

Feb. 24, 1959

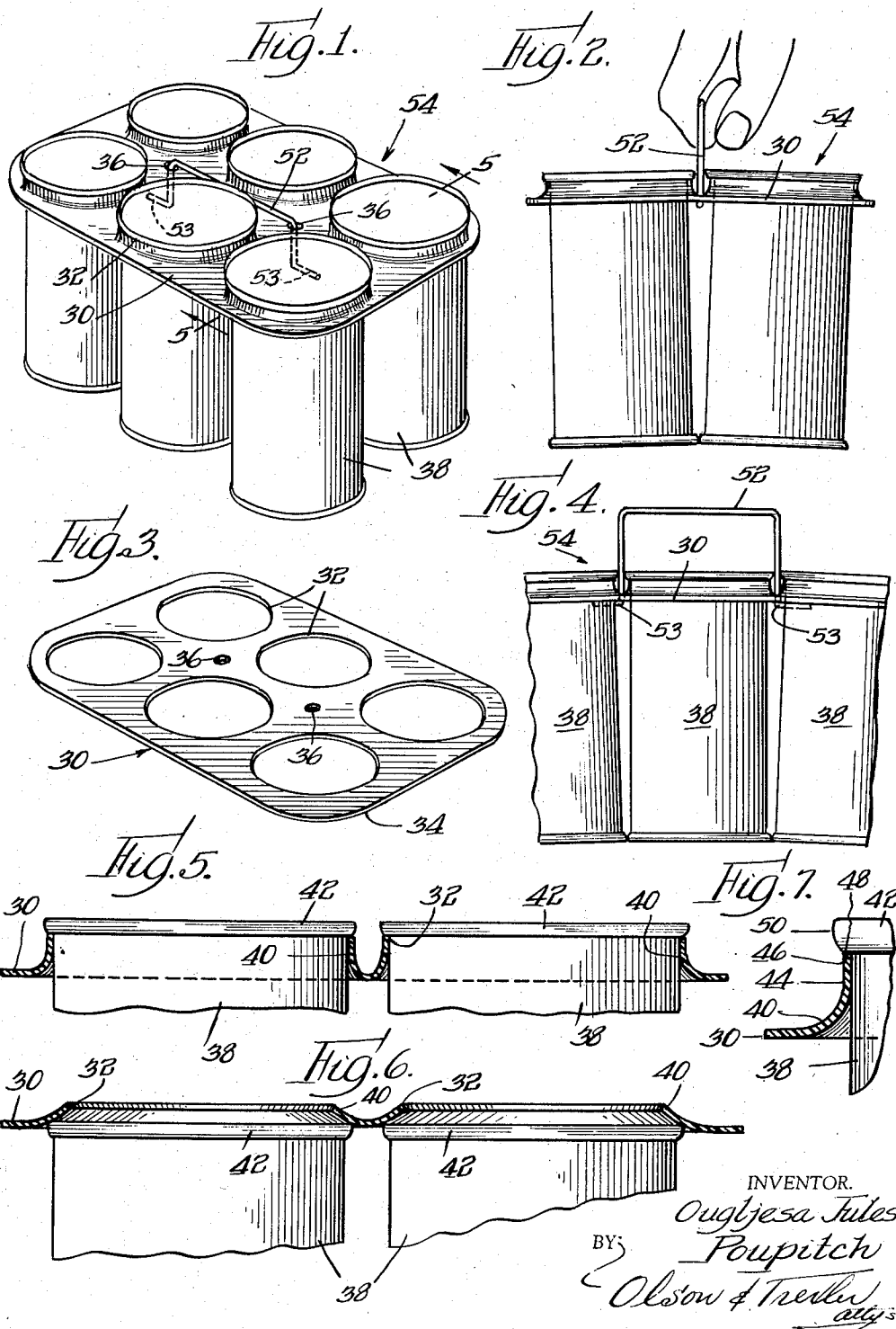
O. J. POUPITCH

2,874,835

CONTAINER CARRIER AND PACKAGE

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Fig. 8.

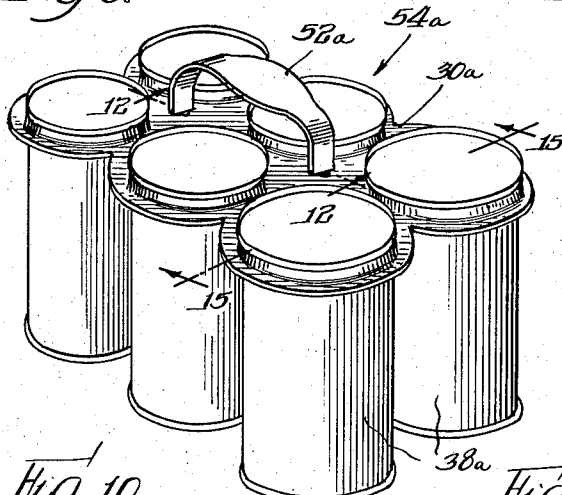


Fig. 9.

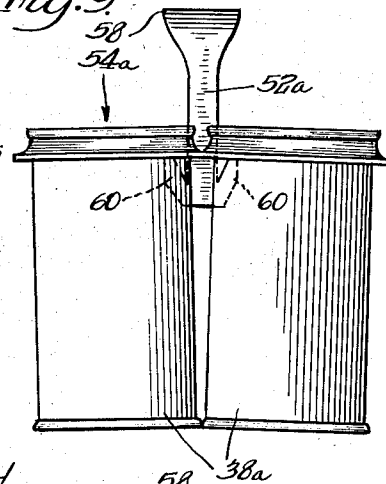


Fig. 10.

