



Episode 314 – Mr. Frank Hatsis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey everyone thanks for tuning in, for stopping by for whatever you want to call this is whistlekickmartialartsradio episode 314 and today we're joined by a guest with a passion for martial arts weapon you probably know very little about his name is Mr. Frank Hatsis. My name is Jeremy Lesniak I'm your host for the show I'm the founder at whistlekick and we make stuff for traditional martial artists whether it's apparel or sparring gear or yes, the development of a number of other products only one of which I will tell you about right now. Nah I'm gonna tell you about I'm just gonna say we're working on uniforms that's all I'm saying but there's a lot more to say a lot more to read see checkout at whistlekick.com all of our products are over there and of course the show notes for this show are at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. When I first started talking to Mr. Hatsis we were talking about his journey in the martial arts but also his passion for the rope dart. Now you've probably seen this in kung fu movies or maybe you've witnessed some folks training with it in a kung fu school but at least according to our guest today it goes so much deeper than most of us realize. Of course Mr. Hatsis didn't start his training with the rope dart so we've got the whole context of who he is and what led up to him discovering that this this very specific piece in his martial arts I guess Arsenal was the piece that he wanted to focus his life his profession on. I'm not to tell you anymore and you let him talk about it so here we are Mr. Frank Hatsis. Mr. Hatsis welcome to whistlekickmartialartsradio.

Frank Hatsis:



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Hey good morning, how are you?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm great great good morning you know I didn't even ask you am I pronouncing your last name correctly you are pretty much one of the only guys out there that is pronouncing it correctly.

Frank Hatsis:

Yes, it's Hatsis it's like to wear a hat on your head and somebody would call their sisters sis so you got a Hatsis and the amount of people that can the types of thing that comes out of people's mouth with something that is so easy to put out is pretty incredible so you actually did nailed my friend.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well I apologize normally I ask ahead of time and you know listeners I always try to talk about this with folks and actually in the very very first version of the guest form there was a place where the guest would write out their name phonetically but I found that people had a harder time writing out their name phonetically than I had just asking and saying, hey could you tell me but I'm I'm looking at your name and I'm wondering what else how else would they say your last name?

Frank Hatsis:

Well sometimes the most common thing is that I was the SIS so forget one of usually the first as José Hatis. I've gotten Hastis like switch the S and the T I don't know you know whatever it's just people you know it's human error I'm I'm guilty of it to but normally for whatever reason people do have a challenge with it and you just kind of knew it and not my thought is it seem like it's pretty easy to pronounce.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I've got to say yeah it's a pretty straightforward name and I understand you know names that I think there's a correlation there between the way people identify with the name and the way people identify with their their martial art of choice you know I've seen so many really get so defensive you know the movement anyone says anything negative about ad I guess this transcends martial arts something that they have done you know we're in this very tri-ballistic society media you know feels feels like they're doing a great job I'd say they're doing a pretty bang up job of pushing us into these camps you know where we have to stand up we have to identify and a name for a lot of people is like that but of course my name if you've ever try to type my name into a phone it auto corrects to something that's that's rather far away from a name and yeah.

Frank Hatsis:



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May I ask what what, what comes up.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well it starts with Les.

Frank Hatsis:

Right gotcha.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right you know so I heard it all through school and and you know I got to a point where my my identity actually became strongly dissociated from my name not that I don't like my name my first name middle name and last name in there they're all fine names but I had so many nicknames and so many variations.

Frank Hatsis:

Yeah, I had a couple nicknames I didn't care about much myself and it's just so I'm pronouncing your last name correctly as Lesniak. That's right and maybe it's the fact that you you're a New Yorker both sides of my family are from Long Island so will will chalk it up to that in your familiarity back I have roots deep in the Hicksville.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh okay sure so I'm originally from Franklin Square so not too far from the Hicksville at all.

Frank Hatsis:

I have no idea. I my parents moved out and then grandparents moved out when I was when I was young I mean I have memories being there but very many of but if you say [00:05:52.26] I'll take your word for it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, I mean I have a a lot of fond memories growing up on Long Island it has it's you know it has its ups and downs just like everywhere else but it was a really pleasant place to grow up, good family life, good people no complaints as to where I grew up I gotta be honest with you. Alright well of course we are not here to talk about our mutual New York lineage we're here to talk about martial arts so we start in a pretty basic way almost a cliché way and I'll just ask how did you find martial arts?



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Frank Hatsis:

Well you know the way I found martial arts is I think the way a lot of people my age found martial arts and that was through the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and it was you know I look back and I reflect on it and you know icons like Bruce Lee was way before my time and some of the more I don't know commercial kid friendly stuff like Power Rangers was after my time but the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles was right during my time and I guess that it allowed to need first off use my imagination and you know dive into that that phase where play and they act like their favorite characters. I was of course Michelangelo I love the flexible weapons but you know we also had our friends in our neighborhood my brother was Leonardo and our other friend was Raphael and our other friend was Donatello so I think the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles not only allows you to use your imagination to be a ninja and all these cool stuff but also allows you to play with your neighborhood friends who were also into the same thing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And where to go from there?

