



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Welcome this is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 512 and today's guest, Shihan Charles Garrett. Who am I? I'm Jeremy Lesniak, you're host for this show, I'm the founder here at whistlekick. Everything we do here at whistlekick is in support of the traditional martial arts. If you want to know what that means, go to whistlekick.com. It's our online home. You're going to find a bunch of stuff over there including our store and if you make a purchase and use the code `PODCAST15`, you support the show and you save a little bit of money. The show itself has its own website, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, we put out 2 new episodes every week, we give you access to every single episode we've ever done all for free and why do we do that? We're trying to connect, educate, entertain traditional martial artists throughout the world. That's our goal. That's our stated purpose and if you want to support the show and that mission, you can do a lot of things. You can do a purchase, like I already mentioned, you could share an episode, you can follow us on social media, we're @whistlekick everywhere, you could tell a friend, pick up a book or a program, maybe leave a review or support our Patreon, Patreon.com/whistlekick. That's where you want to go. If you think that the shows we release are worth 63 cents a pop, not to mention getting access to all of the back episodes and all that, consider supporting us for as little as \$5 a month. If you do, we're going to give you bonus material including a special episode every month. If you step it up from there, we give you more and more and more or you could support for as little as \$2 a month and you still get access to some behind the scene stuff that we release nowhere else so consider that, Patreon.com/whistlekick. I had a great time talking with Shihan Charles Garrett. We talked about a lot of things, of course, how he got started, all that but we really



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

talked a lot about lineage. There are times when that aspect of the conversation doesn't come up a lot but here it was. It was clearly very important to Shihan Garrett and we spent some time talking about who he had the opportunity to train under and it's a name that you might recognize and I thought it was a great episode. Wonderful conversation. I really enjoyed it and I hope that you do too. Shihan Garrett, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Charles Garrett:

Thank you, sir. It's an honor to be on here today.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's an honor to have you! We were just chatting for a bit and as you might imagine, quite often when we get guests on the show, we have conversation before we start and sometimes that conversation starts building up so much momentum and I kind of have to pull in the reins and it's almost what I had to do with you today, sir, to say whoa, whoa, wait for the good stuff! I felt like we were just about to crack into some really good stuff so I'm excited for our conversation because I think we're going to go to some interesting places today.

Charles Garrett:

It's an honor. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Hohan Sōken sensei. When I initially got into the arts, it was because my drill sergeant in basic training in 1967, he said anybody who wants to learn karate, go to Okinawa. I got that opportunity and when I got there, I meandered around Naha looking for a place to join in but I had a back operation a year before so many of the dojos I went by, there were people being slammed to the ground left and right and my back was [00:03:34] so I would bypass those dojos and then by my fortunate luck, I'm looking out my barracks window by Tadake air station. Little old man teaching about 20 G.I.s and it seems to be a class that just started up. I watched it a couple of days and still wondering about going back down the mountain to Naha and looking for a dojo and each time I come back up Tadake, I'd see the gentleman teaching and I go well, I'm going to jump in and whoa, I had really jumped in. It's really unique, the longevity that the martial arts will bring to its practitioner and if you practice in the one right way, the individual themselves become very gracious with what they've learned and the concept of no first strike. I was taught self-defense and self-defense means you don't attack. Somebody attack you then you take care of it so that was my beginning journey in October 1970. This coming October, it will be my 50th anniversary. I've been married more to my karate than my wife.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Do you remind her of that?

Charles Garrett:



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

I don't have to but she knows this and my wife is Okinawan so very fortunate that I took her to Master Sōken and she said, at least 10 or 12 times, she said it's unusual, even for an Okinawan to go to an elder they don't know for them to be [00:05:32] but Master Sōken seem to be a specialist at that as well. He really taught the art as something for your life. Not your oh, I got my black belt, don't say anything anymore. No, no. You want great health and the arts does it. Master Sōken lived to be 92. His uncle lived to be in his 90s and Master Sōken as well. The island of Okinawa just brings out the elders in the world. The region with the most elder individuals and it's just interesting when one of those elders, when you're 25 and you're learning karate from, I think they kicked our booty so easily but Sōken wasn't that way. It's almost sad. He presented a system that is carried down from the originator, Matsumura Sōkon but the Okinawan that was following him, sad to say, didn't convey and teach the kata forms in the way Master Sōken. He really presented Shōrin-ryū Kenpō and a little bit harder concepts behind the system. If anybody's had an opportunity to view videos of Master Sōken in the internet, you'll see this gentleman at 83 years old, just so free and motion is so easy and yet, we go to the first time I had contact with Master Sōken physically. I was in the class my 2nd week and we're in our jodan uke block and they're counting off and Sensei said to a student on my left, lo and behold, he steps in front of me and goes hmm, I'm going to punch at you now but he didn't speak English so I had just finished my left jodan uke so I can block with my right but he throws a right punch and I come out of my right uke and as my right fist is by my left hip, I was saying to myself take it easy, he's an old man. Oh, my goodness! He knocked me backwards and just laughed and went on to the next student.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That laughter at the end. We've heard stories like this. It's kind of a classic. The idea that the inexperienced martial artists is learning from someone that seems to be a senior citizen and someone that warrants maybe holding back especially, I would imagine, with the mindset of someone in the military and it yields, for those of us who've been training a while, maybe a little bit of an expected result that there's some humbling happening but the laughter that you just mentioned, that's the new piece of the story for me and it sounds like, just from the other pieces you're saying about this gentleman, that that might be a theme. Am I right?

