



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hi there! You're listening to whistlekick martial arts radio episode 472. Today, my guest is Mr. Andrew Adams. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, your host on this show, founder of whistlekick and everything we do here at whistlekick is in support of the traditional martial arts. If you want to see everything we're doing, check out whistlekick.com. That's our online home. It's the place to find our store and if you make a purchase in the store, make sure you use the code `PODCAST15` to save 15% on some new sparring gear or maybe a uniform, shirt, something like that, got all kinds of good stuff over there. This show, martial arts radio gets its own website that is whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. We bring you this show twice a week and our goal here at whistlekick is to connect, educate and entertain traditional martial artists the world over. If you want to support the work that we're doing, there are a number of ways you can help us. You can make a purchase, share an episode, follow us on social media. We're @whistlekick. Tell a friend about us, maybe pick up one of our books on Amazon, leave a review or support us on Patreon, patreon.com/whistlekick. Patreon is a place where we post exclusive content and if you contribute as little as \$5 a month, you get access to that content. If you've been a fan of the show for a while, there's a good chance that you are in our Facebook group, Whistlekick Martial Arts Radio Behind the Scenes and if you pay attention to what goes on in that group, there's a good chance that today's guest's name rings a bell. Mr. Andrew Adams helps us out back there. He is one of our admins and he's one of the folks welcoming people into the group. He, along with Stacy, do a great job making sure that all of the amazing people, I think we're close to a thousand people in that group, are on task, on topic and are



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

talking about what we're doing with this show. Now, the way I first met Mr. Adams is a little bit different. Probably different than anyone else I've ever met and we're going to talk about that, we're going to talk about his wanderings through the martial arts and a bunch of other stuff. It was a great conversation. I enjoyed getting to know him better and I think you'll enjoy this episode as well. Mr. Adams, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio!

Andrew Adams:

Thank you so much! It's a pleasure to be here.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It is a pleasure. You were probably the first person that really came to me and said I want to know how you do what you do with the podcast and that was the first time we met.

Andrew Adams:

That's true. You're right!

Jeremy Lesniak:

You hopped in the car, you drove a bunch of hours and we had coffee.

Andrew Adams:

We did, yeah. It was a great meeting and just hearing how this whole thing works.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That was a couple of years ago, wasn't it?

Andrew Adams:

It was, yeah. About a year and a half or so, I believe.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And it's easy to forget that it wasn't that long ago because I feel like I know you. We've had a chance to chat and train and email and you help behind the scenes and it's kind of what you're doing today. Your helping, your giving of your time.

Andrew Adams:

Like I said, it's a pleasure to be a part of this. Not just the interview but just help out whistlekick. I love what it is that you do and I'm happy to help in any way that I can.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Well, thank you and I know we're going to get into everything. We're going to, maybe not everything, that's probably a little bit too grandiose, we only have so much time but we're going to get into a lot of things. Let's get into the most fundamental things. It's a martial arts show, how did you started training?

Andrew Adams:

I was in, I just transferred high schools. I was a freshman in high school so I must have been 13 or 14 and me and my mom had been in a bad marriage and when we got out, we moved to a new school and I said, at 13 years old, I need to be able to protect my mom. That's really what I was thinking. I want to be able to protect my mom so she doesn't ever get hurt and I remember looking in the phonebook because they existed back then and I went to the back yellow pages and I just flipped through, looked up martial arts and there was the local school. I knew nothing about martial arts. I just knew that karate is how you learn to protect people so I remember coming up when my mom came home from work, I said this is what I want to do and she said, ok and was, I never before expressed any interest in it and she had me call. She said I'm not going to do this for you. If this is what you want to do, you have to take ownership of it so I called the first school that was there and it was just the luck of the draw, the first one was about 10 minutes away and we went to our first class and I just was absolutely hooked. There's no other better word to describe it. I just couldn't get enough.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What was it? What hooked you in?

Andrew Adams:

A lot of it, probably the instructor. He was a therapist by trade and did family therapy and I think he could kind of tell that I was lacking in my life at the time, a bit of a male role model and he just connected with me in a way that I don't know some other instructors may have been able to, perhaps and I would train, as a freshman in high school, I started training 4 days a week and for a high school kid, that was a lot and I was there training all the way through high school, started college and whenever I come back from college, that's where I would go. I was always excited to go back to the dojo and I trained all the way through nii-kyu so 2nd degree just before, a couple rounds before black belt and, as it happens all so often especially students who go off to college, I had to take a break. I moved to a new location, was at school and couldn't make it back to the dojo because I was too far away and then, that's when life hits and I think that happens to so many people. I had to take a break for a few years and it wasn't until, maybe, 6 or 7 years later that I had read a statistic. I have no idea how true this is. The statistics are what you make of them, I suppose, but I read a statistic that 80% of people who make it to brown belt never make it to black belt and I said, I don't want to be that statistic so I had to get back involved again. I realized, after reading that, again, missing something in my life so I started training again at a new school. My initial training was in Gōjū-ryū karate and the new school that I started training at was in Shotokan so the instructor looked at my karate, at the time, and said you're good.



