

HW LI LIFE

Holiday greetings

Design a card

Help us help you celebrate the holidays. Design a card that we can print in the paper for you and other readers to mail to friends. Use a 4-by-6-inch index card or piece of paper (or design it online). The theme is "Long Island at the Holidays" (which winter holiday you choose is, of course, up to you). We'll publish some in a December issue of LI Life, and we'll post the rest online, so you can print out your favorites on card-quality paper.

Send your designs to:
Joe Haberstroh
 Editor, Long Island Life
 Newsday
 235 Pinelawn Rd.
 Melville, NY 11747
 Or e-mail us at llife@newsday.com with "holiday card" in the message field.



NEWSDAY PHOTOS / DICK YARWOOD

Gregg Hacker's Presley-driven home decor includes a portrait, above, and a custom-made coffee table in the shape of a guitar.



Take me home

Five-year-old Theo has Chesapeake Bay retriever, Lab, Rottweiler and shepherd in his background. This 80-pounder is mellow and loyal, and gentle with even the smallest children, though he needs to be the only animal in the household. Contact Bobbi and the Strays at 917-232-5562.

— DENISE FLAIM

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HOMAGE TO THE KING

Graceland East in Oceanside

BY BETTINA MARKS

Gregg Hacker is an Elvis-obsessed electrician who has transformed his house in Oceanside into an Elvis Museum. The house showcases his collection of Elvis memorabilia, along with his own eccentric creativity.

Hacker, 43, has been collecting Elvis items for 25 years. Why Elvis? "He had a coolness about him unlike anyone else."

The house has framed, original posters and exhibit cases of clothes Elvis wore while performing. It has custom-designed paintings and objects, such as a glass coffee table cut in the shape of a guitar.

That's right next to the blue suede couch, a copy of the one in the Heartbreak Hotel near Graceland. Nearby is a row of showcases filled with collections of Elvis records.

A floor-to-ceiling etched-glass image of Elvis — Hacker had it made — divides the kitchen from a rear gallery. Adorning the wall there is a poster from the movie "That's the Way It Is" (1970), a documentary on Elvis' stage performances; the original printed flower shirt he wore in the movie, and the original poster from a movie of his 1972 tour.

Encased in a custom-made showcase and on a plastic torso flown in from Belgium is the tan suede shirt that Elvis wore at times in the early



1970s. Hacker bought it at a Sotheby's auction in Manhattan. The torso used for the shirt display is the same used for exhibits at Disney parks, he notes.

The blue silk shirt that Elvis wore for his performance at

the Las Vegas Hilton on Aug. 4, 1972, graces the back wall. He says he bought the shirt at "Gotta Have It," a Manhattan shop that specializes in celebrity and sports-oriented items.

Nearby is a custom portrait portraying Elvis in 1977, paint-

ed by a Memphis-based artist. Another painting, now being completed by a local artist, will show Elvis performing in 1957.

Hacker declines to say how much he spent on all his Elvis stuff, or how much it's worth.

He has managed to mix his obsession with Elvis and his skill as an electrician and self-taught "designer" into a masterfully modern, hi-tech environment. Intricately designed track lighting illuminates the dining area, where a poster for "Viva Las Vegas" is embedded in the ceiling.

Hacker has been to Graceland 10 times. He saw Elvis perform once, at Nassau Coliseum on July 19, 1975. He met Elvis' cousin Patsy Presley, and he met Lisa Marie and Priscilla Presley at a book signing in Manhattan. He listens to Elvis recordings daily, and tunes into Channel 13 on Sirius radio, where his recordings are continually played. Hacker also listens to Pearl Jam, Stone Temple Pilots and Metallica.

When asked to describe what one thing summarizes his feelings for Elvis, he said, "He was God-like," and added that "he had a certain something from within." He then quotes John Lennon: "Before Elvis, there was nothing."

Bettina Marks is a freelance writer.

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