

At 70, Jim Found A New Passion: Helping Others Achieve "Functional Fitness"

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Who	Audio Segment
Jim Owen	<p>And the reason that some people don't stick with this fitness exercise thing is that they never found their why, W-H-Y. Why is why do you want to get fit, Andy? What is it that's motivating you? If you don't find that, you're not gonna stick with it. Me, I said, "I don't want to be using a walker when I'm 85." I'm not trying to live to be 120 in a nursing home, I'm trying to live as good of a life as I can and be independent. I don't want to be dependent on my kids, or my dear wife of 51 years. I want to say, "I want to be independent and pain-free." And all I can say is I spent my career in the investment world in our day, and fitness is the best investment I ever made, bar none.</p>
	<p>INTRO MUSIC; FADE TO BACK DROP FOR PODCAST OVERVIEW</p>
Andy Levine	<p>Welcome to Second Act Stories, a podcast that looks at people who have made major life and career changes and are pursuing more rewarding lives in a second act. I'm your host, Andy Levine.</p> <p>For today's episode, I traveled to Austin, Texas and sat down with Jim Owen. I met Jim in the lobby of my hotel and was immediately impressed. He came in his workout clothes and he is in awesome shape. He exercises regularly and part of his routine is doing three sets of 50 pushups three days a week. That's pretty amazing for a man who is about to turn 79 years old.</p> <p>But he hasn't always been fit. After being a couch potato for most of his life, he decided to get fit at the age of 70. And he wanted to share his new passion with others so he wrote and published a book called "Just Move: A New Approach to Fitness After 50."</p> <p>Here's Jim Owen and his tremendous story.</p>
	<p>FADE MUSIC</p>
Andy	<p>Okay, Jim, I just want to start with a little bit of background. Where'd you grow up, where did you go to school, sort of the first early Jim Owen act?</p>
Jim	<p>I grew up in Lexington, Kentucky, and went to Henry Clay High School, one of the great top high schools in the state, and then University of Kentucky, and then graduated from Regents University out in Denver.</p>
Andy	<p>I want to hear about your first act in your career on Wall Street. So tell me about that.</p>

Jim	<p>When I was a young guy, I left Lexington, moved to New York. So did you know anybody? Nope. So I want to be in advertising. I want to be a copywriter. Did you know anybody who wrote copy? Nope. But I loved to write from the time I was in junior high school. I could always write. Terrible at math but really could always write. Loved papers. So I'm going to be a copywriter. I went to New York, got a job, hated copywriting. So boring.</p> <p>And became an account manager. Go figure. Say, what do you know about that? Nothing, but I had a knack for taking an ad that someone else created and walk into a room of guys, senior executives, and I could always light the room up. I just had a knack for working with very senior executives. I don't know where it came from.</p>
Andy	How many years did you do advertising?
Jim	About three.
Andy	Three years.
Jim	And my friends were all down working on Wall Street, so the old days now. And those days, these were C students. These were people who...
Andy	Not the smartest tools in the shed.
Jim	No. In those days, that was it. But they had connections, they knew people. And that was the fun days of Wall Street. I said, "Gosh, they have so much fun." It doesn't look like they work all that hard. And I said, "Maybe I can do this." So I started, and I got into money management. You can call it asset management. That is managing money for a fee.
Andy	Small firm, big firm?
Jim	Started off with a small firm. And I was a partner in three different firms, and two of them we sold. And that's where I made my money.
Andy	So you were on Wall Street for how many years?
Jim	Thirty-five years.
Andy	Why did you stop working on Wall Street and leave the financial services area?
Jim	Andy, it's a great question. Everybody in the days that I was on Wall Street had a number. And guys don't talk about it except with other guys in the business. The number is very personal. It's here's how much money I need in my account, my own account, to do what I want to do with the rest of my life. And when I achieved that, I said, "Well, I don't want to work anymore. I want to do what I want. I want to follow my passion." And the truth is I was always a creative guy from the day I was born. I'm a creative guy. I'm not a financial guy. I did what I had to do to make the money, but, me, I'm a creative guy.

