

TWINS - COMING HOME

Charles Corley

“Are we close?” “Were we close?” “Are we friends?” “Do I psychically feel what he feels?” “What is it like to be an identical twin?” “Is it fun being an identical twin?” “Would his wife know the difference if you slipped into bed with her in the dark?” (A relative asked me this last question on the wedding day of my identical twin brother Willie.) “Are you sure you’re an identical twin?” “Who’s better looking?” “Who’s smarter?” “Which one is the bad one?” “Did you marry someone similar to Willie’s wife?” These are just a sample of the myriad of questions I have been asked my whole life and some I have asked myself. I have asked myself in particular what the spiritual significance is of being an identical twin.

I write this paper on what it was and is like for me as an identical twin from a physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual point of view. I also present my journey towards finding my core, my divine spark, my uniqueness against the backdrop of Miriam Dior’s “Core Energetics Map Structure,” which is based on the lectures of Eva Pierrakos.

This Map Structure speaks of several overlapping layers, starting with one’s “core,” with which we are all born. The next layer on top of the core is the “wound,” which we all experience as a result of an insult to our basic core. This core wound provokes our “primal NO,” which is an inborn protective mechanism. Since often we cannot express or voice our “NO,” this painful wound becomes distorted and repressed within us and becomes another layer called the “lower Self.” In order to hide this “lower self” layer we develop another layer which is called the “mask.”

I was inspired to write about being an identical twin after working therapeutically and closely with a set of identical female twins I shall refer to as DL and DV. I could not help but adopt them into my heart after hearing so many “identical twins” themes of their life struggles. One day DV shared with me how angry she was with her sister and how violent they were getting with each other. DL had recently had a baby and was no longer smoking pot with DV. Instead, she was nurturing her new baby and giving most of her attention to the new baby instead of to DV. During the fight DL said, “You don’t have to get to know my baby.” DV responded by calling DL a “whore” for having the baby and for having sex.

This anecdote exemplifies a basic issue for identical twins, which is separation, not only separation from one’s mother but perhaps even more importantly from one’s twin. As Eva Pierrakos (1996) says in the Pathwork lecture “The Spiritual Significance of Human Relationship,” “One’s contentment and fulfillment in relationship is a much neglected yardstick for one’s own development. Relationship with others is a mirror of one’s own state and thus a direct help to one’s self purification.” (*Pathwork Lectures*, Lecture #180) As these twins, DL and DV, seem to be a mirror to each other, so my twin brother Willie and I are mirrors to each other.

So begins my journey and love affair with my twin brother Willie. “Our core,” my core, born of the same egg and sharing the same womb. We travelled down the same birth canal three minutes apart. Even then the doctor talked to my mother about doing a Caesarian delivery because he felt that one twin was “holding back” the other. I feel that this is one of my earliest images: I felt for a long time that Willie held me back. Was this a misconception on my part or did I hold *him* back? Or maybe we wanted to stay together. Then we were born vaginally with

the help of the doctor who turned one of us around. I was born first, three minutes before Willie. I have always prided myself on this early achievement.

We were so identical that still to this day my mother tells a story that when we were six weeks old, our ID bracelets fell off in the bath and they could not tell who was who. Willie could be me or I could be Willie. Does it matter? Yes, to me it matters! “Is it true you might be Willie and not Charlie? That means you might not be number one?” asked my ten-year-old nephew Kieran. This point continues to be painful as it is brought up jokingly in my family. To me it represents an insult to my integrity, my core, my basic individuality and is the cause of one of my earliest wounds.

I recently watched a video of Willie and me playing in the bathtub as one year olds and another of us in our one-year-old birthday hats at our birthday party. It really warmed my heart to see and feel the love between us. My mother tells me that we reached many of our early developmental benchmarks, such as standing up, walking, jumping out of our crib and potty training, at exactly the same time. We would also throw tantrums at the same time. My mother also tells of how when we were 14 months old we would play together for hours, not needing anybody else’s attention. We were a unit unto ourselves. In the morning she would come in and find us sleeping head to head.

