11
Saving an Empire

The Great Depression. An empire endangered. Mr. Hearst's best friend. Hatrick produces a cool million. Marion makes a small loan, and takes two Boston tabloids for collateral. How Johnny put everything right. A tragic plane crash.

PP/KSM: *While most of the world suffered through the years of the Great Depression, W.R. continued to buy whatever captured his fancy. He filled warehouses in New York and California with pieces of art which even he could never find a place to show. He had architects working at San Simeon, Wyntoon, St. Donat's and Ocean House [the Beach House], attempting to cope with his expansive nature.*

Income from his business ventures was diverted to pay for his reconstructions. His British magazine Good Housekeeping *held the title to the castle in Wales.*

As the depression and the decade of the thirties continued, W.R. became more and more unpopular with the public. Labor and union problems began to afflict his publications.

Taxes also seemed an incredible burden for both W.R. and Marion. She petitioned for reduction of the corporation and income taxes that Roosevelt's administration had raised to new high levels. When the California taxes were raised [in 1935], W.R. said, "Over 80% of my income will go in taxes—in fact, it may be nearer 90%."

In 1937, W.R. rebelled against the cost of living in California, and took a large party of friends and relatives on what was to be the last of the fabulous European trips.

TC: The trip took place in 1936, from August through October, as noted in Chapter 3, pp. 21, 24; Chapter 4, p. 15; Chapter 5, pp. 5, 19, 22; Chapter 7, pp. 1, 5; Chapter 8, pp. 2, 26, 27, 28; and Chapter 10, pp. 10, 12.

MD: We had visited Europe and we had gone to Venice [on one of the party's first stops in 1936]. Anybody knows that in Italy you dare not eat vegetables or salad.

Arthur Brisbane knew better, but he ate them anyway, and the next day he developed a terrific fever.

We were at the Excelsior Hotel, on the Lido, and Alice Head, who used to be head of the Hearst magazines in London, was with us [as recounted in Miss Head's memoir of 1939, *It Could Never Have Happened*]. That night the Duke of Valletta, who was supposed to be the next heir to the throne after the King of Naples, was giving a dinner party. Barbara Hutton was there, and many others. I got word that Arthur Brisbane had a raging fever, 106 degrees. But he wouldn't let us get a nurse, so Alice and I decided that I would take the night shift and she would take the day shift. His face was scarlet, but he didn't want a doctor. He was a very stubborn person.

He got up and left Venice one morning on Alec M'divani's boat. He went from the Lido to Venice and caught a train to Paris. That was about a month before we left [to return home from Europe]. I said, "He went alone?"

Alec said, "He acted very peculiar, because he said, 'I had to come all the way over here from America to get a fever.'"

PP/KSM: *Russian Prince Alexis M'divani had married the twenty-year old Barbara Hutton, heiress to the Woolworth five-and-ten-cent-store fortune, in 1932. But they had divorced in 1935, before Brisbane died [in 1936].*

If Ms. Hutton was at the party, as Marion remembers, she was then married to Danish Count Kurt Haugwitz-Reventlow. Later she would marry Cary Grant [in 1942], the Prince Igor Troubetzkoy of Lithuania, then Porfirio Rubirosa of the Dominican Republic, then Baron Gottfried von Kramm of Germany.

TC: Alexis Mdivani was no longer living in 1936: he'd been killed in a spectacular car accident in Spain in 1935. Marion's sister Rose and her current paramour, David Mdivani, attended a memorial to Alexis in Paris, going there at Marion's expense.

MD: We went to New York [in November 1936], then we went on to California [in reality, Marion and W.R. remained in the east until

early in 1937]. After we returned to New York, on Christmas morning [1936] the phone rang and Cissy Patterson said, "A.B. just died."

I said, "Good Lord, Cissy, aren't we in enough trouble? I better not say anything to W.R." But he had heard the phone ringing. He started to cry, because he really liked A.B.

A.B. was a big crook, incidentally, but W.R. liked him. He was the editorial writer and had been the publisher of the *[New York] Mirror*.

PP/KSM: *Brisbane may have annoyed Marion because she knew he had amassed a twenty-five-million-dollar estate while he had worked for W.R. And he did not live to help W.R. and Marion when times got bad.*

TC: "Brisbane's blind spot, according to [Westbrook] Pegler, had been lack of humor. He had worked hard to produce an enormous quantity of rubbish; he had also acquired the reputation of being greedy, and none too scrupulous in his methods, for he had used the Hearst papers to promote real estate schemes in which he had interest." Finis Farr, *Fair Enough: The Life of Westbrook Pegler* (New Rochelle, New York 1975), p. 42.

MD: A.B. always wore the same suit when he came to see W.R. I used to wonder why, because I saw that he carried a suitcase. When he was staying at the beach house I asked the maid if she was pressing his things. She said, "No. He's got nothing in there but books." I went in his room and looked, and there was nothing there but encyclopedias. I had no right nosing around, but I wanted to be sure he had a clean shirt. That doesn't mean he didn't have a great mind. He was brilliant.

