

**Dashiell Hammett Society of Studs
San Francisco International Headquarters**

Officers

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

Bill D_____
Geoff Noakes
Lee Tyree
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Minutes of Meeting

Pied Piper Bar/Maxfield's Restaurant

Thursday October 15, 2009

Drinking in Style



A meeting of the DHSOS occurred Thursday, October 15, 2009 at the renowned Sheraton Palace Hotel in San Francisco. Drinks were in the historic Pied Piper Bar, and dinner occurred at a round table in Maxfield's Restaurant.

This was not an easy venue to secure. On the night the DHSOS met, President Obama was in town, as was the Oracle Convention. As reported by the Procurer of Venues:

Tomorrow nights dinner has been absolute hell to arrange. The big Oracle shindig has messed everything up royally. I'm not sure we will even have a table when we arrive. We will see.

I had a "special" tour of the hotel, including the presidential suite, set up for us at 6pm. The tour has totally fallen through and it hacks me

off. So now we will meet in the Pied Piper bar at 6pm for drinks, then we will have dinner at 7pm in the attached dining room at a round table (I think). This week I called to confirm the arrangements. Not only did I learn that the tour was off, but they told me they were no longer taking reservations in the Pied Piper dining room. I think I have gotten the dinner arrangement reinstated, but it is still iffy.....I realize this is a repeat for us of a previous dinner at this establishment, but because it is their 100th birthday, and with the tour, I thought it would be special. Now it looks rather pedestrian. Anyway, the gin and the vodka will taste good. They can't screw that up.

**SF's Palace Hotel Celebrates a Century
(from the San Francisco Chronicle)**

San Francisco has a ton of famous old hotels - the Fairmont, the St. Francis, the Mark Hopkins - along with some grand new ones - the St. Regis, the Ritz-Carlton, and the W. But the grande dame of them all is the Palace Hotel, which is celebrating the 100th anniversary of its rebirth this year.

"The Palace," said Robert Chandler, the Wells Fargo Bank's official historian, "is still old San Francisco."

There has been a Palace Hotel at the corner of New Montgomery and Market Streets for 134 years. The earlier Palace, a

magnificent 800-room showpiece, was the largest hotel in the West - some say the world - when it opened in 1875 at the high point of the city's champagne and bonanza days. When it was destroyed in the great fire that followed the 1906 earthquake, the Palace became the symbol of what the writer Will Irwin called "the city that was."

The "new" Palace Hotel opened three years later, and marked the recovery of the city from the ruins of disaster.

"Lovers of San Francisco, the Palace Hotel has risen again," said Mayor Edward Robeson Taylor on opening night in 1909. "We could scarcely think of San Francisco without the Palace Hotel."

Lunch for \$19.09

The actual anniversary of the new Palace is Dec. 15, but the management is staging a centennial celebration nearly five months long, beginning with special events, including hotel tours, which include a \$19.09 lunch, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

One reason for the long celebration is to attract attention. Like other San Francisco businesses, the Palace has been affected by the economic downturn, and the management freely admits that business is slow.

The hotel is also throwing an invitation-only celebration featuring Champagne, Palace punch and a 10-tier cake on Thursday. The hotel offered free tickets on its Web site earlier this month, but they were snapped up in two days.

It's hard to say what makes the Palace special in a city renowned for its specialness, but the hotel works hard to maintain an old-world panache.

Debs and martinis

The lobby floors are marble, the doorknobs on the 525 rooms are solid brass and the display cases in the lobby show off century-old gold

table service. The famous Garden Court, which has Austrian crystal chandeliers, Italian marble columns, potted palms set under a huge stained glass dome is an official city landmark and an unofficial representation of what San Franciscans think of as high style.

The Palace is where debutantes, dressed all in white, would make their formal bow before the doyennes of San Francisco high society at the annual Cotillion; it is where suave young men would take their dates for martinis at Maxfield's bar under the gaze of Maxfield Parish's huge painting of the Pied Piper of Hamelin; the Garden Court is where San Franciscans would take visiting relatives for afternoon tea.

It has a ton of tradition. In the winter of 1950, Gaildo Pazini and his new wife, Patricia, who were married out in the Excelsior district, began their honeymoon at the Palace. The groom saved his money and spent \$10.50 for an unforgettable night there. He still has the receipt.

Two years ago - 57 years, five children, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren later - he and his wife came back to the Palace for a party at the Garden Court.

"It's a grand hotel," he said.

There is a lot of history in the hotel, some of it a bit grim. Kings and at least one emperor, Dom Pedro of Brazil, stayed at the old Palace. David Kalakaua, the last king of Hawaii, died at the Palace in 1891.

