



Episode 92 – Sabumnin Scott Pribyl | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everyone it's episode 92 of whistlekick martial arts radio. The only place to hear the best stories from the best martial artists like today's guest, Sabumnin Scott Pribyl. My name is Jeremy Lesniak and I founded whistlekick but I'm also your host here for martial arts radio. Whistlekick, I'm very proud to say, makes the world's best sparring gear and some really great apparel and accessories all for those of you involved in the traditional martial arts. Thank you to the returning listeners and hello and welcome to those of you checking us out for the very first time. If you're not familiar with our products, you should take a look at what we make. We have quite a few different styles of hats, fitted ballcaps, winter hats and new styles are always on the way. Check them out and buy it, 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 you a few times a month, we never sell your information and sometimes we email out a pretty generous coupon. Now, in episode 92, we're joined by a man with an incredible story. Sabumnin Scott Pribyl started martial arts training as a late teenager and really took to it. He credits his professional success to the lessons he learned in the martial arts and also his survival of an incident that literally no other person is known to have survived. He's an incredible man and tells some amazing stories. Enjoy! Sabumnin Pribyl, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Scott Pribyl:

Well, good morning, Jeremy, how are you?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm doing great. How are you sir?

Scott Pribyl:

Well, I'm very well on a Monday morning.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It is a Monday morning and it's earlier than we usually do interviews here from headquarters but of course, we really wanted to get you on the show and this is the timeslot that worked for both of us so I appreciate your jumping on the phone early in the morning.

Scott Pribyl:

Well, it's a pleasure to be with you, sir. I appreciate it very much.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh, it's fun. We'll have a good time. So, lets jump in. let's start it the way we always start it. Of course, if you're on the show, you're a martial artist. How did you get started in the martial arts?



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Scott Pribyl:

Well, I'm a little bit older than you, I suspect. I'm 61 years old but back in the early 70's over 40 years ago, I saw two movies. One of which is Billy Jack and the other was Enter the Dragon with Bruce Lee and I really got hooked on martial arts and got the bug, so to speak, and then as I began my college years in 1973, as I was driving to school one day, I happened upon a Taekwondo school that had just opened in Green Bay a couple months before and I stopped back on my way after college, looked into it and learned enough about it to say this is what I'm going to do.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And so, what was it that you learned? What was it that felt compelling to you to drag you through the doors that first time?

Scott Pribyl:

When I first saw those two movies, again, Billy Jack and Enter the Dragon. What I noticed beyond the impressiveness of the art that were represented by both Billy Jack and Bruce Lee's character and how dynamic what they did was, was I sensed a self...I'll rephrase that...a sense of self confidence both those actors had in their characters and I knew that I needed that self-confidence. I was 18 years old at the time and I thought well, maybe this is a good vehicle for me to achieve that or to realize that and sure enough, that's what happened after about 2 months, my self-confidence and my self-esteem began to increase dramatically as I began to learn Taekwondo and a bit of Karate and it's been a process since for my natural personality, which is a Type A, came through via virtue of my involvement with martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, it sounds like we're getting a little bit of a contrast, your post or intra-martial arts life.

Scott Pribyl:

Very much so.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What were you like as a teenager if you, I'm sensing you didn't have that self-confidence but you were cognizant that you were lacking that?

Scott Pribyl:

Yes, I would describe myself as being non-assertive or, even at times, timid during most of my childhood, adolescence and teenage years and I knew that there was something within me that was much stronger, for lack of a better word, but I didn't have the right mechanism or vehicle to let that part out but I always sensed that it was there so when I saw those movies and just had that aha moment that if I can find a way to do that, it's going to help me understand myself better and then happening upon



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this Taekwondo school and later there was a second but that's all we had in Green Bay, Wisconsin at that time were two Taekwondo schools 43 years ago so I got involved and it was hard and it was difficult. I was a fairly good athlete in high school but the types of movements, in particular utilizing muscles I had never used before, in kicking, particular, just brought me to a new level. I began to push myself and push myself and I had a fantastic master instructor, Grand Master Yong-Saem Kim who moved all of us in that direction by example and he was a pretty hard instructor. I'm very grateful for the discipline and the toughness that he conveyed.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sounds like you found martial arts at the right time in your life.

Scott Pribyl:

You know what, it's exactly the way it worked out and in the book I wrote, *Miracle Man: Beating the Odds: Cheating Death*, I described that experience that whenever I've had an inkling, a notion or a gut feel that I needed to move to a certain direction for some end result even though I didn't know what the end result necessarily would be, the vehicle would show up so it was back to that old concept of when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. Nothing personifies that more in my life than my introduction to Grand Master Kim and Taekwondo.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow, certainly a fortuitous chain of events. I know we're going to hear more about how that's impacted your life as we move on but now, it's story time and I'd like you to take a few minutes and tell us your best martial arts story.

