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(54) **CARD CARRYING APPARATUS WITH CELL PHONE CRADLE ATTACHMENT**

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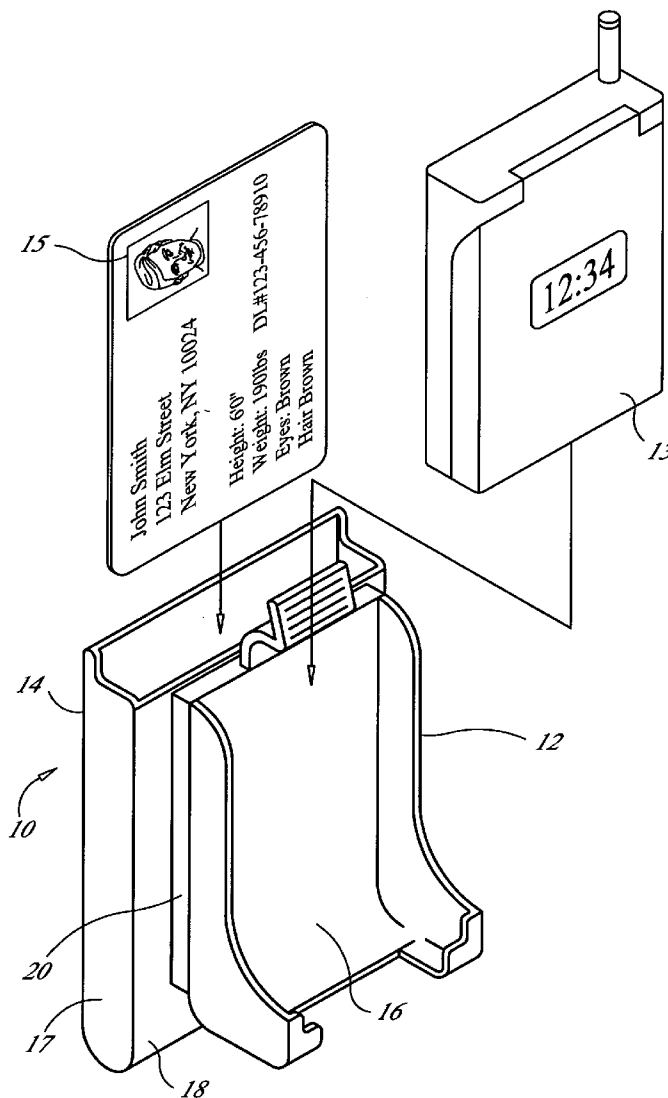
(57) **ABSTRACT**

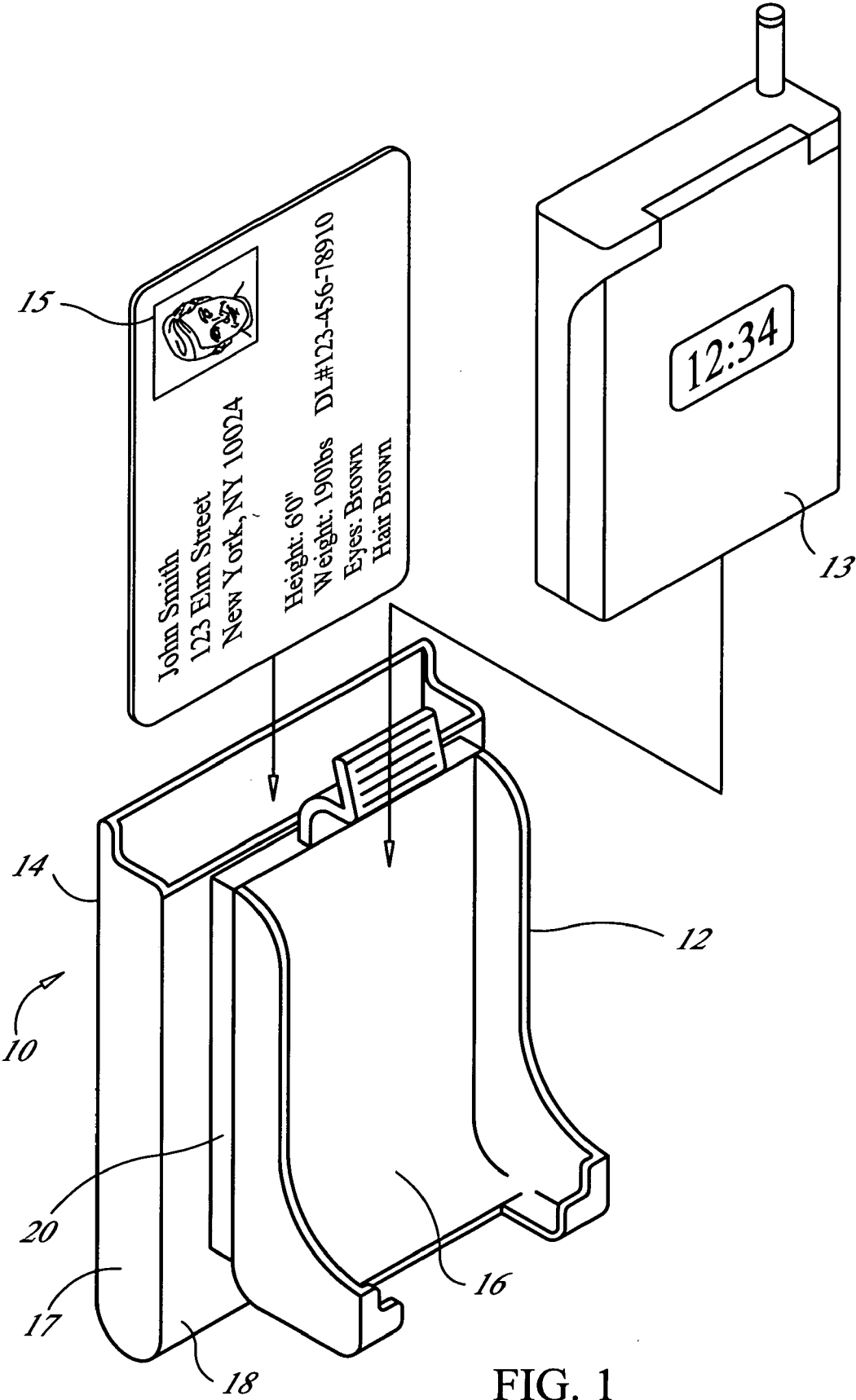
A portable, multi-object storage apparatus that includes two discrete but joined object-storage receptacles. One receptacle is adapted to house a portable electronic device such as a cellular telephone. The other receptacle is adapted to retain credit cards, business cards, folded bills, or similarly sized objects. The apparatus conveniently allows the user to attach the apparatus to the user's belt, clothing, or personal item, thus providing easy access to their cell phone, as well as their credit cards, business cards or money, without the need to store each in separate compartments or in the their pockets.

