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Jeremy Lesniak:

How's it going whistlekick Martial Arts Radio episode 530 with today's guest Sensei Andy Sloane. If you're new to the sound of my voice, you may not know my name. It's Jeremy Lesniak. I'm your host here for the show. I'm the founder here at whistlekick. I love martial arts. I love training. And I love talking about it. And that has led to the last five years of my life plus 500 and something episodes. Oh it's 530, 530 episodes, talking about traditional martial arts and that's what we're doing again today. If you want to check out the other episodes we've done, go to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com and if you want to check out all the things that we're doing, go to whistlekick.com. That's our online home. It's also the easiest way to find our products or programs and links to the other things we're involved in. If you use the code PODCAST15 it's gonna get you 15% off everything we've got over there. Make sure you hit whistlekickmartialartsradio.com for the latest on this show, you can sign up for our newsletter at either site. And we're bringing you new stuff multiple times per week. In fact, if you add it all up, there's a lot between podcast and social media and newsletters, all of it. There's an amazing amount that we're putting out. And if you want to support that, if you value that, you've got a number of ways you can show that appreciation. You can make a purchase, you could share an episode, follow us on social media, we're at whistlekick everywhere you could think of, you could tell a friend, pick up a book on Amazon, leave a review, or support our Patreon effort. Patreon.com/whistlekick, it's the place to go for that. You can support with as little as \$2 a month, and you're going to get original content at every tier. So at \$5 you get exclusive audio, \$10 exclusive video, and it just keeps going up from there. \$2 you're



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getting an exclusive blog post. Check it out, help us pay for this show. Help us put out more better continued stuff to support the traditional martial arts world. Goal setting is important. We've talked about that on the show, we've heard it from a number of guests. But today's guest had a target, a place that he wanted to end up, and he got there. And he talks about how he got there, why he got there and what it's been like, while he's been there, since Andy Sloane grew up training in karate, and ended up in Okinawa. But as you might imagine, it wasn't a linear path. There were some things that happened in between, in fact, quite a few of them and we talked about many of them.

So, let's talk about history. I bet you'll relate some of your life to his. Sensei Sloan, welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio.

Andy Sloane:

Thank you for having me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Of course. Thanks for thanks for being here. Now, we've got quite a bit of a time difference going on, don't we?

Andy Sloane:

Right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

9AM here as we're recording and you said it was what 10PM?

Andy Sloane:

That's right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well, first off, I want to thank you for talking to me. I'm assuming you're not nocturnal. So before bed,

Andy Sloane:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Not something that everybody is willing to do. So I really do appreciate that. And you know what, I'm gonna guess there's a story there. So let's start with that story. Were you, that it's the other side of the world.

Andy Sloane:



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Oh, I'm in Okinawa, Japan as a matter of fact. So I'm stationed here in the Navy and I've been very fortunate to have been stationed in Okinawa for a total of 10 years this month.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh wow. That's quite the anniversary.

Andy Sloane:

I've been here 12 years of my 14 years in the Navy. The 26 months in Korea, and the rest of my time has been here in Okinawa. I've been overseas and I've only had one duty station there in the United States.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, forgive my ignorance. I thought people got moved around more often than not.

Andy Sloane:

Well, they do largely but you know, every command has to have admin people and so I am an admin person. And as long as you stay within your sea to shore flow for your particular job field, then the chances are that you could potentially go, you know, to some individual area repeatedly if you bounce around from different commands, if as long as they have a billet open for you and your job field for your pay grade, then, you know, chances are you might get it. If nobody else wants to go into it, or if the Navy thinks that it's cost efficient for them. Since I was already on the island since 2014 that was that allowed me to go to another unit next door to where I was working when the time came. And then I moved over to another unit earlier this year, so I'll be here till 2023.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow, wow. Now of course, this is a martial arts show and Okinawa being such a hotspot and a historically relevant place for martial arts. I'm sure the audience is listening saying "Okay, so which came first?" So that's my first question to you, which came first? Okinawa or Martial Arts?

Andy Sloane:

Martial Arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Tell us about that. How did how did that happen?

Andy Sloane:

Oh, I started in January of 1991 when I was in middle school in Louisiana, Northwestern Louisiana. And the the school that I went to aren't a magnet school. We used to have two PE teachers and one of the PE teachers was the girls volleyball coach and softball coach and one of the PE teachers, as I said, but she



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also was a black belt in judo. And so half the year, you could choose between Judo or Archery, and then the other half of the year you're all PE stuff. So each are one semester, each of my six, seventh, and eighth grade years, I did judo. That's how I got started in formal martial arts training.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What made you choose Judo for Archery?

Andy Sloane:

Well, I had always seen, you know, martial arts stuff on television, Chuck Norris movies and stuff like that. Bruce Lee movies, of course. Those were, you know, still pretty popular back then. And of course, they had the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles cartoon at that time in the late 80s and into the early 90s it was still popular and of course then they came out with a live-action Ninja Turtles movies to around that time. And I was just interested in martial arts. So when I had the opportunity to do judo, I went for.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, you said that this was a one-semester program. So what was it like at the end of that first semester? Had you fully embraced it? Was judo your new life's passion? Or was it just something you did at school?

Andy Sloane:

It was really just something that we did there after school. You know, and once so as I recall, that was the the second semester of that year. I guess it would have to do with, it was January. But so anyway, yeah, after I got out of the sixth grade, you know, of course over the summertime, I couldn't even do anything and then took it back up. And I think the seventh grade year they actually had the first semester. And so but anyway, like I say, it was just during the school year, but only one semester on it. So there was a time when I was doing it and time when I was not doing it. You know it was summer break of course, I wasn't doing it. But you know, I really enjoyed it, and I had fun. So that was the main thing, I guess. It's at that age that I was having fun with it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, so the, the opportunity for Judo ends in eighth grade you get through that semester, and then what happens?

