

# Distinguished Alumni

## Distinguished Alumnus Award - 2000

### Conrad Lafcadio Hall '45

You arrived in California from Tahiti in 1934 before coming to Santa Barbara School (SBS) in the fall of 1941 as a sophomore. You were active in athletics, including gymkhana, track, and basketball. After two years at Cate, you transferred to San Mateo High School and graduated in 1944.

You worked for the war effort from 1944 to 1945 and graduated from Menlo Junior College in 1946. In September 1947, you entered the University of Southern California, majoring briefly in Journalism before switching to the newly created Cinema School, where you studied all aspects of filmmaking. You graduated with a B.A. in Cinema in 1950 and were recognized for your emerging talents by winning the first American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) student film award.

In 1950, television was becoming popular. The industry was seeking new talent and, literally, the luck-of-the-draw determined your future. After working on sections of animal features for Disney, you formed Canyon Films with two classmates from USC, producing documentaries, commercials, and industrial films. The company's first major project commenced after buying the story, *My Brother Down There* (1956 – released under the title, *Running Target*), which required a producer, a director, and a cameraman. You drew the role of cameraman, which has defined your career ever since. During this time, you also joined the Cinematographer's Guild and the Director's Guild – two important career events.

Your first big break was in 1959 filming *Mutiny on the Bounty* in Tahiti, promoting your knowledge of the island and the fact that your father, James Norman Hall, co-authored the original story helped earn you the role of second cameraman. After this project, you briefly returned to television, where you were involved with the series *Outer Limits* and *Stony Burke*, for which you received your first Hollywood credit as cinematographer. By 1964, you began to concentrate on feature films and earned your first film credit for *Wild Seed* in 1965. Shortly thereafter, your talents were recognized with Academy Award nominations for cinematography on *Morituri* (1965), *The Professionals* (1966), and *In Cold Blood* (1967). *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), your fourth nomination, earned you an Academy Award.

Your visual creations continued to receive recognition with Academy Award nominations for *The Day of the Locust* (1975), *Tequila Sunrise* (1988), *Searching for Bobby Fisher* (1993), and *A Civil Action* (1998). Other important credits include: *Cool Hand Luke* (1967), *Fat City* (1972), *Marathon Man* (1976), and *Love Affair* (1994). For *Tequila Sunrise* and *Searching for Bobby Fisher*, you were awarded ASC Outstanding Achievement Awards. In 1994, you received the ASC Lifetime Achievement Award, which recognizes "an extraordinary body of work that has made an indelible impression." Lifetime Achievement Awards are usually presented near the twilight of the honoree's careers.

However, your career continues to flourish and your most recent film, *American Beauty*, has won you the greatest acclaim—a second Academy Award for Cinematography, the British Academy Award for Cinematography, and a third ASC Outstanding Achievement Award. Proving that age has no

boundaries, you now rank among the greatest of all cinematographers. You are renowned for your delicate use of shadow and precise lighting to enhance the mood of dramas and are respected as an innovator, who forged your career by taking risks and breaking with tradition. It is this "painterly approach" and your use of surrealism, which made *American Beauty* such a visually stunning film. This style was recognized in the acclaimed documentary, *I am a Camera – Visions of Light* (1993), where you were profiled and portrayed as a "painter on film." In explaining your technique, you describe cinematography as an art, "a language far more complex than words."

In recognition of your creativity and professional accomplishments, the Cate School Alumni Association is proud to honor you, Conrad Lafcadio Hall '45, with the Distinguished Alumnus Award for 2000.