



Episode 254 – Sensei Buzz Durkin | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everyone thanks for tuning in this is Whistlekick Martial Arts Radio Episode 254 and today were joined by Sensei Buzz Durkin. If your new to the show why don't you go head over on to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com check out the channel for this episode 254 or one of the other episodes not only do we have the show notes but you can listen from there, we have links, plenty of others stuffs, our guests, our social media and you can get to whistlekick.com from there at whistlekick.com that's where we sell our products, our sparring gear, our apparel, and the other things that we are slowly rolling out as we expand our product line. You can also find links to the other websites that we manage like martialartscalendar.com, a free place to post or view martial art events not just competitions but seminars, testing's, charitable events, and were trying to build that up we've put a lot of our resources into it. Hopefully you will help us make that grow. If this is your first time tuning in you may not know my voice, my name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host on the show, I'm the founder of whistlekick sparring gear and apparel. And I'm a passionate martial artist, who says often I have the best job in the world, because I get to talk to other people about martial arts all the time and called it work, how fortunate am I.

I feel very fortunate today because of our guest Sensei Buzz Durkin, I've long looked up to this man he is, his kind of a legend the very least in the New England Area. Everybody knows who he is, and somehow our paths haven't crossed. Well after this episode were going to change that. Sensei Durkin is not only a practitioner of martial arts but he is also founded his own successful karate school and later on he wrote



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a book about how he did that. Today we hear stories from before during, and after his time overseas during the Vietnam War and how those chapters of his life have connected to make him who he is today. His got a lot of great stories so without further ado, Sensei Durkin welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Buzz Durkin:

It's my pleasure to be here.

Jeremy Lesniak:

The pleasure is mine. You know the irony of courses that you're nearly in my backyard or at least in the way we define a backyard in New England you're pretty close. Just a couple hours away. And yet we've never met at the same time as I was telling you listeners. I feel like I know Sensei Durkin because we have so many folks in common. So many people that have trained with them trained under him and they've had nothing but amazing things to say. I'm just honored to have you on the show today.

Buzz Durkin:

Well I'm thrilled to be speaking with you and I appreciate the opportunity. Thank you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure. People may know your name from some of them some of the books they may know you as someone who is known for a karate style that is not the first one that comes to mind when people think of karate and I know we're going to get into all of those things and a whole bunch more but I'd like to go back I'd like to go back because I don't know the answer. How did you find martial arts?

Buzz Durkin:

Well. I was a student at Boston College at the time between my junior and senior year actually. And that was the time in 1966, 1967 the Vietnam War was very on the forefront of everything and I knew that I was had a couple of choices upon graduation from college and that would be to claim a medical deferment. Go to Canada or do my duty and serve a couple of years in the military and I chose the latter. So uh, knowing that I came I grew up in a fairly well-to-do middle upper middle class family knew nothing about fighting nothing about self-defense nothing about physically taking care of myself. So uh one day I thought that when I joined the Army ROTC actually at Boston College so when I graduated from DC I became a second lieutenant in the army. So I thought self-defense would be something cool to know. So one summer my college roommate and I went to Boston and just took the yellow pages out and started looking for our martial arts schools and that in and of itself was quite a quite a journey. Things were quite different the way the martial arts were taught and the way they were approached in



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those days. For instance most martial arts schools were on the fourth floor where the rent was cheapest. I was either a hot oven or freezing cold summer all winter so we went to a number of different schools.

When we didn't have much luck. Sometimes the places were very dirty. Sometimes the teachers were very brutal. Sometimes it just wasn't good. Sometimes the teachers were never show up but we so we went to several martial arts schools and as a last resort we found this. Madsen Academy of karate which we went to visit and the people were very nice welcoming. The place was very clean had a good atmosphere and so I said let this looks like the best place to start so not knowing anything about what type of karate it was taught or anything like that we just took lessons and for me the first class I fell in love with it really I just couldn't get enough at my. Interestingly enough my college roommate lasted about one week 10 days and he hated it. He couldn't stand martial arts training but for me I just loved it. So I started training at the Madsen Academy of karate in Boston 1966 and it's been a pleasurable ride ever since then. I still have the same teacher Judge Madsen in what we do is we study a particular style of Okinawan karate which is called uechi-ryu, uechi ryu named.

When I started I was very fortunate to hook up with land and a very good school. So from the first class on I could not get enough that voraciously I just loved it and in the early days I would train five days a week sometimes six days a week. And that took precedence over my schooling education and everything even though I did graduate from from B.C. with a B.S. in a business administration and I but I kept my karate up during the whole time so I just thought that self defense would be something cool to know something good to learn. You might stand by me going into the military and so that's what started it and I had no grandiose plans of being a martial arts professional martial arts teacher. I just thought I'd be something cool to learn but once I started I couldn't stop.

Jeremy Lesniak:

One of the things that often comes up when we talk about people joining the martial arts when they jump in as you did with both feet and just kind of immerse themselves usually signifies something that was lacking in their life whether they realized it or not. We've had enough guests come on that we're aware of what they were looking for when they joined martial arts. Was there something in your life that you were throwing yourself at martial arts to to seek out or to avoid something externally.

