# 5
# Hollywood

Chaplin makes a losing bet. A hole in the ice. Spurned by Garbo. Greasepaint, powder and lipstick. Crosby and Cooper and Gable: the nicest leading men. A film with Leslie Howard, who wasn't acting for a second.

**MD:** One day there were thirty or forty of us at breakfast—we called it a "hunt breakfast." We asked Charlie Chaplin if he was going to become a citizen. Charlie said, "I doubt it."

"Why not?"

That started the argument.

Charlie had been here twenty years [since the early 1910s] and had made a lot of money. So W.R. said, "You made your money in America. What's wrong with America? If you don't like it, why not go someplace else?"

"I will. However, I'm not going to have anybody tell me what to do." We let that one go, and then we got on the talkies subject.

I had just finished *Marianne* [1929], my first talking picture, and I was a little nervous [as to] the result.

Charlie Chaplin said, "I don't believe in talkies for myself, because I'm a pantomimist."

"I wouldn't say entirely," W.R. said. "You can talk. You're talking now."

"I will never make a talkie," said Charlie.

"Why don't you want to try it?"

"I'm against the whole idea," [said Charlie]. "And talkies won't last a year."

"I'd like to bet you they'll last a little bit longer," [said W.R.].

"I'm telling you they won't."

"I'll bet you five thousand dollars," [said W.R.].

"I'll bet you a hundred dollars they won't," [said Charlie].

"All right."

Then Charlie said, "I'm insulted. I'm leaving." And he left.

Harry d'Arrast said, "Look at the big genius. He knows all the answers."

"I don't know if he's right, but there should be no arguments at the table," W.R. said.

I said to him, "Why don't you go and apologize to him?"

"Why?"

"He's a guest, after all. Go and say you're sorry. Show him the other cheek."

"All right, I will." And W.R. went out with Harry d'Arrast and said, "Look, Charlie, I'm terribly sorry if I've hurt your feelings. I understand how you feel about talkies. You are purely a pantomimist. And this is out of your territory . . ."

"If I wanted to make a talkie, [said Charlie] I would. But I'm telling you they will not last."

So they agreed that talkies wouldn't last, and W.R. said, "Won't you finish your breakfast?"

Charlie said, "No. I'm going anyway. Thank you." And he left in a huff.

It was a silly argument, but W.R. was big enough to go out and apologize. He liked Charlie, but Charlie was like a cat; he had to go and start a fight. I was glad he had left, and I decided we wouldn't allow him in the house anymore.

But W.R. said, "Oh yes we will."

"Oh no we won't."

"Charlie's all right [said W.R.]. He's just a little nutty."

"You've apologized to him, and I think he should at least be gracious."

"Well, let's call him a genius."

**TC:** The setting of the "hunt breakfast" Marion recounted was most likely the Beach House in Santa Monica, not San Simeon.

**PP/KSM:** *Both Chaplin and Marion would make the transition into talking pictures. As theatres added sound equipment to their facilities, Chaplin expanded his talents to writing—both screenplays and music—and then to producing and directing. Gone were the days of vaudeville and one- or two-length productions. And he moved to Switzerland [in 1953].*

*Comedy moved from the kitchen to the drawing room, as romance moved from the parlor to the bedroom. But Marion still worked in costumes and wigs and furs.*

**TC:** IMDb assigns actor credits, director credits, writer credits, and editor credits to Chaplin as of 1914; producer credits as of 1916; and composer credits as of 1918.

**MD:** In *The Red Mill* [1927] I had to go ice skating in wooden shoes, which was ridiculous. I broke my arches. I had to skate alongside this Great Dane and fall through a hole in the ice.

When we rehearsed it, the dog wouldn't run, so they got a cat. Then he really started to run, and I was hanging on for dear life. I went down on all fours into this dirty pool over in the back lot [at MGM]. It was filthy water, and I got a frog in my throat, a real one. A little frog. And then they wanted to do the scene all over again.

But that Great Dane had caught the cat and broken its back. I went straight to my dressing room and called the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

I didn't mind falling in the water, but I didn't think they should have used a cat or let that dog get it. I didn't get any sense out of it. So I refused to work.

**PP/KSM:** *Was Marion thinking of her co-star, actor Karl Dane? The dog was a Saint Bernard.*

**MD:** That was the picture Fatty Arbuckle directed, but under a different name. After all the scandal [beginning in 1921], Nick Schenck [of Loew's Inc.] felt sorry for him and gave him a job. They called him Will B. Good. That was his name as the director.

**PP/KSM:** *William Goodrich was credited on screen.*

**TC:** *The Red Mill* was indeed directed by William Goodrich, better known as Roscoe Arbuckle (and even better known as the comedian Fatty Arbuckle). Arbuckle had been savaged by the Hearst press and other newspapers in the early 1920s on a trumped-up manslaughter charge, which ended in his acquittal. His film career was all but ruined, though, and he sought refuge in about fifty directorial efforts under the Goodrich name until his death in 1933 (IMDb). In *Marion Davies*, Guiles said nothing of the tragic Arbuckle-Goodrich except in the appendix, "The Films of Marion Davies," p. 388.

**MD:** But they didn't like the rushes [on *The Red Mill* ], so they put George Hill on. Then they didn't like George Hill's work, and they put Eddie Mannix on. And Eddie got fired.

That picture had so many directors I can't remember all their names. Every day I'd have a different director.

