

The Daily Utah Chronicle - Page Eight

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The somewhat sad tale of a mail clerk and his devotion to a messenger of love: Elvis

For as long as I can remember, I've been a fan of Elvis Presley, the King. As many others, I firmly believe his death was faked after he helped the FBI bust an international ring of con-artists. I also believe that he has spent the past decade traveling the highways of our nation helping those in need with an almost magical presence.

I followed the King's progress in the supermarket tabloids, primary among them the Weekly World News. But over the past couple of years, changes occurred in my life to make me think otherwise of the Living Legend of Rock 'n' Roll, changes that would lead me into the heat of darkness and bring me out the other side a changed man.

It's a tale all can benefit from hearing, a tale of how the King changed, not how the King saved my life and taught me how to overcome the inhumanity of the human race as a whole.

I began when I spent a summer searching for the King in the wilds and small towns of Wyoming, Arby's managers and 7-Eleven clerks looked at me blankly, and cops threatened to lock me up for waiting their time—no one had seen the King recently. Hell, no one even knew anyone who had seen the King.

And then an earth-shattering story appeared in the Weekly World News. The paper my hunting-deer-beer-drinking buddy Clyde claims is the only publication that dares tell the truth about what's really going on in this world.

"ELVIS REBORN!" the headline blazed across the two-page spread. Beneath it, apparent proof of the King's final demise was presented in the form of a story on 4-year-old Bruno Hernandez who "sang the King's smash hits...without ever having heard them," "buried out the name Priscilla, Elvis' wife, without knowing why" and "fell ill on the anniversary of Elvis' death and stayed sick for a week." As if all of this wasn't proof enough, there is an uncanny resemblance between the little Hawaiian-Mexican tyke and Elvis at the same age. Furthermore, renowned psychic, paranormal researcher and Elvis expert, Andy Reiss swore that "Bruno Hernandez is being guided by Elvis' spirit. He is Elvis reborn!"

Despite Clyde's assurances to the contrary, I had a hard time believing the story—or rather, I didn't want to believe the story. But less than a month later,



Karl Steven
Chronicle Mail Clerk

Reiss, once again in the News, claimed to have found Elvis' secret, unmarked grave. And I had to face up to what seemed like an undeniable truth. After a week of deep depression, I admitted the King was gone.

And then I got on with my life as best I could. Everything was okay for a while. I could once again function at my job in the Daily Utah Chronicle mail room, and I even turned in a story or two for the Feature section. I went out on a few dates. It began to dawn on me how much time I had wasted searching for a man long dead, as a whole new world opened up for me.

But then the Elvis sightings started again. In the July 23 issue of the News, eight people gave testimony claiming to have seen the King. My spirit was thrown into turmoil. How could this be? How could Elvis be both alive and dead? Which account was correct?

After much mental anguish, I decided to let the King rest. Even Clyde was afraid that the crack staff at the News had been suckered in by an elaborate hoax by an unscrupulous Elvis impersonator. To soothe my troubled spirit, I headed for the mountains last weekend—only to learn upon my return that Elvis had been spotted again—on Greek Row!

University of Utah students Chris Eggett and Shane Larsen came into the Chronicle to report they had seen Elvis at a party at the Kappa Sigma house Saturday night. Naturally, we all laughed it off, assuming it was a big joke. But there was still that glimmer of hope in my mind, hope that the King might still be alive, so I convinced Assistant Feature Editor Tamara Williams to help me interview the pair.

Eggett and Larsen's tale was quite outlandish. The reason they had been able to recognize the King was because he wasn't trying to be incognito at all. In fact, he was trying to be as visible as possible.

According to Eggett and Larsen, Elvis showed up on Greek Row, wearing all white and a short cape, looking like he did during his Las Vegas days (only much trimmer—as if he had been working out). He was singing lines from his famous hits, and girls were lining up in front of the Kappa Sigma house to kiss him.

Later that evening, Larsen claimed to first having seen the King help fight the fire at the Sigma Chi house. "I'm sure there would have been a lot more damage if the King hadn't been there," Larsen said. Afterward, Elvis was seen at the Pie Pizzeria eating pizza and drinking beer.

