INTOLERANCE *from page 1A*

"'We have to kill them first, this is war,'" he remembered thinking. "We can't be pumping out the rhetoric over and over again for years, and then be surprised when someone goes and attacks a child. As disgusted as I was by this, I just said, 'Little ones grow up to be big ones.' And we cracked a beer. That weighed upon me. It still does."

Michaelis has gone through the same journey as those boys — angry and suffering.

Bully

"I had a pretty idyllic childhood," Michaelis said. "I didn't have a lot of reason to lash out. I think it had a lot to do with my adrenaline habit. It was the most powerful way to get a fix by making other kids afraid of me."

He was a smart child, reading complex fantasy novels in second grade. He was put in the gifted program after scoring high on standardized tests.

"I didn't want to be gifted," he said. "I didn't want expectations. So, I thought, 'I'm going to try to make you not expect me to be a golden boy who's going to fix anything. I'm going to break everything.'"

His first bullying victim was his little brother, and he made life miserable for him at an early age.

Next came a kid on the bus with thick glasses. Then more, some with runny noses, others he felt were "funny looking."

It wasn't just verbal taunts that Michaelis doled out. There were often beatings resulting in broken noses and black eyes.

"It was the thrill of punching somebody," Michaelis said. "But getting hit was also a thrill. I definitely enjoyed the idea of dominating someone else."

More than the physical violence, he enjoyed the reactions he would get from the adults, frustrated as to why he was lashing out. They would pay attention to him, which he liked, but the bullying was also an incidental path to get the thrill of creating anarchy.

"There were times when I hurt kids so bad that I felt bad afterwards," Michaelis recalled. "But once you start this process, you get swept up in it. When an adult pulls you off this kid, you feel bad about beating him up. But I didn't have the courage to acknowledge that. I didn't want to acknowledge that I did something wrong, so I would run off to the next victim. I was suffering and I didn't have a healthy way to process that stuff."

By 14 he was drinking. He got into the punk rock scene and would leave for days at a time to see the bands play live.

One summer, he disappeared for a month after trashing his parents' house from a house party. His parents found him, but he refused to go back to school.

"They both loved me very much, but they didn't have any idea how to control me," Michaelis said. "So, they let me drop out of high school. They tried very hard to keep me in, but there just wasn't anything they could do."

Soon after, he moved to Milwaukee, Wis., with a group of punk rockers, living in a rundown house. He then made the transition from punk rocker to white power skinhead.

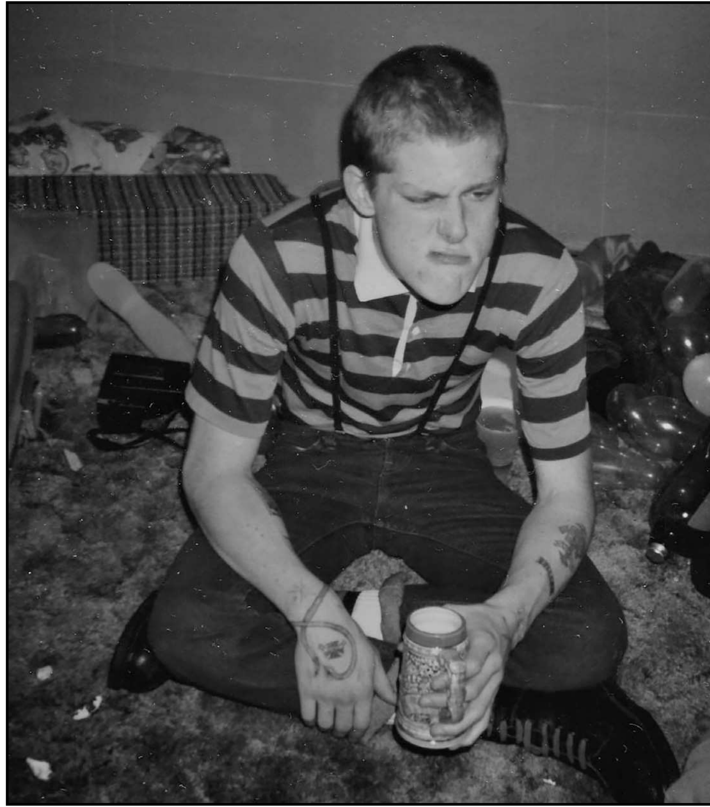
Oi!

