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(54) **STOCKING RELEASABLY ATTACHABLE TO FOOTWEAR**

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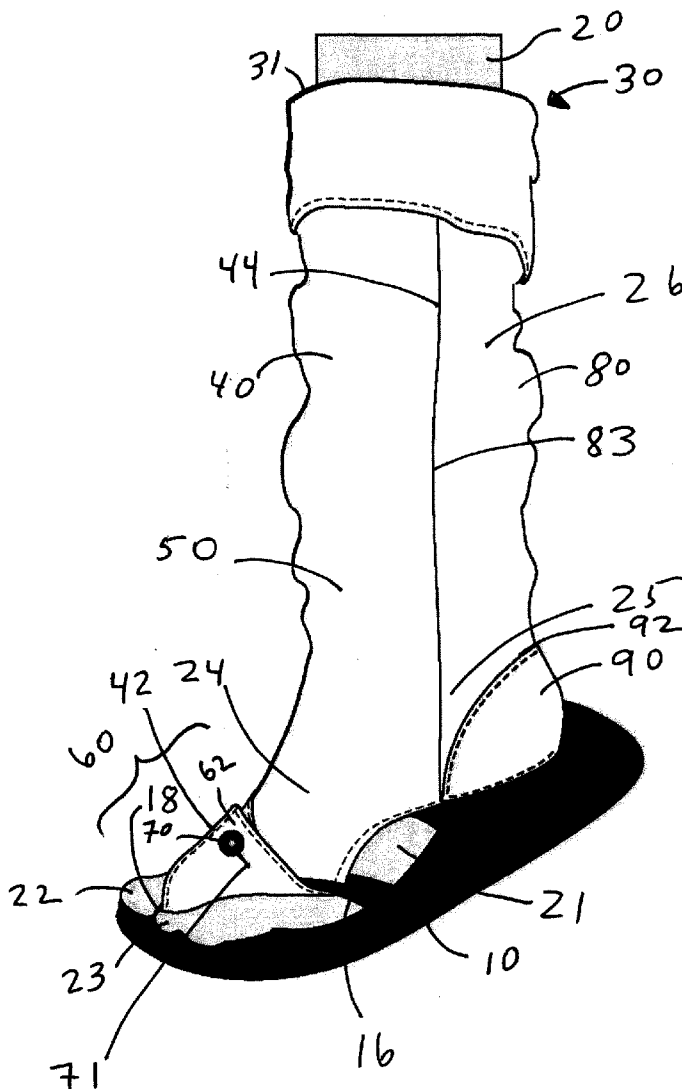
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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Hosiery, such as stockings, are releasably and removably attachable to footwear such as flip-flop type sandals, and/or serve to secure a flip-flop adjacent the foot while the flip-flop is being worn. An instep covering front flap is provided, covering portions of the top of the foot while leaving toes exposed. The stockings include cooperating fastening elements configured to secure the stocking to the V-strap portion of the flip-flop.

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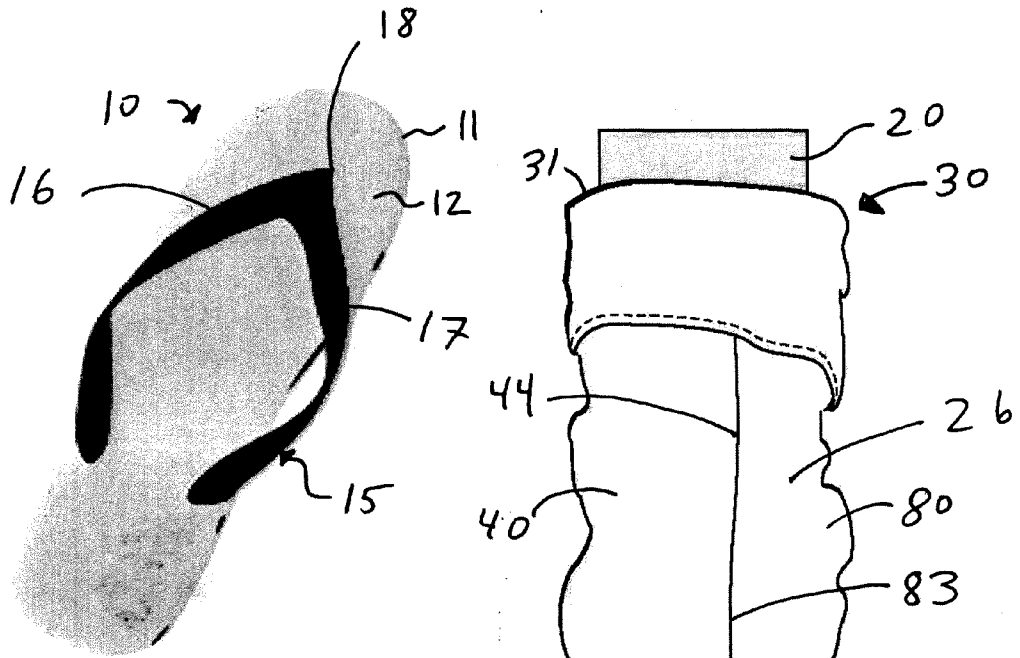


