



Welcome to Rott's Manor

Pete & Mary Clukey

Memphis 2007 Trip Report

5/25/2007 (Friday) –

Just as soon as Mary got off work, Pete drove us from Ball Ground straight to Nashville. The only stop was for dinner at Captain D's just before crossing into Tennessee. We arrived at the Thrifty Inn around 10pm.

5/26/2007 (Saturday) –

We got up at 7am, ate the continental breakfast included in our room at Thrifty Inn (bagels, cereal, etc.), fueled up the car, and then drove to Memphis. We stopped just once at a rest area stop on the way.

Our first stop in Memphis was to find lunch. Our target location was somewhere on Poplar Street but Mary didn't know at what end. So, Pete drove us down Poplar Street in search of Corky's BBQ (<http://www.corkysmemphis.com/>); Mary had the yummy ribs, Pete had a BBQ sandwich. Service was pretty good. Corky's will ship their ribs anywhere and we are definitely considering ordering from them sometime in the future.

After Corky's, we found a parking space near Beale Street in one of the side road parking lots. We walked down Beale Street, and stopped at Rum Boogie Café (<http://www.rumboogie.com/>) for a cold one and a look around at all the guitars. We struck up a conversation with another couple at the bar about Memphis hot spots.

Then it was off for a tour of the Gibson guitar factory (<http://www.gibsonshowcase.com/bealestreet/thefactory.html>). Our lead guide was "new" but we had a very knowledgeable guide assisting at the rear of our tour making sure that nothing was missed.

After the Gibson factory tour, we went to the Rock -n- Soul museum (<http://www.memphisrocknsoul.org/home.htm/>), very informative. We watched a short intro movie and then were issued an audio set and headphones for the self guided tour. I think we spent a little over an hour in this small museum.

After this we rode on the cable car to the waterfront and back to Beale Street. We didn't get off at the waterfront, there was a big festival going on and it even had an air show going on that we enjoyed watching from the cable car.

Before dark Pete wanted to get his car moved from the side street parking lot to the more secure parking garage of the hotel, so we checked into the Double Tree. The staff was very friendly and paid attention to details. Our room was wonderful, although the desk lamp was broken when we arrived.

We didn't come here to hang out in the hotel, so off we go back to Beale Street. There was a lot going on. Music coming from several bars, but the place that got our attention was the band in the park. The band was good. We listened for a little while and when the band took a break we decided it was time to go look for some dinner.

Neither of us was very hungry but we had to eat something... and boy did we find *something*. Dyer's is a burger joint on Beale Street with lots of history... you might even say history you can taste! The "secret" ingredient is their grease in the fryer. You just gotta read the story: <http://www.roadfood.com/Reviews/Writeup.aspx?ReviewID=1251&RefID=1251>

Well, with tummy full of "I can't believe I just ate that"... we went back to see if the band was still playing, and they were. We listened for a little while longer then Mary thought that it would be nice to have a few photos and she didn't have her camera with her, so we walked the few blocks back to our hotel to get the camera, and then walked back to Beale Street. When we got back to Beale Street it was packed, the festival at the river had let out and now everyone was on Beale Street. We had a great time. The band was still playing. We got a couple of beers and hung out listening until it got pretty late. Back at the hotel it didn't take long to fall asleep.

5/27/2007 (Sunday) –

The alarm went off early... and we were up and running. A quick walk back to Beale Street to take a picture of Dyer's during the quiet morning hours. Nothing on Beale Street is open and there is hardly anyone around. So, we walked back towards our hotel to eat breakfast at Denny's which was just down the street across from the Peabody Hotel.

After breakfast Mary ran over to see when the famous ducks would make their entrance. It wasn't for another hour, and we really didn't want to hang around.

We checked out of the Double Tree and drove to Sun Records. The tour was booked and another one wasn't going to go for another hour, so we didn't take the tour. But we had a great time looking around the gift store and all of the wall displays.

