



Episode 260 – Shihan Ryan Chamberland | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey thanks for tuning in, stopping by, whatever you want to call it. This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 260. Today we're joined by our guest Shihan Ryan Chamberland. My name is Jeremy Lesniak. Welcome, thank you for being here thanks for joining me as I get the opportunity to talk to someone I've known for quite a long time actually. But there are always more stories to tell and a good part of what we talk about today is stuff I never knew. So that's awesome, a lot of fun for me and you get to come along for the ride if you don't know who I am I'm your host for the show I'm the founder of whistlekick sparring gear and apparel and you can check out the awesome things we make at whistlekick.com. You can also find the rest of our podcast episodes and the show notes for this and the other episodes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. There are links from both sights to sign up for our newsletter you can check out a ton of really sweet stuff that we put out beyond the podcast beyond the products. We're just here trying to make the martial arts better. Trying to give you more opportunities to connect with each other to expand your learning and really just to enjoy being a martial artist even when you're not training. Our guest today started training during a time when martial arts was really popular. Karate Kid and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles were in movie theaters and on TV and Shihan Ryan Chamberland wanted to be in the martial arts, but his parents weren't so keen on that idea. So, he trained secretly just so his parents wouldn't be upset. Now today, his parents know that he trains and so do many, many other people because he's an active instructor and a school owner and he practices a number of



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different martial arts systems. So, let's hear his story. Shihan Chamberland, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Ryan Chamberland:

Hey thank you very much, it's a pleasure to be here after a stormy day yesterday. I can sit down and talk to someone about martial arts versus shoveling snow.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey, you know always happy to give you that opportunity, that break. I wonder if we have any folks out there listening to this right now that *are* removing snow. That would be kind of meta, that'd be fun. I'm going to imagine, I'm imagining someone out there shoveling and now they're laughing as they're shoveling.

Ryan Chamberland:

It's a nice relaxing thing to be able to listen to while you're beating snow bankings back.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah that's absolutely the case and we're getting kind of, I don't know if I want to say we're getting hammered, but this could be a snowy winter for us up in New England I don't know.

Ryan Chamberland:

Absolutely I mean what five snow storms by Christmas that's quite a few. I think I might have to do a hiatus down south to train.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I don't blame you it's always a great opportunity, great excuse, right? Well you know its snowy and its cold, but I've got to go to this seminar in Florida.

Ryan Chamberland:

Yup thankfully I've got friends in a lot of warm places.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah you do, we both do. We've both been pretty lucky with all the folks that we've met. Of course, you and I go back quite a ways and we'll give the listeners a little bit of that as we thread through, we talk about some of these questions. But of course, the best place to start is the beginning. So how did you start in the martial arts?

Ryan Chamberland:



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Wow that's a story that's pretty interesting. I started in 1986 with a gentleman by the name of David **03:53** back in the day he was a Villari offshoot. It's kind of interesting because I was sixteen I think at the time and my parents were dead set against martial arts. They would not let me do it for about two years I wanted to do it. There was a judo group I think it was John Dyer that was running a judo group at the Y, and I watched it, wanted to be a part of it. My mother was die hard against it and then that Fall I met David and I kind of snuck it from my parents. I went to train with him 2-3 days a week after school and raised my own money to pay for my own classes for about 6-9 months and I washed my own uniform I did everything so my mother wouldn't know about it. One day I come home from school, this is in the spring and my uniforms all pressed sitting on the kitchen table and my mother wanted to know what was up. So, it was quite interesting I had to explain how I got started in the martial arts. Coming home with fat lips and some black eyes here and there because in the old days we played a little bit harder I think. We trained with all adults vs. training with kids or people your own age so that's how I got started in the martial arts back then and again it was still considered somewhat of a thug art. People didn't do it unless you were an adult, the kid population was very, very small, very minimal and my mother found out about it because she noticed that my school grades were actually getting better, which I was struggling in school and high school and my grades were getting better my mom's a school teacher so she was always if you're grades don't look good you're not going anywhere and I knew that so low and behold my grades are getting better and better and better and then she found my uniform in my room I'd hidden and I had to explain it. She was actually pretty happy about it and I had the gumption to go out and do it on my own. So, for my birthday that May she paid for a year's worth of martial arts and that's how I started.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How did that conversation go, you know you come home and there's your ghee on the table and you obviously she wants to know what's up. You know she's got an idea of what's going on she probably recognizes what the uniform represents.

Ryan Chamberland:

Oh absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

But how did that conversation go because clearly if she's paying for your lessons on the other side of it, the conversation went well, but what did it look like?

