



## The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst

By David Nasaw

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David Nasaw's magnificent, definitive biography of William Randolph Hearst is based on newly released private and business papers and interviews. For the first time, documentation of Hearst's interactions with Hitler, Mussolini, Churchill, and every American president from Grover Cleveland to Franklin Roosevelt, as well as with movie giants Louis B. Mayer, Jack Warner, and Irving Thalberg, completes the picture of this colossal American. Hearst, known to his staff as the Chief, was a man of prodigious appetites. By the 1930s, he controlled the largest publishing empire in the country, including twenty-eight newspapers, the Cosmopolitan Picture Studio, radio stations, and thirteen magazines. As the first practitioner of what is now known as synergy, Hearst used his media stronghold to achieve political power unprecedented in the industry. Americans followed his metamorphosis from populist to fierce opponent of Roosevelt and the New Deal, from citizen to congressman, and we are still fascinated today by the man characterized in the film classic *Citizen Kane*. In Nasaw's portrait, questions about Hearst's relationships are addressed, including those about his mistress in his Harvard days, who lived with him for ten years; his legal wife, Millicent, a former showgirl and the mother of his five sons; and Marion Davies, his companion until death. Recently discovered correspondence with the architect of Hearst's world-famous estate, San Simeon, is augmented by taped interviews with the people who worked there and witnessed Hearst's extravagant entertaining, shedding light on the private life of a very public man.

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## **The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst** By David Nasaw Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #53838 in Books
- Published on: 2001-09-06
- Released on: 2001-09-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x 1.82" w x 5.50" l, 1.62 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 704 pages

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

The epic scope of historian David Nasaw's biography matches the titanic personality and achievements of William Randolph Hearst (1862-1951), who built "the nation's first media conglomerate" from a single San Francisco newspaper. Based on previously unavailable sources, including Hearst's personal papers, Nasaw's long but absorbing narrative gives a full-bodied account of the often contradictory mogul: "a huge man with a tiny voice; a shy man who was most comfortable in crowds ... an autocratic boss who could not fire people; a devoted husband who lived with his mistress." Wife Millicent Hearst and actress-inamorata Marion Davies also emerge with more complexity than in previous portraits like Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*, whose factual inaccuracies Nasaw dissects. The author tempers the usual simplistic account of Hearst's political evolution from fire-breathing leftist to red-baiting conservative, calling him "a classic liberal" who believed in less-is-more government and deplored fascism as much as communism. Fresh insights and elegantly turned phrases abound in Nasaw's depiction of Hearst's activities as newspaper publisher, movie producer, and politician, but what's even more intriguing is the poignant personal drama of a man born "in the city of great expectations on the edge of the continent" who was buried 89 years later in San Francisco, "the place he used to know." --*Wendy Smith*

### From Publishers Weekly

It has been 40 years since the last major Hearst biography. Thus this new volume has inherent value in portraying anew the great forerunner of Rupert Murdoch and other modern-day media moguls. This long-winded tome, however, often bogs down in trivial details of Hearst's tangled personal and professional life. Nasaw (*Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements*) is the first to have had access to the formerly closed Hearst archives, but he doesn't really offer any surprises. On the big questions, the author only confirms what we already knew: that it was a lack of academic diligence that lay behind Hearst's failure at Harvard; that, like countless other well-heeled young men of his generation, he kept a mistress before marriage; that he was naïve in his dealings with Hitler. Neither is it a revelation that Hearst's financial collapse in the late 1930s was the result of spendthrift habits combined with the dour economic climate of the times. But the Hearst whom Nasaw portrays in such extraordinary (and excessive) detail is still the fascinating figure we've known for years: the self-absorbed genius equally addicted to power and possessions, the press baron interested not just in reporting news but in making and manipulating it. Photos not seen by PW. BOMC alternate selection. (June)

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### From Library Journal

The outsized life of William Randolph Hearst is a challenge to any biographer. The son of a miner who made a fortune in Western gold fields, he transformed American journalism as a publisher. He was a force in Hollywood's first golden age, and Marion Davies, his longtime mistress, was an early star. In politics, he served in Congress and sought the presidency, an office Franklin Roosevelt attained with the help of Hearst, who then became an arch-critic while corresponding with world leaders such as Mussolini and Hitler. As a collector, he filled warehouses with art objects he could not fit into the castles he built and bought. It may be inevitable that no biography could do full justice to each aspect of such a life, but CUNY historian Nasaw (*Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements*) has done an admirable job. Enjoying the cooperation of family members and access to new primary sources, Nasaw has written a richer biography than the previous standard, W.A. Swanberg's *Citizen Hearst* (LJ 10/15/93), and a comparable book to Ben Proctor's two-volume work-in-progress, of which *William Randolph Hearst: The Early Years* (LJ 4/1/98) is Volume 1. Highly recommended for general collections.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Michael Bennett:**

This The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst book is not really ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you have by reading this book is actually information inside this publication incredible fresh, you will get info which is getting deeper anyone read a lot of information you will get. That The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst without we recognize teach the one who looking at it become critical in contemplating and analyzing. Don't be worry The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst can bring when you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' come to be full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even cell phone. This The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst having good arrangement in word and layout, so you will not truly feel uninterested in reading.

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#### **Viola Ball:**

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