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United States Patent [19]

Brown

[11] **Patent Number: 5,971,102**

[45] **Date of Patent: Oct. 26, 1999**

[54] **LADDER INCLUDING STORAGE COMPARTMENTS**

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[21] Appl. No.: **09/134,958**

[22] Filed: **Aug. 17, 1998**

[51] **Int. Cl.**[6] **E04G 1/00**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **182/129**; 206/372

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 182/129, 108, 182/111; 248/210, 238; 206/372, 373; 340/323 R; 385/13

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Primary Examiner—Daniel P. Stodola
Assistant Examiner—Hugh B. Thompson
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Michael I. Kroll

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A ladder including storage areas for allowing access to an area out of reach of a user. A tool box is removably connected at a top end of the ladder so as to be easily accesible to a user of the ladder. The ladder includes a first pair of legs and a second pair of legs extending at an adjustable angle to the first pair of legs. A plurality of steps extend between the legs of the first pair of legs and a storage compartments is positioned below each of the plurality of steps. The storage compartments are each movable between a first position completely contained beneath its respective step and a second position extending out from its respective step providing access to a storage area. Adjustable feet positioned on a base side of each leg of the ladder. The adjustable feet are both angularly adjustable and height adjustable to adapt the ladder to the terrain on which it is to sit. A pressure sensitive alarm is positioned to generate an audible alarm when a user applies pressure to the bottom step. A retaining device is also provided adjacent the work area for retaining a tool or supply necessary for the user in an easily accessible location. Alternatively, an alternate workpiece such as a paint tray may be releasably connected at the position of the toolbox.

30 Claims, 15 Drawing Sheets

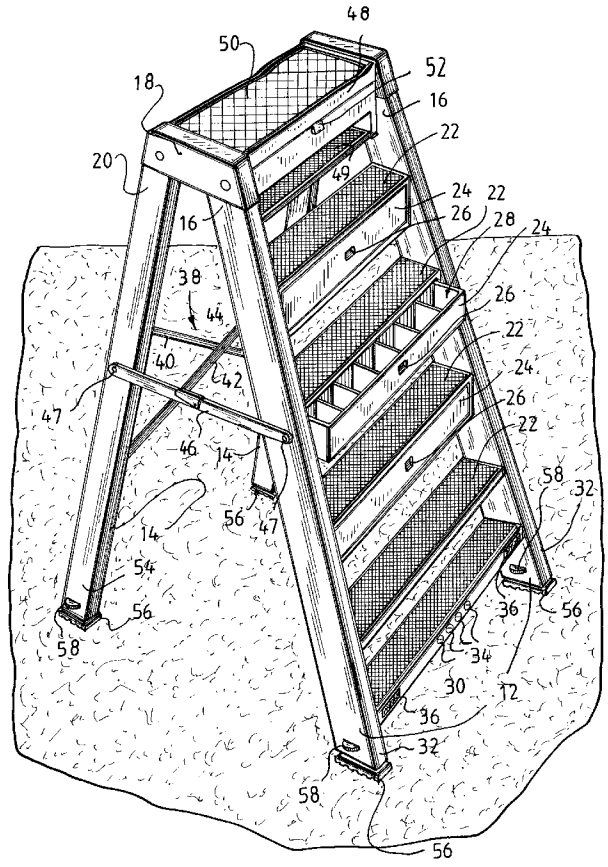

Fig. 1

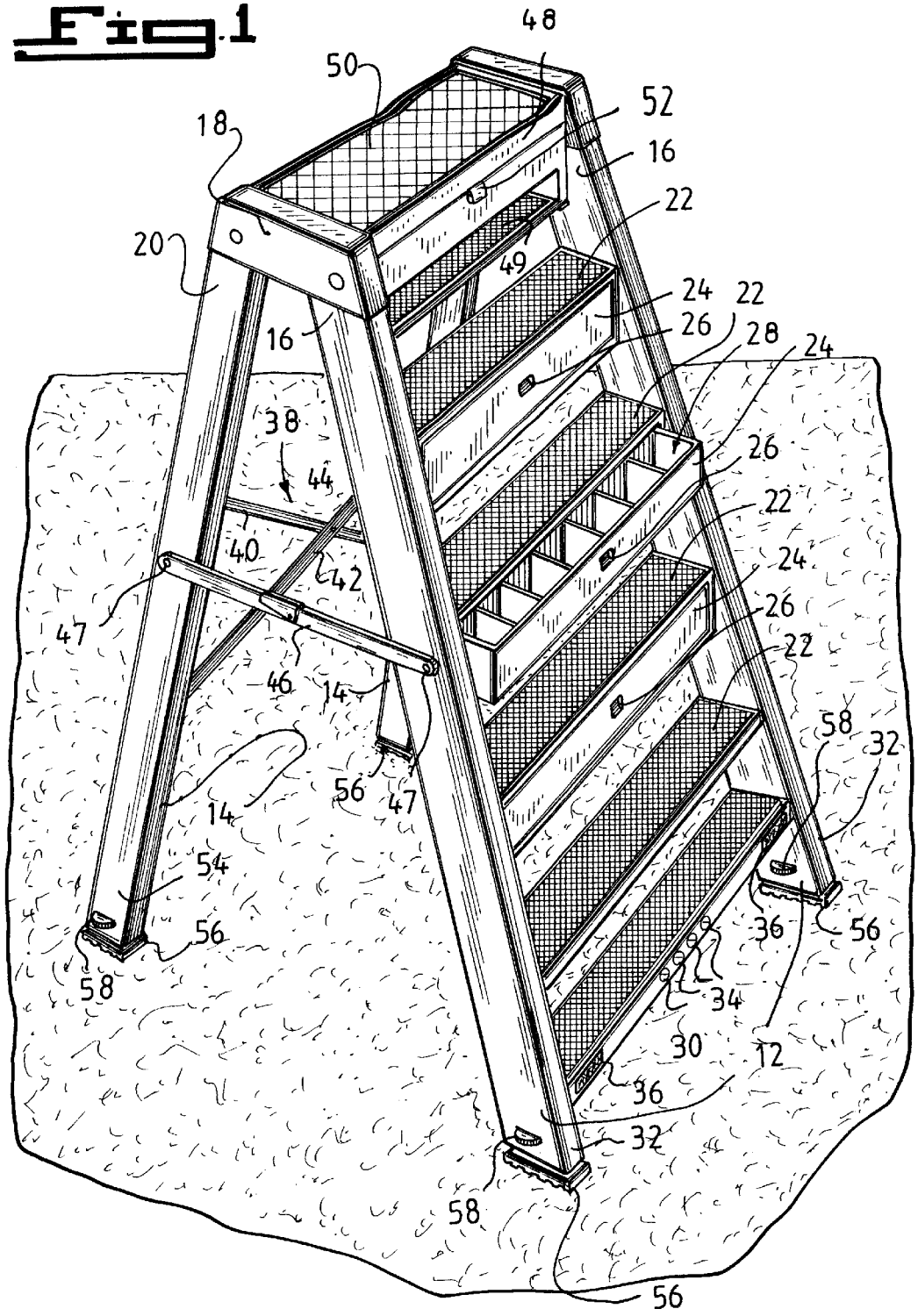
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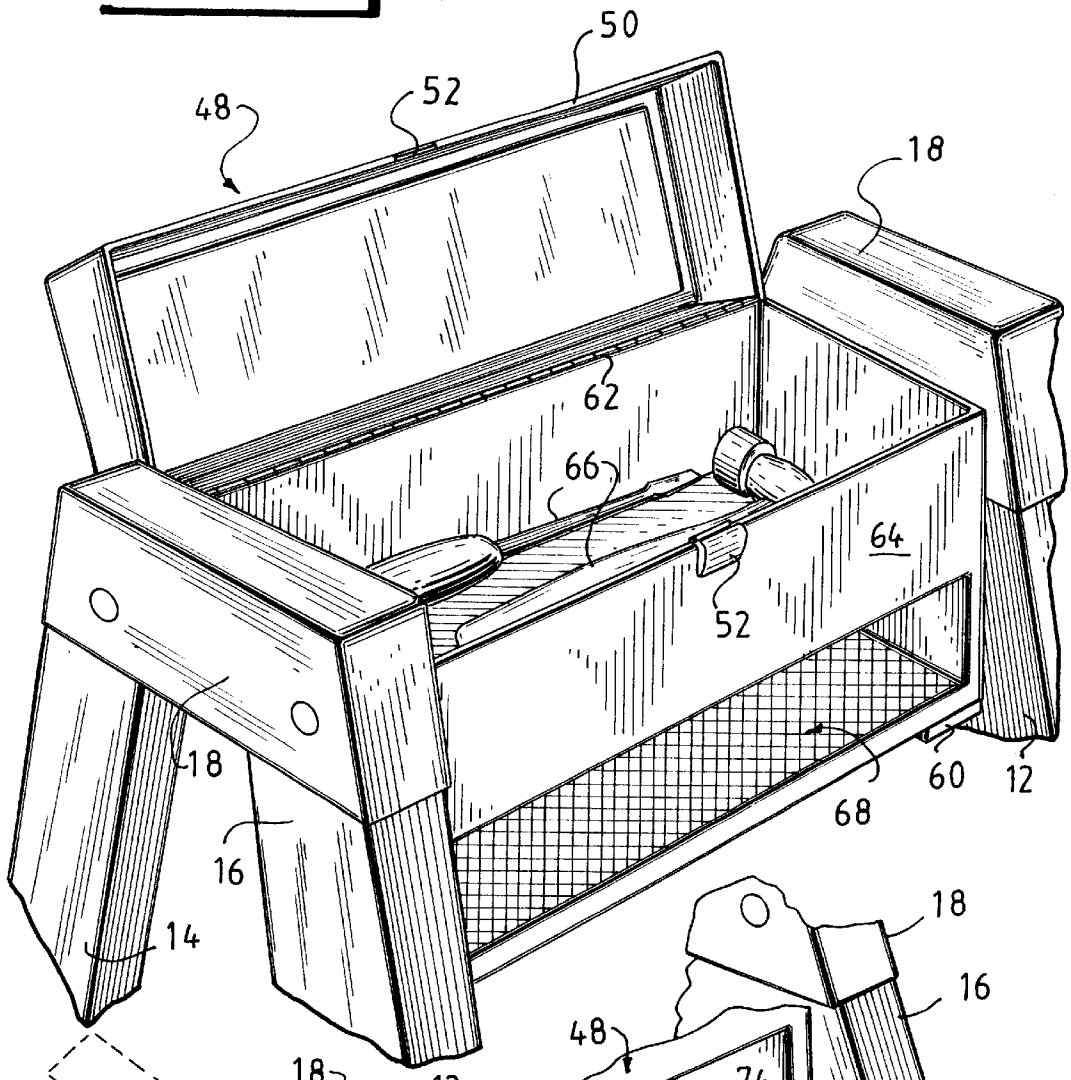
Fig.2



