

15

Looking Back

Looking back. Thoughts on living. Ingrid Bergman and the old Presbyterians. Thoughts on Mr. Hearst. Companionship and devoted love: that was our pact. He was very kind. I was a faker. He thought he was building up a star.

MD: I was always on W.R.'s side, so there was nothing to argue about. And W.R. was always on my side. That's why I liked him so much. If anybody was in trouble, regardless of what it was, he would help. I think that is a great trait.

TC: Jud Smelser, who went from being a utility man and a chauffeur to being W.R.'s valet during World War II, recounted an all-night argument at Wynton in 1935 between "Mama & Papa"; *Building for Hearst and Morgan*, pp. 206, 210.

MD: I liked a lot of people, but there were plenty of villains. That'll be the next chapter [in another memoir]. There were two types of villains. One who says something to you that you don't like and one who takes an attitude so you feel they don't like you.

W.R. would help his enemies. He would help the people who didn't like him. He never held a "knocker" [grudge] toward anybody.

That's a word Bing Crosby used about me, that I never held a "knocker." Maybe I changed a bit, but W.R. was that way. He would never listen to anybody who would say anything against anybody else. He didn't believe in tearing people down. He believed in building them up.

I didn't know Ingrid Bergman at all, but when I discovered the difficulty that she was in [in 1950, during the filming of the Italian movie *Stromboli*], I called up the Los Angeles *Examiner* to put in an article saying that I agreed with her.

The word came out that a women's club was going to ban her because she was in love with another man [Robert Rossellini] and would marry him except that her husband [Dr. Peter Lindstrom] was standing in the way.

She was persecuted; I would say that they nailed her to the cross. If a woman of her great character can go ahead with her love, why should she be criticized? I told W.R. that I thought Ingrid Bergman should be commended and that she was a great person, with a beautiful face.

That women's club was a bunch of old Presbyterians. W.R. agreed with me. I sent her a cable [to Europe] and she answered it. She was very kind.

However, the legal man at the paper took it upon himself to cut the article out of the second edition.

PP/KSM: *By that time, the story in the first edition had been picked up by the wire services—and was soon printed by other newspapers.*

MD: He [the legal man] went to see W.R. and said, "What Miss Davies has done is horrible." He said that I wouldn't be acceptable to the women's clubs—as if I cared. Then W.R. sent for me and said, "I think you've made a mistake. My lawyer said the women's clubs won't like this."

I said, "Don't make me laugh." I showed him the Los Angeles *Times* and their story that "Marion Davies says, 'I think Ingrid Bergman is a great woman, beautiful and with great integrity.'"

W.R. said, "Did the *Times* get it first?"

I told him that his lawyer had cut it out of the *Examiner*. He said he was going to fire him. I said, "You tell him."

He called him and said, "How dare you do that to Miss Davies? When she gives an order to the *Examiner*, it has to go through. And don't you dare countermand it.

"If you ever do that again, I'm going to bounce you out. As far as the women's clubs go—well, Marion is not working in pictures any longer, and if they haven't got the humanity in their souls to be kindly

toward a great woman, if they haven't got an open mind, then they are no good. And you can cut the women's clubs out of the papers . . ." He was really furious, and that was the end of that.

Ingrid wrote me a very nice letter and thanked me.

She was really in a desperate situation. She had given every cent to her husband to put him through school. He was afraid that he was going to lose his money bag. How could a man be so mean? He tried to tear down her character, which nobody in the world could do. She is the most beautiful, kindly lady in the world.

The story was in the Los Angeles *Examiner* the next day. They printed my telegram, and W.R. said I was right.

I just had to stand up for the principle. After all, I did have feelings. And I knew how she felt.

She had been brutalized by a horrible creature, and I knew about this, because I had a maid, Maria, who had worked at her house. She told me that one night he tried to get into her room. That didn't come out in court.

PP/KSM: *Miss Bergman recently said, "I was very pleased to find that there were two sides to a coin." She remembered when she was hospitalized [in Italy], having her child, and stories and headlines all over the world were against her. A nurse brought in the first bouquet of flowers. The message of congratulations was signed Marion Davies.*

TC: "In America the Hearst press was printing the worst possible stories against me. Yet the very first basket of flowers to arrive at the hospital had a telegram attached which said: 'I love and admire you.' And it came from Marion Davies, William Randolph Hearst's mistress." Ingrid Bergman and Alan Burgess, *Ingrid Bergman: My Story* (New York 1980), p. 260.

MD: I had plenty of opportunities to get married, myself. But how can you marry someone when you're in love with somebody else?

I couldn't think of anybody else when I was in love. Whether I could get married or not, I didn't particularly care. How could I break myself away from love just to say that I wanted to be a married woman? That meant nothing. I thought love and companionship were much more important.

That's exactly what it was [with W.R.]. Companionship and devoted love. That was our pact.

