

MY SEARCH FOR JOHN FORD

Carolina 8C

What kind of a student was Ford at school?

Ford wasn't that much of a student. During classes he drew/sketched caricatures of his classmates and teachers, he even drew heroic profiles of cowboys and Indians. He didn't pay attention in class, he didn't care about school or all the subjects that were studied. Only in one class he paid attention, and that was American History. That was the only subject he listened to.

Which subject particularly fascinated him at school? Why?

The subject that particularly fascinated Ford at school was American History. This was because when his teacher Mr. Jack started talked about American history he, John Ford discovered that many citizen soldiers who fought in American Revolution were Irish immigrants.

How did the school environment affect his behaviour?

Well, when he put pen or pencil down to listen to his favorite subject or teacher, he woke up from the dream. By dream I mean from the drawing, the sketching of classmates, teachers and cowboys.

What contrasting character traits became evident in his personality?

The two contrasting things about Ford were that he had a dark personality, which would make you think that he was cold, but really he was sensitive and he did everything to hide it.

According to Ford what should a viewer look at when watching a film and why is this suggestion rather ironic?

The thing that a viewer should watch when looking at a movie is look at the eyes of the person that is acting. He said that the secret is to look at people's faces, their eye expression. This is rather ironic because no one could see his eyes. He always wore a pair of dark glasses to cover his eyes or even an eye patch.

What was John Ford really like? In what ways was he tough, in what ways gentle? What insights are provided by those who knew or worked with him?

John Ford was a really famous Hollywood filmmaker. But that was only his career and a fun time. Milburn Stone, an actor who worked for Ford said that he was very selfish. ***“He was a very selfish guy, and he could be tyrant, yet he got tremendous performance out of people,”*** recalled actor Milburn Stone. ***“On Young Mr. Lincoln I saw him break an old actor's heart, someone who had been a friend. Ford jumped on him all of a sudden and just destroyed the guy.”*** His daughter said that if he would let the people see his nice eyes the people would take advantage of him. ***“If he had shown his kindly eyes, they would have walked over him on the set,”*** said his daughter, ***Barbara***. Olive Carey an actress of Ford Stock Company met Ford as soon as he arrived in Hollywood in 1914. She said that he wasn't so tough, that he was darling and warm, but he put on his big act

of being tough. This is what she said about Ford. That means that Ford was not at all mean, but he just wanted to be, maybe because he wanted a reputation of tough and brave guy, then a darling, warm, sweet, kind and brave guy. He was afraid of it.

Explain how/why film-making became a refuge from reality for John Ford?

Film-making became a refuge from reality to John Ford because it was a way to create a safe, privileged, mythical world that functioned according to his own private rules. To him it was a world where he could have been the *boss*, the *coach*, the *skipper*, the *old man*, the *pappy*, of his extended family of actors and crew people. The Navajo Indians called him *Natani Nez* which means tall soldier, although the real translation would be *Tall Leader*.

What contradictions became evident between the images projected in his films and the reality of his own life?

That Ford was always unhappy. He was not a good family man. Not a good husband, not a good father to Barbara and Patrick. In my search for John Ford it says that John's true family was his movie set. It was a more functional group he knew how to control because he lived within the realm of his fantasies.

Can you suggest reasons for Ford's hostility towards those who delved into film-making techniques?

When people tried to find out Ford's film-making techniques in lots of titles of Ford's films were, "The Silent Man," or "The Quiet Man." He gave these titles to these films because he wanted to confuse the people that tried to figure out his film-making techniques.

In Ford's films, masculinity and femininity are strongly projected. From your reading, viewing and reflecting, where do you think he stood?

I think that Ford stood for both masculinity and femininity. Masculinity because he was the man director, and femininity because his work was dominated by concerns traditionally designated by the society of his time as a feminine.

Although Ford often claimed that his life/work was a dull subject, most cinema scholars do not agree. Besides film making what were some of the things Ford did during his lifetime?

Beside film-making other things that Ford did during his lifetime happened in a lot of places. He did a lot of things. He never wrote an autobiography because he wanted to forget some stuff that he didn't like a lot and he thought it wasn't anybody's business.

Which film did Ford make about the legendary Wyatt Earp and how did he present the story?

The film that Ford made about the legendary Wyatt Earp is "My Darling Clementine." He presented it with the real-life story of Wyatt Earp.

Which film inspired McBride to become a 'Fordian'? Why?

The film that inspired McBride to become a Fordian was “**Fort Apache.**” This film inspired McBride to become a Fordian because Ford’s poetic way of conveying the transcendence of the eternal over the temporal caught his attention.

Why does McBride respect Ford for refusing to explain his work to interviewers?

The older McBride respected Ford refusal to explain his work to the interviewers. He respects that because Ford told McBride “*Everybody asks the same questions, all you people, and I’m sick and tired to answer them, because I don’t know the answer.*” Ford wanted his work to speak for itself.

Why did McBride feel that another biography of Ford was necessary?

McBride felt that another biography of Ford was necessary because he wanted to understand Ford, and since there are a lot of biographies about John Ford he wanted to see the differences. He wanted to understand the man behind the films. McBride says that Ford had an unfortunate side that sometimes confused a lot of people who tried to understand his films.