



Creating family TRADITIONS SMUGGS-STYLE

A peek at a few
time-tested & treasured family activities

By Rebecca Klein

With the daily grind of work, school and other activities, there are days when the Fabrega family of five barely gets to bid each other more than “good morning” and “good night.” But what happens during the school year in Tallahassee, Florida stays down South when these Club Owners make their summer pilgrimage to Smugglers’ Notch.

“I think of our time at Smuggs as being a privilege,” shares mom, Stacy. Most nights, you’ll find Stacy, her husband and kids — ages 9, 16 and 18 — at one of the Resort’s family activities. “Daily life just doesn’t afford that kind of connectivity with your family,” she notes. “I think it definitely brings us closer,” chimes in her daughter, Taylor, who starts college this fall.

Whether your Smuggs stay is for three days, a week or more, here are just a few of the time-tested activities that may become part of your family’s treasured traditions.



“Even Madonna started here ... We named the mountain after her. ”



Sundown, Song Set

The weekly Bonfire Sing-Along is a Fabrega family must-do during their summer stays. “It’s really communal,” describes 16-year-old Alex of the atmosphere. Tunes like Puff the Magic Dragon, Hotel California, and If You’re Happy and You Know It have run on refrain since the event’s debut nearly 20 years ago.

“It transcends generations,” says Club Owner Mary Kay Carroll, of East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. “Even our son Tommy, who is 14, leaves the teen center to join us.”

Charlie Rice, known as *Goodtime Charlie*, leads the event. He revels in the fact that some of the kids who once gathered at the bonfire now attend as adults with their own children, and he enjoys “seeing the family tree grow into a forest.” He knows better than to consider replacing the event or dramatically shaking up what he strums on his guitar. “I continually have parents tell me that their kids talk about it throughout the year. The first time I heard that, it gave me a different perspective.”

Charlie debuted at Smuggs in 1971 when his then rock band, Downpour, played for the après ski crowd. His second act came in the ’80s with his *Goodtime Charlie* role. That’s when he suggested adult karaoke to management, thinking it would last a year or two. He now leads two weekly summertime family karaoke nights and two adult sessions, crediting the popularity in part to all the hit TV singing shows.

The Fabregas recall how even when son, Conner, belted out his ABCs at age 3, the crowd hooted and hollered. Mary Kay and Tommy Carroll have teamed up to perform Bon Jovi. Her son, Patrick, who is autistic and non-verbal, has taken the stage with the family and swayed to the music. Between songs, guests hear classic Charlie jokes like: “Even Madonna started here. We named the mountain after her.”

“It’s all about giving guests the vacation that’s unlike anything else,” describes Charlie, adding they often become like family. He feels honored when he receives cards between visits. “To know you have touched people that way, it’s remarkable.”

Bingo Bliss

Bingo also draws big crowds. Announcer Reinita Delgado-Arnold is as much a part of the tradition as the game. “I’m always trying to get them to laugh,” she says of her 28-year gig. The guests entertain her when they mimic her calling style, dragging out the “ooooh” in every two.

“This is kind of like having dinner together,” Reinita explains of the family environment. When parents only get cards for their kids, she’ll try to persuade them to play too. “They’re always coming back after and saying, ‘I’m so glad you had us do that.’”

Participants pay \$5 for three cards and can win cash or play free and score candy. Profits go to the local United Way. When Reinita reminds everyone to pick up their macaroni Bingo markers at the end, regulars will mimic her as she deadpans, “We might need it for lunch tomorrow.”

Reinita works full-time for a government program that helps people with disabilities find jobs. She also teaches ballroom and salsa dance. In all of her

roles, she enjoys seeing people follow their passions. Renita will never forget the little boy who would sit with her as she announced the game during his visits. He is now a grown-up and a professional actor. “His family thanks me all the time for inspiring him.”

Games on the Green

During your stay, you just may see an 8-foot snapping Styrofoam alligator or a puzzle that outsizes the players set to a backdrop of excited kids and those who get to replay the role. Garry Loomis the *FunMeister* is the mastermind behind the Bigger is Better games on the Village Green and many other activities. “It’s fun to be a catalyst in bringing families together in creating memories,” shares Garry, who became the Resort’s first full-time children’s ski instructor in 1980 and later added his *FunMeister* hat.

“It’s like I’m 10-years-old again and that guy across the way from you – well he’s 10-years-old too. There are no deadlines or meetings. There’s just playing the game and having fun,” describes dad John Carroll, of what he calls a Brady Bunch atmosphere. “The best part is you get to do it with your kids. You get to share a part of their world...”

“I just think it’s really cool to chill out and have fun with them,” reports Tommy of the time he and his brother spend with their parents. “We learned that they like to play games. They’re always working here,” he says, of home.

The Bigger is Better games combine skill and luck (read: so mom and dad won’t automatically win) and are designed for diverse ages. For the gigantic puzzles, players race against the clock and face the challenge of what Garry calls a “wicked curve ball;” some of the pieces are mirror images of each other. In the Snappin’ Alligator game, modeled after a tabletop version, players push different teeth until one causes the gator’s jaws to close. A retired engineer and a blacksmith helped Garry create the jaws, using a junkyard radiator fan and a car starter.

“We always try to put our own twist on it,” says Garry, of supersizing familiar games. “Everything we do has been Smugglerized.”

During the I-Did-A-Cart event, participants use duct tape, poster paint and cardboard to build a derby dummy, which rides a go-cart down lower Morse along a track, ending with a short ramp. With three top places in 10 categories, including best team cheer, biggest crash and most creative — everyone wins.

The Smugglers’ Team

“They seem to have as much fun as we do,” says John Fabrega of the staff. His teens, Taylor and Alex, who work at the Resort during their six-week summer visits and have even assumed the identities of *Mogul Mouse* and *Billy Bob Bear*, have a behind-the-scenes understanding. “They do their best to make sure every guest feels special,” finds Alex. “They are all really sweet to us, everyone not just us,” adds younger brother, Conner.

As for those who have entertained guests for far longer — “We all started when we were 5, 6, 7 years old,” quips Charlie, who is now experiencing the

Resort’s traditions through his young grandchildren’s eyes.

Garry, whose position translates to bragging rights for his three young daughters, has also watched guests grow up and return with their kids: “I remember a particular family that had a little girl and a little boy...” This writer had a hunch of what was coming next... “All of a sudden they appear with their own 3rd generation and end up doing interviews with me.”

Rebecca Klein is the editor of Modern Babies & Children magazine based in Maryland and a freelance writer. She also has a background in TV news and video production. Rebecca thanks her parents, Elaine and Roger Klein, for many incredible vacation memories and loves spending time at Smuggs with them; her husband, Grant, and their two kids, Seth and Samara; her brother, Ben, sister-in-law, Liz, and niece, Nora.

For a weekly calendar of family activities, including appearances by Rockin’ Ron the *Friendly Pirate* and Marko the *Magician*, pick up a copy of the Resort Information Guide at Guest Services. Visit smuggs.com to read more about the activities offered.

