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BILLINGS – It was a dreary January day in 1910 when the students, staff and faculty gathered to share their first meal on the campus of Rocky Mountain College. They had spent the day loading their trunks and furniture onto hay wagons to move into the new buildings. Horses and humans labored in the slush and mud. That evening they gathered for their first meal on campus. The menu was sparse. Some cold meat, boiled potatoes, beans and doughnuts. There were not enough forks for everyone so they had a choice of a spoon or knife. The electricity was not working, so they ate on rough bare boards with candles flickering here and there.

That candlelight dinner became a legacy for the college to celebrate each year, commemorating its meager beginnings but signifying its spirit in the face of adversity. This year will mark the centennial celebration of that first candlelight dinner.

The centennial candlelight dinner will be held Thursday, February 12, 2009 in Prescott Hall, formerly the dining room for the college, beginning at 5:30 p.m. Reservations are required due to limited seating, according to Vicki Davison, RMC alumni relations and annual fund director.

There will be two awards presented during the evening. Ron Sovey, a 1964 RMC graduate, will receive the RMC Alumni Association Outstanding Achievement Award. Dr. Lawrence F. Small will receive the RMC Distinguished Service Award.

“This year we will be honoring two exceptional friends of Rocky,” said Ms. Davison. “Their generous contributions of time and talent, as well as their support of students, faculty and staff, exemplify the spirit of giving that makes Rocky such and excellent institution.”

Mr. Sovey, a 1965 Rocky graduate, is retired from John Deere International where he was the Director of Wage Administration, establishing all the wages for John Deere in North America. He has been an avid supporter of his Alma Mater. Mr. Sovey helped establish the Larry Pretty Weasel Endowed Scholarship. In addition to this generous gift, he also made a 10 year pledge to the Annual Fund, and joined the RMC Quarter Back Club in support of Rocky football. He is a current member of the RMC Board of Trustees.

Dr. Small came to RMC in 1959 as a professor, and was named president in 1966. He served as president until 1975 when he returned to teaching, retiring in 1990. He served from 1984-1990 as executive director for the Montana Association of Churches. He was also founder and chair of the RMC Institute for Peace Studies. In addition to other books, Dr. Small authored a two volume college history, “Courageous Journey,” and “Pathways to the Present.”

For more information or to make reservations: Vicki Davison, RMC director of alumni relations and annual fund, (406) 657-1005, vicki.davison@rocky.edu