The rumor about my having children has come up many times, and many people say that W.R.'s twins are my sons, but I don't see how they ever could be. Randy and David [b. 1915] and I were almost the same age. They say that Randolph looks very much like me, but I don't see any resemblance. What about birth certificates and all the papers and the proof that they were mine? I would have been glad to have both David and Randy with me, if anybody could prove it. Then, I just might say I wish it were true.

The twins are a bit younger than I, but not that much. You have to figure that I didn't even know W.R. until after the twins were born. So where my boys could be, I was damned if I knew. Of course I was working all the time, then, on stage and in the pictures.

PP/KSM: *[Marion was] eighteen years younger.*

TC: She was a month shy of nineteen years younger.

MD: When W.R. met me he was fifty-eight, going on fifty-nine. When we came to California [in 1924], he was well into his sixties, but the rumors went on and on, about the Thomas Ince murder [of later that year]. It was absolutely ridiculous, but people lose their sense of time.

TC: W.R. turned fifty-eight in April 1921; he was sixty-one through most of 1924.

MD: If I had a daughter, I would say, "Get started young. Take the dancing lessons; take posture and poise, and dramatics and diction. Prepare yourself for a good theatrical career." Girls always have a sense of the theatrical. Girls like powder and having their hair fixed. They love lace dresses and party dresses. I was always in front of the mirror when I was young. I was like a statue, showing off, posing; that's how you know you belong to the theatrical life.

TC: Telegrams in the George & Rosalie Hearst Collection deflate greatly (if not entirely) the rumor that Patricia Van Cleve Lake was W.R. and Marion's daughter. Pat Lake was unquestionably the daughter of Rose Davies and her ex-husband, George Van Cleve; Pat was born in 1919.

MD: If you don't make the grade, then you can be a secretary or a salesgirl.

I didn't make the grade myself; I was pushed. If I hadn't been pushed, I would have gotten a job selling gloves at a counter. I wouldn't have been happy doing that.

I can't say I was ever unhappy, not at all. I asked for what I got, asked when I was very little. My sisters were actresses, and I was surrounded by show business. I loved it. It was just like a fairy tale, and I was fascinated.

Still I say the best years of my life were in the background, holding up the backdrop on the stage. We were just a big, happy family. It was a big, gay party, every bit of it.

When I was young I just lived for the stage. I even hated my own home, because it wasn't as glamorous. I thought, like every poor idiot does, that I had a career. Marriage never entered my mind. I was going to be another [Anna] Pavlova. If only I had stopped to realize how stupid I was. I had no talent for the theatre. I had no talent, period. I had the ambition that my life was made for a career and I was never going to leave the stage. But I had no talent even for the pictures, just a little tap dancing. So something, fortune or luck, pushed me along. Otherwise I'd have been Bertha, the sewing machine girl.

TC: A silent movie made in 1926 by the Fox Film Corporation was entitled *Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl*. Madge Bellamy played Bertha Sloan.

MD: When I was about seventeen, I got the second lead in a play that only lasted a week. I think it was called *Words and Music*.

TC: Marion played Gaby Delsys in the Broadway musical revue by that name; the show opened on December 24, 1917, and closed on January 12,

1918; midway through those nearly three weeks, Marion turned twenty-one. There were twenty-four performances of the show all told. (IBDB)

MD: It was discovered in the rehearsals that I couldn't speak a line, so I did things in pantomime, but I couldn't do that very well. Finally I wound up just being dressed in an American flag, and singing one song, "Little Butterfly from Japan."

I found out later that W.R. had backed the play, and then I thought he had done it on purpose, to show me up, to prove that I couldn't act. He didn't care about his money, but I think he was upset when I realized the truth about myself. He maintained that I could do anything I wanted to do. He said that I could dance and sing, and that an inferiority complex was a screen that people hide behind. He said that when I said I couldn't sing or dance, it was really no excuse.

He was very kind about those things. But I was a faker.

TC: Marion had one other Broadway credit in 1917. This was preceded by two credits in 1916 and three in 1915. Her earliest *recorded* Broadway credit (IBDB) dates from late 1914, when she was seventeen—a musical fantasy called *Chin Chin*; see the list in Chapter 1, p. 12. Hedda Hopper, in *The Whole Truth and Nothing But* (1963), indicated that the Hearst-Davies liaison began at least that long ago, as noted previously in these chapters. Miss Hopper, notably sharper than average in her recollections, cited *The Queen of the Movies* from early 1914 as the first show that W.R. saw Marion performing in; however, IBDB excludes Marion's name from the cast of that musical comedy, which ran for three months (104 performances) at the Globe Theatre.

MD: When I first went into motion pictures [in 1917], I thought it was very drab and dull. It was nothing like the stage, so I wasn't very happy doing pictures. I just kept thinking of the stage, the stage.

All my life I wanted to have talent. Finally I had to admit there was nothing there. I was no Sarah Bernhardt. I might have been a character, but any kind of character. I had none of my own.

