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(54) **DISPLAY CASE FOR BEVERAGE CONTAINERS**

(76) Inventors: **Stephen Kamp**, Colleyville, TX (US); **Troy Adam Geesaman**, McKinney, TX (US); **Andrew Springate**, Allen, TX (US); **Jaxie Alt**, Dallas, TX (US)

Correspondence Address:
MARSH, FISCHMANN & BREYFOGLE LLP
3151 SOUTH VAUGHN WAY
SUITE 411
AURORA, CO 80014 (US)

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(60) Provisional application No. 60/587,436, filed on Jul. 13, 2004.

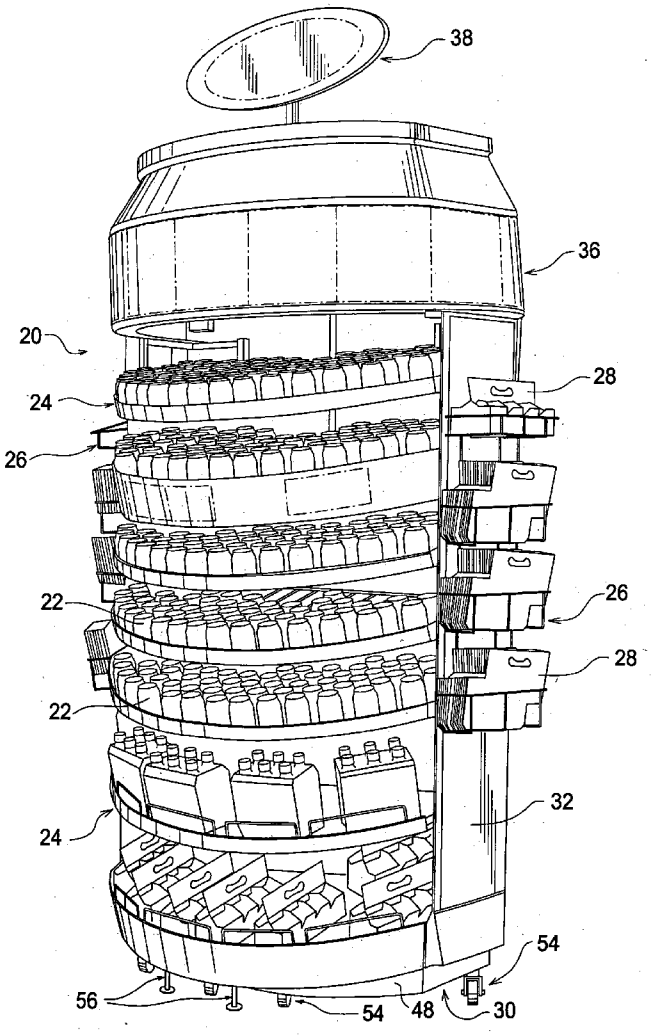
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(52) **U.S. Cl.** **312/114**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A display case for facilitating to consumers the opportunity to purchase any of a variety of different types of beverages by placing individual beverage containers into cartons that are also located in the display case. The display case includes multiple beverage container shelves and side racks for cartons for beverage containers. Promotional materials may be located on or around the display case to promote the opportunity to purchase multiple varieties of different types of beverages to consumers.



