

# Bridge with the Duke

By Pietro Campanile

People called him Duke, a nickname that stuck to him since his childhood from a dog he used to dote on, and he was every bit the giant off screen he was on. Everything about him, his stature, his style, his convictions conveyed enduring strength and no one who observed him take over the set with his personality and his captivating smile could doubt that his strength was real. Yet there was more: John Wayne loved playing bridge, there were periods when he was absolutely

*John Wayne (1907-1979) the movie legend who came to be known to the general public as "the Duke"*



crazy about it and would try and arrange a game whenever the chance came up, often in the breaks between shooting the movie on the set.

I guess that once he found out that his parents had decided to christen him Marion Morrison, the little boy must have got so frightened by his girlish name that he had to spend the rest of his life proving to be "muy macho"!

His family moved to California and California meant Los Angeles and Los Angeles meant Hollywood. A young Marion Morrison soon started hanging around the movie sets trying to get some easy money doing minor roles and got his first job as a prop man in exchange for football tickets. He was cast in his first leading role in 1929 in the movie *The Big Trail*. After nearly ten years of appearing in small western and action films, during

which time he took the name of John Wayne, he shot to fame almost overnight when John Ford cast him in the lead role of *Stagecoach*. He never looked back: among some of his more memorable films are *Fort Apache*, *Rio Grande*, *Rio Bravo*, and *The Alamo*. He won an Academy Award in 1969 for best actor for his portrayal of Rooster Cogburn in *True Grit*. When asked if he did not feel limited as an actor for always taking on roles of the tough, likeable guy, he answered with his

crooked smile: "Forget the characters, I have been playing John Wayne in every movie I have made and so far it has worked just fine."

The Duke was true to his image even at the bridge table. Here is a deal from a high-stake rubber bridge game:

Dealer East – All Vulnerable

♠ A	N	♠ KJ9
♥ 10874	W	♥ QJ
♦ J9652	E	♦ KQ83
♣ 1087	S	♣ Q652
♠ 1087654		♠ 1087654
♥ 93		♥ 93
♦ 107		♦ 107
♣ A43		♣ A43

West	North	East	South
			Wayne
		1♦	Pass
Pass	Dbl	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Wayne took in dummy the ♦6 lead with his ♦A and immediately played the ♠Q!!

East naturally covered with the ♠K and cannot have been too pleased when West had to play his ♠A.

After having shot those two big Indians with the same bullet, the Duke was off to a good start but there was still a lot of riding to do.

West returned a diamond to East's ♦Q and, in order to cut down on possible ruffs in dummy, he continued with the ♠J and a spade. Wayne got to dummy with the ♥A, cashed his ♥K and noted the fall of the ♥QJ from East.

Time to round up the wagons, light a fire and do some thinking: if East was simply monkeying around with ♥QJ10 and the hearts were 3-3, then the contract was in the bag. Otherwise he would need not to lose a club trick. Where was the ♣Q? East had so far shown ♠KJ, ♥QJ and probably the ♦KQ since West would have cashed the ♦K himself instead of playing a diamond when he took the lead with the ♠A. That makes 12 points, enough for an opening. However West, who had at least four diamonds, had passed over the double and would probably not have done that if he had been dealt the ♣Q as well as the singleton ♠A and the ♦J. Showtime: the Duke backed his judgment and played the ♣J from dummy! East covered with his ♣Q, taken in hand with the ♣A and after a successful impasse to West's ♣10 the contract was made in spectacular fashion. After such a hand one could almost imagine the Duke looking up with relief at the red cliffs of the Canyon profiled against the clear blue Colorado sky and slowly putting back in the holster his smoking gun.