

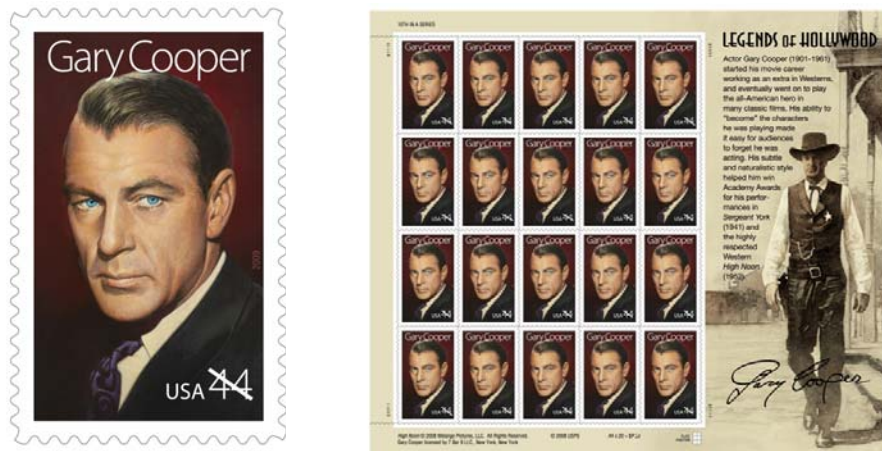
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 10, 2009

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Release 09-76



Gary Cooper Commemorated on Stamp

Legend becomes 15th Inductee into Legends of Hollywood Series

High-resolution images of the stamp and are available for media use only by emailing mark.r.saunders@usps.gov.

LOS ANGELES — Iconic actor Gary Cooper returned to a “stamping ovation” today as the 15th inductee into the *Legends of Hollywood* collectible stamp series. The dedication ceremony took center stage in Los Angeles at the Autry National Center of the American West where the Oscar® for his role in *High Noon* and Cooper movie posters were on display. All 40 million 44-cent First-Class stamps are available nationwide today.

A cowboy from Helena, MT, Cooper started in the movies by falling off horses during Hollywood’s “Golden Age.” For decades, he was the all-American hero whose believable performances and strong, silent appeal brought him a lifetime of fame.

Unknown to many, Cooper and Ernest Hemingway were close friends who shared a love for the outdoors. They met while skiing in Sun Valley, ID, and hunted and fished together for more than 20 years. Hemingway had Cooper in mind when writing *A Farewell to Arms* to which Cooper later played the lead role when the book was made into a movie. Hemingway was honored on a stamp in 1989 as the 7th inductee into the *Literary Arts series*.

“Using the skills he acquired on that Montana ranch,” said U.S. Postal Service Board of Governor member Alan C. Kessler in dedicating the stamp. “Cooper entered the film industry as an extra and stunt double. He eventually traded the stars from Big Sky Country to one on the Hollywood walk of fame as he rode effortlessly into the starring roles of movies like *High Noon*, *The Plainsman* and *The Westerner*.”

Art director Phil Jordan of Falls Church, VA, designed the Gary Cooper stamp using a portrait by artist Kazuhiko Sano of Mill Valley, CA. The image is based on a black-and-white circa 1940 George Hurrell photograph. The artwork surrounding the stamps is based on a still from Cooper’s Academy Award®-winning role as the courageous Marshal Will Kane in *High Noon* (1952).

Joining Kessler in dedicating the stamp was Cooper's daughter Maria Cooper Janis, film critic and historian Leonard Maltin, Gary Cooper Scholarship recipient Sonya Oberly and Autry National Center President and CEO John Gray.

"My father would have been very flattered by this honor, but he was always very self deprecating," said Cooper's daughter. "If he were here today, he'd probably say, 'See, look what you get for falling off a horse.'"

When reminiscing about his life Janis said there were "a lot of surface differences in his relationship to Hemingway, but underneath they were somewhat kindred spirits. My father was the only person who could drop in unannounced and be greeted with great delight and open arms. Papa Hemingway often referred to him as the 'True Gen,' for true gentleman. Both men respected each other's silences — there was no need to fill it with constant chatter."

Janis added that her father had a strong commitment to nature and Native Americans.

"If he were to build a home today it would definitely be green — especially solar energy — as he had a strong sense of conservation." She recently created the Gary Cooper Scholarship that is awarded to Native American students enrolled in the study of film and television at the University of Southern California.

"The Gary Cooper Scholarship is unique in that it's specifically designated for Native American students that study in film at USC," said Scholarship recipient Sonya Oberly, an Osage and Comanche nation descendant and member of the Nez Perce Tribe. "I thought it was cool that I received a cowboy's scholarship, especially since I'll be making documentaries about Native Americans."

