

Reflections on Ralph

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A Tribute to Retiring 3Com Executive Ralph Godfrey

It is an absolute privilege to be honoring one of the most unique and respected individuals ever to have contributed his talents to 3Com. To help us create this portrait of Ralph Godfrey, we sought to compile specific impressions of and anecdotes about him as a person and as a professional. Although there was not enough time to speak with all those who wished to share their favorite stories about Ralph, those with whom we did speak helped us to create what we hope is an affectionate, humorous, accurate *and* thorough picture of a man who has had such great influence on all our lives. Thank you to all those that contributed their time and thoughts to this endeavor, including Eric Benhamou, Betsy McClain, Chris Paisely, Miranda Joseph, Sharon Studer, Bridget McNeil, Sue Bruening, Ellen Michaels, Libby Demeo, Alan Kessler, Carol McKenna, Janice Roberts, Oscar Anzola, and, of course, his wife Lynda.

Ralph – The Long View

Ralph Godfrey brought his professional savvy coupled with a passionate personality to the many roles he has held here during the past decade: most notably, head of our channels operations, vice president of America Sales, and, most recently, senior vice president of our worldwide e-commerce business. This is a man who, in the minds of those he has reported to, those who have reported to him, and those with whom he has worked side by side, is a great mentor. He is a professional who inspires progressive

thinking, loyalty, and enthusiasm and someone who consistently places his work and 3Com's well being above office politics, above self-seeking.

To Retire or not to Retire?

It is with both gratitude and reluctance, then, that we relinquish Ralph Godfrey and send him back, even if belatedly, to his retirement. In actuality, Ralph was supposed to retire two and half years ago; but when Eric Benhamou presented him with yet another challenge – that of building the infrastructure of 3Com's e-business operations – Ralph couldn't, wouldn't leave – thank goodness. However, as he said in his retirement notice: **"I agreed to an 18 month return which has now stretched to 48 months. I realize this could go on forever; there are always more interesting projects on the horizon."**

There was Life Before 3Com

Prior to joining 3Com in 1990, Ralph had already established an outstanding career as a salesman and manager. After putting himself through college and receiving his bachelors and masters degrees in electrical engineering from the University of Alabama, Ralph worked for Hewlett Packard for more than 20 years in a variety of sales management positions; his final one as national sales manager of business systems. While the company's southeast district manager, he and his family – wife Lynda and two daughters Traci and Heather – lived in several major cities, including Houston and then Dallas where his daughters attended high school. Between his tenures at Hewlett Packard and 3Com, Ralph served as vice president of sales for Convergent Technology until Unisys Corporation purchased the firm, at which time he became president of sales and marketing for a Unisys division.

Becoming a 3Com "Big Wig"

In 1990, 3Com was lucky enough to have Ralph join our executive team, where he has held various positions, including VP and SVP of America Sales, as well as his final (we think) full-time position here as senior vice president of e-commerce. Approximately eight months after Ralph joined the company, he was a key player as a part of the

Executive Committee in the decision to remove 3Com from the 3+Open network operating systems business and to re-focus the company on building its NIC, hub, and switch business. Though a difficult and unnerving choice to make then, time has proven the decision to be more than sound, and Ralph retires with the knowledge that, in great part, due to his efforts, we remain on the cutting edge of computer networking. As noted by all his colleagues, and specifically Libby Demeo who heads up 3Com's Web operations; **“One of Ralph’s talents is that he has an uncanny ability to know and focus on what’s right for the company. He won’t necessarily take the easiest path, but the right one for the long-term.”**

