



Episode 336 – Mr. Sean Kinney | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey there, welcome! This is [whistlekickmartialartsradio](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) episode 336. Today, I'm joined by Mr. Sean Kinney. My name is Jeremy Lesniak I'm your host for this show, I'm the founder at whistlekick and I love martial arts, that's what I do, it's my life, it's my job, it's my passion and I'm so blessed because I get to share all three of those things with you. If you want to check out the show all the other episodes we got whistlekickmartialartsradio.com you can find all of our projects, all of our products over at whistlekick.com and we've even got quite a few of our products on Amazon. Yes, they have prime shipping available. We know that a good number of martial artists start off as children and we know that it's not uncommon for martial artists to take a break, to join as a child and then come back to martial arts later in life. And today's guest did just that but as he came back in, it became a family affair and then a much bigger deal as he pursued his love and his families love of a martial arts in a way that very few have done. Rather spoil that surprise I'll let it unfold as we talk so here I am with Mr. Sean Kinney.

Mr. Kinney welcome to [whistlekickmartialartsradio](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com).

Sean Kinney:

Hello. Thank you very much. Very excited to be on the line here chatting with you today.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey I'm excited to have you here no good stuff. We were just having a quick chat about occupying the same state at one point, we'll get into some of that stuff as we go on. You listen to the show most likely the listeners have listened to the show quite a few people come in knew each episode hello to any of them. But we start in a pretty logical place to start, we start usually at the beginning so let's go to your beginning with the martial arts and tell us how you became a martial artist.

Sean Kinney:

Absolutely, absolutely. So I am a student of tangsoodo and I started my studies in the mid-90s out of the YMCA in the town that I lived in at the time in Middleborough, Massachusetts they had a tangsoodo school that was operated through the YM and it was part of the Burn tangsoodo school. Which is really for the most part I think now on in Western Mass. And the New Hampshire, Vermont. So there may be some schools in your current area of residence as well there still a thriving program. Master Burns is no longer with us but his schools are being operated very very well and I actually had the pleasure of being in a tournament and meeting his daughter a year ago so I was about 20 some odd years after I began my journey in martial arts that I got kind of be revisited by that and so it's a very neat opportunity for me. So I went to my early ranks as a gut member that's the Korean term for our colored belts members when I was in my tween and teen years, and then now like I think lots of families that get started. What occurred was I went to high school, I had an opportunity for high school sports or training 5-6 days a week and I shifted my focus from the martial arts to engaging in some of those high school activities. And then having left the realm of the martial arts for a while it wasn't until I became a parent myself then I thought of all of the really outstanding characteristics and traits that come from studying a martial art being a martial artist and I thought I really want to help to bestow those up on my own children. So, when my kids were old enough to begin a program I began seeking out the good programs in the area and I felt very very lucky there was a thriving excellent tangsoodo program in the town next to where we were living and therefore I was able to continue the journey with my children this time while continuing the study of tangsoodo anew.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. Now what's changed for you between being a youth martial artist and an adult martial artist. When you compare the two when you look back and think of and I guess I'll leave that broad. What do you find some of the differences for you?

Sean Kinney:



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How about flexibility? Yeah, I think I was a lot more limber when I was 12 than I am at 35. No, absolutely outstanding question. So many things are different and so many things are the same. I think one of the things that's the same that I found to be the same I found so so rewarding for me that was the same as the culture of the martial arts is one a constant and continual personal improvement being surrounded by people that are looking to achieve their personal best that are focused on putting positive things in their life, being heart healthy, being physically healthy, being able to possess self-confidence and self-discipline and to have through that confidence the ability to protect themselves and their family the people that they care about. So, I love the functional fitness aspect of it but all the psychological components that I think are developed just as powerfully to the martial arts is the physical components are. So those are things that I found to be the same and I'm thrilled for that. I would say that I didn't realize how much I missed being a martial artist until I walked back into the dojang and the moment I walked back in and I met with Master Gregory Mendes and had my first conversation with him just seeing the heavy bag, seeing the ring set up I thought oh my goodness I didn't realize how much I enjoyed this and how much I missed it. So that was a fun thing coming back as an adult that I found. And then for differences it is challenging to say I think, as a child you look at things to a child's eye and as an adult you look at it through an adult's eye, so I would imagine my parents would say that they were very proud and happy to see that when I was studying martial arts that it was bestowing upon me self-confidence, self-discipline, a connectedness to my community and interest in trying to help to improve the community and as a child I just was loving going in and doing my punching and kicking. I was loving going in and feeling that I was part of the community, I was loving going in and being surrounded by people who are positive influences on me, but now as an adult bringing my children into a dojang, I am purposefully really seeking out the opportunity for the personal development, the personal growth as much or more than on seeking out the opportunity for them to have a physical outlet which is of course so important as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I don't think there's a parent out there who brings her kid to martial arts and says you know I don't care if they don't become better people. I don't care if they learn how to be more respectful and have more self-confidence. I mean maybe there's some weird outlier who watched you know the original karate kid and didn't get quite all the way through the movie you know and they crave cobra Kai education for their children. But most of them are going to sit on the sidelines and they're going to wish for that, they're gonna hope for that, maybe they'll ask a couple probing questions. But you as a martial artist now, any martial artist then have a bit more context a bit more understanding how the lessons that we teach, that we learned in a martial arts environment impact a child. How have you prioritize that within either your training or your family or some other way to reinforce to expand those lessons.

