



Episode 488 — Mr. Peter Sorce | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



### **Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hello! This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 488 with today's guest, Mr. Peter Sorce. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, show host and whistlekick founder and everything that we're doing at whistlekick is in support of traditional martial arts. If you want to know more about what we do, go to [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). That's where you go to find everything that we're doing. It's also the easiest place to find our products, the stuff we make because we don't just make podcasts. We make sparring equipment and uniforms and lots of really fun apparel. Great stuff and if you use the code `PODCAST15`, you can save 15% off everything that's over there. This show has a separate website, [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) and we're bringing you a new episode twice a week. The goal of this show and of whistlekick overall is all under the heading of connecting, educating and entertaining traditional martial artists throughout the world. If you want to help guarantee future episodes of the show, there are lots of ways you can do that. You can make a purchase, share an episode, follow us on social media, tell a friend, pick up a book, leave a review or support the Patreon, [Patreon.com/whistlekick](http://Patreon.com/whistlekick). It's the place to go for that. You can support us monthly with as little as \$2 but if you contribute \$5 more, we're going to give you more. More written content, more audio content, more video content. Just more. Who doesn't want more? We're in an interesting time for martial arts as more and more practitioners are cross training. People training in multiple disciplines, finding ways to connect them and quite often, those connections become a new style. Well, not today. Today's guest teaches the things that he knows independently and he has reasons for it and we talk about that, we talk about his past, we talk about a lot so hang on as we



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hear from Mr. Peter Sorce. It's a martial arts show and we usually start in a pretty obvious way and that I ask the guest and, you've listened to a dozen episodes, you've certainly heard us ask at least 10 times, how did you get started?

**Peter Sorce:**

I was 6 years old and I remember this really, really well. We were at this festival market called Somerset and there was this martial arts demonstration going on and I know it's the coolest thing I've ever seen and at the very end, it was mostly adults, but the end they brought out a child and I just fell in love with it and my parents heard the message. They heard focus, respect, discipline and oh my god, we should look into this and what's really cool is I have an abnormality in my hands where it's kind of hard to explain over the phone but if you put your hands out and you flip them over like palm up for someone to give you 5, my hands don't fully rotate. They only turn to 90 degrees and it's just the way I was born so what that means is other sports like throwing and baseball and basketball, I didn't, they were more challenging for me and the other thing is my asthma is pretty severe to the point where if I went outside and I ran around with my friends in the yard for 30 minutes, I'd be in a full blown asthma attack, I'd need my inhaler so martial arts was an indoor activity and we could modify it, make it work for me even though I couldn't do all the proper chambers, everything, perfectly. It didn't matter because I did what I did and it never stopped. It was a love when I started in '82 so we're looking at almost 38 years and I'm like still passionate about it. My wife gives me a hard time because it's the martial arts channel 24 hours, 7 days a week.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

There are a lot of spouses that I think have endured that. The best solution is to get them in and get them training.

**Peter Sorce:**

Yeah, she did a round earlier with taekwondo. She stuck with it, she got her green belt but didn't really love it and then, a couple years ago, she started training in our Filipino martial arts program and she's sticking with that and she really likes it. She likes it and it's a little more obviously practical. It's got the forms, it's got the other aspects that's more right here and there.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Do you teach her or do you have someone else teach her?

**Peter Sorce:**

I do but I'm at a distance. I own and operate a school and I have several other instructors. When it comes time for one on one stuff, I try to sit back a little bit but she'll be in the class with everyone and it



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works better if I have other people kind of work with her but absolutely, we do too. She does a nice job, she challenges and I have to realize that working with your spouse.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, we've talked about that on the show a number of times, people training with family members. Doesn't even have to be a spouse. One of the challenges I had growing up was I outranked my mother and that was a challenge for us both ways just trying to understand that dynamic flips the moment you bow in versus you bow out. It's a completely different thing and it sounds like you certainly recognize it and you're trying to not create any difficulties for your personal relationship.

**Peter Sorce:**

Right. It was hard at first because before class, well, show me a few things before class, before she started. That was kind of hard because oh, you're doing a nice job, you're doing a great job, honey. Let's do this, kind of getting frustrated so it was actually better once she's in the room with everybody else.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I would imagine. Now, you have more than 1 martial arts program going on in that school if I understood what you've got going correctly.

**Peter Sorce:**

I do, yeah. For me, it's like taekwondo or hardcore, for the first 15 years or so, it was almost to the point that I would defend any corner where people say oh, taekwondo's no good. This art's better, that art's better. I'm like the way I learned it, we incorporated self-defense, we incorporated a lot of other things which you really train at. It's a good martial art that encompasses many areas in what most people are close to and then, I slowly started interacting with different people and learning little stuff here and there and eventually, went in full bore into Inayan eskrima and then also, Danzan-ryu jiu-jitsu and then, so in my school today, I have 3 distinct programs. I think it's cool a lot of people, they make a blend. I think that's great but sometimes when you create a blend, I feel you miss out on certain things so I'm a proponent of teach the entire art of taekwondo, teach the entire arts of Danzan, teach the entire art of eskrima and then people can kind of assimilate and become their own martial artist rather than alright, we're just going to do these 10 drills for eskrima and only these 5 drills from judo and these 5 blocks because you think block #18 is useless. I still teach it because depending on the circumstance and if you know it well enough, it might come out so that's kind of my overall philosophy that way.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's interesting you addressed it head on and this is where I was going to go was that you have some schools that teach the different martial arts as distinct programs and you have others that blend them and I'm sure you would agree, there is some benefit to doing it both ways and there are certainly, there



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is a downside to doing it both ways and obviously, you've done it the way that you think is best for you and for what you want to teach and how you want to teach it but how did you get there? How did you arrive at having 3 different distinct martial arts programs that you wanted to share?

