

Memoirs of a Bodhisattva

Short stories by Skip Nelson



MY YEARS WITH FRANK SINATRA

I drove for a limousine company out of LA in the 70s.

One of our biggest repeat clients was Frank Sinatra's Office at the Sam Goldwyn Studios in Hollywood.

I visited Frank's home in Rancho Mirage at least three times a week. We took mostly deliveries between his home and office in LA. Usually papers, personal items and a few times a week, a movie, on reels, in the case, from studios all over LA. Frank had his own personal movie studio on the compound.

I knew his whole staff, from Vine, who was the House Manager in Rancho Mirage, to Sarge and Dorothy, who ran the office in LA. I also know many of his body guards.

I had many encounters with FS, his wife Barbara, his mother Natalie and his daughter Tina. One morning, at an early morning pickup, Barbara met me with curlers, a robe and slippers.

I was working the night his mom crashed in a jet carrying her to Las Vegas to see his show. I arrived at his home which was totally dark. A drastic change from the day before when the whole compound, including his house and his mother's were covered in Christmas lights and decorations.

I literally ran into Spiro Agnew one morning coming around a corner at his compound.....who was carrying his own bags. I would later see him on the freeway into LA driving one of Frank's Rolls'.

One evening I was running a little late and was approached by an unfamiliar car about a mile from the compound. The driver rolled down the window a few inches and asked "When are you going to be at Sinatra's?" I replied..."Who wants to know?". He rolled down the window a little farther and it was one of FS's body guards. "I like that answer." He replied. I guess they were waiting for something extra special.

On one occasion, Dorothy handed me a small silk bag. She said give this to Mrs. Sinatra. It was obviously jewelry. I asked her if I shouldn't sign for it, as was the common practice. She replied, "We know how to find you." With a smile.

I would offer arrive around dinner time coming out of LA to see FS in the kitchen cooking. We would exchange brief greetings.

One day Vine took me in the side room of the pantry and showed me a whole rack of clothes. "What size are you?" I told her 42 and she said "These are Mr. Sinatra's. He usually gives them to the local charity but he found out how much they were charging so he just wants to give them to people he knows. I got a couple of suits that had not even been hemmed. And a few custom make sports jackets and vests he had worn but were like new.

I also heard many stories about Frank and his generosity, which I won't repeat here but you should know Frank Sinatra was a very generous man who gave a lot of money to friends and worthy causes.

It was a great experience. When I left the limousine company, Dorothy provided me with a signed photo from Frank with a person message. I still have it.

Peace and Love,

Skip Nelson