

June 23, 1970

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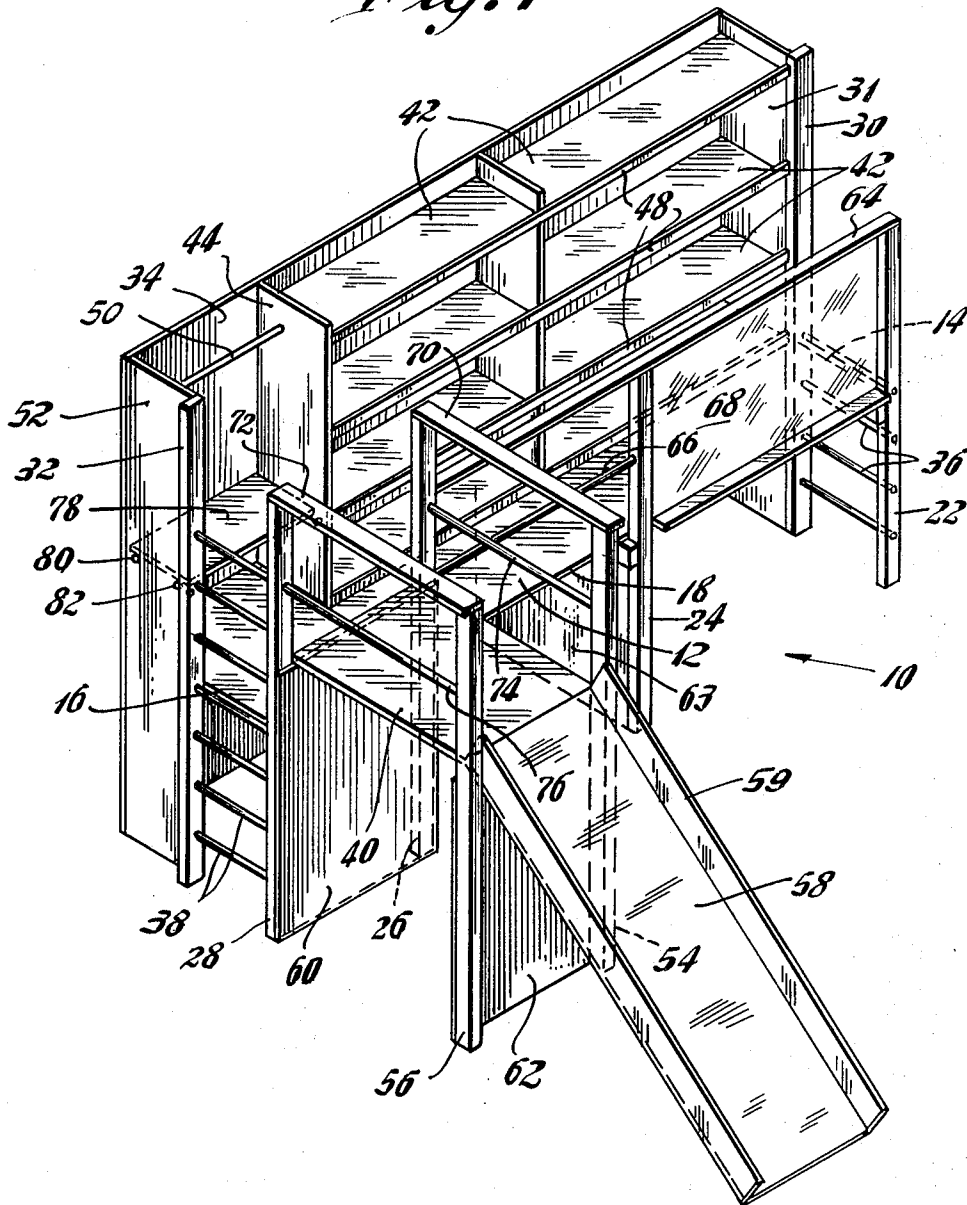
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COMBINED TOY STORAGE AMUSEMENT DEVICE FOR CHILDREN

