

Embrace

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MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA PUBLICATION
ISSUE 18 | SUMMER 2025

WELCOME

From our Director



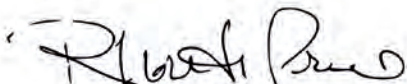
This year, as we honor what would have been Elvis Presley's 90th birthday, we invite you to step back in time and discover a lesser-known chapter of his story, one that unfolded right here on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Elvis first visited the Coast in 1955, but the summer of 1956 truly shaped the man who would become a legend. Before the world tours, the gold records, and the global fame, there was a season of sunshine, freedom, and first love. That summer of 1956, he fell for local girl June Juanico from Biloxi, and together, they experienced the best the Coast had to offer: boating and fishing through backwaters and bayous, playing small gigs at local venues, taking long car rides, meeting friendly locals, and indulging in the unforgettable flavors of the Coast.

This issue celebrates that story: a coastal coming-of-age filled with charm, adventure, and the roots of rock 'n' roll. Few people realize just how much time Elvis spent here or how deeply he cherished it. Our summer issue is a tribute to that pivotal time, marking the 70th anniversary of the summer that helped mold the King of Rock 'n' Roll.

Welcome to *Elvis: The Summer That Shaped a Legend*.

Rhonda Price Director, Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area.



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*Front Cover: Photo from Gulf Coast Album:
by Charles Sullivan,
Tex Hamill Collection*

*Back Cover: Photo from Elvis Up-Closeby
Jay Leviton and Riff, Ger J.*

OUR MISSION

ENHANCE, CONSERVE AND PROVIDE CONNECTIVITY

to cultural resources of a unique and defined area through identification, interpretation and promotion.

CREATE AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

and serve as a source of pride. Providing increased awareness and appreciation of their environment, history, culture, traditions and lifestyles.

PROMOTE ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

of heritage resources that benefit the entire region and support the long-term enhancement and conservation of those qualities that make the six counties of the MS Coast NHA unique.

TELLING THE AREA'S NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT STORY

to residents and visitors through activities and partnerships that celebrate the area's unique history, people, traditions and landscapes.

Your MS Coast NHA is a partnership of communities, businesses, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations and individuals who value the region's rich cultural and environmental diversity, history, natural beauty and traditions.



ENHANCE * CONSERVE * CONNECT

CONTRIBUTORS

Do you have a story that captures the spirit of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, one shaped by memory, heritage, or a unique point of view? This is your chance to bring those voices and moments to life on the page.

If you're interested in becoming a Contributor, contact RoxAnn Rankin Wicker to discuss your article submission: roxann.wicker@dmr.ms.gov



RAY L. BELLANDE

Ray earned a petroleum geology degree from Mississippi State in 1965 and later worked for Humble Oil and Tenneco. In 1980, he became an independent geologist, but he's best known for creating the Ocean Springs Archives. A respected local historian, he now serves as the official historian for the City of Ocean Springs.



ELSE MARTIN

Else Martin, a lifelong resident of Jackson County, has dedicated over 40 years to researching local history and genealogy. She served as a librarian with the Jackson-George Regional Library System from 1985 to 2002, working in children's services and later specializing in genealogy and local history. A graduate of Moss Point High School and Mississippi State University, Else is passionate about preserving and sharing the rich heritage of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.



CHELSEA PRINCE

Chelsea quickly fell in love with the Mississippi Gulf Coast's history and its beauty after moving to the area. She is the author of a children's book, *Carl the Rooster*, founded the Ocean Springs Mississippi Historical Archives Facebook Group and now works as the Outreach Coordinator for the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area. She enjoys gardening, beachcombing and exploring with her husband and three children.



BRILEY RICHMOND

Briley Richmond is a lifelong resident of Ocean Springs and a retired attorney. A former Navy Lieutenant, he served as an American Naval Officer. He has held roles as Alderman and Mayor Pro Tem for the City of Ocean Springs. Briley has a passion for history and art and enjoys sharing stories that highlight the rich heritage of his hometown.



BERNARD ROUGHTON

I've been an Elvis fan since age 11 after hearing 'All Shook Up' on an HMV 78 in England. I collect memorabilia, helped produce Elvis videos through the fan club and worked 30 years with the BBC, one of the first to film inside Graceland. I've made several Elvis trips to the U.S., with a special interest in King Creole and a love for the Gulf Coast, whether America or Mexico.



LURIE ROSETTI

Laurie is a native of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Her roots go back nine generations to the early 1700s and the original families who settled the area. She is employed with the City of Biloxi and her job includes helping to preserve Biloxi's vast cultural heritage. She graduated Sacred Heart Catholic Girls' High School and Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. She is mother to Bryan Rosetti, Jr. and Dylan Russell Rosetti. She enjoys genealogy, cooking and Saints football.



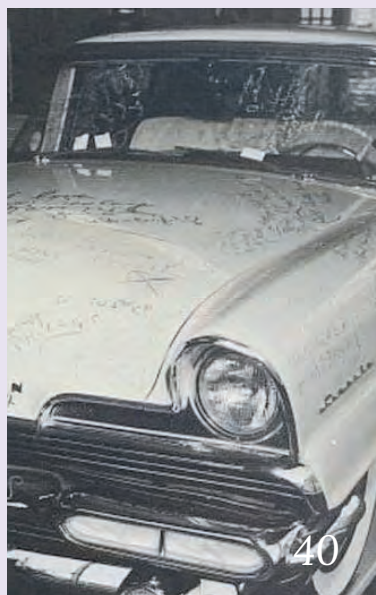
VINCENT CREEL

Biloxi native Vincent Creel is the former Public Affairs Manager for the City of Biloxi and a former reporter and editor for the Sun Herald.



JESSE YARBOROUGH

Jesse moved to the Coast in 1991 and graduated from St. Martin in 2005. A lifelong history buff, he served five years in the Navy in Norfolk, later joining the Mississippi Army National Guard. He earned a B.S. in History from Liberty University in 2021 using the G.I. Bill. Now living in Saucier with his wife, Katie Mae, and their four children, Laney, Luke, Anna, and Bella, Jesse works as a senior technician at Stennis Space Center and recently joined the Navy Reserves.



CONTENTS

HISTORICAL

- 07 Gone to the Shipyard
- 08 Summer Biloxi Stole Elvis's Heart
- 10 "Ann Raye"
- 12 The Venues

INNOVATIVE

- 17 Blue Suede Views
- 19 Viva Preservations

NATURAL

- 21 Sun-n-Sand
- 22 Gulf Hills Dude Ranch & Country Club
- 23 Ces Spearman and the Beachwater Hotel
- 24 Dickie Waters
- 25 A Little Boy Fishing...
- 26 Harry Reeks
- 27 Elvis Goes Fishing
- 29 Fishing & Movie Reels

COMMUNITY

- 31 David's Shoe Department in Biloxi
- 33 Elvis Left the Saenger
- 34 The Pink Pony Lounge & Memories
- 35 Mary Ann Mobley

LIFE

- 37 An English Elvis Fan
- 40 Elvis's Cars

FLAVORFUL

- 43 Barq's Root Beer Float
- 44 Mint Julep Mocktail & Fried Peanut Butter Banana Sandwiches

LAGNIAPPE

- 45 Passport Spotlight
- 46 The Hills: Extend the Experience
- 47 Hayride to Hollywood
- 48 The Elvis & June Experience

A black and white photograph of Elvis Presley in a sailor outfit, leaning against a classic car. In the background, his parents Gladys and Vernon Presley are visible. The word "HISTORICAL" is overlaid in large, pink, outlined letters across the center of the image.

HISTORICAL

*Elvis poses for the camera while his
parents Gladys and Vernon Presley
were visiting Gulf Hills.*

THE PRESLEY FAMILY MOVES TO PASCAGOULA: GONE TO THE SHIPYARD

CONTRIBUTED BY ELSE MARTIN

Elvis Presley's father, Vernon E. Presley's proof of working at the Moss Point Shipyard in 1943.

Thanks to Ernie Denmark for sharing this treasure.



The Book - *Elvis Presley: A Southern Life*, by Joel Williamson, Donald Lewis Shaw, excerpt below:

“In the year 1942, Vernon (Presley) held five jobs. In 1943, Vernon (Presley) continued his peripatetic ways. In mid-February, he quit his job in Millington and within the month was working at the Pepsi-Cola bottling plant back in Tupelo. Several weeks later, on April 29, when he left Pepsi, the clerk made a note on his last pay slip, “Gone to shipyard,” it said.

On May 16, Vernon started working at the Moss Point Shipyard on the Gulf Coast near Pascagoula, Miss. This time, Gladys and Elvis went with him, as well as his cousin, Sales Presley and his wife, Annie, and their two little girls. The work was hard, but exceedingly well paid. Vernon got \$1.20 an hour for a forty-hour workweek and \$1.80 an hour for overtime. Workers and families lived in slapped-together quarters made of wood, canvas, and screen. It was not comfortable, especially as summer heat rose and insects came on, but Gladys and Elvis had the company of Annie and her kids. Elvis was eight years old.

Photo of Vernon Presley, still shot from 8mm film footage by Eddie Bellman in 1956

1943 - Vernon E. Presley, of Tupelo, Miss,
Income Tax withheld and Wages Paid at Moss Point Shipyard

STATEMENT OF INCOME TAX WITHHELD ON WAGES		Calendar Year
By Employer		1943
(EMPLOYEE'S RECEIPT)		
EMPLOYEE TO WHOM PAID	Vernon E. Presley, Tupelo, Miss.	Thanks for Sharing, Ernie Denmark
<small>(Print full name of employee, home address, and social security number, if any. If employee is a married woman, name of husband should also be furnished)</small>		
EMPLOYER BY WHOM PAID	The Moss Point Shipyard, MOSS POINT, MISS.	
<small>(Name and address of employer)</small>		
STATEMENT OF INCOME TAX WITHHELD ON WAGES		
Wages paid during the calendar year 1943	\$ 352.50	
Amount of income tax withheld	\$ 13.60	(10%)

On Sunday, June 20, five weeks after they had arrived, Sales and Annie (Presley) decided to go back to Tupelo. Vernon and Gladys decided to stay. Within hours, Vernon, Gladys, and Elvis threw their things into their car and headed north. About noon, Sales, Annie, and the girls were at a roadside stand having lunch at an outside table. Annie looked up to see the Vernon Presley family in their car turning off the highway. Joining them, Gladys delivered the explanation, “We’re not staying down there alone,” she declared, “watching all those uptown folks eating shrimps and oysters.”

The Moss Point Shipyard was organized in January 1942 with C. B. Wilkerson as president, G. P. Good as secretary, W. W. Barber as vice-president, L. K. McIntosh as attorney and L. C. Winterton as consulting engineer. Moss Point Shipyard built barges for the government, employing 200 people in July 1942 with numbers increasing to between 400 and 500 in a matter of weeks.

THE SUMMER BILOXI STOLE ELVIS'S HEART

CONTRIBUTED BY LAURIE QUAVE ROSETTI

Music has always been important to Biloxi! Biloxians are a celebratory, joyous people! Before our 1699 discovery, the natives of this area were musical, perhaps keeping beat with the rhythm of the Gulf itself. The original settlers brought their people's music with them—the French, the Spanish, the Irish, and later, the Croatian and Vietnamese. So, it is only natural that some truly great musicians have ties to Biloxi and her rich musical culture.

Jelly Roll Morton, native New Orleanian and the “father of jazz,” lived here in Biloxi with his godmother (1907-1908) primarily because his family didn't approve of his career path. And Jimmy Buffett, native Pascagoulian, got his first paid gig in Biloxi thanks to club owner, Jake Mladinich, in the very early 1970s. But it would be the summers of 1956 and '57 when Biloxi was set on fire by a young phenom who challenged societal norms and musical genres like no one before him!

Elvis Presley, a shy young man of exceedingly good looks and charm, took Biloxi by storm (and Biloxi knows a hurricane when it sees one)!