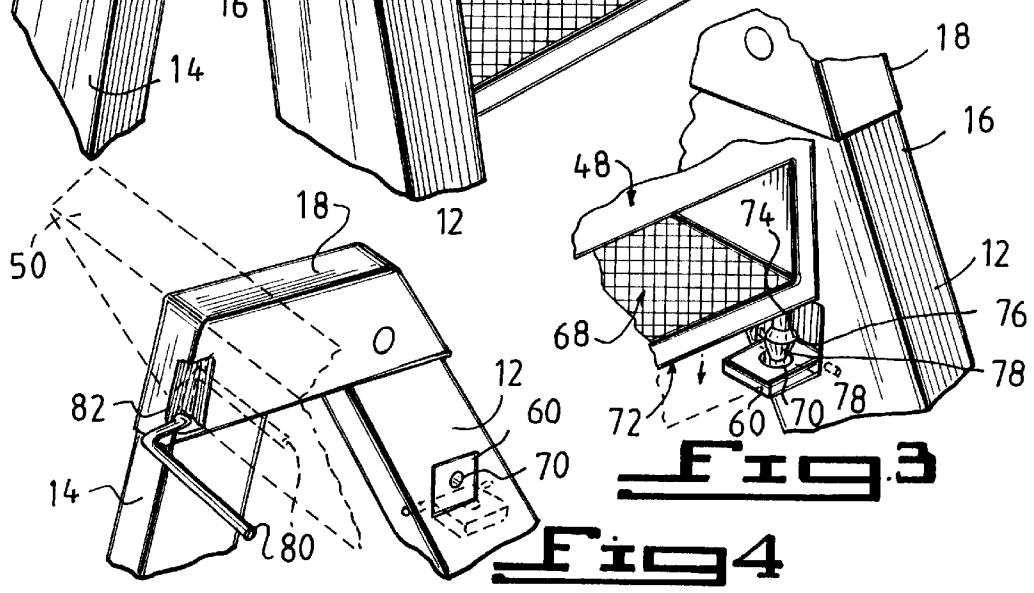
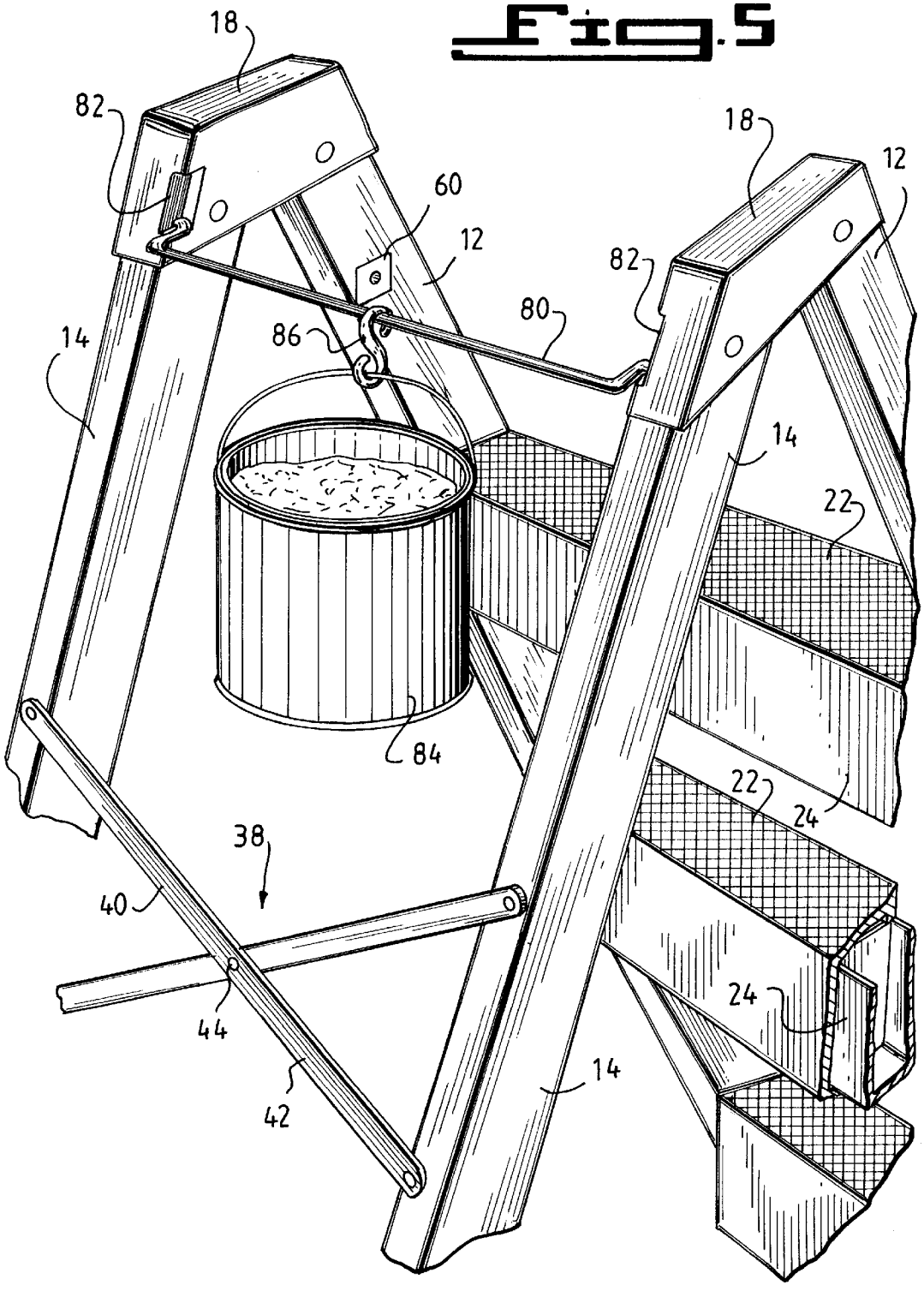


Fig.3

Fig4

Fig. 5



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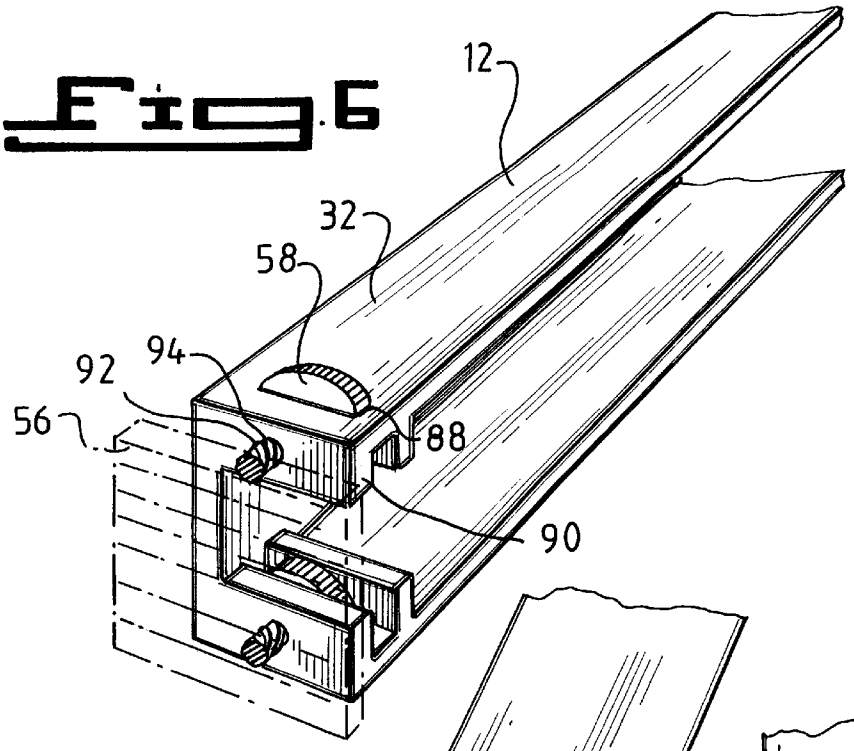

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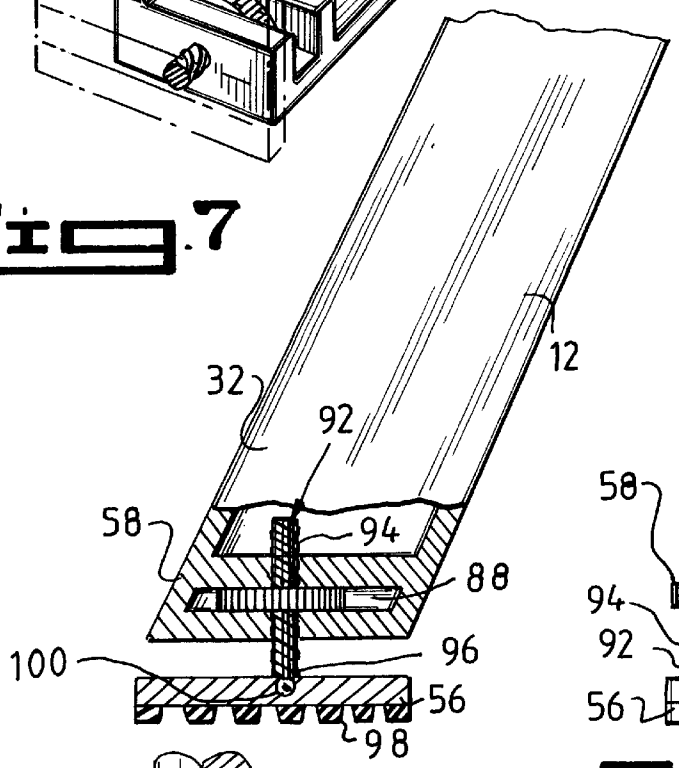

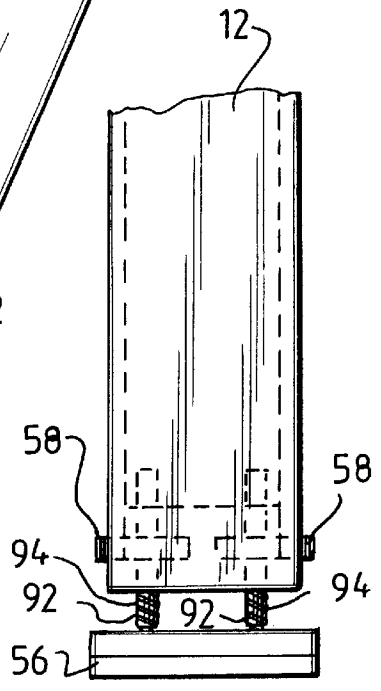

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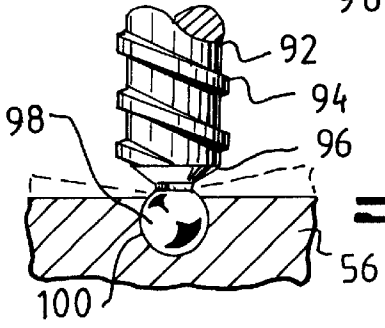


