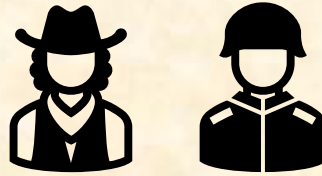


The Hollywood Western and Veterans of the Military and Home Fronts



Veterans Day usually falls during the week of the Go West Film Festival. We hope to contribute to the honor by highlighting the military and home front activities of Hollywood veterans on both sides of the camera! A surprising number of our favorite cowboys and cowgirls became interested in filmmaking while serving at home and abroad, often thanks to offerings of the United Service Organizations (USO). Others were able to study acting, design, lighting, sound, or editing thanks to the GI Bill.

Compiled by David Caldwell for the Go West Film Festival

Gene Autry

Autry ushered in the era of the singing cowboy during the 1930s and 1940s. He enlisted in the US Army during WWII and was assigned as a flight officer with the Air Transport Command from 1942 to 1946. After his military service, Autry returned to making movies and eventually established his own production company, Flying A Productions. Among other western-themed creations, Flying A produced his own television program *The Gene Autry Show* (1950) and the more successful *Annie Oakley* television series (1954 to 1957).

Humphrey Bogart

Bogart volunteered for the US Navy during WWI, more than thirty years before he received critical acclaim for his performance as Fred Dobbs in John Huston's Academy Award winning western *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948). As a sailor, Bogart spent much of his active duty ferrying troops between Europe and the US. He was honorably discharged in 1919.

Ernest Borgnine

At age 18, after graduating from high school in New Haven, Borgnine joined the US Navy, where he served until 1941 aboard the *USS Lambertson*. The ship operated out of San Diego and towed targets for surface combatants, submarines and aircraft. Soon after he left the Navy, Pearl Harbor was attacked, and Borgnine reenlisted for a second Navy tour,

beginning in 1942 and lasting until 1945. He served aboard the *USS Sylph*, which engaged in anti-submarine warfare in the Atlantic. During his naval service Borgnine rose in rank from seaman to gunner's mate first class. Upon his discharge in 1945, he wore the American Campaign Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, the American Defense Service Medal with Fleet Clasp, and the World War II Victory Medal. Borgnine returned to New Haven, where the GI Bill gave him an opportunity to study dramatic arts for six months. His first film role came in 1951. In addition to a number of military-themed movies, Borgnine appeared in westerns, including *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955), *Jubal* (1956), and *The Wild Bunch* (1969). After appearing in an episode of the television series *The Blue Angels* (1961), he was made an honorary flight leader of the Navy's precision flying team. The Blue Angels frequently flew into a California naval air station not far from where Borgnine lived. He invited the pilots to dinner each time they had layovers there.

Walter Brennan

Brennan joined the US Army in 1917 and served in France during WWI. He began his film career as a young man during the silent era. When he was in his 40s, 50s, and 60s, Brennan appeared in westerns, often working under director John Ford, for example *Three Godfathers* (1936) and *My Darling Clementine* (1946). Brennan also appeared in Howard Hawks's *Red River* (1948), John Sturges's *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955), Howard Hawks's *Rio Bravo* (1959), John Ford's *How the West Was Won* (1962), and Burt Kennedy's *Support Your Local Sheriff* (1969). He is the only performer to win three Oscars for Best Supporting Actor.

Charles Bronson

Bronson was drafted into the US Army in 1943 and assigned to the Air Corps. He was a truck driver at first but was later trained as a bomber tail gunner and assigned to a B-29. Bronson flew 25 missions and received, among other decorations, a Purple Heart for wounds incurred in battle. He was based at Guam, Tinian and Saipan. After leaving the military in 1945, Bronson studied art on the GI Bill and later switched to acting. His western roles include *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) and *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968).

Mel Brooks

At the outset of WWII, Brooks joined the Army Specialized Training Reserve program at the Virginia Military Institute before going to basic training at Fort Sill. He served overseas as a combat engineer toward the end of the war and was at the Battle of the Bulge. Brooks's duties included defusing land mines. His talent for performing came to the attention of his superiors, and after VE Day, Brooks was asked to join a touring variety show to entertain the Army troops still stationed in Europe. A western credit from Brooks's film career is his direction of *Blazing Saddles* (1974), in which he is also a cast member.

Harry Carey, Jr.

