METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR CARRYING AND SECURING SNOW SKI AND SNOWBOARD BOOTS

Inventor: Paul William LeMert, Malvern, PA (US)

Appl. No.: 13/032,252

Filed: Feb. 22, 2011

Related U.S. Application Data

Provisional application No. 61/306,763, filed on Feb. 22, 2010.

Publication Classification

Int. Cl.
A45F 3/14 (2006.01)

U.S. Cl. .................................................. 224/250

ABSTRACT

Apparatus for carrying boots includes a handle, a fabric band in the form of an endless loop connected to the handle, first and second parts of a two-part fabric closure connected to the loop at separate positions with the loop being wrapable about the boots in a manner to contact the first and second parts of the two-part fabric closure, thereby to secure the boots for transport upon lifting of the handle.
Figure 3 F
METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR CARRYING AND SECURING SNOW SKI AND SNOWBOARD BOOTS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED PATENT APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims the benefit of the filing date of provisional U.S. patent application Ser. No. 61/306,763 entitled “Device for Carrying and Securing Snow Ski and Snowboard Boots” filed in the name of Paul W. Lemert on 22 Feb. 2010; the benefit of such priority to such filing date is hereby claimed under 35 USC 119 and 35 USC 120.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] This invention relates generally to snow ski and board boot carriers and more specifically to a device for quickly and easily carrying and securing ski boots, snowboard boots, climbing boots, in-line and hockey skates, and other boot-type footwear.

[0004] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0005] Snow ski and board boot carriers have been in use for years. Typically, snow ski & board boot carriers are comprised of the “T” handled boot carrier and ski boot trees.

[0006] The main problems with conventional snow ski and snowboard boot carriers are a lack of convenience and security. These carriers take a long time and require too much effort to load. Loading a T-handle requires the user to unbutton the top buckle and thread the buckle through the T-handle’s strap. These products, particularly the “boot tree” serve only a single purpose and do not work with snowboard boots, in-line skates or ice skates. Neither the T-handle nor the boot tree offers a means of securing the boots. Another problem with conventional snow ski and snowboard boot carriers are size, and storage. The boot tree is a large, rigid plastic device. There is only one size, so regardless of the user’s boot size, the user needs to carry around a device large enough to fit a size 14 boot or skate. When not in use, the boot tree needs to be stored in a gear bag or in a locker because it does not fold or fit inside a pocket. This problem is amplified in families where multiple skiers require that much more storage space to store the carriers.

[0007] Another problem with conventional snow ski & board boot carriers is comfort. The “T” handle is short and narrow, which concentrates the weight and pressure on the joints of the forefingers. The boot trees have a number of moving plastic parts with belts and springs resulting in significant added weight. Neither the boot tree nor the T-handle provides users with the ability to hang the boots or skates to other devices such as a backpack, which would free the user’s hands for other tasks such as opening doors and holding car keys.

[0008] While these devices may have some utility, they are not as suitable for quickly and easily carrying, and securing, snow ski boots, snowboard boots, climbing boots, in-line and hockey skates or other above the ankle boot-type devices.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] The device for carrying and securing snow ski and snowboard boots according to the present invention substantially departs from the conventional concepts and designs of the prior art, and in so doing provides an apparatus primarily developed for the purpose of quickly and easily carrying and securing ski boots, snow board boots, climbing boots, in-line and hockey skates or other boot-type devices. This invention provides a new device for carrying and securing snow ski and snowboard boots construction wherein the same can be utilized for quickly and easily carrying, and securing ski boots, snow board boots, climbing boots, in-line and hockey skates or other boot-type devices.

[0010] This invention, which is described below in greater detail, provides a new device for carrying and securing snow ski and snowboard boots providing the function of the snow ski and snowboard boot carriers mentioned above and provides many novel features in the new device for carrying and securing snow ski and snowboard boots.

[0011] To attain this, in the broadest sense, this invention generally comprises a core strip, a boot restraint, some Velcro binding, a carabiner hanger, a comfort handle and optionally a logo placard. The core strip is, in many ways, the foundation of the device and is preferably one inch wide nylon webbing. The boot restraint is a section of core strip used to hold boots firmly in place while carrying or hanging them. The Velcro binding is a set of mating Velcro, i.e. male and female hooks and eyes, binding together two sections of core strip to desirably maintain a firm compression force on the boots to keep them from falling out of the device. The carabiner hanger is a carabiner connecting to a tab of the core strip and may be used to attach the device to a belt, back pack, or fancy pack, to carry the device or to allow the device to be affixed to a structure to keep the boots from moving or to keep them off the ground. The comfort handle is attached to the core strip and distributes the load and protects the user’s hand from the compression by the core strip while carrying the device. The optional logo placard is a portion of material displaying a logo for general sales but which also allows private labeling as well as personalization of the device.

[0012] In one of its aspects, this invention provides apparatus for carrying boots, with the apparatus including a continuous flexible strip and a handle connecting to the strip at two portions thereon, defining therebetween a first portion of the strip. A second portion of the strip extends from extremities of the first portion, segments of which are secured together in facing contact with one another. A first part of a third portion of the strip continuously adjoins one of the parts of the second portion of the strip, while a second part of the third portion of the strip adjoins the second part of the second portion of the strip, which second portion is folded over itself to form a loop that is remote from the position of adjoinment of the second part of the second portion with second part of the third portion.

