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Goldblatt

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(54) **GAME BOARD AND METHOD**

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A63F 3/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC ***A63F 3/00173*** (2013.01); *A63F 2003/00258* (2013.01); *A63F 2003/00264* (2013.01); *A63F 2003/00946* (2013.01); *A63F 2003/00958* (2013.01); *A63F 2003/00962* (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
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USPC 273/285, 286, 287
See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Removal of game pieces or tiles from the recesses of a game board surface having a raised grid to prevent sliding of the game pieces on the board is facilitated by providing, in one embodiment, a flexible game board which can be bent into a generally U-shaped structure to form a funnel to deposit the game pieces into a receptacle by funneling action. An alternative embodiment provides for pivotably mounted full boards or portions of boards which are rotated on their pivots to deposit the game pieces in a receptacle forming the frame for the structure. Another embodiment provides a grid with a slot under it for receiving a smooth-surfaced marked game board surface under the grid. The game board can be pulled out from under the grid to let game pieces fall down into a receptacle.

6 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets

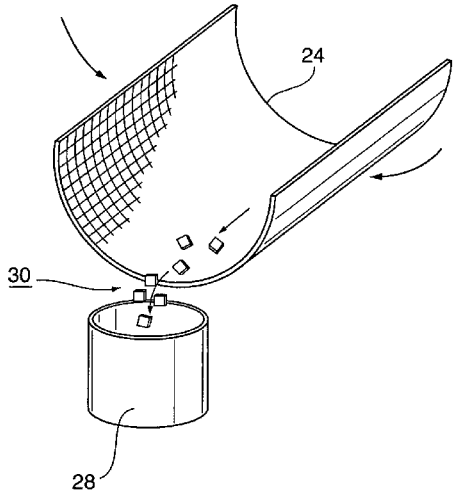

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Fig. 1

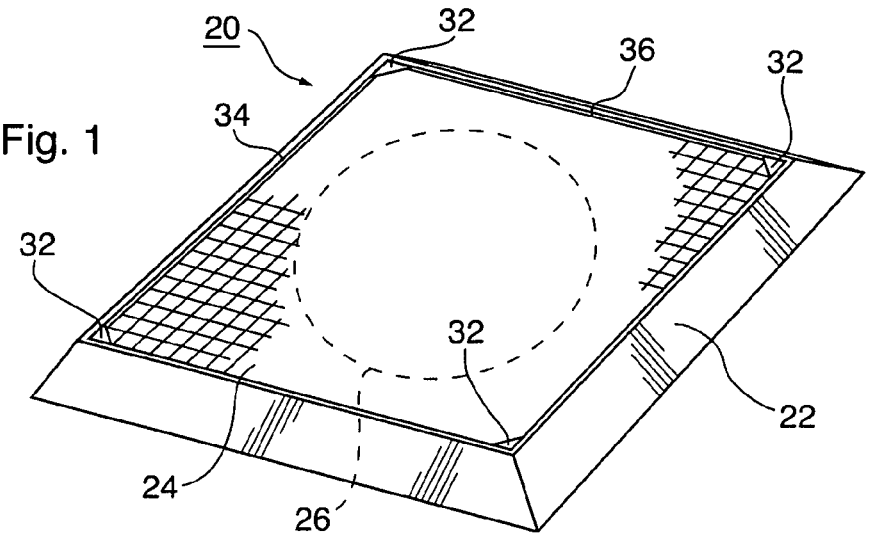


Fig. 2

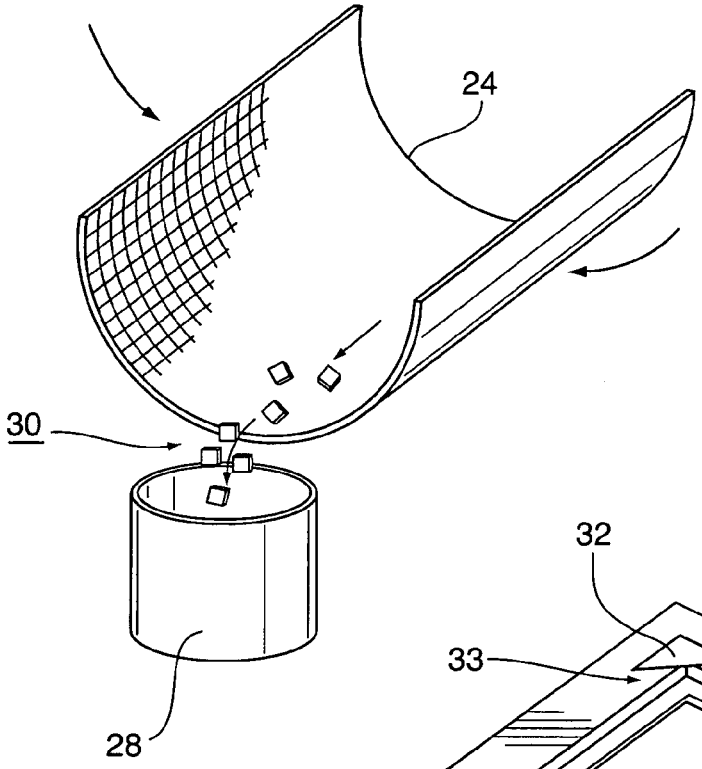


Fig. 3

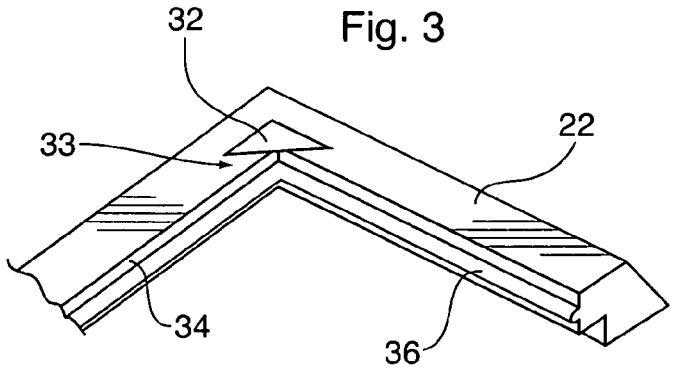


Fig. 4

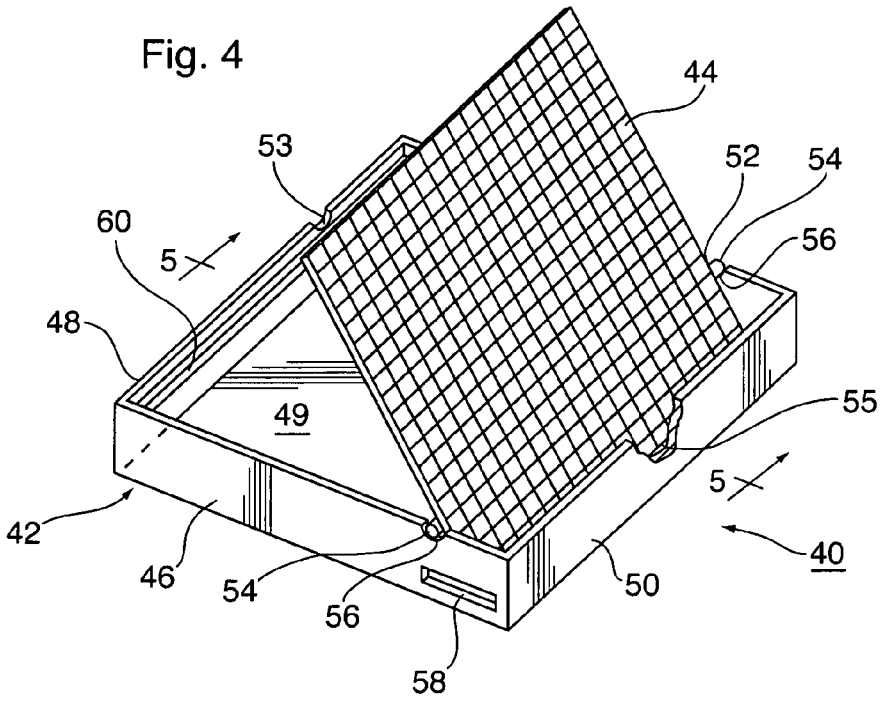


Fig. 6

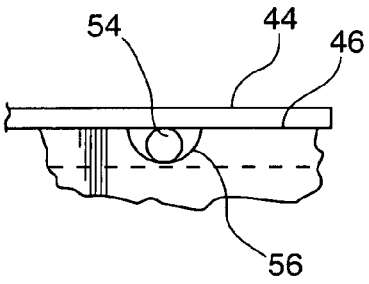


Fig. 5

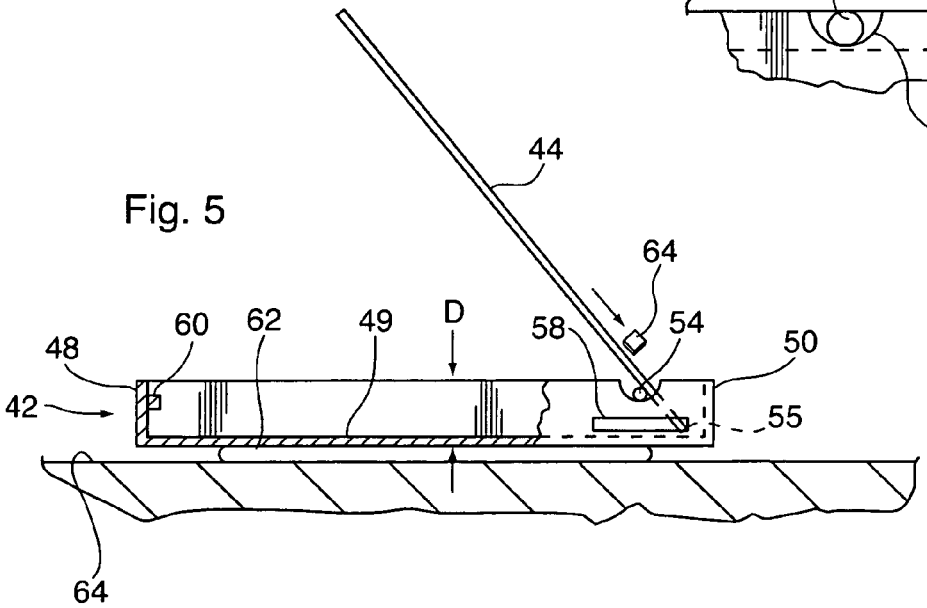


Fig. 7

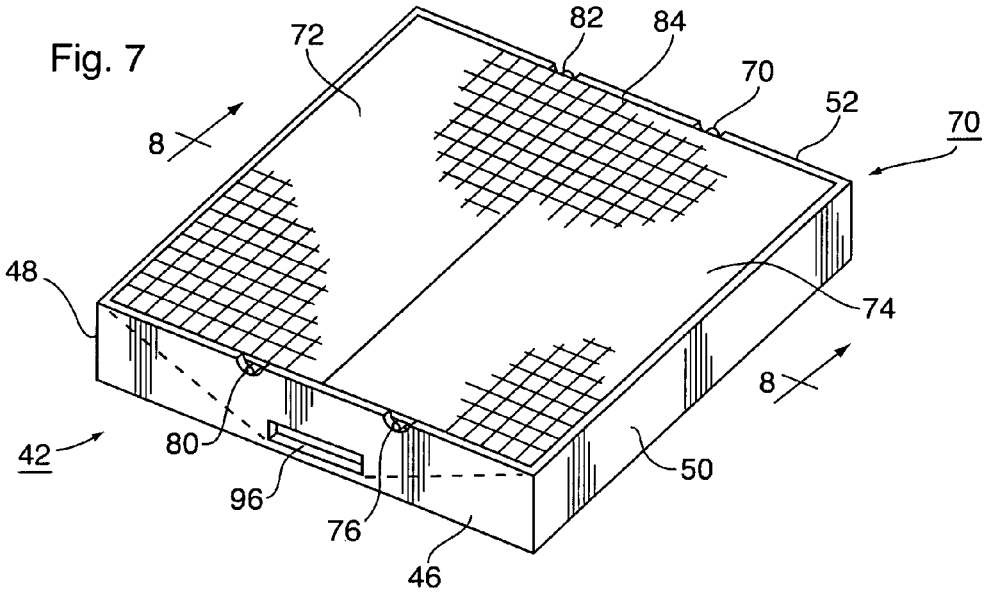


Fig. 8

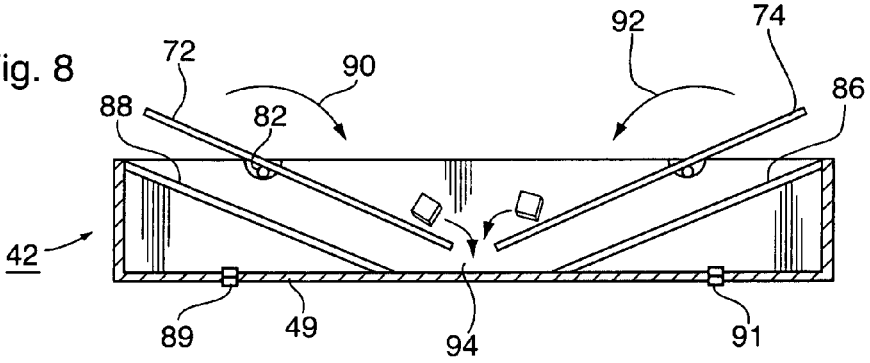


