United States Patent [19]

Owen, III

[11] **3,903,776**

[45] **Sept. 9, 1975**

[54] **BANJO CAPODASTRO**

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[21] Appl. No.: **530,134**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **84/318;** 84/318

[51] **Int. Cl.²** **G10D 3/00**

[58] **Field of Search** 84/318, 269

[56] **References Cited**

UNITED STATES PATENTS

3,329,055	7/1967	Milliken	84/318
3,834,267	9/1974	Shubb et al.	84/318

Primary Examiner—Joseph W. Hartary
Assistant Examiner—John F. Gonzales
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—John R. Walker, III

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A five-string banjo capodastro (or capo) including a blocklike member having a rigid tablike member fixedly attached thereto for engaging or fretting the fifth string exclusively of the banjo, a length of line for circumferentially engaging the neck of the banjo to aid in holding the tablike member in suitable position and an adjustment peg frictionally received in a hole bored in the blocklike member for applying tension to the line. One end of the line is attached to tablike member and the other end thereof is attached to the adjustment peg with a midportion of the line extending a spaced distance beneath the remaining four strings and through a hole bored in the blocklike member. A twisting movement of the peg applies tension to the line thus tightly clamping the blocklike member to the neck of the banjo enabling the rigid tablike member to firmly depress the fifth string at various selected locations along the length thereof.