I went to the preview because I wanted to see the public's honest reaction. But where I thought I'd get laughs, I didn't. Nobody else cried at the drama, but I found myself in tears. I guess I was just sorry for myself. It laid a pancake. When I was ready to leave the theatre, my mother, who had come with me, had gone to the powder room, or so someone said.

But she hadn't. She was outside writing out preview cards. She knew my heart was broken, because I'd worked awfully hard on that picture, and now the reaction was null and void.

The next day there was a big stack of preview cards on Irving Thalberg's desk. "It was a great success," he said. All the cards were flattery; there was not a word of criticism.

I don't know how my mother managed to write all those cards, but Irving fell for them. Luckily he didn't know her handwriting. They said, "Marion is gorgeous—the best comedienne in the world." "Terrific." "She's marvelous."

Irving said, "They're wonderful cards. We've never gotten any better. You can't still think it laid a pancake?"

I said yes.

Then I went back to my bungalow and rang up my mother. I said, "What did you do that for?"

Now I had to figure out how to get those cards away from Irving before he found out. So I called his secretary and I said I wanted the preview cards.

"What do you want them for?"

"I want to show them to my mother. She doesn't think I'm any good on the screen. I'm having a hard time convincing her that the reaction was good."

Well, she gave me the cards. And I destroyed them.

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**MD:** I used to go to Europe for three months every summer, then I'd come back and do about three pictures a year.

**TC:** As noted elsewhere in this new edition, W.R. and Marion were in Europe briefly in 1922. The longer trips that Marion refers to here took place on five occasions: in 1928 as well as in 1930, 1931, 1934, and 1936. They didn't go to Europe in any of the intervening years, such as 1929 or 1932, nor did they ever go again after 1936.

**MD:** Once I was doing two pictures at the same time. On one set I would work from nine in the morning until six. Then at seven I'd go to work on the other set and work until four in the morning. I'd sleep in between. I did that for about six weeks. There were two different crews, because the crews wouldn't work that long. And two different casts.

**TC:** In Chapter 3, p. 3, Marion tells essentially the same story, and she identifies the films in the process: *The Red Mill* and *Tillie the Toiler*, each dating from the late 1926-early 1927 period.

**MD:** I could take it then [working overtime]; it didn't bother me at all. I even liked doing it, working day and night. I wasn't on union time, but I was getting paid a high salary. W.R. wasn't in Los Angeles then, and I didn't tell him about it. The moment they knew he was

away, they asked me to do the work. I don't know whether the studio was going broke, or whether they just needed an extra picture.

When I had a choice, I liked working at night better than in the daytime. I didn't like the cold early mornings with the cold greasepaint on my face. I had my chauffeur drive me and my maid to the studio. If I had been driving I'd never have gotten there. I didn't know one street from another. I wasn't sure where Santa Monica was, much less Burbank.

**TC:** "Santa Monica" alludes to the Beach House, "Burbank" to the Warner Bros. studio as of 1935 and Marion's post-MGM career.

**PP/KSM:** *Though Marion was surrounded by wealth and the glamour of Hollywood stardom, still she retained a sense of humor and compassion for those who worked for her or with her. Marion is still remembered for her kindliness and great generosity. She was never a snob.*

**MD:** The best way to get along with directors is not to be the star. Just be under direction, which is the proper thing to do. That's what they're there for; they're supposed to direct you—you're not supposed to direct the director.

If you say, "I don't like the way you're doing this scene," it humiliates him. You should take orders. Otherwise you wouldn't need a director. Most stars don't realize that. And every director has a different approach.

Actors may think they know it all, but they don't see the outside view. You have to rely on the director to tell you where you're wrong. The person who's observing knows more than the person who's actually doing it. I learned that at the Empire School [in the 1917–1918 period].

**PP/KSM:** *The Empire Theatre Dramatic School was located on the southeast corner of Broadway and 40th Street in Manhattan.*

**MD:** Most directors are very sympathetic. They'll say, "Look, you're a little bit underbalanced in this scene," or ". . . a little overemotional in that." You should take the cue and measure it down.

The kind of director you need will just come up and say, "Now, look, you can do better. You're nervous. Take it easy. You know what the scene is—just pretend there's nobody looking at you, and give it all you've got."

That's if you have anything to give. If you make a mistake, then he'll tell you. Bob Leonard [Robert Z. Leonard] and Richard Boleslavsky [Boleslawski] were that way. But Boley had a heart attack and died after making a picture with Joan Crawford [*The Last of Mrs. Cheyney*, 1937]. He was very sensitive.

**PP/KSM:** *The author of* Acting: The First Six Lessons*, a classic for aspiring thespians [New York 1933].*

**MD:** Right after *Marianne* [1929], which was a talkie, I made *The Patsy*, a silent film, in fourteen days. It was a very funny picture and it did very well. Marie Dressler and Larry Gray were in it, and King Vidor directed.

**PP/KSM:** *Released in 1928, it grossed $617,000, and MGM reported a profit of $155,000. They also reported that it took twenty-seven days to make.*

**MD:** I was the patsy, the youngest one in the family, who everybody hated. They'd say, "Run and do this, or do that, and take your elbows off the table, and blow your nose."

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**MD:** I saw [Greta] Garbo only once [at MGM], when she decided she wasn't going on the set. On a very warm day I happened to go by in time to hear her say, "Why should I work? It's so silly and I'm hot. . . . Goodbye."

