

Notes

PROLOGUE

I may not type good, but they sure do know what I mean up there: Photographer Alfred Wertheimer in a 1998 interview with Alanna Nash, *The Colonel*, 207.

ONE | BOYHOOD

The direct source for almost all of Colonel's personal memories and emotions (and this would hold true not just for this chapter but throughout the book) are the painstaking efforts of his widow, Loanne, to recall as precisely as she could just what he had told her and, later, what she observed, even when at times I know it must have been painful. How else would we learn of young Dries' prepubescent career as an opera singer or the sweeping expression of displacement and discontent that he articulates in the epigraph to this chapter?

Much of the pioneering research into his early years comes from the work of Dirk Vellenga, an astute reporter for Breda's daily newspaper, *De Stem*, whose book (written with Mick Farren), *Elvis and the Colonel*, along with various articles that he wrote over the years, provides invaluable insight and knowledge. So does Alanna Nash's more recent *The Colonel*, which builds on extensive family interviews and original research. In many cases the reconstruction of his early life in Breda and Rotterdam stems from a combination of all three of the above sources, but in the case of single-sourced quotes or facts, I will provide a specific reference.

Quotes from Andreas' sister Engelina come from a 1996 interview by filmmaker Jorrit Van Der Kooi for his documentary *Dries van Kuijk, het Nederlandse geheim achter Elvis*, unless otherwise noted. Quotes from his sisters Adriana and Nel appear in Dirk Vellenga's September 20, 1977, article in *De Stem*, "Breda Family Seeks Contact with Elvis' Manager: Dries van Kuijk, or Colonel Tom Parker, Remains Beyond Reach." All direct quotes from Colonel himself come from Loanne. And all translations from the Dutch throughout the book were generously provided by Jan and Sander Donkers, Jan van Gestel, Hans Luijten, and Jorrit Van Der Kooi.

“He had a heavy hand”: This is from Loanne’s recollections, as is her observation of his “lifelong mistrust of organized religion,” which comes up a number of times throughout the book.

the girls would open up the partition: Nash, 18–19. Nel van Kuijk’s quote comes from Nash, 19, and Vellenga’s 1977 article.

joining up with a roving band of “travelers”: Loanne’s account.

Elvis would play a foundling: Colonel letter to Hal Wallis, December 18, 1958.

One of the clowns: Colonel recounted this story often to Loanne, including the discarded cigar butts.

the crow’s strong stubborn streak: Loanne supplied both the story and Colonel’s character analysis.

he “would walk on the backs of the horses”: Nash, 19.

a friend from school: Loanne tells this story. So does Dirk Vellenga in his 1977 *De Stem* article. Alanna Nash amplifies it on page 18 of her book.

stowing away on the *Veendam*: Through a researcher friend, journalist Lammermert de Bruin discovered Andreas’ name on the manifest for the *Veendam*’s return voyage to Rotterdam on March 20, with his fare as a deported alien paid for by the US government. This discovery was first announced on Lammermert’s podcast series on Colonel Parker for Dutch public radio, *Het Geheim van Colonel Parker* (Colonel Parker’s Secret). The name of the ship on which he initially arrived remains speculative, but it seems reasonable to imagine that the ship on which he was returned, the *Veendam*, was the same one, since there was an almost immediate turnaround.

TWO | AMERICA

their ward was safe: Dirk Vellenga with Mick Farren, *Elvis and the Colonel*, 24–25, has the only detailed account of this interlude.

the closest he ever came to thoughts of suicide: Loanne, obviously. Her extensive account of young Dries’ early travels is fascinating.

Thomas Andrew Parker was born in Huntington: An AP wire service story by George Barker appeared in any number of newspapers throughout the country in January 1957. The “pony-and-monkey act” comes from *Time* magazine, May 16, 1960, in a story entitled “Impresarios: The Man Who Sold Parsley.”

at his sister Adriana’s wedding: This account comes almost entirely from Vellenga, 25–26.

a number of ports of call: The story of Colonel’s final arrival in America is compiled from a confusing array of sources, including Loanne, who seems not to have gotten the chronology straight from her husband; Dirk Vellenga;

Alanna Nash; and Lloyd Shearer, in an August 1, 1982, *Parade* magazine story, “Presley vs. Parker.” I’m not going to say this is the definitive account, but neither am I going to heed the Colonel’s well-intended advice to me, “If you don’t know everything, don’t say anything.”

He enlisted as Thomas Parker: This is corroborated by the 1930 Federal census.

I should append one note about Andreas van Kuijk’s departure from Holland in the spring of 1929. This has been attributed by some sources, with no apparent reason or evidence, to his desperate need to escape from the law after murdering the wife of a greengrocer in his native town of Breda. This simply isn’t true, as an exhaustively researched investigative piece by Geert Nijland, “Was Elvis Presley’s Manager Colonel Parker from Breda a Murderer?,” published in *BN DeStem* on November 21, 2021, makes abundantly clear. The story even goes so far as to name the actual suspect, whom the Breda police arrested immediately following the May 17, 1929, murder and held for three months before releasing him on medical grounds over the protests of the prosecutor. (The released prisoner, the brother-in-law of the murdered woman, appears to have lived for at least another forty years.) I will let Dries’ uncle Jan Ponsie have the last word. “Nobody can hold that boy down,” his uncle declared to the rest of the family. “When he wants to go, he’ll go.” And, once again, this quote comes from Dirk Vellenga’s early research.

THREE | UNDER HAWAIIAN SKIES

Dirk Vellenga, Alanna Nash, and most of all Loanne Parker are, once again, the sources for much of this material. But it is Gayle Kufferath Behnke, and her late father, Arnold, through his written reminiscences (including the account of his father’s first meeting with Private Tom Parker, which serves as the basis for the chapter’s epigraph), who are the source for the Kufferath family memories of their unique family relationship with Tom Parker over the years.

All but two of the children: Wilhelm W. Krauss, “A German-Japanese Family in Honolulu: A Study in Race Biology,” *Proceedings — Hawaiian Academy of Science Eleventh Annual Meeting 1935-1936* (Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1937), 17-18.

“Get fat,” she said: Mary Cooke, “The Colonel’s Lady Loves Hawaii,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, April 9, 1961.

They always wondered what had happened to their friend Tom: Arnold Kufferath’s daughter, Gayle, who would come to know the Colonel well in later years, said that while no one in the family had ever detected any foreign

accent, she sometimes wondered if her grandfather and Tom had ever privately spoken German together. But she had no way of knowing.

he granted himself a furlough: This account of Tom Parker's army misadventures is detailed in Alanna Nash, *The Colonel*, 53–56.

he simply grew tired of the regimentation: In addition to Loanne's speculation, one has only to recall the case of Sidney Poitier, who, sick at the racial inequities that he encountered in the army and desperate for a way out, sought (and received) a discharge for being "mentally unfit." Chester Burnett (the blues singer Howlin' Wolf) was similarly dismissed from the army, albeit not at his own election, as "a mental defective," subject to violent "nervous spells," though he never again exhibited this kind of behavior. One could say the same of the Colonel; if his were indeed symptoms of permanent derangement, it is notable that they never recurred over the next sixty years of his life.

FOUR | THE BIG TENT

Like much of the content of these first few chapters, the circus and carnival years represent of necessity a reconstruction based primarily on Colonel's memories as related by Loanne and bolstered by the sometimes conflicting accounts provided by Dirk Vellenga and Alanna Nash, both of which are well researched but sometimes irreconcilable. I've done my best, but I'm more than open to correction.