In 1955, Elvis was still relatively unknown. It was a chance meeting at a musical revue held at Jesuit High School in New Orleans that introduced Elvis Presley to “Ann Raye,” a 16-year-old Biloxi Country and Western singer whose real name was Martha Ann Barhanovich. After Ann saw him on stage, she convinced her booking-agent father, Frank “Yankee” Barhanovich, to bring Elvis to Biloxi to perform. Against his own opinion, Frank booked Elvis to play at the Slavonian Lodge which in that day held weekly dances for teenagers. Out of that initial performance was born Biloxi's eternal love and infatuation with Elvis and Elvis' love of Biloxi.



Elvis returned to Biloxi and the Gulf Coast the following summer. He was booked to play several venues and spent weeks lodging in Ocean Springs. Like every tourist to Biloxi, he was fascinated with the Gulf of Mexico. He learned to water-ski and went deep sea fishing. But what really caught his attention was a beautiful Biloxi teenager, June Juanico. He met June during his performance at the Keesler Air Force Base Officers' Club. They really hit it off. Elvis and June sightings turned into Biloxi's favorite pastime that summer. Things were really starting to roll for Elvis' career and his popularity was beginning to soar.

The handsome couple had to outsmart the crowds of teenagers following them all around town. One evening while the young couple was relaxing at June's home, her mother received a phone call from a dear friend, Beatrice Manuel. Ms. Manuel asked Ms. Juanico for an unusual favor.

She explained that her daughter, Carole Marie, just seven years old, was ill with leukemia. The distraught mother told her friend that she was asking Carole about her fondest wish, hoping to make her dreams come true. She said that Carole loved Elvis and had been interested in his visit to Biloxi. She loved his new song, "I Want You, I Need You, I Love You," and wanted to meet him. She pleaded with Ms. Juanico to ask the young singer to pay Carole a visit. Ms. Juanico agreed to ask and Elvis immediately said yes.

Elvis and June went right then and there to Carole's home and met the young girl. A bit overwhelmed, Carole was very shy, but as soon as Elvis sang for her, she warmed up and began to talk. They spent an hour or so together, and Elvis promised that he'd come back after a tour to Florida to visit with Carole again. He kept that promise, but when he returned, Carole was very ill and in the hospital. Elvis and June went immediately to the hospital even though the hour was very late.

In her biography, "*Elvis: In the Twilight of Memory*," June recalled that they snuck in a back entrance of the hospital and up to Carole's room. When Elvis saw that Carole was sleeping while receiving a blood transfusion, he quietly pulled a stool over to her bedside, sat down, and gently took her hand in his. After a while, Carole opened her eyes, saw Elvis and said, "I knew you'd come back to see me." They visited for a short while, and Elvis gave her some gifts. Not very long after this visit, Carole Marie Manuel was gone from this world, but never from the hearts of those who loved her. This may have been the very beginning of Elvis Presley's philanthropic story.

Biloxi never quite recovered from those summers in the mid-1950s. Most still had Elvis fever all throughout the singer's illustrious career. In 1977, Elvis was slated to return to Biloxi and open the brand-new Mississippi Coast Coliseum. It was not meant to be, as the beloved Mississippian died two months before the facility opened. He was only 42. Biloxi wept. But his music and time here delight Biloxians to this very day. Today, visitors to Biloxi include Elvis fans from around the world. They come to visit the grave of Carole Marie, and they leave coins on her headstone; sort of an acknowledgement from one Elvis fan to another—bonded by their love for the young man from Tupelo, who was and remains the King of Rock and Roll.



(Top): Resting place of Carole Manuel at Old Biloxi Cemetery.
(Bottom): In April 2024, Laurie Rosetti led the "Strictly Elvis" tour group to visit the grave of Carole Marie Manuel. Julie Roughton shared a photo from the visit on Facebook with the heartfelt caption, "On a more somber note, we pause to pay our respects to Carole Marie Manuel."



(Left) Martha Barhanovich (Ann Raye), (Center) Elvis Presley, (Right) Mae Axton (wrote "Heartbreak Hotel")
 Courtesy of the Archives at Graceland.

MARTHA BARHANOVICH

“Ann Raye”



Contributed by **CHELSEA PRINCE**

Long before she was serving up burgers and stories on Howard Ave, Martha Ebberman, then Martha Barhanovich, was a rising hillbilly music star with her sights set on stardom. Managed by her father, Frank “Yankie” Barhanovich, Martha spent the 1950s gracing some of the south’s most iconic stages, from the Louisiana Hayride in Shreveport to the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. Along the way, she shared the spotlight with legends like Johnny Cash, Hank Williams, and a young singer from Tupelo named Elvis Presley.

Martha vividly recalls the first time she performed with Elvis, during a show at Jesuit High School. “Elvis was wearing a pink sports jacket and pink pants with a black stripe down the side,” she remembers, laughing. “I thought he was going to be some old man, but he was just a kid! I turned to Daddy and said, ‘You need to book him in Biloxi.’ Her father wasn’t quite sold. “I don’t think Daddy was too impressed the first time—not with the way Elvis juggled.”

But Martha saw something in the young performer, and she was right. On June 26, 1955, Elvis took the stage at the Slavonian Lodge in Biloxi with his bandmates Scotty Moore and Bill Black. Fewer than 75 people were in attendance. Just two weeks later, Elvis’s popularity began to soar, and those who had seen that intimate show were left marveling at how quickly he had become a sensation.

As Elvis and the Barhanovich family continued to tour together, a friendship began to form. “One day, I picked up the phone and heard, ‘Hello, can I speak with Mr. Yankie?’” Martha recalls. It was Elvis. She handed the phone to her father and listened as Elvis asked him to become his manager. Mr. Yankie, ever devoted to his daughter’s career and unwilling to commit to life on the road, turned him down, politely, but firmly. Not long after, Elvis signed with Colonel Tom Parker, who would go on to manage him for the rest of his career.

Frank “Yankie” Barhanovich. Credit: Sun Herald



After returning home from the Army in 1960, Elvis hit the road once again, including a stop in Mobile, Ala. Thanks to her father's connections, Martha scored third-row seats. She made her way to the front of the stage, hoping to catch Elvis's eye. And she did.

"Elvis looked down and recognized me," she says. "He smiled, reached down, and started to hand me the ring off his finger." But just before she could take it, a man standing behind her reached over and snatched the ring from Elvis's hand. "It still makes me emotional to think about it," she admits. "I'll never forget that moment." Though she only has one photograph with Elvis, Martha carries a heart full of memories. "He was the perfect gentleman," she says. "And he changed the world."

Today, Martha Ebberman is known less for her days on the stage and more for her hospitality. She's the proud owner of Burger-Burger, a beloved local restaurant in Biloxi where she often chats with guests and reminisces about her musical past. Though she had a chance at stardom, Martha chose love, home, and family.

"Elvis was gorgeous," she says smiling, "but my heart belonged to someone else." She married her longtime sweetheart, Roy Ebberman, and built a life in Biloxi. The couple was married for over 60 years before Roy's passing in 2021.

These days, you'll still find Martha holding court at Burger-Burger, surrounded by the buzz of customers, a few treasured photos, and the echo of a pink-jacketed boy who once made the world take notice.



BURGER BURGER

(Top): "Ann Raye" is shown surrounded by crushers. (Left to right) G. E. Covington, Magnolia; C. Y. Katzenmier, Jr., Port Gibson; E. L. Puckett, Amory; and J. Ben Perry, Grenada. Credit: The Cotton Gin and Oil Mill Press - July 2, 1955. (Left): Martha Ebberman holding a magazine cover of herself (Right): Burger-Burger restaurant located at - 1039 E. Howard Ave. Biloxi, Miss.

THE VENUES

CONTRIBUTED BY CHELSEA PRINCE

SLAVONIAN LODGE

In 1955, a young local named John Lewis was a teenager working part-time at Rosetti's Restaurant on Point Cadet in Biloxi, just a few doors down from the Slavonian Lodge, where Elvis once performed. The Lodge frequently hosted dances for the coast's youth, with admission costing just \$1.25. These events brought plenty of hungry customers to Rosetti's, known for its po-boys, the French bread sandwich made popular by Vincent Rosetti.

In an interview, John Lewis recalled, "Mr. Rosetti was president of the Slavonian Lodge, and whenever a band took an intermission, he'd bring them down to the restaurant kitchen to feed them. Elvis wasn't well known at the time, but it was a nice band. I remember bringing Elvis a Barq's root beer, and if my memory serves me right, Mr. Rosetti fixed them all shrimp po-boys."



"Every time I gave Elvis something, he thanked me politely. But I noticed every time I walked by his table that he was a nail biter. He really bit his fingernails down. I remember that because my grandmother would have knocked my head off if she'd caught me doing it. I knew that wasn't the thing to do, so I was surprised he was doing it."

Though this was Elvis's only show at the Lodge, Barhanovich booked him the next two nights at the Keesler Airmen's Club. Barhanovich remembers Elvis wasn't an instant hit in Biloxi.

- Kat Bergeron-Sun Herald-2005



KEESLER AIRMAN'S CLUB

Looking back on June 27 and 28, 1955, Martha Barhanovich recalled her unexpected moment in the spotlight with Elvis Presley. In an interview on the podcast *Globetrotting with Trey*, she shared how she ended up performing with Elvis at the Keesler Air Force Base Airman's Club, where two shows were scheduled for that first night.

After the 7 p.m. set, Martha headed home. She was still in high school and needed to get to bed. But she had barely slipped under the covers when her father called out, "Get dressed. You've got to come back out here. Elvis can't do two shows—he doesn't know enough songs."

So, Martha got dressed, returned to the base, and stepped back on stage, this time to help Elvis finish his second set.

That same night, at the Airman's Club, Elvis met June Juanico for the first time. After the show, he asked her to show him around town. The two spent the evening at Gus Stevens Seafood Restaurant & Buccaneer Lounge, sipping Cokes and talking, driving along the coast, then walked along the pier in front of the White House Hotel in Biloxi. It was a night full of romance and promise, though June wasn't sure if she'd ever see Elvis again.



(L-R): Master Sgt. Otto Zoller, Gladys Zoller, Elvis and Zoller's friend Kay Brodnax. Courtesy of scottymoore.net



(Top): Postcard of the Biloxi Community Center. Site of modern-day Legends Hotel.

BILOXI COMMUNITY HOUSE

In November 1955, Frank Barhanovich brought Elvis Presley back to the Mississippi Gulf Coast for another round of performances, one at the Biloxi Community House and two more at Keesler Air Force Base. After several failed attempts to get June on the phone to inform her that he was in town that November, Elvis spent his time with a different local girl, Marie Kuluz. Though their relationship wasn't much more than a fling, it is still part of the Elvis story on the coast.

Today, Hotel Legends stands on the very spot where the Biloxi Community House once welcomed swooning fans.

“

GLADYS PRESLEY :
“HE USED TO COME HOME BETWEEN SHOWS, BUT NOW HE ACTS LIKE THIS IS HIS HOME. HE CAN'T WAIT TO GET BACK TO BILOXI.”

”

“

JUNE JUANICO:
“IT'S NOT ME, MRS PRESLEY, IT'S THE GULF COAST; IT HAS A WAY OF MAKING PEOPLE RETURN,”

”

HAMBONE CLUB

Tucked away at the corner of Courthouse and Pass Roads in Gulfport once stood the Hambone Club, a lively music spot owned by Dan Seal, leader of The Dixielanders. With Buford Necaise on bass fiddle, the band brought Dixieland flair to the Coast. One night in 1955, they shared the stage with a rising star: Elvis Presley.

Seal recalled how Biloxi promoter Yankie Barhanovich approached him with a deal. Keesler Air Force Base had agreed to host Elvis again at the Airmen's Club, on the condition that another band headlined.

Barhanovich asked Seal if The Dixielanders would open the show. Seal agreed and, in return, Elvis would perform several nights at the Hambone Club, for free.

In a 2005 interview with *Sun Herald* reporter Kat Bergeron, Seal, then 88, vividly remembered the young performer.

"Elvis did a fine job at Keesler and at my club," Seal said. "He never drank, never cursed. He used to sip Orange Crush from a brown bottle and eat coconut bars. After he left, the girls called them 'Presley Bars.'"

