United States Patent

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[54] **CENTER FOLDED TRAVEL BAG**
11 Claims, 5 Drawing Figs.

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **190/50,**
190/41 B, 190/41 Z, 190/54

[50] **Field of Search** A45c13/36,
190/41 B, 41 Z, 49, 50, 43

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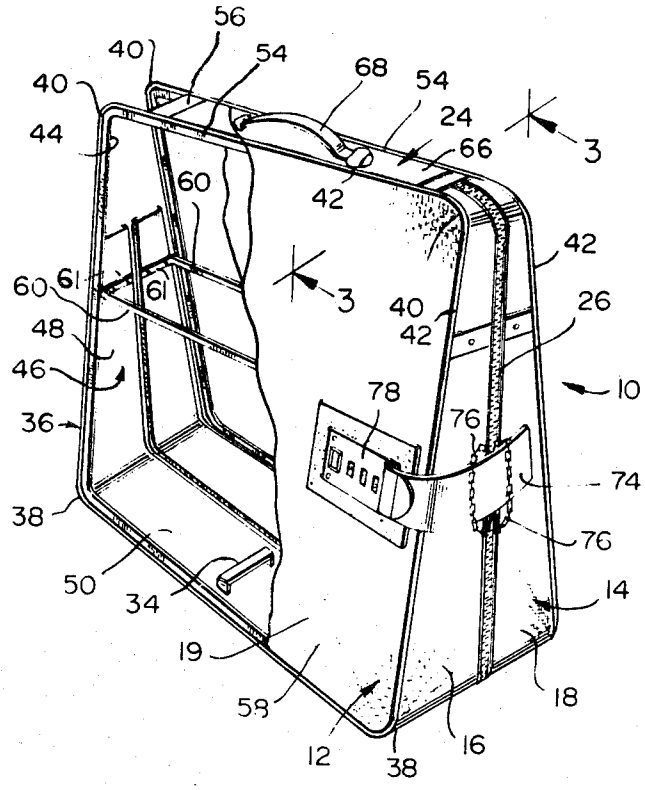
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ABSTRACT: A center-folded twin compartment travel bag is provided for carrying full-length garments such as suits and dresses. A slide fastener detachably joins the compartments around registered open mouths thereof and when opened exposes the interior of the bag so that unfolded suits and dresses may be suspended by a centrally located transverse support. In its open position, the bag may be hung from an end to serve as a portable, semienclosed wardrobe. Each compartment includes a soft base panel whose edges are secured to a rectangular wire frame. When the slide fastener closes the bag, the wire frames are in a sawhorse (opposed diverging) configuration with a top slat joining the parallel upper reaches of each frame. The slat terminates short of both ends of each reach.



