

CHAPTER 18

REFLECTIONS

The first memorial service for Elvis Presley was scheduled for 4 p.m. on August 16, 1978 at the Elvis Presley Circle G Ranch and presented by the Graceland Fan Club.

I entered the service several minutes late. The speaker was a tall bearded man in a maroon suit. His name was Bernard Benson, author of "a personal gift for Elvis" entitled The Minstrel, and he was reading an excerpt from his book:

"And to his surprise he found that he was living in a great symphony, that all of life, that all of the world, that all of the universe, was one great symphony, and he was a part of it. And all of a sudden, the veils cleared from his mind, and he remembered the peaceful land in which he had lived before, and how he had prayed that he could sing and bring music to all peoples everywhere at the same time, and he realised that it had happened. And he was overwhelmed with joy."

I later discovered that Bernard Benson was inspired to

write his magical tale with illustrations while he was in Hawaii in January 1977, seven months before I was inspired to begin my task, also in Hawaii. Bernard Benson's "fairy tale" doesn't mention Elvis' name even though it is dedicated to his living memory, but there is no doubt in the reader's mind that the simple tale with colorful rainbow-like illustrations is about the modern minstrel, Elvis. Elvis, in the story, is a young troubadour who begins one incarnation as a boy in a simple land which has an oriental flavor; since the author was influenced by Tibetan sages, it could possibly even be in the land of Tibet. The boy is blessed with the gift of a musical instrument which is similar to a lyre, and he goes around the countryside singing songs and making people happy. Centuries later the boy is reincarnated again to take away sadness and bring joy to the people of the world.

The cover of Bernard Benson's book bore a palpable impression of a peacock feather, which was chosen by the author to symbolize not only Elvis' love for peacocks, but also the esoteric quality of the peacock. Hidden teachings claim that the peacock is capable of eating poisonous plants, thus enabling it to transmute evil into good. The meaning adapted by the author is that Elvis taught joy through the spontaneous flow of good.

The peacock can also be a symbol of the brightly colored astral aura of man, which shines more brilliantly when feelings

of love, whether spiritual or physical, are aroused and find expression. The peacock can also be regarded as a symbol of royalty. Its colored eye spots, which are displayed by the peacock in a semi-circle of a hundred eyes, are symbolic of intuitive wisdom and omniscience, qualities representing an advanced human being who outstrips his fellows and attains to a regal splendor far in advance of his own race and age. Thus, in reality Elvis becomes the adornment of his race.

Back at the service I discovered that I was standing without a program in my hand. The people next to me had one, and I asked them where they got theirs. They told me that several ladies were handing them out back by the road. I ran back to get my copy. Meanwhile, Mrs. Benson was standing behind the beige podium and delivering her speech. I later read in The Commercial Appeal that she said the best thing Elvis' friends could do was to give him up. "We must all unite and blow him away. That is all we can do." I wasn't too sure what she meant by that, although I surmised she must have heard from other spiritualists that a spirit can be astrally tied to the earth plane if people grieve over its dead body.

The souvenir of the first memorial service was a product of Boxcar Enterprises Inc. On the front side was an ethereal picture of a living bust of Elvis floating in a blue sky with patches of scattered clouds. His youthful face and

compassionate blue eyes looked down from the sky, and his pompadour black hair, except for one unruly strand of hair lying on his forehead, was combed back to show a clean-cut image. Below the picture was the caption: "Take My Hand Precious Lord."

On the other side of the picture of Elvis in the heavenly clouds was a list of events and participants. The first memorial service was titled "Reflections." According to the program, I had missed the introductory song "How Great Thou Art" by Elvis. I had also missed the "Welcome" by the master of ceremonies, George Kline, and the opening prayer by Eddie Poole, President of Graceland Fan Club.

The next speaker was Billy Smith, a cousin of the late singer. I came within hearing distance after Billy had already started. I found his opening words later in The Commercial Appeal, where he was quoted as saying: "I loved him just like everyone of you did, but he was not a person who would want us to weep. He is with us today because he is with us in spirit." The rest of his speech continued as follows:

"We call these thoughts memories. And coming out here I remembered hearing something that Priscilla said. And she said: 'Thank God that Elvis left us with so many memories.' And so I went and got the words to Elvis' great song of 'Memories.' I have paraphrased and rewritten some of the

words as a lead-in to the memories that his friends are going to share with you today.

"Elvis' memories will always be pressed between the pages of our minds and sweetened through the ages just like wine. Elvis' memories will always float down, and settle softly to the ground like gold of autumn leaves around our feet. As we touch them, they burst apart with more Elvis memories. Thank God for more Elvis memories, of days at Graceland, in Los Angeles, in Las Vegas, at all the cities we visited; all the great songs, all the movies, the television shows, and all the fun and sad times we shared together. The red bouquets and twilights, the endless purple haze, and Elvis' laughing eyes and fantastic ways, and fun-filled nights and gentle days. Elvis' memories will always be pressed between the pages of our minds and sweetened through the ages just like wine."

Billy Smith finished his poetic eulogy and lifted his eyes upward and said, "Thanks E for all the memories!" His eyes were filled with tears as he turned to take his seat.

The master of ceremonies, George Kline, returned to the podium to announce the next speaker. He paused to gain control of his emotions. The people sitting on the makeshift stage, which was covered in the front with a white appearance, empathized with George. It seemed as if there were tender moments that they all had shared with the king, and those

moments were filled with powerful emotions which were spontaneously displayed during the service. A bouquet of multi-colored gladioluses stood in front of the podium. A 50-foot cross stood majestically behind the speaker's stand.

