



Episode 460 – Mr. Philip Hartshorn | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everybody! Welcome, this is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 460. Today, my guest is Mr. Philip Hartshorn. Who am I? I'm Jeremy. Jeremy Lesniak, host for whistlekick martial arts radio. Founder at whistlekick and you can see everything we've got going on, all the things I'm spending my time on beyond this show and the rest of the team spending their time on at whistlekick.com. There you'll find links to all the things that we've got going and you'll see a store. Pop into the store, make a purchase, support the show, support our work at whistlekick and use the code `PODCAST15` so we know that you made that purchase because you're listening to the show. We do the show twice a week. Mondays and Thursdays, Mondays are guest interviews. Thursday's a topic driven show and you can find every single episode we've ever done all for free at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com in addition to your podcast feeds or YouTube or anywhere else you might think of. You can sign up for the newsletter on either website and that will keep you informed on all things we got going. Why do we do what we do? We do it all for you, for the traditional martial artist. We do it all to connect with you, to inspire you, to educate you, to support you and your martial arts lifestyle. Let's talk about today's guest. Mister Hartshorn has a lot going on and I don't think I can explain it any better. There's a lot to this man and we talk about much of it. I can't even say that we talk about all of it because there's too much and that's not a bad thing. He openly shares stories and anecdotes, places he's been and going and it was just a wonderful conversation and I really enjoyed it and I'm sure you will too. Mister Hartshorn, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.



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Philip Hartshorn:

Hello, it's a pleasure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey, thanks for doing this. It's going to be fun.

Philip Hartshorn:

I'm excited. It's an honor to be here.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's always an honor to talk to somebody with a really great mic, which I'm sure the listeners are like, uh, really? and it is! It is! I can tell the moment I start the conversation with someone because I think most of the listeners know, in case people don't know, we have a few minutes of conversation, we talk about what's going to happen and how this goes and once in a great while, we just roll into the show but most of the time, we chat and make sure things are going right and the moment I heard you say can you hear me? I was like AH! Great audio quality! This one's going to be great!

Philip Hartshorn:

Perfect, yeah! It does make a difference. It really does.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It does. It does and if you go listen to any random podcast, most of them don't have good audio quality and it's unfortunate.

Philip Hartshorn:

No, it's terrible.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And it sucks. So, this is where I shout out Julius for doing the great work he does on the back end and say Julius kills it with the audio and he made me get a better mic early on. He was like hey, we need to fix some of these things. I'm like ok, I'm sorry.

Philip Hartshorn:

Perfect, that sounds great.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Thank you and you sound great too. This is probably the fluffiest opening I've ever done. We talked about a bunch of things just now and I know we're getting into a lot of them and what I'm looking forward to in this conversation is, I'm expecting we're going to spider off into a bunch of different things but let's get that foundation down. Let's talk about the martial arts core that we're going to relate everything back to as we move forward so how did you get started as a martial artist?

Philip Hartshorn:

I remember as a child watching Star Wars and The Princess Bride and seeing these swordfights. These magnificent swordfights, these epic duels and just saying I really want to swordfight. I love the sword. It's such a fascinating thing. It's just an unspoken language between two people exchanging blows. It's a different language, perhaps more genuine language and so I started fencing and I was probably 9 years old when I did this and I was very kind of frail child and because of my age bracket, I was often times going up against people who are a lot bigger than me. Either just their size and their age and if you've never fenced, you're getting smacked with a metal, a chunk of metal essentially so it's rather painful and quite terrifying when you're a 9 year old. I mean, I wanted to learn the sword and I remember, it taught me the first sort of lesson of the martial ways, if you will. I kept retreating because I kept getting hit with this metal. It's leaving welts in my body by these people.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It seems like a reasonable response.

Philip Hartshorn:

Yeah, people who were 5 years older than me, 8 years older than me. I remember one guy was 18 and I was 9 years old so twice my age. It's a fascinating story. This strange almost twilight zone story where his name was Phil as well and he was 18, he was twice my age and it was almost like I was battling myself and he was attacking me and I was going back and I kept retreating and going out of bounds and you lose. You lose a point and my coach kept telling me, my father, you have to attack, you have to move forward, you have to face your enemy head on and I kind of took this moment and yeah, I'm just going to do this. It's going to hurt but this is it. This is the journey. This is the way. This is life. I have to move forward. You have to take hits, you have to start, face your opponent head on and it was a great lesson so it sort of taught me that so that was my start in martial arts. I did that for a few years. Probably the most experience that I have in competing and actual fighting people for years in fencing. Going to competitions and just training every day and then, later in life I got to, probably in my teenage years, I really loved the aesthetics of tricking which I'm sure you know this is the sort of aesthetic blend for our viewers' martial arts flips, kicks, twists and it's very flashy. It's very beautiful and I wanted to get into that just for the movement. I love movement and so I started training in that. you got some basic kicks down and some flips and after that, I said, I really have the flashy stuff down but I'd like to get something a little bit more gritty, a little bit more real. I kind of wanted to go the opposite way since I



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had now this sword fighting and flashy kicks and flips and so I said, let's find something and I got an opportunity to attend a Wing Chun class. I said ok, this is Bruce Lee stuff. What if somebody stabs me in an alleyway? How do you come out of it alive? It's not a competition like I had competed in. Ok, we stand equidistant from each other and let's salute with our swords. Now, this is the real thing. It was a lot of fun and Wing Chun is very different. It's very mean. It's very rude and gritty so, as I'm sure you know from Bruce Lee, so it was, or if you've seen the Ip Man movies. It was a fantastic experience in that it taught me a little bit more reality of the martial arts where I had grown up sort of this whimsical interest in Star Wars, The Princess Bride, these sword fights, these sort of honorable exchanges and then, as you get older, we tend to get a little bit more, I wouldn't say jaded but a little bit more, you sort of realize the harsh realities of the world.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cynical, is that a fair word?

