

## **A Hefty Price For Holiday Indulgence**

This past weekend, I took down the Christmas tree and stashed it away for another 11 months in the basement. It was so pretty I just didn't feel right treating it like a murder victim on an Investigation Discovery show. Plus, in snowy weather, the temptation is to keep the inside of the house a reflection of the snowy outside to let the holiday spirit linger a little longer.

But there comes a time when the tree has to go. We



always have to put it in a room that the cats do not have access to because even though it's artificial, some of them think it's a delicacy. It becomes a challenge after a while to keep them out of the room. Cats are sneaky and they can slip by unnoticed so easily. Also, at least one of them knows how to open a door by twisting the doorknob between his two paws.

I know I had a good Christmas because I am currently sitting on its caloric memories.

To say I overindulged this year would be an egregious understatement. It was as though the days between Thanksgiving and Christmas stretched together to form one long buffet table full of tempting goodies and I couldn't resist any of them. I like to say I cook too much because I'm used to cooking for a crowd. But I know the real truth -- I want leftovers for days. I love looking in the refrigerator and

seeing all those plastic tubs of fattening favorites just waiting to be emptied onto a plate before going for a spin in the microwave.

In my usual day-to-day eating, I rarely if ever want a sweet after lunch or dinner. During the holidays, it becomes a habit for me to have a slice of pie or a few cookies or a handful of chocolate candies after a meal, and that craving extends into the new year -- and expands my waistline very quickly.

I know I'm in trouble when my sweats are fitting like skinny jeans.

'Tis the season for weight loss programs advertised on TV. I am suspicious of the programs that require people to buy prepackaged processed food. It would seem that when you go back to eating regular food, that weight loss would vanish like so many freshly cooked crab rangoons on a Chinese buffet. I remember the days when I would go on

diet shakes in high school and I would see awesome results until I introduced solid food back into my day routine and all my progress would go down the tubes.

Sometimes I think cutting out bread and pasta would solve all my problems. "Yeah, I can do that," I tell myself. It's harder than I think. Once I gave up bread for Lent and almost ate a crouton on my salad. Thank God someone was there to remind me that croutons are toasted bread.

The most obvious solution is to avoid my kitchen all together. This is going to be hard, though. My coffee maker is in the kitchen and I love coffee, maybe even more than I love the occasional chocolate covered donut. Perhaps I could just re-purpose the kitchen and turn it into a craft room or, even better, an exercise room. Maybe put a stationary bike where the table is and pedal while I sip my morning cuppa joe. I'd

have fab abs in no time, right? Well, probably not. Stationary bikes are terribly expensive. I know what would happen if I joined a gym. I'd go for a couple months and then start finding excuses not to go.

I think the secret is to let go of bad habits gradually. The contents of a sub sandwich are good, and they can be made into a salad, just go easy on the dressing or replace it with just a simple vinaigrette. I stocked up on yogurt recently so that when I want something sweet after a meal, it fits the bill. I remind myself too that when I'm shopping, just because the cookies or chips I like are on sale, that doesn't mean I should add them to my cart.

I never make New Year's resolutions, but in 2019 I resolve to watch my portion sizes, avoid snacking between meals and get off the couch more.

Who's with me?

## POP GOES THE WORLD

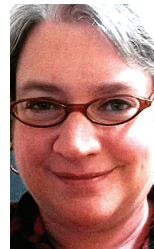
JOANN WARE

# The Skinny On Jeans

I have been hoping that skinny jeans would find their way onto the endangered fashion list for a long time. The denim degradation of the simple, plain jean is the go-to pant for everyone from the hopelessly hip to the too-wide-in-the-hip.

I have never understood why people want to wear garments that are too tight. This comes from being a product of the designer jeans fad of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Levis, Lees and Wranglers got kicked to the curb in favor of Jordache, Calvin Klein and Sassoon.

What I remember about designer jeans is that they were fairly unforgiving to



those who carried a few extra pounds here and there. Board-straight in the leg and high in the waist, designer jeans were not something one could relax in. Denim at the time didn't have the modern inclusion of spandex for a more comfortable fit. The denim then came in a dark wash and it would take years of washing for the blue in the jeans to start appearing powdery. Wear-and-tear to the designer jeans was a fashion no-no. They had to appear brand-box new at all times because that was the style. It wasn't until the late '80s that holes in jeans became acceptable, around the time Bon Jovi became a household name.

There were very few people who could pull off the designer jeans look without appearing to be in constant pain from being swallowed alive by a fashion statement. The girls on "Three's Company" and "Too Close for Comfort" looked as though they didn't mind the too-tight fit, but people did a lot of cocaine back then, so maybe while under the influence

of Schedule II drugs, they didn't even notice that their circulation was being compromised by Gloria Vanderbilt.

Of course, you wanted everyone to see the label slapped on your backside -- that is, everyone who could fit their backsides into those pricey denim torture devices. The commercials all showed people doing disco dances and roller boogie in their designer dungarees. In real life, if you managed to sit comfortably in those jeans at your school desk without passing out, you were doing all right.

I have never been much of a jeans person. For one thing, I have never been able to find a pair of jeans to fit my unique shape, a problem that seems to get worse and worse as I age. I decided a few years ago to just give in and wear "pull-on pants," which are basically sweatpants you can wear to work without looking like your job is binge-watching Netflix and eating hummus by the gallon. I guess I just didn't care what I looked

like, favoring comfort over fashion, and just put on the same black elastic waistband pants every day.

