

# MEMPHEN <sup>the</sup> USUAL PO Box MEMPHIS, TN<sub>x</sub>

MEMPHEN 283, double naught-zero THE USUAL -- Special Pemmi-con issue. This will be distributed at that illustrious con. Mailing address - 141 Stonehaven Circle, Jackson, TN 38305 (a distant suburb of Memphis, TN) (the address is one door over from Carl Perkins House!). If by some odd chance you might want a copy mailed to you, THE USUAL is fine - a request for it, a stamp (odd stamps is best) and a copy will be sent to you by special courier employed by the Federal Government of most nations. I am glad to trade with other printzines so send them my way! Email - gbridgesian@gmail.com

With regard to the title, Memphen was the clubzine of the Memphis SF Association until it became moribund after years of my flogging the dead beast that the club really was by the end- this was about the time my wife got cancer. She's fine now so am going back to doing this as a perzine with a little help from others at time.

I doubt anyone who gets this has the vaguest memory of my time in general fandom before. Perhaps Guy Lillian III, maybe Andy Porter of SF Chronicle (who always said "Hi, Greg!", every time I saw him in hucksters rooms). Mike Glycer might have a dim memory of the guy who hello to him at an airport while he was reading a Western novel as we were waiting for our respective connections - he for his one way, and our's the other.

I have a lot of material for a full length genzine/perzine which I will put out at some point. I don't have a mailing list anymore but will cobble together in the not too distant future (fantext shoemaker that I am).

You might wonder about the Title/Cover colophon. Well, you might just as I found it curious when I received as a LOC years ago. This came just as I ceased pubbing this pub (for some reason I want to say "Bub!"), I received the very odd bit of mail. The address is as you see it (but with the now dead letter mail box number for this Memphen (deleted as you can deduce).

Inside the envelope was a WISH YOU ARE WELL card filled with a detritus of bits of paper, no written note. There was a return address to a Kendal at a Hindu temple in Portland, OR or a supposed Cafe there. That temple still exists but not at that address. I will likely send a copy to the addresses I found just to see what happens.

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## WORLDCON MEMPHIS

Curiously, Memphis was the center of a fannish controversy recently which Memphis fans had nothing to do with it.

### A BIT ABOUT MEMPHIS FANDOM

Fandom in Memphis was spotty before about 1970. There were a few who were active in the 1930's up to 1942. There was even a bit of a controversy regarding Memphis fans, according to Harry Warner, Jr., in that about 1940, some Memphis fans formed a rocket club then had one of the rockets they were launching explode, blinding one of them temporarily which shut down that Memphis fan group according to Warner. Then conscription for WWII dispersed the group as they went off to war.

There were those IN Memphis that read the prozines as there were newstands the city going back to the beginnings of pulp magazines. Burke's Bookstore in Memphis started in 1875 which from the history I have seen of that store, at one time sold magazines as well as 'sundries'. Jerry Pournelle who grew up in Memphis told me he bought his prozines at one on N. Parkway at one next to a trolley stop, he left Memphis to go to

college (University of Washington for some odd reason, but then his Dad was some kind of Radio personality at a time when that mattered before television took off in the 1950's so perhaps that's why).

I started reading SF about 1962 when the Heinlein books came out in paperbacks. As I went to the movies every weekend at the marquee theaters in downtown Memphis, I always went by the newstands there. When I had the money I bought Analog, Amazing, etc. So for a long time I had this fantasy of there having been other fans in Memphis. Who was buying all those SF mags?

At some point I learned of fanzines but didn't know of any other fans in Memphis until I joined NFFF in the mid-60's. There I found the lone listing of a member in Memphis - Dr. Darrell C. Richardson! Being the 'brave' person I am (NOT!), I looked him up in the phone book and called him. This would have been about 1968. After that Dr. Richardson (I never called him anything else) and I had a desultory intermittent interaction when I would call now and again to talk about NFFF and SF.