Buzz Durkin:

Honestly I think not. I think my prime motivating reason was again going into the military. I was going in as an infantry officer I just thought so be well served if I could learn something about self-defense or taking care of myself. I had a very happy upbringing and very lovely family life so I don't think I was running away from anything. I don't think I was trying to find something in particular other than she would be good to know how to take care of yourself.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

and when kind of home

Buzz Durkin:

Yes. So that was that was it. I just loved it from the start. And actually when I graduated from Boston cause I got a two year deferment from the military to get my MBA. And again that gave me two more years to practice my martial arts before I went on active duty service. And during that time I did 1969 actually I received my my showed on my first degree black belt. And then after doing that I spent two years in the Army one year at Fort Carson Colorado and one year in Vietnam.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Did your martial arts serve you while you were in Vietnam?

Buzz Durkin:

It did. People ask me that all the time. Did you use your Karate in Vietnam. I was an infantry lieutenant and I was an adviser to a South Vietnamese infantry battalion. And people ask me do I use my martial arts. Well I was fortunate enough never to be in any hand-to-hand combat where I had to fight with my hands. But I think my martial arts training served me very well in terms of confidence belief in myself patience and just the ability to believe in myself. You know before I left for Vietnam my teacher Judge Madsen put his arm around me. I'll never forget it. And he said don't worry Buzz he said All our black belts have done well over there.

And I thought of that many times under stressful situations. So I would like to think that I use my martial arts training my karate practice every day as a helicopter by myself as a centering exercise I'm just having the belief that I could get through whatever I was facing at the time. So I would say I used my karate. Yeah! Every, every every everyday. And it's just so much more than just the physical aspect of it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure. And of course most of our listeners are martial artists and that's why I phrase to question the way I did not. Did you have to defend yourself? Did you utilize your martial arts?

Buzz Durkin:

Well I tell a story in my book and it's the God's honest truth. And it might sound a little strange but when I was out in the middle of the jungle in a small compound built by Special Forces A Team and one night we got a notice that 2000 North Vietnamese regulars were going to attack our our compound. I was



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with the team I was an adviser and five other Americans with me and that was it. And he had about 80 South Vietnamese. So we did everything we could to prepare for that eventuality in terms of putting out more, wired, putting out more clay more mines. No one slept at night etc. and when everything was prepared it was very overwhelming. I went down to a bank robber myself and I did a Kata and having doing that Kata to give me such internal strength that I was but I was prepared for anything I could handle anything and I had control over something which I couldn't control. And so I use my karate that time and as the Luck of God would have it the fate of the gods. That night the North Vietnamese went totally around us didn't even have a skirmish. So I used my karate on that type of. In that time of experience I should say that makes any sense.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It does. I've never served statistically the majority of our listeners have never served and even fewer of them have seen a situation like that combat. Is there any experience in martial arts training that mimics the I would guess adrenaline or just kind of that emotional gut response that I'm I'm assuming was part of being over there is there a way you can relate it to martial arts for the rest of us.

Buzz Durkin:

Well honestly I must say nothing compares with the experience of combat or being shot at. But the the martial arts training for me the karate training for me just gave me the confidence to know that I was doing my best I could do my best in whatever happened happened but it gave me a lot of confidence and I wasn't afraid. I knew what I had to do and I did my best to do it. I don't think so martial that prepared me for those types of situations through rigorous training through repetition through challenging myself and that all stood by me under the darkest of moments for me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You of course shared a story there when you mentioned that was in your book when I went to talk about what you've written as we get deeper into the show.

But here at martial arts radio we drive everything through stories seems to be a hallmark of the martial arts sort of works well. If I was to ask you for your favorite martial arts story what would that be?

Buzz Durkin:

Well it would be a self-deprecating story and if I tell you the story people won't believe me but it really show you how how. It's a true story. In 1967 I was a green belt at the Madsen Academy of karate in Boston. And at that time the headmaster of his first visit to Boston to America from Okinawa Mr. Kanbun Uechi Sensei came and I was only a lowly greenbelt. And when Mr. Uechi came he had an entourage of people with him. He had a beautiful beautiful impeccably gauge embroidered beautifully



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and beautiful black belt with embroidery on the belt and stripes on the belt. Jet black hair he had no glasses he had contacts and he had an entourage. Now I saw Mr. Uechi had very little interaction with him because I was such a novice at the time but I remember him so flash flash forward four and a half years and I'm in Vietnam I need to take an hour and hour rest and recreation in this place were Thailand, Australia the Philippines. But I wanted to go to Okinawa because I just wanted to go to open our train with Mr. Uechi. And my when I put in my request was denied because it wasn't a regular iron ore spot. I put it in again. It was denied a second time I put it in for Okinawa's the third time at relisting that I was a blackbelt that the blackbelt made me perform better in the field or whatever and finally was approved. So when I got to Okinawa's very excited I was all by myself.