Andy	After leaving the financial services world at 65, Jim started to use his creative muscles. He wrote a book called "Cowboy Ethics: What Wall Street Can Learn From The Code of the West." It did exceptionally well -- selling over 150,000 copies. And Jim found himself giving speeches about it all over the United States. But on his 70 th birthday, he watched a video of himself walking up on the stage to give a speech. And it shocked him.
Jim	Oh. It was humiliating. My shoulders were hunched over. It was just really embarrassing. My both knees was shot, so I was sort of shuffling along, and chronic back pain. And I said, "What am I going to do?" And I started doing my research. If you're on Wall Street and you don't like research, you're in the wrong business. I love reading. I'll read anything. And I started reading about this. I said, "Okay, I got it. I need to get off the couch." People said, "Jim, do you have any certifications?" "Sure. I was a certified couch potato." That's it. I got to move. And so that's why this book is called "Just Move."
Andy	"Just Move: A New Approach to Fitness After 50."
Jim	Published by "National Geographic." They've never done a book like this. And we shopped the book around, and they said, "Jim, we love this book."
Andy	The content is fantastic. It is a beautiful book as well, great layout design, pull out quotes, photos, just a gorgeous book. Going back to your fitness journey, early on you hired a trainer. His name is Scotty Gassner. Can you talk about your first workout with him? What was that like?
Jim	Oh, Andy, you know how to hurt somebody. Day one, I'll forget as long as I live. Scotty said, "Jim, I want you do five push-ups..."
Andy	I got to speak with Scotty Gassner about that moment.
Scotty Gassner	<p>He kinda almost got like one. You know what I mean? And I think that was probably the key moment that kinda was eye-opening for him, is that like he couldn't even do a single push-up, you know.</p> <p>He definitely came in just like a lot of older people do. They just haven't moved a lot, they haven't moved correctly. Their habits are kinda bad. And he was, you know, had a couple of... He had some injuries, he's having problems with his shoulder, his knees were bothering him, he had low back problems. Very similar things that most people kind of experience. I come across a lot of people that have those same types of injuries. It's based on the fact that we're a sitting society and we're not as active as we need to be. So he came in with a lot of the same problems everybody else did. And that first session I think was very...it was very eye-opening for him. And so I think it really ignited a fire in him, from the jump, that this was something that he needed to change about his life.</p>
Andy	Jim remembers that moment as well.

Jim	I said, "What?" "Five push-ups, just try it." And, yeah, I couldn't do one. Now, I kind of did a half push up. It was pitiful. He didn't say anything. "Well, we need to work on that." Today, 9 years later, I do 3 sets of 50.
Andy	There's a term you use in the book, functional fitness, and it is probably the central component of "Just Move." What exactly does that mean, functional fitness?
Jim	It is being able to move through your daily life without aches and pains. That's all it is. So when you get older...and, Andy, you're a young guy, you probably don't have aches and pains...
Andy	I got plenty of aches and pains at 58, so.
Jim	<p>But wait until you're about 65, and you'll say, "Now, wait a minute, I played sports in college." "Well, you probably got bad knees then." So what's ironic about this is people who take up exercising or fitness later in life often end up in much better shape than athletes who say, "I got burned out going to the gym when I was 22." I was not a good athlete. I wish I had been but I wasn't. I learned football, but I was kind of slow and awkward. I weighed 205 pounds in high school, and today I weigh 153, 154.</p> <p>So, now I want to be slender. I want to be...I call it lean, and I want to be able to move. "I don't want to be using a walker when I'm 85." I'm not trying to live to be 120 in a nursing home, I'm trying to live as good of a life as I can and be independent. I don't want to be dependent on my kids, or my dear wife of 51 years. I want to say, "I want to be independent and pain-free." And all I can say is I spent my career in the investment world in our day, and fitness is the best investment I ever made, bar none.</p>
Andy	So in his late 70s, Jim has a new passion. Helping others – particularly older Americans – get fit.
Jim	So my big passion today is taking the message, anybody who will listen to me, you've got to get off the couch. I didn't say become Arnold Schwarzenegger. You've got to move. That's all it is. Simple movements. You can walk, you can bicycle, you can swim, all kinds of things to do, but you can't just sit there. And so that's my passion. And my new project, as you may know , I'm doing a documentary, so a 30-minute documentary. It's called the "Art of Aging Well."
Andy	So what would you say to the person who maybe is in their 60s, maybe in they're even 70s, and they're kind of like, "You know, it's just too late for me. You know, my knees are so bad. I can't run. I can't go on a treadmill. I'm too old to start a fitness regimen." What would you tell them?
Jim	Well, I'm a living proof that you're never too old. I started at 70, Andy. If I started 60, I wouldn't have had to have worked this hard, you might say. So can you start at 80? Oh, boy. Yeah, you can walk properly. As long as you're mobile, you can really improve your health.

