

Opening Ceremonies

by Military Times Phil Ewing May 14th, 2008

Wednesday night was the kickoff for the GI Film Festival, held at the Rayburn House Office Building in the heart of Washington, D.C. The night served as an introduction to the festival, now in its second year, and to declare its purpose: To “celebrate the successes and sacrifices of the American military through the medium of film.”



(Sorry, I'm working on the camera skills.)

The First Media Frenzy Recipients of the Night were the Young Marines from Shenandoah valley, Va.



After their initial entrance, one of the Young Marines (front row on the left) was interviewed by a Web journalist. It became clear that the boy could only speak through sign language — fortunately enough, there was an interpreter on hand. Soon a small crowd gathered to watch the three-way interview, snapping pictures and getting somewhat intrusive, but the brave little guy hung tough, professing his pride in the event and in the Marine Corps.

Shortly after that event was the Second Media Frenzy of the Night: The entrance of Robert Duvall! And wouldn't you know it, the former private first class was happy to see the upstanding young Americans.



The ceremony opened with a welcome by the festival's husband-and-wife organizing team, Brandon Millett and Laura Law-Millett.

Perhaps most impressive of all was a spoken word performance by James McEachin, known widely for his acting prowess but perhaps less for the actions that earned him the Silver Star in Korea. Ambushed while serving with the Army in 1952, McEachin was gravely wounded and left for dead, one of only two men in his unit to survive the attack, according to Millett's introduction. McEachin performed a piece from his [spoken word album](#), ending with the words, "No veterans, no freedom. No freedom, no democracy. No democracy, no America."

Lastly, the organizers gave a GI Hero Award to Marine Sgt. Jeremiah Workman, who earned a Navy Cross in Iraq in 2004. You can read more about him [here](#).

From the looks of things, this should be a very exciting festival. The pro-military attitude was palpable during the ceremony, and the room was packed, with even some congressmen attending. Tomorrow morning, the show kicks off at Bolling Air Force Base.