United States Patent [19]

Cooper

[11] **3,777,418**

[45] **Dec. 11, 1973**

[54] **LUNCH BOXES AND SIMILAR DEVICES ADAPTED TO ACCOMMODATE GRAPHIC DATA**

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[22] Filed: **May 12, 1972**

[21] Appl. No.: **252,702**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **35/62,** 206/1.8, 206/4

[51] **Int. Cl.** **B43I 5/00**

[58] **Field of Search** 35/26, 60, 62, 66; 206/1.7, 1.8, 4; 312/230, 231

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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A lunch box or similar apparatus having the exposed outside surfaces thereof laminated with a smooth plastic of the type capable of having applied thereto graphic data by means of a waxy crayon writing tool, which data because of the smoothness of the plastic cover member can be easily removed and reapplied at the desire of the operator.

6 Claims, 5 Drawing Figures

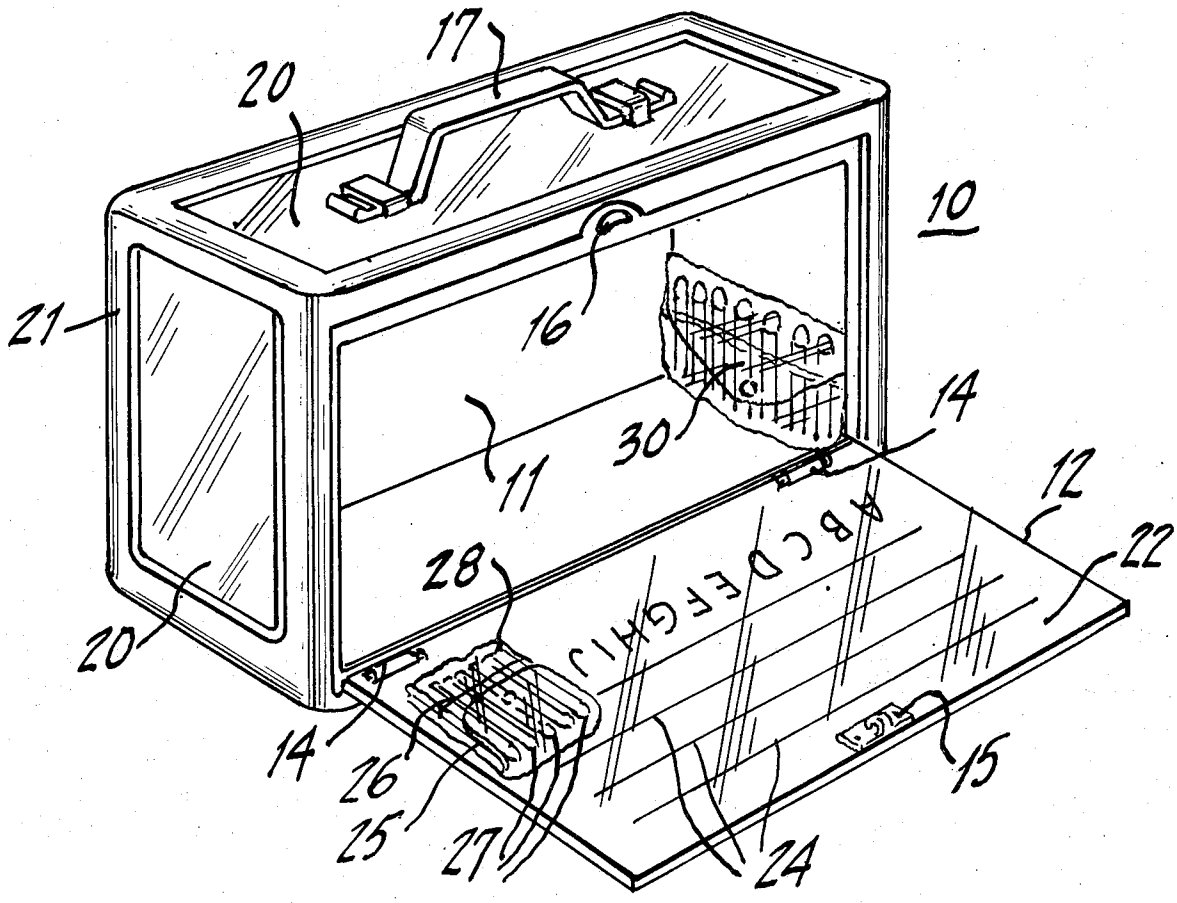


FIG. 1.

