



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey there everyone, thanks for coming by. This is whistlekick Martial Arts Radio episode 348 and today, I'm joined by Sabomnim Alain Burrese. If you're new to the show, head on over to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com to learn more about what we do, to find a whole bunch of other episodes, in fact all of them. We don't put a single one of them away. No paywalls, none of that here, just martial arts podcast. But if you're looking for more than podcast, we do sell some stuff. You can head on over to whistlekick.com, check out our uniforms, our belts, our sparring gear, our shirts, sweatshirts. There's a ton of stuff there and you can use the code `PODCAST15` to save 15% on every single thing that's there.

I had a great time talking with our guest today. We just... we clicked philosophically. There was so much good conversation here and rather than try to sum it up, because I'll admit I've spent the last few minutes trying to find a good way to summarize what we talked about. I'm just gonna let you listen. I love this conversation, I hope you'll love it as well. So I'll just step back and welcome our guest, Sabomnim Burrese, to the show. Sabomnim Burrese, welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio.

Alain Burrese:

Thank you for having me on, Jeremy. I really appreciate it.



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

I appreciate you carving the time out of your day, navigating time zone math to make this happen.

Alain Burrese:

Yeah, it's certainly uhm... it's always a challenge when I do interviews or deal with people on the East Coast.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know, it's funny. Like you know, when I think back, what is the cliché in pretty much any public school classroom or you know, any high school classroom really, is when am I going to use this? And the irony is the hardest math, in my observation since graduating, has been time zone math.

Alain Burrese:

Yeah, I mean especially you have to make sure you're going the right way.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right, right. Maneuvering the right direction and the right number of hours and then if you schedule something for after daylight savings time and then you've got those weird stretches that don't observe daylight savings time, and some countries don't do it at all and it just...

Alain Burrese:

Exactly.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It is complicated. So that's why you know, and anyone that has been on the show in the last six months or so knows, Google calendar, to the rescue. Everyone that is scheduled to come on the show gets and invite to my personal calendar because that's the only way I could figure it out.

Alain Burrese:

Sounds like a good system.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

It works, it works. Now of course we are not here to discuss the challenges of the way we've decided to arbitrarily slice up the way the sun revolves around the earth. That's not what we do on martial arts radio. We talk about martial arts, of course, and that's why you're here. And I appreciate you coming on so we can talk about martial arts. But before we can talk about the things that you've done and the places you've been, we have to talk about your start. So let's go all the way back and why don't you tell us about your martial arts origin story, if you will?

Alain Burrese:

Well my martial art origin story is a little bit twisted and winding.

Jeremy Lesniak:

[03:21](#)

Alain Burrese:

It started in the '70s. You know, I was a kid and I was reading the Bruce Tegner and Fred Neff martial art books. And I didn't have an opportunity to train in a school back then, and so I was at home, I'll look Karate Kid with a book, practicing by myself the best I could in those early years. It wasn't until early '80s in high school that I actually had the opportunity to get some formal training and that was in Judo. We had a Judo club in Thompson Falls, Montana. And it only lasted a year, unfortunately, because of work reasons - the instructor left Thompson Falls. But for that year, I got to train and compete in Judo. After that, I went to the military and have the opportunity to train in some Karate at [04:13](#) Karate at Yadkin Road at Fort Bragg. You know, it was in Fayetteville which is just outside of Fort Bragg when I was stationed there. Then I went to Korea and I went to a little bit of Taekwondo but I was pretty much too busy with Army stuff and I really didn't like Taekwondo as much so I didn't pursue that that much. I got out of the Army and was able to train with Dennis Dallas. Shihan Dennis Dallas who ran Karate, Judo and Hapkido classes. And his Hapkido classes were very influenced by Japanese as well. And I went to every class of his that I could, working around my work schedule. Then I moved again, and I was in a Toshikan Karate for a while until that club stopped. So fast forward, here it is, 1995, I'm writing my first book on self-defense and everybody kept saying what are you a black belt in? And I'm like well, I'm not a black belt in anything. All of these different schools I trained at, I went up color belts but never made it to the black belt level. So I said, what art did I like the best? Hapkido for a variety of reasons. I really liked living in Korea with the Army. I'm gonna go back to Korea and study Hapkido, and I did that 1996. Went over there, started as a white belt and I am still under those instructors today. The last time I saw them was this February; went over there, got to train with my instructor Lee Jun-kyu and we got to go see some of the Olympics as his school is only two miles from the one Olympic Park in Gangneung, South Korea. So that's sort of my history in a nutshell.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Okay so let's kinda go back because there's a point there that I think is probably worth exploring, worth digging deeper on, and that's the point where you're writing a book on self-defense and people are kinda sounds like questioning your credibility because of your lack of a black belt. Now a lot of people would say, you know, I don't need a black belt. I've trained in these schools, I've trained in the military, I've got - I'm doing the math - right around 20 years of experience at that point, so what about this black belt? But you didn't decide just to say okay, I'll go get a black belt. You decided to seek out Hapkido in the homeland, if you will, and move to Korea. That's kind of a big jump.

