



Long before I learned to sew, from the time I could hold a pair of scissors, my earliest creative fashion experiences were realized through paper dolls. I wasn't skilled enough at 8 or 9 years old, to be able to create high fashion for my Barbie dolls using the sewing machine, but I could cut out anything exactly on the line, better than anyone I knew. I was the best paper cutter in Kindergarten.

My middle sister, two years younger, shared my "passion" for fashion, art and dress-up.

Spurred on by a set of Paper Dolls we received as a gift, we chose the then popular Betty and Veronica personae, I was Betty, since I was blonde, and my dark haired sister got to be the more glamorous Veronica, with the rich daddy. We had to include my littlest sister in our creative play, so we found an obscure reference to a third attractive female, Gloria, in one of our many Archie comic books.

So we made our own paper dolls, glued on to card stock, and my mom, always encouraging, provided us with endless supplies of crayons, colored pencils, sequins, trims, books of wall paper, wrapping paper, construction paper and lots of glue.

My sisters and I made up a calendar, it would feature a series of social events for the lengthy weekends. There were pizza parties, sock hops, football games, pajama parties. Movie nights, swim dates, formal dances, the list was endless. We gave ourselves the weekdays, as I recall, to go into our corners, and come up with an outfit appropriate for the upcoming party or social event, next appearing on the calendar. Go-go Boots, hot pants, and mini dresses were very "in vogue" at the time, simple styles, and we created complete looks, with accessories, construction paper skis, paper footballs, cardboard textbooks. We took our clues from Archie comics, the girls were always getting ready for an event. Our imaginations ran wild, we competed with each other for the most original look.

We played paper dolls for a few years, until my sewing machine skills developed and I could create actual clothing. Those years gave me the opportunity to experiment, to understand clothing on a three dimensional form, drawn to a two dimensional shape.

I still have my Betty Doll. She represents some of my best childhood memories, creating fashion and role playing with my sisters in the basement. We needed no other friends. We had each other, reluctantly including the youngest when we had to, grateful when she finally learned to read and could understand the rules of the game.

