



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Chris Thompson:

And the only two thoughts that really kept me going through that time was what would my grandfather think and what would my teacher think? And that was it. That was all I had.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everyone, it's episode 88 of whistlekick martial arts radio. The only place to hear the best stories from the best martial artists like today's guest, Guro Chris Thompson. My name is Jeremy Lesniak and I founded whistlekick but I'm also your host here for martial arts radio. I'm proud to say that whistlekick makes the world's best sparring gear as well as really great apparel and accessories, all for practitioners and fans of traditional martial arts. Thank you to the returning listeners and hello and welcome to those of you listening for the first time. If you're not familiar with our products, you should take a look at what we make. Our shin guards are pre-shaped to your shins so they don't move around and they're double thick right where it counts but they still have plenty of ventilation. Check them out at our website, whistlekick.com. If you want to see the show notes, those are on another website and that's whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. While you're over there, get on the newsletter list. We offer special content to subscribers and it's the only place to find out about upcoming guests for the show. We only email a few times a month, we never sell your information and sometimes we mail out a pretty generous coupon. On episode 88, we're joined by Guro Chris Thompson. A former karate practitioner turned Filipino Martial Arts student and ultimately, instructor. He's a frequent sight on the seminar circuit and really feels passionately for the art he's chosen. He's a dangerous man with a stick or a knife or even unarmed but he's also a really nice guy and it was a pleasure to have him on the show. Enjoy. Guro Chris, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Chris Thompson:

Thank you, Jeremy and thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's a pleasure to have you here. I think this is going to be great stuff. You're going to be coming from a varied perspective. We're going to get some different answers out of you as we do from all of our guests. I'm not going to spoil any of that stuff for the listeners but let's jump into it. I know you kind of got two phases of your martial arts path but let's go way back. Let's start at the beginning, yeah, how did you get into the martial arts?

Chris Thompson:

Ironically enough, I got in when I was about 16 and a little bit of the background of the family information. My mother had 4 kids and I basically got a job, started paying for it on my own, I had a friend that he literally drove me all the time. I literally started off doing traditional Okinawan Goju Karate out in the Central Square of New York at that time. It was about 20 minutes off of Syracuse. It



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

was under James Caulker who is a very good person to train with. I was doing that for a very long time. I got to about 3rd degree in the traditional karate aspect of it. I got to the 2nd degree in the [00:03:06] and I did that about 12 to 13 years straight. Loved it, did it all the time, we did a lot of forms back then. I do a little sparring, sparring of course, but it wasn't my main thing there but just did that and about the 13th year, I came across Filipino Martial Arts with a different teacher and then I started going in that art there. I was doing [00:03:37] and Filipino Martial Arts. I started getting into that a little bit and I really loved it because I just loved weapons in general. So that's when I started making the transition over. Anyhow, I finished up and still worked with James caulker for a while because I taught in school, the whole nine yards and eventually, just went straight to FMA and focused strictly on that. I've been doing that since 16 years straight now too so it's been nonstop after that, I just love it. I've actually gotten three different instructorships in it now, 2 in Inosanto System Kali directly and the new one Bahala Na Original Eskrima system directly from Grand Master Michael Giron so loving that art and just keep expanding on that all the time.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's great so there are kind of the two pieces that I hinted at. The Japanese side, the Karate, the Kobudo and now, the Filipino side. Now, anyone that has trained in distinctly different arts knows that there's always a compelling reason, or I should say, usually a compelling reason. For some, it's that they moved or the instructor retired but generally there's something that you find that you didn't have prior so I'm wondering if you would be willing to share with us. Was there something about Karate and Kobudo that you were, you felt was missing from your training? From your life?

Chris Thompson:

See, [00:05:06] because I don't want to say anything wrong to upset anybody and its nothing against it, I just, we did so many forms, by the time I got it done, I think I had about 50 empty hand forms, 30 weapon forms but there wasn't that street combative aspect to it and that was something that I really wanted cause I'm all about the, you got to have the real, street defense aspect to it, combatives for the military people so they can be safe and come home. Those are major focuses for me. All of the stuff that they're doing is great. I respect all the traditional arts, it just wasn't the right niche for me, is all it was. So, finding this art and the focus required out of it was a totally different level for me that I liked a lot better. It was very dynamic in how it worked so I just enjoyed it more, gravitated towards what I liked.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I can sense that you're really being diplomatic and that's okay but I don't think that you have to feel defensive. I don't think that there're a lot of people listening to this saying, forget him, he gave up on what he had or whatever. Some people might be theorizing. I think a lot of us that have trained in traditional arts, especially arts that emphasized forms training, we've all had a conversation with someone. Might be someone who watches or trains in MMA or what I would call more of a modern martial art like Krav Maga or something that emphasizes the combatives aspects but you hit the nail on



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

the head, at least for me, for the way I nail it. It wasn't right for you and I think that that's the beauty of martial arts is that there's something out there. There are different arts because there are different people.

