



Award-Winning Western Swing Entertainer to Perform in Winchester

Area fiddler and vocalist Paul Schlesinger, who is scheduled to perform for the St. Michael's Annual Picnic in Winchester on Saturday, June 17, recently won the Western Swing Song of the Year award for the tune, "You Were Meant to Ruin My Dreams." The song is a track on his CD, Paul Schlesinger and his Knights of Texas Swing. The presentation occurred at the 21st Annual Will Rogers Academy of Western Artists awards banquet this past March at the Brown-Lupton Ballroom on the Texas Christian University Campus in Fort Worth.

Schlesinger, who is from Taylor, has entertained at the St. Michael's picnic for many years, playing traditional country, western swing, and classic dance hall favorites. Appearing with Schlesinger this year will be steel guitarist Roy Carroll, who toured with and opened for many classic Nashville stars, including Faron Young, Ernest Tubb, Ray Price, and Merle Haggard. Billy Dee, who served as the band leader of the famous Gilley's night club in Pasadena, and is a member of the Texas Western Swing Hall of Fame, will play bass. Jim Bowles, an associate member of the Gatesville Country Music Hall of Fame, will play drums. The group is scheduled to play from 3 to 7 p.m.

"You Were Meant to Ruin My Dreams" was written in 1949 by lyricist Cecil R. "Butterball" Harris and composer Arlie A. Carter, who were band

members of Jimmy Heap and the Melody Masters from Taylor. The song was originally recorded by the Melody Masters for Imperial Records, and sung by fiddler Perk Williams. All involved with the original recording are now deceased.

Schlesinger says, "The original recording is a tad slower than my version, and by today's recording standards sounds a bit primitive. It sold well enough regionally, but was not a hit in 1949. In 2011, Cecil Harris told me he wrote the song to fit around the heartbreak theme, using a 'hook line' that would hopefully catch the public's fancy. I always liked the song and occasionally performed it live at shows and dances. I thought it had potential, and I decided to revamp it for my CD, adding twin fiddles, twin guitars, drums, and swing-style chord pattern."

In January, Schlesinger was contacted by the Academy of Western Artists (AWA) and informed that his recording of the song was a Top 5 Finalist for Western Swing Song of Year. "I didn't know anything about the AWA and really had no idea the song would ultimately win," says Schlesinger. My wife Tara and I attended the event thinking it would just be an interesting experience, and we'd never have the opportunity to go again. However, I think she secretly had more faith than me!"

Other award winners at this year's ceremony include national

celebrities Rex Allen, Jr., for Western Music Male Vocalist, and Roy Clark for Living Legend. Schlesinger reports that Red Steagall, a giant in the western music field, was in attendance, as was Kenny Sears, the featured fiddler on the Grand Ole Opry, and who is a member of the Time Jumpers, a popular western swing group featured on RFD TV. In all, there were about 400 in attendance. Schlesinger says, "I gave my acceptance speech at the podium in front of all those luminaries. Since I didn't think I would win, I had not prepared anything. So I thanked the Lord for setting me on my life path, all the musicians who helped with the CD, as well as those folks who supported me."

The AWA's mission is to promote and preserve America's western past and its contemporary western future. Since 1996, the AWA's Will Rogers Awards have become one of the highest forms of recognition for western artists in the world. All winners are selected by a blind jury of their peers. Awards go to the best western artists in three disciplines: trappings, entertainment, and media. Recipients are given a statue featuring the silhouette of the late Will Rogers, America's foremost recognized cowboy, humorist, newspaper columnist, and social

The CD has caught the attention of many country and western swing enthusiasts around the globe, especially those who favor traditional, independently

produced country music. Country Music People, an international magazine published in the UK, gave the CD a five-star rating in its July 2016 issue. The magazine also spotlighted Schlesinger's career in its November 2016 issue. The CD held the No. 1 position on the international Swingin' West radio show from September 2016 to April 2017.

Schlesinger is a frequent featured entertainer at the monthly Fayette County Opry in La Grange. In addition to his Knights of Texas Swing band, Schlesinger is the music team leader for the Lee County Cowboy Church, and a member of the church's band Second Chance, which includes his wife Tara on piano, and Lexington's Bill Tucker on bass. The Schlesingers are also members of the Milam County Cowboy Church band, and the Comal Country Music Show house band in New Braunfels. They were named Entertainers of the Year in December 2016 by the Country Music Hall of Fame in Gatesville.

Schlesinger also performs regularly with Glen Collins and the Alibis, a classic-country show and dance hall band who have been featured on the syndicated television program "Songwriters Across Texas," and perform all over the state. They are scheduled to appear at Sweet Home Hall on Aug. 6.

Paul Schlesinger and his Knights of Texas Swing CD is available at personal appear-



Paul Schlesinger won the 2016 Western Swing Song of the Year award at the 21st Annual Will Rogers Academy of Western Artists awards banquet in Fort Worth, March 16. The song, "You Were Meant to Ruin My Dreams," is a track on his latest CD. He will be performing for the St. Michael's Annual Picnic in downtown Winchester on Saturday, June 17, at 3 p.m.

ances and online at www.paulschlesinger.com. Be sure to visit www.facebook.com/schlesingerpaul, and www.awaawards.org.

In addition to Schlesinger's music, St. Michael's picnic will also feature a washer tourna-

ment at 4 p.m., a barbecue meal served from 5 to 7 p.m., and a live auction at 7:30 p.m. Drinks will be available from 3 p.m. until closing. For more information see www.stmichaelswinchester.org/home.

Annual Crops Tour Set June 19 at Fayette County Fairgrounds

The annual Crops Tour is an educational event for anyone who is interested in row crop production. The tour will be held on Monday June 19, at the Commercial Exhibit Hall at the

Fayette County Fairgrounds in La Grange. Registration is from 8 to 8:30 a.m. and will conclude about 1:30 p.m.

There will be several speakers this year; Dr. Robert Bowl-

ing, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service-Entomology Specialist, Dr. Josh McGinty, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service - Agronomy Specialist, Donnie Dippel, CHB Consult-

ing, and Levi Garlick, Farm Service Agency - Director. Three CEUs will be offered; one integrated pest management, one laws and regulation, and one general.

The Crop Tour will begin at 9 a.m. with a welcome and introductions. We will then board a charter bus and travel to Joost Farms and Schubert Farm for a tour of corn and cotton. We will

return to the Fairgrounds around 12 noon for a catered lunch. RSVP to the Fayette County Extension Office at (979) 968-5831 by June 15, to adequately prepare for lunch.



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