Warren G. Harding was the last American president to stay at the Palace Hotel; he died there on Aug. 2, 1923. Several other presidents have made appearances at the hotel since Harding died, but none stayed the night.

The Palace was often the scene of civic receptions honoring the dignitaries of the day: Marshal Ferdinand Foch of France, Charles Lindbergh, the king of Belgium, Madame Chiang Kai-shek. In 1951, President Harry Truman and Soviet foreign minister Andre Gromyko came to a cocktail party where guests drank 1,700 glasses of bourbon, 1,500 glasses of Scotch and 12 gallons of martinis. The hotel kept track.

The Palace was owned for nearly 80 years by the family of William Sharon, one of the so-called Silver Kings who made a fortune in the fabulously rich mines of Nevada. In 1954, the family sold it to the Sheraton Corp. for \$6.5 million.

The old barber shop with 20 fulltime barbers and seven manicurists was already history, but the new management changed the name to the Sheraton-Palace, standardized the rooms and cut some frills - like oysters Kirkpatrick from the dinner menu.

"It was no longer possible to maintain some of the costly traditions that sentiment once dictated," the new owners said.

Sit-in in the '60s

The '60s were a time of turmoil in San Francisco. The Palace Hotel was not exempt. In 1964, a famous sit-in took place in the Sheraton-Palace lobby to force the hotel to hire more minorities, particularly African Americans. Dozens of people were arrested.

In 1973, the hotel was acquired by the Kyo-ya Corp., a Japanese firm that owns most of the big hotels in Hawaii. Sheraton continues to manage the place.

By 1989, the hotel was showing its age. It shut down for more than two years and reopened in the spring of 1991. The renovation cost \$150 million and won a number of awards for historic preservation. It also became known again as simply the Palace.

"I'm amazed that they kept it so well," said Pazini, who remembers the old days. "It looks as if they built it yesterday."

Interesting Palace Hotel Stats

533: Number of rooms.

3: Number of restaurants.

1: Number of indoor swimming pools.

53,000: Number of square feet of meeting space.

888: Room number for the hotel's top accommodation: the Presidential Suite, which includes two bathrooms, a kitchen, a card room, a dining room and a bedroom.

2,900: Number of dollars it takes to stay in the Presidential Suite per night.

To read more about the Palace Hotel:
<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/08/22/MNB919B.DP8.DTL#ixzz0U7IYp1JZ>

Banter at the Bar

The Archivist of Knowledge missed the drinking portion of the meeting. DUH PREZ rose to the occasion of taking notes (a noteworthy event, to actually do something). The Procurer of Venues and the AgendaMeister talked about golf, while DUH PREZ and the Communications Czar talked about architecture. For reasons unclear, nobody wanted to talk about either the Dodgers or the Trojans.

Regrettably, the notes taken by DUH PREZ were taken on a napkin (not the notebook our Archivist user) and our waitress tipped DUH PREZ' martini over onto that napkin, and all those great thoughts are now lost to the ages.



Call to Order

DUH PREZ called the DHSOS to order at 7:17 pm. All officers were present, but Duh Burd had the night off.

Book Passings

DUH PREZ passed a copy of *Spade and Archer* to the Communication Czar. This book is the prequel to the *Maltese Falcon*, written by Joe Gores, who was authorized to write it by Dashiell Hammett's daughter. DUH PREZ enjoyed it for its historical significance, but reported "because of modern day political correctness, it didn't have the edge" of the *Maltese Falcon*.

The Archivist of Knowledge passed a copy of the *Dashiell Hammett Walking Tour* to DUH PREZ. This book, written by tour guide Don Herron, covers all of the major haunts of Dashiell Hammett.

Keeping Us on Agenda

The AgendaMeister, doing a suitable John Stewart impression, did his best to keep us on agenda. It was not easy, though, as there are strong personalities in this group, which were further strengthened by recently-consumed beverages.

Ongoing Search for a Clubhouse

DUH PREZ passed around a photo of a house in Sonoma that he thinks would make a suitable clubhouse for the DHSOS. As our

loyal readers know, the DHSOS has been seeking a clubhouse for some time, with the major obstacles being lack of funds and lack of interest. Despite a strong sales pitch for the 4-bedroom house in Sonoma, the subject was postponed for future consideration.

Visit to DeKalb and the Brownie Fiasco

DUH PREZ recently flew to Chicago for a business boondoggle. While there, he rented a car and drove to DeKalb and Sycamore to see his son, Beck, who is also a DHSOS apprentice. He received a tour of the two towns, the newspaper office where Beck works, and reported that Beck is doing well. It wasn't until DUH PREZ arrived at the Wit Hotel and was enjoying drinks at the 27th floor roof terrace bar served by hot waitresses that he noticed he had failed to give Beck a batch of brownies, which were baked and sent by Beck's mother. A good father would have called Beck, invited him to join his dad at the bar, and transferred the brownies to him. Instead, DUH PREZ ignored his son, continued to revel in the attractions at the bar, and fed the brownies to his colleagues the next day.

