

Featured Librarian

Each month a new “librarian” shares their favorite fixing publications and remembers their proudest fix...

My Proudest Fix...

The crotch goes first, in my experience. This makes sense: I was a pedestrian commuter, for most of my first pair of best-loved jeans, and have been going by bicycle for most of the second—the friction just eviscerates those seams. Both crotches have now been darned and patched, repeatedly.

We fix things because they do something for us, financially or emotionally. If an object doesn't do something for us, anymore, we get rid of it.

My current pair of bluejeans are Tellasons, made from Cone Oak Mills denim. I've worn them several times a week (at least) since 2013, so they'll be four, soon. The material has worn in spectacularly, as good denim is famed for doing, and along the way become a kind of wearable record of me and my activity.

We love this quality of our jeans, or we have at least since James Agee waxed rhapsodically/homoerotically in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* about the worn cotton dungarees he encountered on working men across the southern US following the Great Depression.

The fly went next, on the Tellasons, which is weird—my 2003 Levis, now very thin and reserved for special occasions, still have a whole, unpatched placket receiving the little buttons that hold this flap closed. Then it was a tiny spot beneath the point of the right rear pocket, which I sashiko'd (in the Japanese style) myself, thinking how hard can it be? It was plenty hard. A fraying hole the size of a pencil eraser took the better part of an hour of careful work, but the repair is holding well.

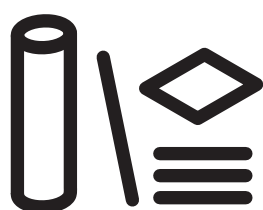
When we fix repeatedly, whether clothing or cars, things become ours. This process of personalization is not trivial.

I cuffed my Tellasons, the first time I'd done this, and when the folded edges of the improvised hem started to fray, I let them go. This went fine, for over a year, but by last month the cuffs were about to fall off altogether. My wife kindly machine-sewed over the entire area, making for an interesting self-patch, no additional material required.

Wear and patina and ongoing repairs make the things we keep with us long-term tapestries in reverse, or chronological records unfolded in real time. When we buy something used, it's like trying to read a document in a language we don't speak, or can only partly understand.

The homestretch for jeans is the thighs, which fade as the dyed warp threads are worn away, exposing the white weft beneath. My Tellasons are fully paled above the knees, now, and will need a front-facing patch before too much longer. This is the point where I buy a new pair of jeans, which I have done: Lees, this time. They are uniformly dark and still very stiff, having been washed only once thus far, but the crotch is already showing signs of wear.

October: Derrick Mead



Maker Library