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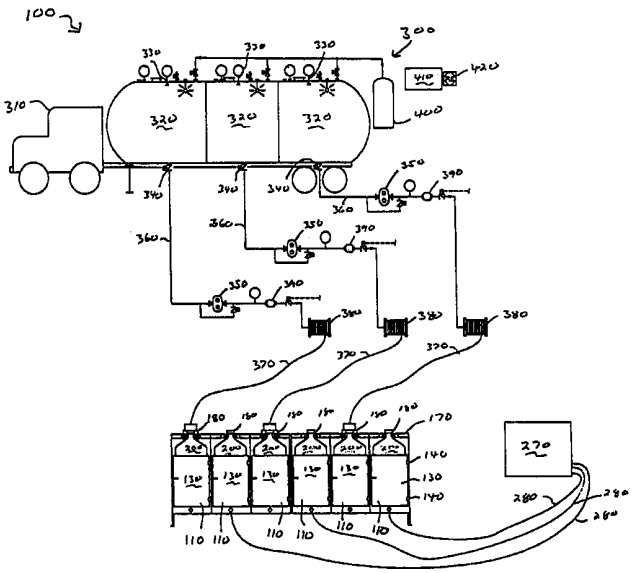

(57) Abstract

An improved bulk storage system for fluids supplied to a dispensing system (270) by a fluid line (280). The bulk storage system includes a receptacle (110) with a first portal and a second portal. A substantially nonpermeable bag (200) is positioned within the receptacle for storing and dispensing fluids therefrom. The bag includes a first passageway positioned adjacent to the first portal of the receptacle and a second passageway positioned adjacent to the second portal of the receptacle. A support device (170) is positioned adjacent to the receptacle. The first passageway of the bag is attached to the support device and the second passageway of the bag is attached to the fluid line (280) such that fluids in the bag flow through the second passageway to the dispensing system.

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BULK FOUNTAIN SYRUP DELIVERY AND STORAGE SYSTEM

Technical Field

The present invention relates to a bulk delivery and storage system for fluids and more particularly relates to a bulk storage device for soft drink syrup and a method for delivering and storing the same.

Background of the Invention

Soft drink beverage dispensers, also known as soft drink fountains, mix soft drink concentrate, such as syrup, with a diluent, such as soda water. The typical soft drink fountain is capable of dispensing several different beverages or beverage flavors, either through a common nozzle assembly or through separate dispensing taps. In either case, the fountain draws in syrup from one or more syrup sources.

The syrup may be provided to a fountain customer in a number of different formats. Conventional methods include delivering the syrup in a disposable five (5) gallon "bag in box" ("BIB") container or in a reusable five gallon tank. The bag in box container or the reusable tank provides the syrup to the fountain by a flexible hose or other types of connectors. Typically, a third party distributor delivers the syrup container to a customer while also delivering food items and condiments.

Another known method is to use refillable syrup receptacles located near the fountains. High volume customers may install bulk syrup receptacles of about 75 gallons or more to reduce the frequency of changing the syrup containers. These receptacles may be 75 gallon stainless steel pressure tanks. The receptacles are periodically filled via a tanker truck of some sort or by similar types of delivery means in 75 gallon increments. Such high volume customers may have several receptacles on the premises to insure a steady supply of syrup. Typically, there are two (2) receptacles per type or flavor of syrup at an outlet.

One drawback with known syrup receptacle designs is that the receptacles generally must be washed out and cleaned before each refilling. This cleaning process can be time consuming and may result in unacceptable

down time for the customer. One or more fountain dispensers may be unavailable while the receptacles are being cleaned and filled. Further, because the customer may not want to have the receptacles cleaned at busy times of the day, delivery times and schedules may be complicated to arrange.

Another drawback is that the syrup receptacles may be inadvertently filled with the wrong type or flavor of syrup. Alternatively, the hoses running between the fountain and the receptacles may be inadvertently hooked up in the wrong order. In either case, the fountain may dispense the wrong type of beverage. Although the substitution of certain beverages may be readily apparent, i.e., a clear beverage for a dark colored beverage, other substitutions would not be as readily apparent to the customer.

Other drawbacks include the fact that known bulk syrup receptacles are generally dedicated to one type or flavor of syrup to ensure consistent taste. A customer therefore may not be able to vary easily the types of beverages offered. The receptacles are also costly to install and may take up more space than the same volume of BIB containers.

What is needed, therefore, is a simplified bulk syrup delivery, storage, and dispensing system that avoids the need for cleaning the syrup receptacles after each use, that avoids the down time common in the use of such syrup receptacles, and that prevents the inadvertent substitution of beverages. These goals must be accomplished in a reliable and low cost manner.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention provides an improved bulk storage system for fluids supplied to a dispensing system by a fluid line. The bulk storage system includes a receptacle with a first portal and a second portal. A substantially nonpermeable bag is positioned within the receptacle for storing and dispensing fluids therefrom. The bag includes a first passageway positioned adjacent to the first portal of the receptacle and a second passageway positioned adjacent to the second portal of the receptacle. A support device is positioned adjacent to the receptacle. The first passageway of the bag is attached to the support device and the second passageway of

the bag is attached to the fluid line such that fluids in the bag flow through the second passageway to the dispensing system.

Specific embodiments of the present invention include using a receptacle having an outer shell with a first end and a second end. The first portal includes this first end of the outer shell. The second end of the receptacle includes a bottom plate with a central drain. The second portal includes this central drain positioned within the bottom plate. The receptacle may be stainless steel, plastic, or a combination of the two.

The bag may be a flexible material such as linear low density polyethylene. The first passageway of the bag may include a spout attached to the bag and a hose connected to the spout or an extended bag section. The second passageway of the bag may include a spout. The bag may have a predetermined color. The color depends upon the type of fluid intended to be contained in the bag. The receptacle and the fluid line also may have this predetermined color.

The support device may include a manifold having a first valve and a second valve in fluid communication with each other. The first passageway of the bag may be attached to the second valve of the manifold such that fluids flowing through the first valve of the manifold pass through the second valve and the first passageway into the bag.

The first passageway of the bag may include a first passageway connector having a predetermined size. The second valve of the manifold also may include a manifold connector with this predetermined size. The predetermined size varies with the type of fluid intended to be placed in the bag. The second passageway of the bag also may include a passageway connector of a predetermined size. The fluid line also may include a line connector with this predetermined size. This predetermined size also varies with the type of fluid intended to be dispensed from the bag.

