

CHAPTER 7

PILGRIMAGE TO GRACELAND

Before I was to undertake my pilgrimage to the world's newest shrine, I had to make an itinerary of all the places I thought were worthy of honorable mention. I had already been to Hawaii. I had seen Los Angeles many times. Las Vegas--that would be a good starting point--then Ft. Hood, Memphis, Tupelo, New Orleans, Miami, Nashville, and other places along the way. I couldn't make a complete tour of the United States (and Germany was a long ways off), so I had to discriminate between the various points of reference. I chose what I considered the highlights of Elvis' life. It was like a new frontier and I was paving the way for others to follow. Elvis had already forged the trail and left landmarks along the way. I was simply following him and recording the visible marks that he had made for all to see.

The invisible marks Elvis had made couldn't be forgotten either, for the invisible things of this world go hand in hand with the visible. It's all part of a pattern, a grand

design in the master plan.

Midnight Globe in the June 20, 1978 issue made known another message from Elvis through Lou Wright. This psychic extravaganza happened in an abandoned mansion called Hacienda Del Sol--House of the Sun--in which other extraordinary human beings like John Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, Freddie Prinze, and Bing Crosby were contacted through five amazing seers. The meeting place was Merritt Island, Florida, located near Kennedy Space Center and Cape Canaveral, a most auspicious site for psychic exploration. In the world of psychic phenomenon what appears to be a coincidence is interpreted as a matter of spiritual intervention (or a physical happening with symbolic, esoteric overtones). Take for example the strange appearance of a peacock, Elvis' favorite bird, and its presence at the window as Lou Wright began to transmit the message Elvis was imprinting on her mental screen: "I was choking, choking, I couldn't get my breath and I fell over... Then I just lay there and slept peacefully." This recounting of his last moments is further followed by an exposition of other karmic ties that need to be straightened out, including another and more equitable will, some missing jewelry, some concern for his Aunt Delta, and a desire for privacy at Graceland. One sentence in particular struck me as verification of the message Orlene had given me: "Lisa is protected and I'll always be with her in spirit." There was something

to this psychic stuff. My cross-examination had revealed Elvis' present mission as guardian angel of Lisa. This is what makes him happy in spirit: the thought of his daughter and knowing she is safe. As for those who betrayed Elvis, well, there isn't much peace of mind in store for them:

"Let those who betrayed me suffer with their consciences."

A week before I started on the voyage of a thousand tales, I had another dream-vision of Elvis (you might even call it El-vision, a word just whispered by a joyful tiny voice in my ear while I was writing). If I were to use the antiquated word dream, all the Freudians and psychologists would jump on the bandwagon with their interpretations of the subconscious workings of the mind. If I were to use the mystic word vision, all the religious freaks would brand me a fanatic. So I have to play it safe and use a combination of the two concepts so that everybody can have a poke at me and at the same time, hopefully, someone can use my dream-vision material as a source of vital scientific research into the amazing world of astral traveling, which in my opinion is the more relevant terminology in describing the concept and the experience of sleeping consciousness. There, I've said a mouthful.

Anyway, to get back to my dream-vision of Elvis. He was in his early twenties and he was running around with his buddies most of the time. He didn't have much time to stop and

talk with me. I remember the last words he told me before he went "to paint the town" at night: "If my ma asks where I've been, tell her I went with the boys. I'll be back in a flash." He had dark hair. He was healthy and had some weight on. What amazed me was that he didn't look real tall!

I would have many similar experiences of Elvis later on. Even my wife would be drawn into this phenomenal world later during the pilgrimage. Somehow I felt they were important, and so I kept a complete log of those spirit visitations. By now I was convinced they were more than just "ordinary dreams."

Before the departure for a most remarkable 20th century pilgrimage to what has become a shrine to millions of people around the world, I ran across a few more articles worthy of mention.

The magazine Preview in its June 1978 issue followed up the Presley imitators in an attempt to unravel their impact on Elvis' memory. The premise of the article on the imitators was that people had a definite need to experience Elvis vicariously. Those paying tribute to Elvis and his immortal music were: Alan Meyer, Dennis Colt, Bill Haney, Jimmy Harra, Rick Saucedo, Steve Long, and Dennis Wise. They were leaders in the field of Elvis "illusionists," and their contribution to the phenomenon of Elvis was enormous. I would later experience this illusion of Elvis in

Las Vegas.

Midnight Globe on June 27, 1978 printed Ginger Alden's story of the gentle, jealous and passionate Elvis, who loved to read about Eastern religions and liked to teach people about faith and religion. On the same day The Star printed an article based on information from a book to be released by Morgan Press entitled We Remember Elvis by Wanda June Hill. The information was purportedly taken from Presley's intimate confessions to the author just within a week of his death. The major thrust of the story was about Elvis' eternal love for Priscilla, a theme which keeps cropping up from time to time.

Several days before the pilgrimage began, I received my necklace, which cost me \$9.95, from B.C. Gallery. I was ready to "take care of business." On July 1, 1978, my wife, my three-year-old son, and I embarked on our long trek in a green van with a convertible sofa-bed and a cabinet with shelves and refrigerator. We were all equipped for a comfortable and economical journey to the outermost corners of Elvis country. Our first night on the road in Oregon was full of portents, as a lightning storm forced us off Hwy. 5 into a rest area. The lightning was electrifying and awesome. We visited relatives in San Francisco, where I bought an Elvis album titled "Let's Be Friends." Three things stood out and were meaningful for me in that album: the title,

which would have lots of meaning later on; a song titled "I'll Be There (If You Ever Want Me);" and the address Sunshine Place from the song "Have a Happy."

Even on the road I kept my eyes open for news articles on Elvis. The July 4, 1978 issue of Midnight Globe carried an article on Wanda June Hill's story, which had already been covered previously. But there were some noteworthy additions about Elvis' last secret thoughts which weren't published before. First of all, Elvis foresaw his own death the previous summer. Secondly, he had made his peace with God and was ready to go. Thirdly, Elvis had predicted that it would rain the day he'd die. Sure enough it rained all across the United States on August 16, 1977, the day he died.

There was also another article in the same issue which carried a strange story about a fantastic claim that a bizarre book named Orion by Gail Brewer (Golden Eagle Publishing Co.) was making: "Presley is alive and living in hiding!" The fictionalized work was based on the premise that Col. Tom Parker masterminded the cover-up of the century. Such an assumption was partly attributed to the fact that Elvis' death shortly preceded the expiration of his 20-year contract with Parker. And so the legend grows.

For me the real pilgrimage began on July 8, 1978 when we drove into Reno and discovered that J.D. Sumner and the Champs were presenting "Memories of Our Friend Elvis" at the

Gold Dust West. We had struck it rich!

