

Love is a many splendored thing Shakespeare in Love garners seven awards including Best Picture at Oscars

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In a night of surprises and upsets, the romantic comedy *Shakespeare in Love* won seven Academy awards on Sunday, including best picture.

Gwyneth Paltrow won the best actress Oscar for her role as the object of a young Bard's affections in *Shakespeare in Love*. Roberto Benigni, as an Italian Jew shielding his son from the horrors of the Holocaust in *Life is Beautiful*, became the first star of a foreign film to win the best actor prize.

"I don't feel very deserving of this in your presence," a sobbing Paltrow said, naming her fellow nominees.

Shakespeare had six Oscars and *Saving Private Ryan* five, while *Life Is Beautiful* had three. After last year's 11-Oscar blowout by *Titanic*, the movie crowd seemed to welcome a close race this year.

The tragi-comic *Life is Beautiful*, which Benigni also wrote and directed, won additional Academy Awards for foreign film and dramatic score.

"This is a terrible mistake because I used to speak all my English," he said, as he leapt to the stage for the second time.

Judi Dench, who played the imperious but air-minded Queen Elizabeth I in *Shakespeare in Love*, and James Coburn, the alcoholic, abusive father in *Affliction*, won best supporting Oscars.

Saving Private Ryan, Steven Spielberg's bloody depiction of World War II combat, won directing Oscar for Spielberg — his second — and also took prizes for cinematography, editing, sound and sound effects editing.

"Am I allowed to say I really wanted this?" Spielberg joked as he accepted the directing Oscar.

Shakespeare in Love, which led all contenders with 13 nominations, also picked up Oscars for original screenplay, art direction, costume design and musical or comedy score. *Elizabeth* won for makeup. *Gods and Monsters* won for adapted screenplay.

The most controversial moment of the show came and went quickly, as director Elia

Kazan — reviled by some for naming names during the McCarthy era — stepped out to accept a lifetime achievement award. Many members of the audience applauded heartily, some stood, while others, like actors Nick Nolte and Ed Harris, sat silently.

Besides Benigni, the only performer in a foreign language film to win an Oscar was Sophia Loren for *Two Women* in 1961.

Fittingly, it was Loren who presented him with his first award of the night. The perpetually ebullient Benigni clambered over the backs of seats and hopped onto the stage after Loren openly rooted for her fellow Italian and announced his foreign film victory.

"I want to kiss everybody," said Benigni, who also was nominated in directing and screenplay categories, while the film was a best picture contender.

Another Holocaust film, *The Last Days*, won the documentary award.

Dench, who made an indelible impression despite her brief screen time in the romantic comedy, held up her gold statuette and said with a smile: "I feel for eight minutes on the screen I should only get a little bit of him."

It was the first Oscar for the 64-year-old British stage actress, who had been nominated last year for playing a different queen, Victoria, in *Mrs. Brown*.

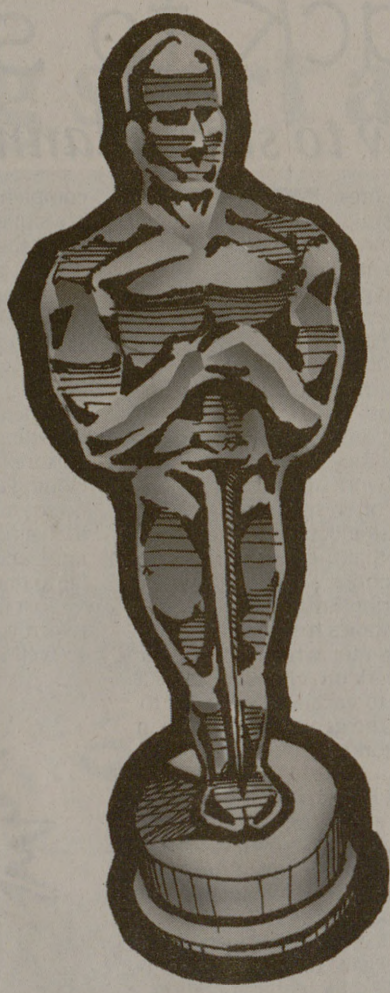
Coburn, 70, had never been nominated.

