

## **Rich Baker Obituary**

### **April 3, 1953 - March 2, 2021**

Richard Louis Baker, “Rich,” 67, of Belmont, Massachusetts, Founder of Glance Networks, Inc; avid backpacker and astronomer; loving father, husband and brother; died Tuesday morning, March 2, 2021, following a year-long battle with Acute Myeloid Leukemia.

Rich was born April 3, 1953, in Los Angeles, California, to Ariel Rufus Baker (“Bake”), and Mabel Pamp Baker. Rich’s older brother, Vince, helped cultivate a love of classical music in Rich, and was a role model for him in entering the field of electrical engineering. His sister, Cheryl, in spite of friendly childhood efforts to get Rich to display his temper, has always been one of his closest allies, most recently acting as his “trail angel” during his last hike through Washington State.

As a boy, Rich and his father raised and raced pigeons, which led to Rich’s interest in creating his first invention, a “birdwatcher” designed to clock when pigeons returned to the roost. Rich remembers the moment when he realized that with hard work he could excel academically, and he worked hard to earn straight As, which helped him earn a coveted spot at Caltech for his undergraduate education.

Rich’s Caltech years provided him many unique opportunities, including playing on both the varsity college basketball and baseball teams in spite of his whopping 5’7” stature, becoming President of his dorm (Ruddock House), and participating in many of the traditions and adventures that occur when bright young students collide with mischievous impulses.



After college and an LDS mission to Argentina (where he learned to speak Spanish), Rich continued his education while working at Hughes Aircraft in Fullerton, California. Hughes Aircraft paid for Rich’s Master’s degree in EE from USC and a PhD from Stanford University. As a member of the Hughes Advanced projects team, Rich contributed to projects in spread spectrum communications, HF radar, and image and speech processing, enhancement, recognition and compression. Using his considerable technical skills, Rich was able to save Hughes thousands of dollars by automating processes used to detect military aircraft flight patterns.

Rich dreamed of being an entrepreneur and longed to create value in the world by starting his own company, but his desire to support his wife, Robin, led him to put those dreams temporarily aside while Robin pursued graduate degrees. While Robin studied for her Master’s degree at BYU, Rich taught in BYU’s electrical engineering department, where he accomplished the herculean task of completing his dissertation for Stanford, while also teaching five different engineering courses. When Robin chose UCLA for her PhD, Rich was conveniently offered an assistant professor position at UCLA where he mentored a talented research team of students who went on to make important contributions in video technologies such as data compression, vector quantization and coding standards. While Rich tolerated research and approached it with painstaking care, his true love was for teaching, and he consistently earned top teaching ratings while at UCLA.

In 1990, Rich was successfully lured away from UCLA to work as the Director of Research at PictureTel in the Boston area. He and Robin assumed their time in Boston would be short, but instead they wound up making Boston their home for the next thirty years. Rich eventually became Chief Scientist and the acting VP of Engineering, helping PictureTel transition from a company of 150 to 1500 during his tenure. He also chaired the Corporate Networks Conferencing Activity Group from 1995-97, launching the industry process which created the global ITU H.323 standard for Internet and LAN-based videoconferencing in record time.

In 2000, Rich partnered with Taylor Kew to create Glance Networks, a company that broke ground in the area of screen sharing using specialized video compression techniques. Rich and Taylor bootstrapped the company, creating a strong culture of careful financial decision-making, commitment to technical excellence, simplicity in design, and fast and easy reliability for their service. The company that Rich and others built now serves thousands of client companies with easily recognizable names. Rich admired his colleagues, respected their technical competence and greatly appreciated their innate goodness. He eventually trusted his colleague, Tom Martin, to take over as CEO, which freed him up to pursue the work he most loved as Chief Technology Officer at Glance. He was proud of the culture of hard work and respect that he worked hard to foster at Glance.

In his final weeks, Rich had a burst of creative energy, and was able to use his considerable technical expertise, his laser focus on simplicity, and his calming teamwork skills to help Glance solve some thorny technical challenges. He was gratified to learn before he passed away that this work was summarized in the 38<sup>th</sup> patent which Rich was involved in generating and filing while at Glance.

Rich believed strongly in doing good in the world, and he continually reached out to help others. He was always the “go to guy” for technology at church, and he was often seen taping wires, adjusting mikes, setting up cameras and trouble-shooting tech problems for church broadcasts. He was tapped to serve in leadership roles in local units of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, serving as counselor to three different bishops: 1) Bob Rees in the Los Angeles First Ward, 2) Paul Dredge in the Lynn, MA Asian Branch, and 3) Doug John in the Belmont, MA First Ward. In 2012, Rich was asked to serve as the President of the Cambridge 3<sup>rd</sup> congregation of Spanish-speaking members, and he was acutely aware that his role as the “outsider gringo” was to tap into the wisdom of this community rather assuming his own expertise. Members of this branch remember his quiet service in pulling in and strengthening youth and encouraging them to attend college and go on missions.