Fig. 9

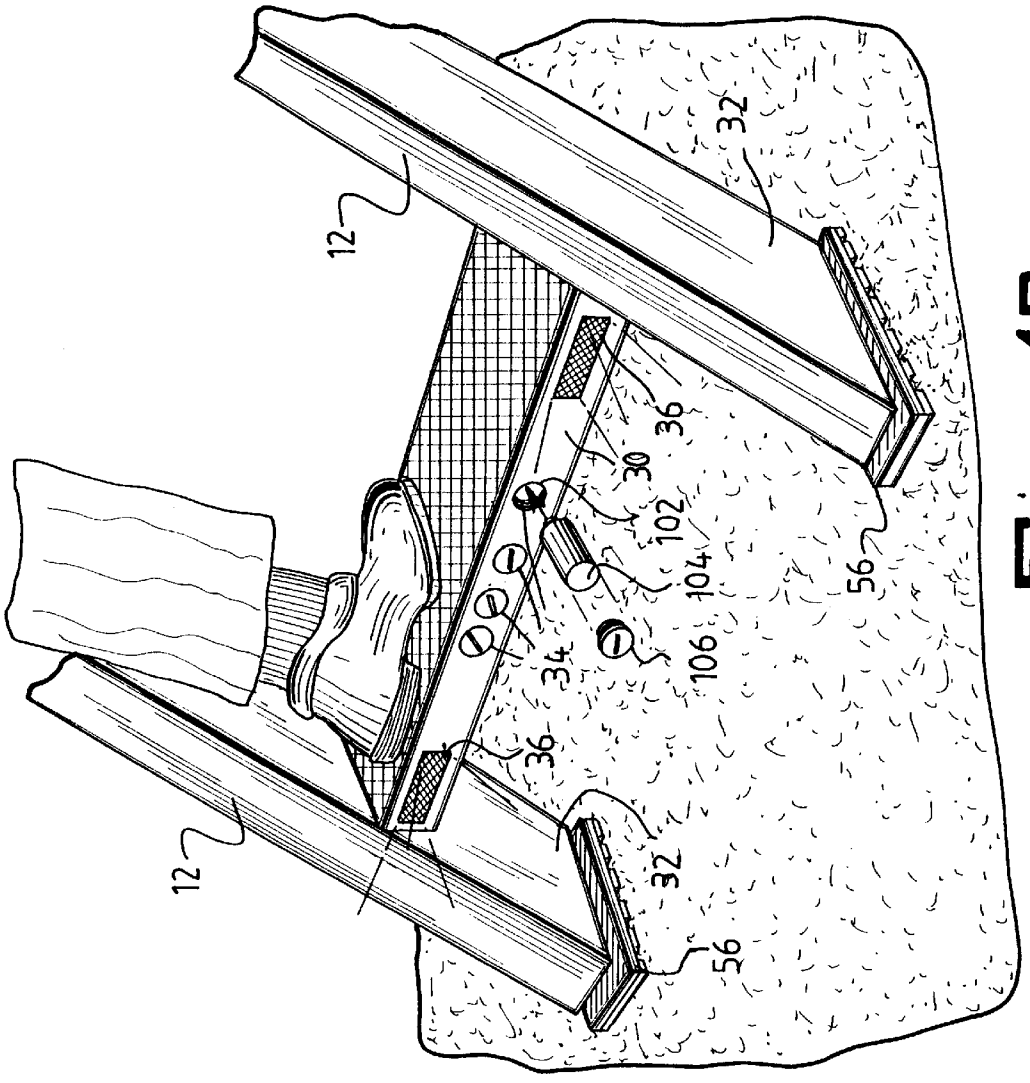


Fig 10

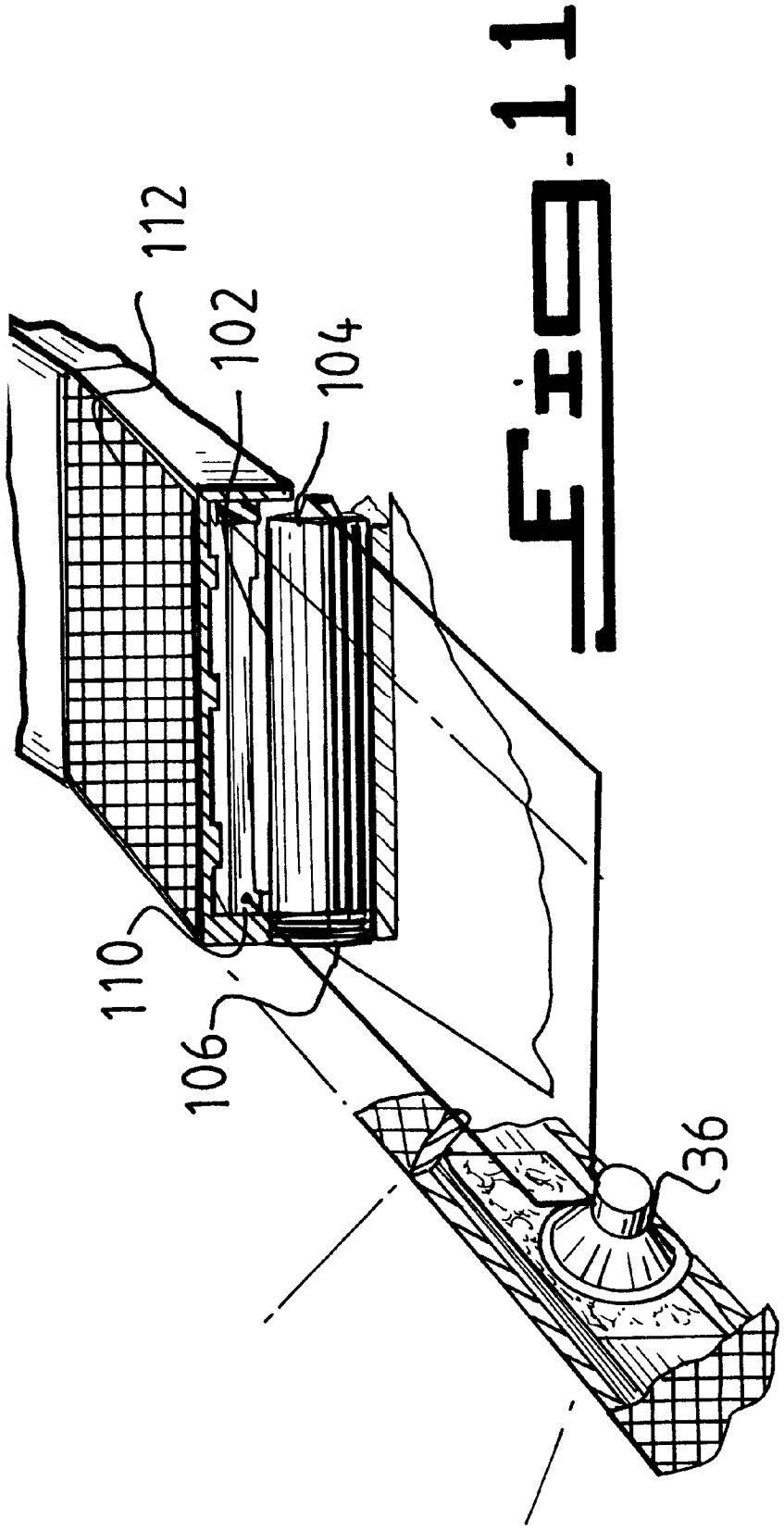
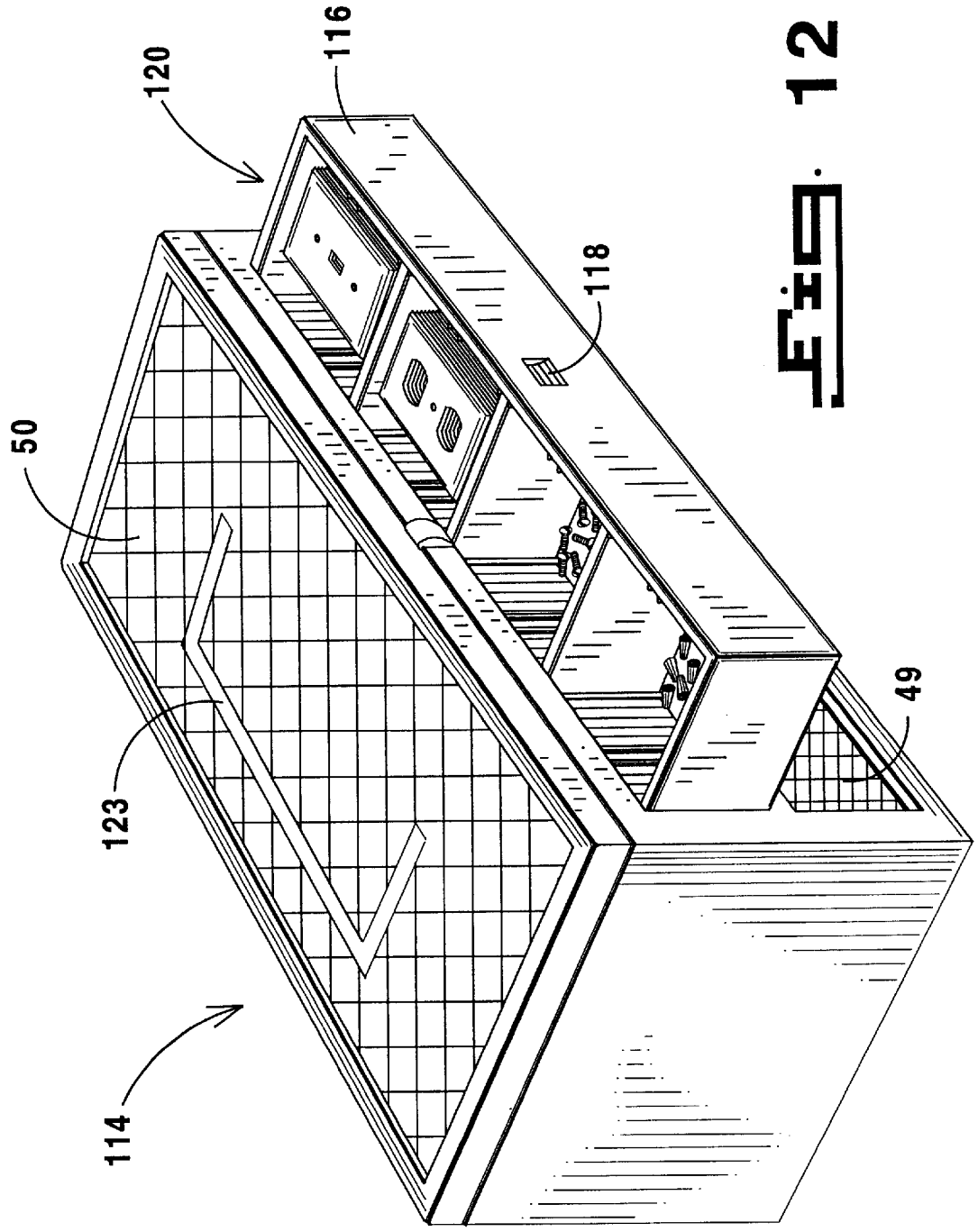


Fig. 11



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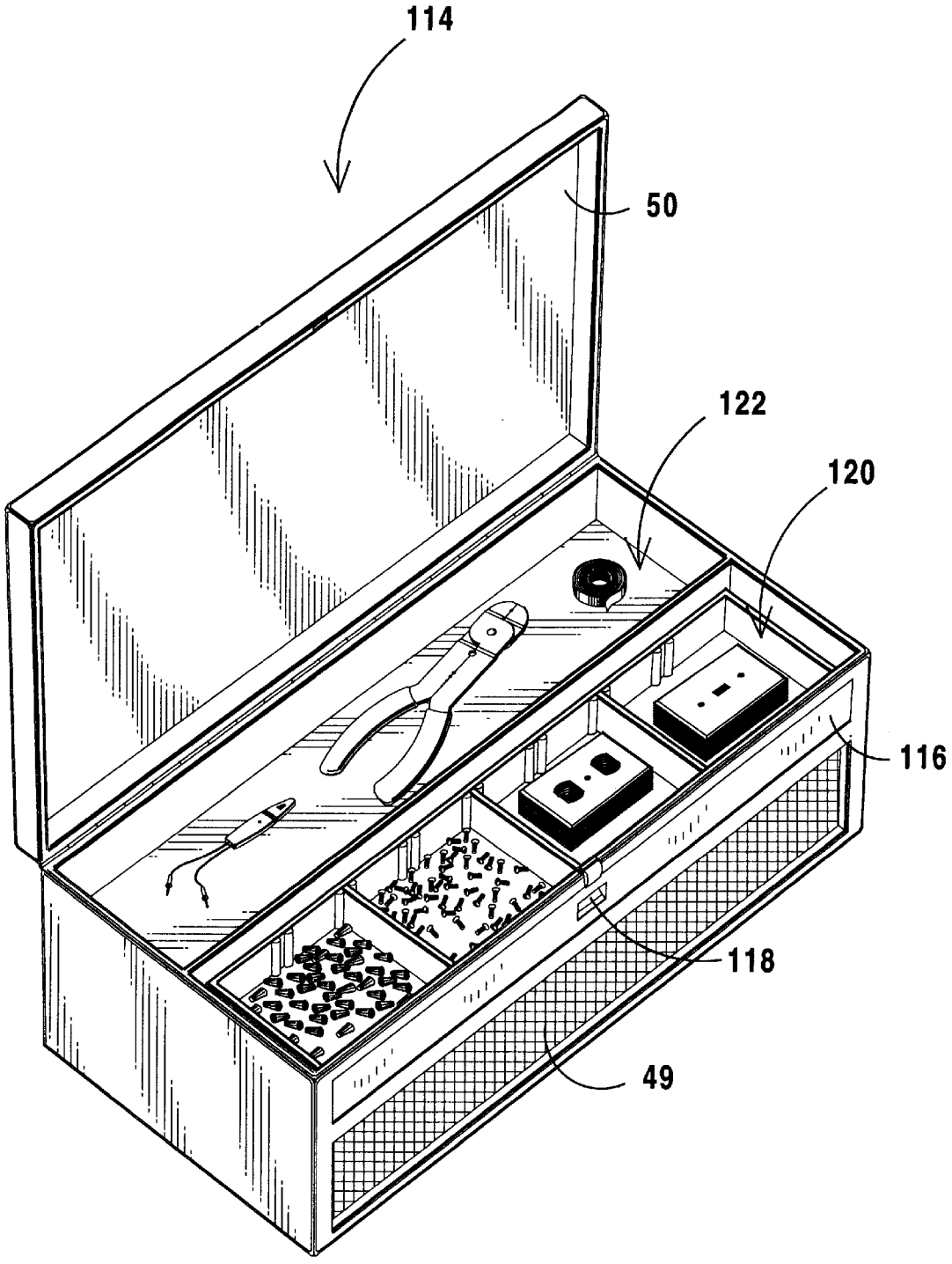
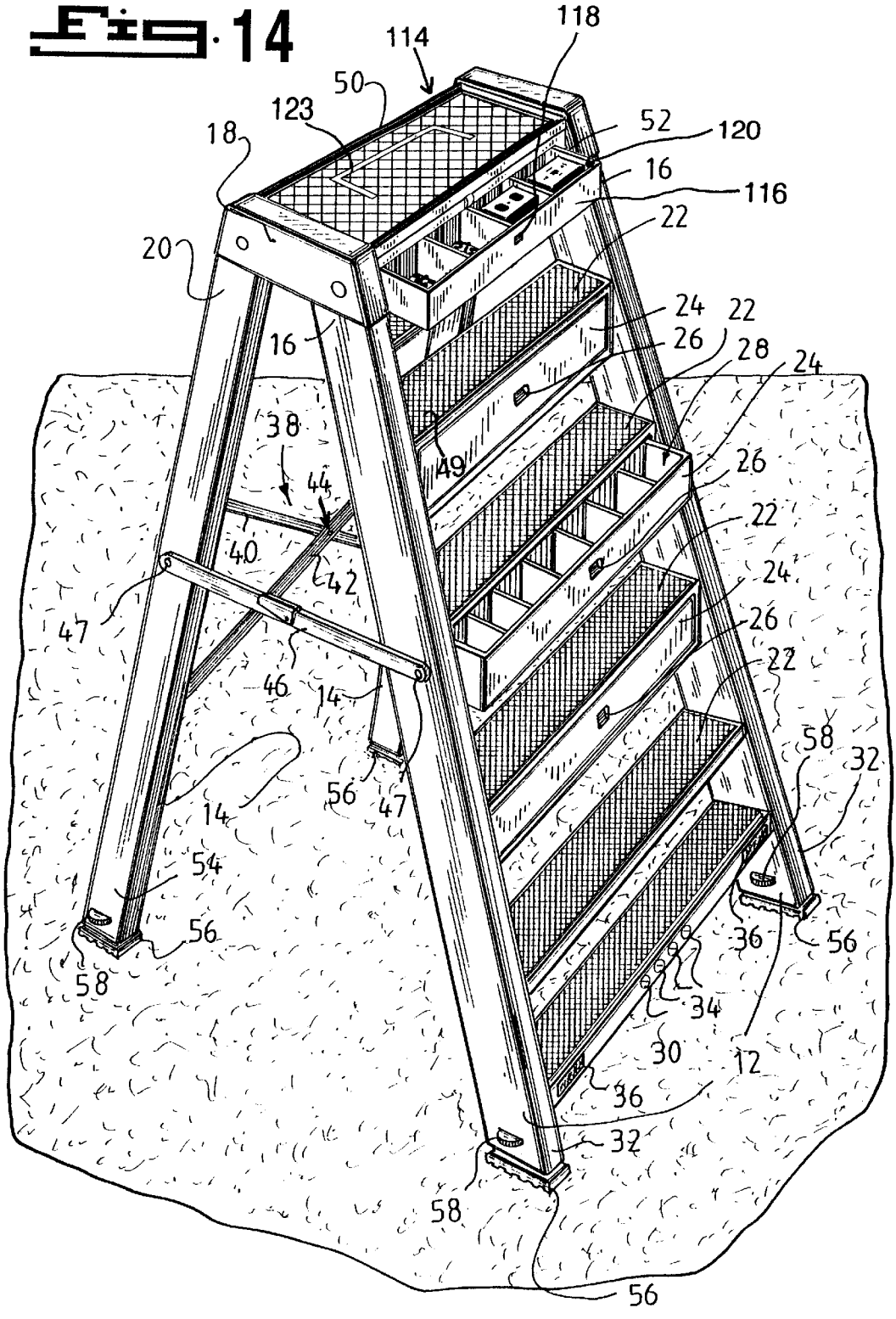


