



Jim Karger and his wife, Kelly.

You Can Get There from Here

By David Leffler

The year was 1976 and Jim Karger was fresh out of law school. By 10:00 AM on his first day at his first job, he realized that he had made a seriously bad career choice. So he did what most people do in that situation—he stuck it out anyway. For years.

But Jim had a strategy. He would be outrageous and wild, and in the conformist and conservative world of lawyers he would get “kicked off the cliff.” He needed this because he didn’t have the guts to “jump off the cliff.”

Jim authored a newspaper column full of dark humor. If anything should have killed his career, that should have.

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But a strange thing happened. The crazier he got, the more his clients liked him. Even after sending out calendars for the firm he later formed which featured Jim and his employees dressed up in military fatigues with semiautomatic weapons, and another calendar featuring the whole crew as a biker gang, his law firm, which focused on representing company management in anti-union campaigns, prospered.

In 2001, after 25 years of being an attorney and building the largest labor law firm in Texas, Jim tired of the rat race, so he sold his house in Dallas and moved to Mexico to settle with his wife in the small colonial town of San Miguel de Allende in the state of Guanajuato.

Jim practices law from San Miguel, representing the clients that followed him down to south of the border. Other than maintaining a website (www.crediblyconnect.com), he does zero marketing, relying on clients from his Texas practice who have multiple locations, each with the potential for their own union issues, which gives him

a steady stream of election cases. Jim stays in touch with other lawyers, which is easy to do from Mexico with Internet telephony.

Through the years he has lost some clients owing to management changes, but Jim still has enough work to keep him busy but not take up all of his time. This is good because he also needs time for the rest of his commitments.

These days he takes on about three to five election cases a year, each lasting approximately six weeks. He is very selective in the cases he accepts for representation. "I look for opportunities where I really believe I can make a positive difference in company culture. If I can't leave it better than I found it, I don't take it."

At one time Jim had traveled abroad to do management training, but this has tapered off with the arrival of the uncertain economy.

Although Jim lives in a beautiful colonial town that UNESCO designated in 2008 as a World Heritage Site, the one real hardship where he lives is that he must travel extensively for work, which he finds very tiring. He typically goes stateside for a few days each week for each of the six weeks of a campaign. He is picked up at 4:30 AM at his home to go to the airport for a 6:30 AM flight to Houston or Dallas or even farther, depending on the client's location.

Personal Transformation

When Jim first arrived in San Miguel, he had let himself go—"all the way to 221 pounds, 39-inch waist, 190/100 blood pressure (uncorrected), three blood pressure medications, and a couple of Xanax just to get through a day. I felt terrible and I looked so bad that I would not allow my photograph to be taken."

"Then after years of self-abuse I decided I was tired of being tired and I did something about it. Eight months later I was 163 pounds with a 31-inch waist, lots of muscle, on no medications, and a new outlook on life and a new look. I did it without drugs, no 'buy our food' programs, and no one to answer to except myself each day."

Jim recently turned 60 years old. He does a workout of weights five times a week that would be impressive for a 20-year-old. When he's on the road, he finds a gym, then gets up at 5:00 AM, goes to the gym, and does the same workout. The only difference (and it's a big difference) is that he doesn't have Kelly, his wife and workout partner, with him.

At one time Jim hired himself out to give exercise and health seminars at gyms and to company employees. However, he stopped because it wasn't effective. "No one is going to make that change unless they decide to do it individually. I don't know how to get people to make that decision nor do I know anyone else who knows how to do this."

If you want to learn more about Jim's remarkable transformation (and see some before-and-after photos

that will blow you away), take a look at his website on his journey to better health (www.jimkarger.com). Jim also has a blog at <http://plusfiftyfitness.blogspot.com>.

Dogs, Dogs, Dogs

Jim's wife, Kelly, founded Save a Mexican Mutt (www.saveamexicanmutt.org) in 2003 when she saw all the suffering of homeless and neglected dogs in San Miguel. Jim helps her with her work, which includes rescuing and transporting dogs to new homes and helping with spay/neuter campaigns and awareness, vaccinations, and giving pets proper care and treatment.

Rescued dogs are sent to good homes all over the United States, from Texas to California to Connecticut. Kelly and Jim have saved hundreds of dogs since 2003 and along the way have met many fine people, which, Jim says, acts as a balance to the cynical view of humanity Jim developed after being a lawyer for more than 30 years.

Currently the Kargers have ten dogs of their own, all rescues, and four foster dogs waiting for adoption, and as Jim says, "We love them all."

What's Next?

In my interview of this remarkable man, I had to ask, "What's on the menu for the next five years? Ten years?"

What he said might surprise you.

"I really don't want anything to change."

However, with a little thought, I could see exactly what he meant. He has found his paradise and doesn't want it to change.

But Jim is firmly in touch with reality. "Not being a fool, I know that things will change."

This awareness affects his views on life. Both he and his wife are highly driven individuals, and that inevitably results in some locking of horns from time to time. But then they both stop and say, "Is this really worth getting upset about?"

Recently they got news that a good friend was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. This got Jim annoyed about all the time he has wasted worrying about things not worth worrying about. But it also made him aware that he should value his time even more.

Considering again if he had any five-year plan, Jim finally said to me, "I don't know what the next five years will bring, but if it doesn't bring anything at all, I will feel very blessed." **GPSOLO**