FIG. 1  
PRIOR ART

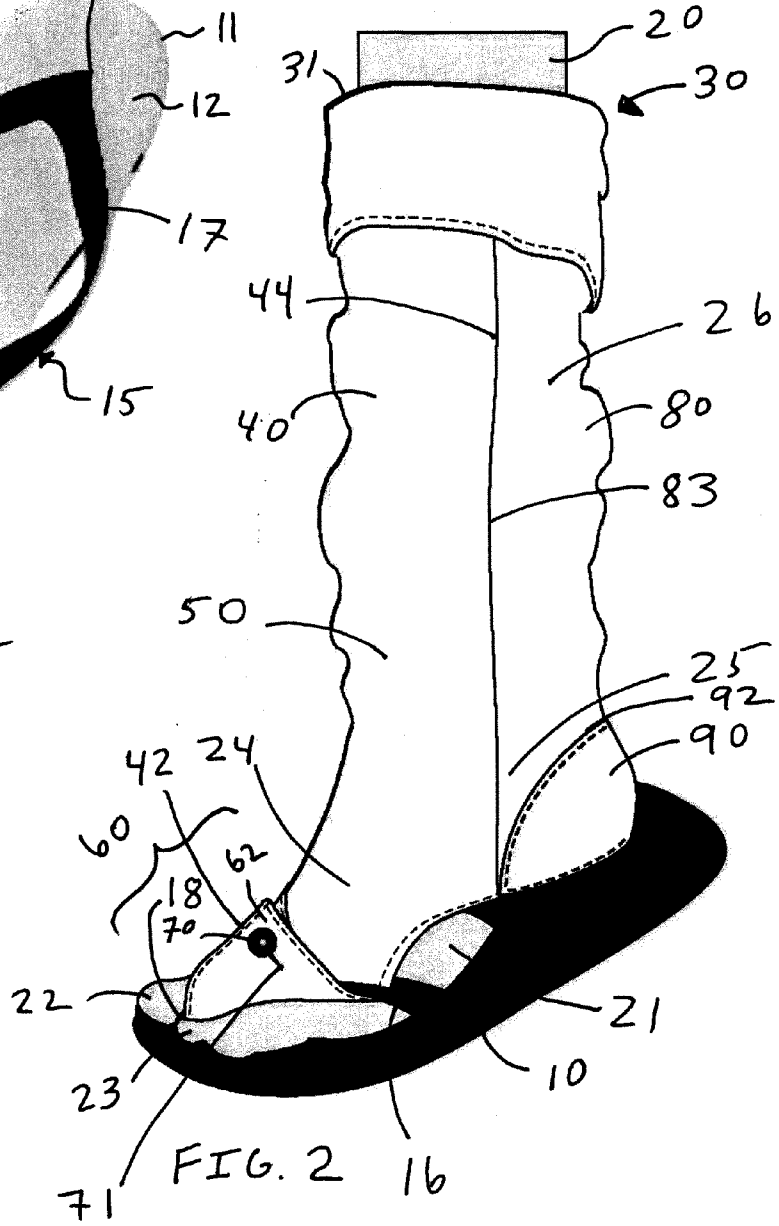
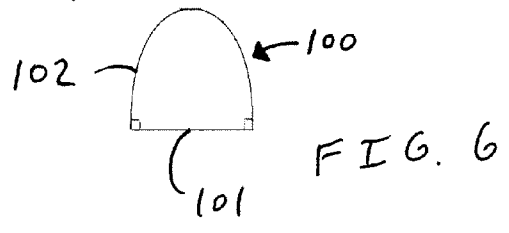
