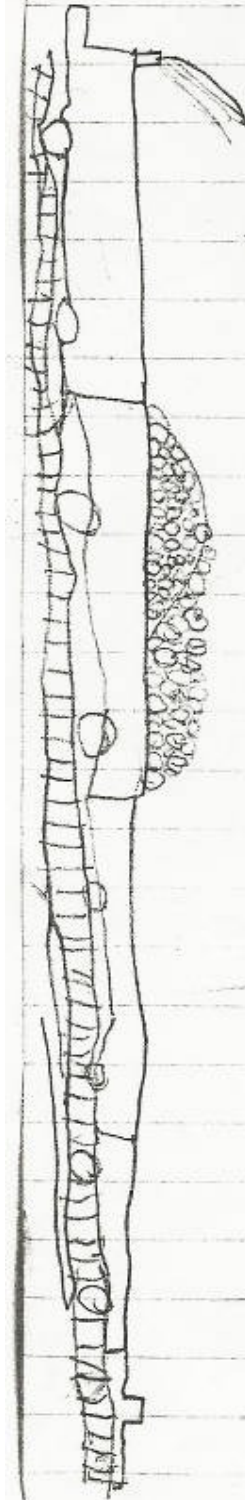


train - drawn from memory
quote "The back is smaller because
further away."

How I I . . have 9



HTILEGA

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I have become aware of disbelief from some concerning my story about the train. They naturally wished for some documentation, and I suppose I can understand that. I don't tend to believe anything anymore, so why should they believe me? And so, I give you

the photocopy above. My Mom had to dig it out of her files, where it was hiding in my babybook. My doubters turn out to be right in one respect: I was not three years old, I was four. I had been told it was three and I had accepted that, but there was either misremembrance or exaggeration on the part of someone. As for the rest, I guess you still have no proof I really said that, other than the word of my Mom, who you don't know. Even I have no proof I really said that, since of course I have only the shadiest memory of it, a memory since tainted by many retellings by my family. I have just accepted the family story, as well as what my Mom has written on this page. That is her handwriting at the top, which I recognize, but of course you have to take my word for that, and if you were doing that there would be no need for any of this.

I asked my Mom about the confusion on the date, and she said we were conflating two separate stories. There is actually a second story, somewhat similar, but from at least a year earlier. I asked her if she had kept the drawing for that and she said she thought she had but couldn't find it right now. It was not as "impressive" to her, she said, since it was just copied figures, and probably wouldn't prove anything to anyone anyway. She says it was kind of like the copied letters above, next to the train, or the Crayola insignia you can see part of. She said I was always copying (not tracing, but side-by-side copying) figures and designs like that, without necessarily knowing what the words meant.

The second story goes like this:

My mother was working on her PhD in math in those years, and she would set up a card table in the living room in lieu of a desk. Apparently my little brother and I would play on the floor beneath the table. Anyway, as the story goes, the doorbell rang and my Mom got up to answer it. While she was away, I pulled a page from off the table (or a page had fallen on the floor) and began copying the figures. Since they were advanced equations, it looked to her at first like I was writing the equations. As it turned out, I wasn't. I had no idea what the equations meant, I was just copying the forms. After questioning me, she quickly figured that out, but she said it still scared the hell out of her.

She couldn't give me a firm date for that, but said I couldn't have been more than three because that was when we were still living in Amarillo, on Jean Avenue.

Years later she admitted to me that after the train incident, she had revisited the prior incident with the copying of equations, and wondered why she was so scared to have a math prodigy but not scared to have an art prodigy. She said that perspective at four is almost as weird as differential equations at three, but being a mathematician and not an artist, the second one didn't register with her. Given the latter, she would have felt required to put me in some special math school or something, but given the former, she

hadn't a clue what to do.

On a lighter note, there is a third story, much shorter. Even before this copying phase I liked to draw, and would draw anytime I could get hold of anything that marked. My Mom did save some of these, though they aren't worth photocopying. They are just chicken scratches. But it seems I was quick with a story even then: when she asked me what I was drawing, I said "French fries!"