Well, almost. The main man, J.D. Sumner, was in the hospital undergoing open-heart surgery. Nevertheless, the Stamps, with soulful Ed Enoch, were able to belt their way into the listener's hearts with some of Elvis' favorites. The Stamps had opened at the 4th & Vine Streets Gold Dust West Casino on Tuesday, July 4, 1978. Tuesday, by the way, is a very significant day in Elvis' life: it was the day on which he was born and the day on which he died. Anyway, in front of the casino was a 1973 Lincoln Continental closely watched by a casino security guard. The gleaming white car with Tennessee license number 575 205-XT was a present given by Elvis to J.D. Sumner. A plaque displayed in front of the Lincoln Continental contained the Certificate of Title complete with purchase date, Dec. 27, 1975, and Elvis Presley's signature. In back of the casino stood an orange and silver bus, the private coach of The Stamps Quartet, license number 4-41-7. The TCB insignia, Elvis' trademark and slogan, stood out boldly in black letters on the sides of the touring bus.

An oldie-but-goodie, Ferlin Husky, opened the first half of the show and later sang one of his favorites, "The Wings of a Dove." Ed Enoch, second-in-command to J.D. Sumner, led the Stamps through the second half of the show with Elvis' favorites interspersed with other popular tunes. I don't know if popular tunes were introduced because of restrictions

Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI), a licensing agency, had placed on the use of Elvis' material, but I came to hear memories of Elvis and, therefore, I was disappointed when they digressed from the main subject. Ed Enoch, the leader of the Stamps who oversees the bookings and financial dealings, began the memorable show with "That's All Right, Mama." His soulful voice resembled Elvis' in force and output, but his stifled movements minimized his appeal and effectiveness. The movements which counted with Ed were his grimaces and tortured facial expressions, which he used as background to lyrics like "It hurts me to see the way you cry." The bass vocalist, Larry Brickland, rumbled his way down into the hearts of shrieking females with "I Just Can't Help Believing."

Ed stopped long enough to welcome the audience: "We hope we do something to make you happy. And we'll try to do our best to. Till then, we'll do some singing and a lot less talking. Do it!" At which point he swung into twisting action with a combined medley of "See See Rider" and "I've Got a Woman."

Ed Enoch kept his promise by doing a lot of singing and very little talking. I wondered if he was going to say anything about Elvis. I expected him to tell the Elvis fans what they had come to hear. I discovered later that the pleasure of talking about Elvis was J.D. Sumner's, and unfortunately he was still in the hospital. It was J.D. Sumner

was shared the legend with Elvis. He was the man who would pick up the skinny kid in the back door at Memphis gospel sings because Elvis had no money. At that time J.D. Sumner was singing with the Blackwood Brothers, a group Elvis desired to join but was destined not to. Rumors of Elvis imitating J.D. Sumner started when Elvis grew his hair long while driving a truck for an electrical firm and was fired because he refused to cut his hair.

In the Showtime Magazine, the weekly publication and entertainment guide in the Reno-Tahoe area, Elvis is quoted as saying: "I wanted to be just like J.D. He wore his hair long and I thought in order to be a good bass singer, you had to have long hair. Singing like J.D. was more important to me than driving that truck, anyway." The thing that attracted Elvis to J.D. Sumner was the fact that J.D. is known internationally as the world's lowest bass singer. What attracted J.D. Sumner to Elvis seems to be Elvis' great range of musical talents; and the lesson J.D. learned from him was to present a variety program of music ranging from country to soft rock with a few gospel songs.

Ed Enoch stopped singing in order to catch his breath after the medley. He paused to introduce the group: "Let me tell you that The Stamps are from Nashville, Tennessee. That's known as the country capitol of the world. Country music for breakfast, supper, dinner and bed-time. And we're

gonna give you some country. But first, let me introduce some of the guys." After introducing several members of the 12-piece ensemble, Ed concluded with the statement: "They're the same bunch that played for Elvis on tour."

Larry, the handsome young bass soloist and the ladies' choice for the night, sang a song whose lyrics revolved around a description of The Stamps' plight: "And you led me down the road I hate to ride." Ed Enoch came back as lead singer with "Just Because," a song which brought a trickle of tears to my wife's eyes.

Ed introduced the gospel song "Help Me" with a few words about Elvis finally: "We had the pleasure of being with Mr. Presley for some six and a half years. And it was a beautiful experience. I don't know how many of you followed his music or not. (Applause) It was a thrill just to do the ooh's and the ah's and occasionally a scooby-do. It was something fantastic and we certainly enjoyed it. The gentleman had some kind of a knack, some kind of gift because he could put more into a song, he could get more out of the words than I've ever heard, especially like the song we're fixing to do. It's called 'Help Me.'"

The song "Help Me" seemed to describe a humble Elvis on his knees, pleading for divine assistance and begging desperately for the help God knows he needed to make the last mile of the way. The golden throne was an apt description

of the seat of divine grace, from which divine understanding and light descended to remove the chains of ignorance and to open the spiritual eyes in order to understand one's own destiny. That wasn't the only spiritual or inspirational song Elvis identified with. There was still another.

Ed Enoch introduced the next gospel song "Walk With Me" with an even longer prelude: "You know, a lot of times as we'd get through a concert, Elvis would call us up to his suite, and we'd have to sit for hours and hours and sing gospel music. The long hair and sideburns and all that, we think Elvis kind of started that, but if you look back at some of the old gospel singers, that's what they looked like. Ed was the instigator of that, in the grease in his hair; he had a slick back and he still got them. But you know, gospel music was an inspiration to him and he had to have it. I had to have it. During the show, sometimes he'd stop it right dead in the middle and have this song sung. And I think you'll enjoy it and you'll understand why. 'Walk With Me.'"

The beauty of the song lay in the manner it was presented by the tenor soloist, Gary Buckles. The message of the song was the soul's desire to encounter the beauty of divine love. The high tenor voice scaled the peaks of musical ecstasy in an effort to reach that love as the singer's long drawn out ending brought him to one knee and the audience

to their feet. A truly inspiring song, not only to Elvis, but also to our hearts as we understood the depths of his searching soul.

Ed Enoch brought the rest of the show to a rapid conclusion with "Way Down," "Burning Love," and in conclusion, "American Trilogy." As The Stamps exited to the instrumental accompaniment of "See See Rider," I was thrilled by the memories of Elvis that had briefly flashed across the stage and were superbly represented by The Stamps. Here were friends of Elvis communicating the exuberance and joy which Elvis had injected into their veins and which flowed through their music. To a spectator like me, they seemed to be special people performing a special role in the aftermath of Elvis' passing into spirit.

CHAPTER 8

LAS VEGAS

We left Reno with pleasant memories of The Stamps Quartet and their performance in memory of Elvis. Even though we were unable to see J.D. Sumner, we were able to ride away with a black-and-white photograph of Elvis and his friend, J.D. As fate would have it, I would be fortunate enough to get the photograph autographed the following year when J.D. Sumner would pay a visit to Oregon. But that's another story, an exciting encounter which I'll relate when the time comes.

By the way, Reno was offering another Elvis-related show during our short stay there. Ronnie Speeks was doing his "Tribute to Elvis" in the Sky Room of the Mapes. His show, according to Showtime Magazine, reflected the later, sophisticated part of Elvis' career. Ronnie Speeks' impersonation had a lot to do with the demand for Elvis' music. There was also a personal satisfaction in doing a fine impersonation out of respect and in tribute to Elvis. After all, Elvis was the performer's reason for being on stage in the first place.

