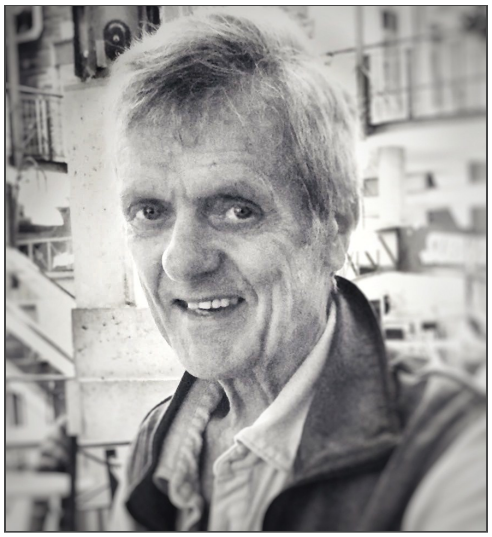
Joseph Cormac "Joe" Baxter



OCTOBER 8, 2020

It is with fond and tender hearts that we announce the passing of Joseph Cormac ("Joe") Baxter on Thursday, October 8, 2020, at long term care home, Haro Park, Vancouver, BC, age 81. Survived by his beloved wife of over 60 years Ila Lee (nee Holdright), also a resident at Haro Park (their 61st wedding anniversary would have been Oct 30th) and by his children Christopher and Janet (m. Keith). He also leaves behind his brothers Brian (m. Doreen), and Michael and is predeceased by sisters Patricia and Cathy-Ann, and son in-law, Keith (Provost). Joe was born in 1939, second child to the late Molly (nee Cable) and Cecil Baxter, and grew up in the small (pop = ~75) town of Maitland Bridge, Nova Scotia, where he spent time fly fishing for rainbow trout in the Mersey River, honing his lumberjack skills, and listening to Wilf Carter songs wafting down the road from a neighbour’s gramophone.

Joe received a Bachelor of Physical Education in 1962 from the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton and a Masters of Education in 1983 from St Mary’s in Halifax. He initially taught Physical Education at high schools in New Germany, Parrsboro, and the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia, before moving west to teach at various elementary schools late 60s - 90s in Kamloops, BC, then on to False Creek in Vancouver, BC to retire turn of the millennium, where he finally hit his stride he would say, teaching kickball to 75 year old women—as part of a weekly exercise class that he ran in the senior’s apartment building where he and Lee resided.

Avid fan of Seinfeld, Fawlty Towers, and The Andy Griffith Show. Always willing to poke fun at himself, when asked to give a speech for a high school Principal's List dinner he quipped, "you know, when I was in school, I was on a principal's list too; nothing to do with getting good grades though... [I got no respect at all I tell ya, no respect at all; tried to donate my body to science - they rejected it!]."

Words (those that are fit to print), that could be used to describe Joe: funny, loyal, considerate, worried, humble, down-to-earth, hardy, generous, thoughtful, fair minded, smart but not a “know-it-all”, obsessive about “safety”. Country boy. Loving husband. Devoted dad. Dedicated teacher. Always striving to be better. Open to suggestions, especially ways to be “healthier”. Excellent card player. Loved sports and coaching. Nimble-footed in his youth. Log roller. Maker of lists and tightener of knobs. Wary of organized religion but felt at home in the fellowship of A.A. Liked having tasks. Liked doing things for others, being of service. Great with kids because he was playful and goofy. Kind and gentle. Pronounced parmesan, “parmesinean”. Would want his obit to make people laugh.

The family would like to thank the wonderful nurses, care aides, recreational therapists, and admin staff at Haro Park for their steadfast care (through two COVID outbreaks) during the last months of Joe’s life. He especially enjoyed the regular music therapy sessions. When recently asked if there was anything he’d like to improve his stay, he said, “I’d like a better singing voice. I wish I could carry a tune”.

Donations in Joe’s name can be made to the Vancouver Alano Club, where he supported many a newcomer on their road to recovery. Please e-transfer donations to: vanalano@shaw.ca.

As per Joe’s request, there will be no visitation or service. Just enjoy a favourite song, have a bowl of ice cream (preferably Grape-Nut), make someone laugh, and be kind to each other. For Joe.

Condolences and memories about Joe can be left below and are much appreciated.

Messages of Condolence

Sending condolences to Janet and Chris and all of the Baxter family. Always very sad to lose someone we love, always leaves such a void. May he rest in peace.

— Sandy Pelley

Lee, Chris and Janet, We are sorry to hear of the loss of your husband and Dad. We will always have fond memories of Joe and his ability to make us laugh.

— Louis and Joan Holdright

Hi Janet. Didn’t know your dad but sounds like a great guy. Take care. See you next time I’m in Vancouver.

