

[54] **INTERLOCKING CONTAINER**
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[51] **Int. Cl.²**..... **B65D 5/30; B65D 21/04**

[58] **Field of Search**.... **229/16 C, 16 D, 16 A, 16 R, 229/26, 36, 37 R; 23 A, 3.5 R, 34 R, 34 A, 34 B, 23 R, DIG. 11, 39 R, 35, 17 R, 17 B, 17 SL, 6 A, 14 R, 43**

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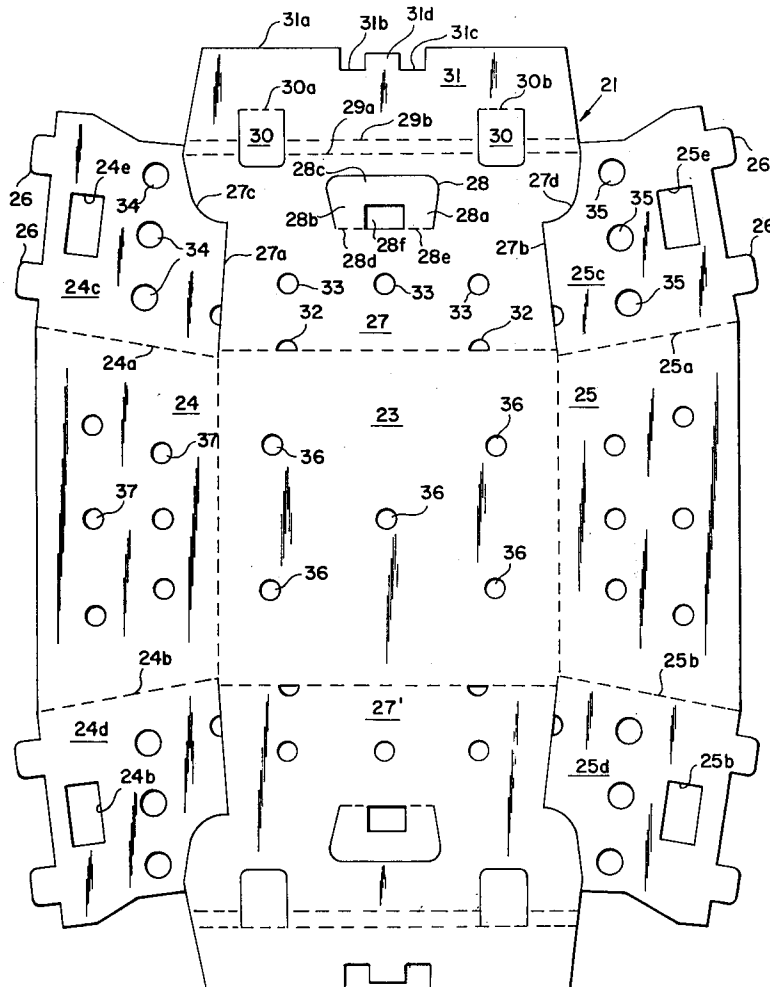
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A container is provided preferably made of wax impregnated corrugated board, of nesting pyramidal shape. A locking member of U-shape is cut from the end wall, and extends inwardly through openings in the adjacent side wall flaps, and then downwardly when plural boxes are nesting. The locking member is pulled up to engage a tab on a depending flap extending downwardly from the top of the end wall. A top is provided, having holes therein, and holes are provided in the bottom: positioning tabs extend upwardly above the top to insure stacking of filled boxes with the holes aligned. A separate top is provided in one embodiment, with locking flaps in the end walls extending into hand receiving openings of the container to lock them together. In a second embodiment, the side walls each has a panel connected to its upper edge which depends into the container, with top flaps connected thereto and extending towards the opposite side wall.

