



Episode 232 – Professor Melody Shuman | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey everybody. Welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio here we are with episode 232 and today's guest is someone that started something that is almost ubiquitous in the martial arts you may not know I'm going to hold off on the name and just let you wonder for a few minutes don't worry, all introducer her. If you're new to the show you may not know that you can check out everything we've got going on @whistlekick.com you can find all the show notes to this and the other 231 amazing to say that episodes at whistlekick martial arts radio.com we have transcripts we have photos, we have videos with all kinds of great stuff links to the guests and what they've got going on really if you're a fan of the show you really should check out whistlekick martial arts radio.com at least from time to time to see the things that were putting on their were trying to add value and give you all those links and book titles and everything because I know a lot of you are listening while you're doing other things and you have time to jot down notes or maybe it's unsafe when you're driving a car riding a motorcycle on a bicycle who knows what it is we want to stay safe. And of course, get on over you can center for the newsletter while you're there we email out that his letter honestly once twice a month that's really infrequent. Sometimes we throw you a discount really were just trying to add some value just maybe give you some additional information on. What's going on at whistlekick or give you some insight into what's happening with new products colors on the gear notice talk and stuff so check that out and you can always unsubscribe if you don't like it. I write it myself. Our guest today is literally and figuratively not short of courage. Despite times when the deck was stacked against her she managed to face and overcome everything life through her. Prof. Melanie Shuman wasn't a typical child she got involved with



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some stuff which led to martial arts ultimately and what I have to say is truly an exciting life at least for my perspective. Her martial arts story is one-of-a-kind and rather me ramble on here let's welcome her and listen as she tells us her story.

Professor Shuman welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Melody Shuman:

Thanks for having me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It is an honor, it is a pleasure to have you here. Thanks for doing this I know were in it working to dig in and a lot of listeners already know who you are because you're out there you doing some great stuff and I appreciate all that you're doing were gonna get into that. But before we can get into that we've gotta get some context for how we got to here, how you start as martial artist?

Melody Shuman:

Well, my story is not your typical I watched karate kid growing up as a little girl and want to take karate. My story goes being very small for my age I got picked on a lot in school and I had a feisty little personality and I used to fight back not physically but in other ways where I made a lot of poor behavior choices. So, my parents as a last-ditch resort put me in martial arts to teach me discipline and I get my behavior straightened up. So when I first started I did not like martial arts as matter of fact I hated it and I cry the whole way to my classes and my instructor's name is Mr. Slaughter, he was an ex-marine and this was back in 1987 in new Orleans so this was that the real dungeon dojo days where I was, found myself in knuckle push-ups a lot in class and the old school dead cockroach position you know where you get put up with your feet up in the air and hands up in the air for long periods of time because of my poor behavior. So, that's really how it all started.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow. You know what I was a wrestling fan back as a kid and slaughter just made me think of Sgt. Slaughter and if he was anything like that character in wrestling it's amazing that you made it beyond a single class.

Melody Shuman:

Well, I didn't have a choice.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

When did that change?

Melody Shuman:

Well, that's another great question. So, my brother, he's two years older than me and he's my best friend and he decided to join martial arts as well just the kind of keep me company in class and there is this older kid in class who was a total Johnny from karate kids you know. Good looking kid total bully and he used to really mess with my brother a lot in class and it was the very first day that we reached our green belts and we started sparring and I and I just wanted to whoop them up and we started sparring and he kicked me in stomach super hard and I caught myself and I was just about the verge of tears but didn't want them see me cry. So, I just went all my effort and energy just popped up a round kick and whacked him head super super hard. I was extremely flexible so was really cool that I kicked him in the head and I stopped and looked over, and I see my mom on the audience and my mom just jumps up in the air just started screaming and cheering for me that I kicked him in the head and I was sitting there going man, I get to kick boys this particular bully in the head and not only I gotta kick him in the head but everybody is cheering for me especially my mom, who is usually yelling at me. This is the coolest sport ever. And ever since that day I really love sparring. I started following up with martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What. What was it? So how old were you when that happened?

Melody Shuman:

I was 11.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, your 11 which is a transitional age for nearly everyone and we can probably say everyone. What, what was it in that moment I mean, you know you you've had plenty of time to to think about that to reflect on that moment but what was it in that moment that you got that you needed? Was it validation? Was it power?

