Feb. 15, 1966 C. W. RECTOR 3,234,623

MORTICIAN'S BLOCK

Filed April 22, 1963 2 Sheets-Sheet 1

Fig. 1.

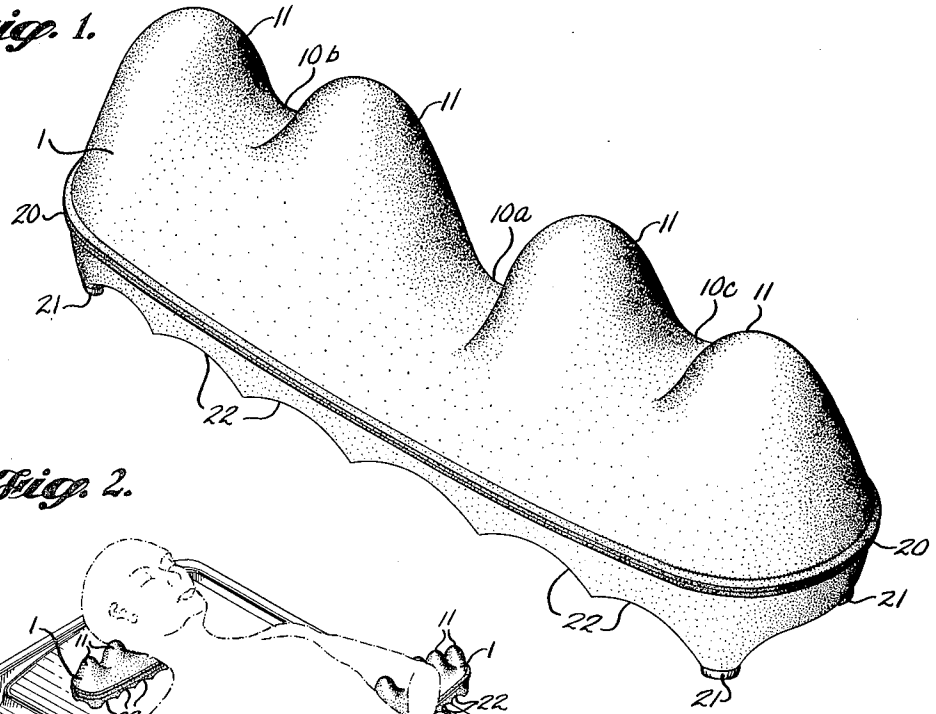
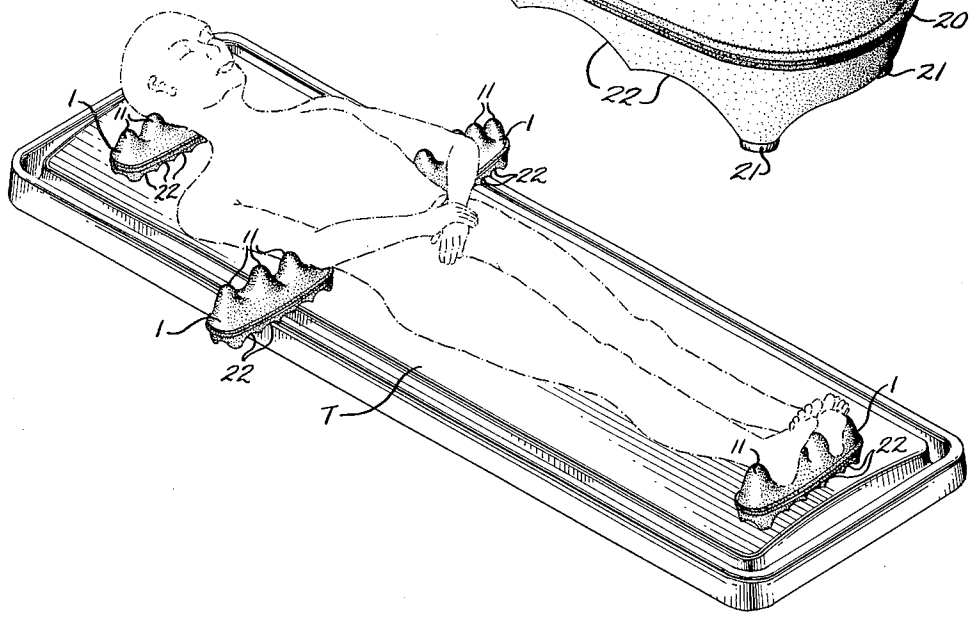


Fig. 2.



