

Former Hazel Park Teacher Dies in Car-Bike Crash



(C. Proxmire, The Ferndale 115 News, July 10, 2012)

A beloved retired Hazel Park High school teacher was struck by a car while riding his bike in Burns Township, and did not survive. 62-year-old Clyde Baker, who often went by CJ, had revved up his interest in both bicycle riding and country singing since taking early retirement from Hazel Park High School in 2003.

[The Argus Press reports](#) that Baker “was riding a bicycle east on Beard Road about 1:35 p.m. Monday when he was hit by a vehicle driven by a 31-year-old Webberville man, Christopher Forester, also traveling east.” Baker lived in Howell and was riding in Shiawassee County when the accident occurred.

 Baker’s Facebook page reflects the passions he enjoyed in retirement. The above picture is one he took along his favorite bike route. “This is northwest of Byron MI which is north of me. I train on roads out there many days a week on my bicycle. This is my favorite section of the 20 miles I ride each time,” he posted.

Hazel Park High School Principal Don Vogt said people in the district are sad at having learned the news this morning. Baker’s wife Leslie is the Principal of Hoover Elementary School, right across the street from the High School where Baker used to teach.

“When I got hired in 2001, Clyde was one of the teachers that the Principal at the time introduced me to as key people on staff. I still remember our meeting that day. He’s a funny guy and a great teacher, really loved by the students. He had this way of blending humor with wisdom,” said Vogt. “To have this happen it’s just tragic.”

Vogt said he’s stayed in touch with Baker and seen him develop his hobbies more over the past few years. “He’s quite a

country western fan, and he's even tried his hand at making a cd. When he was here, teaching was his life. He and his wife both. By being able to retire he got to follow his other dreams, and I'm glad he got a chance to do that."

On Saturday Baker posted a gold belt buckle on his Facebook page. Baker had recorded a country music cd and was involved in country music and keeping horses, and the buckle indicated ten year's participation in a local festival, the South Country Show. A fellow teacher congratulated him, and his response shows the state of mind this beloved teacher was in just before he passed: 

"Thanks, sorta like teaching for both of us. One day you wake up and have enjoyed something for a long time."

Baker taught social studies at Hazel Park School, where his humor and wisdom touched many students. Ferndale 115 News Editor and Publisher Crystal Proxmire credits Baker with teaching a law class that inspired her more than any other high school class. His interactive approach to teaching, his use of irony, sarcasm and humor, his encouragement, and his ability to look at legal and political situations through multiple perspectives are all traits that influenced the foundation of this and other projects. Principles he taught affect this work on a daily basis, and his passing his a sad reminder of the importance that teachers play in the lives of their students.

Christy J. from the class of 1997 wrote "Mr Baker was one of the few teachers who got through to his students. My senior year I ended up with blood clots and was in and out of ICU!! He would always send loving comments home with my assignments and was my cheerleader!!! He made me graduate when I felt like giving up! Class was always a pleasure and as an adult now, I wish we had been more connected! He was a heart full, selfless and motivating man!! He will always be remembered by his students and is loved by many. Our prayers go out to his

family and friends..... HPHS Class 1997!!!!!"

Funeral Arrangements are as follows:

Wessels and Wilk Funeral Home
23690 Woodward Avenue
Pleasant Ridge, MI
(corner of 9 1/2 and Woodward)
(248) 721-9146

Friday, July 13, 2012

12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. – Family only

1:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Viewing

Saturday, July 14

Funeral Home will open at 12:00 noon for viewing and the funeral will be at 3:00 p.m.

In lieu of flowers please make donations to the [Hazel Park Promise Zone](#).

If others would like to share your memories and condolences, please send to editor@ferndale115.com and we will add them to this post. Also check back for updates as to the possible charges against the driver of the vehicle.

Thank you also to the [Argus Press](#), an independent, family-owned local news source since 1841.