When I arrived in Las Vegas, I found out that a wide variety of Elvis impersonators had sprung up like xerox copies. There was Morris at the Silver Slipper doing the complete Presley Story, from the 50's to the 60's to the 70's. Johnny Harra, along with Elvis' original conductor Bobby Morris, was headlined on the big board beneath the Silverbird emblem in front of the Silverbird Casino. Harra's show in the Continental Theater of the Silverbird Hotel began with the familiar theme of 2001 and included the gamut of songs made famous by Presley, from "Blue Suede Shoes" to "Love Me Tender" to "Blue Hawaii" to "My Way." Johnny Harra was an Elvis look-and-sound-alike, a son of a minister, and a young 32-year-old person who had been singing Elvis songs for eighteen years. The mystique of Elvis was brought to life in a tribute that came from the heart and soul of the performer to the heart and soul of the spectator. Most people claimed that Johnny could pass for Elvis in his last years, and his daughter Lisa Marie and his mother supposedly are also look-alikes of Elvis' daughter and mother. Stranger stories were yet to be discovered to fill the annals of the supernatural legend of Elvis.

"Elvis' Double" was what Johnny Harra was billed as. He was also a Glen Pace Enterprises Production with a 15-piece orchestra to back him up. I got a peak at him through the curtains. I had my boy with me while my wife tried her luck

on the slot machines, and so I wasn't able to go in. Somehow I wasn't drawn to see Johnny Harra as much as I was drawn to see Rick Saucedo, who was described by the Las Vegas entertainment magazine, Mirror, as "The Prince of Rock 'n' Roll."

By chance, we drove into the city of glittering lights the night before Rick Saucedo was to debut in Las Vegas in the Stardust Hotel's Crown Room. Tuesday night was opening night and July 11, 1978 was a magical day for me. I bought a ticket for \$12.80 to the 9 o'clock opening show of "Elvis--The Legend Lives." My expectations were high. My day had already been sensational. After months of wading through books and magazines to find the key that would unlock the door to a mathematical universe built on the principle of numbers, I had at last discovered Priscilla's birthday.

Numerology to the uninitiate is meaningless and loaded with countless unrelated possibilities. To the initiate and careful observer it is an art, a science, and a fantastic game of design and patterns that interweave with the real and the spiritual world. I hope to include a chapter on numerology in Elvis' life, because the little that Becky Yancey alluded to in her book was just like one nickel in a wishing well. Becky classified Elvis as a number 5, which is the numerical value of his first and last name. But she never mentioned the fact that his birth number was a number 9 (add $1+8+1935$), the number of completion. In numerology,

all number combinations must be broken down to a single digit.

Why I say Priscilla's birthday unlocked the door for me was because I had already found out that Lisa Marie's birth number was like her father's, a 9 (add 2+1+1968), and Gladys Presley's birth number was a 6 (add 4+25+1912). So when I discovered that Priscilla's birth number was a 3 (add 5+24+1945), I suddenly realized the power of the three-fold pattern in Elvis' life: the triangular father-mother-daughter pattern; the pyramidal base with three female figures emerging from the base; and the progression through cycles of three. There was so much to be gleaned from the application of numerology.

I spent several hours at the Clark County Courthouse on 200 E. Carson, where I finally tracked down Priscilla's birthday. At the same time I was able to see the small office on 3rd St. where the actual registration of Elvis and Priscilla took place. This was where the applicants had to sign an "Affidavit of Application for Marriage License." It was on this copy, for which I paid \$1.50, that Priscilla's date of birth was printed. The clerk searched through a whole file of microfilm before she found it on roll #246. On this same copy Elvis had signed his name as Elvis A. Presley.

Anyway, numerology may be an interesting digression to some, but to most people it's only a bunch of numbers. Then again, most people resent being a number, especially in our computerized age. At best, it's a very touchy subject.

However, studying numerology made me more aware of the vibrations certain numbers carry and the endless patterns that can be built or weaved with numbers. I constantly saw 9s and 5s popping up in Elvis' life. Several times I even saw all three numbers (3,6,9) mysteriously united either in an address or in some other numerical combination. I later found out that Elvis considered 8 to be a lucky number for him since his birthday fell on the 8th day. But basically it was the 9s and 5s that played an important part in the numerical aspect of Elvis' life. More of this numbers business later. But now let's get back to the show.

The most interesting part about the Broadway production, which had 17 highly successful weeks on Broadway, was the fact that Rick Saucedo was actually accompanied by Elvis' own original Jordanaires, who had been with Presley for 17 years, and by Elvis' friend and drummer, D.J. Fontana. A famed columnist, Earl Wilson, predicted great success for the show which had just concluded a cross-country tour with the production closing a record-breaking engagement in Rick Saucedo's own Chicago area. Completing this fine extravaganza was an extraordinary imitator, Dominic DeCeasre, another back up group called the Ambassadors, a black group named Sweet Kharisma in imitation of Elvis' Sweet Inspiration group, and the Elvis Presley Tribute Orchestra. Truly a winning combination.

I sat at a table with a group of older women. My wife

was baby-sitting since we weren't fortunate enough to have her relatives come along as they had to Reno. I listened to the soft mood music before the show; the songs were from the album "Elvis--Aloha from Hawaii via Satellite." That album, of course, brought back memories of my experience in Hawaii, and once again I felt as if I had evoked psychic feelings into existence; again I felt the warm presence of Elvis beside me. It always came like a soft tropical flow of warm air that wafted around me and notified me that his presence was near.

The first segment of the show was a history of Rock 'n' Roll presented by the inimicable Dominic DeCeasre, who impersonated several outstanding artists including Chubby Checker, Tom Jones and Neal Diamond. The Rock Era was co-existent with Elvis; it was an era full of fun-filled action and fantastic flashbacks. The history of that time in space which launched the great career of Elvis into super-stardom began with Bill Haley & The Comets doing "Rock Around the Clock Tonight." Other names like Fabian and Conway Twitty also reached for the stars. "The Big Bopper" and Dion's "I'm a Wanderer" had their moment on the stage of fleeting time. Even the Jordanaires were an integral part in the history that made up the Elvis Presley Story; they sang "O, Lonesome Me," "You Can Have Her," "Peace in the Valley," and "This Little Light of Mine." Ray Walker was kind enough to include a word about Elvis for the fans before the Jordanaires sang "Peace in the

Valley." He mentioned the Eddy Arnold Show, and he said that Elvis came to that show, and after the Jordanaires sang the song he came to them and said: "If I ever cut a record, would you sing?" They said: "Well, sure, man. That's our business." Ray admitted: "We didn't know Elvis from the next door neighbor, then. Let us sing for you the song that attracted Elvis to the sound."

The history of Rock 'n' Roll next moved into the '60s when Elvis returned from the Army and Chubby Checker was doing the twist. Quickly the setting moved forward in time through Elvis' movie years and the Motown sound of "Dancing in the Streets," performed by the Sweet Kharisma girls. With Elvis' return to the stage in 1969 came the sound of Tom Jones doing "It's Not Unusual." To reverently close that page in history, the sound of Neil Diamond's "Holly Holly" filled the solemn auditorium and then echoed in our ears as the first part of the show concluded.