Fig. 8A

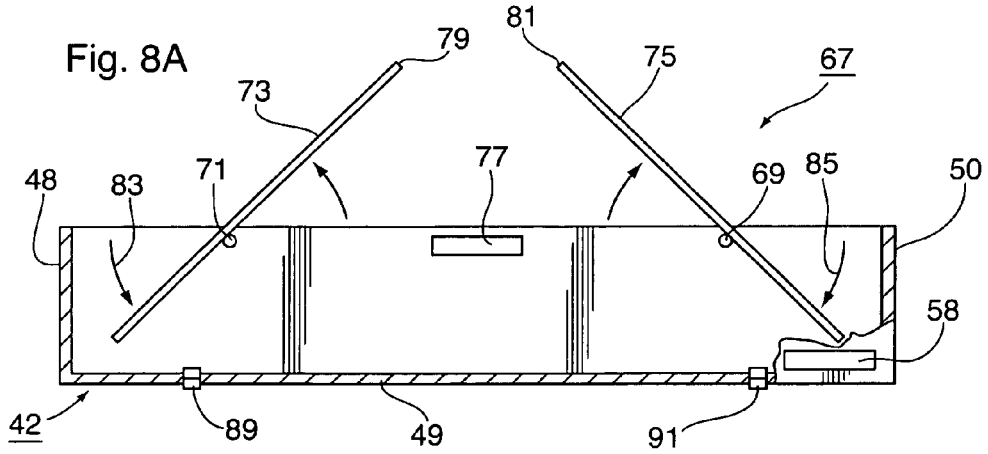
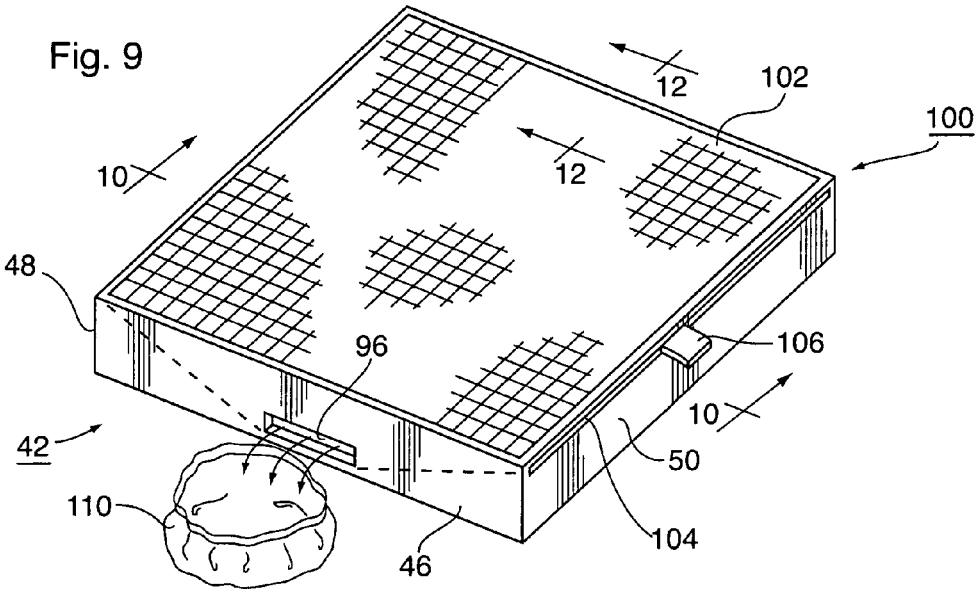


Fig. 9



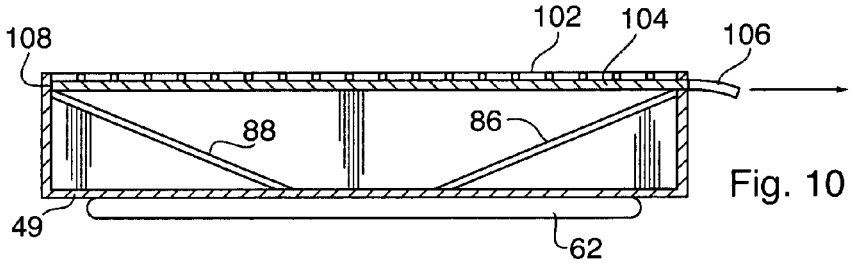


Fig. 10

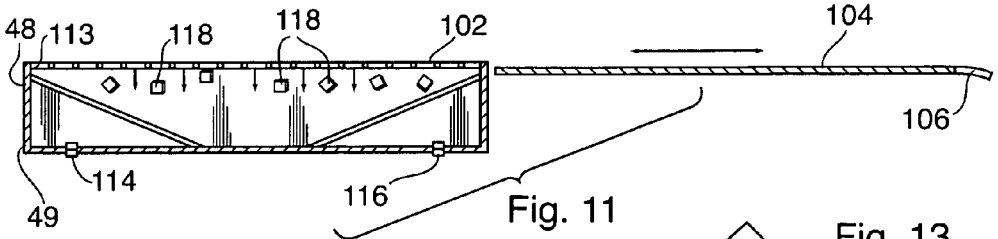


Fig. 11

Fig. 13

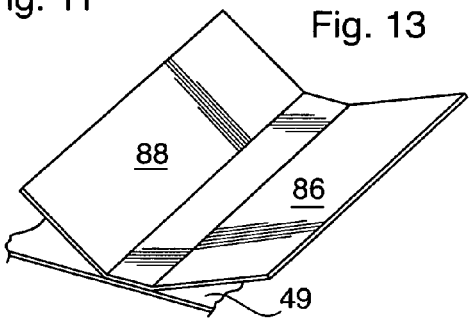
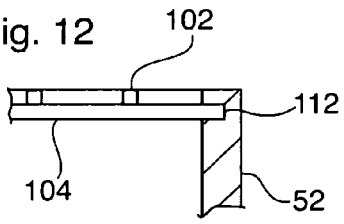


Fig. 12



GAME BOARD AND METHOD

This invention relates to game boards, and to methods of using them. More particularly, this invention relates to game boards in which, during play, game pieces or "tiles" are positioned at various locations on the game board by multiple players, such as in "Scrabble,"™ Chess, Checkers, Bingo, etc.