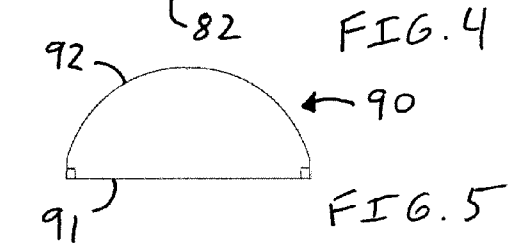
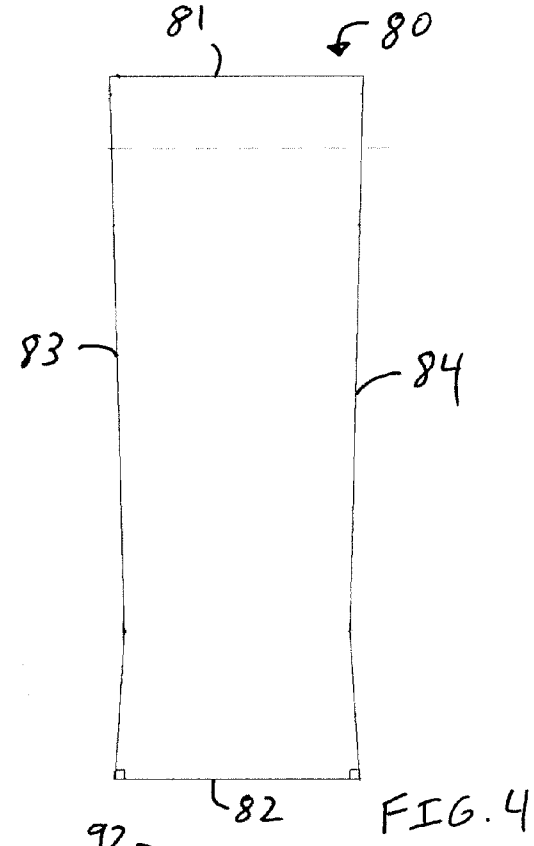
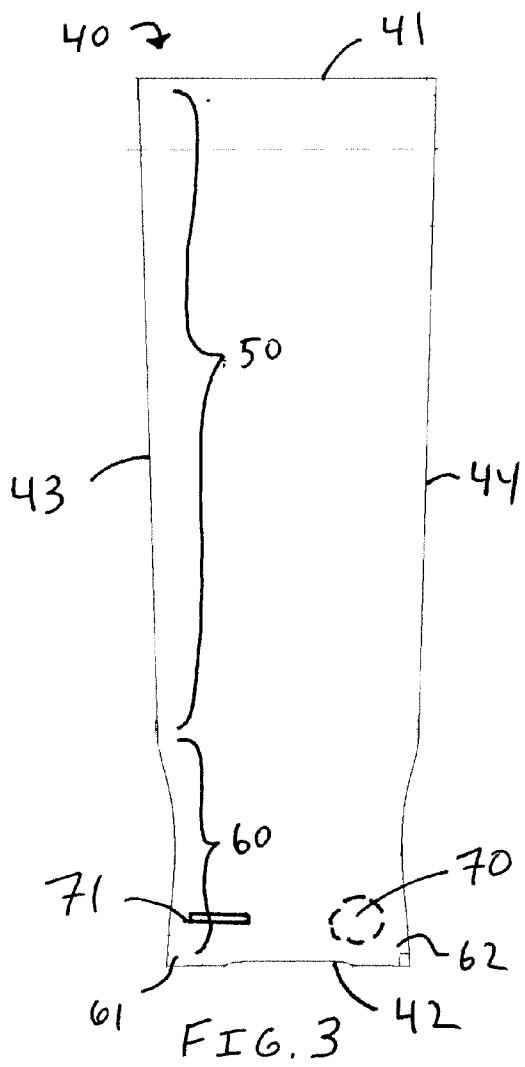


