

In The Spotlight

Bing and Nathaniel – a bond between father and son.

By Mark Pazdur, Publisher

JUPITER, FLORIDA: Nathaniel Crosby, son of late crooner Bing Crosby, was destined to make his mark in the golf industry.

His father was described as being a golfer who loved to sing as opposed to a singer who loved to play golf. Bing Crosby's trademark, bass-baritone voice made him the best-selling recording artist of the 20th century, selling over one billion records, CDs, and digital downloads. An Associated Press poll in 1947 identified Bing as the most admired man alive, ahead of Jackie Robinson and Pope Paul XII.

"Just imagine someone five times stronger than the popularity of Elvis Presley and the Beatles put together," lauded singer Tony Bennett, a legend in his own right.

"Dad's love of golf was unmistakable," said Nathaniel Crosby. "He was the first performer to prerecord his radio shows, allowing him more time on the golf course. He was a five-time winner of the club championship at Lakeside Golf Club in California, and had an amazing 13 holes in one in his lifetime."

The Bing Crosby National Pro-Am was at one time the most popular tournament on the PGA TOUR, more so than even the majors and the first pro-am of any kind. Bing accomplished this by simply coordinating his Hollywood friends with his golf pro buddies.

Living in Southern California, the first tournament was held in 1937 at Rancho Santa Fe Golf Club.



After WWII, Bing sold his house in Rancho Santa Fe and built a home adjacent to the 13th fairway at Pebble Beach Golf Links and brought the tournament up to what he called the most incredible golf destination in the world, The Pebble Beach Golf Links.

Nathaniel picked up the baton from his father, running the tournament for eight years, including executing the pairings and hosting the Clambake, all at the tender age of 16.

UNDERCOVER DAD

"Golf was our principal bond," explained Nathaniel. "A vast amount of our one-on-one time involved sports events. Dad and I would sit in his office and watch the baseball game of the week with Curt Gowdy and Tony Kubek broadcasting. When the game was over, we

made the short drive over to Burlingame Country Club to play a round of golf.

"The only time I lamented anything about being the son of Bing Crosby was when I was required to participate in Dad's annual Christmas shows or the Minute Maid orange juice commercials. It horrified me. All I could think about was the verbal abuse I was going to receive from friends at school the day after it aired.

"With all of his accolades, Dad had the ability to spend an enormous amount of time with all of his children on a one-on-one basis. Golf was his primary vehicle, but hunting, fishing, and African safaris were family mainstays.

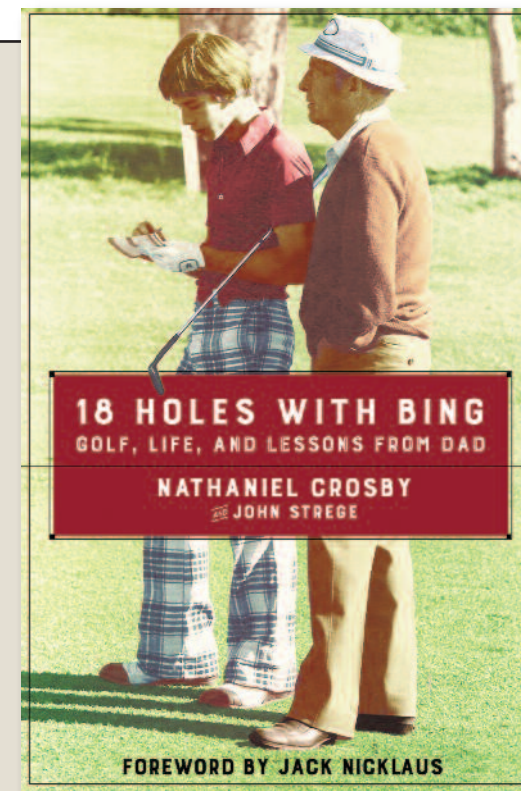
WHEN BING passed away at the age of 74 in 1977, Nathaniel took the rings of the Crosby Pro-Am at age 16.

For eight years he was responsible for 168 amateur invites, 25 pro exemptions, and the pairings.

He was the only student walking to high school with a brief case. When rebranded the AT&T Pebble Beach Classic in 1986, Nathaniel joined the governing body of the championship with the likes of Peter Ueberroth and Clint Eastwood.

"HIP? BING CROSBY EMBODIED THE WORD. The Mick Jagger of 1926. Mr. Cool. The guy did it all." – COMEDIAN DENNIS MILLER

"BING CROSBY WAS A GENTLEMAN. He lived a life his fans around the world felt was typically American: successful yet modest, casual but elegant. He was a man who would be at ease in any American home." – PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER



18 HOLES WITH BING: GOLF, LIFE, AND LESSONS FROM DAD

Nathaniel Crosby's touching memoir, No. 8 on *The New York Times* Best Seller list when released, pays tribute to his father. The book is full of anecdotes of Bing on the course and a glimpse into the Golden Era of Hollywood.

EXCERPTS INCLUDED IN THE BOOK

"DURING WWII, Bing sang relentlessly and delivered messages to Germans that Americans live in a free country, without a Gestapo to fear, and that all peoples are welcome. He was our version of Japan's Tokyo Rose who delivered propaganda to American servicemen in the South Pacific."

"DURING THE 1953 FRENCH OPEN, Bing parked his rented Mercedes convertible in front of his hotel. Noticing several attractive women lounging on their outside deck, he began serenading the ladies with love songs. A woman from a neighboring apartment building wasn't amused. She took her full chamber pot (old Parisian buildings didn't always have indoor plumbing in those days) and doused him with urine. His response was classic Bing, 'There's always a critic!'"

