



Episode 66 – Professor Gary Dill | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

## Jeremy Lesniak

What's up, everybody? It's episode 66 of whistlekick Martial Arts Radio, the only place to hear the best stories from the best martial artists, like today's guest, Professor Gary Dill.

My name is Jeremy Lesniak, and I founded whistlekick, but on Martial Arts Radio, I'm your host. whistlekick, as many of you know, makes the world's best sparring gear as well as some great apparel and accessories, all for practitioners and fans of the traditional martial arts. I'd like to welcome our new listeners, and thank those of you tuning in again.

If you're not familiar with our products, why don't you head on over to [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) and take a look at what we make? We've been selling a lot of sweatshirts lately, both our warm, cozy, pullover hoodies, and our lighter-weight, super comfy zip-ups. You can check those out and see the great colors they come in, like I said, over on the website, but if you want to see the show notes, those are on a completely different website, and that one is [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com). I know, we're really creative with our domain names. While you're over there, go ahead and sign up for the newsletter. We offer special content to subscribers, and it's the only place to find out about upcoming guests for the show.

Just like with episode 64, this one features a quiz, so after you've listened, head on over to the website, go to the show notes, take the quiz, and see how you stack up to others on the leader board.

We have a new review to share with you, and this one's from TKDProfessional. It's a five-star review, and it's titled Best Martial Arts Podcast Ever, with quite a few exclamation points. "I've been a fan of the martial arts most of my life, and I've also been a practitioner for more than five years. This is the best martial arts podcast I have ever listened to. Thank you for such a great show." Well, thank you for that review, and we really appreciate it. We appreciate all of the reviews, and remember, if you leave us a review, we send you free whistlekick stuff, so go ahead, TKDProfessional, shoot us an email, [info@whistlekick.com](mailto:info@whistlekick.com), and we'll get that stuff out to you.

Now, today's episode brings us Professor Gary Dill. He's a multi-disciplined martial artist best known for being one of the few remaining original students of Jeet Kune Do, the martial art pioneered by Bruce Lee. Now, while this is absolutely not an episode about Bruce Lee, it's impossible to discuss Professor Dill's history and views on martial arts without the legend's name being thrown around a little bit.

After the episode closed, Professor Dill continued sharing amazing stories, and some of those stories are tacked on here at the end of the episode, so be sure to listen passed our normal closing. But rather than keep talking about what's going on in this episode, I'd rather just turn it over to Professor Dill, so without further ado ...

Professor Dill, welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio.



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**Professor Gary Dill**

Thank you. I'm glad to have the opportunity to be on your show.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

I'm honored to have you here. You are going to be our first true Jeet Kune Do practitioner, and not that we're out there searching out people of different styles, because I think, you know, a lot of people get bogged down in style versus style, but it's nice to mix it up once in a while, bring in some people with some different background. Of course, you've been around in Jeet Kune Do for quite a while, so you've got some ties back to some early lineage, and I know we're going to get into that later, but let's start, let's go back to the beginning, the very beginning. How did you get started in the martial arts?

**Professor Gary Dill**

I started when I was 16 years old in high school, and I was looking for self defense, a better way to fight, because I had tendencies to have a short temper in high school, and so I thought there's got to be a better way, so I started taking Karate and Jiu-Jitsu, and like I said, I was 16. Been with it ever since.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay. Great, so where were you at that point? Were you a west coast guy? Were you an east coast guy?

**Professor Gary Dill**

No, no no no. Oklahoma. Oklahoma.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Oh, okay, so you're smack down the middle?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, yeah. I've been there, you know, a long time. Born and raised there. I'm there now.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay. So, tell us what early Karate and Jiu-Jitsu looked like in Oklahoma back when you started.

**Professor Gary Dill**



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Oh, yeah. It was rough. You know, there's no socker-boppers, none of that equipment. The only protective gear you had was a quick set of hands, you know, for blocking. You wore gis, and of course, these were the old gis where they looked like pedal pushers, where the bottom of them came up to your knees, but it was ... You know, the old school Karate, they call it, back here, the tournaments we had back in Oklahoma and Texas, they call it the Blood and Guts Stakes, and there's a reason for that, because this was the precursor to full contact. You're in a tournament, and if you don't make contact, you don't get the point, so it got pretty rough, and it was fun. You found out real quick what you could do and what you can't do. You learned the meaning of speed, because if you're not quick, you're not. So that's the old days. Like I said, no equipment, just bare knuckles. I liked it. That's what it's all about, man, you know?

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah. Yeah, no, of course. We've had some guests on that have referenced that early era, that Blood and Guts martial arts era, and a lot of those early stories come out of Texas.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

I mean, some of the great martial artists from that era were from Texas. Did you have a chance to work with any of them?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, God, yeah. We go down ... Oh, yeah, we go there and whip their \*\*\*\*\* all the time at tournaments, yeah. Yeah, we were going back and forth all the time fighting tournaments down there. I was under Lou Angel, and we'd go down, we'd fight Allen Stein's boys. We would fight ... Oh, God. I went brain dead. Anyway, Pat Burleson, fight his boys, and they'd come up and fight us. All the old guys were there when they were young.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah. Yeah. You know, it's an incredible time in our, in martial arts history, and as I talk to guests on the show, as I do research on things, you know, read books, it's a time I wish I could go back, even just to check out a couple tournaments from then, because we don't have anything like that today.

**Professor Gary Dill**



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No. No, you don't. You really don't. They got all that protective gear, and actual technique and skill, it goes out the window. That's my opinion.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah. Yeah. Quite often. Absolutely.

