



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Welcome everyone. Thanks for joining me on episode 218 of whistlekick Martial Arts Radio. Today, we're going to hear from a great guy, Sifu Rick Wong. At whistlekick, we make the world's best sparring gear, but here on martial arts radio, we're bringing you the best podcast on the traditional martial arts twice every week. I'm Jeremy Lesniak, the founder of whistlekick sparring gear and apparel. Thank you to all our returning fans and welcome to any of you, new listeners out there. We appreciate your time.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Shin guards, sort of the unsung hero of most people's sparring gear set. People tend to think about gloves and boots and helmets you know, and even mouth guards. Until they clash shins that is. You know what's great about the whistlekick version of shin guards? They don't move around. If you're tired of re adjusting your shin guards, head on over to whistlekick.com and check out what we offer. Lots of colors and they can go on over or under your training and competition uniforms.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Affinity from martial arts may actually come from heritage or just the way you were raised. That's certainly true for Sifu Rick Wong, who fell in love with the martial arts as soon as he saw Kung Fu movies. Sifu Wong has trained with some of the pillars of the Chinese martial arts world including Sifu bow-sim mark. At the same time, he has made a name for himself but he's here on the show today to tell us some stories and they're good ones. So, you best stick around. Better yet, help me welcome him.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sifu Wong, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Rick Wong:

Hello, thank you very much.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well thank you for being here, I'm looking forward to this you know we've passed some emails back and forth but this is our first time talking so listeners in the same way that this is your first time with Sifu, this is my first time with Sifu so we're all in this together. We start in a very similar way each time and I like that, it gives us some framework to move forward, it gives some consistency across all of these episodes that we do, how did you get started as a martial artist?

Rick Wong:

Well, I'm of a Chinese descent and I was raised in New York City so as you know the typical Chinese skinny teenager I spent a lot of time in Chinatown New York City watching the myriad of kung fu movies from Golden Harvest and Shaw Brothers and so forth so you know back in the 70s there are 5 movie theaters which you could easily catch a double feature pretty much every other day so having grown up watching Chinese martial arts movies you know and having an affinity for that. I started training in 1979 and my first kung fu Chinese martial arts teacher was a man named Sifu Peter Chema and the York City so as you know the typical Chinese skinny teenager I spent a lot of time in Chinatown New York City watching the myriad of kung fu movies from Golden Harvest and Shaw Brothers and so forth so you know back in the 70s there are 5 movie theaters which you could easily catch a double feature pretty much every other day so having grown up watching Chinese martial arts movies you know and having an affinity for that. I started training in 1979 and my first kung fu Chinese martial arts teacher was a man named Sifu Peter Chema and the you know back in the 70s there are 5 movie theaters which you could easily catch a double feature



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

pretty much every other day so having grown up watching Chinese martial arts movies you know and having an affinity for that. I started training in 1979 and my first kung Fu Chinese martial arts teacher was a man named Sifu peter Chema and the Chinese skinny teenager I spent a lot of time in Chinatown new York city watching the myriad of kung Fu movies from golden harvest and Shaw brothers and so forth so you know back in the 70s there are 5 movie theaters which you could easily catch a double feature pretty much every other day so having grown up watching Chinese martial arts movies you know and having an affinity for that. I started training in 1979 and my first kung Fu Chinese martial arts teacher was a man named Sifu peter Chema and the you know the typical Chinese skinny teenager I spent a lot of time in Chinatown new York city watching the myriad of kung Fu movies from golden harvest and Shaw brothers and so forth so you know back in the 70s there are 5 movie theaters which you could easily catch a double feature pretty much every other day so having grown up watching Chinese martial arts movies you know and having an affinity for that. I started training in 1979 and my first kung Fu Chinese martial arts teacher was a man named Sifu peter Chema and the Sifu peter Chema is often known as the adopted godson of the shuai Jiao Grand Master Chang dong sheng his specialty was shuai Jiao and the primary things that I learned from Sifu peter Chema were northern traditional long fist and shuai Jiao Chinese style grappling and wrestling and that's where I first started my martial arts practice.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Ok so here you are you're watching kung Fu movies and you said I've got to do this and you find your instructor and you jump in was it what you expected?

