SALON BELT SYSTEM

Inventor: James B. Flis, Central Lake, MI (US)

Appl. No.: 13/103,650

Filed: May 9, 2011

ABSTRACT

An equipment-holding belt system for salon workers, in which a wide, waist-bridging hook-and-loop faced belt is provided with one or more detachable equipment-holders. The belt has a long, non-elastic, stiffened non-folding section faced with hook-and-loop fastener; a short movement-enhancing elastic section connected to an inner end of the non-folding stiffened section; and a non-elastic, non-stiffened fabric closure end connected to the other side of the elastic section and detachably secured to an outer end of the stiffened section. One or more equipment holders can be detachably secured to the face of the stiffened section of the belt, and in a preferred form include flexible, hook-and-loop backed attachment panels whose height corresponds to the width of the belt.
SALON BELT SYSTEM

FIELD

[0001] The subject matter of the present application is in the field of belts, and more particularly belts for holding implements used in hair care and related salon work.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Tool-holding belts are well known for use in carpentry, construction, and other tool-intensive trades.

[0003] One example is shown in U.S. Pat. No. 5,505,556 to Noriega et al. (Noriega), showing a lumbar support belt having self-fastening hook-and-loop end sections, and different kinds of article-holding devices with mating hook-and-loop backings that mate with the hook-and-loop sections of the belt. The larger of the article-holding devices is a pouch that requires a strap system for connection with the belt, and the hook-and-loop backing on the pouch appears to be provided to prevent movement that the straps alone cannot. The belt has a large intermediate elastic section connecting the two substantially non-elastic end sections. The large elastic section draws the non-elastic end sections securely against the wearer’s waist, captures the straps of the pouch between the non-elastic sections and the wearer’s waist, and presses against the lumbar portion of the wearer’s back, presumably for lumbar support.

[0004] Construction tool belts, however, are not suitable for the salon work environment or for salon implements. They are too bulky, too inconvenient for frequently swapping equipment on and off the belt, and not designed to hold salon implements in a convenient, stable, and comfortable manner.

BRIEF SUMMARY

[0005] I have invented a modular belt system specifically designed for use by salon workers to manage a variety of the heavy and/or bulky containers and implements used for cutting, coloring, perms, hair treatments, and any other table-free hair styling operation. The belt has a continuous, non-elastic, non-folding stiffened body section having an outer end, the stiffened body section comprising the majority of the belt’s circumference; a movement-enhancing elastic section connected to an inner end of the stiffened body section; and a non-stiffened, non-elastic closure end that connects to the stiffened section’s outer end.

[0006] The belt system also comprises at least one detachable equipment-holder adapted to be attached to and detached from the face of the belt. In a preferred form, the equipment-holder comprises a flexible attachment panel and an equipment-holding retainer portion, the retainer portion being located below an upper end of the attachment panel. In a further form, the retainer portion comprises a flexible fabric retainer with a sidewall and a partially open bottom, and further with one or more support straps defining the bottom of the retainer at a location spaced from the sidewall. In a further preferred form, the support straps form a ‘T’ configuration with an open front.

[0007] In a further form, the outer face of the outer end of the belt and the inner face of the second end are faced with mating hook-and-loop material. In a further preferred form, the outer face of the stiffened body is also faced with hook-and-loop material as the attachment means, and the equipment-holder has an inner face (the inner face of the attachment panel) supplied with mating hook-and-loop material so that it can be pressed onto and removed from the stiffened body’s outer face.

[0008] These and other features and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the detailed description below, in light of the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. 1 is a front perspective view of a belt system according to the invention, being worn by a salon worker.

[0010] FIG. 2 is a front perspective view of the belt system of FIG. 1, with article holders in an exploded view relative to the belt.

[0011] FIG. 3 is a plan view of the belt of FIG. 1.

[0012] FIG. 4 is a rear perspective view of the belt system of FIG. 1 being worn by a salon worker.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0013] Referring first to FIG. 1, a belt system according to the invention is shown being worn by a salon worker W. The system comprises a belt 10, and one or more detachable equipment holders 18 for holding and supporting various salon implements, supplies, tools and the like (hereinafter “equipment”) such as coloring cup C, perm paper dispenser box B, and spray bottle S. It will be understood that detachable holders 18 can be modified to hold most types of equipment that a salon worker may need to have at-hand when standing and working on a client’s hair or other needs in a table-free hair care task. Other equipment for which holders 18 can be used or modified include styling irons, perm bags, shears/razor/comb holders, clippers, brushes, and foil dispensers, without limitation.

[0014] Referring to FIGS. 1, 2, and 3, illustrated belt 10 has a stiffened main body section 12 with an outer end 12a, an inner end 12b, an outer face 12c, and a non-folding insert or backing 13 that is substantially contiguous with inner and outer fabric layers between which it is fixed, and that substantially prevents main body 12 from folding about its lengthwise axis A (shown in broken lines). The torsional (twisting or folding) stiffness of belt section 12 makes it difficult for upper edge 12e and lower edge 12f to be folded to any significant degree toward one another, and for outer face 12c to be folded or creased inwardly or outwardly by a salon worker’s movements when the belt 10 is being worn. Stiffened section 12 is accordingly “non-folding” in this sense.

