

CHAPTER 2

BOOKS ARE DOORS

After my Hawaiian experience I was constantly aware of vibrations sent by Elvis. I would later find out on my pilgrimage to Graceland that I wasn't the only one affected by the electro-magnetic force transmitted by the energy field that radiated from Elvis. I was trying to understand what was happening to me and why I was doing the things I felt compelled to do. Since I was willing to be led into this extraterrestrial experience, I was soon to discover many things about Elvis that have never been explained by any of his contemporaries.

I sat with the rest of the world watching the news specials about Elvis that fateful week, and I pondered the significance of the lamentable event. Personally, I felt like others that Elvis was King and that his legend would live on. I looked out over the beaches of Waikiki and out toward Diamond Head the day the specials came over the air, and I realized that Elvis had made vast and towering contributions

to the world.

Back on the mainland I continued to listen to Elvis' music day after day. I began to understand his life more and more, for his life story is written into his songs. I began to get ideas from his songs. One day when I was reminiscing about what I had experienced in Kauai, I impulsively picked up a pencil and started writing about Elvis. The words began to flow automatically from my pencil. The album I was listening to was "Elvis Country," and for the first time I noticed a theme running through the album. I had never noticed a theme in any of his other records. The theme was even set into quotes above the picture of three-year-old Elvis and above the title of the album: "I'm 10,000 Years Old." On the back side of the album was a black and white picture of Elvis singing into a microphone with eyes closed, and above the picture was a wooden fence with Elvis printed five times in white between the posts. I was later to discover the significance of the number five, his name number, but for the moment I was entranced by his comical toying with the idea of reincarnation.

I was only ten years old when Elvis became popular, and I can still remember listening to "Heartbreak Hotel," "Jailhouse Rock," "Teddy Bear," "Hound Dog," "Don't Be Cruel," "Blue Suede Shoes," and so forth and so on. Elvis was part of my life from the beginning. But the intensity of his

being never had moved me as forcefully as it did when I started to write about Elvis. I hadn't even experienced such elation when I saw Elvis at beautiful Lake Tahoe. At that time I was simply amused by his tomfoolery and by his ability to clown around with the audience, at times teasing them with jokes thrown directly at them and at other times simply mocking himself. The man who had respect for everyone was also the court jester who appeared to have respect for no one. Even when he sang a spiritual song, I detected a faint note of innocent laughter when he started singing "O Lord my God," and immediately demanded "put a light on my feet." And lo and behold the light appeared on his feet. He was truly the master of the situation.

Now reincarnation wasn't something that I expected from Elvis. After all, I was brought up believing the same way he did--the Assembly of God way. So I knew the idea of reincarnation was unacceptable to that denomination. I listened to the album again and again. Could Elvis have been really talking about reincarnation? Was this the Elvis that I heard sing "Peace in the Valley" when I was going to church as a little boy? Or did Elvis change, as I had, and as a whole generation of youth had changed during the revolutionary 60s?

As I listened to the lyrics, I saw images of Elvis receding back in time. The further back in time I went,

the more obscure was the view. The space-time machine stopped revolving in my head, and I was standing with Elvis and watching pharoah's daughter pulling Moses out of the waters of the Nile River. Then the scene quickly changed, and I was watching King David's life being saved by Elvis, who was rewarded for his courage with a beautiful wife. The show I was watching with telepathic eyes switched to a comical episode where Elvis continued to reveal what his eyes had seen; before our very eyes we saw Peter, Paul, and Moses actually playing the familiar children's game of ring around the roses. As if that wasn't enough, Elvis proceeded to say that he was there when Noah spent 100 years building the ark, and he managed to crawl in the window after dark. Watching that episode made me burst at the seams, and I continued laughing through the rest of the show as we both watched Jonah eat the whale and Daniel swish the lion's tail. Elvis added one final touch to his fun-filled lives by riding off the screen of my mind on a log.