Sean Kinney:



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Sure. Great question again and several avenues I think through which this is happening in my own life and in the school in which I am a member so just to clarify so I am a student and an assistant teacher, I am a staff member at Mendes martial arts in Taunton, Massachusetts which is part of the Pyong Hwa Kunin Association of tangsoodo with Great Grand Master Steven Voelker at the head of the Association and we are also part of an international organization of tangsoodo schools called the United States goodwill tangsoodo Association and that's really an association of associations that is focused on the betterment of the community, the betterment of the world through helping tangsoodo martial artist develop and become black belts so they use that term. Improving the community one blackbelt at a time at a time and I love that. So that said really there's a lot of emphasis within the school in which I am a student and I'm a staff member on connectivity to the community and helping to improve the world around you through that personal responsibility that we all have as members of the same community and that seeing through the Association memberships in which we carry. So, that said we do some great things within the school that I think are awesome I don't know how many martial arts schools do this it might be really prevalent, it might not be but we have a monthly homework that all of our students are expected to take home to participate in and I love it is a parent, I know that it's a challenge as a parent when your children at home have their own homework in school, they have their other extracurricular activities to fit in, how you fit in your martial arts homework? But what I have discovered them to be is just an outstanding chance for parent and child to communicate about some really valuable topics. So, the homework that our students take home it'll be a monthly topic and will just be one little packet to take home for the month and the theme for each month will be related to some aspect of martial arts but usually the more psychological or you know meta-aspects of martial arts. So one month might be respect, the next month maybe indomitable spirit, the next month after that maybe courage. And it changes throughout the year and that both allows us as a school to focus on the concept for a month which is great to I give that mat chat Opportunity to be centered around a topic but also it includes the parents and the young child in that conversation that match that conversation by giving them that element to take home. So, when I sit down with my five-year-old who's just starting kindergarten and they don't read or write yet, I'm reading the lesson to them and engaging with my child on this topic of respect. And it's something that maybe you do discuss as a parent, but also maybe you don't. Maybe you as a parent you haven't found your entry point yet, so it kind of puts that entry point in the hands of the parents. It becomes great dinner table conversation or something like that. It is a very interesting element it's that the social development, the social education that I think is challenging to fit into the K-12 education with high-stakes testing and with all the elements, all those pieces of curriculum that you need to bestow upon your students, martial arts community is creating an opportunity to have that social development, that social education for kids. So, that something that we do in our school and I hope that it's really prevalent and that listeners who are parents that are catching this podcast saying oh yeah, our school does something similar or does the same thing. Because I found it to be a really rewarding way to engage with my kids in a conversation that maybe I wouldn't have thought of otherwise or maybe I wouldn't have known where the entry point was at otherwise so that's an element to it. And then absolutely, like I said I want back in the dojang and within a few months I was



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a student myself so not only did my son and my two daughters get started but I almost immediately thereafter started as well starting back up again as well. It is clear to, I imagine the listener that martial arts is something that I rediscovered my passion for but it's something that I would encourage parents to consider is this something that you might be passionate about. Would you be passionate about having a greater level of health? We need to be passionate about joining your child on a journey to black belt in a way that you won't join them on a journey to win the football Super Bowl or the dance of the dance recital, you can really participate in that journey to black belt with your child in a way that you can't do most of their other activities that life. Would you be interested in feeling like you are better able to protect yourself and protect your family and in your adult years. So, there is a you know, I think a lot of reasons why parents sitting on the sideline may be I get that itch to suit up themselves and join us to put on a Gi or dobak and join the fray and I would say that for my personal experience back in, I'm loving it. And in recent months at our school we had a bit of a swell of parents joining the fray as well, we put a great promotion out over the summer and it's been awesome to see some great kids have their great parents join in and participate with us and were actually having our first belt test since that summer session that we ran coming up this coming weekend and we're gonna have some parents testing for the very first color belt either alongside their children or the day or two after their children. And just what a cool experience that is to share in something with your child like that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah supercool as you talking about it and I'm thinking a lot about the various schools that I've trained at, that I get to visit as part of my role with whistlekick and you know to respond to the is the question that you put out there, I don't think the majority of schools do have anything that organized that facilitates those discussions and it is something that I would like to see more of and certainly I think some of that happens organically. You know, there's always opportunity to speak with a kid after they get an accidental pop in the eye or you know they don't do so well demonstrating something in front of the class or maybe post competition, something doesn't go you know the way that they hoped it would. But, I think that there's there's some value there and it's something that I Hope that the school owners, cause we do have quite a few school owners and instructors listening. I hope they'll consider that. And then the other piece I wanted to respond to was on families training and training together and I think that any school that does not offer some kind of, I wouldn't call it a family class, an all ages class, even if it's only once a week is missing the boat because from what I see it's the greatest entry point in to keeping a group that will support each other and that leads to retention.

