

*For Immediate Release*

Contact: Jenica Lancy,  
Director of Communications,  
The ALS Association Golden West Chapter  
(415) 967-2572 [media@alsagoldenwest.org](mailto:media@alsagoldenwest.org)

THE ALS ASSOCIATION GOLDEN WEST CHAPTER PRESENTS

# A NIGHT AT THE ESSEYS

## The ALS Association Golden West Chapter to Honor Gary Cooper for “*Pride of the Yankees*” and for Raising International Awareness About ALS/Lou Gehrig’s Disease.

*April 1, 2014- Los Angeles, California*

The ALS Association Golden West Chapter cordially invites you to an evening of elegance at our Hollywood Red Carpet Gala, an event dedicated to conquering ALS. **A Night at the Esseys** will be held on Thursday, June 5, 2014 at the historic Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, home to the first Academy Awards ceremony, and will feature a wine & champagne reception, live orchestra, gourmet dinner, and live and silent auctions. The Essey Awards are the Golden West Chapter’s highest honor, named for one of the Greater Bay Area Chapter’s founding members, Richard Essey. These awards are presented annually to esteemed members of the ALS community for their outstanding efforts in research, philanthropy and public awareness.

Among this year’s honorees, the Golden West Chapter will present an inaugural Legacy Award to the late Gary Cooper for his unforgettable, Oscar-nominated portrayal of the “Iron Horse”, Lou Gehrig, in the Academy-award winning film, “*The Pride of the Yankees*”. This will be the first time that Cooper has been recognized for his contribution in raising ALS awareness through the power of his indelible role, which defined the public’s understanding of this disease around the world.

“The ALS community will be forever grateful for the continued impact that Cooper’s portrayal of Lou Gehrig has in increasing knowledge about ALS”, said Fred Fisher, President and CEO of The ALS Association Golden West Chapter. “It serves as a poignant reminder that anyone diagnosed with ALS is, first and foremost, a person, with loved ones, dreams, and unfulfilled ambitions in their lives. Gehrig himself said, ‘I have an awful lot to live for’ and Cooper’s compassionate performance has helped that statement connect with audiences”.

Originally released in 1942, *The Pride of the Yankees* is a tribute to the legendary New York Yankees’ first baseman, who died at age 37 from ALS, only one year before the film was released. Gehrig’s tragic decline and premature death had such a deep influence that the disease soon after became known to many as “Lou Gehrig’s Disease”. Cooper’s stirring performance has earned the film a spot on many “Best Films” lists by both film historians and movie lovers.

Even today, seventy-five years after Gehrig’s farewell speech, Cooper’s stirring performance continues to bring this historical moment to life for millions of movie-goers around the world. His daughter, Maria Cooper Janis, will be accepting the award on his behalf. “I know my father would be so humbly grateful and honored to accept this Legacy Award,” shared Ms. Cooper-Janis. “My father always felt embarrassed by praise, and particularly when it was heaped upon him for portraying noble people, Someone once asked him, ‘What it’s like to play Lou Gehrig, Sergeant Alvin York, Captain Billy Mitchell?’, to which he answered, ‘I just do the best I can, but I can’t imagine what it must be like to really be a hero.’ ”

“Today, there is much for people with ALS and their families to be hopeful for,” said Fisher. “While at this time, there is no known cure for ALS, receiving excellent care has been shown to lengthen and improve people’s quality of life significantly, and there has been significant progress in the field of ALS research. The ALS community still has far more questions than answers. But our great hope is that we will soon have the technology to not only help us better understand ALS, but also to find effective treatments to halt its relentless progression.”

**Event Details:**

6:00 p.m. – Cocktail Hour, Silent Auction and Entertainment

7:30 p.m. – Dinner, Essey Awards Presentation and Live Auction

**Event Location:**

Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel

7000 Hollywood Blvd

Los Angeles, CA 90028

For more information about sponsorship opportunities, tickets or to submit a tribute for the program, please [visit our website](#) or contact:

Giovanna D'Angelo

Director of Special Events, [gdangelo@alsagoldenwest.org](mailto:gdangelo@alsagoldenwest.org)

(818) 865-8067.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Jenica Lancy,

Director of Communications, [media@alsagoldenwest.org](mailto:media@alsagoldenwest.org)

(415) 967-2572 (ALSA)

**About ALS**

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), often referred to as "Lou Gehrig's Disease", is a progressive, neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. People with ALS lose the ability to walk, talk, speak, swallow and eventually to breathe, while their five senses and, in most cases, their minds continue to function normally. The average life expectancy of a person with ALS is two to five years from time of diagnosis. However, with recent advances in research and improved access to medical care, people with ALS are living longer, more productive lives.

**The ALS Association and the Golden West Chapter**

The mission of the ALS Association is to lead the fight to treat and cure ALS through global research and nationwide advocacy while also empowering people with Lou Gehrig's Disease and their families to live fuller lives by providing them with compassionate care and support. The Golden West Chapter currently serves people with ALS and their families in 31 counties throughout California and the state of Hawaii. Proceeds from this event will provide critical funding for The Golden West Chapter's interdependent mission priorities in care services – which includes regional care management, support groups, loans of durable medical equipment and augmentative communication devices, community outreach and education, and multidisciplinary clinical care – global, cutting-edge research for treatments and cures and important state and federal public policy initiatives.



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