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Graceland Invites Active Military, Veterans to Commemorate Anniversary of Elvis' Military Service During Annual Military Appreciation Weekend March 23-24

**Weekend highlights include patriotic family-friendly activities and
Bret Michaels live at the Graceland Soundstage. Free tickets available
to active military, veterans and Shelby County First Responders.**

Memphis, Tenn. – February 12, 2019 – Elvis Presley™ began his service in the United States military on March 24, 1958 when he was inducted into the U.S. Army, and to salute our troops and commemorate the anniversary of Elvis' military service, [Graceland®](#) will host its annual [Military Appreciation Weekend](#), March 23 – 24, 2019. This two-day celebration will showcase Elvis' patriotism through a variety of family-friendly events and activities including, photo opportunities with Elvis' Presidential Medal of Freedom, daily presentation and retiring of the flag and a care package collection center for active and deployed military. The weekend will be highlighted by a Graceland Live concert featuring [Bret Michaels](#) performing live at the Graceland Soundstage.

“Coming from a military family, supporting the men and woman who serve and protect our freedom holds an important place in my heart,” Bret Michaels said. “I couldn't think of a better way to give back and say, ‘thank you’ than kicking off Graceland's Military Appreciation Weekend and celebrating the 61st anniversary of Elvis entering the Army.”

Michaels, the legendary Poison front man and multi-platinum singer and songwriter, has sold over 40 million albums worldwide and has been in the spotlight for decades. He continues to use his superstar status to entertain fans and support notable causes, such as our nation's military.

“Throughout his career, Bret Michaels has always been a huge supporter of the men and women serving in the military,” said Debbie Miller, Graceland's chief marketing officer. “From his work with the Wounded Warrior Project and USO to honoring active military members and veterans during his shows,

we couldn't think of a better person than Bret to help us salute our nation's troops and commemorate the anniversary of Elvis in the military."

Graceland will provide free entry tickets to the [Elvis Presley's Memphis™](#) entertainment and exhibit complex to Active Duty, Retired Armed Services, and Shelby County First-Responders during Military Appreciation Weekend, along with discounted tickets for family and friends.

Complimentary tickets* will also be available to all active members of the U.S. Military, veterans, and Shelby County First Responders for the March 23rd Bret Michaels' Graceland Live performance at the Graceland Soundstage. **(Note: *FEES APPLICABLE ON ALL TICKETS. Tickets may be reserved online, but they can only be picked up at Graceland Box Office. Valid Identification Required at time of pickup.)**

Along with providing complimentary weekend passes and concert tickets to veterans and active military members, Graceland has also partnered with [Operation Gratitude](#) to collect items and "thank you" letters for troops throughout Military Appreciation Weekend. Operation Gratitude sends more than 300,00 care packages and letters of support to deployed military, military families, veterans and first responders every year. Guests visiting Graceland are encouraged to visit the **Graceland Box Office** to donate some of the most requested items by armed forces overseas such as: all-purpose wipes, deodorant, socks, playing cards and more. A complete of items collected by Operation Gratitude can be found on their "[Wish List](#)." Donations will be shipped to active units overseas following Military Appreciation Weekend.

In addition to special offers at Graceland and Elvis Presley's Memphis, the AAA four-diamond [Guest House at Graceland™](#) resort hotel will offer a special military appreciation discounted rate of 50% off *Best Available Rate per night* to both active military, veterans and Shelby County first responders. Guest House at Graceland accommodations at the special discounted rate have limited availability. Reserve Guest House accommodations in advance by calling 800-238-2000 or visiting [GuestHouseGraceland.com](#).

Tickets for Bret Michaels – Live at the Graceland Soundstage are [on-sale now](#). \$49.50 Advance | \$60 Day of Show (General Admission - Standing) | Free Tickets* for Active Military, Veterans, and Shelby County First Responders (Limited Quantity)

Full details about Graceland's 2019 Military Appreciation Weekend are available online at [Graceland.com/Military-Appreciation-Weekend](#).

Full details about Graceland Live, including upcoming shows, special promotions and early pre-sale ticket access, are available online at [GracelandLive.com](#) and by signing up for [LiveFeed](#), Graceland's exclusive newsletter.

Elvis In the Military

On March 24, 1958, Elvis was inducted into the United States Army at the Memphis Draft Board and assigned serial number 53310761. On March 25, at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, he received his indoctrination exam and traditional, military, G.I. haircut in front of 55 media photographers. Elvis commented to the crowd, "Hair today, gone tomorrow."

Elvis received basic training at Fort Hood, Texas. Private Presley was assigned to the 2nd Armored Division at Fort Hood and received advanced tank instruction. Elvis completed his basic training by the end of May. He earned a marksman's medal and was classified as a sharpshooter with a pistol. Elvis also

was named acting assistant leader of his squad. Elvis was stationed there for six months and his parents joined him at a temporary home near the base.