Chris Thompson:

Yeah, it's all about, and I say this all the time, it's what they're looking for so when I had the school still, I had people come in looking for MMA and that's not what I do so I sent them to the best places around for that. Traditional arts like I really teach kids a lot so I sent them to schools that were better situated to help them what their actual needs were but, yeah, every art is about finding what you like and enjoy doing the most and then pursuing that passion.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right, for anyone that might not be familiar with Filipino Martial Arts, could you give us just a short primer on how the approach, the techniques of Filipino Martial Arts compare to arts that people might be more familiar with like Karate or Taekwondo?

Chris Thompson:

Okay, FMA is extremely interesting. FMA is just a very broad term encompassing all of it whether its Eskrima, Arnis, Kali, Balintawak or any of the other forms or styles or branches of it, I should say. It's an all-encompassing term is what we use, just much easier to use that term. FMA, it's pretty much, it's known for being a stick art, and a weapons-based art. That's what you start training with Day One but it's actually so much more than that. Its literally a comprehensive art that covers every form of fighting there is. We have people that are strikers and kickers, in some systems like [00:08:11], just like taekwondo guys for example and you got grappling arts in there as well and just everything. You're talking hand grappling with knives, sticks, a flexible weapon, it's really comprehensive. You can do it your entire life from 8 to 80, and you'll never learn all of it. There's just so much of it out there. I'm still learning how much is out there but it's mostly known for that. The empty hand aspects, some of it's very similar to basic boxing for example. It uses a lot of intricate work and a lot of footwork involved too and it's all about whatever works in the session or fighting, that's what they use. There wasn't a lot of flash in the art because through its years, you have to understand, in the Philippines, there's 7,101 islands. On average, originally each island has about three different martial arts so Filipino Martial Arts basically is an all-encompassing term for all the different types there are. The major branches, so to speak, are known as either Eskrima, Kali, Arnis or even the Balintawak systems and in each of those, there's a bunch of different styles, the whole nine yards. It's just a general term that encompasses all of it that makes it all easier. Filipino Martial Arts is often known a lot of times as being a weapon-based art or stick-based art or knife-based art and that's what most people see it as and that's actually based on how it came to its history which I will get into in a little bit but one thing that it really does is a truly comprehensive fighting system. There is a lot of different areas in it where you have some systems that



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

look just like taekwondo system. You have other parts that even though you start with the weapons, the stick, the knife and all that, there actually is a comprehensive empty hand system like striking, boxing, a lot of dirty fighting which is a personal favorite of mine. You also have a kicking system which is used for low-lying kicks than anything else. There are some high-line kicks too, I just personally am not a fan of those but that's just me. There's actually grappling aspects to the art that's in there too. It really encompasses everything single thing there is. I'll give you a little trick answer actually, a lot of times people will ask, a lot of instructors are teaching it like Guro Dan and asked this, I went to my other teachers come in and ask this, if you come and take one art, what would you pick? And they'll tell you Filipino Martial Arts, they say kali but it's actually a trick answer because they're not giving up any other art that they do because it's all incorporated into it anyway so you can actually do versions that's tied in it, the striking, boxing, whatever you want it's all there. The reason why it's more known for being a sticks-based art is because in Day One, you start with sticks in your hand and that's what everybody sees. That was actually based on its history because a lot of times if you had your village and you're worried about bandits coming in or your thinking that the next village is going to attack you which is common in the culture coming up through the years, you have to prepare people to fight to defend themselves. The first thing you teach them to do is the weapon. Same thing on that we do in the military. You're not going to sit there and teach the soldier empty hand first thing. You're going to teach him how to use the gun and get them proficient with a tool [00:11:23] to use so back in their day, it was sticks that was the thing that they had the most so that's the thing that they fought and trained with. They always start off with that first and as it progresses, it starts going to empty hand aspects later on. That's in a nutshell what FMA is. It's an extremely comprehensive fighting system. It covers every single range of fighting that could possibly be, it's just a matter of what people focus on inside it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, sure. That makes a lot of sense and I think that that's a great primer. I'm sure we're going to get some more details as we go through the rest of our conversation today but I appreciate you sharing that and of course, anybody that has listened to the show before knows, everything we do is centered around stories so I'd like to hear from you now, what's your best martial arts story?