[0013] A rigid ring is retained within the loop. An openable ring has a manually actuable spring closure and engages the rigid ring. A third portion of the strip extends from and continuously adjoins the extremities of the first and second parts of the second portion of the strip remote from the loop. The third portion of the strip has two parts that are secured together in facing contact over substantially the length of the third portion of the strip. A fourth portion of the strip connects remaining extremities of the third portion of the strip. A hook portion of fabric hook-eye fastening means is connected to the fourth portion of the strip on both sides of the strip proximate mid-point of the fourth portion of the strip. Eye portions of the fabric hook-eye fastening means are facingly contacting connected to surfaces of the third portion that are not in facing contact, along substantially the length of the third portion of the strip.
[0014] In yet another of its aspects, this invention provides apparatus for carrying boots. The apparatus comprises a band-like strip, a handle with a strip being secured to the handle, with one part of the strip extending from the handle forming a loop proximate the handle. The one part of the strip and a remaining part of the strip extend from the handle and are secured together along the part of the strip intermediate the loop and the handle. The one part of the strip extending from the loop in a direction away from the portion of the one part intermediate the loop and the handle is secured to the remaining part for a first distance. The one part of the strip extending from the loop in a direction away from the part that is intermediate the loop and the handle is separated from the remaining part of the strip for a second distance and thereafter joins with the remaining part of the strip. A hook portion of a fabric hook-eye releasable fastener is connected to the strip at juncture of the one part separated from the remaining part where those parts join. An eye portion of the fabric hook-eye releasable fastener is connected to the first and remaining parts of the strip along the first distance at which the first and remaining parts are secured. The apparatus preferably further includes a preferably rigid ring retained within the loop and a preferably openable ring, having a preferably manually actuable spring closure, engaging the rigid ring.

[0015] The strip is preferably continuous; is preferably fabric; and the fabric is preferably nylon.

[0016] In yet another one of its aspects, this invention provides a method for carrying a pair of ski or similar boots that are at least ankle high, comprising placing the boots of the pair adjacent one to another in lateral alignment with the toes of the boots pointing in a common direction and configuring a portion of a continuous band-like loop into a circular form large enough to fit over and around the portions of the boots that cover the wearer's ankles. The method further includes wrapping the circularly configured portion of the continuous band-like fabric loop, having a portion of a fabric hook-eye releasable fastener facingly connected to the circularly configured portion, around upstanding ankle portions of the boots at a position below an uppermost buckle of the boots, with the fabric hook-eye fastener positioned substantially equally overlapping each of the boots.

[0017] The method further embraces drawing a remaining portion of the continuous band-like loop, with the remaining portion having loop portions secured together and having an eye portion of the fabric hook-eye releasable fastener facingly connected to the secured together portions of the loop, forward relative to the boots, to pull the circularly configured portion firmly about the upstanding portions of the boots. The method yet further involves rotating the secured together loop portions under the boots to wrap the circularly configured portion entirely about the upstanding portions of the boots at the position below an uppermost buckle of the boots and then pulling the secured loop portions upwardly between the adjacent boots until the eye portion of the fabric hook-eye releasable fastener contactingly engages and thereby secures the boots within the continuous band.

[0018] The method still further includes raising a remaining portion of the secured together loop portions upper extremities of the boots and thereafter lifting the boots, using the remaining portion of the secured together loop portions for carriage of the boots and the continuous band-like loop together.

[0019] In yet another one of its aspects, this invention provides the combination of ankle-high boots with buckle or other fasteners on the ankle portion thereof and a carrier therefor, with the combination including a pair of ankle-high boots having buckle or other fastening means on the ankle portions thereof, with the boots of the pair positioned adjacent one to another and laterally aligned with the toes of the boots pointing in a common direction. The combination further embraces a continuous band-like loop in configured circular form fitting over and around the portions of the boots covering the wearer's ankles, having a hook portion of a fabric hook-eye releasable fastener facingly connected to the circularly configured portion and being wrapped around rear ankle portions of the boots at a position below an uppermost buckle or other fastener on the ankle portion of the boots, with the fabric hook-eye fastener overlapping each of the boots.

[0020] The combination still further includes a remaining portion of the continuous band-like loop having loop portions secured together and having an eye portion of the fabric hook-eye releasable fastener facingly connected to the secured together portions of the loop extending forward relative to the boots, with the circularly formed portion contacting and fitting around the upstanding ankle portions of the boots. The combination yet further includes the secured together loop portions passing under the boots thereby to wrap the circularly configured portion entirely about the upstanding ankle portions of the boots at a position below an uppermost buckle or other fastener of the boots and then extending upwardly between the adjacent boots with the eye portion of the fabric hook-eye releasable fastener facingly engaging and thereby securing the boots within the continuous band. The combination yet further includes a remaining portion of the secured together loop portion extending above upper extremities of the boots for manual lifting of the boots for carriage of the boots and the continuous band-like loop together.

[0021] In still another one of its aspects, this invention provides apparatus for carrying snow ski boots, snowboard boots and other ankle-high and higher boots having mechanical closures, where the apparatus includes a handle, a fabric band in the form of an endless loop connected to the handle, a first part of a two-part fabric closure connected to the loop at a position remote from the handle, a second part of the two-part fabric closure connected to facingly connected portions of the loop that are intermediate of the handle and the first part of the two-part fabric closure, where the band is wrappable about the ankle portion of a pair of boots, when respective toes and heels of the boots are aligned, with the first part of the fabric closure at the rear of the ankle portions of the boots, the portion of the band extending away from the wrappable portion towards the handle being moveable by being drawn by the handle between the boots below the wrappable portion, and then upwardly to contact the second part of the two-part fabric closure, with resulting contact of the two-part fabric closure thereby securing the fabric band about the boots, with the handle being vertically liftable to raise the band and the boots for transport thereof.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0022] FIG. 1 is an isometric view of apparatus for carrying boots in accordance with aspects of the invention.