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An independent federal agency, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that reaches every address in the nation, 149 million residences, businesses and Post Office Boxes, six days a week. It has 34,000 retail locations and relies on the sale of postage, products and services, not tax dollars, to pay for operating expenses. Named the Most Trusted Government Agency five consecutive years by the Ponemon Institute, the Postal Service has annual revenue of \$75 billion and delivers nearly half the world's mail. To learn about the history of the Postal Service visit the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum: www.postalmuseum.si.edu.

Gary Cooper Background

Frank James Cooper was born on May 7, 1901, in Helena, MT, and spent his early years on his family's ranch. For a few years in England he went to Dunstable School and then returned to the United States to attend high school in Helena. A practical joker, he was expelled for placing Limburger cheese on a radiator during a cold Montana winter. He later graduated from Gallatin County High School in Bozeman and attended Grinnell College in Iowa. He tried to start a career as a political cartoonist, but the endeavor provided little in the way of regular income. While Cooper was looking for steady work, he ran into two old friends who suggested he try being an extra in Western films. The job paid \$10 a day to fall off a horse, and to Cooper this seemed like a great deal of money.

Cooper worked as an extra in several films before he found a casting agent who persuaded him to adopt the name Gary (the agent's hometown was Gary, Indiana). Hollywood, Cooper was told, already had two Frank Coopers. He was cast in a small part in *The Winning of Barbara Worth* (1926). When one of the starring actors backed out at the last minute, the director gave the role of Abe Lee to Cooper. Though inexperienced as a lead, Cooper gave a convincing performance that was praised by moviegoers and critics. Soon after, Cooper signed a contract with Paramount Pictures.

From then on, Cooper's career progressed quickly. His first starring role came just a year later in *Arizona Bound* (1927), and was followed by a brief but memorable part in the Academy Award®-winning *Wings* (1927). Talkies were beginning to replace silent films around this time, and while some actors had difficulty making the transition, Gary Cooper did it seamlessly. His first all-talking movie, *The Virginian* (1929), was a box office hit.

Although Cooper has been called a natural-born actor, he did not consider himself "an easy study." He immersed himself in his characters until he seemed to become them, so much so that people often forgot he was acting. He recognized the camera's ability to pick up small movements and subtle expressions.

By underacting, Cooper actually stole the spotlight.

Over the course of his career, Cooper played opposite several leading ladies, including Clara Bow, Fay Wray, Ingrid Bergman, Audrey Hepburn and Grace Kelly. His character was usually a hero, whether a cowboy, captain, doctor, or soldier. Cooper was tall and handsome — “a man’s man...but a woman’s idol,” said director Frank Capra, who worked with him on *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936) and *Meet John Doe* (1941). Cooper’s starring role in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943) pleased his friend Ernest Hemingway, who had him in mind while writing the novel on which the film is based.

In the 1940s, Cooper made a number of notable biographical films. His portrayal of U.S. Army Sergeant Alvin York, in *Sergeant York* (1941), won him an Academy Award®. In 1942, Cooper gave another memorable performance, as baseball slugger Lou Gehrig in *The Pride of the Yankees*. He reportedly liked making Westerns, because they reminded him of his early days on the ranch. His performance as Marshal Will Kane in the classic *High Noon* (1952) is considered by many to be his finest and won him his second Oscar.

Though he often kept to himself, Cooper was liked and respected in Hollywood, and actors and directors frequently sought him out for projects. All told, Cooper made more than 100 movies, including such other notable films as *Morocco* (1930), *A Farewell to Arms* (1932), and *Beau Geste* (1939). Gary Cooper died of cancer on May 13, 1961, just after his 60th birthday.

First-Day-of-Issue Postmarks

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at their local Post Office, at The Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop, or by calling 800-STAMP-24. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes to themselves or others, and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

The Gary Cooper Stamp
7001 South Central, Room 338
Los Angeles, CA 90052-9998

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by Nov. 11, 2009.

First-Day Covers

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Information Fulfillment
Dept. 6270
U.S. Postal Service
PO Box 219014
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

Philatelic Products

There are six philatelic products available for this stamp issue:

- 463961, First-Day Cover, 82 cents.
- 463962, First-Day Cover Cancelled (Full Pane) \$11.30.
- 463965, Digital Color Postmark, \$1.50.
- 463984, Uncut Press Sheet, \$70.40.
- 463991, Ceremony Program, \$6.95.
- 463999, First-Day Cover Digital Color Postmark and Pane of 20, \$10.30.

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