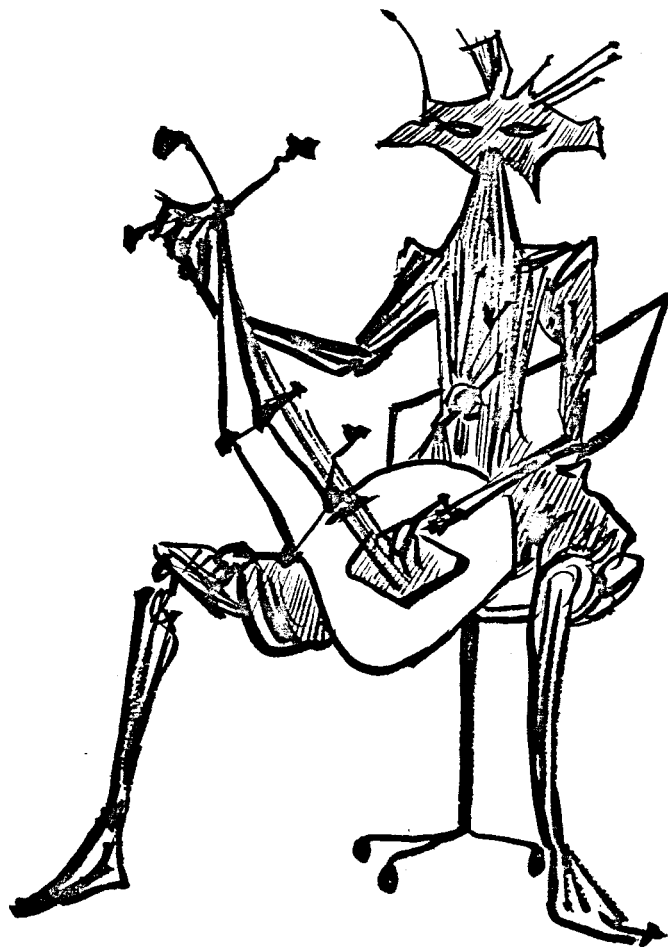


MISTILY
MEANDERING

No. 26



MISTILY

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26

Written by Fred Patten, and published on the LASFS Rex Rotary, Sept. 30, 1968.
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St. Louis in 1969!

Los Angeles in 1972!

Salamander Press no. 345.

((()))

Los Angeles fandom has been bubbling around a bit more than usual in the last few months. No drastic changes, but a number of small ones.

The LASFS Rex is no longer at my home. For the first time in a couple of years, somebody else in the L.A. area has been able to find a place for it at his home, and the club naturally decided to move it back to where more LASFS members could get at it. The someone is Ken Rudolph, current editor of SHAGGY, who'll probably continue publishing SHAGGY on Chuck Crayne's litho, but will probably use the Rex for the upcoming SHAGGY Xmas Art Supplement, because of the greater ease in changing & running color by mimeo. For me, this means that I now have to drive 30 miles each way to pub my fanzines, but since I usually drive into L.A. at least once a week anyhow, it's no great hardship.

We've lost Owen & Hilda Hannifen, Fred Hollander, and Barry Weissman to the Bay Area. The Hannifens are moving to the Black Hole in S.F., and Flieg & Barry are going to the University in Berkeley. But George Barr has moved from Salt Lake City to L.A., which makes up somewhat for the loss. And Jack Harness is back from England.

The LASFS has changed meeting places again, from the slan shack at the Hill to Tom Digby's apartment (& former slan shack under Hannifen & Jack Harness a couple of years ago), the Labyrinth Duquesne. The Hill is due to be torn down this week to make way for a new apartment building; this makes the 2nd clubhouse we've had torn out from under us. Digby's apartment is adequate, but just barely. We wish those incorporation papers would arrive from the state capital, so we'd be in a position to go shopping for our long-sought Permanent Clubhouse.

Los Angeles won the 1969 WesterCon, which'll be organized by Bruce Pelz and Chuck Crayne, and held at a beach-side hotel in Santa Monica. Have there ever been any other s-f cons with beach-swimming opportunities? And the same committee (with the addition of myself on Public Relations) has formally announced Los Angeles' bid for the WorldCon in 1972. Due to the new WorldCon bidding rules, we're probably going to have to go to Heidelberg to get it, though. The trip'll be fun -- if possible.