Fig. 13

Fig. 14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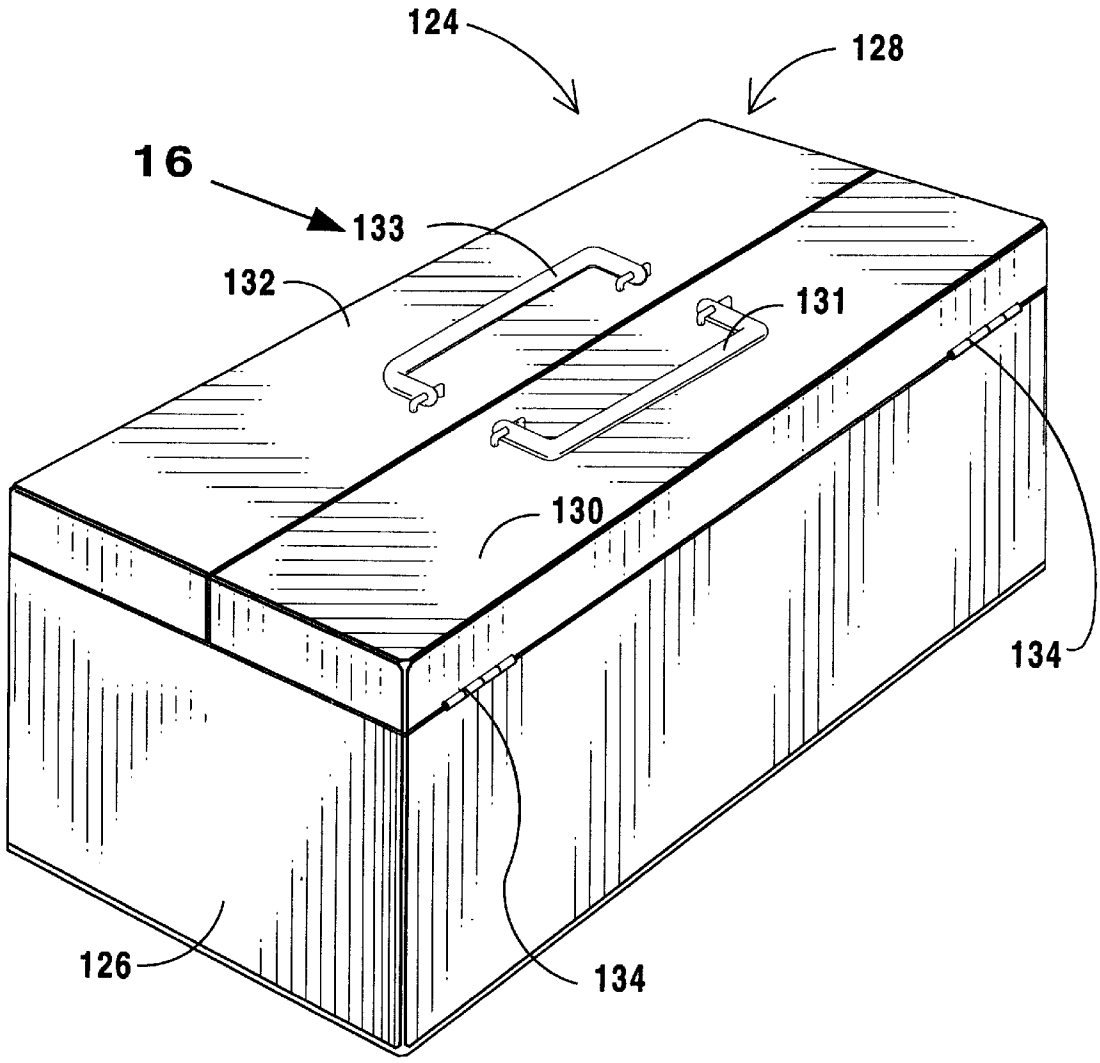

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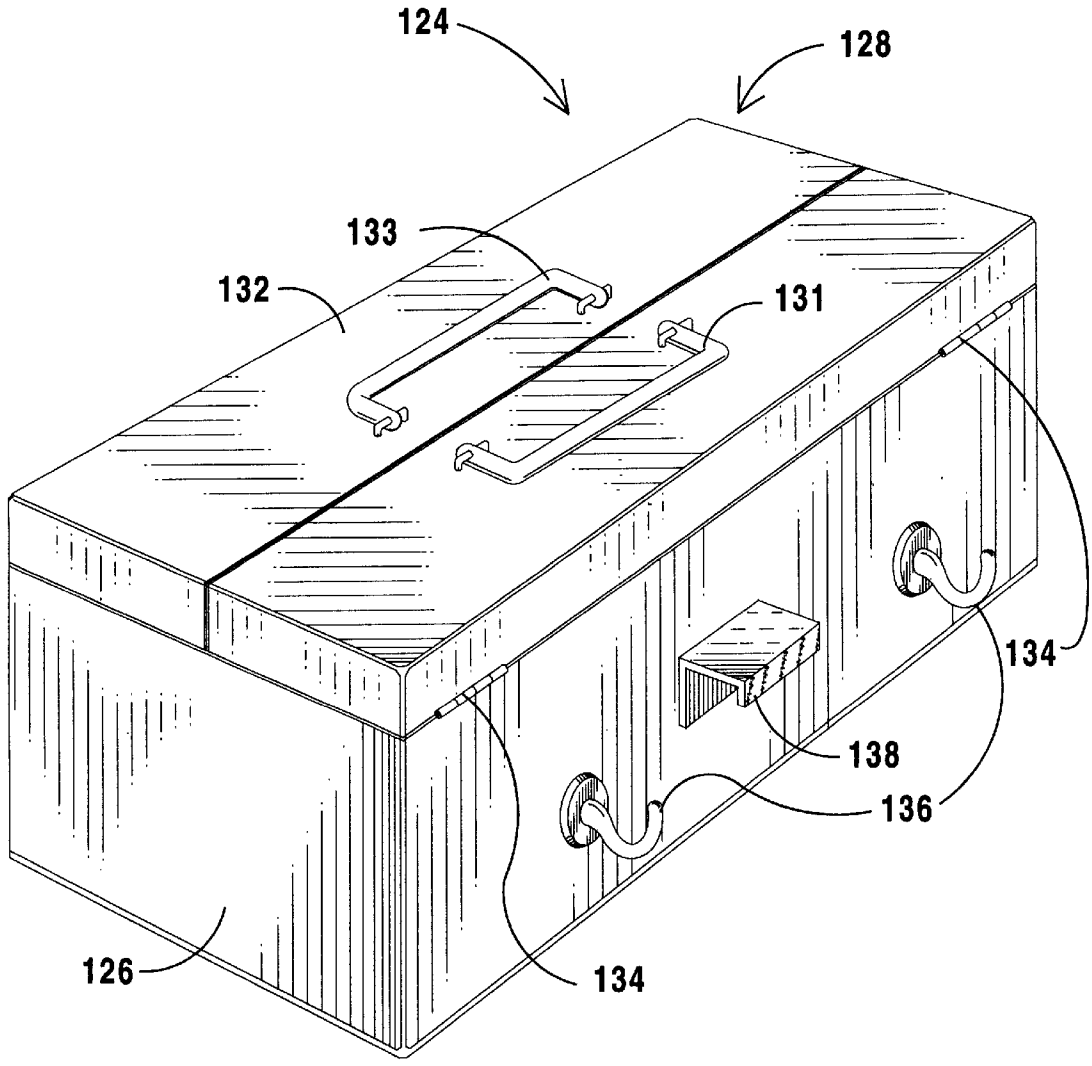

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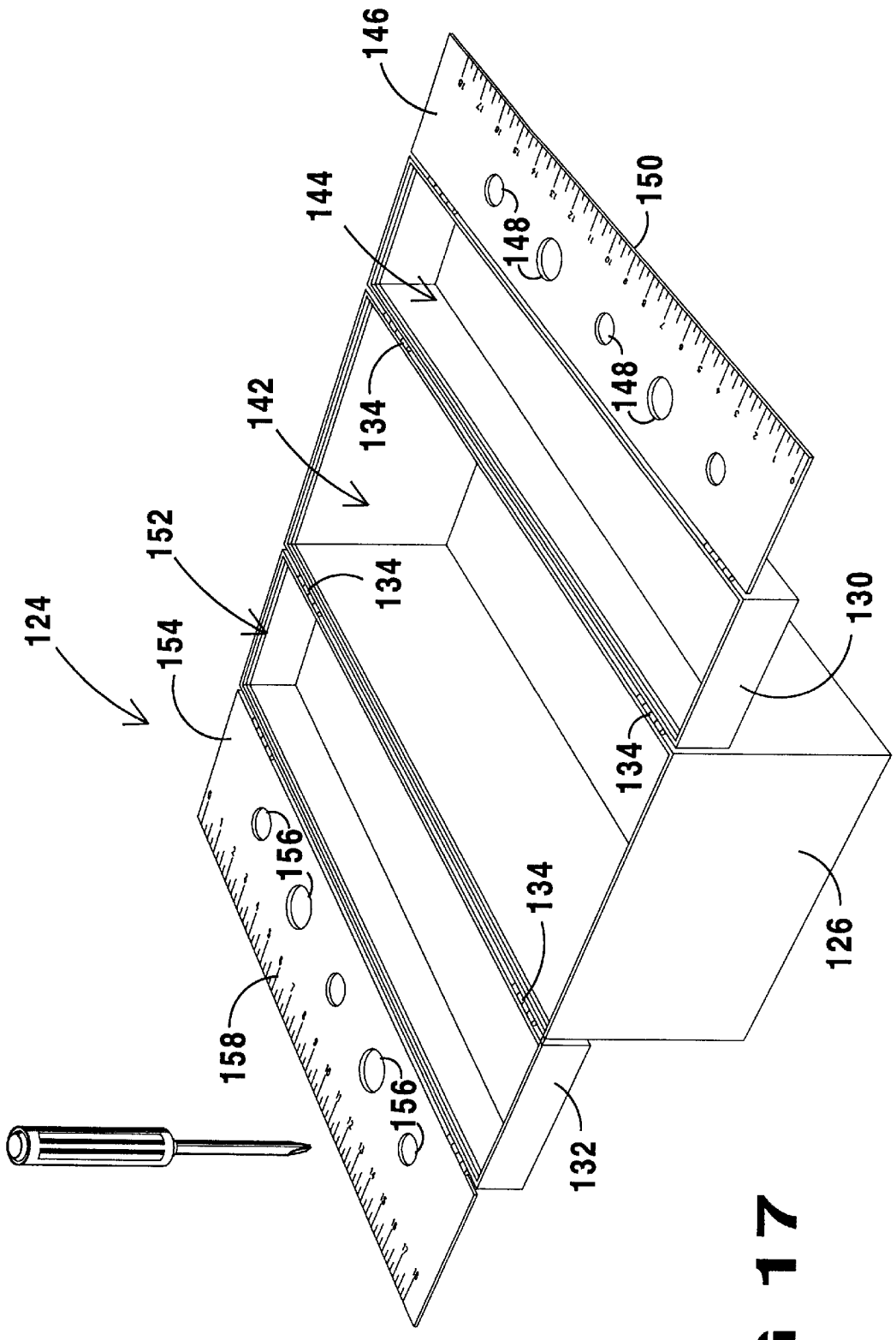
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FIG 17

