

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

Officers

President (DUH PREZ)	Bill Diefenbach
Communications Czar (da Czar)	Geoff Noakes
AgendaMeister (ListMan)	Ken Monk
Archivist of Knowledge (Notes)	Dale Fehringer

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Minutes of Meeting

Thursday, January 26, 2023

Devil's Acre/Tosca Café/Caffe Trieste

**Standin' on the Corner**



The plan was to meet at the Condor Club for a drink. Notes, as temporary Procurer of Venues, had summoned us to meet with this missive:

*As the temporary PoV, I invite you to meet at the newest member of San Francisco's "Legacy Business Program" -- the Condor Club (560 Broadway) this Thursday, January 26, at 5:45 PM for a cocktail. Having never been, I don't exactly know what to tell you to expect, other than the drinks are likely to be pricey. But the conversation will be invigorating, and the scenery should be entertaining. After a drink, we will saunter a couple of blocks to Tosca Cafe (242 Columbus Ave.), where we have dinner reservations at 7:00 PM. The last time we ate at Tosca Cafe (April 1, 2014) it had recently re-opened, and we were generally pleased by the renovations and revised menu. That's been a while: (Leland Yee and Shrimp Boy were in the news), and it will be interesting to see what changes have been made since then.*

Dutifully, DHSOS officers gathered on the corner of Broadway and Columbus outside the Condor Club at the appointed time. Unfortunately, the Condor Club was not yet open, and a woman who works there assured us it would not open until 6:30 PM. So, rather than continuing to stand (rather conspicuously) outside, we elected to move down the street to Devil's Acre for a drink.

**Devil's Acre**

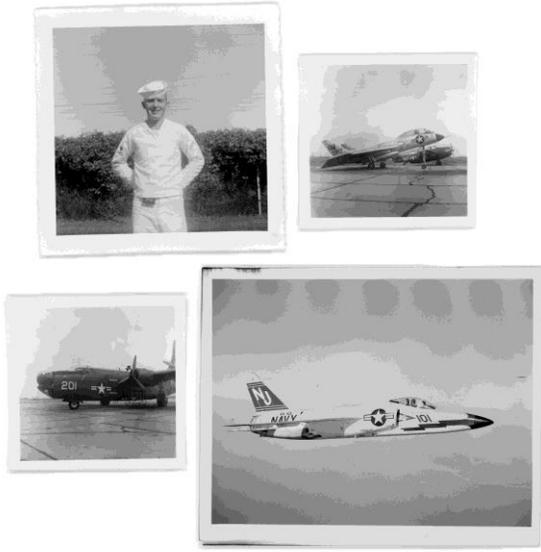


We had been here before, almost exactly five years ago (January 25, 2018) shortly after we lost our Procurer of Venues. During that meeting we received a phone call from his brother, George, who said he was sorry he couldn't join us for the evening. The Devil's Acre is "relatively" new, but meant to look old, and they serve a variety of "healthy" libations. Surprisingly, three of us ordered ginger beers, which are non-alcoholic, for various reasons. That prompted ListMan to order a Manhattan and exclaim "What a bunch of pu\*\*ies." We agreed and raised our glasses in a toast to being together.

## Call to Order

As soon as we were seated, DUH PREZ tapped his dinner knife on his wine glass and called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM. We were off and running.

## Lee's Letter



DUH Prez shared photos of and a letter from our former PoV that he sent his family shortly after entering the Navy (after high school). The photos show a teenage Lee in Navy whites along with the aircraft carrier he was stationed on and the planes on board. His folksy letter home included this explanation why he hadn't told his family much about his job in the Navy:

*"I got your letter today Dad. You complained because I never tell you what I work at. Well, come to think of it, I don't. The reason is I never can think of a way to explain it so you will understand it."*

We talked about the many venues our friend had procured for us over the years, and how he would carefully research each one, sometimes getting to know the bartenders and servers. "Here's to you, Lee," DUH PREZ proclaimed, as we raised our glasses.

## DUH PREZ's Office Party

DUH PREZ was already well-oiled by the time he arrived outside the Condor Club, having had a snootful at an office party for the organization he used to head. The Coronavirus pandemic prompted many downtown office workers to work from home some or most of the time, and his former company recently reduced the floor area of their office space (within the same building). He had just come from a party to welcome employees to the new space, and since the drinks were free ...

