

**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

House of Shields and Tadich Grill

Thursday January 27, 2011

A Night of Tradition

Readers of these minutes know that the DHSOS loves San Francisco tradition. Our custom is to eat and drink in historic, masculine places; typically places our wives would shun.

And this night met those needs: we drank in a notable watering hole and dined in one of the most historic eateries in the City.

All DHSOS officers were in attendance. Da Burd also joined us (and garnered a bit of attention).

Fixing up the House of Shields



Carl Nolte writes a column for the *San Francisco Chronicle* called *Native Son*,

which usually describes San Francisco historic places and people. Recently, he penned a piece about the House of Shields. Here's a little of it:

Here's a toast to the House of Shields, an old-time bar that has just been fixed up to be as good as new.

Bars all have personalities: There are neighborhood bars, gay bars, leather bars, Irish pubs, cocktail lounges where men go to pick up women, waterfront bars, places that

cater to tourists, bars that open at 6 a.m., sports bars, all kinds.

The House of Shields is an after-work bar, a place to stop on the way home. It comes in two waves. There is another spurt of business late at night, when restaurant people getting off work stop by.

Our observation: Since the renovation the House of Shields looks and smells cleaner, and the crowd is younger. But it's still dark, loud, and crowded.

Nevertheless, the DHSOS managed to have a drink, ogle at the young lasses, and retain most of our dignity.

You got to look on the bright side, even if there ain't one.

- Dashiell Hammett

Tadich Grill



Tadich is one of the DHSOS's favorite haunts. It meets all of our criteria (Dashiell ate there, they have strong drinks, and our wives would never set

foot in the place) -- and they have waiters older than us. Here's a little background:

In 1849, during the California Gold Rush, three Croatian immigrants began a business which later was to become Tadich Grill.

Their coffee stand in a little tent-like structure on the edge of Long Wharf served merchants and sailors coming off the square-rigged vessels docked in Yerba Buena harbor.

In 1852, the city's landfill project forced them to relocate to the New World Market, the central produce market of the city, located on Commercial and Leidesdorff Street. They named the thriving business The New World Coffee Stand.

In 1871 redevelopment of the area forced another move to 6245 Kearny Street. It was here that John Tadich, a young immigrant from Croatia arriving in San Francisco in 1871, began his restaurant career.

The menu at Tadich Grill hasn't changed much over the years: they don't take reservations; they offer traditional San Francisco entrees like petrale sole, cioppino, and Dungeness crab; and the gray-haired waiters still know how to mix it up with the customers.

Call to Order

We were standing at the bar, waiting for a table. "Get cozy," the bartender yelled at us, "so the staff can squeeze behind you."

Our proximity prompted DUH PREZ to call the meeting to order; it was 7:07 PM.

Literary Corner

The DHSOS is a literary society and we tend to discuss our favorite books during these meetings. Most of us do more discussing than reading.

This night we digested the book *Pentimento* by Dashiell Hammett's long-term lady friend, Lillian Hellman, (and a recent gift from the PoV). The title comes from the world of art, where a *pentimento* is an alteration in a

painting, showing that the artist has changed his mind.

Pentimento (originally published in 1973) deals with Hellman's youth and early days in New York. The most popular section of the book, focusing on her friend Julia who was trapped by the Nazis, was the basis for the 1977 film adaptation.

Medical Corner

ListMan suggested a new agenda item for this group – the Medical Corner. We discussed a variety of topics, including the number and type of medications we take.

Turns out we consume a variety of prescription and non-prescription meds, with the daily total ranging from two to eight pills, and an average of 3.4.

That's below normal. Recent medical surveys indicate that men our age take an average of 5.8 pills per day.



Spousal medical updates were also discussed. The Czar's spouse recently had successful surgery, and her recovery is on track. Shoulder surgery for the PoV's spouse has been postponed until July.

I don't like crooks. And if I did like 'em, I wouldn't like crooks that are stool pigeons. And if I did like crooks that are stool pigeons, I still wouldn't like you.

Marion in *The Thin Man*

Demise of a Once-Great University



Most university sports programs remain relatively constant over the years. The University of Kansas, for example, is excellent at basketball and pathetic at football. But a few universities self-implode over time, to the chagrin of their supporters.

That, unfortunately, has happened to the alma mater of DUH PREZ.