**TC:** Garbo had been to San Simeon as early as 1927, before the period that Marion's alluding to here (1928, as elaborated below in this section, pp. 8-10. Regarding San Simeon, see *Building for Hearst and Morgan*, p. 21, note 8).

**MD:** "Hello," I said [to Garbo].

She said, “It is very silly for people to work in this heat. Look at this hot dressing room; and not even a toilet.”

“You can use mine if you want to.”

“No, I’ve got mine.” She had one of those [chamber] pots. “It’s very good for this reason—you can dump it out on top of the directors.”

“Aw, you wouldn’t.”

“I wouldn’t, eh?”

She really had a wonderful sense of humor.

Then she said, “I don’t feel good. I don’t [know] why people work like this, under these conditions. It’s perfectly preposterous. Now I have a leading man who seems to think he can be a little bit salacious.”

“Who’s that?”

“Jack Gilbert.”

“Oh! But he’s very nice. I’ve seen him,” I said, “but I don’t know him.”

“You don’t? Don’t!” Then she said, “Come and see me sometime on the set.” Now that sounded funny, because everyone knew she wouldn’t allow anybody to see her on the set.

I was doing my picture right on the same stage. Her half was all blocked off, but mine wasn’t, and one day she came over. I thought, This is flattery, that she’d come over to see me act; I must be great. When she went back to her set, I said to the director, Pop Leonard [Robert Z. Leonard], “Have you got a scene you can do without me? I’d like to go over and repay the compliment.”

“I’ll give you about five minutes.”

I went into a maze of [scenery] flats, which she had planned. She was in the middle of a scene, with Fred Niblo directing, but the moment she heard me walking along she said, “Stop the camera. . . . Who’s there?”

Fred Niblo saw me and said, “Miss Garbo does not want anybody on the set.”

I said, “I know. But Miss Garbo came on my set, and I thought I’d repay the compliment.”

Greta said, "I've got to get my hair done—I'm terribly sorry."

I said, "Can I go and help you get your hair done?"

She said no. "I have my own hairdresser." Well, she had this little bit of a dressing room with the flats around it, and she told the hairdresser, "Push the hair anyplace; it annoys me." To me she said, "Why don't you go back to your set?"

"Well," I said, "I thought I'd like to come over and see you. I understand you're a wonderful actress. You were nice enough to come to my set. I thought I'd repay the courtesy." I was dying to see how she worked.

"You're very funny. You make me laugh," she said. "I didn't come over to see you—I came over to see a great actress, Miss Goudal." Jetta Goudal was doing a scene in French. "She's a very good actress, but she's stealing my stuff, and I don't like it." Then she said, "They're calling you on your set."

"I don't hear any call."

**PP/KSM:** *The action of* Her Cardboard Lover *[1928] takes place in Monte Carlo. Jetta Goudal, a celebrated European actress, co-starred with Marion.*

**TC:** The only one of Garbo's films directed by Fred Niblo in 1928 was *The Mysterious Lady,* released a month before Marion's film *Her Cardboard Lover;* however, Garbo played opposite Conrad Nagel, not John Gilbert. The other Garbo-Niblo collaboration in this period was *The Temptress* (1926), whose male lead was played by Antonio Moreno. Greta Garbo and John Gilbert played opposite each other in *Flesh and the Devil* (1926), *Love* (1927), and *A Woman of Affairs* (1929). The first of those was directed by Clarence Brown, as was the third one; in between, on *Love,* Edmund Goulding directed. Fred Niblo directed Gilbert in *Redemption* (1930, in which he played the lead). Among the foregoing details are numerous ones that Marion could (and did) conflate in 1951. (IMDb; also Mark Vieira to TC by e-mail, 2010)

**MD:** "You're wasting my time," [Garbo said]. "Get off before I have to kick you off. Go back to your set. I won't act. I don't like anybody watching me."

I said, "Well, that goes both ways. Don't you come on my set, either."

"You're very funny, but it's very peculiar. To me, you are null and void—is that the word?"

I said, "Uh huh."

"I don't care about your acting. I just like to visit."

"Well, so do I," [Marion said]. And I'm going to stay here."

"Oh no you don't," [Garbo said]. "It's going to cost the company money, and you're going to be blamed for it. They'll put it [the extra expense] on your production."

"Then I'll leave."

Once Arthur Brisbane wanted to watch Garbo work, and one of the studio heads took him up to the sound booth, way up above. Suddenly she said, "I will not go on any further. There is a man up in the booth whom I do not know. He's watching me, and I will not perform till he gets out."

**TC:** Garbo's first sound movie was *Anna Christie* (1930), directed by Clarence Brown (IMDb).

**MD:** How could she see, with the lights on her face? But she would not move, and Brisbane had to leave.

She might have smelled him. Anybody could.

I always maintained that if you're so shy about visitors, why wouldn't you be shy about the electricians or the property boys? There's always an audience. You might have hundreds of people looking at you while you're doing a scene. What difference does a few visitors make?

**TC:** Marion's comment about Brisbane's odor is surprising. The man was known for his gentlemanly good looks.

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**MD:** I would be at the studio early to get my makeup on, but I didn't go on the set. I'd slop the makeup on and read the paper and take it easy. The dialogue didn't mean anything to me. There was

some old-fashioned theory that you could remember it if you slept on it, so I used to put it on my pillow at night. But that didn't work; when I got on the set, I didn't know one line of it. Anyway, why learn it at night when they were going to change it in the morning anyway?

