6
The Beach House

The beach house. Howard Hughes, who loved ice cream and never drank or smoked. Gloria Swanson invents a game. Death takes an old friend. Mother's perfume was gardenia. Mr. Hearst, who was no different from anybody else.

PP/KSM: *On September 9, 1926, Louella Parsons wrote: "Marion Davies will soon move into her beach house at Santa Monica. It is the largest house on any southern California beach. While being shown around, I counted fifteen bathrooms, and even Marion doesn't know how many other rooms there are. When she tires of it [the house], she plans to convert it into a beach club."*

TC: Chapter 6 was entitled "Ocean House" by Pfau and Marx in the manuscript they delivered to Bobbs-Merrill in 1975.

MD: We had plenty of space in Santa Monica. I owned property on both sides of the house. I had bought some from Will Rogers, so there was my house and then another guest house and then a lawn of about sixty feet, on the right [the north side]. On the left-had side [the south side] were two extra houses and the staff house.

We had ten guest rooms [in the main 415 building] and a living room with each, so that was twenty rooms. There were twelve staff rooms, and another little house on the side had four more staff rooms. We had more staff than we had guests.

TC: Marion's numbers are in keeping with those found in the 1938 inventory of the Beach House (see Appendix C in *Hearst and Marion: The Santa Monica Connection*, pp. 616-619). In popular accounts, the number of bedrooms and other types of rooms in the Beach House are much higher, though obviously exaggerated.

MD: W.R. liked the beach house, but that was when the architects came in again [William Flannery, Julia Morgan, et al.].

More additions were added on. It almost got to be as big as the White House. Bigger, maybe. Just like you build with little blocks, he added on and on. But little blocks wouldn't have cost the money.

TC: This was the closest Marion came to naming "the architects." Flannery, Morgan, and others like the construction men Frank Hellenthal and George Loorz aren't mentioned anywhere in her narrative. Also, she normally called the place the Beach House (capitalized or not), as did W.R. and others close to them, such as Louella Parsons.

Ocean House—sometimes spelled Oceanhouse—was a subsequent name, dating from 1947 at the earliest, when the new owner, Joseph Drown, made that bestowal for commercial purposes. This newer name has proved enduring. Even Marion herself used it after she and Hearst sold the property. Today, the actress Julie Payne still speaks of Ocean House, as did her step-father, Charles Lederer, Marion's beloved nephew.

MD: There was a big pool with a Venetian marble bridge over it. The bridge had to be removed after we sold the house [in 1947]. They claimed there was a law against a bridge being in the middle of a swimming pool that was open for the public [true of the Ocean House phase, under Mr. Drown]. But the pool was ten feet deep in the middle, and I think it was absolutely wrong for them to remove it. I don't know what they did with the bridge. I guess it was sold or chopped up.

TC: Marion often used the editorial "we," the same as Hearst did. Here she can be taken literally; had she said "after I sold the house," the effect of this and similar statements would be markedly different.

MD: I was awfully disappointed when I went down [after selling the property] and saw that [the removal of the bridge]. Most people just don't have any appreciation for the value of a thing like that.

Vincent Astor used to come out to California quite a bit. And the last time I saw him he wanted me to come down to the beach house. It had been made into a hotel [Ocean House] and he thought he was staying in my room. But he wasn't. Mine was up on the third story, on the top deck. He wanted me to explain exactly what had been in the house before we sold it.

TC: Vincent Astor (1891–1951) became heir to the Astor family fortune when his father went down on the *Titanic* in 1912; he distinguished himself as a philanthropist. One of the Astors' biographers, the well-bred Lucy Kavaler, described Vincent as "a personality larger than life, with both the good and the bad in him exaggerated to an extent beyond the normal"—as stated by her in *The Astors: A Family Chronicle of Pomp and Power* (New York 1966), pp. 230-231.

MD: They had done the house beautifully, then [under Joseph Drown]. It had been refurnished and carpeted. It was all modern art, but the wood paneling and the ceilings were still there, and the Gibbons carvings. But not the Oriental rugs [that W.R. had favored].

