

[54] **HOLDER DEVICE FOR INFANT'S NURSING BOTTLE**

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[51] Int. Cl.**H05b 1/00, A47d 15/00**

[58] Field of Search.....**219/280, 535; 248/102-107, 125, 230, 246; 287/23, 54 C, 103; 222/146 HE**

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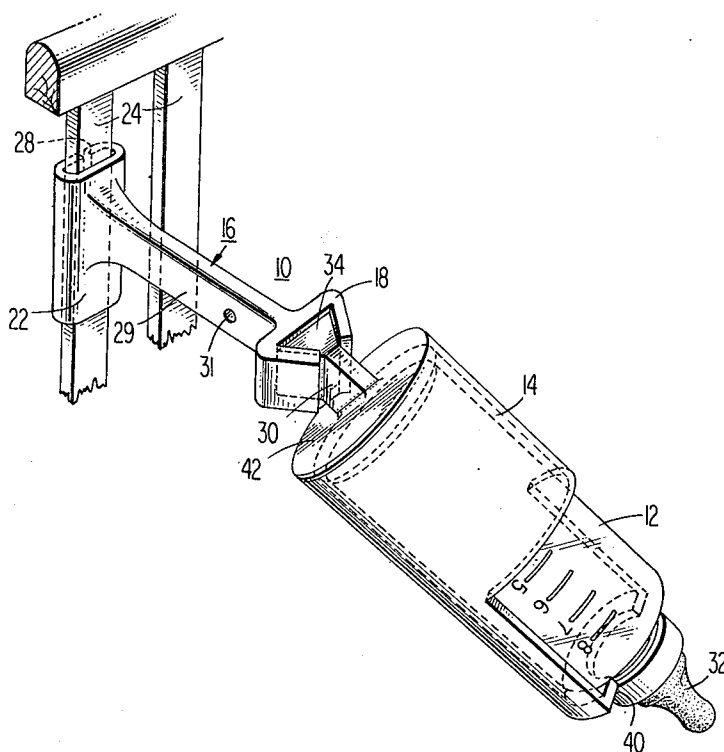
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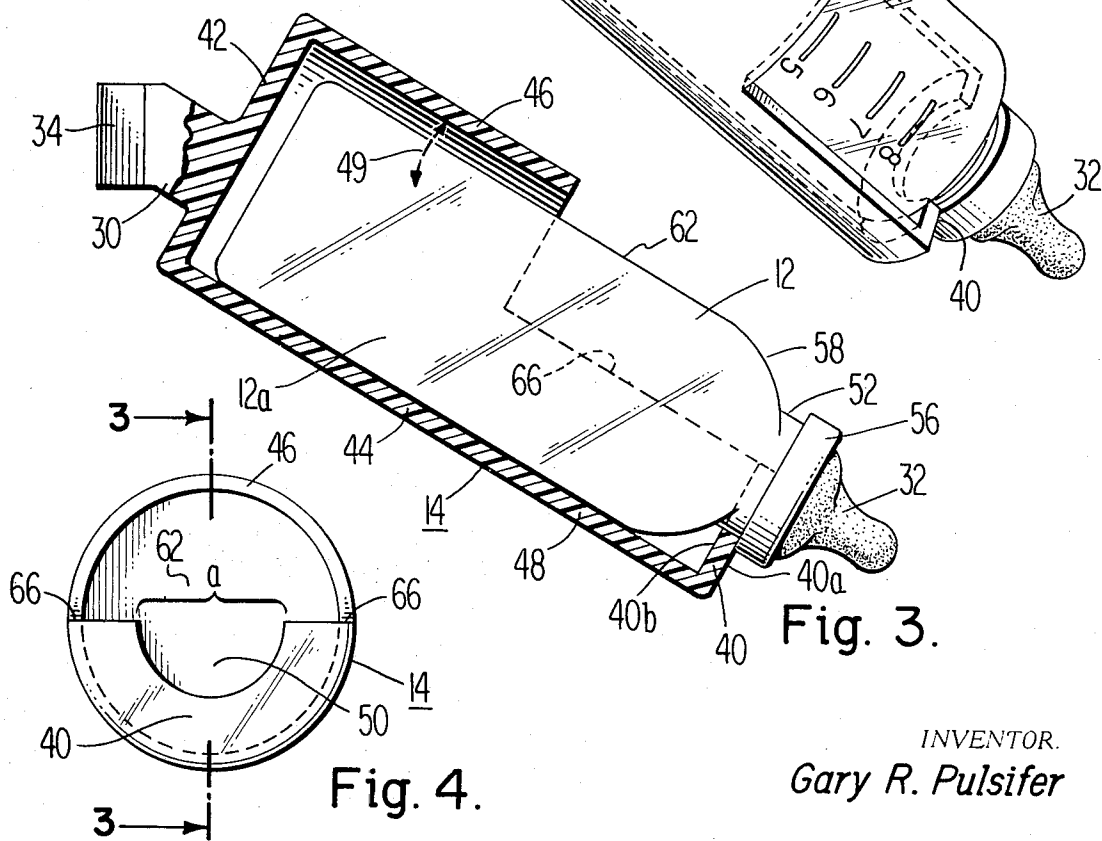
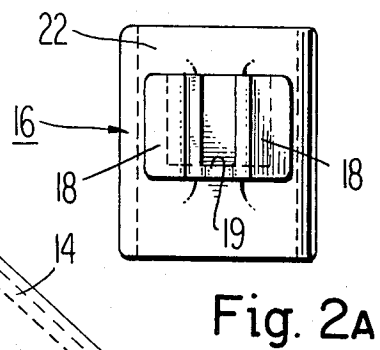
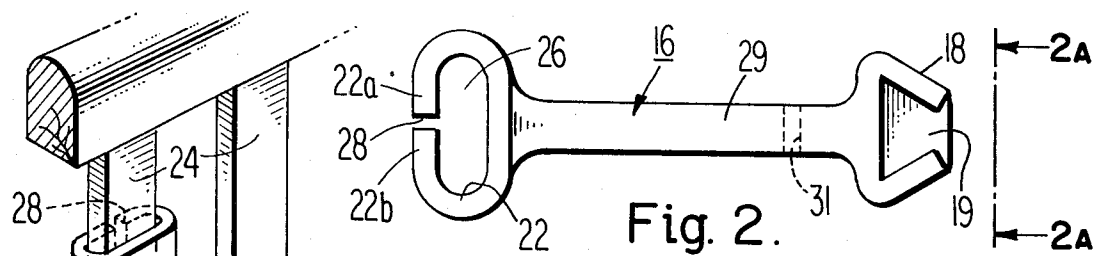
[57] **ABSTRACT**