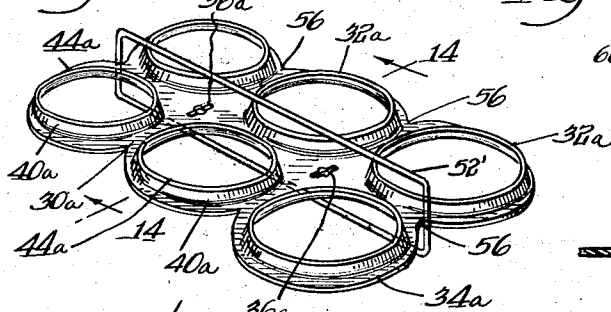


Fig. 11.

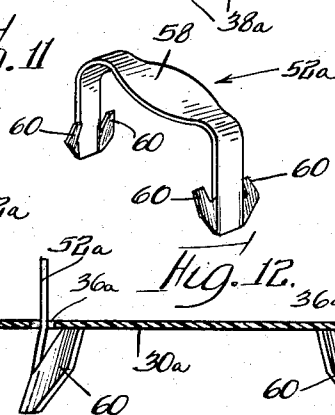


Fig. 14.

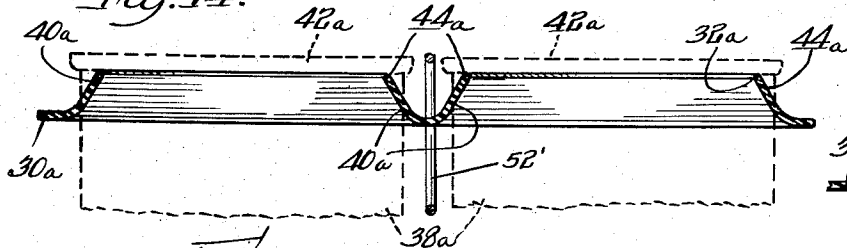


Fig. 15.

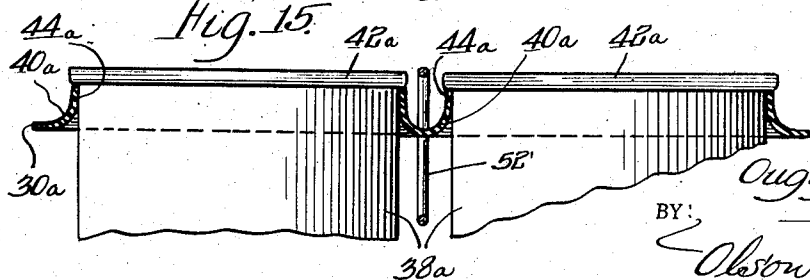


Fig. 12.

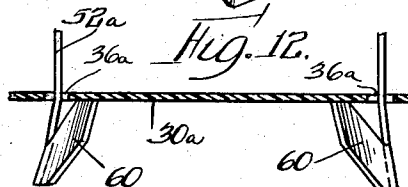


Fig. 13.

