



PRESIDENT'S AWARD
for impact on media

Anderson Cooper's REMARKABLE JOURNEY

BY JILL STEWART

THERE ARE NO gray areas as far as the fans and the non-fans of CNN's globe-trotting anchor-investigator Anderson Cooper are concerned, a fact that has inspired a passionate Tweeter community of 550,000 who follow his daily alerts.

And the intriguing thing about this 43-year-old TV news superstar, and recipient of the Los Angeles Press Club's 2010 President's Award, is that Cooper wouldn't have it any other way.

He's tough, as viewers have seen from his extensive and widely hailed on-scene coverage from the most dangerous places on earth.

He's artful, as shown by his Letters to the President series on Twitter where he recently suggested to Barack Obama "Three Critical Steps to Get Out of the Goo." Since the launch of *Anderson Cooper 360°*, Cooper has covered nearly all major news events

around the world—most recently covering the BP oil spill in the gulf.

During most of 2007 and 2008, Cooper traveled around the world for *Planet in Peril*, a high definition documentary about issues threatening the planet, its inhabitants and its natural resources.

In January, Cooper was the first major news anchor to arrive in Haiti, and he soon found him-





self making headlines when he got caught up in the chaos surrounding a store looting and acted quickly to scoop up and protect a bleeding boy who'd been struck by a rock.

He later summed up a major tenet of his journalism philosophy, writing on his blog: "On a story like this you need to see it with your own eyes."

He thrilled his *Anderson Cooper 360°* audience in April, when he departed from his usual hard-news reporting style to make a personal comment on threats by a radical Muslim group against the creators of *South Park* for poking fun at the prohibition against creating imagery of Muhammad. Clearly edging into commentary in support of the nation's First Amendment, he told his AC 360° audience: "The notion that some radical Islamic group in America would make a threat, even a veiled one, against two men's lives ... is chilling. And for the people making this threat, that is precisely the point—to chill discussion, to chill debate."

In late May, he appeared on-air wearing glasses for the first time—stylish, squarish and black —

setting off scores of headlines and attracting hundreds of comments on Huffington Post, where an online poll quickly determined that 70.94 percent of readers feel he should "leave them" while 29.06 percent said they "love them."

Educated at Yale, and the son of famed de-

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signer Gloria Vanderbilt, Cooper has never played it safe or relied on his privileged background. He went into journalism partly as a way of coping with his brother's suicide many years ago, and as a young man lived in Vietnam for a year. He ultimately made his way to ABC News, where he reported extensively from Africa on the Rwandan genocide and rose to a co-anchor position.

He moved to CNN in 2001 shortly after 9/11,

PRESIDENT'S AWARD **ANDERSON COOPER**



and has since won dozens of awards and accolades. In addition to reporting for CNN, Cooper also provides reports for CBS's *60 Minutes*.

Dispatches from the Edge, Cooper's memoirs about covering the South Asia tsunami, Hurricane Katrina and other news events, recently topped the New York Times Best Sellers List and other best seller charts.

Despite all this, he remains a highly private man, who has been quoted as saying, "I think you have to be yourself, and you have to be real and you have to admit what you don't know, and talk about what you do know."

And that—along with his bold and hands-on style—sums up Anderson Cooper perfectly. 🐉

The Los Angeles Press Club thanks Sean Penn for appearing tonight to help honor CNN's Anderson Cooper for his outstanding coverage of the tragedy in Haiti.

WHEN TWO-TIME Oscar-winning actor Sean Penn presents CNN's Anderson Cooper with the Los Angeles Press Club's President's Award for his fearless coverage of places like earthquake-torn Haiti, the actor will be taking a short break from his tireless efforts to provide relief to the island's beleaguered survivors.

Penn was one of the first humanitarians to arrive following the disaster, placing himself in the midst of the devastation by living in a tent among the Haitian people. Penn has assumed responsibility as the designated manager of one of the largest camps for Port-au-Prince survivors and is the co-founder of the J/P Haitian Relief Organization (J/P HRO). J/P HRO provides long term life-changing support so that the people of Haiti can become a self-sustaining and thriving community.

Penn tells historian Douglas Brinkley in this month's *Vanity Fair*, "There is no exit for me until there is more life than death.... There is a strength of character in the people who have, by and large, never experienced comfort. That's exactly the character that our Main Street culture lacks and needs in the United States. In other words, we need Haiti." He calls his work there "a reciprocal thing.... They have returned to me something I had lost—my humility."

Penn has been described as a dynamic performer capable of intensely moving work. In 2003 he won his first Oscar for Best Actor, playing an anguished father seeking revenge for his daughter's murder in the gut-wrenching film, *Mystic River*. He had been nominated three times previously for *Dead Man Walking*, *Sweet and Lowdown* and *I Am Sam*.

He picked up his second Oscar in 2008 for his portrayal of Harvey Milk, the slain San Francisco gay rights activist. "You commie, homo-loving, sons of guns," a tongue-in-cheek Penn told his peers as he collected his award. "I did not expect this and...I know how hard I make it to appreciate me." When we see what he has done in Haiti, it isn't hard at all.

In 2007, Penn wrote and directed the critically acclaimed *Into the Wild*. The film made both the AFI and National Film Board lists for the top 10 films of the year.

California-born Penn is the second son of actress Eileen Ryan and director Leo Penn. He is a graduate of Santa Monica High School and the proud father of 2 children. 🐉



Sean Penn helps load rice donated by the Jenkins-Penn Haitian Relief Organization and the Salvation Army. Food, water and medical supplies were delivered by members of the Joint Forces Special Operations Component Command and the HM-14 crew, who collaborated with the J/P HRO to deliver the supplies to Cap-Haitien using a MH-53E Sea Dragon.

U.S. Air Force photo: 2nd Lt. Victoria Brayton/Released