

# Helen Marketti's Music Corner



By Helen R.  
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## Elvis & Graceland

An interview with Angie Marchese, Vice President of Archives and Exhibits at Graceland.

Angie admits that she has one of the coolest jobs and many would agree. She has worked at Graceland for over 30 years. Her first job at Graceland was as a tour guide when she was a teenager and she loved it so much, she never left. Angie recently took some time to discuss her role at Graceland, the legacy of Elvis Presley and why overseeing 1.5 MILLION artifacts is not only important but also fun.



Angie reflects on what it is like to work with a collection that belonged to such an iconic figure. "It makes you feel connected. Even though I never met Elvis, I feel connected to him and to his legacy. Everything in the collection is personal and has a deeper meaning. It connects you to a person, a human being. Elvis is still gaining new fans because he is still so relevant. Yes, he has great songs. Yes, he made great movies. Yes, he put on wonderful

performances. However, here is a man who always kept an authenticity about himself and that's what people fall in love with. He was genuine."

1.5 million artifacts make for changing exhibits "easy" as there are always items to choose from.

"Graceland is a time capsule and it is sealed, meaning its left the way it was when Elvis lived there," explains Angie. "The visitor's complex is what I consider my playground as we have 90 thousand square feet to work with. I try to think of exhibits that may be interesting for our visitors. One of our recent exhibits is called, "Dressed to



Rock" which has over 100 pieces of Elvis's stage wear represented from 1969 to 1977. And out of all of the artifacts, I do have a favorite. It's Elvis's wallet. It's because it is so personal. Inside his wallet is a picture of he and his daughter, Lisa. He also has business cards in the

wallet, a movie ticket stub and a newspaper clipping of when he earned a black belt in karate. This is what makes him human."

At the writing of this article, the movie, ELVIS is surging through theatres, capturing attention, hearts and emotional tears around the world. It is a phenomenal story of Elvis and his manager, Colonel Tom Parker. Elvis is portrayed by actor, Austin Butler and Colonel is portrayed by actor, Tom Hanks. The film, directed by Baz Luhrmann has given an adrenaline rush to Elvis fans and gathering up millions of new fans who are discovering him for the first time. Angie was able to introduce Austin to Elvis by way of many special items at Graceland. "The first trip that Austin made to Graceland, it was just he and Baz," said Angie. "We had met with them and discussed the concept of the movie. I had the privilege of walking Austin through Graceland after hours. I was explaining the history, showing him the house so he could take his time to absorb

where Elvis lived. Graceland isn't just a house however, it's a home. It has character and a distinct feeling. I took Austin through the archives and pulled out random boxes of items for him to see. We were going through hats, pants, shirts, coats, etc... I was sharing the history of the items."

She continues, "Austin wanted me to email him everything we had of Elvis talking or performing. We became fast email pals. He wanted to dive into who Elvis was and get to know him on a human level, not only the icon. It's easy to know the star and what their onstage persona is as an entertainer but you also need to know who they are behind all of that. That's the Elvis I feel connected to and that's the Elvis that Austin wanted to connect with as well during his research."

Since the Colonel was such a big part of Elvis's life and career, would there happen to be any artifacts that belonged to Colonel Tom Parker? "In the early 90s, we acquired Colonel's collection," said Angie. "He had moved from Madison, Tennessee to permanently live in Las Vegas. The house he left behind in Madison was full of his life. He not only had items from his career with Elvis but also when he worked with Eddy Arnold and Hank Snow. There were also items that belonged to his wife, Marie. We were able to acquire the entire collection. The unique thing about having these belongings is that we can tell Elvis's personal life story at Graceland and we can tell his professional life and his time with Colonel Tom Parker. It tells a complete story. I am honored to work at Graceland and be part of Elvis's legacy in some small way. Elvis was always true to who he was as a person. He still commands the room."

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