George Kline finally was able to partially subdue his emotions enough to continue:

"Ladies and gentlemen, next I'd like to bring a man up here who lived with us, laughed with us, and as I said, cried with us and died with us. He went to school with Elvis as I did and several others. He traveled with Elvis; he was Elvis' traveling accountant and constant companion. And at Elvis' wedding he was one of the co-best men, along with Joe Esposito. This time I'd like to bring to the stand Mr. Marty Lacker."

Marty Lacker unfolded a piece of paper containing a prepared speech and started reading:

"Elvis was a very sensitive person. He cared so much for all the people's feelings. And more than in life ... (Marty at this point put his paper away; he was too choked up with tears to be able to read) I'm sorry. I don't need this. His personal goal in life was to make . . . I said I wasn't going to do this . . . to make all of us happy. I'm doing what he wouldn't have done. I'm pretty sure he's looking down on all of us now, and probably looking at me and he's trying to knock me on the head and say, 'Hey you, don't cry. Laugh! Be happy! Don't remember me with tears.' I

think the best way to remember him is to try to be kind to as many people as you can in a lifetime. I think most of all what Elvis is saying to us right now is 'I love you.' He said it everytime he sang."

Marty couldn't continue any longer. His emotions had gotten the best of him. It was really amazing. Here were members of the legendary "Memphis Mafia" who were displaying the most gentle human emotions. It was an incredible sight to behold. Elvis had truly touched their lives.

George cleared his throat and introduced the next speaker:

"Thank you, Marty. Ladies and gentlemen, there are some other people on this stand I'd like to bring up who are also very close to Elvis. The next man I'd like to bring up was with Elvis for over 10 years. If you see some of the old movies, you'll see this man somewhere along the way. He was Elvis' stand-in. Now, he was not Elvis' double. The double looks like the star; the stand-in stands there while they set up the scenery. But he was Elvis' stand-in in movies, and then when Elvis went on stage he became Elvis' wardrobe manager. We called him the 'broom.' Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Richard Davis.

Richard Davis came up to the podium and began his speech:

"Again I'd like to thank those in charge for making this possible, and for all you friends of Elvis for showing up.

There is not really much that I can say about Elvis that hasn't already been said this afternoon. Elvis was a great man, but you all know that. He had a lot of love . . . (he also becomes overwhelmed with emotion) excuse me . . . he had a lot of love and compassion in his heart for all humanity, that will never be surpassed. His achievements and accomplishments will live on forever and will never be surpassed. Elvis was a man who was loved by millions of people all over the world, and he will continue to be loved by millions of people. Thank you."

Richard couldn't continue any longer either, and he stepped back to conceal his feelings. George replaced Richard at the stand and announced the next valiant friend of Elvis:

"Thank you, Richard. There was another gentleman in our inner group, ladies and gentlemen, who's on this stage today. He was with Elvis for over 10 years. He was a good friend of mine. In fact, I was the one who introduced him to Elvis. He was the jolly guy of the group. He made us laugh a lot of times when we were on the road and having problems, or when something came about he would always inject some humor into our problems that we made along the way. He was one of Elvis' closest friends. And he was involved with security on the road. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Allan Fortas."

As Allan came to the stand a jet passed over the Circle G Ranch. He lifted his voice above the noise:

"I'd like to thank God for all the years that I worked with Elvis. I'd like to thank God for giving me the opportunity to be with him. Elvis meant a lot to the world as far as music and movies and everything. He left a lot for the world, and I hope everyone enjoys it like we do."

Another brave follower was forced to step back because of the overpowering feelings of love and respect for a man whom they followed as a master. George hurried up to the stand before everyone was carried away by ^{the} sentimental reunion. He introduced the next spokesman:

"Thank you, Allan. Next up, ladies and gentlemen, was a man who met Elvis in the army. When Elvis brought this guy home, we didn't know who he was at first. Then, of course, we were reminded that he had been on television with the Fogey River Boys and on the Red Foley television shows. He became a very integral part of Elvis' group. He not only became a part of Elvis' stage group, and the most visible part of the stage group besides Elvis, but he became one of Elvis' closest and dearest friends. And he lived with Elvis many, many years. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Charlie Hodge."

Charlie Hodge, dressed in dark red pants and black shirt, walked up to the podium and expressed his sentiments:

"Thank you. On the way out here to the ranch today, I was noticing people shopping in grocery stores, going about their normal everyday business. For them it was Wednesday,

August the 16th. And I envied them for that. I wished it could be for me just Wednesday, August the 16th, but it is not and it will never be. What I mostly remembered was all the good times and the fun we had, and how he looked forward to going on tour and singing for his fans. He loved everyone of us. When Elvis did the last TV special, the director came up to him and said: 'Mr. Presley, do you have any questions or instructions?' And Elvis said: 'Yeh. Do as much as you can for the people, cause they paid their hard-earned money to come in and see me perform. And I'm gonna do my best for them.' And he was just taking care of business. And that's what these gentlemen up here are doing. They know how I feel about them. Each one of them. Billy, I'm very proud of him. I love him like a brother. Marty, Richard, George, Ed and Allan. (A small airplane flew overhead) I wish all of you could have met Elvis and known him the way we've known him. And we're all going to try to take care of business."

