United States Patent

Aronoff

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[54] **LUGGAGE CASE**

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[52] **U.S. Cl.**.....**190/41 R**, 190/49, 190/51, 190/54

[51] **Int. Cl.**.....**A45c 3/00**

[58] **Field of Search**.....190/41 R, 49, 50, 51, 54, 28, 190/53, 13 B, 41 C; 49/485–490; 220/DIG. 3; 150/29

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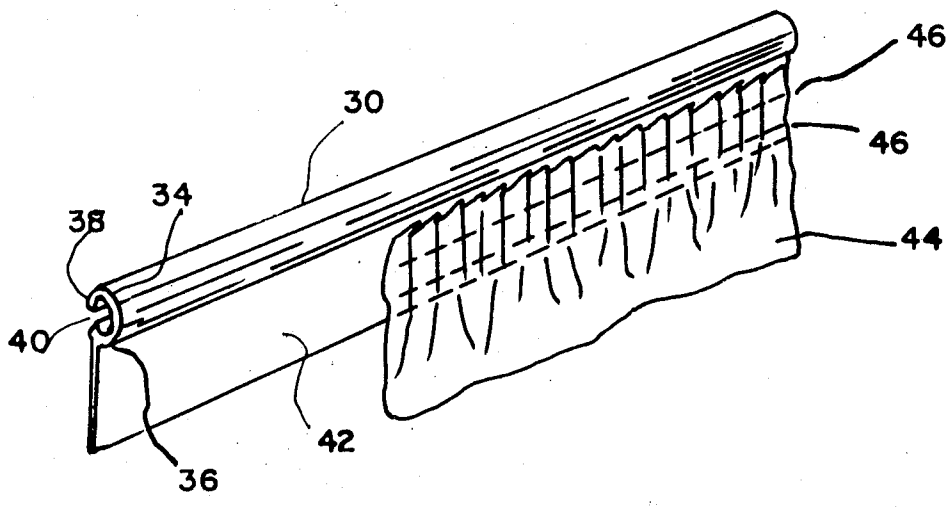
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Assistant Examiner—Stephen Marcus
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

An apparatus and method of manufacture of luggage cases, improving the concealment of the interior lines of joinder by the use of one-piece masking assemblies. The luggage cases are constructed of shell members joined to frame member forming the body of the case whereby the line of joinder is evident at the point where the shell and frame members join. The masking assembly has a resilient deformable body portion provided with a first mating member, such as a channel in the body for engaging a second mating member, which may include a continuous or intermittent projection attached to the shell or frame. The masking assembly has a depending skirt so that when the body of the masking assembly is connected to the cooperating mating member of the luggage case the depending skirt conceals the line of joinder.