Melody Shuman:

It was, I was always an underdog because I was very tiny for my age. So, you know, a really quick back story is my father had been anxious to get me into this all girl catholic school, St. Scholastica academy in New Orleans. He graduated from brother martin valedictorian which is the all boy catholic school and



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finally they got me and said this is in the fifth grade and I walk into my class and all the girls go "who let a kindergarten in?" and of course I turn around and look to see what the kindergartner was and I said to her talking about me. So, you can imagine sports activities things like that, nobody was picking me and so for me to be really really petite and really tiny, and this big taller, good looking kid who is very athletic in our martial arts class, he was winning other tournaments to kick him and take him off guard and see that it's not size and that matters but its heart that matters. That's really what did it for me because, moving on from there I started competing in tournaments and of course forms were my forte that's what I won world champion and but in sparring in our organization, we competed based on age not by size. So, if I lost it was all that poor little girl loss but when I won, boy, was the audience cheered for me and strangers you know. They would see this little girl sparring this bigger boy, or a bigger girl back in the day and I love being the underdog and I loved winning and getting all these accolades based on my heart and on my size.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's something I can relate to certainly being smaller and that the transitional moment, that realization that I have a lot more capacity to succeed within the dojo than I had realized and certainly you and I are not the only ones who have had that experience. I'm sure a lot of the folks listening if had that you know they probably think oh I remember my moment as well. So that's great and obviously you continued you started competing you started winning, what was it about martial arts that kept you hooked? Cause you're still pretty I'm underselling your rather involve still.

Melody Shuman:

Yes, yes. I am extremely involved. What was it that kept me hooked, the martial arts to me you know, your always constantly improving yourself. Even now 41 years old time in the best shape of my life. Right now, I'm covering for our kickboxing instructor you know, it's a fitness kickboxing class in the mornings. And I've been teaching that class for the last two weeks and I just feel myself constantly getting stronger getting more powerful even yesterday. Yesterday was Labor Day weekend at the time of this recording, we were out on our boat of course I'm in a bathing suit and we came over to our friend's house and I hadn't seen in like six months and they're like wow what are you doing you're just in such great shape and I know it all revolves around martial arts and that training. Just it's a fun artful activity that helps you become a better version of yourself.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I love it. And of course, in that back story we, we heard a few tangents stories elements that make you who you are and I love the stories of my favorite part of what we do here. If I was to ask you your favorite martial arts story, what would that be?



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Melody Shuman:

Okay. So, in 1997, this is when I was 21 years old. I was on the world demo team and the at a travel to south Korea and at the time I was very well known in my organization for being a great children's martial arts instructor because I used to work at Disney and entertainment and I pulled a lot of animation and entertainment type of personality into my teaching. So, while in Korea we were at a martial arts school and they had these preschoolers who are taking class and now this is in '97 so back then, most martial arts didn't work with kids under the age of seven right? Because the younger kids are just very hard to deal with behavior wise and curriculum wise, it doesn't really target their stage of development. So, anyway, were watching these preschoolers take class and my one of my masters comes over and tells me I want you to teach them some drills and teach class. And I was like alright, awesome bring it. So, I jumped on the mat and I look at all these kids, and now again when south Korea just to I tee it up, an I look at all the little kids and I said okay guys, line up. And they all just kinda look at me and I was like, okay everybody, stand up and still no motion for many of the kids and I look over at my master then I said did they speak English? And he goes no, and I was like, oh my god I'm in trouble. So, I kinda look around the room, it was also a gym type of facility and they had jumping ropes and hoola hoops and blocks and all these things and I was like I got an idea. So, I just started setting up obstacle courses and all these kind of like game like activities and just kinda started doing them and having the kids follow along. And they were having a blast to the point where my master taps me on the shoulder and goes, it's been an hour, you need to stop. And I was like, an hour has gone by? He was yeah, how long was I supposed to teach drills he was like just for like 10 minutes or so but everybody was so entertained and all the parents came in all the parents were enjoying it so we didn't wanna stop. And that the birth of me really finding my feet into the children's martial arts education because the plane ride home it was 18 hours from Seoul to Chicago which is when we landed in the us, I ended up writing preschool martial arts curriculum for my school because like I said we didn't have kids under the age of seven. So, I wrote this program for 3 to 6 year olds and I called it little ninjas. And if you're a listener and you've heard little ninjas, that was how little ninja program was born. So, the, you know that that was my favorite story just not being able to communicate with these preschoolers so I had to figure out a way to teach them some drills and make it fun by using this play-based learning, this game-based learning concept. Which at the time was very was very uncommon in typical martial arts school?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, so with this, can I use the word accident? Was that what it was or was this the evolution of distinct skills that you have that just it happens to coalesce at that time and even if it hadn't been it would've some other time. How do you look at it?

