



Episode 470 – Sifu Nathan Marinone | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

You're tuned in to whistlekick martial arts radio episode 470 with today's guest, Sifu Nathan Marinone. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, show host and whistlekick founder and everything we're doing over here at whistlekick is in support of the traditional martial arts. If you want to know more about what we do, go to whistlekick.com. That's where you'll find everything that we're doing. It's the place to find our store and if you use the code `PODCAST15`, you can save 15% on everything. Now, everything on this show is on a different website and that's whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. We bring you this show twice a week and our goal here, it's all under the heading of connecting, educating and entertaining traditional martial artists throughout the world. If you want to help the show and the work that we do, there are a number of ways you can help. You can make a purchase, to share an episode, follow us on social media. We're @whistlekick everywhere you can think of. You can tell a friend about us, maybe pick up one of the books that we've written and have listed on Amazon. Leave a review somewhere or support us on Patreon, patreon.com/whistlekick is the place to go for that. You can support us monthly with as little as \$2 and if you spend, \$5 a month, you'll get access to even more content. Content that we make exclusively for the Patreon supporters. Different martial artists train differently. Some of us, maybe even most of us, started a local school and we study a single style and we progress. Some people move so they train in different things, they go to different schools but today's guest does it his own way and he's done it his own way since the very beginning and that's led to some pretty impressive experiences and



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we get to hear all about those today on the show. Sifu Marinone, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Nathan Marinone:

Thanks, Jeremy, for having me. I appreciate it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Thanks for being here. I appreciate it. Audience, we were just talking that I have a great job and I do have a great job and I fully understand. I fully recognize that. It's not all fun. I don't think anyone would pretend it is or expect that it is but I get to talk to great people, I get to talk to you and it just...I don't know. I don't even know that I have the ability to express how lucky I am but it's not about me and that's kind of the weird part. I'm just blessed I get to talk to everyone so today, we're talking to you. I'm talking to you. I'm here to find out what makes you tick and your stories and where you've come from and where you are and where you're going and all that and so we're going to do the very cliché, very boring way to kick it off because it's the best way to kick it off and that's how did you find the martial arts?

Nathan Marinone:

Sure, well I just want to say thank you again for having me on your podcast. I'm a fan and I look forward to sharing my story. I guess everything really started back in the 80s when I was young about, say, 10, 11. We actually lived quite across the street from a taekwondo instructor who actually coincidentally was a Level 5 CO officer. It's a corrections officer so we came into contact with him one day and again, found out that he taught taekwondo. Really just out of his basement, didn't have any school and my sister started shortly after. Of course, at that time, I didn't see any value in it but I somehow took note of her coming home, doing her forms outside and I said this looks pretty cool so really, much through the late 80s, I'd been travelling with my sister to who was soon to be my taekwondo instructor. His name was Sabunim [00:03:55] Levy so I would go to these tournament in the late 80s and it was really cool for me because really, just growing up as a kid, everything was Transformers and Ninja Turtles so now I kind of opened up that whole world to ninjas and Chuck Norris and Bruce Lee and that whole side of everything and really, shortly after, I started to do taekwondo with him across the street. What's interesting is he didn't have a lot of children. He had a lot of adults. I guess the first thing I should have known better when I walked down to the basement, there was several holes in the wall. It wasn't because he was doing any kind of carpentry, it was because the adults tend to spar a bit hard, I guess, at that time with very, very little padding. He was trained by an old taekwondo master. His name was Cheong, was the last name but I stuck around to, I want to say, about yellow belt. I wasn't there for too, too long. I realized it really just wasn't what I was looking for as far as what kind would click with me and stuff. I remember getting up to chunji level which is the 1st form you would learn and stuff and one of the first memories I'd have was actually sparring with my sister which was interesting. My sister was a



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few years younger than me so at the time, if I can ballpark it, I was about maybe 12 and she was, I want to say, 9 and one of my 1st memories was she was a red belt at the time which was one belt short of black and I remember chasing her around and her doing a jump spinning back kick into my stomach and I remember going home and complaining to my parents that my sister hit me and really hit me hard and I kind of got clipped by my father where he said well, you're doing martial arts now and she is better than you. So, after a little bit, like I said, it really wasn't my taste of tea. Kind of searched around a little bit afterwards, got into the early 90s and that's when I really started to take things really kind of serious, about '92, '93. I was in middle school and stuff. Kind of got picked on a lot, like a lot of people do who wanted to start learning martial arts, had a terrible stopping problem and just really want to do something about it. Sounds a little cliché but I used to get beat up and picked on. I'm a pretty short guy, I'm 5'7". I don't weigh a whole lot. Right now, I currently weigh about 159 but I wanted to learn how to defend myself and I found, with the taekwondo, it didn't really satisfy my interest in doing that style of martial arts. I enjoyed the kicking, I enjoyed the forms but I wanted something more. It just didn't fit me so I remember a few years later, the UFC had Royce Gracie on, right? We had that big, big explosion of Brazilian JiuJitsu and ground grappling and of course, in early mid-90s, you couldn't find that around anywhere. The closest school I probably found is probably a judo school so what I started to do was Black Belt magazine used to have this old taped video production series called Panther Productions right out of California, I believe, and they used to have different people teaching hapkido, karate but we also had people teaching sambo and Brazilian JiuJitsu and things like that so what I did is, I put everything together and I purchased the whole bunch of VHS tapes and really, for the next few years, I really kind of invested myself into that. We're really talking about mid-90s and high school and only real form of training was taekwondo, late 80s and early 90s but I really enjoyed the grappling, really enjoyed the pinning, the locking. Being a smaller guy, it always made sense to me. Just leverage in general and taking someone to the ground. I was always kind of rough and tumble too for the most part so I did that for a few years and I would grab a few friends and we would have actually just go right after the videotapes and we would practice guard and mountain, arm bar. I got somewhere proficient at it. I guess someone you would consider to be someone as can be from learning from VHS tapes and later on, when I was in high school, I actually joined the wrestling team to really supplement what I was learning on film. It became a nice vehicle to practice arm locks, leg locks and chokes and sweeps and everything else. The only problem is I had a hard time separating what was wrestling from what was jiuJitsu so in the beginning, I used to pull guard and do everything you're not supposed to in wrestling and I remember a lot of times, my coach would, he would yell at me, you need to stop watching that stuff! You need to stop watching that stuff and my teammates used to kind of, lack of a better term, annoyed that I would start choking them and arm locking them but I didn't have someone to teach me and walk me through and hold my hand to learn this because, again, we're talking mid-90s. It just wasn't around. Royce just came on the scene and really, there was no judo schools around me. Just a lot of karate and taekwondo schools and obviously, my taekwondo instructor across the street was there. It was pretty much a new concept like many of our listeners know. I did that for a few years, wrestling, and I kind of used that as a base to help me to, obviously help me to familiarize myself with the wrestling and take downs and pins



