UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

GOLDPACE ENTERPRISES, INC., a Florida corporation, and CUSTOMER MINDED ASSOCIATES, INC., a Florida corporation,

Plaintiffs,

v.

KOHL'S DEPARTMENT STORES, INC., a Delaware Corporation.

Defendant.

04-20217 CIV-SEITZ MAGISTRATE BANDSTRA

COMPLAINT

COME NOW the Plaintiffs, Goldpace Enterprises, Inc., and Customer Minded Associates, Inc. (hereinafter, collectively, ("Plaintiffs"), and file their Complaint against Defendant, Kohl's Department Stores, Inc.,(hereinafter, "Defendant"), as follows:

ALLEGATIONS COMMON TO ALL COUNTS

This is an action for patent infringement pursuant to the Patent Laws of the United States, 35 U.S.C. §1, et seq.

THE PARTIES

1. Plaintiff, Goldpace Enterprises, Inc. (hereinafter, "Goldpace"), is a corporation of the state of Florida, having an address at 11453 NW 34th Street, Miami, Florida.

2. Plaintiff, Customer Minded Associates, Inc. (hereinafter, "Customer Minded"), is a corporation of the state of Florida, having an address at 11453 NW 34th Street, Miami, Florida.

3. Upon information and belief, Defendant, Kohl's Department Stores, Inc., is a corporation which is incorporated under the laws of the state of Delaware, and has a principal place of business at its corporate offices located at N56 W17000 Ridgewood Drive, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

4. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1331 and §1338.

5. Venue is proper in the Southern District of Florida pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1391(b), §1391(c), and §1400(b) because, upon information and belief, a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to this claim occurred in this district, or a substantial part of the property that is the subject of this action is situated in this district; upon information and belief, Defendant is doing business in this district via an interactive internet website which is readily accessible to the public within this district and a commercial advertising campaign which is broadcast publically on television and radio within this district and, as such, Defendant is subject to personal jurisdiction in this district and is, therefore, deemed to reside in this district; and, upon information and belief, Defendant has established a regular place of business in this district via an interactive internet website which is readily accessible to the public within this district and has committed acts of infringement via this interactive internet website.

6. Personal jurisdiction over Defendant is established because, upon information and belief, Defendant is operating, conducting, engaging in or carrying on a business or business venture in the State of Florida, and more specifically, the Southern District of Florida via its interactive internet website and its commercial advertising campaign, and has committed patent infringement and other related tortious acts within this State via its interactive internet website and its commercial advertising campaign, within the meaning of Florida Statutes, §48.193(1)(a) and §48.193(1)(b).

7. Personal jurisdiction over Defendant is established because, upon information and belief, Defendant has caused injury to property of the Plaintiffs located in the State of Florida, and more specifically, the Southern District of Florida, by infringing upon Plaintiffs' patent rights, while, at or about the time of the injury, Defendant was engaged in solicitation or service activities, in the State of Florida, and more specifically, the Southern District of Florida, via its interactive internet website and its commercial advertising campaign, or, products, materials, or things processed, serviced or manufactured by or for the Defendant were used or consumed in the State of Florida, and more specifically, in the Southern District of Florida, in the ordinary course of commerce, trade, or use via its interactive internet website and its commercial advertising campaign, within the meaning of Florida Statutes §48.193(1)(f).

8. Personal jurisdiction over Defendant is established

because, upon information and belief, Defendant has engaged in substantial, continuous, and not isolated commercial activity in the State of Florida, and, more specifically, in the Southern District of Florida, via its interactive internet website and commercial advertisement campaign, such commercial activity being intrastate, interstate, or otherwise, within the meaning of Florida Statutes §48.193(2).

9. The preceding activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

A. Upon information and belief, Defendant makes, uses, offers to sell, and/or sells in the United States, and/or imports into the United States one or more garment folding device, including at least one device known as the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT," which Defendant uses to prepare men's, women's, and children's clothing, and housewares such as, for example, linens, for display and/or shipment to consumers located in the Southern District of Florida and/or Florida. Copies of photographs of the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device are attached hereto as Exhibit A;

B. Upon information and belief, Defendant offers to sell and/or sells men's, women's, and children's clothing, and housewares such as, for example, linens, which Defendant prepares for display and/or shipment to consumers within the Southern District of Florida and/or Florida using one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, via an interactive internet website located at www.kohls.com (hereinafter "Defendant's interactive internet website"), which is

readily available and accessible to the public within the Southern District of Florida and/or Florida, and wherein ordering and purchasing of said men's, women's, and children's clothing, and housewares such as, for example, linens, can be and/or actually have been accomplished on-line in the Southern District of Florida and/or Florida via Defendant's interactive internet website. True and accurate print-outs of portions of Defendant's interactive internet website are attached hereto as Exhibit B;

C. Upon information and belief, Defendant uses in the United States one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, to prepare men's, women's, and children's clothing, and housewares such as, for example, linens, for display and/or shipment to consumers in the Southern District of Florida and/or Florida via Defendant's interactive internet website;

D. Upon information and belief, Defendant actively induces others to make, use, offer to sell, and/or sell in the United States, and/or import into the United States one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, and which Defendant uses to prepare men's, women's, and children's clothing, and housewares such as, for example, linens, for display and/or shipment to consumers in the Southern District of Florida and/or Florida via Defendant's interactive internet website; and

E. Upon information and belief, Defendant has substantial and continuous sales and/or offers to sell men's,

women's, and children's clothing, and housewares such as, for example, linens, to consumers in the Southern District of Florida and/or Florida via Defendant's interactive internet website, which Defendant prepares for display and/or shipment using one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device.

PLAINTIFF'S PATENTED INVENTIONS

10. United States Patent No. 6,015,069 (the "'069 patent"), was duly and lawfully issued on January 18, 2000. A copy of the '069 patent is attached hereto as Exhibit C.

11. Plaintiff Goldpace, as assignee, is the owner of all right, title, and interest in and to the '069 patent.

12. Plaintiff Customer Minded is the exclusive licensee of the invention of the '069 patent from Plaintiff Goldpace.

13. The patented invention, as claimed in the '069 patent, relates to a garment folding device.

14. United States Patent No. 6,269,987 ("the '987 patent"), was duly and lawfully issued on August 7, 2001. A copy of the '987 patent is attached hereto as Exhibit D.

15. Plaintiff Goldpace, as assignee, is the owner of all right, title, and interest in and to the '987 patent.

16. Plaintiff Customer Minded is the exclusive licensee of the invention of the '987 patent from Plaintiff Goldpace.

17. The patented invention, as claimed in the '987 patent, relates to a garment folding device.

18. United States Patent No. 6,561,392 ("the '392 patent"), was duly and lawfully issued on May 13, 2003. A copy of the '392 patent is attached hereto as Exhibit E.

19. Plaintiff Goldpace, as assignee, is the owner of all right, title, and interest in and to the '392 patent.

20. Plaintiff Customer Minded is the exclusive licensee of the invention of the '392 patent from Plaintiff Goldpace.

21. The patented invention, as claimed in the '392 patent, relates to a garment folding device.

DEFENDANT'S WRONGFUL CONDUCT

22. The Defendant was given and had actual notice of the '069 patent and the '987 patent and, thus, had direct knowledge thereof.

23. Upon information and belief, and despite such actual notice and direct knowledge, Defendant deliberately and directly infringed the '069 patent and the '987 patent by willfully and wantonly making, using, offering to sell, and/or selling in the United States, and/or importing into the United States one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, in flagrant disregard of Plaintiffs' patent rights.

24. Upon information and belief, and despite such actual notice and direct knowledge, Defendant continues to deliberately and directly infringe the '069 patent and the '987 patent by willfully and wantonly making, using, offering to sell, and/or selling in the United States, and/or importing into the United States one or more garment folding device, including at least the

"KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, in flagrant disregard of Plaintiffs' patent rights.

25. Upon information and belief, and despite such actual notice and direct knowledge, Defendant deliberately and actively induced infringement of the '069 patent and the '987 patent in violation of 35 U.S.C. §271(b) by willfully and wantonly instructing others to make, use, offer to sell, and/or sell in the United States, or import into the United States one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, in flagrant disregard of Plaintiffs' patent rights. Further, Defendant's subsequent and actual use of the one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, constitutes a direct infringement of the '069 patent and the '987 patent.

26. Upon information and belief, and despite such actual notice and direct knowledge, Defendant continues to deliberately and actively induce infringement of the '069 patent and the '987 patent in violation of 35 U.S.C. §271(b) by willfully and wantonly instructing others to make, use, offer to sell, and/or sell in the United States, or import into the United States one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, in flagrant disregard of Plaintiffs' patent rights. Further, Defendant's actual use of the one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, constitutes a direct infringement of the '069 patent and the '987 patent.

27. Upon information and belief, Defendant directly infringed the '392 patent by making, using, offering to sell, and/or selling in the United States, and/or importing into the United States one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device.

28. Upon information and belief, Defendant continues to directly infringe the '392 patent by making, using, offering to sell, and/or selling in the United States, and/or importing into the United States one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device.

29. Upon information and belief, Defendant actively induced infringement of the '392 patent in violation of 35 U.S.C. §271(b) by instructing others to make, use, offer to sell, and/or sell in the United States, or import into the United States one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device. Further, Defendant's subsequent and actual use of one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, constitutes a direct infringement of the '392 patent.

30. Upon information and belief, Defendant continues to actively induce infringement of the '392 patent in violation of 35 U.S.C. §271(b) by instructing others to make, use, offer to sell, and/or sell in the United States, or import into the United States one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device. Further, Defendant's subsequent and actual use of one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, constitutes a direct infringement of the

'392 patent.

COUNT I -

DIRECT INFRINGEMENT OF THE '069 PATENT AND THE '987 PATENT

31. Plaintiffs incorporate herein each and every allegation set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 30.

32. Defendant's aforesaid acts constitute direct infringement of one or more of the claims of the '069 patent and the '987 patent, either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents, in violation of U.S. Patent Laws, including 35 U.S.C. §271, et seq., and the developed body of law thereunder.

33. Upon information and belief, Defendant's infringement has been willful and wanton, with actual notice and direct knowledge, and in conscious disregard of Plaintiffs' rights in the '069 patent and the '987 patent.

34. Defendant's aforesaid acts have caused great irreparable injury to Plaintiffs and, unless Defendant is restrained by this Court, Plaintiffs will continue to suffer great and irreparable injury.

35. Plaintiffs have no adequate remedy at law.

COUNT II -

ACTIVE INDUCEMENT OF INFRINGEMENT OF THE '069 AND '987 PATENTS

36. Plaintiffs incorporate herein each and every allegation set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 30.

37. Defendant's aforesaid acts constitute actively inducement

of infringement of one or more the claims of the '069 patent and the '987 patent, either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents, in violation of U.S. Patent Laws, including 35 U.S.C. §271, et seq., and the developed body of law thereunder.

38. Upon information and belief, Defendant's active inducement of infringement has been willful and wanton, with actual notice and direct knowledge, and in conscious disregard of Plaintiffs' rights in the '069 patent and the '987 patent.

39. Defendant's aforesaid acts have caused great irreparable injury to Plaintiffs and, unless Defendant is restrained by this Court, Plaintiffs will continue to suffer great and irreparable injury.

40. Plaintiffs have no adequate remedy at law.

COUNT III - DIRECT INFRINGEMENT OF THE '392 PATENT

41. Plaintiffs incorporate herein each and every allegation set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 30.

42. Defendant's aforesaid acts constitute direct infringement of one or more of the claims of the '392 patent, either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents, in violation of U.S. Patent Laws, including 35 U.S.C. §271, et seq., and the developed body of law thereunder.

43. Defendant's aforesaid acts have caused great irreparable injury to Plaintiffs and, unless Defendant is restrained by this Court, Plaintiffs will continue to suffer great and irreparable injury.

44. Plaintiffs have no adequate remedy at law.

COUNT IV - ACTIVE INDUCEMENT OF INFRINGEMENT OF THE '392 PATENT

45. Plaintiffs incorporate herein each and every allegation set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 30.

46. Defendant's aforesaid acts constitute active inducement of infringement of one or more of the claims of the '392 patent, either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents, in violation of U.S. Patent Laws, including 35 U.S.C. §271, et seq., and the developed body of law thereunder.

47. Defendant's aforesaid acts have caused great irreparable injury to Plaintiffs and, unless Defendant is restrained by this Court, Plaintiffs will continue to suffer great and irreparable injury.

48. Plaintiffs have no adequate remedy at law.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs pray:

A. That the Court find that Defendant's aforesaid acts of making, using, offering to sell, and/or selling in the United States, and/or importing into the United States one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, constitute direct infringement of the '069 patent, the '987 patent, and the '392 patent, either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents.

B. That the Court find that Defendant's aforesaid acts of instructing others to make, use, offer to sell, and/or sell in

the United States, and/or import into the United States one or more garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, constitute active inducement of infringement of the '069 patent, the '987 patent, and the '392 patent, either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents.

C. That Defendant, and all of its agents, servants, employees, successors, assigns and all persons acting in concert or in active participation with Defendant, be preliminarily and permanently enjoined and restrained:

i) From making, using, offering to sell, and/or selling in the United States, and/or importing into the United States any garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, and any other device that infringes any claim of the '069 patent, the '987 patent, and/or the '392 patent, either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents;

ii) From instructing others to make, use, offer to sell, and/or sell in the United States, and/or import into the United States any garment folding device, including at least the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" device, and any other device that infringes any claim of the '069 patent, the '987 patent, and/or the '392 patent, either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents;

iii) That Defendant be ordered to deliver up for destruction all garment folding devices, including at least all of the "KOHL'S FOLD-MAT" devices, and any other devices that infringe any claim of the '069 patent, the '987 patent, and/or the '392 patent, either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents; and

iv) That Defendant be directed to file with this Court and serve upon Plaintiffs within thirty (30) days after service of the injunction issued in this action, written reports under oath setting forth in detail the manner in which the Defendant has complied with the injunction.

D. That the Court order an accounting for damages resulting from Defendant's infringement.

E. That Plaintiffs recover damages adequate to compensate for the infringement, calculated as not less than a reasonable royalty of any financial or any other calculable benefit conferred upon Defendant as a result of direct infringement of the '392 patent and active inducement of infringement of the '392 patent.

F. That the Court enter a declaration making this case exceptional within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §285, based upon Defendant's deliberate, wanton and willful infringement of the '069 patent and the '987 patent.

G. That Plaintiffs recover damages adequate to compensate for the infringement, calculated as not less than a reasonable royalty of any financial or any other calculable benefit conferred upon Defendant as a result of infringement of the '069 patent and the '987 patent, and actively inducing infringement of the '069 patent and the '987 patent, and that the Court, pursuant to 35 U.S.C. §284, enter judgment equal to three (3) times such amount.

H. That Plaintiffs recover their attorneys' fees

incurred in this action, pursuant to 35 U.S.C. §285.

I. That Plaintiffs recover their taxable costs and disbursements herein.

J. That Plaintiffs recover both pre-judgment and post-judgment interest.

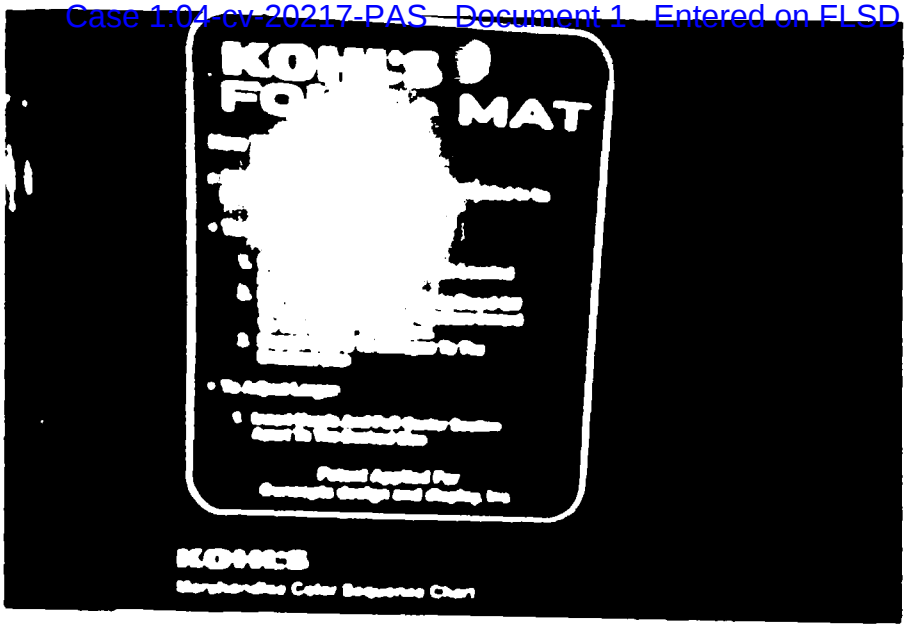
K. That Plaintiffs have such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

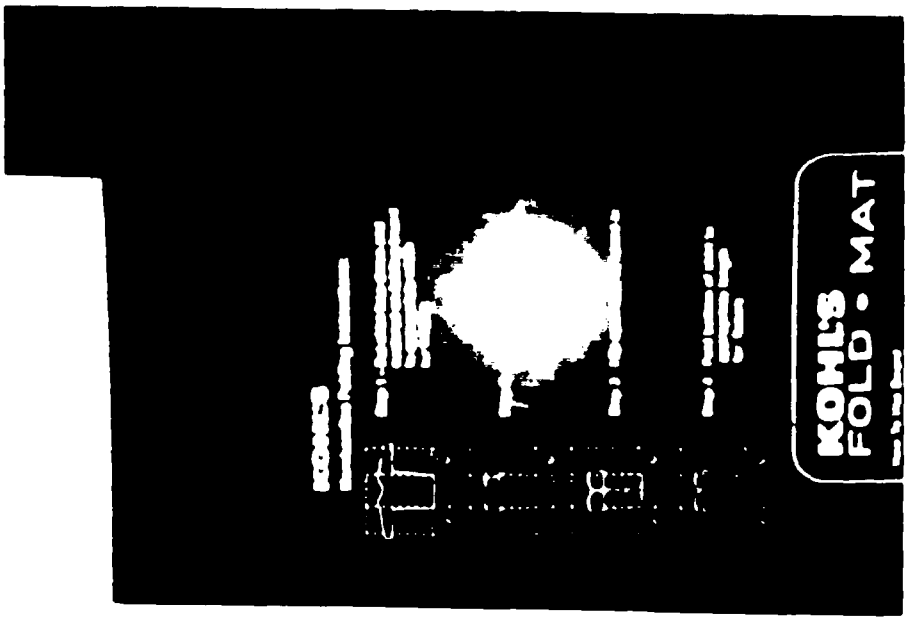
Dated: January 28, 2004

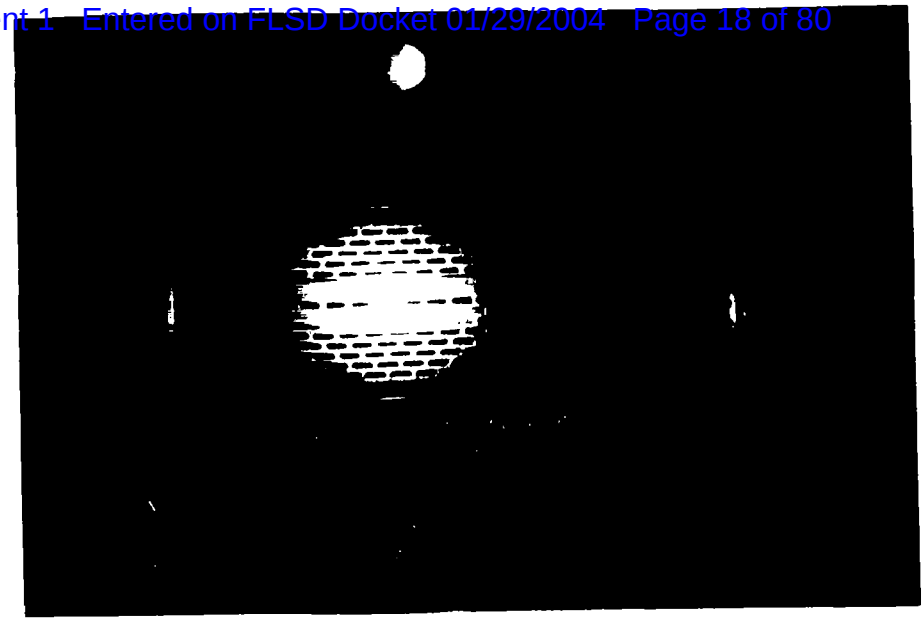
By: 

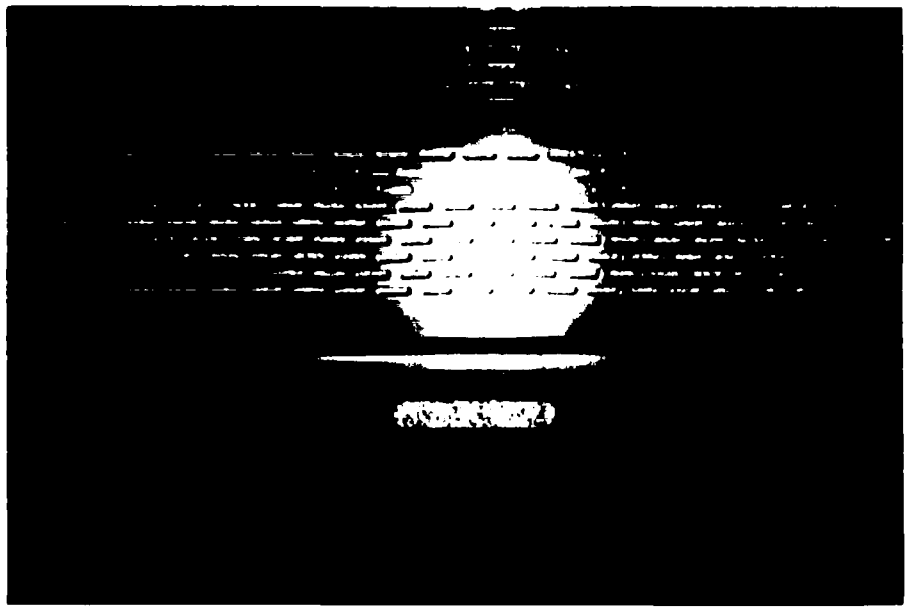
John Cyril Malloy, III
Florida Bar No. 964,220
Peter A. Matos
Florida Bar No. 992,879
Andrew W. Ransom
Florida Bar No. 964,344
John Fulton, Jr.
Florida Bar No. 173,800
MALLOY & MALLOY, P.A.
2800 S.W. Third Avenue
Miami, Florida 33129
Telephone (305) 858-8000
Facsimile (305) 858-0008

