United States Patent [19]

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[54] **INVERSE UMBRELLA TENT**

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[21] Appl. No.: **194,237**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** ..... **135/2,** 135/14 V

[51] **Int. Cl.** **A45f 1/04**

[58] **Field of Search**..... 135/2, 15 P, 15 O, 3 E, 5 E, 135/8, 14 V, 20 R

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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A tent or collapsible shelter of the umbrella tent-type. The tent includes, in one lightweight package, a foldable frame and a tent cover affixed to the frame. In one embodiment, the tent frame includes a vertical erecting rod located at the apex of the tent frame and flexible, segmented tent poles pivotably connected at the upper ends to a sleeve section which is, in turn, slidable on the erecting rod. The tent cover is attached to the tent poles near the ground, is slidably connected to an intermediate section of the tent poles and is connected at the top to the sleeve section at the base of the erecting rod. In this manner, the tent cover is tautly affixed to the tent frame in an erected position and is loosely affixed to the tent frame in a collapsed position. The sections of the segmented tent pole are connected to one another in the collapsed state and are elastically urged into an intercoupling engagement to form a rigid support upon erection.

12 Claims, 9 Drawing Figures

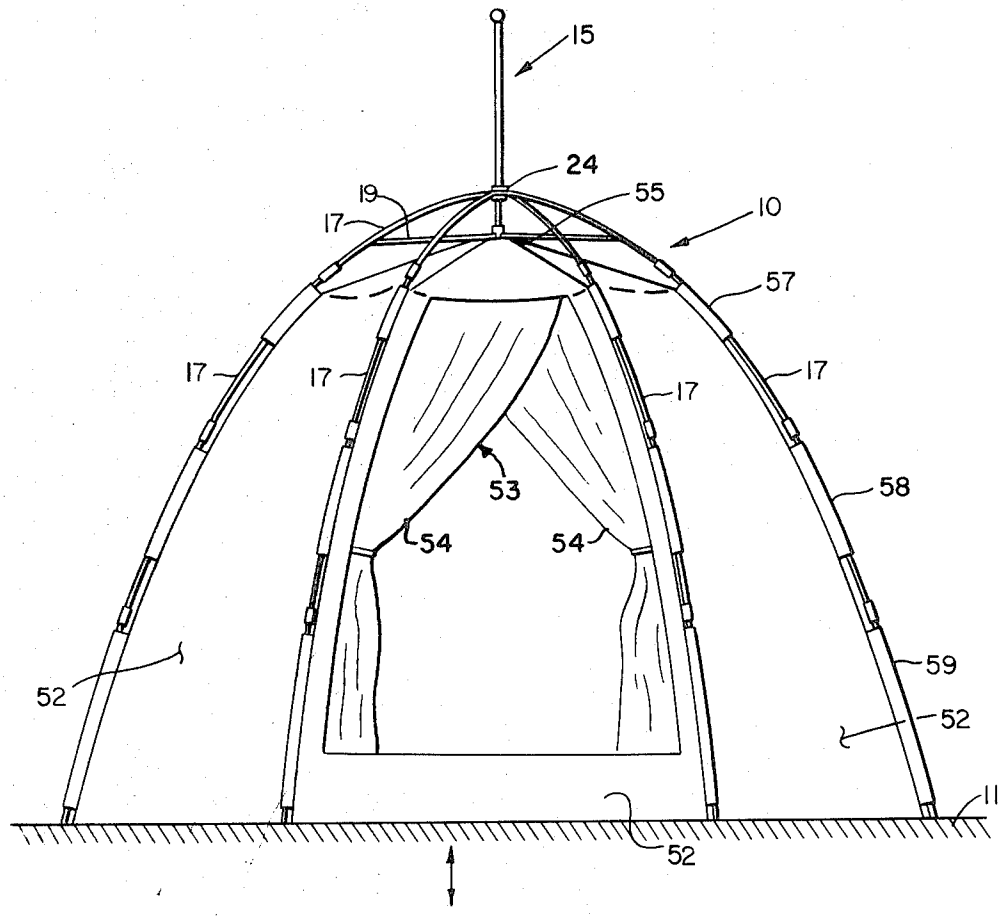
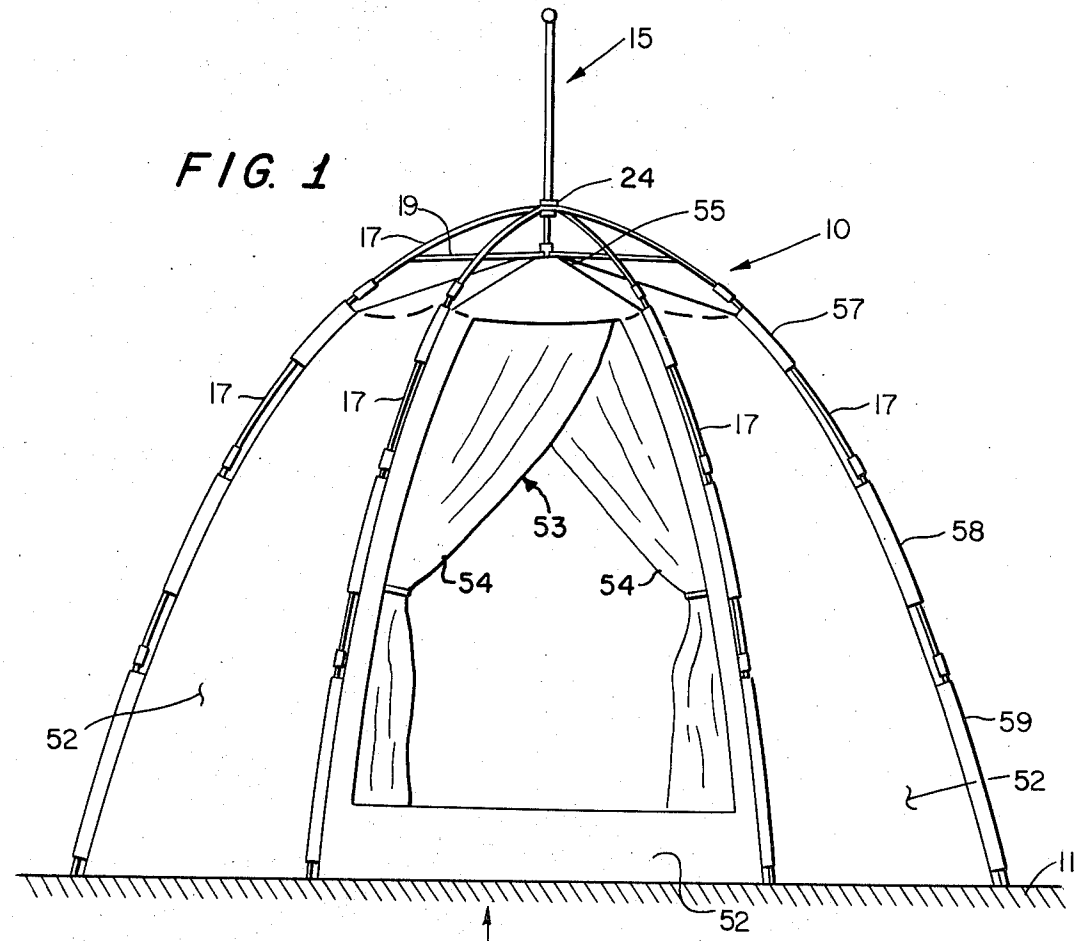


