

Some titles are meant to be given up

Memphis has always had its fair share of notoriety: the home of Elvis Presley, Federal Express, Civil Rights Museum, Beale Street — lots of stuff comes to mind when thinking about our city.

It also seems to wind up on the short end of titles that nobody wants, invariably ranking both high and low on similar lists put together by different sources.

I can recall having some fun when, in a single week, Memphis was named as one of the Most Miserable Cities in the country as well as one of the Best Places to Work.

I guess it depends on your perspective to decide which one is better or worse.

Perusing some of the rankings in which the city has made a name for itself, one might see that Memphis is in the Top 10 of the Most Congested cities. That ranking has nothing to do with traffic; it's all about breathing. And I have to admit that I could probably rank high on a list of the country's largest individual consumers of Kleenex.

Memphis is also among the Cheapest Cities, referring to cost of living and not an overall stingy-ness among the population.

We rank high in cities with the Largest Gender Gap. It's hard to tell if this is considered good or bad. The facts say that our population has 17.5 percent more women than men. That puts us at No. 3. In Minneapolis, for instance, there essentially is no gender gap. So I'm not sure this is a number that would make someone choose one city over another.

That last ranking probably has no bearing on Memphis checking in as the No. 3 Manliest City. That ranking was not determined by the number of men, but rather the number of manly stuff in town: home improvement businesses, steak houses and manly occupations, whatever those are. Cities that didn't rank high on the manliest list tended to have more home furnishings and decor stores, sushi restaurants, nail salons and residents with subscriptions to fashion magazines.

Most of these are pretty harmless exer-

ANOTHER VIEW



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cises: Just about anybody could come up with a ranking of something, such as Ugliest Bridge, Worst Streets or Most Horrible Weather. It's all pretty subjective. Some people like constant cloudy skies and rain. Or, in the case of Memphis, oppressive summer heat and godawful humidity.

But there are a few rankings that seem to keep showing up with Memphis in the lead that are not based on opinion. I'm refer-

ring, of course, to the city's lock as being close to No. 1 in hypertension, obesity and diabetes. These are no jokes, even though some people seem to find great joy in calling Memphis the Fattest City.

In truth, America is the fattest country in the world, so I don't think we can blame just Memphis for that title.

But there's hope in Fat City. There is an effort underfoot to make a dent in Memphis' obesity statistics.

HealthyWage, a company that sells financial incentive-based weight loss programs, is offering a \$10,000 first prize in a three-month weight-loss contest that starts Feb. 22.

Competition will be available for individuals and corporate contestants. First Horizon National Corp., Memphis City Schools and the University of Tennessee Health Science Center are reported to be participants.

Teams of five will compete for the top prize, so if enough participants join in, even if they don't win, they're bound to lose a few pounds along the way.

It's likely that even dramatic results from such a program will not be enough for Memphis to lose its title of Fattest City, but there's always the goal of being No. 2.

And maybe a slimmed down population could do something about the weather.

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