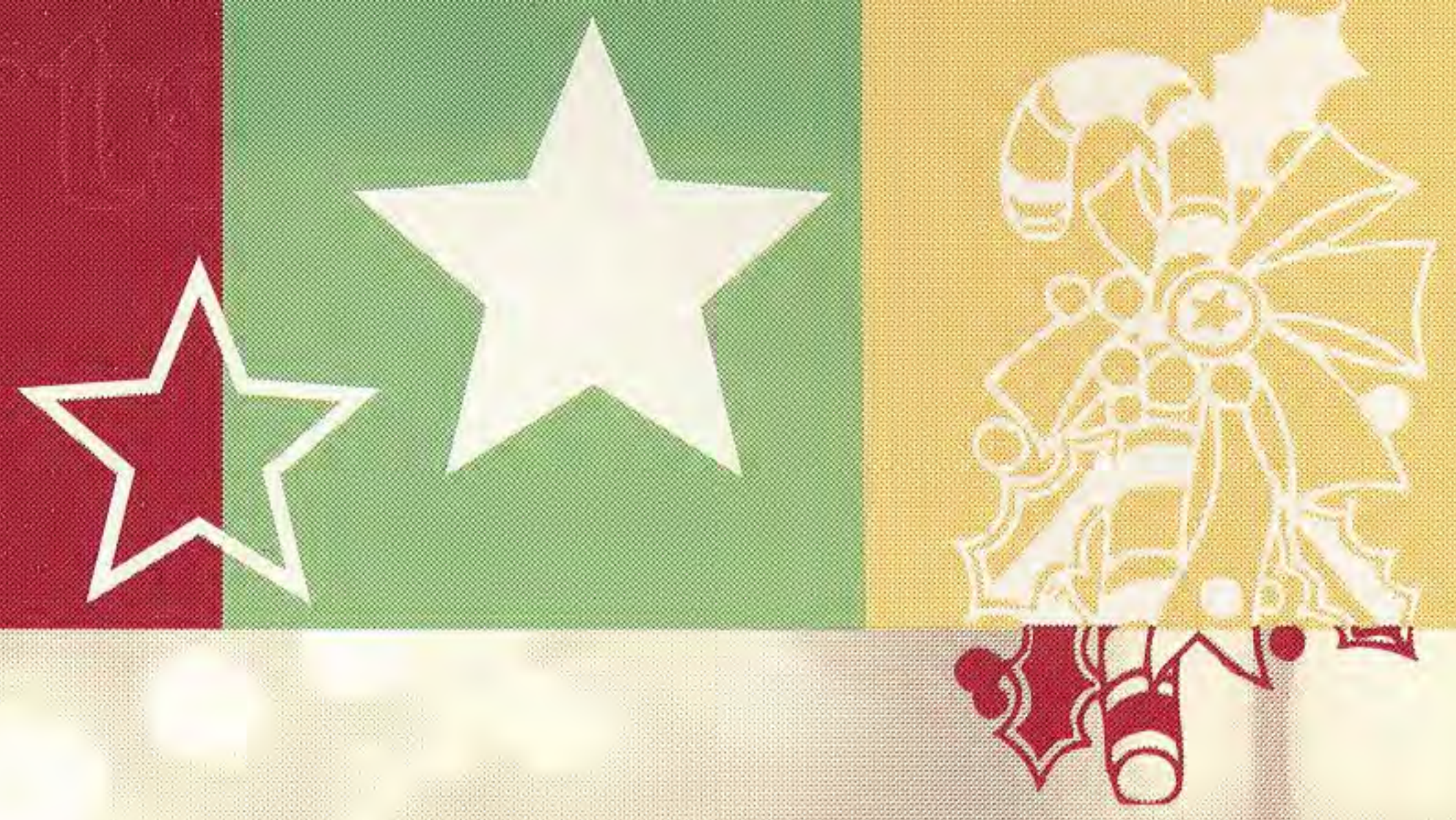


Christmas Features

PAGEANT OF LIGHTS



WHEN OUR CITY SPARKLES THE ANNUAL PAGEANT OF LIGHTS

On the first Thursday of December 1998, the Pageant of Lights was first staged by Rotary to celebrate Christmas. It included the long-standing Bundaberg tradition of having a large Christmas Tree installed in Buss Park and turning on the Christmas lights.

Two years later, well-known Bundaberg community volunteers Nina Higgins and Wendy Driver took over the coordination of the event with the support of the Bundaberg City Council. When asked why she continues to co-ordinate the Pageant of Lights, Nina Higgins responded,

"I love the look on the kids' faces when they are walking with their lanterns. I think it is beautiful."

Each year, the coordinators come up with a different theme or headline act for the Pageant of Lights street parade that winds its way down Bourbong Street. In 2003 the official lighting ceremony led by the Police Pipes and Drums. Some 12,000 people filled the CBD to witness the spectacle last year – one third of our City's population! In 2004, we will see Chinese Lion Dancers from Brisbane in honour of the International Year of Rice.