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and rides but also use it as a vehicle to help out my jujitsu and I did that, I want to say, all through high school up to about senior year until I started to discover Jeet Kune Do and that kind of really changed things for me. So, really, up until mid to late '90s, I was really kind of self-trained doing this grappling thing, watching videotapes, trying to soak in as much as I can and just use my friends, for lack of a better word, as a heavy bag to practice my lock and chokes and supplement my wrestling with that. So, in the early 90s, just reading my Black Belt magazine, I begin to learn about Jeet Kune Do and what Jeet Kune Do was, the different figureheads within Jeet Kune Do, Paul Vunak and Dan Inosanto and Tim Tackett and all those individuals that we have today. So, once again, I live in Connecticut and I live in New England and I have always lived in Connecticut. I lived in Massachusetts for about 7 years and ended up moving back to Connecticut so at that time, there's not really anybody around, again, teaching Jeet Kune Do. Still in high school, had my driver's license but the closest person was an hour and a half, 2 hours away so once again, I had to kind of find a way to learn this. I've always been really proactive in just training martial arts and seeking knowledge and stuff so what I did is the best thing I could do was I found a home correspondence course so there wasn't much out there like there was now. There was a man named David Elwood out in New Jersey and he ran the organization called Total Approach Jeet Kune Do. Please, Jeremy, if I keep talking, feel free to just jump in.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'll reel you back if you get out there too far but I'm listening. I'm enjoying what I'm hearing. Keep going!

Nathan Marinone:

Good. I'm still in work mode so I guess I'm still going so...he really had the only martial arts correspondence course and he was advertising it through black belt magazine and he was certified under a few JKD instructors. The name he continued to kind of promote was a man named Leo Fong who was an old Bruce Lee student from back then so fast forward, we're a senior in high school. I did that for about 3 years. He had each tape for a level, typical with just how you would think it. You would go to a curriculum, you videotape yourself and you would submit it and be reviewed so I did that for 3 years and I didn't really...it was what I was looking for. I was earnest in it. I wasn't lazy on my training. I really trained it every day. At the time, I was 19. I was really, really into it and I really wanted to make sure that I got this and this is it and at that time, well, this is better than learning from videotapes and not getting any type of feedback so I really wanted to make sure because at that time, I really thought that this was as far as I'm going to get with this. No one to teach Jeet Kune Do around me so I'm going to dig into this and I'm going to make sure that I train it and I train it right. I did that for a few years, completed the program in 2002, I believe. So, I was good. I was set. I felt good about my skills. I had some good knowledge and it's kind of funny. A lot of people hark on YouTube or correspondence training and I think it's good. I think, if you don't have anything around, I think it's a good method to learn and I think it sets you up for success. I think it gives you good habits. I think it gives you strong work ethic too. In 2002, I completed that training and then, I discovered there was somebody in Milford, Connecticut who was more south of Connecticut from where I'm at. I was very much close to