Alain Burrese:

It was and it's true that the first book that I wrote, *Hard-Won Wisdom From The School Of Hard Knocks* which is published by Paladin Press, it wasn't about martial arts. It was about actual fights that I had either been in or had witnessed during years in the military, during years in the university when I was doing security and different things. So it wasn't a martial art book; it was a book on self-defense based on actual experiences. But there was still always a part of me as ever since that little kid that was connected to the martial arts as well, and I wanted more of that. I told Shihan Dallas once when I started training with him, I know how to fight - I've done that. But I want to become a martial artist and better myself with martial arts and learn the skills and everything else that can go with learning the martial art. And that's what I wanted to do when I went back to Korea, as well. It wasn't necessarily to become a better fighter although the stuff I've learned in Hapkido has definitely helped me in real situations, but I wanted to be more than just a fighter.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And at that time, and maybe it's even the same definition now, how did you delineate between what a fighter was or who a fighter was and a martial artist?

Alain Burrese:

I think if you learn how to hit and strike and kick, and I can teach you to hammer fist somebody in the nose or kick him in the knee or elbow him, in a very short time, then you can probably defend yourself against a lot of different attacks. Becoming a martial artist to me, it goes way beyond that. You learn skills that aren't necessarily going to help you in an actual street fight but they help you improve yourself. You go beyond what you think you can. And I really do believe that anybody can obtain a black belt and it's not necessarily... you don't have to grade a black belt from Joe and John and Mary and Sue because they're all gonna be different, and somebody might not have the physical capability to do what another person can do. But if they're doing their best and they are stretching and growing and learning, then I believe they can advance in the belt system and they're becoming the best martial artist and the people they can be. Because it's more than just punching and kicking. There should be character development. There should be, you know, the discipline that you go and train even if you don't feel like it. There's the discipline to go through a little bit of pain and discomfort to become better. There's the discipline of helping those that are



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

coming behind you, to help them reach their best. There's the fellowship that you can gain with other martial artists. So there's just so much more than just learning how to fight and defend yourself.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's quite a laundry list and certainly a subject that we've dug into quite a bit on the show. You know, so you're preaching to the choir here and I suspect the majority of folks listening today would fully agree. It's about that development, that growth that makes it so important. Now pretty much anyone that's come on the show who has traveled around and trained for decades, especially when they've trained in other countries, even lived in other countries as you have, they have quite the collection of stories. So I'd love for you to reflect back on your time, training, becoming and being a martial artist, and tell us your favorite story from that time.

Alain Burrese:

I think one of my favorite stories is because we watch movies and we see television shows about going off to foreign land and being trained and such, and after I have lived in Korea - and when I lived in Korea, I went to two Hapkido classes a day and one Qigong class a day and then one on Saturday, so literally it was 11 Hapkido and 5 Qigong classes a week when I training. And then I was teaching English to pay the bills. I left Korea, came back to apply for law school. Then that summer before law school started, I went back to Korea. One to train, two to see the woman that I had been dating when I lived there who is now my wife. But when I went over there I thought well, I know this person that owns a hotel. I can probably get a cheap room, you know, tell him I want to stay there all summer. And you know, I'll do what I can and make it as affordable as I can but I'm gonna go into debt but oh well, it's something important. When I got over there, Lee Jung-kyu, my Hapkido instructor, and at the time he was still under Kim Young-jong teaching out of Kim Young-jong's school, then later he left Kwanjangnim Kim's school and opened his own. But at the time he was still training under Kwanjangnim Kim Young-jong and the lead instructor. When he saw that I was going to stay in a hotel and such, he was like no, no, no, no, no. His parents who he still lived with, this was before he got married, they own what was called a Minbak which is a small type of inn down by the beach. They're in Gangneung. So they gave me my own room and I ate all my meals with him and his family, and his mother actually did my laundry. She included it with the laundry that she did with everybody. And an interesting little story is that one day, some underwear got mixed up with some colors and my instructor came to me one day and he's... and his English was not real good, my Korean wasn't fluent either but we made do. But he came by and he was very embarrassed and his mom was very embarrassed. And he's like Mr. Alain, and he's like you can tell he's not comfortable talking about this, he's like... in Korea, they call men's underwear panties, it took me a long time to get my wife to quit calling my underwear panties but that is something they do in Korea. So he's like uh, your panties, pink. And focus his mom had turned my underwear sort of pink-colored by washing them with some color. So that was just sort of a funny little thing and I could care less. It wasn't like I was running around in my underwear, nobody could see them anyway. But it was sort of embarrassing for him and his mom until I said it was alright. But that entire summer was just so fantastic because I was living my instructor. He