I'd be in the bungalow and I'd be wanted on the set. I'd say, "Just a second, and don't give me those three horns. Not even one."

One horn meant they were waiting for the star; two horns, the rest of the cast; and three horns, the stragglers. After that, the assistant director would come over and very politely say, "Will you kindly come on the set?"

I'd say no; I was trying to learn the dialogue. Bing [Crosby] got mad at me every once in a while, but W.R. never did. He used to coax us not to work. I think he thought it was a waste of time.

Sometimes I would even get to the set around eleven. Sometimes ten—sometimes noon. Then at luncheon we had banquets at the bungalow, and we'd sit around and talk about things. We wouldn't talk about pictures.

We would get back on the set around three, do a scene or so, and then have tea about four-thirty. They would blow the whistle at five, and everybody'd whisk off. So we'd only get a few scenes done all day.

But W.R. didn't worry about the budget. He'd even call the set at about a quarter to five and say it was time to quit. He'd be lonesome. He'd say, "You've been working all day"—not knowing we'd done only one scene.

**TC:** Archival sources like the William Randolph Hearst Papers at The Bancroft Library indicate that W.R. worried almost constantly about budgets, with regard to films and to all his other enterprises. Later, Bill Hearst delved into his father's misunderstood "attitude toward money and knowledge of economics" in *The Hearsts* (Bill's memoir of 1991, pp. 242-245, and its revised edition of 2013, pp. 323-324).

**MD:** When I first started making movies, I was on the legitimate stage at the same time. On matinee days, Wednesday and Saturdays, I

didn't work in the films. To make up for those days, I'd work very late, and I'd work Sundays. There weren't any regular hours.

**TC:** Marion appeared in three musical revues on Broadway between 1917 and 1920. *Miss 1917* and *Words and Music* overlapped late in 1917 and early in 1918; *Ed Wynn's Carnival* played in the summer of 1920 (IBDB).

**MD:** W.R. never demanded regular hours from anybody. It was not at all like it is now, like a machine, with a time clock. In those days you'd go on the set when you were ready, then you'd rehearse and think a scene over, discuss it, make little changes here and there, and then try it again.

When I was working at MGM, I'd leave the beach house early and do my makeup in the automobile. I used very little; just the greasepaint, the powder and the lipstick. The eyelashes were hard to do while the car was going.

It took exactly fifteen minutes from my house to MGM, and I'd be all made up when we got there. Only my hair would need to be fixed, and I'd be on the set right at nine, all ready, and we'd talk the scenes over. Then we'd get a normal amount of work done.

I didn't want to quit at five, but some of the other actors would blow their whistles and go off the set. I would stay and do close-ups. That was kind of smart of me anyway.

Then I'd look at the rushes and talk with the director and the writer, and I wouldn't get home before ten or eleven. Then I'd go over my dialogue [sometimes with George Currie] for about two hours and still be up early the next morning.

**TC:** Guiles, in *Marion Davies,* p. 72, mentions "Professor Currie, who headed the elocution department" at the Empire School of Acting in New York, which Marion attended in the late 1910s. George Currie occurs in the annals in more detail in the George & Rosalie Hearst Collection. He was sometimes at San Simeon and Wyntoon for Marion's benefit, not just at the Beach House.

**MD:** That was at MGM [the schedule just described], but Warners was different [as of January 1935]. There you weren't allowed

to make yourself up. No matter how early you were, there was always a delay waiting for the makeup man. They fixed your hair over and gave you a big mouth. That was the Joan Crawford mouth idea. By the time they got finished, I was bound to be late on the set. We used to call them the wrecking crew, but you didn't want to blame anybody. I'd just say, "It was my fault."

It made no difference. The time that was lost was always made up in some way.

**PP/KSM:** *Marion was indeed a unique movie star. With the support of W.R., she had financing and promotional opportunities that transformed the make-believe stories of the film into the real event of the day. She could be precocious and powerful. She had the support of her fans among the public. She could pay for extra scenes in her films and for the extra niceties of life. And she did.*

*In 1926, her "bungalow" was completed on the MGM lot. Decorated in ornate Spanish castle style, it was situated in Davies Square facing the administration building [along Washington Boulevard] and served as more than just a dressing room.*

*It was a fourteen-room mansion which cost $75,000 then, and it frequently was used for lavish luncheons. After serving at the MGM lot, it was dismantled and moved to the Warner Brothers Studio [in Burbank] when Marion moved there. Finally it was moved to Benedict Canyon in Beverly Hills and sold as a private house.*

**TC:** Officially, the Cosmopolitan bungalow was the West Coast headquarters of Hearst's International Film Service, the parent company of Cosmopolitan Productions and of Hearst Metrotone News.

The various dates and details of what Pfau and Marx have summarized here regarding the bungalow are expanded upon in Coffman, *Building for Hearst and Morgan,* pp. 566 (index listings), and in the same author's *Hearst and Marion: The Santa Monica Connection* (searchable under "bungalow" in that online posting).

**MD:** We used to have big luncheons in my bungalow [while at MGM]. There was always some potentate arriving from Washington or Europe. The studio didn't mind, because they sort of liked the publicity. And we'd make up the time. We'd work a little bit overtime.

