

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

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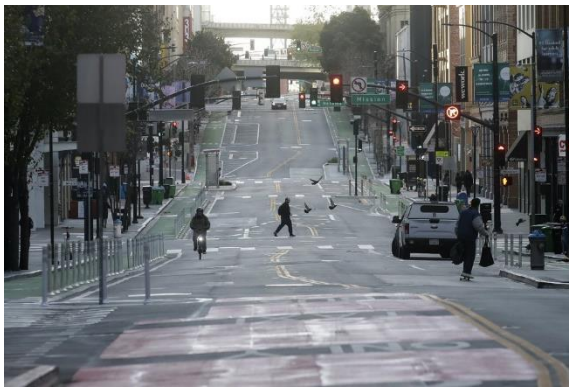
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Minutes of Meeting

Redwood Room/Puccini and Pinetti

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Eerie Evening



Perhaps the Czar put it best when he said it was eerie in San Francisco the night of our DHSOS meeting. We met at the Redwood Room in the Clift Hotel for drinks and there were few people outside on the streets or in the hotel bar.

The coronavirus was just taking off in the U.S. after ravaging China, South Korea, and Italy. And, while we had a good time, it dominated the conversation. Things were beginning to close down: people were working from home; plays, sporting events, concerts, and other large gatherings were delayed or cancelled; and bars and restaurants were virtually deserted. The streets outside the Redwood Room were nearly empty, with just a few drunken tourists and a couple of homeless people begging for money.

As the Czar said, it was eerie!

Redwood Room



The Redwood Room is the bar inside the Clift Royal Sonesta Hotel, which has recently undergone a major renovation. The Redwood Room has been restored and reinvented as a modern bar with an historic past. The bar is Art Deco style, and its interior features original redwood paneling (a rumor is it was all made from one enormous redwood tree) and the bar made from an 800-year-old redwood tree. The original artwork on the walls by Austrian painter Gustav Klimt was recently restored and rehung. The wall sconces and chandeliers are also art deco style and are unique. It is a beautiful place, re-done in a tasteful manner.

Coronavirus

There was only one other table occupied in the room, despite the fact it was the height

of cocktail hour on a workday. A highly-contagious virus was making its way around the world, and starting to affect peoples' lives. Where most people had previously dismissed it as not their problem, reports now indicated it was heading our way and people were beginning to react.

We talked about the effect it will have on the Ballet School, where the first daughter works, Boy Scout meetings and hikes the first son had planned, and the wedding and honeymoon of the Czar's daughter. And it will also likely affect the trip to the UK the DHSOS had planned in June. There will be far-reaching tentacles that will be devastating to waiters, janitors, store owners and clerks, airlines, hotels, and restaurants. Teachers are not working, and security guards, factory workers -- most everyone else except those in the health care and food manufacturing industries.

As we walked the nearly empty streets from the bar to the restaurant we noticed how few people were out and how quiet it was. Even the panhandlers had lost their spirits.

Puccini and Pinetti



Puccini and Pinetti is an Italian restaurant down the street from where the PoV formerly maintained a man cave, and it was one of his favorite hangouts. We had met there before -- most notably in February, 2005, when the PoV after one too many free martinis, had a legendary moment:

The meeting itself was not actually ever called to order. Instead, we just kind of started it around 8:10 PM. The Schlepper of Concoctions (who is now the AgendaMeister) brought up the subject of venues for future meetings -- suggesting that the Society could possibly expand its selection to include newer restaurants that Dashiell would likely have frequented if he were alive today. He suggested that the Procurer of Venues should "feel out" some such establishments as part of his responsibilities. That suggestion was not well received by the Procurer of Venues, who was feeling no pain, but who was feeling threatened. He was also apparently feeling hungry, because he asked Megan the well-endowed waitress why his salad hadn't been delivered just moments after he finished eating it."

-- DHSOS minutes, February 17, 2005

We walked in to a nearly empty restaurant and the waiter (who introduced himself as Paco) told us to sit "wherever you want." We settled into one of the many empty booths and got ready for our meeting.

The Czar proposed a toast to the PoV and we raised our glasses. "To Lee!" we proclaimed. Paco took our photo.

Note: Puccini and Pinetti has since closed because of the coronavirus.

Da Burd



Thanks to DUH PREZ, Da Burd joined us for the evening, emerging from his wooden coffin and roosting in the middle of our table. As is our custom, we summoned Paco (our waiter) to our table to identify Da Burd.

"That's not a bottle of wine, is it?" he asked.

"No, it's the Maltese Falcon," we told him,

A blank look came over his face.

"Have you heard of The Maltese Falcon?" we asked.

"No, what's that?"

"It's a very famous movie from 1941."

"Well, that explains it," he decided, "I wasn't born until 1981."