Next we were off to the riverfront park called Mud Island (<http://www.mudisland.com/>). But first we had to drive across the bridge crossing the Mississippi River and thus adding the state of Arkansas to our little road trip. We filled up with the cheap Arkansas gas (it was less expensive and of lesser quality we found out later when the Mustang started to knock). Then we crossed back over the bridge back into Tennessee. On Mud Island there is a scale model of the Mississippi River. It is very well done. Pete placed a soda cap (our boat) into the start of the river and we followed it most of the way down. There

was a lot of information provided; we certainly did not allot enough time to spend here. It was lunch time already and we haven't yet made it to Graceland.

We leave Mud Island and drive to the Heartbreak Hotel (<http://www.elvis.com/>) at the end of Lonely Street. We purchased a hotel tour package online and while it is too early to check into our room we have to stop by the hotel to pick up our tour vouchers for Graceland mansion. The first surprise was the front row parking that Pete found. The second surprise was that our room was ready. Since daylight was burning, we didn't even look at our room.

From the hotel we walked to the Rock -n- Roll Café for lunch. Not quite in the mood for a peanut butter and banana fried sandwich (one of Elvis' favorites), so Mary had a cheese steak sandwich and Pete had a turkey sub. The onion rings were awesome here. This is such a bad trip for trying to stay on any kind of healthy diet.

Then we're off to see Graceland (<http://www.elvis.com/>). First stop the ticket line, where the announcement tells of an hour and half wait to tour the mansion. We were a little confused as to which line we were suppose to stand in, the long line or short VIP line... because of the package bought online we got to go to the short line. At the window we were told with our package there would be no wait to tour the mansion, we just had to get in the line for the minibus. There were three buses running guest across the street to the mansion, so the wait was not bad at all. Just before boarding the bus we were given an audio guide and headset. The self guided tour of the mansion and grounds took us a good hour and half, maybe two hours. There are lots of "Elvis" things on display. The tour concludes with a stroll through the meditation garden where Elvis and his parents are buried.

After the mansion tour, we strolled through Elvis' auto museum. The auto museum is not too big but has some neat features; Mary's favorite was the "Drive-In Movie Theater". There are several cars from his movies on display. Highlights include Elvis's famous 1955 Pink Cadillac, 1956 purple Cadillac convertible, 1973 Stutz Blackhawk, the red MG Elvis drove in Blue Hawaii, and his Harley Davidson motorcycles.

Then we went onto the Sincerely Elvis museum; 56 of Elvis's jumpsuits (stage outfits) from some of his major concerts. I had no idea what one could do with rhinestones and some imagination.

After the jumpsuits, we toured two of Elvis' airplanes. This tour starts off in an airport lounge. In the lounge we were told a few stories. One time Elvis realized that his daughter had never played in snow, so they all boarded the jet and flew to Denver where Lisa Marie played in the snow for an hour before they all boarded the jet and returned to Memphis. Exiting the lounge to the tarmac, we first toured the larger of the two jets, a Convair 880 called the Lisa Marie. For Pete the highlight was the Lockheed JetStar, the Hound Dog II. Pete is an unofficial Lockheed historian.

The last tour of the day was to Elvis After Dark. By this time we were saturated with all things Elvis. It was a great afternoon with tons of information and stories. Did you know Elvis collected police badges? There was one badge that was difficult for Elvis to obtain; it required a meeting with President Nixon. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/elvis/elnix.html> One interesting story related to that meeting was on the way to Washington, Elvis' friend traveling with him had \$1000 cash. That was all the money that they had with them for their stay in DC. On the commercial flight to DC, there were service men returning for two weeks leave. Elvis told his friend to give him the money and then he gave it all to the service men. His friend was a little upset, since that was all the money they had, but at the same time his friend said "that was Elvis"; he would always give money to those in need.

