



Lisa's Pool & Patio Blog

By [Lisa Hallett Taylor](#), About.com Guide

Who Was Virginia Graeme Baker?

Thursday February 14, 2008

The name attached to a [safety act incorporated in a comprehensive energy bill](#)¹ (H.R. 6) approved by Congress in December 2007 is an old-fashioned and dignified name. I wondered if a well-educated socialite had some sort of involvement in a pool or spa accident. Was she one of those people who simmered a bit too long in the hot tub and drifted off into a steaming deep slumber?

My curiosity led me to a search, where I came upon a [website](#)² that rattled my stomach. There was a picture of a 7-year-old girl -- a vibrant, natural beauty who looked around the age of my own daughter. *She* -- the sweet-faced, smiling child in the photo -- was Virginia Graeme Baker. A twin sister and the youngest of five daughters born to Nancy and James Baker IV, son of former Secretary of State James Baker III. A classmate, a friend, a neighbor, a student, a good swimmer and someone who had lots of love, support and potential on her side.



What happened?

All five girls had joined their mother for a mid-afternoon graduation party at a friend's house in June 2002. Events happened quickly. A sister of Graeme (that's what they called her) pulled Nancy to the hot tub, where Graeme was sprawled at the bottom. Nancy jumped in, but she was no match against the force of the drain's suction. Two men took over and broke the drain in order to release Graeme's body from the suction. Graeme was rushed to a hospital but was dead on arrival.

During her profound grieving, Nancy Baker consulted with her father-in-law on the tragedy and decided to make pool and spa safety -- particularly [anti-entrapment drain covers](#)³-- her mission. More than three years of dedication and activism resulted in the approval of the [Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act](#)⁴.

One rarely "gets over" the death of a loved one, especially if it's a premature death. While Nancy is still haunted by the image of Graeme's listless body, she continues on. Driven by Graeme's once-contagious spirit, Nancy hopes to prevent others from ever having to experience the horrors of that day and its everlasting outcome.

Photo Courtesy of the Baker family