



## The Klan Unmasked

*Stetson Kennedy*

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## **The Klan Unmasked** Stetson Kennedy

"The shocking truth about hooded terrorism by a man who infiltrated the infamous Ku Klux Klan and lived to tell about it."—*Tony Brown's Journal*

"In a fast-paced narrative that both repels and fascinates, Kennedy reveals the inner workings of the Klan as an undercover agent in the post-WWII era."—*Kliatt Young Adult Paperback Book Guide*

Stetson Kennedy here tells the story of his post-World War II years as an undercover agent in the KKK (where he rose to Kleagle rank). Fast-paced and suspenseful, the book is a gripping mix of eyewitness reports of Klan activities, accounts of Kennedy's clandestine information-gathering, and his efforts to report his findings to the media and to any law enforcement agencies that would listen. As a result, for a time in the 1940s, Washington news commentator Drew Pearson was reading Klan meeting minutes on national radio, and radio's Superman had America's kids sharing the most current Klan passwords as fast as the Dragon could think up new ones.

## **The Klan Unmasked Details**

Date : Published February 1st 1990 by University Press of Florida

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Author : Stetson Kennedy

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Genre : History, Nonfiction, Mystery, Crime, Politics, Social Movements, Social Justice

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## From Reader Review The Klan Unmasked for online ebook

### **Barbara says**

I met Stetson Kennedy about six years ago. Fascinating stories. Sad commentary on humanity.

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### **Jonathan Dixon says**

I first approached this because I was doing research for a stageplay that involved the KKK. I was quickly drawn in by the mixture of good storytelling and the understanding that these were true events. The very nature of someone going undercover into a hate group is very compelling, and the book reads like a novel. This is directly non-fiction, but is a first-hand account of KKK practices in Mid-20th century Georgia.

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### **Joanne says**

Kennedy went undercover with the Klan during the 1950s. His courage to do so was amazing, particularly given the web of law enforcement, politicians, and federal agents who were Klan members. I was surprised by how freely he would walk into, say, an FBI office, and announce that he had infiltrated the local Klan under the name of John Perkins, and then walk out. Why was he so free with his secret identity? How could that work?

The book reads pretty sensationally, almost like a comic book. That plus the hate spewed by Klan members, and their casual violence, makes it hard to read. I made it through the first third and then skipped to the end. Kennedy's brilliance, though, was in making the Klan ridiculous, exposing their secret passwords and rituals to make them seem like an overgrown boys' club. A nasty and dangerous one, but silly. At one point he had the writers of the *Superman* radio show include all the Klan's passwords in episodes about Klan-busting.

Kennedy claims that President Harding had been inducted into the Klan, and that Eisenhower was pro-segregation. At the end of the book he includes some Klan-fighting tips (such as investigate their charter and tax status) and laments that many people in 1990, when the book was reissued, no longer saw the Klan as a threat. He thinks they're more of a threat, especially as they ally with neoNazi groups.

I heard a bit of an "interview" with Kennedy on NPR several years ago, an interview which was replayed this past August when he died.

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### **Dawn Wells says**

When I read books of this genre it always humbles me and makes me more loving to everyone.

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### **Krista says**

This book deserves more than 5 stars. I enjoyed learning the ins and outs of the KKK, and I found it interesting how the members in general seemed to be pretty stupid. It saddened me to read some of the night rides and what they did to people, but it was liberating to see how Kennedy worked to get them exposed. What a great man!

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### **David says**

It was a different time, in that the Klan operated openly (at least in some arenas). The public message of the Klan after WWII did not differ from the opinions of a large minority of Americans at the time. However, they had a darker side, one that I think most people knew about, but none could pin on them. That is why Kennedy's work was so instrumental in the fight against the post WWII Klan. He got inside, and showed that the hatred preached as white supremacy actually was based on violence and murder. He also showed that the Klan had infiltrated and corrupted large numbers of sheriff's offices, police departments and other organs of government across not only the south, but the north as well. Kennedy's message is that the Klan needs to be constantly exposed, as it operates in the dark.

This book is an amazing read, and I recommend it to anybody who likes spy fiction, thrillers, or history

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### **Pam says**

Sept '08 rec via bookmooth

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### **Tamra says**

In the 1940s, folklorist Stetson Kennedy went undercover in the KKK and other hate groups in order to document and expose their secrets. When he realized that law enforcement didn't really care, he funneled the information he was collecting to, among others, the Superman radio show. The exposure was credited with breaking the Klan in Georgia.

It turns out that portions of Kennedy's work may be a bit exaggerated (or just plain made-up), but it's such an interesting piece of history that you can't help but be completely taken in by his story.

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### **Kmkoppy says**

The author isn't the most sophisticated writer, but the book details his experiences investigating the Klan. This guy was one of the bravest individuals I've ever read about. His efforts to expose the Klan's horrible deeds were unbelievable. I know there's been some question of the accuracy of his reports, but personally I believe the majority of what he wrote in this book. He was determined to bring down the KKK, and if the FBI and politicians weren't so corrupt during that time, he probably would have been able to make an even

bigger contribution. We will always need to be wary of those in power.

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### **Vincent says**

Stetson Kennedy tells an incredible story of essentially infiltrating the KKK in the deep south - Atlanta - and learning some of their secrets, patterns, traditions, etc. with a goal toward exposing them.

In the book, he describes how when he was young his African-American nanny was one day beat up by some white men for being in the wrong place. This experience had a profound experience on Kennedy, who was raised without prejudice.

His book is sometimes clouded by his own frustrations that the FBI did not do more to respond to his phone calls and messages about what he had discovered.

Some portions of the story are very dramatic, as when he describes riding in a car along with a bunch of racists KKK'ers and they knock an African American farmer into a ditch and kill his donkey, or simply drive their car over a young black man, crushing him instantly.

These indiscriminate acts of violence are a reminder of how awful prejudice is and how much courage it took for him to immerse himself in this world in an effort to make things right.

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### **Walkermetting says**

Stetson Kennedy is awesome! He infiltrated the Klan. Tried to get the authorities to use the secrets he'd gathered against them... He slips all of their secrets off to the Superman radio show writers who use all of their ritual and actual passwords in a week long serial. Woody Guthrie shows up with a rifle, when the kkk is trying to burn down his house. Fun and sensational, political and inspiring!

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### **Pat says**

Half Martin Luther King Jr, half James Bond?

That's how Stetson Kennedy tells it anyway. It's a fascinating read about a journalist who was sick and tired of the KKK spreading its reach while government agencies sat idly by. He took up the mantle himself by lambasting them in print, then getting his hands dirty by infiltrating under a fake name. He tells of learning the secret rituals and passwords and befriending the worst of the worst. He mentions the dozen or so times when things got bad and he was almost smoked out and put in a pine box. There are so many close calls it feels more like a comic book (as another reviewer pointed out) than a staid, non-fiction narrative. On this count, it does feel almost "too good to be true", near sensationalism. BUT, the book still has GREAT value in bringing out all the gory, disgusting details of how widespread and organized the official hate groups were after World War II and several decades after.

I had never heard of the Columbians and I hadn't appreciated how deeply the Klan had their filthy hands into law enforcement and politics. It was a very helpful read to bring back to life all those horrible (yet common) things that minorities had to deal with in the south, just a generation or two ago.

