



Episode 368 – Master Joe Corley | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello, everyone! Thanks for coming by. Welcome. This is whistlekick Martial Arts Radio and this is episode 368. Today, my guest is Master Joe Corley. I'm Jeremy Lesniak. I'm your host for this show. I'm the founder of whistlekick. We make sparring gear and uniforms and all kinds of stuff - great sweatshirts, comfy sweatpants, t-shirts, hats - and it's all focused around helping you live the martial arts lifestyle that is important to you. Now of course, you can save at whistlekick.com by using the code `PODCAST15` and that gets you, you guessed it, 15% off of everything over there. Even sale price stuff. But you might be more interested in the podcast show notes and the other things we have going on for this show, and those are at a separate site, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. Nice and easy. And as always, we don't charge anything for this show. We don't put any of the episodes behind a paywall but what we do ask is that you help us spread the word. Share this episode or maybe another one of your favorites with your martial arts friends. Help them find this show. Help this show grow so we can attract more and bigger martial arts stories from the people who made the martial arts what it is today, and who are helping move it forward for future generations.

Now, today's guest kinda fits both of those descriptions. Master Joe Corley not only had a tremendous hand in forming what we know as the martial arts landscape of today but he's still working to move it forward and to keep it available to those of future generations. We had a wonderful conversation and here's someone that, man, I wish I lived closer because I've



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got a feeling that this guy would be my guy. The man that I would turn to, my Pat Johnson, perhaps. And that will make more sense as we get into the episode. So, let me step back and this is my conversation with Master Joe Corley. Master Corley, welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio.

Joe Corley:

Great to be here with you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh, it's great to have you here. Been looking forward to this one for... I don't know when we set this up. A couple of weeks ago? Just this past weekend, I was in Atlantic City with Sifu Alan Goldberg at his event.

Joe Corley:

Yup.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And a whole bunch of your contemporaries, folks that I know you know quite well...

Joe Corley:

Yeah. I wish I could have been there. I had to be in two places this weekend.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Doesn't work well, though.

Joe Corley:

I smacked my car last Tuesday.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh, no.

Joe Corley:



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It took [02:38](#) So, a lot of the things that I had planned during the week [02:40](#) get a way and get up there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh. Well, I wasn't even expecting you there. So, that would have been a nice surprise.

Joe Corley:

Yup. I made it up a couple of years ago but I haven't been to one so far.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Alright. Well, maybe next time we'll play.

Joe Corley:

Yup.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well, we could spend our time talking about people that you know that I have had the opportunity to talk to. But of course, we're really here to talk about you and talk about your martial art story. So, let's roll the clock back. How did you first find martial arts?

I was a military brat. When I was 6 years old, my dad gave me a pair of boxing gloves and a baseball glove and a baseball. And the two things I always enjoyed most were fighting/sparring and playing baseball. In fact, the only time my martial arts training was interrupted was when I took the summer off to play baseball when I first graduated from high school. The, I guess the short story version, is that when my dad taught me how box, basic boxing - jab, cross, primarily - as a kid. He was courier army. We would move from one army base to another one. And he would explain to me that there would be larger kids coming to [04:08](#)invite me to the neighborhood, and that it would be okay if I hit them in the face with a jab and a cross to let them know that I wouldn't be a victim of bullying. So, my dad passed away when I was 10. And then I went back to the military school that he had enrolled me in in the 1st grade. We had gone away from the States when I was in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade. And when he was diagnosed with lung cancer, he came back to Walter Reed Hospital in D.C. And then I spent the final half of the 4th grade in Tennessee with my grandparents. And then in the 5th grade, went back in the military school. The way I often describe it is half the students at the military school were sent there by parents who couldn't manage them at home. And



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so, they were the unruly ones if you will. And so, I think I set a record at the military school for being involved in the most fights. I never lost a fight until the 11th grade. I ended up in a draw with a person that was a wrestler at the time. That became kind of a metaphor for what would happen with them - mixed martial arts versus kickboxing later in life. But the long and short of it was that when I was 16, I saw a flyer for Karate classes and Karate to me at the time meant that I would get to going great stuff like bricks. And I figured, if I could break bricks, I could also break these people that I had seen who are adults who cried a lot more viciously than kids did. So, when I signed up for this class at the YMCA here in Atlanta, the first night, I just fell in love with it and I felt like I had found a home. So, that was my first having enjoyed the boxing, although not organized boxing, but learning how to box and learning how to use my hands to protect myself. And then being able to get into an organized fighting game, that became a real draw and a real [06:29](#) for me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, boxing... If your father put you in boxing gloves, I'm guessing he had some experience with boxing?

