

VON TRAPP FAMILY

Agathe Johanna Erwina Gobertina von Trapp (1913 to 2010)

AGATHE VON TRAPP | Died Dec. 28, 2010

Reclusive eldest daughter of 'Sound of Music' fame

Agathe von Trapp, the eldest daughter of the von Trapp singing family made famous in the musical "The Sound of Music," died of congestive heart failure Tuesday at a hospice in Towson, Md., a Baltimore suburb. She was 97 and lived in nearby Brooklandville.

Accounts in The Baltimore Sun said that for the past five decades, after she and her siblings stopped performing as the Trapp Family Singers, she lived a quiet life as "a virtual recluse" in Glyndon, another suburb of Baltimore. She was a kindergarten teacher's helper at a private Catholic school for many years, said a friend, Mary Louise Kane, with whom she lived.

The article noted that in the movie that dominated the 1965 Academy Awards and broke box-office records, Ms. von Trapp came out of her shell at "16 going on 17," but the reality of her life was different.

"It's very strange for me; I've been living a very quiet life. All of a sudden, these people want to see me," she said at the time she published her autobiography in which she sought to set the record straight between fact and fiction.

She wanted people to know that her father, Captain Georg von Trapp, a widowed Austrian aristocrat who was played by Christopher Plummer in the film and Theodore Bikel on Broadway, was not cold, unfeeling and distant. She insisted he was a kind and loving father.

"Agathe von Trapp cried when she saw the show at its Broadway opening in 1959. She would have

been just as enchanted as the rest of the audience had the characters' last name been Miller. But this was her family's name, and it was not her family's story," the 2003 Sun story said.

Among other changes, the children's first names and sexes had been changed. In real life, Agathe von Trapp had an older brother, but in the musical the eldest child was a girl, Liesl.

As the eldest daughter, Agathe von Trapp had assumed that was her. But as a teenager she never had a boyfriend, much less a telegram-delivering Nazi.

"In those days, people didn't date like they do here, and teenage boys didn't deliver telegrams," she explained in 2003.

Agathe von Trapp said the nun Maria (played by Mary Martin and later Julie Andrews) who became her stepmother was not a governess. She was a tutor for one of the von Trapp sisters, who was too weak from scarlet fever to make a 45-minute trek to school.

And the children were quite well-versed in music by the time they met Maria, who went by the nickname Gustl.

Agathe von Trapp said the family did not cross the Alps to escape Austria. They crossed the street and boarded a train.

Agathe von Trapp was born in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. She sang with her siblings until she was 43. While in the musical group, she did not stray far from her stepmother, by then widowed and running the Trapp Family Lodge in Stowe, Vt.

Survivors include a brother, Johannes von Trapp; and three sisters, Maria, Eleanor and Rosemarie, all of Vermont.

people

From Web and wire reports

Say so long, farewell, auf wiedersehen and goodbye to "The Sound of Music's" real Liesl: **Agathe von Trapp**, eldest daughter of the Austrian family

who inspired the hugely popular Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, has died at the age of 97 of heart failure in Maryland, according to reports. In the hit musical she was portrayed by **Charmain Carr** as Liesl, singing the duet "Sixteen Going on Seventeen" with Rolf. While liking the film version starring **Julie Andrews** and **Christopher Plummer**, she felt her father came across as too strict.

"She cried when she first saw it because of the way they portrayed him," said **Mary Louise Kane**, the friend who lived with Agathe von Trapp for half a century. "She said that if it had been about another family she would have loved it." The original Trapp Family Singers performed in Europe and North America in the 1930s and '40s with their father, Austrian naval Capt. Georg Ritter von Trapp, and stepmother Maria. Four of the singers are still alive: Maria, 96; Rosmarie, 81; Eleonore "Lorli" von Trapp Campbell, 79; and Johannes, 71. Agathe von Trapp will be buried at a cemetery at the Trapp Family Lodge in Stowe, Vt.