Ryan Chamberland:

It went very well. My mom was, I mean, I went to a parochial school all the way up until 8th grade so I mean we were pretty straight forward with each other in regard to doing stuff. My mom's also a teacher there so she recognized that stuff real quickly and she basically said I know you're doing better, I see



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your `doing better when did you start doing the martial arts and I gave her the date or an idea of the date and that's when she's like well that when we started noticing your grades getting better. Because my freshman year wasn't that great. My sophomore year got a whole lot better right off the bat and I think that contributed to, like I said my martial arts I had to have good grades. She was upset that I lied to her, very upset about that because she really didn't want me getting hurt that was probably the biggest thing was injury and she thought that martial arts again back in the day was all about injuries and stuff like that and people beating each other up and being super rough and stuff like that so it was kind of scary. I mean I walked in because I'm like oh she's going to tell me to quit, and she really didn't. She was more like just want to make sure you're safe. Where are you doing this? Because I wasn't at a traditional school it was actually in someone's garage training with about a dozen guys, all adults which was kind of neat. And then we talked about you know schedules and work and how I've been getting back and forth and that was pretty much, that's how the conversation went. And we moved on from there. My mom was really understanding, I can't ask for that. I don't think my dad would've been quite as understanding if my dad would've found out the way she found out because my dad was a retired marine. He was cut from a different cloth. But he embraced it because my mother embraced it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And of course, you had something tangible to point out, the school grades, something that was so important to your mother I assume to your father as well and here they're getting better and sort of the counter to what I think a lot of people outside of the martial arts might expect here. You've got this extracurricular that is gonna take away time from life I mean it can't add time to your studies.

Ryan Chamberland:

Right

Jeremy Lesniak:

But it, I would imagine it kept you focused gave you some confidence and you know whatever else the multitude of reasons that we all know that you probably talk to parents of potential students when they're looking at coming into your school. We know how beneficial martial arts can be.

Ryan Chamberland:

Oh, absolutely I mean you'd figure also like I said back in '86' it was a different mindset. I mean the Karate Kid just came out and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles was just breaking out but it was still considered very much something that kids did not do. It was an adult thing, so breaking that genre was definitely challenging. And like I said I was training, I was the youngest guy in the room. The youngest student was I think 24, 25 years old and I was out here I am 16 years old training with these guys, so I mean I got some bumps and bruises because of that but I also think it shaped me into the martial artist I am today.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Did they treat you differently because you were a kid?

Ryan Chamberland:

Oh no. Oh no, matter of fact my instructor gave me a rope. He didn't think I was going to last so he didn't want to pay the money for a belt. So, he gave me a white rope and he says if you're here for two months, three months, he goes if everything goes good I'll give you your belt, your first belt, your white belt. So, he wasn't expecting me to last and that's quite interesting. I still talk to him once in a great while, but its, he's always been amazed at where I've taken it and I contribute a lot to his teaching he was very open minded in the different styles of martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's a great origin story. I think that gives us some context to move on, and you gave us some hints you gave us some anecdotes, some small stories there

Ryan Chamberland:

Yeah

Jeremy Lesniak:

And I told you before anybody that listens to the show knows I love the stories they're my favorite part, so I'm gonna pin you down and ask you, from all of your time training I won't even do the math that you would allow us to do because you told us when you started. Everybody does that.

Ryan Chamberland:

Yeah

Jeremy Lesniak:

What's your favorite martial arts story?

Ryan Chamberland:

Wow there is so many of them. I guess in the beginning when I tested for my purple belt. It was literally if you're talking old school stories that was one of my old school stories. And again, we were twelve guys that trained together. I remember training at this guy's, like I said it was a garage and it was for my purple belt. I actually tested by myself because there was a snowstorm I was the only one willing to go to the test and he still tested me because back then it wasn't as commercial as it is today and you know we still did things where probably today I wouldn't be doing just because of safety factors, but my purple belt test was amazing. We tested, he made me run outside in a snowstorm with the old penny



