

Bing Crosby, 73, Dies in Madrid At Golf Course

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By The Associated Press

MADRID, Spain, Oct. 14—Bing Crosby, whose crooning voice and relaxed humor entertained millions around the world for half a century, died of a heart attack today after a round of golf outside Madrid. He was 73 years old.

Mr. Crosby, an avid golfer, collapsed after finishing a game at the La Moraleja club with three Spanish champions. He was taken to the Red Cross hospital, where a spokesman said he was dead on arrival.

A few hours after learning of her husband's death, Kathryn Crosby told a news conference in Hillsborough, Calif., "I can't think of any better way for a golfer who sings for a living to finish the round."

She said their son Harry, 19, and the family's former butler, Alan Fisher, would fly to Spain to accompany Mr. Crosby's body back to Los Angeles, probably on Monday.

Played a Winning Round

Mrs. Crosby said she talked by phone with one of the men who had played golf with Mr. Crosby. "He told me that Bing had a very good round. I'd like that to be said," she stated, smiling with tears in her eyes.

Mr. Crosby carded 85 and won the game by one stroke because of his golf handicap, Juan Tomas Gandarias, a professional golfer, told newsmen.

Mr. Gandarias, who lunched with Mr. Crosby before the game and walked with him around the course, said the singer was relaxed and joking as he left the 18th hole.

"Suddenly he dropped. Before that he had given no sign of illness although he seemed to be favoring his left arm near the end of the game," Mr. Gandarias said. He said Mr. Crosby was about 20 yards from the clubhouse when he fell.

The singer, actor and businessman had come to Spain primarily for relaxation after a tour of Britain, which he described as a test of his recovery from a back injury he suffered in a fall earlier this year. The accident occurred while Mr. Crosby was taping a television show to celebrate his 50th year in show business.

Bob Hope, whose running gag feud with Mr. Crosby was a trademark of both their careers, was “too devastated” to comment on the death of his old friend, according to a spokesman. Mr. Hope, who was in New York City, canceled a benefit appearance at the Governor Morris Inn in Morristown, N.J., and flew home to California.

William S. Paley, chairman of CBS Inc., who signed Mr. Crosby to a national radio contract in 1931, called his death “a great loss to the entertainment world,” and said in a statement, “He will be remembered as one of the best-loved and most highly respected figures in theatrical history.”

A Star Almost 5 Decades

Harry Lillis Crosby parlayed a burbling baritone voice, a relaxed manner and sense of business acumen into millions of dollars and a place in the front rank of world-famous entertainers.

A star performer for almost five decades, he delighted millions on radio, television, and in motion pictures and near World War II battlefields, where he entertained countless servicemen. His records sold worldwide by the millions, and his earnings from his performances and investments well exceeded a million dollars a year for many years.

In all, Mr. Crosby sold more than 300 million records and in his later years, when he stopped making movies, he continued nonetheless to attract enormous public attention with appearances on television and at the Bing Crosby Pro-Amateur Golf Tournament in Pebble Beach, Calif.

Mr. Crosby was born May 2, 1904, the fourth child in a Tacoma, Wash., bookkeeper's family that later became almost entirely caught up in show business. His father, Harry Lowe Crosby, worked for a local brewery to support his mother, the former Kate Harrigan, and his six siblings, most of whom later became associated with one or another of his enterprises. His youngest brother, Bob, became well-known as a singer and bandleader.

He acquired his nickname when he was 7 or 8 years old, the story goes, because of his fondness for a comic strip called “The Bingville Bugle.” As a boy he was called Bing-o, but the “o” got lost along the way.

An alternative version of the name's origin has it that the future star annoyed one of his grade-school teachers with a wooden gun, which he used to fire, shouting, “Bing-Bing!” The teacher began calling him “Bing-Bing,” this version goes, and the name stuck.

Abandoned Law Studies

He went on to attend Gonzaga University in Spokane, where he studied law but was more interested in a local band, with which he played drums and sang at dances and in a Spokane theater. He worked part time in a local law firm, but the entertainment world lured him from that and from his law studies.