INVENTOR.
CHARLES W. RECTOR

BY
Reynolds & Christensen
ATTORNEYS

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Filed April 22, 1963 2 Sheets-Sheet 2

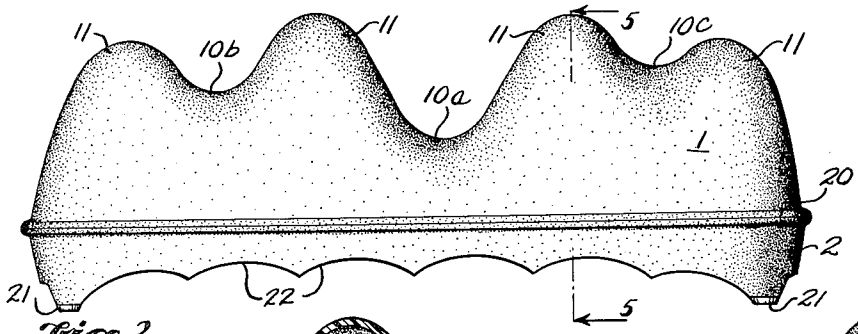


Fig. 3.

Fig. 5.

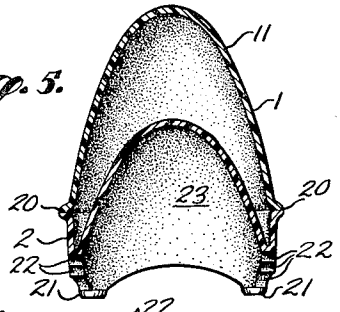


Fig. 4.

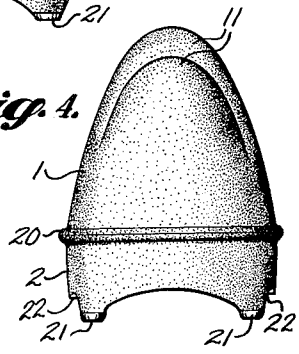
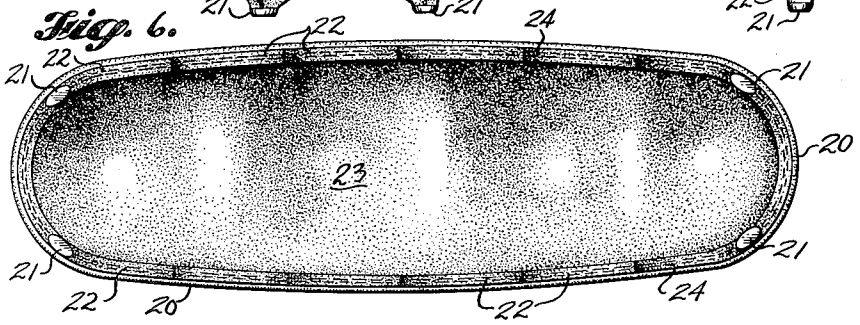


Fig. 6.



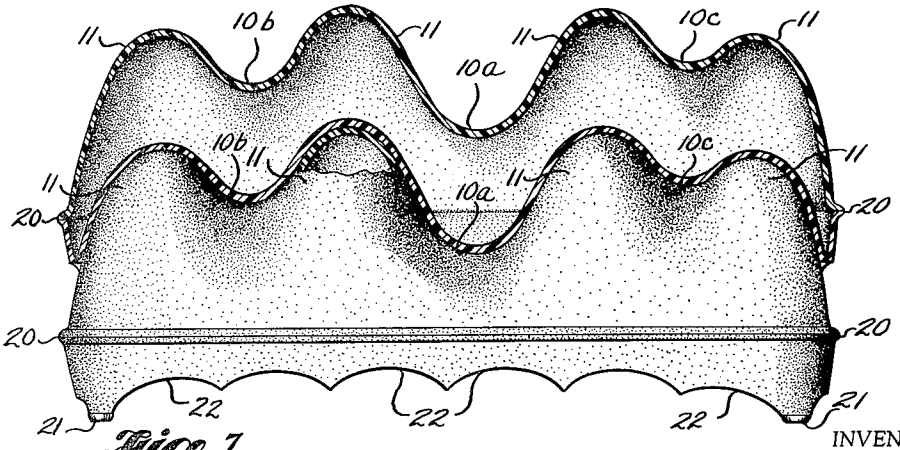


Fig. 7.