I was convinced. My heart soared. Yet, at the same time, I felt foolish for ever having doubted the King still lived. But Tamara was much more level-headed than I.

"Had you been drinking?" she asked the two. They admitted they had, but still stood firm that they had seen the King, describing him as "dashing." And then they revealed they had a photo of the King, standing in front of the Pie, a photo they were going to bring by later.

I waited with bated breath for them to bring the photo, passing the time by punching out Feature Editor Steven Miller for suggesting that Elvis might have been the one who set the fire. I was feeling light-headed when the pair brought the photo. I took it with trembling hands, and stared at it with blurring vision.

And found that the so-called King looked about as much like Elve as my Aunt Mavis does. My elation fled, and I fell into a depression darker than I had when I became convinced the King was dead. I left the office and went home to watch Viva Las Vegas.

But no sooner had I put the tape in the VCR before I became furious. How dare those two boys make light of the King? The greatest rock 'n' roller of all time deserved to be revered, not ridiculed. And then there was my own, emotionless, to consider—someone needed to show those two that they shouldn't treat people that way. I was getting my AK-47 out of see "Elvis" on page nine.



The existential critic

By Emily M. Coonan
Chronicle Art Critic

A six-foot tall stalk of celery towers over the viewer, dominating the gray walls of the Union Gallery. This verdant vegetable stands out as the most unique image among a garden of works by U. Alumni Mary Lou Romney.

The impact of this lone vegetable painting is due not only to its immense size, but to its subtle metamorphoses into a giraffe, that's right, a giraffe, who munches on the lush green vegetation, which once was a part of him, and soon will be again.

The textural treats and light layered washes in this acrylic giant add to the success of this predominantly green painting.

It becomes more difficult to critique the rest of the show because of an ingrained resistance to "flower paintings" pounded into the halls of my thoughts by haughty art professors, who choose to separate fine art from art that is created with an intention to make a profit. I am not testifying that Romney created her paintings with this in mind, but the seemingly innocent subject has stirred a chasm of emotion.

Oh dear elitist Art God, shall I sacrifice my suffering artist's soul in the name of profit? (Please inject a note of sarcasm here.)

I react to the "flower paintings" as one of Pavlov's dogs would salivate at the sound of the bell. Rejection has been inbred through an aristocratic art education, one that often ignores reality, constantly testing artists so that only 50 of the original 200 finish the program.

Can there be some benefit in this process of selection? I suppose it will separate the degree seekers from the dabblers, but in the end, only 12 percent of the 50 graduates work in art related fields. So, we ask why.

The issues of art—right and wrong—exist universally and personally, but when all is said

and done, art for the maker and the viewer, is a matter of personal choice.

We can criticize, accept, and/or reject "til the cows come home, but in a public forum this action must be executed and understood from a formal artistically critical viewpoint, barring personal projection as best as possible. How is this objective state achieved in a seemingly subjective field?

When a person puts their art in a public venue, it is on the chopping block, but how can one decapitate a naked soul? This overreaction does not mean that a flower painting cannot be a beautiful, true expression of the artist's purest nature. But this is where the difficulty lies. For me, it is not subject matter, composition, color, draftsmanship, rhythm or media that make the art speak to me, but that intangible substance called spirit.

All of the above components can assemble and the art will still be lacking if the artist was not present (in spirit) at the time of it's creation. A masterpiece that would be one that was created in an exalted, intuitive, or emotional state, which would include some of the formal elements listed above to generate a harmony that would enlighten each and every viewer to the level of consciousness where the artist had resided during creation.

The question is, how often do we stumble across art that moves us? I suppose that depends upon personal expectations, projections, experiences, and vulnerability at the time of viewing.

The masterpieces which I seek are few and far between, especially in this profit motivated race in which we run. The lure of cash almost inevitably distorts motivation of pure expression.

Okay, Mary Lou Romney, forgive me for this tangent which is and is not related to you and your art. Your art makes many people happy. I, too, have gained from the rich, fiery composition of "Begonias." The details of your watercolor pencil, express the dimensionality and texture, that may not have been possible without your full presence at the time of creation. The varying tones, blending of shades and "popping out" of highlights are pleasing.

The loose, tropical bouquet has see "watercolor" on page nine

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