

OBITUARIES

Frank Sinatra Jr. dies at age 72

BY JUSTIN WM. MOYER
THE WASHINGTON POST

Some sons run from their fathers. Others ride their fathers' coattails. Frank Sinatra Jr., who died Wednesday of a heart attack at 72, charted an even rockier middle course.

"I was never a success," he told The Washington Post's Wil Haygood in 2006. "Never had a hit movie or hit TV show or hit record. I just had visions of doing the best quality of music. Now there is a place for me because Frank Sinatra is dead. They want me to play the music. If it wasn't for that, I wouldn't be noticed. The only satisfaction is that I do what I do well. That's the only lawful satisfaction."

Sinatra Jr., a gifted singer who, fortunately and unfortunately, was the only son of one of American popular music's giantest giants, died while on tour in Florida, as the Associated Press reported. He is survived by a son, Michael. Nancy Sinatra, Sinatra Jr.'s sister, also posted news of his death on Facebook. "Sleep warm, Frankie," she wrote.

Sinatra Jr.'s recent string of concerts, like many, many before, focused on his father's catalogue. Frank Sinatra, who died in 1998, was born in 1915, and the centenary of his birth has brought many a tribute.

"The show that we're doing is one of probably at least a half dozen big Sinatra tributes out there but I like to believe ours is different for one reason," Sinatra Jr. told the Sarasota Herald Tribune just last week. "People know if they go they're going to hear 'Strangers in the Night,' 'My Way,' and so on, but our show goes deeper than that. We assume you're here because you love and know the music, heard all the legends, and now it's time to know something about the man."

If someone was going to do Sinatra, it seemed Sinatra Jr. was the best candidate. And he wasn't phoning in "Fly Me to the Moon" for a paycheck.

"He can sound exactly like his dad if he wants to," Jim Fox, Sinatra Jr.'s guitarist, told The Post in 2006. "He can turn on the classic Sinatra sound anytime. It just depends on what kind of mood he's in. He has such high standards. He doesn't want to work unless he has his 38 band pieces. He knows every third trombone part, every cello part. You know, he conducted for his dad. So he knows the way Sinatra music is supposed to sound."

Sinatra Jr.'s familiarity with his father's music may have been his birthright, but that didn't mean the birthright came easy. Born in 1944, he was not close with his dad — one of the most famous performers of the 20th century. Much of his childhood was spent in boarding schools.

"When I started as a kid, I wanted to be a piano player and songwriter. I only became a singer by accident," Sinatra Jr. said. "I was in college, playing in a little band. The lead singer got tanked one night. A guy in the band pointed at me and said, 'You sing.' I said, 'Me? Why me?' He said, 'You're a Sinatra, aren't you? Sing!'"

Sinatra Jr. could sing —



REUTERS FILE

Singer Frank Sinatra Jr. performs at the 15th annual Society of Singers ELLA Awards in Beverly Hills, California, in September 2006. Frank Sinatra Jr., the son of legendary actor and singer Frank Sinatra, died on Wednesday.

very well. His father certainly could have meddled — in the early 1960s, an endorsement from his dad certainly would have been a great career boost — but didn't. The Chairman of the Board's reported reaction to his son's chosen career path: "If that's what he wants."

"His reaction went to his people, not me," Sinatra Jr. said. "When he learned when I was a teenager and wanted to sing he had one question, 'Can he sing?' To me, nothing. He wanted me to have the right of my own determination, something I was also grateful for."

But the young man's career was nearly derailed by one of the strangest — and, perhaps, most forgotten — celebrity episodes of the 1960s: In 1963, like Charles Lindbergh Jr. before him and Patty Hearst after, Sinatra Jr. was kidnapped and held for ransom.

"Three men kidnapped 19-year-old Frank Sinatra Jr. from a motel in Lake Tahoe, Nevada," The Post recounted in 1998. "He was held in a Los Angeles hideout for four days; the price of his release was \$240,000. During that time, the family was distraught, and because of who the father was, the headlines were big and black and screaming across front pages around the country. Attorney General Robert Kennedy offered the government's support, J. Edgar Hoover activated the FBI, and mob boss Sam Giancana volunteered his own special brand of crime solving (which the elder Sinatra refused)."

The bizarre twist in an already bizarre story: One of the kidnappers was a friend of Sinatra Jr.'s sister Nancy: Barry Keenan, a 23-year-old businessman in the grip of drug and alcohol addiction.