Chris Thompson:

Alright, I actually got one for you on that one. It's actually happened about 5 or 4 years ago. So, there was a time, I was still in the Filipino Martial Arts [00:12:15] only and what happened is I decided, you know what? I really want to try to become an instructor with Guro Dan Inosanto which is not an easy thing to do and [00:12:28] is a great guy and I majorly say that just because it might be taken the wrong way but when I told him my goal, he looked at me and he said, you're setting yourself up for disappointment because he knows how hard it is to get in there. He's had senior instructors that had been applying for ten years and haven't gotten in yet so I understood that too because I knew it wouldn't be like, oh, I want to sign up and here it is. It was not like that, it's a lot harder. So I started going to seminars, always going to seminars and tending my own letter to write to Guro Dan personally



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

and saying, hey, I'd really like to be an instructor and he took it back, he's always a gracious man but nothing happened right away and then about a year and a half later, I was down at New York City at one of the seminars he was having there and I had my daughter with me and at that time, she was training with me, she was about 16 at the time, 15, 16 somewhere in there. So, we're doing this seminar and they're actually doing stick and dagger work and obviously, because I made the training blades, my daughter and I both had a set of aluminum [00:13:25] dagger. So we started doing the drills with the sword and dagger and we're starting to go through it, just having a good time and Guro Dan actually came over to see what we're doing so at the middle of the seminar, he actually stopped it and he had my daughter and I go up in front of everybody else and this is a really good school with a lot of instructors and students in it and he had us demonstrate what we're doing with the sword and dagger in front of everybody and it's the very first time for me doing this with my daughter, she is the first time for her doing it and she was like, holy cow!, and she did really well. We started banging out there like we always do and he's like, alright, go middle level so we'll drop down a little bit and then he said, alright, go to lower level, so you're basically squatting down but your knees aren't touching the ground. We moved around doing the whole scene of fight sequences and patterns and he liked it a lot so then at the end of that seminar, I was talking to him and Guro Dan, funny part about it was, is Guro Dan thought that my daughter was actually my wife and I started having kids when I was a little bit younger and she's 16 and I'm still pretty young and I was like no, no, this is my daughter and he was like really? That's your daughter? No! and I was like, yeah, that's my daughter but it was pretty funny though but what happened with that and what I have to say as I got accepted in the system under him is because of my daughter too. Because at the end of the summer, I did give him the letter asking to be his instructor, [00:14:53] I'm going to make sure to personally give this to my wife to look at and then a couple months later, I got the acceptance letter and in all honesty, I had tears running down my face because I knew it was a really hard thing to get and it was a hard goal and I told my girlfriend at the time, my wife now and she was like, you need to tell Lexie first! So, I called Lexie which has gotten so much older then, she was happy but that was one of the best experiences I've had or a really good story as far as I'm concerned because of reaching for that almost impossible goal and keep working towards it and not worried about timeframe and probably getting there and something I really appreciate too, that's that one.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's a great story. I think most of us that have trained for a little bit have at least one person usually, a couple people that we really look up to that that recognition, be it a black belt, be it an instructor certification, be it coming on to their seminar staff, whatever it is means so much and for those of us that are on either side of that, whether you've not achieved that goal or you have, I think we can all put ourselves into that place and know how much that means to you and how much that means to you at the time and I mean that's phenomenal. Thank you for sharing that. It's kind of an emotional piece and I appreciate your openness with it.

Chris Thompson:



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

It was a fun one. That was definitely a really good day.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. A good day is probably an understatement. You're probably riding high for a little while on that one.

Chris Thompson:

Oh, you could say that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, let's pretend for a second that at 16, you weren't interested in martial arts or you didn't have anyone around to teach you martial arts for whatever reason, you didn't find martial arts at all, what do you think your life would be like today?

Chris Thompson:

I had major, major, major, anger issues and I was that small kid that got picked on and typical of most martial arts as far as I'm concerned, they always had the people that they've been picked on, the whole nine yards but I never really fit in anywhere. I was not happy, I was mean to everybody even with people who try to be nice to me, I was just a very hostile kid and we're talking I was like the age of 5 up. I was that way. I was always angry all the time and I would not like the person I would've been and there was a point when I got older, you take a hard look at yourself and realize you don't like the person that you are. Either you continue on the path and ignore the mirror or you start to make the changes to become a better person for yourself, and knowing how I was as a child back then, a teenager, how angry I was angry all the time, I would not like the person I would have been. To this day, for that matter, I still don't understand why people from my childhood would even want to talk to me, that's how bad I was to everybody. I would just say the things that would hurt the most, wouldn't even care about them, I thought it was funny. Typical behavior at the time I guess but I was not a good person I would not talk to at this moment.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Why do you think you were so angry if we can dig a little bit?

Chris Thompson:

Has a lot to do with portions of my family and how we grew up. It was just a bad situation and my mother, she did the best and I would never going to knock her on it but there was another side which wasn't as good. My parents were separated for a long time when I was young and just how I grew up from certain environments that we came up through that were very pleasant areas to be in but that's what we did, we still had family going forward but there's a lot of anger from my dad's side that we had



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

and as I got older, made my choices I didn't want to be a part of that and I know a lot of it stems from that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

When you started training, was there a conscious effort to address that anger piece or was that sort of just a happy accident?