Joe Corley:

Well, in my dad's age, there was always a boxing ring in the gyms. And if people would go back on YouTube search for the Gillette Cavalcade of Sports Boxing Jingle, they would see that boxing was basically sponsored in those early days by Gillette. So, my dad and I used to watch boxing. The Gillette Cavalcade of Sports every Friday night, boxing [07:11](#) And so, in his day, if two kids had a problem with one another, the coach would throw two pairs of gloves and a ring and make the kids go in there and settle their differences. And of course, in today's world, they would send us to psych places so we could, you know, [07:30](#) our immortal wounds.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right. You and I have had a bit of a pre-conversation when we last talked, not recorded, and there's some elements there that I think the listeners might be able to read between the lines on, things that you and I are lined up pretty well on.

Joe Corley:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Now, what do you think your father would have thought about your journey in the martial arts into non-boxing martial arts?

Joe Corley:

I think he would have been... I think he would have been very supportive and very proud, you know? I think... I can't remember my day too well but I remember an anecdote when we were visiting... When I was actually living with my mom in the summer that he passed away in Washington, D.C., he was in Walter Reed, and my mom enrolled me in a day camp there. In the first day in that day camp, first thing in the morning, I was out on the playground and there was a kid out there throwing rocks at the squirrel and he was kinda hurting the squirrel. And I said, leave the squirrel alone. And he said, you'll just have to make me. So, I hit him with an uppercut in the stomach and he fell on the ground, turned purple. Just then, the woman who ran the daycare center came out and said, what's going on here? I said, he was trying to hurt the squirrel and he told me I'd have to make him stop. So, I did. She said, oh, okay. And turned around and went back inside. And then on the last part of the day camp that day, there was a kid who was going around and pushing everybody that was in the waiting room, waiting for their parents to get there. And so, he came and pushed me and I told him to stop. And he pushed me again. And I used that same uppercut. And about that time, his mother walked in and saw him lying on the floor purple. She said, oh, I hope they'll guide my son if he does anything like this. And there's a 10-year old that said, I don't think you'll have to worry about that. For whatever reason, I just walked out the front door of this daycare center as the 10-year old walked down the street and went to my dad's room in Walter Reed Hospital. He said, what are you doing here? And I told him the story. He said, that's interesting. Are you hungry? And then he gave me his meal. So, my dad...

Jeremy Lesniak:

Go ahead.

Joe Corley:

Would have... You know, being from the old school of what we might, in these days, call the John Wayne School and would have thought that if you did something well in the fight, without a doubt, that was a thing to be proud of and it wouldn't fall under the category of toxic masculinity.

Jeremy Lesniak:

When we talk about martial arts and self-defense, really, is [10:34](#) topics. We very rarely talking about using our skills to defend others. I mean, that's not a combat scenario that very few schools will address, at least in my experience. But here, you've now shared a couple of



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stories where you used some of what your father taught you to protect others. Has that been a theme in your life or we just kinda looked into a couple of isolated incidents?

Joe Corley:

Well, in the real world, I haven't had to defend man against other people. I hadn't stood in and tell people that they should back off, I was a high school senior after I had already done pretty well in my preliminary martial arts training. I had a friend who was a very robust kind of guy. A high school quarterback threatened him in front of me one day and I told him he shouldn't do that again or I'll beat the crap out of him. And so, he left him alone. So, there's a few cases like that that happened but not in a serious [11:48](#) In the Krav Maga training that we do now, we do a lot of 3rd party protection. They come as [11:54](#) So, you do some 3rd party protection there. But I was... Actually, both my parents ended up being alcoholics themselves. I did some therapy for that kind of thing over the years. I pretty much was a [12:17](#) as someone who could be what you would call co-dependent and would spend time trying to help other people solve problems that they probably should have solved on their own. But on the physical defense side, I didn't have to do a whole lot of defending of other people.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Still sounds like it's a big part of your character. And I suspect that even if it's not the primary reason, I would guess if we were to really dig deep, if we were to turn this in some kind of therapy session, we'd probably find that's a strong motivator for you.

Joe Corley:

Yeah. Could be. I hate to see the bullying that's going on. Like you... [13:00](#) to a few months ago. We had some short conversation about politics but I hate to see numbers of people ganging up on other people. [13:11](#) gathering up in big numbers and then bullying people. They shouldn't even be allowed to talk to. It's just that. So, yeah. I think that moves me and it moves a lot of the, you know... I really prefer to call it the Clint Eastwood types in my generation - walk softly, talk softly, and carry a big 44.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Bullying is such a prominent topic in our world right now and I don't just mean in the wider world but I mean in the martial arts world. Because we, as martial artists have an opportunity through not only the physical skill development but also the character development that we're offering up to children in the majority, if not, all schools. But one of the things that I find interesting about this discussion is that different people draw the line of what is bullying and what is not very differently. Obviously, the world isn't going to bow down and give you



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everything you want, but at the same time, you should be able to go to school or work without getting punched in the face. Where do you draw that line?

