

The Reactor

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There she goes, Miss Pacifica...

When the history of Pacifica is written, the Miss Pacifica Pageant will be worth at least a couple of chapters. The pageant was probably the finest display of Pacifica can-do spirit, talent and managerial skill ever brought together to accomplish a goal the entire community could be proud of. The pageant was tops, acknowledged as such by the experts. The pageant was so good, in fact, it was finally named a "Hall of Fame Pageant," and did not compete for a mere first place in staging and management. That gave lesser pageants a chance to win some of the marbles.

A little history for those who weren't around in the 1960s and 1970s. It all began even before incorporation. The first pageant raised funds to finance the incorporation committee. The pageant grew and prospered. A local banker, Stan VanderHule, ran it for some years with a high degree of skill and then Aubrey Lumley took it over in 1969. Never has an amateur, volunteer effort been run with more professional polish and organization. Lumley had his finger on every detail. He delegated a great deal to a dedicated and hardworking volunteer crew, but he coordinated everything. I was involved for several years with the special section published by the *Tribune* prior to each pageant.

It was a pleasure to watch a pro at work, as Lumley saw to it the section met his high standards. It was all done smoothly and diplomatically. It was hard to

believe the section was one small detail out of many. There was staging, sound, choosing contestants, rehearsals for the contestants, including diplomatic handling of any prima donnas (inevitable in this kind of venue). The pageant was staged at the Terra Nova gym. You can imagine the difficulties, yet each year the staging won in competition with far wealthier communities that had real theaters, without disguised basketball hoops hanging from the ceiling. That's skill. That's dedication. That's hard work. That's volunteer effort at its best.

Lumley, like everyone else involved locally, was a volunteer. His nights, weekends and vacation time were all donated to the cause. A glutton for punishment, he ran for City Council and spent four years dealing with city budgets as well as the pageant's bottom line.

The contestants were the best Pacifica had to offer. They danced or sang or showed their talents in other ways. They were fine people, but we never had a Miss Pacifica who could match the staging and professional polish of the pageant itself. Each year, there was a top emcee, someone like Fred La Cosse or Susan Anton, and the Miss California orchestra to back them up.

As the 1970s wound down, so did the pageant. Lumley's skills were recognized. He moved to Scott's Valley, eventually to manage the Miss California Pageant, first in Santa Cruz, then in San Diego. Without his coordination the pageant in Pacifica seemed to dissolve before our eyes. Feminist objections to pageants in general, which had been minor nuisances for several years, combined with a lack of a firm hand at the wheel, and by 1980 there was no longer the possibility a Pacifica girl might represent us as Miss America. The pageant is gone, and Pacifica will never be the same.

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