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**LIFE PRESERVER STORAGE UNIT AND SEAT
FOR MOTOR BOATS**

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4 Claims. (Cl. 9—7)

This invention relates to boat and yacht accessories and more particularly to a novel life preserver storage container and seat for use on pleasure and fishing boats or the like.

In boats of the character mentioned the amount of usable area, particularly the deck area, is quite limited. As a consequence, it has long been recognized that the available space must be utilized to the greatest advantage. In line with this general recognition of space limitations accessory deck and cabin equipment has for years been carefully designed with an eye toward compactness and a minimum of waste space. As this compactness in design and maximum utilization of cabin and deck space for the housing of bunks, bed linens, food storage, clothing, galley and the other comforts of home has proceeded to provide maximum free space for movement over the decks and through the cabins, the proper and handy storage of life preservers has been largely neglected.

However, an adequate number of life preservers of approved design, in addition to being a necessity of the careful boat owner or skipper, are in most localities required by law. As a consequence, it has been the general practice to store life preservers in the few cubbyhole spaces usually found below deck and forward of the cabin area, in ceiling racks in the cabin and the underside of deck roofs, in locker cabinets in the cabin and like out of the way spaces where they are difficult, if not impossible, to quickly reach in an emergency. As a consequence and in spite of laws requiring boat owners and skippers to provide readily accessible life preservers on pleasure and fishing craft, life preservers when urgently needed have not been accessible to boat occupants.

It, accordingly, is the primary object of this invention to provide a readily accessible life preserver storage container which cooperates with a plurality of folded approved type life preservers to form a bench-like portable seat that may be comfortably used on deck or in a cabin to replace built in benches or seats or to provide additional seating.

A further important object of this invention is to provide a life preserver storage facility in the form of a padded seat free of fixed attachments to any part of the boat structure and of a size for convenient handling by one person in an emergency yet of sufficient weight to assure its reasonable stability on deck or in a cabin.

Another object of this invention is to provide a life preserver storage container which cooperates with a plurality of folded approved type life preservers to form a large sized hassock type padded seat that is water resistant and, in event of immersion in the seas, will float and support an overboard victim while the container is opened to gain access to the stored life preservers.

A still further object of the present invention is to provide a water resistant canvas enclosure having a partially zippered top opening through which a plurality of approved type life preservers may be readily inserted in side-by-side folded position to form a portable seat and yet which may be quickly opened to permit removal of the life preservers in an emergency.

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Still another object of this invention is to provide a combination life preserver container and seat wherein said container is substantially filled with standard type balsa or cork life jackets folded and arranged to form the supporting element of the seat.

Another object of this invention is to provide an inexpensive life preserver container and seat which may be quickly and easily produced.

Other objects and advantages will be apparent from the following description when read in connection with the appended claims and accompanying drawings wherein:

Figure 1 is a perspective view showing a preferred form of a combined seat and life preserver container made in accordance with this invention and adapted to store six life jackets arranged in stacked side-by-side relation;

Figure 2 is a vertical longitudinal sectional view through the combined seat and container of Figure 1;

Figure 3 is a transverse vertical sectional view of the combined seat and container of Figure 1 showing the top in open position;

Figure 4 is an enlarged detail of the joint between the sidewalls and top and bottom wall panels; and

Figure 5 is a transverse sectional view like Figure 3 taken through a modified type of container adapted to store eight life jackets stacked therein in two sets of four each lying in a horizontal position.

Figure 6 is a side view of a folded life jacket.

Referring to the drawings wherein like reference numerals indicate the same parts through the several figures of the drawings, the numeral 10 designates the combined seat and storage container generally. The outer covering of storage container 10 is made up of a length of any suitable water resistant flexible material 11, such as light weight canvas, the ends of which are overlapped and double stitched as indicated at 12 in Figure 1 to form an open ended rectangular wall structure having a length slightly more than 23 inches, a height approximately 25 inches and a width from front to back of slightly more than 13 inches. To provide a neat finish outer joint the selvage edge of the outer overlapping end is preferably folded upon itself so as to lie between the opposite overlapped edges in well known manner. The open ends of this rectangular wall structure are closed respectively by a top wall 13 and a bottom wall 14 of suitable rectangular pieces of material of the character used in making the wall structure suitably stitched to the marginal ends of the wall structure as indicated by numeral 15 in Figure 1. While any suitable joining procedure may be employed, a neat appearing finished seam is preferably provided by folding the selvage edges of the sidewall material 11 and the top and bottom wall panels inwardly as shown in Figure 4 to form four thicknesses of material to be stitched together by stitching 15. Such a seam structure provides an exceedingly strong seam and a seam reasonably impervious to ingress of the elements.

