

Christmas Features

LIGHT UP THE CITY



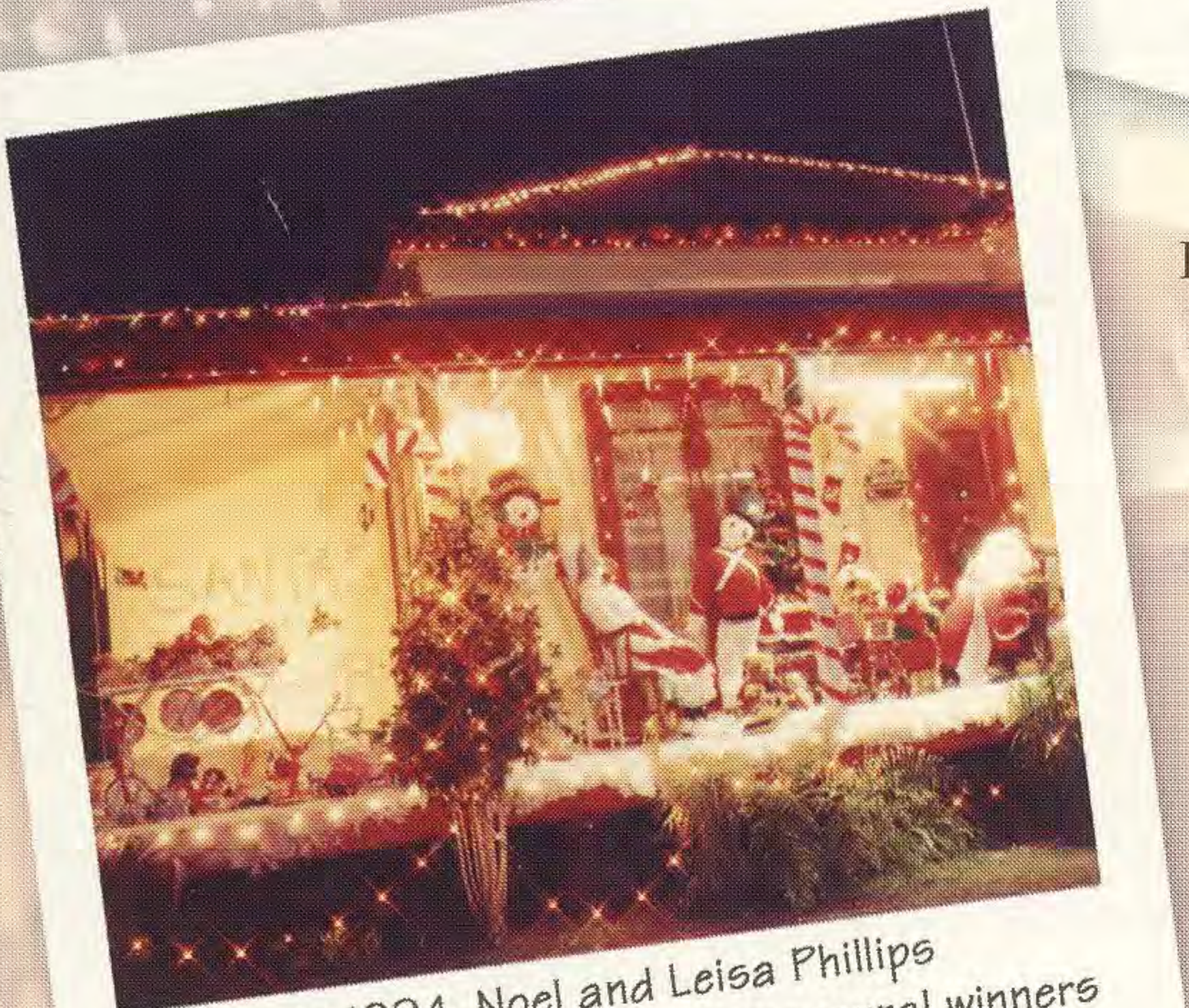
December 2004 marks the 10th anniversary of the “Light up the City” competition. Once again we will hear the delighted oohs and aahs as residents and tourists, young and old, tour the streets of Bundaberg at night to view a myriad of colourful displays.

In November 1994, the incumbent Mayor of Bundaberg, Cr Nita Cunningham (now Member for Bundaberg) attended the Melbourne Cup. She recalls driving down an avenue of trees festooned with sparkling fairy lights which she likened to driving through “fairyland”. She spent the next two days in Melbourne wondering how she could introduce this magical display to Bundaberg for residents to enjoy.

In less than a month, the dedicated council workers had installed 3000 fairy lights in the fig trees in Bourbong Street, Buss Park and the foyer of the Civic Centre – a great achievement in such a short timeframe. On 1st December, 1994 the Mayor switched on these fairy lights, the lights on the traditional council Christmas tree in Buss Park, and the newly installed lighting on the riverbank.

Bundaberg residents, businesses and institutions soon got into the Christmas spirit and with the assistance of local sponsors the “Light up Bundy” competition was launched.

The inaugural winners of the competition for “Best Decorated Home” were Noel and Leisa Philips of Mimmagh Street. Leisa says they were inspired by a trip to Los Angeles, where they were entranced by the lights of “Christmas Lane”. Their display in the first year of competition was based on Santa’s workshop. They set up a computerised display and handed out sweets to all the children that visited. Leisa’s youngest child was



In 1994, Noel and Leisa Phillips of Mimmagh Street were the inaugural winners of the Light Up Bundy Competition



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only three weeks old at the time. The Philips family also won the 1995 competition for which they created a whole new theme with reindeer on the roof and Santa placing toys under the Christmas tree. In 1996 the competition was renamed "Light up the City".

The competition has received tremendous support from local sponsors over the years and Ergon Energy has been the major sponsor the past three years. Cr Kay McDuff, Mayor of Bundaberg, says that over the years, the numbers of residents, businesses and institutions with their premises lit has increased, with 68 involved in 2003. The "Light up the City" competition and the ceremonial "Turning on the City Lights" have become two highlights of Bundaberg's annual calendar. Through these festivities the community comes together sharing the Christmas spirit to herald in the Christmas season.

To add to the bright appearance of the City already created in the suburbs, lights in the avenue of trees from the Post Office to the Anglican Church in Maryborough Street, and on the Christmas tree in Buss Park are turned on ceremoniously by the Mayor on the first Thursday evening in December.

Santa Claus adds his generous touch and distributes sweets to the children. A "Pageant of Lights" Street Parade then moves through Bourbong Street and as a finale, a concert in the CBD pavilion is staged.

This event is always extremely well supported by residents and organizations that enter floats or come to enjoy the evening.

Many thanks to Bundaberg City Council for adding a little extra sparkle to our festive season.

ALISON MCLUCAS
Independent Writer

