



Episode 458 – Professor David Meyer | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hello, everyone! Welcome, this is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 458. Today, I'm joined by my guest, Professor David Meyer. I'm Jeremy Lesniak. I'm your host on this show, founder of whistlekick and I love the martial arts. I love traditional martial arts and training pretty much my whole life and so, now, found a way to turn that into a career and that's what whistlekick is. We're doing all kinds of great stuff for you; the traditional martial artist and you can check out everything that we're doing at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). One of the things you're going to find over there is our store. We make a bunch of stuff. We make uniforms and apparel and protective equipment and just tons of stuff and new stuff all the time and if you make a purchase, of course, you support the show but you can also use the code `PODCAST15`. That's going to save you 15% and it lets us know that this podcast leads to sales which helps justify the expense of this podcast and because I feel like using the word podcast a couple more times, if you want the podcast website, go to [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). There, you will find every single episode we've ever done. We do this show twice a week, all for free and it's all in an effort to connect, educate and inspire traditional martial artists from around the world. My guest today tells some amazing stories, wonderful stories and talks about some people that you've heard of. People who have been on this show, people who we've only talked about on the show. These stories, these conversations that we have today are awesome. I had a great time with Professor Meyer and I hope you enjoy listening to our chat. Professor Meyer, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

**David Meyer:**



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Thank you very much and you can, of course, call me David.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I can now. You had to tell me it was ok first. Well, thank you. Thanks for being here. Thanks for your willingness to come on the show and talk about martial arts. I say it often, I have the best job in the world. I get to talk to other martial artists about martial arts and somehow lump it under the guise of work.

**David Meyer:**

That is very, very cool and I know many of the professional martial arts instructors feel the same way about their work that they get to hop on the map every day or hop into the dojo and do what they love and that's a great thing.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah. What's that saying? Do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life, I mean, that's really how it feels.

**David Meyer:**

Right.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Now, let's go back and we always, almost always, I shouldn't say we always start here, but we almost always start here and it's a good launch point because everyone answers this question so differently if we really dig into it and that question of course is how did you get started in martial arts?

**David Meyer:**

I have been, I'm 57 years old, still actively training and competing in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu right now but I started when I was a 6-year old. My parents put myself and my older brother into a Jiu Jitsu, what I guess we would now call Japanese Jiu Jitsu. Back then, it was just called Jiu Jitsu class at a local community college in the Los Angeles area where I grew up. I was 6 years old, my brother was 9 and he was having some problems with bullies. He wore glasses and we had a cousin who was a black belt under this very well-known local instructor; guy named Jack Seki, and so they thought it would be good to get us both enrolled and so, I kind of came as a tag along but that's why I started at that young age and my brother eventually got what he needed and trained for maybe a couple years, moved off. I, of course, stuck with it and really, really liked it and that's what sort of kept me going and I've been doing it ever since.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Now, I'm doing the math because you said your age. There weren't a whole lot of people training as young children back then.

**David Meyer:**

This would've been 1969. I was born in '62 so there certainly was, I'm trying to remember, I don't know what else was out there when I was a kid. I know that we were heading into the era of Bruce Lee movies and Chuck Norris was doing [00:04:32] and so, certainly in my teens and growing up in my teens, martial arts was a thing. There were karate schools and taekwondo schools and Kung Fu schools but, I guess, at that age, I don't know. It wasn't a dedicated children's class for sure. We were all in one class. I do think there were some other kids in the class but the way Master Seki taught had everybody in one group. I wasn't really conscious if other people did it or not. It was just this thing that I did.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What are your memories from that time? I would imagine that classes back then, especially a mixed class, might have, likely were, run differently. Maybe more hardcore, traditional, does that sound fair?

**David Meyer:**

Master Seki, people just call him Seki, he was half-Japanese, half American. I think his father was an American serviceman who was serving somewhere in Japan in the war and married a Japanese woman and so he had sort of a mix of cultures but he was very stern. What they see is a very stern outside. He had a kind of a soft inside that I saw over the years and I could tell he kind of had a sweetness to him but in terms of how he presented and presented to the students, very authoritarian. Very hai, sensei. Yes, sensei. No talking back and if I try to remember, my memories are from being a little bit older with him but I know that he would demonstrate a technique. He would take us through rigorous warm-ups, the whole class and lots of calisthenics. He was a big believer in serious calisthenics. Maybe half an hour of workout before we ever go for Jiu Jitsu and then he would show a technique, he would work it, similar to what I think is done in a lot of schools today. He would circulate around the class and assist but he definitely was quite authoritarian. There would be periods where he would have us sit and he would just look and not say anything and it's creating almost an uncomfortable silence in the room and he would just be looking at us and you weren't sure like is he mad? Is he thinking? But that kind of, I guess I would call it a little bit of fear, he instilled and certainly, me as a kid, I never was fearful that he would hurt me or dislike me or anything but he just commanded an authority that I do think was kind of normal back then and certainly, some of them from traditional martial arts and honestly, he earned it. He was an extraordinary man. He was small in stature and he was extraordinarily good in Jiu Jitsu. In fact, I can relate to you a couple of stories I remember that I think you'll appreciate.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Please.



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**David Meyer:**

I remember, there's 2 stories that stand out in my mind. One was he was never late to class and believe me when I tell you, you can understand this when I tell you he was authoritarian. You were not late to class. You did not come late to class. I don't even think he would let anyone put a toe on the mat once he bow to us and you came. It was your problem and if you missed classes, he would cut you. One of the things that he, I think, that he valued was he might've been paid something by the local community college but he didn't owe you anything. It wasn't that you were coming and paying him a lot of money and now he had to teach you, he was teaching you because he wanted to teach you and if he did not like teaching you, you were cut from the class and I carried that with me when I started teaching too. That sort of ethic which I did like; although, I do see the value of if you're going to do it professionally, people do need to pay you and you do owe them something in return but there was something special about you didn't owe him anything. You paid your \$5 a month to your local college and that was that and so, he would never ever be late and there was one night where he didn't show and we were all stunned and concerned and had no idea what could've happened to him and I think maybe 15 minutes into when the class should have started, actually one of the black belts started the class on time and started the warmups and about 15 minutes after we should have started, he came sort of limping into class and he had been walking to the dojo which he always did, to the community college, and apparently he had stepped on a nail that punctured a hundred percent through his foot. It went all the way through his foot and he pulled it out and it slowed his walking down a little bit because he had to bandage it and he came walking into class and he taught class. As I recall, I think we were, the adults there, I was a kid, were insisting that we go get a tetanus shot but he taught class and then he went off to the hospital and got his tetanus shot but I just remember thinking I could not believe that the only reason that would make him late to class is literally a nail had gone through his foot and he was very apologetic that it had caused him to be late to class. In his mind, it was no excuse but it did take him a long time to get the nail out and to bandage it up and then to go back and continue his walk to class. To me, it was a testament to this guy's indomitable will and certainly, an inspiration to us and another story I remember is about once a year, we would do a presentation for the parents, for the people, sort of an exhibition and we would do it in the class and you would invite all your parents and your friends to come and see it and we would each have decided which moves we're going to demonstrate and he did not teach board-breaking as far as anything I remember with Jiu Jitsu but obviously, he had some history with it because on these times when we would invite our parents and do this kind of an exhibition, and it was always very impressive to us and at this time, he had taken, I don't know if it was pine, it was real boards and not easy boards to break and he did some board breaking and as you do, they did like one, the two, then 3, then he put together 5 boards and these were 1-inch thick boards. It was really thick and to hold it securely, they took some masking tape and put masking tape on both edges, both ends of the board and one in the middle just to give it a little more stability and this was going to be his sort of finale and he had a student hold it high at chest level and brace themselves holding it and he was going to break it with his forehead, a forehead strike, and everyone was amazed and concerned and confident he could