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loafers on and stuff like that because I was not dressed properly because he gave me a hard time about that, sparring, a couple adults that showed up they thought they were getting a regular workout. I had to spar two adults, one of them his name was Ron **13:13** I'll never forget it because we walked in he was six two, he worked for the National Guard and he looked like, I don't know, Bigfoot walking through the door so I was quite scared because I couldn't see his face because he had a big snow mask on and it was pretty hairy for my test. It was three hours of just blood, sweat and tears and we laughed about it afterwards, that's the crazy thing. You know all the stuff that he put me through and training and at the end we're laughing and joking which is, I don't know, people probably think we're crazy when we do stuff like that, but I think it helped made me a better person. And definitely a stronger willed person for that, I mean that's way back, that's one of the major stories I tell a lot of my students about how about persevering and keep moving forward and training harder and not quit, that no quit attitude. And then I also have the story of the same person coming to my house, showing up at my house on a Saturday because I gave my mother a hard time. My father was out of town at the time and my father wasn't around to help out and I gave my mom a hard time and she basically, she blew me off and said OK no problem and I pronounced not to do too much on a Saturday morning when there's stuff to be done and next thing I know my instructor's knocking on the door wanting to go work out and I'm like absolutely. Hey mom I'm leaving, she's like yep have fun and this is my senior year in high school so we jetted out and we had a three and a half hour work out and he didn't beat me you know my body didn't punch me, hit me, kick me, but we did drills and exercises and drills to the point where I could not move and I'm lying on the floor in a ball of sweat after doing some sort of punching drill I can't quite remember it ,and he leans over me and goes don't let your mother call me again and he left me at the dojo and I had to walk two and a half miles home. So that made me refine what I do with my parents and he was definitely an instructor that was willing to go above and beyond what normal instructors would do so I tip my hat off to him in regard to that. And like I said he's shaped me to the martial artist that I am today, the not quitting martial artist. Even though we struggled him and I halfway through to the arts I think I was a green belt and I was graduating from high school and he basically up and left three months after that and to the point where I almost quit martial arts all together because of that. He didn't really give me too much notice that he was leaving not that I can stop him or wanted to stop him we were a small part time school. He had to follow his job. It was kind of frustrating, it was very frustrating because like I said you're 18, 19 years old and you want to continue martial arts and you've never trained with anybody else. It was kind of challenging I had to basically uplift who I am and go and say ok I have to check out other schools and a lot of people don't do that anymore. If they're frustrated or upset with a school or program that doesn't jive with them, they quit and fortunately that's not what I did. I checked out I think four other schools before I ended up with Kyoshi Brent Crisci back in either 90' or 91' I can't quite remember and then him and I have been student instructors, friends, best of friends, business partners you name it from that point on.

Jeremy Lesniak



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And of course, we've had Kyoshi Crisci on the show you know an absolutely entertaining man and someone I'm blessed to call a friend. You're laughing at the word entertaining, aren't you?

Ryan Chamberland:

Absolutely

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think he may have, not to take anything away from his passion for martial arts and teaching martial arts, but he may have missed his calling. I think the guy might need a TV show.

Ryan Chamberland:

Absolutely. I could see him on some sort of reality based show. He's mellowed out over the years though. People think he's still out there, but I remembered him back in the early nineties and it was quite interesting to see him compete back then, so.

Jeremy Lesniak:

When you talk about your first instructor there, it's clear the impact that he's had on you. I'm gonna guess that you've modeled a lot of what you do after the way he affected you so deeply. So, I'm curious, when you're working with your students as you run your school are there things you're conscious of that you took from your time with him?

Ryan Chamberland:

Yeah, the to-do's and the to-don'ts. The to-dos of the passion of training and the work ethic of training and not willing to quit even though you might have an injury. The passion of, you know he loved to spar, he loved to fight and he was a very understanding of multiple styles of martial arts back then. The to-don't were some of the tactics of how we did things. You just can't do that nowadays and not to mention it's probably not healthy some of the exercises that we did and some of the training that we did. It was just, like I said a different time period, today you just can't do that with students. One, they would probably end up quitting because of how hard you were pushed when you don't leave a horse stance for an hour all your drills came out of your horse stance, Kiba Dachi. You know he would have us hold rocks and throw punches with rocks in our hands and stuff that you know just probably not good for younger kids to be doing or they just kids would be bored with it. When you threw front punches for half a class it taught us that perseverance of training, continue training, not worrying about learning that next new great thing. So, your basics, he was always big into basics, know your basics. And then moving forward getting with Kyoshi Brent, he taught me about history and the understanding of Kata and why we do Kata and getting into competition. That really that really pushed me forward to the next step was that, the ability to start learning the history of the martial arts and why we did things and who did what and who did where and he started opening our eyes up to doing different seminars. I won't forget one



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of the first seminars I went to was with I think it was 93' or 94' at the Karate College down in Radford, Virginia and it was Michael DePesquale's college with Superfoot Wallace and Joe Lewis and Jerry Beasley and a bunch of other great martial artists, but those were the guys that put it on and to walk in the room you thinking that you're this big shot and you're not that big shot. Meeting guys like Joe Lewis was absolutely phenomenal and then him remembering you, you know, made you feel really good about your training.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Remembering you? What do you mean by that?

Ryan Chamberland:

Well I mean I trained with him for two or three years back in 93', 94', 95' at different seminars and it was probably eight or nine years until I think Terry Dow's event or just before Terry Dow's event, the symposium and I ran into him at a seminar that Terry was holding and he remembered who I was. You know he didn't remember my name, but he goes I remember you from Radford, Virginia and I was amazed, or blown out of the water. That's life, that's priceless right there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely to know that someone that you hold in such high regard kept enough space in their mind to remember, to recognize you. I know exactly what you're talking about. Powerful.

