

WILD ANGEL

By John Steven Soet



There's only one word that accurately describes Mary Youshock —

"AWESOME"

Mary Youshock has spent a lifetime in martial arts. It shows. The Las Vegas native boasts a dazzling smile that would shame many of the showgirls in her home town, a physique that would earn her honors in any fitness contest, and martial skills that have won her world titles in forms, musical forms, and point fighting.

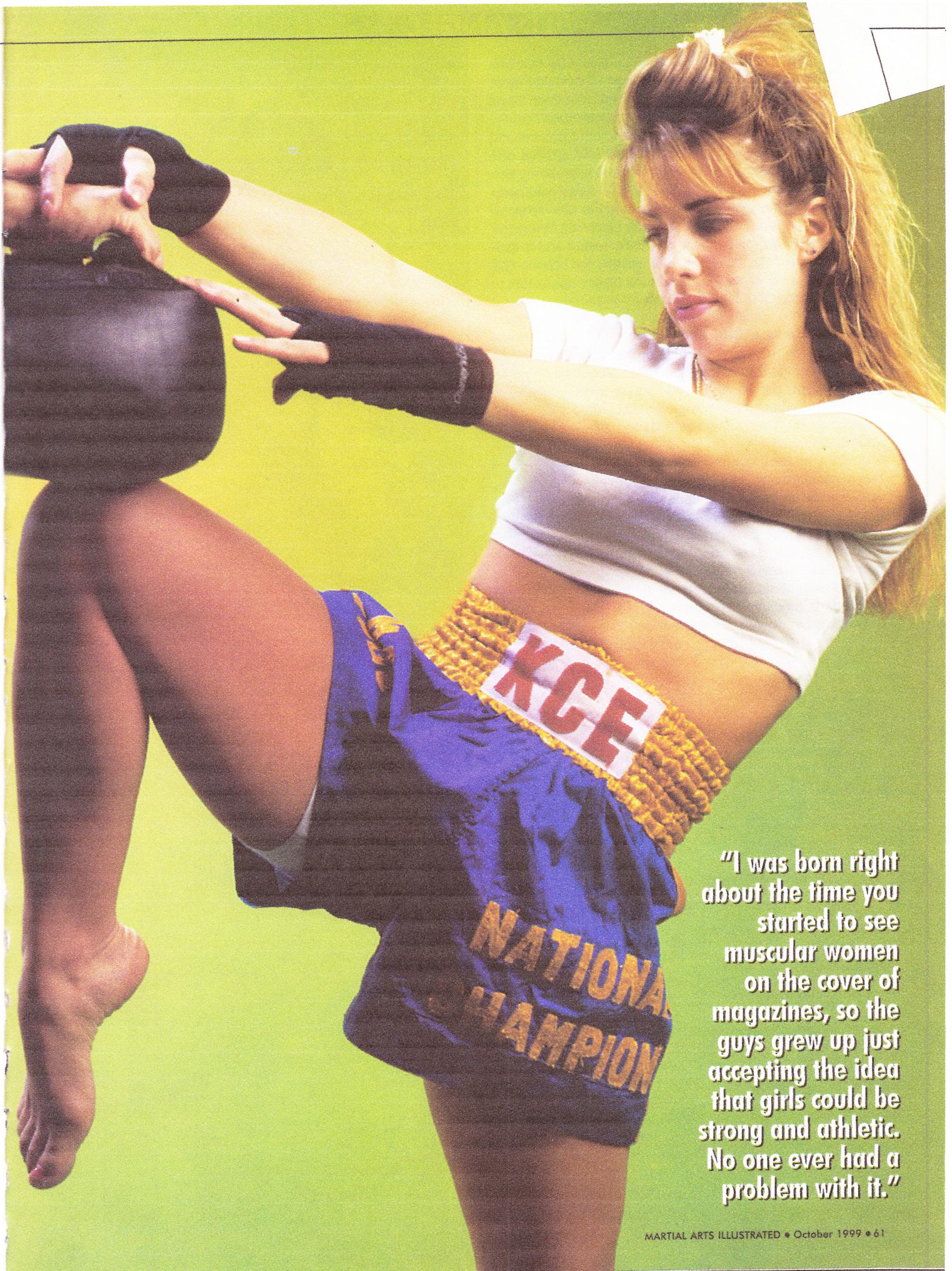
She fought two full-contact matches against older and more experienced kickboxers and knocked them both out in less than two minutes with spinning kicks. She draws standing ovations at competitions throughout the country and has a legion of fans. And at the tender age of 21, she's already the owner of her own school.

