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Silent Pictures

Silent pictures. The Great Marion Davies Murder. An opening at the Cosmopolitan Theatre. Marion moves to California. Terrified by a lion. A party for the King of Siam. Mr. Hearst puts all his eggs in one basket.

MD: I couldn't act, but the idea of silent pictures appealed to me, because I couldn't talk either. Silent pictures were right up my alley, and that's how I got all the bad notices, except for the one that Louella Parsons wrote [in 1922].

She was working on the [New York] *Morning Telegraph,* and W.R. apparently read her review. Everybody else said, "Stinking." But Louella said, "Give the girl a chance." W.R. immediately hired her for the New York *American,* because of that one review.

TC: A possible conflation here: Marion's "Stinking" may allude to *Cecilia of the Pink Roses* (1918) whereas Louella's words refer more directly to *When Knighthood Was in Flower* (1922). Miss Parsons wasn't hired by W.R. until 1923. See George Eells, *Hedda and Louella,* p. 91; see also Samantha Barbas, *The First Lady of Hollywood*, pp. 80-85.

MD: W.R. always said to me, "Never read any bad reviews about yourself. Read only the good ones." Of course I thought, What if there are no good ones? Then I'm really in the dumps. I'd rather read the bad ones than the good ones anyway, because at least there are more of them.

And you might find out what's wrong. If they say this scene or that scene is not good enough, or if the comedy is lacking, maybe you can perk it up.

If they only say, "You're shining, blooming, blah, blah, blah . . ." you have nothing to go on, except conceit and ego, which doesn't help work at all. I liked criticism, but W.R. said, "I never read any of it."

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I thought it was an incentive to prove the critics wrong, and you need that needling in the theatrical business. Nobody's perfect, and if they said, "She was wonderful in her performance; nothing could have been better," then I may as well have packed up and gone to bed.

After I'd made about six or eight pictures, W.R. started the Cosmopolitan Pictures Company, and then he signed a contract with MGM. But that was after about two years [of Cosmopolitan's existence].

PP/KSM: *The first Cosmopolitan production, made for an MGM release in 1924, was YOLANDA. By then Marion had made seventeen feature films, released by Select Pictures, Graphic Films, Pathe or Paramount.*

TC: According to "The Films of Marion Davies," the appendix in the Guiles biography *Marion Davies,* "Cosmopolitan Pictures" figured in 1918 in Marion's second feature film, *Cecilia of the Pink Roses;* "Cosmopolitan Productions" figured as of her third feature, *The Burden of Proof* (also 1918). For further collation of the Cosmopolitan name, *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures: Feature Films 1911–1920* (New York 1971) can also be checked.

MD: *Little Old New York* [1923] and *When Knighthood Was in Flower* [1922] were very successful. They made money. The other pictures we made did not.

When *Knighthood* opened at the Criterion Theatre [in New York] and we were all there in a box, I had a speech prepared. But after the picture ended, the lights went up and everybody left the theatre, so I didn't have a chance to speak. I was so glad, but all through my dinner I had been trying to memorize the speech and I couldn't eat.

I had to learn fencing for that picture. Every day for four hours, for four months. I had a mask for the first month and buttons on the ends of the swords. Then they took the mask away and then they took the buttons off. I was frightened stiff. And my legs were stiff, too, from lunging.

It was awfully hard on the back and the legs.

But I was supposed to be disguised as a boy, and I'm in an inn in England in *Knighthood,* and they think I'm not quite a boy.

I had escaped from my brother, who was Henry the Eighth.

So I had a drink and ate the meat, with my hands, and then somebody said, "How about a duel?" So then I had a duel—with five or six men. You could have five eyes knocked out. You have to be *en garde* all the time. Well, it took four months to rehearse that scene, and I thought it was kind of fun, in a way. I didn't mind the work, but my legs and my back did. The preparation was harder work than the actual production.

I was so stiff I couldn't walk, but the director thought I walked just like a princess. That was Bob Vignola and he was a very good director, and I did about six pictures with him. I was like a racehorse. Once I got started I wanted to run, and once I stopped I just wanted to lie down and read a book, with my hooves on.

TC: The Guiles appendix lists Robert G. Vignola as the director of six Davies films: *Enchantment* (1921); *Beauty's Worth* (1922); *When Knighthood Was in Flower* (1922); *The Young Diana* (co-directed with Albert Capellani 1922); *Adam and Eva* (1922); and *Yolanda* (1924).