After watching the lives of Elvis flicker and disappear from the screen of my mind, I shook my head to regain my senses. The images remained imprinted on my mind for a long time. I started to write what I had seen. I tried to reconstruct the roots of this great and magnificent soul. I started from Atlantis, since that would be roughly 10,000 years ago, and I wrote about his reign as a king there. I

wrote and wrote, showing how the king would return each time in a new disguise, with a new name, living in different countries, and assuming various roles. After I finished writing the book, which I tentatively titled "Elvis--The King Returns," I laid it down for a while and thought about what I had written. The subject matter was definitely original, but it was too fantastic to be taken seriously. By Easter I had completed proof-reading and making final touch-ups, and I asked a close friend for a critical appraisal. Two weeks later he told me that not too many people would be able to swallow reincarnation as far as Elvis' life was concerned. Well, I laid that book on the shelf to gather dust while I started planning a more realistic approach to presenting the Elvis who was still tugging at my heart strings. I read everything I could find to give me new ideas.

Even though I was convinced that reincarnation was very important to comprehend in order to understand Elvis, it was difficult to prove it. Elvis wasn't just a great singer or entertainer; he was a great soul that changed the course of cultural history in America. I believed that some of the things written by his friends were true, like for example Elvis' addiction to mystical religion, numerology, psychic phenomenon, and the belief in reincarnation. Elvis: What Happened? was a stirring and thought-provoking book and Chapter 14 on psychic phenomenon interested me the most.

Like most people who loved Elvis, I couldn't accept some of the stories they told about his involvement with drugs. It did appear as if they exaggerated certain negative aspects for emphasis, but it was a gambit which they lost on, because their actions demonstrated betrayal and lack of faith in their master.

Another book shed yet more light on the Elvis I had come to know. Becky Yancey's My Life With Elvis had a chapter on psychic phenomenon (she calls it self-realization), which coincidentally happened to be also Chapter 14, but her presentation omitted any mention of reincarnation. That seemed odd to me, because after reading Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda (whom Becky mentions), I discovered numerous references to reincarnation, especially in Chapter 35. But such an omission is understandable in the light of Becky's Baptist upbringing. However, Becky inadvertently opened the door to understanding Elvis. Since Elvis was so involved with Yogananda's teachings, I naturally concluded that Elvis had been as strongly influenced by the eastern mystic as I had been. So this was why I felt at one with Elvis in Hawaii. We had both discovered the indivisible Spirit!

Another book entitled The Private Elvis by May Mann opened still another door into what could be considered the subconscious mind of Elvis. May Mann revealed in Chapter

Eighteen that she sent a book called The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran to Elvis for his perusal. The poetical mysticism of Gibran is somewhat different than the scientific mysticism of Yogananda; nevertheless, both strive to transmit self-awareness or self-realization or knowledge of the God within, whatever one wants to call it. They both speak of a universal life and the ability of man to transcend physical consciousness and become one with spirit. One curious statement from Kahlil Gibran was to dwell in my mind for a long time: "Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to eternity" (p. 90).

Another book sort of amused me in that it talked of Elvis being consumed by a spiritual struggle between God and Satan. Elvis by Richard Mann was unmistakably meant to be read by Christians who couldn't understand the complexities of psychic phenomenon, or what they derogatively decry as the occult. These are the people who couldn't understand what was happening to Elvis, whom they describe as backsliding from the beliefs of early childhood and venturing into the world of sin. Let us not be too hasty to condemn the king until we examine all the facts, please. Myopic vision is at best very limited.

Finally, I read Jerry Hopkins biography, Elvis, a biography which is jam-packed with information about Elvis, including an astrological interpretation of Elvis' Capricorn

characteristics. At times Jerry touches on the transformation Elvis went through and which he almost forceably put the whole world through. He pictures Elvis as capitalizing on his experience with pentecostal preachers of his Tupelo childhood by translating hellfire and damnation into "Good Rockin' Tonight." A new message for a new Age. And the book which helps make the transition into the new age of total awareness, in my opinion, is a book that Jerry, bless his soul, is the only one to mention; it's a book that Elvis is reading as he leaves the U.S for his tour of duty in Germany. The book is called Poems That Touch the Heart.

CHAPTER 3

POEMS THAT TOUCH THE HEART

Poems That Touch the Heart is a collection of inspirational and devotional verse full of wisdom and heart-warming emotion. The author, A. I. Alexander, the creator and conductor of the Good Will Court, a mediation board established for the betterment of human relations, expounds a philosophy of life which embraces the hearts of every man and woman. It is easy to see how Elvis was strongly influenced by such a purposeful book. The purpose of the book became so engrained in Elvis that his own purpose in life became thereby more meaningful, not only to himself but to everyone he came in contact with. The book seeks to elevate depressed and disillusioned modern man from the pitfalls of fears and anxieties to the invigorating horizons of the good and the beautiful.