The Ralph Godfrey Room

Although Ralph has done a phenomenal job creating a successful infrastructure for our e-commerce division, the mainstay of his tenure has been leading America Sales and our channels operations. He is responsible for building the America sales force that 3Com has today and, as noted, for successfully re-directing it four years ago when he returned from retirement. In addition, he is responsible for boosting 3Com's business by unifying our Canadian operations and giving Canada its own country status; prior to that it was treated as the 51st state of the Union. Furthermore, his contributions to 3Com's Latin America Sales efforts should in no way be underestimated, and the resultant success in that area has been extremely important to Ralph. Oscar Anzola, who was at one time Mexico's country manager, confirms that **“Ralph did an unparalleled job of nurturing the division through often dramatic crises – such as the major devaluation of Mexico’s currency several years ago – to lift the division up to the world-class level it enjoys today.”**

In fact, in recognition of all the support and attention Ralph gave the Latin America effort, when the division switched offices in Miami last December, Oscar named the new, larger conference room “The Ralph Godfrey” room.

The Godfrey Effect

When Ralph focused on bolstering the channel business, our channels organization flourished, outpacing all others in the industry. In fact, under Ralph's leadership, 3Com consistently won the VAR Business "Best Channels Company" award. "**His influence is quite obvious,**" says Bridget McNeil, who has known and worked with Ralph over the past 10 years: "**In general, when Ralph ran channels, we'd win "Best Channels"; when he wasn't running it, we wouldn't win.**"

3Com further benefited from Ralph's prior experience in sales management because, as past colleague of America Sales Alan Kessler states, "**You couldn't fool Ralph – he'd 'been there, done that.' So if something came out of left field, like a special deal a VAR was offering, Ralph had seen the angle before and knew automatically if it was viable or not.**"

The Anal Engineer!

Ralph Godfrey is an electrical engineer by training, but an extraordinary salesman and manager by instinct and experience, which explains, in part, why he is such an intriguing person. But given his training, then, what is it that makes him such an outstanding leader; that enables him to inspire such loyalty in the people he works with and those to whom he sells? First, by the time that Ralph arrived at 3Com, he had already garnered a refined knowledge of the selling business. As Eric Benhamou notes, "**Ralph has always been a great source of stability for us, and is able to navigate away from really high-risk areas of the sales profession. For instance, he knows how quickly you can put a damper in your sales if your compensation system is skewed, if you have a dysfunctional organization, or if you antagonize your retailers or your internal sales force. Ralph has a very good sense of what will work and what will not work. He's savvy about surrounding himself with good advisors, getting the best out of them, and creating a solid consensus.**"

Meanwhile, the engineer side of Ralph also contributed greatly to his sales management success at 3Com. He has extremely strong analytical skills. Unlike a typically verbose salesperson, Ralph will write more – write strategies, create diagrams and pictures – to provide a solid foundation for a game plan or to reveal areas of faulty planning. He likes systems and the intricate inner workings of a large organization. He is, indeed, incredibly organized, and some would say his engineering mentality manifests in an amazing meticulousness, or “anal quality” as his family and close colleagues teasingly suggest. But that same quality also drives him to be thorough.

An Honest Salesman?

Furthering his status as a sales management anomaly, Ralph is an honest person and expects those with whom he works and does business to live up to the same standard. Because he never has any hidden agenda, Ralph expects that of others as well, and one of the only things that ever sets his temper truly afire is when someone is anything less than honest with him. As Betsy McClain admitted, prior to coming to 3Com to work as national account manager for Ralph nine years ago, she thought that she had worked for some pretty classy sales managers. But Ralph, she soon learned, would raise the bar far above anyone she had ever worked with. To her, he was the first sales executive with first-class integrity. **“He treated everyone fairly. Even when a partner would offer him a deal in exchange for certain favoritism efforts on his part, Ralph would pass. He’d stick to treating everyone the same.”**

So Ralph is an engineer by training and a rigorously honest person, but these qualities do not add up to a traditional definition of a successful *salesperson*. But in truth, Ralph is a natural. **“He is clearly a salesman in that he possesses the mentality of selling when he talks to you,”** says Sharon Studer, who has worked closely with Ralph over the past year as VP of e-Markets. **“But contrary to most peoples’ impressions of what makes a good salesperson, Ralph listens more and talks less.”** Moreover, he loves and is totally focused on what he does and sells, thereby, in a seemingly effortless way, interests and excites customers, colleagues, or staff members. **“He sells you not just a product but also on an idea – the idea of 3Com.”**