I can remember playing punch ball on the streets of Brooklyn with Willie and soon thereafter with our younger brother Robert. It felt as though together we all owned the streets. I can still see the superintendent from across the street running after us. What fun we had together! I can see us in the country, away from Brooklyn, playing baseball together, our core shining through, just love. My mother speaks of a time when we were four or five and we got a lot of birthday presents. Robert cried once because he did not get any presents, so Willie and I started to share and give him our presents in unison. My mother says that at around age of four we had our own language, and the only one who could understand some of what we were saying was Robert. My brothers and I shared everything. My mother told me that our kindergarten teacher loved us. My mother was in “twin heaven “ and we were in “core heaven.”

Whenever we had a test or assignment in class, no matter how far apart the teacher placed us, Willie would come sit next to me and compare answers. We were literally inseparable. Then in first grade came a teacher’s conference, and our teacher told my mother that we were “monsters.” It seems that no one, neither my parents nor the teacher, understood or took into account our unique and close relationship. Nor did they recognize or understand our need for help with the delicate task that lay before us of separating from each other and of integrating ourselves into a larger group.

The school then decided to send us to separate speech classes for what they termed our “speech impediment.” As I walked into speech class I felt ashamed, as if I had done something wrong or there were something wrong with me. All I knew as I ran out of the room was that I had to escape for my life. This wound became even more acute as I felt and realized that my mother’s emotional relationship to me and her view of me had changed. I felt betrayed and alone and had no idea until many years later that our teacher had called us “animals.” My “primal NO” was saying “SEE ME! I’m still the same person!” Yet because I could not verbalize this feeling, it went into the basement of my being. I believed my mother accepted the teacher’s perception of us, and I felt abandoned. I believe that this was the beginning of the formation of the hidden

“lower self,” the distortion of the original wound arising from not feeling able to protect myself.
This was the moment my rage began.

Poem of my twin childhood

First year conference - aftermath-
repercussions
in different classes -
on different little league teams . . .
me getting a ninety-six on a history test
HIGHEST grade in the class . . .
couldn't believe it was ME!!

Both of us failed to make the Majors in baseball
again on different teams in the minors . . .
One year later we make the Majors on Franklin National . . .
the same team
My first kiss . . . Marsha Eisenberg
tell my mother right away.
We spend weekends at my Grandma Corley's house . . .
playing in the woods with the Thompson boys.
Stay up all night watching movies-
going to early Mass . . .
Stay up all night again.

Meet Mariel Wick . . . ask her to go steady . . .
Willie meets Kathy Shaw at the same time . . .
Ride our bikes to their houses together.
Franklin National . . . Willie's the second baseman . . .
I'm the centerfielder.
Mariel and Kathy have a good-looking contest between us . . .
Who's cuter????
I can barely keep my head in the game!

Camp All America would change our life forever -
Boxing my brother Robert in front of my parents and
grandparents on visiting day.
My Grampa Moe rooting loudly for me where I could hear him
YES . . . NO . . . !! STOP THIS!!!
They stopped it after the first round.

I box Willie and he beats me.
Willie receives the “Most Valuable Boxer” trophy in the camp.
I am hysterically crying and felt like I died . . .
losing to him.
This distorted drive to prove that I was the “best”
would go on for years.

My mask, I'm the "tougher one," more aggressive . . .
more expressive.

I liked Georgia Rover, she liked Willie.

I died again.

I dropped out of the competition.

I desperately didn't want it known that I liked her.

So painful to lose to him.

I remember beating Robert and Willie up
in the living room . . .

victoriously raising my hands up,
one had a bloody nose one had a bloody lip.

I now was ten pounds heavier than Willie.

I pissed in Willie's mouth at six in the morning.

He was sleeping.

Being the "baddest," the meanest,

a strong mask was covering up
my lower self that wanted to destroy him.

I was on the move at "Camp All-America."

I forced a kid out of camp by wetting his sheets
and making him think he wet his bed.

He left camp for good.

The counselors blamed me for his leaving.

My cruelty crossing lines from my
twin brother to others.

I remember being at Wright Hall playing soccer
and I thought I was the "GREATEST."

They didn't pick me on the all-star soccer team.

I threw a tantrum in the middle of the hall,
bellowing up the halls to the head counselor.

I was put on the team.

One of my many tantrums I was famous for throwing.

I remember kids would attack me and give it to me
the rest of the summer . . . for you see I made the team
but lost the dignity and respect of the other kids.