The description which depicts Elvis' role in the world is dramatically portrayed in the introduction:

And if a lowly singer dries one tear,

Or soothes one humble human heart in pain,

Be sure his homely verse to God is dear,

And not one stanza has been sung in vain. (p.xxiii).

The optimistic character-building poems that follow this thought-provoking stanza delve into every possible human emotion and into every possible solution to life's difficulties. Each person will see what he needs for his own life, and the reader no doubt will be able to identify certain poems with Elvis' thoughts, moods, emotions, and actions. I made my own list. If you take the trouble to obtain the book as I did, you'll be as greatly rewarded by reading it as Elvis was when he made the great transatlantic trip from America to Germany.

In order to understand Elvis better, which by now was becoming more and more my ultimate objective, I tried to glean the most pertinent passages. At the same time I tried to get in tune with the feelings and vibrations of Elvis, and I tried to sense what passages would have touched Elvis' heart. I had to take into account all that I had read about Elvis and all that Elvis meant to me as a dedicated fan who desired to transmit the spiritual essence of a man who had performed his mission on earth. And that mission was to spread good will wherever he traveled.

The premise upon which Elvis built his musical career was: "Would you have your songs endure? Build on the human heart" (p.xxvii). His somewhat self-praising stance is taken from the anonymous line: "The world is full of folks, it's

true, but there was only one of you" (p.30). A poem entitled "Mistakes" by Ella Wheeler explains in philosophical tones man's purpose on earth, which is to continually struggle on earth through various experiences, good and bad, so that ultimately he may look from the mountain peak and value the truths gained through past mistakes. The song Elvis sang which came to my mind when I read this uplifting poem was "Lord, This Time You Gave Me a Mountain."

I'm sure Elvis chuckled when he read the following anonymous poem:

A laugh is just like music.
 It lingers in the heart,
 And where its melody is heard
 The ills of life depart;
 And happy thoughts come crowding
 Its joyful notes to greet;
 A laugh is just like music
 For making living sweet. (p.44).

If Elvis built on any religious foundation or followed any creed without wavering, it would have to be the following excerpt from an anonymous poem entitled "A Good Creed:"

If any little word of ours
 Can make one life the brighter;
 If any little song of ours
 Can make one heart the lighter;

God help us speak that little word,

And take our bit of singing

And drop it in some lonely vale

To set the echoes ringing. (p.60).

Looking back in retrospect, I'm sure Elvis must have taken the following anonymous bit of sound advice to his heart and kept it there till his closing days:

I am going your way, so let us go hand in hand.

You help me and I'll help you.

We shall not be here forever.

One day the kind old nurse will come and rock us
all to sleep.

Let us help one another while we may. (p.80).

Further on there's this little, but powerful, message:

There's no defeat in life

Save from within,

Unless you're beaten there

You're bound to win. (p.85).

To complement this simple truth is another poem on the same page entitled "Equipment" by Edgar A. Guest. The poet here speaks of the fact that every person upon entering earth is equipped with the same physical equipment as everyone else; the real test comes when the person has to decide what he will do with that equipment. If he uses his inner powers in a positive manner he will be triumphant and he'll

overcome all physical man-made handicaps.

Poems such as "No Friend Like Music" by Daniel Whitehead Hicky and "A Prayer" by Max Ehrmann bring solace to the lonely heart. Poems like "The Clown" by Margaret E. Bruner, the sorrowful "Cloak of Laughter" by Abigail Cresson, and "There is a Mystery in Human Hearts" by an unknown author exemplify the role Elvis sometimes played on stage and the contrasting solitary life he lived at home. Other poems give practical advice for everyday life, like giving a smile to those we meet along the way, or like doing something that will take sadness away. The general philosophy which runs through the book like a purifying underground stream is to be kind, to do good, and to make the world a better place to live in. Simple truths that have profound meaning.

