4
The Talkies

The Thomas Ince affair. Lindbergh returns triumphant. Mrs. Vanderbilt loses her guest of honor. A problem with taxes. The first of the talkies. Marion makes a talkie. Mr. Hearst does a tap dance.

PP/KSM: *Thomas Ince was a successful independent film producer and former Broadway actor. He was forty-four years old in November 1924 when he died.*

Stories surrounding his death often suggest a romantic link between Ince and Marion, ended at the murderous hands of W.R. and covered up by Louella Parsons.

It happened during a pre-Thanksgiving cruise that year, aboard the 201-foot steam yacht Oneida. *Marion talks about some of the guests aboard, but there were others along whom she doesn't mention: Charlie Chaplin, Theodore Kosloff, and Dr. Daniel Carson Goodman, a physician who was also W.R.'s film production manager.*

The Oneida *was then stationed in Wilmington, part of the Los Angeles harbor west of the growing city of Long Beach. It was frequently transferred back and forth between Pacific and Atlantic waters via the Panama Canal.*

W.R. was the publisher of Motor Boating [& Sailing, *acquired in 1909*], *and for his yachting parties he was not restricted to [the] use only of the* Oneida. *He bought the Prince of Monaco's opulent* Hirondelle, *a vessel noted for its indolent approach both to oceanography and to music. Push-buttons exposed a glass section of the hull, and the keyboard of a steam-powered organ.*

At the time of the sinking of the [battleship] Maine *in Havana in 1898, Hearst had offered the U.S. Navy the use of his yacht,* Buccaneer, *with himself as captain. W.R. further offered to fit the 138-foot steel-hulled steamer with the latest naval armaments and to keep these weapons supplied with ammunition as needed. The Navy accepted his offer of the vessel, without W.R. as captain, and it sailed under the [U.S.] flag. It was later returned, with thanks.*

MD: I was really furious about the Thomas Ince story.

We had boarded the *Oneida* at Wilmington on a Friday [November 14, 1924] for a short sail: Seena Owen, a motion picture actress who had been married to Raoul Walsh's brother George, an actor; W.R. and I, [W.R.'s secretary] Joe Willicombe, Elinor Glyn [the novelist], my sisters Ethel and Reine, Tom Ince, and the Barhams [Dr. Frank Barham, publisher of Hearst's *Los Angeles Herald*, and his wife]. I think there were thirteen guests, plus thirty or forty crew members.

TC: Fred Guiles gives an account that differs from most others. "The yacht party was a typical Hearst impromptu affair. It came in the middle of the week (Tuesday, November 18) and everyone, including Marion, had to drop his routine for a couple of days. At least fourteen guests were invited, including Louella Parsons and [Charlie] Chaplin, both of whom dropped by the United Artists studio that Tuesday afternoon to pick up Marion on the set of *Zander the Great.*" *Marion Davies,* p. 157.

The probable love affair between Marion and Chaplin can also be mentioned here. It began in 1924, coincidentally about the time of the Ince episode; it ran sporadically until the end of the twenties, a half-decade stretch that's thinly covered (regardless of the subject) in the William Randolph Hearst Papers at The Bancroft Library and in related archives. The best latter-day coverage is Joyce Milton's biography *Tramp: The Life of Charlie Chaplin* (New York 1996), index listings on p. 565. A more contemporary book—in which Marion figures elusively as "Maisie"—is not to be ignored or dismissed. See Gerith von Ulm's unauthorized *Charlie Chaplin: King of Tragedy* (Caldwell, Idaho 1940), index listings under "Maisie" (not under Davies).

MD: I had invited [the Inces] because I was very fond of Nell, but she couldn't go because one of her boys was having a birthday. "But will you please let Tom go," she said, "because he's been working awfully hard, and drinking quite a bit. I think the rest will do him good."

We got down to the harbor on Friday night. We had a quiet dinner together, and everybody retired early. For dinner we had a lobster cocktail, then turkey and salad; nothing to drink that I knew

about, because anywhere Mr. Hearst was [in those Prohibition days], no liquor was served. And I remember that Tom Ince said, "I would like to drink a toast to my son's birthday." And Elinor Glyn said, "Don't drink it in water; that's bad luck." But I think we did.

The next morning, or maybe afternoon—because when I woke up it was generally afternoon—Tom wasn't around. I asked Willicombe where he was. Willicombe told me that, the night before, Tom had had an attack of indigestion and had asked for some bicarbonate of soda. He had been belching and vomiting all night long, and he said he would like to go home. Afterward, Nell said, "If he had been drinking whiskey, that would have done it." If he was, he brought his own bottle along.

When we went into San Diego harbor, Willicombe sent for the launch and put Tom ashore, and he went home [to Benedict Canyon in Beverly Hills]. A member of his family was a Christian Scientist and didn't want a doctor. Tom was sick for two days and then died.

TC: *Wikipedia* reports that Ince joined the party in San Diego on Sunday morning, November 16. Then it gives a nonexistent date in 1924—Monday, November 19 (Monday was in fact the 17th)—for his departure from the *Oneida*. The website further reports that Ince died on Tuesday night (which was properly November 18).