This was 1971 and I went to the headquarters Do-jo and lo and behold there was no one else for one person it was and it was a little old man in a tattered ghi tattered frayed old black belt in black horn rimmed glasses and white hair and I thought well this must be a senior student of Mr. Uechi she's holding on the fort while the master is away in some country or whatever.

No one spoke as a student no Americans in the Do-jo at the time so I was there for two weeks.

So I went over smile shook hands with this man he knew I was there. He gave me a uniform put on a key and I worked with him for all afternoon. The next day I came back it was the same thing so I had like five or six days in a row where I'm working one on one just the two of us with this old Okinawan men. And once in a while little Okinawan children would come in and that was the extent of it and I must say I was getting a little depressed and I was a little discouraged because I'd made all these special arrangements all these plans I was in this part of the world. God knows what was going to happen to me when I went back to Vietnam and I haven't met Mr. Uechi yet so I was getting a little resentful and I was I was not enjoying to its fullest my chance with this with this old man. And although he treated me like a son he was great we had mikan juice kind of an orange juice drink every day. He spoke no English but he was a magnificent teacher. So I had this one night someone said to me come down tonight to the Do-jo and I went to the Do-jo that night and the place was packed and it was packed. And it was like this was like almost two weeks up. And they were doing some kind of testing. And I ran to an American for the first time. I'll never forget an American rain. And we introduced ourselves. Hi how are you doing. I'm here on leave from Nahm, etc. etc. And he was getting ready to go over there and I said I'm I confided in him I said as we're stretching out before class I said I'm a little disappointed I said I've been here almost two weeks and I haven't meet Mr. Uechi. And the Marine looked at me said who had been trained with man. I'll never forget. He said he'd been training with man. And I pointed to that to the elderly man in the front. The Do-jo when he goes that's him that's Mr. Uechi you didn't know. So I've been training two weeks one on one every day with the master I didn't even know it. Now that might sound weird and I could blame my not knowing on a million things the way he was treated in America the way I remember him with a beautiful blue belt beautiful new guy dyed black hair contact lenses rather than the big horn rimmed glasses. And it just struck me that I wasn't living in the precious present. You know I could have enjoyed it more if I knew what I was doing. So the lesson for me was motion no anticipation. Enjoy what you're doing at the moment and drive with every with every minute. Now that might sound like a really



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weird story but I could blame it on combat stress. I could blame it on just tension or no relaxation. No. No one to communicate with. But that's the absolute truth. So when I was working with this person for two weeks almost exclusively and not even realizing it what a dummy.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think so, anybody could make that mistake. Such a contrast.

Buzz Durkin:

unbearably why it but it taught me a lot. It taught me a lot of times we don't have preconceived thought just enjoy what you're doing at the moment and I try and always live like that actually.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm curious.

Buzz Durkin:

That was so that's it. You people hear that story and they say that's not they couldn't be true. You couldn't be that dumb. And I said Yes I was.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What happened next? What happened after you realized your mistake?

Buzz Durkin:

Well I just that nothing really happened. We still enjoy a wonderful relationship my relationship with him externally didn't didn't change at all and he didn't know whether I knew who he was or not. I don't think. But we actually we developed I think a unique and special bond. We had a couple of years later 20 years later when he came to America. Mine was one of two Dojos that he wanted to visit which I was very proud of. So you know it just it just really struck me that that idea of Mushin you know no mindedness No no anticipation no preconceived thought I had all kinds of preconceived thoughts about how the master would look how he would be treated in his home Dojo. The entourage around him etc. And none of that was true. So it was a good learning experience for me for sure. Now I sound so silly probably I don't even want to talk to me anymore.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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I absolutely want to talk to you. And the reason why is we all make those silly mistakes. I think we've all made hopefully just one or two. I know I've made dozens of mistakes that are at least as goofy and I'm not going to share them because this is your time but trust me listeners. I've I think we've all done it. We've all been foolish. But isn't that part of learning.

Buzz Durkin:

You know it is part of learning and the thing that struck me the most was you know I think a real master shows and a man who has achieved mastery shows it in his reaction and Mr. Uechi to me was the ultimate master. He was kind he was compassionate. He was understanding he was patient all those wonderful martial virtues that we talk about. He really personified. And I just learned so much even when thinking about it in retrospect what I learned from him in terms of accepting people and then being a real person.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Obvious we should be. Obviously your life has shown a lot of dedication to the martial arts puzzle like that stopping anytime soon. But outside,

Buzz Durkin:

I mean I love what I do. It's who I am really have been practicing now 51 years in my school for 44 years and it's been a sheer joy and people that outside the martial arts world will say you were going to retire and retire from what. I mean I love what I do every day I love the students who love being at the Dojo and it's really who I am. And I'm fortunate now to have wonderful people around me all of whom who work at the Dojo grew up at the Dojo so it's a wonderful culture and it's a it's just a great experience so it's been nothing but a sheer joy. And I can honestly say when every Monday comes around I'm just anxious to get to get back at it again. So I've been very very blessed and someone will say to me and asked me about work and I'll say I haven't gone to work a day in 44 years. And I sincerely feel that way it's just been a true blessing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Can you imagine a version of your life without martial arts.