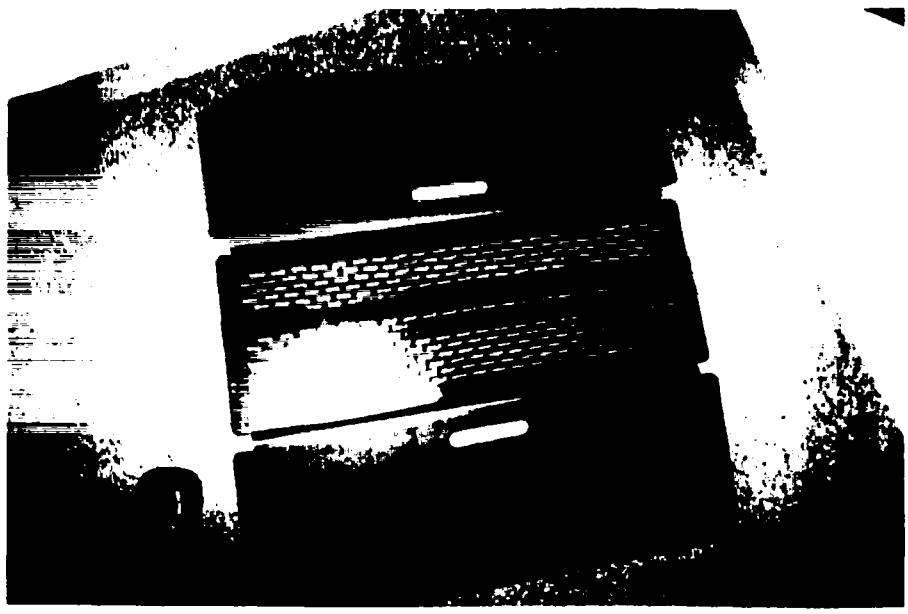
EXHIBIT A

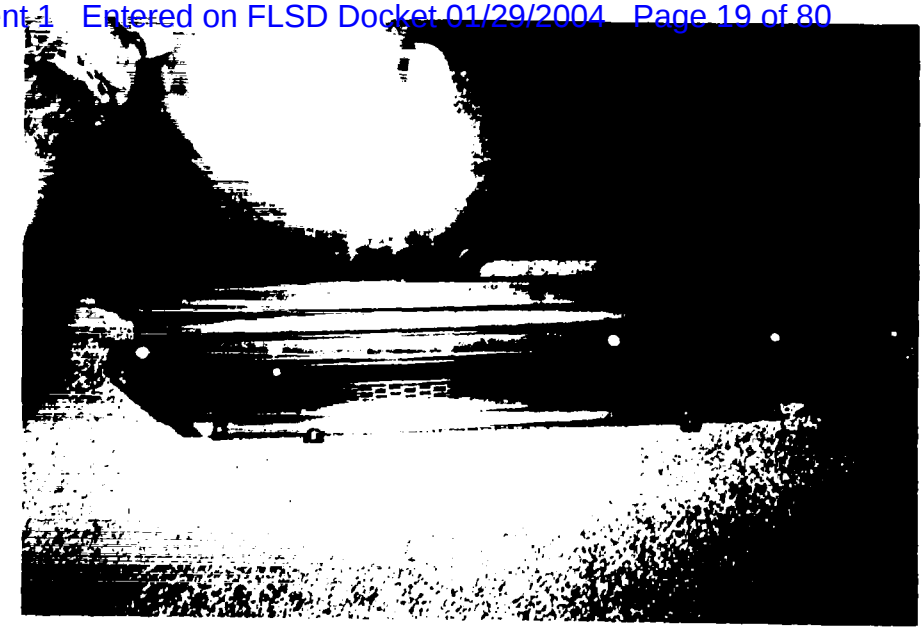

MAT
KOHL'S

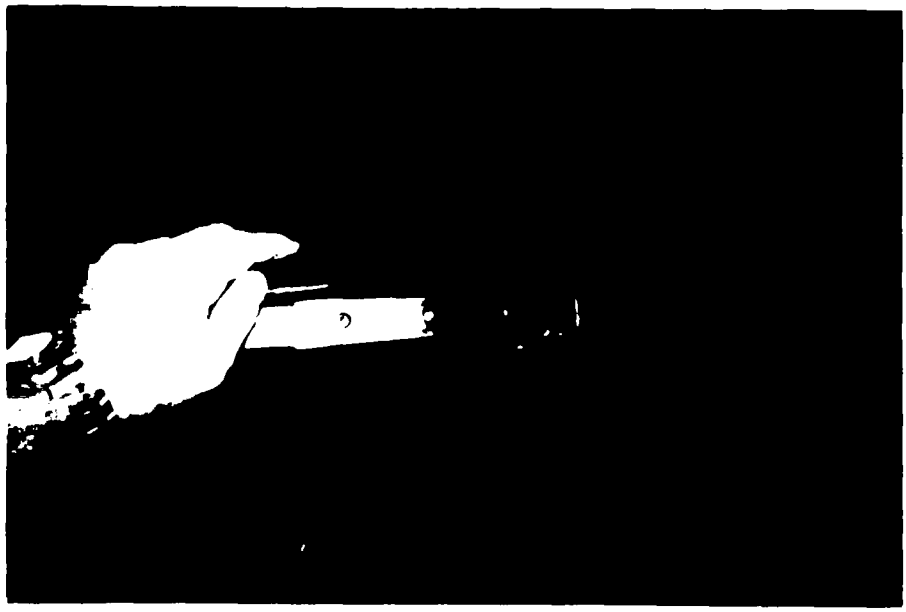

KOHL'S
FOLD • MAT

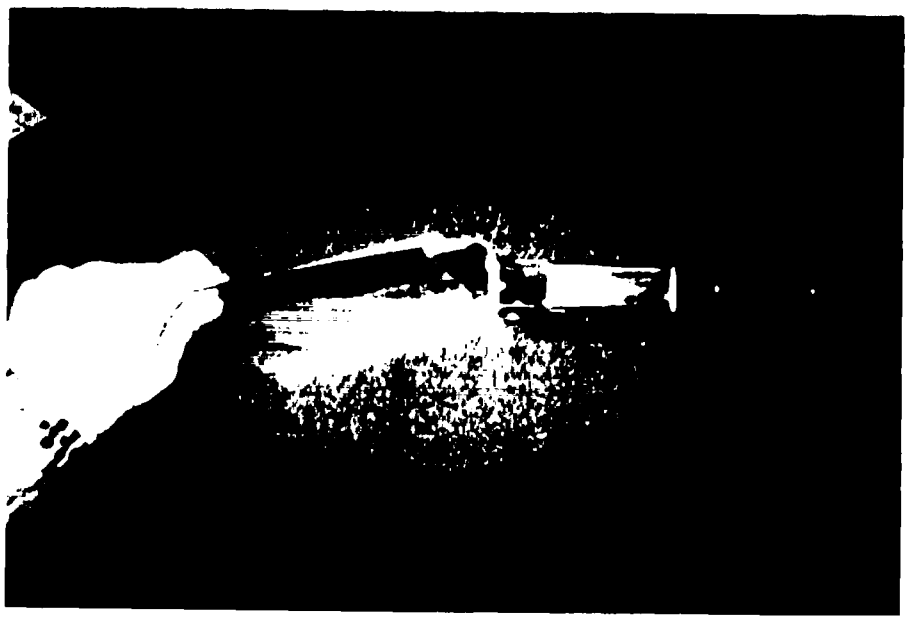


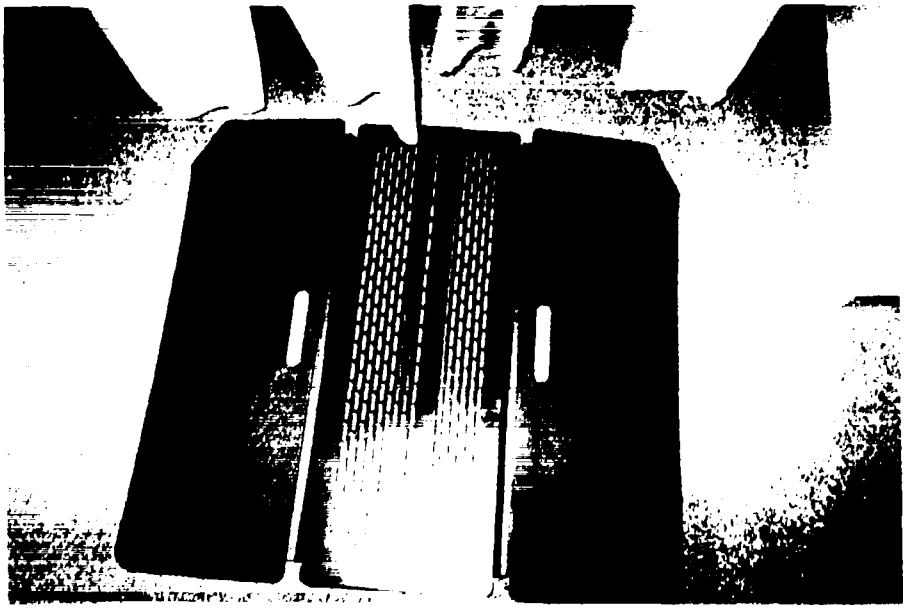












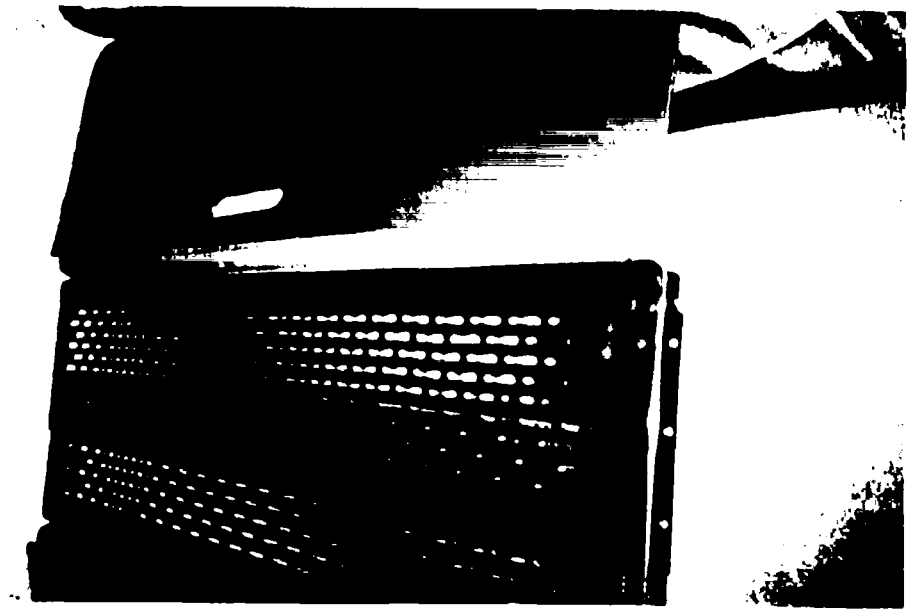


EXHIBIT B

Welcome to Kohls.com!

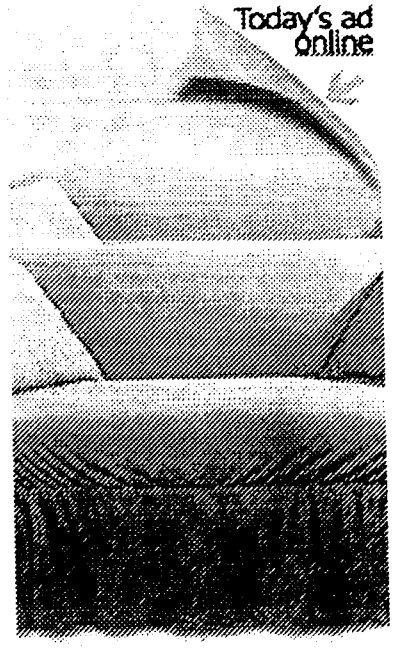
KOHL'S sign-in • customer service • track your order search go

women's juniors' men's kids' homestore clearance gift shop bridal registry gift card

view shopping bag/checkout 0 item(s), 0.00 total

Today's ad online

10-40% Off
ENTIRE STOCK
Floor Care



40% Off
Slipcovers

contact us e-mail sales alerts product recalls shipping shopping guides site map today's ad
about us careers company news investor relations store locator our websites

cg - 1/21/04

women's

- Gifts for Women
- Gifts for the Family
- Tops
- Sweaters & Fleece
- Jeans
- Bottoms
- Coordinates
- Dresses
- Fitness Apparel
- Outerwear
- Swim Shop
- Intimates
- Sleepwear & Robes
- Fine Jewelry
- Fashion Jewelry
- Watches
- Beauty & Fragrances
- Handbags & Belts
- Shoes
- Women's (16W-24W)
- Petites'
- Maternity
- Brands for Her

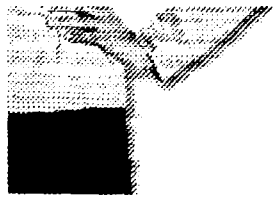
$19.99-$29.99
Women's Jeans

30-50% Off
Nine & Company® and Axcess Modern Sportswear

20-50% Off
Fitness Apparel

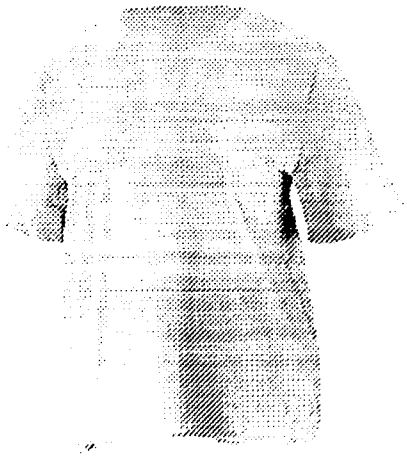
50-70% Off
Winter Outerwear

50% Off
Columbia Sportswear Company® Separates



KG - 1/21/04

Notations Short Sleeve Tee



enlarged image

Notations Short Sleeve Tee
reg. $20.00
sale $14.99

Select the item below.

Click on a swatch to view the color.

Black | Ivory | Sesame | White

More to Consider

Notations Sleeveless Shell
orig. $18.00
sale $12.99

Fundamental fashion! This top is a must-have for any career or dress wardrobe. In silky soft poly microfiber. Keyhole back button closure. Great layering piece!

- 100% polyester
- Machine wash
- Imported

Size Chart

XS	4
S	6-8
M	10-12
L	14-16
XL	18

Size chart is a general guide. It may include sizes that are unavailable for this item.

Item	Price	Color	Size	Quantity
Notations Short Sleeve Tee	reg. $20.00 **sale $14.99**	*Choose a Color	*Choose a Size	*1

Ship this item to: *Choose an address

add to bag

* Required Fields

Kg - 1/21/04

KOHL'S sign-in • customer service • track your order search go

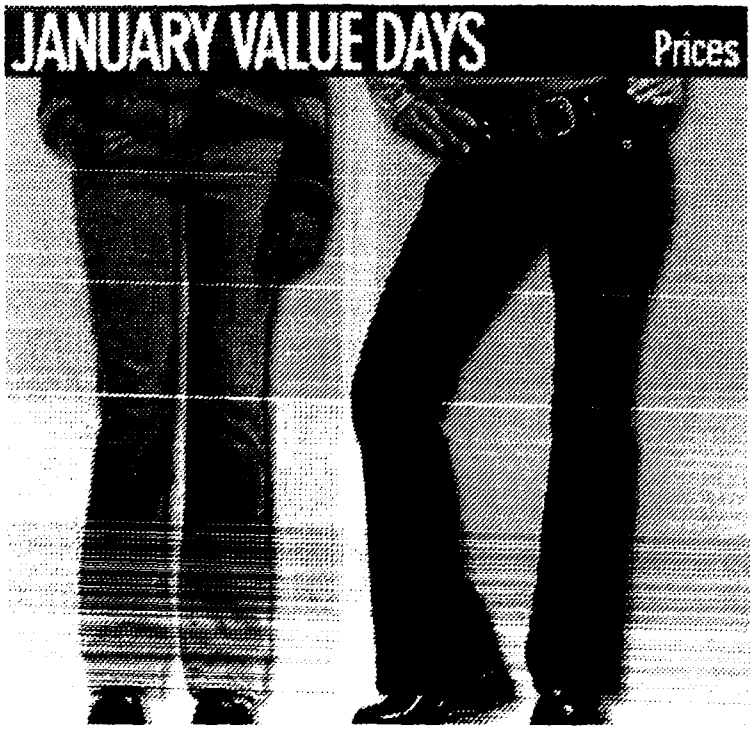
women's | juniors | men's | kids' | homestore | clearance | gift shop | bridal registry | gift card

view shopping bag/checkout 0 item(s), 0.00 total

Home/ Juniors'

juniors'

- Gifts for Juniors
- Gifts for the Family
- Tops
- Sweaters
- Jeans
- Bottoms
- Dresses
- Activewear
- Outerwear
- Swim Shop
- Sleepwear
- Intimates
- Jewelry
- Watches
- Beauty & Fragrances
- Handbags & Belts
- Shoes
- Brands for Juniors
- School Uniforms



$21.99-$29.99
Jeans

SALE **$9.99**
Screen-Printed Tees

$39.99-$49.99
Athletic Shoes

contact us | e-mail sales alerts | product recalls | shipping | shopping guides | site map | today's ad

about us | careers | company news | investor relations | store locator | our websites

KG 1/21/04

KOHL'S sign-in • customer service • track your order search go

women's | juniors' | men's | kids' | homestore | clearance | gift shop | bridal registry | gift card

view shopping bag/checkout 16 item(s), $267.99 total

Home/ Men's

men's

- Gifts for Men
- Gifts for the Family
- Shirts
- Jeans
- Pants & Shorts
- Athletic Apparel
- Outerwear
- Socks & Underwear
- Sleepwear
- Swim Shop
- Watches & Jewelry
- Fragrances
- Wallets & Belts
- Shoes
- Brands for Men
- Young Men's
- School Uniforms
- Brands for Young Men

SALE $14.99
Sonoma 5-pkt. Jeans

30% Off
Hanes® Classics®
Underwear

50-70% Off
Winter Outerwear

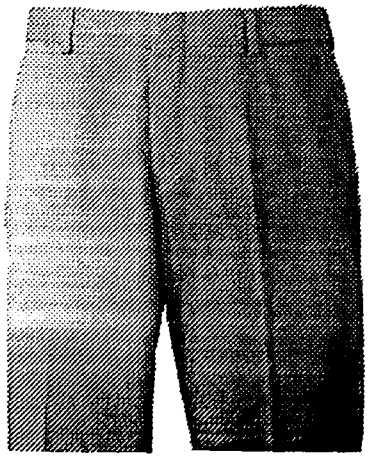
25-50% Off
Athletic Apparel

SALE $25.99
Croft & Barrow®
Piqué Polo

contact us | e-mail sales alerts | product recalls | shipping | shopping guides | site map | today's ad

about us | careers | company news | investor relations | store locator | our websites

KG 1/21/04



enlarged image | alternate view

Dockers® Flat Front Go Khaki®
orig. $39.99
sale $29.99

Select the item below.

Click on a swatch to view the color.

Black | Khaki | Navy | Stone

Perhaps the perfect khakis. Treated with Stain Defender™, these pants make inevitable spills no big deal. With the **"shirt gripper" waistband** to keep your shirt tucked in. And a permanent crease for wash-and-wear ease.

- Flat front
- Front pockets on seam
- Button-through back pockets
- Zipper fly
- Cotton/polyester blend
- Machine wash
- Imported

Item	Price	Color	Size	Quantity
Dockers® Flat Front Go Khaki®	orig. $39.99 **sale $29.99**	* Choose a Color	* Choose a Size	* 1

Ship this item to: * Choose an address

add to bag

* Required Fields

169 - 1/21/04

KOHL'S sign-in • customer service • track your order search go

women's | juniors' | men's | kids' | homestore | clearance | gift shop | bridal registry | gift card

view shopping bag/checkout 16 item(s), $267.99 total

Home/ Kids'

kids'

- Gifts for Kids
- Gifts for the Family
- Baby Gear
- Newborns'
- Infants'
- Toddler Boys'
- Boys' 4-7
- Boys' 8-20
- Boys' Accessories
- Toddler Girls'
- Girls' 4-6x
- Girls' 7-16
- Girls' Accessories
- Sleepwear & Robes
- Outerwear
- Swim Shop
- School Uniforms
- Shoes
- Toys
- Kohl's Cares for Kids
- Brands for Boys
- Brands for Girls

$10.99-$21.99 Jeans

For Toddlers
For Boys 4-20
For Girls 4-16

30% Off Girls' 4-16 IZ Byer California Separates

40% Off Toddlers' Sonoma Separates

50-70% Off Winter Outerwear

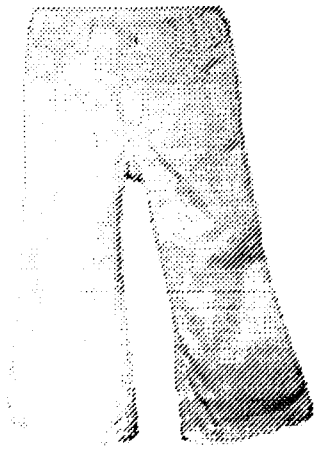
For Boys 4-20
For Girls 4-16

contact us | e-mail sales alerts | product recalls | shipping | shopping guides | site map | today's ad

about us | careers | company news | investor relations | store locator | our websites

kg. 1/21/04

Item(s) added to your shopping bag!



enlarged image | alternate view

Levi's® Red Tab™ 517® Flare Jeans - Rosy
reg. $17.99
sale $12.99

Select the item below.

Click on a swatch to view the color.

Rosey

More to Consider

Carter's® Glitterfly Toddler Shoes
orig. $29.99
sale $14.99

Pretty in pink! Toddlers will love these fashionable jeans. Classic Levi's quality in an extra-fun, flare-leg style. In rosy pink.

- Snap closure
- 5-pocket
- Zipper fly
- 100% cotton
- Machine wash
- Imported

Item	Price	Color	Size	Quantity
Levi's® Red Tab™ 517® Flare Jeans - Rosy	reg. $17.99 **sale $12.99**	*Choose a Color	*Choose a Size	*1

Ship this item to: *Choose an address

add to bag

* Required Fields

KG 1/21/04

KOHL'S sign-in • customer service • track your order search: go

women's | juniors' | men's | kids' | homestore | clearance | gift shop | bridal registry | gift card

view shopping bag/checkout 0 item(s), 0.00 total

Home/ **Homestore**

homestore

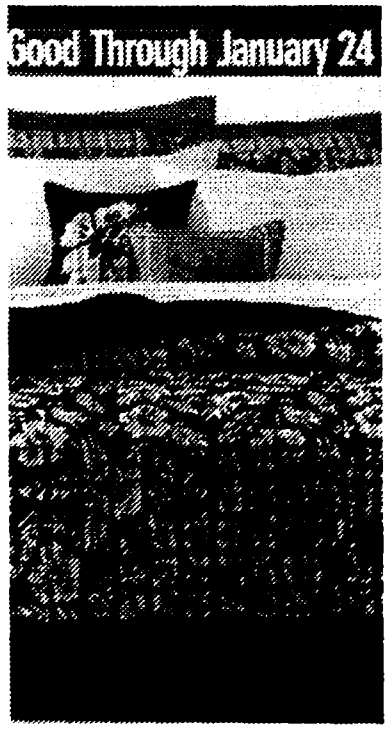
- Gifts for Home
- Gifts for the Family
- Holiday Home
- Bath
- Bedroom
- Dining
- Floor Care
- Frames & Wall Decor
- Home Accents
- Home Essentials
- Kitchen
- Kitchen Electrics
- Luggage & Backpacks
- Personal Care
- Rugs
- Slipcovers
- Brands for the Home
- Necessities for Newlyweds

40% Off
Slipcovers

15-20% Off
Stand Mixers

20% Off
KitchenAid™ Bakeware

SALE **$99.99**
Dockers® Twin Bedding Sets



KS - 1/21/04

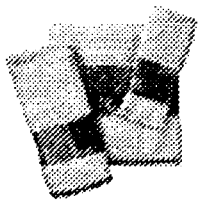
homestore

- Gifts for Home
- Gifts for the Family
- Holiday Home
- Bath
  - Towels
  - Bath Rugs
  - Bath Coordinates
  - Shower Curtains
  - Luxury Collections
  - Kids' Bath
  - Bath Accessories
  - Seasonal Accents
  - Scales
  - Shower Heads
  - Beach Towels
- Bedroom
- Dining
- Floor Care
- Frames & Wall Decor
- Home Accents
- Home Essentials
- Kitchen
- Kitchen Electrics
- Luggage & Backpacks
- Personal Care
- Rugs
- Slipcovers
- Brands for the Home
- Necessities for Newlyweds

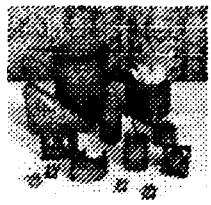
Luxury Collections

1 2 3

Verona Bath Rug
reg. $29.99
sale $20.99



Verona Towel Collection
reg. $8.99 - $17.99
sale $6.29 - $12.59



Verona Bath Accessories
reg. $14.99 - $39.99
sale $10.49 - $27.99

Martex® Platinum Supima® Towels
reg. $9.99 - $17.99

Mohawk Home Belair Bath Rug Collection
reg. $11.99 - $34.99

Martex® Luxor Egyptian Cotton Towels
reg. $5.99 - $11.99

Martex® Luxor Bath Rug Collection
reg. $9.99 - $29.99

Martex® Platinum Microfine™ Towels
reg. $9.99 - $19.99

Malverne Towel Collection - Chili
reg. $9.99 - $19.99
sale $6.69 - $13.39

1 2 3

kg - 1/21/04

homestore

- Gifts for Home
- Gifts for the Family
- Holiday Home
- Bath
  - Towels
    - Solid
    - Decorative
    - Character
  - Bath Rugs
  - Bath Coordinates
  - Shower Curtains
  - Luxury Collections
  - Kids' Bath
  - Bath Accessories
  - Seasonal Accents
  - Scales
  - Shower Heads
  - Beach Towels
- Bedroom
- Dining
- Floor Care
- Frames & Wall Decor
- Home Accents
- Home Essentials
- Kitchen
- Kitchen Electrics
- Luggage & Backpacks
- Personal Care
- Rugs
- Slipcovers
- Brands for the Home
- Necessities for Newlyweds

Towels

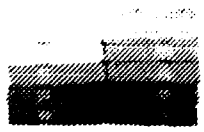
The Big One™ Bath Towels
reg. $3.99 - $7.99
sale $1.99 - $3.99

The Great One® Towels
reg. $3.99 - $9.99

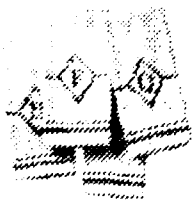
Martex® Platinum Supima® Towels
reg. $9.99 - $17.99

Villager Towels
reg. $7.99 - $13.99

Martex® Luxor Egyptian Cotton Towels
reg. $5.99 - $11.99

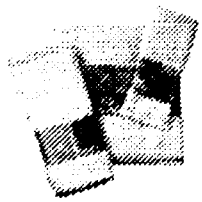


Martex® Platinum Microfine™ Towels
reg. $9.99 - $19.99



Monogram Hand Towel
reg. $9.99
sale $6.69

Butterflies Towel Collection
reg. $9.99 - $19.99
sale $6.99 - $13.99



Verona Towel Collection
reg. $8.99 - $17.99
sale $6.29 - $12.59

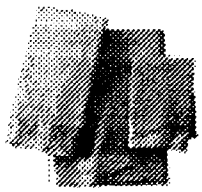
kg- 1/21/04

homestore

- Gifts for Home
- Gifts for the Family
- Holiday Home
- Bath
  - Towels
    - Solid
    - Decorative
    - Character
  - Bath Rugs
  - Bath Coordinates
  - Shower Curtains
  - Luxury Collections
  - Kids' Bath
  - Bath Accessories
  - Seasonal Accents
  - Scales
  - Shower Heads
  - Beach Towels
- Bedroom
- Dining
- Floor Care
- Frames & Wall Decor
- Home Accents
- Home Essentials
- Kitchen
- Kitchen Electrics
- Luggage & Backpacks
- Personal Care
- Rugs
- Slipcovers
- Brands for the Home
- Necessities for Newlyweds

Towels

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



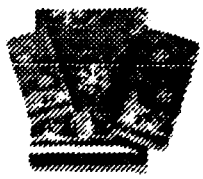
Snowflake Chain Towel Collection
orig. $9.99 - $19.99
sale $1.99 - $3.99

Winter Season Towel Collection
orig. $9.99 - $19.99
sale $1.99 - $3.99

Crystal Snowflake Towel Collection
orig. $9.99 - $19.99
sale $1.99 - $3.99

Nordic Lodge Jacquard Towel Collection
orig. $8.99 - $14.99
sale $1.79 - $2.99

Nordic Lodge Towel Collection
orig. $9.99 - $19.99
sale $1.99 - $3.99



Crystal Snowflake Jacquard Towel Collection
orig. $8.99 - $8.99
sale $1.79 - $1.79

Patchwork Towel Collection
orig. $9.99 - $19.99
sale $1.99 - $3.99

Country Snowman Towel Collection
orig. $8.99 - $8.99
sale $1.79 - $1.79

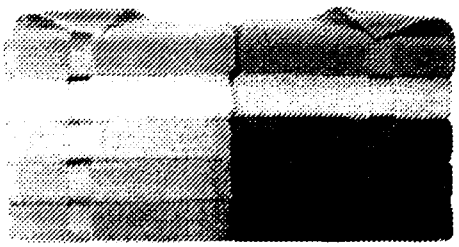
"Let It Snow" Towel Collection
orig. $8.99 - $11.99
sale $1.79 - $2.39

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

KG - 1/21/04

Martex® Platinum Supima® Towels

reg. $9.99 - $17.99



enlarged image

Select the item below.

