

**Convocation Welcome Address – President
George Truett, August 21, 2009**

Welcome ... to the exciting start of an historic academic year that shows nearly a 20% increase in enrollment over last fall

Welcome ... to the tough start of an historic year—the year we deal with and complete the current 2 recommendations of the accrediting commission.

Welcome to all employees of the college—faculty, new, returning, and transitioning from summer to fall—

Welcome to all other staff and employees who have been working hard through the summer to make as smooth as possible this historic year—

Welcome to our students—our community members who have voted with their feet to put their trust in College of the Redwoods—trust that we at CR can and will offer them an educational haven during this time of financial storm—trust that CR employees will help each of them, each student, to build the rainbow of their dreams.

How many of you have read the CR book of the year—Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin?

It's an important book for all of us who are going through this time of societal stress and social transition.

CR, for many, is that last rock of possibility during our nation's current storms and seeming instability. Lives around us are being uprooted and are sinking into pessimism.

Yet CR is truly that gleam in the darkness—an educational lighthouse that our communities look to, to steer by.

Back to the chronicle Three Cups of Tea—a book about a man’s evolving dream and life—filled with trial and error—but in an unusual way, totally focused on bringing education—schools—especially to the girls in the tribal villages of northwest Pakistan—those villagers living in the shadow and light of some of the remotest and highest mountains in the world.

I would like to ask anyone here taking a class at CR this fall semester to please stand. (*remain standing*)

Now, anyone who has ever before taken at least one class at CR, please stand and join our current students.

**Thank you ... thank you each one of you—
standing as vibrant reminders of why we are
gathered here today—to celebrate our
commitment as individuals and as part of CR’s
college community—to serve you.**

(thank you, please be seated)

**I strongly believe that we, as employees and
board members, have an unfailing commitment to
those who have come and will come to CR
seeking help, confidence, motivation, guidance.**

**How do we show that commitment? For those
who’ve read the book of the year—by drinking
three cups of tea. You might say, our commitment
perhaps starts with looking a new or returning
student in the eye while saying—**

**Hello...Welcome...welcome to CR. My name
is...George Truett. And yours? ...Nice to meet
you. You’ve come to a great place.**

Ten seconds, to make a student feel the campus is our educational home together—their refuge—their place of hope for building their dreams into reality, into a future.

Three Cups of Tea... to build those schools for girls and make them a reality in Pakistan, Greg Mortenson had to bridge physical and human divides. This leads me to comment on our warning sanction and a crucial recommendation that affects us all—a recommendation which I think of as the wise advice and demand of the public, as represented by the accrediting commission. We here must bridge the communication and operational divides at College of the Redwoods. Here is what the visiting team wrote to us right before they crafted that recommendation for everyone who works at CR:

Everyone cares deeply about their college and its future, but presently there is not a common understanding of that future. The [visiting] team suggests there is no better way to demonstrate loyalty and respect for College of the Redwoods than to suspend the current distrust, disbelief and anxiety and work together to forge new understandings of everyone's responsibility to make the college an exemplary institution.

Three Cups of Tea...to forge new understandings.

I just want to thank Professor David Holper for introducing us to Three Cups of Tea, and mention that the author Greg Mortenson will be visiting us and Eureka on Tuesday, October 20th.

Now, I know Three Cups of Tea has found a special place in the heart of Trustee Sally Biggin....(Sally?) Also on CR's board, Rick Bennett, _____and with us another four years, another strong supporter of our mission to serve students and our communities, Tom Ross.

From the entire board, thank you for being here today and contributing your best to College of the Redwoods.

Mike?