Frank Hatsis:

Well from there me and my brother just thought a practicing on each other and kinda beat the crap out of each other. My mother finally decided that maybe it was time to enroll us in a martial arts school so we enrolled [00:08:02.25] tae kwon do and that was Grand Master [00:08:05.29] you know Korean gentlemen and he had school there in Stewart Manor which is a town over from Franklin Square my brother and I would actually ride a bicycles there and that's pretty much where my my official martial arts journey began within like the discipline of being in a school and going through a ranking system if you will. Now this is an old-school guy not a belt factory and you had to be extremely proficient in what you are doing in order to get your next belt and I remember belt ceremonies where he did not pass people and that had been I think maybe a little bit embarrassing especially us as Americans to be up there you know you're basically walking up after you've done all your things and Grand Master [00:08:54.10] is either given you the thumbs up to thumbs down with regard to your progression and I was I witnessed some people not progressing and you gotta lower your head and walk away and the next person goes up and they get their the judgment if you will maybe that's a strong word.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And what was it about martial arts it that you dug I mean what you know here you're you're playing ninja turtles you know and then you step into a real class I mean was it was it what you were expecting? Did it grab you?

Frank Hatsis:



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It was very cool yeah it way cooler than what I was expecting and you know what I think I say so just to back up a little bit you know growing up as a lot of little kids there lies some confidence issues, some self-esteem issues I was picked on by other people and you know it's not [00:09:46.00] tell that's a lot of kids can say that so and with martial arts the cool thing was that I didn't need anybody else really to practice of course I can get together with my friends over to play in this and that but when I wanted to practice like nun chucks I just needed me and 265 together. If I wanted to practice forms or kicks I didn't need anybody else to do those things whereas if I got together with friends to play say football or touch football if I messed up everybody pointed their finger at at me or at somebody else and you know and it's just growing up I not like hung up on this stuff but you know being in martial arts allowed me the freedom to be who I was to practice how I wanted to practice when I wanted to practice and if others were around maybe with whom I wanted to practice. So there was that that definitely attracted me to the martial arts I guess that I didn't need anybody else's permission or I didn't have to meet somebody else's standard in order to engage in the activity.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now of course I'm gonna foreshadow here a little bit cause I know we're gonna talk about martial arts that are not tae kwon do as we move forward so how long were you in that school?

Frank Hatsis:

I stayed in tae kwon do for about I wanted I mean this was I was really on but I want to say about six or seven years. I made it all the way to a third-degree brown belt which you know whatever you know belts are belts but that you know just to give an indication of how long I was there as a youth and I ended up discovering Choy Li Fut kung fu or in mandarin they say Cai Li Fo and I saw another kung fu instantly because you know I was already kind of playing with weapons on my own and then I found a school that actually plot weapons and I was like Oh my God I got a jump in on this so I ended up leaving tae kwon do and joining Master Perella's kung fu centers which was a Choy Li Fut and Lama Pai mix from the [00:11:50.06] lineage of [00:11:52.15] if you will.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And what was that transition like you know how and if I may ask how old were you when you switched?

Frank Hatsis:

I was about I would say 13 going on 14 approximately when I was switching and again this is we're talking well over 20 years ago some of my days might be a little bit off but I'm

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's okay.



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Frank Hatsis:

But I'm trying to reflect as accurately as I possibly can. I was about 13, 14 I would say 14 years old when I made the switch from tae kwon do to Choy Li Fut Kung Fu.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay well you know that this is a going in any kind of an affidavit so we don't need to pin you down to exact years or dates or anything like that. So here you are your your training in tae kwon do, you're practicing weapons on your own you find this school that has weapons as part of the curriculum and in your excited and you jump in there and what was it like?

Frank Hatsis:

It was still as cool as training in tae kwon do was for me I felt like I took for lack of a better way to say it the next step up in cool and that same feeling you know I like a a structured approach to things so I never had a challenge with standing on a spot and repeating the same technique over and over to refine them to master them and I use that term very loosely cause I haven't mastered anything yet but to really hone in those skills I you know I think one thing I will say is that whatever success that I've had with regard to martial arts is I actually enjoy repeating and drilling the same thing over and over and over again so to find a school that was continuously you know drilling these concepts as well as adding weapons to those thrilling and and I don't know I'm actually I have a smile on my face as I reflect on it was a really really special time in my life and the feeling of it was like I was just another you know a monk at the Shaolin Temple around all these other monks and we're all going for our forms and everything was what is on point and timed properly and it was you know it was obviously forms I choreographed and it just it it has feeling in me that I guess I'm finding it a little bit challenging to describe right now but it just felt good and I tend to stick with things that feel good.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I can hear a slight shift as you're talking about this school versus this the first school you know and not to take anything away from your tae kwon do school anyone who's a long-term listener to the show knows I firmly believe in all arts have value and the best thing is to find the art the school that works best for you but it sounds good I'm glad I'm glad you but in any hearing your voice it almost sounds like you would call the second school home like you found a place that you belonged and maybe you didn't even realize from the first school that it could be that much better.

Frank Hatsis:

I would say that very accurate way to put that and it was, it did feel like home so when I when I do speak to people and they ask me you know what spot you know about the same conversation you know what style, who's your Sifu all that stuff I always say Choy Li Fut kung fu and I say and and I took



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tae kwon do as a kid and I was there for you know years but really my home was and I still feel like my home is in Choy Li Fut kung fu when I compete or when I bring students to compete. We compete in Chinese weapons divisions Chinese forms divisions Chinese fighting you know some [00:15:50.12] you're familiar with division I don't you know I don't have much I would even say familiar familiarity anymore with regard to tae kwon do while I really don't I a lot of it I left with a lot of the solid the basics of foundations and as you stated I agree firmly that there's something to be gained from every martial art and it really is finding the one that that works for you personally and and tae kwon do did work for me but Choy Li Fut kung fu worked better if that makes sense.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It does and I think most people that have trained in multiple styles would agree that you know there's there's always going to be a special place in their heart for the the first style they trained in.

Frank Hatsis:

Right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

But that doesn't mean that that is the best place for them.

