United States Patent

Spier

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[54] STORAGE UNIT FOR FLATWARE

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[52] **U.S. Cl.**.....**206/75,** 211/60 M, 248/37.3, 312/208

[51] **Int. Cl.**.....**B65d 47/20**

[58] **Field of Search**.....206/45.14, 45.19, 75, DIG. 11; 211/60 R, 60 M, 60 K; 248/37.3, 37.6; 312/208

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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A storage unit for flatware comprising a central body portion having slots therein for supporting a plurality of knives, or the like, in an upright position. Joined to the body portion, and extending outwardly from each side thereof, are upper and lower vertically spaced flatware support arms. The upper arms have a plurality of spaced channels for receiving the handles of flatware such as spoons, forks and serving pieces, while the lower arms have recesses aligned with the channels of the upper arms for receiving an end of each piece of flatware engaged in the channels whereby the flatware is supported in a substantially upright position. The unit includes a cover which overlies the central body portion, the support arms, and the flatware stored in the unit.

2 Claims, 4 Drawing Figures

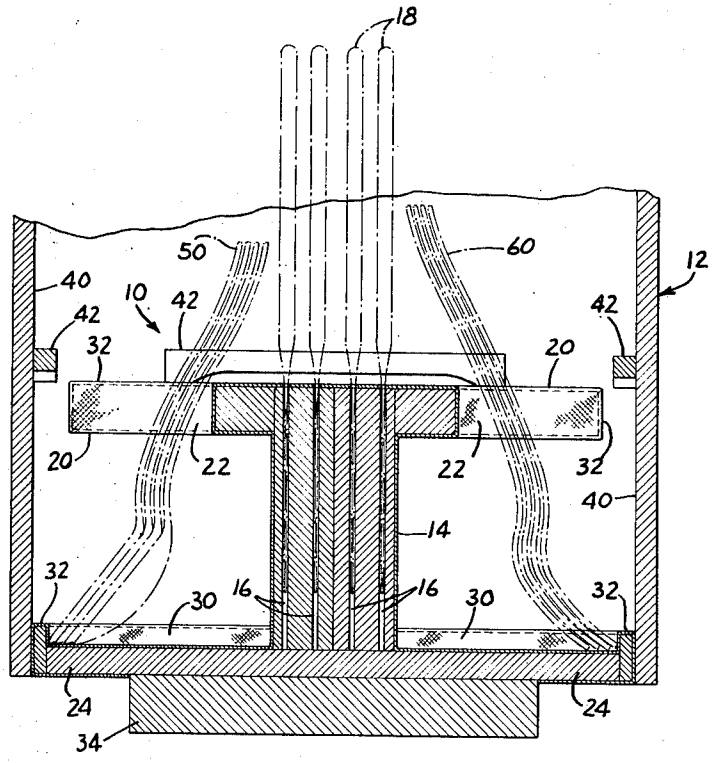


FIG. 1

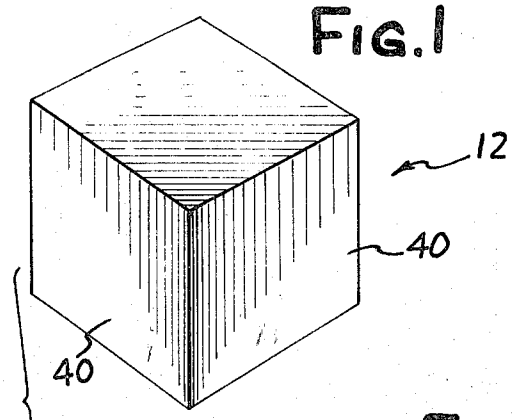


FIG. 3

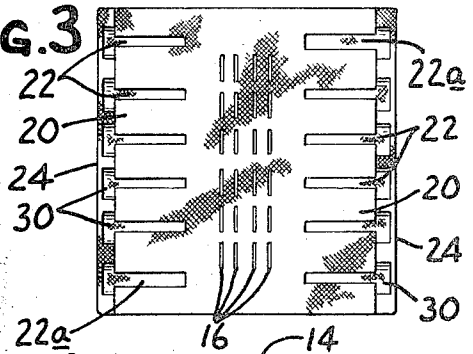


FIG. 4

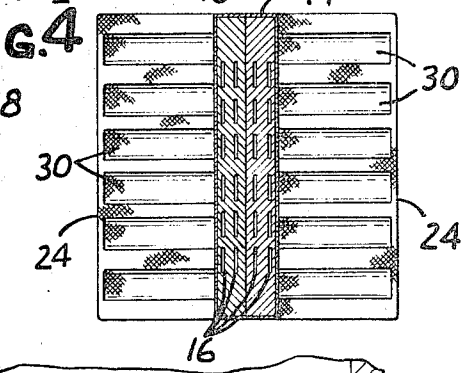


FIG. 2

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STORAGE UNIT FOR FLATWARE

The present invention relates to an improved storage unit for flatware.