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

We're not going to make you go back to white belt. You can stay a brown belt and then, after about maybe a year or so, he re-tested me for brown belt so I got to stay at my same rank which was really nice. I appreciated that and then, fast forward, I trained there for 10+ years, ended up getting my 3rd degree black belt and real life hit again and I had to move to a new place where there was no local school and again, something was missing later on in life and I had to come back to it. I just, I can't stay away.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How much time had passed when you took that break? Was it like a year or 10 years?

Andrew Adams:

Probably 5 to 6 years.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think that's important for people to know because the difference in putting martial arts down for one period of time versus another can really impact how easy it is to come back. The longer you stop doing something, the harder it is to start doing it again. Was it difficult for you to pick it back up?

Andrew Adams:

Yes but there were extenuating circumstances that make it easier. When I stopped after college, when I started retraining again, I had another very good friend who had trained at a separate dojo. We knew each other outside of the dojo. We had met and in our talking, he had done the exact same thing that I had. He had gotten to brown belt in another school and I had gotten to brown belt in my school and we both stopped for a number of years and we both said we want to do this together so now, having been friends outside of training, we started training at the same school for the first time together and so, we had each other to kind of, for lack of a better word, play with, train with outside the dojo but in the dojo, it was new and challenging, in terms of we haven't done it in a long time but we had each other, at least, so that was a huge, huge help coming back into it. I think it would've been a lot more challenging had I not had a friend there with me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What were you leaning on him for? And maybe I'm being speculative in using that word choice but I'm guessing. How did you support each other? Maybe that's a better way or ease? I think you know where I'm getting at so I'll let you answer the question that I'm trying to ask rather than the one I'm asking.

Andrew Adams:

Sure, sure. We were able to, first off, we went to class together. We had a little bit of prep time before class to talk about whatever like I wonder what we're going to do tonight in class and just to get the



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

mind racing with each other and then, after class, we would have the drive home and we could talk about what we did in class and what we struggled with. What I have struggled with may have been totally different from what he struggled with and so, I think it helped our progress because we got to see what the other person did or didn't do well and got to feel, if it had been just myself, I would have been driving home and say I didn't do this well. I felt really bad that I should've picked this up easier but instead, I drove home and said all of those things but I listened to someone else who had difficulty in this other thing that I did really well. That made me feel better like oh, he struggled with that? I actually did pretty well with that but this other thing, he did really well. Man, I had a really hard time with that so I think just being able to have a closer interaction with another student and being able to discuss what we did and didn't do, I think, helped how I felt after class and you don't always get that when you go home and you've no one else to talk to about it or maybe you have a significant other to talk to about it but they don't really understand because they weren't there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think you've kind of hit on something. Something that most of us really don't get the opportunity to do. Yeah, a lot of us start training with a friend but I've seen this happen enough times that one of those people eventually falls off and the other one sticks around because it becomes a part of their lives and they really enjoy it et cetera, whatever their reasons are, but they lose that sounding board and that sounding board is so critical. I'm pretty lucky. I have a really large sounding board. I got to share things with everyone who listens to the show and I get feedback, just bombarding my email and it's really helpful to have that support and your illustrating the same thing. Do you think you would have continued had you not had him?

Andrew Adams:

I don't know if I would have. I may have continued but I don't think I would have continued for as long as I did. I think I would have probably stuck it out but I don't think my heart would have been in it as much. That's my guess. It's hard to speculate because, of course, I had him there but he did end up, we tested for our shodan together. He stayed long enough for that and then after, as often happens when people get their black belt, they think it's over. I'm done. I don't have to train anymore and that kind of happened with him and he stopped training and I kept going and 3 years later, got my 2nd degree blackbelt. 3 years after that, got my 3rd degree black belt so he did die off and fall off going and stopped going but I did that initial coming back to the dojo, I don't know if I would have stuck with it. It was so good to have that connection with someone else and it's different, I think, if I had been a white belt going to class. Everything would have been difficult. People struggled with that and had their own struggles but because I had been training before and stopped and started over, there were things that I thought I should have been doing better and didn't and I think that's where having the support of someone else really, really help.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Yeah, totally get it. Let's go back. Let's look at this spectrum of your martial arts training or timeline. It's a better word. You started training pretty young for a really mature reason. A reason that I don't know that even a majority of us are fully going to grasp. I've got some hints of it up to today. I'm going to assume that your reasons for training now are different than they were when you were 13.