Then in 1969 or so, he invited me to his home. I have to say it was overwhelming! He had one of the world's biggest collections of E. R. Burroughs as well as other SF but also mucho Max Brand in his five bedroom house on N. Stonewall. It took us a couple of hours to just walk through as he showed me all of his collection on what seemed to be endless bookcases with SF art hanging on every surface imaginable. My oo to be my very good friend Claude Saxon, Jr. was there already for the tour. I later said about Claude he was always my biggest friend (at 6'3", 400lbs that had a double meaning - don't think you could ever find a nicer, sweeter person than Claude).

Not too long after that, I got a typed with a typewriter postcard from Claude, inviting me to a gathering at Dr. Richardsons to start an SF club. He typed on his typewrite everyone of them for all those on the list!

That was the beginning of the what soon became the Midsouth Fantasy Association (Midsouth because at that meeting were fans from Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee). At some point in the 1980's many in the club voted to change the name to Memphis Science Fiction Association.

Tom Foster did the next issue of the newsletter (#2). This had a membership list on that attached. We began to have regular meeting about that time. Tom Foster was already an accomplished Fan Artist being in several fanzines (oddly enough, mostly out of Minneapolis). We quickly put together a fanzine 'diversity 1'.

Also, at the gatherings we had, we discussed doing a convention of some sort but no one stepped up for that until 1977 when P.L.Caruthers, Stvn Carlberg and Don Markstein set up *Stvn and Don's Memphis Halfacon* which we all worked on. In those discussions, a Memphis Worldcon would be brought up with all of us laughing as a bit of a joke. Most of us active in the group at the time, had been to worldcons (this being just a year or two after the 1969 Saint Louiscon Worldcon). Having seen the scale of one of those we all again laughed then moved on. Our handfull of fans put on a con for thousands! Hah!

Later I was the mover for the club. As it kept being brought up about a Memphis Worldcon (ahh, the folly of youth), I began to scope out the facilities for having one. My various efforts found Memphis to be lacking in enough hotel space and rooms.

The reason we thought there was some possibility of a Worldcon was that the city had built a cavernous convention facility close to the river in the downtown. The thing was there were NO hotels anywhere close to this boondoggle. And none for years and years after that. So there was the facility but no way to host enough people to fill it.

The Peabody Hotel is in downtown Memphis but at the far end of what was Main Street (now turned into a

pedestrian mall). Lets say a mile away. Having talked to the Convention Coordinator there, the costs would be prohibitive for the meeting space and the room rates were exorbitant as far as fan budgets go.

So the idea of a Memphis Worldcon percolated around among the few fans that there were in Memphis in the '70', 80's and 90'. Bit by bit this hotel and that hotel would go up downtown.

By the '80's with the boondoggle convention center sitting there, by now for decades, the city started a Memphis Visitors and Convention Bureau. This was triggered by Elvis Presley's death and the crowds that began to show up in Memphis to commemorate/memorialize him on his birthday and the day of his death. They needed somewhere to stay so things began to look up for perhaps a Memphis Worldcon as one hotel then another were built.

I began to get the Visitor's and Convention Bureau's list of hotels which had capacity, meeting space, etc. So I'd look at that each year it came out. Sometime in the early 2000s, it was perhaps getting to be a possibility that there were enough rooms and meeting space if one just looked at the numbers. First there was a Hotel built across from the Convention Center - 300 rooms. Then that was enlarged to some 500 rooms.

Since then there have been piecemeal additions of other hotels. One problem is that for some reason, on choice locations where a large hotel might have been built close to the convention center, investors for some reason would build 'boutique' motels - 30-40 rooms! By this time Memphis has had some tourism occurring. There are music festivals, BBQ festivals, etc., all downtown. Another draw is just the Mississippi River itself which in the Spring stretches from the cobblestone riverfront westward into Arkansas as far as the eye can see when it is floodtide. At that time you will often see huge trees drifting along. A good reason not to water ski on the River!

Memphis does have some other attractions besides the River. Memphis has a world class Zoo, the Pink Palace Museum has great exhibits (e.g. a mock-up of the world's first modern super market (which was in Memphis (by the man who built the Pink Palace as his mansion)). In the downtown or actually across the old mouth of the Wolf River is what is known as MUD ISLAND. It has interesting things besides an outstanding view of the river. Among those is a mockup of an American Civil War Ironclad - canons and all which you can walk through plus an inch to the mile concrete map of the Mississippi from its beginnings to the mouth south of New Orleans. It has water flowing through it so on hot summer days you can dip a toe or a foot into that.

