

The Terrible Twins

Janet Fein

I should have known something was up when my three-month old twins were not sleeping through the night as yet. Gregg, I learned would not be a good sleeper. Cara was. I had already had three children and I did not have the same experience with them. My Pediatrician gave me a prescription for a mild sedating suppository that helped them learn to do just that.

Don't get me wrong. They were developing normally. Gregg was one of those children who screamed in the grocery store for no reason. The only way I could get him to stop screaming was to tell him, "If you don't stop screaming, I'm going to leave you here, and put you in the garbage can." That usually worked. Cara was my sweet little girl so I thought.

We moved to an apartment on one of my husband's moves through the companies for which he worked before we moved to a house for such a large family. I would use all the washing machines and dryers on one entire afternoon to do the family laundry. One afternoon I went to the laundry room and I found Cara inside a dryer with her hands on the window. Gregg had placed her in there and was about to turn the dryer on. Cara was sweating inside that dryer but otherwise was not harmed.

My husband was not available to help. He travelled for a living. He was gone from Monday through Friday, and when he was at home, he sat and read the newspaper. There was no assistance from him. I would tell him what the twins had done and he just nodded his head. I was on my own, and I proved it by running the entire household by myself.

There was one thing I taught Gregg and Cara was how to be toilet trained. They were very amenable to the boy standing up and the girl sitting down. I had thought I had achieved one big obstacle in raising them. Going to school would be another matter. I tried reading stories to them, but they would take each other's hands and look away. That happened every time I read to them. I finally gave up. My other boys loved reading in their education and excelled in school. The twin's pre-school teacher told me not to put them in kindergarten as they were too immature. I had to agree with her, but I did not know what to do with them. I put them into school, and I had desired to have them in separate classes so they could be independent of each other, but that was not to be. Gregg was left-handed, but his teacher put a ruler in his hand and made him write with his right hand. That was in 1972 and I do not think that is done in the classroom any more.

There was not a day that passed, that the two of them did not get into mischief. One day, after I had been at work, I got a call from the school nurse that Gregg had swallowed a nickel. That antic caused a trip to the emergency room. There was the day that the twins started a fire on another family's yard. The Fire Marshall called me at work and I had to go home again. He said to me, "Madam, if you cannot control your children, I will." I had waited until the twins were eight years of age before returning to work. I thought of ways to get Gregg and Cara to behave, so I bought a dog. They loved that dog, but it did not change their behavior.

I had desired to teach the children how to eat vegetables, but Gregg fed his green beans to the dog. I had so much to do with all five children, that when Gregg did not bring home a report card, I was too busy to pursue that. He simply signed the report card himself and I would not realize he was manipulating me, and I never knew the difference

There was the day Gregg was riding his bicycle, and a car changing lanes ran into him and knocked him to the street. That was another call to work, and a trip to the emergency room. He was not badly hurt, but he maintained a good scare.

There came the time for Gregg to throw his newspaper route of the Richardson Daily News. He did that on his bicycle. There were complaints from the neighbors that he threw the paper on the roofs of their houses. He was not throwing the papers on their porches. I felt that this was Gregg's responsibility and he would answer to the editors. He continued the route. One Saturday at about four o'clock in the morning there was a call from the Richardson Police patrol. They had stopped Gregg in my husband's car going forty miles an hour in a thirty-five mile zone. We looked in Gregg's room and it was empty. We met the police officer and there was Gregg in our car, barely looking over the steering wheel. He was throwing the newspaper route from our car. My husband always left his car keys on the mantle of the fireplace where Gregg took the liberty of using those keys to drive the car to throw his newspapers.

I was horrified to think that our son could think up some more mischief to get into. Gregg was released into our custody. It was time to see what was causing his problems. We hired a Psychiatrist to see what was bothering our son. He was in high school by this time and took my car to ride to the Doctor's office. He never returned to school on those days and was counted absent from school. Gregg managed to talk his way out of suspension. It was then I discovered that Gregg was not going to the Doctor's office and I still did not know what was driving this child of ours. When the twins turned twenty-one, Cara came to me and told me that Gregg was Gay. I breathed a sigh of relief. Now I knew what was on his mind. I was not horrified. Gregg feared telling me about being Gay. This time he was wrong about that and I

would not punish him as I did for the infractions he incurred. I surprised him with my acceptance of him. There was a great deal of wasted time by Gregg keeping his secret. My love for him never waned.

To this very present day, Gregg is full of mischief, but I am not as horrified as I used to be. He did tell me that starting the fire in the neighbor's yard was Cara's idea and she was not as innocent as she seemed. He also told me that ordering the cheesecake from room service at the Hilton in Hawaii was Cara. I asked to see the ticket for that and she had signed Gregg's name to it. She always maintained that he did it, and he always maintained that she did it. I discovered that she had confessed to her husband that she was responsible for eating the cheesecake and had signed Gregg's name to the food ticket.

I was always shocked by the things they did and to everyone else I called them my devil's children.

Janet Fein is a December 2018 graduate of The University of Texas at Dallas. She has been published twice by *The Dallas Morning News*.