

There's just no way to freeze out Oleta

By AL HOOPER

Oleta Adams is a beautiful Yakima girl who weighs 93 pounds, and 91 of it is larynx. The other week she turned 20 while flying to Los Angeles to sign on as the featured vocalist with skater Peggy Fleming's "Concert on Ice."

What is Oleta doing in an ice show?
"Singing," replies her manager Mrs. Lee Farrell of Yakima, in a tone that suggests it is a funny question.

Any way you look at it, this represents a big step ahead for the little girl who sang in the choir at her father's Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church before gravitating to nightclubs. She was working the clubs around the state when a scout for Bob Banner Associates, which produces the Fleming show, came in during the middle of a performance.

"He asked if I was interested in joining the Peggy Fleming concert," explains Oleta, who steadfastly refuses to dramatize herself. But the fact is the Fleming show is a top-rated production that carries its own ice-making equipment on tour, it plays to sellouts across the country, and any young performer would swap a year of club dates plus her favorite agent to climb aboard.

Oleta actually takes to the ice, too.

She wears spiked shoes and tries hard to look comfortable doing a series of dance steps.

Then she comes to a stop, tilts her head back this much, and out comes that incredible voice so powerful in its presence and intensity that nobody within earshot even twitches, let alone breathes. Any good songstress can shatter glass with her high notes — Oleta's voice fuses the pieces back together.

The Fleming connection will continue to September and after that . . . not even Mrs. Farrell knows for sure.

"They've asked Oleta to stay on through the winter," says Mrs. Farrell, "to fill engagements at Lake Tahoe and Las Vegas. But we're in the process of working out a recording contract and there are several television guest offers to consider."

Things have started to go very well indeed for the daughter of the Rev. John Adams. In her first performance with the Fleming concert she was a smash. It was in the Garden State Arts Center in New Jersey, out of doors, and the 8,000 present were impressed on a couple of levels.

First there was Oleta's spiningling rendition of "Don't Rain On My Parade;" and at the same time the heavens sparkled and shook with thunder and lightning — "in perfect timing with the song," Oleta confided to Mrs. Farrell by phone.

But no rain. Just like the song said.

It's the kind of celestial cooperation a Baptist minister's daughter might expect — provided she sings like an angel.



OLETA ADAMS

. . . a slick number