During World War II, Carey enlisted in the US Navy, where he served in the Pacific theater as a medical corpsman. However, he was transferred back to the United States (against his wishes) to serve under his father's good friend, the director John Ford. Carey, Jr. helped make training films for the Navy and propaganda films for the OSS. His postwar western roles include parts in *The Searchers* (1956), *The Way West* (1967), and *Tombstone* (1993).

Chuck Connors

In 1942 Connors left college before graduating and joined the US Army. After enlistment in the infantry at Fort Knox, Connors later served mostly as a tank-warfare instructor at Camp Campbell, Kentucky, and then finally at West Point. He was honorably discharged in early 1946. Following his postwar career in professional baseball, Connors began acting. Among other films and television shows, he had roles in *Old Yeller* (1957), in William Wyler's *The Big Country* (1958), and in *Ride Beyond Vengeance* (1966). In the 1950s and 1960s Connors starred in two popular western television series, *The Rifleman* (1958-1963) and *Branded* (1965-1966).

Barry Corbin

At age 21, during the Vietnam War, Corbin left Texas Tech University to join the US Marine Corps. He spent about two years at Camp Pendleton in California, training South Vietnamese officers. After his tour of duty, he finished a degree in theatre arts at Texas Tech. Corbin remained in the Marine Corps Reserve, rejoining the 40th Rifle Company in Lubbock, Texas as an assistant Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) man. He was honorably discharged in August 1963. Since the 1970s Corbin has acted in a number of television and film projects, including westerns. In 2021 he appeared in an episode of the television series *Yellowstone*.

Joan Crawford

Crawford first supported the USO during WWII and continued the collaboration into the 1970s. The star of *The Law of the Range* (1928) and *Johnny Guitar* (1954) became the first recipient of the USO Woman of the Year Award (1965). Crawford's will included a generous bequest to the organization.

Marlene Dietrich

James Stewart's co-star in *Destry Rides Again* (1939) made two overseas USO tours during WWII. During her first tour, she became the first entertainer to reach rescued soldiers at Anzio, Italy. Dietrich's second tour lasted nearly a year and took her close to the front lines in France and subsequently to Allied troop positions in her native Germany. At the Hollywood Canteen she worked in the kitchen and served food to troops who enjoyed meals there under the auspices of the USO.

Kirk Douglas

Douglas was beginning to establish himself on the Broadway stage when his career was interrupted by WWII. He joined the US Navy in 1941. Douglas served in the Pacific theater in anti-submarine warfare as a gunnery and communications officer. He suffered abdominal injuries when a depth charge was dropped accidentally. He was medically discharged in 1944. After his recovery, Douglas again acted in stage plays and performed on radio. He appeared in his first film role in 1946. Among a wide variety of parts, Douglas starred in numerous military and western-themed movies, including as Doc Holliday in *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), in *Last Train from Gun Hill* (1959), *There Was a Crooked Man* (1970) and *The Man from Snowy River* (1982).

Robert Duvall

A descendent of Confederate general Robert E. Lee, Duvall combined his family's military heritage with his own interest in the theater. After graduating from Principia College in Illinois in 1953, he volunteered for a two-year hitch in the US Army. In conjunction with a theatrical unit, Duvall performed in plays during his service. He studied acting on the GI Bill after returning to civilian life and subsequently appeared in western-themed television and film productions, among other types of roles, including in *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* (1972), *Tender Mercies* (1983), *Lonesome Dove* (1989), and *Open Range* (2003).

Clint Eastwood

Actor and filmmaker Clint Eastwood was drafted by the US Army during the Korean War. He trained at Fort Ord in California. After training, he remained on assignment at Ford Ord as a swimming instructor. Eastwood was honorably discharged in 1953. He appeared on television as Rowdy Yates in the *Rawhide* series (1959-1965) and in a long

legacy of western films, including breakout roles in work directed by Sergio Leone and in *Cry Macho* (2021), which he filmed at age 90.

Henry Fonda

Fonda enlisted in the US Navy as a seaman during World War II and served in the Pacific theater. He worked in operations and air combat intelligence and earned a Bronze Star and a presidential citation for bravery. Fonda achieved the rank of lieutenant before his discharge in 1945. Among his westerns are *Jesse James* (1939), *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1942), *Fort Apache* (1948), *The Tin Star* (1957), *How the West Was Won* (1962), *The Rounders* (1965), *The Cheyenne Social Club* (1970), and *My Name Is Nobody* (1973).

