

Two is Better Than One:

Twin sets of cousins share brother-sister bond

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An air of intrigue has always surrounded the topic of twins. While some people speculate about a telepathic twin connection, others simply wonder what life would be like with a person who shares their same birthday (and sometimes their genetic structure). But for twin cousins Paige and Jack Searl and Emily and Foster Mullen, having a twin is just another fact of life. Join The Network as it explores the inner workings of these opposite-gender duos.

Searls



Paige and Jack Searl. Photo courtesy of the Searls.

Though Paige and Jack Searl don't claim to have any sort of "freaky twin connection," their childhood may have been a different story. As a baby, Jack would toddle over to his twin sister, pulling her hair forcefully until she succumbed to tears. Soon afterward, Jack would begin to inexplicably cry as well.

Baby Jack may have just been empathizing with Paige – or trying to evade trouble – but childhood occurrences like these could just as easily be attributed to the strong connection that many people believe twins have.

Since their toddler years, the Searls have grown closer to each other, despite attending different schools. Paige, the female half of the freshman duo, attends Marian while Jack claims his home at Creighton Prep.

"We were never best friends 'til middle school. We didn't even think of ourselves as twins, just as brother and sister," Paige said. These St. Wenceslaus graduates claim to have a better relationship with each other than most twins they know.

"Other twins can't stand each other. Our other twin friends fight with each other more than we do," Paige said.

As Jack continued, "It helps that we hang out with the same people."

With their freshman class overflowing with sets of twins, the Searls' friend group consists of a few other duos, including their twin cousins, Emily and Foster Mullen. However, no twins are quite comparable to Paige and Jack.

"As we've gotten into high school, there's a little bit more arguing, but we can talk more. We don't really talk about serious things, but we talk about things for fun," Paige said. The Searls attribute their relaxed relationship to their complementary personalities.

"Paige fights more than me, or at least she tries to. She's more argumentative. I'll try to get my way, but I just do it in a nice way," Jack said with a joking grin.

Paige agrees, pointing out her brother's easygoing disposition. "He doesn't fight. If I get really mad, he won't say anything bad unless it's something like 'shut up.' He's very laid back."

The Searls have gone so

far as to participate in a "cutest twin" contest via Facebook, where friends of theirs would vote for the "best" pair of twins by commenting on various photos of the duos posing together.

"We definitely won that," Jack said.

The fact that they're opposite-gender twins eliminates a bulk of tension between the two. "I think it's easier to get along, because some of the guy-guy or girl-girl twins get compared to each other more than we do," Paige said. "We never get compared to each other, unless it's that we look alike."

"Plus, you get to know more people," Jack said. The two will introduce each other to

new friends they make, providing them with more social opportunities and a variety of weekend plans.

To the Searls, being a twin is nothing out of the ordinary. In fact, they hardly ever imagine life as a non-twin. Although, according to Paige, "I think it'd be boring. All of our older siblings are moving out now, so we'll have the house to ourselves. If it was just me, I'd be alone."

Being twins, Paige and Jack always have something to do, including watching movies in their basement and hanging out in each other's rooms. "If I have nothing to do, I'll just go up and sit down in her room, like, 'What's up?'" Jack said. "But she over-exaggerates when I leave her door open. She has a little desk where I sit, and if I leave the door open when I leave, she'll freak out."

Aside from the minimal sibling banter, Paige and Jack Searl showcase the unique – not to mention strong – bond between those oddities called "twins."

Mullens

While Paige and Jack Searl cried and pulled each other's hair as toddlers, Emily and Foster Mullen, just a year older, stayed up late at night solving puzzles and playing games in the room they shared.

Although the Mullens no longer share a bedroom, the sophomore duo admits that they have remained close their whole lives, eventually trading in puzzles for high school parties.

At their grade school, St. Wenceslaus, "Everyone always asked how it felt being a twin," Foster said. "But we were never in the same class except for third grade, when our mom specifically requested for us to be together."