**Peter Sorce:**

I guess it happened kind of organically. I had the one program and then, as I earned credentials in eskrima, I just slowly started out a separate class like one day a week or a seminar. I started out actually with a seminar here and there and then, started out one night a week and then, eventually grown and originally, I was teaching through, like how many people start, you teach basically in a community center. You have your fulltime job then run the school at night and eventually make it so eskrima kind of started then part time and it kind of just organically morphed where alright, I think I'm ready for a second class. Alright, I'm ready for a 3<sup>rd</sup> class. Oh, now I need an advanced class. There are so many practitioners in this art and it just kind of worked out and then, for the jiu-jitsu, because we do some takedowns and things in our taekwondo programming not extensively and then, there was quite a bit in the Filipino arts. With the Danzan Ryu program, I do one day a week. It's meant to be a complement. You're already training at something and you want to get better at your throws, you want to really concentrate on that and then, we have that. It's kind of like a part-time program.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What was your day job prior to going fulltime with this?

**Peter Sorce:**

I was an electrical engineer.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How long did you do that?

**Peter Sorce:**

I did that for 6 years so what happened was I was in college and started a community program and your parents, I'm sure a lot of people hear this, my parents loved me to death but you know what, you need a real job. You can't be a martial arts teacher. When I was a little kid and I tell this story regularly, whenever there was a vacant store front, I'm talking when I was like 11, 12 years old, I'd look in the window, I'd talk to ceiling tiles and go home and layout a school on graph paper and I must have done this 2, 3 dozen times and my instructor had a successful school but we knew some people that branched off. They tried to open a school and what happened was they didn't make it so my parents said you need a job, you need a steady paycheck, you need insurance, you need these stuff so I went the engineering route and I was miserable and I started to learn about the business side of things and you know what, I got to do this. So, I did 1 year fulltime engineering and fulltime school and at the same



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time, I had just gone through the worst. I was living with my parents so 28 years old, living with Mom and Dad. It's interesting. I love hearing people's stories so I went back and listened to your old podcast where you're interviewed, I just loved that stuff. That's how you get to know people, you know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It is and that's part of why we did that episode was people kept asking me and what about you, what about you, what about you and it was funny because I was really uncomfortable being on that side of the mic. On this side, it's easy. I don't have to be vulnerable. I don't have to answer these questions. I can just poke at other people and see what shows up but to be on the other side, yeah. So, 28, living with your parents, you've got all these flux, all these chaos, in a sense, happening in your life, what was that like? What was that like emotionally and how did that impact your training and how did your training impact that?

**Peter Sorce:**

I guess, I was just running ragged. Fulltime school, I would literally leave work, had a 3-minute drive, had to go right to the studio, trying to open the door 30 minutes before class. Hopefully traffic was good and enrolled every student, met every phone call; basically, taught almost every class. I had some help in the rec program. I'd get some coverage here and there. I'll tell you where the hard part, that wasn't so bad because I didn't have time to stop and think or react but I tell you what did happen, the struggle was when I quit my engineering job and the school was paying its bills and I had saved enough money to live off before for a little while like I'm going all in and that's when it hit me because about 6 months after that, I'm like why don't I have all these work done? Because I figured out, thinking once I quit my engineering job, I'll get my billing set up. My website will do this, this, this. There's like a million tasks when you're running a school to do it correctly and I was like 6 months in, I barely put a dent into all these projects and I thought I'd be done with them all and I was really struggling and I was really fortunate with my now wife, Rachel. She says I think you're depressed. I look better, there's no way! Yeah, I think you are and she kind of explained and I can't remember exactly what she said but she said yeah, sometimes you stop and it shows itself this way and that way. I'm like really? There is no way. Alright, went to bed that night, woke up the next morning and I was like a new person. Just that discussion, just recognizing things were not working right in my brain. It kind of relaxed me and called me down and I was able to focus and get back on track but I'll tell you, I mean I know everyone has a story but man, I mean, the 1<sup>st</sup> time I opened the school, I literally took my life savings. I had 30 grand in the bank, built out the school. My bank account was empty. Now, the engineering job had things going but then, I saved maybe 25 grand that year and this is what I'm going to live off of and then, the school started to make a little bit but then, as soon as it's doing well, I needed to expand so at that point, took out another business loan, expanded and we've done this like 3 times now and I don't think people realize that they look at a school and they see a large facility with staff and beautiful place and they think, oh my god, this guy. Wow, must be nice. I've heard that. Oh, ok, thanks man. Like it's as easy to, it





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just fell on your lap. You just opened a karate school, now you're going to make 6 figures overnight. It's just ridiculous but yeah, it takes time.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It does, it does. Were any of the schools or the expansions or the layouts, were any of those predicted in the drawings for younger you?

**Peter Sorce:**

Similar, man, similar. It was hilarious. There are always things you do a lot. You need a mat, a changing room, bathrooms and office, right? There were some challenges in the building because the building, I had this well over a 100 years old so there's a lot of challenges with holes in walls that couldn't be moved and stuff. There's a lot of similarities and the biggest difference was back in the day, I thought every school had to have a locker room and now I realize that's a bad idea with kids and adults. You should have individual changing rooms so that's probably the biggest difference.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, it's a shame that we had to think about those sort of things especially in martial arts schools. You would think that, now, this is a place we don't have to sweat that but we do.

