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(54) **CONTAINER**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

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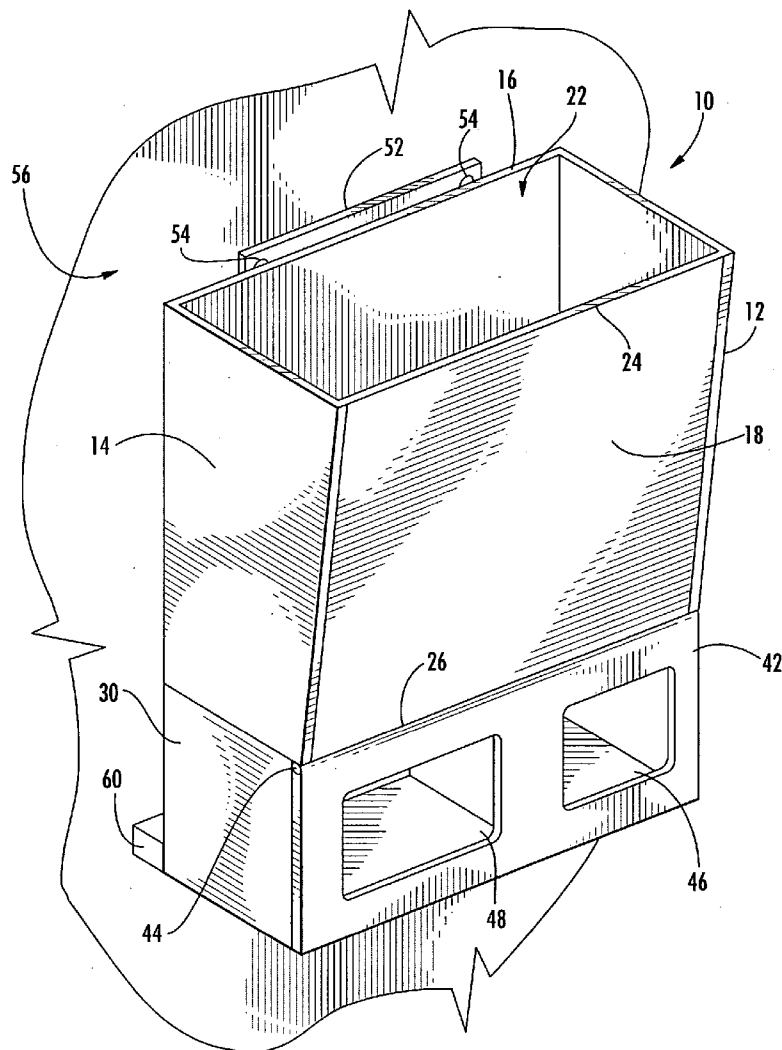
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A container is disclosed that may include a generally rectangular main housing having two parallel sides, a back, a front, and a bottom. A first horizontal base panel is connected with an inside surface of each of the two parallel sides. A portion of the two parallel sides, a portion of the back, the front and an upper surface of the horizontal base panel define an upper compartment having an open top. A vertical divider may be connected with a lower surface of the horizontal base panel and an inside surface of the bottom. A right inner side of the parallel sides, a portion of the back, a right surface of the vertical divider and a portion of the upper surface of the bottom define a lower right compartment having a first frontal opening. A left inner side of the parallel sides, a portion of the back, a left surface of the vertical divider and a portion of the upper surface of the bottom define a lower left compartment having a second frontal opening. A flap lid is connected with a front edge of each respective parallel side.



