



Episode 311 - Wu Chi Kung Fu with Sifu Gary Cecil | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hey thanks for tuning in this is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 311 today we have a past guest back one that you haven't heard from since their original appearance several years ago and we're going to talk about the martial art they practice and how it relates to what you practice how today's conversation might make you a better martial artist regardless of your style my name is Jeremy Lesniak and I am the host of whistlekick martial arts radio. I am the founder of whistlekick the company dedicated to furthering your love your enjoyment your lifestyle as a martial artist. You can find everything we do at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) you can find the show notes for this as well as all of our other episode for free at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) back on episode 94 we had Sifu Gary Cecil he came on he talked about his love of martial arts really at the heart of that's the subject that we talk about with all of our guests but here he's back today to talk about Wu Chi kung Fu the style of martial arts that he is most passionate about that he practices today and it's a little bit different in what you might expect. You know what we could have someone on it and they could give us an overview of aikido and they could talk about aikido and it would kinda read more like a history well that's not what today is today is far more fluid and that far more variable and really that's pretty Wu Chi you'll understand what I mean as we get into it so sit back hang on and let's talk to Sifu Gary Cecil again. Sifu

**Gary Cecil:**



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Yeah hey Jeremy, are you?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm doing great, how are you?

**Gary Cecil:**

Fine nice to hear your voice. It's been a while.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah it has been a while it's you I don't often get to have people back on the show so it's this is fun does this is a good time tonight were not were not starting from zero.

**Gary Cecil:**

No were not. So how can I be of help to your listeners today.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well let's well well first I want to make sure am I using the right title are you Sifu cause I look back and that's what I referred to you as on the previous episode.

**Gary Cecil:**

Well that's that's okay that's the title I'll always love because I really am sort of a grandfather or a grandfather that is to so many of my students you know in that respectful and traditional way but also now since last time I think of the Association granted me this title of Doshi

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I saw that in your signature yeah.

**Gary Cecil:**

Which is another...

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What does that mean?



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**Gary Cecil:**

Well it's just sort of the most Rev. right Rev. a respected title I'm the founder of the Association and its executive and it's sort of the highest level of respect made available to someone and so they voted that in last year I think.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay

**Gary Cecil:**

As a counsel, cause I've established the whole counsel for the Association and they they did that for me wanted me to have that title of respect and but I also have responsibility to the organization as it's representative.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What would that title translate to us?

**Gary Cecil:**

Well I don't recall I mean I remember looking it up once and I don't really, I think you could Google it but my my memory doesn't recall right off the bat I probably could look it up for you.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's okay that's okay I think we often get too bogged down in the supposed translation of titles and I think that the meaning matters more you know I can I could call you a mean even here in a martial arts context I could refer you with your first name in a very respectful way I could also refer to you with your first name very disrespectful I think the intent matter so much more.

**Gary Cecil:**

Exactly we're not big in the titles they just want to show their respect and that that was fine I appreciated the thought we we have various titles for ranks but it's more just to say thank you for hard work. I think it's kind of the bottom line for it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Now we have you on today to talk about your style and and this is a little unique because while most of our guests when they come on when we do what we call the Monday show the the kind



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of standard interview conversation talk about your story we hear a lot about people's styles we hear a lot about you know how they found certain styles how it worked for them things like that but you're on today to talk specifically about your style so I have no idea how this is going to go. This, this can be well I know that you and I are and have fun I can't speak

**Gary Cecil:**

Right

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

For the listeners and you know to a certain degree I don't know that I care because whenever we do an episode it is if I'm not interested in doing it I'm not going to do it and we've learned that you know at least most of the folks out there enjoy it so yeah so let's let's start tell us about your style I'm not even gonna throw any words in as a segue I want you to tell us about what it is you were just talking about the organization so what is this organization what style is it charged with representing and tell us a little bit about that and then we'll go from there.

**Gary Cecil:**

Okay the style we represent is a version of shaolin influence from our direction though it's got broader roots than that Wu Chi Chuan Fa has a rather interesting but rather difficult history to trace and I sent some documentation showing some of my thinking and research in that direction but it's not been cleared it's really hard to to verify some of the data that we receive in so I've been careful how I use it but I've also done a little personal investigation even on foot when I went to Nepal years ago I was looking for clues as well there the weather for another reason I was spending some time watching for the evidence of rumors about how martial arts in general had started in that region I mean this this spans beyond just Wu chi kung Fu wu chi Chuan fa what you chance which is like Wu chi form of this form you know if you wanna be more specific but a lot of the kung Fu styles were often referred to as Chuan Fa you have tai chi Chan or tai chi chi chuan fa which is fist method with was tai chi you know and Wu chi fist method or form is what we represent which is more of a philosophy that actually a a specific style of moves and that's one reason that it's been very helpful to our schools to talk about Wu Chi in terms of its philosophy of movement and its way of thinking about martial arts because it really has been a philosophy it's found within the Shaolin but also other schools of thought have picked up on it in various forms over the decades over the centuries because it really embodies an approach to how one defends oneself or trains the body and displays the mind and the spirit and that approach is as much of what were about then been a specific set of moves that everybody does the same thing and not always and you know choreograph the same way what you will find what you really need about Wu chi schools Wu Chi Kung Fu schools is that you might go into one school and experience an art and then go on to another school around the world and it looks totally different because we don't have a lot of prescribed forms and





