

# Dashiell Hammett Society of Studs San Francisco International Headquarters

## Officers

President (the PREZ)  
Communications Czar  
Procurer of Venues  
AgendaMeister  
Archivist of Knowledge

Bill D\_\_\_\_\_  
Geoff Noakes  
Lee Tyree  
Ken Monk  
Dale Fehringer

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## Minutes of Meeting

Sam's Grill and Seafood Restaurant

Thursday September 18, 2008

### Assembling at the Bar



"Where time stands still."

A meeting of the Dashiell Hammett Society of Studs (DHSOS) was held September 18, 2008, starting at the historic House of Shields (HOS) for libations, then proceeding to Sam's Grill and Seafood Restaurant for a business meeting and dinner.

The Studs met in the bar at the HOS, greeting each other with firm handshakes and manly remarks. The arrival order was opposite what we're used to, as The PREZ, who is often the last to arrive, was the first one there.

"Strong drinks and loud people compliment each other quite well if I do say so myself."

-- Nellie S., writing about The House of Shields on Yelp, September, 2008

The House of Shields, which is directly across the street from the Sheraton Palace Hotel, was once a speakeasy for guests at the Palace Hotel. But that was long ago, and tonight it was wall-to-wall with Gen-X'ers enjoying strong drinks, loud music, and lively conversation.

The martinis were large and well-priced<sup>1</sup> and our conversation was robust. We discussed the Giants and A's, our home improvement projects, and the types of urinals typically found in public places. In Misty's vernacular, these are all "blue" topics.

Apparently, no one remembers how the incident started – all that is known for sure is a bartender threw a beer glass at some of the customers. As one client remembers it:

*"So I was one of the (HOS) patrons that had a glass thrown at us. The event is over, the owner talked to us and all is good. If you read our reviews we have had no issues with the bar before, just this particular night with a particular bartender."*

*It's been really interesting to see everybody's reviews (on Yelp) of how we are whiny marina girls or how we asked for mojitos and cosmos all night long; it's been a great read the past two days.*

*Here's the deal: we ordered beer and vodka tonics all night long, nothing out of the ordinary I say. Hell we even had a couple of people taking advantage of PBR on tap, not many places in the city serve it."*

The House of Shields is an interesting place to hang out. It was wall-to-wall

<sup>1</sup> DHSOS Officers have since indicated an interest in a more limited consumption of pre- and intra-meeting libations, in order to feel better the next day.

with enthusiastic young people, and it was loud, crowded, and brimming with energy. The bartenders were women, and one had prominent tattoos on both arms. Ordering a drink from her was like ordering from the "Soup Nazi".

We stood most of the time, surrounded by generally friendly people. Lee bribed the non-tattooed bartender \$20 to take us through the tunnel to the Palace Hotel. She said she would love to take his money, but she didn't know anything about a tunnel.

#### BEST MONUMENTAL URINAL

-- Bay Area Guardian, September 2008

There is much to celebrate about the ever-static interior of the beloved House of Shields as it begins its second century of operation. The yellowing Charles McCabe clipping on the wall tells no lies when it proclaims, "Time Stands Still at the House of Shields." But our favorite relic is not the ruggedly handsome Victorian back bar, the ornate wood paneling, or even the long closed tunnel connecting the old basement speakeasy to the Palace Hotel across the street. And although we enjoy the quirky music programming at this downtown live venue (everything from live blues standards to "twee pop punk"), there's something more. Discreetly tucked away in the men's room is the largest single-user urinal we've ever seen. No chance of missing the mark with this one. Laid on its back, the mammoth porcelain plumbing fixture could double as a short bathtub. They just don't make 'em like they used to.

39 New Montgomery, SF. (415) 392-7732,  
[www.houseofshields.com](http://www.houseofshields.com)

### Investigating the Claim



We investigated the Bay Area Guardian's claim, and found that the HOS's urinal was indeed large, but not clean, so it lost some of its luster with us. And we've seen larger multi-user urinals (or at least longer ones). We suspect the person who wrote the

HOS review is too young to have attended public school in the 1950s and 1960s, when "mammoth porcelain plumbing fixtures" were common. We remembered porcelain troughs that extended the entire length of a wall, and which always smelled like pee, despite the presence of hockey puck-sized deodorizer "mints" which we assumed were put there as targets.

Eventually a booth freed up and we settled in for another round of drinks. Now we could hear each other talk.

### If your shoes stick to the floor ...

Following a visit to the HOS's men's room we had a discussion about cleanliness. We shared preferences for clean hotel rooms and restrooms and agreed most of us had become more fastidious as we aged.

The PREZ shared a story about an incident in Elko, Nevada during a cross-country drive with Beck. It seems the PREZ and Beck have a running contest to see how cheaply they can stay during those trips and they found a motel in Elko that rented rooms for \$29.95. When The PREZ entered the room his shoe stuck to the floor and was literally pulled from his foot as he took his next step. The solution? He tied his shoelaces tighter so they wouldn't be pulled off again. The PREZ said they had a "very nice night" in their "perfectly fine" room.

### Sauntering to Sam's



Around 7:00 we made our way up the street to Sam's for dinner. It was a beautiful evening in the City by the Bay.