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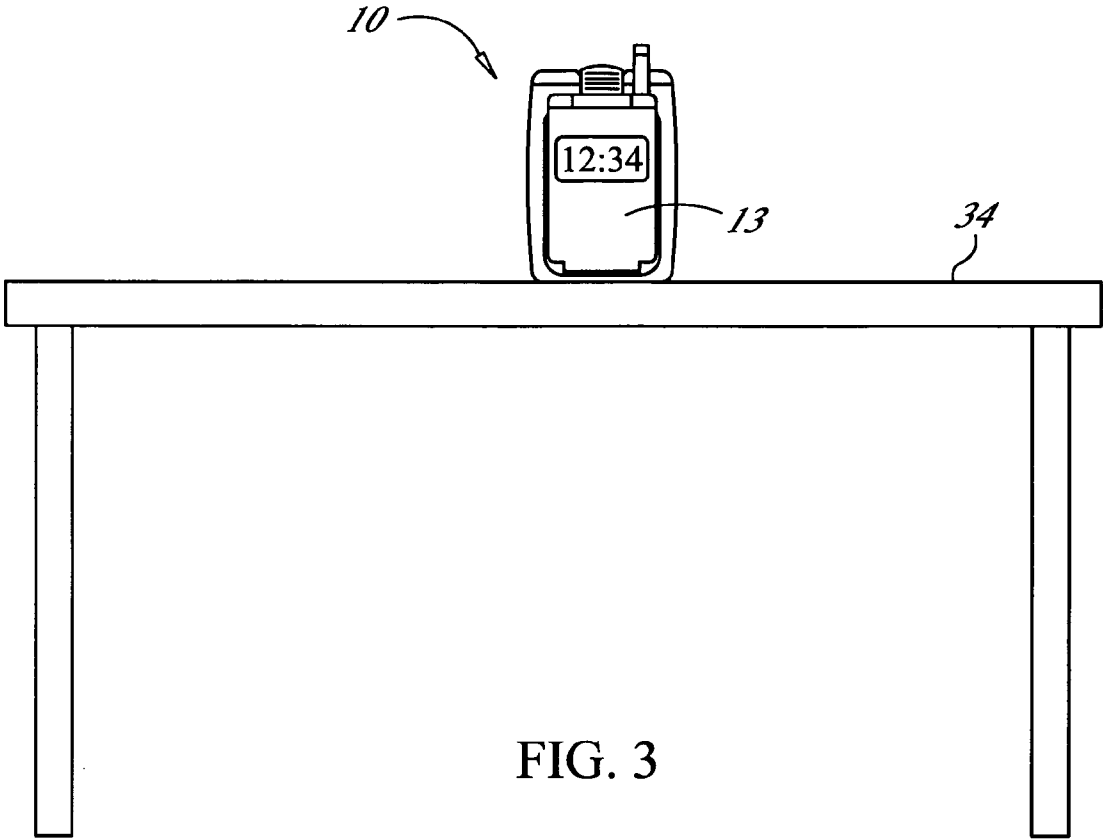