**Peter Sorce:**

Yeah, scary thing.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It is, it is. It's just part of the world that we live in today, though. So, 15 years in taekwondo and I kind of, I'm struck by the way you talk about it. That you were defending it, I think you're defending it to corners in there so I'm imagining that you're having some intense discussion with people at times about the advantages of one art versus another and I'm curious, for you to step into another art, if you were really defensive of taekwondo, something happened. Something in the armor cracked when you said there's more or there's another, not necessarily a better way, but there is another way that warrants some exploration. What happened?

**Peter Sorce:**

I'm going to backtrack just a little bit. There was a point where I was defending taekwondo, this is I remember websites, when I started college it was only green screen stuff and then, all of a sudden, the internet came out. You didn't have to wait for a picture to load. Way back then, I made what you will call a blog now and it was a rant. I wish I kept it but it was a rant about just martial arts and about McDojos and kids getting their black belts and it was basically I have a question and I would just rant for 5, 6 paragraphs and one of the biggest topics in there was just defending taekwondo because I just believed



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so strongly in it. If you really train in it well, if you're good at it, you got it and what happened is I did believe in cross training but I felt it more as a sort of a supplemental. I would get together with friends and we would go to an aikido practitioners and we'd do some lock and even in other taekwondo schools, like honestly, you don't know what's taekwondo or what's not anymore because the self-defense moves, well, is it really hapkido or is that really this or that so I guess, my original blend of taekwondo mixed in other stuff too, right? What happened was I should learn a weapon so I remember stuff like I should learn a weapon. Nunchucks, they look cool, not very practical so I go, this eskrima stick. I think it was late 1999, I signed up for a weekend camp in Inayan Kadena De Mano. I didn't know what it was but I knew it was eskrima but I can't wait so I go in this weekend with my eskrima stick and I was really fortunate in Wisconsin, I have networked with these wonderful group of schools and then, our main guy, Mr. [00:20:37] is this unknown, just this phenomenal person. He introduced us to all these different instructors. Anyway, I end up at this camp and we're like, I'm like 3 hours in and we're doing a knife drill and we're literally doing angle 1. Step forward, angle 1, step back and block. Step forward, angle 1, step back, block and then, we would parry and then we would cut. We would just evade and cut and then, we would block cut, and then, we would parry cut and I'm like I go Mr. [00:21:13] what are we going to do with the stick? And he looks at me like I was crazy and he goes, there's no stick in Kadena. This is going to be empty-hand and knife style. I look down, I almost started crying. I'm a grown man. How old was I at the time? 24 years old, ready to cry because we weren't going to do sticks. I spent all those money and by the end of the weekend, I was hooked. We were doing these interactive knife flow drills. We weren't even doing disarm. We were just doing all these different coordination drills. I'm like where has this been my whole life and I felt like the next step because in the taekwondo program, we were already doing inner 1-steps. We weren't just blocking. We were doing basically parries, different types of movements, already part of that from my old school already. It was like taking that and putting that on the doors but yeah, I remember that distinctly and from there, I never looked back and just kept going and going.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How about the jiu-jitsu?

**Peter Sorce:**

Through Mr. [00:22:28] who brought eskrima to Wisconsin for us works along to train a little bit. I just wanted to say, I know some in your podcast namedrops, if I mention someone's name, it's because I'm so proud of these individuals and support them, man, we wouldn't be here. These guys are absolutely incredible. What people brought out to us in the roads but what happened was Mike and A would do the Filipino entries, all the hand stuff, maybe into a lot, maybe not and the rest would take it and turn it into 5 different throws and takedowns and stuff on the ground and it just blended seamlessly and then they started an instructor program in the Danzan Ryu and I've been doing that ever since as well. So, that's a fun little marriage.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

One of the things I like about cross training and even if it's just for a couple hours, just going to a seminar or something, is that quite often it will not change, that's too strong a word but maybe, adjust the way I look at the things that I do as my core martial arts. Did you have any of those experiences? Did the eskrima change the taekwondo? Did the jujitsu change the eskrima and the taekwondo in the way you saw it or maybe practiced it?

**Peter Sorce:**

Yeah, definitely in the way you practiced it and definitely, the exploration. I feel like, the teaching methodology in Filipino Martial arts was I think holy cow! The way they take it from here's a technique to a drill to reflexive training, there's thrust training, fighting; there's a process. You don't go from here's a technique, now go fight. There's this whole process there and I also feel that training methodology has definitely influenced everything else but then I also feel like it opens a door. All of a sudden, you open this door and outside the door, there's 50 more doors and for me, sometimes one concept. I wish I could think of an example right now but it would change 50 other things, just a little bit and that was the coolest thing because at this point, if you've been doing a martial art your whole life, in cross training, there's not ok, here's a new secret move you're going to learn. It's more like these little pieces, these little nuances. Maybe a little bit of footwork or just one change in direction and all of a sudden, influences everything else.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Do you, and this might be an unfair question because I don't know if I could answer it. Do you remember any of those nuances? Is there one that might be willing to share? That's the challenge right because they're so small and in the moment, it blows your mind up but for me, it just becomes part of the way I see it and it's hard to remember how I used to see it.

