



Episode 2 – Mr. Glen Stafford | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



**Jeremy Lesniak:**

On today's show, we have Mr. Glen Stafford a martial arts artist from Vermont now calling Tennessee his home. I've known Mr. Stafford for years as his instructor is my instructor's son. He's a good guy and a good friend. He also suffered a major setback in life and in his training just a few months ago. We talk about that in detail and how has martial arts has helped him overcome this challenge. You won't want to miss this episode. Mr. Stafford, welcome to martial arts radio.

**Glen Stafford:**

Well thank you very much, nice being here.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well, why don't you give us, me the listeners a little bit of your history of martial arts. How did you get started, who with, where, when? All those fun semantic details.

**Glen Stafford:**



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Well I guess i'll begin when I was a child and I actually saw some of the martial arts films I was always interested in taking the martial arts but our school was so small that I couldn't do that. When I went to college I ended up hanging out with this guy who seemed to be the most popular guy in school, so I kind of pulled him around and hung on his shirt tails a little bit. Hoping that some of that popularity would rub off on me and low and behold that was, who is now Master Lenny Jordan and he was training who is now Grand Master Dunleavy so I spent four years in college training with Master Dunleavy. Once I graduated from college, I graduated with a high red belt and

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And this is in Tae kwon do

**Glen Stafford:**

In Tae kwon do in Johnson, Vermont.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok

**Glen Stafford:**

So, I was training with Grand Master Dunleavy in Morrisville Vermont. And once graduated from college I ended up moving down to Fort Lauderdale, Florida and I spent about twenty years down there before I moved back to Vermont in 2008. Now the 20years that I was down in Fort Lauderdale I looked at other possibilities for martial arts I looked at other styles, kickboxing, Tang Soo Do, I looked at other Tae kwon do schools and the quality that I was experiencing down in Fort Lauderdale was not the same as what I had experienced with Grand Master Dunlevy and Master Yordan in Vermont. So, I was very, very, very drawn back to them when I moved back to Vermont.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok so you moved down there and when was this

**Glen Stafford:**

I moved down to Fort Lauderdale in 1988 and I moved back to Vermont in 2008.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Ok so 20 years, so for 20 years you kind of sounds like carrying a torch from martial arts you're missing it. Keep trying to find a place that you can call home but missing this original school and these people that you started training with in college.

**Glen Stafford:**

Yes, I was very much missing them, very much trying to find a filler for that part of me that was missing yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok, so you moved back to Vermont and I'm going to guess it didn't take you long to start training with these people again.

**Glen Stafford:**

No, it didn't take long at all, I'd probably was training probably within weeks, maybe 2 or 3 weeks I went back to training and I think probably in 2012 I received my black belt from both Grand Master Dunleavy and Master Yordan

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok, so sounds like that's probably a bit of a checkbox on your bucket list.

**Glen Stafford:**

It wasn't just a bucket list I mean it was at that point in time a very big part of who I became and thank goodness because if I had not spent the time doing the martial arts and in training like I was training I may not, might not be here today.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok so tell us what do you mean by that

**Glen Stafford:**

Well, I was supposed to, I was given the ok to test for my second-degree black belt in December of 2014

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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So, for listeners that might be hearing this you know a couple of years from now, that was only 4 months ago

**Glen Stafford:**

Yeah only 4 months ago and I had a little setback, I ended up suffering a stroke on December 10th of 2014.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok so **05:00** that wasn't that long ago

**Glen Stafford:**

No.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And you're, you don't fit the typical mold that I might think of is a stroke victim so how old are you?

**Glen Stafford:**

I am currently now 45 years of age I just had a birthday couple of weeks ago.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok

**Glen Stafford:**

So, I had a stroke at the age of 44

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And I mean I'm not wrong in thinking that right it's not common for a 44-year-old to have a stroke

**Glen Stafford:**



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No not common at all, typically you would relate that to someone who is not in good shape somebody who'd smoke, somebody who had a lot of heath disorders, health disabilities, somebody who is older in general. You know, you don't usually have a stroke at 44.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So here you are you are 44 you're in good shape you're not smoking, you don't fit any of these, these typical factors that might throw someone towards the stroke, so what happened?