Ryan Chamberland:

Yeah, I mean people have a hard time understanding why we're willing to give up a bunch of weekends and extra hours to train. It's a brethren, I mean these guys they'll do so much for you if you ask and I don't think there's one martial artist out there that are good friends of mine if I ever needed them that they wouldn't be there to help you out and that's priceless in itself you know. Dealing with family situations or issues and also having technology now has made things so much easier. I mean look at us today we're sitting here, you're in Vermont I'm in Maine and we're having a great conversation.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's right. That's right and we get to record it and share it with others. The kind of stuff that we couldn't do back when you and I first met each other back in the 80's the 90's it was a different time.

Ryan Chamberland:

I mean you had to travel. You couldn't pick up a YouTube video, I mean I remember the Panther videos; that was probably the nearest, closest thing to VHS videos that you could purchase, but they really didn't show you a ton on those videos. It still made you had to go out there and train. I mean nowadays you can pull up a video or you can Skype with someone, you can video chat, you name it, it's amazing.



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It's made the world a whole lot smaller in regard to training where before we had to drive sixteen hours to go to Radford, Virginia, in a van. Five smelly guys, that was fun.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh, well I'm glad I wasn't in that van, especially on the way back.

Ryan Chamberland:

Yeah well remember how fun Kyoshi Crisci is. Try him with no sleep.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know, I don't know. I don't know that I want to do that.

Ryan Chamberland:

It was fun.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Maybe. Maybe when I was younger.

Ryan Chamberland:

Yeah, we shared quite a few stories. Matter of fact it was Brent that introduced me to a lot of these different instructors, like Bill Wallace and Michael D and my current instructor Hanshi Bruce Juchnik. So, I mean I gotta take my hat off to Brent. Brent and I've, we've turned some dirt together it's amazing. I remember being at seminars and excuse me, being at tournaments and he's the only one in the background cheering and vice versa when he was competing I was the only one in the background cheering. Because you're at tournaments that we're the only two from Maine and you're down in Rhode Island or New York or Vermont, places where you know at that time a lot of Maine people didn't travel to.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah

Ryan Chamberland:

So, it was quite interesting. So

Jeremy Lesniak:



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You've spoken highly of quite a few people here and four past guests on the show and of course folks if you're new to the show we have an entire website set up with all these episodes and you can find this show and other episodes that we're talking about, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com is where you'll find that. Everything's free.

Ryan Chamberland:

Absolutely. I actually, when you contacted me I actually, I broke into the archives a little bit to kind of hone some of my skills here, but also it was obviously interesting to listen too. The one that stood out to me was the one I actually got to sit in on was the Bill Wallace Bruce Juchnik interview. That was, that was amazing. I wish he had a few more hours to interview.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right

Ryan Chamberland:

So that was really impressive and listening to, I actually listened to Brent's and I listened to a few others, but that's cherish. I mean people need to be listening to those. When I first came up through the martial arts I wasn't big into history and knowing your history and knowing your past and knowing what these great instructors did and I'm glad that people like Hanshi Juchnik and Brent Crisci pushed me to those, to have a better understanding of my history and my past.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah absolutely. It's important stuff and I'm just blessed that I get to be someone involved in chronicling this.

Ryan Chamberland:

Absolutely. I mean you're narrating, you're pulling questions out of people that their students need to hear and other people need to hear. I mean it's important. These guys don't I mean, you know I want to live to be 200 years old and how I do that is by people remembering who I was. So, you know and that's important so you know I want to be, I want people to still speak of me long past me so. And that's it. Doing what you're doing that's going to help. That's going to help a lot so I appreciate that, thank you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I appreciate your words, that means a lot. You've spoken so highly of so many different people and I'm wondering if there's somebody that you could kind of add into the list of people that you've trained with, someone you haven't and we'll pretend we have a time machine. You know this could be somebody from anywhere. Who would you want to train with?

Ryan Chamberland:



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Wow that's a really good question. Someone I want to train with. There's so many great names. I still have yet to be able to meet is two people that are still phenomes in the martial arts. Benny the Jet Urquidez is one of my, he's one of my guys I actually patented my jump spin kick when I fought after him. I watched video after video after video of him, him fighting and his history of fighting, sparring and competing was amazing. Absolute amazing. If people want to read some really good history read up on him. The other one that's still alive that I've missed is a couple seminars I was supposed to go to, wasn't able to travel, was Dan Inosanto, Bruce Lee's top guy. Those two if I ever have the opportunity to put it together I would definitely be working with them. Those who have passed I would say I would really like to have met Robert Trias. I think Trias was a person that embodied all styles of martial arts and he was beloved by all and feared by many. He was a very powerful, powerful man and I think that's one of the guys that I definitely would've loved to have met and wasn't able to do so. But I think Trias would definitely be one of them. You know I go to the gathering every year and there's a wall, it's called the Wall of Legends that Bruce Juchnik puts together and there's probably 150 names on that wall and every year you take a glance at it, there are people on there I would love to have met. Another great person that I would love to have met is Henry Okazaki. I actually trained with his daughter Imi Okazaki back in the early, or mid-nineties to late no 2003, 2004 before she passed away. And she was absolutely amazing and talking about her dad and reading the stories that I read about Henry Okazaki, Sensei. He was another gentleman that I would love to have met I mean he healed himself from tuberculosis to he did massage on President Roosevelt. I mean he was another one that was commanded respect in Hawaii. He was kind of a gatekeeper in Hawaii, a lot of different styles of martial arts came through him. The Kodokan system of Judo came through him, but he studied and understood Filipino arts to Korean, Chinese arts, you name it. He was very open minded compared to the styles of Danzan Ryu right now is I hate to say it they're not as open minded as they were, as he was I don't think and that's too bad.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Why do you think that happens that's a subject that comes up on show and we don't get into it terribly often, but where do you think that comes from?