**Professor Gary Dill**

I'm old-school. I've been in the martial arts for 52, 53 years now.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

That's a while. You've been around enough to see some things, and certainly see the progression as it's happened through the United States

**Professor Gary Dill**

Progression, or you could say digression.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah, yeah. Shifts, we can be PC here and say change, but there's certainly ... There are advantages on both sides of it. I mean, you're not going to put a six-year-old into an environment like that, where they're coming out bloody.

**Professor Gary Dill**

No, no no no no no, no. Back in those days, there were no kiddie classes, you know? Teenagers and adults, that was it.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Right. So, of course, if you've been training for 52 years, and you were part of that early era, that golden era that so many of us look back on and wish we could have been there, I know you've got some great stories, so I'd like you to take a second, and think about those stories, and tell us, what's your best one?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, God. Way back then? Oh, gee, I don't know. You put me on the spot there.



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**Jeremy Lesniak**

I did. That's my job.

**Professor Gary Dill**

I got to remember something. Yeah, I got to remember something. What the hell? Geez. I don't know, just the hard training we went through, you know? Two hour class would feel like it's six hours, you know? There's no breaks. Like being in Marine Corp Boot Camp, when your whole karate class is doing knuckle pushups, doing leg raises with Lou Angel coming by and jumping on your belly from one person to the other, getting out there and sparring, and you don't quit until they say you're done, you know? It was good training. I don't regret it one bit. Just I remember all the knocks I got, and the big bops on my legs.

Won't forget this one time I was in a tournament, and I was a beginning white belt, and I was fighting this guy about three sizes bigger than me. I weighed maybe 145, 150. I decided I was going to do a jumping shooto on him and I forgot to cover my groin, and as I was coming down, his front snap kick was right there waiting on me. Oh, boy, did that hurt. I walked around, well, I didn't walk around. I waddled around for two or three hours. That was an eye-opening lesson, you know? Pay more attention to your technique.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah. So, did you get the point?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, God, no. He beat me like his bastard step-child.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

That's amazing.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Believe it or not, all Masters used to be white belts, and if you were a white belt, you also got your \*\*\*\*\* whooped.

**Jeremy Lesniak**



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So, what was it at 16, you know, I mean, you said you were looking for something because you were a little bit, let's say, rougher, maybe than some of you ...

**Professor Gary Dill**

Well, okay, watch your question.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

That you were looking for something in the martial arts that you didn't have, you know, with ... To help you through. I'm trying to be delicate here, you know, let you use your words, but why martial arts? Why not ...?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, man. Listen. Let me tell you. Back in the 60s, if you could find a karate class, you found a magic pill that's going to make you a good fighter because it was new back then. You'd see these guys putting on demonstrations, and kicking, and breaking bricks, and think, "Oh, wow, yeah, that's where it's at."

When I was in high school, I wasn't rough. I was actually the opposite. I was the guy with the pocket protector, the thick glasses, like what Bruce Lee used to wear, and I had a slide rule. Even had a little case down on my belt. When you are a, shall we say a nerd, a geek, you also a target on your back, and I was one of those nerds and geeks that had a temper, so when somebody come up and start giving me a rash of trouble, I'd give it right back, so I found myself in altercations more than once, yup. I'd do good in a fight, but then I'd still get hurt, and I thought, "Well, there's got to be a better way."

Then, I started taking this one karate class, and so I'd drive 30 minutes to class three times a week. Finally got the hang of it. After that, I had one fight after that, and I just threw one punch and the guy was out. You know what? Nobody messed with me anymore. So, that's how I got into it.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay. Well, that winds up. That makes a little more sense. Maybe I did a poor job listening early on, and I apologize for that, absolutely.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Well, just drop down and give me 10 pushups.

**Jeremy Lesniak**



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As soon as we're done, I'll give you 15. I promise.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, don't knock yourself out now.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

I might. I might. There's a desk here. It's not a big office. Now, let's go back. Let's imagine that at age 16 you hadn't found martial arts, that you had found something else to occupy your time, and hopefully you didn't get into anymore fights, but you know, your life carried on, and you never found martial arts. What do you think you'd be doing now?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, I'd be dead. I'd be dead, no doubt about it.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Really?

**Professor Gary Dill**

I'd be dead.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay, why?

**Professor Gary Dill**

The martial arts I'm in, look, the martial arts, it's not just the martial arts. They're my life. You know, they are who I am. It's what I do. I'm 69 years old. I work out every day. I got to keep up with these guys that are teenagers, they're in their 20s. Matter of fact, I was working out when you called me up. I see people my age, and they sit around in their recliners, watching TV, and that's their life. I thought, "No way." I have nothing in common with those people. I'd rather hang out with people half my age, much less than half my age. I have more in common with them if they're in the martial arts. I don't know. I just can't imagine what it would be like. It would be pure hell. The martial arts are everything to me.

**Jeremy Lesniak**





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Whoa. It's a great answer, and very similar to the answer that we often get, that people just can't imagine what their life would be without it. I think for a lot of us, whether you want to call it destiny, or fate, or just really, really good luck, that the martial arts fills this whole, this space, within us that for a lot of us is missing up until we find it.

### **Professor Gary Dill**

But, you know, I feel every human being, there's a reason why they're here, at this time, on this Earth. Everybody's got a mission, and some people just miss it. They miss their calling, and they go through life just running into walls. Everybody has a purpose, and I think my mission is tied in with teaching people how to survive, and teaching good people how to fight, you know? I teach a lot of military and law enforcement, and having been in both of those areas myself career-wise, but I think me teaching the martial arts, that's what I'm supposed to be doing in this lifetime. That's my calling. Some people have a calling for different things, to be a teacher, or some people have a calling to be a priest. I have a calling to be a martial arts instructor. There we go.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah. Perfect. Well then, it's a good thing that you found your calling, and I'm sure all the people that you've taught over the years have been very fortunate to have learned from you. So, our next question really kind of goes ... We come back from the hypothetical, the you didn't get to train in the martial arts world, that really becomes fuzzy when most of us try to imagine being in that space, but let's come back to reality. Let's talk about your past, and let's talk about a challenging time. It could be a day, or a year, but tell us about some rough patch that you went through and how your martial arts training helped you move through it.

