

“The Sound of Music”: Fact or Fiction

Real Story of the von Trapp Family

Von Trapps Reunited, Without the Singing

“She was a very strong minded, strong willed woman,” said Marshall Faye, a baker who has worked at the lodge for more than 30 years. “She ruled the family. Anything they did had to have her blessing.”

But after she died in 1987, the family members — 32 of whom owned stock in the lodge — started to fracture. Johannes engineered a buyout in 1994 and resolved a lawsuit with relatives in 1999. “I honestly resented the fact that none of my older siblings could’ve took over the business,” he said. “Then I could’ve run off and done whatever I wanted to do.”

If he had to run a lodge, he wanted a quiet, dignified one. He enjoys events like the Friday night wine tastings, where he can sip Grüner Veltliners and greet guests in the patrician fashion he learned as a boy.

But in the off season, the “Sound of Music” bus tours arrive, full of seniors who line their purses with cellophane so they can stuff them with Austrian pastries at the breakfast buffet. He recently discovered that his gift shop had been selling a stuffed goat that sings “The Lonely Goatherd.”

“Isn’t that awful?” he said, sighing. “My staff hid it from me for months. But it does sell.”

Since the buyout, the lodge has been profitable, if not enormously so, he said. It provides well for his family — his wife, Lynne, whom he met when she was a singing waitress at the lodge, and his children, Sam and Kristina, 38, who recently moved back to Stowe and built a house on the 2,400-acre property.

For Sam, a generation removed from “The Sound of Music,” the burden of being a von Trapp is lighter. He has seen the movie only twice, and is the child of a Vermonter, not the son of an Austrian baron. “For him, there were all those issues in the family, too, that came along with that little leap into fame,” Sam said of his father.

Since his return, the younger Mr. von Trapp has made snow making his big project, spending nights on the snow-covered meadows in 10-degree weather, doing the heavy manual work it requires. He plans to bring back holiday singalongs and to advertise the lodge during ABC’s broadcast of “The Sound of Music” on Sunday, which his father once opposed.