Charles Garrett:

Oh yes! It ended up being, because see, when he came up with that laughter, when I did my right jodan uke is because it's my first experience in pain as well and so, you're acknowledgment of learning something new and so, later on it equates to and you'll see in my slide section of titular Sōken is doing a nerve point on [00:09:39] limb and at the same time, we barely, barely got within that picture what we call his shitty jodan because he would smile in this manner letting you know, did you understand that? You got that? This is important but interesting when your knees buckle and your body sways downwards. Yeah, you better learn something and I still prevail with doing the same thing with my students to this day. My 12-year old grandson knows the whole system and he's learning very well and on New Year's workout in January doing nerve points on his right limb then I asked his sister to come in



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

with the camera and video his full arm closed because Charlie is kind of a comedian and he really shows the reaction in a past manner at time but when you look at his limb and you see my nail print digging into his 3 or 4 different parts of his arm, you understand oh, Charlie had a reason to go down.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I've trained with a lot of people and humor, I don't know that I want to make a sweeping generalization here but there does seem a correlation between humor and at least, what I've experienced as the better martial arts instructors. Would you agree? Is there something there?

Charles Garrett:

You hit something there in a way. There are people out there, you'll probably find people that really have a dastardly idea of me and don't like me and you'll find out they don't have humor when they teach. Instead they have this buffalo attitude. They're just going to run you over and smash you and I don't care versus when I teach I want to make sure my student, even on the first day, have learned something to defend themselves and even on the first day working out with them, there's going to be laughter in the class but there's going to be a real hard, serious time and I think when you bring just a shade of the humor in, it brings a more natural, relaxed feeling with all students. It's difficult because I was in a small class with Master Sōken. I've only had a few large classes and when you have a larger class, you end up losing the closeness with the student as well and maybe this is why some teachers will find a few students in the group that want to work out a little extra and then they'll probably be a little bit more fortunate because when you have a multitude of students, you have to stay a little bit more serious but when it gets down to just a few, you can get a little more humorous with what you're doing. When they tag you, I've been tagged a few times and I don't care and it's just like right now, because of this COVID-19, I haven't had armed contact with anybody for a couple months. I haven't been hit in my abdomen, my legs haven't been hit. My body is losing its natural adrenaline of accepting energy coming in and if you get some time at my dojo, you'll hear about me teaching the soft chi concept. Our artforms, one individual, he's in Gōjū-ryū, I asked him where do you feel chi? The hair in the back of my neck stands up. But yet, they're unable to feel it between the palms of their hands like a tai chi ball, like in doing reiki. These are all natural things. Master Sōken when they taught us passai kata, at the end of passai kata, we have searching hands. Sōken taught us to do it slow and when you do it slow, you can feel the reiki of the hand at the top. You would feel the energy and now, when I teach that, I brought another part into it and maybe you can bring this in to what you're teaching as well but when you're doing the searching hands slow, let your thumb point down at the arm as the hand goes across and it's really funny, if you become aware, your soft chi, you'll feel the ripple of the hairs on your palm but with your thumb, you'll feel on direct 10-point line and going down your arm. It's these energies, when people become aware of it will help give them more power but at the same time period, I don't see a lot of students laughing. No complaint with that. [00:15:29] son, Junior, he came out to Sacramento in the late 90s and he was very, I don't believe in that, I don't believe in that. Lo and behold, I'm doing the searching hands across his arm and I'm watching his eyes and face and whoa, there's something there.



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

everybody's body needs energy and depending upon your mindset and type of individual and attitude, if you're that ape out there, the apes will never feel soft chi because they're too hard and dynamic in what they do. Those that are relaxed in the manner of their form and kata will feel the energy that's there but in Okinawa, almost 48 years ago, I felt a reiki across my arm. I did not know how to ask Master Sōken about it because he spoke Spanish and nobody in our class spoke Spanish and he spoke in Uchināguchi, Okinawan language. We didn't but years later, I don't know how to say but it's a little bit too late to speak with him about it but I just convinced an Okinawan that the first move in Kusanku is really Okinawa's Tai Chi and all the way, if you do the movement real slow, will you feel the closing or when you clap into a ball when your palms come together in the end. I felt that same energy again 48 years ago when I was learning the system so the manner in how Master Sōken had brought the katas to us and had us work out, I naturally became aware of this energy and when I venture with others in our sister style, Ito and behold, they're too hard, they're too dynamic so they can't feel this soft energy and to me, it's the best thing to keep us from having to get in a fight because our energy tells us automatically where the disturbance is but they're in another hand. We have a requirement as being a guardian because when you really master the martial arts, you're chosen to become a guardian of where you live and you have to learn to protect those that need to be protected because they don't have their own abilities so I've done that a couple times. Thank God that nothing really came out about it. Everything wind on down but our arts is really for health and for our self. Man needs to know how to focus and get centered on what they're doing and in our modern world, we have so many activities, we get lost in what we are doing. The same thing, even sometimes teaching karate. There are so many different things to look at when you're doing kata. One of the greatest things and I kind of like when I'm teaching new schools is really more of the soft chi because it makes them aware of their internal power and name is Head Instructor Michael...sorry, he's Hanshi now, right?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Mr. Sartwell, I think he still goes by Shihan. I believe there was a promotion not too long ago but I'm not quite sure from what to what.

