

# 12

## The Way to Solvency

1942–1944

HEARST AND MARION weren't in Los Angeles or Santa Monica again until December 1942, and then only briefly while en route to Mexico. Hearst's birthday, April 29, fell on a Wednesday, exactly two weeks after the Military Ball; they observed it at Wyntoon, evidently without much fanfare. Except for a quick trip to San Francisco in September, the couple stayed put at Wyntoon throughout the second half of 1942. San Simeon remained quiet during that stretch, as did the Beach House, with each place being cared for by the smallest of staffs.

The year as a whole was scarcely uneventful in Hearst and Marion's lives. Yet so the months ahead could easily be portrayed, there being little to say about Santa Monica or its grander counterpart, San Simeon, some 200 miles up the coast. Consequently, the secondary, the tangential, at times even the wholly unexpected needn't be avoided here, any more than in previous chapters. It's so often all we have to go on, about all we can delve into for the next two and a half years in our chronology. Which is to say it was late in 1944 that Hearst and Marion called San Simeon home again for the first time after April 1941, as recounted in Chapter 10. We've since moved a few more months along the timeline in Chapter 11. The present chapter will cover a much longer stretch—the two and a half years just mentioned—the ones lying between April 1942, with its Military Ball in Hollywood, and November 1944, when the entourage returned to San Simeon during the holiday season. At least for our purposes it was a move that put

Hearst and Marion geographically closer to Santa Monica (in fact, they would never be at Wyntoon again, from the end of 1944 onward).

Back to the spring of 1942. The Military Ball, three weeks in the history books as of May 6, was the subject of a long wire to Hearst at Wyntoon from Harry Crocker on that date; Crocker's message was sent from Los Angeles:

It was repeatedly explained to [Major] Nolan [of the State Guard] that Glenn Miller came to coast to make pictures only and had National Union permit only to do so. Union here demanded that if he play at Military Ball we engage local band also. This we got waived. Miller's fee for a single appearance is twenty-five hundred dollars. This he gave up for Miss Davies.

The sum of two hundred and fifty dollars was explained to Nolan as the local union tax on Miller's performance and cannot be rebated.

Understand Andrews Sisters and manager back in town. When they return their check [for nine hundred dollars] it will prove that Military Ball received thirty-four hundred dollars worth of entertainment for two hundred and fifty dollars.

When Andrews check received will wire you as I feel personally responsible for entertainment end of Ball as well as for other arrangements but have found it exceedingly difficult to make Nolan understand theatrical end of things.

Hearst had passed the two-year mark with "In the News" earlier in 1942. At the time of the Military Ball in April, followed by his birthday the same month, he showed few signs of slowing down or of changing direction. By May and June all such bets were off: a third year of the daily column simply was not to be. He could still editorialize (and did) through his papers. And yet to keep cranking out a column every day (or more often every night or very early in the morning) was unquestionably too much. Besides, what may well have been his foremost purpose—that of rallying his troops and spit-shining them into better performances than they'd ever thought possible—had

sufficiently served its purpose. The momentum he generated before the U.S. entered the war was now fully in gear through the war's unfolding on its own; Hearst could sit back and go for the ride, at least in part, at least more than he had all through 1940, 1941, and the early months of the current year.

Word got out that he was laying down his pen (or thick pencil, in his accustomed case). *Editor & Publisher* magazine in New York heard from Hearst on June 8, 1942:

Thanks for the inquiry.

It is gratifying to know that you have realized that the column is now filled with good news instead of my conventional comment.

No, I have not permanently discontinued the column.

At least, I do not think I have.

In fact he *had* discontinued "In the News" or very soon would, within a matter of days. As he further told *Editor & Publisher* in that same message of June 8:

But there is so much editorial and general executive work to be done on the various publications during the war period, that it is difficult for me to find time to write a regular column.

Tell the folks not to indulge in any premature rejoicing however.

I might resume any day.

Not quite a week later, orders from Joe Willicombe to all editors put the matter in more definite terms; the word went forth on Saturday, June 13:

This is modification of the instruction regarding handling of commendatory messages on MacArthur Day celebration, to be exchanged with other papers and carried in issue of Monday the 15th.

As Chief's "In the News" column has been discontinued, of course the messages cannot be printed in exactly [the] same manner as the "I Am an American" Day similar messages [that appeared in "In the News"].

So Chief instructs to print [the MacArthur items] in the regular news columns with adequate display.

Ten days later, on June 23, Hearst was coming off a stay-at-home vacation, an absolute rarity for him. Joe Willicombe gave some key details in wiring E. D. Coblentz at the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*:

Chief appreciates your kind off[er] to take care of editorials while on vacation.

He says however that he will take over the editorials again, starting at once.

So will you kindly tell the INS and the people in the East to send editorials to Chief beginning Wednesday [the 24th] in the same way as before matter was diverted to you.

WHILE HEARST BUSIED HIMSELF with editorial matters, Marion focused on fund-raising for her former Children's Clinic in Sawtelle, now renamed the Marion Davies War Work Hospital, whose direct beneficiary was the California State Guard. The first outdoor event held in its behalf during the war was slated to take place in Sawtelle; but then the event was moved to the Hearst-Davies house at 910 Benedict Cañon Drive in Beverly Hills instead. Either way, things were summarized by Marion's old friend Marie Glendenning (spelled Glendinning in *The Times We Had*), who wired on Monday, August 10, 1942:

The Garden Party was marvelous. A great tribute to a great little lady. All love darling.

Ray Van Ettisch at the *Los Angeles Examiner* had more specific details for Willicombe that same day, August 10:

Stars at Garden Revel were Dorothy Lamour, Rita Hayworth, Anne Shirley and Marsha Hunt, Eddie Cantor, Gene Autry and Bob Hope. Does Chief wish men used in Sunday movie sections, or just the women? We plan to use: Lamour next Sunday [the 16th]; Hayworth,

August 23rd; Shirley, September 6th; and Hunt, September 13th. Is this program O.K. with Chief and does he wish us to send to other Sunday papers?

Hearst, rather than Willicombe, answered Van Ettisch later on the 10th:

Proposed layouts for women in the Sunday papers OK as per your telegram today.

Please make pictures striking and beautiful and ask that they be used in all cities.

Picture the men in the immediate daily papers—

Eddie Cantor Wednesday [the 12th], Bob Hope Thursday, Gene Autry Friday. Articles brief but highly flattering.

The prestige these events could command seemed almost boundless. On August 26, Marion heard from a man in Beverly Hills with a proposal:

Believe can arrange giant benefit [for] your Hospital Foundation with Benny Goodman [and] Lionel Hampton orchestras at Casa Manna. 100 percent box office proceeds to Foundation. Should net three to five thousand dollars. May I phone to discuss matter with you?

Another instance of fund-raising—stemming from the new Fox movie *The Pied Piper* that starred Roddy McDowell and Anne Baxter—led to Marion's wiring Darryl Zanuck's wife, Virginia, on August 29; Mrs. Zanuck's address was 546 Ocean Front, a few doors south of the Beach House in Santa Monica:

I will present the check here [at Wyntoon] to any authorized agent and the incident can be photographed. I am planning a connection of special importance to the nursery [at the War Work Hospital] and if successful the plan should be worthy of great promotion.

There's ultimately no separating Marion from Hearst in such matters as these. What she got interested in, he took interest in, with the opposite also being true; Marion confirmed this trait several times

in her memoir. Thus when Louella Parsons wired Wyntoon on September 3, 1942, she addressed Hearst directly:

*Pied Piper* opening great success. Miss [Ella] Williams has check for Marion's Hospital twelve hundred fifty [\$1,250]. Twentieth [Century-Fox] added extra two hundred fifty because of your cooperation. Meeting this afternoon with Commander Bolton and Mrs. Zanuck to arrange Wyntoon visit [to] get Marion's picture accepting check for nurseries . Glad everything worked out so well. Love to Marion.

Virginia Zanuck also wired Wyntoon about *The Pied Piper*, likewise on September 3; her message went directly to Marion:

Just wanted to report that the premiere was a huge success due mainly to the support of the *Examiner* and [the] *Herald-Express* which you made possible. In behalf of our organization [the War Work Committee] I want to thank you and Mr. Hearst.

In regard to your telegram I have gone into the matter completely with your representative Mr. Larry Mitchell who is following through with Commander Bolton and who will no doubt report to you direct.

We can discuss this matter further when Louella and I take advantage of your kind invitation in about two weeks. We would like to come sooner but my plans are being held in abeyance until I know what Darryl's plans will be. Love.

In the midst of these August–September messages, Marion received word from her sister Rose indicating that all such efforts by the War Work Committee were truly a family affair. They were efforts that wouldn't have existed in quite the same way in 1942 had there never been a Marion Davies Children's Clinic in Sawtelle for the past decade and more. As Rose told Marion:

Mr. Stone of May Company Wilshire Boulevard has called me to relay the message to you that he would like to offer you and your committee workers a room with running water and conveniences for making bandages accommodating 150 persons at the May Company Wilshire. He prefers you to Red Cross. Will you let us know. Love.