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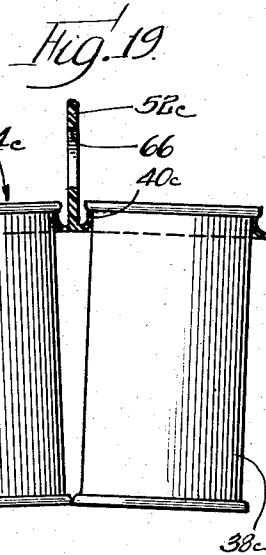
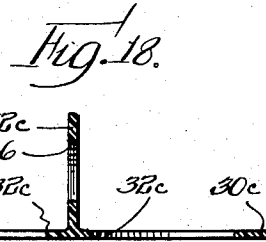
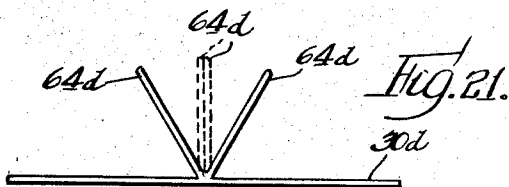
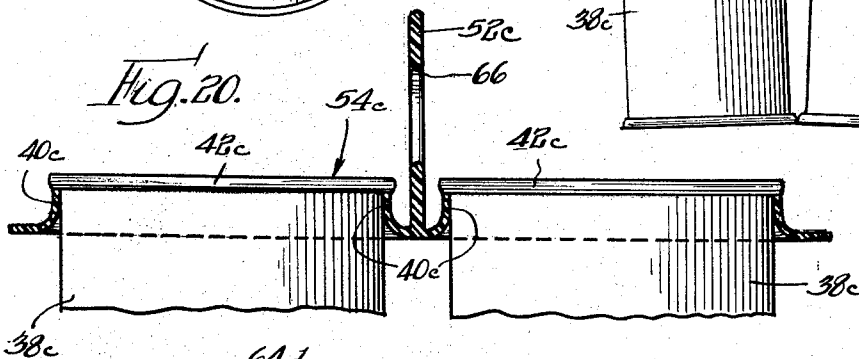
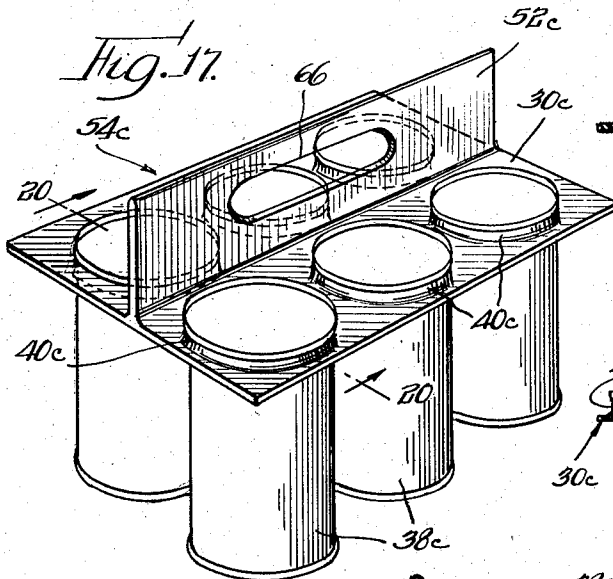
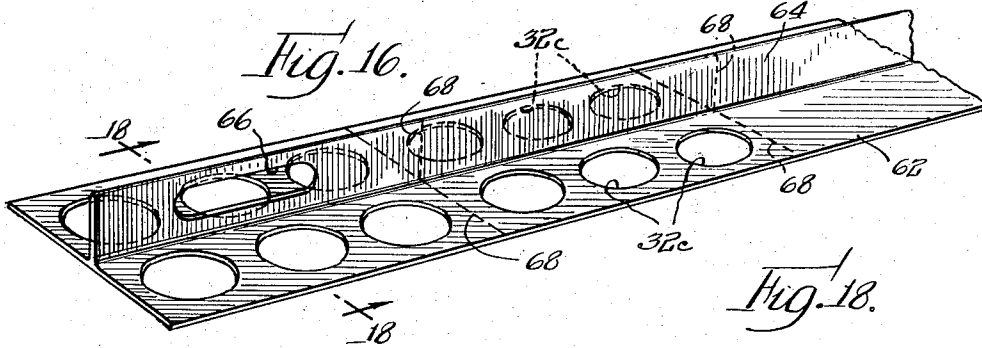
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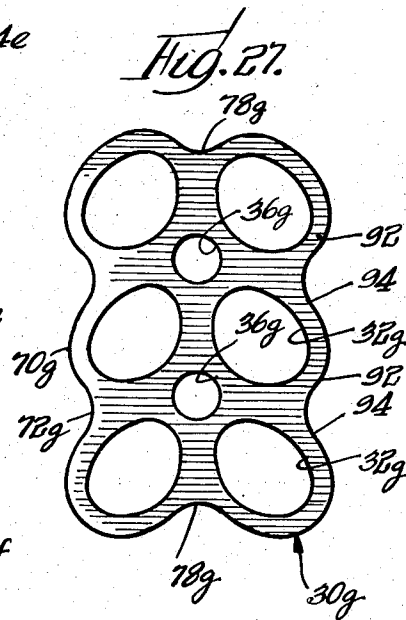
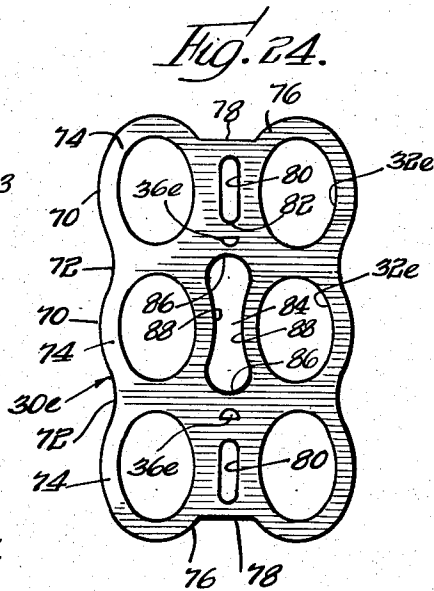
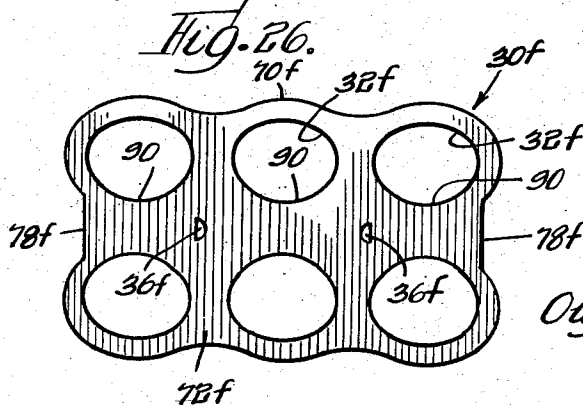
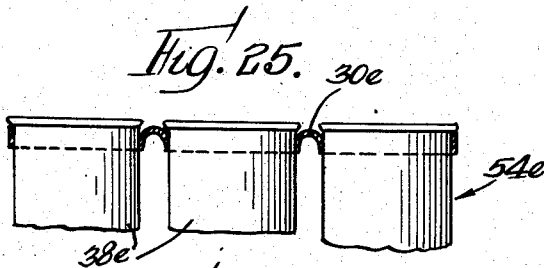
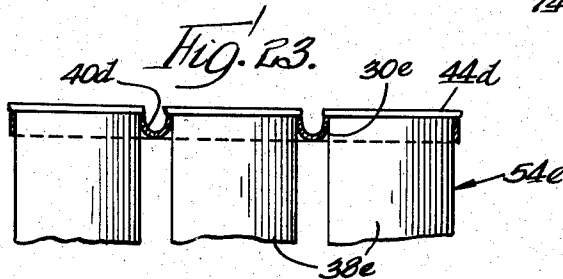
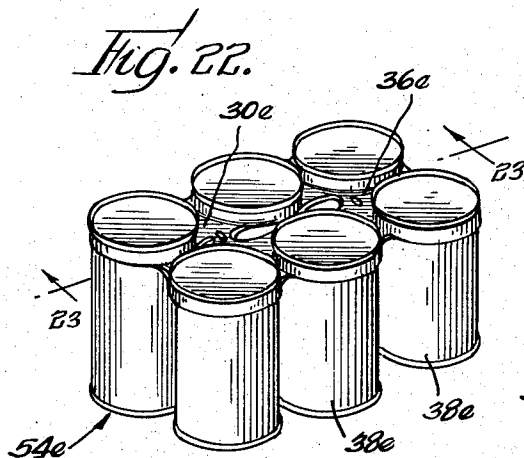
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4 Sheets-Sheet 4