[0023] FIG. 2 is an isometric view of a pair of boots with boot carrying apparatus manifesting aspects of the invention engaging the pair of boots with the pair of boots ready to be transported using the apparatus.
FIG. 3A is an isometric view of apparatus for carrying boots in accordance with aspects of the invention ready to be placed in position in engagement with a pair of boots for carrying the boots, where the boots have been depicted in dotted lines.

FIG. 3B is a view similar to FIG. 3A, showing the first step in engaging the apparatus for carrying boots, manifesting aspects of the invention, with a pair of boots to be carried.

FIG. 3C is a view similar to FIGS. 3A and 3B, showing apparatus for carrying boots, manifesting aspects of the invention, initially engaged with a pair of boots to be carried.

FIG. 3D is a view similar to FIGS. 3A, 3B and 3C, showing the manner in which the apparatus for carrying boots, manifesting aspects of the invention, is moved from the position illustrated in FIG. 3C to a position illustrated in FIG. 3E.

FIG. 3E is a drawing similar to FIGS. 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D and 3E, showing movement of the handle portion of the apparatus for carrying boots in position for carrying the boots after the apparatus for carrying boots, manifesting aspects of the invention, has engaged the pair of boots and the boots are ready to be transported.

FIG. 3F is a drawing similar to FIGS. 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 3E and 3F, showing the apparatus for carrying boots, manifesting aspects of the invention, fully engaged a pair of boots, with the boots and the apparatus ready to be transported.

FIG. 4 is an isometric diagram, in greater detail than FIG. 1, of apparatus for carrying boots in accordance with the invention, with the construction of the invention detailed.

FIG. 5 is a view of apparatus for carrying boots manifesting aspects of the invention that is similar to FIG. 4, but depicting Velcro fasteners in place and also depicting the preferable aspect of the handle of the apparatus.

FIG. 6 is a manufacturing diagram illustrating certain dimensional properties of the apparatus for carrying boots in accordance with the invention when the invention is constructed in the preferred embodiment.

FIG. 7 is a sectional view in schematic form of an alternate construction of loop 28 with the bond that otherwise makes flexible strip 12 continuous provided as a part of the fabrication of loop 28 and not separately within handle 14.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

The drawings illustrate a preferred embodiment of the apparatus for carrying and securing snow ski boots and snowboard boots, which in the broadest sense comprises a core strip, a boot restraint, some Velcro binding, a carabiner hanger, a comfort handle and optionally a logo placard. The core strip is one foundation of the device and is preferably one inch wide nylon webbing. The boot restraint in general is the section of core strip used to hold the boots firmly in place while carrying or hanging them. The Velcro binding in general is a set of mating Velcro, namely male and female or hook and eye sections, used to bind together two sections of core strip to maintain a firm compression force on the boots to keep them from falling out of the device. The carabiner hanger is a carabiner on a tab of the core strip and is used to attach the apparatus to a belt, back pack, or fanny pack to carry the apparatus or to allow the apparatus to be affixed to a structure to keep the boots from moving or keep them off the ground. The comfort handle is attached to the core strip and distributes the load and protects the user’s hand from the compression of the core strip while carrying the device. The optional logo placard is the section of paper or other printed material displaying a company logo for general sales and which also facilitates private labeling as well as personalization of the apparatus.

The core strip is preferably one inch wide tubular nylon webbing sewn into a loop and configured to support the other key elements of the apparatus. In one preferred embodiment, the core strip is a 68½ (sixty eight and one half) inch long strip that can be made in a variety of colors and textures based on the specific taste of the end customer. In one variation, referred to as the “secure” version of the apparatus, the apparatus is lockable, allowing the user to secure the boots to a post, fence, shelf, building, vehicle or other structure. In order to provide the required structural integrity in the “secure” version of the apparatus, the core strip may be made of Kevlar instead of nylon webbing.

In such case, the tubular webbing is reinforced with a narrow steel cable threaded through the hollow webbing. This results in a significant increase in tensile and shear strength making it much more difficult to cut or tear open.

The core strip can be made of either shuttle loom or needle loom weaving with no impact on functionality of the apparatus. The core strip can also be woven with specific patterns or characters woven into it. For instance, one variation is to customize the appearance with a customized logo on the optional logo placard.

The boot restraint is the section of core strip used to hold the boots firmly in place while carrying or hanging them. The boot restraint is the section of the one inch wide tubular webbing strip that wraps around each boot. This section of the strip is very much like a lasso that wraps around each boot and when pulled taught, secures the boots or skates allowing them to be hung or carried without dropping or damaging them. The boot restraint extends from the smooth section of the Velcro binding and splits into two sections of strip that encircle each boot. The two ends of the boot restraint meet in the middle, preferably equidistant from the smooth Velcro binding, namely the eyes or the female portion. The boot restraint is a single section of webbing. Both tubular webbing and single layer webs are suitable.