A 'BEST S-F' LIST

...AGAIN?

From time to time, lists of the best science-fiction books are compiled, in prozines and in fanzines, by polling fans and s-f readers or selected by the compiler on the basis of his personal taste. However these lists are made, they usually have no purpose other than to settle curiosity; to answer an intellectual question. I recently compiled such a list, but not for abstract motives. Hopefully, it'll have solid, commercial results.

I work for a company called Professional Library Service, a Xerox subsidiary. PLS' product is the service of acting as middleman for libraries. We order any book that a library wants, handle all the paperwork of billing and business correspondence and all the stickywork of processing them. This saves the library the trouble and staff-expense of writing to dozens of different publishers, of making its own catalog cards, of having to paste card-pockets and stamp property signs in each book it gets, of having to rebind or reinforce shoddily-bound books. By handling all this ourselves in mass-production, we can prepare each book so cheaply that we can sell it to our customers at what amounts to a profit for both of us. This is something new in the library line, but which (on paper) has a great potential. PLS was started as a small company around 1960, and was just about to go bankrupt through inability to set up a large enough system of efficient operation when the Xerox Corp. bought it out, shortly before I began working for it. Xerox is currently pouring enough capital into PLS to bring it to the point where it can do a competent job. We moved from a cluster of small warehouses into a new \$2 million building designed and built especially for us by Xerox, at the beginning of the year. We're installing new equipment to process the books better & faster (we just got a Telex to connect us with the Xerox head office in Rochester, a couple of weeks ago), and we're hiring new staff with library training, who know what libraries want. Most of PLS' business is done with school libraries, from the elementary to the high-school level; I'm the head of a new College department the company is trying to establish.

One of PLS' major operations is the maintenance of a large stock of preprocessed books. We buy books that libraries are sure to want (reference books, classics, important works on almost any given subject), and pre-process them. When a library orders any one of them, all we have to do is get it out of the warehouse, put on that library's property markings, and ship it out. We list these books in the catalog we publish, and it's our boast that when a library orders from this catalog, it'll get the books all ready to go on the shelves in a week's time (barring transit delays, etc.) This catalog is prepared for the use of the school libraries, and contains everything from the simplest picture books for elementary libraries to works like Giles Coat-Roy for the high-school libraries. (We don't have to worry about censorship; we leave that to the individual libraries.)

PLS is about to revise and expand its stock of preprocessed books, and its catalog, and I got myself a chance at picking the new s-f to go into it. The current list is what you might call a traditional school s-f list; Verne, Wells, most of Heinlein and Norton, basic Bradbury, a bit of Asimov and Clarke, and a scattering of other titles. There's Poul Anderson's Vault of the Ages (a Winston juvenile from its famous series

of the early '50's); the Balmer/Wylie When Worlds Collide bound with After Worlds Collide; some del Rey from the Winston series again -- good books, but basically the same stuff that was in school libraries when I was going to school in the '50's. There are a few new titles (The Lord of the Rings; The Witches of Karres; the Asimov-edited anthology, Tomorrow's Children; some of Knight's anthologies, including the "Nebula" collection), but mostly it's just plain old. PLS wants to expand the s-f in its stock by about 50 titles, and it wants adult books with real literary value as much as it wants safe juvenile books. I persuaded 'em that I'm the man they need to do the picking, since I've personally read everything with any pretension to literary merit, and I'm familiar with most of the reviews in the field. (Also, I'd be doing it on my own time, and saving somebody else some work. Well, it gets me goodie points at work, and gives me something with which to fill an issue of MISTY.)

I got a tentative go-ahead, and I've prepared my list of the 50 Best Science-Fiction Books (not already in our catalog). If my list is approved by the people revising the catalog -- it's a different department, so I have no final say -- it'll mean an appreciable amount of additional sales of these books. We stock 50 copies of everything in our catalog, and reorder another 50 when we sell down to only 10 left. (I tried to get some sales figures. Our records are in a mess; about all I could make out is that we're selling Rocket Ship Galileo faster than The Moon is a Harsh Mistress.) This means extra royalty money in the authors' pockets. It may mean the difference between a publisher deciding to let a book go out of print, and deciding to reprint it when his stock runs out.

