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Dear Carol,

I was so saddened to hear that Vern passed away. He was a wonderful person, great friend, and very respected colleague. I first met Vern in 1970, when I was working for IBM in Chicago, and my customers, Northern Trust Bank and US Steel, were using IMS. I came to Los Angeles California to attend a class that Vern and the several of the other the IMS developers were teaching. Vern came down from Palo Alto to teach the course. I was amazed way back then of his knowledge and ability to explain IMS and how it worked to his students. He had quiet a reputation, even back then.

In 1977 when the STL lab opened and IMS was transferred there, I moved to California permanently, and came to know Vern even better, as we worked together to improve IMS and make it one of IBM's most successful software products. I worked mainly in the data communications area and although Vern was an expert on the entire product, he worked manly in the data base area. But we bumped into each other almost daily, and on many occasions, I had the opportunity to attend presentations that Vern gave, discuss an issue with him, or on occasion he would attend one of our department meetings. Vern was a regular at the STL cafeteria too, as he preferred to eat his lunch with a group of co-workers and talk about IMS, than go out to some noisy restaurant. I always enjoyed listening to Vern tell us the state and direction of the business. I always felt lucky to work on the same product with someone as distinguished as Vern.

One of the most memorable events I remember concerning Vern is when Lou Gerstner, IBM CEO and president, retired in 2002 and came to STL and some of the other laboratories and plant sites to say good-by. He came into the auditorium at STL and sat down on a stool up front and his 'first words were': Is Vern here? Vern stood up in the back and said Yes! That's how high up in the corporation Vern's reputation went.

I will always remember Vern and be thankful to him as a friend, mentor, and roll model. May God bless him and his family, and watch over us all until we all meet again in heaven.

Sincerely,
Mark Ziebarth