Charles Garrett:

Probably he's carrying on Shihan like myself, individuals that are not allowed people to pass, we call them Master and right back at them, please don't call me master. Call me sensei or shihan or kyoshi but I can't get to the level of ability of my teacher so I can't see myself sitting with a hanshi level, a 10th degree and this is one thing that we can really laugh about is that in the Matsumura Shōrin-ryū style, there's got to be 10 to 20, 10th degree masters and it shows, in my opinion, individuals that are really id-orientated versus people that want to teach and share. There's 10 to 20 different grandmasters in one system. It's not the way it is supposed to be but there's been respect lost somewhere and I try to continue and keep things going as proper and openhearted and friendly. Ramona Hasting's hanshi, she's just telling me years ago, Charles, Charles, don't let people take advantage of you and it comes about because I share everything I do. When I teach, I teach my utmost because my family is very well-known



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

for hover caps and strokes and years ago, I had a motorcycle that did a 155-mile an hour and everybody in my family's has been 155 mph. Then there's all my friends, they're hanging on for dear life trusting me. It's a survival period but my mindset was I don't know if I'll be here tomorrow so when I teach anyone, I want to teach them the utmost from my heart and spirit but then on the other hand, one of my students recently regaled on, [00:22:32] regaled them and it was so great, he bypassed me and his teacher's credentials this past year. He said he'll be pretty ready this year and this is all mindset that wasn't ready but we're working on Kūsankū kata and we're learning the [00:22:49] the supporting back, snap kick front and spring up in the air and wrap to the ground with a leg stretch. It was during the technique with your hand and I asked him about the technique and he did do the back end so I end up throwing a toe kick and got him just below the side and Regal was out cold almost. He was Sensei, you barely hit me. Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Now, this is what's really cool. He's one of my first students. He always compliment me when I hurt him.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's a good student right there.

Charles Garrett:

Oh my goodness! I do not feel good when I hear that, though. I don't want to be hurting my students. It's the enemy we want to hurt but in order to understand, we have to go through some pain. We have to understand what it does. Do we have to knock people out? No. I'm sorry, you really don't have to. I'm really glad that Master Oyata put out his videotapes on the knockouts. I have just a few of his students and a few of others that are just really great with those. I don't want to be doing that to my student to show hey, this is what's going to happen because it's self-defense. You have to do full power strikes. If you do too many partial, you're going to get hurt in the long run. A woman, if she doesn't learn to hit hard right away and let me tell you, years ago, going back to [00:24:53] dojo, let me see, what was the young lady, no, not Karen, darn I can't remember her name right now. She comes to me but when I used to work out at the dojo, we have this trunk twist exercise and I walk behind and let them hit my arms as they're blocking behind and when I come up to this young lady and into class, I mentioned this young lady, you're better than these guys. You hurt my arms more. You have better technique than the men in this class. I bet it was kind of a surprise but the young lady seemed to understand only in her condition, only where her block hits, only where her punches, what I'm meaning is that when you step into an individual and you still keep your stance, you don't lose none of them when you block on them or try to move your body back, your position is so proper that they lose out but you have to own your ground and when you're able to do that and this young lady did is just whoa! Inspirational, sometimes laughable to see that she was hitting harder than the men in class. Our kata are so important. I've been chastised by a whole lot of people, oh Garrett sensei, why do you not change your kata? You're supposed to change your kata. Your kata is supposed to evolve. No, no, no, no, no. I was taught by Master Sōken. He was worried about his style dying and he was correct because his follower did not carry on with his kata so I continue as Master Sōken taught and now I'm finding out and I hope that later this year, this



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

gentleman named Kano Sōken may have come across the son of Master Sōken who is still alive. He's 91 years old, lives in Argentina. My friend had just introduced him to [00:27:27] family in Hawaii and he's been in Hawaii for a few months especially since the COVID-19 has come out. Kano Sensei was very mad seeing so many people that were supposed to be, they're all advertising Hohan Soken's karate, Okinawan Shōrin-ryū, Matsumura Sōkon Karate but they looked at their kata and said that's not Soken's kata. Garrett Sensei, you're the only one I see that's doing kata the way I was taught. Kano was born in 1929 so he got probably a good decade with his dad and he's emphatic about don't change kata. Myself, I only felt that it is your bunkai is awareness of concepts and ways in the kata that would change but there are many, many practitioners, oh, you're supposed to change and I'm just an old goat, the old way and that's how I want to keep it, the old way.

