



PROFILING **EVIL**

DECEIVED

AN INVESTIGATIVE MEMOIR OF THE
ZION SOCIETY CULT

MICHAEL R. KING

Foreword by
Forensic Neuropsychologist Dr. Judy Ho

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Prologue

In the next few years, this earth will be rocked and buffeted by the most fearful destruction in the history of mankind. Millions shall perish. Suffering beyond human imaginations will occur, and all the prophesied plagues, diseases, earthquakes, floods, wars, and pestilence of every imaginable kind will be poured out without measure. Men shall wish to die to escape the horror of it all. I cannot paint in words, even a millionth part of the death and horror that awaits this generation.

This dire warning from a self-proclaimed prophet of God was designed to strike fear into the hearts of his gullible followers. For more than a decade, the leader of the Zion Society cult wielded complete control over his devotees. They viewed themselves as the spiritually elite. They had come from near and far seeking the exclusive communications of God's will that their leader promised to provide. Some came to practice polygamy secretly, which they believed was sanctioned by God.

This so-called prophet spoke to his followers in language reminiscent of scripture, and cult members fell for his lies. In his soft-spoken way, he demanded their complete allegiance and devotion.

Once followers experienced sufficient angst from his repeated threats and intimidations, the leader would offer hope.

A special blessing of protection in the last days will encircle those who would bring forth plural marriage and Sister Councils. It is a promise that they would be protected and delivered from the vengeance of God and the cleansing of the earth. Yes, those who embark upon such programs will not taste the bitter wrath of God when it is poured out without measure upon the earth.

The grandfatherly leader who prided himself in his gardening skills was persuasive and manipulative. But he was no man of God. He was a con man, a narcissist, a sex pervert, and a pedophile. He had spent years concocting his abominable “religion” as a guise to satisfy his many perversions. With his abhorrent program called Sister Councils, he managed to convince members of his cult to participate in some of the most repugnant crimes against women and children ever seen in the state of Utah. If not for the courage of a young woman who had been recruited into the cult, the horrible practices might never have been discovered.

We know that people can be led to buy almost anything.... In addition to buying almost anything, people can apparently be led to believe almost anything.... Cults know that if you knew from the get-go what you were in for and why, you would never join. It's as simple as that.

Singer, Margaret Thaler, with Lalich, Janja (2003)
Cults in our Midst, Jossey-Bass

PART ONE

"I didn't go there to join a cult; I went there to escape a bad marriage."

Erin Anderson

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The Confession

July 10, 1991

I heard my office phone ringing down the hall as I stepped out of the municipal building elevator. My workday seemed to be starting without me. As an investigator in the county attorney's office assigned to work property crimes, my days were never quiet. A relentless backload of cases stacked up daily. I rushed to my seventh-floor office only to find I had missed the call. Taking advantage of a quiet moment, I sat down at my desk and began preparations for an upcoming STING operation.

My office was generally a hive of activity and today would be no different. It wasn't long before investigators started filing in and out and the phone began again. I ignored it, hoping the receptionist would take a message. The incessant ringing became increasingly annoying, so I grabbed the receiver and abruptly answered, "This is King." The caller on the other end was our office receptionist asking me to come to the lobby to meet someone.

Another interruption to my already busy day.

Impatiently, I stepped into the lobby. The receptionist gestured toward a young woman seated in a chair.

“Mike, this woman has been waiting to talk to someone for a while—can you help her?”

The woman appeared to be in her twenties and very petite. She was attractive and well-dressed all in black. Her hair was also black, big and stiff with hairspray. She wore plenty of makeup. It was clear she had spent a lot of time getting ready for the day. She looked up from the magazine she was flipping through and politely stood to greet me.

“My name is Erin Anderson,” she said with a very slight lisp. “I need to talk to someone about a cult I have been a member of that is sexually abusing children. Do you have time to talk to me?”

The air seemed to leave the room.

Did I hear her correctly? Did this woman just confess to sexually abusing children?