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do it so he struck his forehead against the boards and they didn't break and you could hear a little bit of a whump, that was strange, from the crowd and he looked a little confused and he said, alright, so he gathered up his energy again, the student braced himself again and he struck that forehead strike again and it didn't break and so, he took a deep breath, gathered his energy and one more time, he struck it and this time, he was bleeding from his forehead and the boards did not break and he was contrite and shrugged and said well, I tried. Thank you everybody for coming and dismissed everybody and they went home and he put a little dab off his forehead and when we were cleaning up and sweeping from the other board breaks, somebody took the tape off of the middle of the boards of these 5 1-inch pine boards that was holding it and it turns out, what happened was the boards feel apart and dust poured out from that middle of the tape was so he had broken the boards. He had liquified the boards. He had demolished the board but the tape, the masking tape, there was nothing sharp enough in the way the boards break to actually cause the masking tape to tear so the masking tape was holding now two sets of board together with sawdust in between them and it was so amazing to me that of course then, it made sense that he broke the board the 1<sup>st</sup> time and he just continued to bash them but it was this little bit of masking tape and the lesson I got from that was, first of all, that Seki was seriously tough and the energy he can put through was impressive and real. The second thing I got from it, his contriteness, he gave it 3 tries, he shrugged, he smiled, he said, well, can't win them all and he took the defeat and the 3<sup>rd</sup> thing is how something small as a little bit of tape in the right position, in the right place can be very powerful which is a concept in Jiu Jitsu anyway. The right pressure, the right angle, the right thing at the right place has an outsized power. That little strip of tape does too. But I just remember, that's the kind of guy that Seki was. He was just tough as nails.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's a phenomenal story. I can imagine being there and I don't know how many people listening missed a break but it hurts. It hurts even more when you have people watching and did he know when you were cleaning up that he had, in fact, broken the boards?

**David Meyer:**

Yes. Well, no, he didn't know that he had broken the boards but he was there when we were still cleaning up and so, he saw what we saw that he had broken the board. I don't remember his reaction to that. He probably didn't.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I would suspect, from what you're saying, there wouldn't have been any outward expression but I can't say I've ever seen...

**David Meyer:**

Yeah, he's very stoic.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I've never seen a break resulting in sawdust and I'm not saying I don't believe. I'm saying that's pretty powerful and to kind of get back up after missing or believing that you've missed a break and do it again and do it again.

**David Meyer:**

Yeah, I don't do board breaking. I've never had. I've never trained in a style. I've been a Jiu Jitsu person and have spent a number of years in some styles of Kung Fu but I've never done any style where there was any board breaking so I don't know it myself but my impression is usually, you don't tape the middle of the board. You probably don't tape them at all but maybe, because we don't do a lot of board breaking and maybe the person holding the boards wasn't skilled in holding boards and maybe it was going to twitch or something, he thought it was best to tape the boards into one block but I don't recall seeing people break boards where there was tape in the spot where they were trying to break the board and I think that was why the sawdust thing happened. I think what happened was the boards were broken and they were broken again and they were broken again and they were broken again and just the energy, the smashing of his head into that same place on the boards was just breaking the boards more and more and more and they weren't being allowed to fall apart. That's my fave.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, that's pretty cool. There's a reverence in the way you're talking about him and I find it really interesting because it's not the words you're using. It's the tone. How long did you train with him?

**David Meyer:**

I do have a reverence for him as just, honestly, anybody who ever encountered him or trained with him. I trained with him, gosh, through my younger years. Grade school, I think, I don't know exactly the year, there was a period of time where I stopped training with him and therefore stopped training Jiu Jitsu. I'm going to say maybe 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> grade then around high school time, went back and continued training with him and after high school into college. I was still training with him and he had moved into a different community center that time and that was sort of my relationship changed a little bit because I was a little bit more adult at that time and could see him as an adult but I do have a reverence for him a lot. He instilled in me some things that stay with me to this day. Definitely a sense of stoicness, of don't complain, just do the work and get it done and not a complainer. Level of integrity which I don't think I match but I would aspire to match. If he says he's going to do it, he would be there on time, deep respect. He was just so solid as a person and as a warrior really. His technique as a small, a person with a small, diminutive size and his ability to throw people and throw people hard to the ground. He used to tell us that you're always armed. You're armed with the ground. He said it's better than a club, it's better than a knife because you can hit someone with the earth and what he meant by that is you can throw them if you want headfirst into the ground and coming from 5 feet high in the air, however high, when



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you throw them, they're not going to get up and he was so powerful at that and such a small guy to make it happen and also, he instilled in us a sense that has definitely stuck with me of defending the underdog whether that be the less powerful in society. Children, yourself, of course, you're going to defend, but women, whoever it is on a situation, or whoever's being ganged up on. He had this really powerful moral sense and he would tell us that if you get into trouble, you don't need to call for help. You are the help. You are the help that other people call for. So, he wasn't saying don't call the police if you need to call the police and need help but what he's saying is you need to foster it yourself and add it to the self-reliance that if someone else needs help, you are the person that they would call on. You don't need to call on anyone. You are the help if you get what I mean and he would say that people, when you're walking down a street or when you're walking into a room, everybody on that street or everybody in that room should be safer because you're there even if you don't know it, the room got safer because you entered it and that's an ethic. That's the commitment to if something bad is happening, don't run away. Get into it, jump into the problem, solve the problem and yeah, you're right. I have a deep reverence for him and he gave me those and he gave me that ethic and that stays with me in my work which is actually, my professional work is not martial arts. It is on animal welfare and animal protection, which to me, is just an extension to protecting the literal underdog in this case but the weak and those who can't speak for themselves, the innocents. Jack Seki was an institution. He was amazing.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And where did you go from there because I get the sense that he's likely passed on?