Buzz Durkin:

Honestly no no it's it's who I am who I become it's I. I relate it honestly to to every everything I do everything I do. There's no separation between. I would like to think how I am at the Dojo and how I am out the traffic. Hi I am at the grocery store. I just can't imagine what I would be like and without it.



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Honestly it's been a great ride and it's very much fun. And I meet wonderful people talk to wonderful people like yourself and some of the other people that we've mentioned and I've been very very fortunate.

Jeremy Lesniak:

On those weekends when you're not teaching or I'm sure you're not training on your own 24 hours a day. Are there things that you enjoy doing outside of martial arts?

Buzz Durkin:

Well I'm a real home boy, really boring person. But I do I do enjoy playing tennis I play tennis regularly and I just find that is a nice change. And so I play tennis a lot and I play tennis competitively and it's fun. So that would be my one diversion I would say from the Dojo and from Martial Martial Arts but of course I can apply a lot of the concepts that I've learned and developed through my training on the tennis court believe it or not in terms of not anticipating in terms of focus and concentration and controlling your mind. And plus the physicality

Jeremy Lesniak:

of course. I'd like you to tell us about a time in your life where martial arts sort of saved you something wasn't going right and you were able to use either your physical skills or other elements of your martial training to get through that difficult time.

Buzz Durkin:

Well I see I'd be well I think I, we were one of the first people and I was one of the first persons in the country really to build their own school. We built this 8000 square foot structure from the ground up. This was back in 1987,88 and when I did very few people a handful of people had done it across the country and certainly no one had ever done it in New England and when I came up with the I rented a small eighteen hundred square foot facility for 14 years with the objective being to simply scrimp save and someday build our own school. And I started talking to people about building my own school. I was laughed at many many times. No one had done it. Most martial law schools at the time were a store front where you could roll up the rug take down a heavy big and be gone the next night. And what I wanted to do was almost a million dollar project devoted entirely to traditional martial arts and it was we had a lot of roadblocks a lot of roadblocks and I kept persevering persevering and I think the thing that allowed me to keep persevering was the training I knew that I could accomplish it. And when I felt like it wasn't going well or is taking too long I just revert back to my training and then just delve into the training and that just keep me such perseverance that I was determined to make it happen and I had I had real tears laugh at me. I've had real to tell me the c'mon up I got this thing for you to look at is with the dance studio. No I want to build it from the ground on up a freestanding building. So I had a plan I



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tech I mentioned this in my book too and it was a plan of positive expectancy and I never would have had the courage or the confidence to do this without my martial training. So I obviously had a bank that I went to and one day I went to the bank and I said who's the vice president who's the manager or whatever. And they showed me who wasn't going off to his office and I said Hey I'm Buzz Dirkin and I'm going to come to you some day about building my own building.

And now the person who didn't know me from home well didn't know who I was didn't even know what I did. So I made it a point of every time I went to the bank to make a deposit to get cheques or whatever I would stop and knock on his office and say I'm Buzz Dirk and I'm going to come and see you about a building a building. God's honest truth and I did this for three and a half years almost four years.

Every time I went into the bank I saw that person had by this time he knew who I was and I said I'm going to come see you about my building. And then one day true story I went to the bank and I was preoccupied to get 100 things in my mind made a deposit and I went straight out the door without going into this person's office. Well lo and behold the door opens behind me and this vice president comes running up he looks me says Buzz. What about your building, in the middle he said that I knew we had. I knew I knew we had him and I said Well let's talk. And that was four years of of doing that and that was the bank that gave us the loan to get the funds for what we needed. No one at the time when I built this building I had to increase enrollment by 25% just to make the bills and I was encouraged to do it. I was I knew we had to do it. I put my house up as a second mortgage that if the Dojo didn't succeed I would have lost my house but my wife was with me on board 100% and I just knew it. Make it happen and I think that that confidence that perseverance that ability to believe in myself all came through my training my physical training and it really did. So we eventually built the building and now we've been here almost 30 years now. Happy happy ever after.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Of course some folks are listening they're doing the math or thinking eight thousand square feet. This guy must live right in the middle of Boston or or Chicago or some other really large city that can support that number of students you and I'm sure everyone else can tell I'm being sarcastic here.

Buzz Durkin:

Yeah well it's interesting. We have people still I'm happy to say come from all over the world to visit us and stay with us monthly and see what we do our school is really known for retention and we don't enroll a heck of a lot of people every month. I'm in a small town of 3000 plus people. 6000 thousand pop might take about 6000 people now. So we're in a town of 6000 people and we keep an enrollment of 300 students and we've been fortunate to be able to do that. And over time we have many second and third generation family members here. And it's been a wonderful wonderful thing so we we're in a small town 6000 people because these peripheral towns around us but primarily Atkinson New Hampshire populations 6000 plus. And that's where our school is located in that community has been able to



