

Don Baker's inventions are in the Smithsonian

By: LaRAYNE WATTS

Donald W. Baker was born in Skagway, Alaska, April 12, 1932, to Ruth and Don Baker. The family returned to Oakville in 1933, and Don grew up in Rochester through 8th grade. He moved to Raymond and entered Raymond Junior High in 8th grade.

He graduated from Raymond High School in 1950 in a class of 52 students.

During his time at RHS Don was senior class president and was chosen as faculty speaker at graduation. He also played football, which he says that he enjoyed, but didn't excel at. He cites an activity that is related to school, but not actually part of it, "I joined Toastmasters International. A public speaking organization, which I learned a lot from and was later very valuable in my life," he says.

On the lighter side, Don has one very humorous memory from his football playing days. He said, "I remember Don Haerling continually losing his pants in the Raymond vs. Montesano second team football game in 1948."

He says that his favorite teachers were "Winfield Fountain for all that I learned in his public speaking class Gorge Askegaard for how well he taught math.

Don's brother Jim wanted to add, "In high school Don got poor grades because he was bored. He spent most of his time trying to make a car run on water."

After graduating from Raymond, don went to grays Harbor College for one quarter, then enlisted in the U. S. Air Force, where he got into radar electronics. He served as an electronics troubleshooter and later was assigned to a Boston-area to do research on an airborne Doppler radar project to see if low flying air-craft could be detected. While in the service, he spent four years in St. Louis, Denver, Alaska, and Boston. After his discharge, he went to the University Washington, graduating in 1960 with a degree in Electrical Engineering.

He took a part-time job in the University's bioengineering. In fact, he says, "I had never even heard of it." However, he learned fast and well. He worked there over 30 years and helped refine ultrasound into the most vital, cost effective diagnostic tool available today. Early ultrasound produced small, fuzzy black and white images. Don came up with the idea of adding Doppler technology to ultrasound to achieve high resolution, crystal clear, real time imaging that showed anatomical structures and delivered precise information about the inside of the body.

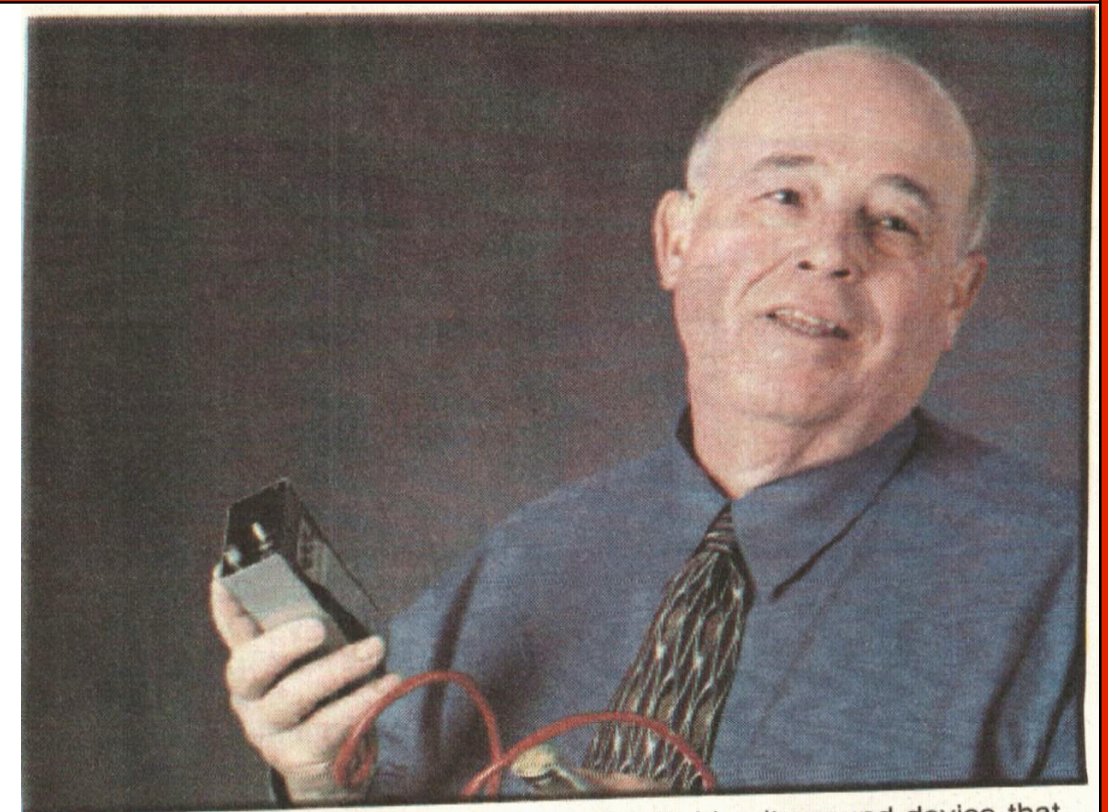
In the early 70's two officials from Advance Technology Laboratories, a small four person company in Bellevue, asked Don to consult on another project. Soon ATL began manufacturing Baker's Doppler machines in a garage in Bellevue. It was a slow start until the word got around. By the mid 1970's the number of fields interested in pulsed Doppler ultrasound grew like crazy. Although the technique was first developed for cardiology, it drew serious interest from obstetrics, vascular surgery, gastroenterology, and orthopedics, to name a few.

Don became a research professor at the UW and had a staff of 4 working in his lab. In 1979 he received a \$1.3 million grant from the National Institutes of Health--- an astonishing figure back then. Then when Reagan was elected President he shut down his lab in 1979 and joined ATL as a full time consultant. He spent the next five years traveling the world, lecturing and spreading the word about his ultrasound created.

Don married Joan Baker. They divorced in 1969. He remarried Joan in 1970. They have to children Donald M. and Tanya. Don and Joan have lived in Kirkland since 1973.

According to the UW Alumni Magazine, Don helped established the Seattle area as one of the world's pre-eminent spots for training in ultrasound. In fact, Don's wife Joan is one of the world's leaders in sonography training.

When asked what advice he would give to this year's seniors Don replied, "Persevere in your goals and beliefs; always work hard to do your best and keep learning."



RHS Alumnus Don Baker, 1950 (shown with his ultrasound device that will be displayed in the Smithsonian.)