



Episode 17 – Sensei Earl Smith | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hello everyone and thanks for tuning in for episode 17 of whistlekick Martial Arts Radio. That's right we're still here and growing strong. I'm your host Jeremy Lesniak and I'm also the founder of whistlekick, makers of the best sparring gear on earth as well as great apparel and accessories for traditional martial artists.

**Earl Smith:**

You can learn more about our products like our sparring gloves that are cut shorter and have a lot more ventilation at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) and you can learn more about the podcasts including all of our past episodes show notes for this one and a whole lot more all for free over at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). While you're there don't forget to sign up for our newsletter full of information, discounts and useful martial arts content. And now for this week's iTunes review and this one is from Joel. Joel titles his review which is a 5-star review always been a fan of martial arts. I only took a year or 2 of martial arts as a young kid, I wish I could have done it longer. I've always enjoyed martial arts and I used to be glued to the television during Saturday Kung Fu flick marathons. Those are awesome. I still can't get enough of martial arts films so now to have martial arts conversations right in my earbuds is awesome, thank you keep rocking - Joel. Today's episode is with Sensei Earl Smith. He's an instructor in the blended style kempo jujitsu as well as eskrima. We've had the opportunity to train together a couple of times and I can personally attest to his skill with the rattan stick. Sensei Smith was very open during our conversation and I found myself inspired at his passion for the martial arts. I hope that you too come away inspired and now Sensei Smith, welcome to whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.

**Earl Smith:**



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Thank you I'm very excited. It's nice to be here Mr. Lesniak.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well this is gonna be fun so let's you know a little bit about you, you know we've trained a little bit you know we've got some people in common but why don't you take it back cause most of the people are listening aren't gonna know a lot about you tell us how you got started in the martial arts.

**Earl Smith:**

Well I was in high school I was about 15. To be honest I got in to the martial arts for all the wrong reasons. I was just a little smart aleck kid you know with you know quick wit and you know what not and kinda you know heavy set you know and my friends they were all like hey there is this martial arts class we should check it out and I was like whatever you know no way and they all went and they came back, they had a great time and they learned all these really cool stuff and I'm like oh my lord they're gonna be able to beat me and so I went the next week and you know here we are they all quit after about you know a year and I stuck with it for the last like 20 03:03 years

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Why'd did you stick with it?

**Earl Smith:**

Well actually it was, I was kinda in and out of it to be honest, at first and until about I got my purple belt in the kempo jujitsu series or style and I went to this one we host a huge black belt camp every summer for the black belt testing and of course I was a low rank and I went to this test and I got to see how everything worked and I got to see the spirituality of the martial art that we do and it bit me and I got infected and I just couldn't stop at that point like I knew what I wanted and I went for it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Like martial art zombie 03:53

**Earl Smith:**

Precisely

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sounds like

**Earl Smith:**

You know it's like eating brains although you're learning martial arts you know



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah sounds a lot tastier, nice. Alright so that gives us a little bit of context so I'm sure you know it's funny you bring up you know the summer event and bringing people together for testings cause that was kind of the impetus for this show I some of my favorite memories are being around camp fires after a long testing or a summer training event or what not and hearing all the great stories that people have especially the masters you know when you're a kid or a martial arts kid a younger rank you seem to think that they've been around forever and have seen everything but I'm sure you've got some great stories so why don't you tell us your best one?

**Earl Smith:**

Oh, wow I'd have to say one of my favorite stories is we went out to California. Basically this whole trip was to help my teacher professor Franco Ricardo was to help him get promoted to get his, actually so he could become a professor he got promoted from 05:13 to professor and while we're out there he's the kind of person that you know makes sure that we're booked you know 100% of the time you know about 4 hours to sleeping and 20 hours of training and doing demos and you know that kind of stuff and yeah hard core you know and well you know we got to meet so many amazing martial arts like world renowned Wally Jay that's what I wanna talk about actually that's probably my favorite story. We, he just decides he wants to go visit Wally Jay and Wally Jay's house, that his dojo was attached right to the house you know and so we show up on his doorstep and he says why don't you guys sit like here and we're like okay cool and he's like btw those are the exact steps that Bruce Lee used to sit on to wait and train with Wally Jay so think about that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Let's take a second for people that may not know who Wally Jay, can you just give us a little bit of context.