Rick Wong:

It was what I expect but I knew it was going to be hard work, one of the things that I thought was very special about Sifu peter Chema was that fact that he didn't run a commercial school, it was a sideline to his real professional side job so because he didn't teach full time commercially he only had a small number of students and he didn't take children or young teenagers but he took me as a student so the interesting thing about that was I was always at the youngest member of that school for many many many years.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And when you say young teenager you know what

Rick Wong:



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Yeah 13, 14, 15 the majority of the students there were fully grown adults mature 20, 30 something year old guys who work very fast very powerful and I was always the one that had to stay up and catch up with them. That was the major major challenge.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And how did you face that as someone who's younger I mean someone in their early teens isn't always mature enough to handle that big of a gap between themselves and others.

Rick Wong:

That was actually the fun part the challenge of realizing that a certain point I probably had learned skill and technique better because I knew patiently that at some point I would physically mature and that my you know I would grow I would get a bit more muscular I'd get, I'd get a little fast, I'll get a bit stronger so I did as they do in kung Fu movies anything about the kung Fu and the skill in practice I figures let me just pay a special emphasis on technique the physical aspect will catch up with me and I think that was the key to my ultimate success and my progression in terms of practicing and teaching martial arts since 1979.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What was it that hooked you, I mean when we talk to people on this show you know what I mean, the challenge and there's a lot there that I think we all share about our love of training, but what I find can be a little bit different is what grabs someone early on you know anyone that's run a martial arts school knows that when someone comes in you don't have 6 months before they decide yeah this is something I want to do, they're going to make that decision in the first few classes, what was it for you that you said - ah this is where I want to be all those kung Fu movies were right, this is my place?

Rick Wong:

Probably the thing that made me know I wanted to go that was being Chinese and knowing what martial arts should look like I think the thing that really made appreciate that school was, it was and it felt authentic cause those are where the years you know when you would buy your comic books and for 99cents you could be the iron palm master and you could get ripped with joe wheeler in 6 weeks and you pay it \$1.50 so the school and the instructor and the lineage was honestly legitimate and traditional and that was the thing that I realized I wanted to do there were



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

too many and there are still are if you are in the martial arts field an awful lot of hokey, charlatanish, overrated people so I knew that was the place to go.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Was there, not quite sure how to ask that as someone of Chinese descent was the fact that kung fu came from china was there some, was there a bond there for you was there something more than say I as a you know a white American learning karate you know I don't have that tie to japan in the way that you do to china, was that at all part of the equation?

Rick Wong:

Oh yeah absolutely, definitely, there is that cultural component of feeling that you need to do that. I went to Boston university for a physical therapy and when I went to college, I wanted and I needed or relished more sparring partners so when I was in college I did this Shotokan karate club at Boston university. I did the Boston university taekwondo club but I was really amazed how when the primarily Korean population of the taekwondo club found out I was Chinese, I was kind of ostracized so the same way as I can understand that you affiliate with something of your culture, I can also realize that on occasions sometimes if you're not of the same culture, you can't really jive or you know unify.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Interesting so there's something to be said for training in a way that came from where you came from. There might be some nuance there you know let's forget for a moment the exclusion aspect. But there may be some benefits to being a Korean training in taekwondo or...

Rick Wong:

I believe so, I believe so.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Ok

Rick Wong:



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Although by the same token I think that the most honest and legitimate people, not necessarily martial artist but people in any walk of life tend to be the most open minded so I know a lot of martial arts instructors and professionals of all types of careers who really it doesn't matter to them who they teach what they teach or who they associate with but unfortunately sometimes the most close-minded people are the most close minded regardless of what their vocation happens to be.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I like that, it's rather poignant. Here on this show we tell a lot of stories and I know

Rick Wong:

Of course, podcast.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's right, stories are the best I mean

Rick Wong:

Absolutely

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know, I say this periodically on the show and the whole reason when I started this show and in this format, was because I wanted to get excuse to get people to tell me their martial arts stories, because honestly those are the most fun for me whenever it's a seminar or a weekend camp or whatever, I just find myself bringing back the stories as much as more than the physical training.

True.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'd love to hear one of our stories, you know if you have a favorite or a best might you share that with us?