### **Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, well, as far as being in the military and being in law enforcement, if it had not been for my martial arts, you would not be talking to me right now. I'd be dead.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay. Tell us more. What does that mean?

### **Professor Gary Dill**

Well, you know, the martial arts taught me how to survive in combat. It gave me the mindset, that warrior mindset to survive. It developed in me, especially when I was in Vietnam, that killer instinct. I know James Lee, in Jeet Kune Do classes, always mentioned you can never be good in Jeet Kune Do if you don't have the killer instinct, and I told him, "Yeah, I know what it is. I've been there." But that





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mindset that you develop in the martial arts, it gives you that ability to survive, on the battlefield, in the military, to survive on the streets when you're in law enforcement, because if you don't have that killer instinct, if you don't have that survivor mindset, you won't survive. You become a sheep.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Powerful stuff. So, our next question talks about your instructors, the people that you've had the chance to train with, but before we do that, I can only just imagine some of the listeners out there saying, okay, Jeet Kune Do, and they were able to do some math and go back and say, okay, you started training at around this time, so let's tackle the obvious question that a lot of those people are going to ask.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Sure. Right.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Did you train with Bruce Lee?

**Professor Gary Dill**

No, I did not. He was the Chief Instructor. He was the head of the school the whole time, that I trained in, but my primary instructor was James Lee.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay. Great, so for listeners out there, there's a couple of you that I know pretty well, and I just imagine you screaming into the headphones ...

**Professor Gary Dill**

The question that you're bringing up is that did I touch the robe of Bruce Lee?

**Jeremy Lesniak**

I'm sure that's how some would ... Yeah, that's how some people would probably phrase it.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, I know. I know. Yes, the Robe of Saint Bruce. No, I did not, but I did become his disciple, under James Lee. The whole time that I trained there at the Jeet Kune Do school in Oakland, Bruce was the Chief



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Instructor, and he was still hands-on, even though he wasn't there teaching. He was in Thailand and Hong Kong, making all of his spaghetti western kung fu movies, but he was in contact with James, saying, "Okay, we're going to take this out of our curriculum, but I want to put this in," and so-on and so-on. You know, James would come down more than once saying, "Okay, we're taking this out of the program. I just talked to Bruce a couple days ago, and he said take this out. Now we're going to ..." You know, he'll come down and say, "Okay, we're going to add this now to the program." James did nothing on his own. Everything he taught was strictly per Bruce, and I was fortunate.

Matter of Fact, a few years ago, Wally Jay and I, Professor Wally Jay of Small Circle Jiu-Jitsu, we got together at a martial arts event, and we had a long talk. Very nice guy, but he was telling me, he said, "You know, you're fortunate that you trained in Jeet Kune Do under James Lee instead of Bruce." Of course, that kind of took me back. I said, "Well, why do you say that?" Of course, James Lee was a very, very good instructor. Don't get me wrong. You know, he said, "You're lucky you trained with James instead of Bruce."

He went on to say that Bruce was the R & D guy, but James was the guy who documented everything, who structured everything, who formulated everything. Bruce came up with it, but James was the one who, like I said, he documented it and put everything in a format. He said Bruce really didn't like to teach that much. He wanted to do it. You see, Wally Jay lives just in Alameda, which is just a hop and a skip from Oakland, so he'd go over there all the time, and he and James and Bruce would work out. He said Bruce and James would be in there in that garage developing Jeet Kune Do. This is after that Wong Jack Man fight, you know? That's when Bruce got real serious about Jeet Kune Do and combat, and he said they would knock each other across on those concrete block walls, and just be harsh, rough, but that's the way they worked. He said, yeah, as far as having one or the other for the instructor, he said, "Yeah, you're a lot better off for having James as an instructor." Not taking a thing away from Bruce, but what is is.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Right. Wow. So, what was that like living in an environment where your curriculum was constantly changing? Was that frustrating or was it exciting?

### **Professor Gary Dill**

It wasn't ... No no no no no no no, it was not constantly changing.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay.

### **Professor Gary Dill**



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Just sporadically.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay.

**Professor Gary Dill**

But I gave that as an example to let you know that Bruce was still very much in charge of that school and that curriculum, but it wasn't constantly changing. No. It was made up of Wing Chun Gung Fu, Western Boxing, and Fencing. But, Bruce would come up with a better way of doing something and he would change it, but it's not like it was going on every day, you know? No, it was a stable curriculum. Remember, I was in karate for years. I had taught karate for years, and it was a very stable program. It wasn't a martial arts of the month club, okay?

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Sure, no, and I wasn't meaning to imply that.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Okay.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

So, what I'm comparing it to, you know, in the styles that I've trained in, the curriculum is fairly well set. I mean, the instructor may have come up with a new way to instruct something, but the way that you throw a punch is the way you throw a punch, and I thought I was getting the impression that you were training in Jeet Kune Do, at the ... Because it was at the time that it was being developed, that maybe you experiencing some of those shifts, those refinements?

**Professor Gary Dill**

No. No, not really.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

No? Okay.

**Professor Gary Dill**



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I started in 1971. Matter of fact, I was there just two days after I got back from Vietnam. No, it was pretty solidified by the time I got there. Bruce did make changes, which in all martial arts, there's going to be changes.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Sure.

**Professor Gary Dill**

You know? If you don't change, you become a dinosaur. Sometimes there's a real major change, you know? This is going to upset a lot of people, but I'm going to tell you on this interview.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay.