Tom Parker's conduit to Johnny J. Jones: This is my speculation, based on my reading of Vellenga and Nash.

"It reminded me of my circus days": This quote appears in Nash, *The Colonel*, 46, its source a letter written by Colonel to Garth Brooks' co-manager Pam Lewis.

"Miss [Cigar] Club" of Tampa: Jean Carr, "One Woman in Elvis Presley's Life Is Former Tampan," *Tampa Tribune*, August 3, 1956.

The first time he visited Rinaldi Printing: John Morthland, "The Colonel and the Rinaldis: A Million Dollar Friendship," which ran as a sidebar to an excerpt from Dirk Vellenga's book in *Tampa Bay Life*, October 1988. This brief account, based on an interview with Steve Rinaldi Sr. and his father, Clyde, supplements Vellenga's equally brief account in his book, and my own interview with Steve Rinaldi Jr. as well as Greg McDonald's affectionate tribute to the Rinaldi family in our interviews (I wish I had been able to amplify this) by way of the Colonel.

"Look what I won": Nash, 74.

“Wedding on the Wheel”: This account comes almost entirely from Loanne, but Dirk Vellenga wrote about it, too. His version is considerably more cynical—but in light of all of Colonel’s subsequent promotion efforts, and the pride he took in them, to me it does not ring quite as true.

splitting a beer: Joe Esposito told me about a time driving back from Palm Springs in the ’70s when Colonel suggested they stop and split a beer. “I realized I’d never seen him drink before—not once. So I said, ‘Did you ever drink, Colonel Parker?’ He said, ‘I can’t drink.’ He said, ‘I completely change when I drink, my personality does, I get very mean. That’s why I don’t drink.’”

this time he got the kind of job: You can check out Colonel’s detailed reports to *Billboard* throughout the entire carnival season of 1938. On September 13 he noted that “Mrs. Thomas Parker left for home in Tampa, Fla. She will also spend a few weeks at her parents’ home in Sarasota.”

FIVE | MY BLUE HEAVEN

There are three principal sources for Colonel’s magical year(s) with Gene Austin: Loanne’s highly entertaining account; Gene Austin’s 1984 memoir, perplexingly titled *Gene Austin’s Ol’ Buddy* (who was the unnamed coauthor?); and Barry Mazor’s brilliant “Gene Austin: The Father of Southern Pop,” originally published in *No Depression*, December 2004.

“What’s the most important instrument when you’re singing?”: Mazor, 87.

with Waller accompanying him on piano: There is some controversy over dates and titles here, but there is no question Austin recorded “Ain’t Misbehavin’” in the summer of 1929, and no question that Waller’s presence either then or on a November session—as recounted, quite differently, in Gene’s memoir, 125ff., and Ed Kirkeby’s Waller biography, *Ain’t Misbehavin’*, 119–120—caused considerable consternation.

a falsetto with “balls”: Mazor, 88.

The theater proudly announced his engagement: *Tampa Tribune*, January 21, 28, 29.

“a crackerjack press agent and manager”: Austin, 168.

“bright star, Gene Austin, America’s No. 1 song stylist”: *Johnson City Press*, April 27, 1939.

the patients at a local VA hospital: *Billboard*, September 2, 1939.

“it looked like we would never know anything but success and money”: Austin, 170.

the single best promotional campaign: Gabe Tucker interviewed by Loanne Parker.

attaching all his profits: *Billboard*, September 23, 1939.

“I headed for Hollywood”: Austin, 171.

confinement in the hinterlands: Both Loanne and Gene describe this interlude similarly.

“We walked onstage with him without a sheet of music”: Mazor, 95.

“We gonna pee on the fire”: Mazor, 95.

“Tom’s knack of handling people”: Austin, 172.

Newport News at the end of July: *Billboard*, September 7, 1940.

“I called him into my office”: Austin, 173. Loanne has a virtually identical account.

a special return appearance: *Tampa Tribune*, October 27, 1940; *Tampa Times*, October 28, 1940.

SIX | THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY

Once again, a great deal of the color, and most of Colonel’s direct recollections, come from Loanne. Colonel kept meticulous scrapbooks of his time with the Humane Society, to which Loanne frequently referred, but sadly I never got a chance to examine them. Through Newspapers.com, I did, however, find numerous contemporaneous accounts in both the *Tampa Times* and the *Tampa Tribune*, and as usual Dirk Vellenga’s research helped out, too. Also, I have to credit Paul Wilder’s “From Plain Dog to ‘Hound Dog’: Tampa Ex-Dogcatcher is Elvis Presley’s Manager,” in the *Tampa Tribune*, November 11, 1956. He and Colonel always had a great time together. When we come to Colonel’s early show-business experiences, I talked to Colonel a little about J. L. Frank, an in-passing reference which, despite its brevity, was eye-opening for the admiration Colonel clearly felt for him.

“his first job helping train bears”: *Tampa Tribune*, November 16, 1940.

an abandoned property: This is extrapolated from Wilder.

an educational campaign: There are any number of stories on any number of subjects bearing out Colonel’s wholehearted dedication to animal welfare, from his public commitment to reshoeing poorly shod mules to his ongoing concern for injured animals. These appear in both Tampa newspapers from the time of his arrival to the day of his departure. (The rabies campaign was announced, for example, in the April 20, 1942, issue of the *Tampa Times*.)

a signed picture of Gene Autry: *Tampa Times*, January 2, 1941.

several well-advertised “midgets”: Both the *Tribune* and the *Times*, December 19, 1941.

the automobile's new designation: *Tampa Tribune*, March 17, 1941.

feeding it from a baby bottle: *Tampa Tribune*, September 8, 1941.

"Horompo crawled into the pipe": *Tampa Tribune*, February 4, 1943. Loanne had a wonderful, and clearly very well-rehearsed (by Colonel, I mean), story about this, too.

his most celebrated gimmick: As I learned from an interment receipt signed by Tom Parker on November 22, 1940, and sent to me recently by Liz McCoy of the renamed Humane Society of Tampa Bay, contrary to Colonel's long-stated claim, burial services must have been offered at the Humane Society for some time prior to his arrival. But I have no doubt that all the colorful appurtenances attached to those services sprang from the fertile promotional imagination of Thomas A. Parker.

he soon took to calling "Pop": Ed Linn, "Colonel Tom Parker, Pitchman Extraordinary: The Colorful Saga of the Man Who Made Elvis Presley," *Saga*, January 1958.

"General Manager of Perpetual Care": Marge Crumbaker with Gabe Tucker, *Up and Down with Elvis Presley*, 62ff. This is a marvelous account, obviously derived from Colonel's many tellings.

"a run-down, dirty, weed-covered [property]": Wilder.

He joined the Exchange Club: Wilder.

he was elected sergeant at arms: *Tampa Tribune*, April 8, 1943.

Eleven members of Royal American Shows: *Tampa Times*, February 17, 1941.

Roy Acuff, one of the biggest stars of the Grand Ole Opry, was in Tampa: *Tampa Times*, March 4, 1942. The following year, on June 12, 1943, the *Times* reported that in addition to a new maternity ward for dogs, the Society had also "completed a new 'humane chamber' for the painless extermination of diseased animals," funded largely by Roy Acuff's donation of his proceeds from a recent show.

changing the face of country music entertainment: J. L. Frank was credited in his Country Music Hall of Fame induction ceremony with having taken country music performers "out of the little schoolhouses and put them into auditoriums and coliseums."