9 Claims, 5 Drawing Figures



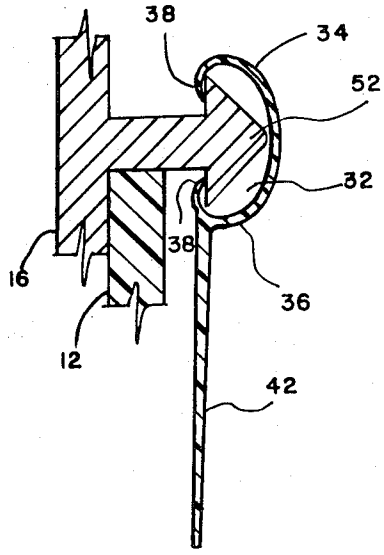


FIG. 4

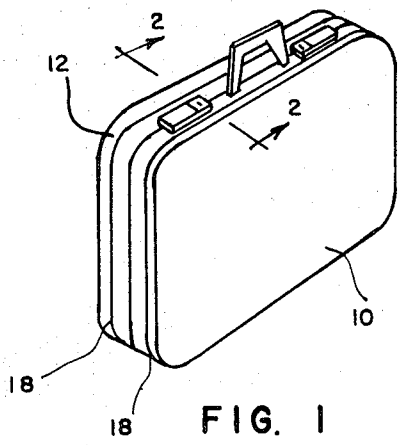


FIG. 1

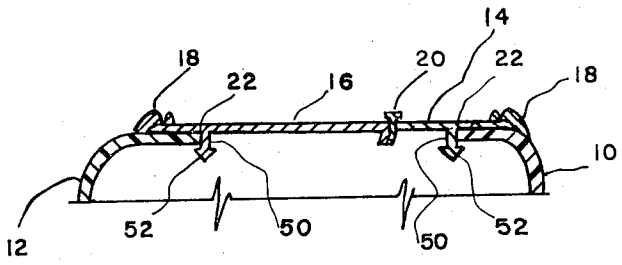


FIG. 2

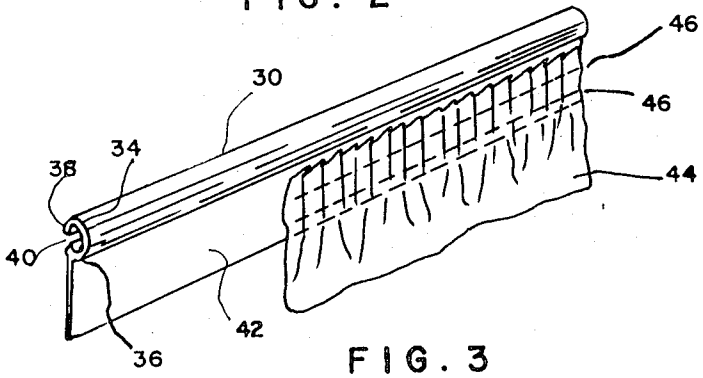


FIG. 3

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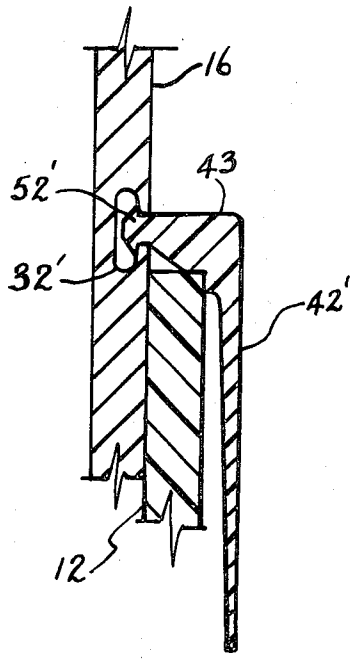


FIG. 5

LUGGAGE CASE

This invention relates to luggage cases.

More particularly, this invention relates in one aspect, to a method for constructing luggage cases; in another aspect to luggage cases having an improved structure; and in a still further aspect, to a masking assembly suitable for incorporation into luggage cases to improve the appearance thereof and to provide a finish to the seams or lines of joinder between various component parts of luggage cases.

Conventionally, luggage cases, e.g. travelling cases, normally include two body portions each consisting of a shell of suitable material and each connected to a frame member. Each frame member cooperates with the other to form a closing member — the frame member being attached to the shell by suitable means, e.g. stitching, adhesives, rivets, etc.

The shells of cases are normally made of high impact thermoplastic material, e.g. styrene or other suitable material such as treated cardboard, etc. Frame members are normally composed of extruded metal e.g. aluminum or aluminum alloys; however, other materials can also be used. At the point where the shell member joins the frame member, a line of juncture or seam is formed, on both the exterior and interior surfaces of the case. At the exterior surface, this line of juncture is normally camouflaged by employing a plastic beading. Frequently this beading is stitched directly to the case in the stitching operation used to join shell and frame members.

On the interior surface of the case, however, the practice in the art has been to camouflage the line of juncture or to conceal the rivets where they are used, by using a band or tape of suitable material which is either glued, or stapled, or installed with snaps, to the shell and/or frame member, over the line of joinder or seam.

Stapling bands or tapes to the shell or frame member is not acceptable due to the undesirable visual appearance of the stapling. Moreover, there is also a tendency for the staples to become loose so that the tape or band will eventually fall from the shell and/or frame member. Installation of the tape or band using stapling is also time-consuming and expensive in terms of equipment and labor required, and there is always a tendency for the staples to go through the outer surface of the case.

With regard to gluing, there is always the risk of damaging cases by spillage of glue onto adjacent areas, and the procedure is also slow and expensive in terms of labor, making this technique undesirable. Moreover, the glue often fails to hold properly during the life of the luggage case, and this is also unacceptable from the consumer point of view.

Thus, the main problem in producing an acceptable article from the appearance point of view resides in camouflaging the interior line of juncture or seam between the respective shell and frame members, as the same difficulties do not arise on the exterior surface of the luggage case.

With this invention, applicant has developed a novel method and article for camouflaging the internal line of juncture or seam between the frame member and the shell of a luggage case which provides a far faster and cleaner process as compared to the prior art procedures, and additionally results in an improved

product. In accordance with one aspect of this invention, there is provided a masking assembly adapted for use in luggage or similar cases for concealing a line of juncture between a shell member of said case and a frame member of said case, comprising, an elongated continuous one-piece body having at least one resilient deformable side wall, a continuous cavity in said body surrounded at least in part by said resilient deformable side wall, an elongated aperture in said body in communication with said cavity and adjacent said resilient flexible side wall, said resilient side wall forming with said aperture an area of restricted opening adapted to mate in cooperating engagement with a cooperating engaging means connected to said frame or shell member of a luggage case, said body having a depending skirt portion connected thereto whereby when said body member is connected to said cooperating means, said skirt is adapted to conceal said line of juncture.