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CONTAINER CARRIER AND PACKAGE

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Application December 1, 1958, Serial No. 775,333

17 Claims. (Cl. 206—65)

This invention is concerned generally with a package or article carrier, and more particularly with a receptacle for holding and carrying beverage containers, e. g., cans.

This application comprises a continuation-in-part of my prior applications Serial No. 642,081, filed February 25, 1957, for "Can Carrier Device," now abandoned, and Serial No. 746,735, filed July 7, 1958, for "Can Carrier," now abandoned.

It is common practice to package beverages, such as beer and soda pop, in cans. In most instances, a plurality of such beverage cans, conveniently six in number, is supplied in a receptacle or carrier for home consumption. A plurality of units of six or so cans generally is shipped in a large carton, and this carton is broken open at a retail outlet for sale of the units to the ultimate consumer.

Beverage cans heretofore have been held together in package units by means of paper or pasteboard containers, or by means of metallic clips.

Paper or pasteboard containers which have been sufficiently strong to be accepted commercially are unduly expensive, and require rather complicated packaging machinery. Such paper containers substantially completely encase a plurality of cans, thus insulating the cans, and requiring that they be removed from the paper container for efficient refrigeration. Furthermore, such paper containers are rather difficult to open.

Metallic connectors or clips have not found full commercial acceptance due to the difficulty of applying the clips to the cans in automatic machinery with sufficient permanence that the cans will not readily become detached from one another.

Prior art containers or connectors which have been sufficiently strong to hold units of cans firmly together have held such units rigidly. That is, all of the six (or other number) cans in a unit have been more or less rigidly interconnected. When a carton of such units, 8 being a common number, is dropped, the tendency is for each rigid unit to direct all of the impact simultaneously in one direction. This causes a substantial impact on the carton, tending to burst the carton. An analogy may be made to a solid ball, and a mass of loosely retained shot. For equal masses, the ball, when dropped, would create a given shock impact, while the loosely retained shot would dampen the shock.

In view of the foregoing, it is a general object of this invention to provide a device for holding a plurality of beverage cans together as a unit.

It is an object of this invention to provide such a device which is, in itself, inexpensive, simple and economical to assemble with beverage cans, without the necessity of extensive modification of existing can handling apparatus.

It is a further object of this invention to provide a device for retaining a plurality of cans together as a unit, which device requires but small force for assembling with the cans, or for removing the cans therefrom for ultimate

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use, which requires extraordinary force for accidental separation.

Yet another object of this invention is to provide a device for retaining a plurality of cans together as a unit with the individual cans capable of restrained movement relative to one another.

Furthermore, it is an object of this invention to provide a device for holding cans together as a unit, which device, by virtue of its own inherent characteristics aggressively grips the cans.

In particular, it is an object of this invention to provide a yieldable, resilient, and elastic device of plastic material for holding a plurality of cans together as a unit.

Still another object of this invention is to provide a sheet plastic can barrier and resulting package unit which makes a most efficient use of the plastic material.

Another object of the invention is to provide a plastic carrier for cans and the like, and a resulting can package or unit wherein stresses in the plastic material are substantially uniformly distributed.

It is also an object of this invention to provide a sheet plastic can carrier and resulting package or unit wherein the cans are held quite closely together for efficient and facile handling thereof, and whereby the cans engage and reinforce one another while depending from the plastic carrier.

Other and further objects and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following description when taken in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a unit of six cans held together by a device in accordance with the principles of this invention;

Fig. 2 is an end view of the unit shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a perspective view of the device for holding the cans together;

Fig. 4 is a side view of the unit of Fig. 1, certain parts being broken away;

Fig. 5 is a cross sectional view of the unit or assembly as taken along the line 5—5 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 6 is a view similar to Fig. 5 showing the retainer device as it is being assembled with the cans;

Fig. 7 is an enlarged fragmentary view in cross section illustrating the cooperation of the retainer device with the cans;

Fig. 8 is a perspective view similar to Fig. 1 showing a modification of the invention;

Fig. 9 is an end view thereof generally similar to Fig. 2;

Fig. 10 is a perspective view of the retainer device;

Fig. 11 is a perspective view of the handle therefor;