I would invite the whole cast to the luncheons, and the studio executives, and maybe some other stars who were working on other sets—Norma Shearer and Joan Crawford and the rest of them. Not Garbo, because she wouldn't go anywhere; she'd just stay in her dressing room and eat salad.

When they'd tell me that so and so was coming for luncheon, it was hard to keep my mind on the work. When people were on the stage and you had to talk to them, say "How do you do and blah, blah," and then you had to get right back into the character again, it wasn't very easy.

I thought I had a more difficult job to do than Garbo had. She could relax between scenes, while I had other things to do. But she didn't agree.

W.R. was after me all the time about my acting. He used to say, "I don't mean to criticize, but if you'll do it this way . . ." And he'd explain it. "You don't put enough drama into it. Your comedy is all right, but your voice is too high-pitched."

He would coach me, and we'd go over the scripts line by line. When I'd see him with a pencil, I'd say, "Oh, Lord, don't change it. I've got it memorized."

He'd say, "This little change won't bother you."

We'd rehearse it, and it would throw me off a bit. Lots of times he'd sit on the set, which would make me a little nervous. He'd say, "You've got to do that over. You can do better." He had a very good sense of the dramatic, and of comedy, too.

Once I was doing a scene with Louise Fazenda. The dialogue wasn't very good. W.R. wanted to change it, and [he] said, "You're supposed to be a secretary, so when you apply for a job, Louise should ask you, 'Are you an amanuensis?'" I didn't know what it meant, but he wanted to change it to that.

I said, "Well, she probably has it rehearsed already."

"But we should change it anyway, if she knows what it means [the term amanuensis] . . ."

I said, "She does. She's very intelligent." [When we went on the set,] I was almost afraid to give the new dialogue to the director.

**PP/KSM:** *Lloyd Bacon was directing* Ever Since Eve *for Warner Brothers [in 1937], and this was to be Marion's last film.*

**MD:** When I told him, he said, "Oh, for Christ's sake, do you know what amanuensis means?" I didn't know. Louise looked at me and winked, and they had a discussion about that line. Hal Wallis was the supervisor, and he asked if anybody knew what amanuensis meant.

**PP/KSM:** *Supervisor was an early Hollywood term for producer.*

**MD:** "Well," said the director, "that fixes it; let's go back to the old dialogue. This is a lot of crap."

Louise and I let them go on with their little act, and then I said, "Now wait a minute. I don't know how to pronounce it, but Louise does, I think."

She said yes, then she added, "It means, are you qualified to be a secretary?"

The director called up the studio librarian, who told him it was okay. "All right," he said, "if you want to say a crap line like that, it's all right with me, but I don't want any part of it."

Louise said, "Well, after all, I've memorized it that way." Now she hadn't, but she was quick, and since W.R. had changed it, I wanted it in.

Usually they had to admit that W.R. was right. But when we'd go over the scripts after dinner, I'd think, Oh, here we go again.

I'd say, "Don't change too much. You're driving me crazy. I won't be able to do anything tomorrow." But he'd usually insist, because he took a keen interest in our work.

But I was the one who had to face the director in the morning. I'd say, "Let's give it a little more life, be a little more literate and give it more intelligence."

**MD:** W.R. would never allow the director to shoot a kiss on the mouth; the side was all right. He said that kissing on the mouth was unhealthy. Maybe he was right. I had read that there were more germs on the mouth than anywhere else, and I thought, How awful for lovers.

Besides, W.R. said, children do not like kissing. I didn't believe it until one time we were looking at a movie, and John Hearst's little boy Bunky [John, Jr., b. 1933], who was then eleven years old, was sitting alongside me. The hero grabbed the heroine and gave one of those luscious kisses, and Bunky hit his head and said, "Ughhh. That makes me sick."

**TC:** Bunky Hearst turned eleven in December 1944, right after W.R. and Marion left Wyntoon in favor of San Simeon, where they hadn't been for more than three years. Bunky lived with them through part of the postwar period, beginning in the winter of 1945–46; he recounted that rare experience in "Life with Grandfather," published by *Reader's Digest* in May 1960, pp. 152-162. Although Marion went unmentioned, she figured in further reminiscences by Bunky in Bill Hearst's book *The Hearsts*, pp. 241-243 (2013 edition).

**MD:** Kissing embarrasses youngsters. W.R. knew that. He said, "That's why Mary Pickford is such a great success. Remember this: play to the youth. Teach them a lesson about the beautiful in life, and do not say anything to make even one mother say, 'I do not want my child to look at that picture.' If you play to the younger audience, the older ones will take care of themselves."

Mary Pickford never made anything that was the slightest bit sexy. Neither did Shirley Temple. But I couldn't compare with them. I tried my best to follow in their tracks, but an imitator is always a poor example.

There was never anything naughty about any pictures I made. W.R. would not allow it, and he was in on every bit of cutting. We managed to strike an intermediate path.

I was very, very lucky that I always had—I won't say leading men; I have to call them stars. Bing [Crosby] and Clark [Gable] and Gary

Cooper and Bob Montgomery, Leslie Howard and Ray Milland were stars in their own right, and I was very fortunate. I had no prejudices at all. They were all very fine people to work with.

