9

Better Gone with the Wind

1940

LOUELLA PARSONS wanted more money. That was the word from Joe Connolly at King Features Syndicate in New York. He wired Hearst at San Simeon on January 3, 1940, a Wednesday coinciding with the forty-third birthday of still-youthful Marion, who'd just got back from a few days at the Beach House, the same as Hearst had. Dr. Harry Martin, Louella's husband, had done the bargaining, as Connolly explained:

> I have talked again to Dr. Martin who says she will not accept seven hundred fifty plus one hundred for expenses. The best I could do with him was to get him down to one thousand without one hundred a week expense. We pay her secretary thirty-five per week. This would be equivalent to [a] raise of four hundred per week. However she insists on right to do outside work and to keep all of the proceeds.
>
> I am to give Dr. Martin our decision tomorrow. I would appreciate your further views. Happy New Year.

Hearst gave his "further views" that very day, without hesitation, the Thomas Ince affair of 1924 notwithstanding (myth-makers claimed that Miss Parsons had a lifetime contract in exchange for her cover-up of the purported murder):

> I think we should kiss Louella an affectionate goodbye. If we pay her one thousand a week and let her do outside work she will draw the thousand from us and do the work for somebody else.

Hearst had more to say that same day (that evening, actually):

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> [Louis] Sobol should be splendid Hollywood commentator. His stuff from there before attracted much attention. . . .
>
> Louella always prevented our getting other good people. The new arrangement should enable us to get lots of them for what we would have paid her.

The very next day, January 4, Hearst got an unexpected offer from the Jones Syndicate in New York:

> Would you consider blanket deal Hedda Hopper's Hollywood column for your chain?

Miss Hopper had gone into writing and reportage late in her working life, full-time since 1938; locally, the *Los Angeles Times* carried her column, "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood."

On January 5 the news went like this—Connolly from King Features in New York to Hearst at San Simeon:

> Parsons okay and will sign on satisfactory terms. . . . I am sure that your talk with her did the trick.

Hearst replied to Connolly the same day, Friday the 5th:

> I am glad about Louella. We better make the three-year contract with her which she wants, or we will have another situation soon. I will take the responsibility for the contract.

Meanwhile, some Beach House news. On Thursday the 4th, in the midst of the Parsons crisis, Bill Hunter wired Joe Willicombe at San Simeon:

> Miss [Ella] Williams phoned that there were some bags left here [at the Beach House] that Connie [Constantine Fox] could not take, also some groceries and fowl sent down from the ranch, and a sewing machine; that if the truck is coming down with the rugs she will send all this stuff back by the truck.
>
> Any instructions?

The items had gotten left behind over the New Year's holiday. The mention of rugs brings the Philibosian matter of 1937 to mind: maybe Hearst had some of those rugs on hand or enough rugs from other sources to supply the Beach House with whatever it needed.

With regard to Louella Parsons, the outcome of recent dickerings bore a surprising twist:

> New York INS has killed to all clients the story about Louella Parsons signing new contract.

That was the word received by Willicombe on January 10, indicating that Hearst had ordered such an action and that it was being complied with. Louella was in Chicago then. She wired Hearst from there on January 11:

> Dear Boss: Well you will have to put up with me for another three years but I hope you are just half as happy as I am. Love.

THE WAR IN EUROPE took center stage when Cobbie (Edmond D. Coblentz) wired Hearst from New York on January 26:

> Welles [H. G. Wells] article in *Liberty* advocates bombing Berlin. Says its [it's] misfortune not bombed in 1918, that bombing town [and] wrecking [it] would be chastening experience for them. He thinks it would be better for them to have regions like devastated France and Belgium in their own homeland to meditate upon. Article largely pleas for collectivization and totalitarianism which he says inevitable in this world. Says "Collectivism in form of New Deal struggling to take possession of America." We have permission to reprint 300 words. Please instruct.

Hearst jumped right on Cobbie's message, answering him at the *New York Journal-American* later that day:

> Quotations from Wells can be used for editorial.
>
> The extracts you mention are doubtless the best.

If three hundred words not enough, ask for five hundred.

Extreme radicals are illogical and consequently unstable and never consistent.

Radicals constitute a valuable critical and opposition element but as an authority they are always failures.

That is the trouble with the present Administration.

Their program reminds me of a line in Xenophon [the Greek historian],—"The idea was good but the execution was impossible."

Wells, a man nearly the same age as Hearst, had been a guest at Simeon half a decade earlier, appearing there in the company of a glamorous young friend of his, Paulette Goddard.

On a different show-business note, Hearst heard again from Jimmie Manos at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles; the following came through on February 2, 1940:

> This is to remind you of the opening of Guy Lombardo and Fred Stone's dancing daughter Dorothy [Stone], with her partner, Charles Collins in the Cocoanut Grove next Tuesday evening [the 6th]. Don't want to disappoint you so am holding choice table for your party. Please call telling me number to expect.

Warden Woolard of the *L.A. Examiner* wired Willicombe that same day, Friday the 2nd:

> Ingrid Bergman will arrive in New York Saturday where she will stay for a month. If you wish to have someone there interview her along lines Chief outlined she can be reached through her representative, [telephone] Bryant 9-8312.

The connection between show business and politics in Hollywood becomes clearer in this message of February 8, from Woolard of the *Examiner* to Hearst at San Simeon:

> *Liberty* [magazine] gives permission to reprint 500 words [Martin] Dies article. Have prepared story embodying Dies' allegations about Communism in Hollywood and [Sam] Goldwyn's denial he attended conference. Am putting story on wire for use in tomorrow's issue.

> For your information I learn conference was held with five or six leading executives just before luncheon to which Goldwyn refers. Goldwyn was too late for private conference, hence his denial. However, Dies did meet with several others.

Hearst got back to Woolard on still another show-business note, yet it was mostly an unrelated one; it was still February 8, a Thursday:

> Use Maureen O'Hara interview with at least two of pictures selected by me—the large head and one fireplace picture this next Sunday.
>
> Louella's recent interview with Ingrid Bergman sufficient for the time [being].

And then a corker of a movie-industry editorial, written by Jose Rodriguez of the *Examiner*, as dispatched to one and all by Willicombe on February 8 after Hearst had revised it, according to his usual habit:

> The Los Angeles City Council should waste no time nor argument in passing the ordinance proposed by Police Commissioner [Henry G.] Bodkin, which would provide powers of censorship over obscene motion pictures imported from abroad and shown in Los Angeles theaters.
>
> Masquerading as art, these films pander to pruriency [lasciviousness]. They are mere translations into the screen of the traffic in lewd postcards so familiar to the American traveler in Europe.
>
> That they are contemptible as "art," that they tend toward perverting public morals, that they are dangerous to our social health, is transparently clear to any intelligent person. . . .
>
> Indecent films should be banned. If it is not done nationally, at least Los Angeles can start the ball rolling.
>
> Propagandist films should also be banned. They are definitely designed to get us into war to our injury. . . .
>
> As Mr. Dodkin points out, the intent is not to establish the Los Angeles Police Commission "as a board of censorship over films produced in Los Angeles. The Hays Organization is keeping local films clean and wholesome. What we want is power to control bootleg films

> and those made in foreign countries which come in uncensored and sometimes smell to high heaven."

The movie industry likewise figured in some comments Hearst made on February 14—on a subject that by 1940 was already a grand Hollywood tradition. Willicombe speaking to the editors of ten of Hearst's seventeen newspapers:

> Chief calls your attention to interesting page of moving picture Academy Award candidates in *LA Examiner* last Monday [the 12th], and says:
>
> "Here is a page for all papers to use just as it is. Interest in this selection is not limited to Los Angeles. Every movie fan will have opinions."
>
> The award will not be made until the Academy annual dinner February 29th, two weeks away.
>
> The *LA Examiner* is sending you a mat [a pressman's matrix] of the page to be printed in your paper.

No longer free to fly back and forth by expensive private aircraft, Hearst still had trains and automobiles at his disposal. Joe Willicombe could therefore tell Warden Woolard on Friday, February 23: "Chief planning to drive down to Los Angeles tomorrow and remain there for [a] few days."

Yes, the Chief and Marion would be staying at the Beach House—staying in town long enough to attend the Academy Awards on Thursday, February 29, at an old stamping ground of theirs, the Ambassador Hotel on Wilshire Boulevard. The invincible couple was back at San Simeon by the weekend of March 2–3. Marion claimed in *The Times We Had* that she never attended the ceremony after 1934, but on this score she was mistaken, as she so often could be in her reminiscences of 1951/1975.

"IN THE NEWS" began innocently enough. Hearst's front-page column first appeared anonymously in his home-base *Los Angeles Examiner* in late February 1940 and soon after that in the *San Francisco Examiner* as well; it took some of its initial inspiration from the Academy Awards ceremony of February 29. No one, almost least of all Hearst, had much of an idea where "In the News" would be heading, how long it would be published, or what impact it would have. Something like a million hand-scrawled words lay ahead (it would take him well into 1942 to accomplish this). For now, based at San Simeon, he was just getting started, experimentally, almost on a lark; the far left column of the front page, where Arthur Brisbane's "Today" had run for years, was the space he eyed.

Soon, when editors throughout the Hearst service saw a long incoming message from Willicombe marked "In the News," they knew it was time to jump, time to get the typesetters rattling their linotypes and the pressmen on the alert for last-minute copy. With the West Coast running two to three hours behind Hearst's Midwest and Eastern papers, the column typically reached those cities in the darkest hours; he still expected to see "In the News" in the morning's editions (he received copies of even his most distant papers within twenty-four hours).