PP/KSM: *Grinling Gibbons's carvings originally came from England, and other examples may be seen today at Petworth Castle, when it is open to the public, south of London near Horsham.*

TC: In his chapter on Hearst in *Moving Rooms: The Trade in Architectural Salvages* (New Haven and London 2007), p. 222, John Harris mentioned the Gibbons carvings that allegedly "were sent by Marion Davies to the Metropolitan Museum of Art." But in his endnote on p. 306, Harris added that the Met "has no record of such a gift." See also *Hearst and Marion,* pp. 48-50 and 625-628.

MD: Now it's all changed [in Santa Monica]. Three or four houses have been built on the tennis courts, and that changed the whole architecture on the right side [the north side]. When I saw it, I didn't even recognize it. I dreaded to go by. It had been so beautiful inside, and when I last saw it, it needed paint.

PP/KSM: *In January 1960 Ocean House would be reduced to a parking lot. Marion then told reporters that she had spent over seven million dollars on the place during the fifteen years she had used it.*

She had sold the property in 1945 for only $600,000. And that was just about the cost of the thirty-seven fireplaces that had been installed.

There had been a little disagreement about property taxes. Los Angeles had assessed Ocean House [or rather the Beach House then] at $220,000 in 1939, and Marion had filed for relief, but E. K. Potter, the chief county appraiser, resisted her appeal. She then described the house as a "white elephant."

Between 1945 and 1960 Ocean House was a private beach club, and then a hotel. But its thirty bedrooms were not enough for profitability. So there was an auction. And then the wrecking crew moved in.

Today, some of the old servants' quarters still stand. They are used as a private club. And the sign at the gate still remembers when it was known as Beach Palisades Road. But most people, thinking only of the traffic as they roar past on the Pacific Coast Highway, do not know of the times that were had at Ocean House [starting in the late 1920s, when the place bore a different name, as noted above].

TC: Appendix E in *Hearst and Marion* concludes with an article of January 3, 1960, by the actor and Hollywood journalist James Bacon; on that report, Pamela Pfau and Kenneth Marx based their belief that Ocean House would be torn down in the same year that Bacon was writing. They can be forgiven their error. Suffice it to say that a key point of Bacon's was that "A few years ago the main building was demolished." So it was, in 1957, and what remained to be done in 1960 was only lesser demolition; the Georgian main building at 415 Ocean Front was already gone by then.

Bacon, indebted to the Bob Thomas articles of 1956 (also in Appendix E), told of "the 15 years that Miss Davies lived there," 1930 to 1945 being the span in question, a point reinforced by Pfau and Marx. In reality, W.R. and Marion made very little use of the property after the big birthday parties of 1937 and 1938; also, they sold the place in 1947 (as Thomas rightly said), not in 1945 (as Bacon said). *Hearst and Marion,* Chapters 7 through 13, delves into these and related points in ample detail.

MD: Jack Gilbert was very nice, but he was extremely nervous and sensitive. Sort of unpredictable. He used to go into very sordid moods, and say he didn't like anybody. One night at the beach house we had gotten tired of sitting around the swimming pool and had gone out on the sand. There were thirty or forty of us. There was a group of writers around Jack, and I could hear an argument. I heard Jack say, "I'm going to commit suicide."

And they said, "Dare you to."

Well, that was not the thing to say to a man who was in that mood, but they were teasing him. They said, "Prove it. You've talked about suicide so much, prove it to us. If you've got the guts to do it, show us."

And Jack said, “All right, I will.”

I thought, “Uh, oh.”

While everyone was chattering away, he went out and walked into the waves. And he kept on walking until I thought, This is not funny. I said, “Somebody stop him.”

But they said, “Let him alone. He’ll stop himself. Just watch him. He won’t do it.” They thought it was a big joke.

Maybe their voices carried across. Whatever, he suddenly threw himself down, and then he came wading in and went down on the sand. He burst into sobs and beat the sand and cried his heart out. He couldn’t do it; he had been challenged and he couldn’t do it.

I got mad. I said, “I think that’s the rottenest thing I’ve seen anybody do to anybody.”

I felt sorry for Jack Gilbert. He was in love with Greta Garbo, and she would have no part of him at all. That was why he was blue.