**David Meyer:**

Yes, he's passed away. After I reconnected up with him, like I mentioned in high school I was still training in Jiu Jitsu, this was a, we would have called not a traditional style of Jiu Jitsu so with the advent of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, people started calling anything that's not Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, Japanese Jiu Jitsu or traditional Jiu Jitsu but of course, there are traditional styles of Jiu Jitsu. Jiu Jitsu has been around a long time as a parent art of aikido, the parent art of judo and there were certainly schools that have very codified list of techniques and they practice them in very formalized way with an uke and a tori. The person who will be the attacker, the person who will be the defender and it's sort of a very controlled, there's not like sparring going on. Seki was not that way. He didn't have a set curriculum. There was no particular technique you needed to learn to get to your next belt. It was all based upon his sense and his feelings and where you were at and we did do what he called randori. We did spar and we did do judo-style sparring without striking. We get some striking so he, it was quite an eclectic, I would say a hard style of Jiu Jitsu that we did and I appreciated that we felt that it put me in good stead as a fighter. In a couple of experiences, I had growing up in school when I got into fights, I easily, easily won so that was good for me but in high school, I had a couple of friends who were interested in training Kung Fu and I thought that would be interesting and so we went down a local school taught by a guy named Sifu Douglas Wong and if you're a Kung Fu aficionado, Douglas Wong is well-known there and his wife, Carrie Ogawa, actually wasn't his wife then and he had a number of people. James Liu, a guy named James



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Brown who were very, very prominent extraordinary Kung Fu people at forms and so, kata, essentially and it didn't interest me that much but it was kind of fun so my friends were doing it so I did it and for me, it was more exercise. Just staying in deep stances and being able to hold deep stances and learning the difference forms was. I did not that Tuesday nights, we had, at the Kung Fu school, what we call fighting class and in fighting class, we put gloves on and we were basically kickboxing and I remember asking Sifu if fighting class is us throwing round kicks and straight kicks and boxing, essentially; what's the mantis stuff and the Tigerclaw stuff and the crane? Is that not fighting too? And he kind of smiled about that. He said look, these are all fighting moves but they are, because nobody reared up into a crane stance and did a snap kick when we were in fighting class with gloves on. It looked a lot more like standard kickboxing but I appreciated that. I did like the forms of it and I love that but Jiu Jitsu was always my root and then when I went to, and they didn't have belts there in his school. There was a black belt or a black sash he would award but I didn't stay that long. I was there for a number of years throughout high school and we remain friends with him but there was no belt ranking for the students but I did work my way into the advanced class where we were doing advanced forms. I could tell you some funny stories from that too. we used to do balance things. He would fill up large coffee tins, I don't know how big it would be because I don't drink coffee but a large coffee tin, maybe 6, 7 inches across. Fill it up with concrete and we would stand on them like you're standing on a pole and you'd be a few inches off the ground because you're on this can and we would balance things, extend kicks from there and if you were good, like his best students were, you would put 2 or 3 of them stacked up and do your balance things there where you could really hurt yourself if you fall off of that and whenever someone would fall, we would always, this is Doug Wong, he would always say be careful, you're going to hurt my cans jokingly like he was more concerned about the concrete can whether you sprain you ankle or not. He says your ankle will heal but that's my can! He was funny but I then, when I went to UCLA as an undergraduate, they had a Jiu Jitsu program and they didn't have an instructor really. It's kind of a club and they actually did, it was a woman who was training in a style called Danzan Ryu Jiu Jitsu but when I showed up, it didn't take very long until they asked me to start teaching and I think that was because I was just technically good and tough and they like the style and so, and that's when I really got deeply back into Jiu Jitsu because Jiu Jitsu at UCLA. I can keep going on because I've done a few other things if you're interested for me to just trace my history where I ended up today.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Absolutely! We're hearing about your history but we're taking some side roads and I think we're learning a tremendous amount about you and what's important to you as we go so I don't see any reason to change.

**David Meyer:**

I'm happy to circle back on any of this stuff so I was teaching in UCLA, this was all not paid which to me, again, I didn't have experience with professional martial arts instructor so for me, there was sort of nobleness in showing up each day and teaching in class and not being paid for it and therefore not





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feeling like I owed anyone anything. I'm the instructor. You owe me respect, I owe you good instruction and being a good instructor but you don't come and pay me money and now I have to perform for you because you paid me money. That was my attitude towards paying for martial arts instruction and as I said, I have since come out with a very different attitude of that. absolutely realized the value of having a professional martial arts instructor for whom he needs to feed their family and themselves and there's nothing at all wrong with paying too but back then, I was very proud of the back that I just showed up and did it as a volunteer thing and in 1984, in Los Angeles, the Olympics came to the city of Los Angeles. The Olympic committee for their various activities took over a lot of the sporting facilities in the city and UCLA was part of that and so, we lost our mat, basically, for the summer of 1984. We couldn't train at the UCLA because of the Olympics so I had to find us another mat that we could rent somewhere and I picked up the phone book and Max were not that easy to find back then. Brazilian Jiu Jitsu hasn't existed in the united states so basically I'd be looking for a judo school that you want to rent out some space, maybe after my class for my Jiu Jitsu class and I went through the phone book and I saw this place near my house which is in the san Fernando valley, part of Los Angeles and I've never seen this school it must have been knew and I thought oh, they'll have mats. It's called Tenshin dojo and I called up and said I'm a Jiu Jitsu instructor at UCLA, we lost our thing, we needed to rent space and the person who answered said well you going to have to talk to sense I about that. He's quite traditional, he'll want to meet you and I went down there and they said bring someone to work out with. Bring a partner so I brought one of my black belt friends down, we went into this dojo we had never heard of and walked into it, it was gorgeous and it was very traditional. It had tatami mats, it was deep, they filled up the whole warehouse. They had a Shinto altar at the end of it and I could see, wow, this is quite formal and we were sitting in those sort of entry room with the door open outside. It was a sunny day and suddenly, the room was darkened by this very large man who filled the doorway blocking the sunlight. I remember thinking like WHOA! Who is this? and it was the guy named Steven Seagal at the time and I have never heard of it, no ever heard of him. This is, of course, Steven Seagal and he just came back from Japan. He was a 5<sup>th</sup> Dan. I think he was the first ever promoted to 5<sup>th</sup> done in aikido. The real deal, for sure in aikido and he was extremely intimidating and scary. It allowed me the show my stuff and he was impressed enough and he said ok, I think you're quality, you can teach after my classes and that became a friendship and a relationship I had with Steven Seagal, this was as he was starting to meet people, he had a desire to be in the movies and he quickly started to kind of infiltrate the Hollywood scene and I remember Jackson Brown, the musician was a student of his. I saw him teaching him, a few other musicians came down and I was with him, still teaching there when his first movie, Above the Law, I think it was called, came out and he took me to the screening at the Grauman's Chinese theater and we've since drifted apart so I'm not in touch with Master Seagal today but that was interesting and then, I eventually got connected up with Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and again, I'll pause if you have any questions but Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is what I've been doing for the last 25 years.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Sure and I suspect that this will probably be a transitional point in our conversation so yeah, let's go back a little bit. Obviously, anyone who is willing to get past some of the more modern criticisms of Steven Seagal with regard to either movies or politics or his personal health or the TV show that he did, if you can get past that, he's a big guy and he accomplished a lot of things and your description of the door being darkened, obviously, I wasn't there but it sounds like that's such an appropriate way to describe it because you're talking about him in his prime.

