

Randy Thompson's Notes from Sanborn/Scheidt Dinner

Date: Friday, October 16, 2009

Time: 7:30 p.m. onward

Location: Pulcinella Restaurant, McLean, Virginia

Attendees:

Jim "FitnezzJim" A.

Timothy Ball

Richard Belfield

Donna "Piranha" Byczkiewicz

Elonka Dunin

Jew-Lee Irena Lann (+ guest)

Balena D. Lloyd

Dan McArdle

Katherine Miller (+ 2 guests)

Tim Rainey

Jae Sanborn

Jim Sanborn

Ed Scheidt

Randy Thompson (+ guest)

John Wilson

1. Our group was seated in a downstairs room at a long table (really several tables placed end-to-end). I was seated at the opposite end of the table from Sanborn. Scheidt was seated on one side, about 7 people down from me, closer to Sanborn than to me. When dinner was finished and dessert was being served, Sanborn kindly moved down to my end of the table to engage with the folks that hadn't had the chance to interact with him due to the original seating arrangements.

2. I had a request and a question for Sanborn:

a) We're in need of more teamwork. We've tried it in various forms, but it doesn't seem to be working. I asked him if he would make a statement encouraging us to use teamwork, and he said that yes, he would. He mentioned that he is currently working on a book, which will include encouragement and hints. He didn't indicate how far along he is on the book, but said something to the effect of "if it's published."

b) I told him that I had a process toward a solution that ended with a string of 48 characters. I asked him if it was possible that the K-4 solution process could go down that low and then be expanded back to about 100 characters. He answered that "anything's possible."

3. For about an hour after dinner, the attendees mingled in small groups. At one point, I was alone with Scheidt. I spoke with him about my process. I thought he might be more open to discussion of it than Sanborn would be. As I gave an overview of my theory, he listened, smiled, and nodded respectfully, but didn't give any indication of endorsement,

surprise, or discouragement. At the end of our conversation, he shook my hand and said, “Good luck”, again without conveying any tone that indicated “you’re going to need it” or, conversely, “I’m excited for you”.

4. I noticed that Sanborn and Scheidt didn’t spend much time together. This could have been because they wanted to spread out and mingle as much as possible, or there could be some tension between the two of them regarding which had actually designed the Kryptos code (an observation by Elonka that she shared with me at the Symposium prior to the dinner). Speculation: The tension, if it exists, may be the result of previous comments the two have made about each other or may be the result of a disagreement over some aspect of the handling of Kryptos.

5. I mentioned to Sanborn that it’s difficult for us to follow all of the work being done in the group and by individuals, so that it was probably unlikely that he could follow all of it either. He responded that he doesn’t follow it himself, but that Elonka is his “filter” or “supplier” for information about what’s being done.

6. I asked Sanborn if anyone had either found the clue that they had claimed was being missed or whether anyone had yet successfully provided a K1-K3 decryption technique that followed the path they had originally intended. Jim responded that that was possible but that he hadn’t been following the progress.

7. Donna told me that she may have gotten a small hint from Jae Sanborn. When asked about the “K-4 Test,” she casually described the way a prospective solver would be asked to verify several letters in certain positions. In an example, she rattled off several numbers, including 98 and 99. After saying those two numbers, she quickly added, “or however many there are.” This would seem to confirm what we’re already pretty sure about: that there are about that many letters in the solution. However, if she hasn’t actually seen the solution or hasn’t used/rehearsed/read the K-4 Test, then her numbers may have been only examples off the top of her head, without basis in anything she’s seen of the actual test or text.

8. Although they didn’t always answer questions, I didn’t get the feeling that Scheidt or either of the Sanborns said anything to trick us.

9. Scheidt mostly listened and did little talking.

10. Jae Sanborn didn’t seem to be there as a Kryptos authority for answering questions.

11. When the dinner activities wound down, I returned to my hotel. It’s my understanding that some or all of the others might have continued the evening elsewhere.

12. On Saturday, I returned home, while Elonka and some others visited Sanborn’s studio and other sites in the DC area.