

# Chapter 4

## Pacific View Memorial Park

Tomorrow is the most important thing in life.  
Comes into us at midnight very clean.  
It's perfect when it arrives and it puts itself in our hands.  
It hopes we've learned something from yesterday.

John Wayne  
actor (1907 to 1979)

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**P**acific View Memorial Park is one of the largest and most beautiful cemeteries in Orange County. Founded in the late 1950's, it is situated on over one hundred acres of prime coastal property. The cemetery is located two miles inland from the coast, and is perched high above the Pacific Ocean with a sweeping vista of Newport Harbor, and Catalina Island. The grounds are well manicured with sloping lawns, beautiful private gardens, family estates, and a gigantic Spanish style mausoleum that crowns the peak of the park. There are two special memorials that grace the grounds, and both are near the entrance to the park, the Armed Forces Memorial (that honors all branches of the U.S. Military), and a Drunk Drivers Victims Memorial (that memorializes those who were killed by drunk drivers). This cemetery is peaceful and calm, and unlike other cemeteries, it is not a place of sadness but rather a place to celebrate life. There is no better place to contemplate or spend eternity, than overlooking the blue expanses of the Pacific with its cool ocean breezes.

This cemetery has the highest concentration of famous and noteworthy graves in Orange County. The grounds are easy to navigate, and lawn markings are clearly visible on all curbs. If all the noteworthy graves mentioned are to be visited, you will need to set aside at least three hours.

### John Wayne

Ironically, just west of Toni, and Josephine, a few yards down the slope is the most famous grave in this cemetery, and in all of Orange County. Here is the final resting place of legendary screen actor **John Wayne** (May 26, 1907 to June 11, 1979). He was born Robert Michael Morrison in Winterset, Iowa in 1907, to Mary and Clyde Morrison. Mary soon had a change of heart, and re-named him Marion Michael in honor of a wealthy relative. The young Morrison grew to despise the name, and his early childhood was not happy. He felt unloved by his mother, who favored his younger brother Robert. Because of his name, Marion was teased, and bullied at school. He found himself in many fights, his father Clyde advised him not to go looking for a fight, but if he found it unavoidable, make sure he won at all costs. The tough image that would be a hallmark of later film characters was being developed at an early age.<sup>28</sup>

In 1915, the Morrison's moved to the Los Angeles area, Clyde had been diagnosed with tuberculosis, and a hot dry climate was suggested. At the age of eleven a big event in Marion's life took place; he was befriended by a local fireman, a man that Marion looked up too, this man gave young Morrison his nickname "big Duke."<sup>29</sup> The nickname stuck, and with the new name came a fresh bravado, the young "Duke" Morrison began to prosper emotionally, and academically. He began to excel in school, and by his senior year was a member of the National Honor Society, and at graduation, was named the class salutatorian. Morrison grew to be a tall and very handsome young man. Because of his size he excelled in athletics. He was named captain of the high school football team, and this team was very successful. These triumphs gave Morrison his first glimpse of fame. As for college, his

greatest desire was to attend the U.S. Naval Academy, at Annapolis but instead was offered a full scholarship to play football at the University of Southern California. Morrison's college years were filled with great joy, and he prospered. He gained tremendous fame on and off the football field. These accolades led to a part-time summer job on the back lot of the Fox Studios. Morrison's first taste of the movies came as an assistant to cowboy actor Tom Mix. This small job was the catalyst that propelled Morrison into his legendary film career. During that summer at the Fox Studios, Morrison would meet a person that would forever alter his life.<sup>30</sup>

In 1930, John Ford, was one of Hollywood's most successful directors, he was directing a film called *Mother MacCree*, when fate sent the young Morrison to the set of the film. The director took an immediate liking to Duke, and a life long friendship ensued. John Ford saw something special in Morrison. He was young, raw, and he saw a potential for stardom. Over the next few years, Ford cast Morrison in several of his films, and he was a natural in front of the camera. Fate again entered Morrison's life when he was introduced to another director, Raoul Walsh. Walsh also saw potential in Morrison, but thought his name was not marketable. A more "American" sounding name was needed, and Walsh came up with John Wayne. The name stuck, and John "Duke" Wayne the movie star was born. It was with Raoul Walsh that John Wayne got his first big break as a leading man in *The Big Trail* (1930).<sup>31</sup>

For the next few years, Wayne starred in numerous serials and B-westerns, his six foot three inch frame, and silent good looks made him very marketable. Wayne felt he was being type cast and yearned to break free to super stardom. The year 1939 was to be very significant for John Wayne. Director John Ford had not forgotten his friend and protégé, he was casting for a new film, *Stagecoach*. Ford thought that Wayne would be perfect for the lead role in the film. This was the break that Wayne needed. *Stagecoach* was critically acclaimed, a box office success, and it propelled Wayne to new level of recognition.<sup>32</sup> It was the beginning of many successes for Wayne, and provided the impetus for the development of the hero image that would prove to be Wayne's lasting legacy in film. The dynamic duo of Ford and Wayne would become box office gold, and over the years their film partnership would produce some of Hollywood's greatest and most successful motion pictures.

