

# COMMUNITY

## Family Traces Roots For Annual Reunions

▲ Some family members were slaves

By VERONICA CLEMONS  
Chronicle Staff Writer

Olivia T. Fields wanted her 28th family reunion to get some publicity this year because she thought the story of her family and its history might encourage other families.

"I felt like maybe if someone else saw it they may want to do it," she said.

Fields is not only talking about carrying on the tradition of having an annual family reunion, but going a step further to keep a detailed history of the family as far back and as current as possible.

Fields has been the family historian since 1965. She has photographs and records that date back to the early 1800s with her great-great-grandparents. From that time period until 1993 she has put the history she has recorded into book form, had it published and copyrighted, and family members have purchased their own personal copies.

"I thought it needed to be in book form so the family would be able to have it," she said.

Walnut Cove has been the designated site for the family reunion, held on Father's Day each year. Field says the attendance has always been above average. One year more than 200 people attended, she said.

The most memorable reunions for Fields were the first five, 1965 to 1970, she said. Those were the beginning years of her history collection.

"I just made a decision to do it to see how far I could get," she said.

Fields has had no professional assistance with her search. In fact, she said a lot of her material is kept only by family members and could not be found in the archives. Her help came from elderly family members who told her which towns to investigate first. She initially traveled to Stewart, Va. She was then sent back to North Carolina to Reidsville where she found a thick book full of information. From there she went to Mt. Airy where she found even more information about her family tree.

Fields said she had to find out about a lot of her history through whites because some of her family members were slaves. But, Fields does not regret any of the effort she has put into retrieving her family history.

"It wasn't any work," she said. "It was all fun and something the family could enjoy."

This year's family reunion started another book for Fields and will be a chronology of what the people in her family are doing now and things they have accomplished. From the information she has received so far, Fields said almost every occupation is represented in her family.

"I think we have everything but a doctor and a lawyer," she said. "But we do have one in medical school."

Many members of Fields' family are in the arts or own businesses. She boasts about the accomplishments of her children. All of her three sons own their own

business. One is even a professional dancer, and once danced with the N.C. African-American Dance Ensemble with Chuck Davis.

Fields has some achievements of her own to add to the book. In 1973, she graduated from high school, the same year as her middle son. She said she decided to go back to school when the "new math" was introduced.

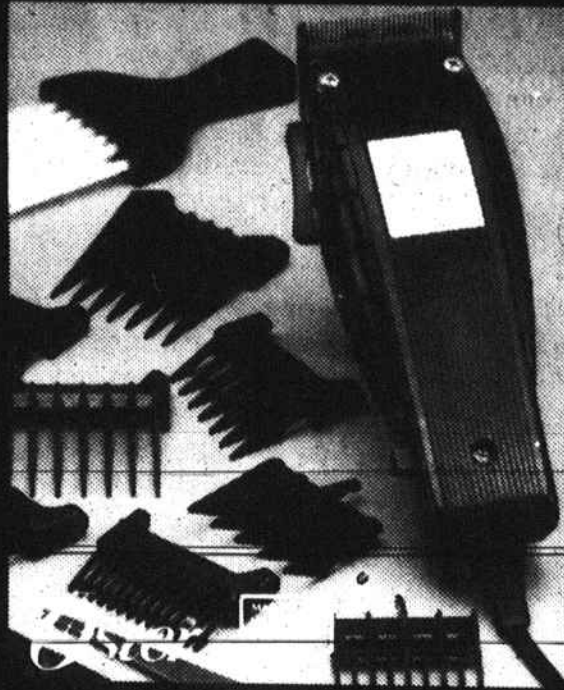
"I figured parents should know a little more than the children so they can help them out," she said.

Since she has had the experience of tracking down her family history, Fields said she would give of her time freely for anyone who wants to know how to get started.

