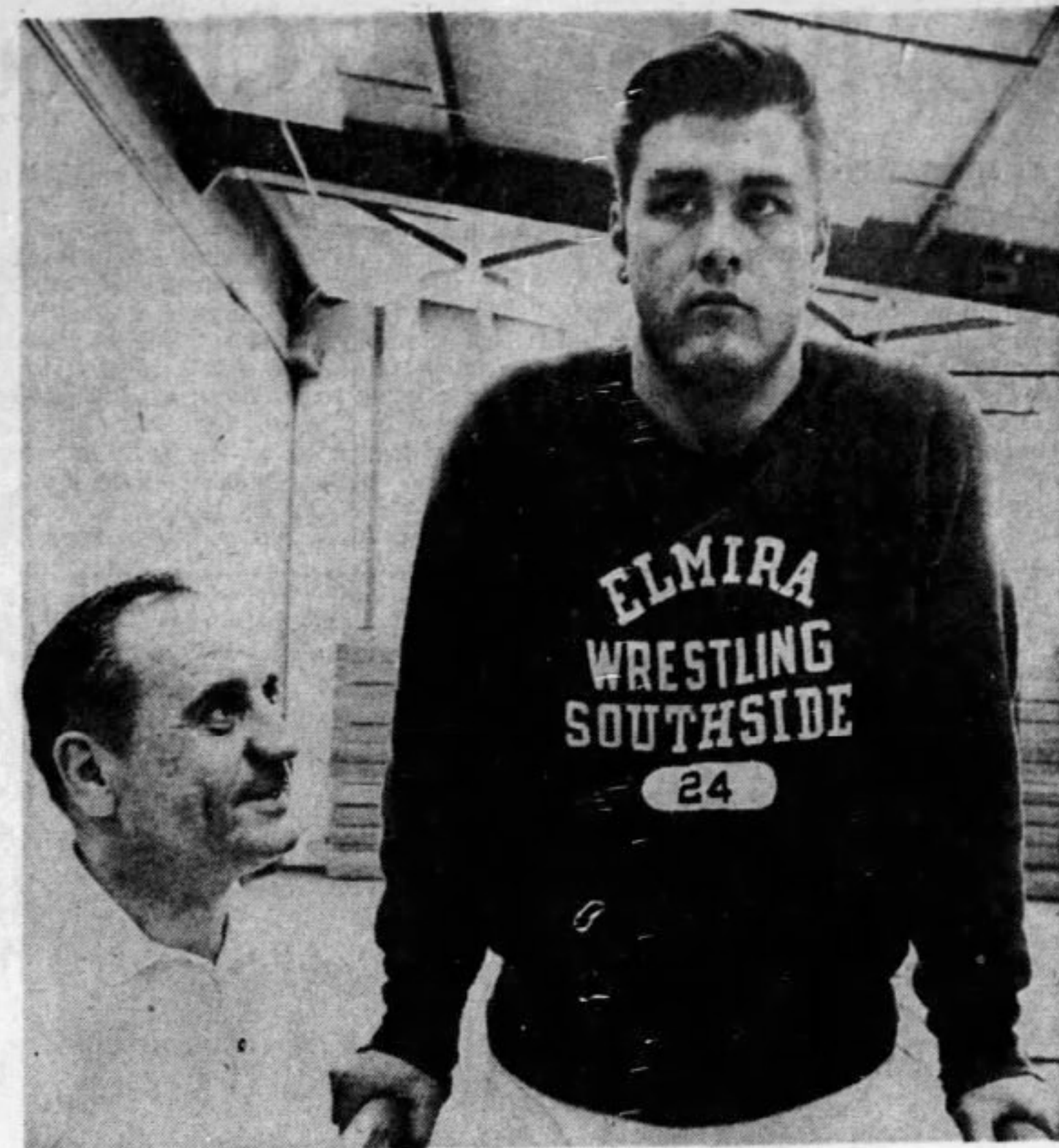


Gary Robinson, Southside's State unlimited wrestling champion, works out with the weights.



Coach Tom Hurley watches as Robinson works on parallel bars.

Gary Robinson: Dream Became Reality

By WAYNE BOUCHER

A high school coach and a young man had an idea last December — an idea that both felt could become a reality — and this dream brought Gary Robinson a New York State wrestling championship.

Robinson was an 18-year-old wrestler for Tom Hurley's Southside Green Hornets.

