

# Needlenose News

Volume 1, Issue 2

October 26, 2004

## Special points of interest:

- Find pictures detailing new exploits of Philip inside this issue!
- Hear new details of what Matt and I are doing with our house!
- Philip's first obedience class went extremely poorly.
- Brian Patrick Murphy moved just down the street.

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## Philip Decorates Our House

As some may remember from the September issue of the Needlenose News, Philip spends his alone time each day marauding around the house, looking for things to chew on. He takes his booty to the living room and destroys it on the rug. Since the last newsletter, Philip has destroyed two large Tupperware containers full of white and brown rice, empty soda cups, shopping bags (one of which still contained Matt's shirt), a Costco box of Ziploc bags (scattering the bags about), a box full of sunflower seed packets (opening the packages and scattering the seeds), a pastry brush, latex kitchen gloves, two dish sponges, and a forty-pound bag of Canidae dog food.

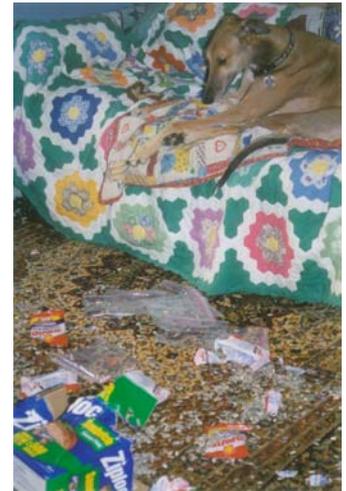
In addition to sobbing with despair, complaining, and, eventually, cleaning up the mess, Matt

and I have decided to document our greyhound adventure.

Throughout this issue, you can look forward to the best examples of Philip's exploits, captured on film. A prime example can be found to the right.

Philip is also skilled at moving the sofa around. He likes to run around in the living room (he slips and skids on the hardwood), and his newest trick is to hop up on the sofa during his lap around the room. When he pushes off again, back a few inches the sofa goes.

The positive side to Philip's redecorating craze? Matt and I (well, Matt, really) vacuum much more than ever before. Historically, Philip has a field day about once a week, making a huge mess, and requiring that we clean up after him.



Philip surveys his day's work from the vantage point of the sofa.

## We Decorate Our House

In an attempt to improve our somewhat dysfunctional kitchen (approximately six square feet of usable counter space and exactly three usable cabinets), we have begun installing shelves and the like on our walls. This not only improves our storage capacity, it keeps more things out of Philip's reach. (If you are in doubt about the value of this

improvement, please see "Philip Decorates Our House," above.) Our kitchen space is, however, limited by — you guessed it — Philip. He has a station in the kitchen consisting of a feeding/watering station, as well as an automated food machine to dispense his morning meal exactly one hour after his morning walk (to prevent bloat).



## We Decorate Our House, Part 2

When we first viewed this house, before we bought it, Brian Patrick Murphy had knocked out a wall in the back bedroom, dramatically increasing the size (think doubling), but without completing the accompanying floor. He had just covered it with a big rug. Well, of course, when he moved, the rug went with him, leaving us exposed subfloor. Last week, we finally decided to do something about that, so we took a trip to Cost Plus and found inexpensive jute rugs in a variety of sizes. Several rugs

fitted together cover the exposed part of the subfloor (under the bed, there's still just the wood)

The process, though, was just a trifle more complicated. A storage unit that has been built into the wall reached all the way down to the subfloor at some points, but not others. To get the rug underneath, Matt had to take a saw to the bottom to even things out. (See the whole process to the right.)

Top: The exposed subfloor on the back half of the bedroom that we've been living with for months.

Middle: Matt saws off a sliver of the storage unit so that our new rug can slip underneath.

Bottom: The same area, now covered with jute rugs. It's not only nicer looking, it's a lot warmer!



## Speaking Of Our House. . .

It turns out that when Brian Patrick Murphy moved, he didn't move very far. And when I say not very far, I mean right down the street. He's exactly three blocks away. I guess he likes the neighborhood. We've seen him around while we're out walking the dog. And in the course of our walks, we've noticed that he's in the process of improving his new house to make it resemble his old house. He put in a brick façade and patio on this

house (ours), as well as installed the wooden blinds and landscaped both front and back yards. In the past few months, we've noticed that he's:

1. Trimmed overgrown trees and planted a rosebush.
2. Covered his existing patio with brick.
3. Installed white wooden shutters on his windows.

All this while we, in his old

house, have:

1. Let the lawns go to pot and infested the backyard with hookworms.
2. Not so much as swept the patio.
3. Allowed the dog to destroy the white wooden blinds in the front of the house.

We wonder what he thinks.

***"It turns out that when Brian Patrick Murphy moved, he didn't move very far."***

## Philip Makes a Mess, Part ∞

In order to keep Philip out of our food storage, Matt and I replaced our open shelving unit with a small Ikea dresser. On top of the shelves is an open cubby in which we store cans, and, previously, rice containers. Now, this probably sounds like idiocy — rice containers out in the open — but you have to understand, the rice containers were stored there for weeks before Philip discovered them.