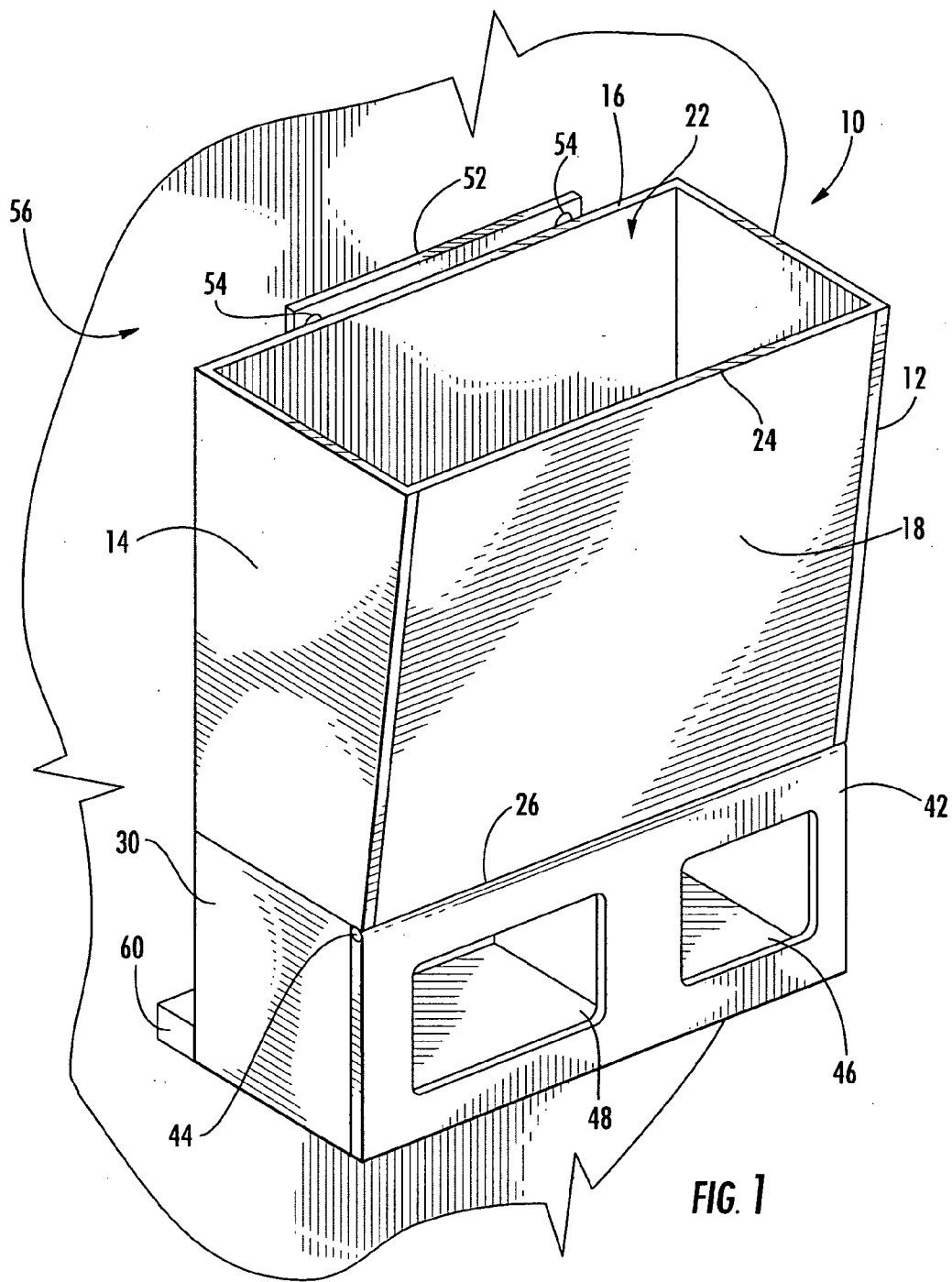
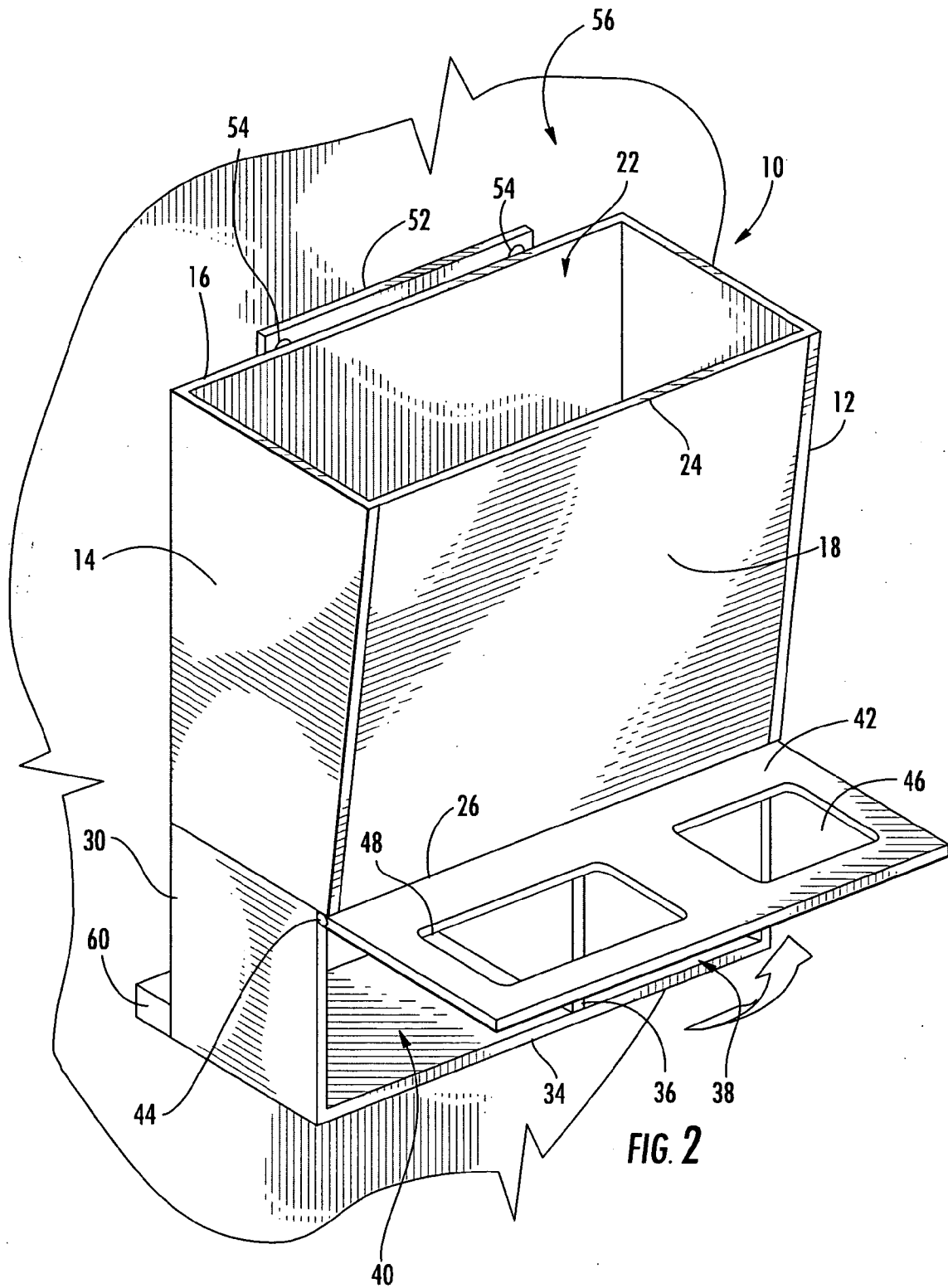