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Massachusetts teaching Jeet Kune Do. I've been driving for a few years and I said why not? Let me contact this guy. His name was Sifu Rick Manente. Unfortunately, he passed a few years later. I contacted Sifu Rick. I said hey, my name is blah, blah, blah. I just got done training with blah, blah, blah. I'm really interested in training with you and at that time, he just stopped doing, he used to have group classes downstairs. He lived on top of a deli, 2-floor. The bottom floor was a deli and there was a big space at the back where he used to teach and then upstairs, there was almost like apartments. So, he goes why don't you come down and meet me in 2 weeks? That's what I did. I drove down. It was about a 2-hour drive. Not too bad and it's really driving down to see him really kind of seasoned me and it really helped me to get me to this habit of driving to really get the knowledge that I want which, I'll obviously get into a little bit later on; so, anyway, I went to see him and it was just fantastic. I had someone to work with, and not just that, it was somebody who knew the material. So, now, I got that feeling, that understanding and stuff so I was lucky enough to work with him a few more times. My training with him was, I would say, it was brief, it was short but it was very profound on me, very profound. The things that he said and just the overall touch that he had and his attitude towards things which was just fantastic and Sifu Rick really was one of the pioneers for kind of spreading Jeet Kune Do around in the New England, Connecticut area. For those who don't know, Sifu Rick was one of Paul Vunak's top guys from the '80s. This is around when Sifu Paul Vunak used to give lessons to the Navy SEALs and provide that training so it was just fantastic and then in 2003, he unfortunately passed away which was a big hit to people. So, what happened was I contacted, shortly after, one of his top guys. A man by the name of Sifu Eric Wnek and I liked Eric. We trained together for about 8 years, 7, 8 years. My math may be a bit off but the reason why I feel we connected well was we were the same age and I think we understood the same things and we understood the same interests so when Sifu Rick passed away, again, I started training with Sifu Eric and unfortunately, he was about 2 hours but now, the other way in Connecticut so he was southeast instead of being more just south so I started training with him and I would see him once. In the beginning, it was twice a week, I would drive down 2 hours one way so we're talking 4 hours in a week now if I saw him thrice and we trained for a few hours. Very, very gracious with his time and knowledge. I think, I don't want to get too ahead of myself but I think, I've gotten a lot from all my teachers. I think we can all say that. I think we get more than just physical techniques. One of the things that I really enjoy about training with different people in the martial arts is just enjoying their personalities and their stories, just really vibing with people and just building that relationship. So, I would see him about twice a week and then, after a few years, he decided to open up a school in Norwalk, Connecticut, about the same distance and I would go down, I would continue to do my private lessons with him. Every week, I was very earnest about that and I was very good for it and then he started to have me assist him at his group classes in Norwalk so this was the first time I was really getting the idea of how to teach, looking at curriculums and really developing those soft skills. How to interpret movements, how to teach principles and concepts and theories. About a year later, he opened up a 2nd school. I believe in Greenwich, Connecticut, I believe if I'm right so now, at that time, I was assisting him at both schools then he ultimately closed down the Norwalk school which had me going to the Greenwich school and at that time, I had left my job to teach fulltime. We had a sponsor at the time



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to kind of help the school grow. Unfortunately, things kind of fell through a little bit later but I will say it was really good experience for me because I would drive down to Greenwich, oh, I don't know, 3 times a week so I definitely logged on the miles in my car. There's no question about that and stuff but it really gave me a sense of hands-on and teaching and understanding the martial arts and dealing with people so I was with Eric for about, I want to say, about 7 years? Learned quite a bit about him and what I will say about Eric is he was very progressive in his thinking. He spent a lot of time with Rick and he started to spend a lot of time with Paul Vunak which then ultimately, he spent a lot of time with Tim Tackett. He butted with Tim Tackett a few times in his seminar but Eric was always very progressive and he would look at things and try to find ways to challenge us to improve our attributes, to improve our abilities so when we go back to doing things that are considered more simple, we would really excel at them. He always talked about keeping an open mind and not just keeping an open mind but being the best that you can be and that's something that really stay with me even to now when training with different people. To always be your best, to never be satisfied with your current level and to always look at things with a discerning eye so in about 2010, we split up and I decided to start training with other people so a few years later, I found another JK-Kali instructor. At the time, I was training in JK and Kali with Eric. Most times, when you're a JKD guy, you kind of have the Kali umbrella also that it falls under so I started to training with a man named Sifu Dustin Santomenna who was out of Boston and Sifu Dustin Santomenna was part of Cass Magda's association. It was very different. If you come from the JKD world or you just dabble in it, you know that each lineage is a little bit different than the next and you each just kind of focus on something a little and each has something to offer for sure so I left Eric in 2010 and started training with Sifu Dustin Santomenna and I did that, I trained with him privately, again, every week. It's another case for me driving now an hour and a half, 2 hours but now east so I guess, I feel fortunate in the sense where I never lived close enough to one of my instructors. I always tell people, if you live close to something, sometimes you take it for granted because you just feel that it's going to be there for the next day and a lot of times, if you take it for granted then it's no longer special so I guess I feel somewhat, I don't want to say privileged or blessed but fortunate that I was able to kind of adopt this mindset a long time ago with learning how to train on my own and be somewhat pragmatic and proactive in my approach. So, I was with Sifu Dustin, about 2 years and basically, after 2 years, he sent me to this instructor. A man named Sifu Pichardo and Sifu Greg Pichardo, at that time, was in Long Island, New York so now, I'm really adding on the miles now so I think it's safe to say that I've gone through 7 different cars. So, now I started training with Sifu Greg and he was about 3 hours from so with Sifu Dustin, why don't you start seeing my instructor? Sifu Greg Pichardo was, he was an instructor under Sifu Cass Magda. Really, he's Sifu Cass Magda's east coast representative for his association which is the Magda institute so this was in 2014. I started training with Sifu Greg and I started to go see him every other month and again, very gracious. I would go in the weekends and I would stay over in the weekends and we will be training privately and I would hop in with the group classes. So, really from Sifu Dustin, I started training Silat. Now, up to this point, it was always Jeet Kune Do and Kali whether it was with Dave Elwood going back to my correspondence time in the late '90s, then I met with Sifu Rick and Sifu Eric, it was really JKD and Kali and then, when I started with Sifu Dustin, roughly in 2011, 2012, now