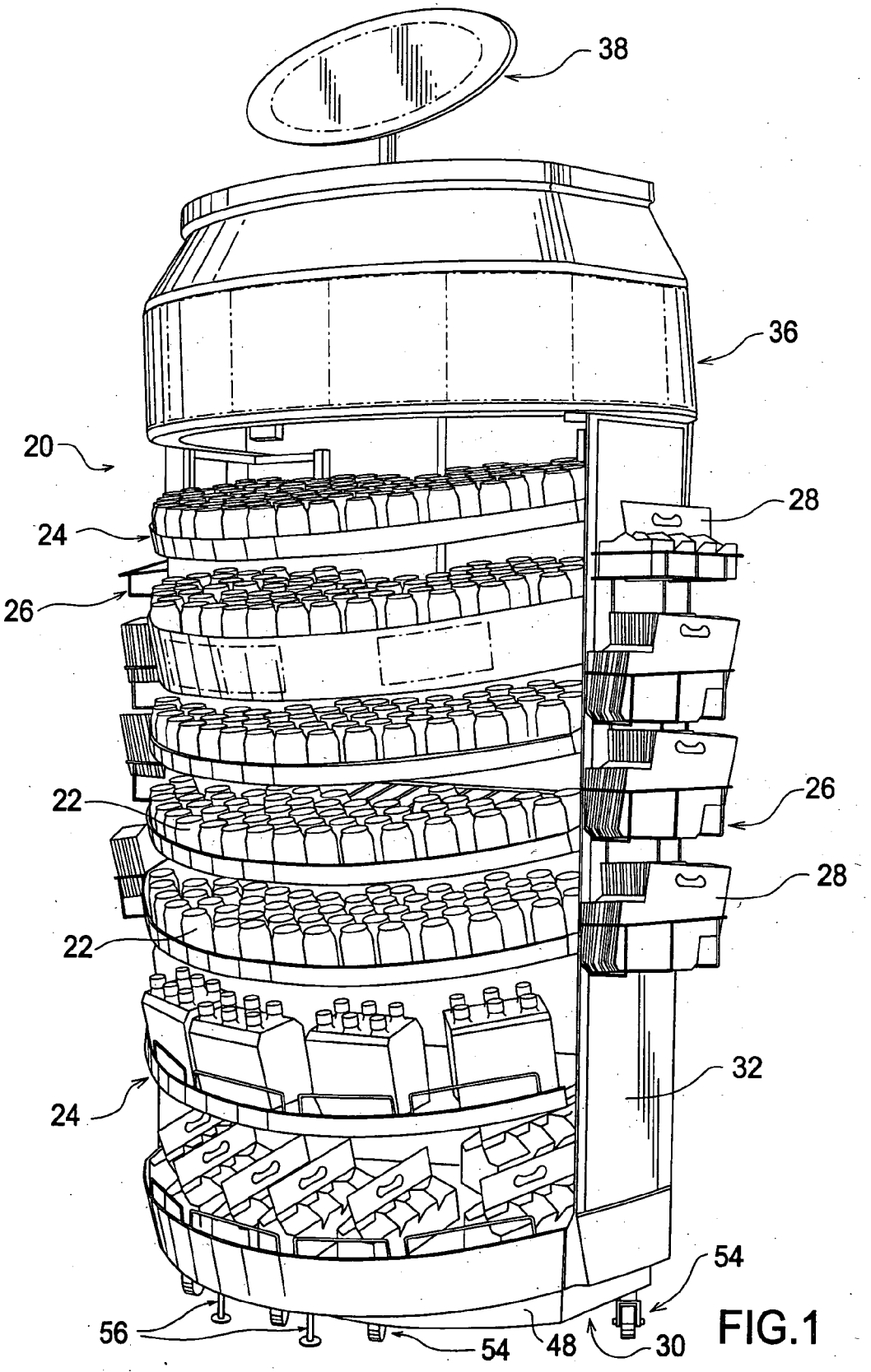


FIG.1

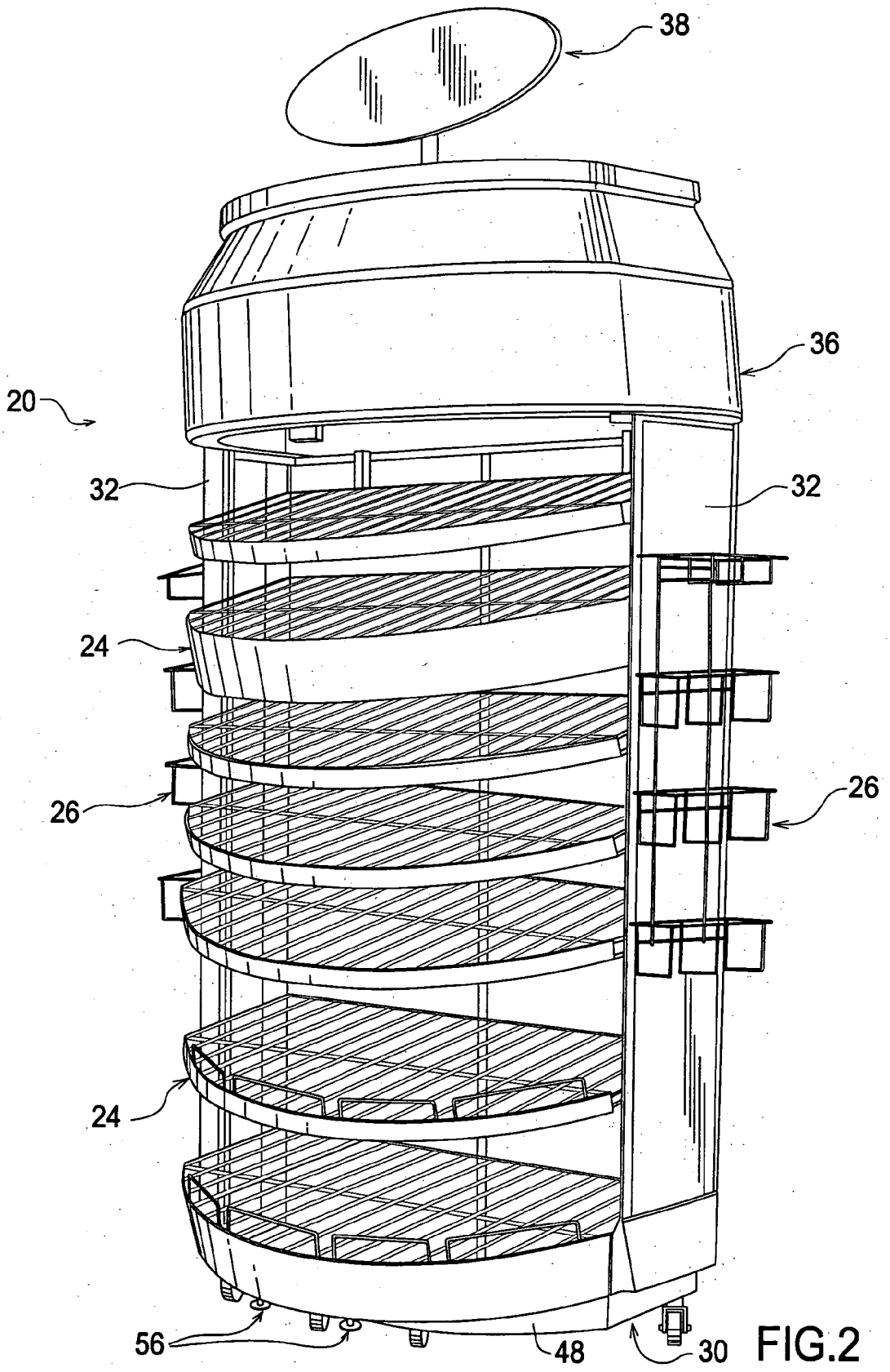