FIG. 1



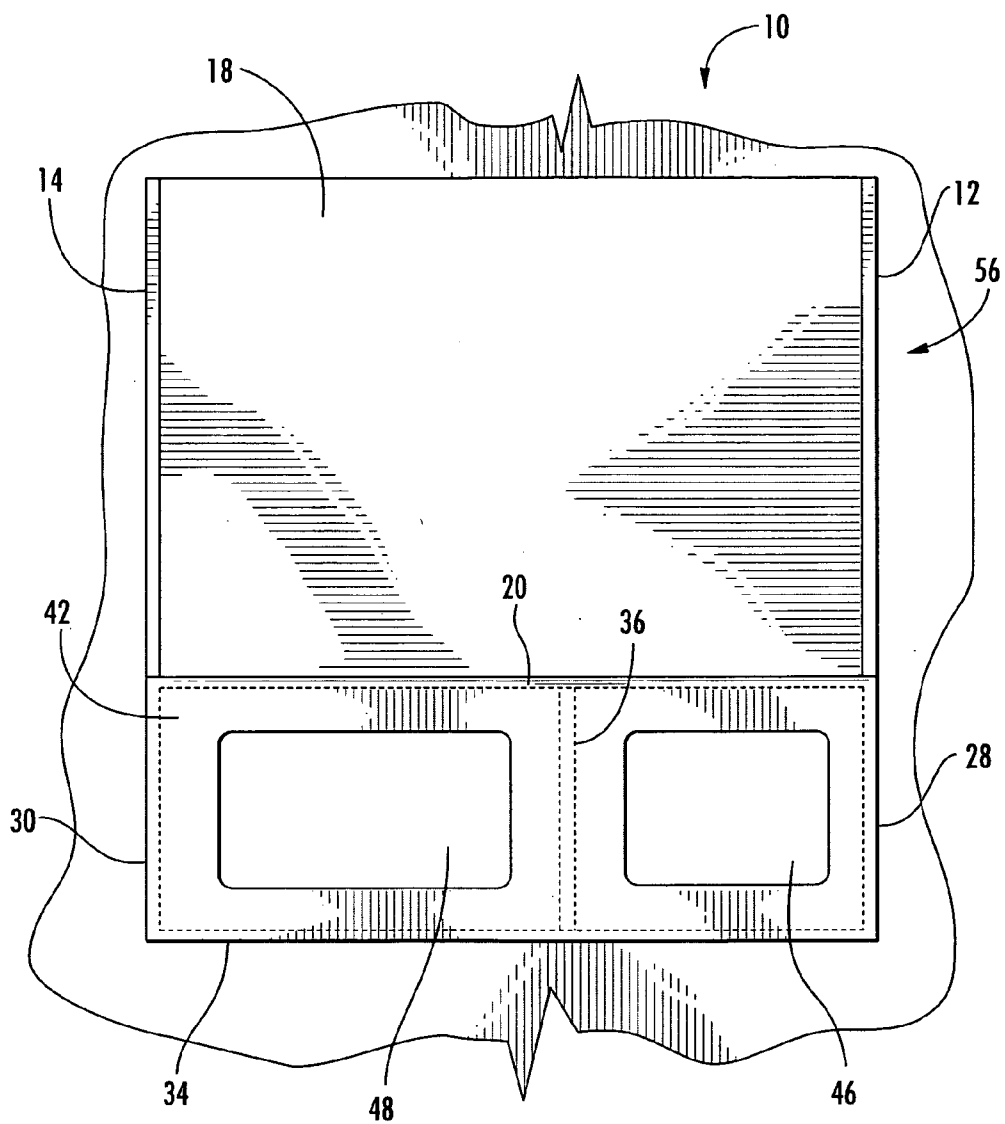


FIG. 3

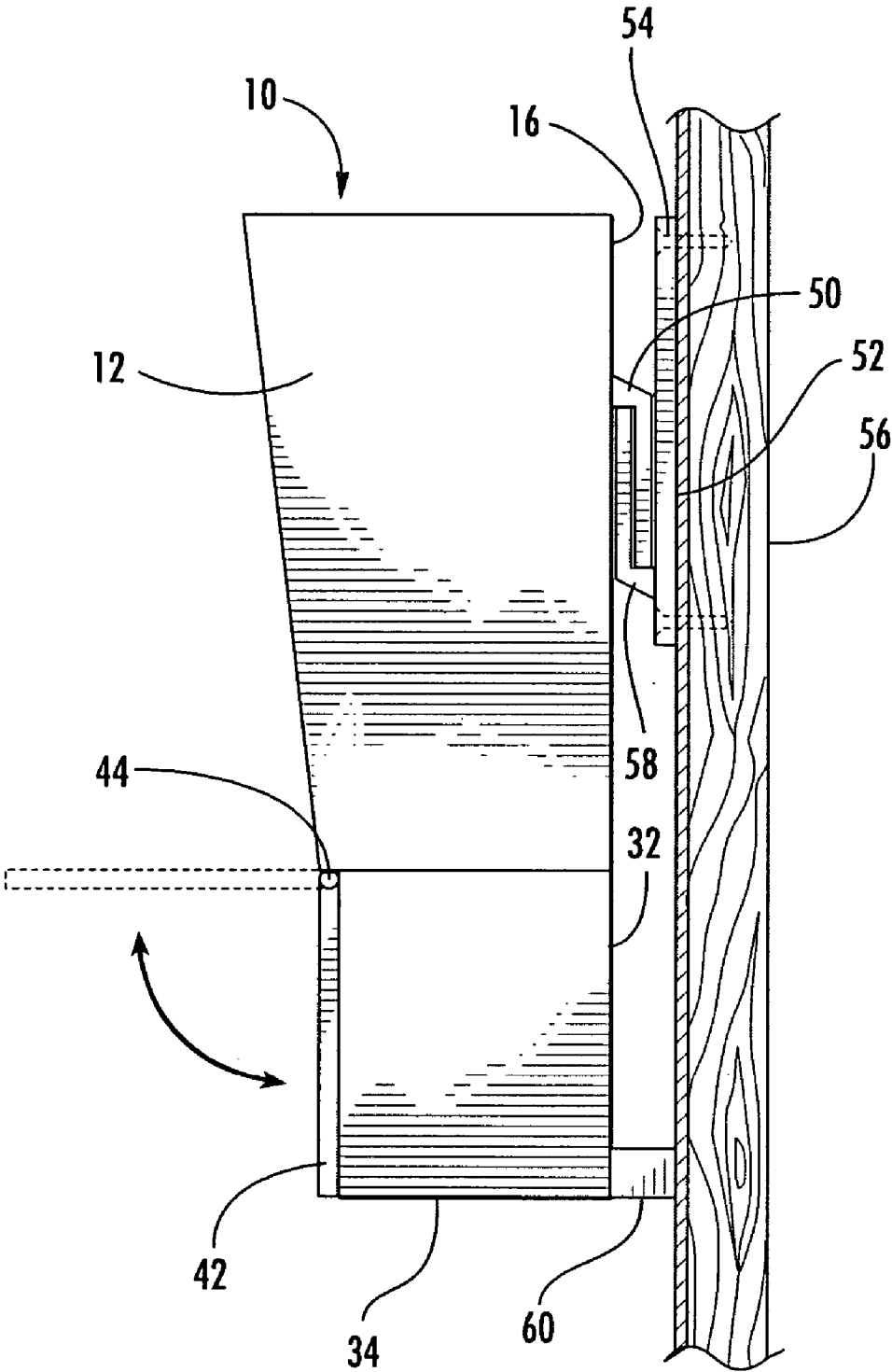