For the Monday papers of March 4, 1940, Willicombe shot the following over the transom late on Sunday the 3rd, one of the first "In the News" columns of Hearst's seen by anyone outside Los Angeles or San Francisco. The name of the column, we should note, was a play on newspaper parlance. The front page of a Hearst paper or any other big-city sheet was "the news," as were the other pages that carried non-editorial copy. To put a column, a sidebar, a photo, or anything else "in the news" meant to incorporate it within the layout of those news-dominated sections. In Hearst's case, backward glancer that he often was, "In the News" didn't mean current events so much, although he

could get current when he wished to be. The wordplay of "in (or amid) the news" was a signal that Hearst meant to be literary and, in the best sense, clever—that he meant to wax eloquent with impressive regularity. He hit for a high average; only a small number of the columns were dogs. He quickly got into fighting trim, staying ahead of and on top of the six-day grind (there was no Sunday column at first). He devoted hours to the new project, staying up till dawn if need be yet never shirking his accustomed editorial duties (he normally started each work day by noon). There was a very good reason for what he was doing, beyond giving Communists a hard time; we'll come back later to that important point, to that very crucial point.

Hearst's column for Monday, March 4, went partly as follows:

> The motion picture people, at the annual meeting of their society for mutual cooperation and congratulation, the Academy of Arts and Sciences, voted *Gone with the Wind* the best picture of the past year and distributed awards to many who participated in its production.
>
> Certainly Mr. David [O.] Selznick deserved his award for his courage as well as his genius.
>
> Certainly the able director deserved his award because many were called and only one was chosen,—and that one wisely.
>
> The others mentioned deserved their distinction. Assuredly Miss Vivien Leigh earned her recognition fully [as best actress for 1939] by doing exceedingly well a historic American role which no American woman was considered competent to do.
>
> But there was an American woman [Margaret Mitchell] who was competent to write the best selling novel of the century [published in 1936] and make the picture possible. She might have received some consideration or courtesy or compliment. She created the plot, and the characters, and the conception and description which others rendered or employed or portrayed. . . .
>
> The Moving Picture Arts and Sciences is a valuable institution. It was born one beautiful evening on the porch of a star's residence by the

> sea in Santa Monica. Several eminent producers assembled there, and a journalist and his attorney were asked to attend as advisers. . . .
>
> "We will assemble all the newspaper representatives publicly and we will announce the plan dramatically," said one eminent producer.
>
> "We will do nothing of the kind," said the newspaper adviser. "If you want something printed that badly the newspapers will print it briefly, guardedly and suspiciously, and present you with a copy of their advertising rates.
>
> "Go back to your meeting place in Los Angeles, assemble your serene selves as secretly and mysteriously as you can, refuse any information to the press, and the papers will print such news as you allow to leak out at length, and on the first page."
>
> Thus and so the institution was launched and very successfully too.

The first reactions to Hearst's new column came in from his own people. A few respondents were in on the game. Other observers were fooled outright by his masterful wit and prose. But his valet, Gus Wahlberg, was anything but fooled; Wahlberg wrote to Nellie Shewmaker at Wyntoon on March 6; Mrs. Shewmaker and her husband, Cal, were assistant caretakers at that northern estate. Under a heading of "La Cuesta Encantada, San Simeon," Wahlberg began by saying, "Well, I suppose, that you know by now, that letterwriting isn't exactly my favorite pastime." Favorite or not, his letter is one of the high spots in the privately held Shewmaker Collection. Wahlberg continued:

> Besides, I'm kept pretty busy, seeing that the Chief does his daily literary contribution to a world, eagerly awaiting his expert (?) comments on current and past events. You know, of course, that he is the instigator of the "In the News" column, that appears in the *S. F. Examiner* and other Hearst papers. He is not only the instigator, but he actually writes it, at the loss of some much needed sleep to everybody concerned, and that sad situation is usually accompanied by some very grouchy and unappreciative grimaces, when yours truly has to wake the

now famous columnist in the morning, in order to see, that he doesn't play hookey from his job [as editor-in-chief of all the newspapers].

The red-eyed Hearst stuck with show business, a subject he knew well, in preparing his column for the Los Angeles and San Francisco papers of March 7; his innate fearlessness, being almost a frontier trait, showed in what he wrote then, somewhat unconsciously perhaps:

One of the most successful methods of publicity, as well as productivity, is to "say nothing and saw wood."

The beautiful and talented Greta Garbo is an adept at this kind of promotion. The oftener she appears behind dark glasses, the more the public wants to see her,—the less she is willing to say to reporters, the more the public wants to hear her.

Recently, however, Greta was travelling in Italy and really wanted "to be alone." She cabled a friend—another moving picture star—who had had experience in such matters and said:

"What shall I do to be free from these kindly but persistent newspaper men who are following me and asking me questions morning, noon and night?"

The friend cabled back laconically and said:

"Answer their questions."

So the gracious Greta assembled the newspaper men at a luncheon, told them everything they wanted to know, and thereafter continued her trip in the midst of a quiet so profound, a silence so intense, that it was almost audible.

Mr. Roosevelt, one of the cleverest publicity prestidigitators that this country has ever seen, knows perfectly well how to excite curiosity and also how to allay it.

In the matter of the third term he has adopted the Garbo publicity technique. . . .

If he takes refuge in dark corners, it is because that is the surest way of attracting the limelight.

If, and when, he wants the third term agitation to STOP, he will assemble the representatives of the press and "answer their questions."

> But if he does not do that we may be certain that he wants to run again for President, and has every intention of running and will positively accept the nomination which will be handed him by acclamation at the Democratic Convention.

Who but Hearst could speak so brashly of his friends and acquaintances? There are instances where he went further overboard than in this example concerning Greta Garbo, who couldn't have been pleased. Hearst was quickly forming a plan, though; and part of it was to call in old bets backed by the largesse he and Marion had bestowed on such people through San Simeon and at the Beach House.

Let's pause briefly for a Santa Monica-Beverly Hills item, under the date of March 7, 1940. Hunter in Los Angeles to Willicombe at San Simeon:

> [Bill] Newton [of the Beach House staff] phones that the tapestry formerly at the studio [the Cosmopolitan Bungalow] is 10 feet four inches by fourteen feet.

Willicombe asked Hunter for clarification. "Fourteen feet high or long?" The latter, said Hunter. "It is locked up at [the] Beach House," he added. The tapestry, being personally rather than corporately owned by Hearst, was available for him to use elsewhere. Thus when Hunter asked if he should send it up, the answer was yes. It's been at San Simeon in Casa Grande pretty much ever since (in the Della Robbia Room on the second floor).

If the Bungalow could have had a tapestry, why not the Beach House? Except for rustic, ruggedly Germanic Wyntoon, Hearst's other kingly surroundings were enriched with tapestries, weren't they, that most royal of art forms? Indeed they were: San Simeon, St. Donat's Castle, the Clarendon in Manhattan, the Ritz Tower in the same city, Mrs. Hearst's place at Sands Point, Long Island. Tapestries galore in these settings, if they were all added up. A mere two of them at Santa Monica, though, each of them small. It's yet another of those points

that gives pause, and elicits not a little wonder. The Beach House surely had wall coverings. The place was a virtual museum of wall*paper*, room upon room of it, very much in keeping with the eighteenth-century colonial theme.

Moses Annenberg, publisher of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*—without whose granddaughter Wallis Annenberg there would be no Annenberg Community Beach House in Santa Monica today, an entity that's much the inspiration behind this book—wired Hearst personally on Sunday, March 10:

> Dear Mr. Hearst: I want to be amongst the first to congratulate you on your column, "In the News" appearing in your newspapers. I earnestly hope the American public will learn to appreciate your very able and very timely opinions of our present troublesome world affairs. Please keep it up and may your newspapers continue, as in the past, to be a force for the best interests of our American people.

Hearst got right back to Hollywood themes with his column filed for Monday, March 11:

> The Westmore Brothers, maker-uppers in ordinary to the kings and queens of Hollywood, are modest and retiring folk. Yet most of Hollywood's distinguished over-actors and actresses owe the bases of their reputation largely to these knights of the kohl pot and the cosmetic pencil.
>
> In former times accomplished actors applied their own make-up and considered make-up an important part of their qualifications as portrayers of character.
>
> Lon Chaney, who leapt to fame as the pretended cripple in *The Miracle Man* [1919], and who originated the grotesque and gruesome make-up of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* [1923], went to such extremes in facial and physical distortion that he made himself lame and almost blind and invited an early death. . . .
>
> Indeed a good make-up is a fundamental in character acting and requires thought, imagination, taste, and knowledge.

> With those supplied most of the Hollywood actors are able to nibble at the scenery with some effect and creditably perform their parts.
>
> So much for the actors; and of course it is no trick at all to make the Hollywood lovelies look lovely. Nature has attended to that.
>
> But sometimes it is a notable achievement to make them look anything else.

A Hearst insider who, along with Charlie Lederer, Marion's beloved nephew, would soon be going too far (for her sake and Hearst's well being, that is) to help Orson Welles with *Citizen Kane* was Ashton Stevens, the man behind Joseph Cotten's role of Jed Leland. Hearst and Stevens had known each other for a good fifty years or more, since their upstart days on the *San Francisco Examiner*; Hearst wrote about his friend in his "In the News" column for March 14:

> Mr. Ashton Stevens, brilliant columnist of the *Chicago Herald-American*, lately related in his column an amusing anecdote of his happy relation with his own dear father and asked readers of his column to contribute recollections of sympathetic association similar to his.
>
> The editor-in-chief of Mr. Stevens' paper begs to submit the following:
>
> Dear Ashton:
>
> When I was a youngster of collegiate age I was sent to Harvard.
>
> I do not know that I got much advantage out of my attendance there, but I have no doubt that the college benefitted considerably by the contact, as I understand it has been doing very well ever since.
>
> At that time my father was the only person in the world who in my modest opinion knew more than I did. Although I have learned since, to my consternation, that quite a number of other people in this surprising world are gifted with thought reservoirs of a more spectacular order than my own.
>
> My father liked a good cigar, so I believed that I did, and I asked him if Mr. Moses Gunst, who was a friend of my father's, and whose shop [in San Francisco] supplied the cigars, could send me a box monthly with which to regale myself and my friends at college. . . .

