

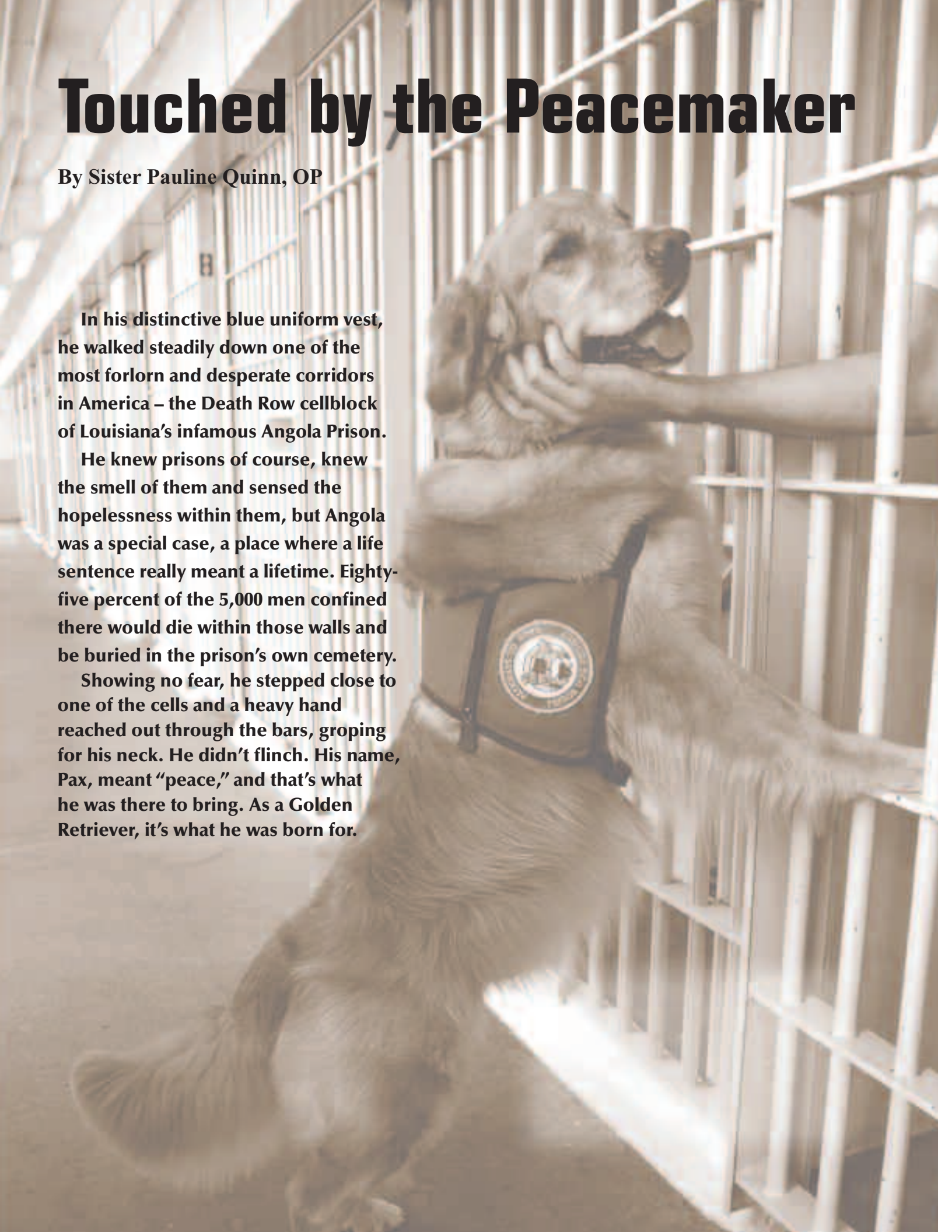
Touched by the Peacemaker

By Sister Pauline Quinn, OP

In his distinctive blue uniform vest, he walked steadily down one of the most forlorn and desperate corridors in America – the Death Row cellblock of Louisiana’s infamous Angola Prison.

He knew prisons of course, knew the smell of them and sensed the hopelessness within them, but Angola was a special case, a place where a life sentence really meant a lifetime. Eighty-five percent of the 5,000 men confined there would die within those walls and be buried in the prison’s own cemetery.

Showing no fear, he stepped close to one of the cells and a heavy hand reached out through the bars, groping for his neck. He didn’t flinch. His name, Pax, meant “peace,” and that’s what he was there to bring. As a Golden Retriever, it’s what he was born for.