FIG. 4

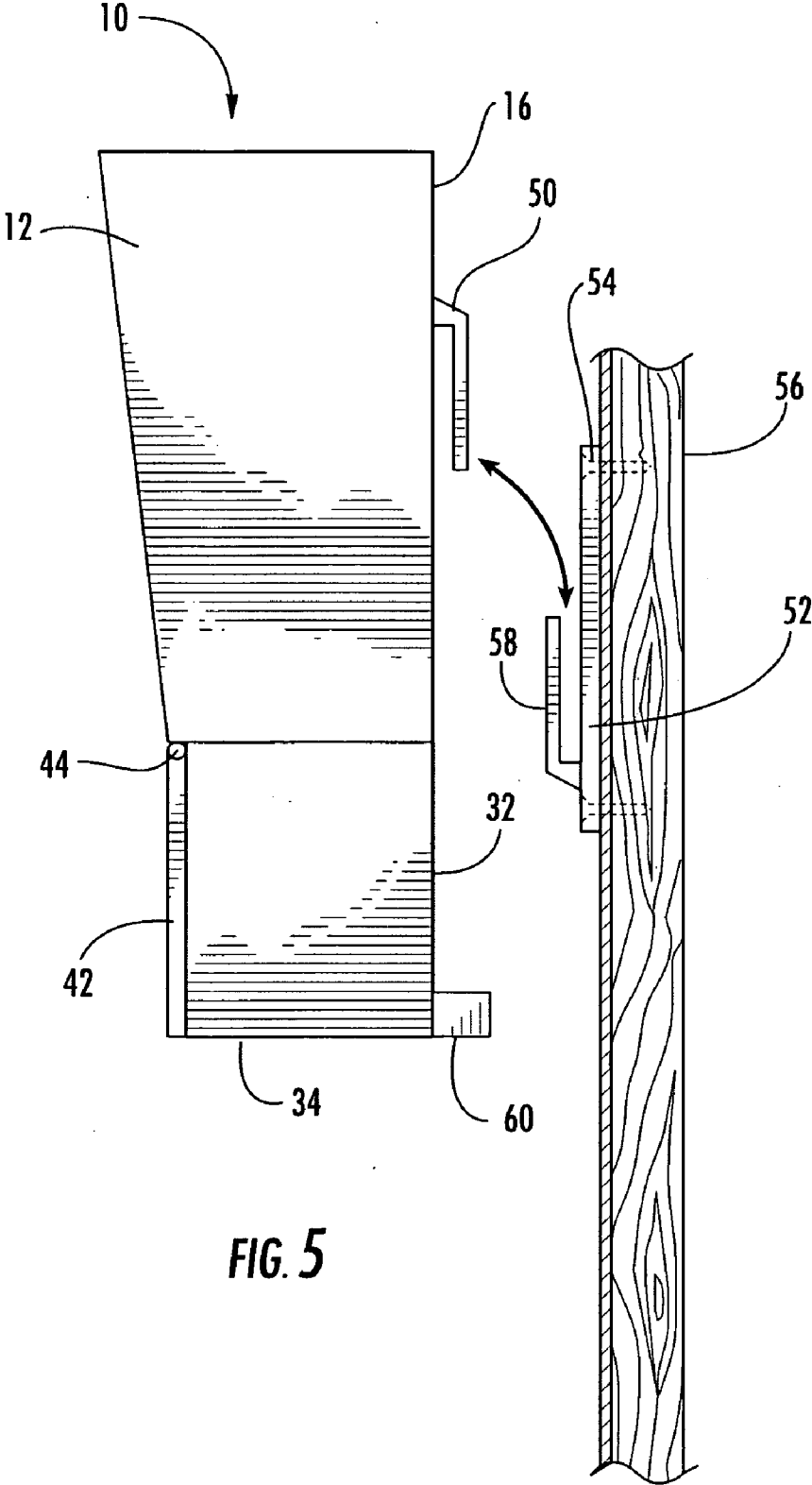
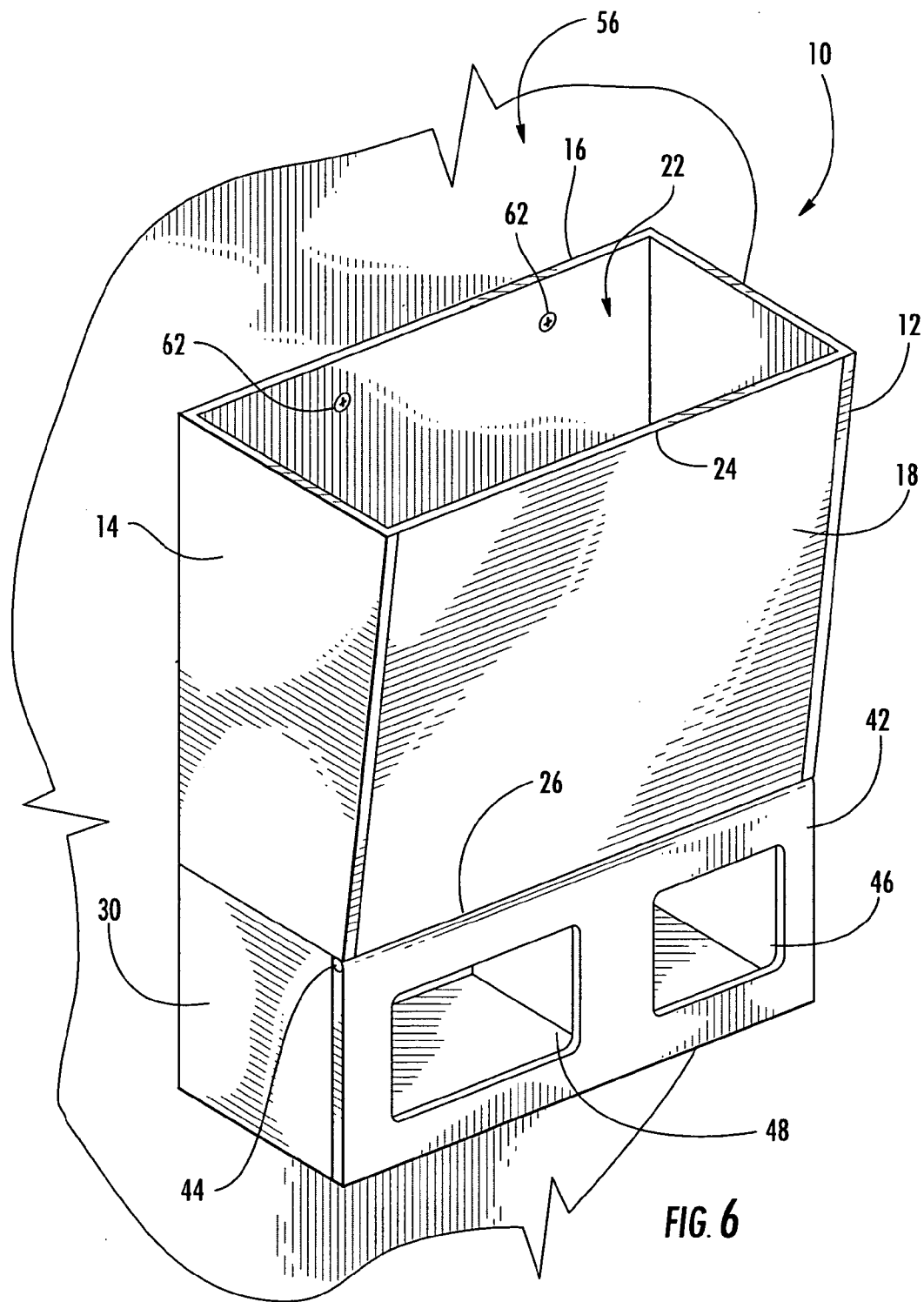


