Introduction

Marion Davies recorded the notes for this book on magnetic tapes in her Beverly Hills home. With the assistance of Stanley Flink, a Time-Life correspondent, she began work in the summer of 1951. On August 14 of that year, William Randolph Hearst died, ending their thirty-two year affair.

For ten years and thirty-nine days after he passed away, Marion lived with her memories [until September 22, 1961]. But this work was withheld from publication while she lived, because she felt she may have revealed too much.

After W. R.'s death, W. A. Swanberg compiled and wrote Citizen Hearst, *published by Charles Scribner's Sons in September 1961. And Fred Lawrence Guiles researched and wrote* Marion Davies, *published by the McGraw-Hill Book Company in 1972. Those two books are certainly the standard reference works on their subjects.*

This book is a personal memory. It is possibly an autobiography, but probably not. Marion said what she had to say, then put it aside and never went back to it.

She was born Marion Cecilia, the youngest child of Bernard and Rose Reilly Douras, and she would become a major American film star of the 1920s and 1930s, helped by her friend, publishing and real estate tycoon, art collector and film producer William Randolph Hearst. He would supervise most of the forty-five films she made as she became the richest actress of her time.

Against the background of the great worldwide depression of the thirties, Marion and W. R. lived in a style that rivaled the grandeur of European royalty, and indeed they traveled in those circles.

When Marion tired of working in films, prior to World War II, she gave herself over to W. R. as a constant companion, carrying out his wishes both in business and in pleasure. After his death in 1951, although

she was only fifty-four, it seems her life lost its momentum. She dabbled in real estate and built her fortune to an estimated value of twenty million dollars, then wavered between constructive charities and destructive drinking.

Her films were forgotten as time passed, and her fans found new idols. The Hearst newspapers faded, too, in the glare of electronic journalism and labor problems.

But the properties remain. San Simeon, the most famous, was given to the State of California. Not the several hundred thousand acres of land around the castle—which still are operated as a cattle ranch—but the buildings at the top of La Cuesta Encantada, the enchanted hill. And now it is a true California spectacle. Opened to the public, cautiously at first, it soon gained an overwhelming response. The landmark generates a profit for the State's general fund. Tickets for the tours are sold out weeks in advance as tourists from all over the world jam the facilities of the few towns along that part of the coast.

We have heard that San Simeon was W. R.'s favorite home, built in honor and memory of his mother, but it was only when Marion reigned as hostess that it dazzled the world. There were sixty guest bedrooms and a constant flow of people arriving and departing. While they visited they had such diversions as pools, tennis courts, the beach, a zoo and a cocktail hour with Marion—which W. R. ignored.

Everyone took meals in the Refectory at a monastery table three hundred years old. Marion and W. R. sat opposite each other at the middle of the long, laden board. The guests would find their place cards moved farther and farther from the center of the table as their stay at San Simeon lengthened. It was a gentle reminder that time was passing, and they could go home.

For the guests, there were also newspapers to read and movies to watch. Mostly W. R.'s publications and mostly Marion's pictures.

For those who were never guests, there were many books and articles and movies that built upon the legends and accounts and realities of life at San Simeon.

Orson Welles wrote, directed, produced and acted in a film which the world believed was based on the lives of Marion and W. R. It seemed fitting, then, that he would write the Foreword to this book. Nonetheless, his only meeting with Marion and W. R., as we understand it, was an occasion after the film was released, when they shared an elevator in a San Francisco hotel, going up in silence. Today Citizen Kane *is shown in theatres and at film festivals, and continues to attract and polarize comments on its subject.*

We think that film influenced W. A. Swanberg and his publishers in their choice of a title for their book.

Marion has taken some liberties in this book. For instance, the older Marion got to be, the later the date she was born. Beginning at that point, the editors have taken some liberties, too, but only to make sense where there seemed to be confusion or to supply the details lost in the lapse of time.

Readers of this collaboration are reminded of Aaron Burr's statement:

> *I would not wish to possess that*
> *kind of memory which retains with*
> *accuracy and certainty all names*
> *and places. I never knew it to*
> *accompany much invention of fancy.*
> *It is almost exclusively the blessing*
> *of dullness.*

Indeed, we wish we had had the great privilege of knowing Marion. Working with her, but without her, we have come to respect her view that there is only one true four-letter word in the English language: dull. *And she is never that.*

—PP & KSM, New York City
July 1975

TC: Except for adding Marion's death date in 1961, I've taken a hands-off approach in presenting this Introduction by Pam Pfau and Ken Marx—as

originally published in 1975. I've also stuck with the italics typeface used by Bobbs-Merrill, a style I've consistently used for the PP/KSM entries in *The Annotated Marion*. Long before that, Bobbs-Merrill (through its editor Gladys Moore) made some minor changes in the Introduction of 1975. Among them: Marion's age of "54" at Hearst's death became "fifty-four" in *The Times We Had;* and Pfau and Marx's "further and further" in reference to place cards in San Simeon's dining room became the more exact "farther and farther" in the published version.

At the other extreme, these next words appeared at the beginning of the Pfau-Marx manuscript, pre-publication:

> Marion Davies recorded the notes for this book on magnetic tape in her Beverly Hills home more than twenty years ago, in 1953. Two years had then passed since William Randolph Hearst had died.

The difference between 1953 and 1951 is pronounced, to be sure. There's no indication in Tom Brown's archival materials of how this key change came about. Suffice it to say the change—or rather the correction—was made before *The Times We Had* went to press in 1975. Posterity can be glad. Had the date 1953 appeared (it was also slated for Chapter 15, for the last page of Marion's testimony), the struggle to right that historical ship may never have ended.