Scott Pribyl:

Well, I think the best story that I have is when I began training in martial arts, I would go to tournaments and I was normally a couple months behind the people in my group, whatever belt rank you may happen to be and I did fair, at best, in tournaments and I wanted to improve on that, my body weight was about 170 pounds and in the Korean martial arts, a 166 and above was considered a heavyweight so I was always sparring with people that were much bigger because I was barely over the limit. So, after doing fair for the better part of the year, I decided I needed to develop my upper body strength because I noticed that even with some of these people I competed with, outweighed more and could kick better, they didn't have much upper body strength so I began weight lifting and I didn't really know much about that either but I did notice I got stronger in my upper body development and I was able to compete in the ring better in tournaments sparring, just point tournaments, we didn't have mixed martial arts at that time and ultimately, when breaking was allowed to be into the tournaments, which was not that way in the early 70's but later on it was an event, I became very good at breaking of bricks, 5 boards. I had 4 different techniques. I could break 5 pine boards and I could do a hammer strike and get 3 concrete blocks and this is all when I was probably 20 or 21 so my confidence just soared and I'll never



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forget those moments because it really helped transform me as an individual and make me a much better person, a much stronger person internally.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, let's pretend that you never found martial arts, that there wasn't Taekwondo in Green Bay or you didn't happen to take that route for whatever reason, you never stumbled on it, what do you think your life now would look like without your martial arts training?

Scott Pribyl:

I think that I would not...I was very fortunate if I could back that up to have reached some very good career goals shortly after my training with martial arts, 1978 to be specific. I became a corporate executive at age 23 and then at 25, I got a big promotion with a large firm in our area on a national level and had I not had the discipline that I gained through Taekwondo, I would not have even attempted to make those career endeavors at age 23 and 25. I would have been very reluctant so as a result, I think I would have a much more limited role from a career standpoint and I have been very, very fortunate to receive more than 50 formal awards in my career for achievement. A beautiful letter from Ronald Reagan, another one from my local congressman strictly from a business standpoint and then I got about 20 trophies and plaques and so forth from my martial arts endeavors and weight lifting as well. So, it just helped me evolve as a human being to be much more disciplined, much stronger internally and subsequently, that lets the real self out.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow. So, one of the things that I'm struck by, what seems to be such a rapid progression. Here you start in your late teens or 20 with your martial arts training...

Scott Pribyl:

I started on the fall of 1973, September. I was 18. 4 months away from my 19th birthday, yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay. So, here, we're just about 4 years from that point, you become an executive. Something that very few people in their early twenties achieve.

Scott Pribyl:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And, clearly, that wasn't a fluke, that was a career trajectory that it sounds like all of that launched from your joining martial arts.

Scott Pribyl:



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It sure did because the people that I was competing with for those positions at age 23 and 25, as you can imagine, had a lot more experience and either came from more prestigious universities, I had a bachelor's degree and most of them had master's degrees and I had to fight hard to get their jobs and that's really what did it. I just fought harder than the other people. Fighting in a polite business sense, a sparring match type sense but that's what I really had to do. I had to figure out a way that how am I going to beat these opponents because they're better equipped just like what I said before, I had to figure out a way to do better at tournaments because I wasn't doing very well and I found weightlifting or my upper body gave me strength in that part which helped me do better and when it came to breaking as an event, that's where I excelled. That was my best event. So, that combination of things and you hit it right on the head they all roll very, very quickly but when they did, it really transformed me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You seem like a very goal oriented person. Once you decide you want something, it's going to happen.

Scott Pribyl:

Absolutely. Absolutely. In Taekwondo, what I loved about it and martial arts in general, I think they're all similar, you have promotion tests. We did every three months and we knew when the next was going to be, we knew what we had to learn and we knew how hard we had to train, we knew when the next tournament was going to come. We knew all these things well in advance when we were going to give a demonstration so as a result, as a group of people in our dojang, we trained hard and we were well prepared and Grand Master Kim made sure that we were prepared and it was not easy back then because I would call it blood and guts taekwondo or blood and guts Karate because we did not wear any pads of any sort and even though it was supposed to be light contact, it often was a lot more than that and we had some scuffles and we had to train hard and there were broken bones and I've had 10 or 12 surgeries as a result but we just kick back up and we keep going and that was Grand Master Kim's theory. Just keep going and you build that internal strength which the Koreans call Ki and I believe the Japanese use the same term, Ki, for the internal energy.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think we're getting quite the picture of you and that's always fun for me as the host to see the path that people take and see how everyone's path is different but yet, for most of us, those differences are so small. We all tend to find martial arts. Maybe we weren't seeking it out for the same reasons that you were but, at some point, maybe it's only in retrospect we realize that that confidence piece was so huge to the formation of our character whatever point in our lives we find martial arts so I think it's fun to see such a tangible, non-martial arts result from your martial arts career.