"I don't want it to seem like punk is some sort of gateway drug to being a white power skinhead," Michaelis clarified. He still loves the music.

Punk began in the 1970s, becoming popular with bands like the Sex Pistols, The Clash and the Ramones. But there were subgenres in the music, one of the most influential being Oi!

The music, fast-paced with lyrics usually yelled, mainly appealed to working class youth, angry and disaffected over rampant unemployment in Britain. Lyrics included topics of worker rights, street violence and harassment by the police. It was a battle cry to change a seemingly broken system.

"To me, punk was about breaking s—t, pissing people off and lashing out. Wanton absurdity and destruction," Michaelis said. "Bucking against every kind of authority and refusing to be controlled."



COURTESY IMAGE

Arno Michaelis used to be an angry young man, actively involved in skinheads, the punk rock scene and, later, the white supremacy movement.

In Britain, some of the most ardent supporters of this music were skinheads.

"They weren't racist," Michaelis said. "They were British kids, some of whom were Pakistani and some were from the West Indies," Michaelis said. "They would all get drunk, shave their heads so you couldn't grab hair in a fight, and then beat each other up. They weren't choir boys by any stretch, but they weren't racists."

Seeing a volatile group of angry and fearful white men seemed a fertile breeding ground for the fascist European political party The National Front, which was able to move in and begin heavily recruiting.

"They said the reason was that jobs were so bad because of the immigrants," Michaelis said.

And as they groomed the skinheads, the Front also influenced punk rock.

"The music recruited pissed off white kids in the late '80s, early '90s in a big way," he said. "The music was fast and aggressive, coursing with testosterone and toxic masculinity with lyrics that really are offensive to civil society."

One of the bands to come out of this era was Skrewdriver.

"It was then that a friend of mine brought a Skrewdriver tape, and I was like, 'Where have you been all my life!'" Michaelis said. "It was good because of the forbidden-ness of it. It repulsed people. That really fit in with everything I was doing since I was a kid. 'You want to see how horrible I am now? Sieg Heil!' It was a continuation of my youth."

He also confessed that all of it was really just an excuse to keep drinking and fighting.

Peace Punks

Aside for the minority white power punk, there were also peace punks that lobbied for social change. Michaelis hated them.

"To me, punk was about breaking s--t, not giving a s--t," he said. "The fact that the peace punks got all activist made my skin crawl."

At the time, the peace punks were boycotting Coors Beer for allegedly racist hiring habits.

"They didn't hire black people, so they were calling to boycott. I didn't give a s--t one way or another who didn't get hired," Michaelis said. "I would spend the extra couple of bucks to get Coors just to piss off the peace punks when I went to a punk show. And I had a Coors hat that I would wear all the time and wave it in their face. I didn't care about the issue, but because people were so upset about it, I was like, 'Coors is my drink. What are you going to do about it?'"

He was a skinhead by this point, but in the more traditional, drink and fight way. He said he wasn't a racist, nor thinking about the issue. He was apolitical.

But when he heard the white power band Skrewdriver, everything changed.

A larger group of amorphous skinheads in Milwaukee started to galvanize, and soon he was a white power skinhead — and Michaelis' contribution was through music.

"Our first band was called 'One Way,'" he said. "We had a catchy tagline. 'One way, the right way, the white way.'"

Michaelis was the lead singer and writer.

"It was simplistic, but we did it very well. I wrote songs about how Jewish people were taking all our money, or by people who didn't want to work. We were shouting about how white people are better than anyone else," he said.

The peak of his music career came after One Way with a band called Centurion, which sold 20,000 copies and has gained a cult status in the white supremist world.

One of Centurion's most popular albums was named "Fourteen Words," a reference to a phrase coined by David Lean, former leader of the white supremacy group The Order.

After he was incarcerated for murdering Jewish talk show host Alan Berg, Lean penned the manifesto 88 Precepts, which described Lane's philosophies on politics and religion from a Supremacists point of view.

