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Laika's story

Laika was the first creature to orbit Earth. She achieved this in 1958, during the Cold War space race.

In October 1957, Sputnik 1, the first Soviet spacecraft, was such a great success that Khrushchev, the leader of the USSR, demanded another: a "space spectacular." He gave a deadline of 1 month.

The spacecraft was put together quickly. A stray dog was chosen from the streets of Moscow, because they could presumably handle extreme cold and hunger. The scientists found one with a calm and sweet personality, perfect for the job. They named her *Laika*, "little barker," and began her training. She spent long periods of time in confined spaces, eating space gel and going through simulated rocket acceleration & noises.

Her trainers got attached to her, calling her nicknames like Little Curly and Little Lemon. Before the launch, one

of the scientists took her home to play with his children. He said, "I wanted to do something nice for her: She had so little time left to live."

All the same, it was time for Laika to go. As she was being strapped in for the last time, the technicians kissed her nose, knowing she wouldn't return. Laika was chained in place in the cabin, with only enough room to stand or lay.

During the launch, Laika's heart rate & breathing were monitored, rising to double or triple normal levels. The rush-job ship malfunctioned, and the cabin began to overheat. Within 7 hours, Laika was gone.

Today, Laika is known and beloved around the world. There are countless memorials and artwork paying respects to her, from stamps to online games. It seems we are regretful about sacrificing her.

Laika

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