An Eye for a Challenge

But what is it about 3Com that Ralph enjoys so much? Both past and present colleagues and family members agree: Ralph is a lifelong learner and he loves a challenge and to be on the edge, whether that is racing along on his mountain bike, coursing down a beachside street in his Harley, or rock climbing or canyoneering during team-building trips with the Executive Committee. He's a skilled, competitive athlete who thrives on physical challenges, which translates as well into his love of a business challenge. Ralph saw the opportunity to fulfill his need for challenges by working on the cutting edge of the revolutionary changes occurring in business. This is, in part, responsible for what enticed Ralph to 3Com in the first place and what delayed his return to retirement in the second. Smart thinking on the part of our president and CEO, who knew that if he could give Ralph another challenge, 3Com could eke out some extra time from him.

Boys and their Toys

Ralph has a lust for life; he thrives on and finds a release in playing hard and fast, and that enthusiasm, without a doubt, bleeds over into his work. Staff and colleagues remember fondly 15-minute lunches in the cafeteria with Ralph that spontaneously turned into engaging, three-hour lunches of swapping stories, anecdotes and ideas. He can enjoy what is right in front of him, as his longtime administrator Sue Bruening recalls, and that enjoyment is infectious. Once, before she and Ralph joined 3Com, he had taken a trip to Alabama to visit his brother. A zealous fan of fast, high-end cars, Ralph could not resist an impromptu purchase of a 1966 Pontiac GTO "muscle car" – to his wife's chagrin. He transported the car from Alabama to California and treated all the members of his staff who were interested in rides around the parking lot in his new toy. Sue remembers all the men in the office standing in line like eager boys at an amusement park waiting for Ralph to take them around in circles, burning rubber on the company parking lot.

Among all the cars that Ralph has collected over the years — his favorites have been Corvettes; more often than not he has one in his garage (even though he might drive a

more sensible car to work, depending on the weather, such as his BMW 840i or Toyota truck). And among the Corvettes, his all-time favorite is a '61 silver convertible, which he owned twice in his life – he eventually bought it back from the guy to whom he sold it.

Ralph's Staff Relations

Along with being an enthusiastic manager with a knack for exciting his team and colleagues about what he wants to accomplish, Ralph is also a hands-off one that empowers his people to make decisions. In every sales management position, Ralph developed a reputation for nurturing and believing in his team, giving people their full share of responsibility and the room to get the job done. He expects results and holds people appropriately accountable; but because his staff always knows where they stand with Ralph, they trust him and know they can approach him if they need help. Though an introverted, often quiet man, Ralph is a terrific communicator who, as a general rule, communicates his enthusiasm – and his displeasure – in the most appropriate manner. If he has something nice to say to someone, he says it in a group setting; if he has something negative to say, he does it behind closed doors.

Although Ralph's insight is highly effective in either formal or informal meetings, he is probably at his best in one-on-one or at least in more intimate group settings, where he tends to reveal more of himself. Having worked with Ralph over the past seven years in Sales finance and marketing, Carol McKenna confirms that; **"He's very good in an intimate group, which enables him to form very deep relationships with people. He creates a huge bond with you, whether it's customers, his direct management chain, whether it's me who was not in his direct management chain but who was managing for him or whether it's the field sales force itself. Building those bonds by communicating well and being supportive is probably his strongest sales skill."**

If you built a strong relationship with Ralph, he will not only provide you with enough rope to get the job done (he'd also be willing to hang you with it if you didn't get it done!), but he will also go to great lengths to support you when you need his help. Betsy expands on this: **"Ralph loves to give people responsibility and let them run with it**

but he's not afraid to get his hands dirty and help out if you're having trouble. Nor is he afraid to send you back and tell you to start over again if you're not doing it right. His preferred management style is to have good people around who can carry the ball. And though he easily grasps details and can jump into a project at any level, he is anything but a micromanager."