OCTOBER 1, 1942, brought a bit of discouraging news about the Santa Monica property; Bill Hunter in Los Angeles to Joe Willicombe at Wynton:

[Bill] Newton says Weddle, the gardener at the Beach House is quitting and going to work at the Douglas [Aircraft] plant [at Clover Field in Santa Monica] Monday.

He will put in a few hours a day at the Beach House until you can get somebody else.

The Douglas facility cropped up coincidentally in a message of October 20 to Hearst, sent to Wynton by a man in Santa Monica:

The fire now raging at Malibu beach might with a change of wind sweep Santa Monica and the aircraft plant. It is the height of folly to use antiquated methods of fire fighting with thin little streams of water playing on blazing mountains. We must have a pumping station in the [Santa Monica] Bay area that can pour the water of the Pacific at any disastrous fire that threatens our war plant.

Will you use the offices of your great chain of papers to further this project and will you remind the American people that twenty years ago General William Mitchell [Billy Mitchell] showed us how to fight forest fires by planes. We must follow him in spirit and enterprise. Yours for victory.

Unbeknownst to the sender no doubt, Hearst still had some minor real-estate holdings close to the fire area. Not in Tuna Canyon, where he'd once thought of rebuilding the "Mount Olive" monastery and which acreage he'd sold to the Los Angeles Athletic Club in recent years, but rather along the Las Flores beach frontage, at the east end of Malibu along the main coast highway.

**BILL HUNTER**, in running a question past Joe Willicombe on October 29, 1942, used what must have been the casual or shorthand name for the War Work Hospital in Sawtelle (the former Children's Clinic):

The State Guard Hospital asks when the thirty-six surgical gowns were sent down—[they say] that they have no record of receiving gowns from Miss Davies recently but may be able to locate them when they know the date shipped.

A message from Willicombe to Larry Mitchell in Los Angeles, sent from Wynton on November 1, also touched on a hospital matter:

Chief wishes to get an iron lung for the Clinic from proceeds of last benefit. He thinks they cost around two thousand dollars.

2. Also he reminds me that you are to have a public accountant keep track of the funds from benefits and other sources and their expenditure.

3. And he wishes you to arrange with *Examiner* and *Herald-Express* [the publishing of] articles telling about treatment of children of Navy personnel at Marion's Clinic. He says the papers have not made enough of that important development.

On a related point, Larry Mitchell heard from Hearst himself on November 2:

Your letter of [October] thirtieth with report of income from Venice Pier benefit for the Foundation has been received.

Please publish the report and say the amount will be devoted to the purchase of an iron lung.

A week later, on November 9, Louella Parsons was in a snit over the handling of these recent fund-raising events in 1942; she wired Hearst at Wynton:

How can a lady help when she isn't told anything about a benefit? No one ever telephoned or mentioned the Venice [Pier] party to me. I was glad to help on the [Military] Ball [in April] and the Garden Party [in August]. You know I always want to do everything I can but I had an



idea that only the big [news] breaks and the pictures [movies reviewed] in the *Examiner* were all that were wanted.

November 11 yielded a matter that would have been more down Miss Parsons' usual alley—once more, had she known about it. It involved the silent-screen idol Pola Negri, who wired Hearst from New York in a plaintive tone:

Will you kindly grant me the courtesy of a reply to my letter. Anxiously awaiting.

Something was brewing about a Pola Negri feature in *The American Weekly*. The magazine's main editor, Abe Merritt, wired Willicombe on November 16:

Please assure Chief that I will do everything possible in the Negri matter and will talk with her for Chief's information. We got under the wire and slipped her \$5,000 before proceedings. Amount now involved is remaining \$1,500 of which she is only interested in \$500 as \$250 goes to her agent and \$750 to ghost writer.

Merritt had more for Willicombe two days later, on November 18:

Dear Joe: I have managed to get released to Pola \$250 of the \$1,500 still owing her and am making arrangements so she can satisfy creditors and also pay agent and ghost writer whom she forgot in the \$5,000 we gave her. [She can] also probably get more for herself. Pola has vanished and if you hear from her will you please ask her to communicate with me.

Willicombe heard further from Merritt later that same afternoon:

Dear Joe: Never mind sending me Pola's address. We have now adjusted satisfactorily to her at least temporarily but I hope permanently [in] the whole matter.

In the midst of the Negri situation, some of Marion's earliest films were of great concern to Hearst; he'd wired his Cosmopolitan man, Ed Hatrick, in Colorado Springs, where Hat was convalescing; this was back on November 15:

As I remember, we bought *[The] Belle of New York* from George Lederer, all rights, theatrical, music, dialogue, everything.

It is now revived in London, very successful.

Do not our rights cover foreign performances, and also American stage performances, and also any motion picture performances?

I think they are complete.

[Carl] Zittel, I believe, bought the rights but perhaps you were party to the purchase.

Do you know where the contract is?

Possibly Zittel has the contracts for *[The] Belle of New York* [1919], *Cecilia of the Pink Roses* [1918], *Getting Mary Married* [1919], and *The Dark Star* [1919].

If so, let us get out a mandamus [a writ] compelling their surrender, as they were bought by the firm [Cosmopolitan Productions].

HEARST'S LARGER THOUGHTS were devoted during this part of 1942 to Mexico, where he and Marion and a few others were about to go, though not entirely for pleasure. As he told two of his Boston newsmen, Hap Kern and Walter Howey, on November 25:

In ten days I am going to Mexico to get mahogany out for the Navy.

I am also going to wind up [to] the ranches and mining properties for required [war] materials.

I do not know how long this will take.

If you folks want to see me before I go, I hope you can come soon.

I do not want to miss you.

Hearst had been briefed as early as June 23 on the mahogany situation by William Murray of Hearst Sunical and by Jose Navarro, a Hearst representative in Mexico, both of whom had gone east in the matter:

After method of approach decided in New York we spent today in Washington [D.C.] in conference with several [of] Navy's procurement heads. This lead arranged by Bill [Hearst] Junior most helpful. They are extremely interested in our product for ships as well as aviation branch.

The are now compiling stockpile figures [of mahogany on hand for war uses] and have requested us be present [this] coming Thursday [June 25] for further conference. We believe more concrete proposition will materialize then. Will wire you results.

A month later, Hearst answered an inquiry from New York concerning his probable whereabouts in the early fall:

Hope to be here [at Wyntoon] in October but am not quite sure as might have to go to Mexico.

His motives appear to have been both humanitarian and commercial: the government needed mahogany, which it could no longer procure from Asia during wartime, and Hearst had a good source of it in Mexico. Bill Murray of Hearst Sunical was at Wyntoon on October 20 when the following message came in from Washington, D.C.:

Otis report, which must come in diplomatic pouch and then clear State Department, still not received by Foster who has only fine samples of Campeche mahogany which were shipped to him direct. Foster says definitely we can get contract within week after Otis report comes in. Mahogany import plan reported your letter October 15 does not affect us because we will sell it at [Ciudad del] Carmen [Campeche] and not import it. Hope some information about [Jose] Navarro organization plans and machinery needs can reach me before discussion of contract per your instructions.

That same day, October 20, 1942, a message from Willicombe to Ed Ardoin, the Hearst man in El Paso, Texas, gave some idea of the degree of traveling that was being planned:

Chief will have two or three trunks. Will it be OK to send them to you at above address and hold until he leaves El Paso and take them on the special train? Please wire collect and oblige.

Hearst, Marion, and their party would be in Mexico City for part of the trip, as indicated by another local representative, Arthur Constantine, who wired Willicombe on November 22:

Elguero house [on] San Angel available. Seven bedrooms, four baths, beautifully furnished, completely equipped with linen [and] silver, fully staffed. Senora Elguero asks guarantee two thousand dollars for two months. Also available penthouse four bedrooms [and] additional suites [at] Hotel Maria Christina. Trying also get option Shaw house [on] Avenida Durango. Finely furnished [and] equipped, fully staffed, [has] six bedrooms. Elguero house first choice.

Bill Murray of Hearst Sunical was in El Paso at the moment. Willicombe wired him there on November 23 with some important details:

Birthplace of Chief San Francisco and Marion Brooklyn, George Hearst Washington [D.C.] and Sally [his wife] San Diego, [Harry] Crocker San Francisco, Raoul [Walsh] New York City and Mrs. Walsh St. Louis, Missouri, [Jud] Smelser [Hearst's valet] Emporia, Kansas and Monteski Minto [Marion's maid], North Dakota.

Willicombe had further details for Murray that same day, November 23:

Miss Julia Morgan has been added to the party for Mexico. Following is the necessary information for permit:

Date of birth, January 1872.

Home address: 2229 Divisadero St., San Francisco, Calif.

Occupation, architect.

Citizenship, American.

Born, San Francisco.

It was two days later, on November 25, that Hearst told the two Boston newspapermen that he was soon going to Mexico “to get mahogany out for the Navy.” Not surprisingly, the arrangements Willicombe made for the trip required some last-minute changes, as in this message he sent the *San Francisco Examiner* on the 27th:

Chief leaving here Monday night [November 30] instead of Sunday. Please have car meet him at Oakland Pier Tuesday morning instead of Monday.

