



Episode 248 – Master Henry Childers | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hello thanks for tuning in. This is whistlekick martial arts radio and this is episode 250. Today, our guest is Master henry Childers. It's gonna be a great episode. I want to thank you for tuning, if you're new to the show, my name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host for this show, I'm the founder of whistlekick, and you can find everything that we do from this podcast, to our products, to all the other things that we create for your benefit at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) if you want to check out the other 249 episodes we've done you can find those at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) or you can find them on YouTube, you can find them in iTunes, you can find them pretty much anywhere that you can subscribe to podcasts. I'm excited for guest today because of his interesting character. Today's guest is Master henry Childers, this man started martial arts because of problems in his family but then he found a second home in the martial arts. Master Childers started training at 14 with his best friend and he never stopped. Now I could tell you a whole bunch more about him, but I'd rather let him tell you his story. So, let's do that. Master Childers welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

**Henry Childers:**

Thank you for having me.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well thank you for being here.



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**Henry Childers:**

Appreciate the opportunity to talk with you.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Listeners, I should let you know that that Master Childers and we've been talking for a few minutes now. We had a great conversation on the phone, when was that? A couple weeks ago and I'm looking forward to this. We've had some good chats and and I just have a good feeling about this. Not that I have a bad feeling about any of the other, actually that's not true, I have had a couple that I've had bad feelings about but they turned out okay, I have a great feeling about this one.

**Henry Childers:**

Would you like to expand on that bad feeling again?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Absolutely not. Well, actually, a bit. We'll just say that there are some people who when I start talking to them, give one and two word answers which doesn't lend them, lend things well to a podcast that has a typically hour-longish format.

**Henry Childers:**

I could imagine that might be a difficult.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Fear of having a three-minute episode. But I know that's not gonna happen with us today.

**Henry Childers:**

Sure.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Let's go all the way back. I caught what you did there don't worry. Let's go all the way back to whatever the beginning is and why don't you tell us how you found martial arts?

**Henry Childers:**

How I found martial arts? Oh wow. Well I'm old so your [00:03:11.46] to go that far back. Let me see 1964 I guess, 14 years old, still living in Louisville, Kentucky. There was no karate the only thing in Louisville that time was boxing, wrestling of course in school and judo and quite frankly I had a very bad home situation, kind of an abusive situation where my older brother should already been running out of the house as a 14-year-old kid, I was scared. Which I think is probably what gets a lot of people into the



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martial arts is something that's happening to or has happened to someone they know they don't wanna be put in that position, they wanna feel like they have some power, they have some control over things. So really that's how I got started in the martial arts. That started at the downtown YMCA and I would either hitchhike. Our bicycle, that was a great bicycle or in those days from [00:04:21.02] county to downtown Louisville twice a week and take judo lessons and I made a deal with my blood brother at the time that if you would sign up to take judo lessons with me, I would scuba dive with him and years later we did exactly that and you know, dove a lot interesting places around the world besides doing a bit of martial arts together he's still, still my hero. So that's how I got started. How that continued was a lot of travel around the country from New York to Los Angeles, Cincinnati, Ohio to Florida, the keys pretty much everywhere I went, I just picked up what I could and work whenever I could and it's been a real interesting journey. Martial arts is much like a motorcycle trip it's about the journey is not about the destination. So, the journey continues.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

This man that you called your blood brother, why did you want him to be the one you train with?

**Henry Childers:**

Well, you know, you have a family and you know, your family is your family that's your blood relatives in their assigned at birth and they are good or they're not good. In my case we weren't an extremely close family by any means, I had, I have really good brothers, I have what one of them just recently passed away that's why I'm going to Louisville next week to take care of some family business. The other one passed away about four years ago he was a music business, a very interesting man and has exhibits around the world. He has a cult following of his own but we are remarkably different individuals you know, they were very intelligent, very talented in their own right but we really didn't have much in common. My blood brother who lives up in Colorado, he was a similar situation I was he didn't have a, he didn't have a close knit family, we kinda running the streets and had we not adopted one another we probably would be much different people and probably not in the good place for both of us were at now cause sometimes you need people and your friends, your contemporaries those are the ones that you choose as family and I've been very, very fortunate in my life to have, not a great number, I don't think anybody can say I have a great number of really close, close friends. We have a lot of acquaintances, that's hundreds of acquaintances through martial arts hundreds of people I really like and enjoy working with and I enjoy sharing time with. But there are only you know generally in a lifetime, you can count on one hand the people that you truly can call family and you know will be there regardless of what happens. They're never judgmental and always have your back. And when we met we are supposed to get in the fight over a girl to be exact and then we ended up being great friends. So, you know, he was my family by choice and the we took care of each other. That's why we train together other than that he was one really tough guy. Cause if you're gonna pick a training partner, pick somebody tough cause you're no gonna get any better unless you work with people who are better than you and have ever better skill set better tools than you do.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Would you have started you know without him?