Unfortunately, my list couldn't be compiled without a lot of strings. Naturally, the books must all be currently in print -- we can't go scrounging through used-book stores to find enough copies of something to add to our stock, no matter how good it may be. Also, they should be in hard covers -- libraries don't like to buy paperbacks because they wear out too fast; and we don't get a large enough margin of profit on them. (PLS will make some exceptions for really good books that just aren't available in hard covers, and I've put a few on my list, but I doubt they'll be chosen.) And the books have to have been favorably reviewed in "legitimate" literary sources -- one of PLS' sales guarantees is that every book in the catalog has passed a sort of literary gantlet and has favorable reviews in journals that school librarians will accept to attest to its high quality. This requirement may knock out some of the books on my list, but the publishers' and librarians' trade journals have been good about reviewing most of the important s-f to appear in recent years. So what my list boils down to, really, is my personal choice of the 50-odd best s-f books currently in print in hardbound editions. This narrows down the field a lot.

Here's the list. The comments in parentheses are my annotations to tell why this book is worth adding to our stock, for the benefit of the people in the department that has the final say; my additional comments here are in brackets.

RECOMMENDED FOR ADDITION TO K-12 KIT LIST

available in standard American hardbound editions.

Aldiss, Brian W. - Who can replace a man? Harcourt, Brace. (A collection of his best short stories.)

Anderson, Poul - Ensign Flandry. Chilton. (A good action series for teenagers; the adventures of an interstellar intelligence agent. Combines plausible action with good science. Sort of a cross between Horatio Hornblower and James Bond.)

Anderson, Poul - Flandry of Terra. Chilton.

Anderson, Poul - Agent of the Terran Empire. Chilton.

Anderson, Poul - Trader to the stars. Doubleday. (A collection of adventures featuring an interstellar explorer-merchant.)

Asimov, Isaac - Foundation. Doubleday. (A continuous chronicle of the fall

Asimov, Isaac - Foundation and empire. Doubleday. of the First Galactic Empire and

Asimov, Isaac - Second Foundation. Doubleday. the events leading to the creation of the Second. "Gibbon's Fall of the Roman Empire writ big." Winner of "Hugo" award for all-time best s-f series.)

Asimov, Isaac - The rest of the robots. Doubleday. (A collection of his robot stories; a sequel to his "I, robot", already on the kit list. Includes two excellent novels, "The caves of steel" and "The naked sun", both currently o.p. in separate hardbound editions.) ["o.p." is out of print.]

Bloch, Robert - Pleasant dreams; nightmares (by). Arkham House. (A collection of his s-f and horror stories, including "That hell-bound train", winner of "Hugo" for Best short story, 1959. Bloch is the author of "Psycho", the novel that Hitchcock made into a hit suspense thriller, which is reasonably typical of the mood of his stories.)

Bradbury, Ray - Fahrenheit 451. Simon & Schuster. (His anti-censorship, pro-individualism novel currently in vogue with the intelligensia.)

Burroughs, Edgar Rice - At the Earth's core, Pellucidar, and Tanar of Pellucidar. Peter Smith. (The first 3 novels of his Pellucidar series.)

Burroughs, Edgar Rice - A princess of Mars, and A fighting man of Mars. Dover. (Two of his famous John Carter of Mars series, including the first.)

Burroughs, Edgar Rice - Tales of three planets. Canaveral. (3 novelettes, representative of his different series.)

Carr, Terry, ed. - Science fiction for people who hate science fiction. Doubleday. (An introductory anthology for readers just discovering s-f.) [I'd've preferred to list the "World's Best" anthologies or "New worlds of fantasy", from Ace, but they're paperbacks.]

Christopher, John - The white mountains. Macmillan. (The first two novels of Christopher, John - The city of gold and lead. Macmillan. his series for teen-agers, in which Earth has been conquered by strange aliens (rather like the Martians in Wells' "The War of the worlds"). In the first, 3 boys leave their occupied homeland in search of a human resistance group. In the second, as agents of the group, they enter the aliens' base in Europe to gather information.)

Clarke, Arthur C. - Childhood's end. Harcourt, Brace. (His near-classic novel about the maturing of the human race into a cosmic mind-form.)

Conklin, Groff, ed. - Giants unleashed. Grosset & Dunlap. (All good an-
Conklin, Groff, ed. - Possible worlds of science fiction. Vanguard. thologies,
Conklin, Groff, ed. - Science-fiction adventures in dimension. Vanguard. including
Conklin, Groff, ed. - Science-fiction thinking machines. Vanguard. some of the
best short stories over the last 25 years.) [The earliest and best Conklin anthologies are out of print.]