**Earl Smith:**

Wally Jay was the founder of small circle jujitsu and an amazing man like an amazing martial artist. He's actually hall of fame, he's world renowned in what he does. It's hard to explain it you know like you find him anywhere you look on the internet, you just look up small circle jujitsu or even professor Wally Jay and you're gonna get a ton of information. He passed away a couple of years ago now and it hasn't been the same since I guess but

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure. Alright, so here you are you're sitting on his steps

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yep we're sitting on those steps



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Getting ready to meet him, the steps that Bruce Lee used to wait on

**Earl Smith:**

Yup

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay and what happens next?

**Earl Smith:**

Well my teacher goes inside and then a few minutes later he comes out and he you know asked us all to step inside and we get in there and we meet his wife Bernice Jay and I have to say she is probably one of the most amazing people I've ever met you know maybe even a little bit more so than Wally Jay to be honest she is just like you know he wasn't feeling well so she had us out in the dojo and she and my teacher you know professor Ricardo was just like hey let us show you some stuff she's like oh I'd love that you know she herself was like a third degree in Danzan Ryu underneath Henry S. Okazaki and so we're doing our demo we have lots of like you know jujitsu and judo throws and we're all a little play slamming each other all over the floor you know really hammering each other and she's just whistling and clapping and she's like I love seeing excellent throws like that's awesome she's like you're I'm gonna have to get him out here so he can see this and you know and so we go in to the living room actually where he's you know got this little bunny slipper on and he's got a blanket and he's at a lazy boy chair and he's really cold and not feeling well and we all sit on the couches or on the floor you know kind of around him and professor Ricardo's chatting with him talking to him and next thing we know Wally Jay I don't know we just brought this energy with us everywhere we went and he just hops out of the chair and just starts beating my teacher up right there in the living room floor you know putting him in all the famous like you know finger locks and everything that you'll see him do and that right there was probably one of the best stories you know, best place to be ever you know and then after that we went out to the dojo and he even came out and he watched us do our demo and it was amazing I even have an autograph book from him and you know everything is pretty cool.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's a quite a story

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Yeah, I felt like I was right there with you on the couch and that gives you yeah, it's clear how much of an impact that event has had on you.

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah, it's one of those things that just another bite that keeps getting infected you know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, how old would he have been at that point?

**Earl Smith:**

I think he was 82 at that time.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay so it's not uncommon for an 82-year-old man to spend a lot of time in a chair under a blanket.

**Earl Smith:**

No, no.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And not feel so well but you know once he got up I'm guessing that he probably, you probably couldn't tell.

**Earl Smith:**

No, no.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That he wasn't feeling well

**Earl Smith:**

And he was like wow I'm feeling great now and then we took him out to lunch and afterward it was like awesome.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You had to bring the virus back out in it right?

**Earl Smith:**

Pretty much and that's something that kinda happened we also went and train with another gm over in Sacramento actually area of California Duke Moore and yeah, he we went over we picked him up and he



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just like oh I'm not feeling so good I'm gonna have my student work with you and then we started training and he just hops out on the floor and he's just doing all these like amazing stuff and we have one guy that was in my black belt you know class with me and my black belt brother big guy. He was about maybe 375 pound you know mainstay champ in wrestling you know like and this little frail like 85 year old man just takes him and throws him like he was a rag doll and that was part of the lesson for us cause you know we were doing his black belt boards he was teaching us his black belt boards and it was stuff that we'd all done already so it was kinda easy for us and I guess it's sadly you know we're young we're all like you know young bugs 20 years old and we're not taking it seriously and he's this is one of the best lessons I ever learned is he stepped up and he's like throws Mr. 10:52 like he's like nothing and then he's like you guys are you know like you're black belts you know you should act like a black belt you know like it doesn't matter if this comes easy to you, you know, but you need to present yourself to the world in a way that is gonna be you know that shows who you are and what you are and you don't wanna be that slacking a little you know jokester you know he's like man up basically and that was one of the most valuable lessons I got right there.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's some pretty good advice

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Cool so you've been training a long time and you know you may have gotten into it for less than the best reasons but clearly you didn't stick with it for those same reasons.

