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(54) **WINE GLASS CADDY**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

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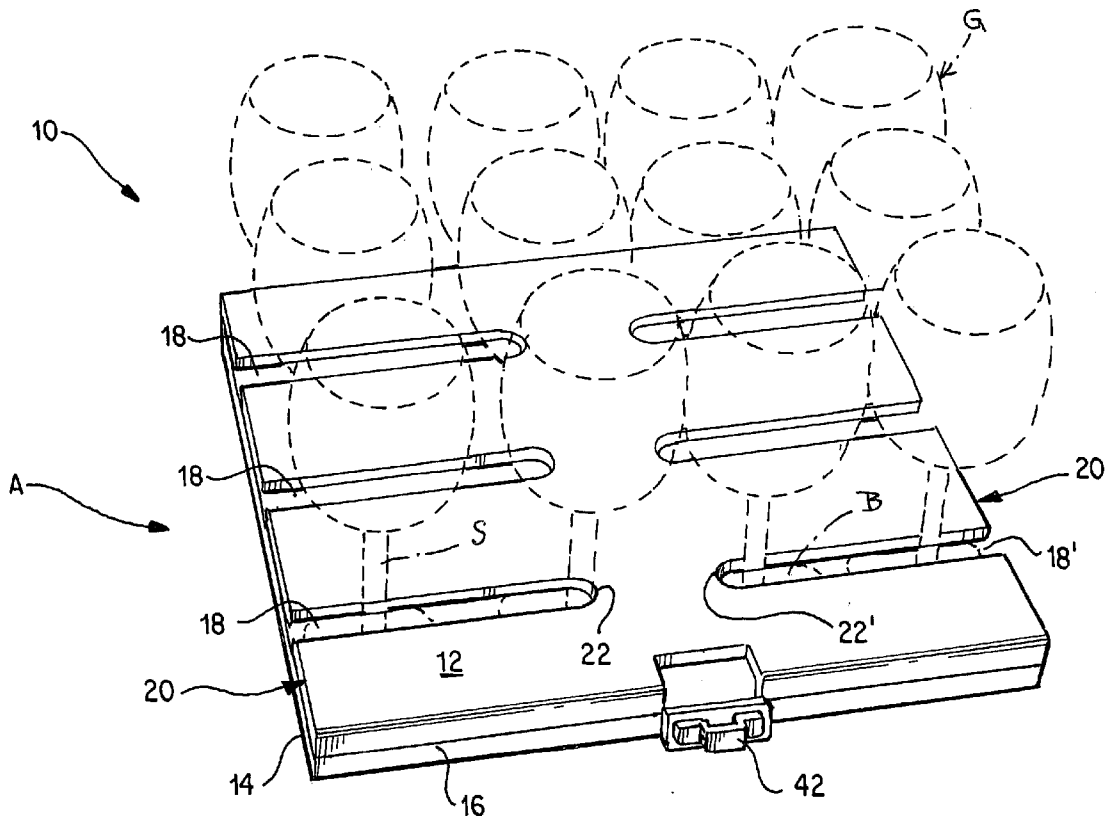
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The invention relates to a wine glass caddy which comprises a rigid horizontal base structure having upper and lower rigid parts spaced vertically apart by rigid spacer strips to form a vertically short space therebetween. The upper part includes at least one slot therein extending from a peripheral edge thereof. The slot is formed completely vertically through the upper part so that the slot communicates with the space. The slot and the space are open at a peripheral edge of the base structure. The space is sufficiently vertically tall to receive a base portion of a wine glass, and the slot is wide enough to receive a stem portion of the wine glass. A rigid cover is insertable onto the base structure and is tall enough to enclose the wine glasses. The cover includes a rigid vertical wall structure and a top. The wall structure includes a securing device connectible to the base structure for securing the rigid cover to the rigid base structure. The cover also includes a carrying handle.