A novel infant-feeding device comprising a receptacle member and means for holding the receptacle member in proximity to the infant. The receptacle member includes an opening whereby the bottle can be introduced therein and a slotted end wall portion, in which slot the neck portion of the bottle nests, the slot width being less than the diameter of the main body portion of the bottle. The feeding device can further comprise a cover member that is adapted to be removably disposed on the receptacle member such that the opening at the receptacle member is substantially completely closed. The cover member includes a slotted wall portion, the slot being located such that it is in substantial register with the slot of the receptacle member when the cover member is disposed thereon.

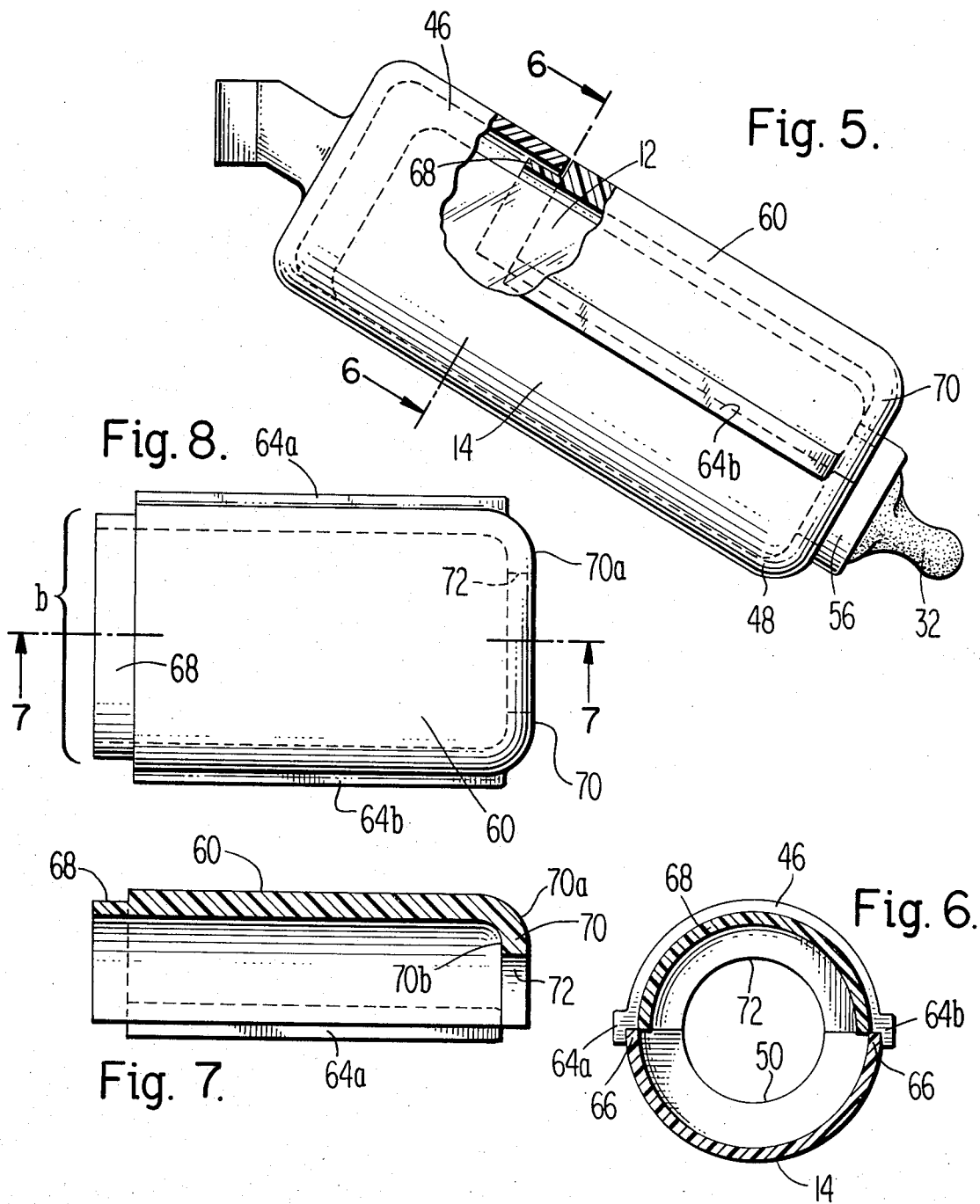
The receptacle member may be provided with electrical resistance heating means, the above-mentioned cover member, and/or a sheet of heat insulating material (including heat reflecting material) on a surface thereof to maintain the nursing bottle and its contents at an elevated temperature. Also, the cover member may be provided with such a sheet of heat insulating material.