Jeremy Lesniak:

To me, because I can see value in both. I can see the value in keeping the form the way that it was taught to you but I can also see the value in changing it. To me, I'm much more inclined to keep things the way that they were taught to me and maybe there's some variants, maybe there are forms like Kusanku which is actually my favorite form and the one that I'm most prone to compete with. There are some, I got a slightly different version that I would compete with versus the one that I will do when I'm training but to me, I think of it like a song. You can have the same words and the same notes and it can still be very different than the next person singing that same song with the same words.

Charles Garrett:

Yes, it's a good way to look at it. There are just so much, we watched Master Sōken in the Super 8s and to see that smoothness from one movement to another, just last week, I write to an Okinawan Master in Okinawa and had a promotion class and I was complimenting students and so on and then I went into a private discussion with him versus a public one and I was really broken hearted because nobody in Okinawa is teaching Soken's way in this time period and the other side of it, that new sport Karate, every bow is the same identical hand technique and myself, I could never see how is it they just put palm over palm and no interlocking thumbs and that's a good block indirectly but when you have your thumbs interlocked, I was taught in Sōken, it brings up to myself a lot stronger of a cut and more pinpointed but what I'm seeing is it scares me the so hard and robotic manner. There's not the fluidity and flow that should be there but then, of course, we're talking about a 180 years difference in time when Matsumura system was made to the present day and so the evolution in karate is there and it's evolving to sports because money, money, money. I've never been interested in making money from it. I do charge a small amount of dues or whatever and yet, I still have students that haven't paid dues in years.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You're certainly not the only one.



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Charles Garrett:

And it doesn't hurt. I don't know. Why is it just a rich man that can do something? There are individuals who don't have, here's a good little story. A student who didn't have money to pay for dojo, I said hey, Tom, I just mowed my lawn out front, will you go to rake it for me? Oh yes, Sensei! Tom scurries out front. I think the venetian blinds were open just a hair and I saw Tom gets the rake and walks over to one section of the yard, he bends over and he picks up a single blade of grass and he walks to his left, 10 feet and he lays the grass down and he did that a couple of times and then he started raking and when Tom was done, hey, Tom, let me ask you. What were you doing? Tom was kind of [00:33:17] he put his head down, I'm sorry, Sensei. Tom was kind of, sad to say, 25, 30 years old this time, he was a kid whose dad was beating him and so bow his head, crawl his shoulder and stuff, go get ready to get hit from his pop for doing something wrong. Tom, what were you doing there? I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I was hoping that he was going to say, I'm taking the grass for the nutrients and food for putting the air for myself so that I can breathe and I have respect for helping me so I told him hey, next time I talk to you, if I ask you that question, give me that answer, okay? I would really love to hear that answer. That's why you picked up a single blade of grass.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I want to hit rewind. I want to rewind away because we jumped in to your story at the start of your martial arts story but something tells me and longtime listeners know that I play the odds with this one. I get a pretty good feeling at this time that there was something in your life prior to your training that, if when we look in hindsight, we can say maybe this person needs martial arts. What was it about your childhood, what was it about your life prior to serving and having the opportunity to train that we might say, you know, martial arts might have fit earlier if you've had the opportunity?

Charles Garrett:

Let's see, I was a scrawny little kid, without a question but my eyes and mind never saw that. 1958 or '59, I went for a drive in a '57 or '55 Thunderbird with my dad and my cousin and I was in the back window curvy area and there was hardly any room there at all so I kind of given up for being 10 years old, I was awfully small but I wasn't, picked on a little bit in school but really never got my butt kicked. I got 3 older brothers and probably had more fights with them than anybody else and they probably helped me fight better. I was talking to somebody about my first fight in junior high was over a comb and I was being called out by one guy really big and one guy closer to my size and we went to the telephone company and punched out after school and I did a right and left combination on him and then the big guy just took off running so again, at that time, alright, alright. What really got me into karate, I was watching the green hornet and the drill sergeant in basic training said get ready to go to war. I did get orders, 2 times to Vietnam but because of my big mouth, I didn't end up going to Vietnam. I had orders to go to [00:36:56] Korea and because of communication with US RADCOM and the other master sergeant in charge and my big mouth, I was allowed to go to Okinawa and that came about because one



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

of my friends wanted me an officer and so I've been paperwork-ed from my job to see the requirements for OCS and you have to have the aptitude, all the scores and so I'm fit and so I put in this application for OCS and I go hey, remember what the drill sergeant said in basic training? What you need to say when you go to Okinawa and so I put my name in for Okinawa. 4 months later, I got sent to Chicago at West Station at Travis at that time when I put my application there but I want to travel to Chicago for the air defense system there and so, I'm only there 2 months and I come down to [00:38:03] Korea. Oh my goodness. That was really a job I did not want to have because it's right on the DMZ line and it's a place where GIs don't rest and I think Vietnam would have been better than North Korea DMZ line but when I called up US RADCOR, spoke to him, talked about my 2 different orders and he said right, you want to go to Okinawa, that's where you'll go and so, my adventure started and being in the military and my brother, when he had told me before I signed in, he says you do whatever you can to stay out of Vietnam. My brother just got back from Vietnam playing dead and Charlie Kong kept him and ruled him older and he got into the news and everybody in the news after that in '65 got a bullet in the head so if you're going to go to a warzone, you better be ready to fight. My brother did do hand to hand combat in Vietnam so I expected the same for myself if I got sent there so I was just going for preservation of myself more than anything out there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You've spoken pretty highly, as highly as anyone have spoken for anyone when you've spoke about Hohan Sōken.