The present invention may further include a delivery system for providing fluids to the bag through the first passageway. The delivery system may include a delivery vehicle with a plurality of fluid compartments and a delivery hose for providing fluids from the plurality of fluid compartments to the bag. The support device may have a manifold such that the delivery hose and the first passageway of said bag are connected in fluid communication therethrough. The delivery hose may include a delivery hose connector of a predetermined size. The manifold also may

include a manifold connector of the same predetermined size. The predetermined size again varies with the type of fluid intended to be delivered to the bag. The delivery hose also may have a predetermined color depending upon the type of fluid intended to be placed in the bag.

The method of the present invention provides for use of a storage receptacle with a beverage dispenser. A fluid line connects the storage receptacle and the beverage dispenser. The method includes the steps of placing a flexible bag with a first spout and a second spout within the storage receptacle; attaching the second spout to the fluid line; supplying fluids to the bag through the first spout; evacuating fluids from the bag to the beverage dispenser through the second spout and the fluid line; and removing the bag from the receptacle when the bag is exhausted. The fluid may be soft drink syrup. The receptacle may further include a manifold positioned adjacent thereto. The method then further includes the steps of attaching the first spout to the manifold and supplying fluids to the bag therethrough.

A further method of the present invention provides for using a plurality of color-coded storage receptacles for supplying syrup to a beverage dispenser. Each of the receptacles is to be lined with one of a plurality of color-coded bags and connected to the beverage dispenser by one of a plurality of color-coded fluid lines. The method includes the steps of selecting one of the color-coded receptacles; selecting one of the color-coded bags to match the receptacle; placing the color-coded bag within the color-coded receptacle; filling the bag with fluid; selecting one of the color-coded fluid lines to match the receptacle and the bag; connecting the bag to the fluid line; and supplying syrup to the beverage dispenser. The method may further a delivery vehicle with a plurality of fluid compartments and a plurality of color-coded delivery hoses. The method then further included the steps of selecting one of the color-coded delivery hoses to match the receptacle and the bag; connecting the delivery hose to the bag; and delivering syrup to the bag.

A further method of the present invention provides for supplying fluids from a delivery source to a plurality of storage receptacles. The method includes the step of supplying each one of the storage receptacles with one of a plurality of bag liners. Each one of the bag liners includes one of a plurality of bag connectors. Each one of the bag connectors

includes a predetermined dimension determined by the type of fluid to be placed within the bag liner. The method further includes the step of supplying the delivery source with a plurality of delivery hoses. Each one of the delivery hoses includes one of a plurality of hose connectors. Each one of the hose connectors has a predetermined dimension determined by the bag connector intended to be used therewith. The method further includes the steps of selecting the bag liner within one of the receptacles to be joined with one of the delivery hoses; connecting the bag liner with the delivery hose; and delivering fluids from the delivery source to the bag liner. The delivery source may further include a plurality of different types of fluids. A different hose connector and a different bag connector may be used for each different type of fluid. The method may then further include the step of selecting the delivery hose and the bag liner depending upon the type of fluid.

A further method of the present invention provides for supplying fluids from a plurality of storage receptacles to a beverage dispenser. The method includes the steps of supplying each one of the storage receptacles with one of the bag liners. Each one of the bag liners includes one of a plurality of bag connectors. Each one of the bag connectors includes a predetermined dimension determined by the type of fluid contained within the bag liner. The method further includes the step of supplying the beverage dispenser with a plurality of delivery hoses. Each one of the delivery hoses includes one of a plurality of hose connectors. The dimensions of each one of the hose connectors are determined by the bag connectors intended to be used therewith. The method further includes the steps of selecting the bag liner to be joined with the delivery hose; connecting the bag liner with the delivery hose; and delivering fluids from one of the receptacles to the beverage dispenser. Each one of the receptacles may have a different type of fluid. Different bag connectors and hose connectors are used for each different type of fluid. The method may then include the steps of selecting one of the storage receptacles and one of the hose connectors depending upon the type of fluid that is to be supplied to the beverage dispenser.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a schematic drawing of the bulk storage and delivery system of the present invention.

Fig. 1A is a schematic drawing of the bulk delivery system of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a diagrammatic view of the syrup receptacles and bags of the present invention.

Fig. 3 is a side cross-sectional view of a syrup receptacle of the present invention.

Fig. 4 is a plan view of the syrup receptacle.

Fig. 5 is a plan view of the syrup bag.

Fig. 6 is a plan view of an alternative syrup bag.

Fig. 7 is a side cross-sectional view of a hose connection.

Fig. 8 is a side cross-sectional view of an alternative hose connection.

Detailed Description of the Invention

Referring now in more detail to the drawings, in which like numerals refer to like parts throughout the several views, Figs. 1, 1A, and 2 show a bulk syrup delivery and storage system **100** of the present invention. The bulk syrup and storage delivery system **100** includes a plurality of receptacles **110**. The receptacles **110** may be stand-alone units, fixedly attached to each other, or wall mounted by conventional means. The receptacles **110** are preferably made from stainless steel, plastic, a combination of the two, or other types of substantially rigid, non-corrosive materials. The receptacles **190** may be modular in construction. Any number of receptacles **110** may be used in any formation.

The receptacles **110** each have an outer shell **120** with a door **130**. The outer shell **120** may be a rounded structure or a four (4) sided structure. The door **130** is mounted by hinges **140** or by other types of conventional mechanisms to the outer shell **120**. The receptacles **110** also each have a bottom plate **150**. The outer shell **120** and the bottom plate **150** may be fixedly attached by conventional means or may be formed as a unitary element. The bottom plate **150** is angled slightly from the outer shell **120** towards a central drain **160**. The angle is preferably about five degrees

(5°) to about ten degrees (10°) so as to assist in draining syrup from the receptacle **110**.

If the receptacle **110** holds about two (2) cubic feet or about fifty (50) gallons or more, the drain rate may be approximately four (4) or (5) ounces per second. The receptacle **110** may hold about fifty (50) to one-hundred (100) gallons. A combination of differently sized receptacles **110** may be used. The outer shell **120** may be of any reasonable thickness to maintain a rigid structure and to prevent puncture of the syrup container described below. The receptacles **110** may be color-coded or otherwise differentiated according to the type of syrup intended to be used therein. The receptacles **110** may have a transparent sight glass (not shown) to permit the customer to see the amount of syrup therein.