**Professor Gary Dill**

We were working on two-hand chi sau, and one night, James Lee came bouncing down the stairs and he said, "Well, do you guys understand the feel of chi sau?" "Oh, yeah, yeah." He said, "Good, cuz you're not going to see it anymore." We all kind of looked at him like, "Duh ... What do you mean?" He said, "I just got a call from Bruce Lee last night. He said take the two-hand chi sau out of the Jeet Kune Do curriculum, that he felt that it was too time-consuming. Because of the amount of time that one had to put into training into chi sau to be effective, that it was not applicable for expediency in combat fighting for the amount of time that it took to train in it to get good, that we could be doing other techniques and achieve the same thing." So, we went to a one-hand chi sau training in lieu of two-hands, because the one-hand was more applicable to someone's arm out there, or a punch coming in. I was there when he took the Wing Chun two-hand chi sau out of the curriculum. Of course, like I said, a lot of people think, "Oh, wow, Jeet Kune Do is Wing Chun, you know, it does chi sau." But, you know, I was there. Bruce took it out of the curriculum.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Now, for listeners, and I guess for myself included, who don't have a lot of experience with the Chinese martial arts, what is chi sau?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Chi sau is energy. You feel your opponent's energies, you know? You're touching. Both hands are touching. You're facing each other. He moves, you move, da da da. You just keep trading bag and forth,



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**[inaudible 27:28]**, yada yada, and it's a drill to build up sensitivity to your opponent's energy and rhythm, and Bruce felt that the two-hand chi sau was ... It just took too much time out of the training curriculum for no more what you got out of it. Instead, we just did the one-hand chi sau, where you are touching one arm of the person, and you respond to that one arm technique with whatever angle or speed he's coming in at. So, it's hard to explain how to do energy drills by just talking about it. You have to feel it. You have to experience it.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Sure. No, I completely understand. From your description, I think I've had some experience with what you're talking about. I just know it by a different name, so what I'll do is I'm going to try and find some video to demonstrate it that we can throw over in the show notes. I'll run it by you first, see if we can find something that matches up with what we're talking about.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Okay. Sure. Yeah, there's a lot out there. You know, I'm not saying that it's a bad training drill. If people want to do it, that's fine. But it's just Bruce took it out of the Jeet Kune Do curriculum.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

But it's pretty fundamental in Wing Chun?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, absolutely.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay.

**Professor Gary Dill**

You see, this is the thing about it. People think Jeet Kune Do is Wing Chun. No. It has Wing Chun aspects in it, but Bruce developed Jeet Kune Do because he felt that, from his own experience, that he needed more than just Wing Chun for his combat, for his combat applications. This is why he started to incorporate boxing, fundamentals from fencing. Jeet Kune Do is made up of three different fighting arts - Wing Chun, Western Boxing, and Fencing - and he took what he felt was the best from all three arts and combined those into what is known as Jeet Kune Do.



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Now, that is the original Jeet Kune Do. That's the Jeet Kune Do that Bruce Lee developed, not somebody else 20 years later saying, "Oh, well, hell, [inaudible 30:00], and this is all Jeet Kune Do because it follows the principle." You know what? On that, I just call bull \*\*\*\*\*. Jeet Kune Do was what Bruce Lee developed. Now, you need to develop your own, your own fighting system, because everybody's different, but Jeet Kune Do is Wing Chun, Boxing, and Fencing. Period. Now, you want to develop your own style of Jeet Kune Do? Then, go for it, but this has been one of my things over the past 40 years, is I'm an advocate of what I was taught. What I was taught was Jeet Kune Do is Wing Chun, Boxing, and Fencing. I was there. I know what it was.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

So, there's a hard line between Jeet Kune Do, the art as it was taught, and Jeet Kune Do, the concept?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Yes. Correct. Yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay. Okay. That makes sense, and I think that a lot of people listening could get behind that. I mean, we've certainly ...

**Professor Gary Dill**

I mean, I have a lot of good friends who are in concepts, and that's their thing. That's okay. That's their thing. The original is my thing, you know? We respect each other, but I was there. I know what Jeet Kune Do was. I know what Bruce Lee developed, because it was taught to me when he was still alive.

Let me say this. I am involved in different martial arts, not just Jeet Kune Do. I like to tell people I'm a martial artist first, a Jeet Kune Do practitioner second. I've got black belts in Karate, Jiu-Jitsu, Kenpo. I'm Grandmaster of Bushido Kenpo, which is a combination of combat Karate, Jiu-Jitsu, and weapons, and it follows the principles of Jeet Kune Do - no katas, no sport, no aesthetics. Everything is geared for combat, simplicity. I have taken what I have learned from Jeet Kune Do, and transformed that into my other martial arts training that I do also on the side. You'll find there's a lot of Jeet Kune Do people that are highly skilled in other martial arts, also.

It's just that my thing is that if somebody wants me to teach them Jeet Kune Do, I want to teach them Jeet Kune Do just the way it was developed by Bruce, and the way it was taught at the Oakland school when he was still alive. Otherwise, they can just go anywhere and learn whatever is called Jeet Kune Do.

**Jeremy Lesniak**



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Right.

### **Professor Gary Dill**

I like to take people back into a time tunnel, and take them back there with me, and teach them what was taught in the way it was taught to me, so they can themselves experience that actual Jeet Kune Do, that original Jeet Kune Do as it was taught back then. It's not my place to change what Bruce Lee developed, and what James Lee developed, and what was taught in the school. It's not my place. I'm just a disciple. I just pass it on, but I do other martial arts also, but I don't water down what was taught to me back there in Oakland.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Sure. That absolutely makes sense. I don't think anyone listening would begrudge you not doing that. I think most ... Maybe I shouldn't say most. Many? A lot? Who knows where the line is? A good portion of martial artists do work really hard to hold true to what they were taught, and to pass it on as they were taught, and I certainly have done that when I've instructed myself. So, other than the instructors that you've had the opportunity to train with, if you could name someone that you would like to train with, be they alive or dead, who would that be?

