

# Was/Is Elvis an environmentalist?

January 1993 was an historic month. The Environmental President left office to race around in his speedboat at two gallons to the mile. Dan Quayle began a much-deserved life of oblivion. Americans were hoping that a red-neck from Hope, Arkansas, is the hope of the nation. The EPA struck a line in the cigarette ashes, confronting the tobacco industry with evidence that second-hand or passive tobacco smoke is a major health hazard.

January '93 was the month of kings as well as presidents. January 6 was the traditional celebration of the Three KINGS of the Bible, a/k/a the Three Wise Guys. January 18 was Rev. Martin Luther KING, Jr., day. We New Orleanians ate KING cake all month. But one of the biggest days was January 8, birthday of The KING, the not-so-late Elvis Presley. In addition to the first day of issue of the long-awaited Elvis postal stamps, January 8 was also the release of a major work of academic scholarship.

The Delta country's famous research facility, The Florida Parishes Institute of Phrenology and Cuisinart Maintenance, has published a study by Delta Sierran Gordon Patton, the institute's professor of forensic metaphysics. Professor Patton, a leading expert on Elvis, has determined that Elvis's songs are filled with environmental messages and that Elvis was a closet environmentalist.

As most serious observers of the Elvis phenomenon are aware, Elvis was born and raised in rural Tupelo, Mississippi. As a boy, he roamed the woods, communing with the natural world and the wild animals. Professor Patton makes a cogent argument that when Elvis was singing, "I just wanna be your Teddy Bear," he had in mind the endangered Louisiana black bear, the original "Teddy Bear" made famous by President Theodore Roosevelt. Performed at the apex of Elvis's career, "Teddy Bear" reveals a threatened, isolated Elvis, uneasy with the big, bright world around him, just like the Louisiana black bear in its shrinking natural habitat.

All popular music fans are familiar

with one of Elvis's greatest hits, "Don't Be Cruel." Doctor Patton, analyzing the singer's notes and correspondence with Colonel Parker, his manager, and Priscilla, his girlfriend-then-wife, has found the subliminal message of Elvis's self-identification with the earth itself.

In begging his respective partners, financial and personal, in what can be described only as "dysfunctional relationships" not to be cruel, Elvis reveals himself as the abused, cheated earth, dominated by those who loathe him/it for his/its wealth, beauty, and talent. This evidence confirms that Elvis was a true lover of the good earth, and were he alive today (more about this later), he would undoubtedly be a member of the Sierra Club — so says the professor.

Delta Sierrans will be interested to learn that "You Ain't Nothin' But A Houn' Dog!" was written as a cathartic response to an environmentally degrading experience the young Elvis witnessed as a child in Tupelo. In the fall of 1946, Elvis was roaming the woods when a pack of feral dogs, the result of negligent breeding by owners of pets and hunting dogs, chased him up a tree from which he saw the fierce animals kill squirrels and young quail (not Dan). The scene horrified and frightened Elvis into erasing the horror from his memory until it was poured out in lyrics and melody.

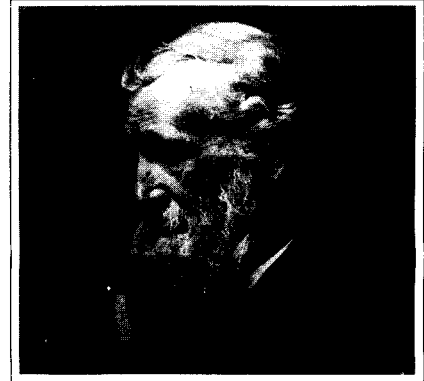
Anyone who has been to the 49th state will readily understand that Elvis's "Blue Hawaii" was, as Professor Patton points out, a call for more protection of the delicate mid-Pacific environment.

Perhaps the most remarkable part of the Institute's study was Doctor Patton's evidence that Elvis is alive and working in a conservation-related field. In discussions with New Orleans outdoor outfitter Byron Almquist and from an interview with one of his guide-assistants, Patton became convinced that Elvis is working as a tour guide in the Honey Island Swamp. If any Delta Sierrans are canoeing or hiking in that swamp and hear the distinctive, plaintive refrain of "Love Me Tender," you will

know that The King is pleading for all people to love and protect his first love, the Good Earth. △

— Earl Higgins

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