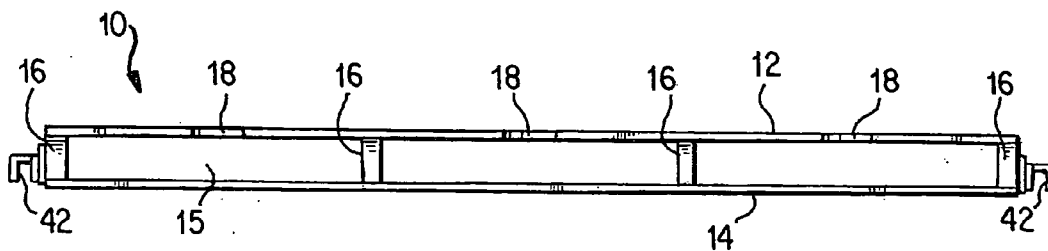


FIG. 2

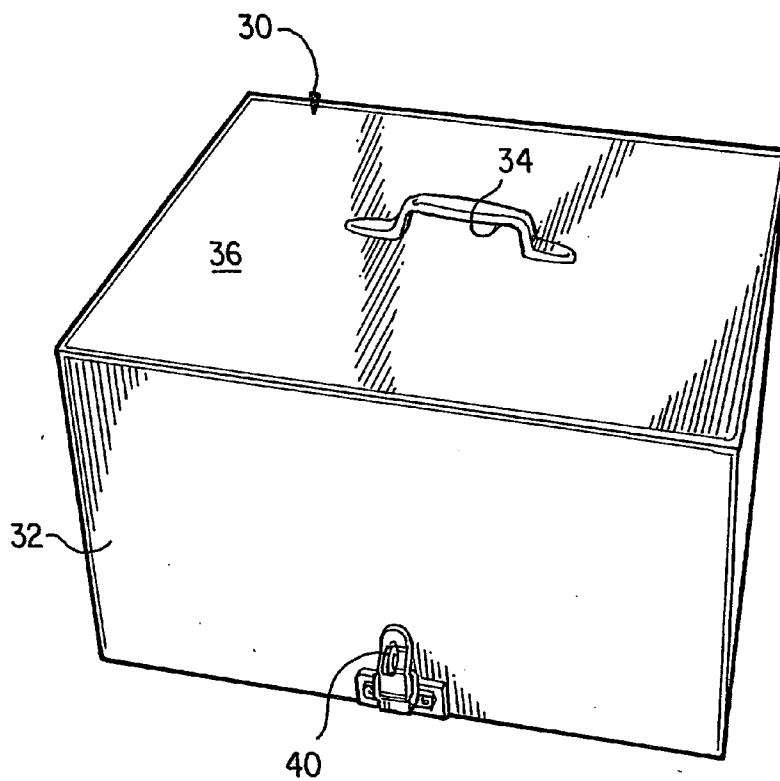


FIG. 3

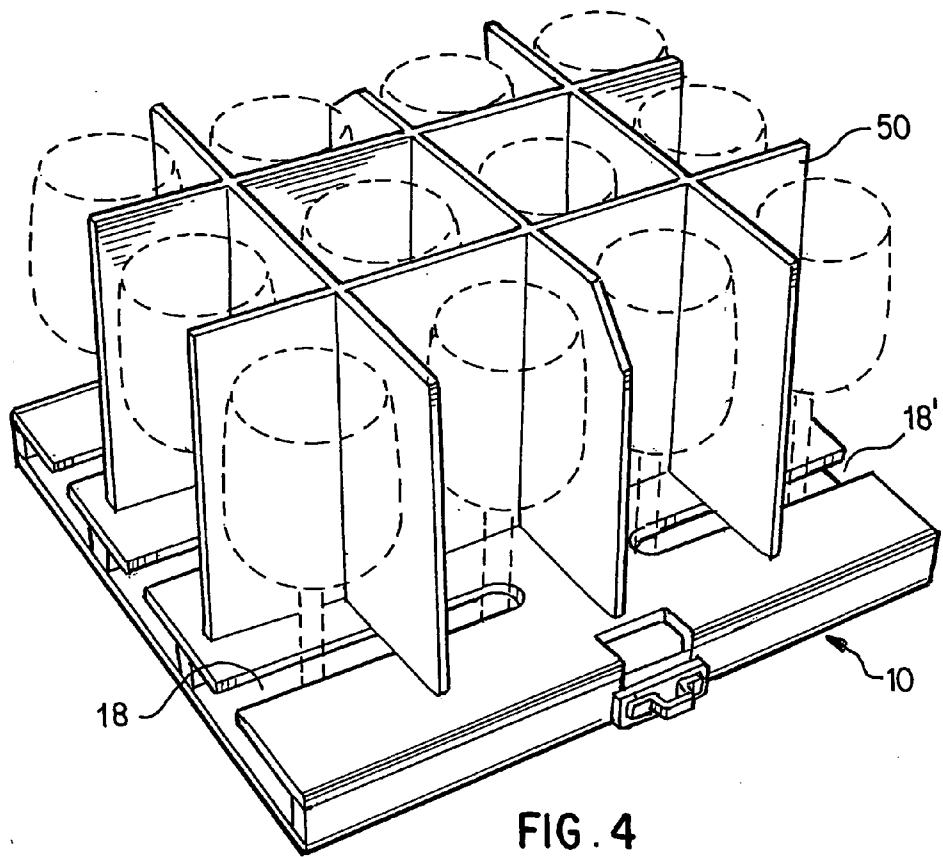


FIG. 4

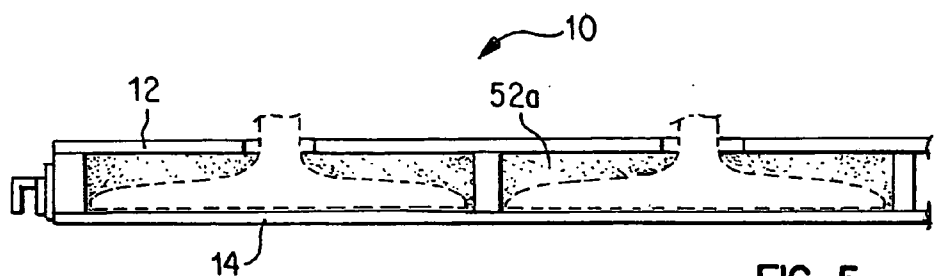


FIG. 5

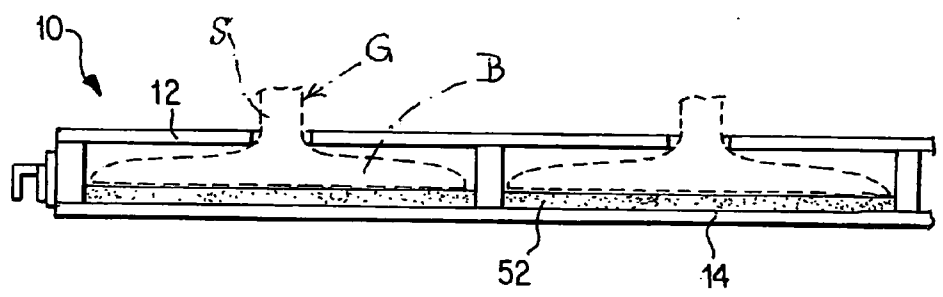


FIG. 6

WINE GLASS CADDY

BACKGROUND

[0001] The present invention relates to a wine glass caddy that enables wine glasses (i.e., stemware) to be safely transported by a wine consumer, e.g. to a wine tasting event.

[0002] Wine tasting events have become popular in which participating wine fanciers sample a variety of wines. Often, the participants bring a number of their own wine glasses so that they can sample numerous wines without the flavor of each wine being affected by residue from a previously-sampled wine.

[0003] Typically, the participant takes measures to prevent the wine glasses from being broken during transport. For example, it is common to wrap the glasses in cloth, or place them in heavily padded compartments of a soft-sided carrying case, or place them in recesses formed in Styrofoam blocks that can be carried in a rigid case. Such measures are effective, but are often large and bulky and might not provide adequate protection against high crushing loads.

[0004] Other transport devices are known which are formed of cardboard, paper, or soft plastic, which are not hard or strong enough to provide adequate protection.