Frank Hatsis:

Yeah

Jeremy Lesniak:

And it doesn't mean that what you want what you need as a human being practicing martial arts doesn't change as you gauge.

Frank Hatsis:

Yeah, I sure I agree hundred percent on that, absolutely. From there though from the Choy Li Fut I actually ended up studying Muay Thai by under Ray Longo and I did that for I do know 5, 6 again seven-ish years maybe my golden number is about seven years but I before I switch for other art but and that's when I was doing more amateur Muay Thai fighting and I bet that is the martial arts that I truly truly fell in love with as a fighting system I like I think every martial art you know has it's fighting application if you and you know people understand what the application really is. I think most applications that people they are applications a little bit to Mickey Mouse and you know real applications are pretty dirty and nasty but but Muay Thai is where I really learned how to fight and I attribute that to guys like Ray Longo, Luke Kumo, Dave Paden I mean these guys are just they are



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always top of the game and they shared their knowledge you know what I loved about Muay Thai as opposed to kung fu was that kung fu every you know a lot of times as though I have this secret thing and it's the same with me I'll teach you the secret thing and you know I'll wash the floors and it's that the other thing for Muay Thai you walked in and they're like no we're getting you ready for a fight you need to know what's going on [00:18:17.09] the tricks of the trade, use all the basics use the stuff that works discard the stuff that doesn't so I had a couple of amateur boys I fight under Ray Longo and I was successful and some not as successful and in others but it was that's where I really learned how to fight and obviously what martial arts is fighting so.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice alright so that gives us a great context, the foundation for who you are for the other things that we're going to talk about is we weave through the story that is your path in the martial arts. One of the things I love to talk about here on the show his stories I see the world in terms of stories really think all we have is history of the stories we tell other people and I'd love to know when you reflect on your time as a martial artist what is your favorite story that you tell?

Frank Hatsis:

The favorite one oh geez, wow favorite story favorite story I guess one of my favorite stories to tell and that it is because people ask me is how I got introduced to the rope dart and it's kind of a long story and it's a lot of seemingly odd events that took place that actually led to me having a rope dart and learning a rope dart and things of that nature but those that it again that this is over months and months of time of the right people the right circumstances just falling in to place. A really easy story would be the first time that I did fight for Ray and I won and I just remember the calmness I had during the all three rounds I remember it despite the crowd you know yelling and cheering and booing and whatever it was what being able to actually block all of that out I only heard Ray's voice that was it out of a huge venue everybody screaming one voice that I heard was Ray's and he wasn't even yelling out loud I just was able to tune in on him and not only that he was obviously coaching me and it was the first time where somebody was telling you what to do in real time and I was calm enough and of sound mind enough and I was executing everything he was saying and I remember he would say something I would do it and he'd be like yeah and every single time he cheered for me it just oh man it put something in my heart that make me go bigger better faster more and it was like he just kept beating fuel into my fire just by him saying yeah cause you know you know martial like what we want we want our Sifu to be proud of us. We want to make our Sifu happy that's why we do the extra push-ups, that's why we're taking the back hundreds of times you want to make our Sifu happy and you know and Ray is an awesome guy I mean he's far by one of the nicest guys there for me so he was generally a happy guy anyway but that he was that happy for me specifically in that moment. I'm actually getting goosebumps on my arm right now. I mean that that's me was just an amazing night I ended up winning you know and I won the fight as I as I mentioned against the bigger opponent and you know all those things that make it a magical event just came into place but whatever reason man just hearing Ray Longo talk directly to me and tell me exactly what he wanted me to do and my having the wherewithal to execute exactly what he was



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saying in the real time in a combat situation that left an impression on me for my entire life that really did.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow, now anyone that's competed has likely experience the exact opposite of that in fact I remember in my early days of competition even in forms competition I would go blank I would fall completely onto my training onto the way that I had done that form hundreds of times and I was not present obviously being present in life in general is a good thing and here you're telling us a story about how you were so present you were able to adapt on-the-fly to take the feedback from your instructor and to implement it with success. I'm going to assume that this wasn't something that happened automatically it came with some experience with developing some comfort in the ring is that is it fair to say?

Frank Hatsis:

Oh yeah it's absolutely fair to say you know anybody that knows Ray Longo knows that he produces the best fighters on planet so leading up to any of my fights I was you know locked in either at the cage that we had there or on the ring with you know your choice of an animal and you know I got my my butt kicked many many many many many times 100 times to the one time that I actually had the opportunity to kick butt and I feel that Ray knows how to prepare people for you know it's beyond that it's the nerves that you know dealing with all of you know it was an amateur fight so it's not like I'm getting paid for it. I still have to deal with paying rent you know going to school the girlfriend's mad at me oh also you gotta get in the ring and have some guy that really want to kick their come face-to-face with you and Ray was able to prepare you for all of that so that you could stay calm and he has experience certainly helps I wasn't that that in tune my first couple of times that I fought under Ray and then to have that moment it was I say I felt like a shift in my overall training and that was when I realized that I should be in the heat of battle and I could be so calm that you'd think I was asleep so.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Were you able to take that presence that calm demeanor in the face of fire outside of the ring?

Frank Hatsis:

Yes, I think that's probably one of the biggest benefits that I was able to draw from it is that I don't I don't get so uppity in a in a you know if there is an aggressive confrontation. I don't get as you know you know people that have never fought they are the ones that are so willing to fight all the time. The guys that have actually gotten there butt kicked many many many times ain't so quick to fight because they know exactly what happened so you know that either one of you get hurt, both of you get hurt, you both might go to jail you know what any any list of things that could go wrong. So I think that being able to stay calm, defuse any kind of a situation before it escalates to that level I think I got that ability from



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from training with Ray it's called it's called law MMA now when I was training there living on Long Island it was Ray Longo's international martial arts Academy.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great stuff now outside of martial arts you know is there anything that you're really passionate about?

