

Mister Pizza

(Rose Side, New Jersey)

Description: a ground-level retail pizzeria on a side street to Rose Side's main street. The pizza oven, grill, and register is right up front; there's a few tables and chairs in the classic checkered tablecloth style, a jukebox in the back, and the bathrooms are past it and to the left. The place is weathered, but clean. Oh: there's a payphone. This will be important, later.

It's always 1987 inside.

Many people don't even notice; they just figure that the pizza's pretty dang'd cheap. Oh, sure, losing cell phone signal while inside is annoying, but that happens in other places, too. Since the proprietor -- a polite but not expressive man in his mid-forties -- will take any legal tender given him, it's unlikely that currency discrepancies will be a red flag. And if the jukebox is full of songs dated no later than 1987, well, who really is shocked at such an situation?

Multiple visits, however, start to clue-in the perceptive. Fashions were different in the 1980s; so was language,

attitudes, and mindsets. Mister Pizza gets plenty of customers who are not confused that about it being 1987 because to them it **is** 1987 -- and when one of those people see, say, a laptop or a smartphone, they will treat it like the insanely ultra-tech item that it is to them. After that happens, it usually takes only a little bit of experimentation before it can be proven satisfactorily enough to the observer that it's always 1987 inside.

Naturally, people try to change the past (please do not try to change the past; it's bad for the universe). They can't. The only person from 1987 that anyone can meet is the proprietor, and he's cheerfully uninterested in any particular 'get-rich-quick' or 'change history' scheme; and if you call up the Department of the Interior and try to warn them of the Exxon Valdez spill two years down the road it never seems to work, somehow. You also can't arrange to meet somebody you meet at Mister Pizza later, either at the site or in 'real' time; nobody ever remembers the conversations that you had in Mister Pizza except the proprietor. And, again: he's not what you call expressive.

But he does have plenty of change for the telephone. Why the telephone? Because it's 1987. That means that if you call up someone alive back then to say -- well, it's not my business what you might want to say, friend --

she'll be there to pick up. And if you don't remember the old number, there are phone books. Directory assistance. You can find the number; it's just a matter of time.

And, hey. You just got given some time, right?

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