

Elvis Presley

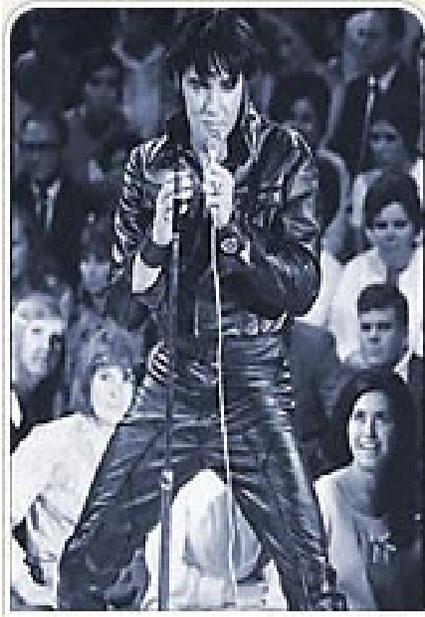


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Elvis. The first name alone invokes images and sounds which spark instant recognition. While he may not have invented rock-n-roll, few can deny that Elvis Presley helped transform a musical fad into a national and international phenomenon. In the process, he became one of the most successful entertainers of the twentieth century and one of its most controversial cultural figures.

Presley was born into anonymity in Tupelo, Mississippi, on January 8, 1935. After years of struggle against dwindling economic opportunities and eroding status, Presley's working class family migrated to Memphis. In the West Tennessee metropolis, young Presley aspired to overcome his feelings of invisibility. Inspired by movie stars and entertainers, he developed a penchant for flashy clothes, slicked-back hair, and long sideburns. In his quest for identity, he also turned to radio and absorbed an eclectic assortment of musical styles: rhythm and blues, country, pop, and both black and white gospel. Presley eventually synthesized these various styles into what became known as rockabilly.

In 1954 Presley made his first recordings for Sam Phillips's Sun Records Company. He also joined the Louisiana Hayride in Shreveport and toured extensively throughout the South and Southwest. By the end of 1955, when he signed with RCA, Presley had become one of the hottest commodities in country music. Yet his new manager, the flamboyant Colonel Tom Parker, sought a larger and more diversified audience for his client. In 1956 Parker booked Presley onto several network television programs, the most famous being his appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show, which beamed the singer's charisma into the living rooms of millions of viewers. Presley's popularity skyrocketed. Following unprecedented record sales, Hollywood beckoned, and the singer became a movie idol in *Love Me Tender*. As his fame rose, furor over a



black-derived and overtly sexual performance style mounted across the nation. The criticisms only heightened Presleymania. By 1958 he was the undisputed "King of Rock-n-Roll."

Between 1956 and 1965 Presley dominated popular music. Even a stint in the army failed to stifle his popularity. After 1960 he devoted his energy almost exclusively to motion pictures. While the results did not bring him critical acclaim, he became one of the highest paid actors of the decade. Yet by the mid-1960s Presley's creativity and influence appeared irreversibly diminished. A highly successful television special in 1968, in which he returned to his blues roots, revived his career, and Presley returned to touring for the first time since the 1950s. To the astonishment of many, Presley recaptured the vitality that characterized his early career. After 1973, however, personal difficulties, including a failed marriage, health problems, and ballooning weight took a toll on the singer. On August 16, 1977, Presley

died of heart failure and complications from drug use. A southern version of the Horatio Alger hero who challenged contemporary boundaries regarding music, sex, taste, race, and public behavior, Presley remains a significant key to understanding the region and era from which he emerged.

Sources: Michael Bertrand, <http://tennesseencyclopedia.net>; Michael Bertrand, *Race, Rock, and Elvis* (Illinois, 2000); Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music* 5th. ed. (2008); Peter Guralnick, *Last Train to Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley* (New York, 1994).

Elvis A. Presley Meets President Richard M. Nixon



Of all the requests made each year to the National Archives for reproductions of photographs and documents, one item has been requested more than any other. That item, more requested than the Bill of Rights or even the Constitution of the United States, is the photograph of Elvis Presley and Richard M. Nixon shaking hands on the occasion of Presley's visit to the White House.

On December 21, 1970, Elvis Presley paid a visit to President Richard M. Nixon at the White House in Washington, D.C. The meeting was initiated by Presley, who wrote Nixon a six-page letter requesting a visit with the President and suggesting that he be made a "Federal Agent-at-Large" in the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. The following materials chronicling the Presley-Nixon meeting were obtained from the Nixon Presidential Materials Project at the National Archives at College Park (College Park, Maryland).