Positioned over each receptacle **110** may be a manifold **170**. The manifold **170** also may be made of stainless steel or other types of substantially rigid, non-corrosive materials. The manifold **170** may have a quick release valve **180** for each receptacle. Each valve **180** may have two (2) connections, an upper connection **182** and a lower connection **184**. The manifold **170** may extend across each of the receptacles **110** as is shown in Fig. 1 or may be centralized as shown in Fig. 2. The manifold **170** may be fixedly attached to the receptacles **110** or may be a self-supporting structure.

Positioned under each receptacle **110** may be a load cell **190**. The load cell **190** may be of conventional design. The load cell **190** allows the customer to measure accurately the amount of syrup added to and drained from the receptacles **110**. The receptacles **110** also may be mounted on to a skid **195** so as to provide containment for syrup spills. The receptacles **190** may be removable to permit access.

Positioned within each receptacle **110** is a syrup bag **200**. Each syrup bag **200** may be made from conventional, substantially nonpermeable materials, such as those used in bags for known bag in box formats. For example, the bag **200** may have two (2) or more walls **205** that are heat-sealed together or otherwise joined by conventional methods. The walls **205** may each have one (1) or two (2) plys of a polyethylene resin. For example, an inner ply made from a web of two (2) mil Linear Low Density Polyethylene ("LLDPE") or similar materials and an outer ply of a four (4) mil co-extrusion layer of LLDPE/Nylon/LLDPE, with tie layers on either side of the nylon, or similar materials. The two (2) LLDPE layers are

preferably about 1.4 mil, the nylon about 1.0 mil, and the tie layers about 0.1 mil. The bags **200** are preferably made from disposable and recyclable materials.

The bags **200** also have two (2) spouts, an upper spout **210** and a lower spout **220**. The spouts **210**, **220** are of conventional design and meet applicable industry tamper evident requirements. Each spout **210**, **220** preferably has a flange **230** surrounding a cylindrical body **235**. The flange **230** is heat sealed to the bag walls **205** for a fluid tight seal. The spouts **210**, **220** may be identical in design to those used in known BIB bags. If the spouts **210**, **220** are similar in design to known BIB bags, a BIB bag can be used as a reserve in the event that one of the bags **200** of the present invention is exhausted. Each bag **200** preferably evacuates to approximately one (1) ounce or less over five (5) gallons. In fact, less than three (3) ounces may remain over fifty (50) gallons. Because the fill time of the bag **200** can be much faster than its drain time, the upper spout **210** may be larger in diameter than the lower spout **220**. For example, the fill time of the bag **200** may be approximately twenty (20) gallons per minute while the drain time may be approximately four (4) to five (5) ounces per second. As such, the upper spout **210** may have a diameter of about two (2) to three (3) inches while the lower spout **220** may have a diameter of only about one (1) to two (2) inches.

The bag **200** is preferably sized to fit within the receptacle **110**. For example, the bag **200** may hold about (50) to one-hundred (100) gallons of syrup depending upon the size of the receptacle **110**. Although the term "syrup" is used herein, it should be noted that any type of fluid may be used. Variously sized receptacles **110** with correspondingly sized bags **200** may be used. The bag **200** may connect to the manifold **170** via a hose **240** as is shown in Fig. 2 or the bag **200** itself may have an upper cone shaped section **250** such that the bag **200** attaches directly to the manifold **170**. An example of a bag **200** with a cone shaped section **250** is shown in Fig. 6. In either scenario, the manifold **170** supports the bag **200** as the bag **200** drains so as to prevent the bag **200** from collapsing upon itself and blocking the lower spout **220**. The bag **200** also may be color-coded or otherwise differentiated according to the type of syrup to be used therein. A possible bag design for use in this delivery and storage system **100** may be similar to that disclosed

in U.S. Patent No. 4,596,040 to Lafleur, et al., owned by Custom Packaging Systems of Maistee, Michigan.

Each bag **200** also is connected to a conventional fountain system **270** via a fountain hose **280**. Each bag **200** is connected to the fountain system **270** by a separate fountain hose **280**. The fountain hose **280** mates with the lower spout **220** of each bag **200** through the central drain **160** of the receptacle **110**. The syrup is supplied to the fountain system **270** from the bag **200** by a pump, by gravity, or by other conventional transport means. The fountain hoses **280** also may be color-coded or otherwise differentiated according to the type of syrup to be used therein.

Syrup is delivered to the receptacles **110** by a tanker system **300**. The tanker system **300** includes a delivery vehicle **310**, preferably with a plurality of tanks or compartments **320**. Each compartment **320** may hold approximately 500 to 1000 gallons of syrup therein. The compartments **320** may be mounted on a skid **322** such that a dedicated vehicle is not required. A conventional intermediate bulk container also may be used. In the example of Fig. 1, each compartment **320** has a fill port **330** and a drain port **340**. Each compartment **320** may be drained via a drain hose **360** connected to the drain port **340**. The drain hose **360** is preferably about 1.5 inches in diameter.

The delivery vehicle **310** also may have a compressed gas source **400** mounted thereon. The compressed gas source **400**, such as carbon dioxide, nitrogen, or compressed air, may be used to provide, i.e., push, the syrup out of the compartments **320** to the receptacles **110**. A compressed gas booster pump **405** also may be used. The compartments **320** may be pressurized by up to about thirty (30) pounds per square inch. The compressed gas source **400** also may be used to blow the compartments **320** and the drain hoses **360** clean after the compartments **320** are evacuated. Alternatively, the syrup in each compartment **320** may be drained via a pump **350**. The pump **350** is of conventional design. The pump **350** preferably can force approximately twenty-five (25) gallons per minute from the compartments **320**.

Each drain hose **360** leads a truck manifold **390**. The truck manifold **390** also may contain a meter **392** to determine the amount of syrup delivered. Any type of mechanical or electrical meter **392** may be used. The meter **392** may be positioned at any convenient location.

Mounted onto the truck manifold **390** is a plurality of hose reels **380**. A delivery hose **370** is positioned on each hose real **380** for easy access and delivery of the syrup. Each delivery hose **370** mates with a valve **180** on the tank manifold **170**. The delivery hoses **370** also may be color-coded or otherwise differentiated according to the type of syrup to be used therein. The delivery hoses **370** may be about 1.5 inches in diameter. The delivery hoses **370** may be approximately 100 feet long or longer depending upon the location of the receptacles **110** and their accessibility.