FIG. 5



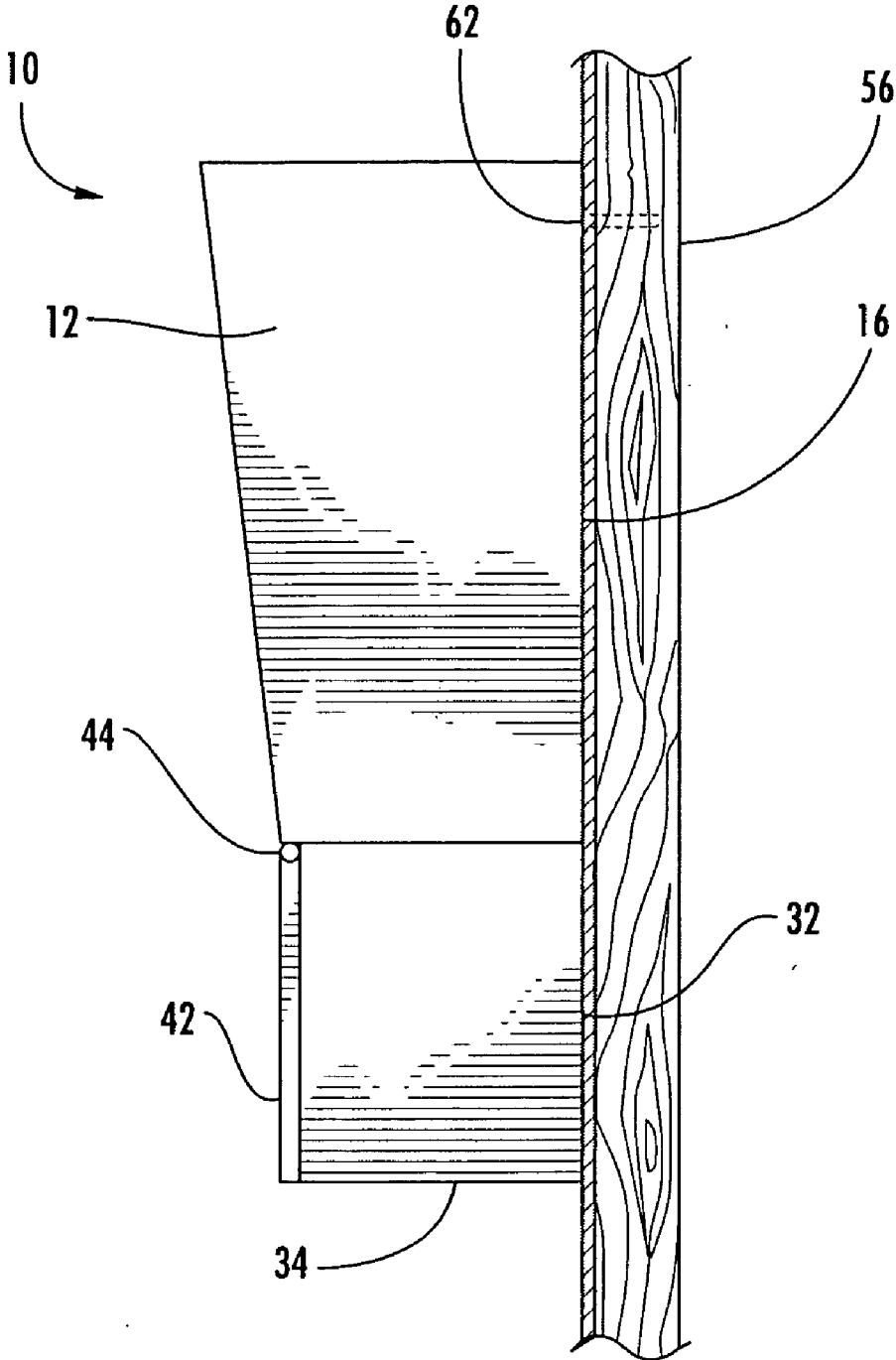


FIG. 7

CONTAINER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Technical Field

[0002] The present invention relates generally to containers and more particularly, to a laundry debris container that includes several compartments serving a variety of needs.

[0003] 2. Related Art

[0004] Laundry rooms and facilities often have the need for storing disposable refuse as well as a need for storing various types of laundry supplies, such as dryer sheets and disposable bags to name a few. Often these items are placed on shelves where they may become hidden or out of sight and trash containers may simply sit on the floor in the laundry room thereby often taking up valuable floor space. Smaller laundry rooms are limited in space, leaving no room at all for floor trash cans. The present invention offers the solution of a wall mountable trash can that also serves as a storage device. This unit will help organize laundry rooms and increase the likelihood that individuals will clean dryer filters regularly. This decreases the possibility of household mishaps, such as fires and machine damaging, due to filters being clogged. This container makes it more convenient to clean the filter and properly dispose of laundry room debris.