I'm tempted to say Elvis at times was a model to look up to, even though as a human being he had his weaker moments. Nevertheless, I feel the world was somehow made better by the fact that Elvis practiced the simple truths of life, especially with his acts of charity and compassion. What he gave to the world was in turn given back to him. The sense of brotherhood which he sowed wherever he performed came back to him with outstretched hands. The bridges he built into the future so those who follow might have an easier path to cross, the dedication to the grand purpose of filling human hearts with love and happiness, and also

the ability to sing away the blues for generations to come will be landmarks for all to emulate.

It is here fitting to insert another anonymous poem entitled "Tribute on the Passing of a Very Real Person:"

People are of two kinds, and he
Was the kind I'd like to be.
Some preach their virtues, and a few
Express their lives by what they do;
That sort was he. No flowery phrase
Or glibly spoken word of praise
Won friends for him. He wasn't cheap
Or shallow, but his course ran deep,
And it was pure. You know the kind.
Not many in life you find
Whose deeds outrun their words so far
That more than what they seem, they are. (p.165).

Another group of poems, which offer a guideline for a successful and prosperous life on earth, and which were exemplified by Elvis' friendly and courteous heart for all people, are: "Recipe for Living" (p.345), "The World We Make" (p.356) by Alfred Grant Walton, "The Dreams Ahead" (p.361) by Edwin Carlile Litsey, and "Blessed Are They" (p.377) by Wilhelmina Stitch.

Several poems on the theme of mother must have also touched Elvis' heart after the heart-rending experience

while in the service: "Mother's Hands" (p.49) by W. Dayton Wedgeforth, the lovely "Mother" (p.329) by Herman Hagedorn, the dream-like "Mother" (p.266) by Max Ehrmann, the undefinable mother in "Definition" (p.318) by Grace Noll Crowell, and the unforgettable mother in "Remembrance" (p.321) by Margaret E. Bruner.

Poetry speaks differently to each heart and to each emotional need, just like Elvis' life touched every life in a different manner. Elvis was like an epic poem that flashed before our eyes and was gone before we had time to digest the meanings. There was one phrase he invariably used at the close of every performance, a phrase he sincerely felt; it was his benediction and blessing to all who loved him--"God Bless You." The closing poem to this chapter is by an unknown author who develops and expands the meaningful words that Elvis used at the conclusion of his concerts:

GOD BLESS YOU

I seek in prayerful words, dear friend,

My heart's true wish to send you,

That you may know that, far or near,

My loving thoughts attend you.

I cannot find a truer word,

Nor better to address you;

Nor song, nor poem have I heard

Is sweeter than God bless you!

God bless you! So I've wished you all
Of brightness life possesses;
For can there any joy at all
Be yours unless God blesses?

God bless you! So I breathe a charm
Lest grief's dark night oppress you,
For how can sorrow bring you harm
If 'tis God's way to bless you?

And so, "through all thy days
May shadows touch thee never--"
But this alone--God bless thee--
Then art thou safe forever. (p.309).

CHAPTER 4

NEWSPAPERS AND TV SPECIALS

I kept my eyes open for Elvis' name daily. Newspapers, magazines, and television provided me with a steady diet of Elvis tidbits. I felt like a historian picking up the pieces scattered along the trail of a great personage. Everything was carefully scrutinized and evaluated; nothing was discarded. I realized, of course, that only so much would fall into my lap, but I resolved to carry on with what I had. I would carry the ball for Elvis to the end of the field. I would continue recording the pulsations he was emitting like a giant quasar. I would perpetuate the legend where others had left off.

National Enquirer, Sept. 6, 1977, told "The Untold Story" of Elvis in 6 full pages: 20-year-old Ginger told her heartbreaking story of unfulfilled wedding plans with Elvis after a nine month relationship, saying that "a part of me died with Elvis Presley;" Rex Humbard, J.D. Sumner, and others confided that Elvis had a premonition that he was

going to die soon, although the statements about Elvis' dying at the same age as his mother at 42 held no water since his mother actually died at the age of 46; Memphis psychic Christine Lilly Williams even revealed Elvis' psychic dreams of his mother reaching out to him beckoningly from the spirit world; emergency medics Ulysses Jones and Charles Crosby of Unit 6 related their story of overhearing an overdose mentioned twice; Ricky Ayers, a second cousin to Elvis, revealed details of the rock king's bizarre behavior during karate work-outs and his inability to hit high notes toward the end; and two psychics reportedly predicted Elvis' death before it happened, one by Jacqueline Eastlund on July 19 on the "Nine in the Morning" show on KHJ-TV in Los Angeles, and the other by Gloria James on WMEX radio in Boston on May 30.