Referring to the drawings in general and to FIGS. 1, 4 and 5 in particular, apparatus for carrying boots, namely snow ski boots, snowboard boots, ice skates and other ankle high boots having at least one buckle or other closure means on the ankle portion thereof, with the apparatus manifesting aspects of the invention, is designated generally 10 and includes a continuous flexible strip designated generally 12 and a handle 14. While flexible strip 12 is a continuous flexible strip, for purposes of explanation of the invention and the apparatus embodying the invention, as illustrated in the drawings, the instant description for purposes of illustration considers continuous flexible strip 12 in several parts. A first portion 16 of flexible strip 12 is that portion of flexible strip 12 having extremities defined by the respective ends of handle 14. Accordingly, first portion 16 of flexible strip 12 is depicted in dotted lines in FIG. 5, but is not so depicted in FIGS. 1 and 4.
As illustrated in FIG. 5, where handle 14 is depicted as having a tubular interior 44, flexible strip 12 has been fabricated into its continuous form by an overlap joint of two ends of strip 12 where the overlap joint is designated 70 in FIG. 5. Overlap joint 70 may be effected by sewing, by adhesive, by thermal bonding or any other means for securing together nylon webbing, which is the preferable material from which flexible strip 12 is fabricated.

Handle 14 has been depicted in cylindrical form in FIGS. 4 and 5. The preferred form of handle 14 is in a slightly curved form, as depicted in FIG. 1, where handle 14 has a slightly curved or bowed configuration with the outer surface, facing away from the remainder of apparatus 10 designed generally 72 and formed on a slightly larger radius than inwardly facing surface 74, thereby to provide curvature to handle 14, facilitating greater comfort for a person carrying apparatus 10 when apparatus 10 is loaded with a pair of boots. The second portion of strip 12 is designated generally 36 and consists of first part 18 of strip 12 and second part 20 of strip 12.

In FIG. 5, the second portion of strip 12 has been designated generally 36. Respective parts of second portion 36 of strip 12, extending from respective extremities of first portion 16 of strip 12, have been designated as first part of part 18 of second portion 36 of strip 12, and second part 20 of second portion 36 of strip 12 in FIG. 5. Lines IA and IB have been added to FIG. 5 to indicate the sections of strip 12 that are designated as first second part 18 and as second part 20 of second portion 36 of strip 12.

First part 18 of second portion 36 of strip 12 and second part 20 of second portion 36 of strip 12 have intermediate segments proximate the respective extremities first and of second parts 18, 20 that are remote from handle 14, which are secured together in facing contact. The area where first part 18 and second part 20 are secured together in facing contact is denoted by bracket III in FIG. 5.

A third portion of strip 12 is designated generally 22 and extends from the extremities of first and second parts 18, 20 of second portion 36 of strip 12. Third portion 22 of strip 12 has two parts: First part 24 of third portion 22 of strip 12, and second part 26 of third portion 22 of strip 12. First and second parts 24, 26 of third portion 22 of strip 12 are secured together in complementary facing contact, preferably by stitching as depicted schematically in FIG. 1. Outwardly facing surfaces of first part 24 of third portion 22 of strip 12 and second part 24 of third portion 22 of strip 12 respectively have first and second eye portions 40, 42 of fabric hook-eye fastener means secured thereto, preferably by stitching, again as illustrated schematically in FIG. 1. First eye portion 40 of fabric hook-eye fastener 40 is secured to first part 24 of third portion 22 of strip 12 as indicated in FIG. 5 by corresponding numerals. Similarly, second eye portion 42 of fabric hook-eye fastener is secured to the outwardly facing surface of second part 26 of third portion 22 of strip 12, again as indicated by the numerals in FIG. 5. First and second eye portions 40, 42 of fabric hook-eye fastener means extend substantially the length of first and second parts 24, 26 of third portion 22 of strip 12, as illustrated in FIG. 5.

A fourth portion 34 of strip 12 connects to the respective remaining extremities of first and second parts 24, 26 of third portion 22 of strip 12 with fourth portion of strip 12 being denoted by indicator numeral 34 in FIG. 5 and further indicated by the bracket V in FIG. 5. A hook portion 38 of fabric hook-eye fastening means is connected to fourth portion 34 of strip 12 proximate the midpoint thereof, and is desirably wrapped about fourth portion 34 of strip 12 and secured thereto by stitching, as depicted schematically in FIG. 5.

Still referring to FIG. 5, handle 14 has tubular interior 44, the ends of which are blocked by plugs 46, 48 in respective ends of handle 14. Within handle 14 further may be provided a printed message on paper, cardboard or otherwise, that is readable through the preferably transparent wall of handle 14, where the printed message indicia within handle 14 has been schematically shown and is designated 50 in FIG. 5. Plugs 46, 48 have been shown in solid lines due to the preferably transparent character of handle 14. Those plugs are preferably fully visible from outside of handle 14, looking at the side of handle 14, with handle 14 oriented in the configuration illustrated in FIG. 5. Similarly, printed message indicia 50 is provided within the interior of handle 14, but is visible from outside handle 14 due to the transparent character of the wall of handle 14.

A section of second part 20 of second portion 36 of strip 12 is folded on itself to form a loop 28 illustrated in FIGS. 1, 4 and 5, where loop 28 is secured by second stitchings that secure in facing contact sections of second part 20 of second portion 36 of strip 12 that have been folded on themselves to form loop 28. The stitchings that secure this portion of the strip into the loop configuration are second stitchings 54, which are illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 4.