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

taught four classes a day so I was going to all four classes every day. I wore myself out; there were times he had to say Mr. Alain, rest. But it was one of those things that you know, you dream about it or it's in the movies to run off to a foreign land and train with a martial instructor, live and train there, and that's what I got to do for that summer.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's awesome. Now one of the things I always ask folks when they've spent time training abroad is how did the expectation match up to the reality?

Alain Burrese:

It wasn't as tough as some people make it seem like or some of the movies portray. I mean I wasn't Jean-Claude Van Damme being strung between two trees to do the splits, you know? And having meat tied to me and dogs chase me through the woods and stuff. But it was still, you know, the people there were so genuine with me and I formed such strong relationships and that was just incredible. I was the only American to train at that school - the only foreigner. And I remember one time, Kwanjangnim Kim Young-jong telling me, and sometimes he told me through my fiancé, now my wife who would sometimes go and translate some that I couldn't completely understand, but he said if I would have known him in his younger days teaching, I would have thought he was very mean but times change. And you know, this was in the 90's, and he's like being mean is not necessary. And this was the man that was... he would smile, he was happy, genuinely friendly with people. Besides on the mat, you know, we would go out, I'd be invited to different parties and different things even though I wasn't even a black belt yet, I was going out with these higher rank black belts and been treated a little bit differently because I was a foreigner and because I was so dedicated to Hapkido. And just a very genuine good person that was really friendly. When he would say yeah, I used to be mean but you don't need to be that way that was the lesson that always sorta stuck with me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's powerful.

Alain Burrese:

And I'll say something about him, I do remember a time, it was just Kim Hyun, Lee Jun-kyu and me there in the room, in the training hall, it was between classes, and Kim Hyun is a super close friend. He was the one that helped me, he was my partner when I took my first Dan test, and he was like a 3rd Dan at the time, and then he went off and he started his own school. So when I go back to Korean, I visit his school as well as Lee Jun-kyu's school. But the three of us were there and they were explaining something and all of a sudden Kwanjangnim Kim Young-jong walks in, no, no, no, no. And he walked over, he hardly moved and it floored Lee Jun-kyu. It put him down on the mat. And when he got back up, he had this huge red mark on his chest. And it's just, the



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

incredible power that he had, and it looked like he hardly did anything. So even though he was such a super nice friendly person, he definitely had the power and the ability to not be nice at the time. And the only reason he was like that with Lee Jun-kyu who's now a Kwanjangnim Lee Jun-kyu was their relationship as instructor and the student, and that was his top student who was doing the teaching in his school, and he grew up with some of the mean training and so he still knew some of that. But it was just very interesting - to see how he could have both of the side. And I think all of us have the ability to have those sides. And it's sad when you see people... all they want to be is the militant, militant, militant, and life is more than that. You gotta have that nice side, and you gotta be good with people too.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, when you think about it, even if you extend that militarism, that let's say aggression, into your training, your training isn't even the majority of your life. So to be able to live kindly, I mean when I think about my instructors that I've had over the years, the best ones were kind the majority of the time. You know, I mean sometimes you gotta pull out that mean streak especially when you're dealing with an annoying, obnoxious at times, child such as I was. But to be kind, right? I mean we're martial artists, we're trying to develop into better people as you said earlier.

