

We Remember



WHYTE, John “Jack”

—

1940 – 2021

Canada lost one of its best-loved storytellers on February 22, 2021.

Born in the town of Johnstone, Renfrewshire, Scotland in 1940, Jack was the eldest of 11 children. His Father, Frank, was badly wounded and blinded during the D-Day invasion of Normandy. At a young age, Jack was tasked with reading books from the Talking Book Library to his blind father. Jack quickly came to appreciate the power and wonder of words – both written and spoken! – and his love for the English language was never to leave him.

He graduated from St. Mary’s College in Twickenham, England, majoring in English and Drama.

Arriving in Canada in 1967, Jack found work teaching high school English, Drama, and French in Athabasca, Alberta. A year later, Jack was entered into a contest to headline the Grandstand Show at the Calgary Stampede. That opportunity led to a 15-year career as one of the best-known entertainers in Western Canada. Working those nights allowed for the quiet days to pursue and ultimately answer his true calling: Over the next 30 years he would write numerous and acclaimed novels, including 3 best-selling series, translated into more than 20 languages.

While a fully integrated Canadian immigrant, Jack was also fiercely proud of his Scottish heritage. Hoping to introduce one of his country's greatest exports to a new, unfamiliar audience he created, produced and starred in a one-man show on the life of Robert Burns, which toured all the major playhouses across Canada. As the Regimental Bard of the Calgary Highlanders, he sang and performed with several hundred pipers and drummers from all over the world at the CNE. His poem, *The Faceless Ones*, about the sinking of the Exxon Valdez and environmental destruction, won international awards, including NYC's, Pomme d'Or, and received global recognition.

One of his greatest joys was his involvement with the annual Surrey International Writers Conference. For over 20 years, Jack taught, encouraged and inspired writers; and shared many treasurable times with friends and colleagues.

Jack was an extraordinary and creative talent. His unflinching ability to entertain his guests with a gripping anecdote, bawdy joke, poem, or a song delivered with that God-given baritone voice, never left his audiences feeling cheated or wanting for more.

His epic poem, *A Toast to Canada*, was a tribute to his adopted homeland, inspired by what he mused might be his hero, Robert Burns' first impressions upon arriving in Canada. The final stanza seems fitting:

“...Each lad and lass, tak' up your glass
And let your mind's eye roam

Across this country, proud and vast
Our Canada, Our home.”

Jack is survived by his loving wife of 50 years, Beverley; his daughter Jeanne, and son Michael (Teresa); stepkids Joe (Sandra), Mitchell (Jane), and Holly (Michael); grandkids Rachel, David, Jessica and Alicia; and his five great-grandkids.

A special thank-you to Dr. Lesperance for her compassionate care and to Dr. Clark and the team at Hospice House.

In lieu of flowers – read a book, sip a scotch and/or donate to a charity of your choice.

If you wish to send a condolence, post photos, or share a memory please scroll down the page to the area called “Condolences”.

