**I DID IT MY WAY**

***What Would God Put In Your Casket?***

Frank Sinatra (December 12, 1915 – May 14, 1998).

Perhaps that name doesn’t mean much to the younger generations, but to those who are older it speaks of an icon, a true legend. He was part of the famous Rat Pack (with Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, Jr and Peter Lawford). He was often called “The Chairman of the Board.” Old Blue Eyes, which his friends called him, captivated the world with his smooth voice, singing tunes with the Big Bands during the World War 2 years, and later the 50’s, 60’s, 70’s and early 80’s. He sold over 150,000,000 records. He starred in dozens of movies, winning an Academy Award for his role in *From Here To Eternity*. He was indeed a star of stars, a man who did it all and had it all. His famous song says it all: *I did it my way*.

What was his way? At his funeral his famous daughter Nancy Sinatra put three items in his coffin. (1) A bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey; (2) A pack of Camel cigarettes, and (3) Ten dimes (during those days pay phones used dimes to make calls). That, in a nutshell, described his value system. His album covers and movie posters always had him with a tilted hat on his head, a cigarette hanging from his mouth, and a glass of whiskey in his hand. He was a real man of distinction. He drank, smoked and socialized, loving the spot-light and applause of men and the flirting of women. He was the envy of all worldly people. He was an American idol.

But in May of 1998 Frank Sinatra was laid to rest like the infamous rich man of Luke 16:19-31. Now what? “*It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment*” (Heb. 9:27). His fate is now sealed (2 Cor. 5:10). Solomon reminds us “*a living dog is better than a dead lion*” (Eccl 9:4) and that mirth, pleasure, laughter, wine, women and song all lead to “*vanity and vexation of spirit*” (Eccl. 2:1-11).

If dead men could speak, Frank Sinatra would tell us the exact same thing the Rich Man told Abraham, “*tell them not to come to this place of torment*.” Mr. Sinatra was remembered for how “I did it my way.” His way, his value system, was summarized by whiskey, cigarettes and dimes. What would God put in your coffin to express your value system? Let me say that again, what would God put in your coffin to express your value system?

Would it be your well-worn Bible, a family portrait, your prayer journal (kept by God from all the petitions, intercessions and thanksgivings you offered in your lifetime), your list of prospects you wanted to convert, a church directory, my guest list from those I showed hospitality to, a list of my hospital visits and stacks of letters, texts or emails I sent to others to encourage them in their walk with the Lord?

Or, would my coffin find in it a fishing rod, ball glove, bowling ball, golf clubs, shotgun or backpack? If sports and recreation are not your values, perhaps God would place your school diploma, pictures of corporate promotions, stock portfolio, bank statements or a wallet full of credit cards. Maybe just my car keys or house keys or a photo of my dream vacation or country cabin would be seen by everyone as they filed passed my casket. Before I am so quick to ridicule Frank Sinatra’s mementoes of a whiskey bottle, cigarette pack and loose change, maybe I need to see that my fondest keepsakes would look as foolish as his.

Nancy Sinatra did nothing more for her dad than the servants of the Egyptian Pharaohs did when they buried their rulers with the things that would help them in their life beyond the grave. King Tut’s tomb revealed his value system with the elaborate gold and treasures he hoped to take with him into the nether world. But King Solomon could have reminded him as he reminded us, “*As he came from his mother’s womb, naked shall he return to go as he came; and he shall take nothing from his labor which he may carry away in his hand*” (Eccl. 5:15). The only treasures we can take into the next life are the ones we have stored up in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21).

For instance, a cup of cold water given in Jesus’ name… or the stranger you took in… or the prisoner you visited… or the naked man you clothed… the hungry widow you fed… the orphaned child you cared for… (Matt. 25:34-40; James 1:27). It might be the “*widow’s mite*” you contributed to the Lord’s work to support the gospel (Phil. 4:18), or the hymn you sang to edify a discouraged soul (Col. 3:16), or the child you nourished and trained in the way of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). These are the “treasures” you can take with you beyond the valley of the shadow of death.

Frank Sinatra loved the bright lights and glitter of Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and the strip of Las Vegas. He lived life his way.

On the other hand, Jesus Christ lived in the humble village of Nazareth, walked the dusty streets of and deserts of Galilee, Samaria and Judea. He purposefully chose to surrender living life His way, choosing to live instead His Father’s way (John 6:38).

Mr. Sinatra will soon be forgotten when the older generation passes, but Jesus of Nazareth will forever be in the hearts and minds of every generation of men who wish to live beyond the grave in the presence of God’s glory. I hope you are one of them who wants to be remembered for being a faithful disciple of Jesus. That will be determined by what God would place in your coffin to tell all mourners who attend your funeral what your value system is.

What WOULD God place in my casket? - Rick