Scott Pribyl:



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Yes, naturally, I don't mean to interrupt you, I'm sorry but you are hitting on a key topic. The discipline you learn in martial arts especially when you are young, 18 years old at that point I was probably the youngest student in the school, most were in their early to mid-twenties, but it carries through life and I hadn't thought about this until I was injured at age 53, years ago. The fundamental principles that build your internal self, carry through and you only get that through martial arts training in my experience so they carry through whatever you do in your career, whatever you do in your personal life, family life. As you meet other challenges, as you grow and develop and going through the surgeries from broken bones to knees and shoulders and all that type of stuff, your character builds and it's a very unique way of character in it. I always refer to it as my form of military training because I was not in the armed services but within Taekwondo, and again, the Korean judges who I'm so grateful to for teaching me the discipline required and to get up no matter what. You just get up and keep going. A tremendous lesson for life.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely, I couldn't agree more. I have a saying that comes out often in the episodes that I believe martial arts is the only thing that can leave someone with benefits throughout their life in a very short period of time. 3 months, 6 months, a year, as a young child can give people tools that last them the rest of their lives and you don't find that in soccer or basketball or whatnot.

Scott Pribyl:

Absolutely correct. I used to be a pretty good basketball player and I knew how to play the game but internally I was in good physical condition but beyond that, it didn't really have an impact so in your case, how long do you think it took you before you really sensed that your inner self was transforming into something stronger?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm not the best example of that because I literally do not remember a time in my life before martial arts. I started just beyond 4 and so, I don't remember. I can theorize what my life was before. I can theorize what it would look like after and that's kind of why I personally enjoy the question what do you think your life will look like without martial arts because I genuinely don't know.

Scott Pribyl:

In my case, I can tell you, lack of discipline and perseverance would not be there because those two and then the indomitable spirit are one of the four tenets of taekwondo really came into play when I had this life threatening injury in 2008 which very few people survive from and I've been able to make a little bit of a comeback and I never really attributed that to much of anything other than my physical body had very low body fat percentage specifically around my heart so the surgeons in the middle of the night could do this emergency surgery in my aorta and later, it took 7 years to understand personally how did I survive that? I understand the physiological aspects from talking with surgeons and I did a lot of



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research, went to Mayo clinic, get a lot of things trying to get this within my wheelhouse, so to speak, so I understood it but what it really came down to at the end of the day in March of last year, came to me that indomitable spirit tenet and went back and looked it up in general. Choi Hong Hi's book which I have on my desk, that one tenet is what I believe carried me through that surgery and allowed me to survive and then come back and then the perseverance and the discipline kept me getting up every day and doing the rehab that I did although it was incredibly limited. I couldn't do much at all but I did and it came back.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And we're glad you did because now you're on the show and you get to share your story but let's go back, our next question generally is about around the low point in your life and I think that, I've got a little bit of context because I have spoken and we've exchanged some emails and this is part of why I wanted to have you on the show but let's go back and talk about that life-threatening surgery that you had that, statistically, you shouldn't have made it through. Give the audience some context for what happened and how impactful this was.

Scott Pribyl:

Sure. On January 27th of 2008 at the age of 53, late at night, I was going back to bed and I had an extreme sudden pain underneath my jaw and it was extremely sharp and hard. Two days before I had ran 5 miles so I was tempted to think that maybe I had twisted something in my body so it may have prompted this to happen because I wasn't having any symptoms of a heart attack. I didn't have any numbness in my upper body, no chest pain, none of that. just something under my jaw so my wife and I waited at home for about an hour and a half and now we're getting close to midnight when this was evolving and finally my wife insisted that I contact my regular doctor's hotline because I was going to go back to bed, I took a couple Tylenol, the pain subsided a little bit and I thought well, I'll go back to bed but what I did not know was that my aorta had dissected and the odds of somebody surviving that are exactly 1 out of a million and that's a statistical fact on Wikipedia. If they have not incurred stroke, brain damage or paralysis, only one in one million people who need emergency aortic dissection surgery will come out as I did and at any rate, went to one hospital, they diagnosed it right away, thank god there was no one in the hospital so they could treat me specifically. Good news, bad news, they knew the problem was, they found it right away but the hospital was not equipped to do the surgery. So, they had prepped me for surgery and then suddenly, across town to another hospital that was able to do it and by this time, close to 3 hours had elapsed and most people that have this injury are dead within 3 hours. 4 hours at best and I still was alive, although prepped for surgery and I had a number of events that occurred that I cannot fathom how they occurred but they did but I survived the surgery. I was in intensive care for 4 days. I had very little memory of that. for 4 days, I was in intermediate care. There was an artificial valve put in my heart. I had an artificial aorta and unfortunately, I had a residual aortic dissection in my abdomen. It's called a residual dissection and that one is still there. I'm having another CAT scan a week from today after this time, ironically, and that's monitored by medication so the long



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and short of it is the odds of me surviving and then making a little comeback which my book is about, *Miracle Man: Beating the Odds: Cheating Death*, probably 1 in 10 to 30, 50 million. Nobody knows that I've been to Mayo clinic and I'm part of the John Ritter Foundation. John Ritter died from that same injury. They've been studying my DNA since August 2015 and they still can't find what caused it and more importantly, how I'd survived and come back and I believe, with all my heart, I'm absolutely convinced, it was the discipline and the training I learned so I carried that through my life even as I had injuries and setbacks and so forth. When that crucial moment came, the martial arts training had prepared me to deal with that at a different level, so to speak, rather than conscious and I came through it, took a long time to rehabilitate, 7 years, but I kept doing the same stuff that Grand Master Kim used to teach me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow. Now, this, to me, this is just a mind-blowing story and we've had several guests on this show who have treated death of their own accord and I don't want to compare in the sense that any one person surviving something that statistically should have killed them or paralyzed them or something similar. No one story is better than another more important but I think that just statistically, you're probably the one person that has survived these set of circumstances and to me, that's just fascinating.

