LVAD Vest

Here is the vest I made for my husband, Hank.   Updated September 2018

**Hank, July 2017**   **Hank, Sept 2014**

The benefit of the vest is, the weight of the batteries is shifted to the sides of the body, and the controller is in the center of the chest. The balance is better, the wires are protected under the shirt, and, depending on what you are wearing, it doesn't show much, if at all. You can adjust it to your own body. This vest is a work in progress. Hank is 5 ft 9 in tall and weighs 180 pounds in September 2018.

NOTE!! There are many variables with LVADs. Hank's LVAD is a Heartmate 2, and the driveline exits his abdomen on his right side. This affects the orientation of the controller pocket and which pocket is larger. Sometimes the driveline exits on the person's left side. If your Heartmate driveline exits from the left side, reverse the orientation of the controller pocket, and switch the battery pockets. Make a mirror image, in other words. Other makes of LVAD's have other differences.

13 inches

6.5 inches Vertically here.

10 inches

11.5 inches Vertically here.

33 inches wide here.
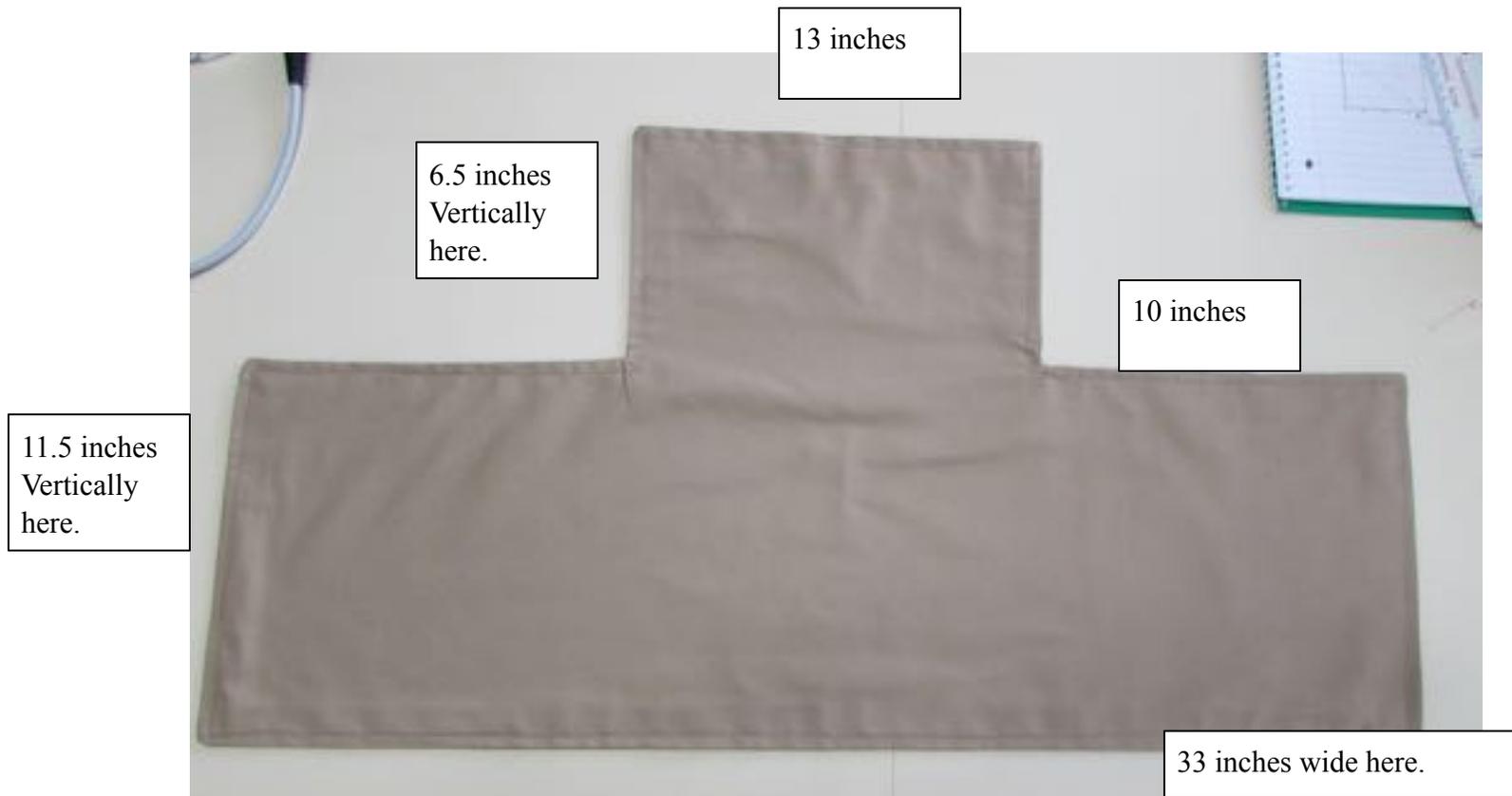
1. **I used 100% cotton twill, 1.25 yards of fabric, 56 inches wide. I cut this piece _doubled, two of the same._ You will also need 2 inch wide elastic (see photo page 3) and 2 inch wide Velcro, which is sold by the foot at the fabric shop, you need 18 inches Velcro.**