FIG. 3

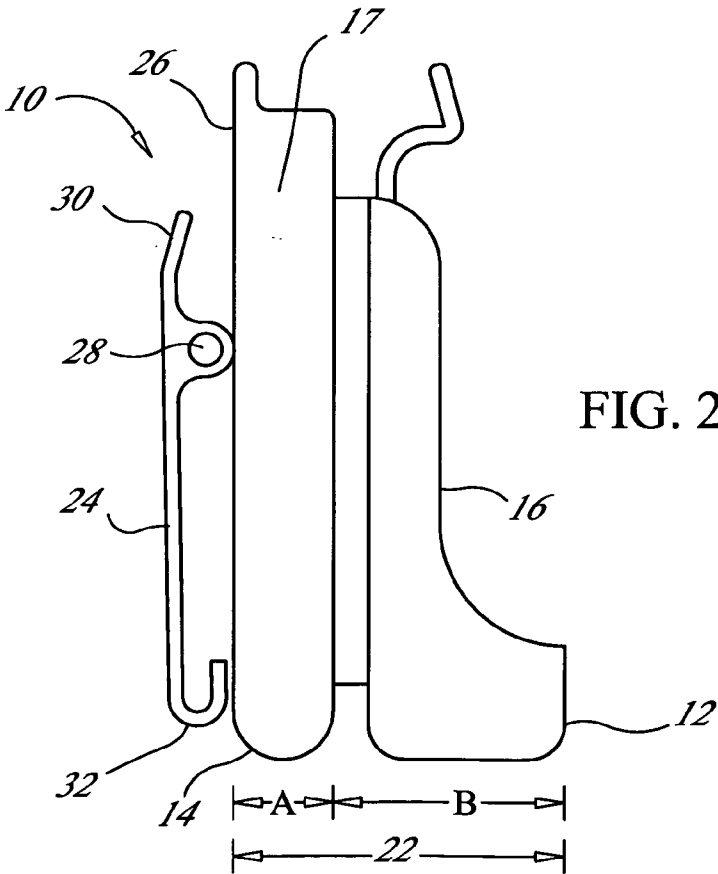


FIG. 2

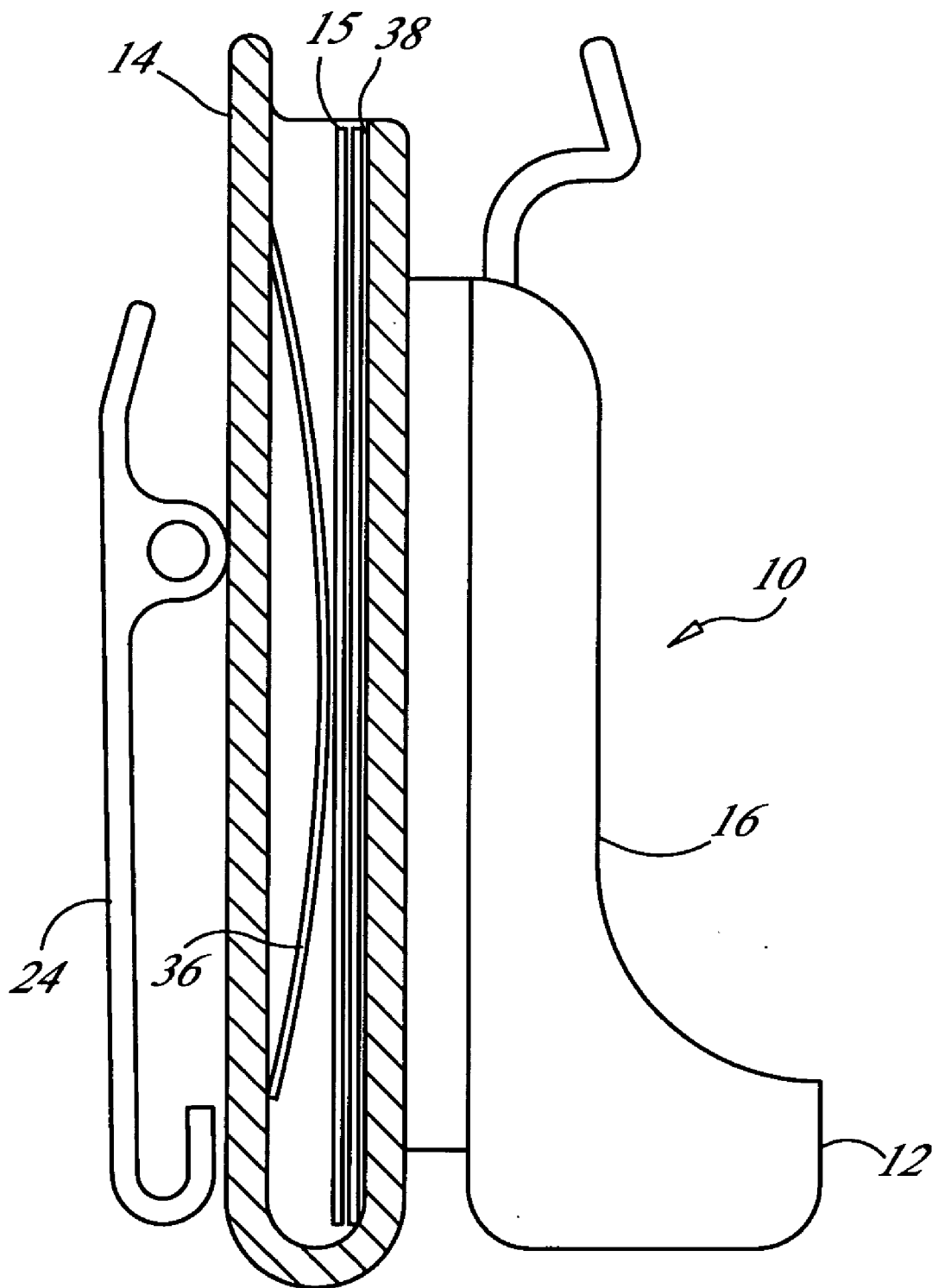


FIG. 4

