

I am here to say publicly what Steve already knew. How thankful I was to him as a friend and colleague.

In 2001 I was a visiting professor at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, looking for a position where I could stay in academia in the USA.

Mutual friends put me in touch with him, his support for my invitation to teach here was crucial.

Over the next six years Steve proved to be more than a colleague: he was my “problem solver.” Through every challenge, large or small, he was always there with a solution. My office in the Social Science Building was not a permanent space. “Why don’t you come over to the Center” asked Stephen one day. “We’ll give you a room, you will have fun here.” He was right, to work beside him every day was a real pleasure.

“You are the real Talat Pasha” he would say, showing me the FEZ he had received from the Minnesota Armenian Community; “now, we have to organize a ceremony to turn this over to you”.

Steve sought to incorporate not only the Armenian Genocide but also other twentieth Century genocide in to the comparative scope of the Center. The Holocaust can be adequately understood only in perspective with other Genocides” he used to say. Let others speak of Stephen Feinstein’s philosophy of comparative genocide or his one week summer seminar for teachers on Genocide and Human Rights. I would rather speak of the Steve who after teaching all day, went home and slept on the floor, too exhausted even to take of his shoes.

Now, when it comes to solving practical issues, I am a person “with two left feet”, my only talent is reading books. But, when I came to the Center I had no book shelves.

PEHH no problem! Steven knew what to do. “Are you going to build them?” I asked, astonished. There he was with the lumber, nails and tools.

“Steve, this shared printer in my office is driving me crazy”, no problem, there was Steve drilling a hole in the wall to reroute the cable connection out of my office. “How can you be so talented Steve, we scholars are supposed to be clumsy”, Well, “this is what we learned from the Nazis,” he would say. “This is how you survive in a concentration camp.”

He walked in every morning with a joke, tossing a sheet of paper on my desk; or starting a new story, “have you heard the one about...” He would come to my office saying, check your email, I just sent you something or he would call me over to his office to watch a video clip or to read a joke. Steve was hilarious, laughing with full mouth... “The jokes are my survival technique” he used to say. But they were a social pressure for Taner Akcam; Oh my god! What should I tell him today?

He loved to see me in the office every day there from 8 to 5. “I am sorry Steve, I had to take my daughter to the Doctor”; “Steve I am leaving, Helin missed the bus, I had to pick her up”. “You need a wife” he would say, “tell your Armenian friends they have to find you an Armenian wife, this can not go on... You cannot work. They should know that they are hindering genocide research, this will be their way to contribute to it” He used to tell visitors, anyone who walked in the door, “I am looking for a Jewish wife for Taner. The Armenians can not find one. So, even though having a Jewish wife and dealing with Armenian Genocide is very suspect but we don’t have any other choice” That was embarrassing.

“Steve, I have time, don’t worry! I get up every day around 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning by the time I come to the office half of my work is done already.” “I never bring work home”, he replied. “I cannot understand how you and Eric work better from home. For me home is the place where I relax”.

Dear Sue, welcome to the world of Steve that he left at the office.

Steve saw life as a joke and lived it as a joke. His leaving us was also a joke but one of his worst ones. Steve... My dear friend... you are always with me, where ever I go. AND I am hoping to see you there.... To listen one more joke from you.