FIG. 2



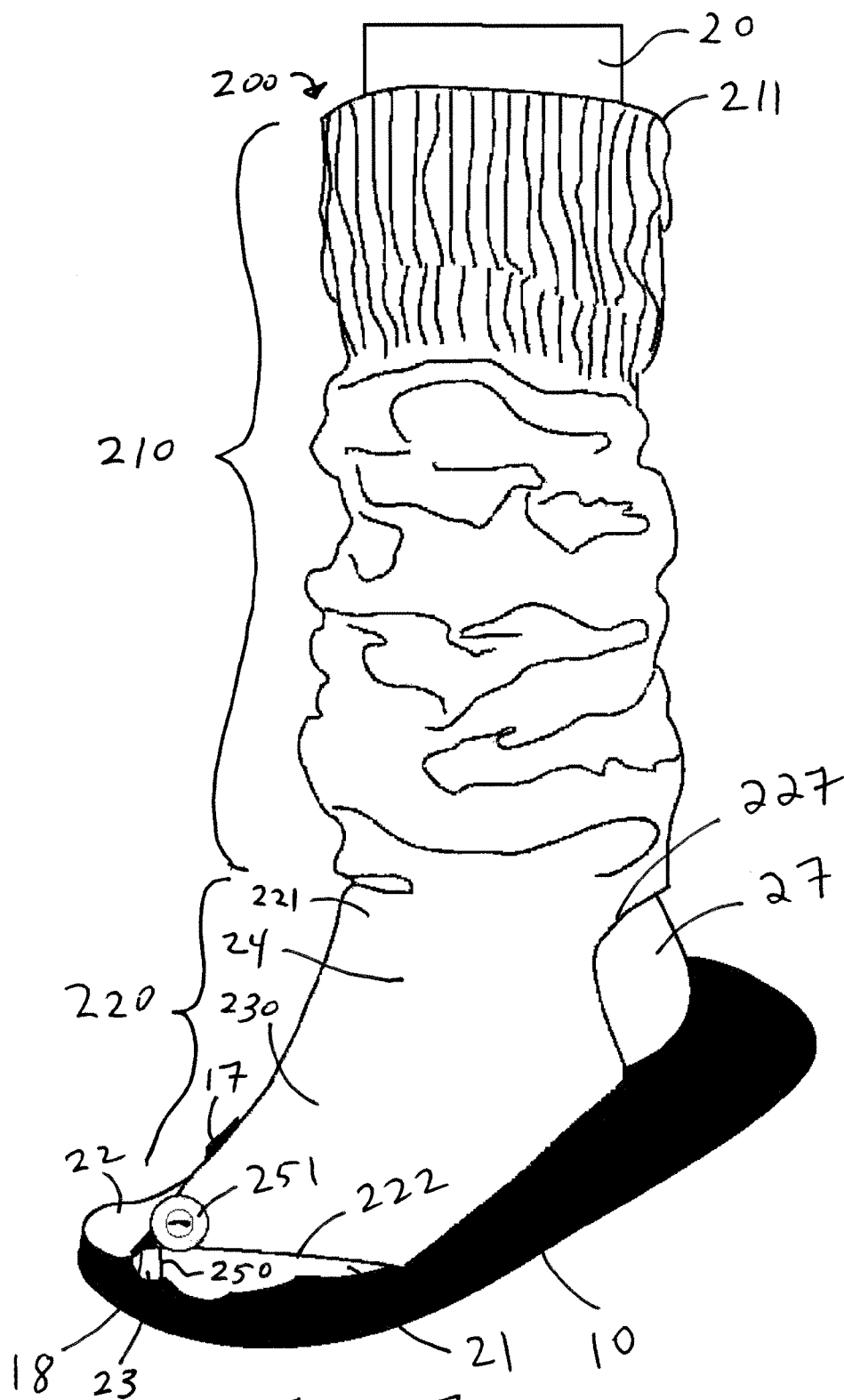


FIG. 7

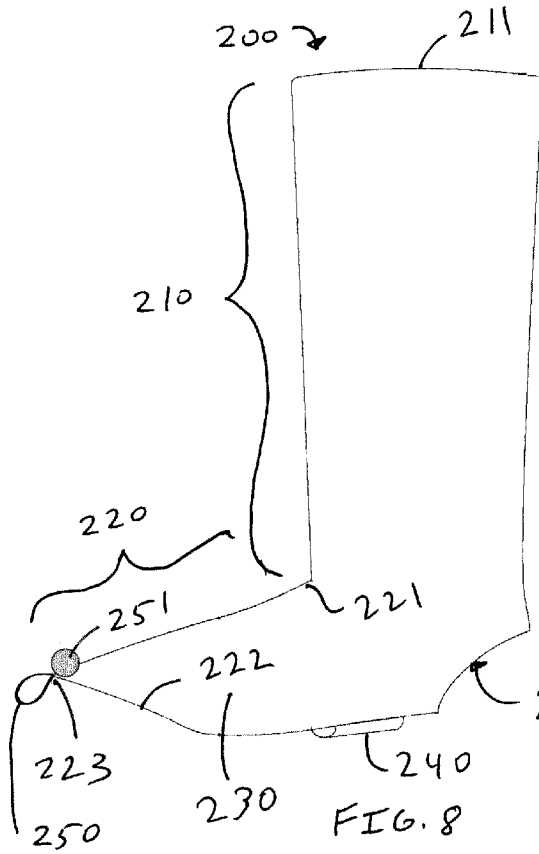


FIG. 8



FIG. 9

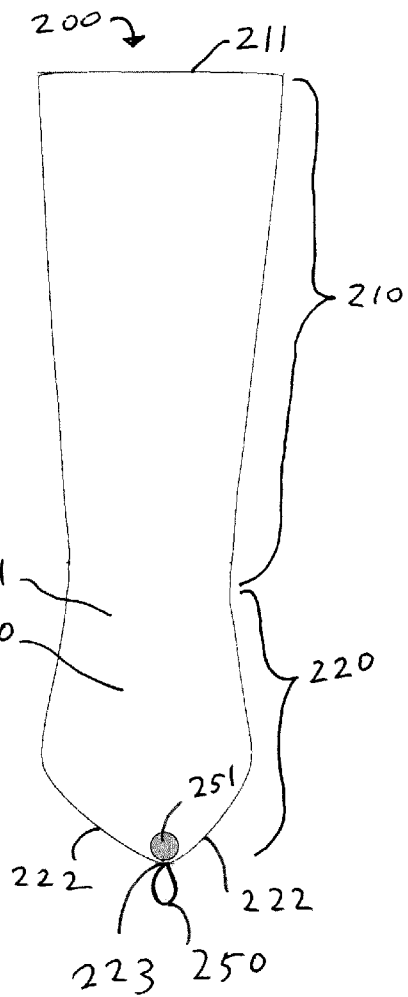


FIG. 10

**STOCKING RELEASABLY ATTACHABLE TO FOOTWEAR**

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

**[0001]** 1. Field of the Invention

**[0002]** The present invention relates, in general, to stockings and hosiery and, more particularly, to a stocking that is releasably and removably attachable to footwear, such as thong-style sandals, commonly known as “flip-flops”.

**[0003]** 2. General Background of the Invention

**[0004]** While they have been in existence for quite some time, flip-flop sandals have become increasingly popular in recent years. While flip-flops are traditionally worn during the summer months and in warmer weather, there are many who, for purposes of comfort, fashion, or both, prefer to wear summer in cooler weather and, indeed, year round.

**[0005]** Accordingly, there are those who may benefit from wearing flip-flops in combination with stockings and hosiery, both for warmth, and for fashion. While flip-flops may potentially work with conventional hosiery, such as socks, there are many who do not find such a combination aesthetically pleasing.

**BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

**[0006]** The present invention comprises hosiery, such as stockings, that are releasably and removably attachable to footwear such as flip-flops, and/or which serve to secure footwear such as flip-flops adjacent the foot while the flip-flop is being worn. The stockings may be of a length sufficient to completely cover the calf, extending further over the knee and at least a portion of the thigh, serving as a leg warmer. Alternatively, the stocking may extend any desired height above the ankle but terminate below the knee, serving as a sock.

**[0007]** In one embodiment of the present invention, the stocking includes a generally cylindrical leg covering region, and an instep covering front flap extending a bottom front edge of the leg covering region. Each distal corner of the front flap includes a cooperating fastening element. In operation, the stocking is worn first, with leg covering region, depending upon its length, surrounding at least the ankle and lower leg of the wearer. Next, the flip-flop is worn in the conventional manner, with the toes slid underneath the strap members or arms of the