

VERN WECKWERTH -- ONE OF A KIND

No one works health care in Minnesota without being challenged by Vern Weckwerth to answer a question that no one else would think to ask. Vern founded the ISP Off-Site Executive Study Programs in Healthcare Administration in 1969. ISP is the oldest continuing distance education program for health care administrators in the nation.

Founded in 1969, the ISP program pioneered international work by creating a distance education program for working health care administration professionals unable to attend on-campus programs. Starting with only 36 enrollees in the first year of the program, Weckwerth has taught a student population of nearly 4,000 administrators from 44 nations around the world. When visiting students at their home site, Weckwerth has been known for sleeping in hospitals around the world, seeing no need to purchase a hotel room for such short visits. Aside from his globetrotting, Weckwerth's recognition as a global leader comes from his care and concern for his students.

Weckwerth was born on a farm near Herman, MN, in 1933, and moved with his family to Colorado before returning to the University of Minnesota for his education and the rest of his professional life. At his retirement celebration last Friday, he recounted how one-room schools and preachers shaped how he thought about the future. He spent six of his eight elementary school years as the only kid in his grade. As he said, imagine any kid getting the personal attention of a teacher for 10 minutes every hour! "What I learned that was valuable I learned from listening to the teacher teach the classes older than I what I was going to have to learn."

He said he learned education is really about different learning for different learners. And teaching? "Teaching is life...and living." He took on classes for which he wasn't paid. He traveled thousands of miles around the world to be with his student leaders. He left a \$5 million endowment to the university for health care education leadership programs. His challenge to students: Did you leave the world better than you found it?

And he apologized to his wife Joanne and five very successful children: The last vacation they had was in 1968.