He was very much the artist type, with flashing black eyes and nervous, emotional moods. Those writers didn’t understand it. They were just watching and pushing him. And imagine the emotions going on inside him. He felt he had to do it, and he didn’t have the guts to do it. It was a hell of a position to be put in.

One night [in the late 1920s] Greta Garbo came to the beach house with Jack. She walked in the door saying, “Hullo. I’m tired,” then the first thing she did was to take off her high heels and throw them in the hall. She said, “You got a pair of bedroom slippers?”

I said yes.

I was getting them for her when I heard sounds. I found her jumping on my four-poster bed, testing the mattress. She was jumping so hard, her head was hitting the canopy. She said, “Good mattress.”

When she got the slippers she said to me, “Get me a knife.” She slit the backs off my slippers and put elastic bands around them. “Thank you,” she said and went downstairs.

She didn’t dance at all. She just sat in one corner with Jack Gilbert. Everybody was looking at her, saying hello and all that, and it

sort of annoyed her. She was terrifically shy; she didn't want to mingle with anybody. It wasn't snobbishness, just shyness. I never saw the like of it in anybody else.

Once Greta had an argument with Louis B. Mayer. Mayer was very good to work for, but when anything went wrong, you'd have to go up to his red-carpeted office. Greta had refused to do some picture, and Mayer had sent for her.

PP/KSM: *The picture was ANNA CHRISTIE [1930], Garbo's first talkie. Though the star had threatened to go home to Sweden, she lost her savings in the failure of the Beverly Hills First National Bank [in 1929]. So she played the part of a waterfront girl in Eugene O'Neill's story, though maintaining that she disliked the play and the portrayals of Swedish characters. This film would be advertised with the famous slogan: "Garbo Talks."*

MD: L.B [Louis B. Mayer] probably gave her his long, emotional talk. Everything was from the heart. He should have been an actor. He'd bring out a little bottle of pills and say, "I'm faint." That was what he did when you didn't do what he asked.

Mayer was telling Greta why she should do the picture. He had gone to all the trouble to pick her out of everybody in Sweden and make her the great actress she was, so why did she turn him down at this moment, when he needed her cooperation on a picture he was positive would be the greatest thing? The act went on and on and she didn't say a word.

When he was finished, she looked at him and said, "Maybe *ja* and maybe *no*. But I don't think so." And she left.

MD: I knew Howard Hughes for a long time, and I always liked him. But I've heard that people who worked for him said he was kind of a hard taskmaster.

He was just a big, awkward, overgrown country boy, always very shy, very polite. He was a little hard of hearing. He was kind, he really was, and smart, but he didn't show it.

TC: According to Pat H. Broeske, co-author with Peter Harry Brown of *Howard Hughes: The Untold Story* (New York 1996), Hughes was "most definitely hard of hearing, probably due to a childhood ailment." She adds that "even as a child he needed to be seated toward the front of the class" (Broeske to Coffman by e-mail, January 10, 2010).

MD: He [Hughes] came to many of our parties and was very nice and affable. He was good company, because he didn't talk too much. I don't know what he thought about San Simeon, because he didn't say.

He was also a good friend. I remember a time when W.R. wasn't feeling well and wanted to go to Seattle to see a doctor. Howard worked all night long on one of his airplanes, having the seats removed and beds put in, all for W.R.

At that time Howard was having a problem with the seaplane. I didn't think he'd ever get if off the ground. He offered pilots all kinds of money to take it up. W.R.'s pilot [Allen Russell] told me he was offered a million dollars to fly it. Howard took it up once or twice himself. He was very brave; he knew no fear, even after the accident he had. How he got out of that one nobody knows. He was awfully smashed up, but he would still fly, because he had great confidence and was not afraid of anything.

PP/KSM: *The gigantic seaplane, a two-hundred-ton wooden boat with many engines, was nicknamed the* Spruce Goose. *Ordered by the government for service in World War II, it was not finished in time and was anchored in Los Angeles Harbor until it was scrapped. It was flown only once, by Hughes, in an unannounced flight [in 1947] that reached an altitude of twelve feet. It was then declared a menace to navigation.*

Hughes would also crash an amphibian into Lake Mead [Nevada], but he retrieved it, repaired it for flight and then put it in storage.