In 1925, Mr. Crosby and Al Rinker, the band's piano player, left Spokane for Los Angeles, where Mr. Rinker's sister, Mildred Bailey, was a successful singer. The "Two Boys and a Piano," as they were billed, played engagements along the West Coast. Paul Whiteman, who caught their act in 1927, at the Metropolitan Theater in Los Angeles, hired them as singing act for his band. Later, Harry Barris joined them to form "The Rhythm Boys." They touted the Keith Orpheum vaudeville circuit and played in Mr. Whiteman's picture. "The King of Jazz."

Mr. Crosby's casual attitude did not go well with Mr. Whiteman, who dismissed him for not being serious enough about his work. The other members of the trio left with him. They played the Montmartre Cafe and the Cocoanut Grove in Los Angeles.

At the Montmartre, Mr. Crosby met Wilma Winifred Wyatt, a rising, young film star known professionally as Dixie Lee. They were married on Sept. 29, 1930, and were to have four sons, all of whom became professional entertainers.

In 1931, at the Cocoanut Grove, Mr. Crosby sang for the first time on radio, with Gus Arnheim's orchestra on a twohour nightly outlet.

Shortly thereafter, Everett Crosby, a brother, sent a record of Mr. Crosby's crooning of "I Surrender, Dear" to William S. Paley, CBS president. The singer was put on the network from New York and became a sensation. He appeared in 1932 at the Paramount Theater for a record run of, 20 consecutive weeks.

Success Led to Films

The success of his program led Paramount Pictures to include him in "The Big Broadcast of 1932," a film featuring radio favorites. From then on, his public life was one success after another, and he appeared, year after year, as a regular performer on the Columbia Broadcasting System's radio networks.

His swift success was as a practitioner of crooning, a singing style to which the teen-agers of the early 1930's and many of their elders, were ecstatically addicted.

His mellow, crooning rendition of "When the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day"—embellished with his distinctive bu- bu- bu- being between phrases—was an overnight sensation.

But as his fame and success blossomed, he became loved as more than just a deft practitioner of a single vocal style. He became a national institution.

Some historians of the Great Depression have maintained that what carried Mr. Crosby on to his expanding popularity was his espousal in song of the “don't worry” philosophy.

Instead of concentrating on the woes of unrequited love, he brightened the idle moments of an impoverished or worried generation with songs about not needing a bundle of money to make life sunny or about pennies from heaven. Over the radio, on records, in motion picture houses, the masses here, and later abroad, were entranced by his smooth and seemingly effortless singing, which gradually dropped its more extreme mannerisms like the bu-bu-bu-bus.

Of more than a score of his recordings that sold above the million-disk mark, the most popular was “Silent Night,” with “White Christmas” second. It has been said that there was not a moment during the year that the Crosby voice was not being heard somewhere in the world—on radio, phonograph or jukebox.

A Half-Hundred Films

Mr. Crosby won a movie Oscar in 1944 as the year's best actor for his role as a priest in “Going My Way” Among the most popular of his half a hundred films were the “Road” comedies —“The Road to Singapore,” “The Road to Zanzibar” and others—with Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour.

His acting style was an embellishment, in a sense, of Mr. Crosby's own personality as a performer—relaxed, low-key and quietly charming. He almost never played a heavy, even as the spineless alcoholic husband opposite Grace Kelly.in the film of Clifford Odets's “The Country Girl,” released in 1954, in which Mr. Crosby gave one of his most compelling performances.

Again in 1966, he played an alcoholic sort, this time, the sodden, unshaven doctor in a remake of the classic western, “Stagecoach.” And again, it seemed to reviewers that his innate likability came across to produce a performance of subtlety and depth.

Indeed, Mr. Crosby once recognized his own screen personality when he told an interviewer how he had recently turned down the role of Scrooge for a Hollywood film.

“I don't think I would have been believable as Scrooge for a minute,” he said. “Everybody knows I'm just a big good-natured slob.”