Derleth, August - The return of Solar Pons. Arkham House. (Not s-f, really, but a pastiche-series of Sherlock Holmes detective stories. Highly rated by Holmes enthusiasts such as Queen, Boucher, Starrett, etc.) [Also, as Arkham House is practically the only specialty publisher still going, I want to send business its way. The more Derleth makes, the more books he publishes.]

- Derleth, August, ed. - Over the edge. Arkham House. (An original anthology of weird/horror fiction, published to commemorate Arkham House's 25th anniversary.)
- Ellison, Harlan, ed. - Dangerous visions. Doubleday. (An anthology of "new wave" s-f, written especially for this volume, centering around controversial themes supposedly taboo in the regular s-f markets (religion, morality, race relations, etc.))
- Garrett, Randall - Too many magicians. Doubleday. (A mystery about a murder at a wizards' convention, dealing with psi powers and set in an alternate world in which the Plantagenet dynasty continues to rule Britain and France today. A "Hugo" nominee for Best novel, 1967.)
- Heinlein, Robert A. - Stranger in a strange land. Putnam. (A novel emphasizing philosophy, religion, and sexual morality. Currently enjoying a vogue with the hippies, and available in several pb printings. "Hugo" winner for Best novel, 1962.) [PLS already has all other Heinlein books in print in its catalog; I don't know how it missed this one.]
- Herbert, Frank - Dune. Chilton. (An adventure novel giving a well-worked-out description of the maturing of a youth with supernatural abilities, set in a carefully detailed alien culture. Won "Nebula" award, and tied in "Hugo" award as Best novel, 1966.)
- Hodgson, William Hope - Deep waters. Arkham House. (A collection of weird/horror short stories, mostly with a sea theme.)
- Jones, Raymond F. - Son of the stars. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. (Two of the better novels in the old Winston Juvenile S-F series. In the first, an American teen-ager meets a boy from outer space, and defends him from prejudice and suspicion. In the sequel, the human boy and his family visit the alien's planet, and become involved unwillingly in galactic politics.)
- Keyes, Daniel - Flowers for Algernon. Harcourt, Brace. (A novel describing the maturing of a moron who is raised to genius level by an experimental medical treatment, and his reaction as the effect wears off and he begins retrogressing. Nominated for "Hugo" and "Nebula" awards for Best novel, 1967; an expansion of the "Hugo" winner for Best short fiction, 1960. Presented as a TV playhouse drama; filmed as serious motion picture.) [Won the "Nebula", I should've said.]
- Lovecraft, H. P. - The Dunwich horror, and other stories. Arkham House. (A collection of the best short stories of a master weird/horror writer.)
- Lovecraft, H. P. - Dagon, and others. Arkham House. (A collection of his remaining worthwhile short fiction.)
- Merritt, Abraham - Dwellers in the mirage, and Face in the abyss. Liveright. (Two classic lost-race fantasies, no longer available in separate hardbound editions.)
- Merritt, Abraham - The ship of Ishtar. Borden. (A classic adventure-fantasy. This is the "Memorial edition", containing the full text and fine illustrations.)
- Norton, Andre, ed. - Space pioneers. World. (An anthology of stories dealing with the exploration and human settlement of other worlds.)
- Norton, Andre, ed. - Space service. World. (An anthology dealing with the professional men (doctors, scholars, politicians, etc.) of the future.)

- Piper, H. Beam - Junkyard planet. Putnam. (A rousing juvenile action novel, in which a teen-ager tries to raise his backward planet by its bootstraps by convincing the people that a giant computer, the relic of an interplanetary war, is buried somewhere on it, setting off conflicts he hadn't anticipated between different interest groups.)
- Simak, Clifford D. - Way station. Doubleday. (A "pastoral" novel about the human caretaker of an unknown alien beacon on Earth. "Hugo" winner for Best novel, 1964.)
- White, Ted - Secret of the marauder satellite. Westminster Press. (The adventures of a young astronaut in the first manned orbital station.)
- Wyndham, John - A John Wyndham omnibus. Simon & Schuster. (A collection of 3 of his best novels, "The day of the triffids", "The kraken wakes", and "The chrysalids", no longer available in separate hardbound editions.)

available in standard British hardbound editions.

