

Two sets of twins 2,000 miles apart with the same sperm donor in common meet up

by Brad Hunter, Daily Mirror **26/09/2011** (<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/top-stories/2011/09/26/>)

Decrease font size Increase font size

Recommend

Send

One person recommends this. Be the first of your friends.

5 (#)

Babies have been conceived using sperm banks for years. But what happens when one donor's offspring decide to meet up?



Twins Jonah and Hilit Jacobson with twins Jesse and Jayme Clapoff

Twins Jonah and Hilit Jacobson love sushi and bite their nails. Over 2,000 miles away, twins Jesse and Jayme Clapoff also love sushi and chew their nails.

All four teens look incredibly similar with the same brown hair, full mouth and great athletic ability. A coincidence? Not at all.

All four are the offspring of the same sperm donor and if it wasn't for a new website that unites 'donor siblings' they would never have met.

Jonah and Hilit, now 16, were born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, US, by Eric and Terri Jacobson. When the couple started trying for a baby they discovered they had fertility problems.

Tests showed Eric had a condition where he didn't produce sperm.

"When you want to have a baby and you can't, it's hard," says Terri, 47. "You try it all and it costs money."

The couple's options included adoption – in the US it would cost \$25,000 (just over £16,000) – or donor insemination. They chose the latter. And from a brochure at a fertility clinic they ordered sperm from donor 1096.

"We saw he was Jewish, 6ft tall, healthy, bright, smart, sporty and worked in industrial design. He came from California," recalls Terri.

"When Eric and I found out we were pregnant, we were both ecstatic, thrilled beyond belief.

"I was ecstatic to learn I was having twins and to find they were a healthy boy and girl. It took five years to have them so the thought of raising two was a blessing." Unbeknown to them, several other would-be-parents liked the sound of donor 1096, too.

In California, 2,300 miles away, devoted career woman Janis Clapoff was heading for 40 and her biological clock was thumping.

"I really wanted to have children," she says. "But there was nobody in my life at the time."

So she decided to use a donor and liked the sound of a tall, sporty, clever, handsome donor. Donor 1096.

And in a year, along came twins, Jayme and Jesse, both now 16.

This could've been where the story ended. Two sets of twins, living thousands of miles apart. But curiosity and a new website meant the twins would eventually meet.

Mum Terri had always wondered whether they had other siblings.

She has always been open about the circumstances surrounding their conception.

"Eric and I used the word donor from the time the twins could talk, so it was a natural introduction for the children," she explains.

But while Terri wanted to know more about the twins' biological father – and any siblings – Eric was less keen.

"My husband didn't want to know the wider connection," she says. In 2000, when her twins were five, Terri joined the Donor Sibling Registry, a way for sperm donor family members to

connect in a way they hadn't done before.

In order to find their half-siblings — if they have any — members use the ID number of the sperm donor. After typing in donor 1096 in to the webpage, Terri found her twins' first sibling when they were eight. A girl called Maddi, whose mum Mara — a single mum — lived in New York.

However, Maddi looked just like her mum and didn't share physical traits with the twins, or donor 1096. But Maddi was athletic like her half-sister Hilit. "There was fondness between them," Terri says.

During this time, Terri toyed with having another baby and bought more sperm from donor 1096, but she failed to get pregnant. However, after spending a tiring day with her 18-month-old niece, she realised having her twins was enough.

Meanwhile, Janis Clapoff also decided to find out about her twins' dad, donor 1096, and any siblings.

She too registered with the Donor Sibling Registry and the families found each other. Then, four years ago, Janis made the trip to Georgia with her twins to meet Terri's.

"The first time they were all in the same room I couldn't believe it," says Terri. "They had the same body type, they even have the same Mick Jagger-style lips." Hilit adds: "The first time meeting Jayme and Jesse was exciting but nerve-wracking. Since my twin Jonah and I had met Maddi two years before, we were prepared. We hugged hello and went to dinner.

"We all talked about our life at home, friends, family and interests. It's cool when half-siblings meet because you do feel a connection, not like just meeting strangers." Jayme adds: "When we went to dinner, we all ordered the same drink, virgin Pina Coladas. That was cool."

Jesse agrees: "The connection was deep. We knew that we were siblings."

In fact, the similarities were clear for all to see. As well as looking so alike, the two sets of twins are both athletic, outgoing, kind-hearted and passionate.

Two years after the Clapoff twins visited the Jacobsons in Georgia, the Jacobsons returned the favour and made the trip to Hawaii, where the Clapoffs were living.