Traditionally, flatware, especially silver or gold flatware, has been stored in felt-lined wooden chests. Generally speaking, the inside of the hinged cover of the chest is provided with means for storing knives, while the bottom of the chest is provided with a channeled member which enables spoons, forks and serving pieces to be separately stacked according to size and shape, in a horizontal position in the chest. Due to the horizontal positioning of the majority of the flatware pieces in the bottom of the chest, such chests have limited capacities. In order to provide more storage space, the bottom of the chest is made deeper to accommodate one or more drawers having a channeled member therein for receiving additional pieces. This expedient, of course, results in a chest of increased size which, among other things, is less convenient to handle and store.

In accordance with the present invention, a storage unit for flatware has been evolved which represents a unique improvement over the traditional flatware storage chest. The storage unit of this invention provides maximum storage capacity for flatware in a comparatively small space. Its compact construction, together with its modernistic, yet simple, configuration facilitates both handling and storage of the unit while achieving a high level of aesthetic appeal. The unit, in addition, enables the elimination of the commonly used chest hardware such as hinges, handles, drawer pulls, and other metalwork without any sacrifice in appearance or structural strength.

In brief, the flatware storage unit of this invention comprises an upwardly extending body portion having a plurality of spaced rows of slots therein, each slot being adapted to receive the blade of a table knife or butter spreader whereby a plurality of such flatware pieces can be supported in an essentially vertical position by the body portion. A pair of upper, substantially horizontal, laterally extending flatware-supporting arms are joined to the body portion along the upper longitudinal margins thereof. Each of the arms has a plurality of spaced, elongated, substantially parallel transverse channels formed along the outer longitudinal margin thereof for receiving the handle portion of flatware such as spoons, forks, and serving pieces. A pair of lower substantially horizontal, laterally extending flatware-supporting arms are joined to the lower longitudinal margins of the body portion. The lower arms are slightly wider than the upper arms, and are provided with a plurality of spaced recesses, which are vertically aligned with the channels in the upper arms, for receiving an end of each piece of flatware, supported in said channels. The upper and lower arms thus cooperatively support the flatware in a substantially upright position. The body portion and the upper and lower arms of the unit are felt-covered to prevent damage to the flatware stored therein and to enhance the appearance of the unit. The unit has a removable cover which completely encases the flatware stored in the unit thereby providing protection for the flatware against physical damage as well as damage caused by atmospheric conditions.

These, and other advantages and features of the invention will become apparent upon making reference to the specification to follow, the claims and the drawings wherein:

FIG. 1 is an exploded view in perspective of an embodiment of the flatware storage unit of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged, fragmentary, vertical sectional view of said embodiment of the invention showing flatware stored therein;

FIG. 3 is a top plan view of the flatware supporting portion of said embodiment of the invention; and

FIG. 4 is a horizontal sectional view taken substantially along line 4—4 of FIG. 1.

Referring, now, to FIGS. 1 and 2 of the drawing, the embodiment of the invention illustrated comprises a flatware supporting member **10** and a cover **12**, both of which desirably are made of wood, but which may be fabricated of plastic or a lightweight metal such as aluminum.

The flatware supporting member **10** comprises an upwardly extending body portion **14** having a plurality of rows of elongated, downwardly extending, narrow slots **16**, each of which is adapted to receive the blade of a knife **18** (see FIG. 2), or a butter spreader, or the like (not shown). Joined to the body portion **14**, at the upper longitudinal margins thereof, are a pair of substantially horizontal, laterally extending flatware support arms **20—20**. The arms **20—20** are each provided with a plurality of spaced, elongated, transverse, flatware receiving channels **22** along the outer longitudinal margin thereof. As best shown in FIG. 3 of the drawing, some of the channels **22**, designated by reference numeral **22***a*, are made wider to accommodate the usually wider handles of serving pieces.

Joined to the base of the body portion **14**, along the lower longitudinal margins thereof, are a pair of substantially horizontal, laterally extending base arms **24—24**. The base arms **24—24** desirably are wider than the flatware support arms **20—20**, and the upper surface of each of the base arms **24—24** is provided with a plurality of spaced, elongated grooves or recesses **30** which are in vertical alignment with the channels **22** formed in the arms **20—20**.

The exposed surfaces of the flatware support member **10** desirably are covered with felt **32** (see FIG. 2), and a pedestal **34**, the function of which will become clear as the description proceeds, advantageously is secured to the bottom of the member **10**.