Charles Garrett:

Master Sōken, oh gee. I wish you can see a picture. If you go on Facebook or see Facebook posts I've had or on my webpage, he came in and out of his dojo through his bedroom window because his dojo was built on the back of his home and there's a metal chair at the window where he comes and goes through and the windowsill just an inch or two below the top of the metal chair. He would venture in and out, 4 times a day probably, back and forth, and one day, his right foot's on the windowsill, his left foot's in his bedroom and his right foot slipped into the dojo and I think, there were only 4 of us that were there that day and we're looking at each other and go, whoa, he almost got wishboned. His gi pants didn't touch the windowsill. He flew over like a crane. He went over with such ease like nothing had even happened and when he came back, he acted like nothing happened. Coming back was chi force because every day at the end of class, he would serve a cup of tea for each of us and then we would have little discussions or he would sit and watch each one of us do our kata one by one instead of everybody together and he didn't beat a student down like I've seen some Americans do. All come out from underneath his wings a little bit. They weren't totally his students by no means, like myself, very fortunate, myself and the [00:41:52] students were only taught by Master Sōken so we didn't know any other style of input but there's a few others that were really brutal and when they work out with their students, they're even more brutal and I don't know. I kind of look at it this way, a lot of my friends were going to Matsumura dojo in the Bronx or Brooklyn area and a student has been in there, a gentleman about 25 or so, doing



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

[00:42:29] arm whip in the air but the underside of his bicep is wide open, the teacher goes up and hits him on the underside of his bicep hard and drops his guard and my friend said he left and never returned to that place. Teachers that teach brutality like that, I think they're afraid of their student being better than them. I want my student to be better than me. There's not one student I've had that I don't teach them proper enough to beat me. I teach them to beat me as well but yet, I don't abuse the student. We'll go through, we'll learn the nerves and stuff but I think some people are just too afraid. There's one gentleman that wrote a book about him being a first student Fusei Kisei and 10-year student of Sōken Sensei but he doesn't do anything Sōken does but he does a lot of what Kisei does and Kisei's a great karate master in swords and all kata weaponry but he loves to socialize with too much alcohol which bring about people who just want to fight and really shouldn't just have fun fights with karate other than in dojo with fellow student. All karate should be for your self-defense and to see, this is one thing that really separated Master Sōken and Kisei was the fact that Kisei has students going to bars, fight for money for Kisei. Kisei get money, not student and Master Sōken, he frowned on that. He didn't like that. He was so adamant about no first punch, no first strike, self-defense only. The other day I went out, I had a pretty good association lately with my Makaoati board and my Makaoati board has been going for 44 years old, 45 years old, red wood post and it sounds like I'm hitting a board with a hammer and when I got done, hit the Makaoati board left and sight and shutos and I'm thinking I don't want to get nobody. I never really want to have to hit somebody with these knuckles that I've developed. That's not the idea of development but oh gee, know darn well the damage that would be caused and it's really kind of interesting, we'll go back almost 50 years ago, when I got my brown belt in Okinawa. Master Sōken when he did the promotions for everybody, he wouldn't sell you ever certificate for every step. That was Kisei's way but Sōken, ok, Sankyū was the highest ranking in green belt so that was our first colored belt at Sankyū. The second one for brown belt was ikkyū but brown belt was second and ikkyū so I get my brown belt, I got bigheaded. What a dumb. That was so dumb of me. I took off on my motorcycle, it wasn't that same night but it was after I was promoted brown belt but I go down to downtown Naha looking for some skirmishes. I really were but I wasn't going to do like the barroom brawl type kind of make it but just trying to get somebody to jump me or whatever and it didn't happen. When I got back to Yozadake and the next day, I'm thinking that's not a good idea to run down there because those guys know karate too. You think those guys don't know karate? This is during the gun roof strikes in Okinawa over the beach, 10 or 15 Okinawans at every gate has a staff and a flag on it and the staff isn't intimidating when you see the flag but when you're staffed yourself, we understand, oh, battle. It kind of reflected on me, those guys are out there with the staff every day and so on and you're wanting to pick, ok, don't do that in a war so that was my last adventure of intensely trying to get into it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

As we've talked about your story here, I don't think we can understate or, rather, overstate the importance of what seems to be a very chance encounter that you end up on Okinawa, you end up viewing the classes from this one man and I'm curious, have you given thought to how your life might be



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

different if it had been someone different or if your orders had taken you somewhere else? Do you ever wonder about that?

