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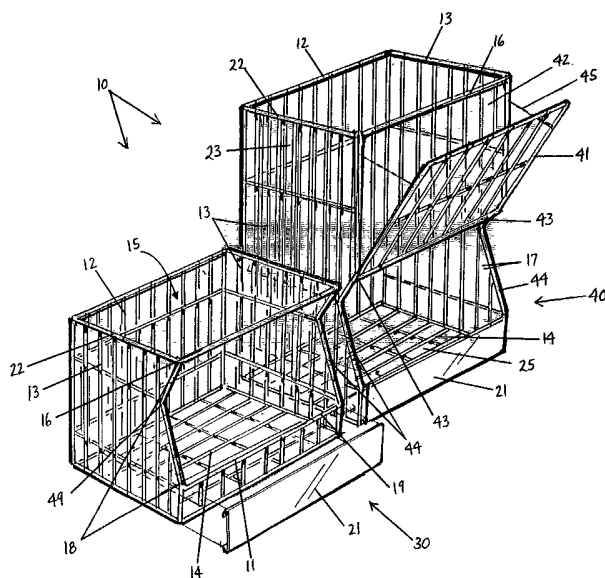
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(54) Title: **MERCHANDISE DISPLAY SYSTEM**



(57) **Abstract:** A system and method for displaying merchandise items includes stackable bins (10), each bin having a front wall (11), a back wall (12), two side walls (13), and a bottom (14) attached to each other to form containers for receiving and displaying merchandise items. The bins include an opening (17) in the front of the bin through which merchandise items can be easily placed and displayed in by merchants and removed from by consumers. Display bins can be short or tall. Tall bins can include an upper front door (41) for inspecting and re-stocking inventory. Embodiments of such a system and method provide for efficient utilization of space in display of merchandise items and for improved efficiency in stocking and maintaining inventory of higher sales volume items in a retail setting.



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MERCHANDISE DISPLAY SYSTEM

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

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This application claims priority to pending U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/365,245, filed March 18, 2002, which is incorporated herein in its entirety.

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

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The present invention relates to a system and method for displaying merchandise items. Embodiments of such a system and method provide for efficient utilization of space in display of merchandise items and for improved efficiency in stocking and maintaining inventory of higher sales volume items in a retail setting.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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In the retail sales industry, it is common to display goods for sale using a sales display, sales rack, or similar device for displaying the goods to customers. As merchandise items are purchased by customers, inventory on the displays must be re-stocked. In order to re-stock inventory on a timely basis to maintain an available supply for customers, inventory levels in retail displays require frequent monitoring. For items that are popular and sell quickly, monitoring and re-stocking of inventory in a display must be done with even greater frequency. Such monitoring and re-stocking inventory in a retail setting can be time and labor-intensive.

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Thus, there is a need for a system and method for displaying merchandise items that provides for efficiency in stocking and maintaining inventory of higher sales volume items in a retail setting.

In conventional display racks, a finite amount of vertical space is available for shelving. The more shelves that can be placed within this finite area, the better from a merchant's standpoint, because the merchant can display more product for sale. In addition, the more shelves within the area, the less frequently the merchant needs to restock the display rack. Therefore, merchants desire display racks having the maximum possible number of shelves which are able to fit within a defined area.

In the retail clothing industry, socks are typically packaged together using a hook or similar packaging means and hung on a peg or other display for hanging packages. One problem with the typical method of displaying items in such an arrangement is that a certain amount of space is required between each row and between each column of items to allow for placing and removing the items without disrupting items on adjacent pegs. In order for customers to reach between rows and columns to retrieve socks displayed in this fashion, a space of one to two inches generally is left between each row and column of displayed socks. As a result, a significant amount of space is used to display such items, which decreases the available retail floor space for other items.

There is also a need for a system and method for displaying merchandise items that provide for efficient utilization of space in display of merchandise items by eliminating space between displayed items.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a system and method for displaying merchandise items. Embodiments of such a system and method provide for efficient utilization of space in display of merchandise items and for improved efficiency in stocking and maintaining inventory of higher sales volume items in a retail setting.

In embodiments of the present invention, a merchandise display system comprises stackable bins, each bin having a front wall, a back wall, two side walls, and a bottom. The front, back, and side walls and bottom are attached to each other at approximately right angles to form cube-shaped and/or rectangular-shaped containers for receiving and displaying merchandise items. The tops of the side walls are connected to each other at the front with a top connecting member. In this configuration, such a bin is provided with an open top.

The front wall extends upwardly from the bottom and is substantially shorter than the back wall so as to provide an opening in the front of the bin. Merchandise items can be placed in and removed from the bin through the front opening. The distance between the top

of the front wall and the top connecting member is sufficient to maintain merchandise items such as packages of socks within the bin, while allowing easy access to the items by customers. In preferred embodiments for displaying socks, the vertical distance between the top of the front wall and the top connecting member is in the range of six to eight inches.

5 In embodiments, the front wall comprises a product information display panel for displaying information about the product and/or products contained within the bin. Product information can include graphic information such as brand name, size, and price.

10 The present invention includes bins of varying sizes. Generally, however, the bottoms and tops of the bins are the same dimensions so that bins can be stacked vertically each upon the other in an attractive and stable display unit that utilizes a minimum of space. In embodiments, the present invention includes a short bin and a tall bin. The back and side walls of a tall bin have a greater height than the back and side walls of a short bin. Preferably, a tall bin includes an upper front door positioned so as to cover the front opening of the upper portion of the bin.

15 In embodiments, the upper front door is attached with hinges to a point in the approximate middle of the front aspect of each of the side walls. The upper front door operates to open and close about the hinges. A tall bin having an openable upper front door preferably includes a means for maintaining the door in a closed position. Such means include a snap-lock mechanism, magnets, latches, hook-and-loop type fasteners, and/or other means for releasably closing the door. In preferred embodiments, a tall bin further includes a means for supporting an upper front door in a partially open position. Such a means may be a cord or small chain attached to at least one side wall and to the upper front door. Partially opening an upper front door on a tall bin, for example, to about a 45 degree angle, and supporting the door in such position helps keep merchandise items within the upper part of the tall bin while the door is open for inspection of inventory volume and re-stocking activities.

20 Such embodiments of tall bins allow retail personnel to maintain a larger on-floor stock of higher volume sales items, for example, stock keeping units (SKU's) having an historically higher volume of sales. A tall bin of the design of the present invention provides space to stock 40 percent or more of the same item than a short bin. As a result, a bin of the present invention decreases the labor required for re-stocking particularly high volume sales items by providing a larger volume of inventory in a bin. In addition, access to re-stock a higher volume item in a tall bin is facilitated by an openable upper front door.