**Henry Childers:**

I don't know I don't know. Cause, by that time, we were both you know, we have bonded pretty much as brothers. So, would have I started without him? Yeah, probably. I would've probably started without him but I wouldn't have had near as much fun. I mean the very first family session for a belt in judo we left a week before the testing was to come up so really just to demonstrate your routine in you know and so forth. We had to split the class in half and I had to compete with one half the class, he competed for the other half of the class one at a time not like a kung fu movie. But since he was larger than me he got the large half of the class, I got a small half the class cause I was the second smallest guy in the place. But where about six people each and that we did very well, we had a lot of fun. We got beat up pretty good and there weren't in those days there wasn't a vinyl covering on your mat so they were just rough canvas. So, we looked like we had been dragged down a gravel road when were done. We had so many skin marks and strawberries and so forth and we went down and fell on the swimming pool in the basement of the YMCA and the chlorine just about killed us, it was worse than the competition had bee. But yeah. Yeah. Good times.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And what's the most memorable place at the two of you went scuba diving?

**Henry Childers:**

Well a concrete ship off the Bahamas that had been used for strafing during the war and so the story goes was the last place that the infamous torpedo bombers disappeared into the Bermuda triangle were reported to be. That would probably be one of the most interesting eerie places to ever go since it was concrete and sunken in the water and had all its rebar hanging down and looked a lot like out of a you know, horror film set so that was really interesting, that was good. We did a lot of freshwater diving when were younger, did a lot of rock quarries it's amazing how much life there in the rock quarries, t [00:10:43.25]

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm not a scuba diver myself. I've done a little bit of snorkeling but I.

**Henry Childers:**

We did some caves too that's always fun. Spelunking, diving in caves and it is true you can get [00:10:57.29] not know if you're going up or down.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Really?

**Henry Childers:**

Yeah, we saw people [00:11:02.21] I was swimming and look and saw the bubbles were going in the wrong direction. So maybe I'm backwards cause you have no point of reference.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It is clear that your storyteller and you told me a number of stories off air. If I was to pin you down and say that the only way you could get up is to tell your favorite martial arts story, which one would you share?

**Henry Childers:**

Wow, my favorite martial arts story. Well, I can't do that cause its gonna sound like I'm bragging.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's okay

**Henry Childers:**

And I don't want to brag and so that means that you change the names to protect the innocent and guilty both. Okay, I guess one my favorite martial arts stories, one of my favorite martial arts stories which I got involved with the Tracy company and that was in Louisville, Kentucky. I traveled, I traveled up to New York and dabbled in some wing chun up there and did some training in judo, further training in judo up there got involved in taekwondo up there, got to meet some of the notable people around the New York area. Had a really good time but then I had a relative gets sick back in Kentucky and so we went back, went back to Kentucky to help out and when I got back here there is no place to train. I mean there are a lot of places to train but this time [00:12:32.35] to train. This was early 70s now but there were no places that it I wanted to train you know, you have to have a feeling about the place. You have to feel like you're you know, you have to feel like you're you know its gonna serve the purpose you have. And what I was looking for at the time because I was young and because I had a relatively interesting upbringing, I went to someplace where the best competition there was. You know, I was going to meet the toughest guys I could meet and that means they had to be able to beat me and they had to be able to beat me hands down. So, I did a tour of all the karate studios in that area and there are some nice people, some fine martial artist, but it wasn't what I was looking for. And I went in the Tracy studio which was on Berkshire road at that time, it was a small school and believe it or not was one of the best schools at that time in that system, I mean business-wise, they were just, they were doing incredible business and it was a boom time. And I went in and I said [00:13:56.35] alec and I went and it just worked out with a black belt, I want to work out with one of your best black belts blah blah blah you know, like everybody else that does that. You know we didn't blew my horn and I worked out with



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young greenbelt kind of a pretty blonde kid who I look at [00:14:13.31] kill this guy and I he just beat me [00:14:17.49] and it was because, it wasn't because he was strong, it wasn't that he was particularly fast, because he had really, really good training and comparatively speaking, my technical knowledge of just basics. And here again it all comes back to basics, I mean, my foundation compared to the foundation that, Jimmy Stewart was the owner of that school and still is my friend and my mentor today and this is 50 some years later, he was just turning out the toughest guys, I mean it was just amazing. The quality of fighter he was turning out and there was nobody else in that area that you could compare. It wasn't near as traditional as many of the schools, it didn't have the [00:15:08.04] in the circumstance it was the keys were kinda threadbare and we are kinda sweaty and we worked real hard and that really formed brotherhood. And first time I worked out with Master Stewart was in the room that was about 10 feet by 10 feet was had wood paneling on the walls and something had told him that I was a black belt from another system which was not true, I was a brown belt from another system at time, and that I had come down there expressly to kinda get what I could then run back to where I had come from in other words I was an industrial spy. So, we went the back room and we worked out together in this little 10 foot by 10 foot room and he broke every piece of wood paneling on that wall with my body. However, that being said, he did it in a very nice way. He didn't hurt me, just launched me to the wall every, every chance there you know, that he got which was numerous and after about an hour, I was smart enough to keep my elbows down, you know, and keep my chin tucked, after about an hour, I finally got a shot in, I think he actually let me get it in and [00:16:25.54] he said [00:16:26.56] I'll see you next week and walked out of the room and I thought, [00:16:33.29] I knew right then, had he wanted [00:16:38.09] me, had he wanted to hurt me, he could have done it anytime he wanted to. All he wanted to do was establish his dominance and show me who was boss and he certainly showed me who was boss and he certainly establishes dominance and the next week when I showed up for my session with him, the first thing he said was, I didn't you'd come back. And I said, are you kidding, I said, I know you could've hurt me [00:17:08.25] I mean he had me, that was it. But you didn't, you just dominated me, you just showed me who was boss and I gotta learn that you know, I'm not gonna be happy until I can do that. I mean, I'm not gonna be happy until till I can get back in this room with you and then basically we can go toe to toe and and go at it and I can hold my own. As long as I can't do that, that means that I'm a real little fish in a real big pond if it's a whole lot of big fish out there. So, there's only one place to be and that's where the competition is the stiffest and that's where the instruction is the best. And after that I really developed a family. I really [00:18:00.35] with him and those people are still my friends today and still highly respected and yeah that's it. You know, but you have to start somewhere and you have to begin and you have to be willing to sweat, you willing to take some bruises, you have to be willing to to get out there with people who were better than you and you have to be lucky, lucky enough that they will be compassionate enough and not have, not have such an overblown ego that they'll just go out there and crush you and I never found that, I never, see with Jim, I never never experience ego, I never had that problem. He went really hard with me a lot of times but I wouldn't had it any other way.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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The matter of ego comes up on the show quite a bit how do you think martial artist can best keep your ego in check?