Charlie took his seat, and George came back up to introduce the next spokesman:

"Thank you, Charlie. Ladies and gentlemen, there was another man who was a member of our group. He was involved also with the security department, and he's from the western part of the United States. But he joined Elvis on his many tours, and he looked after our man. Mr. Ed Parker. Ed, would

you come up and say a few words."

Ed Parker, whom Elvis had nicknamed "kahuna" or high priest, approached the speaker's stand. He was the biggest man on stage. He began his carefully planned speech:

"Although I didn't anticipate speaking today, I'm grateful for the opportunity of being here. There was once a philosopher who went up into the hills and he came back. And in his hand he had a rose, he had a hawthorn twig, and he had a lily. To the first gentleman he came across he gave this rose; to the second he gave the hawthorn twig; and to the third he gave this water lily. The first man upon receiving the rose said, 'This rose has a thorn in it.' The second said, 'This hawthorn twig has a dry leaf on it.' The third in turn said, 'This water lily has some mud on it.' The philosopher in turn gave to the first man not the rose, but the thorn; to the second man, the dry leaf, and not the twig; to the third, he gave the mud, and not the lily.

"Elvis was the philosopher. He never found any fault in us. He always saw the rose, the twig, the lily; not the thorn, the dry leaf, and the mud.

"There's another story I'd like to say relating to Elvis. There was once a young man who bought an elephant, and this elephant became very violent. Instead of wasting the amount of money that he had spent, he decided, since he was the owner of the elephant, that he would announce the fact to the audience

of the town that he would assassinate this particular elephant, hoping that he might get back some of his money. That night the elephant was in his cage, and before this assassination took place a young man entered and said: 'Mr. Owner, I'd like to have the privilege of talking to your elephant.' The owner at this time felt perhaps the elephant in its violent state would kill the young man. And this would increase the interest of the public. So the audience paid the money to see the show, and the young man went inside the cage. He started to speak a foreign language. Before long this elephant started to sway from side to side and took on a very friendly disposition. The young man then came out and said, 'That elephant is an Indian elephant, and you have to understand him and speak its language. And as that man walked out of that ring, disappointing the audience, the proprietor asked him: 'And sir, what is your name?' And this young man said: 'My name is Rudyard Kipling.'

"Elvis was also a Rudyard Kipling, because he knew how to identify with us. As Charlie had pointed out earlier, his fans were his primary aim. Many times if he performed badly he'd just as soon give his fans back their money. He was very disappointed when he did a bad performance. On a number of occasions I'd say Elvis was his worst critic. He criticized himself more than anyone of us.

"The last story I'd like to present is also related to

Elvis. It's a story about a person who owned a tobacco plantation, and as he would go down the farm he had this black servant who was very well known with his whip. And as he went on to his plantation he saw a fly on a horse. He said, 'Sam, please get your whip out. I want the fly on the horse to get off.' Sam would get his whip and whack! The fly would fall off the horse without hurting the horse. As he went further there was a dry leaf on a tree. The master also made the same demand to his servant--to hit the dry leaf off the tree. But then, as they went further down into the plantation, they came upon a beehive. The master looked at the servant and said, 'Sam, I want you to get your whip and to hit the beehive from the tree.' And the servant said, 'Mas'r, a fly on a horse is a fly on a horse; a dry leaf on a tree is a dry leaf on a tree, but dat dere is an organization.'

"And Elvis built just an organization. And I'm happy to say that you're all part of it."

Ed Parker finished his fine speech replete with anecdotes, and George returned to the podium to relate a story about the next speaker:

"Thank you, Ed Parker. Ladies and gentlemen, next up is a man who was part of our organization for a while. He's the former sheriff of Shelby County. But he was more than that. He was a good friend of Elvis'. His wife, Ann, graduated from the same class that Elvis and I did from Humes High School.

When I got married years ago, Elvis gave me my wedding, and he said I can invite anybody I wanted to go to Las Vegas. Of course, we took the entire inner crowd, the inner circle. This man and his wife went right along as our guest. And as I was walking over here today he was the first person I walked up to. I told him, I said: 'I called Mayor Chandler's office last week, and I called Mayor Nixon's office last week. And I said, what are you all going to do on August 16th. They said, well, you know, we don't have anything planned. I said, well, I have a few suggestions. And I gave them a few suggestions and nothing happened.' When I told this to this next man, he said, 'George, I guarantee you on August 16th from now on something will happen.' He is our new Shelby Co. mayor and a friend of all of us friends everywhere. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Bill Morris."

Mayor Morris stepped up to the podium to represent the political aspect of Elvis' organization:

"Thank you very much, George. And to all of you friends of Elvis, I have been sitting here for almost an hour now listening to the conversation and dialogue from those on this stage that was a part of the life of Elvis Presley from his boyhood days till he died. I grew up in a small town community near the same area where Elvis was born. I came to Memphis somewhat under similar circumstances. We went our different ways: he became a great entertainer, and it's been

my role to take a part in the political system of Shelby Co. One of the outstanding opportunities of my life was getting to know Elvis Presley. And you've heard what type of heart that he had, and you know what kind of music that he performed, and you know what a great entertainer that he was. But he was something much more than that. I had the opportunity to see the man that cared about the people of America who were on drugs and abused drugs. I had the opportunity to know a man who spent literally hundreds of thousands of dollars to help prevent any further disease and drug abuse. (A big jet roared above the Circle G Ranch, and the words that Bill Morris continued to speak were drowned out for about a minute). I saw a man who stood before presidents and leaders of nations . . . (the jet noise thundered one last time). He cared about me, and he cared about you. And that was the life that he lived whether it was out in an apartment where he lived, or whether it was in a palatial suite in a hotel in Las Vegas, or in the sky in his own airplane, his own jet. Elvis Presley never changed. His heart was compatible with the world. And yet he will live on and on, because you and I will make it so. And as mayor-elect for Shelby Co. I can only tell you this, that August 16th, 1979 will be a different set of circumstances as far as arrangements in paying tribute to Elvis Presley. (The audience gave him a thunderous applause).