INVENTOR.
CHARLES W. RECTOR

BY
Reynolds & Christensen
ATTORNEYS

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MORTICIAN'S BLOCK

Charles W. Rector, 6112 17th Ave. NW., Seattle, Wash.

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7 Claims. (Cl. 27—21)

This invention concerns, in general, the mortician's art, and more specifically concerns a device by the use of which the mortician can maintain limp body elements of a corpse—head, arms, and feet in particular—in a desired attitude during and after use of the embalming fluid, until the muscles become rigid, whereby they will hold the body elements thereafter in that attitude. Thereby the body in all respects will assume and maintain a natural position in the casket.

The device of this invention may be termed a mortician's block, for it is used to block up any such body element from the operating table whereon the corpse rests while it is being prepared. Persons in life are of different attitudes, postures, corpulence, and body proportions generally. One may carry the head forward, to the point of being stoop-shouldered, while another will stand much more erect. The stoop-shouldered one in death must have the head elevated far more than the more erect one. Another may be so corpulent that, in order to fold the hands across the body in the usual attitude in a corpse, the arms at the elbows must be elevated more than in a less corpulent corpse. The feet of a corpse usually are elevated, to incline the torso upwardly, and the feet of one corpse may have to be elevated farther than those of another, in order to urge the torso to a more elevated position. There are many graduations in elevation in these several particulars that must be provided for in the blocks used.

It is a primary object of this invention to provide a single block which can be used to accomplish exactly the desired elevation at any such point, between the extremes of highest and lowest, at least within normal limits, with no need to use a different block at any given location, or for any particular body element, nor to orient the block with other than a single side uppermost.

There are cases wherein the elbows, as the corpse rests upon the table, are so close to the edge of the table, when the arms are disposed in the desired attitude, that any block such as has been available heretofore to support the elbows will extend beyond that edge, and lacking full support, will tend to slip off. It is a further object to provide a block, usable for the support of any body element, but which when used under the circumstances mentioned will so engage the edge of the table that its slippage is prevented. In addition, the blocks of this invention are so made that they conform to the crowned formation of the table, and will not damage its surface.

There are cases in which the forward carriage of the head was so pronounced in life that even the maximum lift portion of a block is inadequate to support the head. It is an object to provide a block which is so formed that two, or even three, blocks can be nested solidly to afford an extra high support in such extraordinary cases. This is also an advantage in that several such blocks can be nested for storage or shipment.

There have been heretofore blocks to support body elements, but these have been made of rubber or the like, and so are subject to deterioration from or absorption of the fluids present upon the table. Moreover, they are inclined to be heavy, and so are difficult to handle, yet must be handled for their proper orientation. It is another object of this invention to provide a block that can be made in a simple manner of materials immune to deterioration or to absorption of pathogens under the conditions of use, light in weight, readily cleaned, and capable of use indefinitely.

With these and other objects in mind, as will appear more clearly hereinafter, the invention comprises the novel block of the form shown in the drawings, and as described herein, and having the capabilities and advantages set forth herein, and the novel features of which will be defined in the claims.

The invention is shown in the accompanying drawings embodied in a form presently preferred by me, although changes may be made in the particular form or arrangement of the several parts, without departing from the principles of the invention, as will appear hereinafter.

FIGURE 1 is an isometric view of the block.

FIGURE 2 is an isometric view of an operating table, with a corpse thereon in phantom, showing several blocks in positions of use.

FIGURE 3 is a side elevational view of the block, FIGURE 4 and end elevational view, and FIGURE 5 is a sectional view at line 5—5 of FIGURE 3.

FIGURE 6 is a bottom plan view of the block.

FIGURE 7 is a view of two blocks nested, the upper one being in longitudinal section and the lower one largely in side elevation.

