

# POTLATCH 18

**potlatch** n. [Chinook Jargon, fr. Nootka *patshatl*, giving.] 1. a ceremonial feast of the Indians of the northwest coast, marked by the host's lavish distribution of gifts. 2. Northwest: a social event of celebration. 3. Contemporary: a gathering devoted to the discussion, creation and appreciation of modern speculative fiction. 4. California: a place where readers and writers meet on common ground.

## PROGRESS REPORT 002

### WELCOME FROM THE CHAIRS

Every year, Potlatch reinvents itself a little.

The first Potlatch was in Seattle. The folks who thought it up were nice enough to let the other kids play with their toys, so Potlatch 2 was held in Berkeley, and since then the con has bounced back and forth between Seattle and the Bay Area (and occasionally Oregon). We've accumulated some traditions, and bent them from time to time.

Potlatch is all about conversation – in the panels, in the consuite, at dinners. Most years we've chosen a Book of Honor to be a focus for some of those conversations. This time we decided to choose two: Ursula Le Guin's *Always Coming Home*, and John M. Ford's *Growing Up Weightless*. They're both very relevant today, largely for different reasons. As the committee has talked about both of the books we've noticed some interesting contrasts and some unexpected thematic similarities, and we hope that you will too.

Potlatch 18 will be the first Silicon Valley Potlatch. Whether it's a dinner at one of the nearby Japanese, Indian, or Thai restaurants, or an expedition to the Winchester Mystery House or the Computer History Museum, we hope you'll have a chance to take advantage of the location.

Everyone on the committee has been doing a great job, but special thanks to Guy Thomas, our original chair, who saw us through the first few months and the selection of our Books of Honor.

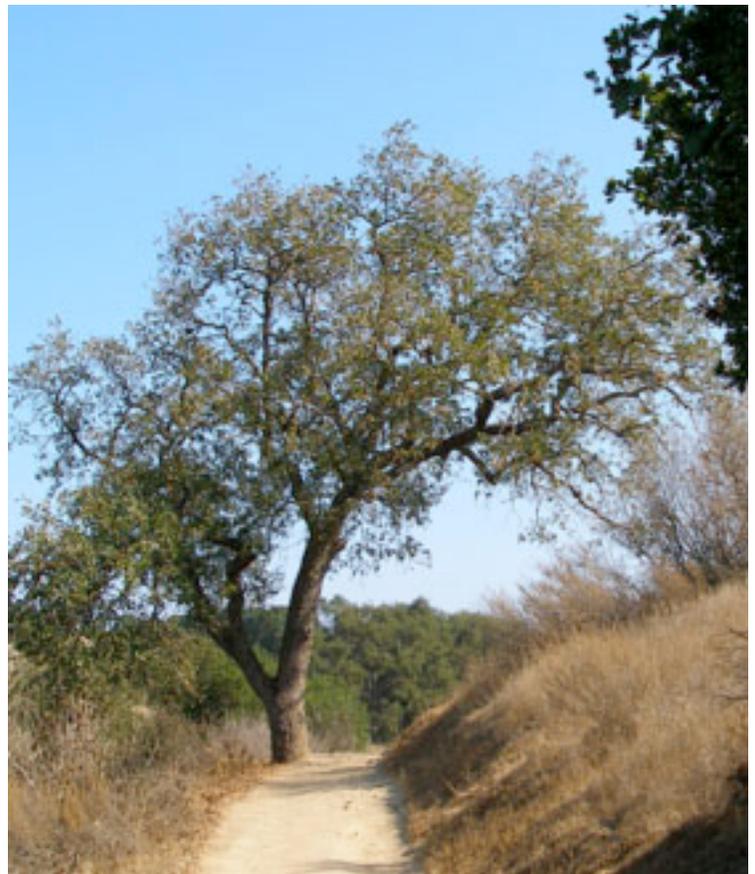
– Matt Austern and Steven Schwartz

### ABOUT POTLATCH

Potlatch is an all-volunteer, non-profit, literary convention for the readers and writers of speculative fiction. At Potlatch, people talk to each other and participate in panel discussions about reading and writing speculative fiction. You'll find conversations at programming events, in Algonquins, in writers workshops, in the consuite, in the halls, and in elevators.

Proceeds benefit Clarion West, an intensive six-week workshop for writers preparing for professional careers in science fiction and fantasy.

For more information, please visit [www.potlatch-sf.org](http://www.potlatch-sf.org).