22 Claims, 14 Drawing Figures





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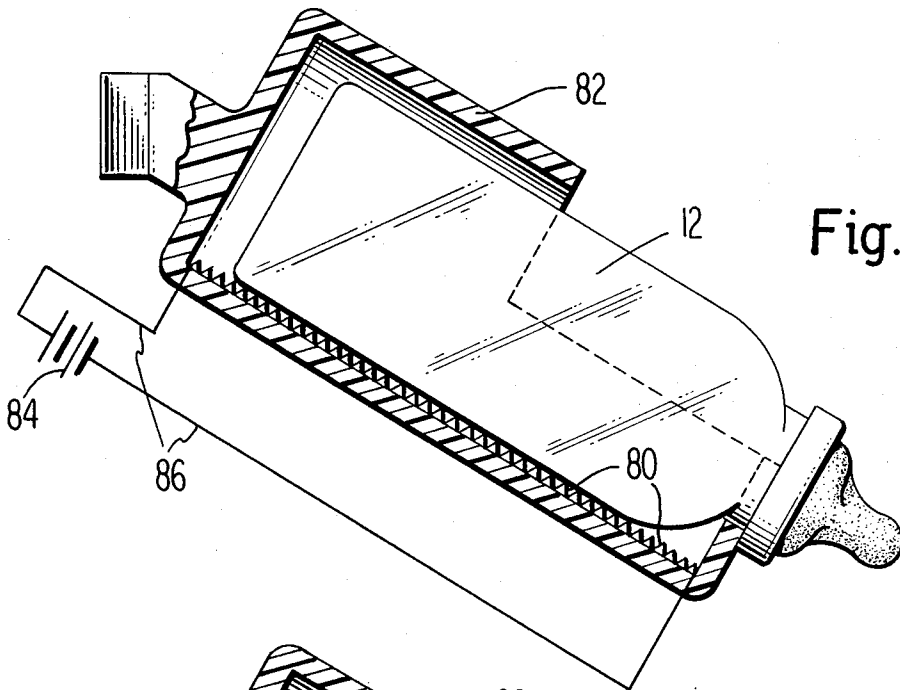


Fig. 9.

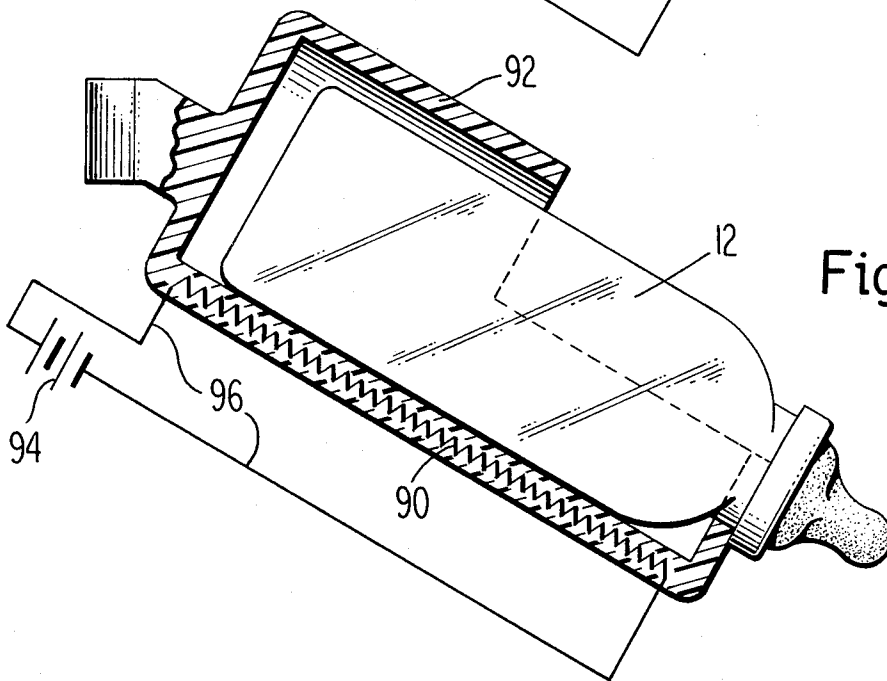


Fig. 10.