Andy Sloane:

So over the summer of 1993, because I was out of the eighth grade in the summer of 93. My grandmother found a guy that was teaching Judo in Shreveport area, where we were from, and it's my understanding that he was like a contemporary of my Judo teachers, teachers. I'm not exactly positive, how accurate that is. But that was my understanding, at least at that time. I never really delved into a



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whole lot, necessarily, the selling background or anything, but so I was a teenager at the time, and I trained with him for a little while into the fall of 93. And around November the first, actually it was on November the first is when I started training on Isshinryu Karate. So in October of 93, my grandmother took me to the Louisiana State Fair. And we were at one building, and they had a drawing that you could put your name in the bucket or whatever for a two, three week membership to the local karate school. And so I'm sure they were given the free two weeks, so everybody who put their name in, you know, but I don't know a week or so later they called me and said, "Hey, you won two three weeks and come on down if you want to take the lessons". So my grandmother took me down there and that was on the first of November of 1993. And I was 14 years old at that time. And then 14 for about a month. And you know, for a little bit there, a couple weeks to a month at least I was doing Judo and Karate at the same time. A couple nights a week I was doing a couple nights a week I was doing Judo, then eventually Karate was not fun and then I just kind of let the Judo go by the wayside.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Do you regret that at all now?

Andy Sloane:

No, because, you know, I still enjoy doing the techniques that I learned. I mean, I didn't get very high on racism or anything, but I learned how to roll and fall really well. And I think that was very, very important. And those are skills that I pass along to my students today. And you know I always tell them, I feel that you're far more likely to have a fall down in your life. And you're gonna have to use other types of martial arts techniques. So I'm sure they've learned how to roll and fall. And then you know, last year I actually pursued a black belt in Jiu Jitsu. So those types of things kind of helped me out.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh, interesting. Yeah, it's, I've always found it fascinating that so many people point to traditional karate and exclude falling and grappling when, you know, I certainly haven't trained every karate school on earth, but every single one I've trained at has incorporated some manner of falling and some basic grappling.

Andy Sloane:

Right, the very first school that I was at, they did well, so I just you know pretty, pretty well ahead of the other students in that regard at least so.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay. So here you are, you're you're in high school, and you're training in Karate and you're you're enjoying it, you enjoy it so much that you let Judo go. And what are the next few years as you finish up high school? What what are those hold for you in regard to martial arts?



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Andy Sloane:

So and that is coincidentally the very day that that I started karate training. My mother had remarried and we learned soon thereafter that she was going to be moving to the Dallas Fort Worth area. And my stepfather used to work for the FDIC. And they had closed the Shreveport office for that and we're relocating everybody to Dallas. And so he and my mother and my two half brothers, we're going to move over there to the Dallas area, but I didn't want to move in the middle of the school year so my mother, let me live there in Shreveport, and finish out my freshman year of high school, living at my grandmother's house. So I did that and went to the school there until the end of May of 94. And then I moved over to Texas but because my family's still mostly live there in Shreveport though your city area at that time, we were back and forth all the time from Dallas to Shreveport, which is only like 225 miles away. And like, you know, one week in the month or something like that, or practically every school holiday that I got summer vacation, all that kind of stuff. I was back over there. So my original karate teacher never stopped being my teacher, you know, but while I was in the Dallas area, I supplemented my training with another Isshinryu teacher and I took some Taekwondo at different schools during the 90s. Didn't go very far at that point in time in the Taekwondo, but I was still, you know, open to learning different styles and, you know, trying to find out what it was all about. I used to go to the library there in McKinney, Texas where I used to live and was just devouring martial arts book or magazine ahead of martial arts article in it something like that, that I could find, I just want to learn everything I could. And so I just kept going and it took probably took a little under seven years to make black belt in karate, but I'm stuck with it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's great. You know, Isshinryu is a style that I mentioned to you beforehand that we've seen a bit more coming through on the show, which I find interesting, because if you look out in the wider world, it's one of the less practiced. I don't have numbers to back that up or anything. But I think if we were to do a survey we'd see that it was far from the top stylistically. Is that something you were aware of back then?

Andy Sloane:

It probably used to be well, before I got involved in anyway, it used to be, I would have to say probably one of the more well-known and...

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh interesting!

Andy Sloane:

practiced styles. You see the founder of our style, he had a contract with the 3rd Marine Division Special Services and the Marine Corps basically paid for the lessons. So they had two karate instructors and two



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judo instructors on staff over here back in the late 50s and early 60s. And so, the Marines, it was something that they could do in their off time and we were trying to main corps was trying to keep them out of trouble. So they got something to do. And there wasn't anything they were required to do. But many of the people that took the karate, with Shimabuku Tatsuo or [0:14:31], for 10 months, they went back to the States and started teaching. So Shimabuku Tatsuo had a lot of students and mistakes to teach in early days. And it really grew up in Tennessee, and New Jersey, and Washington State in the late 50s and early 60s. And so it's my understanding from studying the history a fair amount, but it was pretty popular style and fortunately over here over the years since then, it's trunk even more and the politics and whatnot. You know, it's almost extinct over here sadly.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. Yeah. You mentioned New Jersey, that's where some of my martial arts roots come from Isshinryu being one of the styles that I grew up in. So I'm familiar with that as a as a hotbed. And, you know, the the history of martial arts and how certain styles spread for certain reasons here we've got a sort of geopolitical one. That blows my mind. It just absolutely fascinates me that that martial arts spreads for reasons up beyond simply interest.

Andy Sloane:

Well, you know, back in the day like that, in the late 50s, and early 60s, martial arts in general are largely brand new to the United States. So this kind of mysterious and people wanted to know about it and you know, people were in awe of those that did it to a degree suddenly.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. All right. So here we are. You're you're traveling back and forth from Texas to Louisiana. And you're in your black belt. And I'm going to guess at some point not long after that, you enlist?

