

[54] **GARMENT CASE WITH HANGER-LIKE SUPPORT**

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[51] Int. Cl. **A45c 13/26**

[58] Field of Search **190/43; 206/7 K, 206/7 H**

[56] **References Cited**

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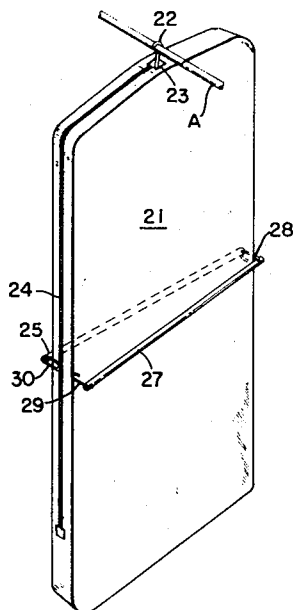
Primary Examiner—Donald F. Norton

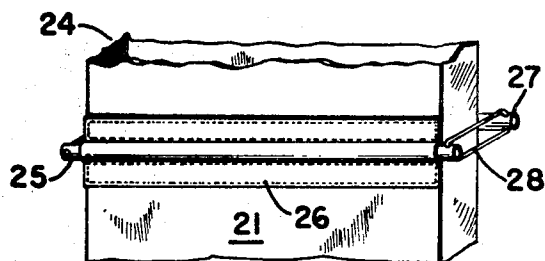
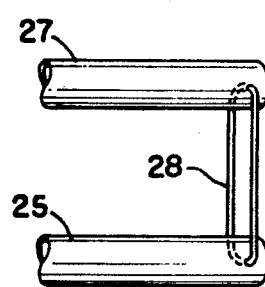
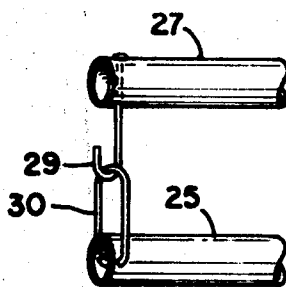
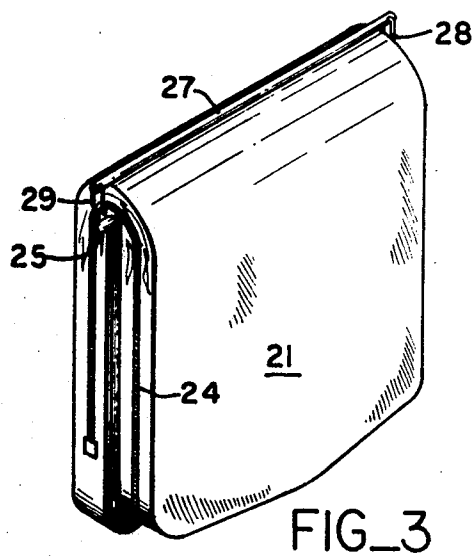
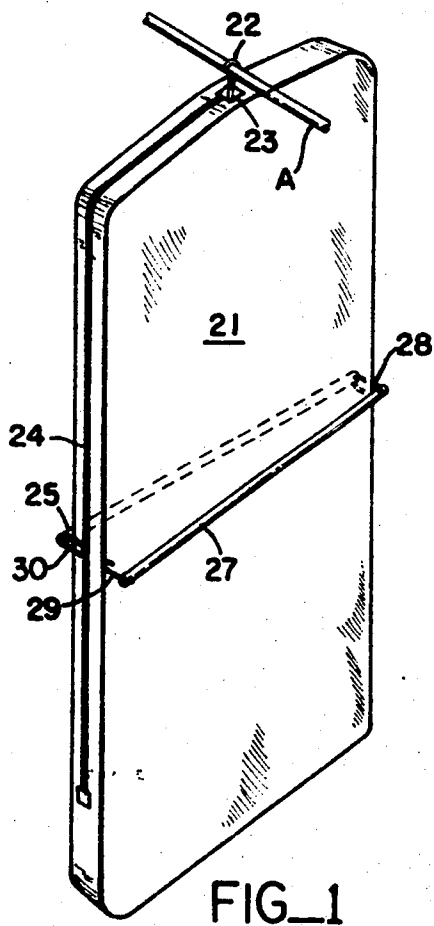
Attorney—Charles M. Fryer, Arnt H. Tjensvold, Donald C. Feix et al.

