

Keeping Them In the Family

— Case 77 —

Florence Pollock has the possibly unique distinction of giving birth eight times to six children.

The first six births occurred between 1940 and 1955 – four sons and, of special interest here, two daughters (Joanna, in 1946, and Jacqueline, in 1951). On the morning of May 5th, 1957, the two daughters, age 11 and 7, were murdered on the streets of Hexham, England while on their way to Sunday school.

They were walking with a friend when a woman ran the children down with her car. Investigators believed that she was depressed and incensed over the loss of her own children in a custody battle. Prior to leaving her home she had ingested a considerable quantity of pain killers and barbiturates. These were, no doubt a factor in her apparently deciding that if she couldn't have children no one else should either. She was seen to cross into the opposite lane, jump her car up onto the sidewalk, scrape along a stone wall, smash into the three kids, and continue on some ways before stopping. Joanna and Jacqueline died before help arrived; their companion died in the ambulance; their killer was committed to a mental hospital.

It goes without saying that Florence Pollock and her husband, John, were horrified at the children's demise. Florence, according to Dr. Ian Stevenson, "found the loss too fraught with suffering to think about." John, on the other hand, "liked to think about the dead girls, although not necessarily to dwell on how they had died. He believed not only that the girls had survived death, but that they remained close to the family. On the very afternoon of their deaths, he had a vision of them in heaven."¹

Although he never could explain whether it was visions or some other psychic means, eight months later, when Florence became pregnant

once more, John felt strongly that Joanna and Jacqueline were going to be born again, this time as twins. John was an ex-Catholic who believed in reincarnation. His wife, also an ex-Catholic did not. Neither did she feel that she was bearing twins; a sentiment with which her obstetrician, hearing only a single heartbeat, fully agreed.

John stuck to his intuition and, when a friend came to him at work on October 4th, 1958, and said: "I have good news for you." He replied: "Yes, I know, twins." And so, Gillian and Jennifer Pollock came into the world.

Between the ages of 3, when they first began talking coherently, and 6, the twins said several things supporting their father's belief that Joanna and Jacqueline had returned.

When the twins were just a few months old, the Pollock family moved from the town of Hexham to Whitley Bay. When they were about 4 years old, the family visited Hexham for the first time since they had moved away. As they were approaching a park where Joanna and Jacqueline used to play, the twins announced that they wanted to go and play on the swings; yet the parents had not mentioned any swings and the park was over a hill and not yet in sight. A little later, as they passed their old home, they both said, "We used to live there."

At Hexham, Joanna and Jacqueline had sometimes eaten their lunch at school. In Whitley Bay, the twins always came home for lunch. One day, when they were grumbling about what their mother was serving, she told them that they could always eat at school. They responded that they had done that before. "Where?" Florence asked. "At Hexham," they answered. But the twins had neither attended school in Hexham nor eaten lunch at school in Whitley Bay.

There was one instance of recall that did not conform to the norm of forgetfulness by age 8.

When she was 23, Gillian was reminiscing with her father about playing in a sandpit with her brothers in a garden by a large house. Her very detailed description perfectly matched a home and garden from which the Pollocks had moved back when Joanna was 4 years old, 8 years before Gillian was born.

Although they were identical twins – that is, one egg, one placenta, one set of DNA – Gillian (the oldest by 10 minutes) was different from Jennifer in many of the same ways that Joanna (the eldest by 5 years) had been different from Jacqueline.

Once, when John was doing some house painting, Jennifer asked, “Why are you wearing mummy’s coat?” This “coat” was an old smock John had donned to protect his clothing from paint splatters. Florence used to wear it when she delivered milk, a job she stopped doing before the twins were born. Not only did Jennifer recognize it as her mother’s, but she expressed annoyance when Gillian could not recall it. During the times Florence was wearing the smock, Jacqueline would have been often around her mother, whereas Joanna would not have.

