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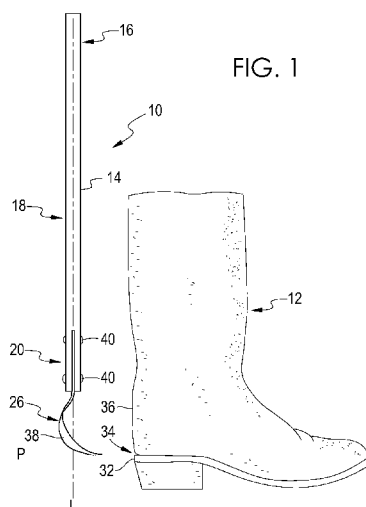
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(54) Title: APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR REMOVING FOOTWEAR



(57) Abstract: An apparatus and method is provided herein for removing footwear from a person's foot, wherein the footwear comprises an upper portion and a sole forming a heel and the upper portion is coupled to the heel so that a portion of an upper surface of the heel extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear. The apparatus includes an elongated member including a first end portion and a second end portion, wherein the first end portion is sized and configured to be grasped by the person's hand and the second end portion comprises an extended member forming a contoured surface sized and configured to be disposed on the portion of the upper surface of the heel which extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear.



APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR REMOVING FOOTWEAR

REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This is a continuation-in-part of co-pending and commonly owned U.S.
5 Application No. 12/384,656, filed June 1, 2009, the disclosure of which is incorporated
herein by reference in its entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] This invention relates to a method and apparatus for removing footwear from a
10 person's foot.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Footwear, such as shoes, boots and the like, are typically worn by those in
various industrial, hazardous, and/or outdoor settings. Further, such footwear may be
15 worn in inclement weather settings to avoid or at least reduce the exposure of the lower
extremities to the elements. In the aforementioned settings, undesirable material such as
mud, hazardous waste, chemicals, and the like may accumulate on the footwear. This
accumulation of undesirable material further complicates the removal of such footwear,
which may be inherently burdensome due to the structural characteristics of certain
20 footwear, e.g., boots. It would be advantageous to remove such footwear without the need
for the individual to contact the footwear with his or her hands, thereby reducing or
eliminating exposure to the undesirable material found on the footwear.

[0004] Those in the art have attempted to solve at least the aforementioned problems by
providing devices sized and configured to rest on the ground and aid in the removal of a
25 boot or other footwear from the individual's foot. However, some of these devices
accumulate the undesirable material from the footwear and may also be hard to sanitize
and store when not in use. Others in the art have provided handheld devices sized and
configured to grip the upper portion of the boot. These devices may apply pressure to the
person's foot causing discomfort. Additionally, constant application of the device to the
30 footwear may cause damage indicated by wear and/or discoloration to the upper portion of
the boot. There exists a continuing need for a footwear removal tool that is easily portable
and storable, yet may be used in an efficient and easy manner without damaging the
footwear.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The present invention is deemed to meet the foregoing need, amongst others, by providing in at least one aspect, a footwear removal apparatus capable of quickly and efficiently removing boots and similar footwear from a person's feet. The removable footwear apparatus is easily portable and, in particular embodiment, can be adapted to provide means for storing the apparatus when not in use.

[0006] One aspect of this invention is an apparatus for removing footwear from a person's foot, wherein the footwear comprises an upper portion and a sole forming a heel and the upper portion is coupled to the heel so that a portion of an upper surface of the heel extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear. The apparatus comprises an elongated member comprising a first end portion and a second end portion, wherein the first end portion is sized and configured to be grasped by the person's hand and the second end portion comprises an extended member forming a contoured surface sized and configured to be disposed on the portion of the upper surface of the heel which extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear.

[0007] Another aspect of this invention is a method for removing footwear from a person's foot, wherein the footwear comprises an upper portion and a sole forming a heel and the upper portion is coupled to the heel so that a portion of an upper surface of the heel extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear. The method comprises grasping a first portion of an elongated member, wherein the first end portion is sized and configured to be grasped by a person's hand and the elongated portion further comprising a second end portion comprising an extended member forming a contoured surface sized and configured to be disposed on the portion of the upper surface of the heel which extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear. The method also comprises disposing the contoured surface of the extended member on the portion of the upper surface of the heel which extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear and urging the elongated member and the extended member against the upper surface of the heel and away from the person, thereby removing at least a portion of the footwear from the foot of the person.

[0008] These and other features, advantages, and aspects of this invention will be still

further apparent from the ensuing detailed description, accompanying drawings, and appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

5 [0009] Fig. 1 is a side view of an apparatus for removing footwear in accordance with one aspect of the present invention.

[0010] Fig. 2 is a front view of the apparatus of Fig. 1.

[0011] Fig. 3 is a perspective view of an apparatus for removing footwear, wherein the apparatus is an integral unit in accordance with one aspect of the present invention.

10 [0012] Fig. 4 is a rear perspective view of the apparatus of Fig. 3 disposed on the upper surface of the heel extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear in accordance with one aspect of the present invention.

[0013] In each of the above figures, like numerals are used to refer to like or functionally like parts among the several figures.

