This interview with Ford, filmed in Hollywood last Summer, is ultimately intended to be edited down to about 20 minutes. This print is of the full interview, in sequence, but with all the false starts, tad takings and takes left in. It is certainly overlong and lacking in zip, but on the other hand it has a certain vitality and honesty which may well be missing when the material is cut down to slickly-edited highlights. (This particular interview won't be cut down until next May.) Getting Ford on film at all is quite an accomplishment these days, since he loathes TV interviews even more than he loathes press conferences - and the only thing that upsets him even more are British interviewers! So BBC-TV had quite a job on their hands. It took weeks to set up the interview, and when the production crew arrived early one morning they were instantly sat upon first by Ford's ancient Red Indian maidservant, and secondly by a screaming Mrs Ford. When the gauntlet was finally run, the Great Man was found in his den (apparently rather like Fritz Lang's in The Love of Jeanne Ney) lying on a bed, naked except for the remnants of a red sweater, and surrounded by empty bottles attesting to a lively evening the night before! First denying all knowledge of any interview, he finally and very reluctantly agreed to it, and the footage you are to see was shot in that frame of mind, about fifteen minutes later. The equipment was hastily erected downstairs, the lights very unfortunately placed so that they shone directly into Ford's face. (Since his eyes give him a great deal of pain, his tolerance of those lights is quite remarkable. Presumably the crew was afraid to re-arrange the lights in case, in the interim, Ford's tenuous acceptance of the interview vanished altogether.)

What emerges is both fascinating and frustrating, with Ford mixing sharp wit, affecting sentiment and solemnity in almost equal measures. Be prepared to learn almost nothing about his films. Ford has constantly down-played and minimised his production methods, discounting any preoccupation with art, a personal style, or what have you. Luckily the films speak for themselves: nobody who can turn out such intensely personal and poetic films as "Youth Mr. Lincoln", "Hangman's House", "How Green Was My Valley" and "The Wagonmaster", can ever convincingly claim that films are just a job of work and no more. But you will learn a great deal about Ford the man, and his feelings about things often quite unrelated to film. In that sense, these 3 reels are invaluable.

Where the interview is so frustrating is in its waste: to have Ford, one of our half-dozen finest directors, and one of our few still active pioneers, totally available for so long, and to limit the questions to such magazine trivia as "How did you meet John Wayne?", is incredible. The interviewer quite obviously rubs Ford the wrong way, not least because he has a set of questions from which he won't deviate, and a lot of the time Ford would clearly prefer to pass on to something else. (A sailor working with the crew seems to have struck a much more sympathetic chord with Ford!) In retaliation, Ford goes out of his way to needle his interviewer, requires "translations" of his English accent, and parries questions about American "guilt" of the Indian massacres by querying British "guilt" over the Irish problem! At such times the film is both fiery and funny, reveals a surprising knowledge of British history, and usually manages to answer questions that he insists he will not answer because they are political, not filmic. The anecdotes about his own film work aren't by any means too reliable -- I've heard several different versions of the shooting of the unscripted funeral sequence from "Wee Willie Winkle", and the most reliable-sounding (and the most interesting) came from Arthur Miller, the film's cameraman. Ford's account of "Stagecoach" is especially hard to take when you hear about "this young kid Wayne, that I had on my crew", quite ignoring the fact that Wayne had been a star, albeit not a major one, for a whole decade at that time! However, as I mentioned earlier, this interview is valuable mainly as a study of the man rather than for any historical background on his films. That, luckily, is fully documented elsewhere. Despite a story told against him, Ford seems to have a genial regard for Cliff Reid, the Rko producer, although he never actually refers to him by his full name. The anecdote he tells concerns the shooting of "The Lost Patrol". Regardless of how Reid got involved, Ford is emphatic about Reid's influence on the film. He was a fellow and one who offered a minimum of unwelcome supervision. The number of worthwhile films he promoted at Rko is quite remarkable, and it's a pity that more isn't known about him personally.

Ford, curiously, has never been "boxoffice" at the Huff -- not that we are too concerned about that. Most of the Ford programs that we've run have failed to break even; indeed, only "Straight Shooting" wound up in the black, and that possibly more because of our Gibson and Carey devotees. When I run (and announce in advance) a Ford film for my students at the School of Visual Arts,
there is always a marked increase in absenteeism, while even at the New School last season, "The Hurricane" was one of the lesser shows in terms of audience-size. It's odd that everybody admires Ford, but takes him so much for granted. It'll be interesting to see whether the different aspect of Ford himself on film makes for more understanding... or whether the long unseem "The Plough and the Stars" (scheduled for March) will attract on its own merits, or have to fall back on the recent and rather strange Barbara Stanwyck cult to provide the bulk of its audience.

--- Wm. K. Everson

Intermission

The following program notes on "THE LOST PATROL" were contributed by Richard Kraft, to whom we are most grateful.