MD: But I did a lot of pictures. I worked harder than I thought I did, but it was a very happy existence. The parties, the dinners, not much rest. But sleep wasn't important. It was one big merry-go-round.

I really wanted to give up when the talkies came in [in the late 1920s]. I was all right in silent movies when I just had to make faces at the camera. But I wasn't interested in silent films. It wasn't really work. When the talkies began, I realized I had to work; I couldn't stall around anymore. But even when I worked hard, I still wound up at zero. I had tried, anyway.

It's a pretty rugged life for a person. You have to admire actors. It's a wonder they have any hearts left, the way they work. They get so excited when they go through emotional scenes.

I didn't have it. When we would see a play, W.R.'d say, "I think you could have done that better." But I knew perfectly well I couldn't have done it even half as well. But he was prejudiced, which was understandable. And I rather liked him for that. He made me feel comfortable when I was uneasy.

Now the critics didn't quite agree with his theory, so he didn't read any of the criticisms. I thought I had to read the critics just to know how I was. W.R. would say, "I know you're all right." But he was just one critic.

Some of my pictures did get some critical approval. *Operator 13* did [1934], *Little Old New York* did [1923], *Peg o' My Heart* did [1933] and *Knighthood* did [1922], except in London, where they said, "Why should an American girl play Mary Tudor?" They thought it was horrible for the sister of Henry the Eighth to talk like me—and they tore me apart in London. But the English are the ones who should watch their diction. I can hardly understand them or their films, and I'm very proud of my American accent.

TC: Regarding *Operator 13,* W.R. and Marion saw its preview in Los Angeles early in May 1934. The movie "was not received well," George Loorz reported, and W.R. returned to San Simeon "with spirits at low ebb." Taylor Coffman, *Building for Hearst and Morgan: Voices from the George Loorz Papers* (Berkeley 2003), p. 116.

MD: Well, the English paid a lot of attention to their critics, and *Knighthood* was a terrific failure in England.

We could have made *Little Old New York* in less time [in 1923], but the whole studio [in Harlem] had burned down, with my costumes and everything. We had to move over to Fort Lee in New Jersey and I had to get new costumes.

TC: Edgar Hatrick, head of Cosmopolitan Productions as of 1924 (Marion's "business manager," she rightly called him in the new Chapter 11, p. 6), mentioned the debacle to Hearst nearly twenty years after it occurred—this with regard to *The Belle of New York* of 1919. "Original contracts lost in studio fire," Hatrick reported on November 17, 1942 (G&RH).

MD: And another thing happened when I was doing *Little Old New York.* There was the Freeport [Long Island] murder. And that happened the same day that the studio burned [February 18, 1923].

I was sleeping at my mother's house [on Riverside Drive]. I had to get up early in the mornings to go to work, and the newspapers had EXTRAs on the street. The boys were outside yelling, "Read all about the Marion Davies murder!"

So we sent for a newspaper. There was a story: "Woman shoots husband because of jealousy of Marion Davies, who was at her sister's home at a birthday party for her father."

I was nowhere near Freeport. I was at Riverside Drive. I said to my mother, "This isn't true. I can't understand it."

Then my mother rang up Reine [Marion's sister in Freeport], who said, "What happened was, my neighbors, a mile away, decided to have a fight. And she chased him around the lawn and she shot him. But all she did was knock his false teeth out." Papa Ben [Marion's father] rushed out immediately and called the police.

I threatened to sue the papers. Every one of them headlined me. They called it the Marion Davies murder. And I had two witnesses to the fact that I was not there: my mother and the butler. None of my family even knew the people. I think their name was Hirsch.

All I wanted from the newspapers was a retraction. I rang up every newspaper myself. They all said, "No retraction."

Then I wrote the papers a letter, and still I got no retraction. It may have been a slap at Mr. Hearst, but I don't really think it was. I didn't want the publicity, but I got it. Bad publicity.

So my father said, "You've got to sue. You have to go into court and fight for your rights." Well, I'd never been in court in my life, and I was afraid I'd stutter. He said I'd better get ready. So I sued the newspapers. Each for a million dollars, just to scare them. I wanted any kind of retraction.

And I went to court as the main witness. The whole place was jammed, outside and in.

Reine was on the witness stand, and my mother was with me, but I was afraid. If you stutter, the implication is that you're guilty—immediately.