Speaking in general terms, the block of this invention is somewhat elongated, rather than cubical, as blocks have been in the past, and has one side that is always uppermost in use, opposite a side that always rests upon the table. The table-engaging side is designed to rest upon four feet at its corners (although three would suffice), of neoprene or the like, so that they will not slip nor mar the surface of the table, although as will appear later it is so formed that it will remain in place even though an end, with its feet, projects beyond the edge of the table. Its under side is bowed upwardly to accommodate the crown of the table. Its upper side is formed with two or more (usually three) grooves transverse to its length, and each of a different height from the plane defined by the table-engaging feed, whereby a body element, such as the neck or head, can be elevated above the table by any of the three different heights, by choosing the correct groove for supporting the body element. The same grooves afford a choice of different heights for the elbows, or other body element, and while a given block will support the two feet at slightly different heights, this difference is of minor importance, and unnoticeable in the casket. The block is formed with a longitudinal depression or groove in its under side, and the peaks on the upper side, between and outside of the transverse grooves, are formed complementally to this longitudinal depression on the under side, so that the peaks fit within the same. This enables nesting the blocks for shipment or storage, but even more importantly, it enables nested blocks to be solidly interengaged and used as a support whenever elevation to a degree not possible with a single block is desired.

The blocks are preferably made of thin, vacuum-molded and form-sustaining plastic, in upper and lower hollow halves, joined and sealed permanently about a side seam. The plastic should be one that it not affected by the fluids present on the table, nor porous to absorb pathogens, and the block is very light and easily handled. It is of a smooth, nonpervious material, for example polystyrene, and can be washed and cleaned readily after use, so that it can be used again and again, without deterioration, and without danger of absorbing or passing on pathogens. The blocks are also useful in autopsy procedures, to support the waist, the feet, or other body members in a given position.

Referring to the drawings, the block is composed of an elongated upper half 1 and a like lower half 2, each

molded of thin plastic material having the characteristics mentioned above, and permanently sealed, by heat, by a bonding agent, or otherwise, about a side seam **20**, to completely enclose the air space within it. A typical block is 15 inches long, 4⅛ inches wide, and 4½ inches high. The bottom half **2** has four feet **21** located in the general vicinity of its corners. These can be of neoprene or like material, which is resistant to chemicals or decomposition, and are bonded to the lower half, to define a plane and to support the block from a table T (FIGURE 2) without likelihood of slipping. Except for the fact that the table has a transverse crown, for drainage, the block could be flat on the bottom. Instead, intermediate the feet at opposite ends of the block the bottom of the block is bowed upwardly, as best seen in FIGURES 3 and 7. This enables it to clear the transverse crown of the table T, which appears in FIGURE 2, whenever it straddles this crown, while the feet rest upon the table and define a plane which otherwise would intersect the crown, were the block flat upon its under side. The support of the block on several small feet also allows drainage beneath the blocks. In addition, scallops **22** indent the lower margin along at least each longitudinal side edge of the block.

The upper half **1** has a series of peaks **11**, usually four in number, rising sufficiently to define between them transverse grooves **10***a*, **10***b*, and **10***c*. These grooves are of different heights above the plane defined by the feet **21**. The groove **10***a* is of the least height, say 2¼ inches, and is shown as centrally located. Groove **10***b* is a little higher, say 3 inches, and groove **10***c* is of greatest height, as for example 3¾ inches. The latter two grooves are located at the opposite ends.

Rising within the bottom half **2** is a longitudinal depression **23**. This may be a continuous groove, or it may be a series of individual depressions, the reverse of the peaks **11**. Preferably it is of the latter type. Its purpose is to receive the peaks of one such block within the longitudinal depression of another block above, in the manner shown in FIGURE 7. This enables the grooves **10***a*, **10***b*, **10***c* of the block above to be raised above the plane defined by the feet **21** of the block below, thereby gaining extra elevation for those grooves, over and above the elevation afforded by the single block. Three blocks can be so nested, if need be. This nesting of blocks is also advantageous for storage and shipment.