All went well until my father got the bill. Then when he recovered his breath he saw Mr. Gunst and said:

"Moses, that youngster does not know a good cigar from a piece of hay rope.

"Cut down on the cost—gradually you know, so he will not notice." . . .

So I wrote a letter to Mr. Gunst to the general effect that something must have happened to the tobacco crop in Cuba, as I noticed that the cigars he was sending me were getting to be as poor as my standing with the college faculty.

Mr. Gunst showed the letter; and my father said:

"Well, if the boy really knows the difference you had better send him the good ones. Cut down on mine."

And my father might have been reduced to smoking stogies like another later idol of mine, Calvin Coolidge, if a fellow who had been suspended from Oxford had not come over to Harvard and made pipes popular.

I have always, however, felt the bitter pang of remorse in after years about the several weeks that my father smoked cigars with only one Corona to their name.

Hearst heard from Stevens the next day:

Delighted with first columnist's first letter in today's "In the News" not only because it is addressed to his grateful old friend but because it shows several million readers that our editor in chief can outwrite his whole staff humorously as well as seriously. I hope you are as happy today as you have made me.

Hearst was keeping his eye on Presidential candidates and hopefuls in both parties. They, in turn, were keeping a finger to his pulsebeat as much as possible. Wendell Willkie to Hearst on Saturday, March 16, sent from San Francisco:

I would like very much to have a chat with you. I am in California hoping to arouse some interest in the very serious situation confronting all of us. My plans take me to Los Angeles tonight to fill engagements

> there Sunday and Monday. It would give me great pleasure to call upon you any time after that. I shall be at the St. Francis Hotel [San Francisco] until this evening and at the Ambassador [Hotel] in Los Angeles.

Hearst told Willkie in reply later that day, wiring him at the St. Francis:

> I shall be very delighted to see you. Am at San Simeon and will welcome you there any time if you can find it convenient to come.

Since Hearst was still leasing the Beach House and therefore regarded it as his and Marion's, not just hers, he kept in periodic touch with the attorney Geoff Konta in New York, as this example from March 19 shows; some firm language was called for:

> While you were still engaged in supervising antique arrangements you negotiated exchanges which offset Schedule A items against me [and the W. R. Hearst Personal Account].
>
> These included Beach House material, but also embraced other exchanges.
>
> Now entirely different proposals are made.
>
> Will you kindly see that your original agreements are carried out and greatly oblige [send confirming messages to Hearst, as needed].

Schedule A pertained to American Newspapers Inc. or some other non-personal, corporate entity that owned a certain portion of Hearst's art objects and furnishings. Such tax-wary designations had been on the books since at least 1937.

HAVING GOT HIS FEET WET and with his sea legs fully under him in 1940 with "In the News," Hearst could begin to get more serious in his efforts—and not infrequently more sardonic and at times cynical. He was absolutely fearless about prospects of slander or libel; no one that he might see fit to single out or, frankly, attack was immune or exempt—not Churchill, not President Roosevelt, surely not some

hoodlum or gangster like Willie Bioff, no one. On March 22 he went after James H. R. Cromwell, the playboy husband of Doris Duke, a woman who along with her "Jimmy" had orbited occasionally around Hearst and Marion; it seems somewhat doubtful, though, if they would do so any more after Hearst had his caustic say (but see Appendix V and its reference of March 1951 to Miss Duke):

> The honorable James H. R. Cromwell was lately appointed Minister to Canada by President Roosevelt.
>
> The honorable James H. R., familiarly known as Jimmy, is a very amiable and agreeable young man AND the proud possessor of circulating medium to the value of much mazuma.
>
> When Jimmy was appointed to Canada he promptly went, saw, and was conquered.
>
> He found the Canadians royally good fellows. He liked them. He fraternized with them. And then, by golly, he was going to get us into their war overseas even if he had to fight it himself. . . .
>
> The immediate thing to consider is that Jimmy, and folks like him, have always had their own way and may be going to try to have it now.
>
> Anyway, Jimmy's remarks have created a political sensation. . . .
>
> Mr. Cromwell's remarks do not in essence differ materially from the opinions expressed by Mr. Roosevelt on his visit to Canada in 1938, and from Mr. Roosevelt's precept and example as President.

Often assumed to be anti-British because his Americanism could be so fanatical, Hearst addressed the matter toward the end of his finger-pointing at Cromwell and Roosevelt; this from the same column of March 22:

> The writer of this column is not prejudiced against England—but is in fact very attached to that country and favorably disposed to the Anglo-Saxon races.
>
> Indeed, he obtained his honorary LL.D. degree [at Ogelthorpe University in Atlanta in 1927] by a thesis advocating "Cooperation for Peace Among English-speaking Peoples." . . .

> Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Cromwell, as representatives of the American people, "the vast majority of whom believe in neutrality," can, we hope, express the affection and admiration which the people of America entertain for their good friends in Canada, without involving the United States in the complications and conflicts of Europe.

As wise and farsighted yet also as bitter as Hearst could be, he retained an uproarious sense of mirth and humor; such traits would have to have been well-developed for him to keep in step with his darling Marion; here, an excerpt from his "In the News" column for March 26:

> The Associated Press announces on the authority of an Egyptian diplomat that the high cost of polygamy in Egypt has abolished the historic harem. . . .
>
> And furthermore, freedom of marriage and divorce is so great in Egypt that multiple marriage would not seem to be in the least appealing.
>
> Your columnist was voyaging upon the Nile at one time and the Dahaseeyah tied up along the bank for the night beside a small mud village.
>
> From one of the outlying huts near the river came a tremendous racket.
>
> An Egyptian gentleman was shouting at the top of his voice and a lady was weeping softly.
>
> "What is going on?" was asked of our dragoman.
>
> "Oh, the man he divorce his wife" was the reply.
>
> "Do they hold court in those little shacks?" was the next question.
>
> "They no hold court," said the dragoman. "The man he tell his wife what he think of her and when he get through they divorced."
>
> Simple and effective, but under such easy circumstances why bother with polygamy or bigamy?
>
> Monogamy would seem to be liberal enough to suit even Professor Bertrand Russell.
>
> Did you ever hear the story of the young boy at the question-asking age who said to his father:

"Pa, what is having a lot of wives called?"

"Oh," answered Pa, "that's polygamy—from the Greek poly, you know—anyhow that's polygamy."

"And what is having two wives, Pa?" asked the boy.

"That," said Pa, "is bigamy—from the Latin bi or something—that's bigamy."

"And what is having one wife, Pa?" continued the boy. "That," said Pa, "that's MONOTONY,—I mean MONOGAMY. Doggone it, why do you ask so many questions?"

On March 26, Hearst received further word through Willicombe from Wendell Willkie in San Francisco:

> Tried to make arrangement about a private plane to fly to San Simeon but Mrs. Willkie became disturbed about weather. Very sorry business requires me to be in NY hence am leaving in about an hour. Please present my regrets to Mr. Hearst & tell him I expect to be back in few weeks at which time I hope he will give me the great pleasure of paying my respects to him as I think he [is] doing a magnificent job in maintaining those principles that are indispensable for the preservation of our liberties.

It was Willkie's potential loss, not Hearst's

The world of show business and entertainment media of all kinds remained central to Hearst, radio included. On March 28 he heard from Louella Parsons, who wired from Hollywood:

> Dear Mr. Hearst: Kate Smith wants me as her guest on broadcast in New York April 15. All my expenses are paid and I would fly each way. I'd like very much to do it since she has a listening public of seventeen million and I would mention the column in all the Hearst papers. May I have your permission for one broadcast with her? I would only be gone long enough to fly there and back. Could you let me know immediately to 619 N. Maple [Drive] Beverly Hills since they want to announce it?

A BRIEF BUT VERY KEY MESSAGE from Willicombe to Mac McClure is dated April 4, 1940:

> Chief would like you do detailed drawings and supervise Beverly Hills house [1700 Lexington Road] as per your letter. Assume this will be on present salary basis. Kindly wire confirmation.

The book *Building for Hearst and Morgan* theorizes that Julia Morgan may have had a bearing on this remodeling job in 1940. That idea no longer seems likely—not in the wake of further work by its author (yours truly) in the Morgan-Forney Collection. If Morgan had been active in any kind of Hearst or Davies work in 1940, her records would reflect it. But they don't; and that's not excepting the occasional "umbrella" situations, where a smaller job would be entered underneath a larger one, witness Morgan's otherwise untraceable work in 1929 on the Douras Mausoleum in Hollywood. The logical thing in 1940 would have been for her to designate the small Beverly Hills effort (had she made it) as the "1940 Scheme," taking up where she'd left off with the "1929 scheme," the one that marked Mac McClure's first efforts on a Hearst-Morgan job (or really on a Hearst-Davies-Morgan job). No such thing happened in 1940, though.

