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[56]

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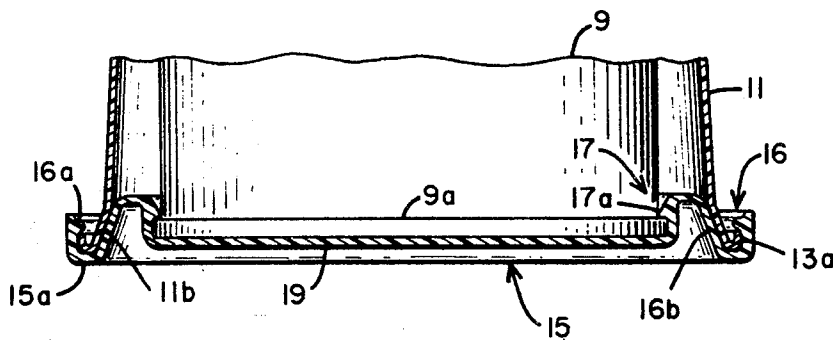
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[54] **DISPLAY AND SHIPPING CONTAINERS**
3 Claims, 3 Drawing Figs.

[52] U.S. Cl..... **206/45.34,**
 206/45.14, 220/60, 220/69
 [51] Int. Cl..... **B65d 25/00**
 [50] Field of Search..... **312/284;**
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ABSTRACT: A display and shipping container having a transparent housing that forms locking engagement with a base member having an inner product engaging ring for holding the product securely within the container.



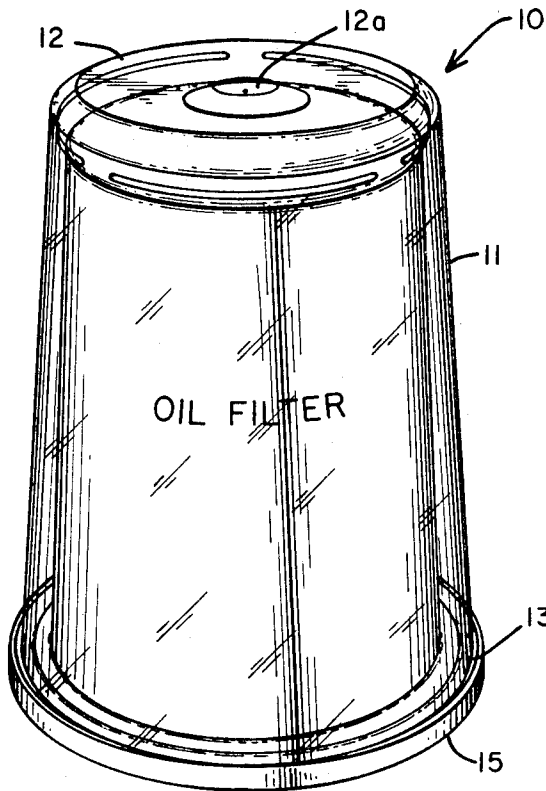


Fig. 1

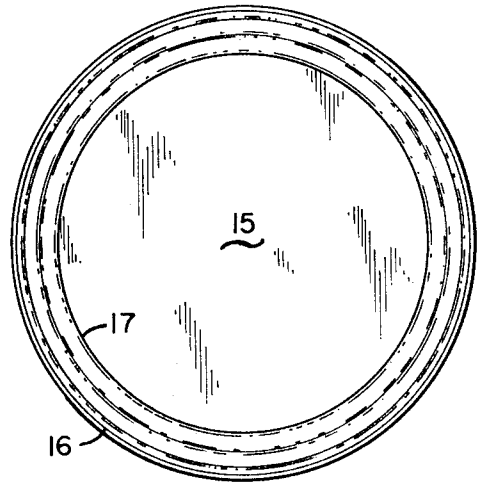


Fig. 3

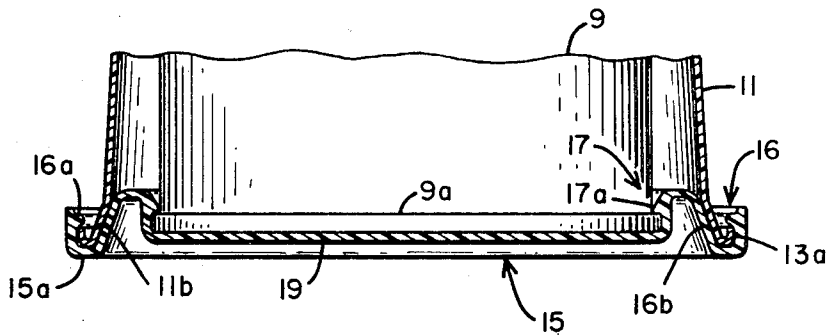


Fig. 2

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DISPLAY AND SHIPPING CONTAINERS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates generally to display and shipping containers and, more specifically to transparent, multipurpose display and shipping containers.

