



Laika's story

Laika was the first creature to orbit Earth, during the Cold War space race.

In October 1957, Sputnik 1, the first Soviet spacecraft, was such a success that Khrushchev, the leader, 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. This one had the perk of a calm personality. 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 poems and artwork paying respects to her, from stamps to online games. She was sacrificed for national pride, but it seems we still have regrets.

Laika

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