"He studied people": Holly George-Warren, *Public Cowboy No. 1*, 113.

"a good word for the down-and-out musician": Paul Kingsbury, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Country Music*, John Rumble entry on J. L. Frank. This is a quote from Alton Delmore of the Delmore Brothers.

Acuff, who had recently opened up the Florida territory: Jack Hurst, *Nashville's Grand Ole Opry*, 127, 128.

"the greatest modern singer of American folk songs": *Tampa Times*, March 31, 1943.

"ROY ACUFF'S OWN FLOUR": *Tampa Times*, October 5 and 9, 1943.

making close to \$100,000 a year: Elizabeth Schlappi, *Roy Acuff: The Smoky Mountain Boy*, 139.

“I presume I was the first”: Jerry Hopkins, “Fame and Fortune: The Life and Times of Col. Tom Parker,” *Rolling Stone*, September 22, 1977.

“Smilin” Eddy Arnold: Michael Streissguth, *Eddy Arnold: Pioneer of the Nashville Sound*, 36.

Frank had told him from the start: Streissguth, 46.

“Eddy Arnold...Marco Polo with a Guitar”: Streissguth, 54–55.

as a boy he had ordered all of Austin’s records: Barry Mazor, “Gene Austin: The Father of Southern Pop,” *No Depression*, December 2004, 90.

“I was a young kid at that time”: Mazor, 96.

touting all the improvements he had made: *Tampa Tribune*, December 11, 1943, inter alia.

“Ran into [movie star] Danny Kaye”: *Tampa Times*, February 5, 1944.

SEVEN | THE EDUCATION OF THOMAS A. PARKER

In addition to Loanne, I am greatly indebted to Michael Streissguth not just for his absorbing and scrupulously researched biography of Eddy Arnold but for the generous attention he gave to my many persnickety questions. In *Up and Down with Elvis Presley*, Gabe Tucker provides many informative and amusing insights into his early years with Eddy Arnold and the Colonel. All of Colonel’s contracts and correspondence come from the Graceland Archives unless otherwise noted. Eddy’s grandson, Shannon Pollard, supplied photographs and additional documentation as well as permission to quote from his grandfather’s letters. The interview with Steve Sholes was originally done by Tandy Rice for the Country Music Foundation Oral History Project on February 8, 1968, and is used by permission of the Frist Library and Archive of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. An extensive interview with Eddy Arnold, too, was done by John Rumble for the Country Music Foundation Oral History Project on September 12, 2000, and is also used by permission of the Frist Library and Archive of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. After the first citation, quotes from these interviews will be identified as FLA.

“one poor old man who was coming down the road on a bicycle”: Jack Hurst, *Nashville’s Grand Ole Opry*, 127.

“There’d be talk like you don’t ever hear anymore”: Hurst, 128.

The tent, which could accommodate: Hurst, 121.

“Daddy had a tremendous appreciation”: Alanna Nash, *The Colonel*, 100.

“As soon as Ernest walked out on the stage”: This is a combination of very similar accounts in Nash, 102, and Ronnie Pugh, *Ernest Tubb: The Texas Troubadour*, 101. It is further amplified by Nelle Poe’s handwritten account, preserved at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

the same percentage that J. L. Frank took: Holly George-Warren, *Public Cowboy No. 1*, 113.

as far north as Pennsylvania: Michael Streissguth, *Eddy Arnold*, 66.

he dashed back and forth: The travels are chronicled by Streissguth, Dirk Vellenga, and Gabe Tucker.

The merchandising concession had previously been given to the band: Streissguth, 66, 81.

“He was a ball of fire”: Nash, 103. Nash cites the sources of this quote as a feature story in the *Atlanta Journal*, January 22, 1997, as well as a Nashville Network documentary, *The Life and Times of Eddy Arnold*, plus Arnold’s interview with filmmaker Constant Meijers for his documentary, *Looking for Colonel Parker*.

“When we’d be in a town, and there’d be a circus”: The quote is from an Eddy Arnold interview in a documentary which appears to be called *The Definitive Elvis: Elvis and the Colonel*, available on YouTube.

“About ten minutes went by”: Rumble interview with Eddy Arnold for the Country Music Foundation Oral History Project, FLA.

Another time, in Chattanooga: Rumble, interview with Eddy Arnold, FLA.

“I spent quite a little time”: Rice, interview with Steve Sholes for the Country Music Foundation Oral History Project. FLA.

his company had one of the poorest shares of the country market: Streissguth, 71.

the full scope of his artist’s talents: There were any number of such ads. One early ad appeared in *Billboard*, January 11, 1947.

“He was a very kind man”: Judy Gay Burkley quoted in Lorrie Lykins, “Source of Parker Bio Sings a Different Tune,” *Tampa Bay Times*, September 1, 2005.

how the two of them could “make a buck with the hillbilly trade”: Nash, 131.

15 percent of the gross proceeds: Streissguth, 78.

he got a fireman in the audience: *Tampa Tribune*, February 3, 1946.

“Earthy,” Eddy mused: Eddy Arnold, *It’s a Long Way from Chester County*, 46.

Standing orders for Eddy Arnold’s new RCA releases: Streissguth, 92.

Tom Parker informed the Grand Ole Opry: From Rumble interview with Eddy Arnold, FLA. “I had a daily radio show on the Mutual Network [and a transcribed] show on a regional network for the Ralston Purina people... which was paying me quite well.” There’s a very similar phrasing of this same point in Streissguth, 97.

“With the audacity of a young man”: Hugh Cherry, “The R&R Interview: Irving C. Waugh,” *Radio & Records*, January 27, 1978.

“Mr. Danforth gave Eddy and me two shares of stock”: My interview with Colonel, September 30, 1994.

an old carnival acquaintance named Bob Greer: Gabe Tucker in Crumbaker, 67.

“I hadn’t ever really put an act together”: Rumble interview with Eddy Arnold, FLA.

on his way to Hollywood: *Billboard*, April 16, 1949.

“I couldn’t act”: Streissguth, 106.

selling tickets and doing whatever needed to be done: Jean Carr, “One Woman in Elvis Presley’s Life Is Former Tampan,” *Tampa Tribune*, August 3, 1956.

Tom Parker was seen as an exemplar: Johnny Sippel, “Rustic Rhythm Reaps \$\$ Reward,” *Billboard Special Disk Jockey Supplement*, October 22, 1949, 97.

pagging the star: Streissguth, 91.

the name of his manager: Streissguth, 90, 91.

Tom had been working as office manager: Much of the information on Tom Diskin comes from interviews with his longtime friend Al Dvorin. I learned a little about the history and switch-off identities of the various Dickens Sisters (who comprised a trio of varying constituencies assembled from four or five different sisters, with any number of spellings of their first names) from their brother Ron Bonja, and I studied *Billboard* advertisements over the years to try to determine as best I could the makeup of the group at various points in time.

a second “Uncle Tom”: Information about the Bonja family in general and their close relationship with their uncle’s friend and employer comes from my interviews with Ron Bonja, Bettie Bonja Byers’ helpful photo identifications, and the informative commentary of Paul Gansky, friend to all Bonjas. An extensive online video interview with Ron’s late brother, Ed, who in the ’70s served as official photographer for the Elvis tour, was also helpful.