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movements that everybody has to do the same but whatever we do has to conform to our understanding of the art the philosophy and the basic principles under which that [00:09:03.23] what we do. We do have so you would see some similarities with with how they they practice what they're trying to accomplish but you would not necessarily see the same prescribed forms in fact in the tradition wu chi kung Fu I think there are several families that emerge from different schools of thought you've got the MA mountain tradition which is the highest mountain in China where a lot of martial artists practice. You've got the shaolin sect which is I'm more familiar with because my roots were through Shaolin master. You have the Wu-Tang Mountain group which will be closer to tai chi and that type of philosophy and then there's a wandering sect which I think never really settled into one homeplace the sort of put the wood around as mercenaries or whatever they were doing and refining their art as they traveled around from school to school or place to place just expanding their knowledge. I've been in conversation over the years with a representative of the wandering sect I've talked with the master and as far as Australia who I'm not I don't think I even asked him what sect he thinks he's associated with but he's one that pointed me to our roots probably being somewhere in the Makalu mountains near Tibet and again not far from Nepal and that whole region where a philosophy developed that took on form and also that form influenced how they began to practice their self-defense. It's that's about that's about the gist of it but wu chu chan really represents a way of thinking about martial arts and that gives us some common ground with a lot of arts we can talk with a lot of artists find common ground because of that.

### **Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure now that's certainly a part of the world it's not that far off you know we we talk about China as possibly or the depending on your perspective origin of what we come to think of as Eastern martial arts but Nepal Tibet these are countries you know I mean you know there's there's no there's no big wall there you know that there is a property line in a sense we don't talk about martial arts coming from there terribly often but of course if you look on a map it's not really that far off.

### **Gary Cecil:**

No and I I think people like historians will have a hard time associating religion with the proliferation of martial arts and I think that's fair but at some point when the Buddhists began expanding out of India into Nepal and up into Tibet and over into China they the disciplines they brought with them fed into the martial arts that were already taking place in villages in regions and among various soldiers etc. that they began to form or influence what we now think of as kung Fu you now that everybody had martial arts I mean India had them anywhere in the world you find martial arts how they defended themselves how they fought but what what began to I think develop what we know as kung Fu was the Taoist and Buddhist beliefs and the and Confucianism as well I mean the religious culture or quasireligious culture though not directly perhaps impacting how they felt and one level it did have an influence how certain training



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methods spread or use for meditation personal development strengthening the body now that then fed into the way they began to practice the [00:12:56.09]. So, there's a connection there I'm trying to be careful in respect to the historians but Sure. Yet at the same time it's hard to deny that where the Buddhists went they took with them certain disciplines that fed into how people began to practice what we associate with the shaolin tradition and everybody almost everybody agrees the somewhere along the way you have to pay homage to Shaolin if you're going to call yourself a kung Fu

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right

**Gary Cecil:**

So, you know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I don't think it's too hard to to consider that people of faith or of combat of military are going to spread martial arts I mean when when we look at martial arts in the United States it's not too hard to see that you know it all comes out of World War II American soldiers stationed abroad learning from someone coming back teaching it etc. You know and it spread that quickly in really just a couple generations. Now you're talking about Wu chi as a philosophy so maybe this is a good point to dig into that and talk about what you mean when you say it is a philosophy rather than a codified set of movements.

**Gary Cecil:**

Well there are certain precepts that we teach and principles and they're not precise from sect to sect either but Wu Chi is a is a if you well let me put it this way people understand tai chi as a philosophical principle whereas the separation of the into yin and Yang and so there's a full philosophical association with the art of tai chi where they use this balancing force of you know of of light and dark which might be as a force and of retreat and forward motion to left and right the the idea of the separation into this Yin and Yang influences the way they practice their art. Wu Chi happens to be philosophical principle that goes into the very beginning it's the one is it's actually the nothingness that you find in both we find it in almost in every religious tradition. I as a Christian Pastor read Genesis 1 and see the wu chi philosophy embedded in the first chapter of Genesis I mean it is there so clearly in the beginning and that idea of the beginning and how creation unfolds in that story is representative of the primordial energy that wu chi represents it's an effort to tap into our sense of being and life being aware that there is this energy that began from the very beginning of time that is life itself and what the Chinese would call chi or the Japanese would call ki this life force. Wu chi pays attention to that we pay attention to breath



