

FORUM

But ... What of Those on Whose Shoulders Elvis Rocked?

Last week, through a medley of events and a diverse array of written articles — not to mention radio and television shows — a significant segment of the American population memorialized the living spirit and the final curtain call of Elvis Presley. Most of what was said and done to refresh our collective recall of the 20th anniversary of the death of the King of Rock and Roll focused on how he made women — those young

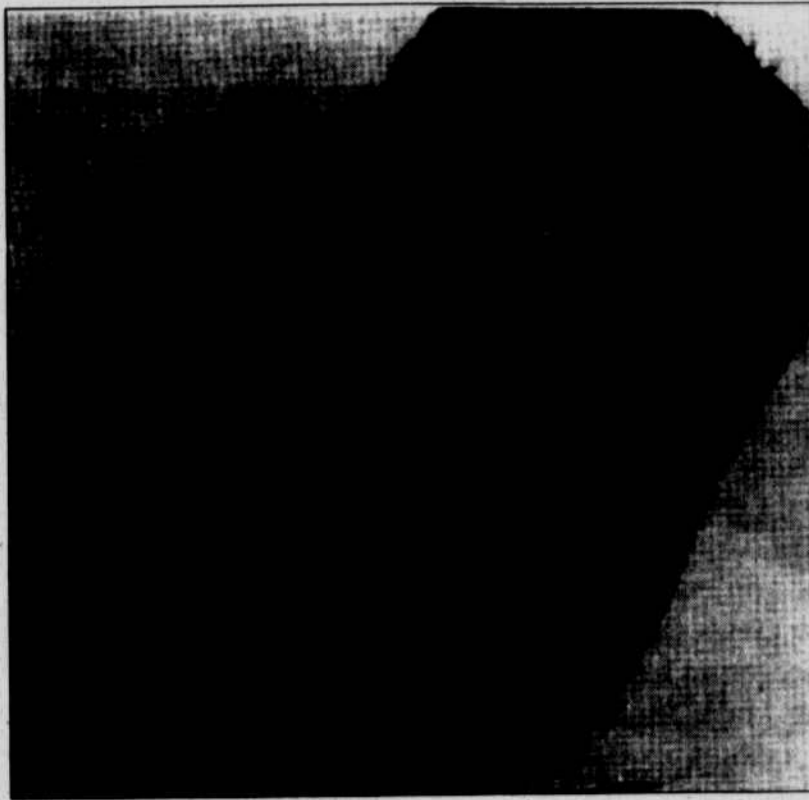


and not-so-young — go weak in the knees. Seems that more than a few 50s-era parents — more specifically those in white households — feared Elvis Presley as the ultimate in-house sum and substance of romantic sensuality, sexuality, and sin. Hide the young maidens; and, if Ed Sullivan "must" have him on television, show him from waist-up camera angles only, thank you.

In the 1950s racial integration was the red-button issue. Elvis Presley stepped into a Memphis, Tenn., studio and out stepped the integration of "snow-white" country music and "darkly black" rhythm and blues.

Though now romantically honored, in the beginning of his career, Elvis, according to the old guard cultural gatekeepers, was nothing more than a handsome-faced, two-bit, vulgar, rebel rockabilly.

Elvis and his music had this "image" problem because he was so clearly and so heavily influenced by southern black rhythm and blues. His (and their) approach to music was essentially a very independent and spirited



defiance of straight-laced (Nashville) musical and social norms.

Like the black artists he idolized and imitated, Elvis and his music symbolized an unconstrained, separate and alternative lifestyle. But, like those artists from whom he took his cues, Elvis, in his music, also kept faithfulness to church, home, mother and apple pie.

The King of Rock and Roll was born into poverty in Tupelo. Not far

away, another cultural icon — the King of the Blues — B.B. King, was born in Indianola, Miss. Toward the end of his life, Elvis — although extremely wealthy — was ever mindful of his poor origins. Elvis matured on a constant diet of gospel (he was Pentecostal) and blues music, both of which he took freely from up and down Beale Street in Memphis, where he grew up.

In the heart of Elvis' music were the harmonies of Mississippi John Hurt, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Bessie Smith, Leadbelly, Ma Rainey, and Big Mama Thornton. From Big Mama, he borrowed "You Ain't Nothin' But a Hounddog." His lavish dress and stage presence were hand-me-downs, pre-owned by Little Richard.

In the Memphis of Elvis' boyhood, what is now Graceland was once the workstation of the slave fiddlers and banjo pickers whose reels and buck dances were spread throughout northern Mississippi. He learned well from the ebony-faced street criers who peddled their goods with melodious chants along the muddy and dirt-laden footpaths of New Orleans, Jackson and Birmingham.

Not only on Elvis, but on countless white musicians, the aristocrats of ebony Southern music have been exceedingly influential, yet far less so than the credit they deserve. But Hank Williams, Maybelle Carter of the famous Carter family, and Bill Monroe (the father of bluegrass) all have admitted the power and effect of black Southern music on them.

From Elvis Presley to Bob Dylan to the Rolling Stones, we need to understand that the very history of modern popular music — including rap — stands on the shoulders of those who lightened their field labor through their music.

In the future, when we pay homage to Elvis, we should remember and love all of those on whose shoulders he rocked. Let's do so tenderly.