In the popular game of "Scrabble" and other games using multiple tiles or game pieces positioned on a game board, the players greatly desire to prevent the game pieces from moving around after being positioned. For example, it is greatly desired to prevent the game pieces from moving when the board or the game pieces are accidentally hit by a player. To alleviate this problem, a game board with ridges separating adjacent squares from one another has been used successfully.

Some game boards are sold combined with turntables or equivalent devices on which to rotate the game board easily to bring the board in proper alignment with each of several players. A game which combines these features is known as "Deluxe Scrabble."

A problem with such game boards is that it is difficult to remove the game pieces from the board after a game has been finished in order to prepare for another game or to put the game away. Because of the ridges enclosing each of the squares, the tiles do not easily fall off when the board is tilted, with the result that often the game pieces must be removed one-at-a-time by hand. This is time consuming and annoying to the players. Various attempts have been made to solve this problem in the past, with varying but mostly moderate degrees of success.

For example, two-part game boards hinged in the middle have been provided to enable folding of the halves of the game board towards one another. This somewhat facilitates removal of the tiles. However, it is still relatively slow and cumbersome to gather the tiles from one game to ready the board for another game, or to put the game away.

Even with smooth-surfaced game boards, it often is cumbersome and slow to remove the game pieces and deposit them neatly into a receptacle for reuse or storage.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a game board and a method of using it which solve or greatly alleviate the foregoing problems.

In particular, it is an object of the invention to provide a game board in which game pieces or tiles can be removed from the game board surfaces relatively quickly and easily so as to increase the pleasure and decrease the annoyance of removing the tiles and depositing them in receptacles.

It is a further object of the invention to provide such a product and method which are relatively inexpensive to manufacture, simple to use, and attractive to see.

In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, the game piece removal problem has been alleviated by the provision of a flexible game board which can be removed from a frame in which it is mounted, or it can be used separately as a stand-alone game board, with relative ease in removing the game pieces from the board.

The board preferably is made flexible in the manner of flexible plastic cutting boards for the kitchen. In use, at the end of the game, the board is removed from its frame or picked up from a flat playing surface, it is bent by hand to form a kind of funnel, and then the funnel-shaped board is tipped towards a game piece container, such as a bag or cup, and the tiles are deposited in the bag or cup by the use of gravity. Then, when the board is released, it automatically returns to a flat shape and it is again ready for use, either alone, or by mounting it in a frame, with or without a turntable or the like under it.

Alternatively, the game board can have a smooth surface instead of one having raised ridges. Its flexibility makes it useful for forming a funnel shape which will assist in quickly removing the game pieces from the board and, if desired, guiding them towards a receptacle.

In accordance with another embodiment of the invention, the game piece removal problem is alleviated by the provision of a stiff game board with a raised grid, and with a pivot mechanism to mount it in a frame. When the game is finished, the game board is pivoted on its pivot points and the game pieces slide under the force of gravity downwardly into a receptacle. Preferably, the receptacle forms part of the frame and has an exit slot or opening which allows the game pieces to exit the receptacle in a restricted area to guide the tiles into the mouth of a bag or other container.

Preferably, the pivot mounting of the game board in the frame is made easily disassemblable, so that the game board, if desired or needed, can be removed completely from the frame to a vertical or upside down position to better and more quickly remove the game pieces.

It also is a feature of the invention to provide a funnel-shaped bottom surface for the receptacle so as to funnel the game pieces towards the exit opening from the receptacle, again to speed and ease the exit of the game pieces from the receptacle.

In accordance with a third embodiment of the invention, the game board with raised grid is formed from two portions, which are mounted on a frame, on a pair of pivot axes. The axes are located so that the two halves can be tipped to deposit game pieces towards the center or the edges of the receptacle to quickly and easily remove the game pieces from the board. Again, it is preferred that the pivot structure allows each of the board halves to be removed from the receptacle completely. An exit opening from the receptacle and a funnel-shaped bottom also are preferred features of this embodiment.

In the pivotable embodiments, it is preferred to make the distance from each pivot axis slightly less than the depth of the receptacle, at least if the pivots are secured to the frame.

Alternatively, the surfaces of the pivotal board or boards in the foregoing pivoted board embodiments can be smooth, thus taking advantage of the pivoted structures to facilitate removal of the game pieces.

In a fourth embodiment, a plastic grid is secured on a frame having a receptacle beneath it. A horizontal slot is located in the frame at a position just below the grid. A smooth-surface slideable game board surface member can be slid into and out of the slot to be positioned in close proximity to the grid directly above it. The printed matter on the surface corresponds to the game being played, and the grid lines are aligned with the areas beneath them on the board.

