



Elvis and Thanksgiving

On Thanksgiving Day 1971, Elvis Presley gave one of his final live performances of the year in the Las Vegas Hilton showroom. He was in the midst of his holiday engagement at the Hilton, where he often performed for extended periods in the 1970s. Elvis also had a tradition of celebrating holidays like Thanksgiving with family and close friends, usually at his Graceland home in Memphis, Tennessee, when not on tour. Family dinners and a sense of camaraderie were part of his holiday celebrations, often centred around music and good food.

Elvis had a strong connection to his family and friends, and his Thanksgiving gatherings were known to be festive and generous, sometimes involving charity work or donations. For instance, in 1968, Elvis participated in a Thanksgiving food drive.

Thanksgiving celebrations

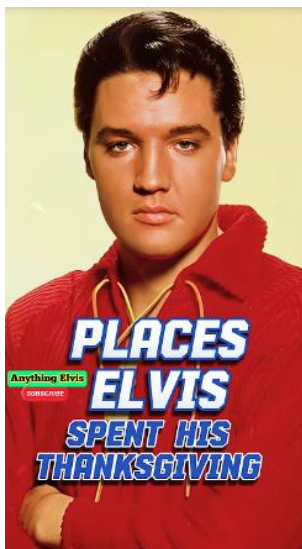
Elvis Presley's Thanksgiving celebrations varied depending on whether he was performing or spending time with family. Here are more detailed facts and evidence related to his Thanksgiving activities:

1. **Thanksgiving 1971 Concert:** Elvis performed at the Las Vegas Hilton on Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1971. This was part of his long-standing contract with the hotel to perform regular engagements in Las Vegas. The 1971 shows were well received, with Elvis often incorporating gospel music into his performances, a reflection of his upbringing and personal beliefs.
2. **Thanksgiving at Graceland:** When not on tour, Elvis would celebrate Thanksgiving at his Graceland mansion in Memphis, Tennessee. His home became the centre of family gatherings, with large meals and the presence of his close inner circle, often referred to as the "Memphis Mafia". Elvis enjoyed traditional Southern dishes, including turkey and dressing, sweet potatoes, and other comfort foods.
3. **Elvis' generosity on Thanksgiving:** Elvis was known for his acts of generosity, particularly around the holidays. For example, in 1968, during his comeback

period, he participated in charity work by donating to local Memphis causes. Throughout his life, he often gave gifts, money, and even cars to friends, fans, and strangers, especially around the holiday season.

4. **Family and Friends:** Elvis' Thanksgiving gatherings were intimate and centred on his deep love for family. His father, Vernon Presley, and other family members, including his grandmother Minnie Mae, were always part of the celebrations. Elvis was close to his stepbrothers and often included them and their families in holiday festivities.
5. **Elvis' spiritual side:** Thanksgiving was also a time for reflection for Elvis, who had a deep spiritual side. He was known for singing gospel songs with his friends and family after meals, often leading to impromptu performances. He once said, "Gospel music is the purest thing there is on this earth", and holidays gave him the chance to sing songs that were meaningful to him in a more intimate setting than his public concerts.

These elements show Elvis' strong ties to family, his generous nature, and the way his personal and professional life intertwined, even on holidays like Thanksgiving.



Watch this video:

<https://youtube.com/shorts/YDLHCKnRq9E?si=3Y7MNpVpTDjYav7M>



Watch this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tW-ug4-sW4Y>



Recordings around Thanksgiving

Elvis Presley didn't have any known recordings specifically on Thanksgiving Day, but he was active in recording sessions around the Thanksgiving period in various years, and some of his notable songs or albums were recorded close to the holiday. Here are some key examples:

1. "Elvis Sings the Wonderful World of Christmas" (Recorded May-June 1971):

- While not directly related to Thanksgiving, this album was released in October 1971, shortly before the Thanksgiving season. It became a holiday staple and contains some well-loved songs such as "It Won't Seem Like Christmas (Without You)" and "Merry Christmas Baby". Elvis was deeply connected to the holiday spirit during this period, making this album relevant to his work around Thanksgiving that year.

2. November 1956 Recording Sessions:

- On **November 16, 1956**, Elvis recorded at Radio Recorders in Hollywood, where he cut songs like "Too Much" and "Playing for Keeps." This session took place just days before Thanksgiving, showing that he was busy in the studio around the holiday.
- These songs were eventually released in early 1957 and became significant hits, especially "Too Much," which reached No. 1 on the Billboard pop chart.

