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## Dalmatian's passing shows veterinarian's compassion

**Author(s):** Bill Nash **Date:** January 24, 2002 **Section:** News

I first met her in the small hours of Jan. 2 1991. I was a firefighter. She was a Dalmatian puppy who along with her mother and the rest of her litter had just been rescued from a garage that was fully involved in fire. After the fire she went to live with the fire chief who named her Spotty. About nine months later she moved in with me and my family where she lived until last week when cancer claimed her.

It doesn't take a lot of imagination to name a Dalmatian Spotty but the name suited her fine. She was a beautiful specimen of the breed and she could run like the wind which she did every time we left the front door open a crack. She wasn't real friendly to other dogs but she loved people as long as those people weren't mail carriers.

We have never treated our dogs like pets they were family members and losing Spotty affected us deeply. In one regard though we were very fortunate as was Spotty. We had the caring people at Santa Clara Valley Veterinary Clinic to help ease Spotty's passage from this world.

All four of us went to the clinic on Wells Road to say our final goodbyes to Spotty. As we walked through the door to say farewell I saw a teen-age girl who was obviously just saying her first hello to a new kitten. I wondered what kind of person could introduce a girl to a kitten one minute and the next minute have to help a family already in mourning. And then I found out it takes an amazingly compassionate person such as Dr. **Sheila Langrock**.

**Langrock** had diagnosed Spotty's terminal cancer and counseled us every step of the way. But more than that she stayed with us when we needed her and with Spotty when she needed her more.

I'm certain that veterinarians prefer handing out kittens to ending the suffering of a much-loved family pet but there was nothing in her manner to suggest that with **Langrock**. She seemed to know exactly what to say to each of us and when to say nothing.

Obviously we would much rather have known **Langrock** under other

circumstances but under the circumstances we had I'm very grateful she came into our lives.

To be sure we're not the first family to grieve over the loss of a pet and **Langrock** probably deals with the situation more than we imagine but that's part of what makes her extraordinary. No matter how many times she's had to watch a family say goodbye we felt special in her care. What an amazing gift she has. Even before Spotty left us **Langrock** was helping us to heal our grief.

I'll always remember watching Spotty sprint down the street. I'll cherish the photos of her sitting with me in the cab of Santa Paula's Truck 5 fire truck. And memories of her curled up under the Christmas tree chasing squirrels across the back yard and barking at jetliners passing 30000 feet overhead will never leave me. She was a part of our family.

I'll never forget Spotty. And I'll never forget **Sheila Langrock** either. I'm blessed to have known them both.

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