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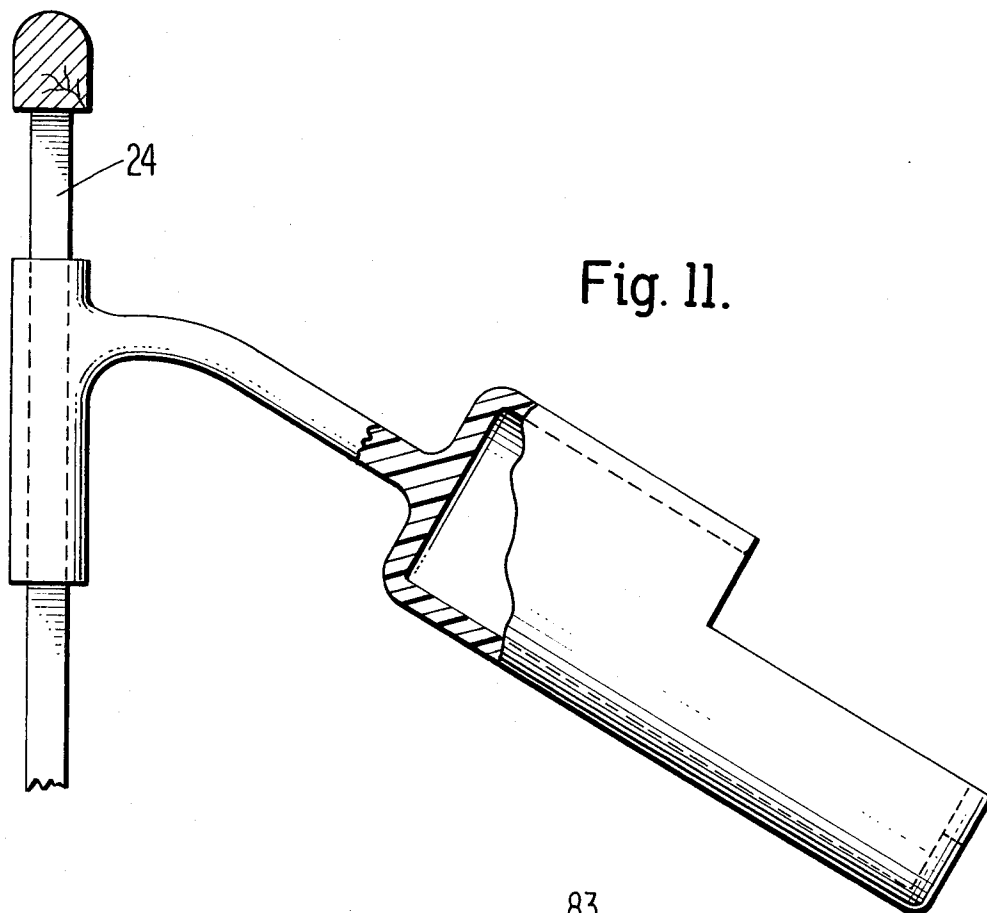


Fig. 11.

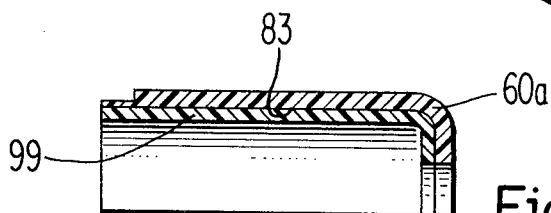


Fig. 13.

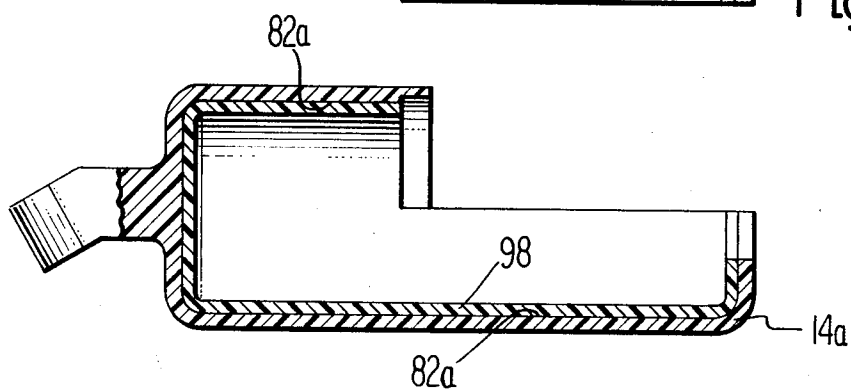


Fig. 12.

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HOLDER DEVICE FOR INFANT'S NURSING BOTTLE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a novel infant feeding device, and particularly to a holder for an infant's nursing bottle, which holder optionally can allow the maintenance of the nursing bottle's contents in a warm condition.

It is often desirable to feed an infant with a nursing bottle that is held in a prone, or inclined, position by some mechanical means so that the person attending to the infant can perform other duties. Furthermore, it is often desirable that the food (e.g., milk, etc.) be taken in a relatively warm condition by the child, this to make the food more appetizing to the child than it is in a cold state; to avoid, as some believe, the causation of colic to the child by giving him food in a cold state, and so forth. Therefore, it would be desirable to be able to provide a fixture, or device, that could be used for holding an infant's nursing bottle in a suitable feeding position, this with the optional additional ability to maintain the food or other contents of the nursing bottle in a warm condition. While the prior art has disclosed nursery bottle holders that merely serve to hold a bottle in a feeding position, some of these holders (particularly those relying on the springiness of metal parts thereof for holding a bottle) are not completely satisfactory because it may become possible for the bottles held by them to move or slide, particularly along the major axes of the bottles, while the infant is feeding.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The novel invention is an infant-feeding device comprising a receptacle member that is adapted to hold an infant's nursing bottle, which receptacle member includes a slotted wall portion, and means for holding the receptacle member in proximity to the infant. The receptacle member and the holding means may comprise an integral structure or two physically distinct structures.