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breath control which in an Indian he breaking Greek philosophies all translate show themselves as brass is is associated with spirit and there is an intimate connection with the very gift of breath and our vitality and of course yoga teaches that I mean so many martial arts teach that so Wuchi kung Fu pays attention to some of these basic principles of of health we want to to perform our we want to fashion our movements upon a strong foundation vitality and energy so that when we perform a movement when we have a set of moves we apply to a defensive situation we are doing that I guess you might say I hate to sound I don't know quite how to right word maybe the harmony yk to that we moved with a sense of harmony with our situation our sense of who we are and from somewhere within ourselves we respond appropriately the and so were paying attention to those foundational principles that begins from the very beginning. I guess there's this is a lot of teaching even of Shaolin and and Taoism as well but this primordial status thing. You'll find a lot of literature on returning to the primordial energy the Chi that came out of creation itself and how the mystics and the different monks has set forth tried to talk about that and practice that in their daily walk in their daily practice and that's kind of where wu chi kung Fu comes from. We don't forget our fundamental roots in that and actually I would say it's a humility the idea of emptying ourselves of self to allow there to be room for tapping into to an awareness as to what's around us and the energy that surrounds us and what's going on in our world. The openness we've tried to cultivate certain openness to our practice and to others who come into our sphere.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay. I think I'm with you. One of the things that striking me about your description is how much it reminds me of the way tai chi has been presented in most of its more kinda modern less combative iteration the ideas of harmony and balance and all that is that by accident or do you think there's some synergy in there.

**Gary Cecil:**

I think there's some synergy when you see when you see the Wu-Tang sect or the wandering sect practice their wu chi forms they can sometimes it's very much like tai chi and in fact the in the shaolin sect when you do some research there was that this Art that was practiced more by the elders of shaolin temple that's related to what's called ryu chan soft movement soft form that is related to what we would now call what they began to call later shaolin tai chi shaolin tai chi which was really a nickname for what we understand to be the basics of wu chi kung Fu. So it was a softer side to the shaolin art an art and some respects that is had a relationship I think to what we would recognize as maybe tai chi like movements but there's also a hard side to the two and it had a lot of force and power like some people say tai chi does as well but shaolin sort of disguises wu chi kung Fu as Shaolin version of tai chi and there were probably was some influence from wu dang Mountain and all that as and then you'll have these martial artists travel back and forth and that you know there was a lot of give-and-take and sharing of techniques among different people as they travel the lands there's no doubt there was a lot of cross



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pollinating of stuff back and forth across China and I think some of that shows and you see how you take a shaolin art and begin to see that that kind of influence showing itself even there. See Shaolin can be very very very difficult of course it's a very hard style of training very physically demanding and like myself when you get older you find you have to soften up and so there had to be another way to practice and that the older Masters found that softening up the technique and flowing more being more like water rather than far suited them quite well and in fact it helped improve their art and they became very efficient then. So, my my teacher was showing me some stuff that he called shaolin tai chi that has become foundational to me and probably is the formative place from which we fashioned our version of Wu chi kung Fu because what I teach is not solely representative of all wu chi kung Fu but I follow its philosophy and have adopted that methodology that more more not much methodology I'm sorry that those precepts and principles in fashioning the curriculum we teach in our particular Association. But our Association by no means captures the whole of what one might find to be the world of Wu chi kung Fu it's just not being talked that much you know we were considered esoteric art nobody's heard of us and I have decided in this day and age of information exchange of how open we are we need to be a little more transparent about who we are and what it is we practice because you know most people never heard of Wu chi chan wu chi kung Fu.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

One of the things that truly is striking me about what you're talking about here with Wu chi is the way you're presenting it the way you're presenting what you teach and how you teach it is a complete 180 from the way most people would talk about the martial art that they inherited from their instructor you you're using the word version and you're saying it's not the be-all and end-all definition of what wu chi is and it's bringing a smile to my face.

**Gary Cecil:**

Oh good

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You know it's this one of the things that drives me crazy is this notion that there is only one way to do a thing and that any particular person to say my way is the right way to do that thing that just drives me insane. Now is this something that is I don't want to say unique but something that we would find among the majority of practitioners of Wu chi or is that something that is you know a little more rare and something you see in in you know your organization and maybe some folks adjacent to you?