FIG.2

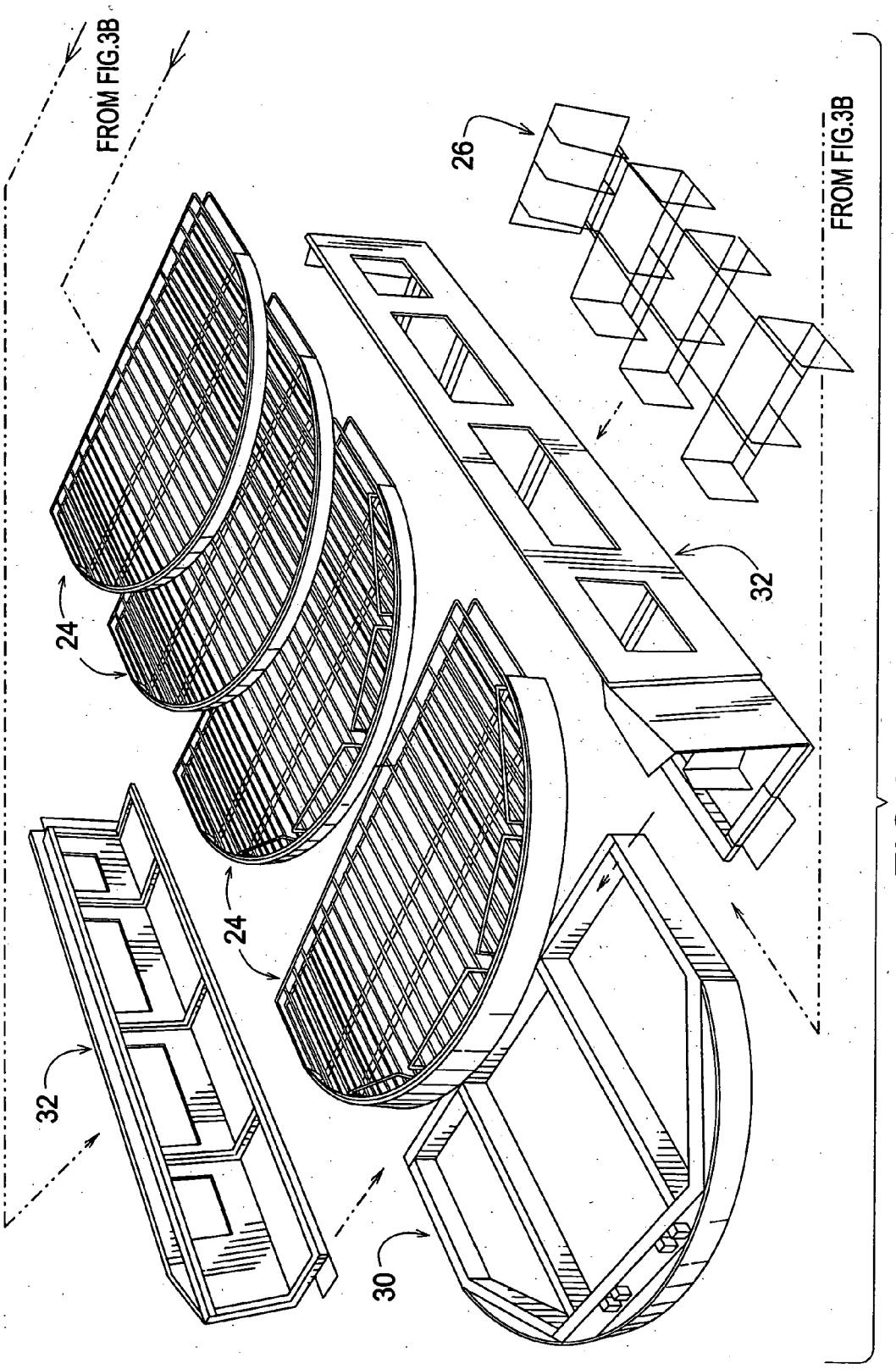
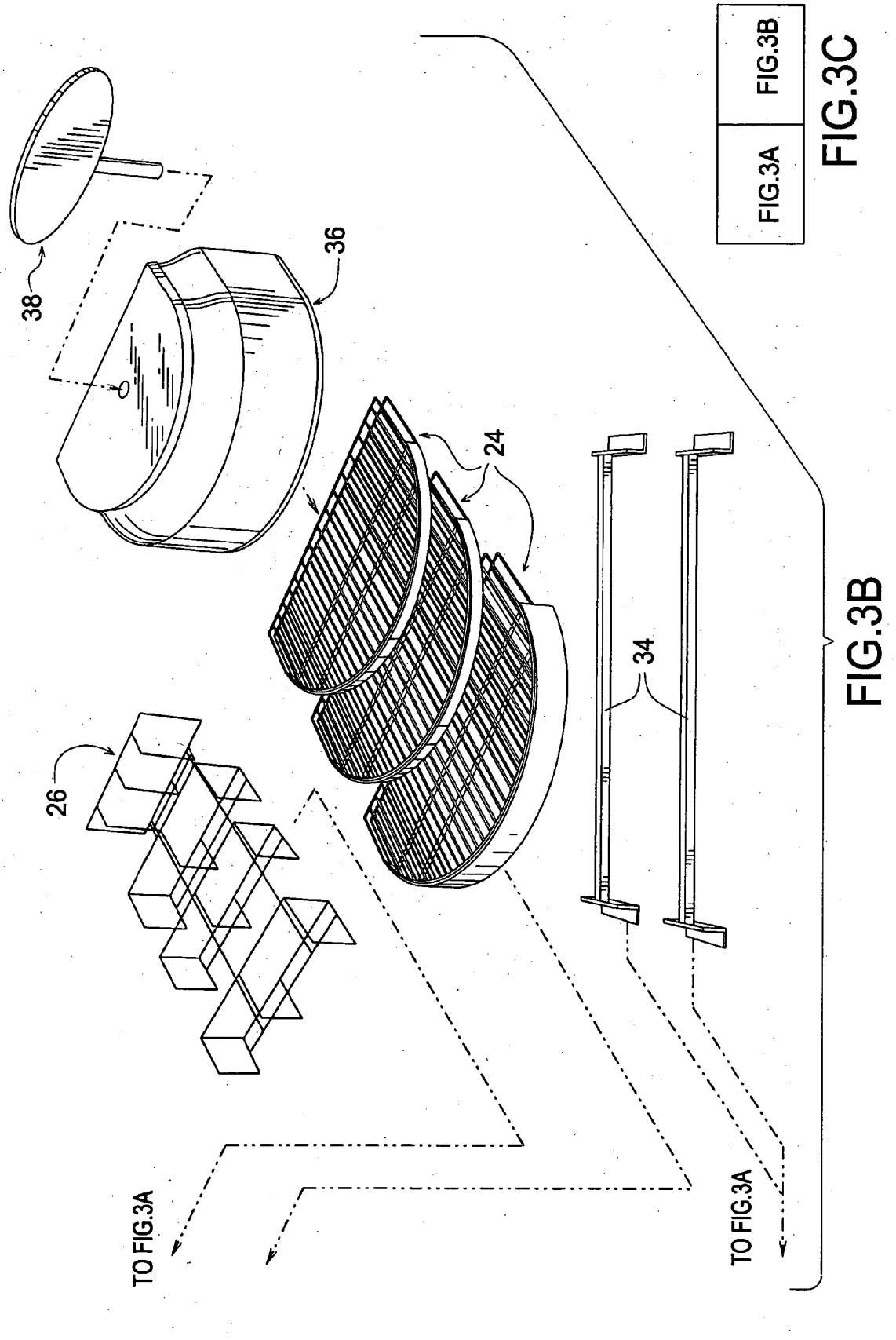