Also kindly notify Fairmont [Hotel] he will arrive Tuesday morning and leave Tuesday night on [Southern Pacific] *Lark* for Los Angeles, being in San Francisco for only that one day.

2. Of course send up the papers to Wynton Monday morning as usual.

Thanks for all your trouble.

On November 30, before the Hearst-Davies party left Wynton, Willicombe wired Bill Murray at Hearst Sunical in San Francisco:

Replying your message today Chief says OK. He asks that you prepare document giving Miss Davies one-third of profits for financing this [mahogany] enterprise.

While Hearst and Marion were at the Beach House, pending a corporate meeting to be held there on December 2, 1942, an editorial by Benjamin DeCasseres came in from New York for his approval:

Prime Minister Winston Churchill in his recent radio address said that after the united nations [the Allies] had cleaned up Hitler and Mussolini, England would come to our help in the Pacific.

Let us hope that it will not be TOO LATE.

Just at present things do not look particularly encouraging for us in the Pacific area.

The Japs remain almost unmolested in the Aleutians, which is American territory.

In spite of the unquestioned damage done to Japan's fleets and her air force [as in the Battle of Midway], those forces still remain PRACTICALLY INTACT and are now planning for another all-out attack on Guadalcanal.

General MacArthur has not yet driven the enemy out of New Guinea—far from it.

It is nearly a year now since the dastardly attack on Pearl Harbor. Since then we have not got very far on our way to Tokio. . . .

The greatest threat to the United States is JAPAN.

So what will it profit us if Hitler is defeated in a year or two and the Japs are on our Pacific Coast?

Hearst approved the editorial for release the next day, December 2. Its content was a good indicator of what his sentiments were as well as those of many others in the U.S. when 1942 drew to a close.

UPON RETURNING FROM MEXICO at New Year's in 1943, Hearst and Marion spent nearly five months in Los Angeles. Or more precisely, on the Westside; but it's imprecise how they divided their time between the Beach House in Santa Monica and the much smaller house at 910 Benedict Cañon Drive in Beverly Hills. The usual scattered clues have them making use of both places; again, though, the ratio of Santa Monica stays to Beverly Hills stays for the couple through May 1943 is unclear; it awaits further research in the Hearst Papers at The Bancroft Library or through other sources that may yet materialize. A Bancroft item from January 13 brings out the ambiguity, the uncertainty; Willicombe to Randy Apperson, manager of the San Simeon Ranch:

Chief asks that you kindly send him a young male white deer, which he would like you to kill and dress. . . .

You will not have to hang the deer [to cure the meat], as he has a big enough refrigerator to take care of that.

He would like you kindly to ship this to him as soon as you can, addressed:

W. R. Hearst,  
415 Ocean Front,  
Santa Monica, California.

2. Will you kindly ask Nick Yost to pack up the bathing suits on the Hilltop and send them to Chief at 910 Benedict Canyon, Beverly Hills.

A similar message, Willicombe to Apperson on January 22, 1943, gave the edge to the smaller house:

Please send Chief as quickly as possible to 910 Benedict Canyon Road, Beverly Hills, four turkeys.

Chief also asks that you send him a list of the poultry available at San Simeon.

Two months later, the Beach House was the specified address in another Willicombe-to-Apperson item, dated March 22:

Our meat supply will be exhausted by the end of next week. Chief would like you to ship another half beef, so that it will arrive at 415 Ocean Front (Santa Monica) first part of next week—say Monday the 29th.

Between these two dates—“the second week of February,” as John Dunlap defined the moment in his biography, *The Hearst Saga*—“Marion went on a totally out-of-control alcoholic bender,” possibly brought on by the death of her beloved dachshund, Gandhi. The drinking binge was “deeply humiliating” to Hearst, “who was obliged to commit her to hospitalization.” Thus the following memorandum to Rose Davies from Hearst, dated Sunday, February 21, 1943:

I did not go with Marion to the hospital as the doctor asked me to stay away for the time being.

In view of your uneasiness, however, I went down last evening—at 12 o'clock midnight.

I had to wait three hours, as Marion was sleeping and the nurse naturally wanted her to get all the rest she could. When she awoke I saw her and talked with her. She was relaxed and in a good mood, considering.

I talked with her and she asked why [she'd been hospitalized], and I told her that nobody could control her outside of a hospital,—neither doctors nor nurses nor priests nor those who loved her best. She seemed to accept this statement.

She had been given a hypodermic and complained of soreness in her arm. I told the nurse it was not to be repeated under any circumstances, and to communicate that word to the doctor.

I stayed about half an hour [more], but Marion was tired and needed some rest, so I did not keep her awake longer.

The nurse said the doctor's orders were that she was to be kept perfectly quiet and undisturbed for another twenty-four hours.

Charlie [Lederer] was up here last night and made a good suggestion about the employment of a psychiatrist, and the use of analytical and persuasive methods.

I am going to see Dr. Moore Monday [February 22] and make this suggestion. I am sure he will concur.

Marion's cold, she says, is much better; and I think it is, as she did not cough very badly, and certainly looked less ill and less harassed.

Apart from these jarring details, which cast deep shadows on Marion's future credibility as a memoirist—or do they?—the dates skip along briskly in these early weeks of 1943. They do so for the most part because there's no George & Rosalie Hearst Collection for this period: all messages over the local teleprinter, whether incoming or outgoing, accumulated in Los Angeles and stayed there; they were never among what accrued at Wynton or San Simeon during the early forties; nor were they ever sent to San Simeon at some later date, as were numerous Wynton items of the 1930s and 1940s.

And thus straight to April 23, 1943, we can go, with the advantage belonging to the Beach House again, as it did earlier in the year; Willicombe to Apperson at San Simeon:

Chief would like you to ship IMMEDIATELY to him at 415 Ocean Front, Santa Monica, California, the following poultry:

- 12 Pheasants
- 12 Mallards
- 8 Guineas
- 8 Jungle Fowl
- 4 Roasting chickens
- 3 Turkeys
- 6 Soup chickens

I telephoned to save time, as they must arrive NOT LATER THAN WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28th—CHIEF'S BIRTHDAY, AS YOU KNOW, BEING ON THE 29th.



Obviously “a gathering of the clans,” as Hearst himself might have said, was in the works. We have Louella Parsons to thank for a firsthand account of the occasion in her memoir of 1944, *The Gay Illiterate*, in which she began with a good description of Wyntoon:

Wyntoon was the favorite spot of Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, mother of the Chief. It is set in a grove of huge pine trees, towering over the rippling McCloud River, so clear that the trout play in transparent splendor for all the world like a fisherman’s dream come true.

The whole effect of Wyntoon is that of a complete Tyrolean village straight out of the old world. The cottage [The Gables] housing the dining room is so far removed from the other buildings that it is necessary for guests to motor to meals. . . .

Since the war San Simeon is officially closed, and Mr. Hearst divides his time between Los Angeles and Wyntoon. His eightieth birthday, April 29, 1943, was celebrated in Los Angeles.

There were just a few of us, his sons and their wives, his editors, his official family, gathered around the table at the beach house in Santa Monica. Outside, the dimmed-out beach towns along the shore were barely discernible in outline. Inside, tall, tapering, silver candlesticks on the table lent a warmth and cheer that was reflected in every heart as we listened to Mr. Hearst return our greeting toasts. I will always remember what he said:

“I shall not pretend that I am happy to be eighty. I would gladly exchange that marker for two lifetimes at forty—just as a woman, reaching forty, would gladly exchange that milestone for two at the twenty mark. Yet, I am thankful and grateful that I find so much in life that is fresh, stimulating, and dear to me.”

It’s significant that Miss Parsons didn’t speak of “Marion’s beach house,” for she knew the score, the same as Jack Warner did when he looked back twenty years later, from the mid-1960s. In peacetime and in wartime both, the Beach House was *theirs*—Hearst and Marion’s, through and through.

*Time* magazine published an account of the birthday gathering almost two weeks later in its issue of May 10, 1943, under “Hearst is 80”:

William Randolph Hearst, monarch of a communications dynasty (16 newspapers [actually 17], eight magazines, four radio stations, one news service, one feature syndicate, one photo service), art collector, exponent of yellow journalism, worshiper at circulation’s shrine, reporter, reformer, politico, columnist and multimillionaire, was 80 last week.

For a man of his means and mightiness he celebrated modestly. At the lavish, enormous Santa Monica, Calif, beach house of ex-film star Marion Davies he talked with friends, read congratulatory messages, played his daily hour of tennis. (Hearst tennis compares unfavorably with that of Octogenarian King Gustaf V of Sweden: no one ever keeps score; Hearst covers the court only to arm’s length each way and it is taken for granted that the ball must be hit within his reach.) Birthday dinner guests were Marion Davies, four Hearst sons and their wives, a handful of Hearst publishers, movie columnist Louella Parsons, ex-Georgian Prince David Mdivani, film actor Arthur (Dagwood Bumstead) Lake, [and] several others. They nibbled a red and white cake (16 candles).