**Peter Sorce:**

Yup. I'll give you an example. There's something called a [00:25:52] what it is it's a back and forth with locks. It's a form originally so you can learn a series of locks and then how to counter them so what happens is I'll put you in lock 1, you counter it because every lock has a way out right? Fulcrum, base and lever. So you get out of lock, you can put me in lock 2. I'll get out of that lock, we'll go to lock 3. To learn this full form, once you learn this series, let's say there's 11 locks. You got to do it right side, you got to do it left side but then you should be able to enter every one of those 11 locks from a straight across wrist grab so how do I get there from a straight across. How do I go to lock #4 from this position? Another example would be, so I'm doing the lock back and forth, how do I transition doing them all in order? So, instead of me doing lock #1, you do lock #2. I do lock #1, you counter and I transition to lock 2, then I transition to lock 3 so it's a one direction lock then you look at every lock and you go what takedowns can I do with from this one lock? So, all you do is you get 4 takedowns and then when you do





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the 2<sup>nd</sup> lock, how many ways can I do this then you give your students this challenge and all of a sudden, I didn't see that then you take that same lock and you do it against the wall. Now, you're on the wall, now you have this lock but now, how can I use this, basically fixed weapon, manipulate them so I throw them into the wall as part of it or they get taken down, they take down, they hit the wall and now they're in this precarious situation or a hallway and then do the same lock while on the floor. It's like holy molly! That one concept opens up 50 new, an unlimited number of techniques and then you look at anything else that way, you look at this disarm and I should be able to do this disarm, how do I get there from any one of these positions and so on and so forth so that's probably the best example I can think of.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That makes sense. I can see that and I suspect a lot of the people listening have had similar moments. I think we, quite often as we're training in the early days, we're looking for those big secrets, those short cuts. Oh, if I go train this art or I go train with this person or this seminar, I learn this movement then I'm going to be that much better. Leapfrog everyone else, it's almost like out of an old Kung Fu movie. They're expecting that there's going to be some super-secret dim mak death touch kind of thing that we're going to learn but you get a few years in and you learn all these really, really small increments that, in and of themselves, maybe they're not terribly valuable but because you've done those other 40, 50, 60 hours on the thing proceeding it; now, it becomes 1% better and then 1% better then maybe on a really good day, it's 1½% better and that's really what training is.

**Peter Sorce:**

Absolutely. It's fun. I have not lost the desire to keep growing and learning. It's weird. I keep thinking when am I going to stop? When am I not going to want to do this? When am I just going to be just happy? I'll just be happy here running a school, teaching and mentoring other instructors and stuff and that hasn't happened yet.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm going to guess, just the way you've talked about this is that you have to keep developing new skills. You have to develop new skills to open a school and then, we talked about bringing on staff and now you just use the phrase mentoring instructors so unless you started out with all those skills and you are really, really lucky, you've had to keep getting better, am I right?

**Peter Sorce:**

Oh my god, yeah. Lots of mistakes along the way, yup.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Would you mind talking about some of those?



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**Peter Sorce:**

I remember, probably the biggest thing is you know the old hard mean way of teaching, if you think of the Cobra Kai, pushing out and bossing people around. I remember I made this one mistake and I came from the right way but I did not mean any harm but it was a kids' class and there's this one kid who was teasing another kid and I wasn't sure and he wouldn't stop and I wouldn't know how to handle it so, and he was right in front of me and he kind of made fun of this other student in class. Alright, show me your kicking combination. He showed me his kicking combination, I looked at this I'd, this kid was 11 years old and I'm in college and I looked at him and I go oh yeah, when you do this combination, you look like a monkey. Your arms are flopping around everywhere. Here I am in front of 30 people and their parents, making fun of this kid that didn't really deserve it, he didn't mean it, the kid started crying, I felt awful. I learned my lesson right then and there. I thought I was doing the right thing. Oh yeah, he's going to learn how much these things hurt and maybe he'll never make fun of anybody and maybe it worked. I didn't have any real fallout because people knew I was from a good place and the kid's parent was right there and I'm freaking out, I'm apologizing. I'm so sorry. It's ok, I understand but yeah, that was a big one. That was a big mistake there.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That could be tough and I think that that, for me, and just based on the schools that I've watched, it's really hard when you've got that situation where something's going on right in that moment and you have to respond to that right in that moment but handling it with all of the grace that it needs to be handled but knowing that the way you disciplined that kid impacts the way the kid that was getting picked on was going to feel and the way that everyone else around is going to react and that sets a tone for later on and I don't know about you but I don't think there's a right answers. I think they're all wrong to varying degrees and you just got to pick the one that seems the least wrong in that moment.

**Peter Sorce:**

Yeah, the biggest teaching tools are going to be influence over authority rather than bossing people, you tell them what you want, not what not to do. Just using positivity as the #1 thing. You got a kid that you want them to stand up strong and tall on their knee and the kid next to them is spinning around. You can say come on, stop spinning around, knock it off. You can go to the one sitting tall next to them and man, I love how you're sitting up nice and tall. Oh wow, good job, Johnny and you kind of, I find that is the best way to do that and when I made that change, it happened kind of naturally but once I saw it on paper and you learn this. Wait, this is an actual teaching tool? Oh my god. You start applying it and then you see the results you get. Now, there definitely are times when you have to raise your voice, put your foot down but each class is different. You're teaching 5 or 6 years olds, then you've got the basics kids who are in it for 1 year and then, my next program, I got kids who have been in it and they're 7 to 12 and they're from 1 year to 5 years of training and that class, I have rapport with them and if they've been training for 3 years, I can raise my voice and say knock it off and it will work but not for that yellow



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belt who's been with you for 6 months. With them, you keep being positive. Even in that intermediate and advanced class, we're still 90% positive but then, every so often, we got to bring the screws down and raise your voice. I hate doing it but sometimes we have to.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

For sure, for sure. I think of it kind of like a currency. You get time with them, you get time on the mat, whatever you call it and you treat them well and they start to trust you and you earn that currency and you can spend that in a lot of different ways. You can spend it all at once if you've got it and yell and demand something and maybe they'll comply if you've got enough. If there's enough in the tank to spend it on that but I've learned, I got to be really careful how much of that I try to spend if I burn it all out at the beginning of class, I've got nothing for the last 15 minutes. They're not going to pay attention to me, they're not going to listen. I already asked them too much. I've emptied the tank.

