

Best wishes to all of our friends for 2008,

It was a year with two major additions in our lives. My addition was Birchhurst Bentley, Asta's great nephew. Kim's addition was to increase the size of our home by 66%.

Me first, I was heartbroken by the loss of Asta in 2006. He was the best dog and my companion on adventures great and small. Joyce, Asta's breeder, kept telling me a new puppy would help make me feel better. I just knew with my schedule it wouldn't be fair to get a puppy.



Finally she sent me the good news I needed. Her son, Bruce, in North Carolina, had a returned adult dog, 3 ½ years of age, in need of a new home. I told Kim I had to make the drive to North Carolina. She said I could go, but she and the beagles had to come. This was now Lacey and Snoopy's home and they had some say in any new member of the household. We mailed last year's Christmas cards on the Saturday morning that we started down to meet Bentley.

There was a quick stop in Washington DC. Kim had never been there before. We spent a couple ours on the mall and then pressed on. We had dinner south of Richmond, and the waitress greeted us by saying, "How y'all doin'?" Kim laughed and said, "You really do talk like that." I had to explain that Kim was from Nebraska and had never been down south. Besides we were the ones with the accent. We made it to Raleigh that night. Sunday morning we were in Durham at eight in the morning to meet Bentley.

He was a shaggy dog when we met, full of energy and happy

to play with Asta's spikey ball. Bentley had had a rough road in life. His first owner was somewhere between neglectful and abusive. When Bentley had worn out his welcome he ended up in a shelter. Luckily he was identified as a wire fox terrier and got into the Carolinas' fox terrier rescue. Then he was identified as a Birchhurst and got back to his breeders, Bruce and Lori.

Bentley is close enough to the breed standard that he could have been a show dog and earned points towards being a champion like his dad. All I wanted was a faithful companion. The great look is a nice plus. Asta was a wonderful soul, but definitely not a show dog. Bentley is not Asta Charles, but both of them could/can always make me smile and laugh.

Bentley is learning a lot about being a member of a family. We love him and look forward to many happy years with our new companion.

My addition was a time commitment; Kim's addition was a financial commitment. I was single when I got the house. I'll admit it was small, but the construction was sound and it has a generous lot. Kim wanted to add on a master suite and a great room. I wanted a garage and new windows and



siding. We made up our wish list and Kim went about finding contractors to interview.

The contractor we hired had done my aunt's addition. He was laid back and seemed like a straight talker. He told us we would be done by July 31, just before the CT River Raft Race. Work went fast. The foundation was poured for a new basement with a walk out then framing and siding. We were warned that interior work would take time. There were delays and cost overruns. Still the electrical, plumbing, insulating and drywall all went along with a few difficulties, minor and major, but forward progress was made.



By mid September no more forward progress was being made. I tiled the bathroom. Kim and I installed the hardwood floor. I wired a new circuit for the garage outlets. We painted and I installed baseboard heat and a new zone off of the boiler.

Come December I asked Kim if we could fire the contractor. Kim wrote an e-mail asking him if he would either stop work on the project and we would not pay him any more money or would he come out to walk through with us and generate a list of things to do before he received final payment. He chose to walk away. I hope to finish the project by mid March. We now know why people never do a second addition. Below are the before and after shots with the new work almost hiding two existing sides.



Now the rest of the year:

Kim went down to Florida in January for the Disney Half Marathon. She had a great time visiting her friend Deb. Kim does not like NASCAR. They took her to the Daytona Motor Speedway. I got this picture and a lot of abuse.

In February my 42 year old body and my 42 year old mind had a serious disagreement about how hard I could run and train for races. I was gearing up for the 20 miler in Martha's Vineyard and ignored the pain in my legs. The race starts at 11:00. During my warm-ups I realized something was wrong. I was on the ferry off the island at 10:45; I did not want to be tempted to start the race. It was for the best, the following Wednesday I was at my friend Craig's physical therapy center. After he evaluated me he asked when I wanted to be able to run again. I said "Yesterday". He said OK I'll see you three times a week for the next four weeks at 7:00 in the morning.