The warden of the Louisiana State Prison for Men wanted to start a prison dog program so Pax and I had been invited down to remote Angola. Pax went to every building, meeting the inmates and staff, with some of the inmates saying that they hadn't touched a dog in years. Pax was the star. He was so happy to have so many people pay attention to him. So many wanted to touch him.

Pax has traveled more than half a million miles in his six years of life, bringing love to thousands of people, from prisoners to elementary school students. He has become my dear companion and, due to my declining health in recent years, my dependable aide and helper.

I was a missionary, working in wars, bringing wounded into the United States for medical attention, bringing children from orphanages for adoption...a dog wouldn't fit into this work.

He has so many special friends that when we get off the airplane, he sometimes prances as we walk down the jetway to the seating area. He throws his head back with excitement. He thinks that all the people standing there are waiting for him. He lifts his head back trying to catch a scent that he recognizes, and if he sees or scents someone he knows, Pax squeals with delight and runs into their arms.

Pax was sold to me for one dollar by Deborah Harper of Fresno, California, on the condition that I use my new Golden friend to do something good for others... and to send her pictures.

I had met Deborah through my Golden Retriever Guide Dog friends, Toni and Ed Eames. Though blind, they both had trained and handled their previous Golden to Companion Dog Excellent titles. Sighted dog handlers have a hard enough time obtaining their dog's CDX titles and to watch my blind friends compete and receive titles for their guide dogs was inspiring.

So, when I found out that Deborah's Golden Retriever *Cinnabar's Desert Illusion CDX*; *Can CD* was expecting puppies out of *Am-Can CH. Golden Pine Dustrax Maverick CDX, TDX, OS, CGC*; *Can CD*, I talked to her about obtaining a pup for my work in prisons.

The opportunity to have a Golden Retriever was exciting to me, but I found myself wondering if the responsibility that I was taking on would fit into the complicated puzzle of my life.

I was a missionary, working in war zones, bringing wounded into the United States for medical attention, bringing children from orphanages for adoption and helping people from Third World countries who needed artificial limbs. A dog wouldn't fit into this work. But on the other side of the coin; I was starting programs in prisons where inmates were training dogs to help the handicapped. Pax would be a natural in the prison dog projects.

How could I manage having a dog when I had to travel away so often? Going in and out of dangerous areas increased the possibility I might not even return home. What would happen to Pax? Where could I keep him? I live on a remote farm in a clearing in the woods of Maine. If he stayed here, he wouldn't have another dog to play with. The sisters are busy with other projects. He would be alone. I needed to feel he would be safe, freeing my mind from worry while I was gone. These questions kept pressing my mind, unsure how it would work out. Should I take the pup?

Back in 1981 I started the first prison dog program in Washington State where women inmates learned how to train dogs to assist the disabled. The program is still going. Since then, I started prison dog programs at the California Institution for Women, as well as programs in Massachusetts, Maine, and Wisconsin. I also have helped many people who have sought out advice about how to start programs in their states.

For me, the decision to do prison work with dogs has had far-reaching effects – it was like a stone thrown into the water making ripples and expanding them outward. The first prison dog program started the ripples, then when many people learned of the programs, they too wanted to reach out to prisoners, dogs and the handicapped by starting their own dog programs. Once the dogs got inside the prison many lives started to change. It became like the ripples, moving from one institution to another. Not only did it affect the life of the prisoner, but the staff, volunteers and others who came in contact with the programs were able to see the inmates accomplishing something that was good and worthwhile.

I did not have to look very far to



Young Pax had no idea when he arrived in Maine what adventures lay in store for him in his action-packed life.

understand the impact dogs can have on troubled lives. My own childhood was not what anyone would call happy or even normal. I had been abandoned as a child, mostly because of a dysfunctional home-life. My stepfather had been tortured in the Bataan Death March during WWII. During the 1950s, I was shunted from one institution to another where I was forgotten at best or victimized at worst. It was a scarring time, literally as well as figuratively, and some of the scars I gave myself as I struggled with feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness. Sometimes I lived alone on the streets. It was difficult for me to imagine anything good would ever come of my life.

It was the unconditional love of a dog – a German Shepherd – that finally showed me how to find value in myself and helped change my life. Realizing the positive effects of dogs and their love in people's lives, I wanted others who had experienced hardships to find healing by the love of a dog, hoping that it would help them find meaning in their suffering.