V-strap of the flip-flop, and with the apex of the V-strap positioned between the big and second toes of the wearer. Next, the opposing corners of the instep covering front flap are drawn forward, between the foot and the arms of the V-strap. Each opposing corner is then wrapped over the top of its associate V-strap arm, and brought towards the other corner of the flap. Finally, the cooperating fastening elements are brought together and affixed to each other. In this manner, The V-strap and, in turn, the remainder of the flip-flop, are secured to the stocking and, in turn, are secured in place adjacent the wearer’s foot, while, at the same time, leaving a significant portion of the toes exposed and in view.

**[0008]** In this embodiment, the cooperating fastening elements may comprise, for example, a button and buttonhole. Alternatively, the cooperating fastening elements may comprise male and female portions of a snap fastener. Other types of cooperating fastener element combinations contemplated by the present invention involve hook-and-loop type fasten-

ers, laces that can be tied together, a button in combination with a looped string or cord, and a pair of mating hooked members.

**[0009]** In another embodiment of the present invention, a substantially tubular leg covering region is again provided. In this embodiment, the instep covering front flap takes on the form of a tapering partial foot covering region, having a loop of string, cord, or an elastic material at the tapered distal end. In operation, the stocking is again worn first, with leg covering region, depending upon its length, surrounding at least the ankle and lower leg of the wearer. Next, the flip-flop is again worn in the convention manner, with the toes slid underneath the strap members or arms of the V-strap of the flip-flop, and with the apex of the V-strap positioned between the big and second toes of the wearer. Next, the loop at the distal end of the partial foot covering region is stretched over the top of the V-strap, and over and around one of the wearer’s toes, such as the second or third toe, where the loop remains in place. Inasmuch as a portion of the V-strap is thus sandwiched between the wearer’s foot and the partial foot covering region, this, in turn, serves to secure the flip-flop in place adjacent the wearer’s foot, while, at the same time, leaving a significant portion of the toes exposed and in view.