The fabric in those pants was starting to thin, which is ironic because perimenopausal me continues to get bigger. I hated putting them on in the morning. They made me look dowdy and sloppy. I take quite a bit of time putting on my face in the morning, but my clothes I just threw on so that I wouldn't break any indecent exposure laws.

This spring, I decided to start fresh. I had not been shopping for new clothes in years. I deserved some pretty clothes to spruce up my look. I bought some cute tops and a pair of navy blue chinos at a chain store in Roanoke's Valley View Mall. I liked the experience of wearing new things and being complimented on them so much I went back to that store, armed with a coupon from the previous visit, and bought more clothes.

I always check out the clearance items because I love a good bargain. I found

a pair of skinny jeans in my size. Not just skinny jeans, but super skinny jeans. I had flashbacks to the designer jeans from my adolescence and was about to just put them back on the rack. But a little voice told me, "Try them on." So I did.

They fit like they had been made for me.

They did not bind at the waist, they did not make me feel like I was going to faint as though I were being squeezed by King Kong. They were stretchy and comfortable and I didn't look too bad in them. Best of all, they made me feel like, fashion-wise, I had rejoined the living.

No wonder this is a trend that doesn't seem to be going anywhere.

At this time in my life, I am quite comfortable in my skin. I'd like to take off a few pounds, but I am happy and enjoy my life.

I will, however, be livid if some dimwit designer ever brings back dark-wash jeans. I'd rather relive the horror of home perms.

## POP GOES THE WORLD

JOANN WARE

### Beans

I'm not sure of the origin of my aunt Wanda's nickname Beans. I just remember calling her that from the time I learned how to talk. My mother probably chose it, as she was the one who often came up with alternate names for family members. I myself was referred to as Joanie, Joker, Joker May, Joker June and Miss May. Is it any wonder my signature is a scribble because I just don't know what my name is sometimes?

I was very shy growing up, which gives my friends



pause now because I am the complete opposite now. I rarely made eye contact with anyone, even close relatives.

My mother's sister Wanda always made me feel a bit intimidated. Even though I was shy, I had a strong will from the day I was born and I wanted my way always. To save money, Wanda would often cut my hair and I disliked the result. I would complain that she made me look like a chicken head when her scissors were finished with me. I wanted long, luxurious hair like Cher, but I had fine hair and it would never look like Cher's. A short haircut was my lot in life.

Money was tight in the 1970s and Wanda made a lot of my clothes. She would sit for hours at her sewing machine turning out clothing for me and her own children.

On one particular day she was at her sewing machine when her son Jeremy and I

witnessed an odd event in the den. The family mutt Sally stumbled in from the outside and collapsed behind a chair. Jeremy and I watched with curious eyes as Sally expelled a sausage-like creature encased in a filmy membrane. Jeremy reported to his mother that a snake had crawled out of Sally. Wanda nodded and kept at her sewing. Children tell fantastic tales sometimes so she wasn't too concerned. By the time Jeremy told her a third snake had made its way out of Sally, Wanda had to investigate. Sally had given birth to four puppies. My cousins named them Adam, Hoss, Little Joe and Sneakers.

Flash forward a dozen years, I am a student in my aunt Wanda's English class at Lexington High School. It was at this time that the nickname Beans vanished. It just felt wrong and weird to refer to a teacher as Beans.

But I couldn't call her Mrs. Leadebttter, either. I can't remember what I called her while she was my teacher, but when I raised my hand, she wouldn't call me by any family nicknames. I was Joann.

During a humanities fair, Wanda's English class did an abridged version of "Macbeth." We worried about what we would do for costumes, but Wanda said she would take care of the costumes. I knew she was a wiz at the sewing machine, but I was unsure that she would be able to stitch costumes for all the dramatis personae in Shakespeare's play. She came through, though, bringing in a box full of costumes for us to wear. The box contained the clothing my cousins wore in the 1970s.

Of course she thought of her children's 1970s clothes when costuming a budget production of "Macbeth." Plaid was all the rage that

decade and "Macbeth" is called "The Scottish Play" by superstitious folks who think calling it by its actual name brings about disaster in a theater setting. The student playing Macduff wore my cousin Jenny's red winter coat with a faux fur edged hood as he held Macbeth's head on a spear. Macbeth's head was a stocking stuffed with polyfill.

My aunt Wanda died recently. Her death has left a gaping hole in the fabric of the family that will never be filled.

At her memorial service, her children and grandchildren remembered her as a woman who took the greatest pleasure in the simple things in life. They remembered her taking them on excursions to local museums and teaching them about bread making and crafting homemade Halloween costumes.

To her there was nothing more important than spending time with family. Going on expensive trips was never her thing. She enjoyed spending time at her home - the only home she ever owned in 80 years of life - and teaching her children and grandchildren the importance of continuing family traditions.

She inspired two of her daughters to become teachers. A grandson just began his first year as a high school English teacher.

I hope that when Wanda left this earth, she knew how cherished she was by not only her family and friends, but also the countless students whose lives she influenced in her long career as a teacher in public schools.

I am comforted thinking of her teaching the angels about making quilts from the trails of falling stars and patches of clouds.