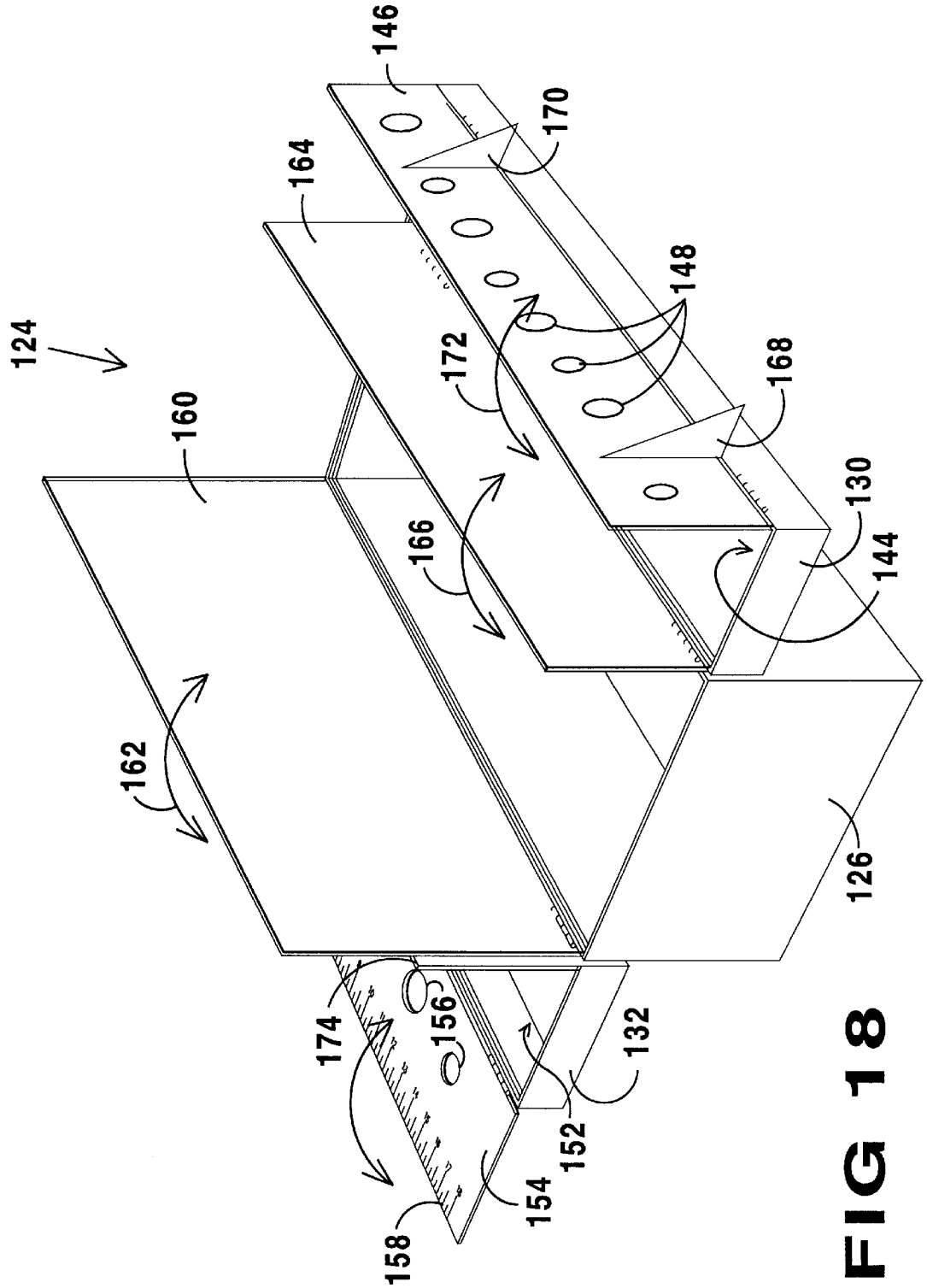
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FIG 18

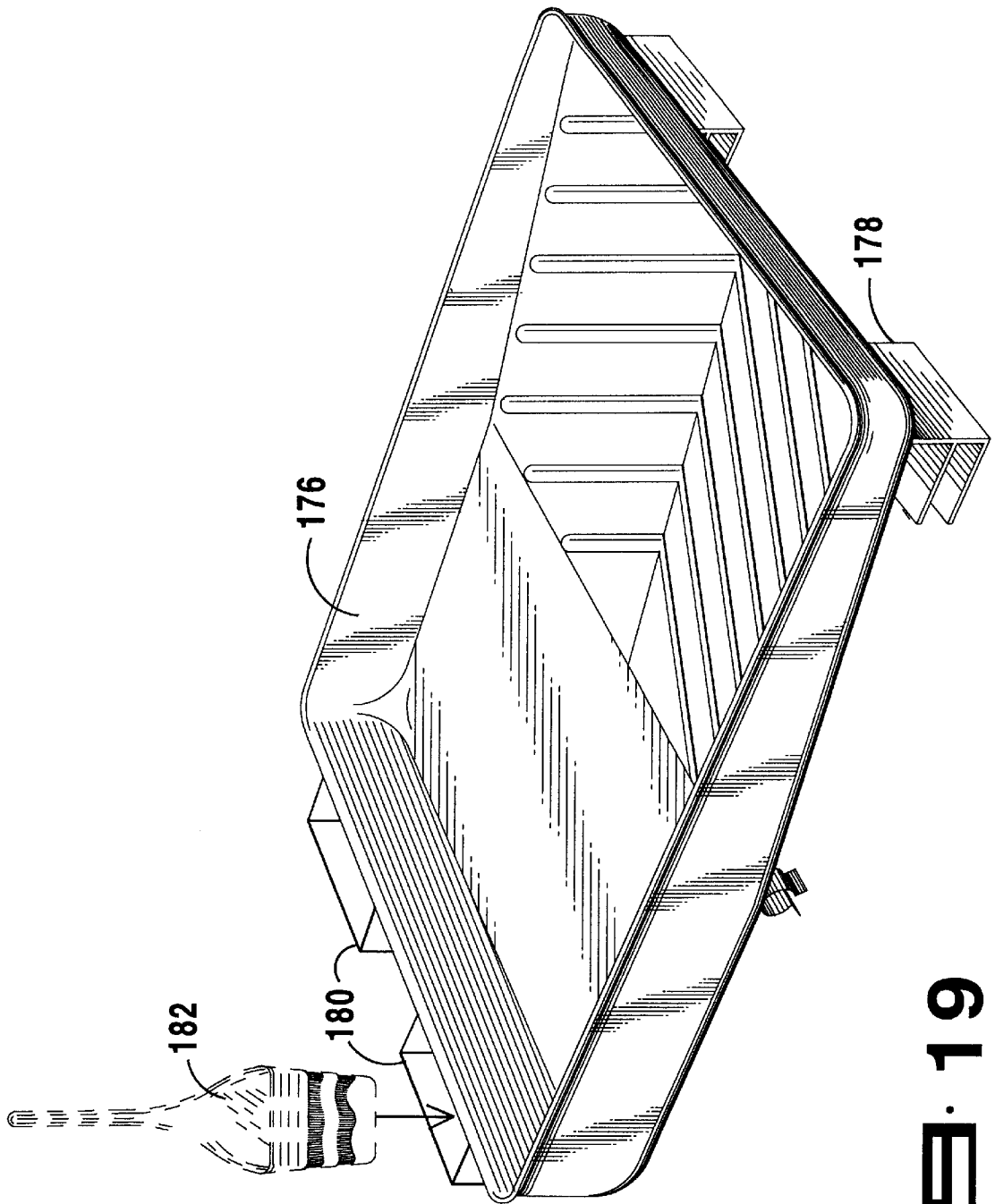

Fig. 19

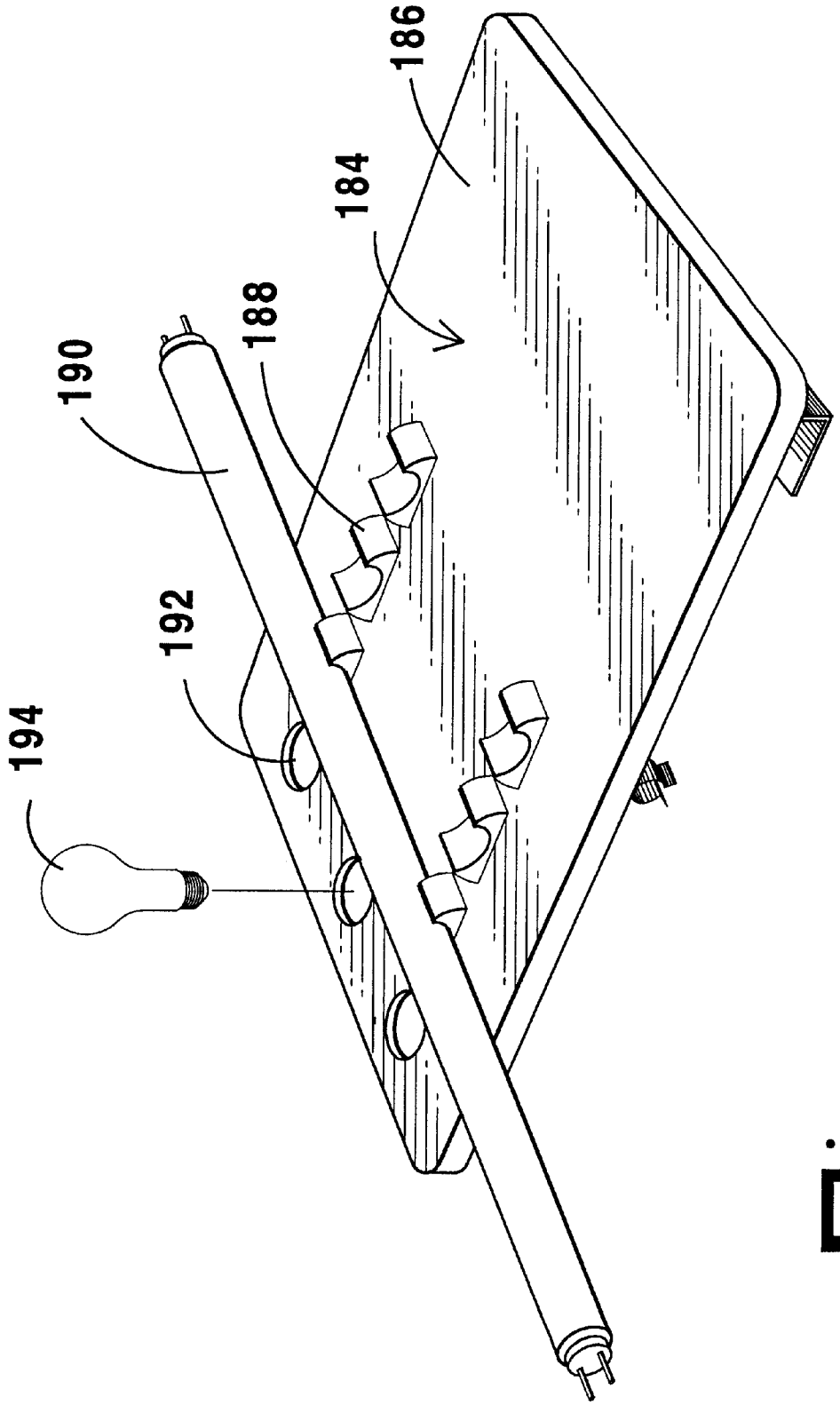

Fig. 20

LADDER INCLUDING STORAGE COMPARTMENTS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to ladders and, more specifically, to a ladder able to retain a toolbox in a strategically located position adjacent the work area, the ladder including hideaway storage cabinets and a device for retaining a tool required for the particular job being performed in a position adjacent and easily accessible to the user.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Numerous types of ladders have been provided in the prior art. For example, U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,505,302; 5,547,080; 5,603,405 and 5,613,574 all are illustrative of such prior art. While these units may be suitable for the particular purpose to which they address, they would not be as suitable for the purposes of the present invention as heretofore described.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,505,302

