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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

92-year old World War II Veteran Honored for Service to Community
Orange County Resident Decorated with O'Connor Mortuary Heart & Soul Award

LAGUNA WOODS, Calif. – March 14, 2011 – Highly decorated for service to his country during World War II and the Korean War, Ward Payne has dedicated much of his life to protecting the freedoms of others. But even upon returning to civilian life, he still maintained his own personal legacy of service – this time by donating relentlessly to Kiwanis Club and American Legion where he has volunteered for nearly four decades. For his lifetime of steadfast commitment to community involvement, Payne has been announced as the March 2011 winner of the O'Connor Mortuary Heart & Soul Award.

Created by [O'Connor Mortuary](#), the Heart & Soul Awards program is designed to recognize Orange County citizens for their passion for life and their dedication to making a difference, whether they possess a lifetime of endeavors or for a one-time inspirational achievement. One Orange County citizen is presented the award each month.

“I’m honored to thank Ward and recognize him for his contributions,” said Neil O’Connor, President and CEO of O’Connor Mortuary. “While he has earned distinguished martial honors – including Silver and Bronze Stars, a Purple Heart and even a Korean Medal of Honor – it is O’Connor Mortuary’s privilege to salute him and humbly bestow civilian recognition from the O’Connor family on someone who has done so much for our community and our country.”

Payne was drawn to Kiwanis Club and American Legion out of admiration for their patriotic ideals, and he came to be an integral cog in both local organizations. He says he has long taken a special interest in Boy State, a leadership and citizenship program that fosters good government, and has concentrated his efforts on helping high school students earn scholarships and compete in mock-government scenarios in Sacramento. Even in his nineties, he still reviews Boy State applications. In addition to his volunteer work at Kiwanis Club and American Legion, Payne has been Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Mayflower Congregational Church for more than 20 years.

“Ward is an outstanding citizen, serving both our country in war and our country in peace,” said Don McIntosh, a fellow volunteer who has worked with Payne at American Legion Post 257 on Boy State and other veteran affairs.

As a winner of the Heart & Soul Award, O'Connor Mortuary will present Payne with an official plaque, and a donation will be made in his name to Saddleback Memorial Hospital.

ABOUT THE HEART & SOUL AWARDS

Created by O'Connor Mortuary in February 2010, the Heart & Soul Award honors Orange County individuals each month for their exemplary and inspiring roles within the community. In celebrating the human spirit, the award recognizes OC residents for pouring their heart and soul into making a difference, whether for a life filled with dedicated endeavors or for a one-time inspirational achievement. One recipient is honored each month with an award plaque, a one-time donation to a local nonprofit organization in his/her name and recognition at a quarterly award reception. To nominate an outstanding Orange County citizen, email Patricia Kolstad at patricia@oconnormortuary.com.

ABOUT O'CONNOR MORTUARY

[O'Connor Mortuary](#) is the oldest family owned and operated mortuary in California. With offices in Laguna Hills, San Juan Capistrano and Irvine, Calif., it is the leading "stand alone" mortuary in Orange County. Founded in 1898 by Patrick J. O'Connor, and succeeded by his son Joseph and grandson Joseph Jr., the company today is managed by fourth generation CEO, Neil P. O'Connor and his two brother-in-laws, Joseph Fitzgerald, CFO and Charles Ricciardi, COO; as well as Jeff Turner, CAO. O'Connor Mortuary is recognized throughout Southern California for its longstanding tradition of caring, personalized service, honesty and integrity. The multi-generational company is active in numerous local charitable organizations and was honored by the California Historical Society for more than 100 years of continuous care and service to Southern California families. In addition, the company was honored in 2005 by the Family Owned Business Council for longevity and has received the Leatherby Award for Ethics in America.

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