Within a year of their first meeting: The origin and evolution of Jamboree Attractions becomes clear from *Billboard* advertisements as well as from Colonel’s early correspondence with Tom Diskin.

“If it would help Eddy Arnold”: “Story Behind String Ties,” *Tampa Tribune*, December 21, 1952.

“I must be the only phony Colonel”: Paul Wilder, “Elvis Presley’s Snowman,” *Tampa Tribune*, March 6, 1960.

“I just ignored him for several days”: Streissguth, 127.

a deal with every radio station in Las Vegas: *Billboard*, May 16, 1953.

“I was displeased about the exclusivity”: Streissguth, 127.

“we have never had as successful a tour”: *Cash Box*, March 26, 1955.

EIGHT | THE BEGINNING OF IT ALL

I'm not going to annotate each letter, because their provenance is covered in the biography and letters sections. All correspondence cited comes from the Graceland Archives and is copyrighted by Elvis Presley Enterprises unless otherwise noted. Harry Kalcheim's letters are quoted courtesy of the Kalcheim family. All interview material is taken from my own interviews unless otherwise noted.

an unknown artist whose name he usually got all jumbled up: C. Robert Jennings, "Elvis Lives," *West* (supplement to *Los Angeles Times Magazine*), February 18, 1968.

he had actually been told about the boy two months earlier: Contemporaneous confirmation of this timetable comes from Paul Wilder's brief joint interview of Colonel and Oscar Davis at the same Lakeland, Florida, show where Wilder conducted his controversial *TV Guide* interview with Elvis on August 6, 1956. Jerry Hopkins' interviews with Oscar Davis as well as Doug Green's 1974 interviews of Davis for the Country Music Foundation Oral History Project, FLA, were helpful as well.

Oscar Davis looked the part: Al Dvorin and Gordon Stoker contributed equally to this assessment of Davis in separate interviews. So did Sam Phillips without attribution as well as his assistant and right-hand woman from the start, Marion Keisker.

Presley was "pretty securely tied up": Tom Diskin letter to Steve Sholes, February 10, 1956.

"anyone could have helped him": Wilder interview of Colonel and Oscar Davis, August 6, 1956.

a unique artist-manager relationship: *Cash Box*, August 6, 1955.

"a poignant contrast to Metropolitan Opera": Jean Yothers, *On the Town, Orlando Sentinel*, May 16, 1955.

"individual artists [who] have a feeling inside them": Colonel letter to Gene Austin's wife, LouCeil, February 7, 1961.

he would have to walk away from Hank Snow: This is my theory—and it's *only* a theory, an attempt to explain (to myself as much as anyone else) why Colonel would take so uncharacteristic an action, and one that went against all his principles of business. Loanne tried to explain to me how Colonel explained it to her, but I would say he was not being entirely candid either with himself or her.

the contract of Frankie Laine: Although Sam loved to draw this comparison, music historian Colin Escott points out that it is not entirely apt. Columbia did not buy out Laine's contract but paid him a recoupable signing bonus of \$25,000 in 1951. Still, you can see Sam's point.

Hank realized, to his lifelong consternation: Ed Linn's "Colonel Tom Parker, Pitchman Extraordinary: The Colorful Saga of the Man Who Made Elvis Presley," *Saga*, January 1958, paints a pretty extensive if ultimately confusing picture of Snow's incomprehension of what had happened to him. The same thing was brought out in my interview with him. His own autobiography, *The Hank Snow Story*, written with Jack Ownbey and Bob Burris, is no less confusing (or simply confused). But it's worth noting that Snow remained on the best of terms, both professional and, seemingly, social, with the Colonel, at least through Elvis' time in the army.

NINE | DEFENDING ELVIS

Once again, all contracts and letters are courtesy of the Graceland Archives and Elvis Presley Enterprises. Hal Wallis' correspondence both here and in subsequent chapters is courtesy of the Elvis Presley General Correspondence Files in the Hal Wallis Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Library.

In conversation with Stoker: "It was the worst sound," Gordon told me. "It was a strained sound and a very bad sound."

"They all told me it didn't sound like anything": Tandy Rice interview of Steve Sholes, for the Country Music Foundation Oral History Project, February 8, 1968, used by permission of the Frist Library and Archive of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum (FLA).

they were impressed with his acting potential: Peter Whitmer, *The Inner Elvis*, 236. Whitmer quotes from a letter written by Joe Hazen to his partner, Hal Wallis, immediately after seeing Elvis perform live on *The Milton Berle Show* in early June.

"I pretended to know a lot about pictures": John Semien, "Graceland Magazine Honors Parker," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, June 23, 1994.

"it was time to quit school and get a job": Frank Rose, *The Agency: William Morris and the Hidden History of Show Business*, 5.

Elvis sold over twelve million records: Mike Kaplan, "Elvis a Millionaire in 1 Year," *Variety*, October 24, 1956.

his threat to public morals: Both the *New York World-Telegram* (July 6, 1956) and *Time* magazine (July 23) quoted Sullivan to this effect. So did many others. But Sullivan changed his mind.

a twenty-six-year-old freelance photographer: All subsequent quotes from Al Wertheimer are from Alfred Wertheimer with Gregory Martinelli, *Elvis '56: In the Beginning*.

“He’s a very amusing guy”: Paul Wilder interview of Elvis for *TV Guide*, Lakeland, Florida, August 6, 1956.

In another interview: Robert Carlton Brown, “A Craze Called Elvis,” *Coronet*, September 1956.

in a brief exchange interrupted by screams: Wilder interview.

“she reportedly stroked [Elvis] brow”: Sandy Schnier and Damon Runyon Jr., “Hey, Gals! Elvis Has 2 Steadies,” *Miami News*, August 4, 1956. My interviews with June Juanico provided personal detail.

a very small office to be sure: Interview with Trude Forsher for the 1993 documentary *Elvis in Hollywood*, courtesy of Stuart Goldman and Adam Taylor.

Trude acted as hostess: Interview with Trude Forsher, as above.

Arthur Hooten sat on a stool: Alanna Nash, *The Colonel*, 143.

the first all-out merchandising campaign: Kaplan, *Variety*.

the program was really getting into gear: Chester Morrison, “The Great Elvis Presley Industry,” *Look*, November 13, 1956. See also Kaplan, *Variety*.

“he was one hundred percent honest”: Whitmer, 227.

Parker was teaching him how to scrutinize and “refine contracts”: This and other comments by Julian Aberbach come from my own interview with Julian as well as Bar Biszick-Lockwood’s interviews with him for her book, *Restless Giant: The Life and Times of Jean Aberbach & Hill & Range Songs*.

Elvis’ sales were so overwhelming: *Variety*, September 5 and September 26, 1956, and *passim*.

her good friend Sophie Tucker: The fact that they *were* good friends is highlighted in the wedding announcement for the marriage of Frances Arms and Abraham Lastfogel in *The New York Times*, April 7, 1927, which reported that Tucker gave the bride away.

“She had a mouth on her”: This was Grelun Landon’s I think affectionate assessment. Frank Rose’s *The Agency*, 94, has similar things to say on the subject.

the appearance of “a sharpie”: Rose, 204.

“little square man”: Rose, 204.

the only outsider present: Rose, 4.

“a crap picture”: Whitmer, 245, 257, in addition to various other similar, slighting references by both Hazen and Hal Wallis in the Wallis Papers.

according to *Loving You* screenwriter-director Hal Kanter: Whitmer, 268.