Joanna’s and Jacqueline’s toys had been packed away in the attic after their death. The twins did not see the toys until they were 4 years old and their parents unpacked the box. Immediately, and without any prompting, Gillian said that a doll that had been Joanna’s was hers, and Jennifer claimed a very different doll, one which had been Jacqueline’s. Jennifer correctly recalled the names – Mary and Suzanne – previously given to the dolls. They both then announced that their dolls had come from Santa Claus – which was true.

Santa was also credited with the gift of a toy clothes wringer.² (Clearly English children in the early 1950s differed from today’s kids in their idea of what made a fun toy.) Again, the ‘older’ girl, and not her twin, was acknowledged by both

twins as the owner of an item that had belonged to the older sister.

On a considerably less jolly note, although the twins never talked with their parents about the deaths of their sisters – and their parents certainly never mentioned the subject to them – their mother recalled that several times she overheard them discussing the event among themselves. What Ian Wilson refers to as “the most macabre incident of all,” was witnessed by Florence when she once peeked into the twins’ playroom and “found Gillian cradling Jennifer’s head in her hands and saying: ‘The blood’s coming out of your eyes. That’s where the car hit you.’”³

The differences between the twins carried over to physical behaviors and features. For one thing, the ‘older’ twin tended to mother the younger to a much greater extent than would be thought normal in siblings of the same age. This behavior could well be a carryover from past lives in which Joanna often cared for her younger sister Jacqueline. More impressively, and concretely, are the two birthmarks that Jennifer had: one of which looked and was located exactly like one that Jacqueline had on her left waist; the other which mimicked a scar that Jacqueline had received when she fell off her tricycle and hit her forehead on the edge of a metal bucket. Neither Gillian nor any other member of the Pollock family had any similar scars or birthmarks. Such differences among identical twins are extremely rare; these are totally inexplicable in light of the congruence with those of her deceased sibling. Inexplicable, that is, within any paradigm lacking the concept of reincarnation.

It seems noteworthy in this context that neither twin has any scars or birthmarks that might be attributed to the way in which their sisters had died. Very often, when children spontaneously recall another life, their bodies are marked in ways associated with the cause of death in that previous life. Many times such scars and deformities provide strong corroboration of their claims. But

Gillian's and Jennifer's bodies suffered such massive trauma in numerous locations that no one, apparently, bothered to precisely record or map them. To carry over such scars into a new life, therefore, would be seriously disfiguring while serving no purpose of identification.

Discussion

Some critics have suggested that this case is weakened because one of the key witnesses (John Pollock) was a believer in reincarnation and his testimony is likely biased. But the other key witness (Florence Pollock) was strongly opposed to the idea of reincarnation yet her version of the events is essentially the same. Also, as John pointed out to Dr. Stevenson, if he had *not* believed, he would not have made the observations and the case would never have been initiated.⁴

The unique (to my knowledge) feature of this case is the return of siblings to the same family. (The fact that they return as identical twins makes it even more special.) The separate and distinct

memories and preferences — Gillian's memories were exclusively Joanna's and Jennifer's solely Jacqueline's — are definite counters to the idea that the twins picked up their memories from their mother's thoughts and dreams during their gestation. And their physical and behavioral differences in light of the equality of their DNA refutes any claim of "genetic memory" — if such were even conceivable in this case.

This is a tough case to score. It is really two cases which are inextricably entwined with one another. The ESS was not designed to determine how much one reinforces, or detracts from, the other. So, we are re-evaluating the evaluation system. No matter what the final score, though, the case, as researcher Guy Lyon Playfair has pointed out, "is as solved as any case is ever likely to be."⁵



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¹ Stevenson, Ian, *Reincarnation and Biology: A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects Volume 2*, Praeger Publishers, 1997, p. 2045.

² Prior to the invention of electrically heated clothes dryers, excess water was extracted by feeding the clothing between two rollers known as wringers.

³ Wilson, Ian, *Mind Out of Time?*, Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1981, p. 24.

⁴ Stevenson, p. 2058.

⁵ Playfair, Guy Lyon, *New Clothes for Old Souls*, Druze Heritage Foundation, 2006, p. 114.