The magic that Elvis brought to the world was introduced in the second segment of the show with the apocalyptic "Thus Spake Zarathustra" theme. As the curtains opened the stage was set for a second coming of the superman that Nietzsche spoke of in his prophetic book Thus Spoke Zarathustra. The teacher of eternal recurrence, known as Zarathustra or Zoroaster, had spoken of returning eternally to the identical and self-same life, and here before our eyes we were witnessing

a recreation of a new mystery. It was the mystery of the spirit of Elvis in the flesh. It was as if the elements which revolved in Elvis' earth life had gathered together to revolve once again around the figure of a singer who would vibrate with the spirit of Elvis. The 13-member band was set; the Sweet Kharisma and the Jordanaires were positioned on the right hand side. And suddenly the forces produced an Elvis-like singer, a black-haired, virile, vibrating vocalist dressed in a white jump suit with a blue Star of David formed from blue stones on his back and a blue scarf around his neck.

Rick Saucedo's voice naturally sounded like the mature Elvis as he sang "See See Rider." Even when the young singer spoke he naturally sounded like Elvis: "Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome. Good Evening. Yeh (low guttural sound). We're gonna do absolutely, ah, nothing to-night. We'll bore ourselves (Elvis laugh). We'd like to do a tune for you; it's by B.J. Thomas and it's called 'I Just Can't Live'." After that introduction he sang "I Just Can't Help Believing." He even changed words to the song like Elvis did to some of his songs; instead of saying "for more than just one day," he said "for more than 24 days." Besides that, his "yehs" were nicely verbalized at important spots in the song. The most astonishing and haunting part was the realistically reproduced laugh of Elvis. At times it sounded like the laugh of a sad and lonely clown.

Rick Saucedo was explosive on stage. He resembled Elvis in his early Las Vegas performances when he had lots of energy, vigor, vitality and enthusiasm. His movements on stage were fast, and they accurately portrayed Elvis' movements. Rick took a breather after almost every song, and he would always have something humorous to say. He introduced the song "Treat Me Like a Fool" with: "We're gonna do a real sad tune for you, so go ahead and get your napkins out...cry it out...trea... this Las Vegas...ain" After a drawn-out ending to that song he said: "Thank you. We're gonna do a few more of these sad tunes for you cause they have a lot of meaning to them. (Elvis laugh) We're gonna do a tune, it's by the Righteous Brothers and it's called 'You've Lost.'" Rick used the same technique as Elvis of walking back and forth on stage, and he gave the impression that he was using the same extemporaneous, ad-lib style that Elvis had incorporated into his mannerisms.

Rick introduced "Jailhouse Rock" with a fine twist: "We're gonna do a new tune...what's it called? (turns around to the band) You know (Elvis laugh)...ah...(turns around and swings arm as a signal to start)." After that sharp conducting he went on to introduce "Heartbreat Hotel" with more humor: "Let me tell you...whew...well...I like to do that... it clears everything out...well, since my baby left me (Elvis laugh)." He ended that song with a real low sound as if he was forcing the air out of his lungs. He remarked, "Man, it's

such a beautiful running show tonight."

Then he reverently stood with head bowed and eyes closed as he sang "How Great Thou Art;" he faced the Jordanaires as they sang their gospel-version of the second verse. After the loud and drawn-out ending, Rick stooped down Elvis-like to talk to one of the ladies: "What's your name, dear? Pardon? Betty? Whew! Anyway, we're gonna do another fast number for you. But (Elvis laugh) it's a weird tune...it doesn't say much...so, you know...(walks back and forth)...I just like looking at everybody...that's the whole show...just looking at everybody (Elvis laugh) Who? (turns around) O.K. I'll tell you what...that's a good idea (Elvis laugh) this is...this is our our second time...ah...really our first time in Las Vegas... and we'd like to do a tune for all you tourists here...I'm one too...lost everything...all my money...and I'd like to do a tune for all you losers out there, it's called 'Viva Las Vegas.'"

After some fast, exhilarating movements, Rick did a novelty act: "I'm gonna do something I've never done before. I'm gonna take my shoes off (Elvis laugh). No...I'm gonna do a little thing that they do in the burlesque...burlesk...or whatever they call it...what do they call it? Burles or burlesk? Anyway, I'm gonna do something that a girl showed me. This belt's too big." Rick proceeded to take off his belt, sliding it down his thighs and revealing a slim waist. Now he was able to move around a little faster in rhythm to "Polk Salad

Annie." He continued without talking much by doing Frank Sinatra's favorite "My Way;" then he changed pace again and sang a good rocking song, "Baby, Why Can't You Be True;" and before he took a short break, he sang Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline."

Ray Walker's voice came through the loud speakers as he made a special announcement: "Ladies and gentlemen, it has been our purpose tonight to bring you the music of Elvis Presley, and in some cases even similarities of Elvis himself. We the Jordanaires and D.J. Fontana who knew Elvis so well, and were friends with him for some 21 years, and worked with him for some 16 or 17 nearly every week, know that while Elvis was alive he did not mind people singing his songs and singing them the way that he sang them, as long as their attitude was right. As soon as Elvis sang a song it seemed that it was the only way they could be done again. We were friends with Elvis for some 16 years while working with him in the studios and also on some 28 movies, and we're happy to say now that we're friends with Rick Saucedo. (Applause--Rick is looking at Ray all this time). Knowing Elvis like I did, I firmly believe that Elvis would be proud to stand and say, 'I'm Rick's friend, too.' (Applause) We think it's marvelous that a young man like Rick can depart a little from his style of singing and come on stage at night and entertain and sing music another man's way, and yet at the same time remain himself. May we the entire

cast now sing for you the title for tonight's show: 'The Legend Lives.' This song was written by Doc Pomus who knew Elvis so well that he put into the words of this lovely song some of the ways that Elvis had begun to feel about his own life and about things around him. Would you listen please as one of the greatest voices in the world today sing for you. Rick, if you please."

I had the eery feeling that Elvis was standing on stage and actually reaffirming Ray Walker's words by nodding his head to the newly-established friendship. A bond had been formed between two singers: one singer was singing the praises of another singer. Rick was handed a guitar with two necks--one for the lead, the other for the bass part. The song was about a country boy whose road from Tupelo to heaven was a long, long road; but he was able to climb the ladder of success to the stars through divine help from the angels. Some people worshipped him and others denounced him, and yet he was only human like the rest of us; so now he had left us, but his song and light would live on in the legend he had become. The song started with a slow smooth tempo and later crescendoed into a hard rock beat which pounded out the loud and strong message that although the man was gone physically, his spirit would live forever as a great legend.

To prove that Elvis would live on each time the show was reenacted, the concluding song "American Trilogy" featured

a resurrection scene. This was the climactic scene, featuring a special anthem composed of three parts: "Dixieland," place of Elvis' birth and upbringing; "All My Hard Times," a description of his pilgrimage on earth; and "Glory, Glory Hallelujah," a cry for joy in anticipation of ascension and return to the divine origin. It was as if the mystery of the ages, which had previously been concealed, was now revealed again and again in order to demonstrate the greatest of all truths: the truth of eternal life.