3. "Guitar Man" (Recorded September 1967, Released November 1967):

- Elvis recorded "Guitar Man," one of his favourite tracks, in September 1967, and it was released as a single in **November 1967**, around the Thanksgiving holiday. The song showcased his Country and Blues influences, and it remained a standout in his later catalogue. While not recorded on Thanksgiving, it was a notable release during that period.

4. "If Every Day Was Like Christmas" (Recorded June 10, 1966):

- This holiday-themed song, recorded earlier in 1966, was released as a single in **November 1966**, just in time for the holiday season, including Thanksgiving. Written by Red West, a member of Elvis' inner circle, it reflects the warmth and generosity that Elvis often displayed during the holidays.

Though Elvis didn't specifically record on Thanksgiving Day itself, these recordings and releases highlight how the holiday season was often a productive and celebratory time in his career.



Charity work

Elvis Presley was known for his incredible generosity, donating to numerous charities and causes throughout his life. Here are some of the key charitable acts and donations he made:

1. St Jude Children's Research Hospital (Memphis, Tennessee)

- **Donation:** Elvis was a long-time supporter of St. Jude, founded by his friend Danny Thomas. He contributed both publicly and privately, donating money directly to the hospital and participating in fundraisers.
- **Impact:** St. Jude became one of the leading research hospitals for children with catastrophic illnesses, particularly cancer, thanks to widespread support from celebrities like Elvis.

2. 1961 USS Arizona Memorial

- **Donation:** In 1961, Elvis helped raise over **\$54,000** (\$500,000+ in today's currency) for the construction of the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor. The bulk of the funds came from a benefit concert he performed in Hawaii on March 25, 1961.
- **Impact:** His involvement provided crucial funding that allowed the memorial to be completed, honoring the fallen soldiers from the Pearl Harbor attack.

3. Tornado victims in Mississippi

- **Donation:** After a tornado struck parts of Mississippi in 1957, Elvis made a sizable donation to help the victims. This came soon after he gained national fame, showing his early commitment to helping those in need.

4. Memphis Charities

- **Donation:** Elvis was known to donate to various charities in Memphis throughout his career. He frequently gave to the **Cynthia Milk Fund** (providing milk to underprivileged children) and **The Salvation Army**.
- **Impact:** He supported these charities regularly, helping improve the lives of people in his hometown, particularly children and those facing hardship.

5. Charity Concerts

- **Donation:** Elvis often performed charity concerts. For example, in **1964**, he performed a benefit concert at the Ellis Auditorium in Memphis to raise money for local charities. He also gave proceeds from many concerts and events to causes close to his heart, like local children's hospitals and veteran organizations.



6. Christmas and Holiday donations

- **Donation:** Around Thanksgiving and Christmas, Elvis was especially generous, often donating to local charities and individuals. He was known to give cars, jewellery, and cash to friends, employees, and fans, particularly during the holidays.
- **Impact:** His holiday gifts became legendary, extending not only to his inner circle but also to people in need.

7. The Presley Charitable Foundation

- **Donation:** After his death, the Presley Charitable Foundation was established in his honour. One of its key projects is **Elvis Presley Place**, a housing development in Memphis for homeless families. The foundation continues to provide aid to those in need, particularly within Memphis.

8. Donations to Police and Firefighters

- **Donation:** Elvis often donated to local law enforcement and fire departments. He gave financial support to help them purchase needed equipment and even gifted police cars to local departments on occasion.

9. Donations to Individuals

- **Donation:** Elvis was famous for his spontaneous acts of generosity. He frequently gave cars, houses, and large sums of money to friends, acquaintances, and even strangers. For example, he was known to walk into a car dealership and buy cars for people who were there, or give away jewellery or cash on a whim.

10. 1968 Charitable Acts (Comeback Special Era)

- **Donation:** In 1968, as he made his television comeback, Elvis participated in a Thanksgiving food drive in Memphis, donating large quantities of food to the underprivileged.

