



Jaime Ortega with fellow seminarians at Mont Tremblant, 1964

spent four formative years as a student of theology at the Foreign Missions Seminary at Pont-Viau outside Montreal. Jaime Ortega along with three of his fellow Cuban seminarians evidently took up skiing with enthusiasm at the famous Quebec resort of Mont-Tremblant.

Science and a love of Cuba's tropical ecology has been the basis of some great friendships between Cubans and Canadians. One of the foremost figures of Canadian botany was Brother Marie-Victorin, the founder and Director of the Montreal Botanical Garden. In the late 1930s, Marie-Victorin made a series of extensive trips across Cuba with Cuban students and researchers to discover rare plants, such as the living fossil, the endemic cycad *Microcycas calocoma*. Together with a fellow Canadian priest, Brother Léon, who was the director of the Botanical Laboratory of La Salle College in Havana, Marie-Victorin wrote a multi-volume work published in Montreal entitled *Botanical Itineraries in the Island of Cuba*. His contribution to Cuban botany is remembered to this day through the Cuban genus of flowering shrubs, *Victorinia*, named after him by Léon.

In more recent times, a close friendship has been established between the Canadian authors and naturalists, Graeme Gibson and Margaret Atwood, and two senior scientists at Cuba's Museum of Natural Sciences, Gilberto Silva, Cuba's foremost mammal expert, and Orlando Garrido, lead author of the defini-

Gilberto Silva, Margaret Atwood, Orlando Garrido, and Graeme Gibson, Holguín, 2003

tive guide to Cuban birds. Their friendship provided the impetus for World Wildlife Fund to begin its pioneering work with the Cuban government in 1988 to protect the Zapata wetlands. Subsequent donations of equipment and material from Canadian institutions and firms, organized by Graeme Gibson, have helped build the collections and public exhibits of the Cuban Museum of Natural Sciences. Most recently, Atwood and Gibson have established a small international trust fund, CURE, to assist Cuban biologists to carry out field research in their own country and to publish the results of their work.