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support our school in a fine fashion. And I think the reason is what makes our school go is not marketing not next latest fad and getting people in but just retention. And my philosophy always has been we teach people first martial arts second. And everybody that comes in to see me has a heart of soul feelings and emotions. And if you take that into consideration first I think you're well on your way to meeting someone where that where they want to be. You know one of my mentors is a man by the name of Harvey Mackay who's a very famous author. He wrote the best seller number of best selling books swim with the Sharks though being eaten alive was probably his most famous and his philosophy was always think long term and think in human terms. And that's how I've tried to run the school. That's how I try and make every decision. So if someone comes in with a challenge I don't look at them as a karate student a green belt a brown belt they are a human being they have feelings they have emotions they have a heart and soul. They want to be treated with human dignity. Think long term and think in human terms in the long term. If I never do anything the quick appeasement you know how is this a decision I make now going to affect me five months from now five years from now ten years from now. And that's the way we think and that's been a good philosophy for us because it's worked for us. I haven't had to change that. So we always try and think long term what's in the best interest of the school. And I think in human terms because people first martial arts second best kind of philosophy upon which we have built the school.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sounds like a great philosophy. It sounds like it's certainly working. Do you think that's a mistake. Most martial arts school owners are making that they're not doing that.

Buzz Durkin:

I think it's education. I think sometimes you can get caught up on the physical the technique the amba, the choke the take down the front kick the punch and that's how I look upon all that stuff as the vehicle to develop great human qualities like patience like confidence like perseverance like belief in self. So we use our Okinawan curriculum our aid Kaja etc. to as the vehicle for the student to develop confidence to develop belief in oneself etc. and I don't think enough teachers today relate the two if someone's a better fighter than someone in your, is the best fighter in your Dojo for instance. Why is that. What's that going to get them in life really. But yet everyone needs to have patience. Everyone needs to have confidence belief in themselves. Everyone needs to persevere to be successful and if the teacher can show how the physical curriculum that are teaching develops these traits and how their real value is not so much on the Dojo floor. The real value is how they're used and applied in the real world. People will always come back the real world as we know can be a very negative place with so much negativity. A good martial arts schools full of positive vibrations positive people positive community and I think a lot of our students who have been coming for literally decades combat to just get the batteries recharged. There's so much to drain you on the outside. You come in you have a workout with like minded people supportive people. People who are trying to make you get better as they get better then you're better able after class to face those challenges in those life issues and those life issues stay with you whether



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you're 14 40 or 64. So people will keep coming back. If a teacher can relate the real important things in life the thing that the vehicle of the martial arts the physicality of the martial arts allows us to develop.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We've heard about a couple of the folks who have been really influential on your martial arts Mr. Madsen Mr. Uechi of course if I was to ask you for a third name someone who just clearly guided you or or elevated your skills or anything however you want to define it. They were instrumental. Who would that be?

Buzz Durkin:

Well that's a good question because you've you've mentioned my teacher and you've mentioned that the headmaster of our style you know I think my father instilled a lot of this stuff in me actually. And I guess one role model that I admire among all the the great martial artists and famous martial artists although he hasn't had personal effect in my training was Chuck Norris and I think Chuck Norris does a wonderful job of representing the real value of the martial arts and I think he's a martial artist first actor second. And I just admire the way he carries himself in his the way he presents is the martial arts in the way he's exposed the martial arts to so many people.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Certainly a legendary figure and probably the name that most non martial artists know. More than any other martial artist that he has the chops the real skills. I mean anybody that has that was there or like me wasn't there but seeing the video of his skills back in the 60s and 70s.

Buzz Durkin:

Absolutely. I remember watching it many times in Madison Square Garden the felt forum Heran banks world of self defense and he was the real is the real deal. Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

If you could train with somebody else that you haven't anybody in the world anywhere in time who would you want to train with?

Buzz Durkin:

Anywhere in time. And I would relish the idea of training with the original founder of the style Kanbun Uechi. I think I would love that. I think that would be just so cool. That would be my my dream instructor



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Jeremy Lesniak:

and I'm going to present

Buzz Durkin:

see very as you can see I'm very Uechi oriented and I think I think a failing of most of many men not most but many martial art school honors today as well would they jump on the martial art. Did you or you know someone down the street is having success teaching this discipline so I'll teach this discipline. Someone down the street is having success teaching this other form of martial art. I'll teach them the fire marshal as they have a lot of students why can't I. And I'm a firm believer that you know selling is really just a transference of feeling and it's not so much what you teach. I think it's your belief and your passion for what you teach that inspires other people and gets other people to believe in to believe in what you're doing. And I think that's a very important aspect of of of teaching your belief your passion and truly what you do is almost more important what you do to communicate with people and I think there's a lot of instructors that I just called the Martial art dojo. They just jump on what's popular now having little training in it having little background in it and therefore presenting it in a half baked way. And that doesn't do anything to enhance the school or the people who will benefit from that from the train from their teaching.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What would you have to gain from training with him? I mean you've you've trained in with Uechi-ryu your entire martial career you've worked with the best in the world and most folks are going to put you in that group. So what is it training with the founder of the style you would hope to gain?

