

# IN MEMORIAM: REAL PANTS

*BY K.E. FLANN*

Real Pants, the wardrobe staple that enjoyed global success for centuries, passed away peacefully, surrounded by family who were working from home. An exact date of the passing isn't clear because Real Pants had become increasingly reclusive, rarely leaving the chair in the bedroom. "When we discovered them in a pile on the closet floor," said a family member, "we knew it was over. They'd been ill-fitting for quite a while, but it was still a surprise."

Born centuries ago, Real Pants rocketed to prominence late in life. With the rise of cameras in the 19th century, they established a niche by dating people's photographs. Thanks to Real Pants, a picture's decade could be instantly discerned via flared or tapered legs, pleated or flat fronts, high or low waists. Real Pants began to exemplify who was young or old, a dad or mom, and eventually became the authority on success itself.

Even Hollywood took notice. Real Pants regularly appeared in films, serving as a mainstay in 1980s makeover montages that featured ZZ Top songs and snooty, high-end tailors measuring protagonists' inseams. By teaming up with Real Pants, these characters were able to ascend from mailroom clerks to CEOs.

Upon learning of Real Pants' passing, their long-time companions, Button-Downs and Blouses, commented on years of steadfast support. "Without Real Pants, we wouldn't have been taken seriously." It was an open secret that Real Pants

kept Button-Downs and Blouses separated from Dress Socks because of clashes. “They truly elevated us.”

Over time, the many pressures took a toll. Real Pants would sometimes reach a breaking point and split right down the middle. Then they would retreat from the public eye for rehabilitation, returning only when tidy and perfect, as if nothing had happened. To keep functioning, they regularly required spa days at the dry cleaners.

The exacting style of Real Pants was not without controversy. In the early 20th century, women fought for the right to be associated in public with Real Pants, only to spend the next seventy years striving to avoid them — mainly due to what many came to see as unreasonable inflexibility. Real Pants are widely credited with creating the muffin top as part of the crusade to give tough, honest feedback. Not one to be altered by pushback, Real Pants dug in further, coining the catchphrase, “It’s not me. It’s you.”

Nevertheless, Real Pants maintained seemingly inexorable popularity well into the 21st century, in spite of inflicting humiliations that included crotch tents, wet spots, cat hair, and open barn doors. There were even brazen violent acts such as digging way into butt cracks, which often forced people to pretend everything was totally fine.

Long-time underdog rival Stretchy Pants emerged on the garment scene in 2006. “The minute people are in private, they rip off their clothes to be with me. I feel like a side piece,”

Stretchy Pants famously said at the time. “Not that there’s anything wrong with that. Every single one of you is perfect. Don’t change a thing.” Stretchy Pants then reportedly blew kisses for ten minutes straight, making it impossible to clarify whether this comment was actually a criticism of Real Pants. Many people thought it was.

With the arrival of Marie Kondo’s *Tidying Up* in 2014, a stunning reversal of fortune took place. At first Real Pants tried to silence Kondo, shouting, “I was tidy before you were born, bitch!” However, the damage was done. People were wowed by the groundbreaking idea that clothing should spark joy. As Real Pants plummeted in popularity, Stretchy Pants expanded their reach beyond living rooms and Zumba classes, eventually supplanting Real Pants in the underground club scene and then on city streets. “I’m not here to judge anyone, especially for camel toe,” said Stretchy Pants, sitting criss-cross applesauce on a park bench in 2018, dribbling coffee on themselves without consequence.

Despite their rivalry, Stretchy Pants was inconsolable upon learning of Real Pants’ passing. Reached at an airport bar for comment, Stretchy Pants said, “Will anyone love me without the comparison? A society can’t exist without limitations! What am I supposed to do with all of these phones, wallets, and coins? I’m not strong enough! I’m scared. Hold me.”

Long-time colleague, Underpants, summed up what many are feeling. “There’s bound to be friction sometimes when you’re as close as we were. But at the end of the day, let’s face it.

Without Real Pants, there'll be no way to know that it's the end of the day."

Real Pants are survived by long-time partner Belt, who has remained in the closet through the whole ordeal and is said to be worn out.