

Greg Mortenson is the co-founder of nonprofit Central Asia Institute www.ikat.org , founder of Pennies For Peace www.penniesforpeace.org , co-author of the #1 New York Times bestseller Three Cups of Tea www.threecupsoftea.com, and author of Stones into Schools www.stonesintoschools.com.

In March 2009, Mortenson received Pakistan's highest civil award, Sitara-e-Pakistan ("Star of Pakistan") for his dedicated and humanitarian effort to promote education and literacy in rural areas for fifteen years.

Several bi-partisan U.S. Congressional representatives nominated Mortenson for the Nobel Peace Prize this year. The award recipient is chosen by a secret process and announced in October.

Three Cups of Tea is required reading for U.S. senior military commanders, for officers in the Norwegian War College, Forsvarsnett, for U.S. Special Forces deploying to Afghanistan, Pentagon officers in counter-insurgency training, and Canadian Defense Ministry members.

The book has been read by General David Petraeus – CENTCOM Commander, Admiral Mike Mullen – Chairman Joint Chief of Staff, and Admiral Eric Olson – SOCOM Special Forces commander, and several other U.S. military commanders who advocate for building relationships as a part of an overall strategic plan for peace. Mortenson has addressed the National Defense Senior Leadership Conference at the Pentagon, visited over two dozen military bases, NORAD, and been to the Air Force, Naval and West Point Academies.

Mortenson was born in Minnesota in 1957. He grew up on the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro, Tanzania (1958 to 1973). His father Dempsey, co-founded Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center (KCMC) www.kcmc.ac.tz a teaching hospital, and his mother, Jerene, founded the International School Moshi www.ismoshi.org .

He served in the U.S. Army in Germany (1977-1979), where he received the Army Commendation Medal, and graduated from the University of South Dakota in 1983.

In July 1992, Mortenson's sister, Christa, died from a massive seizure after a lifelong struggle with epilepsy on the eve of a trip to visit Dysersville, Iowa, where the baseball movie, 'Field of Dreams', was filmed in a cornfield.

To honor his sister's memory, in 1993, Mortenson climbed Pakistan's K2, the world's second highest mountain in the Karakoram range.

While recovering from the climb in a village called Korphe, Mortenson met a group of children sitting in the dirt writing with sticks in the sand, and made a promise to help them build a school.

From that rash promise, grew a remarkable humanitarian campaign, in which Mortenson has dedicated his life to promote education, especially for girls, in remote regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

As of 2009, Mortenson has established or significantly supports 131 schools in rural and often volatile regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan, which provide education to over 58,000 children, including 44,000 girls, where few education opportunities existed before.

His work has not been without difficulty. In 1996, he survived an eight day armed kidnapping by the Taliban in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province tribal areas, escaped a 2003 firefight with feuding Afghan warlords by hiding for eight hours under putrid animal hides in a truck going to a leather-tanning factory. He has overcome fatwehs from enraged Islamic mullahs, endured CIA investigations, and also received threats from fellow Americans after 9/11, for helping Muslim children with education.

Mortenson is a living hero to rural communities of Afghanistan and Pakistan, where he has gained the trust of Islamic leaders, military commanders, government officials and tribal chiefs from his tireless effort to champion education, especially for girls.

He is one of few foreigners who has worked extensively for sixteen years (over 72 months in the field) in rural villages where few foreigners go.

TV newscaster, Tom Brokaw, calls Mortenson, "one ordinary person, with the right combination of character and determination, who is really changing the world".

Congresswoman Mary Bono (Rep – Cali.) says, "I've learned more from Greg Mortenson about the causes of terrorism than I did during all our briefings on Capitol Hill. He is a true hero, whose courage, and compassion exemplify the true ideals of the American spirit."

While not overseas half the year, Mortenson, 51, lives in Montana with his wife, Dr. Tara Bishop, a clinical psychologist, and two young children.