Ryan Chamberland:

I don't know. It's a really good question. Is it fear? Fear that they're going to lose their style? I mean you see that somewhat in a lot of the smaller schools. My student can't go here you know because of fear of losing that student vs. they don't realize that having an open-door policy makes your student that much better, I guess. I mean I believe that I take my students everywhere, to seminars whenever I get a chance that someone wants to come with me to train and do a seminar here and there I'll take them because I think an open-door policy or that it makes my students stronger, better, willing to learn. They see the similarities in styles of different arts. So yeah, I mean it's, I'd almost contribute it to being fearful of losing something or losing the maybe the essence of the martial arts. As long as you're not bacterizing it or trying to ruin a style that's of history I don't think that should be an issue. So yeah, I mean that's a very touchy subject because a lot of people don't like to talk about it because they're afraid they're



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going to hurt somebody's feelings or they're going to blackball themselves and I don't think, I think you know more people need to be willing to be open minded in regard to that and he was Okazaki was very open minded. I have a book that was signed by his daughter that he wrote, you know it was a woman self-defense book that was written in 1926, 27 you know something that was unheard of you know men teaching women how to defend themselves. You know it was unheard of and he wrote a book on it and he was an innovator of martial arts and it was interesting I mean he has one of his top guys Professor Wally Jay I mean there's a bunch of them. I met Tom Balls was a student of 34:23 so yeah, I mean there's a bunch of them that came from Okazaki's trainings. So, yeah

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool. I'm curious that book from the 20's does it hold up? Does the lessons on women's self-defense apply today?

Ryan Chamberland:

Absolutely. I mean they're simplistic. I mean they're simplistic self-defense techniques and when you're teaching women's self-defense to someone that's not training, on a consistent level, those techniques definitely hold up. They hold huge merit because of, when someone is doing just a self-defense class they don't have that muscle memory that we do as a martial artist, that you kind of need to have if you're going to be doing some of these intricate techniques and skills. You gotta have that, you gotta build up that muscle memory just not going to remember it. You know if I teach a women's self-defense course I always revert back to that book of simple is better and because unless they're doing it on a regular basis they're not going to remember it and it's unfortunately it's our, ah I don't know how to say it, you know our demons in regard to martial arts we want to teach these amazing techniques and skills, but when you're teaching someone that's only going to do it maybe once or twice you gotta keep it simple. The old kiss method.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Very appropriate acronym.

Ryan Chamberland:

Yup

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm sure that throughout life you've had you know hopefully far more good than bad, but I want to talk about the bad for a minute. Those points in time whether it's a day, a week, a moment where things weren't going well. I'd like you to tell us about one of those times and how you were able to use your martial arts, whether that be the physical aspects or the mental part to move through that challenge.

Ryan Chamberland:



