

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

Officers

President (DUH PREZ)	Bill Diefenbach
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Minutes of Meeting

Thursday, February 24, 2022

The Irish Bank/Sam's Grill

Guinness in the Alley



Covid-19 was still hanging around the edges, so we met for drinks outside, in an alley, at The Irish Bank. It was chilly, but the proprietors assured us they had heaters, which they did, but the heaters didn't put out much heat, so our glasses of Guinness got colder while we talked.

The Irish Bank is an authentic Irish pub snugly nestled in its own lane behind a sushi restaurant, which is in the space Rendezvous Du Monde formerly occupied. That is where we celebrated Vicki's 50th birthday a few years ago.

The façade of The Irish Bank is whitewashed cottage style, and the walls are covered with brass plaques, Irish signs, and hanging flower baskets. Three burly, well-tattooed Irish lads carried drinks to the tables and supplied a reasonable amount of Irish humor.



Call to Order

DUH PREZ called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM by clinking his glass of Guinness against that of ListMan. We were off and running.

Lookin' Back



We reflected on how good it was to be meeting in person at a "real" bar and restaurant – something we hadn't been able to do for nearly two years. And we reviewed our history since losing our Procurer of Venues. For nearly a year, we invited a guest to join us at each meeting, after which we decided four Studs was the right number.

We talked about changes the past two years with the San Francisco Giants, including the illnesses of announcers Mike Krukow and Duane Kuiper, new management and coaching staff, new players, and a stellar season last year.

And we talked about the Golden State Warriors, their move from Oakland to San Francisco, the soaring prices of tickets to

sporting events, the wealthier audiences new sports stadiums attract, and “The Nine, Nine, Nine”, which ListMan explained is a group of Giants fans who are friends of Brian Murphy (a morning sports talk show host), who dream of going to a Spring Training game and ... well, here is how Murphy put it:

Springtime hope, vernal optimism, and the sense that all is possible. Translation: We met Charlie the Cub Fan, who riveted hundreds on the grassy berm with his open proclamation of his attempt to conquer "The Nine Nine Nine."

Nine beers. Nine hot dogs. Nine innings.

Was it Tom Browning or Robert Browning who once penned: "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a Dream Trip for?"

Baseball is Back ... or Is It?

Major League Baseball should be in full swing, with Spring Training underway and the season looming. Instead, the players are locked out and negotiations between owners and players are threatening to delay or cancel the season. Will there be a baseball season, we wondered? Will it be shortened? We agreed it seems to be all about money, with ultra-wealthy owners trying to squeeze more profits from ultra-wealthy players. We started to feel sorry for the players until someone looked up the minimum salary of a major league player, and found it is \$600,000 per year.

We talked about the Winter Olympics, which had recently concluded in China. Were we as excited about it as previous Olympics, and did we watch as much of it? No, and no. We weren't excited about much of it, and we all watched less than in previous years.



Cocktail vs. Highball



I'm not sure how this conversation started, but someone observed that our parents had enjoyed “cocktails” and “highballs” when we grew up. So what's the difference we wondered? Well, here is a possible explanation from a website called “Drinxville”:

At its heart, a highball is a spirit combined with a single mixer in a tall glass. Rum and Coke, or scotch and soda are examples of this popular drink option. Highballs are traditionally served over ice.

Unlike the simplistic highball, the cocktail is a much more involved drink. A cocktail is a single spirit or a mix of spirits combined with other juices, creams, or beverages to create a delicious combination of flavors. Cosmopolitans, martinis, and margaritas are all classic examples of a cocktail.

Ukraine in the News



The country of Ukraine has been in the news lately, as Russian President Putin prepared to invade it by force. We discussed the upcoming tragedy and DUH PREZ reminded us that years ago Christina had spent time in Ukraine as part of a student exchange, and later two Ukrainian students stayed with he and Ruth as part of the same program.

DUH PREZ Paid

It should be noted here for two reasons that DUH PREZ paid the bar tab at The Irish Bank: (1) because he insisted that we give him credit for it, and (2) because he sometimes gets accused of doing nothing at our meetings, when in fact he does: (a) bring Da Burd, and (b) occasionally pay for drinks.

Sam's Grill



After a couple of pints of Guinness, we sauntered a block over to Sam's Grill, where we were seated at a cozy table and waited on by a cheerful man named Sean, who seemed to know everyone of importance.

"Can I start you guys off with a cocktail," Sean asked.

"Bread," we told him. "Bring us your good sourdough bread, Sean!"

"And lots of butter!" DUH PREZ added.

Sean did bring us a pile of their fantastic bread -- and lots of butter. That's one of the reasons we've been to Sam's five times. The Czar brought out minutes from our four previous meetings; all were special occasions, and all involved a lot of bread and butter.

Da Burd got out of his travelling box, took a seat of honor on our table, and overlooked the rest of our meeting.



Prez is Back at It

"I'm working again," DUH PREZ offered, and he proceeded to describe a scenario in which his former boss (whom he hired) called him and begged him to come back to work part-time, to help with a physics laboratory project at a Cal State University. He seemed pleased by the work (and the money), but he did not offer to buy dinner.

Birthday Bash

As a group, we congratulated the Czar on his recent "round" birthday, welcomed him to septuagenarian status, and complimented him on the choice of venue for his party. He was pleased and said he enjoyed it, too. He reminded us that he had his 40th birthday party at Beach Blanket Babylon, his 50th at the Cliff House, and now his 70th at Sociale. We thanked him for including us in the event and offered a toast that the same fate didn't befall Sociale as the previous two locations.

