

= Gary Cooper =

Gary Cooper ( born Frank James Cooper ; May 7 , 1901 ? May 13 , 1961 ) was an American film actor known for his natural , authentic , and understated acting style and screen performances . His career spanned thirty @-@ five years , from 1925 to 1960 , and included leading roles in eighty @-@ four feature films . He was a major movie star from the end of the silent film era through the end of the golden age of Classical Hollywood . His screen persona appealed strongly to both men and women , and his range of performances included roles in most major movie genres . Cooper 's ability to project his own personality onto the characters he played contributed to his appearing natural and authentic on screen . The screen persona he sustained throughout his career represented the ideal American hero .

Cooper began his career as a film extra and stunt rider and soon landed acting roles . After establishing himself as a Western hero in his early silent films , Cooper became a movie star in 1929 with his first sound picture , *The Virginian* . In the early 1930s , he expanded his heroic image to include more cautious characters in adventure films and dramas such as *A Farewell to Arms* ( 1932 ) and *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* ( 1935 ) . During the height of his career , Cooper portrayed a new type of hero ? a champion of the common man ? in films such as *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* ( 1936 ) , *Meet John Doe* ( 1941 ) , *Sergeant York* ( 1941 ) , *The Pride of the Yankees* ( 1942 ) , and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* ( 1943 ) . In the post @-@ war years , he portrayed more mature characters at odds with the world in films such as *The Fountainhead* ( 1949 ) and *High Noon* ( 1952 ) . In his final films , Cooper played non @-@ violent characters searching for redemption in films such as *Friendly Persuasion* ( 1956 ) and *Man of the West* ( 1958 ) .

He married New York debutante Veronica Balfe in 1933 , and the couple had one daughter . Their marriage was interrupted by a three @-@ year separation precipitated by Cooper 's love affair with Patricia Neal . Cooper received the Academy Award for Best Actor for his roles in *Sergeant York* and *High Noon* . He also received an Academy Honorary Award for his career achievements in 1961 . He was one of the top ten film personalities for twenty @-@ three consecutive years , and was one of the top money @-@ making stars for eighteen years . The American Film Institute ( AFI ) ranked Cooper eleventh on its list of the twenty five greatest male stars of classic Hollywood cinema .

= = Early life = =

Frank James Cooper was born on May 7 , 1901 , at 730 Eleventh Avenue in Helena , Montana to English immigrants Alice ( née Brazier , 1873 ? 1967 ) and Charles Henry Cooper ( 1865 ? 1946 ) . His father emigrated from Houghton Regis , Bedfordshire and became a prominent lawyer , rancher , and eventually a Montana Supreme Court justice . His mother emigrated from Gillingham , Kent and married Charles in Montana . In 1906 , Charles purchased the 600 @-@ acre ( 240 ha ) Seven @-@ Bar @-@ Nine cattle ranch about fifty miles ( eighty kilometers ) north of Helena near the town of Craig on the Missouri River . Frank and his older brother Arthur spent their summers there and learned to ride horses , hunt , and fish . In April 1908 , the Hauser Dam failed and flooded the Missouri River valley along portions of the Cooper property , but Cooper and his family were able to evacuate in time . Cooper attended Central Grade School in Helena .

In the summer of 1909 , Alice , wanting her sons to have an English education , accompanied them to England and enrolled them in Dunstable Grammar School in Bedfordshire , where Cooper was educated from 1910 to 1912 . At Dunstable , Cooper studied Latin and French , and took several courses in English history . While he managed to adapt to the discipline of an English school and learned the requisite social graces , he never adjusted to the rigid class structure and formal Eton collars he was forced to wear . After completing confirmation classes , Cooper was baptized into the Anglican Church on December 3 , 1911 , at the Church of All Saints in Houghton Regis . Cooper 's mother accompanied her sons back to the United States in August 1912 , and Cooper resumed his education at Johnson Grammar School in Helena .

At the age of fifteen , Cooper injured his hip in a car accident and returned to the Seven @-@ Bar @-@ Nine ranch to recuperate by horseback riding at the recommendation of his doctor . The

misguided therapy left him with his characteristic stiff , off @-@ balanced walk and slightly angled riding style . After attending Helena High School for two years , he left school in 1918 and returned to the family ranch to help raise their five hundred head of cattle and work full @-@ time as a cowboy . In 1919 , his father arranged for his son to complete his high school education at Gallatin County High School in Bozeman , Montana . His English teacher , Ida Davis , encouraged him to focus on academics , join the school 's debating team , and get involved in dramatics . His parents would later credit her for helping their son complete high school , and Cooper confirmed , " She was the woman partly responsible for me giving up cowboy @-@ ing and going to college . "

In 1920 , while still attending high school , Cooper took three art courses at Montana Agricultural College in Bozeman . His interest in art was inspired years earlier by the Western paintings of Charles Marion Russell and Frederic Remington . Cooper especially admired and studied Russell 's Lewis and Clark Meeting Indians at Ross ' Hole ( 1910 ) , which still hangs in the state capitol building in Helena . In 1922 , Cooper enrolled in Grinnell College in Iowa to continue his art education . Cooper did well academically in most of his courses , but was not accepted to the school 's drama club . His drawings and watercolors were exhibited throughout the dormitory , and he was named art editor for the college yearbook . During the summers of 1922 and 1923 , Cooper worked at Yellowstone National Park as a tour guide driving the yellow open @-@ top buses . Despite a promising first eighteen months at Grinnell , he left college suddenly in February 1924 , spent a month in Chicago looking for work as an artist , and then returned to Helena , where he sold editorial cartoons to the Independent , a local newspaper .

In the autumn of 1924 , Cooper 's father left the Montana Supreme Court bench and moved with his wife to Los Angeles to administer the estates of two relatives . At his father 's request , Cooper joined his parents in California on Thanksgiving Day , November 27 , 1924 . In the coming weeks , after working a series of unpromising jobs , Cooper met two friends from Montana , Jim Galeen and Jim Calloway , who were working as film extras and stunt riders in low @-@ budget Western films for the small movie studios on Poverty Row on Gower Street . They introduced him to another Montana cowboy , rodeo champion Jay " Slim " Talbot , who took him to see a casting director who offered him work . With the goal of saving enough money to pay for a professional art course , Cooper decided to try his hand at working as a film extra for five dollars a day , and as a stunt rider for twice that amount .

= = Career = =

= = = Silent films , 1925 ? 28 = = =

In early 1925 , Cooper began his film career working in silent pictures such as The Thundering Herd and Wild Horse Mesa with Jack Holt , Riders of the Purple Sage and The Lucky Horseshoe with Tom Mix , and The Trail Rider with Buck Jones . He worked for several Poverty Row studios , including Famous Players @-@ Lasky and Fox Film Corporation . While his skills as a horseman led to steady work in Westerns , Cooper found the stunt work " tough and cruel " , sometimes resulting in injury to the horses and riders . Hoping to move beyond the risky stunt work and obtain acting roles , Cooper paid for a screen test and hired casting director Nan Collins to work as his agent . Knowing that other actors were using the name " Frank Cooper " , Collins suggested he change his first name to " Gary " after her hometown of Gary , Indiana . Cooper liked the name immediately .