[0005] It would be desirable, therefore, to provide a wine glass caddy which is relatively compact, does not require thick padding, and protects against high crushing forces.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The invention relates to a wine glass caddy which comprises a rigid horizontal base structure having upper and lower rigid horizontal parts spaced vertically apart to form a vertically short space therebetween. The upper part includes at least one slot therein extending from a peripheral edge of the upper part. The slot is formed completely vertically through the upper part so that the slot communicates with the space. The slot and the space are open at a peripheral edge of the base structure. The space is sufficiently vertically tall to receive a base portion of a wine glass, and the slot is wide enough to receive a stem portion of the wine glass. A rigid cover is insertable onto the base structure and is tall enough to enclose the wine glasses. The cover includes a rigid vertical wall structure and a top. The wall structure includes a securing device connectible to the base structure for securing the rigid cover to the rigid base structure. The cover also includes a carrying handle for manual transportation of the caddy.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

[0007] The objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following detailed description of preferred embodiments thereof in connection with the accompanying drawings in which like numerals designate like elements.

[0008] FIG. 1 is a top perspective view of a base structure of a wine caddy according to the invention, with wine glasses shown in broken lines.

[0009] FIG. 2 is an elevational view of the left side of the base structure, i.e., taken in the direction of arrow A in FIG. 1, wherein an elevational view of the other side would be identical.

[0010] FIG. 3 is a top perspective view of the wine caddy after a cover has been secured to the base structure.

[0011] FIG. 4 is a view similar to FIG. 1 after a matrix type barrier has been inserted to shield the wine glasses.

[0012] FIG. 5 is a partial side elevational view of the base structure showing a first embodiment of cushioning material engaging the bases of the wine glasses.

[0013] FIG. 6 is a view similar to FIG. 5 of a second embodiment of cushioning material engaging the bases of the wine glasses.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0014] Depicted in FIGS. 1 and 2 is a rigid base structure 10 of a wine glass caddy which includes upper and lower rigid horizontal parts 12, 14 in the form of respective sheets. The sheets are spaced vertically apart by rigid parallel spacer strips to form a vertically short space 15 therebetween.

[0015] The parts 12, 14 can be secured together in any suitable way, e.g., by adhesives or mechanical fasteners. Alternatively, the parts 12, 14 could comprise sections of a one-piece element.

[0016] The upper part 12 includes a plurality of parallel horizontal slots 18, 18' extending from opposing peripheral edges 20, 20' of the upper part 12. The slots 18, 18' extend vertically completely through the plate 12, so that the slots communicate with the space 15. It will be appreciated that the space 15 and the slots 18, 18' are open at the respective outer peripheral edges of the base structure to enable wine glasses to be slid horizontally into the base structure. The space 15 is sufficiently vertically tall to receive the base portion B of a wine glass G, and each slot 18 is wide enough to receive a stem S of a wine glass. The slots 18 that are disposed next to one another are spaced far enough apart to prevent contact between wine glasses disposed in respective slots 18. The same is true of the slots 18'. Also, the closed ends 22 of the slots 18 are spaced far enough from the closed ends 22' of the slots 18' to prevent wine glasses disposed in the slots 18 from contacting glasses disposed in the slots 18'.

[0017] The wine glass caddy 10 also includes a rigid cover 30, which is depicted in FIG. 3 as connected to the base structure 10. The cover 30 includes a rigid upstanding wall structure 32 tall enough to enclose the wine glasses. A handle 34 disposed on a top portion 36 of the cover 30 enables the wine caddy to be manually carried.

[0018] The cover can be attached to the base structure in any suitable way. In the depicted embodiment, a latch mechanism is employed, wherein two conventional toggle-type latches 40 are disposed along two opposing bottom edges of the vertical wall structure (only one latch depicted). The latches 40 engage respective catches 42 mounted on opposite edges of the base structure 10.

[0019] Preferably, the cover is configured so that the bottom edge of the cover is flush (i.e. coplanar) with the underside of the lower part 14 after the cover has been secured in place.

[0020] The wine glass caddy may incorporate additional useful features. For example as shown in FIG. 4., in order to ensure that no contact occurs between adjacent wine glasses, a matrix 50 formed of a cushioning material, e.g., plastic foam board for example, can be employed which creates soft barriers between the wine glasses. Alternatively, each wine glass could be covered by its own sheath (not shown).

[0021] Instead of attaching the carrying handle directly to the top portion 36 of the cover, the handle could be attached to a rod that is attached to the lower part and extends upwardly through a hole formed through the top portion 36. For example, the handle could be screwed onto an upper end of such a rod.