Chris Thompson:

Happy accident. I first started training, I mean, I always wanted to train and I remember being probably 4 or 5 years old but I can't remember what show I saw back then but I always wanted to train in martial arts and [00:19:20] at that time especially so just getting to it, here's the opportunity, jumped on and kept going with it but the changing of me and the aspects I've realized I'm this kind of person wasn't looking that I had some really great role models coming up through, they really helped me realized that hey, I can be a better person than this. It all starts and goes and I'm happy with that, happy by product [00:19:48].

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, that's good stuff. I mean that's one of the things that parents and older adults may recognize the benefit for children but it sounds like it was really fortunate that you wandered into the dojo.

Chris Thompson:

Yeah, it was.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That day. Who knows where you would be now and I know at the very least, we wouldn't have met, we wouldn't be having this conversation but there's probably some much bigger stuff that would be missing from your life so certainly the world is better because you've found the martial arts, I'm sure of that.

Chris Thompson:

I'm grateful for it. It always helped me along the way and I'm grateful for it because it made a huge difference for me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, let's pull back out of that alternate reality, back to the real world, you did find the martial art, we are back in today, 2016, and I'd like you to think back over your life, over your time in the martial arts and think about a challenge in your life, some difficult time and tell us how your martial arts experience allowed you to move past that?

Chris Thompson:



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

I didn't want to take a look. Each person has their foundational beliefs, something that it's like your rock and your pillar, whether it's someone's religion, their family or anything else, could be their marriage or anything, but that's like their foundation and that's their guiding force a lot of time and that no matter what kind of crap that would happen to them, they would always have that and it was their security. When I was about, I don't remember exactly when but I think it was probably between 18 or 19 or so, that foundation got destroyed for me and I'm not going to go deep on what caused it but what happened is you know how people would get sad or depressed or anything and I would have gladly traded that for what happened. You kind of fall into the void where you don't feel emotions anymore at all. Sadness is actually a better thing as far as I'm concerned to the void I was in and I was in this for about 5 months straight. To me, it was a little bit past depression, I didn't have any belief anymore and the thing that I always depended on and I thought that was always there for me was gone and it chucked me off pretty bad. So, you're talking, I wouldn't've killed myself at that time, but for example, I didn't have a car then so I was trying to bike back and forth to work and if a truck came at me, I wouldn't've moved. That was how bad it was for me then and it's there for about 5 months straight and there's only 2 thoughts that really did keep me going because there are things that weren't healthy either and the only two thoughts that really kept me going at that time was what would my grandfather think and what would my teacher think? And that was it. That was all I had and those are the two thoughts that really kept me going through it and then about 5 months into it, my friend that would actually help give me ride, he would still help me and he basically pestered me to come back and start training again and luckily, he pestered me enough and I did come back. When I finally came back to the dojo at the time, it was a place I could start to rebalance and it took time to come out of that bad cycle I was in but I did finally come out of it and then I developed new sets of beliefs and foundational strengths that I would go with on my own but honestly that was probably one of the darkest moments I had in my life that I really didn't know I could get through and I'm sure a lot of things worse that could happen, absolutely but for that time, that was definitely the worst thing I was in. My martial arts definitely pulled me through it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sounds like some heavy stuff and I don't think we even need to hear any more of the details to get a sense of where your head was at because, of course, that's the important piece and I'm sure there are people listening now that have been in that space and have had martial arts, whether or not, it directly saved their life but it reshaped their life and I think that probably sounds like a good term for how you looked at it. It reshaped your life. I think you used the word foundation on there.

Chris Thompson:

Yeah it definitely helped because at the time I learned that instead of that time and external forces, you focus more on, not just yourself, not being selfish but you believe in yourself and you use that to be your foundational strength to go forward. You are responsible for your actions and you can make a lot of things happen but you just happen to do it so it's, for me, that's how I sure get in that direction.



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, I don't think that focusing on ourselves is ever selfish. At least in America, we have this culture that doing anything to take care of yourself is automatically selfish and there's that stereotypical example, if the masks drop down from the ceiling in an airplane, you got to put yours on first, you can help everybody else. If you're not taking care of yourself, you're useless with everyone else and we're all here on this big marble together and we should be putting our best selves forward because that's how we all get better so there're going to be times that you've got to do that and it's great that you recognized that and that you had not only the willingness but the ability and the resources from others. Shout out to that person who pestered you to get you back to the dojo.

Chris Thompson:

I still appreciate him to this day. I never told him that but I still appreciate him to this day for it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Maybe you should.

Chris Thompson:

I should.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let him know. I think everyone has the opportunity and I think most people do actually at some point in their lives have a substantial positive impact on someone but I think when we know that we've done that, makes us that much more willing to go out of our way to do that for someone else so I think you should. So, you've had the opportunity to train with some great people. You spoke very highly of several instructors during your career, if you had to pick the person, and let's take out those really core structures, the people that spent a ton of time with you over years, take those out for a second, who do you think was the most influential person in your martial arts upbringing?