Frank Hatsis:

Not really I mean the ropes dart as a martial arts thing yeah I don't have a balanced life I know that everybody says oh you need a balanced life it's like yeah but not if you try to do something big so in other words if I split my time up between the ropes dart and say I really like to cook and now I'm also trying to become some great chef both of those things are going to fail because I'm not because that well I'm balance well oh I have half my time here half my time there but I don't think that you can grow a proper plant by only watering it half the time you gotta water that plant all the time or it's not gonna grow.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh I like I that.

Frank Hatsis:

So I yeah I don't actually have too many other things that I am into in life other than the ropes dart is my life and I say that very happily I don't know that many people get to do what they want with their life the way they want to and I am you know I struggle don't get me wrong it's not it's not rainbows and sunshine but you know I get the be with you know guys like you and I get to meet some pretty amazing people and have some amazing experiences but just before I get too off-topic no I don't really have too many other things. I like to study the laws of the universe the way the universe works that's something I'm very interested in but other than that now my life is extremely one-sided. I ropes dart that's what I do.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You are not the only one in fact just off the top of my head as I reflect back on the guest who have answered this question a lot of them will share other things but you can just hear it in their voice that they are afraid of sounding one-dimensional and then of course we have plenty of folks such as yourself who say no martial arts in whatever flavor is my passion it is my life and we've even had some folks can you take what you said that you going get a great plan if you water it full-time you know really investing that time. We've had some say that that is the way the only way to practice martial arts. So I don't think you're in poor company here.



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Frank Hatsis:

Okay perfect well you know there's so many people it's kinda like the party line of somebody you're at a party you're talking with two of your friends and one of them says oh you know that this problem this problem whatever's going on in their life and the other friend's like well you need to find balance you need to balance things everybody goes to this shotgun approach of you need balance but I'm saying no you don't know it like okay sure yeah you you need you got eat too, you got to sleep by whatever but if you want to do something great in this life there's no time for balance in the sense that we're speaking of right now did it's all or nothing for for me anyway I'm happy to hear you have other guests that feel the same way. It's all or nothing because if you don't put in 100% of what you're what I'm trying to spread the ropes dart across the world now that's a bold freaking statement to make and if I was busy trying to figure out how to make a soufflé I ain't spreading the ropes dart across the world you know so it really is about finding that for me anyways if you want to be on that level and find something that's great and if you want to leave a legacy there's no room for balance there's finding that thing that makes you happy and and going with it. I'm not stopping and not listening to anybody else, cause if people are going to say no but you don't know you just go for it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I understand and I agree, now you mentioned rope start a few times I know what that is but I'm gonna guess we have at least a few listeners out there who are saying what the heck is a rope dart so maybe you can give us a little bit of a primer on what that is because you're the first person on the show in 300+ episodes to even mention.

Frank Hatsis:

Well that's awesome again cause I'm not balanced. So the rope dart is I'll do my best to give a good snapshot. A rope dart is an ancient Chinese martial arts weapon it also has it's some roots and Japanese martial arts as well now I'll explain that in a second but a rope dart is an ancient Chinese martial arts weapon and it consists of a heavy object usually a dart or a dagger head or even like an iron ball like a melon head on a long rope and the idea is that it's basically something to hit somebody with and also to get it back so instead of me just growing a throwing knife at somebody and that's the end of throwing knife I can throw it hit somebody and of course I could retrieve it back. In the Japanese version I believe is called the Kunai where in Chinese they say Sheng Biao or a Fei Tou to describe a rope dart.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay and when did you find that? Was this something that came through as part of your kung fu training?

Frank Hatsis:



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Well you know I tell you it was a series of really odd events that got me, that got a rope dart in my hand to and I'm happy to give you as quickly of a version as I can without spending too long-winded but I was a full-time kung fu instructor at Master Parella's kung fu center so this is the not only the school that I the first kung fu school that I actually became a student in but it also went on to become an instructor there. So it was one night this is back in 2005 and I finished up classes for the evening I had gone home and you know took a shower and I was a little bit wired and like you're a martial artist sometimes you you get done training you go home and you just can't sleep so I decided to go back to the school [00:31:33.09] ran a little bit I'll try this try that hit the bag go through my forms you know all the typical stuff and when I got there my my former Sifu Michael Perella was actually on the floor and he had a rope dart in his hand and I just stood back and I was kinda watching it and he did a what we call a wrap so it seems like the rope dart is actually tied or around the person or bound around them. So he was in what we call a wrap and I looked at him and you know he kinda made like a gesture like it was tied around him and he went bam and he just [00:32:06.24] and it came like you know within a foot of my face I jumped back I was like oh my God like you know what I what I just witnessed was magic. Here was the thing that was wrapped around this guy so far as I can tell and it just magically became unwrapped and he basically almost [00:32:22.02]. So that was really cool and then he said he asked me to point pick out a focus mit we had our focus you know the training the boxing mits people hit we had the focus mit hanging on the wall, he asked me to pick one and I pointed at no particular one and from whatever it was about 12, 15 feet away and he just you know wound up flung and I I am not kidding this guy hit the exact target that I pointed at now whether it was deliberate or accidental or a little bit of luck I don't know but that left such a huge impression on me. I had to know what this thing was and you know I went home you know we talked we did whatever I did not even let him on as to how interested and fascinated I was at this thing cause I didn't want him to tell me don't use it you know no you know first the staff and then you get sword and then this and then after 10 years the ropes dart kind of a thing I don't really believe [00:33:19.14] getting anybody to learn the ropes dart at any time by I went into the school early the next day I found it I just started playing with it and you know the rest is what they say history. There's a lot more steps that actually came to pass but I don't want to get too long-winded on on the stories but that I was actually the first time I have ever seen that that weapon and this is before YouTube was around this is before Facebook this is before anything on the Internet was available. I picked up a ropes dart and started swinging it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool so it almost sounds you know here again we're focusing in you know kind you went from passionate about martial arts what you know with the ninja turtles to a little more passionate about tae kwon do as it got more focus you had some instruction then you move over to kung fu you're even more passionate you're finding more what resonates for you and now we get hyper specific we're talking about yield different variations but really a single implement within the martial arts and listeners you can probably hear what I'm hearing in our guest's voice that further passion that that even higher that elevated energy as you are talking about it. Is this something you you were conscious of right off the bat's and oh my God this is what I need to do with my life?