## About Sam's Grill (from their Website)



The history of Sam's actually stretches back to 1867, when an Irishman began selling the delicious fresh oysters that were abundant in San Francisco Bay. His stall was in the open air market at the base of California Street, which probably looked very similar to the open air markets found today in many third world countries. In the pungent area where vendors hawked fresh fish, crabs and seafood, Michael Molan Moraghan founded an institution that still thrives in the City's financial district.

Mr. Moraghan was a very savvy businessman. By the 1890s, his company had developed into the City's leading seafood establishment, supplying fresh fish and shellfish to the City's best restaurants and hotels. But his specialty continued to be local oysters harvested from the Bay tidelands near Burlingame. Mr. Moraghan was known as "The Oyster King".

The California Market was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake, but the Moraghan business continued to thrive. For a time it operated from various addresses around the City, but in 1919 it rejoined the City's other oyster dealers in a rebuilt California Market, located between California and Pine Streets, where the Bank of America Building stands today. By that time the operation was known as the Burlingame Oyster Company.

In the meantime, Samuel Zenovitch's fortunes also prospered. In 1905 he purchased San Francisco's Reception

Cafe, where he had first worked as a bartender. The Reception Cafe was a hangout for high-flyers in the boxing and racing world, including John L. Sullivan, Jim Corbett, and Jack Dempsey.

In 1922 Samuel Zenovitch acquired the Burlingame Oyster Company, but it would be several years before the oyster saloon would be known as "Sam's". Zenovitch initially changed the name to the Bay Point Oyster Company, but that name lasted only a few years. Around 1930, the restaurant was renamed "Zembolich & Zenovich." It was a fine name, but hardly poetic for a restaurant, or even an oyster saloon. A year later, the name was changed to "Sam's Seafood Grotto." And the restaurant moved to the north side of the California Market, at 561 California Street.



Sam Zenovich passed away in 1936, and the restaurant was purchased by Frank Seput, who formalized the establishment's current name, "Sam's Grill and Seafood Restaurant." Sam's moved from California Street to its present Bush Street address in 1946. Frank Seput's two sons, Walter and Frank came into the business after the World War.

## Dinner for Six at Sam's

We just missed out on the only round table at Sam's, which had given to another less-deserving party.

We were escorted to a perfectly-fine private booth, where we dug into

sourdough bread and a bottle of cheap red wine<sup>2</sup>.

We were attended by Frank, who has worked as a waiter at Sam's for 41 years. Frank had heard it all before, and he dished our BS right back at us.

We were joined for dinner by Da Burd, the Society's original replica of the Maltese Falcon, which resides full time at the home of the PREZ. It was nice to have him with us again after a several-meeting absence.

### Call to Order

I guess the meeting came to order when we settled in the booth at Sam's. I don't remember anyone actually saying anything about coming to order, but it's reasonable to estimate that the meeting started around 7:15 PM. The formalities aren't really important anyway, since no one remembers what happens afterwards.

The PREZ thanked us for attending and passed Da Burd around so everyone could rub its head for good luck. It was a tender DHSOS moment.

September 27, 2008  
San Francisco, CA



Perhaps the most controversial yacht in the world sailed under the Golden Gate yesterday. Tom Perkins' *Maltese Falcon*, the giant sailing yacht with what may be the most advanced sailing system ever created, has come to roost for

a while in San Francisco Bay. The debate over this boat is constant: Whether it is a beauty or a monstrosity, whether it is advancement in wind power or one man's ego-driven carbon footprint; whether it is the ultimate yacht, or the ultimate

exercise in conspicuous consumption. Good or evil, it's certainly a sight to behold.

The *Maltese Falcon* is scheduled to be in San Francisco for a couple of weeks before moving south, where it will transit the Panama Canal and spend the winter in the Caribbean.

- B. Hampton exclusively for YachtPals.com

### The PREZ on "The Maltese Falcon"

The PREZ, who has a cult-like obsession with black-and-white movies, described the different film versions of *The Maltese Falcon*. The novel has been filmed three times, twice under its original title:

- *The Maltese Falcon* (1931), the first version, starring Ricardo Cortez and Bebe Daniels
- *Satan Met a Lady* (1936), a light-comedy adaptation starring Bette Davis and Warren William, with Sam Spade becoming "Ted Shane".
- *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) the third version, considered to be a *film noir* classic, starring Humphrey Bogart, Mary Astor, Peter Lorre, and Sydney Greenstreet.

In addition, there have been many spoofs and sequels, including 1975's *The Black Bird*, a spoof featuring George Segal as Sam Spade, Jr., and Elisha Cook Jr. and Lee Patrick reprising their roles from the 1941 film.

Source: Wikipedia



<sup>2</sup> DHSOS Officers have since indicated an interest in a more limited consumption of pre- and intra-meeting libations, in order to feel better the next day..

## Handouts

There were handouts for the DHSOS, from The PREZ and PoV.