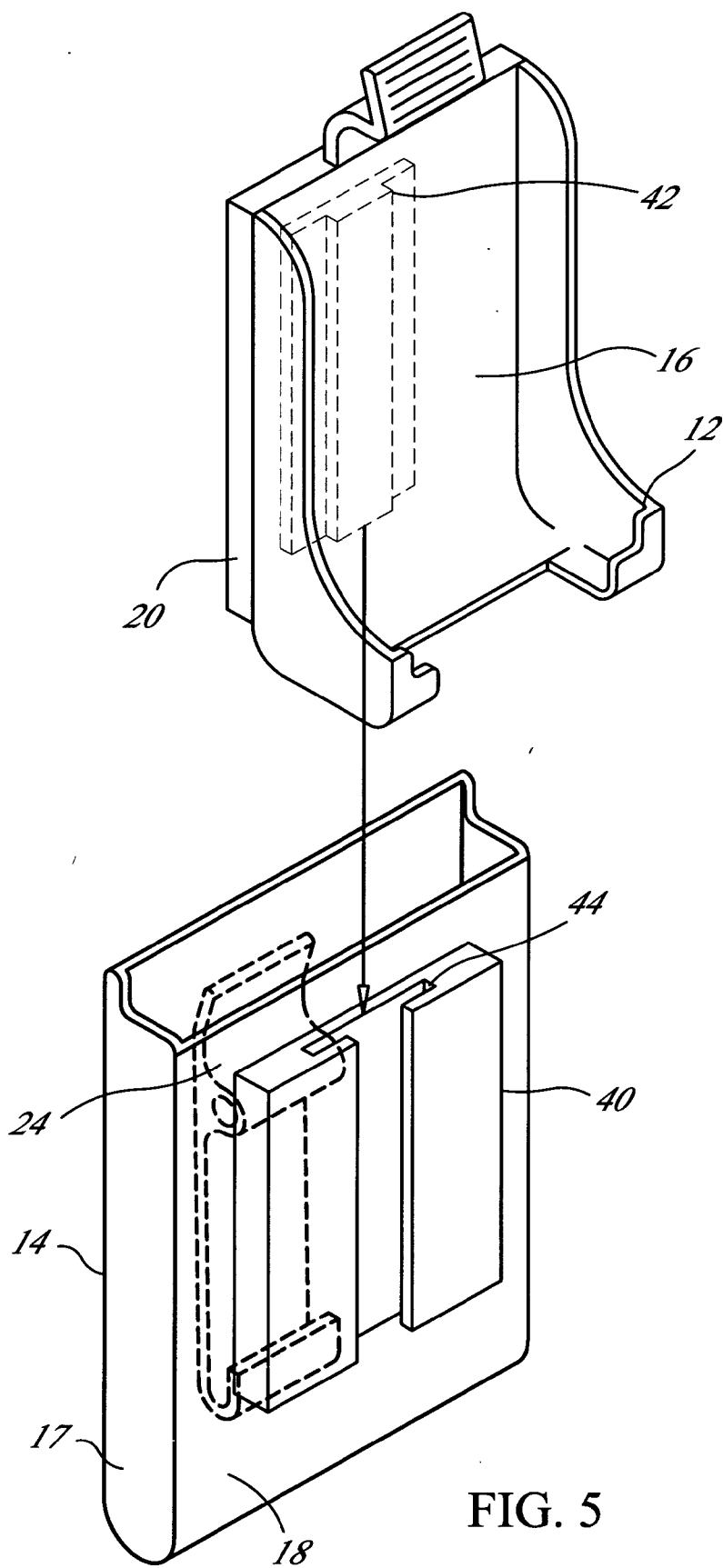
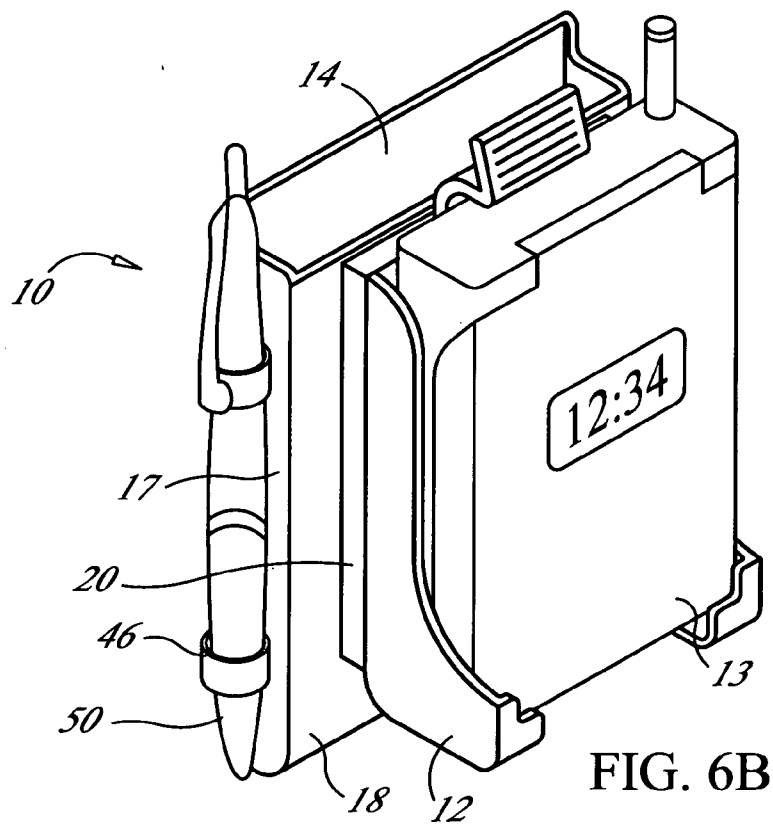
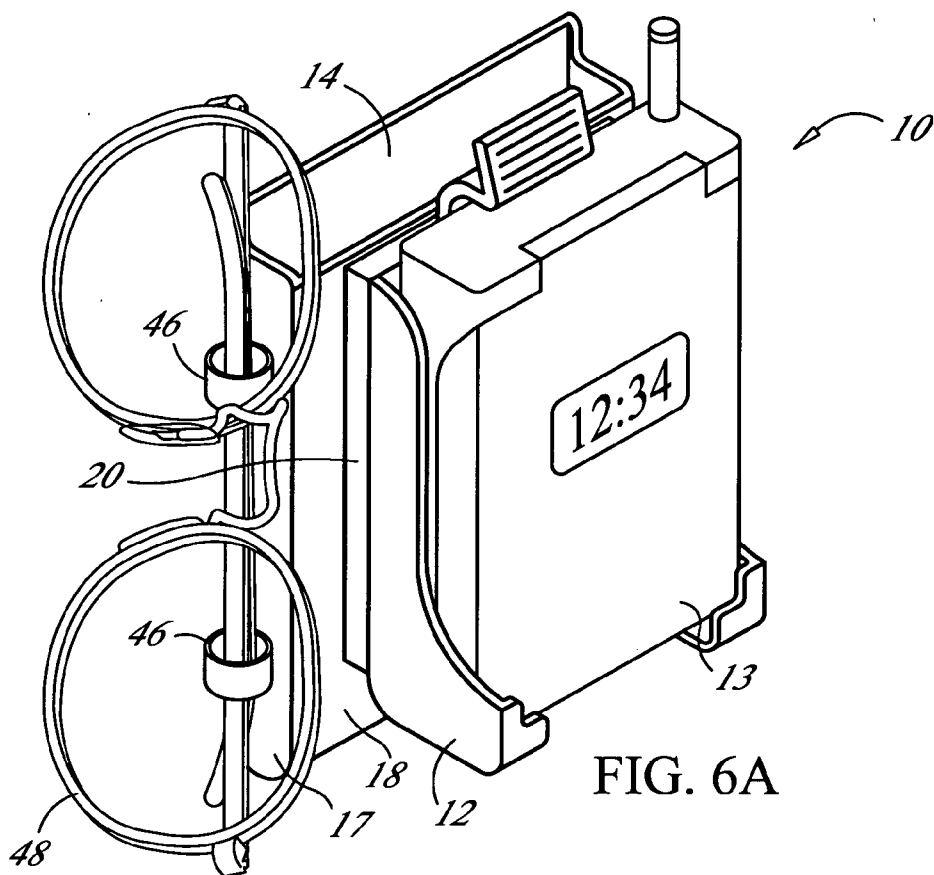


