

A Eulogy for Dale Carr

Delivered at His Memorial Service in
Houston, Texas

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Some of My Memories of Dale Carr

I will always remember Dale as one of the strongest and most influential friends in my life. We first met over the phone; while Digital was in the process of dismantling the unit of 22 people I worked in back in Colorado Springs in summer of 1992. Thanks to Dale, my job was saved, because he allowed me to take a position on his team in Merrimack, NH. Dale saw to it that I was easily relocated across the country from Colorado to New Hampshire, from what turned out to be a very negative situation, where everyone but one other person was laid off from the Digital Colorado Springs unit.

When I was trying to get acclimated to life in New Hampshire, Dale tried to listen and give advice and make me feel at home in the area and on his team. About 12 months later, when things got really tough for me, because being a transplant into New Hampshire was hard, Dale was there to support me, to listen to what I was going through and to give me badly needed advice. I was convinced at that time that Dale was the most HUMAN and HUMANE boss I had ever worked for.

When I left Digital in 1994, I wrote Dale a strong letter of reference saying what a great boss he had been and we promised each other to keep in touch.

During the Summer that followed, Dale was laid off, and I worked with him to give him advice over the phone and via e-mail to help him get up to speed on Visual Basic. Little did I know that Dale was so sharp, he learned Visual Basic on his own from books and by working with it, and he learned it so well, that he created a commercial product to help Christian people using Windows have a Bible study quiet time in the morning, or whenever the first got onto their computers. The product turned out to be a moderate success and later he actually sold it. Later he would confess to me that although he didn't consider himself much of a software developer, building that product in Visual Basic gave him the technical insights and know-how to become a better software engineering manager.

In 1995, I returned to Illinois in the Chicagoland area to work for what seemed like a very promising company. I immediately recommended Dale when I learned that they were looking for an Engineering Manager. When they tried Dale as a boss on a trial basis, they decided they liked him and hired him. I know that the separation from Jean was tough, but I also know how badly Dale wanted to keep a job and stay employed. He worked us very hard, but we also knew it was because he reported to an impossible person who made him do it. Nevertheless, I did excellent work and felt a great sense of camaraderie being back on the same team with Dale, just like the days when I worked for him in New Hampshire, only this was more intense with 80 to 90 hour weeks.

In May of 1995, I left that company for another company here in Chicago. When I left the old company, Dale treated me to a great farewell pizza dinner at Lou Malnati's to discuss out respective futures. Strangely enough, that would turn out to be our last meal we ever had together. The new company I went to turned out to be a mistake for me, but Dale went on to help the company he worked for, get in good enough shape to be acquired by a Houston-based company, and get relocated to Houston.

Through the years, Dale and I would help each other in giving each other insights about the industry and various technologies. We were also each other's best references, because we had worked together at two tough jobs, and we each understood and admired each other.

When I learned that Dale was laid off from BMC back in 2001, I helped him revise his resume' and I gave him advice about job search techniques and anything and everything I knew that could help him get a job. I also prayed several times a day and had other Christian friends praying for God to help Dale get a job. I always told him that I wished we could be back at the same company, working together again, and he always agreed.

When Dale finally got what would be his last job, I was the first person he called and I have repeatedly saved and re-saved his message in my voice mail at home. You could hear it in his voice, the excitement of a man who had been given one more chance to prove his ability to earn a good salary at something he really loved doing, being a software engineering manager. He believed it would work out and I did too.

The last time I spoke with Dale, he was relieved that I hadn't been laid off while our company was going through a recent reorganization, and he gave me advice about getting my wife's final paperwork settled to get her de-enlisted from the U.S. Army. His advice worked by the way and when they got my wife's certified letter, they processed her right out before she ever had to go to Basic Training or anything else.

After returning from Poland, where I spent Christmas vacation from December 19, 2001 – January 7, 2002, I wanted to call Dale and tell him about the vacation. And so, on Tuesday evening, January 22, 2002, I tried for the second time in three days to reach Dale. Jean answered the phone and told me she was glad I called. Then she asked if I was sitting down (in fact I was driving home at 60 miles per hour), and if my wife, Joanna, was around to lend support. I had this sick feeling that something terrible had happened to Dale. That's when Jean told me what happened.

We talked at length and she told me how much Dale thought of me, and what a great friend he considered me to be. As you might expect, I, too am in shock now.

My gut reaction is to be upset with the world, because though three tours of duty as a Marine in Viet Nam couldn't do Dale in, but a recession in the IT market and an overall tough economy, especially for guys over 40, certainly did help do Dale in. But I will just accept this as the culmination of a series of events, including health problems that convinced Dale that he needed to complete the last chapter of his life here on Earth.

Dale was a great man, a man of principle, and one of the smartest and best leaders I ever met. He had compassion and vision, and a will made of iron. I know that it was often unfairly held against him in professional circles that he had no college diploma, but Dale was better and smarter than 99% of the people I ever met who were college graduates. He knew so well how to motivate people and how to do everything necessary to live up to his commitments, both in his professional and his personal life.

The World and Jean and myself are all a lot poorer without Dale here to lean on.

Dale, I'm gonna miss you, my friend. I loved you just like an older brother. One I admired, could trust, and look up to. You were just as steady as the Rock of Gibraltar for me and I always knew I had a great friend with compassion and a sharp mind on the other end of the phone when I dialed 281-498-6251. I thank you for your kindness, support and friendship over the years. I wish I could undo this awful situation and drive around the block and see you waiting there to pick up and go have a pizza with, and laugh about old times working together, but I know you are gone permanently from this life. One of the tough things I learned on my own back in 1986 was that you don't have to be crazy to kill yourself: You just have to be tired of hurting. Dale, I know that you loved God and that you were a Christian, and I believe that God is so full of grace and mercy that you are being looked after well in the next Life. He knew that you just couldn't take it anymore. It is my solemn prayer, Dale that you find peace, and love, and rest, and comfort in the next Life. And when the time comes, I hope that you are re-united with your loved ones, especially Jean, whom I know you loved more than anyone else.

And Jean, I feel for you, because I am in a loving relationship with my wife, who is also my best friend, and I know I, too, would never be the same if I lost her. I pray that God will surround you with love and comfort, and that you will find peace in knowing that Dale was an extraordinary man, a very good man with a very good heart, and that the World and people like us were all better for having had Dale Carr in our lives.

I am here for you if I can be of any assistance, don't hesitate to call. If it were possible for me to take the time off work after this 19-day trip to Poland, I would be there in person on Thursday night, at Dale's Memorial Service. I hope it goes well. I will be in touch. God bless you, Jean.

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