In one embodiment, the slotted wall portion of the receptacle member comprises an end wall portion of the receptacle member. The slot of the end wall portion has a width that preferably is substantially equal to the diameter of the bottle's neck portion but substantially less than the diameter of the main portion of the bottle. It is more preferable that, where the end wall portion comprises a substantially resilient material the slot therein has a width that is substantially less than the neck portion diameter.

In an embodiment of the present invention, the receptacle member comprises an intermediate portion that comprises a first part including a continuous wall structure (e.g., a substantially cylindrical structure) and a second part including a non-continuous wall structure (e.g., a substantially semi-cylindrical structure). It is preferred that the length of the second part be adapted so that any pivoting motion of the nursing bottle in the receptacle, about the slotted end wall will be hindered by the engagement of the nursing bottle by the first part, this being achievable by adjusting the length of the second part to be less than that of the bottle that is used.

In still another embodiment, the novel feeding device comprises means for maintaining the nursing bottle (and its contents) at an elevated temperature (including heating the bottle to a higher temperature and/or retention thereof at a higher temperature — e.g., one above room temperature). This maintaining means may be an electrical heating means (e.g., a resistance heater); a cover member; and/or a sheet of heat insulating material on a surface of the receptacle member and/or the cover member.

In a further embodiment, the feeding device comprises a cover member that is adapted to be removably disposed on the receptacle member so as to substantially completely close the receptacle member opening by means of which a nursing bottle can be introduced into the receptacle member. The cover member can comprise an end wall including a slot that is so located as to be in substantial register with the bottle-receiving slot of the receptacle member.

Among its advantages, the feeding device of the present invention reduces the possibility of the movement of an infant's nursing bottle while the infant is feeding; provides a relatively easy mountability and adjustability thereof in a feeding position and relatively facile rotatability thereof about the support therefor (e.g., a crib slat), thereby allowing the feeding device to be moved out of the way; and is capable of maintaining the infant's bottle and the contents thereof at an elevated temperature when such is desired. The feeding device can be used for purposes other than feeding, also.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the novel infant feeding device according to one embodiment of the present invention, the device comprising a receptacle member and a support member, with a nursing bottle in the receptacle member for illustration.

FIG. 2 is a plan view of the support member shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 2a is an end elevation view of the support member shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a sectional elevation view of the receptacle member shown in FIG. 1 along a plane 3—3 passing through the principal axis thereof, the receptacle containing a nursing bottle for illustration.

FIG. 4 is an end elevation view of the receptacle member in FIG. 3, without the nursing bottle.

FIG. 5 is a partially fragmentary sectional side elevation view of the receptacle member in FIG. 3 with a cover member disposed thereon according to another embodiment of this invention.

FIG. 6 is a partially sectional transverse view along axis 6—6 of the receptacle member and cover member in FIG. 5.

FIG. 7 is a sectional elevation view along the axis 7—7 in FIG. 8, of the cover member in FIG. 5.

FIG. 8 is a plan view of the cover member in FIG. 5.

FIG. 9 and 10 are sectional elevation views along a plane passing through the respective principal longitudinal axes thereof, of receptacle members including electrical resistance heating means according to further respective embodiments of this invention.

FIG. 11 is a perspective view of a novel feeding device according to a still further embodiment, wherein the device comprises an integral structure.

FIG. 12 is a sectional elevation view of a receptacle member having a sheet of heat insulating material disposed at the interior surface thereof according to another embodiment of this invention.

FIG. 13 is a sectional elevation view of a cover member having a sheet of heat insulating material disposed at the interior surface thereof according to still another embodiment.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The novel feeding device 10 (FIG. 1) provides means for holding an infant's nursing bottle 12 in a position where the infant is able to take the bottle's contents and comprises a receptacle member 14 and a support member 16. The support member 16 (FIGS. 1 and 2) comprises a coupling member 18 and a claw-shaped portion 22 that includes oppositely disposed, protruding portions 22a and 22b, the support member 16 preferably being made of a relatively resilient material (e.g., a flexible plastic, such as polyethylene, that can be temporarily deformed by applying force thereto, but that substantially resumes its shape when the deforming force is removed).

The support member 16 is adapted to be removably disposed on a relatively fixed supporting structure, such as, for example, the side slats 24 of a child's play pen or crib. The support member 16 can be disposed on the supporting structure (e.g., slats 24 of FIG. 1) by inserting the supporting structure into the central space 26 of the claw-shaped portion 22 via the opening 28 between the protruding portions 22a and 22b, such that the supporting structure is nested within and securely engages the claw-shaped portion 22 so that the support member 16 does not slide unintentionally. The claw-shaped portion 22 of the support member 16 preferably is sufficiently long (e.g., 6 inches) so as to reduce the possibility of unintentional removal or tilting thereof. The coupling member 18, which can form an integral part of the support member 16 (as shown in FIGS. 1 and 2), or, alternatively, can be produced separate therefrom and subsequently connected thereto, can be a female member of a dovetail joint, as shown. The support member 16 further comprises an arm member 29 that extends between the claw-shaped portion 22 and the coupling member 18 and that preferably contains an opening 31 extending therethrough, which opening 31 is useable for suspending toys and the like from the arm member 29 or otherwise attaching toys to the feeding device 10. The receptacle 14 comprises a support arm 30 that includes a coupling element 34 (i.e., the male dovetail member, as shown in FIG. 1) that complements the coupling member 18. The support member 16 and the support arm 30 (or a suitable alternative structure) serve to hold the receptacle member 14 in a position proximate to the infant within the crib, play pen, or the like, the receptacle member 14 serving to hold the infant's nursing bottle 12 in a position where the infant can be fed. The position in which the bottle is held is preferably inclined so that the bottle's contents can flow freely toward the nipple 32 of the bottle 12. As shown in FIG. 1, the support member 16 is connected to the support arm 30 by means of the coupling member 18 and the coupling element 34, the vertical position of the receptacle member 14 with respect to the infant being adjustable by varying the