Sean Kinney:

Oh for sure I absolutely agree with that statement. From that owner-staff member standpoint, I think the more members of the family you have sharing in the journey, not only the more rich the journey will be but also of course the investments in the school. Not a necessarily financial investment of course, but



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the feeling invested as this is a part of your family life goes to the roof and it is something that I think is really beneficial. We do our parents as coaches class up periodically is not as often as once a week but at least monthly. And we get parents on the floor with kids and there's no pressure, is not a sign up opportunity were not trying to, of course encourage the parents always to consider joining us because we love having more adults to train with for sure, but it really is more designed to allow the child and the parent to turn the tables on each other a little bit and now the kid that's been on the floor for six months or nine months or two years that feels pretty confident in their skills now they are the ones holding the pad for the parent and they get to have that great moment where their skills are shining and their confidences his shining. I think parents and kids always walk up the floor loving those moments.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice so here we have a bit about you, a bit about your martial arts and how it integrates into your life and your families lives, let's talk about what you seen along the way. I love telling stories, everybody knows that I love telling stories and I love hearing stories even more. So, why do you share with us your favorite story from your time as a martial artist.

Sean Kinney:

Alright. I'll endeavor to tell a story. It's so challenging to pick a moment when so many amazing things happen. But I think some of the elements of martial arts that I feel greatest about is in myself and my children and me as a parent watching my children through martial arts overcome adversity, develop abilities and skills they didn't possess before, and to demonstrate perseverance. And I'll say that very early upon returning to study martial arts myself and having my children start martial arts so they were under a year of training under their belts, they were encouraged by this school or the chief instructor, Master Mendes to participate in their first tournament. How I participated in a tournament as a kid and I remember loving it the one tournament that I participated in when I was when I was a student. And we as a school have a notion, a recommendation that we get all of our participants to participating two tournaments a year as a minimum. They have multiple opportunities to the Association and through other associations and so we thought okay will put the kids in the tournament. So we made sure they had everything they needed, they had their sparring gear, they had their [00:18:31.06] etc. And they were ready to go. And we went to this tournament I had three children entered in the tournaments and none of my children earned a metal in any of the divisions in which they entered and I piled up at the end of the day into my minivan three kids all sniffing because they have gone there with these high hopes of coming home with a gold or coming home with a medal or getting something and three children, three divisions each not a single medal to be spoken of. And it was so hard for me as a parent I was so, such an emotive experience for me as a parent to see them all face the challenge of stepping into the competition arena with their peers and to have them not meet with success. Whether it was the point scored in performed form or whether they were being on points in the in the sparring division