### **Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, golly. You know, to this day, I still train with different people. I go to different martial arts events, and I watch other Masters and Grandmaster put on seminars, and I pick up stuff from them. I'm always learning. You know, I may watch somebody teach a choking technique, and I say, "Oh, wow. I like that. I'm going to incorporate that different, that way of moving into that choke, and throw mine out, and put that one in." You know, I'm always learning.

As far as a particular person, I can't really say, because I've seen so many already. I mean, God dang. Back in 1964, '63, I saw Ed Parker put on demonstrations there in Tulsa, and down in Dallas, and I'd just be wiped away with the speed of his hands. That gave me incentive to work on the speed of my hands, watching Ed Parker. I saw Jhoon Rhee, very young Jhoon Rhee in '64, break stacks of boards at a tournament. One time, the guy had six boards. They was on a chair. Two guys were on chairs. They were standing up on the chairs, and they held the boards up over their heads with their arms straight out, so you can imagine how high that was, and Jhoon Rhee would jump up in the air and break all those boards with a front kick.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Awesome.





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### **Professor Gary Dill**

You know, as a young green belt, you just sit there with your mouth open, your tongue hanging out, and slobbering, thinking, “Aw, dang.” I've seen him break a bunch of boards and bricks with his hands. I had a chance ... I was my instructors horse handler. Wherever he would go, I would go. I'd have his stuff with me, so every time he'd have meetings with the big boys - Allen Steen, Ed Parker, Jhoon Rhee - I'd get in. I was right there with him, you know? Going, “Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Oh yeah.” You know? I was wanting see Jhoon Rhee's hands, because I was a Goju guy back then, with big knuckles. That's the big thing. Your status symbols were big knuckles, and I was wanting to see his knuckles, and I saw his hands and they were just as smooth as a teenage girls. I thought, “How in the world?”

You see people like that, you see all these old guys, Allen Steen, and [\[inaudible 37:27\]](#) up there fighting, and you've seen it. You've seen them all, and I'd still go around ... I said, I do a lot of events with Bill Wallace, and we're the same age, and he'll get out there and flip out those kicks, and there are just a lot of Masters and Grandmasters out there that are just amazing. Even though I've been in the martial arts fifty years, and I'll see Bill Wallace out there flipping that side kick, that just gives me motivation to come back home and work on my side kick for a while.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Gives me motivation to work on my side kick, too. He is twice as good at his age than I will ever be.

### **Professor Gary Dill**

Yeah. Let me tell you a story, and I think a lot of the old guys will find this is the case. Back in the mid-70s I was a Federal Agent, and I was working out with a group of older black belts. My partner was a 3rd or 4th degree black belt in Shito-Ryu, and he invited me to come and work out with his geriatrics group. That's what I called them behind his back. I went down, worked out with him two or three times. Man, I saw this one guy. He was a white guy, but he was a Master in Taekwondo, and he had been in his 70s. Man, he was flipping those kicks out there. I mean over the head, full power, and I thought, “Wow.” At that time, I was in my early 30s, and I thought I was pretty good. When I saw him flipping those kicks at that age ...

Finally, once I got to be accepted as their mascot, I asked him. I said, “You know, I'm amazed at your techniques and your speed at your age. I want to be that way when I get to be your age. Can you give me any insight? What is the secret? What do you do?” He said, “There's only one thing, one secret.” I said, “What's that?” He said, “Never quit doing it.” Well, that hit home to me, and I took him at his word, and I have never quit doing it. I work out every day, and that's what keeps me alive.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**



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Has your training changed? Do you do things differently now than you once did?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Well, you know, I don't kick to the head anymore because my back says, "Hell, no, you're not." I keep all my kicks rib cage-high, but I still got the same speed I used to have. Matter of fact, I think I'm better than what I used to be. As you get older, things start falling apart. I don't care how much you work out or how good you are. Things disintegrate, so you have to learn to modify your workouts to ... Be like water. When you come up to that big old boulder in the middle of the stream, you don't stop. You just go around it. That's what you do when you get older in the martial arts. You don't stop doing it. You just keep doing it. You just modify your workouts so you can keep going. Never quit doing it.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

That's great advice. Absolutely. So, how about movies? Are you at all a martial arts movie guy?

**Professor Gary Dill**

No. No. Kind of. It depends on the movie.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay.

**Professor Gary Dill**

I like Enter the Dragon. I like The Karate Kid.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah.

**Professor Gary Dill**

I kind of like [\[inaudible 41:22\]](#) movies, you know? Anyway, what you got in mind?

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Well, you basically answered it. It was going to be tell us some of your favorites, and you just did.

**Professor Gary Dill**



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Okay.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Nice and easy.

**Professor Gary Dill**

You know, I tell you, one of the better ... There's two really good, in my opinion, for what that's worth, two really good martial arts movies - Enter the Dragon, and The Karate Kid. The Karate Kid opened up to the public an aspect of the philosophy behind the martial arts that was never brought out before. I really liked that. Of course, Enter the Dragon, that's my man there. That's my Granddaddy out there kicking.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Right. Well, it probably wouldn't surprise you to know that those are the two most given answers to that question, favorite movies.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, really?

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah, although I don't know that anybody's given both of them together. Maybe one or two people, but we're well over 60 interviews at this point, and it's ... We don't go more than a couple episodes without somebody bringing up at least one of them. They're classics. I mean, I think ...

