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

Officers

President (DUH PREZ)	Bill D_____
Communications Czar (Czar)	Geoff Noakes
Procurer of Venues (PoV)	Lee Tyree
AgendaMeister (ListMan)	Ken Monk
Archivist of Knowledge (Notes)	Dale Fehringer

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Minutes of Meeting

The Tonga Room

Thursday November 11, 2010

Veteran's Day Drinks in the Bar

The fall 2010 meeting of the DHSOS was held at The Tonga Room in the fabled Fairmont Hotel atop San Francisco's Nob Hill.

All DHSOS officers were present and in a particularly upbeat mood following the recent World Series victory by the San Francisco Giants and the perfect wedding of the Perfect Daughter.

It was Veteran's Day, and we raised our glasses in a toast to the PoV and to all U.S. veterans who have given so much for our country.

Da Burd

Da Burd, the official mascot of the DHSOS, joined us for the evening's festivities. He was removed from his travelling case and proudly presided over the meeting from the middle of the table.

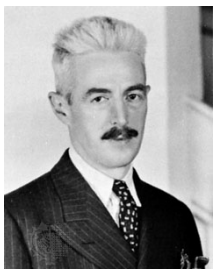
A Toast to Dashiell

We raised our glasses on this Veteran's Day in a toast to Dashiell Hammett, who was a veteran of two wars.

Dashiell joined the U.S. Army in 1918, during World War I. His stint in the ambulance corps was short-lived, however, when he contracted tuberculosis, and he spent the next few years battling the disease. It was during that period he started a relationship with a nurse named Jose Dolan.

Dashiell spent the next several years wasting the money he had received for movie rights to his books. For a while, he tried journalism, writing mostly about the Spanish Civil War and Nazi Germany, but his publishers demanded more fiction, and in an attempt to motivate himself to write, Hammett gave up drinking for about a year, which resulted in a severe depression.

Although he was originally opposed to World War II, Hammett had a change of heart and joined the U.S. Army in 1941. A 47-year-old alcoholic, he was rejected twice before being accepted and starting his army life anew. Army officials eventually realized how incompetent he was, and they stationed him in a remote spot in the Aleutian Islands, where he wrote the *Arkadian*, a newspaper exclusively for the soldiers stationed in Alaska, and *The Battle of the Aleutians*, a history of the islands.



And then trouble came, a williwaw, the sudden wild wind of the Aleutians. Nobody knows how hard the wind can blow along these islands where the Bering meets the Pacific….The first morning the wind stopped landing operations with only a portion of our force ashore and, by noon, had piled many of the landing boats on the beach. The men ashore had no tents, no shelters of any kind. They dug holes in the ground and crawled into them for protection against wind and rain and cold. When the wind had quieted enough to let the others come ashore, they too dug holes and lived like that while the cold, wet and backbreaking work of unloading ships by means of small boats went on. And they did what they had to do. They built an airfield. They built an airfield in twelve days.

Excerpt from The Battle of the Aleutians by Dashiell Hammett

Tonga Room

The Tonga Room is not our kind of place. Drinks served in plastic cocoanut shells with tiny umbrellas, fake rain storms every half hour, a funky band playing Bee Gee songs from a pontoon boat – these are not the usual DHSOS specifications. But we felt obliged to meet there before the joint closed, as was explained by the PoV:

A famous San Francisco venue is about to bite the dust. It will soon be closed and the building demolished, and though an effort is being made to have it declared a historical landmark and have it moved to a different location the effort is likely to fail. We need to honor this great venue with our presence before it is demolished.

I am talking about the famous Tonga Room, located on California Street in the bottom of the Fairmount Hotel. It is one of the last two tiki bars in San Francisco. Tiki bars became all the rage in the 60's and 70's, but have slowly been closing in the last two decades. Just because it is a tiki bar does not mean you have to order a cocktail with an umbrella in it.

The Fairmont created an indoor 75-foot swimming pool on its Terrace Level in 1929. Known as the Fairmont Terrace Plunge, the elaborate tile pool attracted local crowds as well as celebrities such as actress Helen Hayes, actor Ronald Reagan, and members of the Water Follies.

In 1945, Metro Goldwyn Mayer's leading set director, Mel Melvin, was hired to transform The Terrace Plunge into The Tonga Room. The pool became a lagoon, a floating stage for the orchestra that entertained guests each evening. Not surprisingly, The Tonga Room was an instant success.

The last time the Czar was at the Tonga Room was for a birthday party for one of Katharine's friends – when Katharine was 10 years old.

The last time ListMan was there was high school prom night, which consisted of dinner at the Tonga Room, dancing at the Mark Hopkins, and a room for two at the Fairmont (well the last one is an exaggeration, but definitely the first two).

Call to Order

DUH PREZ called the meeting to order at 6:26 PM by banging his plastic straw on the side of the plastic cocoanut shell his Mai Tai came in. It was a pathetic thing to watch.