Scott Pribyl:

Yeah, you make a good point, Jeremy and I don't want to sound narcissistic because it isn't something that I'm particularly proud of, to be honest with you, it just kind of happened but so far, going to Mayo Clinic, being part of the John Ritter Foundation in Houston, Texas, their medical center, we haven't found anybody that survived and made a comeback like I did with the severity of the dissection and the amount of blood I lost. It took 25 pints to keep me alive and there was a 4-minute window once my body temperature is put into a cooling blanket when my heart is stopped, there's a temperature threshold of 60 degrees and once your body gets to that point and your heart is on a cardiopulmonary machine, there's 30 minutes for the surgeon to put in a new aorta as well as a prosthetic valve which is made of carbon steel and he did it in 26 and we just haven't found anyone who's been through that and had been able to do some kind of activity, nothing like what I used to do, but if you look at my book, you'll see photographs that suggest that I'm still somewhat active.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Fabulous and just absolutely fascinating to me and, of course, for anyone who wants to check out, we'll have links to everything we're talking about. The books, some photos and whatnot over at the show notes, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com and we'll make sure we'll get you links where you can check out the book and make a purchase if that interests you and hopefully it does, we're only scratching the surface here. This is just us having a relatively quick chat versus a book., right? You go into all these stuff so...



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Scott Pribyl:

I go into great detail. I talk about my introduction as we did before, Jeremy, about getting involved with Taekwondo and the lessons that I learned which at first, purely seemed to be physical which was good, I needed that. but then, the deeper, inner strength and the inner development of character that I don't know had a full appreciation for until this incident happened, those are the intrinsic or the salient benefits a person gets from martial arts training that if they continue throughout their life, it is a way of life. It isn't just something you do when you're young. Keep doing it. Regardless of how proficient a person is, don't stop.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And we certainly had that advice from plenty of others. Both people that stopped for a time and those that have continued training throughout. Now, it's clear you mentioned a couple times the influence that your original instructor, Grand Master Kim, had not just on you as a youth but setting you on this path and clearly, he changed your life and I think we could even indirectly say, saved your life. Was there anyone else, if we were to take him out of the mi, who else would you say if you were to pick someone that had a strong influence in your martial arts career?

Scott Pribyl:

Well, when I got into it originally, all we had were the two taekwondo school that we had in Green Bay,, there was nothing else and one of them taught a little bit of Karate and that was good. It blended well but you had on your show a gentleman that I followed for many, many years, Bill Wallace and Byong Yu who is a Korean style who also used to be in professional Karate Magazine and I used to follow Fred Ren and Bruce Lee is the obvious one but I found a lot of other people that I could relate to to some degree a little bit better, Allan Stein, Jeff Smith, Joe Lewis, people like that because their style was something that I felt like I could emulate. I never got to that level. I was more regional from Chicago to Minneapolis and the state of Wisconsin, Milwaukee area. That's where I would compete in tournaments but those gentlemen that I mentioned, I would read about it in every publication, Black Belt, Official Karate, everything and I would digest that and consume it voraciously because I'd learn so much.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, just absolutely wonderful people that you've mentioned and of course, we've had a few on the show. We've had others that we've talked to and they are still out there, we're still trying to get them on the show and of course, some of them have passed on and we won't get a chance to talk to them but all of them incredible martial artists in their own right and I think the influence from some of them at that time, we're never going to see that again. I don't know if you would agree. Personally, I don't think we're ever going to see another Bill Wallace and another Joe Lewis.

Scott Pribyl:



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It's hard to imagine. I don't see it...I don't know if you're into the UFC or Mixed Martial Arts, I watch it on occasion but I don't really follow it but the degree of expertise of Bill Wallace and Joe Lewis had in performing the precision of which they deliver their kicks, punches, blocks and etc. and especially Bill Wallace had the injuries that he had, limiting the use of his right leg to zero, no, I don't think we're going to see that. that was some magic era and I doubt that we'll ever see it again.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And the cultural influence with movies and everything and I do follow UFC a little bit and it's interesting that you bring that up because I wonder if we'll look back from now, 20 years from now, did Rhonda Rousey had that kind of impact because she's certainly been the one to had the most cultural impact of any of the fighters out of UFC.

Scott Pribyl:

That's a good question. I don't know. I hadn't thought about this until just now but this morning, I got up and looked on the Internet at Jhoon Ree and at General Choi Hung Hi, both members of taekwondo and instrumental in bringing taekwondo throughout the world and specifically Mr. Rhee through the United States and I do that quite a bit. I look up people from the 70's and the 60's that I was exposed to and you look at the brilliance that those people had at that time and the other ones are still very, very good, no question but that 1968 to 1976 era, that was something very, very special.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, without a doubt and Jhoon Ree is on the shortlist for people that I would die to have on the show and we have reached out, haven't heard anything back, of course, he's in the latter stages of his life and I'm sure is very specific with what he spends his time on but if anybody out there has a way of making that introduction, please, I would owe you big time that would be a lot of fun.