**Gary Cecil:**





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No, I think you would find if you find a true wu chi chan or wu chi kung Fu practitioner that's what you'll find. You'll find that and they follow certain principles that have been very tried-and-true in you know overall martial arts history specially back in the temples of China and so forth but present you know testing a technique you know we we have while [00:24:06.24] in my school you go to each one of my schools they're all gonna different that's what blows people away. How do you manage that they're not all teaching the same thing but they are I understand what I'm saying in terms of how they apply it and I allow each instructor to have some latitude about what they that works well for them so that they can put their personal stamp on their school there's gotta be something they're excited about we we do have our roots in Shaolin I mean? While my people learn the fundamentals of five animals or other in other animals in kung Fu style they understand five animals as the foundation they understand certain Chi gong forms that we teach that we do in my Association we do require a basic set of things to get them started but then they can take those basics and do all kinds of things with them they can innovate as long as they follow the principles of the proper application of energy and understanding of the movement basically I tell them how to fight will this work or not you have to test it you know you can't just do something pretty it's gotta work. If it doesn't work you throw it out and it has to have other principles applied to it as well but yeah, I've got a school in Grand Forks North Dakota for instance it teaches predominantly Tiger style. [00:25:24.19] you go into a Tiger kung Fu school. I've got another school in Minneapolis that it has gone more towards [00:25:34.00] Phoenix and snake and it looks totally different than the other school in Grand forks both of them though follow the same precepts of sorts that guide their practice you know we understand that no matter what you do it's gonna require hard work which is the meaning of kung Fu. You've got to practice hard you've got to focus the and common things to all good schools now by the way not just us and you might walk into one of my schools and think you're seeing something that looks like a you know a school you visited before. Someplace else because we do have common ground if if my teacher if I have an instructor that finds a a method that they really like from another school and or give information to go to use it they'll take it and plot in their school if it works and if it gets there the personality of the school you know and passes our principles in terms of the of its application they're welcome to apply this. So, we do a lot of aikido we do judo we're fairly eclectic in some ways which is true here and here's where I find the common ground for that store for that application. It is believed and this is one of the legends I actually give some credence to cause it keeps coming back and makes sense and their symbolism [00:27:00.00] with the number but many many different martial artist gathered over the centuries on MA mountain the highest mountain in China sacred Mountain and that was a safe place for martial artists to go and gather practice and there they could meet other martial artists from around the country and they can share techniques and practice together and hone their skills. Mercenaries fled them at times even bandits and so forth might find their sanctuary there. The legend has it that somewhere along the way a practitioner was watching these different great martial artists practice and and said I liked that and then he looked over here I liked that he looked over here and he said I like that and pretty soon he had taken the best techniques that he was seeing on the whole mountain and began to put them together and do something that he felt I'm gonna use the best of the best it's what I want to do



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and it took 36 he took from 36 different forms of kung Fu and brought it together and call it Wu Chi kung Fu and from there from MA mountain he had spread you know to the various parts of China like the Shaolin into Wudang and so forth. Now that's a legend but it sorts of tells you the mindset is that if we see something that is it is it works and it's practical and it is fits in to how we practice how we see the substance being effective. We're not afraid to say well we want to honor that so if Shito ryu or Shorin Ryu or somebody else has a technique that goes well and we see that and go well then, we may start teaching that in one of our schools.

### **Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's fascinating and it's something yeah that you know that that speaks to my heart I was pretty blessed my initial martial arts upbringing was was you know very open and very much I don't wanna say one that would steal from everyone cause there's kind of a negative connotation to that but borrowing but looking for synergy looking for things that would work well in the toolbox and round out individual people's kind of complement of of movements it when you spoke to the ideas of aikido and judo you've answered the question that I was was wanting to ask could could you see Wu Chi philosophy kind of in you know non-Chinese arts but I guess you could.

### **Gary Cecil:**

I guess you could you know you might call it something else but if you have this you know in an ad in the in the Christian tradition we have a sense of gnosis and what that means is emptying for one [00:30:07.26] as Jesus emptied himself [00:30:10.02] in a place in the Bible though he could've had it all had all power and all glory he emptied himself and take on the form of a servant. It's the one of Paul's passages and I'm not trying to preach here but but illustrate to you that as a Christian pastor that passage speaks volumes to me about the concept of Wu Chi because it's really an empty circle when you draw it as one of its representations: a circle zero not and that isn't it where we all kinda began you know you can see yourself as it is empty so that in this is an old proverb so that you can be filled you know if you're already full then nothing anything that's poured into you just simply falls over the brim and you gain nothing. So, there's this continual idea of being empty and emptying ourselves of presuppositions or prejudices so that we can receive we can learn we need to be. Wu chi kung Fu is about being teachable just being teachable and being open to one another and to your environment being aware. It's also being respectful being open enough that you respect what others might bring into your circle. We will we are my students go in to the class expecting to receive something new that think that raises [00:31:40.16] on their lips or they'll go wow and it enriches them every class may they go away hopefully filled with something new and some different. They come back the next class I would say alright empty yourselves of any preconceptions expectations and just let's just have fun and receive what you receive and be filled with something. That's that's very fundamental to so many good martial arts it's not unique. I think we do share some of those common ground with good good martial arts to teach a good philosophy and I distinguish the and I'll say that on



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purpose cause if we know that in every discipline there are those who do not represent well to what it should be and there are those who do and I'm not naming any names.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No no no need.

**Gary Cecil:**

Of course, no need but you know we want to represent the the best side of what it means to to develop the person to respect one another and also the I just my goal has been to just help build better people. We wanna be good citizens good people good family members do well in our our jobs you know and maintain a certain self-discipline that will work for the good of our families in our community along the way. Self-control, a sense of faith you have to have faith in something the interesting to me and I remember I did that yeah go ahead.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, I wanna one of the things I do when I'm talking to someone is I I try to imagine if there was an audience behind me and they had buttons and that they could press that button for me to dig a little deeper a whole bunch of buttons just went off when you said that so when you say they have to believe in something what do you mean?

