



Reflections of a River Rat:

Didn't realize I was so cool
until I tore my favorite jeans

After another morning of heart-healthy exercise at the golf course, I trudged into the kitchen where Mary greeted me.



"Well, look at you, Mr. Cool. You look like the kids with those holes in your jeans."

Gosh, there may have been a compliment in there, but immediately my ego came back to Earth. It was just the latest salvo in 38 years of marital sarcasm – the humor that keeps us grounded.

Mary was referring to the fray marks on the thighs of my blue jeans. These had been my favorite for five years because they were lightweight and flexible. I could make my 6½-mile walk around the course

without having them bind. They flexed readily when I had to fish the ball out of the hole or underbrush.

Perhaps gray jeans would be more accurate. They were faded and worn, and the thighs had frayed into a series of strings. I wasn't allowed to wear them at dinner or to the store because they looked bad.



My mother Eileen would have said, "Don't go out looking like a ragpicker," whatever that term meant. In old Irish nurse's vernacular, it often came right after, "Don't show up at the hospital in dirty underwear."

I had considered tossing these pants in the spring until I reasoned that nobody frequenting a golf course at dawn gives a hoot about what I wore. My gray jeans took the summer off during shorts season, but once the morning weather fell back into the 50s, my gray jeans were back in

action until that fateful morning. I bent over a green to fix a ball mark and my kneecap caught in the closest fray. You could hear the rip all the way to the clubhouse.

Everytime I bent over, the fabric split a little more. I had achieved ragpicker status. So without prompting from Mrs. Wonderful, I drove straight home and deposited them in the 96-gallon trash tote. The size of the receptacle seemed appropriate. After all, I was tossing out years of golf memories, too.

I wore these jeans throughout the season in which we won our league title. I had them on when I marked my ball with a loonie and it deflected my competitor's winning putt. We trudged countless times through the morning dew and encounters with deer and their fawns, groundhogs and fox.

Bob Hope should have been singing “Thanks for the Memory” when the gray jeans nestled to the bottom of the bin. Come to think of it, I have trouble giving up my old clothes.



There’s a rack in the garage that holds my favorites. Front and center hangs the School 42 hoodie, prized because I wore it often during my first five years in the classroom. It has a thick gauge and keeps out the cold. But the pocket tore, then I abused it doing household jobs. It shows the black tar from the driveway and the white paint from the house trim. I’d be underdressed at a grunge-rock festival.

I’m not tossing out my Empire State Games T-shirt from 2009. I remember thinking I’d be careful and not ruin it when I touched up the yellow paint on the house. The front now resembles Van Gogh’s “Starry Night.” Again, I’m discarding

memories. Who would want to forget our ESG team that was perfect over two years – we went 0-for-6.

Perhaps I should look for some golf-themed pajama pants. They would be out of style – like me.

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