Though Elvis wasn't meant to be paid for his Hambone gigs, Seal gave him \$20, a generous sum at the time. "When I gave it to Elvis, he said, 'Dan, you don't know how much I appreciate this. It'll put a lot of gasoline in that old pink Cadillac.'"

On the final night, Elvis signed a photo for him: "Dan, I really enjoyed playing at your place. – Elvis Presley."

Just months later, Elvis was in Hollywood making movies. "That's how fast he went up," Seal said, still amazed at the meteoric rise that followed those nights in Gulfport.

- Kat Bergeron from the *Sun Herald*, 2005



Photo of Scotty Moore, Elvis Presley and Bill Black performing on the MS Gulf Coast. Source: Unknown, photo circulated on social media (Facebook).



SIE'S PLACE

Photos of the interior and exterior of Sie's Place on the corner of Division and Fayard Streets in Biloxi in the 1950s. Photos courtesy of the Simon Family Collection. Site of modern-day Seashore Mission.



In the heart of Biloxi during the 1950s, a small club on Division Street played host to some of the biggest names in country music, long before some of them became legends. That club was Sie's Place, and the man behind it was Sie Simon, a sharp and charismatic promoter who had a passion for music and a gift for knowing talent when he heard it.

Simon made his mark bringing country's best acts to the Coast and helping shape the city's musical reputation in the process.

Sie's Place quickly became a hot spot for live music, where the stage saw the likes of Hank Williams, Ernest Tubb, Johnny Horton, Lefty Frizzell, Jerry Lee Lewis, Billy Walker, The Carlises, Darla Woods, Jimmy Perkins, and Ray Price all performing in an intimate club setting that buzzed with Southern charm. And then, there was Elvis.

"He wasn't big then," Simon recalled in a later interview. "He was still on Sun Records, just starting out. But he hung around here a lot." Though he was booked for official performances at the Biloxi Community House and Keesler Air Force Base, he often explored local clubs after hours, including Sie's Place.

Elvis made impromptu walk-on appearances at Sie's Place. "He'd get up sometimes just to sit in with the band," Simon said. "He liked being around the music. He'd sing a few songs, hang out. But back then, he was just one of the guys."

Though the club is long gone, the legacy of Sie's Place lives on through stories like these. - *Vincent Creel*



The day in 1955 when Elvis drove up to Sie's Place

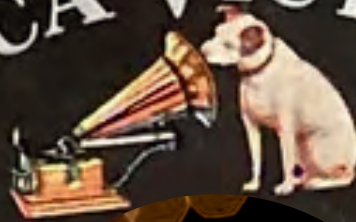
Nell Hebert was behind the bar. Hebert, now 72 (2005) and still in Biloxi, recalls: "Elvis pulled his pink Cadillac on Division Street, walked in and sat down. What do you think he started talking to me about? His mother.

He loved his mother and he talked about her long time. "He looked like a 20-year-old Elvis. Very neat. clean-cut. He was just a country boy, very, very polite.

He sat there and talked to me and the customers until Sie came in. Sie was very particular about who he'd allow to sing on his bandstand, so Elvis told him, 'Well, let me do one song and you can decide.' He did one song and Sie nodded his head and Elvis continued."

-*Kat Bergeron - Sun Herald - 2005*

RCA VICTOR



INNOVATIVE

47-6604

(G2WW-5935)

Elvis Presley Mus. &
Lion Publ. Co., BMI

45 R.P.M.

"NEW ORTHOPHONIC"
HIGH FIDELITY

HOUND DOG

(Jerry Leiber-Mike Stoller)

ELVIS PRESLEY

2:15

TRADE MARKS REGISTERED - MARCAS REGISTRADAS - RADIO CORPORATION OF AMERICA - CAMDEN, N. J. - MADE IN U.S.A.

BLUE SUEDE VIEWS

Elvis Presley's Digital Footprint

Contributed by Jesse Yarborough

"Elvis Has Left the Building"... Or Has He?

"Elvis has left the building." Those five words, first spoken in 1956 by Louisiana Hayride announcer Horace Logan, marked the end of an era, but in many ways, the King never left us. Here we are, 48 years without Elvis Presley, and yet he's still more alive than ever in the hearts and minds of fans all over the world. From Tupelo to Tokyo, people know his name. So, how can someone be even more famous in death than in life? I believe a major part of that answer is social media.

Elvis Is Everywhere

There's hardly a corner of the internet untouched by Elvis. Dozens upon dozens of Facebook pages exist solely to honor him. Some just post pictures and videos, while others dig deeper, helping us get to know the man behind the legend. Thanks to social media, Elvis is more accessible than ever, allowing new generations to experience his music, his charm, and even his flaws.

Stories from the Family

One of my favorite sources of Elvis content comes straight from his family. His cousin, Billy Smith, a member of the Memphis Mafia, and his wife, Jo, created the YouTube channel and Facebook page "Elvis Fans Matter." Through stories, Q&As, and videos, they've brought us closer to Elvis in ways no media outlet ever could. Donna Presley, another cousin, also shares memories on her own Facebook page, offering even more personal insight into the King's life at Graceland.

The Concerts We Missed

As someone who never got to see Elvis live, I can't tell you how grateful I am for the countless concert clips posted online. From rare backstage footage to fan-shot videos, social media makes it feel like we're right there in the crowd, scarves and all. Elvis lives on through those shared moments.



(Top): Elvis playing at the Community House in Biloxi with Scotty Moore and Bill Black (author unknown).

The Dark Side of Social Media

But let's not pretend it's all good. Social media has also been a breeding ground for lies, rumors, and sensationalism, especially when it comes to Elvis' health and final days. Some pages place him on a pedestal so high he stops being human, while others drag his name through the mud.

One person I deeply admire for setting the record straight is Sally Hoedel, author of *Destined to Die Young*. Sally has dedicated her life to uncovering the truth about Elvis' health. Her video series "The Elephant in the Room," tackles rumors head-on with facts and firsthand accounts. I had the pleasure of speaking with her, and she told me, "I think social media has hurt more than it has helped. Elvis Presley is a victim of romanticism and sensationalism more than any other historical figure."

She's not wrong. I've seen wild claims, like one by Dr. Oz saying Elvis died weighing 350 pounds after bingeing on Fool's Gold sandwiches. But according to Elvis' close friend George Klein, Elvis only ate one of those sandwiches, and the rest were shared among the Memphis Mafia. Facts matter. And Sally's work is a powerful reminder of that.

A Global Fan Family

Even with the pitfalls, social media can be a powerful connector. As Sally herself pointed out, it's also the very thing that's brought her closer to Elvis fans around the world. It's a platform for truth if we choose to use it that way, and we must. Elvis once said it was hard to live up to the image people had of him. Social media allows us to show both the man and the myth. It's our responsibility to get the story right.

Elvis on the Coast: Our Local Connection

What makes this even more special for me is how Elvis touched lives here on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Actor and Elvis fan Trey Miller's YouTube channel, "Globetrotting with Trey," highlights places Elvis visited, including Ocean Springs and Biloxi. Trey even interviewed June Juanico, Elvis' former girlfriend, and traced his steps to local landmarks like the Julep Room (the downstairs lounge at Aunt Jenny's) and a house on Porter Avenue in Biloxi.



Through social media new photos and stories have surfaced to add and connect pieces of Elvis's history to continue his legacy.

(Below): Elvis with Sandra and Anita Jones at Gulf Hills Dude Ranch & Country Club, Ocean Springs, Miss.

(Top): Andrea Gilich with Elvis in 1956 in Biloxi, Courtesy of Johnneen Gilich Buchignani.



And right here in our own backyard, we're keeping that history alive. If you haven't already, check out the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area's Facebook page; it's rich with Elvis history. But don't stop there! Ocean Springs Mississippi Historical Archives, Gulf Coast Homegrown History, and Handsboro History are three more pages worth following. You'll even find stories from people like Bill Stafford, who once played guitar with Elvis on the steps of Rosetti's Grocery Store, the old Hambone Club, and the Biloxi USO.

Keeping the King's Truth Alive

Yes, Elvis left the building, but not our hearts. Despite the misinformation and over-the-top worship, there are still those fighting to tell the truth. Here on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Elvis is more than a memory, he's part of our cultural story. He walked these streets, loved our coast, and left a lasting legacy.

For me, for our local Facebook groups, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area, Elvis will always have a special place. And as long as we're here to tell his story, truthfully and with love, Elvis will never truly leave the building.

Viva Preservation

Contributed by Chelsea Prince



This year marks the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, a storm that forever changed the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

We remember the devastation and the lives lost, but we also honor the resilience, strength, and spirit that rebuilt our towns, businesses, and coastlines. The scars of Katrina still remain as reminders of what was endured and how far we've come.

One piece of history that also has been restored since Hurricane Katrina is one of Elvis Presley's most iconic film costumes, the Army costume he wore in the 1960 movie *G.I. Blues*, which washed ashore days after the storm.

The display had just recently been installed at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Biloxi, Miss., when Katrina struck in 2005. The storm destroyed the casino before it could even open, and the uniform was swept out into the Mississippi Sound.

Days later, the costume remarkably washed ashore, battered but intact. Caked in mildew, rust, oil, and salt, the uniform was torn, stained, and missing its belt buckle, yet complete with its Army green cap.

Hard Rock turned to Imperial Gown Restoration in Fairfax, Va., where owner, Steven Saidman undertook the task of restoring the uniform. Saidman said in an interview that Hard Rock told him to restore the costume but not to hide what it had gone through. "Clean it, preserve it, repair the tear so that it doesn't fall apart - but that tear is now part of its history," he says.

The uniform has since been restored and returned to the Hard Rock in Biloxi where you can see it on display in the V.I.P. Gaming area. The costume is a powerful symbol of resilience, remembrance, and the enduring legacy of the King of Rock 'n' Roll.



*(Above): Photo courtesy of Imperial Gown Restoration.
(Bottom): Photo courtesy of the Hard Rock Casino, Biloxi.*



NATURAL

Elvis Presley and Red West horseback riding at Gulf Hills Dude Ranch. Photo courtesy of Gulf Hills photo collection.

Sun-n-Sand MOTOR HOTEL

In May of 1956 June Juanico and her friends Marie, Rosalie, Rita Mae and Pat took a trip to Memphis where fate brought June and Elvis back together. They spent the week together with his family, flew to Houston to pick up his new El Dorado Cadillac and drove back to Memphis. A few weeks later Elvis showed up in Biloxi for the summer to be with June and for some fun in the sun..

*The following article appeared in the
Tupelo-Lee County Tribune, Aug. 9, 1956*

It was during a vacation at the Sun 'n Sand Seaside Motel that a young Elvis Presley, born and raised in East Tupelo and later a resident of Tupelo proper before moving to Memphis, he managed to elude adoring female fans from one end of the Gulf Coast to the other. His escape? Seclusion in the motel's private pool.

Seclusion, that is, aside from the company of his Biloxi girlfriend, Miss Juanico, and a few close friends. Among them were Mr. and Mrs. R.B. "Nubbin" Kirksey of Tupelo and their eight-year-old daughter, Annalyn, who were also vacationing at the Sun 'n Sand.

The Kirksey's spent many hours chatting with Elvis about his early boyhood in Tupelo. As for little Annalyn, she often managed to steal the spotlight from Miss Juanico, whether swimming alongside Elvis in the private pool or posing for snapshots with the rock 'n' roller.

The man behind the camera? Annalyn's father, "Nubbin," who seemed to enjoy the experience even more than the many fans trying to catch a glimpse of Elvis. In fact, he became something of a one-man "Reception Committee" for the young women desperate to break through the gates for a chance to see the man who made "Heartbreak Hotel" a global sensation.

And Mr. Kirksey made the most of the moment. For him, it was a field day, wave after wave of blondes, brunettes, and redheads came from Biloxi, Gulfport, Pass Christian, Moss Point, Pascagoula, and Ocean Springs, only to be met by a cheerful but unyielding "Nubbin."



Each day, morning, noon, and night—he'd offer the same line: "He's all tied up today, but come back tomorrow, maybe you'll catch him then." And back they came, in greater numbers, day after day. But Elvis remained elusive.

