

# More than an obituary: Remembering a friend

There is a section in most newspapers titled "Obituaries."

It's the section where someone, be it a family member or funeral director, has written some words to notify the masses of a person's death and tells the story of their life.

Many of you may have read the obituary for Brad Neuman of Troy last week. And while his obituary was a fantastic snapshot of his life, I feel the distinct urge to dedicate this column to a man who was very dear to my heart and whose death will be felt by many people throughout the region.

It's been said that in the course of your lifetime there are 13 people you will interact with who will have a deep and profound effect on your journey through life. These people are not family members such as parents, siblings or grandparents. They are people who you meet as you grow and mature — strangers who become friends and who are responsible for a "turning point" in your life.

Brad was one of my 13 people.

I first met Brad Neuman in the fall of 2004 at a cocktail party at the home of a mutual friend. As time went on I got to know him a little better, sometimes meeting for coffee or lunch. Eventually I started visiting his farm in Troy, learning all about his lifelong passion — alpacas.



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For those of you who don't know what an alpaca is, Brad always described it as a "gay llama."

It was kind of an inside joke.

When I bought my first "new" car (new meaning new to me) Brad was the first person to see

it because I left the dealership and headed straight for Troy to show it off.

When I went through my first breakup of a long-term relationship, Brad was there for me to just "vent," to cry on his shoulder and to tell me that I was better than my ex.

When power rates skyrocketed and I needed wood to burn instead of using my furnace, Brad was the first to tell me to come to the farm and cut up some firewood. "No charge" he said, "and you could use my chain saw and truck to get the job done."

When money was tight and I needed to pick up extra work, Brad didn't even blink an eye at hiring me to work for him on weekends shoveling the matted mess that is alpaca waste and straw from the shelters and laying down new bedding.

And most of all, when life just sucked I knew I could count on Brad

to be there for me.

But it wasn't just my life that Brad affected.

If he even thought that someone might be in need he was there to help. He was an active supporter of the Troy Volunteer Fire Department and, as the principal of Troy Elementary School described, delivered a "carload" of school supplies for the students and teachers of the school.

Ask anyone who knew Brad how he affected their life and you'd most likely be talking to that person for awhile.

After all that giving you would think he would want something in return. If you thought that, well, you didn't know Brad.

Stories of this great man flowed Thursday at his memorial service and I'm sure they will for the days, weeks and months to come in the many social circles he touched throughout the region.

So to my friend, I bid you well in your continued journey through the universe, whatever that may be. When people ask me if I miss you, I'll try my best impersonation of your Boston accent and say "Oh, yeah!"

**Henry D. Johnston** is manager of an area retail store. Next time he promises to return to writing columns based solely on conjecture and hyperbole.