



Tom Thompson

## CVM receives gift to establish cancer unit

**L**ulu's parentage was dubious—part Labrador, part collie...maybe. What was certain was the bond she shared with Delta farmer Malcolm Mabry, Jr.

Fifteen years ago, Mabry, along with neighbor David Cook, found Lulu near the edge of a wheat field on Mabry's farm near Dublin in Coahoma County. The abandoned pup was cold, frightened and too weak to run away. Lucky for her she didn't.

Mabry, a former state lawmaker, took the dog home, bathed her and provided a meal of warm milk and bread. That was the beginning of a 15-year relationship.

Mabry and Cook shared the responsibility of raising Lulu. During the day, she would ride in Mabry's truck back to the farm. Resting in the shade of a tree, she would watch Mabry as he worked the fields with his tractor.

Lulu's life changed in July 2002, when, at age 13, a fast-growing cancerous tumor appeared in her right leg.

Mabry and Cook took Lulu to Mississippi State University's College of Veterinary Medicine to undergo surgery. Although successful, the surgery could not remove all of the cancerous cells.

As a result, it was necessary for Lulu to go to Auburn University for a month of radiation therapy—a form of treatment unavailable at Mississippi State.

Mabry and Cook spent every weekend that month visiting their beloved pet at the Alabama school. During those visits

they spent hours riding around the countryside—Lulu's favorite pastime.

"Taking animals to Auburn for radiation treatments is a long way to travel, and people hate to leave their pets and not see them for a month," Mabry said.

Following the treatment, Lulu continued to receive follow-up chemotherapy at Mississippi State.

The surgery, radiation treatment and chemotherapy bought Lulu time, but that time ran out in September 2004. Her experience, however, led to lasting friendships between Mabry and many of the doctors and staff at the College of Veterinary Medicine.

"Until you actually deal with a sick pet, you don't really come to appreciate how competent and compassionate the people at the College of Veterinary Medicine are," he said.

Lulu's experience also convinced Mabry of the need for a modern veterinary radiation unit closer to home. As a result, he has made a generous donation that will provide part of the \$1.5 million needed for a state-of-the-art radiation oncology unit at Mississippi State. The gift will allow for research and treatment of tumors and cancerous cells that, as in Lulu's case, cannot be surgically removed because of their location within the animal.

"My dream is to have a radiation oncology unit here," Mabry said, "so that anyone in this area—and that would include not just Mississippi, but parts of Arkansas, Tennessee

and Alabama—can bring their pets to fight cancer without having to travel long distances.”

A similar radiation program at Auburn University, where Lulu was treated, allows for the treatment of animals ranging in size from kittens to adult horses. Side effects to the radiation therapy have been minimal, since the treatments are limited to the area immediately surrounding the tumor.

“Cancer is so widespread, it’s almost a plague in the world today, and our pets have it just like humans,” said Mabry. “Often chemotherapy and surgery can’t complete the job, but radiation therapy is another powerful weapon in the fight against cancer in our pets.”

Dr. Lee Tyner, hospital director at the College of Veterinary Medicine agrees.



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“This will really help us treat more pets more appropriately,” the MSU veterinarian said. “Cancer is prevalent in dogs and there are many cancers that don’t respond to anything other than radiation.”

Mabry served in the Mississippi Legislature for 24 years, first in the House of Representatives and then in the Senate. He was in office in 1974 when legislation was passed establishing the College of Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State.

“Mr. Mabry’s generosity and commitment to helping the College of Veterinary Medicine establish a top-rate oncology unit is a true testament to his compassion for companion animals and their owners,” said Keith Gaskin, director of development for the college. “He was a strong supporter of the college during his long tenure as a Mississippi legislator, and he continues to work hard for us today.”

Mabry also has high hopes that, through research on the effects of radiation therapy, “some of what we learn through treating cancer in animals might one day be translated into human use.”

That would be a quite a legacy for a pup once abandoned in a Delta wheat field.



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Small animal internal medical resident Dr. Andrea Balch and senior student Ellen Tan discuss Lulu’s case with David Cook and Malcolm Mabry.

Mississippi State’s College of Veterinary Medicine is one of only 28 fully accredited veterinary schools in the nation. MSU veterinary researchers have saved Mississippi producers of beef, catfish, poultry and pork tens of millions of dollars through disease prevention and nutrition improvements since the college was founded.

For more information on this and other giving opportunities, contact the MSU Foundation at (662) 325-3815 or (877) 677-8283.