

Fitness of the Future

Jim Sterling, 61, head of Challenge Fitness in El Paso, TX, overcame the odds and found himself with a new lease on life.

by Ryan Gorman



Though the *Journal* has featured many outstanding individuals over the years, every now and then we come across men and women who are exemplary in their dedication to health and happiness. Faced with great challenge, they made the decision to change their lives for the better. These shining lights serve as examples of what can be achieved with a deep and lasting commitment to total mind and body wellness. Starting this month, we've chosen to honor these extraordinary individuals with the title of GVI Man or Woman.

Jim Sterling clearly has a lot on his mind these days. When the *Journal* last spoke with Mr. Sterling, nearly three years ago, he had accomplished great things despite facing what seemed to be impossible odds. "I turned my life around," Jim says, thinking back on it all—his injury, his deep depression, and, ultimately, his triumphant about-face.

"On July 20, 1999, I was on top of the world," Jim told the *Journal* in his 2004 interview, "performing martial arts, running 10 miles a week. Then, in an instant, my world came crashing down." Jim seriously injured his back that day when he fell off a loading dock. In the five years that followed, his health and happiness hit an all-time low. "My health went rapidly downhill," he

recalls. "I gained 40 pounds. Physically and emotionally, I was at rock bottom."

And then, in January 2004, a funny thing happened: Jim, who turned 61 in September, single-handedly saved his own life with dedication and hard work. "I just said to myself, 'I'm not going to die this way!'" he remembers. And so began a remarkable change. "I lost 46 pounds in nine months," he beams. "Once I got going, every day seemed like a new beginning." Nowadays, Jim has made it his aim to share his life-changing experience with others, knowing full well that they too can accomplish what may seem impossible. "[My partner and I] started Challenge Fitness for that reason," Jim adds. "To give hope. There's no reason why *getting older* has to mean *getting old*."

Challenge Your Limits

That's the goal of the program, which has steadily gained momentum since its creation in early 2004, even attracting the attention of fitness luminary Billy Blanks of Tae-Bo fame. "Much of it is based on what I did to get myself back in shape," says Jim, who developed the program with longtime friend and personal trainer Gabriel Martinez, an instrumental figure in Jim's recovery. The finishing touches, he explains, "were taken from

the knowledge I gained while becoming an AFAA-certified Personal, Group, and Senior Fitness Trainer." Challenge Fitness offers low-impact, all-in-one flexibility, strength, toning, and cardiovascular-conditioning programs for people over 40. It also helps those who have excess weight, physical limitations, or a sedentary lifestyle to gradually implement fitness solutions. "It's not about hitting the weight room," Jim clarifies. "And it's not something you do for a few months and then quit. It's planning your fitness future. It's about changing the way you live."

As a father of four who always presses his kids to lead healthier lives ("They're actually starting to listen to me!"), he is the perfect front man for the endeavor. "I've walked the walk," he says. "People are a lot more willing to listen to you if you've got something to back up all your talk." Jim, himself, is the proof: "If you don't challenge your limits, you don't grow. I know this because after my accident, I thought I was done. And now look: I'm healthier than I was when I was 40."

But Jim's recovery was no magic trick. "Beware of anything that offers easy, immediate results," he warns, referencing today's deluge of fad-diet books and programs claiming to 'cure'

weight problems. Instead, this former martial artist brought himself back to health with the only tried-and-true way there is: diet and exercise, or more specifically, *proper nutrition* and exercise.

A Fresh Start

“Here’s how it works,” he says, eager to share. “[Gabriel and I] developed 14 different levels for our program entitled, ‘Forty and Fit for Life.’ The first 12 are oriented toward total-body fitness and the last two—part of our Women’s Empowerment series—toward self-defense. All programs are customized to the individual.”

Before any sweat hits the floor, all prospective trainees must first go through a life assessment. “First off, I make every one of my students keep a food diary for one week.” The goal is to cut down—or cut out—foods that hinder healthy living, such as processed foods and items with refined sugars. “After a week, people are almost always shocked at how awful their eating habits really are,” he notes.

Once his clients’ eating habits are back on track with lean meats, proteins,

whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, the next step is a full-fledged audit of their environment. “My students have to assess their surroundings,” he explains, “because your environment is a very big determinant in how healthy a life you lead.” What he’s talking about is stress, distractions, and other negative influences, all of which can be detrimental to health and wellness. “Do you know what the most common excuse is [for an unhealthy lifestyle]? It’s ‘*I just don’t have time*,’” Jim says. That’s what he hears over and over when he first sits down with a new client. “When you can identify [the stressors in your life], that’s the first step towards making time.”