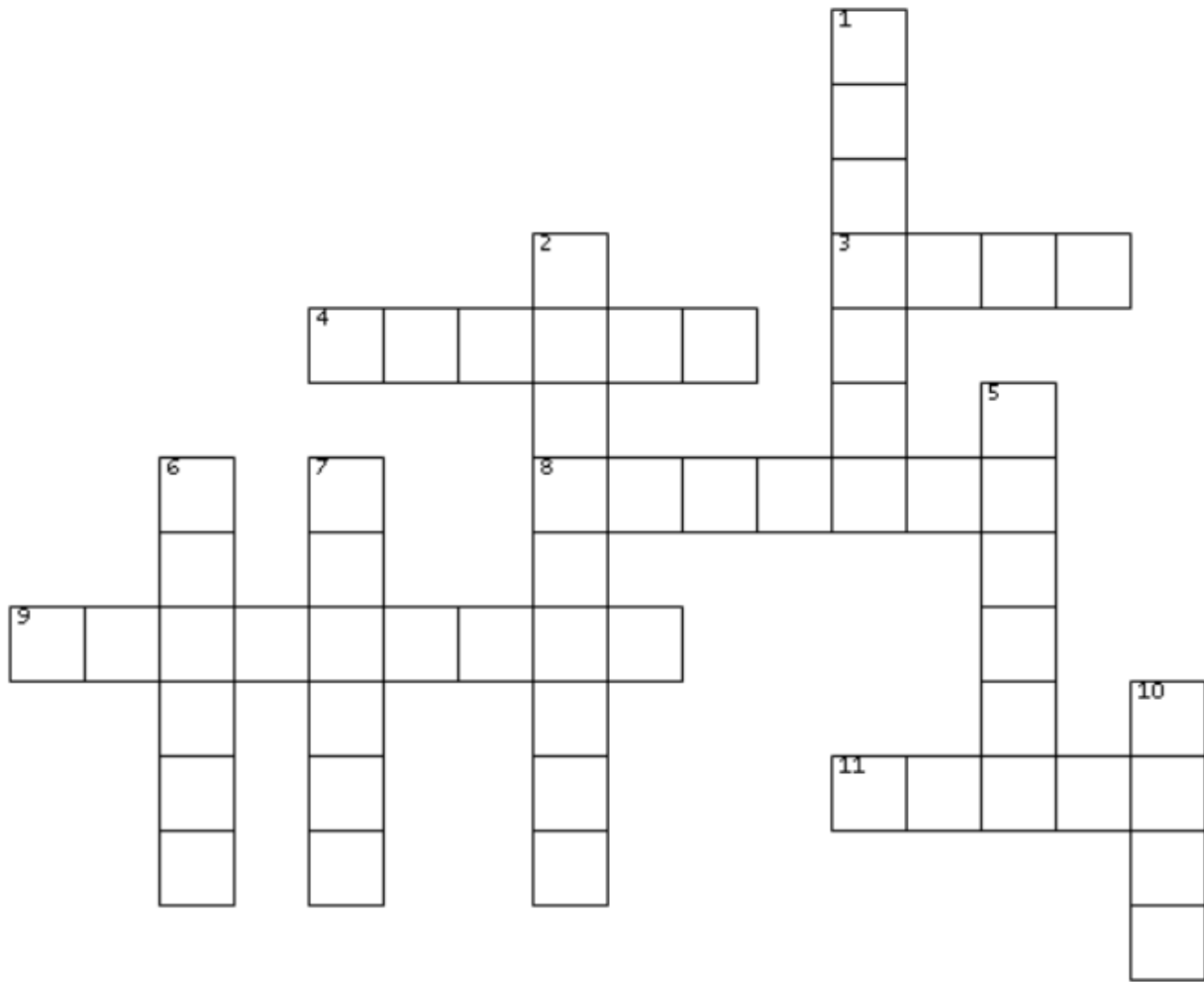
11. Donations to Veterans

- **Donation:** Elvis made several donations to veterans' organizations throughout his career, reflecting his respect for the military. As a former serviceman himself, Elvis had a deep connection with veterans' causes.

12. Annual Donations to Charities from Concert Proceeds

- **Donation:** Throughout his career, proceeds from Elvis' concerts and special events often went to charity, particularly in Memphis. It was common for Elvis to give a portion of his earnings to various charitable organizations.

Crossword puzzle



ACROSS

3. True or False? Elvis recorded songs just before Thanksgiving one year, at Radio Recorders in Hollywood
4. The hospital Elvis supported frequently.
8. Elvis helped victims of a tornado/hurricane/earthquake (choose one)
9. Elvis like to give gifts to friends and family, and even perfect strangers, including items of _____
11. True or False? Elvis participated in a holiday food drive in 1972

DOWN

1. Elvis frequently donated to the _____ Milk Fund (providing milk to underprivileged children)
2. This song was released around Thanksgiving in 1967.
5. He once said, "Gospel music is the purest thing there is on this earth"
6. Elvis raised funds for the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor, at a concert in _____
7. Hotel where Elvis performed a Thanksgiving concert
10. "If Every Day Was Like Christmas" was written by Red _____

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