He even died reading a book.

Cissy [Patterson] and I went over to his house [in New York], and Phoebe [Brisbane, his daughter] opened the door and said, "Come in." She was smiling. She was half Indian, and they had five or six youngsters. Their daughter Sarah was married to Tex McCrary, who got to be publisher of the *Mirror* and then married Jinx Falkenburg.

There was a bottle of sherry, which was a relief. And they were all happy; they were on the loose. Brisbane had been too much of a disciplinarian. Phoebe said, "Would you like to see Arthur?" Cissy said

yes, and we went in. He was lying there with an encyclopedia in front of him. She [Phoebe] said, "Doesn't he look wonderful?"

Cissy and I then left. We went to "21" [the 21 Club on W. 52nd Street] to talk it over and get plastered. That whole family had been tied in a knot for years, and now they were released.

The funeral was at St. Thomas's [an Episcopal church] on Fifth Avenue, and it was revolting. The photographers were going up and down taking pictures while the service was on. W.R. and Vincent Astor were pallbearers, and there were hundreds of photographers in the church. I felt I was getting sick.

Afterwards we didn't go back to "21"; we went home, to the Ritz Tower [on Park Avenue and E. 57th Street]. W.R. owned the Ritz Tower and had a huge apartment and offices there.

PP/KSM: *At the beginning of 1938, W.R. was in very serious financial trouble. His investments in New York City real estate and his boundless appreciation of art had caused a monumental drain on the finances of his empire.*

John Francis Neylan [of San Francisco], a trusted advisor to W.R., had been working diligently to stave off disaster, but he had resigned by this time, saying he was worn out. He had lost the strength to say no to W.R. Marion saw it differently. She thought Neylan was the villain.

In desperation, late in 1937, W.R. had relinquished financial control of the empire. He retained editorial control, but Clarence J. Shearn [of New York, retained in 1938] assumed responsibility for managing the business, with its debts of $126,000,000. Shearn immediately began cutting the losses. He shrank the size and number of publications and liquidated the real estate and collections of art. Still the financial problem persisted.

Canadian newsprint prices rose from $40 to $45 per ton. The increase meant $5,000,000 per year in additional costs to the Hearst Corporation.

TC: For further perspective on the oft-cited, overblown figure of $126 million indebtedness, see *Hearst and Marion: The Santa Monica Connection*, pp. 196, 499-500. See also *The Hearsts: Father and Son* (2013 edition), pp. 62-63, 456.

MD: W.R. was going to be sold down the river by the people he had placed his great faith in. He always misjudged people.

They were trying to get the control, but he didn't know it until it happened, and he was shocked. He was a broken man; he couldn't believe that the people he had practically made would ever do a lousy trick like that to him.

TC: The construction boss George Loorz also described Hearst in this context as a "broken man"—this while writing to Julia Morgan on July 2, 1937. *Building for Hearst and Morgan*, p. 335.

MD: When we had come back from Europe in 1937 [or rather from the trip in 1936], they were piling up bank loans on him, trying to break him and take over. But thank God we came through all right.

The main one responsible was Jack Neylan, who had been in San Francisco and was put in charge of the financial end. Once he had made a statement to a very good friend of mine, saying, "If it's the last act of my life, I'm going to break Hearst in half."

W.R. had thought he had found his best friend in Jack Neylan. But he was the one who had arranged for the whole thing to collapse. I had heard W.R. say, "You, too?" And I thought, *Et tu, Brutus?* That was his best friend, the great wonderful Holy Roman Catholic, John Francis Neylan, the biggest crook that God ever created.

Frances Marion [the screenwriter] knew him very well. She told me that one time he had come up to San Simeon and went over and hid in House B or C [Casa del Monte or Casa del Sol] and didn't appear for four or five days. He used to go on awful benders.

She said she was there one night when he was loaded. He staggered into the living room [probably the Assembly Room in Casa Grande] and said, "Where is Hearst?"

Frances said, "I don't know where Mr. Hearst is. I always refer to him as Mr. Hearst, because I worked for him for a long time and I have great respect for him."

He said, "I call him Hearst."

She told him he was drunk and should go to bed. And he said, "I'll get that son-of-a-bitch if it kills me." Frances Marion asked why. He said, "Because I've always hated his guts."

She told me that a long time afterwards. I'd only just met him. He had a big bloated Irish nose, and he was nearsighted and horrible.

He was the type of black Irishman who was jealous of anybody he thought was a little more powerful than himself. W.R. had been very kind to him. He had made him what he was.

TC: In addition to being an attorney and a financier, "Black Jack" Neylan had been Hearst's publisher at one time on his evening paper in San Francisco, the *Call-Bulletin*, whose editor was the crusading Fremont Older of journalistic fame.

MD: I found out about all that business complication mess because I was just going to the studio [Warner Bros. in Burbank] to finish one last scene [in *Ever Since Eve*, her last movie], when Bill Hearst arrived at the [beach] house and said, "Where's the chief?" It was very early in the morning, but he said, "I think I'll go up and see Pop."