FEBRUARY 27 – MARCH 1, 2009 @ THE DOMAIN HOTEL, SUNNYVALE, CALIFORNIA

## PROGRAM

Planning the Potlatch program is not as much thinking about thematics as it is like running an experiment on the Large Hadron Collider. You have your books of honor, you have people interested in books, and those collide and you get ideas, and those ideas interact with other books and ideas. You look at what you think are going to be the most interesting interactions, and start building a program.

Instead of moderators, we work with ringleaders. A potential ringleader might come to us with an idea, fully formed, or when looking at ideas, we think of someone and think, "yeah, zir is the person to run with this." Then the ringleader may pull together group of panelists, or we can suggest panelists to them.

We need panelists, ringleaders, and ideas. Not that we don't have ideas of our own, but you have ideas, and those are shiny, and we probably haven't thought of them. We will, of course, have panels on the books of honor, and there's rumors of a musical production afoot.

So thinking about the Books of Honor, and the ideas that spark off of them, if you want to ringlead, be a panelist, or have an idea for a program item, please write to [programming@potlatch-sf.org](mailto:programming@potlatch-sf.org).

We welcome program involvement from all Potlatch members, both old and new. If you've never been on a program before, this is a great con to try it out! Potlatch also supports diversity; we encourage members from all cultural backgrounds to submit program ideas and volunteer as panelists.

On this page are some of our current ideas. We will update this list as we hear from you.

– whump

### Unexpected Singularities

Consider *Always Coming Home* as a post-singularity novel. Is the *City of Mind* really that hands-off?

What about other novels and stories that aren't advertised as being about the singularity, but have that feel – such as Candace Dorsey's *Black Wine*?

### Great Books

An idea we borrow from Jo Walton's *Farthing Party*:

- Four people pick three books each.
- Those four people read everyone else's suggestions.
- They discuss them.

## ALGONQUINS

We don't decide all of Potlatch's program in advance of the convention. Maybe you want to continue a conversation begun in a program item. Maybe it's a field trip to a local yarn or gadget shop, or a new insight into one of our books of honor we haven't thought of. That's why Potlatch has Algonquins. We provide space, and sign up sheets. You bring the ideas and other members will join in.

Most Algonquins take place during breaks in the main program: lunch and early evening on Saturday.

– whump

### The Technology of Handmade

In the future, we were told that every artifact was going to be made in a factory, possibly to order.

However, knitting and handmade have become important again. We knit, we sell handmade items on *Etsy.com*.

- Is handmade still under-appreciated?
- What about bespoke software and <http://www.markbernstein.org/NeoVictorian.html>?

We don't want to give away spoilers, but John M. Ford did write a musical in the form of a *Star Trek* novel.

### Silicon Valley in Science Fiction

Since this is the first Potlatch in Silicon Valley, we could talk about books and stories set here.

- *Vanishing Point*, *Blood Music*, Rudy Rucker's novels
- Does science fiction about the Valley reflect it accurately?
- Is science fiction about the Valley about technology, politics, economics or all three?
- Does it represent everyone in Valley, not just the white geeky boys?

### The Scalzi Rule

It has been suggested in some quarters that the audience at a panel should not make statements, but only ask questions.

This was a matter of enough contention that it shook up this year's Potlatch committee. We'd like to discuss it.



## BOOK OF HONOR

*Always Coming Home*, by Ursula K. Le Guin

*Always Coming Home* is a book that everyone in S-F knows about. It is part of the zeitgeist. But there are a lot of people who haven't read it, or who last read it 20 years ago. It is an unusually good match for our Potlatch book of honor criteria – people will have lots of ideas about why they are reading *Always Coming Home*, but they may learn things they weren't expecting.

My memories of reading *Always Coming Home* are that it is a joyful book. I know there is conflict and suffering, but it is a story of survival, of life and culture and hope going on. In many ways it is the exact opposite of *The Dispossessed*. I think the joy in *Always Coming Home* can be shared.

– Tom Becker

## BOOK OF HONOR

*Growing Up Weightless*, by John M. Ford

Mike (John M.) Ford is/was a brilliant science fiction writer whose work is not as well known and well read as we feel it should be. *Growing Up Weightless* covers territory that's particularly relevant and interesting in the climate of the current YA boom in science fiction. It's a story that features a creative, sympathetic protagonist, opening the door to comparisons with protagonists in other popular S-FYA novels: Matt Ronay and his friends vs. Tally Youngblood and her friends in Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* trilogy vs. Heinlein's Podkayne and Thorby Baslim vs. Marcus in Cory Doctorow's new *Little Brother*, etc.

