

Holding on to a dream at school of hard knocks

Spider Jones' classroom was the mean streets

By CHRISTIAN COTRONEO
STAFF REPORTER

Spider Jones first met death when he was 5 years old.

His mother's scream woke him late one night. She was clinging to the body of his 18-month-old brother Dennis.

A few hours later, a thin man wearing a midnight suit and hat appeared at the door.

The man went about his task briskly.

"He just walked in, took my brother's lifeless body and stuck it like a rag doll inside a black case," Jones recalls.

Then he disappeared.

But Jones would see him again in his nightmares; the



BORN FIGHTER: Spider Jones is a three-time Golden Glove winner and boxing hall-of-famer.

pale undertaker was always waiting outside the family's two-bedroom Windsor home. Waiting for Spider.

"Growing up in a religious family, I used to hear my grandmother say, 'The devil's

gonna get you. The devil's out there waiting for you if you're bad.'"

The boy was so filled with terror, at night he remained

☞ Please see 'The lure, A6

sisters were Navy brats. Their father, Arthur, com-

strip club and vows he never will.

— Fred Thornhill, SUN

Spider spins web of his own

By STEVE PAYNE
Toronto Sun

When Spider Jones offers to help troubled kids they should listen — the Talk 640 radio call show host has been there.

Son of a Baptist minister, he was raised in poverty — "even the rats were on welfare," he says — and ran with a vicious Detroit gang.

Two cousins were shot dead and two close friends were bound, tortured and burned to death.

For his part, Jones went on to become a boxer, a bodyguard for hookers and did jail time in Canada for robbery.

"I'm a good guy now," says Jones, 53, who tours schools, encouraging students to resist crime and pursue their dreams.

"There is no ship to Shangri-La," he says. "You have to go out and work for it."

Jones, one of nine children, was

born in Windsor. His U.S.-born mom, Maria, 82, still lives there and, as he puts it, "can still whup my arse."

His Canadian-born dad, Clarence, is dead.

The family moved to Detroit when he was 12, and he joined a gang called The Mobsters.

Jones, who is married with four children, was nicknamed Spider by a boxing trainer because he appeared to have more than two hands when he fought.

Fight he did in the 1960s, in official bouts and illegal underground contests known as "smokers."

A three-time Golden Glove champion, Jones was inducted into the Canadian Boxing Hall of Fame in 1996.

Jones, who met and became friends with Canadian boxer George Chuvalo while training at a Detroit gym, moved to Toronto in 1967.

He became a minder for four or five working girls, who, as he puts it, paid him for protecting them from pimps.

In 1978, Jones, who had a "remedial Grade 5 education," enrolled at Seneca College, studied broadcast journalism and graduated in style, making the dean's honours list.

He worked in cable before Chuvalo insisted Jones become his co-host on a TV show, *Famous Knockouts*.

Jones later did an eight-year stint on sports for Fan 590.

On Talk 640, Jones "tells it like it is."

He's also driven to help kids make good, working with the In Pursuit of Your Dreams Foundation.

Kids must have self-esteem, he says, and he urges them to seek mentors. "It's not stupid to ask for help," he adds.

Start by calling him, he says, at 416-452-2022.



SPIDER JONES

— Veronica Henri, SUN