



James Lee "Jim" Baker

March 23, 1937 - May 5, 2021

On the evening of May 5th, 2021, James Lee "Jim" Baker passed away in Durant, Oklahoma at the age of 84. Jim was born in Lawton, Oklahoma and was raised in Grant, Oklahoma by his grandparents, John and Ruth Hayes. He attended school from age 14 at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Jim served four in years in the U.S. Air Force including a stint in Japan and returned to Oklahoma by way of South Dakota and Minnesota thereafter. On January 28, 1966, he married the love of his life, Karen Sue Fowler. They enjoyed 55 years together until his passing. Jim enjoyed a successful career in sales with corporations such as Xerox, Reynolds and Reynolds, and Express Personnel Services. Jim was a proud Member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. He also had the privilege of serving as the Chairman of the Board of Directors at his alma mater, Bacone College where he received an honorary doctorate and was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

In a word, Jim Baker was a force. He could do whatever he set his mind to, and he set his mind to a great many things. All who knew Jim were familiar with his wry sense of humor and his willingness to help anyone he could in whatever way possible. Jim was always generous with his time and knowledge and never missed an opportunity to provide his trademark unvarnished, yet, constructive criticism. He loved cooking. Steaks and ribs on the grill, ham and beans, stew, chili, and minestrone soup were among his specialties. A skilled shade tree mechanic from an early age, Jim could fix just about anything that broke around the house. He passed those skills on to his children, who have benefited greatly from them. He had a passion for helping the less fortunate and gave generously to that end. In retirement, he took immense pride in the accomplishments of his children and grandchildren.

Jim is preceded in death by his beloved grandparents, John and Ruth Hayes, his dear aunt, Dr. Helen Harris, Ph.D., and her husband, Dr. Edward Harris, Ph.D., who were like a sister and brother to him, and his mother Mary Victoria McIntosh. He is survived by his wife, Karen; his children James Lee Baker, Jr., John Rich, David Rich, Cindy Lessig (husband Tom), Dr. Jonathan Baker, Ph.D. (wife Sharon), and LTC(P) Justin Baker, J.D. (wife Jennifer); his grandchildren Jeremy Rich, Matthew Rich, John Benton, Jr., James

Lee Baker, III, Lawson Baker, and Bennett Baker; his great grandchildren James Lee Baker, IV, Logan Rich, Lauren Rich, Avery Rich, Julianna Rich, Spencer Rich, and Corbin Rich; his nieces and nephew, Dr. Rhonda Taylor, Ph.D. (husband Ron), Dr. Victoria Gayle Harris, M.D., Ruth Soucy, JD (husband Lewis), and Edward Harris (wife Debi).

His family is eternally grateful to the Choctaw Nation for its unwavering support in providing a variety of medical, logistical, and at-home care services. It meant the world to him and his family that the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma was so gracious and provided such selfless service.

A celebration of life service will be held in the Fall.

Comments



“ Jim was my uncle and a large influence on my life. He was generous to me, encouraged me, and I respected him greatly. Ruth Soucy

Ruth Soucy - September 27, 2021 at 10:40 AM



“ Leslie Lowery lit a candle in memory of James Lee "Jim" Baker



Leslie Lowery - May 22, 2021 at 10:24 PM



“ Jim was an engaging raconteur with a larger than life personality. He was so happy sitting at table enjoying Karen's delicious meals surrounded by family. I'm very sorry for your loss. My sincere condolences to Karen and the family.

Leslie

Leslie Lowery - May 22, 2021 at 10:23 PM



“ So I have been thinking about all my memories of Jim Baker, who was like an uncle, older brother, cousin all in one. I remember us fishing , seining for minnows , having thanksgiving dinners , cookouts , riding in Jims John Deere gator , visiting him and Karen in okc, hugo, Grant, Moore , and it's just lots and lots of memories. Jim was always like a rock . My thanks and sincerest sympathies to Karen, Jon and Sharon and Justin and family abs all the other friends and family .

gayle harris - May 19, 2021 at 07:10 PM



“ So sad that my Bacone College friend has left this world..He was very clever with words and I encouraged him to write a Memoir of his life. Condolences to Karen and his surviving children..Mary Taylor

Mary Taylor - May 14, 2021 at 07:56 PM