18 Claims, 12 Drawing Figures



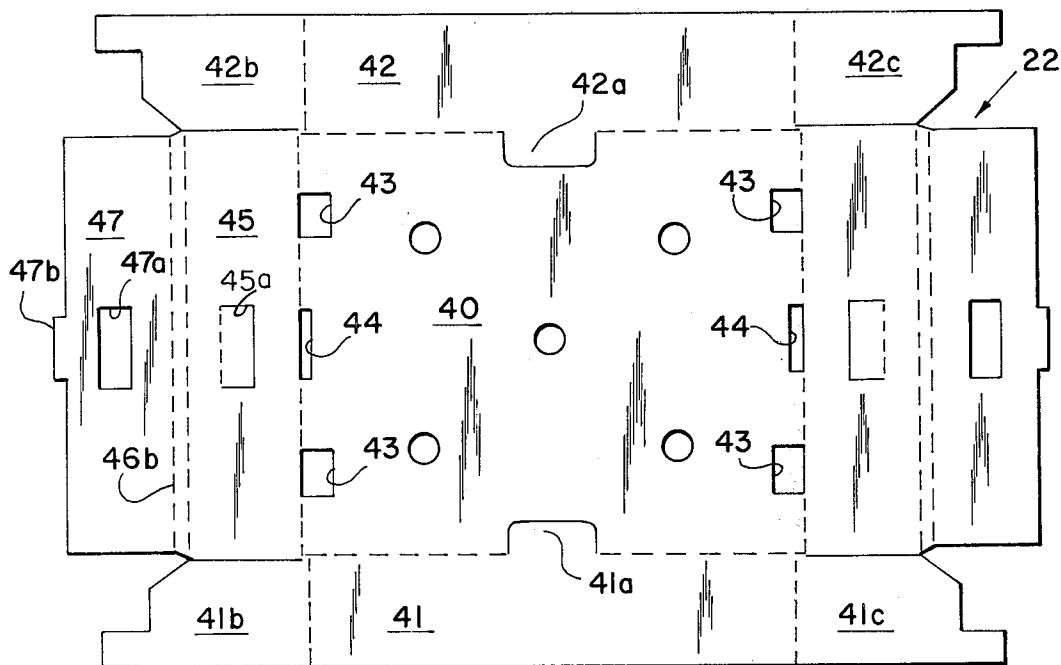


FIG. 4

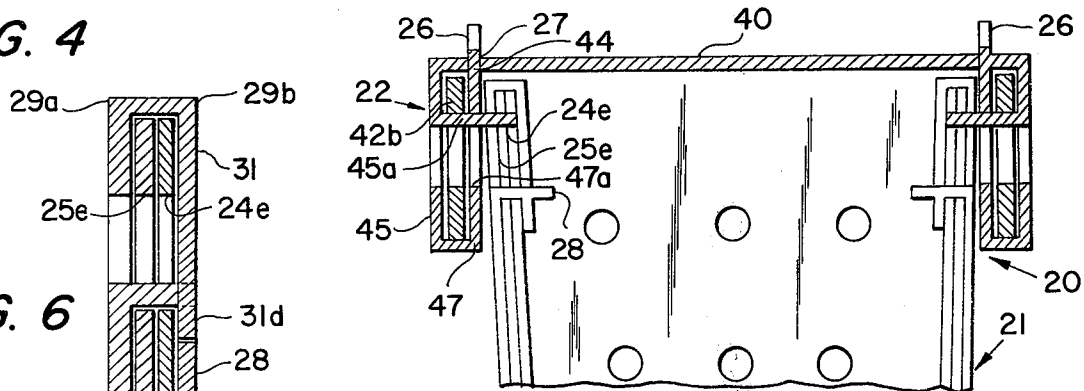


FIG. 6

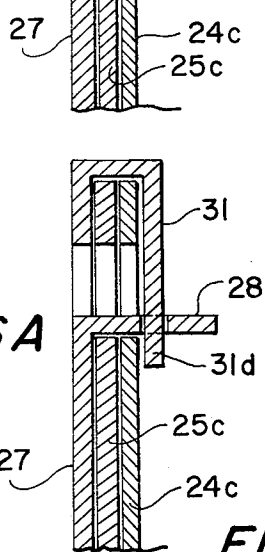


FIG. 6A

FIG. 7

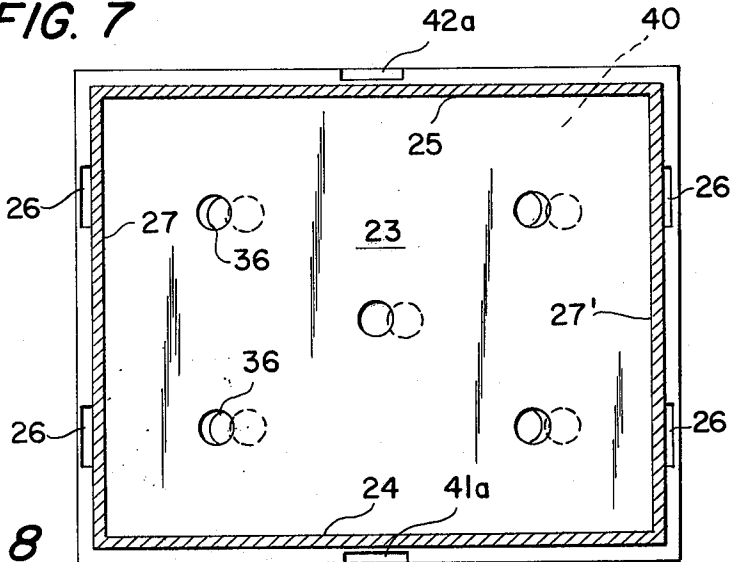


FIG. 8

INTERLOCKING CONTAINER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention pertains to a container, and more particularly to a nestable, stackable, interlocking container.

Containers have been used for many years, made of corrugated paper board. In general, it can be stated that the packaging of various products in wooden boxes or crates has often been supplanted by corrugated paper board containers. One prime example of such replacement of wooden boxes by corrugated board containers is where the product packaged has had a moisture content, either because of being frozen, and releasing moisture when thawed or partially thawed, or because of packaging of the products with ice, which latter occurs in connection with poultry, fish, etc.

Many corrugated board containers which are supplied are used by factories having so-called stitching equipment, which assembles the boxes by the utilization of metal fastening elements, generally in the form of staples. However, in many instances, the organization using the containers does not have stitching equipment, and containers supplied to such organizations are required to be set up by hand. This is achieved by interlocking various parts of the container such as by providing locking tabs which are inserted into corresponding locking members. While such interlocking containers have been satisfactory in many instances, they have not recognized the problem of manual manipulation of the container parts where the container itself has been impregnated, in order to make it substantially moisture-proof. Wax impregnation is widely known as a technique for preventing moisture from the contents packed in a container from reaching the corrugated board structure of the container, which would thereby be significantly weakened should the moisture contact the corrugated board.

