

# Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D. | March 23, 2014

## “Howes' Illnesses of the Famous: Elvis Aaron Presley – Part 2 of 3”

Elvis Presley, one of our greatest pop culture icons, was found unresponsive on the bathroom floor at his home, Graceland, in Memphis on August 16, 1977. He was officially pronounced dead at 3:30 pm at Baptist Memorial Hospital. So, what took his life at the young age of 42 years? Doctors, hospital records, friends, authors, associates and employees have served as my information source for many of Elvis' illnesses. Reportedly, Elvis kept his illnesses away from fans because 'they wouldn't go to a concert to watch a dying man.' Also, he had to maintain his macho image that had been created by his heroic roles in his many formulaic movies. Elvis' medical problems could have started early, as he had a low birth weight because he was one of twins. His boyhood diet likely suffered because of the abject poverty of his upbringing. Poorer people were believed to be three times more susceptible to heart disease and stroke. Some of his possible reported medical illnesses were as follows: insomnia, glaucoma and Reiter's syndrome, diabetes, hypertension, migraine headaches, obesity, heart disease, heart enlargement, spastic colon, neuropathies, liver and bone marrow cancer, pernicious anemia, mega-colon and colonic deformities, compressed spinal fractures, and a suppressed immune system. For years, Elvis had to deal with cluster and migraine headaches, triggered by bright spotlights while performing onstage. Reportedly, Elvis' girlfriend, Kathy Westmoreland, believed Elvis was a prisoner from 1969 on. He was "controlled" with narcotics by his handlers, which contributed to his addiction to some pain medications. Westmoreland also wrote that Elvis had confidentially told her he had bone marrow cancer, which had spread throughout his body and that he suffered from chronic insomnia and painful glaucoma, both of which plagued him throughout his life. Elvis' friend, Dr. Harry Rosenberg, reported that Elvis had episodes that led to blood soaked bed sheets. Priscilla reported that Elvis took prescription drugs (downers) to counter his insomnia and would take Dexedrine (uppers) to wake up. His blood pressure would be as high as 160/110 and his diabetes was kept quiet. Still, this incredible man broke countless sales and recording records. He had a seemingly never ending string of films and served as an inspirational icon for decades. Before he passed away, Elvis' karate instructor told of Elvis' face being shoved under a basin of ice, containing an astringent. This was done to get the swelling down from his face caused by the bloating of his failing liver and cortisone medication. They wanted him to "look good" for the next show. As a result, his lungs and eyes were damaged from the toxic astringent.

In the America that I love, "stars," like Elvis, struggle to present an illusory perception. Please see Elvis gospel songs at:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIU55pUbT9w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIU55pUbT9w)

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