— Peggy Sahlen

Chris and Janet

I just wanted to send you a note and please pass my condolences for your loss. He was such an amazing soul.

I remember dad reading out his letters when we were younger. He was a great writer and storeyteller. He would send a newspaper clipping or something along with it about what was happening at the time with you guys or sports or politics. Rich remembers that he had a gift for making others feel good about themselves and welcome, when we started dating.

One year he came and showed the kids a little envelope that had rattlesnake eggs. He shook it and it sounded like a rattlesnake. The boys and Marci gathered around him and Cody reached in to get one out of the envelope with Joe's encouragement. There was a little snappy thing in it that grabbed at his finger and he jumped a mile. Joe said one must have hatched .Then all the kids had to try it. He was always a hoot. The boys and I remember majic tricks as well and a sense of humor, wonder and fun. He had a special way about him that few people have. The gift to make people feel special.

I am glad Joe isn't suffering anymore . But am sorry for the hole left in your and Chris's hearts from his passing

— Martie Atkins

Ila, Chris and Janet

So sorry to hear of Joe's passing.Keep your memories for comfort and hug each other tight.

Our most sincere condolences.

— Max and Myra Holdright

So very sorry for your loss. I remember Mr Baxter from High School (1963). He was a favourite of all the students. Our school yearbook has several photos of him and if you are interested, I could scan and send. Deepest condolences to his family & friends. I am sure he is someone who will be missed.

— SANDRA CARR DUNPHY

Dear Lee, Chris and Janet,
I was so sorry to see Joe's obituary this morning. He was my gym teacher my last two years in high school in Parrsboro and coach of every sport as the seasons came and went. We were such a small school that there were no such things as try outs and the gym teacher coached everything. I have a picture of Chris holding a basketball. You were our " mascot " and didn't suffer from lack of attention as your Mom cheered us on. I have wonderful memories of those times.
The last time I saw your parents was in Maitland Bridge. We were on a camping trip at Keji with our kids and heard they were home so went for a visit. I remember his amusement that we were wearing the same brand of sneakers!!
Lee, wishing you comfort in your loss. May memories bring a smile through the tears.
With good memories and sincere sympathy,
Celia (Yorke) Burns

— Rodney and Celia Burns

“Mr. Baxter” was one of the most compassionate and understanding teachers at Parrsboro Regional High School in small-town Nova Scotia. He knew that many students struggled with attending physical education classes and that all were not cut out to be natural athletes; therefore, in his desire to be fair and encouraging to everyone, those students were given special attention and down-to-earth talks to prepare them to function better and more confidently in gym class and school sports. He was well liked and very well respected both at the high school and in the larger community.

— Michael G Winters

Hi to Lee, Chris and Janet. I was so saddened to read of the passing of your dear Joe. I babysat you kids a lot when you lived in Parrsboro and went to Fredericton the summer you (Janet) were born. I kept house for your parents and looked after Chris. I also went to Cape Breton another summer when Janet was about 1 1/2 years old and burned her little leg against a boiling kettle. Lol. We had lots of fun together and I cherish the time I had with every one of you!I remet you Lee and Janet as well as Joe at our high school reunion in 1992. I have reflected on how good you all were to me throughout my early teen years as well as a great friendship with Joe as my teacher. Please accept my sincere condolences and great long hugs to each one of you! □ □ □

— Judy I. Morris (Mackay)

My condolences to the Baxter family. I competed against the Baxter brothers at The Sportsmeet in Stillwater and the Guides Meet in Kejimkujik in the 1950's. They were great athletes and hard to beat-in the canoe or on the log! Cormac, as I will turn 81 in two months, please save me a place in the choir!!

— John Cameron

Lee. Chris & Janet

Sincere sympathy on your loss.

Lee, we have been wondering where you moved as our Christmas cards were returned and we didn't hear from you.

We have fond memories of Wolfville, card games, seeing you in Kamloops and several times in Maitland Bridge.

We moved to the Truro area several years ago when we downsized and knew our boys would never be returning to the valley.

Hedley & Ethel Fulton (Grade 3 teacher for Chris, a delightful pupil}

— Hedley & Ethel Fulton

To wife Ila Lee, brothers Brian and Michael, and children Chris and Janet:

My sincere condolances to all, from a former resident of Maitland Bridge. Growing up, the Baxter athletes were looked upon proudly- whether it was school sports, or the various skills they had in Guides' sports, including canoeing and log rolling. They are still well spoken of today, especially by their competitors they had met over the years!

He is a loss to many people.

