United States Patent [19]

Shaw

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[54] **METHOD OF SEALING A BURIAL CASKET**

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[52] **U.S. Cl.** **27/19,** 27/1, 53/184

[51] **Int. Cl.** **A61g 17/00**

[58] **Field of Search** 27/1, 2, 7, 35, 11, 19; 53/30, 184

[56] **References Cited**

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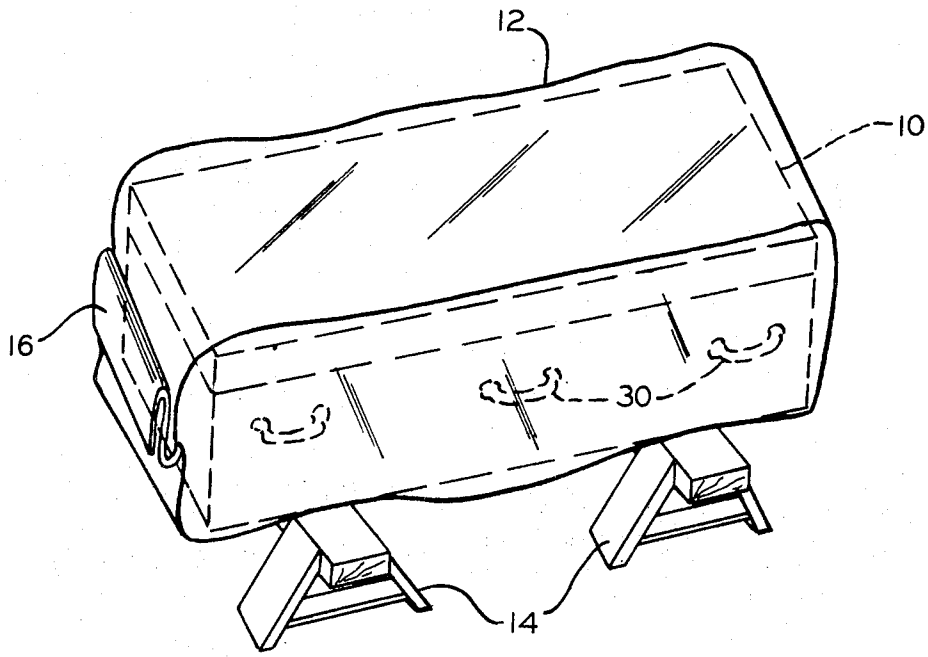
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A casket sealed to prevent moisture from entering its interior, and the method of accomplishing the sealing. At graveside, the casket is placed in an elongated bag of impermeable, shrinkable plastic material and the open end of the bag is closed. The casket is then lowered into a vault previously positioned in the excavation, and a substantially airtight cover is placed on the vault. The cover includes means to enable the air within the vault to be heated in a controlled manner and this causes the plastic material in which the casket is encased to shrink into tight sealing engagement with the casket.

