

Potlatch 14
March 4-6, 2005
Ramada Hotel International, San Francisco

Progress Report 1

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1. Chairs' Welcome

by Janet Lafler and Steven Schwartz

We have a committee.
We have a hotel.
We have a Book of Honor.
And so, we have a con!

Potlatch is back in the Bay Area in 2005, and we hope you can join us. Our hotel is the Ramada Plaza, which proved to be a wonderful space for Potlatches 10 and 12. Our Book of Honor is *A Scanner Darkly*, by Philip K. Dick. Our committee is seasoned, salty, and piquant.

The first Potlatch took place in Seattle, and the folks who thought it up were not only smart and creative, but also generous enough to let some fans in the Bay Area take their idea and see what we could do with Potlatch 2. Since then the convention has shuttled back and forth between Seattle and the Bay Area, with a couple of excursions into Oregon. Along the way it has picked up a number of traditions specific to each location, experimented with ideas for how to improve the recipe (some of which have even worked!), and benefited from some judicious borrowing. The basic ingredients of the stew have remained the same: Books. Talk. Food & Drink. Friendships, old and new. Disagreements, gentle and sharp. "Aha!" moments, small and large. More books. More talk. And, of course, the Clarion West fundraising auction. The trick is getting the proportions and the flavorings right, and that's what we're working on now.

Each person on the committee is doing his or her part, but a couple of the cooks deserve special thanks: Matt Austern, who got the Ramada Plaza for us after all, and Linda McAllister, our original chair, who saw us through the first few months.

Onward! Or, as the late, lamented Julia Child would say, Bon Appetit!

2. Book of Honor

by Steven Schwartz

"Once a man stood in the middle of the room and tried all day to get the aphids out of his hair. His doctor told him he had absolutely no aphids in his hair."

I checked my German-English dictionary. That's what the words meant, but I couldn't believe it. I must have missed an idiomatic translation somewhere. No dice. Aphids. That's what it said.

I gave up. I wasn't able to handle that level of oddness in a language that wasn't my native tongue.

That was my first experience of *A Scanner Darkly*, or *Der Dunkle Schirm* in my edition, back in the days when Philip K. Dick's books were mostly out of print and you grabbed them when you could find them. Even if they were in German.

When I finally found a copy in English, I found I'd translated it right after all. ("Once a man stood all day, shaking bugs out of his hair.") That's how it begins, and it's not supposed to make the kind of sense you might expect from the first line of a novel. This is not a book about uber-competent heroes saving the world; it's about regular, damaged people trying to save themselves.

All the familiar themes that draw people to Dick's work -- religious, humanist, and reality-bending -- are in this book, pared down to some of their bare essentials. Top that off with a critique of both drug policy and the drug culture, add a dollop of untranslated German, and some of the most chilling descriptions of personality breakdown in the literature, and you have a fascinating and troubling book...in any language.

Time seems finally to have come into joint with Phil Dick, as his most paranoid suspicions become more and more realistic-sounding, Hollywood picks up his works to turn into movies, and (thank goodness) his work comes back into print.

A Scanner Darkly is the Potlatch 14 book of honor, and I look forward to hearing the discussions, thoughts, and arguments it sparks. May you enjoy reading it, and don't worry -- there are no bugs in your hair.

3. Programming Notes

by Steven Schwartz

"Programming" is a word that can easily bring to mind a rather sinister image -- especially with a Philip K. Dick book as the Book of Honor. One might imagine the whole con sitting in a single room, being programmed with a new reality.

Fortunately, that's not how we do things at Potlatch. We have only one official track of programming, but we deliberately leave space and time for spontaneous programming items (we call them Algonquins) of many and varied sorts. Most especially, we want your help and ideas.

Do you have an idea for a panel on the book of honor? Do you have an idea for a panel that's related tangentially to the book of honor, or the author of the book of honor, or the subject matter of the book of honor, or the style of the book of honor? If you do, and you think it'd make a really neat panel, send it to programming@potlatch-sf.org.

If you have an idea for a really neat panel that has nothing whatsoever to do with the book of honor, especially if it's the sort of panel that doesn't quite seem to fit at any other convention, send it to programming@potlatch-sf.org.

If you have an idea for something to do at a con that sounds really neat but isn't even really a "panel," I think you know where to send it -- programming@potlatch-sf.org.

We need not only ideas and panelists, but also ringleaders. A ringleader's not simply a moderator, but more like a mini-programming chair, with only one panel to arrange. A ringleader can help shape a panel topic and description, recruit people to sit on the panel, instigate in-advance discussion among the panelists, moderate (or not), and generally influence the course of the panel.

