

CANINE CORNER

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Dogs of Graceland

No visit to Tennessee is complete without a visit to Elvis Presley's Graceland mansion in Memphis. Elvis purchased Graceland in 1957 at the age of just 22 using the proceeds from the first year of his stellar and rising musical career.

Dogs are probably not the first thing you associate with Elvis Presley. If asked, most people would probably think of his hit song, 'You Ain't Nothing But a Hound Dog'. Originally recorded by Big Mama Thornton in 1952, Elvis' version was recorded in 1956, going on to sell over 10 million copies.

When Presley performed 'Hound Dog' on TV's *The Milton Berle Show*, his gyrations caused quite a stir. Young people loved it; critics and many in the adult population were morally outraged not only by what they saw as sexually explicit dancing, but also the 'black music' lyrics. This performance is widely regarded as a piece of television history.

When Elvis was asked to perform the song on TV again a month later, on *The Steve Allan Show*, it came with clear instructions that there was to be no dancing or movement. Dressed in a tuxedo, a stiff-looking Elvis serenaded a Basset Hound sporting a top hat and bow-tie collar. If you're interested, you can view these performances after a quick search on YouTube.

According to Graceland archivists, Elvis had a number of dogs over the years.

He owned a Basset Hound named Sherlock, Great Danes named Brutus and Snoopy, and Edmund, a Pomeranian who he gave to his Aunt Delta. He also gifted a small dog named Sweet Pea to his mother, Gladys, in 1956. In 1962, when Priscilla was visiting from Germany, he gave her a Poodle puppy named Honey.

Elvis spared no expense on most things in his life and that included his dogs. When Get Lo, a Chow, was suffering from a kidney condition, the dog was flown on Elvis' smaller plane, *The Hound Dog II*, to Boston for treatment.

Graceland also has a few bits of dog memorabilia if you take the time to look.

Elvis signed with record label RCA in late 1955; the label used a version of *His Master's Voice*, Francis Barraud's 1898 painting featuring a dog named Nipper, as its logo. Colonel Tom Parker, Elvis' manager, used a desk pen featuring the Nipper dog which has been preserved in the Graceland collection.

Dogs adorned Elvis' upstairs office at Graceland. Although the upstairs of Graceland is off limits to visitors, items from the top floor have been preserved in the museum collections.

On top of Elvis' desk was a German Shepherd pen holder and next to the desk was a life-sized Afghan Hound statue. 🐾

