



Notebook
PHOTO/sketch Autobiography

My story

I had to start on Belmont street in Portland, Oregon in matching dresses Mom sewed for Linda and I. That's Mom in the right corner of the picture with her arms out to hold me and her head tipped back like a mirror image of mine. Her hair is brown and fine - now it is grey, white, wirey and often pasted to her forehead in a swear. TD is hard on her.

We're on the back porch and it looks like summer - probably a mild August day when Oregon

unwraps itself into green and blue skies and flowers bursting with far growth. The door behind me opened to the room I shared with Linda until late in my pre-teens.

The matching dresses with bow ties seem so hopeful to me.

Like we can mask the crisis of alcoholism with pressed white blouses and closely-cut bangs. I seem to be all in, however. Caught by the intensity of the sun above or a squawk of a bird - something has pulled my eyes skyward and I'm happy-filled with wonder. I think that's why I've always loved this photo - the joy. I remember being that joyful child. Still am.

But it also seems miles away from today. Linda, Mom, Dad & I in that house - it looks like when it was painted white with white trim. There was a summer when they paid me to repaint it - & they didn't teach me anything about painting that I remember. They - actually probably just Mom - bought me paint & a brush. I didn't wash the boards & didn't scrape off the peeling paint - I painted over it all. I remember being on top of a ladder with a wide view of empty Belmont St. stabbing my full paintbrush into crevices near the eaves, covering the peeling grey paint with layers of white, figuring this was not how it should be done. But still. Everything was half-assed, half-finished, half-fic - so what did it matter?

How do I still do this? Masking what isn't right w/ a distraction?