"And you come again, and I hope that you will. We're

grateful for your appearance here today. Elvis would love to walk out and touch every one of you, to kiss your cheek and to hold your hand, and to tell you that he's grateful that you're in Memphis, and you're with his friends: the people he cried with, the people he fussed with, the people he lived with, he slept with, he ate with. We will die with him each day that we live. Carry with you all of those joyous memories that will make this world be better because Elvis Presley spent those years on this earth.

"A poem was written on the day after the death of Elvis Presley by Carol Burke. May I share it with you?

'He was the boy from Mississippi, the man from Tennessee
Who unlocked the doors and set the sound of music free.
He put his arms around the world and gave it all he had to give;
Elvis left a little sunshine somewhere everyday he lived.

He sang about the good times, he sang about the hard times,
Of sad times and happy days like we've all known,
And he did it his way with a sound and style that was his own.

Elvis was a loving man, a caring man,
With the spirit of a restless sea;
And the whole world loved the boy from Mississippi,
The man from Tennessee.'

Thank you."

Bill Morris turned the speaker's stand over to George, who proceeded to introduce the next political representative:

"Thank you, Bill Morris. And I guarantee you what Bill Morris says he does, and you'll see something different a year from today. Ladies and gentlemen, you may recall about a year and a half or two years ago, I forget the exact time

element, but a terrible tornado struck the state of Mississippi. And Elvis got together with Colonel Parker, which was the kind of guy Elvis was, and he said: 'Let's do a charity show in Jackson, Mississippi for those tornado victims. We'll pay all expenses.' Elvis even paid for his own ticket into his own concert. That was the kind of man he was. And the man who coordinated that concert was governor of the state of Mississippi, who is not with us today. But the man who represents the governor of the great state of Mississippi is here. I'd like to call up here Dave Hamlin."

The representative came up to the podium and delivered the governor's tribute to the state's favorite son:

"Thank you, George. The governor sends his regrets for not being able to be here and honor the King--Elvis. But he did say that he hoped next year he'd be able to come and participate in the service. I don't know if you know it or not, but our governor was born and raised about 20 miles west of Tupelo. He knew Elvis and he loved Elvis, and he took a great interest in what Elvis did. I don't think I have to stand here today and tell you what our governor or Mississippi thought about Elvis. If you're like I am, you read everything you can find about Elvis. I think you read in most papers around that our governor said: 'When we lost Elvis Presley, our state lost the greatest good-will ambassador we've ever known or will ever know.' Elvis gave us a life. I think the most

important thing Elvis did was he taught us how to love, how to love our fellow man. God bless you."

George returned to announce the closing speaker for the memorial service:

"Ladies and gentlemen, next is a man who I've known for years around Memphis, Tennessee. He wasn't necessarily an inner member of our group, but he came down to the ranch and expressed his desire to do something. And I think he's a very sincere and genuine person. He's an internationally known song-writer. And he has some reflections for you today. Mr. C.G. 'Red' Matthews."

The man with the red hair and the white countenance on his face delivered his message:

"Thank you, George. Ladies and gentlemen, it's indeed a pleasure to be here with you, standing in the light of God and this beautiful white cross to talk about the reflections of the memories and also of the spirit of God. Thereabout in mid-February I had a dream, and in it was a beautiful picture. And also in it was a message. And the next morning I woke up seeing the picture, remembering what was said in the dream. For six weeks I carried this within my mind. I heard it everyday. I seen it everyday. I had been acquainted with a person for two years, Tonie, who brought me closer to God and who wanted me to know the total sum of awareness of the love of God. She taught that the soul's within you and

the spirit's within you. So I carried this dream and this reflection in my mind. I had to tell someone, so I told Tonie about it. She said: 'God wants you to do something about it, that's the reason you remember it.' She kept telling me this and I did. I had a 9X12 full color portrait made for the cover of this song which is seldom played for anyone, because I thought the people who loved Elvis, and the way that I remembered him having met him only 3 times in my life, to a great extent esteemed him to be a man among men. And a man that liked to have you know what he felt and would like to know how you felt, but he didn't have the time to. He wanted to touch us all, as I said.