**[0010]** In a variation of this second embodiment, a cooperating fastening element, such as a button, is provided proximate the attachment point of the looped material to the distal end of the instep covering front flap. In operation, the loop is passed underneath one of the arms of the V-strap, wrapped around the strap back towards the leg, and placed around the button, thus securing the loop to the button. Moreover, it is also contemplated that a plurality of such loops may be provided, with at least one loop being passed underneath and back around each of the separate arms or strap members of the V-strap. Each loop may be secured to its own button attached to the instep covering front flap. Alternatively, all of the loops may be secured to the same, central button. Moreover, as in the first described embodiment, a variety of cooperating fastening members, other than loops and buttons, may alternatively be used. Such cooperating fastening members may comprise, for example, cooperating hook-and-loop tape segments, male and female snap members, eyelets and hooks, buttons and buttonholes, etc.

**[0011]** One potential benefit of this releasable attachment of the flip-flop adjacent the foot by means of the present invention is that the requirement to repetitively curl the toes while walking, in order to maintain the flip-flop in attachment to the foot, is lessened or eliminated. Flip-flop wearers tend to grip the shoe with their toes while walking, forcing them to take shorter steps. This modification in gait may potentially produce muscle imbalances and improper joint mechanics. It is believed that the additional support provided by the attachment of the flip-flop to a stocking may lessen the modifications made to the gait by the wearer, and thus reduce the risk of associated injuries.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS**

**[0012]** FIG. 1 is a top plan view of a conventional thong-style sandal or flip-flop;

**[0013]** FIG. 2 is an elevated side perspective view of a first embodiment of a stocking according to the present invention, and showing, in particular, the stocking attached to a flip-flop while being worn about the leg and foot;

[0014] FIG. 3 is a top plan view of the front panel of the stocking of FIG. 2;

[0015] FIG. 4 is a to plan view of the rear panel of the stocking of FIG. 2;

[0016] FIG. 5 is a top plan view of the back heel panel of the stocking of FIG. 2;

[0017] FIG. 6 is a top plan view of the bottom heel panel of the stocking of FIG. 2;

[0018] FIG. 7 is an elevated side perspective view of a second embodiment of a stocking according to the present invention, and showing, in particular, the stocking attached to a flip-flop while being worn about the leg and foot;

[0019] FIG. 8 is an elevated side view of the stocking of FIG. 7;

[0020] FIG. 9 is a top plan view of the bottom strap portion of the stocking of FIG. 7; and

[0021] FIG. 10 is an elevated front view of the stocking of FIG. 7.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0022] While the present invention is susceptible of embodiment in many different forms, there is shown in the drawings and will herein be described in detail, several specific embodiments, with the understanding that the present disclosure is intended as an exemplification of the principles of the present invention and is not intended to limit the invention to the embodiments illustrated.

[0023] As shown in FIG. 1, conventional flip-flop 10 includes exposed sole 11 having top surface 12, and V-strap 15. V-strap 15 includes first strap member or arm 16, and second strap member or arm 17. Both strap members 16 and 17 are joined together at apex 18, where V-strap 15 attaches to top surface 12 of sole 11, typically via a cylindrical stem. Distal ends of strap members 16 and 17 may likewise attach to top surface 12 of sole 11, as shown in FIG. 1. Alternatively, distal ends of strap members may attach to sole 11 along opposing side edges of sole 11. In another embodiment of a conventional sandal, a single, relatively wide strap is disposed transversely across the upper toe or lower instep region of the foot.

[0024] A first embodiment of the present stocking, that is releasably and removably attachable to at least a portion of a flip-flop, is shown in FIGS. 2-6 as comprising stocking 30 having front panel 40, rear panel 80, back heel portion 90, and bottom heel portion 100. Referring to FIG. 3, front panel 40 includes top edge 41, bottom edge 42, first side edge 43, and second side edge 44. A slightly tapered upper portion of front panel 40 forms a part of generally cylindrical leg covering region 50. A somewhat more tapered lower portion of front panel 40 forms instep covering front flap 60, having first distal corner 61 and second distal corner 62. Button 70 is sewn or otherwise attached to an inner, reverse side of front flap 60 proximate second corner 62, and forms a first fastening element associated with stocking 30. Buttonhole 71 is disposed through a portion of front flap 60 proximate first corner 61, and thus forms a second fastening element associated with stocking 30.