They did, however, find his car—and left lipstick-scrawled love notes and autographs all over its doors, windows, and windshield. Some even tried, in vain, to reach him by phone.

But they always found "Nubbin," who became nearly as sought-after as the King himself. Offhand, it seemed like Mr. Kirksey had become the coast's most popular figure, second only, of course, to Elvis Presley.

Elvis, by the way, is due to return to Tupelo next month for an appearance at the Fair, and says he hopes he doesn't lose that "mean left leg" of his before he gets there.

KIRKSEY BROS., Furniture Company, published.

*(Top): Postcard of Sun 'N Sand Motel in the 1950's.
(Bottom): Photo of Elvis, June with Annalyn Kirksey.*

Photos courtesy of Gulf Hills photo collection.

(1): Postcard at Gulf Hills, Ocean Springs.

(2): (L-R), Arthur Hooten, Gladys Presley, Vernon Presley, Elvis Presley, Red West and Junior Smith relaxing at the Gulf Hills swimming pool.

(3): Elvis on a horse at Gulf Hills, Ocean Springs.

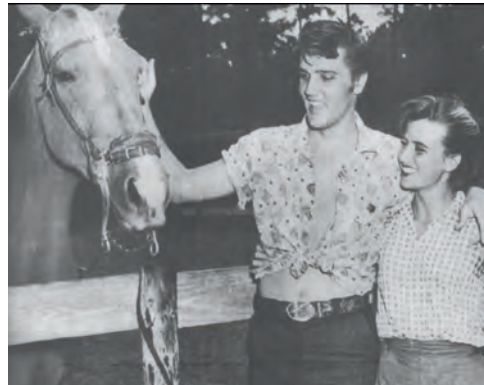
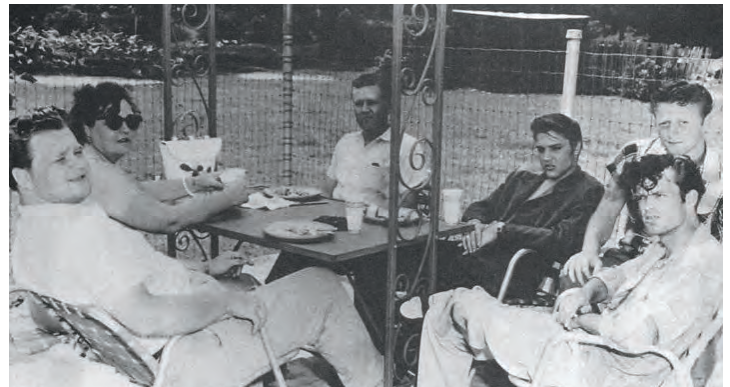
(4): Elvis and June with a horse at Gulf Hills Dude Ranch, photo courtesy of TV Radio Mirror, (Fall of 1956).

(5): Postcard of the pool at Gulf Hills Resort.



Gulf Hills

DUDE RANCH and COUNTRY CLUB
OCEAN SPRINGS, MISSISSIPPI



Gulf Hills Hotel & Resort first opened in the 1920s. Its Spanish Mission-style clubhouse, villas, and lush golf course quickly became a haven for both tourists and locals. By the 1940s and '50s, it doubled as a dude ranch. Inside the famed Pink Pony Lounge, Hollywood stars, jazz legends, and the occasional mobster from Chicago slipped through the arched doorways for entertainment and a relaxing getaway with some privacy.

But it was the summer of 1956 that etched Gulf Hills into rock 'n' roll lore. A freshly crowned chart-topping sensation, Elvis Presley arrived to water-ski across the bay, set off fireworks on the lawns, and hold court in Villa #9 followed by a rental cottage nickname, The Hack House.

Visitors now can experience a taste of its historic and charming history by booking a stay in the "Love Me Tender" suite. Though Hurricane Camille and a fire nearly erased the resort's history, its stunning 2023 revival welcomes visitors to swim in Gulf Hill's original pool and watch the sunset, keeping alive the magic of that unforgettable summer.

Interview with Ces Spearman | Contributed By Ray L. Bellande

While employed at Gulf Hills from February 1956 until December 1957, Social Host and Tennis Pro, Ces Spearman recalls his experience at Gulf Hills and the relationship that he developed with 'the King.' I worked up from trainee to assistant manager and loved the experience. The most memorable experience was getting to know Elvis while he was on the Gulf Coast often to see June, his girlfriend at the time. He was staying at Gulf Hills when 'Hound Dog' was released.

Elvis was a VERY nice guy at that time. Not only did he NOT drink, he would not allow anyone traveling with him to drink. I remember when he sent his cousin home for having a beer during the afternoon. As long as his mother was alive, he was a "straight arrow" and did not drink or even consider drugs. He was polite, considerate and really a nice person at the time. He was clearly different [from the average person]. He slept all day, sometimes, and he was very moody. On some days, he would do any favor asked and, on other days, he would do nothing. We took him horseback riding and Dickie Waters taught him to water ski. I invited him to the tennis court, but when he "whiffed" twice in a row, he said tennis was not for him. He also failed in an attempt at golf, but he could really sing and is still the KING.

Beachwater Hotel

One Saturday night at around 10 P.M., Elvis called me on the phone to ask me to take him to a place that served breakfast all night. I knew of a place and took him and his friends, Red Jr., and several others, to the Beachwater Club that was the "IN" place of Biloxi at the time. It had a nightclub with a band that played R&B music of the era. The food service was on the left as you entered, and you had to walk past that small area to get to the nightclub where the band played their music to a packed house on Saturday nights.

As I led Elvis to the all-night food service place, he bolted past me with his cronies following him and went straight to the front of the band and grabbed the microphone from a stunned singer. He stared at the audience for a few seconds until they could see who it was holding the microphone and then bolted into his version of "Blue Suede Shoes." This was after "Heart Break Hotel" and he was in the midst of "people going crazy" over him!



Elvis sang for maybe a minute or a minute and a half, long enough for people to realize it was Elvis, and then he stopped in mid-sentence (as he was prone to do when playing), walked off of the stage and went outside of the nightclub and stood on the sidewalk. EVERY PERSON in the nightclub went with him. He stood for more than an hour and signed autographs and had his picture taken with his arm around the girls.

After the Keesler show, he volunteered to sing for the owner of the popular Beachwater nightclub. Unfortunately, the manager laughed at Elvis and said, "NO, go sit down. No one wants to hear a white boy sing--sit down." Elvis was really hurt and MAD. This was Elvis' way of getting his revenge--keeping the people outside the bar talking to him on a Saturday night instead of spending money in the bar. He was a nice person, but very sensitive, and always wanted his revenge when he felt "wronged." (Cecil Spearman, August 16, 2007).

- oceanspringsarchives.net

Dickie Waters | Ski Instructor | Contributed by Chelsea Prince

While Elvis Presley was making headlines across the country, a local teenager named Dickie Waters was giving water skiing lessons to Elvis on Fort Bayou. Dickie's family owned and operated the Gulf Hills Dude Ranch from 1946 to 1962.

During that time, his mother commissioned the famed Gulf Coast artist, Walter Anderson, to paint a mural in the hotel. Titled "Pink Pony," after the Pink Pony Lounge on the property, the mural depicted a bucking bronco and featured the signature swirling style for which Anderson was known. "I don't remember it clearly," Waters later said, "but I remember the swirls. Then they remodeled the hotel, and nobody's seen it since." (If you have a photo of the mural, please contact chelsea.prince@dmr.ms.gov).

As an adult, Dickie went by Richard and forged a creative path of his own. He became a respected watercolor artist and a passionate horticulturist, but his most lasting contribution was in music. Richard Waters invented and produced the waterphone, a hauntingly unique instrument celebrated for its eerie, otherworldly sound. The waterphone has become popular with symphonies, touring bands, recording studios and used in numerous motion pictures and television shows.

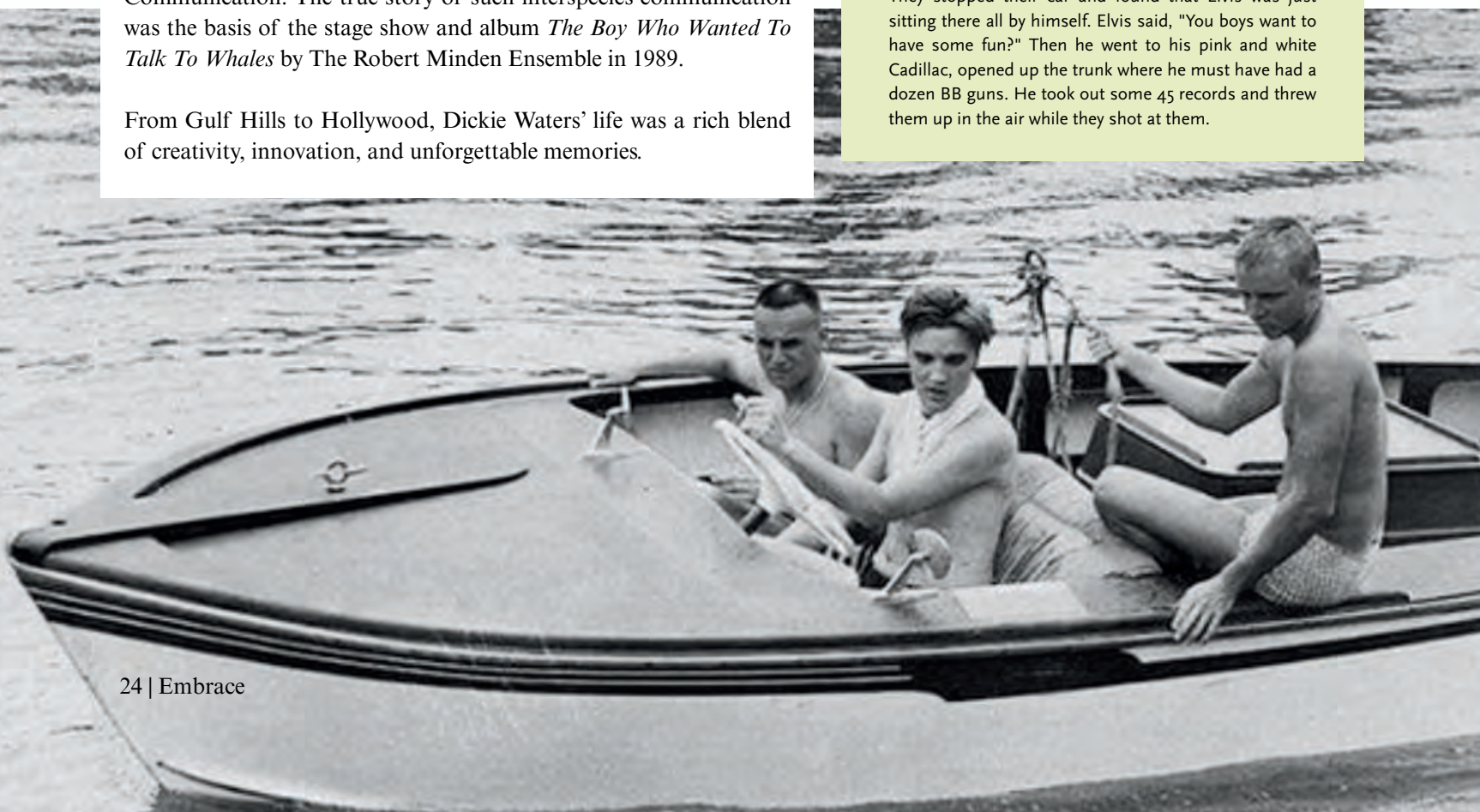
The waterphone has been used successfully to call whales and other cetaceans, especially by Jim Nollman of Interspecies Communication. The true story of such interspecies communication was the basis of the stage show and album *The Boy Who Wanted To Talk To Whales* by The Robert Minden Ensemble in 1989.

From Gulf Hills to Hollywood, Dickie Waters' life was a rich blend of creativity, innovation, and unforgettable memories.



Louis Saucier Jr. and some high school buddies were driving around one afternoon in the Gulf Hills subdivision when they noticed Elvis was sitting on a cottage's front stoop.

