

# Pet Poodles Create Bond for Owners, CVM Students



*Teddy B*

By Debbie Montgomery

Two pets and more than a quarter of a century of relationships with Mississippi State University's College of Veterinary Medicine have cemented a bond between a Germantown, Tenn., couple and the college.

James and Linda Johnson received college educations at other institutions, but the education forged by their pets' illnesses have led to a lifetime commitment as voluntary spokespersons on behalf of the CVM.

"Mississippi State University veterinary medicine students have an unparalleled sense of commitment and compassion. It is truly an uplifting experience to visit CVM," Linda said. "The more I have learned how extremely important veterinary medicine is to society, I realize we just don't give them enough credit."

The Johnsons first became supporters of MSU when James was serving as president of the Mississippi Seedsmen Association in 1979 and later as president of the Mississippi Agricultural Chemicals Council in 1984. Through these associations, he was friends with the late Dr. Louis Wise, former vice president of MSU's Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine. That relationship promoted an interest in the development and success of the College of Veterinary Medicine.

When their much-loved pet of 19 years became seriously ill, the Johnsons' appreciation of the CVM was elevated to a more personal level. Then-intern Susan Simmons, impressed them with her concern for their poodle, Rusty. Simmons discovered that her patient had gastric ulcerations.

The care given to Rusty prompted the Johnsons to honor a friend and owner of Clarksdale Animal Medical Clinic by establishing the Dr. Gerry Grant Humane Award at MSU.

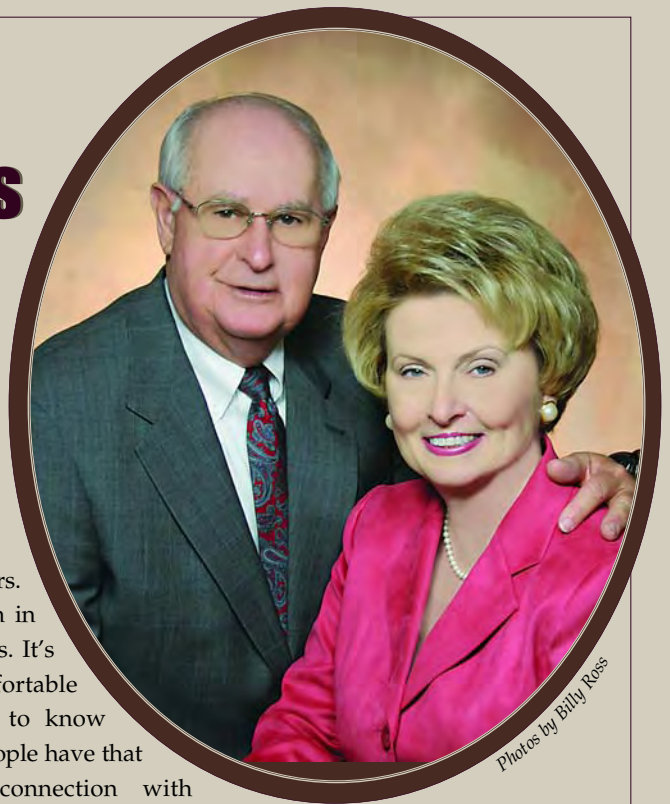
Simmons, who practices veterinary medicine in Greenville, credits people like the Johnsons with enabling MSU to attract outstanding professors and students.

"If the Johnsons are impressed with students from Mississippi State, it's because of the teachers," Simmons said.

The Johnsons had another opportunity for personal insights into the CVM clinic when their new pet, Teddy B, became ill. Linda originally attributed the symptoms to his arthritis medicine, but the onset of seizures eventually resulted in a diabetes diagnosis.

A decade after establishing the Dr. Gerry Grant Humane Award, MSU CVM graduate and Grant's son, Dr. Craig Grant, provided medical care to Teddy during his diabetic treatments.

The younger Grant was pleased to assist his former elementary school principal in her dog's care. "I probably hadn't



*Photos by Billy Ross*

*James and Linda Johnson*

seen Mrs. Johnson in 10 years. It's a comfortable feeling to know that people have that MSU connection with you. I always enjoy having ties to my home state and to my school," he said.

Teddy B required two insulin injections every day, each morning and each evening, at the same time each day. His food intake had to be closely monitored and stress levels kept to a minimum.

"Whether in a pet or a person, diabetes is a horrible disease. To compound the problem with a pet, there is no current procedure available to monitor glucose levels daily. Teddy would go to the clinic every three to four weeks for a glucose curve. For a pet like Teddy who was clinically difficult to stabilize, this is unacceptable," Linda added.

Teddy B died May 18, 2004, after 14 years of providing companionship to the Johnsons, but his spirit remains a part of the Johnsons' lives as well as those CVM students and others who provided care. Because of the profound sense of caring at CVM, James and Linda made a commitment to the Pegasus Partners Endowment.

In honor of Teddy B, the couple has established the James C. and Linda B. Johnson Annual Scholarship, awarded annually to a CVM student who is perceived as having a caring and compassionate attitude toward animals and individuals, and has shown promise for an outstanding career in veterinary medicine.

"James and I have felt for a long time that we should help educate young people and help take care of little animals," Linda said. "Remembering or honoring a pet with a gift to CVM as well as including CVM in estate planning will ensure a bright future, not only for CVM, but for the well-being of society in general."