Kicking Before Kindergarten

Her story began at the age of four, when her mother took her to a local shopping mall to enroll her in ballet classes. "I thought ballet would help give her poise and grace, and would be great exercise for her," says mom Rosemary. "But fate stepped in. Master Bob Chaney's taekwondo school was in the same mall."

Mary takes the conversation from here: "I was fascinated. I didn't even know what it was, all that kicking and jumping, but it looked like fun. Forget that dance stuff — this was what I wanted!" Her mother laughs, "I didn't have anything against martial arts, but I thought she be happier dancing. But she's always been very determined, and she insisted." After talking with Mary's father, Ray Youshock, they agreed to let her try.

It turned out to be a passion. She wanted to take as many classes as she could. While other girls were playing with Barbie dolls, Mary was perfecting her crescent kick. "I can honestly say," states her instructor, Bob Chaney, "that Mary was an



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honest-to-goodness natural. It just came easily for her. She was just perfect for taekwondo – stronger, faster, and more coordinated than most kids, and a very quick learner. She's one of the best students I've ever had, if not the best."

Ray Youshock adds: "Over the years, a lot of trainers and instructors have tried to claim Mary as their own protégé. She has trained with a lot of instructors, but it was primarily Bob Chaney who made Mary what she is today." Mary paid homage Master Chaney by utilizing his name in her own school.

And her progress was rapid: a junior black belt before her tenth birthday, an instructor in her early teens, and a bedroom full of trophies before she set foot in high school. "We thought we were gonna have to buy a bigger house just to hold all the trophies," her mom laughs.

Growing Up in a Gi

Her dedication to training didn't stop her from having a normal life as a teenager, though. She was a top student, popular in school, and a cheerleader. And what about the guys? Were they threatened by a girl who could flatten them with one punch?

"Not at all," smiles Mary. "As a matter of fact they were fascinated by it. Remember, I'm generation X. I was born right about the time you started to see muscular women on the cover of magazines, so the guys grew up just accepting the idea that girls could be strong and athletic. No one ever had a problem with it."

And what about the girls? What did they think of having a martial arts prodigy as a classmate? "Not a problem," Mary says. "Some of them even became my students. But sometimes they'd get me in trouble. Like we'd walk into a place and one of them would announce, 'This is my friend Mary, and she can take any guy in the house.'"

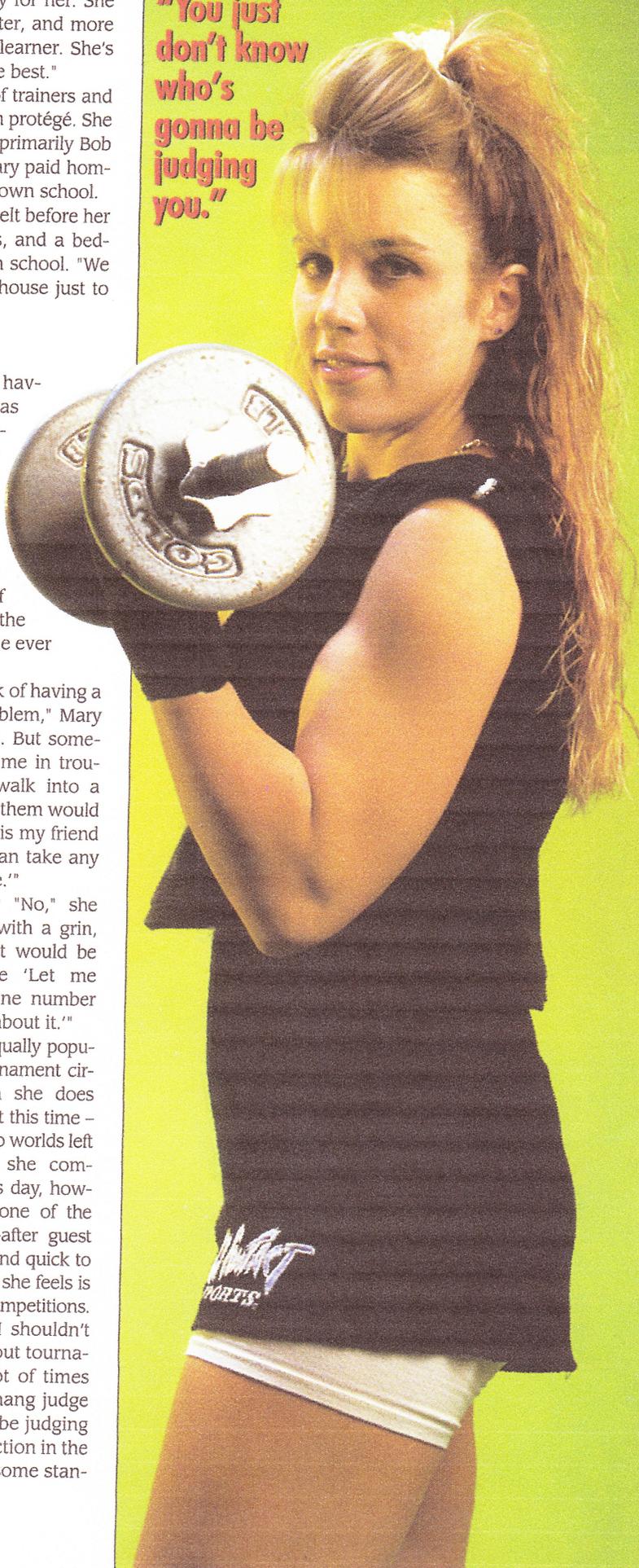
Any takers? "No," she answers, then with a grin, "Well, usually it would be something like 'Let me have your phone number and we'll talk about it.'"