Nor was Frank Hellenthal involved. He overbid the job, causing Hearst and Marion to seek George Loorz instead; they did so from San Simeon. So it was McClure-Loorz at 1700 Lexington Road in the first part of 1940, not Morgan-Hellenthal. Excerpts from a letter that Loorz sent Pete Petersen, a carpenter who'd stayed active at Wyntoon even during the much slower pace of work in recent years, is sufficient to fill us in on several details at this juncture; this item dates from March 16 of 1940:

> I am figuring [bidding on] a job for Mr. Hearst in Los Angeles. If I get it I would like to have you run it for me [as foreman or construction superintendent]. I would give you Otto [Olson] and other good men you might want. . . .

> Suppose you heard that the Bridge at Wyntoon washed out [in a heavy storm]. Logs got in front of the bridge and the whole flat [the Bavarian Village] was covered with two foot of water. A good deal of damage was done but mostly mud.
>
> Mac went up to look things over. He said he didn't think Mr. Hearst could afford to go to Wyntoon this year. That sounds funny.

But Hearst couldn't afford to stay put at San Simeon, either. The place was the most expensive of his properties to operate. He and Marion would remain on the hilltop until Wyntoon got cleaned up and dried out; they'd be heading there by mid-summer and would spend the rest of 1940 in those sylvan surroundings. In the meantime, they would see to some minor work in Beverly Hills, where Mac had been eleven years before. Next to Miss Morgan, Mac racked up the longest stretch for any draftsman, designer, or architect in the Hearst service.

In the meantime as well, Hearst stayed busy at San Simeon with the daily grind of being editor-in-chief of the seventeen Hearst newspapers, a group stabilized at that number since 1939 and a group that would remain intact until after he died in 1951. He'd had that level of editorial work to do all along even before he began "In the News" in February.

The world of film remained its usual priority for him; Willicombe to the *Los Angeles Examiner* on April 6, 1940:

> The cinema page of yesterday prompted the general instruction to editors to get attractive pictures on cinema page, and not box office junk. Thought you ought to know.

Hearst's columnists were quick to praise him for "In the News." In late March, Adela Rogers St. Johns had applauded his new efforts when she said, "Please let me tell you what I felt when I knew you had licked us all as usual." Now it was time for Louella Parsons to do some heartfelt brown-nosing, this on April 17:

> Thank you for this morning's column. It gave me best analysis of European situation I've had. Wish you would write more on this subject for those of us who find it difficult [to] get true picture from contradictory reports. Doctor [Harry Martin, Louella's husband] joins me in appreciation of the *Examiner's* best column.

With encouragement like that, Hearst indeed began to go deeper and longer with his new forum, his often riveting new mouthpiece. As of April 1940 he still had more than two years to go with it, virtually day in, day out.

HEARST'S BIRTHDAY IN 1940 (he'd be seventy-seven on Monday, April 29) would be held at San Simeon for the first time since 1934. The celebration was not part of Ouida Rathbone's spread in *Esquire* in 1972; in fact, the party has barely been mentioned anywhere. The first indication that fun and festiveness were underfoot came on Saturday, April 20, a week before the event, when Bill Hunter wired Joe Willicombe from Los Angeles:

> Miss [Ella] Williams says a 60-foot tent will cost $54.50 for one week, provided you transport it up and back. If the owners transport it, it will cost $240 for one week.
>
> In addition one man to supervise putting up the tent will cost $7.50 a day and expenses up and back. They figure he will only have to be there one day. It will not be necessary to have him supervise taking the tent down.

With the party less than a week ahead, Willicombe answered Hunter the next day, Sunday the 21st:

> Chief says OK for sixty foot tent costing $54.50 for one day's use. We will send truck for it. Can we get it Thursday [the 25th], so that we can put it up Friday, for Saturday's festivities, and get it back to them by Monday at this price?
>
> Also OK for man at $7.50 a day to erect tent.

Hunter gave Willicombe further details on the party plans as the big day approached; this on Monday, April 22:

> It will be O.K. to pick the tent up Thursday morning at Downie Bros., 640 South San Pedro St. The man to supervise erecting it will ride up with the truck.
>
> There is no rush about getting the tent back. You get it a week at that price, so if it is back by Wednesday evening [May 1] that will be O.K.

Downie Bros. was a circus company based in downtown Los Angeles. Bill Wootten, the loyal old telegrapher for INS in Los Angeles also got in on the act; he wired Willicombe on Wednesday, April 24:

> Miss Williams foned in following message for you: "Do you want me to report to you list of people coming, how and when? Also Mrs. [Lorraine] Walsh and Mrs. [Carmen] Considine are sending their bags by train tonight. Will you please have them picked up."

Wootten said in addition the same day, in a later message:

> Miss Williams fones:
>
> "Spanish orchestra 8 men and girl entertainer, singers and dancers, will cost $235.50. Will play all night if necessary for same amount. Eliminating the girl would save $30."

Willicombe had also been working the phones and the teleprinter, having told Young's Market in Los Angeles on Tuesday the 23rd to "ship Mr. Hearst here tomorrow Wednesday six cases of Johnnie Walker Black Label [Scotch whiskey]." And to Clarence Lindner of the *San Francisco Examiner,* Willicombe had said:

> Okey car will meet four of you Friday afternoon San Luis Obispo.
>
> You should know that it will be western costume party, cowboy stuff, boots, overalls, etc.

Not quite as glamorous an affair as in the past, when many of the guests would have flown in. But a rip-roarin' San Simeon party just the same. The amazing thing is that so little trace of the event seems to

exist nowadays. The birthday party of April 1940? Nope, never heard of it till now, many readers will be saying. In truth, what has happened in part is that the event's been misdated—moved back by a year, to 1939. However, Hearst and Marion and their usual entourage were in Washington, D.C. in 1939 on the weekend of April 29–30 (at the home of Cissy Patterson), after which they returned to San Simeon. No birthday party for Hearst was held anywhere in California that spring.

And thus on Thursday, April 25, 1940, Bill Hunter had the latest news for Willicombe:

> Following are arriving times of people for whom I made reservations:
>
> Morning *Daylight* Friday, Carl Hosier and Nick Condos, waiters.
>
> Noon *Daylight* Friday, Princess Pignatelli and two daughters.
>
> Morning *Daylight* Saturday, H. E. Stutz and Benny Young, waiters.
>
> Noon *Daylight* Saturday, Louella Parsons.

Friday, April 26, was the day before the celebration. Hunter to Willicombe:

> The ice cream molds will leave here on the seven o'clock train tonight, arriving San Louis [Luis] Obispo at 12:51 a.m.
>
> Ten minutes before using is time enough to take them out of the dry ice. The Arden people said: "They are very small and will soften rapidly."

Another of Hunter's messages to the Colonel went like so on the 26th:

> Louella Parsons is not coming on the train tomorrow, but is motoring up.
>
> 2. Orchestra of nine people will be on noon *Daylight* Saturday.
>
> 3. Truck with back drops, bar, etc., left at 1:30 p.m.

Sometime during the weekend, probably on Sunday the 28th, Harry Crocker filed a message with the home office at the *Los Angeles Examiner:*

> Tell [Ray] Van Ettisch party story okay but please change "dancing to two orchestras" to "dancing to marvelous Spanish orchestra." Returning Tuesday.

Overlooked event or not, Hearst and Marion and their friends still knew how to have a good time in 1940, even on a tighter budget.

HEARST KEPT AFTER the *L.A. Examiner* constantly—lest it be as lackluster and often dismissible as the *Los Angeles Times.* He told Warden Woolard on Monday, May 6:

> We must get more vital Hollywood stuff for *American Weekly*. Please ask proposals every week from best members of staff for such pages. Avoid press agent stuff, also run of news ideas as latter exhausted in daily issues. Would welcome vivid pictures too.

The American Weekly was a Sunday supplement in the Hearst papers and in many non-Hearst papers as well, akin by 1940 standards to the Sunday insertion of *Parade* magazine that we're all familiar with today. Hearst had wired Abe Merritt, editor of the *Weekly*, that same day, May 6:

> Hollywood article [for] this Sunday [May 5] merely press agent plug for Dorothy Lamour. Will you kindly consult me about Hollywood and western material? Am sure I can help you get better. In fact have done so.

On Monday, May 13, Hunter told Willicombe who the latest distinguished guest at San Simeon would be:

> L[ouis] B. Mayer and two others will be on the morning *Daylight* Wednesday, arriving San Luis Obispo at noon.
>
> Mr. Mayer asks that you have a car meet them. They will be leaving again Wednesday night on the 1 o'clock [Thursday a.m. train].

The Los Angeles office wired Willicombe on Tuesday, May 14, updating the news regarding Louis B. Mayer:

> Original telegram signed H. O. Hunter dated May 13 was killed because Mr. Mayer and two others decided to come to ranch on Wednesday instead of today, Tuesday. Telegram you received was dictated over telephone to Mr. Wootten by Miss [Ella] Williams. I telephoned Miss Williams and she advised that Mr. Mayer will return to Los Angeles tomorrow, Wednesday, night at about 1 o'clock [a.m.], and that she was advised by Miss [Ida] Koverman that they have their reservations.

A recent "In the News" column of Hearst's about Shirley Temple prompted a lengthy follow-up by him on May 21 about Miss Temple; Louella Parsons, David O. Selznick, and Greta Garbo, among others, were also mentioned. The one part that will soon concerns us is this:

> Take Mr. David [O.] Selznick, for example.
>
> Does anyone doubt that he is responsible for the supreme success of *Gone with the Wind?*
>
> He bought the story for fifty thousand dollars, although other producers told him that they had rejected it at thirty-five thousand, and although it was claimed that no Civil War picture had been a success except Mr. [D. W.] Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*.
>
> He carefully selected the cast.
>
> He insisted upon making the story as it was it was written, and not as this or that director thought it ought to have been written.
>
> He dismissed one director after another who wanted to make *Sunk in the Sea* or *Lost in the Snow* or until he found one who was willing to make *Gone with the Wind*.
>
> Then Mr. Selznick produced the picture and scored the outstanding success of the moving picture business.
>
> The other day Mr. Louis B. Mayer, the amazingly able manager of Metro Goldwyn Mayer, visited your columnist at San Simeon.