They stopped their car and found that Elvis was just sitting there all by himself. Elvis said, "You boys want to have some fun?" Then he went to his pink and white Cadillac, opened up the trunk where he must have had a dozen BB guns. He took out some 45 records and threw them up in the air while they shot at them.





A Little Boy Fishing off of a Skiff
Memories told and contributed by Briley Richmond

When I was six years old, my grandfather Panneote Eleuterius built my first skiff. It was six feet long, a shallow, flat-bottomed open boat with a sharp bow and square stern. The skiff in this photo (bottom right) is a replica of that skiff. It was in my first skiff that I plied the waters of Old Fort Bayou between Cherokee Glenn in Ocean Springs and Gulf Hills. It was in that first skiff that I began my education of the sea.

My family moved to Cove Place in 1955. From 1955 until 1965 we were the only house on the street. My bedroom was on the second floor with a perfect unobstructed view of Fort Bayou. Immediately across the water was the Gulf Hills Dude Ranch, which included water skiing. During this time, it was the era of Elvis Presley staying at Gulf Hills Dude Ranch and water skiing in my back yard. But, it was also my fishing grounds.

On one particular day, I fished in my little skiff up against a marsh island near the channel. It was a perfect fishing spot, except for one thing, twice every hour the Gulf Hills ski boat would go by and the wake would get to me. I would hold onto the sides of my little skiff for dear life!

One day, the boat went by and to my surprise, the skier was Elvis! He watched me get hit by the wake. About 15 minutes later, Elvis skied by again. He waved at me and, this time, the boat passed on the other side of the island, which protected me from the wake. Elvis had the Gulf Hills Ski Club change its route so this little boy in a skiff wouldn't get hit by the wake.

Do not say mean things about Elvis around me.



(Top): Ski instructor, Dickie Waters and Elvis Presley water skiing on Fort Bayou at Gulf Hills, photos courtesy of Gulf Hills Photo Collection
(Top right): Replica of Briley's skiff from the day he saw Elvis water skiing.
(Center): Artwork by Briley's sister, Rhonda
(Bottom): Skiff replica painted blue.

Harry Reeks



Contributed by Chelsea Prince

In 1956, Harry Reeks was working as a portrait artist at Gulf Hills, where he had the rare opportunity to interview and sketch Elvis Presley on several occasions.

Just two years earlier, he and his wife, Chloe, had moved to Biloxi after he accepted a position with a public relations firm.

In her book, June Juanico fondly recounted a carefree day spent riding on the back of a motorcycle that Elvis had borrowed from their friend Buddy Conrad. She took him on a tour of her favorite childhood spots, places that had shaped her growing up on the Gulf Coast. They cruised past St. Martin High School, where she had graduated, and stopped at Lamey Bridge, where she used to jump into the water on hot summer days.

“When we returned to Gulf Hills,” she recalled in her book *Elvis: In the Twilight of Memory*, “local artist Harry Reeks was waiting to do a charcoal sketch of Elvis and anyone else who wanted to pose. Elvis sat me in the chair across from the artist, windblown hair and all, insisting I go first.”

Playfully running her fingers through her hair, June asked Reeks if he could “comb it with his charcoal as he went along.” Elvis, watching every stroke, complimented the likeness but insisted she was far prettier. “I blushed,” she wrote, “when Mr. Reeks apologized, saying it was hard to capture that much beauty.”

She then watched in amazement as Reeks sketched Elvis with uncanny precision, perfectly capturing his famously sulking expression. “I took both sketches home with me,” she wrote, “planning to have them framed someday.”

Years later, after Elvis’s passing, June rediscovered the drawings tucked inside an old scrapbook. They were still in perfect condition. “I took them to be framed,” she wrote. “They hang side by side in my home, where everyone can see them.”

Harry Reeks went on to become a celebrated Gulf Coast artist, known not only for his portrait work but also for his acclaimed sculptures.



(Above): Portraits of June and Elvis by Harry Reeks. Courtesy of June Juanico Taranto Collection.

(Right): Painting of the Gulf Hills swimming pool by Harry Reeks. Courtesy of Ray L. Bellande.



ELVIS GOES FISHING ON THE MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST



Contributed By Vincent Creel

When most people think of Elvis Presley's rise to fame, they picture flashing lights, screaming fans, and chart-topping hits. But for Eddie Bellman, a North Biloxi resident, the King of Rock 'n' Roll will always be remembered for deep sea fishing trips and a surprising preference for Barq's root beer over beer.

In the summer of 1956, Bellman was dating Mae Juanico, the mother of June Juanico Taranto. Their paths first crossed when Elvis was checking out of the Sun 'n' Sand Motel. Overwhelmed by crowds of fans who had discovered his whereabouts, Bellman offered the singer a quieter place to stay at a house that he owned on Porter Avenue in Biloxi.

"I drove him in my car thinking we could give them the slip," Bellman recalled. "We even had one of his guys bring his car later and lock it in the garage. But not long after Elvis laid down for a nap, fans were already knocking on the door. The news had spread like wildfire."

Seeking more privacy, Bellman suggested he move to Gulf Hills in Ocean Springs. From there, Bellman organized what would become one of the most memorable outings of Elvis's time on the Coast, a deep-sea fishing trip aboard the boat *Aunt Jennie*, captained by "Bull" Thornton and Hubert Williams.

"We left on a Thursday morning from where Baricev's used to be, behind what's now the Beau Rivage," Bellman said. "It was Elvis's first-time deep-sea fishing. The weather was beautiful, the fish were biting, and we caught a good number of mackerel, bonito, and even some shark."

Bellman recounted a moment that stood out to him, "Before we left, I asked Elvis what they'd like to drink," Bellman said. "He told me all he and his friends wanted was Barq's root beer. Believe it or not, we didn't even have a single can of beer on the boat."



*Captain Bull Thornton, Eddie Bellman, June, Elvis and friends on their deep sea fishing trip on the Aunt Jennie.
(Below): Eddie Bellman and Elvis Presley aboard the Aunt Jennie in 1956.
Photos courtesy of Dixie Press*

“Later that day, I happened to say to Bull Thornton, ‘A cold beer would taste pretty good right about now.’ Elvis overheard and said he didn’t mean we couldn’t have any, he just didn’t want any for himself or his crew. So, we all stuck with soft drinks.”

That day, July 13, 1956, also marked the release of Elvis’s hit single “Hound Dog,” though the day’s focus was far from the music world. It was just Elvis, the open water, and a group of friends enjoying a rare moment out at sea.

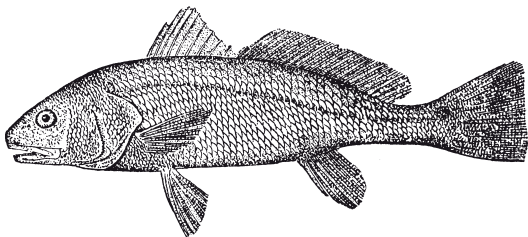
The following day, Elvis returned for another fishing trip, this time bringing along his parents, Vernon and Gladys. His mother, Gladys, had even packed a few of his favorite peanut butter and banana sandwiches for the trip.

The day was remarkably captured on an 8mm film that Bellman found in storage many years later, providing a glimpse into that special summer of innocence with Elvis Presley.

- *Sun Herald*



(L-R): Captain Bull Thornton, Elvis Presley, June Juanico, Vernon and Gladys Presley.
Courtesy of June Juanico Taranto Collection.



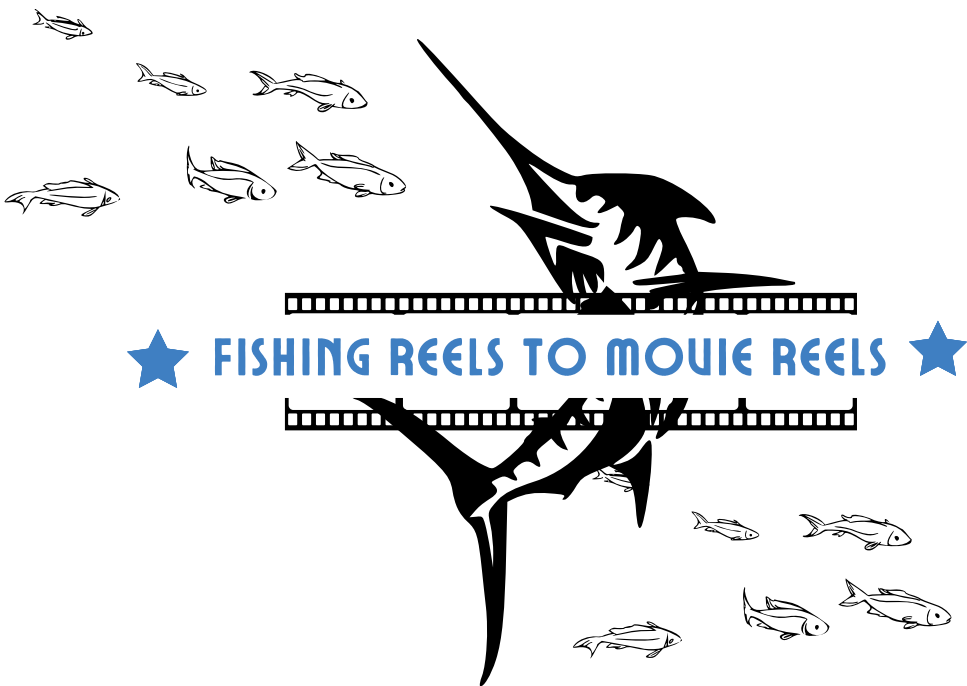
Color photos are still shots from the video footage taken with Eddie Bellman’s 8mm video.

BARQ’S ROOT BEER

Edward Charles Edmond Barq established the Biloxi Artesian Bottling Works in 1898. Located at 142 Keller Avenue, this is where Barq developed the formula for his famous root beer.

BIRTHPLACE OF BARQ’S BED & BREAKFAST COMING SOON





★ FISHING REELS TO MOVIE REELS ★

Contributed by Chelsea Prince

Eddie Bellman (1920-2009), a lifelong resident of Biloxi, was the man who handed Elvis Presley a fishing reel during a 1956 deep-sea trip off the Mississippi Gulf Coast. In 1997, when June Juanico published her memoir about Elvis and her time together, Bellman remembered the Super-8 film he'd shot on that trip. He dug the film reel out of his attic and found seventeen minutes of color footage showing Presley catching bonito, mackerel, and sharks, joking with June, his parents, and friends, and even pretending the boat's boom was a microphone.

In a report from 1999, Eddie explained, "I had kept the film in my closet for nearly 40 years. When you think about it, it's a wonder it wasn't destroyed by moisture or fire or hurricane damage. Anyway, in talking about the book with June, she pointed out how valuable the footage was, and suggested I contact a New York agent."

He did. Clips have now appeared on Entertainment Tonight, Inside Edition, and the documentary, *Elvis' Lost Love*, giving fans a rare look at Presley before he became famous.

To watch the 1956 footage of Elvis Presley in Biloxi, you can find it on online platforms like YouTube, Prime Video, and other streaming services.



June Juanico and Elvis Presley



Eddie Bellman



Gladys and Vernon Presley



June Juanico, Elvis Presley, Mae Juanico



COMMUNITY

Elvis Presley is seen with a group of fans from Biloxi , MS in mid-July 1956. From left to right: Olivia Sekul Rukavina, Genevieve Skrmetta Creel, Frances Kuluz Creel, Elvis Presley, Charlotte McDonnell, Louis Saucier, Patsy Cosmich Kuluz, Albert Ahern, and Jackie Acevedo

DAVID'S

SHOE DEPARTMENT

BILOXI

CONTRIBUTED BY VINCENT CREEL

Elvis Presley made countless public appearances throughout his legendary career, but few were as unexpected or as memorable as the afternoon he signed autographs in the shoe department of a women's clothing store in downtown Biloxi.

It was the summer of 1956. "Heartbreak Hotel" and "Blue Suede Shoes" were climbing the charts, and Elvis was fast becoming a national sensation. In the midst of his meteoric rise, a personal connection brought the King of Rock 'n' Roll to an unlikely venue: David's, a women's fashion store on Howard Avenue in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Eddie Bellman, who co-owned the store's shoe department with business partner Lew Sonnier, recalled how it all came together. At the time, Bellman was dating the mother of a young woman named June and happened to have a strong rapport with Elvis and his family. That summer, Bellman had taken Elvis and his parents on a couple successful fishing trips along the Gulf Coast. Elvis had enjoyed himself so much that he offered to return the favor.