I became a loner in Camp All-America.

My last year in Camp All-America I changed bunks five times.

They called me "King of the Quadrant,"

for getting in trouble and consequently having to
walk around the quadrant late at night.

My brother Willie and I win the little league championship
for Franklin National.

I scored the winning run in extra innings.

We hug each other.

It would be our last fun, winning team together.
Competition no longer would be fun for us.
Sexuality and competition would change everything for me.
“NO NO NO!!!! ME ME ME !!!!”
Camp All-America would be hell for me my third and last year.

I was put in solitary confinement for telling Freddy, a camp
counselor, to go “fuck himself,” about a hundred times.

I was thirteen years old.

I watched my brother Willie win a talent contest.
I laughed, he was great, but I watched from a distance.
A distance that would continue to grow wider and wider,
in the years to come.

___TWINS___

by William Corley

Twins

Fought a lot of battles
others never saw
just laughed as they went by.

Loving the others,
though many make it so hard,
want you to be like him.

helped me to see
to grow alone, when others
wanted me to grow as two.

Found the web others
weaved for me
a tough place to get out of,
rough stepping.

Rocky incline, falling many a time
hurt so much
so did he, and I looked the other way

Couldn't be there
wanted to run
following a road so different
than his

Didn't want to recognize
a lot of me in him
a lot of him in me.

Thousands of thoughts
going through both minds
a lot of love remaining
Fought so hard to become
a force in my own
heard a child crying for
so long

Wanting just to have the
right others have
of being themselves
not compared, looked at,
examined, dissected for
the pleasure of it.

Cruel people, leaving their
darkness behind.
while now our love
still shines.

W.C.

My People-Pleasing Mask

In seventh grade, Willie and I would buy everyone ice cream in the cafeteria. For me it was about getting people to like me. I would steal money from my dad and give it to kids I did not even know because I wanted to join the ranks of the “popular.” I was now 20 pounds heavier than Willie. The one sport I took home with me from Camp All-America in my last year was football. I loved it! I could really take out my aggression and rage, and I was a natural and good at it. It distinguished and separated me from Willie.

That fall I was introduced to Spartan football, or formalized football. Willie, Robert and I went to the first day of practice. Willie dropped out, and Robert and I remained. All I remember that day was running lap after lap and thinking that this was better than being disciplined by being told to hold my arms up in the air. Mr. Lyons was a tough coach. This was my first sport away from Willie. Months later, my parents received a letter saying that we would not be allowed back in Camp All-America. Willie and Robert were very upset over this sentence, but I was very relieved.

I remember that in junior high school Willie and I played chess together along with Bruce Feldman. I loved it. We played cards at Robert Greenspan’s house, and we even cut school to play cards together. I remember that I was a starter on the eighth-grade basketball team. I was running down the court, and I could hear Willie crying and throwing a tantrum because I was playing and he was not. He thought that he was better than me.

Two years later Willie tried out for the tenth-grade basketball team, but the coach cut him because Willie was upset that I was trying out, too. As Willie recalls in his paper on twins “A Twin’s Perception,”

I was cut from a basketball team that I wanted to make very badly and had to accept that I would not play in the same team with my twin. During the tryouts, the coach would not hear why I resented my twin for being there. While trying out I could not put away my feelings and suffered a loss which at the time felt crucial. This incident spoke of my need to cut the bondage, for me to push out of my psychological twinship. I felt this other inside -- always pushing on my own identity. How could I have a relationship with others if I was so tied to another, that my only identity was being a twin?

I remember being sixteen years old and going up to my room and crying, feeling so lonely, and playing the music of the Young Rascals, feeling like the ugly duckling: no matter what, no girl could ever love me. I was unlovable, and I hated myself. I met my first love Sandy in the 12th grade. Willie and I were by this time in totally separate worlds. I could barely tell you who his friends were. I felt that he judged me all the time. He hated my girlfriend Sandy and thought that she was stupid, not good enough for me. I hated him back for this.

Willie states in his paper,

As I entered adolescence there was a further pull towards outside relationships and a further need to separate from him. I did not bring my friends home who he described as intellectuals, nor did he or my friends ever cross paths. He knew very little of my friends (or me) during this time.