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it was JKD, Kali and now, with Silat. I started to kind of try my hand at Silat and I liked it. I liked a lot of the principles that were there and at this time, I was already an instructor under Sifu Eric. He certified me before I left and so, I started training with Sifu Greg and he really started to refine my knowledge and understanding of what I thought JKD, Kali and Silat was. I really enjoyed my time with him too so I would go up on the weekends and I would train with him in New York. I would stay over in the weekends and I would hop in to any seminars that he was teaching and hop into group classes and I will just do private lessons with him. Shortly after that, he presented me in front of Cass Magda. We're talking, I want to say, 2013, 2014, I based off, 2015 then I started training a little with Sifu Cass and that's where I was certified under Sifu Cass so I received my credentials in this art, JKD, Kali and Silat under Sifu Cass. In 2013, I actually had to look at myself, to be honest, to remember and then what happened was that Sifu Cass would come down for classes in New York twice a year so he would come down in May for 3 days and then he would come down, roughly, November for 3 days and he did that for quite a while. I believe we stopped hosting him in, roughly, 2016, 2017 if my math is right. It was then following, I started to travel out to California and continued to train with Sifu Cass and I continue to train with Sifu Cass and Sifu Greg to this day so around that time too, 2015, I met another man through a friend named Guro George Chaber and Guro George Chaber was another JKD-Kali-Silat instructor but he was an instructor under Harley Elmore and Dan Inosanto so I used to go to his, he used to have monthly workshops at his school and there'd be a different topic every month. One month could be Kali empty hands and next month could be single stick or stick and knife and the next one could be maphilindo-Silat so I started going to his monthly seminars and he was over in Bethel, Connecticut and now, we're going another way in Connecticut. He's about an hour and a half the other way now, now he's more west so I've been all over Connecticut as a way of saying it so I started training with him and he accepted me as a private student so I would just, like with Sifu Greg and Sifu Dustin and Sifu Eric, I would go see him as often as I could. Now, I started running into the issue of juggling instructors so I'm training with Sifu Greg, I'm going after Sifu Cass and I'm still with Sifu Dustin a little bit. Now, I add Sifu George to the mix so through Sifu George, I started with him about 2016 or maybe 2015 so again, it's another way for me to refine my JKD, my Kali, my Silat and one of the things I really started to learn through these individuals, one is I don't know it all and one teacher doesn't know it all.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Can we hone in on that because that, I mean everything you're talking about is good but that's an important concept and I want to stay there for a minute because there are a lot of people listening who have probably not trained with multiple instructors outside of a single school anyway for any period of time. In fact, I would say most people pick a school, they train at that school for a while, if not indefinitely, maybe they'll go to a seminar or a camp or something and they'll get a little bit of cross training but I have a similar, I'm going to call it, problem that you do and I have no strength saying no to someone that has knowledge, I don't, offers to share it with me. I want to unpack that a little bit and let you go back to your train of thought there, if you don't mind. The way you express it was no one person,



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I'm going to botch the words but what I heard was, no one person has all the knowledge, all the information.

Nathan Marinone:

That's right. I think, just like you said, a lot of us as martial artists, we want to grow and I think there's just so much out there and I think people a lot of times, they look at curriculum and they look at this codified list of techniques, these physical sense of martial arts and I think what they forget is that each person carrying that backpack, they have different experiences, they have different insights and backgrounds that really help you and lead you to "cross the river". Although I was doing JKD and Kali with multiple people, it was different in the sense where I was getting an expression in these different experiences handed down to me from different teachers. Hey, this is what works, this is what doesn't work, oh, you know this? This works for me and here's why it works for me so they would be putting their own little flavor and twist to things so you can always say a jab is a jab, but I think when you look at something, something means different for everybody and I think based on people's experiences. They don't work the same way all the time and that's one of the biggest pieces of advice that I can give anybody. You should train and you should train with as many people as you can because I think that 1, everybody has something to offer whether that's the black belt, whether it's a white belt, whether that it's someone who does it part-time versus someone who teaches it professionally, I think you can get something from everybody. I don't think one person has it all and I don't think one person will ever have it all. I think when you do martial arts for a long time and I'm coming up on 30 years, it doesn't feel like 30 years to be honest. Once you start getting past physical techniques, you start looking into expressions and you start looking into flavors based upon the experiences of the people teaching it to you and I think, as a martial arts teacher, that's what you reflect on when you begin to teach other people and I think that's what really helps you. What do you think, Jeremy?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I do.

Nathan Marinone:

I'mma put it back on you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You use the example of a punch and we can talk about the basics of a punch. You extend your hand and you hit a certain spot and you're connecting to a certain spot but as you get higher in rank, there's a lot of nuance there. You and I are roughly the same height and build so we're used to being smaller. There's a good chance that when we're sparring with someone, they're taller than us. For everyone, regardless of height, there's a good chance that if you're in a self-defense situation, you're smaller than the person attacking you. That's just what tends to happen so when you talk about the incredible nuance of height



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differential and weight differential and movement and limb length and all of that, there are situations where certain techniques work in certain situations for certain people and to me, I could teach the same thing to 100 people and they're going to receive it slightly differently and if they teach somebody else, they're going to receive it as something else so I look at it as instead of trying to stop that, which is the instinct of a lot of people, no, we need to keep this traditional, I say lean into it. The problem can become the solution. The solution is let, not only allow, but encourage that individual flare in martial arts. I can learn the same form, let's take a form pretty well known across martial arts discipline, Enpi, it's a Japanese kata but it's a very popular form that shows up at darn near every tournament I've ever been to and it can be different depending on the style and that's what makes it great and that's how there are notes to compare. If all of the Jeet Kune Do that was taught was the same and was just a copy, you wouldn't have the opportunity to learn it in different ways from different people because they will all be teaching the same thing.