I stood stunned, frozen. This was the last thing I expected to hear today especially from such a successful looking young woman. She spoke so matter-of-factly that I was caught off guard. I had handled confessions before; this was not the first, nor would it be the last. But usually, confessions came with carefully planned interviews and often times just plain luck. Rarely, did someone offer one without some sort of provocation. *

“Sure,” I said as calmly and professionally as possible, “why don’t we step into my office?”

I tried to gather my thoughts as we walked through my office door. I pulled up a chair and invited the young woman to sit down. Before I could say anything, she blurted out what seemed to be a rehearsed statement.

**There are documented accounts by the “The Innocence Project,” (a team of criminal justice professionals who have exonerated hundreds of wrongly convicted people through DNA testing), that show incidents of people confessing to things they didn’t do, resulting in prison sentences. Their findings suggest that one fourth of those inmates who were exonerated had actually made false confessions to the crimes they were convicted of and the reasons for the confession varied. Some confessed because of real or perceived intimidation, devious interrogation techniques or fear. For some reason, most people will ultimately agree to a police interview when asked. Some experts suggest that it is their way of ensuring police that they are innocent of any charges. Fortunately, law enforcement officers have a much better chance of extracting the truth from people when they can talk to them shortly after a crime, rather than having to filter the information which becomes orchestrated or contaminated over time. With Erin, her initial 4-hour confession would come three months after the last criminal act she committed.*

“I came to the county attorney’s office because of the guilt I have been feeling for a long time. I know terrible crimes are being committed. I need to remove this heavy burden and turn the abusers in.”

“Hold on,” I said. “First, I would like to get some personal information from you.”

She took a deep breath, seemingly relieved.

I wanted to make sure the interview, which could turn into an interrogation, was legal and had structure. I pointed to the locations of the restrooms and the exits.

“Remember, you can leave at any time,” I said.

I reached for an old vintage cassette recorder I kept on a dusty shelf and told her I would be recording our conversation. I then pulled a Miranda Rights card from my desk drawer. Although I knew the warning by heart, I wanted to make sure everything was done by the book. I pushed the record button and began reading Erin her rights.

“You have the right to remain silent.....” I read. “Do you understand each of these rights I have explained to you?”

“Yes, I do,” she said without hesitation.

Erin then began the interview with one of the most captivating statements I had heard in my career.

“Until a few months ago, I was a member of the Zion Society.”

No sooner did the words leave her mouth than I interrupted, “Can you repeat that? A member of what?”

Patently, she repeated, “I was a member of the Zion Society.”

I had heard her correctly. I was actually interviewing someone from a secretive, religious cult in a housing development called the Northwood Subdivision that the police department had heard rumors about for some time.

For several years, there was talk around the city that a group of religious zealots had formed their own religion. There were allegations that the group was practicing polygamy, but no credible evidence had ever surfaced to support the claims. Almost an urban legend of sorts, the sect had been the topic of behind-doors gossip and intrigue for nearly a decade.

Rumors had it that the group was purchasing several small homes in the northern Ogden, Utah neighborhood. Oddly, elaborately landscaped yards distinguished cult members' houses from those belonging to their neighbors. It wasn't uncommon for neighbors to report carloads of onlookers cruising the quiet streets to see the beautiful yards and perhaps catch a glimpse of the homeowners. Some neighbors resorted to placing signs on their front lawns that read: *We are not one of them!*

Access into the neighborhood was only possible through one street. This led to speculation that cult members surveilled each vehicle and pedestrian who entered and reported such movement to the group's leaders.

Curious myself, I had personally driven through the neighborhood dozens of times looking for anything to substantiate these rumors. Within a few minutes of interviewing, Erin had.

As I listened, it became apparent that the existence of a religious cult in Ogden was only the tip of the iceberg. Without hesitation, Erin went on to explain the group was led by a 61-year-old man named Arvin. Ironically, along with many gardens around the city, Arvin was credited with designing and maintaining the famous Ogden City Municipal Gardens surrounding the police department. Nearly every city official knew him.