EXECUTIVE

HE 5-1
GIR/P*

December 31, 1970

Dear Mr. Presley:

It was a pleasure to meet with you in my office recently, and I want you to know once again how much I appreciate your thoughtfulness in giving me the commemorative World War II Colt 45 pistol, encased in the handsome wooden chest. You were particularly kind to remember me with this impressive gift, as well as your family photographs, and I am delighted to have them for my collection of special mementos.

With my best wishes to you, Mrs. Presley, and to your daughter, Lisa, for a happy and peaceful 1971,

Sincerely,

RICHARD NIXON

★
Mr. Elvis Presley
Box 417
Madison, Tennessee 37115

RN/lf/cf/cf . .

gift

JAN 5 1971
CENTRAL

6-page letter, as well as the transcript of Elvis's introduction to Nixon

American Airlines

In Flight...

Altitude;

①

Location;

Dear Mr. President .

First I would like to introduce myself,

I am Elvis Presley and admire you
and have Great Respect for your

Office. I talked to Vice President
agnew in Palm Springs I week and

expressed my concern for our Country.

The Drug Culture, The Hippie Demerits,
The SPS, Black Panthers, etc do not

consider me as their enemy or as they
call it the Establishment. I call it America and

American Airlines

In Flight...

Altitude;

Location;

2

I Love it. Sir I can and will
be of any service that I can to help
the country out. I have ~~no~~ concern
or motives other than helping the
country out. So I wish not to be
given a title or an appointed ^{position}, I can
and will do more good if I were
made a Federal agent at large, and
I will help best by doing it my
way through my communications with people
of all ages. First and foremost I am an
entertainer but all I need is the Federal
credentials. I am on the plane with

American Airlines

In Flight...

3

Altitude;

Location;

Sen. George Murphy and We
have been discussing the problems
that our Country is faced with.
So I am staying at the Washington
Hotel Room 505-506-507 - I have
2 men who work with me by the
name of Jerry Schilling and Sonny
West. I am registered under the name
of Jon Burrows. I will be here
for as long as it takes ~~to~~ get
the credentials of a Federal Agent.
I have done an in depth study of
Drug Abuse and Communist Brainwashing.

American Airlines

In Flight...

Altitude;

4

Location;

Eschwege and I am right in the middle of the whole thing, where I can and will do the most good I am Glad to help just so long as it is kept very Private. You can have your staff or whom ever call me anytime today tonight or tomorrow I was nominated this coming year one of America's Ten most outstanding young men. That will be in paragraph 18 in my Home Town of Memphis Tenn. I am sending you the short autobiography about myself so you can better understand this.

American Airlines

In Flight...

Altitude;

Location;

5

~~approach~~

approach. I would love to
meet you just to say hello if
you're not too busy.

Respectfully

Elvis Presley

P.S. I believe that you Sir
were one of the Top Ten Outstanding Men
of America also.

I have a personal gift for you also
which I would like to present to you
and you can accept it or I will keep it
for you until you can take it.

Mr. President	
PHONE NUMBERS	
These are all my PVT NUMBERS BEVERLY HILLS	278-3496 278-5935
Palm Springs Pvt #	325-3241
Memphis	397-4427 298-4882 398-9722
Pvt. #	
Col. P.S. #	325-4781
Col. B.H. #	274-8498
Col. OFF. MEM.	870-0370

WASHINGTON HOTEL) PHONE ME 85900
Rm 505-506.

PRIVATE
AND CONFIDENTIAL

UNDER THE NAME
OF JON BURROWS

Attn, President Nixon

Via Sen George Murphy

from
Elio Puley

Dear Mr. President:

First, I would like to introduce myself. I am Elvis Presley and admire you and have great respect for your office. I talked to Vice President Agnew in Palm Springs three weeks ago and expressed my concern for our country. The drug culture, the hippie elements, the SDS, Black Panthers, etc. do not consider me as their enemy or as they call it the establishment. I call it American and I love it. Sir, I can and will be of any service that I can to help the country out. I have no concerns or motives other than helping the country out. So I wish not to be given a title or an appointed position. I can and will do more good if I were made a Federal Agent at Large and I will help out by doing it my way through my communications with people of all ages. First and foremost, I am an entertainer, but all I need is the Federal credentials. I am on this plane with Senator George Murphy and we have been discussing the problems that our country is faced with.