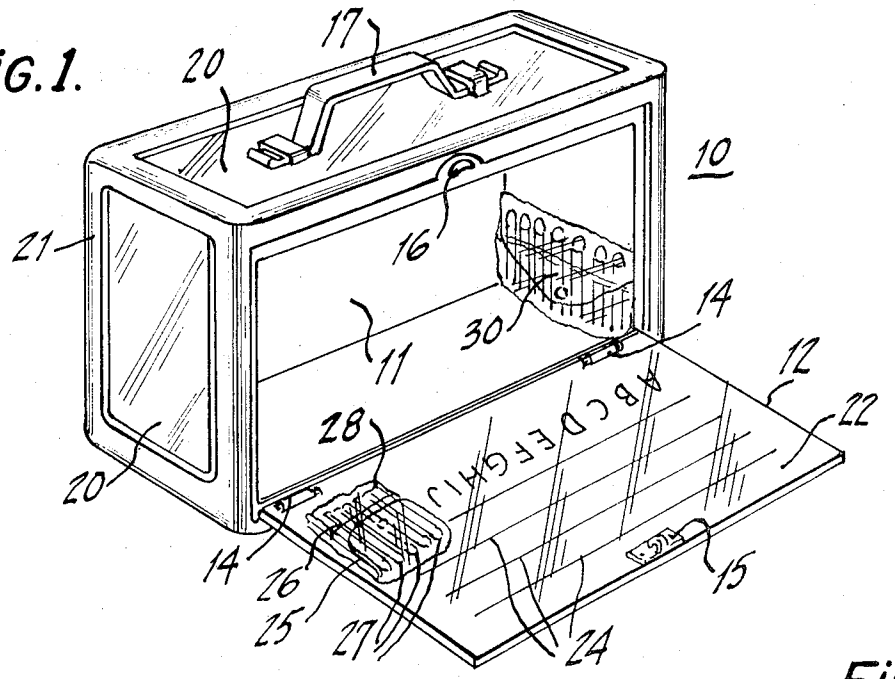


FIG. 2.

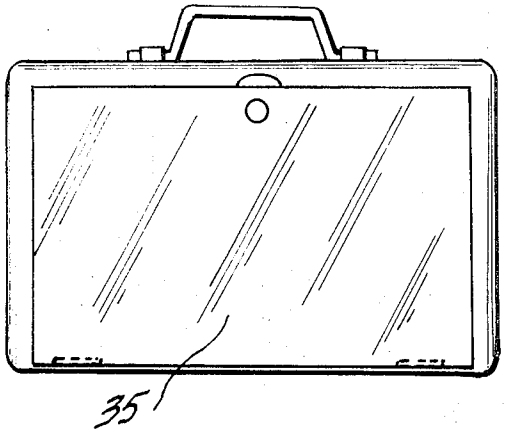


FIG. 3.

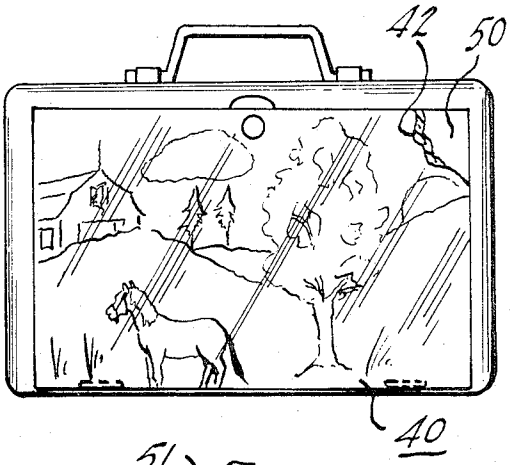


FIG. 4.

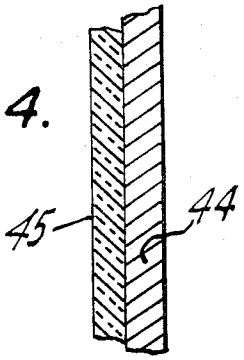
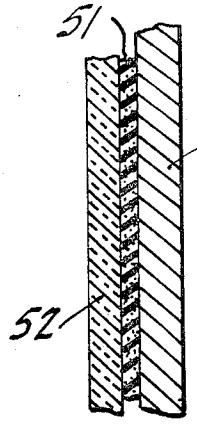


FIG. 5.



