

What has it meant to you to be part of the Fienning Family?

Recently, cousin Edie asked each of us to write our thoughts on "what it means to us personally to be a Fienning"? I have given it a lot of thought lately as I have worked on the creation of the new Von Pein-Fienning website. I can think of many adjectives and verbs to describe what it means such as loved, honored, hardworking and values driven; fun loving, caring, helpers, and proud. I can say how we learned all these qualities from our elders who learned them from theirs. We have shared births, deaths, tragedies and especially our Name.

We have a rich and vast history of both nobility through our grandmothers Frances and Rika and a peasant's history of hope and determination as German immigrants coming to America.

We have many shared memories, as cousins, of warm summer days in the back yard of '1011', fighting over the hammock or swing and eating watermelon, the juices running down our chins. We celebrated special birthdays, anniversaries and holidays around the ever expanding dining room table. We all heard at one time or another Grandpa George's lecture on the virtue of eating your food slowly so as not to develop stomach trouble, or when we got a little too rambunctious he reminded us of his strong right arm and that the boxing gloves were hanging up in the basement ready for the use! Many of the cousins learned from Grandma Rika how to make the Christmas apple people for the table decorations, or perhaps helped fill the gum drop tree while helping ourselves to a few.

We have become Doctors and Lawyers, laborers, teachers, nurses, musicians, religious and community leaders; moms, dads, Aunts, Uncles, and Grandparents. And now we pass on to our children and grandchildren the same values we were taught, giving them a moral compass to guide them until it is their time to pass it on to the next generation.....and so it goes, on and on, as it always has in the Fienning Family.

Our parents and grandparents knew the true meaning of being Family, of sacrifices made for the good of all; for loving one another unconditionally, and for celebrating all the blessings GOD has so richly bestowed on our family.

To me, being a Fienning is not as an individual but as a Family of many individuals coming together in times of joy and sadness with love, strength and comfort for one another.

What does being a Fienning mean to me.....Everything!