



Glenny Brock <glenny.brock@gmail.com>

A Bham request -- instead of a Twitter harangue

Glenny Brock <glenny.brock@gmail.com>

Fri, Sep 25, 2020 at 9:37 AM

To: "Blinder, Alan" <alan.blinder@nytimes.com>

Dear Alan,

Hiya. I hope you are well and thriving in this bonkers year.

I don't know if you remember me: We communicated by email and text about a hundred years ago when I was doing some stringer work for the NYT. The subject was personhood and some of Roy Moore's antics. Later, I think we actually met in person in front of the Jefferson County courthouse, but I can't swear to that. In any case, I have followed your work for a long time with great admiration. And we have several friends and acquaintances in common — most of the Alabama journos you'd suspect.

I write this morning to ask a professional favor. I teach a few journalism courses at Birmingham-Southern College and my students always have to write obituaries. The first time out, several are squirmy, of course, but a lot of them appreciate the assignment, especially if they are later called upon to give a eulogy. I loved the obit you published yesterday of Robert S. Graetz and will use it as one of my model texts this term whether or not I hear back from you. But I was surprised — and a little bit thrilled — when I read the phrase "in an interview for this obituary." I tweeted at you about this, but you may not have seen — or wanted to respond to — that. But could you reply on Twitter or here and explain that? Is it a standard practice at the NYT to interview people for their own obituaries? Did you do that interview or did someone else? Do you have any guidance for young journalists writing obituaries for the first time?

If you have time or the inclination to field these questions, I would be most grateful. Thank you for considering it and thanks too for your good work.

Best,
Glenny Brock
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