Buzz Durkin:

The origin. The Roots. Who made up this wonderful curriculum. Who developed these fabulous this fabulous understanding of the human body to make it so effective. Yeah the roots of how it emerged and how how it was practiced and how it came to be to be such a popular thing and the roots really. I think that would be fascinating for me to discover who thought of this and why and what prompted them to think of this and and prove it to be so critically important.

If that makes any sense

Jeremy Lesniak:

It makes all kinds of sense. Yeah. I'm the same way I like to know the why to again understand the decisions because for me understanding why something was done helps me understand when and how to do it.



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Buzz Durkin:

I think that's a very excellent point and I think you to be successful at martial arts.

No equivocation you have to do it. You have to do it. You just have to do it. Repeat repetition repetition you have to do it. But you also have to study it and if you do it and study you will just develop such a better understanding in your ear ability will be enhanced at a more rapid rate as well. So I think a lot of people just do it blindly.

But if you do it and study it and what does this move mean how did this come from. How can I really apply it in this situation. And I know in my Dojo the people and the senior students who do that and not only practice regularly but truly study it just turn out to be the finest martial artists

Jeremy Lesniak:

we may have someone listening who's thinking Okay I understand you intellectually but how would I study martial arts. What would you tell them.

Buzz Durkin:

Well you'd have to X you have to start with an attitude of acceptance. And there's just so much that to be learned and it's good to question. But you have to start with an attitude of acceptance and this martial arts regardless of style is hundreds of years old. It's a proven pass the test of time even in terms of just pure self-defense physicality. So if someone's standing. How did they do it. They do it by enjoying the ecstasy of sweat and just do it and have an attitude of acceptance. Put trust in your teacher and the teacher will trust the student. And there's no answer other than time to really feel the benefits to understand the benefits you have to experience the benefits no one can really talk to about it. You have to experience it yourself. So repetition experienced the ecstasy of sweat as we like to say here at this school and and have an attitude of acceptance because this stuff has been around for hundreds of years and it's worked effectively. And sure. Times change. But the the human anatomy hasn't changed that much. And so you have to I think I would say have an attitude of acceptance. Be ready to work hard enjoy the spirit of repetition. I know its too ease is to look at repetition. You can look at and say Oh this again I'm so bored of doing this. Or you can say I'm going to study this and find the deeper meaning. Why does he want me to do this over and over. Aha. Maybe there's an epiphany more in there and really you can't beat the ecstasy of sweat.

You just have to do it in a good Dojo it encourages that type of training because if I'm a student in that class by working hard I get better if I get better. Every one of my partners has to get better. So it's a mutually beneficial thing as the group gets better the individual gets better as the individual gets better the group gets better and it's just a wonderful learning experience. And again you develop traits that will stand by you in life and that's it's a beautiful thing. And then I think there's my slides is unique in that it



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can develop mind body spirit and afford so many benefits so many benefits for anyone's daily life. I mean we had a class this morning and though we had several men in their 70's and an 80 year old woman and she was just going on like like it's beautiful. And I don't expect them to train like a 23 year old but it's it's a lot of martial arts when taught correctly I think is a lifelong exercise habit that you can benefit from when you're 4 years old or 84 years old. So I'm getting on my soapbox now because I just love it so much and I just so firmly believe in what I'm saying.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well you are preaching to the choir here and of course the majority of the folks listening are going to agree with you but at the same time you're giving them beautifully succinct ways to express it but I'm sure they're going to take back into their martial arts schools and the places they train themselves. And they're going to share those poignant words that maybe someday will become the next cliches because they are that effective.

Buzz Durkin:

Well I hope so. And you know I think a lot of schools especially new school owners think it's much more difficult to get students in the door than it is to keep them. And I don't agree with that. I think it's much more difficult to keep them than to get people in. And if the focus is on retention if the focus is on really nurturing and taking care of the people who have committed to training with you the school blossom.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You reminded me as you were speaking of one of my favorite sayings and I don't remember what the context is for this or who said it or anything. I don't believe it's a martial arts statement. If you look around the room you're the best person. It's time to get a new room.

Buzz Durkin:

Yeah yeah that's that's that's that's very true. When it's like you hang around smart people you get smart.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's right.

Buzz Durkin:

And a associate with successful people and you'll learn what makes them successful.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely. You mentioned Chuck Norris and having seen him at Madison Square Garden. Were you ever a competitor yourself.

Buzz Durkin:

You know my my journey was. Yes I competed all throughout New England as a cue ranking student when I got my black belt that was really off in the military. And my first year in Colorado I competed in tournaments out there I never had any huge great success although I've got a few trophies here and there but I was never a sport correct to a stand out. Put it that way. And I think it appealed to me but just the logistics of the timing of where I was stationed where are my how it all played out for me didn't really develop into the focus of that. And when I got out of the service and started teaching at my original Dojo or Madsen Academy of karate I had a very large following and I had some of the bigger biggest classes of the week and I enjoyed doing it and I had a great following and that's what made me think that well I can do it maybe I can do it on my own. And that's what made me one of the reasons which I started my school.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Martial arts movies. It's a subject that sometimes we get really deep into the weeds on the show. I think you can imagine martial arts movies not only are something that a lot of martial artists are passionate about. They've often led to waves of new martial arts student Karate Kid or Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. What's your relationship with martial arts movies? Do you enjoy them? Not so much.