**David Meyer:**

Yes, this was before he was an actor. He was a martial artist back then, for sure.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Did you train with him at all? What was that like?

**David Meyer:**

Yeah, well, not seriously as a student. We got on the mat together a number of times but I never, and I would, because I wanted to show respect if I was going to teach...well, I never was ranked with him. I'm trying to remember now. I thought it would be disrespectful for me to show up after this aikido master would teach his class and me, some run of the mill Jiu Jitsu black belt, walk on to the same mat, start teaching my people. I felt like A) it would be disrespectful, B) it would be stupid for me because there's an aikido master in front of me. Why would I not be learning from him? So, I never officially embraced aikido but there was, in those years, I would frequently come to a class in a white belt and take his class from him and then, put my black belt on after the class and then teach Jiu Jitsu class and so, the reason I said no, I didn't train with him because I never really felt that I was a student. I never really committed to learning aikido as a style. I'm not ranked at all in aikido but I took advantage of the opportunity he was giving me to be on the mat with him and that was very impressive as you say. He was very large, 6-something, big guy, broad shoulders and he used that very effectively in his aikido so he would move very, very well, very efficiently and if you made any sort of a lunge at him, he would send you flying. For real. Send you flying. He had a black belt that he had brought with him from Japan. A guy named Matsuoka who spoke very little English, he learned it at the time and Matsuoka was really his punching bag man. Matsuoka was not his size either so he would just demonstrate on Matsuoka and sometimes he would, very frequently, he would allow an elongated demonstration like he would start the class, there would be some sort of warm up that we'd all sit quietly, sitting on our knees in seiza. He would summon Matsuoka to stand up and he would just like elicit an attack on Matsuoka. He would just say come at me and Matsuoka would throw a strike and Matsuoka would throw a kick and Matsuoka reached and he would defend and throw and throw and throw and throw and then at some point, he would maybe hit upon the thing he wanted to teach us. I don't know how he was deciding and the last thing you saw him do, that was the thing he then started talking about so Matsuoka would have just had a workout where we would basically witness the demonstration about 5 minutes of Matsuoka



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being tossed around in every move imaginable before we ended up with the one that we did and then, Sensei Seagal would show it and maybe teach a little bit and then walk off the mat and we'd be on our own and Matsuoka would be helping us but he would literally walk off the mat, maybe sit down on the couch, get some water and then come back on, show another technique, walk off the mat and my understanding, I've never trained in Japan but that's the traditional way to teach in Japan. The teacher shows it, you're on your own kind of a thing which, in my opinion, is not the best way to teach at all. I believe in being a very engaged instructor but that's not the style that he was doing but yes, I did train with him and very, again, no talking about his politics, his movies, just anything about him as a person. I have no comment on any of that except to say he's extraordinarily good at aikido.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And what's I've always suspected but you're the first person I had the opportunity to speak with who did anything more than see him at a seminar so thanks for indulging me.

**David Meyer:**

Yeah, I've known him for years. He's the real deal.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

This is all quite the foundation. We're really building up to something and you're showing that, time and again, you're going back to martial arts, you're finding opportunity for martial arts. It's got some kind of hold on you. Were you aware of that at this point?

**David Meyer:**

Oh yeah, it's always been part of my identity, I mean, since I was a little kid. It's just part of who I am and interestingly, even though I started when I was 6 years old, I was bullied a bit myself in grade school. Pushed, shoved in the hallway and I always try to not get into fights. That's what Seki told us to do. Don't get into a fight and sometimes I would just suck it up but it definitely, I think, this being bullied is a theme in a lot of the best martial artists I know. I do not account myself in the list of best martial artist but I think it's a theme and it certainly was for me and so, fighting, defending the underdog, all that stuff has always been a part of who I am. There was never any question in my mind like when I went to UCLA, I was going to train Jiu Jitsu. Obviously, I found out if there was a martial arts program and I was going to get involved in it because that's where I will be spending my time. I had to train and when I left UCLA, I actually never went back to teaching UCLA after the Olympics by the way because suddenly I was teaching in a place where regular people, my friends could come in and train and they couldn't do that on the UCLA campus so the group that began training at Steven Seagal's, I ended up teaching them not just for the summer but for several years and that became my main place of teaching and charged only what was required to pay the rent to Master Seagal and never took any money from that and that's where I first encountered Professor Wally Jay and became a friend and student of Professor Wally Jay's.



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It was Small circle Jiu Jitsu. He's also no longer with us but for us, those in the Jiu Jitsu world or in the kajukenbo world, some of the worlds in martial arts will know who Professor Wally Jay was and it was in 1990 that I was actually seeking something new and different. I felt like I'm pretty good at Jiu Jitsu and my incremental getting better at this is not going to get much better and I've been working Small Circle stuff with Professor Wally Jay and I wanted to do something different and I heard of Muay Thai and I had just signed up to start taking Muay Thai classes when the first person who ever told me about the Gracies came into my school where I was still teaching at that time. By that time I was volunteering at a different community center to teach because Tension Dojo had moved on because Steven Seagal became a movie star and wasn't teaching in school anymore and I came to it at that moment, I can tell you that story of my first exposure to Brazilian Jiu Jitsu because I didn't continue my new Muay Thai training because I got completely enamored with Brazilian Jiu Jitsu.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Nice, nice and when you look at those early days of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and you think about the things that you had that you were bringing into it, was it beneficial because you had that prior experience to lean on? Was it challenging because there were things you had to unlearn? Or was it some mix of the two?

**David Meyer:**

There was nothing I had to unlearn in Jiu Jitsu. It was all just a refinement and making things better. It definitely gave me a leg up. When I first got on a mat, I put on a white belt. I'll relate to you the actual story of my first Jiu Jitsu lessons because I think you'll find it interesting and your listeners will as well but I would say that my level coming in as an experienced Jiu Jitsu black belt onto a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu mat got me; the first level of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is blue belt. You might attain that depending on the school a year or after a couple of years and so, I was what I would call a bad blue belt. If I was grappling competitively with the newer or not so good blue belts, I could beat them. I would catch them in some sort of a finishing hold. If I was training with an average blue belt or a good blue belt, they would beat me so it did get me something. It didn't get me that much but it got me bad blue belt is what I would say and it definitely allowed me to move quicker through the ranks of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu because I felt comfortable with chokes, I felt comfortable inverting and being kind of twisted up. That was something that I've been doing since I was a child. It was just these guys were showing me much better ways and much better movements than I had been exposed to on the ground, specifically, for what I would call at that time, newaza, the ground technique and so it did help me and there was nothing I needed to unlearn. Honestly, the only thing I needed to unlearn was some of the decorum because I was bowing and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu doesn't have a lot of that. It's a little bit loser, let's just say. I can remember a time when I was training on the mat, this was when I was a middle belt rank and Rigan, my coach, was kind of shouting for everyone to go harder, go harder, we were all sort of in matches all around the mat and he took off his belt and started using it like you would wind up your towel and snap your towel in the gym when you were a kid to use it like a whip. He was using his belt like that and whipping people like snapping it at them and I remember just thinking like this is so far away from the world I grew up in. You



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don't take your black belt off and snap it at someone. It just reminded me there's different rules that apply here, different etiquette so I did have to unlearn some of that etiquette. I don't have to always bow and it's ok to just sit and lean up against the wall instead of sitting seiza and good posture but a lot of that etiquette I carried with me really helped me like for example, I believe when the instructor said start drilling, you start drilling and you just kept drilling and didn't talk. You just drilled and drilled and drilled and so, I was able to accomplish more reps than other people in the class because I wasn't living in that vibe that the instructors were putting out which was kind of really relaxed. I came from a very structured thing and so I used that structure and I think that actually helped me.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I had a similar experience when I dabbled in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and actually found that, I don't want to say I struggled, my attitude, my traditional, my historical attitude towards training was so foreign to everyone else that I had a hard time fitting in.