The Michigan football team started the last decade with a bang, beating Alabama on New Year's Day in 2000 in a memorable Orange Bowl – and closed it with a whimper with the first back-to-back losing seasons in more than 40 years.

And now, to rub salt into the wound, the Wolverines hired Brady Hoke to be their head coach. Hoke arrives in Ann Arbor after spending the past eight seasons as a head coach at Ball State (2003-08) and San Diego State (2009-10).

How do Michigan alums feel about it? Here's one reaction from a fan, Mike MacConnell:

"Let me be real with you. As great and storied of a history as the University of Michigan's football team has, it's just that—history."

So Michigan owns the most victories of any school in FBS history. Ask Auburn, Ohio State, Florida, Texas, USC, Alabama, or LSU how much that means to them? They've each won a national title since the Wolverines earned a share of one back in 1997."

*"He was a manly man, and had fine
generosities in his make-up."*

- Mark Twain

Da Burd is a Hit

As was earlier mentioned, Da Burd (an authentic real-thing replica of the Maltese Falcon) joined us for this evening's event, proudly roosting in the middle of the table. The first waiter who approached our table asked about him, and when we informed the ignoramus that this was the central figure in the most famous Dashiell Hammett book, he replied, "Who's Dashiell Hammett?"

He was sent away.

Several other waiters approached, each more reverent than the one before, and they asked to look at and/or touch Da Burd. One took Da Burd to show da chef, who used to work at John's Grill (the former home of the original Burd). Through it all our feathery friend relished the notoriety, but retained his composure.

So I Shot Him

An unpublished story by Dashiell Hammett is to be released in Feb. 28 in *The Strand* magazine.

So I Shot Him is one of 15 undated short stories by Hammett found in the archives at the University of Texas at Austin. The 19-page crime thriller uses the spare style Hammett is known for.



Hammett turned his experience as a Pinkerton detective to create hard-boiled detective characters such as Sam Spade.

Famous for *The Thin Man*, *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Continental Op*, he published his last book in 1937.

He then served during the Second World War and was blacklisted for his Communist sympathies during the 1950s. He died in 1961 of emphysema (according to Lillian

Hellman) or lung cancer (according to the doctors).

I distrust a close-mouthed man. He generally picks the wrong time to talk and says the wrong things. Talking's something you can't do judiciously, unless you keep in practice.

The Fat Man in *The Maltese Falcon*

Offspring Update

The DHSOS shares three perfect children, and we regularly ask their parental units for updates on their well-being. This night we were told that the eldest and her spouse have purchased a Mazda Miata, which was deemed satisfactory by the officers.

The second-eldest has recently relocated to the Bay Area and is obtaining some photo journalist work – largely from Reuters. He has also acquired a girlfriend, of whom his father (and the rest of the DHSOS) highly approve.

The youngest DHSOS offspring is now a student at a university in Minnesota, where she is doing well, adjusting to unending snow and extreme cold, and planning a trip back to the Bay Area to thaw out.

Pre-Drakesbad

It's never too early to start planning for our annual sojourn to Drakesbad Guest Ranch, and this year Notes has been tasked with planning a prior group activity. Looking for suggestions, he was instead told "You decide," "Come up with something," and "It's up to you."

We'll see how that turns out.

Giants Repeat?

Can the Giants repeat their World Series win? The odds are against them, but the DHSOS is nevertheless optimistic. This year the Giants aren't going to surprise

anyone, and they aren't likely to have as few injuries as they enjoyed last year.

Since 1950, only seven teams have won back-to-back World Series, and four of them were the New York Yankees.

World Series Repeats since 1950

Team	Years
New York Yankees	1949-53 (5 in a row)
New York Yankees	1961-62
Oakland A's	1972-74 (3 in a row)
Cincinnati Reds	1975-76
New York Yankees	1977-78
Toronto Blue Jays	1992-93
New York Yankees	1998-2000 (3 in a row)

Despite the long odds, the DHSOS believes there are reasons the Giants have a chance:

- Starting pitching
- Great relief
- A young catcher with pop in his bat
- The same basic line-up from last season

Comparing Quarterbacks

There has been a lot of whining lately about our quarterback in the City by the Bay. Open a window on any Sunday afternoon and you can hear it. The sniveling involves the 49ers drafting Alex Smith rather than Aaron Rodgers, who played just across the Bay at the University of California.

