



JIM HARSHAW JR.

Revealing Failure as the Path to Success

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #333

Keni Thomas

As a member of Bravo company of the 3rd Ranger Battalion, Sgt. Keni Thomas was deployed to Mogadishu, Somalia as part of a special operations package called Task Force Ranger. Their mission was to find and capture a criminal warlord named Mohammad Farrah Aideed. Outnumbered 10 to 1, the men of TFR distinguished themselves in an 18-hour firefight that would later be recounted in the highly successful book and movie, *Blackhawk Down*. 19 Americans died and 78 were wounded.

Kenny got out of the army to pursue his music career and now works full-time as an award-winning Nashville recording artist.

His band, Cornbread, was featured in the movie *Sweet Home, Alabama* and regularly tours with the USO to perform for our military personnel serving in the Middle East. As an entertainer, Kenny has been recognized by Congress, the White House, and was recently inducted into the VFW Hall of Fame for his dedicated work on behalf of our veterans and military families.

Keni is also very proud to be a national spokesperson for the Special Operations Warrior Foundation, which provides college education to the children of our special operations personnel killed in combat or training.

Keni Thomas is a graduate of the University of Florida, a recipient of the American Patriot Award and the Bronze Star for Valor.

Top Quotes From This Episode

"The ranger motto is, 'Rangers lead the way.' It's not a title and it's not a position. It's the example you set for the people you serve."

"The better you are, the better you can serve your people. And therefore, the more chances of success of the mission."

"The first action in learning is failure."

"Nobody takes the hill alone."

"You start stumbling and making mistakes when you get into a hurry because you're not seeing the big picture."

Show Notes

This episode touches on the following key topics and ideas:

- **The beginning (3:22):** Keni shares what led him to enlist in the military in 1991
- **Entering the ranger school (4:44):** Keni on getting into the ranger regiment and working his way up as a young leader
- **My mission, my people, myself (6:06):** The key to a successful mission is putting your mission and your people before yourself.
- **Black Hawk Down (7:53):** The Battle of Mogadishu in the eyes of Keni Thomas
 - **The brave comrades (13:27):** Meet the men who trained and fought beside Keni
 - **Learning by failure (16:31):** How Keni learned the value of failing as an opportunity to learn
 - **Shared hardship (20:04):** The quickest way to bring men and women together into a tight unit is through shared hardship.
 - **Lead, follow, or get out of the way (25:45):** Keni relives the crucial moment when the Black Bird goes down
 - **Salute to the fallen heroes (34:45):** The story of valor and heroic acts by Gary Gordon and Randy Shughart
 - **Being in a company of heroes (42:00):** Keni on discovering the value of the people who you choose to have on "your left and your right"
 - **The escape (46:04):** How the remaining men managed to survive the enemies' overwhelming attacks

List of Resources Mentioned in the Episode

[Check out some of the images on the field during the Battle of Mogadishu](#)

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

["Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War" \(book\)](#)

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