

Life and death are daily occurrences in this Village of Corrales. It just seems to happen to those we love and those we hardly even knew. We each realize our time will come, but usually push the thought from our mind and carry on the work of the hour and never dwell on the what ifs. We mark the passing of the family pet with as much reverence as a good friend. The worst day often comes when our saddle partner is put down because of an incurable disease and pain and suffering which cannot be helped any longer. That horse we have hugged and stroked and cared for leaves an empty spot in our heart that another horse will never completely fill. The circle of life they call it but it is never easy.

Many of us in Corrales, Corrales Horse and Mule People (CHAMP) and in the International Spanish Horse Community lost a friend and truly unique horseman this last month.

He won't be there when we need a hard worker or a willing hand to do whatever task is needed. He was cut from a different cloth than most these days. He had an unending desire to help, to buoy up, to pitch in.

He kept everything in notebooks. Stacks and stacks of notebooks. When he ran a meeting it went on for hours as he told story after story of similar events and you planned for the next one. If you were in charge, he had the notebook to document what you needed to do.

He knew everyone you needed to know to get the permission or permit or OK to succeed. In fact I think he knew everyone. He always had a grin and an impish look which seemed to make difficult things easy. There probably is no way to replace him. He was unique. He had an opinion on everything, but was willing to listen as well. He functioned at a high level regardless of the politics. If you needed it negotiated with factions within the Village, he was your man.

He touched many parts of this village both officially and behind the scenes. We will never really know all he did. His wife was truly a saint as she supported his frequent absences from home for never-ending meetings and he sacrificed professionally and hence economically to carry out volunteer responsibilities. You never had to worry about him not doing what he said he would do.

At his memorial service in the old church it was standing room only and family and friends gave heartfelt remarks to mark his passing. As I sat there it was hard to believe he was really gone. Maybe he just saddled up and rode off into the sunset? Maybe he left on one of those long-rider adventures?

I missed the last months of suffering that I know he and Robin endured until he took his last breath. I can't even think of my friend going through so much after always giving so much to others. Life isn't fair. Good people do have bad things happen to them. He was one of the best.

So as I write this monthly column I have given myself the challenge to do more. To complain less. To roll up my sleeves more. To try to be as good a citizen as he was. I am afraid I will never fill his stirrups or boots, but that is not a reason to not try.

Life will go on for a while for all of us until we have to face the final journey into the next life. We will adjust and we will move on, but I can't help think of those who he lived with and interacted with daily. A husband, a provider, a companion, a best friend... The hole will never be filled. He was truly unique.

I wish I could have magically made him better. How could the cancer have taken him from his wife and best friend? Not all questions have answers but their love should be an example to all of us. She was there for all of us. Thanks Robin for loving my friend, for wiping his brow, for caring for him always. We all love you and want you to call on the horse community of Corrales whenever needed. We owe it to you for all you have done.

Steve Henry was one of the best and all who knew him know exactly what I mean.

Adios Amigo. Vaya con Dios.