"Look, I don't think it's kind to wake him this early in the morning."

"This is a very serious matter. The empire's crashing."

"What?!"

"We need a million dollars, and the chief has to go east immediately."

TC: W.R. and Marion were at San Simeon, not in Santa Monica, when word came that they had to go east promptly.

MD: It was an awful shock. I said to him [to Bill Hearst], "Well, I'm going with him. But first, I have to go to the studio." But I thought I'd call the studio and say I'd be a little late. I called up my business manager, Edgar Hatrick, and said, "Get me a million dollars right away. I want to sell everything I've got—everything." And he did; he worked like mad, and he met me at the railroad station [in Los Angeles] and gave me a certified check.

I hadn't talked to W.R. I thought: Why have him tortured, for a miserable million dollars, when he was worth three hundred million?

He was very worried, and after we had dinner in the dining car, he said, "I guess I'm through." They had said they were sorry, but everything was going to crash. They owed over fifty million dollars to a bank in Toronto, and the bank was going to take everything over.

When I told him about the check I had, he said, "Don't give it to me. I'll tear it up. Anyway, what's a million dollars when there's fifty million dollars involved?"

I had a good answer for that. "Why are there only fifty million dollars involved when there are three hundred million dollars involved?" ["I'm not good at arithmetic."]

When W.R. wouldn't take my check, I went in and presented it to Tom White, the president of the Hearst Corporation. He was in the drawing room [of the train] with Richard Berlin and Bill Hearst. Tom didn't want the money.

TC: At the moment (late May 1937), Tom White was head of the New York-based Hearst Enterprises. The newer Hearst Corporation still had yet to be formed, later in the year.

MD: I said, "I heard you say that was all that was needed."

He said, "Well, it can't help." He meant well and, to be kind, he said, "It isn't a bad idea."

I said, "Now don't say anything to Mr. Hearst about this. He doesn't know about this."

But he [White] knew better. "He does know, doesn't he? He wouldn't take it."

I said, "Take it. At least it will be a chance for you all to get your breath, to reason things out."

Tom said, "Well, God bless you—that's sweet."

At the Ritz Tower in New York [in June 1937], W.R. gathered everybody but me together for a conference in my drawing room. I heard the argument going on, and I hoped nobody would open the door. If they had, I'd have fallen in.

W.R. said, "We have to give Miss Davies some collateral for this. I don't want to take the money without collateral."

So they picked the two papers that were in the red—the two Boston tabloids. They were losing God knows how much money.

TC: The Boston morning paper, the *Daily Record,* was a tabloid. The other paper, the *Boston Evening American,* was a conventional broadsheet.

> [Sidebar, p. 201 in *The Times We Had:* "Hearst's Newspapers in 1936"] The list contains discrepancies and omissions; among others, the *Chicago Herald-Examiner* is misnamed and the *New York American* is excluded. See *The Hearsts: Father and Son* (2013), p. 454, note 44, for a more accurate summary.

MD: W.R. said no [about the Boston papers]. "We'll give her the magazines." But they wouldn't let him.

Earlier, Joe Kennedy had offered W.R. fourteen million for those magazines, but since the magazines made fourteen million a year, I had said, "Don't accept it."

That was one thing I liked about W.R.—he had no idea of money at all. It didn't make a difference to him. But to be caught in a trap like that—he felt helpless. He didn't know what to do. He was absolutely a beaten man.

He didn't want to accept my money, but nobody else would step forth, even though the boys had trust funds, and the old woman [Hearst's wife, Millicent] had twenty times more than I had.

I went back to my room. W.R. walked in and told me about the Boston papers. I said, "I don't want any collateral.

He said, "Well, you've got to take them. I don't think it's any good, but they [the executives] seem to think this is all right. I know it isn't [sufficient], and I want to get you some decent collateral."

I said, "Listen, if that's what's worrying you, I'll take it. As long as I don't have to pay the expenses of what is in the red."

I got the Boston papers for collateral, and those were the worst papers in the whole syndicate; they were stinkers. But the next day Walter Howey came to me and said, "Hey, boss, I'm going to Boston, and I'm going to take those papers out of the red."

PP/KSM: *The minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors of Hearst's American Newspapers, Inc., show for the year 1938 a pledge of 8000 shares of the New England Publishing Company to Marion.*

TC: Akin to the New England Publishing Company, the Illinois Printing and Publishing Company pertained to the two Chicago newspapers that would be merged in 1939. Other Hearst publishing interests around the country were held by similar corporate or sub-corporate entities.

MD: Well, he [Howey] did. It took him four months. They went way high in the black, and then they were begging me to give back the collateral. They wanted those two papers for the chain. They said they'd give me some of the money now and the rest later. I said, "You were quick enough to give them to me when they were in the red," but I added, "All right—take them."

