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HARRIS BLACKWOOD
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Harry drinks up life

Harry Adams has found the elixir of life. Unfortunately for the rest of us, it does not come in a bottle. At 88, Mr. Harry scoots all over town in his sporty two-door car, plays the organ, tends a few flowers and plants, is host to a cat, paints and, oh yeah, jogs about 3 miles every day.

I have known Harry Adams for more than 45 years. If you're doing the math, he was 43 and I was 8 when we met.

Not long after that, he became the postmaster of the brand-new post office in Social Circle. I thought he was doing such a splendid job that I wrote his boss a letter. The big boss, Richard Milhous Nixon, the 37th president of the United States. Nixon wrote me back and thanked me for my kind note.

Mr. Harry was also the Social Circle correspondent for The Walton Tribune, our county newspaper. Being the Social Circle correspondent was not a full-time job, but I'm sure the post office frowned on such a thing. Because of this, Mr. Harry wrote under a pseudonym, Mrs. Harry Adams.

Everybody knew Martha Adams did not write the newspaper page, but we just went along with it.

Sometimes, what would be a nonevent in today's world was a major headline on the Social Circle page. When I was baptized, there was a story with the headline, "Young Harris Blackwood enters waters of baptism." It was big news, complete with a list of all the out-of-town relatives who came to see Preacher Tribble put me under.

As I reached my teen years, I lost track of Harry Adams. I knew Martha had died, but that was about the extent of my knowledge of their whereabouts.

A while back, we reconnected through his daughter, Jane, who is my real friend on Facebook. I found out he lives in the Augusta area.

Recently, I had the occasion to be in Augusta on a Sunday and I called Mr. Harry and invited myself to go to church with him. I had seen a picture or two on Facebook, but didn't know what to expect.

If you are Harry Adams, 88 is the new 68. He looked rather professorial in his perfectly tied bow tie and plaid blazer. There were no signs this man was an octogenarian. He stands straight as an arrow and walks rather briskly. He has a full complement of white hair that adds an air of dignity. He takes no prescription medications and gobbles down a few vitamins each

■ Please see **HARRY, 6E**

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NAT GURLEY | The Times

Tracy Padgett, her son Cole and their service dog, Price, act as a unit in public. Cole has cerebral palsy, which makes walking difficult.

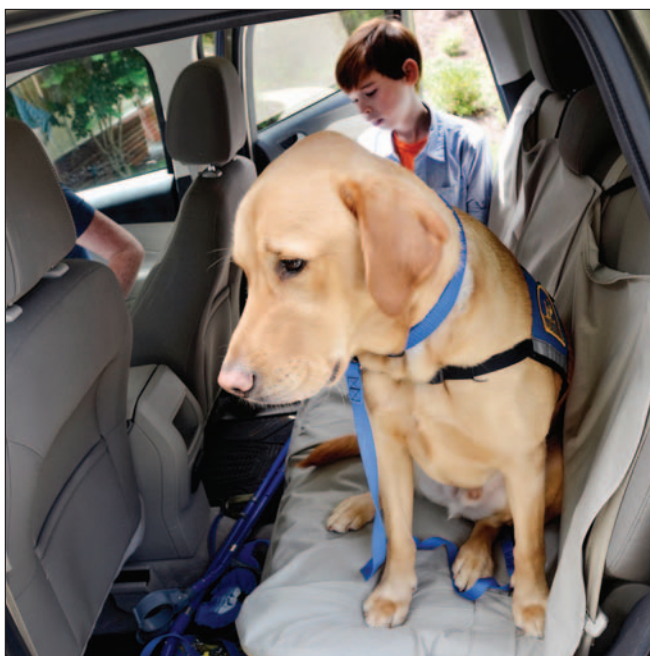
A boy's BEST FRIEND



For The Times

Price, a Labrador and golden retriever mix, curls up with 11-year-old Cole while at training school in Florida. Price is a service dog for the Gainesville boy, who has cerebral palsy, a movement disorder. Price is Cole's constant companion.

Dog serves unique purpose for area kid



NAT GURLEY | The Times

Price has his own seat tether in the Padgetts' car to keep him in a safe position in case of an accident.

BY SAVANNAH KING
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Online

Watch a video of Price working by clicking on this story online.

Price, like a lot of 2-year-old dogs, has a friendly disposition.

He gets excited about meeting new people and enjoys a good game of tug-of-war. But when Price wears his blue vest and collar, he's all business.

"It's funny how serious he gets when you put on his jacket," Tracy Padgett said as she slipped on his collar.

Price's job for the next six to eight years, until he's retired, is to be a skilled companion dog for Tracy's 11-year-old son, Cole. After Price retires, the family plans to adopt him as a pet.

Cole has cerebral palsy, a movement disorder making walking or bending over difficult.

"When Cole drops something, it's hard for him to bend down and pick it up," Cole's father and Gainesville City Manager Kip Padgett said. "He'll have to go down to his knees to get it himself."

Therefore, the family decided

to find a helping hand, or paw as it turned out. The Padgetts spent years searching for a service dog. After applying to Canine Companions for Independence a year ago, the family heard the good news. A dog in Florida would be Cole's constant companion.

Cole and Tracy traveled to Orlando, Fla., the company's Southeast headquarters, for two weeks in May to train with Price. The pair learned all 40 commands and how to care for the animal. While training, Cole and Tracy Padgett met the woman who cared for and trained Price since he was a puppy.

Catherine Baker, of Raleigh, N.C., has been a volunteer puppy raiser for Canine Companions for Independence for several years. Price, a mix of Labrador and golden retriever,

■ Please see **DOG, 6E**