As further illustrated in FIGS. 1, 4 and 5, loop 28 preferably has retained therewithin a ring 30 which is preferably a closed, preferably metal, ring. Retained within and engaging ring 30 is an openable ring 32, preferably a ring of the type having a manually actuable spring closure, ring 30 retained within loop 28, all as illustrated in FIGS. 1, 4 and 5. Ring 32 is preferably of the type commonly referred to as a "carabiner".

As illustrated in FIGS. 1, 4 and 5, handle 14 is preferably tubular with strip 12 preferably passing through the tubular interior of handle 14.

Handle 14, as best illustrated in FIG. 5, preferably further includes a pair of plugs 46, 48 fitting within respective ends of the tubular end of handle 14, serving to secure strip 12 immovably within handle 14 by wedging strip 12 against the tubular interior of the handle. Plugs 46, 48 are preferably elastically and are easily visible within preferably transparent handle 14.

The invention allows provision of printed message indicia 58 within handle 14 and/or embroidering, sewing or other wise affixing to strip 12 identification indicia for the owner of the boot carrying apparatus, advertising material for the seller of the boot carrying apparatus, and the like.

While in the preferred embodiment strip 12 is preferably fabric, namely nylon, it is further within the scope of the invention to provide strip 12 as an extruded flexible strip, preferably plastic.

Stitching is used in various places to secure sections of strip 12 together and to secure the eye portions 40, 42 of fabric hook-eye fastener to strip 12 and to secure hook portion 38 of the fabric hook-eye fastener to strip 12. The preferable hook-eye fastening means is sold under the trademark "Velcro". Different types of Velcro or other fasteners may be used in practicing the invention. The Velcro should be sufficiently soft that abrasion of the user's hands is not an issue, and should be sufficiently strong so as to hold the boots in place when the boot carrying apparatus is deployed.
Respecting the stitchings, first stitchings are used to secure together in facing contact the two intermediate sections of the first and second parts 18, 20 of second portion 36 of strip 12 in the area designated generically 76 in FIG. 4 and in FIG. 1. Indicator numeral 76 has been omitted from FIG. 5 to enhance drawing clarity. The first stitchings are illustrated schematically and indicated by numeral 52 in FIG. 1; first stitchings are shown schematically but not designated with an indicator numeral in FIG. 4.

As noted above, second stitchings 54 secure in facing contact two sections of second parts 20 of second portion 36 of strip 12, to form loop 28. Second stitchings 54 are shown schematically in FIGS. 1 and 4 and are designated 54 therein.

Third stitchings 56, shown schematically, secure together first and second parts 24, 26 of third portion 22 of strip 12, with first and second parts 24, 26 of third portion 22 being secured in facing contact substantially over the length of third portion 22, as illustrated in FIG. 1 and FIG. 4. Third stitchings are designated 56 in FIGS. 1 and 4.

Four stitchings connect the hook portion of the fabric hook-eye fastening means to fourth portion 34 of strip 12 on both sides of strip 12 proximate the midpoint of fourth portion 34. Fourth stitchings are designated 58 and depicted schematically in FIGS. 1 and 4, but not in FIG. 5, in order to enhance drawing clarity.

Fifth stitchings connect eye portions of the fabric hook-eye fastening means in facing contact with outwardly facing surfaces of the first and second parts 24, 26 of third portion 22 of strip 12 along substantially the length of third portion 22 of strip 12. These fifth stitchings, some of which have been omitted for purposes of drawing clarity, are illustrated schematically in FIG. 4 and designated 60. The function of third stitchings and fifth stitchings may be combined and a single set of stitchings may be used to secure both first and second parts 24, 26 of third portion 22 of strip 12 together in facing contact, and to secure the eye portions of the hook-eye fabric fastening means to the outwardly facing surfaces of first and second parts 24, 26 of third portion 22 of strip 12. Fifth stitching 60 is depicted only in FIG. 4 in order to enhance drawing clarity of FIGS. 1 and 5.

Referring to FIGS. 2, 3, 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 3E, 3F and 3G, all of which show the apparatus for carrying boots together with a pair of boots, with the apparatus in various configurations as the apparatus is positioned about the boots and deployed for carrying the boots, numbering of apparatus 10 in these figures in some instances includes only visible portions of apparatus 10. Some of the details of apparatus 10 are not numbered in these drawing figures, for example, the stitchings, in an effort to enhance drawing clarity. In these drawing figures, a ski boot is designated 100 and a boot buckle is designated 102.

FIG. 2 illustrates the apparatus for carrying boots in accordance with the invention with the apparatus designated generically 10 in position, having been deployed about a pair of boots with each boot designated 100, with apparatus 10 ready for manual carrying of the boots of interest. Note that handle 14, second portion 36 of strip 12, loop 28, rigid ring 30 and openable ring 32, as well as a substantial part of fourth portion 34 of strip 12, are all visible in FIG. 2.

FIG. 3 is a view taken in a direction opposite from that of FIG. 2 with the apparatus deployed and ready to carry the boots. In FIG. 3, the connection of the eye portions of fabric hook-eye fastener that are secured by second stitchings 54 to third portion 22 of strip 12 and the hook portion 38 of the fabric hook-eye fastener are shown engaged thereby retaining continuous flexible strip 12 in secure engagement about the boots 100, with strip 12 positioned below at least one buckle 102 of boot 100.

