



Needlenose News

The Advent of Adult Furniture

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Special points of interest:

- Uninvited dogs visit our house.
- Philip goes on the last, best dog food.
- Surprise! Dogs enjoy dog parks.
- Kim eulogizes her school year.
- Gardening sucks!
- The internet rocks!

The life milestone of setting up housekeeping, Ikea notwithstanding, is generally accompanied by a great deal of hand-me-down furniture. And so it was with Matt and me. When we first bought our house, we were inundated with furniture offers — coffee tables, rocking chairs, sofas, a carpet, a kitchen table.

We had to turn down many things due to space constraints. Besides, since we'd lived in the apartment for so long, we already had most of what we needed. In fact, in some ways, we had more than we needed. I was determined to rid myself of the old futon. Moving into a house, I was going to have a proper sofa.

Enter Auntie Jeanne, who offered us a gigantic rug and her sofa (she was planning on getting a new one). The rug we

were delighted to have. We decided, however, that our living room was too small for a full sofa set, and so we only took the loveseat.

A rather harrowing truck ride from San Francisco later, sofa and carpet were installed in our house. Both looked lovely. With a dog on the way, though, the cream-colored sofa needed protection. A blanket thrown over it to keep it clean was fine . . . for Philip.

Henry, however, had no greater ambition in life than the total destruction of the sofa. As sofa fluff and foam crept around our house, Matt and I pondered a replacement. We had garnered another loveseat from my parents, and the room wasn't really big enough for two sofas — but two dogs need two sofas.

Or do they? I pondered the possibility that we might manage with a so called "chair-and-a half." Contemporary furniture is so big, it was just possible. . . yes! A chair-and-a-half turned up for sale at Crate and Barrel. Matt and I drove to Roseville to inspect it in person and found it satisfactory. Thus, an order was



Henry has one last snooze on the old sofa.

placed and the multiple sofas for multiple dogs problem was solved.

After a marathon session of collecting bits of sofa stuffing and foam that had migrated around the house, we swept, vacuumed, and were ready to take delivery of the new sofa. It arrived, to minimal fanfare, and was installed in the corner of the room, where I immediately regretted not comparing the height of the new and old sofas, as the new one towers over the old. Whatever. The dogs don't mind, and neither do I.

I do, however, wish to extend my heartfelt thanks (and apologies) to Auntie Jeanne for the use of her sofa.



Henry enjoys a relaxing interlude on the new sofa.

Dogventures



Toto, the subject of my most recent dogventure.

Anyone who's had a dog has probably had a dog get out. We have. When our air-conditioning was installed, the contractors left the side gate open. Philip got out. A neighbor down the street found him, kept him as long as she could, and then called Animal Control. We picked him up, safe if not particularly sound (food allergies, you know) the next day. So I figure we owe someone one. I stop for loose dogs. (I would anyway, really.)

In recent memory, we located a Sheltie on the street, with leash, but without owner. (Owner eventually came back and found her.) We spent a hectic half-hour or so chasing and eventually noosing Pongo-the-poodle-thing with Henry's leash. And I found Toto-the-terrier-thing on my way home from school one day. He came running to me and rolled over for a belly rub. I carried him home and was thankful he wasn't like Pongo-poodle-thing.

The problem with dogventures is my very own dog. Well, Matt's very own dog, actually, as it's Philip and not Henry who is the problem. Henry did fine with Pongo. Philip tried to destroy him. When Toto came home, only Philip was home. My attempt at an introduction didn't go well. So, inevitably, Philip and dogventure-subject must be separated. Hmm. . . I wonder who the primary source of dog problems in my house is? (*Hint*: Not Henry.)

Philip's Dietary Saga, Part the Last

It made us feel very confident. [Insert tone of heavy sarcasm here.]



Philip thoroughly enjoys his special, allergen-free, \$40-a-bag dog food.

I mean it this time.

So, loyal readers, you've followed Philip's dietary needs from Canidae to prescription fish and potato to prescription rabbit and potato to Health Food For Dogs to Innova to California Natural, with generous intervals of white rice and cottage cheese between each. You'll remember that Philip has many allergies and that his digestive system is easily upset. The most recent incident involved a coastal vacation; the change in routine gave Philip and Henry diarrhea. Henry's went away. Philip's did not.

Thus, we once again pondered the pitfall that is prescription food. Philip's bowels, we've decided, like nothing else. However, previous attempts to feed solely rabbit and potato were doomed by supply issues. (Namely, that the vet/hospital

couldn't get the order right reliably.) However, we have a new vet, whose office appears to be able to order the food and stock a few extra bags as a buffer. First obstacle surmounted.

Naturally, however, a second obstacle intervened, in the form of a pet food recall. For those not in the know, melamine and some other chemical have been found in all sorts of pet food. As our dogs don't eat food with either wheat or rice gluten, we felt relatively safe, but as the recall expanded, we did some research.

Canidae and California Natural websites assured us that the companies were sourcing all ingredients inside the US. Tainted ingredients have been traced from China, so US sourcing meant we didn't need to worry. Good, good.

