

Peter Fonda accepts Cooper Spirit Award

By The Associated Press - 09/14/04

BOZEMAN (AP) - Peter Fonda accepted the Gary Cooper Spirit of Montana Award as part of the final night of the Hatch Audiovisual Arts Festival here.

The four-day festival concluded Sunday night with the award presentation to Fonda for his dedication to helping aspiring filmmakers.

Jeff Bridges said Fonda taught him to dream and to take risks, and to do movies that interest him, rather than falling into roles that fit a certain mold.

Bridges met Fonda in the office of an agent they shared when Fonda was trying to sell the idea of "Easy Rider." Bridges said that movie launched more than the careers of Fonda, Dennis Hopper and Jack Nicholson.

"It launched more than that. It launched an example, not that you can do drugs and operate a motorcycle... something more than that," Bridges said. "If you think it, you can do it."

Accepting the award, Fonda mentioned his Golden Globe awards and Academy Award nominations.

"But jeeppers, the Gary Cooper award, I knew him," Fonda said.

Cooper was born and raised in Montana. He was friends with Fonda's father Henry.

Hatch organizers said they named the award after Cooper because he has inspired young Montana artists for generations.

"That's what Hatch is all about," Penny Ronning, Hatch executive director, said. "It's about making dreams come true."

The closing ceremony also honored student filmmakers with awards for best editing, best screenplay, best cinematography and best direction.

Todd Jeffery won a \$25,000 scholarship and three awards for his film "Shooter."

The goal now is to continue with the festival annually and start a year-round program called Hatch labs that brings professionals to Montana to meet with students, Ronning said.

Information from: Bozeman Daily Chronicle, <http://www.gomontana.com>