APLOGIES for the sudden, last-minute change in dates. The matter was taken out of our hands, and it was not possible to switch to the 5th Avenue Cinema location, which was already committed. The only alternative would have been to have switched to the end of the series, adding an isolated date in January. This would not only have been more inconvenient, but also given such short notice there was no guarantee that we could get the two films together again for that date. Those enrolled for the whole course were notified by mail or phone; for the rest, we used NT's various grapevines and jungle telegraphs and hope the word got to most of you. All other dates remain on Fridays as announced of course. Thanks for your forbearance.

THIS RECKLESS AGE (Paramount, 1931; rcl: 1932) Directed by Frank Tuttle; Screenplay by Joseph L. Mankiewics from the play "The Goose Hangs High" by Lewis Beach; Camera, Karl Struss; NT premiere, Times Square and Brooklyn Paramount Theatres, Jan '32. 80 mins. With: Charles "Buddy" Rogers (Bradley Ingalls); Richard Bennett (Donald Ingalls); Peggy Shannon (Mary Burke); Charlie Ruggles (Goliath Whitney); Frances Dee (Lola Ingalls); Frank Craven (Bunice Ingalls); Maude Eburne (Rhoda); David Landau (Reginald Barlow (Lester Bell); Mary Carlisle (Casandra Phelps); Allen Vincent (Pig van Dyke); George Pearce (John Burke); Grady Sutton (Stepfather Schulte); Harry Templeton (Monk Turner); Leonard Carey (Bretthwaite); Neighbor (Henry Brandon); Banker (Berton Churchill).

Despite a title which suggests a jazz-age comedy, and an opening reel that seems to confirm it, "That Reckless Age" is an intelligent if substantially rewritten version of a play that was initially filmed as a 1925 silent by James Cruze, under its original title, "The Goose Hangs High," and with George Irving playing the father, and Constance Bennett, Myrtle Steadman and Esther Ralston as the three girls. It forms an interesting prelude to the upcoming Mankiewics series at Film Forum. The re-writing includes adapting it to the depression (which makes character optimistically states is just about over) and changing the father's position from a political clerk in the original to a business underling here. Although clearly based on a play, telling its story by dialogue and even retaining a couple of obvious curtain scenes, it breaks the action up rather than opening it out, but on the other hand, the basic story emerges rather late, and as a consequence is wrapped up rather too quickly, but still for a relatively minor film, probably the best of the four that Frank Tuttle directed that year (none of them tough melodramas, the genre he would ultimately specialize in) and as an early talkie, it is both exceptionally well made and very entertaining. Richard Bennett is less mannered than usual, Frances Dee is charming, and the plot does have some enjoyable surprises. Though one should cite Harry Sharp as the cameraman, it was photographed by Karl Struss, whose beginnings as a portrait photographer I stand him in good stead in some of the charming Christmas closeups, framed by holly-wreath. When screened at the Paramount, the stage show was headed by Ruth St. Denis, with Bing Crosby in support.

Ten Minute Intermission

SMALL TOWN GIRL (MG M, 1936) Directed by William Wellman; Produced by Hunt Stromberg; Screenplay by John Lee Mahin and Edith Fitzgerald; Camera, Charles Rosher; NT premiere, Capitol Theatre, April 1936. 108 mins. (Print revised title "One Horse Town" to avoid tv confusion with the remake). Based on a novel by Jean Andrews, which novel was written as a vehicle for Jean Harlow, a very difficult actress. With: Janet Gaynor (Kay Brannan); Robert Taylor (Bob Dakin); Ernie Barnes (Priscilla); Lewis Stone (Dr. Dakin); James Stewart (Elmer); Andy Devine (George); Elizabeth Patterson (Ma Brannan); Frank Craven (Pa Brannan); Isabel Jewell (Emily); Douglas Fowley (Chic); Charles Grapewin (Dr. Fabre); Nella Walker (Mrs. Dakin); Robert Grieg (Childers); Edgar Kennedy (Cap. Mack); Willis Pung (So-So); Richard Carle (Justice of the Peace); Eddie Kane (Head Waiter); Ethel Walsh (Mrs. Johnson); George Meeker (Dr. Underwood); Cyril Ring (reporter); Charles Wilson (Donaldson); Edward Morris, John Harron, Bob Livingston (party guests).

Originally designed as a Jean Harlow vehicle, "Small Town Girl" was presumably softer than a little to provide an appropriate debut for Janet Gaynor at MGM, added (rather surprisingly to their star roster after her slipped popularity at Fox. Despite a Ben Ames Williams original novel, it's standard MGM star vehicle material, pegged up by a strong supporting cast, typical Cedric Gibbons art-deco sets, a Slavko Vorkapich montage or two -- and too much footage. (Often listed at a standard 90 minutes, it actually runs almost two reels longer than that). But one knows what to expect from this kind of MGM film, and enjoys it for the very qualities that make it so standardized -- though it suffers from a weak, world-weary quality that is pleasing (the NT Times compared it tentatively to "Alice Adams") and one wishes that Wellman had been able to keep this flavor, and the small town background, a little longer. (Curiously, the small town is Carvel, home-town for the Hardy Family!) It was one of five films that Robert Taylor made that year, the biggest obvious was "Camille" -- and his somewhat unsympathetic playboy doctor role seems an attempt to cash in on and repeat his success in the previous year's "Magnificent Obsession". Poor James Stewart, likeable or not, is cast as "Elmer" -- a sure tip-off that he's going to lose romantically. Wellman's other film for MGM that year was the much tougher and more appropriate for him, "Robin Hood of El Dorado". Despite its length, and like all MGM films of this type in 1936 was too much product for such a predictable storyline, it still misses a few audience-pleasing bets. Ernie Barnes, in one of her last comic gold-rigger roles (how did all those leading men fall for such obvious wiles until the last reel?), invites a spectacular consequence, which unfortunately occurs off-screen. Familiar Carvel seascape locations are brought into play as doubles for the East Coast -- and it's worth noting that our two cameramen tonight, Strauss and Rosher, worked together in the silent period on visual classics as "Sparrows" and "Sunrise". The remake, much changed so as to serve as a musical, starred Jane Powell, Farley Granger and Ann Miller.

PROGRAM ENDS: 4:56 (NO DISCUSSION TONIGHT) AS SCHOOL CLOSES EARLY.

--- William K. Everson