



# Wood River Elvis Impersonator Continues Late Singer's Legacy 46 Years After His Death

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter  
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WOOD RIVER - Steve Davis, a long time Elvis Presley impersonator from Wood River, recently reflected on his journey to becoming internationally recognized as Elvis on stages around the world. Today - August 16, 2023 - marks the 46th anniversary of Elvis's death, and the 49th year of Davis performing as him.

"I make my living for the last 49 years as Elvis on stage in a variety of large and small venues," Davis said. "I do about 500 shows a year."

Like Elvis himself, Davis spent some time in the U.S. Army - but unlike Elvis, Davis served before performing on stage. Elvis entered the U.S. Army [in 1958](#), two years after his hit singles "Don't Be Cruel," "Love Me Tender," and his cover of Big Mama Thornton's "Hound Dog," peaked at #1 on the Billboard Pop charts.

For Davis, an abrupt end to his military service is what sent him on the path to become The King.

"I was a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army, and I was stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia," Davis said. "I had a small daughter and a wife, and they pulled me into the orderly room one day and they said, 'Lieutenant, we have bad news and good news.'"

Davis said the "bad news" was that the U.S. Congress had just cut 49,000 slots of active duty service members and Davis wouldn't have a job in the next 40 days. The "good news" was that they were willing to pay for Davis to attend a graduate school of his choice. He chose Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, where he received his graduate degree in Cinematography and Animation.

“I came home and I bought the house next door to my mom and dad’s, everybody’s living happily,” Davis said. “My mom goes to me, she says, ‘You’ve always enjoyed impersonating Elvis. Your father and I would like you even if you sucked, but maybe you should see where you stand - maybe you should compete.’”

That year, Davis entered the International Elvis Impressionism Competition in Memphis, Tennessee - his first time officially competing as an Elvis impersonator - and won.

“There were 500 Elvises in competition,” he said. “At the end of the week, I won.”

Davis received a certificate and a 45-week gig at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas. He went on to perform as Elvis all around the world, including in London, on cruise lines, and more.

“I did 10 weeks in London, I did 30 weeks on Carnival Cruise Lines, I did 45 weeks at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas, I play in Branson, Missouri, I play in South Padre Island, Texas, wherever they have me,” he said. “Plus, I do 500 nursing homes in five states.”

Elvis died on today’s date, August 16, 46 years ago in 1977. According to the [website](#) for Graceland, Elvis’s home-turned-museum and burial site, he “passed away due to heart failure August 16, 1977, at Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee” at the age of 42.

The full interview with Davis, featuring his most recent performance as Elvis, is available at the top of this story or on [Riverbender.com/video](http://Riverbender.com/video).