Philip Hartshorn:

Yeah, not to be negative but you get a little bit cynical even if it's just realistically so, so it was a great opportunity to learn that end of it and still, to find a code and I think it's even more important to sort of have a code in that cynicism. It's not just life is terrible, be ready to kill anybody because everybody's terrible. No, no, no, no. Let's find a way to live in this chaos and let's find some peace within it so it was great. It was sort of the opposite and after that, I was just recently, my journey has continued after Wing Chun and a lot of people think it's all I practice because I think a lot of people are very dogmatic about their martial arts. I think it's very American thing after going to China but I've trained in many other things. I was recently in China, living as a warrior monk in a Shaolin temple and training at numerous other martial arts which was an amazing experience.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Can we dig into that? I mean that's not something that we've talked about too much.

Philip Hartshorn:

Absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You're almost glossing like well, you know, I lived in a shaolin temple and I was a warrior monk for a minute and then, I went ahead and like no! How did that happen? How did you get that opportunity and why and what did you learn and everything?

Philip Hartshorn:



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Oh, it was fantastic and life-changing, of course. Early in the year, I had gone to climb Mount Everest in Nepal with my dear friend, Spencer, who is fantastic. If you've seen any of my content, for those of you watching, you know who he is. He's in a lot of my videos. Amazing martial artist, at least 15 years' experience and he had mentioned to me hey, he teaches Chinese. So, he also, when he goes to train at the Chinese temple, he has connections in china, he is the translator. So, he was kind of like hey, you should come with me. It would be fantastic. You're my friend so they'd welcome you in and I think it will be a lot of fun and because of my content, he said ok, you could film and everybody would be happy. You can help promote it. You could train, it would be a lot of fun so I joined spencer and I went over for about a month and yeah, we lived as warrior monks in the shaolin temple in Yunnan and it was one of the hardest things I've ever done, much like the Everest trip but it was probably harder, as strange as that sounds, because it was a true monastic living and eating. For example, you can't speak because it's Buddhist monks. You can't speak when you eat. You have to really appreciate every grain of rice. You can't throw anything out if you're served any amount of food. You must consume it. It's incredibly offensive to throw it away. It doesn't matter what you get. It could be spicy, it could taste like poison but you must eat it so that was just a very fantastic experience. The meditation was a very big one for me, probably the thing I was most excited to train over there as well but besides that, we trained, of course, 9 hours a day. Extreme martial arts training which, I thought I was Mr. Fitness over here. Oh, I train a lot. No, not 9 hours a day, though.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's 9 hours of intense stuff like the level that most of us would expect in an hour class? You come away, you're sweaty, you're tired.

Philip Hartshorn:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You do that 9 hours a day?

Philip Hartshorn:

Yeah, you do that for 3 hours first in the morning after breakfast and then you get lunch, you do it again another 3 hours and you go to eat. You have to eat with proper posture or this guy comes around with a wooden sword and smacks you in the back. You can't even cross your legs. You have to sit properly on this wooden bench.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You get hit if you're eating wrong is what I just heard.

Philip Hartshorn:



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Yes and it's really, the term warrior monk, I think, a lot of people even today say, oh, ok, even warrior monk, what does that even mean anymore, there's no wars and for me, the term warrior really is about discipline, right? If you say I'm going to live the hard life of a warrior. What does that mean? It's discipline. It's self-control. It's resilience and the fact that you eat with perfect posture and I remember this is a great takeaway. Somebody was kind of having bad posture when they're eating and they had to be talked to many times and smacked with a wooden sword and after the fact, the Shifu of the Shaolin temple, Yan Jinn Shifu, have a talk with everybody and he was kind of like, and of course Spencer was translating, he pretty much said, some of you have been a little bit confused that we're so stickler, we're such sticklers to eating properly and then, this point was so great; he says how do you expect to learn or why should you be able to learn one of the most ancient and most difficult, intricate types of movement that the body's ever achieved when you can't even eat right? It was like wow, that's a really good point but it takes incredible discipline. We're just so used to just slacking off and chatting while we eat and crossing our legs and having terrible posture, it says a lot, I think, that we can't even eat correctly yet we want to learn this cherished treasure of movement which is also incredibly difficult. How do you expect to hold these stances from 3,000 years ago that are athletic achievements just to achieve them if you can't sit on a bench and eat right so I thought it was a good point.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How long were you over there?

Philip Hartshorn:

About a month I was there and it was just...it was very intense. Like I said, the training, I mean, you go picture high intensity interval training but there's no intervals, there's no breaks. It's just high intensity training forever. That's how I'd describe it and you just, it'd be ridiculous. In there was different type of training for each day of the week in the morning and then later in the day, you would train different things so learned an incredible amount of different martial arts which is why I loved it and for example in the morning, you would have power training which is one of the most ridiculous workouts I've ever had in my life and this is coming from someone who's very into calisthenics, fitness and all the other variations of it, certified personal trainer et cetera and it just breaks you to the core. It's just an absurd amount of, it's almost militaristic in the way they train you because they sort of find this breaking point but then force you to go well beyond it so it'd be something akin to...oh, do 40 burpees and you're like what? Oh God! So, you do the 40 burpees and then it's like 30 more. You're like what? I'm dead! I can't do 30 more and then it's like 50 more and you're like I'm going to die now and you just do it. you find a way through because traditionally you would say there's no reason for this. This is going to bring injuries, this is not going to grow my muscles, whatever vain reason I'm training but it's a different purpose. That's what I mean by the definition of a warrior. I think it's different than just training for fun. I have that absolute discipline and resilience to keep going so it was a great lesson.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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A lot of people say it takes 3 weeks to cultivate a habit. I've read some conflicting stuff but it seems like a good jumping off point for this question. You were there for a month so what changed in you and your training and the way you approach, I guess, anything? What was the outcome for you being there?