Scott Pribyl:

You know I mentioned the congressman who sent me a really nice letter and invited me to be part of the Great Lakes Export Conference back in 1982 or 3 when I was 27 or 28, that was a big deal for me from a career standpoint but his instructor in Washington, DC was Jhoon Rhee. He taught a number of congressman and senators.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, he was very active politically, kind of a subtle level. I keep finding all these references to people that he taught and things that he had some say over in the background. Things that quite weren't as out. Fascinating, very fascinating man. So, if you could train with someone that you haven't, and we could say that now with where you are at in your life or perhaps back in your prime, we'll open it up, we'll give you a time machine, it could be alive or dead, who would you want to train with?



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Scott Pribyl:

Well, I mentioned a lot of people who would be a real treat to do it with but also Tadashi Yamashita who is a Shito Ryu master, I recall. I would love to learn Japanese Karate more. I didn't get much exposure, I got a little bit but he was someone that always impressed me as well or Hidei Takanakiyama, Shotokan, I really liked the way he would perform when I would get a chance to see him which is pretty rare. Byong Yu, I really like him as well. Americans, Bill Wallace was in his own league. Amazing Joe Lewis, same thing. So, I've named 4 or 5 right there that would be a thrill of a lifetime to train with those guys.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, all incredible and of course, Bill Wallace is still very active in presenting seminars and anyone gets a chance to work with him it's not too often you get to work with a legend. With someone who is recognized for their contributions and they're still alive and of course, he is one of those people and I think everyone should try to make the effort if you had that opportunity.

Scott Pribyl:

When I listened to your interview with him, it didn't sound like it was very long ago and he must be in incredible condition to be able to do the Chinese splits the way he could and probably still can. It's a testament.

Jeremy Lesniak:

He's still incredibly flexible, yeah, episode 14, we'll link it from the show notes here, was done back in June in advance of a seminar we put on with him back in August of 2015 and he is, I'd like to say, he is a better martial artist now at age 70 than the majority of us have or ever would be in our lifetime.

Scott Pribyl:

That's amazing. That is incredible.

Jeremy Lesniak:

He needs to work very hard and can still put his foot anywhere in your body at a moment's notice and he lost a little bit of speed, he'll admit that, but very few people are going to be able to block him even now.

Scott Pribyl:

We talked about the lifelong commitment to martial arts, he personifies it. Master Rhee does as well. Obviously he's 83 years old but for Bill Wallace at age 70 to do the things he does, literally amazing. There are no words. I think incredible is not strong enough.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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No, no. he's still incredibly charismatic and genuinely enjoys what he's doing and I think that's the key. That he found the thing that he is best at in the world and has lived it and I think that most people don't get the chance, most people don't try enough things to find the thing that they're best at.

Scott Pribyl:

And he mentioned that in the interview and I thought that was extremely interesting that everything kind of takes second place when you find that thing. You're right on. I hear you loud and clear. He found it and no disrespect to his family or anything else that he's done but that has been his guiding light, so to speak. He's done it so well. He's influenced and taught so many people and then to come off his injuries he did, to only use his left foot and be so incredibly good, I mean, that is...there's just no words that I can think of to describe someone who has done that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Certainly the end result wouldn't have been anywhere similar but that same indomitable spirit, those aren't necessarily the words he would use having not been a taekwondo practitioner but just as your challenge was to overcome your body trying to end your life and fail, his body was failing as well and he said, forget this, I'm going to find a way forward and he did just as you did and I find those stories very motivating, very inspiring to see that there is so many people, so many places in the world that like to tell us your life is over, this is over, it's all falling apart, and yet, wherever we have those condemnations, there's always someone that rises up through it and proves that no, that death sentence, that curse, whatever it is, there's always a way out of it.

Scott Pribyl:

Yeah and it's interesting that you would mention that because when I was in the hospital and I went from intensive care to intermediate care, there was a little device that was given to me to blow oxygen air to get my lungs to work again and the scale was maybe three inches. 1 to 4 but a very narrow band and I could not get to 1 and I felt like a complete wimp. I thought, my god, here you used to break boards and fairly powerful movements and I can't blow this little ball to 1 inch and they want me to get to 2 inches before they release me and I just couldn't do it and when I got home to walk 20 feet with assistance was a big deal. They come back to recovery from this probably 2 years just to be able to walk and talk again normally and then I began to get back into moving my body the way that I used to, try to anyway, I should say, I never got there to that degree but there was something that continued to motivate me to try and I would get slowly better and better and now I just refer to it as my rehab. It's a work in progress and it always will be.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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And I think that's a great attitude. We're all in our path wherever we are and there is always something in front of us to challenge and I think it's incredibly admirable that you're moving forward and continuing to move forward from this when so many people would not.

