

MCITY CENTER

VOLUME II, NUMBER 16
APRIL 24, 1975

FRONTIER EXPERIMENT:

DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS REFLECT

*Written by June Hicks
Photographs by Alan Copeland*

ON CITY LIFE IN MEMPHIS

LOWENSTEIN TOWER

I was early for my first interview; as I waited for the Savarins, I could feel the slight movement of the small houseboat they use for an office. When they arrived, Marti explained that they had just been watching the stock market. "The city's exciting," Paul added. Paul and Marti Savarin, who coordinate activities for the Memphis Queen, Memphis Showboat, and Belle Carol river boat rides, believe firmly in downtown, saying it "will be the renaissance of Memphis."

The Savarins are residents of Lowenstein Tower, and as Paul explained, "decided in two minutes to live there when we saw the view." Originally waterfront people (she's from Seattle, he's from Maine), they say that the river should be the front door to Memphis. Right now it's the back door.

Citing good police and fire protection, the civic center, convention center and auditorium, they said the potential of downtown Memphis made them fall in love with it. They spoke, however, of some factors which slowed down its growth: "People have been forced to the outskirts because of no housing. Half of the people fighting traffic to get to work would live closer to work if they had a place to live." Retail merchandise and restaurants are other areas which have been neglected: "There's a good money market in young people if there's a place to go."

The Savarins haven't found any problems as far as safety goes and say they often walk around

downtown at night. Marti commented that it was "just plain healthy to be able to walk to church, the grocery, the bank, and to a restaurant."

Paul expressed a great deal of optimism when asked if he thought one could expect the revitalization of downtown Memphis. "Yes, it's gonna happen. Economically we're in a better position to grow than anyone. Why, Lowenstein Tower is full. And we have one of the best Chambers of Commerce I know of. Right now, however, it's difficult to conceive of anything — what with dirty streets and empty stores. These are a by-product of chasing money people away. Many are suffering right now from growing pains," he said. "What's needed is



mainly new residents." He said that tourists stay at the center of the city when they come to Memphis and that the river should be the first attraction. Commenting on the Beale St. project, he said, "Don't promote what once was there, but what is here now. We have so much living history."

The Savarins' prediction: "Within ten years we'll see a completely new Memphis."

Another resident of Lowenstein Tower, Alice Ann Reid, a Juvenile Probation Officer for the Tennessee Department of Corrections, also found the riverview to be a big attraction to downtown living. She said, however, that most of her reasons for living downtown were practical ones. She enjoys going home for lunch and getting home at 4:35 in the evening. Ms. Reid said that she can walk to work and to church, but that she does not do her shopping downtown: the grocery stores are expensive and limited, and the clothes stores close at 5:30, besides being limited in merchandise. "I'd like to see people not being afraid to come down here. I don't get out on the street. There's nothing to be out there for. When I am out at 10 or 11, I walk a little quicker — it's so deserted."

Unlike those who feel downtown shopping leaves something to be desired, Lois Lucento, also a resident of Lowenstein Tower, has found that the department stores downtown have more of a selection than the ones out east. She also finds that drugstores and dime stores meet her needs.

"The only thing I don't like is there's nothing to do at night, ...no place to eat without getting in your car. I like living close to the Auditorium and Cook Convention Center, ...but I miss the movies and restaurants. My daughter and I walk to church and just about everywhere; she makes me walk through the parks."

Ms. Lucento said that she likes the atmosphere of the city, but that at night it was desolate: "If others are with us, we go places. You just don't feel right on a deserted street at night." She said, however, that she had never seen or heard of anything which might give her cause to be afraid to be out on the street at night.

"I've lived in condominiums, townhouses, hotels—you name it—and I like Lowenstein Tower better than any place I've been. It's fantastic." Ms. Lou Hamilin, who made the decision to sell her East Memphis home and move downtown when her husband died, said, "To me it's ideal." A resident of the Towers for four months (she was at the Peabody before that), she said that she came down-

town because she doesn't drive; downtown one can walk out the front door and go just about any where. "You can buy anything you need down here, including groceries." When asked about security, she explained, "I wouldn't go out by myself here at 12, but neither would I on Walnut Grove. I'm not afraid at all."

Ms. Hamlin had high regard for her neighbors, apparently finding it easy to make friends in the building. She especially likes to go to dinner with her friends at the Top of the Hundred. "I think everybody that can is making a mistake not to come down here!"



Looking from Lowenstein Tower to the Edison Park Complex (and close-up).



EDISON PARK

The Edison Park Apartments, located downtown on a 15.9 acre landscaped park rising above Danny Thomas Boulevard, are part of a 1969 project sponsored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development called Operation Breakthrough. Edison Park is one of nine prototype demonstration sites located in various cities, such as Indianapolis, Jersey City, Macon, Ga., Sacramento, Seattle, and St. Louis.

Earl Blomquist, the administrator of the complex, said that Edison Park was the "only really successful one of the experiments." He explained that the Federal government subsidized the building of this complex, and the others like it, and is gradually being paid back for it. When that happens it is likely UT will "inherit" Edison Park.

Various structural designs are available at the Park, including garden apartments, townhouses, and a highrise apartment building. Recreational facilities are available for all ages, including basketball and volley ball courts, shuffleboard, and a putting green for adults; sand, slides, and a teeter-totter for children. A cluster of pavillions house a laundry room, a game room complete with pool tables, pin ball machines and a juke box, and a room which will soon accommodate a cooperative child care program. All of these facilities are arranged attractively on the central deck area, which affords access to pedestrian bridges crossing major thoroughfares.

