

## Fay Wray

The beauty who tamed our hearts ~ Sept. 15, 1907-2004

### It's Our History, Our Country

BY RONALD WOLF



Fay Wray (Vina Fay Wray) was a Canadian-American actress. Through an acting career that spanned 57 years, Wray attained international stardom as an actress in horror film roles, leading to many considering her as the first scream queen.

Wray was born on a ranch near Cardston, Alta., to Elvina Marguerite Jones, who was from Salt Lake City, and Joseph Heber Wray, who was from Kingston upon Hull, England.

She was one of six children. Her family returned to the United States a few years after she was born; they moved to Salt Lake City in 1912 and moved to Lark, Utah in 1914.

In 1919, they moved to Salt Lake City again, before moving to Hollywood, Calif., where Fay attended Hollywood High School. In 1923, Wray appeared in her first film at the age of 16, landing a role in a short historical film sponsored by a local newspaper.

In the 1920s, Wray landed a

major role in the silent films such as *The Coast Patrol* (1925), as well as uncredited bit parts at the Hal Roach Studios.

In 1926, American film association the Western Association of Motion Picture Advertisers selected Wray as one of the "WAMPAS Baby Stars", a group of women who they believed to be on the threshold of movie stardom. She was currently under contract to Universal Studios, mostly co-starring in low budget westerns opposite Buck Jones.

The following year in 1927, Wray was signed to a contract with Paramount Pictures. In 1928, director Erich von Stroheim cast Wray as the main female lead in his film *The Wedding March*, released under Paramount, a film noted for its high budget and production values. It was a financial failure, but it gave Wray her first lead role.

Wray stayed with Paramount to make more than a dozen

more films, staying there to make the transition from silent films to talkie films.

The *Most Dangerous Game* was followed by Wray's most memorable film, *King Kong*. According to Wray, Jean Harlow had been RKO's original choice, but because MGM put Harlow under exclusive contract during the pre-production phase of the film, she became unavailable and Wray was approached by director Merian C. Cooper to play the role of Ann Darrow, the blonde captive of King Kong.

Wray was paid \$10,000 to play the role. Wray wore a blonde wig over her naturally dark hair. The film was a commercial success. Wray was reportedly proud that the film saved RKO from bankruptcy. Wray's role would become the one with which she would be most associated.

Wray was married three times to the writers: John Monk Saunders and Robert Riskin and to the neurosurgeon Dr. Sanford Rothenberg. She had three children: Susan Saunders, Victoria Riskin, and Robert Riskin Jr.

After the success of *King Kong*, Wray appeared in more minor film roles and on television, leading to her final role in 1980.

In 1988, her autobiography, *On the Other Hand*, was published. In her later years, she also visited the Empire State Building frequently, once visiting in 1991 as a guest of honour at the building's 60th anniversary, and also in May 2004, which was among her last public appearances.

In 2004, Wray was approached by director Peter Jackson to appear in a small cameo for the 2005 remake of *King Kong*.

Before filming of the remake commenced, however, Wray died in her sleep of natural causes on Aug. 8, 2004, in her Manhattan apartment. She was 96 years old, only 38 days

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## 'Mighty Drunks' Take Second at Tri Sport

BY CHARRLY MAYNARD

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The results are in for the Marathon Tri Sport competition. This year 7 men's and 7 women's teams signed up for a chance to take on other competitors in ball hockey, softball and golf. Ladies division winners were 'The Wee Naz Tees' and second place finish went to 'The Wii Not Fit' both teams are from Marathon. This year's winners in the men's division were 'Eddie and the Cruisers' of Marathon and second went to the 'Mighty Drunks'. All of the members of the 'Mighty Drunks' were from or have lived in Manitowadge. Members include, Scott Martin, Rob MacKinnon, Bronson Keough, Toby Mattson, Drake Dubreuil Neil and Eric Esarte, Clint Gallon, Trevor Patterson, Brent Campbell and Trevor Puumala.

shy of her 97th birthday. Wray was buried at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery in Hollywood, Calif.

Two days after her death, the lights of the Empire State Building were extinguished for 15 minutes in her memory.

In May 2006, Wray became one of the first four entertainers to ever be honoured by Canada Post by being featured on a postage stamp.

Wray was truly the beauty who tamed the beast, and our hearts. After all, Wray was a Canadian beauty.

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