"The picture that I made a 19X25 of reflected a lot, because it was a reflection of Memphis. And in the dream that I remember, I heard his name several times. So I employed Steve, who couldn't be with us; I was expecting him to unveil a 30X40 oil painting. But I'll be showing you a 9X12 and a 19X25, which is of 'The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.' So God bless you all. I know you'll love Elvis throughout your life, because the spirit will dwell among us, and he's an undying spirit. He's an undying spirit, and he chose to do it his way because he saw his destiny. As God says, we must see our destiny. But he saw one destiny and refused it and decided that he would do it his way. As he said, Blessyou. God bless you. I hope that you get a message from his reflection and also from the song that I felt would capture and give Elvis the recognition that he would like to

have, not to be glorified, but in respect of him, to know that he has left a message. And through God, and through me, I hope this is a message that you've been looking for; it will bring you closer to the All Mighty, and hear the spirit speaking through your soul. This is great. I have learned quite a lot about my spirit and my soul. And you just heard a man whom I met but just a few days ago, Mr. Charlie Hodge, who has a lot of spirit, a lot of vision, of foreseeing and foretelling. And I know that he's a god-send. And if anybody knew Elvis Presley, Charlie Hodge knew Elvis Presley to know God, and Charlie Hodge knows God. And I've made an arrangement to meet with Charlie Hodge to see if I in any way in my reflection can identify with him. Thank you."

Red Matthews finally relinquished the speaker's stand to George Kline, who delivered the tribute he had opportunely discovered in the paper:

"Thank you, Red Matthews. Ladies and gentlemen, this morning I read in the paper a letter that was sent in to the Commercial Appeal. And it was sent in by the Elvis Presley Fan Club of Chesapeake, Virginia. And it touches upon something that Billy mentioned and that Marty mentioned. And if you will, I would like to read this, because I think that all of Elvis' close friends would agree with what I'm about to read. It's entitled 'The Last Farewell:'

"How sad you look today my friends . . .
 I see you weep for me,
 A man you thought so much about and now,
 Who's ceased to be;
 You gave me wealth and happiness over the many years,
 How blue it makes me feel today to see you all in tears;
 I was grateful for the things you did to make a star of me,
 Forgive me friends, for things undone,
 That now can never be;
 I shall treasure all your loyalty knowing that you cared,
 I remember happy times gone by--
 That so many of us shared;
 Don't make a shroud around me friends--
 Don't make a cult of me,
 Don't put me up on a pedestal--
 For all the world to see;
 Please--just keep me somewhere in your heart,
 A little part of you,
 That I may always stay a memory--
 In all and everything you do;
 Dry your eyes now--smile again--
 And let the mourning cease,
 I simply ask of you my friends--
 To let me rest in peace!

As the poem was read another jet streaked through the sky above the ranch. When the reading was over, George requested that the song be played and that everyone rise to their feet. The introductory poem, narrated by Red Matthews, was broadcast over the small speakers; there was organ music in the background as the message of the poem came through:

"On August the 16th, 1977, the Lord beckoned and the angels carried Elvis' soul on to rest. Elvis' reflections here on earth are evidence of total awareness. Though his body has died, his spirit and the reflections of the undying soul will remain here on earth forever. Elvis was constantly reminded, by the spirit within him, of his body's demands and

his soul's desires. His spirit directed him; his spirit answered every question that entered his mind. He knew the time; he could read between the line; he knew when and where he was going. What he felt he wanted others to feel. He wanted to, and he touched all souls. He loved the Lord, and the Lord loved Elvis. He saw his destiny and he refused it, like he said, 'I did it my way.' While in meditation he accepted the Lord's invitation. When he finally got through to the Lord, he saw life's other side. And the spirit in him cried, 'Lord, let the angels carry my soul on to rest.' I say to you friends of the world, people who love Elvis, let forever be love. Cherish the reflections of his undying immortal soul. Thank you."

The song was played next. The lyrics revolved around four letters: M for Memphis, H for History, E for Elvis, T for Tennessee. The recording wasn't too clear and the connections were weak. Even before the song was half begun, the sound faded away and everything stopped. George came to the rescue once again as he made the final announcement:

"Ladies and gentlemen, that just about . . . I'd wish you'd remain rising if you would please, standing that is. At this moment we're all gonna pause. Instead of bringing someone up for a closing prayer as the program says, I'm gonna let each and everyone of you say your own prayer about Elvis. So if you'll bow your heads for just a moment please."

The silence extended for 23 seconds. The stillness of meditation diffused itself throughout the estimated gathering of 400 fans. A slight breeze blew away the heat and the tears from the faces of the loyal devotees. A bird chirped and a baby created its first sounds.

Finally, George broke the silence and gave the closing benediction:

"Thank you very much. And I leave you with this thought: There was only one Elvis Presley, there is only one Elvis Presley, and there will always be only one Elvis Presley. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen."

The fans applauded the fine effort made by the friends of Elvis. It was a memorable memorial service.

CHAPTER 19
HOMeward BOUND

After the memorial service I slowly drove back to the hustle and bustle of life in the city. I turned on my radio to WMC and heard Elvis sing "My Way," the song the memorial service was scheduled to end with. Instead of hearing it at the service, I was hearing it on the radio. I drove by Graceland and saw people still hanging around the gates. A sign was on display in front: "We do not question why, we all just came by today to say our first goodbye."

In the evening we sat in our motel room and watched the news and the special about Elvis on TV. Action Cam on Channel 5 brought us back to Graceland for a review of the action of the day: "It is estimated about 10,000 people have traveled here, and they've come from all over the world. Hundreds of cars, buses and campers were crowding the front of Graceland where just about everything with the Presley name or picture was being sold. One devoted fan named Serita MacReed from Mississippi even has a five-year-old whose first two names

are Elvis Aaron. 'Soon as I found out I was pregnant, I said if it was gonna be a boy I was gonna name him Elvis. And if it was a girl I was gonna name her Lisa Marie.'" There was more news, but somehow that small detail stuck in my mind for some reason.