MD: I went back to work on Monday morning [the 17th]. I was working on *Zander the Great* at the United [Artists] Studios [in Hollywood], where Norma Talmadge was nice enough to lend me her bungalow—her half of it, that is; Connie Talmadge [one of Norma's younger sisters] had the other half. We couldn't work at MGM [in Culver City] because we required an enormous stage, and MGM didn't have much room

Nell called me late Monday afternoon at the studio to tell me that Tom had died. The doctors pronounced it acute indigestion and said it had affected his heart. She was really in a bad way when I went up to see her.

I [very likely] went to the funeral with Nell and Tom, Jr., and Dick and the other boy. I think he was buried in the Hollywood Cemetery [Hollywood Forever Memorial Park].

When I read the story in the *New York Daily News* intimating that Tom had been shot, I was shocked. Who would shoot him? And why? The whole thing was so preposterous. There were no weapons aboard the *Oneida,* ever. And he didn't die until late Monday [November 17]. How long can one keep a bullet in his system?

PP/KSM: *But rumors persist that W.R. would take along a gun to shoot at passing sea gulls.*

MD: The *[Daily] News* also said that Margaret Livingston, who was married to Paul Whiteman [the bandleader], was on the boat. I didn't even know her. And she was supposed to be going around with Tom Ince.

There was one magazine piece about Louella Parsons getting her job as a result of seeing the shooting and not telling. Supposedly, out of gratitude, W.R. fixed her up on the papers. But she was not on board the yacht, and besides, she had been working for Mr. Hearst long before that [since 1923].

TC: In *Hedda and Louella* (New York 1972), George Eells writes: "A check of Louella's column datelines on, prior to and after November 19, 1924, the day Ince died, showed her writing from New York. . . . So much for Louella and the yacht. She was 3,000 miles away and was not to arrive in California for the first time until May, 1925" (pp. 87-88).

The most current account of the alleged Parsons role is in Samantha Barbas, *The First Lady of Hollywood: A Biography of Louella Parsons* (Berkeley 2005): "Louella did not leave New York that month [November 1924] and was never on the ship" (p. 89).

MD: But Joe Patterson [of the *New York Daily News*] started the thing about W.R.'s being jealous. That was silly. I knew [Mrs.] Ince very well; in fact, I knew her better than I knew him [her husband]. Tom wasn't staid, but there was nothing wolfy about him,

not a bit. He wanted to be friendly with everybody, and he was jovial and very good-natured.

And then there was the story about thirteen at the table. I hadn't even realized there were thirteen at the table. But every little thing was picked up and made larger and larger.

One story had Tom buried at Forest Lawn [in Glendale] and cremated the next day, before anyone could see him [for an autopsy]. That added to the mystery, of course.

They kept pestering Nell, and I told her just to make a statement if she wanted to, or to refuse to talk to anybody. She was really grief-stricken; she had been very much in love with Tom Ince.

How could a newspaper make up such a lie? I could have sued them, and I wanted to, but I had tried that once before—the "Marion Davies Murder" thing—and I had got nowhere [as told in Chapter 2, pp. 5-6].

W.R. said, "Never sue. That always enlarges a thing, keeps it going on and makes it worse. After all, newspapers are supposed to write good stories."

"Whether they are true or not?"

"Well, a retraction would be fine, but don't ask the *Daily News* for one. They won't do it."

Now, you can't blame the man who owns a newspaper. Very likely some smart reporter got hold of the story and said, "Here's a scoop." Maybe Joe Patterson didn't even see the story until it was printed. He couldn't be at the office all the time and watch and edit everything.

It was only the one article, and it drifted off to nothing. None of the other papers picked it up. It was just the *New York Daily News*. There was no evidence of any kind. When they [the authorities] investigated, they found out there was nothing to it.

But I kept on hearing about it. People will make a mountain out of a molehill even when nothing happens, and they'll build up a big

story. If anything of the sort had really happened, everybody would have been in jail.

It was the most ridiculous story I ever heard in my life, but when you have an association with a very well-known man like W.R., you are bound to get it.

But that Saturday [November 15, 1924] we went on our way, not very far. And not fishing. I would not go fishing. I had caught one once and I felt so sorry I wanted to shoot myself.

He looked so pitiful, a 148-pounder [probably a deep-sea marlin]. But the poor thing didn't want to be caught. And I got him on just a little thin line, a bass line. But it got hooked right on the side of the jaw. This was somewhere down in Mexico.

W.R. would never fish or hunt, and this was the first time I had ever been fishing. So everybody was telling me what to do. My line started running and I couldn't hold on to it. I said, "Let me alone. I'll do it myself." I was big and brave.

Then my thumb got caught in the reel, turned all black. It took forty minutes, and the poor thing arrived and we didn't have a gaff. My brother-in-law George van Cleve [husband of Rose Davies] took a shotgun. Wherever he got it from, I do not know. Maybe it was a pistol he had. And he shot it. I looked at it, and it was looking at me, and never, never, never again would I fish.

I thought, Get the hook out of its mouth and let it go. What's the use? We can live on bread and cheese and things like beer. You don't have to kill things to live.

