

Touchstone Story #92 The Lions Vest



Photo Caption: Introduced in 1951, the Lions vest has become an icon of the organization.

There is no mystery about the origins of the now ubiquitous Lions vest. It was simply a new apparel item in the 1951 club supplies catalogue that met with wild success and became a Lions icon.

The “No. A-28 Vest,” made of wool gabardine in Lions gold with Lions purple trim, was advertised as “the newest Lions apparel for convention, bowling and meeting wear.” It sold for US\$1.75. Pictured in early ads with the “No. A-25 Change Apron” in gold and purple canvas, the vest-apron ensemble soon became standard Lions gear at community fundraising events.



Members were quick to see the vest as a unique way to show their Lions pride in public. Sales soared in the early years. And it remains a perennial bestseller, with about 10,000 vests shipped annually to clubs and individual members worldwide.

Lions vests have undergone many changes in design and materials since 1951. The original vest was a short-waisted, bolero-style garment designed to be worn with a dress shirt and necktie. In 1960, satin replaced wool as the fabric. The standard vest was redesigned in 1973 to extend below the beltline. Two handy coin pockets were also added.

As more women joined the clubs in the late 1980s and 1990s, a specially-tailored women's vest debuted in 1997. And for disaster relief efforts and potentially hazardous community service projects—such as cleaning up roadside litter—a line of emergency vests in bright yellow or orange, some with reflective stripes, was added in 2011.

Emergency vests are fastened with Velcro. But no standard vest has ever had a button or a zipper. No problem. An elegant gold-plated vest guard with alligator clips and a pendant Lions emblem is also available. It makes the perfect accessory to the pins, badges and other regalia Lions are proud to display on their trademark vests.