

## Thirty-nine years without Elvis

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### "Wow, is that who I think it is?" No, the real Elvis left the building 39 years ago.

**Hollywood, MD** – To anyone under the age of 40, Elvis Presley has always been a dead celebrity. For some of us baby boomers, however, Elvis will always be The King of Rock 'N' Roll. In the mid-1950s, word of Presley's rebellious music and pelvic gyrations spread quickly among America's youth. "Surely, this is a Communist plot," thought many members of the older generation.

Gradually, Elvis merged into America's mainstream. He joined the Army, made a television special with Frank Sinatra and starred in several family-friendly movies. "Bad Elvis" was purged from the nation's mindset over time. Even Nixon liked him.

It was 39 years ago, on Aug. 16, 1977 that Elvis Presley was found unresponsive in a bathroom in his Graceland Mansion. He was rushed to Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis but it was too late. He was dead, officially declared expired at 2 p.m.

Blogger Gary Rodgers noted in a [February 2016 essay](#) that an autopsy revealed Presley died of a heart attack. Several drugs were identified in his system, most notably codeine, which was found in abundance. While there was an autopsy, there was no police investigation, even though technically, it was an unattended death.

Rodgers noted Presley was extremely overweight when he died and was in "terrible health" in the days leading up to his demise. The blogger also noted Presley had been playing racquetball prior to his death.

Despite the fact he was obese and had been using drugs, many felt Elvis couldn't really be dead, which then gave rise to conspiracy theories. The reports of "Elvis sightings" and several other urban legends—such as an insurance policy with Lloyd's of London that was never claimed—fueled speculation that Elvis faked his own death and a "replacement body" lay in Elvis' casket at his funeral. Other skeptics claimed the body was moving during the viewing.

"There are no facts to support Elvis faked his own death and the debate itself is not valid," stated [Patrick Lacey, an "Elvis researcher,"](#) back in 2009. "The evidence is anecdotal at best."

In 2015, the body of an 80-year-old homeless man was discovered in San Diego, CA, the [Empire News](#) reported, adding that there was speculation the unidentified corpse was that of Elvis. Big news, right? Well, yes, until you realize the Empire News is a satirical web site. The hoax was shared widely on social media.

In 1977, Elvis was still recording and touring. Assuming he did die, he died with his Blue Suede Shoes on. Still, dying seemed like a good career move at the time, albeit one that made others rich. It sparked the tourism industry, not just in Memphis and Presley's birthplace, Tupelo, Mississippi, but also in Las Vegas.

However, [Time writer Brad Tuttle](#) reported in 2013 that tourists' interest in Elvis appeared on the wane. Tuttle noted that Vegas' nearly 200 Elvis impersonators saw their bookings fall by over 20 percent between 2011 and 2012. Vegas officials also reported the city's Elvis museum closed several years ago.

Still the industry that is Elvis churns on and Elvis tribute artists continue to dress Elvis style and entertain at various functions, many of them charitable. There is nothing quite as entertaining as seeing a grown man with Elvis' hair, wearing an Elvis jumpsuit, swinging his hips Elvis-style, singing and sounding like Elvis, belting out, "I did it my wayyyyyy."

Elvis will always be The King of Rock 'N' Roll. And, 39 years after he physically left the building his spirit lives on. With so many people dressing like Elvis and spreading good will and cheer, in many ways he is also The Santa Claus of Rock 'N' Roll.

Thirty-nine years later, there is peace in the valley. Rest in peace, Elvis and thanks for the memories!

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