Also on Sept. 6, 1977 another world news media, The Star, presented a 4-page special pullout summarizing the inside story of "slow suicide" from the incredible book Elvis: What Happened? The revelations of dope and womanizing were blatantly portrayed by the Star columnist Steve Dunleavy, and sometimes I wondered if the stories he solicited from Elvis' former bodyguards were just as journalistically sensational as the serializing presented in the issue I was reading. Another article in the same issue seemed more noteworthy, an article about the claim that before his death

Elvis was still pleading with ex-wife Priscilla to come back to him, a claim which even Priscilla verified by admitting, "he's always calling to tell me he loves me and wants me to come to Memphis." A short article on the evils of junk food, which contributed to Elvis' decline, is meant as a nutritional message by Dr. Erwin Di Cyan to 50 percent of the American population who "follow junk food diets similar to that of Elvis's." A study of Elvis' critically low physical, emotional, and intellectual biorhythmic cycles on the day he died by expert Bernard Gittelson adds still another facet to the complex life story of Elvis.

A study by George Nichopoulos, Elvis' personal physician, in the Sept. 13, 1977 issue of National Enquirer confirmed everyone's suspicions that "Elvis was a junk food junkie." In the same issue the book My Life With Elvis, by Elvis' secretary Becky Yancey and writer Cliff Linedecker, was presented in its first installment, showing Elvis' wild private life from toting guns to Dodgem cars and wild parties with a boozing chimpanzee named Scatter. Also in the same issue was an article in which Elvis' former girlfriend Linda Thompson, a 26-year-old Memphis-bred former beauty queen, alleged "I might have saved Elvis." Such a supposition was founded on her maternal instincts and over-protective zeal, cuddling and cooing Elvis with fond names like "Little Baby Bunting." Although Linda mentioned Elvis' search for the

truth about God and that he was reading a book about Jesus when he died, she did not divulge the name of the book.

This intentional omission would later arouse my curiosity, and I would go on an intensive search in order to discover the mystery behind the book Elvis was reading when he died.

More excerpts from Becky Yancey's book were printed in the Sept. 20, 1977 issue of National Enquirer. This time they revealed Elvis' belief in supernatural forces guiding his life, a belief which stemmed from his incessant search for the meaning of life. The Self-Realization Foundation helped Elvis "develop a new perspective on religion and man's place in the universe." And all this happened thanks to Yogi Paramahansa Yogananda. A second article in the same issue described an "incredible wave of Elvis mania," which top psychiatrists claimed was caused by a feeling closely resembling the loss of a beloved relative. Dr. Samuel Silverman, associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School made a profound observation of the phenomenon: "As a result, Americans are responding to Presley's death with an almost religious fervor, and are collecting anything connected with him as if they were the relics of a saint. It's their way of trying to hang on to him and keep him alive in their hearts." And as if to prove that Elvis is still alive, a seance is held at the request of the rock idol's stepmother, Mrs. Dee Presley. The article on the seance is

entitled: "Elvis Has Spoken to Me From Beyond the Grave."

The message which Elvis sent through the channels (or mediums as they are more popularly called, although they can also be called psychics or sensitives) of Sybil Leek and Micki Dahne was a message of peace and reunion with mother and twin brother. Jesse was identified as the guiding spirit who helped Elvis make the transition into the spirit world. The reunion was described by Sybil as "three rays of light coming together to form a triangle, representing Elvis, his brother and their mother." Micki claimed to have seen Elvis' radiant mother clothed in white and Elvis looking "younger and more handsome than he had in real life." Dee's personal conviction at the conclusion of her experience was: "He was telling us not to feel sad at his death. He doesn't want us grieving for him now--he wants us to be happy for him." Her affirmative belief was that he was now in heaven.