In embodiments, the upper front door of a tall bin is covered with a solid covering. The covering may be decorative and/or contain product information and other marketing information, such as promotional news.

5 The configuration, or shape, of the front of the bins can take different forms in order to vary the appearance of the bins for marketing purposes. For example, in embodiments, the front aspect of the side walls are perpendicular to the bottom so as to provide a completely vertical appearance. In one preferred embodiment, the front aspect of the side walls are angled inward near the top of the side walls at about a 135 degree angle. In another preferred embodiment, the front aspect of the side walls are curved in a backward "S" shape. Such
10 shapes are aesthetically pleasing and allow easy access by customers to merchandise items displayed within the bins.

In the present invention, a system for displaying merchandise items comprises a modular display system. A bin can be mounted to a vertical display surface in a retail setting using appropriate means for attachment, the means for attachment depending on the type of
15 display surface available and the construction of the back wall of the bin. For example, wire bins can be connected to a vertical display surface using pegs, hooks, and/or clamps. A plurality of individual display bins can be mounted to a vertical display surface to create multiple rows and columns of display bins to display merchandise items contained therein. The plurality of bins can include various combinations of short bins and tall bins. In
20 preferred embodiments, a series of short bins is mounted to a display surface, and a tall bin is mounted directly on top of the top short bin. In this arrangement, access to an upper front door for inspecting inventory and/or re-stocking merchandise items is facilitated, and marketing information can be displayed on the upper front door covering for viewing at farther distances. Short and tall bins can be positioned at different locations in such a
25 modular system, depending on the desired location for high volume sales items. As such, embodiments of the present invention provide increased flexibility for varying space utilization for merchandise items on a retail floor according to volume of sales.

Embodiments of a modular merchandise display system of the present invention are stackable in direct contact in both vertical and horizontal directions. Such embodiments thus
30 eliminate the wasted space between separate rows and columns of merchandise items displayed on pegs and/or hooks, for example. As a result, bins of the present invention provide increased efficiency of space utilization in a retail setting.

In other embodiments, bins have a construction that is adaptable for displaying merchandise items on the outside of the bins. For example, bins constructed in the form of a wire cage can have hooks or pegs attached to the walls of the wire structure. Merchandise items can then be displayed on the hooks or pegs.

5 Merchandise display bins of the present invention can comprise any material suitable for use in display devices. Such material should be sturdy to withstand repeated use in a retail setting and that allows bins to be mounted to a vertical display surface in a stable manner and have other bins stacked on top. Preferably, containers comprise a wire construction. Plastic may also be used.

10 The present invention includes a method for displaying merchandise items. Embodiments of a such a method include providing stackable bins, each bin having a front wall, a back wall, two side walls, and a bottom. The front, back, and side walls and bottom are attached to each other at approximately right angles to form cube-shaped and/or rectangular-shaped containers for receiving and displaying merchandise items. The tops of
15 the side walls are connected to each other at the front with a top connecting member, which forms an open top. The front wall extends upwardly from the bottom and is substantially shorter than the back wall so as to provide an opening in the front of the bin. Bins can include short bins and tall bins, each bin having the same top and bottom dimensions so that the bins can be stacked vertically each upon the other in an attractive and stable display unit
20 that utilizes a minimum of space. The tall bin includes an upper front door positioned so as to cover the front opening of the upper portion of the bin above the top connecting member and is openable for inspecting and re-stocking inventory of merchandise therein. Methods of the present invention include displaying merchandise items using such a modular merchandise display system

25 In embodiments of methods of the present invention, individual packages of merchandise items are randomly placed within the bins. Individual packages of merchandise are placed and re-stocked into short bins either by inserting the packages through the front opening or into the open top if the short bin is located on the top of a stack of bins. Merchandise items are placed into the tall bins by inserting the packages through the front
30 opening, by opening the upper front door and inserting the packages through the opening, or by placing the items into the open top if the tall bin is located on the top of a stack of bins. The packages in the tall bin are then gravity-fed to the lower portion of the bin as merchandise in the lower portion is removed by customers for purchase.

Features of a merchandise display system of the present invention may be accomplished singularly, or in combination, in one or more of the embodiments of the present invention. As will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art, the present invention has wide utility in a number of applications as illustrated by the variety of features and advantages discussed below.

A merchandise display system of the present invention provides numerous advantages over prior merchandise display systems. For example, the present invention advantageously provides for improved efficiency in stocking and maintaining inventory of higher sales volume merchandise items in a retail setting. The present invention makes removal and restocking of merchandise items easy and uncomplicated. As a result, by providing for larger volume of inventory, such as high volume sales items, in a gravity-fed bin, the present invention decreases labor requirements in a retail setting.

Another advantage is that the present invention provides for efficient utilization of space in display of merchandise items by eliminating space between rows and columns used in conventional display of individual packages on pegs. Accordingly, the present invention allows greater shelf-space on a given footprint of valuable retail floor space. In addition, such a display system can be configured to receive and display packages of different sizes.

Another advantage is that the present invention permits a retailer to allocate specific amounts of space to a product category or specific merchandise item based on the item's volume of sales.

Still another advantage is that the present invention allows display of merchandise items so as to be easily seen, accessed, and removed by customers.

Still another advantage is that the present invention provides a display system that can be easily and quickly mounted in place and removed as necessary, and that can be readily attached to an existing structure and thus be placed at strategic locations.

Yet another advantage is that embodiments of bins of the present invention are simple and inexpensive to construct, for example, by manufacturing from wire merely by welding the various components together.

As will be realized by those of skill in the art, many different embodiments of a merchandise display system according to the present invention are possible. Additional uses, objects, advantages, and novel features of the invention are set forth in the detailed description that follows and will become more apparent to those skilled in the art upon examination of the following or by practice of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIGURE 1 is a perspective view of a short bin and a tall bin showing an open door on the tall bin in an embodiment of a merchandise display system of the present invention.

5 FIGURE 2 is a perspective view of a plurality of the short bins and tall bins of Fig. 1, as shown displayed in a retail setting in an embodiment of a merchandise display system of the present invention.

10 FIGURE 3 is a perspective view of a vertical stack of the combination of short bins and a tall bin shown in Fig. 2, showing pegs for displaying merchandise items on the exterior of the side walls of the display bins in an embodiment of a merchandise display system of the present invention.

15 FIGURE 4 is a perspective view of the vertical stack combination of short bins and a tall bin shown in Fig. 3, showing merchandise items displayed on pegs on the exterior of the side walls of the display bins in an embodiment of a merchandise display system of the present invention.

FIGURE 5 is a perspective view of a tall display bin having curved side walls on the front aspect of the bin and showing a curved door in open position in an embodiment of a merchandise display system of the present invention.