FIG. 3A depicts the boot carrying apparatus in accordance with the invention and as designated generally 10 in position for deployment about a pair of boots 100. Fourth portion 34 of strip 12 has been deployed in a generally circular configuration with the circle being sufficiently large for circularly deployed fourth portion 34 to fit over the ankle portions of boot 100.

FIG. 3B illustrates in schematic form the initial deployment of the boot carrying apparatus 10 about a pair of boots. Fourth portion 34 of strip 12 is configured in a generally circular form, as illustrated in the upper portion of FIG. 3B. The apparatus 10 for carrying boots is lowered, in the direction indicated by arrows A in FIG. 3B, into position with the circularly configured fourth portion 34 of strip 12 positioned around the boots below at least one boot buckle, as shown in the lower portion of FIG. 3B. Once apparatus 10 has been lowered around boot 100, with fourth portion 34 of strip 12 configured as described, the apparatus is in position around the boots as illustrated generally in FIG. 3C.

To then deploy apparatus 10 into position to carry the boots, apparatus 10 is moved, as illustrated in FIG. 3D, from the position designated by the encircled numeral “1” to the position designated by the encircled numeral “2”. This is done by moving handle 14 and second and third portions 36, 22 of strip 12 in an arcuate motion as indicated generally by arrows B, C, D and E in that sequence. As handle 14, second portion 36 of strip 12 and third portion 22 of strip 12 are moved in this manner, third portion 22 of strip 12 passes between the two boots of the pair, thereby closing the fourth portion 34 of strip 12, which had been circularly configured about the ankle portions of the boots as illustrated in FIG. 3C, thereby “lassoing” the boots. As handle 14, second portion 36 of strip 12 and third portion 22 of strip 12 pass between the heels of the boots, the handle is pulled away from the boots, thereby tightening fourth portion 34 of strip 12 about the ankle portions of the boots. Positioning fourth portion 34 of strip 12 below at least one buckle on the boots prevents vertical slippage of apparatus 10 off the boots. Once fourth portion 34 has been tightened about the upper, ankle portions of the boots, handle 14, second portion 36 of strip 12, and particularly third portion 22 of strip 12, are moved somewhat vertically upwardly to contact and thereby engage first and second eye portions 40, 42 with hook portion 38 of the fabric hook-eye fastening means. This secures the boots in place since connection of the hook and eye portions of the fabric hook-eye fastening means preclude movement of fourth portion 34 of strip 12 wrapped around the ankle portions of the boots.

Once this has been effectuated, the result is as shown in FIG. 3E. The next step is to rotate handle 14, second portion 36 of strip 12 and third portion 22 of strip 12 in the direction indicated by arrows F, G and H, in that order, as illustrated in FIG. 3F, thereby to position handle 14 vertically above the boots to be carried. Once this position has been achieved, as illustrated in FIG. 3G, boots 100 are ready to be transported merely by lifting handle 14.

The upper portion of FIG. 6 is a plan view of apparatus 10, similar to FIGS. 4 and 5, with alphabetic letters denoting the position of various portions of continuous flexible strip 12 after fabrication of apparatus 10. Strip 12 is
shown in the middle of FIG. 6 in a plan view, unformed, unsewn and with alphabetic letters depicting portions of strip 12 that will assume the corresponding positions as designated by those letters once apparatus 10 is fabricated and appears as shown in the upper portion of FIG. 6. The alphabetic letters appearing in columnar form down the left side of FIG. 6 have numbers adjacent to them indicating the distance in inches along strip 12 at which the strip must be sewn, manipulated, etc. for the apparatus 10 as shown at the top of FIG. 6 to result. FIG. 6 provides a guide for fabricating apparatus 10 in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the invention.

Referring to FIG. 7, loop 28 for securing rigid ring 30 therewithin is shown in section with ring 30 in place. Second part 20 of second portion 36 of strip 12 is illustrated as 20A in FIG. 7 and has an extremity designated 21 in FIG. 7. Also shown in FIG. 7 is an alternate second part 26A of third portion 22 of strip 12. In the construction illustrated in FIG. 7, an extremity portion of second part 20A of second portion 36 of strip 12 is wrapped around rigid ring 30 and also around an extremity portion of second part 26A of third portion 22 of strip 12. Once this assembly has been brought together, it is secured by alternate third second stitchings 54A as illustrated in FIG. 7. When the continuous flexible strip 12 is configured with what would otherwise be the butt joint effectuating the continuous nature of the strip replaced by the structure and construction illustrated in FIG. 7, no butt joint need be provided within the interior of handle 14 as illustrated in the preferred embodiment.

Apparatus 10 for carrying boots is preferably fabricated commencing with a 68 ½ inch long piece of 1 inch wide nylon webbing, as illustrated generally in FIG. 6. From one end of the webbing, one measures 11 and ½ inches where a fold is made to form a 1 and ½ inch tab using material above the 11 and ½ inch mark. This is done by folding 3 inches of material from the 11 and ½ inch position back towards the end so that there is 1 and ½ inches of strip material protruding perpendicularly, as shown in FIG. 6. A one inch plastic D-ring is placed in the crux of the tab and sewn closed, preferably using a box stitch pattern. Next a 4 and ½ inch section of clear plastic tubing is placed over the upper section of the strip just above the tab having the ring attached thereto. The two ends should be 180 degrees off so that the inside and outside of the top part of the strip 12 mate oppositely to the inside and outside of the bottom of strip 12. Strip 12 is sewn closed with a 1 inch overlap, preferably using dual zigzag stitching across the strap. The strap is then oriented so that the ring tab faces the worker and the other end of the handle faces away. At that point, a logo placard, if desired, can be centered and sewn in place across the ½ overlapped joint in the top of the strap as indicated by “K” in FIG. 6.