position of the support member 16 on the slat 24. Also, where claw-shaped portion 22 made of a resilient material, the feeding device 10 can be horizontally rotated about the slat 24, thereby allowing the feeding device to be swung out of the way when the infant is to be removed or for some other reason.

As shown in FIG. 3, the receptacle member 14 and the support arm 30 may be made as an integral unit, one possible method of manufacturing such an integral unit being to mold a suitable plastic material to the desired configuration and dimensions. Alternatively, the support arm 30 may be made separately and later connected, either removably or fixedly, to the receptacle member 14. As a further alternative, a receptacle member (such as 14 in FIG. 1) and means for holding the receptacle member in a feeding position, which means is removably mountable on a support, may comprise an integral structure, as shown in FIG. 11.

While the figures herein are not made to proportion or dimension, it is generally preferred that the receptacle member 14 be sufficiently large as to accommodate a standard (e.g., eight ounce) nursing bottle. Also, where the support member 16 is substantially straight so that, in its mounted position on the slat 24 it is substantially horizontal, the support arm 30 preferably is provided with an angular portion (as shown in FIG. 3) such that the principal axis of the receptacle 14 will, upon mounting the receptacle 14 in its proper position, be disposed at an angle (e.g., an angle of about 30° with the horizontal) that facilitates the flow of the liquid contents of the nursing bottle 12 held by the receptacle 14 and allows substantially all of the bottle's contents to be consumed. Alternatively, the arm member 29 of the support member 16 can be provided with an angular portion (not shown) so that the desired inclination of the receptacle (and, therefore, the bottle) is achieved.

The receptacle member 14 (FIGS. 3 and 4) comprise a substantially semi-circular, slotted (semi-annular) end wall portion 40; an oppositely disposed second end wall portion 42; and an intermediate portion 44 that has a generally cylindrical configuration. The intermediate portion 44 comprises a first part 46 comprising a continuous wall structure (e.g., a structure that is substantially cylindrical) and a second part 48 comprising a non-continuous wall structure (e.g., a structure that is substantially semi-cylindrical), the second part preferably being integral with the first part and the nursing bottle being insertable in the receptacle member 14 via the opening, or discontinuity, at the second part 48. While the receptacle member 14 is shown to be generally cylindrical in shape, receptacles (including end wall portions) of other shapes may be used with the present invention.

The end wall portion 40 includes a slot, or recess, 50 therein which is adapted to receive the neck portion 52 of the nursing bottle 12. Such a neck portion 52, preferably nests in the recess 50 so that both the ring member 56, which is attached to the bottle 12 and holds the nipple 32 in place, and the shoulder portion 58 of the bottle 12 can substantially engage the wall portion 40 at opposite surfaces 40a and 40b, respectively, of the wall portion 40. The width of the slot 50 should be smaller than the diameter of the main portion 12a of the bottle 12, it being preferred that the width of

the slot 50 (indicated as *a* in FIG. 4) be substantially the same size as the diameter of the neck portion 52 of the bottle 12 to ensure a relatively snug fit. Where the slotted wall portion 40 is made of a resilient material (e.g., polyethylene) it is even more preferable that the width of the slot 50 be slightly less than the diameter of the bottle's neck portion 52. Where the shape of the nursing bottle is not generally cylindrical, the term "diameter" is intended to include the transverse width dimension of the particular part of the bottle being considered. The engagement of wall portion 40 by the ring member 56 and the shoulder 58 of the bottle 12 serves to hold the bottle 12 so that there is minimal axial or lateral motion thereof. It is generally preferred that the length of the semi-cylindrical second part 48 (i.e., that comprising a non-continuous wall structure) be shorter than that of the shortest nursing bottle (e.g., the 4 ounce size) intended to be used with the device 10 so that any pivoting motion of the bottle (indicated by the dashed line 49) about the slot 50 will be substantially hindered or overcome by the engagement of the bottle by the cylindrical first part 46 (i.e., that comprising a continuous wall structure), such pivoting with longer bottles also being substantially hindered or overcome in substantially the same way. Also, it is preferred that the width of the intermediate portion 44 be sufficiently larger than the diameter of the main portion of the bottle so as to allow the facile insertion and removal of the bottle; a width that exceeds this diameter by up to about one-half inch, for example, would generally be suitable. While the second end wall portion 42, at which the support arm 30 is connected to the receptacle member 14, may close only part of the end of the cylindrical first part 46, it is preferred that it close that end entirely to provide better thermal insulation, as discussed below.

