

Duct Tape for Life

By Dennis Knight

One only needs two tools in life: WD-40 to make things go, and duct tape to make them stop.
- George Weilacher

I have given a plug to the WD-40 company, and I hope they appreciate it, but this piece is in praise only of duct tape. It was invented by the bandage makers at Johnson & Johnson during the Second World War for the U.S. Army to seal ammunition cases. Water resistant, green and made from cotton duck material, it logically became known as *duck tape*. GIs found many uses for it, from repairing canteens and guns and jeeps to keeping planes in the air. They even used it to patch up themselves, because it makes a pretty good bandage or a splint.

After the war, the booming construction industry began to use duck tape in an aluminum color to seal heating and air ducts. That is how it came to be called *duct tape*. Today it is pronounced with either the k or the t, but the leading brand of it is sold under the registered name of *Duck Tape*.

There is a legend that, after a fisherman's plane in the Alaska bush was destroyed by a bear, the pilot radioed for an airdrop of tires, plastic sheeting, and three cases of duct tape. With that, he fixed the plane and flew it home. The plausibility of the story was confirmed in recent years by an experiment on the *Mythbusters* television show.

To advance even further the reputation of duct tape as a lifesaver, in 1970, the crew of Apollo 13 used duct tape to retrofit square filters into round receptacles. That creative expedience saved the lives of three astronauts.

If you haven't already, you should try some for yourself. With your new sixty yard roll in hand, peel off the first few inches to fix a leaky garden hose, and use all you need to rebuild your vacuum cleaner, hose and all. After that, you will still have most of the roll left, so keep it around to fix a taillight or fabricate a roof shingle.

You can use a whole bunch of duct tape to re-web your lawn furniture. Doubled up, with sticky sides together, it will be stronger than the original, the flies won't stick to it, and you won't either.

I have used duct tape in all variety of packaging, hanging and repair jobs. I find it especially handy as a substitute for needle and thread; items to which, in combination, I am allergic. Although I haven't yet learned a way to affix a button with it, I can tell you it will hem a pair of blue jeans nicely, and the job will last through several washings.

In an emergency, if I do it neatly from the inside of the garment, I can even use a roll of wonderful duct tape from the nearest drugstore to reconstruct the seat of my pants. I won't tell you how I found that trick.