

Rich families face a marriage problem

By Liz Moyer, Wall Street Journal

Being born to the manor is one thing. Marrying one of its occupants is something else altogether.

Just ask Steven Siig, a self-described “ski bum” and extreme-sports documentary filmmaker who was living near Lake Tahoe and scraping by as a landscaper when he met his wife, Melissa, in 2001.

Unbeknown to him, she was the oldest granddaughter of Richard Bloch, the co-founder of the tax-preparation firm H&R Block Inc. Melissa Siig, now 41 years old, didn't tell him this right away. “We're very guarded about it,” she said.

“It was kind of intimidating,” said Steven Siig, 45, when he learned of her background. “I said, ‘Wow, it's someone I use to do my taxes when I do my taxes.’ I didn't even know if I had done taxes the last few years.”

The couple was engaged six months after they began dating, and Siig began a rapid-fire process of education and assimilation into the family – a move some financial consultants call “onboarding.” Bloch family members gave him personal finance and career advice, and the couple later started meeting with a UBS AG financial adviser. Steven Siig joined the RA Bloch Cancer Foundation board, along with his new wife, and started attending twice-a-year family gatherings in Aspen, Colo., and Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

The onboarding process is one way wealthy families are trying to smooth intrafamily relations and safeguard their fortunes for future generations. As the scions of the patriarchs grow up and get married, the importance of teaching about wealth

and its preservation rises, according to families and their advisers.

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