HERE 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 jour-
nalism 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 pro-
hibition 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 chill-
ing. 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 hun-
dreds 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-

“On a story like this you need to see it
with your own eyes.”

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,
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.