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2 Sheets-Sheet 1

Fig. 1



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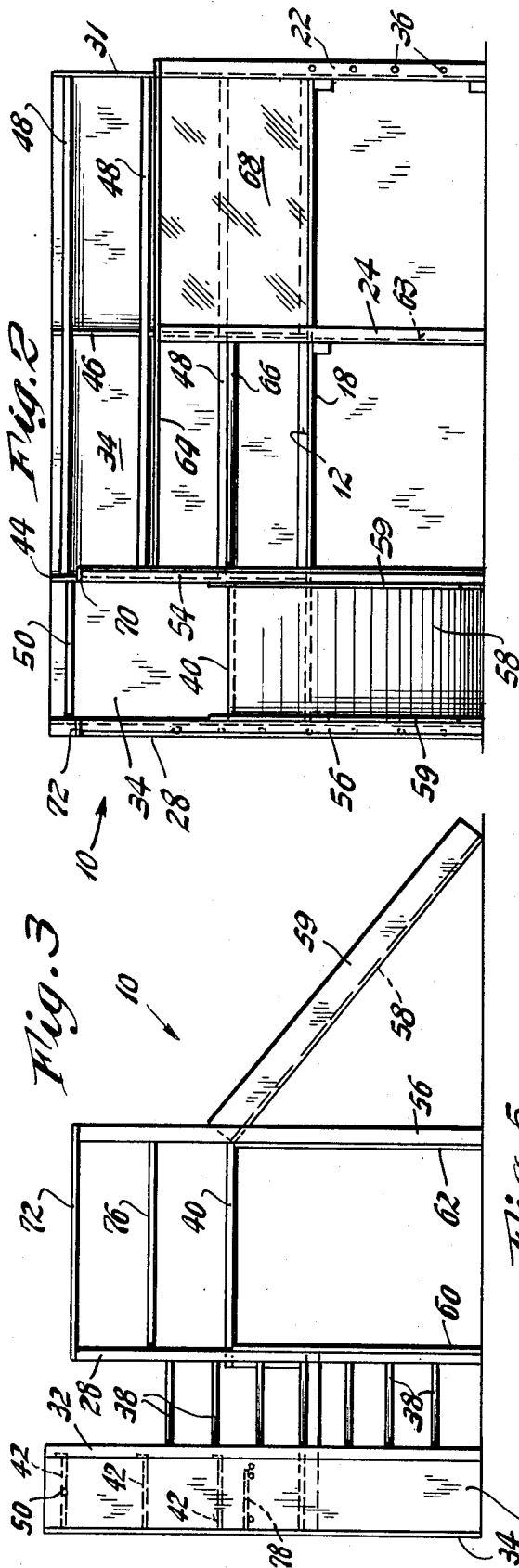
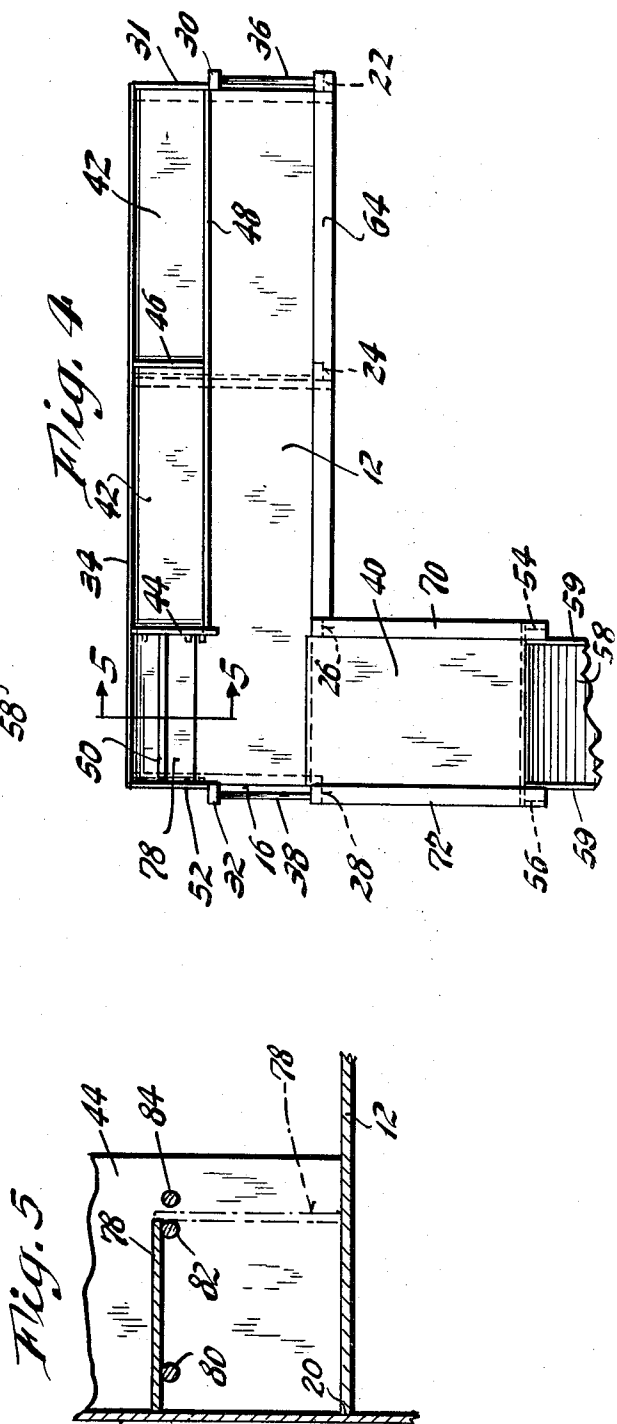
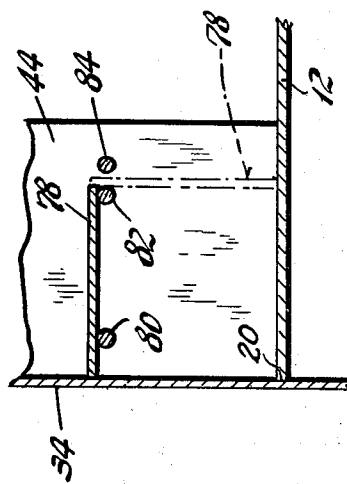
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2 Sheets-Sheet 2