FIG. 1



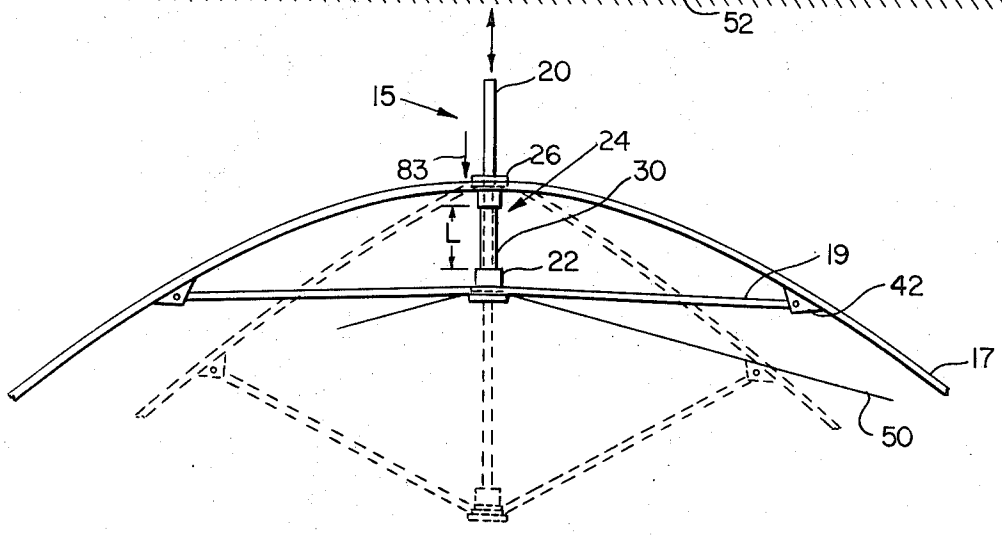


FIG. 2

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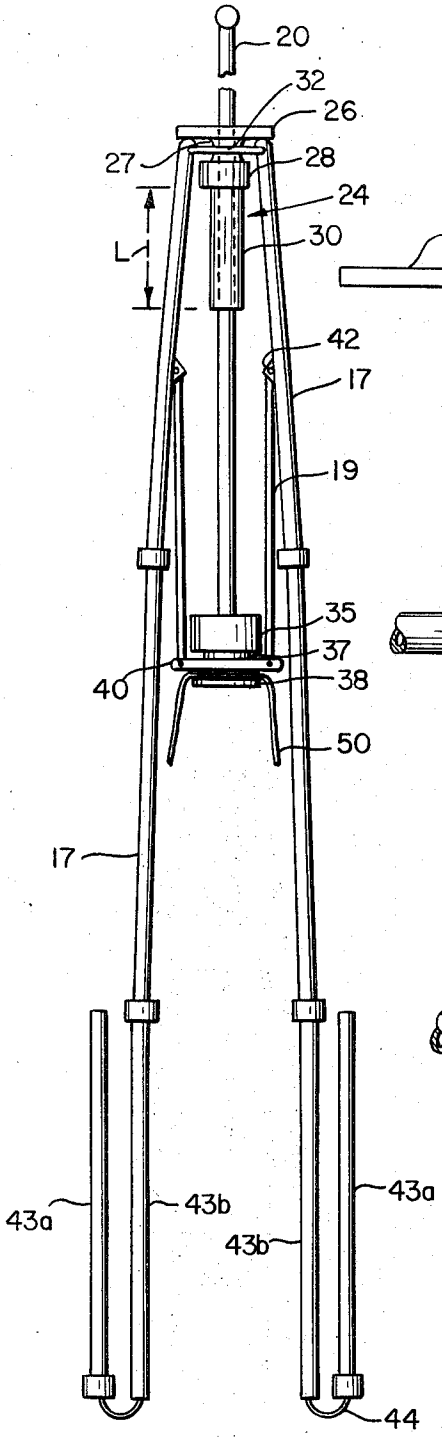


FIG. 3

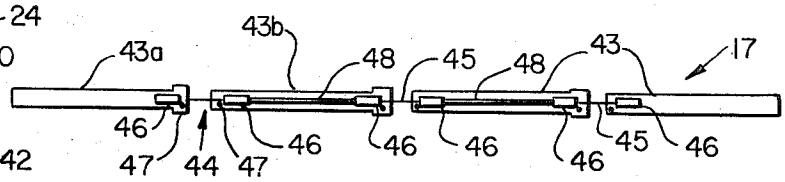


FIG. 4

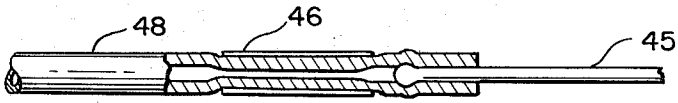


FIG. 5

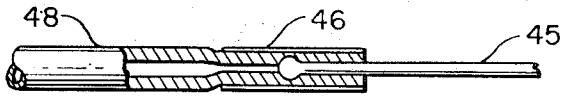


FIG. 6

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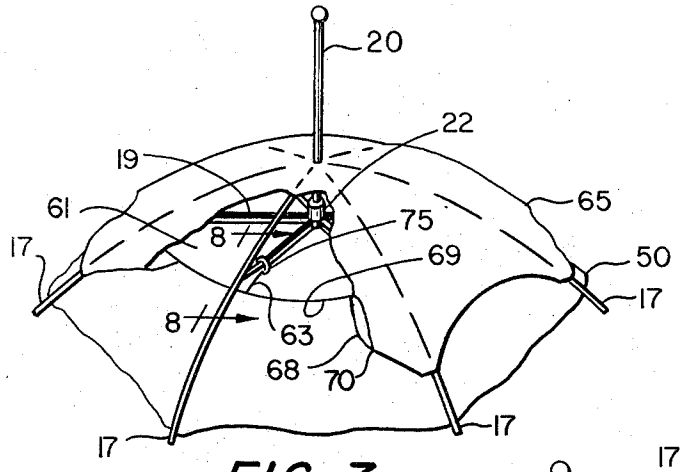


