

John (Jack) Lisman

John (Jack) Lisman passed away peacefully in Victoria, BC, on January 28, 2026, at the age of 93 with his children by his side. Jack was an intelligent, highly opinionated, charismatic Scotsman, committed to science and social democratic values, with an especially irreverent Scottish sense of humour.

Jack was born in Inverness, Scotland, on October 8, 1932, to Robert Lisman, a local fishmonger and later a WWII veteran, and Catherine Glass Lisman. He grew up with his three sisters, Joyce, Rena, and Moira, enjoying hiking, bicycling, and skiing in the Scottish Highlands, as well as local dances and social events, where he was known as the 'life of the party.' His working-class background and his experience being raised as a Roman Catholic of Jewish ancestry, formed the foundation for his beliefs in equality and justice, opposing discrimination of all kinds, especially the mistreatment of those who struggled, and his championing the importance of access to education.

He did his National Service in the Royal Air Force before going on to the Royal College of Science and Technology (later the University of Strathclyde) in Glasgow, receiving his B.Sc. in Civil Engineering in 1961. From 1954 to 1960, along with his studies, Jack worked on engineering projects at an oil refinery and two nuclear power stations. He was an avid debater and Editor of the student magazine in university and, in 1962, ran for municipal office in Edinburgh, strongly advocating for affordable and adequate housing and community-enhancing supports for lower-income residents.

Jack began his professional engineering career in London with the firm of Ove Arup and Partners, where he designed structures in buildings such as the Barbican Centre. He then moved into the field of highway engineering as a Transportation Engineer in the Department of Planning and

Transportation of the Greater London Council from 1965 to 1971, planning and designing freeway structures for new ring roads around London.

Moving to Canada with his wife Barbara and daughter Fiona in 1971, he joined the City of Vancouver as an Assistant Transportation Engineer in its Transportation Department investigating countermeasures for high-frequency accident locations. One innovative traffic calming project for Vancouver's residential West End proved highly successful in reducing accidents and noise in the area.

In 1974, he became Director of the Highway Safety Branch of the BC Ministry of Highways (after 1989, Director of the reorganized Highway Engineering Branch) which produced a first Manual of Aesthetic Design Practices for BC, a new accident reporting system, pedestrian crossing and school pedestrian safety improvements, impact attenuators and safer signpost treatments for hazardous highway areas, and enhanced roadside hazard reduction with specifically designed safety barriers. Jack was known to point out his designs to his children on road trips and was particularly proud of his barrier design! Two significant projects were design and promotion of reduced highway speed limits and passing of seatbelt wearing legislation for the Province of BC, which significantly reduced severe highway accident injuries and deaths.

In 1980, he married Janet and they raised two children, Alex and Amanda, in Victoria. In the 1990s, Jack joined the YMCA and began to train for marathons and triathlons, winning many events including first place in the Sri Chinmoy Triathlon's 'Men's Over 60' category. With the Hash House Harriers, he combined his love of running with socializing, even cooking haggis and 'neeps and tatties' for Robbie Burns events.

After retirement from Government, Jack continued to do highway safety design audits, act as a consulting expert on highway design related to accident litigation and prepare reports for

ICBC on enhanced highway safety measures across the province. Dedicated to advancing international road safety standards, he formed his own firm, Lisman Engineering, and worked on highway design and safety contracts around the world, including Albania, China, Georgia, Romania, Eritrea, Guyana, Honduras, Trinidad and Tobago, and Haiti. Working abroad complemented his love of travel, especially to Mexico and Europe, where he formed strong friendships, learned new languages, and joined international running groups.

Jack's commitment to road safety, along with his involvement with organizations such as the New Democratic Party, the Victoria Secular Humanists and many charities, grew from a genuine desire to improve lives. An avid reader and student of history, he was always surrounded by stacks of books and regularly sought out libraries wherever he traveled. He supported the arts, nurturing a love of culture in his three children who went on to pursue artistic careers with his encouragement.

Left to smile at the recollection of Jack's colourful journey through life are his children Fiona, Alex, and Amanda; grandchildren Sofia, Charlie, Luc, and Caroline; sisters Joyce and Rena (Moirra predeceased him); a large extended family and many friends and colleagues from Britain, Canada and across the world.

Our thanks to the wonderful staff of Mount St. Mary Hospital in Victoria for years of care and support.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (give.unhcr.ca) or a progressive cause of your choice.

Condolences may be offered to the family below, or share your memories of Jack by emailing the family at RememberJackLisman@gmail.com.

McCall Gardens

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