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Frank Hatsis:

Yeah to be totally straightforward with you the second I picked it up I told myself I'm going to do something with this I don't know what it is and I know it's gonna take a long time to do it but you know right now I don't know what I want but there was nothing in my life that ever spoke to me more than the ropes dart other than my beautiful fiancée who for whatever reason said yes today nothing nothing even comes close to the importance of the ropes dart in my life. I just knew it the second I picked it up but I think a lot of people would do when it comes the ropes dart you either fall in love instantly like you got hit with a ropes dart from Cupid or you don't and that's what I seem to find is that people either love it or they're not into it and for me I fell madly head over heels in love with it the first time I saw it and then this first time I picked it up the following morning it was a match made in absolute heaven I just fell in love with it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Alright well I know we're gonna talk a little bit more about rope dart and we're gonna talk about how that's threaded itself through your life. But I have a couple other questions that I want to ask you as we move on. One of my favorite questions the idea that martial artists have this unique ability maybe not unique and expanded ability to handle life's obstacles. I'd love for you to tell us about a time when life was challenging and how was your martial arts training that you are able to utilize whether that be physically or emotionally to move through that obstacle.

Frank Hatsis:

Okay so I'll go I guess what you know with apologies to your guests I'll go with the real easy answer with regards to things that really happened so you know as I already mentioned you know we live when I say we I mean like my fiancée and I [00:36:42.02] we live in Brooklyn we're from Long Island it's not always sunshine and rainbows people get very aggressive people try to you know do things that try to start you know fights or nonsense and it was actually something my my fiancé Sarah you know tells people you know with regard to you know the two or three times that somebody you know what they were drunk or high on drugs or however the hell was basically started with the two of us for no reason and you know she points out that dude like how do you stay so calm like this person is screaming up and down and this and that they were just ready to fight and I'm just standing there like alright dude whenever you're ready. Alright dude when it like whenever you wanna go like and I I don't even really say that much I just stand there and look at the guy and then you know that usually defuses the situation because I think there's something about my calmness that might be a little disconcerting for some people. I would imagine most people who are not trained when they start jumping up and down they want to fight somebody who also wasn't trained that other guy starts but jumping up and down and it's this bark and then I barked louder and then he barks louder than me and it's just this back-and-forth but I don't give those people a reaction I don't give them whatever it is they're looking at and why would I anyway I know that if push comes to shove I need to stay calm in order to handle the situation so you know I would say that's probably one of the better examples of how martial arts in the real life has



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helped me just stay calm and not you know not not engage somebody the way they want. It's kinda like I don't fight their fight so if you you know [00:38:25.23] completed you don't fight the other guys fight you but you make him fight your fight so that's what I do and I even handle that in our our our organization I use the term fight as not literal but figuratively. I don't I don't go the way people think I'm going to do it they either do it the way I'm doing it or they can they could leave friend and I don't do business with because I know what's best for me I know what's gonna help me win and I is that term you know quote unquote win so I I play by my rules and that seems to be working out fairly well. Of course you need to to collaborate with others you have to work with others I'm not saying that it's my way or the highway but when push comes to shove in a fight or negotiation I don't back down so whatever my stance is and I would say that I a hundred percent got that from the martial arts no question.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now when you reflect on all of the people you've trained with worked with anyone that's had influence in your martial arts upbringing who has been the most influential?

Frank Hatsis:

The most influential is man I have not even mentioned yet his name is Aquila Columbus or Zachary Aquila Columbus and he was another instructor along with me at Master Parella's Kung Fu centers and he was the guy that really understood kung fu. Who really understood form and application and a lot of people a lot of martial artist you know in my opinion they don't know the applications [00:40:09.28] technique of a form so they just trying to make it up and what what Aquila taught me was look the moment you realize what a real application is you know it and if somebody says this is the application to this technique in this form and it doesn't make sense just reject it immediately and also look at the technique before so that they're gonna break down an application for me not only do I look at that technique I need to look at the technique before with in the form which leads up to the technique we're discussing and after which is the final result or with that that imaginary opponents counter is and this is the stuff a lot of people don't say it's not just you know I turn this way and hit this guy and I turn that way and hit this guy and it's like that's not what it is, it's you are turning and doing advance with usually one of the person who was countering everything that you're doing. So that you're learning not only the form and its application but you're learning the counter to it as somebody you know and, in the instance, that somebody does it to you but he just understood like you understood martial arts in a way that was absolutely let me say a real funny genius level we would watch got pretty sometimes this guy got I'm not kidding 95% of the Jeopardy answers correct and if he had the wrong answer the person on the show also had the wrong answer. So in other words the first of the contest was also tricked by the question as he was and he was also able to get 95% of the questions correct and I was like you need to go on Jeopardy dude. I don't know what to tell you'll win it and you know I don't he never did so far as I can tell but but he just really showed me what martial arts really was that it wasn't this Mickey Mouse thing where oh this is this block I'm blocking a downward [00:42:09.03] like no you're throwing the guy no you [00:42:10.26] in his neck no you're putting him in a [00:42:17.17] all these things that it's like he