Click on a swatch to view the color.

Amethyst	Cameo	Cinnamon	Dark Plum
Denim	Midnight	Ming Red	Okra
Peridot	Prairie Sky	Red Lilac	Shadow Green
Shadow Grey	Sunwash Yellow	White	

Quality you'll feel every day. Spoil your skin with sumptuous Supima® combed-cotton loops. The softness, strength and absorbency will wow you! Bath, hand and wash cloth with dobby border and end hem. Fingertip towel with fringed edges. Over 1.5 lbs. of cotton in each super-sized 30" x 58" bath towel. In lots of fresh colors!

- Hand towel, 16" x 28"
- Washcloth, 13" x 13"
- Fingertip towel, 12" x 18 1/2"
- 100% cotton
- Machine wash

Item	Price	Color	Quantity
Martex® Platinum Supima® Bath Towel	reg. $17.99	* Choose a Color	* 0
Martex® Platinum Supima® Hand Towel	reg. $13.99	* Choose a Color	* 0
Martex® Platinum Supima® Fingertip Towel	reg. $9.99	* Choose a Color	* 0
Martex® Platinum Supima® Washcloth	reg. $9.99	* Choose a Color	* 0

Ship this item to: * Choose an address

add to bag

* Required Fields

KG - 1/21/04

homestore

Bedroom

Bed in a Bag® & Bed Sets

200-Thread Count
220-Thread Count
250-Thread Count
View All

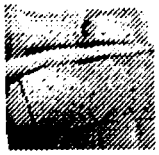
Luxury Bed Sets

View All

Comforters

Down
Solid
Print
View All

Duvet Covers



View All

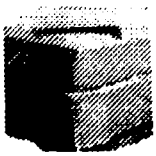
Coordinates

Cannon Royal
Family
Dockers
Martex
Sonoma
View All

Sheets

Solid
Print
Flannel
View All

Bed Skirts



View All

Blankets

View All

Quilts

Separates
Quilt Sets
View All

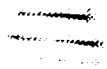
Kids' Room

Bed Sets
Accessories
View All

Mattress Pads

Standard
Specialty
Feather Beds
Covers & Protectors
View All

Pillows



Down Pillows
Synthetic Pillows
Covers & Protectors
View All

Window Treatments

View All

KG - 1/21/04

KOHL'S

sign-in • customer service • track your order

search: go

women's | juniors' | men's | kids' | homestore | gift shop | bridal registry | gift card

view shopping bag/checkout: 17 item(s), $280.98 total

Home/ **Clearance**

clearance

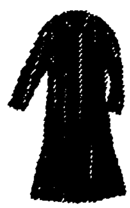
- Women's
- Juniors'
- Men's
- Kids'
- Homestore

World Republic Woven Collar Sweater

orig. $34.00
now $10.20

Croft & Barrow® Marled Jersey Sweater

orig. $44.00
now $13.20

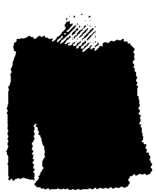


Villager Celestial Fleece Lounger Robe

orig. $40.00
now $12.00

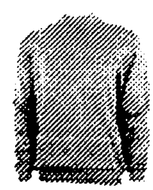
Sonoma Full-Zip Sleeve-Stripe Fleece Sweatshirt

orig. $28.00
now $7.00



G.A.S. Marabou-Trim Sweater

orig. $32.00
now $9.60



Croft & Barrow® Solid Mockneck Sweater

orig. $42.00
now $12.60

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about us | careers | company news | investor relations | store locator | our websites

kg - 1/21/04

enlarged image

Villager Celestial Fleece Lounger Robe
orig. $40.00
now $12.00
Availability of sizes, colors or styles may vary.

Select the item below.

Celestial style! This fleece lounger robe is perfect for relaxing. Featuring an all-over, moon-stripe print. In blue.

- Zip front
- 100% polyester
- Machine wash
- By Liz Claiborne, Inc.
- Imported

Size Chart

S	6-8
M	10-12
L	14-16
XL	18-20

Size chart is a general guide. It may include sizes that are unavailable for this item.

Item	Price	Size	Quantity
Villager Celestial Fleece Lounger Robe	orig. $40.00 now $12.00	* Choose a Size	* 1

Ship this item to: * Choose an address

add to bag

* Required Fields

KG - 1/21/04

Begin Checkout

checkout

Get Help. Or, call us toll-free:866-887-8884

Any way you shop Kohls.com is **easy and secure,** every step of the way. To begin Checkout, please choose your path.

Unregistered Checkout

If you want to remain unregistered, click **continue**.

You will have the opportunity to save your information and create a Kohls.com Account at the end of Checkout.

continue

Registered Customer Checkout

If you have a Kohls.com account, enter your e-mail address & password and click **sign-in**.

E-mail Address: *

Password: *

sign-in

Forget your Password?

KG - 1/21/04

Shipping Information

Please complete the Ship-to Other Address information. For each Ship to Address, we'll ask you to select a Shipping Method. You will be able to review this information again during the checkout process. If you are a registered customer at Kohls.com, we will automatically save this ship-to address in your address book for future use. The address will be stored under the name you provide.

Ship-to Other:

Click here for Help. Or, call us toll-free: (866)887-8884

Enter the Ship-to Other Address. **Don't forget!** Select your preferred Shipping Method below.

For future reference, please name this address:*

*Susan (e.g., Self, Home, Mom or Work.)

First Name:	*Jane
Last Name	*Doe
Address:	*5555 Main Street
Apt. or Suite #:	5
City:	*Coconut Grove
State:	*Florida
ZIP Code:	*33133
Contact Phone:	*305 - *555 - *1212

* denotes a required field

Shipping Method:

Please tell us the way you'd like us to ship your Kohls.com purchase(s).
Read about our shipping rates and policies.

Shipping Method: *Continental US - Standard Ground

Shipping Cost Summary

Standard Ground* 5-10 calendar days shipped via UPS	$6.95 first item	$1 each addtl.
Priority Air 1-2 business days shipped via UPS	$15 first item	$3 each addtl.

*Alaska/Hawaii, APO/FPO: Standard Ground Only, shipped via USPS

Questions? Find answers in our Shipping & Handling Policy.

When your Ship-to Other information is complete, "**continue.**"

KG - 1/21/04

Billing Information

billing

Get Help. Or, call us toll-free: 866-887-8884

Enter Your Billing Address:

First Name:	* Jane
Last Name	* Smith
Address:	* 1111 South Pointe
Apt. or Suite #:	
City:	* Miami
State:	* Florida
ZIP Code:	* 33129
Contact Phone:	* 305 - * 555 - * 5555
E-mail Address:	* yourname@host.com (e.g., yourname@host.com)

☑ Yes, I want to Sign-up for Sale Alerts! E-mail me about Kohls.com's biggest sales.

*Required Fields

Save my info for next time (optional):

Fill in the information below to save your info and create a Kohls.com Account.

First Name:	Jane
Last Name:	Smith
E-mail Address:	(Your Kohls.com Sign-in Name, e.g., yourname@host.com.)
Choose Password:	(Must be 5-8 characters. Passwords are case-sensitive.)
Confirm Password:	

Identity Verification Question & Answer

Should you forget your password, we'll use this question and answer to confirm your identity.

ID Verification Question:	Select One
ID Verification Answer:	(30 characters maximum. For security if you forget your Password.)

*Required Fields

Click on "**continue**" to preview your order and select a payment method.

continue

KG - 1/21/04

18 item(s), $292.98 total

Here's how to modify the items in your shopping bag.

Please Sign-in or Create an Account (optional).

Ship-to Susan: Address: 5555 Main Street 5 Coconut Grove, FL 33133 Shipping Method: Standard Ground

Item Description	Is this a gift?	Color	Size	Your Price	Quantity	Total	Remove
Martex® Luxor Egyptian Cotton Bath Towel Sku #							

kg - 1/21/04

shopping bag

back to shopping | begin checkout

	☐	Cameo	BATH TOWEL	11.99	*10	$119.90	☐
Unionbay® Ruched Tee Sku # 09698011	☐	Pink Green	18 MONTH	6.30	*1	$6.30	☐
Croft & Barrow® Striped Piqué Polo Sku # 35324400	☐	Jester Red	SMALL	7.80	*1	$7.80	☐
Summer Girl™ "Spring Swirl" Halter-Style Top Sku # 34512002	☐	Black	SML AV/RG	26.00	*1	$26.00	☐
Summer Girl™ "Spring Swirl" Cinched-Side Bottoms Sku # 34516002	☐	Black	SML AV/RG	26.00	*1	$26.00	☐
T & Company 2-pc. Dress Suit Sku # 04212515	☐	Peri	8	52.00	*1	$52.00	☐
Dockers® Flat Front Go Khaki® Sku # 25682046	☐	Navy	32X32	29.99	*1	$29.99	☐
Levi's® Red Tab™ 517® Flare Jeans - Rosy Sku # 09718773	☐	Rosey	4T	12.99	*1	$12.99	☐
Villager Celestial Fleece Lounger Robe Sku # 09442027	☐	Blue	LARGE	12.00	*1	$12.00	☐

KG 1/21/04

* required fields

update your order

We ship via UPS

Subtotal	$292.98
Estimated Shipping	$23.95
Estimated Tax (6%)	$17.58
Total	**$334.51**

Review our complete Shipping & Handling policy.

begin checkout

Modify Your Shopping Bag

- **Change your color/size selections** and/or **Ship-to Address** by clicking on the item description to return to the product page.
- **Delete an item** by checking the "**Remove**" box to the right of it. Click on the "**Update your Order**" link under your order summary to refresh your Shopping Bag.
- **Indicate a gift item** by checking the "**Is this a gift?**" box to the right of it. Click on the "**Update your Order**" link under your order summary to refresh your Shopping Bag. If you have multiple items of one product and they are gifts, each item will be separated onto its own order line.
- **For additional assistance**, visit Shopping Bag Help.

Discount

- **If a discount applies** to your order, it will be discounted from your transaction subtotal, before shipping and tax.

Estimated Shipping & Tax

- **How is shipping estimated?** We take the number of addresses you're shipping to and the number of items you're purchasing and calculate an approximate shipping cost based on our Standard Ground Shipping Costs.
- **How is tax estimated?** We take your Shopping Bag Subtotal and apply 6% sales tax. (6% is just an estimate based on "typical" sales tax percentages nationwide. Actual sales tax will be calculated based upon your Ship-to Address and the taxability of the items purchased.) Kohl's Gift Cards are not taxable.
- **These are *just* estimates.** Your actual shipping costs and sales tax will appear on your Invoice Preview.
- **Tax exemptions.** If you are purchasing on behalf of a tax-exempt organization, or claim a sales tax exemption as a Native American, and would like to discuss how to purchase tax-free at Kohls.com, please call Customer Service toll-free at **866-887-8884**.

Top of Page

K.G. 1/21/04

Preview Your Order & Enter Payment Information

preview & payment

Get Help. Or, call us toll-free: 866-887-8884

Preview Your Order:

Ship-to Susan Address:
Edit this Address
5555 Main Street
5
Coconut Grove, FL 33133

Shipping Method:
Continental US - Standard Ground

Billing Address
Edit your Billing Address
Jane Smith
1111 South Pointe
Miami, Florida 33129

Item Description	Gift	Color	Size	Your Price	Quantity	Total Price
Martex® Luxor Egyptian Cotton Bath Towel Sku# 01541042	No	Cameo	BATH TOWEL	$11.99	10	$119.90
Unionbay® Ruched Tee Sku# 09698011	No	Pink Green	18 MONTH	$6.30	1	$6.30
Croft & Barrow® Striped Piqué Polo Sku# 35324400	No	Jester Red	SMALL	$7.80	1	$7.80
Summer Girl™ "Spring Swirl" Halter-Style Top Sku# 34512002	No	Black	SML AV/RG	$26.00	1	$26.00
Summer Girl™ "Spring Swirl" Cinched-Side Bottoms Sku# 34516002	No	Black	SML AV/RG	$26.00	1	$26.00
T & Company 2-pc. Dress Suit Sku# 04212515	No	Peri	8	$52.00	1	$52.00
Dockers® Flat Front Go Khaki® Sku# 25682046	No	Navy	32X32	$29.99	1	$29.99
Levi's® Red Tab™ 517® Flare Jeans - Rosy Sku# 09718773	No	Rosey	4T	$12.99	1	$12.99
Villager Celestial Fleece Lounger Robe Sku# 09442027	No	Blue	LARGE	$12.00	1	$12.00

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none applied

Gift Card?
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Subtotal	$292.98
Shipping	$23.95
Tax	$0.00
Total	**$316.93**

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KG - 1/21/04

Kohl's Credit Card Information

Card Type Kohl's

Name on Card

Card #

Other Credit Card information

Card Type Choose a credit card

Name on Card

Card #

Exp. Date Choose a month / Choose a year

* Required fields

To place this order, you must click on "Place Order."
By doing so, you agree to the Legal Notices of Kohls.com, a USA-based retailer.

place order

KG - 1/21/04

EXHIBIT C

US006015069A

United States Patent [19]

Christensen

[11] Patent Number: 6,015,069

[45] Date of Patent: Jan. 18, 2000

[54] GARMENT FOLDING TABLE

[76] Inventor: Larry Alan Christensen, 103 St. Croix Ct., Aurora, Ill. 60504

[21] Appl. No.: 09/075,640

[22] Filed: May 11, 1998

[51] Int. Cl.[7] A41H 33/00

[52] U.S. Cl. 223/37; 493/405

[58] Field of Search 223/37, 30; 493/405, 493/411, 413, 452

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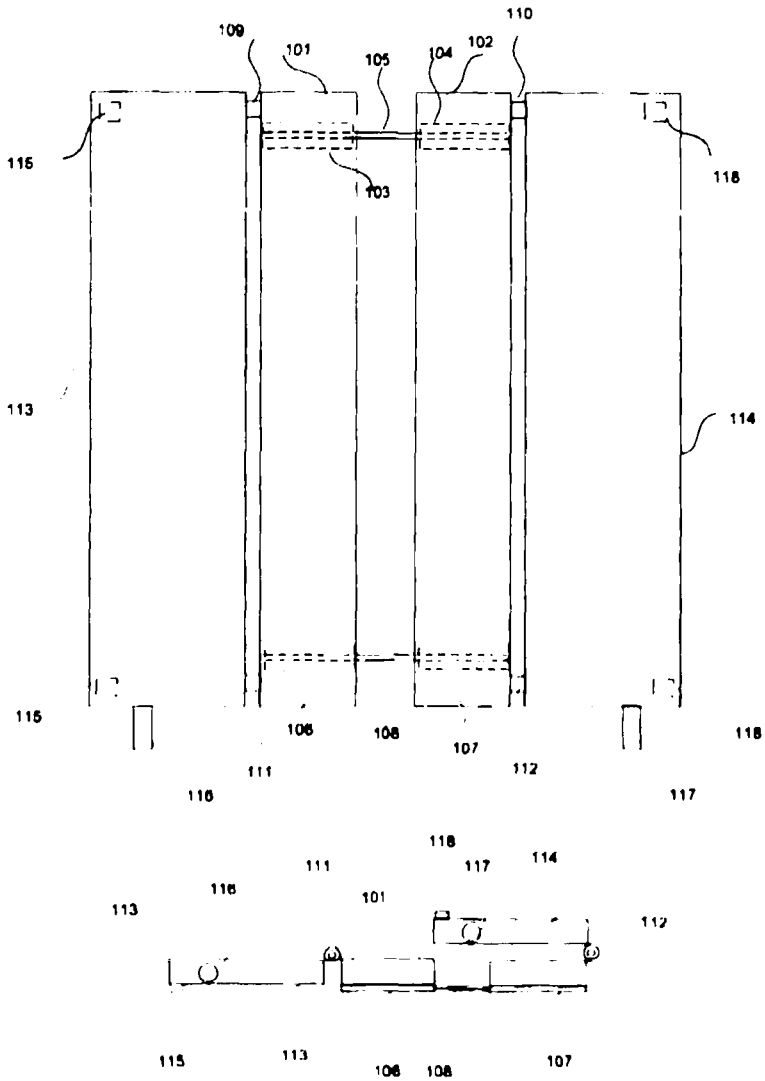
Primary Examiner—Bibhu Mohanty

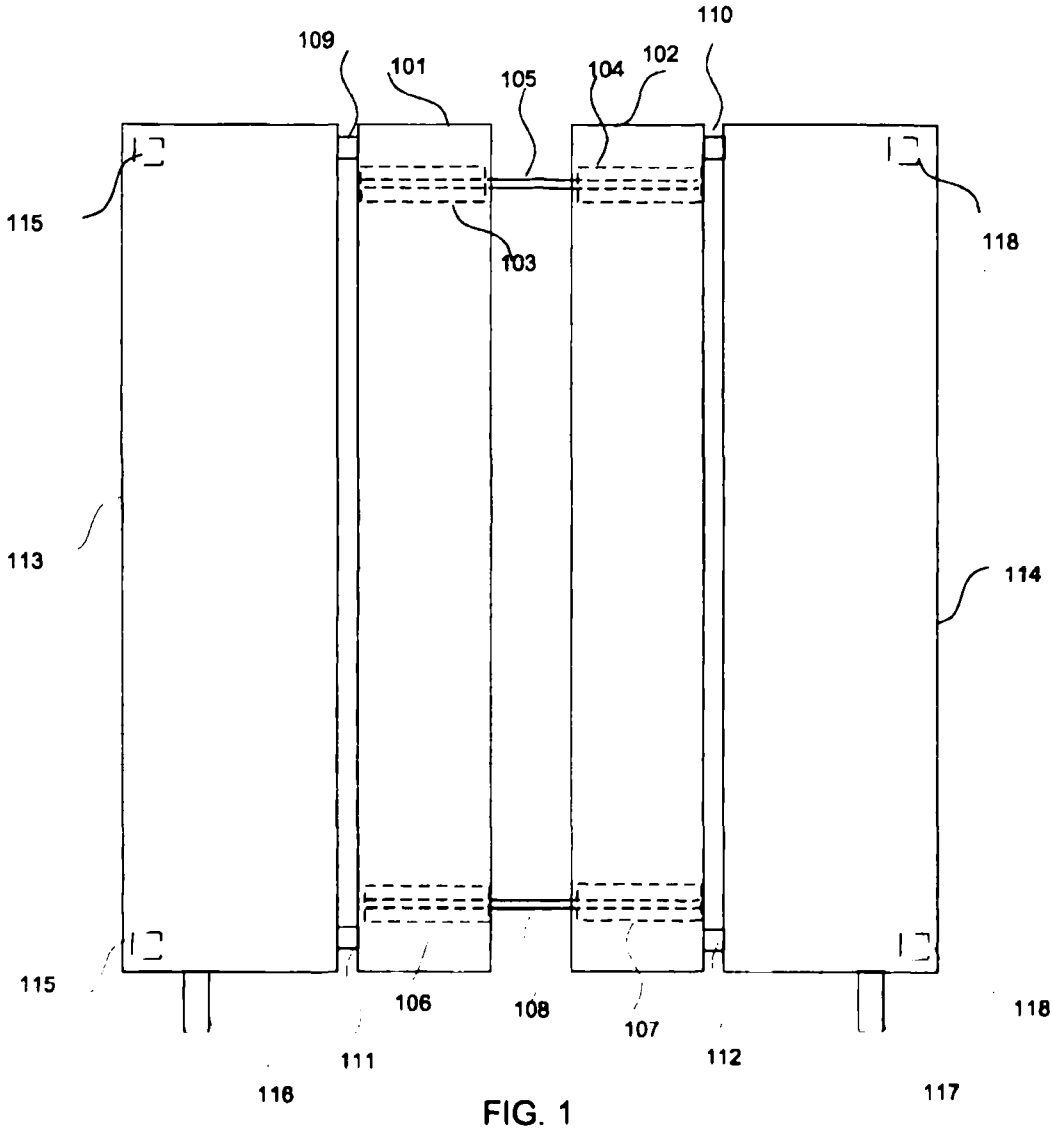
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—John C. Albrecht

[57] ABSTRACT

A hand operated garment folding table for processing knit upper garments comprises an adjustable width bed and a pair of fixed arms. Offset hinges couple the arms to the bed.

