Diogenes Laertius (lived 3rd century, C.E.) is analogous to a modern day editor of People magazine. He wrote about the lives of the eminent philosophers, via what he had heard about them, what he had read about them from others, or of their works, etc. One should not take these words as definitive and absolutely true, given the time passed between Socrates’ death and Diogenes’ birth. Here are some items I found interesting when I read what he had to say about Socrates (all translations are taken from the Loeb Classical Library, Volume 1 of “The Lives of the Eminent Philosophers,” R.D. Hicks, trans., and I have numbered them so we can refer to them by number in class):

1. “Socrates was the son of Sophroniscus, a sculptor, and of Phaenarete, a midwife, as we read in the *Theaetetus* of Plato; he was a citizen of Athens and belonged to the deme Alopece.” (II.18)

2. “It was thought that he helped Euripides to make his plays …” (II.18)

3. ”According to some authors he was a pupil of Anaxagoras, and also of Damon, as Alexander states in his *Successions of Philosophers*. When Anaxagoras was condemned, he became a pupil of Archelaus the physicist; Aristoxenus asserts that Archelaus was very fond of him. Duris makes him out to have been a slave and to have been employed on stonework, and the draped figures of the Graces on the Acropolis have by some been attributed to him.” (II.19)

4. “Socrates and his pupil Aeschines were the first to teach rhetoric …. Again, he was the first who discoursed on the conduct of life, and the first philosopher who was tried and put to death. Aristoxenus … says of him that he made money; he would at all events invest sums, collect the interest accruing, and then, when this was expended, put out the principal again.” (II.20)

5. “… frequently, owing to his vehemence in argument, men set upon him with their fists or tore his hair out; and that for the most part he was despised and laughed at, yet bore all this ill-usage patiently. So much so that, when he had been kicked, and someone expressed surprise at his taking it so quietly, Socrates rejoined, ‘Should I have taken the law of a donkey, supposing that he had kicked me?’ Thus far Demetrius.” (II.21)

6. “Unlike most philosophers, he had no need to travel, except when required to go on an expedition. The rest of his life he stayed at home and engaged all the more keenly in argument with anyone who would converse with him, his aim being not to alter his opinion but to get at the truth” (II.22).

7. “He took care to exercise his body and kept in good condition. At all events he served on the expedition to Amphipolis; and when in the battle of Delium Xenophon had fallen from his horse, he stepped in and saved his life. …. Again, he served at Potidaea, whither he has gone by sea, as land communications were interrupted by the war; and while there he is said to have remained a whole night without changing his position, and to have won the prize of valour.” (II.22-23)

8. “He was a man of great independence and dignity of character.” (II.24)
9. “Often when he looked at the multitude of wares exposed for sale, he would say to himself, ‘How many things I can do without!’ And he would continually recite the lines: ‘The purple robe and silver’s shine; More fits an actor’s need than mine’” (II.25).

10. “He was so orderly in his way of life that on several occasions when pestilence broke in Athens he was the only man who escaped infection.” (II.25)

11. “Aristotle says that he married two wives: his first wife was Xanthippe, by whom he had a son Lamprocles; his second wife was Myrto …. By her he had Sophroniscus and Menexenus. Others make Myrto his first wife; while some writers, including Satyrus and Hieronymus of Rhodes, affirm that they were both his wives at the same time. For they say that the Athenians were short of men and, wishing to increase the population, passed a decree permitting a citizen to marry one Athenian woman and have children with another; and that Socrates accordingly did so” (II.26).

12. “He prided himself on his plain living, and never asked a fee from anyone.” (II.27)

13. “He used to say that he most enjoyed the food which was least in need of condiment, and the drink which made him feel the least hankering for some other drink; and that he was nearest to the gods in that he had the fewest wants” (II.27).