Inventor: Scott R. Ferley

Issued: Apr. 9, 1996

A toolbox for a stepladder comprising a container having a holding space therein, a scalable opening for selectively allowing and preventing access to the holding space, and an outwardly extending lip adapted for hanging items thereupon; and a coupling mechanism for coupling the container to a stepladder.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,547,080

Inventor: Joseph J. Klimas

Issued: Aug. 20, 1996

The invention relates to a tool box that has a lid that may be unobstructedly opened while the box is suspended by its own hanger from a horizontal member of a scaffold. Moreover, the tool box is designed to block rotation of the box while suspended, so that it may be opened, closed, and accessed while remaining out of the way in its hanging position on the scaffold.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,603,405

Inventor: William H. Smith

Issued: Feb. 18, 1997

A ladder top storage rack includes a rigid tool box securable to a ladder top. A pair of side pouches are secured to two side walls of the tool box. Each of the side pouches has a zippered opening. A rear pouch is secured to the rear wall of the tool box. The rear pouch has a zippered opening.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,613,574

Inventor: Charles J. Melanson

Issued: Mar. 25, 1997

A combined compartmented tray and tool holster is arranged to removably clamp onto the top step of a stepladder. The tool holster presents the tool to one side of the ladder or the other as desired. An opening at the bottom of the holster permits passage therethrough of the end of the tool with any tool bit attached thereto. The tool handle rests securely in ready reach of the worker without fear of dropping the tool, while both hands are free when required. Items in the compartments are also within case reach and view of the worker. The clamping system for clamping the device to the top step is adjustable to steps of various thicknesses.

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to ladders and, more specifically, to a ladder able to retain a toolbox in a strategically located position adjacent the work area, the ladder including hideaway storage cabinets and a device for retaining a tool required for the particular job being performed in a position adjacent and easily accessible to the user.

A primary object of the present invention is to provide a ladder including storage areas that will overcome the shortcomings of prior art devices.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a ladder including storage areas which is able to retain a desired tool in an easily accessible position adjacent the user.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a ladder including storage areas which is able to store numerous tools and other desired items in storage cabinets positioned so as not to obstruct the user.

A yet further object of the present invention is to provide a ladder including storage areas wherein the storage cabinets are in the form of pull out drawers located beneath the steps of the ladder and including a snap lock to lock the storage cabinets in place upon return to a position beneath its respective step.

A still further object of the present invention is to provide a ladder including storage areas wherein the tool box is removably positioned within the work area defined by the ladder.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a ladder including storage areas having an alarm signal indicating when the user has reached the bottom step thereby preventing the possibility of the user stumbling when descending from the ladder.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a ladder including storage areas wherein the alarm signal is generated by a pressure sensor positioned in the bottom step and activated when a user applies a pressure to the step such as by stepping thereon.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a ladder including storage areas having adjustable feet on a base of the legs of the ladder thereby adding stability to the ladder when in use. The feet being both angularly and height adjustable.

An even further object of the present invention is to provide a ladder including storage areas wherein a paint tray or storage tray may be releasably connected atop the ladder and within the work area of the user in lieu of the toolbox.

A yet further object of the present invention is to provide a ladder including storage areas including a toolbox releasably positioned within the work area of the user, the toolbox being designed to retain and store supplies and tools related to the particular job to be performed.

A still further object of the present invention is to provide a ladder including storage areas that is simple and easy to use.

A still further object of the present invention is to provide a ladder including storage areas that is economical in cost to manufacture.

Additional objects of the present invention will appear as the description proceeds.

A a ladder including storage areas for allowing access to an area out of reach of a user is disclosed by the present invention. A tool box is removably connected at a top end of the ladder so as to be easily accesible to a user of the ladder. The ladder includes a first pair of legs and a second pair of legs extending at an adjustable angle to the first pair of legs. A plurality of steps extend between the legs of the first pair of legs and a storage compartments is positioned below each of the plurality of steps. The storage compartments are each movable between a first position completely contained beneath its respective step and a second position extending out from its respective step providing access to a storage area. Adjustable feet positioned on a base side of each leg of the ladder. The adjustable feet are both angularly adjustable and height adjustable to adapt the ladder to the terrain on which it is to sit. A pressure sensitive alarm is positioned to generate an audible alarm when a user applies pressure to the bottom step. A retaining device is also provided adjacent the work area for retaining a tool or supply necessary for the user in an easily accessible location. Alternatively, an alternate workpiece such as a paint tray may be releasably connected at the position of the toolbox.

To the accomplishment of the above and related objects, this invention may be embodied in the form illustrated in the accompanying drawings, attention being called to the fact, however, that the drawings are illustrative only, and that changes may be made in the specific construction illustrated and described within the scope of the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING FIGURES

Various other objects, features and attendant advantages of the present invention will become more fully appreciated as the same becomes better understood when considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like reference characters designate the same or similar parts throughout the several views.

FIG. **1** is a top perspective view of the toolbox releasably connected to the ladder including storage areas of the present invention;

FIG. **2** is an enlarged top perspective view of a first embodiment of the tool box positioned in the work area on the ladder of the toolbox releasably connected to the ladder including storage areas of the present invention;

FIG. **3** is an enlarged top perspective view of the releasable connection between the tool box and top step of the ladder of the toolbox releasably connected to the ladder including storage areas of the present invention;

FIG. **4** is a enlarged top perspective view of a retaining device connected to the ladder of the toolbox releasably connected to the ladder including storage areas of the present invention, a retracted position of the retaining device and open top of the tool box are illustrated in dashed lines;

FIG. **5** is a top perspective view of the ladder including storage areas without the toolbox connected thereto of the present invention and including a paint can hanging on the retaining device;

FIG. **6** is an enlarged bottom perspective view of a leg of the ladder including storage areas used with the present invention, the adjustable foot connected at a base of the leg is shown in dashed lines;

FIG. **7** is a side view in partial cross-section of the leg and foot of the ladder including storage areas of the present invention as shown in FIG. **6**;

FIG. **8** is a side view of the leg of the ladder including storage areas used with the present invention as shown in FIG. **6**, the leg adjustment device being illustrated partially in dashed lines;

FIG. **9** is an enlarged side view of the connection between a foot and its respective leg of the ladder including storage areas used with the present invention;

FIG. **10** is an enlarged perspective view of the bottom step and pressure alarm of the ladder including storage areas used with the present invention, a battery compartment for powering the alarm being illustrated in an exploded view;

FIG. **11** is an exploded partial cross-sectional view of the bottom step of the ladder including storage areas used with the present invention and illustrating the connection between the battery and the pressure sensor;

FIG. **12** is an enlarged top perspective view of a second embodiment of the tool box used with the present invention, the toolbox including a pull out drawer including dividers therein for storing tools and supplies;

FIG. **13** is a front perspective view of the second embodiment of thetoolbox illustrated in FIG. **12** with the top pivoted into the open position;

FIG. **14** is a front perspective view of the toolbox shown in FIGS. **12** and **13** releasably connected to the ladder including storage areas used with the present invention;

FIG. **15** is a top perspective view of a third embodiment of the tool box used with the present invention, the toolbox including a pull out drawer including dividers therein for storing tools and supplies;

FIG. **16** is a rear perspective view of the third embodiment of the tool box used with the present invention taken in the direction of the arrow labeled **16**;

FIG. **17** is a top perspective view of the third embodiment of the tool box used with the present invention shown in FIGS. **15** and **16** with the main compartment doors in the fully open position;

FIG. **18** is a top perspective view of the third embodiment of the tool box used with the present invention shown in FIGS. **15–17** illustrating additional compartments within the doors to the toolbox;

FIG. **19** is a top perspective view of a paint tray which may be releasably connected to the ladder in lieu of the toolbox; and

FIG. **20** is a top perspective view of an alternative work surface having a number of holes and clips for releasably retaining supplies therein which may be releasably connected to the ladder in lieu of the toolbox.

DESCRIPTION OF THE REFERENCED NUMERALS

Turning now descriptively to the drawings, in which similar reference characters denote similar elements throughout the several views, the Figures illustrate the ladder including storage areas of the present invention. With regard to the reference numerals used, the following numbering is used throughout the various drawing figures.

10 ladder including storage areas of the present invention

12 first pair of legs

14 second pair of legs

16 first end of legs of first pair of legs

18 top step

20 first end of legs of second pair of legs

22 plurality of steps

24 plurality of drawers
26 latch on drawer
28 compartments for retaining tools within drawer
30 bottom step
32 second end of the legs of the first pair of legs
34 power source
36 audible alarm
38 stabilizing device
40 first cross bar of stabilizing device
42 second cross bar of stabilizing device
44 connection point of first and second cross bars
46 locking member
47 connection points for attachment of locking member
48 tool box
49 top step
50 top side of tool box
52 latch on tool box
54 second end of legs of second pair of legs
56 feet on base of legs
58 adjustment device for adjusting position and angle of feet
60 protrusion extending from legs of ladder
62 pivotal connection between top side and receiving section of tool box
64 receiving section of tool box
66 tools within receiving section of tool box
68 recess in base of tool box forming a top step
70 recess in protrusion extending from leg of ladder
72 base side of tool box
74 protrusion extending from base side of tool box
76 enlarged head portion
78 beveled top side of enlarged head portion
80 retaining device
82 pair of recesses in connection device
84 paint can
86 hook
88 recess
90 ledge
92 screw
94 thread spiraling around screw
96 base of screw
98 ball on base of screw
100 recess for receiving ball
102 recess
104 batteries
106 cap covering recess retaining batteries therein
108 first terminal
110 second terminal
112 spring loaded step
114 second embodiment of toolbox
116 drawer
118 latch on drawer
120 plurality of compartments within drawer
122 additional storage compartment within toolbox and behind drawer
123 handle on top side of ladder
124 third embodiment of the toolbox
126 bottom section of toolbox
128 top section of toolbox
130 first pivotal side of toolbox
131 handle on first pivotal side of toolbox
132 second pivotal side of toolbox
133 handle on second pivotal side of toolbox
134 pivotal connection connecting pivotal sides to bottom section
136 back side bottom section
138 plurality of hooks on back side bottom section
140 elongated hook on back side bottom section
142 internal compartment of the bottom section
144 first smaller storage compartment in first side of top section
146 first cover of first smaller storage compartment
148 plurality of recesses extending through first cover
150 indicia printed on first cover
152 second small storage compartment in second side of top section
154 second cover of second smaller storage compartment
156 plurality of recesses extending through second cover
158 indicia printed on second cover
160 additional platform pivotally connected to the bottom section
162 arrow indicating pivoting of additional platform
164 second cover surface pivotally connected to first side
166 arrow indicating pivoting of second cover surface pivotally connected to first side
168 first stand pivotally connected to first cover of first side
170 second stand pivotally connected to first cover of first side
172 arrow indicating direction of pivoting of first cover of first side
174 second cover section pivotally connected to second side
176 paint tray
178 clips on underside of paint tray
180 retaining device on side of paint tray
182 paint brush retained in retaining device
184 work surface
186 top side of work surface
188 clips on top side of work surface
190 fluorescent light bulb
192 recesses extending through work surface
194 light bulb

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Turning now descriptively to the drawings, in which similar reference characters denote similar elements throughout the several views, FIGS. **1** through **11** illustrate the ladder including storage areas of the present invention indicated generally by the numeral **10**. A toolbox and alternate devices which may be releasably connected to the ladder and positioned within the work area are described in detail with reference to FIGS. **12–20**.

