

Disarmed: The radical life and legacy of Michael “MJ” Sharp

By Marshall V. King (Herald Press, 2022, 255 pp, \$29.99 US)

Many details about the tragic end of Michael Sharp’s life have received international publicity.

Five years ago, Sharp and colleague Zaida Catalàn were working in the Democratic Republic of Congo for the United Nations. Misled into believing that they would be safe

meeting rebels in the bush, they were kidnapped and killed.

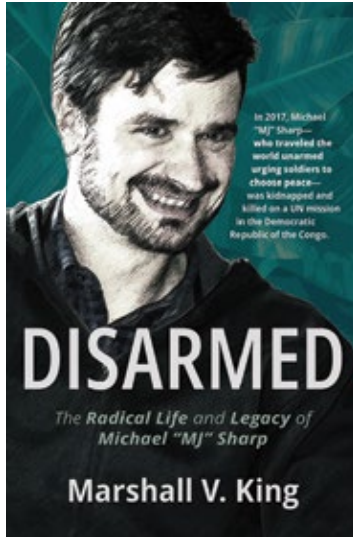
Since the publication earlier this year of Marshall King’s engaging story of “MJ” Sharp’s life, 50 people have been convicted in connection with the conspiracy that led to the murder of the two UN envoys.

In *Disarmed*, King does a masterful job of recounting Sharp’s passion for peace and justice, telling the life story of a man whose commitment to pacifism was anything but passive.

The book delves into how Sharp assessed risk in his work and questions around what constitutes heroism.

As committed as he was to helping others, Sharp loved having fun. Son of a Mennonite pastor, Sharp was a prankster who loved driving a sports car. A wanderer whose ability to win poker games helped pay for his studies at Eastern Mennonite University.

After graduation, Sharp worked with soldiers seeking conscientious objector status in Germany.



A position with Mennonite Central Committee led him to Eastern Congo, teaching non-violent methods of peacemaking and distributing resources to people living in UN camps for internally displaced persons. Success in that work brought him to the attention of UN officials who hired him in 2015.

Sharp’s story would make a great movie. Read this book and you will agree. ●

The funny thing about forgiveness: What every leader needs to know about improv, culture and the world’s least favorite F word

By Andrea Flack-Wetherald. (2021, 213 pp., \$15.99 US)

Andrea Flack-Wetherald is a social worker turned improv performer. She has combined those two passions in & Beyond, a consulting firm that teaches leaders how to be emotionally healthy.

Being emotionally healthy, she writes, allows leaders to build healthy, people-first cultures.

Getting there

requires understanding how to hold accountability and forgiveness together.

Forgiveness is described as the most important soft skill a leader could ever master.

All of life is improv, she writes, and mastering that skill requires both patience and agility.

Patience is sometimes required to navigate the digressions that season this book. But a reader’s perseverance is rewarded with a highly relevant challenge to take an inner journey towards more effective communication.

She emphasizes the importance of listening hygiene. Listening is described as the only one of the primary forms of communication that is not taught in school. A mark of good listening hygiene is ensuring that all communication is receiver-oriented.

The book outlines five core improv skills, providing a sound rationale for each one: Choose curiosity instead of judgement, honor your scene partner, stay in this present moment, listen beyond your comfort zone, and receive everything as a gift.

As with improv performance, people who want to be effective leaders are invited to “follow the fear, as all the fun lies outside your comfort zone.”

Conflict, engaged effectively, can be a useful teaching tool, she suggests. A healthy leader will accept that challenge and invite their team members “to grow into more of who they are.” ●