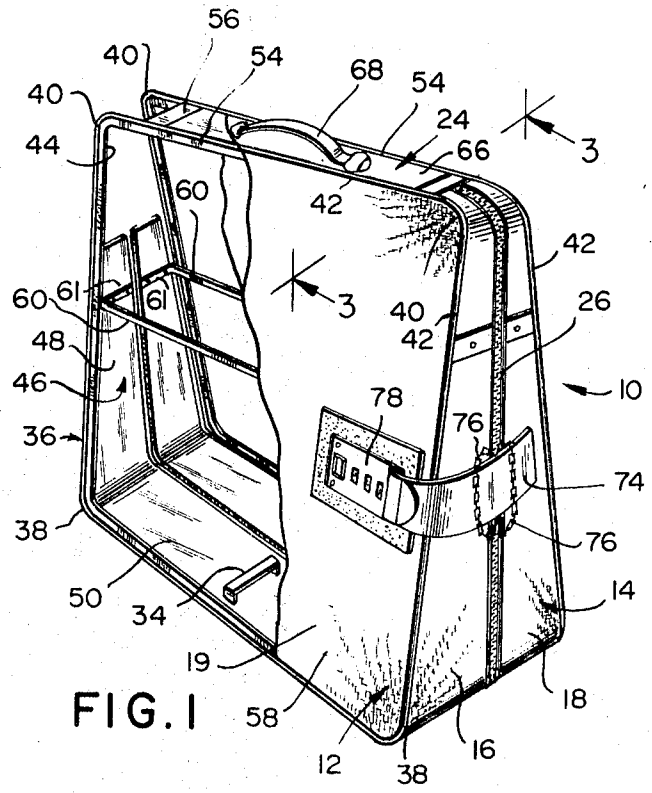


FIG. 1

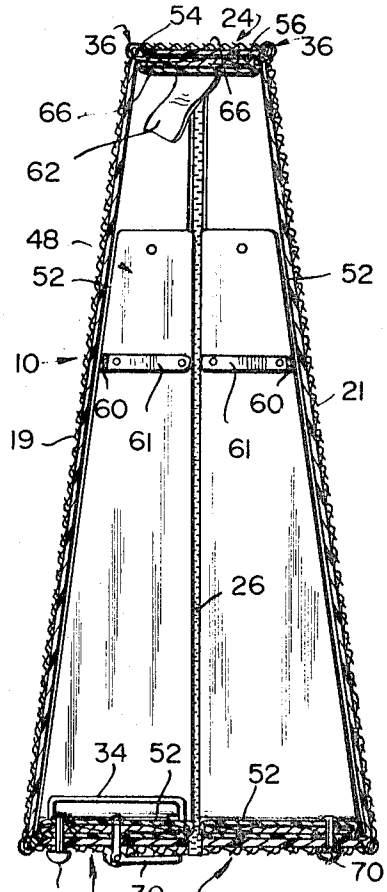
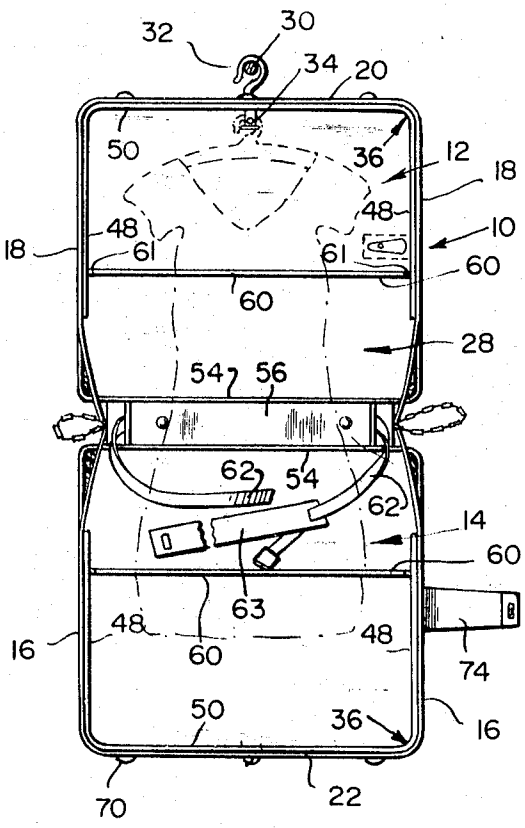


