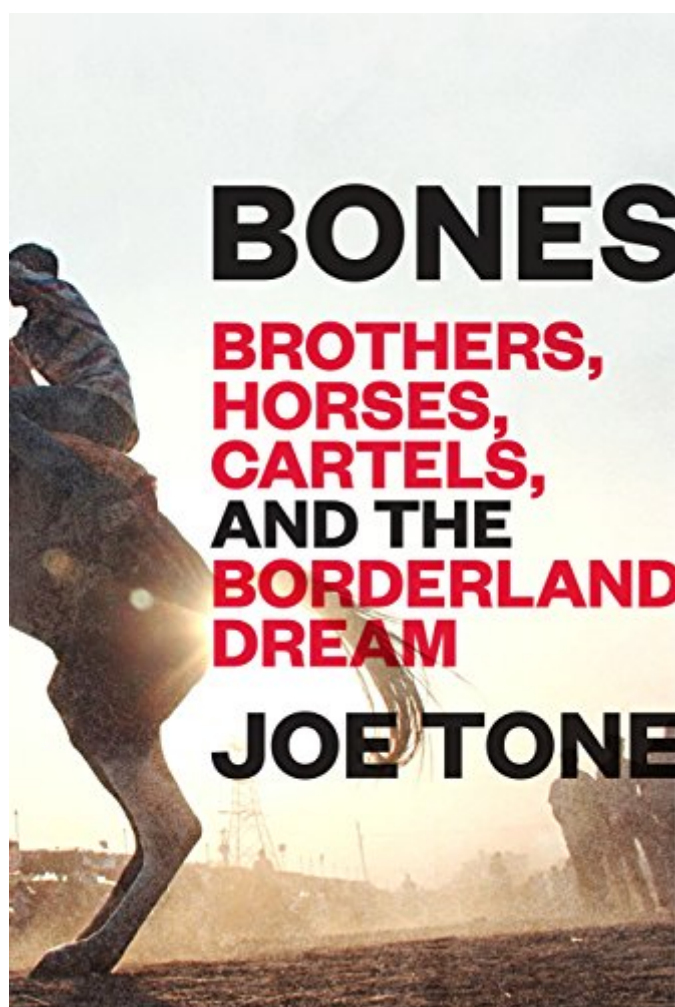


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Bones: Brothers, Horses, Cartels, And The Borderland Dream



Synopsis

The dramatic true story of two brothers living parallel lives on either side of the U.S.-Mexico border and how their lives converged in a major criminal conspiracy. José and Miguel Treviño were bonded by blood and a shared vision of a better life. But they chose different paths that would end at the same violent crossroads with considerable help from the FBI and an enigmatic, all-American snitch. José was a devoted family man who cut no corners in his pursuit of the American dream. Born in Nuevo Laredo, a Mexican border town on a crucial smuggling route, José was one of thirteen children raised by a hardworking ranch hand. He grew up loving the sprawling countryside and its tough, fast quarter horses, but in search of opportunity he crossed the border into Texas to look for work as a bricklayer. He kept his nose clean. He stayed out of trouble. Back in Mexico, José's younger brother Miguel was leading a different life. While José struggled to make ends meet, Miguel ascended to the top ranks of Los Zetas, a notoriously bloody drug cartel—his crimes had become the stuff of legend and myth on both sides of the border. He was said to have burned rivals alive, murdered Mexican and American law enforcement officers, and launched grenades at a U.S. consulate. José, married with kids and now a U.S. citizen, gave every indication of rejecting his brother's criminal lifestyle. Then one day he showed up at a quarter-horse auction and bid close to a million dollars for a horse—the largest amount ever paid for a quarter horse at an auction. The humble bricklayer quickly became a major player in the quarter-horse racing scene that thrived in the American Southwest and Mexico. That caught the attention of an eager young FBI agent named Scott Lawson. He enlisted Tyler Graham, an American rancher who would eventually breed José's champion horse—nicknamed Bones—to help the FBI infiltrate what was revealing itself to be a major money-laundering operation, with the ultimate goal of capturing the infamous Miguel Treviño. Joe Tone's riveting, exquisitely layered crime narrative, set against the high-stakes world of horse racing, is an intimate story about family, loyalty, and the tragic costs of a failed drug war. Compelling and complex, *Bones* sheds light on the perilous lives of American ranchers, the morally dubious machinery of drug and border enforcement, and the way greed and fear mingle with race, class, and violence along America's vast Southwestern border. Advance praise for *Bones*—“One magnificent piece of border reporting.”—Sam Quinones, author of *Dreamland: The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic*—“*Bones* is a riveting read that transcends the larger-than-life cartels, cowboys, and fast horses at its heart. It's about how hard it is to determine what makes a good guy and a bad guy along our embattled border.”—Joe Drape, author of the New

York Times bestseller American Pharoah “What a cast of characters: a bloodthirsty Mexican drug lord, his unassuming blue-collar brother, a daring Texas rancher, and an idealistic young FBI agent. And then there are the racehorses, as fast as the wind, competing for million-dollar purses on the quarter-horse tracks of the American Southwest. Through amazingly detailed research, Joe Tone has brought us a riveting tale about the pursuit of justice in the most dangerous of worlds.” •Skip Hollandsworth, author of the New York Times bestseller The Midnight Assassin

Book Information

File Size: 3471 KB

Print Length: 353 pages

Publisher: One World (August 8, 2017)

Publication Date: August 8, 2017

Sold by: Random House LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B072HLDNPM

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #25,244 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #2

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Customer Reviews

Joe Tone does a great job of connecting the influences on the current drug and cartel world, from law enforcement, to governing laws in the United States and Mexico, to the willing or unwilling business partners available to the drug industry.