It has heretofore been proposed to provide containers which nest when empty, one within the other. Typically, such containers are of generally pyramidal shape. However, such containers have not generally been provided where the containers are of relatively large size, having a volume of approximately one and one half cubic feet. Such large size containers naturally hold not only a greater volume of packaged material, but a greater weight, and therefore must be stronger, both in the corrugated board material used, and in the locking arrangements. Such containers have heretofore generally been provided for relatively low volume and light weight applications, utilizing paper board, rather than corrugated board, the latter being much heavier, stiffer and stronger.

The provision of ventilating openings in containers has heretofore been proposed, to permit air to flow into and through the containers, when used for the shipping of animals, baby chicks and fruit. However, there has not been provided the provision of containers which will permit the flow of fluid from one container into another container, so as to provide for drainage through a stack of containers.

While wax impregnated corrugated board containers have previously been used, as above noted, for ice-packed products such as poultry parts, fish and the like, in certain particular uses the corrugated board container has not heretofore replaced the conventionally used wooden containers: one such field is in the pro-

duction of shell fish, such as clams, where the product is placed into a container and there thereafter occurs a drainage of water from the product. The wooden containers heretofore provided had sufficient openings therein to permit water to flow out of the clam or other shell fish product, and thence out of the containers.

Among the objects of the present invention are to provide a container made of corrugated board, which is wax impregnated, and which container is both nestable when empty and stackable when filled.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a container having provision for drainage of liquid from one container into and through a lower container, when the containers are in stacked array.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a container construction which may be readily nested, and with provision for manual locking in a secure and facile manner of interlocking parts thereof.