Andrew Adams:

Yup, I would agree.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How has that changed and why has that changed? Take us on a little bit of a ride inside your mind, if you will.

Andrew Adams:

Sure. When I was a young kid, it was to protect my mom and I had an older brother but he was off at college so he wasn't around. When I first trained, it was to protect my mom. When I went off to college and started retraining again, I think part of it was pride, I don't want to be this statistic. I don't want to be the brown belt that quite because I'm not a quitter. I'm going to keep going so I started retraining for that reason and after I got my 3rd degree black belt, I got married and I moved away and again, took another 6 or 7 year-break and started retraining again about 3 years ago and now, my reasons for training are completely different. It's health oriented, it's keeping my body in shape. I'm getting older and my muscles ache in ways that they didn't when I was younger and so, you were absolutely right. The reasons for training changed, I think, through a person's career often and I would be surprised if the reason people started training in the beginning are why they're training now. I think that's the journey for me. Initially, for protection and then, because I don't want to be a quitter and then, now, it's just for me. It's not for anybody else but me and my body and keeping myself active, I think, is my main reason for continuing to train now.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I wanted to highlight that because I had a feeling of the answer and I was pretty sure where you're going to go with that. Our reason should change for training because if they don't, it means you're in the same place. It means your challenges are the same, your successes are the same, you're in the same place as a person and if martial arts is this great tool of personal development, then that shouldn't be the case.

Andrew Adams:

Absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

I think the majority of people, I'm hoping most of the people out there listening, if you've been training for a while, I'll let you define that however you want, I bet if you took stock of why you're training now versus why you started training, it's changed. I hope it's changed because it means you've changed.

Andrew Adams:

Sure, and it's interesting because martial arts is something that can be life-fulfilling and life-enriching. For me, that's the goal and at a time when, I can only speak for karate because I have extensive training in Gōjū-ryū, Shotokan and now, Shōrin-ryū but it's all karate-based. Nothing else, really, but if you look at all of the major founders of those styles of martial arts and even, Jigorō Kano or Morihei Ueshiba and some of the other aikido and judo guys, the life expectancy back then was, the average life expectancy was 40 years old and Funakoshi died at 88 and Ankō Itosu was 83 and Sokon Matsumura was 80. It was unheard of to have people live that long so it has to fulfill and enrich your life in a way that, surprisingly, other things don't apparently have the ability to do so I think it's pretty amazing and I think it's one of the few activities that you can do at 5, you can do at 50 and you can do at 90. Everybody finds their own thing from it. What the person at 90 is getting out of it is different from the person who's 5 but they're going to be able to do it for their entire lives and there aren't a lot of hobbies that you can say that about.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's a great point. You can certainly play with trucks when you're 90 years old but are you going to get as much out of it just because you can do something doesn't mean it's going to be as beneficial and I don't know if I've ever thought of it that way. I like that. Nice.

Andrew Adams:

And there are so many different styles of martial arts. You don't typically get, and obviously there are exceptions to every rule, but you're not going to find often a 22-year old guy getting involved in tai chi and you're not going to find 60-year old guys getting involved in MMA. There may be exceptions but, as a general rule, I think that's fairly correct.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I would agree.

Andrew Adams:

But regardless of what age you are, there's something for you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, I want you to think back on your time, your training and stories that come from it. You know I love stories. Everybody who listens to the show knows that I love stories. TO me, this is the driver of



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

everything that we do, not just in this show in whistlekick but in martial arts, it's in telling of the stories so this is your chance to tell your favorite story. Leave us with something. You're stepping up in front of a room and you're asked to present your favorite story from your martial arts training, what is that?

