

# A Tractor For Elvis

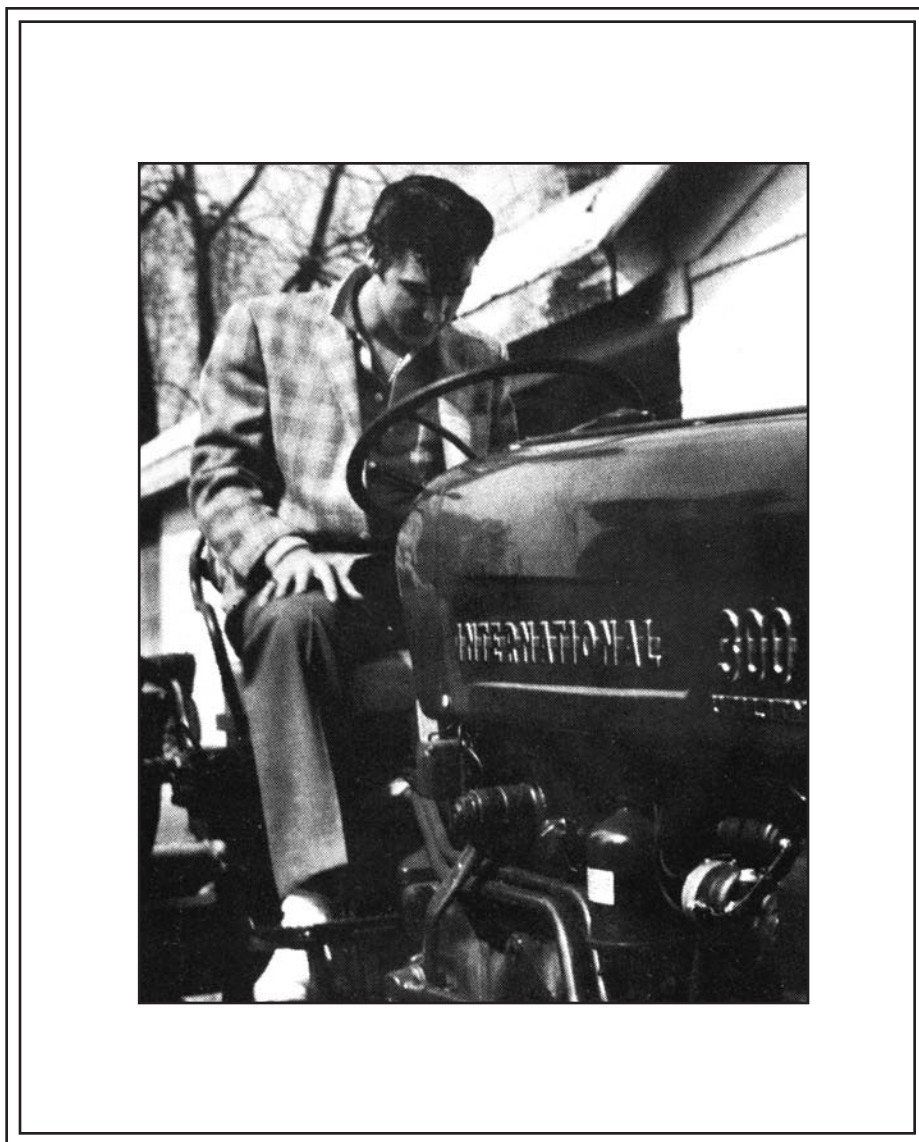
By J.H. Taylor  
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As the Memphis District rep for Light Industrial Equipment (LIE), I spent hours in the car and listened to lots of radio. I was impressed by this kid out of Humes High School in Memphis who had cut his first record for Sam Phillips at Sun Records. A local DJ, Bob Neal, had become his manager. Elvis Presley exploded on the American screen in early 1956 with Heartbreak Hotel, Col. Tom Parker as his new manager, and his appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show.

When Elvis bought his 13 acre estate, Graceland, in early 1957, it occurred to me that he just might need a tractor and mower. Such a sale wouldn't hurt our image as new kids on the block in the LIE business either. I rounded up a local dealer salesman and we went calling. Elvis wasn't home, but we met his parents and made an appointment to see Elvis. Graceland was undergoing a major renovation at this time and they had not moved in. As I recall, I went back two or three times before I finally met Elvis (the local salesman found more productive use of his time).

I enjoyed Elvis' mother, Gladys. She was so proud of her new kitchen under development and was there every day watching. She reminded me of my own mother. Elvis was very close to his mother and was devastated with her untimely death in 1958 at the age of 42. I recall sitting in one of Elvis' pink Cadillacs with his mom during a sudden thunderstorm and comparing our growing-up experiences in northeast Mississippi.

On one occasion, Elvis, Vernon (his father) and I were standing in front of Graceland talking while Uncle Travis Smith (Gladys' brother) was standing guard at the street gate. Suddenly, a flock



**Elvis Presley onboard the International 300 Utility that J.H. Taylor sold him in 1957. He used the tractor to mow the 13 acres at his Graceland estate in Memphis, TN.**

of teenage girls came screaming up the hill to us. Elvis patiently signed autographs for each one. Vernon grabbed a few items and autographed them also (to tell the truth, I thought about signing a few myself). When the girls were rounded up and hustled back out the gate, Elvis said, "If ever body in this organization was like Uncle Travis, I would never get a minute's peace. Those girls can sweet talk him into anything." Elvis was as nice and considerate as any young man I've ever met.

Back to business: Elvis agreed for me to bring him a Cub and belly mower. By my next visit he had decided a larger tractor was needed.

I sent out the Super A size – I believe it was an IHC-140. He kept that a week or so but discovered the I-300 Utility in the literature I had left with him. That was what he decided to keep, which delighted me since that was the anchor tractor for my LIE campaign.

The tractor deal almost tanked one morning when Col. Parker found Elvis with that precious throat sore and discovered Elvis had been mowing after midnight in a light rain. Mowing in the daytime would have caused a traffic jam on U.S. 51 in front of Graceland.

Elvis paid for his tractor like everyone else and no official IHC publicity was allowed.