A still further object of the present invention is to provide a container as above described having provision for locking a separate container top to the container bottom.

A still further object of the present invention is to provide a container of corrugated paper board which is wax impregnated, and which will have an integral top, with secure, interlocking top flaps.

Other objects and many of the attendant advantages of the present invention will be readily apparent from the following description and claims, taken in conjunction with the attached drawings.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present container is made of corrugated paper board, which is wax impregnated. The container, in a first embodiment, includes a bottom and integral upstanding end and side walls. The end and side walls diverge or are inclined outwardly, so that a pyramidal nesting container is provided. The side walls have side wall flaps extending from their upstanding edges, which flaps are in parallel juxtaposed relationship to the end wall, interiorly thereof. The side wall flaps are provided with openings to form hand holes, the openings being aligned. The end wall has a locking member struck therefrom, the locking member being generally inverted U-shaped. The end wall has a flap at its upper edge which extends downwardly, having a locking tab at its lower end. The U-shaped locking member extends through the openings in the side wall flaps, and in the nesting configuration, extends generally downwardly parallel to and adjacent the innermost side wall flap. For locking the container, the locking member is moved to a generally horizontal position, in which position it engages the locking tab of the end wall flap, thereby preventing its movement. In one embodiment, a separate top is provided which has openings there-through, the bottom also having openings, and there being upstanding positioning tabs which extend above the top, so as to position a container stacked thereon so that the holes in the bottom of the upper container are in alignment with the holes in the top of the lower container. In this embodiment, the separate top is provided with a flap which extends from its depending end wall, and through the hand hold openings of the container receptacle end walls, to thereby lock the top to the bottom. In addition, in an alternate embodiment a top structure is provided which is integral with the container receptacle, in this embodiment each of the side

walls has a side wall panel which depends from its upper edge or margin downwardly into the container, there being a flap connected to each of the side wall panels, so that the flaps extend across the container and form the top thereof. Preferably, the side wall flaps are provided with interlocking slits, which are urged into engagement by the natural resiliency of the fold lines between the side wall and the side wall panel, and the panel and the flap.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an elevational view of a stack of filled containers in accordance with a first embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 2 is a cross sectional view showing a plurality of the containers of FIG. 1 in nested position.

FIG. 3 is a plan view of a blank for forming a receptacle of the container of FIG. 1.

FIG. 4 shows a blank for forming a top for the container of FIG. 1.

FIG. 5 is a cross sectional view taken on the line 5—5 of FIG. 2.

FIG. 6 is a cross sectional view taken on the line 6—6 of FIG. 5, with the parts in the position for nesting.

FIG. 6A is similar to FIG. 6, but with the parts in locking position.

FIG. 7 is a vertical cross section on the longitudinal axis of a container of FIG. 1, with the top in position for carrying.

FIG. 8 is a cross sectional view taken on the line 8—8 of FIG. 1.

FIG. 9 is a cross sectional view showing a stack of filled containers in accordance with a second embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 10 is a cross sectional view showing a plurality of the containers of FIG. 9 in nested condition.

FIG. 11 is a plan view of a blank for forming the container of FIG. 9.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Turning now to the drawings, wherein like or corresponding reference numerals are used to designate like or corresponding parts throughout the several views, there is shown in FIG. 1 a stack of containers 20 in accordance with a first embodiment of the present invention, each of the containers 20 comprising a receptacle 21 of generally pyramidal shape, having a top 22. In FIG. 2, the receptacles 21 of the containers 20 are shown in nested condition, awaiting filling.

In FIG. 3, there is shown a blank for making the receptacle 21, and as will be understood, the blank is of corrugated board, comprising a minimum of two outer planar sheets, with a corrugated medium between and adhered to them, in accordance with conventional practice. The blank 21 is wax impregnated, so that the receptacle which is formed upon its erection, without staples, may be subjected to a moist environment without significant loss of strength. In the blank 21 as shown in FIG. 3, solid lines are used to designate margins, and cut lines and dashed lines designate fold lines. The blank 21 comprises a bottom 23 of generally rectangular shape, integral with which are the side walls 24 and 25. Side wall 24 is bounded by outwardly flared fold lines 24a and 24b, and similarly side wall 25 is defined by fold lines 25a and 25b. End wall flaps 24c and 24d are provided, integral with the side wall 24, and identi-

cal end wall flaps 25c and 25d are provided, integral with side wall 25. The shapes of the four side wall flaps are substantially identical, each being provided with a rectangular opening 24e, 25e, 24f, 25f. Each of the side wall flaps is also provided with a pair of tabs 26.