California Institution for Women... Pax and an inmate show love from the heart



When Sister Pauline's duties call her away for long periods of time, Kathy McIntyre, owner of Pax's sire, takes him in. Kathy encouraged Sister Pauline to put obedience and tracking titles on Pax.

Viktor Frankl, a Jewish psychiatrist and survivor of the Holocaust, wrote a book called "Man's Search for Meaning." He found that those in the Holocaust who were able to survive the experience found meaning in the midst of their suffering by helping others. They might have been

Pax passed his tracking test in one try, working so fast that if you ever saw the Flying Nun on the old TV shows, you would have thought that was me.

treated horribly, but when they were able to look past what was happening to them, and reach out to the other people who were suffering in the concentration camps, trying to do things that would help those who were worse off, it gave them the greatest sense of feeling needed, which helped them survive.

This same opportunity to find meaning in their lives is what I wanted to give to the prisoners; by using a dog and the training of that dog, as a means to reach out to help people in the community who were suffering from a disability. An additional benefit was to save unwanted dogs in shelters.

Thinking of all of this, I believed that if I could do something very special with this Golden pup that was being given to me, helping him find *his* special mission in life, too, then I was sure that the Lord would help me find places for him to stay while I was gone overseas.

When Deborah brought little Pax to the home of Toni and Ed Eames, he was eight weeks old. I had flown from Maine to Sacramento, and then took a train down to the central part of California to pick up my new pup, Pax. I decided that no matter how hard it would be, I wanted to have him in my life.

It was just before Christmas. Pax was fluffy and full of life the first time I saw him. He was just taking everything in. I was excited and picked him up in my arms, giving him a big hug. I was thrilled that Pax was now with me but knew this was the start of a long, perhaps hard and complicated adventure. I had to get him back home to Maine before winter set in.

Since Pax was going to be trained as a service dog, I had his little cape with me. Just before we boarded the train for Sacramento, I put his cape on and we started our long adventure back to Maine.

Flying out of Sacramento, I had played with him all day, then took him on a night flight east so he would be tired, the inside of the cabin would be dark and hopefully he would sleep. I had a little soft-sided open purse-type carrier so he would feel secure. Little Pax took the trip in stride, never having an accident.

He was greeted with much love by the sisters when we returned home and he started to settle in to the life on the farm. It started to snow not long after we returned and Pax loved to dig his head deep into the snow as if he was looking for some-

thing. He settled in for the long winter months ahead of us.

This was the beginning of Pax's travels, which have taken him over 500,000 miles, flying to many states and countries, where he did what he knows best – being a peacemaker to thousands of people.

Throughout the years, I've made my rounds with Pax to visit many prisons. At Christmas time, I would put a Christmas collar on him that had bells on it so when we made our rounds down the hall of the prison cells, the inmates heard Pax coming. It was a stark contrast in the prison environment to hear Pax's Golden Christmas cheer moving from cell to cell. When Pax greeted each person, he acted like they were the most important person on earth.

When we went to visit university students or the classrooms of the children in elementary school, Pax would do a demonstration that delighted everyone. When I would say to Pax, "What do I do in church" he immediately would sit up with his front legs held high, his paws then touched together and held that way to show that I prayed. It is so unusual that a dog could bring his paws together and hold them together that it made people laugh.

Pax always enjoyed the last part of the demonstration the best when he could go up and down the rows of students giving his love to them.

My work in Bosnia and Croatia continued on. The more my love for Pax grew, the more I hated to leave him. I was fortunate enough to have a number of prison dog programs started near me where I could keep Pax. He would have a whole prison population who he could visit and love him. He would live with the inmates in their cells. He would be well cared for as well as being supervised by the staff. I certainly knew he was not going to escape and become lost, as he might from someone's back yard. I was free to travel, knowing that there were people who would look out for Pax at the same time he was being loved. What more could I ask for him?

The few times that I couldn't leave him at a prison program, Pax and I would fly clear across the United States to California where Kathy and Ralph McIntyre live. They own Pax's sire "Brett." I knew they would take excellent care of him. I knew he would be loved and could play with other Golden retrievers among the pine trees in McIntyre's back yard in the hills of Los Gatos.



The staff at the New Hampshire State Prison greet two young Golden puppies rescued by Sister Pauline through Foothills Golden Retriever Rescue. They will be raised in foster homes and later begin serious service dog training at the prison.



In Rome, Italy, at the Rebibbia prison, Sister Pauline was instrumental in beginning the prison dog-training program. Pax went along to give the inmates an opportunity to work with a trained dog. It was a thrill to see how the girls love the dogs that they are training.