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Wow that's a really good question. As a martial artist instructor and student, you probably come up with a half dozen areas that challenged you to do this challenged you to do that. I have one that probably was my biggest challenge. Is when my son and daughter was born. They were born two months early and my daughter, well they were both in the NIC unit for quite a while, but the first two weeks of my daughter's life she was touch and go to the point where she had to have a couple surgeries to, we weren't sure I mean we gave her last rights. There's a lot of things that went on with my daughter that if I didn't have a, my martial arts to help me being strong, but also be my martial arts family, both of those they saved my life because I couldn't just close my facility for two months and expect to reopen it. Especially a full-time facility in Winthrop Maine where populations are really small and all it takes is a little slip and you're probably going to end up closing your school because of it. So that time period was extremely challenging for me. Martialy you had to still keep your strength your energy. I was still teaching classes and being able to walk on the mat and I remember my instructor saying you've got to leave your woes and worries in your shoes and I remember always taking my shoes off at the entry of the classroom and it was like a switch was flipped. Here it is my daughter's in a hospital and I'm teaching a martial arts class, and I know some people probably think that, you know why is he doing that you should be with your child. I still had people that I had to be responsible for and that's where I still get on the mat to get what was going on and just focus on teaching my classes with 2-3 hours and that kept me sane. And the minute I got done with my classes, this is where my martial arts family would kick in. I would jump in my vehicle at nine o'clock at night, drive to Portland, which was about an hour and fifteen-minute drive and when I thankfully for cell phones I'd jump in my car I would contact, I had three or four friends that I'd call. They were in the martial arts and every one of them were martial arts instructors or students and I would call them and we'd rap for an hour and then the person on the other end of the line would know that I was safe in Portland. He'd say "alright, sounds like you're parking. I'll talk to you tomorrow". And I would get out of my vehicle, go upstairs and visit with my daughter and my son. My son wasn't as bad, but visit with them and for 2-3 hours go over where we were sleeping or staying, sleep for four or five hours get up in the morning and go back to the hospital. So, then that's where your martial arts strength has to kick in. Your endurance. And that's when I kept going, I used to relate to people I'd say your endurance kicked in so much here, it had to, because if not I would've been a basket case. I mean we did that for two months, back and forth, back and forth for two months and that really made me a better martial artist I think, because of that. Because it made me respect my family, my martial family and also really honed in your mind, body, and spirit of the martial arts because if I didn't have that I probably

would've lost it. I would've had a nervous breakdown because of I, but it kept me straight.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Powerful stuff. Certainly, a situation that no one ever wants to go through.

Ryan Chamberland:



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No

Jeremy Lesniak:

But it sounds like, you said that there were some positives. This has made you better. It was a way for you in sort of a martial arts adjacent way to build on your martial arts.

Ryan Chamberland:

Yeah

Jeremy Lesniak:

We talk so often about training and why we're training and it's so easy to look at a physical confrontation as being the only time that we test our skills, but here's a very concrete example of how your willpower, your physical endurance, your dedication, the word you've used quite often today is perseverance. How those skills tempered in the Dojo allowed you to be there for your family.

Ryan Chamberland:

Oh absolutely. I mean, I call it the selfishness; your self-awareness, your self-control, your self-esteem, self-respect, your self-discipline and your self-defense. If you don't have those you know you're not a true martial artist I don't feel. You know there's nothing wrong with being selfish. And it made me, like I said it saved my life I'm sure during that time period because there were times you know I'm working on two or three hours of sleep and still teaching classes. Still I don't forget too because they were born April 1st. At the time, I had a plowing company as well and I think two weeks after my kids were born we had a big huge snow storm. And I went almost I was probably fifty-four hours without sleep. Because I had to work, I still wanted to see my children, I had to work, I had to plow, it was crazy. And like I said I think my martial arts it's just amazing, I think it kicked in it was automatic. Your body just kicked into automatic mode and you just did what you had to do and I didn't have to think about it. I don't think I ever thought about it once that you know, I could not do it. The whole time I just, I can, I can get this done. That mentality. Testing for your black belt, you're in the middle of your black belt test and you know there's points where you sometimes have that self-doubt and then all of the sudden it just washes over you of I can do this, no one's gonna stop me from doing this. So, and I relate it to that to.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We've heard today that martial arts, it is you. I mean clearly if you're going to give up so much of your time to do something its core to who you are. But I'm curious are there things outside of your family, outside of martial arts that you're passionate about?

Ryan Chamberland:



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Definitely family. During the winter, I snowmobile. I used to snowmobile a lot. I actually had an opportunity to be part of a team Maine racing team. I just wasn't able to take the time away from running a school and being able to put as much time or effort into that. I think I would've been a pretty good teammate because of my conditioning and the ability to, that don't quit mentality and some of the races that we had you had to have that don't quit mentality. So, it was pretty interesting on that aspect as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. How about martial arts movies? Do you enjoy them?

Ryan Chamberland:

Hahaha, yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm guessing you, you know you and I came up at the same time and it was kind of this resurgence this golden era in the eighties early nineties. We were getting some decent films again.

Ryan Chamberland:

Yeah. Absolutely. I mean what, the Steven Seagal movies to you name it. The Van Damme movies, definitely Bruce Lee. I mean I don't know did you grow up on the Kung Fu spaghetti westerns? Saturday morning?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I didn't, I didn't, no. We didn't, I don't know if they just weren't on the channels we had or I just wasn't aware of them, but no I didn't find those until later.

Ryan Chamberland:

Yeah those, I actually, we got into those quite a bit. So yeah, I mean there were always some amazing movies. I'm still a big Jackie Chan fan, love him. Jet Li, like him as well. I mean there's so many good martial, talented martial artists out there, especially in the movies. Jason Statham another great martial artist, so I mean yeah. I don't keep, I haven't even been keeping up on the movies as such because there so many of them out there that keep getting turned out there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Awesome. How about books? You're a student of history and Hanshi Juchnik is the man that you call your instructor. Now of course anyone who's listened to that episode knows that that was a lengthy episode that can be summed up as know your history. Something that is so clearly important to him. So,



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I'm wondering if you came by that naturally or perhaps he beat it into you, but a lot of the older stuff, you mentioned a couple books already.