FIG. 3



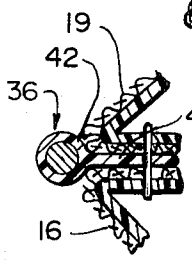


FIG. 4

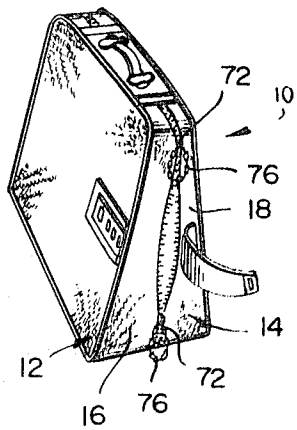


FIG. 5

FIG. 2

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CENTER FOLDED TRAVEL BAG

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of Invention

Center folded trapezoidal soft-sided edge-reinforced travel bags.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Travel bags, sometimes also known as car bags, in the form of foldable wardrobes have become popular in recent years. This is to some extent due to the fact that they permit full-length garments such as suits or dresses to be placed in the open bag without folding. Thus, only a slight amount of wrinkling occurs. These prior bags generally included one compartment foldable at its center along a fold line extending transverse to the length of the compartment. When unfolded, the compartment could be held upright or suspended from an end. The unfolded garments were then inserted into the unfolded compartment. Subsequently, the compartment was closed by a flap and folded about the fold line. The compartment was then secured in its folded position by tabs or catches. In other bags, the halves of the compartment were joined by a slide fastener after folding. Most of these prior bags also included a suspension bar mounted on one end of the compartment so that hanger suspended garments might be hung within the unfolded compartment. Furthermore, the suspension bar permitted the bag to be utilized as a wardrobe.

One problem encountered with these prior travel bags was that because the garments were folded at the compartment center fold, the actual interior bag volume of the garments was much less at the center than at the ends of the compartment. This resulted in a considerable waste of packing space, because the shape of the folded bag (substantially rectangular in transverse cross section) did not actually conform to the volume occupied by the garments. In actuality, the garments occupied an area of wedge-shaped cross section. The total available travel bag volume was not fully utilized and the actual shape of the folded bag left much unuseable packing space.

A further problem encountered with prior travel bags using a slide fastener to join the common folded side edges of the compartment was that the fastener was not able to traverse the upper corners of the folded bag because the welting of the panel of the compartment extended in a continuous strip along the peripheral edges of the entire rear panel of the compartment.

Yet another problem encountered with the previous carry bags related to the fact that at the fold line of the compartment, the garments were gathered together and occupied a minimal volume, while at the ends of the compartments the garments were not under compression and preferably occupied a larger volume. In order to enable the wardrobe to maintain a definite shape when the bag was closed, it was necessary to provide reinforcing or stiffening sheets along not only the ends of the compartment, but also along the sides. These reinforcing or stiffening sheets were disadvantageous because they added to the weight and ultimate cost of the carry bag.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide a carry bag of the general character described which is so constructed that it is not subject to any of the foregoing disadvantages.

More specifically, it is an object of the invention to provide a carry bag of the character described which is simple and rugged in construction yet can be fabricated by mass production methods at an appreciably lower cost than prior luggage designed to serve the same function.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a carry bag of the character described which houses garments with maximum space utilization.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a carry bag of the general character described which is so constructed that a slide fastener may peripherally close the folded bag and extend over the top corners thereof.

Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a carry bag of the general character described wherein soft side panels are supported by wire frames with the frames of opposed panels joined along their respective upper edges.

A still further object of the present invention is to provide a carry bag of the general character described wherein wire frames are provided with said frames being disposed in an upwardly converging sawhorse configuration when the bag is closed so that the folded carry bag assumes a space saving yet attractive, stable, self-reinforcing wedge shape.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a carry bag of the general character described which is lighter in weight and smaller in size than previous carry bags designed to enclose the same volume of garments.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a carry bag of the general character described which may be unfolded and suspended for the insertion of garments and yet can be quickly and simply closed for the portage of said garments with greater facility than prior wardrobe carry bags.

A still further object of the present invention is to provide a carry bag of the general character described wherein a twin-slider fastener for closing the same is provided along with a hasp locking strap for inhibiting movement of both sliders to prevent unauthorized opening of the bag.

Other objects of the invention in part will be obvious and in part will be pointed out hereinafter.

