



—Staff Photo by Kurt Wallace  
**TAKE THAT**—John Mullins, right, applies a kick to John Gordon in orange belt competition of the U.S. Karate Championships at the Convention Center.

After near-fatal gun wound

# Karate star lives

By TOM KOCH  
Staff Writer

When they picked Jim Harrison off the floor of one of St. Louis' black ghetto bars, he was as good as dead.

An underworld assassin had shot the special services policeman four times in the chest with a .45 automatic.

That was over 10 years ago. Harrison lives today as one of the most popular fellows around the United States Karate Championships at the Convention Center this weekend.

Harrison, a former blackbelt, brings his team here from Kansas City, Mo. each year. He runs his own karate schools there.

**YOU THINK** karate is tough. Jim Harrison is tough.

When he was ambushed in that bar, he still managed to blindly draw his .25 caliber automatic and empty it into the partner of the man who shot him.

"I was conscious, but in a coma," Harrison said of his trip to the hospital. "I heard the intern pronounce me dead, but I couldn't do anything about it.

"I can remember the intern saying, 'Well, the cop's had it,' and he pulled the sheet over my face. They said they would look at the other fellow and I wanted to at least stay alive until I heard them say he was dead. It was satisfying to hear that."

Afterwards Harrison went into a coma, and didn't remember anything for six weeks. A doctor had decided to give Harrison's body another look. They removed his ribs, sternum and left a cavity where a normal man's chest would be.

"It's hard to kill an Irishman," he said. "I think some of it is hereditary (his father once crawled under a house and killed a mad dog with a knife.)"

**GROWING UP IN** Missouri and Kentucky, Harrison attended 13 different day

schools. "At every school they wanted to know how tough you were," he said. "I got hit so hard in the seventh grade it knocked my teeth through my jaw.

"But you didn't want to fight the first punk that came along. You get the biggest, meanest guy there, fight him, then the

# to kick again

rest would probably leave you alone."

"I was never much of an athlete. It's not that I was tough or good. I was just hard to hurt.

"I got kicked off the basketball team after I hit the star player with a chair because he spit on me."

Harrison liked individual sports and got into judo. Then came karate. He easily became a champion.

Too much contact in today's karate tournaments will cost you points. But in Harrison's day hitting was legal.

In 1968 at Galveston, Harrison (155 pounds) fought Ed Daniel (285) of Dallas and won. But the two competitors thought it was a draw.

When they both entered the hospital, Harrison made a deal with Daniel that the one with the most stitches in his face would be the true loser. Harrison won, 12-13.

"He is an awful nice guy," said Jack Hwang, a seven-degree blackbelt from Korea now operating a school in Oklahoma City. "If you hit him, you had better kill him.

He one of the meanest guys in the United States."

**HARRISON REALLY** believes in karate as a defensive art.

"Most bullies in the world are bluffs," he said. "When you challenge back, they usually say they were joking. "Karate teaches a kid how to handle himself.

"It can give him an aura of confidence that no one wants to challenge. A person should not spend all his life living in

intimidation. The important thing is to gain confidence."

Harrison has six children. His oldest sons are former junior champions at the Dallas meet, his wife has won her division and a daughter has been disqualified twice. And he has a three-year-old and a year-and-a-half year old to train.

"Most karate students usually get in less trouble than regular kids," Harrison pointed out.