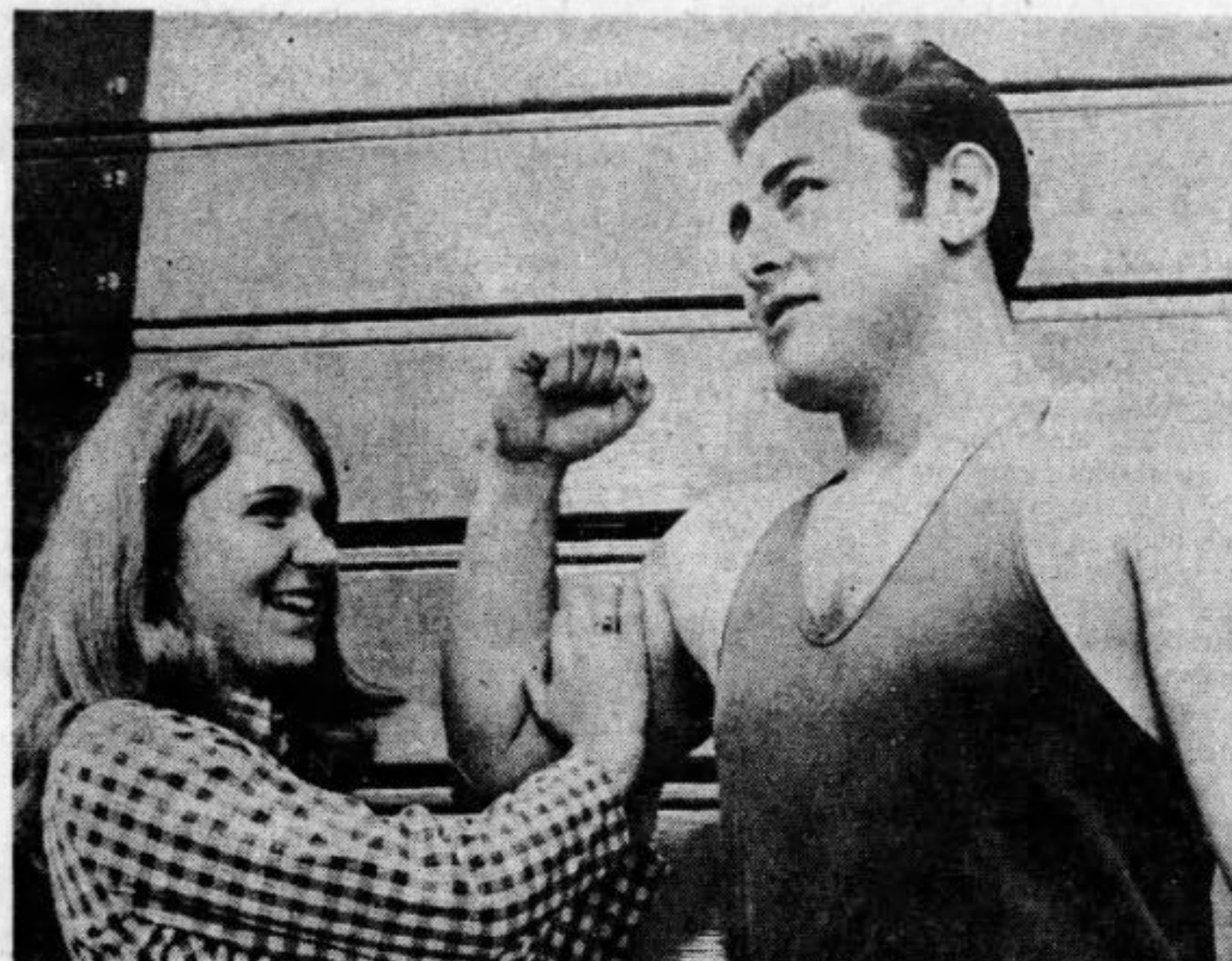
He also had to buck the state's best grapplers the past two seasons while competing in the heavyweight division.

Every high school has a heavyweight wrestler but not every high school has a grappler in the unlimited (215-250 pounds) classification. So Hurley and his pupil decided to go unlimited.

"I got the idea in Waverly during the Christmas tournament when Gary dropped a match," Hurley says. "Heavyweight is a tough section, so why not explore and shoot for the top."

Robinson compiled an 11-2 record in the 1967-68 season, but his newly-won state crown backed Hurley's "Shoot for the Top" philosophy. Gary's overall record this season was 17-3.

Hurley says, "I made the suggestion to Gary and he



SHS classmate Virginia Thorne checks arm muscle of wrestling king.

was receptive. He had no qualms about it."

With Robinson normally wrestling at 210, Hurley reasoned that it would not take much effort for him to hit 215.

"All he had to do was drop out of practice a couple of days and he was 'in'."

Robinson jumped into a class that could find him meeting high school wrestlers weighing up to 250 pounds but this didn't faze "Robbie" or his coach.

Another point, and a very important consideration, was the "field."

This area had another fine

heavyweight grappler, Academy's Earl Stermer, whom Robinson had never defeated.

Stermer, rolling along with a perfect season mark, had to be seeded high, as was another fine matman, Cornell West's George Dietrick.

For Robinson to have a

shot at a state heavy crown, he had to not only brush aside Stermer, but he had to tackle Dietrick. "Let's explore," Hurley said, and they did.