Fig. 12 is a fragmentary longitudinal sectional view through the handle and retainer device as taken substantially along the line 12—12 in Fig. 8;

Fig. 13 is a fragmentary view similar to a portion of Fig. 12 showing the manner in which the handle deforms when strain is placed thereon;

Fig. 14 is a cross sectional view taken during the assembling of the device with the cans;

Fig. 15 is a cross sectional view similar to Fig. 14 and taken along the line 15—15 of Fig. 8 following completion of the assembling operation;

Fig. 16 is a perspective view of a modified retainer device showing various steps in the process of manufacturing thereof;

Fig. 17 is a perspective view generally similar to Figs. 1 and 8 showing the modified device of Fig. 16;

Fig. 18 is a cross sectional view through the device as taken along the line 18—18 in Fig. 16;

Fig. 19 is a cross sectional view similar to Fig. 18

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following assembling of the device with a plurality of cans;

Fig. 20 is a cross sectional view through the assembled unit as taken along the line 20—20 in Fig. 17;

Fig. 21 is an end view of a slightly modified device and corresponding generally to the cross section of Fig. 18;

Fig. 22 is a perspective view of a modified form of the can carrier;

Fig. 23 is a longitudinal sectional view as taken along the line 23—23 in Fig. 22;

Fig. 24 is a plan view of the carrier of Fig. 22 before assembly with the cans;

Fig. 25 is a view similar to Fig. 23, but showing the cans assembled with the carrier in a somewhat different manner;

Fig. 26 is a plan view of a further modified form of the carrier; and

Fig. 27 is a plan view of a further modified form of the carrier.

Referring now in greater particularity to Figs. 1-7, a carrier, receptacle, or retainer in accordance with the principles of this invention comprises a flat sheet of plastic material, hereinafter identified by the numeral 30. The sheet is provided with a plurality of spaced apertures 32, preferably six in number. These apertures are somewhat smaller than the diameter of a can with which the device is to be assembled, and the retainer device is made of a plastic material which is resilient, flexible, and elastic, and which will not readily tear. Polyethylene is a preferred example, but other functionally similar materials are satisfactory. The retainer 30 preferably is stamped from an elongated strip in a suitable punch press, and the scrap formed by punching the apertures 32, and by rounding off the corners at 34, and by providing a pair of small holes 36 for accommodating a handle is readily processed for further use.

As has been noted, and as will be seen with particular reference to Fig. 6, the diameter of the apertures 32 is somewhat less than that of the cans 38 with which the retainer 30 is associated. The retainer 30 initially is flat, and when it is pressed down over the tops of the cans 38, preferably by machinery, not shown herein, the material adjacent the apertures 32 deflects upwardly as at 40 when engaged by the can beads 42. The material 40 finally is deflected upwardly into the form of a stretched lip as may be seen in Figs. 5 and 7. This lip has a cylindrical portion 44 in surface engagement with the surface of the can 38, and the upper (inner) portion of the material adjacent each aperture 32 is at right angles to the plane of the sheet or retainer 30, whereby the edge 46 thereof engages beneath the right angle shoulder 48 of the bead 42 where it joins the remainder of the can 38. Thus, the deflected material 40 forms a strut beneath the can bead resisting withdrawal of the can. Furthermore, the portion 44 of the deflected lip is in tight, gripping surface engagement with the can, and this further holds the can in position. Accordingly, it is practically impossible to remove a can by pulling down on it relative to the retainer 30. However, the force necessary for assembling the retainer with the cans need not be very great.

In view of the foregoing, the cans and retainer are not easily separated by accident. However, when it is desired to remove a can from the retainer, very little force need be exerted as is set forth immediately hereinafter. It will be observed that the bead 42 is rounded, and hence is capable of camming past the lip 40, if moved upwardly relative to the lip. This is particularly true in the form of bead shown in the drawings, and particularly in Fig. 7, wherein the outer surface 50 is of relatively small diameter at the edge adjacent the shoulder 48, and increases to a larger diameter at the outer end. Accordingly, when it is desired to remove a can, the can is simply moved upwardly relative to the retainer device 30, and the can thus moves from the device with the surface 50 of the

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bead 42 camming past the lip 40. It will be apparent that this requires movement the complete length of the can, and such movement is most unlikely to occur accidentally.

As will be evident with reference to Figs. 5 and 6, the adjacent portions of the edges of the apertures 32 are drawn closer to one another upon insertion of the cans, than their initial spacing. Accordingly, a substantial amount of material may be present between adjacent apertures, thereby insuring adequate strength, while allowing close spacing of the cans. As will be apparent with reference to Figs. 1, 2 and 4, a plurality of cans 38, equal in number to the plurality of apertures 32, is supported by the receptacle or retainer device 30. A handle 52 is associated with the apertures 36, and this handle conveniently is made of resilient wire bent in the form of an inverted U, and having outwardly directed ends 53 thereon. It will be apparent that the handle 52 readily is deformed slightly for slipping through the apertures 36, and this may be done substantially at the same time as the cans are assembled with the receptacle or retainer device 30, or preferably, the handles are placed in the shipping carton for insertion by the retailer or the ultimate consumer. The sheet 30 is somewhat flexible, and when the handle 52 is lifted, the sheet flexes sufficiently for the cans to engage, and hence reinforce one another, as shown most particularly in Figs. 2 and 4.