Charles Garrett:

Yes, I have because I had reflected back to my taekwondo. I'd be in taekwondo if I didn't get orders to Okinawa or Tang Soo Do or whatever and I've been doing it for 50 years and I have had a hip replaced and a shoulder replaced and the hip because it cracked, shoulder from old age and stuff but if I had really gotten into taekwondo and Tang Soo Do, I would have the operations a lot sooner but I probably wouldn't be as active right now, maybe. It seems like a lot of hard dynamic styles have a hard time pushing into their 70s because of the locking up of the tendons and extensions of their limbs to their fullest. There's a gentleman that got what Master Sōken or with Kisei and he was one of the barroom brawlers that roamed the whole, he developed his own style and in so doing, every kick was a lock up in the hip area as well and the knee and once you have learned to do that kick properly, you only need that total lock up one out of 20 times maybe, one out of 50 but not every time because what it would do to the joints so it's really fascinating when we look at what the martial arts would do with one's health and recovery from operations. I've had 2 back operations since doing my arts and now, it's typically fully active within a month and a half or two. When I had my hip replaced, I was home within 47 hours, as I put it, they cut my leg off. I had my shoulder replaced, they cut my arm off because at one point, they really are cut off but to nurture back-end condition, the martial arts develops a drive that's inner to none. The power is so great depending on your mind with it but the healing aspect, our breathing exercise and here's my healing so fast that I'm emphatic with the breathing for decades and decades and to utilize it with my own healing, when I had my shoulder replaced, I would sit and do an inhale to the center of where the shoulder joint was and then, exhale, legs uncrossed, palms opened, let the energy just swell out of my limbs, just inhale center, exhale out. I would swear up and down there was a balloon in my shoulder. Even people I've spoken to in the last month and a half that had done some healing courses with, I swear up and down there's a balloon in my shoulder, really, but what's so fascinating because now with more reading, one of my students, Emilia, a book nerd, has pushed me a little more and got me into this one Chinese medicine book and the Chinese medicine doctor talking about a lower back pain. Everybody gets lower back pain, pain in the back, pain here and pain there and this Chinese master emphasized breathing in tandem is needed to alleviate that lower back pain and to see how the healing has gone for myself and operation, I go yeah, I agree and then I guess, it's talking about molecular development, what's in the body. You are able to really talk to yourselves and the body. You can tell them what to do but just like believing in Jesus, you have to have the faith. When you understand the breathing and what it does and how it increases the oxygenation of your body, when you're directing it to the area of injury, it follows it, it works. I feel my students help in that matter and they see it working and they go ok, ok, but to recover sooner is what I am seeing. There's no doubt. I recovered sooner than the other Joe Blows and all the operations I'll never have since being in the arts for so long and it raised me to surmise that the martial arts, the greatest essence of them is the breathing, not the hard physical workout but the proper breathing. That is where the essence is because



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

when I teach the soft chi concept side, it's not muscular. It has nothing to do with the muscular side, it has to do with your side but out breathing is so important. One of my students, I spoke about him earlier, [00:54:14] Gomez, great gentleman, he really got into weightlifting when he was a young teenager and he pushed it and pushed it and now, when he inhales, he can't inhale longer than 6 or 7 seconds. I related to him that I felt that it was because when you got into your muscle development younger, you built your upper body and your muscles and limbs and your muscle pushed down on your abdomen and no, it a little crazy because I told him this a long time ago, the Chinese book that they had me read equates to the fact that that's exactly what's going to happen. If you don't have the right breathing in your lungs initially and he did the hard, heavy muscle development of dumbbells, it keeps the lower diaphragm from being able to expand because there's too much muscle in the area and so they end up with shallow breathing. Shallow breathing will be the death to us. We need deep breathing. You want to live longer? Back in the early 90s, I utilized the moves from Goji Shokan, rotating palms, and I did years ago too but when inhaling, rotate back, exhale rotate forward. Your inhale should be the same volume of air as your exhale. They should be the same time and duration but I really feel that is the essence to the healing and longevity.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I completely agree. Now, for those people out there who maybe don't have the opportunity to learn much about breathing or for those, maybe who were never taught how to teach breathing but they have schools, how might you advise them?

Charles Garrett:

It's something so easy to do. I had a great webpage up until January. The guy that built my webpage turned around and wanted to play hijack me or something. If you don't pay me more money, you billed my webpage for money, now you're demanding money, oh, ok. I'm starting another good YouTube channel and really to teach the rotating palms and breathing and having the facing palms because this is something you can say over the phone and they can understand but facing your palms together 2 inches apart and inhale slow and don't bring your hands no wider than 2 inches past your body, exhale, bring them back together, don't let them touch and it all works and gets that energy going. These are the things we share and share openly because it's the essence to survival. When we get out or get sick, knock on wood, I'm pretty fortunate. I haven't had the flu since I can remember but then, of course, you live in Sacramento, I don't have cold weather.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That does help. We've had snow the last 4 days.