PP/KSM: *W.R.'s yacht* Oneida *was in New York harbor when [Charles] Lindbergh returned a hero from Europe, after his solo flight across the Atlantic late in May 1927.*

The U.S. Navy had sailed Lindbergh to Washington, D.C., aboard the warship Memphis, *but to please the crowds Lindbergh entered New York harbor [on June 13] flying a seaplane.*

MD: We were staying at the Warwick Hotel. We went out on the *Oneida* with quite a few guests and took a motor launch and watched

Lindbergh landing in the water. Then he switched over to the Mayor's boat—the *Macom,* I think it was.

PP/KSM: *W.R. owned the Warwick Hotel at Sixth Avenue (now Avenue of the Americas) and 54th Street in Manhattan. The hotel is still on site. The Mayor of New York at that time [1926–1932] was Jimmy Walker.*

MD: We were following them, but we got ahead of their boat, and when we got to the dock my hair was all stringy and long—from the fog and the water.

When we arrived at the Battery, everything was roped off. The cars and the policemen were waiting for Lindbergh.

I didn't think we could get under the lines, but a *New York Evening Journal* reporter was there, and W.R. said to him, "Give me your card."

We were all ducking under the ropes when a policeman said, "Where do you think you're going?"

W.R. said, "I'm with the *New York Evening Journal."*

Then the policeman said, "What's your name?"

But W.R. forgot [to mask his identity] and said, "Hearst."

The policeman said, "Ahuh, get back there with the rest of the Hearsts." So we had to go back under the line, and we didn't know how to get out. Then W.R. saw the mayor's car and took a dive for it. He left the rest of us flat.

I got into the fourth of the Mayor's cars, where I didn't belong at all, but I just snuggled in. My hair was soaking wet, and I had big goggles on.

The parade started. It was fortunate for me that the policemen were so busy with their horses and the crowds and the confetti coming down. They had little time to bother with me.

I was watching the policemen. They would take their horses and run them into the crowd. There were a lot of accidents that day. There were children everywhere; it was the most amazing sight I ever saw in my life. I think all of New York was there, along Fifth Avenue.

Just before we arrived at City Hall [at 260 Broadway], where Lindbergh was to make a speech, I decided it was time for me to scram. I thought I'd get out of the car, if I could without being beheaded, and go over to the Warwick, get a good shower, curl my hair and then go to Cartier's [at Fifth Avenue and 52nd Street] and watch the parade. But just before we got to City Hall the others in the car started whispering, and I knew the questions were coming. They said, "Are you sure you're in the right car?" I said yes.

"Who are you?" I said that I was a reporter. They said, "You shouldn't be in this car. You've got to get out." I said I was getting out at City Hall. They said, "Be sure you do. And what paper do you work for?"

I said, "The *Mail.*"

PP/KSM: *[The* Mail *was] not a Hearst newspaper.*

TC: Probably the *London Daily Mail,* the famous tabloid published by Lord Northcliffe.

MD: Well, they made sure I got shunted out before we got to City Hall. And I had to push my way through that crowd to get to Sixth Avenue. There were no taxis in sight, just an elevated train. And I didn't have any money.

Anyway, I got on, and I was the only one on the train. Just myself and the man who was running it. He said, "Where's your fare?"

"I'm terribly sorry. If you'll give me your name I'll be sure that you get the fare. I'm at the Warwick, and I have to get off before you go around the loop."

"That's all right [he said]. I was kind of lonesome, anyway."

I got off, went into the hotel and left word for the doorman to be sure to give the man his money the next time he came around the loop.

I jumped into the shower, then got my hair fixed; but instead of going down 57th Street, I got excited and found myself at Central Park [starting at 60th Street]. I was going along with the soldiers, marching. I had a few [admiring] whistles, but not many.

I finally got to Cartier's [at 52nd Street], and I had been there just a second when the parade came along. Lindbergh was waving. W.R. was in the second car. I whistled at him and he looked up. He said, "Excuse me," and got out of the car and came into Cartier's. Everybody was so excited they didn't know what they were doing.

When Lindbergh got to Central Park they asked him if there was anything he wanted. He hadn't eaten anything, so he said, "I'd like a hot dog." And then he was supposed to go to the Vanderbilts', or to Long Island, to the Astors'. I think he went there. Afterwards Mrs. Astor said that she couldn't get him interested in her guests. He had brought two men along: the one who had sold him the gasoline before he went overseas, and the one who had the maps. He spent all his time with those two men and wouldn't pay any attention to the other guests.

I called Jimmy Walker on the phone and said, "Tell Lindbergh to come over here."

The Mayor said, "Ask for anything, Marion. Ask for me to get the sun to come down and meet the moon. Ask me if I can do anything in the world, but don't ask me that."

Then I got Victor Watson on the phone. He was at the banquet, and I said to him, "Slide a note over to Lindbergh. Say, 'Could he come to the Warwick? Only for five or ten minutes. He could relax awhile with a few friends.'"

PP/KSM: *[Vic Watson] was managing editor of the* New York American *[Hearst's main morning paper in the city].*

MD: I expected a no, but in a few minutes he came back on the phone and said, "Yes. He'll be over in half an hour."