There was a real splitting of personality which both of us felt and others recognized the striking differences. I was the intellectual (out front), he the jock (my quieter side). He was the aggressive tough one, me, the passive quieter. He the more selfish, me the more altruistic. (I also see those parts of him in me and me in him).

I had a turbulent relationship with Sandy. Jealousy would raise its ugly head with her and with my friends. I had been threatened to be thrown off the football team because of my disruptive outbursts against my coaches. I knew better than they. I made my relationship "me versus them." However, I loved football, so I contained my rage against and contempt for my coaches. I had a love/hate relationship with them.

I remember playing choose-up football with Willie and brutalizing him. I knew he did not like to hit, but I did and made the most of the situation. I gave it to him good. One time Willie was on a date with a girl, and he brought her to the diner where I was with my friends. We made fun of him because he walked around the car and opened the door for her like a true gentleman. I led the peanut gallery chorus of humiliation as my lower self tried to hide behind my "jokester mask."

I was 18 years old, it was summertime and my parents were away. Willie and I went at each other. I wanted to kill him physically. My friends stopped the fight. I could feel the love/hate streaming in my body. I wanted to put him away. At the same time I became more and

more out of control with Sandy. I threw her out of my car. A storm was raging inside me while I tried to play “Mr. Nice Guy” on the outside.

On a trip to the airport once to say goodbye to Mell Seltzer, an acquaintance, I burst into tears and could not stop crying. It seemed to come from nowhere, but could I have been crying for my original separation at six years old from my twin brother?

Willie moved away to Boston to go to college, and I stayed home and went to St John’s College so that I could be near Sandy. Willie said of this time:

My twin and I strive to build two separate systems, but is this just an illusion? Each of us is deeply a part of the other. Those who are not twins cannot begin to speak of it. In my need to pull away, I eagerly left him for college while he sat at the window watching me depart, his tears running down the window. How ironic it is that now I feel the loss of him as we separate again. It still feels as natural for me to say we as I.

During a cross country trip with three friends that we took for college credit, two FBI agents followed us through a Los Angeles store. They continued following us as we attended the movie “Clockwork Orange,” sitting four rows in back of us. Outside we decided to try hiding behind a passageway to see if they were really following us and they did. We were all asking ourselves, who are these guys and what do they want? After we returned to campus the head of Campus Security called me and told me that two FBI agents wanted to see me in his office. I went to the office, and the FBI agents grilled me for two hours about my twin brother’s involvement with burning draft files in Buffalo and Rochester, New York. Willie’s car had allegedly been used in the crimes. I told them that I knew nothing about it. That was the truth: Willie and I were miles apart, and not just geographically. For the first time I could feel my brother’s pain across the 10-hour distance between us. I immediately drove the 10 hours to Buffalo to see my brother. Upon arriving, several of Willie’s friends told me how frightened and upset he was. They suggested that I go to him and hug him, but I could not move towards him. I wanted to, but I was frozen. We were so far apart, and I felt numb towards him.

Three years later I moved from Trenton, New Jersey to Boston to live with Willie and our friend Steve Parker. We shared the same apartment, but we were countries apart from each other in spirit. We watched television together, and I would loan him my car or pick him up from school or from wherever he needed a ride. Steve and I put together a party Willie was throwing, but Willie arrived with his own guests. This is an instance of how we communicated.

I got a job at the League School of Boston as an assistant teacher for autistic and psychotic kids. The School called to give me the good news in New York on Thanksgiving weekend. Before I arrived, my mother had spoken with Dick Smith, the head of the school, and he told her I had beaten out 200 other applicants. I was elated. I had the job I wanted! Dick Smith had hired me because of my spirit.

He later decided not to rehire me back the following April. Tom Raskin brought me into his office and told me I was not being asked back because I spoke with a New York accent, because I could not articulate conceptually and because I fell asleep at meetings. I was not right

for their school. He said that I had a 50-50 chance if I showed a vast improvement. I felt as though daggers were being thrown at me. Speech, again! My problem in first grade! The pain, the wound -- something was wrong with me! I cried out, "How is my work with the kids?" "Fine," he answered. I could not stop crying in his office.