Scott Pribyl:

Well, thank you and I wish I could say there was a conscious thought, Jeremy, but in the first 5 years ago, something propelled me to even want to try because it would've been so easy to quit and I didn't make a conscious decision to say today, I'm going to go on and conquer this. There was something within me that was moving me and that's why I say it took several ways for me to realize it's just this notion of having an indomitable spirit or the internal strength called Ki. That was that causal factor that prompted me to continue because I'm often questioned why am I even bothering to continue with this? Something drove me and the words of Grand Master Kim had come to my mind constantly, kim mal juseijunbi, horse stands ready and I would just find myself which is how we started every single class and I would just do it. Do whatever I could do and very, very small steps but after 8 and a half years, I can do a little bit and I'm pretty comfortable at this stage in my life considering what has happened.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely incredible. Now, you mentioned a couple of movies, movies that motivated you to explore the martial arts. Billy Jack and Enter the Dragon, two movies that we've talked about on this show quite a bit and personal favorite of mine as well but do you have a favorite martial arts movie?

Scott Pribyl:

I would have to say Billy Jack.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Was that the first one that you saw?

Scott Pribyl:

That's a good question.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm testing a theory here that's why I'm asking.

Scott Pribyl:

I think it was but enter the dragon came out shortly thereafter if I remember right but that's 45 years ago, Jeremy, you're really pushing me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right. If you saw them in theaters, Billy Jack did come out first if I'm remembering my years right. It's '71 for Billy Jack and '73 for Enter the Dragon but I have this theory that the first martial arts movie



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someone sees always holds a strong place in their heart. We've had plenty of people on this show who have said I know it's not the best movie but Five Deadly Venoms is still one of my favorites because it's the first one that I saw so I was just curious.

Scott Pribyl:

Yeah, it's probably exactly [00:42:15]

Jeremy Lesniak:

Without a doubt. Certainly, for the people behind that movie to put so much effort into something that really was just kind of starting to happen in the United States, it says a lot. How about movie actors? Are there any favorite martial arts actor?

Scott Pribyl:

Well, Bong-soo Han who did the character Billy Jack performing in the kicks in the park was incredible. At the time I didn't realize it was someone other than Tom Laughlin, I thought it was him but it was Bong-soo Han and those kicks were just amazing. That's what really caught my attention and then of course, Bruce Lee and all the things that he did which again was beyond description. Chuck Norris was a big favorite years ago. I think I've seen every one of his movies in the 70's that he produced or starred in either one. I liked when he had The Octagon and Bill Wallace was in that one or no, the A Force of One was Bill Wallace. The Octagon had Tadashi Yamashita, I think, was one of the antagonist in that movie so that genre and that period was just really not very long, it was probably about 7 or 8 year stretch. There was so many of them that were good. Killer Elite I like with James Caan. There was some great movies and to this day, I haven't seen too many that compare.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I would agree. For movies that really capture the martial spirit, especially the martial spirit from that era, I was fortunate I feel like I started at the end of that era and I got a glimpse of what it looked like from today's movies and today's martial arts landscape are certainly very different.

Scott Pribyl:

I wish we could have seen Game of Death to it's full culmination. That would have been an awesome movie. I really would have enjoyed that. Do you know how they tried to doctor it up a little bit but the parts of Jabbar and Bruce Lee sparring in the original, that's some good stuff.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's a lot of fun to watch. Two people that contrasts so much in a fight because the hypothetical fights between big people and small people are something that martial artists debate and continue to debate



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and probably always will so there we have kind of two extremes of very tall man and someone who is very much not tall.

Scott Pribyl:

Yeah. It was great thought.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, of course, we have your book which we're going to talk about a little bit more in a couple minutes but are there other books from the martial arts realm that you enjoy.

Scott Pribyl:

Yes, there are. There was a publisher by the name of Ohara, they were advertised in Black Belt and Official Karate but I bought books by Richard Chun who was a Taekwondo practitioner. One on breaking that is my favorite by martial artist, Taekwondo again called [00:45:44], called the art of breaking. I did read Tadashi Yamashita's Shito Ryu book, I liked that one quite a bit. I'm probably forgetting some, I read a couple from Chuck Norris. I used to read everything I possibly could about martial artist and Karate, Taekwondo in particular because I just found them to be incredibly amazing art and the kicking and then having the strength to break large quantities of boards or bricks, that really appealed to me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You mentioned breaking a few times and it's not something that we talked about in the show. Was there a favorite breaking technique that you used or just kind of clue us into breaking for you?

Scott Pribyl:

Yes, I began like most students in breaking a 1 inch board and that seemed pretty daunting at the time. I was probably a green belt or blue belt when I started to do that and as I progressed forward to be black belt, I got up to 5 boards with a stepping side kick or what Master Kim would call a reverse backside kick and that was pretty much fun because whenever I see the demonstrations where the masters, the Korean masters would be displaying their skills much more proficiently than I could, they could be breaking 5 boards so I knew I had at least as much power even though their technique were that much more crisp. It was really, really well defined. Mine wasn't. I always relied more on power to do it and then eventually, there's a Korean term called chung-kwan which is a fore fist or a hammer fist and I would use that rather than a knife hand to break concrete blocks and I used to break three 2 inch by 8 inch by 16 inch concrete blocks and I would practice on the front yard of our house. We had concrete where the water would come down and then the walls of our basement which is solid concrete and I would use that to condition my hands to develop callus so I did that all the time to build up more and more resistance to the force not hurting my hand and my hands are just fine today but that was my favorite technique, that hammer fist and that thing was pretty strong to break those concrete blocks or bricks with tiny spaces and I don't think I even needed the space. Master Kim just didn't want to break



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our hands but my hands were so callused from the training that I just thought that was a great thing. It just shows how mind over matter can be accomplished, as you said before, we find a way to do things that we really want to do. I couldn't have conceived of that as a white belt. It would never have crossed my mind but sure enough, it happened.