But Marion is referring to a different accident Hughes suffered, in July 1946. Another plane had been ordered for service in World War II, the XF-11*, a reconnaissance craft, but it had not been delivered in time.*

Hughes piloted the first test flight, and shortly after take-off he crashed on Alpine Drive in the residential district of Beverly Hills. His chest was crushed, nine ribs were broken, his left lung collapsed, his left shoulder was broken, his nose was broken, his skull was fractured, and he had third-

degree burns. These damages were repaired in a five-week stay in a hospital, but the government canceled the contract for the XF-11.

MD: The movies were more or less a sideline with him. An amusement, like playing solitaire. But every movie he made was a success. The one with Jane Russell and Walter Huston, the western, was very good. He directed it himself, every scene. It got a lot of publicity because they said it was naughty or something. That was *The Outlaw* [1943].

Howard went around with Billie Dove [in the early 1930s]. I think he went with her longer than with any other girl. The other girls were more or less just ice cream.

He loved ice cream, you know. He never drank or smoked, but he was an ice cream addict. He ate it by the quart. At one time I too was an ice cream fiend, and we used to have ice cream races at night. I always ate the most, so I always won. I'd start with four big scoops of orange ice and pineapple ice and ice cream, then I'd take four more, and if anybody would challenge me, I'd take four more. Then they would have to do the same. One man said he had once won a prize for eating ice cream. He said to me, "Nobody can outdo me." Well! He was green when I got through with him. I could never get enough.

MD: Gloria Swanson was at the beach house one night. She was a little prankster at heart; she loved to have fun. She said, "Here's what we're going to do. Let's not look at a picture tonight; let's play a game." It was a little like playing Post Office. You would say to a man, like Harry Crocker or Lawrence Stallings, "Who would you like to marry?"

They would look around. It was just a game, but still their true feelings came out. They would say, "That one." Eleanor Boardman or somebody else. We would say to both of them, "Come into the next room and seal the ceremony."

Then we would go into the Marine Room, next to the library, and they wouldn't know exactly what was happening, but we had it all

planned. We had a pillow there and they were supposed to kneel. I would say, "Do you take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife?"

The man would say, "I do."

I'd say, "Seal the pact with a kiss." As they reached forward, Gloria would take a bag with ice in it and bang them in the face. They would fall backward. We wouldn't let them out of the room until we pulled that gag.

It sounds silly, but it was really fun. That night, we noticed that all of the writers were picking out Aileen Pringle. She had to work overtime being the wife in the gag.

PP/KSM: *An actress who worked in the movies from 1923 to 1939.*

TC: IMDb lists Miss Pringle's credits as extending from 1920 to 1944.

MD: Joe Hergesheimer was taking it very seriously. He really did want her, and when we got them in there and I said, "Seal the pact with a kiss," Gloria Swanson gave him a double sock in the face.

He got up, but instead of taking it in fun, he said, "This is outrageous. This is what I've heard about Hollywood parties. I'm going to write a book about this. And I'll denounce you all. All of you." Then he left the house.

He did write about it. But he didn't mention any names. He just said how crazy the people in Hollywood were.

PP/KSM: *Joseph Hergesheimer had already written several novels about the elegant, refined and decadent world of those people he would term "the international leisure class." Hergesheimer worked at writing for twenty years, retiring in 1934 to spend twenty years more in silent observation. He was quoted, later in his life, as saying, "It was the dullness of pleasure that drove me to the pleasure of dullness."*

We are uncertain what piece Marion thinks Hergesheimer may have written to expose Hollywood. But Samuel Goldwyn had made Hergesheimer's novel CYTHEREA [1922] into a film in 1924, assuring the author a footnote in movie history, not for the story, but for the first use, in the dream sequences, of the Technicolor process.

MD: After he [Hergesheimer] left, Gloria said, "I have another idea. Let's get the men with mustaches. We'll put down a piece of paper, and blindfold them the moment they walk into the room."

We showed them the piece of paper on the floor and said, "Can you pick it up blindfolded with your mouth?" They would think it was easy, and we'd blindfold them. Then Gloria would shove in a big bowl of molasses, and they would kneel down and go right into it, getting molasses all over their mustaches. It was just prank stuff, kid stuff, but it was fun. We both loved it, but some of the men didn't like it.