LUNCH BOXES AND SIMILAR DEVICES ADAPTED TO ACCOMMODATE GRAPHIC DATA

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to load accommodating structures, particularly to such structures for containing school children's lunches and the like.

It is apparent that there presently exists a wide variety of apparatus commonly designated as lunch boxes and used by school children for carrying their lunches to school. Such apparatus is similar in nature in that they all possess the same general appearance of a box-like assembly with a cover member pivotally secured to a side surface for opening and closing the lunch box for access to the contents.

The usual devices are fabricated from metal, wood or hard plastic in order to protect the contents enclosed therein. It is not uncommon that school children who possess such apparatus use the same to strike others and a great many injuries occur due to such uses.

Besides this problem is the general discipline problem commonly associated with school lunch periods. It is desirable in order to maintain good discipline to keep the children busy and to restrain them from fighting and so on. The teacher or supervisor of such a lunch period would attempt to have the children work when they finish lunch or engage in some artistic endeavor. The problem in doing this is that lunch rooms or similar places do not have the facilities to permit such endeavors.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The present invention serves to alleviate the above problems by providing a lunch box having exposed surfaces covered with a soft smooth plastic capable of accommodating crayon writing and capable of being easily erased. Embodiments of this invention include fixed graphic data impressed on the outside exposed surface of the lunch box, which surface is covered by a smooth, transparent plastic material, thus enabling the child or operator to color according to the impressed data on the surface thereof. Other embodiments include crayon accommodating pouches secured to appropriate inside surfaces of the lunch box to provide a child with a complete dual purpose apparatus, one capable of transporting food as well as enabling the child to color, draw on the surfaces thereof, while further providing impact protection to therefore import greater safety standards to such apparatus.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a plan view of a lunch box according to this invention.

FIG. **2** is a front view of a lunch box according to this invention.

FIG. **3** is a front view of an alternate embodiment of a lunch box.

FIG. **4** is a cross sectional view of a typical surface of the lunch box according to this invention.

FIG. **5** is a cross sectional view of an alternate embodiment of a surface of a lunch box.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF FIGURES

Referring to FIG. **1** numeral **10** references a typical lunch box configuration. Although the unit is shown as a rectangular box-like assembly, it is understood that other geometrical configurations will serve as well.

The lunch box **10** has an open top surface **11,** which can be covered at will by means of the pivotally mounted cover assembly **12.** Such cover assemblies **12** are conventionally mounted to an appropriate side surface by means of hinges **14** or other suitable devices. The cover assembly includes a clasp **15** which conventionally coacts with a corresponding catch member **16** on the appropriate side surface.

A handle member **17** is shown to enable a child or other operator to conveniently carry the lunch box.

Such lunch boxes, as indicated, are typically fabricated from metal, wood or plastic all of which are relatively hard and sturdy. The lunch box **10** as shown is also fabricated from such a material, but the exposed surfaces thereof are covered by a layer of smooth plastic, such as a vinyl plastic **20.** The plastic may be glued by means of a transparent epoxy substance onto the exposed surface of the lunch box or alternatively be placed over the surfaces and stitched at the edges thereof. In any event the corners and edges of the bottom and four side surfaces may be covered by a soft pliable material such as vinyl covered cotton or fiberglass mold **21.** The molding serving to protect the apparatus and user from impact.

The vinyl covering **20** has a smooth surface which serves to accommodate writing by means of a waxy substance as a crayon. Due to the relatively low frictional coefficient of such surfaces the adhesion between crayon is not strong and hence the writing can be easily wiped off by means of a suitable cloth or towel.

The cover member **12** has both the outside surface (not shown) and inside surface covered by a smooth vinyl plastic material **22.** The inside of the cover member **12** may have imprinted on the relatively hard base material a series of lines **24** and other data, such as letters of the alphabet and so on. The cover member **12** also may include a crayon accommodating pouch **25,** with a cloth accommodating pocket **26.** The lunch box **10** therefore includes a plurality of crayons **27** and an erasing cloth **28.**

Hence, the child after lunch can use this lunch box as a "portable" desk top or writing surface. The child removes any desired crayon **27** from the pouch **25** and can practice penmanship on the lines **24** or color or draw on any of the outer surfaces. The child can erase any data by using the cloth as by wiping the crayon off and so on.

