



Episode 494 — Sifu Georgeanne Verigan | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Welcome, this is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 494 with Sifu Georgeanne Verigan. I'm Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host, I'm the founder here at whistlekick and what do I do? I do the same thing we're all doing over here. We're supporting the traditional martial arts. If you want to see everything that we're doing, go to whistlekick.com. It's our digital home. There are things constantly being added in support of the arts. One of the things you can find over there is our store. Use the code PODCAST15 to save 15% off anything that we have there. This podcast, martial arts radio, gets its own website, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. That's right, we keep it easy. The show comes out twice a week with the goal of connecting, educating and entertaining you, the traditional martial artist. If you want to show your appreciation for what we do, you can do a number of things. You can make a purchase, share an episode, follow us on social media. You can tell a friend. You could pick up one of our books on Amazon, you could leave us a review somewhere or you could support the Patreon, Patreon.com/whistlekick. It's the place to go. You can jump in for as little as \$2 a month. Let us know what you think, let us know that you love the show but if you step up to \$5, we're going to give you more stuff and honestly, the more you contribute, the more we give you. I had a great conversation with Sifu Verigan. We talk about what it's like to assume a role at a younger than average age. We talk about her start, her middle, we talk about where she's at now. We talk about all the things you might expect but it's a little different with her and I'm not going to color it or predispose you to thoughts on it because I want it to stand on its own. I want you to have your own takeaways so instead of trying to, I'm



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just going to get out of the way and let you listen. Sifu Verigan, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Georgeanne Verigan:

Good morning, how are you?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Good morning. I'm great, how are you?

Georgeanne Verigan:

Very good, thanks.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Good, good. You're on cup of coffee #2. I limited myself to 1 this morning. I'm always nervous when we have an early interview about my hydration levels and I won't elaborate more than that but I'm jealous of your 2nd cup.

Georgeanne Verigan:

I need it, I need it. I've been up since 6:30 so I'm good.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Me too. We do a daily show, a live YouTube show at 6:30. I roll out of bed about 6:10, 6:15, make that first cup. It's actually the name of the show, First Cup, and stumble to the couch. Now, you're in Michigan.

Georgeanne Verigan:

I am. I'm sitting here on the shores of Lake Superior. It's a cloudy day but the geese are coming in. It's a good sign. The lake never froze this year. That sign, I don't know what that means but yeah, I'm excited for spring.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, that makes the 2 of us as I sit and look out the window with the snow coming down.

Georgeanne Verigan:

Uh, jeez. Enough already. Enough!

Jeremy Lesniak:



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And now, given the social climate that has developed. Of course, when we have interviews with people, we don't generally put times or rather days and dates on them because people go back and they'll listen years from now to this episode, to other episodes but as we're talking, there's a lot happening keeping people at home due to illness and what worse way to make cabin fever, to compound the feelings of that than to say now, you can't leave the house.

Georgeanne Verigan:

If I can speak to that for just a minute because we have a very relevant situation going on because of this, as a public health issues, large crowds, they're asking people to avoid large gatherings. We have a charity tournament within our system, within our Family schools in New Hampshire that we've been running for, this would be year 31 and it's a tournament that raises money for local hospice programs. I started that because I lost my father and my sister both to cancer and hospice was not really available that time and I see it as a very beneficial program for a lot of Families locally. So, anyway, point being, this tournament was scheduled for April 18 of this year and in conversations with the local CDC in New Hampshire, they are supporting a recommendation to postpone that so for the first year in 31 years, we will be postponing our Kick for Cancer tournament and are looking to reschedule that for September. We're hoping for September 19th, either it will be 19th or 26th but we will get the information out to everybody on that but it is a big deal. We've been running this tournament, it's the longest running non-profit event in the state of New Hampshire and it's a big deal to have to postpone it but the public health issue will, at times, will have capacity of a gym filled with people. Not just participants but also spectators and spectators mean aunts and uncles that may be over 60, grandmas and grandpas and we need to be really paying attention to that population. It's not so much the young folks but the young folks can carry the virus. It's the effect of taking on the older, more senior generation so we're very aware of that and as a public health consideration, we will be postponing our kick for cancer schedule for April 18th to September of this year. So, you opened up the perfect opportunity for me to say that so I didn't forget it because we just made the decision yesterday.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And I saw the decision yesterday for 2 other tournaments that I'm aware of. One that I was going to be attending and one that, we have a competition team and they follow a couple circuits and one of these tournaments was on that circuit and here we are.

Georgeanne Verigan:

Yep, it's the right thing to do. We talk a lot about staying healthy and being healthy and part of that is public awareness and realizing that we are Families and we can go out and do something and be ok with it but we can bring it back and if somebody's got asthma, somebody has an underlying condition, I'm also an acupuncturist so my office, actually, I've closed for the next 2 weeks. Most of my patients are



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veterans and most of my patients are over 60. It's like everybody just take a breather, little social distancing, go home, play checkers kind of thing. So, there we go, we got that out.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely. I think this is the 1st time we opened the show talking about illness and infection.

Georgeanne Verigan:

Yeah, and talking about public awareness and doing the right thing. Isn't that what we do as martial artists? We try to do the right thing. We make the consideration, we're not over, we're not panicked people. We don't make decisions hastily and without information. The same as if you're entering a sparring match. You don't make decisions without getting more information and you do your observation, you collect your facts and you do what you have to do. Moving on...

Jeremy Lesniak:

As anyone who has started listening has figured out when you're talking about things that have happened for 30-something years, you've been in this game for a while. You've been training, teaching, a martial artist for a while so why don't we rewind that tape to the 0 mark and how did you get started?

Georgeanne Verigan:

Martial arts was never in my younger life. I didn't think much about it. I started in martial arts, it was 1976 to 1977. Right about then, I moved up to the Boston area. I grew up in Miami which is another reason why I find winter so incredibly painful but I grew up in Southern Florida. Martial arts wasn't in my life but anyway, I moved to Boston and I don't know what keyed me in. I think I got into the working world and started to heal that feeling of not being able to be as physically active as I was when I was in college and other places. I was looking for something that fits my schedule and right around the corner from me was a small Kajukenbo school that was, I believe the deal was, 3 months, \$99, free uniform and I thought who can't do that, right? So, I started. It was called New England Health and Self-Defense. It was in Marlborough, Massachusetts and they teach Kajukenbo and that was my beginning and I started going 2 nights a week as most do and as ranks improved, I started going 4 nights a week and then, if you were a certain level, you could attend the beginner classes sort of in the back as a reminder or a refresher on some of the older material you had been working on and then, carry that into the next class so I was going 2 hours a night, 4 nights a week and continue with that, I think, in 1979, close to '78, '79, 2 and a half, 3 years later, I got my black belt and I was the only woman in the school so I went through a ranking that had 8 men, myself and unfortunately, one man who showed up late. I love him, he's a dear friend but I'll never forget that he showed up late. I just can't imagine showing up late to a black belt ranking. Anyway, got my black belt, was really into it at that point. It had started to wrap its dragon's tail around me and around my soul and I left the work that I was doing. I was in the communications industry. I left that and went to open a school and I had a school in Acton, Massachusetts for a while and



