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HERE'S TO SINATRA- By BING CROSBY

BING CROSBY PIKES THOSE RUMORS OF BITTER RIVALRY BETWEEN
HIMSELF AND FRANK SINATRA BY GIVING THE OVERNIGHT SINGING
SENSATION VALUABLE ADVICE WHICH HE HIMSELF LEARNED THE HARD WAY

Dear Frank:

The notion that old Bing, your fellow groaner, has temporarily turned uncle and philosopher will, I know, come as a big surprise to you.

But don't get me wrong, chum.

As you know, I've never exactly thought of myself as Bing, the Big Brain from Spokane. I never expect to match wits with Einstein. Mental midgets like Bob Hope are my speed.

However, your old friend and mine, the editor of Motion Picture-Hollywood, got the idea that maybe a fellow like me who has been lurking around Hollywood for many years, and eating with fair regularity, might slip a few helpful hints to a young singer like yourself who is riding a popularity wave the like of which show business sees only about once every five or six years.

Maybe the editor is wrong. Maybe I'm sticking my neck out and should continue my lifetime habit of minding my own business. But you being the likable, level-headed gent you are, I'll take a chance this once.

Who knows? It may be fun to give out advice. It sure will be turning the tables because I've been listening to admonitory advice ever since the day in a Spokane kindergarten when I stole the beautiful red apple some mama's boy, who wore a Buster Brown collar and blue velvet pants, had brought Miss Abernathy, our teacher.

First of all, Frankie, I want to tell you what a laugh it was to me when some people in Hollywood tried to steam up a feud between us. One reason it worked out no dice is because I've known from away back what a right guy you are.

I remembered some of the stories I heard about you years ago when you came out with Tommy Dorsey's band to do a musical for MGM called Ship Ahoy.

Unlike some of the young performers who hit the Hollywood gold coast for the first time, you didn't try to make a big flash, throwing big parties and spending all your spare time in movietown's fancy bistros in the hope that some big studio man would spot you.

I heard about you living in a small apartment with your brother, who cooked spaghetti for you every night so you could send a few extra bucks home each week to the little woman.

Then there was that party you went to where one of the boys, in his cups, started some talk about a minority racial group to which, incidentally, you don't belong. Frank Sinatra didn't feel like taking much of that talk. This particular racial group was having its ears beaten off in Europe at the time and you thought it would be fine if we had none of that in Uncle Sam's back yard. So you gave out with a snappy left and a kayo right to the chin of this small-scale rabble rouser and ended the distasteful conversation.

For my money, you were Mr. America that afternoon, Frankie! I was proud to be in the same business as an Italian kid who would fight for the under dog in the good old Yankee way.

But now for this advice chore.

I can skip the counsel about the dangers of too many pals, good-time Claras and liquor. You've been a good family man too long for any of that stuff to bother you.

I see by the newspapers that you've been having plenty of managerial headaches lately with various parties slicing up your pay until about all you have left is the envelope the weekly dough comes in.

Back when I was getting my first big breaks—and don't think I don't realize how lucky I've been—I had the same sort of difficulties.

Your main problem is to find one guy, a fellow whom you can trust and is no bird-brain, to run the big business Frank Sinatra and his voice have become overnight. Be sure and choose this gentleman with care, Frankie. If approached by a smooth talker who tells you he can double your money for you in a week, start walking away, and fast! There's only one investment worth a quarter today and it's called War Bonds.

Once you find a sound business manager, let him do your worrying for you. If you have a beef about anything, let him handle the matter. People are always wondering how I find the time for charity golf tournaments, camp shows and other war activities. Well, that's the system, Frankie. I have a paid man to take over all my professional headaches. That not only gives me time out for fun but — and this is more important — it permits me to concentrate completely on my work.

Another thing, Frankie, never forget who your real boss is. It may not have occurred to you as yet, but the man who has really made you famous and will make you rich—God and the internal revenue bureau permitting—is not that fellow in the satin-lined office on the movie lot or the head of the company whose products are plugged on your radio programs.

The guy who actually makes those pretty pay checks possible is named John Q. Public, not forgetting Mrs. Public, his little woman.

Bing found that out a long time ago, Frankie. That's why I never neglect my fan mail. Those people who shove their quarters over the counter in the box offices of theaters on 10,000 Main Streets are the folks to pay most attention to.

The public is your professional sweetheart, your wife. When she gets tired of you, boy, you're through. You gotta give her what she wants and likes, or some other groaner will. And quick!

All of the movie magnates in Hollywood, all of the radio tycoons in the world, can't put you up there in the money again once Mr. and Mrs. Public yell, "Take him away."

I remember the time, when I was fairly new to Hollywood, just as you are now, when a movie producer told my brother, Everett, who runs my affairs, "I'm going to give the world a new Bing Crosby in this picture."

