John Peter Pilch
Reflections on a Life – Dr Bernie Domanski

CMG lost one of our lions earlier this month. A friend of mine, John Pilch, left us too early. If you ever attended a conference in the past 25 years you would remember the guy with two sets of glasses and a slight smile. If he saw your green "first timer" ribbon he would go out of his way to make you feel welcome at CMG….. Here are some thoughts about John Pilch and footprints he left.

Dr Bernie and John at 1st Timers Meeting

Educational Background – John attended Fairleigh Dickenson University in New Jersey for both his undergraduate Bachelors and Masters degrees in Computer Science. He made relationships there that lasted for his entire life, as he taught part-time in their Computer Science department for over 25 years. His "*bread-and-butter*" course was the Graduate course in Computer Operating Systems, which he probably taught over 30 times. He also taught graduate courses in Computer Performance Evaluation and Database Management Systems.

Member of the Technical Staff, Bell Laboratories, Bell Communications Research, Telecordia Systems – John was hired in the mid-70s by Bell Labs into a unique department of analysts who were responsible for analyzing and reporting on the performance of *every* Bell system data center in the country. John worked on several particularly complex projects, perhaps most notably a simulation of what was once the largest database application ever written.

While that department housed all performance studies independent of computer type, John quickly became the in-house *guru* in guiding numerous benchmark studies of large IBM-like systems. Often, John's benchmark team would have to perform their experiments at the vendor laboratories, e.g. IBMs Washington System Center, and Amdahl & Hitachi datacenters in California. The benchmark reports were used by all of the Bell companies that emerged after the divesture. They served as the '*standard reference'* for large system performance. At times, the

benchmarks uncovered performance *anomalies*, and reported back to the vendor – who subsequently had to make changes to their machines.

John's team also used analytic modeling tools to build performance models. These models greatly reduced the need to perform full-blown system benchmarks, and yet we gained valuable insight from the results. In addition, the team developed a set of experiments for large parallel processing machines at a time when commercial machines of this type were first being introduced.

After 20+ years of Bell system service, John continued his high quality work as a Performance Engineer and consultant with companies that included large drug companies, Merrill Lynch and most recently ADP. At ADP John held the position of "*Senior Capacity Planner for Distributed Systems*" where he was responsible to ensure availability and stability of ADP's Distributed Server Infrastructure throughout the United States and Canada. His keen insights as a capacity planner and performance engineer allowed John develop many analytical models which help to identify application inefficiencies that would otherwise have been overlooked.

Professional Contributions – Beginning in 1981, John began a lifelong association with the Computer Measurement Group (CMG), a not-for-profit International association of computer performance and capacity planning professionals. As part of *giving back* to the profession, John authored and presented several papers at the annual CMG conferences. But perhaps John's most notable contribution was his work as a member of the Conference Committee over a long period of time. After many years of wallowing in how to manage all of the papers submitted for consideration for inclusion in the conference, John devised a structured and well-organized procedure, and software was acquired to help make the process more automated than it ever had been. From there, John applied his organizational skills to define he role of the Program Committee – the individual's who read, select and schedule presentations for the conference. He created the *Session Control* booth at the conference so there was immediate access to get questions answered within the actual conference presentation area. In his stint as the Program Chair both the program and conference flourished to its largest attendance figures. Next, John would become a part of the committee that would study and evaluate future conference sites. He had a real knack for figuring out if we would 'fit' everything we need in the available space. Ultimately, John was elected CMGs Treasurer, where he insisted on accountability, long before it was a fashionable term.

Many members of CMG will remember John as the originator and yearly presenter of the 'Rookie Session' – a 60-minute impromptu presentation specifically for first-time conference attendees. Always a good time and incredibly informative, the '*veterans*' found themselves in attendance as well.

John's career was part of the evolution and revolution that large scale information systems had on the US and global economies. He helped ensure that the changes intended by these new technologies actually happened as planned. He also freely shared his skill and knowledge in this area as a mentor and thought leader to inspire others in this rapidly changing field. John leaves an impressive legacy to the performance industry. He demonstrated great technical skills, creativity, and insight, team leadership ability, and lasting contributions to his profession. He will be missed terribly by an entire generation of Information Technology professionals.