8 Claims, 6 Drawing Figures

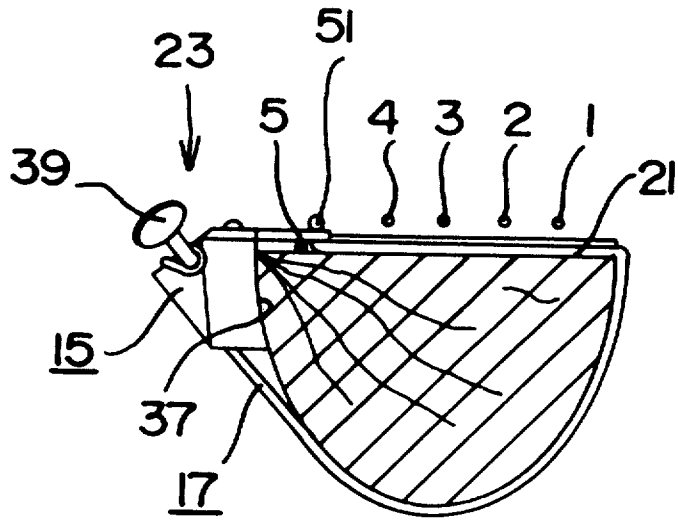


FIG. 1

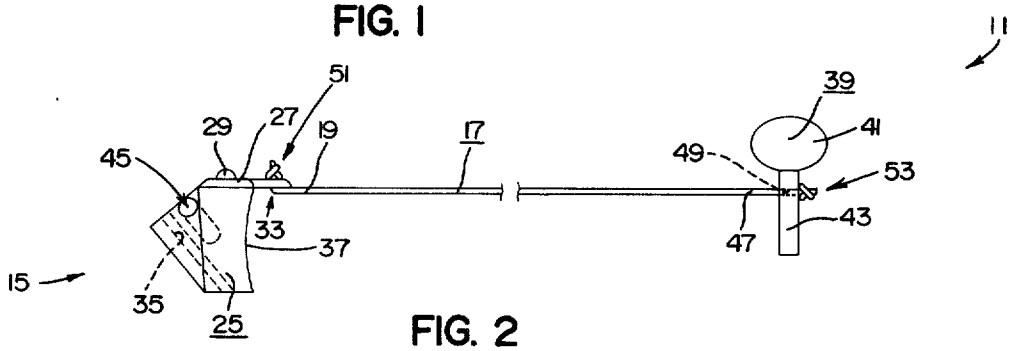


FIG. 2

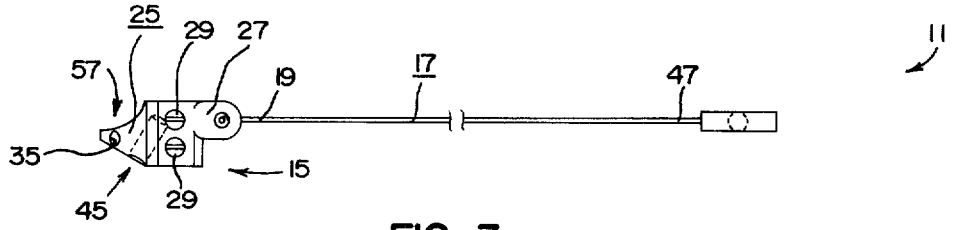


FIG. 3

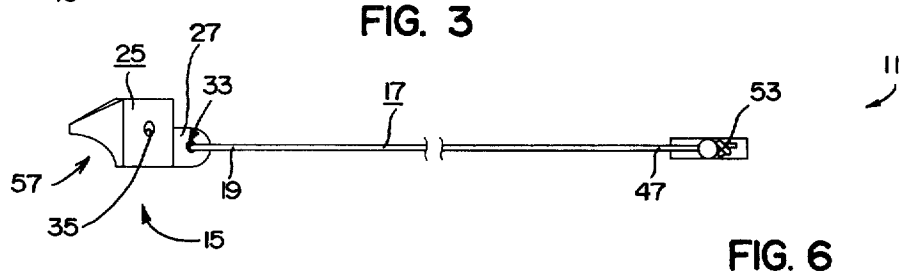


FIG. 6

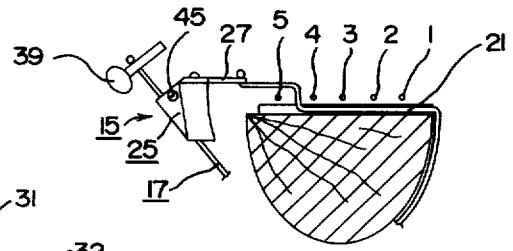


FIG. 4

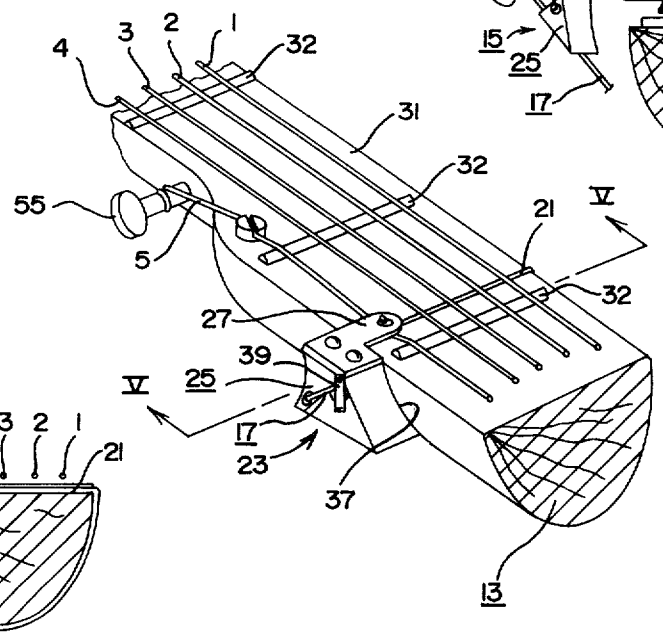
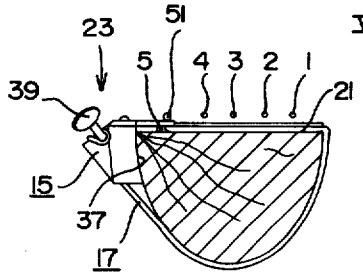