## Gray Eagle/Drakesbad

We have sent our checks to reserve rooms at Gray Eagle for the next two visits (2023 and 2024), and we discussed the pros and cons of it versus Drakesbad. We thanked Da Czar for the books he gave us for Christmas that describe hiking options near Gray Eagle.

## Matabanic

DUH PREZ invited DHSOS officers to join him, his friends and relatives, and who knows who else this September at a summer home in Matabanic, in Michigan. "All are welcome," he offered.

## Tosca Café



Tosca Café has been around since 1919, and it was there when Dashiell Hammett was alive. He probably ate there, and he probably enjoyed it. There have been a few changes since we last dined at Tosca in 2014. For one, there is a beautiful mural above the check-in stand that portrays some of San Francisco's legends, such as Willie Brown, Gavin

Newsom, Allen Ginsberg, and Francis Ford Coppola. Also, ListMan noticed a piano stuck in a corner that we hadn't noticed before. "Does anyone play it?" he wondered, "And if so, when?" A third change we noticed is the clientele have gotten considerably younger (or have we gotten older?).

Speaking of Francis Ford Coppola, ListMan remembered that during an earlier visit to Tosca Café he had seen the man sitting at a table, and he had sidled up to him and told him he enjoyed his movie.

"Which one?" Coppola replied.

ListMan gulped and came up with the first one he could think of – *The Godfather* he replied.

"Which one?" Coppola again asked.

Part II," ListMan spit out.

Now, he admitted, he wishes he had said "all of them."

We were escorted to our table by a very accommodating hostess and seated at a table in the middle of the room, next to a group of screeching women who were gussied up and pumped up with drinks. We could barely hear.

### **Da Burd**



Da Burd joined us for the evening, escorted by DUH PREZ. He emerged from his wooden nest and perched in the middle of our table, keeping an eye on everything and everyone who approached.

### **What's With the Owl?**

Our waiter appeared. He noticed da Burd.

"What's with the owl?" he asked.

"It's not an owl," DUH PREZ replied.

"The eagle?" he tried again.

"Closer," DUH PREZ replied, "It's the falcon from the movie, *The Maltese Falcon*."

"Sorry," our waiter replied, "That was before my time."

Ours, too, we thought to ourselves, but we let it go. At least he had noticed and commented.

Da Burd turned away.

### **Sports IQ**

"What sports do you follow?" ListMan asked the group – the 49ers, Warriors ... others?"

There is a variety, as it turns out, including college football teams, the SF Giants, some golf, a little tennis, and the World Cup. But primarily the Warriors, 49ers, and Giants. Oh ... and the Dodgers. But, as it turns out, there aren't any couch potatoes amongst us -- glued to the sofa during miscellaneous football or basketball games.

### **Tipping Habits**

Have our tipping habits changed since the start of the pandemic? For example, do you tip at Starbucks, or when you get takeout? A survey showed some changes. Notes said he felt so bad for baristas who had to work during the height of the pandemic that he tipped every time he bought coffee, and now it's a habit. Yes, for takeout, DUH PREZ opined, if it's ready when he gets there, but not for coffee. Do you tip the newspaper delivery guy? Most said no, but Notes sends a

check to his carrier at Christmas. The garbage guy? No, although Notes remembers that the PoV used to leave a six pack of beer on top of his garbage can at Christmas.

### Driving Instructions



Who gets driving instructions from their mate, when together in a car? (Note: anonymous answers to protect the respondents.)

Officer 1: Barely

Officer 2: Mostly **after** turns (“You should have turned back there!”)

Officer 3: Only if there is a dangerous situation (i.e., “Watch out!”)

Officer 4: “Lots!” (i.e., “The light is green!” “You need to change lanes!” etc.)

### Rain Leaks

Three of us had leaks in our houses during the recent torrential rains. Notes had a leak early in the rainy season and called a roofing company, who came immediately, fixed the leak, and repaired several other potential problems. DUH PREZ hasn’t had any leaks at his primary residence, but a tree branch fell on the roof of his house near Healdsburg and caused a problem. That has since been repaired. The Czar has been lucky – no leaks so far. And ListMan had one “mystery” leak in a back bedroom that seeped water onto the floor.