Bebe Daniels and I were very good friends. She said, "I can sew." And I could sew, too. So she said, "I'll bet you can't sew a dress."

I said, "I certainly can."

She said, "I'm going out the night after tomorrow, and I'd like to have a white satin dress with some sort of long fringe. Something that looks graceful."

I said, "Have you got a pattern?"

"Don't tell me you work by pattern? I thought you could make dresses."

"I used to [Marion said], when I was a youngster. I used to make my dolls' dresses."

"Well, that was very good training. If you can make a doll's dress, you can make anything."

So I really worked on it, like mad. I got it all ready for her and I sent it down [to 1070 Ocean Front]. I didn't know if she wore it or not, but the very next day a dress arrived from her with a note. It said, "Thanks very much for the white satin dress. I wore it and it was a great success. So here's one I made for you last night, when I came back from the party."

TC: One could also argue that "sent it down" means from San Simeon to Santa Monica. But the speed with which Marion and Bebe communicated in this situation seems to favor same-day courier service on Ocean Front itself.

MD: It was the most spectacular gown, with rhinestones sewn all over it. I thought she must have stayed up all night. Then I saw a label: I. MAGNIN AND COMPANY.

I called her up and said, "I hope you feel all right after working so hard after the party."

She said, "Well, I came home from the party at one o'clock."

"What happened? Did the dress I made you fall apart?"

She said no. She said, "I worked on yours from two until the wee small hours of the morning. I said, "I'm sure. You sewed all those spangles on by hand?"

She said yes.

I said, "Did you sew the I. Magnin label on, too?"

She said, "What??!! I've been loused up."

MD: Alec Moore [Ambassador Alexander P. Moore], whom I had known fairly well, was staying with his niece in New York. She told me that he wasn't well, that he wanted to go to California [in the latter part of 1929] to get some sunshine.

I talked to his doctor and learned he was very sick, although he himself didn't know it. He had tuberculosis of the throat, which was a very bad thing. So he came out with us on the train. He coughed a lot. One night when we were playing cards on the train, he had an awful spell.

The doctors came to the beach house where we were staying and said, "He's got to get to a warm climate."

TC: "Last August [1929], while on leave from his duties as Ambassador to Peru, Mr. Moore went to the home of Charles Chaplin, where he was under the care of a nurse for several weeks, in an attempt to regain his health. From there he went to Palm Springs" (report in *The New York Times,* February 18, 1930, p. 1).

MD: I was working—just finishing *The Floradora Girl* [1930] and doing some retakes on another picture [*Not So Dumb,* also 1930]. Alec went to Palm Springs.

One night W.R. and I went to see him in Palm Springs. He looked to me like he was failing. He seemed all right at the moment, but I asked my sister Reine to stay with him. He had two or three nurses, but Reine stayed for two or three days, and then she came back. She felt that she was in the way. She said, "When somebody's not feeling right, they don't want anybody hovering over them."

The next day the doctor called and said the Ambassador would have to go to Monrovia [about fifteen miles northeast of Los Angeles].

I said, "Is it serious?"

He said, "You can't tell. Monrovia might help him; Palm Springs hasn't."

TC: Moore was transferred from Palm Springs to the Pottenger Sanitarium in Monrovia on February 3, 1930 (*NYT,* February 14, 1930, p. 48).

MD: So he moved to Monrovia, and one night we went down there [out there] to see him. I could hear frogs croaking.

I said, "My God, that's no good. It must be damp here."

TC: Among the many towns and other localities in Southern California, Monrovia has as Mediterranean a climate as any of them. But along with its dry and noticeably warm (even hot) summers, the place is nestled against the San Gabriel Mountains and does get a few weeks of potentially sharp winter nights—the very season in which Marion's story about Ambassador Moore is set. As to rainfall for the winter of 1929–30, downtown Los Angeles received 8.32 inches in 1929, 13.02 in 1930. Common frogs, as anyone who's had a backyard of them knows, don't require a great deal of moisture to set up camp. Moreover, there's no indication here of what the *interior* of the Pottenger Sanitarium was like.