"One day I decided to do something radical," Keenan told Ira Glass in 2002. "Kidnapping seemed like a good idea, so I put a business plan together."

More than 25 years later, Keenan — who served four-and-a-half years in prison after his capture and later became a successful real-estate developer — reported that Sinatra Jr. refused to give up his father's phone number.

"I told him we could get this thing over with quickly and asked for the phone number of his dad," Keenan told The Post in 1998. "He says, 'I'm not going to give you anything . . . you're going to have to shoot me now.'"

Though the episode ended without violence — and, perhaps, proved the mettle of its intended victim — it spawned an unfortunate rumor: that the kidnapping was a mere cry for attention.

"Look, back in those days kidnapping was a capital offense," Sinatra Jr. told The Post in 1973. "And the publicity stunt bit was the only defense those kidnapers had. And the newspapers used that stuff because they gotta sell papers."

Sinatra Jr., who dropped out of a music program at the University of Southern California in his third year, was back on the road soon enough.

"I guess my parents were curious to find out how long I'd stick with show business," he said. "And I — I was curious too."

He stuck with it for the rest of his life. But unlike some of his peers, he didn't ditch the big band and string arrangements for a distorted guitar and a bad attitude.

"I was never an admirer of what used to be called rock and roll and never have been an admirer of rock and roll," he said last week. "It was terribly simplistic compared to the melodies and harmonies of what I consider better music."

Sinatra Jr. was not without admirers among his own rebellious generation, however. In his autobiography "Chronicles," no less a personage than Bob Dylan reported being quite impressed with the singer after seeing him in New York.

"Why him and not somebody on the hip circuit?" Dylan wrote, perhaps intuiting his readers would be confused that he had gone to see Sinatra Jr. at all. "No hassles and nobody chasing me, that's why . . . that and maybe because I felt a connection — I reckoned that we were about near the same age and that he was a contemporary of mine. Anyway Frank was a fine singer. I didn't care if he was as good as his old man or not — he sounded fine, and I liked his big blasting band." Dylan added: "Frank Jr. seemed pretty smart, nothing faked or put-on or ritzy about him. There was a legitimacy about what he did, and he knew who he was."

This self-assurance — that Sinatra Jr. was a living legacy, but also his own person — was on full display more than a decade into his career, when it was perhaps clear he was never

going to make a splash.

"What makes you think I can't do anything on my own?" Sinatra Jr. said. "What makes you think I always have to prove myself?" A reporter who saw him perform wrote: "He even sang one of his own songs."

Never able to escape his father's shadow, Sinatra Jr. slid into it. Though an established, if not widely celebrated, musician and actor in his own right, he became his dad's conductor in 1988.

"I had heard indirectly, because I was not close to it, that he had gone through a series of orchestral conductors," Sinatra Jr. said last year. "There was something missing, obviously, otherwise he wouldn't have made all the changes. And one afternoon in the middle of 1988 he called me. 'Why don't you come out and conduct for me?' Well, when my friends who were in the room revived me with the smelling salts, I said, 'You can't be serious.' He said, 'I'm dead serious. I can't get these guys to give me what I want to get. Maybe another singer can understand what a singer is trying to do.' I took that as a terrific compliment."

The Chairman of the Board often made light of his son's presence from the stage.

"Frank wasn't one for a lot of sentimentality," comedian Tom Dreesen, who often opened for Sinatra, said last year. "He wasn't going to say to the audience, 'That's my son, and I love him!' He used to joke about it. He would introduce Frankie Junior and then say, 'This is my son — his mom told me to give him a job.' But the truth is, it meant a lot."

It wasn't necessarily a heartfelt reunion — but it was more than a gig.

"I was in his life the last seven years that he was giving concerts and as his music director that was when I spent the most time with him," Sinatra Jr. said last year. "In a certain degree, we became closer, but by that point in time, to be perfectly honest, there were so many issues and so many people vying for his time that we never became as close as I would have liked. But it was better than having no time at all."

After his father's death, Sinatra fils carried the banner for Sinatra pater — and not just onstage. He appeared as himself in an episode of "The Sopranos" — a cameo that made anyone familiar with his father's alleged mafia ties smile — during which he was called "Chairboy of the Board." ("There's a resemblance," Tony allowed.) He appeared as himself on "The Family Guy." He sang the national anthem at a Yankees game last year — the team plays "New York, New York" after every home game.