The Special on Elvis on Channel 13 relived the moments of August 16, 1977 for those who were there and recaptured the solemn occasion for those who weren't there. We were given a chance to see the view from a hovering helicopter as the motorcade slowly drove up Elvis Presley Boulevard to Forest Hill Cemetery. Several fans expressed their sentiments, and one in particular impressed me with the content of what was said: "I just talked to Col. Parker and he said for me to tell everybody that Elvis is still with us and that the Colonel's not going and that he's got many things coming up and he's gonna keep Elvis alive for years to come. That the Colonel and Elvis will still be here just like he never left us." One lady expressed the same feeling: "I don't feel that Elvis died. I just think he moved to a better town." Another lady rephrased an opinion that was shared by many devotees: "You must not mourn too heavily and too deeply for some spirit that has gone; in my opinion, you hold him back from enjoying heaven."

An unexpected twist was given to the special by the appearance of Sonny West, who was still trying to justify his

controversial book: "He knew we weren't gonna chop him up, He knew. He knows now, I'm telling you. . . .And we tried to be with him, to protect him and keep him happy as best we could, I swear to God we did, man. And if he had read the book he would have found in there that we were trying to get him with a challenge. That's what I meant when I said maybe it would do some good, for him, for the drug culture, for people who realized no one is out of reach of drugs, man." But his plea for understanding seemed to fall on deaf ears.

We went to sleep early that night. We had a long trip back home ahead of us, and we needed all the reserve energy we could get. In the morning my wife woke up with a big smile on her face again and announced that she had seen Elvis again.

"You had a dream of Elvis?" I asked. I was amazed that he appeared again to her and not to me.

"It was just a small one," she modestly explained. "We were someplace working together--me, you, and him. You know, just like a regular place. It wasn't anything, you know, just working together."

"What kind of work was it?" I inquired.

"Factory work," she answered. She laughed.

"All three of us?" I queried. "You mean I was there, too, in the dream?"

"Yes," she reassured me. "You were there, too, working

with us in a factory."

"You mean he's still traveling with us?" I questioned.

"With me, especially," she stated proudly. She laughed.

"That's Elvis for you," I said.

"He's staying close to me, ain't he?" asked my wife.

"He sure is," I replied with a little bit of green in my eye.

"Maybe he's trying to convince me that he's still around," she postulated, "since I don't believe."

"That's right," I agreed with her assumption. "I'm the believer. The one's that don't believe are the ones that need to be convinced."

After that friendly encouragement and assurance that he was still around, we both felt thankful that somehow Elvis had made our pilgrimage successful and full of wonders.

On our way home we stopped in Arvada, Colorado to see if by any chance Elvis' personal psychic, Lou Wright, would be home. After trying real hard to find her well hidden home, we discovered that she was gone for the week-end. A tiny voice inside of me told me, 'It's time for you to quit, man.' But I was not the quitting type. As I walked away from the home of the person I had hoped would give me some answers to questions I had about Elvis' spiritual quest, I looked through the transparent window and noticed a sheet of music on an expensive organ. The words on the sheet of music

conveyed a message: "We've Only Just Begun." Later I tried to contact her through a letter, but it was to no avail. I realized that she wanted to keep her relationship with Elvis private.

As we came nearer home I noticed a peculiar sight in the sky. We had just driven past the Mormon center in Salt Lake City, Utah. The full moon was shining bright in the semi-dark western sky. On the horizon the first signs of daybreak were visible. I kept looking at the ever-present lunar landscape. The shaded features on the white sphere began to take the shape of a person's wavy hair. I seemed to see a profile of Elvis with sideburns stamped on the face of the heavenly orb. The left side of his faintly visible face seemed to turn just slightly in the pilgrim's direction to offer guidance and solace. I breathed a soft 'Thanks, Elvis' in the direction of the image.

It had been a pleasure to travel in the steps of a great man and to see all the good that he had done for the world in his short span of time on this earth. I was wondering if the people of America would reciprocate. Many people had expressed a desire to see January 8, the singer's birthday, set aside as a national holiday. Many people had expressed a desire to see monuments and museums established in honor of the influential and innovative entertainer. Elvis' home town of Memphis had even announced that an Elvis Presley theater, with a stage show

like one of Elvis' Las Vegas shows, would open at Libertyland before the second memorial anniversary rolled around. I felt it would be interesting to watch the development of the legend of Elvis as it grew bigger and bigger.

When we finally arrived back home I began to compile all the material I had gathered on my pilgrimage. I was impressed by a new meditation song to inspire my mind in combining the essential bits and pieces I had picked up on my journey in the steps of Elvis. I used the song daily to direct my thoughts. The song was taken from the album "Love Letters from Elvis" and it was entitled simply "Life." The song was a digression from Elvis' usual love ballads and rock 'n' roll hits. Its lyrics expressed the depths of Elvis' metaphysical mind as they sought to explain the cosmology of the universe as seen through Elvis' eyes. The song began with a rippling cascade of melodic notes which swirled from a symphony of ethereal sounds. The deep virile voice of Elvis vocalized the ancient belief that in the depths of space before the beginning of the human race a sourceless and timeless source stirred and brought forth the birth of intelligence. The Word superseded intelligence, and then heavenly powers began their task of forming matter. The highest goal of nature was reached when the ageless soul of Love was clothed with the breath of everlasting life. The emanations of universes and diverse creations soon afterwards culminated in the production

of a perfect man, whose love reflected the archetypal ideal. But life had within it the seed of its own destruction--greed. The fires of innate passions disrupted the course of love, and a man was chosen to bear the cross of physical matter in order to transform the downward thrust of hate into the uplifting sublimation of love. Love was the only true way of life. That was the concluding message of Elvis.

