SUBMARINE PATROL" (21st Century Fox, 1939) Directed by John Ford
Produced by Darryl F. Zanuck; Associate Producer, Gene Markey; Scene and by
Rian James, Darryl F. Zanuck, and Jack Yellen from the novel "The Splinter Fleet"
by Bruce Milholland; Camera, Arthur Miller; Art Director, George Boerner; Art
Michael Meacham; Cinematography, Arthur Lange; Script by
With Richard Greaves, Nancy Kelly, Preston Foster, George Bancroft, Slim
Summerville, Joan Valerie, John Carradine, Warren Hayers, Henry Armetta, Douglas
Forley, J. Farrell McDonald, Dick Hogan, Marie Rosenthal, Ward Bond, Robert
Lowery, Charles Tannen, George O. Stone, Moroni Olsen, Jack Pennick, Elisha Cook,
Harry Strang, Charles Trowbridge, Victor Varconi, Murray Alper, E. C. Close,
Lon Chaney Jr., Walter James, Frank Moran, F. Schuman-Heinek, William von Brincker
Ford's two 1938 films for Fox, though both big productions, can now only be
regarded as interesting time-marking places before his finest and most productive
period began in 1939. They are also good examples of the kind of "job-of-work"
productions that he now likes to dismiss as being mere studio assignments, and
while they certainly aren't exactly personal productions, they still show more
and pride in craftsmanship than they would if Ford actually regarded them
as casually as he professes. "Submarine Patrol" is hindered by a little too
much of Ford's traditional naval camaraderie and slapstick, and by some rather too
obvious studio "exteriors". Furthermore, as in other films with non-contemporary
settings, Ford is at pains to be accurate in terms of military detail and
costuming - and then dissipates it all by making his heroine look, talk, dress
and wear her hair like a typical 1938 ingénue. Nevertheless, the old Ford comes
to the fore more than once. The two major action sequences are well staged
(and helped out by a few stock shots from "The Sea's Beneath" and "The World Moves
On") and at least one sequence - the sa l o r's thoughts, spoken aloud, as their
boat leaves New York - is a lovely, poignant episode in which Ford's sentiment
is blatan, unrestrained, yet totally sincere - works beautifully. On TV this
sequence has frequently been cut, and the film was at one time available only in
a TV version edited to 75 minutes. Our print tonight is happily fully complete.

- intermission -

"FOUR MEN AND A PRAYER" (20th Century Fox, 1938) Directed by John Ford
Produced by Darryl F. Zanuck; Associate Producer, Kenneth Mograw; Scene and
Richard Sherman, Sonya Leven and Walter Forrest from a novel by David Garth,
Camera, Ernest Palmer; Music, Louis Silvers; 8 reels.
With Loretta Young, Richard Greens, George Sanders, David Mivan, C. Aubrey Smith,
William Henry, J. Edgar Bromberg, Alan Hale, Ronald Denmy, John Carradine,
Berton Churchill, Claude King, John Sutton, Harry Fitzgerald, Cecil Cunningham,
Frank Baker, Frank Dawson, Lina Basquatte, William Stann, Harry Hayden, Winter
Hall, Will Stanton, John Space, C. Montague Shaw, Lionel Pape, Brandon Hurst.

One of the least typical and certainly least personal of all the Ford films,
"Four Men and a Prayer" at the same time is a much more interesting film than he
himself has indicated in his always contradictory way. A professional Irishman to
the last, he has suggested that he approached this sentimental tale of British
military honor as a tongue-in-cheek romp - but curiously, while there is certainly
some intended (and effective) levity, the story is also moving and respectful.
Basiclly it is little more than a good "B" picture script glossed up
with some big names and an effective use of some impressive standing sets as
possible - rather like the content and modus operandi of Fox's Mr. Moto thrillers.
It certainly covers a great deal of ground, moves constantly, and successfully
combines the adventure genre with that of the mystery thriller. The only major
drawback is one that Ford has complained on so many occasions - the presence of a
"name" star leading lady. Loretta Young often looks quite stunning and is
certainly beautifully photographed, but as a star she is projected in too many
scenes, brought arbitrarily into a story that is moving along very nicely
without her, and often brings it to a grinding halt. With a Lyn Bari or a
Dorothy Wilson in her place, Ford could have kept to a snappier pace and shved
both the running time and the budget. Another curious flaw is the minimal use of a
musical score in the kind of melodrama where music could really have helped
help to heighten tension and excitement. Nevertheless, it's a "class" production all
the way and a most enjoyable minor Ford.