

Remembering Alberto Huerta

Alberto Huerta, PhD, a long-time associate professor of modern and classical languages, and Latin American studies at the University of San Francisco, died Feb. 8 after a short illness. He was 64.

Huerta is remembered by many around campus as a professor who loved life, loved people, and tried to minister to everyone that came to him, said Michael Kotlanger, S.J., who knew Huerta since their early years together as Jesuits at USF in the 1960s. Huerta left the Jesuits in the early 1990s.

Endeared for his unconventional approach to life, Huerta took to heart the Jesuit mission to work on the fringe of society and was known to talk to just about anyone, claiming friends from every niche of society, including prisoners, high-ranking military officers, professors, and runaways living in San Francisco's Haight neighborhood.

He always tried to be a humble servant of God, going so far as to tell his family before his death that he didn't want an elaborate obituary or funeral service. "He said he didn't want an obituary because Jesus

Christ didn't have one," his twin brother Raymond Huerta explained. "He was very spiritual and led us all on a journey of faith while he was here."

Huerta was friends with English author Graham Greene and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, poet and City Lights Booksellers and Publishers founder. He wrote dozens of articles and opinion pieces on topics as diverse as human rights, the Zapatista movement in Mexico, the Beat Generation writers, and former President Bill Clinton's sex scandal. A San Francisco poet, Huerta authored the bilingual epic poem "Grito Mejicano/Mexican Howl," and published poems in *The Argonaut*, *Cruzando Puentes*, *Antología de Literatura Latina*, and *Ventana Abierta*. [USF](#)



Love of Life: Alberto Huerta, a former USF associate professor, is remembered for his love of life and deep spirituality.

Professor's Research Helps Blind Students Learn Math

Art Karshmer didn't set out to design tools for the blind, but a twist of fate led the University of San Francisco professor to devote his research to helping blind students learn math.

Karshmer, a computer scientist who teaches in the College of Professional Studies, has worked for two decades to create computer systems that make learning math simpler for those unable to read printed text.

"Visually impaired students have some of the lowest achievement levels of math learning due to their inability to see and read two dimensional objects like equations," Karshmer said.

Karshmer's work in the area began in the computer science department at New Mexico State University, when he asked colleagues for recommendations of a standout graduate student to hire for help with a research grant. Everyone mentioned one student in particular, Karshmer said. What they didn't mention was that he was blind.

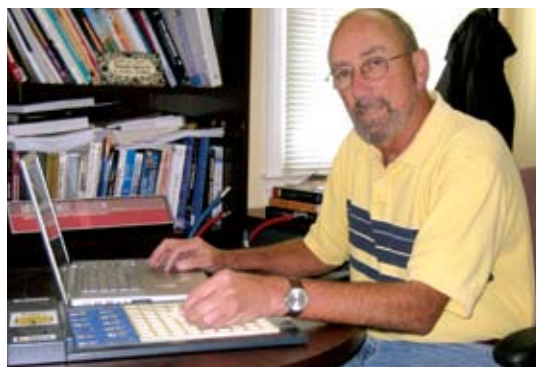
Karshmer watched in amazement as the student used a variety of rudimentary devices to work on the computer. Karshmer knew there had to be a better way, but "little did I know my life would

change that day," he said.

Over the years, a series of grants, including one from the National Science Foundation, have allowed Karshmer to work with other researchers to design the MathGenie computer program and the Auto-Mathic Blocks system.

MathGenie focuses on math at a high school level or higher. The program reads aloud complex mathematical equations downloaded electronically by teachers, ensuring that problems are read in the correct mathematical style so that students have the basic premise correct before solving the equation.

AutoMathic Blocks focuses on assisting younger students with math. Karshmer hopes to eventually make both tools more widely available to blind students so that it's easier for them to learn math and potentially open up doors previously closed to them. He is developing a lab at USF for testing the designs. [USF](#)



Math Matters: Professor Art Karshmer has designed computer programs to help blind students learn math.