



Eugene "Gene" Rogers Baker

Eugene "Gene" Rogers Baker, of Brevard, a loving and devoted husband, father and "paw paw," died peacefully Feb. 6, 2025 at Transylvania Regional Hospital after a period of declining health. He was 88.

Born in Macon County near Highlands on Nov. 15, 1936 he was the son of the late Flora Holden and Austin Baker, both natives of Transylvania County. He was also preceded in death by his beloved son, Jonathan.

He moved to Brevard in 1946 when his parents built and opened Baker's Jewelry and Watch Repairing Shop on Jordan Street.

He graduated from Brevard High School in 1955 and Clemson University in 1959, holding a bachelor of science in chemistry.

While at Clemson, he was elected membership into several honorary scholastic societies and was awarded the Mark Bernard Hardin Award for Excellence in Chemistry, the Western Carolinas Section of ACS Award and the Warwick Chemical Foundation Award. He was described by many as "the smartest man I know." While at Clemson, he met the love of his life, the former Sally Kemp of Marietta, Georgia, who

became his wife of nearly 64 years.

After graduating from Clemson, he studied at Emory University for one year before joining Ecusta Paper and Film Group of Olin Corporation as a research chemist in June of 1960. During his 38 years at Ecusta, he worked in tobacco research, process engineering and technical research.

As a young professional, he was an active member of Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church, the Brevard Rotary Club and the Brevard Jaycees. He was associated with Troop 703 of the Boy Scouts of America, serving on the troop committee as assistant scoutmaster and he was named Transylvania's "Outstanding Young Man of the Year" for 1967.

In his retirement, he shifted his research from paper manufacturing to the history of his community, church and family. From 2008-2012, he was president of Transylvania Historical Society where he promoted and pursued grants to restore, preserve and celebrate historic structures in the county, most notably the Allison-Deavor House and the McGaha Chapel, for which he obtained local historic landmark status.

He also managed restoration projects on the Silvermont mansion and in 2015 he and his wife donated funds to construct an ADA-certified trail around the property in memory of their son.

In 2017, the Waightstill Avery Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution honored him with an Excellence in Community Service Award for his outstanding volunteer service to Brevard and Transylvania County. His generosity, research and efforts added

immeasurable depth and beauty to the history of Transylvania County, its landscape and its people.

A descendant of the Gillespie family, which is associated with the Gillespie Rifles which were prominent and locally produced products in the region's early days, he was an active member of the Transylvania Genealogy Group.

He enjoyed spending his retirement hours searching for an elusive document or piece of evidence and he documented for the first time all the efforts to form a new county, Transylvania, out of Henderson County. He similarly documented efforts to form and incorporate the town of Brevard.

In addition to his dedication to his profession and community, his wife, children and grandchildren always knew he was their biggest supporter.

He is survived by his wife Sally Kemp Baker; daughter Margaret "Meg" Baker Buchanan and hus-

band, Travis, of Brevard; grandchildren Gracie Carrick, of Stokesdale, and Baker and Grant Buchanan, of Brevard.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Friday, Feb. 21, 2025 at Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church with a reception immediately following.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in memory of Eugene Rogers Baker may be made to BDRPC, 249 E. Main St., Brevard, NC 28712, or the Transylvania Historical Society, P.O. Box 2061, Brevard, NC 28712.

Online condolences may be left at moodyconnollyfuneralhome.com.

Moody Connolly Funeral Home is caring for the family.