This invention relates to folded paper products, such as napkins, and holders thereof and, more particularly, to a novel rectangular paper napkin and holder package for sale as a unit to consumers.

In the past, it has been found desirable to store paper napkins in holders which are positioned for ready use after a package of such napkins has been opened. There is a large variety of napkin holders available which are designed for the purpose of storing paper napkins and dispensing them as needed. However, the majority of such holders has been quite expensive compared to the cost of the paper napkins. This is obviously contrary to one of the purposes of paper napkins which is to reduce the cost of providing napkins. Furthermore, such holders are normally designed for permanent continuous use since their original expense is so high. However, it is customarily found that such holders become dirty after continuous use often due in part to their proximity to food, necessitating cleaning. It is also clear that such holders could not be distributed economically with each increment of napkins purchased due to the proportionate high cost and the relatively heavy weight of the holder compared to the napkins.

With a view toward overcoming the above disadvantages, the present invention is directed to a novel merchantable package which contains a supply of folded paper products such as paper napkins firmly held within an improved type of low cost napkin holder. The napkin holder of the invention is constructed of an inexpensive and light weight material, such as polystyrene foam, which can be easily formed into a relatively fixed resilient shape. Furthermore, the cost of such a holder is so minimal that it is contemplated that it will be disposed of after the given supply of napkins is diminished. However, the napkin holder also can be reused with an additional supply of napkins as many times as desired.

The technique of marketing a napkin holder with a package of napkins ultimately furnishes added convenience to the consumer. The napkins, once the purchased package is opened, are ready for instant use without transfer to another napkin holder and dispenser and yet can conveniently be transported in the holder from one point of use to another without problems of holding the group of napkins together.

Thus, it is apparent that one advantage of the present invention is to provide a way to distribute a disposable napkin holder, constructed of relatively light weight material at a relatively low cost, with each increment of paper napkins. A further feature of the invention is the ability of such a combined package of paper napkins and holder to be neatly overwrapped with a light covering into a nicely formed package for consumer distribution. The holder also serves to retain the napkins in a desired position relative to each other during the overwrapping process whereby a lighter wrapped package can be obtained. This results in a more attractive item for sale since any associated art work or printing on the overwrap will be clear and undistorted.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a novel merchantable package containing a plurality of folded paper products such as napkins and a holder therefor.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a novel type of napkin holder constructed of a single piece of polystyrene foam. Additional objects and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following description and appended claims, reference being had to the accompanying drawings in which:

FIGURE 1 is a plan view of a sheet of material used to form a holder of the invention.
FIGURE 2 is a perspective view of one form of holder of the invention.
FIGURE 3 is a perspective view of another form of holder of the invention.
FIGURES 4, 5, and 6 are end views of a holder constructed in accordance with FIGURE 3 illustrating the mode in which napkins are retained therein.
FIGURE 7 is a perspective view of a completed novel merchantable package of the invention including an overwrap.

Referring now to FIGURE 1, a sheet 10 of light weight thermoplastic material, preferably polystyrene foam, is shown in a single plane prior to formation of a holder of the invention. The sheet 10 has a rectangular central section 12 with elongated extensions 14 and 16 from each of its longitudinal edges 18 and 20. The sides 22 and 24 of each extension 14 and 16 are tapered inwardly from longitudinal edges 18 and 20. The corners 26 of sheet 10 are rounded.

FIGURE 2 illustrates a formed holder constructed from the sheet 10 shown in FIGURE 1 and in which the extensions 14 and 16 have been upturned and are substantially vertical with respect to the plane of the rectangular central section 12. This structure is formed after heating the sheet of material in FIGURE 1 along transverse lines defining longitudinal edges 18 and 20 to a forming temperature where the material is softened and can be easily bent along edges 18 and 20 into shape, after which it is held in this position and cooled until a permanent set is effected, resulting in a rigid structure again. This step is important in that the structure of the material forming the holder must not be damaged or weakened during bending, since the holder will be highly stressed in use at lines 18 and 20 along the bends.

FIGURE 3 illustrates a more preferred type of holder of the invention in which the upwardly extending portions 14 and 16 are inclined inwardly so that, as shown in the embodiment, they approach each other and may contact each other in the relaxed position. Thus, the extending portions are inwardly converging and arranged to intersect each other beyond their ends and remote from the rectangular base. Also, shown in FIGURE 3, a decorative design 28 may be placed on the outwardly facing sides of the holder to enhance its appearance.

