

Thanks to a Seneca County farm's loan, Ranger the llama has a friend

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ADAMS — Nearly a year after Ranger the elderly llama found a friend, his life is complete, thanks to a young and spry companion his owner found for him.

In early 2025, Melissa M. Eisenhauer began running a classified advertisement in the Watertown Daily Times seeking a companion for Ranger, about 24 years old at the time and past the end of a normal llama lifespan.

Ranger's best friend and constant companion, his "brother" Bob, died a few years ago. Eisenhauer and her husband, Scott A. Eisenhauer, sought a companion for Ranger because llamas are social creatures and are healthiest and happiest when they are with other llamas or something llama-like.

Ranger shared a storied life with Bob after they were rescued from a kill pen in Washington state in 2009. The Eisenhauers moved to the north country about eight years ago. Scott is the son of Wesley and Donna Eisenhauer, Watertown. He's a 1981 graduate of Immaculate Heart High School, Watertown, and a 1985 graduate of West Point Military Academy, commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army infantry. He served 23 years, commanding troops from platoon to battalion level, including in Alaska.

Bob the llama is buried on the Eisenhauer's County Route 66 farm.

Ranger nearly found a new buddy in October 2023 when his owners traveled to just south of Geneva, near Seneca Lake, where they picked up an alpaca. The Eisenhauers named the animal Forest. It took about four weeks of integration before they let him out in pasture with Ranger. But Forest died a year later.

In January 2025, the Watertown Daily Times published a story on Ranger's dire need for a companion. "You can see him out in his pasture, looking for someone to love," Melissa said at the time. "I just need somebody to come forth with something."

About a month later, Melissa reached out to the Summer Hill Llama Farm in Lodi, Seneca County. The llamas at the farm are pure-bred and have won scores of awards at the New York State Fair and at various shows. For nearly a year now, Ranger has been living with Finnegan, a llama that Melissa is renting from the farm.

Summer Hill is owned by Rachel Diamond. She described the gelded Finnegan, or Finn as he is known to those close to him, as "a typical llama." Finnegan is nearly 2 years old.

"He's kind of, 'I just want to stand out here and be left alone and not do anything,' which is exactly what she is looking for," Diamond told the Times last year as Finnegan was prepped for his trip north.

“Finn is pretty young and full of energy,” Melissa said in January. “He’s made a difference in Ranger’s health and well-being. Per Rachel, Finn will be with me/us until Ranger dies.”

Melissa is undergoing treatment for cancer, and a move may be in her future.

“We are hoping to move home to Alaska in the spring,” Melissa said.

But Ranger will be in good hands.

“If we do move to Alaska, Rachel has a heart of gold,” Melissa said. “She offered to take Ranger, back with Finn, so he can stay with his buddy. He can’t make another, 5000-mile trip at 25. I cried my eyes out when she offered. She knows I’m sick, stressed and worried about my guy.”

Finn shares her concerns.

“If Ranger goes in the barn to lay down, Finn will be there, kind of hovering,” she said, “to make sure my old man is safe and OK. It’s very sweet.”