The invention accordingly consists in the features of construction, combinations of elements and arrangements of parts which will be exemplified in the center folded travel bag hereinafter described, and of which the scope of application will be indicated in the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the accompanying drawings in which is shown one of the various possible embodiments of the invention,

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a carry bag constructed in accordance with and embodying the invention with portions of the covering material removed to better illustrate the novel structure;

FIG. 2 is a front elevational view of the carry bag in its open position and hung from a suspension element to provide a temporary, semienclosed wardrobe;

FIG. 3 is an enlarged sectional view taken substantially along the line 3—3 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is a greatly enlarged sectional view through a portion of the wire frame of the carry bag showing a sheathing layer having a radially projecting web to which the panels of the bag are joined; and

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the carry bag in a partially open position with the hasp strap unlocked and disengaged from the locking slides of the slide fastener.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The carry bag of the present invention employs a novel wire frame structure for supporting a foldable, portable wardrobe carry bag. The portable wardrobe is superior to previous known wardrobes in its space utilization, ease and simplicity of operation, and may be produced at an appreciably lower cost.

Referring now in detail to the drawings, the reference number **10** denotes a carry bag constructed in accordance with and embodying the present invention. The bag **10** comprises a left compartment **12** and a right compartment **14** hingedly joined at their upper edges. Each compartment **12, 14** includes sidewalls **16** and **18** (the end walls of the bag), end walls **20, 22** (the bottom wall of the bag) and cover panels **19, 21** (the sidewalls of the bag). The exterior ply (each wall may be composed of one or more plies) is of flexible material, such for example as cloth, reinforced or nonreinforced plastic sheet or animal skin. Where employed, as will later be mentioned, additional rigid plies function to stiffen and reinforce the wall of which they form a part. Preferably the sidewalls of the bag

have no stiffening plies, although they may be lined with a flexible ply. The top wall of both compartments includes a single rigid slat which serves as a link articulatably joining the compartments as will be subsequently described. Each compartment has an open mouth. The mouths are registered when the bag is closed, and in this position are joined along the full lengths of their side **16, 18** and end **20, 22** walls and portions of their top wall by a slide fastener **26**. When the fastener is open, the left compartment **12** may be swung out and upwardly about the hinge joint connecting it to the top wall **24** to present a rectangular garment-carrying interior **28** extending through both compartments. To facilitate the insertion of garments in the interior **28**, the end **20** of the left compartment **12** includes a conventional pivotally connected hook **30** which can engage a supporting element such as a closet rod **32** (see FIG. 2).

With the opened carry bag **10** suspended from the supporting rod **32**, the top wall **24** will assume a vertical orientation substantially coplanar with the cover panels **19, 21** of the compartments. Hanger-supported garments may be placed within the compartments (as shown in the dashed lines of FIG. 2). To permit the suspension of garments within the open carry bag, a bar **34** or any other equivalent means is provided. The bar **34** is spaced from the interior surface of the end **20** of the left compartment **12**. To anchor the bar **34** short spacing legs are provided Thus, garment hanger hooks are engageable on the bar **34** to hang garments in the opened bag **10**.

When the open carry bag **10** is suspended from a closet rod **32**, garments may be placed within the carry bag and suspended from the bar **34**. It will be observed that garments placed in the open carry bag will be surrounded and partially enclosed on three sides thereof by the compartments **12** and **14**, with only one face of the outer garment exposed through the open compartment mouths. The carry bag **10** thus can serve as a temporary semienclosed wardrobe for use at accomodations away from home.

In accordance with the invention, each compartment **12** and **14** includes its own semirigid wire peripheral supporting frame **36**. The frame **36** of each compartment conforms in shape to the configuration of the soft base panel **19, 21** here illustrated as rectangular, and includes rounded bottom **38** and top corners **40**. The frame is endless, i.e. the ends of the wire composing it are welded together. As best illustrated in FIG. 4, the wire of which the frame is composed is of circular transverse cross section. Typically it is fabricated of spring steel. The wire is peripherally encased in a tubular flexible plastic, e.g. polyvinyl chloride, sheathing **42** which includes a radially projecting web **44** that extends toward the interior of the bag. The web **44** is utilized to join and secure the flexible cloth, plastic or animal skin which forms the exterior plies of the compartment walls. The peripheral edges of said exterior plies of the compartment walls are suitably secured to this web by common fastening means such as stitching, staples or adhesives. With this fastening arrangement, the sheathing **42** is exposed and serves as an attractive binding strip or welt. The same fastening means joins coextensive edges of the compartment walls to one another.