When the game is played, the game pieces or tiles fit into the grid holes and come to rest on the surface of the game board below it. When the game is finished, the game pieces are removed quickly and easily simply by pulling the board out from under the grid so that the game pieces fall through the grid and into the receptacle below.

As in other embodiments of the invention described above, a funnel-shaped bottom structure and an exit outlet cooperating with that structure are used to deliver the accumulated tiles from the receptacle into a bag or other container.

Further features and advantages of the invention will be set forth in or apparent from the following description and drawings. In the drawings:

FIG. **1** is a perspective view, partially schematic of a first embodiment of the invention;

FIG. **2** is a perspective, partially schematic view of a portion of the structure shown in FIG. **1**, bent into a funnel shape to remove game pieces from the flexible board;

FIG. **3** is an enlarged detailed view of a portion of the structure shown in FIG. **1**;

FIG. **4** is perspective view of another embodiment of the invention;

FIG. **5** is a cross-sectional view take along line **5-5** of FIG. **4** and schematically illustrating other features of the invention;

FIG. **6** is an enlarged, broken-away detail of some of the structures shown in FIGS. **1** and **2** of the drawings;

FIG. **7** is a perspective view of another embodiment of the invention;

FIG. **8** is a partially schematic cross-sectional view, taken along line **8-8** of FIG. **7**;

FIG. **8**A is a view like FIG. **8** showing another embodiment of the invention;

FIG. **9** is a perspective view of another embodiment of the invention;

FIG. **10** is a cross-sectional view taken along line **10-10** of FIG. **9**;

FIG. **11** is a cross-sectional view, similar to that of FIG. **10**, but showing the game board structure in a different form while it is in use to remove game pieces from the board;

FIG. **12** is a cross-sectional view taken along line **12-12** of FIG. **9**;

FIG. **13** is a perspective view showing schematically the construction of the funnel-shaped bottom of the receptacle of the device shown in previous figures of the drawings.

FIG. **1** shows a game board structure **20** which includes a frame **22** with sloping sides, a game board **24** mounted in the frame, and a turntable underneath, indicated in dash lines at **26**. Also, a plastic understructure securing the frame **22** to the turn table **26** is provided but is not shown, for the sake of simplicity of the drawings.

In accordance with one embodiment of the invention, the game board **24** is made of flexible, resilient, plastic material like that used to make flexible kitchen cutting boards, so that the board **24**, when removed from the frame **22**, can be bent into a generally U-shaped structure as shown in FIG. **2**, and will snap back to a flat shape when released.

When a game such as "Scrabble" is finished, and it is desired to remove the game pieces from the raised grid on the surface of the board **24**, it is bent as shown in FIG. **2** into a generally funnel shape and then tipped to deposit the tiles by gravity into a bag or other container **28**. The loose tiles falling into the container are indicated at **30**.

When the hand pressure applied to the board **24** to bend it as shown in FIG. **2** is released, it returns to a flat condition. It is returned to a recess in the surface of the frame where it rests on ledges **34**, **36**, etc. (FIG. **3**) and fits in a space **33** underneath each of four corner pieces **32**.

Because it is flexible, the board can be bent upwardly in the middle to shorten it in one dimension so as to easily fit the corners under the corner pieces **32**.

Alternatively, rotatable latch members can be positioned at the corners to engage the corners of the board **25** to hold them into the frame, and to ensure that the board remains flat during play. If desired, the understructure for the board frame can have one or more vertical support members to hold the board up in its center (and elsewhere, if needed) to prevent sagging.

Although FIG. **1** shows the board **24** mounted on the frame, it should be understood that it is perfectly usable as a stand-alone game board resting flat on a supporting surface.

The structure is advantageous in that it has the highly desirable feature of holding the game pieces during play, but making the game pieces relatively easy to remove when the game is finished.

Although the board preferably has a raised grid on its surface, it also can have a smooth surface and the board can be easier to remove the game pieces from due to the flexibility and resiliency of the board to enable it to be formed into a funnel shape to guide game pieces into a receptacle **28**.

FIG. **4** shows another embodiment **40** of the invention in which a stiff plastic game board **44** with a raised grid surface is mounted in a frame which is formed by a receptacle **42**. The receptacle has four side walls **46**, **48**, **50** and **52**, and a bottom wall **49**.

The board **44** has two pins or projections **54** extending from opposite side edges of the board **44**. These projections or pins fit into grooves or notches **56** in the opposite side walls **46** and **52** of the receptacle which serves as a frame. A finger notch **53** is provided in the rear wall **48** of the receptacle to allow easy access to lift the board, and a ledge **60** extends outwardly from the inside surface of the wall **48** and provides a recess into which the board **44** fits when it is horizontal. In its horizontal position, the board is supported by the ledge **60** and the pins **54** resting on the bottoms of the notches **56**.