**Henry Childers:**

[00:19:02.28] years ago and I'll just use the initials cause I won't use the words he used but he told me something this very valuable when I was a kid, he said never buy your own bs. And that's it no don't, don't buy into your own hype. I'm 67 years old now, we didn't have head schools and you know, I have managed schools in Louisville, Kentucky, in Indianapolis, Indiana. I had a school in the sunset Blvd. In Los Angeles and Hollywood. You know, it sounds really impressive, it was tough school, I had some really good tough students, we didn't make a lot of money, the economy was rough at that time. We have some really good competition. And through all those years in and through all that I now hear things that I'm supposed to have done, and there's probably a basis you know, everything is a basis in fact somewhere. Let me tell you that stuff is grown. I've heard stories about myself and other people particularly other people who are more charismatic than [00:20:08.25] I guess in charismatic enough but you know, but I don't make an effort to be in the right place at the right time. It's some people do, that that's how you develop that that huge name in any anything whether be in entertainment or martial arts and martial arts has a whole lot of entertainment and a whole lot of theater in it. You know, if you're charismatic and that attention comes to you, then your name will grow and the thing that you can't do is when people start telling you how great you are, you can't buy into that. Just remember where you came from.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Remember where you came from I think that's, that's a secret. At least that's been one that's helped me to remember.

**Henry Childers:**

Well. You know, it's uh, go to seminars and I was recently at a black belt testing weekend. For lack of better terminology and they did all the demonstrations and the people were very, very nice. I mean, these are the nicest people in the world and one the best family organizations I've ever seen but they're very up the all formal I [00:21:23.20] all Master Childers and Master Childers this, can we get you something, can we do something for you, and I appreciate, I appreciate the treatment, I appreciate the treatment. Everybody loves to have their ego stroked a little bit but the fact of the matter is, is that have a good friend in Scotland, Stuart Gavin, who is that that an amazing martial artist over there, kempo jiu jitsu guy. And he sums it all up, he said my mother called me Stuart that's what you can call me and that's really what it boils down to is you know, my mother called me Henry, well you can call me that but she called the other things. But that's really the basis of it no Master is are wonderful title but I'll never be a Master, I'll be good journeyman. [00:22:12.23] it always has a craft [00:22:15.29] craft, works at it and they'll share it with their apprentices but they still have people they can look to and they still have



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things they can learn. So, you start it, it's fine to be called a Master and it's wonderful to reach that level and that rank and so forth and a lot is [00:22:32.26] perception. But you better remember where your roots are and remember who you are and why you're here to begin with and why those people that you working with are here. So, you know, it's about sharing. Particularly when you get old it's about sharing. Got a lot of experience under your belt you know, share it and. When I leave I hope the people I worked with can take it a step further than I ever could and can share with a few more people than I could. You know cause that's really it. You know. I want them to have a good foundation and I want them to to continue on into places where, where I never made it. That next generation every everything should grow, everything should get better. Time has changed martial arts have to change with it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I agree. I like it. I think you just gave the best description on title that I've ever heard and listeners, you might want to roll back the last five minutes and listen to that again if you didn't catch it cause it kinda club me upside the head and I loved it. What you do when you're not involved in martial arts?

**Henry Childers:**

What I do when I'm not involved in the martial arts, what I like to do?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, you have any hobbies?

**Henry Childers:**

Do I have any hobbies? Yeah. I don't scuba dive as much as I used to cause I don't have an opportunity as much as I used to have. But yeah, I do a lot of walking, I like, believe it or not, I like to cook. Like to garden with my wife, we have some jack [00:24:17.47] in our koi pond and I get a real kick out of that you know, watching Moby dick [00:24:24.20] service and eat things like that. I enjoy spending time with people that I have common interest with. I have a nice little convertible I like to take out of the country, we used to take long, long rides in the motorcycle when I first met my wife 30 years ago or better. We used to jump on a bike in Los Angeles and takeoff and go to Yosemite, go up to the wine country or you know, go down to Mexico and that was all on two wheels. But last several years have been a little harder health wise she's had to deal with cancer so the long long bike rides are not as, she can't do it just like she used to, I can't do it as much I used to either, I got a great motorcycle too, she's beautiful and it's really nice but can't seem to settle for a thousand miles at a time whereas that convertible, I can lay back and relax should and enjoy the air, can take my wife with me and if she gets tired we put the top up.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**





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Sure. I know we have more than a few gearheads a list of the show so I've got to asked you, what kind of bike? What kind of convertible?