FIG. 5



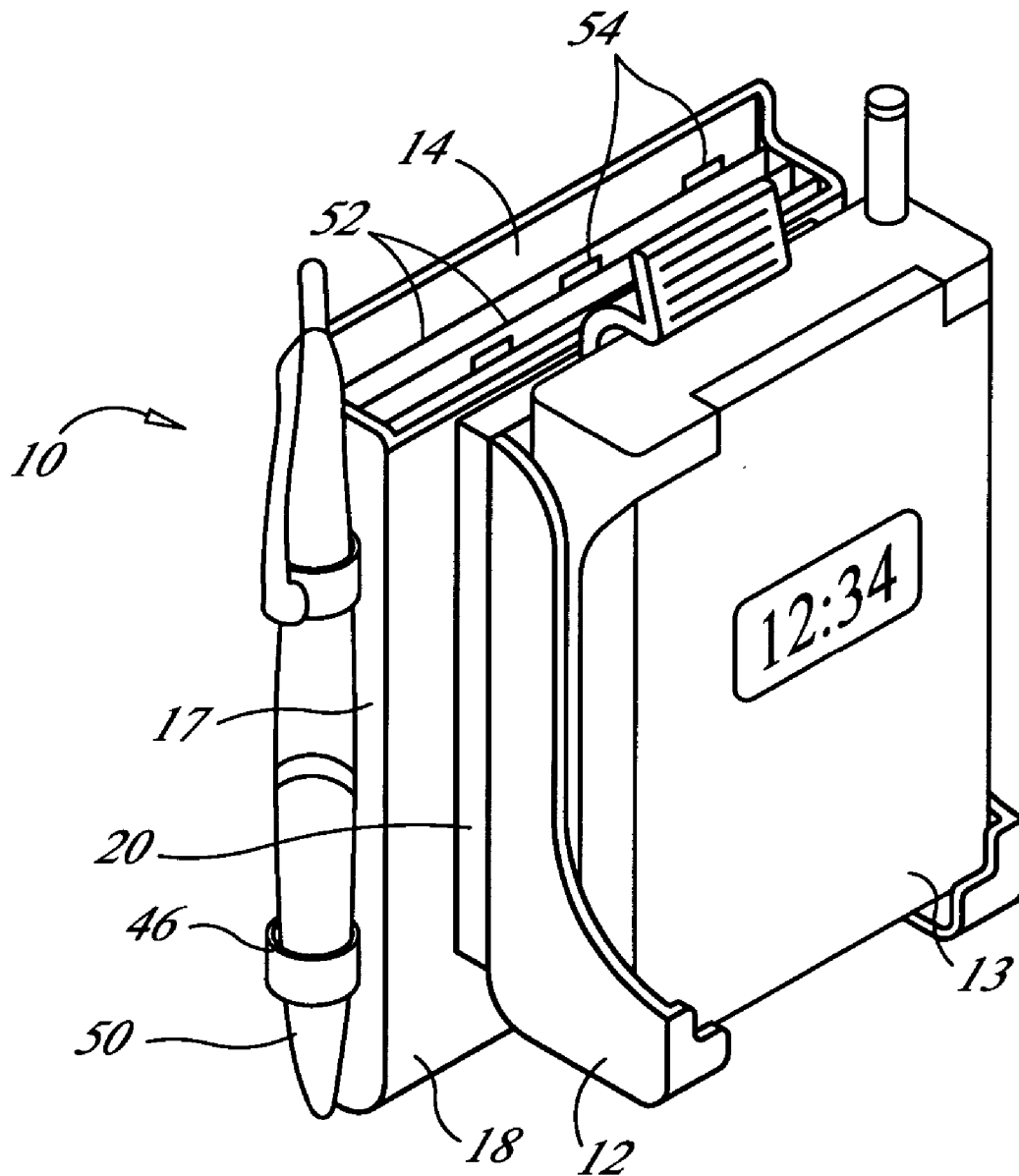


FIG. 7

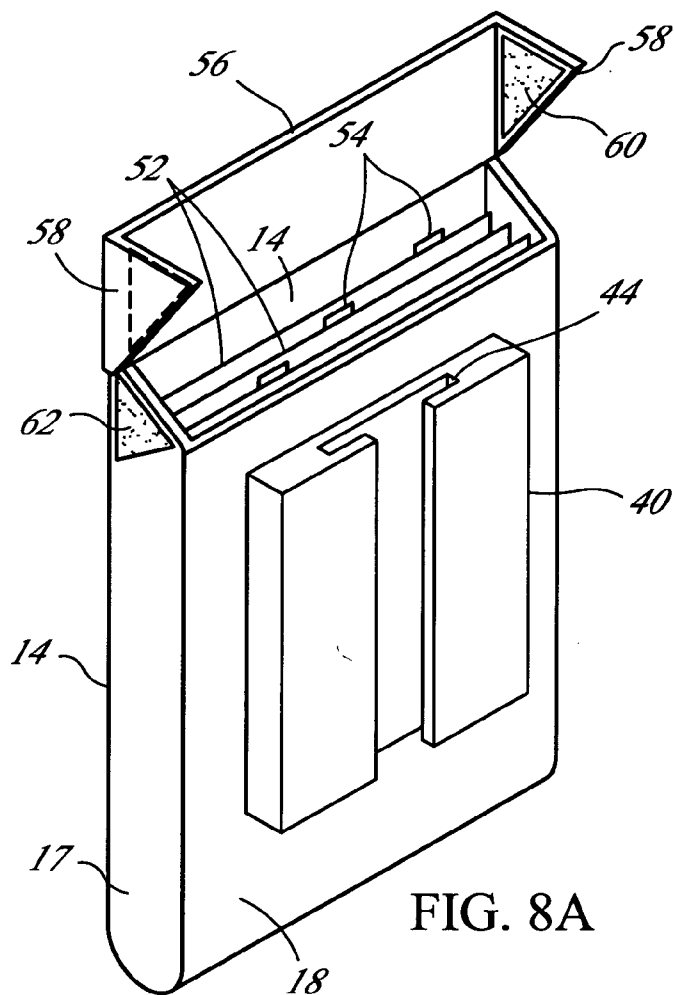


FIG. 8A

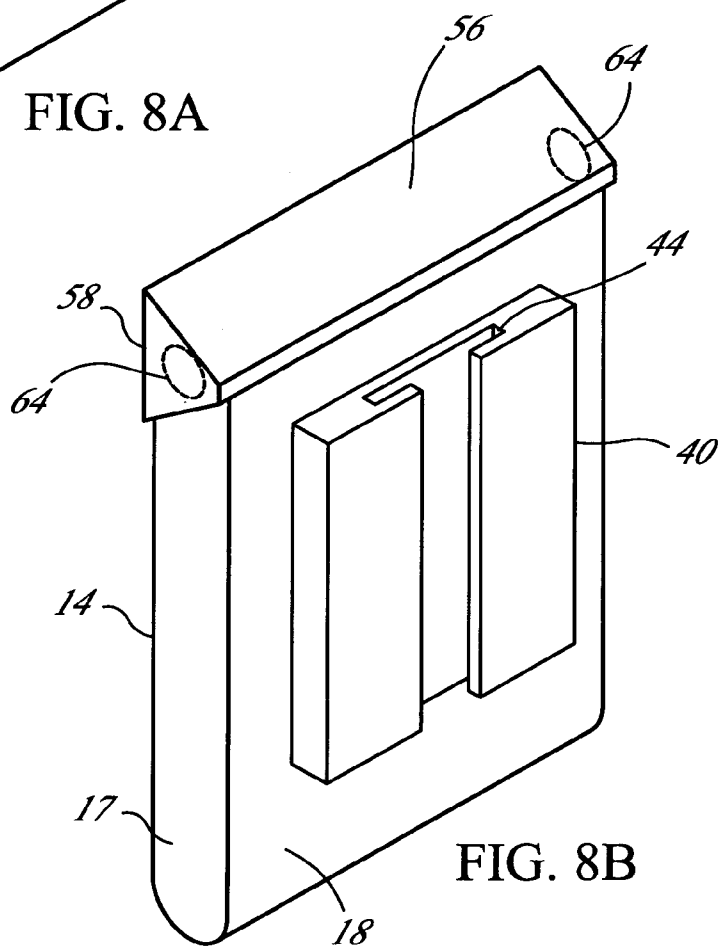


FIG. 8B

CARD CARRYING APPARATUS WITH CELL PHONE CRADLE ATTACHMENT

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application is related to and claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. _____, filed _____, entitled _____, the entirety of which is incorporated herein by reference.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] n/a

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The present invention relates to portable object holders and more specifically to a portable electronic device cradle that includes a separate but attached object-carrying receptacle wherein the entire apparatus can house an electronic device such as a cell-phone in a first receptacle, and business cards, credit cards, bills or the like, in a separate but attached second receptacle.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0004] With the rise in popularity of cellular telephones, cell phone users find cell phone cradles to be indispensable. In the fast-paced twenty-first century, users need to access their cell phones quickly. Cell phone cradles that conveniently clip onto a user's belt or clothing provide easy access to the cell phone and lessen the likelihood that the user leaves their phone at home, misplaces or loses their phone. Thus, cell phone storage and access has been improved by recent technological advances.