Cooper also found work in a variety of non @-@ Western films , appearing , for example , as a masked Cossack in The Eagle ( 1925 ) , as a Roman guard in Ben @-@ Hur ( 1925 ) , and as a flood survivor in The Johnstown Flood ( 1926 ) . Gradually , he began to land credited roles that offered him more screen time , in films such as Tricks ( 1925 ) , in which he played the film 's antagonist , and the short film Lightnin ' Wins ( 1926 ) . As a featured player , he began to attract the attention of major film studios . On June 1 , 1926 , Cooper signed a contract with Samuel Goldwyn Productions for fifty dollars a week .

Cooper 's first important film role was in The Winning of Barbara Worth ( 1926 ) with Ronald

Colman and Vilma Bánky . In the film , Cooper plays a young engineer , Abe Lee , who helps a rival suitor save the woman he loves and her town from an impending dam disaster . Cooper 's experience living among the Montana cowboys gave his performance an " instinctive authenticity " , according to biographer Jeffrey Meyers . The film premiered on October 14 and was a major success . Critics singled out Cooper as a " dynamic new personality " and future star . Goldwyn rushed to offer the actor a long @-@ term contract , but Cooper held out for a better deal ? finally signing a five @-@ year contract with Jesse L. Lasky at Paramount Pictures for \$ 175 a week . In 1927 , with help from established movie star Clara Bow , Cooper landed high @-@ profile roles in *Children of Divorce* and *Wings* , the latter being the first film to win an Academy Award for Best Picture . That year , Cooper also appeared in his first starring roles in *Arizona Bound* and *Nevada* ? both films directed by John Waters .

In 1928 , Paramount paired Cooper with a youthful Fay Wray in *The Legion of the Condemned* and *The First Kiss* ? advertising them as the studio 's " glorious young lovers " . Their on @-@ screen chemistry failed to generate much excitement with audiences . With each new film , Cooper 's acting skills improved and his popularity continued to grow , especially among female movie @-@ goers . During this time , he was earning as much as \$ 2 @,@ 750 per film and receiving a thousand fan letters a week . Looking to exploit Cooper 's growing audience appeal , the studio placed him opposite popular leading ladies such as Evelyn Brent in *Beau Sabreur* , Florence Vidor in *Doomsday* , and Esther Ralston in *Half a Bride* . That year , Cooper also made *Lilac Time* with Colleen Moore for First National Pictures , his first movie with synchronized music and sound effects . It became one of the most commercially successful films of 1928 .

= = = Hollywood stardom , 1929 ? 35 = = =

Cooper became a major movie star in 1929 with the release of his first sound picture , *The Virginian* , which was directed by Victor Fleming and co @-@ starred Mary Brian and Walter Huston . Based on the popular novel by Owen Wister , *The Virginian* was one of the first sound films to define the Western code of honor and helped establish many of the conventions of the Western movie genre that have lasted to the present day . According to biographer Jeffrey Meyers , the romantic image of the tall , handsome , and shy cowboy hero who embodied male freedom , courage , and honor was created in large part by Cooper in the film . Unlike some silent film actors who had trouble adapting to the new sound medium , Cooper transitioned naturally , with his " deep and clear " and " pleasantly drawling " voice , which was perfectly suited for the characters he portrayed on screen , also according to Meyers . Looking to capitalize on Cooper 's growing popularity , Paramount cast him in several Westerns and wartime dramas in 1930 , including *Only the Brave* , *The Texan* , *Seven Days ' Leave* , *A Man from Wyoming* , and *The Spoilers* .

One of the more important performances in Cooper 's early career was his portrayal of a sullen legionnaire in Josef von Sternberg 's 1930 film *Morocco* with Marlene Dietrich in her introduction to American audiences . During production , von Sternberg focused his energies on Dietrich and treated Cooper dismissively . Tensions came to a head after von Sternberg yelled directions at Cooper in German . The 6 @-@ foot @-@ 3 @-@ inch ( 191 cm ) actor approached the 5 @-@ foot @-@ 4 @-@ inch ( 163 cm ) director , physically picked him up by the collar and said , " If you expect to work in this country you 'd better get on to the language we use here . " Despite the tensions on the set , Cooper produced " one of his best performances " , according to Thornton Delehanty of the *New York Evening Post* . In 1931 , after returning to the Western genre in Zane Grey 's *Fighting Caravans* with French actress Lili Damita , Cooper appeared in the Dashiell Hammett crime film *City Streets* playing a westerner who gets involved with big @-@ city gangsters in order to save the woman he loves . Cooper concluded the year with appearances in two unsuccessful films : *I Take This Woman* with Carole Lombard , and *His Woman* with Claudette Colbert . The demands and pressures of making ten films in two years left Cooper exhausted and in poor health , suffering from anemia and jaundice . He had lost thirty pounds ( fourteen kilograms ) during that period , and felt lonely , isolated , and depressed by his sudden fame and wealth . In May 1931 , Cooper left Hollywood and sailed to Algiers and then Italy , where he lived for the next

year .

During his time abroad , Cooper stayed with the Countess Dorothy di Frasso at the Villa Madama in Rome , where she taught him about good food and vintage wines , how to read Italian and French menus , and how to socialize among Europe 's nobility and upper classes . After guiding him through the great art museums and galleries of Italy , she accompanied him on a ten @-@ week big @-@ game hunting safari on the slopes of Mount Kenya in East Africa , where he was credited with over sixty kills , including two lions , a rhinoceros , and various antelopes . His safari experience in Africa had a profound influence on Cooper and intensified his love of the wilderness . After returning to Europe , he and the countess set off on a Mediterranean cruise of the Italian and French Rivas . Rested and rejuvenated by his year @-@ long exile , a healthy Cooper returned to Hollywood in April 1932 and negotiated a new contract with Paramount for two films per year , a salary of \$ 4 @, @ 000 a week , and director and script approval .

In 1932 , after completing *Devil and the Deep* with Tallulah Bankhead to fulfill his old contract , Cooper appeared in *A Farewell to Arms* , the first film adaptation of an Ernest Hemingway novel . Co @-@ starring Helen Hayes , a leading New York theatre star and Academy Award winner , and Adolphe Menjou , the film presented Cooper with one of his most ambitious and challenging dramatic roles , playing an American ambulance driver wounded in Italy who falls in love with an English nurse during World War I. Critics praised his highly intense and emotional performance , and the film became one of the year 's most commercially successful pictures . In 1933 , after making *Today We Live* with Joan Crawford and *One Sunday Afternoon* with Fay Wray , Cooper appeared in the Ernst Lubitsch comedy film *Design for Living* , based on the successful Noël Coward play . Co @-@ starring Miriam Hopkins and Fredric March , the film received mixed reviews and did not do well at the box office . Cooper 's performance ? playing an American artist in Europe competing with his playwright friend for the affections of a beautiful woman ? was singled out for its versatility and revealed his genuine ability to do light comedy . Cooper changed his name legally to " Gary Cooper " in August 1933 .

In 1934 , Cooper was loaned out to MGM for the Civil War drama film *Operator 13* with Marion Davies , about a beautiful Union spy who falls in love with a Confederate soldier . Despite Richard Boleslawski 's imaginative direction and George J. Folsey 's lavish cinematography , the film did poorly at the box office . Back at Paramount , Cooper appeared in his first of seven films by director Henry Hathaway , *Now and Forever* , with Carole Lombard and Shirley Temple . In the film , he plays a confidence man who tries to sell his daughter to the relatives who raised her , but is eventually won over by the adorable girl . Impressed by Temple 's intelligence and charm , Cooper developed a close rapport with her , both on and off screen . The film was a box @-@ office success .

