

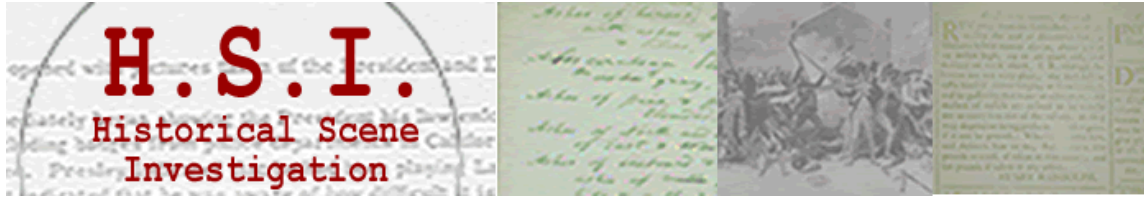
ACTIVE FILE

When Elvis Met Nixon

case ks-02

Case File

Why was a photograph of Elvis Presley and President Richard Nixon taken in December of 1970?



When Elvis Met Nixon

Becoming a Detective



http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/when_nixon_met_elvis/part_1.html

Why was this photograph of Elvis Presley and President Richard Nixon taken in December of 1970?

Investigating the Evidence

There are a series of documents that follow. It is your job to determine the type of evidence included within this file, the credibility of each piece of evidence and how the evidence fits together. Finally, you will be asked to come up with a plausible explanation of why the photograph was taken and how you came to that particular conclusion.

- Document A: Letter from Elvis Presley to President Nixon, December 21, 1970
- Document B: Photo of Nixon and Presely in the Oval Office, December 21, 1970
- Document C: White House agenda for meeting, December 21, 1970
- Document D: White House Memorandum, December 21, 1970

Searching for Clues

Please answer the following questions about each document

1. What type of document is this?
2. Examine any unique physical qualities of the document and make a note of it (e.g. interesting letterhead, Handwritten, Typed, Seals, Notations, "RECEIVED" stamp, etc.)
3. What is the date of the document? Who is the author of the document? For whom was the document written?
4. Why do you think this document was written?
5. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.
6. List one thing the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written.

Cracking the Case

Based on your analysis of the four documents and citing evidence to support your answer, please write a paragraph answering the following question: Why was this photograph of Elvis Presley and President Richard Nixon taken in December of 1970? Please indicate whether you were satisfied with the evidence and list any additional questions that have been left unanswered through your investigation.

Document A

On the morning of December 21, 1970, Elvis Presley personally delivered a letter to the northwest gate of the White House. Written on American Airlines stationery, the five-page letter requested a meeting with President Nixon. Presley intended to present the President with a gift of a World War II-era pistol and obtain for himself the credentials of a federal agent in the war on drugs.

Dear Mr. President.

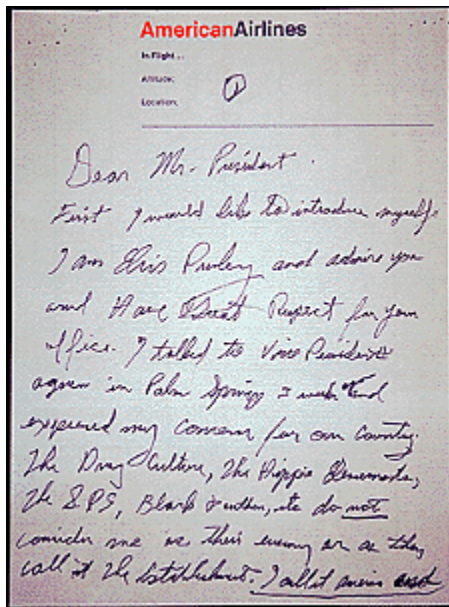
First, I would like to introduce myself. I am Elvis Presley and admire you and have great respect for your office. I talked to Vice President Agnew in Palm Springs three weeks ago and expressed my concern for our country. The drug culture, the hippie elements, the SDS, Black Panthers, etc. do NOT consider me as their enemy or as they call it The Establishment. I call it America and I love it. Sir, I can and will be of any service that I can to help The Country out. I have no concern or Motives other than helping the country out. So I wish not to be given a title or an appointed position. I can and will do more good if I were made a Federal Agent at Large and I will help out by doing it my way through my communications with people of all ages. First and foremost, I am an entertainer, but all I need is the Federal credentials. I am on this plane with Senator George Murphy and we have been discussing the problems that our country is faced with. Sir, I am staying at the Washington Hotel, Room 505-506-507. I have two men who work with me by the name of Jerry Schilling and Sonny West. I am registered under the name of Jon Burrows. I will be here for as long as it takes to get the credentials of a Federal Agent. I have done an in-depth study of drug abuse and Communist brainwashing techniques and I am right in the middle of the whole thing where I can and will do the most good. I am Glad to help just so long as it is kept very Private. You can have your staff or whomever call me anytime today, tonight, or tomorrow. I was nominated this coming year one of America's Ten Most Outstanding Young Men. That will

be in January 18 in my home town of Memphis,
Tennessee. I am sending you the short autobiography
about myself so you can better understand this
approach. I would love to meet you just to say hello
if you're not too busy. Respectfully,
Elvis Presley

P. S. I believe that you, Sir, were one of the Top
Ten Outstanding Men of America also. I have a
personal gift for you which I would like to present
to you and you can accept it or I will keep it for
you until you can take it.