**TC:** Crosby played opposite Marion in *Going Hollywood* (1933); Gable in *Polly of the Circus* (1932) and in *Cain and Mabel* (1936); Cooper in *Operator 13* (1934); Montgomery in *Blondie of the Follies* (1932) and in *Ever Since Eve* (1937); Howard in *Five and Ten* (1931); and Milland in *The Bachelor Father* (1931).

**MD:** Bob Montgomery was especially nice. He would take my part when I felt I was being a little bit kicked around by a director. He'd stand up for me. I liked Bob because he had a striking character which said, "All right, I'll be your defender. I'll help you with your problem." A good, honest citizen with a sense of security.

**TC:** Nevertheless, W.R. took Montgomery to task in 1940 in his daily column of the period, "In the News," aimed at Montgomery's statements on behalf of the Screen Actors Guild—made by a "pink," as W.R. described the actor to Jack Warner. Taylor Coffman, *415 Ocean Front, Santa Monica: The Grand Mansion That Was* (Summerland, California 2009), p. 393—the longer bound-galleys precursor to *Hearst and Marion: The Santa Monica Connection*.

**MD:** Bing Crosby was always a million laughs, and Gary Cooper was a wonderful, silent sort of sage. He always gave very good advice. And he liked to eat just as much as I did.

We'd eat enormous luncheons, [but he wouldn't show his; I would show mine. And] he'd tell me about horses. He knew I was afraid of them, but he adored horses. He said, "If you love a horse, a horse loves you."

I said, "That doesn't prevent a horse from getting mad and biting me on the toe."

But he'd tell me how faithful horses were, and little things like that. Between scenes we'd go into these discussions about horses and golf and various animals and ranch life. He was a good, wholesome person.

Bing liked to talk about his wife [Dixie] a lot. He was full of fun and liked to play pranks. I loved it too, if I knew who the prank was on. Invariably it was on me.

There was an old gag I should have known. You walked in and they said, "You do this dialogue." And you'd get started and you'd find out that the camera wasn't going and the sound wasn't on. Little laughs like that. I don't think that in all the time I was working I ever had any fights with any members of the cast.

Raoul Walsh [director of *Going Hollywood,* MGM 1933] was the main prankster. He used to egg Bing on. They even had a record made that went, "We'd sit on the set, we'd work all day, we'd go over to Davies's bungalow, we'd have a little drink . . ." The whole studio heard that.

[My next film was] *Bachelor Father* with Ray Milland and Big Boy Williams [Guinn Williams], who was the big lover in it. C. Aubrey Smith was my father.

**TC:** Marion's altered words about her "next film" (changed to "I was making" by Bobbs-Merrill) may point to passages recorded in 1951 that aren't at hand. The erratic time line in this part of Chapter 5 may thus have resulted. *The Bachelor Father* (1931) came after *The Floradora Girl* (1930); in turn, the *Bachelor* film preceded *Going Hollywood* by nearly three years. See the invaluable appendix by Fred Guiles in *Marion Davies,* especially pp. 395-401.

**MD:** We had to do a scene [in *The Bachelor Father*] where I rush in a doorway and the rug slips and I am supposed to do a fall. But the rug wouldn't slip. The director [Robert Z. Leonard] said I didn't run fast enough, but the rug was practically glued down: there was rubber underneath. Bob Leonard said, "I'm not trying to protect you. I'm trying to do a scene."

But the property man, Jimmy, had been working with me for quite a while and didn't want me to break my neck. They fixed it, so my magic carpet and I made one big entrance, my legs went up in the air and that scene was finished with. I was a little bit sore, but I wasn't

really hurt. I had to take a lot of falls and I got used to them. I'd take it easy and go limp.

Ray Milland used to talk about England and Ireland. He was very pleasant. We never had any trouble at all.

**PP/KSM:** *Though Marion made three or four pictures a year, whenever one was finished she found time to travel. Before the next production, she would return to San Simeon and invite the cast and crew to come up. Leisurely and rather luxuriously, they would rehearse and get into their roles.*

**TC:** As stated elsewhere in these notations, W.R. and Marion went to Europe five times during her years in the Hollywood film industry (summer-and-fall trips in 1928, 1930, 1931, 1934, and 1936). If "travel" here means trips to San Simeon, the time she and W.R. spent at that estate was significant, enough to make Santa Monica a satellite of San Simeon—rather than the reverse. See *Hearst and Marion*, p. 3.

**MD:** I had seen Leslie Howard in *Berkeley Square* in New York [in 1929–1930] and I was set on having him for a leading man. He was a very fine actor. Maybe I had an audience crush on him, but I thought he was perfect. And he did do a picture with me, called *Five and Ten*. It was supposed to be the story of Barbara Hutton.

When he arrived at San Simeon [in 1931] for the rehearsals of *Five and Ten*, I looked at him and said to the butler, "Who's that?"

Bob Leonard, who was to direct the picture, said, "That's Leslie Howard. I think. I'm not sure." I didn't think it could be, but sure enough it was.

He had looked taller on the stage, I think because I had watched him from the front row. He was introduced all around, and I was very effusive. But I kept looking at him and thinking, That is not the same man I saw on the stage.

Later Leslie asked me why I had looked at him the way I had, the first time we met. He said, "Didn't I live up to your expectations?"

"No. I thought you were Puff Asquith."

**PP/KSM:** *Anthony Asquith was a film director and the son of a British statesman.*

**MD:** "Good Lord, no" [Howard said]. "I'm about half an inch taller than he."

"I didn't have my measuring rod with me" [Marion said].