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

... Each of them inspired a generation of people to start training.

**Professor Gary Dill**



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Oh, you know, really, I have trained thousands and thousands of people, and I have hundreds of instructors and black belts under me, but you know, it's amazing how many people have told me that they were inspired to be in the martial arts when they were kids and they saw Bruce Lee in the movies. He did a lot to really help promote the martial arts industry.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

He did, and his memory still does a lot. Is there anyone today that is better known as a martial artist than Bruce Lee?

**Professor Gary Dill**

No.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

And there isn't. We did an episode on Bruce Lee, talking about him, talking about his contributions to the martial arts realm, and my person opinion is there will never be someone that achieves that status, because he came in at a time when martial arts was so new that people were clamoring to know about it. Like you said at the beginning of our discussion, if you found a karate school, it was like a golden ticket.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Well, you know ...

**Jeremy Lesniak**

It was so rare.

**Professor Gary Dill**

... Back when Bruce brought the combat arts into the forefront, 90% of your martial arts training was traditional, wearing the gis, katas, tournaments. Well, here comes this Chinese dude, and he just overturned that apple cart. Here he is teaching a system with no katas. It's non-traditional. As non-classic goes, it's Chinese American Martial Arts. It's based on simplicity, realism, individuality. He brought forward a fresh approach to martial arts training.

And, what a lot of people don't know is Bruce Lee pissed off a lot of people when he did that, because he rocked their boats. That foundation that they had for years, he comes Bruce Lee. He's kicking it now. He's saying, "No, this is what I'm bringing forward to the martial arts, a whole new format of training."



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That rocked a lot of boats, and a lot of people seriously did not like Bruce. When he was alive, they talked a lot of s\*\*\* about Bruce, and of course now after he died, all those people said, “Oh, Bruce Lee was such a good guy. I knew Bruce. I taught Bruce Lee,” and all this stuff started coming. It was funny.

You know, when you live long enough like me, you get to see all that, and you sit back and you say, “Well, it wasn't quite like that back then.” You know? A lot of people were jealous of him. He was on Kato, Green Hornet, and then he started doing the movies. I don't know, I just find it interesting. When you live history, you see how it's been revised in your lifetime because so much time has passed. Bruce Lee is the best thing that has happened to the martial arts.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

I completely agree. Now, I want to go back for a second, your comment about Jeet Kune Do being so non-traditional, or non-classical, I think, maybe was even a better word.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

You having come up through traditional martial arts - you said you had trained in Goju - what was your opinion stepping into that? Was it new and exciting, or did you ...?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, I loved it. Man, I loved it, because, see, I hated katas. I hated to do katas. I loved fighting. I loved sparring. That was my thing, so the way you practice your punching, and your kicking, and your forms, standing there in lines, throwing those punches out in the air, throwing the kicks out, [\[inaudible 47:36\]](#) yada-yada, and the way you do the katas is not the way you're going to do that technique when you're out there in a free-flowing fight, a kumite with somebody. I always thought, well, there's two karates. There's the traditional karate, then you got your fighting, sparring karate. Now, I like that, and when I got into Jeet Kune Do, that first night, man, I was blown away. I thought I'd died and went to heaven. Everything that you practiced is the way you're going to do it when you're fighting. I mean, it's just all right there. Nothing was theoretical. I loved it, and people think, “Oh, it'd be so hard for me to transform from a traditional karate to Jeet Kune Do.” It wasn't for me. Man, I welcomed it. It was great. It was great. I mean, I'm serious man. That first night, I thought, man, I'd died and went to martial arts heaven.

**Jeremy Lesniak**



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That's awesome. That's such a fun story, and it's fun to try and think back. Now, obviously we have plenty of what we call modern martial arts today. Something like Krav Maga sticks out as a great example, but as far as I know, if I'm not mis-speaking, Jeet Kune Do was kind of the first one to break ...

**Professor Gary Dill**

It is.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

... That cycle.

**Professor Gary Dill**

It is. It is.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay.

**Professor Gary Dill**

And I was there. I know. There was nothing else out there. Nothing else out there.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah. You really were living history. That's so incredible. I'm so jealous. How about books? Are you at all a reader? Do you bring what you read into your curriculums and your training?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Aw, man, books. Too many words. I watch the movies.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay.

**Professor Gary Dill**

What kind of books you talking about?



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**Jeremy Lesniak**

Martial arts books.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, yeah. I got tons in here in my office.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

If you have to recommend a couple to the listeners, you know, things that have really resonated with you, anything that you could think of?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Well, they're more on philosophy than they are on technique. I'd have to go in there and look. I like internal energy. I'm also big into internal energy development in training. [\[inaudible 50:14\]](#) Joe Hyams, he wrote a book, and I can't think of the name of it right now. I'm back here trying to ...

**Jeremy Lesniak**

It was Zen in the Martial Arts?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, yeah. Now, that's a good one. That's a good one.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

That was my first martial arts book. That was when I ... I started training when I was pretty young, and my mom bought that for us. She had started training shortly after. I can't even tell you how many dozens of times I had read that, because it's short. Listeners out there, if you haven't read it, it's a great, short book, and if we want to be really blunt about it, it's a wonderful bathroom book.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Yeah. I love that book. I'm looking here for others. You know when you're looking for something, you can't find it.

**Jeremy Lesniak**





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Right.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Of course, The Tao of Jeet Kune Do is an all-time keeper.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Now, what's ... I mean, of course, a lot of people read that. Most of whom never have and never will have any training in Jeet Kune Do, but the closest thing I maybe have in experience to that is in Taekwondo, we have the encyclopedia that was written by General Choi laying out what Taekwondo would be, and people use it as a reference.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Okay, give me a ... Hold on. Put a hold on that one for a second. I've got some more titles here before we get into The Tao.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay. Yeah.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Alright. Another one is The Karate Dojo by Peter Urban.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Yup.

