

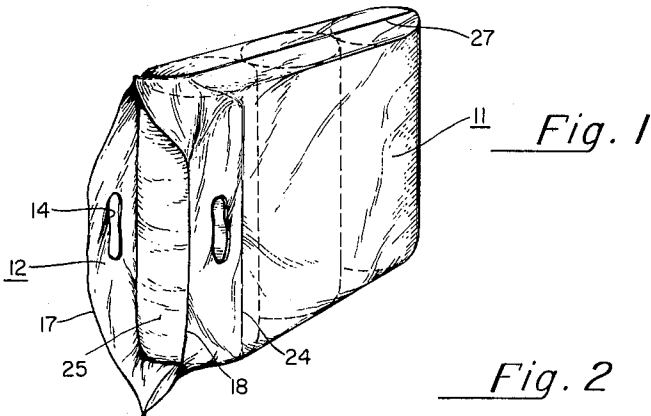
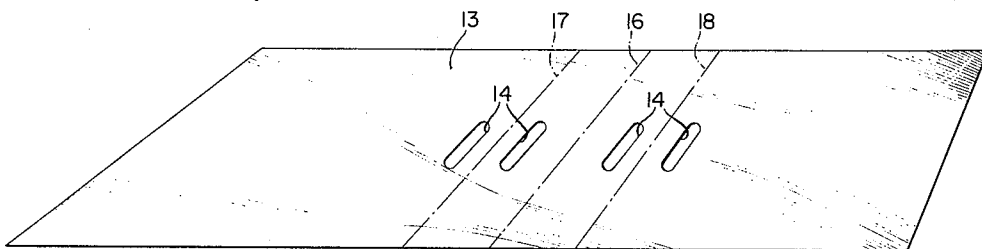
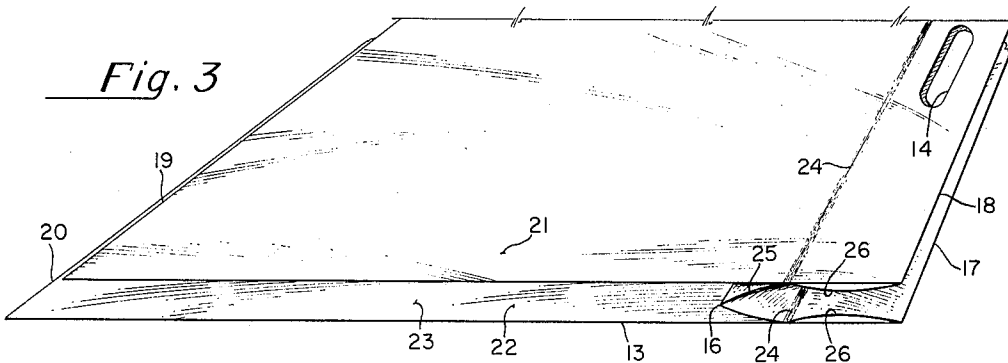
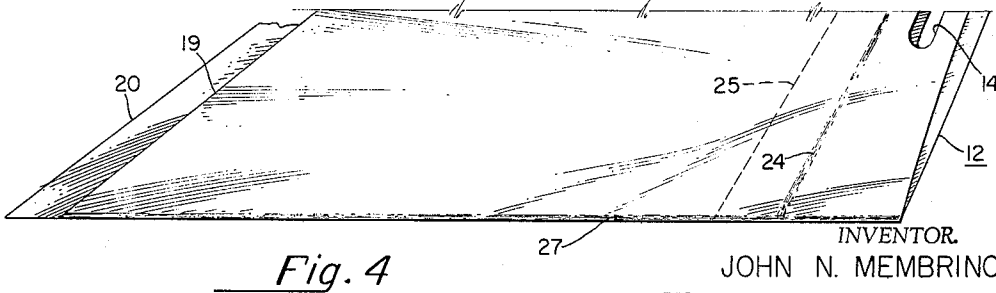
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MERCHANDISE PACKAGE

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3,240,420

MERCHANDISE PACKAGE

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5 Claims. (Cl. 229—54)

This invention relates to wrappers and packages in which merchandise is packaged for sale. More particularly, the invention relates to a wrapper having an integral handle structure by which the package and the merchandise therein may be carried from the market place.