2. Description of the Prior Art

In today's competitive market, there is a need for an attractive display and shipping container that protects the product during shipping and permits the customer to visually examine the product without opening the container. Some examples of typical prior art containers are opaque cardboard boxes that are suitable for holding and shipping the product but these opaque boxes do not readily permit a person to visually inspect the product without opening the box. These opaque cardboard boxes are also undesirable from a retailer's standpoint as oftentimes unscrupulous customers will switch a high priced item from a container marked with a high price into a container marked with a low price in an attempt to pay the low price for the higher priced item. Also, the unsuspecting customer who purchases the high priced item and then upon getting home discovers a cheaper priced item in the container is usually, to say the least, in an unhappy mood.

A second type of container comprises a transparent cellophanelike material which is wrapped around the product; however, this does not give the desired rigidity nor does it give the desired ruggedness required of a container used in shipping, although it allows a customer to visually inspect the product before he purchases the item. This type of container also eliminates the switching of products by unscrupulous customers as the checkout clerks can readily determine if an item has been transferred from its original container by visual inspection of the container.

A third type of prior art container comprises a cardboard container having a transparent window to allow the customer to view the product without taking it out of the box before he purchases it. This has the added feature of protecting the product during shipping and also allowing the customer to visually inspect the product to make sure it is the proper product he is purchasing.

Obviously, these are only three of the many varieties of containers that are available on the market today but they illustrate some of the general considerations and the more important problems in shipping and displaying of the products.

It is well known that the appearance of a particular product oftentimes motivates the customer to purchase it. Oftentimes, in today's competitive market, there are products of fairly equal quality located side-by-side on the retailer's shelf. If the appearance of the container is pleasing or if there is some utility or additional feature of the container it will oftentimes induce the customer to purchase the item.

The present invention comprises an improvement over these prior art containers and offers a prospective customer this added inducement to purchase the product shown within the container. The container comprises a transparent plastic housing having a top sealed end and a lower open end for forming locking or mechanical engagement with a cylindrical base member. The base member has an inner ring or engaging member that attaches to the base of the product. The inducement to the customer to purchase the item, aside from appearance, is that this transparent housing can be reused as a container for various articles. Typically, one of the containers would be used to hold a spin-on oil filter or the like. This is by way of illustration only and no limitation is intended thereto.

The present invention allows a customer to visually inspect the product while still in the container to make sure that he has the proper product. In addition, it makes it difficult if not impossible for an unscrupulous customer to switch high priced items into a container marked with a lower price and walk off with the expensive item while paying the lower price marked on the container. As the transparent container is made from a

plastic material it is fairly rigid and is reusable for a utility container for small articles such as bolts, nuts, screws, nails, etc., or even food. The transparency of the container housing is advantageous when used as a utility container on a workbench as one can readily determine what is in the container without having to empty the container. This reusable feature of the transparent container acts as an added inducement for the customer to purchase the product. Also, if a customer is not interested in reusing the plastic container as a utility container, he can use it to dispose of the old product. For example, if the container is used with an oil filter, the customer can place the dirty used oil filter in the container and dispose of both the container and the oil filter. This eliminates the problem of handling the messy and dirty filter. In order to hold the product securely within the container, the base member contains a locking member that engages the bottom of the product or the base of the product. This locking member is recessed in the base member so as not to interfere with the use of the base member as a cover for the container when it is used as a utility container.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Briefly, the present invention is a reusable display and shipping container comprising a transparent housing member and a base member that forms locking engagement with the transparent housing and also with the base of a product within the container.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the transparent display and shipping container of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view showing the inner and outer locking members of the housing and base members; and

FIG. 3 is a top view of the base member.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring to FIG. 1, reference numeral 10 generally designates a display and shipping container for an oil filter 9 comprising a hollow transparent housing member 11 having a sealed flat top 12 and an open circular bottom 13 for forming locking engagement with a cylindrical base member 15. Housing member 11 can be made from a variety of transparent materials but a polystyrene plastic is preferred because of the combination of its flexibility and rigidity which make it suitable for forming locking engagement with base member 15. To use container 10 as a utility container, top 12 of housing member 11 is provided with a flat surface to allow the container to sit erect when it is turned upside down. Located in top 12 of housing member 11 is a dimple 12a that is a result of the molding process. Dimple 12a extending inward to outside surface 12 is flat allowing the container to sit upright without tipping or rocking.