2 Claims, 1 Drawing Sheet




109
101
105
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117

FIG. 1

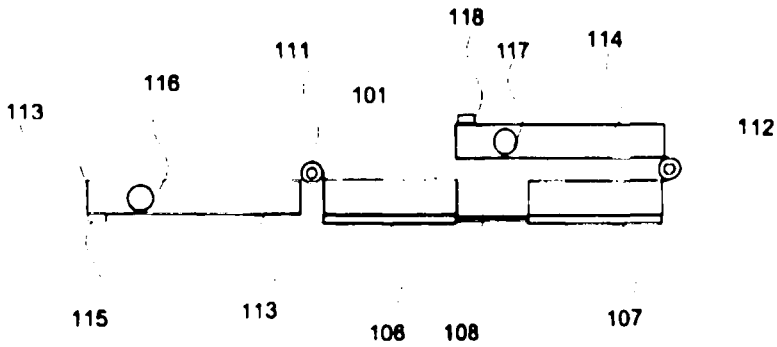
118
111
117
114
116
113
101
112
115
113
106
108
107

FIG. 2

GARMENT FOLDING TABLE

TECHNICAL FIELD

Preparation of "soft" upper garments, e.g., knit T shirts, sport shirts, sweaters, etc., for display in open stacks or in shelving display units.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

"Soft" upper garments generally are made of knitted material. Between the time that new stocks of "soft" upper garments reach a retail outlet and the time of sale, there is a need to not only fold each item for display; but to also refold substantial numbers of items which have been examined by potential customers. Such "soft" garments generally reach a retail store unfolded and laying flat in a shipping box. Although it is possible to display soft goods on hangers, it is generally accepted that display of folded garments in open stacks or in shelving units is more economical in floor space required for display; and is more attractive than hanger presentation. Since, in retail stores, any available employee is called to this duty, there is great variation in the appearance of folded garments. Variation in appearance of folded items detracts from the "sale's appeal" of goods, and may tend to reduce the volume of sales. Since no employee is expected to be an expert in manually folding garments, considerable employee time, both in and out of normal store hours, may be spent in folding garments.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the present invention, my FOLD-PRO™ garment folding table comprises a flat bed and a pair of hinged folding arms for receiving a garment to be folded. In one embodiment of my invention, the bed is adjustable in width to accommodate folded garments to different shelf widths. In a second embodiment of my invention, the size of the bed is fixed in dimension so as to fold a garment to a desired width. In both embodiments, the lengths of the bed and the two arms are equal and fixed

In accordance with an aspect of my invention, the arms are coupled to the bed by "offset" hinges which provide a desired gap, e.g., one quarter inch, between the surfaces of the bed and of an arm when the arm is fully rotated over the bed. In accordance with another aspect of my invention, the sum of the widths of the two arms is greater than the width of the bed

Advantageously, garments folded with my table have uniform dimensions and appearance

THE DRAWING

FIG. **1** is a top view of my adjustable folding table,

FIG. **2** is a modified edge view of the table of FIG. **1**,

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The figures of FIGS. **1** and **2** are representative of the relations of the components, however they are not necessarily of exact scale. The folding table of FIGS. **1** and **2** comprises an adjustable bed **101**, **102**,**103**, **104**, **105**, **106**, **107**, **108** and a pair of arms **113**, **114**. Each arm is rotatably attached to the adjacent side of the bed by an "off-set" hinge assembly. For example right arm **114** is attached to section **102** by the hinges **110**, **112**. Similarly, left arm **113** is attached to section **101** by hinges **109**, **111**. The arms are aligned with the bed and spaced apart therefrom by a fixed distance

The hinge arrangements in FIGS. **1** and **2** are merely illustrative of a possible hinge arrangements. For example, a different number of independent hinges may be used, or a continuous piano hinge may be used.

The function of the offset hinges is demonstrated in FIG. **2**. FIG. **2** is edge view of the table of Fig. modified to show arm **114** rotated 180 degrees counter clock wise. The "off-set" hinges provide a desired gap, e.g., one quarter inch, between the surfaces of the bed and of an arm when the arm is fully rotated over the bed.

Hinge offset is accomplished by placing the centers of rotations of hinges **109**, **110**, **111**, and **112** above the surfaces of the bed members **101**, **102**; and of the arms **113**, **114**. It is possible to fold knit upper garments in the absence of the gap; however provision of a gap between arm **114** and bed member **102**, as illustrated in FIG. **2**, better controls the dimensions of the folded garments.

As seen in both FIG. **1** and in FIG. **2**, the sum of the widths of the two arms is greater than the width of the bed.

Handles **116** and **117** permit an operator to easily rotate the respective arms **113** and **114**.

Solely for the purpose of illustration, two slide assemblies are illustrated in FIG. **1**. One assembly comprises the blocks **103**, **104** and a slide bar **105**. The other slide assembly comprises blocks **106**, **107**, and slide bar **108**. Pads **115** on the underside of arm **113** compensate for the thickness of blocks **103**, **106**. Similarly, pads **118** on the underside of arm **114**, compensate for the thickness of blocks **104**, **107**.

In preparation for use, my FOLD-PRO™ table is placed on a stable, flat surface and the width of the bed is adjusted. The adjusted width of the bed defines the width of the folded article. Adjustment of the bed width thus permits garments to be folded to a range of desired widths.

A knit upper garment to be folded is placed front face down, centered left to right over the table, and with the collar alligned with upper edge of the bed. If the length of the article is greater than the length of the bed, the operator turns the waist portion of the garment up so as to lie fully over the bed **101**, **102** and the arms **113**, **114**. The operator also folds the garment arms inwardly. Folding is accomplished by first rotating one arm, e.g., the left arm **113** clockwise over the bed, returning arm **113** to the position shown in FIGS **1** and **2**. Thereafter, rotating the right arm **114** counter clockwise over the bed to its position as illustrated in FIG. **2**. Upon return of arm **114** to its original position as shown in FIG. **1**, the operator folds the bottom edge of the garment to the top edge of the bed. Folding is the complete and the garment may be turned with the front facing the operator and removed

FIGS **1** and **2** illustrate one illustrative embodiment of my invention with an adjustable bed. An economy version may comprise a bed of fixed width to replace the illustrated adjustable bed

The invention has been described with particular attention to its preferred embodiment, however, it should be understood that variations and modifications within the spirit and scope of the invention may occur to those skilled in the art to which the invention pertains

What is claimed is

1. A manual garment folding table comprising

a rectangular bed having a length and a width, a rectangular left folding arm having a length equal to the length of said bed and a fixed width, offset hinge means attached to one long edge of said left arm and to one long edge of said bed, a rectangular right folding arm

having a length equal to the length of said bed and a fixed width, and offset hinge means attached to one long edge of said right arm and to the other long edge of said bed, said offset hinge means constructed to provide a gap of a planned width between the opposing surfaces of said bed and of an arm when said arm is fully rotated over said bed.

2. A manual garment folding table in accordance with claim 1 wherein:

the width of said bed is adjustable, and the sum of the widths of said left and right arms is greater than the maximum width of the bed.

* * * * *

EXHIBIT D

US006269987B1

(12) **United States Patent**
LaPace et al.

(10) **Patent No.: US 6,269,987 B1**
(45) **Date of Patent: Aug. 7, 2001**

(54) **FOLDING ASSEMBLY**

(76) Inventors: **Christine L. LaPace**; **Ronald J. LaPace**, both of 9793 N. Grand Duke Cir., Tamarac, FL (US) 33321; **Steve LaDue**, 1608 Altamont La., Odessa, FL (US) 33556; **Charles R. Smalley**, 2179 Burnice Dr., Clearwater, FL (US) 33764

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **09/425,575**

(22) Filed: **Oct. 22, 1999**

(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **A41M 43/00**
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **223/37**; 493/405
(58) **Field of Search** 223/37, 38, 120; 493/405; 211/19

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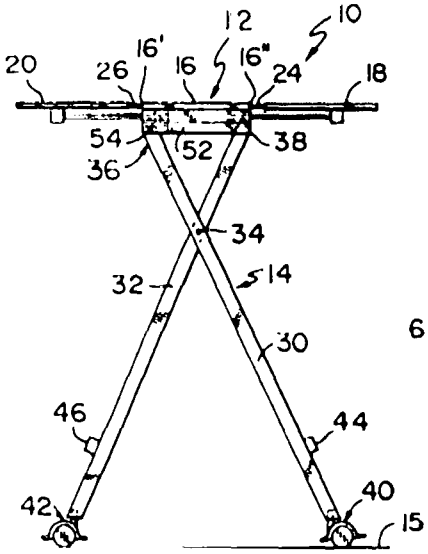
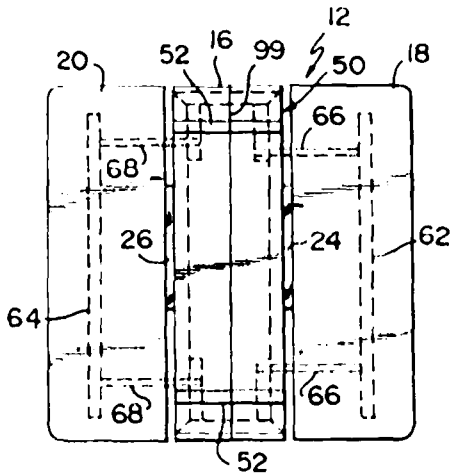
Primary Examiner—Bibhu Mohanty
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Malloy & Malloy, P.A.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A folding assembly structured to arrange any one of a plurality of different articles into a folded orientation and including an orienting device having a main segment and at least two outwardly extending and spaced apart side segments, wherein the main segments and two side segments are initially disposed in engaging relation to different portions of the article being folded. An attachment assembly in the form of a flexible material connector pivotally attaches each of the side segments in spaced relation to the main segment and outwardly spaced relation therefrom. The flexible material connectors thereby serve to accommodate the folding of articles of various thicknesses, in that they allow for the automatic spaced positioning of each of the sides segments at different spaced distances above the main segment as the different portions of the article are being oriented when the side segments are in a folded position. A support assembly comprises an elongated configuration selectively disposable into either a supporting position or a collapsed, stored position, wherein the supporting position is defined by disposing the orienting device at a convenient height above a supporting surface to facilitate the arranging of the articles into the preferred folded position. The support assembly also includes a brace assembly disposable into an operative and in-operative position to selectively support the side segments to define a support surface.

53 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets





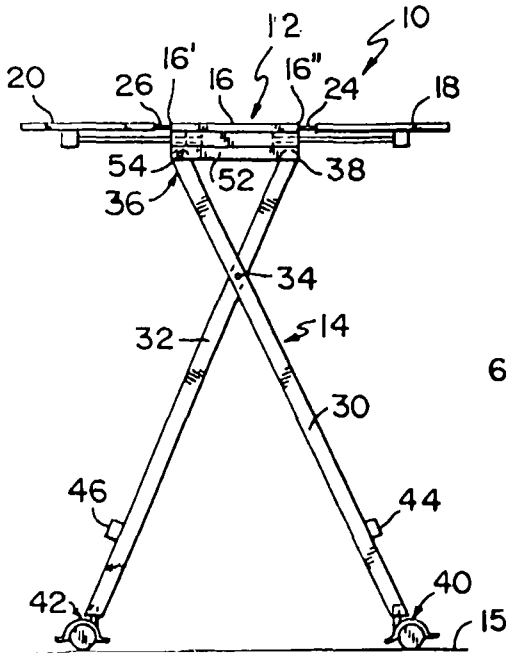


Fig. 1

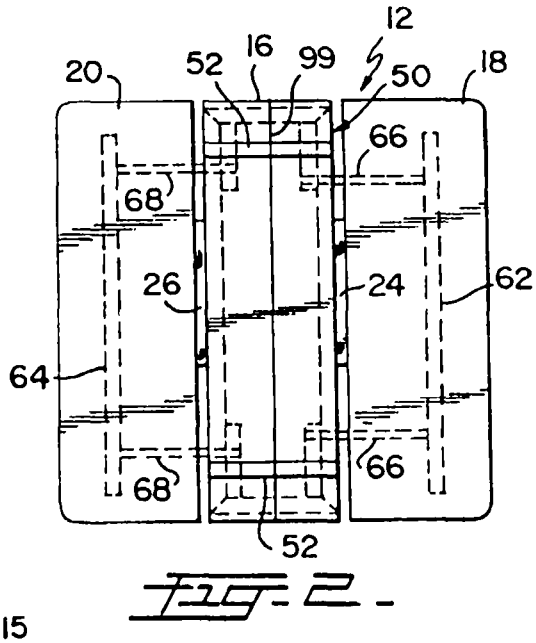


Fig. 2

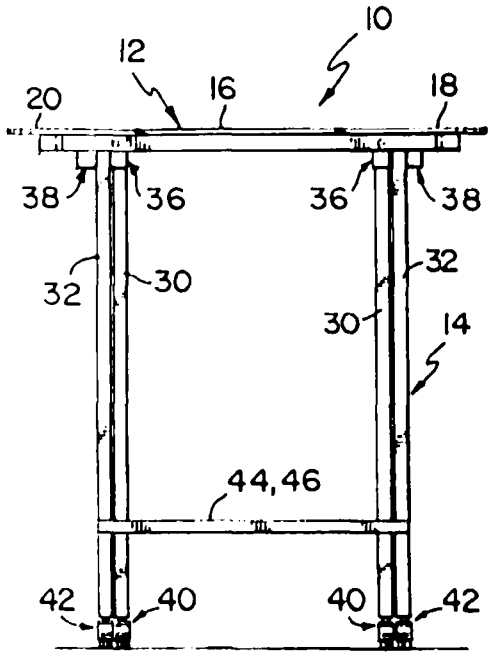


Fig. 3

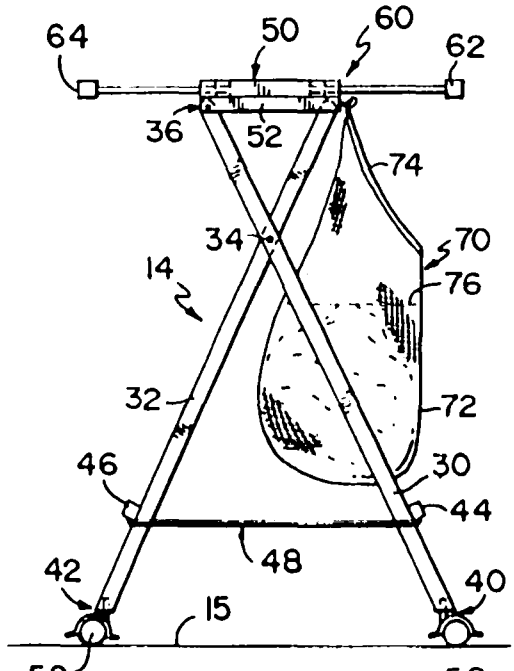


Fig. 4

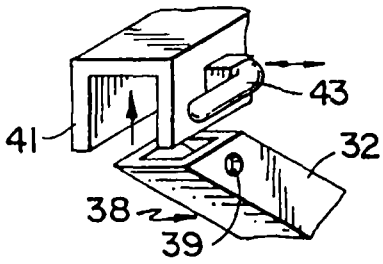


Fig. 3a.

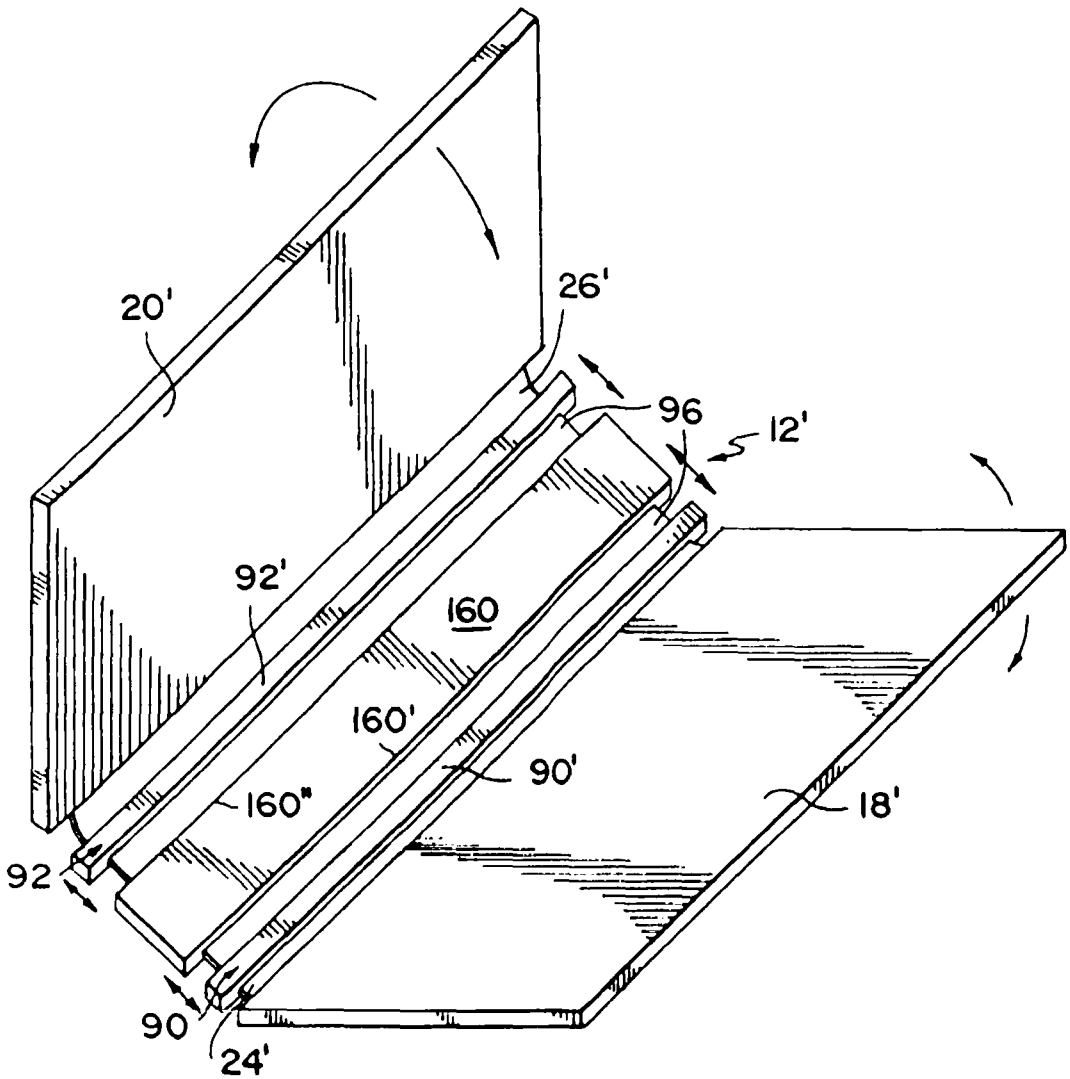


Fig. 11.

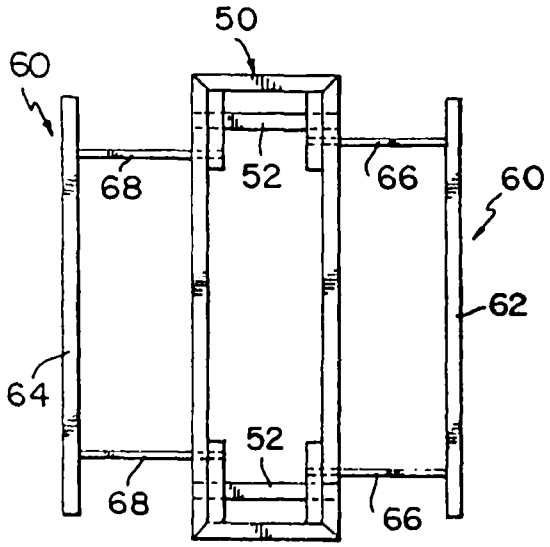


Fig. 5

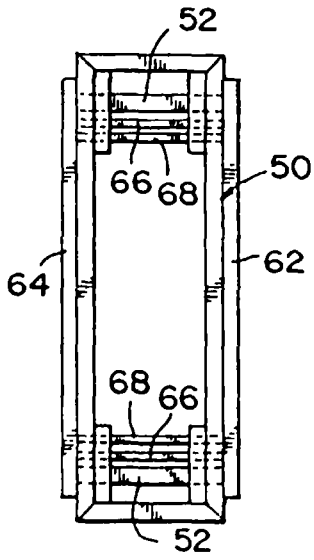


Fig. 6

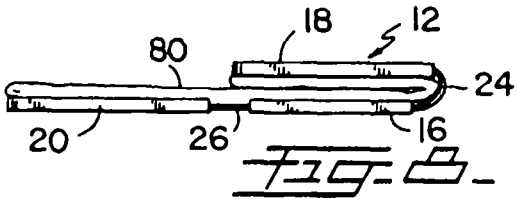


Fig. 8

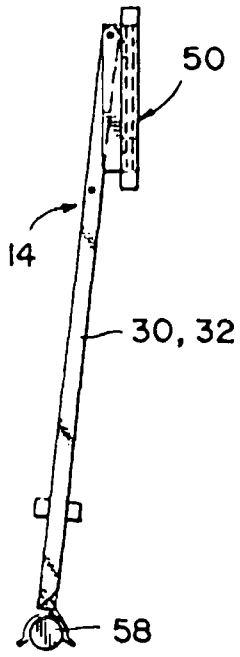


Fig. 7

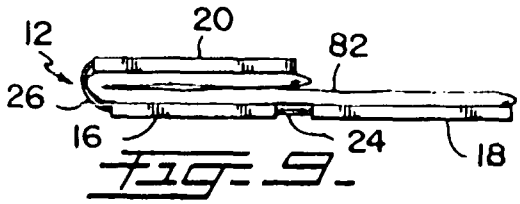


Fig. 9

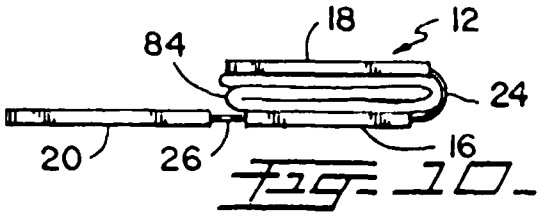


Fig. 10

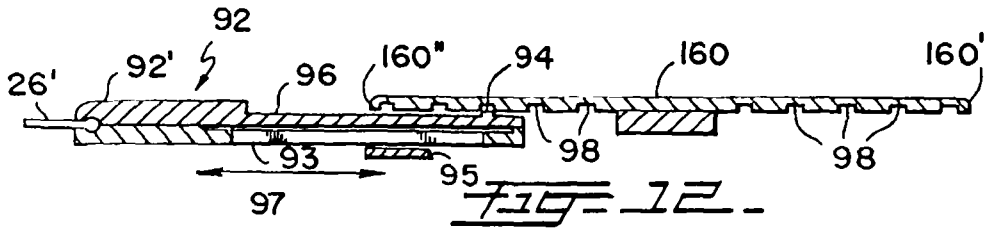


Fig. 12

Fig. 13

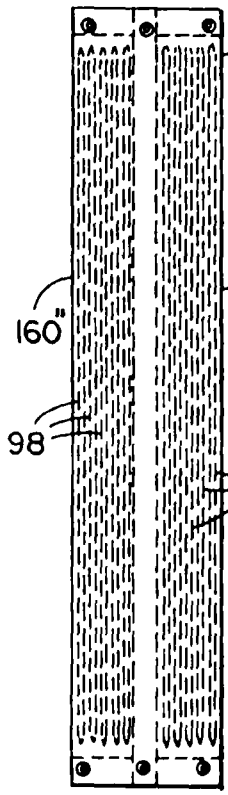


Fig. 14

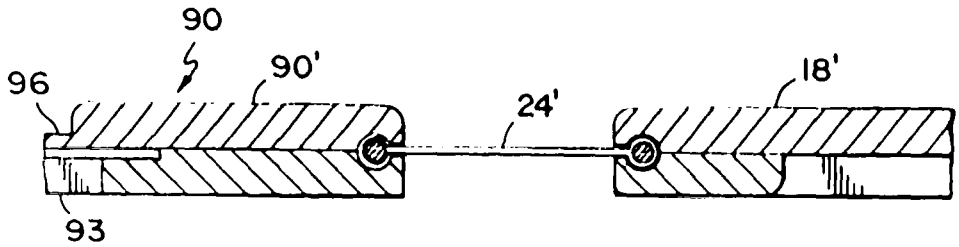


Fig. 15

FOLDING ASSEMBLY

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates to a folding assembly designed to facilitate the manual arrangement of any of a plurality of different articles into a folded orientation, on an independent basis, wherein various operative components of the folding assembly are expandable or extendable into their intended, operative position during the folding procedure, and are selectively disposable into a stored or collapsed, inoperative position to facilitate transport of the folding assembly between different locations.

2. Description of the Related Art

Numerous devices exist which are directed to the arrangement of garments, as well as other articles, in a predetermined, folded position. Such folding devices vary from small manually operated structures, which may be used at home or in an environment where only occasional folding is required, to large mechanized folding devices, which are extremely expensive and primarily designed for strictly commercial environments where garments or other articles are manufactured and/or packaged in extremely large numbers. Devices of the type set forth above are commercially available and are primarily directed to an attempt to save both time and labor, which would normally be expended if the process were relegated to laboriously hand folding each article. In addition, except in the home or domestic environment, the hand folding of garments or other articles is generally unacceptable due to the lack of uniformity resulting from such manual folding. It is of course recognized that such uniformity in appearance of the folded article is a necessity in a commercial or retail establishment, wherein the folded article is made available in a container or package of standard dimension and configuration, or the folded article is presented for display in a manner which is hopefully appealing to the consuming public.

Accordingly, depended upon the particular area of application, folding devices have primarily been designed for specialized applications, in order to accomplish either individual or bulk folding of a variety of different types of articles or of specific articles, such as shirts or the like. Therefore, with the exception of the bulk folding of articles, as primarily used in the garment industry, the individual folding of garments or other articles is usually accomplished either by the use of fully or semi-automatic machines, small, inexpensive and less than durable folding boards, small apparatus specifically designed to fold garments or other articles for purposes of packaging or, as set forth above, by the individual hand folding of each item. A recognized disadvantage of the above set forth categories of folding devices is their lack of versatility and inability to be used other than in the specialized field, for which they are initially designed. For example, there is certainly no need or use for a fully or semi automatic folding machine in a commercial or retail establishment, such as a department store the like, where uniform folding is important but, wherein the quantity of articles that must be folded, or refolded does not justify the expense of such mechanized equipment. Moreover, such mechanized devices do not generally provide a desirable degree of portability so as to allow workers to gather and fold items conveniently at a display location. Alternatively, folding tables or like devices which are manually operated are typically formed from inexpensive, light weight material having a relatively short operable life and which are specifically not intended to accommodate the folding of large numbers of garments or other articles. Likewise, such less sophisticated devices are still somewhat cumbersome to manipulate and move to a desired folding location when a number of spaced display locations are present within a particular establishment.

