



The Year of Fear: Machine Gun Kelly and the Manhunt That Changed the Nation

Joe Urschel

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It's 1933 and Prohibition has given rise to the American gangster--now infamous names like Bonnie and Clyde and John Dillinger. Bank robberies at gunpoint are commonplace and kidnapping for ransom is the scourge of a lawless nation. With local cops unauthorized to cross state lines in pursuit and no national police force, safety for kidnapers is just a short trip on back roads they know well from their bootlegging days. Gangster George "Machine Gun" Kelly and his wife, Kathryn, are some of the most celebrated criminals of the Great Depression. With gin-running operations facing extinction and bank vaults with dwindling stores of cash, Kelly sets his sights on the easy-money racket of kidnapping. His target: rich oilman, Charles Urschel.

Enter J. Edgar Hoover, a desperate Justice Department bureaucrat who badly needs a successful prosecution to impress the new administration and save his job. Hoover's agents are given the sole authority to chase kidnapers across state lines and when Kelly bungles the snatch job, Hoover senses his big opportunity. What follows is a thrilling 20,000 mile chase over the back roads of Depression-era America, crossing 16 state lines, and generating headlines across America along the way--a historical mystery/thriller for the ages.

Joe Urschel's *The Year of Fear* is a thrilling true crime story of gangsters and lawmen and how an obscure federal bureaucrat used this now legendary kidnapping case to launch the FBI.

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