

TWINNS

Double the blessing double the fun

by Margaret Miller, contributing writer

When identical twins Jerry and Terry Akin were born in 1950, their mother was prepared. But just barely.

"Ultrasounds weren't around back then," Jerry says. "Even the doctor didn't know until one month before we were born that there would be two of us!"

Technology may have changed since 1950—but today's parents say that life with twins is still full of surprises!



Jacks and Gray Young enjoy their first spring

Jacks and Gray

Like many parents in their 30s, Eleanor and Homer Young underwent fertility treatment in order to conceive the children they wanted so much. Their beautiful rewards were "relaxed" Jacks and "feisty" Gray.

For answers to her questions about caring for newborn twins, Eleanor has found the Northwest Houston Mothers of Multiples group invaluable.

"The big benefit for me is the Internet access to all the moms," she says. "You just email if you have a problem. *Do we really need two swings? How do you feed two babies at the same time? When one wakes up, should you wake up the other one?*"

The extra expense of having twins is a real consideration as the Youngs decide whether to have more children. "My husband has mini-heart attacks every day when he thinks about putting Jacks and Gray through college," Eleanor jokes.

A graphic designer, Homer conducts most of his business via email and works from a home office. The Youngs' full-time nanny cares for the 5 month olds during the week, but Homer enjoys the extra time with his children, and he and Eleanor consider themselves a team.

"As a father, having twins sharpens your focus about what it means to be involved," says Homer. "I think the experience has strengthened my relationship with Eleanor by forcing us to become more of a team than ever."

Samantha and Sydney

"We're about the same—"begins Sam

"And sometimes opposites," Syd finishes.

Nine-year-old Samantha and Sydney Herkner have the same voice, the same eyes, the same strawberry blonde hair...What's different about these identical twins?

"Our noses!" they answer in unison.

Sydney's is a bit upturned, Samantha's more like a button. Aside from that, you can hardly tell these two cuties apart. Even their mother, Shelly, had trouble at first.

"When they were little, I painted Samantha's toenails,"

she says. "I needed a way to tell them apart until I figured out their differences."

The girls both love reading, volleyball, and playing with their dogs, Chloe and Katie. On the TAKS writing test, they even chose the same topic.

"We were supposed to write about a favorite place you've been or you'd want to go," they explain, their identical voices overlapping, "and we both picked Cedar Point!" (A vacation spot with a roller coaster.)

As for career paths, the girls have different ideas—one wants to be a vet and the other wants to be a dentist.

The best thing about being a twin?

"Always having someone around," they agree. The worst thing?

"People always call us the wrong name!"

The girls' father, Kevin, says that although Sam and Syd long for a baby brother, with twin girls and two dogs, their family is complete.



Samantha and Sydney Herkner with Chloe love being so much alike

Isabella and Andrew

Kristine and Gilberto Carles are the parents of 11-month-old twins Isa and Drew, as well as 4-year-old Paulina and 7-year-old Brian (who predicted that his mom would have twins!) They recently traveled to Panama, where Isa and Drew were born, to visit Gilberto's parents. While four young children keep this bilingual household hopping, they wouldn't have it any other way.

"God has given us the opportunity to have the most amazing experience in the world," says Gilberto. "Emotionally, it's a roller coaster. Having two older children puts more pressure on parents because while the twins are sleeping or calm, the other two need some time from you."

One of his favorite ways to spend time with Brian and Paulina is reading to them at the end of the day and saying good-night prayers.

Gilberto and Kristine admit that making time for themselves is the hardest thing of all. But they find themselves rejuvenated by their children.

Gilberto puts it this way: "When I get home, I get more love than I can take, with hugs, kisses and the energy that I need to keep going. My kids are the reason to give 100 percent and go the distance."

Editor's Note: For more information on the Northwest Houston Mothers of Multiples group, visit www.nwhmom.org.