It has long been recognized that considerable convenience can be afforded a purchaser of a bulky package by equipping the package with a carrying handle. Generally, in the past, such handles were fabricated separately and affixed to the package and, consequently, added considerable cost to the merchandise.

It is the principal object of this invention to provide a package in which the handle is an integral part of the package and formed from the same sheet material as that from which the wrapper is formed.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a package wherein the integrally formed handle structure is of strong and reliable construction notwithstanding the wrapper being formed from thin, relatively fragile, sheet material. This objective is important in today's market place because many products can be economically and attractively packaged in wrappers made of thin plastic film which ordinarily, at least in single-ply thicknesses, does not possess sufficient strength to serve as a handle for carrying the package of merchandise.

These and other objects as well as the various features and advantages of the invention are described in greater detail in the following description in which reference is made to the accompanying drawings forming a part hereof and wherein:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a merchandise package embodying this invention;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a blank of sheet material from which the wrapper for the package illustrated in FIG. 1 is made;

FIG. 3 is a fragmentary perspective view on an enlarged scale illustrating the manner in which the blank of FIG. 2 is folded and secured to form the unitary wrapper-handle structure of this invention; and,

FIG. 4 is a view similar to FIG. 3 illustrating a merchandise package as it appears prior to insertion of the merchandise.

The package illustrated in FIG. 1 and designated generally by the reference numeral 11 is of the type suitable for merchandise household items, such as roll towels and roll toilet tissue. With the increasing practice of marketing such products in multiple count packages, the packages have become larger and bulkier so that the purchaser will appreciate the convenience of having a handle on the package with which to pick up and carry the merchandise. In accordance with this invention package 11 is equipped at one end with a multiple-ply handle structure designated generally by reference numeral 12.

Wrapper 11 with integral handle structure 12 is preferably formed from a single sheet 13 of flexible material illustrated in blank form in FIG. 2. Sheet 13 may be made from any material commonly used for wrapping merchandise, such as paper, but preferably is thin thermoplastic material, such as polyethylene plastic film. Thin polyethylene of a thickness of 1 to 2 mills can be printed for decorative purposes and has the advantage of being

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heat sealable to itself. The latter characteristic permits wrappers to be quickly and economically fabricated from the material. The blank of polyethylene sheet 13 is rectangular in configuration and may be punched to provide a series of aligned openings 14 which ultimately will serve as finger grip openings for the handle 12 of the finished package.

The blank is formed into a wrapper by first folding sheet 13 along three transverse fold lines, indicated by dotted lines 16, 17 and 18 in FIG. 2, which lie in a region of the sheet intermediate the ends of the sheet. Folds 17 and 18 are the same but are opposite to fold 16 so as to provide a four-ply thickness of sheet 13 at the closed end of the wrapper as shown in FIG. 3. It will be noted that the ends of sheet 13, identified by numerals 19 and 20, extend a substantial distance beyond the inner fold 16 and the two plies of folded sheet 13 form front and rear walls, indicated respectively at 21 and 22, which provide a wrapper body 23 for receiving merchandise. Sheet ends 19 and 20 are preferably displaced from each other so that an extension of one wall, wall 22, serves as a flap to facilitate opening the wrapper for the insertion of merchandise.

Referring again to FIG. 3, the inwardly folded intermediate region of sheet 13 at the closed end of the wrapper, i.e., the inner plies in the four-ply region of the wrapper, are secured to the outer walls to which they are contiguous along lines 24 which are parallel to and lie between fold line 16 and fold lines 17 and 18. If the wrapper is made of thermoplastic material this line of securement 24 is preferably made by heat sealing the inner plies to the outer plies. It is particularly to be noted that the line of securement or heat seal does not attach the two inner plies to each other. This technique of fabrication is necessary because the inner plies serve to form a gusset portion 25 when the package is opened to receive merchandise, as well as handle region reinforcing flaps 26 which extend from the lines of securement 24 outwardly to fold lines 18 and 17 respectively.

