Mayor's Journal:
November 4-December 4

Seasons greetings to you all! Much has happened since I last wrote…many, many wonderful things. I hope you all are doing well and preparing for our Holiday Season with jovial spirits.

I chaired another Intergovernmental Advisory Council meetings November 3-5 in Washington DC. Some of our current topics are VoIP, Broadband over Powerline, Emergency Advisory Services, and several other interesting topics that relate to municipalities. I have an extremely dedicated committee, which makes my job as chair much easier.

On Sunday, November 7, I attended Silent Sunday which benefits the Arkansas School for the Deaf. I appreciate the participating restaurants for helping out with this outstanding event. Later that afternoon, I attended a reception honoring Skip Rutherford for his leadership with the Clinton Presidential Foundation. Curran Hall was packed as Skip was surprised with a new coffee named for him at Andina's and a plaque in his honor in the River Market. Also announced that afternoon was the establishment of a Skip Rutherford scholarship which will be given each year to a graduate of either Batesville High School (his alma mater) or Little Rock Central. Many of Skip's friends contributed money to create this scholarship endowment.

On November 8, I attended the Bond Progress Committee meeting at the Neighborhood Resource Center. I am proud of the work this committee is doing for the City…I also want to thank Paula Patterson for coordinating the meetings and the information for this committee.

Tuesday, November 9 was full of meetings and press events. I had the honor of attending the groundbreaking for the new Our House facility on Roosevelt Road. This will be a spectacular building to help house more homeless families. Joe Flaherty has done a fine job for the past seventeen years helping the homeless. He is retiring soon. I wish him Godspeed as he enjoys his retirement.

One of the more enjoyable events on Tuesday was speaking to a Jefferson Elementary 3rd grade class. It always inspires and invigorates me to be around schoolchildren. Adults could take a cue from their fresh, innovative ways of thinking. Thanks to Karen McAtee for inviting me.

Prior to the November 9 City Board agenda meeting, I had the distinct pleasure of speaking at the dedication of the City Blocks. Thousands of ceramic tiles were painted by students, senior citizens, and others. These have been placed underneath the Interstate 30 overpass at President Clinton Avenue. My thanks to the Parks & Recreation Department for spearheading this effort. I also appreciate CDI Construction for their donation which helped make this project possible.

After the agenda meeting at City Hall, I met the President of the American Healthcare Association and his colleagues for a late dinner. We discussed the upcoming conference in Little Rock.

The remainder of the week consisted of receptions, various meetings and press events. I want to mention two special events that week. I was privileged to join Governor Mike Huckabee in awarding $50,000 in musical instruments from Comcast to the Little Rock School District and its superintendent Dr. Roy Brooks. Since 2002, Comcast has joined with VH1 Save the Music Foundation and donated $225,000 worth of musical instruments, which have been provided to nine music programs in the LRSD. What a fabulous partner Comcast is with our community. My thanks to Ronnie Colvin and Mike Wilson of Comcast. Through their efforts, Little Rock benefits from Comcast's support of our schools, our city and our citizens.

The other special event I want to mention is the farewell reception for David Yarberry. David is leaving the City of Little Rock after many years of dedicated service as the Administrative Services Manager for the Police Department. David has been a joy to work with, he will be missed greatly. Though he is joining the private sector, I am certain we will see him around City Hall from time to time.

The week of November 15-19 was, as they say, one for the history books with the opening of the William J. Clinton Presidential Center and Park. There were so many activities this week from press conferences and media interviews to luncheons to receptions to the actual opening itself.
Among the highlights of the week for me were:

- President Clinton swearing in the first corps members for City Year Little Rock
- The International Fashion Show sponsored by Little Rock's Sister Cities Commission
- The annual meeting of the Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce, which featured President Clinton as the keynote speaker. I also want to congratulate Mike Coulson for his leadership as Chairman of the Chamber this past year. His term ended at the luncheon.
- A tribute to 100 African Americans who have influenced President Clinton. This reception was a special evening, with many of the honorees in attendance. It was made even more special by concluding remarks from President Clinton and Rev. Jesse Jackson.
- The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra was joined by the First Lady of Soul, Aretha Franklin. Ms. Franklin put on an outstanding show and was backed up by the fine musicians from our symphony. It was my pleasure to present Ms. Franklin with a key to the city.
- Senator John Glenn was a guest of the Museum of Discovery to launch their "Space and the Presidency" exhibit. I had the honor of introducing Senator Glenn at a press conference. My thanks to Nan Selz and Marge & Tom Scheuck for making Senator Glenn's appearance possible.

- The five living First Ladies of Arkansas gathered for a luncheon to raise money for the Governor's Mansion. It was quite an extraordinary treat to see Betty Bumpers, Barbara Pryor, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, Gay White, and Janet Huckabee all on one stage.
- The Arkansas Arts Center created a one-of-a-kind exhibit collecting art that has hung in the White House since President Kennedy's term. The Arts Center staff had to work with numerous museums to create this exhibit, but it was worth their efforts.
- The actual dedication ceremony itself was memorable. Though the weather was rainy and cold, it was still an exceptional day. The music was stirring and the remarks were inspiring. It was great to see a day where politics took a back burner and the institution of the Presidency was honored. I don't think I'll ever forget the sight of four United States Presidents walking together in Little Rock.

I am so privileged to have been your mayor during this phenomenal time in Little Rock's history. The Clinton Presidential Center will have a tremendous impact on our City for years to come. Already, over 25,000 visitors from across Arkansas, the U.S. and the world already have come to see it. We played host to world leaders, stars of music and motion pictures, artists, musicians, writers, politicians and media. Each one I talked to complimented the City. Many who had been here before could not believe the transformation that had taken place over the past 10-15 years. I cannot tell you how exciting it is for me to have been a part of this development. I can sum up the week in one word: AWESOME!

I commend all the City staff involved in the planning, the dedication itself, and the necessary work after the opening. I want to thank those who worked tirelessly to make certain that Little Rock was ready. Because of the efforts of our City Manager and City staff, Little Rock was not only prepared for the thousands of visitors, but exceeded the expectations of those visitors. I am so proud of each of you!

The following week of November 22-26 was a much slower week, thankfully. I started it by participating in the grand-opening of the newly renovated Hilton Hotel on University. The Belz Group has done an outstanding job with this hotel.

I had my monthly meeting at Curran Hall with citizens and business representative from the downtown area. These meetings are important because they foster a spirit of a cooperation between City Hall and the citizens.

Ward 1 Director Johnnie Pugh, City Manager Bruce Moore and I had the opportunity to visit with a citizen at her home off 21st Street early Tuesday morning. She had several safety concerns and I believe we were able to address each of them promptly. Later in the morning, I taped a show on Arkansas Alive with Pastor Happy Caldwell. We discussed Little Rock's decreasing crime rate over the past ten years…it was a joy to visit with him. I finished my business for the day with our normal Tuesday evening board meeting.

I had a wonderful Thanksgiving with my wife's family this year. As usual, I ate too much, too many times. It is so great to be around loved ones during special times of the year and I am so thankful for my incredible family; I am also thankful to be your Mayor and I am thankful for the over 2000 City staff we have working to make our community a better place to live.

I was in Indianapolis for the National League of Cities conference from November 30 until December 4. I enjoyed the chance to learn and bring new ideas for the City of Little Rock. It is always good to see areas where Little Rock exceeds national standards (and there are many) and to learn about ways we can improve.

I concluded the week by attending the LeAnn Rimes concert with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra. I've been a fan of hers for several years. It was a pleasure to get the holiday season started by hearing her sing wonderful music backed by the Symphony musicians. It was a privilege to get to meet her at the concert and at a post-concert reception.

Until next time, have a blessed Holiday Season!