In accordance with a further aspect of this invention, luggage or similar types of cases which have a pair of cooperating outer shell members forming the shell of the luggage case, and which each include a frame member connected to the shell members, the frame members forming together a closure for the case, are provided with the above-described one-piece masking assembly to conceal the interior line of joinder formed between the respective frame members and the shell members, or for concealing rivets or other similar connecting members joining the shell and frame members, by utilizing a cooperating attachment member connected to either the frame or shell members adjacent the line of juncture whereby the masking assembly may be mounted on the cooperating attachment member to conceal the interior line of joinder.

An alternative form of the present invention is to provide the shell or frame members of the luggage case with a structure equivalent to the above-described body member and to employ in the masking assembly the cooperating attachment member which will mate with the body member when inserted into the body of the shell or frame member to mount the masking assembly and to conceal the line of juncture.

Conventionally, each shell member in luggage cases is connected to a respective frame member and accordingly, with two shell members for each luggage case there will be two interior lines of joinder. Preferably each line of joinder for each luggage case is provided with the cooperating attachment member adapted to mount the masking assembly so that the complete interior of the luggage case is free from the lines of joinder.

The cooperating attachment member adapted to operate in conjunction with the masking assembly may be provided on either the frame or shell member adjacent the line of juncture. To this end, the cooperating attachment member of the luggage case is preferably in the form of a projecting member extending interiorly of the luggage case a distance sufficient to permit engagement by the masking assembly. The cooperating attachment member may be in the form of a continuous or discontinuous — i.e. plurality of individual projections, adjacent the line of juncture. To this end, the cooperating attachment member may be in the form of a continuous projecting bead or a plurality of spaced-apart beads adapted to engage the masking assembly.

A preferred form of the cooperating attachment member of the luggage case is preferably of a "snap" type projection having a body portion extending from the interior surface of the luggage case and terminating in a terminal head portion; however, other similar forms may also be employed for this purpose.

The masking assembly of the present invention is preferably a substantially continuous one piece body extending about the periphery of the line of juncture to conceal the same on the interior of the luggage case. A preferred embodiment of the one piece bead of the masking assembly comprises a pair of spaced-apart deformable resilient sidewalls defining a one piece flexible channel, a continuous cavity in the channel between the side walls with the side walls having opposed free terminal edges defining there-between a restricted opening forming an entrance in communication with the cavity. The cavity and the restricted opening form together a cooperating mating attachment member adapted to be mounted in mating engagement with the cooperating attachment member connected to the luggage case.

The above preferred form of the masking assembly is preferably a one piece plastic extrusion of a length sufficient to substantially extend around the visible portion of the line of juncture.

The depth of the channel of the body of the masking assembly may vary, depending on the type of cooperating attachment member connected to the luggage case. To this end, it may vary from less than one-eighth inch to one-fourth inch or more.

The depending flange or skirt portion of the masking assembly is preferably integrally connected to the body portion and extends outwardly from the body portion a distance sufficient to conceal the line of juncture between the shell and frame members of the luggage case. To this end, the length will vary depending on the distance on which the masking assembly is mounted away from the line of juncture, which may be anywhere from one-eighth inch or less to 1 inch or more depending on the type of luggage case and other factors. The flange or skirt portion may take several forms within the scope of the present invention and may be, for example, a continuous one-piece member extending laterally from the body of the masking assembly. The flange or skirt portion may be in the form of a relatively thin flexible flange of the same material as that from which the body of the masking assembly is made, in which case the flange or skirt is preferably a continuous, integrally connected portion of the body — i.e. the complete masking assembly may be a one piece extrusion, or in other cases, the flange or skirt portion may be formed from a decorative material connected by, e.g. adhesive, to the body and extending outwardly therefrom a distance sufficient to conceal the line of juncture. In a still further embodiment, as in the case of a continuous one piece extrusion, the flange or skirt which is integrally connected to the body may be provided with decorative material such as a frill connected to the flange as for example by stitching or adhesive.

The material from which the masking assembly is made may be any suitable material; for reasons of simplicity and economics, various types of thermoplastic or thermosetting resinous materials are desirable which possess some degree of resiliency. Typical of these materials are for example polyethylene, polypropylene, polyvinylchorides, etc., which may be colored if desired.