FIG. 5



BANJO CAPODASTRO

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates to banjo tuning devices and more particularly to a capodastro for tuning the fifth string of a five-string banjo.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Applicant is aware of the following U.S. patents: the Wood U.S. Pat. No. **370,172**; the Lowe U.S. Pat. No. **3,191,480**; the Simms U.S. Pat. No. **3,227,028**; the Milliken U.S. Pat. No. **3,329,055**; the Dunlop U.S. Pat. No. **3,598,012**; and the Valentino U.S. Pat. Nos. **3,680,427** and **3,722,346**. None of the above patents suggest or disclose applicant's device. The necessity of a fifth string capo is clearly stated in the above-mentioned U.S. Pat. No. **3,329,055**. Further, the problems associated with a fifth string capo have prevailed for almost a century as evidenced by the above-mentioned Wood patent. Since Mr. Wood's disclosure, numerous attempts have been made to improve upon the concept of his patent and the present invention is also directed towards that end. Further, it should be mentioned that the present invention is more specifically an improvement over the above-mentioned Milliken U.S. Pat. No. **3,329,055.**

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed towards overcoming the problems and disadvantages of prior fifth string banjo capos. The concept of the present invention is to provide a five-string banjo capodastro (or capo) which includes a blocklike member having a rigid tablike member fixedly attached thereto for engaging or fretting the fifth string exclusively of the banjo, a length of line for circumferentially engaging the neck of the banjo to aid in holding the tablike member in suitable position, and an adjustment peg frictionally received in a hole bored in the blocklike member for applying tension to the line. One end of the line is attached to the tablike member and the other end thereof is attached to the adjustment peg with a midportion of the line extending a spaced distance beneath the remaining four strings. Twisting the peg within the hole applies tension to the line thus tightly clamping the blocklike member to the neck of the banjo causing the rigid tablike member to firmly depress the fifth string. Therefore, moving the capo to various locations along the length of the neck may be quickly and easily accomplished at the discretion of the user.

The advantages of the capo of the present invention are numerous. For example, the rigid blocklike member, being firmly clamped to the neck of the banjo by a non-elastic line prevents the capo from being unintentionally moved along the neck or at least movement beyond stationary frets is precluded. Secondly, the thickness of the neck of a typical banjo varies along its length which creates an aggravation for certain prior capos. The present invention allows for positive grip of the capo even though it is not necessary to tighten it as tight as if it were depending upon an elastic element to hold it in place. Additionally, elastic elements deteriorate rather rapidly and when the elastic becomes weak the capo inadvertently moves to an out of tune position. Third, the non-elastic line which circumferentially engages the neck of the banjo is very small in cross-section, e.g., one mm. in diameter or less. Therefore, the line is so small that it is not noticeable by the player, i.e., certain prior capos are rather bulky and bothersome to the player which oftentimes have a tendency to adversely affect the skill of the player. Fourth, the capo of the present invention has a harmonious appearance. In fact, the adjustment knob or peg associated with applicant's capo preferably is manufactured to resemble the tuning peg for the fifth string of the banjo and the blocklike member preferably is manufactured to resemble the structure of the neck member of the banjo. In other words, the capo of the present invention has the appearance of being a part of the original banjo. Fifth, the capo of the present invention remains affixed to the banjo when the banjo is being played in a key which does not require a fifth string capo. This has two advantages: the capo can be brought into use more quickly than one that has to be attached, and the capo cannot become lost or misplaced.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

FIG. **1** is a side elevational view of the banjo capo of the present invention.

FIG. **2** is a top plan view of the capo of FIG. **1.**

FIG. **3** is a bottom view of the capo of FIG. **1.**

FIG. **4** is a fragmentary perspective view of a five-string banjo neck depicting the capo of the present invention suitably engaged therewith.

