

# Sheriff Joe Arpaio

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You probably know him as “America’s Toughest Sheriff,” a name given to him years ago by the media. It’s a name he certainly has earned as head of the nation’s third largest Sheriff’s Office which employs over 3000 people. But even before he became Sheriff in 1993, Joe Arpaio was one tough lawman. After serving in the U.S. Army from 1950 to 1953, and as a Washington, D.C., and Las Vegas, NV, police officer for almost five years, Arpaio went on to build a federal law enforcement career and a reputation for fighting crime and drug trafficking around the world.

He began his career as a federal narcotics agent, establishing a stellar record in infiltrating drug organizations from Turkey to the Middle East to Mexico, Central, and South America to cities around the U.S. His expertise and success led him to top management positions around the world with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). He concluded his remarkable 32-year federal career as head of the DEA for Arizona.

In 1992 Arpaio successfully campaigned to become the Sheriff of Maricopa County. Since then he has been reelected to an unprecedented four 4-year terms. During his tenure as Sheriff of Maricopa County, Arpaio has consistently earned extraordinarily high public approval ratings.

With over four decades experience in law enforcement, Arpaio knows what the public wants, “The public is my boss,” he says, “so I serve the public.” He has served them well by establishing several unique programs.

Arpaio has over 10,000 inmates in his jail system. In August, 1993, he started the nation’s largest Tent City for convicted inmates. Two thousand convicted men and women serve their sentences in a canvas incarceration compound. It is a remarkable success story that has attracted the attention of government officials, presidential candidates, and media worldwide.

Of equal success and notoriety are his chain gangs, which contribute thousands of dollars of free labor to the community. The male chain gang, and the *world’s* first-ever female and juvenile chain gangs, clean streets, paint over graffiti, and bury the indigent in the county cemetery.

Also impressive are the Sheriff’s get-tough policies. For example, he banned smoking, coffee, movies, pornographic magazines, and unrestricted TV in all jails. He has the cheapest meals in the U.S., too. The average meal costs about 15 cents, and inmates are fed only twice daily, to cut the labor costs of meal delivery. He even stopped serving them salt and pepper to save tax payers \$20,000 a year.

Another program Arpaio is very well-known for is the pink under shorts he makes all inmates wear. Years ago, when the Sheriff learned that inmates were stealing jailhouse white boxers, Arpaio had all inmate underwear dyed pink for better inventory control. The same is true for the Sheriff’s handcuffs. When they started disappearing, he ordered pink handcuffs as a replacement. And later, when the Sheriff learned the calming, psychological effects of the color pink—sheets, towels, socks—everything inmates wear, except for the old-fashioned black and white striped uniform, were dyed pink.

Arpaio has started another controversial program, the website [WWW.MCSO.org](http://WWW.MCSO.org), so that all those arrested (about 300 per day) are recorded on the Sheriff’s website as they are booked and processed into jail. Just under a million hits daily come into the website, making it one of the most visible law enforcement sites on the World Wide Web.

In addition to these tough measures, the Sheriff has launched rehabilitative programs like “Hard Knocks High,” the only accredited high school under a Sheriff in an American jail, and ALPHA, an anti-substance-abuse program that has greatly reduced recidivism.

As chief law enforcement officer for the county, Arpaio continues to reduce crime with hard-hitting enforcement methods. His deputies and detectives have solved several high-profile murder cases, including nine child murders. The posse, whose ranks have increased to 3000 members under Arpaio, is the nation’s largest volunteer posse. Posse men and women help in search and rescue and other traditional police work as well as in special operations like rounding up deadbeat parents, fighting prostitution, patrolling malls during holidays, and investigating animal cruelty complaints. The posse’s contributions are invaluable and essentially free to taxpayers.

No wonder Sheriff Arpaio has been profiled in over 2000 U.S. and foreign newspapers, magazines, and TV news programs. His leadership and the excellent work of his staff have catapulted the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office into the ranks of elite law enforcement agencies.

On a personal note, Sheriff Arpaio and his wife Ava have been married for over 48 years and have two children, both residing in the Phoenix area. The Arpaios have four grandchildren.

Arpaio looks forward to many more years as Sheriff of Maricopa County.



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