



TAMMY OATES
graceful across the ice

The First Black Skating Star

Tammy Oates, granddaughter of Leola Oates of Kings Mountain, is a rising skating star, Charlotte's first Black star, say friends who have seen her perform on the ice.

Talented Tammy is subject of a feature story by Jeri Harvey in a recent edition of Charlotte Post which the Mirror-Herald reprints.

"A year after she first began lessons, Tammy Oates has become one of the most outstanding pupils at Eastland Mall Icecapades Chalet and if her enthusiasm and dedication continues she may well become the Queen City's first black skating star. Instructors and others who have observed her progress say she has tremendous natural ability plus the discipline and desire to excel that should make her a great success someday.

"I saw some kids doing it and I thought it might be fun so I decided to try it," Tammy said. "It was real easy for me to learn and I enjoy it. Practicing isn't work to me, it's fun," she continued. How many of you think it would be fun to rise early enough to be on the ice by six each morning and practice till eight, then go to school and return to the rink from three-thirty until five, go home, have dinner and then go back to practice from seven thirty until nine each evening?

"Tammy's mother, Mrs. Juanita Oates, said she feels Tammy has bloomed since beginning skating. "It has brought out a lot in her," she said, "and she's doing an excellent job. We live near the mall so she can go over by herself if necessary and when she's there I don't have to worry about her. It's meant some sacrifices for us but it's worth it because she loves it so."

"Icecapades Chalet, where Tammy studies, is owned by Metro-media, the same company which owns the touring Icecapades shows. There are 14 Chalets across the country and Kathy Kirby is director of the skating school at the one in Charlotte. The daughter of Canadian skating champions, Kathy said, "I've been skating just about since I could

walk. I began teaching while still in school and after graduation decided I'd rather earn a living teaching skating than as a conventional teacher." She has a brother, who is a star with Icecapades and a sister, who performed with the show before her marriage.

"Icecapades instructors are trained by the company. A copyrighted curriculum is used for teaching students who are grouped by age and ability. It is recommended that youngsters be at least four years old before beginning instruction and there is no limit on how old the student may be. One young-hearted gentleman began lessons at the age of 68 and "did very well," according to Kathy. She went on to explain that there are several types of instruction available, including figure skating, ice dancing, ballet, freestyle and hockey. "Skating is a sport and an art form," she said. "It develops poise, posture and body awareness. It is definitely a good form of recreation for some people and can lead to competitive skating or a career as a show skater or teacher."

"Charlotte is hardly thought of as ice skating country but Kathy said the response to the school has been very good. Average enrollment runs near 500 pupils each semester and many of them become very serious about their skating, going on to enter competitions and often trying out for the Icecapades show company.

"Mrs. Oates told us that she and her husband, Limuel Oates, hope to take Tammy to New York in October and to Hershey, Pa. in December where competition will be held. "We feel the exposure will be good for her even if she doesn't enter any events herself," she added.

Watching Tammy glide gracefully across the ice, performing figure eights, and pirouettes, spinning effortlessly, it is easy to imagine her in a sequined costume, bathed in the glow of spotlight while the thunder of applause rings through the Coliseum."

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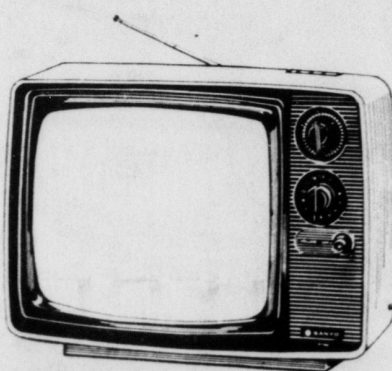
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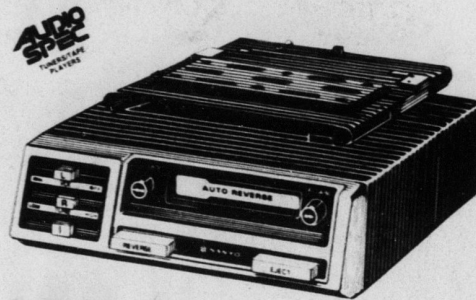
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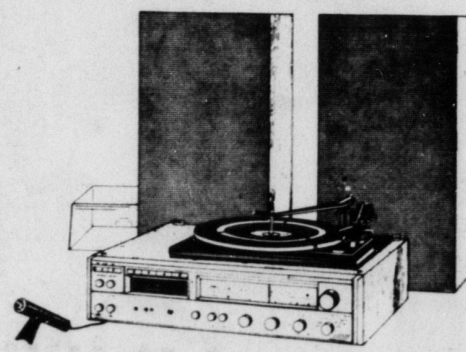
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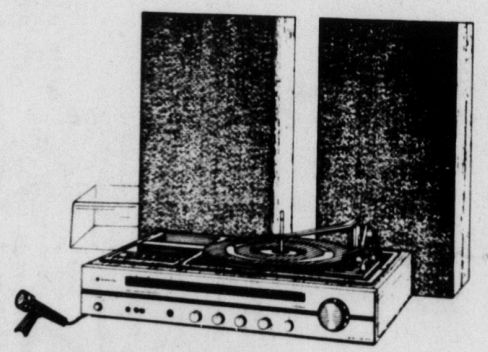
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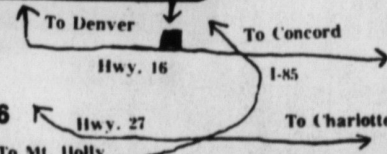
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