"THE LOST PATROL" (Rko Radio, 1934) Directed by John Ford, Associate Producer, Cliff Reid; adapted by Dudley Nichols and Garrett Fort from the novel "Patrol" by Philip MacDonald; camera - Harold Wenstrom; Music - Max Steiner; Edited by Paul Weatherwax; Original running time: 8 reels - 74 minutes.

With Victor McLaglen (The Sergeant); Boris Karloff (Sanders); Wallace Ford (Morella); Reginald Denmy (Brown); J.M. Kerrigan (Quincoamn); Billy Bevan (Hale); Alan Hale (Cock); Brandon Hurst (Bell); Douglas Watson (Pearson); Sammy Stein (Abelson); Howard Wilson (Aviator); Paul Hanson (NacKay); Neville Clark (Lieutenant); Abdullah Abbas (Arab).

The above cast credits are the fullest ever issued. The Huff thanks John Cocoeh and William Thomas for supplying the two names usually left off - Neville Clark and Abdullah Abbas. A ranch still owned by Mr. Thomas pinned down Abbas. McLaglen had met him years before while serving as an assistant Provost Marshall for the British forces in Baghdad during the first World War. McLaglen unofficially adopted the youth and Abbas functioned as side-kick and servant, also appearing as bit player in some of Victor's films.

The novel "Patrol" came out in 1928. Not a great novel, it was yet a tough and vivid account of British troopers lost in the Mesopotamian Desert about 1917, and how, one by one, they met death at the hands of the unseen Arab snipers. In early '29, the first film version appeared - "The Lost Patrol" - directed by Walter Summers, and with one of Victor's six acting brothers, Cyril, in the part of the Sergeant. Made by British Instructional Films Ltd., it was touted as Fox's first British quota picture. Fox evidently had little to do with the production, but handled publicity and distribution. Later in '29, this version opened in the USA. Generally reviews were very good. The stark, tragic quality of the work was noted, and probably discouraged many pleasure-seeking movie fans from seeing it. (In that filming, the Sergeant dies with his men, as in MacDonald's novel). Anyhow, despite the favorable huzzahs of the critical fraternity, it was not a film for the masses. Five years later, while reviewing and praising the John Ford version, William Boeblin of the NY World Telegram recalled the earlier film: "A vigorous, gripping, heart-tearing film, it had only a modest success, in spite of its high quality and the fact that a number of us cheered lustily for it." That it was a silent film in an early year of sound may have had something to do with its lack of success. One hopes that Mr. Everson will someday make a new print of the silent film. The director does not deserve to be forgotten. A Captain in the first World War, Walter Summers later worked with Hepworth for several years. During the years 1922-24 he directed for Samuelson. It was with a series of documentary reconstructions of World War One episodes - Ypres, Mons, the Falklands, the Coral, battles, and an earlier version of "Tell England" - that he achieved recognition. Had Ford seen the 1929 "The Lost Patrol"?

Ford had previously - before 1934 - made a big picture without kiss-kiss. This was "Man Without Women" for Fox in 1930. Another tense look at a bunch of doomed servicemen, this time trapped on board a crippled submarine. There were some females in that one, but little more than extras during a roistering cafe sequence at the beginning of the film. Some said this scene was added after completion of the picture in order to somewhat forestall the box-office danger of a feature without love interest. "The Lost Patrol" was a film Ford wanted to make. Without descending into the torturous irrelevancies of the auteur game, it seems very much a pan effort of his - without commercial frills or maudlin verolocium. In a day when the star system took precedence over director worship, "The Lost Patrol" and the succeeding "The Informer" rekindled interest in Ford, focusing on his ability at lyrical introspection in the midst of virile characterization. Indeed, there were many who professed amazement that Ford had been directing pictures since 1913. Hollywood-inspired memory is short, and as they vulgarly put it - "You're only as good as your last picture!"

After shooting - near Yuma, Arizona - was completed, it was first decided to release the film without musical accompaniment of any kind. A screening of it, sans music, caused a change of mind. Max Steiner was called
in and quickly, turned out the evocative score. It is difficult to think of any other film in which the music supplies so fulfilling a role. There is only one who贯彻 in the entire film when there is no Steiner music. His melody generates each changing mood down to the tiniest flick of menace. His glorious score is a major contribution. Dudley Nichols had worked with Ford on "Men Without Women". His and Garrett Fort's dialogue, a goodly portion of it straight out of MacDonald, balances the poetry and the bitterness, the poignance and the bravado. And ties it all up with the threads of compassion that sustain the film as a human document rather than a realistic action film. Nor is there one false note struck in the acting. Actors typed beforehand as who, for the most part, were to be typed afterwards - here play with an extra dimension of believability.