FIG.3A


FIG.3C
FIG.3A
FIG.3B
FIG.3B
38
36
24
34
26
TO FIG.3A
TO FIG.3A

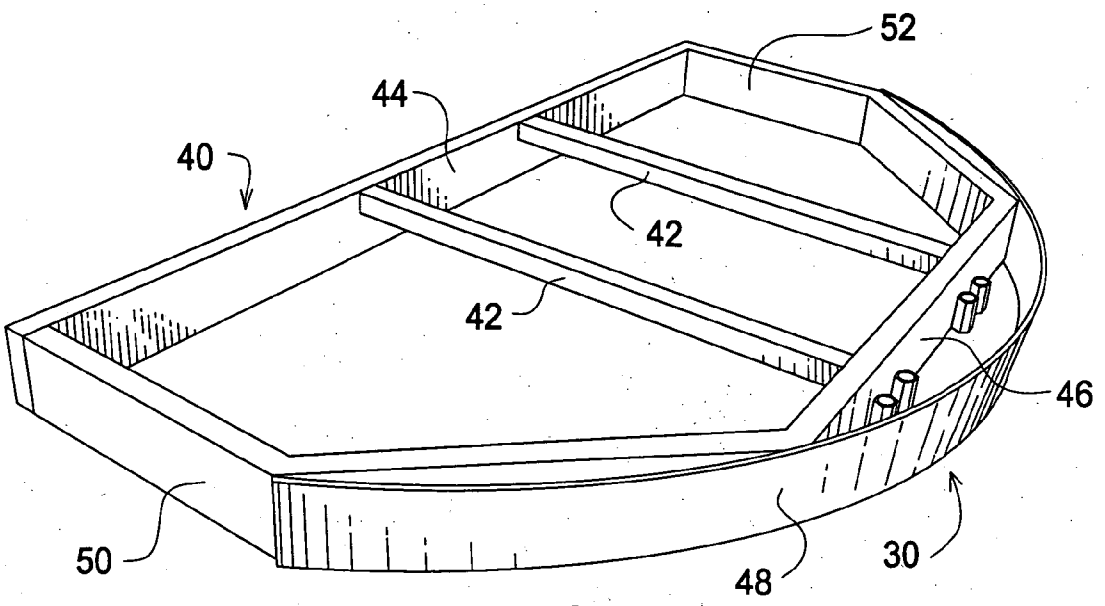


FIG.4

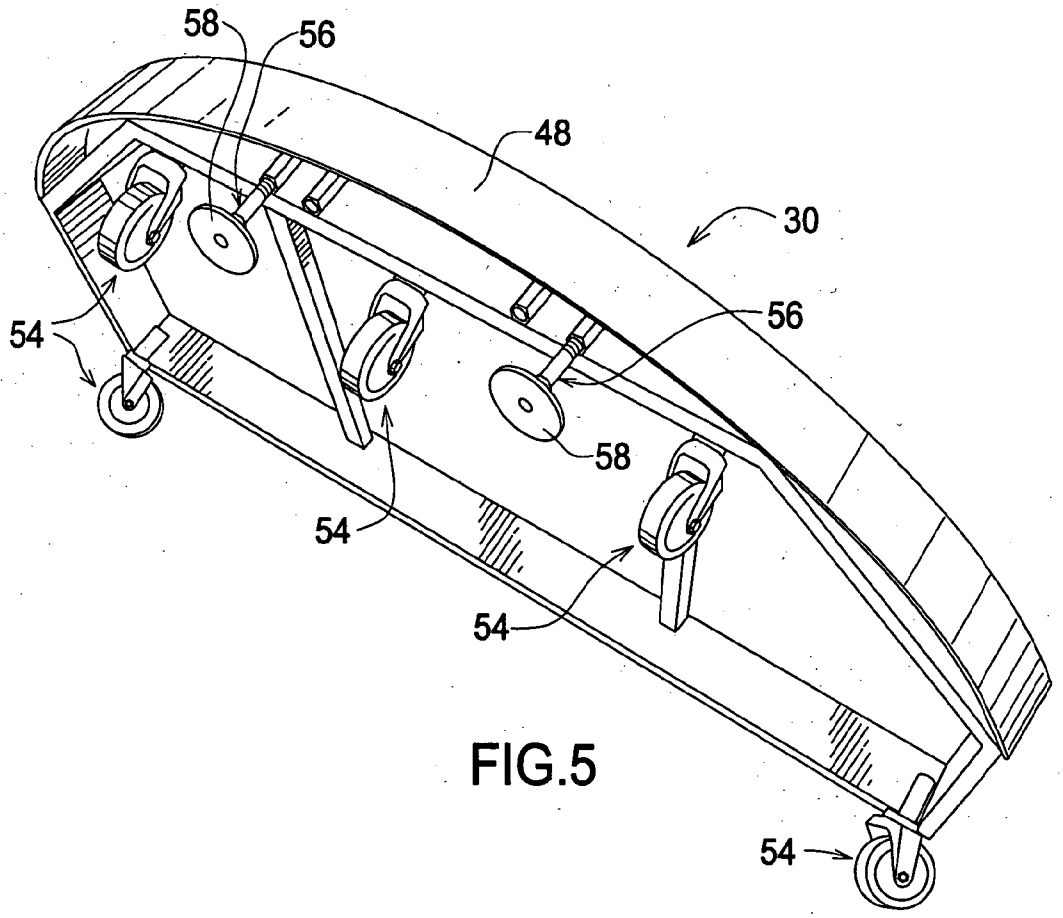


FIG.5

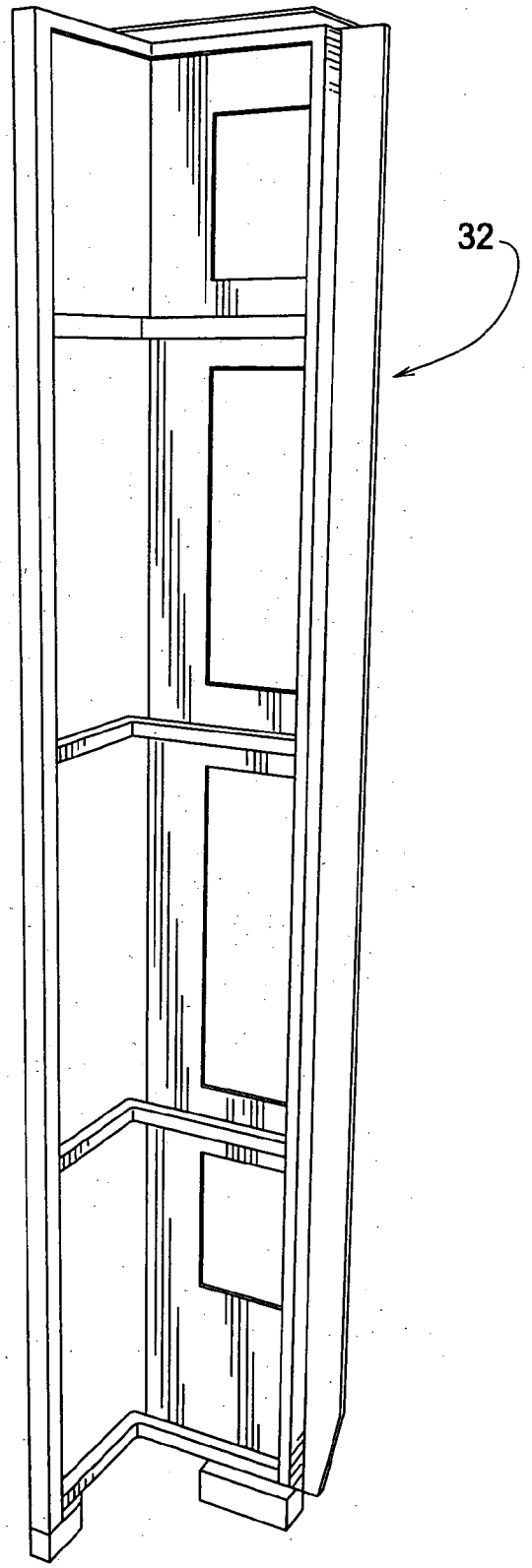


FIG.6

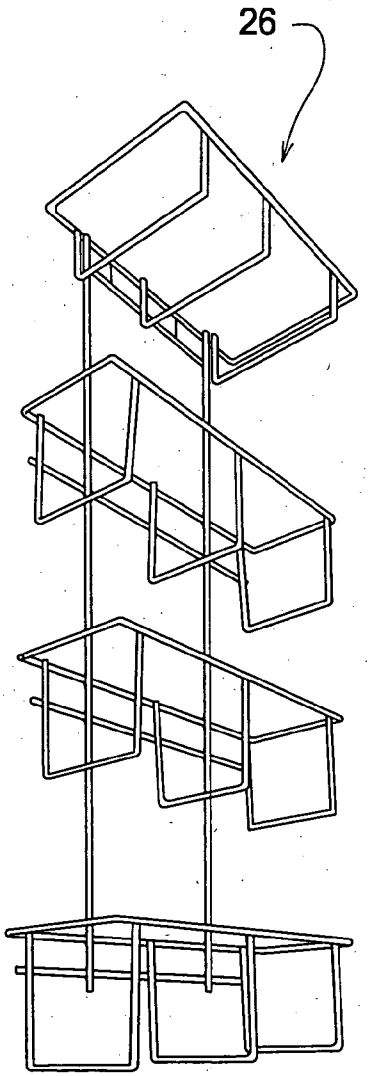


FIG.9

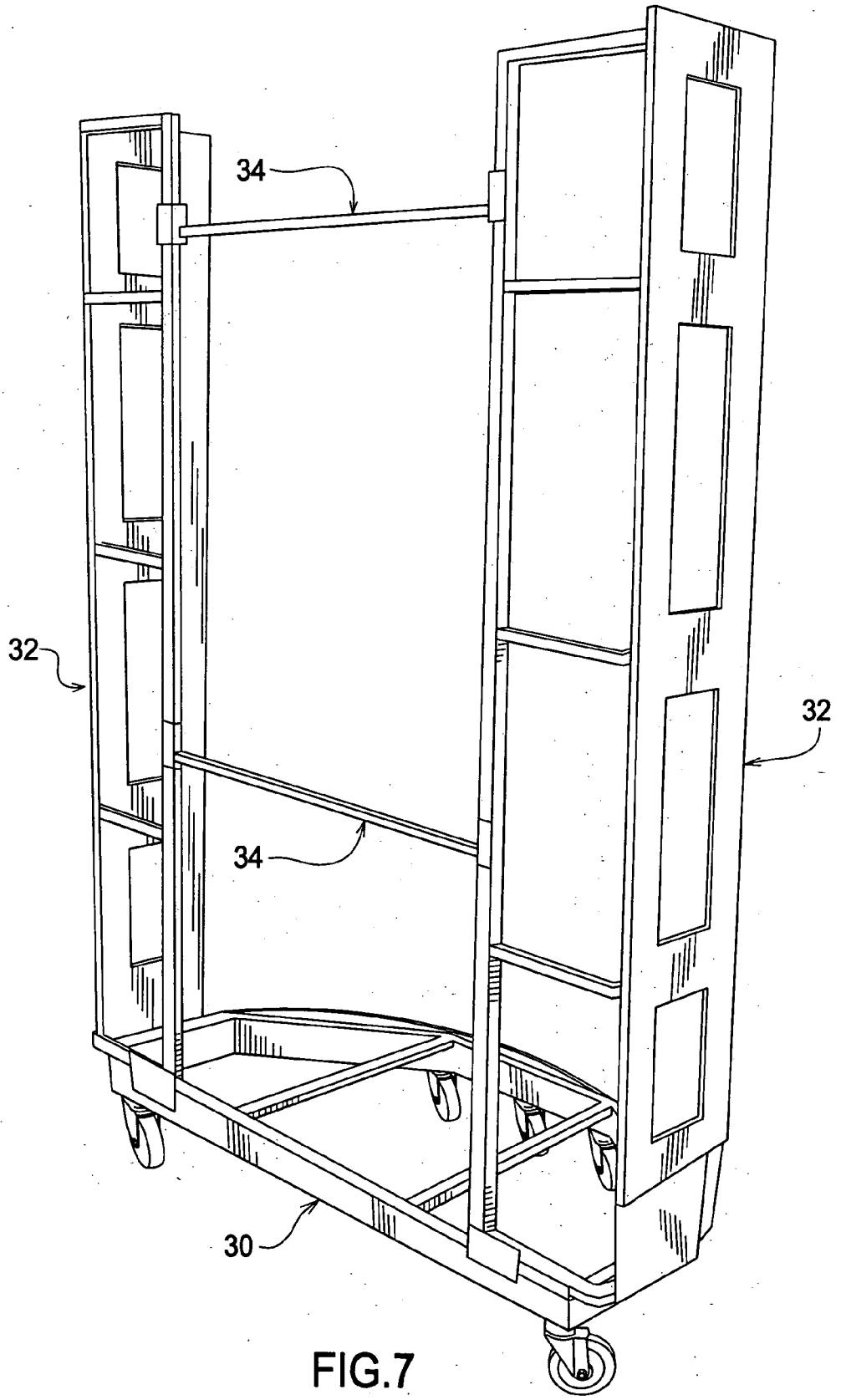


FIG.7

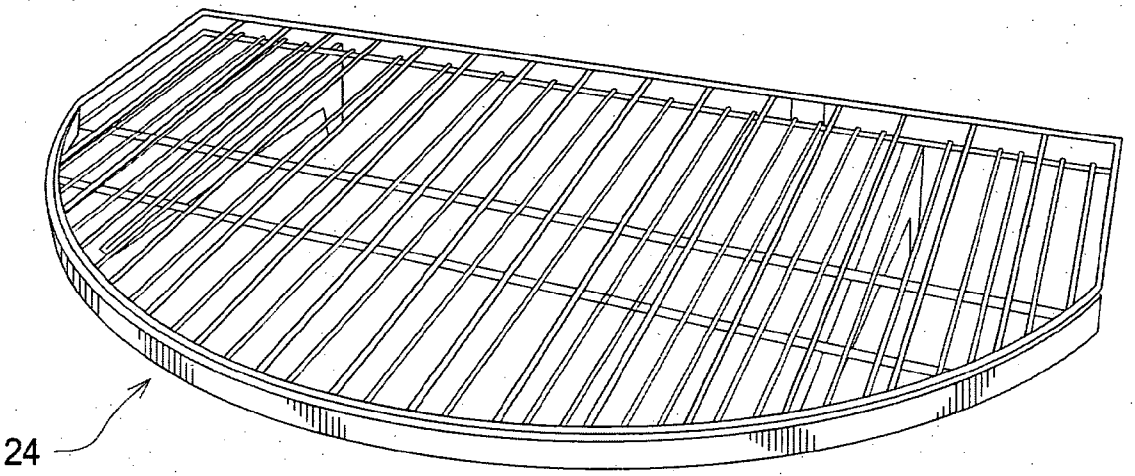

24

FIG.8

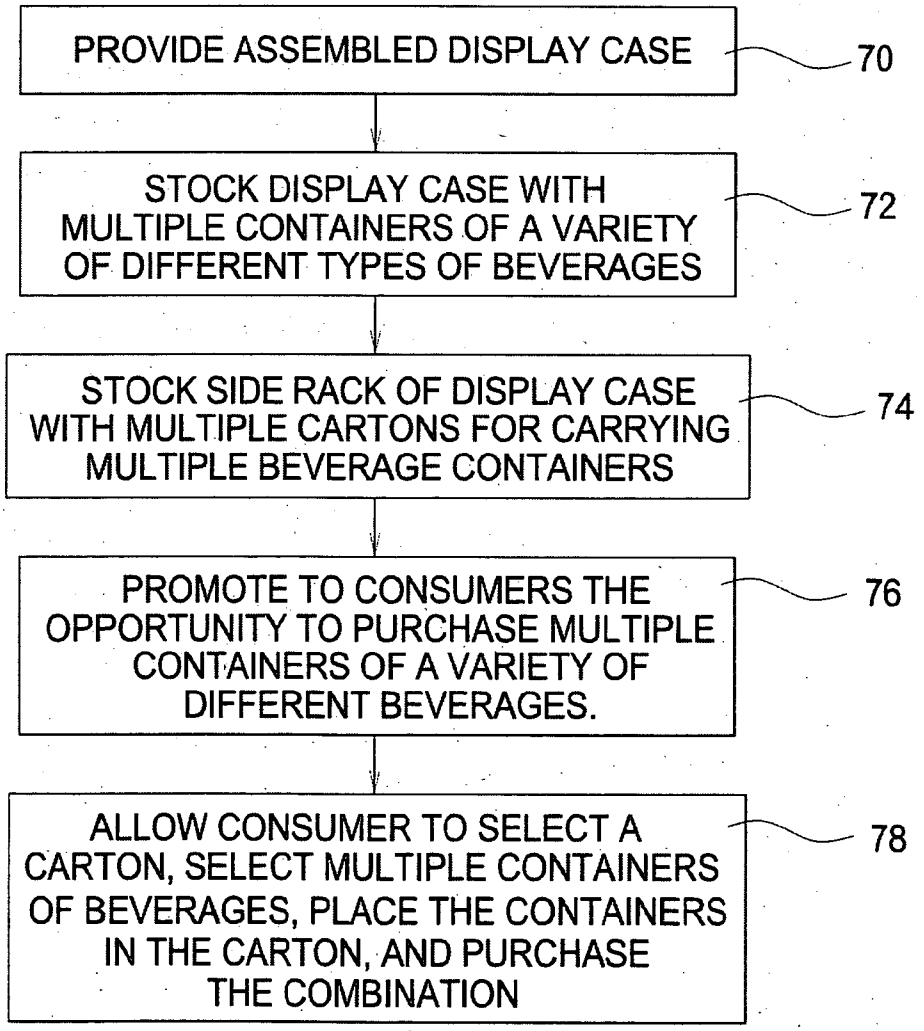

PROVIDE ASSEMBLED DISPLAY CASE
70
STOCK DISPLAY CASE WITH MULTIPLE CONTAINERS OF A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF BEVERAGES
72
STOCK SIDE RACK OF DISPLAY CASE WITH MULTIPLE CARTONS FOR CARRYING MULTIPLE BEVERAGE CONTAINERS
74
PROMOTE TO CONSUMERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE MULTIPLE CONTAINERS OF A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT BEVERAGES.
76
ALLOW CONSUMER TO SELECT A CARTON, SELECT MULTIPLE CONTAINERS OF BEVERAGES, PLACE THE CONTAINERS IN THE CARTON, AND PURCHASE THE COMBINATION
78

FIG.10

DISPLAY CASE FOR BEVERAGE CONTAINERS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/587,436, filed Jul. 13, 2004, entitled "Display Case for Beverage Containers", the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Consumer beverage companies are motivated to entice consumers to sample different types of beverage products. To date, most efforts to entice consumers to sample such different varieties of beverage products have been via marketing efforts such as advertising in various forms of media. Additional efforts to entice consumers to sample different types of beverages include free samples that may be offered at points of sale (e.g., grocery stores) or in other public places. Further, beverage producers make it easier for consumers to try a different beverage by offering beverages in different quantities than the standard 6-packs and 12-packs of beverage containers. For example, beverages may be offered in a single 12 or 16 oz. can or bottle.