**Peter Sorce:**

That's a really good analogy. I'm going to use that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

By all means, steal it. I don't think that was mine. I mean, for all I know it was but it doesn't sound...I'm not taking credit for it and I've extended that out. Anytime I'm working with a person or a group, you've got that personal capital that you get to develop and once I realized that, I spent a lot more time trying to develop the capital, trying to mine that currency with people. The good irony of that is it's all that good stuff you should all be doing anyway. Now, if you, now, would go back to you that, let's say, Day 1 on opening your school. It's shiny and you're there and you've put all that time and money into it, what advice would you give? Let's say you've got to sit down, and quite often I'll ask this question, what's the one thing or whatever but let's open it up a little bit more general. Let's say you have a time machine, you could go back for 20 minutes and you got to sit down with yourself, what would you be talking about, what would you be sharing?

**Peter Sorce:**

I was lucky in that, it was many, many years in the making and I had some colleagues and friend who already made the leap and I was lucky I had a bunch of people guiding me and helping me. The martial art industry association really had their magazines, there's actually resources out there. I was a huge fan of [37:35] because he's well-known in the martial art industry but what he struck me really well was he's like you're a martial artist first, teacher second, businessman third but you absolutely, you can't neglect the business part. You have to have the business part but it's more like he emphasized don't sacrifice your values, don't sacrifice who you are, your program. Be passionate about that stuff but you still have to pay your bills. You got to make it work so I was really lucky with that but some of the biggest things, I think, that I did that really helped and I would tell anybody else to do, one of the best advice I got was



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get a tuition company from Day 1. You might think it's a little expense you can't afford but man, collecting money from your students, having them pay you by the 5<sup>th</sup> of every month was just harder the way you're going to do it. It's so hard whereas if you hire a nice management company, they'll handle all that for you. If they're late, if eventually, you might have to call them or whatever but there are programs now that you set up an automatic email and automatic text. Hey guys, you missed your payment. Here's a link to update your card. That saves you even if you have a small school because when you have a small school, you got to be investing how am I going to get this next? How am I going to get this new crop of students? What is my best class schedule? What is this? Get out there and meet people, plan events. If you're spending your time because 5 people are late on their tuition, oh my god. That is just throwing us. That is one of the biggest things is start that, use that billing company to help you out.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

One of the things that we've gone into, I can't even tell you how many times on the show, this notion of teaching as a business or martial arts as a business versus martial arts as a free program and I think both work. What I think doesn't work is when people try to ride the middle. This is a business but I don't want to be really business-like about it. In my observation, it doesn't work to ride at all. You send a signal to all your students that yeah, I have this rule that you have to pay me but I'm not going to enforce it and I've got this rule that you have to show up on time but I'm not going to enforce it and how are they able to differentiate between those rules and the rules that you have when they step out and it's within class. Are they really going to draw that different of a line?

**Peter Sorce:**

Yeah, I agree. I was just going to say it's a hard balance to, when you look at schools, you got people that maybe sell out. You might think that they're selling out. At that school, you can get to be a black belt in 24 to 30 months. On the other hand, they have 300 students then you have another school that it's basically Mr. Miyagi and he's got 4 people in the basement and takes 10 years to get your black belt, right? There's 2 different ends of the spectrum. If it takes you 10 years, obviously you're going to be amazing regardless of how good the instruction is, in 2 and a half years, it's not going to be the same standard and so, it's like how do you do this? For me, I kind of set myself in the middle. If taekwondo's my core program, for me, that's about a 5 year program. It might be able to be done slightly after. It might take 6 years but that's roughly. If you come consistently, if you put in the work, there's never a guarantee but if you put in the work, you'll do it in 5 years so I found out that's like a happy middle and I'm lucky, I talked to some of my colleagues and in the earlier ranks of taekwondo, one of the retention tools is getting a new belt. If you're getting a new belt, you're excited, you're not going to quit any time soon so for me, in the early stages, they test about once every quarter but then, once you're in the intermediate and advanced, I only offer it twice a year, it's every 6 months. For a green belt, that seems like forever but I explained this to the parents, I explained this to the students and this is the way it is and some people just can't believe that I have a successful business and I can make this longer time



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period to it but I just got lucky and you can do it. A lot of people think you're crazy. Oh, you test every 2 months, that way you don't quit. I don't know how I got off on that tangent, sorry about that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

There are no tangents in martial arts radio. It's all relevant. It's all good. We wander, we wander. Of all the things I worried about when I started this show, the one that I did not worry about was whether or not the martial artist I would have on would be able to fill the time because I've never trained under anyone who couldn't talk the whole class if we kind of poked him in the right moment. I've gotten kind of good at that. I have some friends who are probably listening who will know who I'm talking about so I'm not going to mention which instructor this is but if he's running us really hard, all we have to do is there are a couple of subjects I can just mention with 3 or 4 words and he'll tell us a story.