The ladder including storage areas **10** is formed of a first pair of parallel spaced apart legs **12** and a second pair of parallel spaced apart legs **14**, the first pair of legs **12**

extending at an adjustable angle to the second pair of legs **14**. Each leg of the first pair of legs **14** is pivotally connected at a first end **16** thereof to a connection device **18**. Each leg of the second pair of legs **14** is also connected at a first end **20** thereof to the connection device **18**. The second pair of legs **14** may also be pivotally connected to the connection device **18**.

The first pair of legs **12** have a plurality of steps **22** substantially evenly spaced along the length thereof and extending therebetween. Positioned beneath each of the plurality of steps **22** is a drawer **24**. Each drawer **24** includes a handle or latch **26** for sliding the drawer **24** from its position beneath its respective step **22** to reveal a plurality of compartments **28** therein. The plurality of compartments **28** act to retain tools and supplies therein. The latch **26** on each drawer **24** acts to releasably lock its respective drawer **24** in position beneath its respective step **22** when the drawer **24** is slid back beneath the step **22**.

A bottom step **30** is positioned between a second end **32** of the first pair of legs **12** and a last step of the plurality of steps **22**, the bottom step **30** also extends between the legs of the first pair of legs **12**. The bottom step **24** includes a power source **34** and an audible alarm **36**. The power source **34** and audible alarm **36** are connected to a pressure sensor as will be discussed hereinafter with specific reference to FIGS. **10** and **11**. The pressure sensor detects when a pressure is applied to the bottom step **30** and in response to detecting a pressure applied to the bottom step **30** the audible alarm **34** is activated to generate an audible alarm signal. The audible alarm signal is useful in alerting a user descending the ladder **10** that the bottom step **30** has been reached. This will prevent accidents caused by stumbling on the last step **30**.

The second pair of legs **14** includes a stabilizing device **38** extending therebetween. The stabilizing device **38** is preferably in the form of first and second cross bars **40** and **42**, respectively. The first and second cross bars **40** and **42**, respectively, extend at opposing diagonals to each other and are preferably connected at a point **44** at which they cross one another.

A locking member **46** is positioned between respective ones of the first and second pairs of legs **12** and **14**, respectively, for releasably locking the ladder **10** in an open position. The locking member **44** is releasably connected between the respective ones of the first and second pairs of legs **12** and **14** and defines the range of angles at which the first and second pairs of legs **12** and **14**, respectively, can pivot with respect to each other. As there is a releasable connection between the locking member **46** and the first and second pair of legs **12** and **14**, respectively, the wear and tear on the locking member **46** which normally results in loosening the connection therebetween and rendering the ladder useless is reduced. Alternatively, the locking member **46** may be secured to the first and second pair of legs **12** and **14**, respectively, by either screws or snaps at connection points **47** on the legs of the first and second pairs of legs.

Releasably positioned between the legs of both the first and second pair of legs **12** and **14**, respectively, at the first ends **16** and **20**, respectively, is a tool box **48**. A first embodiment of the toolbox **48** is illustrated in FIGS. **1–3**. The tool box **48** forms the top step **49** and is positioned in the work area of the user thereby placing any needed tools within reach of the user. The tool box **48** includes a pivotable top **50** and a locking mechanism **52** causing the pivotable top **50** to lock closed thereby securing the tools and supplies within the tool box **48**.

Connected to the second side **32** of each leg of the first pair of legs **12** and on a second side **54** of each leg of the second pair of legs **14** are adjustable feet **56**. The feet **56** are adjusted with a manual adjuster **58** to adjust the angle of the feet and to move the feet **58** along a horizontal plane with respect to the terrain on which the ladder **10** is to stand. The adjustment of the feet **56** will be discussed hereinafter with specific reference to FIGS. **7**, **8** and **9**.

FIG. **2** illustrates the tool box **48** positioned atop four protrusions **60**, one protrusion **60** extending from each leg of both the first and second pairs of legs **12** and **14**, respectively. In this figure a pivotal connection **62** is illustrated as pivotally connecting the top side **50** of the tool box **48** to a retaining section **64** of the tool box **48**. The retaining section **64** is used to hold the tools **66** needed by the user therein. The tool box **48** includes a recess **68** positioned under the retaining section **64** providing an additional step for the user to climb on.

FIG. **3** illustrates the releasable connection between the tool box **48** and the protrusions **60**. Each protrusion **60** includes a recess **70** extending therethrough. Extending from each corner of a base **72** of the tool box **48** is a protrusion **74**. Each of the protrusions have an enlarged head portion **76** with a beveled top side **78**. When a pressure is applied to the tool box **48** towards the protrusions **60**, the beveled top side **78** is caused to extend into the recess **70**. The pressure is applied until the enlarged head portion **76** extends completely through the recess **70**. To remove the tool box **48** from its connection with the protrusions **60**, a force is applied in a direction opposite the connection force until the protrusions **74** are removed from their position extending through the recess **70**.

FIG. **4** illustrates a top portion of the ladder including storage areas **10**. As can be seen in this figure, the ladder **10** includes a retaining device **80** for holding a tool or supply in a position adjacent the work area and easily accessible to the user. The retaining device **80** is pivotally secured within a pair of recesses **82** extending into the connection device **18** and is movable between a first in use position and a second not in use position. The pair of recesses **82** are positioned above the connection to the second pair of legs **14**. The retaining device **80** extends between the legs of the second pair of legs **14** and along a plane parallel to the plurality of steps **22** when in the in use position. The upright not in use position of the retaining device **80** is illustrated in dashed lines. In this position, the retaining device **80** is able to limit the pivoting angle of the top side **50** of the tool box **48**. The top side **50** of the tool box **48** is also illustrated in dashed lines. FIG. **5** illustrates a paint can **84** hanging on a hook **86** connected to the retaining device **80**.

FIGS. **6**, **7**, **8** and **9** illustrate the connection between the legs of the ladder **10** and the feet **56**. Each leg of both the first and second pairs of legs **12** and **14**, respectively, include an identical connection, the only difference being the orientation of the feet and legs. A leg of the first pair of legs **12** will be used in the description for purposes of example only.

FIG. **6** is a bottom perspective view of the connection between the foot **56** and the leg **12**, the foot **56** being illustrated in dot-dashed lines. At the bottom side **32** of the leg **12** is a recess **88** through which the adjustment member **58** extends. The leg **12** is hollow and includes a ledge **90** therein on which the adjustment member **58** sits. Extending through the adjustment member is a screw **92** including a thread **94** spiraling therearound. The base **96** of the screw **92** is connected to the foot **56** in a manner which allows the foot to pivot as will be described with specific reference to FIG. **9**.

An enlarged cross sectional view of the leg and foot connection is illustrated in FIG. **7**. This view shows a ball **98** connected to the base **96**. The ball **98** is received within a round recess **100** extending into the foot **56**. The screw **92** extending through the adjustment member **58** is also shown in this figure. The thread **94** spiraling around the screw **92** is engaged with a thread (not shown) spiraling around an inner side of a recess extending through the adjustment member **58** and receiving the screw **92**. When the adjustment member **58** is turned in a first direction the engagement of the thread **94** spiraling around the screw **92** and the thread within the recess causes the screw **92** to be fed further out of the leg **12** and thereby increasing the height of the ladder **10**. When the adjustment member **58** is turned in a second direction opposite the first direction the engagement of the thread **94** spiraling around the screw **92** and the thread within the recess causes the screw **92** to be fed further into the leg **12** and thereby decreasing the height of the ladder **10**.

A back side view of the connection between the leg and the foot **56** is illustrated in FIG. **8**. From this view it is shown that an adjustment device **58** is positioned on each side of the leg **12**. The positioning of the adjustment members on either side of the foot **56** allows the user to cause one side of the foot **56** to extend down further than the other side of the foot **56** and thus allow the foot to be angled based upon the terrain on which the ladder is to sit.

An enlarged view of the pivotal connection between the foot **56** and the screw **92** is shown in FIG. **9**. As can be seen from this figure, the ball and socket connection allows the foot **56** to pivot as illustrated in dashed lines. The pivoting of the foot **56** in this manner is dependent on the terrain on which the ladder **10** will sit and allows the ladder **10** to stand firmly on the terrain without shaking due to uneven terrain.

The bottom step **30** is illustrated in FIG. **10**. This figure illustrates the pressure sensitive alarm positioned within the bottom step **30**. The power source **34** includes a plurality of recesses **102** extending into the bottom step **30** within each recess is seated a battery **104** for providing power to the pressure sensitive alarm. A cap **106** is positioned to retain the batteries **104** within their respective recess **102**. The use of a plurality of individual batteries **104** provides the pressure sensitive alarm with an added life and allows the pressure sensitive alarm to continue operation even if one battery malfunctions.

FIG. **11** illustrates an enlarged cross-sectional view of the pressure sensitive alarm showing the connections between the elements thereof. Also positioned within each recess **102** are first and second terminals **108** and **110**. The first and second terminals **108** and **110** are connected to a spring loaded step **112**. The first and second terminals **108** and **110** are also connected to the audible alarm **36**. When a user applies pressure to the spring loaded step **112** as illustrated in FIG. **10** such as when the step is stepped on, the first and second terminals **108** and **110** are caused to contact the terminals of the battery **104** positioned within the recesses **102**. Power is thus applied to the audible alarm **36** through the connection to the first and second terminals **108** and **110** causing an audible alarm signal to be produced. Thus, the user is alerted that the bottom step **30** has been reached and thereby minimizes the possibility of stumbling off of the ladder **10**. The alarm signal will be produced for as long as pressure is applied to the spring loaded step **112**. Upon removal of the pressure the first and second terminals **108** and **110** are removed from contact with the terminals of the batteries **104** and thus power is no longer applied to the audible alarm **36**.

A second embodiment of the toolbox is illustrated in FIGS. **12–14** and indicated generally by the numeral **114**. Similar elements of the second embodiment of the toolbox **114** and the toolbox described hereinbefore will be identified with identical reference numerals.

The toolbox **114** illustrated in FIGS. **12–14** is releasably connectable to the ladder **10** and is positioned in the work area of the user thereby placing any needed tools within reach of the user. The toolbox **114** forms the top step **49** of the ladder **10** allowing the user to stand thereatop. The tool box **114** includes a pivotable top **50** and a locking mechanism **52** causing the pivotable top **50** to lock closed thereby securing the tools and supplies within the tool box **48**. Also positioned below the pivotal top **50** is a drawer **116**. The drawer **116** includes a handle or latch **118** for sliding the drawer **116** from its position beneath the pivotal top **50** to reveal a plurality of compartments **120** therein. The plurality of compartments **120** act to retain tools and supplies therein. The latch **118** on each drawer **116** acts to releasably lock the drawer **118** in position beneath the pivotal top **50** when the drawer **24** is slid back beneath the pivotal top **50**. When the pivotal top **50** is pivoted into the open position as shown in FIG. **13**, an additional storage compartment **122** for retaining tools therein. A handle **123** is positioned on the top side **50** of the toolbox **114** allowing the user to remove the toolbox **114** from its position atop the ladder **10**. The handle **123** also provides a means for carrying the toolbox **114** separately from the ladder **10** and thereby allowing the toolbox **114** to be used independently of the ladder **10**.

A third embodiment of the toolbox is illustrated in FIGS. **15–18** and indicated generally by the numeral **124**. The toolbox **124** illustrated in these figures is releasably connectable to the ladder **10** and is positioned in the work area of the user thereby placing any needed tools within reach of the user. When connected to the ladder **10**, the toolbox **124** forms the top step of the ladder allowing the user to stand thereatop. The toolbox **124** includes a bottom section **126** for retaining tools therein and a top section **128** formed of first and second pivotal sides **130** and **132**, respectively which when pivoted into the open position provides access to the tools within the bottom section **126**. A pivotal connection **134** connects each of the first and second pivotal sides **130** and **132** to the bottom section **126**. A handle **131** is positioned on a top side of the first pivotal side **130** and a handle **133** is positioned on a top side of the second pivotal side **132** of the toolbox **124**. The handles **131** and **133** are used for carrying the toolbox **124** independently of the ladder **10**. On a back side **136** of the bottom section **126** are a plurality of hooks **138** for receiving a tools, supplies or even a utility belt thereon and retaining the items retained thereby within the work area and easily accessible to the user. An elongated hook **140** also extends from the back side **136** for providing additional stability to the toolbox **124**. The elongated hook **140** is to be positioned over the retaining device and thereby securing the toolbox **124** to the ladder **10**.