Glenn Ford

Prior to WWII Ford appeared in various small film roles. He interrupted his acting career by enlisting with the US Marines at the outset of the war. After returning to civilian life, Ford extended his military career well into the Vietnam War with his service in the Naval Reserve. He achieved the rank of captain. Like many actors who returned to Hollywood after the war (including James Stewart and William Holden), Ford initially found it difficult to regain his acting momentum. He was able to resume his movie career with the help of Bette Davis, who gave him his first postwar break in *A Stolen Life* (1946). Glenn Ford is well known for his roles in westerns, including *The Man from Colorado* (1948), together with William Holden; *The Violent Men* (1956); *3:10 to Yuma* (1957); *Cimarron* (1960), and *The Rounders* (1965), among others.

John Ford

Ford joined the US Naval Reserve prior to WWII. His overall service in the Navy extended from 1934 to 1951. In 1941 he was put in charge of a documentary film unit that took him to battles around the world. Ford won back-to-back Academy Awards for his Navy documentaries *The Battle of Midway* and *December 7th*. After the war, Ford continued to serve in the Navy Reserve and was activated one last time during the Korean War to film *This Is Korea!*, a propaganda documentary about the beginnings of the war. Ford was promoted to rear admiral upon his retirement. Prior to making such acclaimed westerns such as *Stagecoach* (1939), *Fort Apache* (1948), and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), Ford had directed silent westerns in the 1920s.

James Garner

At the end of WWII, Garner dropped out of high school at 16 and lied about his age in order to join the US Merchant Marine, which had begun supplying aid to Europe. After the war ended, he returned to high school but dropped out a second time to join the Oklahoma National Guard. As fate would have it, he was drafted to serve in the Korean War, where he was wounded twice and was awarded two Purple Hearts. After leaving the Army, Garner moved to California and discovered a passion for acting. His movie roles included performances in military dramas, but Garner soared in popularity as the title character in the television series *Maverick*, which aired from 1957 to 1962. His western roles encompass both dramatic work, such as in John Sturges's *Hour of the Gun* (1967) and comedic roles, including his tongue-in-cheek character in *Support Your Local Sheriff* (1969).

Hoot Gibson

With the outbreak of WWI, this rodeo star turned actor joined the US Army, eventually attaining the rank of sergeant while serving with the Tank Corps. He was honorably discharged in 1919 and immediately returned to Universal Pictures. John Ford took note of Gibson's light, comedic, tongue-in-cheek performances in a number of two-reeler westerns and cast him in the 1921 box office hit *Action*, a version of the Three Godfathers story. *Action* propelled Gibson to superstar status. During the silent era, Hoot Gibson and Tom Mix were the two cowboy movie stars who were said to "rule the West."

Howard Hawks

During WWI Hawks served as a lieutenant in the US Army Signal Corps and later joined the Army Air Corps, serving in France. After writing screenplays in Hollywood during the 1920s, Hawks began a career in directing. He directed military narratives such as *The Dawn Patrol* (1930) about WWI, and *Air Force* (1943), a highly regarded WWII propaganda film, before he found an additional niche in directing westerns. His films include *Red River* (1948), *Rio Grande* (1950), *Rio Bravo* (1959), *El Dorado* (1966), and *Rio Lobo* (1970).

Sterling Hayden

In his youth prior to WWII, Hayden worked on several civilian ships and became an excellent seafarer. He gained a ship's command at only 19 years of age. He was lured to Hollywood in 1936. Prior to Pearl Harbor, Hayden abandoned acting to become a commando with the COI (later the OSS). Hayden joined the US Marines under the pseudonym "John Hamilton" (a name he never acted under). During WWII Hayden

secretly ran guns and supplies through the German blockade of the Adriatic to Yugoslav partisans, and he parachuted into Croatia to participate in anti-Nazi guerrilla activities. Prime Minister Tito awarded Hayden the Yugoslav Silver Star citation. Hayden disliked film work but returned to it after the war in order to pay for a succession of sailing vessels. In 1954 he starred opposite Joan Crawford in *Johnny Guitar*.