TC: The two Boston papers (the *Daily Record* and the *Evening American*) remained separate under Hearst ownership until the 1960s, when they were officially merged as the *Record-American*. However, they were informally known by that dual name from the late 1930s onward. *The Hearsts: Father and Son*, notes on pp. 454, 459, 462, 463.

MD: It was a plot. They had it all planned. No doubt about it. It was ludicrous that we couldn't even borrow a million dollars. Later they said they needed more money. And I got some more money. Rose and Ethel and I turned the money over from my grandmother's trust fund. When I see anybody in trouble, I'll fight like hell to get them out. Especially someone I love very much.

TC: Marion's other sister, Reine, died in April 1938, an event that may help date this episode involving Rose and Ethel. Of the three "crisis" years for Hearst—1937, 1938, and 1939—1938 was far the worst of them, although 1937 has often been given the dubious credit for that distinction.

MD: If they had really foreclosed on him and demanded all fifty million dollars, he'd have been sunk. They weren't smart. They didn't figure on me at all. They thought I was just a nonentity, a dullard, a stupid who sits in the corner with a dunce cap.

After that they hated me.

Meantime the Chase National Bank was moving in. I knew Babs Rockefeller [Abby Rockefeller] very well, and [her brothers] Winnie and Nelson, too. I went to see Winthrop [Winnie], but he wouldn't see me. I asked Babs, but she said, "I can't do anything with him."

W.R. then got a lawyer called Clarence Shearn, who got a loan from the Chase National Bank.

Shearn was an old [political] friend of Mr. Hearst's. He said, "I will save your life . . ." One of those things. Lifesavers. You buy them a package, but they don't do you any good.

Shearn was a little bit vicious. One day he called us at San Simeon and said he was in Santa Barbara and wanted to see W.R.

We went down for a conference at the Biltmore Hotel [in Montecito]. I said, "Hello, Clarence . . . you know, it's an amazing thing, but you resemble Napoleon."

"Do I?"

I said yes. "In a way. Because you always scratch your chest. But as far as looks are concerned, you stink."

"You're just kidding."

"Not exactly," I said. "Look, Napoleon, would you have strength enough to go and get me a drink?"

"I'd be delighted to."

"Make it a pitcher—gin fizzes."

So he went off into the hotel, and W.R. said, "You shouldn't talk that way to him."

I said, "I'll crack his skull. I'll take him apart if I have strength enough in my hands."

Shearn came back with a pitcher and started talking about the great job he'd done, rescuing W.R.

I said, "Wait a minute, Napoleon. I'm here and I'm listening." He was telling W.R. what to do. I said, "You know, Clarence, you're beautiful. Anybody ever tell you you're beautiful?"

Well, W.R. finally got wise to him and fired him [in 1943]. He realized he was trying to take over the power. I think he was asking for

[a personal settlement of] five or six hundred thousand dollars, and he finally got about three hundred thousand before he left. He was really abominable.

He used to call up the newspapers and tell them he didn't like the editorials or he didn't like the way the presses were running. He thought he was William Randolph Hearst.

PP/KSM: *When Clarence J. Shearn joined the effort to rescue the Hearst Corporation [in 1938], he was an attorney and counsel for the Chase Manhattan Bank, which held some of the notes. To restore the empire to profitability, he began to liquidate those newspapers which lost money. Some were merged [nine of them], some closed [four of them]. He sold the radio stations.*

He cut salaries, including W.R.'s. That was reduced from $500,000 a year to $100,000. He ordered the sale of the overinflated real estate holdings, and auctioned more of the art collection. St. Donat's Castle was put on the market [but not sold until 1960].

For four years Shearn worked with the Conservation Committee [properly called the Executive Committee] to keep the organization together, but it was difficult for Marion to measure their accomplishments. She saw W.R. giving up his treasures and forgoing pleasures.

When some signs of new life were detected, W.R. thought he should again have complete control of his empire. But the Delaware chancery [equity] court rejected his suit on the grounds that the creditors must agree to a change in power. Shearn remained until 1944 [or rather 1943].

Marion says she suggested bringing in John W. Hanes. She had met him in New Haven [Connecticut], when she was a showgirl and he was, quite literally, a stage-door Johnny. He had become a banker [since then] also an official [the Undersecretary] of the U.S. Treasury Department—just what she thought they needed. Hanes joined the [Executive] Committee and took on the task of restructuring the empire, sprawled among ninety-four separate entities. And he was able to resolve some of the tax problems.

MD: Then Johnny Hanes came in and took over and things went fine from then on. But there was so much to that story, it was fantastic. We'll have to go over everything before it's printed [from the tape recordings Marion was making].

I'd known Johnny since I was about three, and he had a great financial mind. Even though he had a southern drawl, he was still brilliant. And I suggested him.

W.R. had never heard of him, but I wanted him. He whipped things into order without being the master. He settled the financial problems beautifully when nobody else could have helped. Johnny pulled W.R. right out of the mess.

Once, while all this was going on, we were on the balcony at the Ritz Tower and W.R. said to Martin Huberth, "What's that building over there?"