In addition to the frame **36** there is also provided for each compartment a substantially rigid U-shaped reinforcing stiffener **46** for the end **20, 22** and side **16, 18** walls of the compartments. The stiffener **46** includes two upstanding side portions **48** which are shorter than the sides of the frames **36** and a bottom portion **50**. The side portions **48** of the stiffener **46** are tapered to conform to the upwardly converging shape of the sidewalls **16, 18** of the compartments.

It should be noted that each stiffener **46** may be formed of a single sheet of stiff material such as plywood, pressed board, or cardboard, and includes rounded corners joining the bottom **50** to the upstanding sides **48**. The curvature at these corners conforms to the curvature at the bottom corners **38** of the frame **36**. If a single sheet of plywood is used to form the stiffener **46** it may be suitably internally kerfed to facilitate the formation of these curved surfaces.

Because the stiffener **46** directly faces the interior clothing storing surfaces of the carry bag, it is preferably encased in a layer of soft, yet resilient, fabric **52** or fabric heat laminated to foamed polyurethane which serves not only a decorative purpose, but prevents bruising or snagging of the garments placed within the bag. It should be additionally noted that the bottom **50** of the stiffener **46** which is secured in the compartment **12** serves as a support surface from which the suspension hook **30** (shown in folded position in FIG. 3 and in operable position in FIG. 2) is anchored. The thus stiffened base constitutes a stable durable bottom for the bag.

The upper reach **54** of each frame **36** is articulatedly joined to a rectangular rigid slat **56** which reinforces the top wall **24**. The reaches **54** are joined to the slat through the webs **44** which are attached to flexible sheets **66** covering the outer surfaces of the slat so that the left compartment **12** may swing upwardly and the right compartment **10** may swing downwardly with respect to the slat **56**. Thus, when the carry bag is opened and the left compartment is suspended by the hook **30**, the frames **36** of each compartment will lie in the same generally vertical plane along with the slat **56**.

The cover panels **19, 21** are formed of a flexible sheet **58**. The sheet **58** is placed over and supported at its peripheral edges by the frame **36**. As previously stated, the edges of the panels are secured to the frame at the webs **44**.

Each side **16, 18** and end **20, 22** wall of the compartment is also formed of a sheet of the same material used for the cover panels. Preferably a single strip will be utilized for both the sides **16, 18** and bottom **20, 22** walls of each compartment. One of the peripheral edges of the cover sheet at the sides **16, 18** and end **20, 22** is joined to the web **44** of the frame **36** and the other edge, which faces the opposite compartment, bears a slide fastener stringer. The edge having the slide fastener stringer is preferably free and is not secured to the stiffener **46**. The side and bottom cover sheet is secured over the stiffener **46** and preferably extends upwardly past the rounded upper corners **40** of the frame upper reach **54** to terminate at the opposite ends of the slat **56**.

At this point, attention is directed to the fact that the slat **56** is shorter in length than the upper frame reach **54** and is centered between the vertical sides of the frame. The top **24** of the carry bag includes an outer covering sheet similar to the sheet **58**. The edges of the slat **56** covering sheet **66** and the side and bottom covering sheet which face the frame are joined along the web **44** as previously stated.

Reinforcing struts **60** are provided in order to assist the flexible cover panels **19, 21** to maintain their shapes when the carry bag is emptied. The struts **60** also serve to maintain the parallel spacing between the upstanding sides **48** of the stiffener **46**. Each strut **60** is of a generally U-shaped configuration with an elongate center portion and perpendicularly oriented short legs **61**. The legs **61** are secured as with rivets to the sides **48** of the reinforcing panels at the approximate midheight of the frame and the center portions of the struts **60** extend in a substantially horizontal direction. The reinforcing struts span the space between the opposed upright side portions **48** of the reinforcing stiffeners **46** in a substantially horizontal direction parallel to the top **24** and end **20, 22** walls of the compartments. Thus, the cover panels **19, 21** are supported not only along their peripheries but across their centers.