"What's the matter with the old one?" Everett asked him.

"A change will increase his popularity," said the big-shot producer. "I know what the public wants."

"You're a smart man," said old Everett, "but no one guy is that smart. He can only guess. The public knows

what the public wants. And Bing's fan mail — which is the only thing we have to go by — says the people who buy those movie theater tickets still like him as is. And as is he stays until the boys in the gallery yell 'Change your act'."

You'll find all sorts of showmen trying to get you to change your style of delivery. Don't listen to them, Frank. The public is the only barometer and registers its votes at the only polling place for entertainers, the box office.

This is not to say that every song you sing should be sent out in the same way. Variety, I believe, is the biggest professional life preserver. People get tired of too much sunshine and flowers and steaks and all the other good things of life. That's because they're always the same. Why shouldn't people get sick of a couple of groaners like you and me in the same way? Mix 'em up, kid, send those songs out sweet and hot, slow and fast, funny and sad. That's the way I've managed to last this long, that and a lot of luck.

Another thing I've had — and this was lucky, too — is the benefit of good help and advisers. You hear some talk around Hollywood about me carrying my brothers, who run my business and financial affairs. That's a laugh! The truth is that they've helped to carry me. I'd be lost without them.

The next bit of counsel from your pal, the non-Big Brain Bing maybe I don't have to give you. I say that, because you came up the hard way just as I did. You've earned everything you're going to get while you're up there in glittering Headline Heaven.

Yes, I'm going to throw it in, even though, like me, you know what the up-and-down life of show business can be like. Like me, you have slept in flea-bag hotels, sat around for weeks waiting for the phone to ring, and gone hungry more than once.

It's to keep on being yourself. I think it's swell — the classy, down-to-earth way you've taken your amazing flood of high-publicity in your stride, without losing your head.

You'll not have too hard a time keeping that up if you listen more to your critical friends than to the back-slappers. It's the easiest thing in the world for your friends to say, "You were terrific tonight, Frankie boy. Greater than ever."

What is a tough chore for a pal is to say, "Boy, what happened to you tonight? You were awful."

Yep, those are the lads to listen to. Those are the fellows who will still be all out for Sinatra when you and I aren't top singers any more. The others will be too busy throwing posies at the newest sensation in songland to bother with you.

And don't let knocks in the press upset you! You'll catch such blasts every once in a while. I know I have. The funny part of that sort of brick-throwing is that it brings your fans out fighting mad, does you more good than harm.

But maybe you've found that out already, also that the vast majority of the boys and girls who write for the newspapers and magazines would rather give you a boost than an under-the-belt slam.

Every once in a while, though, they miss a good story. For example, like the time, during your last visit to Hollywood, when you were good-natured enough to drop in to clown with me as a surprise guest on the "warm-up" session preceding one of my radio shows. I like to think that some of your fans, who will read this. open letter will now hear for the first time of that gracious gesture by an unspoiled young actor named Frank Sinatra.

One final professional tip, Frankie boy. Don't be guided in your selection of songs by those most plugged on the air. I guess it's no secret to you that those plugs can be bought. What shows true popularity are sheet music and record sales.

Another sure-fire barometer you'll find in your fan mail. I take the consensus of fan mail opinion. When a man or woman admires you enough to take the trouble of writing you, "Please sing this, Frank!" he or she is worth pleasing.

Keep riding that skyrocket you're on, Frankie! I'm all for you. Yes, when I heard the whispers about you and me being bitter rivals, I just smiled.

What did those would-be troublemakers think, anyway? That we were running for Governor, or something?

All that silly gossip about you and me hating one another reminded me of the story I heard about the late George M. Cohan, the greatest of all American performers. I'll never be a George M. Cohan, but I like to think that in all actors there is something of his spirit. Here's the story:

Years ago George was out here to make a picture in which he was supported by Jimmy Durante. The movie company's front office kept calling in Jimmy and giving him the fat lines that had originally been written for the star.

Jimmy, who like all actors held the great song-and-dance man in reverence, became embarrassed after a while. Meeting George on the lot one day, he told him what was going on.

"I can't let them give me a chance to steal your show, Mr. Cohan. You're too big a man for a punk like me to do that to."

Cohan just laughed, "Grab all they throw you, kid. When anyone steals the show from me, it means that I'm not good enough any more. I've been up there with my name in lights for a long time now. Any added time I get as a headliner is velvet. I like velvet but I can live without it. You're just coming up. Yep, grab everything they throw you, boy. It's okay by George M. Cohan."

Well, what's good enough for George M. Cohan is good enough for Bing Crosby now or any time, Frankie. And I hope you keep riding that skyrocket as long and happily as I've been riding mine.

Yours, with every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bing Crosby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the name, there is a horizontal line that starts under the 'B' and ends under the 'y', with a small flourish at the end.