Carl Demmons

— Carl Demmons

Lee, Chris & Janet: so sorry to read Joe’s obit in yesterday’s paper. Have thought of you so often over the years Lee and of all the fun times we had at UNB and a few years after. You and Joe were so much fun. Do you remember my birthday party at Fontaine’s? Garry, Bill and Barb Spurr, Mont, have all left us. I have wondered where Chris and Janet are and if they ever come to N.S. I did get hold of Cathy once many years ago (Joe’s sister). Thinking of you three. Much love, Zel

— Zelma Murley

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— Zelma Murley

So very sorry the loss of your wonderful Joe. I have very fond memories of the days Joe taught at Horton High School with my father (Connie MacNeil) & our families spending many enjoyable times together. Janet & Chris... please give Lee a hug for me & express my sincere condolences. I hope that your fond memories & the love/support of those around you will hold you up during these difficult times.
R.I.P. Joe...
~ Margie

— Margie (MacNeil) MacIntosh

Mr. Baxter was my grade 5 teacher at George Hilliard. He was a funny, smart, and caring teacher. We had so much fun in his class. Very sorry for your loss.

— Tracey Lodge

Our sincerest condolences to all of you. Mr. Baxter was a favorite teacher of ours while he was at Arthur Stevenson. He'll be dearly missed and loved always by many!
Walch Family

— Barb, Dale, Craig, Curtis Walch

Joe was a huge part of our family while he taught at Arthur Stevenson Elementary. Both of our kids excelled in both class and sports in the 80's. Truly a one of a kind individual that touched many by his gentle kindness. Our thoughts are with you at this sad time.

— niemi family

My condolences to Mr. Baxter’s family! I was one of the lucky children to have had Mr. Baxter as a teacher in elementary school in Kamloops. That was 31 years ago and I was literally talking to my children about him again last week. I say again as my parents and I speak of him often and remember him fondly. Safe to say he made his mark on my life. From his cross country runs and encouragement of staying active to his 1-6 and 1-12 times tables when we stepped out of line in the classroom. He made learning fun and I’m sure left his impression on many. I send a silent thank you to him every time I multiply a number in my day today life. Who would have known his lighthearted punishment for talking so much in class could be something I’m grateful for all these years later? May your family find peace in knowing he made a difference in the lives of so many. May you be comforted to know he was and will be remembered fondly for years to come and that his name is spoken of in gratitude regularly by people you do not even know. What an amazing legacy he leaves behind.

— Kirstine (Niemi) Scott

I’m so sorry to hear this, Joe (will always be Mr. Baxter to me) was my grade 5 teacher at Arthur Stevenson and to this day was one of the most influential people in my life! Mr. Baxter was probably the only teacher I had that talked to me about life and taught me about respect. I can still picture him tucking his tie into his shirt to have push up contests during class. I remember him letting us listen to the Beatles when we were good, always think of him anytime I hear the Beatles. The world has lost an amazing person, he will be sadly missed.

— Curt Dale

Grade 5 at Arthur Stevenson was my most memorable year at school ever. He is the only teachers name I remember and his amazing lessons will live on in my teachings to my kids. Every time I do math I think of mr Baxter. You were an amazing teacher and you deserve an amazing rest. Be well where ever you are

— Andrew sadegur

I had the pleasure of having Mr. Baxter as a grade 5 teacher. I still have my Times Table award from him. One of my favourite teachers. RIP. And condolences to the family. I hope all these memories help you in your grief.

— Stephanie Feely (Bond)

So sorry to hear of Joe's passing. Joe and I worked together at Arthur Stevenson for many years and just thinking of him and those times has brought a smile. His sense of humour was always there to cheer you up even on the bleakest of days. We will definitely raise a glass when the group meets for are old retired people's lunch. Thoughts and prayers to you during this most difficult time.

— Linnea Inskip

Mr.Baxter was my Grade 5 teacher when I went to Arthur Stevenson. This man was the best teacher I have ever had. I still talk about him to this day. I have never forgot his kindness and patience...he was also funny. He was the reason I liked school. I will never forget him. Thank you Mr.Baxter for being a huge memory for me and being so kind always. Sending my love to his family and friends. This man was a gem

— Heidi Faisthuber

Joe was a good mentor and great friend. I spent a decade training with him in the martial arts/boxing/kickboxing world, and he also mentored me as a beginning educator. A humble, kind, extraordinary man - always there for a laugh or support. Always did his best to nurture and serve those around him. I miss him profoundly.

— Robert Wielgoz

I had Mr Baxter for grade 7, AE Perry 68-69. My all time favourite teacher. Really got us involved in track and field. As a mailman, I took a lot of cab rides, so got to see Joe and Lee and was able to have visits with them long after my school days.