Bill Hunter had exciting news for Willicombe on a closely related note on Friday, May 24 (Mayer being Selznick's father-in-law):

> Miss Williams asked me to tell you—
>
> Louis Mayer told the Chief when he was at the ranch that he could get *Gone with the Wind* and *Rebecca* for showing up there. Miss

> Williams contacted Mr. Mayer and it required a phone call by him to New York asking for a release and a phone call from New York to him with the O.K. She thought the Chief should know the trouble Mr. Mayer went to [to] get the pictures.

The world premiere of *Gone with the Wind* had been in Atlanta, Georgia, on December 15, 1939, followed by premieres in New York on December 19 and in Los Angeles on December 28. The film had gone into general release in the U.S. on January 17, 1940.

Alas, the showing at San Simeon of *Gone with the Wind* was somewhat less than perfect on the technical side. Hunter to Willicombe on Tuesday, May 28, right after what was evidently a big weekend event:

> Selznick Studio phoned that they bought a set of new reels to protect the print of *Gone with the Wind,* but when the picture was returned from the ranch there were six old reels returned instead of all the new ones. They ask to have the six new reels returned and they will send the old reels back to you.

Willicombe did as asked, but there was still a hitch, as Hunter indicated on May 29:

> Selznick Studio advises only five of the new reels for *Gone with the Wind* were returned. There is still one new reel missing.

About all Willicombe could do was tell Hunter what the projectionist had said when confronted:

> Operator here insists there were only five of Selznick Studio's reels held here and they have been returned.

So much for that. We now know the film was seen at San Simeon. That's all that counts today, some seventy years after the fact and following nearly as many years of rumor, myth, and uncertainty about *Gone with the Wind* on Hearst's Enchanted Hill. The very thought of the Confederate soldier's screams of "Don't cut! Don't cuh-ut!"

reverberating through San Simeon's plush private theater—what an image that we've long been kept from visualizing with any certainty.

On the last day of May 1940, Hearst received word from Larry Mitchell, one of his and Marion's attorneys in Los Angeles (the man mentioned in an earlier chapter who was romantically linked to Ethel Davies):

> Meetings Hearst Consolidated [Publications] and Hearst Publications scheduled for June fifth at Chicago have been postponed to Wednesday, June twelfth, at Drake Hotel, Chicago, at three and four o'clock p.m. respectively. New waivers being sent you today.

The Hearst party's trip east had been planned for some time. Yet as Alice Head once commented, people had to be ready for all manner of last-minute changes with Hearst, a rule of thumb in his businesses as well as in his pursuit of pleasure. The entourage was now slated to arrive in Chicago on June 11 instead.

That detail and others about his itinerary aside, Hearst's short trip east marks the last time he ever went out of state. Two significant exceptions: his sojourns in Mexico early in 1941 and late in 1942; also, he and Marion went to Las Vegas, Nevada, right after World War II, a virtual day trip by airplane that's barely detectable on the radar. Otherwise, they never left California again after going to Chicago in June 1940, a trip that may have included a quick jaunt to New York while they were at it.

ON RETURNING FROM THE EAST in June, the party went back to San Simeon. Wyntoon had some drying out to do still before the winter floods would recede in people's memories. The hilltop could get blazing hot in June and July, so the best bet would have been to use the Beach House, with its dependably cool climate and its afternoon sea breezes. But never again, as we'll be seeing, would Hearst and Marion stay there

lengthily. A day or two or a few days now and then: that would be the extent of their Beach House intervals after the decision made the year before to "mothball" the place, as noted in Chapter 7 that John Dunlap said in his life of Hearst—a relative though not absolute shutting down of the Santa Monica property, as likewise noted.

Wendell Willkie had won the Republican nomination by late June, causing the ranks to get busy. Charlie Ryckman had an editorial ready for Hearst's approval on June 28:

> The nomination of Wendell Willkie as a Presidential candidate by the Republican Party came from the very grass roots of this free country. . . .
>
> Mr. Willkie was not the choice of the politicians, and in fact the politicians opposed him as long as they could and dared.
>
> Mr. Willkie was not even the first choice of the delegates.
>
> But he was the overwhelming choice of THE PEOPLE, and the ground swell of public approval of Mr. Willkie had been rumbling from end to end of the country, and finally broke over the convention like a tidal wave. . . .
>
> Wendell Willkie was not a nationally known figure until quite recently, and in fact was not even a Republican until recently.
>
> But somehow, millions of people suddenly and almost spontaneously became intensely interested in him, and realized he represented something very necessary and valuable to the country.
>
> They liked everything about the man, his looks, manner, voice and the friendly and determined cut of his jaw.
>
> But particularly they liked his solid, matter-of-fact, mind-your-own-business AMERICANISM.

It's quite wrong to say, as most who've sketchily written about these later years in Hearst's life have done, that the 1940 election garnered little enthusiasm or support in the Hearst ranks. True, Hearst preferred Thomas Dewey. That said, however, once Willkie got the nomination, Hearst chimed in; and thus it behooves us to see how he played the Willkie card right up until the election in November.

Not to forget for a minute about Los Angeles, Hollywood, Southern California, and the film industry, Hearst fielded a rich brew on July 1 from Jose Rodriguez, his top editorial writer at what in many ways was the foremost Hearst paper anywhere in the chain, the *Los Angeles Examiner:*

> A theater manager of Ontario[,] California, has been acquitted of showing an indecent motion picture, the subject of which was delivery of a child. The jury's decision was proper inasmuch as the charges were based on a statutory definition of misdemeanor, but if he had been tried on charges of showing bad judgment, he might well have been convicted.
>
> There is great value in such pictures when shown to selected audiences at the proper time and place. Hospitals and physicians show them to prospective mothers, to nurses and students. They are screened in private projection rooms not open to the public, and the reason for showing them is purely educational.
>
> But to show the same film in a theater which anyone may enter on the payment of ticket price, in a theater which is patently a place of entertainment, and where the purpose of showing the film is decidedly not instructive, is to demonstrate bad taste and worse judgment. . . .
>
> Physicians know this very well, and never allow spectators in operating rooms or laboratories unless there is a good scientific reason for it. The theater manager in question should follow this procedure and thus avoid a loss of time, of money and of business good will.

With the Republican Convention now over, Hearst began to formulate a platform of his own, which he laid out for Cobbie (E. D. Coblentz) in New York; the date was still Monday, July 1:

> I propose to run an independent editorial page during this campaign.
>
> We may incline to Willkie but we will not be partisan.
>
> The Third Ticket, if it occurs, will be an important factor in the campaign.
>
> It should draw from Roosevelt and probably help Willkie to that extent, but it will merit attention on its own importance.

> [Sen. Burton] Wheeler is too radical, but he is consistently and soundly radical, and much less dangerous than Roosevelt.
>
> I think we should give him adequate attention. . . .
>
> That perhaps would be more proportionate to the Third Party importance at this moment.

A third-party, dark-horse prospect in Hearst's mind on the Democratic side was Joe Kennedy, ambassador since 1938 to the Court of St. James's, whom he paused to speak in behalf of on July 2; this to Alice Head in London:

> If St. Donat's [Castle] not being used by government maybe Ambassador Kennedy would like to occupy it. I would be happy to have him do so.

Despite Hearst's absence from Hollywood and his and Marion's lack of presence in recent months, even in recent years, at the Beach House in Santa Monica, the entertainment community hadn't forgotten about them. On July 6, a wire from a man named W. Jefferson Davis reached him at San Simeon:

> Academy of Public Affairs Hollywood including Rupert Hughes, Irvin Cobb and leading professional men desire bestow its Award of Merit on you for being first newspaper publisher in America to realize and stress importance aviation as element of national defense. Annual meeting Tuesday July ninth seven p.m. Hollywood Athletic Club. Attendance over three hundred expected. Can you be present for this award?

Hollywood reached out again through Y. Frank Freeman, the head of Paramount Pictures, with this wire to Hearst at San Simeon on July 9:

> Paramount has been anxious for you to see *The Great McGinty* prior to its release because it is probably the most daring and at the same time amusing political satire the movies have yet turned out. Due to the unusual and even unorthodox handling by Preston Sturges, who wrote the screen play as well as directing it, the picture combines entertainment with satire in a manner which is unique. We have

> therefore arranged for a print to be sent to you to be shown at your convenience, and sincerely hope you will be amused by it. Cordially.

Wyntoon was finally ready for re-occupancy by July 11; and thus Willicombe's message to all the Hearst dailies around the country:

> Please send papers to Mr. Hearst at McCloud, Calif [Wyntoon], instead of to Los Angeles [for forwarding to San Simeon]. Do not send any more papers to Los Angeles. Send them to McCloud.

And send them they did.