Despite his age, Tycoon Hearst has not shriveled. Grey, jowled like a coon dog, no longer nimble, he still stands impressively erect to his full 6 ft. 2, is remarkably healthy. He still bubbles with new ideas for his publications, over which he maintains the vigilance of a whimsical despot. His newspapers are still wild-eyed, red-inked, impulsive, dogmatic, often inaccurate, and littered with grade-A, boob-catching circulation features. Currently Hearstpapers are making lurid attacks against “Stalin’s Monstrous Double-Dealing,” and are promoting “Total Warfare Against Japan . . . NOW.” But Hearst personally has mellowed in his declining years, if his press has not. A recent edict of “advice to reporters and editors” said: “Be courteous and considerate. Make newspapers and newspapermen popular.”

Commented Hearst’s Los Angeles competitor, the *Times*, in a birthday editorial: “. . . Even those who have not always agreed with

him can wish him well at this milestone in a career which will be long remembered.”

As for Hearst’s dividing his time between the Southland and Wyntoon, he and Marion weren’t moving back and forth between those distant points in this first part of 1943. They may have been going back and forth between 415 Ocean Front and 910 Benedict Cañon, but that was the extent of it. They hadn’t been to Wyntoon since November, right before their trip to Mexico. As soon as they returned to Wyntoon in late May, it would be for as long and as uninterrupted a stay as they’d ever devoted to the place—fully a year and a half between then and their return to San Simeon late in 1944.

Before pulling up their 1943 stakes in Los Angeles (to use the safe, catch-all geographical term, good for both Santa Monica and Beverly Hills), Hearst wrote to E. D. Coblentz (“Cobbie”) at the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin* on May 6:

I have a strong feeling that the Japanese will raid our coast cities soon—maybe any day, and I think the Coast papers [Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, and Seattle] should take very exceptional measures to extinguish fires in the building [Cobbie’s building in San Francisco] and in the neighborhood of the building, and should have some fire drills and regulations to go into effect if the raid occurs.

The chances that our building would be actually struck are small, but the chances that it would be caught in a general conflagration are very large, and it is time we were making complete preparations for such a catastrophe.

I wish you would let me know what you are doing to meet the situation.

Alarmist notions? Perhaps they were, in view of the “Miracle at Midway” that had begun turning the war in the Allies’ favor nearly a year earlier. But in contrast the unexplained Battle of Los Angeles still stuck in Hearst’s craw no doubt from February 1942. The man always leaned toward the histrionic, of course; there was nothing new in that.

Deeply behind the scenes, however, the Japanese may indeed have had a diabolically ambitious plan, although Hearst, short of being clairvoyant, would have had no way of knowing what would be divulged forty years later by an American scholar, John J. Stephan, in *Hawaii Under the Rising Sun: Japan's Plan for Conquest After Pearl Harbor*:

But the idea of assaulting the American mainland was not merely a literary diversion, nor was it confined to writers during the twilight of Imperial Japan.

According to the distinguished military historian Ikuhito Hata, late in 1944 a group of naval officers led by Lieutenant Commander Daiji Yamaoka seriously entertained the prospect of launching a suicide strike in California. Some three-hundred chosen men of the “Yamaoka Parachute Brigade” were to be transported across the Pacific on several mammoth submarines and landed in the vicinity of Santa Barbara. They were then to shoot their way into Los Angeles via Santa Monica, wrecking havoc with the Douglas and Lockheed aircraft factories and taking as many lives as possible before their own annihilation. Training for this operation began in December 1944 but was halted in May 1945 with the selection of a new target, the Mariana Islands.

It was a scenario that even Abe Merritt's *American Weekly* would have been hard pressed to invent for Hearst.

Charlie Ryckman editorialized on the subject in late May, soon after Hearst and Marion moved back to Wynton from Los Angeles; Ryck's effort on the “Japanese invasion menace” was dated May 29, 1943:

Agents of the [Martin] Dies Committee, a special investigating group of the House of Representatives, report that the Japanese in the Relocation Center in Rivers, Arizona, anticipate that “something terrible is going to happen on the West Coast by October 1.”

Obviously it is anticipated that Japanese forces will either invade or raid the West Coast. . . .

The reliance to be placed in information from such a source is of course insubstantial. . . .

The Japanese have every intention of raiding the United States and of invading the United States and of occupying the Pacific Coast of the United States.

They have planned such operations with utmost care for many years.

They unquestionably have formidable forces in readiness for them.

Pearl Harbor was attacked as a preliminary to this purpose. . . .

The Japanese in the Relocation Centers may not be right that invasion will be attempted this year. They are tragically right that “something terrible” is going to happen, if the time remaining to us for averting it is not utilized in better fashion than all our wasted time in the past.

Alarmism aside, Hearst and Marion’s recent use of the Beach House was to be virtually their last, what with blacked-out nights to contend with in Los Angeles. After May 1943, they scarcely set foot on the property again before they put it on the market in 1946 and concluded its sale in 1947. As for newspaper accounts that portray Marion as having used the Beach House for fifteen years, starting in 1930, and then selling the property in 1945, they can be given little or no credence (see Appendix V). Marion herself, it bears noting, never made any such claim in her memoir, soberly or not.

AS A JOURNALIST AND PUBLISHER, Hearst retained a strong interest in the film industry. One way or another, it was good for business. As he told Abe Merritt at *The American Weekly* on June 9, 1943:

Do you not think Rita Hayworth’s alimony husband [Edward C. Judson] and Mary Cunningham Reed’s would make good story?

Lionel Atwill, English actor on American screen, is another alimony baby [soon to be divorced from Louise Atwill] hanging on to mama’s apron strings.

The trouble with some of our features like Lya Lala, or whatever her name is, [is] that nobody ever heard of them. I think personality pages should be IMPORTANT personalities.

Insofar as, say, the California State Guard went, there were few important personalities in it besides Marion. Yet a recounting of their recent activities had strong local appeal. Ray Van Ettisch of the *Los Angeles Examiner* wired Joe Willicombe at Wynton on June 22, leading off with “We are using following story about Miss Davies starting with early edition tonight and layout of pictures on picture page, including one of the approved photos of Miss Davies.” He asked if Hearst wanted the “story and art sent to other papers”:

Chino [near Pomona], June 22.—Due to Marion Davies, through whose generosity in transforming a portion of the Clinic that bears her name into the Marion Davies War Work Hospital, 25,000 members of the California State Guard have been given hospital care.

This was revealed at the farewell banquet of the active duty personnel, southern section, for which the First Battalion, First Quartermaster Regiment, was host at the Pomona Valley Country Club at Chino last night.

“Miss Davies gave us the finest military hospital in the State, outside Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco,” said General Junius Pierce, former State Adjutant General.

“We owe her a great debt of gratitude for turning over to us this hospital at a time when civilian hospitals were filled. She did it without a thought of recompense and was always ready when we needed further aid.” . . .

With the State Guard about to be inactivated, a task to be completed by June 30, Colonel John French; Colonel Rupert Hughes, the toastmaster; General J. O. Donovan, former Adjutant General; and others paid high tribute to the organization.

“They formed the only organization which paid to serve their country and gave their time to do it,” said Colonel Pierce. . . .

Pointing out that the Guard had difficulty in keeping recruited to full strength of 7,000 because of continuous drafting of its members

into the Army, Captain [Edward F.] Hayes said that the value of Guard training has been indicated by the rapid promotion of former Guardsmen in the regular [federal] service.

Women members of the Guard shared in the farewell banquet, headed by their ranking woman officer, Lieutenant Imogene Meredith.

On a completely unrelated note (typical again of how archival items can skip almost wildly from one subject to the next), more than two years had passed since the *Citizen Kane* episode in 1941. As of 1943, the Hearst organization's ban on RKO seems to have moderated—or perhaps to have been lifted altogether. H. O. Hunter (Bill Hunter) had the following for Willicombe on July 8:

Bill Williams [Ella Williams] asks—

Did the folks see the Disney feature, *Victory Through Air Power*, and the two shorts?

RKO anxious to know what Chief thought of *Behind the Rising Sun*.

The Hearst correspondent James Young had published the book of the same title in 1941; perhaps that had a bearing on Hearst's current stance (Young soon told Hearst that RKO had a new president who was an "exceptionally fine man"). Consider this also: Hearst was now making use of material by John Steinbeck, an equally surprising stance. A query on July 9, 1943, from Ray Van Ettisch of the *Examiner* in Los Angeles to Willicombe at Wynton tells the tale:

Will it be OK now to take [move] Steinbeck articles to page-opposite-editorial to feature [Conchita] Pignatelli stories in news columns?

A snippet from greater Los Angeles allows us to visualize what Hearst or Marion or Willicombe could have thought upon hearing what follows, sent by Bill Hunter on July 26:

Connie phoned at 5:20 that James A. Farley [the prominent Democrat] called at the Beach House looking for the Chief, and left his card.

Farley, the Postmaster General under FDR from 1933 to 1940, made his gesture to no avail of course, for in a year like 1943 Hearst and Marion wouldn't be heading south anytime soon.

