

# Happy Birthday, Elvis!

Elvis Aaron Presley was born January 8, 1935, in Tupelo, Mississippi, to Gladys and Vernon Presley.

That's just the beginning of Elvis' legendary life, one full of music, movies and memorable birthdays.

For all of the celebrating Elvis did at Christmas and New Year's Eve, though, Elvis usually celebrated his birthdays pretty quietly. But there were a few extra special birthdays - complete with special gifts and parties - that meant a lot to the King of Rock 'n' Roll.

Many years, Elvis chose to celebrate his birthday quietly at his beloved Graceland. He often rented out a local movie theatre so he and his friends could watch the latest movies.

One of the most special birthdays Elvis ever celebrated was his 11<sup>th</sup>, **1946**. He actually didn't get what he wanted for his birthday, but maybe he got what he needed.

Some say Elvis asked for a rifle or a bicycle that year, but Elvis' mother, Gladys, instead bought him a guitar. He spent the next year teaching himself how to play the guitar - a skill that would become handy in his career.

In **1949**, for his 14th birthday, Elvis received a book of cartoons by George Price from his father. Vernon wrote inside the book, "May your birthday be sprinkled through 'n' through with joy and love and good times, too. Daddy." Elvis loved this book, and even took with him to Germany when he was there serving in the U.S. Army- but, unfortunately, Elvis lost the book there.

Most Elvis fans are well aware that his birthday falls on January 8 each year. Still, his birthday oftens slips by unnoticed, even by many of his most fervent fans. For commercial reasons, Elvis' life is celebrated with much more fanfare each year on the anniversary of his death than it is on the anniversary of his birth. Weather is main reason. Elvis Presley Enterprises knows it can draw bigger crowds to Memphis for Elvis Week in the summer than it could in the middle of winter. (An observance of Elvis' birthday is still held at Graceland each year for those fans willing to make the pilgrimage.) The nation's press follows suit, printing its Presley retrospect's in mid-August while generally overlooking Presley's January birthday.

Elvis had already turned 19 by the time his singing career began in Sam Phillips' Memphis recording studio in 1954. In commemoration of birthday this year, then, let's take a look back at where Elvis was and what he was doing on the 23 birthdays he celebrated during his entertainment career. Most of the following information comes from Peter Guralnick and Ernest Jorgensen's book, *Elvis: Day By Day*.

# This is How Elvis Presley Celebrated his Birthdays

from 1955-1977



## **January 8, 1955: Elvis' 20th Birthday**

Elvis was in Shreveport, Louisiana, for his eighth appearance on the *Louisiana Hayride*. He sang four songs: "That's All Right," "Blue Moon of Kentucky," "Hearts of Stone," and "Fool, Fool, Fool." His third record on the Sun label, "Milkcow Blues Boogie" / "You're a Heartbreaker," had been released 10 days earlier.

## **January 8, 1956: Elvis' 21st Birthday**

After appearing on the *Hayride* the night before, Elvis flew home to Memphis on his birthday. He was asleep that morning when Colonel Parker called to wish him a happy 21st. Just two days later Elvis would record "Heartbreak Hotel" in New York City.

## **January 8, 1957: Elvis' 22nd Birthday**

After appearing for the third and last time on *The Ed Sullivan Show* on the 6th, Elvis spent his birthday at home in Memphis with his parents. On the same day the Memphis Draft Board announced that Elvis has been classified 1A for the draft.

In theatres: *Love Me Tender*. On the Top 100: "Love Me Tender" at #3.

## **January 8, 1958: Elvis' 23rd Birthday**

At Graceland, Elvis posed for photos with March of Dimes poster child, eight-year-old Mary Kosloski. Later in the day, a birthday party was held for Elvis, who was scheduled to leave two days later for Hollywood to start work on *King Creole*.

In theatres: *Jailhouse Rock*. On the Top 100: "Jailhouse Rock" at #3.



### **January 8, 1959: Elvis' 24th Birthday**

Elvis celebrated his birthday in the army at the Hotel Grunewald in Bad Nauheim, Germany.

Elvis' fans celebrated the King of Rock 'n' Roll's birthday even while he was away serving the country. "American Bandstand," hosted by Dick Clark, aired a special birthday tribute to Elvis.

On the Hot 100: "One Night" at #5 and "I Got Stung" at #14.