**Henry Childers:**

Oh, it it's a 2014 stratoliner by Yamaha that's 1900cc fuel injected it's a great big cruiser and I picked it because it had everything I wanted you know, it still had a nice sporty look to it but also it had one of the best maintenance records in the industry for 10 years running and I really hate to work on things I'd much rather just throw my leg over take it for a ride and I hate when people look at me and say really are you're taking you're motorcycle to Dallas? Well, who's following you? Well why should anybody be following me? I'm not anticipating this you know, breaking down. So, I'm big on on maintenance and I'm big on keeping things in good shape. If you ever get a machine from me, it will still be in good shape. I sold one a couple years ago that I had 98,000 miles on, guys got hundred 125,000 down it's still going strong. So that and the convertible, well the convertibles is a 2008 Chrysler Sebring navy blue with a black cloth top. And kind of a grayish, gray leather interior real nice, it's nice, it's small but six got great pickup.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure. You don't need more of that. It's about the experience on the open road rather than what color the dashes or what's on the hood.

**Henry Childers:**

Had it not been for al Tracy opening Tracy karate studios in Louisville, Kentucky, I would not have met Jim who became a lifelong friend and you know, great instructor and he was a great lawyer when he was lawyer. Very smart man but I also probably wouldn't move to California would've never met my wife, wouldn't have had a lot of the traveling experiences and would not have met so many of the wonderful people that I have had the opportunity to work with and learn from and share with and so forth. So, I do owe al a great depth of gratitude, al was not my my instructor, I'm second-generation, he was at Jim's instructor. So, I'm second-generation there and make no claim to being first generation under al but I certainly have no complaints about being under you know, being with Jim. He gave me a a great, he also came that he came up under a guy named bob babich and bob was a small man, my understanding, but everything I heard about bob and that he was an extremely tough guy, really fast. Fast to the point that people never believe he could be that fast and he came wasn't came to quan which is a Korean form and much more of a [00:28:36.36] Shotokan [00:28:38.19] very power oriented whereas kempo of course is much more speed oriented and combination oriented. [00:28:46.41] kata based art whereas kempo here again is a technique based art. So, getting that foundation from Stewart and that getting power and the use of power and being able to combine it with the, with all the things you came to the Tracy company and all the kempo things really gave me a leg up on a lot of things because I was able to generate that power when I needed and I still had the speed and combinations so I got to thank those



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guys for that. I think cross training is invaluable as long as you train long enough to understand what you're actually doing and don't just jump from one thing to another like a rubber ball so that being fit.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah. Well you know, I hadn't planned you know, we kinda didn't enter back in gracefully there was a bit of a jump if we leave it the way it lies, but the things that you just said I think are rather important to share, are you okay with that?

**Henry Childers:**

Sure.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay so then listeners because as you know I don't like to jump in in the middle so what happened was you know, will chop that part out but Master Childers took a call because we are recording on the day that Grandmaster Al Tracy, great Grandmaster Al Tracy if I'm correct on his title, passed away and so there are quite a few folks some of whom have been on the show who are you know in in various degrees of I guess, mourning and so this call likely was about great Grandmaster Tracy and that.

**Henry Childers:**

Yeah, I just, the day before yesterday I think it was I just spoke with mark, he's at Tampa he's just got done doing a tour around the country and we were talking about his dad al. So yeah, if it hadn't been for al Tracy and him and the Tracy studios and when I moved to los Angeles, I moved to los Angeles, I hadn't been training really actively in a bit yet and I need make a living I was young guy I need to make a living [00:31:14.10] kicking around didn't have a place to live, I was living underneath the house up in the west Hollywood that my brother had a rock band in and he would let me live in the house cause I might upset the rockabilly cause I was this ruffle character and they were much more sensitive than I. Nice nice people, anyhow, so I'm sleeping underneath this house and I have very little money, no prospect of getting a place my own until I can get some money to kinda make some money. So, I went to the international center long beach ed parker's internationals which I had always, always heard about and that's just I couldn't wait to get there because I was gonna see all these great guys, I was gonna see you know. I had aspirations of you know, meeting chuck Norris [00:32:07.43] Howard Jackson, mike stone you know all these guys Ed parker. You know, all these guys you know that I'm thinking [00:32:19.00] internationals they are all going to be there and yes, they all were there. I mean it's one of the greatest tournaments in the world and I'm sure it still is this even though I'm in Texas now not in California any longer. But I go down to long beach international, get down there take a bus, just have enough money to get in then I wander around kinda see what I can see and lo and behold there is my old instructor Jim Stewart who come out there to go to law school at UCLA. Which I might add he is first in his class and all of a sudden, I had a place to live. I had a roommate and I had a lot of good years assuring a place with



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James while he was out pursuing other things other than the martial arts and while I got lucky and we went to a Tracy studio to work out and ended up running of the place. So, you can't ask for much better scenario that, what do you want to do you want to go out [00:33:25.29] or you want to teach karate? I don't know about you but I'll teach karate every time.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Much more fun.