I said to Bob Leonard, "Don't you think you could have a lift put in his heels?" I had worked with lots of leading men who were not quite tall enough, but if you suggested they use a little platform, they would get furious. But Leslie didn't mind. He stood on a platform for me.

**PP/KSM:** *Marion was 5 feet 4 inches tall, weighed 120 pounds, and had blue eyes and natural blond hair—which was lightened to platinum, though she often wore wigs.*

**MD:** It's just a trick of the trade that a man should grab a girl, look down at her and say, "I think you're divine," and that she should look up and say, "Do you really?"

We had a regular theater at San Simeon [in Casa Grande], and we rehearsed for about two or three weeks. After rehearsals we would go swimming. Leslie was like a naughty boy, and his wife would yell at him. Ruth was forty [to Howard's thirty-eight] and rather fat, and she treated him like a child. She would say, "Now don't go in the swimming pool. You might catch cold." Just to tease her, he would jump in the pool and lose his trunks.

She'd yell, "Stop that! Come out of there!" I hoped W.R. wouldn't come down to the pool and see him. He was too grand for that.

**TC:** In Chapter 11, p. 23, Marion recounts a person who supposedly "walked into the swimming pool nude" but how it was "just a legend," something that "could never have happened."

**MD:** Leslie wanted to be jolly and gay, but I don't think he went to many parties, because his wife was always around. And that is a kind of a handicap to any man.

**TC:** The G & R Hearst Collection contains an undated telegram draft from Leslie Howard at San Simeon, sent by him to the Beverly Wilshire Hotel; it concerns his transportation back to Los Angeles. "Notify Miss Head

of charges" appears in his penciled hand, next to the main message; this suggests that Hearst's National Magazine Company in London, overseen by Alice Head, would be absorbing certain expenses of Howard's trip. Miss Head mentioned Howard and his wife in her account of Hearst's sixty-eighth birthday party in 1931, held at the Beach House. *Hearst and Marion* (pp. 125, 126-127 online).

**MD:** Leslie was a great actor, yet he wasn't the type to throw himself forward. He would always try to give the scene to his leading lady, but he couldn't: he was too good. He was not a ham, and he was not pretentious. He was such an easy actor that the things he did didn't seem to be an effort at all. The lines would flow out of his mouth, exactly as if he were carrying on an ordinary conversation. He wasn't acting for one second.

Finally we finished the picture, *Five and Ten*. Everything was wonderful. But when I looked at the rushes, I noticed something peculiar: my face was always at the wrong angle. I found the answer: the cameraman was in love with Mary Duncan, and all the lighting had been to flatter her. Mary was absolutely unconscious of that fact, which made it very funny. I was half in the shadows, and she didn't even know he was in love with her!

**PP/KSM:** *George Barnes was the cameraman and Mary Duncan a supporting actress in* Five and Ten. *The high-society plot had Mary and Marion competing for the love of Leslie Howard.*

**MD:** There was only one way to defeat that. Working at night with another cameraman, I got close-ups of myself and pushed them in [had the film cutter splice them in].

I made only the one picture with Leslie. After that, he did a picture [in 1936] with Norma Shearer and then went back to England. Many years later there was an airplane accident and the ad in the newspaper.

**PP/KSM:** *[The Howard-Shearer picture was]* Romeo and Juliet.

**PP/KSM:** *On June 2, 1943, during the war, a British Overseas Airways Corporation flight from Lisbon, Portugal, to England was attacked*

*by enemy aircraft. It crashed into the Bay of Biscay. Leslie Howard was among the thirteen passengers and four crew members who were never found and presumed to have died.*

*He had made a lecture tour of Spain and Portugal for the British Council, a government cultural office. The tour was seen as a way for him to relax. He had been ill during the previous winter; he had just turned fifty and was acutely aware of the aging process. He had taken up spiritualism and was obsessed by the privileges of youth.*

**MD:** I had a friend in London who knew them [the Howards] very well, and she wrote me about the ad. It appeared in the *Daily Express* just before he died. It said, "In case anything happens to me, get in touch with . . ." It was his secretary's telephone number. It looked to me like a suicide note.

It was all hushed up, and by the time I got to England again, I had forgotten about it. But at the time, I was mystified. Would he have killed himself—and the pilot too? They never found him. It was too bad. He was such a kind person.

**TC:** Marion isn't known to have traveled in Europe again after her last trip there with W.R., in 1936.

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**MD:** Before we made *Five and Ten*, they [MGM] wanted me to have Clark Gable; I wanted Leslie Howard. The part required a society man. A test was made with Gable. I looked at the test and said, "No. No, Irving. He looks like Jack Dempsey, and you can't possibly put him in a role like that."

Irving said, "You'll be sorry. Gable is going to be the biggest sensation in the world."

Well, the lights went on and there was Clark Gable, sitting in the back. He'd heard the whole thing. He didn't say anything. He just looked.

I said to Irving, "Did you know he was in here?"

"No," he said. "But he wants the part."

"It's nothing against him," I said. It's just that I don't think he's suited for that part." Well, a few days later I was walking on the lot and Clark Gable came up and said, "I'm the pug, remember me? I'm Jack Dempsey."

In *Polly of the Circus* [1932] I wanted Clark Gable for the part of a minister. Irving said, "He's no good for society; you said that yourself. Now you want him to play a minister!"