**Peter Sorce:**

I've done that! I've done that! Oh god, that's great.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

One of the challenges that we hear from people is that when they have their own school and they're running that business that their own training suffers. Is that true for you?

**Peter Sorce:**

It kind of goes in waves and you have to accept it because maybe you're not physically getting direction on your form or on your side kick but hopefully, you're watching your students and you're playing with different ways of breaking it down and explaining it. I remember when I was teaching a class, I was teaching this turn to your yellow belts and you phrase it differently and all of a sudden, it works and then a lot of times, you'll explain something to summarize it in a way where it reinforces on your brain and it's making you better so even though you're not getting direction, it's alright. You're still going, you're still learning and I just take it in waves now. There's times where I get direction and there's time when I'm doing more teaching but that's ok. You definitely have to separate training from teaching so for example, if I'm teaching class and I'm like focused on my workout and my pattern, I'm not giving my students like we shouldn't be so it's really important that if you're teaching, you're teaching. Now, in my black belt class, depending on who's there and we're running through mitt drills or whatever stuff, I'll definitely get some reps in with someone that way and then in my entire advanced eskrima class, that's really my time to train because everybody is kind of at a level now where they don't need as much hands-on. They just need like a director just to point them in the right direction and they don't need as much attention but other than that, I have to get together with my training partners, my instructors. I have to dedicate separate times more.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**





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And we just stumbled on something that I think it's really important. I don't know if we've talked about it. Here we are coming up on 500 episodes, I don't know if we've talked about this so forgive me, to listeners and if we have, I'm just spacing. The idea of stepping in and training with your students. That's something that, I'm not going to say most will or most won't but I know a lot of instructors who absolutely will not train side by side with their students. They won't spar with their students. They almost hide and you're talking about it in, what almost seems like a casual way in that this is not a big deal in your school, that you're happy to jump in and train right alongside them.

**Peter Sorce:**

Absolutely, yeah. Especially during seminars when I'm bringing guest instructors to go train and I'm partnering with my, working with my people but I guess the biggest point, if I'm teaching, most classes I'm just teaching. There's only a couple of classes where I get to work in with them and I mean, that's fine. That's a whole different story. I go to class and I'm in the mood to spar. I'm in my 40s now so depending on the day and how the joints feel earlier that day, I may not be up to sparring but when I'm up for it, it's definitely the time.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And I think one word you just used talking about that says a lot about you, tells us a lot about you and your approach to teaching and training. You said get to, you'd get to step in with them. You don't have to, you don't need to. It's not there's an odd number, now you're going to step in and even it out, you get to. Do you feel like you're, how do I ask this? I'm going to speculate that you're not tired of any of this. That you get up in the morning and feel like hey, this is great. I get to do this. I'm lucky that this is part of my life.

**Peter Sorce:**

The majority, yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And I appreciate the honesty.

**Peter Sorce:**

Yes, I do get burnt out. There's times when I am burnt out. I ask my staff but that's very short-lived. It's not because of lack of passion or enjoying it or wanting to do it, it is just like I am exhausted and I need a break and I'm so fortunate with the school. I have to pinch myself sometimes. If you would have told me I'd be where I was at that I was going to own a school one day, that my dream was to have a hundred students and pay the bills and make \$40,000 a year, that would be it. That was my dream. If you would have said you have a full time school, you'll have 7 employees, nearly 300 students, I'm at a point now where some nights, I'm like the principal where I'm not even, I have such good staff members, some of



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them are such good instructors, my challenge now is there's times that I want to teach but I actually shouldn't because it's not my time, it's their time. They're paid to teach and they want to teach and they're really, really good at it and for me to come in there because they've been thinking all day about their lesson plan and what they're going to do and I'm going to come in there and oh yeah, I'm going to teach 15 classes, isn't that cool? I actually feel bad sometimes. A lot of times, they welcome it like oh, great. Alright cool, we're going to see him on the mat. With this class, we don't normally have him on the mat, this is great but there's other times where I feel bad so it's this weird balance of ok, yes I'm still the owner, I'm the instructor but I have all these other wonderful instructors as well so it's like a challenge. When do I teach or not teach and a lot of times, I'll be the assistant instructor. I've been doing that a lot lately. They're running the class so I'm just one of the assistants running a line or taking a look at forms or whatever but it's such an interesting thing and I almost hired myself out of a job, almost but it's a good problem. I have to be honest with you, I was burnt out last night and on Wednesday nights, I have a separate adult class and an adult [50:59] class and it's a smaller group and it was just an unusual night. Smaller classes, I wasn't feeling it. I looked at my staff and said hey guys, would it be alright if we combine class night? Make it a general taekwondo class? You guys want it? They said absolutely, sir, we got it and I just got to take a load off for that class and that happens and I feel guilty sometimes. I feel like I'm letting people down or hurting people but you can't do everything all the time, not hurting people but disappointing them. I wasn't on the floor for that class but what are you going to do? It's 30 classes a week in the school. It's a lot of classes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Wow, how many of those do you teach?