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whatever it may be. So still hard for me as a parent to see them not be successful. And that it was so hard for them as kids to not get the medal because they showed up. And even I had a five-year-old, actually I had a four-year-old a five-year-old and an eight-year-old in the division at the time. And not a single soul walked away with a medal because they showed up in the whole tournament. And that was expected by me but I feel that I underprepared my children for that experience because they are living in the it's the end of the year here's your metal for being on the team and so it was such a challenging ride home. And I was thinking to myself where were the errors that I made is apparent and that I didn't maybe prepare them as well both to perform and to compete, to be successful but also, I didn't prepare them for the psychology of this is a competitive event where they will be in a big division, a few people are going to merits in honor and award and in the rest of the people are going to show up and do their best and they're going to be enriched for the experience. They're going to be a better martial artist for the experience, they're going to forge relationships with other martial artist who are engaging in the experience with you but you will not necessarily come home with a trophy to put on the shelf. So now that doesn't sound very much like my most valuable, my most memorable positive experience in martial arts. And the reason why is because it's only really the first element to what was or what has become my highlight moment. So I brought three now this beginner students to a tournament very early in the martial arts career maybe a little underprepared for competition maybe a little underprepared for the psychology of competing. And it ended up being a negative experience for all, for dad her and for all the kids. And what happened then was the kids went home and had a week commitment to trying to improve. Sometimes you don't know what you don't know, so you don't realize how good the competition could be until you get a chance to go and compete and when you're in a division of eight-year-olds and there are some really outstanding eight-year-olds in there, it allows you to say: hey I am capable of doing that too and it elevated my kids level of interest and level of excitement. So then fast forward, so that was in march of probably 2017, fast forward to October 2017 and I brought two of my three children to another tournament and in their second tournament both of my girls medals in each division. Forms, weapons, and sparring in the division which they competed and both of them earned at least one gold medal. Fast forward again another six months or eight months, June of 2018, my son jumped into his next tournament, the second tournament that he's participated in his is years of study, and he took silver in the sparring division of the tournament that he was in and the perseverance of that, the commitment to continued personal growth was really I think what has become my highlight of this. I don't think that competing in tournaments is by any means the be-all and end-all of martial arts, it's a heck of a lot of fun that you can look at it the right way and a great way to forge relationships with martial artist and to maintain your level of fitness for sure. But for me it was my kids learning some hard lessons about winning and losing at a young age learning that if you want something you work really hard for and that if you want something and you don't get it your first time out, doesn't mean you should give up and so that I would say is probably my highlight experiences that my three children now have all continued to pursue martial arts and not look at that negative experience as one of which they would back away from the sport, from the art. And also that they continue to train we double their



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efforts and then be able to better tournament and take home a medal and really have the pride of earning said medal.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's great story and you know, you touched on a lot of really important points in there about expectation the ever-controversial subject although, far less so in the martial arts community of participation award. Plenty of other things like that so thank you, it was a great story appreciate you sharing it. And that for the most part was a positive story. It was a story that had a happy ending in and really even the low point wasn't that low. But life often has quite a few low points and I'd like for you to tell us now that one of those in your life and how you were able to use your martial arts in whatever way that means to work through it.

Sean Kinney:

I mean a really challenging question for me to answer, I am gonna go back to my childhood days of being a martial artist, kinda to tap into this question and I'll preface that by saying something that I am so humbled with as a martial artist now as an adult and working at a martial arts school and working with different families who choose the martial arts for themselves or for their children as a way to achieve their personal goals and to get personal improvement. I am so, so humbled by the challenges in so many families' journey and the road that they have to walk, the challenges that they have and the way in which they get up every day and they put their best foot forward every day they do the best that they can for themselves for their children whichever it may be. So, I almost feel as if I have a story to tell and it's going to really pale in comparison to the stories of many viewers so for that I suppose I'm a very fortunate person as I think so many people have utilized martial arts to help them overcome greater adversity. That said, my story is I started martial arts I believe when I was in the fifth grade, I need to think back all those many years now and I study martial arts through my upper elementary school and middle school years or junior high years at the time or into early high school and those were times when I was, I was the kid that was picked last in gym class for everything I was the kid that I was 12 years old and it was my last year in Little League but I still was on the minor league teams that wasn't good enough to play in the major league teams, the 10-year-olds would beat me at tryouts and I think I had never found that sports, that athletic outlets that was for me. I had never found a lot of success in anything that would be competitive or athletic. I was finding the classroom, I was a decent student in the classroom, I didn't have that challenge, thank goodness. But I really was challenged to find a foothold in any type of physical or health benefit type of activity or sport. Maybe for that reason I think I was challenged in forging good friendships I didn't have a lot of great social connectivity where I was. Like for many people middle school was was a miserable time for me. Freshman year of high school was a really miserable time for me. And I think that's probably part of the course for a lot of people. It's it's a difficult time of life, so much change psychologically and physiologically for people. But I certainly was



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right there that in addition to that I was the smallest kid in my class, when I was a freshman in high school, I was the smallest kid at my school having that late birthday but still being able to meet the cut off to get into school, I was at that student I graduated high school at 17 because I started you know so early. So when I was a kid I was really, really small for my grade and I was really small for the teams and that poses up lots of social challenges for kids who often define their role by where they fit in, you know, on that athletic team by what number they're being picked in the gym class. So for me, joining martial arts and having an opportunity to do this thing that was confidence building, that helps me to develop some muscle mass, some control of my physicality, [00:28:51.12] to improve my dexterity, fortunately I would say that I was really never the victim of physical bullying so I never needed to use the self-defense skills that I developed to protect myself. But what I did was I developed self-defense skills which allowed me to feel more confidence in the world around me when I was such a small guy. So I would say that that was really the challenge that I had, is I felt like about the social misfit and really didn't belong on any squad, any team when I was a kid and martial arts gave me a place to belong. And like I said earlier in the interview, the martial arts schools the dojangs, the dojos, those are places where positive people are looking to do positive things and I got to be surrounded by people that were positive, by people that were searching personal improvement like me. And then I also I discovered I had an aptitude that it was not only could I be, you know in the studio could I be training with the other kids, I actually discovered that I have some skills, I can be successful here. You know, I can perform these maneuvers and I can do them well and kind of be receiving the positive reinforcement of the teachers in the room and that was a very cool, very cool thing for me and I think that it helped me to approach that next phase of my life was high school years of my life with confidence, with perseverance and a sense of I can do this that I wouldn't have had otherwise.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right on. Now, let's pretend for a moment we have a time machine and you have the ability to train with anyone, anywhere in the world, anywhere in time, who would you want to train with?

