

GRAHAM C. MORGAN (1932-2026)

By Doug VanDine, Adam Silvester and Fred Matich



Graham Morgan passed away in Victoria, BC, on August 13, 2026 at the age of 94. He was born in 1932 in Cirencester, a market town in the Cotswold District of Gloucestershire, England. In 1954, Graham graduated from the University of Leeds with a BSc in Geology. That was followed by a year at Imperial College in London where he obtained a DIC (Diploma Imperial College; somewhat equivalent to a Master's degree) specializing in geotechnical engineering.

In 1955, Graham immigrated to Canada and spent three years working as a consulting geotechnical engineer with Geocon Ltd. He was involved with geotechnical aspects associated with industrial, transportation and hydroelectric projects in eastern Canada and a combined hydro and irrigation project in the Dominican Republic. It was while at Geocon, that Graham met and married Pamela (Pam).

In 1958, Graham moved to BC to work with the BC Power Commission (now BC Hydro). With the reorganization of that organization in 1962, he transferred as a senior engineer to International Power and Engineering Consultants (IPEC), the engineering arm of BC Hydro. With BC Hydro and IPEC Graham worked on a variety of geotechnical projects associated with the W.A.C. Bennett Dam and with the Columbia River dams (Keenleyside, Mica and Duncan). He carried out one of the first evaluation and predictive studies in BC on the effects of reservoir flooding on the stability of reservoir slopes and shoreline erosion.

In 1968, Graham was invited by Professor Arthur Casagrande to attend Harvard University as a Visiting Engineer in that university's Soil Mechanics Program.

Graham joined R.C. Thurber and Associates (now Thurber Engineering) in 1969 and soon became a principal of the firm. Between 1982 and 1986, he served as Chair of Thurber's Board of Directors.

With Thurber, Graham worked on a wide variety of foundation and landslide projects. Some major and innovative projects with which Graham was involved include: the Libby Reservoir preparation study both in Montana and BC; the Attachie landslide that temporarily dammed the Peace River in northern BC; and the BC Highway 99 (Squamish Highway) debris flow study, and subsequent debris flow mitigation designs and construction. For his work on

Highway 99, Graham received an Association of Consulting Engineering Companies' Award of Merit in 1986.

Graham introduced Thurber to the then novel concept of combining socio-environmental studies with geotechnical engineering studies. For many years he was responsible for developing and managing Thurber's environmental division, and its 1981-formed subsidiary, Norecol Environmental. Example projects included improvements to the Trans-Canada Highway through Banff National Park and the Alaska Highway in northern BC and Yukon.

During his years at Thurber, Graham volunteered as a member of the Soil Mechanics Subcommittee of the National Research Council of Canada's Associate Committee on Geotechnical Research, served as an Associate Editor of the *Canadian Geotechnical Journal* and acted as a geotechnical advisor to the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry. From 1969 to 1978, he served as an honorary lecturer in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of British Columbia.

Graham left Thurber in 1986 and formed a sole-proprietor consultancy. He specialized in hazard and risk assessment focusing on landslides and dams. His clients included the BC Water Controller and the Alberta Dam Safety Regulator. In 2011, Graham was named a Fellow of the Engineering Institute of Canada. He retired in 2012 but remained an active and curious member of the geotechnical community into his 90s. In retirement, Graham helped organize the scholarship for the Engineering Institute of Canada's Victoria Section and served on several community councils.

During his career, Graham contributed a number of valuable papers to the Canadian geotechnical literature. For example, his 1967 paper co-authored with Murray Harris on the "Portage Mountain Dam [now W.A.C. Bennett Dam]-Materials" (*Canadian Geotechnical Journal*. Vol. 4. No. 2) and his chapter "A Regulatory Perspective on Slope Hazards and Associated Risks To Life" in the 1997 workshop proceedings *Landslide Risk Assessment*.

Outside of engineering, Graham was a keen sailor, a student of financial investing, and a gifted woodworker. He was predeceased by his wife Pam in 2025. He is survived by two daughters, Sarah and Jill, eight grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Graham will be remembered as a kind and thoughtful gentleman, a devoted husband and father, and an innovative geotechnical engineer. He was a mentor and a stabilizing influence to many with whom he worked.

Co-authors Fred Matich worked with Graham in the 1950s, Doug VanDine worked with Graham in the 1970s and in the 1980s and Adam Silvester, Graham's grandson, is a geotechnical engineer with Thurber Engineering in Vancouver.