**Peter Sorce:**

Right now, always 6 or 7 probably but it could be 15. It depends on the week. There are so many moving parts now. I just had a crazy weekend. We do these after school programs for the local schools and their fundraiser and we had a record number. It's almost a problem. We have over 28 students over the weekend. 28 is amazing and is never happened before. It's oh my god and it came at a good time because things go up and down so it's a nice bump. It's not going to transform the school but it's really nice but these people are coming in, I don't know who they are yet so I'm making sure I know my staff members so I've been, literally the whole school, has a couple nights. I have my office manager doing welcome meetings, I have instructors running class and I'm like trying to meet people at the door, helping them tie their belts and show them how to check in and say hi to their parents and say hey so we won't get to do our meeting tonight but we'll do it in the next week or two, I think it out. I'm not teaching so I might need to learn how to go with the flow and not beat myself up over it, you know?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Yeah. I've noticed that in business, not just in martial arts but in business, people either hold themselves to really high standards that they can never meet, at least not sustainably, or they hold themselves to fairly low standards and they're always at them and reaching for really high standards is good because you put it in motion and things get better and there's improvement but there's a lot of burn out and yet, the other way, maybe things don't progress, at least not as much but it can be a little more satisfying and what I find really interesting about this dichotomy when I look at the people that I'm thinking about as I'm talking about this is they're just wired one way or the other. There's no right way or wrong way and I'm aware that the words I'm using probably make it sound that I'm being judgmental. I'm certainly wired for the former. I'm always pushing, I'm always looking for what's next, bigger, more and rarely satisfied. It can be really frustrating and exhausting. You're talking about some of that too. I think we're probably similar in that way but then I see other people who are wired the other way and they tend to be a lot happier.

**Peter Sorce:**

I like the way you word it. You have a nice way of thinking thoughts and processing it and putting it into words. I like that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Comes from growing up a single child and spending a lot of time as a nerd by himself reading a lot of books. I got really good having conversations with myself. You mentioned earlier on in the conversation, you mentioned how some of the people who have supported you as you've gone on and the advice colleagues, training partners and if you had to pick one of those people and say this person contributed the biggest core, the biggest chunk, of who I am as a martial artist today, who would that be?

**Peter Sorce:**

I'd have to say, and he's done this for a lot of people. Kevin [55:16] out of Wisconsin. He's in Green Bay and just kind of an under the radar phenomenal martial artist who cross trains and he's such a good person. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be exposed to these other arts and he's always giving his time. I could call him up tomorrow and say hey, man, I want to come get a private lesson. He'll say yes sir. He's just a giving person and just a phenomenally good martial artist and just humble as can be and I know in Wisconsin, our group, all really look up to him. He's just a very well-loved and respected and I really appreciate that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's great and the more we do these shows, the more we get to hear about people like that who, and I don't mean this in a negative way. The world is never going to know who they are. They're not famous. They have no desire for being in the limelight. They're never going to have a YouTube channel and a lot of them say no when we invite them to come on this show. They love martial arts, they love teaching,



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they love training and they just want to be part of it and share what they learn. Sounds like he's one of those. The world would be better if we had more people like that, I think.

**Peter Sorce:**

If I could mention that the second person would be Jason Inay. He inherited the Inayan System from his father, Mike. I never knew Mike. I had one training seminar with him, the one I talked about earlier but I was like just in the corners. I wasn't going to say hi. I just hung out there and Mike passed a couple months later. I didn't know. I wasn't in the circle yet. I wasn't in the circle and then, the next training segment, weekend training, and Jason came in on his behalf and I didn't know what was going on and I was so scared like what happened to Mike? I didn't ask and I went through the whole weekend and I got to know Jason Inay really well and, as far as my development personally as a martial artist like growing and becoming a martial artist, he's just unreal the way he presents things and thinks about things and teaches and works with people and his methodology. He's had a huge, changed everything the way I looked at martial arts. He's had a rough time. He lost his father when he was fairly young and it's funny he had to take over the system from his dad and it's not an easy thing to do and now, it's his responsibility to travel the world and carry on the system. I just wanted to mention that because you say who is influential the most, I couldn't not mention those two people and I consider as many more as influential.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That cliché, it takes a village. We're all who we are as martial artists today because of a lot of people whether they were people who showed up for one class and we said one word and worked at one drill. Might not be a big contribution but the desert's made up of a lot of grains of sand and which one of them is most important is not really something you can say. Let's flip that question on its head. If you could add someone to that list, somebody you haven't had the chance to train with or under, who would that be?

**Peter Sorce:**

Someone who I haven't trained with that I wish I could or would have would be Jason's dad, Mike because I had that one summer with him but it was basic and I didn't have any one on one with him but when people talk about the kind of person he was, the way he connected with people and the way he taught, it would definitely would have been Mike Inay. He'd be one person that I would like to train with if I get a chance to. He passed away, a heart attack while he's teaching in his, I believe, in his late 50s when it happened. It was like no one expected it. It just happened.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's a shame, it's a shame. Whether it's martial arts or anywhere else, we see people who are doing great things and they pass too soon and I don't think there's anything you can do other than just recognize



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that that's possible and just treasure what you have. Treasure the people, treasure the time. What about the future? When you look out over the horizon, however far out you want to think of that, what's coming? What are you hoping for? What are you working towards?