20 FIGURE 6 is a perspective view of a plurality of short and tall display bins having curved front aspects and curved doors, as shown displayed in a retail setting in an embodiment of a merchandise display system of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

25 Embodiments of the present invention provide a system and method for displaying merchandise items. Such embodiments are useful for providing efficient utilization of space in display of merchandise items. Embodiment of the present invention provide improved efficiency in stocking and maintaining inventory of higher sales volume items in a retail setting. Figures 1-6 show such embodiments.

30 Referring to the embodiment in Fig. 1, a merchandise display bin 10 includes a back wall 12, two side walls 13, and a bottom 14. The back wall 12, side walls 13, and bottom 14 are attached to each other at approximately right angles. Each of the side walls 13 have a top 22 and a front aspect 44. A top connecting member 16 connects the front aspect 44 at the top 22 of each of the side walls 13 to define an open top 15. A front wall 11 that is substantially

shorter than the back wall 12 extends upwardly from the bottom 14 to define a front opening 17. A product information display panel 21 is removably attached to the front wall 11. In such a configuration, the merchandise display bin 10 is adaptable to quickly receive and dispense merchandise items 24 (as shown in Figs. 2, 4, and 6).

5 The front wall 11 has a height sufficient to contain the merchandise items 24 for display. In embodiments, the height of the front wall 11 is less than 30 percent of the vertical distance 18 between the top 19 of the front wall 11 and the top connecting member 16 to allow access to the merchandise items 24 by consumers.

10 In embodiments of the present invention, the height of each of the back wall 12 and side walls 13 is equal to the width of the bottom 14 so that the merchandise display bin 10 is substantially cube-shaped, as shown by a short display bin 30. In other embodiments, the height of each of the back wall 12 and side walls 13 is greater than the width of the bottom 14 so that the merchandise display bin 10 is substantially rectangular-shaped, as shown by a tall display bin 40.

15 In another aspect of the present invention, the tall display bin 40 includes an openable upper front door 41 for covering and uncovering a front opening upper portion 42. The openable upper front door 41 is hingedly attached to the front aspect 44 of each of the side walls 13. The upper front door 41 allows inspection of an inventory volume of the merchandise items 24 within the tall display bin 40 while maintaining the items 24 within the display bin 40. The upper front door 41 also permits restocking the inventory of the merchandise items 24 through the upper portion 42 of the front opening 17 where room is available after consumers remove merchandise items 24 through the lower open front portion 25 of the display bin 40.

20 The tall display bin 40 includes a means for maintaining the upper front door in a closed position (not shown). The means for maintaining the upper front door in a closed position can be, for example, a snap-lock mechanism, a magnet, a latch, or a hook-and-loop type fastener. The tall display bin 40 further includes a means 45 for supporting the upper front door 41 in a partially open position. The means 45 for supporting the upper front door 41 in a partially open position can be a chain attached between the front aspect 44 of at least one side wall 13 and the upper front door 41. Alternatively, the means 45 can be a cord or other rigid or semi-rigid attachment means.

25 In embodiments, such as shown in Figs. 2 and 4, the upper front door 41 is covered with a solid covering 46. The upper front door 41 solid covering 46 can comprise a product

information display panel 21. In addition, the solid covering 46 can be decorative and/or contain other marketing information.

5 Display bins 10 of the present invention may have side walls 13 that have a front aspect 44 that is angled 49 inward near the top 22 of the side walls 13. As shown in the embodiment in Fig. 5, the front aspect 44 of the side walls 13 are curved 48, in a backward “S” shape. In other embodiments, the front aspect 44 of the side walls 13 are perpendicular to the bottom 14.

Figs. 3 and 4 show embodiments of display bins in the present invention having a construction that is adaptable for displaying the merchandise items 24 on the exterior of the display bins 30, 40. For example, the display bins 30, 40 include a means 50 for displaying the merchandise items 24 on an exterior of the side walls 13 of the display bins 30, 40.

As shown in Figs. 1-6, embodiments of the present invention can comprise a wire construction.

15 Embodiments of the present invention include a merchandise display system comprising a plurality of display bins 10. Each display bin 10 includes a back wall 12, two side walls 13, and a bottom 14. The back wall 12, side walls 13, and bottom 14 are attach to each other at approximately right angles. Each of the side walls 13 has a top 22 and a front aspect 44. A top connecting member 16 connects the front aspect 44 at the top 22 of each of the side walls 13 to define an open top 15. A front wall 11 that is substantially shorter than the back wall 12 extends upwardly from the bottom 14 to define a front opening 17. The front wall 11 has a height sufficient to contain a plurality of merchandise items 24 for display. A product information display panel 21 is removably attached to the front wall 11. The vertical distance 18 between the top 19 of the front wall 11 and the top connecting member 16 is sufficient to allow access to the merchandise items 24 by consumers, such that the merchandise display bin 10 is adaptable to quickly receive and dispense the merchandise items 24.

20 In such an embodiment of a merchandise display system, the height of each of the back wall 12 and side walls 13 in a first portion of the plurality of display bins 10 is equal to the width of the bottom 14 so that the first portion of display bins 10 is substantially cube-shaped, defining a short display bin 30. The height of each of the back wall 12 and side walls 13 in a second portion of the plurality of display bins 10 is greater than the width of the bottom 14 so that the second portion of display bins 10 is substantially rectangular-shaped, defining a tall display bin 40. The tall display bin 40 further includes an openable upper front

door 41 for covering and uncovering the front opening upper portion 42. In particular embodiments of a merchandise display system, the volume of the tall display bin 40 is at least 40 percent greater than the volume of the short display bin 30.

5 In embodiments of the present invention, the dimension of the top 15 and of the bottom 14 of each of the short and tall display bins 30, 40, respectively, are the same such that each of the display bins 30, 40 is vertically stackable upon each other display bin 30, 40. In embodiments, as shown in Figs. 2 and 6, each of the short and tall display bins 30, 40, respectively, are substantially vertical, such that each of the display bins 30, 40 is horizontally stackable. In such arrangement, at least one of the side walls 13 of one display
10 bin 30, 40 is in substantial contact with the side wall 13 of another display bin 30, 40.

As shown in the embodiments in Figs. 2, 4, and 6, a system for displaying merchandise items of the present invention comprises a modular display system. In such a modular display system, a combination of the short display bins 30 and the tall display bins 40 is mountable to a display surface in a retail setting. In preferred embodiments of a vertical
15 stack of the short display bins 30 and the tall display bins 40, one of the tall display bins 40 is positioned at the top of the vertical stack. This configuration of a combination of the short display bins 30 and the tall display bins 40 allows a retail stocking clerk to open the upper front door 41 of a tall display bin 40 and place the merchandise items 24 into the tall display bin 40 through the front opening upper portion 42. Because the tall display bins 40 have an
20 upper merchandise storage area 23 and a lower merchandise display area 25, the merchandise items 24 are fed by gravity from the upper storage area 23 to the lower display area 25.