The National Archives. National Archives Building, Washington, DC. [Available through the
online catalog at <http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/>].

Presley's letter was delivered to President Nixon's appointments
secretary, Dwight Chapin. Chapin immediately wrote a memo to the
President's chief of staff H. R. Haldeman requesting time on Nixon's
schedule and outlining the nature of the proposed meeting.



Document B



Photo of Nixon and Presely in the Oval Office, December 21, 1970

Document C

EXECUTIVE
HE5-1
R07-1/P*

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
December 21, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Meeting with Elvis Presley
December 21, 1970
12:30 p. m.

I. PURPOSE

To thank Elvis Presley for his offer to help in trying to stop the drug epidemic in the country, and to ask him to work with us in bringing a more positive attitude to young people throughout the country.

In his letter to you, Elvis Presley offered to help as much as possible with the growing drug problem. He requested the meeting with you this morning when he presented himself to the guard at the Northwest Gate bearing a letter.

II. PARTICIPANTS

Elvis Presley
Bud Krogh (staff)

III. TALKING POINTS

A. We have asked the entertainment industry - both television and radio - to assist us in our drug fight.

B. You are aware that the average American family has 4 radio sets; 98% of the young people between 12 and 17 listen to radio. Between the time a child is born and he leaves high school, it is estimated he watches between 15,000 and 20,000 hours of television. That is more time than he spends in the classroom.

White House agenda for meeting, December 21, 1970

Document C (Cont.)

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- C. The problem is critical: As of December 14, 1970, 1,022 people died this year in New York alone from just narcotic related deaths. 208 of these were teenagers.
- D. Two of youth's folk heroes, Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, recently died within a period of two weeks reportedly from drug-related causes. Their deaths are a sharp reminder of how the rock music culture has been linked to the drug sub-culture. If our youth are going to emulate the rock music stars, from now on let those stars affirm their conviction that true and lasting talent is the result of self motivation and discipline and not artificial chemical euphoria.
- E. Suggestions for Presley activities:
 - 1. Work with White House Staff
 - 2. Cooperate with and encourage the creation of an hour Television Special in which Presley narrates as stars such as himself sing popular songs and interpret them for parents in order to show drug and other anti-establishment themes in rock music.
 - 3. Encourage fellow artists to develop a new rock musical theme, "Get High on Life."
 - 4. Record an album with the theme "Get High on Life" at the federal narcotic rehabilitation and research facility at Lexington, Kentucky.
 - 5. Be a consultant to the Advertising Council on how to communicate anti-drug messages to youth.

White House agenda for meeting, December 21, 1970

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
December 21, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT'S FILE

SUBJECT: Meeting with Elvis Presley
Monday, December 21, 1970
12:30 p. m.

The meeting opened with pictures taken of the President and Elvis Presley.

Presley immediately began showing the President his law enforcement paraphernalia including badges from police departments in California, Colorado and Tennessee. Presley indicated that he had been playing Las Vegas and the President indicated that he was aware of how difficult it is to perform in Las Vegas.

The President mentioned that he thought Presley could reach young people, and that it was important for Presley to retain his credibility. Presley responded that he did his thing by "just singing." He said that he could not get to the kids if he made a speech on the stage, that he had to reach them in his own way. The President nodded in agreement.

Presley indicated that he thought the Beatles had been a real force for anti-American spirit. He said that the Beatles came to this country, made their money, and then returned to England where they promoted an anti-American theme. The President nodded in agreement and expressed some surprise. The President then indicated that those who use drugs are also those in the vanguard of anti-American protest. Violence, drug usage, dissent, protest all seem to merge in generally the same group of young people.

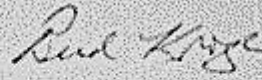
Presley indicated to the President in a very emotional manner that he was "on your side." Presley kept repeating that he wanted to be helpful, that he wanted to restore some respect for the flag which was being lost. He mentioned that he was just a poor boy from Tennessee who had gotten a lot from his country, which in some way he wanted to repay. He also mentioned that he is studying Communist brainwashing and the drug culture for over ten years. He mentioned that he knew a lot about this and was accepted by the hippies. He said he could go right into a group of young people or hippies and be accepted which he felt could be helpful to him in his drug drive. The President indicated again his concern that Presley retain his credibility.

Document D (Cont.)

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At the conclusion of the meeting, Presley again told the President how much he supported him, and then, in a surprising, spontaneous gesture, put his left arm around the President and hugged him.

In going out, Presley asked the President if he would see his two associates. The President agreed and they came over and shook hands with the President briefly. At this meeting, the President thanked them for their efforts and again mentioned his concern for Presley's credibility.



Bud Krogh

White House Memorandum, December 21, 1970