

Special points of interest:

- Whipped cream pies are sticky.
- Some readers disapprove of the quantity of greyhounds I own.
- Dogs get muddy and vomit. You get to read about it.
- Kevin and Emily come to visit.
- I make Kevin a hat. He wears it skiing and gets laughed at.

Inside this issue:

Shut Your Pie Hole	2
Poll Results	2
Oh, The Weather Outside Is Frightful	2
Wii Are Visited By Kevin and Emily	3
The Greyhounds Open Their Pie Holes — Twice	3
What Greyhounds and Kevin Have In Common	3
It's That Time of Year	4

Happy Birthday and Retirement, Mom!

Also, for the record, *this was not my idea.*

My first recorded reference to Mom's party is an e-mail, sent by Kevin, on January 21st. Its exact contents are replicated below:

Hi Kimmie,

FYI Mom is retiring at the end of March so Donald thought it would be nice to throw a birthday/retirement party on that Sat. Interested???

~~~

(In case you were wondering, ~~~ is Kevin's idea of a signature.)

I will admit to professing interest, but my intent was not to condone a surprise party. I mention this to keep Mom from disowning me, as she made her feelings about such things pretty clear quite some time ago.

At any rate, the party was on, and it was to be a *surprise*. This necessitated the usual wranglings associated with surprise parties. For example, Matt and I didn't come to visit Grandma over my spring break, because then coming down the very next weekend would appear suspicious. Auntie Jeanne and Emily stayed with Auntie Nancy and Uncle Gary, rather than with us, so as not to invoke the specter of excessive "coincidence."

The latter ended up being a complication, as all visitation

schedules to Grandma had to be vetted by Kevin. He ensured that Mom didn't encounter Auntie Jeanne and Emily by Grandma's bedside, and did his job admirably.

I didn't do nearly so well: I visited Grandma with Auntie Nancy, Auntie Jeanne and Emily, and left with strict instructions not to mention the latter two individuals. Auntie Nancy even made them hide in the back seat when she dropped me off, in case Mom was looking out the window.

And then, over dinner conversation, I casually mention that I've taken Monday off, and "I think Auntie Jeanne did, too." Long pause. Mom to the rescue! "You mean last week? When she went to Arizona?" Sure, that's exactly what I meant.

Apparently, however, the most suspicious circumstance was when, the day of the party, we insisted on having lunch at exactly 12:00, a scant two hours after break-



Mom with her cake. Surprise! (It's not my fault.)

fast.

"Where are we going?" Mom asked, once we arrived at the restaurant.

"In back," Dad replied.

"In back?" Mom repeated. "You mean where all those people are?" Dad confirms this, and then she leans over to me and hisses, "I told you not to do this!" (For the record, Mom, I didn't.)

I think we're forgiven, though, as the party was very nice and Mom seemed to enjoy it. Thanks to all who arranged and attended.

Enjoy retirement, Mom.



Kim performs post-pie clean-up.

## Shut Your Pie Hole

My school had a “Winter Wonderland” rally on the Friday before winter vacation (logical, really). In addition to the usual relay races, the student council organized a pie throw.

The council suckered various teachers (and the principal!) into volunteering to allow students to throw whipped cream pies at us. Tickets were \$2 (\$2.50 for extra whipped cream), all proceeds to benefit the Make-A-Wish foundation.

As you may have already discerned, I was one of the

volunteers. I figured I’d be targeted a few times, but that the principal, who also volunteered, would take the brunt of the attack.

My supposition was accurate, to a degree. The first round of students mostly went for the principal. On the second round, however, two kids went for me. They weren’t exactly following the rules, either; they were supposed to be standing behind a taped line on the floor, but these particular kids rushed me. At which point, I got pies delivered straight to my face — twice. As you can see, that resulted

in a fair bit of mess.

Due to the gaping hole at the top of my trash bag smock, a great deal got on my clothes, too.

It was very sticky indeed.



Kim, after being hit with two whipped cream “pies.”

*The majority of poll respondents believe that I should acquire negative two more greyhounds.*