Pax stayed with Kathy and Ralph for months at a time while I traveled to a war or other place to do my work.

Both Deborah and Kathy McIntyre encouraged me to test and recognize Pax's heritage and natural abilities as a Golden by trying to get a Companion Dog title. It didn't take very long and he received his title. Kathy, who is very involved with tracking, encouraged me to go out and get Pax's Tracking Dog title as well. Being on a farm in Maine gave me the opportunity to practice his tracking in large fields, in the woods, and on remote back roads.

Pax passed his tracking test in one try, working so fast that if you ever saw the Flying Nun on the old TV shows, you would have thought that was me.

Pax was so eager to track that I had to have several people walk in front of him so I could hold him back as we walked to the starting stake. He is the strongest dog I ever had. Since I felt like fainting, either from low blood sugar or the excitement of it all, I had tied the end of the 30-foot line to my wrist in hopes that I could hold on to it if I fell to the ground.

Pax is trained to come back and help me up if I fall so I knew that if I did fall on the track, he would be right there to help me up. He did this in training, ran back to help me rise, then carried on with following the scent that would lead to the dropped article. He is very good with this task and it is a comfort to me to know that if I fall he will be there for me.

Once I fell in deep snow one night during a blizzard. I was moving from one of our buildings to the main house, Pax was ahead of me. I struggled to get up but couldn't. I called him and he came right to

my side and braced himself so I could pull myself out of the deep snow. If he wasn't there, it would have been very difficult for me because I was unable to get out of the snow without help.

After Pax received his CD and TD, I was encouraged to go on to get his Companion Dog Excellent title. He got this title in five shows. We then went up to Canada where Pax got his Canadian CD and he got two legs on his CDX in two shows.

In terms of his natural abilities and instincts, Pax is all Golden. He is a true Golden, also, in the way he

senses the needs of humans around him and reacts to them. I will never forget the impact of Pax on the death row inmates that we visited at the Tennessee State Prison for Women in Nashville. It was my first experience on a death row. Looking at the women who had to stay in their cells 23 hours a day for years, made me wonder how they can cope with this isolation. It was a wonderful feeling to be able to bring in Pax in this part of the prison where many people are not allowed to go and let Pax lick the hand of an inmate through the little slot in the cell door.

They really were moved by the contact with him.

The experience made me see so clearly how the love of a dog, who did not judge them for what they did to bring them to prison, could help heal wounded hearts.



Nicky, a Papillon puppy that is now at the Indiana State Prison for Women for service dog training, snuggles in for a nap. He will be coming back to Maine when he is ready. Pax loves this little guy and he loves Pax.

And those ripples that I talked about earlier? They kept spreading.

An actress named Ellen Burstyn heard of the prison dog programs while she was doing a movie in Canada. She had her agent contact me, who asked if I would be interested in talking to a client, Ellen Burstyn. I had no idea who she was or how famous she was (she won the Best Actress Oscar for "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore") since I don't go to many movies. I said that it was fine if she wanted to call me, which she did a few days later.

Ellen told me how much she loved the idea of the prison dog programs and she wanted to do a movie about it. She asked me if I was interested in talking to her. I happened to be going to Kathy and Ralph McIntyre's house the same time that Ellen was going to be in the area visiting her brother. We arranged to meet at the McIntyre's house.

It was a very nice meeting. Ellen asked me many questions about my life and about the prison programs. She said she would like to produce a movie that would help people know more about the programs. Ellen was able to convince Lifetime television to buy the rights to the movie and so it began a new adventure for Pax and me, flying to Montréal, Canada, to where the movie was being made. I was really excited that Pax would be able to be in the movie, even though he would have only a small part.

Laura Dern played me - a tall, blonde, thin lady - making me excited that the world wouldn't know who I really was, since I am not tall, or blonde or thin, and Ellen Burstyn played a prisoner. They both did a wonderful job.

Pax did very well in his role when he came out at the end of the movie, showing off his wonderful nature. I, however, was a nervous wreck - one of these "stage mothers" with my comb in hand - the type that had to have everything perfect with her "child." I quickly saw that Pax did a great job walking on stage and standing there, which was the only thing that he had to do. In order for them to do this scene, they kept Pax and me on the set for three extra days; paying for our hotel room, and changing our ticket to go back later.

The name of the movie is *Within These Walls* and it is available on DVD.