**David Meyer:**

That wasn't an issue for me but I would understand why that would occur and the truth is if you're coming from a hard style or from a striking style, it can be hard. Jiu Jitsu is kind of very round and soft and pliable and it's not relying on explosiveness. It's not relying on speed or that kind of precision. It's sort of a different kind of precision, almost a lazy precision and that is hard for people who come from those truly different styles to integrate into that but they do and then, they get the benefit of their stand up technique and their ground technique and it's good for them if they do that. Just relaying how I got into Jiu Jitsu, I think you might find it interesting, I had just begun my Muay Thai, I was teaching Jiu Jitsu. Again, not being paid, it was a local community center. This was a fencing school. They had fencing but they wanted a Jiu Jitsu class and so I headed a Jiu Jitsu class come on there, it was good and somebody walked onto my mat, an old student of mine and said hey, I've been training with this Brazilian guys, these Gracie brothers, have you heard of them? I said no, I had no idea who they are. This was long before the UFC and he said they're unbelievably good and he said let me show you, I will grapple with you and this was a student of mine from years ago and he grappled with me and he was good! He gave me a hard time. He was a blue belt of theirs and I was so impressed like wow! I had a hard time getting you and choking you and I beat him and I was like how long have you been training with these guys? I've been with them for 6 months, 7 months and I said wow, I really should check this out and I made note of it and then, I didn't get around to it and then another guy showed up on my mat, a guy I didn't know, who was sort of menacing and he watched me teach a class and afterwards he said can we grapple? I'm like yes, I would never say no to a challenge like that and he's a little bigger than me and he put on a gi and I had my gi on and we went for maybe 15 minutes before I finally got him on his back and choked him out and he was tough and I said to him who are you? He was wearing a white belt and he said I've been training with these guys, same thing, Gracies and I thought wow! How long have you been training with them and he said 3 months and I didn't believe him. He was a big strong guy but I just didn't believe him. He said no, I'm not kidding. I've been training in private lessons with Rickson Gracie for 3 months



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and I'm like ok, I've got to check this out and he gave me the videotape, Gracie Jiu Jitsu in action, which was a videotape that Rorion and Rickson were circulating were circulating to get known in the United States and they compiled a number of their fights in Brazil and it was narrated by Rorion Gracie who went on to start UFC and I was impressed. I watched the videotapes but I kind of thought well, they're good. They're fighting people, they're doing Jiu Jitsu. I couldn't appreciate how good it was until the first day I finally got it together. Oh, I called actually Rickson, spoke to him briefly and it was very expensive at the time. It was \$100 for private lessons which in 1990 which was like wow, that's really expensive to me. That's a month's training and, of course, I didn't understand how good he was. He's phenomenal and I would have been smart to go take a lesson but I also didn't like the, they had a challenge. The Gracie Challenge was like a \$100,000 to anybody who can beat them and it just wasn't my thing. I didn't like that. I didn't want to be associated with it and then I contacted my original student and he said, hey, no, no, his instructors are Gracie family but it's Rigan Machado and Carlos Machado were there at that time. He said they're not doing the challenge. They're not like that. They're just totally cool and oh, I thought that would work better for me so I found out where they were teaching. They had 2 schools, one of them was near me and I showed up one night to meet them and to take a class and they were not there. It was some heavy, heavy rains, freeways were all jammed up and they had asked a purple belt student of theirs to teach a class but that's mid-level and he was a guy in from Australia named John Will and I have never heard of John Will, didn't know anything about it but I decided, I asked if they had a white belt. I'm a black belt Jiu Jitsu but I'm not going to be a black belt on the mat where the purple belt is teaching. As a sign of respect, I'll put on a white belt Brazilian Jiu Jitsu so I put on a white belt which is a good thing I did because John kicked the crap out of me. He made me tap so many times, I could not believe what I was experiencing. I remember saying to him, if you're a purple belt, what are the black belts like? He said on a different planet and the next time I came, Rigan Machado was there and he played with me like I had never had a day of Jiu Jitsu in my life. He smothered me, he choked me out, he got me in every joint lock and he did it with one arm and he was laughing and not getting out of breath and that's all it took for me to decide, ok, I'm taking my black belt off and I'm putting my white belt on and I'm going to start training with these guys and I continued teaching for maybe about a month and after a month or two of me continuing to teach my Jiu Jitsu, I'm bringing students over to Rigan to try to support him. I closed my class down. I said you guys, there's something better and I'm going to become a student and I invite you to join me and that was it. I devoted myself to Rigan and his brothers and moved through the ranks and that was my entry to Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and that was like around 1990.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Wow. That's pretty cool. That's a great story and I want to touch on something that you brought up because I don't want people listening to think that I'm down on Brazilian Jiu Jitsu because I'm not, certainly not. There's a quality, by relaxing some of the formality, you get these opportunities, these training sessions that have a levity to them where a black belt will play with you like a cat does a mouse



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and it can be humorous, it can be fun and it can be impactful. It can be humbling and at the same time was very inspiring which is my takeaway from the way you're describing it.