In order to prevent the garments which have been placed within the carry bag from becoming disarranged and wrinkled when the bag is folded closed, garment straps **62** and an end slotted slat **63** are provided. The garment straps are threaded through the slat and buckled together after a complement of garments have been hung in the open bag. Thus, the slat **63** cinches the waists of the garments against the slat **56** and secures the garments in place when the bag is folded closed and the slide fastener stringers are interlocked. The nonbuckled ends of the straps are secured to the slat **56** by rivets which pass through not only the slat but the covering sheet **66** which overlays the slat on the interior surface of the carry bag

and serves to protect any garments which might contact the slat.

It should be additionally noted that the carry handle 68 is mounted on the top 24 of the carry bag. Such mounting is secured through the slat 56 for maximum strength. The bag is additionally provided with suitable metal floor contacting button legs 70 which are attached to the bottom portions 50 of both stiffeners 48. These button legs 70 serve to prevent injury to the carry bag when it is placed upon a floor and also serve to prevent the hook 30 (which is mounted to the end 20 of the left compartment 12) from snagging on the supporting surface. The hook 30 as illustrated in FIG. 3 is adapted to be infolded against the base 20 when not used to suspend the carry bag 10. Hooks of this type are common to portable wardrobes.

When the bag is closed and compartments brought together, the opposed elements of the slide fastener stringers are adjacent one another and may be lockingly interengaged by sliders 72. The slide fastener 26 extends from one end of the slat 56, down the sides 16, 18, across the ends 20, 22 and then up the opposite sides 16, 18 to the opposite end of the salt 56. The stringer elements and sliders are so disposed in a well-known manner that each slider will lock the element when moved in one direction and unlock the elements when moved in the opposite direction, the locking directions for the two sliders being opposite. The sliders are able to traverse and lockingly engage the slide fastener around the corners 40 joining the sidewalls to the top wall 24 because there is no welting across the ends of the top wall 24 as has been the common practice in the past.

Preferably, opposite acting sliders are utilized (although one is enough) as a matter of trade practice and in the interests of easier opening and convenience.

A locking hasp strap 74 is provided to help maintain the carry bag closed. The hasp strap 74 is secured at one of its ends to the side 18 of the compartment 14 through an upright side 48 of the reinforcing stiffener 46 at the approximate midheight of the frame 36. A different chain loop 76 is secured to each slider element for the purpose of engaging the hasp strap and thus prevent shifting of the sliders when the bag is closed and both sliders are in the vicinity of the strap. To lock the carry bag the sliders are brought together adjacent the hasp strap which is subsequently threaded through the looped chains. The free end of the hasp strap 74 is then engaged in a Sesame lock 78 carried by the cover panel 19.

As can be seen in FIGS. 1, 3 and 5 the closed carry bag assumes a substantially wedgelike shape with the apex of the wedge truncated by a plane parallel to the base. It should be noted that when the bag is closed the end walls 20, 22 are parallel to the top wall 24, the sidewalls 16, 18 are parallel to each other and substantially perpendicular to the end 20, 22 and top 24 walls as well as to the cover panels 19, 21. Furthermore, the end walls 20, 22 intersect their respective cover panels 19, 21 at acute angles. This configuration brings about a most efficient space utilization because the garments contained in the carry bag are compressed at the top of the bag with the remaining portions of the garments hanging relatively loosely into the compartments. Because the combined width of the ends 20 and 22 of compartments 12 and 14 is greater than the width of the top 24 of the carry bag, there is ample room at the base of each of the compartments for the storage and/or carrying of additional small garments or articles, e.g. slippers.