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opened up a couple other schools. One in Pittsburgh and one in Belmont, Massachusetts so I was right in the center hub along the highway there in MA and I think it was 1980, 1981, I got my 2nd degree and then, things changed. I mean, it was a time in the martial arts where there were systems or large groups that were, to me, it appeared as though they were more interested in sort of franchising out the martial art school aspect than they were in protecting and maintaining the integrity of the training and the integrity of the style. That's probably a very kind way of saying it but there were people who were basically selling black belts. If you pay a certain fee for a black belt program, whether you had met the quality standards that previously had been in place, whether you had met those standards or not, you were still a black belt and sometimes, it was 6 months or 9 months and opening schools and what happens, the art started to water down. This is all my perspective. This is from the perspective of my mind that the quality of the art started to water down and we started seeing people who felt, because they were told that they were there, felt they had the skills to do what they have been training to do when really, their foundations were just not there and I left the martial arts for a while. I had my business partner who had some personal issues going on and I felt I needed to separate from that and I did and I went out on my own, closed my school, actually, I turned over my school to a young gentleman named John James who now went on to train, he went on to train with Nick Cerio. His title, I believe now, is Shihan. He was my 1st black belt and we still have a very close relationship and he is still out there today promoting and making sure that the history, lineage, quality and integrity of Nick Cerio's system stays maintained and kudos to John.

Jeremy Lesniak:

For those of you who may not live in the northeast, that's a big Kenpō name.

Georgeanne Verigan:

And we have a connection there as I get more into history and how Nick Cerio came into my life, how that connected so John went on to train with Nick and I closed my school, I gave it to him. He went on, he is in the medical field right now, John is; but anyway, I traveled around looking for that black belt that loses a teacher or closes a school or moves away and you're trying to find that connection again, somewhere. I think there are probably many black belts out there who have attained that level and realized, at some point which is shortly after that, that that wasn't the end. That's the beginning and you say that so often after you achieve that level of black belt that's like wow, I did it but that can't be the end because I'm really hooked now. There's got to be more to it. There's got to be more to learn. There's got to be a continuing path somewhere so I was in the Massachusetts area so I tried different schools. I went to a Shotokan school for a while. That was good except the teacher, he was amazing, he was like you have to stop the circular stuff and I thought, I didn't realize that Kajukenbo was that circular. I still see a little bend to it because I also do Kung Fu so I see a little bend to Kajukenbo but there is no bend in Shotokan. Everything was straightened lines, straightened lines. Sometimes, someone would do something and I'd move to the side and move around him and he would say you can't do that. I'd be like ok. I trained with him for a while. I'm trying to think. He's still in Natick,



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Massachusetts. He's a master teacher. It will come to me. He also wrote for Black Belt magazine for a while. Really good, excellent instructor in Natick, Mass. I went to Boston, trained a little bit with Yao Li in Kung Fu and he had a branch school out in Billerica, Massachusetts and I went there for a while and trained there and I was just searching for the next thing and one of my dear friends who had been in my black belt, my very first black belt test, he was actually the gentleman who came in late who also got his black belt has a school down close to Rhode Island and he taught taekwondo on Mondays and Wednesdays and he asked me if I could teach Kajukenbo on Tuesdays and Thursdays so I started back again and teaching a little bit with him and one Saturday he said we're going to have this guy come up from Smithfield, Rhode Island. His name is Bill Gregory and he's got a school around there. He teaches Kajukenbo but he also teaches Pai Lum and he's connected with Daniel Pai and it's going to be Saturday, it's going to be black belts, why don't you come on down? I said ok. So, we showed up and there's a group of us that has been still together, we're all friends. We're best friends almost 40 years and this guy pulls up in this red Corvette, top down, probably a '63 Corvette, just a gem of a car and he's a good-sized guy and he gets out and he's Italian and he's got the Italian chains on and the big rings so I'm thinking I don't know. I don't know about this but let's do it. He comes in and he's got on his sam at this point. He's taken off his jewelry and we worked for 3 hours with this guy. It was my first introduction to Grandmaster Gregory, my first introduction at the time. His title was Shenzhen and we did a form where we were doing an exercise, first of all, in close which is something that is a little bit different than what I had been used to. Most of my traditional instruction in Kajukenbo from the very basic set in combination self-defense techniques which you practiced. They're usually numbered and they give you a good tour around all the tools that you have available for self-defense. They almost always had to step back so it's always creating a distance to give you that little bit of a millisecond to respond. With Pai Lum, everything is moving in. We don't concede. Working first on being in close and there was a lot of rolling on the takedowns and changing arms, a little bit of aikido in there because Grandmaster Gregory had studied some aikido and I loved it. I absolutely loved it and found him to be a very cordial man, a very kind man, very generous in the sharing of his knowledge. He was very open to any questions that we had and not, could be a talker and could be very social, but when it came to training, it was about training and sometimes, you can go to a seminar and there's a lot of gabbing. There was no gabbing. It was just do it, let's work on it, ask questions, let's finetune it, let's make it better and that was my first meeting with Grandmaster Gregory. Like I said at that time, he was Shenzhen and I was living in the middle of New Hampshire at the time and I would drive down to Smithville, Rhode Island 2 days a week for training and I did that for 3 years and he became my teacher, he accepted me as his student. This was probably the early '80s, 1980s and I trained with him until his passing in 2001 so that has been a very brief kind of synopsis of my journey to where I got at this point. In 2001, when Grandmaster passed, we did a traditional year of mourning where nothing changed. There were no promotions, there were no gradings. It was as if everything, time stood still for a year and after that year of time, he had stated in his passing documents that he had wanted me to secede him as Grandmaster of the Family and I could talk a little bit more about how he got that title later on but just in the chronology in how I got to where I am. So, in 2002, right there just outside Laconia, New Hampshire, it was a very traditional



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passing. It's called passing of the sword where the Family swords, we have 2 katanas at our Family swords. There was a huge ceremony, not just attended by members within our Pai Lum system, our Kajukenbo system but also members from the New Hampshire, Massachusetts main, Connecticut, Rhode Island Family, heads of Families. Families that still exist today. The Sikaran Family, the Nema Family, the Kenpō Family from down in Rhode Island, the Pai Lum Family from Massachusetts. All of these people came together and acknowledge my ascension as Grandmaster of the Family and as Grandmaster Gregory's lifetime partner said to me, she said you know, he's not doing you any favors and I didn't get it at the moment but I could tell you, being the person who really holds the torch for ensuring that the longevity of the knowledge is harder than it sounds because I, not only need to make sure that my instructors are being fed with knowledge, that I'm still teaching, that I'm still looking at what they're doing. Encouraging them to ask questions and challenging them to ask questions about how they're moving forward and at the same time, supporting them as they bring in new students, as they continue to feed that base of new little Karate people, of new little Kung Fu practitioners so that the style, the system, the way that we teach, the way that we think, the way we move forward is maintained into the future so that's kind of a brief how I got to where I am and I love what I do.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And I suspect everything we talk about from here will be some kind of an offshoot from that story and the first place I want to go, I want to go back. I want to go back to that point you described in the early '80s that, I suspect, was even more impactful than the words you used. You made it sound talking about this realization that there was this kind of this race to the bottle in the martial arts community in the early '80s. A lot of people who weren't around then and I was very young then so I didn't even witness the heyday of the 6 months to black belt movement and we've walked back a lot of that. It did some damage and I think we're still feeling some of the impact of that now as we talk or fight internally as martial artists, however you want to look at it, but you talked about stepping away because of that. That you, here was this thing that we can only assume you loved so much that to watch it be watered down, those were your words, hurt and you didn't want to be even around it? Even fighting against that? I don't want my words to come across as judgment. They're exploratory and I want to go in to understand more of what that time was like for you.