Alain Burrese:

It's true. I mean I don't remember... one of the times I was in Korean, I was going back to Gangneung with Kim Hyun cause he had been on a testing board for a different school's black belt test, and when we were driving back to Gangneung to go to dinner and meet up with Lee Jun-kyu and some other martial artists, you know he told me, the most important thing for a martial artist is to have a good mind and a good heart. And that's something that I always try to remember and live by and teach as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I like that; powerful stuff... When you think about your time as a martial artist, which has been a pretty good chunk of your life, you've developed skills, tools that allow you to face, you know, any number of obstacles. I'd like you to tell us about a time in your life now where things weren't going well and how your martial arts allowed you to overcome it.

Alain Burrese:

That's a difficult one because... I think it's the discipline and just the training that you can do things. And so any time that something is difficult, hitting the gym, hitting the training, has been a part of what I do. And so last year, I lost my father... very difficult time. It's been just a little over a year now but my father was not a martial artist but he was a fighter when he was in the military, and I had learned a lot from him growing up. But to incorporate his lessons to the other lessons that I have learned through the martial arts, which he was very proud of me for the things I've done in



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

the martial arts, I think did help me get through that time. And you know, understanding that what would he want me to do? And he would want me to continue do on what I've been doing - training, teaching, sharing with others and helping others in the areas of safety and personal development and growth that the martial arts provides.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And how do you he would score you if he was to give you a report card today?

Alain Burrese:

Sometimes high and sometimes low. I think we always, all of us fail at times. I think he'd be very proud with the newest book that I just published this summer, and so I'd get a very high score for that. I think I'd get a high score for reaching out and doing the activities that I'm doing with the local churches and then trying to even get beyond the local churches and the Active Shooter Response and some of the Reflex Protect things which is a product that I've been helping introduce in the schools and churches in different places; I'd get really high scores for those. I think I'd get lower scores sometimes when my patience especially with family sometimes. I have a daughter in high school which if anybody has daughters in high school, they probably know what I'm talking about. It can be a challenging time for both the student and the parents, and sometimes I need to back up and be a little bit more patient and use some of the martial art discipline and the breathing and the patience that we learn in martial arts when she's having one of her times. And so I would probably not score quite as high in that because I think I could do better and I think he would know that I could do better.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know for me, it's always been interesting. You know, I have those figures in my life who knew me well, most of them that I'm thinking of have passed on, and I know how they would score me. It's funny, we can fool ourselves but the moment we start trying to step out of that box and thinking what would this person who helped raise me or this person that I respect tremendously, what would they say about what I'm doing? And I think for most of us, it becomes so much clearer, so much more black and white on what we're capable of.

Alain Burrese:

I think you're so correct on that. I remember years ago, I was living in Korea, I was actually training over there but you know, I had the internet, I had a laptop and email and stuff and I shared a joke, you know a lot of us share jokes, now it's Facebook posts. But the joke wasn't... it had sort of a violent ending, and a mentor of mine, PhD from Yale, John Madden who was a classics professor when I went to school, in-charge of the Honors College, the Dean of the Honors College which I was part of, he wrote me back and said you know Alain, does that joke really reflect your values and morals? Is that what you want to promote - violence over something that's probably didn't



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

need to become violent? And he knowing that I was a martial artist, him not being one though, he said is that the kind of jokes that Mr. Miyagi would share? Is that the philosophy that Mr. Miyagi would teach? And when he wrote me that email back, it really made me stop and think, yeah so do I really want to be promoting that kind of thing? And that's why you will never see those kind of jokes, those kind of posts, that kind of stuff come from any of my social media pages.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Makes sense. I like it. Now when you think about the collection of people who had influence on who you are today as a martial artist, all that you are as that individual, if you had to choose one, who has been the greatest influence? Who would that be?

Alain Burrese:

I don't know if I could choose just one because I'm a collection of all of them. The most influential would have to be Kwanjangnim Kim Young-jong, Kwanjangnim Lee Jun-kyu and, he's actually Kwanjangnim as well, Kim Hyun. And then Shihan Dennis Dallas. I learned the most Hapkido from Lee Jun-kyu but I also learned one of the most important lessons about teaching martial arts from Shihan Dallas. And that's when I first started teaching here in Missoula, it would have been around '98 or '99 - and he told me he goes Alain, you can teach the physical stuff, no problem. But if you are not teaching the character development and be strong good people, you're missing the entire point of teaching martial arts and all that good that you could do teaching martial arts in your future. So those are the most influential in my Hapkido journey and my martial art teaching; those four individuals. If Lee Jun-kyu and Shihan Dallas, probably the most.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now let's play hypothetical. If you could add someone into that mix, someone that you haven't trained with, who would you want to train with?