— ken ellis

Mr. Baxter was specail. He had a spark that stuck to you. I always wanted to find him and say thank you. I owe many of my abilities to him, he opened my hunger to learn. I recall once getting lines and he seemed pleased about my misbehavior and many years later I knew why. He built a math foundation with my defiance and celebrated the success. RIP you wonderful person.

— Dylan Schielke

I am so sorry and so saddened to hear of Mr Baxter's passing. He taught me in grade 5 at Arthur Stevenson and he was the best Elm school teacher I had in Kamloops. I had a really hard time in Elementary school because my family was moving a lot and going through things, and I was very hyper and chatty throughout my elm school. Mr Baxter was very patient with me and understood me I think. He gave me The Terrific Kid Award which really boosted my confidence as I had a lot of mean teachers before him. Mr Baxter was always so funny. I remember at our Christmas Concert, he dressed as Santa and conducted our choir and his pants fell down lol!!! On purpose of course to reveal his Santa boxers lol!! Mr Baxter made amazing contributions to many children's and family' lives and he will be forever remembered and dearly missed.
Sincerely,
Frances Wells

— Frances Wells

I shared Mr. Baxter’s obituary to a Facebook group page called ‘Growing up in Westsyde’. The comments are filled with people who loved him as a teacher and were positively influenced by him. It should be searchable if you would like to read them all.

— Stephanie Feely

Another one of Mr Baxter's grade 5 kids, and will echo what others of his students have said. He stands out as a teacher who cared, and showed it in small ways that are gratefully remembered. Grade 5 lightning rounds of times tables might be the last year of my life that I felt I might be good at math! He was a positive influence in the lives of so many who are sending love to the family and friends that grieve his passing.

— Lisa Osborne

I had Mr. Baxter in grade 5 and he was by far my most memorable teacher from both elementary and high school. I still remember doing timestable races against fellow classmates. It was teaching methods like that which Mr. Baxter used to make learning fun and enjoyable. Cheers to you. You have left a lasting impact on many people.

— Shawn Anderson

I would like send my condolences to the Baxter family. I remember them all when I went to school at A.E. Perry from Grade 4-7. The kids were a little younger than myself but remember them in all the sports we played and Track meets galore. Mrs. Baxter was always present as well. Mr. Baxter was a great teacher and was always there to help us all in our sporting activities. He made the best years of our youth and I know all who went to school with me at the time truly appreciated everything he did for his students in the classroom and in the field.
May his family cherish every memory and may he Rest In Peace.

Lani Malanchuk (nee Matonovich)

— Lani Malanchuk (nee Matonovich)

I’m so sorry to hear of your loss.
Mr Baxter taught me in grade 5 at Arthur Stevenson and He was the only teacher I ever had who took time to encourage me in PE. It was always my least favourite subject but that year he made me brave enough that I competed in a basketball free-throw contest outside of school. I won, thanks to his encouragement.
He was such a wonderful teacher and I have so many vivid memories from that year. I’m so very sorry to hear of his passing. He was a one-of-a-kind wonderful human.

— Julie

Mr. Baxter was my Grade 5 teacher at George Slater in Kamloops. He was a special man at a special school, and he made a lasting impact on me and my classmates. Deepest sympathies to his family and loved ones.

— Maria Mazzotta

My condolences to the Baxter Family. Mr. Baxter was my grade 6 teacher at George Hilliard. He made learning fun but made you pay with times tables if you stepped out of line! Great teacher!

— Vince Marino

I was so sorry to learn of Joe's passing. Joe was an outstanding teacher who knew how to make learning fun. He was a true professional in all respects.
My phone would always "ring off the hook" in September at Arthur Stevenson with parents pleading with me to place their child in Mr. Baxter's class. He was one of the best teachers I ever had the pleasure of working with in my career as a principal.
I will always have fond memories of Joe.
It was an honour to have known and worked with him.
Please accept my deepest condolences.
Sincerely, Sandy Mallory

— Douglas (Sandy) Mallory

Mr. Baxter is a household name in our family. I speak of him regularly, from learning how to do a proper push-up, to learning all of my times tables...sorry Mr. Baxter for being so naughty sometimes in your class, but because of you my passion of sports grew and I still know all of my times tables up to 12x12. That grade 5th year at Arthur Stevenson was a great one. Mr. Baxter turned 50 and we had the best celebration ever. Mr. Baxter invited me back into his classroom when I did work experience in grade 12, and I soon discovered I really wanted to be a teacher. I pursued a degree in Kinesiology and then Education and became a P.E. teacher, and then a classroom teacher. I will always be indebted to Mr. Baxter. I feel so very lucky to have had him as my teacher, and I think of him often when I'm in front of my students. My deepest condolences to your family. He was a one-of-a-kind man with a passion for kids, and I will never forget him.

— Natasha Pearson

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https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/baxter-joseph-cormac-joe

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