Joe Corley:

Well, I would probably fall into the category [14:33](#) of having [14:35](#) on my shoulder and teaching the kids under our supervision to have that chip there so that if... Gosh, what's the word? If confronted to act sooner rather than later... We had a young man who came to us literally in the last three months and he had three particular kids from the football team taking on him. He was a middle schooler and he wasn't as big as they were but he's a great swimmer. I mean, he's a kid that can put in thousands and thousands of yards in a workout. He swims more in a day than I could swim in my whole life. So, he's a tough kid. And when we talked to him, he's got great eye contact. Just the thought of him having to endure it even one more day, just didn't sit well. So, we showed him some... You know, we were doing Krav Maga private training with him. And so, the next day, that kid reached out for him and got smacked. And that started the beginning of the end. So, I don't... I mean, I believe that Jesus have the ability to turn the other cheek and I don't believe in the culture that we live in that turning the other cheek gains much for you. So, what I used to call it and still prefer to call what we do is, we call it Clint Eastwood Assertiveness program. So, you can talk softly and you can be polite but it should be very clear to the other person that you won't put up with none of their crap - not a little bit but none.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm right there with you as you might have suspected.

Joe Corley:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

There are quite a few days and exchanges that I wish I could go back and live over knowing what I know now.

Joe Corley:

Yeah. Sure. Every kid that was ever bullied [16:56](#) We have a society that wants to basically erase that from our masculine code. I mean, it's been going on for some five decades. And so, you can't change society. Like you say, you can't force society to bow down to what you want to [17:19](#) But when you see these kids come in, one of the things I always ask in each one of our introductory lessons to the parents is, Mr. Smith, will you... Let's say Jimmy have



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to defend himself in school where they have a zero tolerance for it. Will you actually stand up for him if he gets in trouble at school protecting himself? And 100% of the parents say, yes, of course. In Georgia, the last year as a matter of fact, I believe it was in 2018, a three-year old case was finally decided by the Georgia Supreme Court. They said that this girl who had been suspended from her school three years earlier for defending herself and hurting the child, the high school that tried to attack her. She got suspended, went and graduate from another school. And now, she's already in college. But they said that her right to protect herself superseded the school's stupid zero tolerance [18:18](#) by me. But that's nice to know. So, I always remind the parents that their kids have every right to protect themselves.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Completely agree. Let's switch gears a little bit because I know a lot of folks who are listening know you because of your time in competition. So, I'd like to veer off into that world a little bit. Why don't you tell us how competition even came on your radar?

Joe Corley:

Well, again, I think because of my attraction to the... Not the competitive side of boxing, but the interaction, the one-on-one. When I played baseball, I was a pitcher and I liked that one-on-one drama as well. The first tournament I had a chance to go to was when I was a green belt. And I mean, it really sided me really [19:19](#) So, in my... I seemed to be a pretty good fighter at that time and so, I entered a lot of tournaments [19:30](#) in the Alabama Brownbelt Championship. And then when I got to 1st degree black belt, I won a Southeast Blackbelt Championship and then I won a couple of what we'd call US titles at the time and fought some pretty good people and beat some pretty good people. Then I got ranked among the top 10 in the United States for quite a while, and then travel the country primarily. In the beginning it was Korean Circuit. So then at the 3rd degree level black belt, when I started training with Chuck Norris and Pat Johnson, we started going to more of the open tournaments around the country starting in 1972. And sadly, in 1973, I had a back injury that just wouldn't let go. So, I really only got to do the open tournament circuit for about a year and a half. And then my back pain gotten to be so intense that I couldn't continue. But I really enjoyed the one-on-one drama of that fighting. It's like the whole world would come down to, if the [20:45](#) sizes were correct, 400 sq. ft. and the intensity was just so good there. When we do our pledge at the beginning [20:54](#) of our class, we call them our intensity pledges and that's been one of the fundamental things that I have felt that we could do most for kids, just helping them develop a sense of intensity. While Steve Jobs works takes them in a complete other direction from intensity unless it involves playing a game on their devices, kids really lack that ability to focus and jump into gear. Unless they're competitive varsity athletes, I don't that comes down to maybe 2% of the student body.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Yeah, there's a whole lot there that...

Joe Corley:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think when we look back at the early days of martial arts, martial arts made a great option. But I think as we move forward, the things that those of us who have been training for a long time sometimes taken for granted as being so instilled in martial arts culture and martial arts instruction culture. Seems like they're becoming more and more necessary, more and more lost. And I think that could be an opportunity and unify and correct, sir, you have schools? Is this something you discuss with your instructors and are watching for that opportunity?

Joe Corley:

Well, if kind of based, kind of a broader answer. We have a couple of decades now that I've been telling the public about all these wonderful right skills that we teach people in the martial arts schools. I would venture to I guess that sadly, if these martial arts instructors were doctors and you watch how those doctors lived, you might not want to hire those doctors. In other words, I've seen schools where the instructors can't find their own asses both hands yet they're teaching the kids all these things, these rules for life. So, in 1994, which was, gosh, that was a quarter of a century ago now, I was first introduced to Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure.