Rita Hayworth

Though she later shifted from the western genre, Hayworth starred in several frontier films in the 1930s, making one or more per year. Examples are *Hit the Saddle* and *Trouble in Texas*, both in 1937, and *Renegade Ranger* (1938). At that time, she used her given name Rita Cansino. During WWII, after her career had bloomed, the rebranded Rita Hayworth became an ardent supporter of the war effort. She used her public image to promote scrap metal drives, going so far as to remove and donate the bumpers from her car. Hayworth also helped sell war bonds, and she entertained troops in a magic show orchestrated by Orson Welles.

William Holden

Prior to Pearl Harbor, Holden was on his way to becoming an established star. In 1942 he enlisted in Officer Candidate School in Florida, graduating as a second lieutenant in the US Army Air Corps. He spent the next three years fulfilling public relations duties and making training films for the Office of Public Information. One of Holden's brothers, a naval pilot, was shot down and killed over the Pacific in 1943. After he was demobilized at the end of the war, Holden returned to Hollywood. His re-entry into civilian life was difficult, but after initial struggles, he began to receive regular film roles. Holden played notable characters in westerns such as *The Man from Colorado* (1948), together with Glenn Ford; John Ford's *The Horse Soldiers* (1959); Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969); and *Wild Rovers* (1971), among others.

Earl Holliman

Hoping to be discovered by moviemakers, Holliman ran away from his home in Louisiana at age 16 and showed up in Hollywood. Having no luck in Tinseltown, the teenager returned to Louisiana during WWII and enlisted in the US Navy by lying about his age. As luck would have it, however, the Navy assigned him to a communications school in Los Angeles. The proximity to Hollywood rekindled his passion for show business. Holliman spent much of his free time as a conspicuous presence in the Hollywood Canteen. Discharged from the Navy a year after enlisting, when his true age was discovered, Holliman returned home to complete his high school education. When he was old enough, he reenlisted in the Navy. Holliman was cast as the lead in several Navy Theatre

productions at the naval base at Norfolk, VA. After he was discharged (this time, honorably), he went back to Hollywood and studied acting at USC and UCLA. His first screen role was as a soldier in the WWII movie *Destination Gobi* (1953). In addition to appearing in many western-themed television series, Holliman appeared in *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), co-starred with Kirk Douglas in John Sturges's 1959 western *Last Train from Gun Hill*, and co-starred as John Wayne's younger brother in *The Sons of Katie Elder* (1965).

John Huston

In 1942 Huston entered the US Army Signal Corps at the rank of captain in order to direct films in support of the war effort. Most of his productions were considered too controversial due to their graphic documentation of combat reality and were either not released or were censored. Critics rank three of his films among the finest made about WWII: *Report from the Aleutians* (1943), *The Battle of San Pietro* (1944), and *Let There Be Light* (1945). Huston earned a Legion of Merit Award for courageous work under battle conditions and retired as a major. Hollywood glory came to him again in association with his father Walter Huston and Humphrey Bogart in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948). In 1972 he directed Paul Newman in *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean* and made a cameo appearance in the film as Grizzly Adams.

Brian Keith

Keith joined the US Marines during WWII. He was awarded an Air Medal for his service as a rear-facing gunner on a scout/dive bomber used extensively by the Marine Corps and Navy. Keith saw especially intense action in 1942 on Rabaul in the Pacific. He returned to Broadway after the war and continued his acting career, eventually branching out into television and film, including *Fort Dobbs* (1958), alongside Clint Walker; together with Steve McQueen in *Nevada Smith* (1966); and with Jack Palance in *Young Guns* (1988).

George Kennedy

Following high school graduation, Kennedy enlisted in the US Army in 1943 with the hope of becoming a fighter pilot in the Army Air Corps. Instead, he wound up in the infantry, served under General George S. Patton, and distinguished himself with valor. Kennedy won two Bronze Stars and four rows of combat and service ribbons. As a WWII veteran, Kennedy played to his strengths once he arrived in Hollywood and often portrayed no-nonsense characters. He started out on television westerns in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including *Have Gun - Will Travel* (1957), *Rawhide* (1959), *Maverick* (1957) and *Colt .45* (1957), among others. His early film work includes supporting roles in *Lonely Are the Brave* (1962) and *The Sons of Katie Elder* (1965).

