

# Dr. Bruce Roland Baker

January 22, 1943 – May 7, 2020

Bruce R. Baker, A.M., L.H.D., (honoris causa), Age 77, was born in Baltimore, MD, on January 22, 1943. Son of the late H. Roland and Jessie Baker. Proceeded in death by his cousins Audrey (Rosier) Archibald, of Baltimore, MD, Phyllis (Rosier) Griffith, of Baltimore, MD, and Kent Preston Baker (Donna), of Villa Ridge, MO. He leaves to cherish his memory his cousins, Joseph Archibald (June), of Hampstead, MD, Charles Bullock, of Baltimore, MD, James Bullock III (Jody Welk), of Baltimore, MD, Muriel (Bullock) Jones (Fred), of Timonium, MD, Joyce (Burnett) Koons (Ted), of Westminster, MD, Bailey St. Clair (Christy), of Glen Arm, MD.

Dr. Baker, A.M., L.H.D., was a graduate of Logansport High School, Logansport, IN; Wabash College, Crawfordsville IN (Major Latin and Minor in Greek); and Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT (French language and Literature).

Bruce worked at St. Francis College, Biddeford, ME; Faculty at Frostburg State College, Frostburg, MD; College of d'Enseignements techniques, Rue St. Charles, Paris, France; Faculty at Allegany High School, Cumberland, MD; and as a consultant at Westinghouse Electric Corporation before starting his life's work in the field of augmentative communication. His company's name is Semantic Compaction Systems, Inc. (SCS).

Bruce Baker met Barry Romich, P.E. in 1979, of the Prentke Romich Company (PRC), where he shared his mission of developing a language representation technique for people who could not speak or use hand signs. Bruce named his new technique "Minspeak" to stand for minimum effort speech. Use of the Minspeak® language system helped hundreds of people with little to no speech experience personal, educational, and professional success in their lives. Their success expanded Bruce's mission to include "the highest personal achievement for people who rely on augmentative communication."

Over the next 40 years, Bruce and Barry teamed together, along with hundreds of their employees, to support this mission. Bruce built a legacy of speech-language pathologists, educators, and employees, working for PRC and SCS, committed to continuing Bruce's vision and mission.

After developing the first Minspeak® brand language system called Words Strategy®, derivative works followed to help a broad range of conditions of people with communication disabilities. The current versions include UNITY®, LAMP® Words for Life, and an English/Spanish bilingual system called UNIDAD®. Minspeak® systems have been developed and used in nine languages (i.e., English, German, French, Spanish, Danish, Dutch, Swedish, Mandarin and Japanese) worldwide. Bruce supplied his and his staff's best support to build linguistic foundations for countries like Croatia and Thailand, whom at the present time cannot afford electronic voice output communication aids.

Bruce received many awards, including the following: the recipient of the National Design Award from United Cerebral Palsy Associations; the Distinguished Service Award from the Rehabilitation Engineering Society of North America; the Distinguished Service Award from the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC); a position of Honorary Associate Faculty from the University of Sydney, Australia; and an Inductee into the Hall of Distinction, from Logansport High School.

Bruce, along with his colleagues from Westinghouse Electric Corporation, guidance from the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (PA OVR), and support from interested philanthropists is one of the founders of SHOUT (Support Helps Others Use Technology), a western Pennsylvania non-profit organization which hosted twelve conferences, called the Pittsburgh Employment Conference for Augmented Communicators. Dr. Baker regularly was a guest speaker at international conferences and as a keynote speaker across Europe, Canada, Australia, Japan, Thailand, Singapore, and the United States.

In recent years, Bruce began the Pittsburgh Augmentative and Alternative Language Seminar Series (PALSS). On a monthly basis, he hosted seminars at the offices of SCS, bringing together teams of people committed to his mission of supporting augmented communicators. His generosity of spirit and deep commitment to the success of augmented communicators was evident to anyone attending one of these events. It was his unwavering desire to build a community of committed people, collaboratively learning and working together. He saw that happening with the hundreds of people who have attended a PALSS event.

Bruce was considered universally as a uniquely gifted and generous teacher. One person very close to Bruce said, "the missing Nobel Prize winner was living, teaching, and practicing in Pittsburgh for the past 40 years – Dr. Bruce R. Baker."

Due to the coronavirus outbreak, a service will not be held immediately but a memorial service will be scheduled when friends and family can gather safely and travel at Christ United Methodist Church.

*Source: Beinhauer Family Funeral Homes & Cremation Services*