



Wade Johnson Baker Jr.

April 19, 1956 - February 20, 2026

Wade Johnson Baker, Jr. passed away on Friday, February 20, 2026, at the age of 69.

Born April 19, 1956, to Wade Johnson Baker and Rachel Cooper Baker, Wade J. (or "WayJay" as most of you may know him) was a fourth-generation Baker to grow up in Apex alongside his sisters Pam and Pat. His Apex roots ran as deep as they come, and he always enjoyed spending time with his aunts, uncles, and many cousins on his Baker and Cooper sides.

A graduate of Apex High School, he then attended Appalachian State University. However, Apex was calling him home, and he followed in his father's footsteps, owning and operating the family business, Apex Cleaning Co. He was a member of the Apex Volunteer Fire Department for 19 years, serving as treasurer and president of the organization.

Wade J. married the love of his life and best friend, Sharon Howard, in 1983. Together, they had two children: Andrew Howard Baker and Rachel Evelyn Baker (Simpson). Wade J. was the epitome of what a daddy should be. He was fun, caring, adventurous, and the best listener. He was so proud of Andrew and Rachel and had no problem telling people about it.

In 1996, Wade J. and Sharon decided to close the dry cleaners and start a new adventure. In 1999, they opened Salem Street Soda Shop in the same

location. They served up milkshakes, orangeades, good food, and great fellowship to all of downtown Apex until 2008. During their time in the Soda Shop, they introduced what became known as the best Chicken'N'Dumplings and fried cornbread around. The Soda Shop was a beloved Apex icon for years and is still missed to this day. Many have fond memories of visits to the Soda Shop, and if you were a regular, Wade J. could still recall your usual order. Conversation was 'Wade J.'s gift. You never left after a conversation with him without knowing more than you did when you arrived. The Soda Shop is also where Wade J. and Sharon unknowingly started their second family of kids. Teenagers employed at the Soda Shop learned the value of work and community and also came to count Wade J. and Sharon as family. Wade J and Sharon counted them as family, too.

Wade J. spent the latter half of his career at The Wright School in Durham, where he served as chef for the students and staff. He worked there from 2011 until his retirement in 2024. There, he nurtured the children with healthy meals and spent time with them during meals, encouraging them to try new culinary experiences. He made each child feel special on their birthday by making them a pancake in the shape of their name. Wade J.'s time at The Wright School was some of his most fulfilling moments.

Wade J. was an active member of Woodhaven Baptist Church for nearly 30 years. He served many years as chair or co-chair of the fellowship committee for church events that involved meal preparation and kitchen maintenance. He also served on the offertory, teller, and baptismal committees. His hot dog chili was a necessity at any church function.

If you're reading this, we know Wade J. was a bright light in your life. His easy-going nature, care for others, and desire to have fun made him the life of every party and a warmth in every room.

Wade J. is survived by his wife, Sharon Baker, son Andrew Baker (Katie

Bailey), daughter Rachel Baker Simpson (Jeremy Simpson), and his sister, Pat Helton (Carl Helton). His grandchildren, Laila Simpson, Wade J. Simpson, and Beau Simpson, will miss their Granddaddy dearly.

A service of worship celebrating the life of Wade J. Baker will be held on Thursday, February 26, 2:00 pm at Woodhaven Baptist Church, 4000 Kildaire Farm Rd., Apex, NC 27539. Visitation with the family will follow immediately after, and a graveside service will be held at 4:30 pm at Apex Cemetery, 207 W. Moore St., Apex, NC 27502.

In lieu of flowers, donations by check can be made to The Wright School. Checks can be made out to "The Wright School" with the memo line reading, "In Memory of Wade J. Baker" and sent to 3132 N. Roxboro St., Durham, NC 27704.

Cemetery Details

Apex Cemetery

207 W. Moore St.
Apex, NC 27502

Previous Events

Service of Worship

FEB 26. 2:00 PM (ET)

Woodhaven Baptist Church
4000 Kildaire Farm Rd
Apex, NC 27539

Family Visitation

FEB 26. 3:00 PM (ET)

Woodhaven Baptist Church
4000 Kildaire Farm Rd
Apex, NC 27539

Committal Service

FEB 26. 4:30 PM (ET)

Apex Cemetery
207 W. Moore St.
Apex, NC 27502

Tribute Wall

WI

“ Wake Memorial Park created a Tribute Video in memory of Wade Johnson Baker Jr.



Wake Funeral & Cremation Services, Inc. - February 24 at 05:01 PM

LJ

My prayers for the family .He was a wonderful person and friend. 🙏

Lynn Jones - February 25 at 01:55 AM

BS

I enjoyed watching the tribute video. I have fond memories of WayJay. He was a wonderful man.

Barbara M Small - February 28 at 05:41 PM

MM

“ Wadejay and Sharon were the best employer I every had. They help me through some tough time with my family. And Wadejay was very understandings when I needed to take care of family business. I will missed him. But I know he is in Heaven! With his Mom and other family members. Cooking something up! With all my love Mary Jane M.

Mary J Mendenhall - February 25 at 12:09 PM

WI

“ 283 files added to the album *LifeTributes*



Wake Funeral & Cremation Services, Inc. - February 24 at 04:23 PM

AG

“ I sure will miss his "What's up cuz." WayJay was one special fellow and he sure will be missed. We are keeping you all in our thoughts and prayers.



Ashley R Gunnett - February 24 at 12:53 PM

LR

“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



Lucille Russo - February 24 at 12:00 PM

RA

“ I only knew Wade, Jr. as a child, but I knew his parents well. His mother was in my mother's Sunday School Class. I used to work for H. C. Benton's grocery, which was next door to the dry cleaners. Wade's father would come in the store all the time, so I got to know him there. He had wonderful parents who provided a great example to their children. May God bless his family and may he rest in the arms of Jesus.

Ruth Dawson Achurch - February 24 at 10:22 AM

WG

“ Woodhaven friend group purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Wade Johnson Baker Jr..



Woodhaven friend group - February 23 at 10:25 AM