McLaglen was only great under Ford. Karloff's performance can scarcely be matched by any of his later Mr. Wong of Chinatown brand of junk. Wallace Ford, long the wisecracking reporter or detective in scores of tedious Bs, shows what an incisive player he can be. Denny graduates from his jangling man-about-town niche, and infuses his "What Do I Believe In?" speech with flamboyant iron. They are all good - Kerrigan, Hale, Hurst, Walton. And Billy Bevan, in the only tragic prefall of his career.

There are no women in the cast. Yet I know of no film so warm with their presence. Douglas Walton's mother, a gentlewoman who cried when he enlisted - Beryl Mercer. Billy Bevan's Molly, who wore a red hat when she saw him off and got pregnant under suspicious circumstances - Part Kelton. Wallace Ford's sweetheart of the high wire, whom he loved so much ... she lay there white as milk - Helen Mack. The island girl Reginaled Danny slept with - Bessie Love and she was in "Soul Fire". The Sergeant's wife, who died in childbirth - Margaret O'Hara. Don't blame me; blame Ford and Nichols and Steiner - they set the wheels turning.

Like certain other Rko films, "The Lost Patrol" (which incidentally was unofficially but accurately remade as the 1939 western "Badlands") has never been entirely out of circulation. I first saw it in 1940-41 at the Beacon Theatre and it was complete. I managed to see it complete several more times, and then, inevitably, Rko began to nibble away at it, and by the time it reached 42nd St. in the early 50's, usually teamed with "Gunga Din", it was already less than its 70 minutes, so I stopped going. Then the film started chopping away at "Gunga Din", too. Rko is the world's worst company in the handling of its reissues, Columbia might give 'em a good run down the stretch, but in the end Rko earns the rotten cabbages every time! One scene does exist in stills, and in the novel; but I've never seen it on-screen - presumably it was trimmed before release. I wish they had left this particular sequence in, as it flashes out the character of Abelson (Sammy Stein) whose mainsprings are never too clear in the picture. He is a Jewish ex-pug, a bully from the lower depths, a semi-civil counterpart of Sátir's in Griffith's "Broken Blossoms". Whereas Abelson is capable of an act of heroism, he is mainly the tormentor of Sanders the religious fanatic (Karloff). Abelson had quite more of a prominent part in the novel. Anyway, the still shows Abelson on the ground with Cook, the dour Scot (Alan Hale) standing over him. Previously Brown (Denny) had challenged him, but the Sergeant broke that one up. But when Abelson starts getting obnoxious again, Cook takes up the gauntlet, and the former professional prizefighter is humiliated by a baracks-room brawler. I imagine that it was shortly after this pounding that Abelson was detailed into the 42nd Street greenhorns. His fingers were bruised, and who didn't relish living with his shame any longer. (In the novel, Abelson lives almost to the end, continues to badger Sanders who, in a final paroxysm of madness, stabs him through the eye with a bayonet). The print tonight lacks approx 8 minutes. Here are the principal cuts. 1. Shortly after finding the desert retreat, Sanders is reading his bible while the others skylark. A shot of him reading, then a shot of what he is reading: a closeup of words that say that if you believe in Him, then He will turn the wilderness into a Garden. 2. It is a shot after a scene cut, with Pearson on guard. Shots of the desert night... wind whispering through the trees ... the horses restive and neighing. 3. All of Morelli's soliloquy late in the picture. He and the Sergeant with their rifles on the dunes. Morelli tells of his high-wire act, the girl who was a part of the act and how much he loved her; of her falling one night and dying in the dust, her face as white as milk, and how - ever since then - he's been a Jonah. 4. Most of the Sergeant's answering soul-search. Tells Morelli about his wife, whom he was crazy about, how she died in childbirth leaving a son whom at first he hated, but who he has grown to love. Now his only interest in life is to save his way so the boy can be properly educated. 5. After the aviator is picked off Sanders has a hysterical scene in which he tells the Sergeant and Morelli that the airman was sent to him, as a Saviour. He appears to threaten the Sergeant, who orders Morelli to tie him up. (Later there is a shot of the rope bonds scattered in the dirt; Sanders has loosened himself, and his dejected cockle is heard on the sound track. The next time we see him he is with the Cross, climbing the emly ridge to his salvation.)
That is all I can fix right now, but there may be other bits and pieces, ends of scenes, and the like.

In conclusion let me merely say that I love this film; but I am conscious that there are many who hate it for the same reasons that I esteem it. It is not a picture that one likes mildly. To me it is the essence of the real Ford, and a study of true heroism - the inner kind, not the last reel cavalry charge to Glorious Victory. I read once where Ford had said he had a print of it around the house and still looked at it occasionally. Those who love this picture never forget it, and honor its memory for all time. It's possible to enjoy "She Wore a Yellow Ribbon" and "The Long Gray Line" without, somehow, feeling the same depth of emotion connected with "The Lost Patrol".

Richard Kraft