The last step before launching a student’s conditioning program, according to Jim, is to open the doorway of information for them. “We are so lucky to be living in the age of the Internet,” he offers, “where so much information is at your fingertips.” While Jim stresses that he never tells a student what to do, he will “try to point them in the right direction and let them make up their mind on their own. I want my students to get educated,” he emphasizes. “If I can be the

spark to help them, then I’ve done my job as a personal trainer.”

Leading by Example

These days, students can simply take a look at Jim’s daily life when they’re in need of motivation. “Hopefully,” he says, “the way I live can be an inspiration for others to follow,” in the same way that Dr. Bob Delmonteque was an inspiration to him. “I stay active, busy, and fit,” he says. To the best of his ability, Jim strives to eat organic foods only. “I make sure to eat a big, hearty breakfast. I don’t eat anything manufactured by man.” He feels very lucky, “Because my passion and part-time job [as a personal trainer] has also helped me stay in great shape.”

He also relies on nutritional supplementation. “I never tell my students, ‘You should take so-and-so.’ I’m not a doctor. But I tell them what formulas have worked for me, and the research is out there, if they’re interested.” For Jim, a longtime *Journal of Longevity* subscriber and advocate, “Gero Vita™’s products are the best I’ve found.” There are a few different formulas he won’t go



“There’s no reason why getting older has to mean getting old!”



without—including ACF 223™, Gero-Vita G.H.3., and the most recent addition to his wellness plan, GeniX™. “I’ve found GeniX™ is great for muscle recovery,” Jim says. “As long as I’m taking GeniX™, I’m not nearly as sore after multiple workouts with my students, which is great.” The formula also doubles as a prosexual tonic, which, for this “confirmed bachelor,” certainly doesn’t hurt. “I don’t just look 40,” Jim laughs.

Jim Sterling's GVI Trinity

Together, the three formulas in Jim’s supplement program offer a potent combination of nutrients to benefit the body and mind. ACF 223™ is described as a super-antioxidant formula that features *cat’s claw* (*Uncaria tomentosa*), a plant from the Amazon that is widely used in Peruvian health care (Hardin 2007). Another potent antioxidant for the heart is *L-carnitine* (Calò 2006). Rounding out the list are more of Mother Nature’s wonders, including *tocotrienols*, which are special forms of vitamin E, and *lycopene*, the carotenoid pigment found in tomatoes. (Lycopene is

one of the reasons that doctors say tomatoes are so good for you!)

G.H.3. has earned its reputation as a vitality formula because it possesses a gamut of nutrients for people like Jim Sterling who refuse to feel limited by their age. You’ve probably heard of *St. John’s wort* (*Hypericum perforatum*). Many people herald its use as a tonic for the mind. *Ginkgo biloba* enjoys similar accolades: it has been used for thousands of years to promote healthy circulation, which can benefit the brain (Teeguarden 1998). But you might not know about *L-glutathione*, another nutrient that promotes cellular health.

Completing Jim’s supplement trio is GeniX™, a prosexual formula that contains time-honored herbs from all over the globe. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) contributes herbs like *barrenwort* (*Epimedium grandiflorum*) and *English walnut* (*Juglans regia*) to the mix, used to strengthen the kidneys (the center of energy, according to TCM) for healthy sexual expression (Teeguarden 1998). *Tribulus terrestris* has been hailed in

Europe as a potent prosexual, and *Myristica fragrans* (commonly known as *nutmeg*) has also been used for sexual health (Van Gils 1994).

Hard Work Pays Off

They say that nothing good ever comes easy. “Our program takes hard work,” Jim says, “but I’m proof that it works.” Indeed, it has taken Jim Sterling a lot of hard work to get to where he is now, but his efforts rewarded him richly. For Jim—enjoying robust physical, mental, and sexual health; ready to bring Challenge Fitness well beyond the Lone Star State—many years of perseverance are paying off. **JOL**

In thanks for sharing his experiences, this individual received a complimentary supply of products.

References

Teeguarden, R. (1998). *Radiant Health: The Ancient Wisdom of the Chinese Tonic Herbs*. New York, NY: Warner Books.

References not listed above are available upon request.

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