The following year , Cooper was loaned out to Samuel Goldwyn Productions to appear in King Vidor 's romance film *The Wedding Night* with Anna Sten , who was being groomed as " another Garbo " . In the film , Cooper plays an alcoholic novelist who retreats to his family 's New England farm where he meets and falls in love with a beautiful Polish neighbor . Cooper delivered a performance of surprising range and depth , according to biographer Larry Swindell . Despite receiving generally favorable reviews , the film was not popular with American audiences , who may have been offended by the film 's depiction of an extramarital affair and its tragic ending . That same year , Cooper appeared in two Henry Hathaway films : the melodrama *Peter Ibbetson* with Ann Harding , about a man caught up in a dream world created by his love for a childhood sweetheart , and the adventure film *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* , about a daring British officer and his men who defend their stronghold at Bengal against rebellious local tribes . While the former was more successful in Europe than in the United States , the latter was nominated for six Academy Awards and became one of Cooper 's most popular and successful adventure films . Hathaway had the highest respect for Cooper 's acting ability , calling him " the best actor of all of them " .

= = = American folk hero , 1936 ? 43 = = =

= = = = From Mr. Deeds to The Real Glory = = = =

The year 1936 marked an important turning point in Cooper's career. After making Frank Borzage's romantic comedy film *Desire* with Marlene Dietrich at Paramount ? delivering a performance considered by some contemporary critics as one of his finest ? Cooper returned to Poverty Row for the first time since his early silent film days to make Frank Capra's screwball comedy *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* with Jean Arthur for Columbia Pictures. In the film, Cooper plays the character of Longfellow Deeds, a quiet, innocent writer of greeting cards who inherits a fortune, leaves behind his idyllic life in Vermont, and travels to New York where he faces a world of corruption and deceit. Capra and screenwriter Robert Riskin were able to use Cooper's well @-@ established screen persona as the " quintessential American hero " ? a symbol of honesty, courage, and goodness ? to create a new type of " folk hero " for the common man. Commenting on Cooper's impact on the character and the film, Capra observed :

As soon as I thought of Gary Cooper, it wasn't possible to conceive anyone else in the role. He could not have been any closer to my idea of Longfellow Deeds, and as soon as he could think in terms of Cooper, Bob Riskin found it easier to develop the Deeds character in terms of dialogue. So it just had to be Cooper. Every line in his face spelled honesty. Our Mr. Deeds had to symbolize uncorruptibility, and in my mind Gary Cooper was that symbol.

Both *Desire* and *Mr. Deeds* opened in April 1936 to critical praise and were major box @-@ office successes. In his review in *The New York Times*, Frank Nugent wrote that Cooper was " proving himself one of the best light comedians in Hollywood ". For his performance in *Mr. Deeds*, Cooper received his first Academy Award nomination for Best Actor.

Cooper appeared in two other Paramount films in 1936. In Lewis Milestone's adventure film *The General Died at Dawn* with Madeleine Carroll, he plays an American soldier of fortune in China who helps the peasants defend themselves against the oppression of a cruel warlord. Written by playwright Clifford Odets, the film was a critical and commercial success. In Cecil B. DeMille's sprawling frontier epic *The Plainsman* ? his first of four films with the director ? Cooper portrays Wild Bill Hickok in a highly fictionalized version of the opening of the American western frontier. The film was an even greater box @-@ office hit than its predecessor, due in large part to Jean Arthur's definitive depiction of Calamity Jane and Cooper's inspired portrayal of Hickok as an enigmatic figure of " deepening mythic substance ". That year, Cooper appeared for the first time on the Motion Picture Herald exhibitor's poll of top ten film personalities, where he would remain for the next twenty @-@ three years.

In late 1936, while Paramount was preparing a new contract for Cooper that would raise his salary to \$ 8 @,@ 000 a week, Cooper signed a contract with Samuel Goldwyn for six films over six years with a minimum guarantee of \$ 150 @,@ 000 per picture. Paramount brought suit against Goldwyn and Cooper, and the court ruled that Cooper's new Goldwyn contract afforded the actor sufficient time to also honor his Paramount agreement. Cooper continued to make films with both studios, and by 1939 the United States Treasury reported that Cooper was the country's highest wage earner, at \$ 482 @,@ 819 ( equivalent to \$ 8 @.@ 21 million in 2015 ).

In contrast to his output the previous year, Cooper appeared in only one picture in 1937, Henry Hathaway's adventure film *Souls at Sea*. A critical and box @-@ office failure, Cooper referred to it as his " almost picture ", saying, " It was almost exciting, and almost interesting. And I was almost good. " In 1938, he appeared in Archie Mayo's biographical film *The Adventures of Marco Polo*. Plagued by production problems and a weak screenplay, the film became Goldwyn's biggest failure to that date, losing \$ 700 @,@ 000. During this period, Cooper turned down several important roles, including the role of Rhett Butler in *Gone with the Wind*. Cooper was producer David O. Selznick's first choice for the part. He made several overtures to the actor, but Cooper had doubts about the project, and did not feel suited to the role. Cooper later admitted, " It was one of the best roles ever offered in Hollywood ... But I said no. I didn't see myself as quite that dashing, and later, when I saw Clark Gable play the role to perfection, I knew I was right. "

Back at Paramount, Cooper returned to a more comfortable genre in Ernst Lubitsch's romantic comedy *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* ( 1938 ) with Claudette Colbert. In the film, Cooper plays a

wealthy American businessman in France who falls in love with an impoverished aristocrat's daughter and persuades her to become his eighth wife. Despite the clever screenplay by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder, and solid performances by Cooper and Colbert, audiences had trouble accepting Cooper in the role of a shallow philanderer. For many of his fans, Cooper had become "Mr. Deeds incarnate". In the fall of 1938, Cooper appeared in H. C. Potter's romantic comedy *The Cowboy and the Lady* with Merle Oberon, about a sweet @-@ natured rodeo cowboy who falls in love with the wealthy daughter of a presidential hopeful, believing her to be a poor, hard @-@ working lady's maid. The efforts of three directors and several eminent screenwriters could not salvage what could have been a fine vehicle for Cooper. While more successful than its predecessor, the film was Cooper's fourth consecutive box @-@ office failure.

In the next two years, Cooper was more discerning about the roles he accepted and made four successful large @-@ scale adventure and cowboy films. In William A. Wellman's adventure film *Beau Geste* (1939), he plays one of three daring English brothers who join the French Foreign Legion in the Sahara to fight local tribes. Filmed in the same Mojave Desert locations as the original 1926 version with Ronald Colman, *Beau Geste* provided Cooper with magnificent sets, exotic settings, high @-@ spirited action, and a role tailored to his personality and screen persona. This was the last film in Cooper's contract with Paramount. In Henry Hathaway's *The Real Glory* (1939), he plays a military doctor who accompanies a small group of American Army officers to the Philippines to help the Christian Filipinos defend themselves against Muslim radicals. Many film critics praised Cooper's performance, including author and film critic Graham Greene who recognized that he "never acted better".

