

GUEST COLUMNISTS

Opinion: I wish the rest of America understood what I know about Memphis

By G. Scott Morris, Special to The Daily Memphian

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A special FedEx plane with late founder Frederick W. Smith's initials flew over the FedEx St. Jude Championship tour event at TPC Southwind on Aug. 9, 2025. (Patrick Lantrip/The Daily Memphian file)

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SPECIAL TO THE DAILY MEMPHIAN

G. Scott Morris

editorial review and editing for length and clarity. If you're interested in having a guest column considered by The Daily Memphian, [email Eric Barnes](#).

The Rev. Dr. G. Scott Morris, M.D., is founder of Church Health. He is a regular contributor to The Daily Memphian.



The news that Memphis will not be part of the PGA Tour Championship Series after next year's tournament landed with a familiar sting.

It joins other disappointments for many Memphians, like the continuing reality that college football's changing landscape doesn't seem to want to make a place for the University of Memphis.

If we're honest, moments like these hurt because they feel like rejection. They are rejection. We wonder what we lack. We ask what we could have done differently. We wait for someone with more money, more influence or a bigger television contract to tell us we matter. We hope Elon Musk will come to love Memphis.

Opinion: Local government matters, and every vote counts

Headline sports has become a business where money is the language everyone speaks. Conference realignment isn't about geography, history or loyalty. It's about TV markets, media rights and revenue. The PGA Tour makes decisions based on sponsorships, schedules and financial priorities. That's not a moral judgment about them; it's simply the world in which these organizations now operate.

For much of the last decade and more, however, Memphis remained on the PGA Tour because Fred Smith believed this city deserved to be there. He didn't simply write checks. He used his influence, his relationships and his relentless determination to keep Memphis on the map. He brought the same determination to the University of Memphis, working behind the scenes to help the Tigers find a home in a Power Four conference. He loved the city enough to fight for it.

Many of us watched with disappointment as Memphis was again left outside looking in during the most recent college-conference realignment. Reports suggest the

University of Memphis was kept out of the Big 12 because one college president didn't want students and fans to have to come to Memphis.

Our sense of worth as a city shouldn't rise and fall because a university president hundreds of miles away decided we don't belong. Fred Smith understood that.

Sadly, Fred is no longer with us.



FedEx founder Fred Smith spoke at a panel to discuss investing in Memphis on June 5, 2025. (Sophia Surrett/The Daily Memphian file)

Next week, Memphis International Airport will bear his name. Every traveler who lands here will be reminded of a man whose life declared something simple: Memphis is worth investing in. Memphis is worth believing in.

I was never one of Fred's closest friends, but I knew him well enough to know this: He would never accept the idea that outside voices get the final word on Memphis. He certainly would not believe our destiny is to be defined by those who only know us from the headlines or TV ratings. His life's work was a constant act of faith in this city.

And that work continues. FedEx isn't abandoning Memphis. It is continuing to build here. The future of the city is still being written by people who believe in it enough to invest in it.

Our identity can't be determined by conference commissioners, university presidents, TV executives or professional-sports leagues. If we allow other people to decide whether Memphis matters, we will always be waiting for someone else's approval.

There is a better way. We begin by believing in the place we call home and by living out the values that have always made Memphis remarkable.

Opinion: Adults can debate — but children can't wait

I confess I struggle to understand those Memphians who seem to delight in criticizing Memphis every chance they get. Honest criticism has its place. We have real problems that demand real solutions. But cynicism isn't the same thing as love.

This is our home. No one benefits when we become the loudest voices telling the world that our city is beyond hope. If Memphis needs improvement — and it does — then that work belongs to all of us. Not just elected officials. Not just business leaders. Not just philanthropists.

All of us.

Every Memphian is my neighbor. Every one of us has a stake in what this city becomes. We can either spend our energy rehearsing everything that is wrong or spend it building what is right.

I love Memphis. Not because everyone else does. Not because every national ranking flatters us. I love Memphis because of the people I meet every single day.

Opinion: The lesson from the World Cup is that Memphis needs to promote more local musicians

I think of volunteers who deliver meals for Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association. The teachers in Teach For America and Memphis Teacher Residency. The almost 1,000 physicians who volunteer to care for Church Health patients for free. (That's not a typo.) My neighbor who cuts the grass at the end of my street so I can walk without feeling like I'm in a jungle. My other neighbor who drags the garbage cans out to the street for an elderly couple. The person who plays the piano in Crosstown Concourse so the rest of us can hear beautiful music.

Those stories will never make ESPN. Those people will never negotiate billion-dollar TV contracts, yet they are the reason Memphis matters.

For too long, we've also allowed ourselves to be divided by old racial stereotypes and tired narratives that keep us from seeing one another. We talk about "those neighborhoods" or "those people" as though they are somehow separate from us.

They aren't.

Every Memphian is my neighbor.

Opinion: John Fry's legacy deserves more than the final headlines

That doesn't mean we ignore crime. It doesn't mean we pretend every problem has been solved. But it does mean we refuse to believe crime statistics are the fullest truth about a city.

Statistics tell us something. They never tell us everything. A spreadsheet can never measure compassion. An FBI report can't calculate kindness. A TV commentator can't quantify soul.

Anyone can read numbers. It takes living here to know the people. That's what so many who dismiss Memphis never experience. They see headlines but never hospitality. They hear about violence but never generosity. They know the statistics but not our stories.

I wish the rest of America understood what I know about this city. I wish they could experience the beauty that lives here. But I'm no longer willing to let their ignorance become my disappointment. If they don't know us, that's unfortunate. It doesn't make us any less worthy.

Our identity can't rest on whether the PGA Tour stays or leaves. It can't rest on conference invitations or TV contracts. It can't depend on whether LeBron James likes our hotels or what other people who have never walked our streets think.

Opinion: Safety isn't only the absence of danger — it's also the presence of connection

Our identity must begin with our values, with what we hold dear. If we lead with compassion, generosity, resilience, faith, hard work and love for our neighbors, then Memphis will matter because of who we are, not because someone else finally noticed us.

That is the Memphis Fred Smith believed in.

It's the Memphis I believe in.

And it's the Memphis I will always call home.

TOPICS

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