Buzz Durkin:

I might take them for what they are mostly fantasy but I think that the finest the best the the most memorable was the Karate Kid the original one with Ralph Macchio and that I would have to say is probably my favorite because what that did at the time was opened up the Dojos to children for the first time in young people flooded the Dojo after after that movie and like when I started and now at the Madsen Academy in 1966 67 that school was a melting pot and Judge Madsen sent it over 500 students and it might have been a dozen children. Imagine that the Karate Kid movie really opened the floodgates for that for the kids. And then as a result of the kids coming into the Dojo the parents the dads would watch and then they became involved in martial arts so that's really the catalyst I think for making it a family environment. And even today throughout the country as so many families that study and I think that was a reflection of the Karate Kid movie really.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Were there any other movies that you recall that have ushered in waves. As you saw it in your dojo?



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Buzz Durkin:

That I shouldn't what, I'm sorry.

Jeremy Lesniak:

New students. You know something else culturally that happened that made people show up. I mean I guess even outside

Buzz Durkin:

Yeah, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles was good for children. And then you could move on to the Power Rangers so they all had an effect none of which I think have as big an effect as the Karate Kid movie but I think the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle thing did. And Chuck Norris had a couple of good movies like sidekicks and so hit it all. It all adds up oh I ended up to bring bringing students into the into the Dojo into making martial arts training more acceptable. I mean we even see it on TV commercials now. You know it's great. And it should be like that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Couldn't agree more. We're going to talk about what you've written you know the books that you're known for. But before we go there are there other books from other people. That you're fond of that you might recommend folks read.

Buzz Durkin:

I think a great martial arts book is Kudo, the martial ways you deal in martial ways and it was written by a Japanese man. I can't pronounce. I can't think his name escapes me at the moment but that's tremendous. Easy simple read philosophically very sound. It's a nice nice book as is the classic Zen in the martial arts by Joel Hymes of another classic. But those two books Kudo, martial ways and Zen and the martial arts I think are two excellent books for martial arts school honor to read.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We didn't

Buzz Durkin:

I know from a business point of view. I think my all-time favorite book from the two books actually for someone who is running a school as get that classic swim with the sharks that are being eaten alive there's just so much commonsense business savvy in that book. And the other book that was written by



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Hank Tressler called no bull selling and that's just a wonderful easy to read book. I love books that are easy to read in those two books a wonderful business books for any martial art school or to to to read and apply actually

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now it's time to talk about what you've written, so I confess I don't know how many books you have written.

Buzz Durkin:

I've written one

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's only it's only the one only the one OK. People talk about it so often then it's been mentioned on the show a number of times. I didn't log it in my brain as the title but more so the author so your name has been brought up on the show quite a few times and I guess. Tell us about your book. And my apologies for getting that wrong.

Buzz Durkin:

No no that's fine. It's Buzz Durkin of the martial arts school owner's guide to teaching business and life. The title of the book is success waiting. Success is waiting and you know I. The book was written we wrote two years ago and I had so many anecdotal stories and I've enjoyed a very wonderful time teaching martial arts and I wanted to share that but I've I've I've I had accumulated so many anecdotal stories about dealing with people dealing with situations dealing with martial training that I just thought would be good too. One of the things I wanted to do was share it and maybe help out a new aspiring Dojo or a young school honor. So that's what I did and it was a joy. You spoke with Bill earlier. He was immense in helping me get on track and doing it and it's been very well received. Good great Amazon reviews and it's done very well actually so I've been very blessed by that. It's really my story. And other than the introduction there's a section on students service how to better serve students. There's a section on what to do what not to do. A section on training so it's really been filled with just anecdotal stories that you couldn't make up. Oftentimes the truth is stranger than fiction we know but we have a stew pot on the essentials of what it takes to be successful as him as a martial arts school honor and life commitment perseverance confidence passion have a section on things to learn and remember as a teacher. A whole section on teaching tips student's service tips and what I call best business practices. The long term success. So what I did when I had this idea I'll share with you. I got a big white board in one of the extra bedrooms at the house at my house a huge white pool and I just you know would take little posters and say this would be a good topic. Put on top of the white board. And for about a year when I came home and I said gee I talked about this from class today what



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category that fall under. So it was like a storyboard of the book and then I knew all the stories because I had lived them and then I just started writing. And it's primarily anecdotal relating stories about students and how that can help at school or today. So it was it was a fun experience and I enjoyed doing it and hopefully people have treated their students better because of it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I know it has made an impact I can't say how much you certainly know more than I do based on the numbers that have sold and it's not me asking and they don't want to know that's private. But I know that the folks that have come on the show and spoken of the book have spoken of it very fondly. I'll confess I haven't read it. I have a huge stack of martial arts books I'm trying to get to. And here's isn't it.

Buzz Durkin:

Mine isn't there. I'm going to I'm going to send you a copy right now.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It. It is definitely in there. It is tough there.