**Earl Smith:**

It's not

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, I'd like you to think about how the martial arts has changed who you are and how you've benefited you know physically, emotionally, spiritually however you wanted to find that question and then answer how are you a better person because of the martial arts?

**Earl Smith:**

Well that's actually an amazing question and I think about this all the time and what I would say is the martial arts is it severely helped my confidence like I said I was like that you know that fat kid at high school that kind of was in the background. Everybody knew me but nobody really hung out with me, or did much with me. I had a core group of friends and through the martial arts I gained a whole bunch of



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self-confidence and I guess people notice when you're confident in yourself and your abilities and they treat you your know that way you know and you become you know more you know like sought after I guess you know and that's I guess that's the best thing it's done for me is it's made me more confident in myself, my abilities and it's taught me to do the best in everything that I do and that's kinda what I strive for is when I do something I wanna make it at least the best that I can do and if not a little bit better.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure, you can always give another 1%

**Earl Smith:**

Exactly you know at least attempt to put out another 1%.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right, absolutely. So, I'd like you to think now about a low point in your life, something, some challenge that some wall obstacle road block whatever your wanna call it in front of you that you overcame and how your martial arts training gave you the ability to do that.

**Earl Smith:**

Oh wow, I don't know if I necessarily have like a wall that I had to overcome so much but I do have a down point in my career that happened

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay sure

**Earl Smith:**

I got basically you know living so far away, I kinda got miscommunicated you know from my teacher in school and what not and it definitely made things a lot harder you know and then I went several years without ever training with anyone that was of a higher caliber I guess you know like a master or you know a GM or anything I mean I didn't get to do any of the traveling, I didn't get to do any of the you know the high end you know learning I just spent my days stuck in Vermont you know honing what I had and then just pouring over and teaching you know what I had and it kinda depressing you know and until a couple of years ago when finally I got to go back out to San Francisco and I went and trained with senior GM Rick Alemany something that Mr. Hart's set up for me to get promoted actually cause I hadn't been promoted in like you know 13 years and he talked to me quite a bit and he's like we gotta get you promoted he's like I want you to come out and visit me and so we made it happen and I got promoted to my fourth degree.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Okay so here you are, you're in Vermont and you've kind of set up your little box.

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You know you're training, you're teaching and in your world if I can possibly take some liberty with your language, your martial arts world was kinda small.

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah, yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

At that point, it just listening to the language and the tone of your voice it sounded you know very different vs what you were talking about you know just 5 minutes ago.

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah almost abandoned you know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So yeah, so you'd lost you maybe some of the motivation to train you know you were working within some pretty small perimeters that you'd set up for yourself and here you get this opportunity you know because of one your students because of someone that was in your box with you and saw you should have a bigger box.

**Earl Smith:**

Exactly.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah and so

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And Mr. Hart is one of the most passionate people that I know and he wanted to help me

**Earl Smith:**

and he did.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**





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Yes, yes, he's a good man and for anyone listening that doesn't know him you know he's the one that introduced us and we have at least one guest that's gonna be coming on the show in the future that he one other guest I should say that is gonna come on the show that has quite a bit of background that he made the connection so good guy and a good person to have in your corner so.

**Earl Smith:**

Absolutely

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah so what was it like on the other side of that you go out there and you train and your world opens up again and you're promoted and I'm assuming you're feeling good and connect the dots from then to now.