Call to Order

As is his custom, DUH PREZ called the meeting to order at 6:37 PM. We ordered another round of drinks and got down to business

DUH PREZ's Vacation

We received an extensive report on DUH PREZ's recent vacation to Utah and Florida.

In Utah, he and several workmates skied at Power Mountain and Snow Basin. (Note: Both ski areas have since closed for the season because of the coronavirus).

He had us thoroughly entertained when he described his attempts to get up with his skis on after falling.

"It took three of them to pull me up," he recalled. "I'm not feeble – I guess I should have taken the damn skis off."

In Florida, he golfed with his college roommates and other fraternity bros, and participated in a party with 30 of his fraternity brothers. Why Florida, when his fraternity is in Michigan?

"Have you seen what the weather in Michigan is like now?"

Noir City

DUH PREZ reviewed the recent Film Noir festival, which was called "Noir City:

International II." This was the 18th annual San Francisco film noir festival, and this one featured all international movies.

"Surprisingly," DUH PREZ reported, "It was good! There was a nice selection of entertaining movies, interesting sets, and lovely ladies."

As always, the festival was programmed and hosted by Eddie Muller, internationally renowned "Czar of Noir," host of the popular Turner Classic Movies series *Noir Alley*, and personal buddy of DUH PREZ.

Two Weeks at Home

"What would you do if you were forced into a two-week quarantine because of the virus?"

That question, posed by ListMan, elicited interesting answers and high ambitions.

- Notes said he would clean out his attic, which hasn't been done in 30 years.
- The Czar said he would convert video tapes of Katharine's childhood events to a more up-to-date format.
- DUH PREZ would get his income taxes ready.
- And ListMan would clean up his audio collection, straighten out his passwords, and clean up his yard.

Ah yes ... such good intentions.

Wedding Planners

Plans are coming along nicely for the September marriage of the Czarette, who is betrothed to Hunter, our resident wine expert. Plans for their honeymoon in Northern Italy, however, may have to be changed because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Giants Breakout Players

Our San Francisco pro baseball team is not expected to be top-notch this year, as they are going through a re-building process. But there could be a few surprising “breakout” players. Who might they be?

- DUH PREZ picked Hunter Pence and Mike Yastrzemski.
- Notes thinks it could be Jeff Samardzija and Mauricio Dubon.
- Czar identified Billy Hamilton, and would like to see a return to more base stealing. Or, he said it could be the two seasoned infield vets, Brandon Crawford and Brandon Belt.
- ListMan also likes Brandon Belt and thinks he has the incentive and experience to have a good season.

We will see who, if anyone, is right – if there turns out to be a baseball season.

Swinging With Two Strikes

From childhood we were taught the shame of striking out on a called third strike. Our Little League coaches taught us there was nothing worse than letting a third strike go by, and our teammates and parents threw derogatory terms at us, like “caught looking,” and “left the bat on your shoulder.”

Our Little League coaches tried to cure us, teaching us to choke up on the bat, crouch down, and swing if the pitch was even close to the strike zone.

But that approach is changing somewhat, at least in the pros.

ListMan led us through a revised approach being by some pro teams in today’s analytical times, using a technique that Barry Bonds, among others, used to increase on-base percentage. When you have two strikes on you, the approach says, make sure the next pitch is in your “zone.” Otherwise, don’t swing at it. Sure, you might strike out, but there is also a chance you will walk, and if you do swing

at a pitch out of your zone you are likely to hit into an out, anyhow.

That approach worked for Barry Bonds, ListMan reminded us. In his stellar career Bonds was walked 2,558 times, which is better than second place (Rickey Henderson) by 368 walks. And he was intentionally walked 688 times, which bests second place (Albert Pujols) by 392 free passes.

Given the Boot



Around 8:30 PM we were finishing our business and considering a final drink when Paco the Waiter approached our table and asked us to leave. We weren’t misbehaving, he told us, but we were the only people in the place and they were going to close early.

So we asked him to take a photo of our DHSOS socks (Christmas gifts from Hunter), and Paco obliged. (This was the first time he had been asked to do so in the 21 years he has been a waiter, he reported.)

Next Meeting

Thanks to the Czar, our next meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, August 6, 2020. DUH PREZ will be the acting POV. He asked DHSOS officers to note the date in their calendars and suggested we should think optimistically that the COVID-19 situation will be settled by then.

Adjournment

It was an unusual but satisfying evening of strong drink, manly food, stimulating conversation, and noble friends.

We paid our check, secured Da Burd in his box, and assembled on the sidewalk outside the restaurant. It was a cool and quiet night in the Theater District of San Francisco, and many of the nearby bars and restaurants were nearly empty. We avoided handshakes and fist bumps and instead exchanged hearty elbow bumps and made our way through the silent streets to our cars for a drive home. It was another good night out with special friends!

That's it for now, man.