The resulting package, identified by the numeral 54, is attractive in appearance, and is extraordinarily strong. Although the individual cans may move somewhat relative to one another, thus avoiding undue shocks on the shipping carton, it is substantially impossible for the cans to come loose from the retainer device accidentally. It has been found that when such a package or unit is dropped from carrying height or from table height, or even from substantially greater heights, the cans will not come loose from the retainer. As will be apparent, when the cans depend from the carrier, they abut and hence reinforce one another. Since the retainer does not encase the cans, it presents no problems of insulation inhibiting cooling.

It is within the contemplation of this invention that the deflected portion or lip adjacent each aperture in the retainer might be preformed. Such an embodiment of the invention is illustrated in Figs. 8-15. In these figures, corresponding parts are identified by the use of similar numerals with the addition of the suffix *a*. More particularly, the retainer or receptacle 30*a* is formed from an initially flat sheet, and has rounded corners 34*a*, and also has indentations or scallops 56 intermediate the adjacent apertures 32*a*.

With particular reference to Figs. 14 and 15, it will be seen that the lip portion 44*a* of the lip 40*a* has been preformed to a substantially frusto-conical shape. The internal diameter of the aperture 32*a* which is so formed or defined in each instance is substantially less than the diameter of the cans 38*a*, and particularly the beads 42*a* thereon. When the cans are inserted, the frusto-conical section is stretched and deformed to form the substantially cylindrical portion 44*a*, and it will be observed that this section has a greater amount or extent of surface contact with the can, than is the case with the corresponding cylindrical section 44 of the retainer or receptacle which is not preformed. It will be understood that such preforming is easily accomplished by the application of heat and pressure. The greater extent of surface engagement provides a stronger strutting action resisting withdrawal of the cans downwardly of the retainer or receptacle, and the preforming also aids in centralizing the cans relative to the apertures during mounting of the retainer or receptacle on the cans.

Two different forms of the handle are illustrated in connection with the embodiment of the retainer or receptacle shown in Figs. 8-15. As shown in Figs. 10, 14 and 15, the handle 52' comprises a wire bent into rec-

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tangular form having relatively long horizontal reaches interconnected at corresponding ends by relatively short risers. The risers fit relatively tightly into the indentations 56 at the opposite ends of the can, and the lower reach supports the retainer along the longitudinal center line, thus stiffening and reinforcing the retainer, while the upper reach is grasped by the hand.

The wire handle 52' is made continuous by securing the ends together, as by spot welding, and the handle is readily snapped into place by temporarily deforming the retainer prior to insertion of the cans. Normally the handle would be in a lowered position with the upper reach resting on the retainer. When the unit is to be carried, the handle is raised and the lower reach abuts the underside of the retainer. The handle has been shown in an intermediate position to avoid obscuring details that would overlie one another with the handle either completely raised or lowered.

In the embodiment of the invention shown in Figs. 8-13, the handle 52a takes a different form than that shown in the first embodiments of the invention. The handle 52a comprises a strap of plastic material, conveniently the same material as used for the retainer 30a. The strap is in the form of an inverted U, having a thickened portion 58 for convenient gripping by the hand. The ends of the strap are provided with outwardly and rearwardly directed flanges 60 integral with the strap.

The apertures 36a, provided in the retainer 30a for receipt of the handle, comprise slots elongated transversely of the retainer, and widened adjacent their central portions. The flanges 60 are folded in against the strap and against one another for insertion through the slots, either by hand, or in automatic machinery not shown herein. The inherent resiliency of the plastic material causes the flanges 60 to spring outwardly beneath the retainer 30a, as may be seen in Fig. 12. When lifting force is applied to the handle, the handle moves upwardly, deflecting the flanges 60, as shown in Fig. 13, thus wedging the retainer adjacent the slots 36a tightly into the acute corners between the flanges and the handle.

A further embodiment of the invention is shown in Figs. 16-20, with a variation thereof being shown in Fig. 21, in this instance, the entire retainer including the handle is extruded. More particularly, and as shown in Fig. 16, an elongated strip 62 having an upstanding central web 64 is extruded as a continuous unit. In successive stamping operations, apertures 32c are formed in the strip 62, and an elongated aperture 66 is formed in the web 64. Subsequently, the extrusion, including the strip and the web, is severed transversely along dividing lines as indicated at 68 to provide the individual retainers 30c having integral handles 52c thereon.

Conveniently, the retainer 30c is left flat adjacent the apertures, as in the first embodiment disclosed, although it is contemplated that the lips 40c could be preformed. The cans 38c are assembled with the retainer in the same manner as previously disclosed to provide the complete package or unit 54c. This unit possesses certain advantages in that the integral handle need not be attached to the retainer or receptacle, and in that the handle cannot possibly come loose from the retainer.

The retainer 30d shown in Fig. 21 is produced in the same manner as the retainer in Figs. 16-20, and differs therefrom only in that the web 64d initially is formed as a pair of angularly diverging strips integral with the retainer 30d. These strips are pulled into substantially abutting relation by the hand of the purchaser upon lifting the package for carrying, such relation being shown in dashed lines in Fig. 21. It will be apparent that a wider bearing or base of the handle against the fingers thus is provided, particularly as the strips of the web are left not quite in contact, thus, in some instances, providing for more comfortable carrying of the package or unit. As will now be appreciated,

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this invention provides a retainer or receptacle for beverage cans which is easily assembled with the cans, from which it is practically impossible for the cans to separate accidentally, and yet it allows ready withdrawal of the cans when desired. The package or unit so produced can actually be dropped from a substantial height without causing any of the cans to become detached. The limited movement of the cans relative to one another inhibits rupturing of the shipping cartons when handled roughly. The receptacle or retainer device is readily assembled with the cans on existing can-handling machinery, and both the cost of assembling and the cost of producing the retainer device are remarkably low.

