

The Fienning Family

In looking back, I never really thought much about what it meant to be a member of the Fienning Family. My family really consisted of my mom, my dad and my two sisters. The Fienning family was a place we visited. Where we had Grandparents, aunts, uncles and yes, cousins. It was the car or train ride, 1011, the third floor, the boxing gloves, German potato salad, Glenn Miller Park, the swing, "working" at the store, lots of relatives, smiles and food. The visits were always too short. Occasionally, the family would visit us in Des Plaines and occasionally we would visit the family in Iowa or Oklahoma or just wherever they were. The Fienning family was a constant; a place of stability, but a fixture in my life that I did not focus on in my early years, though I did enjoy the visits and always was made to feel that I belonged.

Through my middle years I had much the same opinion. Distance, other priorities and raising my own family were factors that kept me from thinking very much about my Fienning connection. It was still a constant, even though the family was changing, and I enjoyed visiting whenever the opportunity arose, usually at a reunion, a wedding or just an overnight stay. Taking over producing the family directory did keep me somewhat in touch and I became familiar with names, changes in the family and an appreciation for what George Fienning had started. It did point out to me that it takes effort to really maintain contact with each member; something I am not good at.

Nōw, when I am older, and my head isn't clogged with so much trivia, it is fun to look back and appreciate what the family has meant to me. Each member had an influence on my life, both good and bad. I have a vivid memory of each member. I am grateful for each and every one. It all starts with Grandpa saying "mind your good mother." That seems to be the foundation. Then our Grandma in charge in the kitchen in her wheelchair that would leave tracks on your toes. The same chair she used for squirming when watching wrestling. An aunt and an uncle that could get magic from a keyboard. The joy on the face of Paul with a new wallet. The fun of 'a nickel on the corner'. A two-holer in the garage. An oil well gusher and tent revivals. The caregivers. The Dairy Queen. The love and respect shown to each other. And much, much more. But, most of all, the Fienning Family gave me my "Good Mother".