

Fashion crossed my path once a long time ago. I have never been much concerned with what was “in,” and my choices of dress, hairstyle, and lack of makeup have made that abundantly clear to anyone who knows me. But, inadvertently, it happened many years ago that I found myself wearing what had become fashionable among young women. It may surprise girls now, but bib overalls were the thing to wear at one time. “Farmer jeans” had become stylish.

I had worn bibs for years. Not all the time, but they are good clothes for much of the work I do, and they are comfortable and neat. I even had a pair in green denim—“Mrs. Green Jeans?”

Well, that fad passed, but I continued to wear bib overalls. I have a pair now, too, and they are in the “rotation” of everyday clothes. But, no longer do other women admire my wardrobe choice!

So, it was a surprise when a family member who is more “in the know” than I am told me that once more, after a long, long time, I am on the cutting edge of fashion. Except, this time, it does not involve clothing. That is probably a good thing, as T-shirts that are half worn out, flannel lined jeans, two pairs of socks, and a flannel shirt don’t seem to make up the outfits of those who know what is what.

No, this time, it involves both Runo and me, and it is concerned with a holiday tradition. We have skinny Christmas trees, and I believe that our trees—always cut in the wild from specimens that have no future— have sometimes been objects of pity by folks who have stopped in during this time of year.

It is partly Runo’s fault that we have skinny (does slim sound better?) Christmas trees. When we were living in Sweden, I could not understand the choice of *julgran* that the family preferred. It was always a slender, somewhat sparse spruce in a woods filled with trees that were—in my estimation—perfect.

We compromised for a few years, and sometimes had a thick, bushy Christmas tree, and in other seasons, a less robust one. But, then, I began to fully understand Runo’s mother’s preference. We don’t have a big house. The cabin has room for everything we need and use, but there is not a lot of extra space. The Christmas tree, if not carefully chosen, just takes up too

much room. So, I came around to the same conclusion—a skinny tree is best for us, and, with lights and decorations, is as pretty as a wider one.

So, it was a surprise when my cousin informed me that so-called “pencil trees” were now in style. We were actually ahead of the times.

This year our now more fashionably named “pencil tree” will not require visitors to show compassion or express false praise. The slim balsam fir stands proudly in the narrow space between the cream-colored sideboard and the pine chest. The beautiful paper mache angel—made years ago by a wonderful local artist who has since passed away—stands in a backdrop of tinsel. The blue and silver ornaments, tiny blue lights, and tinsel strands are all our “pencil tree” needs to show its face to whoever stops by. The scent of balsam fir perfumes the air, and our little Christmas tree has nothing of which to be ashamed.