Beautiful Wedding, Beautiful Bride

It has been a high honor for the DHSOS to watch the Perfect Daughter develop from a cute, well-mannered girl into a beautiful and graceful bride, and we were privileged to share what must have been the happiest day of her life.

On October 22, Christina was married to Andrew Rutter in front of their families, friends, and the DHSOS. The wedding and reception were in the Officer's Club at historic Fort Mason on the San Francisco waterfront. The setting was archetypal San Francisco with fantastic views of Alcatraz, Coit Tower, and the Bay Bridge. The evening was lovely and so was the bride, who wore a strapless, floor-length white dress and a huge smile. Despite the appearance of a deer-in-the-headlights, the groom performed flawlessly – he looked great, didn't back out, and didn't fall down.

Well done, 'Stina! Well done, Andrew! Well done, PREZ! Thanks for including the DHSOS in this very special day!

World Series Champions!

If you are a die-hard fan of the San Francisco Giants baseball team (and the DHSOS officers are) life doesn't get any better than it has been the past six weeks!

During that span the Giants took two of three games from the Colorado Rockies, swept Arizona, eliminated the San Diego Padres (during the final game of the season), beat Atlanta in the NLDS, beat Philadelphia in the NLCS, beat Texas in the World Series, and celebrated their first World Series championship in 54 years (first ever in San Francisco) with a monumental ticker-tape parade through San Francisco.

We relived the past few weeks of Giants glory and raised our glasses in a toast to the success of the Giants and the perseverance of their fans.

Who Would You Keep?

As has become his custom, the PoV conducted a survey of the DHSOS.

This time the subject was the San Francisco Giants.

Studs – It is time for another of my very useful and important surveys. This survey is about six key Giants players: Tim Lincecum, Matt Cain, Jonathan Sanchez, Madison Bumgarner, Brian Wilson, and Buster Posey.

By reading the newspaper we have learned that all six of these players are locked up for two more years. But after two years some contracts start to expire and the Giants will have to pay big bucks to keep them. The Giants are not likely to pay all of them big bucks. So we are likely to lose some of these guys as time moves on. So.....the survey is twofold:

1) *If you can only keep TWO of the six for the long term (5-7 years), which two would you choose?*
2) *If you can only keep THREE of the six for the long term, which three would you choose?*

How it came out:

1) ListMan and DUH PREZ would keep Posey and Lincecum.

   Czar, PoV, and Notes would keep Posey and Cain.

2) ListMan would keep Lincecum, Posey, and Bumgarner.

   Czar, Notes, and PoV would keep Posey, Cain, and Bumgarner.

   DUH PREZ would keep Posey Lincecum, and Cain.

Favorite Playoffs Moments

There were many stirring moments during the baseball playoffs, and each DHSOS officer recounted his own favorite moments, including:

DUH PREZ	World Series Game #2	The food, the drinks, a great Chardonnay.
ListMan	NLCS Game #4	Sergio Romo gave up a key hit, but was picked up the next inning by back-to-back hits by Aubrey Huff and Juan Uribe.
PoV	World Series Game #5	When Edgar Renteria hit the game winning home run Cody Ross (who was on base) was so excited he turned a pirouette in the air.
Notes	NLDS Game #1	Lincecum pitched a masterpiece, shutting out the Braves and striking out 14.
Czar	NLDS Game #2	Most exciting game ever; constant lead changes, ups and downs, extra innings, (Braves manager) Bobby Cox thrown out for arguing a call.

The Closer and The Machine

Brian Wilson, the closer (and one of the heroes) of the Giants, led his team throughout the season in most saves – and in craziest haircut and beard. He sported a Mohawk haircut throughout the season, and his (mis-colored) beard started the whole “Fear the Beard” rage. Recently, Wilson gained further notoriety when, during a TV interview, a man walked across the TV camera’s range dressed in leather briefs, a black hood and not much else.

Following the Giants World Series victory Wilson was a guest on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, and again The Machine made an appearance:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrkSElfm7Lk

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSpBVmwQ8wA

Just who and what is "The Machine?" It's the gentleman pictured above with Wilson. In case you missed it, Wilson had teammate Pat Burrell dress in leather and chains and walk behind him during an interview with Chris Rose on his sports national show. Wilson, it seems, was inspired by the movie *8MM*, which also featured a character called "The Machine," a prominent snuff film star.

Czar in the Big Apple

The Czar summarized his recent trip to the Big Apple for a business conference. Unfortunately, his account began just as the very lame band started playing Bee Gees’ songs, so we only heard part of what he said. There was a story about finding an oldie-time steak house with photos of theater and sports stars, but the rest was drowned out.