The delivery vehicle **310** also may have a ticket printer **410** operated by a conventional programmable logic card or controller **420** so as to provide invoices and maintain various types of use and inventory information. The controller **420** may receive information from the meter **392** or other sources. The controller **420** may monitor the amount of syrup dispensed with accuracy of about plus or minus 0.15 percent. The amount of syrup delivered to the receptacles **110** may be varied.

Figs. 7 and 8 show examples of two different spout connectors **460** that may be used with the bulk syrup delivery system **100** of the present invention. The spout connectors **450** may be used in several different locations. The spout connectors **450** could be used between the delivery hose **370** and the valve **180** of the tank manifold **170**, between the valve **180** of the tank manifold **170** and the upper spout **210** of the bag **200**, and between the lower spout **220** of the bag **200** and the fountain hose **280** of the fountain system **270**. The spout connectors **450** prevent the wrong type of syrup from being delivered to the wrong bag **200** or from being drained from the bag **200** to the fountain system **270**. Preferably, each different type or flavor of syrup would have a different type of spout connector **450**.

Fig. 7 shows a quick disconnect connector **460** having a coupling **470** selectively connectable to the spouts **210**, **220** of the bag **200**. The coupling **470** is mounted on one end of the hoses **240**, **280**, or **370**. The coupling **470** includes a sleeve **480** slidably and rotatably mounted on a central core **490**. The inside of the sleeve **480** is radially spaced from the central core **490** to define an annular region **500** between the central core **490** and the inner surface of the sleeve **480**. The central core **490** includes a hollow interior passage connected in flow relation to the hose **240**, **280**, or **370**. Threads **510** are formed on the inner surface of the sleeve **480**.

The spouts **210, 220** also have threads **520** formed on the cylindrical body **235**. The spout threads **520** match the threads **510** of the coupling **470**. When the connector is coupled to the spouts **210, 220**, the central core **490** fits in the annular region **500** and an O-ring seal **540** near the lower end of the central core **490** engages the inner wall of the cylindrical body **235**. Fig. 8 shows a similar connector **460** with the connector **470** having a larger sleeve **480** and a larger central core **490**. Likewise, the spout **210, 220** has a larger cylindrical body **235**. Because of this size difference, the coupling **470** of Fig. 7 will not mate with the spout **210, 220** of Fig. 8 and vice versa.

In use, the customer may have two (2) or more receptacles **110** for each fountain hose **280** connected to the fountain system **270**. This dual receptacle arrangement allows the customer to use one receptacle **110** while leaving the other receptacle **110** available to be refilled. By using the receptacles **110** in this alternating fashion, there is no down time or lack of availability at the fountain system **270**. In the bulk syrup delivery system **100** of Fig. 2, the customer is using at least three (3) different sources of syrup, S_1, S_2, and S_3 and therefore uses six (6) receptacles **110**, two (2) for syrup S_1, two (2) for syrup S_2, and two (2) for syrup S_3.

Likewise, the tanker system **300** is also designed to deliver the same three (3) types of syrup, S_1, S_2, and S_3. Each compartment **320** on the delivery vehicle **310** may contain a different type of syrup. When the delivery vehicle **310** arrives at the customer's location, the delivery worker determines the type and volume of syrup needed. Alternatively, an electronically managed inventory system may be used to determine need and to facilitate route planning.

The delivery worker installs new bags **200** in the receptacles **110** that are not currently hooked up to the fountain hoses **280** of the fountain system **270**. The delivery worker matches the color of the bag **200** with the color of the receptacle **110**. The delivery worker places the correct bag **200** within the receptacle **110** and either attaches a new hose **240** to the upper spout **210** of the bag **200** and to the valve **180** of the manifold **170** or directly attaches the upper spout **210** to the valve **180** of the manifold **170**. The worker unwinds the matching colored delivery hose **370** from the reel **380** attached to the delivery vehicle **310**. The delivery hose **370** is attached to the valve **180** of the manifold **170**. The delivery worker then activates the

pumps **350** or the compressed gas source **400** and fills the receptacle **110** with syrup. The amount and type of syrup to be delivered may be programmed at the controller **420**. The amount of syrup dispensed also is metered so as to shut off the pumps **350** or the compressed gas source **400** after the appropriate amount of syrup has been delivered. This process is then repeated for the remaining receptacles **110** not connected to the fountain system **270**. In this example, three (3) types of syrup may be dispensed at once from the tanker system **300**.

Because of the use of the connectors **460**, syrup S_1 from the delivery vehicle **310** can only be delivered to the receptacle **110** also marked for syrup S_1. The matching color scheme also reduces the possibility that the wrong type of syrup would be delivered to the wrong bag **200**. After the receptacles **110** are full, the delivery worker then reels in the delivery hose **370** on the reel **380**. The bags **200** are then sealed with a tamper evident cover. The controller **420** accurately meters the amount of syrup delivered. The ticket printer **410** may then print out an invoice for the customer. Likewise, the load cell **190** may automatically transmit this information directly to the controller **420** or elsewhere. The load cell **190** also accurately provides information on the amount of syrup delivered and consumed.

When the syrup in the receptacle **110** is exhausted, the customer merely disconnects the fountain hose **370** from the exhausted bag **200** and connects the fountain hose **370** to a bag **200** in a filled receptacle **110**. Again, because of the use of the connectors **450**, the customer cannot connect the hose **370** to the incorrect bag **200**. Likewise, the use of matching colors on the receptacle **110**, the bag **200**, and the fountain house **370** reduces the possibility that the wrong type of syrup would be delivered to the wrong bag **200**. The syrup is then drained through the lower spout **220** of the bag **200** and into the fountain hose **280** of the fountain system **270**. The syrup is then mixed with a diluent such as soda water in a conventional fashion and served to a consumer. The exhausted bag **200**, and the hose **240** if used, are removed from the receptacle **110** by the customer or the delivery worker. The bag **200** is then discarded or recycled.

The present invention thus results in a number of advantages over known delivery and storage means. For example, as compared to known BIB containers, the present invention results in less product remaining in the bag (less than one (1) ounce over five (5) gallons),

eliminates the need for the corrugated boxes, and eliminates the need to lift the boxes. The present invention also provides the ability to deliver a varied amount of syrup as opposed to known method that always push 75 gallons into known receptacles. Further, the modularity of the present invention addresses the problem of limited storage space.