A lifetime of shame, of pain, was reaching down to my soul. Something very familiar was being sounded in me. I was feeling the separation, the loss, the rejection of me in childhood in this man's office. I could not explain it. I just felt it. Diarrhea poured out of me in the following weeks. My demanding girlfriend wanted me to satisfy her sexually, and I was dying inside. She would eventually leave me, and I would have to last another eight weeks at this job, knowing that they did not want me back. The job ended, but I could not move. My brother Willie moved out to live with his fiancée, Mickie. I was paralyzed with fear. I remember my friend Heidi coming over and feeding me because I was afraid to go outside. I decided to enroll in a Master's program in Counseling and to go into therapy, a path that was highly suggested. I decided that I wanted to live, to move toward God and toward myself. I did not know then that I had set up the school authority, Dick Smith, in a me-versus-him situation. I was fighting an injustice that I had felt ever since that first grade conference with my mother and my teacher, the injustice of being separated from my brother, of being diagnosed with a "speech impediment," of my mother's believing it and going along with them. I was dying inside, far away, yet I was closer to my core. This was my move toward God, to find myself, to find my truth.

My master's program supervisor wrote in my journal that it was hard for her to read my journal because I was in so much pain, and I was. I decided to change, to find out about this pain. I started my path back to myself, ultimately back to the oneness of Willie and me. As Eva Pierrakos states in her lecture "The Spiritual Meaning of Crisis,"

Every crisis ultimately means such a readjustment, whether it appears in the form of pain, difficulties, upheaval, uncertainty, or merely the insecurity that comes from starting out on unaccustomed ways of living after giving up a familiar one. Crisis in any form attempts to break down old structures based on false conclusions and therefore on negativity. Crisis shakes loose ingrained, frozen habits so that new growth becomes possible. It tears down and breaks up, which is momentarily painful, but transformation is unthinkable without it. (*Pathwork Lectures*, Lecture #183)

The first dream I worked on in therapy would become my guidepost to finding myself. The dream went like this: I am on Jones Beach in New York with my father, mother and my sister Leah. A tidal wave is taking me out to sea and I am panicking, struggling for my life. I am scared to death, out of control and fighting the wave, and a voice says to me, "Let go." I let go and am carried out to sea and then back to the seashore, where I am lying down, flat on my belly, stretching one hand out to my father and asking him for help. My father says, "You can do it yourself." "No," I said, "I need your help!!" He reaches out for me and picks me up. End of the dream. This was a year of tremendous growth.

Therapy Session with Willie and Charlie

To fulfill part of the requirements of Willie's doctorate program, I agreed to a therapy session with him. My attitude from the start was negative: this session had to be a sham: one session after a lifetime of pain, of walls? I was angry, not really wanting to do it. I wanted more than one session. I told Willie in the session that I did not have to like Mickie, his wife. I cut him out. I was in my mask of knowing more than he, knowing that I was better in this area of personal growth. I ranted and raged during the session. Next would come a family session with Willie, my mother, some members of the family and me. My father came a day late after having missed the first session. He watched the video from the previous day and started right in on me, saying that he and I had had it in for each other, that I had a chip on my shoulder. I told him that I wanted him to come over to me after my football game and give me a hug. He said, "I wanted to teach you to be a man." I then told him that I needed him to put his arms around me and hug me. We connected then, and some of my wall started to come down.

Willie then asked me to participate in a questionnaire for his thesis on twins. I told him that the only way I would answer his questions would be if he allowed me to ask him the same questions. He accepted my terms. In his paper Willie says about this process:

My interview with my twin brother Charlie was by turns very fitting, excruciating, and enlightening. . . . Most salient for me, in listening to the tape, I could barely distinguish which voice was his and which was mine. I have the same response when I see a picture of myself - - I see so much of him in it. In the interview, I limited what I would share with my twin, for I felt unable to express what I was feeling inside about being a twin. In doing so, I drew a psychological boundary which cut him off, and did not allow him to threaten my psychological institution - (self). This wall was my ultimate line of defense, my way of protecting my own sense of identity, which he more than anyone could threaten.

The night after the interview, I watched my twin performing on stage. It was hard to look at him, to hear the inner parts of him. I felt as though I myself was up there, and I flinched, not ready to expose the inner me to the public or to him.