In August 1958, Gladys Presley became ill and returned to Memphis where she was hospitalized with acute hepatitis. As her condition became more serious, Elvis requested emergency leave. He arrived in Memphis on the afternoon of August 12th. Gladys Presley died in the early hours of August 14th at the age of 46. She lay in state at Graceland and services were held at the Memphis Funeral Home on August 15th. Elvis was devastated by his mother's passing. They had always been very close and giving his mother and father a better life had been one of the most heartfelt ambitions in his professional pursuits. He returned to his Army duties on August 25th.

Elvis left the U.S. for his eighteen-month assignment to West Germany in September 1958. Elvis was assigned to Company C, a scout platoon frequently on maneuvers. It was hoped that in this capacity, Private Presley would be largely out of the public eye and able to do his duty as an active member of the U.S. Army. His father Vernon Presley and grandmother Minnie Mae Presley lived with him in his off-base residence in Bad Nauheim. Company C left for maneuvers in Grafenwohr, Bavaria, located on the Czech border on November 2, 1958. Here, Elvis endured the same field conditions as every other soldier. Elvis achieved the rank of private first class in November 1958, specialist fourth class in June 1959, and sergeant in January 1960. He was honorably discharged on March 5, 1960.

Part of Elvis' personal commitment was that he did not perform during his two years in the service though he was often asked to do so. Save for a quick recording session on his first leave from Fort Hood in June 1958 after completing basic training, he took a two-year hiatus from his career. But his manager, Colonel Tom Parker, kept the promotional machinery running, orchestrating continuing record releases, merchandising and special fan communications and taking full advantage of the intense press interest in the most famous soldier of the time, all the while making plans with Elvis for the resumption of his career once he returned to civilian life in March 1960. Elvis served his country just like any other G.I., with none of the special privileges his celebrity status might have afforded him. He was, by all accounts, a model soldier, earning the lasting respect of his fellow soldiers and the public at large. Elvis worried what the long time away from performing, recording and acting might mean for his career. His fans, however, remained steadfast, new audiences would embrace him and many of his greatest achievements still lay ahead.

Elvis returned home to Graceland in March 1960 with great press and public fanfare. He quickly went back to the recording studio producing his album "*Elvis Is Back!*", which would hit number two on the charts with three singles going to number one. He starred in Frank Sinatra's "*Welcome Home, Elvis*" ABC TV special. For this appearance he was paid \$125,000, a record sum at the time. Then, it was back to the movie studio to resume his film career with the musical romantic comedy "*G.I. Blues*", which took advantage of the attention on Elvis' real-life army service and became a smash hit.

About Operation Gratitude

Demonstrating that actions speak louder than words, **Operation Gratitude**, a 501(c)(3) organization, provides tangible ways to forge strong bonds between Americans and their Military and First Responder heroes through volunteer service projects, acts of gratitude, and meaningful engagements in communities nationwide. Through its customized Care Package programs, Operation Gratitude has provided opportunities for countless Americans to say "Thank You" to more than 2.2 million of our

nation's Heroes since 2003. In 2019, Operation Gratitude launched its Make Every Minute Count Campaign with the goal of delivering 525,600 Care Packages – one every minute of the year – to Service Members, their families at home, Veterans, and First Responders. Awarded a 4-Star rating from Charity Navigator and a Platinum rating from Guidestar, 94 percent of Operation Gratitude's expenditures go directly to programs that support our nation's men and women in uniform at home and abroad. To learn more, visit www.operationgratitude.com.

About Graceland and Elvis Presley Enterprises, Inc.

Elvis Presley's Graceland, in Memphis, is music's most important and beloved landmark, with hundreds of thousands of fans from around the world visiting the historic home each year. Elvis Presley Enterprises, Inc. (EPE) manages the operations of Graceland and its related properties, including Elvis Presley's Memphis, Graceland's new entertainment and exhibition complex over 200,000 square feet in size; the AAA Four Diamond Guest House at Graceland 450-room resort hotel; and the Graceland Archives, featuring thousands of artifacts from Elvis' home and career. EPE also produces and licenses Elvis-themed live events, tours, and attractions worldwide. Graceland Holdings LLC, led by managing partner Joel Weinshanker, is the majority owner of EPE. Graceland is the only attraction worldwide to ever receive five USA Today 10Best Readers' Choice Awards: in 2018, it was voted "Best Tennessee Attraction" and Best Holiday Historic Home Tour, in 2015 voted the world's "Best Musical Attraction" and "Best Historic Southern Attraction," and in 2013 voted the #1 "Iconic American Attraction." In 2018 TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards named Graceland one of the top 25 landmarks in the world and Rolling Stone named it one of 10 Great American Music Landmarks. For more information on EPE and Graceland, visit www.graceland.com.

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