Georgeanne Verigan:

Sure, absolutely and I think you'll get an example later on as to how I can express that, how I express that to my students. What I felt, more specifically, more personally to me, is that my business partner who was a terrific martial artist, an amazing martial artist, a wonderful man, Family man, 2 young kids, got so caught up in wanting to...here we had 1 really solid school in Acton, MA, a solid school. I've taken it over from a couple of young brothers who were Kenpō instructors so it already had a base, at some point it was at the bottom of an old building in West Acton, Mass. An old apple seller. It had really huge rooms. It was perfect for teaching but anyway, my business partner, got caught up in this, well, we can start selling programs and I was like well, I'm young. I'm 26, 25, 26, ok, but what does that mean? It says



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that we have to keep them getting better and better so they keep paying. That was kind of the model. You bring somebody in, you feed them a little bit, you give them a rank and I started thinking to myself, this isn't right. That's not the way I did it. That's not the way I came up. It was blood, sweat and tears, sacrifice. Give your time off which is still time is precious to come into work and here, we're going to give people who...I just couldn't go there. I couldn't associate what I had personally put in to my training and my ideas and the virtues and values that had been cultivated within myself over those few years and say let's throw that away for the dollar. I couldn't do that because all you have is your name. When it really comes down to it, all you have is your name and if you don't protect the integrity of your name whether it's your style, your lineage, your school, your personal name, your God-given name, if you don't protect the integrity of that, where do you go and you don't have to put other people down to do that so rather than stay in and continue to answer questions my students would come in and ask, well, jeez, my brother, he goes to school over there on whatever and whatever and he's only been there 6 months and he's got a black belt, do you guys do that? How do you answer that question? You say no, that's not the way we train but you have to be mindful that you don't want to disparage his brother who just got a black belt in 6 months nor do you want to say anything bad about another school. I never felt that you can't elevate yourself by putting down other people. You have to elevate yourself by hard work and perseverance and trying to do the right thing to evade mistakes. Absolutely. If I can go back in my mind in time and maybe if I had done this, this would've worked out a different way, of course but at the time, I wasn't really. I knew something inside of me said this is bigger than me, this is bigger than me so let me take that journey by myself because I know how I think I know the views and values that I have so let me not expose, I'm not going to be a part of this for my students. I'm going to step away. Let John handle it and John did and he kept the school for a while and he eventually sold it but I'm going to take this journey by myself and if there aren't pitfalls, if I do find another teacher, I can kind of decide for myself whether I'm being conned. I'm willing to be a humble student. I went in to every school that I went into as a white belt. I didn't go in and say I'm a black belt in Kenpō. No. I went in and said I would like to train so I think I took it upon myself to take that journey by myself and figure out where are the traditionalists? Where is the integrity? Where is the value? Is it still here? And I found out it was. That there are and the gentleman in Natick that I trained with, his name is Tony Annesi and I believe he's still there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I've heard that name.

Georgeanne Verigan:

What an amazing and he's a Shotokan practitioner, what an amazing practitioner but anyway and he wrote under a different name in Black Belt magazine but I don't know what that is but that was my point. My point was I'm not going to step away from the arts but I'm going to take this journey a little more cautiously. I'm going to seek and find for myself what I need to grow and I don't think at the time I was thinking I'll open up another school one day but let me continue this journey by myself with the



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tools that I have and the knowledge I have about the art and I can't be a part of this franchising. I can't do that. That, to me, it was harder than I can imagine so that was why I stepped away. It was hard but I felt it was safer if I took the journey by myself because I didn't have to answer those questions that might put someone else down. I didn't want to do that. That's not the way I walk if that's helpful.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It is, it is and that's some heavy stuff and I appreciate you sharing that. Now, a lot of what you're talking about sounds, if I can be direct, awfully mature for someone in their 20s facing these kind of challenges because that's the age group where I see people really, let's say, kind of indoctrinated. It's a very interesting martial arts practices because here you are in your 20s, you're old enough to know some things and to do some things but still, very subject to being impressionable by a powerful or a larger than life instructor sort of personality and I think, from what I witnessed, it's kind of that age group where things go off and go awry.

Georgeanne Verigan:

I agree.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That was my 20s. Maybe I'm applying a little bit too much of my own history here but...

Georgeanne Verigan:

I totally agree and I agree that happens today but I think that if we pay attention to what your gut is telling you, even though it's a hard decision, most people can recognize when they're being asked to do something that doesn't sit right. If it doesn't feel right in your gut, stop a minute. It doesn't matter who it is saying it to you, whether it's someone standing up there with a title of Grandmaster or Sensei or Sifu, the responsibility of that instructor to maintain that integrity and to maintain that separation between teacher and student so that you can continue to be a mentor, you can continue to be a guide, you have to pay attention to your words. You can't say things and do things. You can't be the instructor that, you're probably going to cut this but you can't be the instructor that's absolutely shitfaced on Saturday night with your students and expect them to respect you on Tuesday when they come to class. There has to be a separation. We don't have to be perfect puritans but we have to set an example for our students because they do look to us as something other than. I mean, I remember looking at Daniel Pai the first time he came in, he was like a mystery man. Who is this Chinese-Hawaiian guy? What is he doing and he's doing these amazing things. His hands were monstrous. He's throwing people left and right. He barely touches, he sometimes wouldn't have to touch you and I would see people move so I'm like what's that? I want to know that. Now, I could do a couple of things. I could be so enamored by that that I follow him off a cliff or I can be an observer, be a respectful observer, attend the classes, if he ever gets to a place where he wants to share it with me, I can decipher at that point is it BS or is it real but



