



**BIG BAND** *Alliance*

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**HENRY BUSSE**

## VITAL STATS



given name Henry Herman Busse

birthdate May 19, 1894

birthplace Azendorf, Germany

father Ernst Busse

residence 1776 Sullivan Canyon Rd, Westwood, CA

first wife Eleanore Lyman, a show girl, m.1925, marriage annulled 18 months later

second wife Dorothy Angeles Drake, a model and stage actress, m.Apr 18, 1929; div.1931

third wife Lorayne Brock Hall, a singer, b.Nov 11, 1901?; d.Jun 14, 1993?

son Henry Herman Busse Jr., radio broadcaster, b.Aug 22, 1931; d.Nov 23, 2013

daughter-in-law Kim Krueger, d.2011

granddaughter Heidi Busse-Hansen

membership ASCAP 1946-

death date Apr 23, 1955

place of death Memphis, TN (had played a few hours before for the Tri-States Funeral Directors Assn.)

cause of death heart attack



## **“In Search of the Truth”**

Between faulty memories, embellishments, anecdotes, little white lies, rumors, out-and-out falsehoods, rumors, and other confusion, it can be difficult to know years later what was the real story.

Henry Busse himself claimed to be a Dutchman, a native of the Netherlands. Actually, he was born in Germany, and spoke with a heavy German accent. But, evidently to avoid attention after World War I began in 1914 and Germany was one of the United States' enemies, he made that slight revision.

In a report written many years later, the United Press International (UPI) stated that he had enjoyed traveling around the world as a teenage and, at age 16 -which would have been around 1910- earned passage across the Atlantic Ocean by playing trumpet with the ship's band. When they reached the U.S., he decided to stay.

This doesn't quite match an article by historian Joseph E. Bennett, published in 2004, in which it's said that Busse had come to America in 1912, when he was around 18 years old, and played the trumpet to supplement his meager income as a bus boy in a New York City restaurant.

Bennett also provided an interesting detail from Busse's youth: that he had great acrobatic skill as a boy, and, only after suffering a broken wrist, switched from playing the violin to the trumpet.

However, that is in disagreement with yet a third article, which included comments by Busse's son, Henry Jr. It's written there that Busse had been forced to play trumpet in an uncle's band after a finger he broke set crooked and he was unable to play the piano.

Whatever the truth, once here, Busse eventually made his way west, settling in San Francisco, California in 1918. That's when and where he met Paul Whiteman, who had recently been discharged from the U.S. Navy. Whiteman, a violinist, put together a band for an engagement at the prestigious Fairmount Hotel in San Francisco, hiring Busse on trumpet.



# WANG-WANG BLUES



60

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HENRY BUSSE

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R.S.





Henry Busse with Paul Whiteman's band (Busse is sixth from the left), while Whiteman is standing and holding a violin.

Whiteman and Busse became close friends, and Busse continued to work for him until late 1928, thus helping to make history as Whiteman's band enlarged in size and in reputation.

An instrumental which Busse helped to compose, *Wang-Wang Blues*, featured his trumpet and was recorded at the Whiteman band's first Victor recording session on August 8, 1920. Later that month, the group recorded *Whispering*, with another Busse solo; that record sold an incredible two million copies!

Many other Whiteman recordings, but particularly *Hot Lips (He's Got Hot Lips When He Plays Jazz)*, made June 23, 1922, and co-written by Busse, further cemented Busse's reputation as a top man on trumpet. Of course, it later became his own band's theme song.



During a tour of Europe in 1926, Whiteman heard a composition by an Austrian dentist, *When Day Is Done*, originally titled *Madonna*. He liked it so much that he had Ferde Grofe write an arrangement featuring a Busse solo. After the Whiteman band recorded it on June 8, 1927, it became another big success (and, in fact, the tune was played at Whiteman's funeral in 1967).



A William Morris Agency promotional photo of Henry Busse.



In 1928 Busse decided to leave the Whiteman Orchestra and form his own 13-piece band.

They got their first break at Castle Farms, outside of Cincinnati, Ohio, and then, in 1931, opened for the first time at the Chez Paree nightclub in downtown Chicago.

While playing at the Forest Club in Miami Beach in 1933, his pianist-arranger Paul Sprosty came up with a lively, shuffle rhythm at the keyboard, and Busse chose to make it one of the identifiable sounds of his group.

Throughout the years, Busse's band played at a variety of venues, including hotels, across the country. Among them were the Statler in New York City, the Palace in San Francisco, the Beverly-Wilshire in Los Angeles, and the Addison in Detroit.

He also recorded for different labels, such as Victor, Columbia, and, most prominently, Decca.

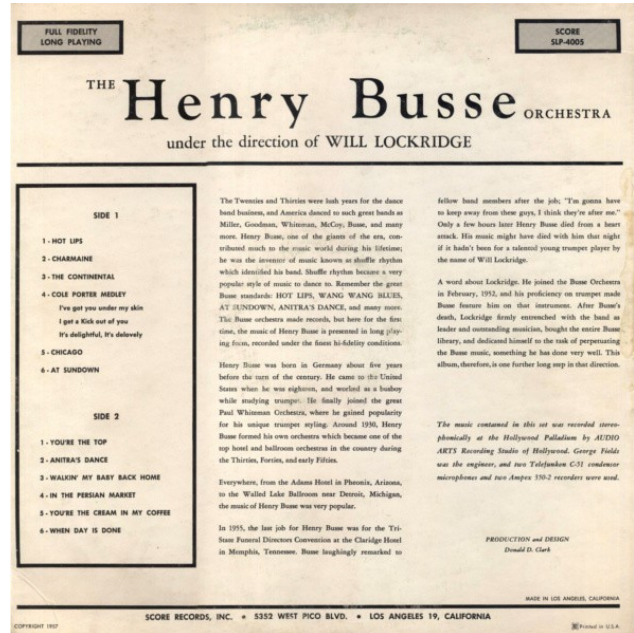


On what would be his final tour, Busse had left his California home on January 9, 1955, and had been making a series of one-night stands in the East and South. Early in the morning of April 23rd, while in his room at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee, he suffered what was described as a "preliminary heart attack" or "heart seizure," but refused hospitalization, saying that he was "feeling better." A short while later, a nurse was sent to care for him, but she found him dead in the bathroom. Ironically, he had performed for the Tri-State Funeral Directors' dance at the Claridge the previous evening.

