

**Gil Cintra**  
*or Gilberto as Steve would sometimes call him*

I thought it would be easy to write a story or comment for this collection to honor Steve's memory, after all, I had known Steve for over 40 years. As one would expect Steve to do, he touched my life in so many ways that choosing a certain moment shouldn't be too hard to do. I was wrong, selecting one story from many has become, incredibly, impossible. I have so many fond memories of our friendship that singling out one would not do justice to the many others that would go unsaid. Instead, I'll try to express the quality, nature or distinguishing characteristics of Steve's offerings to our friendship that made it a unique experience for me. I hope that in doing so I'll be able to illustrate how Steve was such an important part of my life.

I met Steve a couple of years after I arrived in this country from Cuba to attend college. Steve was about 17 years old when I met him. Of all the members of the Hensley family I met at the time, he was closest in age to mine (I was 3 or 4 years older). In the period of time before meeting Steve, I had already experienced the pain that prejudice and discrimination can inflict, so I was cautious when I made new acquaintances. Steve welcomed me into his group of friends with such openness and healthy acceptance that he not only made me feel happy about meeting him, he made me permanently lose my suspicions about the motives that the people I would meet from then on might have. This experience may appear insignificant or lose some of its meaning in the telling, but as a foreigner just beginning my life in a new country, everything seemed so strange and frightening. Steve helped me make the transition to my new life much easier with his selfless and generous acceptance.

Steve also enriched my life with his keen intellect, which he cultivated avidly. His abundant wit brought countless moments of light-hearted joy. His raucous laughter was a beautiful sound I will always remember fondly. I remember when he was teaching me to water-ski and how he would laugh at my clumsy and graceless attempts to learn the sport. I knew that he was not making fun of me. I was happy to join in the merriment. I could tell so many stories now that memories are flowing in. I could tell, for example, about the moments spent untangling a fishing line or taking rides through the country roads on an errand and talking about hopes and aspirations. Every moment was a rich experience.

Steve possessed a rugged physical appearance, that of a lumberjack or outdoorsman, and yet he was gifted with the sensitivity to appreciate the beauty of God's creation. In him, that which appeared contradictory or paradoxical found harmony. His pursuit of story telling he brought to a well-developed talent. In the past few years I looked forward to receiving his Christmas update. Here again, is another example of how Steve brought happiness to my life.

When Sherry asked me to write this piece, she said that writing things down would help us heal. She is right. It has. I am comforted by the knowledge that my friend is now in the arms of the Lord where he can raise his hand and touch the face of God.