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A flexible garment case includes a rigid support member attached to its mid-section on one of its outer surfaces and a carrying handle on the opposite side connected to the support member whereby the case and its clothing contents can be neatly folded over the rigid support member and conveniently carried like a suitcase by the handle without substantial wrinkling of its contents and the carrying handle can be moved out of the way to facilitate the admission and removal of clothing when the garment case has been unfolded and suspended from a suitable fixture for this latter purpose.

7 Claims, 11 Drawing Figures





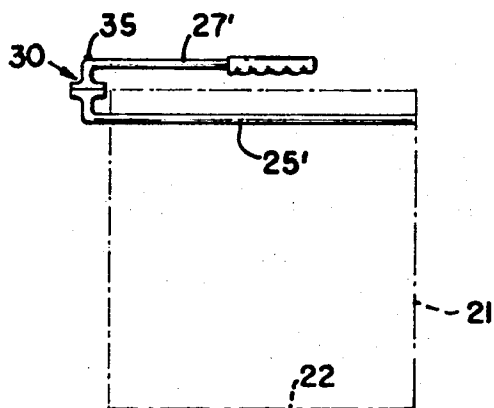
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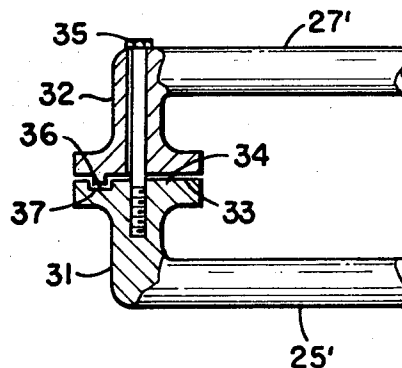
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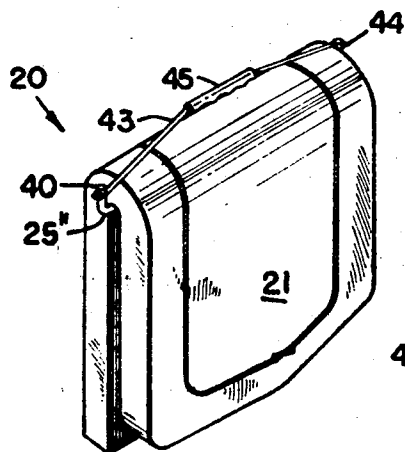
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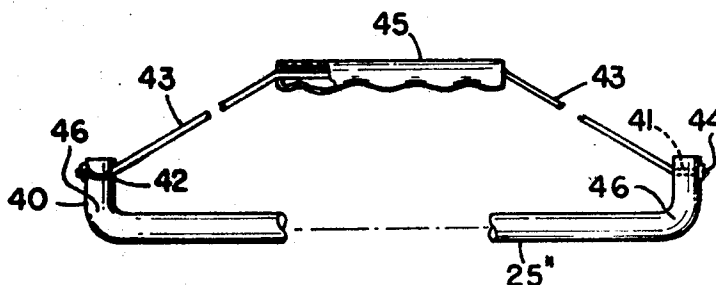
FIG_6



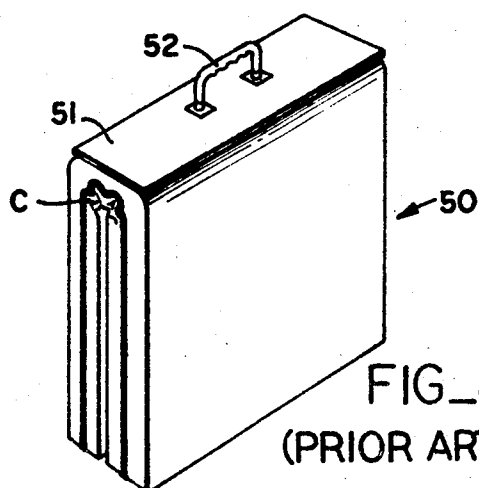
FIG_7



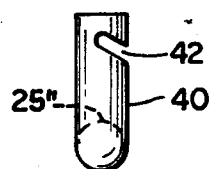
FIG_8



FIG_9



FIG_11
(PRIOR ART)



FIG_10

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GARMENT CASE WITH HANGER-LIKE SUPPORT

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Modern day jet aircraft has reduced the travel time between even distant cities in the United States to a matter of hours rather than days and, as a result, often business appointments even in distant cities can be arranged with only the necessity for a single change of clothes and an overnight stay away from home. As this condition has reduced the amount of necessary luggage for such trips, it has become the practice of many individuals who travel to chose lightweight garment bags or cases which can be carried on board most commercial jet aircraft so that the necessary luggage is always easily accessible and quickly available to such a passenger when deplaning without the necessity of passing through the conventional luggage facilities.