[0022] Alternatively, or in addition to such expedients, the space 15 in which the bases of the wine glasses are inserted could be provided with a cushioning material, e.g., plastic foam, which frictionally retains the bases in place and prevents them from sliding into contact with one another. The cushioning material 52 could be placed on the underside of the top part 12 as shown in FIG. 5, or on the top side of the lower part 14 as shown in FIG. 6.

[0023] The invention thus provides a simple apparatus for safely transporting wine glasses. The apparatus can be of any suitable size and shape for containing as many wine glasses as desired, and any number of stem-receiving slots, including only a single slot, could be provided.

[0024] The slots can be arranged in any suitable fashion. For example, the slots could be provided along only one edge of the base structure rather than along two edges. The slots can be of any suitable length for holding one or multiple wine glasses.

[0025] Any material could be used to form the base and cover, as long as it is rigid enough to protect the glasses. Wood, metal, and hard plastic are among the preferable materials.

[0026] The base structure and the cover are depicted as rectangular in top plan view, but it will be appreciated that other shapes, e.g., round or oval, are also suitable.

[0027] The cover can be attached to the base structure by any suitable type of latching or locking mechanism.

[0028] Although the present invention has been described in connection with preferred embodiments thereof, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that additions, modifications, substitutions and deletions not specifically described may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined in the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A wine caddy comprising:

a rigid horizontal base structure having upper and lower rigid parts spaced vertically apart to form a vertically short space therebetween, the upper part including at least one slot therein extending horizontally from a peripheral edge thereof, the slot formed completely vertically through the upper part to communicate with the short space, wherein the space and the slot are open at a peripheral edge of the base structure, the space being sufficiently vertically tall to receive a base portion of a wine glass, and the slot being wide enough to receive a stem portion of the wine glass; and

a rigid cover insertable onto the base structure and being tall enough to enclose the wine glass, the cover including a rigid vertical wall structure and a top, the wall structure including a securing device connectable to the rigid base structure for securing the rigid cover to the rigid base structure, the cover also including a manual carrying handle.

2. The wine caddy according to claim 1 wherein the rigid base structure further includes rigid spacer strips disposed between the upper and lower rigid parts to maintain the space.

3. The wine caddy according to claim 1 wherein the upper part comprises a plurality of slots, adjacent slots being separated by a spacer, wherein the slots are spaced far enough apart to prevent wine glasses disposed in respective slots from making contact with one another.

4. The wine glass caddy according to claim 3 wherein the upper part comprises opposing peripheral edges, and a plurality of slots extending from each of the peripheral edges.

5. The wine glass caddy according to claim 3 further including a separator configured to be insertable between wine glasses.

6. The wine glass caddy according to claim 1 wherein compressible cushioning is disposed in the space and arranged to contact base portions of the wine glasses.

7. The wine glass caddy according to claim 6 wherein the cushioning material is disposed on a top surface of the lower part.

8. The wine glass caddy according to claim 6 wherein the cushioning material is disposed on an underside of the upper part.

9. The wine glass caddy according to claim 1 wherein a lowermost edge of the cover's wall structure is coplanar with an underside of the lower part.

10. A method of transporting wine glasses, the method employing a rigid base structure and a rigid cover, the base structure comprising upper and lower rigid parts spaced vertically apart to form a vertically short space therebetween, the upper part including at least one slot therein extending from a peripheral edge of the upper part, the slot being formed completely vertically through the upper part so that the slot communicates with the space, wherein the slot and the space are open at a peripheral edge of the base structure, the space being sufficiently vertically tall to receive a base portion of a wine glass, and the slot being wide enough to receive a stem portion of the wine glass, a rigid cover being insertable onto the base structure and tall enough to enclose the wine glasses, the cover including a rigid vertical wall structure and a top, the wall structure including a securing device connectable to the base structure for securing the rigid cover to the rigid base structure, the cover also including a carrying handle, the method comprising:

A) sliding at least one wine glass into the base structure by inserting a base of the wine glass into the space, with a stem of the wine glass extending upwardly through the slot,

B) inserting the cover onto the base to completely enclose the at least one wine glass,

C) securing the cover to the base structure, and

D) manually transporting the wine caddy by the handle.

11. The method according to claim 10 wherein the base structure includes a plurality of slots, and a plurality of wine glasses are slid into the base structure in step A, the method further including preventing the wine glasses from touching one another.