== == From The Westerner to For Whom the Bell Tolls == == ==

Cooper returned to the Western genre in William Wyler's *The Westerner* (1940) with Walter Brennan and Doris Davenport, about a drifting cowboy who defends homesteaders against Roy Bean, a corrupt judge known as the "law west of the Pecos". Screenwriter Niven Busch relied on Cooper's extensive knowledge of Western history while working on the script. The film received positive reviews and did well at the box @-@ office, with reviewers praising the performances of the two lead actors. That same year, Cooper appeared in his first all @-@ Technicolor feature, Cecil B. DeMille's adventure film *North West Mounted Police* (1940). In the film, Cooper plays a Texas Ranger who pursues an outlaw into western Canada where he joins forces with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who are after the same man, a leader of the North @-@ West Rebellion. While not as popular with critics as its predecessor, the film was another box @-@ office success? the sixth @-@ highest grossing film of 1940.

The early 1940s were Cooper's prime years as an actor. In a relatively short period, he appeared in five critically successful and popular films that produced some of his finest performances. When Frank Capra offered him the lead role in *Meet John Doe* before Robert Riskin even developed the script, Cooper accepted his friend's offer, saying, "It's okay, Frank, I don't need a script." In the film, Cooper plays Long John Willoughby, a down @-@ and @-@ out bush @-@ league pitcher hired by a newspaper to pretend to be a man who promises to commit suicide on Christmas Eve to protest all the hypocrisy and corruption in the country. Considered by some critics to be Capra's best film at the time, *Meet John Doe* was received as a "national event" with Cooper appearing on the front page of *Time* magazine on March 3, 1941. In his review in the *New York Herald Tribune*, Howard Barnes called Cooper's performance a "splendid and utterly persuasive portrayal" and praised his "utterly realistic acting which comes through with such authority". Bosley Crowther, in *The New York Times*, wrote, "Gary Cooper, of course, is 'John Doe' to the life and in the whole? shy, bewildered, non @-@ aggressive, but a veritable tiger when aroused."

That same year, Cooper made two films with director and good friend Howard Hawks. In the biographical film *Sergeant York*, Cooper portrays war hero Alvin C. York, one of the most decorated American soldiers in World War I. The film chronicles York's early backwoods days in Tennessee, his religious conversion and subsequent piety, his stand as a conscientious objector,

and finally his heroic actions at the Battle of the Argonne Forest , which earned him the Medal of Honor . Initially , Cooper was nervous and uncertain about playing a living hero , so he traveled to Tennessee to visit York at his home , and the two quiet men established an immediate rapport and discovered they had much in common . Inspired by York 's encouragement , Cooper delivered a performance that Howard Barnes of the New York Herald Tribune called " one of extraordinary conviction and versatility " , and that Archer Winston of the New York Post called " one of his best " . After the film 's release , Cooper was awarded the Distinguished Citizenship Medal by the Veterans of Foreign Wars for his " powerful contribution to the promotion of patriotism and loyalty " . York admired Cooper 's performance and helped promote the film for Warner Bros. Sergeant York became the top @-@ grossing film of the year and was nominated for eleven Academy Awards . Accepting his first Academy Award for Best Actor from his friend James Stewart , Cooper said , " It was Sergeant Alvin York who won this award . Shucks , I 've been in the business sixteen years and sometimes dreamed I might get one of these . That 's all I can say ... Funny when I was dreaming I always made a better speech . "

Cooper concluded the year back at Goldwyn with Howard Hawks to make the romantic comedy Ball of Fire with Barbara Stanwyck . In the film , Cooper plays a shy linguistics professor who leads a team of seven scholars who are writing an encyclopedia . While researching slang , he meets Stanwyck 's flirtatious burlesque stripper Sugarpuss O 'Shea who blows the dust off their staid life of books . The screenplay by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder provided Cooper the opportunity to exercise the full range of his light comedy skills . In his review for the New York Herald Tribune , Howard Barnes wrote that Cooper handled the role with " great skill and comic emphasis " and that his performance was " utterly delightful " . Though small in scale , Ball of Fire was one of the top @-@ grossing films of the year ? Cooper 's fourth consecutive picture to make the top twenty .

Cooper 's only film appearance in 1942 was also his last under his Goldwyn contract . In Sam Wood 's biographical film The Pride of the Yankees , Cooper portrays baseball star Lou Gehrig who established a record with the New York Yankees for playing in 2 @,@ 130 consecutive games . Cooper was reluctant to play the seven @-@ time All @-@ Star , who only died the previous year from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis ( ALS ) ? now commonly called " Lou Gehrig 's disease " . Beyond the challenges of effectively portraying such a popular and nationally recognized figure , Cooper knew very little about baseball and was not left @-@ handed like Gehrig . After Gehrig 's widow visited the actor and expressed her desire that he portray her husband , Cooper accepted the role that covered a twenty @-@ year span of Gehrig 's life ? his early love of baseball , his rise to greatness , his loving marriage , and his struggle with illness , culminating in his farewell speech at Yankee Stadium on July 4 , 1939 before 62 @,@ 000 fans . Cooper quickly learned the physical movements of a baseball player and developed a fluid , believable swing . The handedness issue was solved by reversing the print for certain batting scenes . The film was one of the year 's top ten pictures and received eleven Academy Award nominations , including Best Picture and Best Actor ( Cooper 's third ) .

Soon after the publication of Ernest Hemingway 's novel For Whom the Bell Tolls , Paramount paid \$ 150 @,@ 000 for the film rights with the express intent of casting Cooper in the lead role of Robert Jordan , an American explosives expert who fights alongside the Republican loyalists during the Spanish Civil War . The original director , Cecil B. DeMille , was replaced by Sam Wood who brought in Dudley Nichols for the screenplay . After the start of principal photography in the Sierra Nevada in late 1942 , Ingrid Bergman was brought in to replace ballerina Vera Zorina as the female lead ? a change supported by Cooper and Hemingway . The love scenes between Bergman and Cooper were " rapturous " and passionate . Howard Barnes in the New York Herald Tribune wrote that both actors performed with " the true stature and authority of stars " . While the film distorted the novel 's original political themes and meaning , For Whom the Bell Tolls was a critical and commercial success and received ten Academy Award nominations , including Best Picture and Best Actor ( Cooper 's fourth ) .

Cooper did not serve in the military during World War II due to his age and health , but like many of his colleagues , he got involved in the war effort by entertaining the troops . In June 1943 , he visited military hospitals in San Diego , and often appeared at the Hollywood Canteen serving food to the

servicemen . In late 1943 , Cooper undertook a 23 @,@ 000 @-@ mile ( 37 @,@ 000 km ) tour of the South West Pacific with actresses Una Merkel and Phyllis Brooks , and accordionist Andy Arcari . Traveling on a B @-@ 24A Liberator bomber , the group toured the Cook Islands , Fiji , New Caledonia , Queensland , Brisbane ? where General Douglas MacArthur told Cooper he was watching Sergeant York in a Manila theater when Japanese bombs began falling ? New Guinea , Jayapura , and throughout the Solomon Islands . The group often shared the same sparse living conditions and K @-@ rations as the troops . Cooper met with the servicemen and women , visited military hospitals , introduced his attractive colleagues , and participated in occasional skits . The shows concluded with Cooper 's moving recitation of Lou Gehrig 's farewell speech . When he returned to the United States , he visited military hospitals throughout the country . Cooper later called his time with the troops the " greatest emotional experience " of his life .