Andrew Adams:

I have a pretty funny, I have 2 stories actually, I'd like to share. One is funny and one is a little more touching. The funny one, I spent 3 and a half months in Japan. I was hired to perform at a theme park in Japan which is a pretty unique opportunity to be sure. I would do 4 to 5 shows a day at the theme park with the musical group that I was performing with and I had one day off a week so I work 6 days. Everybody in the group had 1 day off and we had an interpreter that worked for us while we were there for 3 and a half months. None of us spoke Japanese, although I know a little bit through my martial arts training but not enough, not conversational and while I was there, I said I would love to train in Japan and it was actually in one of my breaks but I still had my gi and I still have my belt and I said, when I'm in Japan, I have to train. For me, it would have been one of the highlights of the trip so I brought my gi with me and once we got settled the first afternoon of the first 3 weeks or so, I went to our interpreter, his name was Yoshi; I said Yoshi, I want to train in martial arts while I'm here. I don't care what martial arts it is, I just want to be able to do it while I'm over here and he said ok, I'll find a place, I'll find a place and he made some calls around and he came back and said, on your day off, there's this school. Here's how to get there, you get on the train and I said ok, that's what I'm going to do so that morning, I got up, my heart's racing, I'm all excited, I get on the train, I got my gi in my bag and I planned ahead of time, by having my iPad. It was far long enough ago that I didn't have a smartphone so I didn't have any, my phone wouldn't have worked there anyway, so I brought my iPad which has an app to translate things and because, I wouldn't have wireless internet there, I programmed ahead of time some phrases like I would like to train, can I speak with your sensei and these other things and I programmed them all in ahead of time for phrases I thought I might need. I get to the location, I get there early. I couldn't figure how to get into the building but I saw some stairs in the back and I went up the stairs and a big window and I looked in and I see the dojo and I'm like oh, it's so beautiful and so, I sit there and I wait and I wait and I wait and I wait and sure enough, eventually, a couple of kids come into the dojo but not through the door that I'm sitting in front of in the back and they looked at me and I waved at them and they came over and they opened the door and I grabbed my iPad and I pointed to the phrase like I would like to train today and they motioned like oh, you're in the wrong spot so I went around, I finally found the right door so I came in and they didn't quite understand exactly what was going on and so I waited some more and some more people started showing up and then, I realized every single person coming in is a child. There are no, the only adults are the parents that are dropping children off but eventually, there's going to be an adult instructor coming in and no adult instructor came in and they started teaching and the class was being taught by a 12-year old boy and finally, one of the parents came over and he had his phone, was using an app to translate his Japanese to English and I realized how poorly those apps actually work and I'm trying to talk to him through my app, translating my English to Japanese and it's just not working so I finally, one of them called a friend who spoke English and gave the phone to me



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

and I could say who I was and what I'm trying to do and gave the phone back to him and he listened to his friend translate it back to Japanese and come to find out, this class is only for kids and the interpreter that works for me had no idea and he sent me to a kids' class of 12 and under and I was mortified. I was like oh my gosh, I'm trying to sit in on this kids' class and so, I left and never came back. I was just too embarrassed to come back and I just told the interpreter that works for me that I'm done. Forget it, it didn't work out. Again, handle this and I never got to train in Japan. I was so close and yet, so far away.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I can relate to that. I know how embarrassing that can be. You get up all the nerve that you have to go somewhere in another country, foreign language because you're hoping to find this thing, so close but yet, not.

Andrew Adams:

Yup, yup. Very embarrassed. The other story which I thought was definitely a little more touching but not quite as humorous. When I started training most recently, I came into the school and the instructor said you are a black belt. You have a 3rd degree black belt in Shotokan, your karate is strong. I'm not going to take that belt away from you. You earned that black belt. You should keep that black belt and wear it in the class and I appreciated that. I told them I'm happy to go back to white belt and I didn't really care because I wasn't training for belts, I'm training for myself and he said no, keep your black belt and so, for the first 3 or 4 months or so, I'm wearing my black belt which has my name on it. It says Shotokan on one side and the next test was coming up in the school for under ranks and he had me sit up on the black belt board which was nice. I didn't expect it but I appreciated it. We went through the whole test and the test was all over and we're all standing at attention and he goes through all the students that were getting their belts and at the end, he said, there's one person here that I have yet to call up and I'm standing up there and everyone else is already called up and he asked me in front and stand in front of him. Ok, and no idea why, and he gave a little bit of a speech about who I was and why I wear a black belt because some of the students were kids and the kids class, they don't see me, only the adults so he explained Andrew has his black belt from his old school and we let him wear it here because he's a black belt so I don't want anyone to think that this is a promotion. I am not promoting Andrew to black belt because he's already a black belt but I would like you, Andrew, to take your belt off so I took my belt off and he gave me a plain black belt. Didn't say anything, just plain black belt and he asked if I would be wearing this belt in the school and I said of course and again, he stressed it's not a promotion and I was like oh, which is fine and then, he pulled out green tape and put a green stripe around the end of my black belt and said this is a promotion. I'm promoting Andrew to green belt in our school so I was still a black belt but officially, in the school, I was a green belt but I was to be treated as a black belt because I earned a black belt but I was just touched. I thought it was a great way to allow someone to come into the school and continue to keep their black belt, be treated like a black belt but still go through the testing process and since being in the school, he then, my next test was, I went straight from green to brown belt, for ii-kyu, and then, my next test was for shodan in that school.



