

This Day in History... March 24, 1958

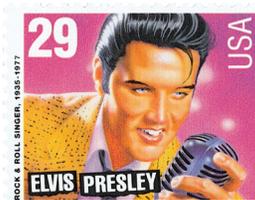
Elvis is Inducted into the Army

On March 24, 1958, Elvis Presley stepped away from the spotlight and into a US Army uniform. At the peak of his fame, the nation's biggest rock and roll star served like any other draftee.

Shortly after turning 18, on January 19, 1953, Elvis registered with the Selective Service System, as required of all eligible American men. At the time, the law called for two years of active duty followed by four years in the reserves. Over the next four years, Elvis's life changed dramatically. He became a national sensation, recording chart-topping songs and starring in films that drew large audiences.

On January 4, 1957, Elvis reported to the Kennedy Veterans Hospital for his pre-induction physical. Later that month, on his 22nd birthday, the Memphis Draft Board announced that he would likely be called to serve that year. As the news spread, both the Navy and Air Force approached Elvis with offers to join under special arrangements.

These proposals included entertainment roles designed to boost morale and recruitment. Elvis declined them – he wanted to serve as a regular soldier.



Some 1.228 million ballots were cast to select the design of the 1993 Elvis stamps.

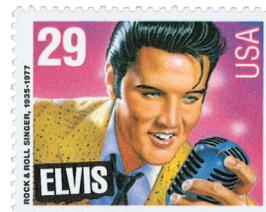
In September 1958, Elvis shipped out for overseas duty. He boarded the USS *Randall* and traveled to West Germany, arriving on October 1. He was assigned to the 1st Medium Tank Battalion, 32nd Armor, part of the 3rd Armored Division. His role was in reconnaissance. He served as a scout and jeep driver, helping gather information during field exercises.

Life in Germany was structured but not without challenges. During his service, Elvis experienced a personal loss when his mother, Gladys Presley, died in August 1958. Despite this, he continued his duties. He also formed close friendships, including one with fellow soldier and musician Charlie Hodge, who later became part of Elvis's stage group.

Elvis's conduct in the Army earned respect from his superiors. On January 20, 1960, he was promoted to sergeant. The promotion recognized his reliability and performance. A commanding officer later described him as a "top-notch soldier" and a credit to his unit. His responsibilities included leading elements of his reconnaissance unit during maneuvers.



From the Music Icons Series; features a 1955 photo of Elvis

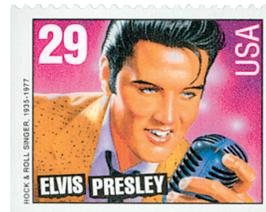


Issued on Elvis's 58th birthday

On December 20, 1957, Elvis received his official draft notice. He was ordered to report for duty on January 20, 1958. The timing created problems. His career was at a high point, and he was scheduled to begin filming *King Creole* the same day. Letters flooded the draft board from fans, business partners, and studio executives. Paramount Pictures had already invested heavily in the film. In response, Elvis was granted a 60-day deferment so he could complete the project.

On March 24, 1958, Elvis reported to the Memphis Draft Board and was officially inducted into the Army. The following day, he traveled to Fort Chaffee, where he received his physical and a now-famous haircut. The event drew heavy media attention. Elvis paid the 65-cent barber fee himself. Photographers crowded the room, documenting the moment as his signature hairstyle was trimmed away.

Elvis then began basic training at Fort Hood. For ten weeks, he trained alongside other recruits. He followed the same routines, drills, and expectations. He did not receive special privileges. Fellow soldiers later recalled that he kept a low profile and worked hard to fit in.



Elvis Booklet Stamp

Elvis completed his active duty service in early 1960. He left Germany on March 1 and returned to the United States shortly after. At Fort Dix, he was processed for discharge. His final Army paycheck totaled \$9.81. From there, he traveled back to Memphis, where large crowds gathered despite harsh winter weather.

Elvis's time in the Army lasted about 18 months overseas, within a two-year service commitment. He served without joining special entertainment units, which had been an option. Instead, he carried out standard duties expected of enlisted soldiers. During his absence, his manager, Colonel Tom Parker, continued releasing previously recorded material. As a result, Elvis remained visible in popular culture.

After returning home, Elvis quickly resumed his career. Within weeks, he began recording new music and soon started filming *G.I. Blues*, a movie that reflected his recent military experience. His service had not diminished his popularity. If anything, it strengthened his public image as both a performer and a citizen who fulfilled his obligation.

Mystic Stamp Company • Camden, NY 13316

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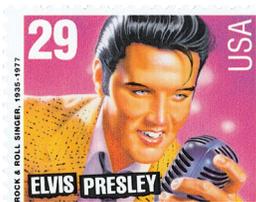
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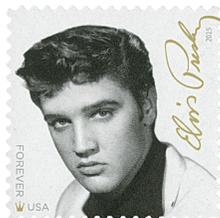


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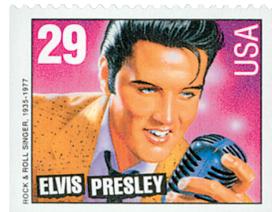


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