= = = Mature roles , 1944 ? 52 = = =

In 1944 , Cooper appeared in Cecil B. DeMille 's wartime adventure film *The Story of Dr. Wassell* with Laraine Day ? his third movie with the director . In the film , Cooper plays American doctor and missionary Corydon M. Wassell , who leads a group of wounded sailors through the jungles of Java to safety . Despite receiving poor reviews , *Dr. Wassell* was one of the top @-@ grossing films of the year . With his Goldwyn and Paramount contracts now concluded , Cooper decided to remain independent and formed his own production company , International Pictures , with Leo Spitz , William Goetz , and Nunnally Johnson . The fledgling studio 's first offering was Sam Wood 's romantic comedy *Casanova Brown* with Teresa Wright , about a man who learns his soon @-@ to @-@ be ex @-@ wife is pregnant with his child , just as he is about to marry another woman . The film received poor reviews , with the *New York Daily News* calling it " delightful nonsense " , and Bosley Crowther , in *The New York Times* , criticizing Cooper 's " somewhat obvious and ridiculous clowning " . The film was barely profitable . In 1945 , Cooper starred in and produced Stuart Heisler 's Western comedy *Along Came Jones* with Loretta Young for International . In this lighthearted parody of his past heroic image , Cooper plays comically inept cowboy Melody Jones who is mistaken for a ruthless killer . Audiences embraced Cooper 's character , and the film was one of the top box @-@ office pictures of the year ? a testament to Cooper 's still vital audience appeal . It was also International 's biggest financial success during its brief history before being sold off to Universal Studios in 1946 .

Cooper 's career during the post @-@ war years drifted in new directions as American society was changing . While he still played conventional heroic roles , his films now relied less on his heroic screen persona and more on novel stories and exotic settings . In November 1945 , Cooper appeared in Sam Wood 's nineteenth century period drama *Saratoga Trunk* with Ingrid Bergman , about a Texas cowboy and his relationship with a beautiful fortune @-@ hunter . Filmed in early 1943 , the movie 's release was delayed for two years due to the increased demand for war movies . Despite poor reviews , *Saratoga Trunk* did well at the box office and became one of the top money @-@ makers of the year for Warner Bros. Cooper 's only film in 1946 was Fritz Lang 's romantic thriller *Cloak and Dagger* , about a mild @-@ mannered physics professor recruited by the OSS during the last years of World War II to investigate the German atomic bomb program . Playing a part loosely based on physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer , Cooper was uneasy with the role and was unable to convey the " inner sense " of the character . The film received poor reviews and was a box @-@ office failure . In 1947 , Cooper appeared in Cecil B. DeMille 's epic adventure film *Unconquered* with Paulette Goddard , about a Virginia militiaman who defends settlers against an unscrupulous gun trader and hostile Indians on the Western frontier during the eighteenth century . The film received mixed reviews , but even long @-@ time DeMille critic James Agee acknowledged the picture had " some authentic flavor of the period " . This last of four films made with DeMille was Cooper 's most lucrative , earning the actor over \$ 300 @,@ 000 in salary and percentage of profits . *Unconquered* would be his last unqualified box @-@ office success for the next five years .

In 1948 , after making Leo McCarey 's romantic comedy *Good Sam* , Cooper sold his company to Universal Studios and signed a long @-@ term contract with Warner Bros. that gave him script and



director approval and a guaranteed \$ 295 @, @ 000 per picture . His first film under the new contract was King Vidor 's drama *The Fountainhead* ( 1949 ) with Patricia Neal and Raymond Massey . In the film , Cooper plays an idealistic and uncompromising architect who struggles to maintain his integrity and individualism in the face of societal pressures to conform to popular standards . Based on the novel by Ayn Rand who also wrote the screenplay , the film reflects her Objectivist philosophy and attacks the concepts of altruism and collectivism while promoting the virtues of selfishness and individualism . For most critics , Cooper was hopelessly miscast in the role of Howard Roark . In his review for *The New York Times* , Bosley Crowther concluded he was " Mr. Deeds out of his element " . Cooper returned to his element in Delmer Daves ' war drama *Task Force* ( 1949 ) , about a retiring rear admiral who reminisces about his long career as a naval aviator and his role in the development of aircraft carriers . Cooper 's performance and the Technicolor newsreel footage supplied by the United States Navy made the film one of Cooper 's most popular during this period . In the next two years , Cooper made four poorly received films : Michael Curtiz ' period drama *Bright Leaf* ( 1950 ) , Stuart Heisler 's Western melodrama *Dallas* ( 1950 ) , Henry Hathaway 's wartime comedy *You 're in the Navy Now* ( 1951 ) , and Raoul Walsh 's Western action film *Distant Drums* ( 1951 ) .

Cooper 's most important film during the post @-@ war years was Fred Zinnemann 's Western drama *High Noon* ( 1952 ) with Grace Kelly for United Artists . In the film , Cooper plays retiring sheriff Will Kane who is preparing to leave town on his honeymoon when he learns that an outlaw he helped put away and his three henchmen are returning to seek their revenge . Unable to gain the support of the frightened townspeople , and abandoned by his young bride , Kane nevertheless stays to face the outlaws alone . During the filming , Cooper was in poor health and in considerable pain from stomach ulcers . His ravaged face and discomfort in some scenes " photographed as self @-@ doubt " , according to biographer Hector Arce , and contributed to the effectiveness of his performance . Considered one of the first " adult " Westerns for its theme of moral courage , *High Noon* received enthusiastic reviews for its artistry , with *Time* magazine placing it in the ranks of *Stagecoach* and *The Gunfighter* . Bosley Crowther , in *The New York Times* , wrote that Cooper was " at the top of his form " , and John McCarten , in *The New Yorker* , wrote that Cooper was never more effective . The film earned \$ 3 @. @ 75 million in the United States and \$ 18 million worldwide . Following the example of his friend James Stewart , Cooper accepted a lower salary in exchange for a percent of the profits , and ended up making \$ 600 @, @ 000 . Cooper 's understated performance was widely praised , and earned him his second Academy Award for Best Actor .

== = Later films , 1953 ? 61 == =

After appearing in André de Toth 's Civil War drama *Springfield Rifle* ( 1952 ) ? a standard Warner Bros. film that was overshadowed by the success of its predecessor ? Cooper made four films outside the United States . In Mark Robson 's drama *Return to Paradise* ( 1953 ) , Cooper plays an American wanderer who liberates the inhabitants of a Polynesian island from the puritanical rule of a misguided pastor . Cooper endured spartan living conditions , long hours , and ill health during the three @-@ month location shoot on the island of Upolu in Western Samoa . Despite its beautiful cinematography , the film received poor reviews . Cooper 's next three films were shot in Mexico . In Hugo Fregonese 's action adventure film *Blowing Wild* ( 1953 ) with Barbara Stanwyck , he plays a wildcatter in Mexico who gets involved with an oil company executive and his unscrupulous wife with whom he once had an affair . In 1954 , Cooper appeared in Henry Hathaway 's Western drama *Garden of Evil* with Susan Hayward , about three soldiers of fortune in Mexico hired to rescue a woman 's husband . That same year , he appeared in Robert Aldrich 's Western adventure *Vera Cruz* with Burt Lancaster . In the film , Cooper plays an American adventurer hired by Emperor Maximilian I to escort a countess to Vera Cruz during the Mexican Rebellion of 1866 . All of these films received poor reviews but did well at the box @-@ office . For his work in *Vera Cruz* , Cooper earned \$ 1 @. @ 4 million in salary and percent of the gross .