One of the most influential phrases in Lane's writing is the 14-word phrase: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children."

Another female centric version states, "Because the beauty of the White Aryan woman must not perish from the earth."

The shorthand for "Fourteen Words" is just the number 14, but it's generally used in conjunction with the number 88, as in 14/88. "H" is the eighth letter in the English alphabet, with 88 signifying "Heil Hitler" — or 88.

The music on Michaelis' "Fourteen Words" album is a cornucopia of straightforward hate speech and white supremacist code.

The first track on the album, "The Planet is Ours," begins with a heavy metal riff on John Williams' "Imperial March," the theme used for Darth Vader in the Star Wars films.

Shortly after, Michaelis' gravelly, screaming voice overtakes the already punishing guitars and drums.

"We'll drive the muds out of our lands, we'll crush the Jews back into the sands," he screams.

"Muds" refers to any group of African, Middle Eastern or Asian descendants.

"We'll break the hold of the alien powers, RaHoWa! This planet is ours!"

"RaHoWa" is a common supremacist term for Racial Holy War.

Another cut from the album was the self-titled song, "Centurion," which describes RaHoWa in more detail:

"N---er, prepare to burn! You attacked our people and now it's your turn. You act so bold, but we'll slap you down. The legions of hate will put you underground!"

Hammerhead

During this time, Michaelis and his band were embroiled in multiple conflicts. They began wars with anti-fascist (referred to often today as Antifa) bands, trashing their venues and stopping the shows. There were gang wars with black and Latino gangs. And then there were other skinheads.

"Any skinhead who didn't consider themselves a racist, we called them a 'baldy,' implying that they weren't real skinheads," Michaelis said. "So, with my band to rally around and a bunch of 'baldys' to go hunting for every night, we just started growing exponentially."

Many of the beatings were brutal, and at times scared him. In one fight, he was hit in the head with a lead pipe, blood streaming down his face. He lunged on his attacker and began beating him into unconsciousness.

"He was just a pulp, I was pounding on his face and his head," Michaelis said. "I could feel him trying to struggle at first, and then the struggling got weaker and weaker, until his body was limp. There was a part of me, this deep voice inside, going, 'This guy is dying. You're killing this guy.'"

But he kept punching until a friend pulled him off and warned him that the cops were coming. The incident was terrifying, but also exhilarating, he admitted.

"It was one of the most glorious moments of my life," he said. "That was my 'legend' of who I was — what people would say about me in hushed whispers. That became my mythology and people were afraid of me and this holy terror. I wasn't afraid of it all. I was celebrating."

But being a holy terror began taking a toll. One friend went to prison after shooting a kid who did a drive-by at their home. It was self-defense, but the attack came because they were white power skinheads.

"As we radiated hate, violence and hostility into the world, the world reflected it back to us," Michaelis said. "Instead of seeing that as a wake-up call, we saw it as further evidence to validate the ideology that we were espousing. Instead of accepting the consequences of our actions, we blamed those consequences on Jewish people, black people, Latinos — It was everybody else's fault but ours."

One Way broke up, so Michaelis started another short-lived band called Hammerhead. This led to his involvement with the Hammerskins. After that band's demise, he created Centurion.

Along the way, he was becoming more enmeshed in supremacy culture, becoming a minister in the Church of the Creator — a white supremacist religion that reveres the white race, looking to create a holy war with Jews, Africans Americans and "mud" races.

In this Saturday's edition, Michaelis will talk about the views of white supremacy, the reasoning behind it and what proponents hope to achieve — including plans to take over the Earth through race wars. He'll also address the current controversies surrounding white supremacists, Antifa and how the cycle of intolerance can end in America.

"The United States has to sit down for a truth and conciliation process," he said.

Michaelis, along with Kaleka, will be speaking at the Presbyterian Church of the Siuslaw, located at 3996 Highway 101, on July 15 at 6 p.m. for "Gift of Our Wounds: Forgiveness After Hate." Pizza and refreshments will be served at 5 p.m. The event is free to anyone, but donations will be accepted.

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