TEN | ELVIS AND THE ADMIRAL

all the benefit there was to be gained: This is articulated in a letter to Howard Letts on September 24, 1957, as well as any number of letters to other RCA executives and industry insiders along the same lines.

“one of the nation’s leading Roman Catholic laymen”: *New York Times* obituary, January 14, 1970.

“one of the few Managers that have so many verbal agreements”: This is from Colonel’s letter of September 19, 1957, to Bill Bullock, but he wrote virtually the same letter to RCA executives Jack Burgess, Howard Letts, Warren Ling, and others, a number of which are referenced in the text.

Colonel proposed as alternate titles: Alanna Nash, *The Colonel*, 168.

“I don’t dig the intellectual bit”: *New York Herald Tribune*, August 18, 1956.

“I sincerely believe this to be a very good effort for us”: Colonel sent this telegram to Elvis on December 28, 1956. Interestingly, Sullivan acknowledged Parker, too, on the January 6, 1957, show for the “magnificent job” he was doing as Elvis’ manager and then announced that Elvis would be doing “a big Hungarian relief show” while he was out on the Coast.

Elvis seized the opportunity: The article by Louie Robinson appeared as “‘The Pelvis’ Gives His Views on Vicious Anti-Negro Slur,” *Jet*, August 1, 1957; the end of the quote comes from what amounts to a rewrite of the same article several months later, in *Tan*, November 1957.

“My Artist,” he wrote to Weisbord: He wrote this on February 1, 1960, just as Elvis was about to receive his army discharge, when both Elvis and Colonel (and William Morris, too) were preparing to start all over again.

determined against all odds to get Elvis there: Just how serious he seems to have been about Australia is indicated in numerous letters, including one to an old friend he hadn’t seen in years, Barton Wilson, on April 21, 1957 (included in the Letters section), and various communications with Abe Lastfogel and others.

the funds for his wife to return to Australia: Colonel wrote to Arnold Kufferath about this on November 18, 1963.

he told featured *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* columnist Cobey Black: Cobey Black, “He’s a Promoter and a Gentleman,” *Who’s News*, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, November 7, 1957.

they might even decide to go on to Australia: *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, November 4, 1957.

no longer the undernourished young man: Mary Cooke, “The Colonel’s Lady Loves Hawaii,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, April 9, 1961.

They had wonderful get-togethers: Gayle Kufferath Behnke supplemented her own warm memories with photographs of the visit.

“a great showman”: “Elvis Rocks the Bowl,” *Hawaii Lightning News*, November 14, 1957, as reprinted in Paul Bélard, *Elvis in Hawaii November 1957*, 130. There is much additional information in this tightly focused book.

ELEVEN | COLONEL AT PLAY

Colonel left a good deal of documentation of both the concept and development of the ever-evolving, and constantly self-delighting, Snowmen's League of America. I only wish there were more. I am, once again, grateful to Jerry Hopkins for his willingness to share some of his unpublished writings on these and many other Colonel-related subjects.

The first mention: Chester Morrison, "The Great Elvis Presley Industry," *Look*, November 13, 1956.

he presented a variation of the same thing: Paul Wilder, "Elvis Presley's Snowman," *Tampa Tribune*, March 6, 1960.

"a small group of dedicated 'out-of-doors showmen'": Showmen's League.org, "About Us."

"a position in classically nonsensical literature": Fragment of Jerry Hopkins' unpublished "snow notes."

Paul Wilder, the *Tampa Tribune* columnist, asked him once: Wilder, *Tampa Tribune*, March 6, 1960.

"Parker orders Bevo around mercilessly": Ed Linn, "Colonel Tom Parker, Pitchman Extraordinary: The Colorful Saga of the Man Who Made Elvis Presley," *Saga*, January 1958.

"the most outstanding talent manager" in the business: *Country Music Reporter*, April 13, 1957.

TWELVE | PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Once again, all correspondence and contracts were furnished by Angie Marchese and her crack team at the Graceland Archives. All quotes, stories, and observations about Colonel's—well, let's just say his fourth or fifth adoptive family, the Williamses, in the "Clannie and Brenda" section of this chapter, were generously offered by Brenda Williams Cohen, who also provided wonderful descriptions of the house, the office, the people, and the work, along with many scrapbook pictures.

a loophole in army regulations: See Alan Levy, *Operation Elvis*, 71. Albert Goldman, too, notes Elvis' closeness to his sergeant, William Norwood, in his biography *Elvis*.

a "clotting phenomenon": Gladys' illness has frequently been attributed to cirrhosis of the liver, which would generally be thought to stem from a drinking problem. Her doctor, Charles Clarke, whom I interviewed (he was an eminently qualified physician who served as chief of cardiac surgery at

Walter Reed during World War II), strongly believed that this was not the case. He said that he was never able to arrive at a full diagnosis, and there was no autopsy. “It was a liver problem, but she was not jaundiced, as I recall. I called every consultant we could latch on to, and we tried our best to diagnose it.” But all that he could come up with was at best a descriptor.

“Good-bye, darling, good-bye”: The devastating details of Gladys’ funeral, and her son’s emotional reaction, are enumerated in stories in both Memphis newspapers, including James H. White, “‘Goodbye, Darling,’ Says the Grief-Stricken Singer,” *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, August 16, 1958, and Charles Portis, “Elvis Presley Tells Mother ‘Goodbye, Darling,’ at Grave,” *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, August 16, 1958.

“a lonely little boy 5000 miles away”: Jonnita Brewer Barrett, *Once Upon a Time: Elvis and Anita — Memories of My Mother*, 130.

“I think he’s entitled to talk to his mother”: Levy, 5. Levy paints a detailed picture of much of Elvis’ army experience at Fort Chaffee and Fort Hood, from the time of his induction in Memphis to his departure for Germany. Colonel’s letters provide much of the behind-the-scenes rest.

“The Army’s bigger and older than you are”: Elvis Presley, “What the Army Taught Me,” *This Week*, December 6, 1959.

Hundreds of fans had gathered: There are various stories in *Billboard*, March 7, 1960, *Variety*, March 9, and the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, March 4. There’s a lot of coverage.

“The Colonel went through that day like a force of nature”: Alanna Nash, *The Colonel*, 191.

he worked out a formula: There are any number of memos, notes, and scratched-out calculations, along with various rejected formulas and formulations, throughout the month of January. Just how seriously the threat continued to be taken is indicated by an unauthorized leak to *Billboard* as late as March 7 (Ren Grevatt, “Added Leeway for Phenom’s Recordings”), in which it was speculated that “even now certain revisions are being written into the Presley-Victor contract [which] are known to deal to some extent with tax matters.”

“pay the government for the country we’ve got”: Jean Bosquet, “Parker Learned Name — Fast,” *New York Journal-American*, June 13, 1960.

“Elvis and me got one job”: Lloyd Shearer, “Elvis Presley: The Return of the King,” *Parade*, June 19, 1960.

a matter of growing concern: There is a great deal of worried correspondence from Colonel around this time in which he expresses concern about Marie’s physical health and her state of mind, particularly in letters to Abe Lastfogel. The doctors, he writes to Lastfogel, can’t seem “to pin down what is wrong with her.” She has lost a great deal of weight, he wrote on another occasion,

and was seeing one doctor or another two or three times a week. “I will stay very close from now on,” he wrote to Abe in October of 1959, “so she won’t be lonesome.”