Philip Hartshorn:

So much, so much. It's cliché to say it's changed my life but it was more the appreciation of the little things and hey, I'm not some unappreciative slob but something that you wouldn't expect, you don't really sit. It's not really possible to sit at the temple because there's no chairs and there's some stone that you could sit on but they say, no, no, no, it's bad for your chi. It's called chi. You can't touch the stone so they don't want you to sit and then you sleep on plywood. This is not a bed. It's not this cushy bed where trained or instructed to think it's the only way to sleep, right? so, there's no comfort in the way we're used to anyway and then, coming back, one of the greatest things that sort of hit me was I said to myself, you know what? I am going to go sit on that chair, it's not even a particularly comfortable chair, I'm just going to go sit in that and take 5 minutes to myself and just breathe. Not going to go on my phone, I'm not going to do anything. I'm just going to sit there and it was beautiful. It was such an amazing thing that I didn't get to do at the temple. It's things like that which we absolutely take for granted until you experience sort of this militaristic warrior's life, if you will. You don't really think about that, ever. There's no reason to. I can sit on a chair for 5 hours straight if I wanted to, right, and do whatever I wanted and it's such a different mindset. Besides that, of course, the training. like I said, thinking that an hour workout was extreme before, that definition has changed for me after doing 9 hours of training. It's just sort of adaptation is one of our greatest strength as humans and the fact that I did that on Day One. I came off a plane and we had this power training I was describing to you which is just this absurd removal of any stamina that you have left and then some and for days, I was sore and I just said oh man, how in the world am I going to do this? This was my first. I was dehydrated coming off the plane. It was 90-something degrees in china. I said this was crazy and then, of course, weeks go by. Habits become sort of normalized and it was the normal thing to do to train 3 hours in the morning. It's like alright, let's go eat and lets do this again. Let's train power stretching in the morning and then we have Wing Chun sanda class later. We'll have Tai Chi, Meihuaquan, the list goes on of all the martial arts. That's what we do. We train in the martial arts so it was just such a mindset shift of the appreciation and what it means to train in the martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I can imagine myself being there and I can imagine a similar experience that I suspect most people who have been training for a while can relate to this. My original blackbelt test was something with a similar philosophy. It certainly wasn't a month long and it wasn't 9 hours but this idea of you go and you think you've hit your breaking point but you haven't and they show you that.

Philip Hartshorn:



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Right, it's like now, you're going to spar 4 people and you're finished. Yeah, I've seen some blackbelt tests. It's fantastic.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, there was a point where I was hurled and that's the only verb that really works if you were there. I was hurled. When you think about your training now, you talked about sitting in a chair, you talked about how you can embrace 5 minutes and feel really different about it versus 5 hours in a chair. I think a lot of people listening are used to 5 hours in a chair. Maybe not all in a row but we know what it's like to sit and be maybe absent as we're doing something like that. What's your training look like now? You're training on your own or whatever it is that you are...are you training in a similar way from before you left for China or have you completely changed what you're doing? What I'm trying to get to is...what does life look like now? We talked about some of the psychological changes but how has that manifested in the variety of things that you do?

Philip Hartshorn:

It's sort of just, it's added to the experience that I have. A similar thing happened with Everest because, think about when you're doing a leg workout and let's say, a set of walking lunges like 30 seconds, a minute. If you're feeling daring, a minute and a half. Oh, very nice. I mean, climbing Everest, I remember one of the jokes I made early on is, and this was a 2 week straight track on the Everest tracking route; so, we're pretty much doing walking lunges for 12 hours straight. That's what this is. No breaks and that's it and uphill and you're losing oxygen rapidly as you go higher so it was a similar thing with that but I came back and now, I'm just like what is my leg work out? This is pathetic. It was a similar thing to that where now, I call the Everest workout. I'll just get on the treadmill and crank up the elevation to absurd levels and then, I'll push the speed to where you almost have to run but you can't. That's the rule. You just have to do this like death march for as long as you can at almost running speed but you have to march and uphill so in a similar way from that, coming back from China, I just say what is my martial arts training, man? What am I doing? What is this? I'll do a couple forms, I'll go through the Wing Chun, I'll go through this, I'll go through that, I'll do some kicks. It feels quite inadequate after the experience so I wouldn't say now I'm mimicking exactly what we did 9 hours because I think, another thing is we don't have the freedom. Most people watching this would agree, you don't have 9 hours a day to train unless you give up everything and go away to live as a monk. You renounce everything. That being said, that was one of the beautiful things about it was I didn't have to think about anything. Just train, meditate, exist. It was the simple life. It has a lot of allure. That was the training. It just became a lot more open to getting past that limit, just sort of breaking through that limit, just sort of breaking through that limit and not worrying so much about the, like I said, I'm a certified trainer, so much about the science that says no, no, no. For hypertrophy, you must only do this many sets and that's about it. The body can adapt just about anything. After the Everest and china experiences, I think that even more than I already did so I can say it's more of a philosophy shift than I'm now mimicking exactly what the shifus showed me in china but I think we can all learn from that.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely. Let's talk about Everest first and we'll work backwards. Did you make it?

