

# Let's Talk Men's Shirts

by Arlene Converse



**T**he most significant part of a man's attire is his shirt! You never get a second chance to make a good first impression. A fresh, laundered and well-pressed shirt is essential to complete your look. Collars, cuffs and plaques down the front are where the eye immediately migrates to when you're talking to someone. We successfully launder thousands of shirts every day. And we are very good at it. But, not all shirts, regardless of the cost of the shirt, are created equal. Sometimes the most cost effective shirt actually presses and finishes much nicer than a custom made man's shirt that costs hundreds of dollars and was manufactured in Europe. The construction and manufacturing of any shirt is essential to the proper finishing. Fabric, interfacing and even the buttons are crucial to the final finished product. But, like all things, shirts can outlive their useful life or exhibit other problems. Whether your shirts are store bought, custom-made, expensive or inexpensive, the problems below identify and explain the issues that we encounter from time to time. Simply put, all shirts are not created equal!

## Q: What happened to my buttons?

**A:** The laundry process of washing and pressing can cause buttons on the shirt to become frail and crumble. Often the buttons crumble visibly and are immediately replaced before returning the shirt to the customer. However the buttons can also be undetectable as to their frailty and once the shirt is returned to the customer, it crumbles when they are trying to button it. The heat from pressing and the general process simply takes its toll on the buttons causing them to outlive their useful life simply due to the repeated washing and pressing. We are always happy to replace buttons should this occur.

Today the designers are putting RUBBER buttons on shirts. They appear to be plastic and are nearly undetectable that they are in fact, RUBBER! The rubber buttons are not able to withstand the laundry process and will melt. Processing thousands of shirts a month, it is practically impossible to be able to detect a rubber button. Visually, they appear the same as all other buttons and are not "rubbery" to the touch as one would expect. The rubber material is actually hard. The care labels on the shirts do not indicate that the buttons are rubber so the process stated on the care label does not take this into account as they are considered ornamentation, or items placed on a garment after it has been made. The care label simply

addresses the cleaning process based on fabric content. Rubber buttons are nearly impossible for a dry cleaner to find so typically, if damaged they are replaced with the traditional plastic buttons.

## Q: I can't wear my favorite shirt anymore.

**A:** The Drycleaning & Laundry Institute tells us that the average life expectancy of a shirt is about 35-50 washes, or roughly two years. But even this will fluctuate depending on the amount of abrasion and strain placed on the shirt during wear, the fiber content, and how the shirt is constructed. Sometimes they simply wear out. Many times the shirt begins to show wear on the elbows and under the arms where there is the most abrasive action during the wearing of the shirt. Once those fibers are broken down due to wear, they can tear and fall apart, particularly during the cleaning process.

## Q: It's a brand new shirt and the color has run all over it! You must have washed it wrong.

**A:** The Federal Trade Commission's Care Labeling Rule states that all components in a garment must withstand the recommended care procedure. If one or more dyes in a multi-colored shirt are not colorfast, bleeding will occur whether you wash it at home or we launder it for you. Significant dye failure is attributable to poor manufacturing and should be returned to the retailer. In today's ever changing world, the dyes being used in garments, rather expensive or inexpensive, have become challenging for most dry cleaners. Care label procedures as suggested by the manufacturer are recommended. Should the process fail the suggested cleaning procedure the manufacturer is responsible.

## Q: The collar and cuffs are full of wrinkles!

**A:** Puckering and excess fabric in the collar and cuffs is often the result of the interfacing shrinking leaving an overabundance of outer fabric. We can't reverse this circumstance without completely restructuring the shirt. The manufacturer is responsible for using interfacing that is compatible with the shirt fabric. Every attempt is always made to overcome this issue however if the original construction of the shirt is not done correctly there is nothing that can be done. This can occur with shirts regardless of the cost of the shirt as it has to do with the interfacing that was used, not the amount that you paid for it. Store purchased, as well as custom made, shirts are all subject to this occurring if not constructed properly.

Toudanines Cleaners processes thousands of shirts a month and often no two shirts are created equal. All shirts are manually touched up, buttons checked and inspected for stains before returning to the customer. Of all the garments processed in a drycleaning facility the most important item is men's laundered shirts. It is the most essential part of a man's dress and the most noticeable. We make every effort to ensure that you look your very best and that your first impression is worth a million words. ☐

*Arlene Converse is President of Toudanines Cleaners in Boerne, San Antonio and Schertz, Texas. They currently own and operate 31 locations in Boerne and throughout the San Antonio area. In 19 years they have owned and operated 17 stores in 11 cities throughout the state of Texas. For more information visit our website at [www.ToudaninesCleaners.com](http://www.ToudaninesCleaners.com), Facebook and Twitter. If you have a question for The Dry Cleaning Lady, please submit it to [info@ToudaninesCleaners.com](mailto:info@ToudaninesCleaners.com).*

