



The Two: The Story of the Original Siamese Twins

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Hardcover book with dust jacket is the story of Chang and Eng, co-joined Siamese twins in the 19th century. Bibliography, index. 360 pages. Illustrated.

The Two: The Story of the Original Siamese Twins Details

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Author : Irving Wallace , Amy Wallace

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Jason says

North Carolina represent! Like much of Amy Wallace's work this is T.A.W.D.R.Y. Either you love that or you don't.

Erin says

I was led to this one by reading about Chang and Eng in A.J. Jacob's "The Know-It-All". Surprisingly, I had no idea that the original Siamese twins spent the last part of their lives married to sisters and living in Mt. Airy, NC. I believe this book was published in the mid to late 1970's... it was definitely dated and went a bit more in-depth than was really needed. Still, this was an interesting read on the history of two very unique individuals.

Rena Sherwood says

Oh so dull -- which is great if you're trying to get drowsy enough for sleep but sucks if you want to be entertained. This book relies heavily on contemporary sources and chooses to quote them extensively (including all punctuation, spelling and grammatical errors) instead of just giving a summary. It does try to liven things up by imagining what the sex life of the Siamese Twins was like (they had 20 or so kids, after all) but even that is more embarrassing than anything else.

Has a lot of photos -- including those people who played a minuscule part of the Twin's lives, such as a photographer who took a famous image of them in their old age.

Does end on a sublime note -- but it's a hell of a long ride to get to that sublime bit.

Leslie says

Very interesting

Monkey says

So, I was watching this show on TLC about the Mutter museum in Philly, which I want to go to even though it's super creepy. <http://www.collphyphil.org/mutter.asp> Check it out.

Anyway, they were showing the death mask of the Siamese twins and discussing them, and how they became famous and then settled down married two sisters and had 21 children! I was transfixed. So off to the local library to find out about them. This book was extremely informative and detailed, almost too much so. Did you know that in all of recorded history (as of the printing of my book) there had only been 300 total cases of conjoined twins living more than a few days? The Siamese twins lived 60 plus years and this was in the 1800's...it is all fascinating. However do not read this book if you just want to find out how they had sex...which was everyone's question to me, because no one knows really. They didn't talk about that stuff then.....

ABC says

Chang and Eng Bunker's lives were absolutely fascinating. They were probably the first truly famous Asian-Americans in America. Successful and intelligent, they would be on tv shows like "The View" and "Oprah" if they were alive today. (Although if they were alive today, they would have been separated at birth. Their medical know-how to do so did not exist during their lifetime.)

I would give this book three and a half stars if possible. It is a very factual biography, relying a lot on letters and that sort of thing. The first half of the book is a little boring. The book gets quite interesting once the twins settle down and get married. The book tries to answer questions like: How did they have sex? How did they treat their slaves? How did they get along with each other? Did they want to be separated? So basically I ended up really liking it.

I googled for more info and discovered that somebody has written a different book which is a fictionalized account of their life. I don't think it sounds like a very accurate book, because the author says they would have died if they had stayed in Siam. (No, they wouldn't have. They were very much alive and successful there.) He also says that Chang was the dim-witted one. (According to "The Two", the twins had different personalities, but both twins seemed intelligent.)

So I would recommend this factual biography over a fictionalized novel. The truth is very interesting.

There are photos at the end of the book.

Anthony Ventrello says

An excellent read from page one. Very-well written as you almost feel like you personally know Chang and Eng and could say, "yeah, I'd like to hang out with them." I was very pleased that I found this book on my mom's bookshelf and was even more surprised that I had known my mother had this book for over 30 years and I had never read it! I wish I had read it sooner, but I am glad that I did. A great book that I would recommend to anyone who enjoys a well-written and relateable biography.

Greg Condon says

This was a interesting book, though as others have pointed, has long passages that are seemingly unnecessary information. Most fascinating to me was the others relationship with each other, the fact they rarely spoke to one another and, when, writing letters referred to themselves as "I" . I love the Book of Lists, by the same authors, they have a unique ability to make you want to spend the rest of your life researching some obscure topic based on a single sentence they wrote.

Tracey says

This was a fascinating book and rich with 19th Century U.S. history. I thought Irving and Amy Wallace (father/daughter) did a masterful job in researching the lives of these Siamese twins. Aside from their "disability" that draws one's interest, they were remarkable men and I think would have been wonderful to have as friends. I do question, though, how successful their marriages were. What they accomplished in their rather short lifetime is remarkable.

Terralyn Brown Barfield says

3 1/2-4 Stars.

Bj Hoover says

I found 5 boxes of old books in storage. This is a book about the original Siamese Twins, Chang and Eng Bunker. I gave it to my Dad in 1983 because of his interest in their story. I read it for the first time this week and found it very interesting. What a challenging life they had in their co-joined state. They made the most of it and managed to live productive and mostly happy lives in spite of their circumstances.

Susan says

This is a biography about the original "Siamese Twins" Chang and Eng. The subject matter is really fascinating to learn about; how they lived day to day being joined at the abdomen. I found it even more interesting that they each married and had 20+ children between them. The books itself was a little dry, and I found myself skimming through parts because it just became so monotonous. Even so, I'm glad I read it and could learn a little more about these brothers.

Benjamin says

The subject matter was very interesting, but the execution was slow and tedious. The book was about three

times as long as it needed to be. Most of that extra space was devoted to long quotations that were only tangentially related to the topic at hand (the most maddening, to me, were passages describing impressions of a city given by someone with no ties at all to the twins; the fact that the twins had passed through that city was justification enough).

The factual highlights include how entrepreneurial and athletic the twins were, how many years they toured (but rarely as part of circus-like freak show), how many children they had, how thoroughly Southern they were (they owned slaves, and they had sons that fought for the Confederacy), and their method for sharing time between their families.

my favorite quote: "A Herald Man at the Hyphenated Brethren's Home"

Lani says

One of my last AABB book swap finds, I took forever to decide to read it because it has a musty, falling-apart book jacket that I thought I would lose if I carried it around much. I was right, but it's not in terrible condition...

I've always been kind of fascinated by conjoined twins, so reading about the original Siamese Twins was pretty interesting. The story encompasses a lot of topics actually - not just conjoined twins but also Siam/Thailand in the 19th century, the vaudeville circuit, and a bit about the Civil War.

I found the book to be a little slow at times, particularly in its coverage of the melodrama of the Twins early management and the later melodrama of the marital situation, but it was all worth reading. The minutia of life as a conjoined twin was covered a bit less than I expected, mostly because the Twins lived in a time when tell-all stories weren't really as... graphic as they would be now. Still, it seemed that the brothers were quite willing to share their lives with the audience - at least when they were younger - and their openness is pretty impressive when you consider the attitudes many people have about "freaks". I found their later life to be amazing - though it made for somewhat boring reading - simply because of the acceptance of their unusual family in a small Southern community.

The book wasn't can't-put-it-down engrossing, but it got a 4th star for being about an unusual subject and covering so much detail. Kind of a weird read, but unique enough to be entirely worth the experience.

Gillian says

really interesting, the even got married, when one got drunk the other felt it to a lesser extent!