[0005] On the other hand, consumers who carry credit cards and business cards are constantly fumbling through their wallets to pull out their cards, only to find that they are crumpled, torn or defaced. Further, as a consumer acquires more and more business cards, credit cards and bills and adds them to their wallets, the wallets become oversized, unsightly and difficult to keep in one's pocket. While bill-folds serve to retain bills and cards, the user must still have a pocket to keep their bill-folds in. In addition, cards or bills can easily slip out of the bill-fold. Further, the user must still have a separate portable receptacle to house their electronic device. While a cell phone cradle and a bill-fold each serve their separate and unique purpose, the user is still required to carry both of these items with them if they want to have access to their cell phones, money, credit cards and business cards. Storing credit cards, business cards, and bills in one receptacle, and a portable electronic device in another receptacle is inefficient and increases the likelihood that the user will misplace one of the receptacles or leave one of the receptacles unattended.

[0006] What is therefore needed is a single apparatus that can both retain a portable electronic device such as a cellular telephone in one receptacle and safely and securely retain credit cards, business cards, bills, and other items in a separate but attached receptacle, and which can be removably attached on a user's belt, clothing, or personal item, thus providing quick and easy access to the items stored therein.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] The present invention advantageously provides an apparatus that includes two separate but connected object-storage receptacles, where one receptacle is adapted to house a portable electronic device such as a cellular telephone and the other receptacle is adapted to house credit cards, business cards, folded bills, or similar objects. The apparatus conveniently allows the user to attach the apparatus to the user's belt, clothing, or personal item, thus providing easy access to their cell phone, as well as their credit cards, business cards or money, without the need to store each in separate compartments or in their pockets.

[0008] In one aspect of the invention, a portable object holder is provided. The portable object holder includes a first receptacle having a base, a front cradle portion and a rear face. The front cradle portion is sized to receive and retain a least a portion of a handheld electronic device. The portable object holder also includes a second receptacle sized to receive and retain one or more objects. The second receptacle includes an open end, a base, opposing sides, a front face and a rear face, where the front face of the second receptacle is affixed to the rear face of the first receptacle.

[0009] In another aspect of the invention, a portable storage apparatus is provided. The apparatus includes an electronic device receptacle having a base, a front recess portion and a rear face, where the front recess portion sized to receive and retain a least a portion of a cellular telephone. The apparatus also includes an object receptacle having an open end, a base, opposing sides, a front face and a rear face. The front face of the object receptacle is joined to the rear face of the first receptacle. The second receptacle is sized to receive and retain one or more cards, where the base of the electronic device receptacle and the base of the object receptacle are substantially flush with each other such that the apparatus may be supported on a surface in a substantially upright position.

[0010] In yet another aspect, a portable multi-object retention system is provided. The system includes one or more interchangeable first receptacles, where each first receptacle includes a base, a front recess portion and a rear face, where the front recess portion of each first receptacle is sized to receive and retain a least a portion of a handheld electronic device. The system also includes one or more interchangeable second receptacles. Each second receptacle includes an open end, a base, opposing sides, a front face and a rear face. Each second receptacle is sized to receive and retain one or more objects. The system further includes an engagement mechanism situated between the rear face of each first receptacle and the front face of each second receptacle. The engagement mechanism allows for removable engagement of any first receptacle with any second receptacle.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] A more complete understanding of the present invention, and the attendant advantages and features thereof, will be more readily understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein:

[0012] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an embodiment of the apparatus of the present invention;

[0013] FIG. 2 is a side view of an embodiment of the apparatus of the present invention;

[0014] FIG. 3 is a front view of an embodiment of the present invention showing the apparatus being supported on a desk;

[0015] FIG. 4 is a side view of an embodiment of the present invention showing a securing mechanism to retain the contents within the second receptacle;

[0016] FIG. 5 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the apparatus of the present invention;

[0017] FIG. 6A is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the apparatus of the present invention where eyeglasses are secured to the card-carrying receptacle;

[0018] FIG. 6B is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the apparatus of the present invention where a writing implement is secured to the card-carrying receptacle;

[0019] FIG. 7 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the apparatus of the present invention illustrating divider tabs to separate the contents of one of the receptacles;

[0020] FIG. 8A is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the apparatus of the present invention illustrating a cover in an open position attached to the card-carrying receptacle; and

[0021] FIG. 8B is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the apparatus of the present invention illustrating a cover in a closed position attached to the card-carrying receptacle.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0022] The present invention advantageously provides a device that includes two receptacles, one adapted to carry business cards, credit cards and/or bills, or similar smaller items, and the other adapted to house a portable electronic device such as a cellular telephone. The device includes an item-carrying receptacle that is sized to receive folded bills, credit cards, business cards, or the like. In one embodiment, a file system is included that allows the user to select one of a plurality of tabs, where each tab is attached to a corresponding mini-folder, and pull out the chosen folder containing the bills, cards, or drivers license, etc. One face of the receptacle is joined to a portable electronic device cradle. Thus, users can carry their mobile telephones in one housing, as well as cards and/or bills in another housing where the housings are integrated in a single, portable, low profile apparatus.

[0023] Referring now to the drawing figures in which like reference designators refer to like elements there is shown in FIG. 1 an apparatus constructed in accordance with the principles of the present invention and designated generally as "10". Apparatus 10 includes two separate receptacles, a first receptacle 12, which is an electronic device cradle sized to retain a handheld electronic device such as a cellular telephone 13, and a second receptacle 14, which is sized to retain thinner items 15 such as a drivers license, credit cards, business cards, paper notes, and/or folded bills. Alternately, the dimensions of receptacle 14 may be different from that shown in FIG. 1 in order to accommodate wider profile items such as keys, etc.

[0024] Receptacles 12 and 14 may be constructed of sturdy material such as but not limited to polycarbonate plastic. First receptacle 12 includes recess 16, into which an electronic portable device such as a cellular telephone 13 can be inserted. Recess 16 of first receptacle 12 may be configured to retain a handheld Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), a pager, a beeper, or any other type of handheld electronic device. Receptacle 12 includes all the necessary electronic connections and mechanical interfaces commonly known in the art, in order for the portable electronic device 13 to be retained within cradle 12 and to operate properly.

[0025] Second receptacle 14 is sized to retain smaller profile items such as folded bills, cards, including but not limited to credit cards and business cards, loose change, note paper, and keys. As mentioned above, second receptacle 14 may be sized to receive and retain wider-profile items. In one embodiment, first receptacle 12 is affixed to second receptacle 14. Specifically, the back wall 20 of first receptacle 12 is joined to the front wall 18 of second receptacle 14. A connection interface piece may also be used to join the compartments. When affixed in this manner, the bottom portion 22 of apparatus 10 is of sufficient width (receptacle 14 has a width "A", while receptacle 12 has a width "B") to support apparatus 10 when apparatus 10 is placed on a flat surface such as a desk (FIG. 4). Thus, apparatus 10, when not clipped to a user's clothing, or personal item, or held in the user's hand, may be supported on a surface in order for the user to view the time and information displayed on the face of the handheld electronic device, as shown in FIG. 3.