PP/KSM: *A friend and confidant of W.R., Mr. Huberth was a real estate expert. He was appointed to the Conservation Committee and liquidated some of the Hearst real estate properties at the time of the financial crisis. His company, Huberth and Huberth, at 488 Madison Avenue, still manages the real estate affairs of the Hearst Corporation.*

TC: The name of Harry Huberth, a nephew of Martin, also occurs in the Hearst archives; but he was a lesser player, whereas Martin Huberth became a trustee of the Hearst estate through W.R.'s will.

MD: Martin said, "That's the Heckscher Building."

W.R. said, "Buy it."

"How can you when you haven't even got fifty cents in your pocket?"

"I have more than that . . ."

He had fifty cents in his pocket, so he wanted to buy the Heckscher Building, a great big edifice.

PP/KSM: *The twenty-five-story building on Fifth Avenue, occupying the block between 56th and 57th Streets in Manhattan, was for sale in 1938 for $4,250,000. But W.R. didn't buy it.*

MD: This was in the midst of that crisis, and he asked him that for a purpose. He wasn't being facetious. He just wanted to find out what the reaction would be. He was very smart and it was a very subtle way of testing somebody. Martin Huberth was very fine during the whole thing.

I'm not really sure where I did get that million dollars. Mr. Hatrick handled it. I thought I had borrowed it from Louis B. Mayer, but maybe it was from Jack Warner. It's too bad I didn't write a diary. But I don't believe in diaries.

Louis B. Mayer used to say, "I loaned you [the] money." But I don't think he did. I thought I worked a year for nothing. Of course, when you worked for Louis B. Mayer it was nothing anyway, so what was a year?

That was a false idea that Louis B. Mayer put in my head, and I hope his horse lost in the races. He told everybody that story and I was not at his studio at that time [having left for Warner Bros. at the end of 1934].

I didn't borrow from any studio. I had some stocks and some money from my grandfather and my mother. I just told Mr. Hatrick, "I don't care what you do—but get me a million dollars in a hurry." And he did. He didn't approve of what I was doing. But I was making a huge salary and it wasn't any too difficult.

PP/KSM: *Hatrick sold at a discount some of the many bonds in Marion's portfolio, and thus raised the money.*

MD: I was at Warner Brothers and I know I didn't get it there. Harry Warner [one of Jack Warner's older brothers] wouldn't spend a nickel to see an earthquake.

PP/KSM: *Marion might have anticipated tremors when Robert Maynard Hutchins visited San Simeon. He had become president of the University of Chicago in 1929, at age thirty, and he remained in that office for seventeen years. Then he became chancellor of the University.*

Renowned as the enfant terrible of education, he had, by the time he met Marion, degrees from Yale, Harvard, Tulane and West Virginia universities, and from Lafayette, Oberlin, Williams and Berea colleges.

Later he would have at least a dozen more honorary degrees. He had also passed the Chicago bar and had been elected to Phi Beta Kappa before becoming a director of the Ford Foundation and subsequently chief executive of the Fund for the Republic at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, California.

MD: Robert Hutchins came up to the ranch [San Simeon]. He was the president of the University of Chicago at the time and a stranger to me. Cissy Patterson was there, and I think Mrs. Robert Hammond Hayes Smith [the socialite Sue Smith] from San Francisco, along with Mayor [James] Curley from Boston.

Hutchins, on my right [in the dining room], said to me, "Why aren't you eating any meat?"

I said, "I'm a theosophist."

He said, "Do you know what that means?"

"I suppose it means not to eat any meat."

I guess I was wrong. He said, "Very stupid." Then he said, "Can you play ping-pong?" I said yes.

After dinner we went outside and played. He gave an upper serve and hit me. I said, "Don't do that. That's not allowed."

He said, "How would you know? You're so stupid."

I said, "Well, I know that in ping-pong, the serve should be underhanded."

Then Cissy Patterson walked in. She said, "How dare you insult the hostess? You belong to the brain trust." And then they had a brilliant argument and she cut him down to size.

He finally said, "There's only one intelligent person here."

I said, "Who is that?" He looked at my sister Rose, who was not too bright. Rose took his part against me.

I went into the powder room [adjoining the Morning Room] and started to cry because I thought I had done something wrong. But I hadn't. I couldn't cope with brains like that. His brains were too big for his head. Cissy said, "I'll fix him."

The next morning Dr. Hutchins said, "I'm leaving."

"So soon?" I said. "I thought you'd stay over the weekend."

He said, "No, I'm leaving." And he did. Cissy had told him to leave because he'd insulted me. He hadn't insulted me, just hurt my feelings, but I suppose his retort was, "How can you insult a person who has no intelligence?"

MD: Right before the war [World War II], the president of the Philippines was up [to San Simeon]. He found out, by the grapevine route, that we had two Filipino cooks [one was Dally Carpio], and they were the first people he wanted to see. I thought that was rather sweet.

