SEVEN DAYS LEAVE (Paramount 1929, rel. 1930) Directed by Richard Wallace; Asst. Dir: John Cromwell; Screenplay by John Farrow and Don Totheroh from "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals" by James Barrie; Camera, Charles Lang; edited by George Nichols Jr.; Titles by M.G.M.


"Seven Days Leave" is one of those curious films that has no "official"reputation, but that is fondly remembered by many who saw it—some 50 years ago. Because of its rather typical and occasionally primitive transition-to-soundstaginess, it has never been officially reissued, and is probably a rarity even on late late tv. It's still a poignant and moving film, in its own very special way a minor classic.

James Barrie always walked a very delicate tightrope that held his pathos, whimsy and sentiment sufficiently in check so that it never became maudlin or cloying. For me, it works beautifully, whether it works for you depends on your own feelings about Barrie; those who dislike him per se will probably find it quite rough going.

Although a lesser work (both as a play and as a movie) it is in many ways a companion piece to his classic "A Kiss for Cinderella", so beautifully filmed by Paramount in 1925. Both stories use the unspectacular "home front" of World War I as the background for timeless themes that could belong to any period. Both stories too are played off by rather off the protagonist—the full yet sensitive policeman and the little lady in "A Kiss for Cinderella", the no'er do well soldier and the little old lady in "Seven Days Leave". There is a strong affinity between Tom Moore's policeman and Gary Cooper's soldier, but of course many of Barrie's characters reappear in different guises.

"Seven Days Leave" gets off to a good start which suggests that it may be unusually cinematic for a 1929 film, but while it soon settles down to lengthy dialogue exchanges in the manner of the stage and film of 1929, at the same time it is more than just a film of stage origin. Beryl Mercer, repeating her original stage role is fine; though unfortunately she continued to play the same role in all of her subsequent films for the next decade, creating a set of mannerisms which were very hard to take, and which may work against full appreciation of her work here. Cooper's performance is uneven, but his natural awkwardness, especially in an early talkie, luckily seems right for the role. But it is the December and the support players that really steal the show; the like is flawlessly created, and Tempe Pigott's performance as "the Haggerty woman" is nothing short of a masterpiece. Curiously, Basil Radford, who must have been recruited from some touring British play, turns up in a small role.

"Seven Days Leave" might have been a major film with a really top director at the helm, but it certainly needs no apologies. John Cromwell's collaboration (as a stage director, probably brought in to work with rehearsals of the actors) was probably minimal, since behind the scenes working on the film still involves a big hit with "Showworn Angel", but was to remain one of those versatile director's forever showing great promise, but never quite making it to the top rung of the latter. However, his many interesting films include "Eight Girls in a Boat", "The Young in Heart", "The Fallen Sparrow" and (shown earlier this season in this series) "The Masquerader".

— TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION —

HELL IN THE HEAVENS (Fox, 1934) Director: John Elystone; Screenplay by Byron Morgan, Ted Parsons and Jack Yellen from "The Ace" by Herman Rossmne; Camera, Bert Glennon; 80 mins.


By the early 30's, Hollywood was absolutely glutted with World War One aviation movies, which had worked their way down from "Wings", "Hell's Angels" and "The Dawn Patrol" to programmers and "B" pictures. Perhaps mainly in order to bring in a few new cliches-to-be, there had been some attempt to introduce a sour note and de glamorize the "glory" but with the exception of "The Eagle and the Hawk", the attempt was half-hearted, and it was still starrs, romance and action that sold most of the films. As the cycle went, "Hell in the Heavens" trots out the spectacular "thundering" footage all over again to provide an adequate Warnes, it is now virtually a lost film, and as a representative of its genre, and for its cast, it is certainly worth seeing. The sound is a little below par at times, due to the ravages of age, and there are a number of jump cuts, though not serious ones. However, apologies or regrets are purely academic, since this is now all that is left.

Program ends approx. 10:20 approx.

An apology: the last five sets of notes for this series were done rather hurredly at a single sitting, without sufficient time for re-reading or corrections. Please bear with us if any typos have crept in.

While cleaning the print of SEVEN DAYS LEAVE it was noted that a few ten-year-old splices have burned a little sticky. Hopefully this will not cause projection problems; if it does, it will be confined to the first 15 mins. of the film. Keep your fingers crossed and your candles lit.