



Episode 363 – Guardian Angels | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey how's it going everybody? Welcome this is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 363. Today, we're going to talk about a group that you may have heard of but probably don't know a lot about, the Guardian Angels. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host for the show, I'm the founder at whistlekick and I love martial arts. Traditional martial art of all kinds and that's why we bring you the show twice a week. And that's why we make you all the great stuff you can find whistlekick.com. Don't forget, you can use the code `podcast15` to say 15% on everything we are adding new products all the time. Seriously, I added something new last night one thing, two things and there are couple new things in development, it's crazy. If you are not heading on to that website weekly you're probably missing out on something cause some of the stuff we do is limited-edition. Of course you can find the show notes with pictures and video and transcripts for the podcast episodes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. And you should sign up for the newsletter, we've got a lot of good stuff going there, exclusive discounts, and we're adding some newsletter exclusive stuff soon. In fact, by the time this episode comes out, it's probably already started the best way to set up a newsletter, you can go to whistlekick.com or whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, there's a pop up that will come up and get you to sign up.

Let's talk about the Guardian Angels. The Guardian Angels is a nonprofit organization aims to gather volunteers from around the globe to promote peace and order. The group was founded by Curtis Sliwa, an American anti-crime activist of February, 13th 1979 in New York City. Down today, there are nearly 100 chapters active in various parts of the world all over the world. The organization began to operate



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mainly in the New York City subway station making citizen's arrest to those who violate the law, especially for violent crimes. Members mainly patrolled the streets and subways but they also hold workshops and seminars like self-defense courses in schools and in the corporate world. Despite the good intentions of the group, it was initially disproved up by New York City mayor Ed Koch in the early 80s but he later revoked his statement after you know, a few years. Other politicians expressed support for the group including New York City Mayor's Rudolph Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg. In November 1992 Sliwa admitted that the group invented crimes in the 80s for publicity after feeling unworthy of the outpouring of support when you survive several gunshots in June 19, 1992. He mentioned that six of their crime-fighting activities were just stunts, but other members said otherwise stating that more of their activities were fake. Aside from that, it was also discovered that the group only patrolled the streets near restaurant row, their subway patrols were to recruit new members and not to make genuine patrols. The Guardian Angels primary mission is to conduct safety patrols on the streets and in public transportation. To be recognized, members must wear their uniform which is characterized by red berets and red jackets or a white T-shirt with their logo. The Guardian Angels promote diversity meaning the group does not discriminate against anyone who wants to join whether that's gender, age, sexuality, race, whatever it is. If a person's qualified, he or she, if they're willing to commit themselves to the mission of the organization, they're in. For the safety patrol program, the minimum age is 16 as a person would be patrolling the streets without any guardians. The group also has Junior Guardian Angels that aim to train children from 6 to 15 years in developing self-esteem and fortitude and to not be easily overwhelmed by fear. However as part of the safety protocols, the group does not accept those who have recent or a serious criminal record, people who are affiliated with gangs or hate groups cannot be accepted. The group doesn't require an applicant to be skilled in anything, so they provide training both in rescue and self-defense. Members are trained in first aid and CPR, law, Conflict resolution, communication and basic martial arts. As the group is not affiliated with any government forces, all members are prohibited from carrying weapons during patrols even if the member can legally carry a weapon. Everyone is physically search to ensure that no member carries a weapon. The buddy system is implanted during patrols and they receive orders from their patrol leader. Whatever happens during patrols even in life-threatening events they will only do what is lawful and necessary.

