

**In memory of Belle, loving family member of Patty and Mike Zahares  
September 16, 1994 ~ February 16, 2010**

*...She will live forever in our hearts...*



**W**e rescued Belle through NGRR on September 8th, 1999, just a week before Belle's 5th birthday. After losing our 16 year old Golden mix, Belle actually rescued us!

Her former family, a couple with a baby, had "Belle Starr" and her litter mate, "Cisco Kid" since they were puppies. Though the wife wanted to keep them both, the husband decided it was too much to have two dogs and a baby, and wanted to surrender both dogs. They compromised by keeping Cisco and surrendering Belle, since she was supposedly the "hellion" of the two. (Personally, I would have surrendered the husband and kept Belle and Cisco). It was obvious that Belle and Cisco were taken care of, but neglected. They were inside dogs that were left outside most of the time, starving for attention. It broke our hearts, that we couldn't take both of them.

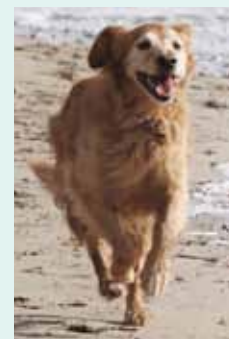
Out of boredom, Belle used to go around the neighborhood (in the Santa Cruz mountains), steal shoes from neighbor's front porches and bury them. She also barked all the time, because she didn't like being left outside...she loved people and wanted to be with them. The first thing we noticed, when we brought her home, was that she didn't bark at all. We thought she was just being shy and would probably start barking, once she settled into her new home. We waited and waited, even encouraging her. In the 10 years/5 months that she lived with us, except for maybe 3 times, she never barked. Content as an indoor dog, she no longer felt the need. Since we both have home offices, we were now her new, full-time litter mates.

Belle loved everyone and everyone loved her. Even all the cats in the neighborhood would come out to greet her and rub up against her, when we went on our daily walks. There was even a cat fight over her. She just took it all in. She always had a big smile on her face which drew smiles from everyone that saw her. With all the attention she always got, we felt like we were with a celebrity. People even wanted their pictures taken with her! We've met so many people because of Belle and now without her, we're back to being just an average couple.

Belle loved the beach and vacationing with us, especially at the Cypress Inn in Carmel. She also loved her toys and tennis balls, but wasn't obsessive about it. She was known as "Belle of the Ball" or "Bellerina" because she would dance around with her ball, fling it in the air and catch it. It looked like a choreographed ballet. Swimming was her other passion. If she had her way, she'd stay in the water all day. She was also an excellent therapy dog with an intuitive, calming effect. If either one of us got upset over something, she was always there to calm us down. She was especially gentle with elderly people on our visits to nursing homes. Then there was the day, she uncannily detected bladder cancer on a friend, by sniffing his crotch relentlessly, something she had never done before. A month later he found out, he had bladder cancer. Ironically, Belle succumbed to bladder cancer, herself.

We had to say good-bye to our sweet, beautiful Belle on February 16, 2010. She was exactly 15 years and 5 months. Thank you, NGRR for bringing us together, and giving us 10 wonderful years and 5 months with her. She will forever live in our memories.

Gratefully,  
Patty Cimlov-Zahares and Mike Zahares  
San Jose, CA



*Still spry at 14!*



PS: Just before we lost Belle, I entered a Hallmark Design-A-Birthday Card competition. Belle was a natural for a Hallmark card. The card was a winner and is being sold online (<http://www.hallmarkcontests.com/page/WINNERS/sub/Gallery/Contest/BirthdayYourWay/do/detail/cardID/5>). It was also mass-produced and is now on sale, nationwide in all the Hallmark stores and drugstores ! A nice tribute to Belle.

*More photos of Belle on the next page...*



*Patty, Belle (15 yrs young) & Mike in Capitola (Thanksgiving 2009).*



*Relaxing after a walk.*



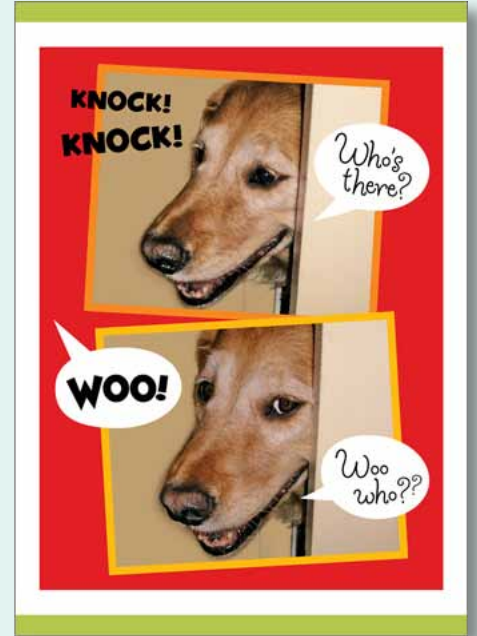
*Pretty Bellerina.*



*Dining at the Hog's Breath Inn in Carmel.*



*Fun at Lake Tahoe, Cressy Field, San Francisco and Santa Cruz.*



*Belle's Hallmark card, for sale online and also in drugstores and Hallmark stores.*