Also, in certain locations such as department stores or other similar retail establishments, available space is at a premium. Accordingly, space dedicated to the storage of a folding table or like device is typically unavailable. Known or conventional garment folding assemblies, of the type set forth above, are not readily adaptable for use in locations where the folding of garments or other articles is necessary for either display or packaging, but where the storage space needed to maintain such folding tables is at a minimum or non-existent.

Therefore, based on the above disadvantages and the overall failure of known or conventional designs to incorporate sufficient versatility and mobility to be adaptable for use in a variety of different commercial, retail and/or domestic environments, there is an obvious need in this area for an improved folding assembly. Such an improved folding assembly should be capable of being operated manually, but should also have sufficient versatility to be used with any one of a wide variety of different types of article for arrangement thereof in a predetermined, folded orientation, resulting in the folded article having a sufficiently uniform appearance to facilitate its display and/or packaging. In addition, such an improved folding assembly should be inexpensive and light weight, yet be formed from materials and or structural components which assure a long operable life and which facilitate the folding device to be transported from location to location without placing undue stress on personnel responsible for its re-location or transport. Finally, an improved folding assembly of the type referred to herein should be capable of being selectively oriented in either an operative position or a collapsed position, wherein when in the collapsed position, the improved folding assembly has a significantly reduced size and configuration so as to be conveniently stored in any of a variety of locations, particularly in establishments where storage space is at a minimum.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a folding assembly designed to arrange any of a wide variety of articles into a folded orientation by the manual manipulation of an orientation device. The orientation device comprises a main, centrally disposed segment and at least two side segments extending laterally outward from the main segment in spaced relation thereto. An attachment assembly, which is preferably formed from a flexible material, movably interconnects each of the side segments to opposite sides of the main segment or in another embodiment to other substantially oppositely disposed structural components of the orienting device, as will be explained in greater detail hereinafter. In other embodiment, the side segments are movably secured to the orienting device in a manner which allows the independent, substantially pivotal movement of each of the side segments in alternate fashion, from an outwardly extended position, for initial support of a garment or other article thereon, to a substantially overlying position relative to the main segment, thereby accomplishing a portion of the folded orientation. The main segment, as well as each of side segments, may of course vary in dimension and configuration, dependent upon the type and or size of the article being folded. However, an overall dimension or configuration of each of the main and side segments is preferably such as to allow sufficient versatility to enable the

orientation device to be used in the folding of any number of a variety of different articles of a variety of different sizes and thicknesses. Also, regardless of the type of articles being folded, a substantially uniform fold will be the result.

One structural feature of the present invention is the aforementioned attachment assembly, wherein at least one attachment member extends outwardly from opposite sides or peripheral portions of the main segment into movable securement with a correspondingly positioned side or peripheral portion of each of the individual side segments. Accordingly, when in their expanded position, each of the side segments are disposed laterally outward from the main segment in spaced apart relation thereto. However, when the side segments are alternately disposed into a folded position, the flexibility of the attachment member allows for the free pivotal movement as well as an automatic adjustment to accommodate the thickness of the material from which an article is formed or the overall thickness of the article being folded. It should be apparent therefore that the folding assembly of the present invention is readily adaptable for use in folding articles or garments formed of a variety different types of materials, without changing the configuration or dimension or being forced to adjust the relative positions of the operative components of the folding assembly, such as the main segment and side segments, relative to one another.

Another feature of the present invention is the provision of a support assembly, which, when in a supporting position, engages and positions the orienting device, including the main segment and outwardly extending side segments, at a preferred height above a floor, platform or other supporting surface on which the folding assembly of the present invention is disposed. The height of the support assembly can be regulated in order to position the orienting device at a desired location to accomplish the process of folding dependent on the particular location or area where the folding processes occurs.

In addition, the support assembly of the present invention comprises a plurality of support members or legs which, as set forth in greater detail hereinafter, may be more specifically comprised of pivotally attached leg pairs. The leg pairs are selectively positioned, along with the other components of the support assembly, into either a supporting position, as described above, or a stored position. The stored position facilitates the hand carrying of the folding assembly or movement of the folding assembly of the present invention, between different locations, where it is being used. Moreover, to facilitate such transport, a plurality of rollers, casters or like structure, hereinafter collectively referred to as a roller assembly, may be secured to the bottom end or adjacent portion of the support members, in order to facilitate the rolling of the support assembly, when the support assembly is in either its supporting position or its stored position, to a desired location.

In order to facilitate a stable engagement and support with the orientation device, as described above, the support assembly further includes a base which is connected to what may be considered an upper end of the plurality of legs or support members. When the support assembly is in its supporting position the base is disposed in supporting engagement with at least the main segment of the orienting device. It should also be noted that the orienting device, including the main segment and the two or more side segments, may be removably secured to the support assembly, including the base, or alternatively may be fixedly attached thereto in a manner which allows the independent movement of each of the side segments relative to the main segment. In the embodiment comprising a fixed attachment, the base may be fixedly secured by any of a variety of applicable structures to the main segment, such that the two side segments are allowed to be collectively positioned between the aforementioned outwardly extended, supporting position and/or in a folded, stored position, as required.

Yet another feature of the present invention comprises the provision of a brace assembly movably mounted on the support assembly in adjacent, co-operative relation to the base. The brace assembly is co-operatively structured with the base, as well as other associated parts of the support assembly, to be selectively disposed in either an operative position or an in-operative position. The position of the brace assembly may at least partially depend on whether the support assembly is disposed in its supporting position and/or stored position, as described above. More specifically, the brace assembly comprises at least two brace members each of which are movably disposed outwardly from opposite sides and/or substantially oppositely disposed peripheral portions of the base and into supporting engagement with an under portion of different ones of the side segments. The outwardly extending position of the brace members thereby defines the aforementioned operative position of the brace assembly so as to define a rigid table type support surface. In one embodiment, each of brace members are slidingly connected to the base and/or an under portion thereof, in the vicinity of the upper end of the support assembly, such that each of the brace members may be independently extended outwardly from the base different distances, dependent on the size, configuration and/or location of the respective side segments which they support. The in-operative position of the brace members is at least partially defined by their respective disposition in immediately adjacent and/or contiguous relation to the base and more particularly to the correspondingly disposed sides or peripheral portions thereof, from which they normally extend when in the above described operative position.

Based on the above, it should be apparent that the folding assembly of the present invention comprises an improved folding device for any number of different garments or a variety of other articles, any of which may by formed from material having a different thickness, wherein any one the various types of the articles may be arranged in a folded orientation in a quick and easy manner, without requiring replacement, adjustments or repositioning of any of the operative, structural components of the folding assembly. Moreover, the folding assembly also provides an easily transportable, multi-function support surface.

These and other features of the present invention will become more clear when the drawings as well as the detailed description are taken into consideration.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a fuller understanding of the nature of the present invention, reference should be had to the following detailed description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings in which

FIG. 1 is an end view of the folding assembly of the present invention in a position ready for use,

FIG. 2 is top plan view of the embodiment of FIG. 1,

FIG. 3 is a side view of the embodiment of FIGS. 1 and 2,

FIG. 3A is perspective view in partial cutaway of additional structural details of a support assembly of the present invention,

FIG. 4 is an end view of a support assembly associated with the embodiment of FIGS. 1 through 3,

FIG. **5** is a top plan view of the embodiment of FIG. **4**;

FIG. **6** is a top view of the embodiment of the support assembly of FIGS. **4** and **5**, shown in an in-operative position;

FIG. **7** is an end view of the support assembly of the embodiment of FIGS. **4** through **6**, shown in a stored position;

FIG. **8** is a schematic representation of an orienting device of the embodiment of FIGS. **1** through **3**, depicting the disposition of certain structural components during the process of folding an article;

FIG. **9** is a schematic view of a different step in the folding process, other than that shown in FIG. **8**;

FIG. **10** is a schematic view of yet another step in the folding process;

FIG. **11** is another embodiment of the folding assembly of the present invention incorporating an orienting device differing from the embodiment of FIGS. **1** through **3**;

FIG. **12** is a partial sectional view of the embodiment of FIG. **11**;

FIG. **13** is a top plan view of one structural component of the orienting device of the embodiment of FIGS. **11** and **12**;

FIG. **14** is a top plan view of another structural component of the orienting device of the embodiment of FIGS. **11** and **12**; and

FIG. **15** is a sectional view in partial cutaway of a portion of the embodiment of the orienting device as shown in FIG. **11**.

Like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout the several views of the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

As shown in the accompanying drawings, the present invention relates to a folding assembly generally indicated as **10** including an orienting device generally indicated as **12**, and a support assembly generally indicated as **14**. With primary reference to FIGS. **1** through **3**, the orienting device **12** includes at least a main, substantially centrally disposed segment **16** and two side segments **18** and **20**. The orienting device may be selectively disposed in either an expanded position, as best shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**, or a folded position, as successively depicted in FIGS. **8** through **10**, which will be explained in greater detail hereinafter.

Each of the main segment **16** and at least two side segments **18** and **20**, may each comprise a substantially flat sheet or panel-like configuration, formed from a substantially rigid or, depending upon the type of articles being folded, at least partially flexible material. Moreover, preferably etched in the main segment **16** is a center line **99**, which provides a guide for the center of an article to be folded. When the side segments **18** and **20** are disposed in their expanded position, they are positioned outwardly from opposite sides or, depending upon the configuration of the main segments **16**, opposite peripheral portions as at **16'** and **16"**. Further, each of the side segments **18** and **20** are preferably coupled in spaced apart relation to the correspondingly disposed peripheral portions or sides **16'** and **16"**, through the provision of an attachment assembly.

Although the attachment assembly may include any of a variety of hinge defining structures, in the illustrated embodiment, the attachment assembly of the present invention is preferably formed of a flexible material, such as but not limited to a high strength, flexible canvas, plastic, or other applicable flexible material. In the embodiment of FIG. **2**, the attachment assembly comprises at least two flexible material straps or equivalently structured connector elements **24** and **26**, each of which serve to interconnect a different one of the side segments **18** and **20** respectively, to the main segment **16**, in spaced apart relation to the correspondingly disposed peripheral portions or sides **16'** and **16"** respectively. It is emphasized that the attachment assembly may differ from the embodiment shown in FIG. **2**, in that the length of each of the flexible material elements **24** and **26** may be increased or decreased or alternatively, a plurality of such connector assemblies **24** and **26** may extend in spaced relation to one another between the main segment **16** and each of the side segments **18** and **20**. As a result of the connector elements **24** and **26** being formed from a flexible material, a substantial degree of versatility is added to the folding procedure. This applies in terms of the types of articles being folded, as well as the physical characteristics, including but not limited to "thickness" of the material from which the various folded articles are formed. The versatile feature will be more specifically described with regard to the folding procedure depicted in FIGS. **8** through **10** hereinafter.

In order to provide such versatility, it is further emphasized that the size, configuration and material from which the connector elements **24** and **26** are formed can vary as long as sufficient flexibility is provided in allowing a substantially "pivotal" type of movement of the side segments **18** and **20**, into their respective folded position, as shown in FIGS. **8** and **9**, during the folding procedure. In addition, the material from which the connector members **24** and **26** are formed can even be elastic, so as to somewhat vary the initial spacing between the side segments **18** and **20** and the main segments **16**, such as when the elastic material connector members are stretched. Alternatively, the length of the connector members **24** and **26** can be selectively varied in terms of extending or retracting the length between the corresponding peripheral portions of each of the side segments **18** and **20** and the respective sides or peripheral portions **16'** and **16"** of the main segments **16**.

Another feature of the folding assembly **10** of the present invention comprises the aforementioned support assembly **14** which, in at least one embodiment has a somewhat elongated configuration and, when in its supporting position as shown in FIGS. **1** through **4**, is substantially vertically oriented so as to position the orienting device **12** in a vertically spaced relation to a floor, support platform or other supporting surface **15** on which the folding assembly **10** is disposed, thereby defining a table or like support article. More specifically, the support assembly **14** comprises a plurality of support members generally in the form of legs or "leg pairs" **30** and **32**. The leg pairs **30** and **32** are pivotally connected to one another as at **34** and include an upper or top end generally indicated as **36** and **38** and a lower end, generally indicated as **40** and **42** respectively. Cross members **44** and **46** may be provided in order to assure the structural integrity and stability of the support assembly **14**. In addition, a retaining member **48** may be disposed in interconnected relation between the leg pairs **30** and **32**, preferably at the cross members **44** and **46**, in order to limit the spaced apart distance between the lower portions of the leg pairs **30** and **32**, when the support assembly **14** is in its supporting position as shown in FIGS. **1**, **3** and **4**.

In order to facilitate either the removal or fixed support of the orienting device **12**, the support assembly **14** comprises a base **50** which may have an open or apertured construction or be in the form of a solid material panel. In either

embodiment, end portions **52**, which may be secured to an under portion or any other applicable portion of the base **50**, are pivotally attached, as at **54**, to an upper end **36** of one of the leg pairs **30**. The upper end **38** of the other leg pair **32** is removably disposed in supporting engagement with the base **50** at an opposite end of the end portions **52** or any other location. In order to further assure stability of the support assembly and prevent inadvertent displacement of the base **50** from its substantially horizontal position, as shown in FIGS. **1** and **4**, the upper end **38** of at least one of the legs of the leg pairs **32**, may include an aperture **39**. In addition, a bracket **41** may be correspondingly mounted or attached to the correspondingly disposed end portion **52** of the base **50**, and is disposed and configured to receive the end **38** removably therein. A spring biased locking pin **43** is preferably mounted on bracket **41** and is positionable to removably pass through the aperture **39**, when the end **38** is received within the interior of the bracket **41**. Conversely, when it is desired to orient the support assembly **14** out of its substantially horizontal support position, the spring biased pin **43** is manually positioned outwardly from the aperture **39**, thereby allowing the apertured end **38** of the leg or leg pairs **32** to be removed from the bracket **41**. The base **50** is thereby disposed in a substantially horizontal orientation so as to dispose the main segment **16** of the orienting device **12** also in a substantially horizontal orientation during the folding procedure, and so as to provide sufficient support thereto in order to define a table top or like support surface.

By virtue of the pivotal connection **54** of the base **50**, it may be selectively disposed in a somewhat aligned, immediately adjacent orientation relative to the plurality of support members or leg pairs **30** and **32** as represented in FIG. **7**. FIG. **7** defines the support assembly **14** in its stored position for purposes of facilitating transport, including hand carrying, and/or storage. In addition, in its stored position, a roller assembly, comprising a plurality of rollers, casters, etc. **58** may be mounted on the lower most end **40** and **42** of the leg pairs **30** and **32** to accomplish transport of the stored support assembly by rolling, rather than hand carrying. Likewise, however, the casters **58** also substantially facilitate the transportability of the folding assembly **10** in its operative position, such as when a store employee wishes to move from location to location, folding and/or otherwise arranging articles on a given display. It should also be noted that in order to facilitate rolling transport or movement of the folding assembly **10** through a crowded area, such as within a retail clothing establishment, when the support assembly **14** is in its operative position, the lower ends **40** and **42** of the supporting leg pairs **30** and **32** are spaced outwardly from one another a greater distance than the width of the base **50**. In particular, the relatively small transverse dimension or width of the base **50**, as compared to the distance between the lower ends **40** and **42**, facilitates travel of the folding assembly **10** between clothing or garment racks, wherein the space between the hanging garments on adjacently positioned garment racks is much less than the relatively greater space between the respective bases of the garment racks, beneath the supported garments. Accordingly, the relatively narrow or lesser transverse dimension of the base **50** facilitates the easy passage of the folding assembly **10** between adjacently disposed, but spaced apart, garment racks of the type commonly used when the support assembly **14** is in its vertically oriented, operative position, while still providing a wide and stable rolling surface. However, in some circumstances, the tight confines of a location may limit operative movement of the folding assembly **10**, the complete and/or partial collapsing of the folding assembly **10** in the manners described herein can further ease maneuverability to a desired location.

Yet another feature of the present invention comprises the provision of a brace assembly, generally indicated as **60**, wherein the brace assembly **60** includes at least two brace members **62** and **64** selectively positionable between an operative position as shown in FIGS. **2**, **4**, and **5** and an in-operative position as shown in FIG. **6**. The brace assembly **60** is selectively positioned, when in its operative position, beneath and in supporting engagement with an under surface of the respectively disposed side segments **18** and **20**. Each of the brace members **62** and **64** are independently moveable between the aforementioned operative position defined by their outwardly extended orientation, and the in-operative position defined by their orientation in immediately adjacent, substantially contiguous relation to the base **50**. As best shown in FIG. **6**, in order to accomplish such selective positioning, each of the brace members **62** and **64** preferably include outwardly extending, spaced apart legs **66** and **68** respectively. The legs or more precisely leg pairs **66** and **68** are slidingly attached to an under portion or other applicably disposed structure of the base **50**. In addition, it is emphasized that the distance of outward spacing or extension of each of the brace members **62** and **64** may vary from a fully extended position, as shown in FIG. **5**, to any number of partially extended positions (not shown), depending upon the overall size and/or configuration of the respective side segments **18** and **20**, which the brace members **62** and **64** support. Also, as best shown in FIGS. **5** and **6** the spacing between the respective leg member **66** and **68**, may vary in order that they would not interfere with one another, when they are disposed inwardly into the in operative position of FIG. **6**.

As each of the brace members **62** and **64** are independently extendable or collapsible, the overall size of the support surface defined by the side segments **18** and **20** can also be varied to the needs of the user and/or the limits of a work area. For example, the preferred connector elements **24** and **26** formed of a flexible material, and as a result preferably define a two way hinge structure. As a result, in addition to being foldable atop the main segment **16** so as to fold an article, such as a garment, the connector elements **24** and **26** also allow the side segments **18** and **20** to fold downwardly when the brace members **62** and **64** are not in their extended, supporting position. Accordingly, a variably sized work area can be provided and easily maneuvered and transported to a desired location.

Other structural features of the present invention may include the provision of a storage facility, generally indicated as **70**, in the form of a bag, bin or other container **72**, having any type of opening **74** communicating with the interior thereof. The storage facility **70** is provided in order to store articles, garments, etc. **76** therein, wherein such garments are yet to be folded and are disposed at an easily accessible location during folding and/or transport of the folding assembly.

As shown in FIGS. **8** through **10**, the folding operation or procedure is accomplish by positioning an article or garment **80** in engaging relation with the main segment **16**, in preferably aligned relation to the center line **99**, as well as the side segments **18** and **20**. A generally central or mid portion of the article **80** is disposed in overlying, supporting relation to the main segment **16**, wherein side or peripheral portions of the article **80** are disposed in overlying, supported relation to the side segments **18** and **20**. The folding procedure is instigated by disposing one of the side seg-

ments **18** or **20**, from its outwardly expanded position to its folded position as shown in FIG. **8**. This will bring one portion of the article **80** into a folded orientation as shown in FIG. **8**. FIG. **9** shows the other of the side segments as at **20** being first brought into its folded position rather than the side segment **18**. Furthermore, in the embodiment of FIG. **8** a relatively thin material article is being folded, while to the contrary, in the embodiment of FIG. **9**, a much thicker material article **82** is being folded. This demonstrates the versatility of the folding assembly **10** of the present invention, through the provision of the flexible material attachment assembly comprising the flexible material connector elements **24** and **26**. Therefore, regardless of the "thickness" of the material from which the article is formed or its overall dimension after folding has been completed, the flexibility and overall structure of the connector members **24** and/or **26** is such as to automatically accommodate and provide for the difference in the spacing between the main segment **16** and the side segment **18**, when a relatively thin material article **80** is being folded, than when a relatively thick material article **82** is being folded. Further, FIG. **10** shows the resulting thicker dimension of the completely folded article **84** requiring the connector member **24** to extend outwardly a greater distance, when the end segment **18** is disposed in overlapping relation to the main segment **16**, than is required of the connector **26** when the end segment **20** is performing the first fold in FIG. **9**.

Additionally, as shown in FIGS. **11** through **16**, the folding assembly of the present invention includes another embodiment of the orienting device which is generally indicated therein as **12'**. The orienting device **12'** comprises a main segment **160** and at least two outwardly extending movably interconnected side segments **18'** and **20'** which operate in substantially the same fashion as described with reference to the embodiment of FIGS. **1** through **10**. In addition, the orienting device **12'** can be used in combination with the support assembly **14** as described with reference to FIGS. **1** through **7** above. However, in this alternate embodiment of the orienting device **12'**, it preferably includes at least one, but preferably two extension members, such as those generally indicated as **90** and **92**, represented in at least partially operative and assembled form in FIG. **11** and depicted and explained in greater detail with reference to FIGS. **12** through **15**. Since the structural details and operative features of each of the extension members **90** and **92** are substantially identical, a detailed description of one of the extension members **92** is meant to be inclusive of the structural and operative features of the other of the extension members.

More specifically, each of the extension members **90** and **92** are selectively positionable both towards and away from the respective sides **160'** and **160"** of the main segment **160**, as indicated by directional arrow **97**. As a result, the overall or effective size of the support surface of the main segment **160** can be correspondingly decreased or increased to meet the needs of the user relative to narrower and wider garments and other articles. Along these lines, it is noted that if desired, the entire main segment can be defined by the extension members, such as by having the extension members abut one another to define all or part of the main segment. Indeed, in such an embodiment, only one of the extension members need truly be provided so as to preserve a preferred, general symmetry of the system.

In the illustrated embodiment, each of the extension members **90** and **92** are preferably moveable independently of one another and are preferably incrementally positionable at any varying distance from the main segment **160** due to the provision of a tongue and groove type assembly. The tongue and groove assembly comprises an integral or otherwise fixedly secured tongue **94**, projecting outwardly from slide portion **96** of each of the extension members **90** and **92**. The tongue **94** is dimensioned and configured to be removably received within any one of a plurality of elongated grooves **98** formed in spaced, substantially parallel relation to one another in the under surface of the main segment **160**, as best shown in FIGS. **12** and **14**. Further, the removable interconnection of the tongue **94** with anyone of the grooves **98** will facilitate the outwardly extending support or disposition of the extension members **90** and **92**. For example, an under surface thereof, such as **93** may engage a support structure as at **95**, which is secured to an underportion of the main segment **160**, at any applicable location to provide something of a cantilever-type support as the outwardly projecting tongue **94** and the under surface **93** of the extension member **92**, simultaneously engage one of the grooves **98** and support structure **95**, respectively. Accordingly, dependent upon the relative position between the main segment **160** and each of the extension members **90** and **92**, the size of a central portion of the support surface, which includes the main segment **160**, is effectively changed, based on the positioning of the support surfaces **90'** and **92'** towards and/or away from the main segment. The extension members **90** and **92** are particularly useful for folding of an unusually large garment and/or where the various garments or articles being folded continuously vary in size or configuration. In the latter situation the extension members **90** and **92** can easily and quickly be adjusted both towards an away from the main segment **160** to either reduce or expand the effective support surface, as described above.

A structural modification also incorporated in the embodiment of FIGS. **11** through **15** includes the side panels **18'** and **20'** being movably connected to the correspondingly disposed extension members **90** and **92**, respectively. More specifically, the flexible material connector members **24'** and **26'** movably connect or secure each of the side segments **18'** and **20'** to a corresponding one of the extension members **90** and **92** respectively, as shown in FIGS. **11** and **15**. Operative positioning of each of the side segments **18'** and **20'** is substantially the same as described with regard to the embodiment of FIGS. **8** through **10**, regardless of the outward disposition of the extension members **90** and **92** relative to the main segment **160**.

Since many modifications, variations and changes in detail can be made to the described preferred embodiment of the invention, it is intended that all matters in the foregoing description and shown in the accompanying drawings be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense. Thus, the scope of the invention should be determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents.

Now that the invention has been described

What is claimed is

1 A folding assembly structured to arrange an article into a folded orientation, said folding assembly comprising

a) an orienting device, said orienting device including a main segment and at least two side segments disposed in engaging relation to different portions of the article being folded,

b) an attachment assembly securing each of said side segments to said orienting device in movable relation to said main segment,

c) said side segments selectively positionable between an expanded position and a folded position, said expanded position at least partially defined by said side segments

extending laterally outward from said main segment in spaced relation thereto and said folded position defined by each of said side segments independently disposed in substantially overlapping relation to said main segment,

d) a support assembly disposed in supporting engagement with said orienting device,

e) said attachment assembly including at least two flexible material connectors each movably securing a different one of said side segments to said orienting device.