**Gary Cecil:**

Well it's interesting first tenet of Wu chi kung Fu is have faith. Now for me as a Christian I think that would be apparent what I have faith in.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure.

**Gary Cecil:**

Or who I have faith in. You don't have to be a Christian though to study in my school and I'm not sure all of [00:33:50.13] me but what my teacher passed on to me and he was he was a committed Christian later on but early when I began with my teacher he was you know he grew up in a Christian environment but he wasn't really a committed to it it was somewhat secular but he still had a sense of faith he respected faith he looked for faith and what did it mean? First of all, can you trust somebody else? You know when you go into our schools you have to trust your partner and you have to trust your teacher. Faith also means trust if you go back to its origins in the Greek and who do you trust? Can you trust this art? I mean in other words do you



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trust what you see and experience can you trust that your partner's gonna take care of you out there when you're practicing. You know there's a certain degree can't get better unless you trust somebody you gotta trust people you train with and trust your teacher and trust the content you test it but you trust it as you test it. We have to teach people to trust in and that it works so here test it out and then you learn to trust yourself you know I can do this and all of a sudden you begin to trust your technique and trust your ability to to performance and reach a higher level. So, there's a very personal side to that word have faith you your ability to trust the art and its integrity and those who teach it to you. If you can't trust anyone's it's hard to learn anything it's hard to do anything and so that's our first tenet is building a sense of trust in your school and within your school and making sure that the teachers also respect their students enough so that they can trust the teacher. So, we have a high sense of integrity involved in what we do and in that we are trustworthy and how we handle this art to this you know these many potentially deadly techniques that you have to have a sense of integrity that those techniques would be guarded and and practice in responsible ways. No wonder we don't want anyone to be hurt or we don't wanna abuse anyone we don't wanna bully anyone so we do build have a certain ethic that goes behind what we teach and that is not different at all from the other side of my influence which was from Miyagi sensei my other the other side that are brought partly into my association was my influence from more Chinese side of what many people call goju karate that I picked up picked up on that in his more in his earlier stages when he was influenced out of southern China what he called [00:36:39.28] which is sort of what goju ryu karate is.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, when you say when you say Miyagi you're talking Chojun Miyagi

**Gary Cecil:**

Some of the founder yeah

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Not the karate kid.

**Gary Cecil:**

Not the karate kid.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I just wanted to make sure.

**Gary Cecil:**





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One of the founders of Goju yeah

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right.

**Gary Cecil:**

Who studied in southern China with Shaolin and others and brought that art back and then he melded it with the local Okinawan art called te or you know defend and so Miyagi takes sort of the local Okinawan defense meld that into what he brought back from southern China and forms goju. Well I had likewise take my Shaolin roots melded with what I brought what I picked up from Okinawa from my teacher who was I guess third-generation for Miyagi and that that some of those techniques have made their way into what I teach. So, but likewise you know they had an ethic Miyagi himself thought his way was peace he was not he was against conflict and violence. He taught that your goal is basic Miyagi said things like you know don't get hit and don't hit. You know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah.

As he grew older particularly you don't get hit and don't hit. Walk away you know what I mean. He had a very peaceful approach to his art and I think people forget that sometimes.

**Gary Cecil:**

When you look over you

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Makes sense to me.

**Gary Cecil:**

It makes complete sense to me and and you know one of the things that I don't mention on the show very often but the thing when I consider everything I've done in martial arts the thing I am most proud of is that I've managed to defuse every fight that nearly happened.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That is true martial arts.



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**Gary Cecil:**

And I when I reflect on that you know the more I reflect on them that in the older I get the more proud of it I am.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yes, and that's where Miyagi was toward the end of his life and his son also but how proud he was I think of teaching this peaceful path in his last days especially. I think he died 57 he left the great legacy and there's many there are some goju schools out there today that I think really still embody his teaching and every every system has somebody like that they turn back to you've got [00:39:22.13] and Funakoshi and so many great guys from that era that you know have handed down martial arts as we know it now in their different styles and forms but when you pre if you would have press back historically you find some mis common threads and wu chi kung Fu just again picks up some common threads like that but we make we make it more of a priority. We again we it's not just about the techniques as much you know the we put a priority on the principles behind it and what we learned behind it.

**Gary Cecil:**

That's I guess the difference may be in how we practice versus some schools where you do you do the prescribed movements so it becomes just I do these movements I get my belt. You can come and do all movements you want to in my school which [00:40:13.20] get your belt unless you got the integrity to go with it and the understanding to go with it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

When you...

**Gary Cecil:**

So, we have a high premium on not only doing it but understanding why you do it how you do it and what would be the point. Why would you do that why not. You know there has to be a real practical application to life involved in what we do and so are by my black belts if you get a black belt in my school it would take a long time by the way. You're gonna be a decent person. You'll have some sense of what's right and wrong and you'll do the right thing.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's a subject that comes up in martial arts conversations from time to time the idea that you know we we we can all kinda generally agree that martial artists become better people in the vast majority of the time in martial artists on the whole or better than the general population but



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you just expressed as if there is a a standard that people are held to is that am I hearing you right?

