

Past Perspectives September 2017

Phillips Classic Golf Tournaments

From 1986 through 1993, Bella Vista had some big name celebrities coming here to play golf and other sports every year. They came to raise money for cancer in the Pro-Celebrity Phillips Charity Classic, started in 1986 by John Phillips, owner of the Phillips Food Center in Bella Vista, with Kirk Dupps serving as Classic Chairman.

Over the years, there were many celebrities who participated, including astronaut Neil Armstrong, singers Pat Boone, Charley Pride, Roy Clark, and Jimmy Dean, fitness king Jack LaLanne, baseball stars Mickey Mantle, Whitey Herzog, Ernie Banks, and Stan Musial, football stars Terry Bradshaw and Lawrence Taylor, movie and TV stars Fess Parker, Leslie Nielsen, Barney Miller star Hal Linden, Wyatt Earp star Hugh O'Brien, Hill Street Blues star Dennis Franz, Dallas star Patrick Duffy, and Our Gang star Spanky McFarland. Other participants included pro fishermen, basketball players and golfers, including Sam Snead, Raymond Floyd, and Lee Trevino.

The Phillips Company that sponsored the Classic was started by John Phillips' father, Harlon Phillips, as a small family-operated store in Rogers in 1946, with a store in Bentonville added in 1950. Their store in Bella Vista was opened in July 1979.

In 1981, the Phillips Company was purchased by Walton Enterprises, and then by Walmart Stores in 1991.

In 1994, Harps Food Centers, which had been started by Harvard and Floy Harp in 1930 in Springdale, purchased the three Phillips stores, including the one in Bella Vista.

John Phillips then went on to found Marathon Global in 1995, a consumer product consulting, sales and marketing company, located in Rogers.

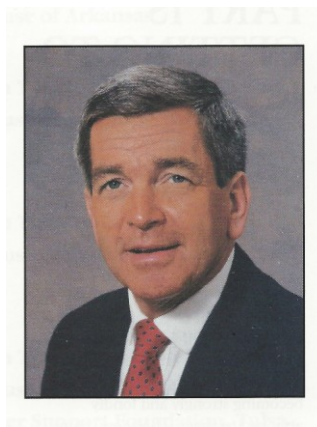
The Weekly Vista of June 22, 1994, said, "The first Classic was a combination golf tournament and backyard barbecue attended largely by the suppliers of the Phillips Food Stores, and raised \$20,000." Golf was played at the Country Club course and the BBQ was held at the Phillips' home. Tennis matches were also

held. The money raised went to the NWA Radiation Institute (NARTI). Other sports were eventually added, including fishing, archery and skeet shooting. Growth over the years resulted in the 1993 event attracting 150 celebrities and more than 100 corporate sponsors, for the benefit of ten cancer-related charities.

More than 1200 volunteers helped out over the years. The July 22, 1987, Weekly Vista reported that the VFW spruced up the grounds, the Crime Watch members handled parking, the Men's Golf Association volunteered to marshal play, the Women's Golf Association sold concessions, the Bella Vista Sheriff's Division directed traffic, individuals volunteered to drive celebrities to and from the Fayetteville airport and around the village, and the Tennis Association helped judge matches.

By the time the last Phillips Classic tournament ended in 1993, \$4.25 million had been raised for cancer treatment, care and research. After John Phillips announced that was the last of his tournaments, volunteers then started the Cancer Challenge in 1994 which continues to this day every year in Bella Vista.

All photos from the Bella Vista Historical Museum files:



Picture 1: John Phillips, founder and chairman of the Phillips Classic cancer fund raiser which ran from 1986 to 1993.





Whitey Herzog's final season as manager of the St. Louis Cardinals was in 1990 and he participated in the Phillips Classic in 1991.



Singer Pat Boone was featured in the Weekly Vista of June 26, 1991, with the caption, "Pat Boone, who has become a symbol of Phillips Classic, entertains the crowd at a special party for the hundreds of volunteers who made this year's event possible."



*The Phillips Pro-Celebrity
Charity Classic*

THIS YEAR'S GOAL FOR
BELLA VISTA VILLAGE Hosts

PHILLIPS
Charity Classic


**1
9
9
3** *Miracle*
MILLION

*June 10 - 14, 1993
Bella Vista, Arkansas*

**YOU
CAN BE
PART
OF IT**

*Join us in Bella Vista
for a five day
golf, tennis and fishing
tournament
featuring many of your
favorite celebrities.
The fun starts June 10th!*



A
Supplement
to
The **Vista** Weekly

Wednesday, June 9, 1993

The June 9, 1993, edition of the Weekly Vista had a entire section devoted to the "Miracle Million" Phillips Charity Classic.