During this period , Cooper struggled with health problems . As well as his ongoing treatment for ulcers , he suffered a severe shoulder injury during the filming of *Blowing Wild* when he was hit by

metal fragments from a dynamited oil well . During the filming of *Vera Cruz* , he reinjured his hip falling from a horse , and was burned when Lancaster fired his rifle too close and the wadding from the blank shell pierced his clothing . In 1955 , he appeared in Otto Preminger 's biographical war drama *The Court Martial of Billy Mitchell* , about the World War I general who tried to convince government officials of the importance of air power , and was court martialled after blaming the War Department for a series of air disasters . Some critics felt that Cooper was miscast , and that his dull , tight lipped performance did not reflect Mitchell 's dynamic and caustic personality . In 1956 , Cooper was more effective playing a gentle Indiana Quaker in William Wyler 's Civil War drama *Friendly Persuasion* with Dorothy McGuire . Like *Sergeant York* and *High Noon* , the film addresses the conflict between religious pacifism and civic duty . For his performance , Cooper received his second Golden Globe nomination for Best Motion Picture Actor . The film was nominated for six Academy Awards , was awarded the Palme d 'Or at the 1957 Cannes Film Festival , and went on to earn \$ 8 million worldwide .

In 1956 , Cooper traveled to France to make Billy Wilder 's romantic comedy *Love in the Afternoon* with Audrey Hepburn and Maurice Chevalier . In the film , Cooper plays a middle aged American playboy in Paris who pursues and eventually falls in love with a much younger woman . Despite receiving some positive reviews ? including from Bosley Crowther who praised the film 's " charming performances " ? most reviewers concluded that Cooper was simply too old for the part . While audiences may not have welcomed seeing Cooper 's heroic screen image tarnished by his playing an aging roué trying to seduce an innocent young girl , the film was still a box office success . The following year , Cooper appeared in Philip Dunne 's romantic drama *Ten North Frederick* In the film , which was based on the novel by John O 'Hara , Cooper plays an attorney whose life is ruined by a double crossing politician and his own secret affair with his daughter 's young roommate . While Cooper brought " conviction and controlled anguish " to his performance , according to biographer Jeffrey Meyers , it was not enough to save what Bosley Crowther called a " hapless film " .

Despite his ongoing health problems and several operations for ulcers and hernias , Cooper continued to work in action films . In 1958 , he appeared in Anthony Mann 's Western drama *Man of the West* ( 1958 ) with Julie London and Lee J. Cobb , about a reformed outlaw and killer who is forced to confront his violent past when the train he is riding in is held up by his former gang members . The film has been called Cooper 's " most pathological Western " , with its themes of impotent rage , sexual humiliation , and sadism . According to biographer Jeffrey Meyers , Cooper , who struggled with moral conflicts in his personal life , " understood the anguish of a character striving to retain his integrity ... [ and ] brought authentic feeling to the role of a tempted and tormented , yet essentially decent man " . Mostly ignored by critics at the time , the film is now well regarded by film scholars and is considered Cooper 's last great film .

After his Warner Bros. contract ended , Cooper formed his own production company , Baroda Productions , and made three unusual films in 1959 about redemption . In Delmer Daves ' Western drama *The Hanging Tree* , Cooper plays a frontier doctor who saves a criminal from a lynch mob , and later tries to exploit his sordid past . Cooper delivered a " powerful and persuasive " performance of an emotionally scarred man whose need to dominate others is transformed by the love and sacrifice of a woman . In Robert Rossen 's historical adventure *They Came to Cordura* with Rita Hayworth , he plays an army officer who is found guilty of cowardice and assigned the degrading task of recommending soldiers for the Medal of Honor during the Pancho Villa Expedition of 1916 . While Cooper received positive reviews , *Variety* and *Films in Review* felt he was too old for the part . In Michael Anderson 's action drama *The Wreck of the Mary Deare* with Charlton Heston , Cooper plays a disgraced merchant marine officer who decides to stay aboard his sinking cargo ship in order to prove the vessel was deliberately scuttled and to redeem his good name . Like its two predecessors , the film was physically demanding . Cooper , who was a trained scuba diver , did most of his own underwater scenes . Biographer Jeffrey Meyers observed that in all three roles , Cooper effectively conveyed the sense of lost honor and desire for redemption ? what Joseph Conrad in *Lord Jim* called the " struggles of an individual trying to save from the fire his idea of what his moral identity should be " .

= = Personal life = =

= = = Marriage and family = = =

Cooper was formally introduced to his future wife , twenty @-@ year @-@ old New York debutante Veronica Balfe , on Easter Sunday 1933 at a party given by her uncle , art director Cedric Gibbons . Called " Rocky " by her family and friends , she grew up on Park Avenue and attended finishing schools . Her stepfather was Wall Street tycoon Paul Shields . Cooper and Rocky were quietly married at her parents ' Park Avenue residence on December 15 , 1933 . According to his friends , the marriage had a positive impact on Cooper , who turned away from past indiscretions and took control of his life . Athletic and a lover of the outdoors , Rocky shared many of Cooper 's interests , including riding , skiing , and skeet @-@ shooting . She organized their social life , and her wealth and social connections provided Cooper access to New York high society . Cooper and his wife owned homes in the Los Angeles area in Encino ( 1933 ? 36 ) , Brentwood ( 1936 ? 53 ) , and Holmby Hills ( 1954 ? 61 ) , and owned a vacation home in Aspen , Colorado ( 1949 ? 53 ) .

Cooper 's daughter Maria Veronica Cooper was born on September 15 , 1937 . By all accounts , he was a patient and affectionate father , teaching Maria to ride a bicycle , play tennis , ski , and ride horses . Sharing many of her parents ' interests , she accompanied them on their travels and was often photographed with them . Like her father , she developed a love for art and drawing . As a family they vacationed together in Sun Valley , Idaho , spent time at Rocky 's parents ' country house in Southampton , New York , and took frequent trips to Europe . Cooper and Rocky were legally separated on May 16 , 1951 , when Cooper moved out of their home . For over two years , they maintained a fragile and uneasy family life with their daughter . Cooper moved back into their home in November 1953 , and their formal reconciliation occurred in February 1954 .

= = = Romantic relationships = = =

Prior to his marriage , Cooper had a series of romantic relationships with leading actresses , beginning in 1927 with Clara Bow , who advanced his career by helping him get one of his first leading roles in Children of Divorce . Bow was also responsible for getting Cooper a role in Wings , which generated an enormous amount of fan mail for the young actor . In 1928 , he had a relationship with another experienced actress , Evelyn Brent , whom he met while filming Beau Sabreur . In 1929 , while filming The Wolf Song , Cooper began an intense affair with Lupe Vélez , which was the most important romance of his early life . During their two years together , Cooper also had brief affairs with Marlene Dietrich while filming Morocco in 1930 and with Carole Lombard while making I Take This Woman in 1931 . During his year abroad in 1931 ? 32 , Cooper had an affair with the married Countess Dorothy di Frasso , while staying at her Villa Madama in Rome .

After he was married in December 1933 , Cooper remained faithful to his wife until the summer of 1942 , when he began an affair with Ingrid Bergman during the production of For Whom the Bell Tolls . Their relationship lasted through the completion of filming Saratoga Trunk in June 1943 . In 1948 , after finishing work on The Fountainhead , Cooper began an affair with actress Patricia Neal , his co @-@ star . At first they kept their affair discreet , but eventually it became an open secret in Hollywood , and Cooper 's wife confronted him with the rumors , which he admitted were true . He also confessed that he was in love with Neal , and continued to see her . Cooper and his wife were legally separated in May 1951 , but he did not seek a divorce . Neal ended their relationship in late December 1951 . During his three @-@ year separation from his wife , Cooper had affairs with Grace Kelly , Lorraine Chancel , and Gisèle Pascal .