Quite a few people were there, and I said, "We're going to have Lindbergh." They didn't believe it.

But the telephone operator must have given the word, because in five minutes the whole place was surrounded. There were thousands of people, and we were on the twenty-sixth story, and I didn't know what was going on. I couldn't hear anything down on the ground.

Then the phone rang. It was the Mayor. Jimmy said, "You can't do this. Mrs. [Grace] Vanderbilt is waiting at her house on Fifth Avenue, and she's got all the gold plate out. Little Gracie's there and the General, and they're waiting."

TC: Little Gracie (b. 1900) was the daughter of Grace Vanderbilt and her husband, Brig. General Cornelius Vanderbilt III.

MD: "I'm sorry . . ." [Marion said].

"She's got three hundred people waiting in the big ballroom. You cannot do this to her" [said Mayor Walker].

"Why don't you put the question to Colonel Lindbergh? Ask him what he wants to do."

"All right," he said, "I'll try."

I didn't want to be hanging around all night, so I got very independent. I said, "Call me back."

And he did. "I'm sending Esmond O'Brien up to see you."

So Esmond came, all dressed up. He said, "Look, Marion, I have to break the news to Mrs. Vanderbilt."

"What news?"

"That Lindbergh is coming here instead of going to her party."

"Oh?" I said. "Really? I didn't know anything about that."

"What am I going to say?"

Well, I didn't know, and that was his problem anyway. He said, "She'll kill me."

I said, "I don't really know if he's coming here." And I didn't know how I could help him.

He said, "He certainly is [coming here]. The Mayor told me to come over here and talk you out of this thing."

"Well, look. I can't talk Lindbergh out of what he wants to do."

After that you never heard such a racket in your life. It was like the whole hotel exploded. The sirens were going like mad. We went downstairs, but you couldn't beat your way through the lobby.

Then Lindbergh came in, in one of those little police cars. He had a white cap on and he was smiling. He was in a very good mood.

People started crowding around, and I thought they were going to tear him to pieces. Finally we got him into the elevator, and we went up. Someone was playing the guitar, and after a while Lindbergh took the guitar and sat on the floor and played.

Ezzie O'Brien came back after a while. He said to me, "Well, I went in, and Mrs. Vanderbilt was standing with the General. I said I had some bad news for her. 'Don't . . . don't tell me,' she said. 'He's not coming.' And she fainted dead away.

"When she came to, she said, 'You break the news to my guests. I haven't the strength.'"

So Ezzie had to face the whole room of people and say he was sorry that Lindbergh could not be there. He said, "You never heard such grunts and groans. And now can I join your party?"

"Certainly [Marion said]. Come on in."

Lindbergh stayed for two hours and played the guitar and sang. It was just a nice little intimate party. We also did acts and charades and games. George K. Arthur was there, and Harry Crocker and Morrie Paul and some friends I knew from New York. Carole Lombard was there, and I forget who else, but Lindbergh had a good time and didn't want to leave. Of course when he left, he still had to face the crowds. He had to fight his way through.

TC: Bobbs-Merrill corrected Mr. Paul's first name to "Maury" in 1975; however, Pfau and Marx had spelled it right in their transcriptions in three later places in this same chapter (pp. 15 and 16).

PP/KSM: *[George K.] Arthur was an actor, and [Maury] Paul the newspaperman who wrote the Cholly Knickerbocker society column. [Deleted by publisher: "Carole Lombard was a major Hollywood film star"—a wise excision by Bobbs-Merrill, since the comment was premature in the context of 1927.]*

MD: W.R. did a tap dance. He was the best tap dancer you ever saw. And he accompanied himself. He didn't need any music, just one, two, three, bum—bum. He did this dance for Lindbergh. Whenever he felt the urge, he often used to get up and do a little tap dance.

It was very nice of Lindbergh to come. He didn't know who I was from Adam. But I guess he didn't want the stuffed-shirt business. We didn't talk much. Very little. But I could see that he wanted a bit of relaxation.

TC: Short of having the Charles A. Lindbergh Papers at Yale University to guide us, some secondary sources along with front-page coverage in *The New York Times* must be cited here to put Marion's tale in clearer perspective. The two best books are Lindbergh's own *Autobiography of Values* (New York 1978) and A. Scott Berg's biography *Lindbergh* (New York 1998). The former reminds us, in Lindbergh's own words, that once he made his historic flight in May 1927, his time was no longer his own, for any purpose:

"From the moment I woke in the morning to that when I fell asleep late at night, every hour was scheduled. Once when I thought I had a few minutes to myself, a hundred pictures were brought to me to autograph. There was no time for the things I wanted most to do" (p. 314).

Certainly this was true of the Monday in New York that Marion describes, June 13, 1927, confirmed by the summary of "Today's Lindbergh Program" published by *The Times* each day that week. For the 13th itself, for example, Lindbergh had obligations starting at 10:45 in the morning and continuing with 11:15, 11:30, 12:30, 12:45: 1:00, 1:30, 2:30, 3:00, and so on.

Scott Berg recounts the eventful Monday in his esteemed biography *Lindbergh*. "Four hours after arriving in the Battery [at 12:40 in the afternoon], Lindbergh faced the three hundred thousand people who had emptied into Central Park's Sheep Meadow for the official honors of New York State" (p. 157).