PETE PETERSEN, who once lived across the street from the Loorz family in San Simeon village and who had followed the course of Hearst-Davies movements in recent years to Wyntoon, had sprung loose from there long enough to do what George Loorz had requested—namely, to run the so-called Marion Davies job in Beverly Hills. On July 2, 1940, Loorz wrote to Pete at 1700 Lexington Road:

> Sorry not to have come down before this [from Pacific Grove] but I see no reason to be there [in person].
>
> Now that we have the approved detail of the mantel you can go ahead with that and keep ahead of the painters as much as possible. I hope everything else is in order. Hope the painters aren't stalling too much.
>
> As per my wire Miss Davies O.K.'d the extra painting on the exterior walls and Patio Walls. Also the bleaching of the hallway, which I think was a mistake.
>
> She will not go ahead with the kitchen alteration or the stairway from #3 [room] to #4 [room] etc. May get some more work in the garden but not at this time. I think she will go ahead with the signal [security] system at the other house [910 Benedict Cañon Drive, around the corner] but not at 1700 [Lexington]. . . .
>
> As I said by phone, remove and carefully crate the fine mantel and have it stored at the Beach House. Order your materials and construct the new mantel as soon as possible. Tell the painter to go ahead with the

> painting of the Patio and exterior garden walls clear around. Try to do it with the one-coat job if possible.

Loorz was glad to have had the Hearst-Davies job when it came up. "We haven't much work right now," he told some relatives in San Francisco, "just finishing up about five jobs." He also told them, "We have been rushed like the devil, could hardly get men."

No sooner had Hearst and Marion dug in at Wyntoon then alarming news reached them from Beverly Hills—from 910 Benedict Cañon Drive—a hop, skip, and a jump from 1700 Lexington Road, which was still being worked on by Mac McClure and Pete Petersen. On Thursday, July 18, Ethel Davies supposedly choked to death during a meal, a piece of steak being the culprit. So said Fred Lawrence Guiles in his biography of Marion. The *Los Angeles Times* gave a very different account the next morning under "Marion Davies' Sister Found Dead; Friend Discovers Body in Bedroom":

> Apparently the victim of a cerebral hemorrhage, Miss Ethel Davies, 35 [46 as of March 21, 1940], sister of Marion Davies, film actress, last night was found dead in the bedroom of her home at 910 N. Benedict Canyon Road.
>
> Miss Davies [Ethel Davies], who had been visited by several guests, including members of the film colony, had been ill for a month. She had dinner in her bedroom. Later her body was found by her companion, Miss Kay English, lying on the floor.
>
> Beverly Hills police and a pulmotor [respiratory] squad tried for 45 minutes to revive Miss Davies. . . . Rose Davies, another sister, was in the house at the time.

Hearst and Marion flew to Los Angeles; they soon returned to Wyntoon. As for San Simeon in 1940, they wouldn't be back there again during the current year, with one minor exception. Nor would they be back in Santa Monica, in whose case there'd be no exceptions whatsoever.

On August 4, Jose Rodriguez at the *Examiner* had an editorial for Hearst's approval on Walter Wanger, the independent film producer. It got nixed; but Rodriguez's next submission, dated August 6, passed muster with the Chief. It, too, was on an aspect of the industry that Hearst kept watching like a hawk:

> That motion pictures be deliberately employed to further domestic and international political proposals has recently been suggested and recommended by some American producers of films.
>
> This, of course, is a euphemism. In plain language, the proposal means using the screen for propaganda.
>
> It means a miscalculation of the purposes and the strength of the motion picture. It means a radical departure from the sound principles that caused films to be a great art and a great industry.
>
> After all, the first purpose of films is entertainment.
>
> The second purpose, accuracy of information.
>
> The third purpose, education.
>
> There is no place for propaganda in the films. Propaganda not only offends the public, but weakens public respect for and confidence in the screen.
>
> Propaganda is neither entertainment, information nor education. . . .
>
> Why not stick to the policy which made moving pictures give entertainment and accurate information, uncolored and undistorted by propaganda?
>
> Let the makers of movies go back to first principles, to the relief and benefit of the screen itself, [of] the people who want good pictures and—as all intelligent producers should realize—of the producers themselves.

WITH BOTH POLITICAL CONVENTIONS out of the way, the Hearst forces began thumping for Wendell Willkie, their only hope against the unprecedented third term that FDR's probable re-election posed. Hearst would be playing the field as much as he still could, now that the candidates had been decided. He would also keep playing the field

in the film industry, as his message to Harry Cohn at Columbia Pictures on August 21 indicates:

> Dear Mr. Cohn: We greatly enjoyed *He Stayed for Breakfast*. Good comedies are the hardest things to make but they certainly are the most delightful things to see. Many thanks for your thoughtfulness and kindness in sending the picture.

The San Simeon hilltop sat mostly empty (except for its caretakers) throughout this period. Exceptions cropped up now and then. This next item should leave us wondering what the reaction would have been when Hearst's arrangements were carried out; they were made through Herbert Fleischhacker, whom Joe Willicombe wired in San Francisco on August 25:

> Mr. Hearst glad to have Dr. Alfred Frankfurter [of *Art News* magazine] see San Simeon on trip south, but kindly explain that place really closed in Chief's absence, and no domestic staff or any other provision for guests. Ask him inquire for superintendent Randolph Apperson at Ranch House foot of hill who will take care of him. Best regards.

What we *don't* see, in contrast, during this period is the occasional viewing of the Beach House by anyone, an ironic thing considering its accessibility. As the grandest of all Hearst's properties, San Simeon spoke majestically for itself; Santa Monica did not; the latter, having been built more for entertaining and less so as a showplace-museum, needed people in large numbers to animate it and give it context and meaning.

As an extension of a corporate meeting held at Wyntoon in the final days of August, Hearst and one of his top executives, Tom White, flew to San Simeon for a brief check-up on matters there; hence this message to White, who was coming into Oakland by train from Chicago. Willicombe did the honors on August 30:

> Chief will meet you when you arrive Oakland Pier at eight fifty-five Saturday morning [August 31] and take you by plane to San Simeon. Kindly acknowledge.

The Bancroft files are too patchy through this late-summer stretch to know what Hearst and White were up to; in any event, they weren't at San Simeon long; Hearst was soon back at Wyntoon.

He kept an eye on the Southland all the while, as in this example from a month later—Thursday, September 26; Willicombe to Ray Van Ettisch at the morning *Examiner* and Jack Campbell at the evening *Herald-Express,* Hearst's two papers in Los Angeles:

> Chief would like both the *Examiner* and the *Herald-Express* to give special prominence and publicity to the centenary celebration of the coming of the first bishop to California, beginning immediately (Sunday). Chief says:
>
> "Archbishop Cantwell has called our attention to this celebration, and I am anxious to give every evidence of our good feeling."

The election in November began to heat up for Hearst and his support network, aimed at the Republican standard-bearer, Wendell Willkie. Charlie Ryckman, who along with Jose Rodriguez formed the one-two punch on the West Coast for Hearst that E. F. Tompkins and Ben DeCasseres did on the East Coast, came forth with an editorial from San Francisco about Willkie; this was on October 3, a month before the public cast its votes:

> The American people should read Wendell Willkie's important speech in Cleveland on the subject of national defense, so far as it is humanly possible to do so, without consideration of its political elements.
>
> Mr. Willkie analyzed the present defensive situation of the United States as accurately and honestly as any statesman has so far attempted or dared to do.
>
> He recognized the imminence of war.
>
> But he also recognized our complete UNPREPAREDNESS for war.

> And that, good people of the United States, is something we should get very clear in our minds BEFORE we let ourselves get into war. . . .
>
> When THEODORE Roosevelt was President of the United States, he said in effect that a wise policy for this country was to speak softly and hold a big stick.
>
> Wendell Willkie, in his Cleveland speech, said the same thing in this fashion:
>
> "What the American people want above everything else is a defense system so strong that none of these nations (Germany, Italy, Japan) will dare to strike at us, for whatever motives."
>
> That is what Teddy Roosevelt called the BIG STICK.

E. F. Tompkins sent an editorial from New York on October 3 that recalled the brass-knuckles contests that Hearst himself had taken part in thirty and forty years before:

> Of course, it is unfortunate for everybody—and most unfortunate for the third-term party—that ROWDYISM has made its appearance in the Presidential campaign.
>
> We refer to those incidents in which a woman RFC [Reconstruction Finance Corporation] employe[e] tossed heavy articles at a Willkie crowd from an eighteenth-floor window, severely injuring another young woman; in which a newspaper correspondent was gashed when a stone was hurled through a window of a Willkie campaign train; in which objects were thrown at Wendell L. Willkie himself; and in which the wife of the Republican nominee for President had her clothes spattered with egg.

There can be no question that Hearst's support of Willkie had become far more than just a perfunctory thing, no matter what biographers have hastily said in the past. The sheer volume of complimentary and rah-rah material amounts to an endorsement by any standard, and not by means of auto-pilot either.

On October 9, Joe Willicombe received a long submission from Ray Van Ettisch of the *L.A. Examiner*:

> Following [Jose] Rodriguez editorial on film extras, for Los Angeles only, is for Chief's approval.
>
> Following a prolonged study of employment conditions in the film industry, studio heads have announced a plan of drastic changes in the hiring of extra players. The chief recommendation is that preference be given to extras who during the year have worked 11 days or more.
>
> This would eliminate the 4,564 extras who worked 10 days or less during 1939. It would also mean more work for those who worked 10 days or more.
>
> After establishing that in 1939 the average extra worked 28.89 days and earned $317.26, the producers concluded that "the continued employment of extras who worked less than ten days is unfortunate for both the producers and the extras." . . .
>
> Nevertheless, film studios need extras, both for the work they do, and as a reservoir of talent deserving promotion into higher ranks. This reservoir must be continually freshened to meet changing demands of public taste and the specialties of production. . . .
>
> Producers and guild alike may not have found the ultimate solution. But it is time that unwarranted optimism or self-delusions of ability be protected from the folly of competing with experienced talent, and be turned toward more profitable, equally honorable and interesting work that has better rewards.