OF FAR GREATER CONCERN to Hearst (and through him to Marion) was the Clarence Shearn case, a poorly known episode in Hearstiana of the early forties. Shearn has managed to be portrayed as a shrewd or even enlightened trustee of the new Hearst financial organization that was formed in 1937. He had been that in part only; more so, he had been manipulative and intrusive, yet Hearst and Dick Berlin and others close to the Chief had withstood Shearn until now, six years and counting. Hearst set the tone in wiring Berlin and Martin Huberth in New York on Tuesday, July 27:

Friend of ours [an informant] says we have excellent legitimate case without malice against Mr. Judge [Shearn] for exceeding proper function and compelling action contrary to the opinion and advice of responsible officers which resulted in great damage and loss.

I am inclined to concur.

Associated Press ran the following story, as Willicombe learned on August 1, 1943:

On last Friday [July 30] it was reported that the publisher [Hearst] had been denied authority to terminate the voting trust agreement he made in 1937 with American Newspapers, Inc. Hearst had filed suit against the corporation and Clarence J. Shearn, voting trustee, to break the trust.

In stating that no final decision had been made upon the merits of the case, [James R.] Morford [Hearst's attorney] said Hearst served notice of termination of the trust on March 16, 1942, and that the "first aspect" of the case was the right of the publisher to terminate it by notice on that date. . . .

"Hearst then served new notice of termination of the voting trust dated May 3, 1943, and asked leave of the court to file an amended and



supplemental complaint showing payment of the Chase [National Bank] loan," Morford continued.

The new notice of termination and of specific complaints concerning Shearn as a voting trustee, the attorney said, justified termination of the trust and Shearn's removal.

Good riddance, said Hearst and those truly loyal to him, one of whom was not Clare Shearn. Now the Hearst empire, revitalized by the war and no less so by the two-plus years that "In the News" was on the front page, could fully reinvent itself. Large debts still remained to be paid, but the P & L statements were looking better and better—enough to keep Hearst feeling young. And thus Willicombe to Hunter on August 4, 1943:

OK, gave Chief the pep pills. Kindly thank Mr. [Dick] Carrington for thoughtfulness, but if there is anyone who does not need pep pills it is the Chief.

Hearst remained open-minded and we can assume clear-headed—enough so that Louella Parsons could wire Willicombe about a new movie; this on August 9:

Warners have a great picture in *This Is The Army*. Jack [Warner] would like have Chief bid. It is as good as [*Mission To*] *Moscow* was bad. Would you care to see it? Best to you.

*Mission to Moscow*, as Parsons well knew, had caused a deep rift between Hearst and Warner earlier in 1943—far too propagandist and Communistic, felt the Chief. Now on August 10, Hearst showed his big-heartedness by answering Parsons directly with "Would be delighted to see *This Is The Army*." He also told her to "Thank Mr. Warner."

How forgiving he was, though, toward Orson Welles, not just toward the studio behind *Citizen Kane*, warrants our consideration. On September 7, Warden Woolard at the *Los Angeles Examiner* wired Wynton:

You may wish to inform Chief that Rita Hayworth and Orson Welles took out marriage license at Santa Monica today. Kindly advise me if there are any instructions.

Whether of lenient or rigid disposition toward Welles, Hearst was unrelenting toward Winston Churchill. “I think Churchill’s speech is an impudent utterance,” he told his two best editorial writers, Ryckman and DeCasseres, on September 7:

In perfectly plain words, it will be acceptable to Britain to have America continue to contribute billions of dollars to England that we never even asked to be repaid.

When E. F. Tompkins, the second-tier editorialist in New York asked for clarification the next day, Hearst exhibited a seeming change of mood that the diarist Hayes Perkins would quickly have seized upon:

I have no objection to laudatory review of Churchill’s book [of war speeches] if it deserves it. I merely did not like his speech. I agree with DeCasseres [who said] “Snap out of it you Yankee Doodle dandies.”  
Let’s be American.

Let’s also be generous, Hearst and Marion could rightly have said of themselves; for generous they were, dependably so. When Marion heard from a servicemen’s group in Arizona on September 24, 1943, the message was one of many grateful ones like it to be seen in these annals:

The Masquers Servicemen’s Morale Corps deeply appreciates your gracious gesture permitting our guests personnel of the 748th Tank Battalion, Camp Bouse, Arizona, to use your pool and beach on Ocean Front, Santa Monica, California, this coming Sunday, Sept 26th. Such an event will doubtless leave a lifelong impression in the minds of these grand boys. Our sincere thanks.

With regard to Marion’s financial status, she had indeed lent Hearst money in the late thirties—the details are unclear—although

what *is* clear is that she was being reimbursed regularly; Martin Huberth to Hearst on the same date as the Morale Corps message, September 24:

I am proceeding with closing deal with Mutual and National City [banks, in the wake of the Shearn case]. Have so arranged that funds will not be required until end of December, when the same will be paid regardless of whether or not deal is consummated with people in north [the Canadian pulp-paper suppliers]. Meantime Marion might as well enjoy the approximate[ly] \$3,000 monthly interest payments until I require funds.

LOUELLA PARSONS, while staying at Wyntoon in November 1943, wired her book publisher in New York, Doubleday Doran & Co., about her new memoir, *The Gay Illiterate*, whose portrayal of Hearst's eightieth birthday at the Beach House proved useful to us several pages back. Next to Alice Head's *It Could Never Have Happened* of 1939, the Parsons memoir, though unpolished in many places (its printing on "war paper" accentuates that effect), gets as close to Hearst and Marion as any other book ever has by a member of their circle. Parsons had these corrections for her publisher:

Page 28 please add after paragraph ending "wild horses" this insertion: "Ella Williams known to all Marion Davies friend as Bill, and I used to amuse ourselves guessing what animal Madame [Elinor] Glyn would call certain stars she had not yet named [as she had Clara Bow, making her the "It Girl"]. Bill has been with Marion for many many years and is one of her most loyal friends and one of my best friends."

On page 21 chapter four, sentence reading "The first glimpse I had of Marion Davies" should read "was when she appeared as a very young girl in the *Follies* with Justine Johnson, Ann Pennington and other girls who were later to become famous" instead of ["was as] Miss 1917 Weber and Fields."

Parsons closed with an immortal line for her publisher: “I promise there will be no more changes.” Famous last words . . .

The very Williams that Parsons mentioned—Ella Williams, better known as Bill—wired Willicombe at Wyntoon on Thursday, November 18, 1943, with a surprising message:

Howard Strickling [of MGM] phoned—

Mr. [Louis B.] Mayer, Clark Gable, Howard Strickling and a Mr. Friedman are leaving on the *West Coast [Limited]* tomorrow—Friday—night, arriving Saturday night.

They plan to stay until Monday morning.

Please advise Mr. Hearst.

For their part, the quarterly corporate meetings had in the past resulted in some quick trips by Hearst and Marion to the Beach House. Not so any longer as of 1943; Wyntoon was now the place, rain or shine, regimentally or recreationally. With regard to the meeting to be held in late November, Willicombe told Clarence Lindner at the *San Francisco Examiner*:

Car will meet you Monday morning [the 29th] at Dunsmuir. Have asked Miss Davies to put you and Cobbie up at [The] Gables. No doubt she will comply.

Whether Hearst’s revised stance toward RKO was in any way a business decision is hard to say; it may have been purely personal. At any rate, Ray Van Ettisch at the *Los Angeles Examiner* had this to tell Bill Hunter on December 10 (Hunter was subbing for Willicombe):

RKO says [Frank] Sinatra’s picture *Higher and Higher* opens locally December 29 or January 5. It already is playing Boston only and will have New York and other Eastern openings New Year’s Day.

Does Chief wish his instructions about this picture sent to other paper[s]?

We plan to use art layout in cinema section Sunday, December 26.

Warner Bros. says *Saratoga Trunk* with Ingrid Bergman will not open anywhere until some undetermined date next spring.

Hearst's forgiving, liberalized views—if that's indeed what they were rather than simply pragmatic views—also embraced John Steinbeck, as we saw earlier. Ray Van Ettisch had the following for Hunter on December 13:

Herald-Tribune Syndicate announces Steinbeck war stories conclude with release for Dec. 18. Steinbeck planning to continue as Herald-Tribune correspondent going to New Orleans to look over Higgins Boat Works and write about it and then plans trip to Mexico to see what he can find to write about. Does Chief think we should continue Steinbeck after Dec. 18?

Hunter answered Van Ettisch that same day:

Replying to your telegram in regard to continuing Steinbeck after Dec. 18th, Chief said:

“No, I would be afraid of his Mexican stories.”

One of those Steinbeck stories became the novella entitled *The Pearl*, published in 1947 and made the basis of a Mexican film, *La Perla*, that same year.

Dick Berlin had good financial news for Hearst the day before Christmas in 1943—the best gift possible next to a lifetime of vigorous health:

My magazine budgets which have always been conservatively accurate indicate 4-3/4 million [dollars] for the first six months of 1944 against 3-2/4 million for the same period in 1943 before taxes. The net after taxes for 1943 for the magazines will be five million. The above figures indicate that [Serge] Semenenko's new six [year] loan will be quickly [re]paid. A wassail cup to you.