Nathan Marinone:

I think that's perfect. I think that's perfect what you said there, Jeremy. Just to kind of stay on the whole topic of Jeet Kune Do, look at Bruce Lee. What worked for me isn't necessarily going to work for you or me or for anybody else depending on size, shape, background, experience so I think it's really understanding how to express yourself and knowing what works for you. One of the things I do with people is I do what we call a SWOT analysis which is strength, weaknesses, opportunity and threats and I think a lot of people will apply that as a tactic but I like to use that tool to look inward to see what are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? Where are your opportunities for improvement? What are the threats that go on you? I think a lot of times, in martial arts, you'll certainly agree, martial arts is such an exterior vehicle. You're always being criticized, you're always being under the eye. Someone's always watching you especially when you put something up on YouTube and I think because of that, there's a lot of judging in the martial arts and one of the things that we have to constantly do, really, what Bruce Lee would say, just looking into that mirror and understanding who you are and what you can do versus what you can't do and identifying those weaknesses. I used to always tell people, sometimes when you look into the mirror, sometimes you don't always like what you see. You can be overweight, you can be a little older than you want to be, you can be out of shape, you can have these injuries here and there but if you don't ever look into that mirror, you'll never get that. self-realization. You'll never begin to understand where you are and where you can go from and I get that sometimes, looking into that mirror, you're not seeing exactly what you, you're not seeing Brad Pitt. You're not seeing Donnie Yen on the other side but I think if you can honestly accept who you are and pinpoint what you need to fix and really just accept who you are, you're never really going to grow. That's one thing I always teach my students. Don't be afraid to look foolish. Even now, on this podcast, this is my first podcast.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You're doing great! I wouldn't have guessed.



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Nathan Marinone:

You know what? I'm probably not going to look...I'm going to be like a typical actor. I'm not going to go back and watch it because I'm going to cringe. So, this is my first podcast and when you contacted me, I was a little hesitant about doing it because, I'll be honest, I don't think much of myself. I'm just a guy out there trying to learn and improve like anybody else but I wanted to do it because I wanted to see how I would handle the pressure of being questioned then having an audience. So I wanted to challenge myself. I guess there was an underlying thought process here in me doing this. You know what I mean? I wanted to see how I would react just like if I was not good with English language, then I would start writing articles for different magazines. That's just for example; so, I wanted to see how I would perform under some kind of pressure. Could I articulate what's in my mind? Will I feel comfortable enough or how would I flow from word to word so even when I'm talking to you, there's these many battles in my head. Don't say this, say this, right? so, sometimes I think we have to put ourselves in positions where we're not comfortable because that's where we're going to grow. Dan Inosanto, he has this tremendous saying: it's from the old that we gain comfort from but it's from the new that we grow. I could continue to teach privately and teach out of a garage, out of a gym or something and I could be king of that castle. I don't ever have to worry about going on podcast or being on late night talk show so I become comfortable within that mold but then what happens is I negate, I separate myself from growth and I think a lot of times people only identify growth by ability and I think there's just so much more than just physical ability. I think it's the ability to speak and articulate what you want to say especially as a martial arts teacher. They always say you have the fighter then you have the coach. Who would you want to learn from? Would you want to learn from Mike Tyson or would you want to learn from [00:37:00] and I think most people who know would probably say [00:37:04], right? Because if you're in a room with Mike Tyson, he probably wouldn't be able to teach you how to get where he's at. I think there's a lot of different levels that we have to really submit ourselves and the martial arts and be pragmatic in thinking and say hey, this is not all about punching and kicking. There's a lot more that we want to polish in ourselves whether they just speak, think, problem solve and things in that nature. Sorry, I hope I didn't mean to take a little side road there and stuff.

Jeremy Lesniak:

There are no bad tangents on this show.

Nathan Marinone:

I like it. It's funny, I have a teacher, Guro George Chaber. He used to say there are no answers, only dumb questions.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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I'll be honest. I don't even agree with that. The only questions I hate answering are the ones when people ask them, they hear themselves talk. They already know the answer and I won't even call those dumb. Those are ego.

Nathan Marinone:

Yes, 100%. 100%. Ok, where was I? I got to think here. Yeah, so, speaking of Guro George. I was with him and still with him, I will say, almost 4 years and now, I'm kind of running into that gamut of training with multiple teachers in really the same arts which, at that time, was JKD, Kali, Silat so I'm trying to balance these 2 to 3 different curriculums and really trying to dissect what each person is teaching me because, again, everyone comes from a different place and thought process so I'm really trying to hone in on these ideas and concepts and through Guro George, I met my serrada teacher, Guro Tony Di Sarro who is also in New York but he was on the other side of New York so with Sifu Greg, who was my primary instructor in the Magda institute association, he was in Long Island. Guro Tony was in Albany which is on the other side of New York so I guess, at this point, I just realized, I just can't get lucky finding anybody close to me so I also learn everything and be that guy so I started to learn from Guro Tony about 4 years ago and I started to train in Cabales Eskrima Serrada or Serrada Eskrima which is similar to Filipino Kali but different in that it's more of a middle to close quarter system and a lot of times the stick is a little short. I don't want to get too much into the actual history of the art so I started to train with him. I started to travel down on, I want to say, every other month. Just like with Sifu Greg, I would train in for the weekend and really try to dissect as much as I can and come back and work it and teach it to my students and really use them as kind of to be the warm body to really improve and stuff. Around the same time, I started to train in Wing Chun Kung Fu so I guess I've always had this uncontrollable hunger for just growth and learning and just continued knowledge and the more I started to train with more people. Right now, I think we're in 2016. I begin to realize hey, I don't know it all and a lot of these guys just have these wonderful stories and years of training. I really begin to adopt through that and I think, people always say martial arts, it teaches you discipline and respect and it kind of molds and shapes you and what I'll say with that, I don't think it's the martial arts. I think it's really my instructors. I see them all as family. They've all been incredibly humble and gracious with their time and knowledge and I think they're the ones that really have helped me to understand and really just better be a better person. You know what I mean? I think there's probably a time in my life and probably a time in a lot of people's lives where they think they know it all and they tend to be a little arrogant especially when I was in my 20s. From what I understand, I was a bit of a terror. You know what I mean? I had a good friend that always reminds me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Can you be a little more explicit with that? What do you mean my terror? I think most of us, if I'm doing the math right, you've got a year or 2 on me and when we're in our 40s, you look back and oh my god, 20s right? And you look back and I think most of us would be critical of ourselves of that stage in life so what do you mean?