"I've been doing this work for like over half my life, and I finally got one right, I guess," said the veteran actor, whose dozens of films include *Our Man Flint* and *The Magnificent Seven*.

"Some of them you do for money, some of them you do for love. This is a love child," Coburn said.

Host Whoopi Goldberg, who changed costumes repeatedly to mimic film characters, got the show off to a rousing start when she came out in full regalia as Elizabeth — who figured in two of this year's contenders — getting a rousing ovation, then a laugh when she announced with an accent that was more Bette Davis than British, "I am the African Queen."

She joked about being the last master of cer-



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

emonies of the century and millennium, saying: "I am the last 20th century fox."

And referring to this year's furor over the special Oscar for Kazan, Goldberg joked; "I thought the blacklist was Hattie McDaniel and me."

The lack of a runaway favorite helped make the 71st Academy Awards among the most anticipated in recent history. With two well received films as the leaders, the campaign for votes was conducted largely in Hollywood trade paper and newspaper ads.

Miramax, which often stages big-money campaigns for its Oscar candidates and succeeded two years ago with a best-picture win for *The English Patient*, laid out millions for *Shakespeare in Love* ads.

Vernal equinox marks beginning of spring, signals time of celebration

BY BOBBIE EFTEKHAR
The Battalion

Human beings find movement in the heavens to be intrinsically interesting," he said.

On Saturday, March 20 at 8:45:52 p.m. EST, spring arrived with the vernal equinox. Sunday, March 21, marked the first full day of spring.

Dr. Ronald Schorn, professor of physics, explained what actually occurs during the vernal equinox.

"The sun passes northward across the celestial equator, which is the circle in the sky halfway between the north and south celestial poles," he said.

The word equinox means equal day and night, but Dr. Schorn says that is not exactly true.

"[The equinox] doesn't mean there will be equal night and day, because twilight makes the day longer," he said.

Dr. Schorn said the vernal equinox marks the beginning of longer days and warmer weather for the Northern Hemisphere.

He said ancient calendars began with the vernal equinox signaling the first day of the year.

Dr. D. Bruce Dickson, professor of anthropology, said there is evidence that stretches back to the Stone Age that phases of the moon and celestial bodies were recognized.

"These sorts of changes are often important in agricultural cycles. Later on it [the importance] became invested in other things," he said.

Although many societies celebrate the vernal equinox, Dr. Dickson said they all recognize the event in different ways.

"The vernal equinox is something interesting tied into something important. It enabled [ancient cultures] to calculate time

One religion that celebrates the vernal equinox is Wicca. Jeff Hamielec, a sophomore genetics major and Co-chair of the Texas A&M Pagan Students Association, said the holiday marks the beginning of spring.

"[The equinox] is significant because the old religions revolved around the seasons and go in a pattern of life, death and rebirth," he said. "This particular holiday signifies rebirth. God is represented as a young healthy man."

Another term used for the vernal equinox in Wicca is Ostara, represented by the color white. At the exact time of the vernal equinox, a ritual is performed.

"During a ritual, a good thing to have is a potted plant to symbolize that life is able to grow again," Hamielec said. "Generally you have all your materials, such as candles, set up on an altar. A circle is cast and a few things are said to honor the holiday. Once finished, the circle is closed down."

One culture that finds significance in the day is that of Iran.

The vernal equinox represents the arrival of spring and the New Year. Older family members give brand new, crisp money to the younger family members.

Seven items that begin with "s" in the Persian language are placed on a table to celebrate the New Year.

There are always sweets and at least one vegetable. Additional items are eggs, candles and a fish.

The vernal equinox holds different meanings in different societies, cultures and time periods, and every meaning is important to that society.

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