FIG. 7

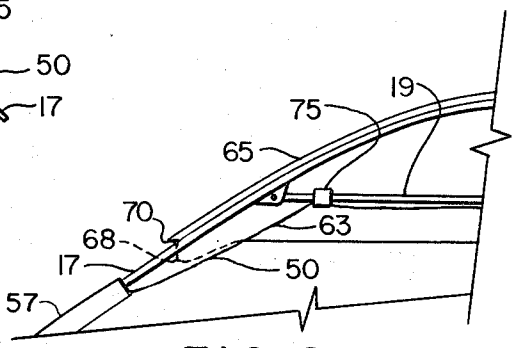


FIG. 8

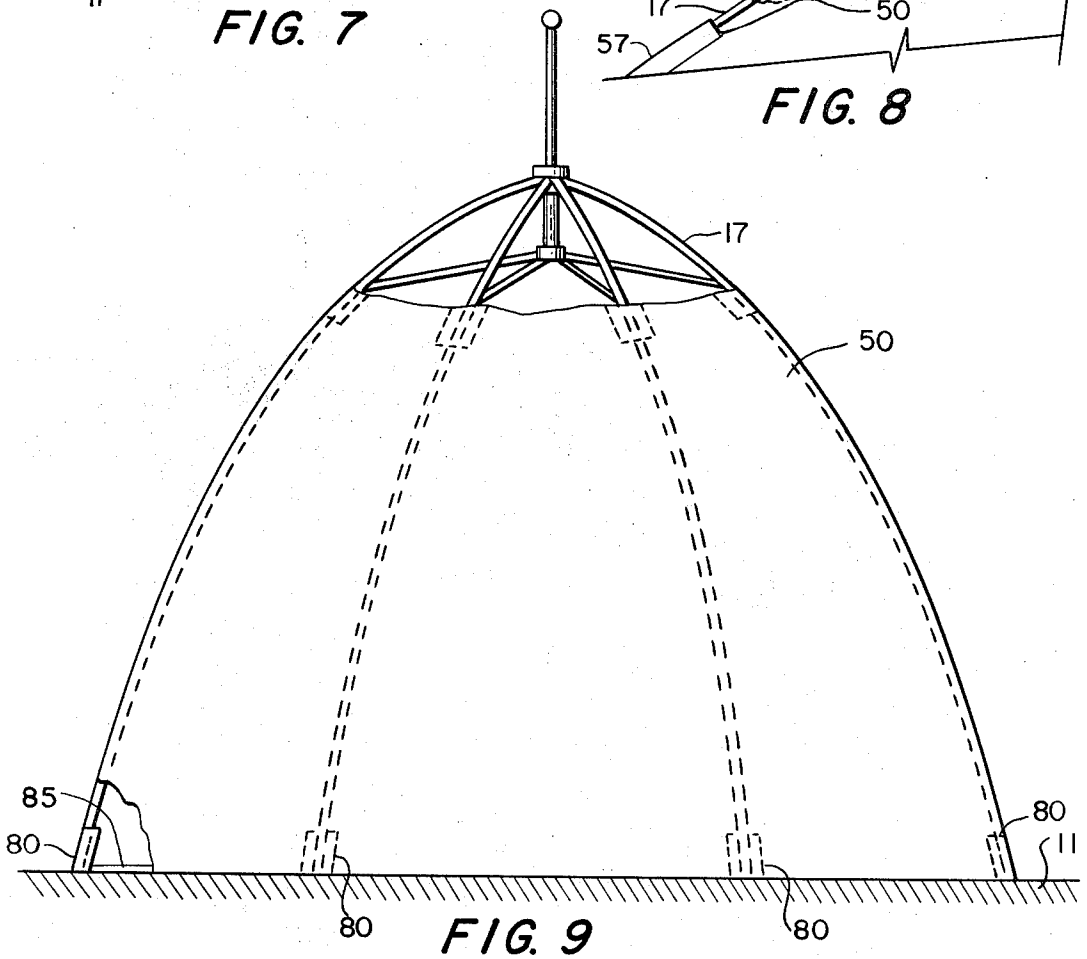


FIG. 9

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INVERSE UMBRELLA TENT

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates to protable collapsible shelters of the type commonly referred to as tents and more particularly to umbrella-type tents without a central support pole.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Portable collapsible structures formed of flexible material supported by a rigid frame have, of course, been used for providing shelter for many years. These collapsible shelters, commonly referred to as tents, are usually of the type in which a frame is erected separately from the covering material. Some modern tents, however, incorporate the tent cover and frame into one unit. In either type of tent, it is desirable to provide a shelter that is lightweight, foldable into a compact unit when collapsed, easily and speedily erectable, and sturdy and strong enough to offer the necessary protection from the environment. These criteria have in the past been mutually exclusive and, the necessary compromise has usually resulted in a loss of ease and speed in the erection of the shelter.

Umbrella tents, in particular, have become increasingly popular in recent years. The conventional umbrella tent comprises a tent covering mounted upon a central tent pole and held extended by ribs pivoted near the top of the pole. It will be appreciated that the central tent pole has a disadvantage of subtracting from the useable floor area. A further disadvantage is that the setting up of the frame and the mounting of the covering on the frame requires a significant amount of time. In a mumber of the umbrella tents attempts have been made to reduce the erecting and collapsing times by employing tent poles having telescopic sections or having disconnectable sections. Nevertheless a considerable amount of time is still required for attaching the tent cover to the tent frame.

Single unit tents, i.e., tents incorporating the tent frame and the covering material into one unit, present further difficulties. It is, necessary if the tent poles are to be elastically urged into an intercoupling engagement to have the covering material taut on the tent frame when the tent is erected and to have the covering material loose on the tent frame when the tent is to be collapsed and the tent pole sections disconnected in preparation for folding. Prior art tent design has not altogether successfully overcome these heretofore mutually exclusive requirements of the covering material. In addition, the tents of the prior art require significant time and effort to reconnect the sections of the tent pole.

Umbrella tents usually include a tent frame that can be collapsed or erected in a manner similar to the lowering or raising of an ordinary umbrella. The ribs and cover supporting members are articulated and interconnectedly pivoted such that they are substantially parallel to the central tent pole in the collapsed position. In addition, the ribs are pivotally connected to a sleeve section that slides along the central tent pole. In the erected position, the slide is usually locked in place with a pin or a snap catch thereby requiring, when collapsing the tent frame, an additional effort for unlocking the locking device.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a sturdy, lightweight, foldable, quickly erectable collapsible shelter which overcomes these and other disadvantages of the prior art. The unique frame construction of the tent of the present invention eliminates the necessity for a central tent pole, and yet at the same time provides the structural stability of tents having a central pole, all without the need for a locking device such as discussed above. In addition, a tent in accordance with the present invention incorporates the tent frame and the covering material into one unit with the attendant advantages of such an arrangement, the tent cover being loose on the frame in a collapsed position and taut on the frame in an erected position. The tent poles are preferably formed of a plurality of sections which are elastically interconnected to provide rapid erection.