Don Knotts

His first stint as an entertainer was as a ventriloquist, performing paid gigs at parties and other events in Morgantown, WV. Knotts enrolled at West Virginia University, but when WWII engulfed America, he enlisted in the US Army. The 19-year-old soldier was assigned to the Special Services Branch, where he entertained the troops. It was during his Army service that Knotts ditched ventriloquism for straight comedy. He returned to West Virginia University with an honorable military discharge. After graduating with a degree in theater in 1948, Knotts married and moved to New York, where connections he had made while in the Special Services Branch helped him break into show business, eventually to include comedic roles such as the lead in *The Shakiest Gun in the West* (1968).

Burt Lancaster

Lancaster joined the US Army during WWII. While serving he performed in USO shows and became interested in acting as a profession. Lancaster played military figures in several of his films. Among his postwar western roles are parts in John Sturges's *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), John Huston's *The Unforgiven* (1960), Robert Aldrich's *Ulzana's Raid* (1972), and in *Cattle Annie and Little Britches* (1980). Lancaster helped pay for the defense of Pvt. Billy Dean Smith, an African-American soldier accused of 'fragging' two officers in Vietnam in 1971. Smith was acquitted at the court-martial.

Lee Marvin

After being expelled from more than one prep school for "incorrigible behavior," Marvin enlisted in the US Marine Corps at the beginning of WWII. He was gravely wounded in the Battle of Saipan in June 1944, when enemy gunfire severed his sciatic nerve. He received a medical discharge. After his recovery, Marvin acted in Off-Broadway plays. His first film role was as an extra in *You're in the Navy Now* (1951). He went on to star in a number of military-themed films, such as *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), which he alternated with westerns that include *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955), *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), *Cat Ballou* (1965), *Paint Your Wagon* (1969), and *Monte Walsh* (1970).

Steve McQueen

McQueen joined the US Marine Corps in 1947. He had difficulty obeying orders and was demoted seven times. After a weekend pass turned into a two-week "vacation" of his own making, McQueen was arrested and served time in the brig. Later, during a training mission in the Arctic, the ship he was on hit a sandbank. Several tanks and their crews were thrown into the water, and many servicemen drowned. McQueen was able to

rescue five men. His discharge from the Marines in 1950 was honorable. From 1958 to 1961 McQueen played a bounty hunter in the popular television western *Wanted: Dead or Alive*. Alternating contemporary and historical characters, McQueen starred in the westerns *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), *Nevada Smith* (1966), and *Tom Horn* (1980). His acting career also included a number of military roles.

Tom Mix

Tom Mix joined the US Army as a young man and was an artillery sergeant during the Philippine campaign from 1898 to 1901, though he never saw action. In fact, Mix deserted the army and carefully kept the facts about his military service a secret. About 1903 he was drum major with the Oklahoma Cavalry Band, which played in the St. Louis World's Fair. In 1904 he was a bartender and sheriff in Dewey, Oklahoma. Mix was in a series of Wild West shows before Selig Pictures hired him to provide and handle horses. His first movie role was in *Ranch Life in the Great Southwest* (1910). In addition to acting, Mix wrote and directed westerns. Fox Films signed him in 1917. He averaged five films a year. With the possible exception of Hoot Gibson, Mix's popularity eclipsed most other great cowboy stars of the silent era, even William S. Hart. Sadly, most of Tom Mix's films are considered lost.

Marilyn Monroe

The same year Monroe starred alongside Robert Mitchum and Rory Calhoun in Otto Preminger's western *River of No Return* (1954), she entertained US troops in South Korea under the auspices of the USO.

Audie Murphy

Murphy enlisted in the US Army in June 1942 after being turned down by the Navy and the Marines. After undergoing basic military training, he was sent to North Africa. However, the Allies drove the German army from Tunisia, their last foothold in the region, before Murphy's unit could be sent into battle. His first engagement with Axis forces came when his unit was sent to Europe. First landing on the island of Sicily, next mainland Italy, and finally France, he fought in seven major campaigns over three years and rose from the rank of private to a battlefield commission as a second lieutenant. Audie Murphy became a national hero as the most decorated combat soldier of the war. Before his 20th birthday he received every army combat award for valor that was available at the time. Among his 33 awards was the Medal of Honor, the highest recognition for bravery that a soldier can receive. In addition, he was also decorated for bravery by the governments of France and Belgium. Murphy was released from active duty, promoted to first lieutenant, and assigned to inactive status. His story caught the interest of movie star James Cagney,