1 Claim, 3 Drawing Figures



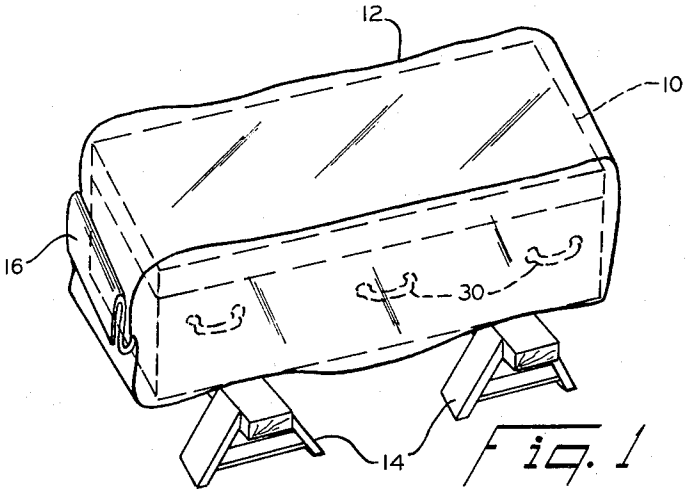


Fig. 1

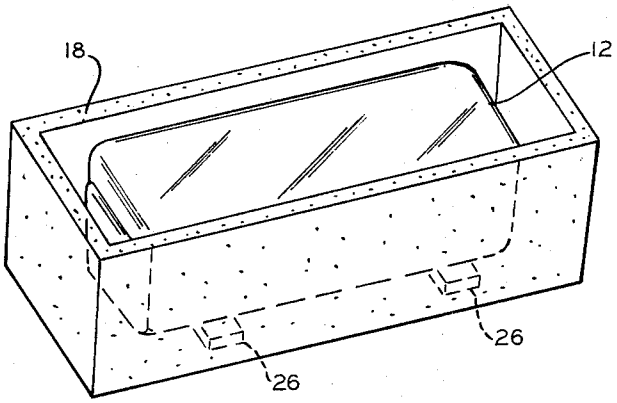


Fig. 2

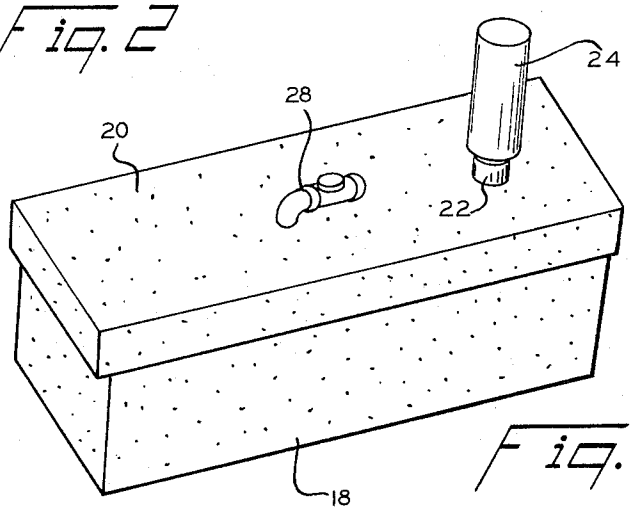


Fig. 3

METHOD OF SEALING A BURIAL CASKET

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to the field of undertaking, and has particular reference to a sealed casket and novel method of effecting the sealing.

Sealed or "sealer" caskets have been known heretofore, the purpose of such caskets being to prevent moisture from entering the casket interior and thus provide more peace of mind to a decedent's family. In the past, sealed caskets have had completely welded joints or have been provided with special gaskets between the lid and main part of the casket. This type of casket is invariably a metal casket and has always commanded premium prices. As a result, most families cannot afford to purchase them.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a sealed casket and a novel inexpensive method of accomplishing the sealing. To this end, the casket, which can be any casket within the means of the decedent's family, is placed in an elongated bag of impermeable, shrinkable plastic following the graveside service. Thereafter, the plastic encased casket is placed in a vault or other suitable receptacle that is provided with an airtight cover and means for heating the air within the receptacle. The receptacle is thus utilized as a "shrink tunnel" or oven wherein the heat causes the plastic to shrink in a known manner into tight sealing engagement with the casket so that it is rendered water impervious.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a casket encased in a bag of shrinkable plastic material in accord with the invention;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view showing the encased casket of FIG. 1 after it has been placed in a vault; and

FIG. 3 is a perspective view showing the vault with a temporary cover in position for effecting the shrinking of the plastic material.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

In the drawings, **10** illustrates a casket which can be any type or size and made of any of the usual materials. Most importantly, the casket can be as inexpensive as necessary.

In accord with the invention, after the graveside service has been held and the family of the decedent has left, the casket is placed by workmen in an elongated bag **12** of moisture impermeable, shrinkable plastic. For convenience, the casket can be supported by sawhorses **14** during this operation. The shrinkable plastic itself is a known, commercially available product, i.e., it is a thermoplastic film that has been "stretched" during manufacture. This stretching gives the film a memory which causes it to return to original form when subjected to a closely controlled flow of heated air.

It is contemplated that elongated bags of a number of different sizes will be produced, and for a given casket a bag will be used that encases it with a close but not a tight fit. After the casket **10** has been placed in the bag **12,** the open end **16** of the bag is folded as shown in FIG. 1 to close the end and tape (not shown) is applied to maintain the closure. In the alternative, the folds can be heat sealed in bag closing position by a portable sealing device. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the bags **12** will be made of low cost polyethelene film that is 5 to 10 mils thick.

After the casket has been enclosed in the plastic bag **12,** it is lowered into a known type of vault **18** that has previously been positioned in the grave excavation. In carrying out the invention, an airtight, temporary cover **20** is placed on the vault which cover can be made of metal, plastic or other suitable material. The cover is provided with a connection **22** to which a heating device, shown schematically at **24,** can be attached for heating the air within the vault.

Heating device **24** can be electric, infrared or gas and if necessary will be provided with a baffle arrangement to prevent too much heat from being directed right at the casket **10** and bag **12.** Because the plastic film of bag **12** shrinks, or returns to its original form, when subjected to a closely controlled flow of heated air, heating device **24,** which is not per se a part of the invention, is provided with suitable heat regulating means (not shown). To enable the flow of air around substantially all parts of the encased casket, the latter is preferably supported above the floor of the vault by four blocks **26.** The temporary vault cover **20** may be provided with a pressure relief valve **28** although such a valve is not normally necessary with proper heat regulating means.

As noted above, the application of the heated air in the vault to the bag **12** causes it to shrink into tight sealing engagement with the casket **10,** the plastic film conforming closely to any irregularities in or on the casket, as for example the handles **30.** Since the shrinkable plastic film is water impermeable, the casket **10** is thus rendered impervious to the entrance of moisture.

A feature of the invention is the utilization of the outer vault **18** as a "shrink tunnel" or oven at the grave location. This is enabled by the temporary vault cover **20** which, after the shrinking operation, is removed and can be re-used. Upon removal of the temporary cover, the vault's own, permanent cover (not shown) is positioned on it.

From the foregoing description, it will be apparent that the invention disclosed herein provides an effective yet inexpensive casket sealing means and method thus making this desired expedient available to many unable to afford it heretofore. As will be understood by those familiar with the art, the invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential characteristics thereof.

I claim:

1. A method of providing a sealed burial casket comprising the steps of: placing the casket in an elongated bag of impermeable, shrinkable plastic material; closing the open end of the bag; placing the casket and bag in a substantially air tight vault provided with a cover having means for enabling the air in the interior of the vault to be heated; and heating the air in the interior of the vault to shrink the closed plastic bag into sealing engagement with the casket.

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