



Written by [Kurt Hyde](#) on February 26, 2014

Last Von Trapp Family Singer Dies at 99

Maria Franziska von Trapp (shown, inset), the last surviving member of the singing family whose story inspired the movie *The Sound of Music*, died February 18 at her home in Vermont at the age of 99.

The von Trapps' story of fleeing Austria after the Nazi takeover was immortalized in the movie *The Sound of Music*. Like most works of historic fiction, the film dramatically altered a number of the actual events. For example, the marriage of Georg von Trapp to Maria Augusta Kutschera was in 1927, not on the eve of the Anschluss in 1938 as portrayed in the movie. Additionally, the family's exit from Austria was as passengers on a train, not the daring escape moviegoers witnessed.



Nevertheless, the historic fiction scenes were based on the realities of the von Trapp family's life in Austria while the Nazis were skillfully implementing their dictatorship immediately following the Anschluss. In one such scene, Herr Zeller, a Nazi collaborator who was rewarded with political position for his efforts, has the following encounter with Captain von Trapp:

Herr Zeller: You were sent a telegram, which you did not answer — a telegram from Admiral von Schreiber of the Navy of the Third Reich.

Captain von Trapp: I was under the impression, Herr Zeller, that the contents of telegrams in Austria are private — at least the Austria I know.

While such an encounter probably never occurred as portrayed, the verbal exchange does reflect the reality of the Nazis' warrantless monitoring of private telephone calls and telegrams.

This scene also serves as a wake-up call for modern-day Americans. In 1965, when *The Sound of Music* was initially released, American theatergoers frequently gasped at this point in the movie. The thought of government agents monitoring private communications of law-abiding citizens without obtaining a warrant in compliance with the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution aroused audience feelings of disgust for the Nazis. Although not depicted in the movie, the Nazis had implemented their police state powers, such as this spying on people's telegrams and phone calls, by disguising their intentions as fighting terrorism.

The von Trapps' experience is a heart-warming story of a family with sincere Christian values who were forced to choose between comfort and freedom on multiple occasions — and who repeatedly chose freedom.

Rest in peace to Maria Franziska von Trapp and the other members of her immediate family.



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