

Giant balloons loom over Star City Holiday Parade

By Michael Hooper
Senior Reporter

Remember sitting in front of the TV watching the giant balloons six stories high go by in the Rose Bowl parade? Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck as high as the big oak tree outside.

They were a curious sight, even on TV.

But "you don't realize the balloons' awe-inspiring height until you're on the street in front of them," said Barb Hager, coordinator of the Star City Holiday Parade that will have several giant balloons.

The balloons — one designed especially for Santa himself — 20 marching bands from across the state, flamboyant Mardi Gras figures from New Orleans and marvelous walking units will all parade down Lincoln's O Street, Saturday, Dec. 6 at 11 a.m.

"It's going to be a stage production — and our stage is 12 blocks long," Hager said.

The event is the second annual Star City Holiday Parade sponsored by Uptownowners, a booster club for downtown Lincoln.

Carol Jess, director of the Downtown Lincoln Association, said 60,000 attended the parade last year. This year 80,000 are expected to attend, she said.

One of the walking units in the parade is the Eagle Nebraska Heartbeat — 35 girls between the ages of 10 and 12, who will jump rope in precise routines, Hager said. Another unit will use colorful streamers to create forward and stationary dance routines.

Hager said the parade, which lasts two hours, will be unlike anything Nebraskans have seen before in this area. It's not going to be like a community parade with flat-bed floats, she said. But rather a parade similar to those televised on TV, she said.

What makes a parade exciting is using all planes and elements — height, width, depth, lots of brilliant colors," Hager said. That's what this one is using, she said.

She said there will be several self-propelled, animated floats that are the result of a float workshop last spring. Float builders learned at the workshop to strip automobiles to their chassis and build the floats on top.

Another walking unit is "Galileo and the Constellations," — a 35-member entourage featuring a 15-foot tall Galileo complete with telescope and a variety of animated giant puppets representing the constellations. The unit, created by puppeteers Paul Mesner and Cindy Zuby, is funded by a grant from Target Stores.

The 20 marching bands appearing in the parade are from Lincoln Public High Schools, Pius X and from schools in other towns such as Luman, Cedar Bluffs, Lawrence, Rising City, York, Deshler and Elmwood. The 43rd Army Band will also march in the parade.

Besides 20 marching bands, 22 floats and six giant balloons, the parade includes handsome equestrian units.

Mayor Roland Leudtke is the official host of the event and will ride in a special carriage at the beginning of the parade. Gov. Bob Kerrey also will appear in a specially-decorated vintage auto-

mobile. Hager said in a press release that the parade is a community-wide effort.

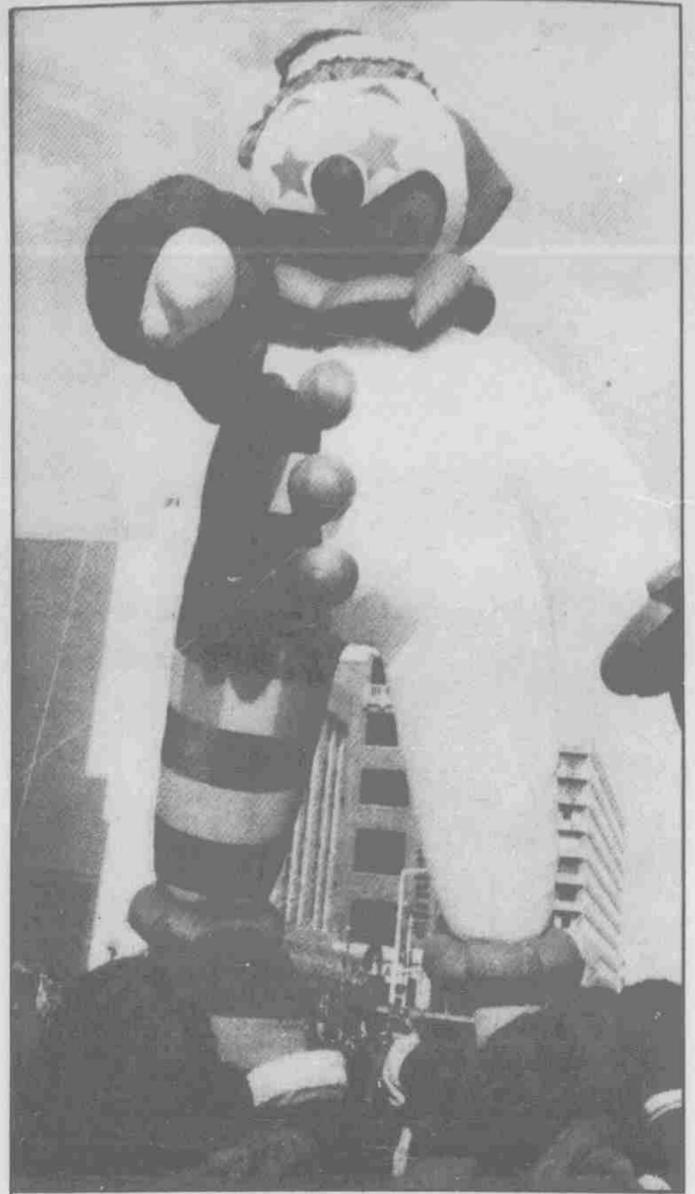
"Absolutely every entry is the result of a financial investment by community members who realize the value of special events to the city," she said.

