Some Memories about my friendship with Enrique Tirapegui

I first met Enrique in 1958 when I attended a Differential Geometry class at the Engineering School of the Universidad de Chile (I was still in high school but I already liked mathematics).

Among the engineering students attending the class it was one who stood out, even from the teacher (It was clear this student knew more Differential Geometry than him!!). This student turne out to be Enrique.

Ever since we met, Enrique was always willing to answer my questions and clear my doubts enthusiastically. Enthusiasm was one of his main characteristics throughout his scientific career as well as in his life.

It was through this Differential Geometry class that our lifetime lasting friendship began. As a high school student I specially valued Enrique´s help and dedication. I considered him my mentor and I felt privileged to count with his academic guidance. We used to share long talks not only about mathematics and physics, but also about Nietzsche and Zarathustra.

That period for me was essential to decide I will pursue a career in mathematics like Enrique has done in Physics.

During those years (1960-1963) it was not possible to get a Ph.D. degree neither in physics nor in mathematics so Enrique and I ended up traveling to Europe, he went to France and I was accepted as a regular student in a program in Germany.

It was hard to adapt to this new life. I was specially hard at the beginning for Enrique. After a while, when I was getting more adjusted to the life in Germany, one day I got an S.O.S phone call from Enrique asking me to visit him in Paris because he was not feeling well there. This one week visit ended up being full of little stories that became part of our “European anecdotal” for the rest of our lifes!!.

Once I remember we were walking in Paris. Enrique was almost shouting out loud on the streets when we met with a group of youngsters who were walking in the opposite direction. Enrique started to confront them without any provocation. He was a bit out of his mind at that point. Thankfully the group of youngsters was very nice. I explained them that Enrique was having a hard time adjusting to his new life.

They left and we decided that we should do something to get him calmed.

Right in front of us was a movie theater so I told him we must go to a movie to calm down. We decided to get in and see the movie without knowing at all what it was!!. It ended up being Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs!!. Somehow Walt Disney ended up calming down our souls. It was exactly what we needed at that time.

After sometime Enrique not only got adjusted to his life in France but he became very fond of living and doing physics there where he was recognized as a strong physicist.

There are many memories like that along the time I got to share with Enrique. Those memories will always be part of my own life.

