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[54] **SOFT SIDED HAND LUGGAGE**

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[51] **Int. Cl.** **A45c 5/04**

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 190/24, 25, 41 Z, 49, 50, 190/54, 52, 53

[56] **References Cited**

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Primary Examiner—Donald F. Norton

[57] **ABSTRACT**

There is disclosed a construction of soft sided traveling case distinguished by the simplicity and ease with which it can be assembled; the construction comprises two shells which are permanently connected, the bottom of each shell having a large window and each shell being lined externally by a covering of flexible cloth or other material which is stretched over and covers the window.

6 Claims, 3 Drawing Figures

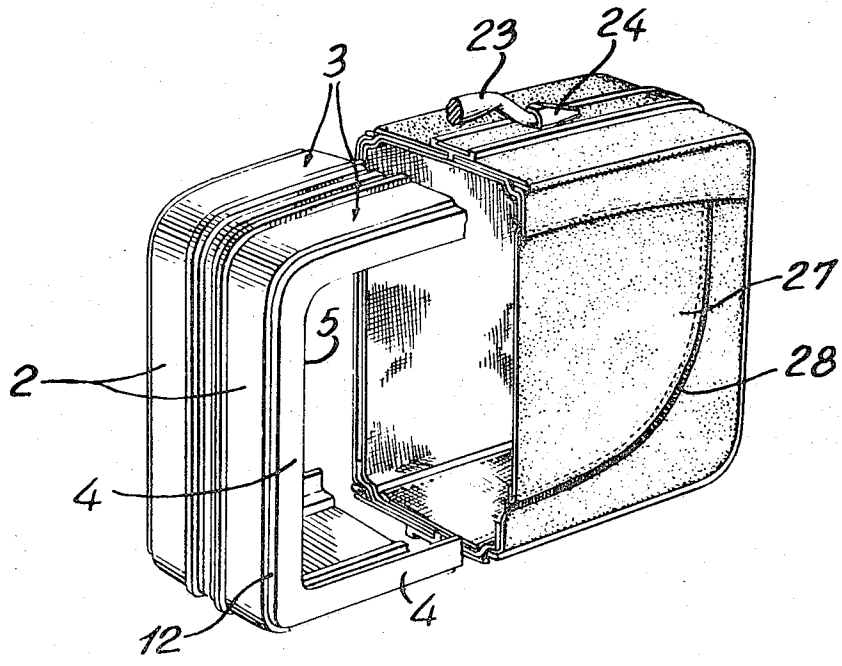
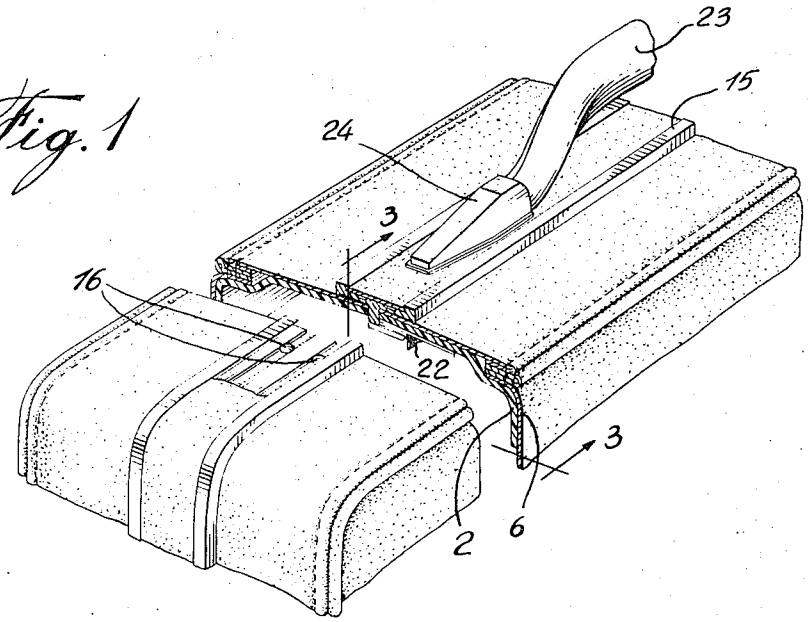