Although the highrise is kept locked 24 hours a day, those who live in the other apartments do not enjoy such security. Carol Kirkland, who lives at Edison Park because it is convenient for her husband Ron, a medical student, does not plan on making downtown living a practice. "A lot of girls around here are petrified," she said. She expressed concern over the number of house and car break-ins, and said that even her husband does not walk to school at night.

As far as entertainment goes, Carol said that they were closer to places like Overton Square and the Coliseum than many of her friends in East Memphis. Finding a place to eat is not a problem either, she said, but shopping is. She prefers to go elsewhere to shop for a couple of reasons: she doesn't feel safe downtown, and finds it difficult to cash checks. Besides the low rent at Edison Park, Carol likes having a lot of children for her young son to play with in the deck area.

DURATION PRE-SCHOOL SPRING ART SHOW

The Mother's Club of Duration Pre-school for Developmentally Delayed Children will hold their eighth annual spring art show and sale on Saturday, May 3 (10 a.m.—5 p.m.) and Sunday, May 4 (Noon—5 p.m.). Local professional and amateur artists will exhibit and sell their work at 1962 Peabody, with designated portion of each sale going to the school. The public is invited to attend; donations are \$1.00 for adults, free for children under 12. All proceeds will be used to buy physical therapy for the school.

CENTER CITY:

Let me congratulate...Center City, in particular, on having generated public dialogue on many important issues....

I think the crux of the issue to which Mr. Ledbetter responds is that without people downtowns will tend to decay and die. Whether M.H.A. pricing of land has contributed to the decay diverts our attention from this central fact.

A downtown with almost exclusively a daytime population is far different, in terms of amenities and activities, than a downtown with also a strong residential population. The cases of Mid-town and Wall St. in Manhattan illustrate the point.

To a larger degree than is generally considered, the decline of many retail activities in downtown Memphis is the result of the loss of a strong residential population. The question then is, "Can our downtown ever provide again the full range of cultural, shopping and other facilities it once did, unless the residential population is restored?" I don't think so.

Thus, attractive residential development in and adjacent to downtown should be a matter of first priority to all of us who wish a vibrant, attractive and rewarding downtown for Memphis.

JOHN GIBSON

**DEPARTMENT OF URBAN &
REGIONAL PLANNING**

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

**If the reader would like to subscribe to
CENTER CITY, please fill out this card
and mail it to:**

**CENTER CITY
First Presbyterian Church
166 Poplar Avenue
Memphis, Tennessee 38103**

NAME _____

ORGANIZATION _____

ADDRESS _____

ZIP _____

earthly delights

DOWNTOWN ART EXHIBITS

Sterick Building (Lobby)

April – Paintings by Ms. Dorothy Smartt*

National Bank of Commerce (Lobby)

April – Bert Wade's Rare Collection of
Photographs of early Memphis*

FILM

Southwestern

April 30 – "Citizen Kane"

UT-Student Alumni Center

May 2 – "Shadows of a Forgotten
Ancestor" & "Morgan"

Peabody Library

May 2 – "Braverman's Condensed
Cream of Beatles," "Special
Tour," "Serpent," "Help! My
Snowman's Burning Down"*

Brooks Art Gallery

May 4 – "W.C. Fields Festival"*

MUSIC

Auditorium Music Hall

April 26-27 – Van Cliburn, pianist –
Memphis Symphony Orchestra

Beethoven Club

April 27 – Recital – Morris Ungren, Bass
Baritone*

Harris Music Auditorium

April 29 – MSU Orchestra and Chorale –
Robert Griffith, conductor*

Harris Music Auditorium

May 3 – Faculty Chamber Orchestra*

*Free

Announcements

CENTER CITY TREATS EXPLORERS

The winners of the third "Exploring Downtown" contest were: Mrs. George Hoogasian (five lunches); Anola B. Crunk (three lunches); and David Hutchinson, Mark Boggs and Martha Jane Avery (one lunch each). These explorers correctly identified the rendering and four photographs in the March 27th issue as: (1) 433 Madison Ave. (2) King Cotton Hotel, Front at Jefferson (3) 88 S. Main St. (4) 33 S. Front and (5) 99-101-103 S. Front St.

PANEL TO DISCUSS MODEL U.N.

Come hear about the experiences of six Southwestern students who took part in this year's Model United Nations...on April 28th at 7:30 p.m., in room 200 Clough Hall, on the Southwestern Campus.

CIVIC CENTER COMMUNITY CULINARY CLUB

Serving from 11:30 to 1:00

First Presbyterian Church, 166 Poplar Avenue

PRICE: \$1.50 per serving, including drink

MENU FOR APRIL 24 – APRIL 30

THURSDAY, APRIL 24

Pork Steak, Whipped Potatoes, Green Beans, Rolls

FRIDAY, APRIL 25

Beef Stew, Tossed Salad, Corn Bread

MONDAY, APRIL 26

Steak w/onion gravy, Whipped Potatoes, Green Beans, Rolls

TUESDAY, APRIL 27

Macaroni & Cheese, Turnip Greens, Corn on the cob, Beets & Onions

Corn Bread

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28

Spaghetti, Cole Slaw, French Bread

THURSDAY, APRIL 29

Ham, Sweet Potatoes, Green Beans, Rolls

FRIDAY, APRIL 30

Turkey & Dressing, English Peas, Cranberry Sauce, Rolls



166 Poplar

Memphis, Tenn. 38103

*Second-class
postage paid at
Memphis, Tennessee*