Joe Corley:

And at the time, we had 8 studios and so I began training all of our instructors in the 7 habits. So, if they could learn from the inside out with the most effective principles, it would be for them to [23:29](#)not with their lives but they have to share with their students. It would... For some of them, it would be 15 years or 20 years later when they would come to me and say, man, we really got so much from that we didn't even know it at that time. Which means that so many of our students are not teachable. So, I think when you teach people about your platitudes and they can just recite them back to you from memory but they don't really get a chance to learn the lessons that... It's very difficult to impart those things. So, I think now, having looked back on all of it, the thing to do is to teach people the thing that they think they want to learn, give them the platitude of what makes you feel better, and then try to figure out



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where the student is actually teachable to learn those things. And then teach them to those students if you know those things yourself. But as Covey would say, you have to start from the inside out. You have to look at yourself and you have to say, do I really know what I'm talking about or I'm just pretending that I know what I'm talking about? And so, if the martial arts had in it what I once believed it had in it, which was that [24:56](#) concept of mindfulness training, if that was really there in the martial arts, then it would seem that the person teaching couldn't eliminate it. But obviously, the person teaching it can eliminate it. Just like the people who are making laws, they might break all the laws that they're enforcing on other people. So, that probably wasn't the question you asked but that's kinda an overview. That's what I feel about what's happening when you do it with teaching - why we're teaching, what the real [25:31](#) effects of it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And that's okay. There are no wrong answers to any of the questions that I ask. And of course, you've taken us in a slightly different direction. Now, you brought up this idea that a lot of martial arts instructors are not people that we should be looking up to. Now first, of course, everyone's human regardless of rank and [25:55](#) and what they're teaching and all of that. We're all fallible. But you do bring up an important point that sometimes, we have these instructors that we are trusting to impart skills - whether they'd be character skills or physical skills - that they've not attained themselves. And it does create a bit of a paradox. So, how do you see that? How do we resolve that?

Joe Corley:

I think we have to turn that over to God because I don't believe we can do that. We can do value judgement. And I'm not saying that the people who have earned this rank shouldn't get the same respect that they would have if they were [26:40](#) or a Captain or a Major or Colonel or a General [26:44](#) What I'm saying is that some of them believe that just because they received that rank, that they have these skills that they really have not yet acquired, that they haven't yet perfected. So when I say platitudes, I mean they're actually passing on words and phrases but they're not really digging in and teaching the people how to use those things. And that becomes more and more difficult in our entire culture. So, I'm not really [27:16](#) them for doing it but I just say that we can't expect that they're getting it done at the rate that we like. We're going to affect maybe 2% of our students [27:29](#) no matter what we're doing. But I wish we could affect the whole 100%. So, I don't really think that there's a way to resolve it. I guess we live in a great country where the weak will at some point will be separated from [27:51](#)

Jeremy Lesniak:



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I hope so. No matter how I slice it, when I look into the future, I think that that has to happen. I think that's the only outcome.

Joe Corley:

Yeah. If our God is truly on our countryside, that will happen.

Jeremy Lesniak:

As we look back over your long martial arts career... I mean you've been at this for a while. You've trained with it and competed with it and met so many amazing people, quite a few that we've had on the show already, and I know that you've got a lot of stories from that time. So, if you were to dig into the archives, if you were writing your autobiography and you wanted to put one story, front and center, to really hook the reader, your best or your favorite martial arts story - what would that story be?

Joe Corley:

That's a, obviously, a deep question and it could happen in a lot of levels since I've actually been involved in so many different parts in the martial arts. I guess, on the physical side, I would put it like this because it also ties in with what has happened on my mental side of the martial arts development. But when I first decided that I wanted to... I don't know how to zone in in that answer. I was in a 600 sq. ft. Karate school that I own with our apartment and I was watching this old Super 8 millimeter film. It wasn't old at the time but it was Joe Lewis and Chuck Norris and Allen Steen fighting among each other for the Grand Championship of the internationals championship, and I wore that video out. It was a taped 8 millimeter film at the time, worn out watching them. And so, I decided to branch out to the Southeast. Like I said earlier, I won the Southeast Blackbelt Championship and so I wanted to do some national competition. So, I went to New York City and fought in the tournament there at Madison Square Garden which was Henry Cho's tournament. In that day, I beat a guy named Hawk Frazier. And then there was some talk going on, there's nobody there representing [30:33](#) Then he won the match. And then that night, he fought Chuck Norris for the Grand Championship. So, I got a chance to meet Chuck there and Chuck invited me to come out to Los Angeles to train with him sometimes when I would be in the area. So, it would be four years after that when I would finally get out there and train with him. And when I got there, he had already continued his... He had already began his movie career. Steve McQueen had gotten Chuck involved in acting classes and felt it would be great when, as time went on, that he could become a good American hero. So, Chuck was busy and he handed me off to Pat Johnson who was his chief instructor. Pat became my mentor for life and my mentor for the martial arts at that time. We had both... All of us had started in Tang Soo Do. So, I learned a lot about hands and sweeps and all of that from Pat Johnson, and had the pleasure of most of the Norris team knocking the breath out of me and doing