In a first preferred embodiment of the invention, the tent comprises a frame that includes a vertical erecting rod located at the apex of the frame, and a plurality of flexible segmented support members or tent poles that are slidably connected at one end to the erecting rod and that extend downwardly from the connecting rod to the ground so as to provide the desired tent shape. The segmented tent poles are comprised of a plurality of cylindrical sections that are, as mentioned above, elastically urged into a coupling engagement. The tent cover is connectable at the top to the base of the erecting rod, is slidably attachable at an intermediate section thereof to the tent poles, and is restrainably joined at the bottom edge thereof to the lower end of the tent poles.

Other features and advantages of the present invention will be discussed in or apparent from the description of preferred embodiments of the invention found hereinbelow.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a front elevation view of a tent in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 2 is a view similar to FIG. 1, with portions removed for the purpose of clarity, illustrating the operation of the frame.

FIG. 3 is a front elevation view of a portion of the frame of FIG. 1 shown in a collapsed and partially folded state.

FIG. 4 is a sectional view of one of the frame members of FIG. 1 shown in an expanded state.

FIG. 5 is a sectional view of a portion of the frame member of FIG. 4 in a partially assembled state during the manufacture thereof.

FIG. 6 is a sectional view similar to FIG. 5 showing the portion of the frame member in the final assembled state.

FIG. 7 is a partially cut away perspective view of the top portion of another embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 8 is a view taken on line 8—8 of FIG. 7 showing the tent members in greater detail.

FIG. 9 is a rear elevation view of yet another embodiment of the invention with portions partially broken away for illustrative purposes.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

One embodiment of a collapsible shelter in accordance with the invention, in the form of an inverse um-

brella tent, is depicted in FIG. 1 in an erected position. The tent is comprised of a bell-shaped or conical frame, generally indicated by **10**, and a cover of sheet material **50** affixed to frame **10** in a manner to be described. Frame **10** is disposed in an outer concentric arrangement with tent cover **50** and is supported by a tent supporting surface **11** which can merely be the ground.

Frame **10** includes a vertical erecting rod, generally indicated by **15**, located at the apex of the tent, and a plurality of flexible, segmented support members or tent poles **17**. In the erected position, the upper portion **17'** of each tent pole **17** is bowed outwardly toward and is slidably connected at the end to erecting rod **15**, in a manner to be described. The midsection of each upper portion **17'** is pivotably connected to the bottom of erecting rod **15** by a radial rib **19**, also in a manner to be described.

As is shown more clearly in FIGS. **2** and **3**, erecting rod **15** is comprised of an elongate member or pole **20**, a base section **22** integral with pole **20**, and a sleeve section **24** concentric with pole **20** and slidable thereon. Referring particularly to FIG. **3**, sleeve section **24** is comprised of an upper section comprising an annular upper cap portion or top cap **26**, a narrower diameter neck portion **27**, and an annular or lower retaining collar or portion **28** of a diameter somewhat larger than the diameter of neck portion **27**. Sleeve section **24** is also comprised of a lower cylindrical portion or sleeve **30** integral with the upper section at lower retaining collar **28** and extending vertically downward from retaining collar **28** for a distance 'L.' Base section **22** is of a construction similar to sleeve section **24** and is comprised of a lower retaining collar **35**, a narrower diameter neck portion **37** and a bottom cap **38**.

The upper ends of tent poles **17** are pivotably connected to a ring **32**, which encircles neck portion **27** of sleeve section **24**, and hence are between top cap **26** and lower retaining collar **28**. In a similar manner, the inner ends of ribs **19** are pivotably connected to a ring **40** which encircles neck portion **37** of base section **22** of erecting rod **15** and are so held between a retaining collar **35** and a bottom cap **38**. In the erected position of the tent, depicted in FIG. **2**, ribs **19** extend radially outwardly and slightly downwardly, the outer end of each rib **19** being pivotally connected to a corresponding rib connector **42** that is preferably integral with the associated tent pole **17**.

As mentioned above, each tent pole **17** is preferably segmented. Referring to FIG. **4**, each tent pole **17** is comprised of a pluraltiy of coaxial cylindrical sections **43** and an elastic member or means which extends through cylinders **43** and is generally denoted **44**. Each tent pole **17** can be comprised of as many cylindrical sections as are required for producing a pole of the necessary length, four cylindrical sections being used in the present embodiment. The ends of two adjacent cylindrical sections **43** are provided with, respectively, a male-end and a female-end having a bore of a diameter larger than the outer diameter of the male-end for interconnectingly receiving or coupling with the male-end. Elastic member **44** extends coaxially through each cylindrical section **43** so as to interconnect adjacent cylindrical sections and elastically urge adjacent cylindrical sections into a longitudinally coupling relationship. As illustrated, cylindrical sections **43** are of two types, viz., end cylindrical sections **43*a*** and intermediate cylindrical sections **43*b***.

