

JONATHAN BENJAMIN BAKER L'63
(February 1938-June 18, 2025)

Submitted by J. Haig Deb Farris L'63:

Jonathan Benjamin Baker (JB), Penn Law School graduate 1963: born February 1938, passed away on June 18, 2025. His daughter and law partner captured his spirit beautifully at his celebration of life.

"As many of you know, my dad had a great sense of humor and loved to laugh. He was known for his sharp, sometimes, cutting wit. He was also genuine and refused to do or say anything he didn't agree with or believe in. This probably didn't serve him well in politics, but he couldn't and wouldn't do it any other way. He refused to be anyone other than himself. He was also a man of exacting principles, integrity, and honor. He was always ready to help and defend the underdog, and not just in his legal practice. My dad practiced law in much the same way. He wasn't motivated by money. He just loved the law and helping people." - Nathalie Baker, daughter

In September 1960, Professor Leo Levin, our funny and wonderful Procedure professor, had two Bakers sitting beside each other in class. To distinguish one from the other he referred to Jonathan by his initials "JB". It stuck and he became JB for the rest of his life.

After law school he fled Ventnor, New Jersey and headed west to Vancouver, B.C. For seven years he was a jack-of-all-trades, went to medical school for a year, gave solo flute concerts, ran an open line talk show, worked at a bank and then in the social planning department of the City of Vancouver where he had a huge impact on the social and cultural life of the city.

In 1969, he robbed the cradle by marrying a beautiful 22 year old French girl, Dominique, who was learning English and living as an au pair with Haig L'63 & Mary Farris helping with their new born twins. The Bakers had 56 years of bliss and two children, a son an entrepreneur and a daughter who became his law partner and is currently the leading municipal litigator in Vancouver.

After seven years in Vancouver, JB became a Canadian citizen, passed the bar exams and became the top municipal law litigator in Vancouver. His clients were people who sued municipalities for some irreparable harm. He was usually successful.

In the 1980s he was elected to the Vancouver municipal council and served with distinction for five years. He once, unsuccessfully, ran for mayor of the City of Vancouver.

After some health issues in the early 2000s he retired from active practice of law and moved to a peaceful seaside home up the BC coast, enjoyed his grandchildren, and was first chair flautist in the Sechelt Symphony.

He will always be remembered as a kind, witty, and thoughtful person, a great musician, a wonderful family man with a huge diverse network of friends and associates.