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you have to take some personal responsibility but I get what you say. I have young instructors in their 20s and 30s and taking them through those, creating a channel of communication with them that's open and honest and creating a place where they can ask questions that they may not ask each other or others and not telling them what to do but showing them maybe what I would have done or have done in that situation and then, having them continue to communicate with me as to where they're going. I have 3 young black belts right now. 2 seconds and a 3rd who are running schools in New Hampshire. One is brand new, one is 2 years old and one is 3 years old. They need a lot of guidance. They have people their own age coming to them because they are in their late 20s and early 30s. People coming to them, looking at them as leaders for the first time in their life. Up to this point, they were students. Now, they're leaders and they are understanding now the importance of being mindful of that. Some of their students are older than they are and they're looking at them as leaders so we really have to take that responsibility of instructors seriously and make sure that our words follow our deeds and we keep that separation between. Not that you can't be best of friends because I am best of friends with some of my students but there are certain levels of discussion that don't happen at certain levels of training. That was my upbringing anyway. I can't remember...I'm trying to remember the first time I'm sitting in a room where Grandmaster Gregory and Dr. Pai were having a conversation. That was not something that was open to everyone and the conversation that they have would not have been a conversation they would have had in the Kwan or the dojo that day with all white belts, purple belts and brown belts so there is a separation and a responsibility we have as instructors. With young people, it's important. The maturity level, even today, there's less social interaction so sometimes, it's confusing as to how we move forward but I always say to them, go with your heart. You have a feeling in your gut, the same little antenna that go up when you're feeling that moment that you might be in danger. You know that. You just get this, I don't know what it is, it's like the hair on your body says just wake up a little bit, just kind of expand your vision a little bit, expand your thoughts, expand your heart, pay attention. It's somewhere, I don't see it yet but I feel it. It's the same when you're working with a student. You observe them, you listen, you pay attention to the subtleties whether you're verbal or not and you try to help to move them in the direction within the perimeters of the art. We don't need to get into people's personal lives unless we're invited but in terms of the art, we have parameters to follow. A lot of us have curriculums that have been 50 years old so we have steps that we can follow. We have short term and long term goals and I think those are helpful.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I agree. You talk about younger instructors who, I was one of these. I had my school and I was 22 and here was this built in group of people with similar interests who thought highly of me and gave me money for my time and my knowledge and it's kind of hard to not feel puffed up about that so when you work with, you give the example of this newer instructor, newer school owner, how are you advising them? I assume you're engaged with them from time to time and guiding them from your role as their superior. What kinds of conversations are you having with them?



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Georgeanne Verigan:

Usually what will happen is I'll get this question, I'll get this email and it's basically there's checking in, I hope you're doing well kind of thing and that is 5 or 6 paragraphs of things that they've probably been thinking about for a while whether it be, I'll give you an example. I had a contact with a young black belt one time and he was like I have students who are really good at kata and I have students that really want to learn how to fight. Now, you've probably heard that before. I don't really want to learn kata. I don't understand it. I think it's really slow. I'm just here to learn how to fight and it's like, you know what, then we're going to do basics for 5 years so I'm sure so you can just get used to standing in a line, hitting a pad, whatever or you can do kata because kata is basics. That's all it is. It's basics put together in a pattern so it's that kind of conversation I'll have with him. So, I say to him, if you had asked me that question when you were a brown belt or a green belt, what do you think my answer would have been and you'll say oh, I know what your answer would have been. Your answer would have been you got to do both. I'm like why would that be? So I can use personal exchanges I've had with them because they know me. They know how I feel about traditional training. I've worked with people who, my youngest student was 4, my oldest student was 72 so I've worked a range of physical abilities, I've worked with people who are autistic, I've worked with people who are in wheelchairs so your challenges as an instructor cover up a wide range. For that young instructor, it's go back to your personal experiences with your teacher which brings us to your previous segment, if your instructor took the time to actually sit down with you and critique what you're doing, not just constantly puff you up because ego's a good thing. There's nothing wrong with ego because if you don't have a bit of ego, that's a little bit of your confidence, that's a little bit of who you are. It's when your ego overrides your sensibilities. If you're standing against somebody 7 foot tall, weighs 350 pounds, you better put your ego in your pocket so there are times to have that. I think it's important. You're the leader. I remember going to my school, looking at my instructor wanting to look like that. I want my kick to look like that, I want my punch to look like that. I want to be able to take that person down like that so you do have a responsibility to maintain your ability to look and be effective in the martial arts. You have to do that as an instructor. If you're just standing in front of a room and you're looking at a teacher whose uniform never gets sweaty, who doesn't ever throw a kick during basics, who's just walking around and hearing themselves chatter, it's like hmmm, do I know? Have you ever been grabbed by your instructor and thrown to the ground? You're like ok, yeah, I want to do that in a nice way and not a mean way. That's who you want to be and I hear how I have grown over the years through the instructors I've met during those periods or who are now instructors but through the students I've met during those periods. When I was in my 20s and 30s, I was a very physical instructor, probably into my 40s even. A very physical instructor because I had to be. I was teaching beginners. You have to be hands-on with them. How do you teach control to someone if you don't show them control? How do you teach balance and being able to shift your weight? How do you teach that without demonstrating that on someone? How do you teach a safe takedown so that you can practice with someone effectively at a moderate to full-contact speed? How do you do that unless you show them how you do it otherwise you're just saying it so I think that carries on to those young



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instructors. It's like you have to be able to show it. You have to be able to do it and then you have to be able to teach it which then gets you into the element of all my students don't learn the same. Some of them learn by touching, some of them learn by hearing, some of them learn by writing it down. Some of them learn by doing it all. They need all of it and then they need time so I try to talk to my instructors about that. Have your students keep journals. Have them keep notebooks. Give them 10 minutes, 5 minutes, at the end of every class. Make it part of the class, write in your notebook what you just learned in your own words. I don't care if you're 6 and you have to do stick figures. They can do something and that way, it begins to get them to a pattern of learning that I'll write it down, I'll do it, I'll practice it, I'll do it every morning and every night and when I get up in the morning, when I go to bed at night, I'll do what I just learned for a few weeks, maybe a month and then it sticks with me. When young people come to me, I try to just help them in ways of things that I have found to work in a positive way for myself and they take it or they don't take it and sometimes they don't. I've had instructors who say well, I'm going to try this and I'll say to them I'll support that but if your students start looking shabby, I'm going to let you know. I'm going to let you know. I'm not going to tell them. I'll never tell them but I'm going to let you know and they're like ok. Because I do make, I still do all the black belt ranking and I still go out to the northeast at least once or twice a year so I do seminars. I see students in all levels and I judge my instructors by the way their students look. If your students still look like they're solid, they still look like they're carrying the torch for Kajukenbo, karate and Pai Lum Kung Fu, I'm good with that. Whatever your style is of teaching but if your students start to show a slacking in any way, I'm going to go to you because that's where it's coming from.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Have you had that conversation?

Georgeanne Verigan:

Oh sure! Oh yes!

Jeremy Lesniak:

Can you tell us about that because that sounds like a really difficult conversation to have for both sides?

Georgeanne Verigan:

It is but I have to respect. I know what it's like to run a school fulltime and I know what it takes. For most of us, you have a fulltime job and then 2, 3, 4 days or nights a week, you pack up in your wonderful, beloved everyday gi or sam and you go to the school and you love what you do but then next morning you're back at your job so for many, many schools especially the small schools still going on in New England area and even here in Michigan, although we could talk about that differently, it's a whole different mentality. Northeast is just scattered with small schools that are still going on at community centers, church buildings. A lot of people don't have store fronts but they've been around for 40 years



