

# Fond Memories of John Tanton: The ‘Grand Master of Life’

DENIS MCCORMACK, NORTH FITZROY, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

While transiting an Australian airport in early 1990, not long before our Federal Election, Dr. John Tanton picked up a discarded newspaper left on a nearby transit lounge seat. Inside the paper John spotted a brief news item in *The Age* (a prominent newspaper), written by the late Pamela Bone, a “respected” feature and op/ed writer of long standing. Her work often reflected her firmly held support for high levels of immigration and welcoming more “refugees.” She was a classic Social Justice Warrior (SJW).

In 1990, Bone interviewed me for what she claimed would be a prominent article. The eventual publication was considerably reduced from what she had promised. But it still included mention of my Federal Senate candidacy for the newly registered political party, Australians Against Further Immigration. This was our first electoral foray on the national stage. John seldom missed an opportunity to see out new people. John’s decision to pick up *that* second-hand copy of *that* paper on *that* day and in *that* place changed my life, and certainly influenced John’s, in what I think we both regarded as only good ways.

From the airport, John posted a quick note to Bone, enclosing his contact details, and asking her to pass them along to me. This she eventually did. I soon wrote to John, thanking him for his interest, and enclosed some AAFI materials. By return mail I received a large package full of TSC, FAIR, CIS, and ZPG publications. John invited me to keep him informed about our doings Down Under and to tell him what we tried to popularize resistance to high levels of immigration-fueled population growth.

In 1992, John invited me to attend the annual

Writers’ Workshop (WW), which was held in San Diego, California that year. I have attended eight of these in-gatherings for like minds. On the morning of my trip to San Diego, I met Dr. Tanton and Professor Garrett Hardin having breakfast, and asked them, straight off the bat, if they had ever read *The Camp of the Saints*. “YES” they both responded, and we three brothers in arms discussed this essential book in our common cause.



John Tanton selecting pumpkins in October 2007 while on a visit with the author in Petoskey, Michigan.

Suffice it to say that John and I hit it off together from that morning over breakfast. From San Diego I flew to Washington, D.C., where I met his colleagues at FAIR and CIS.

Before flying home, I visited Petoskey, Michigan and had the privilege of getting to know his life-partner, Mary Lou. I enjoyed splitting firewood, helping in their magnificent veggie garden, fussing around with John’s bee hives, and hiking around the local park and forest trails while being astounded by John’s encyclopedic knowledge, including the Latin botanical names for just about every plant and fungus we walked past. And we talked about history, books, life, and concerns shared by Australians and Americans, especially immigration-related issues.

There was much to be learned at the office of U.S.

---

*Denis McCormack of North Fitzroy, Victoria, is the Australia correspondent for The Social Contract. Long interested in the situation in Tibet, Mr. McCormack speaks Chinese and taught in rural China.*

Inc. and *The Social Contract* in downtown Petoskey. In addition to John and Mary Lou seamlessly including me in their busy local lives, I came to know John's three right hands in the office — Niki Calloway, Bob Kaiser, and Wayne Lutton. They all made for a happy and productive time on my visits to Petoskey.

In 1993, John and Mary Lou returned to Australia. Their daughter, Laura, had finished her own study in China and arrived in Melbourne a couple of days before her parents. Laura and I practiced our basic but mutually intelligible Mandarin, mine having been learned during my two-plus year stay in the People's Republic of China in the early 1980s.

The Tanton remarked that one of the things that caught their attention was the brilliance, clarity, and vast quantum of extra stars of our southern hemisphere night sky in comparison to the northern hemisphere.

Prolific reader that he was, John had read *All for Australia* (Methuen Haynes, 1984) by Australia's pre-eminent historian, Professor Geoffrey Blainey, whom I knew and was able to introduce to him. John was later interviewed by Terry Lane, a well-respected long-term ABC-Melbourne presenter. Lane was unafraid to call

for reducing immigration, and was a critic of the multiculturalism policy mania. This made his interview with John easy to enjoy.

In 1992 John invited me to serve as *The Social Contract's* Australian correspondent, and am happy to remain so today.

I look at the stack of John and Mary Lou's Christmas letters, the photos taken during our meetings here in Australia and in the U.S., the snap of Mary Lou's surprised, but smiling face, as she tried Vegemite on toast for the first time at breakfast in her kitchen. I have a Tanton beeswax candle, and great and useful books John kindly gave me over the years.

John was a grand master of life, a motivator of people, loved and revered more than he knew by his colleagues. John was a good leader, but never did I hear him bang on about "leadership." Rather, he led calmly and quietly by his example. He was a risk-taker, full of purpose, generosity, curiosity, and surprises. If he wasn't, we might never have met.

I feel forever darned lucky and grateful he picked up *that* particular discarded newspaper on *that* day in 1990, rather than any other. ■

## Candidate Tanton

RICK OLTMAN

In September 1999, Dr. Tanton announced that he was exploring the possibility of running for the U.S. Senate in Michigan.\* Shortly after his announcement, we were both in Washington, D.C., and I asked him a crucial question.

I had by that time run two candidate campaigns and a ballot initiative campaign in California. I had been to more than one campaign school where I learned the first question to ask a candidate. And knowing the intense, hateful treatment he would most certainly have to endure, I asked Dr. Tanton, "Are you sure to want to put you and your family through this?"

He replied, with that reassuring smile and calm, matter-of-fact tone, "Well, I think the country is worth it, don't you?"

Dr. Tanton has also said, "Limiting immigration, and hence population growth, is our duty if we care to pass our national estate on to our successors in livable condition."

I think this is the type of thoughtful, mature, and patriotic analysis that all Americans should apply to every bit of our national behavior, especially and particularly that of our immigration policy, don't you?

[\*In the event, Mark Forton, a U.S. Army and 35-year automotive industry veteran, ran as the U.S. Senate candidate for the Michigan Reform Party. Mass-immigration enthusiast, Sen. Spencer Abraham (R), lost his bid for re-election to the Senate in 2000.] ■

