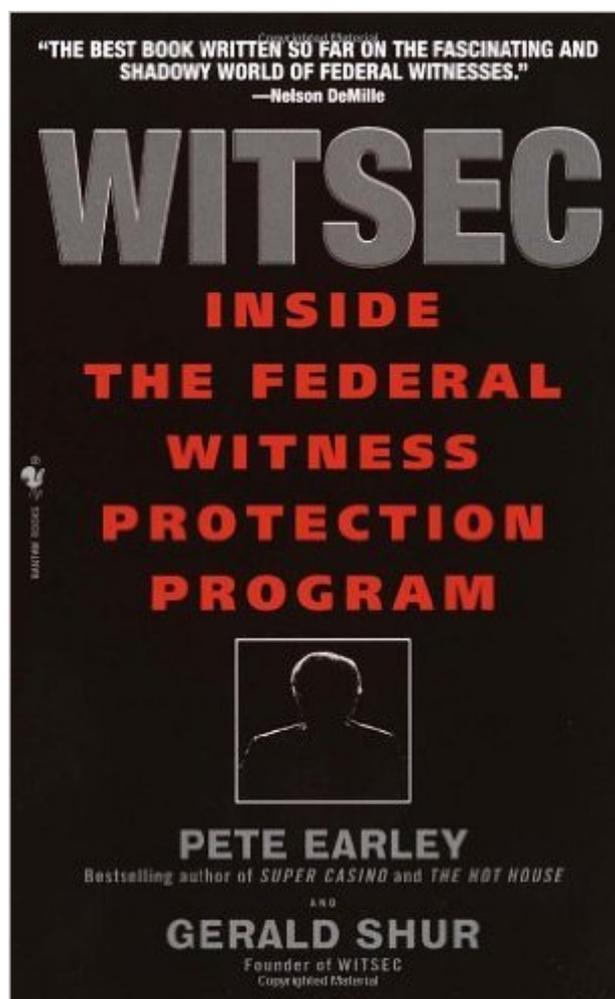


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# Witsec: Inside The Federal Witness Protection Program



## Synopsis

For decades no law enforcement program has been as cloaked in controversy and mystery as the Federal Witness Protection Program. Now, for the first time, Gerald Shur, the man credited with the creation of WITSEC, teams with acclaimed investigative journalist Pete Earley to tell the inside story of turncoats, crime-fighters, killers, and ordinary human beings caught up in a life-and-death game of deception in the name of justice.

**WITSEC: Inside the Federal Witness Protection Program**

When the government was losing the war on organized crime in the early 1960s, Gerald Shur, a young attorney in the Justice Department's Organized Crime and Racketeering Section, urged the department to entice mobsters into breaking their code of silence with promises of protection and relocation. But as high-ranking mob figures came into the program, Shur discovered that keeping his witnesses alive in the face of death threats involved more than eradicating old identities and creating new ones. It also meant cutting off families from their pasts and giving new identities to wives and children, as well as to mob girlfriends and mistresses. It meant getting late-night phone calls from protected witnesses unable to cope with their new lives. It meant arranging funerals, providing financial support, and in one instance even helping a mobster's wife get breast implants. And all too often it meant odds that a protected witness would return to what he knew best—crime.

In this book Shur gives a you-are-there account of infamous witnesses, from Joseph Valachi to "Sammy the Bull" Gravano to "Fat Vinnie" Teresa, of the lengths the program goes to to keep its charges safe, and of cases that went very wrong and occasionally even protected those who went on to kill again. He describes the agony endured by innocent people who found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time and ended up in a program tailored to criminals. And along with Shur's war stories, WITSEC draws on the haunting words of one mob wife, who vividly describes her life of lies, secrecy, and loss inside the program. A powerful true story of the inner workings of one of the most effective and controversial weapons in the war against organized crime and the inner workings of organized crime itself—and more recently against Colombian drug dealers, outlaw motorcycle gang members, white-collar con men, and international terrorists—this book takes us into a tense, dangerous twilight world carefully hidden in plain sight: where the family living next door might not be who they say they are. . .

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I found WITSEC to be fascinating from cover to cover. Gerald Shur was one of the original founders of the federal Witness Protection Program. For many years, he was the lynchpin in bringing increasing levels of organization and professionalism to a once informal "make it up as you go along" experimental program. Now retired and finally free to give an insider's view of the program and its successes and failures, Gerald Shur offers a sometimes captivatingly honest and direct chronicle of the challenges and growing pains the program went through over the years. He is able to give an honest appraisal of the good decisions and successes the program has had, and even more admirable, he is able to state and own the program's shortcomings and outright failures. I admire the fact that Shur has been able to step aside from this work that he lived and breathed for so many years and offer a fairly objective story of the program. At one point in the book, a relocated witnesses' wife tells her own personal story. It is a touching and sad story of a woman who had to abandon herself without notice and chronicles the 25 years after she was first relocated. I cannot imagine, even after having read this book, how difficult it must be to leave one's entire identity behind in order to "become someone completely new" -- birth history, family, origins, family support systems, and familiar surroundings -- all in order to help save a partner's life or one's own! While some have been extremely critical of the purpose of the witness protection program over the years, this is no glamorous escape for criminals who would be otherwise incarcerated for their entire lives.

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