Indeed Ralph can evaluate each detail to see how the overall system is integrated and how, if you make a change in one area, it will affect another. During the time when the Executive Committee decided to re-focus the company toward NICs, hubs, and switches, the Gulf War was underway, missiles were flying over Israel, jobs were scarce in Silicon Valley, and Ralph was part of a team whose strategic decision – dubbed The Renaissance Plan – resulted in layoffs within 3Com. However painful the decision was to make because individuals would be negatively affected, the overall good of the company was at the core of all Ralph's business decisions and the result speaks for itself. When Ralph joined in 1990, 3Com was a \$400 million company with 1,000 employees. A year after the Renaissance Plan was underway, 3Com began acquiring companies – big firms with huge sales forces that Ralph, as VP of sales, was responsible for integrating. (Ironically senior sales managers from these other companies went M.I.A, after the acquisitions – Ralph, you might want to tell us what you did with them!) For several years, Ralph was intensely involved in incorporating new sales people and developing compensation plans and processes. By the time we merged with US Robotics in 1997, we were a \$3 billion company with nearly 6,000 employees.

Past colleague Chris Paisley sums up Ralph's relations with staff and colleagues quite nicely. **"Whenever I'd ask people who they really liked at 3Com and who they really respected, often those two questions elicited two different answers. But Ralph was always the answer to both. That's not always easy in the workplace because you have to make some tough decisions from time to time that go against the grain of what others would desire or that might personally impact people adversely. But he always acted with great affability and that inspired in people respect."**

And Now to the Real Ralph...

Everyone who knows Ralph well also knows three equally endearing, if perhaps less expected, quirks unique to him.

1. The Joker and the Cross Dresser

Though not a rowdy practical joker, Ralph enjoys a good, humorous story. As Chris Paisley recalls: **“His sense of humor was generally at the fore of a conversation, even if he wasn’t cracking jokes. Ralph could look at a situation and often see the humor in it when others couldn’t, and when he was telling a story, that was when he was most open and sharing and engaging. His stories often made fun of himself, yet the times that he did make fun of others, he always did so in a lighthearted way that was never offensive.”**

Ralph seems to never tire, for instance, of telling of a trip he and 3Com’s Executive Committee once took to Israel. **“An irrepressible shutterbug,”** according to past colleague, Alan Kessler, Ralph always had a camera ready to capture priceless moments. While in Israel, the Executive Committee members were about to ride horses into Galilee. **“At that point,”** says Alan, **“I weighed 341 pounds. I remember Ralph poised to take a picture so when I got on the horse, he could capture the expression on the horse’s face.”** Time and again, Ralph leaves everyone in stitches as he relays how the hapless horse’s eyes bulged to about twice their normal size as Alan mounted it.

Ralph and Alan have that kind of camaraderie where they both can laugh at themselves. Especially in internal sales kickoff meetings, where tensions were often high between the channels sales group, which Ralph usually ran, and the enterprise sales group, which Alan often helmed. The two would try to both entertain and motivate their staff by performing outrageous skits designed by Ellen Michaels Presents: from dressing up in grass skirts or wooden shoes to donning “life-size,” ballooned head-to-toe sumo wrestler costumes and wrestling in front of the staff. Alan laughs recalling how Ralph’s face was turning all different hues of purple as Ralph tried to get Alan off of him.