- Asimov, Isaac, ed. - The "Hugo" winners. Dobson. (A collection of all the "Hugo" winners in the Short story and Short fiction categories from the founding of the award in 1953 through 1961. U.S. hardbound ed. was by Doubleday; U.S. pb ed. by Avon is still available.)
- Bester, Alfred - An Alfred Bester omnibus. Sidgwick & Jackson. (A collection of his 2 novels, "The demolished man" ("Hugo" winner, 1953) and "The stars, my destination", and a short story collection. These are only available in the U.S. in separate New American Library (Signet) pb editions.)
- Brunner, John - Telepathist. Faber & Faber. (A socio-psychological novel about the maturing of a mind-reader and doctor. Published in the U.S. in a pb ed. by Ballantine under the title, "The whole man". "Hugo" nominee for Best novel,
- Leiber, Fritz - The Wanderer. Dobson. (An episodic novel about the reactions of different people from different social levels as the Earth comes close to being destroyed. U.S. pb ed. by Ballantine. "Hugo" winner as Best novel, 1965.)
- Pangborn, Edgar - Davy. Dobson. (The maturing of a boy in a post-Atomic, frontier America of the future. U.S. hardbound ed. was by Putnam; pb ed. by Ballantine is still available. "Hugo" nominee for Best novel, 1965.)
- Vance, Jack - The dragon masters. Dobson. (An almost-fantasy about the besieging of the last humans in the far future. "Hugo" winner for Best short fiction, 1963. Unavailable in the U.S. in a separate edition. A small book, but a good one.)

available in U.S. in paperback editions only.

- Blish, James - A case of conscience. Ballantine. (One of the few examples of religious (Catholic) s-f. "Hugo" winner for Best novel, 1959.) ["A canticle for Leibowitz" is completely unavailable, unfortunately.]
- Delaney, Samuel R. - Babel-17. Ace. (A somewhat psychedelic novel about an interstellar quest. "Nebula" winner and "Hugo" nominee for Best novel, 1967.)

- Dickson, Gordon R. - Soldier, ask not. Dell. (A socio-psychological novel about the ability of different cultures of the future to co-exist. An expansion of his "Hugo" winning Best short fiction of 1965.)
- Leiber, Fritz - The big time. Ace. (The battle of two enemy time-travelling political groups to change the past. "Hugo" winner, Best novel, 1958.)
- Sturgeon, Theodore - More than human. Ballantine. (The meeting and merging of different psychological misfits into one superhuman mental ego, and its internal conflict to decide whether to help or rule the rest of humanity. International Fantasy Award winner as Best novel, 1953; considered to be one of the all-time best s-f novels. U.S. hardbound ed., long o.p., was by Farrar, Strauss.)
- Zelazny, Roger - The dream master. Ace. (The relationship between a doctor and a patient whose mind he enters to try to cure her. An expansion of his "Nebula" winning Best short novel, 1966, and a "Hugo" nominee in that category.)
- Zelazny, Roger - This immortal. Ace. (A "new wave" novel about the inter-relationship of a group faced with the decision of guiding Earth's social development in the future. An expansion of his book that tied for the "Hugo" for Best novel, 1966.)

There it is. For the British hardbounds and the paperbacks, I had to cite pretty conclusive evidence that they're all really classics to justify the expense of adding them to our new catalog. For the U.S. hardbounds, I had a bit more leeway, so I could put in a few more of my personal favorites that aren't exactly considered to be great literature -- the books by Derleth, Hodgson, and Piper, for example. Still, I think that this is a well-balanced list for a junior high or high-school library. There's plenty of literary merit in it, and a few good juvenile action novels for the kids who don't care for the deep stuff. You'll note that a lot of them are about people "maturing", or are described as "socio-psychological"; big words to make 'em sound really worthwhile. Some of the books by Burroughs or Merritt may be a bit old-fashioned, but I read 'em when I was about high-school age and loved 'em, and I think they'll still be popular. There are also a fair number of collections of 2 or more novels by an author in one volume. Actually, libraries prefer to avoid these, for several reasons: bigger books are damaged more easily; they're less attractive to the casual browser; they tie up too many titles in one volume (if somebody only wants to read one of the stories, he's still got to check out the whole volume, so the other books in it are unavailable to anybody else until he returns it). However, considering the quality of the novels involved, and that they're unavailable separately, I think they're worth it.