As I watched Rick fold his body into a ball like a scarab and cover himself with his arms, my memory line flashed back to the time I saw Elvis perform the same feat with a cape, and I understood the significance of his message. Elvis was the phoenix, the symbol of reincarnation, a unique bird which was thought to be an emanation of sunlight and to shine with gold, in size and appearance like an eagle. According to legend, the phoenix was said to visit Egypt every five hundred years, but the rest of the time it flew about in India. The 20th century counterpart of Egypt and the Nile River, of course, is Memphis and the Mississippi River. The most interesting part about the legend of the phoenix, according to the Indians, is that it has a sweet voice that sings funeral strains for itself as it is being consumed in its nest, which is set afire by a spark from the sun. When Elvis performed that song a certain chill came over my body when he mentioned the inevitability of physical death; and yet when I saw him rise from

the smoke and the ashes of the past and stretch his shiny cape outward like an eagle ready to soar into the sky, I was convinced that death was comparable to a theatrical device; after all, the ultimate triumph was in the renewal of life.

And so Rick also rose from within the midst of the smoke just like Elvis had done so many times. The message and the legend lived on.

Rick left the stage to the music of "See See Rider," and the announcer exclaimed: "Rick Saucedo, ladies and gentlemen, the Prince of Rock 'n' Roll."

After the incredible show I started walking to my van. The Las Vegas desert breeze was still warm. I was wearing my Elvis T-shirt with a picture of Elvis singing and with the caption: "Elvis--the King Forever." A chain with the TCB insignia dangled around my perspiring neck. A strange, warm sensation started flowing through my veins. A tiny voice told me to go back to the Stardust Convention Center. I was to meet the Jordanares, or at least one of them. My face flushed and my nerves raced excitedly up and down the ladder of my spine. I had been advised to listen to the intuitive mind, for that is a channel to higher awareness. It had been my teacher on former occasions and I welcomed the still, small voice whenever it spoke.

I turned around and walked back toward the purple and blue lights of the Stardust Convention Center. I paused

by the tables set up in the lobby. Rick Saucedo's merchandise was for sale. I picked up a leaflet describing a fan club that Rick had started. All I had to do in order to join was send an initiation fee of \$15.00 to Kathy Losch, Fan Club President, 718 Bonded Parkway, Streamwood, Illinois 60103.

I turned my head towards some commotion in a hallway leading backstage, and I noticed Ray Walker talking to some people. I made my way across the lobby to join the small group. I tuned my ears in closer as I heard Ray mention the name of Elvis.

"No, Elvis did not die of a drug overdose," said Ray. I inched closer to catch every word. He said something about a drug called dilantin.

"How did he die, then?" asked a girl in glasses. Her freckled face wrinkled inquisitively.

"His death was caused by a number of things," Ray began in his Tennessean nasal intonation. "Actually, he smothered himself to death. The carpet in Elvis' bathroom is about two inches thick." Ray demonstrated with his right thumb and index finger. "When he fell from exhaustion and tranquilizers," he continued.

"What kind of tranquilizers were they?" I suddenly interrupted. I expected to listen from a safe distance, but something prompted me to start asking questions.

"They were sleeping pills," Ray quickly replied. He

glanced momentarily in my direction and noticed my Elvis T-shirt. He looked back at the bespectacled girl. "When he fell on the rug," Ray resumed with his attention drawn back to the original question, "his nose was flat in the rug and he couldn't breathe. So he smothered to death."

I was reminded of the seance at the House of the Sun (Midnight Globe seance in June 20, 1978 issue), where Lou Wright heard Elvis tell her that he was choking and that he couldn't get his breath.

"Was Elvis a religious person?" I asked. I was determined to find out as much as I could about Elvis.

"Some people say that Elvis renounced God at the end of his life, but that isn't true," remarked Ray.

"How about his religious beliefs?" I probed a little further each time. "Did he stick to his fundamentalist beliefs?" I knew the Jordanaires were a gospel group from Nashville and therefore belonged to the traditional Bible Belt of the South. Ray Walker seemed somewhat liberal, since he was wearing a thin gold chain around his neck--the newest style of the day.

"I don't know much about that," Ray answered. He gave me a quizzical look. He wondered where I was coming from and why I was asking such questions. He was ready to turn away from me and find some more suitable company. But I had one more urgent question that I was urged to ask.

"Could you tell me what book Elvis was reading when he died?" I asked. Ray looked at me intently to see if I was serious or not.

"You know, I heard the name not too long ago from Gordon Stoker. It just slipped my mind." Ray glanced down the long hall.

"Do you think it would be possible for me to ask him?" I persisted.

"Sure," answered Ray. His bulging eyes smiled. "You stick with me. We'll go look for him. He's probably in the restaurant."

Ray turned aside to talk with some personal friends from his part of the country. I waited patiently while they discussed plans for a late meal. I followed them to the restaurant. I had to quicken the pace of my short legs to keep up with the fast pace of Ray Walker. He was tall, about six feet tall, and he seemed to be an expert at weaving his way through crowds. He mentioned something about winning some silver dollars as we walked through the casino. He talked about buying souvenirs for his family. When we finally came to the restaurant, Gordon Stoker was nowhere to be found.

"Maybe he'll come by," Ray said. He turned toward me and apologized politely for Gordon's absence. "Are you in a hurry to go somewhere, or would you like to wait here for him?"

"If you don't mind me hanging around, I'd like to wait," I replied. I was flabbergasted at the Southern hospitality the bass singer was extending to me. He acted like a gracious host.

I walked with his other two friends to a table, and I sat down with them. Ray ordered a Spanish omelette (I recalled that Elvis used to love Spanish omelettes). I ordered a beverage to drink since I was too excited to eat.

"What'd you think of Rick?" asked Ray. He was a good conversationalist.

"I was stunned at how much he sounded like Elvis," I replied. "The way he moved and laughed--it resembled Elvis a lot. How old is Rick?"

"He's only 22 years old," Ray answered. "Would you believe he used to play and sing hard rock before?"

"That's quite a switch," I said.

"You know, I think he kind of even looked like Elvis," said the lady who was with Ray's friend.

"He's a lot like the younger Elvis," said Ray.

"Did you see Johnny Harra?" I asked.

"He's a personal friend of mine," responded Ray. "I went to see him the other night. He doesn't have the fast movements that Rick has. Johnny is more like the Elvis that performed during the last years of his life. You know, like slow motion."

"Is Rick's voice like Elvis' when he talks naturally?" I asked. By now I felt like a journalist shooting questions out of my mouth like a machine gun. I was absorbing everything in my mind for future reference.

"That's one of the reasons why we joined him in January," said Ray. "His voice sounded so much like Elvis' that it was easy for him to adapt to Elvis' style of music. And his voice, which resembles Elvis', is his natural voice. He sounds like that all the time. It's not as if he were trying to impersonate Elvis. It's just the natural way he talks. It's almost as if he were a natural Elvis."

"I liked his style of ad-libbing," I said.

"You wouldn't believe this," Ray said, "but he's got almost all the songs memorized like Elvis used to, and he chooses the songs as he goes along."

"He does?" I asked in amazement. I had heard that Elvis was gifted with a photographic memory. But to discover that Rick was also gifted was too much of a coincidence. The hand of destiny had something to do with this, I thought.

