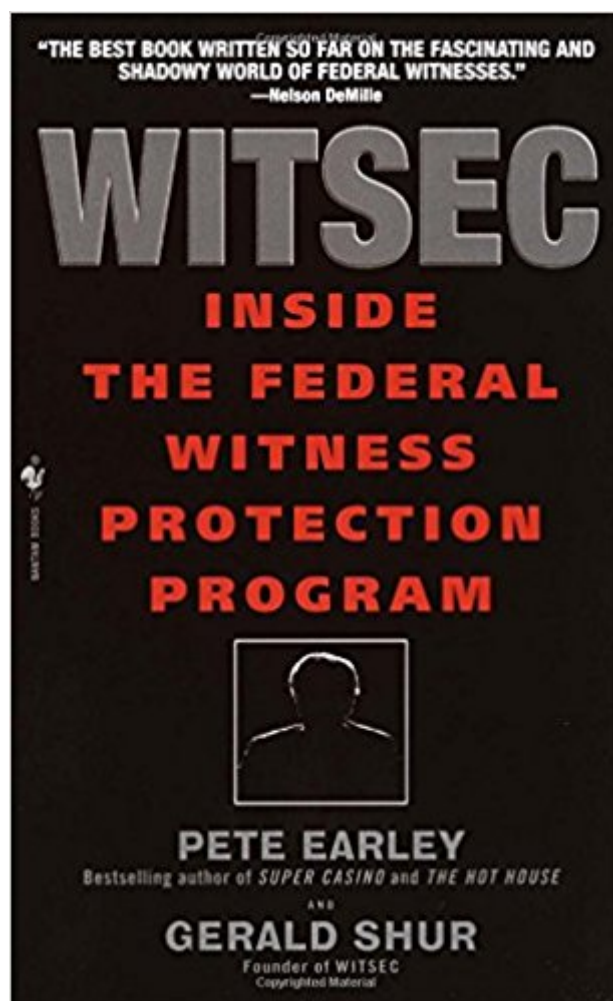


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# Witsec: Inside The Federal Witness Protection Program



## 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

Earley, an Edgar fact-crime award winner for Circumstantial Evidence, and Shur present a fascinating third-person account of Shur's 25-year career with the Department of Justice. Starting out as a federal attorney who recruited witnesses to take down the New York crime syndicate, Shur immediately saw the need to protect those who might testify against organized crime. After years of ardent advocacy, Shur created what would become the Witness Protection Program (WITSEC). As this book shows, WITSEC's 30-year history has been anything but tranquil. Some witnesses started up new crime syndicates or haplessly revealed their true identities. Others, wanting to remain in the spotlight, presented false testimony at congressional hearings. Still others took their indispensability as witnesses to mean they were to live forever on government subsistence checks. Additionally, Shur and WITSEC faced infighting among the federal agencies that most used the program, notably, the FBI, IRS and DEA; and the physical protection of witnesses and their families was often badly handled by a poorly organized U.S. Marshals Service. Yet WITSEC has managed to protect thousands of witnesses from certain death for having offered incriminating testimony to authorities. Since the book brazenly cheers Shur's every contribution to WITSEC, it is not the well-rounded work that it should be; nevertheless, this is an eye-opening account of a significant government program, with firsthand testimony by a woman identified only as "Witness X," who has been relocated by the program. (Feb. 4)Forecast: This BOMC alternate selection has plenty of drama and action to satisfy true-crime fans. The dramatic cover photo of a man in the dark, his outline silhouetted by light, will draw attention.Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

WITSEC, or the Witness Protection Program, has alternately been praised as the key to the

destruction of organized crime and damned for "buying" testimony and setting vicious criminals loose on unsuspecting communities. Here Shur, the driving force behind WITSEC for over 30 years, and journalist Earley present the history of the program, warts and all. Conceived as a way to help mob informants, WITSEC was underfunded, understaffed, and foisted on the unwilling U.S. marshals. But over the years it became much more organized and professional, even as it began to draw controversy. Some relocated criminals continued their criminal careers, families were broken up, and some noncriminal witnesses felt like criminals themselves. Included is a first-person account of the relocated wife of a mobster, who describes the terror and devastation of leaving her old life behind. While Shur's perspective is foremost, the authors bend over backward to present dissenting opinions. Overall, the impression is of a program that works staggeringly well despite its shortcomings. For all true-crime collections. Deirdre Root, Middletown P.L., OH Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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This may have made a fairly good read as a magazine story. The IDEA was great. The first few chapters were pretty interesting, but later it could not hold my interest. Maybe I expected something else. I hate to pan a writer as I know how much work it takes to complete a saleable book.

Very interesting reading about the evolution of WITSEC. I enjoyed learning about how the program changed through the years, and the side stories about the drug cartels and Schur's involvement in other projects. I found Witness X's story very sad. Always enjoy the flow of Earley's books.

Very educational - well-written and very interesting.

Don't usually like biographies/non-fiction, but I was doing research and this one was perfect! And VERY enthralling too.

Very good...

Pete Earley is one of my all time favorite authors. I just started reading this one last night. It's going very fast. It's hard to put down once you start. It's most interesting that Pete Earley collaborated with Shur -- it's really a good thing. So far, anything I've read written by Pete Earley hasn't disappointed

me. He writes extremely well -- gets his point across, etc.

This is a great read, I have always been interested in the way that WITSEC functioned and this book covers the history, trials & tribulations, successes and failures of the program....

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