Sean Kinney:

It's so trite but I have to say Bruce Lee because he brought the notion of adults studying martial arts to the United States in a way where this is a way of life for adults to have physical fitness personal growth, psychological happiness and he build communities very early in his career of martial artist who I think, I think I would really love to been part of that. Be part of the time when adults studying martial arts here in the United States was really kind of blossoming for the first time and we are seeing schools pop-up all across country. Very shortly thereafter and see more and more styles of martial arts begin to flourish here as United States is that melting pot of different cultures and as that flower blossoms, people from all over the world were now residing here United States were bringing to life here in the US martial arts the traditional martial arts from their home countries. And now you know if you would to walk your



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major city you could probably find dozens of different styles of martial arts, some of which are new or some of which are traditional. Some of which are hybrids and I think a lot of that is bootied in the success that was founded by Bruce Lee starting those martial arts schools back in the day. And then obviously promoting the martial arts with as many movies as well. And he's an icon so that you know, no better icon there. Their of course is a great Tangsoodo icon so my close second-place is Chuck Norris. So Chuck Norris is a black belt, I believe he's a master of tangsoodo and that that would be amazing as well but I went for the earliest real key person so there you go.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. You know, I don't think there's anything trite about naming Bruce Lee. I don't think that you can discuss martial arts and individuals who have had an impact whether that be in the way people think about martial arts or in people participating in martial arts without talking about Bruce Lee. There's a reason he is the most celebrated martial artist of all time. 45 years after his death, he's still the one we all think about. So now, to me there's nothing trite about that. Let's kind of flip that question on its head, let's stay rooted in reality. When you consider the folks that you have trained with, who would you say has been the most influential on how you are now as a martial artist?

Sean Kinney:

Absolutely that's a significantly easier question so thank you. I needed an easy one after the last one. Yup. That's good so this is that nice break I can stop sweating now. So hands down undoubtedly, Master Greg Mendes of Mendes Tangsoodo and he is an outstanding instructor. He is an even greater human being and being a part of his school both as a student and getting to work on the staff with him has been an extremely rejuvenating experience for me as an adult and as a father. And hands down he is just an absolutely amazing motivator and passionate, passionate martial artist who cares so much about the artform about tangsoodo, cares so much about helping his students to reach their personal best cares so much about helping people to learn the skills that they need to feel confident and safe in a crazy, crazy world. So and then in addition to that Master Mendes for me has really taken on a mentor role as I now work with him, had the pleasure of working with him at the school that he's helping me not just hone my skills to be a better martial artist and to be a teacher of the martial arts, but really to to have a positive outlook and positive view on the world around me and to see things from the perspective of what can be done and maybe, I'm a bit of a glass half-empty guy sometimes, and he's very, very much the glass half-full and he helps to lift me up in that capacity and help me be a more positive person, so cannot say enough about that man or his program.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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You know after 3 1/2 years there aren't a whole lot of answers that come up that are new. And someone choosing their current instructor as being tremendously influential on them that's not new, it's powerful it's poignant it's important but it's not new. But what was new to me was your use of the word rejuvenating and I suspect that that word wasn't chosen lightly. What do you mean when you say that your opportunity to train with him under him to teach and as someone who works in a school? Why rejuvenating?

Sean Kinney:

Well I would say that life can be a grind for all the, for all the parents out there for all the people working two jobs and three jobs and whatnot out there that are part of the viewership. But life can be a grind, life could be really challenging, difficult decisions and health challenges and financial challenges that are beyond our control can come at us in our adult life, just so frequently and without warning. So I would say that, I was a person who was overworking himself and over committing himself and searching for something different, for a change in and how I do business so that I could maybe be a bust out of the rut. And it's funny my wife who was amazing, was the artist of our books that we publish and is just an absolute amazing wife and an amazing person and an extremely talented artist. She has all of these little hobbies little things that she gets excited about, gets passionate about whether it's just she's going to settle in on the end of a stressful day with an adult coloring book and kind of color and do shading or whatever and produce this really beautiful coloring example. I was someone who at the end of the day when I was done working we'd look around and be like, one of the work is there for me to do cause I didn't have hobby, I didn't have a passion, I didn't have something to that I could call my own that wasn't my career. That wasn't rooted in trying to create the best personal and financial future for myself and my family. And when the time came that I was able to get my children started in a martial arts program and I brought them in and I signed them up for the summer program to get them started and I was around the dojang again and I started hearing the mat chat from Master Mendes, and hearing the motivational things he was saying and seeing the teens and the adults coming in for the class after when my children were finishing up, thinking to myself and saying to myself, maybe this is not even maybe, this is where I need to, I need to be and then in joining and in carving out some time for myself to do something that was a physical outlet that would challenge me in a positive way and that would have me be doing something dramatically different than what I do in my 9-to-5, you know Monday to Friday and what I had been doing for the last decade and a half and maybe kinda get lost in the woods a little bit is apparent just trying to make sure you doing the best you can with your family, that's where it was rejuvenating is it allow me to do something with my children that was also for myself that was for personal improvement and it paired me up with a mentor. It paired me up with someone who has raised children someone who has you know, manage his business. You know been self-employed like I am with the book series and what not and done so successfully and have some stories to tell, some more stories and some victory stories and to be able to motivate and and really be a mentor to me. So that's where the rejuvenation word comes from, is that really taking the time, really at my wife's encouragement



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cause I don't think I ever would've signed up if she hadn't said you gotta get in there you seem so excited to get in there. It has given me an opportunity to as an adult in the life wake up, go to work, go home go to dinner, go to bed, to do something that is meaningful that is powerful that is shared with my family and that is also really awesome for me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Love it. Now, you have some things going on on your end that might take a little bit longer to talk about the we often leave space for. So I'd like to transition that now and let you talk to the audience, talk to me as well I guess about what's happening with you. You've alluded to it a little bit as we've talked but let's just jump in both feet. Tell us what you got going on.

Sean Kinney:

So thanks for give me the floor. So this endeavor, this journey into martial arts again for me as an adult has been so powerful. Really has been, has been life-changing. It's changed both my family life in a very positive way, it's given me this chance to share the journey to blackbelt with my children and it's given me something as I was just saying it's giving me something to hang my hat on as this is something that is positive that is powerful but it's also for me and it's for my growth and it's for my my betterments and it allows me I think to be a better dad to be a better employee and to be a better husband because I'm doing something that is really valuable, that is giving me that destresser and that rejuvenation like we mentioned to be a person. And in the whole process of of walking this road with my kids, I took a lifetime hobby of mine which was kind of journaling and then also writing fiction something I've done since I was a kid just kind of written I have tens of thousands of words that no one will ever get to read because it's always been something that was for me it was my personal outlet and my wife's encouragement just like she encouraged me to go ahead and sign up and start this journey again in the first place when she and a friend of ours who is a children's author kind of got brought into the know got wind that I had been doing some writing on what my kids experiences. Then they had said, you need to develop this. So a friend of mine Jessica Reno who is a children's author in multiple series going she had said to me you know, when I heard what you were doing I looked up some comps and there's book series and book series out there for little girls that are studying dance. There's not a lot out there for little boys and girls that study karate, this is really something that you should consider developing. And having the perfect scenario of a wife who is both a classically trained artist and graphical artists, my wife and I sat down and said well let's let's development what's invest in it. Let's see if anything comes of it, if we plant this garden, if anything will grow. And in really the winter of 2017, my wife and I set out on a journey to take some of my stories and develop them into published children's books about kids doing martial arts, so that said, the karate kid's collection was born and we have since published two stories with a third on the way, God willing, will be published by the end of October were trying to release our biggest story yet which is a 10-chapter, chapter book will be geared for the first and second grade



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reading level. Called the bully on the bus and it's an anti-bullying story and it's been in development for a long time with a lot of support betting from some friends of mine in the public education field and being vetted by law enforcement officers and mental health counselors and public school elementary school teachers and administrators to make sure that the lessons that I'm sharing therein are really, really well vetted and well-crafted for the intended audience. I am a high school teacher by trade Monday to Friday, an amazing job and amazing career field and I'm very, very proud to do it but I have not worked at that age level significantly so having these great, having Dare officers of people there to vet the work for me has been a huge resource, a huge benefits to the story. But yeah that's that is the project, is the Karate Kid's collection and in that series I have probably 15 or 16 children stories aging from books that would be read from a parent to a pre-k child, through books that would be read by second, third, fourth, and fifth graders and everything in between when it comes to reading level and length and topic. In the bag, in the back pocket at least have a first-round editions written that probably require lots and lots and lots of editing on my part but the process of publishing and developing the stories has been an enormous learning opportunity for myself, an amazing challenge for my wife and I to pursue together and to overcome together. Which has been just amazing. I but also, it's been so eye-opening to see that the elements of time that goes into the illustration and the formatting and the layout of the stories is so significant is so dramatic far beyond what I ever would've imagined having just you know, been sitting down as a kid with a pen and paper and then sitting down as an adult with Google Docs and a keyboard. Really learning what the process is to take I dreamed author story and turn them into the reality of having a published work that is available for people to purchase, for people to read, people to share and enjoy with their children or as a family.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow. Cool and what are the goals for this? How big are you trying to make it?