[0005] As set forth above, a need exists for an economical, efficient and practical compartmentalized laundry container that will allow for the storage of refuse and laundry supplies.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] A first embodiment of the present invention discloses a container that may be used for storing refuse, laundry supplies and trash bags. The container comprises a generally rectangular main housing that may have two parallel sides, a back, a front, and a bottom. A horizontal base panel may be connected with an inside surface of each of the two parallel sides. A portion of the two parallel sides, a portion of the back, the front and an upper surface of the horizontal base panel may define an upper compartment or enclosure having an open top. The upper compartment of the container may be used to store refuse or debris.

[0007] A vertical divider may be connected with a lower surface of the horizontal base panel and an upper surface of the bottom. A right inner side surface of the parallel sides, a first portion of the lower surface of the horizontal base panel, a first portion of the back, a right inside surface of the vertical divider and a first portion of an upper surface of the bottom may define a lower right compartment having a first frontal opening. A left inner side surface of the parallel sides, a second portion of the lower surface of the horizontal base panel, a second portion of the back, a left inside surface of the vertical divider and a second portion of the upper surface of the bottom may define a lower left compartment having a second frontal opening. A flap lid may be connected with a front edge of each respective parallel side. The flap lid may include at least two apertures for providing access to the lower right compartment and the lower left compartment.

[0008] The flap lid may be hingedly connected with a front edge of each respective parallel side such that the flap lid is movable between an open position and a closed position. A connector may be located on an upper outside surface of the

back. The connector may comprise an inverted L-shaped connector or bracket. A mounting bracket having a support may also be included as part of the container. The connector of the housing may fit within the support so that the main housing is removably connected with the mounting bracket. The support of the mounting bracket may comprise an L-shaped support that may or may not be enclosed on the sides. In an alternative embodiment, the container may include a plurality of apertures located in the back for connecting or mounting the generally rectangular main housing directly to a support structure, such as a wall.

[0009] Another embodiment of the present invention discloses a container assembly. The container assembly may comprise an upper enclosure having a right side wall, a left side wall, a back, a first horizontal base panel and a front. The right side wall and the left side wall may run parallel in a vertical plane with each other. The right side wall and the left side wall may include a lower front edge portion that may be located at a front edge of the first horizontal base panel that extends upwardly and outwardly away from the horizontal base panel at a predetermined angle. As a result, a larger opening is formed at a top edge of the upper enclosure in relation to the size of the first horizontal base panel, thereby defining a vertical facing open compartment.

[0010] The container assembly may also include a lower enclosure comprising a portion of the right and left side walls, a portion of the back, the first horizontal base panel, a second horizontal base panel and a vertical divider. The right side wall, a portion of the first horizontal base panel, the divider and a portion of the second horizontal base panel define a first horizontal or front facing open compartment. The left side wall, a second portion of the first horizontal base panel, the divider and a second portion of the second horizontal base panel define a second horizontal or front facing open compartment.

[0011] A flap lid may be connected by a hinge to an outer edge of the right side wall and the left side wall. The flap lid is operable to be positioned between an open position and a closed position. The flap lid may include a first aperture positioned to provide a first access opening to the first horizontal facing open compartment and a second opening positioned to provide a second access opening to the second horizontal facing open compartment.

[0012] A first connection member may be located towards an upper outer edge of the back. The container assembly may also include a mounting bracket that is capable of being connected to a support structure. The mounting bracket may include a second connection member and the first connection member may be removably connected with the second connection member so that the container assembly may be removably connected with the support structure.

[0013] The first connection member of the container assembly may comprise an inverted L-shaped bracket that extends outwardly and downwardly in relation to the back. The second connection member may comprise an L-shaped bracket that may be connected with the mounting bracket and defines an upwardly facing cavity. A downward facing vertical portion of the inverted L-shaped bracket may be sized to be removably placed within the upwardly facing cavity. A spacer may be located towards a lower edge of the back having a thickness approximately equal to the first connection member, the second connection member and the

mounting bracket. The spacer keeps the container assembly approximately parallel with the support structure to which it is mounted. The flap lid may form a friction fit connection with a portion of the lower enclosure when the flap lid is in the closed position.

[0014] Yet another embodiment of the present invention discloses a container assembly that may be mounted directly to a support structure or wall. The container assembly may include an upper enclosure having a right side wall, a left side wall, a back, a first horizontal base panel and a front. The right side wall and the left side wall may be parallel in relation to one another. The right side wall and the left side wall may include a lower front edge portion that may be located at a front edge of the first horizontal base panel that extends upwardly and outwardly away from the horizontal base panel at a predetermined angle such that a larger opening is formed at a top edge of the upper enclosure in relation to the size of the first horizontal base panel.

[0015] The container assembly may also include a lower enclosure including a portion of the right and left side walls, a portion of the back, the first horizontal base panel, a second horizontal base panel and a vertical divider. The right side wall, a portion of the first horizontal base panel, the divider and a portion of the second horizontal base panel may define a first horizontal open facing compartment. The left side wall, a second portion of the first horizontal base panel, the divider and a second portion of the second horizontal base panel may define a second horizontal open facing compartment.

[0016] A flap lid may be connected by a hinge to an outer edge of the right side wall and the left side wall. The flap lid is operable to be positioned between an open position and a closed position. The flap lid may include a first aperture positioned to provide a first access opening to the first horizontally facing compartment and a second opening positioned to provide a second access opening to the second horizontal facing compartment. The back of the container assembly disclosed in this embodiment may include a plurality of connection apertures and means for mounting the upper and lower enclosure to a support structure.

[0017] Other systems, methods, features and advantages of the invention will be, or will become apparent to one with skill in the art upon examination of the following figures and detailed description. It is intended that all such additional systems, methods, features and advantages be included within this description, be within the scope of the invention, and be protected by the following claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0018] The components in the figures are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead being placed upon illustrating the principles of the invention. Moreover, in the figures, like reference numerals designate corresponding parts throughout the different views.