Philip Hartshorn:

We did not make it but that was one of the best parts of the journey. So, let me make this clear too. We're going to Everest based on this camp and it's the Everest trekking group. This was sort of the great changing moment as a human being. It was really one of those moments where you can say you're a certain way like you can say you're brave but you don't know you're brave until you have that moment where it's all on the line and something terrifying happens that you run away or are you brave, you can't really know. In a similar way, we had this journey and I was with Spencer, like I said, my friend who I went to China with and we were going up the trail and rapidly losing oxygen. It's certain days that you trek 9 miles and you gain 2,000 feet of elevation in that 9 miles. It was just absolutely rigorous and similar to the China trip, it's all mental. It's really, I expected some, again, I thought I was Mr. Fitness; oh, it's going to be just a really good workout. Absolutely not the case at all. It's just this, it wrecks you mentally. It drives you insane especially someone who's into the martial arts and competitive. You walk one step per second just slogging along and it feels like you're sprinting. Your heart rate is beating through your chest and you feel just so weak and so pathetic and that's when it takes that digging down and looking for your true self to keep going and at night, you'd wake up not being able to breathe, just gasping for air and you think you're going to die because you can barely sleep from the lack of oxygen and it's those things that I didn't expect. I thought it was just going to be oh, this is just a tough workout for a few days so that was very difficult and then, when we got to a certain point on the journey, we got to, it was pretty much very close to Everest basecamp. We're right there. I think it was about. It was close to a mile or two away from it and we reached 17,000 feet elevation and for those of you who don't have too much experience; in China, the Shaolin temple was about 6,000 feet and you really feel 6,000 feet. Your stamina is very much degraded. You jog for 5 minutes does not feel like jogging for 5 minutes. You feel very winded so it takes, you have to acclimatize to these conditions. It takes some time so we were climbing and we got to, like I said, probably a couple miles away and in the middle of the night, Spencer had really serious altitude sickness, cerebral edema which is the swelling of the brain. If not taken care of, you can die from this and this is how many people do die climbing Everest, Kilimanjaro, these other places, is by not taking care of themselves and you have to really get out of there so our other friend, Mike, who was sort of the climbing expert on the trip said that we have to leave now. We have to get Spencer down 5 minutes ago. He didn't sleep one second all night. He has cerebral edema. We have to go now. I had about 5 minutes to get ready to leave and Mike said to me, oh, Phil, you can go on. You can go to Everest basecamp. You'll be like a day ahead of us, behind us, you have to get there, you walk so slow it's close but yeah, you can do that. You can finish the journey and then, this reaction occurred within me of this sort of kneejerk reaction of oh, ok. I'm someone who finishes what I started. It is now my charge to finish this journey. I have to do it for my friends and I kind of just started ok, I got 5 minutes to decide. Let's get ready to do this. My slogan on Stream, on Twitch is towards die



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first so ok, cowards die first. We're going. We're going alone. I have no idea what I'm doing. I never climbed anything. I'm going to go to Everest basecamp by myself and figure this out but then, again, the feeling of ambition. Ok, this will make a great video for content, I need a good title. I did this alone, no training, I'm going to finish this all by myself and sort of that almost dark side, if you will, again to reference Star Wars, all those things that kind of tempt you. Glory, ambition, the dark side of what it means to be a goal-oriented person. You kind of have to have that within you somewhere deep and kind of suppress it and then, I had this moment of yes, cowards die first! I'm going to do this. Wait a second, why did I come on this trip? Because I was having a hard time with something and Spencer said to me, hey, man, why don't you join me; with 5 days' notice, by the way, why don't you join me because I think it will make you feel better, man? Come climb this with me. You're going to feel fantastic so I said man, Spencer wanted me to feel better on this trip. My friend is in agony right now. He can't even think straight. His brain is swelling and I'm about to leave him and go. What was I even thinking for that 30 seconds of the dark side sort of entering my brain sort of like I was even conflicted as we turned back and then, a few minutes later, a couple hours later, we got down, a couple thousand feet. Spencer was feeling better and it donned on me like of course, I'm always going to make this choice because that's who I am. It's such a, it's one of those moments where you don't know who you are until the moment of truth and then, I think it's so easy. Society has just beaten that into us that you have to finish everything. You have to do this sort of personal glory, this ambition especially in the entrepreneurial side that I think you and I are both involved in. It's just so ingrained into that culture. I think it's quite toxic at times so it was such a beautiful moment when he turned and said like, and this is on video, it's such a great moment to capture and he said I can't believe you guys, you relinquished the trip, the end of this journey for me and that means so much to me. You're a true friend. Of course, I was always going to do this. There was no universe where Philip goes there and leaves friends alone in agony and everything. It was such a nice moment and thinking back, like I said, of course I did that but you just don't know. So, that's what I mean. Are you brave? Are you honorable? You don't know until your opponent is facing you down in that duel and in this case, it was Mount Everest staring me down, taunting me so not at all what I expected from that trip but what an experience, what a treasure to come out of it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's pretty powerful. I don't think I know anyone who's undertaken anything like that with 5 days' notice. Did people say you were crazy? Did you tell anyone?

Philip Hartshorn:

Just my family and a couple of friends.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Was anyone afraid you were going to die?

