

February 4, 2012, saw the Wyoming National Guard ceremony that honored Bryan Adrian who lost his life in 2006. It was the dedication of an auditorium that now bears Bryan Adrian's name. Various luminaries spoke in remembrance of the deceased, among them Governor Mead. The story of a young man who decided against a potentially glamorous football career in favor of a higher good would be worthy of capture in book form, like the true-life story Jon Krakauer wrote of another NFL hero who joined his country's military service only to yield his life in the line of duty.

Another of Krakauer's stories is noteworthy in this context, and not only because our town appears in its introductory comments. They allude to the March 21, 2011, event that featured a writer whose books have become popular for its inspirational lessons on Afghanistan and Pakistan with, among other groups, the Pentagon: "As he walked onto the stage in the sold-out arena, more than two thousand men, women, and children leapt to their feet to express their admiration with cheers, whistles, and deafening applause."

Unlike Bryan Adrian's life story, the slender volume Jon Krakauer published concerning that 2011 Cheyenne speaker is sobering and sad. "Three Cups of Deceit" exposes Greg Mortenson, as a would-be humanitarian turned opportunist. The greater portion of Mortenson's "Three Cups of Tea" is an "intricately wrought work of fiction presented as fact," Krakauer alleges. The exposé is meticulously documented, and it followed a "60Minutes" broadcast of April 15, 2011—less than a month after Mortenson's appearance in Cheyenne—that cast doubt on the accuracy of "Three Cups of Tea" and "Stones into Schools." The broadcast also raised questions about Greg Mortenson's charity, the Central Asia Institute. A former treasurer of its board of directors is quoted in "Three Cups of Deceit" that Mortenson uses the charity "as his personal ATM."

"My daughter and I bought tickets to the reading, which weren't cheap," says a friend. "We bought his books—for a worthy cause,

we thought. We stood in line for hours to get his signature. I wanted to ask him questions, but the throng pushed us along.”

Thousands of children have collected “Pennies for Peace” for Mortenson. In 2009 alone, “schoolchildren donated \$1.7 million to Pennies for Peace,” writes Krakauer. Yet the teacher salaries, scholarships, and school supplies that P4P has covered thus far “amount to a paltry \$612,000.” That same year, 2009, CAI spent more than \$1 million to promote Mortenson books, and another \$1.4 million to fly him around in chartered jets. “Donors unknowingly picked up the tab for all of it,” says Krakauer, who himself had donated \$75,000 to the charity. “CIA receives no royalties from the books,” he notes, yet it covers “virtually all the expenses” incurred by Mortenson and his ghostwriters.

A lawyer who examined CAI financial records sent a memo to the charity’s board and to Mr. Mortenson, stating that its payments for Mortenson advertising and travel expenses appeared to be in violation of Section 4859 of the Internal Revenue Services Code; if audited for 2007, 2008, and 2009, he could owe the Institute over \$7 million; if not repaid, “he could face a total liability ranging from \$7,868,746.31 . . . to \$23,606.238.62.” Apparently Mortenson spends huge sums of CAI money to buy his own books from regular booksellers, both to continue the flow of royalties into his pocket and to ensure that the books remain on the bestseller list.

The most dispiriting section of “Three Cups of Deceit” suggests that many of the schools Mortenson built seem to have been motivated by the need to provide grist for the mills of his ghostwriters. Most are “ghost schools” that no children will ever inhabit. They are poorly planned, unfunded, and set in areas the children can’t reach.

Mr. Krakauer at on point describes Mortenson as someone who “lost his way,” alluding to a remark from “Stones into Schools” in which its author states that “I am nothing more than a fellow who took a wrong turn in the mountains and never quite

managed to find his way home.” But “Three Cups of Deceit” also quotes Mortenson as acknowledging that his fundraising and self-promoting “have often made me feel like a man caught in the act of conducting an illicit affair with the dark side of his own personality.”

None of us can claim to be wholly without the shadow of a dark side, for each of us naturally seeks to become a valued member of the family, clan, and society in which we find ourselves. Perhaps humanitarian impulses, noble as they may be at conception, inevitably have a smidgen of self-promotion at their core. But people like Bryan Adrian seem able to leave behind self-centeredness in favor of a life of plain service. Krakauer acknowledges that Greg Mortenson did some good for some impoverished children. Trouble is, much of his effort seems to have centered on “I, me, and myself.”