[0015] The non-folding insert 13 can be multiple layers of stiff cloth such as (but not limited to) “suitcloth”, which is a very stiff fabric; a sheet of longitudinally flexible but torsionally stiff plastic material; or any other structure that allows the belt 10 to be curved around the wearer’s waist and fastened closely and securely to the body, while preventing the outer face 12c from folding while being worn. The non-folding insert can be secured between the inner and outer faces of the belt by sewing, gluing, or otherwise fixing it between inner and outer layers of fabric. It might also be possible, depending on the insert material, to have a two-layer construction in which the insert forms the inside face of stiffened belt section 12, without an inner covering layer of fabric.

[0016] Belt 10 also has an elastic section 14 secured to the inner end 12b of the stiffened main body 12, and a non-elastic, non-stiffened closure portion 16 secured to the other side of elastic 14 and forming the other end of belt 10. Closure end 16 is shorter than stiffened section 12, and elastic section 14 is
shorter than closure end 16. Closure end 16 can be detachably secured to the outer end 12a with various means, but in the illustrated, preferred form, the inner face 16b of closure end 16 is faced with a hook-and-loop material, and the outer face 12c of outer end 12a is faced with a mating portion of hook-and-loop material. The connection between closure end 16 and outer end 12a of the stiffened belt section 12 is infinitely adjustable over the length of closure end 16 for a secure and custom fit. When closure portion 16 is secured to the outer face of stiffened end 12a, elastic section 14 may be stretched somewhat for a snug fit, although it should not be tensioned to its full extent. Different sizes of belt are possible where the adjustability inherent in the elastic portion 14 is not enough.

It will be understood that although elastic section 14 is shown as a solid section of fabric material, it could be discontinuous, for example in the form of spaced straps or bands of elastic material. The same is true of closure end 16. Stiffened section 12 might also be non-solid, for example with perforations or interruptions in the material for weight-reduction or ventilation, but only to the extent that it does not compromise the non-folding nature of section 12.

Still referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, holders 18 are detachably secured to outer face 12c of stiffened main body portion 12. The means for attaching can vary, but the illustrated and preferred example uses hook-and-loop, with most or all of the outer face 12c faced with hook-and-loop (for example, the “female” loop half), and inner faces of the holders 18 faced with mating hook-and-loop material (for example, the “male” hook half).

Illustrated holders 18 are constructed according to a preferred form, in which they comprise flexible fabric attachment panels 20 backed on their inner faces 20b with hook-and-loop. The stiffened portion 12 of the belt is preferably wide enough to bridge the wearer’s waist between hips and abdomen, for example on the order of six inches wide from upper edge to lower edge, and the attachment panels 20 are sized to be substantially fully mated with the outer face 12c of stiffened belt section 12. Holders 18 also include equipment retainer portions 22 secured to the front faces of attachment panels 20. Attachment panels 20 are also sized to be as wide or wider than their equipment retainer portions 22, and to have upper edges 20a spaced above the upper edges 23 of retainer portions 22. Attachment panels 20 allow the salon worker to attach even heavy, bulky items to belt 10 with one hand, by simply pressing the attachment panel to the outer face of stiffened belt section 12.

Retainer portions 22 of holders 14 can be rigid retainers, such as spray bottle cup 22s, or they can be flexible retainers such as the fabric perm paper pouch 22p or the fabric coloring cup retainer 22c. Retainer portions can have closed rigid or flexible bottoms, such as shown in retainers 22s and 22p, respectively, or open bottoms as shown in retainer 22c. Retainer portions 22 can be secured to flexible attachment panels 20 in various ways, for example with adhesive, sewing, or mechanical connectors, depending on the material and shape of the retainer portion 22.

Retainer portion 22c represents a preferred example especially useful and stable for heavy, rigid containers such as coloring cup C holding contents that could splash or spill during use or when being inserted or removed in holder 18. Retainer portion 22c is made from a flexible fabric such as nylon, and has a sidewall 24, an open bottom 26, with flexible fabric support straps 28 for retaining the bottom of the coloring cup C. Straps 28 are arranged in a T configuration, with a cross-strap 28a running from one side to another, and a fore strap 28b running from attachment panel 20 forwards to a junction with cross-strap 28. The T-configuration of straps 28 leaves an open front area 32, and spaces the bottom 26 of the retainer portion 22c from sidewall 24. Sidewall 24 may be split, for example at 24a, to be opened up to receive the cup C from the front, and with a hook-and-loop closure to secure it in place around the cup.

The spacing of retainer portions 22 below the upper edges of the attachment panels 20 has been found to keep the items being held in holders 18 very stable during use, improves access to the items as they are needed, and makes it easier to attach and detach the holders 18 with one hand, even when equipment such as spray bottles, paper boxes, coloring cups, and other items are in the holders 18.

