

## ACTRESS MAUREEN O'HARA

“ I love many flowers but in particular rhododendrons, camellias and daturas. I love gardens but my career was so demanding, it left little time for gardening in my life. My love for gardens, however, was my first inspiration to be an actress. Back in Dublin when I was six or seven, my sister Peg and I would sit in the back garden on a cement pathway where the sun always shone. I would declare that I was going to be the most famous actress in the world and when the world falls down on its feet and accepts me, I'll then retire in all my glory. Other times I would go to the garden and talk to the flowers and then I'd pretend I was a flower, talking back to myself.

Being born and raised here, I was placed in a veritable panorama of the beauty of nature — the green, the flowers and the sea. I loved them all and loved walking in the woods and by the ocean. One can't be born and raised in Ireland without a glowing concept of nature and its beauty. Since I made several western films, as well as desert flicks, the locations could be challenging with heat and cold. Likewise the weather could indeed disrupt filming. There is a stretch of desert near Los Angeles jokingly called 'The Hollywood Sahara' in old Hollywood. They also made their own weather such as bringing in huge fans to create a desert dust storm.

In *The Quiet Man*, the scene in the cemetery was done in a Hollywood sound stage so the waterworks could simulate a controlled weather situation. Rio Grande was filmed in Moab, Utah, on the desert and it was hot and uncomfortable. Trenches were dug that sheltered the cast and covered with a tarpaulin where they huddled until it was time for them to enter a scene. Making a movie was not for sissies, that's for sure. You had to be tough — not complain and get the job done.

John Ford was a stickler for detail and in *The Quiet Man* — during the horse race scene — I was to retrieve a straw bonnet from a stake and instead of placing the wind machine in front of me, he placed



it behind me so that strands of hair were slashing my eyes which made me blink. Ford wasn't happy with this and I blasted back at him: "What would a bald-headed old coot like you know about hair lashing across his eyes?" Everyone on the set remained frozen, waiting for Ford to erupt in anger over my retort. After a period of tense silence, Ford laughed and we went on with the filming.

I live in West Cork. My husband, Charlie Blair, picked a perfect location in the scenic village of Glengarriff because it was situated on a bay with a pier and would allow him to fly there and land his seaplane by the dock. We both fell in love with the area — the quaint village with parks, restaurants and just a plethora of green, trees and flowers. It made the perfect summer home and get-away for us both. I can look out of my bedroom window and watch the sun rise and set on the beautiful bay before me and this remains a haven of inspiration for precious memories of my entire life. ”

— in conversation with Yvonne Gordon

*Maureen FitzSimons was born in Ranelagh, Dublin, in 1920. She trained at the Abbey Theatre and she made her first film, Jamaica Inn, at age 18, when she changed her name to the shorter O'Hara. She went on to star in a string of box-office classics including The Hunchback Of Notre Dame, Miracle On 34th Street, How Green Was My Valley and The Quiet Man, bonding with directors such as John Ford and leading men such as John Wayne. She also sang on television variety shows and in a Broadway musical.*

*Maureen has a daughter and a grandson and lives in Glengarriff, Co. Cork. She has homes in the Virgin Islands, New York and Los Angeles. She has won many awards, has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and has been honoured by the Irish Film Institute with the Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2004, her memoirs 'Tis Herself were published. The Maureen O'Hara Foundation, which will house Hollywood memorabilia and train film stars and movie directors, will open in 2013.*