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took the Mickey Mouse out of martial arts and he put the martial in martial arts and the guy was right on everything he said so I would say he had more influence on me. The only other person that comes equally close would have to be Ray Longo who again this guy taught me how to fight, he taught me how to stay calm, cool, collected in every situation the guy you know he cared about you he really like I didn't it there was no question as to whether or not Ray cared about you and your well-being and and what you were doing and your progress this guy cared and he's seen it all so I would say Ray Longo without a doubt and then Sheila Columbus has the most influence and if I'm being fair Mike Perella because I would not know what the ropes dart was if it was not for Mike Perella and I'd say that open there's no question about that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now let's flip that question. Who would you want to train with anywhere in the world anywhere in time that you haven't?

Frank Hatsis:

Wow okay I have to think of multiple people that I would say. Okay well Raymond Dekker would be one of them who you might be where he was a Muay Thai fighter Ramon Dekker would be one of them cause he just his style of fighting was just so so I've Ray used to tell me that I have nice guy syndrome so I'd have a hard time getting a ring and sparring with people that were my friend. I had a hard time getting in the face and trying to kick them and hurt them. They didn't have so much of a hard time trying to do it to me but Raley said that I had nice guy syndrome. So I would imagine studying under Dekker would give me maybe more of an aggressive approach to fighting which you know of course you have to be aggressive in a fight so he'd be one Kenny Florian one of my all-time favorite UFC fighters all time Kenny Florian I was a huge fan of the man I thought he was a great fighter I think we have similar built I think we have similar approaches when fighting I Kenny Florian is like number if it definitely top five guys that I'd wanna train with. Now the great Dennis Brown I actually have a nice friendly acquaintance dare I say friendship despite more of me saying it than he might say it but Dennis Brown who so far as I can tell is you know responsible he's basically the father of ropes dart in America and yeah and he's down in the DC area and I've met him on a few occasions. He's always nice he loves what we're doing with the Ropes Dart Academy but I've never actually got to train with him and if I could tell you man if I had an hour to just ropes dart with him and just shoot the breeze and talk about things that will probably be I'm gonna go with Sifu Dennis Brown on this and I gotta be honest with you because well the other martial artist that I mentioned that would be awesome they don't they don't have they don't know what I'm trying to do with regards to the ropes dart and I you know if you trying to do something big find somebody that has already done it and you know copy what they did I would have to go with Dennis Brown that's my long-winded answer to a very straightforward question I want to train with Dennis Brown born on absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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You know I never critique anyone for having long-winded answers it's kind of a hallmark of the show. My job is to just kinda keep you talking get out of the way you're doing a great job with that so please don't don't sweat it you are welcome to be as long-winded and circuitous as you would like to be but you know you've alluded to and I think it's a good time to talk about this that you have some ties to rope dart not just as a martial art but kind of professionally I believe you phrase it as things you are doing with rope dart so maybe this is a good time to tell the listeners what you've got going on because it might interest them.

Frank Hatsis:

Okay so we have our company if an organization called the Ropes Dart Academy it's a network of instructors all over the world that work together to bring the rope dart proper instruction great year to the masses we also make all of our own here as well we make them in-house one of our cofounders Philip [00:47:03.03] up in Québec city also makes some of our gear Raven [00:47:09.21] makes our fire head. So the ropes dart transcends the martial arts and that there is an entire community of fire spinners fire performers you know dancers that are into the rope start and it was funny because the story here is it's a little bit whatever it's a straightforward story I I was strictly in the martial arts ropes dart. I loved it you know and I was doing it for years when YouTube came out and now we're talking just about five years after I picked up the ropes dart for the first time you know there's a couple of videos on YouTube really not that many I remember what it was when it first came out if you search ropes dart on YouTube it was as long as one page one YouTube page that was it and it was even full and I remember seeing a video of a fire spinner and he was giving a recap of one of the classes he fought at a fire festival and with all the respect that I was awful and he wasn't a good instructor he didn't understand the ropes dart in any real sense that he should be keeping it and he was still very much a student and I'm still a student too don't get me wrong even today I'm I'm still learning from everybody but this guy was like a new a beginner student and he was teaching the ropes dart and I literally gasped and I was like oh my God he's got this many views and people are watching this what's this garbage so I contacted the festival and I didn't mention you know how bad their instructor was I just said hey I am interested in getting involved and the reason I wanted to get involved is because I saw some really really terrible terrible mixed dojo style instruction going and I was like I need to jump in there and basically save these people from themselves. So then I started teaching at fire festivals and what I found was that the fire dancers that wanted to learn the ropes dart were as keen as was as disciplined as was as enthusiastic even more so than any martial artist I had encountered up until that point and I was like wow these guys are really cool and they they break away a little bit from the traditional style of ropes dart and go towards more of a dancy explorative conceptual thing and for me that means growth and in a ropes like you know it's like if you put a pumpkin in a glass jar it's gonna grow to the size of the glass jar it's not gonna get any bigger so by keeping the ropes dart strictly as a martial art yeah it's cool but the techniques weren't actually expanding there wasn't that universal growth that's prevalent all throughout nature. It stayed relatively the same for a long time and then when it was opened up to fire performers and people who just liked it is there's a lot of people that ropes dart as a hobby or its fitness because it's for for exercise it's better it's way better than going on a treadmill or an elliptical I'll tell you that one when it comes to cardiovascular endurance. You're sweating it's a full body workout, a full