The Wolf River I mentioned had as its native American name, the Nashoba. A very early Free Love community which was in Memphis was named that which besides its astounding premise (for the 1820's) was that it was freeing blacks from servitude then training for live outside that servitude. You can imagine how that went - Free Love and freed black slaves living together?!!!

So yes, I guess I have established that Memphis Fans HAVE considered worldcons. The facilities are there - not perhaps in the most usable arrangements we had to admit. Have to admit that we have been doing SF conventions in Memphis for 45 years now so know the 'terrain' so to speak.

At some point word got back to us that there was someone planning a Worldcon in Memphis. Have to say this was met with shock and disbelief by those who actually put on SF cons in Memphis. Was it the other vaguely related cons - the Furry con? The Fantasy con (which neer has SF writer or artist guests)? The Anime Cons?

No, it was none of those who are mostly clueless with regard to SF writers, etc.

I rely on Memphis own Intrepid Fan reporter who was on the scene when it was announced in Dublin, Ireland - Jane Venters-Dyke.

Using her details as she gave me, it goes like this. Jane saw a flyer for a room party announcing a Bid from Memphis for a Worldcon! Umm, Memphis, TX, perhaps? No, Memphis, TN, her home town (where she has been the Artshow Director for more years than I can remember). Her reaction was "WHAT?!!!" (my own reaction would have been less printable).

SO this was a party not to miss. She approached those setting up for the bid. She introduced herself, they said yes, they were bidding for a Memphis, TN Worldcon bid, yes. they had no idea there was an SF con in Memphis (which as it happens had attendance at the time of around 2000+). They seemed to think that was superfluous.

There were several reasons they chose Memphis. First, they felt there needed to be a bid other than Chengdu. They looked at states that did not have laws restricting LGBTQ rights (at least not yet for TN, I might add). Tennessee popped up. Likely Nashville's booming downtown convention business dissuaded them from that area.

Ah, Memphis - plenty of convention space, motel rooms, etc. -BINGO! We assume that they talked to the Memphis Convention and Visitors Bureau, who I can be sure said "At convention of thousands?!! Oh, bring it on!".

So running with that, not thinking "Hey, is there already a fan group in Memphis that might want to help out?", they started their WORLDCON MEMPHIS Bid.

I am not one to follow all the ins and outs of Worldcon bids but there seemed to have been other problems, as seen by those in the know, about Worldcon bidding. The Worldcon Memphis bid committee seemed a bit sparse, for one thing.

For that reason, Winnipeg got in the game. There was a bit of reluctance on many SF fans part with regard to traveling to China plus with Worldcon Memphis bid a bit thin on the ground, they threw Winnipeg twirly topped fan beanie in the ring.

Winnipeg's bid took off. Their bid had real strength to it, as a real competitor to Chengdu. Eventually in October 2021, the Worldcon Memphis bidders withdrew their bid, not having enough support.

Then what happened it seems Chengdu seeing real competition 'turned on the spigot', you might say. A flood of new memberships came in from China. This insured that Chengdu won the bid for Worldcon 81.

Winnipeg, Canada got the NASFic, calling it Pemmi-con. What one needs to keep in mind an autocratic government does not play fair - ever. My wife and I have been to China twice - adopting two lovely kids. We loved China but when you see People's Army guarding buildings everywhere carrying their version of the Kalashnikov, that got my eye.

So, as a Memphis SF fan, I have to say I felt there was more than a bit of hubris in planning a convention in a city you have never been to (I'm guessing) or seeming to not make any effort to research if there were any SF Fan groups running conventions in that town, such as Midsouthcon, so as to get their support. And, yes, it was our consensus from the Midsouthcon ConComm we would likely support Worldcon Memphis anyway but with reservations. With hundreds of volunteers, we felt it was what we had to do.