who invited Murphy to Hollywood. In 1950 the veteran soldier was prepared to return to the battlefield in the Korean War, just at the time his acting career started to heat up. The Army decided to keep him as a recruitment tool and use his fame to enlist more soldiers. Murphy would retire with the rank of major. Part of Murphy's appeal was that he did not fit the "image" most people had of a war hero. He was slight, almost fragile-looking, shy, and soft-spoken. In addition to roles in military-themed films, Murphy appeared in westerns such as *Gunsmoke* (1953), *Destry* (1954), *Walk the Proud Land* (1956), *Ride a Crooked Trail* (1958), *No Name on the Bullet* (1959), John Huston's *The Unforgiven* (1959), *Bullet for a Bad Man* (1964), and *A Time for Dying* (1969).

Paul Newman

Newman served in the US Navy in the Pacific theater during World War II. He hoped to become a pilot but was disqualified because he was colorblind. Instead, Newman went through basic training and became a rear-seat radioman and gunner in torpedo bombers. He also served aboard the *USS Bunker Hill* during the Battle of Okinawa. He was discharged in 1946 with military honors, including the Good Conduct Medal, American Area Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal. Newman then attended Kenyon College on the GI Bill and eventually started his acting career in Broadway productions. Western film highlights include *Hud* (1963), *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), and *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean* (1972).

Jack Palance

Palance's career as a successful professional boxer ended with the outbreak of WWII, when he joined the US Army Air Corps and became a bomber pilot. Wounded in combat and suffering severe injuries and burns, he received the Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal. Following the war, Palance attended Stanford University and subsequently began a career in acting. Among other films, he appeared in George Stevens' *Shane* (1953) and with Lee Marvin in *Monte Walsh* (1970). Toward the end of his career, Palance appeared in *Young Guns* (1988) and opposite Billy Crystal in the comedic western *City Slickers* (1991).

Jason Robards

After graduating from Hollywood High School, Robards served in the US Navy in WWII and saw combat as a radioman. His western film roles include *The Hour of the Gun* (1967), *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* (1970), and *The Legend of the Lone Ranger* (1981), among others.

Jane Russell

Russell's film career began with westerns, particularly with the success of *The Outlaw* (made in 1941 and released in 1943). Several Wild West movies came later, including *The Paleface* (1948), in which she played Calamity Jane. Alternating westerns with films noir and other types of narrative, she subsequently appeared in *Son of Paleface* and *Montana Belle* (both in 1952) and was the female lead in Raoul Walsh's *The Tall Men* (1955), co-starring Clark Gable and Robert Ryan. Toward the end of her acting career, Russell returned to westerns. In 1966 she appeared together with Dana Andrews in *Johnny Reno*. That same year she was the female lead in *Waco*. As the daughter of a career US Army officer, Russell was eager to contribute on the home front during WWII and the Korean War, but she was conflicted about making entertainment tours and public appearances. A conservative, both politically and religiously, she openly disliked being objectified for her physical beauty and was unhappy with producer Howard Hughes's manipulative attempts to commodify her large breasts. As Russell's popularity rose during the 1940s and 1950s, she was given the nickname "The Brunette Bombshell." Along with Betty Grable, Rita Hayworth, and others, Russell became a favorite pin-up girl for wartime servicemen. She made no USO tours and consented only to occasional publicity appearances together with troops, including for example, a WWII photo op with a dive bomber crew that had named themselves "Russell's Raiders" and had decal'd a large portrait of her onto the fuselage of their plane. During the Korean War, troops code-named a pair of embattled hills after Jane Russell, a sniggering topographical tribute to her breasts. Through charitable activism, especially on behalf of orphan care, Russell quietly coped with the sexist norms of her time. Rather than directly confronting misogynist behavior, she sought to mitigate its harmful aftereffects. She lobbied heavily for passage of the Federal Adoption Amendment of 1953, which specifically allowed the children of American servicemen born overseas to be placed for adoption in the US. She also founded the World Adoption International Fund and played an active role in identifying adoptive families for 51,000 children, some of whom, she knew, were the illegitimate offspring of American servicemen. Her activism in support of child adoption also dovetailed with her personal opposition to abortion.