**Glen Stafford:**

Well, I'm not very good with pronouncing the medical terms they're saying it was a vertebral dissection in one of my arteries going to my brain. Something that actually happened in my neck area and I think it might have been some sort of trauma to my neck, they're not really sure, they don't have any one specific idea. They just kind of narrowed it down to something that might have been some sort of you know trauma to my neck that caused a tear in my artery and when that tear healed itself it created a blood clot so that's a supposedly what had happened but they don't have anything, no medical history no health-related issues, I don't have, I'm not a smoker, I'm not overweight you know I train 10 hours a week in Tae kwon do, you know I was getting ready for my secondary black belt at that time.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, did your martial arts background play any part in your recovery?

**Glen Stafford:**

Everybody seems to think so, I had you know end of the four months that I've suffered the stroke, I went from having week side on my left to gaining some of the mobility back. I had some speech problems where my mouth was a little droopy so that some of my verbiage was slurred. And because I was in the shape that I was, because I had the perseverance and the discipline I was definitely better off.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok so let's go back a little bit, I think you're being a little humble with this. After your stroke and I think this is important for people to hear, after your stroke, you said you had some weakness in your left side, can you be little more specific? What were you able/not able to do?

**Glen Stafford:**



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At one point in time, immediately after my stroke I would say probably a week after the stroke I could not move my left side at all. Not my left arm, not my left hand, not the fingers on my left hand I couldn't walk, I couldn't move my left foot up and down I couldn't move my toes at all I couldn't wiggle them I was...

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok so it might not be the best medical way to express it but to someone like me outside the medical field, I might say that you were half paralyzed?

**Glen Stafford:**

I actually was, yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok, so 4 months ago you're in bed you can't use the left side of your body

**Glen Stafford:**

Yeah, I was at the university of Vermont medical center for a week, then I was released and I was transferred over to the rehab facility at Fanny Allen in Vermont and that's where I was able to work on rehabbing in getting my strength back on my left side. So, at this point in time, 4 months after my stroke I am living in Tennessee and I am walking around by myself, I don't use a crutch, I don't use a brace, I don't use a wheelchair. I'm even able to make some of my own meals and cook. You know, I'm a, I'm you know, probably about 50% of what I used to be.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok, and I mean we were even talking in the pre-show that you even played a little bit behind the wheel of the car

**Glen Stafford:**

Yes, I've actually, I practiced driving a little bit. I haven't been cleared to drive yet but, I have been able to get behind the wheel and drive around the parking lot and thank goodness, I didn't run into any trees or anything like that so that's pretty good news.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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So, no listeners in Tennessee have to worry that you might be coming out of an intersection to Tebow them anytime soon but I think that illustrates how pretty well how fast you've made progress. Are there, you know are there statistics on this? Can we say, I mean I think it's pretty clear to me and probably to everyone listening that you've recovered faster than most people would. Are there numbers to back that up?

**Glen Stafford:**

I don't have any specifics, I don't have you know general statements, made by those people who were medically trained or aware of my case. But I...

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What do they say?

**Glen Stafford:**

I am probably in the top 1%.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok so that's hey, if you're going to be in the top 1% for something, this is the thing to be in, right? What do you chalk that up to? Would you say that's martial arts? Would you say it's lost for life, stubbornness?

**Glen Stafford:**

Probably all the above?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok

**Glen Stafford:**

I would have to say all the above. You know I have always been the type of guy that when I went to the class, if you want me to give you 10 pushups, I'd give you 11. You know I've got that kind of perseverance and that kind of tenacity. That kind of desire to do above and beyond wherever I could.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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And, so let's kind of finish up that line about recovery in martial arts and talk about a couple of other things. Have you started training at all?

**Glen Stafford:**

No, I am currently registered at a business facility, and even this week I'm supposed to be given a release order by my primary care position to go ahead and work out. I have started doing very light weights and some spin classes and some swimming. You know when I say swimming you know I was just standing around waving my arms around. So, it's not like I was competing with Michael Phelps or anything like that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok.