If you think you'd like to ringlead, let us know -- either with an idea of your own that has you excited, or just a "hey, I think I can do that," and we'll talk about the ideas that have been suggested by other people, until we find one that suits.

You don't need to be a Potlatch veteran to ringlead, or to sit on a panel. You don't even need to be a con veteran. We're always looking for new faces and new voices.

And, as you might have guessed, volunteering to ringlead means emailing programming@potlatch-sf.org.

The sooner you get your ideas to us the better; it gives us more time to put together a lineup with a pleasant mixture of themes and styles, and gives the ringleaders more time to get their panels together.

Thank you for your help -- even if all you do is read this and start thinking about Potlatch, that's something. We're looking forward to a flooded mailbox.

4. Hotel Report

by Matt Austern

For a while it looked like we might have to go elsewhere, but Potlatch 14 will again be at our favorite San Francisco hotel: the Ramada Plaza, in San Francisco's Civic Center neighborhood. This is the hotel where we held Potlatch 10 in 2001 and Potlatch 12 in 2003, and, as people who attended those conventions will remember, it is probably the most elegant hotel ever to host a Potlatch. It's even more beautiful than you'd think from its Web site, www.ramadaplazasf.com.

One of the best things about the Ramada Plaza is its location. Members from out of town can come to the con from San Francisco airport without even changing trains: the hotel entrance is literally steps away from the Civic Center BART station. The immediate neighborhood includes fast food joints, City Hall, the Opera House, cheap dives (some very good!), and some of the city's finest dining. The San Francisco Public Library's main branch is directly across the street.

We will once more be using the dramatic Whitcomb Ballroom for our banquet (look for more details in future PRs) and for our main programming space. The programming space has its own staircase leading to a private mezzanine, which served us well in past years for tea and Algonquins. The dealers' room opens directly onto the mezzanine.

The room rate is \$104.00, the same rate as Potlatch 10---still a bargain for San Francisco. Make sure to reserve your room now! We'd hate to fill our room block and have to send you to a more expensive or less interesting hotel around the corner.

The Ramada Plaza Hotel
1231 Market Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 626-8000
(800) 227-4747

Mention Potlatch 14 when you make your reservation to get our special rate.

5. Clarion West Auction

by David Bratman

Potlatch 14 will feature that annual and spectacular event, the Clarion West scholarship auction. Thrill to witty auctioneers, tireless runners, and a wide variety of intriguing and enticing auctionables. And, while you're at it, raise money to help aspiring SF writers attend the Clarion West Writers Workshop, www.clarionwest.org. If you have cool objects suitable for auction that you'd like to donate to a tax-deductible SFnal cause, or if you have no objects but would like to help Clarion West with a tax-deductible monetary donation, we will accept cheerfully and gratefully. And come to the auction to buy more objects for your very own: keep our economy humming.

What sort of cool objects are most appreciated and most likely to come up? Lots of books, manuscripts, advance reading copies autographed by the author (or by the author's pseudonym), rare fanzines. One year we had a set of the 11th edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. And non-readables as well: in past years we've had a Moebius-strip scarf crocheted by Vonda N. McIntyre, a bookbag decorated by Rachel Holmen, t-shirt proofs by Freddie Baer, pieced vests by Kate Schaefer, spiffy jewelry, and other stuff in good, bad, or questionable taste.

The auction will be preceded by a catalog, and will come in two stages. A silent auction will begin early in the con. Items attracting particular interest or that we think will be fun will be held over to the voice auction -- which is where the witty auctioneers and tireless runners come in.

For more info, contact David Bratman at auction@potlatch-sf.org.

6. Writer's Workshop

by Zed Lopez

Potlatch not only benefits the Clarion West writers workshop, it also hosts a Clarion-style workshop at the con. It's a great opportunity to get a taste of Clarion, while honing your craft with fellow writers and our instructors.

In small groups led by a professional writer or editor, workshop participants will critique each other, and receive critiques of their own stories. Whether you're interested in sampling a small taste of what a Clarion workshop is like, seeking advice with a particularly troublesome story, or just want to hone your craft, this is a fantastic learning opportunity. Everyone is welcome.

Participants submit manuscripts of their stories in advance of the con; there will be a \$15 fee to cover postage (workshop participants must also be members of Potlatch.) Each group's manuscripts will be mailed to all members of the group in time for everyone to read them and prepare their critiques before the con.