Charles Garrett:

All 4 days in a row?



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah!

Charles Garrett:

Oh my goodness! You're in the cool lands. Sacramento, though, gee, we haven't had frost here in several years. We used to always have frost. We haven't had snow now since the turn of the century almost. I don't know. Is that climate warming?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I don't know but it says something. I don't know what it says but it says something.

Charles Garrett:

Thanks for the discussion. One style versus another style, ok. It's not the styles that makes it, it's the practitioner then on another hand, I have found that the manner of how Master Sōken taught and I try to follow with is really one fast, developed combative individual. I think there is an essence to the organization plan. I see, Master Kisei had 27 basic exercises. Master Sōken, we have maybe 8 in place and we had 7 or 8 stepping combinations and then kata. Master Sōken's really emphatic about kata and so when we get in tournament against Fusei Kisei, Master Sōken class always win in kata division. In kumite division, I really took first place but Kisei was referee and he didn't want to see his student lose and I sent him a photographed album so stating that too because what happened was I moved in to his student, I do a low snap kick to the guy's left thigh and the guy dropped both his hands to block the kick and I hit him in the face and all I had was leather gloves on, regular army leather gloves and we got the men laughing head cage, that kid's head goes snapping back. Kisei, no point, no point, you touched his leg and we go at it again and I did the same thing again, no point, no point and right after that, his student, point, point, over but I got a little bit of that on video or Super 8 and it was just kind of fascinating but when I saw Kisei, Okinawa he didn't really know me other than that tournament time. In 2004, I went to Okinawa but in mid-90s, one of my students had to go there for a TDY job so I gave him a photograph album, my karate class, pictures from the beginning of that time and on the back hard page cover of the photograph album, I wish you and your family and great health, I still disagree with your officiating the tournament in 1972 but when I saw him in '04, he was glad to see me. When I saw him in '06, he was glad to see me. Oh, there was one other time, in 1999, I rode my motorcycle out to Colorado Springs to Jeff Fader's camp with Fusei Kisei. Oh, I'm sorry, I'm embarrassing all those guys, really. Everybody there for promotion, all the black belts are looking at the other black belts that are losing their kata and when I get in and I talk to them about it, I'm finding out they dumped their kata. They kind of got the Kenpō mode. Hell with the kata, just do kumite or whatever but they only practice the kata when they're in promotion for so they dump the other katas and I go no, no, no, no. You do the neihanchi thing and when you get your new kata, do your new kata too but don't drop your kata. You go backwards a little bit but I guess, Kisei was used to that or whatever so I guess it's not so embarrassing



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

but there were 4th degree students that couldn't do their forms but what was really kind of fascinating, right at the beginning of the class that day, I'd already spoke to Kisei for a short time. Kisei says issao, issao, Sōken Seito, issao, issao, Sōken Seito, that was so funny. Jeff Fader kind of got bothered by me talking to Kisei that day and so, I didn't bother him for the rest of the day. The next morning, Kisei, Jeff Fader, give me a chair, Charles-san, come over here, sit here. I stayed with him for the whole day during the karate time. He asked me, let's do shuken bō kata with no bō and so I did shuken bō without no bō and we're doing it together, though. Oh, we're still same, good, good. Even though, he didn't follow Sōken, I don't have no hate for the gentleman by no means because he's done what was important to me and been important to me is that Master Sōken was known in a 100 or 200 years because of the [01:05:12], now they call it Matsumura Seito and they're far from it but they are carrying his name and legacy on indirectly.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And unfortunately, that's better than so many others with no continuation. Let's flip the clock a little bit. We've talked a lot about your past. We've talked a bit about what's going on today. Let's talk about the future. If you look out 5, 10, 20, however you may want to look out into the future, what are you working for, what are you hoping for? If we were to reconvene at some point in the future, an update in our conversation, what would you hope we'd be adding on?

Charles Garrett:

Waiting for having my roads crossed with Master Sōken's son. When I first heard of Master Sōken's son, I was really ok, can't wait until father and son circle would finish or happen and then, instead though, which is really greater is the Matsumura and Sakagawa circle first and then son and deshi circle. I'm not into large schools by no means. I'm wanting my grandkids and a few of my students to carry on. The classes should be pretty parallel to what happens now and primarily, the stories of Master Sōken and certain things that occurred through the system in itself. It would be great to finally see others finally want to talk to me and hear from me. I got on the internet back in the mid-90s talking about Fusei Kisei's kata, Master Sōken's kata and because of Kisei's student I was known or knew his katas were different but not all his students know that or new that so a lot of his students has come out with hate for me and I don't want to put Kisei down. He does his katas different. They're not Sōken's way. I posted on another page last week as well that I've been out here, open, wanting to share things with Master Sōken. I put out his Super 8 photo online for people to see and I get so few questions to understand how to be soft and fluid. For whatever reason, maybe with my stupid ego inside thinking that because I learned from Sōken and the other people are going to want to talk about it, right? But it really ends up that there's been too many people that said they were with Sōken that weren't but if there's, I'm hoping I got another 10 years. The doctor said I only got about 20% chance for another 10 but she doesn't know the karate that well but that's ok but I'm striving to reach Sōken's age and that is 10 years from now from when I met him and if I'm able to still tug, I use the work tug after Roebuck Sensei. He's the gentleman that took the photograph album with me to Kisei and he saw Sōken and studied down with Kisei in the