[0003] It is against this background and with a desire to improve on the prior art that a display case for beverage containers and other products has been developed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0004] **FIG. 1** is a perspective view of a display case for beverage containers, showing the display case filled with individual containers of beverages and cartons for carrying the same.

[0005] **FIG. 2** is a similar view of the display case of **FIG. 1**, shown without the beverage containers and cartons.

[0006] **FIGS. 3A, 3B**, and 3C are exploded views of the display case of **FIG. 2**.

[0007] **FIG. 4** is an upper perspective view of a support base of the display case of **FIG. 2**.

[0008] **FIG. 5** is a lower perspective view of the support base of **FIG. 4**.

[0009] **FIG. 6** is a perspective view of a vertical support member of the display case of **FIG. 2**.

[0010] **FIG. 7** is a perspective view of a partially assembled version of the display case of **FIG. 2**, showing a pair of the vertical support members shown in **FIG. 6** attached to the support base shown in **FIG. 4**, along with a pair of cross-support members.

[0011] **FIG. 8** is a perspective view of a beverage container shelf of the display case of **FIG. 2**.

[0012] **FIG. 9** is a perspective view of a side rack of the display case of **FIG. 2**, the side rack being adapted for holding cartons for the beverage containers.

[0013] **FIG. 10** is a flowchart of a method for enticing consumers to sample a variety of different beverages.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0014] Reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings, which assist in illustrating the various pertinent features of the packaging design. Although the invention will now be described primarily in conjunction with the sale of beverages, it should be expressly understood that the invention may be applicable to other applications where it is desirable to entice a consumer to sample a variety of products. In this regard, the following description of a display case for beverage containers is presented for purposes of illustration and description. Furthermore, the description is not intended to limit the invention to the form disclosed herein. Consequently, variations and modifications commensurate with the following teachings, and skill and knowledge of the relevant art, are within the scope of the display case. The embodiments described herein are further intended to explain modes known of practicing the invention and to enable others skilled in the art to utilize the invention in such, or other embodiments and with various modifications required by the particular application(s) or use(s) of the display case.

[0015] A display case **20** for individual beverage containers **22** is shown in **FIGS. 1 and 2**. As can be seen, the display case **20** has the general shape and appearance of an enlarged soft drink or soda can. The display case **20** includes multiple shelves **24** to support the beverage containers **22**. The display case **20** also includes a pair of side racks **26** for containing empty cartons **28** for carrying selected beverage containers **22**. As can also be seen in **FIG. 1**, at least one of the shelves **24** can be used to display some of the empty cartons **28** or to display filled 6-packs of beverages. The display case **20** also includes several locations on surfaces thereon for the presentation of promotional materials relating to the sales of beverages. For example, these promotional materials can appear along a front valance at the front of certain shelves, they can appear along an outer surface of an upper cap to the display case, they could appear on one or more signs extending upward from the display case, or they could be displayed in any other suitable manner.

[0016] As can be seen in **FIGS. 1-4**, and particularly in **FIGS. 3A and 3B**, the display case **20** has several components. A support base **30** is adapted for supporting the entire display case **20** and rests on the floor or other suitable horizontal surface. A pair of vertical support members **32** attaches to the base **30** and supports the plurality of shelves **24** that are hung therefrom. A pair of cross-support members **34** is used to connect the two vertical support members **32** to each other and provide stability to the display case **20**. The display case **20** also includes a cap **36** provided at the top and attached to the vertical support members **32**. The cap may have a sign **38** attached upwardly therefrom.

[0017] The support base **30** can be seen best in **FIGS. 4 and 5**. The support base **30** includes a sturdy 6-sided frame **40**. As can be seen in **FIG. 4**, the frame **40** further includes a pair of cross-beams **42** connecting a back side **44** of the frame **40** to a front side **46** of the frame **40**. A curved valance **48** extends from a first lateral side **50** of the frame **40** to an opposite lateral side **52** of the frame **40**. This valance **48** is visible from the front of the display case **20** and helps to give the display case **20** the appearance of a soft drink can.

[0018] As can be seen in **FIG. 5**, five different caster wheels **54** are pivotably mounted to the bottom of the frame **40**. The caster wheels **54** allow the display case **20** to be moved about on the floor of a store where the display case **20** may be located. This may allow the display case **20** to be

positioned at any of a variety of locations throughout the store, such as at the end of an aisle at a grocery store. For stability purposes, the support base **30** also includes a pair of feet **56** that are threadedly attached to the frame **40**. As can be appreciated, by rotating the feet **56** in one direction, the pads **58** on the bottom surface thereof can be retracted toward the frame **40** (see **FIG. 2**) and by rotating the feet **56** in the opposite direction, the pads **58** can be advanced toward the floor (see **FIG. 1**). Thus, the feet **56** can be in a retracted position while the display case **20** is positioned at the desired location, and then the feet **56** can be extended to come into contact with the floor so as to provide increased stability for the display case **20**. One of the vertical support members **32** is shown in more detail in **FIG. 6**. As can be appreciated, the vertical support members **32** help to provide the vertical dimension to the can-like appearance of the display case **20**. The vertical support members **32** are sufficiently sturdy to support the weight of the shelves **24** and all of the filled beverage containers **22** to be placed on the shelves **24**.

[**0019**] The cross-support members **34** are attached to the vertical support members **32**. The number of cross-support members **34** can be varied as may be suitable for the application. In addition, the exact positioning of the cross-support members on the display case is variable.

[**0020**] The cap **36** shown in **FIGS. 1, 2**, and **3**B is also attached to the vertical support members **32** and generally functions to provide an aesthetic appearance of the top of the soda can appearance of the display case **20**. Thus, the cap **36** is generally shaped like the upper portion of a soda can. As mentioned previously, the cap **36** may include multiple locations, such as are designated with dashed lines in **FIG. 1**, for placement and presentation of promotional materials on the display case **20**. The sign **38** extending upwardly from the cap **36** may also contain promotional materials displayed thereon, as shown in **FIG. 1**.