I continued to seek out reports on Elvis. The mere mention of his name caused me to stop and investigate. I began to pay close attention to magazines and news reports related to Elvis. I even kept a journal of the dream-visions of Elvis that steadily poured in through my sensitively tuned super-conscious mind. The dream-visions at times appeared to be short and insignificant, but I soon realized that even the most trivial detail might turn out to be significant in its own right.

National Enquirer, August 22, 1978, announced the opportunity for a lucky Enquirer reader to win the King's last ring, which he wore on his final concert tour, and which had been independently appraised at \$13,425.86! Elvis' personal jeweler, Lowell Hays, helped Elvis design the ring. The ring was designed according to Elvis' numerological insights; his number was eight (day of birth), and since four corresponded to eight, Elvis chose four black star sapphires; four symbolized the material universe, and the four sapphires were

positioned in the four corners of the glittering 14-karat gold base. In between the star sapphires which Elvis closely identified with were 5 enormous diamonds which formed the shape of a cross between the 4 black stones. The five white diamonds and 4 black sapphires together formed an impressive number of 9--Elvis' birth number. According to Mr. Hays, the ring started cutting into Elvis' finger during his last tour, and Elvis also knocked the center diamond loose, so the ring was returned to him for repairs. Elvis died before Hays could return the ring, which automatically became the property of the jeweler because of unpaid bills. I never found out who became the proud owner of the priceless ring, but I knew that it would have a history of its own.

People Weekly, August 21, 1978, carried a front-page look at the "Elvis Legend" one year later. Billy Smith made his appearance in the article on the latest developments in the lives of those closest to Elvis by saying: "He was the light that shined on everybody. Once the light's gone, you have to look for something else." But the light was not gone!

The NBC-TV Special with Ann-Margret was repeated on Tuesday, August, 29, 1978. The 3-hour repeat of the 1977 tribute still had the flavor of newness as I listened to the vibrato voice of Elvis vibrate its way into my heart with his combined gospel and rhythm 'n' blues rendition of "WHERE COULD I GO BUT TO THE LORD," followed by "I'M SAVED." The

climax of Elvis' philosophy and what he truly believed was expressed in the song "IF I CAN DREAM." The special from Hawaii brought back memories of my first encounter with Elvis on the shores of the island of Kauai. There was something at the show which struck my observant eye: the Russian word for Elvis was misspelled; the fourth letter was printed "N," which in reality was a mirror-image of the actual form of the letter.

September 4, 1978. Entry in Journal: At dawn I awoke with the memory of a dream-vision involving Elvis' reflection. I was in the Army and the "man from Tupelo, Mississippi" stood out amongst the men to receive an honorary award. He was credited with contributing to the Army's success. I wanted to shout out the name Elvis Presley, but I didn't. I realized it was understood by everyone who the "man from Tupelo, Mississippi" was.

Today was the first time both my wife and I had simultaneous dream-visions of Elvis. She saw Elvis as a young man, about 25-years-old. He was at a hotel lobby with two friends, who were actually bodyguards. Elvis hugged her in a friendly manner and he also hugged our little boy. The astounding part about the dream was that not too many people recognized Elvis as he stood in the lobby. In fact, his two friends were going around and telling the people in the area, "look, there's Elvis over there." When the females found out Elvis was there,

my wife told Elvis, "I guess I'll let the other girls hug you." And she left.

On the same day we watched Wayne Newton perform a short tribute to Elvis from the Grand Ole Opry in Opryland. The performance was recorded in September, 1977; it was a benefit performance for the Diabetic Association. Wayne even gave a scarf to a girl in the front row. The song he sang in tribute to Elvis was "If I Can Dream." He summed up in a few words what he felt about the man: "It doesn't matter how he goes, what matters is the way you touch or the hearts that you touch along the way."

I was still paying monthly visits to the chapel to discuss Elvis and to receive instruction in psychic phenomenon. I wanted to understand the man by absorbing the information that he had absorbed. There was so much to learn about the dimension which was invisible to the physical eyes. Orlene impressed me at times by her ability to see auras and transmit messages from spiritual beings which co-existed alongside our physical plane. She even had a message for me, which to me meant a message from Elvis, because she understood the constant vibrations that I was sending out to Elvis for his continuous assistance with my project and task. She said: "There is a person with long, black hair, signifying strength, on your right side who will give you strength to carry on with your project."

National Enquirer, September 19, 1978, printed in dark bold letters on its front page the result of an amazing seance: "Elvis talks . . . tells relatives there is life after death." The spirit encounter was transmitted through a 33-year-old housewife named Dorothy Sherry and witnessed by a world-renowned psychic researcher named Dr. Hans Holzer. On hand during the convincing demonstration of the presence of Elvis' spirit were Elvis' stepmother, Dee Presley, and his stepbrother, David Stanley. Elvis' spirit communicated the message that the whole point of the meeting was to verify the existence of life beyond the grave. In Elvis' spirit's words: "If people would just believe it, it would change the world and mankind wouldn't be so damn stupid." The spirit of Elvis also showed concern for his daughter Lisa and his father. The stepbrother was impressed with the authenticity of the seance because Elvis used the exact words he said to David two days before he died: "I'll be around . . . I'll take care of you." Even Dee Presley was touched by the emotional encounter and added that only one other person besides herself knew what the medium revealed: "that Elvis tried to reach me on the day of his death."