"If the 49ers had drafted Rodgers," the crybabies contend, "They would be in the SuperBowl this year, rather than in the dumpster."

Well, the PoV has a different point of view, which he shared with the DHSOS.

At Green Bay, he argued, Rodgers had just one system to learn and an offensive-minded head coach. And he had three years to learn the system before being

thrown to the wolves. And, he has had a great receiving corps in Cheeseland.

Smith, on the other hand, has been in six offenses in six years, and he has played under defensive-minded head coaches who killed what little potential the offenses had.

Smith also had to start right from the beginning on a very bad team, learning bad habits that had him running for his life. He had little offensive support, a weak offensive line, and weak receivers who not only failed to get open, but often turned good throws into picks.

Worst of all, Alex Smith had Mike Nolan as a coach. Nolan forced Smith to play with a separated shoulder and then publicly questioned his toughness, undermining his leadership and possibly doing permanent damage to his arm strength.

The long-and-short of the PoV's theory is this: don't blame the Niners for drafting Alex Smith. Blame them for putting him in a position to fail rather than succeed.

Bay to Breakers



The Czar asked if any DHSOS officers wished to join him this year for the Bay to Breakers. It is, he pointed out, the 100th anniversary of the cross-city run.

He received a strongly negative reaction from Notes and ListMan, who suffered through it last year.

Unfortunately, they pointed out, this historic seven-mile run from bay to ocean has degenerated into an orgy of debauchery and nudity, and while the DHSOS is not generally opposed to those characteristics, we also do not enjoy witnessing mass public urination or nudity by fat, middle-aged men.

"Lift a Glass"

A recent article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* titled "Lift a Glass" evoked the DHSOS's spirit of camaraderie. Excerpts follow:



These guys might be a couple of pounds above their playing weight. And maybe they have lost a step or two on the base paths. But they still have a touch of the grace of athletes. You can see it in the way they walk; they have kind of a spring in their step, even though you might say they are in the autumn of their lives.

They are old San Francisco ballplayers, veterans of the sandlots, high school baseball, semipro teams, college ball, the old Pacific Coast League, the majors. They are a link to the great days when San Francisco was a baseball town, when young men played ball, as opposed to watching it.

More than 100 ballplayers were at Nick's Seashore bar and restaurant at Rockaway Beach in Pacifica on a recent Wednesday for the monthly meeting of the Friends of Marino Pieretti.

You never heard of Marino Pieretti? He was famous in his day and famous still, at least to his friends. He was born in Italy, raised in San Francisco, a true son of North Beach. He was a right-handed pitcher, a little guy, only 5 feet 6, 156 pounds. He won 27 games for the Portland Beavers in 1944, got called up to the majors in 1945, and started 27 games for the Washington Senators. He won 14 and lost 13 in his rookie year.

Life can be rough. After his baseball career ended, Pieretti got cancer. He was in and out of hospitals. "Jeez, he was down to 65 pounds," said his old pal, Frank Strazzullo. "He lost the will to live."

So in the fall of 1977, Strazzullo and some of his friends thought they'd cheer him up, take him out for a kind of last lunch, down the coast to Nick's, an old hangout. When they got to the bar, Pieretti, the old ballplayer, ordered a pink

squirrel, or some other kind of sissy drink. The doctors told him he shouldn't drink alcohol.

"Listen," Strazzullo remembered saying, 'If you're gonna die, you might as well die happy.' It was a grand lunch, full of talk and good times, and the boys delivered Pieretti back home drunk as a skunk.

The lunch had such a good effect, they decided to take Pieretti out the next month. And the next. All the old ballplayers came; you name them, they were there. Joe DiMaggio, too. The farewell lunches for Pieretti went on for years; Pieretti didn't die. In fact, he got stronger until he got into a car accident that fractured five ribs and broke his health.

He died Jan. 30, 1981, 30 years ago, but the Friends of Marino Pieretti still gather every month. They wear green warm-up jackets with Pieretti's name on them, drink, eat and talk baseball.

Adjournment

It had been an enjoyable and tradition-filled evening with an appropriate mix of fine food, good drink, and noble friends.

We paid the check, issued hearty handshakes all around, and walked out into the foggy night air.

That's it for now, man.

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