Bing Crosby, of the blue eyes and brown hair, made no secret of having to wear a toupee in pictures. Off screen he usually wore a hat to cover his baldness.

The easy-going humor and the bizarrely loud sport shirts that were his trademarks through the years were in evidence off stage as well as before the cameras or microphones. But they did not encompass the whole man, who knew trouble and anguish, too.

Dixie Lee Crosby died in 1952 after 22 years of marriage that had contained much heartbreak. Some of the unhappiness between her and her husband stemmed from his iron-handed disciplining of their sons, Gary, the twins Phillip and Dennis, and Lindsay who got into more than a modicum of trouble as young men.

Mr. Crosby's life through the early 1950's was set out in his autobiography, published in 1953, which had the modest title, "Call Me Lucky." Written in collaboration with Pete Martin of The Saturday Evening Post, it appeared serially in that magazine and was published in book form by Simon & Schuster.

In 1957, Mr. Crosby's life entered new era, when, at the age of 53, he married 23-year-old Kathryn Grant, an actress from Texas. The couple had two sons, Harry Lillis '3d and Nathaniel Patrick, and a daughter, Mary Frances. They appeared together on television in occasional Christmas specials and commercials,

Mr. Crosby made wise investments of most of the earnings his talent for entertainment brought him. Even his stable of race horses, of whose slowness audiences were often reminded, paid off in the form of gags concocted by his script writers. He also bred horses, and in the mid-1930's he helped to establish and became president of the Del Mar race track in California. He sold his interest in the track in 1946 for nearly half a million dollars.

When fire destroyed his home in 1943, he poked through the ashes and retrieved \$2,000 in horse-race winnings from shoe. His interest in sports led him one time to buy 15 percent of the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball team and later about 5 percent of the Detroit Tigers.

Exhibitions Aided Charities

His exhibition golf matches with Bob Hope, his great friend with whom he also engaged in bantering exchanges of insults, raised thousands of dollars for charities. In World War II, after each match, they auctioned their clubs and golf togs to buyers of war bonds. An expert, playing in the low 70's, Mr. Crosby was given the William D. Richardson Memorial Trophy in 1950 for his contributions to the game. He played with President Kennedy at Palm Beach in 1961.

Some of the crooners earnings, after enormous taxes, were invested in oil wells, frozen orange juice, real estate, a West Coast television station and the operation of large cattle ranches.

In his later years, Mr. Crosby led the life style of a man of wealth without much flamboyance. He continued his favorite hobbies—golf, fishing and hunting—and traveled frequently with his family on safaris in Africa.

The Bing Crosby Pro-Amateur Tournament and Pebble Beach, known popularly as the Crosby Clambake, became one of the major golf classics as the pros came to dominate the amateurs and capture prize money that swelled to more than \$200,000.

Although he sold his interest in Minute Maid orange juice, Mr. Crosby continued to appear on commercials that featured his family. 'And he spent time at his ranch in Baja California and his rambling home in Hillsborough, a well-to-do suburb south of San Francisco.

He emerged from semiretirement last year to mark his 50 years in show business with a series of concerts and shows to benefit various charities. He appeared at the Los Angeles Music Center in March. and in June and July made a successful tour that included the Palladium in London, other theaters in Ireland and Scotland and more appearances in the United, States, singing medleys of his oldies.

In November, he and members of his family went on the CBS television network for a "White Christmas Special." In a more ambitious run, he brought "Bing Crosby and Friends" into the Uris Theater on Broadway from Dec. 7 to Dec. 19, a dozen evenings of nostalgia that were appreciatively received by critics and theatergoers alike.

Last March 3 Mr. Crosby suffered ruptured disk in his lower back when he fell 20 feet from a stage into an orchestra pit at a theater in Pasadena, Calif, where he was videotaping a television special. He lost his footing while acknowledging a standing' ovation from the audience. The injury left him hospitalized for more than a month. Though still suffering from the effects of the fall, he completed his concert tour of Britain.