

Needlenose News

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Volume 2, Issue 1

Special points of interest:

- Learn more about Philip — his health, his diet, his training, and his new friends.
- See pictures of Kim's fancy new bookshelves!
- Rats? Living with Kim and Matt? Surely not! Learn why, this time, it's a bad idea.
- Everything you ever wanted to know about Kim and Matt's insulation experience.

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We're back. . .

Okay, so the last issue of the Needlenose News was published way back in October of 2004. I've been meaning to pick it back up for a while, but once the school year picks up, my time becomes somewhat limited. However, here we go again.

Updates: Kim has moved schools, due to an intolerable principal, and will be teaching 7th grade (yuck!) at Will C. Wood Middle School next year. I've also attended a training seminar on model-based science curriculum at UCD that gave some cool insight on effective science teaching, and I have a different set of curriculum sessions at SMUD this week. Matt is

still running Matt's Tech Support for UCD and Kim and Kevin and. . . He's also taking a math course a quarter at UCD as preparation for grad school; the current schedule calls for taking the GRE in December.

We've had a few chances recently to celebrate and catch up with college friends when we went to Rebecca and Andrew's wedding in May and Matt and Eva Chan's wedding in July.

Philip has matured nicely into a reasonably well-mannered dog and we're now a lot happier with him, to the point that we're considering adopting another one. As this might require a larger car for greyhound transportation, this idea is on hold at the moment. Stay tuned, though! Oh, and we've read the sixth Harry Potter book (much better than the fifth, we think), and now the wait is on for the last book. . .



Kim and Matt at Rebecca and Andrew's wedding.

What's a needlenose, anyway?

I've heard from Kevin that many of my relations (and probably a large number of non-greyhound owning people (now to be known as Gruggles)), that the term "needlenose" has caused some confusion.

"What's a needlenose?" people are wont to ask. Well, ask no more. The first Needlenose News of 2005 will give you your answer.

In short, "needlenose" is an affectionate term for a greyhound, as greyhounds have very long, narrow noses (you

know, like a needle). See below for an example.



Four-legged, four-toothed friends

As everyone knows, Matt and I are more than moderately fond of rats. The rats of which we were more than moderately fond, however, were invited into our home and had the Dr. Ibsen seal of approval.

Now, we've always suspected that additional rats made their home with us. When we moved in, there was an epidemic of fleas, presumably left over from Brian Patrick Murphy's dogs, but which must have had a host in the interim period between when he and his dogs vacated and when we

moved in. Also, there was occasional . . . evidence, shall we say, of the animals which came to be known as our four-legged, four-toothed friends. (The four-toothed part is needed to distinguish them from Philip.)

Clearly, our uninvited guests needed to go. However, people who have lived with and loved rats find it hard to bash any rats, even uninvited ones, over the head. As a result, humane methods of disposal were required. Since there really weren't any, we settled



Four-legged, four-toothed friend number 3 of 6.

for relocation. So far, we've captured and relocated six friends (a mother and her spawn, we think). About half are living in an olive orchard in Davis, and the other half currently reside in the spacious and affordable C.M. Goethe Arboretum at CSUS.

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The behemoth behind

The house behind us used to be a rental, and its tenants the bane of our lives. They were nasty frat-boy college kids who had loud kegger parties at the wee hours of the morning, among other things. They're gone now, and, in fact, the entire house is gone now.

There used to be a big tree in their backyard. One day, we woke up, and it was gone.

Likewise, another day we woke up, and the house itself was gone.

According to the always-reliable reconnaissance of Willie, our next-door neighbor, the owners were going to build a three-story (!) house on the lot. You have to understand that our house is 750 square feet, and their lot is not significantly bigger than ours.

Construction has been going on all summer (bang, bang, clang, clang), and the house is indeed three stories; it's HUGE. Matt and I will probably move our bedroom to the front room for a little more privacy.

Side note: according to Dictionary.com, a behemoth is also "a huge animal, possibly the hippopotamus, described in the Bible."

Our first major home improvement

When we bought our house (vintage 1926), it came without air conditioning but with state-of-the-art vermiculite insulation (asbestos possibly included at no additional cost). The air-conditioning company representative with whom we consulted about the best system for us estimated that our current insulation provided protection to the tune of R-3. (The R-value is a measure of a substance's resistance to heat

flow. Higher is better. R-38 to R-49 is the current recommendation for California attics.)