Embodiments of the present invention include a method for displaying merchandise items including providing a plurality of display bins 10. Each display bin 10 includes a back wall 12, two side walls 13, and a bottom 14. The back wall 12, side walls 13, and bottom 14
25 are attached to each other. A top connecting member 16 connects the front aspect 44 at the top 22 of each of the side walls 13 to define an open top 15. A front wall 11 that is substantially shorter than the back wall 12 extends upwardly from the bottom 14 to define a front opening 17. The front opening 17 has a height sufficient to contain the merchandise items 24 for display. A product information display panel 21 is removably attached to the
30 front wall 11. The vertical distance 18 between the top 19 of the front wall 11 and the top connecting member 16 is sufficient to allow access to the merchandise items 24 by consumers.

A combination of the plurality of display bins 10 are selected from among a first portion of the display bins 10 having a first height, defining a short display bin 30, and a second portion of the display bins 10 having second height greater than the first height, defining a tall display bin 40. The tall display bin 40 includes an openable upper front door 41 for covering and uncovering the front opening upper portion 42. After making the selection, the combination of the short display bins 30 and the tall display bins 40 is stacked in a retail setting. Then the merchandise items 24 are placed into the short display bins 30 and into the tall display bins 40 through the front opening 17 for display.

In other embodiments of a method of the present invention, when one of the short display bins 30 is located on a top of the stack of bins, the merchandise items 24 are placed into the short display bin 30 through the open top 15. In other embodiments, the upper front door 41 of a tall display bin 40 is opened and the merchandise items 24 are placed into the tall display bin 40 through the front opening upper portion 42. The tall display bins 40 have an upper merchandise storage area 23 and a lower merchandise display area 25. Such a method further includes feeding the merchandise items 24 by gravity from the upper storage area bin 23 to the lower display area 25.

Although the present invention has been described with reference to particular embodiments, it should be recognized that these embodiments are merely illustrative of the principles of the present invention. Those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that a merchandise display system of the present invention may be constructed and implemented in other ways and embodiments. Accordingly, the description herein should not be read as limiting the present invention, as other embodiments also fall within the scope of the present invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A merchandise display bin, comprising:
a back wall, two side walls, and a bottom, the back wall, side walls, and bottom
attached to each other at approximately right angles;
5 each of the side walls having a top and a front aspect;
a top connecting member connecting the front aspect at the top of each of the side
walls to define an open top;
a front wall substantially shorter than the back wall extending upwardly from the
bottom to define a front opening; and
10 a product information display panel removably attached to the front wall,
wherein the merchandise display bin is adaptable to quickly receive and dispense
merchandise items.
2. The merchandise display bin of claim 1, the front wall further comprising a height
15 sufficient to contain the merchandise items for display.
3. The merchandise display bin of claim 2, the front wall further comprising a top,
wherein the height of the front wall is less than 30 percent of the vertical distance between
the top of the front wall and the top connecting member to allow access to the merchandise
20 items by consumers.
4. The merchandise display bin of claim 1, the back wall and side walls each having a
height and the bottom having a width, wherein the height of each of the back wall and side
walls is equal to the width of the bottom so that the merchandise display bin is substantially
25 cube-shaped.
5. The merchandise display bin of claim 1, the back wall and side walls each having a
height and the bottom having a width, wherein the height of each of the back wall and side
walls is greater than the width of the bottom so that the merchandise display bin is
30 substantially rectangular-shaped.

6. The merchandise display bin of claim 1, the front opening further comprising a front opening upper portion, wherein the display bin further comprises an openable upper front door for covering and uncovering the front opening upper portion.
- 5 7. The merchandise display bin of claim 6, further comprising a hinge for hingedly attaching the upper front door to the front aspect of each of the side walls.
8. The merchandise display bin of claim 6, further comprising a means for maintaining the upper front door in a closed position.
- 10 9. The merchandise display bin of claim 8, wherein the means for maintaining the upper front door in a closed position comprises a snap-lock mechanism, a magnet, a latch, or a hook-and-loop type fastener.
- 15 10. The merchandise display bin of claim 6, further comprising a means for supporting the upper front door in a partially open position.
11. The merchandise display bin of claim 10, wherein the means for supporting the upper front door in a partially open position comprises a chain attached between the front aspect of
- 20 at least one side wall and the upper front door.
12. The merchandise display bin of claim 6, wherein the upper front door comprises a solid covering.
- 25 13. The merchandise display bin of claim 12, wherein the upper front door solid covering comprises a product information display panel.
14. The merchandise display bin of claim 1, wherein the front aspect of the side walls are perpendicular to the bottom.
- 30 15. The merchandise display bin of claim 1, wherein the front aspect of the side walls are angled inward near the top of the side walls.

16. The merchandise display bin of claim 1, wherein the front aspect of the side walls are curved.

17. The merchandise display bin of claim 1, further comprising a means for displaying the merchandise items on an exterior of the side walls of the display bin.

18. The merchandise display bin of claim 1, further comprising a wire construction.

19. A merchandise display system, comprising:
a plurality of display bins;
each display bin including a back wall, two side walls, and a bottom, the back wall, side walls, and bottom attached to each other at approximately right angles; each of the side walls having a top and a front aspect; a top connecting member connecting the front aspect at the top of each of the side walls to define an open top; a front wall substantially shorter than the back wall, extending upwardly from the bottom to define a front opening, having a height sufficient to contain a plurality of merchandise items for display, and a top; a product information display panel removably attached to the front wall; and a vertical distance between the top of the front wall and the top connecting member sufficient to allow access to merchandise items by consumers, wherein the merchandise display bin is adaptable to quickly receive and dispense the merchandise items.

20. The merchandise display system of claim 19, the display bin back wall and side walls each having a height and the bottom having a width,
wherein the height of each of the back wall and side walls in a first portion of the plurality of display bins is equal to the width of the bottom so that the first portion of display bins is substantially cube-shaped, defining a short display bin, and
wherein the height of each of the back wall and side walls in a second portion of the plurality of display bins is greater than the width of the bottom so that the second portion of display bins is substantially rectangular-shaped, defining a tall display bin.

21. The merchandise display system of claim 20, the tall display bin front opening further comprises a front opening upper portion, wherein the tall display bin further comprises an openable upper front door for covering and uncovering the front opening upper portion.