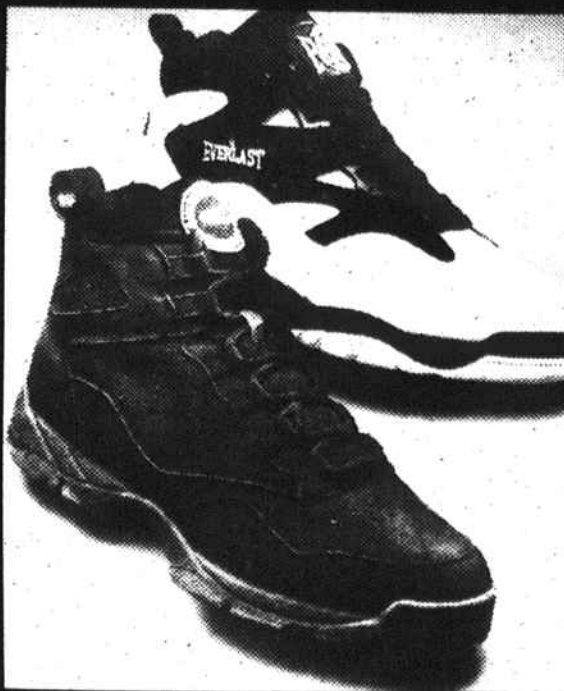
"Suppose God charged for everything he does for us," she said. "If I've got some know-how, I think I should help."



Family members who attended 28th Annual family reunion in Walnut Cove.