1a. Reinforce the sides where the batteries like to make a hole!   Cut two pieces of polar fleece, 6 by 4 inches. Lay them down on the reverse side of one of the cut vests as shown, one inch in from the edges. Sew them on.

Now, sew the two vest pieces together inside out, leaving the bottom middle section unsewn so you can turn it right side out and finish the seam at the bottom, then sew a finishing seam all along the edge. <u>So, it is double thickness. The measurements above allow for 1 inch seams.</u>   Before you turn it right side out, you may want to trim the corners for neatness.

2. Sew on the elastic at the top <u>now</u>.

Turn the vest over, and sew on the two top straps. If you make each elastic piece about 28 inches long, that should be long enough, but remember, the strap crosses in the back, so measure your person to be sure. You can always shorten it later.

Dritz 2" Knit Elastic
Elástico Tejido
9583W

2 in x 2 yd
(5.08 cm x 1.83 m)

One package of elastic might be enough, depending on how you measure for your person. With the measurements I'm giving, you will need a bit more than one package. There is one more piece of elastic to cut.

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3. We are going to attach the wicking piece now. Use iron-on tape or sheet to adhere it to the back of the vest. I used a piece of polar fleece here. It helps to wick off moisture from the heat of the controller, and also gives the chest a little padding and softness. The cotton twill of the vest does not wick moisture well.

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4. This next piece goes on the front chest. It holds the controller. We call our controller Wilson, so when I say Wilson, you think controller. "Controller" is an Orwellian term for our little friend, I think. If Apple made the controller, they might possibly name it Wilson, or more likely, Watson.

9.5 inches this side.

1.75

3 ½ inches

8.5 inches this side.

5 inches this side.