Midnight Globe saturated its Sept. 20, 1977 issue not only with 16 more Elvis movie posters (17 were published the previous week), but also included provocative and revealing articles like "My Nights of Love With Elvis" by blonde Diana Lars, and "I Was Elvis' Secret Psychic." The latter article was intriguing in that more about Elvis' other side, the mystical or spiritual side, was being revealed. The secret psychic was Miss Lou Wright from Denver, Colorado, who

revealed Elvis' obsession with the future and his utter amazement at her gift of clairvoyance. The romantic side of Elvis was treated in articles like "Elvis Never Planned to Wed Ginger" and "Priscilla's beau begs: now please will you marry me?" Also included in the Elvis-packed issue was another article covering the highlights of the book Elvis: What Happened? by his three bodyguards. Also of interest was a short article on Globe's campaign to make Graceland a national monument in honor of "a one-of-a-kind human being," as Natalie Cole put it.

One day before the CBS-TV Special, on Sunday Oct. 2, 1977 at 7:00 P.M., the bodies of both Elvis and his mother were unceremoniously taken from the Forest Hill cemetery in Memphis and laid quietly to rest side by side at Graceland's meditation garden. He was finally brought home to rest in peace. This move was later covered in the Nov. 1, 1977 issue of National Enquirer.

The CBS-TV Special was a tribute to the late singer. It was televised on Monday night, Oct. 3, 1977. The entire show was like watching the sun rising and then setting back into the ocean. The hullabaloo of life, with the high-pitched hawkers selling souvenirs (albums for \$3.00, buttons for \$2.00, posters for \$3.00, set of binoculars for \$5.00, necklace for \$5.00, and a golden belt buckle for \$10.00), set the carnival atmosphere of the Elvis in Concert production. The vicarious

experience of watching Elvis on television was not nearly as dramatic and awe-inspiring as seeing him in person. As one fan at the concert said: "You feel as if God just landed." Indeed Elvis' arrival via Lehr jet was comparable to a visit from outer space. Even his jumpsuit with sundials on front and back, which he wore at this, his last, concert cannot be overlooked for its mythological implications. It's as if Elvis was weaving his own mythology as he walked on stage after the introductory "Thus Spake Zarathustra." A superman from the future descended to earth and flashed a one finger sign with both hands uplifted as if to signify the beginning of a golden age.

Time stops.

The American audience is transfixed by the image of the superstar that television brings into our homes. As Elvis opens his mouth to sing, we all sit back in amazement and are thrilled by what our See See Rider has done. We watch as he puts every ounce of energy into his songs. We listen as he explains the cause of his profuse perspiration: "the lights are hot." Someone raises a sign reading "Kiss me, Elvis." The chains around his belt shake to the rhythm of his movements, and the sundial shines brilliantly like the sun. As he sings "Are You Lonesome Tonight?" we flash back with the cameras and listen to fans like us reaffirming the viewers' opinions: "He's the greatest person that has ever walked."

We are caught up into the dimension of Elvis' vibrations as we share the love, the joy, and the respect that others feel for Elvis. We tend to agree with the black person with sideburns when he says, "he's the number one singer of all time." Even the male post office worker doesn't astonish us when he admits, "I just love the guy." We nod our heads understandingly as he confesses, "I know that sounds kind of weird, but I just love the guy."

Afterwards, Elvis performs a number that raises everyone's consciousness to the seventh heaven, saint and sinner alike. His rendition of "How Great Thou Art" will live as a monument to the omnipresent ruling life-force that shaped his destiny. The song has such a powerful spiritual impact that its total message, as presented by Elvis, deserves a full portrayal.

This is what I saw as Elvis sang the song: "O Lord my God! (looks upward to the heavens in a prayerful mood) When I in awesome wonder (closes his eyes and bows slightly) consider all (opens his eyes and looks out into the audience) the big worlds (grasps his hand as if holding a ball-like earth) thy hands have made (head level, brings imaginary ball clutched in his hand slowly downward); I see the stars (eyes closed again, points face eastward as if contemplating the stars), I hear (opens eyes, ears perked up) the rolling thunder (closes eyes again, watching inwardly something