= = = Friendships , interests , and character = = =

For me the really satisfying things I do are offered me , free , for nothing . Ever go out in the fall and

do a little hunting ? See the frost on the grass and the leaves turning ? Spend a day in the hills alone , or with good companions ? Watch a sunset and a moonrise ? Notice a bird in the wind ? A stream in the woods , a storm at sea , cross the country by train , and catch a glimpse of something beautiful in the desert , or the farmlands ? Free to everybody ...

Cooper 's twenty @-@ year friendship with Ernest Hemingway began at Sun Valley in October 1940 . The previous year , Hemingway drew upon Cooper 's image when he created the character of Robert Jordan for the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* . The two shared a passion for the outdoors , and for years they hunted duck and pheasant , and skied together in Sun Valley . Both men admired the work of Rudyard Kipling ? Cooper kept a copy of the poem " If ? " in his dressing room ? and retained as adults Kipling 's sense of boyish adventure . As well as admiring Cooper 's hunting skills and knowledge of the outdoors , Hemingway believed his character matched his screen persona , once telling a friend , " If you made up a character like Coop , nobody would believe it . He 's just too good to be true . " They saw each other often , and their friendship remained strong through the years .

Cooper 's social life generally centered on sports , outdoor activities , and dinner parties with his family and friends from the film industry , including directors Henry Hathaway , Howard Hawks , William Wellman , and Fred Zinnemann , and actors Joel McCrea , James Stewart , Barbara Stanwyck , and Robert Taylor . As well as hunting , Cooper enjoyed riding , fishing , skiing , and later in life , scuba diving . He never abandoned his early love for art and drawing , and over the years , he and his wife acquired a private collection of modern paintings , including works by Pierre @-@ Auguste Renoir , Paul Gauguin , and Georgia O 'Keeffe . Cooper owned several works by Pablo Picasso , whom he met in 1956 . Cooper had a lifelong passion for automobiles , with a collection that included a 1930 Duesenberg .

Cooper was naturally reserved and introspective , and loved the solitude of outdoor activities . Not unlike his screen persona , his communication style frequently consisted of long silences with an occasional " yup " and " shucks " . He once said , " If others have more interesting things to say than I have , I keep quiet . " According to his friends , Cooper could also be an articulate , well @-@ informed conversationalist on topics ranging from horses , guns , and Western history to film production , sports cars , and modern art . He was modest and unpretentious , frequently downplaying his acting abilities and career accomplishments . His friends and colleagues described him as charming , well @-@ mannered , and thoughtful , with a lively boyish sense of humor . Cooper maintained a sense of propriety throughout his career and never misused his movie star status ? never sought special treatment or refused to work with a director or leading lady . His close friend Joel McCrea recalled , " Coop never fought , he never got mad , he never told anybody off that I know of ; everybody that worked with him liked him . "

= = = Political views = = =

Cooper was a conservative Republican like his father , and voted for Calvin Coolidge in 1924 , Herbert Hoover in 1928 and 1932 , and campaigned for Wendell Willkie in 1940 . When Franklin D. Roosevelt ran for an unprecedented fourth presidential term in 1944 , Cooper campaigned for Thomas E. Dewey and criticized Roosevelt for being dishonest and adopting " foreign " ideas . In a radio address that he paid for himself just prior to the election , Cooper said , " I disagree with the New Deal belief that the America all of us love is old and worn @-@ out and finished ? and has to borrow foreign notions that don 't even seem to work any too well where they come from ... Our country is a young country that just has to make up its mind to be itself again . " He also attended a Republican rally at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum that drew 93 @,@ 000 Dewey supporters .

Cooper was one of the founding members of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals , a conservative organization dedicated , according to its statement of principles , to preserving the " American way of life " and opposing communism and fascism . The organization ? whose membership included Walt Disney , Clark Gable , Ronald Reagan , Barbara Stanwyck , and John Wayne ? pressured the United States Congress to investigate communist influence in the motion picture industry . On October 23 , 1947 , Cooper appeared before the House Un @-@

American Activities Committee ( HUAC ) and was asked if he had observed any " communistic influence " in Hollywood . Cooper recounted statements he 'd heard suggesting that the Constitution was out of date and that Congress was an unnecessary institution ? comments that Cooper said he found to be " very un @-@ American " . He also testified that he had rejected several scripts because he thought they were " tinged with communist ideas " . Unlike some other witnesses , Cooper did not name any individuals during his testimony .

= = = Religion = = =

Cooper was baptized in the Anglican Church in December 1911 in England , and was raised in the Episcopal Church in the United States . While he was never an observant Christian during his adult life , many of his friends believed he had a deeply spiritual side .

On June 26 , 1953 , Cooper accompanied his wife and daughter , who were devout Catholics , to Rome , where they had an audience with Pope Pius XII . Cooper and his wife were still separated at the time , but the papal visit marked the beginning of their gradual reconciliation . In the coming years , Cooper contemplated his mortality and his personal behavior , and started discussing Catholicism with his family . He began attending church with them regularly , and met with their parish priest , who offered Cooper spiritual guidance . After several months of study , Cooper was baptized as a Roman Catholic on April 9 , 1959 , before a small group of family and friends at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Beverly Hills .

= = Final year and death = =

On April 14 , 1960 , Cooper underwent surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston for prostate cancer after it had metastasized to his colon . He fell ill again on May 31 and underwent further surgery at Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles in early June to remove a malignant tumor from his large intestine . After recuperating over the summer , Cooper took his family on vacation to the south of France before traveling to England in the fall to make his last film , The Naked Edge . In December 1960 , he worked on the NBC television documentary The Real West , which was part of the company 's Project 20 series . On December 27 , his wife learned from their family doctor that Cooper 's cancer had spread to his lungs and bones and was inoperable . His family decided not to tell him immediately .

On January 9 , 1961 , Cooper attended a dinner given in his honor at the Friars Club hosted by Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin . Attended by many of his industry friends , the dinner concluded with a brief speech by Cooper who said , " The only achievement I 'm proud of is the friends I 've made in this community . " In mid @-@ January , Cooper took his family to Sun Valley for their last vacation together . Cooper and Hemingway hiked through the snow together for the last time . On February 27 , after returning to Los Angeles , Cooper learned that he was dying . He later told his family , " We 'll pray for a miracle ; but if not , and that 's God 's will , that 's all right too . " On April 17 , Cooper watched the Academy Awards ceremony on television and saw his good friend James Stewart , who had presented Cooper with his first Oscar years earlier , accept on Cooper 's behalf an honorary award for lifetime achievement ? his third Oscar . Speaking to Cooper , an emotional Stewart said , " Coop , I want you to know I 'll get it to you right away . With it goes all the friendship and affection and the admiration and deep respect of all of us . We 're very , very proud of you , Coop . " The following day , newspapers around the world announced the news that Cooper was dying . In the coming days he received numerous messages of appreciation and encouragement , including telegrams from Pope John XXIII and Queen Elizabeth II , and a phone call from President John F. Kennedy .