Berg continues by recounting, "After a thirty-minute review of the tail end of the parade, Lindbergh and his mother [who'd met him at the Battery] were taken to an apartment at 270 Park Avenue, which had been loaned to them by a friend of the Mayor [Jimmy Walker] for the duration of their stay in the city. At the apartment, Lindbergh ate his first food since leaving Washington early that morning. It was also his first quiet moment in ten hours" (p. 158).

Berg's account continues: "By 8:15 that night [still on Monday, June 13], a revived Lindbergh was driven to the Long Island estate of Clarence Mackay—head of the Postal Telegraph Company, one of the city's most prominent social leaders, and the disapproving father-in-law of Irving Berlin.

At Harbor Hill, his fifty-room mansion in Roslyn, Mackay hosted a dinner for eighty in Lindbergh's honor with several hundred more guests arriving later for dancing. Lindbergh did not return to Park Avenue until after midnight" (p. 158).

"Wednesday night [June 15], after a full day of receptions and a midnight benefit performance of *Rio Rita*—the Ziegfeld musical he had missed weeks earlier [in favor of his historic flight], when the weather over the Atlantic had suddenly cleared—Lindbergh took the wheel of a car himself and sped out to Mitchel Field on Long Island" (p. 159).

"At 7:40 a.m. [on Thursday, June 16], Lindbergh flew toward Roosevelt Field [on Long Island], grazing over the runway from which he had made history one month earlier, then landed at Mitchel Field. . . . Back at his apartment [on Park Avenue, later on the 16th] he changed into evening clothes for a reception of University of Wisconsin alumni and a dinner of the Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce. Later [that same evening], he dropped in on a party given by William Randolph Hearst, which was also attended by the Mayor and Charlie Chaplin" (p. 160). *The Times* reported that the party was held at the Hotel Warwick and that Lindbergh "looked in" on it for all of ten minutes before returning to Park Avenue.

It was evidently on Wednesday afternoon, June 15, that Lindbergh had to make a hard decision, as Berg further recounts. "The most extravagant offer [of the many he received] came from William Randolph Hearst, whose media empire included Cosmopolitan Pictures. He wanted to star Lindbergh in a motion picture about aviation opposite his mistress, Marion Davies. Hearst offered Lindbergh $500,000 plus ten percent of the gross receipts . . . [an arrangement] leaving him financially set for life" (p. 162).

The rest of the story is fairly well known: Lindbergh had gone to the Clarendon that afternoon to meet briefly with Hearst, whereupon the young aviator turned down the sumptuous offer. Hearst told Lindbergh to toss the contract into the fire; and so he did (though why a fire burned in June in New York—in the daytime—has never been questioned). At any rate, the deal died a sudden death; yet it wasn't until Lindbergh's autobiography was published posthumously in 1978 that the real reason for his refusal was disclosed.

In a word, Lindbergh didn't like Hearst.

"But there were reasons against accepting," as Lindbergh put it in his *Autobiography of Values*. "William Randolph Hearst controlled a chain of newspapers from New York to California that represented values far apart from mine. They seemed to me overly sensational, inexcusably inaccurate,

and excessively occupied with the troubles and vices of mankind. I disliked most of the men I had met who represented him, and I did not want to become associated with the organization he had built" (p. 317).

Likewise well known is the upshot of Lindbergh's trip to the Clarendon: while leaving, he admired two silver globes of Hearst's, German antiques dating from about 1700, and was amazed when Hearst gave them to him by courier the next day, June 16. In the Lindbergh Exhibit in St. Louis in 1942, the inventory of the art objects and other items said of the globes: "Presented by Wm. Randolph Hearst, June 15, 1927" (*Autobiography of Values*, p. 318). The date would have been that of Lindbergh's Wednesday visit, not of the courier delivery. The disparity can be reconciled well enough (perhaps Lindbergh's cameo appearance at the Hotel Warwick late on June 16 was to thank Hearst for the lavish gift that day). What cannot be reconciled is Marion's account of events on Monday the 13th.

Hearst's own account of Lindbergh's visit to the Clarendon appeared in an editorial in 1934. See "Charles A. Lindbergh" in E. F. Tompkins, ed., *Selections from the Writings and Speeches of William Randolph Hearst* (San Francisco 1948), pp. 61-62 (under "Biographical").

MD: When Lindbergh was out in California [in September 1927, while on his cross-country hero's tour], he came to MGM. And we were driving to the airport, and a potentate whose name I won't mention was taking all the bows from the schoolkids. The kids were bowing to Lindbergh, not to Louis B. Mayer, but Lindbergh was sitting next to me, and he was laughing. He was very conservative, very quiet. Smiling, but not saying much.