Please be clear that the workshop is not on a drop-in basis. To allow time to distribute your story to the instructors and other participants, it must be postmarked on or before January 31, 2005

If you have any questions, please email workshop@potlatch-sf.org.

7. Corflatch!

by Tom Becker

You may have read in the National Enquirer about Corflatch, the mysterious creature of the Pacific Northwest, lurking in the tall trees, never seen except for an occasional giant footprint on a back road. But that's all wrong. Corflatch is an urban phenomena, what happens when Potlatch and Corflu get together. The first Corflatch was in Seattle in 2000, and the spheres have aligned for another Corflatch, this time in San Francisco.

Potlatch and Corflu have many good things in common, and some interesting differences. Both are small conventions where it is easy to meet your friends and make new ones. Both have a single track of programming. Both are focused, Potlatch on reading and writing science fiction, Corflu on reading, writing and publishing fanzines. Potlatch has a book of honor instead of a guest of honor, Corflu picks its guest of honor out of a hat. Potlatch has an auction to benefit Clarion West, Corflu has an auction to benefit TAFF and DUFF. Other Corflu traditions are the presentation of the FAAn awards, the election of the Past-President of FWA for the previous year, and a softball game after the con.

Corflu started in the Bay Area. The first Corflu was held at the Claremont Hotel in 1984, followed by the second one in Napa (Fans in Ferment). Since then Corflu has traveled around, even going as far as Leeds in the UK. Corflu 22 will be only the second time that it has been back to the Bay Area, and the first time ever that it will be held within the City and County of San Francisco. This will be a special Corflu, and the conjunction with Potlatch makes it even more so. I hope that as many fans as possible will attend both conventions, even if it does mean having to spend the week between in San Francisco.

Corflu 22 will be on February 25-27, the weekend before Potlatch, at the Holiday Inn Civic Center. Memberships are \$60 through the end of the year. The rate includes the banquet. In the US and Canada, please make checks payable to Spike Parsons and mail to: Corflu 22, c/o David Bratman, Registrar, P.O. Box 662, Los Altos, CA 94023. For overseas members, there is a list of our international agents on our web site at www.corflu.org. For general inquiries, there is more information about Corflu on the Web site, you can e-mail us at info@corflu.org, or write to us at the registration address.

8. Concom

Co-chairs: Steven Schwartz and Janet Lafler
Treasurers: Lyn Paleo and Ian Stockdale
Registration: Cynthia Gonsalves _____
Hotel Liaison: Matt Austern
Publications: Lori Selke
Publicity: Lenny Bailes
Webmaster: Lenny Bailes
Consuite: Ellen Siegel and Ruth Leibig
Programming: Steven Schwartz and Lori Selke
Auction: David Bratman
Dealers' Room: Dave Clark
Tiptree Bake Sale and Afternoon Tea: Ruth Leibig
Writers' Workshop: Zed Lopez

9. Current Members

Matt Austern
Lenny Bailes
Allen Baum
Tom Becker
Jack Bell
Alan Bostick
David Bratman
Dave Clark
Scott Custis
Jules Dickinson
Lise Eisenberg
Doug Faunt
Jack Foy
Jeanne Gommoll
Cynthia Gonsalves
Eileen Gunn
Glenn Hackney
Jane Hawkins
Marilyn Holt
Denys Howard
Bill Humphries
Mary Kay Kare
Jordin Kare
Janet Lafler
Ruth Leibig
David Levine
Zed Lopez
Marci Malinowycz
Rich McAllister
Linda McAllister
Luke McGuff
Vonda McIntyre
Fred Moulton
Debbie Notkin
Lyn Paleo
Spike Parsons
Dawn Plaskon
D Potter
Anita Rowland
Peggy Rae Sapienza
Kate Schaefer
Karen Schaffer
Steven Schwartz

Lori Selke
Ellen Siegel
Ian Stockdale
Donya Hazard White
Tom Whitmore
Clifford Wind
Kate Yule

10. Register Now!

There are two ways to register for Potlatch-14. It's only \$40 through November 14, 2004; \$20 for persons age 11-17 and free for persons 10 years and under.

By mail:

Fill out the registration form below and mail it to:

Potlatch-14
c/o Lyn Paleo
PO Box 5328
Berkeley, CA 94705

By PayPal:

Go to our website's registration page and follow the instructions: www.potlatch-sf.org

Additional Information:

If you want a Dealer's Table, please contact Dave Clark: dealers@potlatch-sf.org