MY DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Julie Wilczynski

[Assignment: In light of our recent readings of Declarations of Independence and study of personal declarations, consider a situation from which you must free yourself, and write your own declaration.]

(1) After 19 years of not knowing who I am, I find myself desperately searching for something to call mine, something that sets me apart from my twin sister, something called self.

(2) I am an identical twin. My sister and I have established a closeness not known to most singletons. We have always been together in everything we have done, and we have now chosen to go our separate ways for the first time in our lives. As a freshman in college, I have chosen to attend Valparaiso University while she has chosen DePaul University.

(3) Identical twins naturally receive attention just because they are identical and they are twins. They inspire a curiosity in those around them, and they capture the imagination. However, twins are forced to define themselves in a world where there is someone very similar in the opposite corner, a world where they are forever standing in each other's shadow.

(4) Sometimes I feel as though my twin sister and I are not two different people; we are one. We are perceived as one entity, and I need to establish my own identity. We are functional equivalents. I am half of a whole, and when my sister and I are together, I am complete. We have no separate lives, and so I long for uniqueness. I have my own traits and I have my own distinct personality. However, always being addressed at "the twins" has actually instilled in us a fear of being individuals or being alone.

(5) After spending so much time together, I have lost the "I" part of me because I always think of myself as "we." Julie and Janie. Janie and Julie. Somewhere inside I cling to the other and depend on her to face the world. Two to face the world together. It is so reassuring.

(6) In a relationship baptized by both sharing and competition, my twin sister has become my most beloved friend and my bitterest rival, my confidante and my betrayer, my sustainer and my dependent, but scariest of all, my equal. Known only to twins, these unavoidable relationships are the justifications of my longing for independence.

(7) The twin bond creates a rivalry that can be destructive. As twins, we are doomed to equality, for better or for worse, until death do us part, or until one wins. We fight in order to tell ourselves apart, to become individuals, and to feel superiority. Always being together means always having something to fight about.

(8) Competition is inevitable among siblings close in age, and, as twins, we compete to establish our own identities, and we do so precisely because we are so much alike. We have constantly tried to outdo each
other, a natural reaction to our shocking similarities. Locked together in fierce competition, we have built up resentment toward one another.

(9) When we are together, we are compared. When we are alone, we cannot be ourselves. Twins are forever being asked, "Which one are you?" Since twins rarely have their own individual experiences, I have come to believe my life is dependent upon hers. I exult in my twinnness, and I am scared to face the world alone. I feel insecure when I am alone, and the only way to defeat this is to practice it. So I have decided to strike out on my own.

(10) By forming such a close intimacy within the borders of twinship, I often have difficulty in dealing with other relationships and withdraw myself from the reality of the outside world. I expect a lot from people and will not settle for anything less than my sister has given me. Therefore, I find it hard to establish a close relationship with others.

(11) I sometimes get confused and frustrated when someone cannot understand me because my twin always has; my sister and I have insulated each other from the realities of other human relationships. Because of my twinship, I find it difficult to express how I think and feel; I am used to the understanding of a nonverbal relationship. We have had to share all the special events a singleton considers his or her own.

(12) I have measured myself against her all my life, always feeling second best. I sometimes wonder if she has done the same. I cannot alter the ties that were forged before we were born and would not wish to do so; I love my sister dearly. But a separation will be a valuable and healthy learning experience for both of us.

(13) While apart, we will each establish our own unique identities and learn to face the world alone. In addition, our relationship will grow and flourish as we will have stories to share and thoughts to perceive as individuals. We need to step outside our special bond, so that we can establish emotional stability on an individual level. As twins, we must manage to achieve the fine balance of living fulfilling separate lives while retaining the magic of the special closeness of twins.