[0026] Referring to FIG. 2, a clip 24 is affixed to a back wall 26 of receptacle 14. Clip 24 is spring loaded and pivots at pivot point 28, which allows the user to depress an upper portion 30 of clip 24 towards wall 26, which in turn forces a lower portion 32 of clip 24 away from back wall 26 of receptacle 14. While keeping upper portion 30 depressed, the user can attach apparatus 10 to his or her clothing, belt, purse, briefcase, or the like. Releasing upper portion 30 of clip 24 returns lower portion 32 of clip 24 to its starting point, thus securing apparatus 10 to the user's clothing or personal item. The clip 24 shown in FIG. 2 is merely one type of securing apparatus that may be used to attach apparatus 10 to a user's clothing or personal item. Other types of securing devices commonly known in the art may also be used. For additional security, a chain or second clip can be used to affix apparatus 10 to the user's belt, clothing, or personal item.

[0027] In the embodiment shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, first receptacle 12 is joined to second receptacle 14. Specifically, the back wall 20 of first receptacle 12 is connected to the front wall 18 of second receptacle 14. As described above, apparatus 10 can be easily carried by hand, fit in the user's pocket, or conveniently affixed to a user's belt, clothing, purse or other personal item via clip 24 or similar securing means. The thin, compact design of receptacle 14 results in apparatus 10 being relatively thin and less bulky than traditional wallets or card-carrying cases. Apparatus 10 may also be placed on a substantially horizontal surface, such as a table 34, as shown in FIG. 3. Advantageously, the combined bottom portions of first receptacle 12 and second receptacle 14 have a thickness (A+B) that provides sufficient stability for apparatus 10 to be supported in a substantially upright orientation by the table as shown in FIG. 3. Thus, apparatus 10, when placed on a substantially horizontal

surface, can be used as a clock, to show the time displayed by the electronic device 13. Further, if the handheld electronic device 13 is a PDA, the user can set apparatus 10 on his or her desk as shown, and view not only the time, but also e-mail messages, calendars, or other information displayed on device 13.

[0028] Referring to FIG. 4, second receptacle 14 can be seen to include an elongated spring 36. Spring 36 can be a tempered metal device and shaped in any manner in order to press the contents 15 of first receptacle 14 against an inner wall 38 of the receptacle. Initially, prior to any contents being inserted in receptacle 14, spring 36 presses against an inner wall 38 of second receptacle 14. The user can then slide one or more bills, cards or the like 15 between the spring 36 and the inner wall 38 that spring 36 is pressing against. The pressure exerted by spring 36 against the cards and/or bills 15 forces the cards/bills 15 against the interior wall 38 of receptacle 14. As more bills or cards 15 are inserted, the spring 36 is slightly separated from the inner wall 38 to accommodate more cards, while still maintaining pressure against the trapped cards 15. Thus, in the embodiment shown in FIG. 4, the contents 15 of receptacle 14 remain safely secured within receptacle 14 even when the user's motion (i.e., bending down, jogging, playing sports, etc.) may cause the open end of receptacle 14 to face down.

[0029] FIG. 5 illustrates an alternate embodiment of the invention. In this embodiment, first receptacle 12 is removably attached to second receptacle 14. FIG. 5 illustrates one way that receptacle 12 may be removably affixed to receptacle 14. Receptacle 12 may include on its back wall 20 a mounting flange 42. Receptacle 12 is removably mounted on mounting sleeve 40, via mounting flange 42. Mounting sleeve 40 includes groove 44, which slidably receives flange 42 thus securing receptacle 14 to receptacle 12. Groove 44 has a shape that is similar to the dimensions of flange 42 thus allowing flange 42 to be easily slid into the groove and retained therein, thus securing the two receptacles together. Similarly, the two receptacles can be separated by sliding flange 42 upward and disengaging it from within groove 44. The attachment mechanism illustrated in FIG. 5 is merely illustrative and the invention is not limited to a particular type of attachment device.

[0030] Advantageously, this feature allows for different types of electronic device receptacles 12 to be "mixed and matched" with each object-holding receptacle 14. For example, a receptacle 12 housing a cell phone may have different dimensions than a receptacle 12 that holds a pager, a beeper, or a PDA. A user may select his or her portable electronic device, i.e. their cellular telephone, and its corresponding cradle 12, and affix the cradle 12 to receptacle 14 in the manner described above, or utilizing another mounting procedure. The user may then decide to carry a PDA rather than his or her cell phone. In this instance, the user removes the cell phone cradle 1, which had been mounted to receptacle 14, and replaces it with a different receptacle 12, sized to receive the PDA. In this fashion, many different cradles can be used with one object-holding receptacle 14.

[0031] In an alternate embodiment, more than one object-carrying receptacle 14 can be used with the electronic device receptacle 12. Wider or narrower receptacles 14 may be interchanged and used with electronic device receptacle 12. For example, a wider receptacle 14 may be sized to accom-

modate several keys on a key chain, or a larger stack of business cards. The embodiment shown in FIG. 5 allows the user the freedom to interchange receptacles of different sizes, dimensions and functions, thereby allowing for the storage and transport of many different types of electronic devices in one receptacle 12 and other smaller profile items of different sizes in the other receptacle 14.

[0032] FIGS. 6A and 6B illustrate another embodiment of the present invention. In FIGS. 6A and 6B, object fasteners 46 are affixed to a side 17 of receptacle 14. Fasteners 46 can retain objects such as eyeglasses, pens, pencils, keys, PDA stencils, or the like. Used as shown in FIG. 3, apparatus 10 can include fasteners 46 to provide a desk-supported communication station. For example, when used in this fashion, a user at their desk can view the digital display on the face of the electronic device 13, retain business cards in receptacle 14 for easy storage, display and/or retrieval, and/or use the writing implement 50 or eyeglasses 48, as needed.

[0033] FIG. 7 illustrates yet another embodiment of the present invention. In FIG. 7, receptacle 14 includes one or more dividers 52, which are sized to fit within receptacle 14. Each divider 52 is comprised of an inverted flap with an open top end a closed lower end, thus forming a "V" shape. Each divider 52 is sized to hold bills, cards, etc. within the divider flap. One of the top two portions of the open "V" includes the raised tab 54, which extends above the license, cards, bills or other items contained within receptacle 14. Thus, each divider 52 forms a sub-compartment, or mini-folder within receptacle 14 and separates a different item within receptacle 14. For example, the user can place all their credit cards in one sub-compartment, bills in another sub-compartment and a driver's license in a third sub-compartment. Advantageously, each tab 54 corresponds to a different sub-compartment and the user simply pulls upward on a tab 54, and removes the corresponding mini-folder attached to the selected tab 54, along with its contents therein. After a short time, the user will become adept at knowing which tab 54 corresponds to which sub-compartment and can select their card, license, or bills easily without needing to glance down at apparatus 10.