Buzz Durkin:

Well I wanted to book one of my two goals. It had to be a book that was easy to read because I like books that are easy to read. And I know martial artists are very caught up in time. There had to be a book that was easy to read and had to have short chapters. I wanted a book that you could pick it up read read it two or three page chapter. Put it down and read another chapter a week later and put it down. So I think I accomplished those two things. It's an easy read. Big fontt easy read and short chapters.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That was kind of the formula for Zen in the martial arts.

Buzz Durkin:

It was.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It is my favorite martial arts book of all time and that is your fantastic book of course. We did an entire episode going into the history on on the book and Joe Hyme's and everything and we'll link that in the



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show notes and for anybody that might be new to the show we do a show notes page at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. So if you're driving or on the treadmill or something you know I have to take notes with all these things we're talking about. We're going to give you notes make it easy.

Buzz Durkin:

Sounds good.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. It is clear how much you love martial arts. I mean it's I can't imagine anybody ever doubting that. But the question that I find myself asking after how many years would you say 51 years

Buzz Durkin:

51 years

Jeremy Lesniak:

After 51 years. I'm gonna guess you're at least as passionate as you were when you walked into the Dojo that first day. And my question is why.

Buzz Durkin:

The why of it is for me is that it's such a beautiful habit. It's such a beautiful practice you can connect with yourself on just so many levels mentally attitudinally physically. I mean I can keep going back to it being a lifelong exercise habit. And there is no denying it martial arts training is good for the soul it's good for the body it's good for you. You know it's interesting. If a student say quits our school and I see him a year later at the grocery store the first thing he says to me the very first thing that everyone always says is I'm coming back Mister Durkin that are coming back. I'm coming back and I say bye just to say hi for us. Let's see how are you doing. Good to see you. And I. I've often thought of that. Why would someone say that. And the reason they say that is because they know intuitively instinctively it's good for them.

No one's ever said any man am I glad I stopped martial arts training that stuff's no good at all that stuff stinks that stuff's terrible. No one has ever said that but everyone always says I'm coming back. I'm coming back and I bet this is school owners that are listening to this right now. I've had that experience. And I often think why. Why do they say that. Because who can deny it it is good for you it's good for you physically mentally emotionally it's good for your entire well-being. That can I think will be very hard for someone to deny that. I mean the elderly people who do and people in their 60's 70's and



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80's just fighting against the aging process just staying flexible and keeping strong bones. I mean it's it's great stuff you know and I know my monitors 70 is the new 50. And 50 is the new 30 and and really truly you know taking care of your body regular exercise eating healthy. My teacher Judge Madsen now is 80 years old so vibrant it's just an inspiration in is a very famous Uechi practitioner of Master Naka Hodo in Okinawa who is 86 and he moves like he's 26. So no one can deny. I think the martial arts training regardless of style is just a great practice habit and that's what keeps me going I think there's no it that it's perfect and it's as perfect as you want to make it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now for folks that are listening if they want to reach you if they want to find out more about your school and the other things you have going on maybe social media things like that. How did they find you?

Buzz Durkin:

Well buzzdurkin.com. We have a huge presence on everything really Facebook primarily Instagram and Twitter and Facebook primarily. And the book is available at the karateteacher.com or Amazon. The karateteacher.com, buzzdurkin.com and we're on Atkinson New Hampshire. Anybody can call me I love speaking with Dojo Honors I just love it and I love speaking especially with young new school owners. And if there's anything I can do to have them learn from my foibles and my mistakes I'm happy to do that. Believe me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's great. And one more thing before we go some parting words for the folks listening

Buzz Durkin:

Well I think we've got a martial arts school owners audience correct?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Not entirely school owners but definitely martial artists

Buzz Durkin:

Yeah definitely martial artist. I think those who dare to teach us lead should know must never cease to learn. I love that saying those who dare to teach our lead must never cease to learn. And I think that applies to every aspect certainly for school honor certainly for martial arts practitioners and certainly for life. So if we keep learning you keep experiencing new things it keeps you vital it keeps you young and keeps you current. And especially if you're going to teach you know those who dare to teach or lead



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must never cease to learn. And I think that's and also I'd go back to what I mentioned earlier in all your dealings with people think long term and think in human terms and treat people the way you love it if someone treats you like that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sensei Durkin impressed me with his dedication to sharing the martial art not only in his small town but throughout the world. I enjoyed his stories and I'm hoping to connect with him very soon in person Sensei Durkin. Thank you for your service and thank you for being on the show today. If you want to check out the show notes remember those are at whistlekickmartialarts.com. We've got links we've got titles we've got social media we've got everything that you might want to further explore today's episode and learn more about Sensei Durkin. If you want to follow us on social media we are at whistlekick, pretty much everywhere. Facebook Twitter and Instagram are our primary channels. And of course you can find all the other things that we do at whistlekick.com, if you want to be a guest on the show or you have someone you'd like to recommend as a guest on the show. Fill up the guest form over at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com our best guests come from listener suggestions. Truthfully I hope wherever you are in the world you're having a great day. Your training's going well and this is where I step back until next time. Train hard, smile and have a great day.