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Nathan Marinone:

This was back when I was in my 20s and I was training with Sifu Eric. Again, wonderful teacher and really, really after Rick, not including my taekwondo instructor, he's my first real JKD Kali guy. Like I said, Sifu Rick died and a lot of my early training came from Sifu Eric and I think like most people who start training in something and they get good at it, they tend to get a bit of a big head and then, I found myself getting better and better where now, I started to teach these classes over in Norwalk and Greenwich, Connecticut and now people started to call me Sifu so I think at that time, my head got a bit swole and what I really lacked was just experiences. Lack of training with other people, lack of getting out and training other art and seeing other people do things so I think, really, I didn't have that experience but, of course, at that time, the whole world revolves around you and you think you can go out there and break down trees with your kick and not be held against it and stuff so during that time, I think, I certainly learned a lot about what to do and not what to do for sure. I think, at that time, I upset a lot of people within that crew with Sifu Eric and stuff. I think my ego got the best of me in a lot of cases which I guess, looking back at it now, I can use that to kind of spot it early on with my students. You know what I mean? I think as martial arts teachers, we have to be incredibly perceptive and aware, not just what's going on in our own body but life, for example, we talked about prior to being in life here, I worked in Aerospace so within Aerospace, and for those who don't know, Aerospace is really airplanes and military weapons or even, aeronautics which is more like NASA and one of my mentors told me a long time ago: there's always 2 conversations that are going on. This is something that I carried over into my martial arts training. There is always 2 conversations going on in the room. There's the one under the table which is what you don't see and then, there's one on top of the table and so when he told me that, it really took me back. What he meant by under the table, he meant people's attitudes, their opinions and if they have a hard morning, you can just see it on them. Where are they coming from if somebody's overworked or underworked or underappreciated, that comes out when the meeting happens. That becomes on the table so I think as martial arts teachers, we have to be super aware, not only of ourselves but also our students. How are they developing? How are they interacting with the other students? How are they interacting with the sifu or sensei? I think that all comes into play and I think that creates a healthy atmosphere if you understand how to see those things and block it so I think, during that time, I think I was a bit arrogant and I certainly had a large ego but very much just not a world traveler yet, just lack for a better word of saying it so I wasn't seasoned as my Sifu Cass Magda would say. I wasn't seasoned yet in seeing and understanding these things but because of it, I'm really able now to kind of get a bite on when somebody kind of walks down that road. I'm really able to kind of nip it in the bud and right now, currently, I actually just moved from Massachusetts to Connecticut so I don't teach anywhere openly as of right now so I can be somewhat selective of who I teach but I think with that experience, I think it's taught me a lot about the person I was versus the person I am now. There's an old saying I really like, the name escapes me who said it but, really, the phrase is you wanting to, what's the word here I'm looking for? You want to take advantage of other people's weaknesses or mistakes but really, if you can take a step back and you can kind of catch it ahead of time before it even



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gets there, you are even better for it. So, in Jeet Kune Do, we would call that attack of intention or attack of preparation so I guess in the physical sense, you'd see the guy go to punch, you can physically see that movement and then you would hit or intercept which is what Jeet Kune Do would mean, the intercepting fist, but if we take another step back and we feel the intention of the attack, it has yet to put itself into a physical form and if we can intercept it right then and there, it's a lot less abrasive. Does that make sense?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure does!

Nathan Marinone:

I think we can learn from other people's mistake and stuff but again, I think it really comes down to perception and awareness, for sure and I think that's something that I learned over the years from training with different people and I think that is such a healthy thing for me. If someone wants to stay in the same school, I don't think there's anything wrong with that. As I get a little bit older, I'm turning 40 this year. Not too excited about that but as we get older, I think you begin to see, when you begin to look at martial arts and I'll quote Guro George Chaber, one of my current instructors, he always says martial arts is 2 things. You have martial and then you have arts so martial obviously is what everyone knows. It's the violence, it's the military. It's doing what needs to get done. Lack for a better word, it's violence and it's training yourself in that violence. When you get to art, it really becomes the creativity, the expression, the problem solving. It becomes the functional versus the non-functional in a sense and I think as you get a little bit older, I think once you get past your 20s and 30s, it becomes less martial in the sense where hey, what you're doing is fun. You enjoy what you do, you're enjoying the learning process and you want to challenge yourself more. I once heard a Chinese martial artist say martial arts should improve your quality of life. It shouldn't stress you out. It shouldn't put you in code orange, like a lot of these guys who learns all these tactical stuff and they're always walking around like in the red, so to speak. It should improve your life. It should improve the quality of your life. If you're getting injured from doing martial arts, then you're not doing it right and I'm certainly not saying training something that's not going to help prepare you for a real fight, all I'm saying is that once you have the ability and you know you can fight and you have the ability really to protect yourself, there has to be something more than just hitting the guy in the mouth or putting a thumb in his eyes. There's a creative side to this and that's what you should really get to explore and I think that's what's going to help you to train and train healthy as you get older in these arts for sure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well said.

Nathan Marinone:



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So, yes, apologies.

Jeremy Lesniak:

No apologies needed. Keep going! You're making my job easy. I'm just hanging out, listening.

Nathan Marinone:

I'm working through this thing by myself.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You're doing great.