Sir, I am staying at the Washington Hotel, Room: 505- 506-507. I have two men who work with me by the name of Jerry Schilling and Sonny West. I am registered under the name of Jon Burrows. I will be here for as long as it takes to get the credentials of a Federal Agent. I have done an in-depth study of drug abuse and Communist brainwashing techniques and I am right in the middle of the whole thing where I can and will do the most good.

I am glad to help just so long as it is kept very private. You can have your staff or whomever call me anytime today, tonight, or tomorrow. I was nominated this coming year one of America's Ten Most Outstanding Young Man. That will be in January 18 in my home town of Memphis, Tennessee. I am sending you the short autobiography about myself so you can better understand this approach. I would love to meet you just to say hello if you're not too busy.

Respectfully,

/s/ Elvis Presley

P. S. I believe that you, Sir, were one of the Top Ten Outstanding Men of America Also.

I have a personal gift for you which I would like to present to you and you can accept it or I will keep it for you until you can take it.

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

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Gen. Brentneger as he appeared in a special television program in 1975.

FORD GIVES SUPPORT TO NEW AGREEMENT ON PANAMA CANAL

President Calls Pact 'Important Step Forward' and Signals Frontal Assault Approach

WASHINGTON, Aug. 16—President Gerald R. Ford today gave his support to the Panama Canal agreement announced by the Carter administration. He said the pact "is an important step forward" and called for a frontal assault approach to the canal's operation.

The agreement, which would transfer control of the canal to the Panamanian Government at the end of the century, has been hailed by some as a major step toward resolving the canal's long-standing problems.



President Jimmy Carter and Brezhnev after the Vietnam peace accord in the Soviet Union for official talks.

BREZHNEV DEPICTS CARTER'S OVERTURE AS A POSITIVE MOVE

SAVING HELL FROM AN INITIATIVE

MOSCOW, Aug. 16—Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev today depicted President Jimmy Carter's initiative to end the Vietnam war as a "positive move" and a "saving hell from an initiative."

ELVIS PRESLEY DIES; ROCK SINGER WAS 42

Root Cause Cited by Doctor—Krebs' Autopsy Shows

By BRUCE FINK
Elvis Presley, the 42-year-old singer, died today of a heart attack, a doctor said. The cause of death was atherosclerosis, the doctor said. The doctor also said that Presley had a long history of heart disease and that he had been taking medicine for it.

Presley Gave Rock Its Style

He Did's Iconic Feats, But Did Better Image

By JOHN ROSENBERG
The music world today is a different place than it was when Elvis Presley died. He gave rock and roll its style and iconography. He was the first to combine music and showmanship in a way that has never been repeated.

Catholic Prelates Organizing a Drive Against Abortions

Archbishops Say They Will Oppose Any Measure to Legalize the Procedure

By MICHAEL J. SULLIVAN
Archbishops in the United States are organizing a drive to oppose any measure to legalize abortion. They say they will support any effort to restrict the procedure.

U.S. JUDGE IS CHOICE AS NEW F.B.I. DIRECTOR

Frank Johnson of Alabama Expected to Be Named Today by Carter

WASHINGTON, Aug. 16—President Jimmy Carter is expected to name Frank Johnson, a federal judge from Alabama, as the new director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Sitting During Flag Pledge Upheld

Court Decision Upholds Right to Sit Down

By ROBERT D'AVANZO
The Supreme Court today upheld the right of citizens to sit down during the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools.

S.E.C. Seeking to Salvage Report, Called Inadequate, on City's Crisis

By MICHAEL J. ROSEN

WASHINGTON, Aug. 16—The Securities and Exchange Commission is seeking to salvage a report on the crisis in the city of New York, which it called "inadequate."

Carey Kills Bill On Assaults Of the Elderly

By BERNARD R. BRAUER

ALBANY, Aug. 16—Governor Carey today vetoed a bill to strengthen laws against assaults on the elderly.



Several hundred children of the dead were being taken to the city morgue by the city's health department. The 11-year-old boy in the foreground is the son of a man who was killed in the explosion.

Table with 4 columns: Name, Position, and other details. Includes names like Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, and others.