Jeremy Lesniak:

There's a wonderful element to the breaking world and I have some friends that are very deep into it and have some competition and some world record and things and I've dabbled a little bit but the fun thing about breaking is that it's subjective. Assuming that you're not cheating with your materials which you know if you are, then if you break it, you broke it. You can't really argue the success and the failure there.

Scott Pribyl:

Yeah, I broke my leg once, too, doing it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How did you do that?

Scott Pribyl:

At age 49, I thought I'd go back and enter a tournament and sparring and doing the forms, Korean Yeong, I got a third place in each and in the breaking part, it was supposed to be one board and you could have up to three stations which I thought was pretty simple being secondary black belt so I decided to do them all in one. I actually went for 4 as I recall and I did a stepping side kick but unfortunately, I had forgotten how important it is to have good holders and experienced holders and I had 2 yellow belts with small hands that were not very tall and I hit the boards okay but I think the guys moved a little bit and my ankle did with it so I broke my ankle just above that bone.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And of course, anyone that has spent any time breaking knows the importance of good holders and I think you all had this good story of flubbing a break from holders.

Scott Pribyl:

Yeah, and Mr. Kim was so good at teaching us how to do that, how to hold correctly and I had forgotten when I tried this at age 49, 12 years ago how to do the correct way and how to have the holders and everything positioned properly so when you execute the technique, even though my technique wasn't as good at 49 as that at age 20, obviously, it was good enough but I didn't work with the holders and that was my mistake I paid the price.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Hopefully, you weren't out of commission for too long.

Scott Pribyl:

No, about 6 weeks and there's nothing you can do for a broken bone like that. It didn't shatter all the way through but it was a clear break in the bone and I think it was about 2 months before I was able to get back and started doing things. I was going to ask you were there times in your career, so to speak, with martial arts that you felt a sense of oneness when you were doing, if you're doing Korean or Japanese kata, whatever you do when you're doing those so well that you know you have hit the best you can be that you are in sync, so to speak, with whatever that internal energy is?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, it hasn't happened really often but it absolutely does happen with whether you want to call them [00:52:05] poomsae, kata, forms, patterns, that has always been my strength. The place where I feel the strongest in my martial arts and it's an incredible feeling. Again, I think it goes back to when we talk about finding the thing in your life that you can do better than anyone else. I'm absolutely not saying that I can do forms better than everyone or even anyone but, for me, within my martial arts training and expression, forms is the element that I feel the strongest in practicing.

Scott Pribyl:

Well, congratulations. They're not easy to do and they are not my strong point. They are my weak part but every moment, as you said, for some reason on a given day, it would fall in place and when you do that two or three times the same form, I would come away saying, I really feel at ease, I'm relaxed yet I'm highly focused at what I'm doing and I felt that oneness with some kind of energy force, for lack of a better term, whether it comes from within or without, I was connected to it. Very rare but a wonderful feeling.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, sure. An incredible feeling and one that if we could package it up as a drug, I'm sure a lot of people would get addicted.

Scott Pribyl:

That's very true. I never felt more peaceful. It was a few times that happened because forms were really hard for me, the precision and to do them properly, you always had to return to where your stance began and when it's going to end. I had to work at that. That was hard. Breaking came relatively east, sparring I was so-so, 50-50 Bill Wallace would have me done in about 20 seconds but the forms part, I admired the Koreans so much because they were just machines. They were so good and I wasn't so every now and then when I had a really good one, it was a great feeling.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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So, let's talk more about you and your book and these other things going on. This is kind of your commercial time so I'll turn it over to you and share with us what you want to share about the book and I'd love to know why you wanted to write the book but other than that, have at it.