BILL HUNTER in Los Angeles had a message for Willicombe at Wyntoon on Thursday, October 10, that bespoke a new trend among those in the Hearst-Davies circle—that of flying to Medford, Oregon, northwest of Wyntoon by a good 100 miles or more and then getting transportation to the isolated, ultra-private Hearst place from there:

> Sam Goldwyn phoned me that he is leaving by plane tomorrow, arriving Medford at 3:45 p.m. He asks that you have a car meet him.

Willicombe responded to Hunter later that same day, confirming the details:

Telephone Mr. Goldwyn that car will meet him and Mrs. Goldwyn when plane arrives 3:45 tomorrow (Friday) afternoon at Medford.

Another Hollywood matter, we can call it, came up on October 10 as well; Hunter to Willicombe once more:

Bill Hebert, of Paramount Studio, says he would like to have Susan Foster go up to Wyntoon and sing for the Chief some time. She would have to bring an accompanist and somebody from the publicity department

Either Hebert or some girl with her. She is fifteen years old.

Please advise.

Hebert has arranged to let the Chief have her latest picture, *There's Magic in Music*, for Sunday night [the 13th]. Allan Jones and Margaret Lindsay are in the cast.

Willicombe's reply to Hunter was much longer in the Foster situation:

Tell Mr. Hebert Chief appreciates his suggestion regarding Susanna Foster coming up to sing for him, and would be delighted to have her come, with her accompanist and someone from the publicity department—either Hebert or some girl—three in all.

Sometime the end of month is best—how about Halloween?

Also thank him for sending her latest picture for Sunday night.

Let me know if Halloween OK for Susanna.

Bill Hunter was back on the teleprinter the next day, October 15, telling Willicombe:

It is O.K. on Susanna Foster for Hallowe'en.

Her contract with the studio provides that when she travels she must be accompanied by a teacher; so there will be four in the party,—Susanna, an accompanist, a teacher and somebody from the publicity department.

Their tentative plans are to leave here on the *West Coast [Limited]* Tuesday night, October 29, arriving Dunsmuir the night of the 30[th].

Hearst's "In the News" column ran Monday through Friday, followed by a "Saturday Symposium" comprising letters to the editor. These were normally published full length, and for further authenticity they also bore the address the sender used—addresses ranging from San Simeon and Wyntoon to those of newspapers offices hither and yon. Buron Fitts, the District Attorney of Los Angeles County, knew that Hearst was at Wyntoon and addressed him accordingly on October 10, a letter that Hearst put in the Saturday Symposium of October 19:

> Like so many thousands of your readers, I am a great admirer of your "In The News" column.
>
> Aside from its other many appealing discussions, I particularly want to commend you for your clear, unalterable stand on the principles and doctrines of true Americanism. Many years ago [probably in 1935], you stated among other things:
>
> "The serious aspect of the Communistic agent in this country is not that he can accomplish the success of Communism; but that he may accomplish the destruction of democracy itself. The danger is that the despotism of Nazism is only too frequently raised up to combat the despotism of Communism. Then, liberty and democracy, crushed between the upper and the nether millstones is ground to dust and desolation."
>
> How true that prediction made by you years ago is today!
>
> Those of us who have been active in the American Legion and other veterans' organizations for the past twenty-two years [since 1918] have fought for an adequate national defense as you have done. . . .
>
> We all know that you will continue to fight, and you may rest assured, Mr. Hearst, that I will do likewise in my public capacity and as a private citizen and a war veteran.

Yet another editorial taking issue with the prospect of a third term came in from New York on October 19:

> One of the arguments advanced for a third term of President Roosevelt is that he is "experienced" and that Mr. Willkie "has no experience." . . .
>
> . . . Wendell L. Willkie has had years of tried and proven experience.

He has had many years of experience in the only thing that counts at present—EXPERIENCE IN BUSINESS.

The United States is a BUSINESS INSTITUTION.

It should be managed by BUSINESS MEN.

Mr. Willkie is practical. His experience is built on RESULTS, not on theories.

His is the sort of "experience" the people of this country have been seeking.

President Roosevelt's so-called "experience" has accomplished very little.

Mr. Willkie's experience has brought concrete results in the industrial field and in business management.

Four more years of the kind of "experience" that Mr. Roosevelt has acquired will land us in chaos.

The plans for a festive Halloween continued apace; Hunter to Willicombe on October 19:

There is a complication about Susanna Foster for Hallowe'en.

She now has a broadcast on Nov. 1st and has to be here at 1:00 p.m. that day for rehearsal. If she stays for the Hallowe'en dinner she will have to take the midnight plane from Medford and they hate to have her do that the day before a broadcast.

Hebert asks if it will be all right for her to sing the evening of Oct. 30th, which will give her plenty of time to get back for the rehearsal.

Hearst remained flexible in the matter. "Chief says certainly," was Willicombe's reply to Hunter on October 20. "Tell Susanna to come anytime at her pleasure."

Charlie Ryckman submitted one more pro-Willkie editorial from San Francisco before it was too late, this on October 30, six days before the election:

Wendell Louis Willkie has ably completed the arduous task of conducting a campaign for the Presidency of the United States.

Essentially this has been a ONE ISSUE campaign, since the one thing uppermost in every mind is the THIRD TERM.

> The American people must now decide if a President in office can utilize the vast powers of that office to retain it for whatever period his own ambition persuades him is justifiable.
>
> That decision overshadows all else in this campaign.

OCTOBER 30, 1940, likewise marked the moment when Hearst embarked on a new path, one that would become an obsession and not just another crusade. It began with a message from Ray Van Ettisch in Los Angeles to Willicombe at Wyntoon:,

> Warner Bros. were shooting *Charge of Light Brigade* on location near Sonora [California] when, in June of 1938 [actually 1936], Los Angeles SPCA [Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals] advised SPCA office in San Francisco to watch operations. Officer Al Girola was sent to scene, found that several horses were tripped by device called "flying" and so badly crippled that they had to be killed.

Van Ettisch sent Willicombe more information that same day, October 30, all of which he knew stood a good chance of getting kicked upstairs from Willicombe's level to the Chief's:

> The local SPCA has one humane officer. It does not handle movie cases any more. They state this work is being done by Richard Craven, western regional director of the American Humane Association, Albany, N.Y.; to which about 600 cities throughout the country belong.
>
> According to the SPCA, they investigate complaints (mostly received by phone) of animal cruelty, but film cruelty is referred to Craven for investigation. They have had no recent complaints.
>
> As far as Los Angeles city is concerned, its humane department officers rarely handle any film cases because hardly ever are any animal shots made within the city limits; most of the ranches and locations are in unincorporated areas.

Hearst shifted into high gear with his crusade against cruelty to horses and other animals in motion pictures on Monday, November 4, the day before the election. He had a new cause, a new axe to grind,

and he'd spent a goodly part of the weekend no doubt gearing up for this salvo:

> Fellow members of the great unconsidered, unheeded public, have you noticed how the maltreatment of animals in moving pictures has steadily increased until it has become a horror to many theatre goers?
>
> Doubtless you, gentle reader, have like many others become almost afraid to see your favorite westerns for fear that you would have to look at unhappy horses tumbled headlong down steep hills—hurled from high cliffs—or else to view with anger teams of the helpless animals forced down slides into deep waters with heavy coaches piling up on top of them all supposedly to create thrills for people who like brutal sensations. . . .
>
> Westerns are good wholesome pictures in the main.
>
> They are enjoyed by decent healthy people who like the "great outdoors," and believe in rude justice, and who admire courage and manliness, and who LOVE ANIMALS.
>
> Why make westerns repulsive to the very people to whom they ought to appeal?
>
> Why let stupid unimaginative directors spoil a product which has so much of legitimate popular appeal?
>
> Why make a wholesome picture unwholesome by cruelty and coarse grained brutality?
>
> There is no excuse for the cruelty.
>
> There is nothing clever, nothing new in forcing horses down a precipice into a stream with a heavy coach piled on top of them, or in pitching a hog tied horse head over heels down a steep hill to land at the bottom bruised and bleeding if not maimed and broken in bone, and having to be shot to put it out of its misery.
>
> What kind of intellect (if you can call it intellect) is it that thinks cruelty of this kind is a fit thrill for decent pictures and for decent people?
>
> What kind of dumb directorial brains (if you can call them brains) are they that can think of nothing else but this worn-out sensation, which was offensive to begin with because of its brutality, and is doubly offensive now because of its antiquity and stupidity?

> This maltreatment of animals, moreover, is not only an offense against the decencies and proprieties, not only an affront to the sensibilities and a blight upon an otherwise worthy class of pictures, but it is a violation of the law. . . .
>
> Often again [film] companies which plot cruelty and law evasion sneak off on location to shoot when the officers are not around.
>
> It is admittedly difficult, therefore, for humane societies to be wholly effective without the complete authority, without proper appropriation of funds for law enforcement by the state, and without officers directly representing the state. . . .
>
> Doubtless the public, if it would avoid the debasing influence on itself and on its children of wanton brutality, will have to take steps to censor or boycott brutal pictures or to secure from its legislatures more effective and official law enforcement.

There were other important issues that day, right before the nation went to the polls. Yet Hearst had a new hook now, a new mission; and the Presidential race was already almost old news, with Roosevelt's victory all but assured. *Look* magazine contacted Hearst at Wyntoon the same day that he'd unlimbered his guns against Hollywood and its abuses of animals; what followed was brief but likewise urgent; *Look* told Hearst (who already knew the score on this one):

> West Coast extremely vulnerable to Japanese attack says Major Leonard Mason in article to be published in *Look* magazine tomorrow Tuesday, November 5. Rushing you advance copy under separate cover.