I also felt Willie's wall during this interview process and found myself doing all the sharing and revealing. It was not until four months later, when Willie gave me a copy of his paper and I read it that I felt confirmed about the wall between us. I felt very sad about this.

As I was about to move to California, I said goodbye in the diner to Willie, Mickie and their two children, Meg and Tommy. An outpouring of tears came from both of us at the same time. It was as though we knew that this was our last time together in the same place. Our pain, our wound, our tears flowed without stopping over years of separation, never spoken of, never mentioned, just felt in this Massachusetts diner. Meg, Willie and Mickie's four-year-old daughter, said, "Look at Daddy and Uncle Charlie! They are both crying." It was so painful to say goodbye, leaving to go to California, for what I did not know, but I was leaving. God was sending me, this much I knew. The years of loss, of the wound, of our sharing the crib, the class, the little league team, Camp All-America, high school, college -- everything was being touched at

this unlikely place. I could not stop crying. I was going to miss him: words that I had never allowed myself to utter, not to this day, not to this moment. To touch back to when they split us up and maybe lifetimes before that.

California. A spiritual journey of Buddhism (“Nam myo ho renge kyo”). Maharaji, where I received knowledge up on a mountain in Malibu, finding my truth, my God and myself.

Two and a half years later I moved back to New York, where I would find the Pathwork, which would introduce me to Core Energetics and John Pierrakos, through whom I would meet my future wife at the Phoenicia Pathwork Center. I worked with Stuart Black in front of the whole Phoenicia Pathwork Community. I went through the gamut of emotions, from rage to my longing to embrace the men who represented the most important men in my life: Willie and my father.

I worked with John Pierrakos for the first time, and he made me aware of the mask around my eyes which I had felt for years and the pain, the sadness, the rage in my eyes. He told me to massage myself around my eyes regularly. He said to me, “I can tell you like this work!” And he was right. I felt that this work was freeing me from the weight inside me.

I worked with Sid and Cindy in my second year of training at the Core weekend intensive. I worked with my lower self for two hours, turning away from God, from my group . . .

a river of emotion came tumbling down

through . . . around . . . freed up . . .

my mask comes off . . .

I show my lower self to the group . . .

maybe for the first time . . .

and my Core . . .

reveals the longing to be embraced . . . loved

held . . .

and how sorry I felt . . .

that I’ve withheld for so long . . .

Forgive me . . .

Willie . . .

As I embrace Franz . . .

I embrace Willie . . .

The walls I had put up to keep him out . . .

I take down in this moment.

Willie . . . me . . . one . . . God.. .womb . . .

Holy alliance . . .

which turned into an

unholy alliance . . . war . . .

now comes tumbling down.

After years in therapy with Jac Conaway, I finally wrote Willie a letter about how I felt shut out and how I had shut him out at the therapy session we had had so many years before. I was not ready to let him in. I was hurt, angry, stubborn -- I *had* to *win* -- but now I wanted to let him in. This was what I told him in the letter.

I went up to Boston to visit him with my one-and-a-half-year-old daughter Elizabeth. As we walked into his house, Elizabeth immediately jumped into his arms and embraced him, as I wanted to do but did not. She had no past, just spontaneous love for him. I was a little jealous, but I understood. I liked that she felt close to him.

This year my whole family went to a wedding of a close friend's daughter. Willie and I were seated at separate tables. He came over and sat down next to me. We were in silence for a moment. I thought, "What do I talk to him about?" "What do I say as we share our silence together?" But he came to me, to sit next to me. It felt good. We felt close even though I felt awkward and did not know quite what to say.

Oneness . . .
two twins . . .
same egg . . .
connected . . .
God . . .
our lot . . .
our life . . .
born the same day . . .
came back home . . .
to stay.

CHARLIE
by
William Corley

Charlie
if you care to write
write

If you care to laugh, laugh
I will listen

If you care to cry, cry.
If you want to shout, shout
out Loud

I'll be there
to bare with you, to
stay, when others would
leave.

Charlie
sing, sing of the days
before

the hurt neither of us
saw, but felt.

The wall, others forced
between us.

But Charlie! Oh Charlie!

Sing of us, crossing
those barriers beyond,
to a place where Love
is seen.

Where blue birds flock
together.

to give strength to each
other.

W.C.

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