Robert Ryan

Ryan served in the US Marines as a drill sergeant. He won a boxing championship during his time in the Marine Corps. Ryan went on to become a key figure in post WWII American films noir and westerns. Primarily a man of pacifist beliefs, Ryan often found it a challenge to play despicable characters who were at odds with his personal ideals. However, the narratives of his movies often trace the psychological damage of the fictional bad guys he played to combat experiences and similar trauma. Additionally, Ryan actively campaigned for restricting the spread of nuclear weapons. He strongly opposed McCarthyism and its persecution of people he believed were innocent, and he was a vocal

supporter of the civil rights movement. Western film appearances include *The Naked Spur* (1953), together with James Stewart; Raoul Walsh's *The Tall Men* (1955), together with Clark Gable and Jane Russell; John Sturges's *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955), alongside Spencer Tracy; *Day of the Outlaw* (1959); and Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969).

Tom Selleck

Selleck served in the California National Guard from 1967 to 1973. He later went on to portray military veterans and western figures on television and in film, including *Quigley Down Under* (1990) and *Monte Walsh* (2003).

Rod Steiger

Steiger dropped out of high school at age 16 and joined the US Navy. In WWII he saw action in the Pacific as a crew member on the destroyer *USS Taussig*. The *Taussig* was a support ship that helped launch the Doolittle Raid in 1942. Steiger was serving on that ship in the Philippine Sea on the day of what is known as Typhoon Cobra or Halsey's Typhoon in December 1944. Three destroyers sank during the storm. The disaster became the background for the novel and film *The Caine Mutiny* and for the stage play *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial*. Steiger had an operatic voice but was untrained as a singer and had little sense of pitch. He told Robert Osborne in an interview that when he was in the Navy, he would sing on deck during watch duty. The ship's captain ordered him to stop. Steiger appeared together with Glenn Ford and Ernest Borgnine in the western *Jubal* (1956). He was later offered the title role in *Patton* (1970) but refused the part, saying, "I'm not going to glorify war." The role was then given to George C. Scott. Steiger was an active member of Handgun Control, Inc.

George Stevens

Stevens joined the US Army Signal Corps and headed a combat motion picture unit from 1944 to 1946. His unit filmed the Normandy landings, the liberation of Paris, and the liberation of the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau. Footage shot by Stevens was used as evidence in the Nuremberg trials and de-Nazification program after the war. Many critics claim that the somber, deeply personal tone of the movies Stevens made after he returned from WWII, for example *Shane* (1953), were the result of the horrors he saw during the war. The postwar projects contrast sharply with his light-hearted pre-war western romanticization *Annie Oakley* (1935).

James Stewart

Having learned to fly in 1935, Stewart was drafted into the US Army in 1940 as a private (after twice failing the physical exam for being underweight). During the course of WWII, he rose to the rank of colonel, first as a flight instructor at home in the United States, and later flying combat missions in Europe. Stewart remained involved with the US Air Force Reserve after the war and officially retired in 1968. In 1959, he was promoted to brigadier general, becoming the highest-ranking actor in US military history. Western roles include *Destry Rides Again* (1939), *Broken Arrow* (1950), *Winchester '73* (1950), *The Naked Spur* (1953), *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), *How the West Was Won* (1962), *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964), *Bandolero!* (1968), *The Cheyenne Social Club* (1970), *The Shootist* (1976), and a voice part in the animated film *An American Tail: Fievel Goes West* (1991).

Wes Studi

Drafted into the US Army in 1967, Studi served twelve months in South Vietnam with the 9th Infantry Division in the Mekong Delta. In 2013 he became the second Native American actor inducted into the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum of Great Western Performers. (The first Native American inductee was Jay Silverheels.) Western film credits include *The Only Good Indian* (2009), *Hostiles* (2017), and *Badland* (2019).

John Sturges

Sturges started his movie career in 1932 as a film editor. During WWII, he served with the US Army Signal Corps but later transferred to the Air Corps. Eventually he edited and/or directed 37 training films and five documentaries for the military. Sturges served in Africa, Italy, Corsica, and Britain. After the war he garnered accolades for *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955), which combined elements from both film noir and the western. Sturges returned to the traditional western genre with popular films such as *Backlash* (1956), *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), *The Law and Jake Wade* (1958), *Last Train from Gun Hill* (1959), and another career highlight, *The Magnificent Seven* (1960).