Chris Thompson:

It would really come down to the two different time frames there because James Caulker, with him, I was in karate, he helped me a lot, we're talking a young teenager up to a young adult. He was very informed at that time, he was someone that I definitely looked up to and learned a lot from but then also going in the FMA field, you're talking Kevin [00:24:46] with him for years and a lot of stuff he did was more than just the training aspect. He did a lot of stuff with the mental aspect as well which was very informative and helps drive me in directions that were very positive, too. I kind of have 2 people that really did a lot to help me there. Then, of course I got Guro Dan, I also have Grand Master Michael now there's a lot there but those two would be the top primary ones with the most influential time frames involved.



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Good stuff. So, let's talk about competition. Was that ever...or is it part?

Chris Thompson:

I dabbled. I dabbled in it. My thing with that, anyone that does it, awesome. Good for them. It's not something I'm really interested in. I mean, [00:27:36] sure I did a couple tournaments here and there, did okay. If you're talking about, I probably did three or four events. It's just, at that time in and other aspects of my life especially in my early childhood, if you're not the best at something, you're not good enough and that should never be how it is. It's not that way, you put in your effort, you do your best, you evaluate, you grow from there and I'm all for that but it really wasn't for me. People that do the tournament stuff, that's awesome, good job, good for you guys, it's just that's not my cup of tea. It's just not my thing so I'm always more about let's focus more about the street-based combatives aspects of it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, here's a question that just comes out of ignorance. Is there competition around the Filipino arts or is there a stick fighting competition?

Chris Thompson:

There are. Depending on what type you get into too. For example, a lot of it [00:28:35] tournaments are basically stick fighting tournament they have on armor. It's pretty good stuff. There're problems with it like everything else. With the armor, you have people out there that would start trading blows and you're talking in a minute round, they'll hit each other a couple hundred times, it amazes me how fast these sticks move but they're just trading blows to get the shots and it's for the point calculations going on. So, they're not really paying attention to the fact that hey, I'm getting hit, I can be damaged by this too. Then there's the other side of it where they actually are using better footwork in a more [00:29:07] attacks so the competition there is interesting because you got some really good stick fighters out there who are amazing fighters and instructors, the whole nine yards and there's one guy actually rumored that he could knock people out through the armor which is ridiculously hard to do but he had that kind of power to him but it's there and then you also have another side of it, like for example, there's the Dog Brothers who are there. They're a whole separate entity, really, but these guys are phenomenal. They only wear for example, hockey gloves, elbow pads, knee pads, and basically a fencing mask and that's it and then you see these big heavy sticks and they're not really about trying to tournament trophies and winning. It's all about making each other stronger through prior consciousness through higher contact is what they do. I've never done Dog Brothers but I respect the crap out of these guys because they really put that time in there and their effort and they bang the crap out of each other. They really do but it's always also in good camaraderie too. It's not all about trying to beat the crap out of each other, hurt each other, it's about improving everybody. I mean, that's a really good group that's out there as well.



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'll see if I can find some video to post over at the show notes and we can talk after the show, if you have some links you can share. And for everybody that's new to the show, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, check out over there and you can see what stuff we can cobble together, put some video in this because that sounds like something that I'd really like to check out. Sounds like a lot of fun.

Chris Thompson:

Oh, they got some great videos, too, I mean, I have mad, mad respect for these guys. They're just awesome.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I've done just enough with sticks and taken a stick across the knuckles enough times to know that even when you're not trying to hurt someone, how painful it can be so for people going at it hard, yeah, I got a lot of respect for them. I think it probably takes a certain kind of person to do that and I am not that kind.

Chris Thompson:

They're an interesting breed.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, for sure. Now if you can train with any martial artist, living or dead, that you haven't, of course, who would that be and why?

Chris Thompson:

Do I have to pick just one?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'll let you pick two if you really need it.

Chris Thompson:

Fair enough. I do need the two. Guro Dan Inosanto had a teacher called Grand Master [00:31:33]. He was around, he died I think he's like 78 or 80, somewhere in that range. Guro Dan says that there's some footwork thing that he can do that Guro Dan can describe but he still can't do. [00:31:47] was kind of like the renaissance man of Filipino Martial Arts. He knew so many different styles from all over the entire region and he was just really good at what he did. He was in the northern region learning some of those arts, he was also down in the Muslim southern region, Mindanao area. He goes into some of those arts plus he had the Siam region as well so he's really all over the place. I mean, Guro Dan still speaks very highly of him to this day and that would definitely be a person I would love to train with. He knew a lot of good stuff to him. Now there's the other person and it's more of a legend but if it's true and



