

'Ghostbusters' fan club full-time job for founders

By Ward W. Triplett III
Daily Nebraskan Staff Editor

The worried-looking ghost almost certainly will appear in most any avenue of clothing or entertainment you can find these days. You can see him at the top of the screen in the latest series of Diet Coke commercials, or materializing in any number of Music Television spots, forever trapped in that red restriction zone.

He shows up in various forms and visages on the T-shirts of ugly little spuds in Lincoln and other points, not to mention on buttons, lunch boxes and other children's items. But, it doesn't stop there. Somewhere in New York a store with an exclusive contract is marketing jump suits with the little ghost on the breast pocket. A car-maker is considering plans for an "Ecto-mobile" design. Mattel is working on a Stay-Puff Marshmallow Man doll.

Usually you don't see this kind of behavior in the general business place. But, these are just some of the multi-million dollar deals that have grown from the success of "Ghostbusters," this summer's largest money-making film. With its ticket sales approaching \$200 million and its by-products pulling in at least half that, the business of ghost-busting articles has grown to the size of a 1,000-pound Twinkie.

And, if you're one of the few who hasn't seen the film, or just part of an ever-diminishing number who hasn't bought at least one Ghostbusters item, well, a lot of people might say about you, "It's true...this man has no...taste."

For Mark Lister and Jim Garvey, the guys who own the exclusive rights to promote the international Ghostbusters fan club, the fascination began at the first screening they saw together.

Lister, a former security system installer, and Garvey, a former psychotherapist ("I used to bring people back into reality," he says, "now I bring them out."), started Fantasy Traders of Pittsburgh as a part-time business three years ago.

"We were both big, big movie fans," Lister said. "We traveled to a lot of movie conventions, selling

and trading articles from science fiction movies and found out we were good at anticipating what people would like."

The business became full-time last year, but the big break came when "Ghostbusters" opened. Although they handled merchandise for "Star Trek" and other big science fiction fan clubs and trades, the \$20 million Ghostbusters was "the" vehicle, Lister said.

"We wanted to deliver a fan club about that film that was interesting and could really be fun," Lister said. "We also started it because we were fans as well."

There are imitators out there, and others who market T-shirts and the like, but the official fan club packet includes a four-issue subscription to the official news magazine, a certificate of anti-paranormal proficiency, an insurance packet in case you are "slimed in the line of duty," an Ecto-vehicle bumper sticker, a badge, patch and a set of stickers. T-shirts, posters and other mementos are available on a mail-order list. The packet costs \$8.95.

The response has not exactly turned Fantasy Traders into a demilitarized zone. Lister and Garvey had two employees before May. They now have 10 who work 12 to 15 hours a day. A "ton" of neighborhood kids volunteer their time to help stuff the membership packets.

"It happened pretty fast," Lister said. "The first mention of the club was on an inside page in USA Today. That first day we got about 2,000 calls on our 800 number." Lister estimated that over 35,000 applications have been received and sent out and the number keeps growing.

"The promotional items on Ghostbusters got out a little late," Lister said. "Manufacturers were waiting to see if the movie would become a hit before they started in on the T-shirts and dolls and so forth. That's why we're still filling a lot of orders for those kinds of things."

Susan Miller, an administrative assistant for Columbia Pictures in Dallas, said Columbia knew they would have a hit, but never thought it would be this big.

"As far as it getting to this point, I don't think anyone would

have predicted this," she said.

Miller said the promotional plan for the movie was utterly simple. Just the now-famous logo with the words "Coming to Save the World this Summer," which ran in some larger newspapers and record and entertainment magazines. A week before the movie opened, ads with the players themselves began appearing.

"People who had seen the ghost ad were able to put it together with the faces then," Miller said. "By the time 'Ghostbusters' opened, we had a poll that showed 80 percent public awareness of the movie, which is pretty high for any film."

Lister and Garvey sensed the hit as well and contacted Columbia about the exclusive rights for a fan club the next week. They had to advance the motion picture company a "sizable" amount to show they had capital to produce a quality product and had to commit to a product that "respected" the film and its players. Columbia still gets a percentage of each club membership and part of any Ghostbuster item Fantasy Traders sells.

The real test for the Ghostbusters club will come after the film closes. The Stuart Theatre, which has shown the film five times a day since it opened, will end Ghostbusters' run Oct. 10. It already has closed in some smaller cities and will end its general release everywhere later in the month. This is one case, however, where Lister and Garvey think "out of sight, out of mind" won't matter.

"We're very much up to date as far as the future of Ghostbusters," Lister said. "I've been bugging Columbia about a second film, but so far they say there aren't any plans."

In the meantime, the club paper will carry interviews with the film's stars as well as real-life ghost stories, and profiles on real ghostbusters. The film will open overseas in December and Fantasy Traders already is bracing for a new wave of believers.

