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JIM SCHAEFER PHOTO

A FAMILY *Legacy* OF HORSES & BEER

by Deb Pierce



Billy Busch poses for a picture with his surprise Christmas present from his family.

Billy Busch climbed out of his Range Rover and into the bright sunshine and crisp air of a late December morning on his farm just outside of St. Louis. His wife, Christi, and two of his children had conspired to bring him there on the pretense of doing a quick interview his staff had scheduled before spending the rest of the day hanging out together. He was prepared to discuss the business of beer and his recently formed company, The William K. Busch Brewing Company, but he quickly forgot about all of that when he saw the new wagon his family had secretly ordered a few months earlier that had just been delivered.

"Did you know about this," he asked each of his children as they grinned and nodded, proud that they had kept the secret

from him for months.

The wagon wasn't Billy's first, but it was the first to promote his new beer, Kräftig, and was designed with some kid-friendly features for family rides behind his four-in-hand hitch of Belgian horses.

As you read this, I'm wondering if you are getting a sense of déjà vu. If parts of this story seem just a little bit familiar, well, they should.

William K. "Billy" Busch is from one of the most storied families in American history, and this isn't the first time a wagon has been given as a gift of celebration in this family. Just in case you aren't all that familiar with the Busch family story, I'll step back and give you a little refresher course before we come back to Billy and his own chapter.

Family History

Back in 1860 Eberhard Anheuser purchased a small brewery in St. Louis named the Bavarian Brewery. His son-in-law, Adolphus Busch (Billy's great-grandfather) joined the business a few years later and the new partnership was named Anheuser-Busch. Adolphus made significant contributions

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While his new wagon is meant for his Belgians, Billy just wouldn't be a Busch without a Clyde or two.



Terry Pierce of Belgian Hill Farm strikes an arc on the rear axle of the running gear. Note the retractable steps for easy access to the back of the wagon have already been attached. The front axle of the wagon will be the full fifth wheel gear Terry makes for all of his wagons.



The Busch family asked for weekly updates with photos routed through a third party so Billy didn't catch wind. Here, the box has had a coat of primer. In the next step, Terry will use a special automotive paint with a metallic silver flake in it to achieve the gorgeous iridescent Kräftig Green as seen on the finished wagon.

A Family Legacy continued

to the business by way of innovation and in utilizing new technology. Adolphus was the first brewer in the U.S. to add pasteurization to the brewing process. He embraced the use of artificial refrigeration, and began using the country's vast trans-continental rail lines to distribute their product nationally. The business grew.

Upon the death of Adolphus in 1913, August A. Busch (Billy's grandfather) succeeded his father as head

of the company. This was during a period in American history considered the Gilded Age, and it was common for wealthy urban industrialists to build country estates. It was during this era that August A. purchased a tract of land outside St. Louis for his primary family residence that came to be known as Grant's Farm. He built a massive French Renaissance style chateau, a working farm complex, added a menagerie of animals and built an impressive stables and

carriage collection.

August A. then led the family company through its most challenging period of time, Prohibition. When it became illegal to sell alcohol in 1920 most breweries closed their doors, but August A. fought to diversify the company's product line and eventually found some success in selling malt and yeast products to home brewers and bootleg operations. When Prohibition finally ended in 1933, his sons, Adolphus Busch III and

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August A. "Gussie" Busch Jr. purchased two wagons and 18 head of Clydesdales from the Union Stockyards and Wilson Packing Company as a gift for their father. The original six-horse hitch hauled the first cases of post-prohibition beer down Pennsylvania Avenue for delivery to President Franklin D. Roosevelt before being shipped to New York City, where it delivered Budweiser to Governor Al Smith (who had played a major role in the repeal of Prohibition) during a ceremony at the Empire State Building.

August A. passed away just a year later (1934) and his son Adolphus III took over and ran the company until his untimely death in 1946. Then Adolphus III's younger brother, August A. "Gussie" Busch Jr. (Billy's father), took over as company president. Up to this point, each generation of the Busch family brought a special talent to the development of the company, but Gussie took leadership to a new level. Under Gussie's direction the company went from producing three million barrels a year to over 34 million. By 1957 Anheuser-Busch was the largest brewery in the U.S.

Gussie re-opened the chateau at Grant's Farm in 1954 as his family's principal residence (it had been shuttered since his father's death in 1934) and it was there that he and third wife, Trudy, raised their six children. At the same time, he also opened parts of Grant's Farm to the public as a tourist attraction to help promote the brewery's image. Gussie brought back the menagerie of animals that had been sold off during the financially difficult years of his father's tenure, he established Grant's Farm as the base of the breeding program for the Budweiser Clydesdales and he continued to add to the carriage collection his father had started.