[**0021**] The shelves **24** are seen in **FIGS. 1, 2, 3**A, **3**B, and **8**. As can be seen, the shelves **24** may come in a variety of configurations. For example, they may have a small valance or a larger valance, as seen in the shelves **24** in **FIG. 3B**. Also, as shown in **FIG. 1**, some of the shelves **24** can have a partial railing extending along an upper front edge thereof to act as a fence to prevent cartons from falling out of the display case **20**, for example. Other shelves **24** may not have this upper rail. The shelves **24** may be composed of any suitable material and be of any suitable design. In this embodiment, a wire-rack shelf is shown. The front edges of the shelves **24** of the display case **20** are curved to add to the soda can-like appearance of the display case **20**. As can be seen, the shelves **24** can be attached to the vertical support members **32** so that the shelves **24** angle downwardly from back to front at an angle of approximately 11°, although other angles may also be suitable. This angle has been found suitable to provide for gravity-feeding of the shelves **24**. In other words, a store employee who stocks the display case **20** can add beverage containers from the rear of the display case **20** and they will slide forward on the shelves **24** toward the front edge of the shelves. In this manner, the shelves **24** can be easily stocked and will provide a pleasing appearance of a fully-stocked shelf. It is also possible to coat the surface of the shelves **24** upon which the beverage containers rest with a low friction material, such as styrene, silicone, or other suitable material.

[**0022**] The side racks **26** are shown in **FIGS. 1, 2, 3**A, **3**B and **9**. As can be seen in **FIG. 9**, this embodiment of the side rack **26** includes a wire frame with three lower compartments for containing collapsed cartons **28** and an upper compartment for containing cartons **28** that have been unfolded into an orientation to be able to receive beverage containers **22**.

[**0023**] As can be appreciated, the display case **20** can be assembled as follows. The feet **56** can be attached to the support base **30**, if they are not already. As shown in **FIG. 7**, the vertical support members **32** can be attached to the support base **30** and the cross-support members **34** attached between the vertical support members **32**. The cap **36** can then be attached to the top of the vertical support members **32** and the various shelves **24** can be hung from the vertical support members **32**. The side racks **26** can be attached to the outer surfaces of the display case **20**, and the sign **38** can be attached to the cap **36** and promotional materials can be provided on the various outer surfaces of the display case **20** as described previously. The display case **20** can then be stocked with beverage containers **22** and cartons **28** as has been previously described.

[**0024**] A method for enticing customers to sample different types of beverages is shown in **FIG. 10**. First of all, the assembled display case **20** is provided **70**. Next, the display case **20** is stocked **72** with multiple containers **22** of a variety of different types of beverages. The side racks **26** of the display case **20** are also stocked **74** with multiple cartons for carrying the multiple beverage containers **22**. The opportunity to purchase multiple containers **22** of a variety of different beverages can then be promoted **76** to consumers. This can be done via promotional materials located on the display case **20** via advertising in any of various forms of media, via in-store announcements, or through any of a variety of other suitable means. The consumer is then allowed **78** to select a carton **28**, select multiple containers **22** of beverages, place the containers **22** in the carton **28**, and purchase the combination. It should be noted that the beverage containers **22** stocked in the display case **20** can be of any of various sizes and configurations. One example of a size and configuration is 8 oz. trial-size beverage cans. It is possible, however, for any other size beverage container or other type such as plastic bottles or containing other quantities such as 7 oz., 11 oz., 12 oz., 1 liter, or other suitable amount may also be substituted.

[**0025**] The term sample as used herein refers to both paid and unpaid distribution of products/services. Also, it should be understood that certain implementation details can be varied and the objectives of the invention would still be met. For example, the number, types, and angle of the shelves could be varied, a different manner of supporting the beverage containers than shelves could be used, the appearance of promotional materials could be eliminated, the appearance of the display case could be of a different type of beverage container or have some other appearance, the empty cartons could be contained in a different manner, a display case that did not have a support base or vertical support members could be used, the cross-support members could be eliminated, the cap could be eliminated, the sign extending from the cap could be eliminated, and any other suitable modification could be made.

[**0026**] The foregoing description of the display case has been presented for purposes of illustration and description.

Furthermore, the description is not intended to limit the invention to the form disclosed herein. Consequently, variations and modifications commensurate with the above teachings, and skill and knowledge of the relevant art, are within the scope of the invention. The embodiments described hereinabove are further intended to explain best modes known of practicing the invention and to enable others skilled in the art to utilize the invention in such, or other embodiments and with various modifications required by the particular application(s) or use(s) of the invention. It is intended that the appended claims be construed to include alternative embodiments to the extent permitted by the prior art.

What is claimed is:

1. A display case for multiple containers of various types of beverages and for carrying cartons therefor, the display case comprising:

a support structure, one portion of the support structure being adapted for supporting and containing multiple containers of each of multiple varieties of beverages, another portion of the support structure being adapted for supporting and containing cartons.

2. A display case as defined in claim 1, wherein the display case includes surfaces thereon for displaying promotional material.

3. A display case as defined in claim 1, wherein the outer surfaces of the display case are shaped to represent a beverage container.

4. A display case as defined in claim 1, wherein the one portion includes at least one shelf that is angled relative to a horizontal plane to allow beverage containers placed thereon to be urged by the force of gravity toward a front portion of the shelf.

5. A display case as defined in claim 4, wherein the display case includes at least three such shelves.

6. A display case as defined in claim 1, wherein the at least one shelf includes surfaces along a front edge thereof for displaying promotional material.

7. A display case as defined in claim 1, wherein the another portion includes at least one display rack provided on an outer surface of a lateral side of the display case.

8. A display case as defined in claim 7, wherein the at least one display rack is selectably removable from and attachable to the display case.

9. A display case as defined in claim 1, wherein the beverage containers contain less than 11 ounces of beverage.

10. A display case as defined in claim 9, wherein the beverage containers contain approximately 8 ounces of beverage.

11. A display case as defined in claim 1, wherein the beverage containers are metal cans.

12. A display case as defined in claim 1, wherein the beverage containers are plastic bottles.

13. A method of promoting and selling a variety of different types of beverages, the method comprising:

providing a display case that contains a variety of different types of beverages in beverage containers and also contains multiple cartons that each are adapted for carrying multiple beverage containers;

promoting to consumers the opportunity to purchase multiple containers of a variety of different types of beverages; and

allowing consumers to select a carton from the display case, select multiple containers of beverages from the display case, place the containers in the carton, and purchase the combination.

14. A method as defined in claim 13, wherein the display case is shaped to represent a beverage container.

15. A method as defined in claim 13, wherein the beverage containers are metal cans.

16. A method as defined in claim 13, wherein the beverage containers are plastic bottles.

17. A method as defined in claim 13, wherein the cartons are composed of cardboard.

18. A method as defined in claim 13, wherein the beverage containers contain less than 11 ounces of beverage.

19. A method as defined in claim 13, wherein the beverage containers contain approximately 8 ounces of beverage.

* * * * *