

THE KAUBELLS' HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER

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What's Inside:

- Kaubells still boring
- Ailments and weight gain
- Oatmeal? Really . . .
- Shameless self-aggrandizement
- Perfunctory nod to season

ALL IS CALM (ENOUGH)

This year has been relatively uneventful, but we're not complaining . . . we're comfortable, work is engaging, and we still enjoy reading and taking walks. We have a new TV, and there's enough interesting social interaction to keep us off the suicide prevention hotline. Matt is particularly grateful that all his work on the estate of his mom and step-dad is nearly at an end.

SUMMER ADVENTURES

We were again lucky enough to spend part of the summer in the U.K. Matt was co-chair of a conference in Edinburgh, which was a big success. We spent six days there, and then moved on to the charming town of Dunblane, a highlight of the trip. We spent a week there, then enjoyed the Cotswolds for nine days, and finally settled in Cambridge for six weeks, where Matt co-organized another academic meeting and again worked with Mike Gordon at Cambridge University. We both kept up with work and colleagues at home via Skype.

The only downside of the trip was that shortly before leaving, Holly found out her cholesterol was high, which meant curbing her intake of scones and clotted cream, not to mention cheese and sticky toffee pudding. Very sad. However, she did discover Scottish oats. Apparently oatmeal has some magical anti-cholesterol agents, and Scottish oats are not the gummy boring oats of childhood, but oats on steroids. We also had the best couch potato experience of the year: watching all three seasons of *Gavin and Stacy* – a U.K. favorite – on DVD.

Matt, however, had lost 20 pounds before the trip, so he enjoyed eating meat pies and

drinking hard cider with abandon. He also discovered a new level of chocolate evil in Gü, a cross between candy and molten lava.

BACK AT HOME

On the state side, Matt and Holly are both still working at the University of Texas. Holly won a teaching award in the spring. She also now has contracts for two new evaluation projects. She is enjoying her new co-workers and has her own office for the first time since she's been at UT. She will be teaching a new course on data analysis in the spring. The writing on the Katrina book continues . . . As a result of her research on Katrina survivors, she was appointed to an advisory committee to develop a statewide plan for post-disaster housing reconstruction.

Matt continues to enjoy working on the ACL2 theorem prover. He and Holly have switched work styles – Matt now works most of the time at home while Holly goes to her office at the university.



MATT ENJOYING A CIDER
MORETON-IN-MARSH, ENGLAND

BURGLARY

While visiting family and friends in North Carolina in April, someone broke into our house. We lost TVs, bikes, musical instruments, etc. We were happy to discover that we weren't as attached to those things as we'd thought. We decided not to buy a new TV right away and instituted weekly "movie nights" with friends Nancy and Rob. However, two months of reruns on British TV inspired us to buy a big screen TV and cable when we returned. We are now graduate level couch potatoes. Our new additions include *Mad Men* and *Boardwalk Empire*.



HOLLY IN HER HALLOWEEN COSTUME,
COURTESY OF SISTER LINDA AND NIECE IVY

HEALTH

As people well into middle age, of course we have to give you an update on our ailments. Holly's back problems seem to have largely resolved after years of physical therapy. This Thanksgiving she was even able to sit at the sewing machine long enough to make a new nightgown. Matt, however, is having problems in one leg and now he has a physical therapist. She makes him do exercises, which he despises, but does very diligently in front of the television. Overall, we're doing great.

RESOLUTIONS

Holly's 2010 New Years' resolution was not to change anything important. This has no doubt contributed to the calm of the year, but it appears that she will be in the line at Weight Watchers after Christmas. Matt's resolution was to care less about stuff (actually expressed more succinctly than that, but we'll spare you the "colorful" wording); however, he still needs to learn to take irresponsibility so he plans to renew this resolution for another year. If he gets around to it. *Whatever*.

HOLIDAY AMBIVALENCE

The front page of the UT website currently features research that Holly found interesting. In her 1995 book, *Christmas in America*, historian Dr. Penne Restad argues that there has always been a certain cultural ambivalence about the meaning of Christmas:

There exists no singular Christmas past to reclaim . . . Tension and controversy have always surrounded the holiday. "Jesus is the reason for the season" may ring true for some today, but many of the earliest American settlers either rejected the holiday as unChristian or engaged in rather unholy, whiskey-fueled celebrations. Even the oft-lamented commercialism of Christmas isn't new. If anything, it's one of the main reasons Christmas took hold in this country.

Far from fitting into a single category, Restad says, Christmas has grown large enough to encompass the frenzied shopping and the White House Christmas tree, the family gatherings and reverent church observances. More than any other holiday in the U.S., Restad says, Christmas — in one way or another — taps into our national consciousness and "provides a communal and calendrical touchstone of the nation's faith, hope, and moral aspiration, a national monument of harmony and transcendence." (http://www.utexas.edu/features/2010/12/06/christmas_america/)

So, however you celebrate -- whether spending time in contemplation or the mall, feeding homeless people or baking cookies for your co-workers, alone or with family -- we hope the rituals of the season bring you closer to whoever and whatever is most important to you. Keep us posted . . .

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