While there is growing interest in programs to let prisoners train service and assistance dogs, they are not possible everywhere. At Angola, for example, the



At the Angola prison, Pax's visits are especially welcome in the hospice ward. He fills the rooms with joy and love. You cannot be around Pax without feeling his love.

program is going to start, but the prison is so remote that there are no experienced trainers living nearby. This makes a program much harder to start.

But even so, just visiting a prison with a dog like Pax can have good effects, as we saw at Angola. When we made our way to the hospice part of the prison where there were many inmates who were dying, I was very sad to know that these men had very little time left. Their families often abandon the inmates after the first three years that they are in prison. It is so far from any town that getting to Angola isn't easy and the people stop coming.

To bring Pax into this sad environment made the prison be filled with a spirit of love. You just can't be around Pax without feeling his love. I just wonder if more inmates and staff felt loved in their own lives, they could find more meaning for their existence. Hope is lost when you do something terribly bad at a moment in time, and it can't be taken back, just lived with.

Pax and I were also taken to the room where the inmates were strapped down and killed. Pax placed his paws on the cross shaped table. When I saw him touching the table, I hoped that the spirit of Pax would remain in this room and the unconditional love of this peaceful dog would bring a good spirit to the next per-

son who had to lay their head on this table where their life would end.

The most extensive prison dog program Pax and I helped with was in Italy, at the Ribbiba prison, where Pax became a star for the Italian television and I had the chance to make my TV debut (in Rome, at the center of my faith, no less) as a helpless old nun. Pax demonstrated how he helped pull off shoes and socks, turn lights on and off, and pick me up when I fall. Having Pax run over to pick me up – and I really need him for this task – is embarrassing enough when you fall when you are alone, but to do it on Italian TV where I knew that the old priests from the Vatican could be watching this Golden dog help an old nun off the ground wasn't easy for me to do.

Pax loved the Italian prison. They have large grass areas that the dogs can use to romp and play together.

I had grown to love the city in the 1980s when I worked there with African refugees, and I learned about many handicapped people who didn't go out much. Some people were ashamed of them. I felt that if the Italian people learned about the dogs and how they helped others, perhaps someone would want to start a program in this prison so the handicapped people of Rome could be helped.

Back in the 1980s I approached a movie dog trainer named Massimo Perla who is one of the top trainers for the Italian films. He has a dog training center in Rome called *Indiana Kayowa*, where he promoted Agility competition. I wanted very much for Massimo to start the prison

I don't like people's lives to be wasted. I want them to find a meaning to their existence.

dog program in Rome but at that time, he was unable to do it. I don't think that the Italian prison system would have been ready either but I had hoped.

Twenty years later, Massimo's life changed. He wanted to do more to help others and started the prison dog program. He had to convince the Italian prison system to let him in. Since he is a famous dog trainer, it helped to open the doors. This is the only prison dog program that started with the involvement of psychologists, a medical doctor, and many trainers. You can see it on the web page <http://www.confido.it>

Many times over the years, the person who most needed to draw upon the spirit of Pax has been me.

As time travels on, I wonder when I will have to stop my work. Having operations one right after another as well as trying to help so many people in difficult places, I am just getting tired.

Pax now has a big lump on his side, which is getting bigger. The veterinarian said not to worry, but there also is a low blood platelet count that has us concerned. Pax's face is turning a little gray. He still is strong but easier to manage. I wonder how long I will have with him. I don't worry so much about that though because I have no control over what happens. I just learn to accept what happens and go on. I see that so often in the wars or helping refugees. They can't control what happened to them, some are separated from their families forever. They have no choice really in what to do. They either die of a broken heart or they go on and most choose to go on to see what is waiting for them next.

I want to have these lasting memories of what this special dog has done for so many people. All the great friends that he has made along life's way.

The prison programs are always looking for dogs. I love the Golden Retriever the best but they use other dogs as well, purebred and mixed, mostly young – not over a year old. The older the dog is when they get into the program, the more bad habits need to be worked out. Starting them when they are young helps to mold the dog to what is expected of them.

I still am hoping that I can get Pax's UD. I am sure that Pax could do it, but it is me that I am worried about. Having diabetes keeps me tired. But working with Pax would bring about a lower blood sugar and would help me become healthier. So I am motivated.

Pax's registered name is *Cinnabar's Peacemaker CDX,TD*. If you ever meet us in the airport, at a dog show, on the airplane, please come and greet us. We would love to meet you. If you know young dogs that would like a job, please contact me.

Let us all work for peace in this world. Pax be with you. ❖

For more information on Sister Pauline Quinn, OP, and her work visit:
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