Andy Sloane:

No, actually, it was quite a while after that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay.

Andy Sloane:

Yeah, I joined the Navy late in life. I was almost 27 when I joined the Navy.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What happened in between those two things?



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Andy Sloane:

Well, I was living. I originally got my own apartment in McKinney. Just before that, I moved back to Louisiana for about seven months. So after I finished high school in 1997, I'm going back a little bit more. I was going to the community college there in Collin County. And I got my associate degree there about three years to get an associate degree because I didn't really take on full load on semester. I just wasn't really focused on school that much at that point. So my stepfather kind of wanted me to join the workforce or move out or do something if I wasn't gonna continue to go to school. And so I didn't really have any place else to go. So I moved back home to Louisiana, to my grandmother's and lived with her for about seven months and moved to Louisiana State University, Shreveport one semester. And I could say, I was not really focused on school. So I decided I would get a job and I had a friend that helped me get a job back in the Dallas area. So I moved back to Dallas and lived in Plano for about three months. And then I got my own apartment in McKinney in June of 2002. And I had that apartment for about two and a half years, or three years. Three and a half maybe. And it wasn't until February of 2006 that I joined the delayed entry program for the Navy and I went to bootcamp in June of 2006.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Why?

Andy Sloane:

Well, at the time, I was having a difficult time trying to find a permanent job, I was working several jobs at once. And though I was, you know, in my mid 20s, I could do it for a while. But you know, that kind of weighs on somebody having to work every single day of the week. You know, you can only do that for so long before you get burned out. So I knew something had to deal when mom said, "Well, you know, my grandfather had been in the Navy for about eight and a half years and a nine year period between 1942 in 1951. And then my dad had also been in the Navy very briefly, 72 and 73." So I was like, oh I wanna see what this is all about. And although I wasn't very close to either of them, you know, I said, "Well, here's the family connection. So let me just see what we can do". And my grandfather already passed away by that point, and my father passed away in 2007 so very long after that, but he passed away, but, you know, it ended up being something that I have really enjoyed for the most part. And, you know, I owe so much to their country and to the Navy. I mean, pretty much everything I have, was in my experiences that I would never otherwise have are due to my service in the Navy.

Jeremy Lesniak:

A lot of people make comments about the, I guess we'll call it the militaristic inspiration that comprises many of the martial arts that we trained in today. Was that something that was, did you notice that at all? Was there anything that you took from your martial arts? When you went into the Navy that you said, Ah, this is easier because of that, or I am more familiar or more comfortable with this environment because of training?



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Andy Sloane:

Well, because I was over I was the fourth over semi-division in bootcamp. So, I was relatively well disciplined already. And, you know, to concentrate and I could see the bigger picture and why the Recruit Division Commander was trying to make us do things just so, you know, I realized that they were trying to prepare people for shipboard life and not having a whole lot of space and you need to do your, you know, your, your bedding, just settle, and keep your belongings in this small little space. Because, you know, there's not gonna be very much room if you're going on shift and whatnot. And so I could see all that so I wasn't, you know, I was not, I didn't have a problem with authority, like some of the folks in there did and get in trouble and of course, they'd have to punish the whole group and, and we were not very happy about that. But you know, so yeah, my discipline and ability to concentrate and things that I got a lot of that from my martial arts background. So, you know, I've been training in martial arts. For long time at that time. [0:21:01 - 0:21:06]

Jeremy Lesniak:

I would imagine as someone who had trained as long as you had, somebody who would, you know, it sounds like really found something that struck you that resonated, that at some point, through this process of, of entering the Navy, you were hopeful you would end up somewhere. And if you were training in Isshinryu, it would make sense to me that you probably had a pin in a map somewhere for Okinawa. Am I right?

Andy Sloane:

That's right. So, you know, I had hoped that potentially I would be able to go to Okinawa, so I chose a job in the Navy that I figured that would help me get there, potentially. But also, I had a big background in customer service before I joined the Navy. So I wanted to be able to do something in the Navy that I already had a background in, and also it could be something potentially that I could do once I got out of the Navy because I knew that no matter how long I was going to be in the Navy, it was always going to be temporary. So, you know, at that point, I really had only intended to do a four year enlistment with a one year extension. And that was going to be it. But then, you know, things kept rolling. And I was like, hey, this isn't so bad. And let me let me see about another enlistment. And then I did that. And here, let me see if I have another enlistment. So now, it's just gone on for 14 years now. And I have just a little over five and a half years remaining, and I'll be able to return there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow it's so...

Andy Sloane:

Oh, I'm sorry.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Keep keep going. Keep going.

Andy Sloane:

Well, I was gonna say that when I got to my job training after two months of being in the boot camp, recruit training there in Great Lakes, Illinois. My particular job field as a yeoman, the schooling for that as a month long school and expanding Meridian, Mississippi. So I was down there at Naval Air Station Meridian for a month as a self-paced course, but I was there for almost pretty much exactly a month. And you know, they asked you to fill out a dream sheet basically, you know, where would you like to be stationed? So, you know, I put down everybody got to you know, write down three choices and so I thought mine were pretty diverse. I wanted to be stationed in Okinawa, Japan, of course, or well the Spain, or Washington DC, and I didn't get any of the three choices that I asked for. So they stuck me in Oklahoma City.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Like that's the opposite somehow the opposite of all three of those places.

Andy Sloane:

Yeah, you know, so I mean, at the time it was a little disappointing of course, but you know, it didn't end up being a very bad station to be station for my very first one. I mean, since I had joined the Navy out of the Dallas area, then Plano you know, going three and a half hours at the highway in Oklahoma City was a little bit disappointing, but I still got to go home, sometimes to visit my parents and you know, my friends and family, they're in the Dallas area, students that I had.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Did you say students?