Various lightweight plastic or fabric luggage bags or cases have been patented such as those illustrated in U.S. Pat. No. 2,740,506 and U.S. Pat. No. 2,887,196, both issued to Davis and U.S. Pat. No. 2,839,167 issued to Smith. Such prior art garment bags and cases tend to be bulky and are designed to carry far more luggage than is essential for an overnight business trip. Further such bags or cases are difficult to unfold and hang in the coat storage lockers in commercial jet aircraft, eliminating many of the conveniences experienced with the lightweight fabric or plastic bags now in use for carrying garments on trips.

The simplest garment bag or case now in use is usually constructed of lightweight plastic or fabric material of a highly flexible character which is sewn into rectangular bag-like shapes that can be placed around clothing hung on conventional hangers in a manner that the hooks of the hangers project through an aperture at the top of the bag or case. These simple bags or cases, however, are difficult to carry by grasping the projecting hanger hooks because of their inconvenient length and discomfort suffered when holding these projecting hooks in one's hand. A handle can be provided at the hanger end but the length of bag is such that it must be carried at shoulder height to avoid dragging on the ground. Further, if the bag is folded in half and not centrally supported through some external fixture, the clothes therein will become disarranged and severely wrinkled since they are not then suitably supported within the bag.

An object of the instant invention is the provision of a lightweight garment bag or case of the aircraft carry-on type which can be folded to a suitcase-like configuration for convenient transport without excessive wrinkling or disarrangement of clothing contained in such a lightweight bag and conveniently opened so it can be hung through use of a hanging attachment at one end.

Still another feature of the instant invention is the provision of an inexpensive lightweight garment bag or case having adequate protection for the clothing plus carrying convenience without excessive weight or bulk.

Other objects, features, and advantages will be apparent in the drawings and description of the invention herein.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The above objects, features, and advantages can be accomplished by a lightweight travel garment case having a central hanger-like support which includes a case of flexible material with an elongated generally rectan-

gular configuration, a rigid support member oriented normal to longitudinal axis of the case and centrally attached on an outer surface of one of the surfaces of the case, a carrying handle disposed adjacent to the opposite side of the case and attaching means coupling the rigid support member with the carrying handle whereby both the bag and its contents can be neatly folded over the rigid support member on its outer surface to a suitcase-like configuration and conveniently carried by the handle on its opposite side to prevent wrinkling and abuse of clothing within the case. The handle, which is not physically attached to the case, is preferably flexibly or swingably connected to the rigid support member so that it can be swung out of the way when clothing is inserted into or removed from the case.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective of the garment case with the handle disconnected from an end of the support member and swung partly out of the way to facilitate access to the interior of the garment case;

FIG. 2 is a broken-away perspective showing one type of attachment of the rigid support member to the garment case;

FIG. 3 is a perspective of the garment case illustrated in FIG. 1 folded in its transport or suitcase-like configuration;

FIGS. 4 and 5 illustrate a simple catch and swingable connection, respectively, between the ends of the rigid support member and the handle of the garment case illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2;

FIGS. 6 and 7 illustrate, respectively, an elevation and a broken-away section of an alternate swivel connection between the handle and the rigid support member which allows the handle to be swung out of the way for access to the interior of the garment case;

FIG. 8 illustrates in perspective an alternate embodiment of the garment bag wherein the rigid support bar or member has been modified to accept a handle supported by a flexible cord or cable;

FIGS. 9 and 10 are elevations which illustrate the detail between the handle and the rigid support member or bar of the alternate embodiment shown in FIG. 8; and

FIG. 11 illustrates a perspective of a prior art garment bag employing a top stiffening panel incorporating a handle for transport of the folded bag.

DESCRIPTION OF AN EMBODIMENT

FIG. 1 illustrates a travel garment case 21, having a hanger-like support, in its open or unfolded position with the elongated bag or case 21 in an upright position and suspended with hook 22 from rod A. The hook may be integrally attached to the top of the bag or case, or alternatively formed by a plurality of conventional hanger hooks projecting from aperture 23 and the top of the bag or case from hangers disposed therein. In this latter situation it is desirable that an edge zipper 24 interrupt the wall of the aperture to facilitate the insertion or removal of clothes on conventional hangers in the bag or case.