rising and receding), thy power (looks up to reacknowledge the omnipotent force) throughout (closes and opens eyes) the universe (holds hand open, arm outstretched, as if holding the universe) displayed (shuts hand into a ball)." As the boys sing the first part of a verse from the song without Elvis, Elvis bows his head and meditatively walks several steps and then reverently stands still again, pondering the prophetic words "and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!" He resumes singing: "Then I shall bow (eyes open, head level this time) in humble adoration (closes and opens his eyes) and there proclaim (closes his eyes as he envisions the future) oh my God (raises his right hand, shakes a little left, and stands sideways to the left) how great Thou art! (continues reverent stance) Then sings my soul (switches mike from right to left hand and becomes more intense in his delivery) my savior God to Thee (closes eyes in blissful contemplation) how great I think you are (projects his thought to the Universal Mind) how great Thou art (looks out to the left), then sings my soul, my soul (emphasizes the main aspect of existence) my savior God to Thee (opens and closes eyes intermittently, as if blinking messages and simultaneously wiping away the watery substance from his eyes) how great Thou art (keeps eyes open as he stares out into the audience, which appears as one vast stretch of light to him) how great, how great (goes into karate stance with right

hand extended and fingers solidly molded into some strange configuration demonstrating the curvature of an invisible object) how great (raises hand and lowers hand, shakes the microphone near his mouth to utter his last words) Thou art (again right hand extended, head held high and outstretched in a peacock stance, which he holds sideways to the audience)."

As Elvis verbalizes his gratitude with his familiar "thank you, ladies and gentlemen," we sigh in relief with Elvis and bring our imagination back to reality. The spiritual elation is over. We watch the rest of the show listlessly as if our energy has been drained, while Elvis continues to sing, to throw out scarves into the grasping sea of hands, to introduce his daddy and girlfriend, and to conduct his band with arms swinging like a maestro.

When he finally says "till we meet you again, may God bless you, adios," we kind of wish he didn't have to leave so soon.

We watch him fade from the screen singing "Can't Help Falling in Love With You" while his father's image replaces Elvis; we listen to Vernon talk about Elvis' first appearance when he was 9 years old, and how he won 3rd prize for singing the sad story of a dog named "Old Shep," and we are glad to hear Vernon say that Elvis "never changed his feelings about people;" as Vernon continues to relate the major events of Elvis' life, including the Army, Colonel Parker,

Bob Neal, and Graceland, we begin to hear Elvis coming back with the conclusion of the song, "like a river flows, surely to the sea."

Suddenly Elvis comes back into full view again, singing "take my hand, take my whole life, too." The self-sacrifice is completed. In the end, he bows out gracefully to the See See Rider background music that greeted him at the beginning of his concert. Once again he extends both hands into the air, two index fingers flashing symbolically in a gesture of farewell. As we watch a jubilant Elvis being ushered into a car bearing the license plate number 772882, we feel that it has been a perfectly joyous time for all involved. Finally we hear the announcement over the loud speaker: "Ladies and gentlemen, Elvis has left the building. Thank you and good night." And the sun sets into the ocean.

The NBC-TV Special with Ann-Margret, which was presented in November, was a show I regretfully missed the first time around. I was more diligent the second time around when a repeat performance was presented. Since the three hour repeat of the tribute "Memories of Elvis" didn't occur until Aug. 29, 1978, I had to wait almost a year to see Ann-Margret present Elvis' first TV Special of Nov. 1968 and his "Aloha from Hawaii" Special.

For Elvis' 43rd birthday on Jan. 8, 1978, the first one without him, Nashville decided to honor Elvis with its own

tribute entitled, "Nashville Remembers Elvis on His Birthday." It was televised over NBC and hosted by Jimmy Dean. The remembrance show included recollections of Elvis the man by Jack Albertson, Bill Bixby, Nancy Sinatra, Stella Stevens, and Mary Ann Mobley. The rest of the show was dominated by the giants in the world of country music, singers like Merle Haggard ("Love Me Tender"), Ronnie McDowell ("The King is Gone"), Dottie West ("American Trilogy"), Carl Perkins (E.P. Express"), Charlie Rich ("Lonely Weekends"), Larry Gatlin ("Help Me"), Jerry Lee Lewis ("You Win Again"), and Patsy Tucker ("A Big Hunk o' Love").

Nashville's recognition of Elvis the man through the medium of country music demonstrated the impact Elvis' music had in their world. Elvis' huge fan club consisted of people from all walks of life, and the country music road was just one small stream that flowed into Elvis' ever-widening river. Nashville was a major tributary, though, and some of Elvis' closest friends came from there.