**David Meyer:**

Yeah, that was it. He didn't destroy my ego. He just played with me and it was fun and remember, it was at a time when I was seeking something new. I was about to throw myself into Muay Thai which would have been a great thing to throw myself into. Introduce me to a whole new level of power, of kicks and elbow strikes and things like that. It attracted me. They were welcoming, they were friendly, they were respectful of me, respectful of my students. They were respectful of all martial arts. Rigan and his brothers who were Jean Jacques, Carlos, Roger and John, there's 5 of them, and they eventually all came over from Brazil and came to California, they were so deeply respectful. They weren't trying to prove anything. Rigan would take us to Judo classes, would take us to wrestling classes, we went to other tournaments. They were very, very respectful. Very early on, they got linked up with Chuck Norris who really helped them and helped Brazilian Jiu Jitsu get a foothold in the United States and Chuck was coming from a different style so there was all this mutual respect and the Machado brothers were never saying anything other than we do what we do and you're welcome to come and learn with us. They were always very open to anything new and that was what allowed me to embrace it. I didn't get any weird vibes from them, ever at all and I derive from Jiu Jitsu but definitely from Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, I derive a whole set of rules. I can, I'd given actually some presentations on this, some conferences, they're not related to martial arts but related to actual animal advocacy which again, is my profession, my chosen profession and all of the lessons I've learned from Jiu Jitsu and I could write a book on it. I mean, leave your ego at the door, look for a tipping point. You don't need to throw someone all the way to their back, you just need to find the point which gravity will take over. Know how to rest while you're still fighting, how to find moments of rest. Find good teachers. Don't try to reinvent the wheel. There's so many life lessons. When you're in a bad situation and this one I got from my now, great friend John Will who went on to become the first Australian to get a black belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and is still, in my opinion, the finest, certainly one of the finest Brazilian Jiu Jitsu instructors anywhere in the world today. If any of your listeners ever get a chance to take a seminar with him or check out any of his books or anything like that, he is such a phenomenal teacher. A teacher's teacher, a coach's coach. Just to divert for a moment, we all get good at our art and then we start teaching but it's not that anyone taught us how to teach, I mean, that's a whole separate skill and he's got that skill. He really breaks it down and understands how to impart information to people in a way that they will learn it quickly and hint, it's not show the technique once and walk off the mat and let them figure it out for themselves but anyway, the lessons that I've learned, the lesson John taught me, look for 5% improvements. If you're in a bad situation, don't try to toss the person off you. That's a waste of energy. 5% improvements, improve your situation a little and then a little more, a little more. Just so many things I learned in Jiu Jitsu and useful in my animal advocacy, in my life, business, I really love it and I'm sure every martial art has that but Jiu Jitsu is one that I'm in and I've certainly derived from that.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Let's talk about your profession because you've brought it up a couple of times and you just mentioned how you've given presentations incorporating your martial arts into that and I'm guessing there's some other synergies there.

**David Meyer:**

Yeah, well, I jokingly tell people I have a business card saying kicking butt and saving animals because it seems odd to people that oh, you're this fighter guy and I definitely am embedded sort of in this UFC culture, although I wouldn't call myself a fan but many of my friends, people I trained are UFC fighters and successful UFC fighters and for example, when I was down in Los Angeles trained with Rico Rodriguez and a number of people down there and when I moved into San Francisco which is the area I've been living now for the last 15 years, I trained with Jake Shields and Nick and Nate Diaz, just a number of UFC fighters just coming out of the Cesar Gracie camps, a buddy of mine so there's a fair amount of aggression and stuff and then, there's this caring for animals and caring for, I'm a gentle person. I was a vegetarian, became vegan many, many years ago, decades ago and so I'm the person who will escort the spider out of the house and not kill them and I don't see any discrepancy there at all. I think the greatest strength is gentleness. Schindler's List, I think, said this: the ability to destroy but don't, but not. Your listeners who are religious, it's what God does. We are so insignificant and he could easily destroy us but a deity decides not to and instead is kind and compassionate. To me, that's the greatest strength so, to me, working to end animal cruelty and to represent living beings that suffer, that can't represent themselves is 100% in alignment with my fighting and my martial arts ethic which is exactly why I got into martial arts and why I stayed with it. I began working at some point, I just decided I want to spend my life, my daily life, doing something meaningful and I didn't want to teach martial arts for a living. Not because I have any problem with being paid for it. As I say, I understood there's a great value in that but it was just that I was concerned that my love would become a daily grind and I didn't want that to have happen. I didn't want to work to become, to impinge upon the thing I do because I love it so much. The people who are most successful find a way to make the business work but also, keep the fun in it for them but I was concerned about that so I decided I could always do Jiu Jitsu as an avocation but my vocation would be saving the world in other ways and I eventually founded and continue to run something called adoptapet.com which is North America's largest homeless pet adoption website so animals that are in homeless shelters, virtually in every animal shelter or Humane Society in the United States and Canada post their pets onto adoptapet.com and it's central place that aggregates that information and it's free and you can search for a particular type of dog or cat or rabbit or whatever you're looking for, instead of having to drive to different animal shelters or look at all these different websites, it gives you a chance to find it easy in one place and it really, really helps save hundreds of thousands of animals in that way and my love for animals go way beyond companion animals. As I've mentioned, I don't eat any animal products. That's a personal decision of mine that has worked really well for me over the years. I really do feel that that's been key to my continuing, I got 8





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Brazilian Jiu Jitsu world championships and I continue to compete at 57 years old and I'm training daily with college wrestlers and these guys are tough and they're young and they're hard and I definitely taken my dings, my injuries and I very much credit my diet, a very clean diet for helping me have this longevity in the martial arts and helping keeping my energy level up and my recovery time quick. It's really, really worked for me and so I advocate it, I don't sit around talking about it, what people should eat is kind of their own business but I do feel that, for people who are interested in exploring what are the real outer limits of what's possible with their body, they ought to give meat reduction, animal product reduction a try and then, their body will decide for themselves. Actually when Jake Shields who's been vegetarian his entire life, never eaten meat in his life, he was fighting with Georges St-Pierre for the UFC title, I tossed up a website which is still up called [fuelthefighter.com](http://fuelthefighter.com) just because it would be easier for him to say go check this website out because fighters aren't always that articulate and that's not the subject of the interview, what they're eating and that basically has some ideas and an attitude towards why it makes sense to do it and how you would reduce the stuff in your diet but for me, I do believe it works for me that it's a health thing but it's an ethical thing for me. For me, personally, again, I'm not trying to preach to anybody else, I don't want to harm an animal if I don't have to and I've now shown for decades that I don't have to for my food so to me, that works really well and interestingly, there's another thing that attracted me to the Gracie family because Carlos Gracie, the patriarch of the family, along with his brother, Helio Gracie. He was a nutritionist and he was a vegetarian. The whole Gracie family in Brazil, all those times when they were doing all those vale tudo no rules fights, they're vegetarian. A lot of the family members have adopted more of a standard American diet when they came to the west so they've added maybe lean meats, chicken but that always interested me and definitely worked very well for my kind of moral thing.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's really interesting and we're in an interesting time and we're having a lot more discussion about nutrition and how it relates to our choices and you're probably aware of the documentary, *The Game Changers*.

**David Meyer:**

Not only am I aware of it, I'm friends with James Wilks, of course, who did it and I know the people who funded it. I think it's phenomenal.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

James was on the show, not too long ago so I brought that up, yeah.