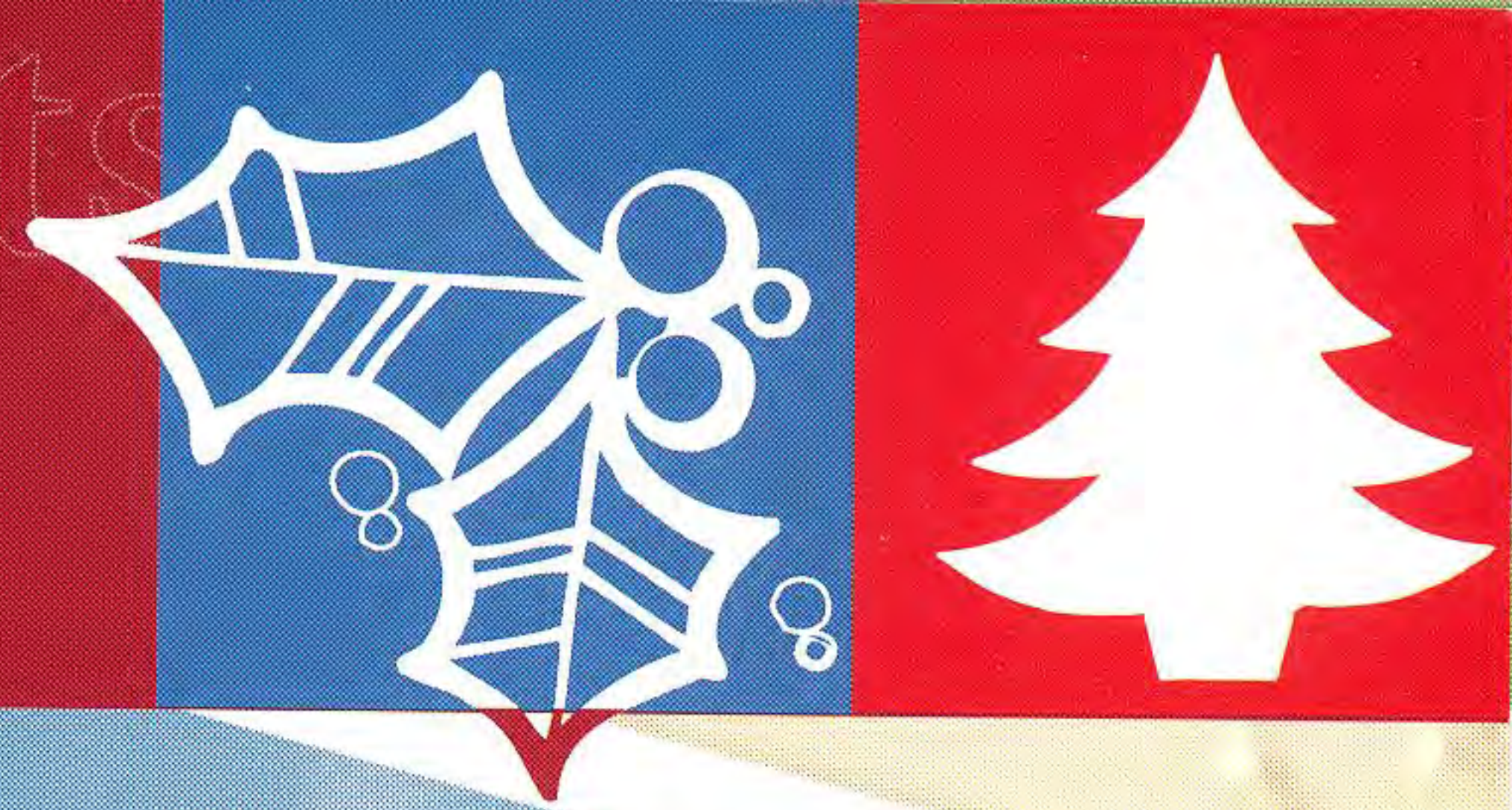
The Pageant of Lights event begins with the Mayor officially turning on the myriad of fairy lights in Buss Park to signify the commencement of the festive season, followed by the chiming of the bells of St. Andrew's church. The street parade then kicks off from the Walla Street end of Bourbong Street doing a complete circuit past Buss Park and back down to the original parade assembly area. Stalls line the main street so that visitors can purchase something for dinner or even a Christmas present or two. The CBD Pavilion becomes a centre for musical entertainment while Santa pays a visit to local children.

One of the many features that Bundaberg residents look forward to every year is the street parade. Walking groups and bands march along with floats from youth and community organisations. Groups can enter into the float competition as long as they have a Christmas theme and must include some lighting to fit in with the activities of the night.

In 2003, the Australian Sugar Cane Railway group took out the main prize for their float which included

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a locomotive engine which was the third built by the Bundaberg Foundry Engineers in 1952. The float was all lit up and even the engine was in steam and the whistle was blowing. This float delivered Santa Claus to the many eagerly awaiting children.

Although many members of the organisation were involved in the float's design, David Twist from the Australian Sugar Cane Railway group accredited enthusiasts Bob Truscott and Ross and Wendy Driver with getting the float automated.

"Our group is all about restoring relevant artefacts from the sugar cane industry in Queensland to keep the history alive. Participation in the parade helps us to promote the group's activities and build support for what we do," said David Twist.

The Pageant of Lights is a well-supported community event. Congratulations to the Coordinators and the Council for continuing this spirit lifting tradition.

SHELLEY PISANI
Bundaberg Arts Centre



The award winning pageant float from the Australian Sugar Cane Railway Group.



Chinese Lion Dancers featured in the 2004 Pageant of Lights