Even though Ralph enjoys a good belly laugh, it was a bit hard to elicit one from him, but not for want of trying, as Betsy McClain confesses. “**Having really grown to care deeply for and respect Ralph over the years, I loved to make him laugh because it was such a joyful, endearing laugh that infected everybody. But it wasn’t always easy because every now and then, that Southern reserve would kick in.**”

2. Mount St. Helen

Ralph’s second endearing and unique trait is that, whenever he gets mad, he has a considerate way of broadcasting the storm brewing before it blows. First, his ears turn bright red and then his face. Those who’ve witnessed the physical warning and then the storm recall that if you saw those signs, you either knew to get out of the way or stay, hold on tight, and take it. “**Though a reserved Southern gentlemen by everyone’s account,**” says Betsy, “**Ralph is incredibly passionate, which manifests not only in his enthusiasm for his work, family and play, but also in a fiery temper that is slow to boil – but when it does, watch out. At an earlier roast done of Ralph with the Executive Committee, I said that working for him was like working in the shadow of Mount St. Helen’s – you never knew when the top was going to blow. His explosions, though, are some of the fondest memories I have. I’d see his ears turn red and then his face. Then I’d run down the hallway warning people, ‘take cover, take cover, he’s going to blow!’ That’s just Ralph. He’s passionate and when you push him to that point, man he is going to explode. But again, it’s because he cares so much and it almost always was when someone had been dishonest about something or had not acted in the best interest of 3Com.**”

Most often, Ralph “blow ups” at a situation rather than a person, but occasionally, individuals were on the receiving end of the storm. There was the time recently, Betsy recalls, when Sue Bruening and she witnessed the integration of his passion and sense of humor. From Betsy’s cubicle, they overheard Ralph on the phone in his office yelling at a sales rep that had lied to him about his competition. Ralph was furious and he hung up on the rep, who immediately called him back. Ralph picked up the phone and continued to yell. Sue at one point suggested to Betsy, “**Well, maybe you ought to go on in**

there,” to which Betsy replied, “**Are you nuts!**” At the tail end of the conversation Ralph yelled, “**And I will never buy another product from your company again!**” Then he slammed down the phone and added, “**...in the 30 days I have left at 3Com.**”

3. “*I was just resting my eyes*”

Ralph’s been known to periodically and briefly nod off in meetings – of course only in *boring* internal meetings. Apparently Ralph does not sleep that much, which most likely accounts for his afternoon drowsiness. He does lead a well-rounded life, but a busy one by any standard. Ralph is devoted to his work emotionally *and* in terms of schedule; generally in by 8:30 a.m. and out no earlier than 6 p.m. or whenever the work is done. Therefore, by the time the afternoons roll in, his eyes have been known to roll shut. “**I’d watch him in meetings and you actually think he’s napping,**” says Betsy. “**His eyes would be closed and you would think ‘this man is sleeping through the meeting. Good God, I’m going to have to carry the whole thing myself.’** Then he’d open his eyes, start talking and get right to the heart of the matter. **Ralph has an incredibly sharp brain that operates on a different level than most people. He can cut to the chase – projects that we’d worked on for months, that we struggled to tell him where we’d need to get to, he’d nail in lightning speed. He’s that quick and his brain that strategic.**”

The fact that Ralph nodded off periodically doesn’t preclude him from poking fun at others’ dozing tendencies. Often his London-based colleague in e-commerce, Sharon Studer, flew to California to meet up with Ralph and they usually had dinner together her first night in town – which, because of the time zone difference, makes it early in the morning for her in UK time. One time she *almost* fell asleep, but insists that she did not. However, Ralph never ceases to find the joy in teasing her about it. Really, in the same breath he pokes fun at her, he is indirectly poking fun at himself, which is a secret of his lighthearted, endearing sense of humor.

Affairs of the Heart

Ralph is clearly devoted to his family and his hobbies; “**Ralph has two weaknesses,**” says wife Lynda, “**cars and his daughters. And as much as people see that he’s dedicated to his work, he is really tenfold more dedicated to his family.**” Ralph’s also a weekend mountain biker, motorcyclist and a unicyclist (!) (he owns two). He loves to play golf; he is a handyman around his house and his daughters’ homes; and he is an avid reader of fiction and thrillers (always has a paperback going) that he likes to escape into before falling asleep or when he’s on an airplane. In fact, Ralph keeps a list of the hundreds of books he’s read because he does not want to buy one only to recall in the third chapter that he’s read it before.