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Elvis Presley, the first and greatest American rock-and-roll star, died yesterday at the age of 42. Mr. Presley, whose throaty baritone and blatant sexuality redefined popular music, was found unconscious in the bedroom of his home, called Graceland, in Memphis yesterday at 2:30 P.M.

He was pronounced dead an hour later at Baptist Memorial Hospital, after doctors failed to revive him.

Dr. Jerry Francisco, the Shelby County coroner, who conducted a two-hour examination of the body, said "preliminary autopsy findings" indicated that the cause of death was "cardiac arrhythmia," which a hospital spokesman defined as "an irregular and ineffective heart beat." The coroner was not immediately able to determine the cause of the "cardiac arrhythmia."

Mr. Presley was once the object of such adulation that teen-age girls screamed and fainted at the sight of him. He was also denounced for what was considered sexually suggestive conduct on stage. Preachers inveighed against him in sermons and parents forbade their children to watch him on television. In his first television appearance on the Ed Sullivan show, his act, which might be thought of as tame by today's standards, was considered by the broadcasters to be so scandalous that the cameras showed him only from the waist up, lest his wiggling hips show.

Mr. Presley's early hit songs are an indelible part of the memories of anyone who grew up in the 50's. "Hound Dog," "Heartbreak Hotel" and "Blue Suede Shoes" were teen-age anthems. Like Frank Sinatra in the decade before and the Beatles a decade later, Mr. Presley was more than a singer--he was a phenomenon, with 45 gold records that sold more than one million copies each.

Mr. Presley was a show-business legend before he was 25 years old. At the age of 30 he was the highest-paid performer in the history of the business. He made 28 films, virtually every one of them frivolous personality vehicles and nearly all of them second-rated at best, but they gross millions.

In recent years, Mr. Presley, who used to carry about 175 pounds on a 6-foot frame, had been plagued with overweight.

A recently published book called "Elvis, What Happened?" by three of his former bodyguards alleged that the singer was given to using amphetamines.

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Salvage Report,
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City's Crisis
Carey Kills Bill On
Assailants Of the
Elderly

History of Mild Hypertension

Dr. Francisco said yesterday that Mr. Presley had a history of mild hypertension and that he had found evidence of coronary artery disease. Both of these, the coroner said, could have been "contributing causes" in Mr. Presley's death.

"But the specific cause may not be known for a week or two pending lab studies," he said, adding, "It is possible in cases like this that the specific cause will never be known."

A hospital spokesman said that the coroner is required by law to conduct an examination if the case of death is not immediately apparent.

Responding to repeated questions about whether the autopsy had revealed any signs of drug abuse, the coroner said the only drugs he had detected were those that had been prescribed by Mr. Presley's personal physician for hypertension and a blockage of the colon, for which he had been hospitalized twice in 1975.

Dr. George Nichopoulos, Mr. Presley's personal physician told the Associated Press that Mr. Presley was last seen alive shortly after 9 A.M. Dr. Nichopoulos said that Mr. Presley had been taking a number of appetite depressants, but the physician said they had not contributed to his death.

Elvis Aaron Presley was born in a two-room house in Tupelo, Miss., on Jan. 8, 1935. During his childhood, he appeared with his parents, Gladys and Vernon Presley, as a popular singing trio at camp meetings, revivals and church conventions.

The family moved to Memphis when Mr. Presley was 13. He attended L. O. Humes High School and worked as an usher in a movie theater. After graduation, he got a job driving a truck for \$35 a week. In 1953, Mr. Presley recorded his first song and paid \$4 for the privilege; he took the one copy home and played it over and over.

A shrewd song promoter called "Colonel" Thomas A. Parker was impressed by the early records and took over the management of Mr. Presley's career. Mr. Presley toured in rural areas under the sobriquet "The Hill Billy Cat." Colonel Parker, a character of P. T. Barnum proportions, followed the credo, "Don't explain it, just sell it." He once observed, "I consider it my patriotic duty to keep Elvis up in the 90 percent tax bracket."

When Colonel Parker went to negotiate with 20th Century-Fox on a film deal that would be Mr. Presley's screen debut, the studio executives dwelled on the singer's youth and inexperience. "Would \$25,000 be all right?" one executive finally asked. Colonel Parker replied: "That's fine for me. Now, how about the boy?"

"Heartbreak Hotel," Mr. Presley's first song hit, was released by RCA in January 1956. A blood-stirring dirge about love and loneliness, it burned up the jukeboxes and eventually sold two million copies.