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body exercise as matter of fact we hooked somebody up to a it's called my zone and it reads your heart rate and your calories burn everything Philip [00:50:29.02] one of our our cofounders op in Québec city he ropes darted intensely for about an hour ended up burning open hundred calories which is twice of what you would burn running on a treadmill so the ropes dart has a place in so many different areas of self-exploration of obvious things of that nature but I found that the fire spinning world [00:50:54.24] they talk to the ropes dart the way a martial artist what they had a very I can't speak for all of them there's gonna be some goofballs everywhere including in the martial arts world I could think of a couple of the top my head [00:51:08.24] from the ropes dart world but you know there's always gonna be those goofballs but other than that the majority of fire spinners they take it super dooper seriously and for a guy like me that just speaks to my heart it really does. I don't know if I answered your question.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I don't know that you did either and so that's kinda what I'm considering here let's let's kinda jump in and inlets let's call it more than the commercial time I told you that we would have that section listeners know that we we do give our other guests that opportunity as we near the end what resources are available to people that want to learn more about the rope dart?

Frank Hatsis:

So if anybody wants to learn more about the world thought they should go to ropesdart.com it's the ropes dart R O P E D A R T S. Com that's the official world Ropes Dart Academy website and that we have online training so I again with regard to so I used to be a school teacher I have a degree in science in physed a Master's degree in that and I used to be a schoolteacher so when it comes to teaching I said that as a point of pride there I say something that I try really hard to do well and I've developed a so there's this idea that ropes dart is this impossible difficult weapon and it's not it really isn't anybody to learn the ropes start most I think a lot of that has to do with instructors keeping it away from their student just because the instructor themselves actually don't know how to use a ropes dart so they just say oh you got away you got away whereas you know they're flipping through trying to figure it out themselves so we have our online training it's a step-by-step comprehensive if you've never picked up a ropes dart before there is no better training I bought the DVDs that are available I said I made my online training I looked at what those DVDs were saying and doing and I'm doing the exact opposite you don't ever have to have picked up a ropes dart in your life you start a video one I think there's 38 videos by the time you get to 38 you are ropes darting like you would not believe so ropesdart.com. If you go to super cat40 on YouTube that's my personal YouTube channel. I have tournament videos instructional videos theoretical and principle videos any it's all the role it's my personal page only as good ropes dart stuff and then the ropes dart Academy page on YouTube also has these over a hundred tutorial videos but they're not in any kind of real order. So the online training on our website is in a comprehensive order it starts at square one and it that basically had built you a house that allows you to furnish and paint it however you like. Whereas on YouTube it's a little bit like you're kinda just threading at different things and you know hopefully if you stick around long enough you'll understand the full concept. Whereas the online training it you know from beginning to end soup



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to nuts I think the best thing you could ever do you just it's the instant access you it's like if you buy a DVD but instead of a DVD waiting to arrive at your home you purchased it and there you go you have access to the videos.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice and of course anybody that's new to the show we do link all the stuff over on our show notes whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. Cool alright so we've we've got all that there we went a little bit out of order so there are couple more short questions I want to ask you you mentioned that you're a teacher and you know we started off talking about your love for the ninja turtles so I'm curious about how you look at martial arts in let's call it popular culture, movies TV books are there any of those entertainment genres that you look at and you say you know when it comes to this movie really show or this book you know these are things that I enjoy and I would encourage the listeners to check out.

Frank Hatsis:

Yeah so you know I would say I have both sides of that there are some things that you know some things that when it comes to application in history things to that people get fundamentally incorrect. You know I like you know I read kung fu tai chi magazine I think they do a great job with sharing the arts with with others. I don't think there's any substitute for finding people who are like real Sifus real students who who have or are doing what you want to do and seeking them out as opposed to just kind of saying oh you know I'm gonna read this article that you know on you know somebody wrote this article about martial art application and you know it's just fundamentally incorrect and personally doesn't know what they're talking about. I go straight to the source you know as you mentioned earlier you know we basically can't hide it's 2018 everybody's exposed on the Internet there is nowhere for anybody to go so if for any listener that's interested in you know doesn't have to be the ropes dart just any kind of martial art for you to find the you know the big kahuna if you will of that art and reach at them email Facebook whatever LinkedIn, there's so many avenues reach out and say hey I love your you know your monkey style kung fu and I've always wanted to learn monkey style kung fu you know just what's the best way for me to move forward. I think you just reach out directly to the people because we can validate you know 20 years ago we didn't have that luxury today we do I I reach out directly to the people I say hey this is who I am this is what I'm doing I like are you doing let's do it together kind of a thing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Exactly cool and know what are your goals not just for rope dart but for life for your own training when you look out 5 10 20 years what are you looking to accomplish?

