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# *A couple from Charles St. puts Elvis on the map*

By Lesley Sussman, *The Villager*, Thursday, January 15, 2015

Photo by Lesley Sussman

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Alan Grossman doesn't wear blue suede shoes or have long sideburns like Elvis did, and his wife, Andrea Shaw, isn't exactly a Priscilla Presley lookalike, as you might expect from two people who are among the world's most devoted Elvis Presley fans.

But looks aside, what they have done to honor the memory of Elvis — to the delight of his millions of fans worldwide — is produce a must-have accessory for the thousands of die-hard Elvis fans who each year visit Graceland and want to see all the sites in town related to the performer's life and times.

Their homage to Elvis is an illustrated map of downtown Memphis that serves as a self-conducted walking tour and is filled with original illustrations and informative anecdotes of where the King of Rock 'n' Roll once lived, worked and played.

This unprecedented paper map — the first map with illustrated landmarks and former locations that lets fans visualize Elvis's life in Memphis — was published in 2013 and sells for \$9.95 at the Graceland gift shop, online ([Memphis-mapforelvisfans.com](http://Memphis-mapforelvisfans.com)) and elsewhere. It features more than 100 hand-drawn sites — some still in existence and others long gone — where Elvis

lived, worked and played.

Fans can visit sites such as the Baptist church where, between 1953 and 1955, Elvis and his then-girlfriend, Dixie Locke, attended evening services to hear gospel music, or the store where the singer and actor bought the furniture that wows visitors when they visit the "Jungle Room" at Graceland. The map is also the first-ever detailed map of the Elvis estate, the Graceland Plaza and the Visitors Center.

So how did Alan, an attorney, and Andrea, a freelance writer, get caught up in all this Elvis madness? Well, it's kind of a long story that begins with the day that Andrea first visited Graceland.

Seated in their Charles St. apartment that has an Elvis cutout and other Presley memorabilia, Andrea is the first to answer the question — and rightly so, since she was the one who came up with the map idea in the first place.

"It started 10 years ago when Alan and I went on Priceline and found a \$38 round-trip ticket to Memphis for the weekend," she said, unable to control her laughter at the memory. "I always wanted to visit Graceland because I had become an Elvis fan.

"So we went there, saw Graceland and walked

around the city a little bit. We walked past Sun Studio and then checked Memphis off our list.”

Andrea paused for a moment, lost in a pleasant memory.

“It was a visceral experience visiting Graceland,” she said. “And if you’ve ever been there, I think you know what I mean.

“Over the next couple of years, I read Peter Guralnick’s two-volume biography on Elvis. That really turned me on and got me so interested in Elvis, that a couple of years after that, I said to Alan, ‘Let’s go back to Memphis and visit these places. I want to see where Elvis dated his girlfriend and where all this stuff happened — where he saw his first records pressed.’ ”

Andrea said that when they returned to the city, they assumed there would be an Elvis map to guide them to the different Elvis locations, like in Hollywood, where there are maps tracing the footsteps of classic movie stars.

“There was no map at all,” she said. “None. Nothing. And that’s what started it.”

It was now Alan’s turn to add to the story.

“You know,” he began, “Elvis changed my life.”

“Not God?” a reporter asked, as laughter shook the room.

“They could be one and the same,” Alan replied jokingly.

“When Elvis came on the scene,” he continued, “I was just about to become a teenager. It was that time of life when the only music on TV was ‘How Much is That Doggy in the Window?’ But when Elvis came along, he broke that little suburban Westchester shell I was in. It introduced me to teenage life in America. I saw stories about dancing and rioting in the streets when he showed up — things like that.”

Alan recalled how he and his family would

watch Elvis on television.

“It just shook up everything,” he said. “And then one Wednesday when my parents went into the city, the babysitter came over and immediately called her boyfriend. He came over with Elvis’s first album, and they danced as my sister and I watched from a corner of the room.

“That was my introduction to girls and sex,” he said. “I discovered there was something bigger out there than my room. I started listening

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to radio and became a big Elvis fan — the way he dressed and everything — and that connected me to a whole different world. But it was Elvis on ‘The Ed Sullivan Show’ crooning ‘Don’t Be Cruel’ that really got me hooked.”

Although Andrea in her earlier years wasn’t as big an Elvis fan as her husband, she got a portent of things to come in her life involving the singer when she agreed to marry Alan. At their wedding reception in 1991, Alan and Andrea eschewed a large floral display, opting instead, at Alan’s urging, for a life-size cutout of Elvis.

“He put a yarmulke on the cutout,” she recalled laughingly. “This was four days before our wedding and it was too late to call it off.”

Alan recalled that when Andrea came up with

the idea for an Elvis map, he thought it was a “brilliant idea.”

“We each were coming at Elvis in different directions,” he said, “and I thought there couldn’t be anything better than this.”

The rest was a lot of hard work, a big investment of their personal savings, lots of time spent finding the right talent to design and illustrate the map — and, finally, great persistence in convincing the Elvis Presley estate to officially license and sell the product.

“There was also an awful lot of research involved,” Andrea noted. “I was reading more than 150 books on Elvis’s life.”

“It was two and a half years of research,” Alan added, “and we were there in Memphis during the research 25 times looking for these sites.”

“A lot of places just weren’t there,” Andrea recalled. “They were just empty lots. We found pictures of the places that were no longer there and had them illustrated for the map.”

With the map now selling very well, having received 100 percent five-star reviews on Amazon and from new and seasoned Elvis fans alike, what’s next for this dynamic duo?

What else but a similar kind of map for visitors to the West Village. •