**Professor Gary Dill**

That's a good one. There's one called Asian Fighting Arts by Donn Draeger and Robert Smith. Oh, oh, oh. Fighting to Win. Fighting to Win, by David Rogers. Now, these are all very good philosophical books on the fighting arts. But anyway, I just saw these and I wanted to get these out there before we lost that thought. Alright, now we're back to The Tao. We're back to The Tao.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah. Yeah. No, I appreciate that. Those are great titles, and we've talked about a few of them on the show before. And, of course, for anybody that might be new to the show, we have links to all this stuff,



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[whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com). You can pop over to the website, check the show notes, and get links, and photos, and all kinds of great stuff over there. So, now, The Tao, as really the book that Bruce Lee wrote, how do you view that? Do you view that as a reference? Is that the gospel?

**Professor Gary Dill**

No, it's not ... I wouldn't call it a gospel, because basically, The Tao was composed of notes that Bruce Lee had written over many years, and all of those notes were compiled into one book, and sometimes you will find that there's some things in the book that contradict other things in the book on the same subject. It's because that Bruce changed his aspects on that subject over a period of time.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Right.

**Professor Gary Dill**

It can be confusing to people, but, golly, I mean, it's an excellent source for understanding the, lack of better terms, the concepts, the principles behind Jeet Kune Do.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Sure.

**Professor Gary Dill**

You know, it's hard to confine ...

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah, the concepts are great, and everybody should read it.

**Professor Gary Dill**

It's hard to confine Jeet Kune Do in one book. He's got his four-volume Bruce Lee Fighting Methods that came out in the early 70s. Those are good, basic, how-to books, but as far as I'm concerned, if you're a Jeet Kune Do practitioner, and you don't have a copy of The Tao of Jeet Kune Do, something's wrong with you, because that's the ... I don't know, textbook, so to speak, but don't look at it like it's the Bible, that that's the only ... That's it, that's the way, that's the only way. It's a guide. It's a guidebook. That's a good way of putting it.



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**Jeremy Lesniak**

Got you. That makes sense. So, we've talked a little bit about your training, your daily training, you know, your love for the martial arts. Now, outside of that, do you have goals? Are there reasons you train, or things you're trying to accomplish beyond continued improvement? Something that you're fired up about?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Well, you know, I train to stay alive. I got Type II Diabetes, compliments of Agent Orange, compliments of Vietnam, yada-yada, and I've got to stay healthy to stay on top of the Diabetes. I watch what I eat, and I work out a lot to keep control of it, so that's one reason why I work out, so I can stay alive and functional. I work out because I want to keep my fighting skills up. I work out because I want to still be able to pass on what I know to other people. I got ... The ball's in my court, man. I'm not going to be here. I'm 69. I only got about 30 more years to live, you know? I try to train as many people as I can to not just keep Jeet Kune Do alive, but to keep the fighting arts alive, and teach people how to truly fight and survive, the good people, you know? Teach good people how to fight.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah.

**Professor Gary Dill**

And wipe out the thugs. Nothing is as ...

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Maybe one day we can.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Nothing is as gratifying as to see some thug laying out in the middle of the street doing the chicken after some good guy just knocked the crap out of him. That's fine.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Is there a story there?

**Professor Gary Dill**



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Ah. Long story, but anyway.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay. Probably some stuff from law enforcement that you maybe shouldn't tell us. I understand.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Before. After.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Moving on. No worries. So, if someone wants to get a hold of you, if someone's near Oklahoma, wants to train with you, maybe you've got seminars, this is your opportunity for a commercial. How would they go about getting a hold of you?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Well, my email is P, as in professor, PDillJKD, that's P-D-I-L-L-J-K-D, @aol.com. [[PDillJKD@aol.com](mailto:PDillJKD@aol.com)]. I'm also on Facebook, Gary Dill under Facebook, so just drop me an email, catch me on Facebook, and I do ... I'm active.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Do you travel? A lot of our guests are traveling around and doing seminars. Is that your thing at all?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Well, it used to be. I used to do a lot of them, but with the economy the way it is, it's hard to get a big enough group together for a seminar. Hopefully, the economy will start getting better, but I used to have a motto, "Have focused niche, will travel."

**Jeremy Lesniak**

So, you're open to it? So, if people are listening, and they want to bring you into their school ...

**Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak**



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... And train with you. Oh, great. Great, because I think you ...

**Professor Gary Dill**

That's what I do. There's a lot of people with skills who would like to see the original Jeet Kune Do, and I've done that a lot through the years.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Great, so of course, we'll have links to your contact information over on the website there.

**Professor Gary Dill**

I do anti-terrorist training, also. I said I was in Vietnam. I was also a US Intelligence Agent for several years. Law Enforcement for many years, but most of my training came from the military and as an Intelligence Agent in this area, Combatants, Homeland Combatants.

Right after 9/11, I was contracted by a private security company back on the east coast to formulate a close-quarters combat program for the [\[inaudible 59:54\]](#) special forces group, as per some specifications they had on contract, so I put one together for them. Then, we took the program. We taught it to Air Force Spec Ops Units up at McGuire Air Force Base, and then the Homeland Security Training Organization that trained and certified Homeland Security personnel, military and government, and they adopted my program as their official CQC program. It's very hardcore, because techniques in it are strictly break, maim, and kill using empty hand, knives, some stick, but I've been putting those on recently. A lot of people are getting more concerned with all that terrorism stuff that's going on. I do teach gun disarm, how to terminate people with your empty hands, how to terminate people properly with a knife, and it's gets gutsy.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah.