Philip Hartshorn:



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Yes, many people were afraid. I remember I didn't even look into it. I didn't even know anything about Nepal, anything about the trekking route and I think I remember just seeing one thing in an email that he tried to quickly prep and send to me and it was like a couple years ago, 40 people died in one day because there was bad weather on this trek and I was like alright, this is pretty serious but like I said, man, cowards die first which it seems kind of shallow, that saying, but I don't literally mean if you're a coward, it's more if you don't go for it, if you don't just be brave and jump into it, you kind of die inside or you kind of lose that opportunity, if not your shame and all that side of it so that was my viewpoint on it is I need to do this. I need to do this for people who can't do this because I have an open schedule. Most people could never do that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

When you say cowards die first, I have not, I'm not thinking of someone who's necessarily fearful and calculated. I'm thinking of the proverbial squirrel in the road that can't decide which direction to go and the only wrong decision is no decision and it's so controlled by fear and it's so indecisive that it gets flattened.

Philip Hartshorn:

Precisely. It's a great saying that me and my friend came up with while playing a game on Twitch, oddly enough. Long story short, it's one of the hardest video games ever created. Pretty much for the purpose of driving you insane with frustration, it's called Dark Souls and you just die over and over and over again and within the game, this goes into another topic we can get into but I am very into the classics. The Iliad, Achilles is one of my favorite characters and the saying is from Achilles because in The Iliad, he despises archers. When I read this, I was like what? Why does he hate archers so much? We're used to seeing Robin Hood, Legolas from Lord of the Rings, all these cool, Link from the Legend of Zelda, all these cool sort of fashionably skillful archers. Why does he hate them so much? I think there's a scene where he's actually crying in a rage that he hates Archers so much. Cowards and then he said, they're literally standing on top of a wall safely and there's men in the battlefield dueling each other honorably and they're just like sniping and picking off people from a safe distance. Let's not fight that legendary hero. Let's just kill them from safety. Let's not actually test his martial arts and it donned on me, man, that is truly cowardly! That is disgusting! Long story short, in this video game which is already incredibly difficult, there are some archers amongst other enemies and we created this rule. It's like no, the ultimate cowards. Cowards die first. You have to go and kill the archers first no matter what even if you have to run through a hundred swordsmen and spearmen. You have to fight them even if you die. You have to try and kill them. It became sort of the slogan.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I like it.

Philip Hartshorn:



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Yeah, and there's a different meaning behind it. It's a deep meaning if you think about it. It's like hey, you kind of die inside if you don't go for it and you really, we want to sort of not glorify that aspect of it. It's not cool to snipe people off and not even enter the battlefield from a safe distance so yeah, it's a fun thing but it actually has kind of a cool meaning behind it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I like it. I like it a lot. Now, you've talked about Twitch and streaming and games and I know that that's a part of what you do. We were talking about that before we went live so how do you get from martial arts and Everest and all of these other things you've talked about. What's going on with you playing games online and spoiler alert: making some money doing it?

Philip Hartshorn:

Yeah, well, I think it all stems from my love of stories. It's really all that drives me. It's kind of my heart beat and I mentioned my love for Star Wars, my love for the classics. It's been this fascination with the heroic cycle my entire life. The hero's journey, if you will, and if you're not familiar with the classics, The Iliad, The Odyssey, The Argonautica, the list goes on. Star Wars is a great example because George Lucas also's obsessed with the heroic cycle and the original trilogy and the prequels, not the new stuff, they've long since abandoned the heroic cycle to sell easier, it's the hero's journey. It's a very simple journey of someone who has no skills, being forced out of their home, having to leave their home and meeting these people along the way and gaining these skills as they go amongst other things and this beautiful arc that occurs of growth and it's universal. It's in any good story is this sort of instinctual reaction that probably contains the heroic cycle either invisibly or quite obviously so yeah, I've had this fascination with it my entire life and stuff like going to Everest, stuff like I also draw, I also make action films; it all stems from that fascination but to me, it's all really the same thing if it makes sense, martial arts, drawing. To use the example of painting, I think that it's all just a paintbrush. I'm just kind of caught in this daydream of trying to both tell stories and immerse myself in great stories because I really think it is the heartbeat of humanity. When you see yourself in a story, like why does everybody love Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader? Because we see ourselves, we relate to that on an instinctual level and what it means to grow up and face down evil and, like I said in Everest, face down the dark side and then, you come to that point where you have to make that decision. Do I do this or in one angle, the money, like I could have done a great video and made a lot of money off it or is friendship more true my character so yeah, I've had this fascination with it and, as far as painting, I think that, like in martial arts, your body is the paint brush and you're able to just create this beautiful movement and tell this story. Like I said earlier, I think, perhaps a more genuine story than language, than words can tell with your body. Body language is so real. There's no faking it. There's no faking martial arts training like you can't really fake certain things. This is why I love sort of that side of personal training and fitness is you can't really fake a good physique. You can cheat with drugs, of course, which is disgusting and cowardice first but you can't really fake martial arts training like when you see someone do a form. I competed in one, the Wing Chun division in the Shaolin Federation International Competition in China, that's another fun story, but to see