Referring now to Figs. 22-24, there will be seen a further embodiment of the invention, similar numerals again being used with the suffix *d*. In this instance, the can carrier 30e is assembled with a plurality of cans 38e (there being six cans in the illustrative embodiment) to form the package or unit 54e. The carrier 30e again is generally rectangular in outline and has a plurality of can receiving apertures 32e stamped or otherwise formed therein. In the illustrative embodiment of the invention there are six can receiving apertures 32e. These apertures are distinguished in that they are non-circular in form. In the embodiment of Figs. 22-24 they are elliptical or oval, but as will be brought out in connection with subsequent embodiments the openings can be otherwise non-circular, but in all instances having smoothly arcuate edges and devoid of sharp corners. In the present instance the major axes of the apertures 32e are oriented longitudinally of the can carrier 30e, while the minor axes thereof are oriented transversely.

The longitudinal edges of the can carrier are more or less sinuous in form, being convex outwardly adjacent the various apertures as at 70, and being indented or concave outwardly at 72 between adjacent apertures, whereby to maintain a more or less uniform width of material between the apertures and the outside of the carrier in the form of a narrow band 74 of material. The opposite ends of the can carrier are also curved in as at 76 to maintain uniformity of the band, and are finished straight across as at 78.

Rectangular openings 80 are provided between the end pairs of apertures, and preferably have rounded ends 82 to relieve or prevent stress concentrations. The openings 80 are relatively long and narrow, and are located with their major or longitudinal dimensions substantially on the center line of the can carrier 30e longitudinally thereof. A larger opening 84 is provided between the two center apertures 18, having rounded ends 86, and having sides 88 which are convex toward one another, and concave toward the adjacent apertures 32e. The apertures or openings 80 and 84 serve to provide a more or less uniform width to the bands 74 of material encircling the respective can receiving apertures 32e.

In addition to the openings or apertures heretofore mentioned, there is a pair of relatively small holes 36e respectively disposed between the central 84 and the end openings 80 for receiving leg portions of a more or less U-shaped handle, such handle being omitted from the drawings, but preferably made of plastic, or possibly wire, such as in Fig. 1, for example.

The carrier is forced down over the cans 38d, thus thus stretching and deforming the material adjacent the apertures in order that the apertures might become circular to accommodate the cans. The material intermediate the apertures is deflected upwardly as indicated at 40d in Fig. 23 while the remainder of the adjacent material, comprising the bands 74, is deflected substantially to cylindrical form whereby the cans are gripped aggressively below the beads 44d with a substantially surface contact. The masses of material between the apertures, 75 coupled with the elliptical shape of the apertures,

leads to nearly uniform concentration of stress, thereby allowing lighter gauge material to be used for a given required strength than is possible with circular apertures. Furthermore, the elliptical shape of the apertures affords a narrower carrier than is possible with circular apertures. As a result, there is a savings of material up to 20%.

The carrier resists removal of the cans downwardly of the carrier, but removal can be accomplished by pulling a can outwardly away from the center line of the carrier, and simultaneously tipping it up and out. Alternatively, the can can be removed in the direction of insertion, by pushing it up through the carrier.

An alternative assembly is shown in Fig. 25 which sometimes proves advantageous. In this instance the parts are identical with those in Figs. 22-24 (although the concept could be applied to previous examples), but the cans initially are passed nearly through the carrier so that the material adjacent the apertures is turned down rather than up. This results in a reversal of stresses from the arrangement of Figs. 22 and 23.

A modification of the invention having certain advantages is shown in Fig. 26. Similar parts are identified by the use of similar numbers with the addition of the suffix *f*, repetition of description accordingly being unnecessary. As in the previous examples of the invention, the can receiving apertures 32*f* are disposed symmetrically about the longitudinal center line of the carrier. The form of the apertures is somewhat different, but still approaching an ellipse as in Fig. 24, and again having the major axes parallel to the longitudinal center line of the carrier. Specifically, the apertures 32*f* are "fat" ellipses, having one of the longer or larger radius sides at 90° of smaller radius than the opposite larger radius side. Specifically, the sides 90 are disposed toward the longitudinal center line. As a result of this configuration, the center openings are unnecessary, since the material adjacent these sides need not stretch and deform quite so much. Furthermore, the openings are thus disposed with their inner portions (the sides 90) closer to the longitudinal center line, and the cans are thus pulled in closer together. In addition, since the bulging sides need not stretch to such a great extent, it is simpler to remove the cans with an outward pulling and tipping force.

A preferred embodiment of the invention is shown in Fig. 27 which is similar to, but presents advantages over, the embodiment of Fig. 26. Again, similar parts are identified by similar numerals, this time with the suffix *g*. The "fat" ellipses forming the apertures 32*g* are skewed. There is still symmetry about the longitudinal center line of the carrier, and all of the major axes on either side are parallel. This form of the invention possesses the advantages of the form of Fig. 26 and additionally presents simplified removal, since the cans are removed by tipping and pulling toward the upper adjacent corners (as positioned in Fig. 27). This pulls a can being removed away from the adjacent cans. In this form of the invention the holes 36*g* are enlarged sufficiently to receive a thumb and finger for carrying, a separate handle thus being unnecessary.