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

I heard a number of different ways that instructors would handle someone with previous ranks. I have experienced a number of different ways, that's probably the coolest one I've seen, heard of, rather. That's really neat.

Andrew Adams:

I thought it was really nice because he didn't want to take anything away from me with my previous training and he felt it appropriate that the students treat me like a black belt, though technically, in the school, I wasn't at that particular school because it was a different system. My black belt was in Shotokan and this was a Shōrin-ryū school and that's a school that I train at now and when I got my brown belt in the school, he just put brown tape at the end of my black belt and then, when I tested for black belt, I got a new black belt.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I really like that. Sounds like a really good school. Sounds like you found a good home there.

Andrew Adams:

I'm very, very happy.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, being someone that trained in 2 other schools, I imagine that you were evaluating this 3rd school before you committed to it. Are you willing to talk about that at all?

Andrew Adams:

Sure, sure. My first school was a very traditional dojo. Tatami mats, showman, bowing in, very, very traditional. The class was taught 90% in Japanese. We didn't say front stance, we said Zenkutsu-dachi. The whole class, that's what you learned. Didn't go to a lot of tournaments, a couple but we weren't a big tournament school and then when I took a break and went to my second school, very different. Sport karate-oriented, we sparred in class every single night. Did some board breaking, again, a handful of tournament but not a lot but a lot more focus in learning kata and less about practical application technique and the school that I'm at now, very, very traditional-oriented school. Again, teaches in Japanese. A lot more practical application of things, less focus on learning lots of kata and instead learning more practical things but for me, it was important to find a traditional school. That's what resonates to me. Understanding the culture, understanding the language as much as possible, we don't converse in Japanese in the class but it's still taught in Japanese and to me, that's really important. Not to take away anything from schools that don't do that but for me, that was the right fit.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

And I think it's really important to realize what is and isn't a good fit. I've trained at schools that weren't the right fit and I trained in schools that were for some reasons but not others and it comes down to the why, what matters to you and I've trained in schools with varying formality. I've been with schools that were too formal and I didn't feel like my personality existed anymore. I felt stifled and I've trained in schools where I felt like I was in a daycare full of adults just doing their own thing.

Andrew Adams:

I've always felt that there's no such thing as a bad school, per se. There may be a bad school for me but if that school have students in it, if those students are happy with what they're learning then good for them. Those students will probably not be happy at the school I'm training at so what one man loves, one man may not and that's ok.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And this is one of the beauties of having a number of different martial arts taught by a number of different people in a whole bunch of different ways.

Andrew Adams:

Absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Everybody gets a chance to find what works for them. To me, the sad thing is, someone who tries one way with one instructor and doesn't find a fit and gives up.

Andrew Adams:

Exactly. One of the things when I took my first break and started training in my second school, one of the things that I loved about the school is my first initial interaction with the instructor, he said come on in and check out a class or two. If it's not your cup of tea, that's totally fine. I'm happy to point you at another instructor that may be more fitting to what you're looking for and I think, as an instructor, to be able to have that humility enough to be able to say my style of teaching might not fit what you're looking for and that's ok. I'm happy to show you someone else that may fit what you're looking for and I think, as an instructor, be able to have that wherewithal is important.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, martial arts is clearly a big part of your life, something that you're passionate about but I know it's not the only thing that you're passionate about and there's another aspect to your life that I know a little bit about and I got a feeling that the 2 have some synergy so I'm wondering if you might tell us about drumming.

Andrew Adams:



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Sure, sure. I left regular day job a number of years ago to focus on my passion, my other passion: teaching drumming. Specifically, a niche style of drumming which is drumming for bagpipe bands. When you see a bagpipe bands walk down the street, they're going to have bagpipers but they're also going to have drummers and that's what I do. I teach those drummers and there is a, I'm surprised the more and more I'm involved in the bagpipe band community, how many musicians, specifically pipers and drummers, are involved in martial arts. More so than any other group I've been involved with. If, on a basketball team, if I were to interview everyone on the team and find out how many of these adult play or involved in basketball and martial arts, it would be a pretty low number; as opposed to musicians are often, in my experience, often involved in martial arts and I find that interesting and I think it has something to do with kata, pre-arranged motions and muscle memory of doing things and it's the same with music. The muscle memory of holding your fingers this way on a guitar to do a specific chord and I'm just speculating here but I think it has something to do with that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, and this is your full time job, teaching drumming.