John Wayne's award winning acting, producing, and directing career spanned five decades, beginning in the late 1920's through the late 1970's. A prolific film career that saw him star in over two hundred and fifty motion pictures. During this time he starred alongside many of Hollywood's greatest actors and actresses. The characters he portrayed in many of his films, personified the image of the true patriotic American. Some of Wayne's many legendary films credits include:

*Dark Command* (1940)  
*Reap the Wild Wind* (1942)  
*Flying Tigers* (1942)  
*The Fighting Seabees* (1944)  
*Fort Apache* (1948)  
*Red River* (1948)  
*Wake of the Red Witch* (1948)  
*The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949)  
*Rio Grande* (1950)  
*The Quiet Man* (1952)  
*Hondo* (1953)  
*The High and the Mighty* (1954)  
*The Searchers* (1956)  
*The Alamo* (1960)  
*The Longest Day* (1962)  
*In Harm's Way* (1965)  
*The Green Berets* (1968).

He was nominated for a best acting Academy Award for his portrayal of Marine Sergeant John Stryker in *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949). In 1969, he won the best actor Academy Award and Golden Globe for his portrayal of Marshall Rooster Cogburn in *True Grit*. Wayne's last film was *The Shootist* (1976), in the film he played an over the hill gunfighter who is dying of cancer. Ironically, in real life Wayne was also battling cancer. He was a life long smoker, and had been waging a fight with lung

cancer for several years. Illness was nothing new to Wayne, he had a cancerous lung removed in 1963, had open heart surgery in 1978, and had his stomach removed in 1979. He died on the evening of June 11, 1979, at the U.C.L.A. Medical Center in Los Angeles, California from lung and stomach cancer.<sup>33</sup> According to his widow Pilar, John Wayne final wish was to be cremated, and his ashes scattered at sea, near Catalina Island. He also wanted all of his friends to gather at his home for a party, not wanting a sorrowful occasion; but instead wanted a joyful celebration of his life, an Irish type wake.<sup>34</sup> These arrangements were never carried out; Michael Wayne the executor of his father's estate chose to have a "more dignified" arrangement. Wayne was to be buried at Pacific View Memorial Park, which overlooked his beloved Newport Harbor. At 6:00 a.m. on June 15, 1979, Wayne's bronze flower draped casket was brought into Our Lady Queen of Angels Catholic Church in Corona del Mar for funeral mass. In attendance were only immediate family, his seven children, twenty seven grand children, Pilar Wayne, and a few close friends. After the conclusion of the mass, the funeral procession of only twenty cars made its way to Pacific View Memorial Park. After the procession had entered the cemetery, the gates were closed, and no one else was allowed admittance. As the sun arose in the east, on that June morning, a brief graveside ceremony was conducted by the archbishop Marcos G. McGrath, and John Wayne was laid to rest.<sup>35</sup> This was not the end the legendary actor had envisioned. It is interesting to note that the plot in which Wayne is buried was given to the Wayne family by his close friend, Chick Iverson.

John Wayne's final resting place lay unmarked for over twenty years, his son Michael was very protective of his father's image, and was adamant about keeping fans away. He feared fans would desecrate the grave, and wanted the location of his father's burial kept as secret as possible. It was only after Michael's death in 2003, that the surviving Wayne siblings decided it was time pay tribute to their father's legacy, and at long last had a flat bronze marker (which plays homage to his image of the ultimate cowboy) erected at his grave site. Today, John Wayne's legacy is found in his films, and the characters he portrayed will be remembered forever. He was a true American icon, an original, a legend bigger than life.

John Wayne's grave is located in Bay View Terrace lawn, lot 573, it is a few yards from his daughter Toni, and first wife Josephine's graves, walk west down the slope, six rows to the legendary actors final repose.

In addition to John Wayne, this book contains over two hundred interesting life stories of the rich, famous, infamous, and noteworthy who permanently call Orange County home.