After a busy afternoon, we returned to the Heart Break Hotel. Our room was quite nice. It was a two room suite. We plopped down on the loveseat and turned on the 24 hour all Elvis movie channel. Hawaiian Paradise was playing. We had planned on a 7:30 dinner but instead we just hung out on the loveseat until the end of the movie. By the end of the movie, we were quite hungry. Tonight's dinner was going to be "special". Marlowe's (<http://marlowesmemphis.com/>) sends a pink limo to pick guests up free of charge. We had a full limo of hotel guests going to Marlowe's. Marlowe's is a BBQ place about a mile from the hotel. We shared a rack of ribs. It was good, maybe not as good as Corky's, but this place did have character. After dinner, we were the only ones ready to go back to the hotel, so it was a private ride back.

Back in our room we once again took up our spot on the loveseat and watched more Elvis movies. It was not long before Mary was out cold.

5/28/2007 (Monday) –

The alarm was set for 7am. This morning we went over to the meditation garden at Graceland (<http://www.elvis.com/>) where Elvis and his parents are buried. The gates to Graceland are open between 7:30am – 8:30am for visitation, a classy thing to do, I think, for Presley Enterprise to allow free visitation.

After our stroll through the meditation garden, Mary wanted to get a few pictures of the heart shaped pool at the hotel before it became full of people. So, even before stopping for breakfast we quickly visited the pool area for a few pictures.

The Heart Break Hotel includes a deluxe continental breakfast for its guest. We enjoyed bagels, muffins, and a southern favorite biscuits and sausage gravy.

After breakfast it was time to check out. But first we were hoping to catch the housekeeping staff cleaning one of the themed rooms, so we wandered the hallways. No such luck. The theme rooms are booked months in advance and no one has yet checked out. But, we did get to take a look out the window of one of the rooms with a nice pool view.

Our next stop is 2 ½ hours away in Tupelo, Mississippi. Tupelo is where Elvis and his twin brother, Jesse, were born. The two bedroom house (<http://www.elvispresleybirthplace.com/>) is still there and has been set up as a museum. In addition to the house, there is a museum, chapel, gift store, and a car on display. The car is the same make/model that the Presleys loaded up and used to move to Memphis. After about 45 minutes here it was time to go find lunch. The lady at the ticket desk told us that her favorite place to recommend was closed for the holiday, but she gave us directions to the mall, where we found a Chili's for lunch. Pete had some quesadillas and Mary trying to make up for the diet disaster weekend had a fish entree.

After lunch, it's another 2 ½ hours 'til we get to Birmingham, Alabama our next stop. We found out the world's largest cast iron sculpture is in Birmingham. Well, we just had to see it. Vulcan Park (<http://www.visitvulcan.com/>) has a museum dedicated to the iron industry and the refurbishment of the cast iron sculpture of the Greek God Vulcan. We rode the elevator up to the base of the sculpture. This was a pretty neat stop.

Just a few more hours on the road and we will be back in the home territory of Atlanta. We take I-20 from Birmingham to Atlanta, on the way passing the NASCAR track of Talladega.

Just before crossing into Georgia, we are reminded of just how dry it has been in the south this year. There is a forest fire right next to the highway. Visibility is obstructed by the thick dark gray smoke. Fortunately it wasn't a big fire and we passed it quickly.

All day long we had thoughts of the familiar places that we wanted to go to for dinner tonight, but we were not going to make it to any of them before they closed. So, with still about an hour to go before we get home we stopped for dinner at Olive Garden. We had a good dinner. As we were telling our waiter about the road trip we just took, a young man at the booth right next to us said that he is from Memphis. He wanted to know how we liked his city. This just emphasized the friendly attitude that we felt permeated Memphis. Everywhere we went people were enthusiastic about sharing their city's culture and special places.

The final hour of our journey went by quickly and without incident. We're always thankful when we get through "Atlanta" without traffic backups. And it's always nice when we pull into our driveway and find our house in the same condition that we left it. I think we got home around 9:30pm... plenty of time to unpack and relax. It was a great trip and we can't wait to get back to Memphis.