## Poll Results

Occasionally, I post polls on my website (hint, hint; go read it). Polls have solicited my website readership’s opinion on the best greyhound, the new site URL, and beets.

The results? Most people like both dogs (tact gone awry — we’re at war, people. Pick a side.) People claimed to notice the new site URL, though I got two e-mails after Matt disabled the automatic forwarding asking for the new URL. Apparently these were

not poll respondents. Nobody much likes beets. (I actually love the taste of beets. It was the, er, side effects that were troubling. Beets dye everything red. Everything. Including feces.)

The most recent poll asks you to vote on how many more greyhounds I should acquire. Your choices are 0, 1, 2, and -2. (In retrospect, that probably should have been 0, 1, -1, and -2, but whatever.) At the time of this writing, the

there is a tie between the number of poll respondents who believe I should acquire two more greyhounds and those who feel the number should be negative two. Bad news, Philip and Henry!

But you can turn all this around (or reinforce it). You need only visit my website ([akimslife.com](http://akimslife.com)) and make yourself heard. I await your decision. (Though I’m not going to abide by it.)



The picture that summarizes my winter experience.

## Oh, The Weather Outside Is Frightful

Matt and I have an ongoing dispute about the feasibility of a lawn in the backyard. He would like one. I don’t think he has a chance. We have tried, over and over and over again, to grow grass. We succeed. Every time. And yet, our yard still bears a strong resemblance to a mud-wrestling arena.

The source of the problem, as is so often the case, is the

greyhounds. Although Philip and Henry spend the vast majority of their time sleeping, when they run, they really tear up the yard. Chunks of soil fly through the air. . . with grass still rooted in it. By winter, the grass is gone again, and we battle mud. Again.

This pattern has been occurring for what, three years now? I vote for hardscaping the backyard. I think Matt is

finally coming around.

In the meantime, however, mud is everywhere. It’s on the bed, including the sheets. It’s on the sofas, new, and old. The floor and rugs, naturally, are muddy. Mud also adorns the washing machine (by the dog door) and refrigerator (ditto). And occasionally, the dogs trample the laundry.

I can’t wait for spring. . .

## Wii Are Visited By Kevin and Emily

When Matt and I bought the Subaru, I had visions only of transporting two greyhounds. Matt had visions of trying out skiing or snowshoeing, as the wagon has all-wheel drive. So far, that hasn't happened, although Subaru did provide us with free lift tickets.

The problem? We don't ski. At all. Hence, said lift tickets were presented to Kevin. (He brought me Pocky sticks in exchange — sounds good to me.)

Kevin has been trying to serendipitously arrange a work-related trip to Tahoe to coin-

cide with good snow. He thought he had it in the bag, and then the client rescheduled. To console himself, he booked a weekend reservation at Kim and Matt's Greyhound Hotel for himself and Emily.

They arrived, and although accommodations were spartan (think air mattress on the floor), everyone claimed to have a good time. Matt and I actually cleaned the house (somewhat) in their honor.

Kevin and Emily hit the slopes Saturday (Kevin wore his frog hat, see bottom story). That

night happened to also be the release date for a Wii game called Super Smash Brothers: Brawl, which, as the title implies, is a fighting game.

Members of the Miyasaki clan who were not amused by rabbit anesthesia (the object is to make the patient unconscious via a series of carefully calibrated beatings) will not be amused by this game, either. The object is to cause so much damage (again, by administering beatings) to your opponent that he/she flies off the stage.

I flew off a lot. Surprise!



**Matt, Emily, and Kevin guillotine French nobles. Hey, it's not a video game!**

## The Greyhounds Open Their Pie Holes – Twice

Henry is very food motivated. He also counter surfs. This becomes a problem because Matt and I are not as careful as we should be about putting away people food in the kitchen. As a result, Henry has been gorging.

