

What does it mean to be a Vegter from an In-law's perspective?

An In-law would be one of the lucky few that have married into the family. I'm married to Karen, Vi's tenth child of eleven. When you are married, the tradition is that the wife takes on the husband's name; which Karen did by all legal aspects. BUT; Little did I know that in this family there is a higher ranking rule, that somehow your spouse will FOREVER be called a "Vegter", you will become and be called a "Vegter", your kids will be "Vegters", the spouses of your kids become "Vegters", and it never stops and continues to grow.

Why isn't there a rebellion for this insane take over? Why is everyone associated with the Vegters so proud of it?

It is because at the head of the family there were two of the greatest people you would want to meet, Hank and Vi.

Hank was a likeable, hard working, quiet man with many stories. One of his favorites to tell, with a big grin, was how he finagled switching dates of a double date; to end up with Vi. They say opposites attract, Vi was barely 5 foot tall, fiery, spirited, and made the energizer bunny look like he was standing still. Dynamite comes in small packages.

By the time I came along the "Vegter" name was already famous, AND KNOWN for its size. There were a lot of family members of all ages. BUT; when it comes to the "Vegters" everyone is treated like family. The whole church is like family. New and old acquaintances quickly become like family; which gives it the persona of being even bigger than it is. The love extended has no end and is contagious. I consider the bonds I have made with my In-laws (the entire family) some of the strongest bonds ever made. Last night I was talking to a close friend. The comment

was made that Vi and the entire family is RICH, not by money but in what truly matters.

Gatherings of any size are where Vi flourished. Large crowds, normally no less than 20, consisting of all ages, made her smile. The more the merrier, so she could bounce from person to person and visit. A busy atmosphere where the guys were on the porch telling stories and the gals would be in the kitchen cooking something under Mom's direction; laughing and talking about girl stuff, like the next to get married and possibly to whom, or who is expecting (again). I am so glad Mom taught all the girls how to cook. The food at family get togethers is always the best. Many times the meal was roast, potatoes, fresh green beans, homemade bread, and gravy. Mom made this meal for two reasons; it was Dad's favorite, and it was easy to add more potatoes for the extra visitors, invited or those that just showed up. But be careful of the sugar bowl by the coffee, it's really salt.

To be part of the Vegter clan you would expect these things; no privacy, to have a large family, share everything, help each other, to live with each other and take care of each other, participate in Church, and to always be on the go. There have been so many caravans of people migrating to different parts of the country just to attend the next grandchild's graduation or wedding. The looks from people when they saw the crowd walk in are priceless, and Mom would be all smiles.

What I didn't know was how vast the Vegter name actually was. I've met the immediate friends and family in Florida, Wisconsin, Texas, and California. But the Colorado reunion was the eye opener. Mom couldn't wait for these reunions. 200+, sometimes 300, Vegters, descendants of Hank's grandparents William and Trinji, came from all over, congregating at a YWCA in the mountains for an entire week. Other reunions took over college campuses. These are extremely fun times during the day, with each evening ending in sing hymns as a huge family choir. Mom loved music. She required her kids to learn an instrument or sing; and at these reunions everyone eagerly participated,

thoroughly enjoying each moment. You can tell there is extreme pride in being part of this vast clan.

At first, as an In-law, a family of this size with this much love for each other, and toward others, was almost inconceivable. Mom, like me, at one time was also an "In-Law". And like me, she figured out quickly that this is special and to be fully embraced. Therefore; Mom went on to make herself a Vegter legion.

Having been part of the Vegters for 33 years now, I have to say "Thank you" Mom, and Dad. Being part of the Vegter clan, immediate and extended, is a rare gift that will continue long after you are gone. You have lived the example of 1st Cor 13 and taught us all to LOVE.