Andy Sloane:

Yes, I've been teaching since...

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh, we missed that part. Tell us about that.

Andy Sloane:

I'm sorry. So yeah, back in 1996. I don't remember exactly when it was probably fall sometime. My original teacher, Harvey Kennedy, there in Shreveport, he had said to me, "Well, why don't you teach somebody so that you have somebody to practice with?" And so that was my permission, as far as I was



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concerned to begin teaching until I began teaching when I was a senior in high school in February of 1997.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And what did that look like over the next few years? As you're working all those jobs?

Andy Sloane:

Well, I would teach privately. I mean, of course, when I was living in Louisiana briefly in 2001, I went back to the Catholic school and is actually I was working for Mr. Kennedy as one of his assistant instructor. So I got a lot of experience over those months teaching various age groups and stuff. And, you know, I've been teaching my classmate there in high school when my friend from classes we were in, we were seniors together. And we used to have class on our lunch break and stuff like that. Our senior year, we had an hour for lunch. So we used to go across the street to the lake that was across the way, the park and teaching over there and stuff like that. So I got a little bit of experience to teaching. And I just tried to hone my ability and teach him and, you know, see what different age groups acquire, you know, with developmental stage of children and so on. And I really enjoyed doing that. I mean, of course, probably everybody has their age groups that they prefer, but you know, I enjoyed learning how to teach. And I think I'm a fairly decent teacher.

Jeremy Lesniak:

All right. So you're in Oklahoma City? No, no oceans around.

Andy Sloane:

That's right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And how do you get from there to Okinawa? Well, first off, how, you know, obviously there's there's the side of you that's, you know, interested in traveling I would imagine everybody I've ever met who went in the Navy was really interested in travel. And then there's the martial arts side of you, the more the passionate martial artists, who, you know, I'm gonna guess if you could have your first three choices would have been Okinawa, Okinawa, Okinawa.

Andy Sloane:

Right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, taking that hit, and you know, obviously, you get back up and you're doing your job. And how do you get from Oklahoma to Okinawa? Was it was it one more step or do we have more in between?



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Andy Sloane:

So that was the next destination I tried. So they had a billet available in Okinawa. And when I got into my window, to choose orders. They had the a billet well coincidentally, I had just enough time left on my contract that I would be eligible for those orders because it was a three-year billet. And because I had enlisted for four years with a one year extension, I was going to potentially get to Okinawa right around my two year mark, if I was selected for them, and then I don't have the three years, so that's exactly what ended up happening. The command let me go about five months early. One month of the last then I'll on leave in May to June, early May, early June of 2008. And you know, then releasing early and I went on over to Okinawa and I got here the first time, June 8 of 2008 and checked into my command over here at that time, June the 12th of 2008. And I was there. It was supposed to be a three year billet but of course I enjoyed it so much that I extended for a fourth year. And, you know, I was the assistant instructor for one of the two main guys, well really the only two guys that was Isshinryu Karate over here and more. So he was teaching on one of the Marine Corps Bases and he also has a dojo in town. And I'm primarily rebuilding the class on the Marine Corps Base [0:28:22 - 0:28:24].

Jeremy Lesniak:

Did I hear you right? There are two people left teaching Isshinryu Karate on Okinawa?

Andy Sloane:

Right on to.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow. That blows my mind.

Andy Sloane:

Shortly before I came over here the first time, there were as many as about five people that were teaching, but I don't know exactly when all of those other three schools closed. But little by little they closed down and so by the time I got here, they're really only two left. One person's wife had passed away. I found it out and that to me got depressed and closed the school. And he had a falling out with Uezu Angi, he was the son-in-law of the founder of our style. [0:29:09 - 0:29:10] was his name. I don't know exactly when his wife passed away when he closed the school, but it wasn't too long before I got here, I founded out. And then Uezu Sensei himself, he had a stroke in 1994 and he had passed his association along to [0:29:27 - 0:29:28]. And by the time I got to Okinawa, though, they had [0:29:33] and [0:29:35] had started his own association in 2007. So I was one of the early members of that, and I was his assistant instructor. And the other Okinawan gentleman was Shimabuku Kichiro, who is the oldest son of the founder, and he's still teaching to this day. He's 81 now.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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So you got there on the 12th. I'm guessing you went out looking for where you were gonna train on the 13th?

Andy Sloane:

Well, no, actually, uhm I knew where I was going to train because my stay and I, so after I made showed on October of 2000, I had actually got promoted by a guy in Texas, and the people in Louisiana that that knew me and that I respected. I did not want them to think for a moment that I was not being honest about having been promoted to black belt in Texas. But the gentleman that I had been promoted by, they'd never heard of. So even though he had a legitimate running in fact, the founder, they never knew who this guy was. So I just felt it was in my best interest to retest for Shogun and so when I did the very next month in November of 2000, my present teacher he was there at that test as a figurehead and he actually was a student of Shimabuku Tatsuo when he was in the Marine Corps stationed here in the late 50s, and early 60s, and he invited me to come train with him since I ended up, I founded out that we only lived about 30 minutes away from one another who live in Dallas proper. And I lived up in McKinney at that time. So just made more sense and not that there was anything wrong with Harvey Kennedy and his instruction or anything like that. It just, it was more geographically appropriate, I suppose, for me to go train with Mr. Johnson, Ed Johnson. And so that's, you know, I switched over to being under him and there never seem to be any kind of problem in doing that. Mr. Kennedy knew Mr. Johnson for years and years and, and I'm still in good terms with Mr. Kennedy and the other people that I trained with over the year and other styles and other teachers that I've trained with too. So you know, I don't see the problem but I've been under Sensei Johnson for 20 years this year.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow, it's a long time. What's different about training on Okinawa than in Southern in Southern US?

Andy Sloane:

Oh, before I forget, though, you get asked about training and stuff.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So yeah.