The vertical front wall 16 and the opposite end walls 17 and 18, at a point a substantial distance below top wall 13 are slit, preferably but not necessarily in a plane paralleling the top and bottom walls, to a point short of the opposite ends of the back wall and fitted with a zipper fastener 19 of suitable length and preferably non-corrodible material to provide an access opening 22 from end to end across the front wall 16 and along substantially the full depth of both end walls 17 and 18. When the zipper is actuated to disconnect the zipper fastener 19, the top wall 13 and its depending front and side wall sections may be swung back generally as indicated in Figure 3 to permit ready insertion and removal of the life preservers or jackets 24 which are of standard construction. The unslitted portions of end walls 17 and 18 and the portion of the back wall generally indicated by numeral 25 act as a hinge in opening of the outer covering,

Handles 30 formed of double thicknesses of the covering material having inwardly turned selvage edges 31 stitched together by stitching 32 and of suitable length are stitched to end walls 17 and 18 below the plane of access opening 22 as indicated at 33 to facilitate handling and movement of combined seat and storage container 10 from place to place. The particular location of these handles or one such handle, it will be appreciated, assures that the weight of the unit, including the stored life preserver jackets will not be imposed on the zipper fastener 19. Thus distortion and injury of the zipper fastener is avoided in normal usage of the unit.

Each life jacket 24 is made up of four blocks of balsa wood or cork roughly 2 inches thick, 5¼ inches wide and 10 inches long and four blocks of balsa wood or cork roughly 2 inches thick, 5¼ inches wide and 7 inches long enclosed in a suitable water resistant canvas or like covering reinforced by bands 24 of suitable webbing in a manner well known to the art. Referring for the moment to Figure 6 wherein a folded life jacket appears, as there shown two short covered balsa wood or cork blocks 27 (note dotted lines) are disposed between two long covered balsa wood or cork blocks 28 to form arm holes 29 in the web of covering material spanning the space between blocks 28 and above blocks 27.

While Figure 2 illustrates alternate jackets 24 stacked with arm openings 29 opposite short blocks 27 this particular stacking arrangement is not required so long as horizontal stacking is resorted to assuring substantial filling of the canvas covering and protective housing of the life jackets. Such housing of the jackets in the water resistant covers not only protects them from the elements but prevents the jacket covering and reinforcing bands from being scuffed by frictional movement against surfaces of the boat and eliminates the danger of stressing the coverings between blocks resulting in tearing the jackets apart as often happens when they lay around loose under bunks, in cubbyhole storage areas and even ceiling racks.

Completion of the combined seat and storage container 10 is effected by placing a supporting seat panel 34 of plywood or other suitable rigid material having a foam rubber or like seat cushion 36 secured thereto as by rubber cement or rivets or the like (not shown) at each corner on top of the stacked life jackets and enclosing the contents by zippering the covering closed. When the top 25 is closed the life preservers or jackets 24, panel 34 and cushion 36 are closely confined and held in place so as to permit use of the storage container as a portable seat.

While the combined seat and storage container 10 may be made of any suitable size, experience with the standard life jackets of today and customer requirements for life jackets suggests the desirability of two standard sizes, one to house six jackets in superposed stacked relation as depicted by Figures 1 to 3 of the drawings and the other to house eight jackets in two side-by-side stacked sets of four as depicted by Figure 5 of the drawings.

In these sizes, the combined seat and storage containers will be roughly of the following dimensions when a covering container of suitably loose yet position retaining fit is provided:

	Six Jacket Storage, inches	Eight Jacket Storage, inches
Length.....	23	45
Width.....	13	13
Height.....	25	18

Assuming the combined seat and storage container 10 is being used on deck as a seat and an emergency

requiring use of life jackets occurs, it is a simple matter to quickly unzip the cover and secure access to the life jackets. If the emergency does not permit even time to unzip the covering the unit can be simply tossed overboard and opened in the water. Since opening of the top section of the covering exposes a substantial area of the stacked jackets and substantially the whole of the two top horizontally stacked jackets and as the covering only loosely encloses the jackets, it will be appreciated that the jackets are readily removable.

The invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit of essential characteristics thereof. The present embodiments are therefore to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, the scope of the invention being indicated by the appended claims rather than by the foregoing description, and all changes which come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are therefore intended to be embraced therein.

What is claimed and desired to be secured by United States Letters Patent is:

1. A portable and buoyant combined multiple life preserver storage unit and boat seat having sufficient weight to remain normally stationary on a deck of a boat and being sufficiently light that it may be manually jettisoned from such a boat in an emergency, said combined container and boat seat comprising a flexible water resistant covering having front, back, bottom, top and opposed side walls and an access opening extending along the front and substantially the entire width of the opposed side walls whereby the portion of said covering above said opening is hinged to the remainder thereof; a zipper fastener made of non-corrosive material mounted in said access opening and adapted to selectively open and close said access opening; said front, back and side walls being of such height that said top surface is spaced from said bottom surface sufficiently to form a comfortable seat for a person sitting thereon, a multiplicity of life jackets disposed in said covering material in superposed relation to substantially fill said covering; said life jackets being formed of rigid blocks of buoyant material interconnected by a covering material; and a supporting rigid seat panel having a cushion layer on one face disposed on top of said stacked life jackets with the seat cushion facing upwardly, said life jackets and said seat panel upon closing of said access opening being retained by said flexible covering against wear producing substantial relative shifting movement so that said life jackets furnish the supporting structure for the seat panel whereby said life preserver storage container is adapted for use as a boat seat.

2. The combination defined in claim 1 wherein said covering is of a size to receive not more than eight life jackets and is provided at its ends with handle elements adapting said combined container and seat for ready handling.

3. The combined storage unit and boat seat defined in claim 1 wherein said water resistant covering is formed of canvas.

4. The combined storage unit and boat seat defined in claim 1 wherein the buoyant material of said rigid blocks is selected from the group consisting of cork and balsa wood.

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