I got up and ran for the car and went home. When my father got home, he was furious. He said, "Judge Simpson can't understand your actions. You were called and called . . . Don't you know that that is a breach of court? You might be thrown in jail for not appearing on the witness stand."

I said I couldn't help it. I couldn't do it.

He said, "You've certainly spilled the apple cart. Haven't you got courage enough to get up on the stand and tell the truth? What are you afraid of?"

"Nothing," I said.

He said, "Well, you lost your case."

I didn't want any money. I just wanted to be cleared. My father said he'd see to that. And they did print the retraction, but you had to get a spyglass to read it, and it was way back, practically with the classified ads.

W.R. said I should have gone ahead with the lawsuit and made them retract the story on the front page, just the way they had printed it. But I couldn't.

His papers didn't print the story at all. Never said a word. But W.R. thought I might have been there that night. He was a little bit dubious about it. But I was looking at the [film] rushes with my mother, nowhere near Freeport. I had to work until nine, look at the rushes until midnight or maybe one o'clock, and then be back at the studio in the morning. I had to be up at seven.

So they called it the Marion Davies murder, but all his wife did was shoot his false teeth out.

MD: Then there was almost a tragedy at the opening of *Little Old New York* at the Cosmopolitan Theatre [on Columbus Circle], which Mr. Hearst had bought just especially for the opening. We were having

a banquet with the Mayor, and I think Will Hays was there, and Joseph Urban, who did the decorating. Urban was saying, “Don’t go in—until the theatre’s finished.” I was supposed to sit with the Mayor in one of the loges that had been fixed up in the theatre. It looked like a little jewel. At the last minute there was a chandelier they couldn’t get up. And it cost about sixty thousand dollars. It was already 8:15, and we were being stalled off while they were trying to finish the job with big ladders.

PP/KSM: *John Hylan [1918 to 1925].*

MD: There were people outside waiting, and cars all around, and W.R. said, “It has to be now or never. We can’t keep the people waiting. Let’s take a chance.” So we went in.

I didn’t look at the picture, because I was looking at that chandelier all the time. It was an enormous thing, and all the audience down below would’ve been killed if it had fallen.

The Mayor said it was a very good picture, and he was very conservative. [But I bet they were glad to get rid of us.] After the premiere [on August 1, 1923] we went to California[—by request of New York].

TC: The preceding paragraph is a good example of how complex the editing of *The Annotated Marion* has become. The bracketed “But I bet” is Bobbs-Merrill’s contribution, imposed over and above Marion’s original words. The bracketed date in 1923 is my insertion. The bracketed “by request of New York” was deleted from what Marion said in 1951. Most other explanations of this kind can be found in the endnotes.

MD: When I first arrived in Hollywood [back in 1920] I didn’t like it. I decided to live in Santa Barbara and make pictures up there. I didn’t know anybody, and I couldn’t understand the big wide spaces. I was a city girl, and I was afraid of everything.

TC: Guiles goes into these dimly known details of Marion’s initial presence in California; how reliable they are is impossible to say. *Marion*

Davies, pp. 96-102, of which p. 97 touches on the "quiet weekend alone together" that she and W.R. supposedly spent at "an inn at Santa Maria," a remote town in 1920 that was midway between Santa Barbara and San Simeon—and one that seems an improbable candidate for a Hearstian tryst. However, the Santa Maria Inn proudly boasts of having been founded in 1917.

MD: After a while I learned to like California, so that when I went back east, I didn't like New York anymore. I think you like either one or the other, but not both. In New York I got to feeling crowded in, crushed; there was no fresh air, just gas fumes and coal dust. So I switched my affections. It did take a while, but when I got broken in I stayed broken in.

All the family had come along, and we rented Mrs. Somebody's lemon ranch—only she wouldn't let us pick a lemon off a tree. That was in Montecito [adjoining Santa Barbara].

A studio which had been empty for years was being fixed up [the Flying "A" Studio of the American Film Company in Santa Barbara]. I was there a year without ever shooting a scene. We just sat around and talked about the story, which didn't mean much—it was about a love piker, sort of a sucker. I didn't care for it, but we were supposed to do it. Poor Frances Marion [the screenwriter] would work on it and get headaches, and then we never made it. Of course I knew nothing about pictures, so I couldn't put my two cents in. Whenever I said anything, it was so dumb they would look at me in amazement.