An end wall 27 is integral with the bottom 23, and an identical end wall 27' is provided at the opposite end of the bottom 23, also being integral therewith, and substantially identical to the end wall 27. End wall 27 is separated from the side wall flaps 24c and 25c by a pair of cut lines 27a and 27b, which converge towards each other, and are thence joined by generally J-shaped cut lines 27c and 27d.

A generally U-shaped locking member 28 is provided, having a pair of parallel legs 28a and 28b, joined by a transverse leg 28c. At the ends of the legs 28a and 28b, the locking member 28 is joined to the end wall 27 by fold lines 28d and 28e. A rectangular opening 28f is thereby provided bounded by the legs of the locking member 28.

Extending across the end wall 27 are a pair of discontinuous, parallel fold lines 29a and 29b. These fold lines are interrupted by tabs 30 which are severed from the side wall 27 on three sides, being connected by fold lines 30a and 30b to an end wall flap 31. The outer edge 31a of the end wall flap 31 is provided with indentations 31b and 31c, which are spaced apart and have a tab 31d between them.

At the inner margin thereof, adjacent the bottom 23, the end wall 27 is provided with a pair of spaced openings 32, and thereabove, with three openings 33. Three corresponding openings are provided in the side wall flap 24c, designated 34, and the side wall flap 25c is provided with three corresponding openings 35. In addition, the bottom 23 is provided with openings 36, there being four openings 36 forming a rectangle, with a central opening 36 between them. Further, the side wall 24 is provided with openings 37, there being illustrated two rows of three openings each.

Referring now to FIG. 4, there is shown a blank of the top 22, and including a top panel 40 with side walls 41 and 42, each of generally rectangular construction, and having a tab 41a, 42a extending into the top panel 40. Side wall 41 is provided with side wall flaps 41b and 41c.

The ends of the top panel 40 are provided with spaced apart openings 43, there being two such openings at each end of the top panel 40, each opening 43 being sized to receive a pair of tabs 26. Intermediate the openings 43 at each end of top panel 40 is an opening 44.

A top panel end wall 45 is provided, connected to top panel 40, with a locking flap 45a connected thereto by a fold line 45b. A pair of spaced, parallel fold lines 46a and 46b separate the top end wall 45 from a top end wall flap 47 having an opening 47a therein of a size to receive the locking flap 45a. A tab 47b extends from the flap 47.

The blank shown in FIG. 3 may be erected into a receptacle, and secured in erected condition without the use of staples. The side walls 24 and 25 are folded upwardly, and the four side wall flaps are folded inwardly. Referring to FIG. 2, the bottom 23 may be seen with an opening 36, the side wall 25, and at the left end of FIG. 2, side wall flap 25c, side wall flap 24c, and end wall 27. These three elements are in adjacent, substantially contacting relationship, and the bottom margins or edges

of the side wall flaps 25c and 24c rest upon the bottom 23. The blank has been folded about the fold lines 29a and 29b, so that the end wall flap 31 may be seen to extend downwardly into the pyramidal receptacle. Tabs 26 may be seen extending upwardly, one of the tabs 26 being of the side wall flap 25c, and the other of the side wall flap 24c. Adjacent the tabs 26 is one of the tabs 30, thereby providing a three-component upstanding tab structure.

Referring now to FIG. 5, there may be seen the receptacle 21 with bottom 23 and side walls 24 and 25. There may also be seen the side wall flap 24c, with its bottom margin, as above noted, resting upon the bottom 23. There may also be seen a part of the side wall flap 25c, also having a bottom margin resting upon the bottom 23. There may also be seen the downwardly extending end wall flap 31, the tab 31d, and the locking member 28. The tab 31d is received in the rectangular opening 28f of the locking member 28. The tabs 30 are also shown.