### **January 8, 1960: Elvis' 25th Birthday**

Elvis participated in a telephone interview with Dick Clark for his *American Bandstand* show. Priscilla Beaulieu was among 200 guests who attend a birthday party for Elvis later in the day at a local recreation centre. Four days later, Elvis left for Paris on a 12-day leave. Sargeant Presley was a short timer; his army discharge was only 57 days away.

### **January 8, 1961: Elvis' 26th Birthday**

With Elvis' birthday falling on a Sunday, a party in his honour took place on the set of *Wild in the Country* on Friday, January 6. The cast and crew gave Elvis a plaque reading, "Happy Birthday, King Karate."

In theatres: *Flaming Star*. On the Hot 100: "Are You Lonesome Tonight?" at #1. (It would be the only time during his career that Elvis had a record at the top of the *Billboard* pop chart on his birthday.)



### **January 8, 1962: Elvis' 27th Birthday**

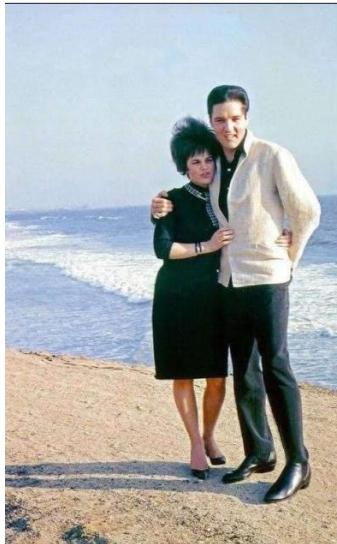
Elvis was again away from home for his birthday, this time in Las Vegas. Sahara Hotel owner Milton Prell, a friend of Colonel Parker, provided Elvis with a large cake.

In theatres: *Blue Hawaii*. On the Hot 100: "Can't Help Falling in Love" at #5.

### **January 8, 1963: Elvis' 28th Birthday**

Elvis spent his birthday with Priscilla, who had flown in from Germany for a Christmas visit at Graceland. She would head back to Germany three days later, after Elvis failed to convince her parents to extend her visit.

In theatres: *Girls! Girls! Girls!* On the Hot 100: "Return to Sender" at #8.



### **January 8, 1964: Elvis' 29th Birthday**

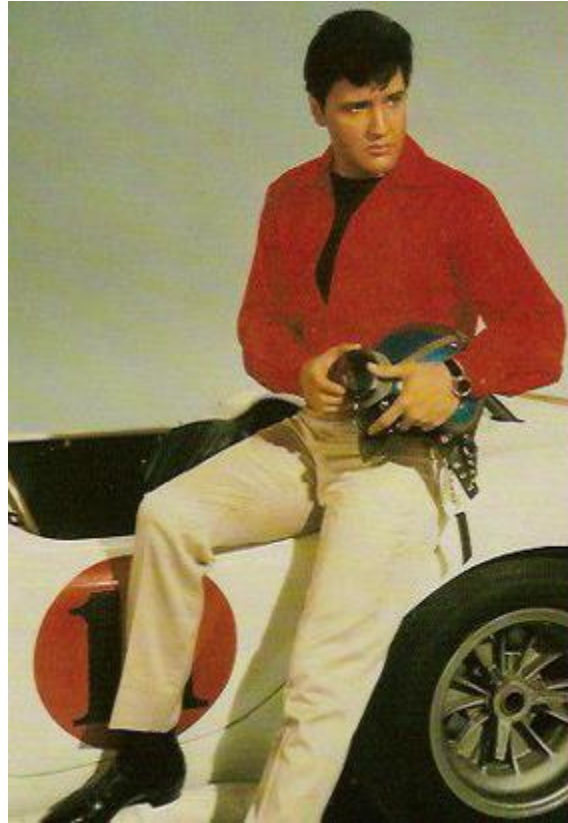
Elvis spent the last birthday in his twenties at Graceland. Four days later he travelled to Nashville for a recording session that produced "Ask Me," "Memphis," and "It Hurts Me."

In theatres: *Fun in Acapulco*.

### **January 8, 1965: Elvis' 30th Birthday**

Press reports across the nation noted Elvis' 30th birthday, which Elvis again spent quietly at Graceland.

In theatres: *Roustabout*.



### **January 8, 1966: Elvis' 31st Birthday**

Elvis spent the evening at the Memphian theater viewing *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*.

