

Protecting Pooch and Property

PET LOVER'S DOG LEGGINGS HELP KEEP PAWS SAFER AND CLEANER **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

ACCORDING TO the American Pet Products Association, total sales of pet products reached \$103.6 billion during 2020.

Inventions often result from the love people have for their pets. In the case of Walkee Paws™, invented by New York-based Lisa Baronoff and featured on “Shark Tank,” clean paws help keep a tidier home and a safer pooch.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): Tell us about your background. Had you invented anything before Walkee Paws?

Lisa Baronoff (LB): I was raised in South Africa as the daughter of a famous fashion designer who was very creative. I've come up with numerous ideas over the years.

When my daughter was a baby, I invented a mat to add to a changing table, with an arch containing toys to distract her from

rolling over during diaper changes. I never brought it to market and years later saw something similar on “Shark Tank.”

EGT: Where did you get the idea for Walkee Paws?

LB: In 2015, my cocker spaniel, Toffee, got ill from ingesting snow-melting chemicals on his paws. My vet recommended he wear booties. But they were hard to get on, uncomfortable because they had to be tight on the ankles to stay on, and invariably just fell off.

Fortunately, my experience developing and marketing toys and pantyhose for brands like Mattel and Sara Lee Hosiery made the little light bulb in my head go off.

I raced to my closet, grabbed two pairs of old pantyhose

Walkee Paws products include a puffer coat with leggings and a pom-pom hat.



“I ... grabbed two pairs of old pantyhose and cut them into leggings. Next, I slipped them onto Toffee’s legs, tied them over his back and—hot dog!—they stayed in place.” —LISA BARONOFF



and cut them into leggings. Next, I slipped them onto Toffee’s legs, tied them over his back and—hot dog!—they stayed in place. The pantyhose acted like a sling, making the whole experience easy for me, comfortable for Toffee and a godsend for the both of us. That’s when Walkee Paws officially got its start.

Inspired by the versatility of pantyhose, my incredible team developed a four-way stretch fabric, along with a clever over-the-back tightening tool that prevents Walkee Paws from falling off while also remaining comfortable for the dog.

Next came the waterproof paws. We knew we wanted the material to be lightweight and thin enough so that dogs could still feel the ground and walk more naturally, but it also had to be durable enough to withstand water, pavement, snow and the general wear and tear that comes with outdoor walking.

Although there was lots of trial and error, rest assured Toffee earned many a peanut butter bone in exchange for his work as our test model. We finally “paw-fected” our Walkee Paws and went to market in November 2018. And to this day, we’re still the only brand of dog leggings on the market.

EGT: Any additional products?

LB: We have an innovative new product, a puffer coat with many innovative features—like a pocket to hold poop bags and a fold-out flap to make it adjustable to fit longer-bodied pups.

The main innovation is, there are four hidden buttonhole slits in the coat so a set of four “attachable leggings,” sold separately, can be attached to form a snowsuit for winter.

The idea came to me as I was bothered last winter by the process of putting the leggings

on first and then the coat. This took too long. The attachable leggings form a snowsuit for toe-to-tail coverage and are super quick and easy to get on and off.

Because these are sold separately, people can get the correct fit for all dogs. The coat will fit their body type, and the leggings are designed by paw size. Plus, we developed a super cute “pom-pom” hat to match, with slits for the ears and a neck strap to ensure it stays on.

EGT: How many tries did it take with prototypes with the leggings?

LB: Many. The challenge was the boots. They needed to be thin enough so a dog could feel the ground when walking, yet thick enough to be durable. They also had to be waterproof and have a smooth seam between the rubber and boot material to prevent nails and dewclaws from getting caught.

EGT: Is Walkee Paws patented? Was that difficult?

LB: Yes, we have several design and utility patents. The process took many years and was extremely expensive.

EGT: Where are you manufacturing? Have you had any lessons learned during production?

LB: We manufacture in China. It was too expensive to do in the U.S.A. I have realized you need to be on top of every production cycle and check products very carefully, as factories tend to try to cut costs by using cheaper materials than were approved.



Walkee Paws waterproof rubber boots with grippies help prevent slipping on wet or icy pavement.

EGT: What would you say were your top three obstacles during product development?

LB: First, developing the waterproof rubber boot. We needed molds, and it was hard to find a manufacturer. Second, finding a designer to do the tech packs and sizing. The first company I used charged a fortune and was not effective. Third, learning to work with factories in China.

EGT: Where are you selling?

LB: We sell on our website, Amazon, Zappos and Chewy.com.

EGT: Were you offered a deal on the show?

LB: Yes, by Mr. Wonderful, Kevin O’Leary. Kevin

offered me a deal as soon as I had finished my pitch on the show. He said he knows dog people are crazy about their pets and he’s learned they spend tons of money on them.

I was asking for \$150K for 5 percent equity. He offered me \$150K for 20 percent or a royalty deal of \$2.70 per pair until he made his money back and then \$.50 per pair in perpetuity. I declined both offers.

EGT: What advice do you have for inventors?

LB: Don’t be too concerned about patents and prices. Just get your product to market as soon as possible to show proof of concept. 🐾

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Edith G Tolchin has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. She is an editor (opinionatededitor.com/testimonials), writer (edietolchin.com), and has specialized in China manufacturing since 1990 (egtglobaltrading.com).



