



# JIM HARSHAW JR.

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## *Revealing Failure as the Path to Success*

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #334

**Joe Pistone aka Donnie Brasco**

Former FBI agent Joe Pistone went undercover for 6 years assuming a fake identity as a small-time jewelry thief named Donnie Brasco. He infiltrated two of the Five Families of the New York City mafia that led to over 200 arrests and shed light into the once thought impenetrable mafia.

In his first book, "Donnie Brasco: My Undercover Life in the Mafia," he detailed harrowing tales of criminal activity and nearly getting murdered on multiple occasions. His story was also adapted into a film starring Johnny Depp as Joe and Al Pacino as the mob hitman, Benjamin "Lefty" Ruggiero.

While in his second book, "Unfinished Business: Shocking Declassified Details from the FB," he recounts his experiences after the operation, his time on the Hollywood set with Pacino and Depp, and other undercover operations through present-day.

In this episode, we have none other than the man with a \$500,000 bounty on his head from the mafia, Joe Pistone! Tune in as Joe reveals how he built a life as Donnie Brasco and how he survived living with infamous gangsters for years. You don't wanna miss this interview, so hit that play button now!

### **Top Quotes From This Episode**

*"You have to know your enemy. You have to know who you're dealing with because if you know your enemy, it will help you in your conversations, it helps you in how you act, and it helps how you react to certain situations."*

*"A failure actually propelled me into the next level."*

*"Undercover has a lot to do with mental toughness. If you don't have mental toughness, you're not cut out for the undercover field."*

## Show Notes

This episode touches on the following key topics and ideas:

- **The birth of Donnie Brasco (2:50):** Joe talks about the journey leading to his 6-year long mafia infiltration; the preparation to give life to Donnie Brasco
- **Don the Jeweler (7:52):** Joe relives the moment he finally blended into the world of the mafia
- **Bonanno crime family (13:38):** How a physical altercation got Joe into the Bonanno family, one of New York City's "Five Families"
- **Tony vs Donnie (16:27):** Tony Mirra's attempt to have Joe assassinated due to an argument over the former's cold food
- **"Performance" control (18:30):** Joe on staying in character as one of the gangsters
- **Managing his life as Joe Pistone (20:23):** Joe shares how he was able to maintain his relationship with his family without getting caught by the mafia
- **On respect and friendship (22:04):** Seeing the good behind the gangsters
- **To his younger self... (25:16):** Joe's regrets on being entangled in the 6-year mission
- **From real to reel (28:39):** Joe on the surreal experience of having his story be adapted into a movie
- **The \$500,000 bounty on his head (29:48):** Is Joe still in hiding from the mafia?
- **Joe's calling (30:30):** Joe says he would've still been in law enforcement if he didn't become an FBI Undercover Agent

## List of Resources Mentioned in the Episode

Joe Pistone's books:

["Donnie Brasco: My Undercover Life in the Mafia - A True Story by FBI Agent Joseph D. Pistone"](#)

["Donnie Brasco: Unfinished Business: Shocking Declassified Details from the FBI's Greatest Undercover Operation and a Bloody Timeline of the Fall of the Mafia"](#)

Watch ["Donnie Brasco"](#)

["Black Hawk Down"](#) (movie)

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### **Other Episodes Referenced**

[#333 Black Hawk Down: Army Ranger Keni Thomas Recounts the Battle of Mogadishu and Powerful Leadership Lessons from the Battlefield](#)