"He valued his privacy and could mix with a crowd at Candlestick Park in an overcoat, a scarf, a pair of sunglasses, and a Sherlock Holmes hat and never be recognized. No security needed!"

UNDERACHIEVER OR OVERACHIEVER

Nathaniel's accomplishments in golf are noteworthy. He is a three-time USGA National Medalist, including the U.S. Amateur at Olympic Club in 1981 and being the Low Amateur at Pebble Beach in 1982. He also won the prestigious Porter Cup in 1982. He was seemingly on his way to becoming a PGA TOUR star as so many amateur champions eventually become.

"One of my lifelong wishes is that Dad would have

been alive long enough to celebrate the U.S. Amateur win with me," lamented Crosby. "I take solace in the fact he likely had a better view than the gallery."

Crosby was around nine years old when he, together with his brother Harry, would hand out scorecards and pencils to the likes of Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, and Lee Trevino at the Crosby Pro-Am. "It motivated me to work hard on my golf with the intention of playing the PGA TOUR one day," recalled Crosby.

Although his main goal as a successful PGA TOUR star didn't happen, it's easy to look back and realize the accomplishments that happened were byproducts of him striving to qualify as a Tour player.

"I like to think I am just trying to play through a 35-



President Roosevelt organized the USO during WWII for the likes of Bing Crosby and Bob Hope to entertain troops on the front line. Bing had deep relationships and was golfing buddies with Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. Frank Sinatra built a wing and helicopter pad at his estate in Palm Springs for President Kennedy's visits. On one notable trip to the California desert, President Kennedy decided to stay with Bing Crosby, irking Sinatra. Sinatra's stern response: "He isn't even a Democrat." Above photos: Nathaniel continues the family tradition by playing with Presidents Ford and Bush.



Tom Watson receives trophy for winning the 1982 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach. Nathaniel Crosby, pictured in lower right, is a three time USGA National Medalist.

year slump!" winked Crosby. "Looking back, I am confused as to whether I am an underachiever or an overachiever!"

CONTINUING A LONG RELATIONSHIP WITH GOLF

After playing on the European Tour for three years with sporadic success, Crosby retired from professional golf at the age of 26. "Turning my attention, I organized a group to purchase the Toney Penna Golf Company. Mr. Penna was my golf instructor in college and one of Dad's best buddies, so it seemed fitting," said Crosby.

Unfortunately, persimmon woods were Toney Penna Golf Company's core business and metal woods had started to systematically eliminate the demand for wooden drivers. Nathaniel was able to recruit Nelson Doubleday and convert the Penna effort into a partnership between Doubleday and Nicklaus. This became a viable, profitable effort eclipsing \$24 million in sales and was prof-



Nathaniel Crosby (back row, center) is pictured with his family. Back: Nathaniel Jr. and Brendan. Front: Turner and Courtney Reynolds; Nathaniel's wife, Sheila; and Bridget and Claire Crosby.

itable each year under his tenure as president alongside his CEO and good friend, Bob Kelly.

"Bob was 'Mr. Inside' handling daily operations and I was 'Mr. Outside' pounding the pavement making sales," said Crosby. "We were a good team. After I left Kelly's job, it got a lot easier as he and the CFO didn't have to count so high."

THAT DARN RUSSIAN RUBBLE

Crosby's next venture was the Orlimar Golf Company where he brought the vision of a direct marketing TV and print campaign and helped build participation for Orlimar on the major Tours as well as overseeing the distribution effort.

Along with like-minded owners, golf retailers Ed Dolinar and Rich Oldenburg, and the great club designer Jesse Ortiz, sales exploded from \$1.2 million per year to over \$100 million per year in less than 24 months. "Our direct response advertising campaign worked. Each dollar of advertising generated four dollars in sales. At our peak, we were shipping \$20 million per month out of a space not much bigger than a garage," beamed Crosby.

Nathaniel was also the front man to sign major golf icons at Orlimar. "There were significant names on the PGA TOUR that I tried to sign before our initial public offering," recalled Crosby. "Arnold Palmer was closing his

equipment company, Tom Watson was leaving Ram [he was playing our clubs voluntarily], and Greg Norman had just left Cobra. We had an opportunity to capture these stars through cash stock incentives and make Orlimar a permanent brand on Tour for a long time."

All the well-known Wall Street investment houses were chasing Orlimar. "I was in the Seminole locker room when a well-known investment banker nudged me and said, 'I've got \$100 million burning a hole in my pocket. Want to discuss that golf company of yours?'" reported Crosby.

Alas, the Russian ruble collapsed the week before Orlimar's scheduled IPO and the company never received safe cash reserves

to grow the company. "One by one, the available megastars signed with other companies," said a crushed Crosby. "No other golf manufacturing company went public after the summer of 1998, with Adams Golf being the last."

ORGANIZING AFFLUENT TRAVEL GROUPS

After the astounding success and ultimate fall of Orlimar, Nathaniel turned his attention to development. Projects included Chileno Bay in Mexico, St. Andrews Grand/Hamilton Hall in Scotland (the historic building behind the 18th green at the Old Course), and Private Quarters, (a fractional residence club).

"My dad loved every place he visited. If he had his way, he would have bought homes all around the world," recalled Nathaniel. "Although he had more disposable income than just about anyone in Hollywood, my mom understood the costs and the headaches from managing multiple properties as well as the financial consequences."

Nathaniel now is immersed in organizing the AppleTree Golf Society where small and geographically designed regional societies enjoy residences that are in destinations customized to typical member travel patterns.

"It is a shamelessly ambitious endeavor," said Crosby, "but a certain highly affluent market will truly appreciate the network of these great clubs. After all, what could you possibly want and not be able to have with your success in life? The answer is access to the best of private golf with a residence." ■