[0034] FIGS. 8A and 8B illustrate an alternate embodiment of the invention. A pivoting and foldable lid 56 can be included to cover the open end of receptacle 14, retaining the contents of receptacle 14 therein. Lid 56 may be used alone or in conjunction with spring 36 to further retain the items within receptacle 14. Lid 56 is foldable with respect to receptacle 14 and can be closed to retain the contents of receptacle 14 by a variety of closure mechanisms common in the art. For example, the inner sides of lid flaps 58 may include VELCRO® strips 60 which, when lid 56 is folded down, adhere to corresponding strips 62 on the outer sides of receptacle 14. Thus, the user can simply flip lid 56 down, where it is sealed upon the open end of receptacle 14. In an alternate embodiment, pivoting lid 56 can include snaps in place of VELCRO® strips. In yet an alternate embodiment, each side of receptacle 14 can include a hole 64 through which a projection from the inner side of flaps 58 extends. In each of the above-described embodiments, lid 56 is secured over the open end of receptacle 14 via a securing mechanism and can be lifted up with minimal effort to provide access to the contents with receptacle 14. Advantageously, lid 56, when closed upon receptacle 14, slopes

downward toward the front of receptacle 14. The raised portion of lid 56 provides clearance for the raised tabs 54, if tabs 54 are used.

[0035] In use, the present invention provides the user with an integrated, all-in-one electronic device receptacle 12 and a card or bill-carrying receptacle 14. The user can affix the apparatus 10 to their belt, for example, via clip 24, and extract from receptacle 14 a particular item without having to look down at apparatus 10. For example, if the user wishes to use his or her credit card at a gas pump, they can feel for lid 56, pull it up, and with prior knowledge as to which sub-compartment contains credit cards, pull on the corresponding tab 54. The divider 52 attached to the selected tab 54 can then be pulled and extracted from within receptacle 14. The user can then open divider 52 that contains all their credit cards and select one for use.

[0036] It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that the present invention is not limited to what has been particularly shown and described herein above. In addition, unless mention was made above to the contrary, it should be noted that all of the accompanying drawings are not to scale. A variety of modifications and variations are possible in light of the above teachings without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention, which is limited only by the following claims.

What is claimed is:

- 1. A portable object holder, comprising:
 - a first receptacle having a base, a front cradle portion and a rear face, the front cradle portion sized to receive and retain a least a portion of a handheld electronic device; and
 - a second receptacle having an open end, a base, opposing sides, a front face and a rear face, the front face of the second receptacle affixed to the rear face of the first receptacle, the second receptacle sized to receive and retain one or more objects.
- 2. The portable object holder of claim 1, further comprising means for affixing the portable object holder to a user's clothing or personal item, the affixing means connected to the rear face of the second receptacle.
- 3. The portable object holder of claim 2, wherein the affixing means is a spring loaded clip.
- 4. The portable object holder of claim 1, wherein the second receptacle is removably affixed to the first receptacle via detachable mounting means.
- 5. The portable object holder of claim 4, wherein the detachable mounting means comprises:
 - a mounting flange disposed upon the rear surface of the first receptacle; and
 - a flange receiving sleeve disposed upon the front face of the second receptacle, wherein the first receptacle can be demountably engaged with the second receptacle by sliding the mounting flange within the receiving sleeve.
- 6. The portable object holder of claim 1, wherein the second receptacle further includes one or more fasteners affixed to one or more of the sides of the second receptacle in order to secure additional objects to the object holder.
- 7. The portable object holder of claim 1, wherein the second receptacle further comprises object retention means to secure objects within the second receptacle.

8. The portable object holder of claim 7, wherein the object retention means comprises a tempered spring that applies pressure upon the objects within the second receptacle, such that the objects are pressed against an interior wall of the second receptacle.

9. The portable object holder of 7, wherein the object retention means comprises a clip that further secures the objects within the second receptacle.

10. The portable object holder of claim 1, wherein at least the base of the first receptacle and the base of the second receptacle provide a support surface to enable the object holder to be supported on a substantially flat surface.

11. The object holder of claim 1, wherein the base of the first receptacle is substantially flush with the base of the second receptacle thus enabling the portable object holder to be supported by the substantially flat surface in an upright position.

12. The portable object holder of claim 1, wherein the handheld electronic device is a cellular telephone.

13. The portable object holder of claim 1, wherein the handheld electronic device is a pager.

14. The object holder of claim 1, wherein the handheld electronic device is a PDA.

15. The portable object holder of claim 1, wherein the second receptacle is sized to retain one or more cards.

16. The portable object holder of claim 1, wherein the second receptacle is sized to retain one or more folded bills.

17. The portable object holder of claim 1, wherein the second receptacle further comprises a cover enclosing the open end of the second receptacle.

18. The portable object holder of claim 1, further comprising one or more dividers disposed within the second receptacle, the one or more dividers forming sub-compartments, each sub-compartment adapted to contain a common object.

19. The portable object holder of claim 18, wherein at least one of the one or more dividers further includes a raised tab to facilitate selection of a chosen sub-compartment.

20. A portable storage apparatus comprising:

an electronic device receptacle having a base, a front recess portion and a rear face, the front recess portion sized to receive and retain a least a portion of a cellular telephone; and

an object receptacle having an open end, a base, opposing sides, a front face and a rear face, the front face of the object receptacle joined to the rear face of the first receptacle, the second receptacle sized to receive and retain one or more cards, wherein the base of the electronic device receptacle and the base of the object receptacle are substantially flush with each other such that the apparatus may be supported on a surface in a substantially upright position.

21. The apparatus of claim 20 further comprising a clip for affixing the object receptacle to a user's clothing or personal item, the clip connected to the rear face of the object receptacle.

22. A portable multi-object retention system comprising:
one or more interchangeable first receptacles, each said first receptacle having a base, a front recess portion and a rear face, the front recess portion of each said first receptacle sized to receive and retain a least a portion of a handheld electronic device;
one or more interchangeable second receptacles, each said second receptacle having an open end, a base, opposing sides, a front face and a rear face, each said second

receptacle sized to receive and retain one or more objects; and
an engagement mechanism situated between the rear face of each said first receptacle and the front face of each said second receptacle, the engagement mechanism allowing for removable engagement of any said first receptacle with any said second receptacle.

* * * * *