Sean Kinney:

That is way more challenging questions than it should be, really the goal for me was to enjoy the therapy of writing which has always been something I've had in my back pocket as an individual, and then when it became something that my wife and I decided that we would jump in and try to make this happen really the goal was to produce three stories and the third of those three stories is the one that we hope to release this year. So, in the first three stories that were getting to publication we have three different protagonists. They all have, I changed my children's names for the purpose of it by each of the stories the protagonist is based on one of my children. So the real at its core goal of this was for me to commemorate my children in this published work so that's a story and elements of their experience with the martial arts could live on forever there and that they could live on forever as the intended protagonist of the story. So really I would say were meeting the goal when we published a story in October, but I would say that our first milestone will be releasing this third final story which is based



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upon an experience that my oldest child had and she's in second grade what she was experiencing some bullying in our school bus ride to school and it was just prior actually to her starting martial arts, so the details of the story had been created so as to share this lesson with the world about how to have children be consciously aware of how to prevent themselves from being bullied how to support targets of bullying and what to do when faced with the challenge of bullying. But it's sharing and elements of her actual life, same thing the second story that we produced was with my son is the protagonist and it was about learning how to tie his shoes and learning how to tie the belt to his gi. And the first story that we produced was about my youngest child which is titled the impossible push up and that stories about my teeny tiny Sprite of a daughter, who's six years old now but when she started martial arts, she was only four and she was the littlest kid in the crew and the challenges that she had when in a class at the bigger kids that had better control of their physicality for her to do some of those physical challenging things and that was difficult for her being such a teeny tiny one. And a little sidebar here on this and she's getting ready to belt test this coming week for her orange belt and she's on her road black belt now as she's old enough that she's six and we were in the studio the other day and after class wanted to see what she could do and she popped out 28 really impressive push-ups one superset with having been committed to continue her improvements and loving the martial arts and doing those physical things that make them healthy and strong, so she went from being the protagonist of the impossible push-up two years ago when she was four, to being able to do 28 a set which is a challenge for a lot of adults.

Jeremy Lesniak:

For sure.

Sean Kinney:

But yeah, that's the first milestone for us is to get this third book out and then all of my children will have their cornerstone piece written and out. And then really the books are about, in my opinion, telling positive stories about how kids in martial arts encounter the same challenges that kids that are not in martial arts encounter but how their skills and knowledge and confidence that are bred within a martial arts program give them the ability to overcome those challenges. So kind of hokey in some ways that you know, it always comes down to a lesson from the master instructor that gives them that knowledge they need to know to be successful in whatever the challenge may be, but really true in that, in committing yourself to personal improvement through the martial arts you're going to learn invaluable life skills that regardless of your age whether you're three or 30 or anything in-between it will help you to be a better person and that's where we're at. So I have lots of additional stories and I want to tell and and I look forward to telling and sharing the the workload with my wife of building these books and getting them published and if it's something that ever gains mass-market appeal that'd be amazing. If it's something that has its little niche of the martial arts world and and some families of young martial artist enjoy sharing with their children that's outstanding and really if it's something that is a project that my



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wife and I have and endeavored upon and really it never becomes more than telling stories that are powerful and meaningful to us that commemorate the life lessons that we have learned his parents that our children have learned growing up through the martial arts, it really it's a very powerful and outstanding personal endeavor for my family.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool, nice. Now if people wanna find what you've got going on, you know, websites social media and all that, let them know.

Sean Kinney:

