

## Graham Jones (1946-1996)—*Ave atque vale*

Some people excel at their chosen activity, whether in their career or in the arts or sports. But Graham Jones excelled at something far grander and nobler than any one activity (accomplished though he was in the musical field): he excelled at life itself!

And, oh, what exuberance he brought to the job! Whether putting together his recording studio, biking hundreds of miles, entertaining seniors, caring for his pet rabbit-eating malamutes, or raising his fish (on one of which he performed eye surgery), he brought an enthusiasm that was wondrous and infectious. His optimism was boundless; on the way to hospital after losing some fingers to a snow blower, he told fellow Wild Colonial Boy Gordie Black, "I will have to take up the trumpet." But he never had to because with a couple of digits reattached by the plastic surgeon, he relearned the fingerings for guitar, flute, and keyboard.

"The Wild Man," we called him. Hair askew, clothes rumpled (even those awful white tuxes we bought at an auction), glasses at the end of his nose—he tore into every activity like a hurricane, stirring up all in his path. At the hockey rink, banging into all on the ice (teammate or foe); wrestling like a wolf with an errant husky dog; barrelling down the ski slopes; and standing on his very tip toes to reach that high note! He routinely startled audiences with his uninhibited demeanor.

Graham, of course, was a singer/songwriter, to say nothing of multi-instrumentalist, sound man, and technical genius. Was there a set of lyrics he couldn't remember? For all those things he would deserve a tribute, but he was much more: he was also a kind man. He saw the good in his fellow humans, for his mind was always open and accepting. He loved kids and taught them so much more than the guitar, for a visit to his home was a magical adventure, where nothing was conventional, or on time, or brand new; all was childlike and harmonious. Kids loved

Graham—likely because he was one of them. He told his wife Nancy on one occasion, "I have a kid I am helping who just wants to be me!" Graham was amused at that, but surely every parent among us would be happy to have our children turn out like Graham.

Graham was a generous man, and while he never had a lot, he shared unstintingly. "Take it," he would say, giving away a favorite amp or a special guitar.

He was a democrat in the proper sense, at ease with anyone he met. I have seen chat him with equal facility to Peter Lougheed at a golf tournament where he had a gig and to utter strangers in an audience between sets. The vast cross section of society in this church today is the best testimony to his eclectic personality.

Jonesy stories are legion. We have enjoyed them all for years: Jonesy driving to Jasper by way of Golden; breaking his arm when he snuck in a wild ride on a horse, just before the start of a week-long gig; falling from a promenade stage onto the table of some startled patrons, then hobbling back up, still playing his strat; or ripping the top of the Bootleg bus at a service station. Once he forgot his daughter and mine at the US border while driving them down to Whitefish to ski.

Last weekend was typical. Despite his increasing angina, he supervised a gang of young gardeners in his yard on Saturday, and on Sunday he insisted on a round of golf with Johnny Worrall, Gordie and myself, devising his own handicap system and displaying his usual skill and enthusiasm.

On Monday we lost him. Perhaps his big heart could not keep up to the challenges he set for it. We shall remember his zest for life and his uncomplicated love. We were lucky to have known him!

—John Martland

*We thank John Martland for allowing us to use this excerpt from the eulogy he read at Graham's funeral in Calgary on June 14, 1996. Martland, a Calgary lawyer, was a founding member of the Wild Colonial Boys, the house band of the Calgary Folk Club. Graham Jones was a member of the group for many years.*