

'What am I, chopped liver? ... A tribute to my husband, 'Big Lou'

Contributed by Leilani Martinez
July 19, 2008

Luis Martinez Jr., aka Big Lou

Martinez - your brother and friend - has gone home to be with God. He left after being in a coma for a week. He had a raging strep infection in his blood, which caused cardiac arrest that resulted in extensive brain damage. He did not suffer very much, and left this world in the way he planned to leave all along, quickly and without pain.

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Those of you who came to know and love Big Lou have been asked the above question - "what am I, chopped liver?" - sometime in your relationship with him. And the reason was because if you would walk into a room where Big Lou was and failed to say "hello" to him, he would more than likely call you back and ask you the question. And so he was dubbed by many friends and family simply as Chopped Liver or Grandpa Chopped Liver.

Big Lou was baptized into Christ in 2006, on Martin Luther King's birthday, and that was a joyous day for our family, both physical and spiritual. He was the last holdout of the Martinez clan. Oldest son LuJack and his wife Cathi, as well as twin daughters Laura and Laurice, and younger son Larry (Bear) and his wife Nicole, and me, were baptized as disciples years before. I have been a member of the East Region of the Los Angeles Church of Christ since the inception of the East Region, and when my love was baptized, he joined me as part of the Mature Marrieds family group in our beloved Whittier Ministry.

In 1989, when the church was planted in Los Angeles, Big Lou refused to have any part of it. But he allowed the East Region (sector at the time) to have church services (mostly midweeks) at our home while we were living in La Mirada. He cooked for the disciples so that they could eat before service ("Honey, most of these poor folks work and have no time to go home and cook" was his reasoning); the South Central Singles ministry held parties at our home (LuJack and Cathi were leading the singles in South Central then). Our home in La Mirada became the hub of activity for whatever ministry LuJack and Cathi were part of in Los Angeles at the time. So really, Big Lou, though he was not "officially" a disciple, served the people of God from the birth of the Los Angeles Church of Christ.

But even before he became a disciple, God used this man powerfully to prepare his wife and children for the time when they would become disciples of Jesus Christ. Several people lived with our family at one time or another, whether it was one of our children's friends who was at odds

with their parents, or a relative who found themselves in some kind of familial bind. Big Lou took everyone in with kindness, love and encouragement. And he taught his family to have great compassion and great discernment as well. The compassion part we got down really good, but we're still working on the discernment part. When my children became disciples, especially my daughter, Laura, they let their Dad know that it was because of him, the way he unconditionally loved and respected people no matter who they were, that convinced them to become disciples.

And Big Lou's sense of humor is legendary. All his family and friends will attest to that. I remember distinctly a time in the early 90's when Tom and Kelly Brown were leading the L.A. Church. We were invited to their home for a lu'au, and afterwards the marrieds went inside for coffee and a couple of games. We played a game called Stare Down (I think) where someone stands or sits in front of you and tries to make you laugh or smile within an allotted length of time. Tom Brown sat in front of Big Lou for about five minutes, trying every funny face he could muster and funny line he could come up with. We were all laughing so hard at Tom's antics, but Big Lou just looked at him with a bored look on his face. At the end of three minutes, Tom stopped and said to Big Lou, "You didn't even crack a smile! What's up?" And Big Lou replied with total equanimity, "Sorry Tom. You're just not my type." Tom fell back laughing so hard, and Big Lou let go with a big guffaw as we all joined in their laughter.

We're going to miss this wonderful man. He was not perfect, but he was a man who loved his wife, children, grandchildren and all of his family, both physical and spiritual. Big Lou never met a person he didn't like, except when someone crossed him! But when he made the decision to become a disciple of Christ, he realized that the "except" part was going to have to change, too. And it did. Big Lou touched the lives of many people, many disciples, and I for one am so glad that he came into my life, gave me four beautiful children, five amazing grandchildren (soon to be six!), and an abundant life in every way that God intended it to be.

Aloha, my beautiful friend! I look forward to seeing you when God calls me, too. But in the meantime, your Polynesian baby is going to continue the work of compassion, generosity, perseverance, patient endurance and love that you and God taught me and our children. I will teach it to our grandchildren so they will always remember what kind of man their grandfather was. Pleasant dreams, sweet prince, as you rest in the arms of our Lord.