Rick Wong:



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Sure, you know it's interesting because best is hard to say cause the best is so relative. I'd like to say that some of my more interesting stories are the ones where I learned something so you know from a martial arts perspective I frankly think that the best things to encourage growth and progress is to actually lose something. I remember when I was first training we went to an open karate tournament in New York City and those were the days when it was you know nobody used macho or sanctuary or even whistlekick back then it was just bare foot bare hands and to get a point you needed to violently shake or disturb the body of the opponent in a bare knuckle, bare foot type of method but I remember this tournament it's not my best story but it's the one that made me think about wow I really have to train, my kung fu teacher said we're going to go to this tournament and for reasons unknown to me he put me in a division that I'd probably going to be outclassed. I think I was training about a year and a half I only knew 3 forms and we also did sparring. I remember that the first competitor I competed against I won I was very happy it's the first time I've done this. The second competitor I had already seen him destroy somebody else and I saw him warming up against me and I thought to myself, I'm a gunner but I figured let me show my best. Nevertheless, even though it was open karate point sparring I was drilled with a kick that just completely flattened me and I thought to myself my god this is embarrassing I can't get up. It took me a while to get up I lost the match anyway but I thought to myself okay this is never going to happen to me again, I learned something. We went to the forms divisions we're tied so I think it's the greenbelt division cause it's you know a year and a half of training give or take I remember that I did a form and it was a three way tie for first, they said you got to do a second form, I realized I couldn't remember any other form except for the one I competed with so I messed that form up too, so I lost the match got flattened forgot my form was thoroughly humiliated and I said to myself okay this is never going to happen to me again so it's not my best martial arts story but it's my first martial arts story and my first martial arts story is be prepared, have confidence, don't over estimate your opponent, have a set of techniques that will work for you always have 3-4 bare hand forms if available to you at a certain skill level and go from there so losing is the best way to progressing, that's not my best story but it's actually a good story.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think that's a great story.

Rick Wong:

It never happened to me again.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

And what did you change in your training so it didn't happen again?

Rick Wong:

We looked at say you know why did I get dropped with this kick? My classmates told me, my teacher told me, I was actually fortunate enough to have to face this opponent the next year at the very same tournament and although I did not win, I gave him a serious run for his money and I also got first place the next year in the bare hand weapons category. Since then I no longer compete but for a while I did open karate tournaments pretty successfully when the Chinese martial arts competitions started to become popular, I started competing in those two. And as I always told we're not going on the parting advice martial artist training but without a doubt never look down on your loss, look at it as a point of growing. I'm not necessarily the biggest football fan but if you saw Superbowl 51 the patriots being down 28 to 3 was probably one of those best examples of don't give up cause at half time in the last superbowl most people thought the falcons, they were killing the patriots. The patriots just hung in there and they ended up winning the superbowl. So, I always tell people, look to your classmates, look to your teachers if they're honest, sincere, legitimate they'll guide you in the correct direction.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I love how you tied that back to that game because that game will always be very vivid in my head. I was watching it with friends and I had to come home eventually and I thought you know what it's half time I watched a little bit of the show that I wanted and I drove home and I said let me check the score and I turned it on and went oh, now we have a game.

Rick Wong:

Right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And on reflection the thing that I think you can say about the patriots in that circumstance is maybe the heart or part of what you're trying to get through at least you said don't give up but there was a confidence there was a patience. I think a lot of people, a lot of teams in that situation would change their strategy, dramatically. They would start throwing things against the wall as they get stuck. But the patriots recognized how good they have been over the last however long, I'm not a huge football fan either but they've got a bit of a dynasty going and they trusted their training.



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Rick Wong:

Exactly, it boils down to you used the word trust and trust is a key component. As a Sifu Rick Wong, I'm an instructor or I've been certified by two instructors one is Sifu Peter Chema and my other teacher is Sifu Bow-Sim Mark so I'm very fortunate to you know have lineage in two different styles and two different martial arts families but when you used the word trust I did have a third instructor who always said I can't call him as instructor because I already have an instructor and he was not a Chinese martial arts practitioner he was a Kyokushin Karate Sensei in New York and you know if you're familiar with Japanese Kyokushin, the Kyokushin term is searching for the truth so that's about honesty with yourself so trust Kyokushin Kai the association to search for the truth.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, I think trust is something that maybe we don't talk about a lot in the martial arts but it's so deeply rooted in everything we do we have to trust our training partners, we have to trust our instructors as instructors we have to trust the students.

Rick Wong:

Absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Without that trust, the whole framework you know it just it collapses and you end up with chaos at best at worst lots of injuries and no one coming back.

Absolutely yes, it's true.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Outside of martial arts, are there things that hold your interests, any hobbies, passions?

Rick Wong:

Well, at this point my oldest son is a college senior UMass [16:05](#) and I have twins that are boy and girl twins who will be going to the high school so my hobbies or pursuits other than martial arts has been enjoying my kids' accomplishments.



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Do they train?