Andrew Adams:

That is my fulltime job. I get hired by groups all over, mostly New England, I do have a few groups outside of New England, in Canada, Royal Canadian Mountain Police Pipe band hired me to travel up Montreal and teach them but I also get hired by a lot of students all over United States to teach lessons over Skype. One of the beauties of modern technology is that I consider my computer in my home and I can have a student in Seattle, Washington sit at their computer and we can see each other and I can give a drum lesson over the computer. Something that you couldn't do 15 years ago.

Jeremy Lesniak:

No and I think the thing that blows me away, in a good way that I love, is there are people out there who say oh, that's too specific. There aren't enough people who would want that business and it won't work and I think you are the perfect example of a very niche thing and turning it into a job and, through that, being able to make your living doing something you love.

Andrew Adams:

You're right. I do love it. I often tell people, in fact, Jeremy, you say often on your show that you have the best job in the world but you're lying because I have the best job in the world because I get to teach drumming the whole day.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's pretty cool. It's really is. Logically, I might be able to one up you because I get to hear about you talking about your job so we might be able to diagram that out in a way that I win. I'm reflecting back on



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

some college level logic notation but it's rusty, I don't know if I could diagram that. Let's talk about the synergy between drumming, or rhythm, and martial arts because it's in there, it's not something that's often discussed. Maybe you can talk about where drumming came in for you, when you started that and how, maybe, martial arts impacted drumming and drumming impacted martial arts.

Andrew Adams:

Sure. For me, I started drumming in high school. For me, it's interesting, I haven't thought about this, right around the same time I started martial arts, actually. Had transferred to a new school, didn't know anybody and, for me, I had an older brother that passed away when I was very young and I didn't really know him very well because I was 4, 5, or 6. I was really little when he had moved, when my dad left my mom, he had gone with my dad so I didn't really know my brother really well but I knew that he played snare drum in a bagpipe band. That much I knew and so, when the band director in school said we need drummers in the band, I thought oh, great! This is an opportunity for me to a, try something new and b, do something my brother did. Even though I didn't know my brother really well, I feel like this will bring me closer to him and so I started drumming in high school for that reason primarily and it became something that I just loved, much like martial arts, and I think, for me, may very well had been because they started the same time and I started for a very emotional reason. That might be one of the reasons why I became so passionate about it but in terms of how does it affect my martial arts? For me, the thing that I love is kata. I love doing forms and you can see the same form done, even in the same school, by different students and it will look slightly different because of the cadence or the rhythm of how they do it and I think, for me, seeing how the kata is done and for me, when I perform a kata and go through the motions, not just in my head going through the motions and thinking about what the move is but changing up the rhythm and the cadence of the form can change the form dramatically and I think that's pretty cool.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, I'm going to guess that, as a percussionist, your ability to make slight variations in that cadence is probably better than the average person. I know, whenever, not that anybody seems to do this anymore, back when Guitar Hero and Rock Band were videogames people were playing, I would do fine on guitar, I would do fine on bass guitar but the moment I picked up those drum sticks, even when putting it on the easiest level, didn't work well for me. I don't do well with that rhythm. Somehow I can find it in a form but I'm guessing part of why you love kata is that you're able to explore it in a way that most of us can't.

Andrew Adams:

Maybe, perhaps. I also think, it helps in other ways too that I haven't necessarily thought of but I believe it was Musashi who said there are 3 times when you can attack your opponent. Right before they attack,



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

right exactly at the same time and right after they attack and, for me, I think perhaps I'm able to gauge that before and after rhythmic-wise a little differently than other people can.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I would imagine, as much time as you spent in martial arts, you're doing at least some level of instruction, in the supporting role at the very least, does your ability to teach drumming come into play? Are you doing anything differently? Maybe drills that we may look out and say what is he doing?

Andrew Adams:

You're right. I do teach in the school that I'm at and my last school, the instructor, when I got my san-Dan, my 3rd degree black belt did give me the title of sensei. I don't use it because I'm not a sensei in the school that I'm in now but in my school, currently, I do a fair bit of teaching for the sensei when he's away and help him out in class. I don't know that my drills are, per se, different because of my drumming but I will say, if there's one thing that I learned in my years and years of teaching drumming, is that what works for teaching one student a particular movement, might not work teaching this other student and so, one of the things I've learned in my many years of teaching is different ways of teaching the same thing so that if this thing doesn't work with this student, let me try this other way because I worked for this other person over here and I find myself using those same types of teaching methods when I teach karate as well. I want this outcome, this is what I want but I know of a few different ways to get there so what way is going to work for this particular student and I think, as an instructor, being able to quickly find what does and doesn't work with students is crucial and so, my many years of teaching drumming has helped me teach karate for that reason.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, way back at the top of the episode, you talked about protecting your mother as the initial motivation for your training. What have her thoughts been as you stepped in and out and back in to martial arts?