Alain Burrese:

So many people. I mean that's... I would love to be able to go back and train with Choi Yong-Sool, the founder of Hapkido. I would have loved to train more than one day with Bong-soo Han. I would love to train more with Dr. Kimm. You know, I've had a chance to train with him a little but those are some people that I would love to have had an opportunity to train for a long time with.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What would you have... I'm not great with names. The founder of Hapkido, what was his name again?

Alain Burrese:



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Choi Yong-Sool.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Choi Yong-Sool.

Alain Burrese:

Dojunim Choi Yong-Sool

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay. What would you have hoped to gain training with him?

Alain Burrese:

I don't know if his Hapkido is necessarily better than many others that are training in Hapkido. But I think it just would have been fascinating to train with the founder, you know, if from a historical aspect. Because right now, there's different stories about this and that in Hapkido's history and what the real truth is is probably somewhere in between some of the things. I just think it would have been historically... If I could have trained with him and been fluent in Korean to learn directly from, you know, the person that you know, Hapkido came from. So that, I think, what I would have gained. I don't know if the necessarily physical skills would have been much different than I learned when was in Korea from the instructors I had but from a historical point of going back to the beginning, that just fascinates me there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

For me, the opportunity to speak to a style founder and honestly, this conversation comes up the most when we talk about Aikido on the show. For some reason, when we speak to folks who have deep Aikido in their personal martial arts practice, it's a discussion of O Sensei Morihei Ueshiba. And to me, it's... what was in your head as you made these decisions, right? Because every style includes some things and excludes other things, and I just find that that delineation to be fascinating. Why? It's neat to me.

Alain Burrese:

And that fascinates me, too. And Choi Yong-Sool, his instructor in Japan was Takeda Sensei. So it has the same roots as Aikido but they're sort of went in different directions when Choi Yong-Sool went back to Korea. And then there were some of Dojunim Choi Yong-Sool's students that incorporated more kicking into the art which is why it has much more kicking than Aikido. But if you go back far enough, they do have the same roots.



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

That makes sense. Competition is something that I don't if I want to say is polarizing but folks have either had a fair amount of experience with it or usually very, very little. Where do you fall in that dichotomy?

Alain Burrese:

I would fall in the very, very little.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay.

Alain Burrese:

In Judo, I competed, you know, back in high school. And two tournaments out of the year that I competed until the instructor moved away, two tournaments had the biggest influence on me. One was a tournament in Missoula, you know I was living in Thompson Falls at the time - high school - that's about two hours from Missoula where I am right now. But the tournament was in Missoula and it was a double elimination tournament and I was able to take a first place. I had to go against the second place guy three times. Because earlier in the day, he beat me. And then the way the tournament bracket round up, we're facing each other again. If he were to beat me, he would win but he didn't. I beat him, so that made us go into the final match, a third time we had to meet cause our loses had been to each other and I was able to beat him in that final match and take the first place trophy home. And that was just... it made me really into like, you know, Judo and so that was an important tournament. But probably more impactful tournament was a tournament in Plains Montana where I was choked unconscious. And why it was impactful, and I've told this story like in my Chokes and Sleepers DVD, when I got choked unconscious, as I was going out then I was out, I realized that there is absolutely I could do as I'm going unconscious. And at the same time, I read a magazine article and the article happen to be by Loren Christensen. At the time, I never knew Loren and I would become friends and that we would be promoting each other, and you know he wrote the foreword for my newest book just this last summer. But that article and being choked out made me really devote myself to learning chokes and sleeper holds. And I became very good at them and I had to use them on a number of actual altercations throughout my army days and during security and different works. So that getting choke unconscious lit that fire to me to get really good at those and getting really good saved me later.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice One of the things that I often say maybe not so much on the show but just in general when I'm talking about martial arts is that a diverse martial artist is a better martial artist. The more things we are adapted to handle, the better, and competition is certainly one of those things that



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

gives us the opportunity to, we'll say, diversify. Now you've talked a bit about self-defense and how it's separate in a sense or at least you know, not the complete intersection of the Venn diagram with martial arts, and that you've written some books. So let's kinda veer down that side street and let's talk about self-defense and how you found yourself writing on that subject.

