

A DREAM COME TRUE: THE ILLINOIS ORGANIZATION OF MOTHERS OF TWINS CLUBS

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The dream began when an exuberant mother of identical twin girls engaged the help of a mother of identical twin boys to assist her in contacting already formed mothers of twins clubs (MOTC) throughout the state of Illinois. Their dream and their purpose then — and the purpose of the Illinois Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs, Inc. (IOMOTC) now — was to join together socially and educationally member clubs throughout the state of Illinois and to exchange information pertaining to the rearing, development and recognition of the individuality of twins as may be forthcoming from parents, doctors, educators and other appropriate sources. The 16 charter clubs and 2 members-at-large became organized on October 20, 1962... thus a dream came true.

Today IOMOTC boasts a membership of 27 clubs and 1 member-at-large for a total of 556 members and a voluntary executive board of 8 officers and 16 chairmen. All member clubs are self-governing. IOMOTC is noncommercial, nonpartisan, nonprofit and nonsectarian. Two sister clubs have the smallest membership (8 members each) and two clubs tie for the largest (48 members each).

A bimonthly newsletter, *Illinois State Saga*, is available to all mothers of multiple births at a nominal cost. As part of their dues benefits, each member club receives copies of *Saga*. The second vice-president is always available to help either by mail, phone, or in person, any MOT's wishing to start a club or just wanting to join a club close to her home. Officers and chairmen are often invited to visit local clubs. This is valuable in bringing members up-to-date in the latest goings on in "state". Each year a different philanthropic project is selected by the members at the annual convention, which is held the third week-end each October. Sister clubs present bids for a charitable organization to the board before convention and the final bids are then presented to the general membership for voting at convention. Convention time is social, educational, knowledgeable and perhaps the highlight of the year for IOMOTC. Member clubs wishing to hostess a convention make their bids known at least two years prior to the requested date. Fellowship flows heavily and each MOT attending goes home feeling richer. Mothers of all ages, backgrounds and walks of life attend — about 225 in all — and all have a common bond... twins. Everyone of these women has something to give to enrich the convention spirit. Workshop speakers at convention do discuss twins in many different areas but often workshops are held to inform the mothers on numerous other subjects as well, i.e., health, crafts, general topics concerning children (as singletons are important too to a MOT), club fund raising and program ideas. The fathers of twins (FOTS) are invited and about 150 do attend. They participate in the social festivities and have many functions simultaneously while the women are in the business session to which FOTS are also welcome. In 1966 and 1972, the governor of Illinois named the days of our convention week-end as Mothers of Twins Days throughout the state.

A vast amount of information is available to member clubs and individuals through the "state" library. Books, articles, pamphlets, etc., are available upon request. The history of our organization complete with photographs is kept by the historian.

From time to time, the IOMOTC research chairman conducts a survey on twins for an article in our newsletter or packet. IOMOTC mothers answer questions on many topics such as: separation of the twins in school, dressing alike, unusual happenings, medical findings, and so forth.

Because IOMOTC wished to become involved in research, a data bank was begun so that if we were contacted by a doctor, educator or researcher on a specific subject, we could contact the mother or

club quickly. Of our paid membership, to-date 510 have participated in the data bank. New members are given data bank sheets to complete upon their joining local clubs. Of these 510, there are 82 sets of identical boys, 97 sets of identical girls, 93 sets of fraternal boys, 99 sets of fraternal girls and 117 sets of boy-girl twins. Thirteen of these sets are mirror image, 11 mothers have two sets of twins, 1 mother has three sets of twins, and 6 mothers have a set of triplets. Seven sets of twins were adopted. The average age of the IOMOTC MOT at the time they gave birth to twins was 27 years of age — with the oldest mother being 50 years of age. Eleven of our mothers gave birth to the first-born twin breach, while 55 gave birth to their second born twin breach. Two-hundred eighty-six had a normal delivery for both twins and 56 mothers had their doubles delivered by cesarean. The average minutes apart for delivery of those currently participating is 6 minutes. One-hundred forty-one mothers nursing their twins and 102 continued nursing beyond a few days. Of our mothers, 263 knew in advance that they were having twins. Most found out in the seventh month of pregnancy by X-ray. This data bank lists birth defects, speech problems, hearing losses, etc., among the twins. Already IOMOTC has been involved in many research projects. To mention a few — a doctor from the Institute of Psychoanalysis in Chicago, asked our assistance on a research paper regarding twins who suffered the loss of one or both parents through death or divorce before age 19 and on twins who lost siblings, through death or permanent separation before age 19. This same doctor also gathered data on twins who suffered from peptic ulcers, ulcerative colitis, essential hypertension, rheumatoid arthritis, bronchial asthma, neurodermatitis or thyrotoxicosis. Thankfully, very few of our twins were afflicted with any of the above mentioned.

A dentist from the University of Illinois wrote his thesis on the bone growth of the teeth in twins. This proved extremely interesting and many sets of twins participated. Each participating mother was given the results of her twin's tests including an extensive blood test to conclude identical or fraternal. Another University of Illinois student wrote his thesis on the pre-school speech of twins. Current research being conducted is a handwriting analysis of the twin's handwriting or printing. Years ago, moms submitted samples and those participants are now being asked for a second sample to see if maturity changes the twin's personality, character, and so forth.

The most recent research is our participation with an advanced Astrology Class at a local Park District to compile statistical astrological data concerning mothers of twins. They wish to prove that astrological points (both traditional and contemporary) indicate certain trend toward twinning. Individual member clubs do also participate in their own research programs. One club is involved with a doctor at Rush-Presbyterian St. Luke's Medical Center in Chicago regarding twins helping out in research projects being conducted on cancer, diabetes, learning disabilities, etc. In this one club of 16 members, there are four sets of twins where one or both from the set have congenital defects. This same club is also conducting a study regarding the pill and the incidence of twinning. Several MOTC's in Illinois have written booklets for the expectant MOTS covering everything from weight gain and stretch marks to breast feeding and introducing twins to the family. Also included will be experienced short cuts on caring for twins. They expect to place these booklets in hospitals and doctor's offices.

One individual MOT has a strange case history of seven separate happenings with twins in her immediate family. In each case, one of the set of twins born to various family members was born dead or was not fully developed, and therefore, really never was born.

Through our participation in the First International Congress of Twin Studies, we hope that a closer relationship has been established between the professionals and the mother. Our twins are individuals: but they are also unique. We realize that researchers, educators and doctors find them invaluable for research development. We wish to offer our services in the research area and hope that we can be of help to the medical profession for, as our slogan signifies, there is "Strength Through Unity".

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