Gussie loved to drive horses and a four-in-hand was his favorite. He would drive horses every day when he got home from work taking his family along for the ride. Upon his death in 1989, Gussie bequeathed to he and Trudy's six children the 281-acre estate of Grant's Farm, and placed the property in a trust for the six of them. His desire was that it would be maintained in the man-



With his family's 150 years of beer brewing experience behind him, Billy Busch is in a great position to take his Kräftig (the German word for "strength") far.

ner in which he and his father had developed.

When Gussie retired from the company in 1975, his son August A. Busch III took over as CEO of the company. Subsequent to August III's tenure, his son August Busch IV took the helm until InBev, a Belgium-Brazilian conglomerate merged with Anheuser-Busch in 2009.

Blue Heron Farm

Billy Busch grew up at Grant's Farm and spent much of his youth working with the menagerie of animals and in the farm operations there. His love and passion for Grant's Farm became apparent as he spoke about his childhood memories as we toured Blue Heron Farm, the tract of land near Defiance, Missouri, that he and wife, Christi, have developed as a retreat for their family of seven children.



Throughout the entire farm is an amazing network of rustic roads and trails that take you over the rolling hills, down through rocky creek beds and wooded areas, past a lake, weathered barns and working fields. There are several pastures of horses and a small cattle herd. Billy pointed out a distant barn where they keep Alpacas and laying hens.

We stopped in a small wooded meadow where miniature mules hang out, and Billy told the story of his first team, a pair of miniature mules named "Soup and Noodle," a gift from his father for the purpose of learning to drive. Next, we drove out into a pasture to see his Belgians, and then stopped to pet a pair of young Clydesdale mares in a corral. Family legacy is important to Billy.

It's obvious that Billy loves horses of all kinds, but polo ponies are his real equine passion. He has been a very competitive polo player for all of his life. He keeps about 60 head of polo ponies at the farm, including a stallion, and he raises a few foals each year. There are two competition level polo fields on the farm where Billy and Christi host polo tournaments and a few charity events each year. The polo fields area of the farm is reminiscent of Grant's Farm in that it is open to the public each summer. Billy and Christi welcome anyone who wants to come out to picnic and watch the polo practices on Saturday afternoons.

Our conversation turned back to Grant's Farm and the ongoing legal battle over its future. When InBev merged with Anheuser-Busch, it also removed all ownership of stock by Busch family members. Included in the purchase were the animals at Grant's farm (including the Clydesdales), but not the farm itself, as it was personally owned by the Busch family and had always been leased to Anheuser-Busch to run the portions of the farm that were open to the public. The neighboring St. Louis Zoo recently made an offer of \$30 million to purchase Grant's Farm from the family trust to expand the Zoo and add to their programs—in turn, InBev offered to donate \$10 million to assist the Zoo in their quest.

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A Family Legacy continued

Billy would like to keep Grant's Farm in the family as his father bequeathed. Consequently, he's made a counter-offer to buy out his siblings' interests, but four of the five are in favor of selling the property to the Zoo instead. When I asked Billy why InBev would make an offer like that to assist the Zoo, he said "I don't know. InBev has already taken so much away from my family; I don't know why they want to take our family home as well."

The issue is scheduled to go to court and will be decided by a Judge later this year.

William K. Busch Brewing Company

Billy established the William K. Busch Brewing Company in 2011. The company currently produces two beers: Kräftig Lager and Kräftig Light. Billy's goal is to produce quality lager beers by brewing them under the standards of a 500-year-old German purity law called Reinheitsgebot. In what is probably the oldest consumer protection standard in the world, Reinheitsgebot states that only four ingredients can be used when brewing beer: water, barley, yeast and hops.

Billy says this is a natural process that takes longer to brew beer, and when you combine the process with the highest quality North American barley, Hallertau hops and premium brewers yeast, you end up with a superior beer. No other brewers of mainstream lagers in the U.S. are using this process.

The company is small, but growing. Distribution is currently limited to Missouri, Illinois and Texas. The beer is being brewed in Wisconsin, but Billy hopes to be able to build a brewery in his hometown of St. Louis soon. He must be doing something right, because Kräftig Light has won four consecutive gold medals in the annual U.S. Open Beer Championships which has nearly 4,000 beers entered from around the world each year. No other brewing company has ever won four consecutive gold medals at this event.

When I asked Billy why he decided to start a brewing company, he simply said that it is because brewing beer is what his family has always done. Whether you talk about family, horses or beer, Billy Busch is very proud of the legacy he has been given.

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