At the center of mid-section of this flexible elongated case 21 a rigid support member or bar 25 is attached to its outer surface transverse to the bag's longitudinal axis. The attachment can be conveniently accomplished, as illustrated in FIG. 2, by sewing or otherwise

securing a strip 26 of lightweight material or fabric on the outer surface of the bag to envelope the support member in a flexible sleeve across the middle or mid-section of this surface of the case. The sleeve could be molded internally in the wall of the fabric, if plastic material is used, or the strip could be placed on the inside surface of the bag to approximate an integral sleeve or pocket in this wall of the bag. Alternatively the support member or bar may be laced to the fabric of the case itself with appropriate lacings or attached in some suitable similar manner. The rigid support member or bar should be constructed of wood, plastic or metal to avoid any substantial deflection along its longitudinal axis when the garment case is being transported in its suitcase-like configuration, as it is the load carrying element connected to the handle and any measurable deflection would cause wrinkling of the clothing contents within the bag or case.

The suitcase-like configuration as illustrated in FIG. 3 shows how both the bag and its contents are folded over the support member or bar 25 to achieve the hanger-like support that prevents the bunching or gathering of the case fabric or material in the area of the fold. Since the bag is formed of a highly flexible material, both the material of the case and its clothing contents fold neatly over the support member as though it were an extra large coat hanger.

To facilitate the transport of the garment case 20 in its folded or suitcase-like configuration a handle 27 is located on the side of the case 21 opposite the support member or bar 25 and is connected only to the support member or bar as shown in FIG. 1 in a manner that the handle can be moved out of the way to provide a more convenient access to the interior of the elongated bag to remove or admit clothing. In all the embodiments and as illustrated in FIGS. 1 through 5, it can be seen that the handle is not directly attached to the elongated bag and that a movable attachment or connection of the handle to the rigid support member or bar is accomplished with the simple closed cable loop 28 connecting their respective ends at one side of the case. Since the length of the bar approximates the length of the support member the loop will not bind on the edge of the bag. This swingable (movable) connection is located on the side of the case remote from the edge zipper 24, when an edged zip bag is employed, to avoid interference with the admission or removal of clothing and on the opposite side of the case the other ends of the support member or bar and the handle are joined by a simple hook 29 and small ring 30 passing through a bore in the support member that form a releasable catch which can be conveniently opened to allow the handle to be swung out of the way to clear the front surface of the case and easily closed when it is desirable to transport the garment case in its folded or suitcase-like configuration. A snap fastener could be employed to prevent inadvertent release of the handle.

It can be appreciated whether the zipper 24 is located along the edge of the garment case 21, as shown in FIGS. 1 through 3, or alternatively in a conventional inverted U-shaped configuration on the front surface of the garment bag 21 remote from the support member or bar, as illustrated in FIG. 8, it is desirable to move the handle 27 away from the front surface of the bag to provide convenient access to its interior. Further the bag could have no zipper at all and employ overlapping flap arrangement (not shown), if desired.

An alternate embodiment is illustrated in FIGS. 6 and 7 wherein the rigid support member or bar 25' is connected to a handle 27' at only one of its ends through a swivel 30. This swivel is formed by integral elbows 31 and 32 at the ends of the support member and handle respectively which terminate in opposed circular surfaces 33 and 34. The elbows are pivotally connected with the pin 35 passing through a bore in one of them and tapped into the other and one of the surfaces has a raised lug 36 which is received in a cooperating notch 37 in the opposite surface when the handle and support member are in parallel alignment. Thus when the garment case 20 is being supported through its handle the lug and notch arrangement will lock them in parallel alignment. The connection accomplished with the pin is such that a small amount of lost motion is available between the several opposed surfaces which allows the lug to be displaced from the notch when the case is not supported through the handle, thereby allowing the handle to swing away from the front of the case as described above. Obviously there are other mechanical equivalents to the swivel mechanism described above which could be employed and that will allow the handle to be moved out of the way from the front surface of the garment case. Some such embodiments may require that a rigid support bar rotate in the sleeve formed with strip 26 so the handle will clear the front surface of the case.