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so anyway, I have to respect their method of teaching. They're the ones that are making the sacrifice. If I try to make them into mini Me's, it's not going to work. I have my life experience with me, they have their life experience. We all learn differently. They grew up in my class so they have a, I guess, an outline of how a boilerplate of how I always ran the classes but that may not work for them. As long as the student is getting the material, the material is solid and understanding, it moves in a coherent way, there are reasons why there are black belt forms and there are white belt forms in kata. If you're going to teach a black belt kata to a white belt, you better teach them all the basics first. If not, you'll be stopping every other move to try to get them to understand it. There is a coherent way that curriculums move forward and they build upon themselves so it is a hard, I have instructors who really want to just do self-defense. That's kind of their bag. That's what they love, that's what they enjoy doing, that in-close contact. That's fine but the normal person coming in from the street, barely shakes hands with people let alone wraps them up around the shoulder, puts a tiger mount around their shoulder and throws them on the ground so you have to understand how people come together and get to that place. They might be there to learn self-defense but you better teach them how to stand and balance and to breathe and to be aware of their environment. You better teach them all those things somehow as you're showing them how to punch and kick and block and move which I think is the most important thing. You've got to move first. If you don't teach them all those things, they're never going to get to that fancy self-defense thing that you want to do and so, usually that conversation comes around is that they're feeling frustrated or I do a seminar at one of their schools and I'm doing self-defense and I'm constantly repeating certain parts of that technique and I'm realizing there's something missing here. What is it that these people aren't getting? So, I'm backtracking and fixing it and coming back and I'll have a discussion with the instructor afterward whether it be your people talk too much, meaning why are beginners talking to beginners when they're trying to learn something new? They shouldn't be. They should only be listening and talking to you so I'll have a different conversation with that instructor. They can take the information and do with it what they will. My goal is to make sure that people come through and have a solid foundation and a style, a solid foundation and a system. Everyone is welcome. Everyone feels safe but we have to remember, we're doing martial arts. At some point, there is going to be contact and we need to make sure that when that contact happens, that it's safe for that person. The safer it is for that person, the closer they will get to their opponent and the more they will begin to understand their own power and their own confidence. If you hurt them initially going in, they're going to walk away so yes, I want the student to stay but for me as the head of the Family, if we're not planting solid seeds in the beginning and keeping people safe until they get to a place that they can really defend themselves which sometimes can be months, even maybe a year or before someone actually feels comfortable having someone punch at them, it depends on the individual. We have to keep them safe and growing and learning until that time so whatever path they take to teach, as long as the student at the other end is like I see the end of the production line, what I want to see is to look like somebody who does Kajukenbo or somebody who does Pai Lum or somebody who does both because we had schools who just teach Kajukenbo karate and we have just Pai Lum schools and we also have bridges which we can talk about later but those are hard discussions to have because I don't want to



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poo-poo what they're doing. I don't want to say what you're doing is awful because that's not the way to help people grow. It's to kind of give them the opportunity, they need to present a plan and show me what they're doing and let me see the result. Let's see the results but results, as you know in the martial arts, could take a year. It could take two years. These are long-term things so we have to pay attention.

Jeremy Lesniak:

One of the things that I really enjoy about the format of this show being so often is that I get to say something and step back and listen but in that openness, because the guest is driving the conversation, we can infer a lot of things about that person and what's important to them and what I'm starting to notice as you're discussing, I'm going to guess that you're incredibly passionate more so about the development of people, let's say, further down the line in the Family than maybe even your own technique. It seems like you spend...I'm trying to choose my words because I want to make sure they're coming across in the complimentary way that I mean them and not in a critical way.

Georgeanne Verigan:

Don't worry about that. Say what's comfortable for you. If I infer any kind of whatever, I'll let you know.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Alright, sounds good. I appreciate that. your energy, your time, goes to the development of these students, these other instructors in an almost selfless way and I suspect that has been that way for a very long time.

Georgeanne Verigan:

I could tell you, Grandmaster Bill Gregory passed away 2001 so it's been almost 20 years. 20 years is a long time. I have 2 young people that were going up for black belt in a couple of weeks and I haven't told them yet but I'll make sure I'll email them before they hear this that they're going to have to be postponed because I'm not coming out to New Hampshire but these people never met Bill Gregory. They never met Daniel Pai. He passed away 1993. These are the roots of our Family style, I mean, the most current roots. Bill Gregory was about the same age as Nick Cerio. They trained together. Bill Gregory was one of Nick Cerio's black belts. If you go back at that time, you had all kinds of people. You had Earnest Li, you had Tadashi Yamashita. You had all these people in New England and they were bringing up people very, very quickly and that's the root so if I can't teach people the roots of the tree, I'm trying to teach them about people that don't exist anymore. They only exist in our heart. They only exist on the expression of our style. They only exist in the integrity and quality of what we do. That's how they exist. In Chinese medicine, they call it the shen. It's that part of you that exists after you pass and it only exist because people talk about it and remember you which is why it's so important, when I walk into a school and I see pictures, it doesn't have to be a Kajukenbo school or a Pai Lum school. When I see pictures of lineage, I know that those students are being taught where their style came from.



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Whether those men, and it's usually men but there are some women now who have gotten to higher levels within the arts, whether those men were good people or not good people, they were carriers of the torch of their style and we need to move the style forward so I do take care of my black belts but I don't get in their way. I tried that. It was a tough transition for me to go from [00:51:17], I was a 5th level black belt in the Pai Lum system to Grandmaster. I was like what? What? Here, I'm with, I'm head of my school and all of a sudden, I'm head of all the schools. You can't get in their way. These people are planting seeds and growing students and you need to be there to support them and welcome them but you can't get in their way so I am passionate. I'm very passionate with people who, when they say to me, oh, I've got 18 students now or I have 40 students now. That's wonderful because I know the numbers. I know how many students about how it's going to take to even get to 1 black belt and how many of those black belts is it going to take to have 1 instructor and of those instructors, how many of them will ever really open a school. You know the numbers, right?

Jeremy Lesniak:

They're not good.

Georgeanne Verigan:

You can't be in their way but you have to be passionate. I am absolutely, there are 2 things that I have control over in this Family. I have control over rank which means I can take your rank and I can give you rank so that says a lot because I learned this in 20 years. You only have control over 2 things, one of them is rank and the other is curriculum. That's it. If I have a school that decides it wants to go full MMA, they're not a Pai Lum school anymore because Pai Lum is not MMA. White Dragon Pai Lum is Kung Fu and it has particular set of systems and movements in it. Now, you can be a Pai Lum practitioner who does MMA but you're not going to teach it. if you're going to teach it, there needs to be, in my rules, a certain percentage. It's like 85% of what you teach in your school has to be Pai Lum or Kajukenbo and one of the ways that I maintain the integrity of both of these systems to either keep them separate or together is I'll promote the black belt up to 2nd degree in either style. They can be 2nd degree in Kajukenbo, full Kajukenbo, all the katas, the pinyans, the self-defense techniques, the bō staff, the nunchucks, all of that and I'll promote up to 2nd degree Pai Lum with just pure Pai Lum training but for a black belt instructor in my system, my style, to get a 3rd degree, they have to have a 1st in one of the opposite style so if you're a 2nd degree in Pai Lum and you need a 3rd degree, you need to get all of your Kajukenbo katas and pinyans down before I'll promote you and that's one of the ways that I can assure that both of the systems move forward is that any of my instructors have black belts in both styles and they have both systems and they understand the difference between the two. There are some bridges, there are some forms that we do that we call them bridge forms that kind of blend them. There's forms that look a little more Kajukenbo but they have some Kung Fu in it and then, others you can completely tell that they're separate styles so we'll bring in those bridge forms first so people can kind of feel that. anyone that I taught when I was teaching, all of my black belts have rankings in both styles but it's the new ones coming up that they're like what do I need to do for my next level? I say you need to learn the