"That's right," said Ray. His omelette arrived and he stopped talking for a while. I chatted with Ray's friends, who wanted to talk more about Rick than about Elvis. Ray's friend worked for Weyerheuser Publishing Company, and we talked some about his job.

Shortly, Rick's manager arrived and Ray talked with him.

Ray seemed to be concerned about the smoke machine not working effectively during the performance of "American Trilogy." He was telling the executive-type man in the beige suit that the side doors had been opened and were blowing the smoke away from Rick. Ray also mentioned something about Rick's attitude being right, even though he was a little nervous and forgot to hand out any scarves.

Eventually, it was time for Ray to go backstage and get prepared for the midnight show. He told me I could follow him so I could talk to Gordon. Once again I had to double time to keep up with the speedy Ray Walker. The man and his wife left to get in line for the second show. I followed Ray silently. He glanced back over his shoulder several times to see if I was still following him. When we came backstage he led me to the Jordanaires' dressing room.

When I stepped into the dressing room I couldn't believe my eyes. The glittering costumes of the Jordanaires shone like particles of gold. Before me stood Gordon Stoker, Hoyt Hawkins and Neal Matthews. Seated on a bench beside a piano was D.J. Fontana. I had never even dreamed of such an encounter.

"This young man wants to know what book Elvis was reading when he died," Ray said to Gordon, who was adjusting his jacket.

"I've been trying to find out about it," I told Gordon.

"Somehow I feel it's very important for me to know." The friends of Elvis looked at me with searching eyes. D.J. sat on the bench and watched me without saying a word.

"Charlie Hodge told me about the book," Gordon quickly replied in his baritone voice. "But somehow I can't remember it."

"How can I get a hold of Charlie Hodge?" I enquired. I wasn't about to give up the search.

"I think you can get in touch with him by contacting the Dick Clark Show down in Hollywood," said Gordon. "He's working on a movie."

"Thanks," I said. I turned around to leave.

"Sorry we weren't able to help," said Ray as I walked out the door.

"That's all right," I said. "It was a pleasure meeting and talking with you." I turned and smiled at Ray. I would never forget the way he walked tall and proud like Elvis. Something of Elvis had rubbed off on Ray. I could sense it.

The next day, before we left Las Vegas, we drove by the places that Elvis was associated with in life. We stopped at the Hilton Hotel, which was known as the more apropos International Hotel when Elvis made his comeback in 1969. The globe of the world suspended in the center of three upright pillars at the entrance to the parking lot of the hotel was an apt symbol of Elvis' stupendous record-breaking career

and heights reached during his sell-out performances at the International Hotel. My wife and I had just missed seeing Elvis in 1975 when we traveled there during our Thanksgiving vacation. We were able to see Ann-Margret though; she had played a major role in his life as his partner in the movie "Viva Las Vegas." If we could have stayed three more days, we could have seen Elvis on Dec. 2, 1975, that's if the tickets weren't all sold-out.

The Hilton, incidentally, was the place of the rainbow. The symbol of the rainbow was painted all over the illustrious hotel. Elvis was like a personification of the rainbow, appearing at the hotel in all his colorful splendour. He even had a rainbow jumpsuit. Like the rainbow, he was a bridge from the physical world to the spiritual world. He was like a spiritual link between all cycles, especially a link between the old and the new. He was the new symbol of hope, a new sign for a new golden age.

We also visited the gilded Aladdin, where the wedding ceremony of Elvis and Priscilla took place at 9:41 A.M. on May 1, 1967. Aladdin's golden lamp on top of the billboard reminded me of the fairy tale nature of Elvis' life; it seemed as if he were able to make not only one genii, but a dozen geniis, do his bidding whenever he rubbed his magic lamp.

As we drove out of Las Vegas we stopped at McCarran International Airport, where Elvis had landed numerous times

to play at the International Hotel.

Finally we left the hot desert city with a feeling that not only had we walked where Elvis had walked, but destiny had somehow managed to let me see and talk with people who were close to Elvis and who were carrying on the message of a living legend.

I carried another feeling away from Nevada with me. It was the same feeling Col. Parker expressed in Steve and Eydie's dressing room: "I feel Elvis is away--just like he was away in the army." I clipped that little remark from a Vegas entertainment paper because I felt it was highly significant. It testified to the incredible feeling that the spirit of Elvis was still with us, and there was a subtle hint that Elvis would return again.

CHAPTER 9

FT. HOOD

We continued on our pilgrimage to Graceland via Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. In Texas, we spent the night at the Traveler's World Campground in San Antonio. On the morning of July the 17th I awoke to the happy song of a red summer tanager. This was the day we were going to visit Ft. Hood, the Army camp where Elvis went through basic training. I peeked out of the pop-up tent opening and saw a beautiful red summer tanager hopping around on top of a barbecue pit. The red color reminded me of Elvis, for that was one of his favorite colors in his early years.

My wife awoke when she heard me stirring in the tent. She had a smile on her face.

"Guess what?" she exclaimed. She pulled the sleeping bag away from her face.

"What?" I replied.

"I saw Elvis," she said matter-of-factly. She laughed.

"So you finally saw him, too," I said. I was glad to

hear I wasn't the only one seeing things. "What happened?"

"It was a concert," she began. "It wasn't a hotel or anything, it was just in front of a store on some steps."

"Where was this?" I asked. I was trying to get the scene fixed in time and space.

"It was some kind of opening," she continued. "It was like a grand opening to a store, and there was just him and this guy. He didn't have a band, just him and the guy who played guitar. Elvis sang and this guy played along with him. The guitarist seemed like a manager."

"What color suit did Elvis have?" I asked.

"He didn't have a suit," she answered. "He was wearing a regular pair of slacks and a sports jacket, you know, the kind they used to wear before. The jacket was green and the pants were brown, kind of beige, something like that. I don't remember exactly. I was looking at his face. He looked just normal."

"And then what happened?" I asked. Images of Elvis popped-up in my head. The colors Elvis was wearing appeared to be symbols of a tree--the tree of life.

"After the concert," she continued, "I ran up to him and I hugged him and gave him a kiss. And he did, too. Really nice. You know, like a normal guy. And so then we started walking down the steps, me and him--he had his arm around me--and you and my sister were walking behind. We were just

talking.

"So I asked him where he was staying. He said he was staying in a hotel. Then he and his manager started walking to their car. You and I started walking to our car.

"All of a sudden he turned around, grabbed his suitcase and started following us. He asked me, 'Do you have a place for me to stay?' I said, 'Sure we have a room.' He said, 'O.K.' He was tired of staying in hotels. I asked him, 'How about your friend?' He said, 'He'll stay somewhere else.' So I said, 'O.K.' You gave me a funny look, as if you were saying, 'be careful.'"

"You mean that Elvis might take advantage of you?" I inquired.

"No," she answered. "Just that I was getting too friendly, inviting him and all that. I didn't invite him. He invited himself.

"So we said, 'O.K.' He went in our car, and he came home with us. I told him we had a room up in the attic; it was like a two-story house, and there was one room and one bathroom in the attic. He said he didn't care what it was as long as there was a bed there.