Colonel was good friends with Lyndon Johnson: George Hamilton spoke of the two men’s friendship in 1964, when he was dating Johnson’s daughter Lynda Bird; Loanne observed it, too, when Colonel and the ex-president met by chance in Los Angeles not long before Johnson’s death. There is little evidence of this closeness in Colonel’s letter to Johnson after the USS *Arizona* benefit in 1961, save for a certain jauntiness of spirit, though it must be admitted that much of Colonel’s correspondence was characterized by this same tone. But they must have hit it off (at least enough for Johnson to continue to remember Colonel) when they first met in 1959, on Colonel’s visit to the LBJ Ranch with Eddy Arnold. Brenda Williams Cohen, too, speaks of their apparent closeness, and in *The Colonel*, pages 188 and 359, Alanna Nash cites, and quotes briefly from the beginning of, a nine-year correspondence that she discovered in the LBJ Presidential Library.

Zeke Parkenstein: Colonel adopted this *nom d’agent* in his very spoofy December 7, 1960, letter to Lefkowitz. He also recorded a not-all-that-funny rubes-in-Hollywood improvisational skit with Gabe Tucker, in which Tucker took the role of a wide-eyed visitor from the hinterlands (Harlan County, Kentucky, to be exact) named Zeke Rosenberg.

four thousand congratulatory telegrams and letters: Pat Embry, “The Colonel,” *Nashville Banner*, June 12, 1987. Loanne, who provides much of the detail here, has the figure a little lower.

“He hadn’t made a sound”: Ray Walker quoted in Rose Clayton and Dick Heard, eds., *Elvis Up Close: In the Words of Those Who Knew Him Best*, 168–69.

“They didn’t say anything”: This account stems from my interview with Bill Porter; John W. Rumble, “Behind the Board: Talking with Studio Engineer Bill Porter,” *Journal of Country Music* 18, nos. 1 and 2, and 19, no. 1; and David Okamoto, “Engineering the Hits for Elvis,” *Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph*, August 15, 1988.

the collector label, Follow That Dream: *Elvis Presley: For LP Fans Only*, a two-CD set, Follow That Dream/RCA 56020-975-117.

THIRTEEN | THE PAST ARRIVES

All of the personal information about Ad van Kuijk Sr.’s trip to America (including the reply Colonel wrote to Ad’s son’s letter), as well as nearly all the details about Ad’s relationship with his family and vice versa, comes

from the very thoughtful and insightful contributions of Ad van Kuijk Jr. The book, *ElvisMatters: The Travel Log — Op zoek naar Colonel Parker*, whose overall authorship and direction is credited to Ad Jr., offers documentation and photographs of Ad's trip, along with a perceptive essay, "Dries, de verloren zoon" (Dries, the Prodigal Son), by Jorrit Van Der Kooi. All records having to do with the USS *Arizona* tribute, and Colonel's extensive, if unrealized, plans for "the greatest TV package ever presented," come from the Graceland Archives, although Lee Cotten, *Did Elvis Sing in Your Hometown, Too?*, was very helpful here as well. And Gayle Kufferath Behnke once again supplied the Kufferath perspective on the family's continuing relationship with their old friend Tom.

she burnt a candle: My interview with Jorrit Van Der Kooi.

"Are you really my uncle?": Jorrit Van Der Kooi, "Dries, de verloren zoon."

"There will be no passes": *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, December 20, 1960.

"the greatest one-day charity show box office": *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, February 8, 1961.

"Parker said Elvis was coming": George Chaplin to Sue Wiegert, September 23, 1987, in Sue Wiegert, *Elvis: Precious Memories* vol. 1, 97.

"everyone's gotta buy a ticket": *Honolulu Advertiser*, January 12, 1961.

"[He] grabbed the mike": *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, February 27, 1961.

"He just had kind of an effervescence": Jerry Hopkins interview with Ray Walker, 1971.

"Island Girl Meets Elvis": *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, August 16, 1960. This is supplemented by Gayle's very specific memories.

"He's wearing his own watch": I love this story, an oft-repeated anecdote with many variants. Mine stems from Allan Weiss' interview for the 1993 documentary *Elvis in Hollywood*; Jerry Hopkins' interview with Ron Jacobs; and my interviews with Al Dvorin, who has the Colonel charging for his own walk-on.

he found out right away: Van Der Kooi, "Dries, de verloren zoon."

he had met a man from Tilburg: This, along with several additional quotes, is from the *Rosita* articles that appeared in three successive weekly issues beginning on July 1, 1961.

Dries unexpectedly asked: Both Colonel and Loanne attested to the meeting, as has Ad Jr., who remains firmly convinced of his father's story, if not all of its shifting embellishments. Loanne was certain that Elvis never told anyone about it, which given the fact that not a single one of the people around Elvis was aware of it, combined with Loanne's ability to discern when her husband was telling a story just to put people on (not, as every reader by now must realize, an uncommon occurrence), has me convinced.

“He sends you all his greetings”: My interviews with Jorrit Van Der Kooi, Dirk Vellenga, and Ad van Kuijk Jr.

“Sometimes we had to live on a dollar a week”: *Rosita*, July 15, 1961.

“no magazine or newspaper picked it up”: This comes from a chapter (“My Brother”) Dirk Vellenga sent me, which as far as I can tell did not appear in his book.

“after a meaningless conversation with Ad van Kuijk”: Vellenga, “My Brother.”

Colonel continued for many years to send money: This is what Loanne believed. Ad Jr. told Jorrit Van Der Kooi that he took it to be his father’s understanding that Colonel was sending the money to help Ad Sr. in his various enterprises, including a succession of tearooms and restaurants.

FOURTEEN | LATERAL THINKING

Colonel summed it up for *Variety*: Michael Fessier Jr., “Elvis Hits \$20,000,000 Gross Jackpot,” *Variety*, January 15, 1964.

“The [Hollywood] big shots are afraid to be seen with me”: C. Robert Jennings, “There’ll Always Be an Elvis,” *Saturday Evening Post*, September 11, 1965. See note about Colonel’s 1966 rubes-in-Hollywood comedy skit with Gabe Tucker above.

“an image of cornpone simplicity”: This is drawn once again from Jerry Hopkins’ unpublished, and very appreciative, writings about the brilliance of Colonel’s comic inventions. I filled out (actually initiated) my knowledge of Edward de Bono’s theory of lateral thinking via *Wikipedia*.

“He wouldn’t play a game he didn’t know how to win”: This is from my 2024 interview with George Hamilton, as are all subsequent quotes from Hamilton.

“I don’t think anyone was consciously trying to harm me”: Elvis’ 1972 interview with Bob Abel, Pierre Adidge, and Jerry Schilling.

FIFTEEN | THE JEWELS IN THE DESERT

she enjoyed playing the piano: The picture of Palm Springs and Marie during these years has been drawn from my interviews with Greg McDonald, George Hamilton, Jerry Schilling, Loanne Parker, Gabe Tucker, Brenda Cohen, Ron Bonja, and others. Everyone talked about the Yahtzee.

“I wish he’d stay out of my refrigerator”: This is from one of Gabe Tucker’s many vivid anecdotes in *Up and Down with Elvis Presley*, 115.

“He had this need to get to Las Vegas”: Joe Esposito, Jerry Schilling, Greg McDonald, Andrew Solt, and, of course, Loanne—in addition to Hamilton—were all keen observers of the attraction Las Vegas held for Colonel in later years as well as his almost inexplicable approach to games of chance.