Andy Sloane:

Yeah so Sensei Johnson, he asked me, he said, "Well, when we get to Okinawa, who do you want to train with?" And I said, "Well, I don't know Sensei who you'd want me to train?" And I said, "Do you want me to train with [0:32:30] Sensei, or you want me to train with Uezu Sensei?" And he said, "Well, I would train with Uezu Sensei", and so okay. So that's what I did. So about, I want to say probably two days, maybe after I got there, it was it was first week. I took a taxi down to the Marine Corps Base because I was living on the Kadena Air Base and one of the hotels on the base for the first couple of weeks until I



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got a house on town. And so I took the taxi and came on down to the Marine Corps Base and and I had I don't actually I'd already met Uezu, Sensei back in 1994, when he and Uezu Sensei had come to Louisiana to Mr. Kennedy's ports. So I told him who I was not that he would have remembered me necessarily. But uhm, you know, I told him about that he remembered, of course, going to Louisiana at that time, and come to that school. And so, I mean, I was able to show them pictures of me and Uezu Sensei and stuff so he knew that that was me. And he may have recognized me at that point, but who knows, he's taught hundreds of students success and you know, been all over the United States, giving seminars and stuff. But anyway, so, you know, I just, I was a young guy at the time. And so, you know, I would help him teach. And in those days, anytime he would go abroad to teach, I was teaching his classes fine. And the reason why he allowed me to do that was because right after I got there the very first time and you know he wanted to see how I did kata and so we did kata side by side. And the first thing that he said when we were done, he said almost same. So...

Jeremy Lesniak:

With the compliment.

Andy Sloane:

Yes, thank you. And his, his big deal has been this is one of the reasons or probably the main reason why he and the Uezu Sensei had trouble fallen out which they have seemed to have mended fences since then now but, you know, back then it was very controversial. He did not realize that Uezu Sensei, in his opinion, was not doing things like the founder. And when he made a visit to the United States in late 2001, he was finally able to see the films that Shimabuku Sensei that were shot in 1966. And he'd been training Isshinryu for a quarter century at that point, basically, and had no idea. So he got back to Okinawa he, you know, asked Uezu Sensei about it. And Uezu Sensei told him yeah, that he had made some changes. And so, but didn't sit well with him and he decided, hey, well now that Uezu Sensei had these strokes. And I'm in charge of the association. Well I think I'll do this, you know, get things back closer to what we can see the founder doing on the film. That didn't sit well with a lot of people. And so he felt inclined to depart that association and, and he went off on its own for a number of years before he eventually started his own association. But he kind of inherited that class, their Marine Corps Base Camp foster from Uezu Sensei and Uezu Sensei eventually closed the dojo. I don't know exactly what year it was, but the association that Uezu Sensei had started back in the late 80s. It was basically for all intents and purposes, the funk here in Okinawa and he's passed it on to an American, their mistakes. Mr. Christopher Chase that's his, you know his successor in the association but Uezu Sensei started his own association and his main thing has been trying to get the kata back to what the founder can be seen to do on the film's you know, granted, you know there you can argue various points about the films that we have with the founder, because he was not really going full speed or full power of these things. He was mainly walking through them, you know, just for the sake of doing them basically because I guess he felt like he was, he kind of owed Steve Armstrong for bringing him over to that visit. And you know,



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Jeremy Lesniak:

I've heard the story about the about that tape, but I've seen I've seen the video. And and maybe maybe you've heard this, maybe you can disprove this I don't know. So at this point, this is conjecture. This is what I was told. I'm not saying it is true. I was told he was drunk, that they had to get him drunk because he didn't want to record.

Andy Sloane:

I don't I don't know about that. I have not heard that specific thing. I mean, I Shimabuku Sensei by many accounts like to socialize quite a bit, in Okinawa they make socialize, they like to drink so I'm not saying that he was never drunk. But as far as as far as how that plays into having a film made, I do not know. Because I, if you've ever read Steve Armstrong's book, I mean, it's very clear in there that that was a reason why he wanted to have Master Shimabuku come back to the United States. He'd already come over in late 64 for three months and didn't feel like he wanted to come back because he felt overworked and mistreated. And there was another opportunity for him to come back over as it turned out, and he agreed to come over which that also was not enough problems. But at any rate, he made the films for Armstrong, I guess, probably because, you know, Armstrong wanted him to and, you know, he kind of felt like he owed him I guess, I don't know. I mean, since I wasn't alive back then I wasn't involved in it. You know, of course, I don't know all of the ins and outs of it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right.

Andy Sloane:

But Mr. Armstrong made it clear in his book that you know, that was one of the main reasons why I wanted the master to come back so he could film and do another kata. So while Master Shimabuku may not have intended for the films that were made to be the standard, Mr. Armstrong sure did. So Uezu Sensei, you know, had seen these films and now he's, he's been trying to make things back, like the film, like the presentation of a sound was put on, for good or bad, you know, and there are things on the film that the founder did, that it didn't teach. So a lot of people don't realize this, I've come across people who don't. There's a difference between what that's what Shimabuku allowed in the dojo and what Shimabuku Sensei also specifically taught. And then there's what he did in his own practice to, which was sometimes different from what he did, and what he taught.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Can we suspect that's true of just about every instructor I mean, the the gap between the two might differ from instructor to instructor. But you've spent time teaching. I've spent time teaching I'm sure many of our listeners have spent time teaching. And yeah, you strive for perfection as you understand it. You gotta help people get there.