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all these other competitors, you can't fake 20 years of training in something. To see my friend Spencer, kind of go out there and do his thing, it's such a beautiful experience. It's so real. It's not some rehearsed thing that he's prepared to look good. It's just 20 years of real training. You can see it. you can see the sweat. You can see all those days he was just at his breaking point but kept going and to me, that is the personification of the hero's journey, of everything that I love and whether it's me drawing a picture to express that, whether it's me making an action film, going to Everest and sort of partaking in my own journey, that's really my heart beat. That's what keeps me going so yeah, the gaming is the same thing. I love a good story. I love sort of the art side of video games, the music. I also play the piano. I do gaming music streams on Twitch, videos on YouTube and to me, that's really all that drives me. I have often been described as a daydreamer who once in a while snaps out of it and does something like Everest and goes back to my mulling over stories and creating them but it's really all I love to do and I have this sort of dream that it's difficult to define. I don't even really know what it is. It's just this dream that I chase. I chase this feeling of telling stories and sharing the humanity of what we all go through as humans, as people on our own personal journeys. Whether it goes into a serious look, a philosophical look with one of my films or something like even action comedy, I just try to share these emotions with everybody and that's really all that matters to me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You brought up earlier some of the push that the, we'll say, the online entrepreneurial culture advocates. Sleep when your dead and all this and if you're familiar with all that, listeners are familiar with that, you're probably also familiar with this recent shift towards valuing failure and identifying these things that don't work out. You're talking about some very exciting opportunities. Things that are popping up and I get a sense that you say yes to a lot of things, probably darn near everything and you just see where it takes you. Am I right there?

Philip Hartshorn:

Yes, I mean, if it's a great opportunity, yeah. I mean, I wouldn't say yes to like you want to go do drugs in the back alley? But yes. If it's a good...

Jeremy Lesniak:

And there's probably people listening who would say I would rather go do drugs in the back alley than Everest on 5 days' notice.

Philip Hartshorn:

Yeah, that would be nicer, honestly, but not my cup of tea.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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We don't need to go there. I mean, we could but I want to talk about are your failures because everything we've talked about so far today has been, if not successful, we've talked about from a very positive side. I mean, you very easily could have talked about this Everest trip from a much more negative perspective so I'm looking for two things here. One, I'm looking to get past the positive side which I'm sure based on who you are and what you've accomplished, that's a big part of who you are so I want to drill through that a little bit and I want to talk about some of the things that, not only didn't go well but you're unhappy about them. You, maybe regret is too strong of a word, but stuff that you're not going to put at the top of your resumé sort of the stuff.

Philip Hartshorn:

Absolutely. It's fascinating you say that because yeah, those experiences of failure are some of my most valued times, if you will. Like Everest, that video that I made, I can't imagine the joy of watching that in 20 years, 30 years, 40 years. To have that encased in time is such a fantastic thing and the whole thing is a failure and that's what I'm saying is it's such an important thing and other people may have spun that quite negatively but for me, it was one of the greatest victories to know that about myself. through a failure, I gained that confirmation and I want to keep stressing that we can say we're a certain type of person but you don't know until you've been tested, right? that failure for me was incredibly valuable and even in China, how many of those workouts did I fail? In the traditional definition, I just couldn't do it. I couldn't complete the workout. I felt weak, I felt pathetic. In Everest, I couldn't walk, for goodness' sake. I am a former Division 1 Cross-country athlete all through my college experience and I couldn't walk. One step per second. What is this madness? Absolute failures in my previous definition of the word but in these scenarios, it made me grow so much. Even other shortcomings that I had in these entrepreneurial journey which if you don't know, it may really beat you down for our viewers who may have partaken in it, you may know as well. It is such a ruthless and the media wants you to believe that too. We said sleep when you're dead, don't ever rest. it's ridiculous. I've been beaten down so much on this journey but, like I said, I'm just loving that sort of narrative thread of heroic cycle, whatever you want to call it, keeps me going through it and also realizing in the heroic cycle, most victories come from some sort of failure as well, or most growth, I should say, come from failures. Say, I've failed on Everest completely. I've failed in china. I mean, I won the Wing Chun tournament which is amazing but in the basic stances of shaolin and meihuaquan which became one of my new favorite martial arts, I couldn't even do the basic stances for a week. I still can't do it. I'm trying to and after a lifetime of martial arts, to be brought back to that level of failure and sort of beginner feeling is actually fantastic. I enjoy that. I enjoy that so much because you have so much to gain when you're failing at that level. You have so many victories to achieve and for instance, in my Wing Chun training which I've basically kept out on, there's not so much of that. you know what I mean? I can make more subtle victories like I recently trained with my sifu and went back and saw him. We're working on micro details in the first form again. We're going back and sort of restructuring to get an even higher level but you don't have that oh, I can finally do this first basic stance. For me, there's a lot of that as far as regrets are concerned, I do have some which may surprise some people. I do have quite a bit of it and it's not so much something that I



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could control, on the one hand, we live and we learn, of course. If I had started this journey now with the knowledge I have, I would do things totally different as we all would. There's not much to say but there are mistakes I've made and I want to make that clear and I always try to be open in all my videos. I never would have called myself a master of anything, much less martial arts. Maybe on the film end one day or the drawing end, I think I'd be more comfortable 40 years from now calling myself a master but I don't think I'll ever feel that in the martial arts especially which is too deep of a well but yeah, I have made mistakes. I want to make that clear to everybody. I'm not some, none of us are. None of us people who have achieved any sort of victory. I recently hit a 100,000 subscribers on YouTube which should feel, it is my life's work essentially and I was sort of surprised to not feel much from it which kind of made me sad where I say I wanted to feel some ridiculous dopamine, endorphin release here but it's also sort of the feeling of the bigger you get, the smaller you feel. It's like oh, when I had 1,000 subscribers. It felt like I owned the world. I can't believe I did this. I never thought I would do this but then going through all those hardships and failures along the way when you get to a hundred, it's kind of just like alright, so on to a million then maybe we'll be something. Things change. I wouldn't say it's regret necessarily but along that way, like I said on the Everest trip, you have those moments where you get tempted on the dark side, the ambition. I mentioned that I just chased this amorphous dream that can't be contained, it can't be defined. I don't even know what it is, I'm just chasing it hoping that it fulfills me and brings me peace one day. That has absolutely made me sort of be true to myself, if you will. I've had to make some very hard decisions in my personal life, in my relationships and I've lost people that I might have found happiness with by chasing this dream but it's sort of the only universal truth that I know so there's a lot of regret there but at the same time, much like the decision to turn back with my friends, I think that's who I am.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What is that dream if you have to sum it up because it sounds like it's broad, it encompasses a lot of things so how do you define it?