Frank Hatsis:



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So my goals are all again [00:57:24.02] bouncing all of my goals are ropes dart related they truly are and working out I would love a you know a space we don't actually have an official studio if you will but somewhere down the line I would like to have that might my goal right now and will forever be is spreading the rope start across the world the same way other people have done it with other things you know take snowboarding for example or you know skateboarder or yo-yo or anything like that the way it went from this subculture kind of neat thing to a mass scale people are doing it people are enjoying it. It's growing it has a universal law of growth that is my goal is to bring the ropes dart that the world and to not sound to cliché making a household name and that is it's you know it's been 13+ years of me doing that but I am starting to see that you know it it is catching on that you know it used to go and for years and years and years no matter what I did nobody knew what it was and now people are starting to know what it is and without putting my own horn and I say this I don't know like I feel weird saying it but it is true I go to other countries now and people like hey wait your Frank Hatsis and it's like oh wow they can even speak English and they actually know my name that was in you know festival type if places and not like I was shopping in a supermarket and a little dotty pointed me out you know so it's just to stay within reasoning keep me grounded and my ego in check I'm in you know places that would be interested in the ropes dart but the fact that they they even know what it is and they know who I am and that they thanked me for doing what I'm doing that means that I am getting closer and closer to my goal of making the ropes dart you know it's a mainstream thing it's not it is for everyone I think it's great for kids. It gave me confidence in myself it gave me self-esteem that I didn't have until I started ropes darting and I truly believe that [00:59:37.17] that anybody cause when you rope dart you're a bada** and that's it you are bada** when you rope dart so when I walk into a room I don't care where I am on this planet when I walk into a room that's exactly how I feel and I think that I can do that for anybody it can make anybody feel more confident if they stick with it long enough. So my goal is to get a ropes dart on everybody's hand but see the benefit of it and and I'm just gonna keep working towards that that goal and that that is a lifelong goal and you know it's kinda like you know there's a question it's like well you know how how old will you be when you reach that goal and my my answer to that is well how old will I be if I don't reach that goal so I'm gonna keep doing it and I don't plan on stopping my goal my dream my aspiration is to spread the ropes dart across the world to be able to provide the best service possible to provide the best instruction possible and to also furnish ropes dart [01:00:40.14]we make all our gear I design our gear I think I have a lot of experience and knowledge my gear is designed to help folks learn the ropes dart a mistake people make is they just know they tie anything at the end of a rope thinking that that will suffice and it's like well for you know a real quick thing that you want to try maybe but once you start getting into advanced things the things like proper weight balance distribution length of rope all of this stuff comes into play and people end up limiting themselves or thinking they can't do with because they're using an improper set up if you will so I guess another part of my goal is to educate people on the proper not only proper instruction of the ropes dart but educate them on the proper setup of what a ropes dart should actually feel like what it should fly like how to get the results you want with it if you if you have something that's not really aero dynamic what something that's bouncy and springs back at you you're not gonna get that, you're not gonna get the results you want. So to just tie anything to a rope yeah for your first day or two sure but you know you don't have to get a ropes dart from me. I'm not trying to sell you anything but get a ropes dart from somebody who actually knows how to build a ropes dart and what it's actually supposed to feel like.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Awesome. I appreciate your time here today appreciate being so generous sharing your story with me with everybody that's been listening I have one more request one more question for you as we head out and that would be what parting advice what words of wisdom would you want everyone listening to hear?

Frank Hatsis:

It's going to sound redundant but when I decided to stop being a schoolteacher which you know for a lot of people is a great career and it's really safe and they take care of you. I got a lot of pushback from family I got a lot of pushback from friend's people questioning me people virtually laughing in my face I had an ex-girlfriend laugh at my face saying that you know my dream to you know be somebody and share the ropes dart with the world was basically a joke and I didn't listen. So my words of wisdom to anybody listening now if you're gonna listen to anything listen to this don't listen to the naysayers and that's something Arnold Schwarzenegger said that something the greatest sages of history say do not listen to the people who tell you know you know your spiritual path you know your goals in life better than anybody ever will and had I listened, listened or you think my mom said hey great Frank quit being a schoolteacher and ropes darting she didn't say that why my dad was pissed at me people laughed at me and [01:03:32.23]tell you that much do not listen to people who tell you you can't do it you can do it if I could do it or at least be in the throes of doing it with something as obscure as the ropes dart with something that people haven't even heard of then you can do it with something even more obscure. You could do with something less obscure do not listen to the people who say no that you're wrong they will listen listen the greatest form of revenge is massive massive amounts of success. Do not listen to anybody don't let the physical plane stuff the bank account the people telling you you're wrong whatever it is do not let the physical plane noise disrupt the spiritual plane goal or dream. If your dream that's on your spiritual plane that this thing you want to do is a white-hot burning desire as Napoleon Hill would say you stick to that and you stick to to your gun look I don't eat some days I don't [01:04:34.20] don't care I don't I'm wearing the same sneakers for a year now they got holes in them. I don't go out to expensive dinners I don't do any of that stuff but I understand the way the law of nature and the universe works and it all comes back and you need to lay yourself down sometimes you need to sacrifice big sometimes the bigger the risk the bigger the sacrifice the greater the reward will be.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's not often that here we are episode 314 that we have someone talking about something new here Mr. Hatsis with the rope dart that's pretty new that's pretty I don't want to say unique to the world of martial arts but it's unique at least in the history of this show and I think it's a perfect way to prove that martial arts have space for everyone regardless of what they are passionate about. Thank you for sharing so much of your story with us today Mr. Hatsis. Now I hope everybody's gonna check out all the stuff that he's got going on it's it's a lot it's there's a lot of really cool stuff as a reminder we receive no incentive no kickbacks no commission no nothing like that. I just see a man who is passionate about



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martial arts and is making a business out of it and I want to support that because guess what that's what I'm doing to and I appreciate when all of you and others support me and the team that we have here whistlekick. You can find the show notes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com including links to everything we talked about today all of Mr. Hatsis' links and you can find everything that we've got going on whistlekick.com. We recently revamped the wholesale program it's now simpler no separate website and you can even get discounts on the apparel the first time. So check that out. That's all I've got today. I'd love for you to reach out to us I'm jeremy@whistlekick.com our social medias are @whistlekick and until next time train hard smile and have a great day.