Referring now to FIG. 6, there is shown an enlarged cross sectional view, taken on the line 6—6 of FIG. 5, but with the wall structure in a vertical position, for convenience. There is shown the end wall 27 with the adjacent side wall flap 25c and the side wall flap 24c inwardly thereof. At its top, the end wall 27 has the fold line 29a and inwardly thereof is the fold line 29b, with the end wall flap 31 extending downwardly, and inside of the composite end wall made up of end wall 27, and flaps 24c and 25c. The locking member 28 extends through the openings 25e and 24e, and is thence bent downwardly, and as shown in FIG. 5, the tab 31d lies in the opening between the legs 28a and 28b thereof. This is the position of the parts for nesting, as shown in FIG. 2. When the receptacle 21 is to be filled, the U-shaped locking member 28 is pulled up, moved to a generally horizontal position, where it extends transversely to the plane of the end wall flap 31, thereby capturing the tab 31d which now extends through the opening 28f, with the inner surface of flap 31 being prevented from rotating about fold line 29b by the outwardly facing margin of leg 28c of locking flap 28. This locks the end wall flap 31 in position, and it, in turn, locks the side wall flaps 24c and 25c in position, being in parallel, contacting relationship. There is thereby formed a composite end wall of substantially triple thickness, with all of the three elements thereof extending from the top of the end wall to the bottom, to thereby provide a construction which will be sufficiently strong to withstand substantial loading in the generally vertical direction, which occurs when filled containers 20 are stacked as shown in FIG. 1.

The top 22 is erected in substantially the same manner as the receptacle 21, with the top side walls 41 and 42 being folded so as to be perpendicular to the top panel 40, and the flaps 41b and 42b lying adjacent the top end wall 45. As shown in FIG. 7, the top end wall flap 47 has been folded, so as to extend upwardly with the tab 47b extending through the opening 44 in the top panel 40, capturing between it and the top end wall 45 the top side wall flaps 42b and 41b, the former of which may be seen in FIG. 7 since these two side wall flaps are substantially coplanar. The flap 45a has been folded so as to pass through the opening 47a, and when the top 22 was placed upon the receptacle 21, the in-folding of the flap 47a causes it to pass also through the openings 24e and 25e in the receptacle, and also through the

opening in the wall 27 formed by movement of the locking member 28. The locking member 28 is shown in the same position as in FIG. 6A. Consequently, the erected and locked receptacle 21, after having been filled, has the top 22 applied to it, with interengagement by virtue of the flap 45a. Consequently, when the filled container 20 is to be lifted, fingers may be passed into the opening at either end of the top 21, engaging the locking flaps 45a, so that lifting will be of both the top 22 and receptacle 21, with security and strength.

Referring now to FIG. 8, there may be seen in cross section the side walls 24 and 25, and end walls 27 and 27' of a first receptacle, with its bottom 23 resting upon the top panel 40 of a top 22 of a container 20 therebeneath. The receptacle which comprises the bottom 23 is positioned on the top 22, and is held in position by the tabs 41a and 42a of the top 22, and by the tabs 26 of the underneath receptacle 21, which latter extend through the openings 43 of the top panel 40 of the underneath container. The tabs 41a, 42a and 26 are so positioned that in any position which the upper receptacle 21 can occupy between them, there will be some registration of the openings 36 in the bottom 23 with the openings in the top panel 40 therebeneath. In the case of such products as clams, where clams containing a substantial amount of water are placed in the wax impregnated receptacles 21, this registry of the openings will permit water to drain through an entire stack of filled receptacles, such as shown in FIG. 1. This is also shown in FIG. 1, where the tabs 26 are seen outwardly of the superposed receptacle 20, and where there may also be seen a tab 41a. It will be noted, also, that the tabs 30 are adjacent tabs 26, to thereby provide a strong, composite tab structure.

