



Harl Willen "Van" VanDerHeck was born in San Antonio, Texas, on August 7, 1944, to Willen Wil and Elizabeth Ferrell VanDerHeck. He graduated from Highlands High School and attended San Antonio College. He enlisted in the Air Force and was stationed in Puerto Rico, where he joined the Flying Club and entered into what would become his lifetime passion and career, aviation. As a commercially rated pilot he considered himself one of the fortunate few who make their living doing what they love. He managed Gunn Air Charter before becoming the owner and operator of Advantage Air Charter. Whether teaching others to fly, helping to save lives flying air ambulance or organ transplants, flying hordes of Aggies to follow their beloved team, or flying passengers for business or pleasure, he exercised his need to be in the sky while serving others.

His children were the light of his life and that love was evident to anyone who knew him. In 1992, he met Nancy Sugarek and the two of them began a twenty-eight year adventure of devotion and togetherness that included bountiful love, laughter, faith, family, friends, travel, and service. As the joy of grandchildren came into their lives, those lights of life expanded even further.

An avid boater, he loved being on the water. Whether delighting passengers as he zipped along the water on Lake LBJ in his boat or letting a captain handle navigation on multiple cruises with Nancy, being on or near the water made him happy. He loved classic cars and relished collecting them. One look at an old car and he could immediately identify the year, make, and model. His pride and joys were his El Caminos and the classic Mustang that had been his son's car.

Van was a fiercely loyal friend. People were important to him and he valued maintaining those friendships. Meeting a person once, they became his friend for life and he treated them as such. A kind and cheerful man with a servant's heart, he loved helping and entertaining others. He served as an Elder at Covenant Presbyterian Church where he also served by delivering Meals on Wheels. His Christian faith and optimism sustained him. Even faced with health issues that

would be daunting to others, he treated each day as a gift and was determined to live life to the fullest until, as he would say it, “The Man Upstairs” was ready to call him. That call came on September 11, 2020, when our beloved pilot gained his heavenly wings.

He was preceded in death by his parents Willen and Elizabeth VanDerHeck and his son Eric Willen VanDerHeck. He is survived by his sweetheart, Nancy Sugarek, his children Amber (Mark) VanDerHeck Cox, Heath (Monica) VanDerHeck, and Harl (Theresa) VanDerHeck, plus seven grandchildren: Garrett Cox; Austin, Collin, Riley, and Luke VanDerHeck; John and Paul Cordova; and a host of friends and family.

A graveside service will be held through Funeral Caring, Inc. on Friday September 18, at 2:00 pm in Mission Park Cemetery. With appropriate masks and social distancing, all are invited to attend. The service will be live streamed through www.facebook.com/Covenant.satx/live A Celebration of Life Service will be held at a later date when the current public health situation allows.