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. An improved bulk storage system for fluids supplied to a dispensing system by a line, comprising:

a receptacle;

said receptacle comprising a first portal and a second portal;

a substantially nonpermeable bag positioned within said receptacle for storing and dispensing fluids therefrom;

said bag comprising a first passageway positioned adjacent to said first portal of said receptacle and a second passageway positioned adjacent to said second portal of said receptacle;

a support device positioned adjacent to said receptacle;

said first passageway of said bag attached to said support device; and

said second passageway of said bag attached to said line such that fluids in said bag flow through said second passageway to said dispensing system.

2. The improved bulk storage system of claim 1, wherein said receptacle comprises an outer shell.

3. The improved bulk storage system of claim 2, wherein said outer shell comprises a first end and a second end.

4. The improved bulk storage system of claim 3, wherein said first portal comprises said first end of said outer shell.

5. The improved bulk storage system of claim 2, wherein said second end of said receptacle comprises a bottom plate.

6. The improved bulk storage system of claim 5, wherein said second portal comprises said central drain positioned within said bottom plate.

7. The improved bulk storage system of claim 1, wherein said receptacle comprises stainless steel.

8. The improved bulk storage system of claim 1, wherein said bag comprises a flexible material.

9. The improved bulk storage system of claim 1, wherein said bag comprises linear low density polyethylene.

10. The improved bulk storage system of claim 1, wherein said first passageway comprises a spout attached to said bag.

11. The improved bulk storage system of claim 10, wherein said first passageway comprises a hose connected to said spout.

12. The improved bulk storage system of claim 1, wherein said first passageway comprises an extended bag section.

13. The improved bulk storage system of claim 1, wherein said second passageway comprises a spout.

14. The improved bulk storage system of claim 1, wherein said support device comprises a manifold.

15. The improved bulk storage system of claim 14, wherein said manifold comprises a first valve and a second valve and wherein said first valve and said second valve are in fluid communication with each other.

16. The improved bulk storage system of claim 15, wherein said first passageway of said bag is attached to said second valve of said manifold such that fluids flowing through said first valve of said manifold pass through said second valve and said first passageway into said bag.

17. The improved bulk storage system of claim 16, wherein said first passageway comprises a first passageway connector, said first passageway connector comprising a predetermined size.

18. The improved bulk storage system of claim 17, wherein said second valve of said manifold comprises a manifold connector, said manifold connector comprising said predetermined size.

19. The improved bulk storage system of claim 18, wherein said predetermined size varies with the type of fluid intended to be placed in said bag.

20. The improved bulk storage system of claim 1, wherein said line comprises a line connector, said line connector comprising a predetermined size.

21. The improved bulk storage system of claim 20, wherein said second passageway comprises a passageway connector, said passageway connector comprising said predetermined size.

22. The improved bulk storage system of claim 20, wherein said predetermined size varies with the type of fluid intended to be dispensed from said bag.

23. The improved bulk storage system of claim 1, wherein said bag comprises a predetermined color, said predetermined color depending upon the type of fluid intended to be contained in said bag.

24. The improved bulk storage system of claim 23, wherein said receptacle comprises said predetermined color.

25. The improved bulk storage system of claim 23, wherein said line comprises said predetermined color.

26. The improved bulk storage system of claim 1, further comprising a delivery system for providing fluids to said bag through said first passageway.

27. The improved bulk storage system of claim 26, wherein said delivery system comprises a delivery vehicle with a plurality of fluid compartments.

28. The improved bulk storage system of claim 27, wherein said delivery system comprises a delivery hose for providing fluids from one of said plurality of fluid compartments to said bag.

29. The improved bulk storage system of claim 28, wherein said support device comprises a manifold such that said delivery hose and said first passageway of said bag are connected in fluid communication through said manifold.

30. The improved bulk storage system of claim 29 wherein said delivery hose comprises a delivery hose connector, said delivery hose connector comprising a predetermined size.

31. The improved bulk storage system of claim 30, wherein said manifold comprises a manifold connector, said manifold connector comprising said predetermined size.

32. The improved bulk storage system of claim 31, wherein said predetermined size varies with the type of fluid intended to be delivered to said bag.

33. The improved bulk storage system of claim 28, wherein said delivery hose comprises a predetermined color, said predetermined color depending upon the type of fluid intended to be placed in said bag.

34. A method for using a storage receptacle with a beverage dispenser, said storage receptacle and said beverage dispenser connected by a fluid line, said method comprising the steps of:

placing a flexible bag within said storage receptacle;

said flexible bag comprising a first spout and a second spout;

attaching said second spout to said fluid line;

supplying a fluid to said bag through said first spout;

evacuating said fluid from said bag to said beverage dispenser through said second spout and said fluid line; and

removing said bag from said receptacle when said bag is exhausted.

35. The method of claim 34, wherein said fluid comprises a soft drink syrup.

36. The method of claim 34, wherein said receptacle comprises a manifold positioned adjacent thereto, said method further comprising the steps of attaching said first spout to said manifold and supplying said fluid to said bag through said manifold.

37. The method of claim 34, further comprising the steps of:

color-coding a plurality of said storage receptacles, a plurality of said flexible bags, and a plurality of said fluid lines; and

providing a plurality of said fluids such that each of said color-coded plurality of said storage receptacles, said color-coded plurality of said flexible bags, and said color-coded plurality of said fluid lines correspond to one of said plurality of fluids.

38. The method of claim 37, further comprising the steps of:

selecting one of said plurality of color-coded receptacles;

selecting one of said plurality of color-coded bags to match said color-coded receptacle;

placing said color-coded bag within said color-coded receptacle;

filling said color-coded bag with said one of said plurality of fluids corresponding to said color-coded bag and said color-coded receptacle;

selecting said one of said plurality of color-coded fluid lines to match said color-coded receptacle and said color-coded bag;

connecting said color-coded bag to said color-coded fluid line; and

supplying said one of said plurality of fluids to said beverage dispenser.

39. The method of claim 38, further comprising a delivery vehicle, said delivery vehicle comprising a plurality of color-coded delivery hoses.

40. The method of claim 39, wherein said method further comprises the steps of:

selecting one of said plurality of color-coded delivery hoses to match said color-coded receptacle and said color-coded bag; and

connecting said color-coded delivery hose to said color-coded bag.

