



Three Cups of Tea Impressive but Flawed

BY ELI HORNSTEIN

Three Cups of Tea is a captivating account of a former “ugly American” who is so impressed by the kindness of the inhabitants of a small village that he devotes his life to bettering theirs. Greg Mortenson (Doctor Girek) was taken in by a family of Balti when he lost his way returning from a failed attempt to climb the mountain K2 in 1993; during his recovery from his



Greg Mortenson (left) and co-author David Oliver Relin.

injuries, Mortenson attempts to help the inhabitants of the small village with his nurse’s training, and endears himself to the people of Korphe by his success.

The majority of the book focuses on Mortenson’s struggles to raise money for the building of a school in Korphe, and then his continued development of his ideas into an organization devoted to educating the isolated peoples of Pakistan and the surrounding area. Although one can’t help but root for Mortenson in his quest to build schools, the book begins to take an uncomfortable turn after Mortenson’s first return trip to Pakistan. Although still pertinent to the story, accounts of Mortenson’s rocky love life and personal feelings seem out of place coming from a third-person narrator, and lend a fictional feel to

parts of the story.

As Mortenson’s successes accumulate, the story gains the added dimension of being remarkable within its class, not just another account of helping a single village. As the scale of his endeavor increases, so too does Mortenson’s fame throughout an entire region. In the second half of the book, as victories pile up and the Central Asia Institute receives a million dollar donation, it looks as though Mortenson is on a path to singlehandedly change the world.

Unfortunately, the plot returns to the United States, where we are informed in the uncomfortable writing style that characterizes such sections, of Mortenson’s faults. Although committed entirely, Mortenson’s absolute refusal to move beyond having as much personal involvement as possible in his organization begins to prickle. Although his purism seems reasoned when he avoids corruption, Mortenson’s refusal to compromise at times restricts

the growth of his own institution, an infuriating prospect to those readers who have watched it grow by leaps and bounds.

The book ends on two inspiring notes: the introduction of Mortenson’s “hearts and minds” approach to rebuilding the Middle East into the American political lexicon, and the beginnings of his mission reaching outside Pakistan. Ultimately, the book comes off as impressive, but not as astounding as it had the potential to be. Mortenson’s described refusal to do anything he did not see as directly relevant to building a school, coupled with the fact that he did not write the book himself begs the question of whether to the protagonist of the story, Three Cups of Tea is just another source of funds.

Seniors Give Tips for Class of 2010

COMPILED BY CASSANDRA MCGUIRE

As the school year begins, life at NCSSM can seem overwhelming to incoming juniors. To help with the acclimation process, here are a few words of wisdom from seniors who know from experience the trials and triumphs that can accompany junior year.

“If you aren’t careful, the NCSSM experience will probably take a good five years off of your expected lifespan. So to prevent a premature death: Take short breaks after every hour of studying to relieve stress. Don’t skip meals to study (studying on an empty stomach will backfire, trust me). And finally, watch your hygiene. In other words, don’t let work consume your life, and on the other hand, don’t get so lazy that you stop taking care of yourself.”



George Zuo

“The most rewarding experiences for me at S&M were often the result of the relationships that I developed with my teachers. When you go to a class, try to make some kind of personal connection with your teachers. They might have scary PhD ‘s, but they are all people and really cool. They are the best resource you have at S&M and their advice about career plans and college information to me has proven invaluable.”



Adam Collins

“I would say definitely go to tutorial. Many people may be used to always understanding everything at their old schools, but at NCSSM they’ll have to definitely swallow their pride and ask for help. It saves lots of time and effort.”



Daixi Xu



Priya Balagopal

“A really great thing to do is to start talking to people. Socialize, and get to know the people you will be spending the next two years of your life with (including staff). You’d be surprised how much you have in common and how much you can help each other out. Academics are definitely important, but the relationships you establish will end up being a lot more valuable than your grades.”