FIG. 2 and 3 more clearly show cylindrical base member 15 having interlocking means 16 and a product engaging and securing means 17. Interlocking means 16 comprises an annular locking ridge or bead 16a that extends around base member 15 to form a locking engagement with an annular ridge 13a. Base member 15 also contains an annular tapered section 11b of housing number 11 that forms a matching sealing relationship with tapered section 16b and base member 15. Typically, base member 15 is made from a pliable yet fairly rigid opaque material such as polyethylene, although this is given by way of example only and no limitation is intended thereto.

Located on the inner portion of base member 15 is a second annular bead 17a for forming an interlocking relationship with an annular ridge 9a on oil filter 9. The center of base member 15 is raised so as to allow annular edge 15a to form an abutting relationship with a shelf or the like and thus hold container 10 in an upright position.

FIG. 2 shows annular bead 17a in interlocking relationship with annular bead 9a on oil filter 9. While annular ridge 17a is

readily suitable for engaging and holding filter 9 in an upright centered position within container 11, it is not limited to holding oil filters. By incorporating a base and annular ridge such as on oil filter 9 into a product base, it allows one to mount the product in base member 15. For example, a toy, a work tool, or the like, could be mounted on bases and then installed in base member 15.

The material in base member 15 is rather pliable to allow one to bend annular ridge 17a over ridge 9a without much difficulty, yet it has a certain amount of rigidity so as to hold filter 9 and annular edge 9a securely centered within base member 15. Similarly, the outer annular bead 16a can be bent over annular ridge 13a to securely hold transparent member 11 in interlocking relationship with base member 15.

In the event that the items should receive considerable buffeting and shaking during transit, a spacing pad can be inserted between the underside of flat top 12 and the top side of oil filter 9 to hold the product from moving within the container. This can be either left in the container or removed when the product is placed on the shelf. A typical example of material that could be inserted would be foam rubber or the like which acts as a shock absorber and also has enough rigidity to hold the article within the container.

While transparent housing 11 is shown as being a transparent hollow frustum, no limitation is intended thereto as other geometric configurations could also be used.

I claim:

1. An improved container suitable for multiple products and multiple uses including shipping products, displaying products and utility storage of products, said container comprising: a housing member for placing around a product; said housing member having a first end, a second end, and sidewalls formed from a transparent material to enable the product within said housing member to be seen without removing said housing member from therearound; a further member located on said first end of said housing member, said further member forming integral engagement with said walls, said further member and said sidewalls coacting to produce a protective covering for a product, said further member having a surface engaging

section for holding said housing member in a stable position when said surface engaging section of said further member is placed on a surface adapted to hold a container, said second end of said housing member having an opening located therein to allow said housing member to be placed in a protective position over a product, said second end of said housing member having a circumferential base-engaging member comprising an annular bead for forming interlocking relationship with a pliable base member;

a pliable base member, said pliable base member having a circumferential housing member-engaging section, said housing-member-engaging section operable to form an interlocking relationship with said base engaging member located on said second end of said housing member to thereby prevent said housing member from becoming separated from said pliable base member during use of said container to ship products, said pliable base member further having a circumferential product-engaging member, said product-engaging member further operable for performing interlocking relationship with a product, said product-engaging member further usable for holding a product in a predetermined orientation with said housing member to thereby permit inspection of a product, said product-engaging member having circumferential means for forming frictional engagement with the product to enable a product contained therein to maintain orientation of the product in a predetermined direction, said pliable base member further having lip means for removing said base member from said housing to thereby allow the base member to be operable for use as a closure top when said container is used as a utility bin.

2. The invention as described in claim 1 wherein said product-engaging member includes an annular bead for engaging the base of a product.

3. The invention as described in claim 2 wherein said base member and said product-engaging member are substantially circular in shape.

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