Andy	And it has made a major impact on his quality of life. While most people in their late 70s are slowing down, Jim is just warming up.
Jim	<p>Look at me, I've lost weight. I look better, I feel better," which is key. And so it's true that fitness can be transformative. It was in my case. Out of this has come a confidence. When I turned 70, this is a confession time for me, Andy, I really did feel like my best days were over. This is how many adult, older folks feel, "My best days are behind me." And today, if you would ask me because of this fitness journey I've been on, are you kidding me? My best days, you ain't seen my best days yet. They're ahead of me. I believe it's true. So there's a confidence factor that you cannot put money on.</p> <p>If I can do this, if I can do 3 sets of 50, a lot of guys who are 25 can't do that. So working out in the gym I say, "Is that all you do, son? You're doing 20 push-ups. Look at me. I'm as old as your grandfather." And they say, "I know. You're my hero." I just laugh, of course. But it's just, for whatever reason, I use push ups. It could be planks. It could be squats. I happen to think push-ups is one of the great...it's a 2,000-year-old exercise.</p>
Andy	Because you use every muscle in your body.
Jim	Every muscle in your body. So the key to it is good form. Focus. While I go in the gym, I don't do small talk. I don't look at my cell phone. I don't watch TV. I'm there for...it's like a business. I'm actually focused on the job at hand.
Andy	Is the trainer important to get the form right?
Jim	<p>I don't know how you do it without a trainer. Now, let me explain. It doesn't mean you have to have an expensive gym, doesn't mean you have to pay a trainer an arm and a leg, maybe hire a trainer for a dozen workouts.</p> <p>You get the form right and then, "Scotty, can I see you maybe every three months?" "Sure." Like any other business person, it's just a business. And so I happen to enjoy it. I like Scotty's company. It is a source of great knowledge. And when you get into this fitness thing, I find it fascinating. There's always something new to learn.</p> <p>Now, everybody's a student, and I love being a student at my age.</p>
Andy	Jim's trainer Scotty Glassner echoed Jim's focus on learning.
Scotty	He is a very dedicated, he's a good student. He wants to do things the right way. He's very much a perfectionist. So his dedication to what he's doing, his willingness to learn and be a student of exercise, and then just his consistency, it supersedes pretty much like most of my clients, young and old. He just, he's really dedicated to living longer, and living healthier, and living better, having a good quality of life in the twilight years of his life.

Andy	You made this transition from Wall Street, to author, motivational speaker, you did this in your 60s, you've now moved on to this new fitness area. And you've kind of described the second part of your life, at least in your book, you described it as finding the true purpose in your life. What advice would you give to someone who maybe is thinking about doing something different, thinking about making a change like what you made? What advice would you give to them?
Jim	There's a phrase in this book "Cowboy Ethics," "Anybody can make money, much harder to make a difference." And I'm not being hoity toity, I'm just saying I believe in my heart, I take those words to heart and say, "I want to make a difference." As they say, I want to leave the world a little bit better than I found it.
Andy	So you're 78, turning 79 in 2 or 3 months...
Jim	Two months.
Andy	What does the future hold for Jim Owen?
Jim	Well, that's the fun part. I don't know. A lot can happen to you. What I found out is that a lot of people are racked with chronic illnesses, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure. Andy, this is really an important statistic, 75% of those diseases can be traced largely to lifestyle. That's the truth. Now, about 10% to 25% of these diseases can be traced to hereditary. You cannot change that. I may end up with a stroke or this or that, but it ain't gonna be today, and I hope not tomorrow. But I take each day at a time and I...but my life is brighter. And I hope I've made a few other people's lives brighter by my work. And that's what I call purpose. And, Andy, one thing I want to say to your audience, having a purpose doesn't mean you have to write a book, or do a documentary film. It doesn't mean you have to rescue somebody from a burning building. No, you could be that special person to a grandchild who doesn't have a father and say, "I'll be your father," and the difference that can make in that child's life, that's called purpose. Being a special friend, that's having purpose. So don't think about this in grand terms. Whatever my purpose is applies to me. I'm not trying to sell this to other people.
Andy	Your book is "Just Move: A New Approach to Fitness After 50." Jim Owen, thank you very much for taking the time to sit down with me. This was an awesome conversation.
Jim	Oh, Andy, well, thank you so much.
	OUTGOING MUSIC; FADE TO BACK DROP FOR PODCAST CONCLUSION

Andy	<p>I can't tell you how much I enjoyed my time with Jim Owen. His story is a simple one – he looked at himself at the age of 70. And he didn't like what he saw. So he decided to make a change. He changed his diet. And he started a fitness regimen. And he wrote a book about what he learned.</p> <p>There's a lot I took away from my time with Jim. Back at the top of my list was his ability to be a student at the age of 70. He did his research and learned everything he could about fitness. He learned from his trainer Scotty Gassner and he learned others. And it was a transformative experience.</p> <p>Whenever I go to the gym, I think of Jim Owen. And as I struggle to get 10-15 quality push-up, I remember my interview with Jim, a 78-year-old man who does 50 push-ups at a pop.</p> <p>We hope you'll keep listening. There are more second act stories just around the corner.</p>
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