22. The merchandise display system of claim 21, the tall display bin and the short display bin each further comprising a volume, wherein the tall display bin volume is at least 40 percent greater than the volume of the short display bin.

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23. The merchandise display system of claim 21, the top and the bottom of each of the short and tall display bins having a dimension, wherein each of the top and bottom dimensions are the same, and wherein each of the display bins is vertically stackable upon each other display bin.

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24. The merchandise display system of claim 23, wherein the side walls of each of the short and tall display bins are substantially vertical, wherein each of the display bins is horizontally stackable having at least one of the side walls of one display bin in substantial contact with the side wall of another display bin.

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25. The merchandise display system of claim 24, further comprising a modular display system, wherein a combination of the short display bins and the tall display bins is mountable to a display surface in a retail setting.

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26. The merchandise display system of claim 25, further comprising a vertical stack of the short display bins and the tall display bins, wherein one of the tall display bins is positioned at a top of the vertical stack.

25

27. A method for displaying merchandise items, comprising:

providing a plurality of display bins, each display bin including a back wall, two side walls, and a bottom, the back wall, side walls, and bottom attached to each other; each of the side walls having a top and a front aspect; a top connecting member connecting the front aspect at the top of each of the side walls to define an open top; a front wall substantially shorter than the back wall, extending upwardly from the bottom to define a front opening, having a height sufficient to contain the merchandise items for display, and a top; a product information display panel removably attached to the front wall; and a vertical distance between the top of the front wall and the top connecting member sufficient to allow access to merchandise items by consumers;

30

selecting a combination of the plurality of display bins from among a first portion of the display bins having a first height, defining a short display bin, and a second portion of the display bins having second height greater than the first height, defining a tall display bin, the tall display bin front opening further comprising a front opening upper portion and an
5 openable upper front door for covering and uncovering the front opening upper portion;
stacking the combination of the short display bins and the tall display bins in a retail setting; and
placing the merchandise items into the short display bins and into the tall display bins
10 through the front opening for display.

28. The method for displaying merchandise items in claim 27, further comprising, when one of the short display bins is located on a top of the stack of bins, placing the merchandise items into the short display bin through the open top.

15 29. The method for displaying merchandise items in claim 27, further comprising opening the upper front door of a tall display bin and placing the merchandise items into the tall display bin through the front opening upper portion.

20 30. The method for displaying merchandise items in claim 27, the tall display bins having an upper merchandise storage area and a lower merchandise display area, further comprising feeding the merchandise items by gravity from the upper storage area to the lower display area.

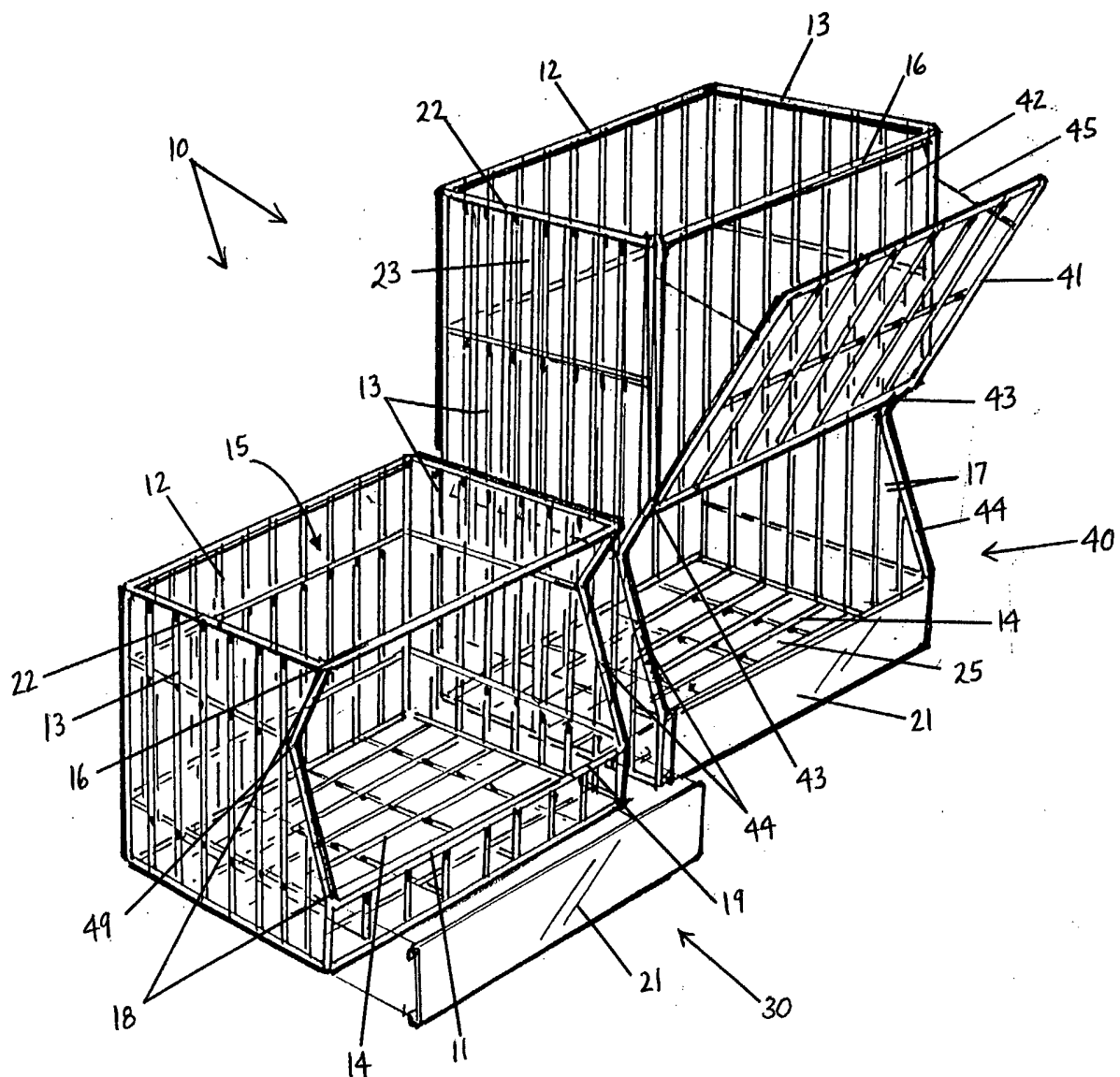
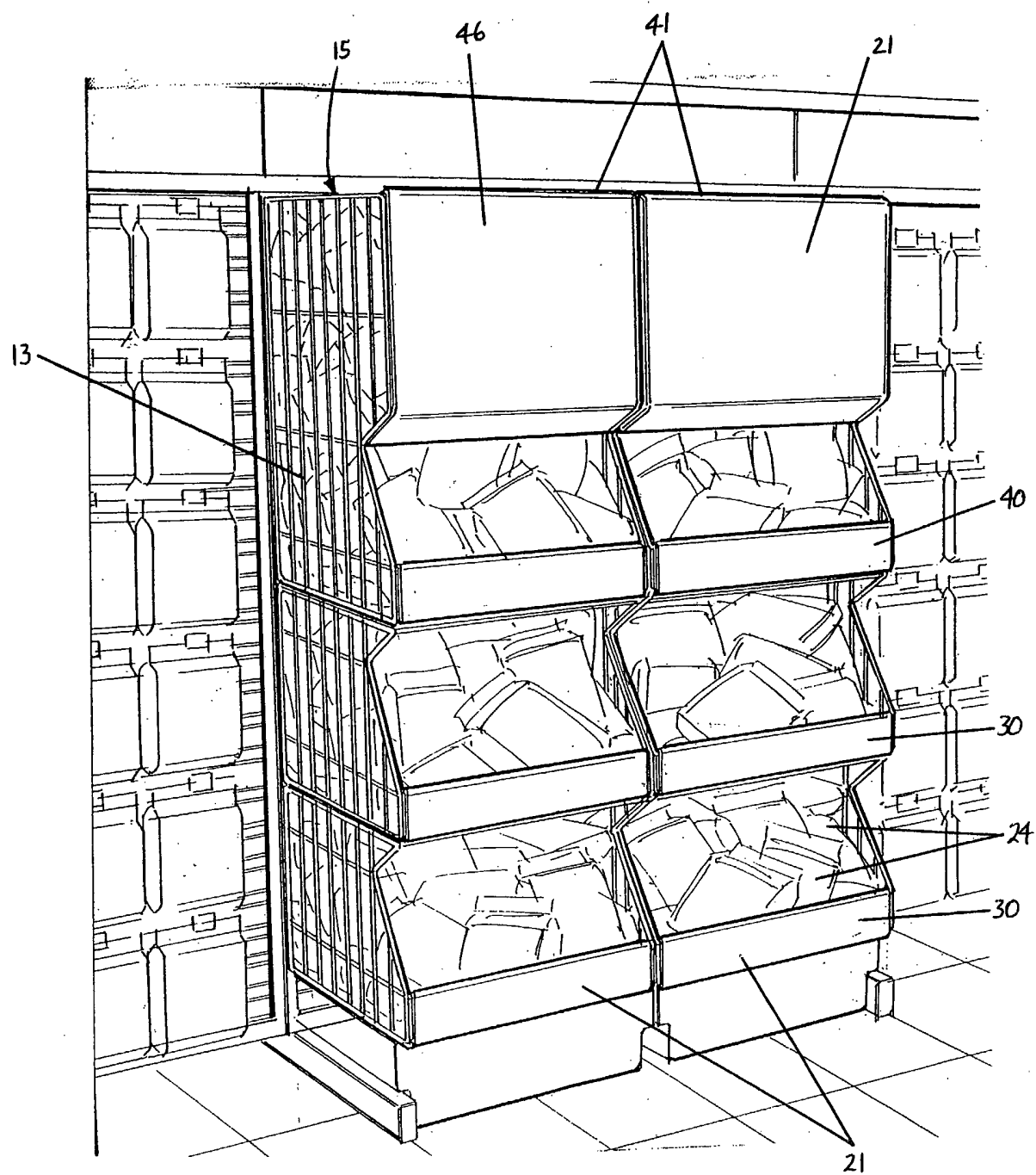