Melody Shuman:



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I call it serendipitous luck. That is why the words I use a lot especially when, with my coaching clients and serendipitous luck is basically when hard-working opportunity meet. So, I really had been harnessing a lot of personality and entertainment type of teaching strategies when working with my students and that's why our school was so successful. And then the opportunity to teach children in another country and be inspired by my ability to educate them and entertain them without using a word of verbal communication that's it that's how it all developed. So everything that happens to me now is still all that part of that serendipitous luck, because after that not too shortly after that, I was taking a natma remember natma back in the day and I was on I met on a cruise taking their cardio karate certification with Jim Graden and we just went to lunch after our certification on the cruise and I was telling him about this program I wrote and that he was like oh my gosh you have to come teach it at my school because he was only an hour and 1/2 away. So, implemented the program in his school and it just so happened that the vice president of natma was taking kickboxing one day when I was teaching that class and that was rob [00:13:53.29], man this is something. So, he schedules a meeting with john Graden and was the president of natma and next thing you know little ninjas is in 2000 schools and dozens of countries all around the world. So yeah serendipitous luck.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And what luck it was because it's completely changed not only... Well, I'm gonna speculate that it's changed your life to change but I know it's changed the lives of a lot of people in the martial arts its changed a lot of schools and I'm gonna guess that it's brought profitability to some schools that might've been on the edges prior.

Melody Shuman:

That was the greatest benefit of the little ninja program was traveling all around the world and having schoolers tell me that they were able to leave their morning job are there full-time job and become full-time martial arts school owners because it opened up such a lucrative niche market that they didn't have and not only with the students you know, the younger generation of students but then it was filtering and their older siblings and so forth. So yeah definitely was sentient what a great this at such an honor to hear their stories and so very rewarding. Just the stories alone made me really find my grasp and find my grip in the industry.

Jeremy Lesniak:

One last question about this and then we'll move on. When you are writing that, we are on that 18-hour plane ride back from Seoul, did you have any idea what you are writing would become this?

Melody Shuman:



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You know, I did not. I hope that it will provide me a new passion in my own school because at the time we had a very successful martial arts school but, we were having those roller coaster classes where students were dropping out mid-level. The older ones are dropping out because the classes were too easy. Younger kids are dropping out because classes were too hard so I was getting frustrated teaching every single day and I almost quit martial arts. So, what I was writing this program I was hoping that it was gonna give me this this new passion to stick with it because I was 21 I was taking business classes at night and I wasn't really sure if I was stay in the martial arts industry or not because I finding myself so stressed out and I didn't want to have a stressed-out career for the rest of my life. So, I didn't but boy, it definitely was life-changing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Awesome. That's certainly clear and I'm sure that as we go on were gonna, loop back and tie in the sum of this. When you're not involved in martial arts, when you're not coaching or teaching or training or writing or any of the other things we can put under the heading of martial arts, what do you like to do? Do you have hobbies? Do you have time for hobbies?

Melody Shuman:

Yeah, oh absolutely as a matter of fact, my hobbies are basically they come first, well not hobbies but which to say my family comes first obviously I have a son who is 2 1/2 years old his name is van and he is my world. So, when I'm not working I am either swimming with my son, I'm on the boat with my son. We have a boat we go out several times per week over here. I'm taking them to parks where just having the time. But for my personal self, my other hobbies is I'm big on the golf so I love to golf I do a lot of golfing and I'm a big gym girl too. So, I like to work out that sometimes twice a day. It's just, it's a way to clear my head and it's also a way to help me stay empowered.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What are your workouts looking like?

Melody Shuman:

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays I do skills fit which is a fundamental interval training kickboxing program that we have a genius lady Michelle harling wrote and as those are my great cardio and bag workouts but when I'm in the gym you know, I do a little bit of a pre-quarter warm up my muscles and then I am alternating leg days arm days and I hitting free weights on Tuesdays and Thursdays. And if I do skills fit and then I go to the gym then I'm working on the machines.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Great, okay. One of the things I love to discuss shows how people's martial arts background has helped them in just general life, one of the ways that I think we can best exemplify that is to talk about a time where things work good. You know could be a difficult moment in time or difficult time in your life, but if you be willing to tell us about one of those and how your martial arts help you get through it.

Melody Shuman:

Well this is kind of uhm a roundabout about story but, well when I moved to Florida when I was 14 years old I lived on New Orleans as I mentioned, and I was freshman in high school and you know back then even nowadays I mean, it's getting a lot cooler than it was back in the day the martial arts weren't a very cool and high school. And I couldn't really find a martial arts school that I liked in Orlando when we moved to Florida so I dropped out. And I got into soccer and I got kicked off the team for again getting picked on the field and making some bad choices. And so, I stopped doing sports and activities that just really started to rebel and one day I was in the cafeteria and I sprayed pepper spray in the cafeteria just to mess with some people that I didn't really like and was in the office getting expelled for bringing a weapon the school and you can imagine I sent a counselor and a student into the hospital and I felt really bad about it so I'm in the office and it was struggle because my parents were in New Orleans at the time on vacation. So, they know what to do with me to have me sitting in the principal's office trying to decide whether or not they're expel me or suspend me and Disney happened to be there and they were hiring for food and beverage for the holiday season and the manager she felt bad for me and she came over and I told the story how did they know what to do with me at the time and she said why don't you get a job and tell your parents good news, bad news. Bad news is I got suspended but good news is I got a job. And I said I don't want to work in food and beverage you know, I'd love to work in entertainment. She said well you're short enough to work in entertainment cause there's a size requirement for the entertainment position that I was looking for. And she asked me if I had any acting experience and I told her no, I didn't have any acting experience and she said oh well Disney hires people who've had childhood backgrounds in acting and performing so that wouldn't work and I told her I was like you know I am a black belt and at the time it was a national champion in sparring and in forms and she was the coolest thing in the world. So, she called her boss in the next day I had a six-hour private audition at Disney. And so, being a black belt and a national champion got my foot in the door at Disney but then the composure of being able to audition for six hours, I would have been able to do that if it weren't for all of those testing's that I had to do. You know getting up performing of forms, breaking board, sparring you know working you're best measured by how you handle yourself under pressure and I had failed my black belt testing twice because I made a lot of mistakes and I couldn't break my boards but after I passed my black testing, I became more empowered and more confident in my abilities and I got that job because I nailed my audition and they were so impressed with my composure because at the time was 17 years old and they hasn't seen a 17-year-old have that much composure during an audition especially somebody who didn't have any kind of acting background. So that I have to say is really one that's the beginning of how martial arts really help my composure.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow. Six hours, you call it an audition

Melody Shuman:

Yes

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm just I'm just I'm drawing a lot of correlations between what I'm imagining happened there in a black belt test yes lengthy high-pressure what else it would else can you tell us because at the black belt test there's probably things that happened that aren't public

Melody Shuman:

Yeah. There were choreographed routines so they would teach me a choreographed routine for about 30 minutes and then give me 10 minutes to practice it on my own and then I get up and I perform it and then you give me these acting type of routines where they would teach it to me and then they give me a couple of minutes to practice it on my own that I would get up and I would perform. So, the performance part of being able to number one learn something and then turn around and spin it back out with my little flare. That's a there's a lot of correlations to what we do in martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, what's going on in your head there you you've just been suspended from school you know you're parent are going to be unhappy. If I'm constructing any kind of accurate picture of who you are, who you were as a teenager, you're probably feeling some anxiety about that?

Melody Shuman:

You know, you would think that I was but I just, loved the entire process. I just wanted that job so bad and I remember when I was moving from New Orleans in time all my friends you know, goodbye. And they were like, yeah but you're moving to Orlando and I was like I know, I'm gonna work at Disney one day. I just had this drive and this overwhelming confidence that I had the parts and all that because of martial arts and a lot of that is just from my overwhelming ego that I had as a child. So, I'm sure that there was anxiety but I do vividly remember how confident, and how driven I was to get that job.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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And of course, it happened.

Melody Shuman:

Yes, it happened, so it was a good news bad news when my parents came home.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What did they say? I'm curious.

Melody Shuman:

They cannot believe it and as a matter of fact, they stood up for me because they wanted to expel me but they just went ahead and suspended me, so my parents handed the school board and they had the plea to not expel me for bringing a weapon the school. It was pepper spray, it was a stupid choice, so to see my parents proud of me for getting this awesome job and that pride they had for me really made it, you know, it swung the table over into my side when they went to bat for me to keep me from expelling school too. Just pretty cool.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, there's a lesson to any children that are listening out there, if you're going to do something that you shouldn't do make sure you follow it up by something really amazing, so hopefully it evens out.

Melody Shuman:

That's right

Jeremy Lesniak:

I love it. Now, if I was to ask you who the most influential person on your martial arts has been, who would that be?

Melody Shuman:

Do you mean a person that I've met or anybody just in general?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Anybody could be someone you've met or someone that even is a fictional character.



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Melody Shuman:

Well growing up, my uncle, my mother's brother he was handicapped. He was a special needs person, he was a lot older than me but he was never able to live on his own so he always lived with my grandmother. And my grandmother and my grandfather were my best friends so used to I spent a lot of time hanging at their house and especially with my uncle Danny. And my uncle Danny lays a big kung fu star he was a big Jackie Chan fan and drunken master was his favorite movie and we used to watch that movie over and over and over again and I just, I really got my passion for technique by watching Jackie Chan movies with my uncle. So, I would say that if anybody when I was growing up and I really found my grip and martial arts I was loving Jackie Chan was the one who I idolized. I idolized the technique and the sidekicks I idolize his intensity because he was a small person as well he has to be one of the most influential people in my life as far as the art form.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Have you met him?