**Earl Smith:**

Well when we did all that I actually made contact again with one of my other black belt brothers, Master Wynn. Well Master Wynn now at the time he was Mr. Wynn still when we went out to San Francisco but he and I we've been training together. We were training partners for many, many years I mean we went and train to you know special forces 17:08 together you know underneath our teacher professor Ricardo obviously and but he and I were the ones that were the demo of you know like we were the ones swinging the sticks we were the ones you know trying to you know like show what it was at a high caliber high level you know so that they know what they could aspire to and so anyways he and I got to I invited him to come out with us and that's when he got his master rank and so that it bridged that gap again so I had my contact and now I'm in steady contact with Master Wynn he and I you know chat regularly and we try to hook up. He lives over in Main over in Waterboro so we get together as frequently as possible. He came down you know just about a month ago to do a little seminar for us and what not and it is it was good times and so this whole experience that kinda rekindled my drive and what not and so I've started you know teaching more and picking on you know picking up people who were interested again and then teaching. I haven't charged for teaching martial arts in several years now, it's something that's passionate. It's a passion of mine and I believe everybody should learn some form of the martial art you know and so I feel that I pass that on you know as best as I can you know

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure, sure and I'm sure you're not saying that you know just in case anybody who's listening and taking issue with that. You're not saying that everyone should be teaching for free.

**Earl Smith:**

No, no definitely not.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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It's just it what works for you based on you know what

**Earl Smith:**

It's hard in my area with like very few people cause I'm from Johnson Vermont where you know there's maybe, there's more cows than people you know and you know I don't wanna grapple with the cow because they're bigger and stronger you know so I would just take anybody who's interested and that's how I did things you know

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure yeah

**Earl Smith:**

And I used to run a school, I ran a successful school for quite a long time and then people you know the 19:13 you know the recession and the you know the you know the big

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's hard

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah and I ended up having to pay to teach people martial arts and so I figured I'd rather you know not do that so I went to just teaching for free and I would just do it outside you know no overhead you know and just you know and that's how I did it or I would train here for food you know sometimes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hey nothing wrong with that

**Earl Smith:**

Exactly

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And you know I think there's something to be said for that, that that's kind of

**Earl Smith:**

It was so like, it will keep my skills because I didn't want to you know to lose out and I still need the training partners so that's basically it was I pick up training partners and you know Mr. Hart's he is one of those people actually. He found me up at where I work at Johnson State College and he's like teach me I'm like alright well if you wanna learn then you're gonna start at the beginning and you're gonna do



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everything the way I tell you to do it and he's like okay and we started and you know now he's pushing for his black belt soon you know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, it's a great way to do it I what I love about that and just the way you're expressing it I'm assuming that there's some that that's how it used to be you know if we go way, way back you know when martial arts were a little less organized than it was you know it was more familial passed down

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah, it's very

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Father to son

**Earl Smith:**

20:46 like you know like

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah

**Earl Smith:**

Teacher and student

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah and I really dig that I think that's a fun dynamic and certainly not an easy one but got a lot of respect for it. So, you've trained with a bunch of different people.

**Earl Smith:**

Yes

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

But I'd like you to think of someone other than those that you would consider your immediate instructors and you mentioned a couple of them by name, but I'd like you to think of somebody other than them that was instrumental in let's call it your martial arts upbringing, tell us who that person is and what it was that he did for you.

**Earl Smith:**



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Oh, I got to meet Professor Kufferath a long time ago he came out to one of our actual seminars or something like that. He's did a seminar for us and he was just such a humble old man and you know he was 80 something years old and he's out there and he just does his own thing too like everybody will be all stressed out and busy doing something and running around with their heads cut off and he's out there and it looks like he's doing a dance and all he's doing is just like I don't remember what it's called exactly but he's just swinging his arms back and you know back and forth and he's moving in a way that looks almost like a jinga actually from like the capoeira system

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah

**Earl Smith:**

And he's just massaging his heart points on the front of his chest and the back of his chest and cause that's one of his styles was he did he was the GM of kempo and he was the GM of danzan ryu. He was one of the first people to become like a dual 10th degree black belt in two different whole styles and he also was a what do you call it like one of the main people for seifukujutsu which is the Japanese restoration therapy and Chinese Herbology and so he knew all these like pressure points and what not to massage you know to help you, to stay healthy and alive and what not and so he's out there just swinging around looking like he's dancing and he's actually like extremely you know precise in where he's touching and he's basically just keeping his heart up and going and then and running also another great thing about the man is he put tabasco sauce on every single thing. His ice cream he would be sprinkling tabasco sauce on it swear to you know swear to whoever you want and he said it's because it kept the cold out of you. The man had never caught cold and I guess something like 30 years because he put tabasco sauce on everything.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I guess if it works it works.

