

Drumroll Please

Written by Jes-c Brandt

A dream come true



As I write, I am sitting in my bedroom in a camp chair, with my computer on my lap. There are all sorts of various thoughts and emotions ricocheting within me. Does using a camp chair as furniture indicate that I am some sort of pathetic bachelor? Should I postpone writing this column to contemplate growing up and investing in real furnishings?

Since it seems I've delayed writing long enough already, growing up will have to wait, as I continue to muddle through the thoughts my current surroundings elicit.

The chair I'm sitting in was a gift from my family. It is covered in pictures of Elvis Presley. Believe it or not, I have encountered individuals who find it strange to sit in such a chair. For me, it only seems natural. After all, I sleep beneath an Elvis quilt every night.

There it is; the secret's out. I am a huge Elvis fan, and with that on the table, I can finally tell you about a recent experience that was truly a dream come true.

While the children I work with were all home for spring break, I did a little cross country road trip. I flew out to New York to reunite with a couple college friends, then drove for three days to get back to Texas when school resumed.

Conveniently, Memphis, Tenn., lies directly in the path I was taking. After two long days, I was starting to get restless. That's a long time to spend sitting in the car, and there's only so much road games and music can do to keep things lively.

Even so, the western edge of Tennessee was a beacon of hope. Driving through the city, I knew I was getting close to the King's home, when I spotted Elvis Presley Boulevard. Turning down Lonely Street, I saw the iconic Heartbreak Hotel, and it took me a moment to catch my breath.

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Parking the car, Elvis' voice was suddenly gone from the speakers, and I sat in silence for a moment, just taking it all in. Hardly capable of containing my excitement, I went and checked into the Heartbreak Hotel, where the desk clerks were, in fact, dressed in black.

As excited as I was to be in the hotel, I was quickly back on the road, making my way downtown. Beale Street at night was extraordinary, and everywhere I turned there was great live music. But that's not what I was there for.

About a mile away from the lights and the sounds of Beale Street is a small, quiet building. During the day there are tours of Sun Studio, where Elvis recorded his first record. By the time I got there, the tours had concluded and the studio was closed up, but it was incredible nonetheless.

I saw the neon sign from across the street. The building was humble, on a street that didn't have any pizzazz, but as I made my way toward the front window, I was shaking. Grandeur wasn't necessary, because 60 years ago that is where the magic happened, plain and simple.

The following day was a stark contrast to my nighttime visit to the recording studio. The sun shone brightly as I waited in line to tour Elvis' home, Graceland. The mansion and estate were every bit the grandiose home that I had imagined.

As I explored the mansion that Elvis called home, I was guided by an audio tour. At times, recordings of Lisa Marie describing memories of her father came over the headset. With much passion, she described the charitable side that made Elvis so much more than just a musician.

At other points in the tour, audio and video recordings of the King himself were included. Standing in the office out behind his house, I watched a video of an interview Elvis had in that very room. It was almost like he was really there.

From the time I was a budding Elvis fan, I've always had a twinge of sadness that I never had

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the chance to see him live. However, he left such an impact that I can always count on family, friends and even strangers who did have the opportunity to see him perform to share their experience, because it was always unforgettable.

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