A crayon pouch **30** can also be located on a side surface and can have a cover to prevent the crayons from spilling out during transport of the lunch box assembly.

The apparatus therefore serving the above noted multiple functions, while the cost of the apparatus remains virtually unchanged due to the inexpensive costs of the vinyl covering as well as the crayon pouch and crayon tools. The relative dimensions of such a lunch box may vary but typically are about **7** inches by **8** inches and approximately **3** to **4** inches deep.

FIG. **2** shows either the top or bottom surfaces laminated with a smooth, crayon writing accommodating plastic **35,** stitched over the appropriate surfaces.

FIG. 3 shows a top or bottom surface of a lunch box **40** wherein the smooth plastic laminate is a transparent vinyl **41.** The surface has a base member **42** fabricated from a metal, wood or hard plastic upon which the outline of a scene is permanently impressed on a white, yellow or other contrasting background. The child can now color the scene as desired. It is of course understood that any graphic data can be so included. For example, the data instead of the landscape shown may include outline drawings of popular TV shows, storybook scenes, sports events and so on. The graphic data can be selected according to the age group desired, the sex of the child and therefore include educational data, as arithmetic problems and so on.

FIG. 4 shows a cross section of a typical side member. The bottom or base layer **42** is, as indicated, fabricated from a hard substance. It is upon this substance that the fixed graphic data can be impressed. The base layer **40** has laminated thereon a smooth plastic cover layer **45,** of a suitable vinyl and so on to accommodate crayon writing while permitting easy erasing by means of a suitable cloth or other material. Layer **45** can be bonded to layer **44** directly or by means of sticking and so on. For direct bonding a clear epoxy or glue is used.

FIG. 5 shows a base layer **50,** an intermediate layer **51** and a smooth plastic laminate layer **52.** The intermediate layer **51** is fabricated from a soft pliable material as a sponge, rubber or cotton composite. This acts as a cushion to further protect against impact. In this case the vinyl layer is opaque and attractively colored and can again directly accommodate crayon or waxy substance imprints.

Such data can be easily removed by means of a cloth **28** as shown in FIG. **1.**

The apparatus therefore provides a versatile assembly for a school child and alleviates many problems as described above.

While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to the above figures, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that the foregoing and other changes in form and details may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

I claim:

1. A lunch box or similar apparatus, comprising:

a. a load accommodating assembly having a bottom surface and first, second, third and fourth side surfaces, to thereby form a box-like structure with a top open surface, said bottom surface and said side surfaces fabricated from a relatively hard substance of an opaque nature and at least one surface having imprinted thereon permanent graphic data,

b. a cover member pivotally mounted to one of said side surfaces to cover said top open surface in a closed position,

c. said exposed outer areas of said bottom surface, and said first, second, third and fourth side surfaces covered by a smooth transparent plastic material to enable said permanent graphic data to be viewed, said transparent plastic capable of having applied thereto graphic data impressed thereon by means of a waxy crayon writing substance,

d. said inside surface of said cover member facing said top open surface further covered by said smooth plastic material, to also enable application thereto of erasable graphic data by said waxy crayon writing substance, and

e. means secured to one of said surfaces forming said box-like structure and within the load accommodating portion of said assembly for accommodating a waxy crayon instrument.

2. The apparatus according to claim **1** wherein said smooth plastic material is vinyl.

3. The apparatus according to claim **1** further comprising,

a. a crayon accommodating pouch secured to said inside surface of said cover member.

4. The apparatus according to claim **1** further comprising,

a. an intermediate layer of a soft pliable material interposed between said smooth plastic material and said exposed outer areas of said bottom and side surfaces to thereby aid in cushioning any impact of said apparatus.

5. The apparatus according to claim **1** wherein said bottom and side surfaces are fabricated from a fiber board material.

6. The apparatus according to claim **1** further comprising,

a. a cloth accommodating pouch secured to one of said surfaces within said load accommodating position of said assembly, said pouch capable of supporting a cloth of the type to readily remove said waxy substance when impressed on said smooth plastic by a rubbing action.

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