At any rate, when I came home one day, I encounter a not-at-all sheepish Philip sleeping on the couch, two broken Tupperware containers on the floor, and rice strewn all over the floor, all over the rug, and all over Philip's bed. Brown rice grains, white rice grains, rice, rice, rice, rice. Now, Philip likes rice; it was an integral part of his bland diet (white rice and cottage cheese), so perhaps nostalgic memories of those days lured

him into the rice containers. Of course, it could also have been pure cussedness, boredom, loneliness, or all of the above. Take your pick. . .



Philip napping after breaking into the rice container.

## Philip's First Obedience Class

In an effort to teach Philip some manners, Matt and I have enrolled him in a program known as step obedience. Participants progress through five steps, advancing from step to step as they master obedience skills. Last Saturday was our first class with dogs. In our class is a man who will bring his puppy when she is vaccinated, Philip, Matt, and me, and a couple with a pair of schnauzers. Because it is raining, class is held indoors, in what is the changing room for the neighborhood pool in the sum-

mer. Philip is sitting reasonably quietly until the schnauzers enter, barking madly. Philip immediately begins crying. And crying, and crying. At no point for the remainder of the hour-long lesson is it silent. The instructor is trying to tell us about exercises we can't do in class because the dogs won't settle, her poor dog is looking perplexed but is still sitting quietly, and at any given time, no more than one dog is silent. We leave later with a pounding headache each, plus some exercises to try at home. Yay!



Kim and Philip are lazy.



Philip and Kevin have a staring contest.

## Goethe News

Although October is drawing to a close, the honeymoon has officially worn off, and my kids are starting to become very squirrely, school is still a whole lot better than last year. Besides, in a few weeks the quarter will end, and then I can start looking forward to vacation.

There's not much new on the teaching front, but Goethe is

now in the process of looking for a new principal. Garth Lewis, our old, fantastic, wonderful principal, took a position in Woodland this year so that his job is closer to his family. Up until this point, Laura Zahn, Goethe's vice-principal and my old Summerbridge director, has been acting as principal. She's pregnant, though, and due any day now, so she didn't want to apply for the principal job before she had her baby and decided whether she wants to

work or stay home. So the school is looking for a new principal.

I served on the interview board last week to interview the candidates that did apply. I was underwhelmed. We're in a state of suspense, though; we don't know if anyone will be hired yet. I'm hoping they repost and we get someone better. To be continued. . .

*“At no point for the remainder of the hour-long lesson is it silent.”*

## Philip Tracks In Poopy

Previous articles have discussed assorted home improvements Matt and I have been making, but have not addressed Philip's role in them. In addition to hanging around and causing trouble, Philip actually created the impetus for our house-cleaning craze by, as you may have guessed from the title, tracking in poopy. Here's the story: On the weekend, Philip gets up early, marauds around a bit, and then hops in bed with us. When we wake up, we go

for a walk. A few weekends ago, I notice that Philip is lying on his back when he joins us. It's unusual, but maybe, he's hot, I surmise sleepily. A little later, I get a whiff of something foul. Yuck, I think. But, then again, Philip is prone to gas. . . I fall asleep again. The second time I smell sulfurous emanations, I think, “Uh oh.” On the other hand, it's not unheard of for Philip to be excessively gassy. . . I hope. But to no avail. When we wake up, we

discover that Philip has, indeed, trodden in poopy. He has very considerably tromped all over the house, leaving fecal samples in his wake. I get as much off him as I can, but then we have to give him a bath, and after that, we have to sweep and mop and vacuum and do laundry, and after that, well, we figured we might as well do some of the stuff we've been talking about for so long. So, as usual, everything revolves around Philip.



Philip snoozes on the sofa.

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616 40th Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819

Phone: 916-455-0125  
Cell: 916-996-0430  
Email: kim@miyasaki.net  
msrenquist@ucdavis.edu

Check out greyhounds!  
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**Needlenose News** is also available in PDF format with color pictures! E-mail Kim if you're interested.

**I saw a doormat the other day that says "This house operated solely for the comfort and convenience of the dog." That seems to sum our life up nicely.**

## Philip FAQs

**Q:** Has Philip's special white fish and potato dog food improved his health?

**A:** Yes, it has. Philip's stool now looks like normal dog poopy.

**Q:** What is Philip doing in the picture to the right?

**A:** Philip is investigating bags he has already torn to bits. In the process, he tore a shirt that was in the bag.

**Q:** Does Philip still use that expensive, huge dog crate that you bought to make him feel safe and ease his transition into your house?

**A:** No. He used the crate for exactly three days. He won't even enter the crate voluntar-

ily. The crate is currently used as a storage place for shoes.

**Q:** Does anybody at all like Philip?

**A:** Yes. Other greyhound owners frequently approach us and bring their dog to meet ours. Also, complete strangers

often tell us that Philip is a beautiful dog.

**Q:** Don't you have anything better to do than publish the Needlenose News?

**A:** The Needlenose News is more fun than writing lesson plans, as I should be doing.