JOE KENNEDY would soon be in the neighborhood and would be visiting Hearst and Marion at Wyntoon; his second son, John, the future President, would be included. Kennedy wired Hearst from New York on Thursday, November 7, two days after the election:

> Arriving San Francisco Monday morning [the 11th] twelve o'clock noon. Would like to bring my son Jack along with me.

Hearst replied later that same day, telling Kennedy, “Most certainly bring Jack and anyone you please.”

With regard to his new crusade against cruelty, Hearst soon heard from two supporters. On November 9, it was the former dancer Irene Castle McLaughlin, who wired from Lake Forest, Illinois, near Chicago:

> Congratulations and heartfelt gratitude for wonderful editorial [“In the News” column] on unnecessary cruelty.

The other congratulations came from William Boyd in North Hollywood, a movie cowboy better known as Hopalong Cassidy:

> As one connected with western pictures your editorial Friday [November 8] naturally interested me. I whole heartedly agree there should be no cruelty to animals on the screen. However it must be said constructive reforms have been made in this direction recently. One of these is the California law which requires an officer of the Humane Society on the set whenever animals are used. As you say the people who patronize westerns and that means just about everybody instinctly demand fair play and that applies to a horse just as well as its master. It’s up to us to live up to the rules.

On November 11, Bill Hunter in Los Angeles wired Willicombe about a film matter that fell outside the mainstream:

> Blake McVeigh, of the Charlie Chaplin Studio, asks if the Chief would like to see “The Dictator” [*The Great Dictator*].

Yes, said Willicombe to Hunter, the Chief would like to see the new Chaplin film.

Hearst got an update from Joe Kennedy, who’d been delayed in heading west; this was on Tuesday, November 12:

> Weather permitting will leave New York tonight. Plan to stay Beverly Wilshire Hotel Los Angeles Wednesday [November 13]. Must talk with motion picture people regarding renewal British exchange agreement. Will leave Los Angeles Thursday morning arrive San Francisco noon.

Willicombe heard from Warden Woolard at the *L.A. Examiner* on Wednesday the 13th:

> In the course of an interview here today Joseph P. Kennedy said he is going to visit Mr. Hearst.
>
> *[Los Angeles] Times* publishes following: "He is scheduled to leave this morning on a United Airlines plane for San Francisco. Next he will visit William Randolph Hearst."
>
> Asked if the visit is of a professional nature such as the planning [of] any writing for the Hearst papers, he said it is not.
>
> "Mr. Hearst is a good friend of mine," he said.
>
> Will appreciate advice whether this matter should be included in our interview.

Charlie Ryckman got busy in San Francisco; thus this submission to Hearst on November 14, made through Cobbie at the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin:*

> Herewith is Ryckman editorial for your approval on Kennedy statement in Los Angeles.
>
> Joseph P. Kennedy, the American Ambassador to Great Britain, is doing his country immeasurable service in arousing the sentiments of the American people against war.
>
> Mr. Kennedy's interview in Los Angeles, for instance, contained one of the most forthright declarations of American policy that it has been the privilege of our people to read.
>
> "The most important thing confronting the people of the United States at this time of world crisis," he said, "is the essential, national duty of KEEPING OUT of any overseas war.
>
> "I say with all sincerity that THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO NECESSITY FOR THIS COUNTRY TO ENTER THE EUROPEAN CONFLICT.
>
> "I am stressing that conviction in every conversation I hold.
>
> "And I will do everything I can, in every way possible, to KEEP THE UNITED STATES OUT OF ANY WAR, ANYWHERE."

For his "In the News" column of Friday, November 15, Hearst opted for a Saturday Symposium a day early—for a cluster, that is, of letters to the editor that were increasingly piling up. He was busy with the Kennedy visit then and needed to rest on his laurels for the moment. The old silent-screen cowboy William S. Hart had sent a letter from San Bernardino, California, a week earlier:

> Thanks a million for your grand article on the wanton brutality of those now in power of the making of western pictures.
>
> It is one of the crimes of the age and should cause every American citizen to get red behind the ears with shame.
>
> Our creator did not give dumb animals a brain.
>
> Our creator expected human beings to whom he gave brains to protect the dumb creatures.
>
> It is up to real human beings to do so in spite of those who control the picture industry.
>
> The cruel part of it is, it is all unnecessary.
>
> This writer made many western pictures covering a long period of years.
>
> A dumb brute was never injured in one of them, unless this writer be classed as one [a brute], to which this writer would not object in the least.

Joe Kennedy and his son Jack went to Los Angeles after seeing Hearst and Marion, who remained at Wyntoon but who arranged for the Kennedys to stay at the Beach House in Santa Monica for two nights, November 17 and 18.

ON NOVEMBER 26, two days before Thanksgiving at Wyntoon, Joe Willicombe heard from Bill Hunter in Los Angeles:

> Found the following correspondence in the 1925 files—
>
> May 26, 1925, [Harry or Martin] Huberth wrote Chief at New York.
>
> June 4 [Roy] Keehn wrote Chief at New York.
>
> June 6 [Frank] Barham wired Chief at New York.

June 12 [Roy] Keehn wrote Chief at New York.
June 15 You wired Chief at Chicago from New York.
June 17 [Clarence] Shearn wrote Chief at Los Angeles.
June 24 [Arthur] Brisbane wired Chief at Los Angeles.
June 25 [Harry or Martin] Huberth wired Chief at Los Angeles.
June 25 You wired Chief at Los Angeles.
June 27 and 28 [Florenz] Ziegfeld wired Chief at Los Angeles.
June 29 [John Francis] Neylan wired Chief at Los Angeles.
All of the above dates were in 1925.

This message is included here because of what it tells us, as commented hundreds of pages ago in Chapter 1—namely, that a date like 1925 is an early one for the West Coast side of Hearstiana. Willicombe seemed keenly frustrated over the difficulty of finding certain records of fifteen years prior. As he told Hunter on the same date in late November of 1940:

> Thanks for file data for June 1925, but while it indicates Chief in New York early part of month and in Los Angeles latter part, all the communications are address[ed] T O him. If you can find some letters throughout the month F R O M him, it would be conclusive. Please try.

Hunter tried. This is what he came up with, as he informed Willicombe on November 27:

> There is not one letter from the Chief in the whole 1925 file here. The carbon copies of his letters would of course be in the office and would all be sent to New York for [the master] file. The [1925] letters and telegrams to him which are now here were probably in the desk at the ranch or the Beach House or the [Cosmopolitan] studio and thus missed the shipment of file stuff east.

Hearst stuck with his new theme and crusade, devoting several "In the News" columns to it as the year waned. In their midst, a simple, typical directive that he sent out through Willicombe to all parties on December 7 could easily be misconstrued:

> Chief thinks unnecessarily offensive cartoons of Mussolini or even of Hitler are not desirable. There are a great many Italians in this country whom such cartoons needlessly offend, and besides they are on too low a plane.

Hearst wanted his papers to look and feel a certain way; that's all the more that need be read into the foregoing words; Marion herself said as much in *The Times We Had*, more than once.

Again, the thing that Hearst was sticking to the most steadily at this juncture, now that he was no longer actively in film production, was his cruelty crusade, mostly through his "In the News" column. On Thursday, December 12, Willicombe dispatched the contents of the next Saturday Symposium, slated for publication on the 14th; the first letter was from a woman named Mary McAllister:

> 2245 W. Fayette St., Baltimore, Md.
> Nov. 28, 1940.
>
> Mr. William Randolph Hearst,
> San Simeon, California.
> My dear Mr. Hearst:
>
> I am following with the deepest interest your articles appearing in the *News-Post* of Baltimore, on the cruelty to animals as shown in the movies, and I want to congratulate you on your courageous persistency in showing up this barbarity of the enormously rich filming companies who are appealing, in these animal pictures, only to the degraded taste of that section of our citizens who find pleasure in thrills of cruelty and daring gangsters.
>
> Your efforts in behalf of the animal world could not appear at a more opportune time.

Apart from the content of a letter like Mary McAllister's, its erroneous use of San Simeon for Hearst's mailing address in December 1940 (a common detail, oft-seen in many such submissions) led scholars and laymen alike to assume years later that Hearst was living

at San Simeon at the moments specified. He wasn't, of course, but his policy of "following copy" with the headings and greetings in these letters surely gave that impression.

Horses and cowboys weren't far apart in the interest they generated among readers. The daughter of Louella Parsons, Harriet Parsons, had become a writer also. On December 17, Ray Van Ettisch asked Willicombe about her work:

> Harriet Parsons' Keyhole feature for next Sunday is on Gene Autry, with a picture. Is there any change in previous instructions about him?

Hearst had views in the matter, as Van Ettisch and others found out; Willicombe in reply later that same day:

> Chief says regarding Harriet Parsons story on Gene Autry (WITHOUT PICTURE) this is to be an exception to the rule.
>
> "We were overloaded with Gene Autry," Chief says, "for a long time as if he were the only western star. There are others as good or better. William Boyd as Hopalong Cassidy and Roy Rogers are better and have better pictures. I advise using the article as long as Harriet Parsons has written it, but omit the picture."

Hearst, Marion, their extended families, and various other people were hunkered down at Wyntoon now for the winter. Hearst had indicated through Willicombe in late November that he'd be leaving Wyntoon in favor of San Simeon during December.

It didn't happen.

For the first time ever, he and Marion and company wouldn't be pulling up stakes and heading there or going down to Santa Monica. They were poised now to turn the corner into 1941, one of the most unusual years in all the annals of Hearstiana.