

Mike Kleinman

About six years ago Sherry invited me to Tennessee for Thanksgiving. I had never been to the South and looked forward to visiting. Sherry had told me many wonderful stories about her Dad, Robie and her two brothers, Ted and Steve. As it turned out they were as interested in meeting someone from California as I was meeting people from Tennessee.

I met Steve at Thanksgiving dinner. He was not wearing coveralls nor whistling the tune from *Deliverance* as I had feared. He was quite a gregarious guy with a lovely wife and children. We all ate Thanksgiving dinner and Steve complained about how full he was and promptly went to sleep on the sofa. Later, his wife Julie woke him to go to her family's house for yet another dinner. Steve got up, smiled sleepily and said, "Off to eat again."

The next day Steve and I were to go flying. Steve picked me up in a Volkswagen Rabbit that was so cluttered with stuff that there was nowhere to put my feet. And the clutter was so dense that I could not identify any distinct parts. It was just a mound of stuff surrounded by a little car. We drove out to the airport and parked near a hangar. Inside the hangar was a single engine Beechcraft of some nature. We rolled the thing out and Steve pointed me to the left seat. Me? He said, "Go ahead". When we got in the plane Steve pointed out a gauge that did not work and said, "Don't worry about it." To a guy like me who had been trained not to fly with low tire pressure this was something to worry about.

We took off and had a great flight. We flew over Martha and Richard Scull's house (now owned by Park Overall) and a number of other local sights. At one point, Steve asked me if I had ever landed on a grass field. Well, I told him I hadn't but that was not to be for long. He had me pilot the plane toward the field without flaps. I was beginning to sweat as we approached the runway. At what seem to be 10' above the runway Steve took the controls and dumped in 30 degrees of flaps all at once. The plane landed pretty as you please with a completely controlled roll out.

We took off from the grass field and flew toward Asheville, North Carolina. Steve spent most of that flight filling me in on local history. He told me about his wife's family who owned a plating shop that actually put out cleaner water into the environment than it took in. It was a thoroughly interesting afternoon.

Later that trip, I went to Steve's house. We sat in a rustic kitchen with Julie, his wife. To an inveterate TV watcher, people who can live without it always impress me. Steve seemed to have no trouble at all. He had so many interests to keep him busy. It is no wonder to me that he had a degree in Story Telling.

I will always be grateful for having known Steve Hensley.