One of Rich’s biggest contributions was to the scouting program in the Belmont, MA congregation, where he served as scoutmaster for seven years, encouraging many boys to obtain their Eagle Scout rank. During this time, Rich also introduced dozens of boys to the beauties and challenges of backpacking in the Sierra Mountains. Rich believed that the surest way to keep boys out of trouble was to wear them out, and the best way to keep them safe during these trips was to prepare. As a result, countless talks and college essays were written by young men who learned important life skills from Rich, and who discovered they could accomplish things they did not know they were capable of.

Rich had an intense and passionate love of learning. He rarely went anywhere without a podcast in his ear or a Scientific American or Astronomy magazine in his hand. He read multiple newspapers and would often send interesting links to family members on a variety of topics. He had strong

opinions about politics and spent what he called “too much time” reading about what was going on in the world. Rich was an avid amateur astronomer, and he loved dazzling any who would listen or look through his telescope with the wonders of the night sky.

Rich was also a creative teacher who loved explaining things, occasionally in more detail than people expected. He was a master at creative teaching moments, with one particular lesson that stands out—when he taught 10 wide eyed three-year-olds in the church nursery how to light fires using flint and steel. The elementary school age kids at church also remember Rich using items such as an axe, a bear can, and raw eggs to illustrate concepts. While the kids may not have remembered the points of these lessons, they were always captivated by the display. Rich taught teens to build camp stoves out of cat food cans, and pack backpacks light enough so that they could actually carry them. He taught students to understand tricky engineering concepts, and he taught his children to be good people. Rich also spent hundreds of hours as a student of Mormon culture and thought, and in spite of his many doctrinal and policy questions, he was a deep believer in the value of the community as a way to connect, serve and love others.

Most people who knew Rich soon learned of his passion for backpacking, as most conversations with Rich inevitably steered towards this topic. Rich was the Pied Piper of backpacking, and he spearheaded many backpacking trips with not only scouts, but friends, colleagues, families, and his children, starting when they were as young as five. Rich dreamed of hiking the entire Pacific Crest Trail, which stretches 2,650 miles from the Canadian to the Mexican border. In the summer of 2018, Rich hiked his first 500-mile section of this trail, starting at the southern border of the state of Washington, stopping just a few miles shy of the Canadian border when the weather turned dangerously snowy. In the fall of 2020, when Rich’s Bone Marrow Transplant appeared to be offering him a cure, Rich had his next permit in hand, and was looking forward to hiking another 500 miles of the trail in the coming summer.

Rich’s partnership with Robin began when they met at church in the Stanford ward in 1980, where both of them quickly realized that they liked life much better together than alone. While they were direct opposites in some ways, Rich’s meticulous approach and Robin’s ability to dive right into projects was a healthy combination for getting things done both quickly and effectively. It is a testament to their ability to communicate and problem solve that Robin and Rich were able to work together at Glance for 8 ½ years. Rich stood behind Robin in everything she hoped to do with her life, and there was no one more ardently supportive of Robin’s return to school in her 50s to become a family therapist than Rich. Rich was just as delighted by Robin’s successes as his own, and this made marriage a haven for both of them.

Rich adored his children, and he was incredibly proud of them all. He loved being at every possible performance, which took him to places as far away as Carnegie Hall, Washington DC, Los Angeles, Canada, and England. Rich savored music and the arts, and especially enjoyed times when his children were performing. Rich relished his role as the “grand documenter” of their many artistic performances and important moments of their lives. It was a rare event when Rich did not have his camera at the ready to create lasting memories of these moments, and he left a legacy of over 300 videos featuring family members.

Rich's sister-in-law, Diane Sampson Zenger, summarized Rich with the following: "Rich had the extraordinary ability to couple an intensity about things and ideas with a mildness about people and faults. He was unusually able to let situations mature before getting fractious or resentful, and to shrug off the ways the rest of us are annoying. The vibrant buoyancy and focus with which he attended new projects, skills, and ideas; his self-deprecating humor that never seemed to turn to self-doubt; his ability to make things not-about-him; his brilliancy that he didn't need to "prove" to anyone (oh, that remarkable brain); his faithful abiding confidence and pride in all of children—these traits of his are a profound legacy he is leaving to all of us. We are better humans and parents for having seen him in action. I am profoundly grateful for his influence in my life."

Rich is survived by wife, Robin, his children, Shannon, Scott (Katrina), Leslie (Taylor), and Kelly (Daniel) and siblings, Vince (Kay), and Cheryl (Steve) and grandchildren Sierra and Autumn. He will be sorely missed. We hope to remain connected to stories of Rich's life, and we welcome anyone who would like to share greetings, memories, or stories of Rich to please send these to the following email: richbakermemories@gmail.com.

A memorial service for Rich Baker will be held Saturday, March 6 at 2 pm Eastern on zoom at the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84153343491?pwd=TGtRT01samxuUnVoSG5obXI0c0VjZz09>

In lieu of flowers, people may contribute to one of the following charities which were important to Rich:

- The Pacific Crest Trail Association: <https://www.pcta.org/donate/#donate>
- The Bone Marrow Registry - BeTheMatch.com: <https://bethematch.org/support-the-cause/donate-financially/>
- Bountiful Children's Foundation: <https://bountifulchildren.org/>