Melody Shuman:

Not yet. And I say not yet because one day I'll meet him.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. Your traveling in some big circles and it would surprise me if that didn't happen soon. Cool. And if I was to ask you who you would want to train with? I suppose it could be the same answer but perhaps not, who would you want to train with it? And anywhere in time anybody you could imagine.

Melody Shuman:

You know, I'm sure everybody says Bruce lee because of his philosophy and how much of a genius he is. But the Jackie Chan because he was the one who I used to watching the movies and again his technique, I'm a technician and I won world champion in forms. That was my biggest title that after won and because I like technique so he would be the one. So, if you're listening and you have connections to his agent or family or him himself, hook me up.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And then once that happens please hook us up because he is certainly on the shortlist for coming on here. He's fantastic and had quite the influence on my upbringing as well. Now, let's talk more about competition. You talked about these titles, you talked about your passion for competition, but let's go



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back to the most basic of questions there, why? Competition seems to be such a polarizing thing for folks and anybody that's a long-time listener to the show knows my feelings on it, but why did become such an important part of your life?

Melody Shuman:

I believe that competition is really how you measure yourself. Win, lose or draw you become a better version of yourself because of the energy and effort that it takes to compete. You know there's a lot of practice involved there's a lot of detail involved, there's a lot of passion, there's a lot of ups but there's also a lot of downs. And I believe that my martial arts career was defined based on my competitions. So, as a younger girl when I started getting into martial arts, the best memories I have with my family were traveling to martial arts tournaments and going to these competitions and seeing my friends. You know, this is back in the day when we didn't have text message, social media, cellphones, email nothing like that so we see our friends from Florida from all over the united states and we go to these competitions and we'd all hang out and have a good time. So, it wasn't just about the actual competitions but again going into the competition the highs when I would win championships and titles, my confidence in my own abilities would soar and I never really wanted to be that person even now today, I don't use the fact that I'm a female in a male dominated industry as an excuse. I don't use my size as an excuse, it's all it's all based on my and my heart my passionate desire to succeed and a lot of that was born through competition.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And so, as you're traveling around, you're competing you're doing all these amazing things how did that change you?

Melody Shuman:

Well, again it established my confidence, it taught me how to handle defeats. My best quote that I tell my students even today especially when they're getting ready to test for their black belt, you're not measured best by how you won your easy days, you measured best by how you handle yourself under pressure, how do you handle yourself on your worst days. It's one thing to be in a great mood and do great things when it's your birthday or Christmas is next week and you're excited, but how do you handle yourself when when you yourself when you lose? How do you handle yourself when your car breaks down or you get in an accident or you know you have appliance armageddon in your home and you're frustrated you know? Those are the days that really define you and competition is all part of that. I'll give you another great story, I'm 21 years old and I'm in Las Vegas for nationals and I'm sparring the reigning world champion, I just moved up to 3rd degree black belt and that this girl was my idol back in the day, I used to watch her compete. So here I am competing for, competing with her for first place and were tied 4-4 and it's on sudden victory. Now, this is in Vegas again, I'm 21 years old and I left my



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mouthpiece back in port charlotte. This is what I live in south Florida, so I had to buy a mouthpiece before my competition and of course I am an adult size mouthpiece and it didn't fit my mouth I have a tiny, tiny jaw. And here we are tied 4-4 time starts where in sudden victory, my gums are all bleeding from this mouthpiece it doesn't fit my mouth so I spit the mouthpiece out on the floor and the ref looks at me and says you need to put that back in your mouth and I was like, I'm not putting that back in my mouth it's on the carpet at this convention center, all these dirty feet have been so, that's not gonna happen and he looks over at my coach and says hey it's gonna be up to you, letter fight or she has to forfeit. He's like why are you afraid she's got this. So, he says go and I'm ready to go he scored a point and this girl threw this back-side kick and hit me square in the side of the jaw and I spit out what feels like rocks out of my mouth and it was four of my teeth to my front teeth and one on my bottom jawline one of the other side, I don't know how that tooth got knocked out. So, and of course I lost but not only did I lose, but now I'm in Vegas for the next few days missing teeth, and of course I stayed in a hotel room the entire time because I didn't want to go out with missing teeth are anything but it taught me one of my biggest lessons, it taught me a lot about humility, and it taught me a lot about making stupid choices and that story right there really, it doesn't get any worse than that. So, you know, it really shifted my mindset to see things in a positive light no matter what happens to you, you know. You get kicked in the face, you get teeth knocked out, you move on and interestingly enough, I beat her at world championships and ended up taking bronze. Not too long later, but still I have to go to the dentist once a year to have my teeth you know, still worked on because she did so much damage to my jaw.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well, we don't need to talk about the horrendously sharp-edged irony of that moment, because that's about as ironic as you get to were not going to go there because what is there to say that isn't already understood. But I wanna talk about your confidence in facing your idol. I think most of us to come up in the martial arts we have at least one person multiple people often times sometimes it's our instructor that we look at and say that person that person is amazing and I want to be like them someday but to step up and be, I mean for all intents and purposes you were on a peer level even in that moment. 4-4 sudden death, it's about to go down. Did you realize in the moment how big of a step that had been for you?