The worker proceeds by holding handle 14 in one hand, locating the center of the other end of the loop of a continuous flexible strip. The worker proceeds to center the preferable 3 ½ inch long patch of male or hook Velcro, which is preferably 2 inches wide, on the center point of the continuous flexible strip remote from handle 14. This Velcro patch is wrapped around strip 12 and sewn in place. From the edges of the male or hook Velcro, one measures 14 inches up the side of the strip and joins the strips together while accommodating a ½ twist in the strip. The strip is then sewn together up the strip towards the handle for a distance of 10 inches so that in effect what results is a single strip of double thickness defining the third portion 22 of the strip. A 9 inch strip of 2 inch wide Velcro is then wrapped around the third portion of the strip designated 22 in the other drawings and sewn onto the strip where the strips come together above the male portion of the Velcro. The female or eye portion of the Velcro should be located at the point where the strip has joined to define the third portion of the strip and run for a length of about 9 inches, which is the length of the third portion of the strip, with the Velcro running up both sides of third portion of strip 22.

While the foregoing and the dimensions set forth in FIG. 6 may be used to fabricate the invention in the preferred embodiment, the product may be varied. A shorter version of the apparatus may be provided to accommodate shorter people and children whereas a longer version might be helpful for taller persons. It is also within the scope of the invention to provide a longer strip of the eye or female portion of the Velcro that would run further down the continuous strip which would allow the apparatus to more firmly compress smaller diameter boots and skates.

Apparatus 10 is designed to easily attach to a pair of ski boots, snow board boots, hockey skates, in-line skates or any other boots that include buckles above the ankles. To attach Apparatus 10 to a pair of boots, place the boots side-by-side with the toes of both boots 100 facing away from the user. Hold handle 14 in one hand, and the hook portion 38 of fabric hook-eye in the other. Slide the eye portions 10, 42 second to that portion 22 of strip 12 between boots 100. With the hand that is holding the hook portion 38, lasso the boots by leading each side of the fourth portion 34 of strip 12 around one of the boots so that the two parts of fourth portion 34 are below the top buckle of the boot 100. With each boot 100 encircled by a loop part of fourth portion 34, pull handle 14 back creating a compressive force on each boot 100. While pulling back on handle 14, lift it up from the surface that the boots are resting on, allowing hook portion 38 to mate with eye portion 40, 42, securing the boots within apparatus 10. Apparatus 10 is now loaded and ready to carry boots 100. With the boots 100 loaded, the user may carry the boots between locations or they may choose to use the ring 32 to hang up the apparatus with the boots attached. To remove boots 100 from apparatus 10, set the boots down on a firm surface. With the tension of handle 14, pull apart the mating hook and eye 40, 42 components releasing the compression on boots 100. Lift the hook portion 38 up and over the back of boots 100. Boots 100 can then be separated and are ready for use.

I claim the following:
1) Apparatus for carrying boots, comprising:
   a) a continuous flexible strip;
   b) a handle connecting to the strip at two positions thereon, defining therebetween a first portion of the strip;
   c) a second portion of the strip, having first and second parts extending from respective extremities of the first portion, the first and second parts having intermediate sections portions proximate respective remaining extremities of the first and second parts secured together in facing contact with one another;
   d) a third portion of the strip having first and second parts extending from and continuously adjoining the extremities of the first and second parts of the second portion;
   e) the first and second parts of the third portion being secured together in facing contact over their common length;
   a fourth portion of the strip connecting respective extremities of the third portion;
g) a hook portion of fabric hook-eye fastening means being connected to the fourth portion of the strip on both sides of the strip approximate a midpoint of the fourth portion;

h) eye portions of the fabric hook-eye fastening means being facingly contactingly connected to respective outer surfaces of the third portion, along the length of the third portion.

2) Apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a section of the second part of the second portion of the strip being folded on itself to form a loop.

3) Apparatus of claim 2 further comprising a ring retained within the loop.

4) Apparatus of claim 3 further comprising a openable ring, having a manually actuable spring closure, engaging the ring retained within the loop.

5) Apparatus of claim 1 wherein the handle is tubular and the strip passes through the tubular interior of the handle.

6) Apparatus of claim 5 wherein the handle further comprises a pair of plugs fitting within respective ends of the tubular interior of the handle, securing the strip immovably within the handle by wedging the strip against the tubular interior of the handle.

7) Apparatus of claim 6 wherein the plugs are elastomeric.

8) Apparatus of claim 1 wherein the handle is transparent.

9) Apparatus of claim 1 wherein the handle further comprises printed message indicia.

10) Apparatus of claim 1 wherein the first portion of the strip has entity identification indicia thereon.

11) Apparatus of claim 1 wherein the strip is fabric.