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wonderful things with their hands that we weren't able to do. So, I made good friends such as people like John Natividad, those kind of people who just recently was at Battle of Atlanta 31:59 He was one of the recipients of the Joe Lewis Eternal Warrior Award. But anyway, I came back to the Southeast and we started the Southeast Karate Association. 32:10 of that SEKA. We grew a number of people. And then, it would be years later that I would... Oh. Along the way, not so many years later but the next year, 1973, we took the Battle of Atlanta to a new level. And we went to that new level because of what Pat Johnson suggested which was to create a tournament of champions so that the top fighters in the country would be given 12 heated positions and then four people from the daytime would fill out the other four so you'd have 16 people in the tournament of champions. That was in the height of the Kung Fu series on television. We advertised on the Kung Fu series and all that. When we went in the back after the eliminations to have our meeting. We came out. Georgia Tech Coliseum was filled with 8500 people seating in there, watching this event. And it was truly an exciting event that had Mike Warren in it and Jeff Smith and Bill Wallace and all that. And so, Jeff Smith and Howard Jackson fought for the Grand Championship officials at that even with Pat Johnson, Chuck Norris, Mike Stone, Tadashi Yamashita and Bob Wallace. We had five really good referees, judges in the center. It was really a great event. I had bought a 1967 Ferrari GTB4 and I had sold it for \$9000 in order to actually fund that event. And now, I can buy it back with \$3.5 million. It's always on my bucket list. But the event went well. Pat Johnson really became my mentor for life like... He's not old enough to be my dad but he felt like a dad to me. So, I guess he's more like a big brother than anything. Anyway, through that, we ended up going and making some presentations a few years later over at Turner Network. So, this is where the martial arts part of it carries over to the 2nd phase of my professional career, if you will. And so, there was a man named Sid Pike who worked with Ted Turner and he was like a no-guy. So, any time you were gonna come and talk to Ted, you had to talk to Sid. And Sid's response would always be no. So, he was empowered to say no to everything. So, about the 3rd time I had met with him, I was there... He was a kind of guy that when you make your presentation to him, he would be looking at you the whole time but he would never nod his head or make any body movement that would let you know that you're saying something that he's heard. And again, when you would ask, so, can we do this? He'd say, no. And you'd pack your stuff up and leave. So, the 3rd time that happened, I was packing my stuff up to leave and Ted Turned was, for same reason, in the hallway at the office - this was before it became WTBS and all that - and he had just launched the station to something like 800,000 people in the Unites States and Rob Reiner was... Oh, Carl Reiner. I guess Rob Reiner is dead. Carl Reiner filed a suit against Turner to stop him from building up his super-station. So, well, for whatever reason, he's walking around in the halls and he's got this sword and he's swinging the sword. And I would later learned that he had gone to the same military school that I had. He was older than I was but he had only made it for a year. But he had this sword from there and he swinging it around. He said, ah, Karate guy, what would you do against this sword? And I said, well, if you knew what you were doing with it, I would probably leave now but I think I'll just beat you to death. So, I started backing him down the hall and he's swinging this sword at me and he stops. And



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he says, hey, man. I have an idea. So, he called in all of his executives. He said, next week in Washington, Carl Reiner - and we're in front of him, we have an open committee there - will you come up and speak on behalf super-station? I said, yeah, we'll do that. And he looked at me and then said, what can I do for you? I said, well, we've got... Jerry Rhome is gonna be fighting Ross Scott for the World Heavyweight Champion down at Atlanta [36:59](#) We'd like to carry it on your super-station. He said, we'll do that. Sid Pike stood in and said, yeah but... He said, no, Sid. We'll do it. So, anyway, we did that event and at the end of the event, we had this phenomenal fight - if any of your listeners haven't had the chance to see it, they can see the Jerry Rhome vs. Ross Scott Heavyweight Championship 1977. Compare that with the quality of the fights that you see in these days and see what was going on back then. So, I went to CBS and just knocked on the door there and said, I'd like to sell you guys this fight. And they said, well, honestly son, we don't buy fights. They appear on other people's networks but you seem like somebody who can really present the sport well. Let's say you do the commentary for us on our upcoming PKA [37:52](#) in Las Vegas next month? I said, the PKA guy is really [37:57](#) now. And he said, well, if they don't agree then we just won't do the fight. And of course, you fought Bill Wallace yourself. I mean, who would be better at it? So, that started that my PKA career all because of Ted Turner swinging that thing around and that all came from Pat Johnson leading me to believe that we didn't have to rely on a Korean instructor or an instructor of any type to be who we wanted to be. We didn't have to kinda give up ourselves to that instructor. So, that's where our American Karate philosophy was born. That was from that. So, anyway, kind of a long-winded winding story but it takes you from the fighting to the fighting among the broadcasters which, of course, was the beginning of the whole other chapter of life.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure. And I love those winding stories as you call it because we touch on so many things. I mean, just the names alone that you had mentioned to tell that story. I mean it's... I'm sure we could turn that story into a movie, in it of itself. There's so much there. There's so much substance.