SIXTEEN | THE MAGICIAN

Geller, a twenty-four-year-old hairdresser: Background information, as well as the account of Geller and Elvis’ first meetings, comes from Larry Geller and Joel Spector, *“If I Can Dream”: Elvis’ Own Story*; my interviews with Larry Geller; Rose Clayton and Dick Heard, eds., *Elvis Up Close: In the Words of Those Who Knew Him Best*, 208–9; and Jess Stearn with Larry Geller, *The Truth About Elvis*. Colonel communicated some of his thinking about Larry to Loanne, and maybe more that she didn’t choose to share, because I’m not sure she agreed with him altogether on this subject.

“reading wasn’t a passive activity”: Geller and Spector, 100.

“Larry was a total threat to us all”: My interview with Priscilla Presley, 1995.

“I understand that you’re a magician”: Geller and Spector, 104.

Elvis threw himself into preparations: Interview with Red West by author and Ernst Jorgensen; listening with Red and Ernst to the home tapes, 1996.

he needed to have Jones: You might think that Tom Diskin and Freddy Bienstock didn’t try all that hard, but Diskin’s correspondence shows that they did. It was only after their failure to locate Jones that Diskin suggested that they might substitute the Imperials, a white quartet led by Jake Hess, Elvis’ childhood idol and the original lead singer for Elvis’ favorite gospel quartet, the Statesmen.

“someone else is going to have to take the reins”: Chris Hutchins, “Colonel Tom Parker’s Retirement,” *New Musical Express*, January 1966.

he gave an interview to his friend James Kingsley: *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, February 2, 1966.

“I work only for you”: My interview with Priscilla Presley.

He took care of all publicity, marketing, and record and concert promotion: He articulated this summary view, both publicly and privately, in various settings, including Michael Fessler Jr., “Elvis Hits \$20,000,000 Gross Jackpot,” *Variety*, January 15, 1964.

“I went into each town with my staff”: My interview with Colonel, 1994.

“Elvis would go out in the barn every day”: Marty Lacker in Alanna Nash, *Elvis Aaron Presley*, 397. Everybody else I interviewed who was around at the time spoke about the ranch in the same way, Jerry Schilling and Joe Esposito most of all.

“Vernon literally begged him to stop”: Priscilla Beaulieu Presley with Sandra Harmon, *Elvis and Me*.

“Some of you,” Colonel said, looking at Larry: Geller and Spector, 167.

“those masters of yours”: Stearn, 175; Geller and Spector, 168; my interview with Larry Geller, 1989.

“We were both so nervous”: My interview with Priscilla Presley.

SEVENTEEN | REAWAKENINGS

With respect to the 1968 television special, I spoke with NBC producer Bob Finkel as well as Steve Binder, Bones Howe, music director Billy Goldenberg, Bill Belew, and Billy Strange; Jerry Hopkins’ interviews with each of these key figures, and others, provided invaluable information and perspective as well. But it was Bill Bram’s 2007 interview with Singer creative director Alfred di Scipio that provided some of the most surprising revelations.

With respect to Las Vegas, all the logistical specifics come by way of Loanne and were compiled from Colonel’s meticulous records. I don’t think I need to point out that this is where Loanne for the first time fully enters the picture with her own observations and recollections, which is a pallid way of referring to a love affair that blossomed on both sides from the very start. From this point on, Loanne is a constant, and wholly involved, presence.

Colonel met with Alfred di Scipio: According to Al di Scipio’s interview with Bill Bram, along with contemporaneous notes from the meetings, Bob Finkel was not at the first meeting, at which Colonel was persuaded to sign on to di Scipio’s new plan, and Colonel was not at the second — but from my conversations with Finkel he and di Scipio appeared to operate as a seamless team.

“the program ought not to be a purely Christmas oriented show”: The swiftness with which this concept was embraced is borne out not only by notes from the meetings but from my interviews with Finkel and Bill Bram’s with di Scipio.

“The gophers in the desert [will] know you’re here”: Joe Esposito with Elena Oumano, *Good Rockin’ Tonight*, 142.

“visibly swooning”: *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, August 12, 1969.

the two men approached each other: Though everyone remembered the moment vividly, the particulars were inevitably a little different. I’ve done my best here to align Sonny West’s, Charlie Hodge’s, and Priscilla Presley’s memories, along with Loanne’s own summary of what she gathered from all of the parties.

“On the stage he [had] this look”: My interview with Priscilla Presley.

EIGHTEEN | ON THE ROAD AGAIN

As you can see, from this point on Loanne's unique vantage point and perspective begin to give us an increasingly detailed picture not only of the challenges but of the impact that touring had on Colonel as well as his artist. All documents and financial figures come from Elvis Presley Enterprises, although not infrequently from Loanne as well. Al Dvorin, Tom Hulett, and Mel Ilberman all contributed immeasurably to my understanding of the nuts and bolts, and the *humor*, of the operation, and Jerry Weintraub offered his own perspective, though Jerry was not the person to go to for either humor or nuts and bolts.

His scripts for the radio advertising: Greg McDonald gave me a detailed rundown on Colonel's approach to the promotion-and-exploitation end of the business, as well as the highly specific rhythms of selling, be it sacred or secular.

Colonel ditched Weintraub and got RCA to form what amounted to a shell corporation: This was explained to me by Mel Ilberman and borne out by extensive RCA Record Tours documentation.

"only about 60% of his musical potential": Robert Hilburn, *Los Angeles Times*, August 18, 1972.

NINETEEN | SECRETS AND LIES

this "combination of con man and Santa Claus": Robert Blair Kaiser, "The Rediscovery of Elvis," *New York Times Magazine*, October 11, 1970.

he didn't play games of skill: Greg McDonald, George Hamilton, and Andrew Solt all bore witness to Colonel's unique, and seemingly self-defeating, method of calculating the odds. See also Alanna Nash, *Elvis Aaron Presley*, 471-72.

\$800,000 at a single sitting: Some put it at \$1 million, but Greg McDonald, who frequently accompanied Colonel on his roulette marathons, swore that \$800,000 was the most he ever saw Colonel lose at one time. And, Greg insisted, he remained unfazed.

"This was a man who never spent any money": Julian Aberbach spoke more than once of the complete turnaround he witnessed in Colonel's behavior in his interviews with Bar Biszick-Lockwood as well as in his interview with me.

"you never could pierce that veil": Lamar Fike in Nash, 471.

Tom Diskin became so concerned: Al Dvorin, ordinarily the most easygoing of men, shed all pretense of imperturbability when he told me this story.

Song publisher Freddy Bienstock described much the same experience. “He got very angry at me,” Freddy told me. “He said, ‘It’s my money. I can do what I want. Don’t talk to me about that.’ And I never did again.”

she tried to talk to him about the drugs: Joyce Bova as told to William Conrad Nowels, *Don’t Ask Forever: My Love Affair with Elvis*, 379.

“a special champion comes along”: Chris Chase, “Like a Prince from Another Planet,” *New York Times*, June 18, 1972.

old friends on the line: Jerry Hopkins, “Don’t You Go Winnin’ Elvis No Oscars,” *Rolling Stone*, September 17, 1970.

“Oh, he’s just an old coot”: This account combines stories by George Hamilton and Gabe Tucker in his book with Marge Crumbaker, *Up and Down with Elvis Presley*. Each bears out Greg McDonald’s affectionate but clear-eyed portrait of Colonel and Marie in Palm Springs.