**Gary Cecil:**

In my schools there's a standard [00:41:16.20] now again it's not I'm not discriminating that they have to be [00:41:22.03] Christian or whatever however they just simply have to respect my Christian principles. I'll ask them you have to respect that I'm a Christian pastor I have certain understanding how things work since I'm the founder of this particular Association I've I need you to respect that. I don't want [00:41:40.15] cursing going on in my school. I don't want my Facebook be covered with inappropriate language and stuff you know. So, there are standards there and that's some of that is my personal reflection of me but is also just a sense of common decency in our society and it's something I think we're losing you know there's a loss of stability, lots of people talk about already nothing new there but it concerns me greatly and and even when I look back in history it some the old masters they had similar concerns. You know someone like [00:42:19.10] who was maybe one of the toughest fighters in Jap you know Japanese art who basically just folded up one day and quit. He said he was irrelevant his way of thinking and acting [00:42:31.04] society but he just quit walked away. I'm going wow what happened there what you know you know we are people of our times and we had to learn to adapt the one of the other tenants by the way that we teach is be adaptable and that is where it is also important. I know the things change inside these [00:42:54.10] issues for my people to be able to function effectively and appropriately within an environment that changes quickly although sometimes not just about self-defense but just about dealing with people but you can do that with again hold your head up with a sense of integrity and and finding your center your place in all of that is important to me. And my black belts have bigger representation for our school and I so we have certain standards now again they're not spelled out like the 10 Commandments per se but we all understand what that looks like I think. When the board gets together and talks about our our black belts or new advancements we all have a sense of how they embody the things we've taught you know. Do they have a you know how do they display their trust for one another the collegiality they're adaptability the respect you know we we do measure those things especially when they get to a black belt test?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How?

**Gary Cecil:**

How?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Yeah. I support it but to me it's always very subjective and you know we do have a lot of school owners that listen to the show so anytime we can talk about these these things that I feel help move martial arts forward help move the ability to raise educate better students forward I want to ask those questions.

**Gary Cecil:**

Well first of all we are we cultivate personal relationships with our students. We go beyond simply having a class we develop a fellowship and that's one of the things I think has been the strength in the Wu Chi Kung Fu Association. We all see each other's family and I'm sure you have probably heard that before but

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yes

**Gary Cecil:**

It's more than just going to class and then walking away I mean there is a fellowship that occurs. Often, they go out to dinner together, they get to know each other we have conversations we dialogue we ask the questions. I try to be available to all of my students and my instructors as well to answer questions to get to know them personally myself in some level. To the point that as you get to know a person you're not just looking at the performance on the floor now but you know who that person is who stands on the forefront. This is not just the disembodied you know what I mean just a a person wearing a sash or something that's looking for a belt this is someone that has whom you have some knowledge and personal experience. You're seeing them interact with other people you know something about them you know how they've in a conversation how they dealt with difficulties in their lives You've been a part of their life and they've been a part of yours. So how it means you have to invest in relationships. You know if you're an instructor you just simply see these students come forward on the mat and can they do the technique and then you pass them on I think you've missed an opportunity because the you know that's again that's our second principle by the way. Whereas that second tenet this form cause I've had a hard time translating that from its original but the second tenet of wu chi kung Fu is it is that it's about encouraging and developing your students beyond simply a performance of a move [00:46:43.06] or a form but how do you encourage their growth as people and that means it implies a certain personal engagement in respect that the teacher has some student as well expecting the student respect the teacher.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What are the other tenets or precepts?





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**Gary Cecil:**

[00:47:09.03] some are basic.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You mentioned the core you mentioned two at length and we've we've meandered a bit so I I may I may have misnomer not recognize that they were on that that that structure.

**Gary Cecil:**

Well and you know I toss them around a lot different times myself and sometimes I need to stop and think about them a little bit again, in essence the idea of the ability to trust and not enough reason I hesitated cause I've also sort of toyed with them in terms trying to make them more understandable because the second one was it was given to me in a way that this didn't quite translate well and I think it's because it probably come from Chinese thought. A value of do not interfere but everything else was more of a positive like be adaptable and follow the way. Now if you're a Taoist you'd understand follow the way, if you're a Christian you'd understand follow the way in a different way. But if you does the martial arts you know there's a way of the way of of of the art so that's that that would have to be translated but basically it's have faith do not coerce or manipulate another's energy for your own and don't take advantage of your students in ways that are inappropriate which really is is more I like this thing you know have faith and build up each other build up others be adaptable and follow the way those are in essence four tenets of Wu chi chan and I think you'll leave that open to the interpretation a little bit on purpose specially follow the way. I think each student will have to dialogue about that with their teachers and colleagues what does that mean have some conversations follow follow the way and what way is there for you what's the way for you. So, there's some personal journey involved there and discovering what the way is.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

When you found wu chi cause I I forget and even if I hadn't forgotten I would still ask this question if this was your first art was was wu chi the first thing first martial art you trained in.