In April 2015, the alt-newspaper the Dallas Observer published an article by former editor Joe Tone,

entitled *The Rookie and the Zetas: How the Feds Took Down a Drug Cartel's Horse-Racing Empire*. Tone had left the newspaper to write a book on this story. This is the book. Already, before publication, it's been optioned as a movie. It's a heck of a story. After working at manual labor for years, Jose Trevino suddenly broke loose and began buying champion quarter horses. His horses not only won at the track, they made him tons of money at stud quarter horse racing, for short distances, is big business in the southwest. Eventually Jose had his own stables. He owned at least on paper five hundred horses. (At one auction, his agents spent \$2.3 million to buy twenty-three horses. Where did the money come from? And why do his horses win so often? Jose's brother, Miguel Trevino Morales, was second in command of the ruthless Mexican drug cartel, Los Zetas. Jose disavowed Miguel in public but there was nowhere else this much money could be coming from, and if the Zetas were involved, then even the horses' wins were suspect. Los Zetas had no problem making money. The problem was making it clean afterwards. The border wasn't as porous as it was before 9/11 and old money laundering schemes no longer worked as well as they had in easier times. Horse racing, like gambling casinos, offered Miguel the chance to clean up dirty money, so family ties trumped Jose's desire to stay clean of criminal activity. Enter a rookie FBI special agent, Scott Lawson, assigned to Laredo, Texas. The FBI was already paying a lot of attention to Miguel. Lawson focused on Jose. He found an informer, a wealthy Anglo horse and cattle breeder who had an in with Jose. A lot of squeezing, several near shaves that could have made it all fall apart, and at the end, after three years of effort, Scott, no longer a rookie, got his man. The story is interesting and fast-paced, the cast of characters intriguing. This is reportage, not fiction, and Dallas-based Tone was enough of an insider to know the players and the territory. He does a good job of describing changes in the Mexican drug scene (killings, torture and intimidation, mobs and factions up and down) and explaining the ins and outs of the drug traffic, the mechanics and problems involved in laundering money, and the particular charms of quarter horse racing. Only a good reporter could write this book, and being a Texan himself was a definite asset.

Miguel Trevino has risen to be a power among the Las Zetas cartel, one of the most brutal in Mexico. Miguel--or "Cuarenta," "Forty"--is himself a brutal man, fond of gunfire and violence. He is one of the most wanted--and feared--men in the Mexican drug world. His brother Jose, however, is a law-abiding citizen of the U.S., a Dallas bricklayer. So when Jose suddenly begins investing in--and winning--quarter-horse races, the FBI and other intelligence agencies take notice. Horses

run deep in the Trevino bloodline, and horse racing in the cartel world, and Nuevo Laredo, where the brothers are from. Could Jose have turned from his legal lifestyle and become a means for his brother to launder money in the States? BONES is a thrilling story of crime, legality, and fidelity. Joe Tone brings an interesting writing style. This subject could easily have become your rudimentary true-crime, by-the-way narration. Instead, Tone brings almost a novelist's flare for language, scene, and character. This is a true story, but the pages race by. It's a story both timely and timeless, as terrifying as it is captivating. A must-read for anyone interested in the current Mexican cartel scene, or just anyone who loves a good crime story (especially if it's true).

Bones provides a fascinating look at the Trevino family and how the enticement of easy money lured many of them into the drug trade. Joe Tone has done a masterful job of using primary sources to show the interplay between the family and their desire to better themselves and the lure of the drug cartels to gain fame, fortune, and power. It details the efforts of an FBI agent to bring down members of the Zeta cartel and describes the atrocities perpetrated by some of the most ruthless drug lords in the cartel. It also shows how drug money was laundered through quarter horse breeding and racing and how many turned a blind eye to the cartel's use of drug money to dominate the sport. When I first started reading the book, I thought it was a novel, but, make no mistake, this is a non-fiction account. In fact, many of the players in this drama are still alive, although the cartel murdered more than a few of those who opposed or offended them and scores of them ended up in prison. This is one of those fact is stranger than fiction books that is sure to hold the reader's attention.

I normally don't read books and this is the first I've purchased in years. With that said this book is excellent. I grew up along the border in the US and this book really hits home. It's odd to think that this happens right under our noses without any notion of wrongdoing. If you are on the fence about buying this book just buy it.

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