The cover **12** of the embodiment of the invention illustrated is cubically shaped, and the dimensions of the opening therein correspond to the length and width of the member **10** as defined by the outer side margins of the base arms **24—24**. Secured to the inner surface of each of the side walls **40** of the cover **12** are elongated extensions or stops **42** (see FIG. 2). The stops **42** are positioned on the side walls **40** at a distance from the bottom of the cover **12** approximately equal to the distance from the top edge of the arms **20—20** to the bottom edge of the base arms **24—24**. When the cover **12** is placed over the flatware support member **10**, as shown in FIG. 2, two of the opposed stops **42** make contact with the upper surface of the arms **20—20**, and thus support the cover on the member **10**.

In utilizing the storage unit of the present invention, knives **18**, or butter spreaders or the like (not shown), are positioned on the body portion **14** of the member **10** by inserting the blades thereof into the elongated slots **16**. The knives, or the like, as best seen in FIG. 2, are supported in a vertical position, and the handles thereof extend well above the top surface of the body portion thereby enabling them to be easily grasped when it is desired to remove them from the slots **16**. Other flatware pieces such as spoons **50** and forks **60** are positioned on the member **10** by inserting the handles thereof into the channels **22** and placing the lower ends of the pieces in the aligned recess or groove **30** in the base arms **24-24**. As shown in FIG. 2, the individual pieces are rested against each other and, due to greater width of the base arms **24-24**; tend to lean in the direction of the body potion **14** in a generally upright position. The handles of the flatware extend well above the top surface of the arms **20-20** thereby facilitating their removal from the channels **22** when desired. The handles of the knives, and the flatware pieces supported in the channels **22** and the grooves **30**, are positioned in relation to one another to enable clear visibility of any design or engraving thereon.

The cover **12**, as indicated above, completely encases the member **10** and the flatware supported by it. When in position, two of the opposed stops **42** on the inner surface of the side walls **40** of the cover **12** rest on the upper surface of the member **10**. The outer margins of the base arms **24—24** abut against the inner surface of the side walls **40** at the opening in the cover **12** to provide a seal. The pedestal **34** elevates the member **10** and the cover **12** sufficiently to enable the fingers of an individual to engage either the bottom of the side walls **40** of the cover **12**, or the bottom of the base arms **24-24**, to permit the cover to be removed when desired, or the unit to be carried.

It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications may be made in the preferred embodiment of the invention above described. Thus, for example, the flatware supporting member and the cover may be round, or of other desired configuration. Also, a handle, or handles, may be provided to facilitate transport of the unit. Therefore, it should be understood that any such departures from the specific embodiment shown and described are intended to fall within the spirit and scope of this invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A storage unit for flatware comprising a flatware supporting member and a hollow, unitary cover for the flatware supporting member, said flatware supporting member comprising a central, upwardly extending, narrow, elongated, rectangular body portion having substantially horizontal upper and lower flatware support arms joined, respectively, to and extending laterally outwardly from the opposite sides of the body portion along the upper and lower longitudinal margins thereof, said body portion having a plurality of spaced apart rows of vertical, enclosed slots therein open at their upper ends, each slot being adapted to longitudinally receive and enclose the blade of a knife or the like whereby a plurality of knives or the like can be supported in an upright position by the body portion, said upper arms having a plurality of spaced elongated, substantially parallel transverse channels formed along the outer longitudinal margin thereof, said channels being open at their outer end and being adapted to laterally receive the handle portion of flatware positioned on the flatware supporting member, said lower arms being wider than the upper arms and having a plurality of elongated, spaced apart recesses formed therein each of which is vertically aligned with a channel in the upper arms, said recesses being adapted to receive the lower end of each piece of flatware positioned in the channels of the upper arms whereby the flatware will be supported in a generally upright position, said cover being provided with an opening in the bottom thereof, and having dimensions which correspond to the outer dimensions of both of said lower arms whereby the inside surfaces of the cover at the opening thereof abut the outer margins of the lower arms to provide a seal for the interior of the unit when the cover is in place, said cover having means engaging the upper surface of the upper flatware support arms whereby the cover is supported in overlying relation to the flatware supporting member and the flatware adapted to be supported thereon.

2. A storage unit according to claim 1 wherein a pedestal is secured to the bottom of the flatware supporting member whereby said member and the cover can be maintained in an elevated position when the unit is placed on a horizontal surface, the degree of said elevation being sufficient to enable the fingers of a person to engage either the bottom of the side walls of the cover thereby to remove it from the flatware support member or to engage the bottom of the flatware supporting member thereby to enable the unit to be carried.

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