Next program, Nov. 21st: SCARLET RIVER (Otto Brower, 1953) with Tom Keene, Dorothy Wilson, Lon Chaney Jr., Betty Furness, Myrna Loy; EXCLUSIVE (Alexander Hall, 1937) with Fred MacMurray, Frances Farmer, Lloyd Nolan, Charlie Ruggles.

Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

October 31, 1977

HEARST AT SAM SPINO

Two reels of home movies shot by Ben Lyon in the early 30's. Among the many guests shown are Constance Talmadge, Ben Lyon, Bebe Daniels, William Seiter, Jack Mulhall, Howard Hughes (seeking in vain for some privacy while making a phone call!) and of course Hearst and Marion Davies. There's the usual unflattering mugging, but some fascinating shots of the Hearst zoo, of art treasures being uncared for, of a banquet and a beach picnic, all of which make for interesting comparison with parallel scenes in "Citizen Kane". Since these are no more than off the cuff snapshots, we'll present them as Hearst must have done, casually and without a "score".

THE CLINGING VINE (Cecil B. de Mille Pictures-P.D.C., 1926) Directed by Paul Sloane; adapted by Jack Jevne and Rex Taylor from the (1922) play by Zelda Spears; presented by C. Gardner Sullivan; titles by John Krafft; sets by Max Parker; Camera, Arthur Miller; 7 reels

With Leatrice Joy, Tom Moore, Robert Edeson, Dell Henderson, Snitz Edwards, Toby Claude, Wilson Beng. It is a little over 16 years since the Huff last showed "Clinging Vine", and it hasn't shown up anywhere else in the interim, so one can consider it the kind of minor footnote to film history for which the Huff exists. As a play, it opened on Christmas Day in 1922, but the film four years later caused no great stir. It's a minor programmer to which some aura of topicality has been added because of its feminist angles, and basically it is merely a casual forerunner to all those films that Rosalind Russell and Melvyn Douglas spawned at Columbia in the 30's. It's nicely mounted, excellently photographed by Arthur Miller (also the cinematographer on the second film tonight), fitted out with some quite snappy titles, and has an amiably sassy quality which seems to discourage anyone from taking it even remotely seriously. When the plot contrivances start piling up near the end, they only get in the way of relaxed enjoyment of the faces and the costuming. Paul Sloane, who directed, was never particularly inspired but at least he was prolific and hard-working; to my knowledge, his last film was a modern version of "Madame Butterfly" (with Sojin in a supporting role) made in Japan in the mid-50's. The only time I ever screened "The Clinging Vine" to a non-Huffian audience was once in 1956 when Leatrice Joy introduced it at an old ladies' home in New York. The audience (thinking that Leatrice was moving in with them, and disappointed to find this not the case) had a thundering good time and enjoyed a relaxed 70 minutes with no violence, sex, problems or much of a plot to worry them. Huffian enthusiasm may be diverted from those qualities to an admiration of the excellent print quality, made from the original 35mm neg.

THE SPIELER (Pathes, 1928) Director: Tay Garnett, Producer: Ralph Block; Scenario by Garnett and Hal Conklin from an original story by Conklin; Camera, Arthur Miller; Asst. Director, Robert Fellows; Music, Josiah Zuro; 7 reels

With Alan Hale, Rene Adoree, Fred Kohler, Clyde Cook, Kewpie Morgan, Jimmy Quinn, Fred Warren, Billie Letimer.

When we last showed "The Spieler", exactly 10 years ago, it was of the silence version. Tonight we have a fine print with the original music and effects track, sometimes a little inappropriate it's true, but a fascinating example of that early use of sound. A third version, apparently lost (although check us in another ten years) did have limited talking sequences. Like all such hybrid films, it falls between the styles of two schools, the expert photography of the silent period somewhat ill at ease with the lethargic pacing of the early sound. The basic problem, as often was the case, is in the script - two reels of narrative padded to seven (or actually six, in terms of footage). But it has powerful opening and closing sequences, and the cunning way a few extras and slumgay sets do manage to suggest a busy carnival is worth studying. WKE

(Director Garnett died earlier this month)