Arvin, Erin added, had already recruited over 100 followers who considered him to be a prophet of God. He proclaimed to have godly authority to direct and control the group members' daily affairs including all aspects of finances, education, religion, and even individual sexuality. She said he preached that he had received instructions from God to take multiple wives of all ages, including little girls. Erin went on to say Arvin eventually coerced the members of his group to engage in an abhorrent program he claimed was sanctioned by God that consisted of deviant sexual practices involving children.

"I want you to know that I didn't go there to become a member of a cult; I went there to escape a bad marriage," she said, her voice trembling.

I was both horrified and stunned. If these appalling accusations were true, we would be dealing with what was likely the biggest and most significant child sex abuse case in the history of the state if not the country.

After what seemed like a few minutes, I glanced at the wall clock and was surprised to see that more than three hours had passed since Erin had begun talking. We were both emotionally exhausted and I suggested we take a break, that perhaps it would make better sense to regroup the following day. She breathed a sigh of what appeared to be relief.

As Erin stood to leave, she glanced around. She paused to view some photographs of my family I had placed about the office.

“Your children are beautiful,” she said and then grew silent for a moment. “They look safe. That’s something I denied my daughter.” Tears welled up in her eyes.

After she’d gone, I found myself feeling considerable sorrow for this young woman despite what she had just revealed. If the things she had said were true, I worried she might very well, out of self-preservation, change her mind and not return for our appointment scheduled for the next morning. I also couldn’t help wondering if there might be some hidden motivations for her confession. Did she have a secret agenda?

I immediately slipped into county attorney Reed Richards’ office to brief him on this explosive interview. I had joined the prosecutor’s office four years earlier at the young age of 27, shortly after local defense attorney Richards was elected as the new county attorney.

Although I had grown up in Salt Lake City, I began my law enforcement career in a small department outside of Ogden. I quickly moved on to the Ogden Police Department where I developed my love for police work. The rush of adrenaline when responding to a violent crime in progress was exciting. Every call was different, and you needed to think quickly in order to be successful.

I came to know Richards when I was a young patrol officer and we faced one another in the district court. He was defending a woman named Kitty Eakes who was charged with pre-meditated murder and I

was one of the prosecution's key witnesses. Months earlier, Eakes had killed her lover's wife, Sharon Wetzel, in a pre-meditated, execution-style shooting. Hours after the murder, Eakes had approached me as I sat in my squad car in a nearby park and said she wanted to confess to the killing. After declining her Miranda rights, she provided a full confession during a formal interrogation. Following her confession, and just moments before being booked into the Weber County Jail, she asked if I could make a phone call to her attorney to let him know what happened. It was nearly midnight, but I made the call to Richards at his home. When I told him what his client had confessed to, he ordered, "Tell her not to answer any questions." I readily complied.

In the months that followed, Richards and I exchanged warm "jabs" at each other as the case progressed through the court system, eventually ending with a guilty plea by Eakes. I remember standing in the back of the courtroom as she was led away by the sheriff's deputies, thinking there are no winners in most criminal cases. Richards and I just happened to exit the courtroom at the same time. He turned to me and said, "We had no choice. She clearly confessed to the crime and since every judge in the county thinks you can't tell a lie, we didn't have a chance. All you have to do is smile with that baby face and those dimples and you win your cases." *I'll take it as a compliment, but I've always hated being called a baby face.* A few months later, when Richards was elected Weber County Attorney, he asked me to join his office. Later he told me that he offered me the job because of my performance in the Eakes case.

