

## Paper Trails

By Carrie Rengers

# Phil Wyrick on the campaign trail

It was Sunday evening a week ago when Nate and Hope Coulter were across the street from their Hillcrest home having dinner with friends, and Nate took one of his children back to the baby sitter at his house.

"Some state senator came by to see you," the baby sitter said. Coulter, a former Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor, figured it was a legislative friend from out of town.

Once back across the street at dinner, the doorbell rang. In walked Republican state Sen. Phil Wyrick.

Coulter, who is planning a possible bid for attorney general, figured Wyrick must already be out campaigning.

"He wouldn't go door to door in Hillcrest at 8:30 on a Sunday night if he weren't campaigning for something in 1998," Coulter says.

"In the interest of being polite, we refrained from asking him if he was running for Congress."

The family dog wasn't as polite. He sniffed all around Wyrick.

"I know he can tell he's sniffing a Republican here," Wyrick said.

Wyrick says many people were confused upon finding him at their doorstep.

"A lot of them said, 'Well, wait a minute. When's the election?' I said, 'No, there's no election.'"

Door-to-door visiting is how Wyrick likes to keep in touch with his constituents.



State Sen. Phil Wyrick is likely to talk — and walk — all the way to the 1998 elections.

But yes, Wyrick admits, it's a form of early campaigning as well.

"Well, I mean, you know, sure," Wyrick says. "Anytime you're serving in public office there's always another election."

But Wyrick isn't firm on what that next election might be. His current plans are for another state Senate bid, but he won't rule out a race for Congress.

"You never know what's going to happen," Wyrick says.

## Hot hot hot

It was cool and comfortable Wednesday night, but that's not how anyone inside Barton Coliseum felt during performances by country stars Alan Jackson and LeAnn Rimes.

"You got it heated up in here," a glistering Jackson yelled to the crowd. "It's ready to go, just the way we like it."

But fans don't like it when concert after concert and event after event at the coliseum is marred by the temperature.

"The air-conditioning system is very old," says Jim Pledger, the general manager and executive vice president of the Arkansas State Fair & Livestock Show Association. The Legislature has appropriated \$400,000 for improvements to the system next year, but Pledger says what's really needed is a new \$2.5 million system.

That's how much has been put into the coliseum recently for a new tile floor, a new roof and other remodeling. Pledger isn't sure when he'll be able to replace the system, which is more than two decades old, but he doesn't think even that will entirely solve the problem.

When road crews set up for a concert or event, a huge overhead door is open all day long.

"You run the system all day, but you're losing most of what you're doing," Pledger says.

There's the same problem in the winter with the heating system. People on the floor of the coliseum freeze because the door is open, and people in the seats near the rafters swelter.

"I just don't know how you solve that," Pledger says.

## \* Marlboro Man hits the road

Have you noticed anyone missing this year at Ray Winder Field?

