



Fire Safety K9 Passes Away

Dalmatian served CAL FIRE for eight years

Ahren S. Fox, Fire Safety K9
May 21, 1992—December 8, 2007

By Gordon Winningham, Fire Caption, CAL FIRE Academy

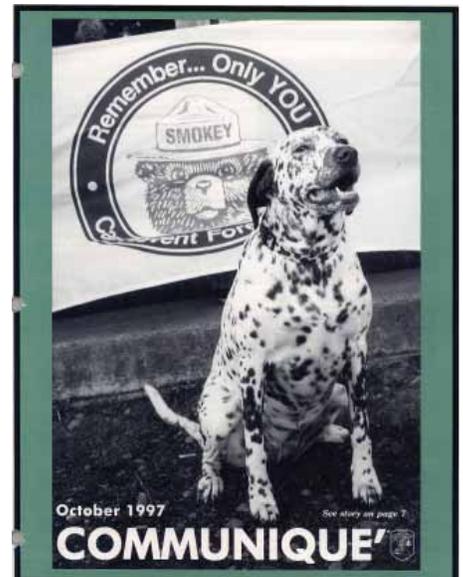
Brothers and Sisters, Friends and Family,

It is with great sadness that Catherine and I write to let you know of the passing of Ahren S. Fox, Fire Safety K9 on Sat., Dec. 8, 2007, at 1 p.m. She was 15 ½ years old.

I write to you because all of you knew Ahren as more than a pet. Catherine and I realized what a blessing she was the day, at six weeks old, she came to work to visit me at Twain Harte FFS. Before long the neighborhood kids were at the station to visit the "Fire Dog". This was the beginning of the Ahren S. Fox Fire Safety K9, Fire Prevention program. Ahren's "scootchie" command and her "stop-drop-and roll" not only made children laugh, but gave me the opportunity to teach them fire safety. Ahren's program was one

of the first three programs of its kind in the nation. The others were at FDNY in New York and Metro Dade Fire and Rescue in Dade County, Florida. Ahren was the last surviving Fire Safety K9 of the original three.

In her eight-year career as a Fire Safety K9 she visited with over 50,000 children of all ages, had newspaper and television exposés done about her, raised money for burn survivor camp, and went to burn camp to play, swim, and comfort burned survivors. She even did a radio interview. Ahren had numerous articles about her in local newspapers, television and radio stations. She was in our Department's Communique' magazine and was on the cover of the October 1997 edition. Ahren was featured in a 2002 firefighters' calen-





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dar, which raised money and put thermal imaging cameras in service with Fresno County Fire Protection District, Fresno and Clovis Fire Departments.

In 1999, Ahren joined CAL FIRE Firefighters Honor Guard, becoming the only canine Honor Guard member in the nation. In 2001, at the CAL FIRE Firefighters' convention in Fresno, then Union President Tom Gardner accepted a motion from the delegation to vote Ahren an honorary CAL FIRE Firefighters Local 2881 member. IAFF General Secretary Harold Schaitberger was the first to congratulate her. That same weekend Ahren was a part of the 9/11 memorial dedication at Pelco in Clovis, CA. As an Honor Guard member, Ahren participated in many events from Line of Duty Death funerals to parades and dedications. She was a part of CAL FIRE's 100-year celebration at the State Capital in 2005.

Catherine and I write to you not only to share the pride we have in the accomplishments of Ahren S. Fox, Fire Safety K9, but also to thank all of my Brothers and Sisters for your support and commitment to her Fire Prevention and Honor Guard careers. Union Presidents, Department Directors, General Union Members, Engine Company Firefighters and everyone in between supported Ahren. Ahren slept in the Director's office and in firefighter's beds. Union Officers took her for walks and Deputy Directors and corporate presidents carried her water dish. Our words can't come close to the heart-felt thanks we owe to all of you. Nor can words convey the anguish in our hearts. So I leave you with a quote from our local newspaper. This is a letter-to-the-editor written by another proud and grateful dog owner.

Union Democrat, Sonora CA.
January 2006

For Lumpy
To the Editor:

I recently suffered the heart-wrenching task of "putting to sleep" my wonderful retriever, Lumpy O'Mulligan, while my wife, hugging Lumpy and sobbing, bid him goodbye as the life-ending fluid entered his veins.

Having eulogized many departed relatives and friends, I could do no less for Lumpy, and found the perfect tribute. George Vest, a 19th century US Senator and Lawyer from Missouri, concluded a canine wrongful-death trial by telling jurors, in part:

"The one absolutely unselfish friend that a man can have in this selfish world, the one that never deserts him and the one that never proves ungrateful or treacherous is his dog. A man's dog stands by him in prosperity and in poverty, in health and in sickness. He will sleep on the cold ground, where the wintry winds blow and the snow drives fiercely, if only he may be near his master's side. He will

kiss the hand that has no food to offer, he will lick the wounds and sores that come in encounters with the roughness of the world. He guards the sleep of his pauper master as if he were prince. When all other friends desert, he remains. When riches take wings and reputation falls to pieces, he is as constant in his love as the sun in its journey though the heavens.

"If fortune drives the master forth an outcast in the world, friendless and homeless, the faithful dog asks no higher privilege than that of accompanying him, to guard against danger, to fight against his enemies, and when the last scene of all comes, and death takes the master in its embrace, and his body is laid away in the cold ground. No matter if all other friends pursue their way, there by his grave side will the noble dog be found, his head between his paws, his eyes sad but open in alert watchfulness, faithful and true even in death."

John Woods
Sonora

Yours in Brotherhood,
Gordon and Catherine Winningham
12/9/2007