PP/KSM: *Manuel Quezon was the first president of the Philippines, elected in September 1935. A U.S. Governor General, Frank Murphy, from Detroit, had been the executive prior to that election.*

MD: The cooks were so flustered that they mixed everything up. I couldn't tell what kind of food we got, they were so excited. It tasted good, whatever it was.

W.R. loved to cook. He made scrambled eggs wonderfully. He could cook almost anything. I would wash the dishes and he would dry them, or vice versa.

We worked by ourselves. We didn't need the staff of about fifty or sixty. We lived quite simply.

We'd do the jigsaw puzzles for hours in the main living room [the Assembly Room]. Twenty of us would be around and we'd pick out the pieces. It was childish, and I wouldn't do it now; it's awfully hard on the eyes. But we had a big table and everybody'd get in and there'd be arguments and little flirtations because the men would get in and pick out a piece for a girl and give her a wink. We had hundreds of puzzles.

It was fascinating. It was also a good way to waste time.

We used to look at my own films [in the nearby Theater]. Most of the other people were so bored they'd go to bed. And afterwards, after a late evening, Mr. Hearst would make Wells rabbits and biscuits and coffee. He would get a big pan and put the cheese in it and then he'd bring it in [to the Refectory dining room] and serve it.

One night I was so hungry for one and he put one next to me and I was talking to somebody. I thought, Will this woman ever stop talking? And when I reached for mine, it was gone.

Gandhi [her pet dachshund] had eaten the whole Welsh rabbit. I saw him licking at the rest of the plate. I was so mad and I asked for another one, but W.R. said, "Sorry—they're all gone."

I said, "But Gandhi ate mine."

He said, "He'll be sick."

Gandhi wasn't sick. He was healthier than I was. I was sick because I didn't have one.

MD: My father moved to California after my mother died [in 1928]. He came out for the funeral, then he went back east. He was still a magistrate then and had a job to do. But after about a year I asked him if he wouldn't like to come out and stay.

His first answer was no; but he finally did come out. However, he didn't like it; it wasn't the same life that he had in New York with the court and all his cronies. But after going back east for a while, he came out again, saying, "New York is not the same."

I guess all his friends had died. He stayed at the Lexington Road house in Beverly Hills with my sisters and my niece and nephew [Pepi and Charlie Lederer].

TC: So far as dating this passage, Pepi Lederer died in June 1935.

MD: It was an amazing thing: My mother had died when she was fifty-two, and my father was twenty-two years older than she was. He died when he was eighty-two, I think, but he said he was seventy-eight. Rosie [Rose Davies] said he told her he was eighty-seven, and my niece said he told her he was ninety-eight. I never figured out exactly how old he was. He died when I was making my first movie at Warner Brothers, *Page Miss Glory*.

PP/KSM: *On April 26, 1935, when Marion's father died, he was just past his eighty-second birthday [b. 1853].*

TC: The niece Marion meant in this passage was probably Pepi Lederer (b. 1910); her other niece, Patricia Van Cleve (b. 1919), was fifteen at this point in 1935, sixteen as of June.

MD: The trouble with people who fib, like my father, is that you tell everybody a different story and you expect them to believe it. I guess I took after him, that way.

He didn't do work when he came out to California. He met the magistrates [in the Los Angeles area] and went around with them. He'd get dressed and go out wearing spats. I'd say, "What have you got spats on for?"

He'd say, "Because I belong to the gay nineties."

He'd take his cane, but he didn't walk with it; he'd twirl it around. He even wore a monocle. He was very suave.

He got along fine with W.R., because W.R. would just be perfectly quiet and let my father talk. W.R. knew that nobody could argue with him. It was just like when he was on the bench; his mind was always full of politics, the Constitution and the Civil War. He came to the studio now and then [mostly MGM] to watch the movies being made. He didn't like Hollywood at all. I hate to use a four-letter word, but he didn't think much of the movies. He thought that it was all very *dull.*

My father didn't particularly like San Simeon. He was a kind of wry, independent character who was not impressed by anybody.

He would gather all the younger girls around him and tell the darnedest fibs about when he was in the Civil War. He wanted an audience. He told a story about how he pulled General [Ambrose] Burnside's whiskers off by mistake as he was riding along with a message. They all believed it, but if he had been in the Civil War he'd have had to be a hundred and seventy years old [a child of 1765].

PP/KSM: *Not exactly. Papa Ben was born in 1853 and would have been eleven years old [and very nearly twelve] when the Civil War ended. Many a drummer boy became a veteran at that age.*

MD: I didn't know that he was bribing them [the young ladies at San Simeon] all the time. On Christmas Day, the year before he died, I went downstairs [from the Gothic Suite] to have some breakfast, and they all said, "Your father gave us each a hundred dollars."

"Oh, how wonderful," I said.

There were a lot of those young flibbity-gibbities, girls around eighteen or nineteen. I thought that was all right, and I wondered what he was going to give me.

