

**Dashiell Hammett Society of Studs (DHSOS)
San Francisco International Headquarters**

Officers

President (DUH PREZ)	Bill Diefenbach
Communications Czar (Czar)	Geoff Noakes
AgendaMeister (ListMan)	Ken Monk
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Minutes of Meeting

Porschestrassen

Thursday, November 5, 2020

All Gussied Up



The DHSOS gathered for our first in-person meeting in eight months in the back yard of DUH PREZ. Drinks were served on his veranda, which was dressed for Halloween, and dinner took place in the Porschestrassen. The coronavirus was raging across the U.S. (picking up speed as we met) and indoor dining was discouraged in San Francisco and across the U.S.

After a couple of less than wholly satisfactory virtual meetings DUH PREZ decided to host an in-person, mask-wearing, socially-distanced outdoor meeting at his place. It was one of the few decisions he has made in his years as DUH PREZ, and it was a good one. We showed up at the requested time with masks, hand sanitizer, food, drinks, and good attitudes.

Having recently retired (more about that later), and being grounded by the virus, DUH PREZ has little to do (besides babysitting grandchildren and changing diapers), and he had spent some of his new-found free time decorating for the occasion.



It's not an exaggeration to say that DUH PREZ's back yard was all gussied up. Lights had been strung and lit on trees and shrubs and on the ceiling of the Porschestrassen. Chairs were set up on his back porch (for cocktails) and a round table was set for dinner in the Porschestrassen.

As soon as the group was assembled, DUH PREZ began mixing drinks, and soon everyone was seated with cocktails in hand, masks off, and smiles on faces. We toasted DUH PREZ and each other. It was good to be together in person again.

Pre-Meeting Prattle

It was a nice night – chilly but clear -- and it was good to be together again. Pent-up man talk spilled out. We toasted DUH PREZ on his recent retirement (two weeks earlier) and we patiently listened while he repeated the story of his employment at the architectural firm. We heard about DUH PREZ's grandchildren and how Halloween had been a bust (because of the virus), and we discussed the devastation of recent forest fires on the West Coast. ListMan talked about losing electricity at his house because of the threat of fires, and we launched into memories of the 1989 earthquake and how bad the next big shaker could be.



We discussed the recent baseball World Series and how well it has been run, but how odd it had been to see it played without fans. We toasted the Czar, a lifelong Dodger fan, for patiently waiting 31 years to see his team win it all.

Shifting sports, DUH PREZ told how he had suffered when his Michigan Wolverines lost to cross-state rivals Michigan State, and how he had reluctantly mailed a lost bet on the game to his sister. His face contorted in agony when he described dropping the letter to her (with a crumpled \$10 bill inside) into a mail box.

We toasted ListMan and congratulated him on a recent outstanding round of golf at prestigious Poppy Hills country club. His story was upbeat:

“I went down to Monterey to play Poppy Hills with three long-time friends, my favorite 4-some to play with. Three in our party drove together with masks on. There is a tendency when you shoot a good round to have the feeling “but of course that should be what I always shoot, as opposed to the realistic 1 in 20 chance of actually shooting in the 70's, which is my gold standard.”

“Thinking about the round later I admitted to myself that I got a lot of good breaks, i.e., two bad shots and a really good one saving you, or get out of the bunker and one putt, or sinking a long putt or two to save a par or bogey. I had the benefit of no double bogies which are killers to a good score. Fun day. My takeaway: sometimes you have luck on your side.”

“It was a hard course,” he concluded, which made his score of 79 seem even more impressive. “I’ve actually gotten better,” he suggested, which provoked yet another toast from the DHSOS.

DUH PREZ reported that he is looking into the possibility of purchasing a vacation home in the Russian River area of California, a home he has rented in the past. He went to great lengths to describe the home, which sounded wonderful, but the enthusiasm died down a bit when he announced that he expected each of us to contribute to the purchase.

Call to Order



DUH PREZ called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM by rapping a teaspoon against his martini glass. Da Burd joined the meeting, proudly occupying center position on the table and keeping a close eye on DUH PREZ's Porsche.

Big Bang Theory



“What’s new with everybody?” DUH PREZ asked. “What is everyone doing to keep busy during the pandemic?” The Czar reported that his spouse is “all in” on watching the TV show “Big Bang Theory” and that he is now joining her – and enjoying it. The show, which centers on five characters living in Pasadena, California, includes Leonard Hofstadter and Sheldon Cooper, who are physicists at Caltech; Penny, a waitress and aspiring actress who lives across the hall; and Leonard and Sheldon’s similarly geeky and socially awkward friends and co-workers aerospace engineers Howard and Raj.

That led DUH PREZ to report that he had once led a project at Caltech and that many of the students there looked and sounded like the characters on the TV show.