A phenomenal string of hit songs followed, and Elvis Presley fan clubs sprouted all over the world; membership at one time numbered 400,000.

In 1957, he went to Hollywood to make his first film, "Love Me Tender." It opened to unanimous jeers from the critics and grossed between five and six times what it cost to make. His later films were conducted equally obnoxious by cinEastes. One critic remarked of "Jailhouse Rock" that Mr. Presley had been "sensitively cast as a slob." Mr. Presley responded, "That's the way the mop flops."

Drafted Into the Army

In the spring of 1958, Mr. Presley was drafted into the Army as a private, an event that caused as much stir as an average Super Bowl. "The Pelvis," as he was known, was stationed in West Germany for two years and was given an ecstatic welcome home by his fans.

In 1967, Mr. Presley married Priscilla Beaulieu, the daughter of an Air Force colonel. They met during his military service, and had a daughter named Lisa Marie, born on Feb. 1, 1968. Although concrete details of their private life remained sketchy through his deliberate design, the fan magazines were full of reports of marital difficulties, and the couple separated in February 1972. They were divorced in Santa Monica, Calif., in 1973.

Mr. Presley was said to have been a shy person, and rarely granted interviews. He seems to have been scarred by some of the early heavy publicity, and returned from his stint in the Army more withdrawn than he had been.

In the early 60's, he made no personal or even television appearances, but earned \$5 million a year simply by cutting a few records and making three movies a year. He made a picture called "Harem Holiday" in 18 days and was paid \$1 million.

In the 70's Mr. Presley appeared with some frequency in Las Vegas, Nev., nightclubs. Although he sometimes appeared bloated, he was still an excellent showman and audiences always loved him.

In his nightclub act, he would occasionally parody himself. "This lip used to curl easier," he joked, referring to his one-time trademark of singing with a sneer.

It was believed that Mr. Presley neither smoked nor drank, but according to the book by his former aides, he depended heavily on stimulant and depressant drugs. He is also said to have been depressed by the book's "iconoclastic" treatment of him.

He was a generous and often sentimental man. He deeply mourned the death of his mother, and kept a suite for his grandmother, Minnie Presley, at his home in Memphis. The house, Graceland, was an 18-room \$1 million mansion with a jukebox at the poolside. Mr. Presley surrounded himself with a retinue of young men called the Memphis Mafia, who served as bodyguards, valets and travel agents. He had a passion for cars, especially Cadillacs, which he tended to acquire in multiples.

Preferred Night Hours

Mr. Presley also gave Cadillacs away with startling frequency. He would from time to time see some stranger, nose pressed against a car-showroom window, and invite the person to go inside and pick out the color he or she liked best. Mr. Presley would then pay the entire cost of purchase on the spot.

Mr. Presley was a nocturnal person who thrived when most others were asleep. Maurice Elliott, a vice president and spokesman for Baptist Hospital, said Mr. Presley had gone to sleep yesterday morning at 6 A.M. Some time during the evening or early morning hours, Mr. Elliott said Mr. Presley visited a dentist. Then, between 4 A.M. and 5:30 A.M. he played racket ball on the court of his mansion, the hospital official reported.

When Mr. Presley was a patient in the hospital, Mr. Elliott recalled, "he would put tin foil over the windows. He would normally not get up until noon or thereafter, and not go to bed until 2, 3, 4 A.M."

Mr. Presley's movie career ended in 1970, and in that year he made a successful television special. Critics remarked on how little he had aged. He kept in shape for years with karate, in which he had a black belt. But his penchant for peanut butter and banana sandwiches washed down with soda finally caught up. In one of his last appearances, his trademark skintight pants split open.

After his death became known yesterday, radio stations around the country began playing nothing but old Presley records. Mr. Presley recorded about 40 albums, many of them soundtracks of his films. They include "Loving You," "King Creole," "Frankie and Johnny," "Paradise, Hawaiian Style," "Clambake" and "Speedway."

At his death, Mr. Presley had been an indelible part of the nation's musical consciousness for 20 years.

The funeral is being handled by the Memphis Funeral Home. A spokesman said late yesterday that arrangements had not been completed.

Mr. Presley is survived by his 9-year-old daughter, father and grandmother. His father and his daughter were reportedly at Graceland at the time of his death.