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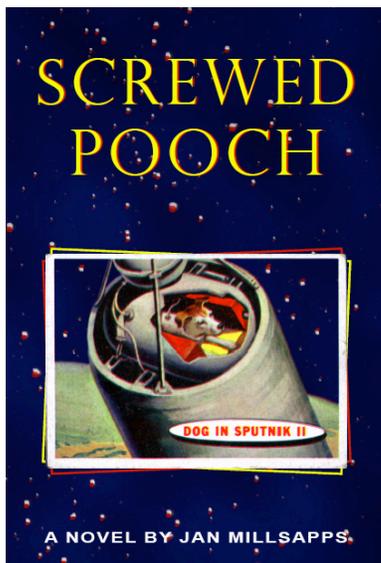
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New Novel Tackles Story of the Soviet Space Program and “Laika,” the Dog Who Was the First Space Traveler

Now, at the 50th Anniversary of Laika’s trip, *Screwed Pooch* describes the dog’s historic mission and the duplicity behind it.

San Francisco. October 1, 2007. The first living being into space was not astronaut Alan Shepard...or cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin. It was Laika, the heroic little Russian dog who set the stage for human space travel.

But Laika’s story has a dark side. In *Screwed Pooch*, author Jan Millsapps reveals the ugly truth about how the dog was “screwed” from the outset.



Laika, the Russian dog orbiting Earth in Sputnik 2. An immediate pop culture icon, she is pictured here on a 1957 Topps bubble gum trading card. Author Jan Millsapps traces Laika’s tragic and heroic story in *Screwed Pooch*.

On October 4, 1957, the Russians shocked the world with the launch of Sputnik, the first artificial satellite. The Soviet Union had caught the United States flat-footed, and Nikita Khrushchev was positively gleeful.

Khrushchev wanted an immediate follow-up. He demanded a second satellite be launched in less than a month to coincide with the 40th Anniversary of the Bolshevik

Revolution. Khrushchev got his Sputnik 2 on November 3, 1957 – this time with a dog as a passenger.

Screwed Pooch, a new novel by award-winning author and filmmaker Jan Millsapps describes the historic mission of Laika, arguably the most famous dog in history. Meticulously researched, *Screwed Pooch* tells the story of Laika’s launch into Earth orbit and sheds light on her role in the early space race as both heroine – and victim. Millsapps reveals that, in the rush to launch Sputnik 2, there was no time to plan for bringing Laika back alive.

Millsapps has created a story based on two years of research into the Soviet space program. She describes Laika’s mission and its impact on the humans she encountered, both real and fictional. We meet her beloved yet duplicitous trainer; the brilliant yet anonymous “chief designer” of the Sputniks; her canine gal pals; top dog Khrushchev and his heavy-handed KGB; and two women from Laika’s Moscow neighborhood who mount a daring plan to rescue her.

Laika’s unprecedented journey takes us from the snowy Moscow streets to top-secret labs and launch sites, and from the depths of a Soviet gulag to transcendent views of earth from outer space. Millsapps gives a distinct voice to the canine cosmonaut whose ultimate sacrifice turned dreams of human space travel into reality.

For Millsapps, the fact that Laika (and all space dogs) were female adds an ironic twist to the story.

“I love the fact that ‘the right stuff’ – usually associated with male pluck and endeavor – actually showed up first in a small female mutt,” she says. “It was important for me to locate and amplify that female voice, normally absent from early space history.”

“Since Sputnik 2’s telemetry failed after the first three orbits, it’s impossible to say with certainty what happened to Laika during her mission,” Millsapps explains, “which was great for me as a storyteller. The ending of Laika’s story was begging for a fresh interpretation, and I was happy to oblige.”

Screwed Pooch (348 pages, paperbound, \$17.99) is published by BookSurge Publishing and is available through [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Complete details about the book and Millsapps’ research into the founders of the Soviet space program can be found at laikaspace.com.

About the Author

Jan Millsapps teaches screenwriting and digital cinema courses at San Francisco State University. She is a versatile and accomplished writer whose work exemplifies the digital age. She has produced films, videos, digital and interactive cinema, and has published in both print and online. She is a featured blogger on Apple’s Learning Interchange and contributing editor for the online, rich media journal, “Academic Intersections.”

Millsapps' films have been shown at the Smithsonian Institution, the Kennedy Center, the International Center of Photography in New York, and the De Young Museum in San Francisco. Her multimedia work has been featured at the National Educational Film and Video Festival, the Mill Valley Film Festival, San Francisco City Hall, and USC's Interactive Frictions Conference.

She holds a Ph.D. in composition and rhetoric from the University of South Carolina and recently received a certificate in cosmology from the University of Central Lancashire in the UK. She and her husband, composer and sound designer Phill Sawyer, live in San Francisco.

Screwed Pooch information at laikaspace.com.

FOR REVIEW COPIES OF *SCREWED POOCH*, contact Gary Carr, below.

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