**Earl Smith:**

It worked for him but I also think that it has something to do with all the Chinese herbology and everything that he was into as well but.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, what was it about him, what did you find so inspiring or...

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah, yeah inspiring I guess. He was just an old guy that you could just tell he had an air of confidence you know and he was just fun loving. It was his birthday that weekend to which was hilarious and you



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know my teacher got him a card and you know I don't know if this is you know G-rated or not but it was a card with some you know women on it and he ended up like poking a hole through it and sticking his nose through and you know and this is an 82-year-old man just having fun you know and

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah

**Earl Smith:**

You know and I think that I'm drawn to people who are don't take themselves too seriously but yet have that air of confidence and are extremely good at what they do.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I think you know I haven't done any kind of formal study but the really high ranking martial arts masters that I've been exposed to tend to have more of that senses of humor, that willingness to not take life too seriously than the average population, would you agree?

**Earl Smith:**

Actually, I have run into some high ranking martial artists that take themselves way too seriously. Well absolutely, you know I can think of a few right now but it just if I I'm working within my sample set my data here you know and I'm just it seems like more often than not they you know as you were describing that man with the sense of humor and everything it describes most of the masters that I've 25:27

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'd have to say it definitely describes most of the elder masters you know like the ones that have lived life and they understand that it's about having fun and not being stressed out.

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah, wonder if there's something there who knows.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Exactly

**Earl Smith:**

All kinds of theories coming out of this show that maybe someday, I'll have the money and research and commission studies and we'll find absolutely nothing 25:53 I don't know. Who knows, maybe it just comes down to the people.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Yeah, have you, do you have any experience with competition?

**Earl Smith:**

No, I do not, I don't I'm not much of a competitor myself and I'm just not that I'm against it, I believe in competition I'm just I don't know I'm not a competitor. Now I have taught and trained a lot of people who have wanted to compete and have competed. I've had several students go on and do jujitsu tournaments and what not and it's actually you know the one in particular that I remember is kinda funny because he went in and he won every single match that he was in but the problem was he beat them about you know 16 seconds and not transition for points so you just get the 3 points for the win and then when that person was doing matches against other people you know he's getting like you know 10, 15 points because you know they're just doing going from mount to guard to mount to side mount you know they're transitioning you know and trying to get the points up.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right

**Earl Smith:**

And our guy just goes in, does a standing choke that passed the guy out and he's like he's out he's out you know and he just lays him down lightly and you know and he won but he 27:13

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh because of points.

**Earl Smith:**

Because of points you know and it so we had to rethink our stance on how we did things there but yeah so, our style never really competed very well. Now that they're starting to do a lot of those like the stick fighting tournaments and what not I think that we might build the transition better into that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That would be fun to watch. I'd like to see that.

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah, they're intense and a lot of fun.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh cool, maybe if one of those is coming up you know somewhere nearby we can go. I'd love to check that out.



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**Earl Smith:**

Yeah that would be amazing.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, you've had the opportunity to train with a lot of great martial artists but if you could train with someone that you haven't living or dead who would you wanna train with?

**Earl Smith:**

I would say it would be a toss-up between James Mitose and Henry S. Okazaki or both.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay

**Earl Smith:**

And it's just funny because those are the two that professor kufferath trained under both of them and he became the GM pretty much in both styles.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay

**Earl Smith:**

But yeah, those two.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So tell us a bit about those two people and what is it about them?

