



Richard William Baker

March 9, 1944 - December 9, 2023

Richard (Dick) William Baker of Eolia, Mo., passed away on December 9, 2023, at the age of 79.

Dick was born in Lansing, Mich., to Elmer Baker and Dorothy Baker (Bohr) and grew up in Grand Ledge, Mich., with his seven siblings. He graduated from Grand Ledge High School and then served in the U.S. Army, doing a tour of duty in Germany. Dick traveled in Germany and other European countries following his military enlistment. Throughout his life, he often told stories about these travels, particularly his adventures in Ireland.

Once back in the United States, Dick studied electricity and became a licensed electrician, working for General Motors – first in Michigan at plants in Lansing and Saginaw and then in Missouri at the Wentzville Assembly Center, where he retired.

Dick was a friend to all and would immediately strike up conversations with anyone (sorry to anyone who may have been behind him in line at the grocery store or post office and was in a hurry). He also was a lifelong learner with an insatiable curiosity about everything. He was never afraid to ask questions, which could annoy his children (and other tourists) on guided tours to museums, historical sites, and other places. He was tickled (and his kids relieved) when he discovered the Smithsonian Channel.

Dick lived up to the Baker's name and was a master at baking bread. His breads were so delicious that they never lasted long. He also made legendary soups and was best known for his French onion soup, bean soup, and pea soup – whole pea, not split pea (if you know, you know).

Dick's artistry skills weren't limited to the kitchen; he also was a true woodworking craftsman, creating unique gifts for family and friends. His motto: Measure twice, cut once, and have the right tool for the job, which was always a convenient excuse to buy a new tool.

While he liked putzing around in the kitchen and the workshop at home, he also was one for frequent drives to take in the rural Missouri countryside or to explore the many areas in and around St. Louis. Sometimes, he'd go alone; other times, he'd take along family or friends. What's impressive is that he started his signature drives here, there, and everywhere before the invention of GPS. The jury is still out on whether he knew where he was going or was lost and kept driving until he found a road, street, or highway he recognized.

In addition to his local travels, Dick enjoyed family-related trips to Westphalia, Mich., for the annual cemetery walk to explain the area's history and the part his family played in it. He also loved trekking to North Carolina to see his Miller cousins and attend their Thanksgiving get-togethers.

Dick had a beard his entire adult life, and as he aged, he grew to look like Santa Claus with pure white hair. During the holiday season, he would often don a Santa hat when he was out and about because he loved seeing kids' eyes light up when they saw him. He also had Santa's heart. He was generous to others, particularly kids – giving them his time, talents, and treasures. He was an honorary grandpa to several kids beyond his own grandsons. Most people knew him as Papa Baker.

Playing dominoes was one of his favorite pastimes later in life, with his grandsons or his special friend Pat Kawlowski. When he could, he'd take his grandsons for domino matches at bakeries, where they would enjoy special treats, several games, and endless talking. The lively back-and-forth bantering would often attract the attention and smiles of other customers. Until the end of his life, Dick and Pat had a standing dominoes date on Fridays.

For the last 23 years of his life, Dick lived in rural Eolia, Mo., on a small acreage. He met several incredible neighbors who became family, including Roger and Janie Brown, Bruce and Ann Denslow, and Paul and Caryn Brunner. All three couples looked after their elderly neighbor and spent time with him, creating memorable moments that Dick treasured. He loved his friendly competition with Ann over who could attract the most hummingbirds to their feeders. Dick was also blessed that Janie was the nurse for his doctor and went above and beyond for Dick time and time again, including being at the hospital and providing emotional and spiritual support to him and his children when he took his last breath and passed from this world to eternity. Janie was Dick's angel on Earth.

Dick is preceded in death by his parents, Elmer Baker and Dorothy Baker (Bohr), and his siblings: Donald Baker, Sue Baker, Thomas Baker, Barbara Armstrong, and Harry Baker.

Dick is survived by his son Sean Baker and daughter Jennifer Cronin (Matthew); his grandsons Kenneth Cronin and James Cronin; his brothers Daniel Baker and Steven Baker; and several nieces and nephews.

As his last gift to this world, Dick donated his body to medical science so future medical professionals can use his body in their medical education and

training.

His children will hold a Celebration of Life in March.