On May 4 , Cooper , in his last public statement , said , " I know that what is happening is God 's will . I am not afraid of the future . " He received the last rites on May 12 . Cooper died quietly the following day , Saturday , May 13 , 1961 , at 12 : 47 pm , less than a week after his sixtieth birthday . A requiem mass was held on May 18 at the Church of the Good Shepherd , attended by many of Cooper 's friends , including James Stewart , Henry Hathaway , Joel McCrea , Audrey Hepburn ,

Jack L. Warner , John Ford , John Wayne , Edward G. Robinson , Frank Sinatra , Dean Martin , Randolph Scott , Walter Pidgeon , Bob Hope and Marlene Dietrich . Cooper was buried in the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in Holy Cross Cemetery in Culver City , California . In May 1974 , after his family relocated to New York , Cooper 's remains were exhumed and reburied in Sacred Hearts Cemetery in Southampton . His grave is marked by a three @-@ ton boulder from a Montauk quarry .

= = Acting style and reputation = =

Naturalness is hard to talk about , but I guess it boils down to this : You find out what people expect of your type of character and then you give them what they want . That way , an actor never seems unnatural or affected no matter what role he plays .

Cooper 's acting style consisted of three essential characteristics : his ability to project elements of his own personality onto the characters he portrayed , to appear natural and authentic in his roles , and to underplay and deliver restrained performances calibrated for the camera and the screen . Acting teacher Lee Strasberg once observed : " The simplest examples of Stanislavsky 's ideas are actors such as Gary Cooper , John Wayne , and Spencer Tracy . They try not to act but to be themselves , to respond or react . They refuse to say or do anything they feel not to be consonant with their own characters . " Film director François Truffaut ranked Cooper among " the greatest actors " because of his ability to deliver great performances " without direction " . This ability to project elements of his own personality onto his characters produced a continuity across his performances to the extent that critics and audiences were convinced that he was simply " playing himself " .

Cooper 's ability to project his personality onto his characters played an important part in his appearing natural and authentic on screen . Actor John Barrymore said of Cooper , " This fellow is the world 's greatest actor . He does without effort what the rest of us spend our lives trying to learn ? namely , to be natural . " Charles Laughton , who played opposite Cooper in *Devil and the Deep* agreed , " In truth , that boy hasn 't the least idea how well he acts ... He gets at it from the inside , from his own clear way of looking at life . " William Wyler , who directed Cooper in two films , called him a " superb actor , a master of movie acting " . In his review of Cooper 's performance in *The Real Glory* , Graham Greene wrote , " Sometimes his lean photogenic face seems to leave everything to the lens , but there is no question here of his not acting . Watch him inoculate the girl against cholera ? the casual jab of the needle , and the dressing slapped on while he talks , as though a thousand arms had taught him where to stab and he doesn 't have to think anymore . "

Cooper 's style of underplaying before the camera surprised many of his directors and fellow actors . Even in his earliest feature films , he recognized the camera 's ability to pick up slight gestures and facial movements . Commenting on Cooper 's performance in *Sergeant York* , director Howard Hawks observed , " He worked very hard and yet he didn 't seem to be working . He was a strange actor because you 'd look at him during a scene and you 'd think ... this isn 't going to be any good . But when you saw the rushes in the projection room the next day you could read in his face all the things he 'd been thinking . " Sam Wood , who directed Cooper in four films , had similar observations about Cooper 's performance in *Pride of the Yankees* , noting , " What I thought was underplaying turned out to be just the right approach . On the screen he 's perfect , yet on the set you 'd swear it 's the worst job of acting in the history of motion pictures . " His fellow actors also admired his abilities as an actor . Commenting on her two films playing opposite Cooper , actress Ingrid Bergman concluded , " The personality of this man was so enormous , so overpowering ? and that expression in his eyes and his face , it was so delicate and so underplayed . You just didn 't notice it until you saw it on the screen . I thought he was marvelous ; the most underplaying and the most natural actor I ever worked with . "

= = Career assessment and legacy = =

Cooper 's career spanned thirty @-@ six years , from 1925 to 1961 . During that time , he appeared

in eighty @-@ four feature films in a leading role . He was a major movie star from the end of the silent film era to the end of the golden age of Classical Hollywood . His natural and authentic acting style appealed powerfully to both men and women , and his range of performances included roles in most major movie genres , including Westerns , war films , adventure films , drama films , crime films , romance films , comedy films , and romantic comedy films . He appeared on the Motion Picture Herald exhibitor 's poll of top ten film personalities for twenty @-@ three consecutive years , from 1936 to 1958 . According to Quigley 's annual poll , Cooper was one of the top money @-@ making stars for eighteen years , appearing in the top ten in 1936 ? 37 , 1941 ? 49 , and 1951 ? 57 . He topped the list in 1953 . In Quigley 's list of all @-@ time money @-@ making stars , Cooper is listed fourth , after John Wayne , Clint Eastwood , and Tom Cruise . At the time of his death , it was estimated that his films grossed well over \$ 200 million ( equivalent to \$ 1 @.@ 58 billion in 2015 ) .

In over half of his feature films , Cooper portrayed Westerners , soldiers , pilots , sailors , and explorers ? all men of action . In the rest he played a wide range of characters , included doctors , professors , artists , architects , clerks , and baseball players . Cooper 's heroic screen image changed with each period of his career . In his early films , he played the young naive hero sure of his moral position and trusting in the triumph of simple virtues ( *The Virginian* ) . After becoming a major star , his Western screen persona was replaced by a more cautious hero in adventure films and dramas ( *A Farewell to Arms* ) . During the height of his career , from 1936 to 1943 , he played a new type of hero ? a champion of the common man willing to sacrifice himself for others ( *Mr. Deeds* , *Meet John Doe* , and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* ) . In the post @-@ war years , Cooper attempted broader variations on his screen image , which now reflected a hero increasingly at odds with the world who must face adversity alone ( *The Fountainhead* and *High Noon* ) . In his final films , Cooper 's hero rejects the violence of the past , and seeks to reclaim lost honor and find redemption ( *Friendly Persuasion* and *Man of the West* ) . The screen persona he developed and sustained throughout his career represented the ideal American hero ? a tall , handsome , and sincere man of steadfast integrity who emphasized action over intellect , and combined the heroic qualities of the romantic lover , the adventurer , and the common man .

On February 6 , 1960 , Cooper was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6243 Hollywood Boulevard for his contribution to the film industry . He was also awarded a star on the sidewalk outside the Ellen Theater in Bozeman , Montana . On May 6 , 1961 , he was awarded the French Order of Arts and Letters in recognition of his significant contribution to the arts . On July 30 , 1961 , he was posthumously awarded the David di Donatello Special Award in Italy for his career achievements . In 1966 , he was inducted into the Hall of Great Western Performers at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City . The American Film Institute ( AFI ) ranked Cooper eleventh on its list of the 25 male stars of classic Hollywood . Three of his characters ? Will Kane , Lou Gehrig , and Sergeant York ? made AFI 's list of the one hundred greatest heroes and villains , all of them as heroes . His Lou Gehrig line , " Today , I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth . " , is ranked by AFI as the thirty @-@ eighth greatest movie quote of all time . More than a half century after his death , Cooper 's enduring legacy , according to biographer Jeffrey Meyers , is his image of the ideal American hero preserved in his film performances . Charlton Heston once observed , " He projected the kind of man Americans would like to be , probably more than any actor that 's ever lived . "

= = Awards and nominations = =

= = Filmography = =

The following is a list of feature films in which Cooper appeared in a leading role .