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COMBINED TOY STORAGE AMUSEMENT DEVICE FOR CHILDREN

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7 Claims

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An integral structural unit serving the dual purposes of providing children with amusement and play opportunity and also providing storage facility for both small and large toys. The unit incorporates a variety of play devices as well as shelf space for small toys and open cabinet space for larger toys, and the components are so related that certain of the play devices must be made use of in connection with placing toys in the storage facilities whereby to increase a child's desire to keep his toys in a neat and orderly manner.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to storage units and more particularly to a storage unit for children's toys and the like with related play facilities which have a function intimately associated with the use of the storage facilities.

It is a well recognized fact that small children lack a sense of neatness and orderliness in connection with their personal belongings generally and with their toys particularly. Children ranging generally in age from two to eight, and perhaps beyond, tend to be quite careless about the manner in which their toys are kept and exhibit no desire to return toys to a place of storage when they are through playing. As a result, toys are left lying about on the floor or on furniture for considerable lengths of time with the result that toys are misplaced, certain items of multiple piece toys become lost, and a playroom or other room in the house takes on a messy and undesirable appearance.

These problems are further complicated, and become quite severe, in the family having many small children which may be fairly close together in age. For example, in a family having three or four children each only a year and a half to two years apart, there may be four children under eight years of age, each with his or her own collection of toys. Quite frequently, the toys of the older children are of a more complex nature and more costly than those of the younger children, and it is necessary to keep the older children's toys away from the younger children. The best way to accomplish this is to have the children put their toys away when they are through playing with them. However, in many families, it has proven to be an extremely difficult task to have children put their own toys away. It is even a more difficult task to teach children to be neat about their clothing and other personal belongings.