Scott Pribyl:

Well, the incident occurred almost 8 and a half years ago and when I got to the 7-year point, I came to this realization that I have a photographic memory so I remember these chronological, sequential events very well but it occurred to me that the reason I survive and I still continue with my rehab even though I could do very little and it was very hard the little I could do was in March 2015 when I began to see that my body was returning back to normal and I could walk normally and I could perform hand movements. Kicks were still hard but I could do some of the things I used to do and in the process of that 7-year period of doing these little baby steps to kind of start to get back into the flow, I was 60 years old at that point so I'm nowhere near where I used to be and because of the injury, that was a further inhibition, it dawned on me one day, what has kept me going to do this to the point where now, I can look in the mirror and I feel pretty good about who I have become because I couldn't say that 7 years earlier when the injury had occurred and I would relate that to the indomitable spirit. That thought just came to mind. What keeps me going? Because I wondered, I just couldn't understand for 7 years why I had the desire to still keep trying because it would've been so easy to just quit and most people do. The vast majority. 25% of those people who are lucky enough to survive, the 1 in a million that we talk about die in 3 years and they just kind of give up. So, it just occurred to me that that tenet of indomitable spirit is what kept me going but I wasn't really aware of it at a conscious level and at that point, once I've realized, I thought that there's a story here and what it will hopefully bring is this hope and inspiration to other people that had injuries and illness and as I began to go back and forth with the publisher, we looked at any type of circumstance or life difficulty, could be personal or financial or job or career or the loss of a loved one or a relationship, it really doesn't make any difference, the process is always the same. You get knocked on your butt and then you have to get up even if it takes you a little while to get up and you keep moving forward and you keep progressing. So, while your physical body may not be able to do that which it could, in my case, 40 years earlier, that inner strength gets stronger. The body may not be as receptive to what you want it to do but the internal spirit is absolutely receptive to it and then I wrote the book and I won't say it's gone completely viral but it's available all over the world now and more importantly, this story's been told by NBC TV during a live interview. I've done a number of radio interviews, a number of book signings, some at my former dojang when they had promotion tests and it's getting a lot of visibility and publicity and most people who comment to me or book review companies who give me unsolicited comments say this is an inspirational book, everyone who has a problem or think they may someday should read this book, take from it the concept and apply it on their own lives and that's the biggest gratification that I can receive. It isn't financial. It's just having people say, I read your book, I got one yesterday from a guy from Tampa, Florida, who I've never met and he said I really feel the urge to continue, he had the same injury and he survived, he's tougher than I was, a



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tougher situation, I would say, but he's coming up to visit me from August from Tampa, Florida because there are very few survivors.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow. Yeah, I think, for me, the piece in your story that is the most striking is that to anyone on the outside, the doctors, the nurses, anybody in the hospital, anybody that had any experience with this condition, I'm sure mentally wrote you off.

Scott Pribyl:

They all did.

Jeremy Lesniak:

The numbers were so stacked against you.

Scott Pribyl:

That name of the book Miracle Man. That was not the name that I gave, that was what the nurses gave me because no one thought I would survive and they told my wife that when the surgery was going on, I was sedated and going through the procedure but she's preparing for me to be dead and that didn't happen.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And so, of course, for me, I'm someone that really responds strongly to the motivational stories of others. Your story and certain plenty of others and so I look at this and, for me, I say, if you can make it through that, this challenge that I'm facing right now that is not statistical certain death pales so far in comparison. If you can make it through that, I can make it through this and that's fire for me. That really gets me going.

Scott Pribyl:

And that is the most gratifying thing in the world, Jeremy, to hear someone say that. Because there are some really tough stories as you know and you've heard so when you hear someone come back and say, I'm going to get up tomorrow and today and I'm going to go do something, small as it may be, but if it's on a larger path, boy, I feel good. That's a great feeling.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, and I personally, I applaud you for your willingness to share something so personal, I can only imagine is still very sensitive. I mean, I've talked to other people who've had circumstances where they've been close to the end of their life and come back and it's an emotional experience, to be sure.



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So, I think it says a lot about your character that you're willing to open up and share all that, not just on a book, but here on the show and I appreciate it.

Scott Pribyl:

Well, you're more than welcome and I can tell you've done this a lot and you're a very professional interviewer and one of the things that I think is unique about the book and I wanted this by design because you and I both know in martial arts, there is no in between. It's either yes or no. I include those surgical records and the hospital records and I identify the hospital so anyone can look at that book and say this is not some made up story. This really happened because I don't know the verbiage very well in those records although I've learned how to understand some of them, it's medical lexicon and anyone can look at that and say yeah, it's all there in black and white. My name is totally identified, what, where, when and the point in saying that is it's authentic, it's documented, it's a true story and relate it back to one thing: the martial arts training. That's how you overcome severe problems because we're going to face them whether we like it or not and they're going to manifest in many forms. Health is just one of them but as we go through life, it is difficult. It always difficult getting up off the mat when you got a broken leg or you've broken something, a board or a brick, and you've broken your hand. That's not an easy year but it's the same process.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely. I appreciate you being here today. Any parting words of wisdom? You certainly left us with some pretty powerful things and some pretty poignant quotes but anything to tie it off?

Scott Pribyl:

I think the one thing I would say and I'm hearing you say the same thing is that development of the internal self, that internal strength, Ki or the Chinese call Chi, either same thing. That is the single most part of a human person's being, so to speak, that if they develop that sense of inner strength, that transcends their entire life and I don't know of any other activity that will grant that other than martial arts training.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Thank you for listening to episode 92 of whistlekick martial arts radio and thank you to Sabumnin Pribyl. Head on over to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com for links to Sabumnin's book and pictures to showcase how strongly he's come back from statistically certain death. If you like the show, make sure you're 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 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. Those reviews are a lot more important than you think. If you know someone that would be a great interview for the show,



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