"So I said I'd fix it up for him and he could stay up there. So we came home. He was really nice. He sang to us. Just like a regular guy. He wasn't doing anything funny or putting on a show. He was just like a regular friend visiting."

"Do you remember what songs he sang?" I asked.

"I don't remember any of the songs," she confessed.

"I was too wrapped up in just, you know, he was there."

"What did he look like, young or what?" I asked.

"He was slim, about 30," she answered. "His hair wasn't big or anything. It was just sloped down natural and parted on the side. He looked just like a regular guy you'd meet on the street."

"Sounds like you're describing the picture of him on the cover of 'Welcome to My World,'" I remarked. The image from that album flashed into my mind.

"He wasn't a big show off or anything," she added.

"It's interesting that the image from that album popped into my head," I continued with the thought that impressed itself on my consciousness, "because your dream occurs at the Traveler's World Campground. 'Welcome to My World' is the traveler's world, the world of adventure with Elvis. Which means that he's going to travel with us. Or should I say we're going to travel with him?"

Somehow I felt it was the latter, because now we were both fully initiated into Elvis' spirit world and he was taking us on a fantastic trip through it. I later found out that Elvis recorded the song "Welcome to My World" at the January 14, 1973 Aloha from Hawaii concert which was telecast via satellite to the whole world. He was doing exactly the same

thing now in spirit. He was showing himself to friends around the world who believed and accepted his friendly, warm, and loveable spirit. It was Elvis' way of saying, "Let's Be Friends."

The hot summer sun beat on our heads as we drove into Killeen. Killeen was the town Elvis stayed at during his basic training at Ft. Hood. We drove through Killeen on Business 190. One curious sight on the main road through town was an old "Blue Moon" Restaurant across the street from the Killeen Motel. The crescent moon sign above the restaurant seemed to speak of days gone by, when Elvis' blue moon had turned to gold. We drove down Oak Hill Drive looking for the home that Elvis rented during his stay in Killeen, but we couldn't find it. The former residents were no longer listed in the telephone book. After all, twenty years had passed.

We drove two miles west of town to Hood Rd. and we turned north. I stopped at the main gate to check a map which was color coded into four sections. I knew that Elvis had been assigned to the 2nd Armored Division, and I found the Headquarters for the 2nd Armored Division in purple-coded section 4. The building, called Gaffey Hall, was numbered No. 919.

There were two interesting facts about the Ft. Hood period of Elvis' life. First of all, Elvis came to Ft. Hood on March 28, 1958, a Friday, and left September 19, 1958, also

a Friday. The circle made a full swing during his stay at Ft. Hood, just like the circle of life made a full swing for Elvis' stay on earth (Elvis came and left on a Tuesday). The second curious factor deals with numerology. The numerical value of Killeen is 5, Elvis Presley's name number; the numerical value of Ft. Hood is also 5 (granted it could also be 2 if the unabbreviated form, Fort Hood, is used). The number of days assigned to Ft. Hood (including the 13-day extended emergency leave during his mother's illness and death from Tuesday Aug. 12 through Sunday Aug. 24) totals 176, which adds up to the single number of 5. An extra bonus for numerologists is the haunting number of 42, the age at which Elvis left the physical plane; this number shows up in the date Ft. Hood was dedicated in honor of confederate general John Bell Hood--Sept. 18, 1942. The number 42 also shows up in the date Elvis left Ft. Hood ($9-19-1958=42=6$). Incidentally, Elvis entered Ft. Hood on a 9 ($3-28-1958=36=9$).

The drive through Ft. Hood brought back memories of my own basic training experience at another hot Texas Army camp, Ft. Sam Houston in San Antonio. I could still hear the troops marching to the tune of a favorite rhythmic chant:

Ain't no use in looking down,
 Ain't no discharge on the ground;
 Ain't no use in calling home,
 Jody's got your girl and gone.

The tune and the words rang through my mind as I watched the

soldiers in green fatigues listlessly performing their patriotic duty.

The 2nd Armored Division Museum (Bldg. No. 418 in Sec. 3) on Battalion Avenue offered an insight into the influence of the machinery of war on Elvis' life. The badge of power and physical force which Elvis carried on his uniform was the ominous "Hell on Wheels" patch. This emblem was painted on the backside of the museum. A triangular shape was divided into three equal areas and three colors, orange, black and red (on the headquarters building the triangular shape was divided into the more familiar orange, blue and red); in the orange area was the number 2; in the middle of the triangle were the symbolical tracks and red lightning bolt, symbols of mobility and fire power. Below the triangular shape was a rectangular base on which was printed in bold capital letters: "HELL ON WHEELS."

Elvis later revised the concepts behind the awesome insignia and created his own masculine brand of mobility and fire power: the TCB and lightning bolt necklace ("Taking Care of Business in a flash"). The lightning bolt was a powerful symbol of the spark of life-force which starts the creative process. The feminine counterpart was a mollified TLC slogan signifying "Tender Loving Care." It's interesting to note that Elvis had already adopted the lightning bolts as his own trademark back in August 10, 1954, according to

Paul Lichter, when he appeared at the Overton Park Shell auditorium wearing black pants that featured pink lightning bolts lining the outside seam of the leg.

Another impressive emblem was a painting I saw on the side of a barrack which war-mongers would be embarrassed of and preachers would be self-righteous about. The picture depicted five "Pillars of Hell" supporting the 2nd Armored Division emblem; in between the five white pillars were four layers of gold; the whole structure was standing on a foundation of five white stones; below the foundation were 13 meaningful blackened letters, "PILLARS OF HELL." The preachers who condemned Elvis' devilish gyrations at the beginning of his career would have a field day with the symbols implicit in the emblem.

When Elvis joined the Third Armored Division in Germany, his patch was slightly, but significantly, modified. He no longer wore the number 2; instead he wore the number 3. "Hell on Wheels" was changed to "Spearhead," a significant change in that whereas Elvis in the beginning of his career was seen by many as a frightening spectacle howling and whirling his way to the top of the heap, he was now seen as a leader of men spearheading a movement which would solidify one's sense of patriotism. Elvis would proudly display his "Spearhead" patch after his honorable discharge in 1960. He would carry the mark of the leader till his last day on earth.

Back in civilian Killeen I was prompted by my inner

guide to visit the local library on Green and N. Gray (also known as 6th) Streets. The public library is always the greatest and quickest source of information, and Killeen's microfilms had a fair representation of Elvis' sojourn in their neighborhood. The Killeen Daily Herald's first article on Friday March 28, 1958 reported that "Pvt. Presley Comes Today to Fort Hood." Private Elvis was scheduled to arrive from the induction center, Ft. Chaffee, Arkansas, with 18 other Army rookies late in the afternoon. Elvis was to arrive at the Processing Plant, Building 1035, located on Hood Rd. between Tank Destroyer Blvd. and Headquarters Ave. Incidentally, for numerologists, two number combinations appear in this first Killeen front-page article on Elvis, 18 and 1035, each of them adding up to give the single digit 9, Elvis' birth number; another number also caught my eye on the front page, Vol. 6, No. 60, which seemed to anticipate the tragedy of Elvis' mother, since 6 is the numerical value of the name Gladys Presley, and 6 is also Gladys' birth number (add $4+25+1912$). One more note in passing: the front page had a short article on W.C. Handy dying in New York City; his blues music, the same music Elvis roamed down Beale St. to hear, was immortalized in Memphis.

