



## Leland Baska,

February 11, 1931 - February 24, 2011

Leland Karl Baska Jr. died suddenly on February 24, 2011 at his home in Gainesville, VA. He had just celebrated his 80th birthday two weeks prior. He was the son of Ethel Rose and Leland Karl Baska Sr. and grew up and was educated in Chicago, Illinois. He graduated from Gage High, received his Bachelor's and two Master's degrees in Education from Roosevelt University, and was a PhD. student at Purdue University for two years in the gifted education program.

His lifelong passion was music. He began his career in jazz clubs at age 14, playing at the Club Deliza in Chicago for many years. He made good friends playing in the 7th Army Band while stationed in Stuttgart, Germany during the Korean conflict. He later went on the road with the Johnny Hamlin Quintet for a year and a half stint. He then entered the field of education as a band director at Dunbar High School in Chicago, a guidance counselor at Tinley Park High School in the Chicago suburbs, and a school psychologist in Chicago Public Schools (CPS), spending his last 12 working years in the gifted program, serving districts on the south side of Chicago through testing and program development. While he worked with CPS, Lee published several papers and book chapters on the use of testing and program development services for gifted children. He also served as president of the Chicago Association of School Psychologists. During the entire span of his adult life, up to the time he experienced a minor stroke three years ago, he continued to play music on jobbing dates in the Chicago area and then in the Hampton

Roads area of Virginia. On one special job, he met his idol Benny Goodman who needed to borrow Lee's clarinet. He was especially proficient on the flute, saxophone, and piccolo, even composing and playing a song for his daughter at the moment of her birth. Additionally, he enjoyed playing with the Williamsburg Consort, a musical group composed of talented musicians from around the United States. He recently was featured in a book about the history of music sidemen in the Hampton Roads area.

Lee retired from Chicago Public Schools in 1977 when he and his family moved to Williamsburg, Virginia. In retirement, he was an active volunteer in Channel 38 Educational Television, the Kiwanis Club, and service projects sponsored by that organization. He also continued to play chess, a second passion, and to create chess programs and tournaments for children in the Williamsburg schools, often organizing classes at the library as well as teaching at Rawls Byrd Elementary School as a volunteer.

He is survived by his wife of over 30 years, Joyce VanTassel-Baska, his two sons, Jeff Baska of Terrell, Texas and Eric Baska, of Plano, Texas and one daughter, Ariel Baska of Centreville, Virginia.

Arrangements are being handled by Pierce Funeral Home in Manassas, Virginia. A memorial service will be held at the mortuary on Tuesday, March 1 at 5:00 pm. The family will receive friends from 4:00-5:00 pm. on that date. Interment will be in Arlington National Cemetery. A memorial service is planned for Williamsburg on a date to be determined. Written tributes may be made online at [Legacy.com](http://Legacy.com), and contributions in his name can be made to the scholarship fund for aspiring musicians at The American Federation of Musicians, 1501 Broadway, Suite 600, New York, NY 10036.

# Tribute Wall

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“ On behalf of so many within the Gifted Resource community of PWCS, we want to express our sincere condolences in the passing of your precious husband. Both of you have made such an impact in gifted education, and your work will remain a legacy for our students and future educators.

*You are in our thoughts and prayers.*

*Sincerely, Amber Bateman*

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**Amber Bateman** - March 29, 2013 at 02:00 PM