September 25, 1978. Entry in Journal: Sometime this morning between 5 and 6 I astral traveled to the home of Lou Wright, Elvis' personal psychic. I talked with her and asked her certain questions about Elvis. She told me that she would find out the information that I needed. She said: "I'll talk

to the old boy." It seemed as if she wanted to signify by her statement that Elvis had lived many previous lives and that he was an old soul.

I wrote to Lou Wright the following day, but I never received an answer, as I previously stated. In the meantime, I kept my eye open for Elvis' movies on TV. There was the movie "Harum Scarum," which described Elvis as the "Prince of Peace" and the "Most Exalted One." Two days after the movie I had another dream related to Elvis.

October 4, 1978. Entry in Journal: I dreamed early this morning of Elvis' kinsfolk and manager. Vernon was eulogizing his son at a conference, Vester was sitting in the lobby, and Colonel Parker was just walking in. The Colonel walked in silently and he had a morose look on his face; he had the appearance of a small chubby fellow. I couldn't remember the exact words Vernon used to describe his son, but I distinctly recalled hearing him use the words "Prince of Peace."

That same evening Dick Clark featured a salute to Elvis by eight musical impersonators on his variety show. Elvis was extolled as "the hero of the people all over the world." The three impersonators that stood out in my mind were: Rick Saucedo, Dennis Wise, and Allan Meyer.

October 23, 1978. Entry in Journal: This morning I awoke from an inspiring dream-vision of Elvis, who was incognito.

My wife and I were at a concert, and we were waiting in the lounge for the show to begin. I noticed a man in his early thirties with shoulder-length hair which was slightly disheveled; he also was wearing a beard. The appearance was similar to Elvis from the movie "Charro." I came up to the man whom I knew to be Elvis and asked him a question: "Are your outfits with designs filled with symbolical meaning?" "Yes," he answered. I sat by him and started talking to him about the various meanings of the jumpsuits. Then I called my wife over to sit between us as we continued our conversation. Later, as I was walking to the men's room, I heard the loud-speakers play the song "He Arose."

Soon afterwards I "coincidentally" ran across an article in the Winter, 1978 issue of "Official UFO Encyclopedia" entitled: "Elvis' clone is loose in the streets! 100,000 reward for return of clone!!" Why I say coincidentally is because I had just finished reading In His Image--The Cloning of a Man by David Rorvik one day before I spotted the unexpected magazine on the stands. I had read in the book that the boy was born on December 11, 1976 (for numerology buffs, the date adds up to 1999, which could signify the last year of our century; the number is broken down to a 1, which would imply a new beginning). The interesting factor in the supposedly science-fiction story, which appears to be slightly prophetic in its tone, is that Elvis' clone supposedly turns

out to exhibit erratic and violent behavior.

Modern People, November 19, 1978, printed the headline: "Send Elvis to Heaven." Inside, the psychic Dolores Dargas revealed that all the fuss connected with the image of Elvis was drawing him back earthward. She felt that Elvis needed to be released from the "chains of physical life" by holding a "quiet vigil for Elvis in the temple of their hearts," instead of exploiting him. She also felt that once Elvis was freed from the emotional ties with the living his soul could then proceed to re-enter the earthly plane. Dolores Dargas even predicted that "the soul of Elvis will someday return to live among us," adding that his new goal would be to achieve "greater spiritual satisfaction, which his soul sought diligently but did not find as the man we called Elvis."

Several days later I saw Elvis' six-foot, 400 pound bronze replica at the Las Vegas Hilton on the Mike Douglas Show. The statue was a creation of the sculptor Carl Romanelli. Also on display at the Hilton were: Elvis' guitar from his last performance, a priceless jumpsuit last worn by Elvis, and a memorial plaque made in tribute to Elvis. So this was the great unveiling that Elvis' father and the Colonel presented at their "Always Elvis" festival from Sept. 1-10, 1978; the dedication of the life size Elvis statue occurred on Sept. 8, at 11:00 A.M.

The Star, November 28, 1978, presented Elvis' stepmother,

Dee Presley, in an exclusive preview of a sensational book that she was working on. The name of the book was not revealed, but I found one statement in the article which I thought was noteworthy. Her last words in the article are: "He believed in reincarnation, so if he is back among us I hope he has got what he wanted." The "if" in her statement exposed a fact that I found out about months later. Dee Presley had heard of a baby who was proclaimed as the reincarnation of Elvis. That's why she said "if he's back among us."

December 5, 1978. Entry in Journal: This morning I had faint reflections of Elvis in a dream-vision. It was about the upcoming film on Elvis' life, and the person playing the part of Elvis was trying too much to be like a copy of Elvis that was standing in the form of a model beside him. The real Elvis was looking on in spirit. There were three of them! The Elvis in spirit was chuckling to himself. I woke up hearing the music of the spheres in the song "One broken heart for sale."

December 9, 1978. Entry in Journal: Last night I saw the Elvis archives during astral traveling. I saw many books on Elvis; one book stood out--Ed Parker's Inside Elvis. I saw many books in Elvis' section which were on topics related to Elvis, such as books on Memphis, the home town of Elvis.

A week before Christmas I started picking up strong signals from Elvis saying "I'll be home for Christmas."