

Ghost writing:

I wrote this profile of *Sinatra, Sammy & Liza* using the notes and diaries of Hollywood celebrity photographer Harry Langdon. This is an excerpt from a memoir book proposal that remains a work-in-progress.

- Douglas Glenn Clark



Sammy...

Squeezing Sinatra,



...and Liza!



I have found that the best way to gather a group when lack of control is involved is to draw a rectangle on the floor just large enough for three people, and tell the group to fit inside the marks.

That's exactly what I did the night I photographed Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., and Liza Minnelli at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

I didn't hesitate to accept the offer to stay at the Waldorf for a week. But I was not prepared for the logistics of constructing a studio setting in Sammy's 34th floor suite dining room.

The room I chose was the largest within the three floors of suites that Mr. Sinatra had reserved. But it included a chandelier that was so large and hung so low that it almost touched the table in the center of the room. And the hotel manager insisted, "We do not move chandeliers at the Waldorf."

Not knowing what else to do, I said, "Well explain that to Mr. Sinatra." Within five minutes the chandelier was removed and stored in a closet.

But that wasn't the only obstacle. Earlier my New York assistant looked at me with trepidation when I ordered him to procure four 8- by 4-foot sheets of ¾-inch

plywood to make a hard floor on the thick carpet. I did not realize the closest lumber yard to the hotel was in New Jersey. Plus he had to hire a cab and tie the wood to the roof of the vehicle to make the delivery.

The next challenge was to get the wood into the small Art Deco elevators that were run by finely dressed operators who took pride in the immaculate chambers. Such forbidden matters were forgiven when word got around that I was in the employ of Frank Sinatra.

Liza was the first to arrive. We barely introduced ourselves when Sammy and Mr. Sinatra arrived. Both were in a very buoyant mood. Now all I had to do was somehow squeeze all that star power into the small space I had created on my plywood floor.

Although the preparation took days, the session lasted about five minutes. I had taken about 20 shots when Mr. Sinatra said, "You must have it. Thanks, Harry." And the group dispersed in different directions.