

To comprehend the bond that exists between Kim and Kelli Masters, consider the story of a spill taken by one of the identical twins when they were toddlers. One was in the front yard and the other in the back yard of their home. Only one twin fell, but both crumpled to the ground, clutching the same knee and howling in pain. Because their mother could not tell which was truly hurt, both got Band-Aids and kisses.

They are that close to being the same person.

"We look back on childhood experiences and can't remember which one of us things happened to," Kim admits with a smile.

Talking with the Pride of Oklahoma's feature twirlers is an exercise in memorization. At 5-foot 5-inches, slender, brunette and brown-eyed, the twins are nearly indistinguishable. Both are enthusiastic and quick to laugh. They finish each other's sentences or talk in unison, choosing almost exactly the same words. As incoming freshmen, they chose identical courses and instructors without knowing the other's selections, all while using different enrollment counselors. Their mistakes during twirling performances are often the same mistakes at the very same moment.

Better than anyone else, they understand why people cannot tell them apart—even people who know them fairly well.

Kim, an accounting major, often is mistaken for Kelli by her sister's fellow journalism students, and vice versa. Recently, an OU journalism professor approached Kim and struck up a conversation about one of Kelli's classes. Kim politely stopped him and explained, "I think you have my sister in your class."

"It really threw him for a loop," Kelli says, grinning. "He didn't know I was a twin. That's the best part. Friends come up to you and say, 'Are

you you or are you your sister?'"

"Kelli and I have twin friends, and we know what it's like being in other people's shoes," Kim says. "I don't think a day's gone by in our lives that we haven't gotten 'twin questions.' But we've enjoyed the advantages of being a twin."

Separately, the Masters twins are



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*Senior twirlers Kim and Kelli Masters perform at halftime with OU's Pride of Oklahoma marching band.*

remarkable students. Together, they are extraordinary. They came to OU as co-valedictorians of Midwest City High School, sharing a 4.32 grade point average. They have earned almost every honor and leadership position available to OU students, from the President's Leadership Class to Big Woman on Campus. As international competitors, Kim and Kelli are six-time national twirling duets champions and the winners of a gold and a silver medal from the World Twirling

Championships. Kim, as Kelli proudly points out, currently holds the title of Miss College Majorette of America, the highest achievement in U.S. competitive twirling. Now retired from competition, Kim hopes to pass the title to Kelli in the summer of 1995.

"We were active in high school, and when we came to OU, we thought we'd only have enough time to dedicate to the Pride," Kim remembers. "But during our freshman year, we saw that there were a lot of other opportunities and doors we could open."

Those doors have led the twins to active roles in student life and experiences they believe will serve them well after graduation. "It's interesting. We meet a lot of people who know us as the Pride twirlers; on campus, we have a whole other identity," Kelli says.

Both agree that making time to be performers, competitors and active, successful students is not easy.

"Sleep is just kind of out of the question," Kelli jokes, adding that years of competition have taught them strict self-discipline.

"You have to keep your priorities straight and block out time for the things you need to do. If that means getting up at 6 a.m. to practice, we do that," she says.

They also make an effort to block out time for each other.

"We try to take a few classes together—we're each other's best study buddy because we think alike," Kelli notes.

They share a car and shop for clothes together, a practice they picked up in junior high after discovering they could have twice as many clothes by splitting a wardrobe. The only thing they will not share, the twins say, is boyfriends.

Their boyfriends also have learned how important making time for family is to the Masters.

"It's like having another mom," Kelli insists. "We look out for each

other and joke that guys always have to take us both out for Cokes."

But no matter how much time they spend together, the twins claim they never fight.

"It's a lot more productive and a lot more fun if we don't fight. I think that comes from working together," Kim says. She explains that their mother, Barbara, was forced to come up with ingenious strategies to handle two small, identical children.

"When we fought, we were put in opposite corners and had to ask permission from each other to get out," she says admiringly. "That was the start of learning that getting along was easier."

Being a twin can have unusual benefits. "Growing up, we were the only kids who had all twin Barbies," Kim quips.

"We have our bond, and it's stronger than anything else I think I'll find," Kelli says, with Kim nodding in agreement. In a few short months, that bond will be stretched when Kim moves to Dallas to accept a position with the Ernst and Young accounting firm. The twins will be separated for the first time in their lives.

"It's making me nervous thinking about it," confesses Kelli, who currently is working for KWTU-9 as a Griffin Scholar. But she quickly chimes in with Kim to say that, "Our two biggest worries are splitting up the wardrobe and long-distance telephone bills."

"Our built-in mirror's not going to be there anymore," Kelli laughs. "We'll be calling each other every morning and saying, 'I've got this on with this and this. How do I look?'"

"We're always going to be each other's best friend. We've both grown up a lot during college, but that doesn't mean we've grown apart. If anything, we've grown closer together on the emotional level. We've both found our niche, but we share common interests."

Those interests include the dream of earning their competitive judges' licenses, performing for a professional sports team or maybe someday opening a studio together where they can teach twirling and dance.



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*Recalling their own childhood aspirations, Kim and Kelli offer some pointers to a Pride twirler-in-training.*

"It's something that's been such a big part of our lives for so long," Kim says. "I don't think that either one of us is ready to quit performing."

Performing with the Pride has ended. On November 26, the twins entered Oklahoma Memorial Stadium for the final time as OU's feature twirlers.

"We really dreaded the Nebraska game, because when we came off that field, we knew it was the last time," Kelli admits. "We've looked up to that position all of our lives. From the time we first picked up a baton, we looked up to the OU feature twirler."

The twins' first batons belonged to Barbara Masters, who was a majorette in high school.

"We were four or five, and we found Mom's batons and began playing around with them," Kim says. The twins attended an OU football game and saw the Pride's feature twirler perform. They decided then that they wanted the spot for themselves. Many years later, they persuaded OU Pride Director Gene Thraikill to allow them to share the position, which officially belongs to only one twin—although Thraikill tactfully declines to say which one.

Barbara and Jon Masters have supported them through years of competition and performances, Kim and Kelli say. The twins choreograph their Pride routines and consult with a Dallas choreographer for competitions. Barbara Masters memorizes each step of every routine so she can serve as her daughters' daily coach and often rehearses with them early in the morning or late at night.

Although twirling has meant time, effort and money, the twins believe their parents might miss it all now that their performing days are over.

"Both Mom and Dad have been a part of our twirling from the beginning," Kim says. "It's a family operation. Mom sews our costumes, and Dad puts on the rhinestones."

I think this was the first year they actually got to sleep all night before the Texas game."

Kim and Kelli credit their parents for their successes and also for the closeness they share, a closeness that is evident to all those who have watched them perform through the years.

"It's always like a security blanket, having Kelli beside me," Kim says. "We've built a mutual trust through teamwork. You have to be intuitive, and it's amazing how much we can communicate just with glances. We watch each other constantly. I know when I go out in front of a stadium full of people, she's right there by my side."

—Anne Barajas