



# FAMILY TRAILS CARVED THROUGH THE GENERATIONS

BY REBECCA KLEIN

Early one morning, still in withdrawal from our just-ended Smuggs getaway, my then 2-year-old son, Seth, climbed into my bed, nuzzled up to me and whispered, “Mama, we’re Snugglers Notchin’.”

His storybook souvenir, *Smugglers’ Snugglers Snowy Play*, written by another mother for her children, may have sparked his sweet sentiment. More on her story a little later.

Seth, now 5, and my 3-year-old daughter, Samara, already have the same soft spot for the Resort as the two generations before them. My parents, my younger brother and I first took a Smugglers’ ski trip in 1981 when I was 8. The following year, I remember racing room to room, ecstatic about the new Slopeside home away from home.

So many standout childhood adventures took place with Smuggs as the backdrop—in the summer, hiking, horseback riding, braving the big waterslide, trying the ropes challenge course and sleeping at the top of Sterling with camp, and in the winter, skiing as a family. I loved reconnecting with the friends my brother and I met on previous visits. We enjoyed the kind of freedom to explore on our own that didn’t come

until years later in our New Jersey suburb and the concentrated family time trailside, fireside and poolside that's tough to squeeze into the daily grind.

Now, thanks to some creative schedule juggling, our family of nine, spanning three generations, takes an annual ski trip to Smuggs. My little ones also love Smuggs in the Summer, especially any activity involving Mogul Mouse. The same excitement I experienced each time we arrived at the Village while growing up continues today as we make the journey from Baltimore. Turns out I'm not alone.

"I get giddy when I make the turn off 108 into the Village," shares Kristen Townsend, who now visits with her husband, Scott, and sons, Colby, almost 3, and Parker, 10 months. She recalls how her mom and stepfather became club owners in the late '80s when she was a little girl and would load up their blended New Jersey family of seven kids into the station wagon each Summer. "You grow up seeing the same people the same week every year. You see the same counselors and lifeguards. It just kind of becomes home."

The Townsends, who live outside Mystic, Connecticut and shared their first ski trip when dating in college, bought their own club ownership last year.

"I feel like I'm living my childhood again because he is seeing it for the first time," says Kristen, referring to Colby, who did the Little Rascals on Snow ski program this past winter. A big moment came as Colby followed through on his agreement to surrender his last pacifier to Mogul Mouse or Billy Bob Bear after completing another milestone, the Cookie Race, where little skiers get cookies at the end of a mini-course. Following the event, Mogul Mouse received the pacifier as his own unexpected treat (later reclaimed by Mom when Colby wasn't looking).

The sideline announcer of my daughter's Cookie Race—Garry the FunMeister—was the ski instructor I used to look up to for his ability to imitate the hot chocolate machine. It was such an incredible feeling to watch my little ones experience their Cookie Races as I reveled in their thrill and relived my own. I still have what became a surprise souvenir—a Cookie Race picture of me that turned up in a Resort ad.

Mary Kay Sloan, of Somers, Connecticut, created a touching keepsake for her three daughters and in turn for other children. Her Smugglers' Winter-themed children's book and her follow-up Summer story, *Smugglers' Smugglers Sunny Play*, which includes an illustration by each of her girls, is available at the Smugglers' Country Store.

"I'm a huge believer in family vacation memories," she says. "The memories will stay with you for your whole life."

Her husband, Chris Sloan, recalls first bringing Mary Kay skiing to the "Sloan retreat" in college. "The family took to her immediately. She adopted the sport."

Chris and his family, his sister Hillary Ingham and her family, and matriarch Claire Sloan now overlap their Summer stays in the Mountainview condo that Claire and her late husband bought in the '70s, when their three children ranged from their early to older teen years.

"It's one of the places where I feel my father the most," says Chris. "We've shared so many chairlift rides."

Claire, who lives in Ridgefield, Connecticut, knows her late husband would have enjoyed watching the grandkids experience Smuggs. "They're just having a blast," she describes. "I think for the children, it's just the best memory. It draws them closer."

Goodtime Charlie is a familiar presence to Smugglers' visitors of all ages – whose vacation memories have been shaped by his family entertainment programs.



As the Resort has grown over the years, Kristen Townsend points out, "Ultimately, it's still the same good old Smuggs. The family atmosphere has never changed." She enjoys the build-your-own-adventure style and can't wait until her kids are old enough to try the activities that weren't available when she was little and to experience traditions like bingo.

"I lived for going to bingo," she says, slipping into the game caller's nasal "Bee-tew-ooo" (B-2) that she's heard since childhood. The Sloans schedule their time around the event. Chris adds that everyone knows the caller's banter and yells it out. She is "often imitated, rarely duplicated," he quips.

Hillary Ingham, of Ellicott City, Maryland, teases her kids that they now have "the Cadillac experience." Even so, her three kids go rock hopping up the stream, just as she did as a kid. "It's the only place that we go to that's from my childhood. That's why it's so meaningful," she shares.

She recalls many Christmas memories, including once in the early '80s when her family needed a last minute tree. She and her brother, David, headed out with a kitchen knife searching for a small roadside tree and picked up a young hitchhiker. Turns out the kid lived on a nearby farm and cut down a 5-footer for them. She also remembers the major efforts her parents made to make their holidays spent at Smugglers' special and says it taught her the importance of working to make family memories.

Like his sister, Chris appreciates being able to pass down the Smugglers' experience. His 15-year-old daughter, Kelsey, already understands that the time spent has value beyond the activities themselves, observing, "It's a way to really connect with your family."

She and her family have bonded over hiking, skiing, family karaoke, parties with Goodtime Charlie and more.

"Everyone is having a good time. You're breathing in the fresh air. It's beautiful. It's about the family," sums up Mary Kay, Kelsey's mom.

As the Townsends create their own family traditions, Scott hopes his sons one day do the same and that they know, "It's not my Smuggs, it's their Smuggs."

*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; her brother, Ben, sister-in-law, Liz, and niece, Nora.*

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