Depending upon the packaging method and equipment to be used, it is possible that the wrapper would be fed into a wrapping operation in the form in which it is illustrated in FIG. 3 and that the wrapping operation would include insertion of merchandise in the body 23 of the wrapper and securement of wrapper walls 21 and 22 around the merchandise.

It has been found more convenient for most applications to perform a further operation on the wrapper by which the opposite contiguous edges of front and rear walls 21 and 22 are secured together as indicated at 27 to convert the body portion of the wrapper to tubular form. Again, if sheet 13 is a thermoplastic material, the securement along lines 27 is preferably effected by means of heat sealing. The wrapper in this form may conveniently be stored in flat condition, but readily opened by separating edges 19 and 20 of folded sheet 13 for insertion of merchandise.

It will be noted that the several openings 14 in the four plies of material of the handle portion of the wrapper are in alignment when the sheet 13 is folded as described above, so that the several openings become, in effect, a single finger or hand grip opening for the handle portion of the wrapper. One of the particular advantages associated with formation of an integral handle in the manner of this invention is the strength and durability of the handle portion which results from having four plies of sheet material in the region of the handle opening 14. A sheet of 1½ mils polyethylene plastic may be entirely adequate from a strength standpoint to serve as the main body of the package 11. Such a sheet would be entirely inadequate from a strength standpoint to serve as a handle in a single-ply or perhaps even in a two-ply

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handle structure. It would be uneconomical to make the entire package of heavier wrapper material, but by utilizing the wrapper structure of this invention it is possible to provide an integral four-ply handle structure which will have sufficient strength to support the merchandise contained within the package.

The structure of this improved wrapper offers the further advantage of providing an integral gusset 25 for the closed end of the wrapper to enhance the neatness and appearance of the end closure even when bulky objects, such as roll towels, are confined in the wrapper.

While the invention has been described with reference to preferred embodiments thereof, it is to be understood that certain changes and modifications may be made in these embodiments without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A merchandise wrapper comprising a single sheet of flexible material, said sheet being folded upon itself along a first line intermediate the ends of the sheet and reversely folded along second and third lines equidistantly spaced from and on opposite sides of said first fold line to provide a four-ply thickness of material, the ends of said sheet extending substantially beyond said first fold line and providing a two-ply body for wrapping merchandise, each of the inner plies of material in the four-ply region of the wrapper being secured to the outer ply of material contiguous thereto along a line parallel to and intermediate said first fold line and the second and third fold lines, and spaced from said first fold line, there being a finger opening provided which extends through each ply of the four-ply region between said line of securement and said second and third fold lines.

2. A merchandise wrapper as set forth in claim 1 in which the opposite contiguous edges of the folded sheet are secured together to provide a tubular body in the wrapper.

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3. A merchandise wrapper as set forth in claim 2 in which the flexible material is thermoplastic and securement of the sheet is effected by heat sealing.

4. A merchandise package comprising a single sheet of flexible material which is folded upon itself to provide front and rear walls and an end closure for the package, an intermediate region of said sheet connecting said front and rear walls being folded inwardly between said walls to provide a reinforcing flap adjacent the inner surface of each of said walls and a gusset section connecting said flaps, each of said flaps being secured to the wall adjacent thereto along the juncture line between the flap and said gusset section, said front and rear walls being secured to each other along common opposite edges to form a tubular merchandise confining body, said walls at the end opposite the closed end of the package being initially open to provide unrestricted access to said body from said opposite end for supplying merchandise thereto, said flaps and the wall portions adjacent thereto providing a four-ply handle structure for the package and being provided with finger openings for that purpose.

5. A merchandise package as set forth in claim 4 in which said sheet is made of thermoplastic material and securement of the sheets is effected by heat sealing.

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