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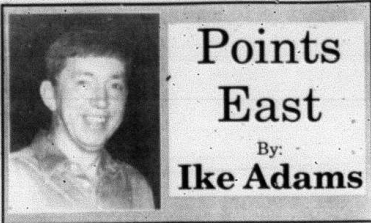
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Points East
By: **Ike Adams**

Patch is gone

When Loretta and I hooked up just over ten years ago, she came with three kids and a dog. Within a year the kids were as much mine as I had been their natural father and I felt like I had raised ole Patch from a pup. It is no understatement to say that he was a member of our family. I say "was" because we buried him last Saturday in a little pine grove in Madison County and it was one of the toughest things I've ever had to do. The toughest thing was agreeing with the vet that he would die a horrible death if we didn't put him to sleep.

Patch was going on 16 years of age. One year of a dog's life is supposed to be equivalent to seven human years. That made him nearly 112 in relative terms. Lots of folks have asked us over the years, what breed he was and the closest description we could offer was All Dog. A broad shouldered, medium height, brown fellow with a few white patches on his feet, chest and torso. Loretta says that if there was a breed of dogs just like him, they would be called Faithful.

Over the last three years we had watched him age pretty rapidly. He lost most of his hearing and he devel-

oped a pretty bad hitch in his gait along, but as recently as two weeks ago he would attempt to bounce around and play tag in the yard with the kids or myself. He was still the first member of our family to greet whoever showed up at the door and he still managed to, somehow, wag all over when we came home from work and school.

In his prime, I have seen him snap to attention and trot to the end of the driveway as much as five minutes before Loretta's car came into sight, or for that matter within hearing distance of my own cars. He could even recognize the different motors of the numerous school buses that passed our house on 52. He paid no attention to the ones that our kids weren't on, but when he saw it coming in the distance, he would trot out to welcome them home. Since they all look alike, I'm convinced that he distinguished some subtle little sound that the human ear cannot detect.

He managed to live so long because he was saved from certain death at least twice as a result of efforts that can only be described as heroic.

On one occasion he walked several hundred yards out onto a lake that

was covered with a thin sheet of ice. It broke and he fell through. Some neighbors with a boat spent more than an hour frantically breaking through the ice to paddle out and rescue him in sub zero temperature. Loretta revived him with hot baths and prayers.

On another occasion he was missing for several days and we had combed the woods and neighborhood on Harmon's Lick for miles. We had checked ditchlines thinking he might have been hit by a car and we had involved numerous neighbors in the search. The whole family was distraught. We thought that he might have been poisoned. We were not overly concerned that he was stolen because he simply wouldn't have stood for it and the local hospitals told us that nobody had been admitted with severe dog bites.

A few days later our neighbor, Lola Prewitt, called Loretta to tell her that she could faintly hear a dog barking. They found him stuck in a culvert more than two feet below the surface of Harmon's Lick Road. Not only that but a thunderstorm was underway and he was in great danger of drowning.

Thank God for the Cartersville Fire Department because more than a dozen of its members show up with picks, sledge hammers and iron diggers. While some of them flagged and rerouted traffic, the others cut a hole through more than a foot of black top and another foot of gravel. The culvert had separated in the middle and they were able to pull him out no more than five minutes before it was completely filled with a raging current. He was covered with mud, but Loretta went back to the hot bath and after a few ravenous meals and much loving care he was back to normal in less than a week.

Junior Helton guarded the hole in the road while I rounded up 1000 pounds of ready mix concrete. We

patched the break in the culvert and used every ounce of ready mix to fill the hole. That was five years ago and the kids still joke when we go visiting on Harmon's Lick and pass that culvert that we are on the strongest part of any road in Garrard County. This time though, he couldn't be saved. No heroic efforts of any neighbors or fire departments or even a hospital could have done anything to make him survive. We are trying gallantly to remember the good times and the good life he had. But our kids are getting their first real experience with grief and learning how painful it is. We're missing our old Patch and dealing with the sorrow. Somehow there's not much comfort in knowing that there will never be another like him.

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