[0025] Referring to FIG. 4, rear panel 80 is substantially rectangular, with slightly tapered side edges, and comprises top edge 81, bottom edge 82, first side edge 83, and second side edge 84. Rear panel 80 is sewn or otherwise attached to front panel 40, with top edges 41 and 81 aligned to form substantially circular top opening 31 of leg covering region 50, with a first longitudinal seam running proximate first side edge 43 and second side edge 84, and with a second longitudinal seam running proximate second side edge 44 and first side edge 83, thus forming a substantially cylindrical leg

covering region 50. Alternatively, substantially cylindrical leg covering 50 may be formed in a continuous, seamless manner. Moreover, zero, one, or two seams may be employed proximate substantially circular top opening 31.

[0026] Referring to FIG. 5, back heel panel 90 is substantially semicircular in configuration, and includes base edge 91 and semicircular edge 92. As shown in FIG. 2, back heel panel may optionally be attached for additional strength and reinforcement proximate the heel portion of stocking 30, by stitching or otherwise attaching back heel panel to rear panel 80, with base edge 91 of back heel panel 90 substantially aligned with bottom edge 82 of rear panel 80.

[0027] Referring to FIG. 6, bottom heel panel 100 is substantially semielliptical in configuration, and includes base edge 101 and semielliptical edge 102. If desired, in order to provide additional bottom heel coverage and additional securing of a portion stocking 30 in place proximate the heel of the wearer. Heel panel 100 may be stitched or otherwise attached to rear panel 80, with semielliptical edge 102 substantially aligned with bottom edge 82 of rear panel 80.

[0028] Referring to FIG. 2, in operation, stocking 30 is first worn, by drawing top opening 31 over foot 21, beyond instep 24 thereof, past ankle 25 and adjacent leg 20, until leg covering region 50 surrounds leg 20, and instep covering front flap 60 extends over the top of foot 21, from instep 24 towards the toes, including big toe 22 and second toe 23. Next, foot 21 is inserted into flip-flop 10, with the toes slid underneath first strap member 16 and second strap member 17 of V-strap 15, such that toes 22 and 23 are disposed on opposing sides of apex 18 of V-strap 15. Next, bottom edge 42 of instep covering front flap 60 is drawn towards the toes and underneath V-strap 15, with second corner 62 drawn forward adjacent the foot and underneath first strap member 16, and first corner 61 drawn forward adjacent the foot and underneath second strap member 17. Next, a generally triangular portion of front flap 60 proximate first corner 61 is folded back over the top surface of second strap member 17, exposing first fastening element, or button 70, proximate instep 24 of foot 21. Similarly, another generally triangular portion of front flap 60 proximate second corner 62 is folded back over the top surface of first strap member 16, such that second fastening element, or buttonhole 71, engages button 70, with button 70 being inserted through buttonhole 71 to secure second corner 62 to first corner 61. This, in turn, secures flip-flop 10, generally, to stocking 30, thus securing flip-flop 10 in position with foot 21 inserted therein. Undoing the foregoing steps in the reverse order serves to unattach flip-flop 10 from stocking 30. In this manner, stocking 30 is thus releasably attachable to and detachable from flip-flop 10.

[0029] Another embodiment of the present invention is shown in FIGS. 7-10 as comprising stocking 200, having generally cylindrical leg covering region 210, having a top opening at top edge 211 thereof. Partial foot covering region 220 extends forward from a bottom portion of leg covering region 210, and includes instep covering front flap 220. When stocking 200 is worn, the underside of the foot is generally left exposed, with the exception of the region covered by the transverse attachment, by sewing or other means of attachment, of elastic bottom strap 240 across opposing sides of instep covering flap 230. Optional heel cutout 227 is disposed proximate the junction of leg covering region 210 and partial foot covering region 220, if an exposed heel is desired. Alternatively, a heel panel, or a heel extension of either leg covering region 210 or partial foot covering region 220 may be provided to cover the heel.

[0030] As best seen in FIG. 10, partial foot covering region 220 includes proximal portion 221, instep covering front flap

230, and tapered edges 222, terminating at apex 223. A first fastening element, in the form of loop 250, is sewn or otherwise attached to front flap 230 proximate apex 223. A second fastening element, in the form of button 251, is sewn or otherwise attached to front flap 230, again proximate apex 223.

[0031] Referring to FIG. 7, stocking 200 is first worn, by drawing the top opening at top edge 211 over foot 21, beyond instep 24 thereof, past ankle 25 and adjacent leg 20, until leg covering region 210 surrounds leg 20, and instep covering front flap 230 extends over the top of foot 21, from instep 24 towards the toes, including big toe 22 and second toe 23. Next, foot 21 is inserted into flip-flop 10, with the toes slid underneath first strap member 16 and second strap member 17 of V-strap 15, such that toes 22 and 23 are disposed on opposing sides of apex 18 of V-strap 15. Next, first fastening element or loop 250 is drawn forward, underneath either first strap member 16 or second strap member 17 of V-strap 15, proximate apex 18. Next, loop 250 is wrapped around, back over the top of either first strap member 16 or second strap member 17, and is secured about second fastening element or button 251. This, in turn, secures flip-flop 10, generally, to stocking 200, thus securing flip-flop 10 in position with foot 21 inserted therein. Undoing the foregoing steps in the reverse order serves to unattach flip-flop 10 from stocking 200. In this manner, stocking 200 is thus releasably attachable to and detachable from flip-flop 10.