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other system and they're like oh. They're like what? Yes, that's what you need to do because we are, Bill Gregory was Kajukenbo and he was Pai Lum and I remember when he changed because we were all in gis and we were teaching Kajukenbo and then he came up to my school in New Hampshire and he taught a crane form and did double broadswords and he said Pai Lum, this is Pai Lum and he looked at me and said, you got to get them in sams. I was like ok and that was the change and that was the 1980s and we taught only Pai Lum all the way up until he passed. I didn't teach Kajukenbo and when he passed, I realized it had been 10, maybe 12 years and my dear senior up in Nova Scotia, Canada, Larry Maclellan, he also recognized at that point, wait a second, we're going to lose Kajukenbo if we don't teach it. Both of us, for a couple of years, just taught Kajukenbo and we got it back into the roots, got it back into the tree and that's how we move it forward but it's quite a journey. Recognizing the things that need to stay together in order to move forward and when you're at the top, you have very little control over that so you have to be able to recognize the things that you have control over and just make that clear, make it really clear to everyone and then, move forward. You have to be nice, you have to be generous, compassionate and kind but you also, they need to know within you exists the dragon and the tiger and that you have these tools available to you and you don't like to use them very often but you can if that makes sense.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You talked about assuming this mantle of Grandmaster at an early age, an age that very few people are going to assume that role. It's a big deal. It's something that most of us, I won't speak for most of us, when I think of someone kind of inheriting that Grandmaster role in a system, I'm always thinking of someone in, at least, their late 50s or usually 60s, maybe even older depending on just how that lineage flows and you said it's been 20 years so we can get a rough idea of your age and are you thinking about that next generation of Grandmasters and if so, are you willing to talk about what that's like because now you've got 20 years of knowing what it's like, of the challenges and then, I would assume, because of the other things that we talked about today, your goal of better preparing the person that takes over for you than you were prepared.

Georgeanne Verigan:

Oh god, yeah. I had, in my lifetime, 2 experiences of that transition and I can tell you I've had many, many friends in the martial arts who's never experienced it once. When Daniel Pai passed away in 1993, he was out of the country and there was no secession. There was no plan of who was going to be, he had, at that time, a handful. I mean, literally less than 5 men who were 7th level or higher in Pai Lum. One of them was my teacher, Bill Gregory, and a couple of higher level black belts that he had had lived with him down in Florida and not took care of him but they were there. They were like, I don't know, assistants or something but they were black belts when they were training. I don't mean to diminish their level at all so when he passed, it was a year of mourning and then there was a huge conference in the center of Florida. I went to that with my teacher, Bill Gregory, and there was a council of seniors in the Pai Lum Family up on ahead of this. There hundreds of black belts around this huge round table,



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huge round table, in this place in Orlando and there was a seating at the top of this table, just on a little bit of a stage platform, 7, maybe 9, seniors. I believe Tommy St. Charles was there. He's from Connecticut. He's passed. I believe [00:59:29] from Missouri was there. Obviously, Bill Gregory was there [00:59:34] He's from the south was there. Glenn Wilson was there and they were talking in conversation about forming something called the White Dragon Society. The World White Dragon Society so here you have these men who all have their own Families, who all have their own thing. They're doing it for years because Pai was the leader and nobody questioned it. He had no plan. He left no plan. There was no plan so earlier when we talked about ego, here we have sitting at the head of this table, probably there's so much ego that you couldn't close the doors and trying to make the decision who was going to be in charge or how that was going to look and all around the room, we all had to stand up and say who we were and whatever but I'm watching this, I'm thinking this is not going to work, to myself I'm thinking that but my job was to support my teacher. It went on in discussions and shortly after that there was a smaller gathering and that got a little heated and it all blew up and everyone went back to their homes and everyone that went back to their little dugouts and decided, we're going to do what we've been doing all along and that's teach Pai Lum and that's what we're going to do and that's when some people stepped out and said I'm in charge and no, he left me in charge and quite frankly, it was all BS. Nobody was left in charge. It was because he didn't expect to die. He didn't go away ill. He fell ill and died so there was no when I leave you're going to be in charge. That's not how Pai taught. Pai had people all around the world that he taught and there was no one who was going to be in charge. It was like do your thing. It wasn't his way of thinking so that all blew up. I've experienced that firsthand and then, when Grandmaster Gregory passed, that was a long, unfortunately, long death and there was already the experience of what happened when Pai died and the importance of making sure there's some cohesiveness that people understand we need to be better prepared and I did not know that he had listed me as the successor to take over the title until basically a couple of days before his death that's when I knew and when I went to his home at the day of his passing, I was greeted by people that were somebody's taking the swords because they're going to take those for a year and this person's talking to me and don't worry about that and I'm like what is going on? It was a little bit confusing but it all coalesced and there were some conditions that had to be met. I had to be close to the age of 50. They wanted me to be the age of 50 but I wasn't but because of my years in and because I knew a lot of these men of these heads of these Families, they agree that would be ok so it was a combination of years in the art and age in order to take that over. Being designated as head of the Family doesn't give you any more than you came in with, really. You have to kind of figure out what that means moving forward and when I look to the future, I look at my students, I look at the people currently that I have in my field and I say who can realize their number 1 goal is to make sure that you still have something in your hands at the end of the days here. You can't just come in with your ego and say oh, the hell with you all. You're not doing anything I want you to do, go away. You can't do that because that's not your role anymore. Your role significantly changes. You have to sit there and listen to people say things and do things that you might not agree with and find a way to make a bridge and you have to continue to cultivate those bridges and be careful what you say because 20 years has passed



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already and so, it's always people who want to be here can be here but we have rules and we have certain things that we need to maintain and that's what I need to hear and if you want to go off and do this, that's fine but it doesn't meet the standard of what I'm looking for and I have to have those discussions. I have taken rank away from people. Things that they have done that brought, what I think could bring a strong negative impact on our Family name, our quality, our integrity, I have taken their rank away.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Can you give an example that might not put somebody's business out there? Is there a way to say it generically?

