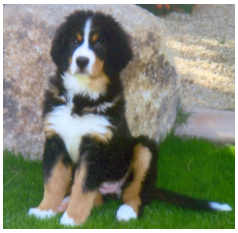
At a year of age, Millie Stuart is a Bernese Mountain dog that weighs 90 pounds. Her owners, Jon and Dee Dee Stuart of Tulsa, Okla., describe her as a 'gentle giant, just a big friendly dog.'

"We purchased Millie from a Texas breeder," explains Dee Dee. "All her papers were in order and the breeder was very proud that there was no sign of any hip dysplasia, which many large breeds are prone to have."



However, as Millie grew, a slight limp was noticeable. On a regular visit to her veterinarian, Dr. D. C. Smith noticed Millie was walking a little different than normal.

"Dr. Smith took some radiographs at his clinic and confirmed that Millie has hip dysplasia," says Dee Dee. "He referred us to Dr. Mark Rochat at OSU."

Rochat is the Small Animal Surgery Section Chief at the Boren Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital located within the OSU Center for Veterinary Health Sciences complex in Stillwater.

In early December 2008, Millie underwent surgery to correct the problem. Under Rochat's tutelage, Dr. Zachary Ricker, a resident in small animal surgery, performed a triple pelvic osteotomy (TPO) on Millie's left side. The procedure lasted 3 to 4 hours with the actual surgery taking about 2 hours to complete.

As with every case at the veterinary teaching hospital, Millie was assigned a 4th year veterinary student. The students spend a 3-week rotation in every aspect of veterinary medicine at the hospital to gain hands-on experience.

"The students were wonderful," recalls Dee Dee. "Jennifer Mead and Erica Reinman both spent their 3-week rotations with Millie, one after the other. They researched how to do her rehab. They called me twice a day with updates on Millie's progress and spent many hours working with her so she could walk again. I can't say enough about how much they helped her to recover."

Rochat reports that Millie's prognosis is very good.

"Even though Millie managed to pull the screws partially out of the bone on the back part of her TPO site, the acetabular cup remained rotated like it is supposed to," says Rochat. "As long as the TPO continues to stabilize Millie's left hip, she will be fine."

After a short recovery period at OSU's veterinary hospital, Millie was back home with the Stuarts. Until Millie was completely healed, she was confined to being on a leash with no running or jumping. However, as the saying goes, 'it's hard to keep a good dog down.'

"On New Year's Day I was out with Millie," explains Dee Dee. "She was on a leash but somehow, she was able to lunge at a bird. As a result, she dislocated her right hip. Dr. Smith was able to relocate it back into position; but within 24 hours, it was out again."

So on Jan. 2, 2009, the Stuarts checked Millie back into the veterinary hospital. This time a total hip replacement was needed on her right side, which Rochat performed.

"We're glad the Stuarts were able to stick it out through the long haul," smiles Rochat. "They were wonderful to work with and the improved function Millie received is so important for such a young dog. Within two to three months of this last surgery, Millie should be back to running and jumping like normal."

While Jon and Dee Dee Stuart have never before needed the veterinary services available at OSU's Center for Veterinary Health Sciences, they are not strangers to the center. In the past they have donated $2,000 to the Brittany Fund, which was established by a grateful client to help defray the veterinary expenses of people who are truly indigent and do not have the financial means to provide for their pet in exceptional cases. The Stuart Family Foundation gave $5,000 to support the Small Animal ICU renovations currently in progress. The Stuarts have also donated $26,000 to create the Dr. D.C. Smith Endowed Scholarship in honor of their beloved veterinarian and OSU veterinary alumnus (Class of 1970). The $1,000 scholarship was awarded for the first time in 2009 to a full-time veterinary student in good academic standing.

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