**David Meyer:**

Ok, yeah, James is awesome and yeah, he's a good guy and yeah, I am and I think it's very sound and very interesting to watch and we really give people a pause as to what advantages they might be able to



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get as they switch to even just a more plant-based diet. I'm not a believer, even the term vegan or vegetarian, it connotes kind of a lifestyle. It brings up other things in people's minds. I don't know. Hippie? Maybe annoying person, a vegan. I get it and I feel like it's not about being this or diet. It's about a diet. What are you going to eat? You don't have to become vegan or become vegetarian or I know some people who eat very little animal products in their diet but they're not vegan but they're much closer to me than the average person who's eating hamburgers everyday so why don't, there's not a word for them. You hear a word, flexitarian, reducatarian, for just a person that's trying to reduce their animal consumption in their diet usually for health reasons although there's very strong environmental reasons too. It seems kind of crazy but there's so much waste that goes into the production of animal products to get the nutrients that we need. They're basically consuming the plants that we consume anyway and so, now what's happening with the rising concern for the environmental and global warming, climate change, things like that, people are seeing the incredible effect, especially cows, but chickens, other animal products as well have on the environment because the environmental cost for that so I think that's driving interest in this and it's certainly driving governments to be interested in this to maybe promoting more of a plant-based diet. I'm happy to see that that is catching attention and I'm really happy to see that, for a lot of people, they'll be fine to consume a lot less meat but it's not clear to them how to do it and what does it mean I eat? People used to say well, what am I supposed to eat? Salads, carrots and obviously, your normal burrito but just don't have the chicken or the beef, just have beans. Beans are great source of protein. Obviously, salads but pastas and Thai food, Indian food. I mean there's just so many foods to eat that you just don't have that little chicken in it or you just don't have that little meat in it but now, you got these products like Beyond Meat and the Impossible Burger and many products available in sort of the Whole Foods type market that are trying to replicate the taste and the texture of meats to make it easier for people to eat less meat and they're quite good and a lot of my meat-eating friends really like them and they're substituting them in now and it's a much better fit environment. It's not as healthy as just eating plant-based food. It is a processed food but it's healthier than the meat it's trying to replace because there's no growth hormones or concentrated pesticides or antibiotics or any of that stuff or cholesterol in those products so it's a good step for someone who is a heavy meat eater and wants to cut down a bit and just wants to get an impossible Whopper at Burger King, do it. that's a good first step but I think that people, I've never met anyone who didn't reduce animal product consumption who didn't feel that they felt better afterwards and didn't like the feeling of it. I've met a few people who went like all-vegan and then sort of backed off a little bit although I know many more who haven't but I think it's still a personal thing. I definitely think it's...we talk about self-defense as martial artists, the basic form of self-defense is staying alive and heart attacks, heart disease is the number one killer. Cancer, I believe, is number 2 and both of these have a lot to do in your behavior and your diet choices so I think it's very much in accordance with our desire to both protect ourselves and defend ourselves and defend our families and defend our nation to engage in behaviors that are helpful in ourselves and for our planet and to me, being open to, at least, cutting down a little if not entirely eliminating animal products is a big part of that.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Let's talk about the future. We've really had a great view into you and your life and the things that are important to you and how martial arts is threaded through all of them and in fact, I suspect, at some point it says has not been a thread but the motivator, the impetus. As you look into the future, you're talking about the way you're conducting your training now, it sounds like it's still pretty intense so that makes me wonder how long are you planning to do that or is that an indefinite thing?

**David Meyer:**

Yeah, that's an indefinite. I'll keep training as long as I can. I've talked about this. I mentioned John Will. He writes a blog and has really interesting posts and stuff like this and we've discussed this because I took a path, we became partners and early on, we actually developed a curriculum and used in a thousand different taekwondo and karate, non-Brazilian Jiu Jitsu schools that wanted to offer Brazilian Jiu Jitsu before there were Brazilian Jiu Jitsu instructors so this was DVDs and stuff and at that time, I was building adoptapet.com and didn't have any funding or money and I would be making money by travelling and teaching seminars for those people who bought our curriculum but then, we turned and once I was able to make a living in the animal, I took that as my job and John stayed as a professional martial arts instructor and got in many schools and got big associations so we talk about this and for me, the driver was always competition. There's always another competition coming up, there's always another championship and that's what keeps me pushing and interested. John was never really into competition, he did a few competitions but the driver for him is the puzzle, the learning new things in all martial arts in general. He's an extremely accomplished standup fighter and he teaches that in his school too. He teaches a mix of standup fighting and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. Certainly in the Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, he's very much gotten into that so for him, what drives him is the constant puzzle. What's the newest thing and how do you stop it and I appreciate that too but I don't get to immerse in that because I'm not on the mat as a teacher and I'm on the mat to get my training in with fighters and so, I would probably, as I need to taper down the competition and I can say, we all have our injuries and I also don't have the time to train and there's new people coming up. Even if I compete in my age division, I have an advantage because I was one of the first American black belts. I have a lot of knowledge and training experience but I also have a lot of damage, joint damage so somebody who's competing who is also 57 years old but they've only been doing Brazilian Jiu Jitsu for 10 years and they brought a very healthy body to it, they don't have as much damage as I do for having done it now for 30 years so there is a point now that I'm starting to think maybe I should start teaching now just a little bit just to give myself a reason to stay current and I could see that switching to, not the next competition being the thing that's making me want to get into the mat but learning the next move or solving the next move. I am involved in that. I'm current. I train in a lot of different places so I always like to say you may be able to beat me but not with something I've never seen and that's not always true but it usually is true because I train, I specifically buzz around in a lot of different schools. I'm pretty current on the grappling but it doesn't mean that I'm good at it or I can teach it. I could defend against the latest thing but so, I think I can see that in my



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future. I do enjoy the training, I enjoy the camaraderie. I enjoy getting with the younger guys on the mat. That's always fun and I will continue to compete so long as it's fun. Recently, I've been backing off a little bit because my work has been so busy. I don't have the time to train and I have a high expectation for myself so when I don't win, it's hard for me to accept that and of course, I give all the greatest respect to all the people who I compete with whether I beat them or not, I need them and they need me and there's a great camaraderie at my level in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu but winning is fun and it's not everything especially when I'm competing to be the number 1 in the world at the 55 year old age division, that's great but I'm not number 1 of the world and so, I like the concept of switching a lot more back into some teaching for some fun of it. It's certainly my friends who I drop in on my classes are always happy to have me teach and I say hey, I want to teach a technique and they will step aside and they let me do that any day of the week so that's probably more of that in my future.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And you've mentioned a couple of the things you've put up online and if you can just run through all those now. Websites, social media, anything that people want to connect on.

**David Meyer:**

I'm not terribly accessible online, like I said, because I'm not teaching. I'm not trying to promote anything myself. I did adoptapet.com. Obviously, that's where I work for and if anyone in the US or Canada is looking for a pet, I would hope that you would give us a look, it's free. Check out the animals in your local shelter before you go purchasing an animal a different way. You might be able to find exactly the pet you're looking for and I certainly promote adoptapet.com. That website I tossed up that I mentioned, fuelforthefighter.com, that is fuelforthefighter.com, that's got some interesting information on it. I haven't kept it up to date but it's good for a young man or anybody who's a fighter that's interested in that. I also did a video on the food subject, a short video that lives on the website, thesmarterdiet.com, that's just something I threw up there that your listeners might find interesting and find to listen to. I strongly recommend, as I did, that you check out, certainly, any of the Machado resources or if ever, in your neck of the woods, you're interested in taking a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu seminar, definitely check them out and John Will is an amazing, amazing instructor in Australia. You'll find stuff of his written online. He's a great life coach and martial arts instructor and that's where I would point people to.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Awesome, awesome. Yeah, we'll get that linked up for all our listeners listening and one final thing as we head out, we've heard some wonderful stories from you today and I feel like I've got a pretty good idea of who you are so I appreciate that but what would you leave everyone now with? As you walk off the mat, walk off the stage, what are your final words?