Melody Shuman:

Apparently not because I didn't block. You know it was as amazing because the girls third degree black belt division in the organization was an extremely popular division because there was some just great, great fighters and our ring was crowded and I feel bad for everybody who's competing around us because of all the cheers that were coming out from our ring. So, it was really exciting to be tied 4-4 and have all these people there and I was thinking, I thought for sure I was gonna win. So, I had too much confidence and I was like this is it because you know, when I again because of my size she's a lot like 5'8 and 140 pounds and here I am five nothing 90 pounds soaking wet so I was like if I lose, and everybody'd



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like oh man she put up a good fight, but if I won, I was victorious, I was going down is a legend in martial arts and my organization. So yeah, my overconfidence really got the best on me on that one so it wasn't always a bed of roses.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Speaking as a smaller man I can certainly appreciate that. You know, you almost can't lose in that kind of scenario because oh well you can just play off that person was bigger than me or something like that but it doesn't change the fire for those of us that are competitive I think you and I are certainly similar in that way. Let's talk about movies.

Melody Shuman:

Okay

Jeremy Lesniak:

You love Jackie Chan so I'm gonna guess, some of his movies have made it through a few rotations on your television over the years?

Melody Shuman:

Yes, still I let my son watch him but yes, definitely can is one of the places, one of the movies that is my go to. If I'm home alone and a Jackie Chan movie is on I'm stopping.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's hard to move past that, isn't it?

Melody Shuman:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What's your favorite movie? Favorite martial arts movie?

Melody Shuman:

Drunken master.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

You're not the first to name that on the show, but I'm curious of your reasons why.

Melody Shuman:

Because you gotta remember when I watched drunken master with my uncle Danny who was 20 years old at the time and again as I mentioned my uncle Danny he was handicapped, he had special needs he was just the funny dude so we would just, as a young girl seeing him drunk and beat up people I just thought it was the funniest thing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Are there any other movies that hold a special place for you?

Melody Shuman:

Teenage mutant ninja turtles the original movie. Yeah, I used to want to be Ernie Reyes Jr. The pizza delivery boy.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Awesome. If you had to be one of the turtles which one?

Melody Shuman:

You know I'm a nunchuks girl I'm really really really good at nunchuks so, I like Michelangelo but also, I like that leadership position so you know it's a tie between Leonardo and Michelangelo.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That should almost become a question because I think every martial artist knows which ninja turtle most identify with.

Melody Shuman:

Oh yeah. Yes, yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Some quiz will put out a quiz on Facebook, to tell you which ninja turtle you are.

Melody Shuman:

You know it's interesting that you say that because we just had our big retailer skills organization, we just had our annual conference in here in St. Petersburg Florida and I heard Ernie junior as our keynote speaker so he came down and hung out with us the whole weekend and we do it, we make it gathering nobody's used the hotel we hang out at the resort the entire time and Ernie and his wife hung out with us the entire time even at the beach bars and stuff and it was really cool having people come over to our table you know while we were hanging out and saying you know this was my favorite turtle and bringing their like bringing their items and posters of ninja turtles and saying who their favorite was. So yeah that definitely should be a question because and I couldn't believe how many of our skills members were such huge ninja turtle fans.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. There was nothing like it when it came out it certainly did a lot for the martial arts for get another round the kids interested you mentioned Jackie Chan you mentioned Mr. Reyes, you've mentioned Bruce lee. Are there any other martial arts actors you look at and you say yes that that person I love? You know their skill or their choreography or something.

Melody Shuman:

Well, believe it or not, I was also a big fan of bloodsport growing up.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, how can you not be?

Melody Shuman:

So, Jean Claude van-Damme was another one who I just you know I had a big girl crush on growing up as a little girl. Between Jackie Chan and Jean-Claude van Damme sidekick my that was my favorite kick my signature kick was the [00:38:54.54] sidekick. You know, every time the demonstrations I would jump over a bunch of kids breaking a board with a jump side kick so, he's another one that stands out. I know not your typical traditional martial artist but for me I gotta keep it real.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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I'm right there with you. I think I personally was responsible for wearing out the VHS copy at the local convenience store where we would rent them and I distinctly remember my mother rewinding certain parts, not so much the action scenes you know, you weren't the only one that had a crush on him, let's put it that way.