MD: I called his doctor and said I'd heard frogs croaking. The doctor thought it was all right, but I said it wasn't. I would have had him at the beach house, but that was also near the water, so it wouldn't have been any good, either.

Two days later he was in Los Angeles at the Good Samaritan Hospital. He didn't go back to Palm Springs, so they'd brought him there. I phoned him. Alec said, "I have no relatives, not even cousins."

"Why are you telling me this?"

He said that he just wanted me to know.

Well, I was working that day, and about one o'clock the next day, I was on my set and there was a phone call. They said, "Get down to the hospital right away. He's dying."

So I rushed down, in costume, my hair all done up and very blond. When I went in he looked up at me and said, "I'm all right, Lillian."

He thought I was his wife, Lillian Russell. But she had been dead for fifteen or twenty years [roughly eight years, since 1922]. Then he said, "Will you kiss me, Lillian?" So I bent forward and kissed him on the cheek.

Well, my God, they hurled me into the next room and they gargled me and they sprayed me, and they said I shouldn't have done that, because he had the most awful tuberculosis.

There was nothing that could be done for Alec, so I decided it was better for me to go back to the studio. They called me about six that night and said if I wanted to come back [to the hospital], it was just a matter of minutes. So I went again, and by the time I got there he was dead [on February 17, 1930]. A lot of people were outside his door—ten or fifteen, maybe. When I walked in, he was covered up. The doctor said, "Everybody out there wants this suitcase. They say they are his cousins and in-laws."

TC: Moore died at 12:25 p.m. in the California Hospital in downtown Los Angeles, not at Good Samaritan, which lies just west of the downtown core and which witnessed another death in Marion's life a little more than five years later—the suicide in 1935 of her niece Pepi Lederer.

MD: I said, "He told me he had no relatives. But Lillian Russell had a daughter [Dorothy Lillian Russell] by her first marriage to a man called Solomon, who was an orchestra leader. That would be the only one who has any connection with him."

So they had lawyers investigate, and Dorothy Russell got the suitcase. I don't know what was in it—probably just his clothes and maybe some jewelry.

PP/KSM: *Miss Russell had a child by her first husband [1879–1885], music conductor Harry Braham. She had no other children.*

Her second husband [1885–1893], Edward Solomon, was an orchestra conductor. John Chatterton, her third, was an opera singer, a tenor. Alec Moore was her last spouse, and he had been a widower for eight years [1922–1930].

Known to her fans as the American Beauty Rose, Miss Russell died June 6, 1922. She was a soprano, famous for her stage performances and for a long relationship with Diamond Jim Brady, a gambler now remembered for his penchant for red plush and prime ribs.

TC: IMDb states that Miss Russell had a child by each of her first two husbands, as does Wikipedia. The latter website states that she had a son who died in infancy in 1879, fathered by Harry Braham. Dorothy Russell, born out of wedlock in 1883, was the daughter of Edward Solomon, whom Miss Russell married in 1884 (Wikipedia).

In addition to the niece of Ambassador Moore that Marion mentioned at the outset of this section, "Several relatives were at the bedside when he died" on February 17 (*NYT* obituary, February 18, 1930, p. 1). The same paper reported on February 19, p. 21, that a private funeral service was held in Los Angeles on the 18th, pending the body's placement "aboard a train destined for Pittsburgh, where the former newspaper publisher" would be sent for burial. Among those attending in Los Angeles were "Charles Chaplin and Marion Davies, motion-picture actors; [and] William Randolph Hearst, newspaper publisher."

MD: My mother died about four one morning after a big party we had at the beach house. The watchman—Maine was his name—come for me, with my sister Rose. He said, "Your mother's ill."

TC: Marion's usage of "come" constitutes a rare grammatical error in these annals. Or perhaps the original editors made a simple typographical error.

MD: So I said, "Wait a minute—I'll just get a coat."

Rose and I went, and as we were going by Sawtelle Boulevard [next to West Los Angeles] I said, Rose, that's Mother's perfume." She used gardenia.

When we got to the house [at 1700 Lexington Road, Beverly Hills], my sister Ethel was there and my mother was dead. I had heard about self-control, but it doesn't always work. I just went crazy.