Alain Burrese:

Well it started probably when I was in the Army in Korea and I read Marc MacYoung's first book, *The Cheap Shots Ambushes and Other Lessons*, and I read Peyton Quinn's first books, *A Bouncer's Guide to Barroom Brawling* - both from Paladin Press. And reading those books, I was like... I'm seeing the same kind of stuff down in the bars. These guys are, they're talking sense because I have an experience in the same thing. When I got out of the Army and I was in college, I wrote Marc MacYoung and you know, this is back before email and the internet. It was a real letter, and he wrote me back. And we started writing letters that turned to phone calls that turned to him actually coming up to Montana - I was a student at University of Montana - and through some groups that I was in, we were able to host him to come up and get a crime avoidance seminar for students. So when he came up, we spent a bunch of time in the gym training together and then I actually helped him, assisted him, giving that crime avoidance seminar to the campus. And I told him about the idea that I had about *Hard-won Wisdom*, the book I wrote. And he was like, that's a good idea; write it. And so I ended up writing the book, he ended up helping me edit it a little bit, gave me suggestions, and he wrote the foreword. And Paladin Press ended up publishing that book, and that was my first book and my introduction with Paladin Press.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And what is it that you like about writing? Because we've had a number of authors on and they've all spoken very fondly about the process and production of a book but they've also spoken very much to the challenge and the rarity of seeing any kind of reasonable financial return from the time they invest.

Alain Burrese:

I like the aspect of being able to share something with others that may help them whether it's the book on active shooters or self-defense or if it's one of my tough guy wisdom books or my novel, they just get some enjoyment out of it. I like the aspect that you know something that I can produce and share with others that will benefit them in some way. And there's a little bit of the vanity that you know I like seeing wow, you're gonna go to Amazon and wow there's 11 DVDs and half a dozen books and, you know, being wow you got some stuff out there; you're getting out there. I like that. I don't like the long hours sitting by yourself just belaboring over something cause you just can't quite get it right yet. I don't like the editing process and going through stuff over and over to make it better and they find the little mistakes and hope that you'll find them all and then you publish a book and you find that other mistake that you missed those first 20-some times. But overall, I mean it's a satisfying feeling to actually hold a book that you created.



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

There's a lot of overlap with the mindset it seems that goes into a book as martial arts training.

Alain Burrese:

There is. When it comes down to it, to write a book, you know, it's a very simple formula. Put your butt in a chair and start typing. I mean that's what it takes, and it takes a lot of discipline to make sure you do that consistently to the end. Like martial arts, I am sure there are way more people that have started a book just like there are tons of people that start martial arts than those that actually complete a book or those that obtained their black belt. There's that stick to it-ness that is needed for both.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm sure you're right. I'm sure if we were to take up some numbers because you know, pretty much everyone has said that they're writing a book at some point. I've said I'm writing a book; I've actually written a couple small ones but I've said I'm writing far more. There are far more ideas in my head than [39:50](#) half-finished books. So if we were to... Let's dig in to the self-defense a little bit because self-defense is a pretty controversial topic within the martial arts. Because so many outside of the martial arts equate martial arts with self-defense. We seem to have taken up this mantle in a sense to say if you want to learn self-defense, you should come into a martial artist and of course that is not the only way. And sometimes, because of the intersection of self-defense and martial arts, there are some folks who are great at teaching it and others who are less so. But if we were to talk about the difference between your perspective on martial arts and your experience and what you teach, what you write about versus some of the, I don't know, maybe the clichés or the widely held beliefs, you know, what myths might you bust for us, for the listeners today?

Alain Burrese:

I think one of the big ones is that you have to become a black belt or that you have to train for years upon years to make it proficient to defend yourself. Because there are those out there that say the short courses, they're not worth anything and I think that's complete BS. I remember Tony Blauer talking on an interview once where... cause he does a lot of short courses, and he has had people in his short courses defend themselves. And it was because of those short courses that gave them the skills and tools they needed. So don't tell Tony Blauer that short courses don't work because he has proof they do, and he's just one example. We could probably find a whole bunch more but his name came off the top of my head because I remember that interview. I have taught a ton of short courses and I think a lot of them, if you can get people's mindset changed and get them thinking differently, that's one of the most important things you can do. And then you teach them just a couple of physical tools - with the right mindset and a couple of physical tools - people can defend themselves enough to get to safety in most of the things that are happening to people.