Melody Shuman:

You had a...

Jeremy Lesniak:

No, it was her was all her. I like the skills she was the one with a crush on van-Damme. I mean wouldn't mind not been able to do that split even now.

Melody Shuman:

No, no.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How about books? You've written books, are there books that you look at and you say this book is so solid, so worth reading is a martial artist that you might want to share?

Melody Shuman:

Well believe it or not, I have several martial arts books but I have never been able to get through any of them. And I'm not really sure if I have a good enough explanation why I have it you know, I have the way of martial arts, I got the art of jeet kune do, I've got the book of five rings, but the books that I like are all into science and psychology, particularly as it relates towards children because, traditional martial arts as much as I loved it for myself, it wasn't my passion for what I felt was gonna be my purpose in my career and I believe that children's martial arts education is, it's definitely transforming I believe I personally have a hand on that as a humble brag but children learn best through play and learn according to their stage of development so everything that I wrap my head around as far as it comes to reading and researching is gonna be more into the psychology that Daniel Goldman, emotional intelligence, Daniel Siegel with mine site books like that.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Yeah and what is it about those martial arts books that they're classics and they're books that they're mentioned on the show quite often in your not the only one who struggles to get through them all the way I'm going to hitch my horse to your wagon there. Any thoughts on why?

Melody Shuman:

Because it depends, you know. Because everybody's personalities' different, right? You know some people read for entertainment. My form of entertainment is more going out, working out, going on the boat, playing golf and so forth. So, when I read I want to read to learn and the things that I want to learn all are based around what I do right now as a career and as being a children's martial arts consultant. So, I read things that are going to help me translate better to my audience how to teach children in a way that's more productive, that's measurable, that's gonna get better results so that they can in turn become better martial arts instructors to children. So, one of the typical martial arts books that you have, they don't really revolve around that concept, so you know that's I guess that's my best way to say it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I know you've got a lot of materials out there and were gonna talk about how people can find what it is you've got going on if they're interested in developing a stronger children's program. But before we wrap up these last few questions it seems like a good time which one thing that people that teach kids should stop doing and what's one thing that people that teach kids should start or focus on.

Melody Shuman:

Well, it's hard to tell somebody that they should do something because I don't think that I deserve the right to say this is how things should be but I could tell you what is working best based on all the feedback and based on everything I've been doing with all my research and that is focus more on believing that children can, will embrace discipline, will brace hard work, will embrace the ethics of learning and improving themselves with a positive mindset. See there's types of theory and martial arts instructors as it pertains to working with children and not just martial arts instructors but people in general. Douglas Mcgranahan came up with this theory he is a child psychologist or psychologist and he said there are x people or typically your traditional martial arts instructors, there are x people more authoritative. They believe that children need to be coerced, they need to be threatened, they need to be punished and held accountable when they make mistakes. So, for example if you going to some of the martial arts community is really on Facebook and you see somebody say, hey I've got this kid who just can't sit still, he spins around, he interrupts in class, you know, what do I do? Theory x people are gonna be the first to jump in and say give him push-ups put in timeout, tell him if he doesn't behave he's not gonna get his belt, take away his stripe and those types of things. And that could be very retroactive particularly for the average children in today's society, right? So, it's very militaristic mindset and it's



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only effective on a very small majority of children and the other ones that, again its retroactive. Theory y people believe that if you use positive teaching strategies that you can get them to sit still without threatening them without punishing push-ups to be a perfect example, I believe in the full moon I'm sure it if you work with children, its martial arts, you believe in the full moon and I'm teaching a group of five and six-year-olds in one day it was a full moon and of course the kids were just at a whack. I look over in the audience and looking at the parents and the parents just feel bad for me you could see it in their eyes they're just like us poor girl is going down fast and I grabbed all the kids and I brought them in and I said hey guys you see your moms over there, you see moms and dads and your parents and everybody watching us now again I was like, when you guys are wiggling and moving around you're not really trying hard and paying attention you making me look bad so what I need you guys to do is can you do me favor and make me look good? So, when we go back to this drill. Can everybody standstill in line and sit still and try 100% and make me look really good because if you make me look in front of your parents they'll keep bringing you. They were like yeah, yeah, yeah, I can do that. And it worked, as a matter of fact age 2 started wiggling a little bit and they kinda nudged age 2 and said age 2 your making master melody look bad. And they tried so hard for the rest of the class and the parents came over to me afterwards and said what did you say to them. So again it's that theory y mindset is if you know how to talk to them in their language, they will give you better discipline, they will give you better focus but you have to have that theory y mindset that mindset that using things like prompting good behavior the concept of healthy competition, the hierarchy of intrinsic motivation all these uplifting positive teaching strategies are gonna be way more effective than taking away their belts, giving them pushups, kicking them out of class putting them in time out, those types of things.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Really well said certainly it... Hopefully it's changing it seems like it might be changing based on my visits to schools and traveling around but that theory x mindset is you call that is certainly what's been entrenched in the martial arts for very long time. And I think they were starting to transition

