

Jewish businessman makes Vermont a worldwide attraction

By Mike Cohen

Smugglers' Notch, Vermont—It is the number one family resort in North America, according to a 2000 Ski Reader's Survey, and for the past 28 years it has been firmly in Jewish hands. Nestled among the spectacular green mountains of Vermont, with beautiful views, a warm environment, shopping, dining, endless recreation and cozy, comfortable accommodations, Smugglers' Notch Resort has also gained a lot of friends

in Canada for accepting our looney at par for trips booked in advance.

"The Canadian funds at par policy is painful for us," Smugglers' owner Bill Stritzler said. "We're counting on the Canadian dollar to strengthen and when it does we hope our Canadian guests will remember that we were one of the few resorts to continue accepting their dollar at par when times were tough."

Stritzler became the sole owner of Smugglers' in November 1996, after

serving as the managing director for 10 years before that. He and his wife Vi first encountered the resort in 1977 when they bought a condominium here. Owners get to choose three weeks a year to stay at their residence, splitting the profits for rentals during the remainder of the year with the Smugglers' administration. Stritzler was a rising executive at AT&T. At Smugglers' he became more than just a resident, eventually joining the board of directors of the association

of homeowners in the early 1980s. Stritzler got to know Stanley Snider, the Jewish owner of the resort at that time. Snider would end up hiring Stritzler to run the place and later sell him this gigantic property not far from Stowe.

Last year Stritzler's daughter Lisa was married here with all the kosher trimmings. "We spent the better part of a year making sure everything met the requirements of our rabbi," he said. "A portion of the kitchen at one of our on-site restaurants was koshered. We had the ceremony here. It was beautiful."

Jewish guests, particularly from Montreal, frequent this place regularly. Hebrew Academy in Montreal arranges annual ski trips here and sets up kosher kitchens in the on-site condominiums. A National Council of Synagogue Youth (NCSY) chapter from Toronto also visited the resort a few years ago.

Jewish visitors now have something more to smile about. The nearby Jewish Community of Greater Stowe (JCOGS) has hired a young spiritual leader, Brian Besser, and a fundraising campaign is presently underway with the hopes of seeing the area's first ever synagogue built within the year.

Renowned for its award-winning family programming, Smugglers' has traditionally offered special rates for Canadians. This policy is now being extended for the AutumnFest program from September 4 to October 14. AutumnFest is designed for those families with children and grandchildren aged five and under who are not constrained by



Bill Stritzler (right) accompanied by Andrew Goldman, a Jewish sales executive

school calendars. Daily on-site programs for children are provided at no extra cost. Even couples traveling without kids will enjoy these packages, with everything from guided hikes and walks, tennis, a golf driving range, art workshops, heated indoor or outdoor pools and hot tubs. Stritzler boasts that even the popular spring break period next March will see Canadian bucks at par. That's quite a bargain

snowshoeing also on the agenda. There are 67 trails and nine lifts.

Options include activities such as child care and ski school. This policy means that the March school vacation week is also offered at par.

Accommodations make guests feel right at home. From studio condominiums to five bedroom townhouses, the 500 slopeside units have kitchens, living and dining rooms, microwaves and even VCRs. Many units include fireplaces and balconies. This is a virtual city, with as many as 1,000 full and part-time staffers. Guests can park their car upon check-in and not require those wheels for the duration of the trip. Restaurants, lounges, boutiques, a golf driving range, tennis courts, a grocery store, private massage sessions and evening entertainment are all within an easy walk or convenient village shuttle ride. During the summer months, Smugglers' takes care of everyone from toddlers to teens via its sensational camp program, with an impressive ratio of two counselors per every eight kids. Rave reviews are merited for the newly instituted Peak of the Week Family Day on Wednesdays and the presence of a true Vermont Country Fair on Thursday evenings.

Smugglers' Notch is two hours by car from Montreal and easily accessible via the Burlington Airport, which is less than an hour away.

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since it costs Canadians about \$1.60 for every U.S. dollar.


The place has no fewer than eight pools and three waterslides. They remain open until October 15, weather permitting. In a few weeks, one facility featuring a pool, wading pool, water slide and two whirlpools will be covered by a protective bubble so it can remain operational year-round.

During fall foliage season, the green mountains are ablaze in red, amber and gold. Ski season begins in late November and continues until mid-April with snowboarding, cross-country skiing and

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