When the first and second sides **130** and **132**, respectively, are pivoted into the open position the internal compartment **142** of the bottom section **126** is exposed. The first side **130** forms a first smaller storage compartment **144** and includes a first cover **146** pivotally connected thereto for closing the first smaller storage compartment **144**. The first cover **146** includes a plurality of recesses **148** extending therethrough and indicia **150** printed thereon providing a ruler for the user. The second side **132** also forms a second small storage compartment **152** and includes a second cover **154** pivotally connected thereto for closing the second small storage compartment **152**. The second cover **154** also includes a plurality of recesses **156** extending therethrough and indicia **158** printed thereon providing a ruler for the user.

FIG. **18** illustrates the toolbox **124** of FIGS. **15–17** including an additional platform **160** pivotally connected to the bottom section **126**. The additional platform covers the bottom section when in the closed position and provides access to the bottom section when pivoted into the open position as illustrated in FIG. **18**. Arrow **162** illustrates the direction of pivoting of the additional platform **160**. When the first and second sides **130** and **132** of the top section **128** are pivoted into the open position, the additional platform provides a flat surface on which the user may work.

The first side **130** also includes a second cover section **164** for covering the first storage compartment **144**. The second cover section pivots as indicated by the arrow labeled **166**. When pivoted into the open position indicated in FIG. **18**, access to the first storage area is provided and when the second cover section is pivoted into the closed position access to the first storage area is prevented. Pivotally connected to a back side of the first cover **144** are first and second stands **168** and **170**. The first and second stands **168** and **170** retain the first cover **144** in a level position when pivoted into the open position. When the first side **130** is pivoted as indicated by the arrow labeled **172** into the open position, the first cover is pivoted into the open position with the first and second stands **168** and **170** contacting the side of the first side **130** and the second cover section **164** is pivoted into the closed position, an additional flat surface is provided for the user to work on.

The second side **132** also includes a second cover section **174** for covering the second storage compartment **152**. The second cover section **174** is pivotally connected to the second side **132**. When pivoted into the open position indicated in FIG. **18**, access to the second storage area **152** is provided and when the second cover section **174** is pivoted into the closed position access to the second storage area **152** is prevented. Pivotally connected to a back side of the second cover **154** are stands for retaining the second cover **154** in a level position when pivoted into the open position. When the second side **132** is pivoted into the open position, the first cover **154** is pivoted into the open position with the stands contacting the side of the second side **132** and the second cover section **174** is pivoted into the closed position, an additional flat surface is provided for the user to work on. An enlarged work area is thus provided by the additional platform **160**, the first cover **146** of the first side **130**, the second cover section **164** of the first side **130**, the first cover **154** of the second side **132** and the second cover section of the second side **132**.

Alternatively, a paint tray **176** as illustrated in FIG. **19** may be attached to the ladder **10** in lieu of the toolbox for enabling the ladder to be used for painting an area. The paint tray includes clips **178** on an underside thereof for engaging the protrusions **60** extending from the legs of the ladder **10** to thereby retain the paint tray **176** in place atop the ladder **10**. Also extending from one end of the paint tray **176** are receiving devices for retaining a paint brush **182** therein and readily available to the user.

FIG. **20** illustrates a further work surface **184** which may be releasably connected to the top of the ladder. The work surface **184** includes clips **186** on an underside thereof for engaging the protrusions **60** extending from the legs of the ladder **10** to thereby retain the work surface **184** in place atop the ladder **10**. Positioned on a top side **186** of the work surface **184** are a plurality of clips **188** for receiving fluorescent light bulbs **190** therein and readily accessible to the user when replacing a light bulb. Extending through the work surface **184** are a plurality of recesses **192** for receiving light bulbs **194** therein and readily accessible to the user when replacing a light bulb.

The operation of the ladder including storage areas **10** will now be described with reference to the figures. In operation, the storage compartments **28** of the ladder including storage areas **10** are first filled with the tools necessary to perform the desired operation and the recesses **102** are loaded with batteries **104** so the audible alarm will operate. The ladder **10** is then transported to the work area.

At the work area the terrain is examined and the angle and height of the feet **56** are adjusted to meet the terrain. This allows the ladder **10** to stand firmly in the work area without the possibility of tipping or being unstable. The first and second pair of legs **12** and **14** are then separated to the desired angle thus providing the ladder **10** with the desired height. The locking member **46** is then secured in position to lock the first and second pairs of legs **12** and **14** at their desired angle.

The tool box **48** may now be secured atop the ladder **10** by applying pressure towards the protrusions **60** such that the protrusions **74** are caused to extend through the recesses **70**. The tool box **48** is now secured at the top of the ladder **10** and readily accessible to the user. The retaining device **80** is then placed in the in use position and any desired tool or supply may be connected thereto and be easily accessible to the user. The ladder **10** may now be used to complete the desired task.

Once the task is finished, the tool or supply hanging from the retaining device **80** is removed. Next, the tool box **48** is removed by applying a force in a direction opposite the force used to secure it in position. This force is applied until the protrusions **74** are removed from the recesses **70**. The locking member **46** is then removed and the first and second pairs of legs **12** and **14** are moved towards each other causing the ladder **10** to be in a closed position. The ladder **10** can now be stored until it is desired to use the ladder **10** again.

From the above description it can be seen that the ladder including storage areas of the present invention is able to overcome the shortcomings of prior art devices by providing a ladder including storage areas which is able to retain a desired tool in an easily accessible position adjacent the user and store numerous tools and other desired items in storage cabinets positioned so as not to obstruct the user. The storage cabinets are in the form of pull out drawers located beneath the steps of the ladder and including a snap lock to lock the storage cabinets in place upon return to a position beneath its respective step. The ladder including storage areas also includes a tool box removably positioned within the work area defined by the ladder and is able to generate an alarm signal indicating when the user has reached the bottom step thereby preventing the possibility of the user stumbling when descending from the ladder, the alarm signal being generated by a pressure sensor positioned in the bottom step and activated when a user applies a pressure to the step such as by stepping thereon. The ladder also includes storage areas having adjustable feet on a base of the legs of the ladder thereby adding stability to the ladder when in use, the feet being both angularly and height adjustable. Alternatively, the ladder including storage areas may include a toolbox designed to retain and store supplies and tools related to the particular job to be performed releasbly positioned within the work area of the user or a paint tray or storage tray may be releasably connected atop the ladder and within the work area of the user in lieu of the toolbox. Furthermore, the ladder including storage areas of the present invention is simple and easy to use and economical in cost to manufacture.

It will be understood that each of the elements described above, or two or more together may also find a useful

application in other types of methods differing from the type described above.

While certain novel features of this invention have been shown and described and are pointed out in the annexed claims, it is not intended to be limited to the details above, since it will be understood that various omissions, modifications, substitutions and changes in the forms and details of the device illustrated and in its operation can be made by those skilled in the art without departing in any way from the spirit of the present invention.

Without further analysis, the foregoing will so fully reveal the gist of the present invention that others can, by applying current knowledge, readily adapt it for various applications without omitting features that, from the standpoint of prior art, fairly constitute essential characteristics of the generic or specific aspects of this invention.

What is claimed is new and desired to be protected by Letters Patent is set forth in the appended claims:

1. A ladder including storage areas comprising:

a) a first pair of legs;

b) a second pair of legs extending at an adjustable angle to said first pair of legs;

c) a plurality of steps extending between said legs of said first pair of legs;

d) a plurality of storage compartments, each of said plurality of storage compartments positioned below a respective one of said plurality of steps and movable between a first position completely contained beneath its respective step and a second position extending out from its respective step providing access to a storage area,

e) a tool box including a tool retaining section, a top cover pivotally connected to said tool retaining section and a recess extending into a side of said tool retaining section on a base side of said toolbox providing a top step on which the user may step; and

f) means for releasably connecting said tool box in a work area of said ladder and easily accessible to a user, wherein each leg of said first and second pairs of legs include a connection nub extending therefrom, each connection nub including a recess extending therethrough and said tool box further includes at least two protrusions extending from an underside thereof, said at least two protrusions being removably received by a respective one of said recesses in said connection nub when said tool box is connected in the work area.

2. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **1**, wherein each of said plurality of storage compartments include a latch for releasably locking said storage compartment in said first position.

3. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **2**, wherein each of said plurality of storage compartments further include a plurality of dividers therein for providing a plurality of storage areas for separating tools and supplies.

4. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **1**, further comprising adjustable feet connected to each leg of said first and second pair of legs.

5. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **4**, wherein said adjustable feet are angularly adjustable to meet a slope of terrain on which said ladder is positioned.

6. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **5**, wherein said adjustable feet are adjustable in height for matching an uneven terrain on which said ladder is positioned and providing added stability thereto.

7. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **1**, further comprising means for securing said first and second pair of legs at a desired angle.

8. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **7**, wherein said means for securing is removably connected to both said first and second pair of legs.

9. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **1**, further comprising a pressure sensor positioned within a bottom one of said plurality of steps.

10. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **9**, wherein said pressure sensor generates an audible alarm signal when pressure is applied to said bottom one of said plurality of steps.

11. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **1**, further comprising means for retaining one of a tool and supply in an easily accessible position for a user connected to said ladder.

12. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **1**, further comprising means for retaining one of a tool and supply in an easily accessible position for a user connected to said ladder.

13. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **12**, wherein said tool box includes a top cover pivotally connected thereto.

14. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **13**, wherein said means for retaining is operable between a first position for retaining one of the tool and supply thereon and a second position defining a range of angles within which said top cover is pivotable.

15. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **1**, wherein said at least two protrusions each include an enlarged head section with a beveled top side for receipt within its respective recess.

16. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **1**, wherein said toolbox includes a base section, a top cover pivotally connected to the base section and forming a top step of said ladder, a face side and a storage compartment extending into said base section and movable between a first position completely contained within said toolbox and a second position extending out from said toolbox providing access to a storage area.

17. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **16**, wherein said toolbox further includes a recess extending into a side of said storage compartment and on a side of said storage compartment opposite said top cover providing an additional step on which the user is able to climb.

18. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **17** further including a handle positioned on said top cover for removing said toolbox from a position atop the ladder and carrying said toolbox separately from said ladder.

19. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **1**, wherein said toolbox includes:

a) a base section having a platform pivotally connected thereto for providing selective access to said base section; and

b) a cover section, said cover section including first and second side compartments, each side compartment being pivotally connected to opposing sides of said base section and including a first cover section pivotally connected thereto for providing selective access to said respective compartment, wherein said first and second side compartments are pivotable between a first position preventing access to said base section and a second position pivoted to provide access to said base section, said respective first cover sections extending parallel to said platform and providing an extended work area for the user when said first and second side compartments are in said second position.

20. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **19**, wherein said first and second compartments each further

include second cover sections pivotally connected to a side of said respective compartment, said second cover section pivotal in a direction opposite said first cover section and including at least one recess extending therethrough for receiving a tool therein and indicia printed thereon.

21. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **20**, wherein said indicia identifies units of length.

22. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **21**, wherein said second cover sections each include at least one stand pivotally connected to a side opposite said indicia for contacting said respective side compartment when said second cover section is in an open position, thereby retaining said second cover section in a position parallel to said platform providing an extended work area for the user.

23. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **1**, further comprising a paint tray and means for releasably connecting said paint tray in a work area of said ladder and easily accessible to a user.

24. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **23**, wherein said paint tray includes at least one clip positioned on an underside of said paint tray for releasably connecting said paint tray to said ladder.

25. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **24**, wherein said paint tray further includes means for receiving a paintbrush positioned on a side of said paint tray and retaining the paint brush in a position readily accessible to a user.

26. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **1**, further comprising a work surface and means for releasably connecting said work surface in a work area of said ladder and easily accessible to a user.

27. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **26**, wherein said work surface includes at least one clip positioned on an underside of said work surface for engaging said means for releasably connecting and releasably connecting said work surface to said ladder.

28. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **27**, wherein said work surface further includes at least one retaining device adapted to receive a light bulb therein and retaining the light bulb in a position readily accessible to a user.

29. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **28**, wherein said work surface further includes at least one recess adapted to receive a light bulb therein and retaining the light bulb in a position readily accessible to a user.

30. The ladder including storage areas as recited in claim **28**, wherein said at least one retaining device is adapted to receive a fluorescent light bulb therein.

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