[0032] Various means of attachment to flip-flop 10, other than an elastic loop and button, may be employed in variation of this embodiment of the invention. For example, a length of material, having a buttonhole proximate a distal end, may instead be attached to apex 223, wrapped around a portion of V-strap 15, and attached to button 251. Hook-and-loop type fastening elements may alternatively be disposed at the distal end of such a strip of material, and in place of button 251. Male and female portions of a snap fastener may likewise be disposed at the distal end of such a strip of material, and in place of button 251. A hook may be disposed proximate apex 251 in place of a fastener, to engage and secure loop 250. Moreover, a plurality of any of the foregoing fastening elements may be employed, with at least one pair of such fasteners associated with each opposing tapered edge 222 of front flap 230. In this manner, loops or lengths of material may alternatively be simultaneously wrapped around both strap member 16 and strap member 17 of V-strap 15, thereby providing more balanced, enhanced securement, as compared to a single point of attachment.

[0033] Moreover, a variation of the embodiment of FIGS. 7-10 is also contemplated, wherein second fastening element or button 251 is omitted. In this embodiment, loop 250 is instead extended over V-strap 15 and is placed so as to encircle one of the toes, such as second toe 23. Moreover, a sufficient length of loop 250 may be provided, or loop 250 may be of a material of sufficient elasticity, so as to permit loop 250 to be wrapped one or more times completely around either first strap member 16 or second strap member 17, prior to attachment to one of the toes. This attachment of a distal end of instep covering front flap 230 over V-strap 15 and to one of the toes of the foot likewise serves to maintain flip-flop 10 in attachment to the foot. As in the previously discussed embodiments, a plurality of such loops 250 may be provided, for attachment to multiple toes, and/or for wrapping about both strap members of V-strap 15, providing enhanced securement of flip-flop 10 in place while being worn.

[0034] In the embodiments illustrated in FIGS. 2-10, the stocking of the present invention is in the form of a leg

warmer, extending up the leg approximately sixteen to eighteen inches, as measured from the bottom of the foot. Alternatively, the length of the stocking may be shortened to mid-calf, or to just above the ankle, in the configuration of a sock. Moreover, the general circumference and lengths of the stocking may be varied to accommodate various sized wearers, such as by matching established sock or shoe sizes.

[0035] The stockings of the present invention may be woven or knit from a variety of natural or synthetic materials, such as cotton, wool, polyester, nylon, Spandex®, or natural/synthetic blends. It is desirable that at least the portion of the stocking that partially covers the foot be sufficiently stretchable or elastic in nature to facilitate attachment of the stocking to the flip-flop while the stocking is being worn.

[0036] Many modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings. It is therefore to be understood that within the scope of the appended claims, the invention may be practiced other than as specifically described. Various modifications, changes and variations may be made in the arrangement, operation and details of construction of the invention disclosed herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. The present disclosure is intended to exemplify and not limit the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A stocking releasably and removably attachable to an article of footwear, the footwear having a strap having at least one strap member, the stocking comprising:

- a leg covering region;
  - a front flap region; and
  - at least one fastening element;
- wherein at least one of at least a portion of the front flap region and the at least one fastening element is configured to be disposed about the at least one strap member.

2. The stocking according to claim 1, wherein the at least one strap member comprises a V-strap having a first strap member and a second strap member, and the front flap region includes a first corner region wrappable around the first strap member and a second corner region wrappable around the second strap member.

3. The stocking according to claim 1, wherein the at least one fastening element comprises a first fastening element and a second fastening element, the first and second fastening elements being attachable to each other.

4. The stocking according to claim 2, wherein the at least one fastening element comprises a first fastening element proximate the first corner region and a second fastening element proximate the second corner region.

5. The stocking according to claim 4, wherein the first fastening element comprises a button and the second fastening element comprises a buttonhole.

6. The stocking according to claim 1, wherein the front flap region is substantially rectangular.

7. The stocking according to claim 1, wherein the at least one fastening element comprises a loop disposed proximate a distal end of the front flap region.

8. The stocking according to claim 7, further comprising a second fastening element comprising a button disposed proximate a distal end of the front flap region, the first fastening element and the second fastening element being attachable to each other.

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