In theatres: *Harum Scarum*. On the Hot 100: "Puppet on a String" at #21.

### **January 8, 1967: Elvis' 32nd Birthday**

Gordon Stoker of the Jordanaires visited Elvis on his birthday at Graceland. Elvis was in the midst of a horse-buying spree. Five days before his birthday, he purchased three horses, including a registered palomino and a Tennessee walker. The day after his birthday he bought three more—a black gelding, a buckskin mare, and a sorrel. The Graceland barn was being remodelled to house all the horses.

In theatres: *Spinout*.

### **January 8, 1968: Elvis' 33rd Birthday**

Elvis celebrated his birthday for the first time as a married man. He and Priscilla spent the evening at the Memphian theatre. Four days later Colonel Parker reached an agreement with NBC for a TV special to be aired at year's end.

In theatres: *Clambake*.

### **January 8, 1969: Elvis' 34th Birthday**

Elvis spent his birthday, his first as a father, with his family at Graceland. Plans were in the works for Elvis' January recording session to be held at Chip Moman's American Studio in Memphis instead of at the usual RCA Studio B in Nashville.

On the Hot 100: "If I Can Dream" at #26.

### **January 8, 1970: Elvis' 35th Birthday**

Elvis and his family were in Los Angeles as Elvis prepared for his February Las Vegas engagement at the International Hotel. Two days later Elvis began rehearsals at RCA's studio on Sunset Boulevard.

In theatres: *Change of Habit*. On the Hot 100: "Don't Cry Daddy" at #15.

### **January 8, 1971: Elvis' 36th Birthday**

According to Guralnick and Jorgensen, "Perhaps as a birthday gift to himself, Elvis has a police radio installed in his Mercedes and buys an array of police equipment, including revolving blue lights, shoulder holsters, chemical weapons, and handcuffs." The next day Elvis received an unexpected present. The U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce named him one of the country's Ten Outstanding Young Men of 1970.

In theatres: *Elvis: That's the Way It Is*. On the Hot 100: "There Goes My Everything" at #35.

### **January 8, 1972: Elvis' 37th Birthday**

Priscilla was in Los Angeles, having told Elvis 10 days earlier that she was leaving him. Elvis flew girlfriend Joyce Bova into Memphis to spend his birthday with him at Graceland. Four days later Elvis flew to LA to prepare for his late-January opening at the Las Vegas Hilton.

### **January 8, 1973: Elvis' 38th Birthday**

Elvis was in Los Angeles prior to flying to Honolulu the next day. He had lost 25 pounds on a crash diet in preparation for his upcoming "Aloha From Hawaii" TV special concert on January 13.

On the Hot 100: "Separate Ways" at #28.



### **January 8, 1974: Elvis' 39th Birthday**

"The two mayors of Memphis, city and Shelby County, declare Elvis' thirty-ninth birthday to be Elvis Presley Day, and both march in a parade down Elvis Presley Boulevard to Graceland and his high school alma mater, Humes, had their band play "Happy Birthday." Elvis watched the festivities from the front porch and waved to fans. In Georgia governor Jimmy Carter issues, a similar proclamation, in deference to Elvis' five Atlanta performances in 1973."

### **January 8, 1975: Elvis' 40th Birthday**

"Elvis Fat and Forty" was the headline over newspaper articles across the country on the day that Elvis turned 40. A story in the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* noted that Elvis spent the day "in self-imposed seclusion" at Graceland.

On the Hot 100: "Promised Land" at #38.

### **January 8, 1976: Elvis' 41st Birthday**

Elvis spent his birthday in a rental home at a Vail, Colorado, ski resort. With him were friend Jerry Schilling and Myrna Smith of the Sweet Inspirations. Elvis stayed secluded indoors during the day, emerging on the slopes only at night to ride a rented skimobile.

### **January 8, 1977: Elvis' 42nd Birthday**

Elvis Presley spent his last birthday studying and reading books in his Palm Springs home with his girlfriend Ginger Alden and her sister Rosemary. Later, he invited a few others over to read and share thoughts. He later sent them shopping, not focusing on himself even on his own birthday. Ginger Alden, Elvis's last girlfriend, shared that he was so selfless on that special day.

To this day....The Memphis and Shelby County Mayors, as well as other special guests and officials, continue the Elvis Birthday Proclamation tradition each year at Graceland.