When I went to my room, my father's valet, John, knocked on the door and gave me a note. There was a five-dollar bill in it. I was furious. I went over to House B [Casa del Monte] and said, "What is this for?"

He said, "It's your Christmas gift."

I said, "What nerve you have, Dad. You give all these girls a hundred dollars each, and you give me five."

He said, "What's wrong with that? They need it and you don't."

I had no answer to that. I thought of saying, "Maybe you need it more than I do," but I didn't dare, because he was so right. He was a Solomon, all right. He could judge things.

TC: *Building for Hearst and Morgan*, pp. 158-159, contains a further account of the Christmas of 1934.

MD: My father was very active until about two weeks before he died. It was cirrhosis of the liver, or something. I'm not quite certain. He was buried in the Hollywood Cemetery, where we had a mausoleum [designed by Julia Morgan]. We had more than half the family wiped out within two years. First my mother, then my niece, then my father, then Reine and then Ethel. The dates I don't actually know. I just thought it was only a few years when the whole family was wiped out.

PP/KSM: *Irene (Reine) was born in 1886 and died in 1938.*
Ethel was born in 1889 and died in July 1940.
Charlie [Douras] was born in 1891 and died in 1906.
Rose Marie was born in 1895 and died September 20, 1963.
Marion was born January 3, 1897, and died September 22, 1961.
Bernard J. Douras was born April 14, 1853, and died April 26, 1935.
Rose Reilly [Douras] was born in 1862 and died January 25, 1928.

TC: One other member of Marion's extended family also died during the period in question (in 1934). He was Maitland Rice, a son of George Lederer and a half-brother of Pepi and Charlie Lederer.

MD: Dorothy Plunket called me from Los Angeles. We were at the ranch and it was winter. She was a guest of Sylvia and Doug Fairbanks, and she said she wanted to see me.

PP/KSM: *February 1938.*

TC: Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford had divorced in 1936, and he and Lady Sylvia Ashley had married later the same year.

MD: "I'm only going to be here one or two days—do you mind if we fly up?" she said. She was with her husband Terry [Lord Conyngham] and she said, "We have another guest [bobsled champion James Lawrence] with us. Is it all right if we bring him along?"

"Certainly," I said.

"Would you send the airplane down for us?" We have no way of getting there."

I said yes, "But, look, Dorothy, don't leave Los Angeles later than two, because the fog starts rolling in. It's treacherous on the cliffs."

She said she wouldn't. I was with Dorothy Mackaill, who was beating me at gin rummy, and no one else was at the ranch except Mr. Hearst, and he was resting that afternoon. [The writer Damon Runyon was also a guest then, but no other Hollywood people were there besides Miss Mackaill.] When I thought the Plunkets should have arrived—it only took an hour to fly up—I went down to the phone in the office [on the south side of the hilltop]. I looked out the window and the sky was very bad.

I rang the man at the teletype, Jack Adams, because he could radio the airplane. He said, "Well, I don't know. They should be in by now." I told him to try to get a message to the pilot [Tex Phillips] to explain that the ceiling was low. He said he'd try.

Then I heard the sound of a motor over the ranch and I said, "My God, that's the plane. It must be." It was way up over the castle. I

called back to Jack. He said, "For God's sake, hang up—he's in trouble. Hang up! I'm trying to call him. He can't come in!"

I hung up, but he couldn't make contact. Something was wrong. I rushed down to the plaza [the Main Terrace, in front of Casa Grande], but I couldn't hear the motor anymore. I said, "I wonder what happened? Maybe he's gone back to Santa Maria or San Luis [Obispo]." The next thing I heard was this terrific sound. He had tried to land, but thinking they would hit a mountain, he had given the damn thing the gun and it had gone shooting up and then straight on down, in a nosedive. Then I saw the flames.

The whole thing was in flames. The [Hearst Ranch] fire department started going like mad, but it was too late. They were gone, burned to death. Only Lawrence was saved.

The reason he got out was that the plane hit the ground at the tail end, breaking in half, and he was tossed out. One of the rental cars was going by, and Steve [Zegar, of San Luis Obispo], the rental man, saw all of the smoke and Lawrence lying there in flames. He hopped out and beat the flames off and saved him. Lawrence was in the hospital for a year. There was nothing left of the rest of them but their heads, so they told me.

Then I called up Doug Fairbanks and I said, "Get up here quickly. Something terrible has happened. Will you call Fanny Ward?"

PP/KSM: *Lady Plunket's mother [in Palm Beach, Florida].*

MD: Doug said, "What happened?"

"Dorothy and Terry were killed. They were late."

"Yes, she was late [Doug said]. They didn't get to the airport until almost three."

"I wish to God you'd phoned me [Marion said]—or somebody'd phoned me—I'd have told her not to go at that time."

Well, Doug got up there as fast as he could. Then he said, "You have to call Fanny."

"I can't do it," I said. "I'm a nervous wreck." I had fainted when the plane crashed—the only time in my life I'd ever fainted. I just fell

right down on my back, and Dorothy Mackaill was running around, yelling for somebody.