Then the telephone rang. It was W.R., calling from the beach house. He said, "I'm awfully sorry."

I said, "It's all right . . ."

He said, "May I be a mother to you?"

TC: The voice and the choice of words on W.R.'s part are authentic. Several years later—on February 17, 1941—he wired his grandson John Hearst, Jr., in Palm Beach, Florida: "Why not spend the summer with us as mommy?" He signed his message "Grandpop." *The Unknown Hearst: 1941*, p. 75.

MD: That was the sweetest thing. He said [when Mrs. Douras died], "I'll try my best." She died of angina pectoris [a type of heart disease]. Sudden death. She was quite young when she died.

TC: Pfau and Marx originally wrote that Mrs. Douras "died at age 52"—corrected before publication, as immediately follows.

PP/KSM: *Rose Reilly Douras (Mama Rose) died in 1928 [on January 25], at age sixty-six. The gardenia smell could have come from the nurseries the Japanese gardeners had established along Sawtelle Boulevard. The flowerful Oriental community still exists in West Los Angeles, though now threatened by new projects to widen the roads.*

It seems Marion had a strong sensitivity to odors. She mentioned the smell of Arthur Brisbane on page 86 [p. 10 in the updated Chapter 5 of The Annotated Marion: "Hollywood"*], and as she recorded these notes [with Stanley Flink in 1951], apparently the gardenia smell triggered another recollection of Brisbane. So it follows.*

MD: Nobody ever got the best of W.R. in an argument. He had debates with Arthur Brisbane quite often, on various different topics. Arthur had a great mind. Maybe he picked some of W.R.'s brains. But

when they were having a discussion, if [Arthur's size got] lower and lower, you knew he was wrong.

Once a very wealthy society woman said to W.R., "I wish your newspapers would keep my son's name out of print."

W.R. stopped her. He said, "If you can keep your son out of the divorce courts, his name will be out of the papers." She couldn't say another word.

W.R. never got angry, but when he looked at you with those piercing eyes, you'd think he was looking right through you. He would wait a long time and then say something. He was right and you couldn't argue. Some people said, "I'm afraid of him . . . the way he looks at me. He doesn't like me."

I'd ask him why he looked at so and so like that, and he'd say, "Like what?"

I'd say, "They think you don't like them."

He'd say, "Do I look like a villain?"

I'd say no. But perhaps he was a little austere. He didn't mean to be, at all. When he was looking at somebody and saying something, he might be thinking of something else more important.

Well, there were always debates, and he wouldn't say anything; he'd just listen. He didn't want to be bothered with any nonsensical confrontations.

If he got mad at bridge, he'd just say he wasn't going to play anymore, and he'd get up and walk away. He didn't like bridge anyway, and I had to coax him into a game. Then I'd start nagging him, "Why did you play that card?"

When he'd walk into a room, no matter how many people were there, he sort of awed them. Maybe it was his height. They would almost be fawning, and he didn't like that at all. He was very unpretentious.

I'd tell him it was just respect for him, but he didn't like it. "Why don't you treat me like an ordinary person? Which I am. I'm no different from anybody else," he'd say. "Matter of fact, I'm worse." But

when he was present, the conversation would be immediately censored. Everyone would try to be very elegant, and there'd be no cattiness. It didn't matter what was said, anyway; he wasn't listening. His mind would be way off, thinking of something else.

He'd come down and play tennis once in a while, and then he'd beat everybody on the courts, except the professionals. You had to look out for his right-hand drive, and his serve. He didn't seem to move much, but no matter where you put the ball, he'd send it back. He'd play for two or three hours and then go back to work. He had tremendous vitality.

TC: Marion's "come down and play tennis" is equally applicable to San Simeon and to the Beach House.

MD: In Europe he'd take us to museum after museum, and we'd be exhausted, while he'd be fresh as anything. I wanted roller skates so I could do the Louvre, but W.R. wouldn't be a bit tired. All day long, he'd want to go on to another place, while we'd want to go back to the hotel.

Then he was never tired at night, at dinner. He'd want to dance, and everybody else would be dying on the vine. Then he'd be up the first thing in the morning and be downstairs waiting, trying to get us going.