He was the keeper of his father's flame — but kept it his way.

"Sinatra had this magnificent talent of picking the right stuff for him," Sinatra Jr. said in 2006 of his father. "In those days, of course, there were a lot of songwriters to pick from. Today, who's left? . . . Most of it has long since passed. But it's OK. You can always reach into the past"

Who really needs a colonoscopy?

BY SAM WOOD
THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

PHILADELPHIA — Peg Bradford lost a grandmother to colon cancer, and knew her family was right when they nagged her to get checked. But she dreaded the unpleasant prep required for a colonoscopy and the slim possibility that her colon would be punctured during the procedure.

"I was a scaredy cat. I didn't want to deal with it," Bradford said. "I built my own fears up and put it off."

In December, shortly after turning 50, her South Jersey gastroenterologist discovered four polyps, fleshy growths sprouting from the walls of the colon that sometimes turn cancerous. He could remove only three. The last, a little over the diameter of a dime, was tucked in her cecum, the most distant portion of the bowel. She would need to see a specialist in Philadelphia for a second colonoscopy.

"I never expected this to happen," said Bradford, who runs a Facebook group, Steps to Good Health, that has more than 20,000 members. "I was a wreck."

Biopsies showed that all four polyps were benign, and she recovered without any problems. Bradford believes a colonoscopy was the right choice for her.

But colonoscopy — the most common and costly form of screening for colorectal cancer — isn't the only test available. It's often called the "gold standard," and generally gets more publicity in March, the month designated for colon cancer awareness.

Even so, some public health officials say it shouldn't be the preferred option. In Canada last month, an independent task force came out against routine screening colonoscopies.

In the United States, several cancer experts said more Americans likely would get screened if their doctors offered them options.

The most commonly suggested alternative: a simple take-at-home stool test that may suffice for healthy people who have no family history of the disease and aren't suffering from irritable bowel syndrome.

If done annually, fecal immunochemical tests have a strong track record for detecting hidden blood in the stool, an early sign of malignancy. A FIT doesn't require any inconvenient, uncomfortable preparation, anesthesia, or even a visit to a doctor's office. The completed test can be mailed to a lab. If it comes back positive — about 5 percent do — a colonoscopy is recommended to investigate further.

"We haven't done a good job telling people that there are two good, viable screening processes," said Marcus Plescia, former director of the Division of Cancer Prevention and Control at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "There's colonoscopy and fecal testing, and each one is a good approach."

Last year, about 133,000 Americans were diagnosed with colorectal cancer. An estimated 50,000 died.

Early detection can prevent most deaths attributable to the disease, which is the second leading cause of cancer deaths among men and women combined in the U.S. The American Cancer Society strongly recommends screening for everyone between age 50 and 75. For patients such as Bradford with a family history of the disease, the ACS recommends screening starting at age 40.

In addition to colonoscopy and FIT, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force suggests a third option, the rarely performed sigmoidoscopy, every 10 years with a FIT test.

"There is no empiric data to suggest that any of the recommended strategies provide a greater net benefit," the independent group of experts stated in a draft of new guidelines released in 2015.

Most doctors agree that the best method is the one that gets done.

"Any form of colorectal screening that's been approved is reasonable," said Mitchell Conn, a gastroenterologist at Thomas Jefferson University. "But someone who already has symptoms needs to have a more thorough procedure to

evaluate the colon."

Outside of the U.S., the fecal test is preferred. Last month, the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care came out strongly against colonoscopy for routine screening, citing "the level of uncertainty over [colonoscopy's] effectiveness and harms."

The statement riled the Ontario Association of Gastroenterologists. "Colonoscopy is probably the best colon cancer screening test," the group retorted. "It's just not proven yet."

Four randomized controlled trials are underway, one in the U.S. by the Veterans Administration, but results aren't expected for several years. The USPSTF commissioned a review using existing observational data, which found all three strategies were effective and provided similar benefits.

While the jury is out, colonoscopy, as gastroenterologists are quick to point out, has its advantages. For starters, a patient needs only one every 10 years, unless polyps are found. The test, in which a thin, flexible tube is used to inspect the colon while the patient is under anesthesia, can spot most of the polyps that emerge from the colon wall or rectum, and remove them on the spot. Most will never become cancerous, but there's no way to know which will and which won't.

The procedure got a big public boost 16 years ago when TV journalist Katie Couric underwent one after her husband died of colon cancer. Still, a third of American adults have never had any kind of screening.