(Bill Turner is a freelance columnist for The Chronicle.)

Some Sites You Just Have to See

"When thou enter a city, abide by its customs."
— The Talmud

Jamaica is one of my favorite places to visit. It has beautiful blue green water, attractions like Dunns River Falls and jerked pork and curried goat. When you visit a destination you like, you want to share it with others, so they can visit and enjoy the experience also.

Several weeks ago, I invited readers to "get on the bus" and join me on the information superhighway. Some of you did just that. An acquaintance from years ago wrote from New Jersey and could sympathize about the forgotten passwords. "It probably is age — we're contemporaries," he said. I also received an online greeting card encouraging me to continue writing in this space. And this one nailed it on the head: "You sound like a new Internet addict (publishing your e-mail in the paper). Some people will do anything to get mail." She's right!

I am back on the net, and my wife is trying to stop me before I surf again!

One of the benefits of surfing and sharing web sites with others is you develop a list of favorite places that you visit repeatedly.

Like Jamaica, I recommend you spend some time at the following locations. Maybe they will become your favorite places too.

INTERNET ROADMAP

<http://rs.interic.net/nic-support/roadmap96/>

This is a web and e-mail-based course on Internet tools. It is self-paced and you progress at your own speed. There are 27 lessons and "Map-Extras" written for beginners and delivered in an easy-to-follow, entertaining style.

The Washington Post endorsed the site and said, "If you're looking for a free, easy way to learn about the Internet, look no further." The first lesson is an introduction to the Internet. Did you know both



Motivational Moments

Nigel Alston

the Internet and the Interstate highway system were designed for the same basic purpose? They were designed to enable and to secure the flow of military "stuff."

FAST COMPANY

<http://www.fastcompany.com/>

Fast Company is a relatively new magazine whose mission is to define the new world of business and capture the spirit of those who are making it happen. The current issue available at newsstands and online features an outstanding article by Tom Peters, "The Brand Called You." You can go directly to this story at <http://www.brandyou.com>.

The site contains business "how-to" articles, an online discussion area for readers to discuss a broad range of issues affecting business and future forums featuring conferences and seminars.

EDUCATION WEEK on the WEB

American Educators online newspaper of record
<http://www.edweek.org/>

If you are interested in education or educational issues, you will enjoy this site. There are seven channels to choose from, Education Week, In Context, The Archives, Teacher Magazine, The Daily News, Special Reports, and Products and Services. There are also numerous links to other education sites on the web (Best of the Web).

For example, the In Context channel includes background papers on key education topics, facts and articles about each state and education jargon in layman's terms.

I recently read and printed several articles on the "integration vs. Neighborhood school debate (another column). They are interesting, informative, insightful and always point you toward additional articles or related sites.

These are just a few of my favorite places. If you are like me, sometimes you will be in an area and wish someone else could see the site or think of a person who would enjoy it. The next best thing to them being there is to e-mail the area to them as a "hyperlink." Want to know about it? Visit Roadmap 96!

I hope you enjoy my favorite places! And yes, I'll do anything to get mail, so e-mail me at nalston237@aol.com about your experiences and favorite locations.

Signing off for now.

(Editor's note: Nigel Alston submits his column by e-mail.)

(Nigel Alston is an executive for Integon Insurance Company.)

CANCER

from page A1

pinpoint why a young African-American like Eric Davis would develop colon cancer in his youth and strength; why the prostate cancer incidence rate is some 35 percent higher for black males than for white males; or why African-American women have a higher breast cancer mortality rate than white women.

At the center of the new effort to answer these and other puzzling questions about minority cancer rates is one of the most talented and knowledgeable African Americans in the cancer field. Dr. Otis Brawley has devoted a career to designing clinical trials, to making updated technology and treatments available to people of lower socioeconomic status, and to researching prostate cancer. As the former Senior Investigator in the NCI Division of Cancer Prevention and Control and program director for the

Prostate Cancer Prevention Trial, Dr. Brawley will help move us forward with his professionalism, expertise and sensitivity on this issue.

The Special Populations office at NCI is part of a broader array of strategies to fight cancer for everyone, including a \$400 million increase in funding for NCI since 1993; quicker approval of cancer drugs, as well as expanded access to promising new therapies; and the toughest anti-tobacco initiative in American history to kick Joe Camel and the Marlboro Man out of our children's lives.

Our efforts to combat minority cancer extend to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which is helping to track minority cancer rates and actively recruit minorities for clinical trials. The CDC has also played a major role in fighting breast and cervical cancers in minority communities, having provided funding to help 1.2 million uninsured and underinsured low-income women — about half of them minorities — receive mammograms and Pap tests in a six-year period through

September 1996.

More than 136,000 African Americans will be diagnosed with cancer this year alone. Precious African-American children should not face a greater threat than their white counterparts of losing a parent to cancer early, or never knowing their grandparents because of cancer's reach. And no child should ever come into the world at greater risk of having their own lives and dreams cut short by cancer, simply because of the color of their skin.

I know that Dr. Brawley, with the full resources of the National Cancer Institute behind him, will help us close the gap for African-American children and make the future more promising for all children and their families.

(Donna E. Shalala is a member of the President's Cabinet as U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services.)

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