[0019] **FIG. 1** is a perspective view of a container.

[0020] **FIG. 2** is a perspective view of the container depicted in **FIG. 1** with a flap lid in an open position.

[0021] **FIG. 3** is a front view of the container illustrated in **FIGS. 1 and 2**.

[0022] **FIG. 4** is a side view of the container mounted on a wall with a mounting bracket.

[0023] **FIG. 5** is a side view depicting how the container may be removably mounted to the wall using the mounting bracket.

[0024] **FIG. 6** illustrates another embodiment of a container that may be fastened directly to a wall.

[0025] **FIG. 7** is a side view of the container illustrated in **FIG. 6**.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENTLY PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0026] Referring to **FIGS. 1-3**, a container **10** is disclosed that may be used to hold refuse, dirty laundry, bags, and various types of laundry supplies (e.g.—dryer sheets). The components illustrated throughout the figures are not necessarily depicted to scale and it should be noted that the container **10** may be manufactured in a variety of sizes. The container **10** may include an upper right side **12**, an upper left side **14**, an upper back **16**, an upper front **18** and a horizontal base panel **20** that define an upper compartment **22**. The top portion of the upper compartment **22** is open so that debris, such as dirty laundry or refuse, may be stored in the upper compartment **22**.

[0027] As illustrated in **FIGS. 1 and 2**, the upper right and left sides **12, 14** of the container **10** extend upwardly and outwardly at a predetermined angle in relation to the upper back **16**. As such, the upper portion of the upper compartment **22** is larger in size than the lower portion of the upper compartment **22**. The volume or storage capacity of the upper compartment **22** steadily increases from the bottom portion to the top portion. As depicted in **FIGS. 1 and 2**, an upper front edge **24** of the upper compartment **22** protrudes outwardly further than a lower front edge **26** thereby allowing the upper storage compartment **22** to increase in storage capacity from bottom to top.

[0028] Referring to **FIGS. 1-5**, the container **10** may also include a lower right side **28**, a lower left side **30**, a lower back **32** and a bottom **34**. The upper right and upper left sides **12, 14** and the lower right and left sides **28, 30** may be formed as one piece along with the upper back **16** and the lower back **32**. The container **10** may also include a vertical divider **36** connected vertically between the horizontal base panel **20** and the bottom **34**. The lower right side **28**, a portion of the horizontal base panel **20**, a portion of the bottom **34** and the right side of the vertical divider **36** define a first or right side lower compartment **38**. The lower left side **30**, a portion of the horizontal base panel **20**, a portion of the bottom **34** and the left side of the vertical divider **36** define a second or left side lower compartment **40**. The right and left side lower compartments **38, 40** are preferentially rectangular in shape and may be sized by placement of the vertical divider **36**. The right and left side lower compartments **38, 40** have horizontal openings as opposed to the upwardly faced opening of the upper compartment **22**.

[0029] The container **10** may also include a flap lid **42** that may be connected with the outer front edges of the right and left lower sides **28, 30**. The outer right and left edges of the flap lid **42** may include a hinge mechanism **44** that allows the flap lid **42** to move between an open and closed position. The hinge mechanism **44** allows the flap lid **42** to be movably

connected with the upper outer edges of the right and left lower sides **28, 30** at approximately the outer edge of the horizontal base panel **20**. Several different types of hinges may be used in the present invention and for the purpose of the present invention it is important to note that the hinge mechanism **44** connects the flap lid **42** to the container **10** and allows the flap lid **42** to move between open and closed positions. The flap lid **42** may also form a friction fit connection with the right and left lower compartments **38, 40** when the flap lid **42** is in the closed position.

[0030] The flap lid **42** may also include a right side aperture or cut out **46** and a left side aperture or cut out **48**. The right and left side apertures **46, 48** may be generally rectangular in shape and may vary in size and location. The right and left side apertures **46, 48** allow individuals to gain access to the contents that may be stored in the right and left lower compartments **38, 40**. In some embodiments of the present invention, the right and left lower compartments **38, 40** may be used to store disposable boxes containing items such as trash bags and laundry dryer sheets. When the trash bags or dryer sheets run out, the user lifts up the flap lid **42** and removes the empty box from either the right or left lower compartment **38, 40** and then replaces it with a full box.

[0031] Referring to **FIGS. 4 and 5**, the upper back **16** may also include an inverted L-shaped connector or bracket **50**. The inverted L-shaped connector **50** may be connected with the upper back **16** or may be molded as part of the upper back **16**. A mounting bracket **52** may also be part of the container **10**. The mounting bracket **52** may include a plurality of apertures **54** that allow the mounting bracket **52** to be secured to a support structure or wall **56**. The mounting bracket **52** may be secured to the support structure **56** using several different types of connection devices such as bolts, screws, and so forth. The mounting bracket **52** may also include an L-shaped support **58** that may be connected with the mounting bracket **52** or may be molded as part of the mounting bracket **52**.

[0032] The inverted L-shaped connector **50** mates with or fits within the L-shaped support bracket **58** of the mounting bracket **52** when the container **10** is mounted to the support structure **56**. The inverted L-shaped connector **50** and the L-shaped support bracket **58** allow the container **10** to be removably mounted to the support structure **56**. The support bracket **58** may also be closed on the sides instead of open, as illustrated in **FIGS. 4 and 5**, thereby forming an enclosed cavity in which the inverted L-shaped connector **50** may fit. For the purpose of the present invention, it is important to note that the container **10** may be removably mounted to the wall **56** using several different types of connection mechanisms. A spacer **60** may be connected with a portion of the lower back **32** or may be molded as part of the lower back **32**. The spacer **60** has a thickness such that the container **10**, when mounted on the support structure **56**, is approximately level along its vertical axis. In other words, the spacer **60** has a thickness equal to the combined thickness of the inverted L-shaped connector **50**, the L-shaped support bracket **58** and the mounting bracket **52**.

[0033] Referring to **FIGS. 6 and 7**, another embodiment of the present invention discloses a container **10** that may be mounted directly to the support structure **56**. As such, in this embodiment, the container **10** is not removably connected

with the support structure **56** as with the previously disclosed embodiment. The container **10** may include a plurality of apertures **62** that allow connection devices such as screws, bolts and so forth to be used to mount the container **10** directly to the support structure **56**. All other features of the container **10** remain the same in this embodiment as fully set forth and described above in regards to the previous embodiment.

