A World War II Pilot Talks About Healing His Soul Through Meditation

On March 7, 1945, Jerry Yellin, a distinguished P-51 fighter pilot (and current Fairfield, Iowa, resident), landed on a small strip of land in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. For the next six months he saw things that would haunt him for 35 years. The strip of land was Iwo Jima.

Twenty-eight thousand soldiers died on Iwo Jima. Jerry strafed the island for the Marines, and then flew 19 missions over Japan. When Jerry returned to the States, he took the traumatic images of what he saw on Iwo Jima with him. Every day—and many horror-filled nights—Jerry relived the horrors of war. Time passed, his memories did not.

Though he didn’t die on Iwo, his memories were slowly but steadily killing him. Then in 1975, Jerry learned Transcendental Meditation. Gradually, the memories began to fade. He reconnected with himself on a deep level and experienced the joys of life that were absent for decades. Though he had married a wonderful woman and had four great sons, he couldn’t feel the flow of life until he learned to meditate. Years later, he said, unequivocally, that TM saved his life.

Last year, a friend called Jerry and said that her son was having a difficult time adjusting from his multiple military tours of duty. Jerry met with the young man and, combat soldier-to-combat soldier, tried to console him. Though well-meaning and compelling, his words didn’t work. Two weeks later, the young man committed suicide. (A little known horror is that more soldiers commit suicide each month than die in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.)

Jerry was devastated. He felt in the core of his Being that something had to be done to prevent such suicides and reclaim the ruined lives of soldiers suffering from post-traumatic stress. Jerry picked up the phone and called the David Lynch Foundation, a non-profit organization that has been teaching Transcendental Meditation to at-risk youth around the world since 2006. A partnership for forged immediately to bring TM to veterans and Operation Warrior Wellness was launched, www.operationwarriorwellness.org. Since then Jerry, 87, has criss-crossed the country talking to military groups. The response has always been the same: “Yes, we want to meditate. Yes, we need this—and we need it now.”

“We send our young men and woman to fight and then, when they return, we can’t really help them integrate into society successfully, because what they saw and heard are so devastating to their souls.”—Jerry Yellin

AUTHOR VETERAN JERRY YELLIN TO SIGN FOUR BOOKS

PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT OPERATION WARRIOR WELLNESS

Saturday evening, November 5, from 7:30–8:30
at the Fairfield Library meeting room.

Receipts from the sale of his four books will benefit Operation Warrior Wellness, a division of the David Lynch Foundation.

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