Fig. 1



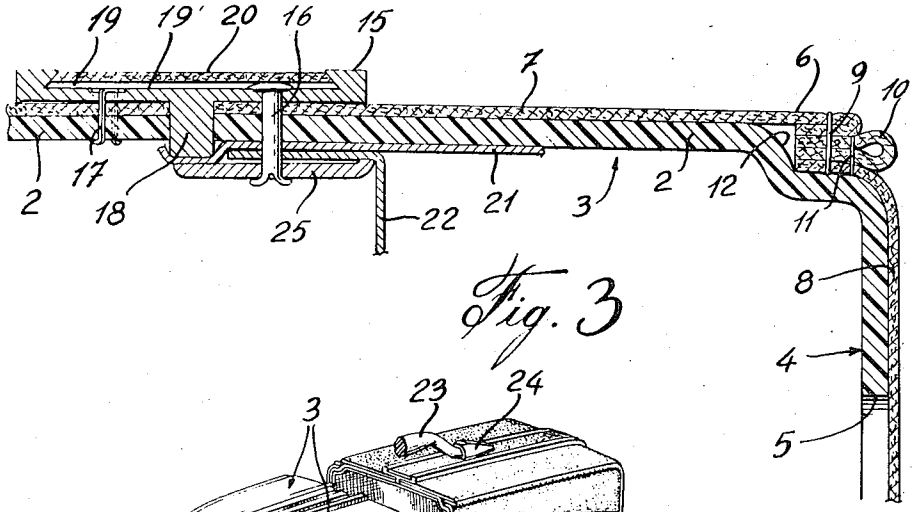


Fig. 3

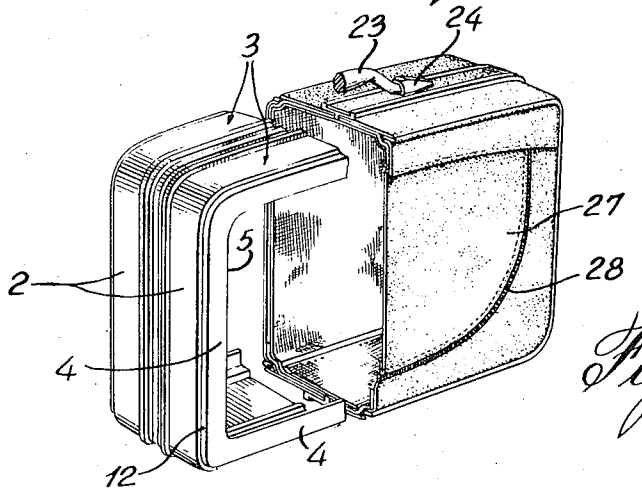


Fig. 2

SOFT SIDED HAND LUGGAGE

The present invention relates to an improvement in traveling cases of the type having soft sides and involves a novel construction of such cases.

One of the objects of the invention is the provision of a traveling case which has essentially the same advantages as cases made of rigid material but which can more easily tolerate a certain excess of baggage or even accommodate articles some of whose dimensions slightly exceed those of the enclosure defined by the case.

A further object of the invention is to facilitate the construction and low cost production of traveling cases with soft sides of durable quality and appearance which may even be superior to those of cases of the same type currently available.

The invention is generally concerned with a new structure using modern materials which are clearly superior to the materials previously employed. These materials are superior both from the manufacturers' and the consumers' point of view because on the one hand they allow simpler and faster production and on the other hand they give the product increased durability due to excellent resistance to impact and wear.

The soft sided traveling cases according to prior art generally comprise a rigid frame made of wood or thick cardboard disposed in the interior of a liner or bag of cloth, leather, imitation leather or other soft material so that a thickness of this material is stretched in front of each of the front and rear faces of the frame. The space in the interior of the case is thus limited on the one hand by the internal faces of the sides of the rigid frame and on the other hand by the flexible material which is stretched in front of each of the faces of the frame. The capacity of such a case varies with the degree of elasticity of the flexible material used therein.

Access to the interior is provided through the flexible material covering at least one of the main faces by the provision of a large panel surrounded by a suitable closure such as a slide fastener.

The invention provides means for fast and easy assembly, particularly for eliminating the problems which arise from mounting or positioning in the interior of the flexible envelope a rigid frame whose dimensions are greater than the openings in the envelope itself. In accordance with the invention, this effect is obtained by a structure essentially constituted by two shells connected to each other along the central plane of the resulting case.

The soft sided traveling case according to the present invention preferably comprises two individually formed half sections which are connected by means of a binding of T shaped cross-section, the edge of each half section abutting and being secured against the vertical spline of the T section binding. Each half section is specifically constructed of a rigid plastic shell or tough metal shell externally lined with a cover of flexible material. The rigid shell has a bottom in which is formed a window and part of the bottom of the cover extends over the window and may at that location be provided with a U shaped opening both edges of which are provided with matching parts of a slide fastener. The U shaped opening provides a flexible panel which when folded away gives free access through the window of the shell with the space in the interior of the traveling case.

A preferred embodiment of the invention is illustrated by way of example in the accompanying drawings in which

FIG. 1 is a fragmentary partially exploded perspective view of one upper corner of a traveling case according to the invention,

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a traveling case according to the invention partly exploded and with the cover partly removed,

FIG. 3 is a partial elevational section along line 3—3 of FIG. 1.

