

## Cousin Robbie Shelton

I have lots of stories about Steve. Most of them are about flying, as you can imagine. Some are not, but usually when Steve and I were together we were either flying something or at least talking about flying. I miss those times. I could write all kinds of Steve Stories, but the story I want to tell is the story of Steve's generosity. I made my first parachute jump in October 1984. Robie was flying the jump plane that day. Not only was this my first jump, but it was also my first airplane ride. I was hooked on jumping and very soon decided to learn to fly too. Mom said, "if you are going to learn to fly, you need to call Steve. I'll bet he will teach you!" I didn't know Steve very well at the time, but I called him anyway. When I told him I wanted to learn how to fly he just told me to meet him at the Greeneville airport on Saturday morning and we'd get started. Although we were second cousins, Steve and I became close friends over the next few months.

Then one day Steve said, "boy, let me tell you what you ought to do. You should come work for me. I'll teach you how to fly and I'll pay you too!" What a deal! Working for Steve was an opportunity for me to learn all about airplanes and to have lots of fun to boot. During the time I worked for Steve I met lots of people around local airports. Most of them had stories about how Steve had helped them either get their pilot certificate or how he had done work on their airplane. The ones that had flown with Steve all told me how much they enjoyed learning from him.

You see, Steve was a teacher and you could never go flying with him without learning something new. Just talking with Steve usually was a learning experience. There are many people in this area that would not have been able to afford flying rented planes. Steve would let his students use airplanes that belonged to him and all the student had to do was buy the fuel. I know this because I was one of those students. Anything Steve had to fly he would tell me, "help yourself, just make sure you have plenty of fuel and don't run into anything." He was just being funny, but I took him seriously anyway. David Dunford and I have talked many times about how fortunate we really are to have been able to learn to fly from Steve. I know there are lots of pilots around that had it not been for Steve, they would still look up when an airplane goes over, and wonder what flying would be like.

Flying and spending time with Steve was the best!