A third embodiment of the invention is illustrated in FIGS. 8, 9 and 10 wherein the support member 25'' is fastened to the elongated case 21 in substantially the same manner as described above and includes two integral angled extensions 40 that project from its ends for coupling the handle thereto. Adjacent to an end of one of these angled extensions is a bore 41 and adjacent to the end of the opposite angled extension is a groove slot 42. An end of a flexible rope or cable 43 can be threaded through bore 41 and a washer 44 and terminated in a manner whereby the bitter end of the rope or cable cannot pass through the aperture of the washer. This cable or rope can then be threaded through a bore and handle 45 and then through another washer 46 with its bitter end secured or terminated in the same manner as described above. Due to the provision of slot 42 at one end of the support member or bar the cable or rope can be simply inserted in the slot when the garment bag is to be transported in a folded or a suitcase-like configuration, thereby attaching the handle to both ends of the support member or bar.

It should be appreciated that the rigid support member can be modified to have the angular extension 40, referred to above, and that these angular projections could be connected with straps to the edges of the bag to support the rigid support member or bar in the mid-section of the bag. Obviously other equivalent attachments of the support member or bar to the bag can be employed, depending upon the type of zipper or flap opening in its bag.

Utilization of the angular extension 40 prevents the flexible attachment of the handle from binding on the edges of the bag and therefore will eliminate wrinkling and abuse of the garments contained in the bag. Obviously a rigid handle having a length approximately co-extensive with that of the support bar, as illustrated in FIGS. 1 through 3, also avoids the impingement of the handle attaching mechanisms on the edge surfaces of the bag.

5

FIG. 11 illustrates a prior art bag or case 50, as disclosed in the aforementioned patents, which shows that the areas C where the fold occurs in such bags or cases is irregular, with bunching of the fabric of the case in this area, as this area is unsupported. As a result the case's fabric tends to cause wrinkling and abuse of the clothing in the interior of the bag or case even when they are supported by a separate interior bag or member tied to the stiffening panel 51 to which handle 52 is permanently connected to transport the bag or case. By contrast the instant invention does not connect the support member or bar on its opposite or back surface over which both the case and the contained clothing are folded. In this manner substantial reductions in weight and costs are achieved while providing carrying convenience for the user.

In the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 6 and 7 notches can be provided in the handle for carrying convenience and hanging up the garment case in its folded condition.

What is claimed is:

1. A lightweight travel case having a hanger-like support feature comprising:
 - a case of flexible material forming an elongated rectangular bag for sequestering garments therein and having an opening to admit and remove such garments;
 - an elongated rigid support means oriented normal to the longitudinal axis of said rectangular bag and attached to the central portion of one of the surfaces of said case;
 - a separate and independent hand carrying means on the opposite side of said bag with respect to said elongated rigid support means, said hand carrying means being free of any direct physical connection with said opposite side of said case; and
 - attaching means connecting said hand carrying means and said elongated rigid support means whereby both said case and its garment contents can be folded over said elongated support member and supported solely through said hand carrying

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means, said attaching means being disconnectable at one side of said case allowing said hand carrying means and attaching means to be moved out of an interfering relationship with the opening to the interior of said case.

2. The travel case as defined in claim 1 wherein the elongated rigid support means projects beyond both edges of the case and the attaching means includes a flexible connection between the hand carrying means and at least one end of said rigid support means.

3. The travel case as defined in claim 1 wherein the attaching means connecting the hand carrying means to the elongated support means includes a swiveling attachment means at one end.

4. The travel case as defined in claim 1 wherein the elongated rigid support means includes angular projections at its opposite ends and the attaching means is composed of a flexible filament means connecting the hand carrying means to said angular projection on opposite sides of said bag.

5. The travel case as defined in claim 1 wherein the elongated support member is secured to the outer surface of the case with a fabric strip attached thereto forming a sleeve with said case for receiving said elongated support member.

6. The travel case as defined in claim 1 wherein the hand carrying means is also formed by a rigid member having a length approximating the length of the elongated rigid support means and the attaching means includes two coupling members connecting the respective ends of said hand carrying means and said elongated rigid support means on opposite sides of the bag, one of said coupling members being detachable to allow said hand carrying means to be moved away from the adjacent front surface of said bag to facilitate ingress thereto.

7. The travel case as defined in claim 6 wherein one of the coupling members is detachable and the other is flexible to facilitate moving the elongated rigid support member.

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