Figure **3** depicts tent poles **17** in a partially folded configuration wherein the lower end cylindrical section **43*a*** is separatd from and folded back in a parallel arrangement with lower intermediate cylindrical section **43*b***, thereby stretching elastic member **44**. Thus, elastic member **44** tends to contract and coaxially realign end cylindrical section **43*a***, provided with a female-end, and middle cylindrical section **43*b***, provided with a male-end. Further contraction of elastic member **44** urges the male-end into a coupling relationship with the female-end.

Referring again to FIG. **4**, elastic member **44** includes a plurality of elastic tubing sections **48** that can be made of, for example, latex, each elastic tubing section **48** extending substantially through the length of the bore of each intermediate cylindrical section **43*b***. Each end of each elastic tubing section **48** fits inside a hollow cylindrical connector **46** and is attached therein. Connector **46** can be made of, for example, tenite tubing. The assembly of two connectors **46** connected by elastic tubing section **48** is retained within the bore of an intermediate cylindrical section **43*b*** by metal pins or stops **47** that are positioned near the end of intermediate cylindrical section **43*b*** and extend slightly off center therethrough so as to limit the longitudinal expansion of the assembly. Adjacent ends of adjacent cylindrical sections **43** are connected by a cord **45** that can be made of, for example, braided nylon. Cord **45** is retained within connector **46** thereby limiting the separation between adjacent cylindrical sections **43**.

The components of elastic member **44** can be very economically and easily assembled by a relatively simple method, two steps of which are depicted in FIGS. **5** and **6**. The interconnecting of elastic tubing section **48**, connector **46** and cord **45** is accomplished using substantially the same procedure for each end of elastic tubing section **48**. An elastic tubing section **48** of the proper length and elasticity is selected and stretched so as to constrict the diameter thereof. Connector **46** is then threaded around elastic tubing section **48** so as to leave a small portion extending therebeyond. The end of cord **45** is heated to the melting point of the cord material and then formed into a ball or plug of a diameter larger than the diameter of cord **45**. The ball end of cord **45** is pushed through the bore of the exposed portion of elastic tubing section **48** is again stretched so as to constrict its diameter and connector **46** is slid over the portion of elastic tubing section **48** that contains the knotted end of cord **45**, as indicated in FIG. **6**. In this state, the radial expansion forces of elastic tubing section **48** is sufficient to prevent the relative positions of the knotted end of cord **45**, the elastic tubing section **48** and connector **46**, as shown in FIG. **6** from being changed. The same method of assembly can be used for attaching cord **45** to connector **46** in end sections **43*a***, after which the portion of elastic tubing section **48** extending beyond connector **46** is removed.

Elastic tubing section **44** can, of course, take a form different from that described above. For example elastic tubing section **44** can comprise a continuous length of elastic cord that is connected only to end sections **43*a***.

Referring again to FIG. **1**, cover **50** is comprised of a plurality of vertical panels **52**, preferably equal in number to the number of support members **17**. The embodiment in FIG. **1** employs six support members equally spaced around and connected to base section

22 and hence, in the embodiment shown in FIG. 1, cover 50 employs six panels. An opening, such as door 53 comprised of flaps 54, is provided in one of the panels to permit access to the inside of the tent. Each panel 50 is connected to the adjacent panel along the respective edges and is of a shape such that cover 50 has an ogive-like vertical cross-sectional shape and a hexagonal horizontal cross-sectional shape. A bottom for cover 50, such as indicated in FIG. 9 at 85, can be employed by being connected along the edges to the edges of the adjacent vertical panels. The top 55 of cover 50 is provided with an orifice through which erecting rod 15 extends. Top 55 is permanently secured to the top surface of bottom cap 38, the orifice provided in top 55 being sized so as to allow neck

Each panel 52 is provided with an upper loop 57, a middle loop 58 and a lower loop 59 for receiving an associated pole 17. Upper loop 57 and middle loop 58 are in a slidable relationship with pole 17, whereas bottom loop 59 is securely attached to support member 17. Thus, whenever frame 10 is not in the erected position, as depicted in FIG. 2 by the dash lines, upper loop 57 and middle loop 58 are permitted to slide downwardly along support member 17, permitting cover 50 to hang loosely on frame 10. Whenever frame 10 is in the erected position, as depicted in FIG. 1 and in FIG. 2 by the solid lines, the bottom of cover 50 is restrained at bottom loop 59 and top 55 is urged upwardly by base section 22, thereby keeping cover 50 taut on frame 10.