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

And if they have the right mindset and awareness, they can avoid a lot of the violence that happens in the first place.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I get it, I get it. Now let's kinda open that subject up a little bit. If folks were to, and I hope some of them will, pick up your books, and of course this is a good time to mention... we're gonna have a bunch of links, bunch of things over at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. So whether you're new or not to the show you may not know that, you may not remember that, go ahead, head on over. You can check out some of Sabomnim's books and links and everything. So if we consider the catalog of material that you've produced, what other things, you know... give us a few other hooks, you know, what are the things can we share with the audience that might excite them about checking out some of the other things you've written?

Alain Burrese:

Well you know, look at my DVDs first. I have DVDs on Streetfighting Essentials which is out by Paladin Press. And that teaches basic striking, basic kicking, you know, things that you can learn pretty fast. But then if you into my Lock On: Joint Locking Series with Aiki Productions, that's all about joint locks. Joint locks are going to take longer to become proficient enough to use them. It doesn't take much practice to be able to hammer fist somebody in the nose. It takes a lot more practice to be able to joint lock and escort somebody out. And so depending on your skill set and your goals, do you need a short self-defense class that teaches awareness in a few schools? Do you need a longer course that will teach you skills for law enforcement or bouncing where you have to escort and maybe use joint locks in that arena? Or do you want to become a martial artist and learn a plethora of skills, some which you will never need on the street, but you will become a better person, a more disciplined person, a more educated person on how the body works, and wide joint locks or other different pressure points, whatever skills you're learning throughout the martial arts, why they were? It just encompasses so much more and it really is a lifetime worth of studying that you can keep learning and improving and growing, and adapting and changing as you age. Because you can't do the things in your 50s, 60s, 70s that you could in your teens, 20s and 30s so you have to learn to adapt and change and still continue that growth. So the martial arts and some of the products that I put out, that's for that long-term growing and becoming a better person, better martial artist. Other things are for the short-term - you need to learn some things so you're safe out in the parking lot or you need to learn a skill if a crazy person comes in and starts trying to kill people and you have to respond. And that's why I teach these things to different websites and do try to keep things a little bit different although there are some people that want it all, sorta like me - I want to be the best at self-defense but I also want to grow as a martial artist.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great. I love it. Let people know even though I said we're gonna drop the links, and why don't you just let folks know where they can find some of your things - your DVDs, your books, etc.



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Alain Burrese:

For martial art related things, yourwarriorsedge.com. I have you know, videos on martial arts; I have the videos for sale, I got the free stuff, I have a blog that focuses more on martial arts, martial art philosophy and such. If you go to surviveanddefend.com, that focuses on safety and self-defense more. And so that blog has a different goal and there's also a membership site with... there's now close to 650 different pages of videos, audios, written things that are all on keeping you safe. Then I have survivalshooting.com; that is specifically for active shooter and terrorist threat situations, and things you can do beforehand, during and after that will save lives.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice.

Alain Burrese:

And each of those websites has a corresponding Facebook page as well. It includes articles and posts about those specific topics.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, great. And again folks, you know, we're gonna link those for you so no need to write on the back of your arm or crash into a tree while you're driving. When you look out over your next however long you choose to spend training, and I'm assuming that it's not gonna stop... very rarely do our guests plan, in fact never has a guest admitted or even speculated they would stop training at some point. So when you look out over your future, what are your goals? Are there definable things that you're striving for with respect to you know, your personal training, your professional work, helping others?

Alain Burrese:

I want to keep training, keep writing, keep teaching, and keep helping others on their journeys whether it's in the staying safe in self-defense or their martial art journey. And that's gonna change some, and some might be more mental than physical as I age. I'm very fortunate for the last six or seven years, I've been one of the instructors at the Korean Martial Art Festival in Crestview, Florida, fantastic three-day event every April, and there's just some fantastic instructors. And the last couple of years, Dr. He-Young Kimm has been one of the instructors. This last spring when I was down there, besides teaching my class, I like to go to all the other instructors' classes that I can and learn from them. Dr. Kimm's class, he held up a couple of magazines. He held up a magazine from back in the '70s or so when he was on the cover doing this super high flying kick and he talked about when you're young, you can do all these physical things and you know, I could jump very high. Then he held up a magazine, I think it was from the '80s... no, it's probably the '90s or so. He was on the cover and he was doing more of a throw or a joint lock technique,