TC: "MD fainted in the picture show last night, or passed out, I'm not sure which." So said one of George Loorz correspondents on Sunday, February 27, 1938, three days after the crash. *Building for Hearst and Morgan,* p. 359.

MD: I was just a wreck. To look at a crash, to know that your friends are in it, is a terrible experience. Well, I called Fanny in Palm Beach. I didn't ask to talk to her; I spoke to her husband, Jack Dean. I didn't know him very well, just slightly, and I hadn't seen her for a long time. I told him what had happened and he said, "Oh, my God—well, you've got to tell Fanny . . . I can't." So again it was up to me.

I was so darn nervous I could hardly open my mouth. "I have some bad news for you," I stuttered. Then I told her. She started to scream.

It was about two days later [Saturday, February 26] that we had to go to the funeral. There was an awful flood. The Los Angeles River was up to the bridge. We weren't allowed over the bridge. We had been to the funeral for the Plunkets and were supposed to go to Glendale for the pilot's funeral, and they were waiting.

We couldn't get to the pilot's funeral. Nobody was allowed in Glendale.

In Long Beach a bridge had been washed away and a man was electrocuted, and in Santa Monica there were floods in the canyon [Santa Monica Canyon, just north of the Beach House], and some houses were washed away. It was very bad.

I didn't get over that shock for quite a long time. It was a terrible thing to see and know two of my best friends were there. It was just another reason why I hated flying—but I hated flying even before then.

PP/KSM: *Subsequently [in the late 1940s] an instrument-landing system was installed at San Simeon, the first such private installation in the world.*

MD: Well, that was at San Simeon.

How often it seemed that in the midst of gaiety and frivolity, the phone would ring. Then there would be tragedy.

MD: A German baron came from Europe on his yacht. Apparently he was an adopted son who was supposed to have murdered his father and taken all the money, but I didn't know that at the time. When he arrived [in San Simeon Bay] he sent up a letter of introduction from a friend I knew in France. There were about eight in his party, and they had luncheon [on the hilltop]. Then he asked if we'd go down and have the courtesy of having dinner on his yacht.

Mr. Hearst wouldn't say no, so we went down on the yacht, a fairly big one. A little French girl dressed like a sailor came dashing up. She couldn't speak a bit of English. I don't think she could have been more than fourteen years of age. Well, the baron screamed at her to get out, and I thought it was kind of peculiar.

When we went back to the castle we discovered that we didn't have enough room for his guests and our guests, too, so two people had to go down and stay on the yacht that night.

One was Lloyd Pantages. He told me that in the middle of the night he heard terrible screaming and banging noises. He went to see what was the matter and broke the door down. He found that little girl. She was stark naked and all the sailors were taking a whack at her.

He told me this the next day. I told Harry d'Arrast to get rid of them.

TC: Harry d'Abbadie d'Arrast was married to Eleanor Boardman from 1940 to 1968; Miss Boardman had previously been married to the film director King Vidor, another Hearst-Davies insider.

MD: Harry did. They left, and we heard there was a fight on the ship. It was a real mystery ship. The girl had gone completely insane.

Then the baron went to Paris and left her behind. He said he could not take her along.

I talked to W.R. about it and he said, "We'll have to take care of her." I told Harry to tell the doctor to take care of her and that Mr. Hearst would pay her expenses until she was well enough to go home, and then he'd get her home, if she had any family.

But that wasn't all. I got word from the district attorney [in San Luis Obispo] that the doctor had attacked the girl himself. She was only a kid in a little sailor suit.

The doctor charged W.R. six thousand dollars [at least $90,000 today], but I said, "Don't pay him." I didn't tell him what Harry had told me. It shows how you can get in trouble by just meeting up with strangers. It was the most fantastic thing that ever happened to me, and I was shocked.

If I had known at the time, I'd have had them all arrested. After that Barbara Hutton met the baron, and there were reports that she was going to marry him, but somehow she got out of that all right.

Plenty of romances started there [at San Simeon]. The watchmen were around, so nobody could do anything off the beam. That was a strict rule. They had to be in their rooms at a certain hour, and nobody could be in anybody else's room.

W.R. was right, in a way. There were young girls, and they could have gotten involved. The moonlight is very efficacious there. He had a place called the Cloister. It was way upstairs [a group of four bedrooms, directly above the Refectory dining room], and that was for the girls, next to the library.

The bachelors stayed in the duplexes [another four bedrooms, not far from the Cloisters]. There was no connection [by internal passageway]. Let's not call it Presbyterian, but let's say he was very careful. And there was one good thing about it—nobody stayed too long.

There was a story that someone walked into the swimming pool nude, but it was just a legend. It could never have happened. There were always lights around the pool, and all the watchmen.

W.R. didn't want to have anything happen. He was very, very austere, and he always demanded that the girls wear wraps over their bathing suits. He thought they might catch cold.

It was for his own protection, too. Somebody might get raped or murdered and he'd have been accused. Nobody got away with anything.