Friendly and extroverted, the forty-three-year-old Richards came across as easy-going, but he had the unique ability to get you to do things out of your comfort zone. One of the first things I noticed about him was his signature laugh. Like his professional dealings, it was short, decisive, and to the point—one big, loud "Ha." He was average height and weight and as long as I knew him, he kept a deep side part in his chestnut-colored hair. As well as being an outdoorsman and heavily involved in scouting, he was also deeply religious and served in leadership positions in his church. Although he had a jovial smile

and appeared casual in his manner, as an attorney, Richards spoke deliberately and intelligently.

After providing him with a detailed overview of the case's emerging facts, I expressed my concern as to whether Erin was telling the truth.

"She seems very sincere," I said. "But the allegations are so bizarre and horrific. They are just incredibly hard to believe. I also wonder what has motivated her to turn herself in."

As we talked through every detail Erin had shared, we came to the agreement that an immediate and in-depth investigation was warranted in order to better understand the complaint. "If these allegations are true," said Richards, "the children have to be protected."

My first order of business was to look into this so-called prophet.



Mike King has worked in the law enforcement field for over 40 years. He received a BA and an MA in Criminal Justice and began his career as a police officer in northern Utah. He became an investigator in the Weber County Attorney's Office and subsequently in the Utah Attorney General's Office where he also served as Chief of Staff. He trained in criminal profiling under FBI Special Agent Gregory Cooper (ret.). He and Cooper were the investigators for the Discovery Channel's Emmy Award winning investigative documentary: *Who Killed King Tut?* He entered the private sector in 2004 and began working for Environmental Systems Research Institute (Esri) as the global director of emergency communications and fraud. Other books he has authored are: *Who Killed King Tut*, *Predators: Who They Are and How to Stop Them*, *Profilers*, and *Jane: A Woman's Determination and the Wild West Frontier*. He and his wife, Bonnie, are the parents of three children and they have four grandchildren.

To inquire about booking Mike King for a speaking engagement,
please contact ProfilingEvil.com

An audio and digital edition of this book is also available.

Profiling Evil, LLC

"You want to read this book. It is chilling and compelling at the same time."

Dr. Phil McGraw

This book has it all - intellectually scintillating deep dives into the investigation for the true crime buffs, relatable character portrayals of people who joined the cult looking for love and community, and heartwarming stories of hope and redemption after trauma. Mike is an expert author, having penned several books in his illustrious career, and this latest volume is one you won't be able to put down. It is a book you'll want to tell your friends about; a book that will leave a lasting impression with you long after you've finished it.

Dr. Judy Ho, Clinical and Forensic Neuropsychologist,
Associate Professor at Pepperdine University, Author of *Stop Self-Sabotage*

"Deceived" is a memoir of Detective Mike King's 1991 investigation and the ultimate take-down of a deviant polygamous cult called the Zion Society. For over a decade, gossip swirled around northern Utah that a secretive group of religious zealots were buying up homes to take over a developing neighborhood in an Ogden community. The homes were known far and wide for their immaculately landscaped yards. Rumors spread that a well-known landscaper in the city had proclaimed himself to be a prophet of God and was being commanded to start his own secret religion that promoted polygamy. It was also believed these extremists were stockpiling weapons as part of their doomsday beliefs. In reality, the leader was directing some of the most repugnant crimes against women and children ever seen in the state. The hidden atrocities of the cult may never have been discovered if not for the courage of one of its members. Thirty years later, victims reconnected with each other and with the lead investigator to address the shortcomings of the criminal justice system regarding child victims.

I've known Mike King for many years, at least long enough to become a close friend. He is an example of what law enforcement is truly about. He was involved in the solution of a great problem that took place in Ogden, Utah. I won't try to tell you about the book as the story goes far beyond any description. I will say that the book contains intimate details of the solution to one of the most bizarre cases I've ever heard of. As a result of his research and absolute dedication to his profession, Mike has very effectively told this story.

As I began to read it, I became aware that my friend is a great storyteller. As you read this book, the scripture to keep in mind is Mark 9:42 which says "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." Enjoy the read.

Wilford Brimley (1934-2020)

ISBN: 978-1-7362374-0-3

\$19.99 USD



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