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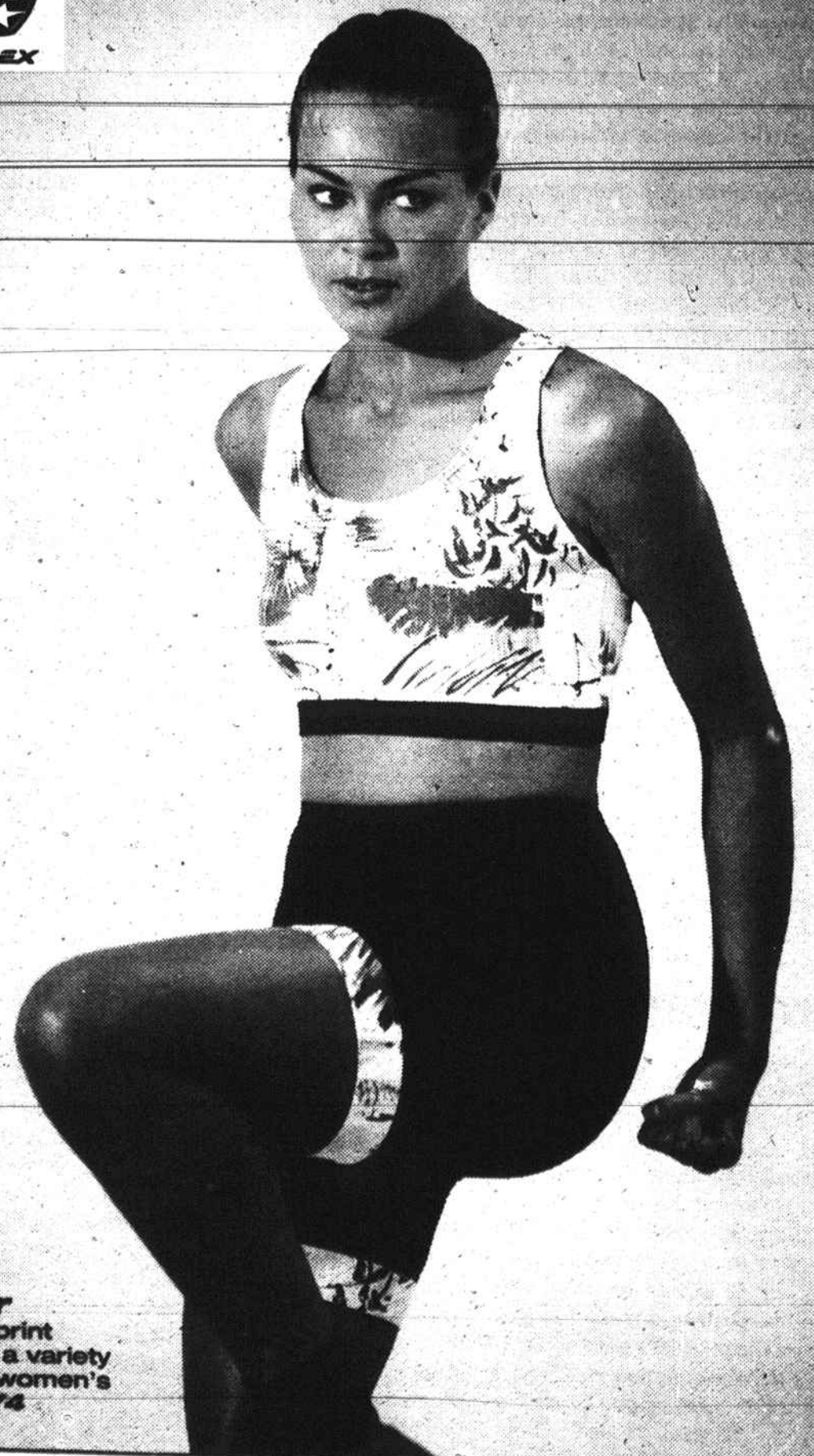
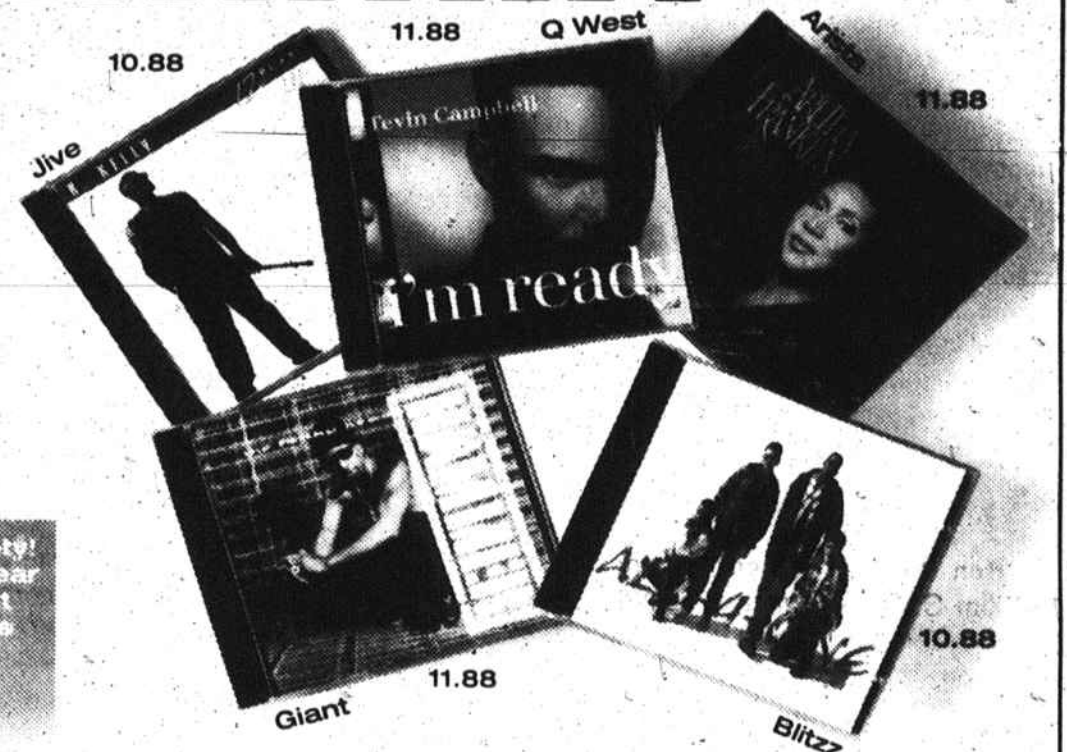


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