TC: Guiles has Lindbergh making "a quick trip by air to San Simeon, where he was photographed next to his delighted host"—this while on the California part of his tour; *Marion Davies,* p. 198. I was thus misled in writing *Hearst's Dream* (San Luis Obispo 1989), p. 68, by Guiles's conflation with the visit Lindbergh made to Wyntoon in 1941. Lindbergh's own book *The Spirit of St. Louis* (New York 1953) contains a complete log and map of his cross-country trip. It shows that he was in Los Angeles on September 20–21, 1927; pp. 509, 514-515. His later *Autobiography of Values* includes a similar map, p. 82. San Simeon unmistakably was not among the many stops he made that year. He's portrayed elsewhere as having been at San Simeon in 1933, a claim that may well be baseless (see Chapter 9, p. 7).

MD: Well, that was 1927 [that Lindbergh was in New York and Los Angeles], if I have to mention the date. The first thing you know, they are going to make me a hundred and five years old. They lie about Louella's age in *Who's Who.* If they can say she's sixty, then I'm ten.

TC: Louella Parsons, b. 1881, was forty-five during the Lindbergh events described; Marion was thirty.

MD: And Tallulah [Bankhead] never mentions any dates. They always make the older people older. People said that Mary Pickford must be sixty-three, and I'd say, "Wait a minute. Now Mary can't be more than thirty-five." But why do they add on age to motion picture stars, while newspaper columnists can pull their own ages down?

TC: Miss Bankhead was the author of *Tallulah: An Autobiography* (New York 1952), but it didn't appear until after Marion made the tapes with Stanley Flink (starting in 1951). Mary Pickford, b. 1892, was fifty-nine when Marion began making the tapes; Marion was fifty-four.

PP/KSM: *Marion and W.R. made a point of taking time for travel. They made a trip a year to Europe, always stopping in New York.*

In June 1927 Marion had rushed to New York to join W.R. for the celebration of Lindbergh's successful flight [of May 20–21]. They were again in New York when the public caught the enthusiasm for "talkies." Both events were spectacles of the times.

TC: Marion and W.R. had last been in Europe in 1922. They didn't go there again until 1928. They made four more trips after that: in 1930, 1931, 1934, and 1936.

MD: We had just come back from Europe [in October 1928] when the signs were flashing, "See Al Jolson in 'Sit Upon My Knee, Sonny Boy'" or whatever it was [*The Singing Fool*]. It really got me disturbed.

Maury Paul went with me to the Capitol Theatre to see the picture. When I heard the voice of Al Jolson, I thought, No. This can't be. There can't be talkies. I'm ruined. I'm wrecked.

When Jolson started singing, "When there are clear skies . . ." I started to cry. The mascara ran all over my face. He sang, "I'll think of you, Sonny Boy . . ."

Maury said, "What's the matter with you?"

The picture was really wonderful, but I kept thinking, I'm ruined. When we went back to the Ritz Towers, I couldn't stop crying. But I kept singing, "When there are clear skies, I'll think of youuuuu."

I was crying in the elevator, and when W.R. saw me he said, "What's the matter?"

Maury said, "Sonny Boy got her down."

I really thought I was finished. But the funny part of it was, I didn't have any trouble. No one thought I could talk, and I didn't think I could either. I stuttered. I was scared to death when I got word I had to make a test at MGM. I didn't know what to do. They sent me a script and said, "Memorize this."

I looked through the dialogue; it was very silly. So I called Irving Thalberg and said, "Do I have to play both parts?"

"No. We have George K. Arthur. We'll be ready in about half an hour.

"I can't memorize this in half an hour."

"Stage 2 in half an hour," he said.

So George K. Arthur came over, and he agreed it was the silliest dialogue he had ever heard. Like, "Do you think it's nice to be in a river with a caterpillar?" I tore it up and said we were going to ad lib. He said, "But—what about me?"

I said, "Just follow me. I'll lead you." But he was English and wasn't too brave, so we had a glass of sherry before we went on the set.

There were others making tests, and I was really cringing. When they said, "Ready for Miss Davies," I was petrified. I couldn't budge. But they found me and we got on the set. They had a camera with a big mirror on it so you could see yourself while you were acting. I didn't care to look.

I'd had a little sherry, and you'd think I knew what I was talking about. I started a routine. I said, "This is a dinner where [there are] ersters. From Brooklyn . . . ersters . . ." And I went on from there, and I wouldn't stop.

TC: Marion's wording of "there are ersters" was, presumably, a playful reference to oysters. In opting for "we are eating ersters," Bobbs-Merrill made a questionable change in 1975. Marion's real meaning here warranted more thoughtful editing or a best-guess notation—or both.

MD: I said to George [K. Arthur], "Sit down."

"There's no chair."

"Well . . . fall down. What's the difference?"

We went on ad-libbing lines until Douglas [Shearer] said, "That's it. That's the end."

That was Norma Shearer's brother, the head of the sound department. He was up in the booth. So thank God it was over, and I went home [to the Beach House] and I talked to Mr. Hearst and he asked how it went and I said no. "I've decided I'm going back to Europe; don't care for the climate out here. I like it better in Europe. Much nicer. Better for me.

"As a matter of fact, this sound thing is progressive, but I don't care for it. Get reservations tomorrow for me. The first plane, then a boat . . ." I went to the beach house and the whole [Davies-Douras] family was there and I said, "Go away from me. Don't talk to me, please. I don't care for this idea at all. I'm going to sleep and I hope I never wake up . . ."

