



TECH CHECK

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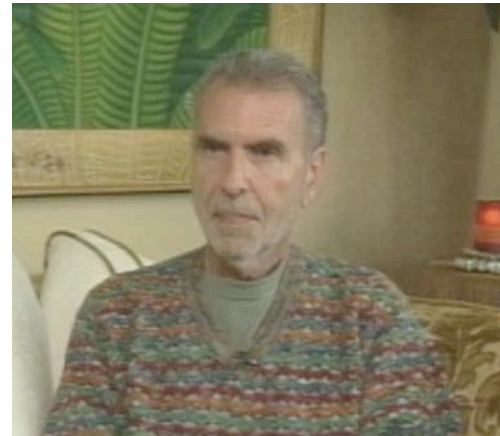
The New "Jerry" Levin

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I had the unusual opportunity of sitting down with a media icon from what seems like another era. Someone I've always wanted to interview, someone I used to read about and cover from afar. So when the opportunity came up to sit down with Gerald Levin, now "Jerry," I jumped at the chance.

A bit of history first: Jerry Levin was the power-broker behind what some have called the worst business deal in American corporate history. No one will deny it was the largest. Time Warner [[TWX 21.96 0.04 \(+0.18%\)](#)] selling out to America Online in a merger valued at nearly \$200 billion. The splashy press conference. The handshake on stage with AOL CEO Steve Case. Jerry Levin was arguably the most powerful media executive in the world, staging a remarkable personal and emotional turnaround, bouncing back from the horrific murder of his son Jonathan, 31, an English teacher who was killed by one of his own students just three years earlier.

But behind the mask of power and influence was a man in shambles. He was an emotional wreck. Empty. Bitter. Spent. Lost. Lonely. Flailing.

"If I had walked in and had just said, I need some love, I need some understanding. I don't really know what's happening. When you are supposed to be the person with all the answers, making all the decisions, pretty rock solid for everybody, you are not attending to yourself," Levin tells me during my exclusive interview with him in Southern California a week-and-a-half ago.

I met Jerry, along with wife Laurie, at their Moonview Sanctuary in Southern California. Its exact location is a secret, but the Levins want to get the word out about what happens at this unusual place: for \$175,000, clients begin their year-long treatment by spending an intensive two weeks undergoing a complete psychological, emotional and spiritual makeover. The facility is staffed by what the Levins call renowned experts that mix and match psychology, psychiatry, spirituality, Eastern religion and many other disparate components that create an approach not really found anywhere else. The facility, "sanctuary" as the Levins prefer to call it, is targeted at CEOs, celebrities, and other power-brokers who will foot the high bill, and essentially pay for the ongoing research there so that successful strategies that deal with psychological issues can ultimately



trickle down to anyone who wants to take advantage of them.

"The true, ultimate goal is to change the delivery of mental health, and maybe medical care, because if we can get a group of experts to work on each individual and think-tank on their case everyday, that is true care and we want to provide that," says Laurie, who brims with enthusiasm over the project and its mission.

That's the background.

When I sat down with Jerry, I found a thoughtful, candid, far thinner former media titan than I had remembered. I had some difficult questions for him, regarding this sanctuary, how he coped with the murder of his son, and where he was in life right now. Jerry has the benefit of some years now, some distance between the man he has become and the man he left behind. In just a matter of a few years, Levin had to face the murder of his son, a \$200 billion merger that he brokered, and then the tragedies of 9-11.

"When 9/11 happened and I saw the faces of mothers, brothers, fathers, cousins, sisters, who had lost someone who had simply gone to work, that brought up the pain in my own family. I thought the pain was mine, but then I realized that it was my whole family that was permanently affected by this," he remembered. "And then I had to stand up and give a Wall St. report and the first question was, Are some of the activities that you're doing, because we were trying to help out with a lot of the survivors, how is that going to affect our margins in the next quarter? And I literally lost it at one meeting because I said I'm not going to answer that. And then we were supposed to have a board meeting that week and I didn't want to have a board meeting. So the whole circumstances of the game of what the corporation was doing and my responsibility was running head-long into this wave of emotion that I had no way of expressing."

Levin walked away, and began a quest to reconnect with himself and those he loved.

"It was just like something clicked at that point and I saw, maybe for the first time, that I can't just be what I'm expected to be at this point. At that point, it was easy to say goodbye. I didn't know this was where I was going to be but I knew I was going on a journey, and I knew it had to be outside of the business world," he said.

His journey ended with the opening of Moonview, Laurie's idea from the outset.

"It's revolutionary in the way that we are coming back together," she says. "To connect as a collective group of doctors and practitioners, a think-tank on the case every day, to be a healing force for that complex individual. You're too complex for any one practitioner to see the totality of you. To get a group of practitioners and doctors together to look at all aspects of you and think-tank together is not revolutionary, but it is not done."

And if Levin was once the poster-boy for corporate power and the internet boom, today he hopes to become a poster-boy of a different sort. He's reached an inner peace with himself and if he can achieve that kind of transformation, he's confident this approach can work for anyone.

"If I can give meaning and purpose that way, and say look at me: I have been healed by this environment. And what's important? Family, love, having a sense of purpose, having something in the core, something in the center beyond money and power and recognition, because it's all fleeting. And in a way, everyone works on their legacy, which I think is an arrogant thing, but mine now is just kind of being at peace. Achieving some kind of peaceful understanding. If people can see that

in me, then maybe I can help them. That's my aspiration."

But make no mistake: Levin hasn't abandoned the corporate world all together. In his first comments about the business world since leaving it, I found a Jerry Levin still connected to Wall Street, but determined not to let that world ruin, or even run, his life any longer.

"I do get the box office every morning, I do get the clips that cover Time Warner, but I don't read the journal the way I used to. Here is the difference: Before there was a separation. I had a business life and an activity and it had its own circumference. And then I had a personal life, a private life, a family life. Somehow the two were separate, they seemed to be at odds most of the time. And now, there is total congruence with what I call my family, my extended family, my personal life, my life at Moonview. It's all in one piece. That's an insight that I wish I had had."

And he's still fascinated by all things new media, just as he was when he was HBO's CEO, or pioneering Time Warner's ground-breaking interactive/video-on-demand initiative in Orlando, Florida. Today, he still has a strong interest in the company he used to run, calls himself a supporter of CEO Dick Parsons, but finds himself more fascinated with what's occurring on the internet.

"I love the pace and forms of internet programming and advertising. I think it's truly exciting and dynamic," he says. "I always believed in the power of the internet and I love the way it's flourishing. The whole idea of HBO was to have more programming, so now the programming comes from citizens, citizen programming, so it's beautiful. But i don't miss (Liberty Media's John) Malone and (News Corp's) Rupert (Murdoch) negotiating over that transaction. It's not, 'Been there, done that.' It's ok. Let them hang on. I'm over here now and this is where I want to be."

And Jerry Levin will be the first to tell you it's a happier, far more enriching place. Excerpts of my interview with Jerry will run on CNBC TV throughout the day on Tuesday, Dec. 19.



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