When we went to the website

for IVD (the prescription rabbit and potato food), all they would tell us was that their products were not affected by the recall and were safe. Yes, fine, but how are you making sure they *stay* safe? We postponed putting Philip on IVD.

Next thing you know, the IVD company is recalling food (though not the food under Philip-consideration). They've also disabled the forum from their website, without answering questions about their food ingredient sources. It made us feel very confident. [Insert tone of heavy sarcasm here.] Matt started calling the company.

It turns out that they, too, are now sourcing from the US and are also screening for melamine. So Philip now eagerly devours his rabbit and potato chow, and Henry licks his bowl clean.

The Boys Go To The Dog Park

On the way home from a particularly traumatic vet visit (for Henry, at least), I commented to Matt that we could take the dogs to the dog park, as there's one on the way home.

I stopped taking Philip to the dog park because he's a bully and doesn't play nicely. It's also difficult to supervise a dog who can run 40 miles per hour and is hell-bent on making trouble. Henry's never been to a dog park because he's timid; I wasn't sure he'd enjoy it.

However, the day was mild, the dogs were boisterous, and so we figured we'd give it a try. We had to drive around the park a few times because the dog park's been moved since I was last there, and now it's hiding in a valley that's difficult to see from the road. When we finally found it, it didn't look too crowded, there were no tiny rat-dogs, and there was a lake-thing that the dogs could swim in. Looks good!

It was good. Henry doesn't

adore other dogs, but he doesn't mind them. Philip is still obnoxious, but somewhat less energetic and thus, easier to manage. The general *modus operandi*: Philip trots around, sniffing and marking. Henry follows. The exception was when provided access to the lake-thing. Henry waded in and stayed put for a good 15 minutes. Philip wandered off.

Bonus for us: the dogs return from the park exhausted. No need for another walk!



Philip and Henry enjoy the dog park.

School Year Summary

All in all, this was a good year. I prefer 8th graders and the 8th grade curriculum, and that's what I'll be teaching for the foreseeable future. This year's kids were good, too: I had more standout kids on the outstanding side of the spectrum than standout kids on the . . . less outstanding side of the spectrum. (I had all the mem-

bers of the student council in my classes, plus most of the Mathletes team, plus the top reader in the school (7,000,000 words)) Only one kid swore at me, and he apologized. As for the brawl. . . well, the brawl was an aberration. (Further information on the brawl is on my website. Type "brawl" into the "Find" box at the top.)

I also worked with some very strong and very sociable teachers this year, which made me feel more connected. I won't be working directly with them next year, but I've been adopted (take that, Mom!) by one of the veterans and will thus be an "honorary Mustang" and invited to events. As for now. . . it's time for summer.



I've been adopted (Take that, Mom!) by one of the veterans and will thus be an "honorary Mustang."

Kim's Gardening Troubles

The trouble is, as usual, that I don't pay enough attention to the yard. Two years ago, the front yard got a lot of sun. Too much sun. So much sun that it was difficult to get things enough water. That's when the azaleas started to suffer. We finally dug out a crispy corpse of a particularly unfortunate

one this year.

So, when pondering plantables, I naturally gravitated toward sun-lovers. Sun-lovers like the mini-dahlias I planted in a corner of the yard last summer. They bloomed, they were happy, they even came back. I got married in a dahlia garden; I'm fond of dahlias. Why not?

Well, as it turns out, because dahlias are sun-lovers. And the area where I planted them isn't sunny. It's shady. Very shady. (The dahlias are getting very tall and leggy. Not happy.)

Why the change? In the past two years, the tree in the middle of the lawn grew. Oops.



Example of Kim's very lanky flowers.



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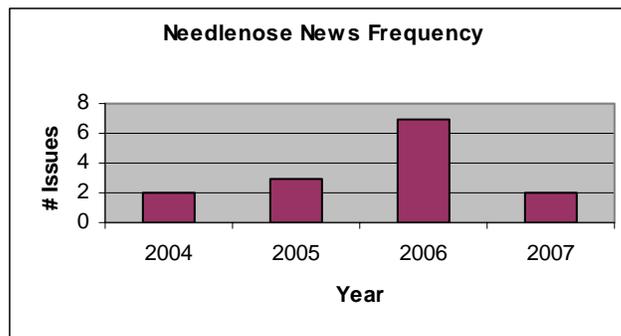
Needlenose News

Why You Should Read My Website

People, the chart says it all. The frequency of Needlenose News publication is decreasing. So far this year, I've only matched the all-time low of 2004 — two issues.

I might add that 2004 was the inaugural year of publication. . . and that I started publishing in September. Thus, I managed two issues in four months of 2004. Perhaps you've noticed that it's practically September now, and that it's unlikely that I'm going to manage another two issues this year?

There are several reasons for my decreasing publication rates. One is my new knitting



habit, which doesn't make for fascinating reading but uses a great deal of my spare time. One is that I'm congenitally lazy and am simply not doing a lot of newsworthy things.

Perhaps the most important contributor to declining Needlenose News publication,

however, is my website. At this writing, there were 167 posts on my website. That's 167 things you don't know if you don't read it.

I'm not giving up the Needlenose News. But the Internet is where it's *at*, folks.



Read me! Read me!

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