1.75
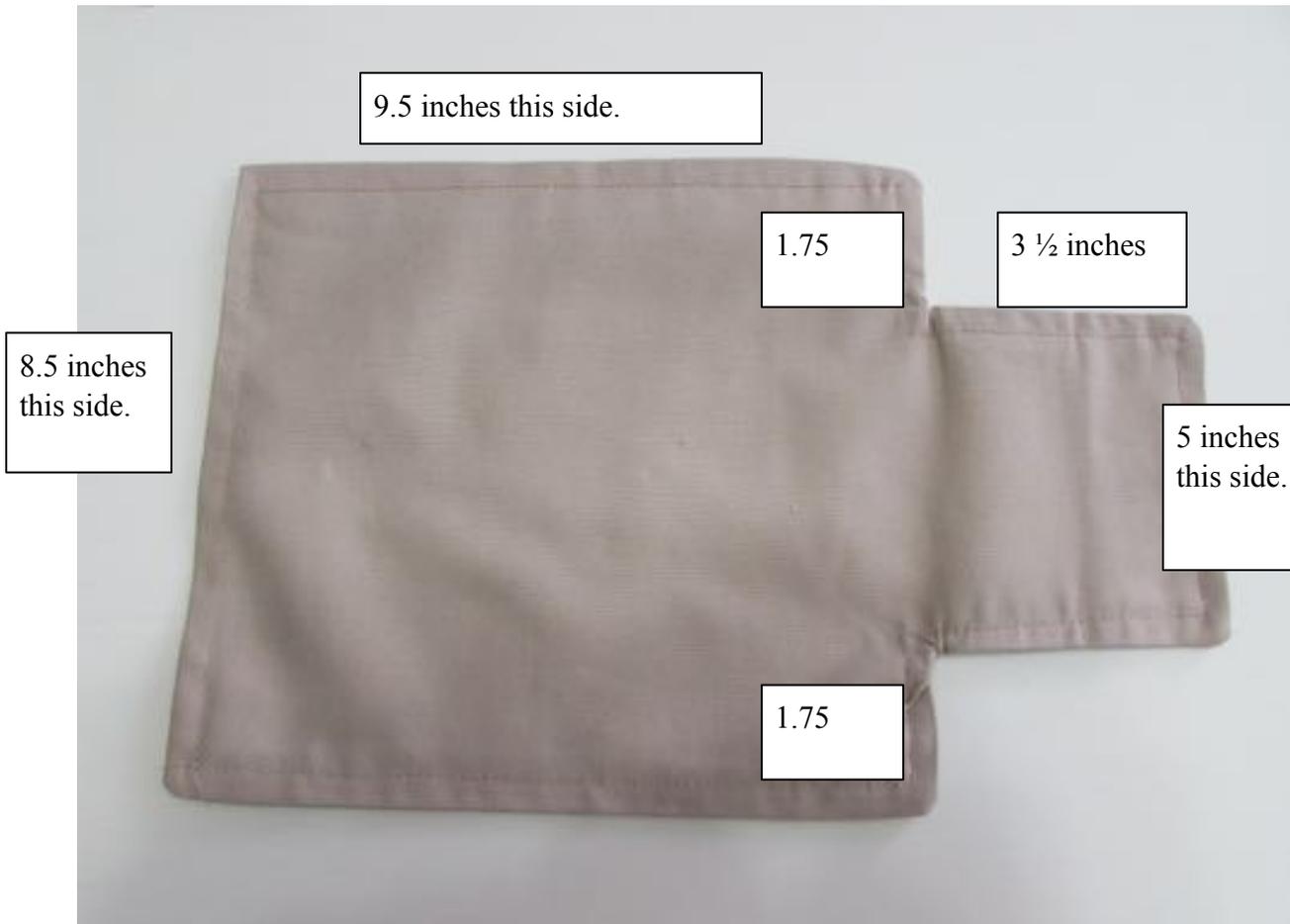
I cut the fabric double, sewed it inside out, flipped it right side out, finished the open seam and then sewed a finishing seam all around.

**NOTE: THESE MEASUREMENTS ALLOW FOR A 5/8 INCH SEAM.

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5. Next, we are going to sew the Wilson pocket onto the vest. Use your extra Wilson as a guide, to make sure it will fit inside. Don't make the pocket too loose, or it will just hang and annoy the wearer. But, don't make it so snug you have to force Wilson in. Here are some photos to illustrate. That chalk line where I sewed, that's a 1 inch seam line there. BUT, use your extra Wilson for good measure. I double stitched every seam, for extra strength.

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I doubled over the end to make it strong. The finished pocket is raised up, not flat, for better fit. If the pocket is flat, it presses on the wearer's body and feels too tight.