**Peter Sorce:**

I guess, from a martial arts standpoint, I'm really happy with how the school's doing. My biggest thing is I want to grow my adult program and I have a really strong adult program. If you look at most fulltime schools with 200 or more students, you're talking, usually there, when you're thinking about the traditional arts, 90% kids if not more. So we have maybe 20 adults training. I have a pretty good number, I don't know the exact number but I'm at 25 which is a nice number. I have nice classes, 10, 20, 25 people in classes, great but I want to bring in more adults. My frustration is yes, thank you, Karate Kid. Thank you, Power Rangers. Thank you to all of that stuff. People see it as something just kids do but in reality, it was never designed for that. The traditional martial arts is an adult activity that we let kids do so the last couple years, I've been trying to be more creative with reaching more adults. Yeah, they want to do kickboxing and they want to do Brazilian jiu jitsu and they want to do MMA, hey that stuff is wonderful but there's another side of traditional martial arts that, not only is it good for kids but it's good for you guys. You're going to get some exercise, you're going to get to reduce your stress. You're going to work your mind in different ways, you're going to have a reward of learning a new skill, you're going to make more friends. It's for adults. It's unbelievable so it's really hard to get someone who's never thought of it ever, never consider it to actually wear a uniform, wear a belt, come in and start in this weird foreign activity that the only thing kids do so I've been really doing some things to really grow the adult market and it's slow but it's working so that's probably my one, my one main goal and then, my other goal is I have this little, hobby business but of course, it's still martial arts related. I call it a hobby business because so much time has been put into it and it's not, the revenue that's generated from it is nothing substantial but it's a little something and I have a little thing where it's a way for people to grow in their martial arts as like a school or an instructor. It's online with me but it's like a distance learning program and right now, I have 17 people in it and its people I know. They have schools and I have met them across the country and what happens is the curriculum's all laid out to them and they're in videos where a lot of Filipino martial arts programs are wonderful but a lot of them lack structure and the Inayan program is really structured but I kind of tweak it, add a little flavor for it and made videos for everything. I really enjoy working with school owners because you take someone who's been doing martial arts for 25, 30 years and all of a sudden, you show them a Filipino hand drill or stick drill and you watch their eyes pop out of their head and their jaws hit the floor and get all excited. Ok, here's another drill. Oh my god, oh my god and they're like little kid white belts again. That is the most rewarding thing in the world so I guess I have a little hobby business that I wouldn't mind growing to maybe doubling. I'll get 30, 40 members in it. I think that'd be awesome and it's really cool because most of these people that are in the program now, they have a taekwondo background so I have these shared knowledge and experience and if they'd be able to take that and transition to these other areas is really, really cool so I guess that's what's on the horizon. That was a really long answer.





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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No, that was not even close to a long answer in the context of this show.

**Peter Sorce:**

When will this guy be able to shut up?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

The record for one episode is 2 and half hours, we split it in 2 parts so you're not even close. If people want to reach you, they want to find you online, social media, any of that, where would they go?

**Peter Sorce:**

Yeah, I'm on Facebook. Sorry, I have not joined the Twitter world and Instagram. I probably should.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, don't apologize for it.

**Peter Sorce:**

Pete Sorce, I'm on Facebook. That's one social media thing enough for me and then, the website for my school is [sorcemartialarts.com](http://sorcemartialarts.com) and the website for that other program I talked about [sorcetrainingsystems.com](http://sorcetrainingsystems.com). There not a way to subscribe or anything like that. It has a few things and some information but it's literally people, we get to know, it's a personal thing. If people are interested, they can reach out and you can't just go to the website and sign up. It's more...casual. It's more for people that you get to know a little bit and they really want to learn it and we could go down that avenue if they wish. It's not like a big closed website, sign up now. It's not like that and that stuff's great too. Maybe I will do that. You'll never know. As of right now, that's where I'm at.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It can all work when done the right time for the right people. This has been a lot of fun and I'd like to give you the chance to send us out in whatever way feels most appropriate. What parting words, advice, wisdom, you name it, would you want to leave the listeners with today?

**Peter Sorce:**

Oh man. I knew this question was coming. I guess, the thing is you got to stay passionate. You got to just work at it, too. You got to work at it. It's like a relationship. If you think about someone you fall in love with. In the beginning, you're excited and you're not sure yet but you just know you want to get to know more about them and it's kind of like the same thing with the martial arts to begin with. I'm not sure what I like but I want to do more classes and then, over time, you start to grow in love. You fall in love



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with this person but as it grows, you got to make time and effort. You got to be in the same page, you got to work at spending time with your significant other. You have your family, you have to make time for that so same thing with your martial arts, you have to do the work to stay passionate. You got to continue to talk to people. You got to read, you got to look at videos, you got to go take a seminar. You got to put the work in to stay passionate so I guess that would be my closing thoughts there.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I've heard people say that one of the best ways to know another martial artist is to train with them or to spar with them. I think we can get a pretty good idea who someone is by talking to them here in martial arts radio and that's how I'm leaving today. I feel like I've got a great understanding of who this man is and in case, it wasn't obvious, I thoroughly enjoyed my time. I hope you did too so thank you, Sir. Hope to talk to you again soon. If you want more, head to [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). That's where you'll find photos, videos, links, social media and a lot more for this and every other episode we've ever done. If you're down to support us in all of our work, you have a number of options. Visit the store, [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com), and use the code `PODCAST15` to get 15% off or leave a review, buy a book on Amazon or help out with our Patreon account, [Patreon.com/whistlekick](https://Patreon.com/whistlekick) and remember, if you see someone out in the wild wearing a whistlekick shirt or a hat, make sure you say hello. We're building a community here and you are a part of it whether you want to be or not. Hopefully, you want to be. If you have guest suggestions, I want to hear them. Email me, [jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:jeremy@whistlekick.com) and make sure you are following us, [@whistlekick](https://twitter.com/whistlekick), Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and some others that you probably don't even check on yourself. That's all for this episode, until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!