An exit slot **58** is provided in the side wall **46** at a position close to the bottom wall **49** and the right side wall **50**. The width of the slot **58** is determined by the width of the opening to the container to be used to hold the tiles when they are not in use. In this way, the receptacle can be tipped towards the container to allow the tiles to slide out into the container. By tipping the board **44** up to the angle shown in FIG. **4**, the game pieces will slide off and downwardly into the receptacle below.

Preferably, the notches **56** are open at the top so that the pins **54** are not held in them. Thus, the game board **44** can be removed entirely from the frame and held upright at a vertical angle to the bottom of the receptacle, or even can be tipped upside down, to facilitate removal of the game pieces.

As it is shown in FIG. **5**, a turntable **62** is positioned under and secured to the bottom wall **49**. Alternatively, rollers or wheels can be used instead of a turn table, as will be described in further embodiments below.

FIG. **7** shows another game board structure **70** which is similar to that shown in FIGS. **4** through **6**. However, the game board is divided into two portions, **72** and **74**. Each portion has a pair of pins **80**, **82**, **70**, or **76** which fit into grooves, like the grooves **56** shown in FIGS. **4** and **6**. The side edges at the center of the structure form a joint **84**. The two portions of the board fit closely together to keep the gap **84** small. The two boards swing downwardly into the receptacle below, as shown in FIG. **8**, to remove tiles.

The bottom structure of the receptacle shown in FIGS. **7** and **8** is different from that shown in FIGS. **4-6**. A pair of sloping wall members **86** and **88** form a funnel-shaped bottom structure so as to funnel the game pieces towards the area **94** shown in FIG. **8** when they fall from the two board halves.

The two board portions **72** and **74** preferably are swung downwardly, in the directions of arrows **90** and **92** towards the center of the receptacle **42**. Referring to FIG. **7**, the slot **96** is provided to dispense the game pieces into a bag or other container.

As in the embodiment of FIGS. **4** through **6**, each of the portions **72** and **74** of the game board with a raised grids can be lifted completely free of the receptacle so as to more quickly and easily dislodge the game pieces from the board.

The embodiment shown in FIGS. **7** and **8** has the advantage that both of the board portions tip downwardly towards the center of the receptacle so that it is unlikely that any of the tiles or game pieces will miss the receptacle and scatter.

A further advantage of the embodiment shown in FIGS. **7** and **8** is that it is believed that the manufacturing costs can be lower due to the reduction of molding costs.

FIG. **8**A shows an embodiment like that of FIGS. **7** and **8**, but in which the pivot pins **71** and **69** of the boards **73** and **75** are located closer to the side-walls **48** and **50**, than to the center of the receptacle **42**. A centrally-located stop member **77** is mounded on the inside surface of the two side walls **52** and **46** (only wall **52** is shown in FIG. **8**A) to support the centrally-located edges **79** and **81** of the boards **73** and **75** closely adjacent to one another.

The boards **73** and **75** can be tilted to the position shown in FIG. **8**A by pushing downwardly on the board portions between the pivot points and the left and right side walls **48** and **50** as shown by the arrows **83** and **85**.

As in the embodiments of FIGS. **4-8**, the boards **73** and **75** preferably can be lifted free of the receptacle **42** because the pivot projections fit into shallow notches or grooves in the side walls **52** and **46**.

A game piece exit slot **58** is provided, as in the FIGS. **4-6** embodiment. As with the embodiments shown in FIGS. **1-3**, the pivoted boards **44**, **72**, **74**, **73** and **75** preferably have raised grids on their surfaces, but alternatively have smooth surfaces, to facilitate removal and guidance of game pieces into an external cup, bag or other container.

FIG. **9** is a perspective view of another embodiment **100** of the invention. Like the embodiments shown in FIGS. **4-8**, a receptacle **42** is provided, and the reference numerals used in FIGS. **4-6** and **7-8** also have been used in FIGS. **9** through **13**.

Mounted on the top of the frame formed by the receptacle **42** is a plastic grid **102**, preferably transparent, that is used as a replacement for the built-in grids on the boards of the previously-described embodiments. Formed in the side wall **50** of the receptacle **42** is a slot which contains a smooth-surfaced game board **104** with printed indicia suitable for the game being played. For example, if the game is "Scrabble," the pattern of squares on board **104** corresponds to that for a Scrabble game. The lines of the grid **102** are aligned with the lines between the squares on the board **104**.

When the game is played, the game pieces are put into the grid openings and rest on the surface of the board **104**.

When it is desired to remove the game pieces or tiles from the board **102**, one simply pulls on a tab **106** extending outwardly from the right edge of the board **104** and pulls it to a position such as that shown in FIG. **11**. When the board **104** is thus out of the way, all of the tiles **118** fall downwardly through the open grid mesh **102** and fall to the bottom of the receptacle.

FIG. **10** shows a conventional turntable **62** secured to the bottom wall **49** of the receptacle to enable the game board to be turned to facilitate access by multiple players at a table.

FIG. **11** shows an alternative rotatable mounting scheme in which wheels **114** are mounted on the bottom wall **49** and extend a very small distance below the bottom surface of the wall **49** and roll on a horizontal surface on which the game board is played, and thus facilitate rotation of the game board.