Referring again to FIG. 2, each rib connector 42 is located on the corresponding tent pole 17 such that at some point during the erection of the tent, the associated ribs 19 are perpendicular to erecting rod 15. The minimum separation between base section 22 and top cap 26 is determined by length 'L' of sleeve 20. Length 'L' is selected such that in the erected position, the ribs 19 extend from the pivotal connection at the first ends at associated rib connectors 42 in a slightly upward direction to the pivotal connections at sleeve section 24 at the other end. The resiliency inherent with the flexibility of each tent pole 17 tends to straighten the bowed shape of each tent pole 17. The straightening tendency of each tent pole 17 generates a force that acts, in the erected position, in an inward radial direction urging each rib 19 associated with each tent pole 17 in an upward direction. The ribs 19, in turn, urge base section 22 upwards against sleeve section 24. When sleeve section 24 is in a position on pole 20 such that ribs 19 are perpendicular thereto, the resultant of the aforementioned forces on sleeve section 24 is zero. Thus, sleeve section 24 is in an equilibrium position, whereby there is no resultant force tending to move sleeve section 24 along pole 20. A further separation between sleeve section 24 and base section 22 beyond the equilibrium position, such as the position shown in dashed lines in FIG. 2, results in the aforementioned forces tending to further separate sleeve section 24 from base section 22.

Another embodiment of cover 50 is shown in FIGS. 7 and 8. Cover 50 is attached to tent poles 17 in a manner similar to that shown in FIG. 1 and described hereinabove. However, at the top of cover 50 there is provided a large opening 61 for ventilation purposes. A plurality of cords 63 connect the top edge of cover 50 to base section 22. Opening 61 is covered by a waterproof cover 65 located at the apex of frame 10 outside of tent poles 17 and slidable thereon. Waterproof cover 65 is also provided with an orifice (not shown) through which that part of pole 20 above sleeve section 24 extends. Interconnecting waterproof cover 65 and cover 50 at opening 61 and providing the ventilation area is an annular-shaped section of mosquito netting 68. Mosquito netting 68 is connected at the inside edge 69 to cover 50 and, in the erected position of the tent, extends radially outwardly in a substantially horizontal plane and is connected at the outside edge 70 to waterproof cover material 65. Fitted around and freely slidable on each rib 19 is a vent adjusting ring 75. Cord 63 passes through vent adjusting ring 75. With vent adjusting rings 75 located radially inward on their respective ribs 19, adjacent to base section 22, the respective cords 63 are supported near their inner ends. The weight of the material of cover 50 above the upper loops 57 will cause the top of cover 50 to fall downward and away from waterproof cover material 65, thereby stretching mosquito netting 68 and providing maximum ventilation area. If vent adjusting rings are located near their respective ribs 17, the end of cover 50 is kept closed to waterproof cover material 65, the mosquito netting 68 hangs loosely and a minimum ventilation area is provided. Thus, a change in the effective ventilation area can be attained by a change in the position of vent adjusting ring 75 along rib 19, and a consequential change in the separation distance between waterproof cover 65 and cover 50.

A further embodiment of the invention is depicted in FIG. 9. Tent poles 17 are spaced in a circular configuration around base section 22 and extend downwardly to surface 11 in an inner concentric arrangement with cover 50. Cover 50 is provided, on its inside surface, with a plurality of upper and middle loops in a manner similar to upper loop 57 and middle loop 58 in the embodiment of the invention depicted in FIG. 1. However instead of lower loops 59, the embodiment depicted in FIG. 9 has a plurality of pocket-like receptacles 80, equal in number to the number of tent poles 17. Receptacles 80 are located at the inside lower edge of cover 50 and receive the lower ends of poles 17.

The tent can be erected by using a number of different methods. After the shelter has been unfolded and cover 50 smoothed out so as to enable elastic means 44 to interconnect cylindrical sections 43, erecting rod 15 can be grasped in one hand and top cap 26 pushed toward base section 22 with the other hand. This moves sleeve section 24 in the direction indicated by arrow 83 in FIG. 2 until sleeve section 24 reaches the equilibrium position, that is, the position at which sleeve section 24 is exactly perpendicular to ribs 19. As discussed above, continued application of such a force will cause movement of sleeve section 24 toward base section 22. The limit of travel of top cap 26 and bottom cap 38 is fixed by the length of sleeve 30, also as described above. Since top 55 of cover 50 is connected to bottom cap 38 and since bottom cap 38 has been moved in an upward direction relative to the bottom of cover 50, cover 50 is thus stretched in an upward direction and pulled taut on frame 10.

An alternate method of erecting the tent involves grasping the top end of one of the tent poles 17 with one hand and one of the ribs 19 with the other hand and then exerting a force to move the tent pole 17 toward the rib 19.

The tent may be collapsed by pushing downwardly on erecting rod 15. The downward movement of erecting rod 15 separates sleeve section 24 from base section 22

and collapses the tent. Cylindrical sections **43** can then be disconnected by employing one person to grab the bottom and employing a second person to grab the top of the tent. The two persons then pull the ends of the tent in a direction away from each other thereby uncoupling cylindrical sections **43**. The tent can then be folded in sections of a length equal to the length of cylindrical sections **43**. The amount of the separation between cylindrical sections **43**, which determines the permissilbe thickness of the folds is, in turn, determined by the length of cord **45** and the longitudinal positioning of stop **47**.