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

and he talked about how when you get older, sometimes your techniques start to change, maybe you can't jump as high so you do something different. And then he held up a magazine cover from sometime in the 2000's, and the article and the feature about him was more on the mental aspects of training. And he talked about, you know, as you get older still, your training goals and what you're doing changes. And now this is a man... he's 80 years old and he was out there teaching joint locks and running a seminar session. But I found that interesting when he held up those magazines and talked about how we change as we age. We don't stop but we do have to modify and do things maybe differently, and maybe our focus will be different of what we do in the arts. And so I hope I'm teaching when I'm in my 80's like he is and I understand that things are going to change. I'm in my 50's now, I'm different from when I was in my 20's, 30's, and it's gonna keep changing but I think martial arts will slow the changes. Continued practice will help slow the aging and will help me age better, and hopefully those are lessons that I can pass on to others so they can train and age more slowly and better and have longer journeys in the arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great, great stuff. I really appreciate your time today. I appreciate you coming on the show and sharing your stories and just being so open with the audience. It's meant a lot to me. So if I could ask you just one more favor, if you could send us out with some parting words or something poignant, what last words would you offer to the folks listening today?

Alain Burrese:

I think I would just have to repeat the words of wisdom given to me by Kim Hyun on that drive in Korea a few years back. To have a good heart and a good mind, that's the most important thing that we can do as martial artists and as people. And have a good heart and a good mind, that's really the key to life. I really think it is, and I think a lot of the stuff that we see going on in the world right now, so many people fighting and mad and angry with others over different ideas or over this or that, if we could just stop and have open our hearts and have good hearts and good minds, and do our very best to help other people, then I think we would have something. And I think as martial artists, we should have the discipline, the skill sets, the abilities to do that. Well I was gonna mention... I mean for an actor, obviously I watch tons of movies, but I'm still a huge Chuck Norris fan. And an interesting little story is when I met Chuck Norris a few years back, my wife and I went to a book signing. When he was promoting that *Against All Odds*, and I'm standing in line with a bunch of other people and I looked over and I tell my wife, that's Howard Jackson. And she's like huh? Who? I said, the man standing over by the table by Chuck Norris and his wife, that's Howard Jackson. He's actually a really good martial artist, too. And I said wait a second, and I opened the book that I was holding in my hand that I was gonna, you know, buy and have him sign, and I look through it and there's a picture of Howard being kicked with Chuck Norris in a scene for one of the movies they did together. I said that's him, there, right there. So I get up, Chuck Norris signed the book and you know, talked to him briefly and then I went over and started talking to Howard and I had him sign that picture in the middle of the book. So my book *Against All Odds* is signed by both Chuck Norris and Howard Jackson. And then when the crowd left, Howard and I went back over to where Chuck was and I got to talk to him a little bit longer and



Episode 348 – Sabomnim Alain Burrese | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

stuff. But yeah, I just thought that... so that's sort of a special... you know, I have 500 or more signed books in my book collection but that one's really special cause it's signed by both of them.

Jeremy Lesniak:

When I talk to folks like Sabomnim, I get the sense that we're in the midst of this movement of traditional martial arts moving forward, understanding its place in the world today, understanding how much of an impact we can have on ourselves and on others in and out of the martial arts, and that really excites me. So thank you, sir. Thanks for coming on the show today and helping me feel better about the world. If you want to check out the show notes with transcripts and photos and videos and links to social media, a ton of stuff, in fact a lot of stuff today, head on over whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. You get links to books and DVDs and all kinds of cool stuff that this man puts out. It's great. And just... I say it every once in a while, I'm gonna say it again, we receive absolutely no compensation or kickbacks for any guests coming on the show, for any products that you may purchase from them. We're just trying to help share. If you want to check out what we do, things that we share, you can find those at whistlekick.com. Use the code PODCAST15 or head on over to Amazon. If you want to find us on social media, that's @whistlekick - Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, those are our main platforms. And you can email me, jeremy@whistlekick.com. If you have a suggestion for a guest, there's a form on the website, on the Martial Arts Radio website, fill that out and we'll be in touch. Whether that's you or somebody else, we want to talk to you. We want to know what your stories are; that's what makes this show so special. And that's what I've got for you today. Until next time. Train hard, smile, and have a great day.