The container 20 may be made of strong corrugated paper board, wax impregnated, and shipped in flat condition. Both the receptacle 21 and top 22 may be erected by the user, without stitching equipment. A plurality of the receptacles 21 may be nested, as shown in FIG. 2, and may be filled with water-containing material, such as clams, and then the top applied, for subsequent stacking and draining. The containers 20 provided are strong, due in part to the construction of the three-element end walls. When nested, the locking members do not interfere with the close nesting of the receptacles 21, shown in FIG. 2, and when prepared for receiving material, the locking members are moved to locking position, so as to provide a strong, interlocked receptacle. When the top is applied, lifting of the entire container is assured, due to the interengagement of the flaps of the top end walls with the receptacle.

Referring now to FIGS. 9-11, there is shown therein another embodiment, designated 50, of a container in accordance with the present invention. The container 50 differs from the container 20 principally by the provision of an integral top or closure. Thus, referring to FIG. 11, there may be seen a blank for the container 50, having a bottom 53, side walls 54 and 55, side wall flaps 54c and 55c at one end, and side wall flaps 54d and 55d at the other end. There are also provided end walls 57 and 57', with locking members 58, end wall flap 61 and tab 61d. Significant differences between the blank of FIG. 11 and the blank of FIG. 3 include the absence of tabs 26 on the blank 50 of FIG. 11, which extend from the side wall flaps of the blank 21, and the absence of tabs 30 from the end wall flap 61, which occur at the end wall flap 31 of blank 21.

The side wall 54 opposite the bottom 53 is bounded by a fold line 65, there being a corresponding fold line 65a at side wall 55. A panel 66 is outwardly of the fold line 65, there being a corresponding panel 66a outwardly of fold line 65a. Fold lines 67 and 67a separate the panels 66 and 66a from top flaps 67 and 67a, each of which is generally rectangular, each of which is provided with an inwardly directed locking slot 68, 68a at the edge opposite fold line 67, 67a.

The container 50 is erected in substantially the same manner as the container receptacle 21, with setting up of the side walls 54 and 55 and the end walls 57 and 57' to form a generally pyramidal container. The end wall flaps of the container 50 will be folded into position, one of them being adjacent a corresponding end wall, and the end wall flaps will be folded downwardly to overlie or capture the side wall flaps.

Referring now to FIG. 10, there is shown, in cross section, a plurality of containers 50 in nested condition, and there may be seen the side wall flap 54c and a part of the side wall flap 55c. There may also be seen a locking member 58, corresponding to locking member 28 of FIG. 5, as well as the tab 61d corresponding to tab 31d. The panels 66, 66a and top flaps 67 and 67a diverge upwardly and outwardly, and as is apparent, a plurality of such containers 50 nest within each other, ready for filling.

Referring now to FIG. 9, there is shown a bottom container 50 having a bottom 53 and side walls 54 and 55. The panels 66 and 66a extend downwardly inside the walls 54 and 55, being in adjacent, parallel, relationship thereto. The container 50 has been substantially filled, as with the clams c, to approximately the level of the lower ends of the panels 66 and 66a, defined by the fold lines 67 and 67a. The top flaps 68 and 68a each extends towards the opposite side wall of the container 50, so that the two top flaps 67 and 67a extend substantially across the top of the container 50 and serve to close it. These top flaps 67 and 67a will be seen to lie below the upper edges of the side walls 54 and 55, and they of course also lie below the upper edges of the end walls 57 and 57'. In practice, there will be an interlocking of the top flaps 67 and 67a, through utilization of the locking slots 68 and 68a, as is indicated in FIG. 9.

An upper container 50 will be seen resting on the lower container 50, being held in position in the stacking relationship due to the fact that the top flaps of the lower container are below the upper edges of the side and end walls, thereby providing a recessed top which will serve to prevent lateral sliding of a top container 50 on a bottom container 50, in any direction. Also, there will thereby be provided some registry of the various openings, of generally circular or semi-circular shape, shown in FIG. 11, so that there may be drainage of water from an upper container entirely through a stack of containers, and out of the bottom container.

The container 50 hereinabove described has the advantage of being strong, due in part to the three-element end wall structure, and may be erected by interlocking, and without the use of stitching equipment. It may be stored in nested condition, and when filled, may be stacked. Erection of the container, and closure thereof may be readily accomplished, without using tools or other equipment.