Joe Corley:

Yeah. I think it's going to be a movie at some point in time once the people care about the PKA the way they once did. And we hope to do exactly that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well, I hope that happens soon because I would be there front row, opening day.

Joe Corley:



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Great. I appreciate that. I... The other thing that came out of that whole Pat Johnson this is that I start writing a book in 1999 and then by the year 2011, I had written three paragraphs. So, it wasn't going very fast. And Joe Lewis came in to Washington, D.C. Jeff Smith has invited us in for Jhoon Rhee's 80th birthday and it was held in a rotunda at the Senate. So, all the senators spoke about Jhoon Rhee and all that meantime, Joe Lewis was seating over on the side using his hand strengthening thing that he would always have [40:22](#) squeezed. And at the end of the evening, we all went out. So, I was sitting at the table where Allen Steen and [40:31](#) and Jeff Smith and all of the guys from Texas. And then Joe Lewis was... He was holding cork that night. He had these huge knuckles on his right hand and his hands were moving through the air kinda like a maestro. It's like a... Later I would teach the head of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra man named Yoel Levi. Watching Lewis's hands go through the air that night reminded me of Yoel Levi conducting the orchestra. And Lewis talked and looked at me in the middle of it and he said, Corley, you know how bad I screwed up? I said, yes, sir. I do. And then he went back to talking about whatever he was talking about and then he looked at me a few seconds later and he said, Corley, I never thought you really liked me. I said, yup, I liked you a lot. And...

Jeremy Lesniak:

Did I lose you?

Joe Corley:

No.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay.

Joe Corley:

That just makes me emotional there for a second.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure. Yeah. Take a moment. He... I never met...

Joe Corley:

Anyway.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Go on.

Joe Corley:

What I was going to say is that, the next day, I wrote 10 chapters in the book. It just... [41:52](#) But anyway, the point I was going to make is in the book, it's done kinda like [41:57](#) So, at the beginning of each chapter, I ask Master J, who's Pat Johnson, a question and then he answers it. And then the chapter, it's a short chapter, kinda like John Maxwell's leadership books are. You know, short chapters [42:15](#) So, we'll look forward to making that into a movie once we get all the stuff done right and people care again.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. I think there is a pretty strong core of people who care. I just don't know that they feel supported and caring about it in that way. The martial arts has changed, the world has changed. And it's my own resistance to that change that led to this show. It's the stories that you're telling, that so many others have told on this show that I saw starting to slip. As I realize that this amazing generation of martial artists, the folks such as yourself who we... I'm 39, I'm turning 40 shortly. I owe everything of my martial arts upbringing to folks of your generation. If it hadn't come back from overseas, if it hadn't been something that folks like you and Bill Wallace and Joe Lewis had done and brought back and shared, where would it be? It wouldn't be anything close to what it is. And I think it's important that those of us who are a bit younger recognize that and hold on to those stories. Because I think the stories are just as much a part of our martial arts culture as the movements and the forms and the self-defense techniques. I don't think you can separate the two effectively.

Joe Corley:

Yeah. It's an interesting perspective. It's... I remember reading about a baseball pitcher once who won the Cy Young Award but he didn't know who Cy Young was. So, it made me realize that it's not just the martial arts. It's the world, it's the generations. So, I did a post the other day. I said, reviewing and enjoying the past in order to really appreciate the present and look forward to a better future. So, that's the way to make it work. And as you know, it's going to be the way these stories are presented that will make them interesting to a crowd that's growing up with a miniature computer in their hands that really has an answer to any question that they want to ask but they just don't know what questions to ask because they've lost their curiosity.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Right. Now, as we've been talking today, you've named off so many names. But I'm curious if there's someone that you didn't have the opportunity to train with or worked side by side with that maybe you'd wanted to?