According to a particularly preferred embodiment of the present invention, the cooperating attachment member of the luggage frame or shell extends substantially about the circumference of the frame or shell at a point adjacent the line of juncture between the shell and frame members. The masking assembly is preferably substantially coextensive with the cooperating attachment member. In practice, the masking assembly may be mounted in mating relationship with the cooperating attachment member following assembly of the luggage cases according to conventional procedures.

Having thus generally described the invention, reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings illustrating a preferred embodiment and in which

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a typical luggage case to which the present invention applies;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged section taken along the line 2 — 2 of FIG. 1, showing the shell and frame members of the luggage case without the masking assembly being mounted;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of two forms of a typical masking assembly according to the present invention;

FIG. 4 is en enlarged view of a portion of the frame and shell members of FIG. 2 showing the masking assembly of FIG. 3 being mounted thereon, and

FIG. 5 is a view similar to FIG. 4 showing a portion of the frame and shell members with an alternate embodiment of the invention.

Referring now to the drawings, a typical luggage case is shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 consisting of conventional shell members 10 and 12 each connected to frame members 14 and 16. The shell members, as previously mentioned, may be of any suitable material such as, for example, high impact thermoplastic material e.g. styrene or the copolymer known as "ABS" in the art. The frame members may be of any suitable material such as, for example, extruded metal — e.g. aluminum. The shell members 10 and 12 may be secured to the respective frame members 14 and 16 by means of stitching using an external beading 18 located at the exterior of the frame members to conceal the stitching. The beading 18 is generally of a flexible material, with a recessed portion in which the stitches are placed.

The type of frame members 14 and 16 illustrated may be of any conventional type, one of which includes an overlapping flange 20 adapted to close the joint between the two frame members 14 and 16 at the point where they meet.

In accordance with this invention, the line of interior juncture between the respective shell members 10 and 12 and the frame members 14 and 16, indicated generally by reference numeral 22, is provided with a masking assembly, which masking assembly is that illustrated, according to one embodiment, in FIGS. 3 and 4. More particularly, the masking assembly comprises a one-piece body indicated generally by reference numeral 30 provided with a continuous axially extending channel 32 defined therein by opposed substantially coextensive continuous spaced-apart deformable resilient side walls 34 and 36 connected

together. Each of the side walls 34 and 36 includes a terminal free edge 38, and in the embodiment shown is generally inwardly curved to form between the edges a restricted opening indicated generally by reference numeral 40. The opening 40 is in communication with the cavity 32 of the body.

In the embodiment illustrated, the body portion of the masking assembly is a one-piece unit, in the form of an extruded member of plastic material such as polyvinyl chloride.

Connected to the body of the masking assembly is a depending skirt 42, which as will be seen from the drawings extends laterally from side wall 36. In practice, the skirt 42 may extend from either side wall 36 or 34 depending on the location of the line of juncture between the shell and frame members. The skirt 42 may be slightly tapered as shown, and is of a length to conceal the line of juncture 22 formed between the respective shell and frame members of the luggage case.

If desired, for decorative purposes, the masking assembly may include a frill as shown in FIGS. 3 and indicated by reference numeral 44 attached to the skirt 42 as for example by stitching 46. According to a further embodiment, however, the frill may be directly attached to the body of the masking assembly and may take the place of the skirt if desired, whereby the frill 44 is adapted to conceal the line of juncture.

To mount the masking assembly of the present invention, and in the particular embodiment illustrated, the frame members 14 and 16 are provided with cooperating attachment members, which in this case comprise a body 50 extending upwardly from the interior surface of the respective frame members and terminate in an "arrow shaped" head 52. In the embodiment shown, the body 50 and head portion 52 forms an integral projection extending inwardly from the respective frame members and in this case, the frame members may be extruded to have the body 50 and head 52 mounted in the manner shown.

As described hereinbefore body member 50 and projection 52 form the cooperating attachment member for the masking assembly and may be connected to the shell members 10 and 12 of the luggage case, in place of being connected to the frame members 14 and 16.

As mentioned previously, this invention also contemplates that a groove may be formed in either of the shell or frame members corresponding to the axially extending channel 32 of the masking assembly, with the masking assembly being provided with a body portion having a projecting cooperating member adapted to mate in the groove of the shell or frame members — in other words, the embodiment illustrated in the drawings could be reversed. As illustrated in FIG. 5, the channel or groove may thus be formed in the frame member 16, as indicated by reference numeral 32'. The masking assembly may then include a portion 42' corresponding generally to portion 42, and in place of the previously described channel attached to the depending skirt, a "-head" portion which includes a neck 43 and a projection 52' generally similar to the projection 52 of the previously described arrangement.