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6. Next, cut out the pockets. **THEY ARE TWO DIFFERENT SIZES. I cut each one double, sewed it inside out, turned it, finished the open edge, and sewed a finishing stitch all around. This picture shows it at the stage where it is inside out and trimmed.** -- The WEARER'S right pocket is 12 inches wide and 9 inches tall. The completed pocket is 10 inches wide and 7 inches tall. One inch seams.
The WEARER'S left pocket is 11 inches wide and 9 inches tall, and the completed left pocket is 9 inches wide and 7 inches tall. The pocket goes on horizontally, make a note of that.

Once the pocket is finished and pressed, it's time to <u>sew on the Velcro</u> <u>BEFORE YOU SEW POCKET ONTO THE VEST.</u> I use 2 inch wide Velcro. The pieces shown are 2 inch square pieces. The Velcro square is positioned 1½ inches from the top of the pocket. I am showing the finished product here, but remember, <u>sew on the Velcro first, then sew the pocket to the vest.</u> The pieces here are the <u>rough loopy side of the Velcro,</u> not the fuzzy side. The two other squares are sewn on diamond-wise to the corners of the vest for the upper straps, as shown.

7. Next, cut a piece of the 2 inch elastic about 20 inches long, longer if your wearer is larger. Now it is time to do a fitting. Put the vest on the front of your person, then take the top elastics, cross them in the back, and pin them to the upper Velcro diamond squares on each side. Then pin the 20 inch elastic along the back to the lower Velcro squares. <u>The bottom one should be a little loose, because the batteries will stretch it out.</u> Load up all of the equipment for the best result. Pin where you want the cross in the upper elastics to be.

8. Next sew on the Velcro to the bottom elastic. Use a 2 inch piece of the fuzzy side. Fold under the ends for a clean edge.
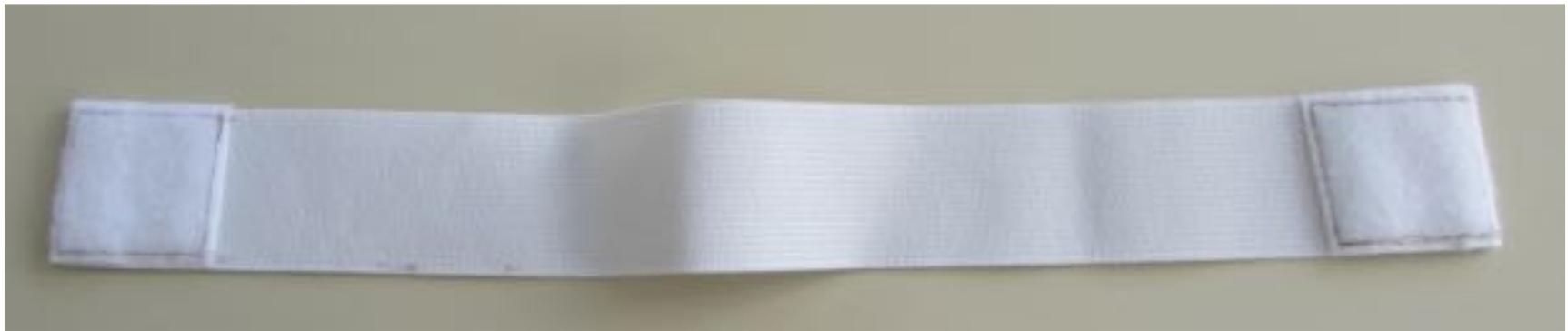
Sew the crossover point as shown. Then sew Velcro to each end, a 4-inch-long piece, using the fuzzy side of the Velcro. Turn the ends over for a clean edge. Next, add some trimmed down Velcro as shown below, as a tie down for the wires and to secure Wilson. Each is 3.5 in. long and 1/2 in. wide.

Finished!!! Enjoy!! I machine wash the vest in warm water permanent press, then hang to air dry.
Any questions, email me at hankpattyrichmond@sbcglobal.net. Please share freely.

Patty Richmond, Sept 2018