Our solution was to head down to Lowe's, take advantage of a no-payment, no-interest for a year deal, and purchase 40 bags of cellulose insulation (it's shredded newspaper treated with a fire retardant). We had to wait a week for delivery, and then an additional three weeks because the



blower was out for repair. Finally, we got tired of waiting, rented a blower from another location, and installed insulation over two days last week-end. Very dusty, but the house is noticeably cooler. Estimated result value: R-40.

Dog sitting

When I participated in a ten-day curriculum development session at UCD in July, I met Bill, who immediately endeared himself to me by revealing that he owns two greyhounds. As Matt and I are toying with the idea of getting another dog (greyhounds adore each other's company), I offered to dog sit when he went out of town.

Bill has two dogs, a three-year-old boy named Hugh, and a five-or-possibly-seven-year-old named Willow. An initial meeting went well (much sniff-

ing and licking of impolite places), so Bill brought his dogs to stay for a while.

When I tell this to people, they tend to ask, "And was Philip possessive of his house?" No. In fact, both dogs walked all over him. Hugh, as the dominant dog, took all the best cushy sleeping spaces. Hugh's favorite place to be was on the soft space wherever a human was (sofa or bed). Willow took whatever best cushy sleeping space was left, and poor Philip was relegated to the floor.

After the continuous company, Matt and I were afraid that when Bill's dogs left, Philip would go into a lonely decline. Fat chance. He saw them off, reclaimed the sofa, and hasn't seemed to miss them a bit.



Philip's favorite resting place. During the duration of their visit, it was routinely usurped by Willow or Hugh.

Stupid dog tricks

At our last press date, Philip had whined his way through his first obedience class. I'm happy to report that his voice got lots of exercise for the next few weeks; we couldn't take him near the class without him crying. Non-stop. We tried a few more times; he became so fearful that he started growling and barking at perfectly innocent dogs during our walks. At

which point, we pulled him out of group classes and opted for the trainer to come to us (at a fairly considerably cost, but we didn't have a lot of options left).

Angie was finally able to get Philip to sit (about four professional trainers had previously tried and failed) and helped give us strategies to ensure that Philip knows Matt and I

are the bosses. We're still training, but a year after we got him, Philip can: sit, stand, and go down on command; ignore or drop a forbidden object when told; walk on a leash without pulling; get off furniture when told; go down and wait until released to eat when fed.

Now, if he would just stop barking at the mailman. . .

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Home redecoration

Matt and I had two black bookcases in the apartment living room, which looked fantastic against the white walls, but not so brilliant against the blue walls in the house. Besides, in the apartment, I also had yards of wall shelves that stored additional books. Without those, shelf space has been in short supply in the house.

Ikea to the rescue! With the help of (a disgruntled) Kevin, I



bought a wall-spanning array of book and CD/DVD storage. Matt and I assembled the shelving and leveled it as best we could (old houses tend to have uneven floors and walls), and I now have enough space for all

my books plus room to grow. I still have to do some tinkering to do to get the most efficient arrangement, but it's great to have them all out.

A full row and a half of Agatha Christies.



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and comfort of the dog.**

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Philip's dietary update

As of our last update, Philip was eating a specially veterinarian-prescribed white fish and potato dog food to resolve persistent diarrhea. It worked, but did nothing to resolve the insane itchiness poor Philip was suffering. Said insane itchiness resulted in frenzied chewing on himself, resulting in a bald spot that Kevin (incorrectly) referred to as mange.

In spite of treatment with Benadryl and fish oil capsules, the itchiness and mange spot persisted, leading Dr. Ibsen to refer Philip to a dermatologist (!). Dr. Taylor diagnosed a bacterial skin infection, accounting for general itchiness, and a ringworm, accounting for

the mange spot.

With the fullness of time, the skin infection went away, and the ringworm went away, but the itchiness did not, indicating that Philip had a food allergy. How does one determine what a dog is allergic to? One puts one's dog on a limited-ingredient diet (in our case, rabbit and potato) that the dog hasn't been exposed to. Then one waits for symptoms (itchiness) to resolve, and reintroduces possible allergens. If symptoms return, the dog is allergic to whatever it is. The limited ingredient diet cost \$45 for 20 pounds of food. Philip had to be on it for a minimum of eight weeks.



Health Food for Dogs, the somewhat granola-y named food that costs only \$22 for 35 pounds!

Long story short, a lot of money and a handful of accidental ingestions later, we've determined what Philip is allergic to. Turns out it's wheat (Bisquick and Cheerios), corn (Bisquick), beef (dog treats), and lamb (dog treats). We can put him back on regular dog food as long as it doesn't have those ingredients. The diarrhea from before was probably a legacy of intestinal parasites.