She was equally popular on the tournament circuit. Although she does not compete at this time – "There were no worlds left to conquer," she comments. To this day, however, she is one of the most sought-after guest performers, and quick to point out what she feels is

the biggest problem facing today's tournament competitions.

"Stupid judging," she begins, "well, maybe I shouldn't call it stupid – no, it's stupid. The whole thing about tournaments is that it's hard to get good judges. A lot of times they'll pull black belts out of the audience and hang judge tags on them. You just don't know who's gonna be judging you. There have been some steps in the right direction in the last few years to get things organized, and have some stan-

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dards. But it's really frustrating when you see someone who's worked really hard – and I'm not just talking about myself, you see it all the time – and is obviously the winner, then you hear someone else's name called. And you know the judges have their own personal opinions, grudges, prejudices and loyalties."

And what about the rumored "bad blood" between her and Michele "Mouse" Krasnoo, another legendary competitor. "No way," she says. "Mouse and I always got along. I think everyone wanted to set us against each other because we were both young and blonde. Any talk about bad things that were said never came from me or Mouse. A lot of times people speak for you, and since they're hooked-up with you, when they sound-off, people think they're your opinions. But it's not always the case."

With her photogenic appeal and physical talent, many would consider her a natural for movies, but she does not want to make the same mistakes so many others before her have made. "When I was younger," she says, "I met all of the best martial artists. They were all gonna be movie stars. Today, a lot of them are pushing 50 and they based their whole life around that goal. I'd love to act, sure, and I've studied acting, and I'll pursue it, but it's so iffy and competitive you can't put

all your eggs in one basket. You've got to keep your life under control." These days, Mary's life is that and much more. Her real passion is teaching and she is currently managing and instructing at her growing Las Vegas school.

On Being "Awesome"

Mary works hard with her students, and tries to give every one individual attention, from child to adult. "She's really good with the kids," says her mother. "She's done a lot of work with educationally handicapped children, and attention deficit kids. The discipline they learn teaches them to focus, and their grades improve."

Mary is known as a devastating kicking specialist, with spectacular acrobatic kicks and power that few can match. She has recently utilized this ability to venture into the world of home video with her four-tape video training program from Unique Publications Video, *The Awesome Series*. "I wanted to make a set of tapes that everyone, adults, kids, older people, men, women, beginners, black belts, you name it, could learn from," Mary says. "I teach

by breaking kicks down into the basic elements, one move at a time – stand correctly, time everything right, bring the knee up correctly, pivot, snap, retract, and so on. Once the elements are right, the whole thing can be done in one action. In a martial art, every single move is made with your body, your mind, and your intention. You don't just kick with your foot or punch with your hand."

Mary also teaches many individuals who are strictly interested in getting and staying in shape. But she doesn't simply teach an aerobics class utilizing martial arts moves. "For fitness applications, I teach real kickboxing, using equipment like Thai pads, focus mitts, the

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