Rick Wong:

Noteworthy, I just coach my son's soccer team and they owe the boys under 14 middlesex league champions and I'm very proud of my son. I did use a combination of martial arts and soccer training in terms of getting fast at leg speed. It was not uncommon to see my son's soccer team or our soccer team performing modern wushu basics as the warm up. So that was a lot of fun, it gave kids serious leg speed and serious leg control.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Can I, I want to ask a little bit about that because that's something that I bet you, sure you're not the only one listening right now, you're speaking but I'm sure we have others involved listening right now saying yeah, I coach soccer, basketball football and I've always wanted or maybe even try to bring some elements of martial arts into our warm ups into our practices but I wasn't able to do them or do them effectively clearly you not only did them but did them effectively. How were you able to get the kids to adopt that?

Rick Wong:

Well, you know the funny thing because, the reason why I coached this team is because my son Chris there were some slight disciplinary problems and they were afraid of me. I'm a pretty easy-going guy but apparently according to my son, some of those kids were going to listen to me to do whatever you know I ask them to. And the other thing to is it's lead by example, I'm going to be 51, most people would think that I'm I don't know 10-15 years younger so I didn't tell them to do the warm up kicks, I demonstrated and lead the warm up kicks and you know once you lead a slight competitive element to something, they have to keep up so the other thing too is not that I want to talk about the movie shaolin soccer but you know in the movie shaolin soccer you had those guys you know doing shaolin and modern wushu and it's a popular movie. But yeah, whether it's soccer or basketball you know there are a lot of traits that are similar to martial arts, there has to be coordination, there has to be speed, there has to be intent, there has to be structural alignment, there has to be fluidity and there has to be a certain sense of open mindedness and being fluid to the situation so it's really no no no different. I often tell young teenagers that I worked with then especially, not necessarily for martial arts practice but for like off season training. Some of the best things to do for off season training tend to be, in my opinion, cause I'm also a physical therapist at



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Spaulding rehab and malls with an outpatient clinic, the best things are clinically stated are martial arts, yoga, taichi, and dance you know if you look at somebody who's an [19:24](#) those are superior athletes, you know if you look at somebody who's a highly skilled yoga practitioner, that is a superior athlete so it's easy to sell this, let me take it back, it's not easy to sell it to some teenagers or [19:41](#) to some athletes but nobody could deny that a good dancer or a good martial arts guy that isn't fit. So, when you sell it like that, it works for them especially if you can demonstrate that you're better, in better shape than they are for their age of 14 or 15.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's some great advice in here and I hope listeners that if you are able to make some inclusion of martial arts in to the other things you do when teaching people that you'll throw some feedback and you know tell us how have you been able to do that and you know the to lead by example is a I think a critical piece it's, I see a lot of martial arts instructors that teach from standing or...

Rick Wong:

Yeah exactly.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Even sitting and that only works if the people in the room have been you know if they had seen you do what you do

Rick Wong:

Absolutely

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right ok, I'd like you to tell now about a time in your life when things weren't going so well and how you were able to use or reflect on your martial arts training to get through it.

Rick Wong:

Can you like, reiterate that?

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Absolutely, so we all go through tough stuff, you know whether that's you know something physically difficult you know we have had guest talk about illnesses or maybe a challenging family situation you know something with children or spouse or parents up to we've even had guests talk about physical confrontations where they've been attacked in some dramatic way

Rick Wong:

Right, well going back to the concept of patience and trust and adding faith in one's self probably the most challenging period of my time was about three years ago when my family and I were on vacation in Vermont and the school vacation in February and you know in February everybody goes skiing cause it's school vacation. I'm not the greatest skier in the world but I remember I was going down a slope, there were a lot of little kids all around me and I thought wow I'm going to have to do some serious maneuvering here just so I don't collide, just as I was planning in my route and it was pretty icy out, some guy just shot passed me, I went flying, I tumbled down and tumbled down and tumbled down and I could definitely feel that I was injured. So I got myself up, fell down a few more times, I had serious pain in my arm and I couldn't move it and I thought okay maybe I dislocated it so as it turns out, one that have happened after my diagnosis I had a spinal cord compression injury so it left my right arm essentially half paralyzed so you know I was fortunately as a physical therapist who does martial arts I thought to myself okay another diagnosis, another prognosis is going to take a long time, and I'm going to have to be careful. For example, I couldn't do a single push up for 6months, that's frustrating, I can't do a push up? At this point in time three years later I can handle any weapon I can spar I can wrestle I can grapple I can pretty much do whatever I need to or want to do but the thing that happened with that was made me, here is that word patience again it made me be far more patient than anybody than I thought but it made me be far more patient with anybody that I treated clinically because now I knew what it felt like to take twice as long to get dressed. I knew how frustrating it was to take a look at long how to get the car started and so forth so whenever I worked with students, say oh I'd like to be able to learn faster, or why am I moving so slow, or when I have a patient who says I tore my rotator cuff and is out of the prognosis and slower than I expected or have my ACL reconstruct or if I had a stroke you know I can honestly get legitimate advice based on experience not just on academic textbook theory.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right and I'm sure all of your students and your patients are much happier with that additional perspective you have now