Ralph also sees absolutely every movie that is released, even if Melanie Griffith is in it and especially if it features Catherine Zeta-Jones (who is rumored to be naming her son “Ralph,” but will not disclose any more information) or Meg Ryan. In fact, though he prefers action adventures, such as *Mission Impossible*, he doesn’t discriminate and will see *Bridges of Madison County* or even a Woody Allen film (although he is not a fan of Woody’s!) if the moment calls for it. Most recently, he enjoyed the Julia Roberts’ picture *Erin Brokovich* (not just because of her outfits, we were assured) and the supernatural thriller, *The Sixth Sense*. If Ralph sees three movies in one weekend, which has been known to happen, it is a sure bet that the previous week was a particularly stressful one. In fact, love of cars, mountain biking, and motorcycling, all provide Ralph with a form of release from tension – just as movies and reading do.

“Whoa – we must be in Rio.”

Ralph can also be counted on to be graceful under pressure, and he’s been under a lot of it. But one moment that was probably not too hard to stomach, though which required a good bit of grace on his part, was when his brand new staff member at the time, Bridget McNeil, who then was running Latin America Sales, brought him to Brazil for a tradeshow and meetings. Ever considerate, Bridget treated him to a Rio de Janeiro review, which included dinner and a cabaret-type show. “**We were eating dinner right**

in front of the stage and the first set of dancers came out dressed in elaborate Brazilian costumes – but were topless,” says Bridget. “The scene wasn’t that different from what you saw on an everyday beach in Rio, but in the United States, it would be considered quite risqué. There I sat with my new boss, not four feet from those women, on his second day in South America.” Though she was ready to collapse in embarrassment, Ralph let slip one of his understated responses that assuaged what could have turned into a paralyzingly awkward situation: **“Whoa – we must be in Rio.”**

Ralph’s Harem...

Ralph has very valued relationships with women in both his personal and professional life. In the same way he wants the world to be open to his daughters Traci and Heather and has instilled in them that they are capable of doing whatever they set their minds to, Ralph is one of the biggest promoters of women in the company. Lynda and several colleagues further note that Ralph was the first person in Hewlett Packard history to hire a woman sales rep – in the heart of the South, no less.

Lynda is convinced that one of the reasons Ralph has had such esteemed relationships with female colleagues is that he possesses the quality of being a universal father figure – something that he comes by honestly from raising his two daughters with such respect and care. Having consulted with so many of the women that Ralph has worked closely with over the years, it’s clear that you couldn’t ask for a better mentor or a better role model. **“Not to the disadvantage of any man (Ralph’s been a mentor to nearly 50 men and women both during the past decade), but Ralph has always been incredibly supportive of the women in his organization,”** says Betsy. **“There were six senior-level women in his department at one time that all had stay-at-home husbands. That must have been the best time for his wife because when she went to meetings anywhere, she got to hang out with all guys!”**

Though Ralph promotes women to senior-level positions and gives them the same opportunities as men, he always remains a chivalrous Southern gentlemen, as Janice

Roberts recalls: “**He’s the sort of man who, when traveling with a woman on business, will carry her bag; courteously, respectfully and professionally, without a trace of condescension.**”

The Surprise Factor

Ralph is clearly a complex human being, and he knows and appreciates that he can surprise people who stereotype him. Carol McKenna remembers how much he enjoyed letting slip in the course of a casual work-related conversation, “**Oh, and when I was riding my Harley this weekend...**” – just to see the look of astonishment on someone’s face who might not have known him that well. Because Ralph can be so reserved, it can take time to truly get a sense of who he is. But slowly and surely, when he finally lets you in, you’re glad you got there. “**When I first met Ralph, my first day on the job at 3Com, it was a bit frightening for me – here was this big cheese, VP of Sales, and I never would have imagined that he would become someone that I consider to be one of my best friends,**” says Betsy. But again, that’s Ralph, a man full of surprises.