Quite apart from the obvious solution of one or both of the parents constantly "picking up" after their children and putting toys away for them, it is known that children can be trained to willingly accept certain responsibilities and perform certain duties without objection which they would otherwise find to be quite unpleasant. For example, if an act, such as cleaning up a playroom and putting away toys, which the average child finds objectionable and does not wish to perform except under threat of some form of punishment, is made pleasurable by interjecting a form of play or other pleasurable experience, the child gradually accepts the responsibility to perform the

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act and eventually undertakes the obligation to continue performing the act without the pleasurable aspect being present. Thus the child is trained through a form of play to accept the responsibilities for acts required later in life which are an inherent function of maturing. This form of training develops a much stronger sense of responsibility in a child than does the mere forcing of a child to do something, and not only trains the child to mechanically go through the motions of performing the act when he is told to or when he knows he should, but actually creates a desire on the child's part to perform the act for his own benefit, pleasure or well being.

Thus it is recognized by most toy designers and manufacturers that a toy with an educational function, or a utilitarian device with an amusement function is a great asset in the effort of parents to teach their children through gradual training and experience many of the more or less unpleasant tasks and obligations of adulthood, and there is, therefore, a need for the device of this invention.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed toward a combined toy storage and amusement device for children which satisfies the need generally indicated above for a utilitarian device for children having an amusement function intimately related therewith to assist in training a child to be neat and orderly with his toys, and at the same time provides the necessary facility for such neatness. The device is basically a storage unit for both small and large toys, and has associated therewith certain play or amusement elements which are related to the storage facilities in such a manner that some of the play elements must be utilized in carrying out the storage function, while others of the play features may be utilized in carrying out the storage function as desired.

To this end, one embodiment of the invention comprises a first elongate platform having means for supporting the platform at a first predetermined height above floor level, ladder means disposed adjacent at least one end of the platform for providing access to the platform by relatively small children, a plurality of storage shelves extending from one end of the first platform over a major portion of the length thereof, the shelves having a depth substantially less than the width of the first platform, and means for supporting the shelves in vertically spaced relationship with the longitudinal rear edges of the shelves vertically aligned with a rear edge of the platform thereby providing a walkway along the platform in front of the shelves. There is also provided a second platform with means to support the second platform at a second predetermined height above the floor level which is higher than the first predetermined height and with the rear edge of the second platform substantially vertically aligned with the front edge of the first platform so as to provide access from the first platform to the second platform. An inclined plane is connected to the front edge of the second platform and extends substantially to the floor level thereby providing a sliding egress from the first platform to the floor level independent of the ladder means.

In the presently preferred embodiment of the invention, there is a ladder means at both opposite ends of the first platform, and one of the ladder means extends from the floor level only to the first platform and the other ladder means extends from the floor level to a height substantially above the second platform, thereby providing a variety of climbing facilities for small children. The second platform is disposed adjacent one end of the first platform and extends therealong over the minor portion of the length of the first platform which is beyond the extent of the vertically spaced storage shelves. This space may be utilized for storage of miscellaneous articles not suitable for storage on shelves.

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Preferably the space beneath the first platform is left open to provide storage for a variety of wheeled toys such as tricycles, cars, etc., except that this space may be partitioned off and a portion thereof provided with shelves having substantially greater depth than the above mentioned shelves for storage of large area relatively flat toys or toy boxes. Further it is desirable to provide vertical partitions or walls extending from the front and rear edges of the second platform to floor level to simulate a tunnel through which a child can drive a wheeled vehicle in the process of placing such vehicle in the storage area provided therefor, thus enhancing the child's pleasure in putting the vehicle in its proper place.

Having briefly described the general nature and construction of the present invention, it is a principal object thereof to provide a combined toy storage and amusement device for children having novel features of construction and arrangement which are both useful and appealing to children.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a combined toy storage and amusement device for children which stimulates an interest in very young children to be neat and orderly with their toys and playthings.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a combined toy storage and amusement device for children which functions to train children to be neat and orderly with their toys and playthings by providing an accessible or necessary element of play in connection with utilizing the device for its storage function.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a combined toy storage and amusement device for children which provides play facilities for small children both independently of and in conjunction with the use of the device for storage.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a combined toy storage and amusement device for children which has a high degree of safety, is relatively inexpensive to manufacture and simple to install and maintain.