Georgeanne Verigan:

If it has become clear to me that someone has been dishonest, someone is being abusive, whether being verbally or emotionally to students, we talked about that a little bit in an earlier segment, the responsibility of an instructor to be very clear of their boundaries of what they say and how they guide their students. If someone does something illegal, the illegal part would be immediately you're out, you're gone because right now, I have 4 schools in New Hampshire. If one of my instructors in my school in New Hampshire, I continue to let them carry that brand and they're doing something illegal, it reflects on every other school that's there and it's not just my schools. If we have a school, let's say for instance there's an example here in Michigan and this was quite extreme but there was a gentleman, I should not use that word, there was a man who had a martial art school and he had some female students which is fine but he proceeded to then do drugs with them, tie them up in his basement and keep them there for several days. No one said there's a deranged man who did this. They said there is a martial arts instructor. That's how they identified this man. A martial arts instructor, so the martial arts schools around here for a while took a little bit of a hit because if I'm a mom, I'm not going to bring my kids to a martial arts school and feel like they're safe, right? So, what we do as a community reflects so I had an instructor that, they're no longer involved with our system at all. All their ranks have been removed, all their titles and designations have been removed. Having their students do things under the guise of if you really want to be better, this is what you have to do and I'm asking you to do this and as your teacher, you should do what the teacher ask you to do. We've probably heard this, some variation of this statement, from an instructor at some point in our life and they were injuring other students at the behest of the instructor. That's just a small example. Hey, I want you to take this guy down. I'm sure you've heard that before or somebody has just rehabbing from a broken wrist, I want you to pop them in the wrist. Things like this. Now, I'm talking back 1970s, 1980s. A lot of this went on and we did try to do a pretty good job of weeding it out. If you had a real guy that came into your school who's a little bit of a nutcase, you'll figure it out quickly and you got them out but when you see that happening now and it's a way of promoting themselves. You'll do this for me because you're loyal to me, that kind of stuff I find very disturbing. Doesn't matter whether it's martial arts or anywhere. If you had the responsibility as a teacher, your job is to be a teacher. Your job is not to have people do things under this guise of if



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you don't, you're not loyal and therefore, I can't give you a rank or whatever the prize is at the end so that instructor's gone and anyone who does that in my system will be gone and I would expect the other people that I know in New Hampshire area especially, the heads of the Families there, they would do the same.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's a challenging situation and I started to get a little hot under the collar once you're talking about this "martial artist who tied women up in his basement" because one of the things that's got me fired up for a very long time is the fact that because we don't police our own, we end up with this public image that the general public is just far too happy to tear down because we're not showing internal standards that we're holding each other too.

Georgeanne Verigan:

Absolutely. I also celebrate the good things. When I have the opportunity to gather with other schools or other leaders, I'll tell them the good things we're doing. That's the time I introduce them to maybe a new black belt or introduce them to this and they know that because we try to have a cordial relationship and see that we can celebrate the good things and we can also identify if I remove someone's rank, I let every school in the area know so I want them to know this person no longer has anything to do with us. That's my job. That's not an easy thing to do. That person could continue to run a martial arts school but all the heads of the Families and we've had open conversations. They know if I hear something from them, I pay attention to it. They're not putting it out on Facebook, they're not putting it in anywhere but we do try to police our own. We do try to make sure because in small communities, you can have, as I said before, a tiny martial arts school in someone's garage. It's been there 25 years. they're doing a good thing. We don't want anyone to be injured if we can help it by the bad judgment, whatever, of a single person. It's an industry but it's also a lifestyle.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let's flip our timeline a little bit. Let's start looking into the future. We've talked about some of the things that you're kind of, in general, addressing but if we look out over the next 5, 10, however many years you want to look and you think about your relationship to martial arts. Your training, your instruction, your overseeing of the organization, what are you looking forward to and what are you hoping to maybe create in that time?

Georgeanne Verigan:

It's a planning style that just takes so much patience and every year, when the new year comes around, I ask for more patience because I would like to see things move faster, that people develop as we develop over the years and often times, we don't see the results of the work for a while. The next generation to me is a mystery. I have the men that I trained with that are my age and high level. I have that next



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generation that's maybe in their late 40s, 50s who have black belts under them and then I have the young black belts in their 20s and 30s that are opening schools and that's where my intimate knowledge of the Family stops so their students, I don't know yet. Over the next few years, my goal is to get into all those schools so they know me. That's important. Otherwise, they will skip a generation and I think so, even a presence, even being there, doing a seminar, talking about my Family history, talking about our style, our Family history, giving them the things, the gems that I think are important so that they feel a part of Pai Lum and a part of Kajukenbo so, in the short term, for me that will be 5 years over the next 5 years, I need to get into all those schools. I need to make sure, and usually when I come to town, it's a seminar where all schools are invited and that is also important in our Family because even though, we have separate, and these are businesses for these young black belts. They have other jobs, some of them is full time, they need to learn about their brothers and sisters. They need to learn and know that there are other people close by that are learning what they learn so there's a, that's where the ego has to go away. It's not like we're stealing students from each other. We come together as a Family and do our seminars in a group where you get to meet instructors from other schools. You get to meet the students from other schools and they start their Facebook conversations and their social media interactions and so, that has also been a big part of our Family. Two is getting together as a Family. When Dr. Pai would come in, we would have black belt training with a hundred black belts from all over. When Grandmaster Gregory would do seminars, it was always everyone came so there would be 75 by a 100 people there, black belts and sometimes brown belts. If he taught lower levels, we'd have big gyms and all the people would be there so that Family connection. That's the short term. The long term is that hard decision. I'm constantly looking for candidates. I'm constantly looking for candidates to carry this forward. I don't want to and I could, of course, go for a walk today and be hit by a bus. I have written down names and there are few people who know about that and those people always had the option to say no or not but I do know what it takes to be the head of a Family. I'm living it. It's incredibly humbling. It is a huge responsibility. Most of the calls that I get, I'll tell you, are not calls of hey, have a great day. Most of my calls are there's something going on and I'm the person who needs to correct that if it's going in the wrong direction and that's been cultivated over time so it is a position where people will go to you looking for the answer and the answer may not be as direct as go here or go there. You have to consider the whole Family in every decision you make. It's not a personal decision. It's a Family decision and making sure that the Family stays strong and that every person is supported so in the long term, I'm never going to stop. My personal training, I do a lot of tai chi, I do qi gong, I'm an acupuncturist. I dig up old Pai Lum films. I search out forms. There's one I've been working on now for about 2 ½ years and I think by next year, I'll be ready to share that so yes, I'm still teaching. I'm still trying to pick up things that maybe fell through the cracks that haven't been taught in 20, 30 years and just yank them up and throw them out there so my goal is to make sure there is as much information out there on Pai Lum, as much information out there in Kajukenbo that I can find and make sure that my students have it because the more they have, things do fall to the side. You find instructors and you've probably seen this. Instructors that have their favorites and things that they do well and, oftentimes, that's what they teach and they can neglect or set aside some of the things they don't do so well or maybe they don't



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look so well so they don't teach those and somehow that sort of falls away and yeah, some things are hard and challenging but there's nothing wrong with saying, like for me, am I going to do a Chinese crescent kick these days? Hell no, I'm not. I'm not jumping up in the air and throwing 2 kicks in the air. That's ridiculous but I can tell you how to do it and I can tell you how to do it because I've been working with you and I've been teaching you and I know how your body works. When we get to that point in the form or we get to that point in the kata, I may do a shuffle step and still end up in the same position but I'm going to tell you to do a Chinese crescent and that's the way it's supposed to be done and when you get as old as me, you can do a shuffle step and they're like ok. That's how you do it. It's more or less, are you in the same, you'll end up to be in the same position to be as effective as you would've been without the Chinese crescent? The Chinese crescent is the Kung Fu. That's the Kung Fu. The slap in the face is something else. That's what you're going for so throw out the flashy thing and then, slap them in the face. That's in the long term. The long term is making sure that there are enough seeds planted that can continue on because when I'm gone, the next person has the same job and maybe it will be this way, maybe it won't be this way but the threads are there holding everyone together. My job is to ensure that those threads got rewound every once in a while so they're just a little bit tighter because people are people and personalities come together and not and the bottom-line is we know we love the art. We know we love each other. We know there's not much you can do. You really have to do something off the charts for me to push you away but your troubles are welcome here. You're welcome here. Your successes are welcome here as long as the goal within the construct of Pai Lum and Kung Fu and Kajukenbo, as long as the goal is to move the system forward, we're on the same path. Whatever happens on the outside, we can talk as people but in this construct, that's where I see it. It's like a laser that's moving forward. It doesn't have a side path.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great stuff. If people want to reach you, find you online, school, website, social media, anything like that we could share with them?