About that time Sean, the waiter, walked by, overheard our conversation, and offered that he had recently waited on a man who had bought the concession for the Cliff House and promised to re-open it.

Gray Eagle and Drakesbad



Everyone who reads these minutes knows that the DHSOS has a long history of vacationing at Drakesbad Guest Ranch in Lassen Volcanic Nation Park. This year, though, we have different plans. Because of damage from a forest fire, Drakesbad is closed this year, so the DHSOS will stay

instead at Gray Eagle Lodge, near Sierraville. This will be a change for the DHSOS, and we usually don't like change. But this should be a good one.

As an introduction to our new lodging, here is a little background information:

Gray Eagle Lodge was established by the Zehner Family in 1923 in the Plumas National Forest. For generations, the Lodge was celebrated by "well-to-do" San Franciscans as an ideal escape from the City life. The Lodge collapsed under "Sierra cement" snowstorms in 1982. The massive Tahoe-style log design of the current Lodge was constructed in 1983. Since then, the Smith Family has owned and operated this High Sierra get-away!

About the owners:

Bret was raised in Los Gatos, California. He enjoys snow skiing, wake surfing, and remodeling projects. Bret took over the Lodge from his Dad, Sam, in 1990, leaving the hustle and bustle of a professional job in San Francisco to become a host.

Lynn was raised in Pleasanton, California. She enjoys riding working cow horses, raising their son, Brady, and collecting border collies. Lynn worked for Otis Elevator Company for thirteen years in San Ramon, CA before being transferred to the Reno office of Otis, which is where she met Bret at a local wine bar. Married in November of 2002, they began their personal and professional relationship at Gray Eagle Lodge.

Kitchen Re-Model



The Czar reported that his kitchen remodel is going well and is on schedule. The demolition is complete and there were no huge surprises. He also reported that the new cabinets and appliances are in and the re-framing of his breakfast nook is underway. And, while all that is going on, he and Nancy are having a good time at their temporary headquarters in Marin County -- enjoying long walks, new restaurants, and seeing stars at night.

Travelin' Men

Well, this is a topic we haven't talked about for a while. We all have plans for overseas trips this year, and we discussed the dates, locations, and timing. But the longest story was from DUH PREZ, who told in great detail how he was able to finesse canceling his reservation for a shared cabin on a river cruise, make another reservation for a different cabin so he could take P.J., and fill his former reservation -- all without paying a penalty.

Your Dad's Cars



ListMan has a way of coming up with interesting topics and tonight he asked us to describe a special car our fathers owned. He started it by talking about a car his dad and friends purchased to commute from the East Bay to San Francisco for work. The car was huge, he reported, and even had seats in the back that faced each other.

DUH PREZ said his father once purchased a Buick Wildcat convertible that DUH PREZ and his buddies drove around with the top down seeking chicks. He once went a little too fast around a corner and fish-tailed into another car,

causing a sizeable dent. Police were called, but fortunately they didn't look in the trunk, where DUH PREZ and his friends had several rifles and lots of ammo, because they were headed out for target practice.

Notes talked about a 1946 Chevy his father bought new when he got out of the Marines at the end of World War II. It was light brown with a dark brown roof, and it was his dad's pride and joy. He doesn't remember it having seat belts, power steering, or a turn indicator.

The Czar reported that his parents had three cars: a "business" limo, a station wagon, and a Chevy Corvair. That was the car he was driving with four basketball buddies when he missed a turn and wound up in a ditch. They smelled gas, got out of the car, somehow got home, and faced the music. The Czar was grounded, the car was pulled out and repaired, and things eventually returned to normal.

Sister Anne

Notes related a story from his wedding which was especially relevant now, with the recent death of his sister.

This took place before his wedding in October 1989. Jim Struthers, Patty's minister growing up, had flown out from Oklahoma to marry them, and there was a rehearsal at the Mission in Sonoma the night before the wedding. When Jim asked who was going to do the readings Notes told him "Sister Anne." That's what he and Patty called her, and they didn't think anything about it. Well, Jim didn't know that part and since he knew Notes was raised Catholic, he assumed Anne was a nun. Jim was respectful when he greeted Anne and they went over the readings.

"That will work out just fine," he said when they were done, and he flashed Anne a smile. "Is there anything else?" he asked. Anne turned to Buzz, who was standing a few feet away, and she asked him to join us.

"This is my husband, Buzz," she said to Jim.

"Wow!" Jim said.

At least that's how Notes remembers it. And he remembers that Jim's smile froze, and his eyes moved back-and-forth. This was something he hadn't expected.

"The Catholic Church really *has* changed!" he blurted out.

That's when they lost it. Anne laughed, and Patty and Notes looked at her and they laughed, and eventually Jim did, too.

"I'm not a nun," Anne told Jim.

"Oh – so they just *call* you that!," he said. "And you had seven brothers and no sisters -- you really should be sainted!"

Plotting the Sites



DUH PREZ likes to stay busy. His latest project has been to plot the various architectural projects his former company has completed in San Francisco and Oakland on maps, and to label and organize photos of the buildings. He showed us maps he has finished, which looked very organized and very busy. It was late, so we agreed to learn more about his project at our next meeting.

Hearty Good Night

It was time to go home. Everyone else had left the restaurant (including the noisy group down the hall) and Sean, the waiter, had taken off his vest and tie. So we paid our bill, put on our jackets, and walked outside. The San Francisco winter wind hit us in the face, and we turned our backs on it, issued hearty fist bumps all around,

wished each other good night, and wandered off into the chilly San Francisco evening.

It had been another good night under improved conditions with special friends!

That's it for now, man.

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