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Filipino history is young so who knows, I have hope it's true but also there's two sides of every story so we'll see that but there's legend of the Princess Peypay is one of the names for her and she was a blind princess is the other name that she was kind of known for. Now, if these are the same person, I don't know the answer to that, I don't know the culture in that aspect but some of the grand masters claimed to have trained with her and obviously others have said that's not true but she was supposed to be so good with a stick that even though she was blind people could never hit her. She was that good. One of the stories about her is that she was the chieftain's daughter in the village and she was always helping people and eventually when the chief got older, he wanted her to marry somebody and she said well, I will marry them if they can beat me in stick and you're talking years went by, no one can beat her, no one can even come close to it. People will come from all over the place and like hey, if I can beat her and I'll marry her then I'll be all set because of the chieftain's family, I'll be okay and you're talking, she'd fight with them and like okay, I'll fight you but if you lose you got to become one of my bodyguard and she would fight them and they'll get there waiting for someone and see who their champion was and then it was actually her and she would fight these guys for hours and beat them and that was the legend of her and how good she was so she would definitely be my other person that I would definitely train with if the story is true.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I may have to do a little bit of research. That sounds like a pretty cool story and not one that I have heard before. A lot of art has the legends of some kind of blind very proficient martial artist, I mean, that archetype even shows up in Game of Thrones. That's a current one that's going on right now if anybody watches that show.

Chris Thompson:

And if it's true, I would have loved to train with that person too. I don't care if they're man woman, young, old, I don't care if you can teach me, I'd be happy to learn. That's how I look at it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I completely agree. How do you get better is by spending time with people that are better than you?

Chris Thompson:

Yeah, or they can share insight that you might not have seen before. I can learn from an 8-year-old just as much and it doesn't matter to me, if they got something cool, hey, okay, show me, let's see what this is, check it out, I'm all good.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah absolutely. So how about movies, are you at all a martial arts movie guy?

Chris Thompson:

ah, that's a good one. A little bit, I really try not to watch that much tv anymore, movies included in that



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

aspect. On average, if I get an hour a night with my wife, that's pretty much it for me but there's a couple movies out there. The first one's corny as can be.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I love them.

Chris Thompson:

But back in the 80s, it was *The Last Dragon*, that was a great movie at that time and of course, you had Bruce Lee running around and showing off. That was definitely one of my favorite movies from back in that time period. More recently, there was a B-rate movie called *Equilibrium* and that was pretty good because this was like after all the matrix movie came out. This was really good too. It was a B-rate movie about a future sci-fi thing but the fight scenes were pretty good in it and I liked that one a lot, too, so there's two out there for you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, cool. Now, we had *The Last Dragon*. We had Taimak Guarriello on the show just a few weeks ago. I don't know if you had the chance to check that out

Chris Thompson:

Not yet, but I have to.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, it was a fun episode, I mean, the first real big movie star that we've had on the show so a lot of fun. He's a great guy in the midst of a book and movie tour because it's the 30-year anniversary of the movie coming out so doing all that stuff. He wrote an autobiography that you can check out. Links are in the notes for that episode, we'll link it from these show notes as well.

Chris Thompson:

I appreciate that, yeah. I definitely have to check that out see what he's up to.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, he's a good guy. How about actors? Is there anybody that when you watch their fight scenes, it really resonates for you like say, that guy, I dig his fight style.

Chris Thompson:

Oh, I'm going to get in trouble for this one. I like quite a few of them. Jet Li, I like obviously. Jackie Chan was just phenomenal how he did things. I always loved his stuff. Donnie Yen is really good but admittedly, I haven't seen enough of Donnie Yen's stuff yet to really appreciate his style. I just hadn't



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

watched a lot of TV and movies lately. Jet li, I like his stuff a lot and his Fist of Legend was awesome and his movies, I kind of see the same thing all the time and it's the same thing with Jackie Chan, too, but Jackie Chan had that way about him and he'll do all these crazy stunts and these things that are pretty much insane, and movie or not, it's just great how he always did it. I really like those three. Jackie Chan will probably be my most favorite of it and again, I just don't have enough references about Donnie Yen to formulate that opinion fully yet. He's there but I haven't seen enough of his movies to really say this one's my favorite of these three people.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right. Right and of course, the three, Donnie Yen is the one that's the most active right now. He's going to be in the new Star Wars movie.

Chris Thompson:

I can't wait for that. That's going to be so awesome.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, as a self-proclaimed martial arts nerd, I mean, Star Wars isn't my favorite movie series but I really enjoy them and of course, lightsabers are awesome so what could be better than the prospect of a martial arts fight scene involving Donnie Yen and light sabers?

Chris Thompson:

I'm excited for it already. I can't wait for this to come out and I'm definitely, catch it in theaters for that one. You got to be in a big screen but yeah, I'm definitely for that too.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How about books, if you're not a movie or tv guy, are you more of a book guy?