Rick Wong:



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Sure

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, we've heard about a couple of your instructors and you and I talked a little bit before so you know I've got a sense as to how important they were to you so I kind of want to take them out of the mix for this next question, if I was to ask you who the most influential person on your martial arts upbringing has been, who would that be?

Rick Wong:

Influential, it's so funny because every period in life has that single influence and it's hard to very very difficult to answer that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

If you're unable to narrow it down to one, you can give us about more than one.

Rick Wong:

I'd probably say the three people that are most influential are Sifu Peter Chema because he got me started and I always appreciated that, I would say that the second person is, sensei Ed Frasier who trained me in a mas oyama style. He is the person who most people in my martial arts interactions no too much about he wasn't formally my teacher but he was a high school teacher, he wasn't my martial arts teacher but he was a high school teacher in my high school and what he had done was he had been unhappy with the politics that occur in pretty much most martial arts organization so he had kind of pseudo retired and did not want to be involved in martial arts and one day on a Friday afternoon he saw myself and a bunch of my friends, we had like a little informal martial arts club in high school where every Friday after school we just went down to the cafeteria move some chairs and tables around and had a couple of friends who did taekwondo, a couple of friends who did Fu Jau, a couple of friends who did seven star praying mantis, a couple of friends who did hapkido what we'll do is we would take turns leading warm ups kind of like working on the techniques that we had been working on. We spar round robin against each other, we had a fabulous time when we shared what we had and I knew that this teacher at the high school Ed Frasier was a well know martial arts teacher who stayed away from, he was almost like, like a Jedi knight retirement just didn't want to be involved but he kept coming there, just to walk by and observe for curiosity's sake and one time he just came over started getting advise and started to help us out, gave really good advice and you know I'd like to say that he's one of the people that talking to be very open



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

mindful, meaning his issue with martial arts was don't teach this, do teach that, you get a 4th degree if you do this, you don't get a 4th degree if you don't do that but he when I graduated from high school and went to college one of the things he had said to me was that my friends and I brought back to him a love of martial arts the way it was done purely for improvements and for sharing so he's a special person. The third person who is very very special to me is Grand Master bow sim mark cause that's the next teacher that I had once I moved from New York to Boston and I first met her at Boston university when all college students had to take a [28:04](#) class so I signed up for her taichi class which is Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 8 in the morning and no college undergrad wants to take a class at 8 in the morning but one of the reasons why I went to Boston university is because she was well well well known so that's why I went to Boston university so she's my third very very major influence. One of the things I loved about Sifu mark was she's a woman and I've had this conversation with her daughter many times about what's it like to train with or take class from a woman and for me I think it was humbling in a different sort of way. My first training was involved with very fit powerful athletic people whereas now all she's extremely skilled, highly skilled and extremely physically talented but the skill for martial purposes used by a 5 foot woman versus a 5'8" guy who's jacked is completely different so having gone from 2 male instructors to a female instructor I get a sense of sophistication in terms of forms and combative skills which really tempered and gave the yin aspect of the yang aspect that I always always used so because of the fact that her son and daughter similar to my sister and I meaning roughly the same age it felt very familial for example my oldest son is the same age as her oldest grandson, that kind of thing

Jeremy Lesniak:

Some parallel

Rick Wong:

Because her oldest grandson lives faraway when I had my, when my first son was born, anytime I took him to class, she always held him and walked to him and so forth so for her this symbiotic relationship was she, I learned tons from her in her case that felt like she had you know family, you know a grandson meaning my own son

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right when you look back I'm sure on those three individuals and the other folks that you've trained with you know I t becomes kind of this layered sort of mesh approach and I wonder if you had done



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

things in a different or if you would train say with Sifu mark first, do you think you would have ended up as the same person?