These and other objects and advantageous features of the present invention will be more readily apparent from an understanding of the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment of the invention when considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a combined toy storage and amusement device according to the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a front elevation of the device of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a left side elevation of the device of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is a plan view of the device of FIG. 1; and

FIG. 5 is a sectional view taken on the line 5—5 of FIG. 4.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to the drawings, it will be seen that the device 10 of the present invention is an integral built up structure which may be assembled from individual components and elements suitably secured together. As will be apparent, the several components hereinafter described may be made of any desirable materials, e.g., wood, metal, plastic and other synthetic materials, and such components may be secured together by any convenient connectors and fasteners such as nails, screws, bolts, brackets, etc.

The device 10 comprises a first elongate platform 12 having longitudinally opposite edges 14 and 16 and laterally opposite front and rear edges 18 and 20. Means are provided for supporting the platform 12 at a predetermined height above the floor which height is preferably in the order of about two to two and one-half feet, although this may be varied in accordance with the age and/or height of children for whom the device is intended. The supporting means comprises a plurality of

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vertical support columns or posts 22, 24, 26 and 28 spaced along the front edge 18 of the platform 12. In addition, supporting columns 30 and 32 are disposed at opposite ends of the platform 12 and support the platform at locations intermediate the front and rear edges 18 and 20. As best seen in FIGS. 1 and 3, the rear edge of the platform 12 is supported by a vertical wall 34 which extends the length of the platform 12 and from floor level to a height substantially above the platform 12.

In order to provide easy access to the platform 12 to small children, which is relatively high in relation to the size of the children, ladder means are provided at at least one end and preferably both ends of the platform. In the embodiment disclosed, the ladder means comprises a first set of vertically spaced rungs 36 supported by the columns 22 and 30, the rungs being spaced apart a distance convenient to small children and extending from the floor level only to substantially the height of the platform 12. The ladder rungs 36 thus provide an access from the floor to the platform, it being understood that the height of the platform is such that a small child would find it difficult if not impossible to climb directly from the floor to the platform.

A second set of vertically spaced rungs 38 is preferably provided at the opposite end of the platform 12, the rungs 38 being supported by the support columns 28 and 32 and spaced apart substantially the same distance as the rungs 36. However, the rungs 38 extend from the floor level to a height substantially above the height of the platform 12 in order to provide an amusing obstacle over which a child must climb in order to gain access to the platform 12 at this end thereof. The rungs 38 also provide access to a second platform 40 more fully described hereinafter.

In order to provide for the storage of toys and miscellaneous playthings which are of such a nature that they will fit on more or less conventional size shelving, there is provided a plurality of storage shelves 42 which extend from the end 14 of the platform over a major portion of the length thereof. The shelves have a depth which is approximately one-third to one-half the width of the platform 12, and they are supported in vertically spaced relationship by the column 30, and end wall 31 which rests on the floor and extends above the platform 12 to substantially the height of the rear wall 34, the rear wall itself, an end partition 44 which rests on the platform 12, and an intermediate partition 46 which also rests on the platform 12, the bottom edges of the partitions 44 and 46 being secured to the platform 12. The arrangement is such that the shelves 42 are supported with their longitudinal rear edges in vertical alignment with the rear edge of the platform 12, whereby a front portion of the platform 12 projects beyond the shelves 42 to provide a walkway for children along the platform in front of the shelves. The shelves 42 are provided with suitable curbs 48 along the front edges thereof to prevent articles from falling off the shelves, and the end wall 31, rear wall 34 and partition 44 all extend slightly above the topmost shelf for a similar purpose. It should be noted that the area of the platform 12 beneath the bottommost shelf is also effectively a shelf and may be used for storage if desired.

The remaining minor portion of the length of the platform 12 which is not covered by the storage shelves 42 is intended to provide an area of storage for miscellaneous items which are not necessarily adapted or suitable for storage on flat shelves. Thus a bar 50 is supported by the partition 44 and another end wall 52 which has the same dimensions as the opposite end wall 31, the bar 50 providing storage space for articles suitable to be suspended. As described in more detail hereinafter, this space can also be utilized as a play area provided with a seat or as storage for items suitable for storing in a bin.