Planning His Birthday Bash

The Procurer of Venues is approaching a milestone, and he recounted last minute details for the birthday bash. He lambasted the Archivist of Knowledge for making travel plans rather than attending the birthday soiree, then described the plans for dinner (at Ristorante Allegre, in the vault of a former bank building) and his plans for a hot air balloon ride over Napa Valley. He also reported that when she accepted his offer to attend Miss K asked: "When is this over?"

A Great Day

The AgendaMeister thanked the Communication Czar for attending his birthday golfing outing and reported that it was "a great day" which he "thoroughly

enjoyed.” He indicated that the day was a gathering of friends who used to get together, but who no longer do, and he really enjoyed spending time with them.

Update on the House Next Door

The guy who bought the house next to the Communications Czar (a character named Culpo) filed plans with the SF Planning Department for putting the mess back together. Geoff received notice of the plans and went to the Planning Department to review them. Since it appeared that the new owner was attempting to expand the house well into the back yard (therefore blocking the light to the house next door), Geoff filed an appeal. That met with a quick response, in the form of Culpo ringing Geoff’s doorbell and barging into his home, accompanied by his “girlfriend,” who is also a lawyer. A brief and rather argumentative conversation followed, during which Culpo stated “I can do whatever I want.” Geoff hired a permit consultant, who got the new owner and his architect to redraw their plans for the backside of the house, and Geoff has withdrawn his appeal; he is waiting to see what happens next.

Groveling for Points

After riding high for many years of backing Michigan’s football program, DUH PREZ has now resorted to calling DHSOS officers’ wives and trying to place bets against their teams – while asking for points. As reported by the AgendaMeister, this is a new low in sports pride, which DUH PREZ shrugged off.

Hardly Strictly Bluegrass

Three of the DHSOS officers attended this huge musical event recently in Golden Gate Park. They reported massive crowds of people, good music (Booker T. Washington, Doc Watson, Earl Scruggs), and a throwback to the 70s. The next time, they intend to go earlier, stake out a place for the group, then stay put throughout the day.

Colonoscopy Party Pooped

The AgendaMeister proposed that the DHSOS should organize a colonoscopy party, as was

described by Steve Martin on the Dave Letterman Show. The idea is to get together the night before the procedure and play poker while getting prepped. There was little enthusiasm for this event, which died on the table.

New Halloween Ideas

DUH PREZ asked for new ideas for his huge Halloween bash. Suggestions included a second scary creature to drop on trick-or-treaters from the trees and a punchbowl of “blood.” The Procurer of Venues will again dress as Dracula and lie in a coffin on Bill’s front lawn, but he warned that this might be his last year.

Lee’s Granite Woes

Lee reported that the third piece of granite is installed in his kitchen, after Misty unsuccessfully looked all over the Bay Area for a substitute. It doesn’t match the other two pieces, and neither he nor Misty is pleased by this situation. The next step is to install a “stepped-up” back splash, which will be eye-catching and which will (hopefully) divert attention from the granite. The DHSOS agreed to heartily compliment the granite when next in Lee’s house. Lee then ran through a list of his other troubles, but by that time the DHSOS was exhausted and paid little attention.

Driving Pet Peeves

The AgendaMeister asked for a list of pet peeves about driving and drivers, and opened with one:

- (Ken) Drivers in the left hand (turn) lane who wait until just before an intersection (when you are right behind them) before they turn on their turn indicator.
- (Dale) Drivers who pay more attention to their cell phones than their driving.
- (Bill) Bicyclists who don’t follow traffic laws, run red lights, and swerve in front of you while you are driving.

- (Lee) Agreed with Bill and stated that “the SF Bicycle coalition is a bunch of communists!”
- (Geoff) Bicyclists who swerve into his driving lane and the traffic mess caused by highway 101 being torn up.
- Bill and Lee also hate the new Market Street “no cars” rule, and Bill stated it is a “communist conspiracy.”

Scheduling Future DHSOS Meetings

The Communication Czar proposed scheduling all 2010 DHSOS meetings at once. There was general agreement, and Geoff will undertake this effort at once.

Wrapping It Up

It had been an event-filled evening that turned out well, despite a shaky start. It was filled with nostalgia, excellent libations, good food, and noble friends. We paid the check, issued hearty handshakes all around, and walked out into a foggy San Francisco night.

That's it for now, Man.