41. The method of claim 34, further comprising the steps of providing a plurality of said flexible bags with said first spout and said second spout, providing a plurality of said fluid lines, and providing a plurality of said fluids.

42. The method of claim 41, further comprising the step of providing a plurality of delivery lines intended to be coupled with said first spout of said plurality of said flexible bags.

43. The method of claim 42, further comprising the step of providing each of said first and said second spouts with one of a plurality of predetermined first dimensions.

44. The method of claim 43, further comprising the step of providing each of said plurality of delivery lines and each of said plurality of fluid lines with one of a plurality of predetermined second dimensions.

45. The method of claim 44, further comprising the step of selecting one of said plurality of said flexible bags to be joined with one of said plurality of delivery lines and one of said plurality of fluid lines depending upon said one of said plurality of fluids to be used therein such that said predetermined first dimension accommodates said predetermined second dimension.

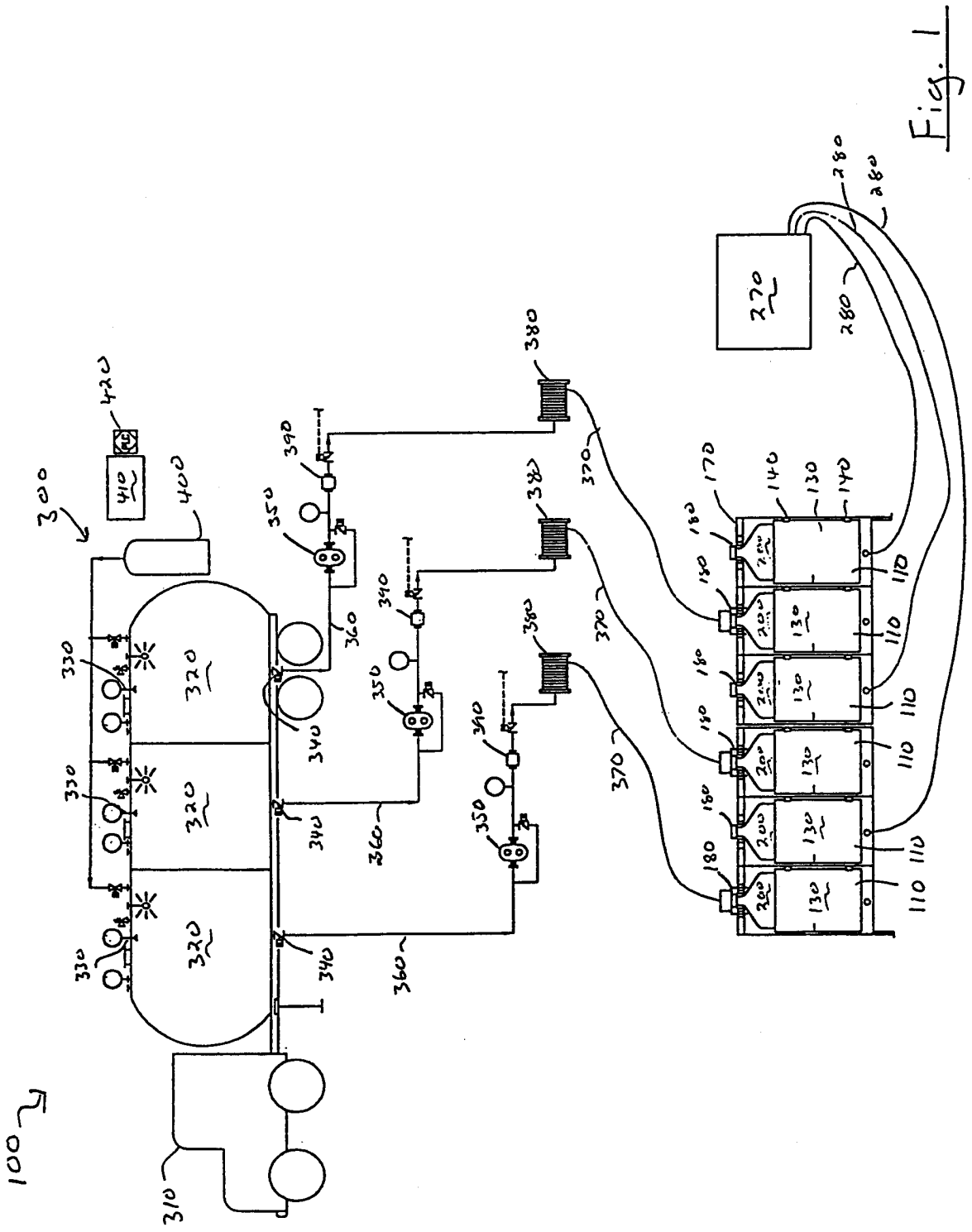
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Fig. 1

