“That’s All Right” on Memphis Radio, July 1954

Source: Historic-Memphis.com

Dewey Phillips was a longtime disc jockey at WHBQ radio in Memphis, Tennessee. Phillips was known for playing music recorded by both black and white and artists. Shortly after Elvis Presley made his first recording, a single whose A-side was the Rhythm and Blues song “That’s All Right,” Phillips became the first disc jockey in the country to play the song on the radio, in July 1954.

The account below is taken from the book *The Last Train to Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley*, by Peter Guralnick.

> *The response was instantaneous… He played the record seven times in a row, eleven times, seven times over the course of the rest of the program. In retrospect it doesn’t really matter; it seemed as if all of Memphis was listening as Dewey kept up his nonstop patter, egging his radio audience on, encouraging them to join him in the discovery of a new voice…*
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> *For Gladys [Presley, Elvis’ mother] the biggest shock was “hearing them say his name over the radio just before they put on that record…” She didn’t have time to think about it for long anyway, because almost immediately the phone rang. It was Dewey for Elvis… He said, “Mrs. Presley, you just get that cotton-picking son of yours down here to the station. I played that record of his, and them birdbrain phones haven’t stopped ringing since.”… Within minutes, Elvis was at the station. “I was scared to death,” Elvis said. “I was shaking all over, I just couldn’t believe it…”*
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> *“Sit down, I’m gone interview you” were his first words to the frightened nineteen-year-old, Dewey told writer Stanley Booth in 1967. “…I had a couple of records cued up, and while they played we talked. I asked him where he went to high school, and he said, ‘Humes.’ I wanted to get that out, because a lot of people listening had thought he was colored.”*