While the preferred embodiment of the collapsible shelter has been described above for use mainly as a tent, the invention can also be used to construct a floorless clothes-changing tent for use, for example, at the beach. The invention can also be used to design a very large collapsible beach umbrella, in which case the erecting rod **15** would extend downwardly beyond bottom cap **38** to the ground and support member **17** would extend only to the edge of a canopy-type cover.

Although the invention has been described in detail with respect to an exemplary embodiment thereof, it will be understood by those of ordinary skill in the art that variations and modifications may be effected within the scope and spirit of the invention.

I claim:

1. A collapsible shelter comprising: a cover of sheet material; a frame for, when erected, supporting said cover so that an enclosed shelter is formed thereby and on which, when collapsed, said cover is retained, said frame including an erecting rod which, when erected, is substantially vertical and which comprises an upper elongate portion and a lower base portion, a plurality of support members for, when erected, supporting said cover, first connecting means for slidably connecting a first end of said support members to said elongate portion of said erecting rod, said support members extending downwardly therefrom, and said first connecting means being movable between a first position proximate to said base portion when the shelter is erected and a second position remotely spaced from said base portion when the shelter is collapsed; second connecting means for connecting the top of said cover to said base portion to cause stretching of said cover on said frame when said connecting means is positioned in said first position proximate to said base portion; and means for slidably attaching an intermediate portion of said cover to said support members.

2. A collapsible shelter in accordance with claim **1** wherein each said support member comprises a flexible elongate portion, and wherein said frame further includes third connecting means for pivotably connecting said base portion to said support members at a location on said support member near said first end such that said third connecting means urges said base portion and said first connecting means towards each other for maintaining said frame locked in a first, erected position and said third connecting means urges said base portion and said first connecting means away from each other in a second, collapsed position.

3. A collapsible shelter in accordance with claim **2** wherein said pivotably connecting means comprises a plurality of rib members, equal in number to the number of support members, which extend radially outward from said base portion; means for pivotably connecting said rib members at a first end to said base portion; and means for pivotably connecting said rib members at the other end to said corresponding support members.

4. A collapsible shelter in accordance with claim **1**, wherein said slidably connecting means comprises a cylindrical sleeve section concentrically mounted on said erecting rod, said sleeve section comprising a lower cylindrical portion and an upper section including a neck portion of reduced cross section intermediate between an upper cap portion and a lower collar portion; and a ring-shaped member encircling said neck portion of said upper section for pivotably connecting said first ends of said supporting members thereto.

5. A collapsible shelter in accordance with claim **1** wherein said support members are equi-distantly spaced around said base portion nd extend downwardly therefrom to the supporting surface in an and concentric arrangement around said cover.

6. A collapsible shelter in accordance with claim **5** wherein said cover of sheet material comprises a plurality of panels, equal in number to the number of said support members, each panel connected to the adjacent panels along the respective edges and shaped such that the cover has, when erected, an ogive-like vertical cross-sectional shape; and a bottom that is connected to the plurality of panels.

7. A collapsible shelter is accordance with claim **6** wherein the top of said cover is provided with an orifice through which said erecting rod extends, and the edges of the orifice are supported by said base portion.

8. A collapsible shelter in accordance with claim **6**, wherein said cover has an opening at the top and further includes a plurality of cord means for connecting the top edge of said cover to said base portion; waterproof cover material for covering the opening, said waterproof cover material being located outside of said support members and slidable thereon, and being provided with an orifice through which said erecting rod extends, and annular netting material connected at the inside edge to said cover and, when erected, extending outwardly in a substantially horizontal direction and connected at the outside edge to said waterproof cover material.

9. A collapsible shelter in accordance with claim **1** wherein said support members are equi-distantly spaced around said base section and extend downwardly to the supporting surface; and wherein said cover surrounds said support members, said cover being further provided with plurality of pocket-like receptacles located at the inside lower edge for removably receiving the other end of said support members.

10. A collapsible shelter in accordance with claim **1** wherein each said support member comprises a plurality of separable, telescopingly interconnected cylindrical sections; and elastic means for elastically urging said cylindrical sections into telescoping interconnection.

11. A collapsible shelter in accordance with claim **10** wherein said cylindrical sections have a longitudinal bore therethrough; and wherein said elastic means includes a plurality of cord means for extending between said cylindrical connections for limiting the separation thereof, a plurality of connecting means contained within the bores of said cylindrical sections for connecting the cord means thereto, stop means for preventing said connecting means from being withdrawn from the cylindrical sections; and at least one elastic member extending substantially through the bore of at

least one of said cylindrical sections for elastically interconnecting said connecting means.

12. A collapsible shelter in accordance with claim 8 wherein said frame further includes means for pivotably connecting said base portion to said support members, the last named means including a plurality of rib members, equal in number to the number of support members, which extend radially outward from said base portion, and wherein said collapsible shelter further includes support means slidably mounted on said rib members for supporting said cord means such that when said support means is located proximate to a first end of said rib member, said top edge of said cover is proximate to said waterproof cover material and when said support means is located proximate to the other end of said rib member, said top edge of said cover is separated from said waterproof cover material, thereby extending said netting material to provide a maximum ventilation area.

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