**Henry Childers:**

And also, to have my mild instructor they're not at my school but they are available for me to continue my training with him. You can't ask to be much luckier than that you know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No certainly not.

**Henry Childers:**

And yes, I did get to meet all those guys except for mike stone, he's a friend on Facebook but he seems to be a very nice guy. Everybody else got the opportunity to meet one time or another.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Do you have any favorites that you know, some of, well of course everyone knows who chuck Norris is but a if you, who is your favorite to watch? Yeah yeah if you know cause not all them are actors or anything so if we can put them on equal footing, it would be martial arts.

**Henry Childers:**

We're talking martial arts are not talking acting. I have a great chuck Norris story I'll tell you about acting sometime when were not on-air. He can tell you. But he is a really nice guy, [00:34:44.54] one of my students working for many years as a student. Charlie Steen steen, really tough guy good stuntman work on a lot of Norris's stuff and Norris was always, the few times I got to talk with him in meetings always a gentleman but honestly, back when I was about a brown belt cause he's ten years my senior, I use to dig up things on chuck Norris because he had just the, some of the best cleanest technique, I mean some of the best kicks. His spin kicks were just extraordinary you know he had this beautiful technique, so yeah, he was one of my favorites. Now one of my favorites that I was lucky enough to get to know him and have the honor to to work with just a little bit was a Howard Jackson. Who was just a really nice man Howard passed away a few years ago himself of cancer and but he was great guy and he was like five times world lightweight full contact champion. Just and funny, what a funny guy he has sense of humor that wouldn't stop. So yeah. Those are couple of the guys I guess.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Such great names in your mentioning. You know an era of martial arts that we'll never have.

**Henry Childers:**

Well you're lucky to get to meet those people you know? So, I'm old now so I, somebody told me I was in the golden age of martial arts, I guess where in platinum now I don't know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

One of the things that I, I guess, enjoy is the wrong word but I appreciate asking all of our guest is about the difficult times that they go through. I find that martial artist have a different toolbox to handle life's rough stuff and I'm wondering if you might tell us about a difficult time in your life and how you were able to handle it.

**Henry Childers:**

Well probably the best tool I've ever had is a heavy bag cause I've never needed a psychiatrist. Heavy bag and motorcycle have always been able to pretty much cope with anything. So, I really, I don't know. I guess probably some of the most difficult times is when I was a kid and I would get an abusive stepfather and my mother would need to do this and I was scared. The way I coped with that was finding the martial arts and finding some foundation and finding out that they were [00:37:25.42] they were really tough people that [00:37:29.09] if they were kind and they were caring and they shared. You know, that I guess that each you know, 15 years ago my [00:37:44.59] was diagnosed with the cancer and is given two months lived, my son was five years old and the things, I guess the things that I learned from the people in the martial arts not from the arts themselves, arts themselves are our tools, they're mechanics, they're body mechanics you know it's physics but from the people was that, you just don't give up, you don't quit. Karen green, roger green's wife. I don't know if you met roger, really nice man up Oklahoma, tough guy, Karen, wonderful woman, smart, we were talking one time she said, you know the only difference in a black belt and the white belt, it's just a white belt didn't give up. Just didn't quit. And that's really it. You just keep putting 1 foot in front of other one and keep going forward, in my wife's case we [00:38:50.57] immediately got into other doctors and some good medicine, little help from bob and she's just the toughest person [00:39:05.17] entire life, she still here with me today and our son's 20 now. So, you know, that's how you cope, you cope, you draw in, you circle your way on the people you love and you [00:39:19.48] you draw strength from and from all the things which you done in the past. You know, it is really corny sayings you know that the fact of the matter is when you get knocked down, you got to [00:39:34.09] and then you get up and that's it. [00:39:39.48] have you either here continue you put 1 foot in front of the other then live in life or you don't and that that's, that's when you find out things like that happen, it's not [00:39:58.58] hit you you know, it's not the guy who could throw a really good hard punch or a good hard sidekick you know, [00:40:08.15] admired with the people who get up every day and they do the things they have to do to take care of their family and to continue on and sometimes are not real happy with what they have to do but there are people that



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depend on them and they're out there, they do it, and they're tough, you know, it's those everyday people they teach you how to live.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

One of my favorite sayings is that people are like goldfish, they will grow to the size of the bowl that they're given. People tend to rise to the occasion.

**Henry Childers:**

Yeah oh absolutely, absolutely. You know, I got asked a few years back at a seminar cause I've had the opportunity over the years to you know, spar with people who are really top fighters. You know, we had Joe Lewis come in to our schools there when we were in Kentucky and you can't get much tougher Lewis and much better fighter. You know and I had the pleasure of being able to do all that but, I had a guy ask me some who is the absolute toughest person you've ever known? I didn't even hesitate, my wife. She's been battling demons that she can't see and she's been going on against insurmountable odds and she still there. You know, so all those people are doing that, and do it every day, I have nothing but admiration for them. You know, so [00:41:48.49]

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No. Not at all. No worries. You've mention a lot of great people, people that you know, others train Weston folks that people would love to train with. But if I had to ask you to choose one of them that was the most influential on your martial arts, who would that be?