This list was made up a couple of months ago, around F-UN Con time. If I were making it up now, it'd be somewhat different. I'd put Zelazny's Lord of Light in, as the "Hugo" winner -- the inclusion of award winners is easy to justify. Also, Walker & Co. has just announced its plans to reprint a number of classic novels available so far only in paperback, in hard covers. These include The Wanderer, A Case of Conscience, and I believe a couple of others on my list of British books or American paperbacks; I'm sure PLS will be much more willing to select them on the basis of the Walker editions. Walker is reprinting a number of other titles, such as Chthon, Dragonflight, The Space Merchants, that deserve to go on the list, too. I don't know what I'd drop to make room for them, though -- the Pellucidar volume, I guess; Dagon ...

The list is still in the mill, and nobody knows what'll be decided about it. At the moment, PLS seems to be considering taking the revision of the catalog away from the department that usually does it and giving the job to a "select board" consisting of some of our customer-librarians, so maybe my list won't even be considered, after all. At the worst, it's been fun compiling it -- and something may still come of it. I'll let you know.



A HARP FOR TED JOHNSTONE

GRO #8 -- (Atkins) A very good story. It looks as though you'll make a worthy replacement for LeeJ in the SAPS fiction department. ## I've heard a rumor that half of Ellery Queen -- I forget which half -- is supposed to be almost senile, and the other half is either writing the new book alone, or is shopping for a new collaborator. Considering the vagueness of this, I wouldn't be surprised if none of it is true. I stopped reading Queen over a decade ago, and I'm a bit surprised that new books are still appearing at all. ## Santa Ana seems to be very good at letting apa mailings go through at Book Rate.

SPACEHARP #89 -- (Rapp) Some popular magazine -- LIFE, I think -- recently ran an editorial predicting the imminent breakdown of the U.S. postal system unless Something is done Immediately. It seems to me that, on the whole, delivery of first-class mail is a bit faster these days than it used to be. I'm getting letters from across the country at about the speed that it used to take an air-mail stamp to get. A letter or package is still occasionally fouled up, but at about the same random rate as before. From all the news of an impending crisis lurking behind the scene, potential cuts in service, etc., I gather that Something may indeed need to be done; but, as far as my personal mail service is concerned, the Revolution is not yet. ## From the point of view of filling in blanks on personnel-type application forms, I'd rather go on listing myself as a Vice-President of the Spectator Amateur Press Society. If I called myself a Prince, it might have the wrong effect. ## Would stencil cement work on poly-vinyl? ## We haven't had a good bookstore browse at the junk stores yet; we'll have to organize one someday. The only trouble is, as you point out, you seldom find much besides Book-of-the-Month Club and Readers Digest volumes. Still, it's the looking and not the expectation of finding anything that's fun. ## Your ballads remind me of the comic book about two truck drivers named Riesling and Bôjolet. A Belgian comic. Written in French. Set in New Mexico. The stereotype of the American atomic scientist that European children learn about in their comic books is really frightening. They (the scientists) all swear, "Nuts!", too. Gen. McAuliffe seems to have had a definite effect upon the French language.

HALF A COUGH #3 -- (Foyster) If Aussie Fandom is coming alive, more power to it. Besides the zines you list here, there are at least 2 good zines in Comics Fandom that I know of: BRAMSTON, by Gary Mason, and BOOMERANG, by John Ryan, both of NSW. Ryan's involved in the attempt to sell Bester's The Stars, My Destination as a serious newspaper strip, sticking as closely to the book as possible. And Melbourne is bidding for the '75 WorldCon. It all sounds good.

JOURNAL OF THE H. JAMES APPRECIATION SOCIETY -- (Foyster) Did I just spell Delany as "Delaney" in my list of the 50 Best? I did ... ## Sounds like a good con. Melbourne in '75! ## When you talk of an auction "reserve", I assume you mean what we'd call a minimum bid? ## I wonder how involved it would be to arrange a convention on A. Bertram Chandler's boat? A floating convention. They've moored the old "Queen Mary" at Long Beach as a convention hotel, you know. It's supposed to be permanently moored, but I wonder ... Let an s-f Con at it, and ...