DUH PREZ Steps Down



After 48 years of toiling (45 at SmithGroup), DUH PREZ finally hung it up last month, making his long-anticipated retirement official. This milestone was acknowledged by the DHSOS, who offered a toast to his career longevity and his new-found freedom.

He reminded us of his many career accomplishments and recounted some career highlights and lowlights. His company had a Zoom party to honor his retirement, as did his circle of friends. He gracefully accepted all congratulations but was a little disheartened they couldn’t be in person. “They didn’t even have to buy me a drink,” he lamented.

So what does he plan to do now? “Babysit and change diapers,” he reported. “Does anyone want to hear about the diaper I changed today?” The group declined and changed the subject.

Forest Fires and Other Disasters

We had recently suffered through a series of devastating forest fires that affected much of the West Coast, and ListMan told that his house had an electrical outage. We talked about what we would do and what we would take if we were forced to evacuate our homes. There was a wildly divergent opinions about what was “crucial” with no reasonable conclusion. That discussion morphed into talk about earthquakes, earthquake preparation kits, and the need to have a pair of slippers in one’s kit.

We discussed what to do when an evacuation is threatened and what we would pack in our “go bags.” That conversation evolved into a discussion of whether it was worth it to purchase and install a generator to keep the refrigerator and lights going, and a tangential conversation about how long a generator would run and how large a garden hose would have to be to deter a forest fire. It was evident at that point that the martinis were affecting the conversation.

Good People

Notes passed out copies of his latest book, titled “Good People” which he had autographed for DHSOS officers. “It was my pandemic project,” he reported, “And now I need another one.” He offered to publish a collection of DHSOS minutes,

which was enthusiastically received by his fellow officers.

Presidential Son Update



DUH PREZ reported that his son, who is a DHSOS trainee, was doing well at his job at Bring-A-Trailer, and he bragged that the aforementioned son had recently helped sell a very special car.

John Lennon's sky blue 1965 Ferrari 330 GT 2+2 Coupé was sold to an unidentified buyer for \$775,000.

Audible gasps were heard among the officers, whose cars are collectively worth a small fraction of that. A toast was offered to the lad, who continues to be a source of pride for the Society.

Perfect Child and the Mercedes



Another source of pride, the Perfect Child of DUH PREZ, also had news. She and her hubby recently purchased a home in the Bernal Heights section of San Francisco. A rather detailed description was provided, much of which was lost on us because a neighbor drove past in a Mercedes AMG GT Coupe with a rumbling, throaty exhaust system. DUH PREZ even stopped his

speech to admire the car. "That is one of the best sounds in the world," he muttered, and he stood up and led us to the car, where we all paused in respect. Sorry, Christina, but the car stole the show.

Friendly Skies?



Is it safe to fly now? One opinion came from Miss K, the daughter of the Czar. She has been flying for work, he reported, and this is what she found:

1. Airline travel policy varies widely. Main point of difference is whether they are blocking middle seats or, if you are in first class, the seat next to you.
2. From the studies I reviewed, air travel itself does not increase your risk of contracting COVID - planes circulate and filter the air often enough, and everyone is required to wear a mask.
3. That said, I felt very uncomfortable while flying, especially in airports pre/post flight, mainly because everyone clearly had different comfort levels:

-Some people took their masks off on the plane while eating and drinking. Some people brought full meals onto the plane, and had masks off for 15+ minutes. I never took my mask off.

-Airports were the scariest places. Some people travelled through terminals with masks off, some wore their masks incorrectly. Airports before COVID felt like a melting pot of germs, and this was further heightened during COVID.

-I wore a face shield in addition to a mask. It was a very uncomfortable experience, but it made me feel safer.

4. Bottom line, would I fly again? Yes, but I would try to fly Delta because they are taking the most conservative approach by blocking seats.

Notes had a better experience on a recent flight to Portland, and his opinion was that this is a good time to fly.

“The airport was nearly deserted,” he reported, “And there were no lines to check baggage or to check in or for Security. And there was even a chair to sit in while waiting for my flight! Everyone on the plane wore their masks, the middle seats were empty, and the flight attendants were masked and friendly. My flight was even on time. I think it’s a great time to fly!”

It would be good to end this topic with a conclusion, because our readers like to follow our advice, but at that point no one was really paying attention and we were winding things down.

Hearty Good Night



This was an excellent meeting, everyone agreed, and better than meeting by Zoom. We laid heavy compliments on DUH PREZ for glitzing up his back yard and for cooking salmon for us, and we donned our masks and wandered into his alley to say good night. There were no handshakes or even fist bumps, because of the virus, but we exchanged a round of hearty elbow bumps,

bade each other good night, and wandered off into the night.

It was a special night under unusual conditions with special friends!

That’s it for now, man.

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