

31. Remembering the Child

It is sadder than I expected to realize that I have no one left to ask about myself as a toddler. I'll have to focus on my teenage self and the only two people who knew me intimately then. My sister Karen's memories of me are always a bit warped by the jealousy between us – always! My brother's Kim's memories of me are equally warped by a kind of hero worship. So, these views of me...

My sister Karen always tells stories about how much I bullied her. If true, it is remarkable that she survived. Though, truth be told, she was an irritating manipulative child who often provoked me into yelling or smacking her – so I was frequently punished for mistreating her. I don't think I ever actually drew blood, or left bruises. Her favorite story is about the time I chased her around the entire upstairs walkway at the Friendship Apartments, screaming that I was going to kill her when I caught her. In her story, worried residents called my mother, the apartment managers, maybe even the police. In my version, I never even caught her.

My brother Kim idolized me and I took advantage of that. He believed anything I told him, even when I made it up. He was convinced I was the smartest person in the world and would argue with his teachers whenever they disagreed with something I had told him. Instead of appreciating his hero worship, I took advantage. Suffice it to say that I found a complicated and tricky way of showing him how to count his toes so that it always appeared that he had four toes on one foot, six toes on the other. "Uh Uh!" he'd exclaim, my counting making a liar of his own vision. I was chagrined when I found him in the swimming pool, with his hoes on, so no one would see his deformed feet.

Although there is a contrast in both stories, I must have been a trial. I was emotional, with more than a few anger issues, a bit conceited and a show-off. Even more significantly, what does it say that these are my sister's and my brother's *favorite* memories of me? I'm not even going to ask them about their *worst* memories!