**Gary Cecil:**

No no I began with the gang ryu, goju I came more from Miyagi side as the first.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, when you found this what what was that like because



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**Gary Cecil:**

Well

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Everything you're talking about is so so open that even the most open martial arts school I've attended this sounds like a more open system if we can even use that term.

**Gary Cecil:**

Yes, that's why it's been hard for us to actually we've had to work hard to find some definition you know you still have to have some some concrete places to settle down you know. It can't be you have to have at least a [00:50:41.17] post you know of things you you hold to in terms of techniques and things but I know we just challenge new schools to set the standards you know they have to work on setting the curriculum and I have to approve it and has to should has to demonstrate its connection to our principles you know and we have other we have precepts to and all that when we teach about awareness and not judging others etc. so not judging a technique prejudging a technique when they try it out. About integrity and sincerity and that your words and your actions need to match up and being again developing a certain insight and understanding the things and being a responsible person, we teach those things too but yeah, I I was practicing martial arts very young through an Okinawa the instructor came from Okinawa in the Miyagi tradition. Got lucky to fall upon that and find that and also was very curious about the martial arts so were also like a lot of people in my generation we were enthralled with Bruce Lee and we now you and I have been over this territory before [00:52:04.17]

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No no that's okay we we gonna link just for folks that are listening we are gonna link in the show notes to your your past episode of course it's still available they're are all still available and if you haven't you know if you're new to show or something [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) so [00:52:22.09]

**Gary Cecil:**

So anyway but I had a great experience with my my colleagues and my teachers I practiced all I could and even when I couldn't be in class because of transportation needs out there as a kid I had some other high-level people in the class would work with me and keep me up and so forth so that when I did get back to class I was up to speed that etc. and it was a great experience because it was a really down to earth hard-core martial arts class the way that you know that you hear about the old schools you know this was bareknuckle sparring but with control. This



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was you know we did throws and had no mats and all kinds of stuff like you know the good stuff [00:53:12.13] you hear stories about now There were injuries and I said the downside of the camp training is there are injuries and then also we learned later even the concerns about their Southern style white Crane influence showing up with what's called a [00:53:33.24] Japanese or [00:53:36.01] you know from the Chinese version of it often practiced in some of the southern kung Fu styles with a lot of tension work in the breathing. That that week came to find that if you did that incorrectly that had real health consequences I mean that became dangerous people die from doing that for 20 years of their training from hypertension and so forth so you know we've learned a lot since then and I've had to change the way I taught things because of new discoveries about our science we look at what have most concussions now that's come to the fore in just the last few years you know we we we do we keep learning but I was old school style and and I enjoyed it I started teaching. When I went to college but then when I went to college I was I was found or discovered by someone basically found me I didn't find them and that's the way it was with wu chi kung Fu to I it's found me I really wasn't looking for it and that's hard to explain but as I got deeper into that that that Shaolin style school American Shaolin experience and sort of by chance opened the door for my teacher to show me some things that I've never seen before that I came later to understand to be this Shaolin tai chi which I then I discovered was also code for Wu chi kung Fu or wu chi chan fa I have found that I that I discovered something or it discovered me because I was having ideas and notions about martial arts already forming in my mind and in my practice and I put that together in a book actually for my schools called the circle and the circuit and we still have the book we're gonna republish it with new information which was my vision basically for what martial arts ought to be and after I wrote that out after that I found out that what I had written and discovered was consistent in a spooky way with an artist who has taught me that wu chi kung Fu and we hooked up and started talking and I found out that I was actually a wu chi practitioner but did know what to call it. Actually, I did I called it Wu chi I found out there was a whole art of Wu Chi Chan Fa out there that embodied the same principles that I was talking about and I had talked about this principle before I knew about these people or knew about this school. I picked it up from my teacher but he never called it that he used code words [00:56:29.20] but in other ways but I discovered as a whole organization whole bunch of schools around the world that practice these same principles and talked about in the same way I was blown away I just it I mean literally I think it found me it was a moment it was moments of inspiration and and and comprehension from things that were told to me and taught to me along the way that came together when I [00:56:54.12] thinking I found a home I will send with other people who had similar approaches and standard tradition that began to speak to you know they shared history with me that I did know about the begin to put it all together. It's taken years actually to put some of this together it's been a whole journey of discovery but again what I love about it is I think it's possible for any artist in any style you have their elements of what we do that you can find in my teacher once told me that told it to me this way it's really about it's not about the style it's about the person you know any martial arts can go on a journey of self-discovery and evaluate what you're doing in a way that they would come to some similar conclusions.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm sure there are number of folks out there nodding along quite a bit of what you've been saying especially over the last couple minutes but if people wanna go a little deeper into Wu chi what resources are available to them?

