

Charles E. Fienning
5 Pathfinder Drive
Sumter, SC 29150

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Ms. Edith M. Croake
14 Ridgemor Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Dear Edie:

The cover of the *2011 Fienning Family Directory* features this statement: "Our family is a circle of strength and love. With every birth and every union the circle grows. Every joy shared adds more love. Every crisis faced together makes the circle stronger." That statement is a good summary of "what it means to be part of the Fienning Family".

A pencil-size stick of wood can be easily broken. But a band of two dozen sticks has strength. And so it is with the Fiennings.

Over the years, love and joy have been accompanied by discord and sadness. As you, Edie, have pointed out, it's easier to make an entry in the "Book of Love" than it is in the "Book of Forgiveness". The *Holy Bible* commands us to live a life that exemplifies both love and forgiveness. The family has strived to do this, difficult as it is.

The Fiennings are "work horses" not "show horses". We're an unpretentious lot who value work, personal responsibility, and individual initiative. Children are expected to get an education and then GO TO WORK. In an American population comprised of people who make things happen, people who watch things happen, and people who don't know what's happening, the Fiennings have a large number of family members who 'make (good) things happen'. We tend to be 'doers' not 'watchers'. Our work ethic is strong.

The Fiennings tend to 'work to live' not 'live to work'. Family members have avocations and hobbies, enjoy picnics and parties, and can tell you what their next weekend plans are as early as Monday. Fiennings tend to smile a lot, hug each other, and live in the present.

Faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior runs strong among the Fiennings. Few family reunions feature a religious service of any kind. The family’s ‘attitude of gratitude’ to God is evident in the interactions among family members and in their outreach to others with whom they associate. As with all families, there have been some ‘family feuds’, but in time, these have been overcome by God’s love and grace and a willingness to forgive one another and ‘move forward’.

Mental illness has its place in the family gene pool. Over the years, family members have sought to understand the causes and treatment of brain disorders that are mostly genetic in origin. Some family members have devoted their life’s work to studying and treating mental illnesses. Members who have lost a loved one to suicide have sought to counsel others within and without the family about brain disorders and how to deal with a loved one who is afflicted.

Fienning family members are active citizens who ‘give back’ to the communities in which they live. In ways large and small, the Fiennings are devoted to improving the space in which they live. As Ed Fienning said, “Community service is the price you pay for the space you occupy.” Good citizenship is practiced by family members who vote, pay their taxes, and contribute to the well-being of their city or town of residence. Some members have served the public in the military service or elective office.

My father, Ed Fienning, told me, “The best thing that your mother and I have given to you, Jenny, and Kathy is a good name. You can easily ruin that reputation. So be on guard and keep up the good Fienning name.”

It’s an honor to carry the name “Fienning” and to be part of this wonderful family.

Love,

Charles E. Fienning