Old Dog – New Tricks

After coming out of retirement the first time (and hopefully, for him, the last time) to help re-direct Sales, he stayed on to accept another challenge. This is simply testimony to the fact that he is, indeed, a lifelong learner with a passion for trying new things. Ralph could have easily gone back into retirement 30 months ago, having more than earned the right to appreciate all that he had contributed throughout his career and to us, specifically. But as we struggled for several years to Web enable the company without the success we had hoped for, Eric Benhamou asked Ralph to pick up the reigns and take over; consistently loyal, he, of course, stayed on.

At first blush, Ralph appears to be a traditionalist – after all, he’s a man who loves Harleys, ‘Vettes, and pizza – yet these traits belie an agile mind capable of very progressive thinking. Some who did not yet know him as he was about to take over e-commerce, for example, were not convinced that a man with nearly four decades of

traditional sales management experience could take on such a “hot new area.” One of the main objectives is to sell direct over the Web, which is “**completely opposite to what he’d been doing previously for 3Com,**” notes Miranda Joseph, Ralph’s e-commerce business development manager. Moreover, to create and maintain an e-commerce infrastructure requires the seamless integration of many highly technical IT systems. “**What did he know about working with GIS/IT and putting the infrastructure in place – from scratch? He’d have to make decisions regarding commerce engines, servers, security software, trade and tariffs, data privacy, Web dynamic content, Web personalization, marketing automation software – and not just for the USA markets but for Europe and Asia, as well.**”

What Miranda came to realize after working with Ralph is precisely what his previous colleagues already know and appreciate: Ralph’s a tireless, enthusiastic student, and if he’s challenged, he’s going to come out on top, and bring his team with him. Miranda echoes her predecessors when she admits: “**How wrong I was. He might not have known very much about e-commerce in the beginning, but how quickly he picked it up! He has a wonderful ability to dig deep and ask pertinent questions that teach him about each particular issue. He then puts together what needs to be done to accomplish a specific goal.**”

Watching Ralph achieve a unified sense of direction among his team further inspired Miranda and her colleagues. In either a one-to-one or formal meeting environment, “**Ralph completely engages you and makes you want to work harder to meet the shared goal; not just because you know it’s the correct business decision, but also because you personally want to make Ralph happy.**”

The Web Master

And Ralph has been happy in this last position. In fact, though most might believe his overriding legacy to be the strength of channels and America sales, he just might be proudest of the e-commerce work. Libby Demeo notes that Ralph does indeed “**wish the Web work had begun 10 years ago so he could ride the wave of what we’re doing.**”

His wife Lynda even witnessed a dramatic change in Ralph when he took his new position. **“Ralph has been reinvigorated by the challenge. He is truly at his best when he’s in that mode. And overall, it was nice for him to get away from what he already knew so well – how many sales meetings can one person run? He’s definitely been happy doing something different.”**

Roaring off into the Sunset

Without 3Com to tug at his loyalty full-time, what will Ralph do?

Popular opinion from all of Ralph’s colleagues is that he will remain involved in some form of business, whether consulting, sitting on any number of boards, or in his executive consulting role with 3Com. Though retirement is often seen as the end of something, for Ralph we are sure that it is only just the beginning of new adventures for him.

Ralph, may you have the best mountains to bike, best roads to ride your Harley on, more frequent and leisurely golf games, more time at the movies, more time with your family, more time for fiction, more cars – sorry Lynda – and more cutting-edge adventures to feed your soul.

Stay away and have fun, but come back often and never forget how grateful we are to you and how you will be missed.

Thank you for everything, Ralph.

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