### Katharine and Hunter’s Abode

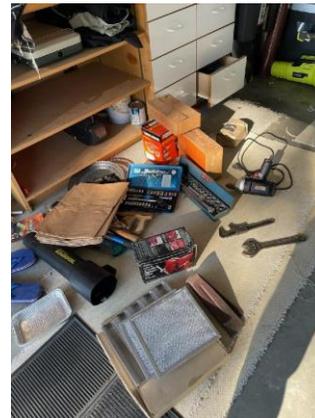
Construction is progressing nicely on the home of Katharine and Hunter, with completion expected around the end of February. One small setback occurred recently when their cabinets were delivered – finished differently than expected. That issue is being addressed, with a possible slight delay in project completion.

### River Rising

“How high’s the water, Momma?” Johnny Cash might have sung for DUH PREZ during the recent rains, as his Healdsburg house is subject to occasional Russian River flooding. But DUH PREZ says he wasn’t worried -- he had neighbors watching the river and notifying him if it reached flood levels -- and he has an app on his phone that tells him how high the water is at all times.

“It came up to 16 feet at one point,” he calmly told us, “And my lawn doesn’t even get wet until it reaches 20 feet.”

### Tools in Your Garage



“Look at all these tools in my garage,” ListMan exclaimed. “Do I really need a soldering gun? I’ve got limited storage space. And the two wrenches that used to belong to my grandfather – do I really need them?”

We all agreed that we have more tools than we need, but there were no proposed solutions. Men can't throw tools away, after all, and there's not much market for used tools.

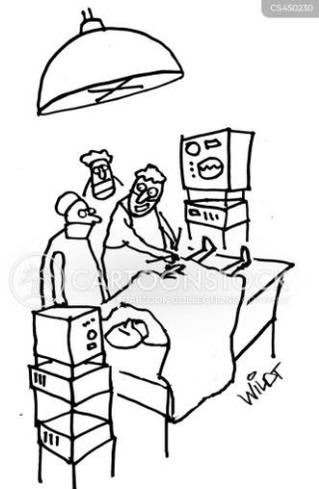
So what to do with all those extra tools? The best we could come up with was to leave them in the garage and let the next guy deal with them.

### Stina's Job

Christina, eldest daughter of the DHSOS, has a new job, as reported by her father, DUH PREZ. She is now the liaison between the staff and Board of Directors at the San Francisco Symphony. And she and Andrew have a new dog named Keith, who is attempting to become acclimated to his new home.

We raised our glasses in a salute to Christina and wished her well.

### Geoff Faces the Knife



"The hip bone's connected to the...! Once you start humming, it all comes back to you."

Next Tuesday, January 31, da Czar will go under the knife, when he has hip replacement surgery. He will check in at 5:00 AM, have surgery sometime after that, meet with a physical therapist and occupational therapist, and if all goes well be released the same day. While he is not looking forward to the surgery, he is hoping

that after recovery he will enjoy more mobility and less pain. We raised our glasses in a toast to successful surgery and a full recovery.

### Aches and Pains, Part II

We have reached that stage of life often accompanied by various aches and pains. Da Czar, for example, has had a sore elbow, knee, and hip for some time. DUH PREZ admitted he is close to needing surgery on his hips. Notes experienced foot pain during the pandemic, and now ListMan has joined the crowd with nagging back pain (treated by physical therapy), and by what he believes is plantar fasciitis in a foot. He received a good deal of advice from the other officers, to which he gave several head nods.

### Caffe Trieste



The screeching women at the table next to us grew louder and louder, and we decided to pay up and walk up Columbus Avenue for coffee. Ironically, just as we stood up to leave, they did too! We paid up, boxed up Da Burd, strolled to Caffe Trieste, ordered coffee and dessert, and relaxed in what they brag is "the first espresso coffee house on the West Coast." "Papa Gianni" Giotta (above) opened Caffe Trieste as a place to relax and enjoy traditional espresso, and during the 60s it was a hangout for Italian fishermen, Bohemian poets, artists, and musicians. Tonight, it was a hangout for

the DHSOS – briefly – before we were asked to vacate the place so they could shut down.

### **Hearty Good Night**

It was time to go home. We had shared drinks at Devil's Acre, dinner and screeching ladies at Tosca Café, and coffee at Caffe Trieste. We wandered down Columbus Avenue, dodging tourists outside the gin joints, to our cars. We paused, gave hearty fist bumps all around, and wandered off into the cool, fresh North Beach air. We'll go to the Condor Club another time.

It had been another good night in an interesting part of our favorite city with very special friends!

That's it for now, man.

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