

# ON THE MOVE

## Twins tackle college SUIV L TOGETHER



Stephanie Colombo (left) laughs with her twin sister, Stacy, at the Cardinal's Nest at St. John Fisher College on Sept. 8. The 18-year-olds from Hilton are freshmen.

**S**tephanie and Stacy Colombo say their mother didn't know she was having twins until seven minutes before they were born. Because they were so intertwined, they were instead thought to be one large baby.

Now, nearly 19 years have passed and the identical twins still haven't separated very much — at least symbolically.

Even the beginning of college has failed to send Stephanie and Stacy in diverse directions. They not only attend St. John Fisher College together, they also share a tiny dorm room at Murphy Hall.

"People say, 'You're twin sisters, how can you live together?' But you get a connection, a bond, that you can't get rid of," Stephanie said.

"We're used to studying and doing homework together, and at my dad's house (their parents are divorced) we share a room. So this is nothing new," Stacy said. "We talk about everything — she's my best friend."

The twins also claim they can't stay upset at each other. Said Stacy: "She'll get the silent treatment for five or 10 minutes. Then I'll say, 'So, what do you want to do?' And that's it; we won't even say why we were mad."

No, the twins' true sentiments are symbolized by a photo of them hugging on high-school graduation day from Aquinas Institute in June. The picture is prominently displayed on a dorm-room shelf.

Both Stacy and Stephanie said they have always enjoyed being twins — in fact, a few years ago, they attended an annual summer festival for twins in Twinsburg, Ohio. (Yes, the

place is for real. It's a small town located near Cleveland.) Until seventh grade, they wore matching haircuts and clothes. They've also relished playing practical jokes specially reserved for twins, such as switching desks in class.

Being roommates is also nice, Stephanie said, because the availability of clothes automatically doubles. "It's easy — everything I have is hers," she remarked.

However, Stephanie did say she's not thrilled about losing out on the lower bunk bed, Stacy claimed that prize by beating Stephanie into their room when they moved in Labor Day weekend.

"As soon as I got through the door, I called it real quick," Stacy said.

Stephanie said she's had to learn to get to her bed by vaulting from a chair. Getting down can be even more dangerous, she said.

"Sometimes you want to roll out of bed. Well, you can't do it," she remarked.

Yet bunk beds are a minor change compared to the emotional adjustment of living away from home for the first time. Though Stephanie said she's excited about college, she also exclaimed, "I'm so homesick!"

On Sept. 5, the first day of classes, Stacy admitted that she'd already shed quite a few tears. "I'm lonely; I miss my mom. I feel like I moved to Indiana," she remarked.

In actuality, the twins reside less than an hour from their home in Hilton. And, to say the least, they're much, MUCH better off than other homesick freshmen on their floor. For example:

Stacy and Stephanie's mother, Anita Nagel, had already paid them two visits in their first four days at St. John Fisher — and taken their dirty laundry home as well. The twins noted that they're careful to make their beds, just in case their mom pops in on them.

"Mom even offered me a home-cooked meal," said Stacy, who added that she was quite tempted to accept the offer.

"She's already called me three times today," Stephanie added.

One day, Stephanie said, there were 11 messages on their answering machine — mostly from family members. Their father, David, checks in frequently as well, she said.

"He'll just call in the middle of anything. He'll call to tell me that the (Buffalo) Bills won," Stephanie said.

Asked what the family would have done if they'd attended college out of town, Stephanie said emphatically, "They would

have moved."

Despite the uncertainty of being in a new environment, the twins are moving ahead with enthusiasm. They've already tried out for — and made — the St. John Fisher cheerleading team, extending one of the great passions in their lives. The diminutive twins — Stacy is 4'11" tall and Stephanie towers over her at 5'0" — have several years' experience cheering for Aquinas, as well as CYO teams at their home parish, Holy Cross in Charlotte.

The sisters are also looking forward to extending their love for volunteer work. In fact, it was their volunteerism that helped land them at St. John Fisher, through the college's Service Scholars Program.

Stephanie is focusing on a career in nursing while Stacy is a communications major. Originally, the twins had both planned to attend other colleges. But each of them qualified for the service scholarship, which was only awarded to 36 of more than 200 freshman candidates. Begun in 1996, the Service Scholars Program provides one-third the cost of tuition, fees and room and board provided that students remain in good academic standing and stay active in community service.

Under terms of the agreement, Stacy and Stephanie must complete 130 hours of community service this school year and up to 200 hours in subsequent years. But Stacy doesn't see that as a hindrance.

"That's nothing compared to what I've done," she stated.

Stacy and Stephanie have both served as cheerleading coaches and camp assistants at Holy Cross Parish, as well as religious education and vacation Bible school instructors. While attending Aquinas, they also helped with many charity fundraising campaigns.

As their freshmen year of college kicks in, Stephanie is ready to embrace her new world, saying, "I can't live at home all my life. You've got to do this; it's all part of the college experience. Now I get to learn things about what I want to do."

Yet Stacy, when asked if she feels more like a girl or a woman right now, paused and said, "I'm a girl trapped in a woman's body. Even though I'm 18, I'm still ..."

"... Working on it," her sister chimed in. "(College) will make me go into that woman stage, but I'm not there yet."



Stacy (left) and Stephanie practice for cheerleading tryouts on Sept. 7 at St. John Fisher. Both girls made the team.

Story by Mike Latona

Photos by Andrea Dixon



Stacy (left) gives Stephanie a knowing look while they watch "Jenny Jones" on TV in their dorm.

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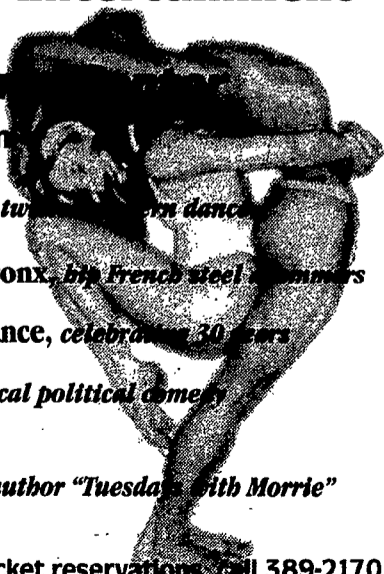
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