FIGURE 2 shows the blocks in use. The corpse rests upon the table T, and the head must be elevated. The neck of the corpse is rested within a groove **10***a*, **10***b*, or **10***c*, whichever affords the desired elevation; the block rests with its feet upon the table and its bowed under surface straddling the table's crown. The feet can be positioned and elevated by a second block. The elbows normally must be elevated, so a block is supported beneath each elbow, the upper arm above each elbow resting in whichever groove raises it to the desired elevation, and nested blocks being used if greater elevation is desired than one block will afford. The table is rather narrow, and it will often be found that the outer end of the blocks at the elbows hang over its edge, and the outer feet **21** of the blocks have no support. To prevent the blocks, thus lacking in support, from slipping off the sides of the table, the scallops **22**, pressed down by the weight of the arms, engage the rather abrupt outer edge of the trough about the margin of the table, and keep the blocks from slipping. These scallops are in a marginal area **24** along at least the two longitudinal sides of the central longitudinal recess **23**, and preferably this area extends completely about that margin.

After use the blocks can be removed, washed, disinfected if need be, and are ready for reuse. The material of which they are made is nonpervious and smooth, hence is readily cleansed, and nonabsorptive, and is not affected by materials used in the preparation, nor by those used subsequently. They are light, and readily placed in position. Their upper side is always immediately apparent, hence they require no turning over to select as the upper side that one of several sides that is of the desired height; they merely reqiure endwise shifting over the table to select any height. The neoprene feet protect the table's surface from damage, and will not slip when supporting a corpse.

I claim as my invention:

1. A block of the character described comprising an elongated form-sustaining body having supporting feet at its under side defining a support plane, said body at its upper side being formed with a plurality of peaks defining intervening transverse grooves, each groove being at an elevation above such plane different from the elevation of the other grooves, and the under side of said body being formed with a longitudinal groove intermediate its side margins and rising above such plane, corresponding in size and shape to at least some of the peaks, whereby the peaks of a similar block may be nested therein, and the side margins being transversely scalloped at intervals.

2. A block for the support of a body element of a corpse, comprising an elongated body having an under side formed to define generally a plane, such that in use the block can be stably supported upon a table, and formed on its upper side with a plurality of grooves directed transversely to its length, and with intervening peaks, the several grooves being individually of different height from the plane defined by the under side, whereby selectively to support a body element at a desired elevation above the table, the block being formed at its under side, above the general plane defined thereby, with successive scallops transversely, for nonslipping engagement with the edge of the table whenever the block protrudes beyond such edge.

3. A block for the support of a body element of a corpse above a table, comprising elongated, thin-walled, and form-sustaining upper and lower halves joined about a side seam, the upper half being formed with upstanding peaks spaced in the direction of the block's length, to define between them transverse grooves adapted to receive the body element to be supported, different grooves being of different heights above the seam, the lower half, within its margins, being formed with an upwardly directed recess corresponding in size and shape to at least some of the peaks of its upper half, whereby the peaks of a similar block may be nested therewith from below, said lower half also being formed at its ends with feet defining a support plane.

4. A block as in claim **3** wherein the lower half is bowed upwardly at its margins, between the feet at opposite ends, to clear any crown the table may have.

5. A block for the support of a body element of a corpse comprising a substantially rigid elongated body having at its under side means defining a support plane, said block being formed at its upper side with a plurality of grooves directed transversely of its length, and with peaks at the opposite sides of the several grooves, the several grooves being individually of different height above the support plane, the under side of the block being further formed with a longitudinal depression rising above such plane, corresponding in size and shape to at least some of the peaks, whereby the peaks of a similar block may be nested therein.

6. A block as in claim **5**, wherein the longer lower margins of the block are formed with successive scallops along their lengths.

7. A block for the support of a body element of a corpse, comprising elongated, thin-walled, and substantially rigid upper and lower halves joined about a side seam, the upper half being formed with a plurality of upstanding peaks spaced lengthwise and rising to a height to define between them several transverse grooves, the lower half being formed at its end portions with at least three feet defining a support plane for the block as a

whole, the several grooves being of different height above the support plane, and the lower half, within the seam, being formed with a longitudinal depression rising above the plane of the seam, and corresponding in size and shape to at least some of the peaks of the upper half, whereby the peaks in the upper half of a similar block may be nested therein.

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RICHARD A. GAUDET, *Primary Examiner.*