"I still can't remember any awkward or weird moments between us," Jonah says. "Jesse and I love the ocean and discovered that we both wanted to attend the same uni, which is on the beach."

It's the internet that has changed the world for donor conceived children. In the US, there are already about 7,300 sibling connections on the Donor Sibling Registry and that number is expected to rise.

And it's estimated that between 30,000 and 60,000 donor conceived children are born each and every year.

This \$1billion industry is thought to be the result of an ageing and even more diverse population, a society that's putting off having children until later and advances in medicine that allow procedures like donor insemination to happen.

But despite heart-warming stories like the Clapoffs and Jacobsons', not every family is keen to meet their half-siblings. And many are less than forthcoming about their children's biological origins.

"Having a donor father is nothing to be ashamed of," says Terri. "Honesty is always the best policy between the parents and children and between the children and everyone else."

Terri's view is backed up by a 2010 study, which revealed many donor children want to know more about their background.

However, Terri is also aware of a recent study that warns of the dangers of a sperm donor being used too many times. Recently, it was revealed that one man has at least 150 offspring, raising fears of the potential for incest.

"I used to think that it was a needle in a haystack situation," says Terri. "But now I'm not so sure. At our sperm bank, they were supposed to cap the number of children a donor could father at 10.

"But we now know there are at least 14 and probably 20 children from donor 1096."

She adds that the industry in the US is unregulated and there will undoubtedly be some unfortunate and shocking results. However, her journey has been a good one.

Terri says her twins haven't yet shown an interest in discovering the identity of donor 1096 and the reason for this, she thinks, is simple: "Their father is Eric – he raised them."

Since the two sets of twins have met, other donor siblings have been discovered, all the result of the same biological father. When Jonah and Hilit Jacobson celebrated their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, eight of their donor siblings showed up for the party.

Jayne says: "I wish we lived closer together because we would be so much closer than we already are. We tell each other about certain things. It's a really great relationship and I just really love them so much."

• **WWW.DONORSIBLINGREGISTRY.COM** (<http://>)

Related articles

- **[Real life: A dare found me a husband](http://www.mirror.co.uk/life-style/real-life/2011)** (<http://www.mirror.co.uk/life-style/real-life/2011>)

[/09/17/real-life-a-dare-found-me-a-husband-115875-23425416/](#) 17/09/2011 00:00

- **[I found out Dad murdered Mum when I put my name into Google \(http://www.mirror.co.uk/life-style/real-life/2011/09/16/i-found-out-dad-murdered-mum-when-i-put-my-name-into-google-115875-23422880/\)](#)** 16/09/2011 00:00
- **[I begged my husband to have the snip - then used a teenage sperm donor for baby number eight \(http://www.mirror.co.uk/life-style/real-life/2011/09/14/i-begged-my-husband-to-have-the-snip-then-used-a-teenage-sperm-donor-for-baby-number-eight-115875-23418580/\)](#)** 14/09/2011 00:00
- **[Diary of a divorce: Steve lost £50k, our home and family - all because of his gambling habit \(http://www.mirror.co.uk/life-style/real-life/2011/09/13/diary-of-a-divorce-steve-lost-50k-our-home-and-family-all-because-of-his-gambling-habit-115875-23416029/\)](#)** 13/09/2011 00:00
- **[One weekend.. I had a stroke at 28 \(http://www.mirror.co.uk/life-style/real-life/2011/09/10/one-weekend-i-had-a-stroke-at-28-115875-23408489/\)](#)** 10/09/2011 00:00

[jesse and jayme clapoff \(http://www.mirror.co.uk/tags/jesse-and-jayme-clapoff/\)](#), [jonah and hilit jacobson \(http://www.mirror.co.uk/tags/jonah-and-hilit-jacobson/\)](#), [real life \(http://www.mirror.co.uk/tags/real-life/\)](#), [twins \(http://www.mirror.co.uk/tags/twins/\)](#)

Recommend

Send

One person recommends this. Be the first of your friends.

5 (#)

[Print \(#\)](#)

[Send \(#\)](#)

[Share \(#\)](#)

Search Mirror.co.uk

[RSS \(http://www.mirror.co.uk/rss.xml\)](#) | [Site Map \(http://www.mirror.co.uk/sitemap/\)](#) |

[Tags \(http://www.mirror.co.uk/tags/\)](#)

Quick Search

[Search Local Mole for a comprehensive business directory list](#)

[\(http://www.localmole.co.uk/\)](#)