I said, "Irving, I just realized you were right."

He did play it, but he was not very willing. He'd come in and say, "Do I still look like a prizefighter?"

I'd say no. "You're just like a minister." He was very good as a minister, but Irving thought it was the wrong casting. After that we did another movie, *Cain and Mabel,* over at Warners [in 1936].

**PP/KSM:** *In CAIN AND MABEL, Gable played the part of a down-and-out heavyweight fighter. Marion played the part of a down-and-out musical comedy star. They wound up together in New Jersey.*

*Neither got any good reviews for their efforts. The critics thought they were miscast.*

**MD:** The night Gable and Lombard got married I was working and couldn't go to their wedding. I was very happy for them. It was too bad it [the marriage] ended so suddenly.

**PP/KSM:** *Gable was making GONE WITH THE WIND when, on March 29, 1939, he married Carole Lombard, a popular top Hollywood star. But their life together ended on January 16, 1942, when Carole was returning from Indiana. She had appeared at a rally in her hometown, selling war bonds, and had boarded Trans World Airlines Flight 3 in Chicago. The plane stopped for fuel in Las Vegas, Nevada, took off for Los Angeles, and crashed into Table Rock Mountain. Carole, her mother and all aboard the plane died.*

**TC:** On March 29, 1939, W.R. and Marion were at San Simeon. Nearly two years had passed since she'd last worked (in *Ever Since Eve* at Warner Bros.) or would ever work again. At San Simeon on that date, Joe Willicombe received a brief teletype message, a mere one sentence long: CLARK GABLE AND CAROLE LOMBARD MARRIED AT KINGMAN, ARIZ. TODAY.

Along with the errant story that the couple got married in the old mining town of Oatman, Arizona (about twenty-five miles from Kingman), another story has them honeymooning at San Simeon, where they occupied the Celestial Suite, high up in the towers of Casa Grande. At least two other desert localities besides Oatman, Arizona, lay claim to being the place where they honeymooned: the Willows Inn in Palm Springs and the Furnace Creek Inn in Death Valley.

**MD:** I visited Norma Shearer on *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* set [at MGM in 1934], but I was shushed right off. And once I went on Joan Crawford's set. She was doing *Within the Law*. I just went in for one second, and she said, "Well, come on in, Marion."

**PP/KSM:** *The Broadway play by Bayard Veillier [Veiller] was released as a film under the title* Paid *[1930].*

**TC:** Pfau and Marx spelled Veiller's name correctly in their manuscript, but Bobbs-Merrill made an unmarked change of it—probably because of the misspelling on p. 262 in the original hardcover (part of a drawing by Ralph Barton that depicted the gala premiere of *Little Old New York* in 1923). The index in 1975 also includes the misspelling.

**MD:** I knew, when she said that [when Miss Crawford invited Marion to watch], that I shouldn't be there, so I just watched for a second, then took off. It's not supposed to be the proper thing for a star to go and visit another star; apparently they get nervous. But it didn't matter to me. Anybody could come on my set. It was open season, and I didn't charge admission. I guess I didn't figure myself as a star. I thought of myself as a poor, unfortunate creature who was trying to make a career of herself. The President of the United States could come on the set and it made no difference to me.

When Calvin Coolidge and his wife, Grace, were Mr. Hearst's guests up at San Simeon [in the winter of 1930], she got stuck in the elevator one night. There were bad storms and all the lights and everything went out and you could never tell when the electricity would go back on. Fortunately it was only ten minutes. But then another thing happened that I think was very amusing.

Calvin Coolidge never drank anything, but the first night he was at San Simeon we had some Tokay, and he said to me, "What is that?"

I said that's *Tokay*.

He said, "What is it?"

I said, "Non-alcoholic."

I gave him a glass, and then he said he'd have another. I gave him another. This was some Tokay that W.R. had kept in his wine cellar for years. It had belonged to his mother. Dinner was announced and I said, "I'll go with you."

But he said, "I'd like to have another drink. It's good. Best darned non-alcoholic drink I ever drank in my life."

He started talking at dinner, and kept on drinking the Tokay. I said. "What would you like to do tomorrow? Would you like to go down to the zoo?"

"No. I can see all the zoo I want in Washington."

He smiled a lot—he was in a very good humor—and Grace said to me, "You know, Calvin is usually sort of austere, sort of an apple-cracker. But he's really had a good time here."

**PP/KSM:** *At that time Coolidge was no longer saddled with the pressures of the presidency. He had been succeeded by Herbert Hoover [a year before, in 1929].*

**MD:** Mrs. Coolidge said they'd like to see the studio, so then we went down to MGM. I was doing *The Floradora Girl* [1930], a musical.

Of course, when we got to the studio, Louis B. Mayer wanted to take over. He had a big banquet for the Coolidges, and then they went back to Washington.

**TC:** By this time in 1930, a year after Hoover's inauguration, the Coolidges had retired to their home town of Northampton, Massachusetts, to which they returned after being in California and visiting San Simeon—and also seeing "the sets in Hollywood." Robert H. Ferrell, *The Presidency of Calvin Coolidge* (Lawrence, Kansas 1998), p. 202.

**MD:** I really had a good time at MGM. I liked it there. I was very fond of Irving [Thalberg] and of L. B. And we had no quarrels, much,

except that once in a while I'd go up to the front office and say I thought I should be doing something big, like washing elephants.