Buck Taylor

Western enthusiast Buck Taylor served for two years in the US Navy before beginning his acting career. He made his mark as a recurring character on the series *Gunsmoke*. Subsequently Taylor appeared in numerous western television shows and in the films *Cattle Annie and Little Britches* (1980), *Tombstone* (1993), *Cowboys & Aliens* (2011), *Hell or High Water*

(2016), and other westerns. Between 2018 and 2022 he was a cast member of the television series *Yellowstone*. Taylor tours the US promoting awareness for organizations that support police officers, military veterans, and men and women currently deployed in the defense forces.

Spencer Tracy

Tracy and classmate Pat O'Brien quit school together and joined the US Navy in 1914. Stationed at the Norfolk Navy Yard for the duration of WWI, Tracy never saw combat duty. He and O'Brien moved to New York to study acting. After appearing on stage, Tracy was discovered by director John Ford and received his first film role in 1930. In 1955 he starred as a military veteran in John Sturges's *Bad Day at Black Rock*.

Lee Van Cleef

Van Cleef was a sailor in the US Navy from 1942 to 1946. During WWII he served aboard minesweepers and submarine chasers. In his film debut, Van Cleef appears in the pre-title solo shots that open *High Noon* (1952). In 1962 he appeared alongside James Stewart and John Wayne in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. Van Cleef subsequently appeared in numerous western television series and worked alongside Clint Eastwood in films directed by Sergio Leone, including *For a Few Dollars More* (1965) and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966). In 1967 he achieved top billing for the first time with his bad guy persona in *Death Rides a Horse*.

Clint Walker

In 1944 Walker quit high school and joined the US Merchant Marine. Though acting was not a career goal, service in uniform prompted him to leave his native Arkansas and indirectly led him to Hollywood. After the war Walker roamed the country to take a variety of jobs, including as a security officer at a Las Vegas hotel where Hollywood luminaries often stayed. There he was introduced to Cecil B. DeMille, who encouraged Walker to audition for film roles. DeMille gave him his first acting job with a small part in *The Ten Commandments* (1956). Even before the film was released, Warner Bros. became aware of Walker's potential and cast him as Cheyenne Brodie in *Cheyenne*, only the second series in a craze for adult television westerns that would dominate home entertainment in the 1950s and early 1960s. (The first adult western series, *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp*, had appeared two weeks earlier.) *Cheyenne* aired for seven years, from 1955 to 1962. Walker's acting career encompassed military roles and westerns. He starred alongside Brian Keith in *Fort Dobbs* (1958). Other western film credits include *Yellowstone Kelly* (1959), *The Night of the Grizzly* (1966) and *Baker's Hawk* (1976).

Dennis Weaver

During WWII Weaver served as a fighter pilot in the US Navy. After the war he sought to join the US Olympic decathlon team but failed to qualify. Eventually Weaver tried his hand at acting. From 1955 to 1975 he co-starred with James Arness in *GunsSmoke*. At the time, *GunsSmoke* was the longest-running US television series. Weaver appeared alongside James Garner and Sidney Poitier in the western *Duel at Diablo* (1966) and was later known for his role as a Western lawman in the popular television series *McCloud* (1970-1977).

Floyd “Red Crow” Westerman

After his graduation from college, Native American activist Westerman joined the US Marines and served for two years. He subsequently embarked on a successful singing career. Beginning with *Renegades* (1989), Westerman established himself as an actor. He starred primarily as Native American characters on television and in movies. In 1990 he appeared in Kevin Costner’s *Dances with Wolves*.

Gene Wilder

While serving in the US Army from 1956 to 1958, Wilder was assigned as a medic to the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology at Valley Forge General Hospital in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. He helped treat psychiatric patients. After becoming an actor in the early 1960s, Wilder steadily gained professional stature, eventually writing and directing films. His western credits include starring roles in Mel Brooks’s *Blazing Saddles* (1974) and in Robert Aldrich’s *The Frisco Kid* (1979).

William Wyler

Westerns such as *Phantom Outlaw* (1927) were a prominent part of Wyler’s directorial projects during the silent era. After the transition to sound, he continued that interest in 1940 by directing Gary Cooper in *The Westerner*. As a major in the US Army Air Corps during WWII, Wyler directed three military documentaries. After the war he won an Academy Award for best director on *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), a story about three veterans returning from WWII. Subsequent films included military and frontier narratives. His western *The Big Country* (1958) was President Dwight Eisenhower’s favorite movie.

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