Ryan Chamberland:

Yeah. A lot of, it's tough because I mean he definitely, he made me understand martial history and history period. I had my mother and father, both school teachers so you know science and history were big I mean, I remember one of vacations was to go to Washington D and learn about all of what Washington DC had to offer and I'd do it again. Just to learn the history of what we are, who we are. And then the reinsurance of Hanshi Juchnik getting us to know our history. We did a, I'll never forget this, we did a we'll call a Deshi which is basically we stayed at his house, I think eight or ten of us, we literally stayed at his house for four days. We'd get up early in the morning, we'd get going around 7, 7:30 and we'd train until 4 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon. And then he gave us homework at night for three nights, we did that for three days and I won't forget it Friday, Saturday, Sunday and one of the homework assignments he gave us this big book, a big binder with all this history in it, was knowing your leaders. Good leaders and bad leaders. So, we had to do a little mini report and create our own I don't know country let's say for easier words. So, we had to pick a president, a general and someone like Aristotle, or Epocrates, stuff like that. That was more of your spiritual guidance of a person and we had to be able to create our organization based upon who we did our studies on and why it would be successful. Like why is the United States successful? Why was Alexander the Great successful? Stuff like that and he was, he's huge into that. I remember going to train with him at Gettysburg and training there on the battlefield and we talked about history and battle, different battle scenes and stuff like that. He then related it to martial arts which was amazing. It was like, it made martial arts kind of come alive, in a different aspect, in a different way. Which a lot of people wasn't able, you know not able to do and he tied it in so it made sense to me which was awesome. So, with that being said, books, I was always a Jack London fan, White Fang, Call of the Wild, stuff like that, those type of books. But I've always been big into history. I love, I do a lot of reading on Teddy Roosevelt, he's probably one of the best. I read some really good books on him. Not to mention he grew in Maine so it's kind of cool. Not a lot of people know that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I don't think I knew that. I'm racking my brain I don't think I knew that.

Ryan Chamberland:

Yeah when he was young he was I want to say he had emphysema or something like that. It was in regard to breathing and his parents sent him to Smyrna Mills, Maine to live in a logging and hunting camp just to help strengthen his lungs and stuff like that. There's a, he has journals about climbing Mount Katahdin and hunting, fishing in Maine and that's what gave him his oomph to be, wanting to be



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more ecofriendly that's probably the best way to say it, but he was one that started a lot of the national parks and different organizations for the preservation of animals and stuff like that in the United States.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right and of course he was known for playing Judo in the White House.

Ryan Chamberland:

Exactly. I was just going to get to that. He was, he was the only, and that's the other thing I say hey that's what made him cool is he's the only martial artist of all our presidents that studied martial arts in the White House. So, and he was big into it, he loved it. And then his famous quote of you know "walk softly and carry a big stick". I think that's a good quote for all martial artists.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Totally. So, what's keeping you going? You know your training, you sound like you're still as passionate about your training and your school as ever and I'm always curious why. You know most of us we don't do so well when we have these open-ended commitments. Things you know most of us can buckle down and get something done for a fixed period of time, but you've invested so much of who you are into this kind of esoteric idea of the martial arts for the majority of your life. Why? What's keeping that drive?

Ryan Chamberland:

To be a student. I tell people that, I say's you've got to continue being a student and if you don't, you stop being a student, you'll not be in this profession for a very long time. You'll literally, I've seen, I've seen it, I've seen a lot of these martial arts instructors that bowed out because they stopped being students. Two years ago, I started studying another style of martial arts Daito Ryu under Roy Goldberg Sensei. A friend of mine Tony DiSario got me interested in this and I'm like I got to learn this, I've got to be a student again. I've studied many different styles of martial arts, have rank in a lot, but I want to be a student again and this gave me the opportunity to do so, keep my energy going, keep that passion alive. I think a lot of people lose that passion because they stop being a student. They want to be just that business person or that I just want to run a school and you'll burn out. I watch guys like a good friend of mine Dave Kovar, he is amazing at keeping his energy alive. That guy, I'm amazed at how he keeps things going, all the time, he's on Screech 100%. But one of the things I had a sit-down lunch with him when he came to Maine one time and he said to me he's like "Ryan I just got to continue being student" he goes "that's the reason why I do what I do, and I can do what I do because I want to be a student" and he's extremely successful in the martial arts. A lot of people look up to him on how to run their schools and how to become better people in martial arts and how to be a better instructor.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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He is an incredible example of someone who has dedicated themselves to lifelong learning. If I remember correctly ten black belts, not honorary, but legitimate trained for, earned, black belts.