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Andy Sloane:

Right. And but another thing was we didn't have a founder who really provided the standardization of these Marines who would used the order and discipline would have preferred, you know. It was a little bit seeming my lack of basical about things and that's not necessarily a bad thing. You know, looking on people, a lot of times, they're, you know, it doesn't have to be only one way. There's many, many ways to do karate, and they're all this about, you know, and Shimabuku Sensei has been trained in the older styles and took what he felt were the best elements of those older styles. He very well with knows that you know, just because it was a different style doesn't mean in any of the techniques and they are wrong, or bad, so, you know, they just put together what he thought was the best element, but he wasn't the only teacher to do that, you know, she thought he was another example of [0:40:11 - 0:40:13]. And, you know, back prior to the Shimabuku today people live studying with various people. So there weren't styles per se, it was all karate back in the late 1800s and early 1900s. But until about the 1930s, that style name started popping up really. So there was one thing going on all the time was you know, a teacher might know two or three kata, and then they would, you know, write a letter of introduction and say, hey, go down here to this village and triangle, whoever because they're a specialist in such and such, you know, so there's a lot of cross pollination back in the day. But Shimabuku Sensei, he would, you know, dabble in various ways of doing things. You know, I've talked to several first generation people that train with the founder. And, you know, for instance, Bill Barr, he told me that he used to try to watch the founder very closely so he could do it just like him. And that he was getting, you know, kind of frustrated, because, you know, Shimabuku Sensei would do something different, seemingly, almost in every performance. So, you know, while he never did overhaul the style, once he had it in place in the late 40s and early 50s, he kind of tinkered around with timing on things, and some techniques here and there, you know, but largely, it was the end of the of the kata in there that he want it. And, you know, the basics in there, they want it and, you know, there wasn't really a whole lot of evolution after the early 50s. He just said, mean it you shouldn't do till 1956. So, but at one point in about 1963 or thereabout, you know, he allowed some of the students that want to do the twist punch, to do the twist punch. So depending on when some of the Marines learn something, if it was during that two or three year period, if so, then they learn Isshinryu with a twist punch. And that wasn't wrong, it was just different, you know, and he also went back to doing the down block with the bone with the outside edge of your oma. You know, and then he kept that middle block and the high [0:42:13] muscle, you know that he was doing that low block with the with the bone and you can even see him doing that on the film in 1966. Bone block from down block, and then eventually when he went back in probably early 1967 to Okinawa you know, he had seen everybody in the States pretty much doing it the way he had originally envisioned. So he switched it back. And so everybody else since that time was doing the muscle box or and the vertical punch.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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For listeners that might not be familiar with what we're talking about, in the majority of martial arts, when you throw a punch, your palm starts up and finishes down. What we're talking about with Isshinryu, is that there isn't generally much if any rotation that the thumb is on top of the fist and the fist is vertical, and stays that way through. And some of the some of the blocks traditionally come in that position. So it's, it's visually very different. And if you've trained in it, it is quite different in the way that you utilize it.

Andy Sloane:

Well, but see, some people think that Shimabuku was a you know, a pioneer in doing that. Well, not necessarily. I mean, his teacher his primary teacher Kyan Chotoku that was a specialty punch using the vertical fist to the face. [0:43:29 - 0:43:30] wrote about that. And Motobu Choki also with another one of Shimabuku's teacher briefly. And he also used that vertical punch, you know, he used the one knuckle sticking out. And he also made use of vertical punch as well, but Motubu is well known for holding the fifth and vertical position and striking with that index finger knuckle. So that to me, it's a it's a possibility that talks to us in Senseis usage of the vertical fist as his primary weapon for his style was to pay tribute to his teachers in a way you know. It was so strong. Found the vertical fist, they just don't use it as a primary weapon like we do.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right and the thumb is generally not on top, my everywhere I've ever seen it the thumb maintains its position underneath the fingers.

Andy Sloane:

But there actually are lots and lots of people who, in my estimation, are not really placing thumb in the correct spot. We have photographs of early Okinawan or early American students training over here. And they're doing the fist, just like passively used to do it until you got pictures of Tatsuo himself, holding the fist, which is you know the tip of the thumb basically on the first knuckle of the index finger, and lying it down to the thumb joint is lying across the top of the index finger. But yet you have people that all have their thumb on the second knuckle of the index finger and having the thumb sticking straight up to the sky, and that's not really possible. So the purpose of this thumb on the top if you lie the thumb down, and you squeeze it, and that's what allows the chest to be tighter on the backside of the hand. The knuckles on top two knuckles out and then the dueling it makes the wrist tire.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What's that?

Andy Sloane:



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I can send you some photographs if you like that I'm talking about. So you can see that the hand position and stuff, you know, and I actually had to, I've been doing it wrong for probably, you know, like 10 or 11 years. Finally, I saw a video of the younger son of the founder, and I said, "Oh, my goodness, I've been doing this wrong all this time". And so when I placed my hand in the same position, I could see the founder younger son doing, I could immediately tell that was a much stronger fist position than when I had the boom. So I was very happy to have that little correction. And then of course, I went back and looked at some of the old photographs and like oh sure enough doing this all along.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let's talk about the martial arts culture on Okinawa because anybody who's trained any martial art, I'm sure at some point has said you know, that maybe they don't have strong desire to go there and train but they recognize the significance. And I'm sure a lot of us have these ideas of what it would be like to train over there. And I'm wondering if you might compare you know, you trained in a few places in the US and then you went to Okinawa and you're training there. How different is it?

Andy Sloane:

Well, by and large, Okinawan dojo focus a lot on body conditioning and some styles do it with the you know the Hojo Undo equipment that you may be familiar with. Chi Ishi and Ishi Sashi and so on. American dojos don't do that a lot that I've seen. I mean, I know there are some course and they probably are many of them. But I think that probably the majority have none. For whatever reason, maybe they're not worth it. Maybe they just prefer them not being in class, I don't know. Uhm but yeah, there's a lot of body conditioning involved most of it. I think I have yet to find a dojo over here that has an air conditioner. It's awful, awful hot.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What's, what's the average temperature over there?