PP/KSM: *THE LOVE PIKER was made in 1923 as a Goldwyn-Cosmopolitan Production, but Marion Davies was not in it.*

Writer Frances Marion, in her autobiography OFF WITH THEIR HEADS! (Macmillan [New York], 1972), noted that after W.R. had hired her, her father sent her a note: "So you've gone from bad to Hearst." But in a career that would include 137 film credits and many other published works, Frances Marion went ahead and worked on the screenplays of seven of Marion Davies's films: THE CINEMA MURDER (1920), THE RESTLESS SEX (1920), ZANDER THE GREAT (1925), THE RED MILL (1927), BLONDIE OF THE FOLLIES (1932), PEG O' MY HEART (1933) and GOING HOLLYWOOD (1933).

TC: Today's IMDb website lists some 170 films in which Frances Marion had a hand, mostly as a writer, from 1912 to 1953; the list includes two posthumous credits (1979 and 1989) and, from the early 1920s, three films as a director. *The Love Piker* was indeed made, as Pfau and Marx rightly noted; in fact, it was released in 1923 less than a month before Marion's own *Little Old New York* had its premiere. Stephen Lawton alluded to *The Love Piker,* which he left unnamed, in *Santa Barbara's Flying A Studio* (Santa Barbara 1997), p. 87.

The Flying A western unit of the Chicago-based American Film Company was active in Santa Barbara from 1912 to 1920. In contrast to Lawton's passage, the UCSB film scholar Dana Driskel mentioned Marion in an earlier context against a backdrop of the Flying A—and with regard to the director Frank Borsage, who in the summer of 1920 hoped to make films there that would feature her. Marion "often visited Montecito," noted Driskel, and she was thought to applaud the idea. But Borsage's plan never gelled. Driskel contributed "The American Film Company: 1910-1923" to the exhibit catalogue *The Flying A: Silent Film in Santa Barbara* (Santa Barbara Historical Museum 2012); p. 19 includes the Davies-Borsage reference; p. 21 has supportive citations from 1920, in that year's *Santa Barbara Morning Press* of August 3 and September 21. See also Robert S. Birchard, *Silent-Era Filmmaking in Santa Barbara* (Charleston, South Carolina 2007), p. 4.

Those late-summer dates in 1920 recall Hearst's second season at the emergent San Simeon, a period covered in my *Hearst as Collector: The First Fifty Years, 1873-1923* (Summerland, California 2003), pp. 124-126.

MD: They couldn't figure out what to do with me [in the early 1920s], so they dumped me on Louis B. Mayer. The next thing I knew I was at MGM, working on *Zander the Great* [in 1925]. Frances Marion wrote that play and she did a wonderful job. Hedda Hopper played my mother in that picture. I was supposed to be an orphan kid, and I had to fight a lion in a lion's cage.

PP/KSM: *The screenplay by Frances Marion and Lillie Hayward was based on the play by Salisbury Field.*

Hedda Hopper played Mrs. Caldwell, Marion's foster mother and Zander's [the boy's] real mother.

MD: The big job was to get me into the cage. With the lion there. Frances Marion's [future] husband, George Hill, was the director. He

said to me, "Now look, we've got a big sheet of glass here, between you and the lion. All you do is get into the cage, and get near enough so that the audience thinks you're kissing the lion. Then he'll roar and you'll climb up the side of the cage."

Like a monkey, I guess.

Somebody said they'd taken all the teeth out of the lion. But they hadn't. That lion had teeth, and he was mad because they had brought him over from the zoo [the Selig Zoo near downtown Los Angeles]. And he was kicking up a bit.

They wanted a rehearsal. I was courageous and went into the cage, and the lion went "RRRRooooaaaarrrrr!" I started climbing, and when I got to the top of the cage I was yelling, "Help!! Murder!!"

It was just one of those stunts for a laugh. That was the big idea, but I think a lion can go right through glass, which I had forgotten was there.

Whoever whipped that one up didn't like me. But Charlie Chaplin came over and did the scene for me, in my clothes. And that was the first time I ever met him. He did the whole scene in two shots and then he left. Then I did my close-ups alone, in the cage, without that lion.

But they thought up more stunts for me. They wanted me to ride backwards on a bicycle, when I couldn't even ride forwards. It was a story that was mixed up with the West and the circus. They said it was funny, but George Hill committed suicide a little while after [in 1934]. I hope it was not because of the picture.