An egress from the platform 12 to floor level, independent of the ladders, is provided which provides an as-

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pect of amusement to children in addition to that which can be experienced by climbing down either of the above described ladders. This egress takes the form generally of a slide, and consists of the above mentioned second platform 40 which is supported by the columns 26 and 28 and two additional columns 54 and 56 spaced in front of the columns 26 and 28 respectively so as to support the platform 40 in forwardly projecting relationship relative to the platform 12. As best seen in FIG. 4, the platform 40 is disposed adjacent the end 16 of the platform 12 and has a width substantially equal to that minor portion of the length of the platform 12 not covered by the storage shelves 42.

The platform 40 is disposed with its rear edge substantially in vertical alignment with the front edge 18 of the platform 12 and is supported at a height above the platform 12 such that a small child can climb directly from the first platform 12 to the second platform 40, although perhaps with some difficulty. If desired, the platform 40 may be disposed at a higher elevation with one or more rungs supported between the upper portion of the columns 26 and 28 for the convenience of small children who could otherwise not climb directly from one platform to the other.

An inclined plane 58 has one end connected to the front edge of the platform 40 and extends to floor level, although the other end of the inclined plane may be supported by blocks (not shown) a short distance above the floor so that a child sliding down the plane 58 does not land directly on the floor in a sitting position. The plane 58 is provided with upstanding guide rails 59 or the like for manual grasping and for safety.

The enjoyment of putting away wheeled vehicles in the space provided therefor beneath the platform 12 is further enhanced by the provision of a tunnel through which such vehicles can be driven by a child. Thus a partition 60 is connected to the columns 26 and 28 and extends from floor level to the underside of the platform 40, and another partition 62 of similar dimensions is connected to the columns 54 and 56. These partitions define the tunnel through which a child can drive a tricycle or the like, it being recognized that head clearance beneath the platform 40 becomes a limiting factor in determining the minimum height of the second platform 40 above the first platform 12 or above the floor. A vertical partition 63 is provided beneath the platform 12 and extending from the column 24 to the rear wall 34 to partition off the storage space for wheeled vehicles to simulate parking stalls for such vehicles.

Various other safety features are incorporated into the device 10, one such feature being a guard rail 64 supported by the columns 22, 24, and 26 and extending over the aforementioned major portion of the length of the platform 12 along the front edge 18 thereof. A bar 66 is supported by the columns 24 and 26 to partially close the opening between these columns beneath the guard rail 64. The space between the columns 22 and 24 beneath the guard rail 64 is effectively closed for safety purposes by a solid surface 68 which also has play function, such, for example, as a conventional blackboard, a bulletin board, or a metal surface for supporting magnetic letters or numbers, or any combination of these play facilities.

Additional guard rails 70 and 72 are supported by the columns 26 and 54, and 28 and 56 respectively at a convenient height above the platform 40, and a pair of bars 74 and 76 are supported by the aforementioned columns as shown in FIG. 1 to partially close the space beneath the guard rails 70 and 72.

As mentioned hereinabove, an additional feature of the invention is the provision in the space not covered by the shelves 42, of a horizontal member 78 supported between the partition 44 and the end wall 52 at a predetermined height above the platform 12, this member being removably supported by short dowel pins 80 and

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82 horizontally spaced apart in the partition 44 and the end wall 52. In this position the member 78 forms a seat or an additional shelf. If it is not desired to use the member 78 either as a seat or as a shelf, it may be removed from the dowel pins 80 and 82 and inserted vertically between horizontally spaced apart dowel pins 82 and 84, in which position the member 78 cooperates with the partition 44, rear wall 34 and end wall 52 to form a bin or receptacle into which miscellaneous playthings may be placed for storage.

