

'Elvis and Ginger' by Ginger Alden

Reviewed by Bill Dougherty

For more than 40 years little has been known about the short but complex relationship between Elvis Presley and Ginger Alden. Though countless books have been published on the king of rock and roll, little has been written about his final days.

Enter Ginger Alden, the onetime beauty queen who falls madly in love with Elvis at first sight. She follows wife Priscilla, who maintains a fantastic relationship with her ex-husband and Linda Thompson, who found Elvis's moods and surroundings too dark and gloomy to stay.

Graceland is a place of Disney-like perfection. The estate purchased for Gladys and Vernon Presley is a gift from their son in 1956. Gladys and a top Memphis designer turn the house into a stunning



Graceland, Memphis 1977

masterpiece, but Elvis's gift backfires. The Presleys feel isolated in the stately mansion on the hill. Their friends seldom visit, too intimidated by all the Cadillacs and crystal chandeliers. Vernon Presley works 7 days a week for Elvis Presley Enterprises, while Gladys passes her time feeding the horses and drinking herself into oblivion. She dies of cirrhosis in 1958. The Presley family doctor spares Vernon and his only child the truth and tells the two Mrs. Presley died of heart failure. Her death and the still birth of his twin Jesse, haunt Elvis for the rest of his life.

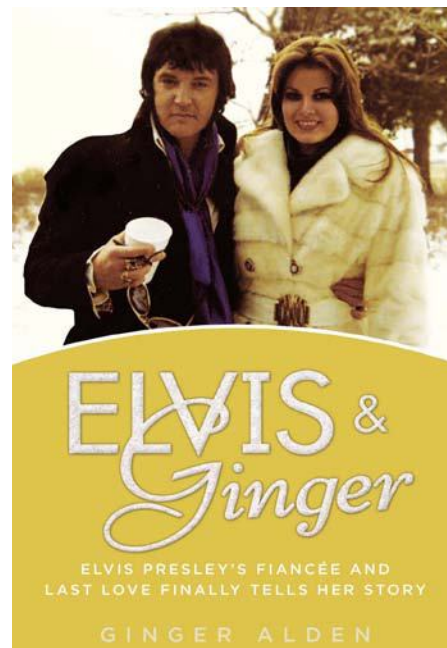
Ginger Alden is mystified by Graceland. Maids and servants arrive and depart behind the wheels of Eldorados and Continentals. Not a blade of grass goes unmowed nor a chip of paint untouched. On the ground floor the "new" Memphis Mafia



Vernon and Gladys Presley 1956



Elvis Presley and Ginger Alden, Honolulu 1976



pass their time playing cards and smoking cigarettes. It appears to be a happy setting. Upstairs however things are grim. Since Vernon Presley's heart attack, father and son have quit smoking. Elvis has managed to keep his habit a secret from his fans for more than 3 decades. The results for Vernon have been successful, for his son they are disastrous! Elvis has exchanged a 2-pack-a-day habit and a rail thin frame, for platters of lasagna, vast amounts of cheese burgers and mixing bowls full of ice cream. He continues to smoke cigars and teeters on 300 pounds. By this point he lives in fear of two soon to be published tell all books. The first by former Memphis Mafia bodyguards and the second by his much detested former stepmother Dee Presley. He is drug addicted and sun deprived, choosing to seldom leave the second floor of the mansion.

This is a book everyone should read if interested in the subject of Elvis Presley. It is a tender portrayal of a young and innocent young lady unable to control the slow moving train wreck with which she has fallen in love. Ms. Alden offers few criticisms in the book. Elvis is kind and extremely generous to a fault to all who surround him, yet he too is extremely dissatisfied with the outcome of his life. We've waited more than 40 years for this book. Any Elvis fan will greatly enjoy it.