

THE CHORISTER

William Rowe “Bill” Van Ark (FCAS 1982)

1945-2018

Bill Van Ark of Wyoming, Michigan, lost a long battle with Parkinson’s disease on October 7, 2018. His wife and daughter were with him. He was born on November 11, 1945, in Chicago, the oldest of eight children born to William Jury and Esther (Van Houten) Van Ark. He was raised in Holland, Michigan, and graduated from Holland High School in 1963.

The year 1968 was a pivotal one for the young Van Ark as he graduated from Grand Valley State University, joined the Coast Guard (serving until 1973) and, most importantly, married Judy Palmer on June 22. The couple raised a son and a daughter together.

After earning a master’s in actuarial science from the University of Michigan in 1975, his actuarial career began in earnest and included posts at Sentry Insurance in Stevens Point, Wisconsin; Argonaut Insurance in Palo Alto; National Council on Compensation Insurance in New York City and Saint Louis; Watson Wyatt and Towers Perrin in Southfield, Michigan; and Michigan Professional Insurance Exchange in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Van Ark loved reading, games and travel, but his greatest joys were family and music. He and his siblings began singing as children at Grace Episcopal Church in Holland. Years later, calling themselves “The Ark-Tet,” the siblings joined their mother and her siblings, and other family members in the “Van Arks and Friends” family concerts at Grace Episcopal. He sang with church choirs everywhere he lived, most recently with the Grand Rapids Symphony Chorus, Grace Episcopal Grand Rapids choir and the Kentwood Seniors Chorale. He sang in Carnegie Hall and cathedrals across Europe with the Grand Rapids Symphony Chorus.

He is survived by his wife; mother; children, Emily (Todd) Stefanik and Billy (Nikki Ebright) Van Ark; grandchildren, Katrina and Liam Stefanik; brothers, Charles (Suzanne), Robert (Nancy) and James Van Ark; sisters, Dawn and Laurie Van Ark, Velma Neau, and Sally Gunn; mother-in-law, Lorraine (Jaarda) Palmer; brother-in-law, John Palmer; sisters-in-law, Jerri (Doug) MacPherson, Julie (Robert) Gagnon and Jean Palmer. Memorial donations may be directed to scholarships at Grand Valley University (<https://www.gvsu.edu/giving/majorpriorities.htm>) or the charity of your choice.