



## **Bailey Battles Canine Oral Melanoma**

It was Christmas Day 2007, when Frank Santonastasi found a tumor the size of a golf ball inside the mouth of his thirteen-year-old Chow/Rottweiler mix, Bailey. “Bailey is always picking up things on our walks,” said Frank. “When I reached into her mouth, I was confused for a moment why the tumor wouldn’t come out.”

Frank took Bailey to her family veterinarian who surgically removed the tumor for biopsy. The biopsy showed it to be malignant melanoma. Canine oral melanoma is known to be one of the most aggressive canine cancers, so it was expected that the tumor would regrow and spread to the lymph nodes and lungs in a few short months. It was recommended that Frank not seek treatment, due to Bailey’s age and simply enjoy the remaining time he had with Bailey.

In the meantime, Frank began researching canine cancer treatments and vaccines. He found CARES online. Wanting to learn more, Frank scheduled Bailey for an appointment in January 2008 with CARES Oncologist, Dr. Beth Overley. Frank explained to Dr. Overley that he wasn’t sure he wanted to seek invasive treatment for Bailey. They discussed treatment with Oncept, the new melanoma vaccine that has few side effects, and Bailey began this treatment.

The initial tumor was large, and not all of the cells had been removed. Despite three treatments with Oncept, the tumor returned. Bailey was in good overall physical health, and at that point, Frank wanted to do everything he could to help her. Therefore, Dr. Overley recommended surgical removal and medical treatment with a drug called carboplatin, in addition to last melanoma vaccine. The hope was treat Bailey’s disease aggressively enough to defeat it, though the odds were low.

CARES surgeon Dr. Puerto performed Bailey’s surgery and managed to achieve clean tumor margins. “Bailey came out of the surgery as if nothing had happened,” explained Frank. “Because of where the tumor was on the side of her mouth, she had to have some reconstructive surgery. When I first saw her, she was all shaved and looked kind of crazy, but she felt great and wagged her tail like a fool.” Bailey completed her treatments in the spring of 2008, and now, almost 3 years after her first diagnosis, her cancer appears to be under control. She came in to oncology for periodic monitoring after treatment, but now she enjoys her life with Frank and only comes to CARES on occasion to visit other specialists in internal medicine and ophthalmology.

“I have had Bailey since 1994 and am glad to report that she is just a few months from her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday in January of 2011,” said Frank. “At CARES there is a specialist for everything and I have always had very, very professional and knowledgeable service from their veterinary specialists.”