**Henry Childers:**

I'll be right back at Jim. He was foundation. Hey gave me my foundation. I've gone and trained in other areas and other arts other than what we worked on and but he's still my friend, he's still my mentor, I can still talk with him for 15 minutes and realize things that I should've realized 30 years ago. It's like teaching a student probably the most influential person for me to somebody you train. Because you're seeing it through this person's eyes maybe for the first time and if you share this knowledge you share this experience with somebody and you don't learn from it, boy you're wasting just an incredible opportunity. You know, you work with somebody you share something with somebody and all of a sudden you realize that you see, see didn't do it you see that light come on and you realize that you know, maybe there is a little bit more of this, all I had this that sucker nail, I thought I had this all this figured out but all I said you see it to somebody else and so probably your best, your best teachers in the entire world is the one you're teaching.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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I have a feeling anybody out there that has spent a lot of time instructing is nodding their head and now I am. Absolutely I learned more in the two years I had my own martial arts school than in any other probably tenure period.

**Henry Childers:**

Yeah, yeah let me having calving no... I did bodyguard work, I did loss prevention work, I did [00:44:00.43] work, I did serve papers, I did some bad areas, that gives you some really good practical experience to figure out what works and what doesn't work but it doesn't turn those lights on like, like, like when we work with somebody and you share something with somebody you're, you you take this great responsibility on because you're here again, you're not teaching how to make them peanut butter sandwich, you're teaching them how to defend themselves, maybe it's for someone they love and that such a huge responsibility and one of the big responsibilities of the student is, is not just say things it on blind faith. Just cause I come out here and say this is the way this is done, just cause I say this is so, does not necessarily make it so. You should question it, you should deconstruct it, you should take it apart, you should find out what makes it work for you and that the only way you can do that you know, cause were all gonna and hopefully all all all of them are, all these people are going to you know, the young ones are gonna grow up, they're gonna have their own children, maybe have their own students but certainly sometime in their life, they're gonna teach you're kid how to put his hands up, protect himself or her hands up to protect herself and the only only we can do that is by really understanding what makes it work. If you can do that, if you can break it down then you can understand it physically then you can at least pass the physical part along. Now, spiritually hopefully if you are training you'll find out that you know, like I said over years that some of the toughest guys I know each of his people I know are the nicest people I know had the best values, they're not thugs, they're good upstanding people they really care about their families their country, you know all this and another and are willing to share with you. You know, it's tough to learn from somebody who's just out there to fight. Cause they're gonna come out there and bang you around and get what they can get out of it and they're gonna be on their merry way. So the finding a good trainer that is willing to share with you is a, that's a real blessing. They'll not hold anything back.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What do you mean?

**Henry Childers:**

Well I've known people over the years, I had a student came to me several years ago when I first came to Texas, I had a small school down here, shared it with a guy named mike law, mike's a really wonderful judo practitioner, player, nice guy. But I had a student come in and he wanted to learn how to better use his hands that boxed as well as you know doing kempo and so forth. And he kept quizzing me, quizzing me, in quizzing me about what would you do if? What would you do if? Because I'm twice as old as him



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and you know, I'd say well, this is, this is how to handle that, it was all in sport and competitive martial arts. I knew what he was doing, he was he was teaching for another school and I know who he was teaching for, I don't care if teaching for somebody else that was no skin off my nose and you got a job and he's enjoying being and instructor and it's a lot of fun instructing people. You know, that's a great honor it's a privilege. But so, he's trying to figure out how to teach somebody in particular this is obvious in this eventually came to pass. He came in one day as he's like aha you know, I bested this guy but I was polite and I was respectful and all this, but they turned around and asked me when I learned this, and then he said I told him. And they told me that I could either quit studying with you or stop teaching for them. They said how do you feel about that that's what's up to you. I said, that's you're decision if you like to continue coming here, what about I'm teaching something that you taught me, in somebody else's place? I said, that's okay you know, you're still sharing at your own, spread the word is a work you know enough I trust you. You're a good person you know. I [00:48:19.36] disappeared for about three or four weeks, I thought well he has decided to continue teaching there and you know, I don't blame him you know, good gig, nice respect and all that. He came in after three or four weeks with his gym bag and he said can I come back? Of course, you never left. He said, I did leave and I didn't talk to you about it I feel I'm disrespectful I said no, [00:48:49.28] what was going on. Come back now, because they told me that I could not do this and still continue working with them he said that an ultimatum, you turned around and told me, yeah go. Do to what you're gonna do, it's human nature expand you're knowledge you if you want to do this, you're gonna do it and it doesn't take away from what we share and he said so I told him I had to go that if it was an ultimatum that I was gonna go where I'll learn the most and he said frankly and six months, he said I picked that more here than I did six years. So that was a great complement to me I really felt good about that. But the thing is you can't get people [00:49:34.17] you can't put them in a box. Study can go for a lot of years and you know, there are just hundreds of self-defense techniques in kempo and kempo is not only karate, its kempo jujitsu as well. It's really hard to put that jiu-jitsu aspect back in those self-defense techniques to make it work and one of the things that helped me was I had the opportunity to work with wally jay in small circle jujitsu. And just in the few times I was able to work with him, his principles help me so much and opened up new fields of thoughts. You know, I got to work with Remy Presas in arnis and its very flowing art you know, edged weapons. Lotta grappling and a lot of locks in there and that helped my kempo that helps what I do that helped my primary art that I love. So theres nothing wrong doing with doing that away.