A campaign called "80 by 2018" aims to get 80 percent of adults screened during the next two years. The initiative is sponsored by the American Cancer Society, the CDC, and the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable.

As Bradford's story shows, anxiety is one reason that people avoid testing.

"For some it's the ick factor; for others, it's true fear," said Richard Wender, chief cancer control officer at the American Cancer Society. "One patient asked, 'Why are you sticking something where the sun don't shine when you're feeling perfectly fine?'"

Time can also be a concern. For the popular "split-dose prep," the first dose of the formula is taken at around 5 p.m. the day before the test, and can make for a sleepless night before the second dose early on the morning of the test. Patients are advised to take it easy for a day after the test, as it is done under general anesthesia. So it takes at least a day off work.

But the biggest barrier to screening is cost, said Wender, a physician at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital who also serves as the chairman of the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable.

Without insurance, a colonoscopy with anesthesia can run several thousand dollars.

Screening colonoscopies are covered by most private insurance plans. But once a polyp is detected and removed, the screening becomes a diagnostic procedure and costs rise.

"People face an out-of-pocket expense if they're getting a colonoscopy. They also have to take a day off from work," Wender said.

"You can afford a fecal blood test," which runs \$15 to \$27.

Of course, if the fecal test suggests there is a problem, you need a colonoscopy, but 95 percent of fecal tests don't indicate a need for further testing.

Some people don't know about screening because their doctors fail to recommend it, Wender said. Others think they need to get screened only if they have symptoms or have a family history of colorectal cancer.

"The majority of people who develop colorectal cancer don't have a family history," Wender said. "If you have a strong family history, screen earlier, but the absence of family history doesn't get you off the hook."

Patients should be offered a choice of screening tests after a careful discussion with their doctor, said Minhuyen T. Nguyen, director of clinical gastroenterology at Fox Chase Cancer Center.

"Screening rates are highest when patients self-selected a screening method," she said. "If we can bring the screening rate way up, then it would be a win-win situation all around."

Israeli spymaster Meir Dagan dies at 71

BY DAN WILLIAMS
REUTERS

JERUSALEM — Mossad director Meir Dagan, who after a long career spearheading shadow wars against Israel's enemies became a vociferous critic of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's saber-rattling on Iran, died of cancer on Thursday, aged 71.

A pugnacious retired army general, Dagan took over the Mossad in 2002, when a Palestinian revolt was raging, international Islamist militancy was on the rise and world powers learned of Iran's secret uranium enrichment projects.

His eight-year tenure saw a series of aggressive covert actions that were widely attributed to Israel. Among them

was a 2007 airstrike that destroyed a suspected Syrian atomic reactor and assassinations and cyber-sabotage targeting Tehran's nuclear scientists and technologies.

But weeks before he stepped down, Dagan suspended convention by summoning Israeli reporters to Mossad headquarters, where he disputed Netanyahu's assessment of the imminence of an Iranian threat and declared readiness to launch a pre-emptive war to foil it.

"Israel should not hasten to attack Iran, doing so only when the sword is upon its neck," Dagan said in the briefing. Enraged Netanyahu aides quickly dismissed his statement as pique after the prime minister declined to retain him as Mossad chief.

In a tribute to Dagan published by his office on Wednesday, Netanyahu made no mention of their disputes. "Meir was a bold warrior and commander determined to ensure the people of Israel will never again be powerless or defenseless," it said.

Asked by Army Radio on Wednesday whether Dagan had effectively scotched an Israeli attack on Iran, Netanyahu's defense minister at the time, Ehud Barak, said: "Could well be."

The son of Polish survivors of the Holocaust, Dagan said he had spoken out for fear that Netanyahu was needlessly endangering the Jewish homeland. His dissent over strategy on Iran and the Palestinians was soon echoed by other nation-

al security figures.

Two scandals tarnished Dagan's Mossad legacy, however.

In 2010, Dubai published pictures of an alleged Mossad hit squad that had killed a Hamas armorer in a hotel in the emirate and dressed his death up as a heart attack. The suspects used cloned passports of foreign Jews who had emigrated to Israel.

Also that year, an Australian-born Mossad officer accused of leaking Israeli state secrets committed suicide while in prison.

Dagan had been ill for years, and Netanyahu and Barak helped to arrange a liver transplant for him in Belarus in 2012 after he was denied the operation in Israel because of his age.