FIG. **5** is a sectional view taken as on the line V—V of FIG. **4.**

FIG. **6** is a view similar to FIG. **5** showing the capo of the present invention in a partially installed condition.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The capodastro device **11** or capo of the present invention is intended for clampingly engaging the neck member, as at **13**, of a five-string banjo. The complete banjo is not shown in the drawing but the neck member **13** thereof and the five strings are depicted, i.e., the first four strings being characterized by the numerals **1** through **4** and the fifth string being of shorter length is characterized by the numeral **5.**

The device **11** includes rigid blocklike means, as at **15**, for engaging or fretting the fifth string **5** of the banjo while the remaining four strings **1** through **4** thereof remain unaffected by the blocklike means **15.** Also included is a length of line **17** for circumferentially engaging the neck member **13** of the banjo to aid in holding the rigid blocklike means **15** in selected numerous positions with one end of the line, as at **19**, being attached to the blocklike means **15**, i.e., in a manner to be fully disclosed, and a midportion thereof, as at **21**, extending a spaced distance beneath the remaining four string **1** through **4.** The device also includes adjustment means, as at **23**, coacting with the rigid blocklike means **15** and the line **17** for selectively applying tension in varying degrees to the line **17** thus clamping the rigid blocklike means **15** to the neck member **13** of the banjo.

The blocklike means **15** alluded to above includes a main body member **25** which may be formed from hardwood or the like and a tablike member **27** which may be formed from brass or the like. The tablike member **27** is fixedly attached to the main body member **25** in any well known manner as with screws **29** or the like. From FIGS. **4** and **5** of the drawing it may

clearly be seen that the tablike member **27** reaches a predetermined distance over the finger board, characterized by the numeral **31**, of the banjo to clampingly engage exclusively the fifth string **5**. The finger board **31** includes the usual fixed frets **32**. It should be understood that the main body member **25** and the tablike member **27** may integrally be formed from a high density plastic or the like without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

The tablike member **27** is provided with an aperture, as at **33**, for facilitating attaching the line **17** thereto, i.e., the line **17** passing through the aperture **33** as clearly shown in FIG. **1** of the drawing.

The blocklike means **15** preferably includes guide means, as at **35**, for guidingly constraining the line **17** whereby the tension being applied to the line aids in assuring optimum engagement of the tablike member **27** with the fifth string **5** of the banjo. The guide means **35** preferably consists of a hole through the blocklike means **15** through which a section of the midportion **21** of the line **17** passes.

The main body member **25** has a portion thereof, as at **37**, compatibly shaped to the contour of the neck member **13** of the banjo for contiguous engagement with the neck member as clearly shown in FIGS. **4** and **5** of the drawing.

The adjustment means **23** alluded to above includes a peg member **39** cooperating with the main body member **25** and the line **17** for selectively applying tension in varying degrees to the line **17**. More specifically, the peg member **39** includes a knob portion **41** and a shaft portion **43** and the main body member **25** is provided with a bore, as at **45**, for frictionally receiving the shaft portion **43**. Additionally, an end **47** of the line **17** is attached to the peg member **39** whereby twisting movement of the peg member **39** in the bore **45** is effective in applying tension to the line **17** thus clamping the tablike member **27** in fretting engagement with the fifth string **5** of the banjo. The shaft portion **43** preferably is provided with an aperture **49** for allowing the line **17** to pass therethrough. The ends **19, 47** of the line **17** respectively are attached to the tablike member **27** and the shaft portion **43** in any well known manner as by knots **51, 53**. It should be noted that when the guide means **35** consists of a hole through the blocklike means **15**, the line **17** is passed therethrough before the ends **19, 47** of the line **17** are attached to the tablike member **27** and the shaft portion **43** respectively. More specifically, when it is desired to affix the capo device **11** to the neck member **13** of a banjo, the end **19** of the line **17** is preferably first attached to the tablike member **27** and the end **47** of the line is then positioned beneath the first four strings of the banjo, around the bottom of the neck **13** of the banjo and through the hole in the blocklike means **15**. Next, the end **47** of the line is attached to the shaft portion **43**.