When it is desired, the feeding device 10 can be used for holding items other than nursing bottles in a fixed position so that the infant can use these other items, also, without the assistance of another person. For example, the device 10 can be used to hold an infant's pacifier (not shown) that generally has a nipple and a ring handle with a flat plate therebetween, the pacifier being mounted in the slot, or recess 50 of the wall portion 40 such that the wall portion 40 can be engaged by the ring handle and the flat plate in a manner similar to that of the bottle shown in FIG. 1. Therefore, the infant can turn to and use at will the pacifier or the nursing bottle, as the case may be, that is held in a fixed position by the feeding device 10 herein.

To use the feeding device 10, the support member 16 (FIGS. 1 and 2) is mounted on the support 24 (e.g., the slat of a crib) by separating the protruding portions 22a and 22b thereof to allow the support 24 to be inserted in the channel, or central space, 26 that is partially defined by the protruding portions 22a and 22b.

Where the support member 16 is made of a resilient material, such as polyethylene or another plastic, for example, the protruding portions 22a and 22b can, after insertion of the support in the channel 26, resume their original shape. The central space, or channel, 26 is adjusted in dimension such that the clamp 16 can engage the support 24 it being preferred that the central space, or channel, 26 be smaller than the support 24 with which it is to be used to ensure minimum slipping

of the device 10. The support arm 30 is then detachably connected to the coupling member 18, the slotted end wall portion 40 of the receptacle member 14 being lower than the oppositely disposed second end wall portion 42 so that the bottle 12 will be inclined. The nursing bottle 12 is inserted into the receptacle 14 by way of the opening 59 therein (the opening 59 being partially defined by the semi-cylindrical second part 48), the bottle 12 preferably being disposed such that the slotted wall portion 40 of the receptacle member 14 nests between the ring member 56 and the shoulder 58 of the bottle.

Where the coupling member 18 and the coupling element 34 comprise, respectively, the female and the male elements of a dovetail joint (as shown in FIG. 1), it is preferred that the female dovetail slot (i.e., 18) of the support member 16 and the male dovetail element (i.e., 34) of the support arm 30 both taper downward (i.e., each have a smaller dimension at the bottom thereof than at the top) so as to compensate for wear. Also, it is preferred that the coupling member 18 have a closed bottom 19, as shown in FIGS. 2 and 2a, and that all of the parts of the feeding device 10 be made of suitable synthetic resinous material (e.g., a resilient plastic, such as polyethylene or Teflon) so as to avoid rusted parts and to facilitate cleaning of the device. The use of heat resistant materials for the feeding device 10, which is preferred, allows the sterilization thereof. The use of comparatively soft materials (e.g., polyethylene) for the device 10 reduces the possibility that the infant will be injured by the device.

In another embodiment of the present invention, the feeding device 10 comprises a cover member 60 (FIG. 5) that preferably is made of a plastic material (e.g., polyethylene) and that removably engages the receptacle member 14 at, preferably, the first and second parts 46 and 48, respectively, thereof (as shown). The configuration and dimensions of the cover member 60 preferably are such that the cover member 60 substantially closes the opening 62 (FIG. 3) of the receptacle member 14, as shown in FIG. 5. Similar numerals in the various figures indicate corresponding parts. The cover member 60 serves to retain heat within the receptacle 14, thereby retarding the cooling of the contents of the nursing bottle 12 and serving to maintain the nursing bottle and its contents at an elevated temperature, if any, to which they have been heated.

The cover member 60 (FIGS. 5 through 8) is substantially semi-cylindrical and includes lip portions 64a and 64b that engage respective ones of the edge portions 66 of the second part 48 of the receptacle 14, which edge portions 66 partially define the opening 62 of the receptacle 14. The distance between the oppositely disposed lip portions 64a and 64b preferably is slightly smaller than the distance between the oppositely disposed edge portions 66, which smaller size requires that the lip portions 64a and 64b be spread apart somewhat when placed on the receptacle 14, thereby providing a relatively tight fit and more readily allowing the retention of the cover member 60 in place. The cover member 60 also includes an optional second lip portion 68 that fits within and engages the cylindrical first part 46, as shown. The second lip portion 68 preferably has an outside width (indicated as *b* in FIG. 8) that is substantially equal to the inner diameter of

the cylindrical first part 46; however, the outside width may be somewhat larger or smaller than the inner diameter. The cover member 60 further includes a substantially semi-circular end wall portion 70 that includes a slot, or recess, 72 that is situated so as to be in register with the slot 50 in the end wall portion 40 of the receptacle member 14 when the cover member 60 is disposed on the receptacle 14. The slots 50 and 72 comprise an opening sufficiently large to receive the neck portion 52 of a nursing bottle 12 the exterior surfaces 40a and 70a of the respective end wall portions 40 and 70, and the respective interior surfaces 40b and 70b thereof preferably engaging, respectively, the ring member 56 and the shoulder 58 of the bottle 12.

In another embodiment, electrical heating means, such as, for example, an electrical resistance heating element 80 (FIG. 9) is provided for maintaining the nursing bottle at an elevated temperature. As used herein the term "maintaining at an elevated temperature" is defined to include the heating of the nursing bottle and its contents from a relatively cool to a relatively warm condition and/or the substantial retention thereof at an elevated temperature. The heating element 80 is covered with a heat-transmitting, electrically insulating material (not shown) and is provided within the receptacle 82 (similar to 22 in FIG. 1) such that the bottle 12 is in proximity with the heating element 80. The heating element 80 is connected to a source of electrical potential 84 by wires 86, the potential source 84 preferably being of a comparatively low voltage (e.g., a 10 volt battery) for safety purposes. The wires 86 can pass through the wall of the receptacle member 14 (as shown) or pass through an opening in the receptacle member 14. Where it is desired, a heating element (e.g., 80) can be disposed on the interior surface of the receptacle 82, as shown in FIG. 9, or it can be attached to a cover member (e.g., 60 in FIG. 5) or both.