It will be observed that the straight line indented portions at the ends have become short arcs at 78*g*, due to the close approach of the apertures 32*g* to one another along the center line. The skewing of the ellipses also changes the longitudinal edges which are somewhat steeper at 92 adjacent the short arcs of the apertures than at 94 adjacent the long arcs.

The carrier herein disclosed is simple to associate with containers such as cans and forms a stable unit or package therewith. However the cans can be readily removed. The particular configurations shown lead to a substantial savings in material and a superior mounting of the cans.

The examples as herein shown and described are to be understood to be for exemplary purposes only. Various changes in structure will no doubt occur to those skilled in the art, and are to be understood as forming a part of this invention insofar as they fall within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

The invention is claimed as follows:

1. A receptacle for retaining a plurality of containers or the like having peripheral enlargements at one end in side-by-side substantially abutting and parallel relation, comprising a substantially unsupported sheet of plastic material, said sheet of plastic material being resilient, deformable, and elastic and having a plurality of apertures therein, each of said apertures having a peripheral measurement less than the periphery of the corresponding container, the material at the edge of each aperture being circumferentially continuous and uninterrupted, the apertures in the sheet being intended for association with the containers whereby such containers can be inserted through said apertures from a given direction when the material adjacent said aperture is stretched and deformed to form circumferentially continuous lips embracing said containers beneath said peripheral enlargements and resiliently gripping said containers, and a handle associated with said sheet of plastic material for carrying said receptacle.
2. A receptacle as set forth in claim 1 wherein the sheet of plastic material is provided with a pair of spaced apart, relatively small apertures, and wherein said handle extends through said apertures and has parts underlying said sheet.
3. A receptacle as set forth in claim 2 wherein the handle comprises a strap of plastic material having projections at its ends extending laterally beneath said sheet.
4. A receptacle as set forth in claim 1 wherein the handle is integral with the sheet of plastic material.
5. A receptacle as set forth in claim 4 wherein the integral handle comprises a web extending at substantially right angles to said sheet and having aperture means therein for manual gripping.
6. A receptacle as set forth in claim 5 wherein the web comprises a pair of strips substantially joined along one edge and joined to said sheet at that edge, said strips initially diverging.
7. A beverage or the like unit comprising a plurality of containers having circular cross sections and annular enlargements at one end, and a sheet of substantially unsupported plastic material having a plurality of substantially circular apertures therein, said sheet of plastic material being resilient, deformable, and elastic, the material at the edge of each aperture being circumferentially continuous and uninterrupted, the apertures in the sheet being of smaller diameter than the containers whereby the containers, inserted through said apertures from a given direction, stretch and deform the material adjacent the apertures, the material adjacent the apertures being in the form of upwardly directed lips locking beneath said annular enlargements and resiliently gripping said containers to resist retrograde withdrawal of said containers.
8. A beverage or the like unit as set forth in claim 7 wherein each lip is in part cylindrical and is in intimate surface engagement with the corresponding container.
9. A receptacle as set forth in claim 1 wherein the apertures in the sheet of plastic material are circular.
10. A receptacle for retaining a plurality of containers or the like having annular enlargements at one end in side-by-side substantially abutting and parallel relation, comprising a substantially unsupported sheet of plastic material, said sheet of plastic material being resilient, deformable, and elastic and having a plurality of apertures therein, each of said apertures having a peripheral measurement less than the periphery of the corresponding container, the material at the edge of each aperture being circumferentially continuous and uninter-

rupted, the apertures in the sheet being intended for association with the containers whereby such containers can be inserted through said apertures from a given direction when the material adjacent said apertures is stretched and deformed to form circumferentially continuous lips embracing said containers beneath said peripheral enlargements and resiliently gripping said containers, and a handle disposed on the longitudinal center line of said sheet of plastic material and intermediate the ends thereof.

11. A receptacle as set forth in claim 10 wherein the handle comprises integral plastic means providing finger aperture means.

12. A beverage or the like unit comprising a plurality of containers having curvilinear cross sections and annular enlargements, and a sheet of substantially unsupported plastic material having a plurality of curvilinear apertures therein, said sheet of plastic material being resilient, deformable, and elastic, the material at the edge of each aperture being circumferentially continuous and uninterrupted, the peripheral measurement of each aperture being less than that of the corresponding containers whereby the containers, inserted axially through said apertures, stretch and deform the material adjacent the apertures, the material adjacent the apertures being

in the form of axially directed necks engaging said containers below said enlargements and resiliently gripping said containers to resist withdrawal thereof, said containers depending from said sheet of plastic material in side by side abutting relation whereby to reinforce one another upon carrying of said unit.

13. A beverage or the like unit as set forth in claim 12 wherein the apertures are each defined by four arcs, two of relatively greater radius and two of relatively lesser radius.

14. A unit as set forth in claim 13 wherein one of the greater radius arcs is of larger radius than the other greater radius arc.

15. A unit as set forth in claim 13 wherein the apertures are substantially elliptical.

16. A receptacle as set forth in claim 10 wherein the apertures are substantially in the form of ellipses.

17. A receptacle as set forth in claim 16 wherein one of the longer sides of each elliptical aperture bulges outwardly, being of shorter radius than the opposite longer side.

No references cited.