**David Meyer:**



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First of all, of course, thank you for this opportunity, and thank you to whoever is listening to this wherever it is you're listening to this, I'm honored and appreciative that you've decided to spend a good few of your remaining minutes left in your life with me and listening to my voice. I think that's what I would say. I feel like life is short and it's always a little shorter than we think and I think that, especially in these times of conflict in the United States where we're so politically divided, I wish if people can all remember that you know what? It's all going to end and you're not going to have another chance to kiss your loved ones or do anything good in the world, this is your moment. This is the day, this is your chance and if everyone would just maybe a little more selfless and just say what can I do to help the world right now and if that's helping an animal, fine; if it's volunteering at your church, whatever it is that you believe is the thing that the world needs to be a better place, to leave the world a better place than we found it, I wish that people will do that. I hope that you'll do that and I see that as part of the martial arts. It's about honor. It's about defending what we believe in and I would just ask everyone to do that and like I said, if it's maybe trying to eat a little less meat, that's fine. That would be helpful for a lot of reasons and certainly, to some little animal somewhere who maybe doesn't get killed but really just anything. Whatever it is, I feel like we get caught up in our daily lives and one day, maybe something happens that wakes us up. Maybe a diagnosis or something, don't wait for that day to wake up. Wake up today. I'll give you one thing that I share with people sometimes. If you just close your eyes and imagine that you're leaving wherever you're at now, you're driving off to your next thing or hopping on to a train, whatever you need to do to get to your next activity right now and something happens, you're hit head-on collision if you're in a car, train hit the rails and whatever and BAM! Suddenly, everything has changed. Suddenly, you're blacked out. Suddenly, you're seeing emergency lights. Suddenly, you're in the hospital. You got tubes in your arm and you're going to die and that's it and that could happen and if you can just really feel your feeling, what would you think? What would you wish you had done differently? What would you wish you had done to someone today, this morning? Who would you want to repair the relationship with? What would you want to do differently in the world? If you can really imagine what that would feel like and then, just open your eyes up again and say ok, well, that didn't happen. That shouldn't have to happen for you to have a life-changing experience, is my point. Because if that did happen to you today and then you survived it, you would make some changes in your life. Everyone would. They would reprioritize some things. I'm saying so why can't we just do that now? Why can't we do that without the life-threatening situation without the head-on collision? If it's possible to make those changes in your life if you do that, if you have that bad experience then just make them now without the bad experience and you'll live a happier life and you'll be happier when the end does come and so, that's my invitation to everybody.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's a wonderful place for us to end. Thank you so much. This was phenomenal.

**David Meyer:**



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Thank you so much, I look forward to meeting you in person some time and thanks to everybody who's listening, again.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh, it's just us now. It's just out now. We cut it there.

**David Meyer:**

Thank you! I appreciate that. Thanks for the opportunity. It's fun.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Good, good. It was fun and I'm curious. Do you know a man name Julio Fernandez?

**David Meyer:**

No.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

He's kind of our big Brazilian Jiu Jitsu guy in Northern New England. He's under Carlson Jr., he's like a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree or something.

**David Meyer:**

Well, I knew Carlson.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

He's similar in age that's why I bring it up and he competes not as actively as you is my understanding but periodically, every few years, he'll get the edge and he'll go back out there so I was curious if you bumped into him.

**David Meyer:**

Cool, I'll keep an eye out for him. I've got a world championship coming up defending a title for me and my age group with no gi Brazilian Jiu Jitsu in a couple weeks and that will be out here in California. So, yeah, thank you for the opportunity. By the way, I mentioned John Will, I know you haven't heard of him but it's really great.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I haven't. I would be interested to talk to him. Now, one of the things that we do a little differently on this show because this is a traditional show, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu has a one foot in tradition and one foot in MMA, at least today, so we have to be really careful as much as I respect and love Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. We're careful about who we bring on the show because there are dozens of MMA and UFC-focused



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podcast. Honestly, we've had world champion fighters approach and say we'd love to come on the show and we can't find a traditional hook.

**David Meyer:**

So, I think you would really like John but that's totally up to you. You just take a look into him, look him up online but John is exactly what you're talking about. It's very interesting. John came from...I'm trying to think, he did so many things. He had his taekwondo blackbelt, Kyokushin karate, he then went and I don't know if you've heard of Don Draper, he followed in Don Draper's footsteps training because he's in Australia and it was easy for him to get to Indonesia and Japan and Thailand so he's trained Muay Thai and he's trained as a black belt in pencak silat, won a world championship and he's very much into, he understands traditional martial arts, he embraced and understands Jiu Jitsu. He created Australia's first martial arts magazine and it was in the late '80s and he's one of the first non-Brazilians at all to study.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

This sounds like a person I want to talk to.

**David Meyer:**

Super interesting guy! Not at all, he's got students in the UFC and things like that but he's not into that. He's very traditional in the way he runs classes. He's very formal. He's an extraordinary guy. He really does, as a person who integrates very well the traditional world that we all came from and sort of what's happening now and he has some serious things to say about what's happening now if you want to talk to him about it because he's not a fan of UFC and he's certainly not a fan of YouTube instruction.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sounds like we'll get along very well.

**David Meyer:**

He's a really extraordinary guy. You should check him out online. I'm sure you'll find him and if you decide you want to talk to him I can make the intro, he's great.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Cool, I just sent Lessie a message to remind her for us to check him out and just make sure he seems to be a good fit.

**David Meyer:**

He's one of the most interesting people in the world you can talk to. I can honestly say that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Coming from you, that's high praise because...

**David Meyer:**

He's way more interesting than anybody else.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's next level!

**David Meyer:**

Alright, I have to run but if you're ever out in San Francisco area, let me know. Take you out to lunch.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Absolutely, that's great. Thank you so much for your time.

**David Meyer:**

Okay, take care.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Bye-bye. I think one of the things I really appreciated about Professor Meyer was his diversity in the way that he looks at life, in martial arts, in training. It's clear that this guy has a lot of different stuff going on. Different stuff that he's interested in and passionate about and that's what came through to me, first and foremost. Of course, having the opportunity to train with legends as he has is inevitably going to lead to stories but it also, at least in this case, leads to passion. To be around people who are passionate about the martial arts, creates other people who are passionate about martial arts so sir, thank you for joining us and I appreciate you sharing that passion with everyone today. If you want the show notes, you know where to go, [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). You'll find links and photos and a lot more. Sign up for the newsletter while you're there. Pop over to [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com), make a purchase, support the show and if making a purchase isn't the best way for you to support the show, there are other ways. You can share this or another episode. You can leave us a review on Google or Facebook or in any podcast app or feed or you can follow us on social media. We're @whistlekick everywhere you can think of and my personal email address, [jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:jeremy@whistlekick.com). Thank you for your time today, thank you for your support. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!