Andy Sloane:

Well, temperature wise it probably doesn't get higher than the low 90s. But with the humidity, which is usually very high, you know, at 85% or greater. It makes it really, really hot. There's only been a few instances over here that I actually got bothered by humidity. Because I'm from the south so I can do the hot, dry heat of Texas I can do the hot, humid heat of Louisiana so it never really bothered me. And even when I went when I was stationed in Korea, people complaining about the humidity there I said almost its nothing. It's like 15 percentage points higher in humidity in Okinawa than when I live in Korea, so it doesn't bother me at all. But yeah, it's awful hot, especially in the summertime over here. And it rains a lot too. And I know there's technically rainy season here, but really it can rain all year round. And when they have the typhoons the typhoon season run from the beginning of June to the end of November. You know, you never know what you're going to get as far as typhoons go, but man, they can rain, rain,



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rain, not all of them make landfall of course, but some of them do it periodically. Mostly we just get the wind in the rain. And you know, it can rain for for like two and a half days straight or more and then just constant. So it's pretty wild. Let's see, you asked about how Okinawan dojos besides from that, every single one that I've been in has a hardwood floor. I say very hot in here. Most of them are relatively small. They focus on quantity of the material that's taught. So, while they may have a larger curriculum, then what they teach they teach it very slowly. So they focus on what is more important to the teacher to teach, you know, basics in the style, a few kata manifested we can you know digest it all and of course they get more and more.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What about things like etiquette, and titles, and rank and all that, you know, I'm sure you were here in the US and even in other parts of the parts of the world, we often get wrapped up in all that there's a lot of conversation about that. What's it like in Okinawa?

Andy Sloane:

Well uhm you know, it's not really all over here necessarily. I mean, they have of course, you know they utilize it, but by and large, they want the student to focus on the material not the rank. And you know, some teachers are very strict about how they promote somebody but you know, Americans largely place will place a large emphasis on on showdown you know, virtually by you know. And while it is a big deal over here too, it's not nearly as big a deal over here than United States. So it's still beginner rank over here, basically. And so...

Jeremy Lesniak:

What do you mean by that?

Andy Sloane:

Well as the average student can make black belter in about two years, if they're training on a regular basis, and I know the material, you know, the teacher will probably come up with them after a couple of years. Whereas in the States, you know, a lot of schools were purple, basically pride themselves on saying, "Oh, well, you know, it's going to take upwards of three to five years or more to make black belt or whatever. And honestly, I don't know what big thing is, is why it needs to be that long. You know. The showdown you know, they don't write the character with the character for one. So like first degree showman is more like smaller level knowledge. So it's starting over again, basically you just been initiated into the club so to speak, you're now in rank school, [0:51:31 - 0:51:33]. And you know, you essentially know the material well enough that you don't necessarily have to have your instructor harping on you all the time. But it's really not the end all be all like some people make it out to be in United States.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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It's good to hear.

Andy Sloane:

So Sandan is basically the first level that you can really be a Sensei, you know, and maybe some other styles of the fourth dan or something, you know, to be Sensei that you're typically not an autonomous instructor until you go down. And that's about the time that she could be a Shihan, Shihan is a generic word that basically means chief instructor. You know, and it's not a title that's to be bestowed on anybody, like a lot of people will do. And there's all kinds of things, Sensei is not really entitled to be bestowed on somebody like on [0:52:24 - 0:52:25]. It's just it's just kind of you assume that that role as a Sensei, you know, most people in the States they call black belt instructor or somebody with a black belt Sensei mostly to be respectful and polite and I get that. But not everybody is a Sensei, just because they have a white belt over here at least.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What about competition?

Andy Sloane:

Well, they have them there's different kinds of associations. And they have competitions now. I'm not aware of all of them. I never really tried to find out where all of them are. But there is an annual tournament that I compete in. And whenever I have students who are able to do so I haven't competed them as well. Within my city Karate Federation has a tournament every September, and I get invited to it every year by [0:53:13] Sensei. He's a fire inspector [0:53:16] white beach actually. And so you know if you live in even my city or if you have a karate school in Illinois City or if you attend a karate school in Little Missouri around to go to this tournament can be in a tournament. [0:53:32 - 0:53:35] be attending a school or have a school, live there in Little Missouri. It's held one of the local high schools, you know, they have like a Kendo, a Karate dojo in the back of the high school and, you know, tournaments in our area. And I've also been to other facilities on island that are larger course and they had really big turnout for those tournaments. I was in the World Tournament they had in 2009. I went to the one that they had in 2018. I didn't compete in it, but I watch some of it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let's imagine that tomorrow, your instructor comes to you and says, "You know what? I'm kicking you out, not for bad reasons. But it's time for you to go off and do something else." And, and at the same time, the Navy says, and we'll even put you up somewhere else you can you can, you know, be stationed anywhere. And and let's say even to further this crazy hypothetical, if there's no naval base there, we'll build one just for you. We're where would you want to go? And what would you want to train?

Andy Sloane:



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Well, aside from being here in Okinawa, really the only other place I wouldn't mind going would be somewhere in Europe, you know, I've only been to Europe one time and only recently at that last October, I took my wife to France and you know, but every now and then, when I was up for orders, I would see you know, different village in Europe, Germany or Belgium or something, you know, Spain, and so I thought it'd be kind of neat to go to Belgium, something like that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And what would you want to train there? If not Isshinryu but not something too close...

Andy Sloane:

Go on. Are you saying that I would need to do a different martial art?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah.

Andy Sloane:

Situation?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, we're, we're trying to drill into your head without without permit of entry.

Andy Sloane:

Hypothetically, if that was the case, and I was no longer to do Isshinryu, and I'm going to be in Europe or something, I might try try my hand at Savate or something like that, you know?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Why does it? Why does that jump out for you?