"We not only get letters from people who like the movie, but from a lot of people who say they really believe in ghosts and want to know if Jim and I are really in the ghostbusting business," Lister said.

Last week, a letter told of a woman who was housekeeping for a neighbor when the clock fell off the wall and broke. Later, she found out the neighbor had died in a car accident at the time showing on the broken clock face.

"We get a number of things like that. Most of them are very interesting," Lister said.

Even if Ghostbusters crosses its streams, it won't be the end of the business.

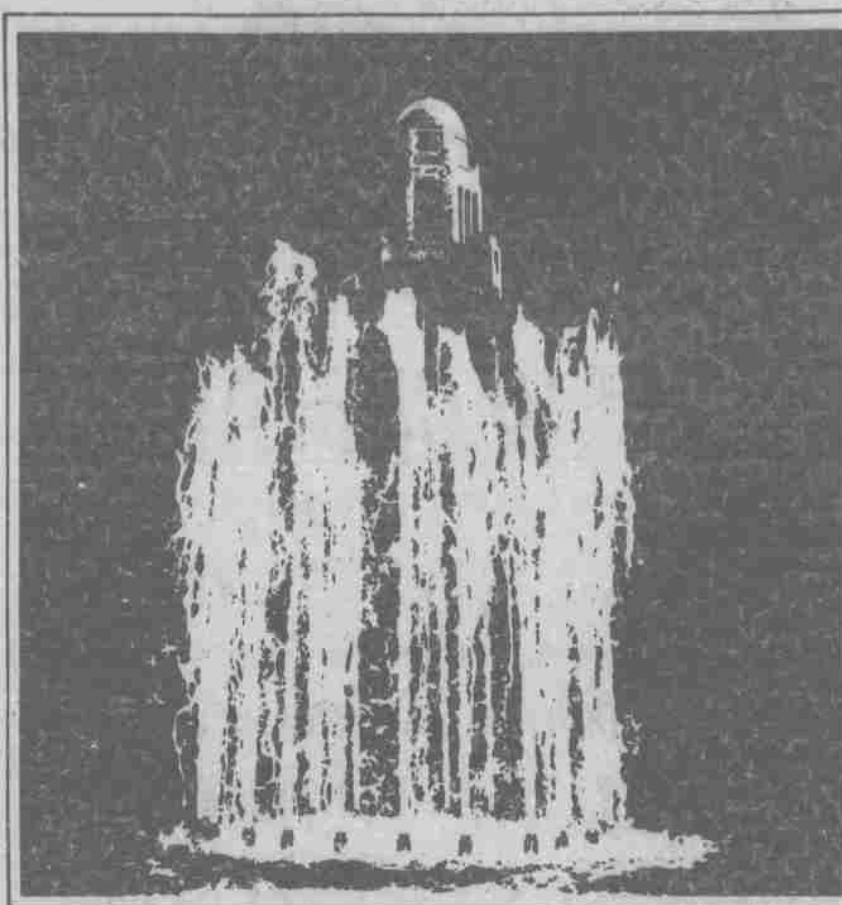
"We still sell a lot of Star Trek material and there will always be more science fiction films," Garvey said. The company is preparing materials for "Dune" and "2001: A Space Odyssey."

Ghostbusters is keeping us busy right now and we hope it keeps us busy for a while longer. But our purpose is to provide information and materials that aren't

available anywhere else. We can always do that with other movies," Garvey said.

And between the slimings, the prehistoric bitches, the power grids and the marshmallow men, is there any part of Ghostbusters the ghostbusters themselves liked the most? "Sigourney Weaver, no doubt about it," Garvey said.

Ghostbusters fan club memberships are available by writing Ghostbusters: Post Office Box 8278, Pittsburgh, Penn., or by calling 800-331-1000.



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for children or pregnant women, she said.

There are practically no dangers involved in the lacto and lacto-ovo diets, Caudill said. Although the diets are low in iron, women generally don't get enough iron anyway, she said. Lacto stands for milk, which is important in the diet, she said.

"Milk actually is the best source of protein to us," she said.

The purist diet is the easiest to get all the nutrients and therefore is the safest one, Caudill said.

Vegetarians became popular in the early 1970s when people were concerned with feeding the world, Caudill said. It then became connected with a fad where the question of safeness comes up,

she said.

"A lot of college kids probably started it," she said.

In addition, during the last five to 10 years, the importance of fiber in the diet has gotten more attention, Caudill said. Raw fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods help fulfill the body's fiber needs, she said.

Vegetarian diets meet the American dietary guidelines, Caudill said.

Less saturated fats should be avoided, Caudill said, whereas more polyunsaturated fats are encouraged. Saturated fats include coconut oil, palm oil and chocolate, while polyunsaturated fats include corn, cotton, safflower, sesame, soybean and sunflower oil, she said.

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