**Glen Stafford:**

You know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Alright, how bad do you miss it?

**Glen Stafford:**

Every day, yeah, I miss it every day. You know I can find myself, in a seated position and I actually try to move my left arm as I would, if I was doing a low block or a high block in kyon 1 for Tae kwon do. You know one of the patterns I would actually just go through the motions and at least give it a try

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And you're still doing that? How's that going?

**Glen Stafford:**

Just fighting every day, you know the doctor actually told me that 6 months from the stroke I should be able to do Tae kwon do again

**Jeremy Lesniak:**





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So that's pretty soon

**Glen Stafford:**

And every medical professional I've spoken too says that my recovery should be 100% by the time I get done. It might be a year and a half, 2 years but I should be able to become 100% once again. So, then I will go ahead and do all the training I can for my secondary black belt.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I, you know listening to you I have no doubt that you're going to make a full recovery and you're going to go on to that secondary black belt and third degree black belt and however far that you want to take it. I've known stroke victims before and they're all of course, they've all been older but neither one of them has had the refusal to give up, they pretty much accepted their position and rather than committing to getting better, they've committed to adapting to their new body and I think that's an important difference for people to hear and I think the foundation you have the brain-body connection that you have from your experience with martial arts and having something that you love so much that it, it sucks that you can't do it right now and I think it's driving you and I think that that's really awesome to hear and I hope that people get that. So, let's switch gears for a little bit, so you spoke pretty fondly, it sounded like of the two people that brought you up in martial arts. Can you tell us a little bit about them? And your relationship with them?

**Glen Stafford:**

Well, let's see here. As I bring it up, it might bring a tear to my eye and might choke me up a little bit but I think I can do it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

We're ok with that if you are

**Glen Stafford:**

Well I have to say probably, the time that I've spent at Johnson State college with Master Yordan. He and I became probably best description, best friends and I still hold on to that relationship today. And actually, I would probably say that at my time in college that even though I did have a father, Grand Master Dunlevy was probably like a father to me so yeah, I have to say that probably those individuals probably have created who I am today

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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And of course, if listeners haven't figured this out yet, you and I are not strangers. I've know you for several years now and of course I know Master Yordan and Grand Master Dunleavy and they are pretty exceptional people

**Glen Stafford:**

Yeah that doesn't change the fact that I'm still strange.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yes, you are a strange friend but a friend nonetheless

**Glen Stafford:**

I have to agree with that yeah

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How about competition, have you ever participated in any competition, martial arts competition?

**Glen Stafford:**

Actually, quite often, yes. I can tell you that one of the things that stick with me today is my very first martial arts competition. I went under the guidance of Grand Master Dunleavy who was still my Master Dunleavy at that point in time. I competed in a tournament as a white belt and I was a white belt at the age of 18 and I went up against a white belt who had been practicing as a white belt for quite some time and he was probably 30 years my senior and he gave me a whooping.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And this was with forms competition or sparring or??

**Glen Stafford:**

Actually, this was a sparring competition he actually took me to school so I spent a lot of training and trying to get better after that so I've done pretty well. Actually, when I went back down, when I went to Florida I competed in a tournament and even though I had only been with the school for about a month, I took the whole tournament at my rank of high red belt and I can honestly say that it was due to what I'd learned from Master Yordan and Grand Master Dunleavy that I was able to do so because after being with a month with a new



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instructor I didn't learn anything new. He didn't have very much experience at all with the whole Florida setting and I just took what I learned from Grand Master Dunleavy and Master Yordan and took that to the tournament and won the tournament.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Wow

**Glen Stafford:**

Yeah, so you know it was the guidance of Grand Master Dunleavy that I was able to assist me in getting a second, I got a silver medal and Vermont state full contact tournament and somewhere around 89 or 91 I think.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok wow, if you could train, this is kind of a stereo typical question of course we put our martial arts spin on it. If you can train with any martial artist living or dead, who would it be and why?

