Next program: May 16th: FLYING DEVILS (1931) with Bruce Cabot, Ralph Bellamy, Arline Judge, followed by THE WHITE GORILLA (1945) — an event to be cherished the absolute nadir of nearly three decades of the Huff with Ray Corrigan, Francis Ford, Charles King and Frank Merrill.

Note: with the next program, the Huff will close down until September. A new schedule will be issued around September 7, and care will be taken to avoid conflicts with the Museum's Universal cycle.

Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

May 9 1977

Tonight’s two films have a great deal in common. Both are what once used to be termed "women's pictures", and both came out within a month of one another in 1931. They share one of the same scenarios and associate producer, and both have two players - Robert Williams and Walter Walker - in virtually identical roles in each film. Both too tend to be somewhat stagey and talkative, almost a trademark of RKO in that period. They make an interesting combination, yet in some ways they are poles apart too. "The Common Law", being filmed for the third time (a 1918 version starred Clara Kimball Young, a 1923 remake starred Corinne Griffith) was already out-of-date and an old chestnut; "Rebound" on the other hand was very much up-to-the-minute, and isn't intrinsically dated today, apart from the rather plodding direction.

THE COMMON LAW (RKO Pathe, 1931) Directed by Paul Stein; Screenplay by John Farrow and Horace Jackson from the original story by Robert W. Chambers; Associate Producer, Harry Joe Brown; Camera, Hal Mohr; 7 reels
With Constance Bennett, Joel McCrea, Lew Cody, Robert Williams, Hadda Hopper, Marion Shilling, Walter Walker, Nella Walker, Paul Ellis.

Perhaps an old-fashioned director like Paul Stein is just the right man for "The Common Law"; he's neither ashamed of it, nor pretentious with it, and keeps it moving along rather well, with a lavish artist's ball as a pictorial highlight. Constance Bennett was by now turning out films like this with incredible regularity - "Bought" was released around the same period - and had this particular kind of "confession" movie as a virtual monopoly. Joel McCrea appeared in quite a few of them too, and his naive innocence combined with Bennett's worldly-wise sophistication made them almost an archetypal team — and this is very much of an archetypal movie, even to Lew Cody virtually re-doing the Lenox Sanderson role from "Way Down East". McCrea of course was frequently to return to this kind of role, as witness "Barbara Coast" and "The Passion Path".

REBOUND (RKO-Pathe 1931) Director, Edward H. Griffith; screenplay by Donald Ogden Stewart and Horace Jackson from the play by Stewart; Camera, Robert Brodina; A Charles Rogers production; Associate Producer, Harry Joe Brown; Art Director, Carroll Clark; 10 reels (in actual running time, 8 reels; also erroneously listed in some sources as 67 minutes!)

Although his direction was praised at the time, Edward H. Griffith really wasn't up to the demands of his material here, and really performed as usual, with workmanlike competence and no more. But denied the elegance that a Cukor could have given it, it still works - and works well - mainly because of its pungent and often witty script, and some really excellent performances. Ina Claire (in the role Hope Williams did on stage) is quite fine, and a master of timing; Myrna Loy is again so good in a sophisticated role (and not an easy one) that one wonders anew why it took another couple of years before her talents were really appreciated. Robert Williams (whose dramatic capabilities might have been hindered, had he lived, by his resemblance to comedian Bert Wheeler) is extremely good in both films. Both he and Robert Ames died too long after making this film. It's slow, but a good filmic record of the play as produced by Arthur Hopkins, and a fine showcase for Claire, Loy (who even sings, and well) and Robert Williams.