(Stermer was defeated in his bid for a heavy title while Robinson did wrestle Dietrick, and defeated him.)

Robbie moved into the Rochester tournament on March 8 and, in the space of seven hours, defeated three matmen, to bring Elmira its third high school state wrestling title ever.

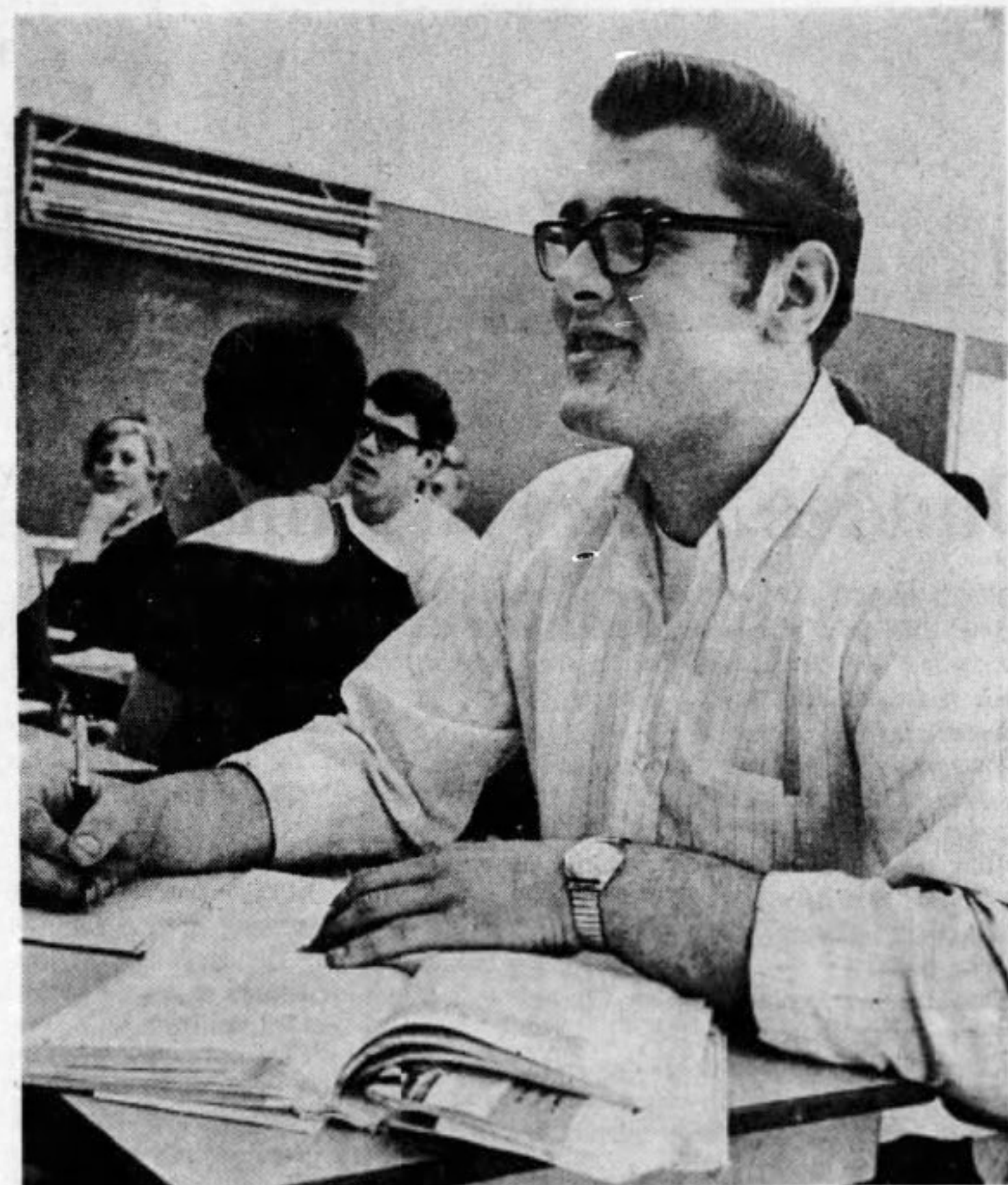
The only other Elmira state champs were Mark Stevens (148) of Southside in 1966 and Ken Haynes (165) of Horseheads in 1965.

His victory was a double one. Section 4 and Section 11 were tied at 77-77 as Robinson wrestled a Section 3 opponent. Gary's victory gave Section 4 the state title.

What's next for Robbie?

"Several schools have been talking to him," Hurley says. No decision has been made.

Whatever Robinson decides, when they talk about Elmira's wrestling champs, they'd better remember "Robbie" and the talk a teenage wrestler and a coach had one winter evening in Waverly.



Robinson hits the books in classroom.