The initial cost of the parade is about \$60,000, she said, but that does not include the cost of building the floats and other elements in the parade. The giant balloons, sponsored by FirstTier, National Bank of Commerce, Commercial Federal, First Federal and the Lincoln—Lancaster County Visitors Committee, would not be possible without those organizations underwriting the expense of bringing the balloons to Lincoln.

Parking may be hard to find with 80,000 spectators expected downtown. Lincoln Transportation System will offer a 50-cent adult and 25-cent senior fares. Children ride for free. LTS plans to add "booster" buses to regular routes and will offer return service every 15 minutes following the parade. For more information call LTS at 476-1234.

Following the parade are various activities. The Haymarket Christmas Food Boutique will be selling cakes, cookies, Christmas fruit, Greek baklava and other Christmas sweets in the Candy Factory, 8th and P streets. Horse and carriage rides also will be available until 5 p.m.

In the evening, UNL's Cornhusker Marching Band will perform at Kimball Hall, 12th and R streets. Also in the area is "A Flea in her Ear," a famous farce, at Howell Theater.



Courtesy of the Downtown Lincoln Association

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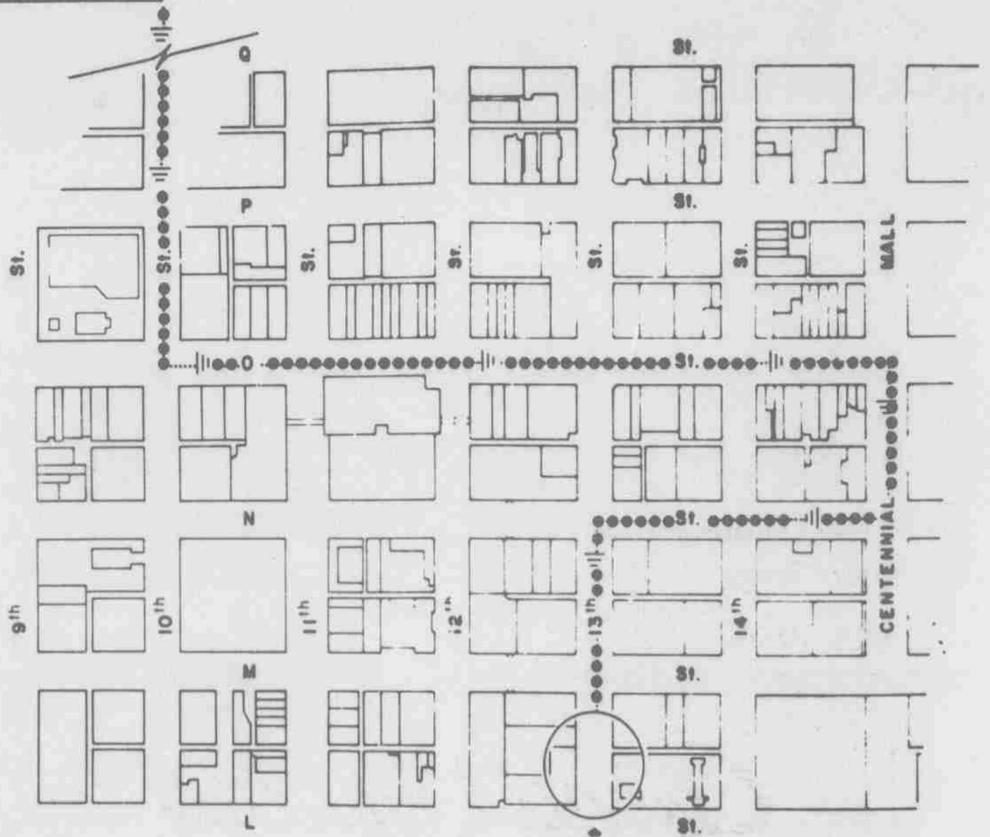
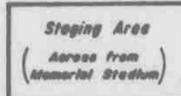
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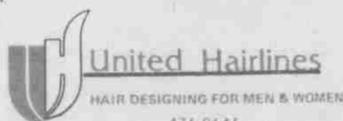


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