

---

## FOREWORD

THE FIRST TIME I became aware of the Aryan Brotherhood was in jail, standing in line to get clean laundry. A deep voice behind me said, "I know who you are."

I ignored the voice, because I was nobody. Whoever the guy was he wasn't talking to me.

"I know who you are," said the voice again. Only this time the voice wasn't behind me, it was over me. Turning, I found myself staring at somebody's chest. A chest that was about one inch from my nose. Taking a step back, I looked up. The guy stood about six feet four inches and had a shaved head. And, from the muscles that adorned his body like ornaments on a Christmas tree, it was obvious he came from good breeding stock. Unlike myself.

"I read about you in the paper," he said. "You're famous."

Sighing, I replied, "Infamous is more like it."

He thought about that for a second and grinned. Then he held out his hand, which was attached to an arm as big as my thigh. His forearm was covered in a spider web tattoo. So was his other forearm and everywhere else. I shook his hand.

He told me his name was T.Rex. His real name was Charles Kemp, but everyone called him T.Rex.

"Why do they call you T.Rex?" I asked.

He paused, thinking about it. Then he shrugged. "I dunno."

Because wise men don't go where angels fear to tread, I didn't say anything. I just nodded.

He said he'd just arrived. He was being transported down south from up north, where he'd been at Pelican Bay prison. I nodded and turned back around. In jail, you don't ask too many questions. If you do, it could mean you're a snitch.

Thirty seconds later, T.Rex growled and said, “This is bullshit, man.” Putting his hand on my shoulder, he stepped out of the line, taking me with him. He then marched—with me in tow—to the front of the line, where the Trustees were doling out clean laundry.

In jail, cutting the line was tantamount to a mortal sin. Anyone stupid enough or crazy enough to try it was immediately challenged by a bevy of angry voices. And since the owners of those angry voices were armed robbers and murderers, persons who didn’t think twice about stomping someone, they usually got their way. The line cutter would “get back in the fucking line!” and wait his turn like everybody else.

But not this time. No one said anything.

“Whaddaya need?” asked the Trustee.

T.Rex looked at me, raising his eyebrows. “Large,” I said.

“Size large for my dog here,” pronounced T.Rex. “An’ triple-X for me.”

The Trustee tossed two bundled rolls of clean clothes at us.

As I walked away, I marveled at T.Rex’s brashness. I figured it was his sheer size and badass attitude that accounted for the episode. I was wrong. It wasn’t T.Rex’s size and attitude that caused the other inmates to bite their tongues. It was what he was.

Later, I found out T.Rex was a member of the Brand, which was a nickname for the Aryan Brotherhood. They were also called the AB or Alice Baker. Whatever they were called, they were royalty in the pecking order of prison, where gangs ruled supreme. Their royal status came from the fact that they were—to paraphrase Psalm 23—the “meanest motherfuckers in the valley of the shadow of death.” Which meant they ran the show in prison.

Which probably explained why T.Rex was in protective custody. Protective custody is jail inside of jail. It’s where they segregate the baddest of the bad guys from the ordinary bad guys. “You gotta keep ‘em separated,” a classification officer told me, or somebody’s going to get hurt. This is because the culture of jail revolves around gangs. And gang affiliation is based on skin color.

---

There were Crips, Bloods, Joe Boyz, Nortenos, Surenos, MS-13, and Nazi Low Riders, just to name a few. Then there was the Aryan Brotherhood. And the truth about the AB was this: no matter where the powers-that-be put them, the Brotherhood did as they pleased. They found a way to reach out and control their environment. Wherever the AB was—inside prison or outside prison—they prevailed. The way they did that was simple: fear, macho violence, and death.

After I found out who and what T.Rex was, I kept my ears open. Anytime anyone spoke about flagrant events in prison, the Aryan Brotherhood was mentioned. To me, it soon became evident that these guys—the AB—were the Real McCoy. They were the definition of ‘Machiavellian function,’ because they took care of business. They didn’t posture, they didn’t negotiate, and they didn’t hesitate.

I became fascinated by the Aryan Brotherhood. I didn’t want to be one, but I did want to understand how they operated and why they were the way they were.

The purpose of this book is to view the remarkable role that the Aryan Brotherhood has played in the largest and most densely populated prison system in the history of humanity—the penal system of America.