FIGURE 4 illustrates an end view of the holder illustrated in FIGURE 3 and more clearly shows the manner in which the sides are inclined. FIGURE 5 shows a number of folded paper products 30, such as paper napkins, removable inserted and retained edgewise within the holder shown in FIGURE 4. As shown in FIGURE 5 such folded paper products may be of varied size although they preferably are of the same length and width when folded. In the combination shown in FIGURE 5 it should be understood that the upwardly extending side portions 14 and 16 exert force inwardly against the outer surfaces 32 of the outer folded paper products 30 due to the fact that the holder is formed of resilient or elastic material which tends to return to its original formed configuration. FIGURE 6 illustrates how such a holder continues to grip the paper products inserted therein after a number of such products have been withdrawn.

FIGURE 7 is a perspective view of a package com-
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praising the holder and folded paper products shown in FIGURE 5 surrounded by an overwrap 34 which may be tissue or some type of transparent film, and upon which can be placed decorative material and advertising and sales information. It will be evident that the package as shown in FIGURE 7 is a composite merchantable package containing both a disposable holder and a plurality of folded paper products such as paper napkins. It has been found preferable to employ a transparent film overwrap in order to allow consumers to see that they are purchasing a napkin holder with each increment of napkins. Such a film may conveniently be of polyethylene sheet material.

From the above description, it can be seen that the invention provides a new merchantable napkin package including, in combination, a folded paper product holder which is low cost, light weight and disposable, a plurality of folded paper products, such as paper napkins, removably retained therein, and an overwrap surrounding the holder and paper products to evolve a convenient consumer product. The use of semi-rigid material such as polystyrene foam has been found most advantageous both from the standpoint of weight of the holder as well as the overall strength of the holder. Furthermore, polystyrene foam seems to possess superior resiliency and ability to resist internal flow when stressed for a lengthy time such as when stored full of napkins on a shelf. Moreover, the surface of polystyrene foam exhibits good frictional characteristics which aid in retaining napkins in the holder without excessive inward pressure of extended portions 14 and 16. This is true of many other types of semi-rigid resilient foam materials also.

The strength of the holder is important in so far as is concerned the task of retaining the napkins in the holder by means of inward pressure of the extended portions 14 and 16. To this end, the portions at the bends 18 and 20 may conveniently be thickened slightly to give the article increased strength in the area of the bends where breakage seems to be most likely. This thickening has been found to occur naturally with foam as it is heated to the softening condition and then bent. Thus, the material at the inside of the bends tends to swell up in thickness as well as to be slightly compressed, resulting in a stronger structure at the point of highest stress.

When the sides of the holder are inclined inwardly as shown in FIGURE 4, the inward pressure of the sides, when the holder is filled with napkins, is sufficient to firmly retain the napkins when the holder is turned in all directions. It can also be seen that such an arrangement as shown in FIGURE 5 makes an ideal combined item for covering with an overwrap such as a transparent polyethylene film. It should be clearly understood that although the above description refers to paper napkins as one item which could be packaged and marketed in accordance with a holder and package of the invention, the description and the claims are intended to be equally applicable to other types of folded paper products such as sanitary tissues of many types which could be handled in the same manner, thereby avoiding similar problems otherwise attendant therewith.

What is claimed is:

1. In combination, a folded paper product holder comprising an elongated base having inwardly converging upstanding portions integrally connected to its longitudinal sides, said holder being formed from a single sheet of semi-rigid resilient foam the ends of which have been bent into position along heated transverse lines defining the longitudinal sides of said base to form said upstanding portions, said upstanding portions inclining inwardly over said longitudinal base so that the upper ends thereof approach each other in the relaxed position, a plurality of folded paper products of substantially equal size arranged in overlying relationship, said folded paper products being removably retained edgewise within said holder so that said upstanding portions contact the outer faces of the outer folded paper products, and an overwrap surrounding said folded paper products and said holder.

2. In combination, a folded paper product holder comprising an elongated base having inwardly converging upstanding portions integrally connected to its longitudinal sides, said holder being formed from a single sheet of polystyrene foam the ends of which have been bent into position along heated transverse lines defining the longitudinal sides of said base to form said upstanding portions, said upstanding portions inclining inwardly over said longitudinal base so that the upper ends thereof approach each other in the relaxed position, said portions exhibiting substantial resiliency so as to exert elastic force inwardly when the upper ends thereof are relatively spaced apart, a plurality of folded paper products of substantially equal size arranged in overlying relationship, said folded paper products being removably retained edgewise within said holder so that said upstanding portions contact the outer faces of the outer folded paper products and exert said elastic force inwardly, and an overwrap surrounding said folded paper products and said holder.

3. A paper product dispenser comprising a substantially rectangular base having upstanding portions integrally connected to its longitudinal sides, said dispenser being formed of a single sheet of polystyrene foam, the ends of which have been bent into position along heated transverse lines defining the longitudinal sides of said base to form said upstanding portions, said upstanding portions inwardly converging over said base so that the upper end thereof approach each other in the relaxed position, said portions being upwardly tapered inwardly and possessing substantial resiliency so as to exert elastic force inwardly when the upper ends thereof are relatively spaced apart.

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