Philip Hartshorn:

I would say it's definitely vague but in the fact that it's a romanticized dream of story-telling, of fulfillment, of for me, personally, finding peace but also healing people. I think it's one of the main things. I said, my, for instance, when I make an action film or any of the films that I've done, I try to make them very thought-provoking. Not just some action insanity like for example my, Ferocity series which is one of the earlier ones that I still do installments of. I just show extreme violence out of context. 2 people fighting viciously out of context. It's meant to be jarring, it's meant to be disturbing in the fact that when you see somebody start, if you ever seen a fight in person, it is very upsetting. It's very disturbing afterwards if you ever seen any violence in person. I was in a shooting scare in Penn Station in New York city and it was so upsetting. People thought there was an active shooter, somebody let off a stun gun and they thought there was a shooter and a telephone 5 seconds later, the people yelling shooter, a human stampede occurred. I'm fine because, like I said I was a runner, I made it out



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alright but I saw the elderly get trampled. I saw children left to die. People just running and pushing them aside. It's so disturbing when you get to that level that we are animals. We are animalistic beasts at the end of the day. Civilization paints this façade over us to try and organize us and give us a purpose. We all play this collective game called society. It's a stark reminder but, for instance in my films, I try to achieve that level of upsetting for the reason to make it thought-provoking and to have some philosophy behind it that we can do better and if you've been through something like that, you can be healed. You're going to be alright and whether it's just a comedy piece, I want to make people feel good. It's not something so, so serious. I'm a man of extremes. I tend to be the extremely dark, philosophical, deep or very light but yeah, that's definitely part of the dream. It's the healing of myself and others through stories. It's just sort of this romantic cloud that I chase of those things and I think the stories are key to it. Like I said, that universal truth and relatability of being able to stare down the evil which you can put anything in that in place of even in that slot. It could be the Everest conundrum. Do I leave my job to follow my dreams and become an entrepreneur or do I stay in this relationship because I love this person but it may be holding me back, I may be holding them back? Is it selfish to stay with this person if I truly love them, should I set them free? Whatever evil is, whatever that selfish sort of cowards die first scenario is so that's it, man. I'm just trying to chase that but also, more importantly, share it with others and that was, if not feeling such a sort of shallow satisfaction from the 100,000 subscribers. I did have that at least. I'm able to share this with people and hopefully, help people now more than ever on my journey. Maybe that's it. Maybe it's just to keep growing so I have that sort of voice and me and Gabrielle talk about it in her podcast too. What is this dream? Is it I get a Netflix deal and I have a movie? I doubt that I will be finished with my dream, right, if I have that, we got it now boys, let's go home. Is it Hollywood, is it this new platform that doesn't exist? Is it I just have a video do well on YouTube? I doubt it. I think it's this amorphous feeling of that will never be achieved but that's what makes it the dream that it is.

Jeremy Lesniak:

There's your pretty strong corollary there with martial arts. Martial arts doesn't stop even if you stay in the same style for 80 years. You're not done. There's always more. Do you think that's part of what resonates for you about martial arts or is this just how you were raised because most people, let's face it, most people like to check boxes to get stuff done and say I'm done with this, I move on and we're brought up that way. In most modern societies, you have school grades and there's the requirements and you go on even in martial arts, even early on. You do this, you get a blue belt and you move on. In most of our professional careers, we're expected after X number of years, you've achieved these certifications, these standards and you move up the corporate ladder but it sounds like nothing in your life has any aspect of that.

Philip Hartshorn:

No. No, it's the endless journey. It really is the endless journey. You just kind of march on and even the sword for example, from my first topic of this conversation. You could never master the sword and if



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you did, you've only mastered one style and there's so much more there. it's the same thing with drawing, like I said, that's your sword. I will never master anything and if you do master, I don't know, some sort of stylized example within drawing or some art form and with martial arts, it's the same, man. Like I said, my Wing Chun is by no means any sort of mastery but I've reached some level of skill and you can assess that for yourself for those of you watching or I think I have some level of skill after a decade and but what is that? Is it as good as my teacher? Absolutely not. Is it as good as his teacher? Absolutely not who is the son of Ip Man? No. I don't think we'll ever achieve any sort of ending but I think, you said society trains us to lie to ourselves that we have and I think I'm just not willing to do that. I'm a little more willing to be someone who is not so keen on labels to say that's completed to say I'm a master. I'm this, I'm that. I can't do it. It makes me incredibly uncomfortable to do it. Like I said, I'll never call myself a master. I love the endless journey, thought. That's me personally. I think a lot of people, they want that dopamine release to say I'm done but also, even the school I went to for Wing Chun, there's no system. There's no politics. There's no levels of belts. There is no level of achievement that can be had. If Russ Cichon, my sifu, thinks you are doing well enough, he will show you the next part and that's it so maybe it's even that that appealed to me in that particular school but I love it. I love the endless journey and maybe it goes back to the heroic cycle to Gilgamesh, the Ramayana. All the stories that I love and have enjoyed. There's so many lessons in that and even, we look at Heracles or Hercules, the roman version. His end is not some beautiful victory. I don't know if you know how Hercules dies but he's wrongly accused of cheating on his wife and is poisoned and ripped trees out of the ground, builds his own funeral pyre and jumps on it and has his friend light it for him and sort of even that ending is part of the journey. He didn't finish. You know what I mean? There's no oh, we did it, boys, let's go home to say what I said earlier. That's what I love about it. I know the person, Miyamoto Musashi, is another one of my favorites. If you've read The Book of Five Rings, I'm sure if viewers are into such things like that, I just love it. If you look at his sort of tenets for life. Very harsh, not comforting way to live your life but it's sort of in that same theme, I think, of we're chasing something that cannot be defined. We're trying to better ourselves but we're not some god. We're not some complete being and to me, that is life. That is the journey and I'm interested in exploring that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. So, if you're to look forward, let's put a couple sign posts in your journey. Let's look out a year, 10 years and 50 years. What would you want to be able to say about each of those points in time?