"He told me he'd be happy to come by the store," Bellman said. "It was his way of saying thanks for those great days on the water."

Bellman approached Dave Rosenblum, the store's owner, with the idea of a personal appearance. "His eyes got as big as saucers," Bellman said, laughing. Elvis confirmed he'd stop by that very afternoon, Wednesday, August 1, 1956.

Bellman called Rosenblum with the news, and the store quickly spread the word to local radio stations, along with others in Mobile, New Orleans, Jackson, and Hattiesburg. It didn't take long for the phone lines at David's to light up.

"People thought it was a prank," Bellman said. "When we told them it was real, they said, 'We're on our way.'"

Bellman drove his '55 Chevy to Gulf Hills to pick up Elvis, hoping to quietly usher him in through a side entrance. But when they approached the store, the scene had already erupted. "The sidewalks and streets were packed," Bellman said. "We had to be escorted by the police just to get in."

Elvis spent 55 minutes inside David's, signing autographs while the police let fans enter in small groups. Despite the frenzy, Bellman said Elvis remained calm, gracious, and composed. "He was polite and accommodating the whole time. He handled himself very well."

Photo: Inside David's Shoe Department Store on Howard Avenue in Biloxi, Miss. Credit: Sun Herald.





Kay Sloan photo

Elvis signing autographs at David's Shoe Department in Biloxi.
 Photo courtesy of *Early Elvis: The Sun Years* by Burk, Bill E., 1992

After the excitement died down, store owner Dave Rosenblum suggested showing their appreciation with a gift. He asked Bellman and Sonnier if they'd be willing to chip in with him to buy something special for Elvis.

"I told him that Elvis wasn't expecting anything, that he was just returning a favor for the fishing trips," Bellman said. Nevertheless, the trio decided to go ahead with the gesture.

They purchased a .410-gauge Winchester pump shotgun from Bel-Bru Sporting Goods in Biloxi, a shop Bellman had previously co-owned. That same day, Bellman presented the shotgun to Elvis in Gulf Hills and brought along a hand trap and skeet targets to make an afternoon of it.

"This was his first time at flying targets," Bellman recalled, "but he did real well."

It was a fleeting visit, but one that left a lasting impression on the Gulf Coast town. Nearly 70 years later, locals still remember the day Elvis Presley brought rock 'n' roll and a generous spirit to the back of a women's shoe store.

“

I lived in Biloxi. I was about eight years old. We were going shopping and started up the street when my cousin saw us. He ran to Mom and said, "Hurry Elvis is at Austin's and letting 3 women in at time to get autograph." We literally ran to the store because she was a huge Elvis fan!

The crowd had already started gathering. They started all pushing in and got into the store. The Shoe Department was at the back and the women were everywhere. My Mother picked me up and stood me on a display case so I could see him, and I did! It was just a matter of minutes that they took Elvis out back way. The crowd dispersed when he was gone, we did not get close enough for autograph.

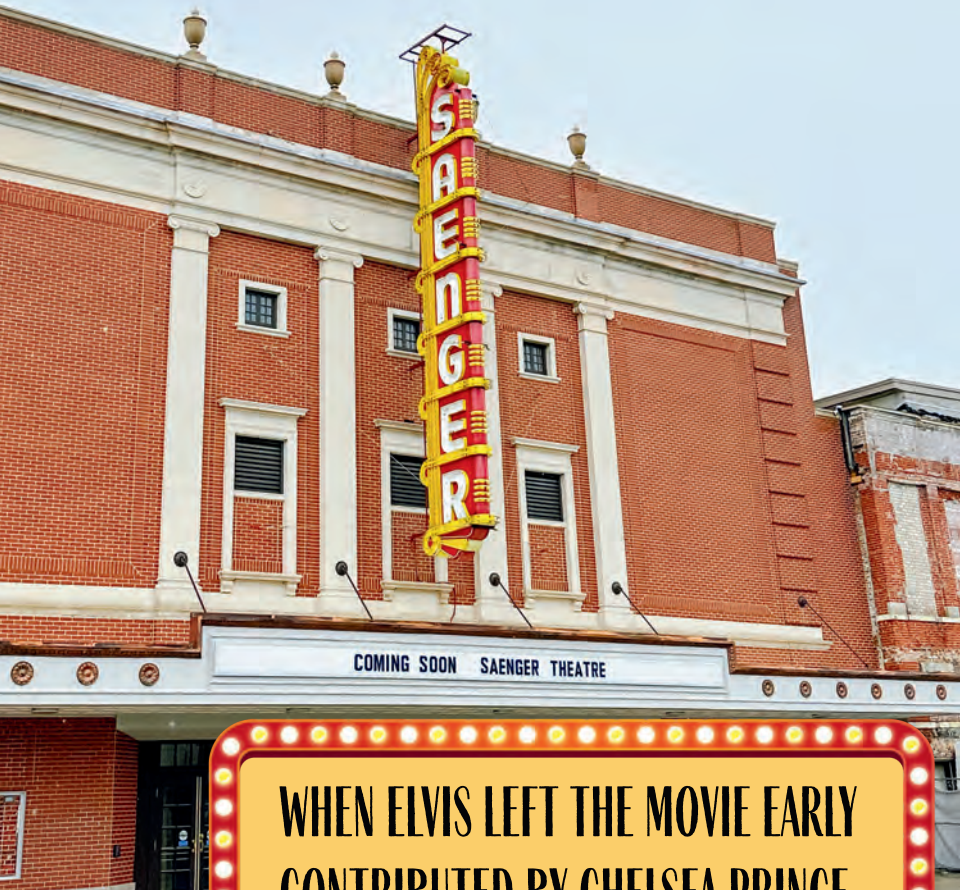
He could have been at another store too, but I remember that day still!

-Margaret Dearing Goff

”



Eddie Bellman with Elvis Presley. Photos courtesy of the June Juanico Taranto Collection.



WHEN ELVIS LEFT THE MOVIE EARLY CONTRIBUTED BY CHELSEA PRINCE

In the summer of 1956, Elvis Presley was spending a lot of time along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. One evening, looking for something to do, he and a group of friends, including June Juanico, Pat Napier and Elvis’s friends and cousin, decided to head into Biloxi to catch a showing of “The King and I,” playing at the Saenger Theater.

Once the movie began, it didn’t take long for Elvis to lose interest. Despite the movie’s glowing reviews, musicals weren’t Elvis’s idea of good entertainment, in fact he despised them. Elvis wasn’t just dreaming of being a singer, he was chasing serious acting roles, determined to make a name for himself as a serious actor.

Elvis felt that singing and dancing on screen was just silly.

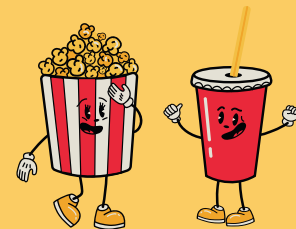
Both June and Pat have confirmed that Elvis got up and led his friends out of the theater before it finished. This is small but telling moment that revealed the depth of his ambition. Elvis told his friends later that if he ever was going to be in an actor that he would never sing in a movie.

Though fate, Hollywood and Colonel Tom Parker would later cast him in a string of glossy musicals, that night in Biloxi offered a glimpse of the real Elvis. Elvis was a young man who wanted to be respected and to command the big screen with raw, dramatic talent if he would only be given the chance.



Photo: Library of Congress

SINCE ITS GRAND OPENING ON JANUARY 15, 1929, THE SAENGER THEATRE HAS BEEN A CULTURAL CORNERSTONE— AND THE MISSISSIPPI COAST EAGERLY ANTICIPATES THE RETURN OF THIS ICONIC VENUE.



THE PINK PONY LOUNGE

In the clubhouse of Gulf Hills was a fabulous lounge called "The Pink Pony." Many movie stars, gangsters, and members enjoyed drinks, dancing, and entertainment at this venue. Elvis Presley frequented The Pink Pony Lounge and loved to play the piano and just relax in this comfortable and secure atmosphere.



MEMORIES OF JUNE JUANICO

ELVIS: IN THE TWILIGHT OF MEMORIES

Gulf Hills catered mainly to golf enthusiasts, and their early morning tee-off schedule fit in perfectly with ours. The majority of hotel guests were already in the middle of their golf game by the time we were up and around. We usually had the hotel dining room, the hotel lounge, and the Pink Pony Lounge to ourselves.

We spent the evening with my mother and Eddie at the Pink Pony Lounge. Red took my mother for a twirl on the dance floor while Eddie took his turn on the bongo drums.



A small group of tourists was there, having a nightcap. We all ordered Cokes and gathered around the upright piano. We usually started with a sing-along, but most people were a little reluctant to sing with Elvis - they were happy just to sit and listen. He entertained us with all his favorites, including some boogie-woogie. We took turns playing the bongo drums. A hush came over the room when Elvis ended the night with a spiritual song, sung with great feeling. *Photos from the June Juanico Taranto Collection.*

MEMORY TOLD ON FACEBOOK BY MICHELE FONTE

In July, 1956 (just before Elvis went to Hollywood to make his first movie) at the Gulf Hills Dude Ranch in Ocean Springs, Miss.

My 17 year old mom was on vacation with her family when ELVIS walked in unexpectedly and she dropped her spoon in her soup in wonderous excitement!

Of course, being the polite southern gentleman he was, Elvis profusely apologized for interrupting their dinner and forever more won over my grandfather who previously thought Elvis was Satan because of the hip swiveling/long hair thing.

My grandmother reluctantly obliged my mom by snapping this photo (left) on the way back to their hotel room. A very treasured family memory indeed!" *Photo courtesy of Michele Fonte shared on Facebook.*



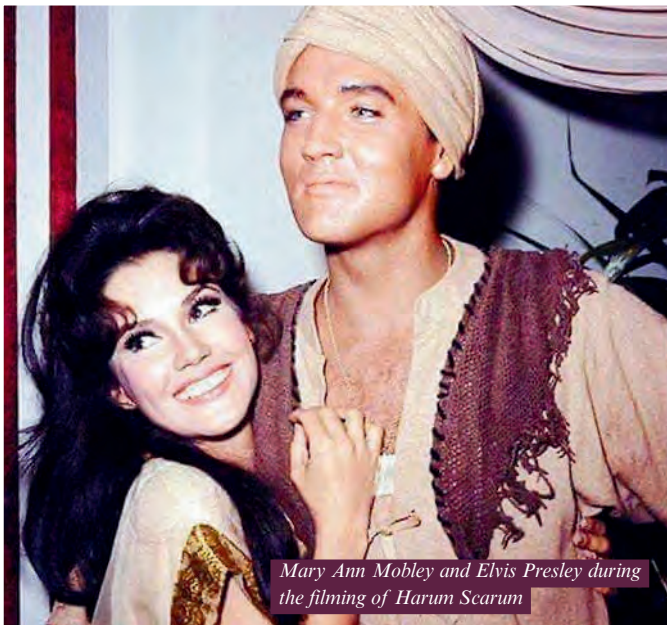
Mary Ann Mobley

Contributed by Chelsea Prince

Mary Ann Mobley was born on February 17, 1937, in Biloxi, Miss., and raised in Brandon, Miss.. Mary Ann was the first Mississippian crowned Miss America in 1959. She received her degree from the University of Mississippi in 1958, where she was also a majorette and a member of the Chi Omega sorority.

Mobley later embarked on a career in entertainment, acting and singing, eventually signing a contract with MGM. She had the opportunity to co-star with Elvis Presley in two 1965 films: “Girl Happy” and “Harum Scarum.”

In a past interview with Mary Ann she once stated, “Elvis and I felt a common bond, coming from Mississippi. He thought I understood him, and I wasn't after anything. This is an odd thing to say about Elvis Presley, but it was like I was working with my brother. We never dated. We were just two people from the same state.



