Monday next, August 4th: "LOVE E'M AND LEAVE E'M" (1926, dir: Frank Tuttle) with Louise Brooks, Evelyn Brent, Lawrence Gray, Gogood Perkins; preceded by a 5-reel documentary compiled by and for the now defunct Hollywood Museum.

July 28, 1932
The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

Early Henry Hathaway

Tonight's program is admittedly an odd one for a film society to present - although the Huff has always been rather an odd society. Students of Henry Hathaway's career - even though it isn't yet fashionable to acknowledge his career as being worth serious study - will doubtless find it most rewarding. And veterans of the early 30's with fond memories of traditional Saturday afternoon lightweight action fare will find it a nostalgic and typical resurrection of that kind of program. To those of you who are here optimistically expecting a continuation of the this year's only truly artistic "White Gold" "Homecoming", "Weeks of New York" - we suggest just that you let your hair down and enjoy the number. Maybe in 30 years the theorists will have decided that Sternberg is out and Hathaway is "in", and then you'll be able to think back with pride to this memorable evening! Hathaway's career started as an assistant director in the late 20's, and he switched to full directorship in 1933 with Paramount's "Haze Grey western series. Within a couple of years he had worked himself up to "A" product, and through the years had made many dozens ("White Witch Doctor" for example), but he was always straightforward, unpretentious, director, a good craftsman and a good story-teller. Even when his stories had some sort of undercurrents ("Rawhide") he retained a pleasing directness; and his latest, "True Grit", has all the simplicity and vigor of his "Lives of a Bengal Lancer."

"TO THE LAST MAN" (Paramount, 1933) Directed by Henry Hathaway; 6 reels

scenario by Jack Cunningham from the novel by Zane Grey; Camera: Ben Reynolds; Cast: Randolph Scott, Esther Ralston, Noah Beery, Buster Crabbe, Gail Patrick, Jack La Rue, Barton MacLane, Myrel Kirkland, Fuzzy Knight, Egon Brecher, Ed Gargan, James Eagles, Shirley Temple, Eugenie Beisserer, Harlan Knight, Jay Ward, John Carradine, Erville Alderson, James Mason.

The third of Hathaway's six Zane Grey westerns over 1933/34, "To the Last Man" was not only one of his best in this series, but probably one of the best and most carefully made "B" westerns from any period, its superiority in story, cast and production values more than making up for its fairly measured pacing. Most of Paramount's Grey westerns of the early 30's were remakes of silent versions, and were often literally built around stock footage from the old ones, some, like "Man of the Forest" and "The Thundering Herd" (both also Hathaway) going so far as to re-cast many of the same players so that even medium shots of those actors from the decade-old versions could be intercut without impurity. "To the Last Man" however (made in 1923 by Victor Fleming) uses relatively little stock from the silent version: an establishing scene or two of covered wagons, an avalanche, a night raid on a cattle herd, and that's about all. Most of the major action is newly filmed, and in any event, this is a western told more by characterisation than by traditional action - although the closing reels are certainly lively enough. The locations are excellent, and the photography first-rate, but it is the acting that commands the most respect. Esther Ralston is so good that she looks so beautiful, that one regrets all the more that she was so wasted in talkies. Noah Beery's jovial villainy is magnificent as always, though the lechery and treachery of Jack LaRue at times almost overshadows him. The plot (one of Grey's beloved "revenge" themes, similar to but livelier than "Riders of the Purple Sage") has some real surprises, and the last reel is a hum-dinger. Only in its credits is the film a little disturbing: it copies the old silent method of introducing players as they appear, but what worked well with a silent cast doesn't seem to work as well in a talkie. The device is pleasing at first, but unfortunately the multitudinous characters continue to be introduced right up to the half-way mark!

"COME ON MARINES" (Paramount, 1934) Directed by Henry Hathaway; screenplay by Byron Morgan and Joel Sayre from an original story by Philip Wylie; Camera: Ben Reynolds; editor, James Salk; 7 reels


An intertitle film, "Come on Marines" was both Hathaway's first western, and one of his only two programmers for Paramount (the other: "The Witching Hour"). Wylie obviously didn't strain himself for the story, which is merely designed to fall in 70 minutes pleasantly and effortlessly. It moves, however, to several locations (Catalina some of the time) and has plenty of comedy and sex - Grace Bradley's black-garbed number will be a delight for all our fetish admirers, while the more normal ones among us will revel in all those lovely stars-to-be, still in their teens, prancing about unmade jungles in their lingerie. To paraphrase the old song, it's foolish but lots of fun, and a very pleasant, totally non-demanding diversion. With this under his belt, Henry moved on to "Now and Forever" "Peter Ibbetson" and others.

--- W.K. Everson ---