

Violet Vegter's Social Security

Once upon a time, many years ago, a vivacious and beautiful young woman from South Dakota traveled to California and fell in love with a dashing and daring young man from Wisconsin. And they had a couple of children. But they didn't stop with 2, or 3...



Or 5...

Or 10...



But 11. Finally.



How demanding to feed, clothe, and rear 11 children. Jerry, John, and Bill remember a dad with three jobs and calloused hands to feed 13 people. The girls fondly recall a new homemade Easter and Christmas dress every year: 8 girls times 2 holidays times 18 years. That's 288 dresses. Plus countless special occasions with corresponding innumerable dresses. Anybody and everybody welcome for Sunday dinner. The mouths increased, and the slices of Sunday roast grew smaller. But always plenty of potatoes.





But that was many years ago. The 11 grew up, had families of their own, and gave their parents 40 grandchildren. Yes, 40. No "his and hers." Straight biology. And countless great grandchildren. And great, great grandchildren.

Good times and celebrations came and went, decade upon decade. Birthdays, anniversaries, Easters, Christmases, and reunions. Dad passed on and left mom behind. But not alone. Mom slowed noticeably. Then increasingly frail.

About 2 years ago, her daughters, said, "Mom, you can no longer stay alone." (Our tale now turns to the Vegter village: It never once entered the mind of those girls to send their dear mother away to an institution.) "We'll take turns. One of us will stay with you each night, and you'll come with us during the day. That way, you'll never be alone." And so Violet Vegter's *"social security"* kicked in.



Saturday. Mom's week starts with Dianna (Daughter #1) staying over Saturday night, fixing Mom's hair on Sunday mornings, and taking her to church.



Mom goes to Bill's (Son #3) for Sunday dinner every 5th Sunday. Sheila makes jello because mom likes jello. Sometimes Bill takes Mom to Clearwater to see Jenny (granddaughter) and her children.



Sunday. Karen (Daughter #7) stays overnight each Sunday and involves mom with her family the following day. Mom was just home from the hospital, so Karen brought her own family to mom's for evening meal. Her family went home, and Karen stayed the night.





Mom's Care wouldn't work without a bunch of brothers-in-law that are "just fine" with their wives spending many nights caring for Mom. Karen's husband, Blair, humors mom with his birthday pie.



And Karen makes sure Mom is enrolled in their book club, Page Turners.



Monday. Sharon (Daughter #8) stays with Mom on Monday nights. Sharon is also Mom's shopper and bookkeeper. On Mondays, Mom spends the day with Sharon and her family. Sharon took Mom shopping at Sears and picked up broccoli soup at Panera Bread. Sharon goes to Bible study every other Tuesday and takes Mom with her.

Tuesday. Carol (Daughter #5) comes to Mom's on Tuesday nights. The next morning is pickle ball day for Carol, so, guess what? Mom is a pickle ball fan on Wednesdays. And after pickle ball, time to make Tomato Soup Cake, which Mom made for her girls growing up.



Carol's husband Jim is another of those husbands that make it easy for their wives to take care of Mom. It was Tuesday, so Jim surprised Carol and Mom with cinnamon coffee cake.



Wednesday. Judy (Daughter #6) stays with Mom on Wednesday nights. Mom loves to see Judy coming. The cleaning gets done on Judy's watch. Carol made lunch for niece DeAnna and her family. Mom was invited. So Judy, Mom's butler for the day, drove Mom to Carol's for lunch.



Thursday. Mom, such a social creature, attracted many friends on the journey. Sue (Mom's left), a close family friend, stays overnight with mom on Thursdays. Sue takes Mom to Super 60's on Fridays for good music and food.



Friday. Not enough daughters in town, so the 5 local daughters take turns, every 5th Friday.

Surprise. The neighbors love Mom too. Karen commented to neighbors John and Jerilyn how nice Mom's geraniums were looking. "Well, we've been fertilizing and watering them a bit." And they added, "We worried before you girls were staying overnight, so we'd watch to see that the shades were pulled up each morning. Then we figured everything was okay."



A couple of times a year, Kathy (Daughter #3) flies down from Wisconsin, stays with mom, and gives her sisters a brief break.



Mom always welcomed many friends to her home. No longer able to entertain, mom is thrilled when Kathy comes. Kathy, head baker at her own Wisconsin bakery, prepares a grand meal for mom and her many friends.

And Kathy made scones and coffee for Mom, her sisters, and cousins.



Susan (Daughter #4, Mom's left) is a ticket agent for American Airlines. So periodically, Susan uses her perks to fly in and allow her sisters some time off.



When Kathy and Sue come, it's "Mom this is your week. What do you want to do?" Mom wanted to go to Florida's Holy Land Experience. And they went.

When Jerry (Son #1) and Diane come from Wisconsin, they stay with mom and give the girls a short recess.



John (Son #2) and Cheryl come from Wisconsin every year. Just like a daughter, Cheryl takes care of Mom at night giving her sisters-in-law a very nice breather. Cheryl also watches Mom during the day while John works on their church sound system (John's business). Cheryl and John took Mom to Eagle Lake Diner for lunch.



Periodically, Linda (Daughter #2) comes from Wisconsin, stays with Mom, and allows her sisters a temporary rest.



How long will this arrangement last? Certainly, not "happily ever after." It's day to day, and week to week. Living to be 101, Mom's own mother, Grandma Tschetter spent her final year in a nursing home. When she would have to leave her own mother to come back home, Mom would feel bad. But what could Mom do from 1,700 miles away? Amazingly, Mom's 5 local daughters all live within 2 miles of their dear mother. Mom, like all Americans, is grateful for Social Security. But in addition, Mom reaps dividends of a *social security* that most Americans read about only in fairy tales.