Chris Thompson:

I used to be a lot into it. Sun Tzu's Art of War was always one of the top books I liked. I read that back in high school actually. I got a lot of looks for reading this book about war but the strategy is in there, don't apply to war but apply to life too so I really enjoyed that book. Other books I liked is like Jim [00:38:40] had the Lessons from the Masters which is a martial arts book I liked a lot. Steve [00:38:47] he did his winning mindset book which I've taken a lot of stuff of that one and applied it to a lot of different areas in life. We're talking about personal, martial arts training, business stuff, the whole nine yards so I really enjoy those 3 books are like my top favorite books right there.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Alright, cool, those are great picks and of course anybody that hasn't read art of war, really should. I mean, any book, that stays prominent for that many years, I mean, how far back are we going? 500 hundred years, a thousand years? I don't know my Chinese history and I apologize.

Chris Thompson:

I don't either on that one. I'm thinking that's somewhere at a hundred thousand but that's a total guess on my part too.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, it definitely wasn't written in this decade and so that makes it the oldest book that has been recommended in this show and it has come up a few times so if you haven't read it, definitely go read it and we'll link to it from the show notes. So, you talked a little bit about your goals and the things that keep you fired up but let's expound on that, if you're looking at a year from now, 5 years, 10 years from now, with respect to your martial arts, what are you hoping to accomplish?

Chris Thompson:

There's a couple of big ones in there. Right now, as I think I talked about last year when we met. Anyways, right now I'm the only person on the east coast with the Bahala Na Original Giron Eskrima System which I've been introduced with Grand Master Michael Giron to teach. Now, with that one, it's bigger on the west coast, obviously. I would like to see that to get just as big here on the east coast. I actually bring Grand Master Michael out here once a year for an apprenticeship camp that we do and I really wanted help promote that system in that area like a couple of people like Chris LaCava in the show a couple weeks ago, a podcast a couple weeks ago, I should say. He's learning that system as well. There's other people that are learning it, a couple that are more local than me and I'm just really trying to help promote that system for people that want to learn it, hey, apprenticeship camp, it's not that hard to get here, it's not that much, it's really decently priced and it will help them learn the system as well, help promote it, get them going in the system, too, to develop it and get it all throughout here and Michael literally has the entire eastern coast. Here's the Midwest, there's your half the state, let's get it into every half of the states. I want it to be everywhere. That's one of the big goals for that and that's for me, personally, and I've been doing martial arts for a really long time now and obviously I did the training blades before and I'm phasing that out. I really want to start doing more DVDs and start doing more seminars, in general, too and I think that a lot of the good stuff I can share, I have a pretty good idea how to translate a lot of the different aspects of different arts, a lot of traditional art because the karate background helps with that. I really want to help spread FMA out there more too. It's kind of like the biggest unknown art there is and I think it should be out there more. People should see then appreciate what it has and incorporate into what they do because it's a great tool that can also help them with what they already have going on.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Sure, sure. Now, of course, one of the things and I think I've said it on the show, my personal view of different martial arts, I think you take one art, you start training in it and imagine a trivial pursuit piece of pie and you get to plug in a wedge and then as you train with other people in other arts, you're adding pieces to your pie, your personal martial arts pie and anybody that has trained with you, anybody that has trained in FMA, there's a good sized chunk, there's certainly some good philosophies there that I think dovetail well with really any martial art and I think you got a good background with your Japanese martial arts to be able to say here are the way that these things relate, here's the ways that they don't relate but maybe complement, is a better word to use there.

Chris Thompson:

Yeah, I'm comfortable to use the word enhance a lot because it doesn't replace what anybody does already. It's just alright, if you think about they have their areas of expertise that they're really, really good at but they also have areas that they're not so good at so I'd say that like hey, this art can really help enhance some of those areas that you guys may not focus on as much. The BJJ guys, they're phenomenal, they are the masters of their craft but if you can keep them out of their craft, which is a hard thing to do. It changes the game, like for example, a boxer. I don't know why they dismiss boxers now they're actually extremely scientific in their fighting methods and they're really, really good. I've got mad respect for everybody pretty much but again, that's their aspect, they're great at it but you take them out of their element, they do have a hard time. Just don't let the boxer hit you which is harder than you think. But yeah, they all can help each other and that's how I look at it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I agree. And of course, to your earlier point of spreading Filipino Martial Arts on the east coast. We'll say here on the east coast, not that this show is just for people on the east coast or in the northeast where we are, it's for everybody. Globally, we do have listeners across the globe which is a lot of fun to look at the numbers but anybody that might be interested in attending that camp, please keep us updated, we'll push out the information over social media as you release DVDs and other information, we'll get those links on the show notes here for the page and for the episode and keep everybody up to date on what you've got going on because we'll do what we can to help you reach those goals.

Chris Thompson:

I appreciate it, thank you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure. Oh, you're welcome. The more you grow, the more that martial arts grows overall and that's better for all of us. I've said it a bunch of times on the show, I think everybody should be training martial arts, the more people we've got doing martial arts, the better it is for all of us.

Chris Thompson:



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

I totally agree with that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, are there any websites or social media, anything that you want to share with people if they want to stay in touch with you?