Being in different classes caused the Mullens to think of themselves as siblings more so than twins, and sharing a birthday seemed to take a spot on the backburner.

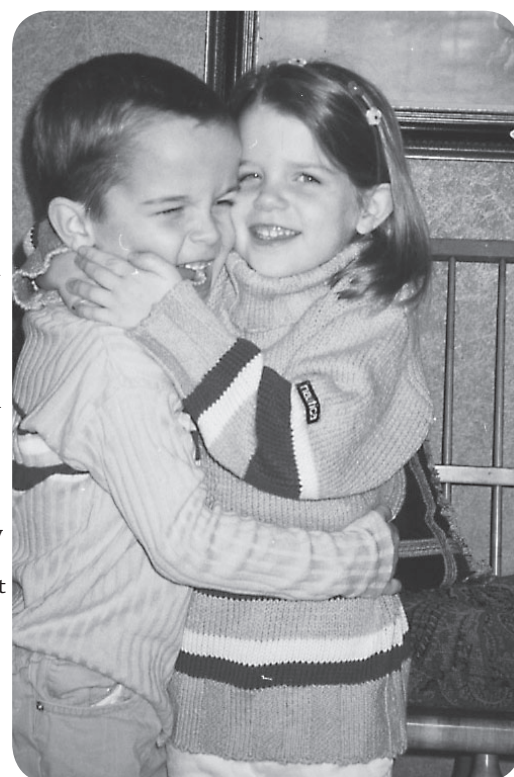
For them, having a twin is nothing out of the ordinary. However, many non-twins may find the relationship between Emily and Foster intriguing, partly because of the twins' opposite genders. With Emily attending Marian and Foster at Creighton Prep, different experiences accompany different schools. But, at the end of the day, their educational disparities don't impact the relationship that's carried them through the past 16 years.

"Even though we're in high school now, we still get along. We hang out with the same people, so that helps," Foster said.

Like any pair of siblings, the Mullens' relationship isn't completely lovey-dovey. "In grade school, I used to say hi to him in the halls and he would just stare at me," Emily claimed.

"Now at Prep games, she always tries to say 'hi,' but I ignore her," Foster said.

Despite these occurrences, "Our relationship is better than with our other siblings because we actually get to see each other on weekends. We go to the same places," Emily said, although they usually arrive to weekend events in separate cars. "Our mom always tries to get us to carpool to parties, but we never do."



Foster and Emily Mullen. Photo courtesy of the Mullens.

Because Emily and Foster are the second and third youngest out of eight children (with Emily claiming her title as the older twin), the bond of twinhood has proven beneficial. With equal maturity levels comes a tighter and more dynamic relationship.

The Mullens also enjoy their status as brother-sister twins.

"It seems like girl-girl and boy-boy twins go everywhere together. If I had a girl twin instead, people would probably be like, 'Oh, this twin is nicer.' There would be a lot more comparison," Emily said.

Foster also thinks the pressure would be greater with a twin of the same gender. "Academically, [Emily and I] are still compared to each other. But I feel like you can't compare boy and girl twins in most ways."

They reap the additional benefits of having an expansive social circle. "I get to know when girls have parties that [Emily] knows about," Foster said. "Being her twin, I get more 'inside information' and social opportunities."

Without their twin counterparts, the Mullens aren't sure what life would be like. "I think it'd be a lot different," Emily said.

"If I didn't have a twin, there wouldn't be someone who knows everything about me, so our parents wouldn't know about something I did. I could get away with more," she said.

"Hey! I never rat you out," Foster quickly defended.

Laughing in response, Emily knows that without her brother, there would be no late-night Mario Party competitions, no watching "The Office" together in the living room and no weekend parties to attend (driving separately, of course).

And without his sister, Foster knows that he would never have someone to poke fun at for being a bad skier and laughing constantly.

They both know that without each other, life would only be, well, half the fun.



Paige and Jack Searl (center) with their confirmation sponsors Emily and Foster Mullen. Photo courtesy of the Searls.