Additional storage facility may be incorporated into the device if desired by the installation of one or more shelves in the space beneath the platform 12 and extending between the columns 22 and 30 on one side and column 24 on the other side, and having a depth commensurate with the depth of the platform 12. Thus these shelves would be suitable for toys which are relatively flat but which require a deep shelf for support, or for large flat boxes in which a variety of toys consisting of many pieces are packaged. This addition, of course, limits the storage space available to vehicles to that on the opposite side of the partition 63.

It should now be apparent that the device of the present invention provides a variety of storage facilities for toys and miscellaneous playthings and also provides play facilities a number of which must be utilized in connection with utilizing the storage facilities. For example, small children enjoy the experience of climbing a ladder and of walking on an elevated platform to reach the storage shelves for small toys, and then of either climbing down the ladder or sliding down the inclined plane to pick up further toys. Similarly there is enjoyment for a child to pretend that he is putting his tricycle or car into a garage for the night, especially after driving under a tunnel to reach the storage space. And of course other play facilities may be made use of independently of the storage function, such as climbing over the high ladder, sliding, drawing on the blackboard, etc., or any of a number of other activities which may occur to a child's imagination.

It is apparent, then, from the foregoing, that there is provided a combined toy storage and amusement device for children which fulfills a need for such a device and which achieves the foregoing objects. It is to be understood, however, that the present invention is not intended to be limited to the specific embodiment described above and shown in the accompanying drawings, which is merely illustrative of the principles of the invention and is the best mode presently contemplated for carrying out the invention, and is susceptible to change in form, size, detail and arrangement of parts and components, the invention being intended to cover all such equivalents, variations and modifications thereof as may be deemed to be within the scope of the claims appended hereto.

What I claim and desire to secure by Letters Patent is:

1. A combined toy storage and amusement device for children comprising:

(A) a first elongate platform,

(B) means for supporting said first platform at a first predetermined height above floor level,

(C) ladder means disposed adjacent at least one end of said first platform for providing access to said first platform by relatively small children,

(D) a plurality of storage shelves extending from one end of said first platform over a major portion of the length thereof, said shelves having a depth substantially less than the width of said first platform,

(E) means for supporting said shelves in vertically spaced relationship with the longitudinal rear edges thereof vertically aligned with a rear edge of said platform thereby providing a walkway along said first platform in front of said shelves,

(F) a second relatively short platform,

(G) means for supporting said second platform at a

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second predetermined height above said floor level which is higher than said first predetermined height and with a rear edge of said second platform substantially vertically aligned with the front edge of said first platform so as to provide access from said first platform to said second platform, and

(H) an inclined plane connected to the front edge of said second platform and extending substantially to said floor level thereby providing a sliding egress from said first platform to said floor level independent of said ladder means.

2. A device according to claim 1 wherein there are ladder means disposed adjacent to both opposite ends of said first platform and one of said ladder means extends from said floor level only to said first platform and the other of said ladder means extends from said floor level to a height substantially above said first platform whereby said other ladder means provides a climbing obstacle to said first platform.

3. A device according to claim 2 wherein said second platform is disposed adjacent the end of said first platform proximate said other ladder means whereby said other ladder means provides direct access from said floor level to said second platform.

4. A device according to claim 1 wherein said second predetermined height of said second platform is at least sufficient to provide head clearance for a relatively small child to drive a toy wheeled vehicle beneath said second platform, and there are vertical partitions disposed at said front and rear edges of said second platform and extending therefrom to said floor level thereby simulating a tunnel through which a child can drive said wheeled vehicle.

5. A device according to claim 1 wherein there are vertical partition means defining that minor portion of

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the length of said first platform not covered by said shelves, and wherein there is an elongate member disposed in said minor portion and means for removably supporting said member alternatively in a horizontal position at a height above said first platform convenient for small children to sit thereon or in a vertical position in substantial alignment with the front edges of said shelves thereby defining an open top receptacle with said vertical partition means.

6. A device according to claim 5 further including a bar supported by said vertical partition means adjacent the upper ends thereof for supporting suspended articles in the space between said vertical partition means.

7. A device according to claim 1 wherein said second platform extends along the minor portion of the length of said first platform not covered by said shelves, and wherein there are safety guard rails extending along the remainder of the front edge of said first platform and along opposite sides of said second platform.

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