TC: In *Marion Davies*, p. 207, Fred Lawrence Guiles quoted Marion as having said: "I was no Sarah Bernhardt. I was no great actress." At this same

junction Guiles spoke of “those weeks in 1952” that Marion “spent with Stanley Flink’s tape-recorder.”

Pfau and Marx took inspiration as well from Marion’s reference to Madame Berhardt—in a photo caption on p. 265 of *The Times We Had*. The caption began with “Marion going to tea at St. Donat’s Castle in Wales, 1935.” But the closest plausible dates are 1934 or 1936. Those two editors, as well as Guiles, erred at times in such matters, not surprisingly in view of when their books were produced.

MD: W.R. argued with millions of people. He thought I could do anything—Shakespeare’s plays, any sort of a part. He thought I’d be the best. There were quite a lot of people who didn’t have the same theory.

I did get a few crank letters every once in a while and I heard the gossip, but it never came inside the house. I was very well protected from every angle. I did get a bomb once, for Christmas [in 1931, sent to the Beach House], but it looked funny. The spelling looked like Spanish. It looked like it said Maria Davies. It was investigated for months, but we never found out who sent it.

TC: *Hearst and Marion: The Santa Monica Connection*, pp. 138-140.

MD: That was a little worse than the pranks I played. It could have destroyed me, and my neighbors, too. I just played little tricks at the studios.

I never saw the picture *Citizen Kane* but my sister Rose did, and she said, “I’ll kill him, it’s terrible. You can’t even see the picture, because it’s all dark.”

PP/KSM: *Orson Welles [was the person Rose meant]*.

MD: I said, “Why are you saying it’s terrible?”

“It’s against you. They have you playing and hiding behind curtains.”

I said to her, “Rose, there’s one tradition that I have that was taught to me by W.R. Never read criticism about yourself.” Once I made a mistake and read some criticism of myself, and it did get me riled up. After that I didn’t read any critics and I paid no attention.

A man working on the *Telegram* in New York wrote a scathing article about the picture *Cain and Mabel* [1936]; he said I should be washing dishes. Little did he know that I loved to wash dishes, and I liked to dry them, too. But he went on and on and on. I sent him a telegram saying, "I'm mad at you." That was all I said, and I never got an answer. It was silly of me, and stupid, and he was probably right.

W.R. never went to see *Citizen Kane* either. The Hearst newspapers put a ban on it, as far as publicity went, but W.R. wasn't little that way. His theory was that no matter what anybody said, no matter what they wrote, you didn't read it and you didn't listen.

W.R. said, "Yesterday's newspaper is old news." But plenty of people talked about *Citizen Kane*. They would say that it was terrible and I had to go see it. But we never did.

TC: See *The Unknown Hearst: 1941*, p. 12 ff.

MD: I had no anger toward Orson Welles. After all, everybody is created to do their very best, and he probably thought that was his way to make money. Who was I to say I didn't like the way he did his picture? I was not built that way. I liked to keep the waters calm.

And I heard about Aldous Huxley. I don't think I ever met him, nor did I read his book, but I wanted to.

PP/KSM: After *Many a Summer Dies the Swan* [1939] was considered a parody on life at San Simeon.

TC: Huxley and his wife were once thought to have been guests at San Simeon in 1938, a year before the novel appeared. See *Building for Hearst and Morgan*, p. 392. But see also the more current analysis included in Coffman, *Hearst and Pearl Harbor: A Memoir in 41 Parts*, pp. 176-181 (posted online @ www.coffmanbooks.com).

MD: When W.R. was really interested in something, he would go in heart and soul. Not just a little bit, but all. He did the same with my pictures as he did with his newspapers. He never made the remark, "I feel the pulse of the public." He seemed to know what the public would like, and he opposed anything that mothers wouldn't bring their children to see. He wanted nice, clean, honest pictures.

He wanted me to keep my career. He had signs all over New York City and pictures in the papers, and I was always meeting people. I thought it got to be a little bit too much, but W.R. didn't.

I said, "Maybe somebody else could do it, somebody who has talent." But the way he advertised me, I don't think anybody could. I said, "This is irritating to the general public. They read it, and then they go see the picture, and they think it isn't what they thought they were going to see." But I couldn't stop him.

In New York City there were big signs, blocks and blocks of signs, and people got so tired of the name Marion Davies that they would actually insult me. W.R. thought he was building up a star. He saw me, in all his good faith, as an actress, or that I had the ability to be one.

I hope, before he died, he found out I wasn't. Still, I think he thought I was.

Beverly Hills, California, [1953].

TC: As noted of Fred Lawrence Guiles—and of Pamela Pfau and Kenneth Marx—some erroneous dates crop up in their books. In the manuscript of *The Times We Had* as originally submitted, Pfau and Marx's citing of 1953 in their Introduction and likewise here in Chapter 15 is especially eye-catching. The correct date of 1951 was supplied before publication, without traceable comment, either by Bobbs-Merrill or by those two editors themselves.