It can be observed that with the above spatial relationships between the base of each compartment and the top wall 24 of the carry bag, the frames 36 of the closed compartments are arranged in an upwardly tapered sawhorse configuration. This configuration is due to the fact that the upper reaches of the frames are joined to the top wall 24 while the lower portions of the sides of the frames and the bottoms are joined to the reinforcing stiffener 46.

It will be appreciated that the essence of the invention resides in the provision in a twin compartment carry bag of soft panels, peripherally reinforced by frames which slope inwardly and upwardly from a bottom spacing to a narrow top spacing, the frames being supported at the top by a stiff member such as a slat to which the frames and soft panels of the bag are hinged and the bottom of the bag being stiffened so that the bag when empty or when full is of trapezoidal configuration as viewed from an end constituting in effect a sawhorse so that the bag resists deformation when subjected to rough handling, such for instance as is experienced in storing in or removal from the baggage compartment of an airplane or steamship.

The hinge connection between the peripherally reinforced panels and the top slat is inhibited by the sidewalls of the compartments which include a stiffener whereby even when empty the bag maintains its sawhorse configuration.

This configuration moreover is additionally insured by the contents of the bag when the bag is full.

Furthermore, a unique feature of the present invention resides in the provision of a stiffening of the sidewalls of the compartments to a point short of the top corners of the bag and the spacing of the ends of the salt from the top corners of the bag so that between the ends of the slat and the top of the side stiffening means, the bag is formed of a flexible material. The foregoing, in conjunction with the use of a slide fastener for closure of the bag, which slide fastener extends around the corners of the bag between the ends of the slat and the top of the side stiffening means, enables the bag to be opened up flat, i.e. with its panels in substantially the same plane as its slat, inasmuch as the soft top corners of the bag readily collapse inwardly when the bag is opened. (See FIG. 2).

Thus it will be seen that there is provided a portable carry bag which achieves the various objects of the invention and which is well adapted to meet the conditions of practical use.

As various possible embodiments might be made of the present invention and as various changes might be made in the embodiment above set forth, it is to be understood that all matter herein described or shown in the accompanying drawings is to be interpreted as illustrative and not in a a limiting sense.

Having thus described the present invention, there is claimed as new and desired to be secured by Letters Patent:

1. A portable carry bag for the transportation of garments which are unfolded when placed within the bag, said carry bag comprising two compartments, each compartment including a substantially rectangular, soft, flexible cover panel, a frame, side and end walls and a mouth, the mouths of the compartments being in registry when the bag is closed, the sidewalls being substantially perpendicular to the panels, each panel being peripherally reinforced by a respective said frame, garments being insertable into the opened bag through the mouths of the compartments, means articulatively interconnecting said compartments adjacent the upper edge of each cover panel, said interconnecting means including a slat, means articulatably securing the upper reach of each frame to the side edges of the slat, the cover panels and the slat being positionable in coplanar relationship when the bag is open, the slat being of a length less than the length of the upper reaches of the frames, the mouths being substantially bounded by the peripheral side edges of the side and end walls, said peripheral side edges being juxtaposed when the bag is closed, the end walls of the compartments jointly forming the bottom wall of the closed bag, means selectively joining the peripheral side and end edges of the compartments when the bag is closed, means for supporting garments within the bag, said garment supporting means adapted for engaging garments approximately at their waists, said supporting means being mounted on the slat.

2. A portable carry bag constructed in accordance with claim 1, wherein the bottom wall of the bag intersects the cover panels at an acute angle, the slat is of a width substantially less than the width of said bottom wall and the side edges of the frame extend downwardly and outwardly from the slat to the bottom wall of the bag to provide a sawhorse configuration when the bag is closed.