Mary Ann Mobley and Elvis Presley during the filming of *Harum Scarum*



Miss America, Mary Ann Mobley at Biloxi

He and I would talk, I think he put women in two categories. You were either one of the girls, or you were a lady. In Mississippi, he was taught to be kind and take care of ladies, and then he had the other constantly thrown at him. He used to say to me, 'Mary Ann, one day I'm going to have a party I can invite you to.' I took that as a compliment. And I never will forget, once one of the boys said 'damn' in front of me, and Elvis said, 'You never cuss in front of a lady.'”

Elvis and Mary Ann shared an instant connection rooted in their shared Mississippi upbringing. Both born and raised in the Magnolia State. They understood the same small-town values, Southern traditions, and deep appreciation for family and community.

Mary Ann was also a philanthropist. She participated in numerous charitable concerts to raise funds for educational initiatives in Mississippi and supported relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina victims.

Mobley passed away on December 9, 2014, in Beverly Hills, Ca. at the age of 77, after battling breast cancer. Her legacy endures through her contributions to the arts and her unwavering commitment to her home state of Mississippi.



LIFE

*Elvis signing autographs for fans outside of Gulf Hills.
Photo: Gulf Hills Photo Collection.*

AN ENGLISH ELVIS FAN'S

ADVENTURES ON THE MISSISSIPPI COAST



CONTRIBUTED BY BERNARD ROUGHTON

M My name is Bernard Roughton and I've been an Elvis fan since I was 11, when I heard 'All Shook Up' on an HMV 78 in England! I live in Dorset, which is known as the West country, and it really is in the country!

After three years studying photography, I joined the BBC and stayed with them for 30 years working in various film units. After that, I became a lecturer in photography, which I did for another 15 years.

I played an active part in the EPFC (Elvis Presley Fan Club), producing and filming a number of Elvis-related videos, as the EP Video Workshop, covering European and US fan club tours, and features about Elvis, probably about 30 in all.

During this time, I got to know Jack Soden, Graceland CEO, and, in 1983, he graciously allowed me to film previously unseen areas of the house, a year after it opened to the public. Aunt Delta was still living there at the time, and she was most amused when Elvis' dog Edmund nipped my ankle whilst I was concentrating on filming the kitchen!

(Left): Alister Roughton on the Biloxi Shrimp Tour

(Right): Bernard Roughton outside the Julep Room, Ocean Springs.

Some years later, my wife Julie and I were successful in gaining access to Elvis' old apartment in Lauderdale Courts. This was before it had been restored and wasn't a terribly safe area. Laquan, the 16-year-old lad who let us in, proudly told me he had been visited by Graceland and they had given him a video. To my astonishment it was our 1983 film, I didn't even know it had been released in the States.

In 2024, Julie, myself and our now 24-year-old son, Alister, took a trip with 'Strictly Elvis' which included New Orleans and your Gulf Coast. In early 1958, Elvis' movie 'King Creole' was filmed in New Orleans. I felt it was one of his best, and from the mid 80's onwards, I'd set out to try to find the locations, without much of a clue as to what was actually filmed there, and how much was Paramount backlot. I'd hoped local New Orleans residents would be able to help me, but as it turned out, nobody knew where anything was!

In 1986, I had met Julie on a plane bound for Memphis, and from then on, I had a companion with a similar desire to properly research the movie. (Although we did take a break from it in 1997, when we got married at the Coco Palms in Hawaii, recreating the wedding scene from 'Blue Hawaii'!)



Bit by bit, on short holidays to the city, either by ourselves or on fan club tours, we worked on our New Orleans film. It took us many years and six visits before we found all the correct locations. For those who know the film, we've been up on Elvis' "Crawfish" balcony in Royal Street, and into Maxie's courtyard and balcony, right next to Pat O'Briens! We also found the correct site of the Lake Pontchartrain camp featured in the final scenes of the movie and met some very interesting people along the way.

By 2024, there was just one location left to film, the 'Berry Man' featured in the opening street vendors scene. With the help of 'Google Earth' back in England, I'd eventually worked out where I thought the site was, but when we finally got back there, we were a bit alarmed that with the number of parked trucks and vans, it was almost impossible to replicate the 1958 shots (which were originally shot by the Paramount crew from higher up on a nearby balcony). Notwithstanding, we were delighted to finally commit the site to film.

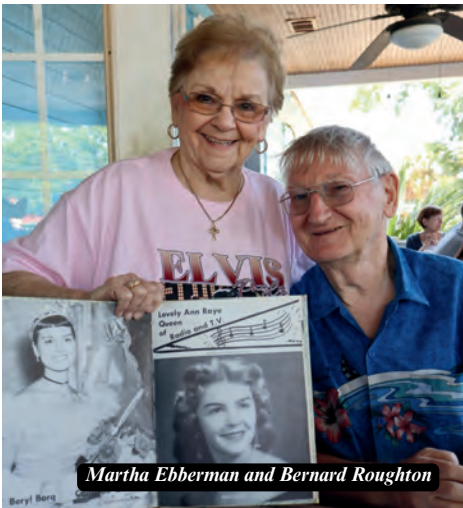
So, we left New Orleans feeling really chuffed with having finally completed our mission and headed east down the Mississippi Gulf Coast for Biloxi. We had a short one-hour stop off in the beautiful Bay St Louis and loved the French-style holiday atmosphere of this fabulous city. And then following Highway 90, we feasted our eyes on the mile upon mile of stunning white sand beaches, before stopping for lunch at Ocean Springs, with its beautiful oak-tree lined main street.

Afterwards, we briefly tried to get into the Keesler Air Force base (Elvis performed here), but security balked at our coach! But we were able to stop at the house of June Juanico, who Elvis dated, and probably committed mass trespass as we all photographed the house!

We eventually arrived at our hotel, the Gulf Hills hotel, where Elvis holidayed with June. Chelsea Prince and her colleagues of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Heritage Area have produced an excellent booklet detailing his time with June in Biloxi, so I won't duplicate those details here.

After checking in, we walked down to the lakefront, where we were greeted by former Mayor Pro Tempore, Briley Richmond, who as a boy had watched Elvis waterski. A very interesting chap. And a stone's throw away was the Hack House, which Elvis rented, and where we were met Heather Wagner, the current owner. She shared some excellent stories and her personally autographed copy of June's autobiography with us. What a great way to end a fabulous day!

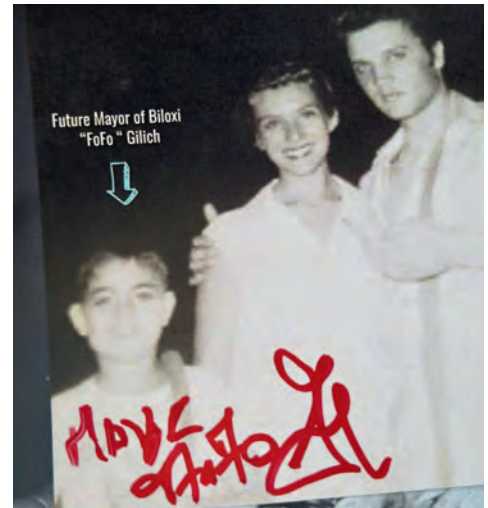




Martha Ebberman and Bernard Roughton



Mayor FoFo Gilich



Julie Roughton drinking her first Barq's



Kay Bankston, daughter of Sie Simon



Rox Ann and Chelsea (MGCNHA)

Our full day in Biloxi began with personal greetings from the affable Mayor Andrew 'Fofo' Gilich, and a lot of other guests who had taken the trouble to come out and welcome us. Fofo produced a photo of him and Elvis, taken at Pontchartrain amusement park! Bill, the friendly anchorman of local TV station WLOX, was there to film us, and we exchanged career notes! The mayor showed us to the site of the Slavonian Lodge, destroyed in Katrina in 2005. I knew about New Orleans, but not Biloxi – this was an eye opener (our house in Dorset was flooded, so we can relate to this).

Moving on, we arrived at Sie's Place and were regaled by his daughter Kay Bankston with tales of Jerry Lee, Hank Williams and of course, Elvis. Fascinating stuff. Next it was her friend Helen who described kissing Elvis. "Lips like marshmallows" made the ladies in our party squeal and the men laugh!

All too soon, we left for the Biloxi Visitor Center, opposite the Biloxi lighthouse. Well worth a visit (and there's an Elvis jacket in there, too).

Finally, we visited the grave of a little girl who met Elvis just before she died. So Carole Manuel is remembered.

Then it was on to 'Burger Burger' for an excellent group meal courtesy of Martha, who had toured with Elvis and the Hayride in 1954. A really interesting link and a lovely lady. Chelsea's colleague, Mandy Hornsby (Biloxi's Historic Administrator), introduced Julie to the local Barq's Root Beer! I took a sip myself and it was really refreshing.

After a visit to the waterfront (we don't have wild pelicans in the UK!), we arrived en masse at the Julep Room. The surprised barman did a good job mixing us all really good mint Juleps!

All in all, it was a whirlwind tour of the Elvis sites of Biloxi. But what sticks in the memories of everyone on the trip was the wonderful hospitality we received. We thank you all very much for your kindness and would love to return.

ELVIS'S CARS

SEEN ON THE MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST

1

1955 PINK & WHITE FORD CROWN VICTORIA



2

1956 WISTERIA LINCOLN PREMIERE



3

1956 WHITE CADILLAC EL DORADO BIARRITZ



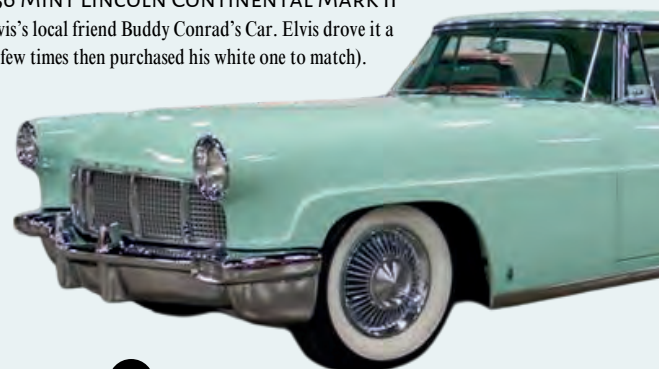
4

1956 WHITE LINCOLN CONTINENTAL MARK II



5

1956 MINT LINCOLN CONTINENTAL MARK II
(Elvis's local friend Buddy Conrad's Car. Elvis drove it a few times then purchased his white one to match).



6

1955 PINK CADILLAC FLEETWOOD 60



7

1954 BLACK CADILLAC FLEETWOOD 75 LIMOUSINE



3



1956 WHITE CADILLAC EL DORADO BIARRITZ

6



1956 WISTERIA LINCOLN PREMIERE

5



1955 PINK CADILAC FLEETWOOD 60

7



1954 CADILLAC 75 FLEETWOOD LIMOUSINE
(LIGHT BLUE THEN PAINTED BLACK)

2



1956 WISTERIA LINCOLN PREMIERE

4



1956 WHITE LINCOLN CONTINENTAL MARK II

1



TRY TO FIND ALL OF ELVIS'S CARS DURING CRUISIN' THE COAST

Photos 1,3: Courtesy of June Juanico
Photo 2: Photo of Nancy Zanca Ryan
Courtesy of Ashli Ryan Locke
Photo 4: Miami Springs Historical Society
Photo 5: Author Unknown (Pinterest)
Photo 6: Courtesy of scottymoore.net
Photo 7: Courtesy of D.J. Fontana



FLAVORFUL

*Elvis Presley and Eddie Bellman,
courtesy of June Juanico Taranto Collection*



ROOT BEER FLOAT



INGREDIENTS

- 3 TO 4 SCOOPS OF A HIGH QUALITY VANILLA ICE CREAM (LIKE BLUE BELL OR BREYER'S)
- 1 BOTTLE OF ROOT BEER, PREFERABLY BARQ'S
- 1 TALL GLASS
- 1 STRAW
- 1 LONG ICED TEA TYPE OF SPOON

DIRECTIONS

Fill your glass half the way with vanilla ice cream. Slowly pour Barq's root beer over the top of the ice cream until the foam rises to the top, reserving just a bit of the root beer. Give it a good stir and then pour the rest of the root beer on top to bring the head back up. Stick in a straw, stick in a spoon, so you can dig out some of that ice cream, and slurp it up!