Joe Corley:

Well, I got a chance to do a 30-minute TV show with Bruce Lee one day when he was promoting his first movie with James Garner. I had known people who had trained with Bruce Lee and all that. I wasn't one of the people that thought of Bruce Lee in the ways that he was presented. I felt like he was really a great symbol for the martial arts. And that in Jhoon Rhee's memorial service in D.C. this past year, I had a good chance to spend some time with [46:08](#) And I guess the people that I actually respected the most, that really turned out to be Jeff Smith and Bill Wallace and Joe Lewis. I had a chance to interact with them in many ways. My Judo instructor, Bob Byrd who was World Masters Judo Champion. I had a chance to train with him. And now in Krav Maga, I'm working with Bill Clark's group, Warrior Krav Maga. So, I guess that's really one of those things where I don't feel wanting. I don't feel like there was someone I would have wanted to have trained with, that I admired that I didn't get a chance to. I'm working now in the Warrior Krav Maga with a man named Andy Norman who has a defense [47:13](#) And Andy Norman trained Liam Neeson for Taken and he trained Tom Cruise for the Jack Reacher film and all that. So, that's all really kinda new stuff that we're learning now. But nobody that I really... To answer your question, to say gosh, I wish I had had a chance to train with that person. Now, in the boxing world, if I could get inside the head and copy and paste in the mind, just do a CTRL + C in his head and CTRL + V into my head, it would be Lomachenko. You know, the Vasyl Lomachenko. Best boxer in the history of the world in my opinion.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now boxing, just like Karate or Taekwondo, people get really deep into their opinions of who's the best at certain things or overall. Why is he your pick for best boxer?

Joe Corley:

Well, when we went Pacquiao fight, I guess it was Pacquiao when he fought Mayweather, he was an under card on that fight. We were sitting in a sports club and I was cutting on a steak and watching him and I ended up putting the knife down and the fork down and watched him and two rounds later, I reclaimed to everyone on the table, this is the best fighter right here of all time. They said, well, how could you know that after two rounds? I said, well, just seeing in two rounds, him doing every single thing that I've ever tried to learn, that I've ever tried to teach, that I've seen anyone else try to teach, I've seen anyone else try to learn and I've seen him do it against the fighter who's got 50 knockouts. So, a couple of years later, the guys on HBO and ESPN are saying, yeah, he may be one of the greatest of all times. Now,



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they're saying, yup. He's really one of the greatest of all times. And then they interviewed him one night and one of the guys from HBO said, so, the [49:28](#) is that you're going to have to fight some bigger names before you're gonna really fall into that category of some of the best of all time. And Lomachenko said, yeah, you're right. So, he had the humility to go with all of it too. But if you watched... He's got a video online called Lomachenko tricks and then another one, Lomachenko highlights, and of course all of his videos now have hundreds of thousands of views because people had watched him. Even have gyms in New York that are basing their entire training patterns on the exercises that he does which aren't just different from anybody else but he can do everything. He can do every single thing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow. This is a good point to mention every one that maybe you're new to the show, maybe this is the first one you've listened to. But I keep good notes while I'm talking to the guest and we post those notes with links and such over at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. So, people can check that out. Now, you have a favorite boxer. How about a favorite contemporary martial artist? I mean, is there somebody that's on the competition circuit now that you look at and say, I would have liked to have gone up against that person back in your heyday?

Joe Corley:

I think a better question would be I certainly am glad I didn't have to go up against that person. The top guys of all time that I could mention to you that I just have thought that have been great stars would include current one and that is Stephen Thompson, Stephen "Wonderboy" Thompson. He came from kickboxing [51:22](#) the UFC and there's a few others in the UFC that thought their styles, are pretty deadly. John Jones was like... He was just unique enough and I don't know [51:43](#) enough to make it really hard for him but he had a lot of natural gifts. But he's not [51:48](#) Lomachenko's style. He's just very effective in that kind of fighting. But in our PKA world, you've got, of course, Joe Lewis, Jeff Smith, Bill Wallace. And then we ended with Jean Theriault, The Iceman. We ended up with [52:02](#) Jerry Rhome, Jerry Trimble and the list just goes on and on. All of these guys are just super, super good. We're working on a video project now that we'll have 100 hours of our greatest fights of all time. And I've been looking at those videos and just marveling it - what their fighting skills were in the '70s, '80s and early '90s. And still they're just head and shoulders above these people about 25 years later.

Jeremy Lesniak:

High praise, for sure.

Joe Corley:

Yeah.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

When you think about you as a martial artist, and I think I know the answer but I'm gonna ask it Anyway. When you think about who you are as a martial artist today, who would you attribute most of that to? Who's been the most influential for you? Is that Pat Johnson or is that somebody else?