– Lenny Bailes



## TIPTREE BAKE SALE

The James Tiptree Jr. Award is given annually to the work of science fiction or fantasy that best explores or expands gender. The award is 18 years old this year (coincidentally the same age as Potlatch!). To learn more about the award (and the award-winning SF/F), please visit [www.tiptree.org](http://www.tiptree.org).

From the beginning, it has been entirely funded by contributions from the science fiction community, and we've been able to give at least \$1000 to the winner or winners every year (plus original art work, chocolate, and a hand-made certificate). The original funding idea comes from award co-founder Pat Murphy, who said, "If you can't change the world with chocolate chip cookies, how can you change the world?"

Please plan to bring a batch of your home-made chocolate chip cookies, or any other home-made goodies (savory or sweet), to the convention for sale. Not a baker? Just bring your wallet. The Tiptree Award appreciates bakers and purchasers equally.

Looking forward to seeing you at Potlatch 18,

– Debbie Notkin

## POTLATCH BANQUET

The Potlatch banquet will be Sunday's lunch. (For hotel guests, complimentary breakfast included in the room will be served earlier.) The meal will be served as a hot buffet, and the menu is:

*Atlantic salmon with whole grain mustard creme fraiche*  
*Fusilli pasta salad nicoise of olives, roasted red pepper and green beans*  
*Tabbouleh with parsley, tomato and cucumber*  
*Chicken breast stuffed with apple and fennel*  
*Marinated grilled vegetables*  
*Fresh fruit sorbet*  
*Iced tea, hot tea, and coffee*

The meal will be \$30 per person.

– David Bratman



## HOTEL

The Domain Hotel is located at 1085 E. El Camino Real, Sunnyvale, California. This is between Wolfe Road and Lawrence Expressway on the Santa Clara side of the city. The hotel is accessible by public transit, most simply by the Valley Transit Authority 22 bus from the Santa Clara Transit Center or the San Jose CalTrain station.

**To reserve a room:** Please visit the Potlatch website at [www.potlatch-sf.org](http://www.potlatch-sf.org). The Hotel page has a link for on-line reservations. Or call 408-247-0800 (mention the Potlatch attendee code: 0902POTLAT).

**Rates:** \$109/night for a regular guest room with either one king bed or two queen beds; \$139/night for an executive suite, including king bed, sofa bed, and Jacuzzi. Handicap-accessible rooms are available on inquiry to the hotel. The rooms have lots of drawers and desk working space, refrigerators, and large LCD TVs that can be used as computer monitors. (Free wired and wireless internet, of course.) The hotel has free parking, a heated outdoor pool, and a fitness studio.

The rates include a hot buffet breakfast for one or two people, with scrambled eggs, bacon, potato, oatmeal, pastries and cereal, plus (this is Silicon Valley after all) rice, miso soup, and Japanese condiments. For three or four persons, \$10 extra per day will be charged, except that there is no additional charge for children under 10 years old.

The Potlatch rates are good for stays arriving as early as Monday, Feb. 23, and departing as late as Thursday, March 5. This is a real bargain for a business-oriented Silicon Valley hotel, so come and pay a long visit and see some of our sights!

– David Bratman

## GETTING HERE

The San Jose airport (SJC) is by far the closest to our hotel, and we recommend it for attendees flying to the convention, unless you have business elsewhere in the Bay Area pre- or post-con.

The San Jose CalTrain station is also the closest AMTRAK station. It is on the Coast Starlight and Capitol Corridor routes.

– David Bratman

## T-SHIRTS

Freddie Baer is designing the t-shirts. Supply will be limited. You can order yours now.

## MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

You can purchase memberships by check or on-line. By check, please send the registration form with your check to:

Potlatch 18  
 c/o Lyn Paleo  
 PO Box 3400  
 Berkeley, CA 94703

Please make checks payable to "Potlatch 18".

To register on-line, please visit [www.potlatch-sf.org](http://www.potlatch-sf.org).

– Lyn Paleo



### Potlatch 18 Membership Registration Form

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Badge Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

T-Shirt  M  L  XL  2XL  3XL  4XL @ \$16

Banquet \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$30

Please check if you are interested in:

- volunteering
- participating in the program
- participating in the writers' workshop

Membership:

- Regular @ \$55 (through Feb 14)
- Supporting @ \$20
- Youth (ages 7–17) @ \$25
- Child (6 and under) @ Free

Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_