**Earl Smith:**

James Mitose is basically the father of kenpo in the you know in the United States and Henry S. Okazaki is the he was the head of dazan ryu jujitsu and which is you know kind of amazing art on its own as well but they both were in Hawaii at the same time and they both had their respective schools and they were basically the they were the who's who of jujitsu and you know basically kenpo karate and they were phenomenal men from what I heard you know from the stories passed down and I think that going and training with them would have been an amazing you know time and you know worthwhile experience you know and which is funny cause Kufferath was actually Henry S. Okazaki's student and they traded number 1 students to each other, kinda testing each other out and

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Yeah

**Earl Smith:**

And then Kufferath basically then became the number one student of both sides.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Wow that's to achieve that level of knowledge

**Earl Smith:**

Exactly

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

In multiple styles and that's pretty darn impressive yeah, yeah, I don't think I know anyone that's taken multiple styles that far. So awesome. You a movie guy at all, you got any favorite martial arts films?

**Earl Smith:**

Oh my word, favorite martial arts films, there's so many. It depends on what you're looking for. If you're looking for pretty, I really love the Only the Strong there with Mark Dacascos the Capoeira. I also really enjoy like the Kung Fu style films as well, those are a lot of fun like my favorite comedic kind of martial arts film is Kung Fu Hustle

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah

**Earl Smith:**

That's pretty funny but yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Those are great movies, I haven't Only the Strong in years but that was 31:03

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah, I actually 31:04 bought it recently so I could watch it again.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh really? That was some of the impetus for me to actually seek out a capoeira instructor.

**Earl Smith:**

Oh nice





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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

For a couple of years so yeah, it's a good film, well no it's not a good film but there's some good sequences in it I guess it's probably better to say.

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah, yeah, it's fun to watch, it's not a movie.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No not at all. How about actors any in particular that you like?

**Earl Smith:**

I, to be honest, I'm really am a fan of Jeff Speakman.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, I heard that name from 31:38

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah, he was basically a Filipino stick guy and he did that in several of his movies and so yeah, I kinda really like him because you know I know where he comes from

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right, well that's cool. How about books, any recommendations?

**Earl Smith:**

I read one I think it's called the martial way, I can't remember the author now, But it's about a man who kinda found himself through martial arts and you know living the martial way I think it's what it's called actually, living the martial way and yeah he had an amazing story and you know he was going into the military and then coming out and not really knowing what to do and not being able to much and then joining the martial arts and then gaining control of his life through the martial arts. Also one of my students wrote a book about his life. I can't remember exactly it's called the something through the kai whatever or living or finding Christianity through martial arts something like that. He's an, he was extremely or is an extremely religious you know person and he also you know one of my best black belts to. He wrote the book about you know his whole experience and what not and how the martial arts played an intricate part in his religion and in his life and he dedicated it to me. I am one of the people he dedicated the book to.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Oh wow, that's really interesting, let's make sure when we finish this up that we can find that and get the link into the show notes. So that's yeah

**Earl Smith:**

33:22 if I you know push this book you know and get a few more you know dollars.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure, well it's an interesting idea cause I think for so many of us martial arts are so spiritual however we define spirituality. It can be such a vehicle to move us in whatever we actually want.

**Earl Smith:**

Speaking of that I did a little bit of training with Great GM Ralph Castro. He was shaolin kenpo and his take on it was he had a very you know Christianity take on the martial arts and he actually incorporated a lot of the you know his religious beliefs into what he did and I remember like you know like his whole like rising sun was something about the angels and it was actually very very cool.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, I you know I think one of the things I've found myself saying on the show a very personal belief for me about the martial arts is that you get out whatever you put in. It's a direct correlation you know the more you put in the more you get out in a way that you don't really have in other elements of life I mean you can, I could work really, really hard to be a great basketball player but at 5'7" on a good day that's not really gonna happen. I'm not gonna get back as much as I put in but with the martial arts I can do that and that's something that I've always loved and found fascinating and so of course by why not why can't you or your spiritual journey be wrapped in with that you know whether it's eastern or western or any other kind of religious philosophy.