One of the giants in the world of country music, Merle Haggard, even recorded an album in tribute to Elvis called "My Farewell to Elvis." Jimmy Dean vouched for Merle Haggard's integrity by stating that Merle wouldn't capitalize on anything. Merle offered his own honest explanation for his album by saying, "I think everyone in the entertainment field owes a debt to Elvis Presley and I'm no exception and that's

the reason why." Merle's truly magnificent homage in song testified to the long road Elvis traveled from the Sun years of the 1950s in Memphis, when screaming fans were ushering in the birth of rock 'n' roll, to the faithful path he followed before being taken home to the Promised Land. Merle even heightened the effect of the song by starting it with a variation on the "Thus Spake Zarathustra" theme. Merle's testimony was the same that millions of Elvis' fans had attested to: "Elvis touched the life of every ear that heard him." Elvis' greatness was further unraveled in the belief that Elvis even knew when he was to die, right down to the number of the day.

Jack Albertson (from the popular TV series "Chico and the Man" with Freddie Prinze) worked with Elvis in Hollywood and his remembrance of Elvis as the perfect gentleman was put on tape for Nashville. Mr. Albertson had the fortunate opportunity of doing two films with Elvis, and he was convinced that Elvis was "one of the kindest, most generous and considerate young men" he had ever worked with. Mr. Albertson went on to relate how Elvis wouldn't stoop to calling his elders by anything but their last names. In Mr. Albertson's case, during the filming of "Kissin' Cousins," Elvis made a slight compromise by calling him sir. Jack Albertson found him to be "a very dedicated young man, one who worked very hard at what he had to do."

Stella Stevens also worked with Elvis in Hollywood and she also contributed to Nashville's program via tape with an honorable tribute to Elvis, the ladies' man. Stella related how Elvis' humor and laughter would bring relief to all those who worked with him. At times Elvis was uncomfortable when performing in front of people because of his high expectations for himself; he would try very hard to be good enough for his audience. Of course, for Stella and millions of women, Elvis was the truly sensuous man. Stella stated that he loved women in such a way that it came across to them. In her opinion, Elvis sang to the ladies in his audience and they knew it, "and although men also admired him and liked his music, he really sang to the ladies."

The Jordanaires, of course, had to be included in the remembrance of Elvis, not only because the show was being done in their home town, but mainly because for "14 years they backed Elvis in movies, personal appearances, records, and they're just part of the legend that we know as Elvis Presley." The gospel quartet that contributed to Elvis' success were still harmonizing with the old gospel flavor and rhythm that had started them on the circuit many years ago. They sang a medley of Elvis' very successful early hits: "Blue Suede Shoes," "All Shook Up," "Loving You," "Can't Be Cruel," and "Hound Dog."

Jimmy Dean's song "Big John," which Elvis liked very

much, and which reminded me of a legendary figure who walked "through the dust and the smoke of this man-made hell" just like Elvis, was followed by a very touching and tear-jerking tribute. Ronny McDowell's "The King is Gone" was the story of a 6-year-old boy who grew up to the sound of Elvis' records, mimicking the nuances of sound that came from Elvis' white box. The adult Ronny was now singing to audiences about the man he had always admired, a simple man who made the world stand still with a song, a man who was crowned king. This king never forgot to lend a helping hand to a friend; he never forgot to love and to share the happiness that he had tasted. And even though the king was gone in body, his name and fame would live forever in the hearts and minds of men. "Good-bye, Elvis. We'll miss you." With those closing words Ronny McDowell established his memorial to the king.

Programs and TV specials about Elvis came and went, leaving a stronger desire for more of Elvis. It was like a chemical need for the elements that sustain the emotional body. The cigarette smoker searches for fulfillment in a puff of smoke; an alcoholic sips in hope of finding the elixir which will give him unquenchable happiness; a dope addict experiments with chemical reactions which will sustain the euphoria of nirvanic emptiness; and I was trying to grasp the ever-fleeting image of Elvis that kept reappearing in myriad lights and symbols. Later on this emotional

need would be transformed into mental satisfaction. But for the meantime I was grabbing for the physical and visible elements of Elvis.