The organization has evolved and expanded through the years by including more programs not just for adults but for youth as well, youth programs include martial arts classes, personal safety, homework assistance, nutrition arts and crafts, games, community, volunteer projects, cultural arts, computer activities, and movies. The organization doesn't just protect people but also animals. According to studies people who abuse animals are more likely to abuse people as well. The first activity of the animal protection program was to provide shelter to feral cats especially during winter season. They collaborate with other groups that already do this job, the organization has a block watch program where residents the communities are educated on crime prevention, safety awareness, and more. There are in partnership with the local police departments and public officials. Group participants, will receive



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monthly training to perform their duties effectively. The orientation is strongly against any kind of child sexual abuse of course and people who let's called them perverts that may be hanging out on the streets. So they launch the perv busters initiative to provide help to people who are sexually harassed. They have a dedicated hotline for new York citizens. As early as 1995, the cyber Angels program was founded by Gabriel Hatcher to serve as an online sort of neighborhood watch. Originally formed the hunt sexual predators online, the group gathered its experience and educated police, schools, and families. In 1998 Cyber Angels received a presidential service award and one of its early members was Tony Riccardi the founder of Macsupport.com.

Curtis Sliwa plan to intensify their training courses by using the power of the Internet so they're would be more accessible to the members. He announced the plan at the 2010 world conference in San Francisco. Now, of course I mentioned there are plenty of chapters and after its headquarters in New York, the Guardian Angel established chapters in some pretty big cities including Washington DC, New Orleans, LA, San Diego, San Francisco, Fresno, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Denver, London, Toronto, Dallas, Tokyo, Houston, Cape Town, Auckland, Savannah, Las Vegas, Reno, Seattle, and York. It also established chapters in some smaller cities in the US. The chapter in LA, California started in 1981. So not too long after the founding originally led by Ron Pono, Richard Dominique, and Kevin Terry. The membership went well mid 80s but declined in the 90s. By the year 2000 the number of subchapters dropped to one, from a high of six. In 2006, the LA chapter was successfully restored to the efforts of Alex [00:07:08.09] a former Guardian Angels volunteer in the mid-80s. Prior to him, the chapter was led by James Richards, but he was shot to death outside his home on October 18, 2000. Richards was not on patrol at time but he was coordinating with the local law enforcement regarding drug related crime in his neighborhood. The Sacramento chapter was the third chapter be established in California after LA and San Francisco. Its membership peaked at 50 where members age from 60 to 50. The group is supported by the local police and they were provided with a phone number and a liaison officer to be used within the people oriented police, or POP division. For several years, the Sacramento chapter headquarters operated in half of the commercial medical duplex without paying any rent. Aside from the usual walk safety patrols he also had a bike patrol along the American River Parkway. They also use CB radios to report to the headquarters immediately as well as to the Sacramento police. [00:08:10.12] groups often patrolled in threes, the patrol leader, communications and a runner. The patrol leader was in the front, the communications would follow on the side or behind and a runner or runners were you know the bulk of the patrol and they would be positioned next to the communications person. In larger groups, the second would be responsible for keeping the patrol group organized at the rear and in cases that needed immediate physical attention, the patrol leader would send out the runners under direction of the second or the communications could be sent out instead accompanied by another member so they can call the police or call back to headquarters. When on bicycles the second, a runner and the patrol leader could go out altogether for faster response to incidents. The group also uses a discrete method of communication including whistling. It was mandatory for all patrol members to bring a working pen, pad of paper and flashlight for other means of communication.



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And just to go off script for a moment here, when we think about you know, vigilante justice, we're often thinking about violence and using our martial arts skills to stop violence but, if you consider what law enforcement is in a preventive way, right? Because we want to be, if this is something that interests you and as part of the reason for doing this episode, prevention happens before the violence. Right? So were talking about gathering information. Back on script now. The entire city was patrolled by the group and each patrol can last for four hours up you know to a ten mile walk Stephen. They even patrolled notoriously gang affiliated territories including the Oak Park neighborhood, which was the territory for the Crips. Once a Guardian Angels were mistakenly identified as an enemy gang by the Crips because of the red uniform. On the other hand another gang the bloods used red, consider the Guardian Angels a weaker version of their gang or just imitated them. Occasionally the group will use cars for patrols for long-distance and their assistance was also sought by other cities in events like the Rose Bowl parade, or other events you know handling crowd control. Their service has been well acknowledged by the public and are frequently interviewed by the media with regard to crime incidents within the city. The arrest of Eric Royce Leonard a.k.a. The thrill killer in 1991, brought press conferences to allow the Guardian Angels to state their stance on the matter and build some attention.