Andrew Adams:

I don't know. It's not something I talk with her a ton about. I mean, she continued to support. When I was in high school, she's the one that brought me to class every single day that I went and when I got to college, she was less involved because I could drive myself but she's always been there and when I moved a few hours away and started training again and eventually getting my 2nd and 3rd degree black belt, she was there at those tests. She, as an older woman in her 60s and 70s would drive the 2 and a half hours and come to my test which is pretty cool. I certainly appreciated that. We haven't talked specifically about much of my martial arts training since then but she's still here and she still supports me and I appreciate that.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

I would encourage you to talk to her. I don't know why. Something in my gut tells me there's a conversation there that she might enjoy hearing. Did you ever tell her the impetus?

Andrew Adams:

You know what? I don't know that I have, Jeremy.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well, maybe she'll listen to this because I can't imagine there's a mom out there that wouldn't be touched to hear that story about her child. When you take a look back, much of what we've talked about today is looking at your training in these sections, these segments and we have, what is it, 3 really clearly defined periods of time and each one of those has a certain instructor and maybe the theme or where you were at in life is a little bit different in each one but they clearly thread together and build on each other but you talk about your training and it sounds like you see your training as this kind of broader, you train in karate, you don't train in Shōrin-ryū. It sounds like you see it in a wider perspective. Am I reading that right?

Andrew Adams:

Yeah! you're absolutely correct. The "style" and I hate that term but the dojo I train in now is Shōrin-ryū but there's so many similarities between all the styles of karate. It's really hard to say style even.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Is that a perspective that your fellow students in the school or your instructor share? **Andrew Adams:**

My instructor, for sure, I think when you get to the level of being an instructor, it's hard to not see those similarities. I can't speak for the other students in the school. I think the advanced students, for sure, understand that concept and see the similarities and perhaps, they even see a little more now than I've come in to the school and have an outside perspective. For them, most of them anyway, all they know is the dojo that we're in but because I come in with knowledge of other styles, and it's interesting because in the whole grand scheme of things, Gōjū-ryū is on one end, Shotokan is kind of in the other and Shōrin-ryū in my view is very much kind of between the two so it's been interesting training in these 3 styles and seeing the dichotomy between all of them.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We talked about training philosophy and we de-toured a little bit to talk about music and now, I have no idea but I'm going to guess that martial arts entertainment is something that resonates for you. Am I on or am I way off?

Andrew Adams:

I would actually say you're way off to a degree.



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

To a degree, what do you mean?

Andrew Adams:

I am not a fan of, not to say that I hate it but it's not my cup of tea, tournament-style tricking or the flashy types of kata that is popular with a lot of people these days but I enjoy the entertainment style of martial arts in terms of movies and things of that nature whereas, to me, it's fantasy. It doesn't have to be real. For some reason, when I see the tricking type stuff, it's not as applicable to real life which is what I appreciate about the martial arts if that makes sense at all.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It does and it's funny that that's kind of where you went with the question because I actually meant more the movies stuff but I mean, we opened something up so let's explore it for a moment. You brought up the idea of practicality or realism as being something that you value so how does that impact your training?

Andrew Adams:

I want to make sure that in the training that I do that even though I'm training for myself and my health and my well-being, what I'm learning is still applicable in the real world. I love to watch the videos and instruction from people like Iain Abernethy, for example. His stuff is very, very, I don't want to say street-oriented, but real life, this is how it would work and I got an opportunity to work with Sensei Abernethy a couple times and it was phenomenal but when I see a lot of jumps and spins in the air and taking your bō staff and spinning it off the air so it's twirling around, it's very, very impressive but, to me, would you ever really do that in a fight? And so, for me, the answer would be no and so, I don't enjoy that aspect of the martial arts. It is very popular. If you go to tournaments these days, you will see that type of stuff. It's just not for me

Jeremy Lesniak:

I hear ya. So, then, let's talk about the movies. Do you have a favorite martial arts film?

Andrew Adams:

Oh gosh. In college, I worked in a movie theater, in a video store. Those used to exist back in the day.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I did as well. Was it a Blockbuster?