There'd been other good news during 1943. In late July, Gimbel Brothers, the New York department store, reported having sold 4.2 million dollars in Hearst items through the 1942–43 season—“the

second highest total in the three years since the company began selling art.” Dick Berlin was the bearer of other financial news on December 27, 1943, much of it dauntingly complex; and yet the essentially positive spirit of things is clearly conveyed here all the same:

Four years steady application on the financial problems of the institution have reduced the overall debt to \$15,000,000 excluding well-funded mortgages on [newspaper] plant properties.

The terms of the new bank loan are extremely fair. Amortization is no more than the magazines have paid in the past.

The [new] bank loan is necessary: 1) in order to replenish working capital expended in settlement of the debts above mentioned and also expended in Shearn and Brisbane settlements; 2) because we want to be 100 percent reserved [prepared] for taxes; 3) we want to give Hearst Consolidated [Publications] 30 days time on the payment of their [print] paper bill whereas they now are paying cash: in effect this increases Consolidated’s cash balance by \$1,000,000; 4) we want to pay off Marion’s loan immediately.

The only reason the Canadian [pulp suppliers] are willing to fund the debt over the ten-year period is that we have been able to reduce the debts of your company by some \$6,000,000 [since the late 1930s] which obviously makes their notes [that they’re holding] much more secure. . . .

As explained to you over the telephone it is necessary to close [retire] the bank loan prior to December 31st because only if the money is received and dividends declared this year, can \$360,000 in dividend taxes be avoided.

Berlin’s message is three or four times longer than the parts quoted here, most of which no one short of a banker or economist could do justice to. Suffice it to say the Hearst organization had ways of making money in the present wartime conditions, provided it allied itself with the best advisers, men whose loyalty and competence (unlike Clare Shearn’s) was unquestionable. Suffice it also to say, the familiar,

biographical, oft-repeated figure of \$126 million in indebtedness for the Hearst organization as of 1937 is greatly overblown.

THE COMPLEXITY OF HEARST CORPORATE affairs is further conveyed by a message Hearst received at Wynton on January 23, 1944, sent by two of his lieutenants, Martin Huberth and Harry Bitner, both of whose loyalty matched that of Dick Berlin:

Federal Communications Commission has ruled that it will grant no more the six FM applications to any common owner. We tried to find [a] way to get six for [Hearst] Consolidated cities and six for Hearst Corporation cities but without success thus far. Therefore we recommend applying for the four radio stations we now have plus two more. May we have your advice? We suggest two selections from coast *Examiners* [Los Angeles and San Francisco], Chicago and Boston. As Commission will not grant licenses until after war we suggest [we] file for six other cities in several months in hope that rule may be changed.

The distinction between six cities whose Hearst newspapers operated under the Consolidated banner versus six others that did so under the Corporation banner is a challenge to unravel. By late 1939, following various sales and mergers, the Hearst chain had stabilized at seventeen daily papers (fewer on Sunday) in thirteen cities, a number that remained unchanged until after Hearst's death in 1951. From East Coast to West, the thirteen cities were:

Boston (two papers)  
Albany  
New York (two papers)  
Baltimore  
Pittsburgh  
Detroit  
Chicago  
Milwaukee  
San Antonio

Los Angeles (two papers)  
San Francisco (two papers)  
Oakland  
Seattle

Ed Hatrick of Cosmopolitan Productions was back in Colorado Springs for his health when Hearst heard from him on February 8, 1944; film interests and ownership remained of concern to Hearst and Marion, as Hat's wire showed:

We own silent rights to [*The*] *Pride of Palomar*, a Peter Kyne story [a full-length novel] that you produced [as a non-Davies picture] in the early twenties [1922]. We are offered twenty-five hundred dollars by Republic Pictures for our rights and I understand Kyne is selling sound rights for [the] same price.

These negotiations have been going on for three months and I would recommend closing at this price. There is no agent's commission but there will be small charge for drawing papers.

Hearst's opinion still mattered. His continued stature in the film industry, albeit an absentee one, is apparent from a message that Bill Hunter sent Willicombe on the same date as Hatrick's message, February 8:

Miss [Ella] Williams said Sam Goldwyn told her he would appreciate very much hearing what Chief thought of his picture *Up In Arms* [slated for a premiere in New York on February 17].

Earlier in February 1944 Hearst had heard from Damon Runyon, who was working as a screenwriter for Darryl Zanuck at Twentieth Century-Fox:

In a studio projection room last night I saw what in my opinion is the most powerful presentation of the case against the Japs ever conceived. . . .

It is a picture made by Colonel Zanuck called *The Purple Heart*, and is based on the trial by the Japanese of the American aviators who bombed Tokyo [in April 1942]. I have urged him to send you as soon as



possible a print of the picture [released February 23] because I believe it will serve to arouse our people against the barbarian foe as nothing has yet done. It truly carried a terrific punch. If I sound like a publicity man, it is only because I am still deeply moved.

I trust this letter finds you in the best of health. I was quite ill for some weeks with influenza and a throat infection, but seem to be all right now. As you are aware, the California climate cures all ailments if you give it a chance.

Hearst got back to Runyon promptly, on February 9, 1944:

Please devote one of your fine columns ["The Brighter Side"] to *The Purple Heart*.

It must be great [the movie] but I do not have to wait to see it.

I know your profound patriotism, and I am carried away by the enthusiasm of your letter.

I am looking forward to seeing the picture, and I have asked the papers for impressive reviews of it.

Sorry you had the Flu. I had it, too. Am glad we are well again.

We can't afford to lose us.

The latest Board of Directors meeting at Wynton, slated for late February, cast Marion in the role of social secretary and hostess, as was prevalent; Willicombe to the attorney Heinie MacKay in Los Angeles on Friday the 11th:

Marion inquiring who will be here for meeting so that rooms may be assigned. Will you please wire me names Saturday? Thanks.

The bad feelings between Hearst and Jack Warner the year before over the film *Mission to Moscow* must have been patched up by this early part of 1944. On February 28, Hearst heard from Warner as follows:

Dear W. R.: Received your wire about [the screenwriter] Mark Hellinger being permitted to leave our studio for a period of time to cover an important assignment for your papers. Am very happy to be able to be of service to you and have approved Mr. Hellinger leaving at the

appointed time. I know he will do a great job for you. With every good wish to Marion and yourself.

The situation that Ed Hatrick had aired with Hearst earlier in the month reappeared on the Wyntoon teleprinter on March 1, 1944, this time addressed directly to Marion by the Los Angeles attorney Larry Mitchell:

Have not received check for sale of Peter Kyne story [*The Pride of Palomar*]. Queried [C. B.] Stratton [of Cosmopolitan Productions in New York] and he wires, "Due to absence of buyer's attorneys have not been able to secure approval of papers covering sale Kyne's story which will embrace assignments from Hearst Magazines [Inc.] and Chief. Deal is for twenty-five hundred dollars less attorney's fees and hope have matter cleaned up within next two weeks."

Marion also heard from Cissy Patterson in early March in an unrelated but fascinating matter; the latter's message came from Sarasota, Florida:

Dearest Marion: Just received your telegram on return from trip to Everglades. Yes we [at the *Washington Times-Herald*] certainly will get right behind the dog exemption bill. Have you any new data on subject? Could we use any of your stories? Have forwarded your wire to office and will telephone instructions this morning.

Thank you so much darling for the magnificent box of chocolates. Candies of that quality are no longer to be had around here. We all dipped in and had a wonderful time and practically have been on the wagon ever since in consequence.

This is the most wonderful winter climate I have ever struck anywhere. W. R. and I both knew Miss Potter Palmer [Mrs. Bertha Honore Palmer, 1849–1918], a beautiful lady with a keen eye for real estate. She bought up most of this part of the west coast of Florida about forty years ago. Love to you both always. My address [care of] Kimlira, Sarasota, Florida.

Hearst is only sketchily associated with Palm Beach or other places in Florida; Mrs. Patterson's reference is therefore welcome—and

suggests yet another avenue of research, in this case into the man's middle years when he and Marion were first acquainted (probably as of 1914, a good deal earlier than Marion's memoir and most other sources claim).

An item from Willicombe on behalf of Hearst to Ray Van Ettisch at the *Los Angeles Examiner*, dated March 7, is along more familiar lines:

Chief asks that you give some promotion to Arthur Lake [Dagwood Bumstead in the *Blondie* movies].

And will you kindly tell Jack Campbell [of the *Los Angeles Herald-Express*] the same thing.

The idea is that such promotion might help to keep *Blondie* on the screen, so that it will be beneficial not only to Lake but to our comic strip "Blondie."

"Do what you can without going to extremes in the matter," Chief says.

On March 18, Hearst himself sent Van Ettisch a suggestion:

Why not revive the idea of a Marion Davies Victory Garden on the Clinic lot [in Sawtelle] and get cinema people to help? Maybe have tickets of entrance; maybe have auctions or a county fair. Receipts to go to disabled veterans or to taking care of their children.