Great. Yeah, so you can find us were on Facebook @karatekidscollection, we're on twitter also @karatekidscollection and then when we have our website www.karatekidscollection.com and you can find information there, updated pretty regularly. And then also the first two books that are available that are published and available for purchase you can find in some local area independent booksellers like read more books in Taunton for example, they carry our stories. But then we're also available on Amazon.com for prime eligible shipping and if people are interested in purchasing a copy and sharing it with a young martial artist or sharing it with a school, I think one of the things that's been most exciting for me in this process has been that the school in which I work they utilize the books as part of our welcome package for new families and we'd used on instant summer camp programming as resources and we use it as prizes giveaways when we have rattles and things like that so its founded niche there in. We've had the support the Pyong Hwa Kunin association to sell the books at tournaments, so that's been really neat. Actually, if you've ever been to a tournament with a child, there's a lot of hurry up and wait you get there, you perform bow in and then everyone goes off and waits for their opportunity to have their age division called or be the division in which they're gonna go compete get called, so we have we sold a lot of books at Pyong Hwa Kunin tournaments in the New England area and families the kids sit down and review the books that show the books of their I would've brought to the tournament while they're waiting on their their time to compete which has been great. So that's been a wonderful thing. But also, I'd love to say more and more schools, I'll couple other schools and have taken those books on and they're using them they're either making them available in their studio for when kids are waiting in between classes and [00:54:41.10] so they have some martial arts material that's age-appropriate for children right there in the studio to be shared. Some of them and use them as giveaways or have used them as prizes and things so that's really, really neat. I mean, where on martial arts niche and what I really would love to see is that school owners look at the books, they see the value of the books and they look at it as this reinforces those same character traits that were trying to promote in our students, and we would love to share these books with our students by having them available in some capacity so that has been a really really cool thing that I've been excited to see. And as we move forward with the series, we have some stories that are not necessarily tangsoodo related, so we have a



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jujitsu story, and we have a kung fu story and we have a handful of other things and all shared with young protagonist characters that are going to demonstrate how the skills that are taught in their style of martial arts help them to grow into being the kind of person that could find success in life.

Jeremy Lesniak:

For sure. Good stuff and hope folks will check out these websites and you know, the website to social media and ultimately check out these books. You know, I want to throw this out as a reminder because it comes up once in a while. You know, no guest comes on the show with any kind of financial exchange there's no commission that kicks out, we just try to bring folks on that have interesting stories and once while those folks with interesting stories have something interesting that they've done and just part of the mission of whistlekick is to give a platform to those people who are doing cool stuff in the martial arts just like what you're doing. So I appreciate that and I do hope folks will evaluate it. Of course you know, we'll have the links over at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com so you can go there and click through and not have to remember any of these things if you're driving along or on the treadmill or something like that. I appreciate your time here today and I'd love for you to send this out the same way but the best way that I can think of, the way we ask all of her guests too. What parting words would you share but the folks listening today.

Sean Kinney:

Jeremy, thank you so much I can't thank you enough for the opportunity to contribute through this podcast and have the opportunity to form speak with you. I have been humbled again and again since my return to the martial arts world, not so many years ago with just the outstanding personalities that fill the martial arts world the more school owners that I need through the opportunities of writing and sharing these books and the more families that I need that engage and commit to martial arts the more I just feel that this is a very, very broad, very, very diverse community but some of the things that we have in our core is what all seeking to be our absolute best and nearly every ethos from every style of tradition or new martial arts that I've discovered, really are about helping people become not just a physical best but their absolute best and to take the absolute best and to share it with the community to help your community be the best it could be. And I very much get that sense from whistlekick and what you're trying to do personally, professionally and through martial journal and through the podcast as well. So given an opportunity to speak with you really, it's the pleasure entirely mine and I am so excited that I got a chance to have a voice for a few minutes with you is amazing. And then for the listeners out there just to thank you so much for your time today, if there is a martial artist in your life if there's a parent, a child in your life that you think would benefit from, from this podcast, would benefit from the book series, please feel free to just copy this URL and share it and let them know. Share it on your social media, we really, I think whistlekick, I think Martial Journal, Mendes martial arts, Pyong Hwa Kunin and karate kid's collection, we're all about trying to promote the positive benefits of martial arts to the



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world around us so that this generation and future generations of martial artist can really continue to lift the community up. And that said my journey has been an amazing one these past several years. I've see my children grow and develop into strong confident and both physically and psychologically prepared young children. They're so successful in their lives and I think that martial arts can claim a big portion of supporting them in that success. And I know for me as an adult coming back to it and getting fit through punching and kicking and being part of its team of adults that are trying to improve and trying to be their best has been an amazing journey for me. And I wish that same journey for all of you and I hope you consider joining the fray with whatever local martial arts school or style might be that you feel suits your interest and your goals and become part of this ever-growing community of martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

As you might imagine have a special place in my heart for anyone who loves martial arts so much that they create something out of it. As something that benefits children, that helps expand the reach of the martial arts all the better. So thank you Mr. Kinney for doing what you've done along with wife and for coming on the show today. Of course, you can find show notes with links to these great books and the other things that they've got going on over at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com you can find us on social media we are @whistlekick. Don't be afraid and sign up for the newsletter drop one maybe two issues a month super low-key but just to keep you up on what's going on especially roll out new products. If you want to email me jeremy@whistlekick.com is the best way, always love hearing from the listeners. That's all I've got. Hope you have a great day, great weekend, week, month, and even year. Until next time. Train hard, smile, and have a great day.