**Earl Smith:**

Exactly you know. I believe wholeheartedly that the martial arts is what you make it you know and if that's what draws to you then that's where you go.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah. So you've certainly accomplished a lot. You've had quite the martial arts path, but I'm sure you're not done so I'd like to know what keeps you going, any goals or things you're reaching for?

**Earl Smith:**

Well right now I'm looking to reopen a school again here soon. One of my black belts is the principal of a school over in my area and over in Winooski and he was running a successful program out of the school for you know several years but he has just gone to the point where he's so busy and he can't really



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manage it anymore and so pretty soon I'm you know starting probably this next school year, I'm thinking about you know talking to him in getting that up and going again and then try and get the program running again. I'm also now that I'm on you know 36:21 of what not I'm hoping to go and work with you know Mr. Lenahan and Mrs. Hart's you know more frequently as well and pick up some stuff from Mr. Lenahan. He has a lot of stuff that I'm really interested in learning. It's mostly you know about kicking because I come from a kenpo background which is fist law you know lots of punching

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right

**Earl Smith:**

And you guys are you know the Taekwondo which is the kicking side that I need.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure and of course for anybody listening I'm not sure what episode and when we'll release this one you know that we're recording now but Master Lenihan's episode was episode 12 which just came out a couple of days prior to now I mean it's we're recording 2 days after that episode was really sounds kinda funny.

**Earl Smith:**

So yes so, I'm looking forward to working with you know more people also there's another man that was very humbling as well Master Rotta.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

My instructor.

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah, yeah. he I did that one seminar there like a couple of years ago and he came up and he wanted me to do all the techniques on him and I'm just, no I can't do this to you, you know you're the master you know like I'm supposed to beat up the little guys. You're supposed to beat me up and it was and he's like oh no, no I love it I love the pain, I love the feeling do it, throw me on the ground, I'm like okay.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Some of you listening may think that Sensei Smith is taking some liberties or you know bordering on disrespect but anyone that has trained with Master Rotta knows that if anything he's selling him short we recorded an episode yesterday with his son who told a couple of stories that will just completely support everything you just said. So look for that coming in the next few weeks that's Master Leonard.



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**Earl Smith:**

I have no disrespect whatsoever.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No not at all.

**Earl Smith:**

I have the utmost respect for the for Master Rotta he proved to me that age is definitely not a barrier.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No, no age and some joint replacements, 38:42 surgeries and he still likes getting on to rounds, he's a good man. Well that's cool, you can get your own school back up in going and keep me informed I'd love to come out then hang out with the guys when that happens. So you shared some great stories and some great advice with everybody today but you got anything you wanna offer up for parting words of wisdom?

**Earl Smith:**

I guess you know the best thing is no matter what reason you get into the martial arts, it's a way of life and once it bites you and you get infected and become a martial arts zombie, it'll just make you want to improve everything in your life not just martial arts it's like I said it's a way of life and I believe everybody should experience the martial arts in some fashion. It should be a class in school or something you know every school it should be trained and it just makes you wanna be a better person and do everything to the best of your ability and I recommend it highly.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Cool yeah, I don't know what else to say that's a great point to end on. Yeah you got anything else going on anything you wanna share, anything that doesn't fit in the context to one of these questions that you wanna tell us?

**Earl Smith:**

I don't know I got a lot of stories.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You got a short one you wanna end on maybe?

**Earl Smith:**



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So many fun stories how about talk a little bit about spirituality of the martial arts like how we do it. See I mentioned our black belt camps that we have every year in the summer time. Basically all our brown belts that are ready to become black belts we have a huge camp and that's like a 4-day long process where you show up Wednesday morning and we train about 20 hours a day for 4 days.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Wow.

