



# Making Friends among the Taliban: A Peacemaker's Journey in Afghanistan

*Jonathan P Larson*

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The Sharron Valley is as majestic, harsh, and remote as any in Afghanistan. In the summer, snowmelt feeds a silver ribbon of river, and the valley floor is strewn with stones and boulders. On each side, mountain walls rise steeply away to the crests of the Hindu Kush. As far as the eye can see, there is hardly any sign of human settlement. Not by chance is it home to the elusive snow leopard, ibex, and Marco Polo sheep.

On the silent valley floor, on a summer day in 2010, sits a caravan of three white Land Rovers. Closer examination suggests a desperate story. On small grassy mounds around the vehicles, bodies lie prostrate under a cobalt sky. Others are strewn in and under the vehicles where the victims took cover. All of them taken out execution-style. Ten in all.

The sketchiest outline of what happened there along the river emerges from the testimony of a passing shepherd who witnessed the events from the surrounding hills, and from the sole survivor, a young Afghan driver.

In *Making Friends among the Taliban*, childhood friend Jonathan Larson retraces Dan's nearly forty years in Afghanistan and, through interviews and eye witness accounts, relays Dan's incredible way of daily living. Facing famine, poverty, prison, and rifle muzzles and across three decades of kings, the Red Army, warlords, the Taliban, and the American-led coalition Dan found improbable friendships across the front lines of conflict and inspired small Afghan communities to find a better way of life. This inspirational narrative of Dan's life and friendships offers a model for living authentically wherever we are.

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