12) Apparatus of claim 1 further comprising:
   a) first stitchings securing together in facing contact intermediate sections of the first and second parts of the second portion of the strip;
   b) second stitchings securing in facing contact sections of the second part of the second portion of the strip that are folded on themselves to form the loop;
   c) third stitchings securing together the first and second parts of the third portion in facing contact substantially over the length of the third portion;
   d) fourth stitchings connecting the hook portion of fabric hook-eye fastening means to the fourth portion of the strip on both sides of the strip approximate the midpoint of the fourth portion; and
   e) fifth stitchings connecting eye portions of the fabric hook-eye fastening means in facing contact with outwardly facing surfaces of the first and second parts of the third portion, along substantially the length of the third portion.

13) Apparatus of claim 1 wherein the strip is extruded.

14) Apparatus for carrying boots, comprising:
   a) a band-like strip;
   b) a handle;
   c) the strip secured to the handle;
   d) one part of the strip extending from the handle forming a loop approximate the handle;
   e) the one part and a remaining part of the strip extending from the handle being secured together intermediate the loop and the handle;
   f) the one part extending from the loop in a direction away from the portion of the first part intermediate the loop and the handle being secured to the remaining part for a first distance;
   g) the one part extending from the loop in a direction away from the part intermediate the loop and the handle being separated from the remaining part for a second distance and thereafter joining;
   h) a hook portion of fabric hook-eye releasable fastener being connected to the strip at juncture of the one part separated from the remaining part where those parts join;
   i) an eye portion of the fabric hook-eye releasable fastener being connected to the first and remaining parts of the strip along the first distance at which the first and remaining parts are secured;
   j) a first ring retained within the loop;
   k) an openable ring, having a manually actuable spring closure, engaging the first ring.

15) Apparatus of claim 14 wherein the strip is continuous.

16) Apparatus of claim 14 where in the strip is fabric.

17) Apparatus of claim 16 wherein the fabric is nylon.

18) A method for carrying a pair of ski and similar boots comprising:
   a) placing the boots of the pair adjacent one to another and laterally aligned with the toes of the boots pointing in a common direction;
   b) configuring a portion of a continuous band-like loop into a circular form large enough to fit over and around the portions of the boots that cover the wearer's ankles;
   c) wrapping the circularly configured portion of the continuous band-like fabric loop, having a hook portion of a fabric hook-eye releasable fastener facingly connected to the circularly configured portion, around upstanding ankle portions of the boots at a position below an uppermost buckle of the boots with the fabric hook-eye fastener positioned equally overlapping each of the boots;
   d) drawing a remaining portion of the continuous band-like loop, the remaining portion having loop portions secured together and having an eye portion of the fabric hook-eye releasable fastener facingly connected to the secured together portions of the loop, forward relative to the boots, to pull the circularly formed portion firmly around the upstanding portions of the boots;
   e) rotating the secured together loop portions under the boots to wrap the circularly formed portion entirely about the upstanding portions of the boots at the position below an uppermost buckle of the boots and then pulling the secured loop portions upwardly between the adjacent boots until the eye portion of the fabric hook-eye releasable fastener contactingly engages and thereby secures the boots within the continuous band;
   f) raising a remaining portion of the secured together loop portions above upper extremities of the boots and thereafter lifting the boots, using the remaining portion of the secured together loop portions, for carriage of the boots and continuous band-like loop together.

19) Ankle high boots with buckle or other fasteners on the ankle portion thereof and a carrier therefor, comprising:
   a) a pair of ankle-high boots having buckle or other fastening means on the ankle portions thereof, with the boots of the pair adjacent one to another and laterally aligned with the toes of the boots pointing in a common direction;
   b) a portion of a continuous band-like loop in circular form fitting over and around the portions of the boots covering the wearer's ankles, having a hook portion of a fabric hook-eye releasable fastener facingly connected to the
circularly formed portion and being wrapped around rear ankle portions of the boots at a position below an uppermost buckle or other fastener on the ankle portion of the boots with the fabric hook-eye fastener overlapping each of the boots;

c) a remaining portion of the continuous band-like loop, the remaining portion having loop portions secured together and having an eye portion of the fabric hook-eye releasable fastener facingly connected to secured together portions of the loop extending forward relative to the boots with the circularly formed portion positioned around and in contact with the upstanding ankle portions of the boots;

d) the secured together loop portions passing under the boots thereby to wrap the circularly formed portion entirely about the upstanding ankle portions of the boots at the position below an uppermost buckle or other fastener of the boots and then extending upwardly between the adjacent boots with the eye portion of the fabric hook-eye releasable fastener contactingly engaging and thereby securing the boots within the continuous band;

e) a remaining portion of the secured together loop portions extending above upper extremities of the boots for manual lifting of the boots for carriage of the boots and continuous band-like loop together.

20) Apparatus for carrying snow ski boots, snowboard boots and other ankle-high and higher boots having mechanical closures, comprising:

a) a handle;

b) a fabric band in the form of an endless loop connected to the handle;

c) a first part of a two-part fabric closure connected to the loop at a position remote from the handle;

d) a second part of the two part fabric closure connected to facingly connected portions of the loop that are intermediate the handle and the first part of the two-part fabric closure;

e) the band being wrappable about the ankle portion of a pair of boots when respective toes and heels of the boots are aligned with the first part of the fabric closure at the rear of the ankle portions of the boots, the portion of the band extending away from the wrappable portion towards the handle being movable by being drawn by the handle between the boots below the wrappable portion and then upwardly to contact the second part of the two part fabric closure with the first part of the two part fabric closure thereby securing the fabric band about the boots with the handle then being vertically liftable to raise the band and the boots for transport thereof.

* * * * *