The traveling case comprises primarily two shells 2 of plastic or metal, each shell 2 having sides 3 and a bottom 4. The central portion of bottom 4 has an opening therethrough constituting a large window 5 which extends over most of the surface of bottom 4. Each shell 2 is lined externally with a cover 6 of cloth or other flexible material shaped to match perfectly the shell and cover the surface thereof.

The material of cover 6 may be imitation leather or cloth which is made more resistant by means of a plastic lining whose texture may to advantage simulate the texture of leather. Cover 6 comprises a peripheral strip 7 secured edgewise to part 8 of the same shape as the bottom 4 of shell 2 by means of a seam 9 which includes a piping 10 of the same material previously assembled around part 8 by seam 11. Since the seam 9 assembles several thicknesses of material of the cover 6, means have been provided in the construction of the traveling case to avoid that the stack of layers projects from the generally smooth surface of the traveling case because such projection would inevitably give rise to areas concentrating the effects of wear and deterioration. To avoid such projections, the shell 2 has a small peripheral recess 12 between the bottom 4 and the sides 3. The piled up material at the seam 9 is arranged to be contained within the recess 12.

The cover 6 is preferably made of a slightly stretchable material and may be of slightly smaller dimensions than the shell 2 so that when it is assembled with shell 2, it matches the shape thereof perfectly by placing the material under slight tension. The surfaces of cover 6 which are in contact with the outside of shell 2 may be connected thereto by means of adhesive material.

The shells 2 lined with covers 6 are connected to each other by means of a binding or belt 15 of metal by generally known fasteners such as rivets 16 or clips 17. Part of the width of binding 15 covers and surrounds a narrow marginal outer portion of each shell 2 and the covering 6 thereon. To ensure proper positioning of shells 2 with respect to the binding 15 prior to the application of fasteners 16 and 17, the inner face of the binding is provided with a projection 18 against which abut the edges of shells 2 on either side thereof. Projection 18 also has the purpose of improving the stability of the rigid skeleton of the traveling case.

It is advantageous though not essential to the invention to provide a shallow longitudinal recess 19 on the outside of the binding 15, to the bottom 19' of which recess may be secured an adhesive tape 20. The adhesive tape is employed for its ornamental effect as well as for hiding the fasteners such as rivets 16, clips 17 or the like. It has likewise been found useful to provide in the generally flat surface of the bottom 19' of recess 19 on either side of a center line of the same, depressions

21 of depth and width to receive the heads of rivets 16, clips 17 or other fasteners in coutersunk position to prevent these heads from projecting through the tape 20.

As shown in FIG. 3, the rivets 16 may be put to multiple uses, not only for assembling the shell 2, cover 6 and binding 15 but also for securing optional accessories or decorations located both inside and outside of the traveling case such as internal finishing strips 21, belts 22 and attachments 24 for a handle 23. It is also shown therein that if it is desired to vary the point of attachment of a belt 22, a plate 25 may be used which is retained by a rivet 16 and holds against its rear face the belt, the other end of which is adjacent the projection 18.

As shown in FIG. 2 to provide access to the interior of the case, the face 8 of at least one of the covers 6 is provided with a panel or flap of U shape, the opening of which is effected by a slide fastener 28 or any other suitable fastening means.

The shell 2 may be made in various ways according to the type of material employed. A large number of plastic compositions may be used to advantage. One of these plastics, ABS (acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene) is commonly employed in the manufacture of rigid traveling cases and is useful in the present case for making the shells 2. The binding 15 may be made of aluminum or other light metal preformed from extruded molding.

I claim:

1. Soft sided traveling case comprising:

two rigid shells each having a bottom, sides, and a window in said bottom,

a flexible and slightly extensible cover disposed on each of said shells and matching the external form thereof, each cover having a bottom whose central part extends across the bottom window of the corresponding shell, and

a metallic binding connecting said shells and their respecting covers, a first portion of the width of said binding encircling the outer margin of one of said shells and secured thereto, a second part of the width of said binding encircling the outer margin of the other of said shells and being fixed thereto, said binding comprising internally thereof a longitudinal projection separating said first and second portions of the width of said binding.

2. Traveling case according to claim 1, wherein said flexible covers are made of extensible cloth which is slightly stretched when in assembled position on said shells.

3. Traveling case according to claim 1, wherein at least one of said covers has an access flap in the portion thereof extending across said window of the corresponding shell.

4. Traveling case according to claim 3, wherein said access flap comprises a U shaped panel with fastening means at the edge thereof.

5. Traveling case according to claim 1, wherein each flexible cover comprises a strip portion adapted to cover the sides of the respective shell and a bottom portion adapted to cover the bottom of the respective shell, said portions of said cover being connected by a piped seam.

6. Traveling case according to claim 5 wherein each shell comprises a peripheral recess at the joint between the bottom and sides thereof to receive said piped seam.

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