### **Jeremy Lesniak:**

If you could train with any martial artist that you haven't, living or dead, anywhere in time, who would that be?

### **Henry Childers:**

Wow. If I could train with any martial artist living or dead that I haven't. Boy, that is just a gigantic field. There are several actually, one of my I'd love to train today, who's still living, been getting up here since gene lebell. I like to go back to my judo roots and I think gene and I would get along really well if he



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didn't break me in half. He's got a pretty tough reputation. Mas oyama. I mean, I would love to go back there and get some of that that just amazing power that he had. Probably it said that the couple of good rooms right there you know. That that gives you both ends of the spectrum, either hit him or choke him out. He didn't choke people, out didn't he?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I don't know if he does that specifically. I've heard some stories that my memory of them is so much the specifics but just as you mentioned his reputation for being such a tough guy.

**Henry Childers:**

Maybe couple of celebrities that we could ask but I'll not go into that. Gene and I had one thing in common though, we do have one thing in common. Well two things were both exceptionally handsome and I'll pay for that someday and we both wrestled the bear so.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm not, I can't let you gloss over that one. You wrestled a bear?

**Henry Childers:**

I wrestled a bear. I couldn't pass up this opportunity. The bear won. He didn't, he didn't have any trouble with me whatsoever.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What's the context for this? Where did you wrestle a bear?

**Henry Childers:**

In the Kentucky state fair, several years back. I was there and there is a bear there but the wrestling bear, his name is actually a louis and I have a lovely daughter from many years ago and I was there with her and she was still fairly young, she had a boyfriend who was such a big wrestler. So, I was riding my school out in Los Angeles at the time, he was kinda giving me grief and I was, have been told I had to be in my best behavior. So, I couldn't just do anything, cause I found them to be a bit boorish shall we say. Full of himself at any rate, so I took them all to the state fair and we're passing the circus tent there was by the wrestling bear so I said, let's go wrestle the bear. And it was really my way of putting in his place could that be good well he would wrestle the bear Katie had to wrestle the bear [00:53:55.50] and that the night before I've gone with a friend of mine who's chief of police in a town right outside of Louisville, Kentucky another great martial artist really, got trained with us Joe Renzi, he was middleweight really tough guy. Does police work for many years but anyhow, we've gone to a wrestling match the night before and I'd seen the WWF at that time not WWE, and watch Hulk Hogan, wrestle on [00:54:25.04] with Evil Bobby the Brain Henan in the corner and we laughed till we cried you know, and had a good time.





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So, I wrestled the bear and they they split up five people and you each get three minutes or until the bear pinch you. So, I put myself right in the middle of the five because I wanted to see two people wrestles with bear but I didn't let the bear to be in a bad mood after having wrestled too many you know. I didn't want him take louis as the fifth one, get him out of here. Myself in the middle [00:55:01.18] being that, being a complete idiot and shown off for my daughter and working the crowd, you know, I'd watch the big time guys the night before so have more fun with it that. So, they bring the bear out, they put the bear in the ring and the man explains that you don't hot the bear, not that you're gonna hurt these 637 bears, but if you hit the bear the bear hit you back so that's probably not a good thing to do. You don't do anything abusive you will try to [00:55:29.28] the bat [00:55:30.12] has or anything because there's going to get angry and he is much larger than you so use some common-sense wrestle him up and up on the [00:55:39.16] Queensberry wrestling world I suppose. So, I'm just having a fine time I'm thinking I'm in the middle and he leaned over the ring he says, your first. Then I went me? Why me? Because you're having way too much fun. So, he got me up in the ring and he explained that the bear knew 32 amateur wrestling holds and the bear had muscle, and had no claws, so the bear and I squared off and the bear hooked my ankle, stuck his nose in my nether regions, took me down and all I saw was a giant bear head coming up toward me crawling right up the middle my body. I stuck my arms out the trap of blocking any took my arm in his mouth and had a chewed on it like he was like a dog play and you know. The muscle wasn't very effective in other words. Then he spun around the [00:56:34.25] across me so my feet were sticking out one side, my head was sticking at the other side, I had this big smelly bear on top of me, it is no way remove the 600-pound bear. Si I'm flopping, my little feet up and down and this wrestling guy looks at me and says, what are you doing? That's it I'm doing a kick out, they did it last night it works hulk Hogan. And he said he wasn't wrestling a bear, so they got me up and they let me actually you're only supposed to be able to wrestle him once but I was getting so much fun and the crowd was too that they let me wrestle two more falls, unfortunately he beat me all three falls with no problem at all but I had more fun than I could stand and smelled like a barnyard when I was done and I do it again, I do that again. Even now I think I do that again, it was a lot of fun. It didn't figure they'd out a bear out there that's gonna eat me so hopefully.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right

**Henry Childers:**

So that's how I wrestled the bear and its why wrestled the bear. I didn't hear much more about that the ineffectiveness of karate and what a great wrestler this kid was after that. And they kept like, you wouldn't wrestle a bear.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What a wonderful story. Oh, that's fantastic.



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**Henry Childers:**

Didn't have to hit him. So that's why wrestled the bear.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It was worth it. Would you have not wrestled the bear otherwise?