PP/KSM: *When Marion began working at MGM [in 1924], W.R. assigned a young reporter to cover her, releasing him from his regular duties at the* Los Angeles Examiner*. And he would stay with Marion, handling her publicity material, throughout her working days at that studio [until 1934].*

MD: When I first started to work at MGM, I used to see a man on my set, all the time. I didn't know the setup, and I wouldn't ask anybody. So finally I asked him, "Who are you, please?"

He said, "I'm from the publicity department."

“Yeah?”

“Now don’t get me wrong. I don’t want to be here any more than you want me here. But I’m stuck with you. If you can take it, I’ll try to [do the same].”

“Is it going to be as hard as that?”

“Pretty tough, I think.”

“What makes you think so?” I asked.

“Well, I’ve been here for about a month, and you’ve just looked at me and said mentally, ‘Throw that punk off my set.’ ”

I said, “No, I didn’t do that . . . What did you say your name was?”

“Wheelwright. You know, wheels, like on cars. Of course, if you don’t like that joke, I’ll walk out and come back again the other way. But I’ve really been sold down the line. I’m in Siberia as far as you’re concerned. There are other stars I’d rather be on the set with than you. It seems I’m nailed to the cross.”

“Well,” I said, “it looks that way to me, too. I’m nailed up, too, but I don’t mind the nails.”

“Well, it all depends. If you’ll treat me like a human being and won’t look at me like I’m poison . . .”

I said, “Now look, let’s not be facetious about this.”

“Oh, you know that word, too. Well, I’m stuck with you, so let’s try to make the best of it.”

“Okay,” I said.

When I saw him the next day I said, “Hello. What’s your name?”

“Hello, Miss Nobody.”

“What is your name, really?”

“Call me Ralph.”

I said, “Are you sure?”

He stayed with me for every picture I made. His boss was Howard Strickling [head of publicity at MGM]. Howard and I had one thing in common: we both stuttered. When Ralph introduced me to his boss, I was saying, “How-how-how-how-how are you?” And

Howard was saying, "How-how-how-how are you?" So he also said, "I've met my enemy."

When I was in the *Follies* back in New York [in 1916], I had a faculty for looking out from the wings, which I was not supposed to do. Joe Frisco, who was in the show, had a cigar, and he was lighting it before he went onstage. I watched him like a punk, two nights in a row. Then I walked over and asked him, "Why-why-why-why do you light this cigar?"

He said, "Jeez, get away from me. If won't be able to speak a word." When he went onstage, he couldn't talk. Stuttering is contagious, from one stutterer to another stutterer.

So I became known as public nuisance number one-one-one.

Vincent X. Flaherty [the sports columnist and screenwriter] and I had a good time together, because he stuttered very badly. He'd say, "P-p-p-p-p-put me away from her." And George Hearst [W.R.'s oldest son] was the same way.

PP/KSM: *And Somerset Maugham was the same way. Frances Marion reports that he once thought Miss Davies was mimicking him. Outraged, he stormed away from her, saying, "Fre-fre-fresh b-b-b-bitch!"*

MD: Life in California got to be very gay. There was work and some sort of a party every night. And I got to love MGM, I really did; but I didn't realize it until I left. I was ten years at the studio [1924 to 1934] and I knew everyone. There was always something to do.

Frances and Sam Goldwyn would have dinner parties, and he was always very nice and amusing, without meaning to be. W.R. also liked Sam and Frances. She was wonderful, and very intelligent.

TC: Alice Head, managing director of Hearst's National Magazine Co. in London, visited California in 1931, her third trip to the West Coast. Regarding Hearst's birthday party that year at the Beach House in Santa Monica, she said in her memoir: "Frances Goldwyn is a lovely creature—beautiful and gay and *good.* I have always had the greatest affection for her and though we meet but seldom, possibly after a lapse of years, she is always the same, and we take up the threads of our friendship exactly where we left off." *It Could Never Have Happened* (London 1939), pp. 153-154. Miss

Head's reminiscences are extensively quoted in my online book *Hearst and Marion: The Santa Monica Connection* (2010).

MD: Mary Pickford was the great hostess. At least she had that honor. She did give good parties—a little bit on the dignified side, but otherwise all right. You couldn't take off your shoes and dance, like you could at Lord Beaverbrook's house in London.

I don't think anybody actually gave wild parties. But you always had at least one or two drunks at a party.