**Glen Stafford:**

Yeah of course you have to throw it out there and probably Bruce Lee you know being the iconic martial artist that he is. If I was to have a second place, it would probably be Chuck Norris. I mean I know those are probably two stereo typical martial artist but I think those two are better, the most authentic for their art. I think they are two that are the most dedicated. So those would be the top two that I would have to.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure, did you grow up watching either or both of them in movies or tv

**Glen Stafford:**

I still do today, see all the rewinds, see all the repeats

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah. Are you a walker Texas ranger fan?

**Glen Stafford:**

I'm a fan of the man and the concept I can't say the character is all that fantastic. You know the acting is not Chuck Norris' number one calling.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I think I'd have to agree with you, unless he is within kicking distance and then I would disagree with you.

**Glen Stafford:**



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Well I think at that point in time we get away from the acting, we get back to his true calling.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right, do you have a favorite martial arts show?

**Glen Stafford:**

I tell you I know so many, I can't say that I have a favorite of just one.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Throw a couple at us

**Glen Stafford:**

Probably, I'd have to go with the classics. Probably the game of death and the octagon. Those two are high up on my list, I think. Of course, being a tae kwon do practitioner, best of the best, was always a good film. No, I would not give much credit to best of the best 2, 3 or 4. I think, rumor has it they even made a fifth one but I didn't see that either.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I think I stopped watching it too. Maybe i'll skip 3 and 4, i'll go try and find 5 because if you haven't seen it, if you're not even sure it exists, it's probably not that good. And I love a good bad martial arts film. Those are fun.

**Glen Stafford:**

Well then you should definitely see, best of the best 4 because that was a bad film. (chuckles). That's where traditional martial artist is given a gun. It was pretty bad.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That sounds like an interesting concept for martial arts flak.

**Glen Stafford:**

Yeah, sure it was.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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How about any books? Any martial arts books that spoken to you or had an impact on you over the years?

**Glen Stafford:**

Uhm, books. I have to be ashamed to say that I am not a huge book reader. I think my martial arts book s have probably ended with black belt magazine and probably a novel called the ninja.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay. Well, I mean. I'm not going to scold you for reading blackbelt magazine. We're pretty heavy supporters of blackbelt. We've advertised in there for quite a whole now. One book that you might want to check out then it's on the smaller side and kind of an easy read, in fact growing up it was in the bathroom at my house, Zen in the martial arts. Not really sure, one to three-page kind of parables that you can get through in a short time frame.

**Glen Stafford:**

Well, I have to put that on the top of my amazon list right there.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, as we wind down, any martial arts related goals for the future. I'm assuming the first one might be getting healthy and starting to train again, how about beyond that?

**Glen Stafford:**

Well I have to say that something I have as a goal for a long time is to actually reach that 4th degree blackbelt rank of Master. You know, I've been doing martial arts now for thirty years and to actually attain that goal in that rank of Master would probably be number one on my list.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's a good goal. I look forward to, call Master Stafford at some point. I can say that for certain.

**Glen Stafford:**

Well thank you sir.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well, anything else you want to share.

**Glen Stafford:**

No. I think that's a pretty good.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, I think we dug in to it pretty well and hopefully in a little bit as you're starting to train again, love to have you back on and we could talk about your personal journey through this recovery. I think it's really compelling and I know if I want to hear it, there are other people out there that want to hear it so, thank you. Are there, if people want to reach you, is there a way we can reach you that you're willing to share?

**Glen Stafford:**

If they want to reach out to me, I guess you know, go ahead and hit me up on my email address which is [glensvt1@gmail.com](mailto:glensvt1@gmail.com). I'm not opposed to receiving fan mail or spam mail, I'm pretty good at erasing that real quick.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well hopefully you'll end up with some fans maybe there are even be some people out there that have been through this and can offer you some more words of encouragement. Doesn't sound like you need them though, you're doing a great job and of course we'll throw that email address and all the other things that we talked about. Maybe I can even find a link to the imdb page for best of the best 4 and throw that in the show notes for everyone.

**Glen Stafford:**

That would be pretty funny.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So well, cool. Mr. Stafford, really appreciate having you on and talked to everybody.

**Glen Stafford:**

It's totally my pleasure.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Alright and thanks a lot for appearing on whistlekick martial arts radio.

**Glen Stafford:**

Yeah it was great being here. Thanks.