It will be obvious to those skilled in the art that various changes may be made without departing from the

spirit of the invention, and therefore the invention is not limited to what is shown in the drawings and described in the specification but only as indicated in the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A container comprising a bottom and side walls and end walls upstanding therefrom, a side wall flap connected with a side wall and disposed inwardly of said end wall, said end wall and flap being in adjacent parallel relationship, an opening in said side wall flap, a locking member having first leg means extending from said end wall and through said opening in said side wall flap and having a second leg transverse thereto, said second leg lying inwardly of said side wall flap and spaced therefrom to provide an opening between said second leg and said side wall flap, said end wall having a flap connected to the upper margin thereof and depending interiorly of said side wall flap, said end wall flap having a tab extending into said last mentioned opening and captured by said second leg of said locking member.
2. The container of claim 1, wherein the axis of said second leg is substantially parallel to said bottom, and said tab depends from said end wall panel flap.
3. The container of claim 2, wherein said first leg means comprises a pair of spaced parallel legs, said locking member being substantially U-shaped.
4. The container of claim 2, wherein the outer end of said first leg means is integral with said end wall.
5. The container of claim 1, wherein said locking member is movable from a first position in which said second leg is adjacent to said side wall flap to said position in which said second leg captures said tab.
6. The container of claim 5, wherein said second leg in the first position of said locking member is lower than said first leg means.
7. The container of claim 5, said side walls and end walls being outwardly inclined to provide for resting of a plurality of said containers with said locking member in said first position thereof.
8. The container of claim 1, said container comprising a receptacle, and a top therefor, said top comprising a top panel and depending side and end walls outwardly of said side and end walls of said receptacle, said receptacle having a hand receiving opening in each said end wall adjacent the upper margin thereof, said top having a hand receiving opening in each of the end walls thereof in alignment with the hand receiving openings of the said receptacle end walls, and locking flap means on each top end wall extending through each of the hand receiving openings of said top end wall and the hand receiving openings of the receptacle end walls.
9. The container of claim 8, said locking flap means lying at the upper margins of said hand receiving openings.
10. The container of claim 1, said container comprising a receptacle, and a top therefor, said top comprising a top panel and depending side and end walls, said top panel having slots therein inwardly of the end walls thereof,

said receptacle end walls having tabs extending upwardly therefrom, through said slots in said top panel and above the upper surface of said top panel.

11. The container of claim 10, said side walls of said top having tabs extending therefrom above the upper surface of said top panel.

12. The container of claim 1, said container comprising a receptacle and a top therefor,

said top comprising a top panel and depending side and end walls,

said side walls of said top having tabs extending therefrom above the upper surface of said top panel.

13. The container of claim 1, wherein each said end wall is bounded by edges extending upwardly and inwardly from said bottom to a level intermediate the top and bottom of said end walls, said edges then curving outwardly and upwardly to the top corners of said end wall.

14. The container of claim 1, wherein said side walls each has a panel connected to the upper edges thereof and extending downwardly inside said container, a top flap connected to the panel and extending toward the opposite side wall, the top flaps of the two side walls extending substantially across and closing the top of said container, said top flaps lying below the upper edges of said side and end walls.

15. The container of claim 14, wherein said top flaps are provided with interlocking slot means at the free

edges thereof.

16. A shipping container for liquid-associated products comprising:

a bottom and peripheral walls upstanding from said bottom,

means defining a top spaced from and generally parallel to said bottom,

aperture means in said bottom,

aperture means in said top defining means, and

positioning means for aligning said bottom aperture

means of an upper container with said top defining

aperture means of a lower container when an upper container bottom is placed on a lower container

top defining means,

whereby to assure fluid communication between the interiors of a plurality of said containers when stacked.

17. The shipping container of claim 16, wherein said shipping container comprises a lower receptacle and a said top defining means comprises a separate top, and said positioning means comprises a plurality of upstanding positioning tabs extending above the upper horizontal surface of said top.

18. The shipping container of claim 16, wherein said top defining means is integral with at least one said wall and is closer to said bottom than the upper margins of said walls, said walls above said top defining means comprising said positioning means.

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