[0034] The container **10** disclosed herein may be manufactured from several different types of materials such as plastic or wood, but is preferentially manufactured from a plastic or polymer based material. In addition, the container **10** may be manufactured as three or four individual pieces or may be manufactured as several different pieces that may be connected or assembled together to form the container **10**. For example, the container **10** may be manufactured and assembled as three pieces (main body, flap lid and mounting bracket) or it may be manufactured and assembled from a plurality of individual pieces that are connected together using conventional connection devices during assembly. Those skilled in the art of plastics would recognize that various manufacturing variations exist and may be taken advantage of by the present invention.

[0035] While the present invention has been described with reference to specific exemplary embodiments, it will be evident that various modifications and changes may be made to these embodiments without departing from the broader spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the claims. Accordingly, the specification and drawings are to be regarded in an illustrative rather than a restrictive sense.

What is claimed is:

1. A container, comprising:

- a generally rectangular main housing comprising two parallel sides, a back, a front, and a bottom;
- a horizontal base panel connected with an inside surface of each of said two parallel sides, wherein a portion of said two parallel sides, a portion of said back, said front and an upper surface of said horizontal base panel define an upper compartment having a vertically facing open top;
- a vertical divider connected with a lower surface of said horizontal base panel and an upper surface of said bottom, wherein a right inner side surface of said parallel sides, a first portion of said lower surface of said horizontal base panel, a first portion of said back, a right side surface of said vertical divider and a first portion of an upper surface of said bottom define a lower right compartment having a first frontal opening, wherein a left inner side surface of said parallel sides, a second portion of said lower surface of said horizontal base panel, a second portion of said back, a left side surface of said vertical divider and a second portion of said upper surface of said bottom define a lower left compartment having a second frontal opening; and
- a flap lid connected with a front edge of each respective parallel side, wherein said flap lid includes at least two apertures for providing access to said lower right compartment and said lower left compartment.

2. The container of claim 1, wherein said flap lid is hingedly connected with said front edge of each respective

parallel side such that said flap lid may move between an open position and a closed position.

3. The container of claim 1, further comprising a connector located on an upper outside surface of said back.

4. The container of claim 3, wherein said connector comprises an inverted L-shaped bracket.

5. The container of claim 3, further comprising a mounting bracket having a support, wherein said connector fits within said support such that said generally rectangular main housing may be removably connected with said mounting bracket.

6. The container of claim 5, wherein said support comprises an L-shaped bracket.

7. The container of claim 1, further comprising a means for removably attaching said generally rectangular main housing to a support structure.

8. The container of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of apertures located in said back for connecting said generally rectangular main housing to a support structure.

9. A container assembly, comprising:

an upper enclosure comprising a right side wall, a left side wall, a back, a first horizontal base panel and a front, wherein said right side wall and said left side wall are parallel, wherein said right side wall and said left side wall include a lower front edge portion located at a front edge of said first horizontal base panel that extends upwardly and outwardly away from said horizontal base panel at a predetermined angle such that a larger opening is formed at a top edge of said upper enclosure in relation to a size of said first horizontal base panel thereby defining a vertical facing open compartment;

a lower enclosure comprising said right side wall, said left side wall, said back, said first horizontal base panel, a second horizontal base panel and a vertical divider, wherein said right side wall, a portion of said first horizontal base panel, said divider and a portion of said second horizontal base panel define a first horizontal facing compartment, wherein said left side wall, a second portion of said first horizontal base panel, said divider and a second portion of said second horizontal base panel define a second horizontal facing compartment;

a flap lid connected by a hinge to an outer edge of said right side wall and said left side wall, wherein said flap lid is operable to be positioned between an open position and a closed position, wherein said flap lid includes a first aperture positioned to provide a first access opening to said first horizontal facing compartment and a second opening positioned to provide a second access opening to said second horizontal facing compartment;

a first connection member located towards an upper outer edge of said back; and

a mounting bracket capable of being connected to a support structure, wherein said mounting bracket includes a second connection member, wherein said

first connection member is capable of being removably connected with said second connection member.

10. The container assembly of claim 9, wherein said first connection member comprises an inverted L-shaped bracket that extends outwardly and downwardly in relation to said back.

11. The container assembly of claim 10, wherein said second connection member comprises an L-shaped bracket connected with said mounting bracket that defines an upwardly facing cavity, wherein a downwardly facing vertical portion of said inverted L-shaped bracket is sized to be removably placed within said upwardly facing cavity.

12. The container assembly of claim 9, further comprising a spacer located towards a lower edge of said back having a thickness approximately equal to a combined thickness of said first connection member, said second connection member and said mounting bracket.

13. The container assembly of claim 9, wherein said flap lid forms a friction fit connection with a portion of said lower enclosure when said flap lid is in said closed position.

14. A container assembly, comprising:

an upper enclosure comprising a right side wall, a left side wall, a back, a first horizontal base panel and a front, wherein said right side wall and said left side wall are parallel, wherein said right side wall and said left side wall include a lower front edge portion located at a front edge of said first horizontal base panel that extends upwardly and outwardly away from said horizontal base panel at a predetermined angle such that a larger opening is formed at a top edge of said upper enclosure in relation to a size of said first horizontal base panel thereby defining a vertically facing open compartment;

a lower enclosure comprising said right side wall, said left side wall, said back, said first horizontal base panel, a second horizontal base panel and a vertical divider, wherein said right side wall, a portion of said first horizontal base panel, said divider and a portion of said second horizontal base panel define a first horizontally facing compartment, wherein said left side wall, a second portion of said first horizontal base panel, said divider and a second portion of said second horizontal base panel define a second horizontally facing compartment; and

a flap lid connected by a hinge to an outer edge of said right side wall and said left side wall, wherein said flap lid is operable to be positioned between an open position and a closed position, wherein said flap lid includes a first aperture positioned to provide a first access opening to said first horizontally facing compartment and a second opening positioned to provide a second access opening to said second horizontally facing compartment.

15. The container assembly of claim 14, further comprising a plurality of connection apertures located in said back and means for mounting said upper and lower enclosure to a support structure.

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