

McLaughlin Writes for a Song

When Olathe kicks off its sesquicentennial celebration with a Governor's Ball on Feb. 17, Paula McLaughlin, administrative



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assistant, Olathe Center, will be center stage.

McLaughlin, a professional singer and Olathe native, wrote the lyrics to the Olathe anthem commissioned for Olathe's 150th anniversary and will sing the song, *Olathe City Beautiful*, at the Feb. 17 event.

"Olathe's 150th Celebration committee wanted someone to capture the spirit of Olathe from its beginning to now," McLaughlin said. "It wasn't easy to take 150 years of history and put it into three refrains and four verses."

Howard Abernathy, Overland Park, a professional composer, wrote the music.

"I think Howard has done a great job with

the music and arrangements," McLaughlin said.

The events and festivals subcommittee co-chairs, Connie and Jerry Snider, approached McLaughlin about writing the lyrics in August 2006. She spent August and September researching Olathe's history including the early settlers, the U.S. Navy base, Hyer Boot Company, railroads and expansion with the building of I-35.

When her mother died in October 2006, McLaughlin dedicated the song to her parents, Bill and Jennie Stambaugh, who had owned Bill's Meat Market on Hwy K-7 from 1955-1976. Her six siblings and friends had helped her

brainstorm ideas at the hospital during McLaughlin's mother's final days, and the lyrics followed that same month.

"Writing the words made me appreciate Olathe more," said McLaughlin, who signed her maiden name to the song. "I realized how the little town that had a population of 30,000 when I was growing up is now a town of more than 100,000."

McLaughlin was adamant that the song would not scream "O-l-a-t-h-e" like a television car ad. She wanted the song to relate to the traditional interpretation of the Shawnee word "Olathe" as "beautiful" and to be general enough that everybody who hears the words can relate to its meaning.

"I was really honored to do this because I know how many talented musicians there are in Olathe," McLaughlin said.

McLaughlin has sung professionally 20 years, performing with the City Limit Band, the Plaza Summer Series, the Phoenix Bar & Grill, Plaza III Steakhouse, 2001 Plaza lighting ceremony and the 2006 Legends at Village West Christmas tree lighting. She sings at weddings and funerals, and estimates she performs about three week-ends a month in addition to her full-time JCCC position. *Olathe City Beautiful* will be her first published work.

Jerry Snider said they asked McLaughlin to write the lyrics because they wanted a local musician.

"We have a national song and a state song, so we thought 'why not a city song?'" he said.

The Governor's Ball is at 6 p.m. Feb. 17 at the Holiday Inn of Olathe. Tickets are \$75, available by calling the city, 913-971-8700. 🌸