I was able to run the Boston Marathon in April, that makes 13 in a row or halfway to the quarter century club. My mind may still be youthful, but it needs to listen better to my tired legs and maybe workouts involving mile repeats at five minutes and forty-five seconds a mile on the treadmill should be kept to once a week.

During the cold months Kim worked on stitching together the blocks that made up our wedding quilt. With the addition we will have a free wall to hang the quilt onto.

I raced the USATF-NE Mountain Circuit again this year. A couple of the races are a little over the top. The Cranmore race course is similar, but harder than the world championship race and the Loon Mountain race that contains a section a quarter mile long at over 25% grade. I enjoy seeing the same group of idiots racing up mountains week after week in the early summer.

Kim raced the Covered Bridges Half Marathon in Vermont. She wanted to run it in 2006, but the race filled up before she entered. She had me sign her up online. The race filled in less than a day. I was racing in New Hampshire that day so we could not support each other.

There is something to be said for persistence. The Lee Jet, the really expensive raft at the CT River Raft Race, did not show up this year. I now am the only one left from a once fiercely competitive racing division. The fact that I can still field a crew begs the question "Who is more foolish, the fool or the fool who follows him?" Maybe my crew just humors me for old time's sake.



In August we added the Cathedral Trail to the list of ways I've reached the summit of Katahdin. Kim chose to stay at Chimney Pond while Craig, whenever possible take your physical therapist hiking with you, my running buddy Larry and I went up the back side of the mountain.

Asta's ashes came with me up to the summit. In life he was never allowed in Baxter State Park, I hope we can do all 50 state summits together. Kim was thrilled to see her first moose on this trip to Maine.

I took Kim on vacation down south in September. We drove Skyline drive staying at Big Meadows and visited Grayson Highlands. We looked all over for the Wilburn Ridge Ponies, finally we had to leave. Some of the ponies were grazing near the fence at the exit. Kim thought they were cute. Bentley thought they were big dogs. The colt thought Bentley was a very small pony.



Then we hiked in the Smokies for a couple of days. Kim loved the hike to the Lodge on Mount LeConte. The hike is popular and even with school in session the number of hikers made it feel like a highway.

The next day we hiked up Snake Den Ridge Trail trying to reach the summit of Mt Guyot, the highest peak east of the Mississippi I don't have. I mistakenly took Old Black as Mt Guyot, bushwhacked to the summit and then we hiked back down to the car. It was weeks later when something nagging made me look at the topo maps and find my mistake.

We saw a lot of wildlife on the trip, deer (OK it was after dark and the deer had bedded

down for the night, I thought their glowing eyes looked cool, Kim thought they were vampire deer and nearly panicked), a bear, wild ponies, two elk and while hiking back from Guyot a falling squirrel. Not a flying squirrel, but a falling squirrel. I heard what sounded like a branch falling just behind me and in front of Kim. Kim heard the sound and stopped as a grey squirrel fell inches in front of her face. The squirrel hit the ground with a thud and ran off. I laughed and Kim was shaken almost as badly as by the flesh eating deer from a couple of nights earlier. Kim loved the Smokies and southwestern VA. We plan on going back in 2009 and spending a night at the Lodge on LeConte.

We had Bentley with us on vacation but just didn't have the time to go to as far east as Durham, NC. I do want to get a picture of Bentley and Champion Birchhurst Never Say Die (Rocky) (Dad). There is a picture of Rocky at www.wirefoxterriers.net

It was a very packed year. We look forward to finishing the addition and having time for other pursuits.

Best Wishes Again for 2008

Todd, Kim, Snoopy, Lacey and Bentley



PS I finally started to add content to my website at www.ToddBrown.com

Kim felt left out so I bought her www.KimBrown.net

We will both work on adding to our websites.