Andy Sloane:

Well, because it wouldn't necessarily be too different from you know, my background, I've done Taekwondo and I've done Boxing and Kickboxing and stuff like that. So it need to see what authentic Savate technique is like. I have a very well, very good is an understatement. He was an excellent boxing and kickboxing coach, and he unfortunately passed away a couple years ago, but I've spent 18 years almost my entire adult life.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sorry to hear that.



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Andy Sloane:

He was a gentleman from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And he moved down to the Dallas area in 1999 and I was one of the first friends that he made there in the Texas, Dallas, Texas area. And one of his students at the community college used to teach the cardio kickboxing so he could do it all he could do the full contact. He could do the Sport Karate fighting, he can do that he later got into Muay Thai and started doing all that and it was excellent whatever he did. He was kind of a, somewhat of a local celebrity in the martial art community here in the Dallas area.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's like a really interesting person. That's great.

Andy Sloane:

And Jay Wilson was his name. Very, very decent person. And, you know, very sad that he passed away. A heart attack. And he's only in his early 50s. But he was one of my dear friends and he was a really excellent coach. But let's see. Anything else?

Jeremy Lesniak:

How about the future? And we've talked about the now, we've talked about the before. You know, if we, if we did this, if we got back together some point in the future, I'll let you pick the time. And I said, "What have you been up to martial arts wise since we last spoke?" What would you hope you were gonna tell me?

Andy Sloane:

Well, I guess it might depend on how, how far out in the future this you know that we get back together. But, you know, I have a plan to hopefully get some of this. Most of the students that I've been teaching over the year so that, you know, fairly close to black belts that are, you know, they also when you're in the military, you're either transferring to your next duty station or your students are, if you are teaching martial arts, and so you never know how long you'll have with somebody. And not always are you fortunate enough to have some folks and start with you like right after they get to wherever you know, they station. But in my case, I've got three individuals that, you know, started with me just recently and fairly close to the beginning of their tour. And I'm still going to be here until 2023, as I said so. I'm hoping to get those guys, you know, promoted to black belts during that time. And then I have some students that are scattered throughout the United States that I've taught over the years. And I got one that still lives up in mainland Japan that I used to teach in Korea. But he's he retired actually is not stationed there anymore. Places retired, he was an Air Force and now he's retired but lives up there in mainland Japan. I'd like to get some of these guys up to black belt finally, you know, kind of difficult to do that when you're no longer, you know, face to face with him. But, you know, with the technology with Zoom and things like that, you know, I think that they can learn the remainder of the curriculum that they



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need and then, you know, maybe in 2022 they're about maybe they could test test for the black belt. It would be really nice I've and all the years that I've been teaching actually, I've never had any of my own students go all the way from my black belt, but I have promoted a couple of other people to black belt that weren't my students. So that was kind of interesting scenario.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. I'm sure it's quite the challenge to end up with people at different phases in their training, and certainly, you know, other instructors have to deal with this. But I would imagine in the military, it's something you deal with far more frequently.

Andy Sloane:

So, in the future, well, I mean, I want to continue to teach a course and my I think I probably mentioned it in the bio that I sent you that, you know, I do a fair amount of volunteer work and my volunteer work that I do is teaching. So that's what my passion is to help others. And while I'm on active duty, I don't charge for karate lessons, the students got to buy their own manual student manual and their equipment and stuff, you know, uniforms and whatnot. But I tell that the lessons themselves I don't charge for. And, you know, I intend to continue doing that. And eventually when I get out of the Navy, and I want to have a school. So i guess depending on when we get back together, if it's you know, really far in the future, and then hopefully, I'll have a school gone by then but the meantime I'll just teach on private lesson setting you know, handful of students at once.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sounds great. And if people want to reach you or their, you know, social media, website, email or anything like that, that you're willing to give out publicly.

Andy Sloane:

Sure, I'm easy to find on Facebook. And my email address has been same since about 2002, karateusa@hotmail.com. And I have a magic jack phone number that has the United States phone number. So anybody can call me on that as well if you like. I can give that phone number out 972-886-5924 it's a Dallas area phone number but it lands to my computer.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great. I thank you for being here today. We always ask, I guess, kind of the same question but they take it in different ways. What parting words, wisdom, advice, whatever you want to call it would you choose to close out this episode?

Andy Sloane:



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Well, I saw a motivational saying in a dojo back in 2005 in South Louisiana, and it's always stuck with me and I have to tell my students about it, you know, it said, "Perfection is our goal. Excellence will be tolerated." so everybody, just strive to do the best you can whatever art that you choose to train in and it doesn't matter what art just do the best you can to build yourself up and build your students, you know, be a good influence on people and try to be a good example to people in the community.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I want to thank Sensei Sloane for staying up so late to talk to me to share his journey, to share that story with all of us that, let's be honest, I think quite a few of us can see some of ourselves in there, and also see some things that we would love to do. How many of us who grew up or training karate now, would love to spend time living in Okinawa? We've heard from guests who have moved to the birthplace of their art. But regardless of what that art is, I think we've talked to people from who are now living in every country that is known for traditional arts and the passion that comes through. That's what I took from this episode. Since he is passionate about his training, and he's found a way to incorporate it into his entire life. So, thank you Sir. Thanks for joining us and I hope to connect with you again soon. If you want to connect with the show, go to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com and if you want to connect with everything that we're doing, it's whistlekick.com. If you value what we're putting out, please help us out. whistlekick.com, make a purchase, [podcast15](https://www.patreon.com/whistlekick) to save 15% or the [Patreon, P-A-T-R-E-O-N.com/whistlekick](https://www.patreon.com/whistlekick), two bucks and up a month. And of course, sharing the episodes helping us reach new people. All of that is valuable to us as well. You see somebody rocking some whistlekick gear out somewhere chat him up, could be your next training partner. If you've got guest suggestions or other feedback, make sure you email me Jeremy@whistlekick.com. Until next time, train hard smile and have a great day.