FIG. 1



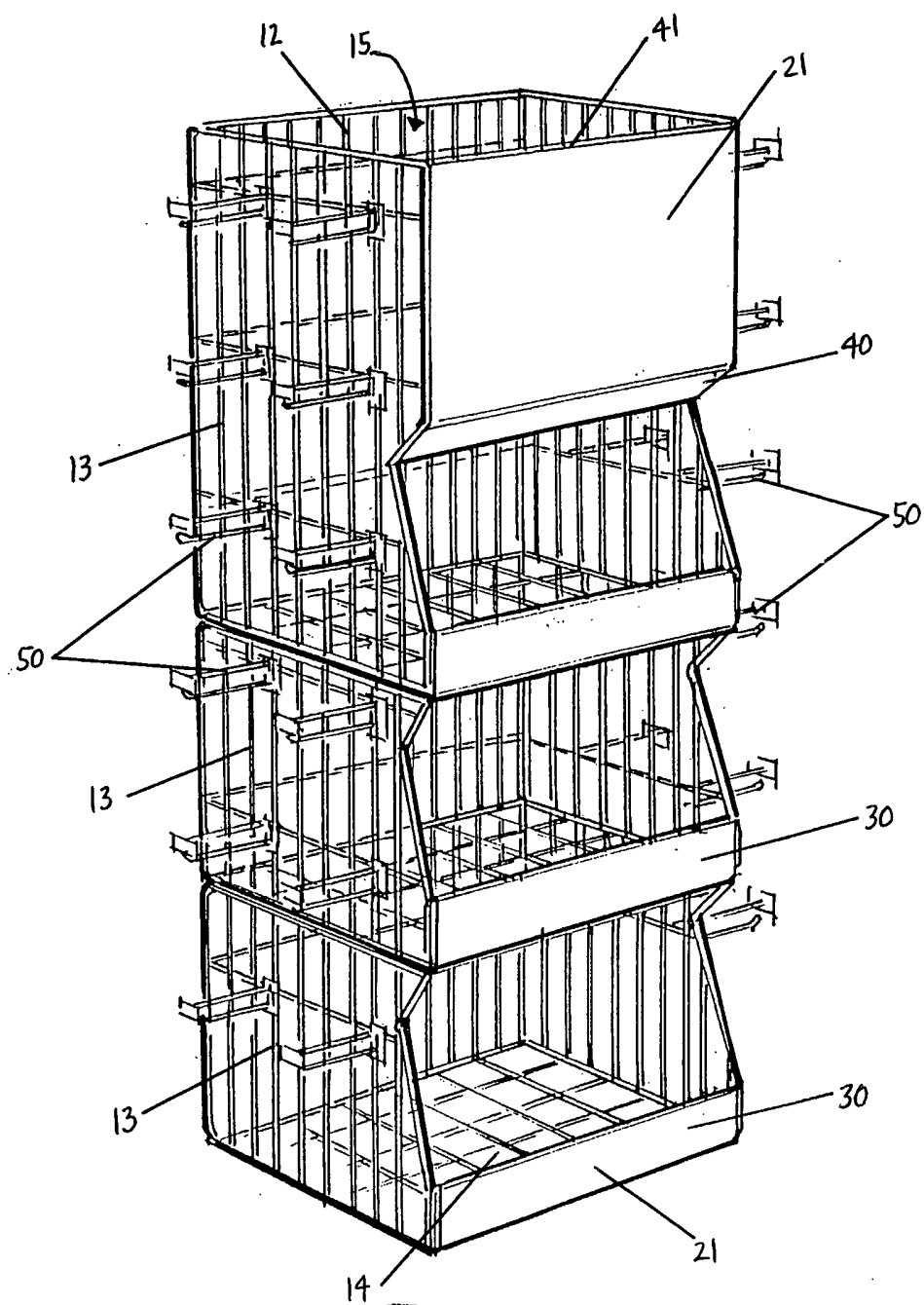


FIG. 3

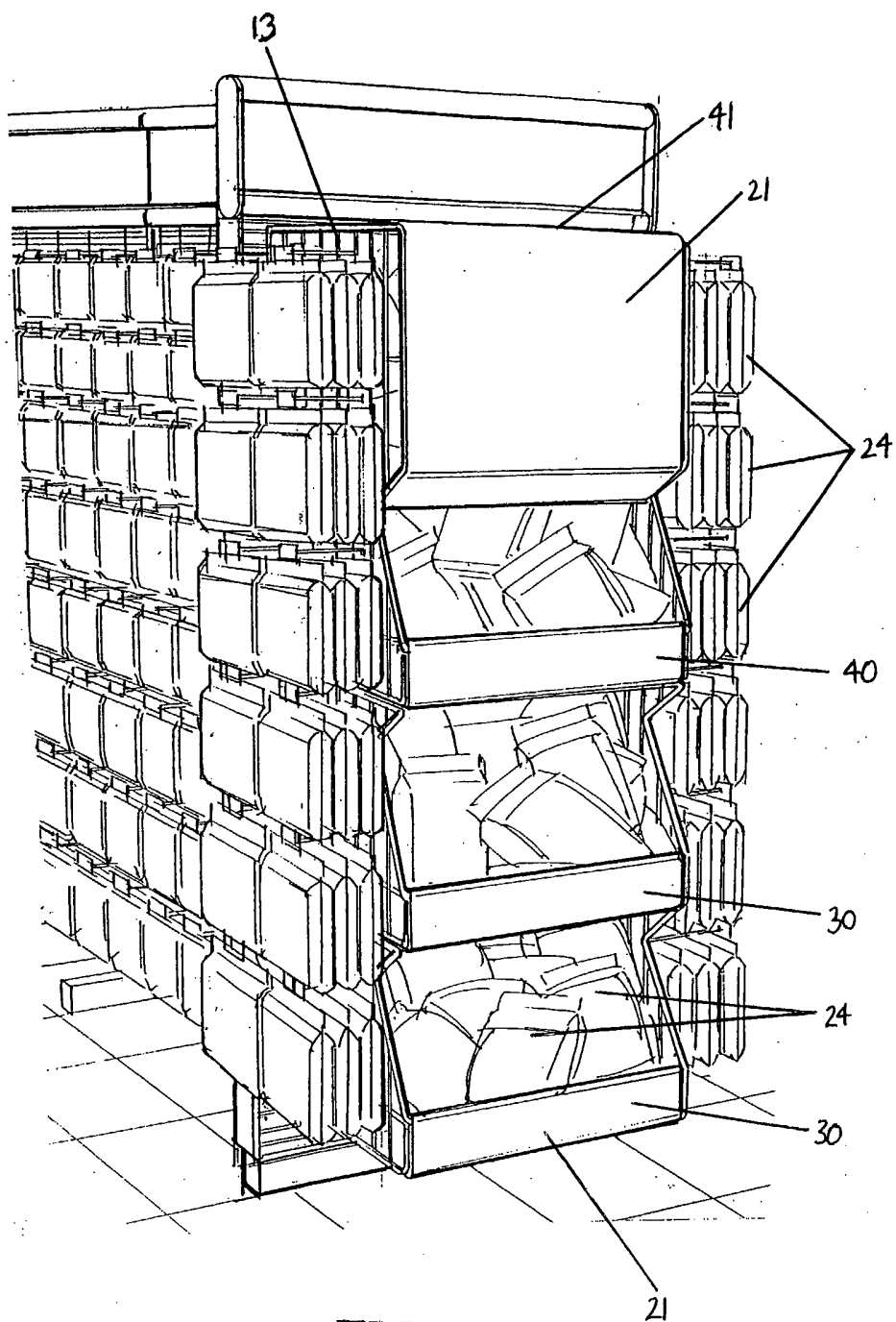


FIG. 4

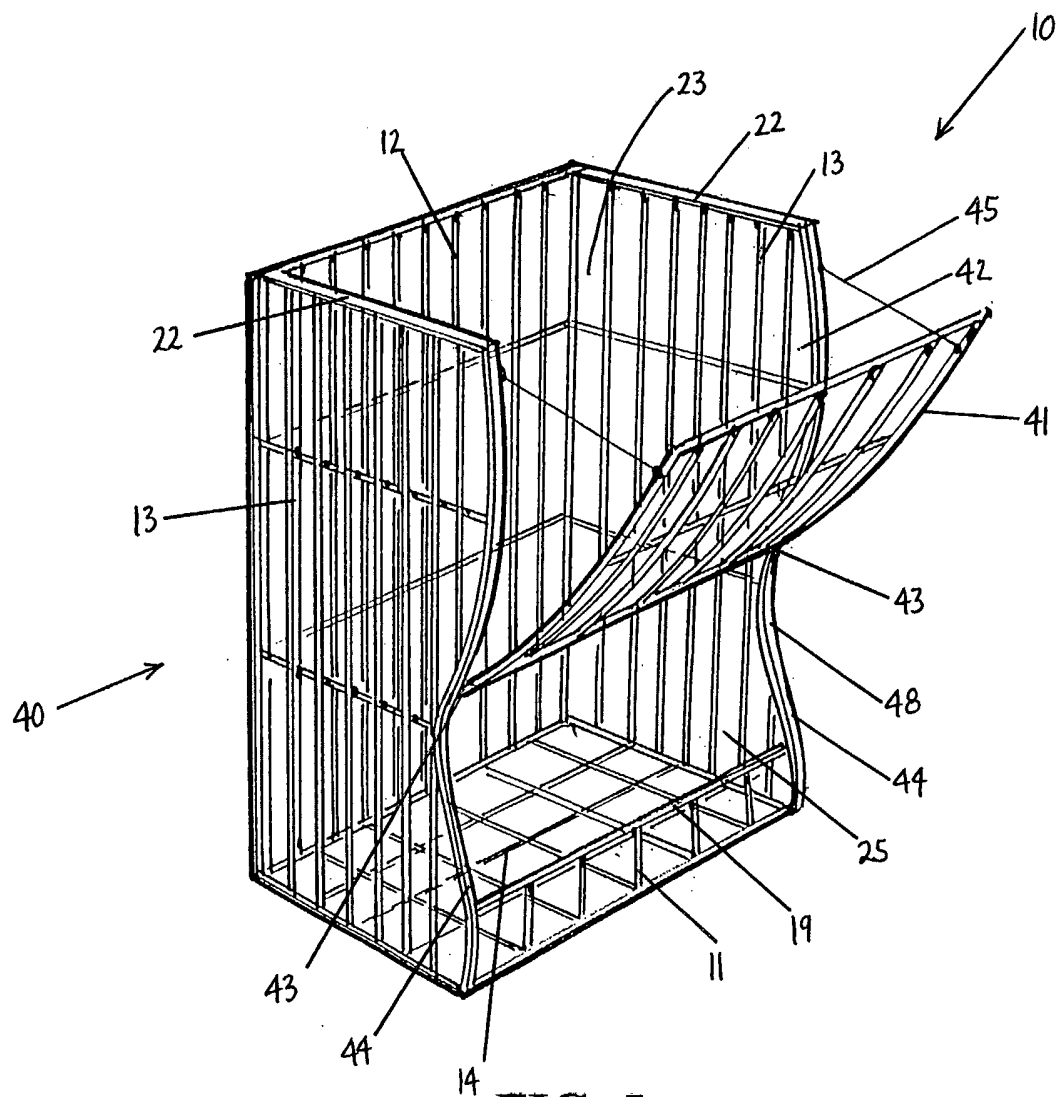
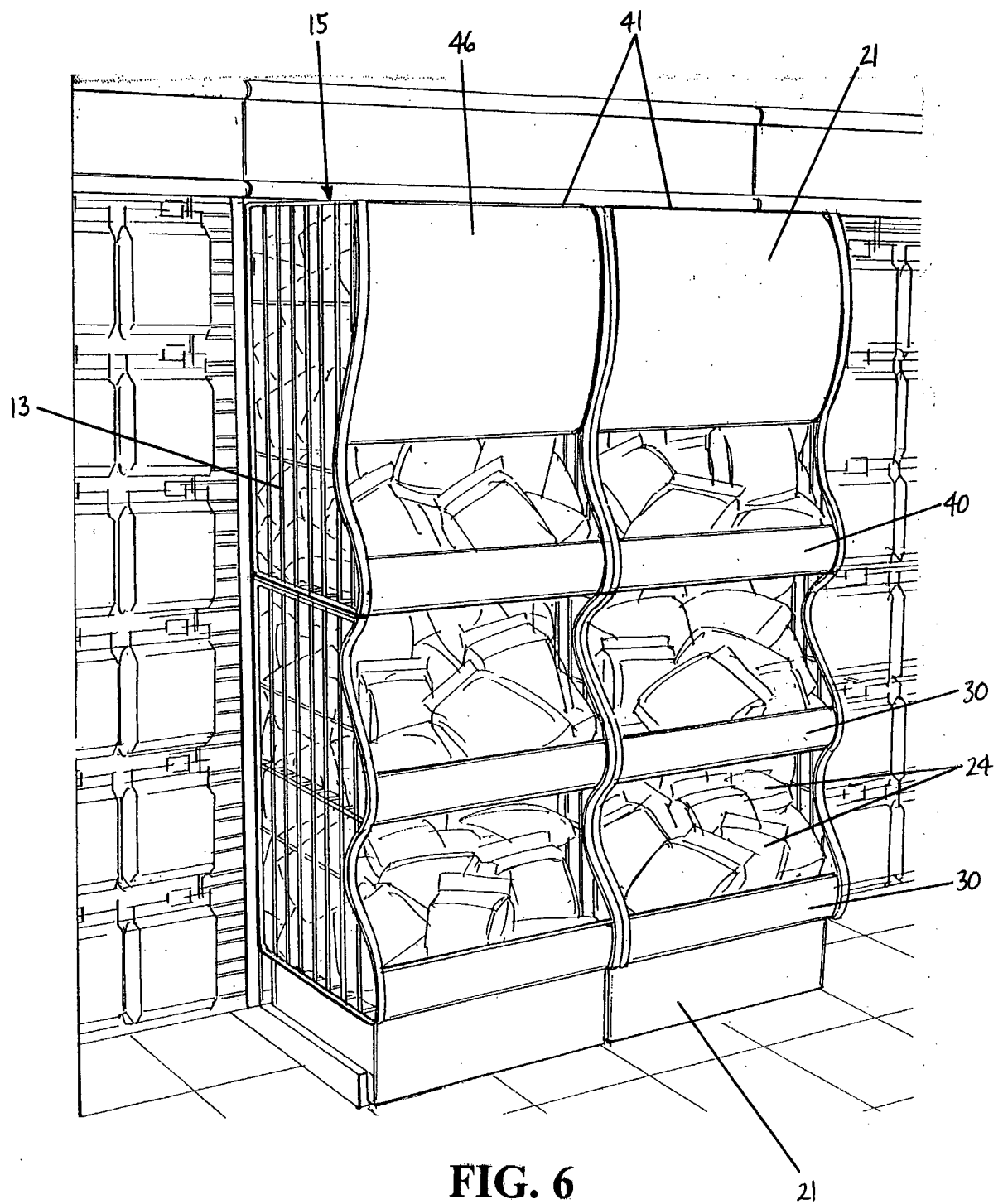


FIG. 5



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Int lonal Application No

PCT/US 03/08099

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
 IPC 7 A47F3/14 A47F1/08

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 A47F A47B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 1 734 031 A (CARLSON WALTER C) 5 November 1929 (1929-11-05)	1
A	page 2, line 10 - line 15 ---	5, 14
Y	US 3 880 292 A (KITCHEN HARRY E) 29 April 1975 (1975-04-29)	1
A	figures 1,6 ---	2-4, 14, 18, 19, 27
A	US 1 939 504 A (LEE ST MELVILLE R) 12 December 1933 (1933-12-12)	1-3, 14, 18-20, 27
A	figure 1 ---	
A	US 5 251 972 A (ZURAWIN MICHAEL) 12 October 1993 (1993-10-12)	1, 2
	abstract; figure 1 ---	
	--- -/--	



Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.



Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

11 July 2003

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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PCT/US 03/08099

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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A	FR 2 794 626 A (WIRQUIN PLASTIQUES SA) 15 December 2000 (2000-12-15) the whole document -----	1-3

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