TWENTY | LOSS

All Mel Ilberman quotes and perceptions about the evolution of the masters buyout deal (and his dealings in general with Colonel over the years) are from my 1995 interview with him. As always, Loanne’s documentation and insights were invaluable.

erratic performances: The February 6, 1973, edition of the *Hollywood Reporter* cited “his apparent “lack of energy and interest.”

“Aw, hell,” he said at last: Red West, Sonny West, and Dave Hebler as told to Steve Dunleavy, *Elvis: What Happened?*, 10.

If Colonel wouldn’t handle the deal: In addition to Loanne’s account, I gained additional insight from interviews with Mel Ilberman, William Morris lawyer Roger Davis, and Ed Hookstratten.

for the first time full 50-50 partners: There have been other such manager-artist deals over the years, though not so many as to call it a commonplace arrangement. Colin Escott has pointed me to at least two. (See Colin Escott, *Roadkill on the Three-Chord Highway*, 60ff.) Popular contralto Kate Smith’s manager, Ted Collins, created a 50-50 partnership with his client in 1930 and maintained it for over thirty-three years (see Richard K. Hayes, *Kate Smith*, 16-17). And Patti Page and her manager, Jack Rael, had a 50-50 deal from early in her career, at the singer’s instigation. Even Bob Dylan, who in 1967 might have seemed the antithesis of Elvis Presley in terms of music business expertise and cultural sophistication, appears to have permitted similar opportunities for self-aggrandizement to his manager, Albert Grossman, who, like the Colonel, took a 25 percent manager’s share but, probably

unbeknownst to his client, received a 50 percent share of the publishing from the firm to which he first brought the Dylan song catalogue. (See Fred Goodman, *The Mansion on the Hill*, 88, 103–4, 129, and *passim*.) This is not meant to condone or condemn, just to say something which could just as easily be said about business practices in other areas of the music industry, song publishing in particular.

He was having increasing difficulties with his artist: Roger Davis, Mel Ilberman, Julian Aberbach, and Ed Hookstratten all bore out Colonel's frequent expressions of frustration in my interviews with them. Loanne, of course, was, as always, candid in her articulation of Colonel's views.

He and Tom Diskin were driven there: Colonel's longtime aide George Parkhill described the scene in his 1981 deposition for one of the numerous lawsuits that sprang out of the reports by the guardian ad litem, who had been appointed by the Shelby County Probate Court the previous year to look after the interests of Elvis' twelve-year-old daughter, Lisa Marie.

Elvis was so excited: Joe Esposito, Jerry Schilling, and Lamar Fike all spoke of this.

It was Las Vegas that had seduced the Colonel: Articulated, once again, in my and Bar Biszick-Lockwood's interviews with Julian Aberbach.

"Adios, you motherfucker, bye bye, Papa, too": The show was described by Sue Wiegert in Wiegert's *Elvis: For the Good Times*, 143, 144. Also by British fan Christine Colclough in one of her scrupulously observed fan reports from Las Vegas, though in this case with less explicit language.

"iatrogenic and volitional polypharmacy": This description came from Elvis' personal physician, Dr. Nick (Dr. George Nichopoulos). It is borne out by much of the language, both diagnostic and anecdotal, in Charles C. Thompson II and James P. Cole, *The Death of Elvis: What Really Happened*.

"I know what I'm doing": Both this and the quote that follows are from Colonel's interview with Larry Hutchinson, the chief criminal investigator for the Shelby County attorney general, in the official inquiry into Elvis' death, as cited in Thompson and Cole, 356.

How could Elvis go to Japan: This account comes primarily from my 1990 interview with Tom Hulett, but it is supported by my interviews with Jerry Schilling and Joe Esposito.

he never thought CBS would meet his price: William Morris lawyer Roger Davis, who filled in the legal language of the deal that Colonel outlined, appears to have been surprised, too. "We presented the deal to CBS, and they just took it," he told me.

At William Morris' suggestion: Roger Davis set up the meeting. "It was put together in my office," he said. "It took about a week."

four hundred lawsuits: Jerry Hopkins, “Playing the Elvis Presley Game,” unpublished manuscript.

“We’re keeping up the good spirits”: Hopkins.

he charged just one dollar: Robert Hilburn, “They Still Love Him Tender,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 1978.

“We made a hell of a team”: Robert Hilburn, “Col. Parker Dies; He Made Presley a Star,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 1997. The quote is from the original 1978 interview but was left out of the 1978 article.

TWENTY-ONE | AFTER ELVIS

Most of the legal quotes come from voluminous legal records, including the two ad litem reports and Colonel’s depositions and notes, as well as a number of newspaper interviews Colonel did during this time. My conversations with Jack Soden were an enormous help to me in establishing both the chronology and the purpose of Elvis Presley Enterprises as well as how the purchase of Colonel’s archives came about. All quotes from Jack are from these interviews unless otherwise noted. Bill Bradley, too, was a big help to me in his explanation of some of the intricate (to me anyway) legal complications of the situation. Most of the details of the Elvis birthday dinner are from my own contemporaneous notes.

“a man without a country”: This description appears in both Lloyd Shearer’s Intelligence Report, “Presley vs. Parker,” *Parade*, August 1, 1982, and *Variety*, June 24, 1983, and subsequently everywhere else.

Colonel received more than \$2 million: Even though all parties were said to have been enjoined from discussing details of the settlement, the basic facts (including RCA’s payment of \$1.1 million to the Estate, which I think can only be interpreted as a getting-back-in-business bonus) were published in a UPI story by Frank Thorsberg, “Presley Estate and RCA Settle out of Court,” filed June 21, 1983, and in “Presley Executors Settle with Manager and RCA,” *New York Times*, June 22, 1983.

“I just liked his positivity,” she said: Matt K. Johnson, “Keeper of the King,” *Regis Magazine*, April 29, 2020. Another story, Coeli Carr, “Private Sector; Keeper of the Blue Suede Shoes,” *New York Times*, August 4, 2002, fills in additional background information.

“the only real authentic memorabilia”: Pat Embry, “The Colonel,” *Nashville Banner*, June 12, 1987; Colonel even went so far as to pave his front yard for visitor parking and obtain an occupancy permit for the proposed museum, according to Alanna Nash, *The Colonel*, 328.

“It’s been too long”: *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, January 9, 1988.

“I don’t think there was any producer”: Nash, 331, plus my contemporaneous notes.

“chronic brain syndrome”: Nash, 329. Colonel described her condition without any of the clinical language in a 1981 letter to the Kufferaths.

“a single man and a single woman”: Nash, 332.

Colonel engaged another of Crowley’s clients: Both Mike Crowley and Monte Warden spoke to me about Monte’s appearance at the birthday dinner (I remember it well!), and Jimmie Dale Gilmore has spoken of his afternoon with the Colonel on a number of occasions, including interviews in the *Houston Press*, the *Houston Chronicle*, and with Terry Gross on *Fresh Air*.

a great subject for a book: You might think this was me, but it’s not. He made the suggestion a number of times to Elvis biographer Jerry Hopkins, with whom he always enjoyed a congenial relationship.

“he doesn’t wish to speak with anyone from Holland”: Nash, 334.

“Dood, Ad is dood”: Jorrit Van Der Kooi, “Dries, de verloren zoon,” *ElvisMatters: The Travel Log — Op zoek naar Colonel Parker*. Jorrit described the meeting to me in further detail as well.