I'd have dinners at the beach house [at 415 Ocean Front in Santa Monica], and we'd go to the pier at Venice, or the Cocoanut Grove [at the Ambassador Hotel], or to the Biltmore Hotel [downtown] after a football game. That would be a madhouse. You could hardly get in the lobby, what with the carrying-on by those lovely little football characters. Then there was also the Montmarte Restaurant [in Hollywood], but only for lunchtime. And there was the Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood.

There was a country club [the Vernon Country Club, southeast of downtown Los Angeles] where the younger degeneration used to go, and we would go there every once in a while, for a dance. There was also the Embassy Club [in Hollywood], and one time we went to Palm Springs, when the Ambassador to Spain was there.

PP/KSM: *Alexander P. Moore had been the United States Ambassador to Spain in 1923.*

TC: Moore's ambassadorship lasted until 1925. More germane to these show-business musings, Moore was the fourth husband of the famous Broadway diva Lillian Russell (1861–1922), whom a star-struck W.R. had seen on stage in San Francisco in the early 1880s, right before he went to Harvard. See also Chapter 6 in this compilation, pp. 11-14, in which Alexander P. Moore figures.

MD: One night [in 1931] Mary Pickford called me up and said, "I'm having a party for the King of Siam." I said I'd be there.

I was a little late, so I went running up the steps [at Pickfair, in Beverly Hills]. She was standing with a chap I thought was the butler.

I had an ermine coat. So I threw my coat to him and said, "I'm sorry I'm late."

Well, he was the King of Siam. He was all dressed up with a white jacket.

She was very disturbed; she thought I had done it on purpose, but I hadn't. I was upset at being late.

She put me at an odd table, but then the King asked Doug [Fairbanks] if I could sit next to him. I didn't move. I put on a pout until Doug asked me to sit next to the King.

Then I went over. But it was just like talking to a wall. He understood English as much as I understood Chinese. He wanted to explain that he wasn't angry, but it was a horrible thing for me to do.

That was just before Doug and Mary got their divorce [in 1936, after a long separation].

MD: When I first got to Los Angeles [in 1924], I stayed at the Ambassador Hotel. Then I rented a house in Beverly Hills that belonged to Norman Kerry, the actor, and his wife, Rosine.

Then we moved into the house at 1700 Lexington Road [in Beverly Hills].

My mother bought it, and that's where we lived. That's where we had the most fun.

My mother was very quiet and reticent. She didn't seem to fit in with the motion picture people. She was very nice and polite, but she couldn't understand their sense of humor and would take things seriously. We'd drive her crazy with the victrola or the radio and our friends coming over at night and playing cards. She couldn't sleep, and one night she lost her temper. She leaned over the balcony and said, "Everyone go home, please."

But we were all there, and it was like the Sanger Circus, with Ethel, Rose and her daughter Pat, and Reine and her daughter Peppy [Pepi] and her son Charlie, who had just graduated from the University of California at Berkeley at the age of sixteen.

PP/KSM: *He hadn't graduated; he'd just dropped out.*

TC: According to IMDb, Charlie Lederer turned sixteen at the end of 1927. His sister, formally Josephine (Pepi by nickname), was twice called "Peppy" in the Pfau-Marx manuscript of 1975. Bobbs-Merrill retained that spelling here in Chapter 2 but changed it (oddly, perhaps by typesetter's error) to "Peggy" in Chapter 3; see p. 20 in that part of this newer compilation. Although the error seems minor at a glance, it has long caused confusion.

MD: We all lived at 1700 Lexington, and Mr. Hearst stayed there too. I had been working for him in New York, and he had turned over the Cosmopolitan Film Company to me. Then he made a contract for me at MGM [in 1925], and my salary was very good. It amounted to about half a million a year [equal to 6.5 million in 2013]. Who would turn that down? But it was too much money, because my ability was not equal to it at all.

He had said, "I guess I'm putting all my eggs in one basket." And I was the basket.

At MGM they thought maybe they had something in me. To their sorrow, they found they didn't. And it was a ten-year contract, and there were supposed to be four pictures a year.

As it happened, it was set down to two pictures a year because I didn't want to make any more. But I worked at MGM for almost ten years.

W.R. made me the president of Cosmopolitan Films, and I was supposed to get half of the profits. And they [Louis B. Mayer et al.] went for that.

I had lots of fun at MGM, and no problems, because they had figured out that either I was sort of an idiot or I had a protector.

They never argued with me.