Andrew Adams:



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

No, it wasn't a Blockbuster. It's more of a local chain but I often told people you're not allowed to ask me what's my favorite movie if you worked at a movie store but I loved, when I was in high school, watching the Van Damme movies, the Bruce Lee movies. When I was in high school, my friends would come over and we would have cheesy ninja night and we would get, I'd rent like 3 really bad, cheesy ninja movies and we would sit down and watch them all throughout the night and we would do a body count of any time somebody would die and we would all yell and scream oh, we're down to 5 people now! I watched everything you could get your hands on.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That sounds like it's a good time.

Andrew Adams:

Oh, it was a lot of fun, for sure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Were you continuing to watch movies while you weren't training?

Andrew Adams:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How did that make you feel?

Andrew Adams:

Nostalgic, I think, at the time. It's like wow, I used to do this but I also recognize that this is a movie. This isn't real. I think I would have felt totally different if I'd been walking past the dojo and I did see a couple of times happen when I would be walking in wherever, visiting someone in another town and be walking downtown and I'd see a dojo on a street corner and I'd be like oh, I really miss that and I, for sure, missed it and my life didn't feel complete in those 2 breaks that I took of the 4, 5, 6 years or whatever.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I can relate to that a bit. If you could train with anybody, anywhere in time, anywhere, living dead, any style, you've named some big names. I usually have an idea where someone's going to go for this one but I had no idea for you. Who would you want to train with?

Andrew Adams:



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

For me, it would probably be Itosu. He was, with the karate lineage, he's kind of up there and a lot of the fathers of different styles, Funakoshi, they all studied with him. I would like to see where his head was at karate-wise.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great choice. Yeah, somebody who I continue to learn about and am increasingly fascinated with because it's a name that most people don't know and it's become glaring to me that it's a name we should know.

Andrew Adams:

I would agree.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let's look forward. When you look out into your future and how martial arts fits into it, what does it look like?

Andrew Adams:

I would say it's much the same as it does today. I'm just going to continue to train. I don't train for belts, I train for me. In my Shotokan school, my instructor was a 4th Dan and he tested me for my 3rd Dan and said I can't take you any further and I said I don't care. I'll keep training and the only reason I left was because we moved away. The current school that I'm training at, I just got my shodan and my next belt would be niidan but I don't care. I mean, if and when I get it, great but I train for me now and I don't see that changing so I will continue to go to the dojo as often as I can and continue to help the instructor teach and as often as I can and help the growth of other students because my passion is teaching regardless of whether it's drumming or whether it's martial arts and so I'm happy to continue in that endeavor.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, that leaves us with a pretty big question, kind of an obvious one. You think you'll ever open your own school?

Andrew Adams:

I have thought of it in the past and my wife has often said you should and I have other students, when I was in my breaks say you should open your own school, you'd be great. You'd be a great instructor and school owner. I don't know. Is it possible? Sure. Do I see it right now? Not right now.

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 472 — Mr. Andrew Adams | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

I hope you do. Something tells me you should. Now, if people want to connect with you or see what you got going on, maybe there's people listening and saying I want to learn bagpipe drumming! Weirder things have happened. I know we're laughing about it but some of the connections that have happened as a result of this show are mind-boggling and I love it so let's hear email, social media, websites, any of that stuff you want to share?

Andrew Adams:

You can find me on Facebook, Andrew Adams. There's a fair number of them but I'm usually either my profile picture is either me wearing a kilt or me wearing a gi so that's pretty easy to find and if people want to email me, it's Andrew.adams.drums@gmail.com.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I appreciate being here today. Thanks for coming on and we got the chance to chat and I learned some stuff about you I didn't know. That's always fun.

Andrew Adams:

Absolutely! It was a blast. I had a great time. I appreciate you having me on.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I always appreciate getting to know my friends better and what better way to get to know my martial arts friends than to bring them on the show? So, thank you Mr. Andrew Adams, he's probably rolling his eyes for me calling him that, for coming on the show. I appreciate all the work you do to help us out and I look forward to getting to train with you again. You can visit whistlekickmartialartsradio.com to see show notes for this and for every other episode that we've ever done and those notes include photos and videos, links, websites, social media and more. Every single episode we've ever done is up there available for you and if you're up for supporting us and the work that we're doing at whistlekick, you have a few options. You can use the code `PODCAST15` to save 15% off at whistlekick.com. You can also share an episode, leave a review somewhere, tell a friend or contribute to the Patreon, patreon.com/whistlekick and if you have stuff you want to say, I'd love to hear it. If it's about an episode, please leave a comment under the episode at the show notes page but if it's more general in nature, if you want to reach out to me, jeremy@whistlekick.com and our social media, of course, is [@whistlekick](https://twitter.com/whistlekick) everywhere you could think of. I want to thank you for coming by today. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!