**Professor Gary Dill**

Been doing that as well as Jeet Kune Do.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Great.

**Professor Gary Dill**



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I got a lot of instructors under me who do a lot of the teaching and stuff. It's all fun and games.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

It is. It is all fun and games.

**Professor Gary Dill**

But, in a nutshell, I'm not in my rocking chair, baby.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

That's great. As you shouldn't be. You have far too much to contribute to all of us still. I'm blown away talking to you today with how much you have going on, and all that you've done. As we wrap up here, do you have any parting advice for the martial artists that are listening, or for anybody listening?

**Professor Gary Dill**

Well, my advice is to respect everyone else in the martial arts. All martial arts are good. It just depends on which one is best for you. One thing that kind of rubs me the wrong way, somebody comes in and they start knocking this system, or that system, and it shows me how shallow they really are. We're all martial arts brothers and sisters, and we all contribute. Even though one particular martial art's not your thing, it may be someone else's. Just respect all the different martial arts out there. Not necessarily respect all the instructors, because there are some maggots, but the martial arts are all good, and you have to find the one that works best for you.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Thank you for listening to episode 66 of whistlekick Martial Arts Radio, and thank you to Professor Dill. Head on over to [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com) for the show notes, the quiz, some photos, and a video of chi sau, if you're not familiar with that practice. If you like the show, please subscribe or download one of the apps so you never miss out on a new episode, and if we could trouble you to leave a review wherever you get your podcast, we'd appreciate it. Remember, if we read yours on the air, just email us, and we'll get you a free pack of whistlekick stuff.

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lots of colors. There's something for everyone. So, until next time, train hard, smile, and have a great day.

### **Professor Gary Dill**

Now, let's see. There's the one about the instructor at Golden Gate Park, there's the one about the [\[inaudible 1:04:11\]](#) in San Jose, there's one about the weapons. You know, the weapons would be good because it'd kind of give you a great background. You know, I had been there in karate for years, and I was there with James now for a few months, and I thought, "Well, you know, wonder when we'll do weapons." So I decided to ask him. That was a mistake. I ask him, "You know, when are we going to start doing weapons?" Then he grinned at me. I knew then that was trouble for James Lee to grin, and I knew I stepped in it. He looked at me and he said, "Where you been? We've been doing weapons." I thought, "Oh, God. I know I stepped in it. I know I did."

Then he said, "Okay, look. This is how it works. When you learn Jeet Kune Do, you already know weapons. You take your empty hand Jeet Kune Do techniques and you put a weapon in it, and you just do Jeet Kune Do using the weapon. Of course, each weapon has its own personality, and you make modifications in the technique to fit the weapon. But why learn a whole different martial art weapon system when you have it all right here in Jeet Kune Do?" Made sense, and to that day, my whole weapons program is based upon his philosophy of using Jeet Kune Do.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

I can imagine that grin there ...

### **Professor Gary Dill**

Oh, God.

### **Jeremy Lesnia**

... and knowing ...

### **Professor Gary Dill**

He's stoic. He's stoic, you know? So, when he grinned, I thought, "Oh, \*\*\*\*\*, I'm in trouble"

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

I know that grin. I've ... You know, I think ... I mean, I've tested for black belt in a couple different schools, and several times, and nobody has ever taught me that grin, but every instructor I've ever had





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has had that grin, so I know exactly what you're talking about. I don't know when you learn it. Maybe I have it and I don't know it.

### **Professor Gary Dill**

Then there's one about the [exclusivity] of Jeet Kune Do back then. I was in a class, my first class. There's all white guys, and we were all wearing white karate gi pants, and I knew something was not right, because my question, where's the Chinese?

Trained there for the first month, then James came down and he said, "Okay, I'm not feeling good, so I'm going to ... I'm stopping this class. I'm going to shut it down. I don't feel good so I'm not going to keep this class going." I thought, "Oh, man. Are you kidding me? I've been waiting for this for years, ever since Kato in 1966, man. I've been waiting to learn this, and here I am. I'm here, and now, the rug had just been pulled out from underneath me because there's so much I learned in that month. It was just amazing, just flat amazing, and now it's gone. I was just totally depressed, and he picked up on it during class.

Well, class was over, and so I was picking up my gear, getting ready to just go on home. He said, "You wait. You wait. You wait." "Oh, okay." These three guys, come to find out they were all karate instructors from a big school in San Jose. We were standing there at his garage door and he was telling them goodbye and all that stuff, and I'm just standing back there in the background, and he gave them a brand new two-ended bag, you know, the round ball with the bungee cords on it, you know?

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah.

### **Professor Gary Dill**

It's brand new, still in the box that Martial Arts Supply sent to him a few days before. He gave it to them. So anyway, they were walking down the driveway, going to the car. He's waving at them, they was waving back, and then he looked at me. He said, "Those sons \*\*\*\*\*. Those sons \*\*\*\*\*." I said, "What? What do you mean?" He said, "Oh, if Bruce was here, he'd kill them." I said, "What's going on?" He said, "Those three guys? They were teaching Jeet Kune Do there at their karate school in San Jose behind our backs." "Oh. Yeah, if Bruce was here, he'd kill them." I said, "Why did you give them that new bag?" He said, "Aw, man, that thing? That thing'll kill them. Give it to them. That'll kill them."

And I said, "Well, okay. I guess I'll go now." He, "No no no no no." He says, "So, you want to really learn Jeet Kune Do?" I said, "Oh, yeah." Then, I started perking up. I knew something was coming then. He said, "Okay, now, you be here next week on these days." "Oh. Okay." Now I'm doing the Snoopy dance,



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you know? The following week, I came back, and looked, walked in the garage, and I was the only round eye in there. There was all Chinese. That's when we really started rocking and rolling.