- The PREZ had books, photo CDs, and of course Da Burd.
- The PoV had photo CDs, an article on asteroids, and lots to say including the following:

*I couldn't be fonder of you if you were my own son. But, well, if you lose a son, it's possible to get another. There's only one Maltese Falcon.*

– Kasper Gutman to Sam Spade, in “The Maltese Falcon”

## Misty's Recovery

This was the fifth week since Misty's surgery, and the PoV reported she continues to recover. He pointed out that while she is definitely feeling better, Misty: (a) still doesn't feel good, (b) hasn't started exercising, and (c) is skipping events she would normally attend.

## The Bailout ... er, I Mean Recovery Program

Debate was underway in both houses of Congress about a financial program to bailout the country's financial system, which is drowning from overextension and “toxic” mortgages. We talked about the many possible implications to us and to the next generation of DHSOS.

At this point it looks like such a major recovery program would cost at least \$700 billion, which is we agreed is a staggering sum of money. It's been estimated that if a person stood in front of an ATM and took out money as fast as possible 24-hours per day, seven days per week – it would take 30 years to withdraw \$700 billion.

At this point we ordered a second bottle of cheap red wine and our waiter, Frank, uncorked it and set it before us<sup>3</sup>.

## Update on the House Next to Geoff

*Background: The elderly woman next door to Geoff passed away, and her niece sold her house to a developer. He obtained a permit to make “minor” repairs to the house, then took the roof off and prepared to add another floor to the house, at which time the Communication Czar and Mrs. Czar raised an objection. So work temporarily stopped, storms came, and rain poured into the house, and eventually into the Noakes' house.*

*When the rains let up the construction workers came back, and again started to add another floor. So the Communication Czar complained again and this time a large sign was installed on the work site: “Stop Work: Earthquake Retrofit Needed.”*

Since then, Geoff has gone back-and-forth with the people in charge of the construction and with inspectors, contractors, lawyers, engineers, and neighbors. He is juggling construction in his house and also trying to keep the mess next door under control. Now, his house and the house next door have passed inspection, and the work in his house is progressing.

The most recent incident with the house next door involved the foundation that is shared between that house and Geoff's. Workers started to replace the shared foundation, which extends under the Noakes' house.

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Geoff got them to stop, and then hired an engineer and lawyer to advise him what to do next. After some back-and-forth he settled on a plan that will replace the shared foundation (which includes about one-third of the foundation under the Noakes' house) and the owner next door will pay for Geoff's out-of-pocket expenses. He's somewhat skeptical about the agreement, and is waiting for money to actually change hands before he feels comfortable that the other party will live up to the agreement.

### **Drakesbad Reservation System**

Lee sent a note to the National Park Superintendent in charge of Drakesbad, asking her to reconsider automating Drakesbad's reservation system and eliminating two-year advance reservations. Geoff responded to Lee's email, seconding those sentiments.

Lee implored all DHSOS officers to correspond with those in charge of Drakesbad, to shore up support for keeping our reservation privileges.

### **Vetting Andrew**

The DHSOS agreed that Andrew is a good guy and is probably suitable for the Perfect Child, but we agreed there should be further vetting of his opinions.

It was moved and seconded that the AgendaMeister put together another means of further discerning Andrew's views. I don't remember a vote, and the enthusiasm for further vetting has died down since the meeting.

### **Global Warming**

Geoff shared a theory that the root cause of global warming is the sun, with minimal blame placed on mankind. Lee agrees

with the theory and offered facts and names to support it. That started quite a discussion.

Two sources for this are:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHlrW\\_YjiPc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHlrW_YjiPc)

and

<http://www.oism.org/pproject/s33p36.htm>

The number and volume of opinions expressed were impressive, as was the number of times "un-named" groups of scientists were quoted as a source. Whether anyone actually agreed with the theory is immaterial, because now the rest of us can say we have two friends who think global warming is caused by the sun.

### **Back-up Systems**

The Communications Czar got us thinking about how we back up our computers, and he's kept after us since. He gave us a detailed run-down on all available options. He uses a home-built back-up system, and has steered Dale and Lee to an online service called Mozy. Bill's computer is backed-up by his company, and Ken is evaluating back-up options.

### **Home Improvements**

Each of the DHSOS are in the middle of, or have just completed, or are about to begin major home improvement projects.

Ken's home looks great, and he and Vicki are enjoying their new kitchen, refurbished bedroom, and living room furniture. Updating the bathrooms is on deck.

The PREZ just finished a successful renovation of his home's lighting

system and floors, and he repainted most of his house, too.

Geoff's bathroom re-model is on track and the major disruptions are through. He and his family are looking forward to having their lives back and to being able to use their facilities again.

Dale and Lee are next, and their spouses are scheming on bathroom and kitchen improvements, respectively.

### **Stina's Move**

The Perfect Child moved on Saturday, September 27, with an assist from her mother, the PREZ, and the Archivist of Knowledge. She now lives in a one-bedroom condo in a multi-unit building, with a balcony and a view like that in Hitchcock's "Rear Window."

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the DHSOS will take place Thursday, January 29, 2009.

### **Adjournment**

It had been a good night with an appropriate mix of good food, strong drink, and noble friends. We paid the check, issued hearty handshakes all around, and walked out into the clear night air.

That's it for now, Man.

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