**Earl Smith:**

First thing you do is get up around like 5 in the morning and you have to go run well when I was, when we were in Maine we run 41:14 a mile and a half all up hill and we do that first thing in the morning come back and then we'd start class you know doing you know all of the basics like you know punching and kicking and then we have breakfast and then we would spend the rest of the day doing whatever techniques we were demonstrating for the low ranks. I'll just go from my black belt test. So that way it's easy for me to explain so then we would teach all the low ranks you know and work through the basic stuff and what not and then at some point we could do an hour for lunch and then we I never did lunch I actually slept in my eating times cause I was exhausted and so we then would train again all night until dinner time and then once dinner time came everybody else would be able to go out to bed and camp and what not and the candidates we get separated off and we would have to work on the black belt only material and we would be doing that until about 2am and then you know 3 am and then go to bed get up at 5 and start it all over and then so you know that's the martial arts part and then the spiritual part comes in on the last day Saturday night at around you know midnight we build the bonfire and everybody circles it and what you see is the black belts they totally missed initiation till the night before. Friday night all the black belts actually haze the candidates, you know initiation basically.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Because 20 hours of training is a 43:00

**Earl Smith:**

So now you try to go to sleep for the next day and they're gonna mess up your tent and they're gonna keep you up all night. I remember on our test actually this is a good story maybe you wanted to hear. We were doing training videos for the military because we were in contact with you know the military we're doing training for them you know I went a couple of times actually with my teacher to help teach the special forces 43:24 and so we're doing this video and he stuck his hand out a little too far and I swung a little too close and I ended up hitting his hand and I broke his hand.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

This is with a stick.



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**Earl Smith:**

Yes with a stick yeap and you know we did this you know so he's this is Mr. Tibbits the 375-pound state champion wrestling and in utmost respect he did not go to the hospital he stayed and finished the test with a broken hand. It looked like a ham on the end of his wrist 43:57 and I basically broke the 2 middle bones there just on the outside of his meta carpals there and so that night he we go out to our tents and he finds about a quarter of wood stacked inside his tent but he was a boy scout I think and he was prepared he had a tarped down he just kinda wrapped the tarp up and he dragged all the way out of his tent and just hop back in and you know and so one of the black belts goes up to his tent and like oh men how's your hand and I'm watching from the sides you know getting ready to go to bed and I see a couple of the black belts around the corner of the building and they've got this white bucket and I'm like oh no what's happening and you know he's like how's your hand let me get you some ice he's like and Mr. Tibbits is like oh that would be awesome thank you and then I see the black belt you know not even looking 44:48 backwards he waves to the other guys and they come around the corner with these two big 5 gallon buckets and you know Mr. Tibbits is in his tent and they throw all this ice into the tent you know so there's our hazing you know and then he 45:05 making all and there was four candidates and they made all four of them sleep in a two man tent that was put inside a small sandbox so we had like no room, we're stacked up on top of each other, that's how we slept that night and but then we'll get back to the tap out big bonfire, you know everything's amped up we got the big drum beating in the back ground, black belts are running in a circle around the fire going in and out you know they're taking turns and what not and then next thing you know they come running straight at you and hit you for all their worth and you get snagged, caught and blindfolded and dragged off and that's as far as I can talk about it but cause you have to experience it and I bit both side of my tongue and I'm bleeding I looked like a zombie actually and I'm bleeding out of my mouth and it was amazing and yeah so

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Wow

**Earl Smith:**

when I have one of these tap outs I'll definitely invite you along so you can come and experience it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That would be great

**Earl Smith:**

I'm actually gonna

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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You know how tightly I wanna participate after hearing about all that, yeah it doesn't sound like something I could pass up the opportunity on whether I want to or not.

**Earl Smith:**

Definitely.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So it's a great story then on and I appreciate it.

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah that's the light of our martial arts and the hard core of our martial arts.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah absolutely I feel bad, is that guy's hand?

**Earl Smith:**

It got better.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well that's good.

**Earl Smith:**

He went on to become a police officer eventually. He got better.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Glad to hear that, well cool. You know Sensei Smith I really appreciate you coming on and talking to us and sharing such wonderful stories, this has been a lot of fun.

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah yes it has.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So yeah thanks and why don't you hang on the line and after I hit stop on the recorder and then we'll get the name of that book so we can put it in the show notes for everybody.

**Earl Smith:**

Yeah definitely.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Alright thanks for being here on [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com).

**Earl Smith:**

Thank you for inviting me it was awesome.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

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