

Dan Vliet

Mediator/Employment Arbitrator at Resolute Systems
Rotary Member Since 2002

Is Dan Vliet related to the 19th century surveyor Garrett Vliet, for which the northwest Milwaukee Street is named?

Yes! While Dan hails from Chicago, Garrett Vliet is a distant ancestor. (Garrett Vliet, was a contemporary of Byron Kilbourn and Increase Lapham. Unlike the cars and trucks of today, during Garrett's lifetime runaway horses plagued the roadway. Garrett is buried in an unmarked grave at Forest Home Cemetery & Arboretum—it's on Dan's list to remedy that in the future.)

Dan recently retired as a shareholder in the law firm Buelow Vetter Buikema Olson & Vliet. The firm focuses on representing employers in all aspects of the employment relationship, including counseling, litigation and mediation. Dan also represented municipalities and school districts in a variety of matters. Helping employers better understand and serve their employees' needs was challenging and sometimes contentious. However, Dan successfully created an environment of compromise and harmony, whereby the employers' bottom line was protected and the employees looked forward to the workday.



He occasionally also represented individual employees in disputes with employers including non-compete litigation and severance arrangements. He is known for his ability to get to a practical settlement that worked for both sides.

This detailed and difficult work could also turn spicy with employer/employee imbroglios Dan mediated to protect all the parties involved from some really hot messes. *(Any incidents told to this writer were heavily redacted to protect client/attorney privilege; but they were interesting nonetheless!)*

Today, Dan works mostly part-time as a mediator under the aegis of Resolute Systems, LLC. He enjoys the work and is relishing the free time it allows for family, travel and service.

Thanks to his late father, Roger, Dan met his wife Susan on the shores of Lake Michigan as both their families had lake cottages just north of Milwaukee. Dan was 26 years old and had finished law school; in between jobs and visiting his parents. Sue was a junior majoring in Art History at Beloit College. Sue would often walk her family's standard poodle past the Vliet's cottage. Roger, wanting to see his son settled, encouraged Dan to introduce himself to the cute girl walking a dog. It was a foggy day and Dan ran down to the lake and struck up a conversation; they were married two years later. To this day should they have a quarrel, they both say in unison, "it's Roger's fault!"

A testimony to their romance, the couple have had a standard poodle as a member of their family almost since the day they were married; they are now on their fourth four-legged treasure, Auggie. They also have always had Maine Coon cats. (The Maine Coon has existed in the U.S. since the 1800s and is considered the oldest native cat breed in the U.S.) Freya, the third Maine Coon they've owned is now in residence.

Socially, Dan credits Sue as the relationship builder. As a lawyer he feels he might be more transactional, however, his engaging sense of humor gives him equal footing on developing the long-lasting friendships the couple enjoy.

Travel is on the agenda for the Vliets and a trip aboard the Orient Express from Paris to Budapest this September, following a visit to Japan late last year.

Dan and Susan's daughter, Sally Hegwood Vliet and her husband Chris have two children. Lucia "Lucy," is 26 months old and a very busy toddler; son Henry "Hank," is three months old and mostly eats, sleeps and eliminates. (Sally works with Rotarian JoAnne Anton at Herb Kohl Philanthropies as the Program and Community Outreach Director and loves it). The grandparents delight in spending time helping with Lucy and Hank.



2023 was a difficult year. Dan and Sue's son, Connor, who had a successful career as a sailor and sailmaker, died from a drug overdose. A sports injury at a young age led to a continuing struggle with addiction for Connor and his family. This loss has been extremely painful, but Dan, Sue and Sally gather strength from the support and love of family and their wide circle of friends. Connor will remain in the family's hearts forever.

A member of RCM since 2002, Dan served as president of our club in 2015-16. *"I enjoy Rotary and am continually impressed with our collection of people who want to do good. When I first joined, I thought weekly meetings might be draining, however, I look forward to the regularity of interesting speakers and programs,"* he said. Hosting the Rotary Large Club Conference in Milwaukee in the fall of 2015 was the highlight of his year at the helm.

Continuing to give back and do good, Dan serves on the city of Milwaukee Ethics Board and the Board of Pathfinders. (Pathfinders offers a wide array of services for youth experiencing trauma, crisis, homelessness and housing instability through direct service, harm reduction and prevention supports.) He has also served on multiple regional, state and local bar association committees.

Dan earned his law degree from Marquette, an MS in Industrial Relations from UW and a BA from Wheaton College. He is a Fellow in the College of Labor and Employment Lawyers, was named to the Best Lawyers of America and Wisconsin Super Lawyers and is AV rated in Martindale-Hubbell. He has published several chapters in legal tomes. This very accomplished lawyer also is a top-chef of pancakes and waffles.

With professional credentials nearly a mile long, wild horses wouldn't have stopped Dan Vliet from traveling the road bearing his name. He remains in full throttle as a Rotary Person of Action.



Editor's Note: Barbara Velez started the Rotary People of Action series several years ago. She has been an active RCM member for more than 25 years.