Rick Wong:

No as a matter of fact, I loved the way it turned out I think it turned out beautifully in terms of you know as a martial arts practitioner I think it worked out fabulous. I learned excellent combative skills and then I had those combative skills, I wasn't a very good forms person so I ended up getting the core rough skills and then I had it polished down as I needed to have it done so I think it worked out best that way. One of Sifu mark's lineage is a Fu style bagua and historically bagua practitioners were [31:31](#) skill are skilled in something else and then they learn bagua and the training of bagua supplements and improves the preexisting skill so I think it worked out fabulous. I don't think I would be able to go from like taichi, bagua, modern wushu and then make an attempt to learn combative skills. I think it worked great the way it turned out and I have absolutely no regrets I think it was optimal.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Interesting, now let's kind of flip that question we talked about the people you had trained with, let's talk about who you haven't, if you could pick out one person from any time in history anywhere alive or dead who would you want to train with?

Rick Wong:

You know, I've thought about that question because there are Fu style bagua at Sifu Mark so, heritage or lineage and I also teach that of course as part of family tradition that being said the person I would like to meet Fu style founder Fu zhensong and the reason why that's my curiosity is because Fu zhensong took classical bagua layered it with his Chinese style taichi the he had learned initially was a contemporary of yang cheng Fu and of course the yang's style taichi learned wudang sword and also trained with sun style founder sun lutang in taichi [33:04](#) bagua so, my curiosity is and I would love to go back in time and ask for training Fu zhensong what made you add elements of one's style versus delete certain elements of other styles because in the world of martial arts and I know most of us will agree with this, you learn techniques, you learn techniques, you learn a form, you learn a form at a certain point you had more stuff that is useful or necessary I have this mess and this clutter so similar to Bruce Lee's concept, at a certain point to get rid of stuff that is unnecessary so I would ask Fu zhensong, what elements, or why did he choose certain elements from his training to keep and what elements that he'd discard. The other thing that is interesting to me about Fu zhensong is he grew up in that period of civil unrest you know



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Sino Japanese war, communist revolution, so if ever I would be able to go back in time I would like to see what it'll be like to work with train with the people who went through the boxed rebellion the opium war sino Japanese occupation that kind of thing because those were the years where defense reputation and killing somebody had to be done you know right now it just like go for points or a lot of submissions but when people really realize there is a livelihood and their life that when it has more meaning.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You mentioned a little bit about movies you know certainly the impact they had on getting you in the martial arts and you named some of them, but I'm wondering do you have favorites?

Rick Wong:

Do I have favorites, favorite martial arts movie is like best martial arts story it depends on your mood I have to admit as a young boy I did not enjoy the Bruce Lee movies of you know like 72 or 73 because I thought they were too realistic which is funny cause that's why people liked them. However, when I get to favorite martial arts movies I would definitely say that one which is the answer for many people is probably enter the dragon and the reason why I like enter the dragon is because warner brothers you have a Chinese protagonist, you have Jim Kelly African American you're willing to put him in a supporting role, you know John Saxon as supporting role, and it has great martial arts it has great philosophy and I really appreciate that so from a serious martial art movie, I really love that one. From a comedy martial arts movie, the first comedy martial arts movie I saw was Jackie Chan drunken master and I'm sure a lot of people love that one and the reason why I love that particular movie is it really shows the athleticism of how one can be. I remember when I was a young teenager I learned my kip up from watching Jackie Chan movies and I emulated his kip up technique. So, drunken master for athleticism and enter the dragon for the integration, the realism, the grittiness and the philosophy.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How about actors you mentioned Jackie Chan, you mentioned Bruce Lee, if you had to put a couple of actors into your favorite slots so to speak would they be they're or would it fall to someone else.

Rick Wong:

Absolutely, absolutely I think that one of the best martial arts actor is Sammo Hung and one of the reasons why I love Sammo Hung is because his longevity, his longevity has been amazing, you know



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

when people watch enter the dragon who don't know much about martial arts history they would say yeah, Bruce Lee beat up the fat guy at the beginning. Bruce Lee didn't beat up the fat guy, Bruce Lee put Sammo Hung in there as a tribute because he respected Sammo, so you know Sammo was a choreographer at the 60s he did his action movies on his own, he's paired up and costarred with Jackie Chan and Yuen Biao and you know even ten years ago he did the s.p.I with Donnie Yen and Donnie Yen was at the peak of his physical powers and Sammo still look fabulous so in my opinion one of my favorite martial arts actors is Sammo because one would never expect the very chubby person, one can move like that and move like that since the 60s and he can still making movies in the 2000 [38:01](#)

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, he's utterly incredible I remember that TV show it was called martial law...