Cinematically and otherwise, an acclaimed yet notorious actor of the day was still of potential concern to Hearst; Bill Wren of the *San Francisco Examiner* wired Bill Hunter, who was on duty at Wynton temporarily in late March 1944:

Any answer on my previous letter to Willicombe asking if Chief has any instructions on treatment of Orson Welles' new picture *Jane Eyre* which opens here soon?

Wren got an answer later that same afternoon, March 24, one that made him realize he was on his own and would have to exercise his own best judgment:

Chief received your letter twenty-first regarding *Jane Eyre* and made no comment.

Hearst had a comment to make, though, regarding the Peter Kyne situation; this on March 30, Hunter at Wynton to Larry Mitchell in Los Angeles:

Re *Pride of Palomar* Chief instructs to hold up “signed documents and cooperate with Mr. Kyne.” Regards.

Likewise film-related and evocative of the past was the message that C. B. Stratton at the Cosmopolitan headquarters in New York sent to Willicombe at Wynton on April 10:

Office of War Information requesting permission use certain *Janice Meredith* scenes for film of France solely for military purposes similar [to] that furnished Major Briskin’s office year ago. Please wire authorization [to] permit use.

Later that day, Hearst granted the permission Stratton sought.

**MARION GRANTED PERMISSION** as well on April 13—to the Seabees at Camp Rousseau at Port Hueneme, some thirty-five miles up the coast from Santa Monica in Ventura County:

I would be happy to have you use the beach at my house and the pool. We will provide luncheon for you. Please get in telephone touch with Ella Williams, 10736 Ashton Ave., West Los Angeles [Westwood], telephone Arizona 33180.

Naturally Marion didn’t say *our* house in allusion to Hearst. She was too well trained, as was he. Simple episodes like this could have gone far toward reinforcing the public view that the Beach House was Marion’s or that it constituted the Marion Davies Estate, however the outside world cared to put it.

Hearst's birthday—his eighty-first—would be coming up in two more weeks. By April 17, preparations were in the making; Bill Hunter (back in Los Angeles by now) to Willicombe at Wynton:

The Southern Pacific have secured permission to handle the special car on the 27th, from Los Angeles to Fresno on the *Owl* and then [to Dunsuir] on the *West Coast [Limited]*.

The following have planned to go—

David Hearst, wife and child.

John Hearst and wife.

Arthur Lake, wife and baby.

Louella Parsons and Dr. Martin [her husband].

Harry Crocker.

Billy Mayer and wife.

Lorelle Hearst.

Princess Pignatelli and Stefanella. The other two [Pignatelli] girls cannot go.

Rose Davies and somebody—she thought probably Kay English, as she did not think Mrs. [Marie] Glendenning could go.

Four minutes later on April 17, Hunter had an update for Willicombe:

John Hearst is not bringing the children.

2. Louella Parsons and Dr. Martin have to return to Los Angeles Sunday Morning April 30.

3. Billy Mayer and his wife would like to return Monday morning, May 1.

Will you please see if you can get these reservations [for the return to Los Angeles]? We do not have much luck from this end on reservations from there.

Rose Davies was living at the Beach House during this period (1700 Lexington Road in Beverly Hills was still being rented by Harry Cohn of Columbia Pictures). Kay English and Marie Glendenning were also living at the Beach House in the mid-forties, and so was a man named Eli Robbins. A question that Ella Williams had to raise with

Marion on April 18 pertained to one of the outlying units in the Ocean Front compound, immediately south of the main building:

Geraldine Fitzgerald has made an offer to lease 451 Palisades Road [synonymous with Ocean Front] for one year for \$400 per month. Would like to have an answer today.

The files contain no response from Marion, else it would surely be included here. What they do contain for the next day, April 19, is a message from Marion to Lorelle Hearst at the Beverly Hills Hotel:

I hate to bother you but if you have time would you pick me out an evening dress that I could wear at W. R.'s birthday party? Have them sent up from Magnin's on approval. Miss Williams will know of other places that I have charge accounts at. I know you have very good taste and know just what will suit me.

Lots of love.

Bill Hunter was still tangling with train reservations on April 21, as he told Willicombe that afternoon:

Have not been able to line up the people to return on the same day.

I understand you have reservations for the Dr. Martins and Harry Crocker Sunday [the 30th] and the Billie [Billy] Mayers Monday.

Arthur Lake says he must return Sunday for his broadcast Monday, but Pat will stay over.

If you can't do anything else, maybe Harry Crocker will stay until Monday and let Arthur Lake use the space you have for Crocker, as he does not have to return until Monday.

Princess Pignatelli and Stefanella have to return Sunday.

Lorelle Hearst says her grandmother is in the hospital [in Los Angeles] and she wants to get back as soon as she can, but does not want to offend the Chief by leaving too soon. She asks for a reservation for Sunday and one for Monday also.

Rose Davies says she will stay "a week or two."

Estelle Forsythe, who along with Hunter would succeed Willicombe as the main secretary in a year's time, had a request for Hunter in Los Angeles on that same date of April 21:

Miss Davies wants to get some crossword puzzle books for Mr. Hearst's birthday. Will you please see what you can find? Try to get something out of the ordinary if possible i.e. not the usual run. They should have either leather bindings or good stiff cover bindings, and [be] the very latest editions.

Later that day Mrs. Forsythe had a related message for Nick Yost at the San Simeon warehouses:

Miss Davies wants you to send twelve of those jigsaw puzzles to Mrs. Harry Rubey [Eileen Percy Ruby], eight naught five [805] North Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills, Calif.

She suggests two of the large ones and ten of the small ones. They are for use in one of the hospitals.

On April 24, five days before the birthday party, Marion heard from Larry Mitchell in Los Angeles; he had various things to report:

[Miss] Williams says 1) Seabee party was very successful. There was 22 present from Port Hueneme and they were exceptionally well behaved and very appreciative. Arrived about 10 a.m. and were gone by 4:30 p.m. 2) That rugs and room [in the Beach House] have been fumigated once a month with parabichlor benzene crystals and that [Bill] Newton reports no moths there. 3) That special [railroad] car is filled and Joe Willicombe has list. 4) That Lorelle has Sealsealyham [a dog] with her. 5) That Rose has invited Kay English to accompany her and Kay has accepted if Rose goes.

Mitchell's wire was dispatched to Wyntoon at 4:39 p.m. That evening at 9:22—still well before quitting time on the normal Hearst swing shift—Willicombe had the latest for Hunter in Los Angeles:

Miss Davies has assigned the [train] rooms as follows—

Compartment D—Billy Mayer and wife.

Compartment E—John Hearst and wife.

Compartment F—Conchita & Stefanella Pignatelli.

Compartment G—Rose Davies and Kay English.

Drawingroom A—Arthur Lake, wife and baby.

Drawingroom B—David Hearst, wife and Millicent.

Compartment H—Lorelle Hearst.

Compartment I—Harry Crocker.

Drawingroom C—Doctor Martin and Louella Parsons.

Please advise whether or not there is any question about compartment H and I with single occupancy.

The Wyntoon of 1944 had become the center of Hearst and Marion's life more than ever in the past and would remain so for several months to come. A message she sent to the painter-illustrator Henry Clive in West Hollywood on April 25 reinforces that fact:

Will you please finish my picture the best you can and send it to the Beach House? I don't know when I shall ever be in Los Angeles again to pose for it. If there is anything wrong with the picture, you can touch it up when I do get down. Lots of love.

For what would prove to be Hearst's last birthday party at Wyntoon, the couple was pulling out all the stops; Hunter to Willicombe on April 26:

Glenn Miller is leaving on *West Coast [Limited]* tonight, arriving Dunsmuir 6:30 Thursday evening.

Bigger events were constantly at hand for Hearst all the while; he heard from Dick Berlin in New York on April 27 with a suggestion that he may have found irresistible:

Possibly you would like to use DeCasseres [*New York Daily*] *Mirror* editorial submitted to you April 26th [and] Eric Johnston article in *Cosmopolitan* [magazine] in your other papers. The editorials on Churchill's arrogance and impudence are excellent. Now that we are finished with our friends [the Canadians, who were pro-British] I say hear hear.



Berlin was unable to attend the birthday party, but Martin Huberth was already at Wyntoon on April 28 when Dick Burrud of Hearst Sunical's Hollywood office wired him there. The Los Angeles Herald Building (again, not to be confused with the older, more renowned Los Angeles Examiner Building that Julia Morgan designed, half a mile east) had evidently been leased by the Hearst interests from its inception in 1924; hence Burrud's message to Huberth, the company's main real-estate man:

Have spent considerable time with [G. O.] Markusson past three days. He favors purchasing Express Building per my letter but is awaiting arrival [of] Dick Berlin Sunday to discuss proposal and then they will consult you for final decision.

This was a sure sign of increased and renewed prosperity in Hearst business activities: the rolling over of a lease into full-fledged ownership of a key building.

On the 29th itself, Hearst received the usual wealth of greetings and good cheer from friends and employees. Ed Hatrick's wire from New York was one of the best:

Dear Chief: Would enjoy attending one of those old-time costume parties tonight at San Simeon or Santa Monica but as this is not possible will be with you in spirit if not in person at Wyntoon. Kindest regards.