Perfect College Daughter

Miss K, the perfect collegian daughter of the DHSOS is now happily adjusted to life at Carlton College. After a rocky couple of homesick weeks, she has solidly rebounded and is now ensconced with a cool roommate, in a cool dorm room, at a cool college, that has a cool “boy” situation. Thanks to the DHSOS, Miss K is well-versed in various alcohol drinks and sexual innuendo.

Blessing of the Beasts

Notes and his bride recently adopted two feline companions, which they named George and Gracie. They are Giants fans, and George is known to watch the Giants on TV.

Hoping to sanctify the beasts, Notes recently took them to church, on Saint Francis Day, to have them blessed. Although they enjoyed their outing, their behavior has not substantially improved since the blessing.

Vacation Updates

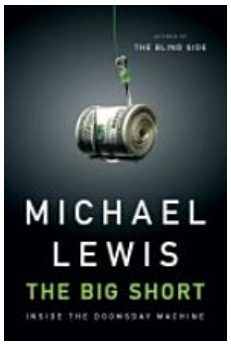
The DHSOS discussed the recent vacations of ListMan (Austria and Switzerland), Notes (Morocco and Switzerland), and the PoV (Africa). All were excellent reports on what sounded like terrific vacations.

The PoV was clearly the best prepared, as he had his "five-minute" discourse printed and delivered on a sales presentation flip chart.

"Talking's something you can't do judiciously unless you keep in practice."

Dashiell Hammett, in The Maltese Falcon

The Big Short



"The willingness of a Wall Street investment bank to pay me hundreds of thousands of dollars to dispense investment advice to grown-ups remains a mystery to me to this day. I was twenty-four years old, with no experience of, or particular interest in, guessing which stocks and bonds would rise and which would fall."

That's how "*The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine,*" written by Michael Lewis begins.

Although Lewis is best known for his sports-related books (including *The Blind Side*), his first book was the autobiographical *Liar's Poker*, in which he chronicled his disillusionment with Wall Street in the 1980s. In *The Big Short* he returns to his financial roots to examine the crisis of 2007–2008, including investigating the histories of several Wall Street outsiders who were betting against the grain.

Mad as Hell!

The PoV is mad as hell, and he's not going to take it anymore!

He's been working with the National Park Service on their plans for Warner Valley – especially plans to develop a fen and get rid of Dream Lake – and the Park Service seems to be proceeding despite his efforts. But now … he has taken his fight to another level:

Chairman Koeberer and Board of Directors
Lassen Park Foundation

We received your letter today telling of your goal of raising $500,000 and asking for our support. We have supported the foundation in past years because we love Lassen Park. We have come there every year for almost 30 years and always spend a week in Warner Valley. We have always felt good about supporting the foundation. However, that is no longer the case.

We cannot justify supporting the Foundation when the National Park Service does not support us, the patrons of Warner Valley. The vast majority of the patrons of Warner Valley do not want a fen restored in the valley and do not want to see Dream Lake eliminated. Instead the vast majority of the patrons would like to see Warner Valley stay as it is and Dream Lake restored and maintained. The managers of Lassen Park have known this for many years. Yet the Lassen NPS has produced a Warner Valley Comprehensive Site Plan that flies in the face of the patrons of the Valley.

The Lassen Park managers have given token recognition to the views of the people who spend time in Warner Valley every year. The patrons of Warner Valley have had no influence what-so-ever on the comprehensive site plan. Lassen Park managers decided years ago what they wanted to do and thumbed their noses to the wishes of the patrons. So what can we do?

Regretfully, we will not be making a financial contribution to the Foundation.

Sincerely,

And on it goes …

Gents – FYI, Darlene Koontz (National Park Service) called me to discuss my letter. She is a hard person to have a discussion with. She doesn't like to listen. I tried my best to hear her and understand. I failed. I came away with the feeling that they are going to do what they want to do regardless of the views of the visitors. The government knows what is best for the people.....Tyree

Darlene:

I appreciated your telephone call to discuss Warner Valley with me. Thank you.

Your comments about Dream Lake resonated. You scored some points.

Your comments about the fen did not resonate. You scored no points.

You are familiar with the adage; "if it isn't broken, don't fix it"? Warner Valley meadow is not broken. It is beautiful. It is loved. Please don't fix it.

If the patrons don't want a restored fen, for whatever reason, why do it?

The conversation drifted and we didn't get to discuss your question on input.

Pollsters accurately predict election results days in advance at every election.

It would have been possible to determine how patrons felt about the site changes.

That anyone in the NPS would think the patrons would like the fen is astonishing.

Again, thank you for reaching out to discuss the issues.

See you at the campfire next summer. Come listen, learn, and have a marshmallow.

Sincerely,

The meadow at Drakesbad (without fen)

Adjournment

It had been a good night with an appropriate mix of strange food, bizarre drinks, and noble friends.

We paid the check, issued handshakes and fist bumps all around, and walked out into the warm, clear night.

That's it for now, man.