

# Bodybuilder from Cicero pushes a drug-free life

By Tim Egan

Cicero resident Tony Purvis, a former Mr. Illinois, and bodybuilder Yvonne Lambert have used the words "max" and "spot" without hesitation in the weight room.

When they went for their "max," they were lifting the maximum weight they could.

When they asked for a "spot," they needed someone to make sure the lift would be supervised.

For Purvis and Lambert, those words have taken on new meaning outside the weight room.

Because of the haunting terrors they share from steroid abuse, the word "spot" means emotional support and "max" is just living.

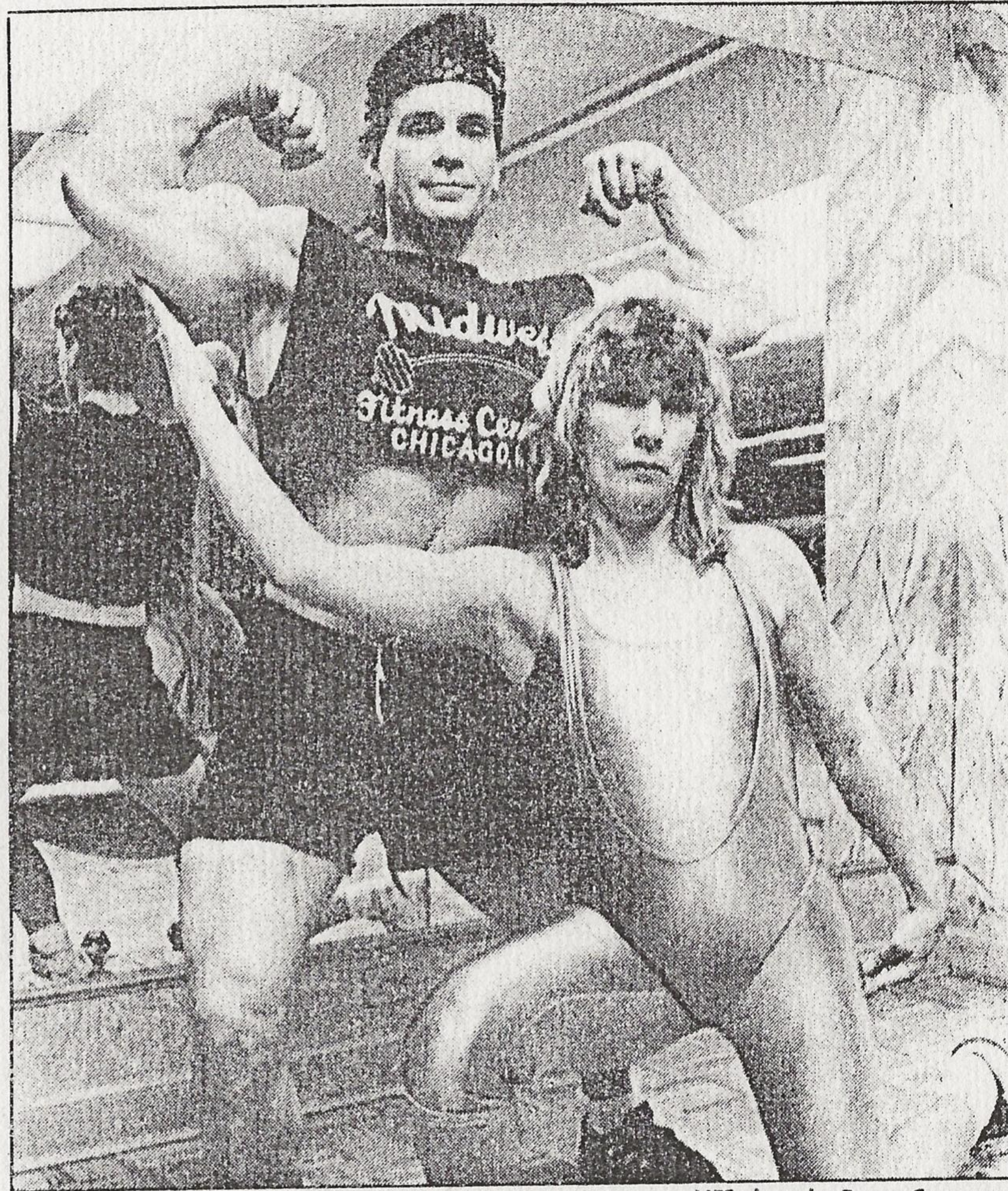
Purvis, who said he has been clean for three years and three months, is intent on getting the word out about the problems with steroids.

"A lot of the guys you see in the muscle magazines come and go like this," he said with a snap of his fingers. "They're a flash in the pan. That's because they get so messed up, and boom, they're out of the picture. Then there's another new fool coming up."

"It's true, there's always another fool. Steroids is an epidemic waiting to explode and the fuse is burning fast."

Purvis' past and conviction against steroids led him to "spot" Lambert, a Forest Park resident.

"I'm trying to help her get



LIFE photo by Bryan Carpenter

Cicero resident Tony Purvis, an admitted former steroid abuser, is offering emotional support to Yvonne Lambert. She also is trying to live a drug-free life.

through what I went through," Purvis said. "I understand."

Lambert is tall, soft-spoken and has an awkward shyness for a person once on the cutting edge of strength and muscle

tone. She abused steroids "on and off for 16 years" and has been clean for five months.

"If it wasn't for Tony, I'd probably be dead," she said.

Steroid abuse can lead to permanent physical damage to the liver and kidneys, but the mental damage done to a person trying to break the habit can be just as devastating.

"When I first started talking with Yvonne, she was very negative," Purvis said. "The mind feeds on negativity. Now she's more positive."

Because he can relate, Lambert has found a mental crutch in Purvis.

"Even if I tell her something that might scare her, she's better off knowing it's going to come."

"It's therapy," Lambert said. "It's a good support system."

Though Purvis suffered the same sleep disorders, hair loss, distorted body images and low self-esteem that Lambert had because of steroid abuse. But he could never relate to her biggest tragedy.

"I went through pregnancy twice," she said. "Both of my children were born dead."

That was during steroid use, and now it's time for her to follow Purvis' own words: "I won't let the horrors of the past dictate my future."

With the "spot" Purvis gives Lambert, she can reach the "max" that was once threatened by steroids.

As Lambert slowly progresses, she has come up with advice for anyone thinking about using body-enhancing drugs:

"Put a gun in your mouth and pull the trigger. It's quicker."