Ryan Chamberland:

Yeah, absolutely. And you know who his instructor was right?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Ummm. You're thinking of somebody in particular. No, I'm gonna kick myself, but, because I know this, it's in there somewhere, but go ahead.

Ryan Chamberland:

His original instructor was Bruce Juchnik. So...

Jeremy Lesniak:

I did know that, that's right.

Ryan Chamberland:

Yeah. I mean if you read David's, one of his, David's books he talks about, I think it's the tool box book. He talks about Hanshi about you know the do's and don'ts of an instructor. And you know Hanshi Juchnik basically introduced him to multiple styles of martial arts. You know it was amazing, I mean the Filipino arts to, you know Parker Kempo, to Tracy Kempo, excuse me not Parker. Tracy Kempo to White Crane, you name it. There's a bunch of styles. Silot KunTao, he studied with Juchnik's Sensei and then from there it gave David the bug to go out and study multiple other styles of martial arts. He's a super well-rounded person because of that. Not to say you can't stay with one style of martial arts, you can. I know many great instructors stayed with one style of martial arts as long as they had that passion of being able to be continuously the student. That's what made them successful I think. That's my, I guess my opinion of it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think it's a good one and it's certainly an idea that we've heard echoed on the show quite a few times and it's important. And yet as important as it is, as much as we've heard it, it's not something that I think everyone is willing to do.

Ryan Chamberland:

No.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Maybe this episode will convince a few more to, stretch

Ryan Chamberland:

I did it. I own my own school, my own building and I remember we were doing an expansion on my facility and I was one of the guys pounding nails and teaching classes and I stopped becoming a student, and my classes faltered for it. And I'm like wow, that's amazing, you know six months of me not putting my effort where it should've been and I can already see my classes starting to falter because of it. And that's one of the reasons why, it's one of the areas when I said I need to get back into being a student, and that was two years ago. I jumped back into doing a completely different style of martial arts. So, it pushed me. I'm thankful for it and I was thankful that I recognized it before things could've gone bad.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Good. How can people reach you? I know that you travel around a bit if someone wants to reach out and connect, maybe invite you to their school or something like that how would they get a hold of you?

Ryan Chamberland:

There's a couple different places to get a hold of me. I've been moved into the 21st Century and Facebook, so I'm on Facebook, Ryan Chamberland, really simple easy way. Or you can look up my facility United Fitness and we have a self-group United Fitness and Friends on Facebook. If you just want to contact me directly you can call me at the Winthrop location and if I'm not traveling I'm pretty much one of three people that are gonna answer the phone. So, you call Winthrop United Fitness I will answer that phone if it's during the week. Weekends I'm hit or miss as I do travel and I've been doing a lot more seminars lately. I travel with Hanshi Juchnik and I actually go, I still go, I try to go to two or three seminars a year, to different instructors to see other people teach. I thank people like Brent and his instructor Master Ho for that because it, they're still on the floor. I watch master Ho seventy years old and he's still out there training, he doesn't have to be, he can go on his accolades if he wanted to, but he's still out there training so if he can do it I can still do it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. And my last request, some parting words for everyone listening today. What advice would you leave them with?

Ryan Chamberland:

What advice. Wow that's, Jeremy you're doing a great job at this. I guess the biggest one is if you are in the martial arts and you've been in the martial arts for a long period of time, don't be afraid to put on that white belt again. And don't be afraid to, to, to, I don't want to say embarrass yourself, but get out



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there and have fun. You know laugh, joke and make mistakes. Students like to see that you're human to. That's probably one of my first instructor's flaws is he hated seeing people make him making mistakes. I think it made me a better instructor, also made my students better if they see me making mistakes. They know it's OK. I guess the best saying is a mistake is a learning opportunity, so if your making mistakes you're trying to learn, you're trying to better yourself.

And then you know don't be afraid to reach out to great martial artists. You know my goal is to reach out to different martial artists as I continue my training. I'm going to get out there and I'll reach out and talk to some new people. My goal is this year is to either meet Benny the Jet or to meet Guruan Santos. Those are my two goals this year. I try to set something up. I'm gonna, I will get it done because I feel that continued education is just gonna make you a better martial artist.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Shiyan Chamberland is nothing, if not a dedicated martial artist. His passion, his genuine love for the arts, it's awesome. I really like his attitude towards both training and teaching and it's probably why we're friends. Shiyan Chamberland thank you for being on the show today. If you want to check out the show notes you can find them at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com and you can find all of our products at whistlekick.com. If you want to follow us on social media, give some feedback or just say hello you can do that Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, we're @whistlekick. You can always email me directly jeremy@whistlekick.com and I hope you do because I love to get feedback from listeners. That's all for today. Until next time, train hard, smile, have a great day.