Nathan Marinone:

So, I'm still trying to appreciate that so...I forget what year we're in but I started to train in Cabales Serrada Eskrima with Tony and stuff and so once again, my number of instructors have gone quite up and then, I remember at that time, 2016, 17, I started training in Wing Chun Kung Fu. Really enjoyed the Jeet Kune Do but wanted to really dig in to more what that style is all about. Wing Chun is one of Bruce Lee's 3 arts that he used to kind of develop his method of fighting or develop his understanding of Jeet Kune Do so I wanted to really dig into that. Fortunately, I found a guy only an hour from me so I actually cut down some time which was nice so a guy named Sifu Ed Chow or Chow Chong Ying, trained, really, started back in the late 60s with the teaching of professional Leung Ting then years later moved to an Ip Chun student but he's been in that art for about 54 years, New England Wing Chun over in Connecticut and stuff so I started training with him every weekend, would still continue to train with my Serrada teacher every other month and then still see Sifu Cass, probably got there once a year to California. Usually stay out there for a few weeks, really get my training in as far as the association goes then I would continue to work with Sifu Greg every other month, drive down to Long Island and then, as well as see Sifu George Chaber on a monthly basis as well for his workshops and do private lessons and then somehow some way, I found time. I don't know. I always found time or found some way to continue to train with other people. In the mid-2000s, I was training Brazilian JiuJitsu over at Massachusetts and lately, for the past few years, I've been doing catch wrestling under Coach Mike Miggs and I would go see him every few months, every 3 months. It's all been really the same thing. I would go down for a few hours, drive on over to Boston, really just spend the whole night with him training and stuff so that's pretty much current of the day. I think I named everybody that I could think of but it's funny. I've been really fortunate to have so many wonderful teachers and train in the martial arts and really just, I always tell people to go out and train and experience something. If you want to learn more about aikido, go out and learn about aikido. If you want to learn more about Balintawak, go out and do Balintawak which I actually have a Balintawak teacher as well. I know, it's terrible. The more I listen, the more what's up with this guy and I actually have a modern Arnis teacher too. It's terrible.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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What's funny about this is that there's the joke whether it's the sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*, *Barney* has a guy for everything or most of us know somebody who oh, I know who you could go see. You have a martial arts person for everything. Oh, you want to learn this? I know somebody.

Nathan Marinone:

It's terrible. I feel bad if I miss anybody.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I don't think it's bad at all. I think it's great!

Nathan Marinone:

Like I said, really what it is, Jeremy, I don't have any kids. I've been really fortunate to have a pretty good job per shift so really, everything else besides work is spending time with my life. I've been traveling and doing martial arts. Like I said, I think early on, doing things in the 90s, starting off with the correspondence tapes, I've always been self-sufficient. I've always wanted, I've always had this deep hunger for knowledge and growth. I've always just wanted to get out there that if something interested me, nothing was going to hold me back. Like I said, started doing Balintawak last year and it's kind of interesting. So, people always say you train with this guy, you do this art, you do this art, right? How do you remember them all. I've gotten that question quite a bit and it's a very good question and I think, as you train in these things long enough; first is you begin to see patterns. You begin to recognize lines and patterns. If you look at a punch, what changes from style to style of that punch is how somebody postures. If somebody holds it by the chin versus in the center of their chest versus on their hip, that's what denote style. A punch is still a punch. It's just how somebody presents that punch and it's the posture in which they're in and how they deliver that punch so you could look at things and you could say ok, each one of these individuals do one technique and they're all similar but the presentation and how they deliver that technique is a little bit different but ultimately, it comes from the root source. It's still an extension. It's just the point of deployment and the point of recovery are now different so I've always been, really, I've always had a really easy time seeing those patterns and lines. Certainly, there's things that I do that I'm a little bit more serious in. Right now, I teach 5 different martial arts. I know that sounds a little crazy but there is all the ones that I train in that I do because I enjoy it. For example, with like catch and Balintawak and modern Arnis, I had to test for all those. I don't do it to remember a curriculum or to try and attain rank in those. I do it because one, I enjoyed the process of learning. I enjoyed that learning curve and I enjoy doing something that challenges me and there's things that I see that can improve me as a martial artist so I'll go in to those things, to certain systems trying to look for something to get out of it. I'm not necessarily going to adopt the whole curriculum. I think at this point, I think my mind is overflowed anyway. I don't think I have anything more to put in my head but I think what's more important to me at this stage in my life is the relationships of the people that I have in the martial arts more than so the techniques that I learned from them. For sure, I think, yeah, when I start



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pulling out all my curriculums, at least I do, I see more similarities than I do differences. I, for certain, 100%, there's some of these different Filipino systems. You can put this system against this system against this system and I guarantee, you're going to see more similarities than you do differences.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Like the ways we can move.

Nathan Marinone:

That's right. you look at someone like Dan Inosanto or a lot of his followers or anybody else really pragmatic in the martial arts, these guys, they go out and they train in different things and they train because they're exploring, they're learning. I think they fill their curiosity which I think is good. For myself, I'm not trying to know everything or train with anybody, I'm just fueling my curiosity and I really enjoy the process of learning and challenging myself, for sure. I think that's what I really enjoy. At least, at this stage of my life, I really enjoy training and learning and studying with different people and understanding the things that I do wrong. When my good friend, Sifu Dustin, I started in before I went to Sifu Greg, he used to always say if somebody can teach me something I already know but put a different spin on it, present it in a way that I may not have seen, that's valuable to me. I think there's a lot of truth there especially when we start training in a lot of different things, I think a lot of times, we start to collect. We collect more and more techniques and I think that could become bad for the obvious reasons. It's like what Grandmaster Ed Parker used to say. You have 10 things that can fight me instead of 10,000. He was kind of getting the idea of I'm not overthinking the process. Guy grabs you, you hit. You have a few well-tuned responses to a majority of what can be attack. It's really kind of the antithesis of what Jeet Kune Do is but I believe you have to go through the process to learn different things to really whittle down that statue of, say, Michelangelo. You just can't end up in a polished state. You have to go to that learning process and I think, each person that you work with, I think they give you something to that, for sure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Totally.