Georgeanne Verigan:

I'm not a social media person but I just...I guess, I get texts once in a while but I don't know anything about Facebook or Twitter or any of that because I tried Facebook once and after figuring out how many people were shopping and how many people were having coffee, it was like really? Ok, I can do better so I have, if you can bear with me, I'd like to, at least, highlight the 4 schools in New Hampshire and then, I've got a school down in Florida too. The 1st school is White Dragon Martial Arts. It's in Gilmanton Ironworks and Sifu Baiocchetti and it's 603-387-0779. Next is Sifu Nic Rollins and he does martial arts. He's a Pai Lum school. He has a website, www.zenithmartialarts.net. He's in Concorde, New Hampshire and 603-630-6896. We have Sifu Rob Rowe. This is our Kajukenbo academy. He's in Franklin, New Hampshire and it's franklinkarate.com or you can call 603-455-7855 and our newest school is Sensei Sarah [01:20:17], she's also teaching Kajukenbo and it's in Epsom, New Hampshire so right there at the Rotary and Epsom and it's 603-731-5722. Those 4 schools are up and running. They're all doing well. Lots



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of kids, some focus more on kids than adults but they've got both programs running and the, I've got a school down in Naples, Florida which Pedro Pineiro, he's a 5th level in Pai Lum. It's White Dragon Martial Arts in Naples and it's 239-601-4376 and it's a bilingual school so he teaches both English and in Spanish which is really helpful in southern Florida so his schools are bilingual. Those are the schools. I'm in Michigan. I don't really want to give out my contact because my cellphone number's also my office number. If anyone needs to reach me, they can reach me through Vinnie Baiocchetti so if you call the 603-387-0779, he usually texts me right away, gives me the information and I'll get right back to people within the day. That's not an issue. That's awesome!

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great! This has been a lot of fun. You've shared some awesome stuff and I think you've probably inspired people to ask as many questions as you may have given them answers and to me, that's the mark of a good episode, get people thinking. So, I'll leave this to you. How do you want to wind this up? Any parting words, any final thoughts that you'd give to the people listening?

Georgeanne Verigan:

There were a couple things on the survey that you asked about that I thought were...really got me searching and they may sound so simple and so trivial but I think there are some things that can show people through their own exploration some ideas about the path of someone who really goes into the martial art and hold what that path could look like at the end and one of them is a book that I read. It's a book called The Chronicles of the Tao and it's by Deng Ming-Dao. It was originally 3 books and I remember reading it back in the 1980s and I remember reading it. It was the Wandering Taoist was the 1st book, I think. 7 Bamboo Tablets was the 2nd and Gateway to the Vast World was the 3rd and it's actually a true story about a young boy who enters the shaolin temple and it's true and he goes to the Japanese occupation of China, he goes through a revolution, he makes his trip to America but his way of growing and what he sees and what evolves from what he sees as a young boy who just wants to get in and learn how to fight to his statements of you really don't want to fight. That's not what this is about. You really don't want to and as a martial artist especially anyone who's been in for years, the last thing you ever want to do is use your martial arts on someone because it isn't a game. It's real and all the years it takes to get to that place of realization of I have this in my toolbox and I hope I never have to use it so let me cultivate all the other ways that I can keep myself and the people I love safe so I don't have to reach for that, that's kind of what this book it's about. I think it's fascinating. It's now in one large book just called the Chronicles of the Tao but it's broken down into 3 and then, the 2nd thing, just for entertainment, years ago there was a movie that came out. Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon, I thought it was a fabulous movie on Kung Fu because it was rich in history so any Chinese practitioners out there that want to know some of the more subtle things about the mysteries and the mystics of Kung Fu, I think that movie showed it. It also showed, interestingly enough, the equality of women in the martial arts and how that has never been an issue in a patriarchal society like the Chinese and it's important, I think, for young girls and women to understand that as women, we think differently than



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men but we have the same tools within us and we do think differently and so those come across. I think is a long journey for people who want to get into martial arts. I also think those that step in and out, it's ok because life changes and if you can't make it, you'll get back into it later if it's important to you but when it finally grabs you and wraps around you, it is in your everyday thinking. It isn't like oh, I think of Kung Fu class and I'm going to act like this, it just becomes a part of who you are and a more aware of who you are and how you fit in whatever structure you're working through that day and I think the importance of remaining calm in a world that can sometimes be spinning. The importance of understanding what you have to move yourself forward in whatever situation it is and acting on that and being clear that things are a journey. There's never an end, we'll all get to that eventual end, whatever that is and transform into whatever your belief system is but it is a journey, it is a continual journey and I think the rules, the virtues that we see in the martial arts of respect, self-respect, perseverance, compassion, empathy, those things are really critical but they're not just in the field of martial arts. They're for everyday living so for those who really want to look at something that can change your life, go to a school. Observe. Take a couple of classes. Use your common sense. Pay attention to what your gut tells you. As long as you're enjoying yourself and you're safe and you're having a good time, stay with it. Stay with it because it will grow and it will change and you will grow and you will change. It takes time. Nothing can be done in a short amount of time so, it takes times, stay with it. Most of the martial artists I know have been in decades and there's a lot of them so stay with it and the very best to everyone. I wish everyone the best health, a peaceful life and if you have the tools that you know you need should you ever need them, your life will be more peaceful. Believe me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think you can probably see what I meant in the intro saying that there was a different quality to this episode and I mean that in the best of ways. Every guest is different and every guest has something to teach and maybe it's just where I'm at now, what I'm facing as I'm handling life and recording these intros and outros that this one stuck with me. I think that's some of the beauty of what we do is that depending where you are in life, these episodes are going to impact you differently but regardless of where you are and what you took from today's conversation, I'm sure you can appreciate that Sifu Verigan was open and honest and undoubtedly, fervently passionate about her training and her teaching so thank you, I appreciate you coming on this show, Ma'am and I hope to talk to you again. You can visit whistlekickmartialartsradio.com to see the show notes and that's where you'll find photos and videos, links, social media and a lot more for this and every other episode. If you're willing to support us and the work that we do, you have options. Make a purchase at whistlekick.com and if you do, use the code `PODCAST15` or leave a review, buy a book or help with the Patreon, Patreon.com/whistlekick. If you see whistlekick out in the wild, make sure you say hi, talk to whoever's wearing the shirt or a hat or maybe you're at a tournament, talk to them, make a friend, make a training partner. If nothing else, let them know, hey, we both train. We're trying to better ourselves and that deserves to be recognized. We'd love to hear your guest suggestions so send them in. You could follow us on social media,



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@whistlekick, or email me directly jeremy@whistlekick.com. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!