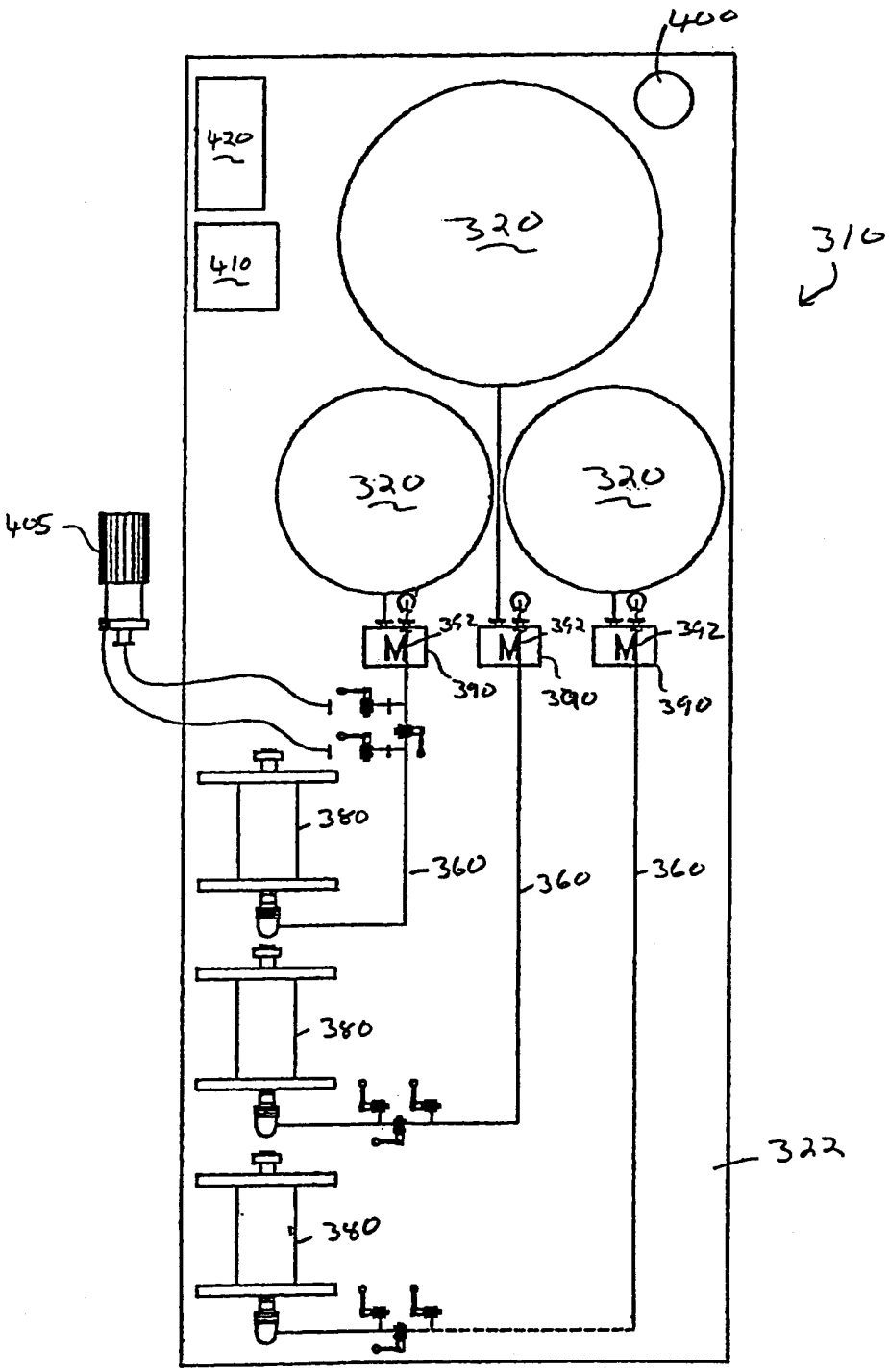

Fig. 1A

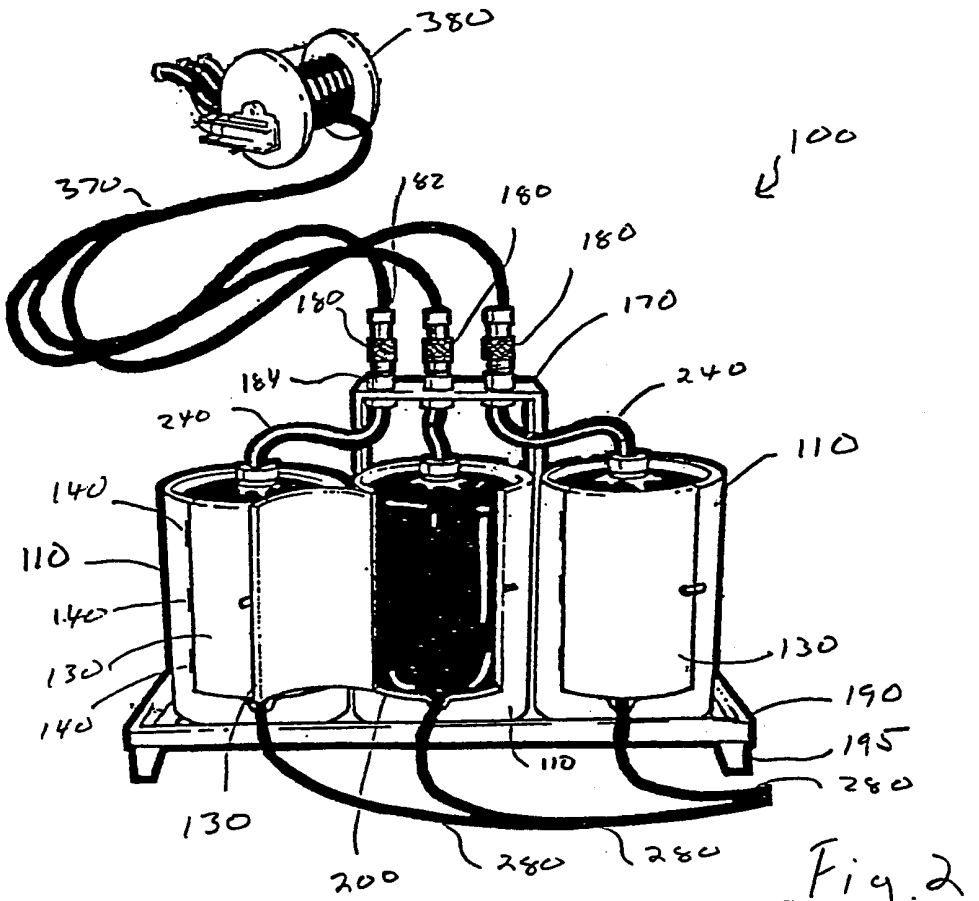

Fig.2

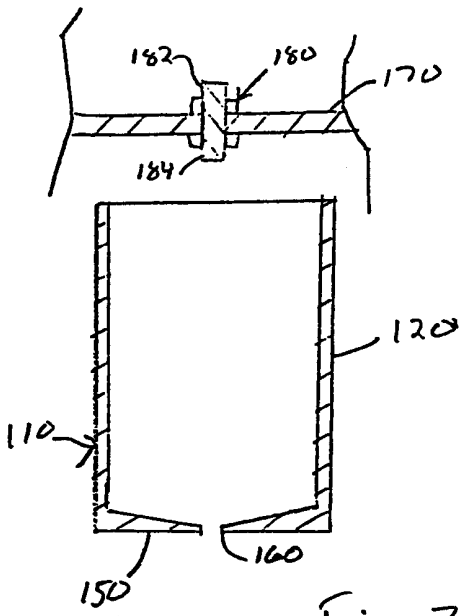

Fig.3

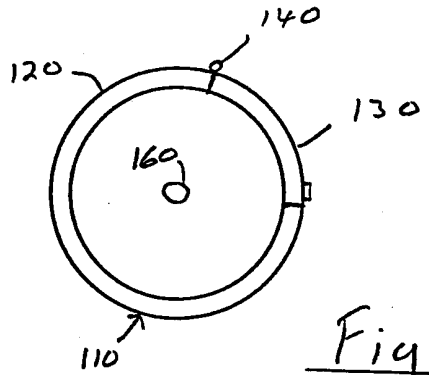

Fig.4

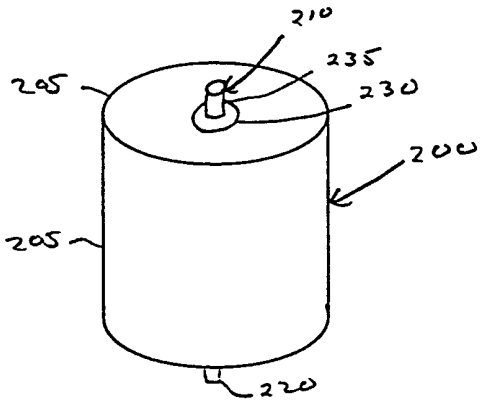

Fig. 5

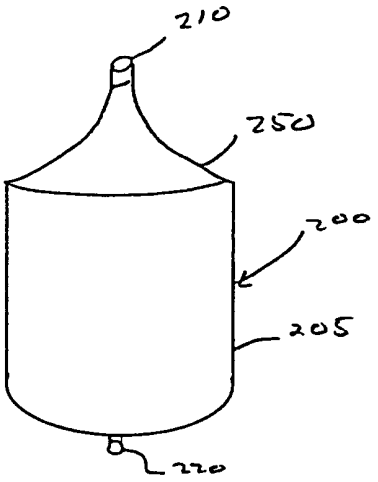

Fig. 6

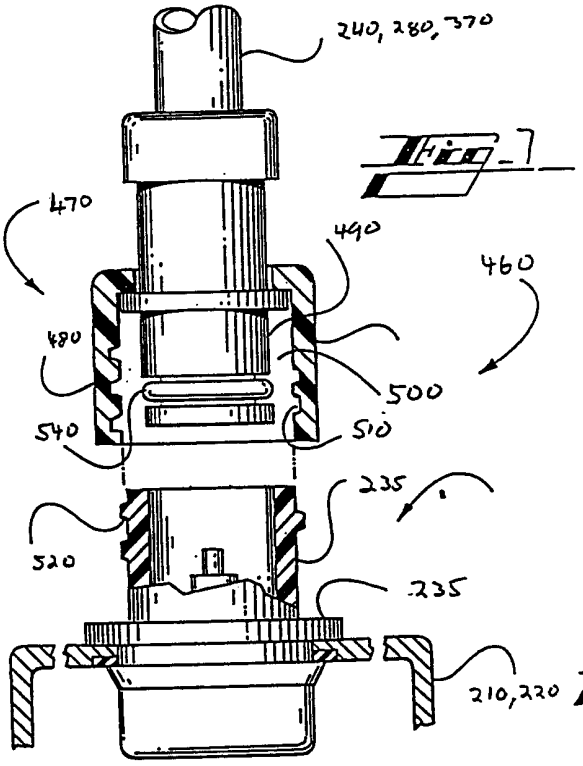

Fig. 7

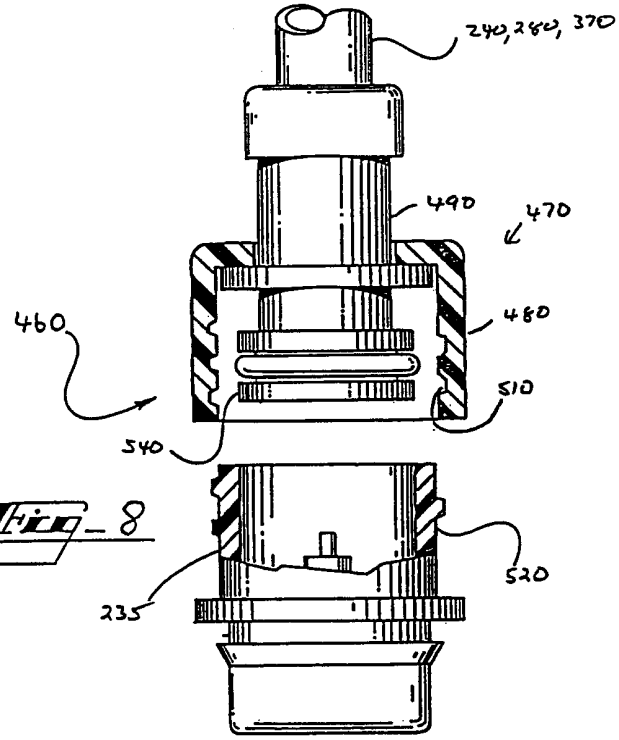

Fig. 8

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Inte 'onal Application No
PCT/US 00/08190

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 B67D1/00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 7 B67D B65D

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)
EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 3 057 517 A (DOUGLAS, HOMER C.) 9 October 1962 (1962-10-09)	1-6,8, 20,21
A	column 1, line 59 -column 2, line 14; figures 1,3	7,9,34
X	WO 91 10615 A (HARPER ALAN) 25 July 1991 (1991-07-25)	1-6,8, 10,12, 20,21
A	claims 1,3; figure	7,9,13
X	DE 34 36 053 A (NILGEN ELMAR) 10 April 1986 (1986-04-10)	34,41
A	page 6, line 21 - line 27; claims 1,2; figures 1,2	1,35,37, 42
A	FR 2 411 318 A (TOBELEM JOSEPH) 6 July 1979 (1979-07-06) page 1, line 13 - line 22; figure	1,34

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[X] Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

[X] Patent family members are listed in annex.

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"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
28 July 2000	09/08/2000

Name and mailing address of the ISA	Authorized officer
European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL – 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Wartenhorst, F

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Inter onal Application No
PCT/US 00/08190

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication,where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	GB 1 200 296 A (CONNETT,D.A.) 29 July 1970 (1970-07-29) page 1, left-hand column, line 12 - line 34; figures 1,3	1,34

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

.formation on patent family members

Inter nal Application No
PCT/US 00/08190

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
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WO 9110615 A	25-07-1991	NONE	
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