Recently, he had a package of gingerbread cookies, oatmeal, a package of rainbow goldfish, and a (bite of an) onion. He also had something very bad for a greyhound — most of a 14 ounce bag of

dark chocolate M&Ms. Swell.

I came home from school one day to find the remains of the goodies from our Christmas stockings on the living room floor. There was a can of nuts, unopened, and a bag of M&Ms — very, very opened. And very, very empty.

A frantic phone call to the vet later, I'm told that the dogs are probably under a lethal dose of theobromine, the toxic ingredient in chocolate, but

that it might be a good idea for them to vomit. "That's going to be messy," the vet said. "Make sure you're outside."

Outside we went, with hydrogen peroxide and a turkey baster as a delivery system. 30 mL (for Henry) and 45 mL (for Philip) of peroxide later, regurgitated chocolate adorned the patio — and the dogs were ready for a run.

I think they'll be fine.

*30 mL (for Henry) and 45 mL (for Philip) of peroxide later, regurgitated chocolate adorned the patio — and the dogs were ready for a run.*

## What Greyhounds and Kevin Have In Common

A wardrobe. Well, to be perfectly accurate, one element of a wardrobe.

As you may have ascertained by this point, I sometimes employ my crafting impulses toward dog duds. Hey, greyhounds have no undercoat. They need me to make them clothing.

When we had only one dog, making coats was fun. When we got Henry, we had plenty — or so I thought. It turns out

that one coat to wear and one to wash for two dogs is — gasp! — twice as many as for one dog. Also, I've learned a few things from the coat-making process.

**Bad:** too dark (shows fur), too light (shows dirt), too garish (just plain ugly), too girly (we have boys)

**Good:** red, medium-tone green, blue or brown

Applying this knowledge, I

made Henry a new coat and, for kicks and aesthetic appeal, knitted a matching snood. It's very dashing.

How does Kevin come into this? Well, Kevin was so taken by Philip's frog coat that he "requested" (it was a little more demanding than that) a matching hat. I've been procrastinating for ages, but finally, it's ready. I think I've found the latest trend in fashion. . .



**Kevin and Philip show off their frogs.**



**Needlenose News**

Needlenose News: The go-to source for your greyhound news needs.

AKIMSLIFE.COM  
MATTHEW.RENQIUST.NET

## *It's That Time of Year*

You know, the time of year when the countdown begins. In the NCLB era, however, we schoolteachers need two countdowns: one to track the time remaining until state testing, and the traditional one that tracks how much longer I have to be in school.

Testing countdown:  
**16 days**

Last day of school countdown:  
**43 days**

(All counts, naturally, are of school days only and don't include weekends.)

Completely aside from issues of snowpack and drought, I am rooting for more rain because sunny days + teenage hormones =

very bad for me. It looks like I'm out of luck, though.

Thus, I have to concentrate on smaller milestones. April 11 is the end of the third quarter, and thus, a minimum day. Since the science department rearranged the teaching calendar this year, I taught my weaker subjects (astronomy and physics) earlier in the year, when I had more energy, and am now teaching my strongest subject (chemistry).

My school has longer days throughout the year so that we can have minimum days during state testing. Thus, assuming I live until the first week of May, testing week for me will be easy — I'll administer tests and knit, then have the afternoons off.

And, of course, there's always the summer to look forward to. This year, Matt and I are planning a trip to Seattle to attend the marriage of two college friends. We're also considering the restful job of ripping out our dysfunctional kitchen cabinets and replacing them with IKEA models. (Of course, this has been on the to-do list for years, and it's still not done, so. . .)

In the meantime, I need to find or manufacture a real compost bin (we've been using a plastic storage box), and we're continuing weekend farmer's market trips and cooking more. It's not very exciting, but it's my life.

I'll keep you posted here or on my website.



**I'd rather be relaxing at the beach. Wouldn't you?**