2. A folding assembly as recited in claim 1 wherein said support assembly comprises a base disposed in supporting engagement with said orienting device so as to define a support surface at said orienting device.

3. A folding assembly as recited in claim 2 wherein said base includes a pair of brace members structured to selectively extend into supporting, engaging relation with each of said side segments so as to vary a size of said support surface.

4. A folding assembly as recited in claim 3 wherein said attachment assembly is structured to permit selective downward pivotal movement of said side segments, upon a corresponding one of said brace members being disposed in a retracted, in-operative position, so as to selectively reduce said size of said support surface.

5. A folding assembly as recited in claim 4 wherein said attachment assembly comprises at least two flexible material connectors structured to provide two way pivotal movement of said side segments.

6. A folding assembly as recited in claim 1 wherein said support assembly comprises an elongated configuration extending substantially vertically upward from a supporting surface into supporting engagement with said orienting device at an upper end of said support assembly.

7. A folding assembly as recited in claim 6 wherein said support assembly is structured to be selectively disposed between a supporting position and a substantially collapsed, stored position.

8. A folding assembly as recited in claim 1 wherein said support assembly comprises a plurality of support members movably connected to one another and selectively disposable between a supporting position and a stored position.

9. A folding assembly as recited in claim 8 wherein said supporting position is at least partially defined by said plurality of support members collectively extending substantially vertically upward from a supporting surface into engagement with said orienting device at an upper end thereof.

10. A folding assembly as recited in claim 9 wherein said stored position is at least partially defined by said pair of support members collectively disposed in a substantially aligned, collapsed position having a substantially flat configuration.

11. A folding assembly as recited in claim 8 wherein said support assembly comprises a base movably connected to said plurality of support members and disposed in supporting engagement with said orienting device, when said support assembly is in said supporting position.

12. A folding assembly as recited in claim 11 wherein said base is disposed in substantially aligned, overlapping position when said support assembly is in said stored position.

13. A folding assembly as recited in claim 12 wherein said stored position is further defined by said plurality of support members collectively disposed in a substantially aligned, collapsed position having a substantially flat configuration.

14. A folding assembly as recited in claim 13 wherein said supporting position is at least partially defined by said plurality of support members collectively extending substantially vertically upward from a supporting surface and said base is substantially horizontally oriented into engagement with said orienting device at an upper end of said plurality of support members.

15. A folding assembly as recited in claim 14 wherein said support assembly further comprises a roller assembly secured to said plurality of support members in opposed relation to said base.

16. A folding assembly as recited in claim 8 wherein said support assembly comprises a base movably connected to said plurality of support members and disposable in supporting engagement with said orienting device.

17. A folding assembly as recited in claim 16 wherein said support assembly further comprises a brace assembly disposed in supporting engagement with said side segments when said side segments are in said expanded position.

18. A folding assembly as recited in claim 17 wherein said brace assembly is selectively positionable between an operative position and an in-operative position.

19. A folding assembly as recited in claim 18 wherein said operative position is at least partially defined by said brace assembly extending laterally outward from said base into supporting engagement with an under portion of each of said side segments.

20. A folding assembly as recited in claim 19 wherein said in-operative position is at least partially defined by said brace assembly disposed in substantially aligned, immediately adjacent relation to said base.

21. A folding assembly as recited in claim 18 wherein said brace assembly comprises at least two brace members independently movably mounted on said support assembly relative to said base, each of said brace members selectively extending laterally outward from a different peripheral portion of said base into supporting engagement with a different one of said side segments to define said operative position.

22. A folding assembly as recited in claim 21 wherein each of said brace members is slidingly mounted on said support assembly towards and away from said base so as to at least partially define said in-operative and said operative positions respectively.

23. A folding assembly as recited in claim 21 wherein said operative position of said brace assembly is further defined by each of said brace members extending outwardly a variable distance from said base, dependent on the size of corresponding ones of said side segments.

24. A folding assembly as recited in claim 23 wherein said attachment assembly comprises at least two flexible material connectors each movably securing a different one of said side segments to said main segment.

25. A folding assembly as recited in claim 24 wherein said flexible material connectors are structured to permit two way pivotal movement of said side segments.

26. A folding assembly as recited in claim 1 wherein said main segment includes an etched center line defined therein.

27. A folding assembly as recited in claim 1 further comprising a storage facility operatively associated therewith and structured to contain a plurality of said articles.

28. A folding assembly as recited in claim 1 wherein said orienting device further comprises at least one extension member moveable outwardly to selectively vary the effective size of said main segment.

29. A folding assembly as recited in claim 28 comprising at least two of said extension members.

30. A folding assembly as recited in claim 29 wherein each of said extension members is movably disposed in interconnecting relation between said main segment and a different one of said side segments.

31. A folding assembly as recited in claim 30 wherein said attachment assembly comprises at least two flexible material connectors each movably securing one of said side segments to a different one of said extension members.

32. A folding assembly as recited in claim 31 wherein each of said side segments is laterally moveable towards and away from said main segments along with a corresponding extension member to which it is secured.

33. A folding assembly as recited in claim 29 wherein each of said extension members is laterally positionable towards and away from opposite sides of said main segment.

34. A folding assembly as recited in claim 33 wherein each of said extension members is independently disposable into a plurality of spaced apart, incrementally variable positions outwardly from said main segment.

35. A folding assembly designed to arrange an article into a folded orientation, said folding assembly comprising:

a) an orienting device including a main segment and at least two side segments disposed in engaging relation to different portions of the article being folded,

b) said side segments movably secured to said main segment and selectively positionable between an expanded position and a folded position,

c) a support assembly disposed in supporting engagement with said orienting device and structured to be selectively disposed in either a supporting position or a stored position, and

d) said support assembly comprising an elongated configuration extending substantially vertically upward from a supporting surface into supporting engagement with said orienting device at an upper end of said support assembly when in said supporting position.

36. A folding assembly as recited in claim 35 wherein said support assembly comprises a plurality of support members movably connected to one another and selectively disposable between said supporting position and stored position.

37. A folding assembly as recited in claim 36 wherein said support assembly comprises a base movably connected to said plurality of support members and disposed in supporting engagement with said orienting device, when said support assembly is in said supporting position.

38. A folding assembly as recited in claim 37 wherein said stored position is at least partially defined by said plurality of support members collectively disposed in a substantially aligned, collapsed position and having a substantially flat configuration.

39. A folding assembly as recited in claim 38 wherein said supporting position is at least partially defined by said plurality of support members collectively extending substantially vertically outward from a supporting surface and said base is substantially horizontally oriented into engagement with said orienting device at an upper end of said plurality of support members.

40. An assembly as recited in claim 35 wherein said support assembly comprises a base movably connected to said plurality of support members and disposed in supporting engagement with said orienting device, when said support assembly is in said supporting position, said support assembly further comprising a brace assembly disposed into supporting engagement with said side segment when said side segments are in said expanded position.

41. A folding assembly as recited in claim 40 wherein said brace assembly is selectively positionable between an operative position and an in operative position, said operative position being at least partially defined by said brace assembly extending laterally outward from said base into supporting engagement with an under portion of each of said side segments.

42. A folding assembly as recited in claim 40 wherein said brace assembly comprises at least two brace members movably mounted on said support assembly relative to said base, each of said brace members extending laterally outward from a different peripheral portion of said base into supporting engagement with a different one of said side segments to define said operative position.

43. A folding assembly as recited in claim 42 wherein said operative position of said brace assembly is further defined by each of said brace members extending outwardly a variable distance from said base, depended on sides of corresponding ones of said side segments.

44. A folding assembly designed to arrange an article into a folded orientation, said folding assembly comprising:

a) an orienting device including a main segment and at least two sides of segments disposed in an engaging relation to different portions of the article being folded,

b) an attachment assembly disposed in interconnecting relation between said main segment and each of said side segments,

c) said attachment assembly comprising at least two flexible material connectors each substantially pivotally securing a different one of said side segments in laterally outward spaced relation to said base,

d) a support assembly disposed in supporting engagement with said orienting device and structured to be selectively disposed in either a supporting position or a stored position, and

e) said support assembly comprising an elongated configuration extending substantially vertically outward from a supporting surface into supporting engagement with said orienting device at an upper end of said support assembly when said support assembly is in said supporting position.

45. A folding assembly as recited in claim 44 wherein said support assembly comprises a base movably connected to said plurality of support members and disposed in supporting engagement with said orienting device, when said support assembly is in said supporting position.

46. An assembly as recited in claim 45 wherein said support assembly further comprises a brace assembly disposed into supporting engagement with said side segments when said side segments are in an outwardly expanded position.

47. An assembly as recited in claim 46 wherein said brace assembly comprises at least two brace members movably mounted on said support assembly between an operative position and an in-operative position relative to said base, each of said brace members extending laterally outward from different peripheral portions of said base into supporting engagement with a different one of said side segments to define said operative position.

48. A folding assembly as recited in claim 47 wherein each of said brace members is slidingly mounted on said support assembly towards and away from said base so as to at least partially define said in operative and said operative positions respectively.

49. A folding assembly as recited in claim 48 wherein said operative position of said brace assembly is further define by each of said brace members extending outwardly a variable distance from said base, depended on the sides of corresponding ones of said side segments.

50. A folding assembly structured to arrange an article into a folded orientation, said folding assembly comprising:

a) an orienting device, said orienting device including a main segment and at least two side segments disposed in engaging relation to different portions of the article being folded,

b) an attachment assembly securing each of said side segments to said orienting device in movable relation to said main segment,

c) said side segments selectively positionable between an expanded position and a folded position; said expanded position at least partially defined by said side segments extending laterally outward from said main segment in spaced relation thereto and said folded position defined by each of said side segments independently disposed in substantially overlapping relation to said main segment,

d) a support assembly disposed in supporting engagement with said orienting device, and

e) said attachment assembly structured to permit selective downward pivotal movement of said side segments, so as to selectively reduce said size of said orienting device.

51. A folding assembly structured to arrange an article into a folded orientation, said folding assembly comprising:

a) an orienting device, said orienting device including a main segment and at least two side segments disposed in engaging relation to different portions of the article being folded,

b) an attachment assembly securing each of said side segments to said orienting device in movable relation to said main segment,

c) said side segments selectively positionable between an expanded position and a folded position; said expanded position at least partially defined by said side segments extending laterally outward from said main segment in spaced relation thereto and said folded position defined by each of said side segments independently disposed in substantially overlapping relation to said main segment,

d) a support assembly disposed in supporting engagement with said orienting device, and

e) said support assembly structured to be selectively disposed between a supporting position and a substantially collapsed, stored position.

52. A folding assembly structured to arrange an article into a folded orientation, said folding assembly comprising:

a) an orienting device, said orienting device including a main segment and at least two side segments disposed in engaging relation to different portions of the article being folded,

b) an attachment assembly securing each of said side segments to said orienting device in movable relation to said main segment,

c) said side segments selectively positionable between an expanded position and a folded position; said expanded position at least partially defined by said side segments extending laterally outward from said main segment in spaced relation thereto and said folded position defined by each of said side segments independently disposed in substantially overlapping relation to said main segment,

d) a support assembly disposed in supporting engagement with said orienting device, and

e) said main segment including an etched center line defined therein.

53. A folding assembly structured to arrange an article into a folded orientation, said folding assembly comprising:

a) an orienting device, said orienting device including a main segment and at least two side segments disposed in engaging relation to different portions of the article being folded,

b) an attachment assembly securing each of said side segments to said orienting device in movable relation to said main segment,

c) said side segments selectively positionable between an expanded position and a folded position; said expanded position at least partially defined by said side segments extending laterally outward from said main segment in spaced relation thereto and said folded position defined by each of said side segments independently disposed in substantially overlapping relation to said main segment,

d) a support assembly disposed in supporting engagement with said orienting device, and

e) said orienting device further including at least one extension member moveable outwardly to selectively vary the effective size of said main segment

* * * * *

EXHIBIT E

US006561392B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Lapace et al.

(10) **Patent No.: US 6,561,392 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent: May 13, 2003**

(54) **FOLDING ASSEMBLY**

(75) Inventors: **Christine L. Lapace**, Tamarac, FL (US); **Ronald J. Lapace**, Tamarac, FL (US); **Steve Ladue**, Odessa, FL (US); **Charles R. Smalley**, Clearwater, FL (US)

(73) Assignee: **Goldpace Enterprises, Inc.**, Miami, FL (US)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 146 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **09/804,922**

(22) Filed: **Mar. 14, 2001**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2001/0020630 A1 Sep. 13, 2001

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 09/425,575, filed on Oct. 22, 1999, now Pat. No. 6,269,987.

(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **A41M 43/00**
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **223/37**; 493/405
(58) **Field of Search** 223/37, 38, 120; **493/405**; 211/19

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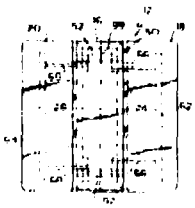
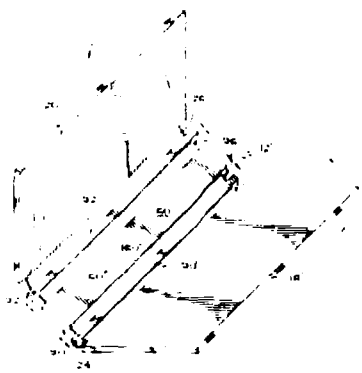
Primary Examiner—Bibhu Mohanty
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Malloy & Malloy, P.A.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A folding assembly structured to arrange any one of a plurality of different articles into a folded orientation and including an orienting device having a main segment and at least two outwardly extending and spaced apart side segments, wherein the main segments and two side segments are initially disposed in engaging relation to different portions of the article being folded. An attachment assembly in the form of a flexible material connector pivotally attaches each of the side segments in spaced relation to the main segment and outwardly spaced relation therefrom. The flexible material connectors thereby serve to accommodate the folding of articles of various thicknesses, in that they allow for the automatic spaced positioning of each of the sides segments at different spaced distances above the main segment as the different portions of the article are being oriented when the side segments are in a folded position. A support assembly comprises an elongated configuration selectively disposable into either a supporting position or a collapsed, stored position, wherein the supporting position is defined by disposing the orienting device at a convenient height above a supporting surface to facilitate the arranging of the articles into the preferred folded position. The support assembly also includes a brace assembly disposable into an operative and in-operative position to selectively support the side segments to define a support surface.

18 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets





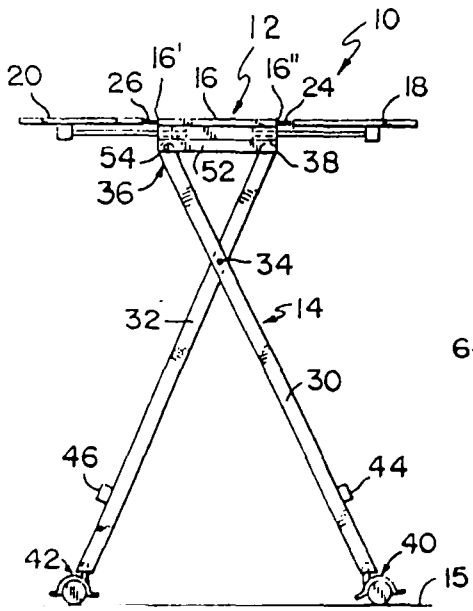


Fig. 1

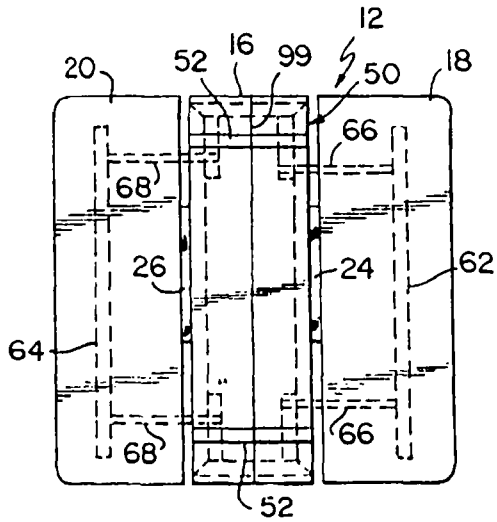


Fig. 2

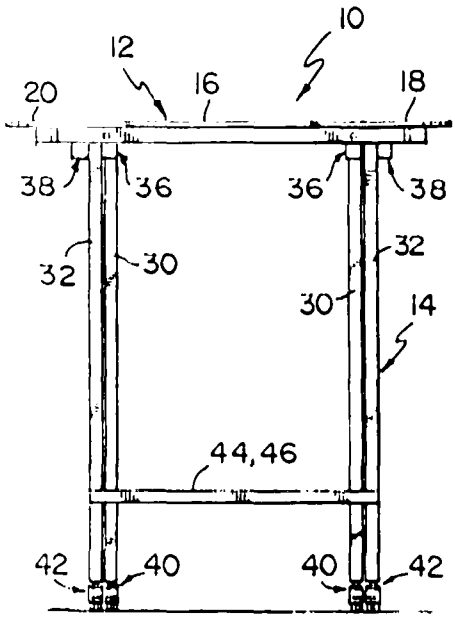


Fig. 3

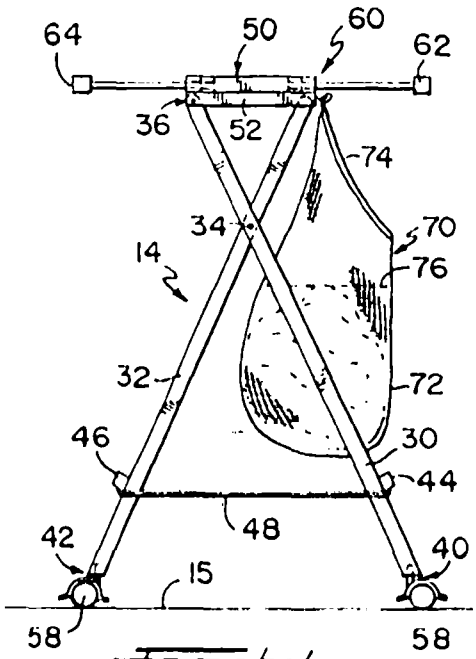


Fig. 4

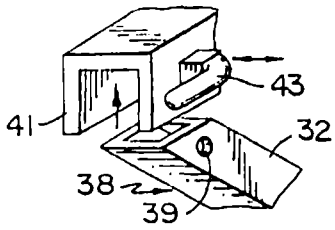


Fig. 3a.

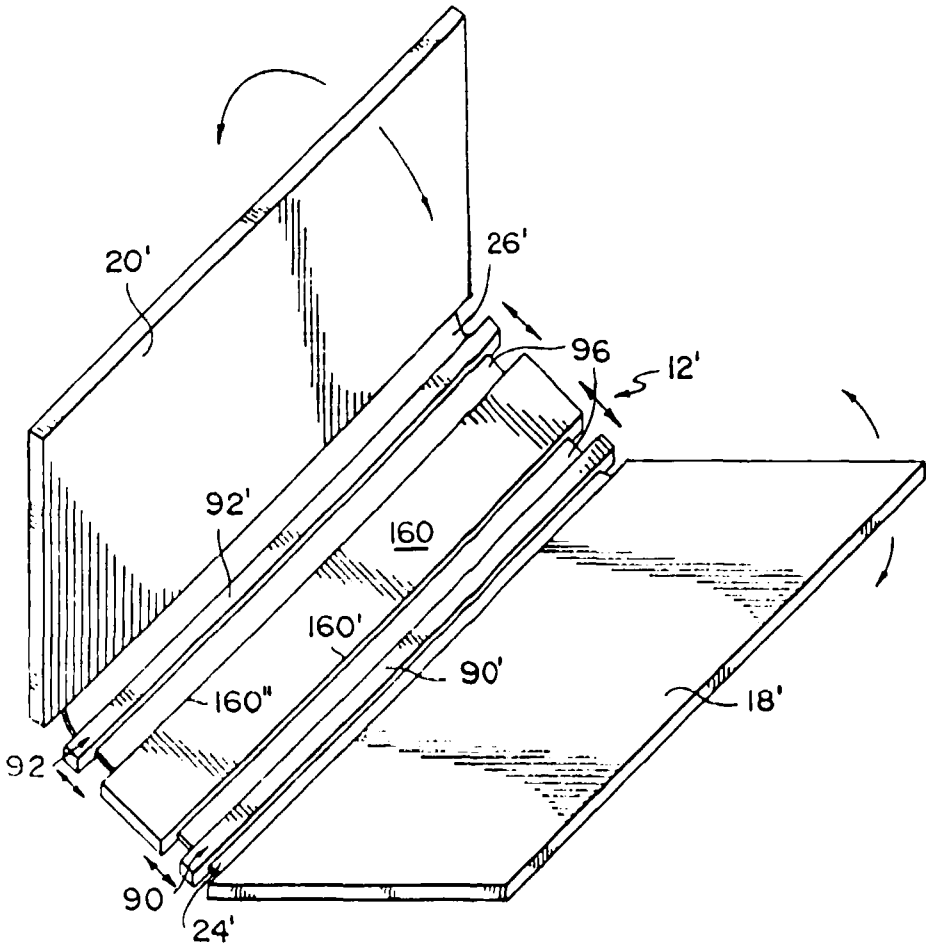


Fig. 11.

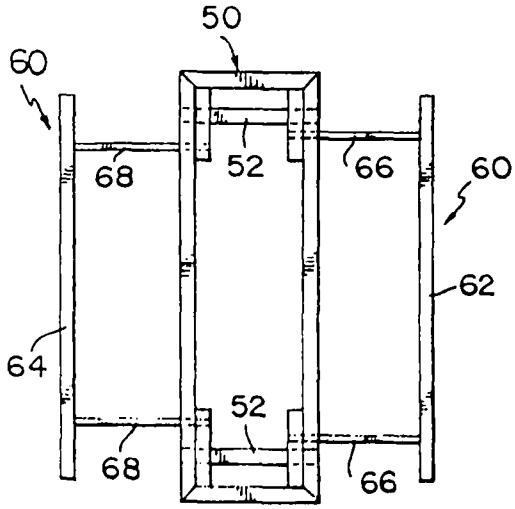


Fig. 5

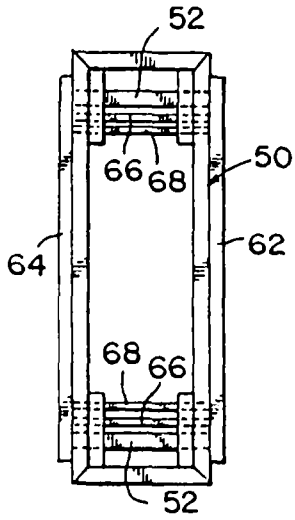


Fig. 6

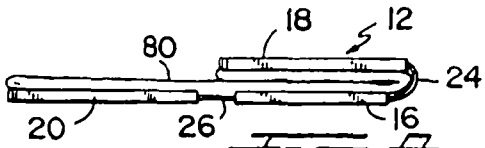


Fig. 8

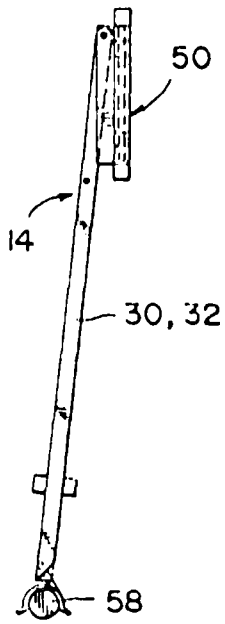


Fig. 7

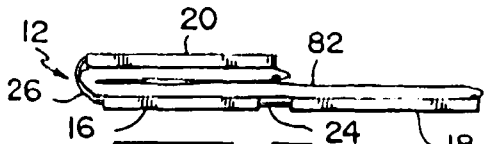


Fig. 9

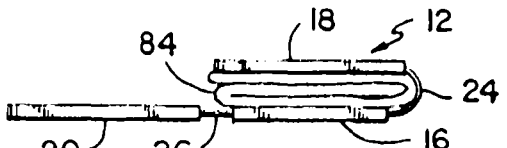


Fig. 10

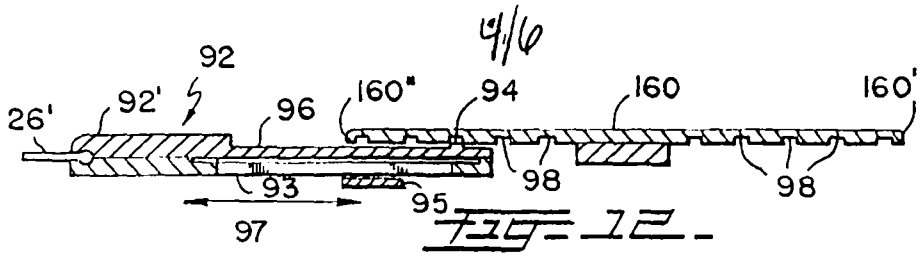


Fig. 12.