**Henry Childers:**

I probably wouldn't sit there and just watched it you know and say how cool but that little mischievous freak in you, you know that said oh this this was an opportunity to you know, yeah, I would probably just watched but I had I had little had a little one-smashup going on. So, I had to take an opportunity, you gotta look good in the eyes of your daughter. Of course, that made us keep all the windows down in the car going home cause I didn't smell like a bear. Yeah well what can you say. I actually have some pictures of that around here they're not very good but I've got a couple.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

If you could get couple of those to us for the show notes, that would be fantastic and for folks that are listening, we keep the show notes at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) if you might be new. We haven't heard that before but that's what we do with photos and links and stuff like that over there.

**Henry Childers:**

Running across from it, it's just a giant bear laying on top of me. Yeah, I think I'd do it again a matter of fact I probably be quicker now than I would have been because I kinda know what to expect and the bear would probably eat me now so you know, I'm to say much thinner, so yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

As we've talked it's become abundantly clear that you still love martial arts you are still passionate about martial arts. And you're still active in martial arts and when I talk to folks on the show and the they maintain that passion, it's usually because there's something that they're either working towards you know, some kind specific goal or just something, I don't wanna necessarily say unfinished, but there's a reason there's something motivating them. So, I'm curious, what is your motivation for continuing to train?

**Henry Childers:**

You know I honestly, I hadn't thought about it. I suppose I would like to leave something behind, I suppose I'd like to, like everybody else I would like to you know, give my two cents in there and that have some people look back and it was a joy. You have had so much fun being the student and working with people over the years and learning from other people that here I look back at these guys as father figures and friends and things and it was, it's a huge part of my life. Without the martial arts you know,



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like I said, when I was a kid I didn't have much of a family and that's where I found my family. You know, these are the people have, it's one of the things, I've been in a lot of really great schools over the years. I have visited people, seminar, done this done that, you know, I've seen some really, really tough schools. There are some schools you go in, and you take good lessons and you learn good, good martial arts and then you go home and you practice. Other schools develop a community, they develop a family. And within the school itself and that's, that's just an extraordinary thing and I have been so lucky to be associated with a couple schools have done that and currently I am really enjoying some of the people that have had the opportunity to meet in the last couple years and they've really taking in made me part of their family and I think it's that huge part of it. You know, families, family is the biggest thing in my life and not only my immediate family but what that's my extended family. So yeah, I want to keep hanging out with these people cause they're got so much to give and just so lucky to be able to be able to do it, to be still be able to do it. You know, still be able to so keep kicking as they say. I think that the some the most important things is not necessarily [01:02:25.59] it but how change your life. I have a student years ago that I hadn't thought anything about. He came in the school, stuttered and he shook and he was real no self-confidence and worked with him for about three years and he was a really nice young man and he came in after three years and he said I gotta talk to you I'm leaving and I said, did I do something wrong? And he said, no no, he said, I just wanted to tell you that I'm moving to another state and taking over a business, I'm engaged to be married, I'm leaving my family's home for the first time in my life. Then he said three years ago when I came in here you said I have stuttered, I couldn't look you in the eye, he said I know that I'm not the toughest guy that's ever walk through the door by any means, he said I'm gonna go out on my own, I'm taking over a business, I'm engaged to be married, he said I couldn't have done any of this three years ago. He said, working with you and working with other people here, we had, that was one of the studios that Jim owned, he's sitting working with everybody else and he said, I realized that people it out there they will help me and don't have any ulterior motive for helping me, they just do it for the joy of doing it and he said I realize that if I focus on something, I can actually accomplish it. I have self-worth, that I can do these thing he wasn't a great tournament fighter, he didn't want to do any you know, full contact training, but he went on and his life was changed because of his experience there at that school. And that's really when you look at the martial arts now, that's really for me at this point, I just want to be able the share some of that. I just just wanted to share that. Because it did that he did it for me like I said cannot not had my association with Jim and with the Tracy company, and al and all of that, I would never met my wife, I would never travel halfway around the world, I wouldn't know people that I know, I wouldn't have had these these experiences, I wouldn't have had the nerve to go when I lived in los Angeles, get some stuff to work out there and work with some stuff and have a lot of fun. Didn't pursue it seriously as a career just got an opportunity to have people to be on the fringes and have fun and enjoy it, but when I had the nerve to try any of this stuff that might've been little off-the-cuff, a little crazy, maybe not. And you know, that's why you keep doing it because life is about the journey, it's not about the destination. Nobody gets on [01:05:27.24] a lot so you better enjoy the trip.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It seems that Master Childers turned out quite well despite his not so pleasant childhood. I think we can credit martial arts for keeping him on track. His stories were wonderful and at times left me speechless. Sometimes in my role with the show, it's really hard to keep asking questions when all I want to do is listen, this was one of those episodes. I want to thank you Master Childers for coming on the show. If you want to check out the show notes with links, everything we talked about today, you can find that [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) sign up for the newsletter while you're over there, we put out some good stuff. You can find me at [jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:jeremy@whistlekick.com) that's really the best way the email address. You can find all the social media [@whistlekick](https://www.instagram.com/whistlekick) and don't forget you can find our products at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) that's a lot of at's on those few sentences in there. Thanks for tuning and I appreciate your time, hope you're having a great day. Great week. Great month. Whatever it is, until next time. Train hard, smile, and have a great day.