

Memoirs of a Bodhisattva

Short stories by Skip Nelson



My Elvis Experience

During the summer of 1977, I was on summer break at my home near Palm Springs from Brooks Institute in Santa Barbara, California.

My ex-father-in-law, Clarence, was a top Cadillac salesman at Plaza Motors in Palm Springs and one of his long time customers was Elvis. As we all know, Elvis loved to buy Cadillacs for people.

One Sunday, we were at my in-laws when the phone rang. It was a go between who stated that Elvis needed a silver Sedan de Ville. It just so happened that Clarence was driving one as a demo.

Clarence was asked to bring the Cadillac to Elvis' house in Palm Springs. Elvis was there briefly after an appearance in Las Vegas to rest and recuperate, and as we found out later.....with a young lady who accompanied him on his trip. Evidently she worked at a bank in Memphis.

Clarence asked me if I wanted to go with him. "What? Go to Elvis' house?? Do I look stupid? Of course!"

We got into the car and drove to Elvis' house. It was a very nice house, but nothing like I would have expected. A little understated and not particularly notable.

On arrival, we got out of the car and proceeded up the stairs to the front door, where we were greeted by a body guard and invited into the living room.

Knowing I would never get another opportunity, I immediately began to look around the room at everything I could manage to see. A grand piano in the corner, tastefully decorated living area...and....yes.....quite a bit of velvet.

As I was looking, all of a sudden, I felt a change of energy in the room and then heard a familiar voice behind me say....."Hey baby.....come here!"

As I turned around, there he was. Elvis. The King.

Dressed in a typical 70's style 3/4 length velour bathrobe, levi's and black boots, he was carrying a large, plastic cup, also typical in the 70's, which appeared to be filled with rum and coke.

At that moment, an attractive young brunette emerged from the kitchen, to my left. Evidently she was a teller at a bank in Memphis who Elvis had met and invited to accompany him to Vegas.

"Come outside Baby. I want to show you something".

We all proceeded out through the front door and down the stairs to where the new silver Sedan de Ville was sitting, on the gravel in front of a cinderblock wall.

"It's yours Baby!" said the King.

"Mine? Really Elvis?? This is mine?" she said as she proceeded to open every door and sit in every seat.

"Oh Elvis, I thought the diamond ring was wonderful, but THIS too?? I don't believe it."

Then she added....."I better sleep in it tonight or it won't be here in the morning.".....To which Elvis replied....."Baby.....IF you DO sleep in it tonight.....I GUARANTEE you it will not be here in the morning."

As she continued to explore her new gift, Elvis then came over to the low cinder block wall near the left rear of the car where I was sitting, and sat down beside me. He looked at me and smiled.

I told him that my sister, Patti, was a huge fan from day one and asked him if I could get him to sign an autograph to her. He said sure.

I didn't have any paper but got a business card from Clarence and a pen and handed it to Elvis. He took the small card and put it on his knee and began to write.

I apologized that it was in such a difficult position.....to which he looked at me and smiled...and said with a sly grin....."You wouldn't believe some of the places I've signed my name."

He handed me the card and the pen. We exchanged a few more pleasantries and soon, we departed.

It was about three weeks later, while I was working in the darkroom back at Brooks, that I heard over the radio that he had died.

My takeaway: He looked very tired and was very heavy, but a total gentleman and not the least bit arrogant. A really nice guy.