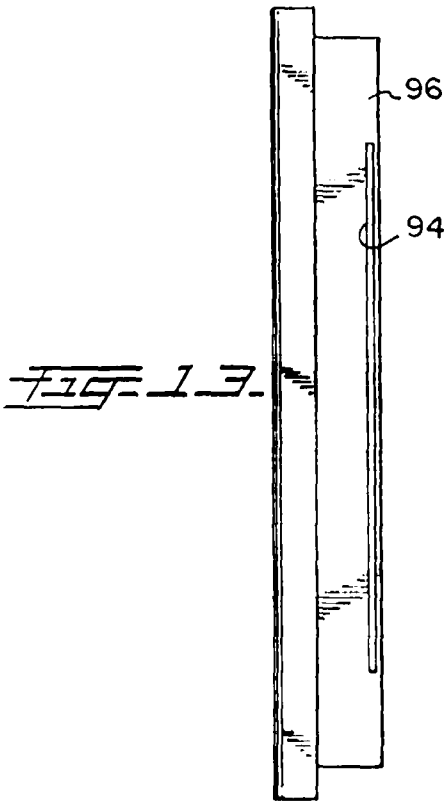


Fig. 13.

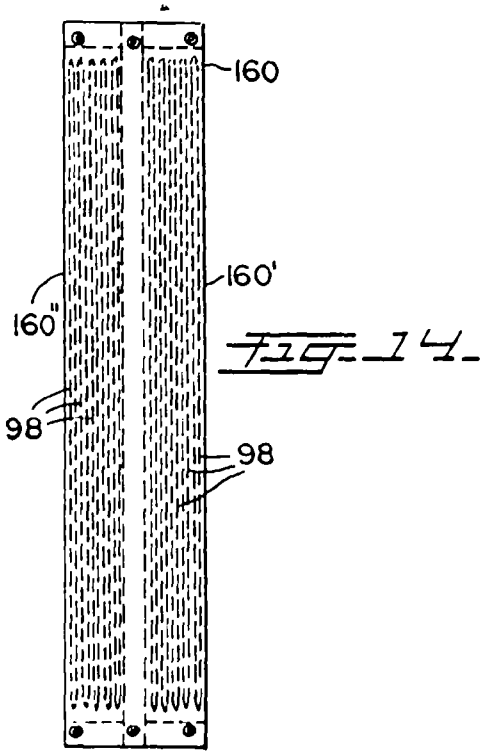


Fig. 14.

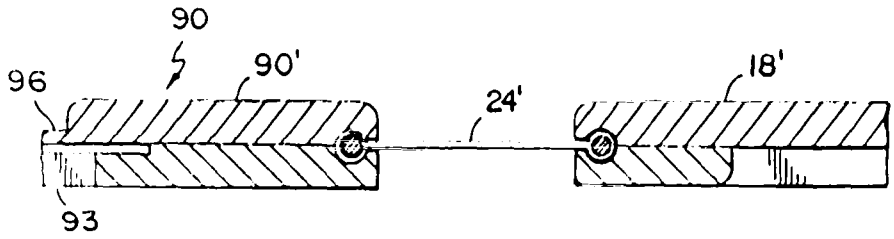


Fig. 15.

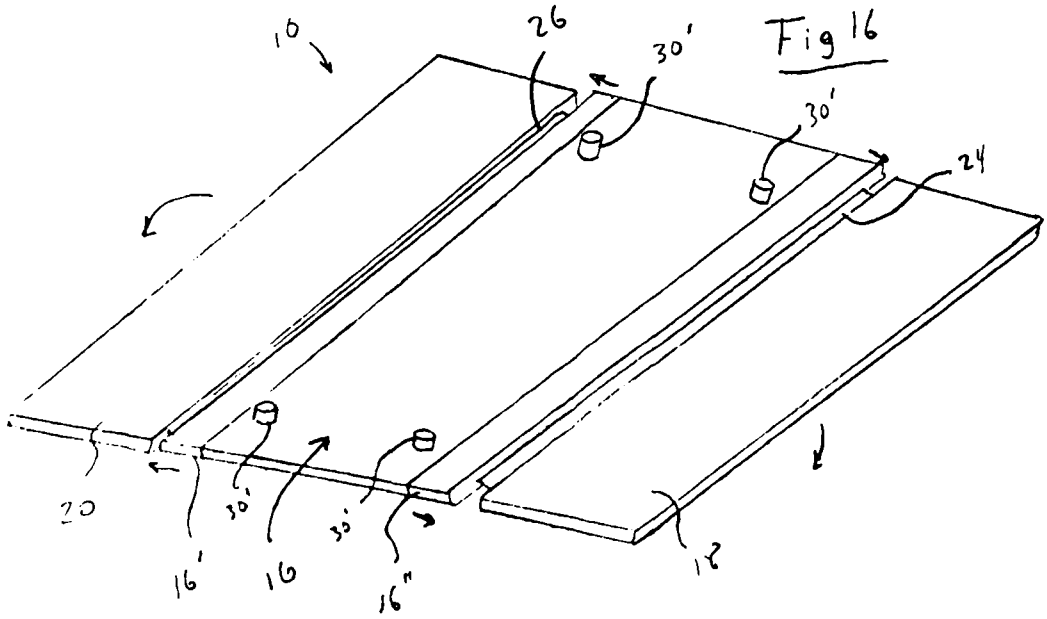


Fig 16

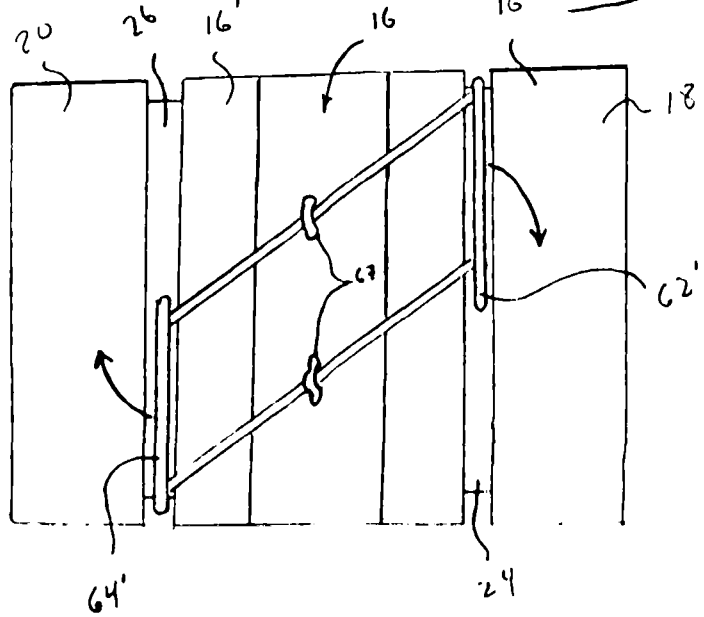
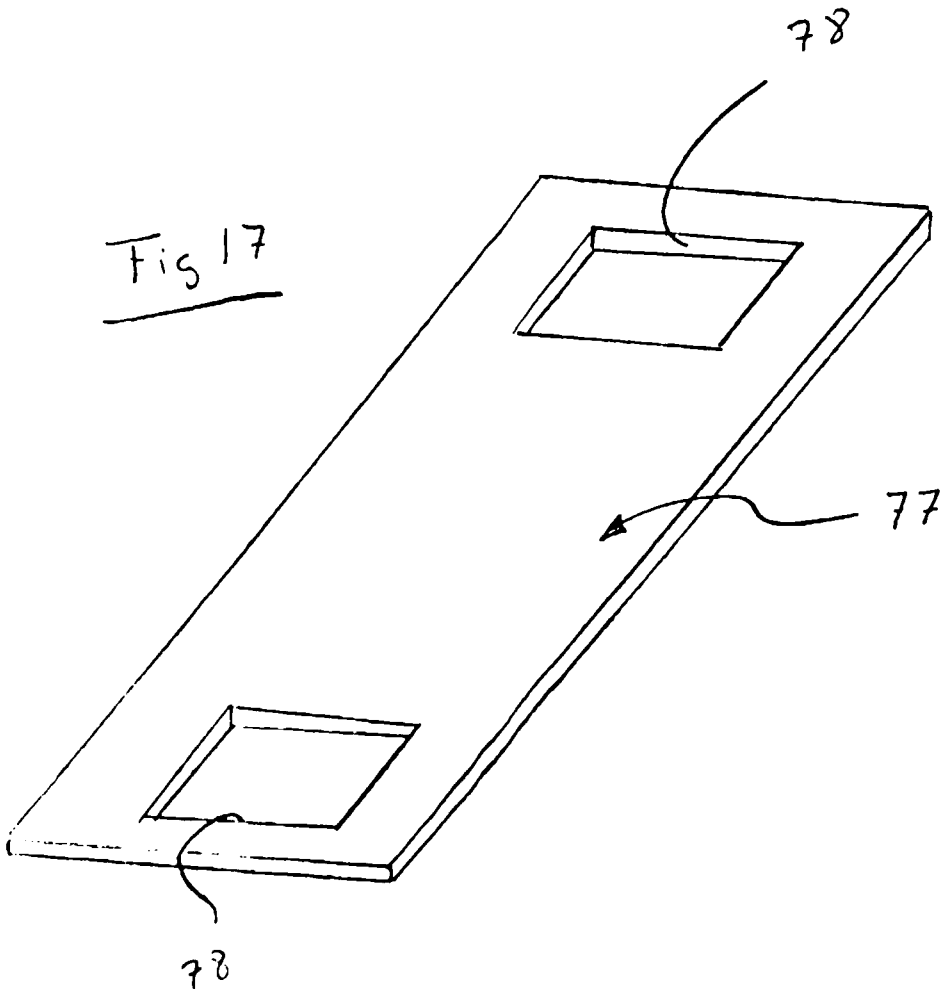


Fig 17

Fig 17



FOLDING ASSEMBLY

The present is a Continuation of previously filed, copending application Ser. No. 09/425,575 which was filed on Oct. 22, 1999 now U.S. Pat. No. 6,269,987, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates to a folding assembly designed to facilitate the manual arrangement of any of a plurality of different articles into a folded orientation, on an independent basis, wherein various operative components of the folding assembly are expandable or extendable into their intended, operative position during the folding procedure, and are selectively disposable into a stored or collapsed, inoperative position to facilitate transport of the folding assembly between different locations.

2. Description of the Related Art

Numerous devices exist which are directed to the arrangement of garments, as well as other articles, in a predetermined, folded position. Such folding devices vary from small manually operated structures, which may be used at home or in an environment where only occasional folding is required, to large mechanized folding devices, which are extremely expensive and primarily designed for strictly commercial environments where garments or other articles are manufactured and/or packaged in extremely large numbers. Devices of the type set forth above are commercially available and are primarily directed to an attempt to save both time and labor, which would normally be expended if the process were relegated to laboriously hand folding each article. In addition, except in the home or domestic environment, the hand folding of garments or other articles is generally unacceptable due to the lack of uniformity resulting from such manual folding. It is of course recognized that such uniformity in appearance of the folded article is a necessity in a commercial or retail establishment, wherein the folded article is made available in a container or package of standard dimension and configuration, or the folded article is presented for display in a manner which is hopefully appealing to the consuming public.

Accordingly, depended upon the particular area of application, folding devices have primarily been designed for specialized applications, in order to accomplish either individual or bulk folding of a variety of different types of articles or of specific articles, such as shirts or the like. Therefore, with the exception of the bulk folding of articles, as primarily used in the garment industry, the individual folding of garments or other articles is usually accomplished either by the use of fully or semi automatic machines, small, inexpensive and less than durable folding boards, small apparatus specifically designed to fold garments or other articles for purposes of packaging or, as set forth above, by the individual hand folding of each item. A recognized disadvantage of the above set forth categories of folding devices is their lack of versatility and inability to be used other than in the specialized field, for which they are initially designed. For example, there is certainly no need or use for a fully or semi automatic folding machine in a commercial or retail establishment, such as a department store the like, where uniform folding is important but, wherein the quantity of articles that must be folded, or refolded does not justify the expense of such mechanized equipment. Moreover, such mechanized devices do not generally provide a desirable degree of portability so as to allow workers to gather and fold items conveniently at a display location. Alternatively, folding tables or like devices which are manually operated are typically formed from inexpensive, light weight material having a relatively short operable life and which are specifically not intended to accommodate the folding of large numbers of garments or other articles. Likewise, such less sophisticated devices are still somewhat cumbersome to manipulate and move to a desired folding location when a number of spaced display locations are present within a particular establishment.

Also, in certain locations such as department stores or other similar retail establishments, available space is at a premium. Accordingly, space dedicated to the storage of a folding table or like device is typically unavailable. Known or conventional garment folding assemblies, of the type set forth above, are not readily adaptable for use in locations where the folding of garments or other articles is necessary for either display or packaging, but where the storage space needed to maintain such folding tables is at a minimum or non-existent.

Therefore, based on the above disadvantages and the overall failure of known or conventional designs to incorporate sufficient versatility and mobility to be adaptable for use in a variety of different commercial, retail and/or domestic environments, there is an obvious need in this area for an improved folding assembly. Such an improved folding assembly should be capable of being operated manually, but should also have sufficient versatility to be used with any one of a wide variety of different types of article for arrangement thereof in a predetermined, folded orientation, resulting in the folded article having a sufficiently uniform appearance to facilitate its display and/or packaging. In addition, such an improved folding assembly should be inexpensive and light weight, yet be formed from materials and or structural components which assure a long operable life and which facilitate the folding device to be transported from location to location without placing undue stress on personnel responsible for its re-location or transport. Finally, an improved folding assembly of the type referred to herein should be capable of being selectively oriented in either an operative position or a collapsed position, wherein when in the collapsed position, the improved folding assembly has a significantly reduced size and configuration so as to be conveniently stored in any of a variety of locations, particularly in establishments where storage space is at a minimum.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a folding assembly designed to arrange any of a wide variety of articles into a folded orientation by the manual manipulation of an orientation device. The orientation device comprises a main, centrally disposed segment and at least two side segments extending laterally outward from the main segment in spaced relation thereto. An attachment assembly, which is preferably formed from a flexible material, movably interconnects each of the side segments to opposite sides of the main segment or in another embodiment to other substantially oppositely disposed structural components of the orienting device, as will be explained in greater detail hereinafter. In either embodiment, the side segments are movably secured to the orienting device in a manner which allows the independent, substantially pivotal movement of each of the side segments in alternate fashion, from an outwardly extended position, for initial support of a garment or other article thereon, to a substantially overlying position relative to the main segment, thereby accomplishing a portion of the folded orientation. The main segment, as well as each of side

segments, may of course vary in dimension and configuration, dependent upon the type and/or size of the article being folded. However, an overall dimension or configuration of each of the main and side segments is preferably such as to allow sufficient versatility to enable the orientation device to be used in the folding of any number of a variety of different articles of a variety of different sizes and thicknesses. Also, regardless of the type of articles being folded, a substantially uniform fold will be the result.

One structural feature of the present invention is the aforementioned attachment assembly, wherein at least one attachment member extends outwardly from opposite sides or peripheral portions of the main segment into movable securement with a correspondingly positioned side or peripheral portion of each of the individual side segments. Accordingly, when in their expanded position, each of the side segments are disposed laterally outward from the main segment in spaced apart relation thereto. However, when the side segments are alternately disposed into a folded position, the flexibility of the attachment member allows for the free pivotal movement as well as an automatic adjustment to accommodate the thickness of the material from which an article is formed or the overall thickness of the article being folded. It should be apparent therefore that the folding assembly of the present invention is readily adaptable for use in folding articles or garments formed of a variety different types of materials, without changing the configuration or dimension or being forced to adjust the relative positions of the operative components of the folding assembly, such as the main segment and side segments, relative to one another.

Another feature of the present invention is the provision of a support assembly, which, when in a supporting position, engages and positions the orienting device, including the main segment and outwardly extending side segments, at a preferred height above a floor, platform or other supporting surface on which the folding assembly of the present invention is disposed. The height of the support assembly can be regulated in order to position the orienting device at a desired location to accomplish the process of folding dependent on the particular location or area where the folding processes occurs.

In addition, the support assembly of the present invention comprises a plurality of support members or legs which, as set forth in greater detail hereinafter, may be more specifically comprised of pivotally attached leg pairs. The leg pairs are selectively positioned, along with the other components of the support assembly, into either a supporting position, as described above, or a stored position. The stored position facilitates the hand carrying of the folding assembly or movement of the folding assembly of the present invention, between different locations, where it is being used. Moreover, to facilitate such transport, a plurality of rollers, casters or like structure, hereinafter collectively referred to as a roller assembly, may be secured to the bottom end or adjacent portion of the support members, in order to facilitate the rolling of the support assembly, when the support assembly is in either its supporting position or its stored position, to a desired location.

In order to facilitate a stable engagement and support with the orientation device, as described above, the support assembly further includes a base which is connected to what may be considered an upper end of the plurality of legs or support members. When the support assembly is in its supporting position the base is disposed in supporting engagement with at least the main segment of the orienting device. It should also be noted that the orienting device, including the main segment and the two or more side segments, may be removably secured to the support assembly, including the base, or alternatively may be fixedly attached thereto in a manner which allows the independent movement of each of the side segments relative to the main segment. In the embodiment comprising a fixed attachment, the base may be fixedly secured by any of a variety of applicable structures to the main segment, such that the two side segments are allowed to be collectively positioned between the aforementioned outwardly extended, supporting position and/or in a folded, stored position, as required.

Yet another feature of the present invention comprises the provision of a brace assembly movably mounted on the support assembly in adjacent, co-operative relation to the base. The brace assembly is co-operatively structured with the base, as well as other associated parts of the support assembly, to be selectively disposed in either an operative position or an inoperative position. The position of the brace assembly may at least partially depend on whether the support assembly is disposed in its supporting position and/or stored position, as described above. More specifically, the brace assembly comprises at least two brace members each of which are movably disposed outwardly from opposite sides and/or substantially oppositely disposed peripheral portions of the base and into supporting engagement with an under portion of different ones of the side segments. The outwardly extending position of the brace members thereby defines the aforementioned operative position of the brace assembly so as to define a rigid table type support surface. In one embodiment, each of brace members are slidingly connected to the base and/or an under portion thereof, in the vicinity of the upper end of the support assembly, such that each of the brace members may be independently extended outwardly from the base different distances, dependent on the size, configuration and/or location of the respective side segments which they support. The in-operative position of the brace members is at least partially defined by their respective disposition in immediately adjacent and/or contiguous relation to the base and more particularly to the correspondingly disposed sides or peripheral portions thereof, from which they normally extend when in the above described operative position.

Based on the above, it should be apparent that the folding assembly of the present invention comprises an improved folding device for any number of different garments or a variety of other articles, any of which may by formed from material having a different thickness, wherein any one the various types of the articles may be arranged in a folded orientation in a quick and easy manner, without requiring replacement, adjustments or repositioning of any of the operative, structural components of the folding assembly. Moreover, the folding assembly also provides an easily transportable, multi-function support surface.

These and other features of the present invention will become more clear when the drawings as well as the detailed description are taken into consideration.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a fuller understanding of the nature of the present invention, reference should be had to the following detailed description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is an end view of the folding assembly of the present invention in a position ready for use;

FIG. 2 is top plan view of the embodiment of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a side view of the embodiment of FIGS. 1 and 2;

FIG. 3A is perspective view in partial cutaway of additional structural details of a support assembly of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is an end view of a support assembly associated with the embodiment of FIGS. 1 through 3;

FIG. 5 is a top plan view of the embodiment of FIG. 4;

FIG. 6 is a top view of the embodiment of the support assembly of FIGS. 4 and 5, shown in an in-operative position;

FIG. 7 is an end view of the support assembly of the embodiment of FIGS. 4 through 6, shown in a stored position;

FIG. 8 is a schematic representation of an orienting device of the embodiment of FIGS. 1 through 3, depicting the disposition of certain structural components during the process of folding an article;

FIG. 9 is a schematic view of a different step in the folding process, other than that shown in FIG. 8;

FIG. 10 is a schematic view of yet another step in the folding process;

FIG. 11 is another embodiment of the folding assembly of the present invention incorporating an orienting device differing from the embodiment of FIGS. 1 through 3;

FIG. 12 is a partial sectional view of the embodiment of FIG. 11;

FIG. 13 is a top plan view of one structural component of the orienting device of the embodiment of FIGS. 11 and 12;

FIG. 14 is a top plan view of another structural component of the orienting device of the embodiment of FIGS. 11 and 12;

FIG. 15 is a sectional view in partial cutaway of a portion of the embodiment of the orienting device as shown in FIG. 11;

FIG. 16 is a bottom perspective view of another embodiment of the present invention including a shortened support assembly;

FIG. 17 is a perspective view of the alignment segment; and

FIG. 18 is a bottom view illustrating an alternate embodiment of the brace members

Like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout the several views of the drawings

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

As shown in the accompanying drawings, the present invention relates to a folding assembly generally indicated as **10** including an orienting device generally indicated as **12**, and a support assembly generally indicated as **14**. With primary reference to FIGS. **1** through **3**, the orienting device **12** includes at least a main, substantially centrally disposed segment **16** and two side segments **18** and **20**. The orienting device may be selectively disposed in either an expanded position, as best shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**, or a folded position, as successively depicted in FIGS. **8** through **10**, which will be explained in greater detail hereinafter.

Each of the main segment **16** and at least two side segments **18** and **20**, may each comprise a substantially flat sheet or panel-like configuration, formed from a substantially rigid or, depending upon the type of articles being folded, at least partially flexible material. Moreover, preferably etched, drawn, attached, or otherwise defined on the main segment **16** is a center line **99**, which provides a guide for the center of an article to be folded. When the side segments **18** and **20** are disposed in their expanded position, they are positioned outwardly from opposite sides or, depending upon the configuration of the main segments **16**, opposite peripheral portions as at **16'** and **16"**. Further, each of the side segments **18** and **20** are preferably coupled in spaced apart relation to the correspondingly disposed peripheral portions or sides **16'** and **16"**, through the provision of an attachment assembly.

Although the attachment assembly may include any of a variety of hinge defining structures, in the illustrated embodiment, the attachment assembly of the present invention is preferably formed of a flexible material, such as but not limited to a high strength, flexible canvas, plastic, or other applicable flexible material. In the embodiment of FIG. **2**, the attachment assembly comprises at least two flexible material straps or equivalently structured connector elements **24** and **26**, each of which serve to interconnect a different one of the side segments **18** and **20** respectively, to the main segment **16**, in spaced apart relation to the correspondingly disposed peripheral portions or sides **16'** and **16"** respectively. It is emphasized that the attachment assembly may differ from the embodiment shown in FIG. **2**, in that the length of each of the flexible material connector elements **24** and **26** may be increased or decreased or alternatively, a plurality of such connector elements **24** and **26** may extend in spaced relation to one another between the main segment **16** and each of the side segments **18** and **20**. As a result of the connector elements **24** and **26** being formed from a flexible material, a substantial degree of versatility and variability is added to the folding procedure. This applies in terms of the types of articles being folded, as well as the physical characteristics, including but not limited to the "thickness" of the material from which the various folded articles are formed. The versatile feature will be more specifically described with regard to the folding procedure depicted in FIGS. **8** through **10** hereinafter. However, it is noted that gaps of varying dimensions are defined by the same attachment assembly so as to conform to the clothing article being folded.

In order to provide such versatility, it is further emphasized that the size, configuration and material from which the connector elements **24** and **26** are formed can vary as long as sufficient flexibility is provided in allowing a substantially "pivotal" type of movement of the side segments **18** and **20**, into their respective folded position, as shown in FIGS. **8** and **9**, during the folding procedure. In addition, the material from which the connector members **24** and **26** are formed can even be elastic, so as to somewhat vary the initial spacing between the side segments **18** and **20** and the main segments **16**, such as when the elastic material connector members are stretched. Alternatively, the length of the connector members **24** and **26** can be selectively varied in terms of extending or retracting the length between the corresponding peripheral portions of each of the side segments **18** and **20** and the respective sides or peripheral portions **16'** and **16"** of the main segments **16**.