**Gary Cecil:**

Not many I guess that's part of the problem is that again this is and in terms of legend and most of all we've had to work with this legend and it's so esoteric and little known about it that you get a little you look if you spell it the right way and Google it you have to have the right spelling too you'll find some things and it's not even at all consistent not a whole lot done about just called an esoteric art usually associated with tradition but also wu dang and I learned a lot of what I'm talking about from another practitioner who's a wu chi chan artist in California and his school but that he also got me connected to some others around the world makes us see through all those talk with while back in Australia and he's one pointed me toward some of the history back toward Kulen Mountains that tradition and that has very esoteric Chi Gong root there in the Kulen mountains that they bled over into martial arts later I think so it is been it's been it has been a process of discovery I don't know how to put it. Self-discovery as well as actually connecting with people who understood what I was talking about and help me understand more of what I was talking about but I'm very grateful to to the few out there that stepped up and said what we're willing to talk to you and there are few schools out there that use the wu chi label that may not actually share our principles it but no surprise there right.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's so open but it's so open that it can even be not open and [00:59:53.22] there I suspect

**Gary Cecil:**

We're all principle based though I mean we do insist on certain principles and and they may vary a little bit from teacher to teacher but we have these fundamental ideas anyway that we share more or less so.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Great

**Gary Cecil:**

But but anyway because wu chi is a philosophical concept that it could be it can be used in so many different ways to I mean adapted to a lot different titles methods as well.





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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

This has been a lot of fun and unfortunately with the lack of online resources for us to direct people to I guess I'm gonna put you on the spot a little bit and ask and can people email you?

**Gary Cecil:**

Sure, and by the way you can find some of my schools I would refer your friends just to...

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay

**Gary Cecil:**

The sinking moon school in Minneapolis.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Can we make sure we get this website up?

**Gary Cecil:**

Sinking moon school kung fu in Minneapolis I think has a good re has a pretty good presentation online. It's still developing cause it's one of my newer schools but you know he's communication is like his thing so you know you'll find pretty decent stuff there and the I'm trying I'm gonna look it up I think you can Google so I find sinking moon I want to find the I will find the full title here for you but also we have the Wu Chi we have some other just look up wu chi school of self-stance or what you know on so forth you might find some different references there.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay

**Gary Cecil:**

In Grand Forks there's that school on the website they've been they've been going strong up there for quite a while. I don't think there's any information that you have one of my newer school starting up it's gonna be called Fifth Dragon school of Wu Chi kung fu. Pete Ferguson he's working on that and I think he's gonna be down toward Fargo. I've got some people and I mean I've got some people as practice classes but I don't think they really going online but we



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get some folks we really haven't advertised they just teach because we don't do it commercially we really have done this as an active fellowship and love for years because none of my teachers get salaries out of this they displace the charge whatever they have to do tort of uniforms and in some cases pay the rent that's all it is again they love the art that's why they do it. So, I'm here I'm trying go to Google here myself.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's okay we can we we can add these in after the fact will will put some stuff up on the show notes and you know you may have some some of your schools that you know have have some newer resources or something that we haven't you know we haven't talked about or maybe didn't even no popped up who knows I want to make sure we get some good stuff at the show notes but there was one last question I wanted to ask you know when we had John before I asked you you know what parting words would you would you have for everyone and I'm gonna take a little bit of a twist on that this time what one thing would you hope people would take from Wu chi into their own training?

**Gary Cecil:**

What one thing take wu chi into their own training so I'm talking to that general audience who may be in tae kwon do or Absolutely.

You know shorin ryu or some of this as the other type schools. I think the predominant principle behind what we do is what you've talked about already. Be open. If you think about that empty circle again one of the ways to depict Wu chi circle of the creative primordial creative moment before it divides into the tai chi that it is about potentiality and when you're open be open to the potential your own potential and potential brothers so an openness to that great potentiality within each other. So, don't sell yourself short, work hard practice and you can accomplish really amazing things best, kind of the fundamental of what we do is an openness to your own potential as as a person and as a practitioner I think that would be the one thing I will leave you with.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I don't know that he put in exactly these words but Sifu's comment that so many of us are in a sense Wu chi practitioners really resonated with me. Throughout so much of what he said I found myself nodding along saying yes that's that's me I believe that I get that. Maybe I'm a Wu Chi practitioner and I didn't even realize it you know I guess in a sense I can say I am and I bet some of you out there are. Of course, we got show notes with some links everything we talked about today if you want to dive deeper into Wu chi maybe reach out to Sifu you know we've got that all over there [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) as well as the link to his prior episode where we talk more about him and his history his path story as a martial artist you know I get really



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jazzed up listening to people talk about their martial arts story and of course you can find the rest of what we do [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). We're on social media at whistlekick Facebook twitter and Instagram are our main outlets and of course Martial Journal [MartialJournal.com](http://MartialJournal.com) if you haven't been over there it is blowing up and we've been posting something almost every day. It's crazy how quickly it's growing and we're starting to get some attention it's lot of fun. We're looking for writers we're looking for readers. If you want to reach out you just want to say hi were you some feedback for the show or suggestion I guess or anything like that I'm [jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:jeremy@whistlekick.com) super simple that's all we've got for today until next time train hard smile and have a great day.