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

'70s but I got to carry on the great individuals like him so he always called it tugging. I'm going to still punch it out, still going to block. Hopefully, I've been able to get a text finished by that time. I see everybody that's written text, their karate, but they don't talk about what's really happening in the dojo. One of Master Sōken's favorite exercises would be the knee bends or squats because the Okinawans learn to squat real early in life. That's always how they go bingle. Myself, I was a baseball player, I was the catcher so being a catcher, I always squatted so it's easy for me but Sōken would laugh at the GIs not being able to squat down. I would be really happy in the martial arts school if I can get my text gone up as well as working on redoing all my slides and everything else for getting out into the world again and online where it's going to be there for a while but what would really be cool as well is to see a little bit more familiness between styles versus hate because too many teachers with their id, I'm so much better than you, I'm so much better than you. So what? I don't care. It's ok that you're better than me. Don't you understand that? What's important is what type of sharing you do with your betterness or are you hoarding it? Matsumura Sokon and part of his scripts survived the war. Spoke about the 3 R's: reading, writing, arithmetic but at the same time, stating that when you learn something, share it, in his case, it was village at that time period and so, in this case, for ourselves, it would be our neighborhood. I think when people are blunt with too much money behind things, it changes the system and things. It's very understandable. One has to make a monthly income from teaching. Myself, I probably taught more free than I had taken in any money. I just enjoy what I do and if that part could be passed on to others, to learn to enjoy what you're doing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well said, well said. This has been great. You've really carried a pretty strong theme through here as we've spoken and I suspect anyone who's listened has a pretty clear window into you and into who you are and what's important to you and of course, that's the goal, it's my hope, whenever I have a conversation with someone and it almost feels hollow to post this because I don't know what's left but my gut tells me you can always find more so as we close up a show, I always ask the guest, how do you want to end it? What are your final words that you want to leave the audience with as we roll out here?

Charles Garrett:

During our lives, we, just like in karate, we have different levels. One of the methods I presented years ago and I haven't formally had it public or anything, draw a little pyramid and think of your teacher as being at the top of that pyramid and you're at the bottom of that pyramid. This is what I did decades ago. Think of Master Sōken and he's at the top of this pyramid, I'm at the bottom and I'm thinking whoa, I'm doing 99.9% physical here. Look at Master Sōken, he's only doing 1% physical because you need to add another pyramid inverted from the top going upside down so now you have an inverted pyramid where the base of the pyramid where it hit my baseline, that's how much physical? Only 1% physical and you're 99% mental? Now, what we need to do is draw a vertical lines through both points of pyramids straight up and down and let it bypass. Put one hand over one side of the line, you look to the right and you see an hour glass. Everything you do in life all take time. It's not going to just jump and be right



Episode 512 — Shihan Charles Garrett | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

there. It takes time and don't expect it before the time has hit it's point. Now, we uncover the left side and now, we look at the right and we cover up the opposite and now, we look at the opposite side and we see it in another, not an hour glass this time, but 2 roads and the 2 roads are the good and the bad, or the giving and the taking but what's really beautiful, the 2 roads, you could always go back to being proper but it's very hard when you're always out there taking and not sharing so if you learn to share what you have learned so that others, especially the others that are totally unfortunate, don't have the money or the resources or the capability to get there, some people may say sorry, I'm in a wheelchair. That's ok. I can teach you the whole system from a wheelchair. You don't have to step around but understanding that whatever road you're on, you have to go with the attitude that it's the right road and you got to prosper with the right attitude and keep taking the step forward for more knowledge. Don't stop striving for more knowledge but, tomodachi, friends, tomodachi, friends.

Jeremy Lesniak:

See what I mean? That was a great episode. Great conversation about lineage and history and connections. We talked about past gets, Shihan Mike Sartwell, we talked about quite a few things and I want to thank you sir for coming on. Great conversation, I appreciate your time and hope that we can connect at some point in the future. For those of you listeners out there, go to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. Find the show notes. Based on the numbers, there's quite a few of you that don't do this. Check out the website, it's worth it! We put a ton of time into it. You're missing out! What do we put over there? We've got photos and links and videos and transcripts. Sign up for the newsletter. Tons of stuff! It is worth it, I promise, and if you're up for supporting us, the work that we do here at whistlekick, you've got some choices. You can make a purchase at whistlekick.com and if you do, use the code PODCAST15, save 15%. You can also leave a review, buy a book or support the Patreon.com/whistlekick and if you see somebody out in the world wearing something with whistlekick on it, say hello. Maybe you'll make a new friend or a training partner and if you have suggestions for guests, let me know, email me jeremy@whistlekick.com. I love your feedback, I love your guest suggestions. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!