The next day Irving Thalberg called me to come to the studio immediately. I said to him, "I can't. I'm not feeling well."

"Look. I want to talk to you." He was very severe. He said, "I have some news for you which you're not going to like."

All right, I thought. So I got dressed and went over. He said, "What did you do?"

"I didn't do anything."

"You made a test last night. What did you do?"

"I didn't do anything."

"Well, whatever you did, you stunned the other people. You're the only one who's getting a new contract. Yours is the best [test]; do you want to see it?"

I said, "NO!"

You've got a new five-year contract," he said.

"You're lying to me, Irving."

"No," he said. "The others'll go. [John] Gilbert, [William] Haines, [George K.] Arthur, [Ramon] Novarro . . . You're the only one. I want you to stay . . . Who wrote your dialogue?"

I said, "I don't know. He's the one you sent over."

"I'll have him promoted [Thalberg said]. Who was it?"

"He was a great writer. It was a wonderful script."

"But how did you memorize it so quickly?"

"Because it was such a marvelous script."

Then W.R. arrived. We looked at the test, and W.R. started to cry. He said, "My God, it's marvelous."

So they got me right into production immediately. In *Marianne* [set in World War I], they asked me to do everything but stand on my head. I danced, I sang, did [Maurice] Chevalier imitations in a French accent. I was dramatic and comic at the same time in my first talkie.

PP/KSM: Marianne *[the aforementioned talkie] was not released until October 1929. The studio made both a silent and a sound version. It was reviewed favorably as a talkie, and the silent print was never shown.*

MD: Now I had to beat myself into talking. I didn't know anything about Christian Science then, but I thought, If you're going to do it, you do it. If you don't do it, you spank yourself. That was the idea. I tried talking with a pebble in my mouth, like Demosthenes [the Greek orator]. It might have worked for Demosthenes, but it didn't for me. I just swallowed the pebble.

Yet through all those takes, never once did I stammer. My leading man in *Marianne* was Lawrence Gray. He had a wonderful voice and a very good disposition. It was easy to work with him. Except one day

he took off his uniform coat, because it was warm, and he put it on this curling thing the hairdresser had on the stage. He burned a hole in it.

He blew his top when they didn't have another coat his size in the wardrobe. But they whipped one up in a hurry, and the next day he did the same thing. He blamed it on the hairdresser, and there was a riot on the set. He was so mad, but he should have known the iron was there.

While we were making *Marianne,* Irving [Thalberg] never lost his temper with me. He had plenty of reason to lose it, but he never did. He'd look at me and say, "Why did you do that?" He could give you a stare that made you feel just so high.

One time he said we could have an orchestra for three hours to do a number. We finished it in two hours. So I suggested we throw in another number, and we did. He said, "Don't ever do that again." I thought Irving was really mad. He had never talked to me like that, and I choked up, but he left that number in the picture, and it was a big success.

Later he said he was sorry. He said, "You were right. I hate to admit it, but I like to give credit where it's due." The number I had added had already been written for the show, but he had said he didn't like it. It was "Hang on to me, hang on to me"; Benny Rubin and Cliff Edwards did it. My back was turned to the camera, because I didn't know how to sing very well. I was supposed to be weeping because my soldier was mad at me. I didn't sing the song. It was a good chance for them to do things behind my back.

Irving Thalberg was always very kind. If he was preparing a story of you, and you read it, he would ask, "Is there anything in this that you don't like?" He was terribly busy, but he would say, "Come to my office and we'll talk it over."

Everybody went to his office; I don't know how he ever got through his work. I'd go in and we'd argue a little bit, back and forth, and then he would say, "Is this entirely *your* thought?"

I knew what he meant [in allusion to W.R.]. I'd say, "Yes. In a way." I had another honor; I was known as liar number one. But there were certain times when the truth would hop out of me before I'd realize it. So when I said, "In a way," he knew.

Irving said, "You don't understand what I'm trying to do. I'm trying to get you away from those namby-pamby pictures to do something with a little character. Mr. Hearst doesn't want you to do anything the slightest bit off color, and I have no intention of doing that. I just want to strike a happy medium. I want you to do something that isn't entirely gutless, something that means something. And I don't want to be told about these things by another person."

That was the only time that he got the hair up on his neck. He said, "Don't you have confidence in me? If you leave it to me, I'll see you through."

"All right," I said.

I was at a very bad disadvantage. Irving could talk me into anything, and he knew damn well he could. I didn't know as much as he knew. I thought you should reason things out, and if you were right, admit it; and if you were wrong, admit it. I didn't mean to be facetious; I just wanted him to know that I respected his opinion—which I did, and who didn't?

When *The Big Parade* was opening [in 1925], I wanted to ask Irving something, so I went to his office. His assistant, Bernie Hyman, said, "Irving's home. He's very sick." But I heard him telling somebody else, "Send those reels of film over to Mr. Thalberg's house [707 Ocean Front in Santa Monica]. He's going to work on them there."

So I went over to Irving's house. He was in bed with the flu. A screen was up, and the [film] cutter was there, and they were working like mad. It was only four days to the opening, I think.

"Hello," I said.