Rick Wong:

Yes

Jeremy Lesniak:

When I was a kid and it was one of the few things my mother and I could agree on and we would watch that and I just remember how unassuming he looked until there is a fight sequence

Rick Wong:

Exactly

Jeremy Lesniak:

And then how dominant he looked.

Rick Wong:

No, it's true and the funny thing about martial law which is a great show is if you remember, it was back to back to walker Texas ranger which I was not particularly fond of, you know talking about the integration, I think I respect integration of Chinese and like Bruce Lee, I'm married to a Caucasian woman, you know my brother in law, my sister's husband is African American so I love integration I



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

love working with everybody, but once you put in Arsenio hall with Sammo I thought this movie is going to, this show's going to go down and it disappears soon after that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah it was, he was not the right person.

Rick Wong:

Arsenio?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, he was not the right person for that role, Wesley snipes maybe

Rick Wong:

Oh right, yes

Jeremy Lesniak:

But, not Arsenio, how about books are you a fan of martial arts books at all?

Rick Wong:

Yeah, I have a pretty big collection of martial arts books without a doubt you know they spend a gamut from books where a form is being taught, to books where applications are being taught you know to books about philosophy and like Tao jeet kun do so I have a ton of books, I love books, I think reading is wonderful, you're going to ask me what one of my favorite books is.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well I'd love to know your favorites but I'd also because if you have an extensive collection, you know we tend to get a lot of the same answers for this question I think that's good because it underscores how important some books are and you know I'm sure there are listeners out there that it takes thirtieth time of them hearing you really need to read the art of war before they're going to go read the art of war.



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Rick Wong:

Yes

Jeremy Lesniak:

But if, as someone who has an extensive collection maybe you have a title or two, that you'd recommend that people likely haven't heard of.

Rick Wong:

Well, I have to admit one of my favorite books, it's not about martial arts but it's one of my favorite books is the Marie Kondo book on clearing out, are you familiar with that book because it's been on the best seller.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm not no, tell us about it.

Rick Wong:

It's by Marie Kondo, there's a lot self-help books on trying to get you know less stressed and cleaning out your basement and cleaning out your closet and so forth and it's by Marie kondo, I can't remember the exact article but the reason why I like about that is because it's not just about cleaning out your basement or cleaning out your closet, it's about clearing out your consciousness, and clearing out the stuff that's in your mind and how your mind gets matched to stuff you own or you possess or think that you need so the reason why I like that book is because we're all a little cluttered at heart, physically or emotionally and earlier I made a comment about how at a certain point you don't need 75 you know or a hundred joint lock techniques or I don't practice kempo but I know there is like pinan this and pinan that and 35 ways to go against a right reverse punch and at a certain point you have to get rid of stuff so this book that I've had since it first came out, it teaches you how to psychologically appreciate or understand that you don't need things to be happy whether it's a form of martial arts technique, a belt and accreditation or junk.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Sure, sounds like a great book we'll put that in the show notes along with everything else we're talking about, for anyone that might be new those are at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. Now how about like your favorite martial arts book?

Rick Wong:

Probably, one of the most instrumental martial arts books or the probably the 2 most instrumental martial arts books are the first one I ever bought which was I haven't looked at it in years but I think it's James Lew and Harry Wong kung Fu kicking and stretching methods and the reason why that one, I don't want to say it's my favorite but it's instrumental, and the reason why is because when I first wanted to take kung Fu classes my father said I don't like you do it if you're going to quit in 6 months so don't even waste your time or effort or money if you just [42:55](#) stick with it, so my father said why don't you do this, go down to the bookstore and buy a book about kung Fu or whatever so I bought this book kung Fu kicking and stretching methods and my father said look at the chapters and pick like a bunch of exercises, if you're willing to do those exercises you know like 4-5 times a week for the next 3 months then we'll sign you up so I bought the book, I followed along, I stretched here I kicked like that and I felt like that was my starting blocks, when I took my first class at least I had been stretching for a good period of time before I did that. That's a very basic book it was by unique publications it came out in the 70s, much later on for the next favorite book that I had was the book by Sifu Bow-sim Mark the one that's called basic wushu training, because when that book came out I already was pretty positive if I was going to move to Boston to go to college and I was already pretty positive if I was going to go to her school so when I bought that book, so there is the young Christine Yen, young Donnie Yen posing for this and moms doing the stretches. I did the same thing, I went chapter by chapter did all the exercises and I came even better flexibility and leg skills just by spending time with that so those two books I haven't looked at in years but if you look in my book collection, you can easily tell they are weathered, like they've really been handled.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Was your, did your purchase of that book and what you read in it solidify or at least make you even more sure that Boston and Sifu mark's school where were you needed to go.