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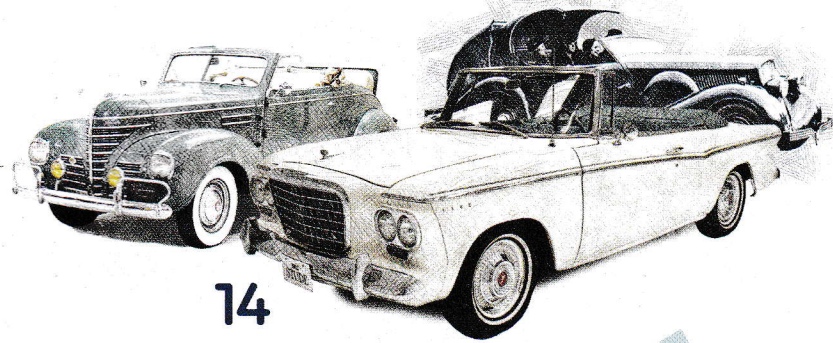
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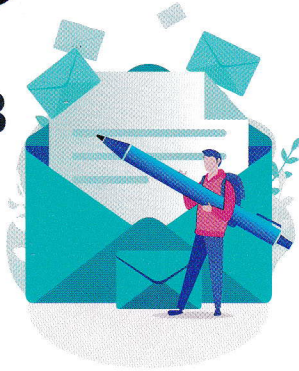
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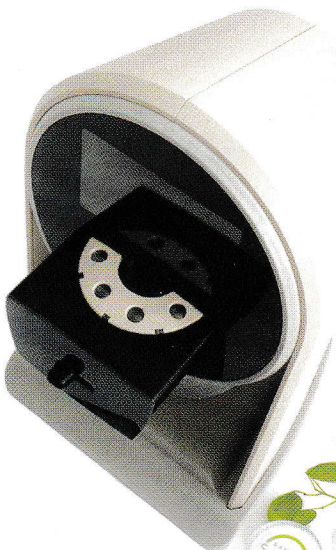
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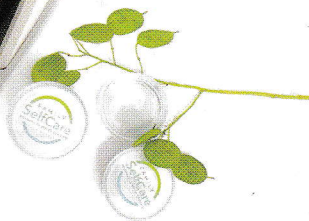


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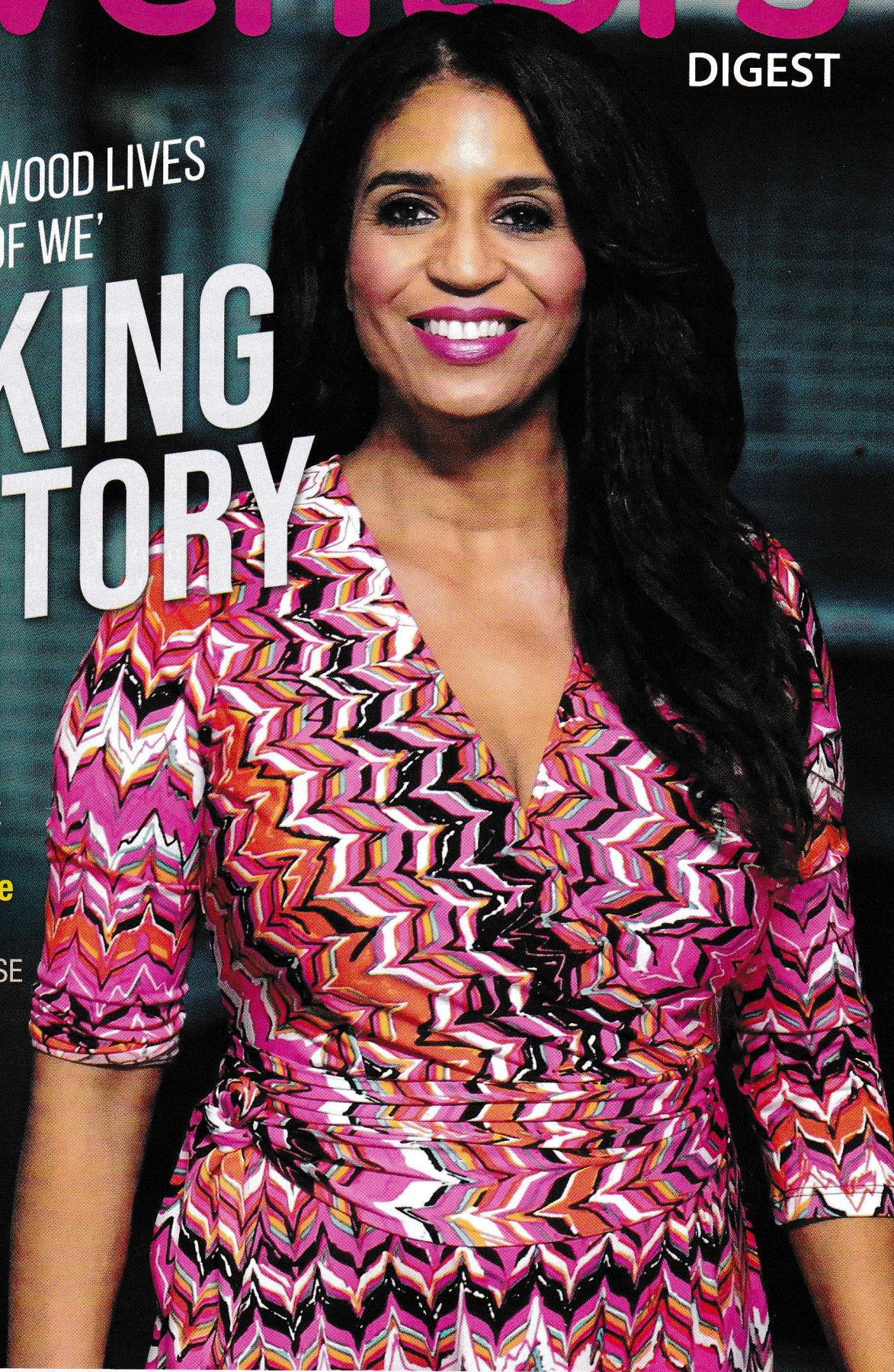
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