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FURTHER DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0014] Illustrative implementations of the invention are described below as they might be employed in the construction and use of an apparatus and method for removing footwear from a person's foot according to at least one implementation of the present invention. In the interest of clarity and conciseness, not all trivial features of an actual implementation are described in this specification. It will be of course appreciated that in the development of such an actual implementation of the same, numerous implementation-specific decisions must be made to achieve the developers' specific goals, such as compliance with system-related and business-related constraints, budgets, and so forth, which will vary from one implementation to another. Moreover, it will be appreciated that such a development effort might be complex and time-consuming, but would nevertheless be a routine undertaking for those of ordinary skill in the art having the benefit of this disclosure.

25 [0015] The present invention relates to footwear comprising an upper portion and a sole forming a heel, wherein the upper portion is coupled to the heel so that a portion of an upper surface of the heel extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear. Typically, such footwear includes, for example, boots, galoshes, and the like. However, it should be appreciated that such footwear as disclosed

herein may include any footwear including such structural characteristics.

[0016] Turning now to the Figures, an apparatus **10** for removing a boot **12**, in accordance with one exemplary aspect of the present invention, is illustrated in Figs. 1 and 2. Apparatus **10** includes an elongated member, illustrated in Figs. 1 and 2 as an elongated shaft **14**. Elongated shaft **14** has a first end portion **16**, a mid portion **18**, and a second end portion **20**, wherein the first end portion forms a handle **22** sized and configured to allow a person (not shown) to grasp the handle in a manner discussed below. As shown in Fig. 2, handle **22** defines an aperture **24** sized and configured to receive a nail, hook, or the like and provides means for storing the apparatus **10** when not in use.

[0017] In Fig. 2, handle **22** of elongated shaft **14** is shown slightly enlarged, wherein a portion of elongated shaft is tapered from first end portion **16** to mid portion **18**. Although an enlarged handle is illustrated, it should be appreciated that the handle may take a variety of forms, and for example may be substantially equal in width and/or diameter to the mid portion and/or the second portion of the elongated shaft. The handle may include a rubber coating and/or form one or more additional grooves sized and configured to receive the contour of a person's hand. Alternatively, a cover or sheath may be disposed on the handle to provide gripping means. Optionally, the handle may be attached to first end portion of the elongated shaft. Such attachment may be effected by any convention means, including, e.g., bolts, rivets, screws, and the like.

[0018] The elongated shaft may form various shapes and sizes. As illustrated in Figs. 1 and 2, elongated shaft **14** is cylindrical. Optionally, when viewed from above along a longitudinal axis **L**, as shown in Fig. 1, of the elongated shaft, a cross section of the elongated shaft may form shapes, including, for example, a square, rectangle, triangle, oval, circle, and the like. Such examples are nonlimiting and it will be appreciated that other shapes may fall within the spirit and scope of the present invention. Additionally, the first end portion, mid portion, and second end portion may vary in shape. For example, the handle of the first end portion may be enlarged, and as such, the first end portion may form a shape varying from the mid portion and second end portion. Further, the length and width/diameter of the elongated shaft and handle may vary depending on the needs of the practitioner. The elongated shaft may be fixed or may be adjustable in nature. For example, an adjustable elongated shaft may be provided by a telescopic elongated shaft, wherein a second end portion and mid portion may be slidably received by an inner chamber of the first end portion.

[0019] The elongated shaft may be formed from various materials. Preferably, the elongated shaft is formed from plastic. Other suitable nonlimiting examples may include or aluminum, wood, and the like. The handle may be formed from the same material as the elongated shaft or may be formed from alternate materials. Such materials may include rubber, ceramic, and the like. Additionally, as referenced above, the handle may be coated or covered with rubber or other material. Such material may include leather, fabric, and the like.

[0020] As illustrated in Figs. 1, 2, and 4, second end portion 20 of elongated shaft 14 comprises an extended member 26 forming a contoured surface 28 sized and configured to be disposed on the portion of the upper surface 30 of the heel 32 which extends outwardly from the junction 34 between the heel and the upper portion 36 of boot 12. Extended member 26 further forms an arcuate main body portion 38 more clearly seen in Fig. 1. As more clearly shown in Fig. 4, main body portion 38 is sized and configured to receive at least a portion of upper portion 36 of boot 12 when contoured surface 28 is disposed on the portion of upper surface 30 of heel 32 which extends outwardly from junction 34 between heel 32 and upper portion 36 of footwear 12.

[0021] Contoured surface 28 is illustrated as curvilinear in Figs. 2, 3, and 4 and is preferably sized and configured to duplicate the contour of a portion of the upper surface 30 of heel 32. Contoured surface 28 lies in an imaginary plane P which preferably is substantially perpendicular to longitudinal axis L of elongated shaft 14 as shown in Fig. 1. Plane P may also be at an angle less than or greater than perpendicular to axis L, as long as the angle is no more than about 45° less than and no greater than about 45° more than perpendicular. It will be appreciated that the contoured surface does not have to substantially duplicate the contour of a portion of the upper surface of the heel and will still function as intended. The contoured surface may be, for example, V-shaped, C-shaped, or U-shaped as long as the contoured surface is sized and configured to be disposed on the upper surface of the heel. In certain aspects of the invention, however, it is preferable that the contoured surface be curvilinear, and even more preferably arcuate in shape.

