Tuesday next, February 20: A collection of extremely rare "primitives" from the Library of Congress paper-print collection: 1902-1911 films, including two by Edwin S. Porter, "Jack and the Beanstalk" and "The Seven Ages"; a notable Danish film by August Blom, "Deademons"; plus "He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not" and "A Search for Evidence", both with Kathryn Osterman, "The Bank Robbery" with Al Jennings, "Tom Tom the Piper's Son" and "The Nihilists"; plus a curious British melodrama, built around the history of the record industry, "Calling the Tune" (1935) - with Sally Gray, Clifford Evans, Donald Wolfit, Sir Cedric Hardwicke.

Note: this whole program is more of historic and academic interest than anything else; students and those genuinely interested in film history should find it a most rewarding and intriguing evening, but fringe attendees and guests are duly warned. We'd rather have a small group, thoroughly interested, than a large and restless assembly.

February 13 1968

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT re an unavoidable CHANGE IN PROGRAM

Film societies are ever faced with the peril of no-show films, and we've been exceedingly lucky in this respect. When a film hasn't arrived on schedule before, there has usually been sufficient notice for us to get out a new mailing and announce the substitution and re-scheduled date. Only once before - some five years ago, with "Last of the Pagans" - were we faced with a last-minute non-arrival, precluding the opportunity for a mailed notification. Now, for the second time in our roughly 16 year life-span, it has happened again - so much at the last minute this time that all our program notes had to be redone just an hour or two before the show. Going to keep up THE FAST LADY, we found that due to some complicated snafu, there wasn't a single print in New York. This particular tv distributor has been very kind to us in the past, making many otherwise unobtainable films available to us, and usually at no charge, so we just rolled with the punches and picked up the closest equivalent film we could -- another British comedy, also in color, made by the same unit at the same time, and likewise limited to tv circulation over here -- a film called "Father Came Too".

The negative aspects of the arrangement are that "Father Came Too" is quite certainly not as good a film as "The Fast Lady"; on the other hand, "The Fast Last" has an unknown quantity to most of you, so its non-showing at this time will be less of a disappointment than if some better known silent had failed to materialise. (And I can't believe that there are really any Julie Christie devotees among us, for Christie must be the most notable example of a star foisted on a helpless public since the days of Anna Sten!) Also, to my knowledge, "Father Came Too" has not yet had its NY tv premiere. "The Fast Lady" will of course reappear on our schedule as soon as she can be pinned down, and in the meantime we hope you'll think as charitably of us as possible.

"THE PICTURE THEATRE" (BBC-TV, 1964) Directed by Tony Staines; produced by Christopher Doll; Camera: Alan Hewison; 3 reels With John Betjeman and Philip Jenkinson.

This charming slice of underplayed nostalgia has much the same emotional quality as William S. Hart's introduction to his reissued "Rumblewoods". Visiting many of London's elaborate super cinemas of the teens, twenties and thirties, British poet and critic John Betjeman recaptures the feelings of the audiences of those times, the architectural thought behind the various types of theatre, and shows representative excerpts of films from the periods in question. I may find it especially touching because I grew up in all of these theatres, and am pleased to find them still held in such reverence - and maintained with such loving care. But I don't think the appeal of the film is in any way limited to this aspect; the things it says hold good just as much for the Roxy in New York as they do for the Astoria in Pinzburry Park. The only difference is that the Roxies are gradually and unemotionally being torn down and turned into offices, to be replaced by the sterile and tastelessly modernistic art houses, while the Astorias go marching on, and even maintain squads of usherettes who still politely light the way to your seat instead of letting you blunder around in the dark. Another major asset of this film is the personality of Betjeman himself; his material is obviously personal and largely unrehearsed, and his warth, honest sentiment, and puckish sense of humor show through beautifully. He looks a lot like the bomb-making minor villain in Hitchcock's "Sabotage" ("A Woman Alone"), and this helps too! He's no film historian, and often makes sweeping generalisations which are quite inaccurate, but it hardly matters. Too, not all of the film clips perfectly represent the periods they are supposed to, due to the problems of obtaining clearances. Thus a chunk of Carbo from "Joyless Street" is
pressed into service for the glamorous 30's, and the Karloff-Lugosi "The Raven" is illustrated by a hodge-podge of Lugosi shots from "White Zombie" and "The Return of the Ape Man". But none of this really matters, since Betjeman himself is so likeable, and it is the theatres themselves that really star. Although it isn't a point made in the narrative, it's quite surprising how the decor of the New Victoria parallels that of the night-club in Lang's 1922 "Dr. Mabuse"! I'm sorry the film isn't longer, and doesn't offer comparisons from the other end of the scale - like the barn-like Biograph cinema at Victoria, one of England's very first, and still going strong, or the Golden Domes at Camberwell, on which the delightful little movie house in "The Smallest Show on Earth" was patterned.

--- intermission ---

"FATHER CAME TOO" (Julian Wintle-Leonard Parkinson Productions, 1965)
Director: Peter Graham Scott; Screenplay by Jack Davies and Henry Plyth; Camera: Reg Wyer; in Eastmancolor; English title: "Daddy Came Too". 10 reels

"Father Came Too" seems to have been made at about the same time as "The Fast Lady" and maybe even back-to-back with it; it features the same crew, many of the same cast names, uses the same locations, and is a similar kind of comedy - though alas not nearly as good. The lack of a commercial release here for "The Fast Lady" is inexcusable (a single 42nd St. exposure hardly counts) since it had a then red-hot star in Julie Christie, plenty of sex, slapstick, good co-starring names, and was the kind of film that couldn't have failed to garner good commercial reviews. An obvious attempt at being another "Genevieve", it was still sufficiently different to pay off on its own. One can more readily understand the quicker shifting to tv of "Father Came Too"; it's an expert-enough comedy, certainly far superior to any of the Carry-Ons, but it does lack star names, and has little to offer beyond elaborate slapstick and pleasant personalities. It's not the kind of film to garner good enough reviews to make it a commercial proposition in the face of the expense of making color prints of such a lengthy film. Nevertheless, despite some arid spots, it's a lively and most entertaining film, gaining from the English rural surroundings, and the adroit use of many British character comedians, including such veterans as Fred Emney.

It follows the basic format of both "Genevieve" and "The Fast Lady" -- young love thwarted by things largely mechanical. The main trouble is that by now it had become just that, a format. The comedy sprang naturally and logically from "Genevieve", less naturally but still acceptably from "The Fast Lady". But here the situation is reversed: the idea seems to have been to take all the problems of buying and building a house, and then show how those problems affect young love. It's a more contrived approach and it does get a bit labored and protracted at times. Still, the Laurel and Hardy sight gags work well for the most part, the risque double-entendres are often very funny, and there's enough change of pace and style for it to hold together rather well for the most part. People like Raymond Huntley are always a joy to watch, and the film makes good use of him and his ilk. It's probably not a film we'd have ever played, had it not been for "The Fast Lady" either slowing her arrival or accelerating her departure -- but it's certainly an entertaining enough trifle, and we need offer no apologies for having become a kind of alternative to the Little Carnegie on this particular occasion.

========== Wm. K. Everson =========