3. A portable carry bag constructed in accordance with claim 1 wherein the frame is sheathed, wherein welting is provided at the peripheral edges of the cover panels, said welting joining said peripheral edges to the sheathing of the frame, the welting of one panel being separated from the welting of the other panel at the top of the bag by the slat, wherein the ends of the slat are spaced inwardly from the sides of the bag and wherein the means selectively joining the side and end edges of the compartments includes a slide fastener, said slide fastener terminating adjacent the ends of the slat, whereby the slide fastener extends along portions of the top of the closed carry bag.

4. A portable carry bag constructed in accordance with claim 1 wherein the ends of the slat are spaced inwardly from the sides of the bag and wherein the means selectively joining the side and end edges of the compartments includes a slide fastener, said slide fastener terminating adjacent the ends of the slat, whereby the slide fastener extends along portions of the top of the closed carry bag.

5. A portable carry bag constructed in accordance with claim 1 wherein the means selectively joining the juxtaposed edges of the sidewalls of each compartment includes a slide fastener, said last-mentioned means further including two sliders, means locking said sliders to maintain the slide fastener in a closed position, said locking means comprising a closed loop on each slider, a hasp strap anchored to the bag and having a free end adapted to be interengaged through the closed loops when both sliders are disposed adjacent said hasp strap, and a lock, said lock selectively engaging the free end of said hasp strap to thereby prevent movement of the slide fasteners.

6. A portable carry bag constructed in accordance with claim 1 wherein a reinforcing stiffener is provided for each compartment, said stiffener including upright side portions and a bottom portion, said stiffener being positioned within the interior of each compartment, and being secured to the bottom and sidewalls of each compartment, the side portions of the stiffener being of a height less than the height of the side walls of the frame, portions of the sidewalls adjacent the top of each compartment being unreinforced and collapsing inwardly toward the cover panels when the bag is opened.

7. A portable carry bag constructed in accordance with claim 6, wherein a reinforcing strut is provided for each compartment, said strut including an elongate portion and a leg at each end of the elongate portion, the elongate portion being of a length approximately equal to the width of the cover panel, the strut spanning between space between the side portions of the reinforcing stiffener, the legs being mounted on the upright sides of the stiffener, whereby the upright sides of the reinforcing strut are maintained in parallel spaced relation.

8. A carry bag constructed in accordance with claim 7 wherein a suspension hook is provided, said suspension hook being mounted on the bottom wall of the one compartment, whereby the opened carry bag may be suspended from a suitable support to facilitate the insertion or removal of the garments.

9. A carry bag constructed in accordance with claim 1 wherein one of the compartments includes a suspension bar mounted on the bottom wall thereof, said suspension bar facilitating the placement of garments on hangers within the bag when the bag is open with said one compartment being disposed vertically above the other compartment whereby the bag provides a portable wardrobe.

10. A portable carry bag constructed in accordance with claim 1 wherein welting is provided, each panel being peripherally encompassed by a bead of the welting, the welting of one panel adjacent the upper edge thereof being spaced from the welting of the other panel by the slat, the ends of the slat being spaced inwardly from the sides of the bag, the means selectively joining the edges of the compartments including a slide fastener, the ends of the slide fastener terminating adjacent the ends of the slat, whereby the slide fastener extends along portions of the top of the closed carry bag.

11. A portable carry bag constructed in accordance with claim 1 wherein a reinforcing stiffener is provided for each compartment, said stiffener including upright side portions and a bottom portion, each stiffener being positioned within the interior of the associated compartment and being secured to the bottom and sidewalls of such compartment, the side portions of the stiffener being of a height less than the height of the sidewalls of the frame, portions of the sidewalls adjacent the top corners of each compartment being unreinforced, the means selectively joining the peripheral side edges of the compartments including a slide fastener, the ends of the slat being spaced inwardly from the sides of the bag, the ends of the slide fastener terminating adjacent the ends of the slat, whereby the bag may be easily opened for the insertion of garments therein with the unreinforced portions of the sidewalls of each compartment at the top corners of the bag folding inwardly toward the cover panels of the respective compartments.