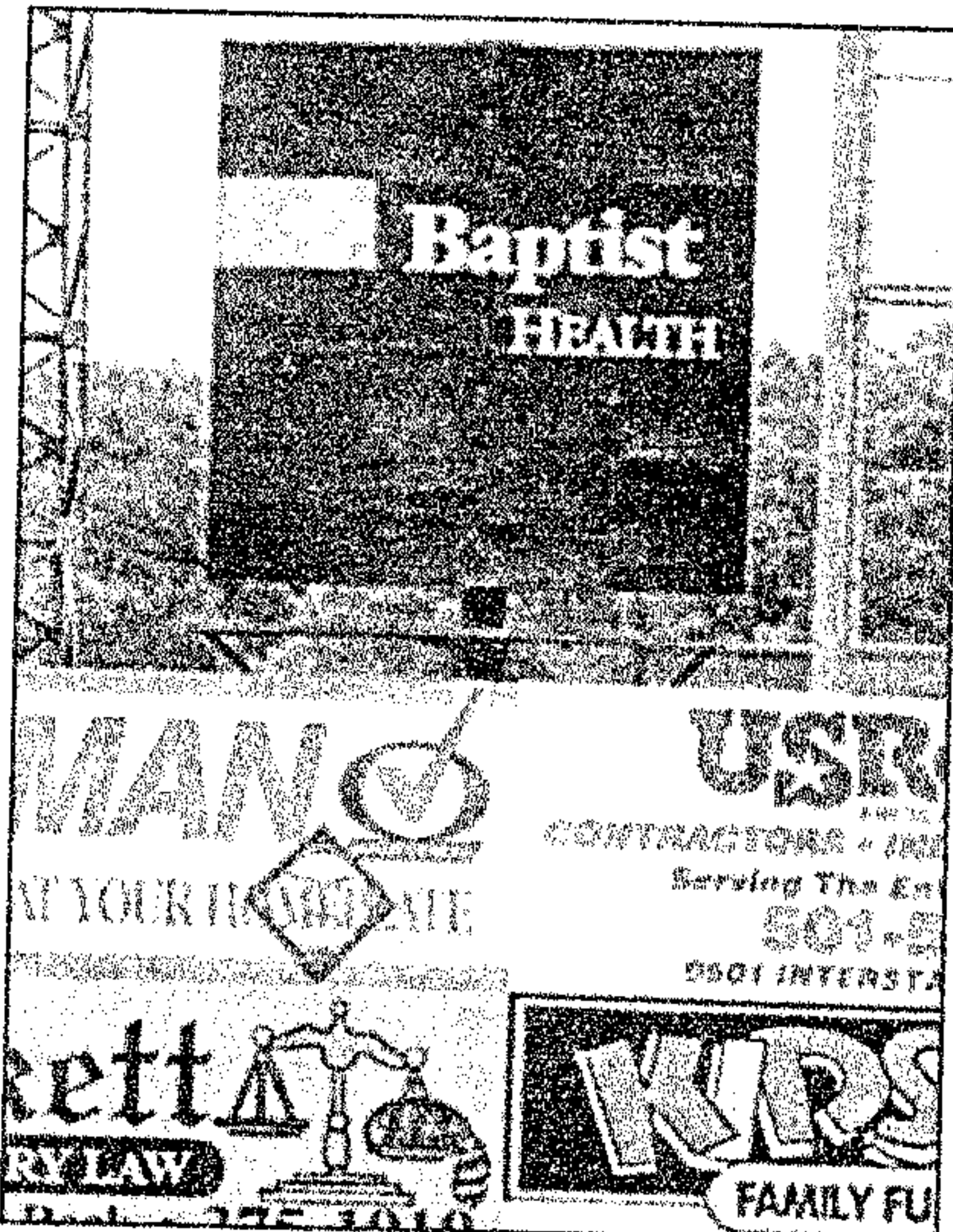
The Marlboro Man is gone.

The giant red sign was a fixture at the ballpark for 25 years, but the Philip Morris Co. chose not to renew its lease.

"I think because they didn't want the hassle," says Bill Valentine, Arkansas Travelers general manager, of the controversy over the sign.

David Bourne, director of the Preventive Health Division at the state Department of Health, lobbied Valentine for several years to remove the sign. He even offered to match the \$4,000 that the cigarette maker paid for the sign to replace it with a billboard promoting healthy habits.

"This guy was just looking for ways to try to embarrass us," Valentine says. "Why spend money just to be harassed?"



A sign for Baptist Health moved into the Marlboro Man's home of 25 years.

Bourne got his wish without spending anything. Baptist Health now has the space.

"I think that's wonderful," says Bourne, who gives credit to Valentine "for being aware of how the community feels about tobacco."

"It's really good when kids can go out and watch the Travelers and not have to see the Marlboro Man."

## The enlightened Fayetteville

The May-June issue of the *Utne Reader* picks the top 10 most enlightened cities in the United States and Canada, along with the most enlightened city in each of the 50 states and Canada's 10 provinces.

Arkansas didn't have an entry in the top 10, but Fayetteville was hailed as the best in the state for qualities that don't usually make the tabulations of best places to live.

Forget such things as hot job markets, booming real estate and low taxes. "Cities can rank quite high in these categories and still be dreary, soulless places," the magazine says.

"That's why we set out to find towns that are making a special effort to foster connectedness and contentment among all the people who live in them."

Fayetteville makes the list for having at least one environmentally concerned city councilman and a Danish-style ecovillage in the works.

Enlightened cities close to Arkansas include Chattanooga, the Tennessee town that ranks No. 10 as a model of sustainable community development; Austin, the liberal bastion of Texas; Lafayette, the Cajun capital of Louisiana; Norman, the big green spot in Oklahoma; Columbia, the cultural capital of Missouri; and Oxford, which lends an artistic flair to Mississippi.

## HOT TIP? QUIRKY STORY? LIVELY TALE?

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