Nathan Marinone:

100%

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let's flip it. We've talked about the then and the now and lets talk about the future. I'm going to guess. I don't usually do this but I'm going to guess, if we look 5, 10 years down the road. You still have what many people would say are too many instructors, you're still passionate about the martial arts, you're



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still travelling, training, trying to squeeze every little nugget of wisdom you can out of the people around you and probably still loving it. Am I missing anything there?

Nathan Marinone:

No, I think it's...as long as I still have hair on my head too.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Careful.

Nathan Marinone:

I'm beginning to get a little, yeah, I noticed! I'm beginning to think it's a little thin.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know that's not, it's not hard to see! You see any pictures of me, it's pretty darn clear!

Nathan Marinone:

I think as you do the martial arts for a long time, you develop a thick skin and you're in this because you want to improve as a human being and everybody gets something a little bit out of the martial arts and I think you have to get a thick skin. I think, no matter what you do, you're going to be criticized. You can pick, we can pick anybody out there from martial artist, an actor or actress, somebody iconic like, let's just say, oh I don't know, like Christ himself. All these guys are criticized for something. You're never going to get anybody on the Jeremy train or the Nate train or the Dan Inosanto train or the Bruce Lee train so I think you have to do what makes you happy and I think if you can see the value in that and it's making you better, a better martial artist, a better teacher, a better fighter, then I think there's value added in that. I think when you really begin to understand things, everything is just movement. It's perfect what you just said. That concept of physical techniques no longer really apply anymore. It's just now what you see is a stylistic view of delivery of something. You don't necessarily see a technique per se and I think, speaking for myself, but I think that's how a lot of people can train in most of the martial arts. All the teachers that I trained with, they all train in multiple martial arts whether it's just JKD-Kali and you add in Silat, now you add Wing Chun or Brazilian JiuJitsu or even a little bit of Thai boxing. I think everybody, I think they're all able to see all those patterns and lines and they're able to draw the essence of those arts and just teach them outwardly, for sure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool. This has been great and you did great.

Nathan Marinone:



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Yeah, I enjoyed it! This has been interesting for me trying to figure out what I'm going to say. This has been really educational just for myself as you know I'm growing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's an interesting exercise to put yourself out there to talk like this and if anyone wants the quick and dirty experience of doing this, go back, especially to the earlier episodes where I very much followed a script in asking the questions and when the guest is talking, just turn the volume down and you answer it.

Nathan Marinone:

That's not a bad way either. That's going to be good.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And then when I start talking again, turn it back up and listen and answer that question and it's really funny. You listen to people come on and I don't know how many people listen to every episode other than me. I was there for all of them but it seems like it should be easier than it is and what I've noticed is the guest who just kind of go, just like I'm just going to talk have the best time and when I started the show, the one thing that I was not concerned about was getting martial arts instructors or people in the industry to talk because I've been in enough classes with enough instructors, enough places to know martial arts instructors can talk.

Nathan Marinone:

Of course. You're spot on. I think one of the reason to what lead me to doing this, I like to practice what I preach. You know what I mean? I'm always telling my student to train outwardly. Train with these people. Look into the mirror. Identify what you're weak at and improve upon it so I knew, never doing this before, I was probably never going to sound like a total dingaling but if I didn't subject myself to it, I would not be a good teacher. If I wasn't out there, training with multiple people and trying to understand different things but I expected my students to do it, then I wouldn't be any better for it so I've always told my students, anything I would ask you guys to do or advice you to do, I'm doing myself and I think that's important as teachers. I think we tend to challenge our students but I think that we really challenge ourselves. I think we really have to be the message. If we want our students to compete, maybe we should compete and understand what that environment is like so just, I think, perfect, I've never done a podcast so I'm going to subject myself to a podcast so I'm going to put myself out there whether I sound good or bad and get that experience and that understanding of it so that ok, I've done it. This is what I have to learn from it so I think you should never be afraid to look stupid no matter if you're training, if you're speaking because really, it all comes down to growth and understanding. I always say this, you don't want to be the big fish in the small lake. You always want to humble yourself



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and stay modest and try to improve. Don't be afraid to look dumb because ultimately, this is your story, this is your journey. What you put in is what you're going to get out of it, 100%.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, if you know anything about me and my training, you know that I can certainly relate to training under a number of people and travelling for that training and doing all of that so I have certainly have found a kindred spirit in Sifu here but what didn't come out in the episode was there are a lot of people who think very highly of this man and when word got out that he was coming on this show, I got a number of messages so not only was he a great guest, he's clearly made an impact on those around him. Thank you for coming on the show, Sir. I hope we get to meet up and train together soon. You can visit whistlekickmartialartsradio.com to see the show notes. There you can find videos and links, social media, pictures and more. It's not just for this episode but everyone we've ever made. If you're willing to support us and the work that we do, you have lots of options. Make a purchase at whistlekick.com, don't forget the code PODCAST15 to save 15% or leave a review, buy a book on amazon or help out with our Patreon. That's patreon.com/whistlekick. If you have guest suggestions, let us know. Our social media which we put a lot into is @whistlekick everywhere you can imagine and my personal email address, jeremy@whistlekick.com. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!