"Sit down for a minute; I'm sort of working." He was saying, "Cut this here and cut that there and two inches here and . . ." On and on he

went, until they finished the reel. "All right," he said, "what's griping you?"

"Nothing. I just wanted to come over and see how a sick person acts. And I've learned plenty."

His mother had said to me, "Please tell Irving not to work so hard. He's so sick." He wasn't married yet to Norma Shearer, but just after that, there was the lovely wedding [in 1927]. Again I was a bridesmaid, and Norma looked beautiful in a gorgeous costume—the wedding dress, not exactly a costume.

W.R. was crazy about Thalberg. He said, "Ofttimes the word genius is misplaced, but in the case of Irving, [that] is a conceded fact." Look at all the wonderful pictures he made.

Irving loved parties; they were his way of relaxing. And everybody loved him.

He was always kind of frail looking. But he needn't have died so young [at thirty-seven in 1936]. I think he ran his motor out, because all he had on his mind was work. Pictures and work.

MD: Louis B. Mayer helped me out when I was called to Washington in the middle of making *Marianne* [in 1929]. I went by train. It was early morning when I arrived, and I wasn't feeling any too good, because I hadn't slept. I was worried because I didn't really know what they wanted.

The meeting was held in the Customs House, which looked like a jail. At the table were thirteen men, my unlucky number.

My New York lawyer [Geoffrey Konta] who had made out my income tax was there, and a Commissioner Harris, who wanted to know what a deduction for an automobile for going on location was all about. I said, "If you go on location and use your own car, you have to buy gasoline and all, and that's the deduction."

Then it was powder, greasepaint and lipstick. I said, "Those are necessary for my work. Did you ever try to work on the screen without getting made up?"

That must have rubbed him the wrong way. The Commissioner said, "Don't be funny." And he threw out that deduction. Then he went on and on with the silliest things. Like hairpins, which anybody's who's working would deduct.

My lawyer was looking at me as if he didn't know me, and those thirteen men were staring at me. At the end, the Commissioner said, "You have been defrauding the government. It will cost you exactly $950,000."

I went down to the bathroom there and started to cry. I was hungry. Even though I had had nothing to eat, I vomited.

One of the stenographers followed me in. She said, "This is awful. I've never heard anything like it before."

When I went back upstairs, the men had taken a different attitude. They even stood up, which was very nice; they hadn't done that before. I guess the secretary had told them I was very ill.

My New York lawyer turned out to be no help to me at all. I blamed him for the whole thing, anyway. When you are working, you cannot make out your income tax by yourself. You leave it to lawyers, and you pay them for it. If anything is wrong, it's not your fault.

I said to the Commissioner, "I'm sorry. I'm in the midst of a picture and I'm holding up the studio. What can I do?"

They wanted $950,000 in a certified check, and an extra $110,000. I said, "What is *that* for?" It was for dismissing the claim of defrauding the government.

TC: The combined amount—$1,060,000—would be the equivalent in 2013 of roughly $14,000,000.

PP/KSM: *As time passes, the government retires its records. While Marion's round numbers seem extraordinary, she did have tax liabilities for her film production company, her real estate investments and her personal income, and these figures may have covered several years.*

During the thirties, Marion continued to have tax problems. Newspapers reported that her tax for 1931—$100,292—had been found deficient and that she was being charged an additional $52,044. Since the tax rates for that year were lower than they had been in the 1920s, it was

the sign of a fantastic income. The total tax of $152,336 [$2,269,137 in 2013] probably had to be less than five percent of her annual income.

MD: I called Louis B. Mayer and got the money from him. He didn't want to stop production [on *Marianne*], so he said, "Come back as quick as you can. Take a plane."

Of course I took the train back, and then I worked for two years for nothing.

PP/KSM: *It was a studio practice to advance the stars money when they needed it—thus assuring cooperation and a continued flow of films.*

MD: It was all a political thing. I don't want to mention his name, but he [Herbert Hoover] was the President of the United States, and he had been attacked by the Hearst papers for going to South America [while President-elect, late in 1928]. He was getting even by using me.

TC: "Hearst is back again [at San Simeon]. . . . He is railing on Hoover, who has deeply insulted him." So begins a typically histrionic passage in "Here and There," an unpublished memoir-diary by a workman named Hayes Perkins; its San Simeon portions were initially composed in the late 1920s and early 1930s. "As Hearst backed Hoover for president, he feels the latter should in some way pay for that support."

Fine and well on that score, but then Perkins blasts away with both barrels:

"Rumor saith Hoover and wife have been invited here to meet Princess Marion. Louis B. Mayer carried the invitation to the White House, and Hoover almost chased Mayer out of the place. As Marion means more to Hearst than all else he has, he is much peeved, and threatens dire vengeance."

Doubly histrionic, yes, and yet Marion's claim that Hoover was "getting even" with her suggests that Perkins may have been on to something.

In any event, Hoover seems never to have been at San Simeon; however, he may (according to Perkins) have visited W.R. and Marion at Wyntoon in 1935. *Hearst and Marion: The Santa Monica Connection,* pp. 169-172. See also Taylor Coffman, ed., *The Wayward Diary: Hayes Perkins on W. R. Hearst, 1928–1936* (forthcoming).