Attachment panels 20 can optionally be provided with assist tabs such as 20b, useful for removing the panels 20 from the face of belt 10.

The fabrics and other materials used in the belt system comprising belt 10 and holders 18 can vary, and heavy-duty nylons, polyesters, and canvas materials are possible options. Plastics are preferred where more rigid materials are needed, although other rigid materials could be used. The definition of “fabric” should be construed broadly.

While hook-and-loop is shown as the primary and preferred attachment means for detachably securing equipment holders 18 to belt 10, other connectors may be possible, either in place of the hook-and-loop or in addition to the hook-and-loop. Magnetic, mechanical (e.g., snaps), or reusable adhesive or static-cling type connections might be possible.

DESCRIPTION OF OPERATION

In operation, the belt 10 is worn by salon worker W who wraps the unsecured ends 12a and 16 around his or her waist, and fastens closure end 16 to outer stiffened end 12a so that the belt is snug. Equipment holders 18 can be applied before the belt 10 is put on, but more likely will be attached after the belt 10 is secured around the waist. The hook-and-loop attachment panels 20 allow the holders 18 to be attached to the belt whether the holders are holding equipment or not, easily with one hand. Holders 18 can be re-positioned virtually infinitely about the circumference of stiffened portion 12, for a custom fit and placement suited to the salon worker’s preference.

The stiff, non-folding nature of main body 12 ensures that holders 18 cannot be accidentally popped or peeled off by the salon worker’s movements, and are held in a stable and secure manner. Elastic section 14 provides enough localized flexibility to let the salon worker bend at the waist when needed. Non-elastic, non-stiffened closure end provides a secure, adjustable, custom-length fit around the waist without compromising the function of stiffened portion 12 or elastic section 14. Elastic section 14 does not need to be stretched when fitting and securing the belt around the waist in order to function properly, since length adjustments are made with the adjustable overlap between closure end 16 and outer end 12a of stiffened section 12. In normal use, elastic section 14 is substantially un-tensioned or only partially tensioned until the salon worker bends at the waist, at which point it yields or stretches an additional amount to allow some bending movement without placing strain on the stiffened section 12.
In the preceding description, various aspects and examples and configurations of making and using the invention as defined by the claimed subject matter (the “invention”) have been described, for purposes of explanation, to provide a thorough understanding of the invention, and to enable those skilled in the art to make and use the invention. It will be understood that the disclosed embodiments are representative of presently preferred forms of the invention, but are intended to be explanatory rather than limiting of the scope of the invention as defined by the claims below. Reasonable variations and modifications of the invention as disclosed in the foregoing written specification and drawings are possible without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the claims below. It should further be understood that the use of the term “invention” in this written specification is not to be construed as a limiting term as to number of inventions or discoveries or the scope of any invention or discovery, but as a descriptive term which has been used conveniently to describe advances in science and the useful arts. The scope of the invention is accordingly defined by the following claims.

What is claimed:

1. An equipment-holding belt system for a salon worker, comprising:
   a belt comprising a non-elastic, stiffened non-folding section having an outer end, the stiffened non-folding section comprising a majority of the belt’s circumference; a movement-enhancing elastic section connected to an inner end of the stiffened non-folding section; and a non-stiffened, non-elastic closure end adapted to connect to the stiffened non-folding section’s outer end; and,
   at least one detachable equipment-holder detachably secured to an outer face of the stiffened non-folding section of the belt.

2. The belt system of claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the stiffened non-folding section’s outer face is faced with hook-and-loop fastening material, and wherein the equipment-holder comprises a flexible attachment panel backed with hook-and-loop fastening material that detachably secures to the hook-and-loop fastening material on the stiffened non-folding section.

3. The belt system of claim 2, wherein the equipment-holder comprises an equipment retainer portion, and the retainer portion is located below an upper end of the flexible attachment panel.

4. The belt system of claim 2, wherein the portion of the outer face of the stiffened non-folding section faced with the hook-and-loop material is faced substantially continuously with the hook and loop material over its width from an upper edge to a lower edge, and wherein the flexible attachment panel has a height substantially equal to the width of the stiffened non-folding section and is substantially continuously faced with the mating hook and loop material.

5. The belt system of claim 1, wherein the retainer portion comprises a flexible fabric retainer with a flexible fabric sidewall and a partially open bottom.

6. The belt system of claim 5, wherein one or more support straps define the bottom of the retainer at a location spaced from the sidewall.

7. The belt system of claim 6, wherein the support straps form a ‘T’ configuration with an open front.

8. The belt system of claim 1, wherein the outer face of the outer end of the belt and the inner face of the closure end are faced with mating hook-and-loop material and are infinitely adjustable over a length corresponding to the inner face of the closure end.

9. The belt system of claim 8, wherein the elastic section is less than fully tensioned when the belt is secured about the waist.

* * * * *