Joe Corley:

Yep, It's Pat Johnson no question. No question. On the other parts of what I have learned and what I think I would attribute to whatever level of confidence I have right now I think... Jeff Smith and Bill Clark would be people who very much influenced me. There's the martial arts side of me that was a fighter and then there's a side that was a teacher and then there's a side that is a philosopher, if you will. And so, Pat Johnson probably helped me the most in all three of those area. And then the other people like Jeff Smith and Bill Clark and others whose names people wouldn't necessarily know who helped influenced me and, if you will, whatever wisdom that I have been able to acquire. And even though I never met him, Steven Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People influenced my way of thinking and doing and being more than anything else I've ever read. And then his son's about the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teams and then his son's other book, the 7 Habits of Happy Kids are things that just give us a way of putting everything into proper perspective. Martial arts is great but it's not your life. I mean, it's your lifestyle, if you will. But then your life [54:53](#) made of certain principles. And Habit 7 is called sharpening the saw. In the martial arts part of our world, it's that part of your life where you develop yourself spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally. And that's the sharpen the part so. That's for Pat Johnson, Jeff Smith and Bill Wallace have helped me sharpen the saw.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Very well said. Now, of course you're still at it. You're still quite involved in the martial arts and a lot of what's going on. And the question I always ask people is why. What is it that's keeping you motivated and fired up and whatever you would choose to describe this passion that you clearly still have? Are there things you haven't accomplished yet or is it a duty? What is it?

Joe Corley:

I ask myself that question every Sunday night when I review my mission statement. And in the mission statement, I think I get down to the place where I'm not happy with the results as of yet. Some people describe it always as pushing the goal line further off. So, you have friends around you and then you say, I haven't accomplished the things that I set up to do. And they said, no, just think about you did this, you did this, you did this, you did this. But still that doesn't reach the level of fulfillment. One of the things that I do on many days is I go through Tony Robbins ritual. He calls it his Morning Ritual. And in that ritual, you actually reflect back on three things that happened, like the Ted Turned story that I shared with you.



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Three things that happened that might have been coincidences but if you look back on it, it made such a difference in your life. And then he has you look forward to three things that you want to have happen in your life, that you want to see happening. And the one that's most moving there of course is that my daughter, who's now 21, would be 30 at that time and she would just give me a big hug and say, dad, I finally get it. And then I see myself in the Skybox at Madison Square Garden looking down on a filled arena with celebrities and so on and I have the press there, there'll be ESPN or NBC or CBS or Showtime - whoever - standing next to me and said, even though it was Dana White and the Fretitta brothers that carried this ball across the goal line, you told us that this was gonna be like this for those many decades. And therefore, you have finally succeeded with that. And then the third one would have to do with the development of martial arts on a global basis. Being what is always... What's the right word to say? Purported to be where the people would come together and draw from this huge basic knowledge where we could figure out what we all have in common and then figure a way to duplicate it like Steven Covey did with the 7 Habits. So, you could boil it down and say, this is the way we need to teach each and every person. Much in a way great pastors would be able to do if they were able to impart to you that which they wanted you to learn so that you were gonna do it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I like it and I agree. If people want to get a hold of you or find what you have going on online, maybe you've got a website for the school or social media you're willing to share. Ho would people find you?

Joe Corley:

Best way right now is... We just, the 1st of January, kicked off the PKA Associated School to a number of programs and that's what it's called on Facebook - PKA Associated Schools and Members. And Don Willis and I have kicked this off and we're trying to use this kind of a [59:24](#) maybe that global marketplace. Ultimately, that could be a space where people could ultimately go once we have the resources to put the information in and that would be the best way to reach me. My email, direct email address, is pkajocorley@gmail.com so people can write directly there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, great. Great. And one more thing. If I can trouble you, what parting words, what advice would you tie up this episode with for the folks listening?

Joe Corley:



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That is challenging my [1:00:18](#) basically. I would say that if you could reach out to people like... From a business perspective, if you could reach out to people like Bill Clark, Jeff Smith and Stephen Oliver, or people who are doing what Steven Covey says is, doing the right thing for the right reasons and with the right principles, that would be a great way to tie everything that's apart of a martial arts life together. And so, I think finding the right mentor for a want of a better word, I don't like the [1:01:01](#) of Guru or Professor and all that. But if you could find the right mentor/ teacher, people like that would be the great ones to do it. If you can locate that Pat Johnson in your life who's got the wisdom, the insights, the caring, the nurturing qualities that you're looking for. Would be great to continually read and try to understand. And I failed to mention the one who most recently has had the greatest impact on me. That's Dr. Jordan Peterson who's written the 12 Rules for Life. And he is today the world's most, in my opinion, the most poignant speaker who mentors no [1:01:53](#) but I would definitely recommend the 12 Rules for Life as a must read almost immediately, and to follow his videos online. I think he's had about a billion views so far. And through that, we'll probably help people, find this right mentor that I'm talking about that they can relate to. People that really have not only done it themselves but can give you the step by step processes through which to be successful so that you don't waste a lot of your life following false prophets and going down the rabbit holes that don't lead anywhere.

Jeremy Lesniak:

The martial arts obviously isn't just about kicking and punching. It's about becoming a better person. It's about finding your place in the world and carving out that niche the best way you can. Now, i have no doubt that all of our guests have done just that through their time training but I have to say that today's guest was much clearer, much more open about it. And I think we can all connect the dots between martial arts and his life in a stronger way than we can for just about any other guest. So, I want to thank you for your time today, sir. I really appreciate the conversation that we had.

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