Philip Hartshorn:

A year...within a year, I would say, I would like to, and similar to that Everest decision, sort of reaffirmed or confirmed who I am as a human being a little bit more. Just one step further would be nice to have that confirmation. It could be any numerous ways but I think for me, that character that is so important, who you are when no one's watching character. I would like to get another proof of who I think I am. As far as the 10 years, I would want to be much more further along in that same journey and also, perhaps, grasp my dream a little bit more, perhaps defined a little bit easier and then I think on the 50 years, I



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would love to have found some peace. A place that I can really call home, a place that I can find peace and to be able to have helped a lot of people heal and feel better about those similar aspects of themselves, to have confirmed and felt comfortable with who they are in this sort of chaotic world that we live in to help them deal with some trauma they've had in their life, physically or mentally, and to have really taken some strides forward to that dream and rather than chasing the dream so much, perhaps to have called it more of a friend. To sort of walk hand in hand with it in stride. I think that would be interesting.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great stuff. Where can people find you? You threw out a lot of stuff. I'm sure there's a long list but let's give them the highlights.

Philip Hartshorn:

Well, my biggest thing is YouTube, of course, like I said, very exciting. We just reached a 100K subscribers and I've been putting out the content from this China trip. There's a ton of it so there's a lot more to come as well but it's just [YouTube.com/philhartshorn](https://www.youtube.com/philhartshorn), try to look it up, and then that's sort of my big longform big production stuff, my fight scenes, and films. We also do drawing and gaming but Instagram is sort of the best way to get in touch with me and the best way to see my short, fun stuff because it's minute-long videos. It's the same thing which is my name [@philiphartshorn](https://www.instagram.com/philiphartshorn) on Instagram. Send a message if you have any questions, I'd be glad to help out. Twitch, of course, if you want to chat live, is amazing. Same exact thing, just [philiphartshorn](https://www.twitch.tv/philiphartshorn), my name no spaces. We'll do drawing streams, we'll talk about all this stuff that we've rambled on about in this interview. I'll play music, we'll play games, you want to play Smash Bros with me and speaking of martial arts, fight me in a virtual world. That'd be fun. I usually do have my viewers so yeah, those are the big 3 I would say. I'm also on Facebook and all the others but it's essentially just the same content repurposed so come say hi or anything, always glad to chat, answer questions and support you guys as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Awesome, awesome and of course, we'll have links at our show notes for anybody that might have missed any of that or drive or whatever.

Philip Hartshorn:

Thank you, thank you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And let's wrap up the show here. You've been pretty forthcoming with the advice and thoughts through this whole conversation but let's try to pin it down to a single nugget, if you will, what parting words would you leave everyone with today?



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Philip Hartshorn:

What parting words, indeed? I think, to circle back around, I would say that cowards die first is a great way to look at life, if not I've by it, all jokes aside. Like you mentioned earlier, I appear to have said yes to a lot of absurd scenarios, really. 5 days no prep, go to Everest; china, I think, was a week notice but that has led me to such wonderful realization and has led me to such opportunities and just friendships, to name one of the most fulfilling ones and fulfillment and joy, reflection, like the meditation on China or on Everest, just standing at the top of the world, eyes placed on earth and being able to think about who I am as a person and where I wanted to be in my life. It can't be valued. It's incredibly valuable so now, I'm not saying go to Everest but try living your life by that cowards die first philosophy and try just saying yes to something that you feel that pang of fear at first but then say, what would I wish I had done when I'm on my deathbed? As intense as that is, that's how I tend to live my life and if it sounds like something you'd be interested in, give it a try. Cowards die first.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Talk about stories, right? I mean, this man's done a lot of great stuff but what I like most, was the why. You could see, at every stage, why he was doing things and I really appreciate that. It's important that we all find our why, not just broadly but specifically. When you undertake something, what's the reason? Thank you for coming on the show, for sharing all of these things, Mr. Hartshorn. I hope we get to talk again. If you want the photos and the links and everything else from this episode, from every other episode we've ever done, go to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. If you haven't been there awhile, go check it out. There's always new stuff going up there and you know what we update even more than that site? Whistlekick.com, from the blog to the store to links to the other things. It is our digital hub, our virtual storefront and you can find a lot of things there. If you want to know what's going on, best way to do that, sign up for the newsletter. There should be pop-up at either website for you. If you want to give us a hand, make a purchase. Use the code PODCAST15 to save 15% or follow us on social media, share the things that we do, leave reviews, show us some love. We're doing everything we can for you and for the rest of the traditional martial arts community and when you help us out, it helps us out. It helps us help other people. If you've got a guest suggestion, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, there's a form over there. Fill it out, let us know. Follow us on social media, we're @whistlekick, or you can email me, jeremy@whistlekick.com. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day.