[0022] The main body portion of the extended member is generally arcuate in shape. Alternatively, the main body portion may be nonarcuate and simply formed so as to itself form the contoured surface or be attached thereto. Preferably, however, it is sized and configured to receive at least a portion of the upper portion of the footwear therein.

Optionally, main body portion **38** may form at least one raised rib **44** to provide extra rigidity and structural support as shown in Fig. 2. Preferably, the main body portion of the extended member may be formed from stainless steel. Optionally, the main body portion may be formed from such suitable nonlimiting examples as aluminum, plastic, and the like.

[0023] As shown in Figs. 1 and 2, extended member **26** is coupled to second end portion **20** of elongated shaft **14** by fasteners **40**, illustrated as rivets. Optionally, the extended member may be coupled or attached to the second end portion of the elongated shaft by nuts and bolts, screws, gluing, welding, or any other fastening means known to those in the art. Alternatively, as illustrated in Fig. 3, extended member **26** may be integral with elongated shaft **14** such that the apparatus **10** is an integral unit **42** forming one continuous piece. Such an aspect may provide additional structural rigidity and support.

[0024] In one aspect of the present invention, a method is provided for removing footwear from a person's foot or feet using one aspect of the footwear removal apparatus as disclosed herein. In practicing this aspect of the invention, an individual grasps a handle of an elongated shaft of the apparatus, wherein the handle is sized and configured to be grasped by the individual's hand. The elongated shaft of the apparatus further comprises a second end portion comprising an extended member forming a contoured surface sized and configured to be disposed on the portion of the upper surface of the heel which extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear.

[0025] The individual disposes the contoured surface of the extended member on the portion of the upper surface of the heel which extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear and urges the elongated shaft and the extended member against the upper surface of the heel and away from the individual. As the individual urges the elongated shaft and the extended member against the upper surface of the heel and away from the individual, at least a portion of the footwear is removed from the foot of the person.

[0026] Except as may be expressly otherwise indicated, the article "a" or "an" if and as used herein is not intended to limit, and should not be construed as limiting, the description or a claim to a single element to which the article refers. Rather, the article "a" or "an" if and as used herein is intended to cover one or more such elements, unless the text expressly indicates otherwise.

[0027] Each and every patent or other publication or published document referred to in any portion of this specification is incorporated *in toto* into this disclosure by reference, as if fully set forth herein.

[0028] This invention is susceptible to considerable variation within the spirit and scope
5 of the appended claims.

CLAIMS:

1. An apparatus for removing footwear from a person's foot, wherein the footwear comprises an upper portion and a sole forming a heel and the upper portion is coupled to
5 the heel so that a portion of an upper surface of the heel extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear, the apparatus comprising
an elongated member comprising a first end portion and a second end portion,
wherein the first end portion is sized and configured to be grasped by the person's hand
and the second end portion comprises an extended member forming a contoured surface
10 sized and configured to be disposed on the portion of the upper surface of the heel which extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear.
2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the elongated member is an elongated shaft and the
15 first end portion forms a handle.
3. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the contoured surface is curvilinear.
4. The apparatus of claim 3 wherein the extended member is coupled to the second end
20 portion of the elongated member.
5. The apparatus of claim 3 wherein the extended member is integral with the second end portion of the elongated member.
- 25 6. The apparatus of claim 4 wherein a longitudinal axis of the elongated member is substantially perpendicular to a plane parallel to the contoured surface.
7. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the extended member forms a main body portion wherein the main body portion is sized and configured to receive at least a portion of the
30 upper portion of the footwear therein.
8. A method for removing footwear from a person's foot, wherein the footwear comprises an upper portion and a sole forming a heel and the upper portion is coupled to the heel so

that a portion of an upper surface of the heel extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear, the method comprising

5 grasping a first portion of an elongated member, wherein the first end portion is sized and configured to be grasped by a person's hand and the elongated portion further comprising a second end portion comprising an extended member forming a contoured surface sized and configured to be disposed on the portion of the upper surface of the heel which extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear;

10 disposing the contoured surface of the extended member on the portion of the upper surface of the heel which extends outwardly from the junction between the heel and the upper portion of the footwear; and

urging the elongated member and the extended member against the upper surface of the heel and away from the person, thereby removing at least a portion of the footwear from the foot of the person.

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9. The method of claim 8 wherein the elongated member is an elongated shaft and the first end portion forms a handle.

10. The method of claim 8 wherein the contoured surface is curvilinear.

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11. The method of claim 10 wherein the extended member is coupled to the second end portion of the elongated member.

25 12. The method of claim 10 wherein the extended member is integral with the second end portion of the elongated member.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein a longitudinal axis of the elongated member is substantially perpendicular to a plane parallel to the contoured surface.

30 14. The method of claim 12 wherein a longitudinal axis of the elongated member is substantially perpendicular to a plane parallel to the contoured surface.

