

On the straight and narrow

EVERY OTHER day, Charles Jones hits the gym.

The 57-year-old former Golden Gloves boxing champ says he stays in shape so he can keep up with the "young cats." But for the more than 40 years Jones has been fine-tuning his body, he admits it's mostly to keep the fighting spirit in him alive.

"When I was younger, I used to keep myself in shape so I could beat up anybody who crossed my path," Jones says. "Now it's so I can keep my body and mind fit so I can fight to keep young people on the straight and narrow path."

Raised in Windsor

While growing up in Windsor in the 1950s, Jones often struggled to navigate the straight and narrow path. He dropped out of school at 15, joined a gang and became a pretty good thief.

"It was almost a natural way of life," Jones says. "It was natural to carry guns, fight and piss the bed." Jones laughs as



Ex-boxer tells Nicholas Davis how he turned tough life lessons into inspiration for others

he talks about wetting the bed, but he's aware of the connection between his bedwetting and his life of crime.

When Jones was 6 years old, his younger brother died of pneumonia because the house they lived in was so cold. It was particularly cold on that January night in 1953 because Jones was robbed of the money his parents gave him to buy coal for the stove they used to heat the house.

It took Jones a long time to come to terms with his brother's death.

"He was only 18 months old," Jones says. "His death was the beginning of a long downward spiral in my life that didn't stop until I was almost 30."

After his brother died, Jones started having nightmares. He

dreamt that the angel of death would come and take him next. This made Jones afraid to leave his bed even if he had to use the washroom. The nightmares and bedwetting haunted him for years and they drove Jones into a deep depression.

'Low self-esteem'

"I had such low self-esteem," Jones says. "I failed Grade 3 twice and ended up dropping out of school with a Grade 4 education."

"The only way I knew how to make money was by hustling."

After spending a lot of his childhood and young adult life in jail for petty crimes, Jones decided that enough was enough. "When I got out of jail at 26 years old, I remember

the door closing behind me at Millbrook," Jones says. "I was tired of people putting me to bed every night and waking me up every morning. I was tired of living my life in and out of jail. I was tired of gang violence. I decided that enough was enough."

Around the same time Jones decided to do something positive with his life, the race riots exploded in the United States.

That was 1967 and Jones was staying with family in Detroit.

"The riots really changed my whole perception on life," Jones says. "As I watched the violence unfold, I realized I needed to get away from Detroit and Windsor and all the bad things that were in my life."

Jones decided to move to



■ CHARLES "Spider" Jones "wants to be a role model to young people."

Toronto where, a few years later, he met the woman who would complete the turnaround in his life. "I met my

wife Jackie who convinced me at 30 years old to go back to school. It was the best advice anyone had ever given me."

Jones ended up going to Seneca College where he graduated in 1981 on the dean's list from their broadcast journalism program. He's currently the host of his own radio program called the *Spider's Web* on CFRB.

Jones also does motivational speaking for more than 100 schools each year.

"I want to be a role model to young people," Jones says. "If I could overcome my troubled childhood and be where I am today, so can anybody. I want kids to understand that you have to believe to achieve."

You can read about Charles "Spider" Jones' life in the book, *Out Of Darkness: The Spider Jones Story*. It's available at all major bookstores. And if you want to book Jones for a speaking engagement, you can get in touch with him at spiderjones.com or e-mail him at spiderjones@rogers.com.

I was the one to do the sexual harassing.
—HONEY BEAR
DEAR HONEY BEAR: Whether or not what "Sugar" is doing is called sexual harass-

sources for your company.
DEAR ABBY: Three of us found ourselves walking behind a blind woman who used a walking stick. We didn't know if we should of-

woman, and we felt helpless in a situation none of us had encountered before.
—VISITORS
DEAR VISITORS: It is never offensive to ver-

help, he or she would prefer to take the arm of the helper rather than vice versa.
Dear Abby at Charaboy.com or P.O. Box 69448 Los Angeles, CA 90068