Alternatively, a resistance heating element 90 (FIG. 10) can be embedded in the wall of the receptacle 92, the receptacle 92 being made of a heat resistant, preferably electrically insulating material that is capable of transmitting heat. The heating element 90 is connected to a source 94 of relatively low voltage (e.g., 10 volts) by wires 96. Where it is desired, the voltage source that is used with the feeding device may be contained in a space, or compartment, comprising the feeding device.

In another embodiment, the respective interior (or, optionally, the exterior) surface 82a and 83 of the receptacle member (e.g., 14a in FIG. 12) and/or the cover member (e.g., 60a in FIG. 13) of a feeding device is provided with a sheet 98 and 99, respectively, of a heat insulating material so as to provide heat retention within the receptacle member or to further improve the heat retention where the receptacle member already is provided with a cover member and/or heating element, as used herein, the term "heat insulating" is defined to include heat reflecting, as well as both heat reflecting and heat insulating. Such a heat reflecting material is, for example, a metal, such as aluminum, while the heat insulating material can be, for example, a natural fiber, such as wool or cotton, or a synthetic material.

I claim:

1. An infant-feeding device comprising:

a. A receptacle member adapted to hold an infant's nursing bottle, said receptacle comprising a generally trough-shaped body portion and a substantially flat and semi-annular end wall portion adapted to snugly embrace the neck of said nursing bottle, said end wall being so dimensioned that a first surface thereof substantially engages the nipple-retaining ring member of said nursing bottle and a second surface thereof substantially engages the shoulder portion of said nursing bottle and

b. means for holding said receptacle member in proximity to said infant, said means being removably attachable to a relatively fixed support.

2. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 1, wherein said receptacle member and said holding means comprise an integral structure.

3. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 1, wherein said receptacle member comprises a structure physically distinct from said holding means.

4. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 1, wherein the slot of said end wall portion has a width that is substantially equal to the diameter of the neck portion of said nursing bottle and substantially less than the diameter of the main portion of said nursing bottle.

5. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 1, wherein said end wall portion comprises a substantially resilient material and the slot of said end wall portion has a width substantially less than the diameter of the neck portion of said nursing bottle.

6. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 1, wherein said receptacle member further comprises a second end wall portion oppositely disposed to said semi-annular end wall portion and intermediate portion located therebetween, said intermediate portion comprising a first part comprising continuous wall structure and a second part comprising a non-continuous wall structure, said second part being located adjacent to said semi-annular end wall portion.

7. An infant-feeding device comprising:

a. a receptacle member adapted to hold an infant's nursing bottle, said receptacle member comprising a slotted first end wall portion and a second end wall portion oppositely disposed to said slotted first end wall portion, said receptacle member further comprising an intermediate portion located between said first and second end wall portions and including an opening adapted to allow the deposit of said nursing bottle into said receptacle member, said intermediate portion comprising a substantially cylindrical first part adjacent to said second end wall portion and a substantially semi-cylindrical second part integral with said first part and adjacent to said slotted first end wall portion, said slotted first end wall portion being substantially semi-circular and

b. means for holding said receptacle member in proximity to said infant, said means being removably attachable to a relatively fixed support.

8. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 7, wherein the length of said second part is adapted so that any pivoting motion of said nursing bottle about said slotted end wall portion is substantially hindered by the engagement of said nursing bottle by said first part.

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9. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 1, wherein said device comprises means for maintaining said nursing bottle at an elevated temperature.

10. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 9, wherein said means for maintaining said nursing bottle at an elevated temperature comprises a heating means.

11. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 10, wherein said heating means is an electrical resistance heating element.

12. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 11, wherein said electrical resistance heating element is disposed within said receptacle member and adapted to be electrically connected to a source of electrical potential.

13. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 11, wherein said electrical resistance heating element is embedded in the wall of said receptacle member and is adapted to be electrically connected to a source of electrical potential.

14. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 9, wherein said receptacle member comprises an opening whereby said nursing bottle can be disposed in said receptacle member and said means for maintaining said nursing bottle at said elevated temperature comprises a cover member adapted to be removably disposed on said receptacle member so as to substantially completely close said opening.

15. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 14, wherein said cover member comprises a slotted end wall portion, the slot of said end wall portion of said

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cover member being located so as to be in register with the slot of said end wall portion when said cover member is disposed on said receptacle member, whereby said slots together provide an opening adapted to receive the neck portion of said nursing bottle.

16. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 9, wherein said means for maintaining said nursing bottle at said elevated temperature comprises a sheet of heat insulating material disposed at a surface of said receptacle member.

17. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 9, wherein said means for maintaining said nursing bottle at said elevated temperature further comprises a sheet of insulating material disposed at a surface of said cover member.

18. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 1, wherein said holding means comprises means for attaching toys thereto.

19. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 1, wherein said holding means comprises a claw-shaped portion.

20. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 1, wherein said holding means comprises a dovetail joint.

21. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 20, wherein the female member of said dovetail joint comprises a closed bottom.

22. The infant-feeding device defined in claim 21, wherein the respective members of said dovetail joint are tapered downward.

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