Melody Shuman:

We are we are sure

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's great it's okay if we don't keep them in martial arts are not getting the good stuff out of it. If we look to the future what is it that's keeping you motivated? Your clearly an active participant in the martial arts and whole variety of layers and your excited about it your motivated, why? What are you striving for right now?

Melody Shuman:



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Well, I am in the process of building a new franchise format and its gonna be, its gonna a have children's martial arts education involved in it and I really want it to be one of the number one franchises for child enrichment. And I don't see any reason why it can't be, so that's what's getting me very very very excited about the future we've got some really big players outside the martial arts industry we've caught the attention of with my skills program and they want on board to help make this dream a possibility. So that's right now that's where my passion is.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Awesome. And is it too early to ask for information on that if somebody wants to check that out?

Melody Shuman:

It is, yeah. 2018.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay. When that happens folks if your listening to is in 2018 by all means when you come back to check out the show notes whistlekickmartialartsradio.com hopefully will have them updated please make sure you give me some links when it's time and when I do the show notes I'll make sure everybody knows. All right now where can people find you all the things you got going on I know you're on social media, I know you've got websites, let's have it. What's the best place to find you online and everything you've got going.

Melody Shuman:

You can navigate everything that I have to remind what my website melodysshuman.com so that's melody and then Shuman and Shuman so I have a podcast series where I go over the stage of the development of children I talk about the behavior, positive behavioral teaching strategies that touched on a little bit here. I talked as if I'm talking to the parents and talking to teachers and coaches not just martial arts school owners and instructors, the benefit to that is that if you are a parent yourself or you want to utilize those podcast as valuable resources for your parents or your schools that's great content. I have there, you can reach skills which is our children's martial arts consulting company. We actually I provide consulting we might as much what curriculum we have a massive drills library all of our content broken up age specifically. Of course, it all integrate science and psychology, [00:49:05.43] so definitely going to be very cutting edge but highly effective if you can integrate some of those teaching strategies. And then I believe you can get to my social media pages through that as well cause I'm on twitter, I'm on Instagram, I'm on linked in and I'm on Facebook. So, and of course you can search for me there as well by using my name.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Well I really appreciate you coming on. I appreciate your time today everything that you shared I'm hoping I could trouble you for one more bit and that's the way that we always sign off, some parting words of wisdom for the folks listening.

Melody Shuman:

Some parting words of wisdom. Okay, we'll let me wrap my head around this. When people ask me what I do especially now I travel alone a lot by myself, I have to go to Chicago on Friday for a millionaire summit with some great martial arts school owners and instructors and I get on the airplane people were like what do you do? So instead of me telling people that I'm a martial arts instructor or children's martial arts instructor, pediatric ninja specialist and what it does is it makes people lean in and listen in and go what is that? I wanna hear more about that because utilizing something like pediatric ninja specialists is very uncommon title to give myself but that's really when I look at myself as a pediatric ninja specialist. So, if you do if you are martial arts school owner or instructor and you're out networking and you're out doing school speeches or whatever you doing to promote your business, try to give yourself a title that makes them lean in a little bit more because if you just say I'm a martial arts instructor they may easily blow over it. But if you can ask you questions about it your gonna get them locked a lot more and I get a lot of new students that way, a lot of new connections that way by utilizing a title.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Professor Shuman is a woman whose heart and courage are just unquestionable. She rose to the occasion every time a challenge was in front of her, despite her size she still competed and managed a great deal of success there. I was struck by her passion for constant improvement and her desire to bring out the best of everyone around her. Even a group that so many don't think of is capable, young children. Thank you, Professor Shuman, for your time today on the show. You can check out everything we talked about links, photos, social media, you name it whistlekickmartialartsradio.com its episode 232 you check out everything that we've got going on social media @whistlekick Facebook twitter Instagram YouTube were even doing some stuff on google+ now we're just trying to reach all of you wherever you might be. We'd love to hear from you, I'd love to hear from you. You can email me directly jeremy@whistlekick.com that comes right to me and any of you that have emailed no, I do write back. If you want to talk about the show with other listeners check out whistlekick martial arts radio behind the scenes that's a Facebook group, it's a private group request being added as long as you seem like some crazy stalker spammer sort of person, we'll let you in. That's all for today. Until next time train hard smile and have a great day.



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