

## 600 HOURS OF EDWARD

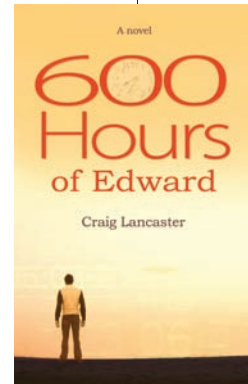
By Craig Lancaster  
Riverbend Publishing, 280 pages, \$14

Edward Stanton is an unpretentious man. He makes copious notes, keeps data, prefers facts to any kind of speculation, and when asked a question responds directly. He is long on manners but has no sense of political correctness. Stanton is 39 years old, lives alone, and writes letters of complaint on a daily basis, which he never sends. In short, he is a quirky, charming man, a character in the true sense of the word. He also has Asperger Syndrome.

Craig Lancaster's novel about the fictional Stanton is an early summer's worth of fresh air reading. It takes on the difficulty of relationships and social interaction through the mind of a man

who by the limitations imposed by his illness is more comfortable alone, singularly ill-suited to the give and take of community. And yet he does. Haltingly, faultily at first, but gathers steam as he looks outside his home and beyond the Dagnet reruns he watches every evening.

Dagnet is an ordered world for Edward, built on facts that Joe Friday uncovers logically and relentlessly. "I would not want to be a criminal being worked over by Friday and Gannon. They would surely make me admit my crimes. They are very logical men." That outcome is Stanton's comfort zone. He lives for pattern and the clear steps of certainty. Watching him wander out of that zone is at times painful and oftentimes humorous. An attempt at online dating is hilarious in its honesty.



The real break from the stranglehold of routine is at the instigation of a 7-year-old boy, his new neighbor Kyle. They paint the garage together, Stanton builds him a monster of a bicycle, and Kyle's mother, wary at first of this strange neighbor, takes on the challenge of having him as a friend. We do not know the outcome, but the steps Stanton takes in breaking first the bonds of a horrible relationship with his family, then venturing out into the irrational world are there. First steps, only 600 hours, but with grand promise.

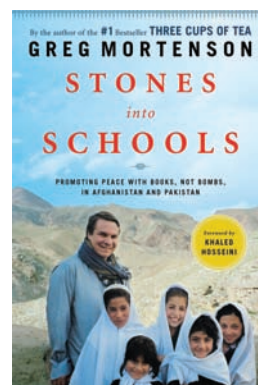
This is a wonderful book. Mr. Lancaster's journey from the daily life of journalism at the Billings Gazette into the imaginative pages of fiction was one well taken, for himself, for readers and certainly for the lovingly created Edward Stanton.

## STONES INTO SCHOOLS:

Promoting Peace with Books, Not Bombs, in Afghanistan and Pakistan

By Greg Mortenson | Viking, 352 pages, \$26.95

I am leery of the "by and about" authors who write first-hand their good deeds. The bully pulpit book is literature disguised, long on publicity and short on thought. I did not read Mr. Mortenson's previous book, *Three Cups of Tea*, and so expected the worst of his most recent title. The very



best materialized in this fine book.

Yes, the book is centered on the Central Asian Institute, CAI — a non-profit, Montana-based organization that builds schools, with educating girls in Pakistan and now Afghanistan as its main goal. Yes, Mortenson is its founder and so at the

center of attention. But the self-satisfaction is subtle, only where deserved, and the drive of the book is more of a detailed history of that little-known but prominent — because of war and terrorism — part of the world. Mortenson, like all good leaders, has studied and knows the details of what has come before CAI in trying to sort out a small slice of disturbingly complex history. You have to know the rules to break the rules, and he has mastered both efficiently and to