

**Minutes of Meeting**  
**Dashiell Hammett Society of Studs**

Hotel Union Square  
John's Grill  
Puccini & Pinetti  
San Francisco, California  
Thursday, February 17, 2005

“Do you realize this may be as good as it gets for the DHSOS?”  
-- Schlepper of Concoctions

“I sure hope one of you will drive me home, ‘cause I’m too drunk to take MUNI.”  
“Please, never allow me to go near a free martini bar ever again.”  
-- Procurer of Venues

“My name? Fred Smith.”  
-- THE PREZ (while being interviewed by KQED)

It may not get any better than this for the DHSOS. For us, this was the Holy Grail of Hammett-ness. For true devotees such as us, it was the “perfect storm” of nostalgia, libation, and zest -- a maxing of the senses worthy of Bacchus.

Everything a true Dashiellite could want was there – outrageous parties, free food and booze, and femme fatale galore. It was San Francisco’s tribute to *The Maltese Falcon*, a 75<sup>th</sup> birthday party, San Francisco style. There were lights, food, and lots of beautiful people decked out in period dress. Men wore double-breasted suits and hats and women were in furs and tight-fitting dresses. Everyone was loose, friendly, and became more so as the evening proceeded.

It’s difficult to know where to begin describing such an evening! Maybe with the searchlights outside the Hotel Union Square. It was that kind of evening – the spotlight on Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*, and the DHSOS.

And the people -- dozens of Sam Spade and Brigid O’Shaughnessy wannabes in 1930s outfits -- tight fitting and sleek. They were our kind of people. Everyone was celebrating. It was a joyous occasion, an excuse to party.

So we celebrated. It’s not that we needed an excuse to party, but the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *The Maltese Falcon* just happened to fall on the night the DHSOS met.

- No one was in a more celebratory mood than the **Procurer of Venues**. It was a mood brought on by the occasion and by frequent trips to the martini bar. Many of those who encountered him that evening now actually believe that *The Maltese Falcon* was written in office 743 of the Flood Building. Who knows what else he spewed forth to other unsuspecting nubilees that evening?
- The **Communications Czar** was a true leader -- circulating with celebrities, lining up media interviews, and encouraging other members to avail themselves of the free food and spirits.

- The **Schlepper of Concoctions** was in his element – taking in the atmosphere and schlepping drinks to Society members and strangers alike.
- The **Archivist of Knowledge** arrived in costume and soaked up the atmosphere, all the while carefully recording the goings-on for permanent DHSOS records.
- **THE PREZ** looked dapper in period costume and felt hat, but something was amiss. He accurately represented the values of the DHSOS to the KQED reporter, but when it came time to give his name, he came up with some phony alias. But the Communications Czar fixed that up later. It should be noted that THE PREZ deserves all of the credit for recognizing the significance of this evening's opportunities and its coincidental timing with our regular DHSOS meeting. Our fedoras are off to THE PREZ for redirecting the evening's entire agenda so that we all could participate in the event of the decade.

As a Society, we looked marvelous! The hostess at Puccini & Pinetti said so, and there is no reason to doubt her assessment. And we felt marvelous! After all, it's not every night one's organization is honored with spotlights, parties, dancing -- and did I mention free food and booze.

A great many DHSOS business cards were put into circulation; these seemed to quickly differentiate DHSOS from all others, and to in some sense legitimize the society. For the first time, some Studs seemed apprehensive about which e-mail address and phone number they were sharing.

Two perspective new DHSOS members emerged from the gin-soaked shadows of the evening. "Scoop," the 1930s photographer from the event at John's Grill is interested, as is Melissa Penagas, the first-place winner of the Brigid O'Shaughnessy wannabe contest. Melissa's photo appeared in the SF Chronicle the day after our meeting, so she's nearly as famous as THE PREZ, who (it is rumored) appeared on TV the night of the event.

In addition to being entertaining, DHSOS members also found the evening to be educational. Few of us knew, for example, that *The Maltese Falcon* was made into a movie three times (the famous one was the third one), and that the first choice to play Sam Spade was George Raft, who turned it down because he didn't want the lead in a redo, and he didn't want to work with "greenhorn" director, John Huston.

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The gathering at the Hotel Union Square was an intimate affair – sort of like inviting 300 of your friends to dress up and come over. It was butt-to-butt socializing, a Sam Spade-Brigid O'Shaughnessy look-alike contest, an interview with KQED (arranged by the Communications Czar, (and which can be heard on the DHSOS website on the "Good Stuff" page), and lots of free food and booze.

Festivities continued at John's Grill (the home of the Maltese Falcon). This invitation-only affair featured live music, dancing, the finale of the look-alike contest, a photo op with a San Francisco police officer in front of a 1930 Packard, and lots of free food and booze. Credit goes to the Procurer of Venues for procuring the invitations.

The literary portion of the evening took place at Puccini & Pinetti, where the DHSOS was afforded all the respect it was due by Loretta the lovely hostess, Eugenia the enthusiastic bartender, and Megan the well-endowed waitress.

It would be an exaggeration to describe the business portion of the DHSOS meeting as a literary feast, but we did manage to fit in a little business. This was possible because we were able to procure the only round table in the restaurant, thanks to the pull of the Procurer of Venues.

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The meeting itself was never actually called to order. Instead, we just kind of started it around 8:10 PM. The Schlepper of Concoctions 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. This suggestion was not well received by the Procurer of Venues, who was feeling no pain, but 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 it.

THE PREZ handed out copies of *Dashiell Hammett’s San Francisco (A Pictorial Guide)*, which he had illegally duplicated. He offered no apology (and only a feeble excuse) for using a pseudonym during his interview with KQED. Does he really think he has a reputation to protect?!?! Does he think such a cowardly act sets a good example for the rest of us?

During the “sporting” section of the meeting, the Schlepper of Concoctions reported that he had transferred a golf club to THE PREZ, and that club had added 30 yards to THE PREZ’s drives – thereby increasing them to an average of 50 yards. This upgrade in golf clubs was compared to trading in a Ford Escort for a BMW.

A discussion then ensued regarding birthday plans for the Procurer of Venue’s spousal unit. Some concern was expressed as to whether the Procurer of Venues would be able to pull off a surprise, and suggestions were made that he have a professional actor (e.g., Dennis Hopper) serve as a stand-in. The Procurer of Venues prevailed, however, insisting that all he needed to do to maintain the surprise was to say, “What the hell are you doing here?” to anyone that showed up. He also indicated that members of the DHSOS were “really lucky” to have been invited to the event. “You guys wouldn’t have been included except for the fact that you are in the DHSOS,” he said.

There was a discussion of recent publicity in the local media surrounding *The Maltese Falcon*. All agreed it had been extensive and worthy, and THE PREZ promised to get an equal amount of publicity for the DHSOS.

Other discussions revolved around investments, homeowners insurance, Social Security, the recent death of noted architect Phillip Johnson, and Beck’s recent auto accident, at “5:15 on a Saturday morning.” None of that seemed to matter much, as the evening’s focus was clearly on Dashiell Hammett and *The Maltese Falcon*.

There being no interest in further discussion, an evening of celebration and another successful DHSOS meeting was adjourned sometime around 10:15 PM. The Communications Czar poured the Procurer of Venues into his vehicle, and the other members of the Society slogged out the door and down the street toward their homes.

It was an evening to remember!