Rick Wong:

Oh definitely because in addition to her taichi and her bagua skill she's very very well known for straight sword skills and the ability to use straight sword is usually not very good in those kung Fu schools you know most kung Fu schools have pretty good staff and broad sword skills but I always



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

knew that I wanted to improve up on what I had and I also wanted to be much better at straight swords so in addition to that book, I already knew that I wanted to go to her school for the training of straight sword, you know if you look at my Facebook or my website you'll notice that my logo is a silhouette of myself with a straight sword which is the exact same concept as her logo which is herself silhouette with a straight sword so yeah I already knew I was going to go to her school.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool, let's talk about the future, you're teaching, you're training, I'm sure there is a reason you know it's not your professions or you're doing it for reasons other than financial, why what's keeping you moving forward?

Rick Wong:

Well you know as I get older you know you worry about your health, I've already gone through my neck related spinal cord injury so as I go into, as I'm in my third decade of teaching you know my primary goal is to maintain my health and fitness. Knowing what I know about western physical therapy, orthopedics, sports rehab, injury prevention and legitimate Chinese martial arts, one of my goals is to pass that on. I know that Christine Yen and Jean Lukitsh and myself I'd been working to promote the bow sim mark tai chi arts association in terms of propagating for the future and I know one thing there has to be some kind of combination of the best of evidence based practice not just allegorical stuff so one of my goals is really to just get the best skills available kind of discard this stuff that may actually be not so good or potentially a waste of effort time and motivation and then just push that on to you know the next generation. The other thing, that's the big picture, the smaller picture or the individual picture is you know for myself there was an article in the Boston globe about 2 months ago about the number one thing that ails men in their 50s and 60s and according to the Boston globe article on the number ailment for men in their 50s and 60s is loneliness it's not prostate cancer, it's not cardiac diseases, so one thing is I'm really really fortunate is not just my physical therapy job but when I practice and teach Chinese martial arts there are students there are you go to tournaments you go to competitions, you go to performances you go to workshops, you do all these things and somehow your social structure becomes bigger than it used to be or for example let's just say that I practice shuai Jiao you know I have shuai Jiao classmates and friends that I know from competition or classes on the west coast in Europe in Asia. I practice the tai chi Fu style, you know I have friends and colleagues in Asia and so forth, so it's a bigger community picture. The world is getting smaller so they say because of technology but even though the world is getting smaller, people tend to be less happy potentially so one of my martial



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

art related goals is as the Chinese people say at mandarin woo lin yi jia the martial forest is one family. So, if everybody technically does this for purposes of health but socialization is a huge one.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool and now tell about how we can find you, you mentioned a Facebook page you mentioned a website if people are interested in you if they want to get hold of you maybe they're you know traveling to or in the Boston area and they'd like to look you up you know how would they do that?

Rick Wong:

Well my Facebook, I mean sorry my website is Rick Wong's Chinese martial arts center from you know that's also on Facebook so a person can easily look that up.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, and they can contact you from there and of course everything else, we'll have those links so if you're driving in the car you know please don't try and find something to scroll on while you're driving you know we want everyone to be safe

Rick Wong:

Yeah please drive safely

Jeremy Lesniak:

I really appreciate your time here today, and I'm wondering if you might leave us with some parting words?

Rick Wong:

My parting words are just be a good person, take care of yourself, take care of your family if you are the person who teaches martial arts take care of your students give them just a little bit of taking care, the world has to be a better place.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 218 – Sifu Rick Wong | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

I found Sifu Wong to be thoughtful, kind and honestly the type of person I'd love to train with. Boston isn't that far away from me so who knows, maybe that would happen down the road. Thank you, Sifu Wong, for coming on the show today. Over at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com you could find all the show notes from today's episode. Some great photos, links and names of the books we talked about. Find whistlekick on social media @whistlekick on twitter, Facebook, Instagram and everything else. You can also check out the shows Facebook group, whistlekick martial arts radio behind the scenes. The next time you see someone adjusting their shin guards, do everyone a favor and let them know about ours. I'd really appreciate it and thank you for doing that. That's it for today, until next time. Train hard, smile and have a great day!