FIG. **12** is a cross-sectional view taken along line **12-12** in FIG. **9** and shows one groove **112** of a pair of grooves in the sidewalls of the receptacle in which the game board member **104** slides. FIG. **11** shows a notch **113** in the rear wall **48** which accommodates the rear edge of the board **104** to seat it properly and maintain proper alignment of the board **104** with the grid **102**.

FIG. **13** is a perspective of the bottom panels **88** and **86** forming the funnel-shaped delivery system which facilitates delivery of the game pieces out of the outlet **96** (see FIG. **9**) into a container such as a bag **110**.

It should be understood that a post or other vertical support can be located in or near the center of the bottom wall **49** to support the board and press it upwardly against the grid and thus keep the board from sagging.

It also should be understood that the nature of the game can be changed, say, from Scrabble to bingo or checkers simply by substituting another pre-printed panel for the panel **104** and sliding the new panel into place under the grid.

It is preferred that the embodiments shown described above be fabricated as much as possible by plastic molding. The techniques and materials for doing this are well-known and will not be described in detail here.

Variations in the embodiments disclosed can be made, within the scope of the invention.

Referring to FIGS. **4** and **5**, preferably the distance from the pivot axis through the pins **54** to the right edge **55** of the game board is slightly less than the depth D (FIG. **5**) of the receptacle, especially if the pins **54** are fitted into holes closed at the top to secure the board **44** to the frame rather than just resting in the notches **56**. This will insure that the board **44** can be rotated to a vertical position or beyond without hitting the bottom of the receptacle.

Similarly, referring to FIGS. **7** and **8**, it is preferred that each of the distances between the pivot axis **80-82** and the joint **84**, and between the pivot axis **70-76** and the joint **84** for the game board portions **72**, **74** be less than the depth of the receptacle, for the same purpose.

Of course, these distances can be longer, if notches are used to receive the pins with the FIGS. **4-6** and **7-8** embodiments, so that the boards can be lifted free of the frame.

In addition, if the game boards are mounted on pins resting in notches, other games can be played using the same frame and receptacle, simply by changing the game board to one for a different game.

Another variation of the FIGS. **1-3** embodiment is to use a wide receptacle **42** under the board **24**, and bending the board to guide the game pieces into the receptacle. This provides a larger receptacle which is hard for the game pieces to miss when they are dislodged from the board.

Although the invention has thus been shown and described with reference to specific embodiments, it should be noted that the invention is in no way limited to the details of the described arrangements but changes and modifications may be made without departing from the scope of the invention which is defined by the appended claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A game board for bearing a plurality of game pieces distributed in a plurality of game piece locations on said game board, said game board bearing indicia defining said game piece locations, said game board comprising a normally flat solid sheet of resilient plastic material with said

indicia, said sheet being bendable by hand into a substantial U-shape with said game indicia on separate parts of said board being moved towards one another, and without permanent deformation so as to return due to its resilience to a flat shape when released, in which said game board indicia include a retaining structure at each of said locations to impede sideways movement of said game piece from said location due to movement of said board or accidental contact with said game piece, said retaining structure comprising barriers on a plurality of sides of each of said locations to separate each of said locations from the others of said locations.

2. A game board as in claim **1** including a frame for holding said game board flat, and including a rotary support device supporting said frame for facilitating rotation of said board on a support surface.

3. A game board for bearing a plurality of game pieces distributed in a plurality of game piece locations on said game board, said game board bearing indicia defining said game piece locations, said game board comprising a normally flat solid sheet of resilient plastic material with said indicia, said sheet being bendable by hand into a substantial U-shape with said game indicia on separate parts of said board being moved towards one another, and without permanent deformation so as to return due to its resilience to a flat shape when released, including a frame with a holding structure for releasably holding said flat sheet in said frame in which said frame forms a receptacle below said board, and an outlet opening in said receptacle for allowing said game pieces to be poured out of said receptacle.

4. A game board for receiving game pieces distributed in a plurality of game piece locations on said game board, said game board comprising a normally flat solid sheet of resilient plastic material with game markings, said sheet being bendable by hand into a substantial U-shape without permanent deformation so as to return due to its resilience to a flat shape when released,

a frame for supporting said board and holding said board flat,

a turntable secured to said frame for rotatably supporting said frame and said game board above a support surface,

said game board having a mesh of protruding ridges for holding each of a plurality of game pieces in position at a pre-selected location on said game board.

5. A device as in claim **4** in which said frame has a recessed ledge upon which the edge of said game board rests, and a plurality of retaining members positioned around the periphery of said ledge to engage and hold said game board seated on said ledge.

6. A device as in claim **5** in which said game board has a plurality of corners and said frame has a plurality of matching corners, and said retaining members are corner covers for each of said corners of said frame, with each of said corners of said game board fitted under one of said corner covers.

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