

## **Clifford, Canine partner to Claudine Singer, PSW 2000-2011**

Clifford lived his short life with gusto, full speed ahead, every single minute.

This gentle soul abandoned on the streets of Ventura County, was rescued from the shelter in 2001. It soon became clear that Clifford needed a job. After multiple obedience classes, Clifford became a compassionate Therapy dog. In 2004 Clifford and I were certified as a HOPE AACR Crisis Response team.

Our first call-out was the 2005 Metrolink derailment, followed by Hurricane Katrina, various HOPE events then again the 2008 Metrolink disaster where Clifford's gentleness shined with one of the 25 victims' spouse. A gentle probe with his muzzle, then a warm body curl on her feet and a quiet comfort followed. Clifford became "The dog who kept my feet warm" at the Candlelight Vigil, the week following the train disaster. The magical moment repeated itself one year after the Metrolink disaster when Clifford met up again with the curly haired woman, at a survivor support group meeting, when unprompted, he got up, walked over to her and curled his warm golden body on her feet.....it brought tears to my eyes as he knew which person needed his unconditional love and comfort.

Clifford knew what he wanted and needed and was not afraid to ask: he fearlessly dove into our swimming pool, he tirelessly retrieved tennis balls and he demanded his meals with such hourly precision that we swore Clifford had learned to tell time. Clifford was playful and rambunctious to be sure, but the moment he cloaked his working vest, he knew his mission and he did it well.

In April 2011, an MRI revealed that Clifford had an inoperable malignant nerve sheath tumor and his time with us would be short. Six weeks later on May 17<sup>th</sup>, and after trying our best to prepare ourselves for the inevitable, we said goodbye to our beloved golden boy.

Clifford brought so many smiles during his nine years of animal-assisted therapy, his participation in the READ program and his six years as a HOPE Crisis Response dog. I will always miss my four-legged angel. Clifford will forever warm my heart.

Claudine Singer