Another feature of the folding assembly **10** of the present invention comprises the aforementioned support assembly **14** which, in at least one embodiment has a somewhat elongated configuration and, when in its supporting position as shown in FIGS. **1** through **4**, is substantially vertically oriented so as to position the orienting device **12** in a vertically spaced relation to a floor, support platform or other supporting surface **15** on which the folding assembly **10** is disposed, thereby defining a table or like support article. More specifically, the support assembly **14** comprises a plurality of support members generally in the form of legs or

"leg pairs" **30** and **32**. The leg pairs **30** and **32** are pivotally connected to one another as at **34** and include an upper or top end generally indicated as **36** and **38** and a lower end, generally indicated as **40** and **42** respectively. Cross members **44** and **46** may be provided in order to assure the structural integrity and stability of the support assembly **14**. In addition, a retaining member **48** may be disposed in interconnected relation between the leg pairs **30** and **32**, preferably at the cross members **44** and **46**, in order to limit the spaced apart distance between the lower portions of the leg pairs **30** and **32**, when the support assembly **14** is in its supporting position as shown in FIGS. **1**, **3** and **4**.

In order to facilitate either the removal or fixed support of the orienting device **12**, the support assembly **14** comprises a base **50** which may have an open or apertured construction or be in the form of a solid material panel. In either embodiment, end portions **52**, which may be secured to an under portion or any other applicable portion of the base **50**, are pivotally attached, as at **54**, to an upper end **36** of one of the leg pairs **30**. The upper end **38** of the other leg pair **32** is removably disposed in supporting engagement with the base **50** at an opposite end of the end portions **52** or any other location. In order to further assure stability of the support assembly and prevent inadvertent displacement of the base **50** from its substantially horizontal position, as shown in FIGS. **1** and **4**, the upper end **38** of at least one of the legs of the leg pairs **32**, may include an aperture **39**. In addition, a bracket **41** may be correspondingly mounted or attached to the correspondingly disposed end portion **52** of the base **50**, and is disposed and configured to receive the end **38** removably therein. A spring biased locking pin **43** is preferably mounted on bracket **41** and is positionable to removably pass through the aperture **39**, when the end **38** is received within the interior of the bracket **41**. Conversely, when it is desired to orient the support assembly **14** out of its substantially horizontal support position, the spring biased pin **43** is manually positioned outwardly from the aperture **39**, thereby allowing the apertured end **38** of the leg or leg pairs **32** to be removed from the bracket **41**. The base **50** is thereby disposed in a substantially horizontal orientation so as to dispose the main segment **16** of the orienting device **12** also in a substantially horizontal orientation during the folding procedure, and so as to provide sufficient support thereto in order to define a table top or like support surface.

By virtue of the pivotal connection **54** of the base **50**, it may be selectively disposed in a somewhat aligned, immediately adjacent orientation relative to the plurality of support members or leg pairs **30** and **32** as represented in FIG **7**. FIG **7** defines the support assembly **14** in its stored position for purposes of facilitating transport, including hand carrying, and or storage. In addition, in its stored position, a roller assembly, comprising a plurality of rollers, casters, etc **58** may be mounted on the lower most end **40** and **42** of the leg pairs **30** and **32** to accomplish transport of the stored support assembly by rolling, rather than hand carrying. Likewise, however, the casters **58** also substantially facilitate the transportability of the folding assembly **10** in its operative position, such as when a store employee wishes to move from location to location, folding and/or otherwise arranging articles on a given display. It should also be noted that in order to facilitate rolling transport or movement of the folding assembly **10** through a crowded area, such as within a retail clothing establishment, when the support assembly **14** is in its operative position, the lower ends **40** and **42** of the supporting leg pairs **30** and **32** are spaced outwardly from one another a greater distance than the width of the base **50**. In particular, the relatively small transverse dimension or width of the base **50**, as compared to the distance between the lower ends **40** and **42**, facilitates travel of the folding assembly **10** between clothing or garment racks, wherein the space between the hanging garments on adjacently positioned garment racks is much less than the relatively greater space between the respective bases of the garment racks, beneath the supported garments. Accordingly, the relatively narrow or lesser transverse dimension of the base **50** facilitates the easy passage of the folding assembly **10** between adjacently disposed, but spaced apart, garment racks of the type commonly used when the support assembly **14** is in its vertically oriented, operative position, while still providing a wide and stable rolling surface. However, in some circumstances, the tight confines of a location may limit operative movement of the folding assembly **10**, the complete and/or partial collapsing of the folding assembly **10** in the manners described herein can further ease maneuverability to a desired location.

Looking to FIG. **16**, it is also recognized that the support assembly may include one or more support members **30'** that are substantially short in length. Such a configuration facilitates positioning of the folding assembly **10** on a table or counter top, or on an existing cart type structure. Of course, it is understood that no support assembly is required in some embodiments.

Yet another feature of the present invention comprises the provision of a brace assembly, generally indicated as **60**, wherein the brace assembly **60** includes at least two brace members **62** and **64** selectively positionable between an operative position as shown in FIGS. **2**, **4**, and **5** and an in-operative position as shown in FIG. **6**. The brace assembly **60** is selectively positioned, when in its operative position, beneath and in supporting engagement with an under surface of the respectively disposed side segments **18** and **20**. Each of the brace members **62** and **64** are independently moveable between the aforementioned operative position defined by their outwardly extended orientation, and the in-operative position defined by their orientation in immediately adjacent, substantially contiguous relation to the base **50**. As best shown in FIG **6**, in order to accomplish such selective positioning, each of the brace members **62** and **64** preferably include outwardly extending, spaced apart legs **66** and **68** respectively. The legs or more precisely leg pairs **66** and **68** are slidingly attached to an under portion or other applicably disposed structure of the base **50**. In addition, it is emphasized that the distance of outward spacing or extension of each of the brace members **62** and **64** may vary from a fully extended position, as shown in FIG. **5**, to any number of partially extended positions (not shown), depending upon the overall size and/or configuration of the respective side segments **18** and **20**, which the brace members **62** and **64** support. Also, as best shown in FIGS. **5** and **6** the spacing between the respective leg member **66** and **68**, may vary in order that they would not interfere with one another, when they are disposed inwardly into the in operative position of FIG **6**.

In one embodiment, each of the brace members **62** and **64** are independently extendable or collapsible, thus the overall size of the support surface defined by the side segments **18** and **20** can also be varied to the needs of the user and/or the limits of a work area. For example, the preferred connector elements **24** and **26** are formed of a flexible material, and as a result preferably define a two way hinge structure. As a result, in addition to being foldable atop the main segment **16** so as to fold an article, such as a garment, the connector elements **24** and **26** also allow the side segments **18** and **20**

to fold downwardly when the brace members **62** and **64** are not in their extended, supporting position. Accordingly, a variably sized work area can be provided and easily maneuvered and transported to a desired location.

In yet another embodiment of the present invention, as in FIG. **18** the brace members **62'** and **64'** may be hingedly connected to the orienting device, such as indirectly via the base. Moreover, as shown, the brace members **62'** and **64'** may be coupled with one another so as to retract and expand in unison. In the illustrated embodiment, by pulling either one of the brace members away from the brace about the pivot joints **67**, the other brace member is also in turn pulled outwardly into its expanded orientation. Also as can be seen from this and the previous embodiment, the brace members need not extend completely beneath the entire surface of the side segments.

Other structural features of the present invention may include the provision of a storage facility, generally indicated as **70**, in the form of a bag, bin or other container **72**, having any type of opening **74** communicating with the interior thereof. The storage facility **70** is provided in order to store articles, garments, etc. **76** therein, wherein such garments are yet to be folded and are disposed at an easily accessible location during folding and/or transport of the folding assembly.

As shown in FIGS. **8** through **10**, the folding operation or procedure is accomplished by positioning an article or garment **80** in engaging relation with the main segment **16**, in preferably aligned relation to the center line **99**, as well as the side segments **18** and **20**. A generally central or mid portion of the article **80** is disposed in overlying, supported relation on the main segment **16**, wherein side or peripheral portions of the article **80** are disposed in overlying, supported relation on the side segments **18** and **20**. The folding procedure is instigated by disposing one of the side segments **18** or **20**, from its outwardly expanded position to its folded position as shown in FIG. **8**. This will bring one portion of the article **80** into a folded orientation as shown in FIG. **8**. FIG. **9** shows the other of the side segments as at **20** being first brought into its folded position rather than the side segment **18**. Furthermore, in the embodiment of FIG. **8** a relatively thin material article is being folded, while to the contrary, in the embodiment of FIG. **9**, a much thicker material article **82** is being folded. This demonstrates the versatility of the folding assembly **10** of the present invention, through the provision of the flexible material attachment assembly comprising the flexible material connector elements **24** and **26**. Therefore, regardless of the "thickness" of the material from which the article is formed or its overall dimension after folding has been completed, the flexibility and overall structure of the connector elements **24** and or **26** is such as to automatically accommodate and provide for the difference in the spacing between the main segment **16** and the side segment **18**, when a relatively thin material article **80** is being folded, than when a relatively thick material article **82** is being folded. Further, FIG. **10** shows the resulting thicker dimension of the completely folded article **84** requiring the connector member **24** to extend outwardly a greater distance, when the end segment **18** is disposed in overlapping relation to the main segment **16**, than is required of the connector element **26** when the end segment **20** is performing the first fold in FIG. **9**.

Additionally, as shown in FIGS. **11** through **16**, the folding assembly of the present invention includes another embodiment of the orienting device which is generally indicated therein as **12'**. The orienting device **12'** comprises a main segment **160** and at least two outwardly extending movably interconnected side segments **18'** and **20'** which operate in substantially the same fashion as described with reference to the embodiment of FIGS. **1** through **10**. In addition, the orienting device **12'** can be used in combination with the support assembly **14** as described with reference to FIGS. **1** through **7** above. However, in this alternate embodiment of the orienting device **12'**, it preferably includes at least one, but preferably two extension members, such as those generally indicated as **90** and **92**, represented in at least partially operative and assembled form in FIG. **11** and depicted and explained in greater detail with reference to FIGS. **12** through **15**. Since the structural details and operative features of each of the extension members **90** and **92** are substantially identical, a detailed description of one of the extension members **92** is meant to be inclusive of the structural and operative features of the other of the extension members.

More specifically, each of the extension members **90** and **92** are selectively positionable both towards and away from the respective sides **160'** and **160"** of the main segment **160**, as indicated by directional arrow **97**. As a result, the overall or effective size of the support surface of the main segment **160** can be correspondingly decreased or increased to meet the needs of the user relative to narrower and wider garments and other articles. Along these lines, it is noted that if desired, the entire main segment can be defined by the extension members, such as by having the extension members abut one another to define all or part of the main segment. Indeed, in such an embodiment, only one of the extension members need truly be provided so as to preserve a preferred, general symmetry of the system.

In the illustrated embodiment, each of the extension members **90** and **92** are preferably moveable independently of one another and are incrementally positionable at any varying distance from the main segment **160** due to the provision of a tongue and groove type assembly. The tongue and groove assembly comprises an integral or otherwise fixedly secured tongue **94**, projecting outwardly from slide portion **96** of each of the extension members **90** and **92**. The tongue **94** is dimensioned and configured to be removably received within any one of a plurality of elongated grooves **98** formed in spaced, substantially parallel relation to one another in the under surface of the main segment **160**, as best shown in FIGS. **12** and **14**. Further, the removable interconnection of the tongue **94** with anyone of the grooves **98** will facilitate the outwardly extending support or disposition of the extension members **90** and **92**. For example, an under surface thereof, such as **93** may engage a support structure as at **95**, which is secured to an underportion of the main segment **160**, at any applicable location to provide somewhat of a cantilever-type support as the outwardly projecting tongue **94** and the under surface **93** of the extension member **92**, simultaneously engage one of the grooves **98** and support structure **95**, respectively. Accordingly, dependent upon the relative position between the main segment **160** and each of the extension members **90** and **92**, the size of a central portion of the support surface, which includes the main segment **160**, is effectively changed, based on the positioning of the support surfaces **90'** and **92'** towards and or away from the main segment. The extension members **90** and **92** are particularly useful for folding of an unusually large garment and or where the various garments or articles being folded continuously vary in size or configuration. In the latter situation the extension members **90** and **92** can easily and quickly be adjusted both towards an away from the main segment **160** to either reduce or expand the effective support surface, as described above

A structural modification also incorporated in the embodiment of FIGS. **11** through **15** includes the side panels **18'** and **20'** being movably connected to the correspondingly disposed extension members **90** and **92**, respectively. More specifically, the flexible material connector members **24'** and **26'** movably connect or secure each of the side segments **18'** and **20'** to a corresponding one of the extension members **90** and **92** respectively, as shown in FIGS. **11** and **15**. Operative positioning of each of the side segments **18'** and **20'** is substantially the same as described with regard to the embodiment of FIGS. **8** through **10**, regardless of the outward disposition of the extension members **90** and **92** relative to the main segment **160**.

Looking to yet another structural component of the present invention, as detailed in FIG. **17**, an alignment segment **77** may also be provided. The alignment segment **77** is preferably generally rigid and elongate, and may be of a similar length as that of the main segment. In the illustrated embodiment, the alignment segment **77** is formed of a rigid, generally flat panel. In use, the alignment segment **77** is structured to be disposed on the article, and especially on a pair of pants, after the article has been disposed on the main segment, but before the side segments are disposed in their overlapping relation to the main segment. In particular, the alignment segment **77** is especially beneficial in folding pants, so as to maintain an interior crease, such as at the crotch of pants, such as jeans. For example, when folding pants, such as jeans, it is beneficial to define a square folded unit that can fit into a compact storage and display area. As a result, to define the square shape it is generally beneficial to fold the crotch of a longitudinally folded pair of pants onto the main body of the pants prior to folding the legs and waist onto one another. As this region can sometimes be resilient, especially in jeans, the alignment segment **77** is structured to be disposed atop the folded crotch portion so as to maintain the crease defined thereby while the side segments are used to fold the legs and the waist portions on one another to define the folded article. As can be appreciated, a plurality of pants can be folded simultaneously, with the alignment segment **77** being sufficiently elongate to stretch onto each of the adjacent pairs of pants. Moreover, the alignment segment **77** preferably includes one or more handles **78** which facilitate sliding removal of the alignment segment **77** from within the folded pants. If desired, a hook or holding structure may be provided so as to secure the alignment segment to the remainder of the folding assembly **10**, at least when the alignment segment **77** is not in use.

Since many modifications, variations and changes in detail can be made to the described preferred embodiment of the invention, it is intended that all matters in the foregoing description and shown in the accompanying drawings be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense. Thus, the scope of the invention should be determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents.

Now that the invention has been described,

What is claimed is:

1. A folding assembly structured to arrange an article into a folded orientation, said folding assembly comprising:

a) an orienting device, said orienting device including a main segment and at least two side segments disposed in engaging relation to different portions of the article being folded,

b) an attachment assembly securing each of said side segments to said orienting device in movable relation to said main segment,

c) said side segments selectively positionable between an expanded position and a folded position; said expanded position at least partially defined by said side segments extending laterally outward from said main segment in spaced relation thereto and said folded position defined by each of said side segments independently disposed in substantially overlapping relation to said main segment, and

d) said attachment assembly including at least two flexible material connectors each movably securing a different one of said side segments to said orienting device.

2. A folding assembly as recited in claim **1** further comprising a support assembly disposed in supporting engagement with said orienting device, said support assembly including a plurality of support members.

3. A folding assembly as recited in claim **2** wherein said support members are generally short in length.

4. A folding assembly as recited in claim **2** wherein said support assembly comprises an elongated configuration extending substantially vertically upward from a supporting surface into supporting engagement with said orienting device at an upper end of said support assembly.

5. A folding assembly as recited in claim **1** further including a pair of brace members structured to selectively extend into a supporting, operative position which engages each of said side segments.

6. A folding assembly as recited in claim **5** wherein said attachment assembly is structured to permit selective downward pivotal movement of said side segments, upon a corresponding one of said brace members being disposed in a retracted, inoperative position, so as to selectively reduce said size of said support surface.

7. A folding assembly as recited in claim **6** wherein each of said brace members is slidingly secured relative to said main segment.

8. A folding assembly as recited in claim **1** wherein said flexible material connectors are structured to define a variable, unplanned gap between said side segments and said main segment.

9. A folding assembly as recited in claim **1** wherein said main segment includes a center line defined thereon.

10. A folding assembly as recited in claim **1** further comprising a storage facility operatively associated therewith and structured to contain a plurality of said articles.

11. A folding assembly as recited in claim **1** wherein said orienting device further comprises at least one extension member moveable outwardly to selectively vary the effective size of said main segment.

12. A folding assembly as recited in claim **11** comprising at least two of said extension members.

13. A folding assembly as recited in claim **12** wherein each of said extension members is movably disposed in interconnecting relation between said main segment and a different one of said side segments.

14. A folding assembly as recited in claim **1** further comprising an alignment segment, said alignment segment structured to be disposed on the article after the article has been disposed on said main segment, but before said side segments are disposed in said overlapping relation to said main segment, said alignment segment being generally rigid and elongate.

15. A folding assembly as recited in claim **14** wherein said alignment segment is structured to maintain an interior crease of the article prior to its being folded, and includes a handle structured to facilitate removal of said alignment segment from an interior of the folded article.

16. A folding assembly structured to arrange an article into a folded orientation, said folding assembly comprising:

a) an orienting device, said orienting device including a main segment and at least two side segments disposed in engaging relation to different portions of the article being folded,

b) an attachment assembly securing each of said side segments to said orienting device in movable relation to said main segment,

c) said side segments selectively positionable between an expanded position and a folded position; said expanded position at least partially defined by said side segments extending laterally outward from said main segment in spaced relation thereto and said folded position defined by each of said side segments independently disposed in substantially overlapping relation to said main segment, and

d) said attachment assembly structured to permit selective downward pivotal movement of said side segments, so as to selectively reduce said size of said orienting device.

17. A folding assembly structured to arrange an article into a folded orientation, said folding assembly comprising:

a) an orienting device, said orienting device including a main segment and at least two side segments disposed in engaging relation to different portions of the article being folded,

b) an attachment assembly securing each of said side segments to said orienting device in movable relation to said main segment,

c) said side segments selectively positionable between an expanded position and a folded position; said expanded position at least partially defined by said side segments extending laterally outward from said main segment in spaced relation thereto and said folded position defined by each of said side segments independently disposed in substantially overlapping relation to said main segment, and

d) said main segment including a center line defined thereon.

18. A folding assembly structured to arrange an article into a folded orientation, said folding assembly comprising:

a) an orienting device, said orienting device including a main segment and at least two side segments disposed in engaging relation to different portions of the article being folded,

b) an attachment assembly securing each of said side segments to said orienting device in movable relation to said main segment,

c) said side segments selectively positionable between an expanded position and a folded position; said expanded position at least partially defined by said side segments extending laterally outward from said main segment in spaced relation thereto and said folded position defined by each of said side segments independently disposed in substantially overlapping relation to said main segment,

c) said orienting device further including at least one extension member moveable outwardly to selectively vary the effective size of said main segment.

* * * * *

CIVIL COVER SHEET 04-20217

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CIV-SEITZ
MAGISTRATE BANDSTRA

a) PLAINTIFFS
GOLDPACE ENTERPRISES, INC., a Florida corporation; and CUSTOMER MINDED ASSOCIATES, INC., a Florida corporation.

DEFENDANTS
KOHL'S DEPARTMENT STORES, INC., a Delaware corporation.

(b) COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED PLAINTIFF Dade County
(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)

COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED DEFENDANT Wisconsin
(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)
NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.

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d) CIRCLE COUNTY WHERE ACTION AROSE: (DADE), MONROE, BROWARD, PALM BEACH, MARTIN, ST. LUCIE, INDIAN RIVER, OKEECHOBEE HIGHLANDS

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (PLACE AN "X" IN ONE BOX ONLY)

- ☐ 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff
- ☒ 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)
- ☐ 2 U.S. Government Defendant
- ☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)

III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (PLACE AN "X" IN ONE BOX FOR PLAINTIFF AND ONE BOX FOR DEFENDANT)
(For Diversity Cases Only)

	PTF	DEF		PTF	DEF
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Citizen of Another State	☐ 2	☐ 2	Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State	☐ 5	☐ 5
Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	☐ 3	☐ 3	Foreign Nation	☐ 6	☐ 6

IV. ORIGIN (PLACE AN "X" IN ONE BOX ONLY)

XX 1 Original Proceeding | ☐ 2 Removed from State Court | ☐ 3 Remanded from Appellate Court | ☐ 4 Reinstated or Reopened | ☐ 5 Transferred from another district (specify) | ☐ 6 Multidistrict Litigation | ☐ 7 Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment

V. NATURE OF SUIT (PLACE AN "X" IN ONE BOX ONLY)

A CONTRACT
- ☐ 110 Insurance
- ☐ 120 Marine
- ☐ 130 Miller Act
- ☐ 140 Negotiable Instrument
- ☐ 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment
- ☐ 151 Medicare Act
- B☐ 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excl Veterans)
- B☐ 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits
- ☐ 160 Stockholders Suits
- ☐ 190 Other Contract
- ☐ 195 Contract Product Liability

A REAL PROPERTY
- ☐ 210 Land Condemnation
- B☐ 220 Foreclosure
- ☐ 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment
- ☐ 240 Torts to Land
- ☐ 245 Tort Product Liability
- ☐ 290 All Other Real Property

A TORTS

PERSONAL INJURY
- ☐ 310 Airplane
- ☐ 315 Airplane Product Liability
- ☐ 320 Assault, Libel & Slander
- ☐ 330 Federal Employers Liability
- ☐ 340 Marine
- ☐ 345 Marine Product Liability
- ☐ 350 Motor Vehicle
- ☐ 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability
- ☐ 360 Other Personal Injury

PERSONAL INJURY
- ☐ 362 Personal Injury – Med. Malpractice
- ☐ 365 Personal Injury – Product Liability
- ☐ 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability

PERSONAL PROPERTY
- ☐ 370 Other Fraud
- ☐ 371 Truth in Lending
- ☐ 380 Other Personal Property Damage
- ☐ 385 Property Damage Product Liability

A CIVIL RIGHTS
- ☐ 441 Voting
- ☐ 442 Employment
- ☐ 443 Housing/ Accommodations
- ☐ 444 Welfare
- ☐ 440 Other Civil Rights

PRISONER PETITIONS
- B☐ 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence
- HABEAS CORPUS:
- B☐ 530 General
- A☐ 535 Death Penalty
- B☐ 540 Mandamus & Other
- B☐ 550 Civil Rights
- B☐ 555 Prison Condition

FORFEITURE/PENALTY
- B☐ 610 Agriculture
- B☐ 620 Other Food & Drug
- B☐ 625 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881
- B☐ 630 Liquor Laws
- B☐ 640 R R & Truck
- B☐ 650 Airline Regs
- B☐ 660 Occupational Safety/Health
- B☐ 690 Other

A LABOR
- ☐ 710 Fair Labor Standards Act
- ☐ 720 Labor/Mgmt. Relations
- ☐ 730 Labor/Mgmt. Reporting & Disclosure Act
- ☐ 740 Railway Labor Act
- ☐ 790 Other Labor Litigation
- A☐ 791 Empl. Ret. Inc Security Act

A BANKRUPTCY
- ☐ 422 Appeal 28 USC 158
- ☐ 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157

A PROPERTY RIGHTS
- ☐ 820 Copyrights
- ☒ 830 Patent
- ☐ 840 Trademark

B SOCIAL SECURITY
- ☐ 861 HIA (1395ff)
- ☐ 862 Black Lung (923)
- ☐ 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g))
- ☐ 864 SSID Title XVI
- ☐ 865 RSI (405(g))

FEDERAL TAX SUITS
- A☐ 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant)
- A☐ 871 IRS – Third Party 26 USC 7609

A OTHER STATUTES
- ☐ 400 State Reapportionment
- ☐ 410 Antitrust
- ☐ 430 Banks and Banking
- B☐ 450 Commerce/ICC Rates/etc
- ☐ 460 Deportation
- ☐ 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations
- ☐ 810 Selective Service
- ☐ 850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange
- ☐ 875 Customer Challenge 12 USC 3410
- ☐ 891 Agricultural Acts
- ☐ 892 Economic Stabilization Act
- ☐ 893 Environmental Matters
- ☐ 894 Energy Allocation Act
- ☐ 895 Freedom of Information Act
- ☐ 900 Appeal of Fee Determination Under Equal Access to Justice
- ☐ 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
- ☐ 890 Other Statutory Actions
- A OR B

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION
(CITE THE U.S. CIVIL STATUTE UNDER WHICH YOU ARE FILING AND WRITE BRIEF STATEMENT OF CAUSE. DO NOT CITE JURISDICTIONAL STATUTES UNLESS DIVERSITY.)

35 U.S.C. Section 100, et seq. - Patent Infringement

LENGTH OF TRIAL
via 4 days estimated (for both sides to try entire case)

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:
☐ CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER F.R.C.P. 23

DEMAND $ TO BE DETERMINED

CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint
JURY DEMAND: ☐ YES XX NO

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY (See instructions)
JUDGE DOCKET NUMBER

DATE January 28, 2004

SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
RECEIPT # $150.00 AMOUNT $150 APPLYING IFP JUDGE MAG. JUDGE