Still further, the cooperating attachment member of the shell or frame members could be in the form of an "L-shaped" member, mounted between the respective members at the point where the line of juncture is formed.

From the above description it will be obvious that the present invention provides many advantageous features over prior art methods of constructing the interior of luggage cases while at the same time eliminating the disadvantageous features associated with prior art techniques. Thus, while using the masking assembly of the present invention, the interior line of joinder in the luggage cases can be quickly and economically concealed without the use of high labor costs associated with the techniques of gluing or stapling; further, the masking assembly of the present invention also provides a decorative effect, if desired, in the interior of the luggage case without the necessity of adding additional components to accomplish the same result.

It will be understood that various modifications can be made to the above without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

I claim:

1. A luggage or similar case having a pair of cooperating outer luggage members, each luggage member being connected to a frame member, each frame member being adapted to mate in closing engagement with the other, there being an interior line of joinder between each of said frame members and the respective luggage member, a one-piece masking assembly adapted to conceal said interior line of joinder, said masking assembly comprising a one-piece flexible channel having opposed substantially co-extensive continuous spaced apart deformable resilient side walls, a continuous cavity in said channel between said side walls, said side walls having opposed free terminal edges defining therebetween a restricted opening forming an entrance in communication with said cavity, said cavity and said restricted opening forming said first cooperating mating attachment member, a second cooperating mating attachment member connected to each of said frame members interiorly thereof, said second cooperating mating member comprising projecting means mounted to said frame member extending upwardly from the interior surface thereof at or near said line of joinder, said projecting means being adapted to mate in cooperating engagement with said cavity through said restricted opening, whereby when said skirt and masking assembly are mounted in engagement with said projecting means, said skirt is adapted to conceal said line or joinder.

2. The product of claim 1, wherein said projecting means extend substantially about the interior of said luggage case, said masking assembly being substantially coextensive therewith.

3. The product of claim 1, said channel having a depending peripheral skirt portion attached thereto, said skirt portion being substantially coextensive with said channel.

4. A luggage or similar case having a pair of cooperating luggage members each connected to a frame member whereby an interior line of joinder between the respective frame and luggage members is formed, a one-piece deformable masking assembly adapted to conceal said interior line of joinder, said masking assembly comprising projecting means connected to a skirt portion and extending therefrom, said projecting means being adapted to mate in cooperating

engagement with further cooperating mating engagement means associated with each of said frame members, said further cooperating mating engagement means comprising a groove or recess therein adapted to receive said projecting means, said groove or recess comprising a continuous cavity between spaced apart side walls, said side walls having opposed free terminal edges defining therebetween a restricted opening forming an entrance in communication with said cavity, said cavity and restricted opening forming said further cooperating mating engagement means, whereby when said skirt and masking assembly are mounted in cooperating engagement with said further cooperating mating engagement means, said skirt is adapted to conceal said line of juncture.

5. In a luggage or similar case having a frame member and associated side members defining therebetween an enclosure, with an interior line of joinder in said case, an elongated one-piece masking assembly forming first cooperating mating means, said one-piece masking assembly having a body with at least one resilient deformable side wall, a continuous cavity in said body of said masking assembly surrounded at least in part by said resilient deformable side wall, an elongated aperture of said body of said masking assembly in communication with said cavity and adjacent said resilient flexible side wall, said resilient side wall forming with said aperture an area of restricted opening adapted to mate in cooperating engagement with second cooperating mating means, said body of said masking assembly having a depending skirt portion connected thereto adapted to conceal said line of joinder, said frame member having second cooperating mating means interiorly of said case, one of said cooperating mating means of one of said members being an enlarged head portion on the end of a projecting member connected to said one mating means, the other of said mating means of the other of said members being a recess, said enlarged head portion of said projecting member in said recess being in mating engagement with each other whereby said skirt conceals said line of joinder by extending over said line of joinder.

6. The product of claim 5, wherein said first cooperating mating member includes a resilient deformable body portion adapted to receive in engaging relationship a projection extending from said second cooperating attachment member.

7. The product of claim 5, wherein said body comprises an extruded one-piece resinous channel adapted to conform to the contours of said luggage case.

8. The product of claim 5, wherein said depending skirt includes a frill.

9. The product of claim 4, wherein said groove extends substantially about the interior of said luggage case, said masking assembly being substantially coextensive therewith.

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