Van Kent Scheppach, third and last child of Gertrude Martha Scheppach and Arthur Gottlieb Scheppach, was born at Yale Hospital of the Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut on December 18, 1942. He was preceded in death by his parents and two brothers, Sheldon and Douglas. His maternal grandparents were Gertrude Martha Howe and Christopher Trombler Howe, both also from Madison, Connecticut where Van spent his childhood at their estate home with his family.

Van died in March 18, 2020, of osteomyelitis, a fatal spinal bacterial disease, at the age of 77 years. He was currently married to Ellen Joyce Scheppach whom he’d graduated with at Gallaudet College some 52 years ago. They were married February 7, 2009 and had lived in Washington State since.

Van have two children, Amberly Judy Scheppach-Turczyn and Andrew Howe Scheppach from a previous marriage. He also has four grandchildren, Max, Morgan, Blake and Abigail.

Van attended American School for the Deaf in West Hartford, Connecticut. He graduated high school in 1962 and went on to Gallaudet College, now Gallaudet University, in Washington, D.C., having graduated there in 1967 with a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education. He later received his Master of Vocational Rehabilitation and Counselling from University of Tennessee (1974). In 1978, he obtained his second Master’s degree in Administration having won his National Leadership scholarship at the California State University, Northridge, CA.

Van had been a teacher of the Deaf for 19 years at all three state schools for the Deaf in Idaho, Colorado and Arkansas. In the interim, he was Executive Director of Center on Deafness in Denver, CO. Having departed from Deaf Education, he began working with Sprint Relay as Account Manager in California, Oregon and Washington State, totaling 15 years. He retired in June 2009.

Van had a life-long love of football. He played football in high school and college, as well, coached high school football and basketball. He also loved bowling, which he’d kept at for 29 years. He was elected into National Deaf Bowling Leadership Hall of Fame in 2000 as leadership president and editor serving National Deaf Bowling Association (NDBA). He
retired from bowling with 280 as the highest score for a deaf bowler in any of ABC National tournaments at the time. Had he managed one more ‘x’ to score in his frame of x’s, he’d have captured or been awarded a diamond on an ABC (American Bowling Championship) Logo Ring “300”.

Of his other passions, these are fishing, playing pokers and creating stained-glass piecework. His stained-glass artworks could be found on Tiffany lampshades, window or door-side panels, and Christmas ornaments which he is able to pass on to family members and friends.

Van had first been hooked into professional football when he’d go to the games at Yale Bowl with his father. Again, Yale Bowl is part of the Yale University facilities, where his banker father had graduated from. As a teenager, he would also play softball with hearing friends. When he was a bit older, he began work as a stock boy and a delivery boy for a local drugstore during the summers he’d be home from school and later from college.

Van’s childhood memories contained happy days at home where his father would coax his brother, Douglas, and him into target-shooting with BB guns to earn rewards. They could hit on woodchucks that got into his grandfather’s beloved vegetable gardens.

Father would allow neighboring cows to graze on their 60 acres property. Van felt his life was rich and full.

His grandfather also happened to have a rabbit pen which was how Van and Doug learned about the ‘bird n’ bees’ song on how rapidly rabbits multiply. In the barn was his Grandfather’s old 1940 Dodge. Doug would patter around and make the engine come alive so they could drive around on a parcel of land with an apple orchard, picking apples for apple cider.

Living three miles west of the Atlantic Ocean, the brothers would bike out to Long Island shores, swim and then bike back to stop in town midway for milkshakes. These were their happy days!

Ellen and Van, together with another couple, Connie and Mike Gough, enacted a state-wide Deaf seniors’ nonprofit organization, Washington State Deaf Senior Citizens. It is alive and well with over 200 active members. Ellen, Van and Connie ran a Deaf Seniors of America 15th biennial national conference earlier in September 2019 with close to 1000 in attendance. Van started dreaming of setting up a program for lonely deaf seniors in isolation and away from their circles of friends and family. He aspires to have a project called Van’s Friends run by deaf volunteers. The Deaf volunteers fully fluent in ASL can call the seniors up by videophone and let them know they are not forgotten.

At the Deaf Seniors of America’s banquet, Van won an award, “Ralph White Extra Mile Award”, for his endearing work and aspirations. Upon learning of his terminal illness, Van
was deeply saddened by the feeling that his work would not be finished. His mentor, Karen Atwood, and his wife, Ellen Scheppach, have avowed to carry on with his project.

As you can see that Van was a storyteller as his life was full and rich with experiences and journeys meeting people and students along the way. He was always telling stories and sharing all the knowledge he had built up in his lifetime.

At this time due to the coronavirus crisis, a Celebration of his life will be announced when the pandemic is over. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to “Van’s Friends” project in care of WSDSC, PO Box 1472, Vancouver, WA 98668. You can make your check payable to WSDSC with a memo to Van's Friends.