There were 14 newspaper articles which covered Elvis' arrival, stay and departure:

- (1) Fri. March 28, 1958: Elvis Comes Today to Fort Hood.

Pvt. Presley Comes Today To Fort Hood

Private Elvis Presley, the actor, singer and entertainer, will arrive at Fort Hood today. He is expected to remain at the post for several days before returning to his home in Memphis, Tenn.

Presley, who has been in the service since 1958, is currently assigned to the 16th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division. He is a member of the post's G.I. Club and has been very popular with the troops.

He is expected to perform at the post's main theater, the Fort Hood Auditorium, on Friday night.

Presley's performance is being sponsored by the post's G.I. Club and the 16th Cavalry. It is expected to be a very successful one.



LATEST FASHION — Elvis Presley, soldier without rings and the Army's property, has the next two years' allowance of 200 uniforms in Army uniform patterns at Fort Hood, Tex., where he was captured in assembly line fashion. (NSA telephoto)

Forewell To Fort Hood

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Elvis To Begin Atlantic Crossing

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TOO YOUNG TO CRY?

Two young Midwestern girls — 15-year-old Mary Kay and 14-year-old Mary Ann — were encouraged by their father to visit to the Elvis Presley home.

They were meeting him at the home along with a crowd of other fans — to dance to the singing of the rock and roll performer.

Friday night, they returned in hopes of a repeat performance.

Ahead by their parents if they made it on the second trip, the girls replied.

"No, only because we've cried once submitted in this time."

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(2) Mon. May 5, 1958: Elvis is Assistant Squad Leader Now in "A Company, of 2nd Medium Tank Battalion of the 37th Armor at Ft. Hood. The trainee post is equivalent to sergeant in an active Army unit. Presley's squad of 14 men enter the transition firing phase of training this week. This is the fifth week of training.

(3) Fri. May 16, 1958: Elvis Presley Will Perform. Elvis Presley will make a public appearance at 10:00 A.M. Saturday, the first since his induction into the army. Now under contract to the United States, Presley will appear under the auspices of "A" Company, 2nd Medium Tank Battalion, 37th Armor, 2nd Armored Division. Instead of the familiar guitar, he will carry a M130 caliber carbine across his shoulder. The 266th Army Band will replace his former accompanists, the Jordanaires. On the show with him will be some 15,000 Fort Hood soldiers, marching in an Armed Forces Week review.

(4) Fri. May 23, 1958: Elvis Says He Isn't Engaged. Relax, girls. Elvis isn't engaged yet. Pvt. Elvis Presley, nearing completion of his basic training at Fort Hood, said he and singer Anita Wook are not engaged to be married to quell a rumor that had been circulating in the area. Presley made the announcement that he is not engaged to marry through the public information office at Fort Hood.

(5) Tues. May 27, 1958: Pvt. Presley Will Be Sent to

Germany. Pvt. Presley completes his basic training Saturday and will have a two-week leave. He will spend until Sept. 20 in advanced armor training at Fort Hood and then be sent to Germany as a replacement for the Third Armored Division. On June 16, he will begin eight weeks of advanced training as an armor crewman--a tanker--and on completion of this, he will go into six weeks of basic unit training, learning to work with a team. In Germany, Pvt. Presley will be in the Third AD which is a part of the U.S. Seventh Army.

(6) Mon. June 23, 1958: Elvis' Parents to Reside Here for Two Months. The Presleys will occupy the home of Attorney and Mrs. Chester Crawford while the Crawfords are on vacation. Pvt. Presley can now leave the post after duty hours provided he reports back in by 11 P.M. the night before a duty day. The elder Presleys have been staying at the Ranch Motel in Killeen for the past two days. The Crawford home is located on Oak Hill Drive and is a three-bedroom brick house.

(7) Wed. Aug. 13, 1958 (Memphis): Mrs. Presley Critically Ill in Memphis, Tenn. Army Private Elvis Presley remained by his critically ill mother's bedside today on a seven-day emergency leave from Ft. Hood, Tex. His mother, says Vernon Presley, is hospitalized with a liver ailment. Her condition was described as "critical" by her physician, Dr. Charles Clarke. Presley flew here from Dallas Tuesday

night.

(8) Thurs. Aug. 14, 1958: Death Came Unexpectedly.
ELVIS PRESLEY'S Mother Dies in Memphis Hospital. ...she was 42. (Correction mine--she was 46) ...death came at about 4:15 A.M. (c.d.t.) Her husband was at her side when she died, but Elvis was asleep in his \$100,000 mansion "Graceland" in Suburban Whitehaven. "She apparently died of a heart attack," the doctor said. The husband said he was asleep on a cot in Mrs. Presley's room when he was awakened by her "suffering for breath" at about 4 A.M. He immediately summoned the physician, who pronounced her dead.

(9) Mon. Aug. 25, 1958: Presley Returns to Hood. ...following an emergency leave during the illness and death of his mother. "One of the last things Mom said was that Dad and I should always be together," Elvis said.

(10) Mon. Sept. 15, 1958: Elvis to Leave for Germany at End of Week. Presley...is now a light truck driver in a tank company and is expected to have a similar job in Germany. He is listed as an assistant squad leader.

(11) Tues. Sept. 16, 1958: Presley's Departure Drawing Crowds, Long Distance Calls.

(12) Thurs. Sept. 18, 1958: Elvis' Fans Giving Singer Big Send-Off. ...scheduled to board train about 8:20 P.M. Fri. for NYC. ...1,360 other Third Armored replacements who will leave with him.

(13) Fri. Sept. 19, 1958: Preparing to Leave. Elvis, father say stay here enjoyable.

(14) Mon. Sept. 22, 1958: Farewell To Fort Hood. Elvis To Begin Atlantic Crossing. ...Presley, who spoke to reporters only briefly while transferring from the bus to the train, said he guessed "I just feel sad" about going. Earlier, he said he felt it was "a duty to go."

Well, so much for reliving historical moments. It was fun romping through the past, but now it was time to move on to Memphis.

As we left Ft. Hood and Killeen, I picked up a copy of the July 18, 1978 issue of the Midnight Globe. There was an interesting article in it about a devoted woman named Beth Chandler, 42, from San Bruno, California. She had turned her home into a shrine to Elvis. She had memories of Elvis which she cherished since 1957, especially the memories of Las Vegas, where she tipped a \$50 bill to a head waiter for the opportunity of sitting alongside the stage. Her gambit paid off, for her white gown attracted Elvis to her and she received an unforgettable kiss and a scarf from him. The scarf is her sacred relic from the most wonderful man she had ever met. Beth felt there was "an indefinable greatness" about Elvis that attracted her from the beginning.

Another article in the same issue revealed the use of an Elvis look-alike, Larry Blong, a 26-year-old Philadelphian,

to fool Graceland crowds. The double was used by Elvis because his security guards feared for his safety. The clever trick, however, was used only at Graceland.