

by Cheryl Lock

Meet Rose Coluccio & Vicki Orrico

Twins who are 90 Years Young this Month!



From the time they were born—back on Feb. 6, 1922—to this day, twins Rose Coluccio and Vicki Orrico have spent their lives fascinating, and confusing, people.

“When we were 6-years-old, we went to the hospital to have our tonsils taken out,” Rose said. “We each had a different doctor, but we never wanted to be apart, so after the operation we stayed together in the same bed. When word got out that there were twins on the floor, there were so many people in our room who wanted to see us, our doctor got angry and had to shoo people out.”

Back in the days when the girls were growing up, a twin sighting was few and far between—and identical twins, well you hit the jackpot if you saw a pair. So from doctors to teachers to friends, the pair continued to elicit shocked responses everywhere they were seen.

“Our mother used to dress us alike, so we could see people from the window saying, ‘Look at the twins!’ as we’d walk down the road,” Rose remembers. “Then they’d all come to the window and stare. We felt like we belonged in the circus. They were just so amazed with twins! But we didn’t like that. That’s when we stopped dressing alike.”

The confusion worked with boyfriends, too. In fact, when Vicki had a boyfriend who drove a truck she was less than fond of, the girls decided to take matters into their own hands. “Vicki really hated that truck, but I didn’t mind it, so instead of him driving her, he would pick me up and bring me to work every day, even though it was far away,” Rose said. “It was a couple of weeks before a girl at work called out my name and he found out I was Rose instead of Vicki. He was mad!”

It worked for break-ups, too. Breaking up isn't so hard to do, actually, when you have an identical twin to take care of that for you.

Growing up during the Depression with six siblings wasn't always fun and games, though. The family moved around a lot, as her father's shoe repair business would take him from New Jersey to Connecticut, and then from Brooklyn to Newburgh, N.Y., where the family finally settled.

"The Depression was hard, especially for our Mom, but she never complained," said Vicki. "As little girls, we would want a new dress, and our Mom would want to get it for us, but they couldn't afford it. Any money went towards rent, and making sure our electricity stayed on. But you learned to get along with what you had, and eventually things got better. With eight children, kids started to grow up, which means they could go to work and help out."

At work, the girls found themselves running into trouble with their looks, too. "Our boss's would come to the wrong person and try to give us the other twin's work," Rose said. "They used to get so frustrated; they'd say they were never hiring twins again."

In school the girls were even forced to go into separate classrooms when the teachers couldn't tell who was who. "When they first tried separating us, I'd cry like heck and run out into the hall to go find Vicki again," Rose said. "But eventually I knew I had to stay where I was. We've always been like that though—we hate being apart."

Even when marriage came into the picture, Rose remembers feeling happy to be starting her new life, but sad at the same time. She felt like she was leaving her sister, who she had lived with up until the day she was married. Even after marriage and children, the twins remained as close as ever. "Sometimes my daughter even gets us confused," said Rose. "Especially if one of us is at the sink with our back to her, she can hardly tell who it is."

Despite their closeness, and what Vicki calls "the feeling of always having a best friend around," there were difficult parts about being a twin, as well. "A lot of people would criticize us about not being like the other twin," said Rose. "We definitely had our own personalities. I would laugh and joke more, and Vicki was more serious, so people would say to Vicki, 'Why can't you be like your sister?' Then Vicki became a talker and I was quieter, and I'd get the same question."

To the world, the twins were just an anomaly, two girls to be admired and fascinated with. Even, it turned out, in times when



other people should have been the center of attention. "We were in our sister, Josie's, wedding, and we dressed in the same dresses as her bridesmaids," said Rose. "As we were coming down the steps we could hear people saying, 'Look at the twins!' Josie was so beautiful that day, and we felt all the attention was on us. We never felt so bad. Had we known, we never would have been in the wedding."

Their siblings were a huge part of their lives from the very beginning. Both Rose and Vicki remember fondly growing up with all their brothers and sisters, and on the day they were born, their brother played an integral part. It was a blizzard, the day the girls were born, and each weighed in at only 3 pounds when they were delivered at home. "The doctor put a small table close to the coal stove, and he put each one of us in a shoebox and covered it with a blanket so we wouldn't freeze," said Rose. "Then he made a tent around the table so when our brothers and sister came home from school we wouldn't be affected."

Still, with all that taken care of, the girls were having trouble eating. "No milk agreed with us," said Vicki. "But there was a lady next door who raised goats in her backyard. So the doctor gave my brother a bottle and sent him out into the blizzard to go get some goat's milk (and that, we could eat.) If that didn't work, we may very well have died. It was nice that lady had those goats so close to us."

These days, the twins are back together after both husbands have passed away, living in the house that Rose and her husband raised their two children in. The girls have lived a full, happy 90 years—I should know, I'm Rose's granddaughter.

Despite the fact that they have grown to look somewhat different, many people even to this day get them confused. "My dentist still doesn't know us apart," said Vicki. "He probably wishes we'd just go there one at a time, and not together."

The outside world and any confusion they may cause is no matter to these girls, though. As long as they have each other, and their family, they'll be happy. "Other people come in and out of your life, but they have whatever else going on in their own lives. The two of us, we're always there for each other." ♥

Cheryl Lock is an editor at the leading women's financial Website, *LearnVest.com*. Her work has been published in *Parents*, *More and Family Circle*, and online at *AOL Travel*, *Petside.com* and *The Kennedy Center*. Cheryl's grandmother is one of the twins in this story!
