

THE HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL TWINS ASSOCIATION (I.T.A.)

LAVELDA and LAVONA ROWE

Ambassadors-At-Large, International Twins Association, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Dr. Gedda, Dr. Parisi, Honored Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is both an honor and a pleasure to stand before you today to take a small part in the First International Congress of Twin Studies.

For several years, we have dreamed of someday visiting the Mendel Institute. We first became aware of Dr. Luigi Gedda's work with twins in a psychology class at the State University of Iowa, in Iowa City, Iowa, in 1954. We are here today as Ambassadors-at-large of a rather unique organization for twins - the International Twins Association, Inc.

The International Twins Association, Inc (I.T.A.) was organized By and For Twins in 1932. Rev. Edward M. Clink of Silver Lake, Indiana, U.S.A. was on a tour of the United States. He encountered several sets of twins and thought that they should get together. He and his twin sister, Elsie Clink inserted an article in several newspapers requesting twins to bring a basket dinner to Center Park in Warsaw, Indiana, on Sunday, August 29, 1932. Twenty-four sets of twins were present at that first meeting.

One year later, a basket dinner was served to 200 sets of twins. And by the next year, 400 doubles and 2000 onlookers were present. The 4th annual meeting in Warsaw Park in Indiana in September 1935 found more than 900 sets of twins parading before 5000 spectators. That year, many states of the union were represented.

On August 1937, Fort Wayne's Trier Park in Indiana was host to 1,900 sets of twins for the 5th annual convention with 10,000 spectators. But the largest attendance, still unequalled to our knowledge, occurred the following year on August 29, 1937 when the National Twins became known as the International Twins Association, Inc. An old newsclipping states that 20,000 twins were in attendance. At this time co-officers were elected (a set of twins holding an office to emphasize the twin idea), and By-laws written to govern the association. The International Twins Association, Inc. (I.T.A.) conventions were held in Fort Wayne until 1939. Then the conventions moved from city to city throughout the United States, giving more twins an opportunity to learn about this unique fraternal organization.

The purpose of the International Twins Association, Inc. is to promote the Spiritual, Intellectual, and Social Welfare of twins throughout the world. It is a non-profit organization. There are no age limits for membership. A twins only requirement is met at birth. Dues are \$ 1.00 per year per twin under 18 and \$ 5.00 per year per twin 18 and over.

Many twins who attend these conventions have never associated with other sets of twins... this is a good experience. Twins attending have a need for companionship with people who are like themselves... different! Here, they can converse about their experiences as twins, ask questions of each other that they certainly can't do with their friends around home that are not twins.

At the past I.T.A. convention, a set of thirteen year old boys watched as other twins came and went. They saw baby twins, and old twins, all dressed like each other, all laughing and having a good time. Eventually the boys came over to us. They were smiling for the first time since we met them, and they had a look of happiness about them. Smiling, they said, "there isn't anything wrong with being twins at all, is there?" These little fellows had just learnt that they belonged to a special group of people. They had just learned to accept themselves for what they were, and could thus face society.

Later, their mother told us that they have been in and out of hospitals with all kinds of stomach complaints, never finding anything wrong. After that convention, the boys were alright. Twins, attending the International Twins Conventions all agree that "Happiness is being born a twin".

At other times, physicians and scientists have become interested in the International Twins Association, Inc. At the 6th annual convention of twins, Dr. D.C. Rife, Professor of Genetics at Ohio State University, enlisted the aid of twins for blood groupings, tastes, palm prints, and other tests. Since then, others such as Dr. Rhine of Duke and Dr. Phillip Clark of East Lansing, Michigan have conducted twin testings. Some of the tests included psychological studies, measurements of head shapes, and blood tests to determine identicalness. There has even been finger print studies and hand-writing analysis and Esp studies.

The International Twins Association, Inc. hold their conventions each year over the United States Labor-Day week-end. This is the week-end with the first monday in September. The convention convenes for three complete days includes informal gatherings, tours, Sunday Morning gospel sing, formal dinner-dance, and an annual business meeting. The highlight of these conventions is the "all twin judging event" held on Sunday afternoon.

Fourty-four trophies are awarded to twin winners in various twin classifications. These include youngest, oldest, most identical boys, girls, men and women in various age catagories; also most unalike twins, plus the selection of Twin Kings and Twin Queens. Twins traveling the farthest distance are also awarded trophies. Lima, Peru, and Switzerland were the farthest distance traveled by twins so far. We hope that in 1975 that twins will represent the Continent of Europe in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.

We have fun being twins. We feel that we were given one of God's greatest honors on earth by being created twins, but an even greater honor be being made identical. We are identical mirror-image twins. La Velda is left-handed, right-eyed; La Vona is right-handed, left-eyed.

We try to help to spread the good news of the International Twins Association and "Twindom" by traveling and speaking throughout the United States; and through a personal publication called "Twincereely Yours by the Rowe Twins". The latest issue was mailed to 8000 sets of twins within the United States, 150 sets of twins outside of the United States, Canada and Australia. The mailings also went to 450 Mothers of Twins Clubs.

The Mothers of Twins Clubs were organized about ten years ago by mothers to emphasize individuality among twins, and to help mothers with problems that they might encounter in raising their twins. The Twin Chapters were organized about forty-one years ago by twins seeking a better understanding of twins in society, and to give twins a chance to be with someone like themselves. The twin chapters are open to all multiple births. The Mother of Twins Clubs and the Twin Chapters are separate organizations each working toward their own goals. There are seventeen state organizations which are chapter of the International Twins Association, Inc. All seek to create a better understanding of twins throughout the world.

It is with the hope of building better understanding of twins throughout the world that we present to the First International Congress of Twins Studies and to Dr. Gedda, and Dr. Parisi, our list of twin names and addresses. In parting, we remain, Twincereely Yours, LaVelda and LaVona Rowe.

LaVelda and LaVona Rowe-Richmond, 1120 Lindenwood Dr., Aurora, Illinois 60506, USA.