When I was released from jail, I began toying with the idea of writing about the Aryan Brotherhood. I wanted to tell the story of the AB from the inside. To tell how they did what they did. To that end, I started doing research. I contacted acquaintances I had met in jail and asked them to hook me up with AB members willing to talk. I also contacted members of law enforcement agencies.

The AB has a code of silence, which each member vows to abide by. Their motto is “lie or die.” In other words, never say anything about the inner workings of the Brotherhood. If you do, you die.

Most law enforcement agencies have a similar code. Only without the death clause, of course. Leaking confidential information is frowned upon, especially for active agents. It is considered a breach of faith and a conflict of interest. So mum is the word.

There were—as is always the case—individuals who were willing to talk. Some were bitter. Some were whistle-blowers. Others just wanted attention. But almost all insisted on one thing: anonymity. They would only talk if they remained unnamed or—in some cases—if their names were changed. Members of the AB feared retaliation or incarceration. While members of law enforcement agencies didn't want to lose their jobs or become pariahs. And active correctional officers had a very real fear of reprisals from prison inmates.

Of the two groups—good guys and bad guys—the bad guys were motivated by a lust for approbation. They wanted attention. They wanted the world to know how tough they were, how smart they were, how they beat the system. So they agreed to be interviewed, as long as they could hide behind an anonymous wall.

For example, Arturo Colano, who is my favorite character in the book, had never been arrested or interrogated by the authorities. Oh, they knew he existed, but that's all. They had no name, no description and no photograph. Zilch. In my opinion, when Arturo agreed to be interviewed, he did so out of a need for recognition. Like Zorro he wanted to leave his calling card, his mark. Yet at the same time, he realized that removing his mask would end his career. And he thoroughly enjoyed his career. So he insisted that his real name not be revealed.

In other instances, high-ranking gang members spoke openly about gang activities. They agreed to do so only if their names were withheld, which was their way of taking the Fifth Amendment. They didn't want to incriminate themselves. Under the circumstances, a portion of what they said was possibly embellished, amplified, enhanced and sensationalized. However, it's also likely that there's more here than meets the eye. Since they were speaking anonymously, why wouldn't they speak with accuracy? Which means the Devil may be just as black hearted as he says he is.

In any event, the text tries to carefully reproduce their words. These interviews form the primary sources for the book.

---

Without the interviews of Sam Sauter, Arturo Colano, Wolf Weiss, members of the Aryan Brotherhood, members of the Nazi Low Riders and others, including US marshals, DEA and ATF agents, correctional officers, officers of the court (attorneys), and FBI agents, the story would have been bereft of flesh.

While much of the dialogue and background in the book is taken directly from court transcripts, newspaper and magazine articles, and depositions, in many cases it is based on conversations with the actual participants.

It should be recognized that trial testimony and interviews sometimes produced conflicting versions of events. Where such conflict existed in testimony or recollection, I sought to provide a version of the facts which was in my opinion the most plausible.

Roger Poppen, who was—once upon a time—a crackerjack investigative journalist, performed a number of interviews during the big federal trial of the Aryan Brotherhood that took place in 2004 through to 2006. Access to those unpublished interviews provided extremely valuable information.

Court transcripts report what was said. The veracity of what was said is open to debate. Most of the television documentaries relied on former members of the AB, who had an agenda. Their agenda included applauding themselves. According to them, they had seen the error of their ways and had gotten out of the Aryan Brotherhood for one reason or another. More often than not, that reason was opportunism. They became informers in exchange for reduced prison sentences.

Due to the Freedom of Information Act—often called ‘sunshine laws’—certain bureaucracies released files relating to the Aryan Brotherhood. For the most part, the files were highly redacted. Which means they were bankrupt, as far as providing any concrete information about the inner workings of the AB.

All that being said, writing about the Aryan Brotherhood was simultaneously frightening and exhilarating. For absolute evil has among its constituents a subtle hallucinizer. The observer is

hypnotized by that which his senses cannot comprehend. Pure, unadulterated, raw violence is beyond the understanding of most people. It is as alien as little green men from outer space.

That's what separates the Aryan Brotherhood from the rest of humanity. And in the end, it's what sets them apart from other prison gangs.

*John Lee Brook*