Chris Thompson:

The easiest way to get a hold of me is through my website which is the FMA Academy. The FMA Academy literally. I'm on there as info@fmaacademy, that's the main website that I use for it and so I have a school that I used to have. I basically teach out of my house, private lessons and my seminars, my main focus areas. I'm on twitter @guro_chris. I'm on that. Facebook, obviously, if you pull up The FMA Academy is how it will pop up on Facebook. There's also our YouTube channel which is FMA Academy USA which is our unique channel name that we have and those are the main ways to get a hold of me and again, obviously you can call me on the school's number which is area code 315 313-KALI or 5254. I messed that up!

Jeremy Lesniak:

So hard to get that number.

Chris Thompson:

Yeah! So, what I'm saying is wait, what is the actual physical number now?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Fun aside, completely unrelated to martial arts, I have a Google voice number which is because I live in Vermont where we have a lot of places where there is not cell service. Crazy, right? Yeah and one of those places where cell reception is poor is my house. I have a Google number, I can give that out to people that rings my cellphone and my landline. I still have one of those simultaneously. But when you sign up for a google voice, you get to pick from a whole bank of numbers and I spent, I'm not joking, two hours taking all of the number options I have and punching them into a website that would give you all of the word combinations.

Chris Thompson:

Yeah, that's actually what mine is. That technically is actually the academy number is the google voice number that brings right to my phone. I did the exact same thing and I got 313-KALI, it was like oh, this is awesome! I'm taking this one but yeah, I did the exact same thing you did really but that's how I do it too. I always have it to me because once I'm busy at work or teaching, I always answer when I can.

Jeremy Lesniak:

my phone number has the word GONG like bang a gong in it.



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Chris Thompson:

That works!

Jeremy Lesniak:

Its rather memorable.

Chris Thompson:

Yeah absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, as we wrap up here, you've dropped a lot of knowledge on all of us today, I really appreciate that. Do you have any other, let's say, some parting words of wisdom that you might want to leave us with?

Chris Thompson:

Yeah, one thing is everybody wants to see change and I totally agree. I'm all for people who want to self-improve themselves from anyway, I'm all for it. I don't care what someone's past is, I don't care what you've done, if you're trying to improve yourself, I respect that. No matter what. You're the mom at home that's taking care of the kids or the dad at home that's taking care of the kids, I was a single dad for a really long time. I respect you because you're taking care of your family. I don't care if you're the garbage man, the maintenance worker, the CEO, I respect that. Be the change you want to see in the world. We all want things to be different, want things to be better, be that change and it sounds kind of hard but it's not really that hard. You decide how you want to be as a person and you improve upon that and just do that and you will set examples for people and you never know and one thing I say a lot of times when I'm teaching people, even, is a small difference can make a world change. I'm sorry a small detail can make a world of difference and sometimes there are techniques and I'm sure you know I don't have any background in taekwondo but [00:48:35] if the techniques are not exactly right, the locks don't work, right Exactly. They're not easier. A slight change in footwork can make a huge difference in power, for example. In striking ability or your defenses. You might be thinking it's no big deal, that you smiled at somebody that day or talked to them and said hi to them but that might be the highlight of their day and you never know so be the change that you want to see. Even if it's just a little thing that you think isn't a big deal, it's a huge deal to someone and that's how I got to look at it. You might not see it, you might not ever realize it. just like how I talked about before that bad stuff that happened, that friend that pestered me into going back to class made a huge difference and there's other people that done that too. We all have it. It's just a matter of seeing it and appreciating it, too, but be the change you want to see and small differences make a, yeah, small details make a huge difference. That's all I'm all about with that stuff.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 88 – Guro Chris Thompson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Thank you for listening to episode 88 of whistlekick martial arts radio and thank you to Guro Chris. Head on over to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com for the show notes including some incredible video of Filipino Martial Arts competition, links to Guro Chris's videos and plenty of other offerings. If you like the show, make sure you are subscribing or using one of our free apps. They're available on both iOS and android. For those of you kind enough to leave us a review, remember we randomly check out the different podcast review sites and if we find your review there and mention it on the air, be sure to email us for your free box of whistlekick stuff, if you haven't left us a review yet, please do help us out and leave one because reviews are a lot more important than you may think. If you know someone that would be a great interview for the show, please fill out the form at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com or if you want to shoot us a message with a suggestion for a Thursday show topic or some other feedback, there's a place over there to do that as well. You can follow us on social media, we're on Facebook, twitter, Pinterest and Instagram, pretty much everywhere you can think of and our username is always whistlekick. Every episode is also on YouTube so check us out there if you have a chance. And remember the products you can find at whistlekick.com or on amazon like our great shin guards. If you're a school owner or team coach, you should check out wholesale.whistlekick.com for our discounted wholesale program but that's it for today. So, until next, train hard, smile and have a great day!