Another item was a description of the Chief released by King Features Syndicate to some of the Eastern papers for the feature "Today's Birthday," which said in part:

He became proprietor of the largest group of publications ever owned by an individual, an outgrowth of his enterprise and his genius for the development of new techniques. He is a trail-blazer in every branch of modern, high-speed journalism and a writer of English prose none of his many authors can match for clarity and force. William Randolph

Hearst was born eighty-one years ago today. Those eight decades comprise the greatest continuous advance in the history of journalism.

That evening, probably while the festivities were getting under way at Wyntoon, Willicombe wired the *San Francisco Examiner*, which knew all about fielding unusual requests on short notice:

Chief instructs to send up with papers as soon as possible six complete sets of fishing tackle,—rods, reels, lines, sinkers, fish hooks, etc.— and two or three baskets.

There's always the homespun and the ordinary in these annals to offset the more complex and the profound, a trait that adds a welcome dimension to biographical details that are seldom dull, whether amplified or not.

THE TRAIL-BLAZING SIDE of Hearst's activities, however, was hampered by a flawed infrastructure. Ted Shea, who had charge of the mechanical needs of Hearst's seventeen papers, filed a disturbing report with the Chief on May 17, 1944:

Chicago and Los Angeles have identical press equipment for *Pictorial [Review]*. San Francisco press differs slightly but can deliver same combinations. New York has entirely different press layout and can run only eight four-color pages plus four additional pages in one color and black.

The present limit for Baltimore, Boston, Detroit, Milwaukee and Seattle is eight four-color pages. In doing this we are running full color on some presses not attempted before. Full color in Pittsburgh is definitely out because of inadequate press equipment. . . .

We are working with presses that range from 20 to 57 years old [dating from 1887 to 1924] and of many type and designs. I shall see you one week from today and have a complete press survey for you.

It's startling to think that the Hearst papers could have functioned at all, much less competed seriously, when even their

newest presses were partly antiquated; those from as far back as 1887, the year Hearst broke into publishing with the *San Francisco Examiner*, must have been more fit for a museum by 1944 than still suited for the hard, daily use they were subjected to. Hearst obviously should have been folding more of his profits back into the business than he had been since year one.

He countered that same day, May 17, by asking Shea:

Can we have New York presses altered to equal production of Chicago—also changes made in other cities? Is it a matter of additional cylinders? We might demolish old presses to secure them.

The negotiations that had gone on with the author Peter Kyne earlier in 1944 reached a simple climax on May 21, one showing that, as usual, Hearst was as much a part of Marion's life in any such matter as he was in things more intricate and involved. Marion wired Larry Mitchell in Los Angeles on May 21:

Mr. Hearst says if we cannot do any better on the *Palomar* deal, let it go through as it is.

The old-time actress Pola Negri, who'd barely worked since the late 1930s, appealed to Marion—and to Hearst—on May 25:

As you know [I] have received extremely unfavorable publicity lately due to unfair attitude of lawyers representing parties who are persecuting me. On advice of my lawyer am contemplating certain move to protect my future and permit me to earn a living. Darling can you and the Chief assist me with a favorable attitude by the newspapers? All my love.

The George & Rosalie Hearst Collection of teleprinter communications ends in June 1944. Before it runs out, Hearst left us with a memorable item on June 8, sent to Abe Merritt at *The American Weekly*:

I would rather not publicize Orson Welles. If we print anything bad about him it will be attributed to hostility, and if we print anything good about him, it will be a lie. So we better omit him.

On June 13, Ray Van Ettisch at the *Los Angeles Examiner* queried Willicombe:

Please wire if following story on wedding of Rose Davies is OK for immediate use, with pictures of Rose and Adlon:

By Louella Parsons

Motion Picture Editor International News Service

With the blessing and good wishes of her famous actress sister, Marion Davies, Rose Davies yesterday became the bride of Louis Adlon, screen and radio actor. They were married in Las Vegas by Judge O'Malley and returned to Santa Monica [the Beach House] immediately after the ceremony.

Accompanying the bride were her close friend, Mrs. Marie Glendenning and Eli Robbins, as well as several friends of the groom, all of whom acted as witnesses.

Miss Davies, who is the daughter of the late judge [Bernard Douras] and Mrs. Douras, is a talented composer. Her recent song hit "Wherever You Are" was introduced over the air by Dick Haymes, and another song composition, "Unnamed Waltz" was played by the [Los Angeles] Symphony Orchestra last spring.

The bridegroom is a member of a family well known in Berlin in the pre-Hitler days. His father owned the famous Adlon Hotel before the Nazis took it over, and it was well known to many Americans who visited the German capital before the war. Adlon, himself, is an American citizen and has been in this country twenty years. He has two brothers in Uncle Sam's service.

The bride and bridegroom are living in her home in Santa Monica. When she telephoned me from Las Vegas, to tell me the news, she said: "I have known Louis for a long time and I feel we will be very happy."

The bride's daughter, Mrs. Arthur Lake (Patricia Van Cleve) and Arthur, "Dagwood," to his many fans, were on hand to offer their congratulations when the bridal pair returned from Las Vegas.

Rose Davies had a way of going through men. There'd been David Mdivani and the bandleader Vic Erwin in recent years and, before them, Ned McLean of former *Washington Post* fame—and that was just counting those she'd known in the 1930s and early 1940s. McLean left her a small fortune when he died in 1941, but his estate was deemed bankrupt; the thought alone counted. Even then Hearst had to approve what could or couldn't be printed about McLean and Rose lest it reflect poorly on Marion and maybe also on Hearst himself.

The Chief may no longer have had "In the News" to make his views known, but he still had the editorial pages. Here it was an election year again—1944, with the prospect of Roosevelt's gunning for an unheard-of fourth term. That wouldn't be until July, though; the Republicans were convening first, during the last days of June. Hearst had an axe to grind, one he'd been keeping sharpened since the last Presidential race in 1940; Willicombe to the editorial writers Charlie Ryckman in San Francisco and E. F. Tompkins in New York on June 26, the day the Republican convention opened:

Chief requests you kindly write an editorial and rush to papers marked hold for Chief's release, based on [Wendell] Willkie's criticism of the foreign policy plank of the proposed Republican platform, as per INS story tonight out of New York.

Chief says to dress Willkie down thoroughly and tell the Republican Party not to pay any attention to the policies which defeated it last time,—the Willkie policies,—that the Willkie policies are the Roosevelt policies and if the people want the Roosevelt policies they want Roosevelt; if they do not want Roosevelt they want something different, something truly American, and that is what the Republican Party is supposed to offer them.

Hearst said in conclusion through Willicombe, "If it does not offer them that, it has no right or reason to exist."

CONSTRUCTION AT WYNTOON seemingly had no right or reason to exist either, not in years like 1943 and 1944. And yet work went on there, albeit mostly at a crawl. Mac McClure had served the greater good of the F. C. Stolte Co. in 1942 only; at this juncture in 1944, he'd been back on the job at Wyntoon for a full season and a half. Julia Morgan had been briefly active in 1942 at Wyntoon in Mac's absence; by now, though, her efforts for Hearst were focused on the Babicora Ranch in Chihuahua, Mexico (none of what she did for him then—or for other clients—appears in her Distribution of Expenses sheets, confined to the years 1924 through 1940). She was also keeping an eye on, and her heart devoted to, prospects for the re-erection of "Mount Olive," the Spanish monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. From the time Hearst gave the monastery to that city in 1941, she'd been active in planning its rebirth as a medieval museum from the countless crates it filled; but now in July 1944, she made her final entry in the ledger sheets that, up till then, had been called the "Park Museum" account.

In that sense, with the mothballing of Morgan's dream for Mount Olive, August 1944 was a fitting moment for what befell Hearst and Marion and their entourage at Wyntoon: an unmistakable instance of ways and fortunes changed forever more. The catastrophic fire that ruined The Gables late that month meant that everyone's days at Wyntoon were numbered. Hearst and Marion hung on for three months before taking decisive action, but once they left that estate for San Simeon in November 1944, they never went back. With their presence farther south, and with their whereabouts well known from then on (they were embarking on their final two and a half years at San Simeon, through the middle of 1947), their relation to the Beach House in Santa Monica is easier to visualize. Hearst had told a friend in Berkeley on October 20, 1944, when asked by her if he could be seen at Wyntoon:

It is impossible for us to have visitors. We are burnt out. We have insufficient help and insufficient accommodations and are planning to leave here ourselves.

As we well know by now, no such intimation or suggestion of what *might* be done can be trusted without convincing evidence that Hearst's daily pile of newspapers, the constant stuff of his working life, had been switched from one address to another.

Word came through on November 27, the Monday after Thanksgiving in 1944. Ray Van Ettisch of the *Los Angeles Examiner* wired Bill Hunter at San Simeon, telling him, "Have issued instructions changing Chief's mailing address on newspapers to San Simeon in place of Wynton."

It mattered not that it was still wartime and that it would continue to be for several months to come. San Simeon it was, from then until longer than anyone could presently foresee.