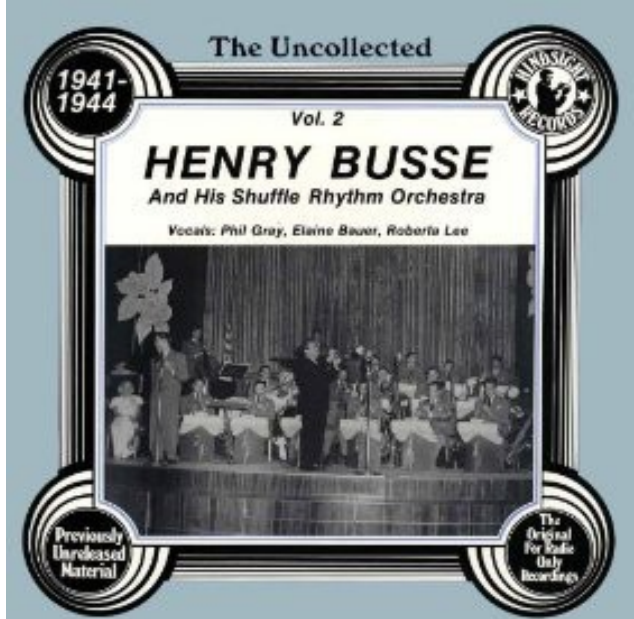
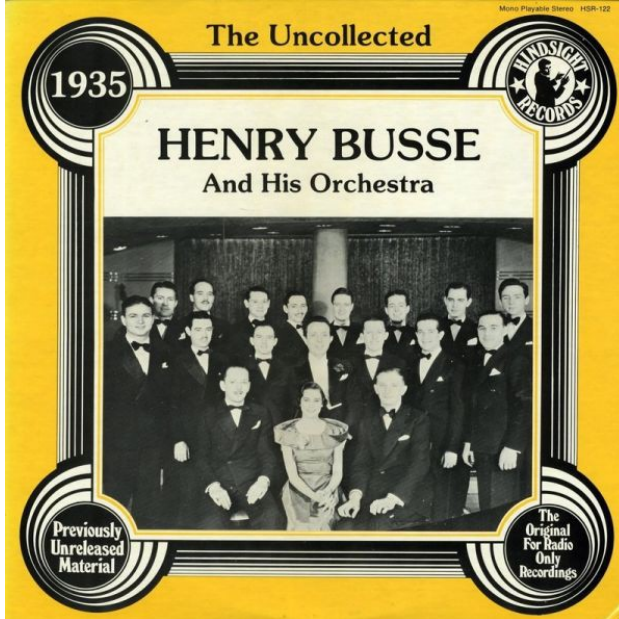
His death was quickly reported on the front-page of the Los Angeles Times newspaper.

A few days later, Busse's family and friends, including fellow bandleader Freddy Martin, gathered for a memorial service in Beverly Hills.

In April 1957, trumpeter Will Lockridge recorded a stereo tribute to Busse, and billed the band as “The Henry Busse Orchestra.” *Hot Lips* opened the selections on the album and *When Day Is Done* concluded it.



In more recent years, Busse’s musical legacy was kept alive by the issuance of a handful of collectors’ albums, such as Hindsight’s two excellent Busse LPs in 1978 and 1983, respectively.



Also, Busse’s son, Henry Jr., hosted a jazz show over WMSU, at Minnesota State University in Mankato, Minnesota, from 1979 to 1994 and even started a website dedicated to his father at shuffle-rhythm.com, but it went inactive after a short time.

It was reported that both Al Hirt and Herb Alpert, popular trumpeters of a later generation, were influenced by Busse’s work.



# BEI MIR BIST DU SCHÖN

*(Means That You're Grand)*

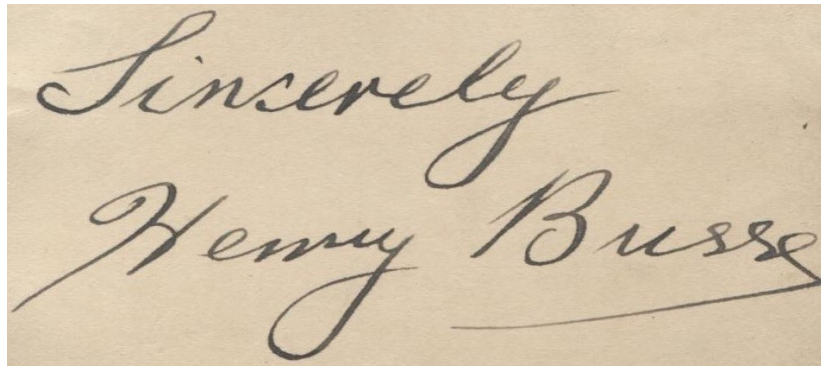
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*Featured by*  
**HENRY BUSSE**  
*and his Orchestra*

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NEW YORK





**SOURCES:**

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Tim Krohn, "Life remembered: Busse was all jazz all the time," Mankato (MN) Free Press, Nov 27, 2013.

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