From the above disclosure it can readily be seen that the usual frets **32** prevent movement of the capo device **11** from inadvertent movement to an out of tune position. Therefore, the device **11** is highly reliable and yet may quickly and easily be changed from one music key to another by simply twisting the shaft portion **43** in a direction to slacken the tension on the line **17** thus enabling the capo device **11** to be moved beyond the frets **32** to the desired position. Also, the capo device **11** can remain affixed to the neck member **13** of the banjo even when the banjo is being played in a key which does not require the use of the capo device **11**. More specifically, when it is desired to play the banjo in a key which does not require the use of the capo device **11**, the capo device **11** is merely moved to an inoperative position adjacent the peg **55** provided on the banjo for adjusting the tension of the fifth string **5** of the banjo. In this position, the tablike member **27** does not engage the fifth string **5** of the banjo since the fifth string **5** angles downwardly adjacent the peg **55** so that the tablike member **27** cannot engage the fifth string **5**. In this manner, the capo device **11** can remain permanently affixed to the neck member **13** of the banjo to allow the capo device to be capable of being quickly brought into an operative position and to prevent the capo device from become lost or misplaced. It should be noted that the main body member **25** of the blocklike means **15** may be provided with a cutaway portion **57** on one side thereof for allowing the capo device **11** to be easily positioned adjacent the peg **55** when it is desired to play the banjo in a key which does not require the use of the capo device **11** without interfering with the use of the peg **55**. Likewise, the bore **45** in the main body member **25** of the blocklike member **15** is preferably angled away from the cutaway portion **57** so that when the peg member **39** is received in the bore **45** and the capo device **11** is in the inoperative position adjacent the peg **55** there is no interference with the use of the peg **55**.

Although the invention has been described and illustrated with respect to a preferred embodiment thereof, it is to be understood that it is not to be so limited since changes and modifications may be made therein which are within the full intended scope of the invention.

I claim:

1. A capodastro device for clampingly engaging the neck member of a five string banjo, said device comprising rigid blocklike means for fretting the fifth string of the banjo while the remaining four strings thereof remain unaffected thereby, a length of line for circumferentially engaging the neck member of the banjo to aid in holding said rigid blocklike means in a selected one of numerous positions with one end of said line being attached to said blocklike means and a mid-portion thereof extending a spaced distance beneath the remaining four strings, and adjustment means coacting with said rigid blocklike means and said line for selectively applying tension in varying degrees to said line thus clamping said rigid blocklike means to the neck member of the banjo.

2. The device of claim **1** in which said rigid blocklike means includes a main body member and a tablike member fixedly attached to said main body member for reaching a predetermined distance over the fingerboard of the banjo to clampingly engage exclusively the fifth string thereof.

3. The device of claim **2** in which said tablike member is provided with an aperture for facilitating attaching said line to said tablike member with said line passing through said aperture.

4. The device of claim **3** in which said rigid blocklike means includes guide means for guidingly constraining said line whereby the tension being applied thereto aids in assuring optimum engagement of said tablike member with the fifth string of the banjo.

5. The device of claim **4** in which said guide means includes a hole extending through said rigid blocklike means.

6. A capodastro device for permanently clampingly engaging the neck member of a five string banjo, said device comprising a main body member having a portion thereof compatibly shaped to the contour of the neck member of the banjo for contiguous engagement therewith, a tablike member fixedly attached to said main body member for reaching a predetermined distance over the finger board of the banjo to exclusively selectively engage the fifth string thereof, a length of line having one end thereof attached to said tab member for circumferentially engaging the neck of the banjo to aid in holding said tab member in a selected one of numerous positions with a mid-portion of said line extending a spaced distance beneath the remaining four strings, and a peg member cooperating with said main body member and said line for selectively applying tension in varying degrees to said line, said main body member being provided with a bore for frictionally receiving said peg member and the end of said line remotely disposed from said one end thereof being attached to said peg member whereby twisting movement of said peg member is effective in applying tension to said line thus clamping said tablike member in fretting engagement with the fifth string of the banjo.

7. The device of claim 6 in which said main body member includes guide means for guidingly constraining said line whereby the tension being applied thereto aids in assuring optimum engagement of said tablike member with the fifth string of the banjo.

8. The device of claim 6 in which said guide means includes a hole for extending through said main body member.

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