14. “He showed equal ability in both directions, in persuading and dissuading men; thus, after conversing with Theaetetus about knowledge, he sent him away, as Plato says, first with a divine impulse; but when Euthyphro has indicted his father for manslaughter, Socrates, after some conversation with him upon piety, diverted him from his purpose. Lysis, again, he turned, by exhortation, into a most virtuous character. For he had the skill to draw his arguments from facts.” (II.29)

15. “… when Charmides offered him some slaves in order that he might derive an income from them, he declined the offer …” (II.31)

16. “There is, he said, only one good, that is, knowledge, and only one evil, that is, ignorance; wealth and good birth bring their possessor no dignity, but on the contrary evil.” (II.31)

17. “He made Crito ransom Phaedo who, having been taken prisoner in the war, was kept in degrading slavery, and so won him for philosophy.” (II.31)

18. “… in his old age he learnt to play the lyre, declaring that he saw no absurdity in learning a new accomplishment. … it was his regular habit to dance, thinking that such exercise helped to keep the body in good condition.” (II.32)

19. “He used to say that his supernatural sign warned him beforehand of the future … that he knew nothing except just the fact of his ignorance.” (II.32)

20. “Some one asked him whether he should marry or not, and received the reply, ‘Whichever you do you will repent it.’” (II.33)
21. “He used to express his astonishment that the sculptors of marble statues should take pains to make the block of marble into a perfect likeness of a man, and should take no pains about themselves lest they should turn out mere blocks, not men” (II.33).

22. “He had invited some rich men and, when Xanthippe said she felt ashamed of the dinner, ‘Never mind,’ said he, ‘for if they are reasonable they will put up with it, and if they are good for nothing, we shall not troubles ourselves about them.’ He would say that the rest of the world lived to eat, while he himself ate to live” (II.34).

23. “To one who said, ‘You are condemned by the Athenians to die, ‘So are they, by nature.’ … When his wife said, ‘You suffer unjustly,’ he retorted, ‘Why, would you have me suffer justly?’” (II.35)

24. “When he was about to drink the hemlock, Apollodorus offered him a beautiful garment to die in: ‘What,’ said he, ‘is my own good enough to live in but not to die in?’” (II.35)

25. “… the Pythian priestess bore testimony when she gave Chaerephon the famous response: ‘Of all men living Socrates most wise.’ For this he was most envied; and especially because he would take to task those thought highly of themselves, proving them to be fools, as to be sure he treated Anytus, according to Plato’s Meno. For Anytus could not endure to be ridiculed by Socrates, and so in the first place stirred up against him Aristophanes and his friends; then afterwards he helped to persuade Meletus to indict him on a charge of impiety and corrupting the youth.

The indictment was brought by Meletus, and the speech was delivered by Polyeuctus, according to Favorinus in his Miscellaneous History. The speech was written by Polycrates the sophist, according to Mermippus; but some say that it was by Anytus. Lycon the demagogue had made all the needful preparations” (II.37-38).

26. “The affidavit in the case, which is still preserved, says Favorinus, in the Metroon, ran as follows: ‘This indictment and affidavit is sworn by Meletus, the son of Meletus of Pitthos, against Socrates, the son of Sophroniscus of Alopece: Socrates is guilty of refusing to recognize the gods recognized by the state, and of introducing other new divinities. He is also guilty of corrupting the youth. The penalty demanded is death’” (II.40).

27. “Justus of Tiberias in his book entitled The Wreath says that in the course of the trial Plato mounted the platform and began: ‘Though I am the youngest, men of Athens, of all who ever rose to address you’ – whereupon the judges shouted out, ‘Get down! Get down!’” (II.41)

28. “So he was taken from among men; and not long afterwards the Athenians felt much remorse that they shut up the training grounds and gymnasia. They banished the other accusers [Lycon and Anytus] but put Meletus to death; they honoured Socrates with a bronze statue, the work of Lysippus, which they placed in the hall of processions. And no sooner did Anytus visit Heraclea than the people of that town expelled him on that very day. … Euripides upbraids them [i.e., the Athenians] thus in his Palamedes: ‘Ye have slain, have slain, the all-wise, the innocent, the
Muses’ nightingale.’ This is one account; but Philochorus asserts that Euripides died before Socrates.” (II.43-44)

29. “Both were pupils of Anaxagoras, I mean Socrates and Euripides, who was born in the first year of the 75th Olympiad in the archonship of Calliades.” (II.45)

30. “I have written verses about him too, as follows:

   Drink then, being in Zeus’s palace, O Socrates; for truly did the god pronounce thee wise, being wisdom himself; for when thou didst frankly take the hemlock at the hands of the Athenians, they themselves drained it as it passed thy lips.” (II.46)

31. “Of those who succeeded him and were called Socratics the chief were Plato, Xenophon, Antisthenes, and of ten names on the traditional list the most distinguished are Aeschines, Phaedo, Euclides, Aristippus.” (II.47)