Source: deepsouthdish.com

Photo courtesy of the Barq's Online Museum

MINT JULEP MOCKTAIL

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup cold water
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup packed fresh mint leaves, plus extra for garnish
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (optional, for a citrus twist)
- 1 cup crushed ice
- 1 ½ cups chilled ginger ale or sparkling water (your preference)
- Thin lemon or cucumber slices (for garnish, optional)

DIRECTIONS

- In a small saucepan, combine the water and sugar. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat, stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat, stir in the mint leaves, and let steep for 10 minutes. Strain the syrup through a fine mesh sieve and discard the mint leaves. Let it cool.
- In two julep cups or glasses, fill halfway with crushed ice. Pour 2-3 tablespoons of the mint syrup into each glass (to taste). Add 1 tablespoon of lemon juice to each glass if using.
- Pour in the ginger ale or sparkling water until the glass is full. Stir gently to mix.
- Garnish and Serve:
- Add a generous sprig of mint and, if you're feeling fancy, a slice of lemon or cucumber on the rim.
- Serve in silver or pewter cups if you have them, they keep things nice and frosty.
- Lightly smack the mint leaves before garnishing to release their oils.



Back in the summer of '56, Elvis, June, and their crew loved hanging out at King William's Cellar—what locals now know as the Julep Room in Ocean Springs.

They always kept it clean, ordering virgin mint juleps (their favorite), and Elvis would usually park his car out back behind the big live oak to stay off the radar.



This recipe comes from a YouTube video featuring Mary Jenkins, Elvis Presley's longtime cook and friend. Elvis famously loved fried peanut butter and banana sandwiches, often mashing the ingredients together before spreading them on bread.

The photo shows his mother, Gladys, feeding him his favorite snack while fishing in Biloxi—a moment captured by Eddie Bellman.

ELVIS'S FRIED PB & BANANA SANDWICH

INGREDIENTS

- 2 slices of white sandwich bread (or wheat, if that is preferred)
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter (Elvis reportedly preferred creamy over chunky)
- 1 ripe banana
- 1-2 tablespoons unsalted butter (softened, for skillet use)

DIRECTIONS

- Peel the banana and slice it into thin rounds.
- Lightly toast the bread in a toaster until just golden.
- In a medium skillet, melt butter over medium heat.
- Spread peanut butter evenly on one side of each slice of toasted bread.
- Arrange the banana slices over one slice of bread, then top with the other slice to form a sandwich.
- Place the sandwich in the skillet and cook, flipping occasionally, until both sides are golden brown and the peanut butter is warmed through.
- Add more butter to the skillet as needed to ensure even browning.
- Remove from heat, slice, and serve immediately.

PASSPORT

BILOXI VISITORS CENTER

Heritage Area Stamp Site



Step into the story of the Mississippi Gulf Coast at the Biloxi Visitors Center —where history, culture, and coastal charm come together. See the iconic jacket Elvis Presley wore during his 1969 comeback, explore interactive exhibits that bring Biloxi's past to life, and get your Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area passport stamped. Located across from the Biloxi Lighthouse, the center is your perfect starting point for discovering the heart and heritage of the coast.



Elvis Presley's jacket on display at the Biloxi Visitors Center.

Extend the Experience

TO THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE KING OF ROCK 'N ROLL



mississippihills.org

MISSISSIPPI HILLS
National Heritage Area



After soaking in the sights of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, take your Elvis experience to the next level—head to the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area! Explore the King's roots at his birthplace in Tupelo, then stop by Tupelo Hardware, where a young Elvis got his very first guitar. History, heart, and rock 'n' roll—only a short drive away.

mississippihills.org

HAYRIDE TO HOLLYWOOD

ELVIS'S COAST DAYS



The Mississippi Gulf Coast played a powerful and personal role in Elvis Presley's transformation from a small-town boy to the King of Rock 'n' Roll. In the summer of 1955 and 1956, the Mississippi Gulf Coast was Elvis Presley's favorite place. It was where he performed at small venues, went fishing, with friends and drove along the beaches of Biloxi, Ocean Springs, and Gulf Hills. He had a last bit of normal life before everything changed. By the end of 1956, Elvis starred in his first movie, *Love Me Tender*, scored five No. 1 singles and two No. 1 albums, and wowed millions on TV and at live shows. By blending Black rhythm and blues with country and bringing it to mainstream white audiences, Elvis created a new style and helped tear down racial walls in American music.

Humble Beginnings

- Jan 8, 1935:** Elvis was born in his house in Tupelo, MS.
- 1943:** The Presley Family moved to Pascagoula MS for a few months before returning to Tupelo.
- 1945:** Elvis entered a talent contest at the Mississippi-Alabama Fair and Dairy Show in Tupelo, singing "Old Shep" and won fifth place. This was his first public performance.
- 1948:** The Presley family moved to Memphis, TN.
- Jun 3, 1953:** Elvis graduated Humes High School.
- Jul 18, 1953:** Elvis recorded "My Happiness" and "That's When Your Heartaches Begin" at Sun Records as a birthday gift for his mother.
- Jul 5, 1954:** Elvis recorded his first single, "That's All Right."
- Jul 12:** Elvis Presley signed his contract with Sun Records.
- Oct 2, 1954:** Elvis appeared at the Grand Ole Opry.
- Oct 16, 1954:** Elvis first appeared on the Louisiana Hayride, performing 52 times from Oct 16, 1954 to Dec 15, 1956

1955 - The Rise to Stardom

- Jan 1:** Elvis signs a management contract with Bob Neal.
- Feb 4:** Elvis meets Yankie and Martha Barhanovich from Biloxi, MS at Jesuit High School performance in NOLA.
- Feb 6:** Elvis first meets Colonel Tom Parker.
- Jun 26:** Elvis performs at the Slavonian Lodge, Biloxi, MS
- Jun 27-28:** Performs at Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi, MS
- Aug 15:** Elvis signed a contract with Colonel Tom Parker.
- Oct 31 - Nov 5:** Performs at Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi, MS.
- Nov 6:** Performs at the Biloxi Community House.
- Nov 6:** Impromptu performance at Sie's Place, Biloxi, MS.
- Nov 7:** Performs at Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi, MS.
- Nov 20:** Elvis Presley signed a contract with RCA Records.

1956 - The Birth of a King

- Jan 27:** Released his first RCA single, "Heartbreak Hotel," which became his first No. 1 hit on the Billboard charts.
- Jan 28:** National television debut on The Dorsey Brothers Stage Show in New York City.
- Mar 23:** Released his debut studio album, *Elvis Presley*, which became the first rock-and-roll album to top the Billboard Top Pop Albums chart.
- Mar 26:** Signed a formal contract with Parker to be his sole and exclusive representative.
- Apr 3:** Appeared on The Milton Berle Show, aboard the USS Hancock in San Diego.
- Jul 1:** Guest on The Steve Allen Show, famously singing "Hound Dog" to a basset hound as a comic skit.
- Jul 9:** Arrived at the Mississippi Coast for the summer.
- Jul 12:** Fishing trip in Biloxi aboard the *Aunt Jennie*.
- Jul 13:** Released "Don't Be Cruel"/"Hound Dog," which dominated multiple Billboard charts.
- Jul 13:** Fishing trip aboard *Aunt Jennie* with his parents.
- Aug 1:** David's shoe store appearance in Biloxi.
- Aug 12:** New Orleans Municipal Auditorium performance. (Many friends from the coast were in attendance).
- Aug 22:** Started filming his first movie, *Love Me Tender*.
- Sept 9:** Debut on The Ed Sullivan Show.
- Sept 26:** Reunion Show at the Tupelo Fairgrounds.
- Oct 19:** Release of his second studio album, *Elvis*, which also went to No. 1 on the Billboard album chart.
- Oct 28:** Second Ed Sullivan Show appearance, again stirring both adoration and controversy.
- Nov 15:** World premiere of his first film, *Love Me Tender*, at the Paramount Theatre in New York City.
- Dec 4:** Million Dollar Quartet impromptu jam session at Sun Records, featuring Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins.
- Dec 3:** Elvis souvenirs made \$22 million (Wall Street).

ELVIS & JUNE

Summer of 1956

The Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area has partnered with Coastal Mississippi to ensure Elvis's legacy will live on the coast forever.

At the beginning of Elvis Presley's stardom, June Juanico of Biloxi, Miss., was the lucky girl who stole Elvis' heart at one of his first performances on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Their time together was filled with love, romance, heartbreak, and a lot of youthful, innocent, fun-filled adventures.

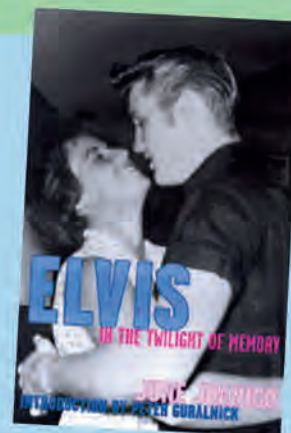
Based off of the book by June Juanico, *Elvis: In the Twilight of Memory* and personal accounts, take a journey with us to all the places where Elvis Presley left little pieces of his heart. This collaboration brings a new wave of heritage tourism to Elvis fans everywhere.



Scan here for more details



ELVIS & JUNE COAST DRIVING TOUR



Slavonian Lodge (site only)
Historic Marker
150 East First St., Biloxi

Keesler Airmen's Club (site only)
Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi

Gus Stevens (site only)
Approximately - Big Play
1836 Beach Blvd., Biloxi

White House Hotel & Pier
1230 Beach Blvd., Biloxi

Biloxi Community House (site only)
Approximately - Hotel Legends
674 Beach Blvd., Biloxi

Sie's Place (original)
Seashore Mission
856 Division St., Biloxi

Sun & Sand Hotel (site only)
Approximately - (across the street
from Treasure Bay
1955 Beach Blvd., Biloxi

Fiesta Hotel (site only)
Approximately
1965 Beach Blvd., Biloxi

June's House (private residence)

KoKo Lounge (site only)
Approximately
153 Camellia St., Biloxi

Saenger Theater (original)
170 Reynoir St., Biloxi

Gulf Hills Dude Ranch (site & pool)
Gulf Hills Hotel & Resort
13701 Paso Rd., Ocean Springs

Hack House (Private Residence)

Ocean Springs East Beach (site only)
Second Seawall, Ocean Springs

Baricev Pier (site only)
Approximately - Beau Rivage
875 Beach Blvd., Biloxi

King William's Cellar (original)
Now - Julep Room
1217 Washington Ave., Ocean Springs

Sunkist Pool (site only)
2381 Sunkist Country Club Rd., Biloxi

David's Shoe Store (site only) Approximately
796 Howard Ave., Biloxi

BONUS SITES

Biloxi Visitors Center
(Elvis Jacket)
1050 Beach Blvd., Biloxi

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino - Biloxi
(Elvis's G.I. Blues film costume in VIP area)

Burger Burger
1039 W. Howard Ave., Biloxi

Birthplace of Barq's Root Beer
(Call Birthplace of Barq's B&B for a tour)
142 Keller Ave., Biloxi

Biloxi Cemetery
Carole Manuel's resting place
1156 Beach Blvd., Biloxi

*June's book can be
found at local
libraries and Audible*



Summer of 1956

The "Summer of '56" marks a pivotal chapter in Elvis Presley's life. During this period, Elvis skyrocketed from a rising star to an international sensation, thanks to his hit records, TV appearances and debut film. It was also the summer he began a meaningful relationship with June Juanico, representing a brief, more personal and simple time before his world changed forever.

Though sometimes described as his last summer of innocence before military service, the phrase is best understood as a time of dramatic personal and professional transformation, a season that set the stage for Elvis to become the King of Rock 'n' Roll.

June Juanico Taranto



June is 87 years old and is still living on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. We are so grateful to June for documenting her time with Elvis.

June is happy she chose the life that she did. Being a mother has brought her the most joy in the world. She will always have a place in her heart for Elvis. The tour is June approved! *Photographed with Chelsea Prince.*



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