Smaller chapters in different parts of the US have been established and help mitigate crime in the respective areas. There is a chapter established in Boston in 2007, which was originally posed by the mayor but the group wasn't stopped providing service and eventually the mayor once he saw what was happening changes stance and gave them his support. That same year, a chapter was established in Kansas City Missouri but was unfortunately disbanded due to a lack of activity, a lack of membership. The Japan chapter was established in 1996 to Keiji Oda, who was a former member of both the Boston and New York City chapters in the 80s. It ranks second in terms of membership and activities next to the US. At first the concept of the Guardian Angels wasn't welcome in Japan, Oda later successfully convinced the Japanese official to agree to launching the chapter as long as the principles to be adhered to are universal and not just American. Disapproval of the Guardian Angels to have a meeting with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in 2005. They were the first community organization in Japan to be awarded nonprofit status. There is a chapter in Israel led by Jill Shames, a social activist and martial artist. The activities of this chapter a little bit different and that they focus on helping Jewish-Ethiopian immigrants. Guardian Angels have a chapter in London and have since 1989 but membership declined and in 2007 there only 12 members left. Now what are the laws in London forbids the use of force in citizen arrest but will allow force in extreme cases of life and death. As a result the training of the Guardian Angels in London has to be a bit differently focuses on employing minimum possible force. The situation the Guardian Angels was difficult one to say the least especially in the first decade. They were accused of being vigilantes and taking advantage of free ride on London's transport systems. In 1989 Parliament discuss their operations and the volunteers were declared persona non grata. But this didn't last. Aside from the London chapter, there's a Manchester chapter established in 1991 that was closed in 96 and we have more information about some of the localized chapters I'm not gonna go through any more of them. There's some interesting information about why certain one started and disbanded.



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But why I want to talk about this today? If you attend some of the larger martial arts events, you may have seen these folks. The red berets, the red jackets, they're pretty hard to miss. And when I've attended the New Jersey action martial arts magazine Hall of Fame weekend, this is where I've seen them. They're recruiting membership, they're offering training and they seem like a good group of people. Now, I don't know about you, but I've long thought that martial artists with our skill set have a, I don't want to call it a responsibility, I guess an opportunity in showing the world that we can use our skill in a positive and peace seeking way. Well, the Guardian Angels are doing exactly that and I would like to see more of us participating with them. When we consider crime, most of the time were thinking about reactive methods, but of course the best way to avoid something is to prevent it. And that prevention that deterrent, isn't always effective as punishment. To put it another way, the more of us that are out there being quality people, being good martial artists, standing up to the negativity of the world whether through Guardian Angels organization or not, the less likely were going to see crime and violence and people suffering. We as martial artist have experience an opportunity to benefit the world in this way and I would like to see more of us doing that whether formally or informally. The best way to inspire people is to be a good person, to be that beacon of light or however you choose to see it that others will look to and want to imitate. We see this in great martial arts instructors, we see this in some of our heroes, that these people represent ideals that we aspire to. Well, these ideas were talking about these ideals, we don't just have to aspire to them we can embody them so that's my hope for you, for all of us. That we will be part of the solution and not indifferent.

As I said you can check out a transcript of this episode including a bunch of information whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. This is episode 363, you can save 15% on any of the products at whistlekick.com using the code `PODCAST15`, sign up for the newsletter if you haven't. And if you want to follow us on social media you should, tons of good stuff. We are at whistlekick on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. My email address is Jeremy@whistlekick.com, I thank you for your time today, until next time. Train hard, smile, and have a great day.