High Efficiency Solar Powered Fans

12-14-2010

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HIGH EFFICIENCY SOLAR POWERED FANS

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Assignee: University of Central Florida Research Foundation, Inc., Orlando, FL (US)

Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 39 days.

Appl. No.: 12/183,279
Filed: Jul. 31, 2008

Related U.S. Application Data
Continuation-in-part of application No. 11/433,888, filed on May 12, 2006, now Pat. No. 7,507,151.

Int. Cl. F24F 7/007 (2006.01)
H02N 6/00 (2006.01)

U.S. Cl. 454/228, 454/230, 454/900, 416/63, 136/245, D13/102

Field of Classification Search 454/228, 454/230, 900; 416/63, 136/245; D13/102
See application file for complete search history.

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Primary Examiner—Steven B McAllister
Assistant Examiner—Patrick F. O'Reilly, III
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Brian S. Steinberger; Law Offices of Brian S. Steinberger, P.A.

ABSTRACT

Highly efficient solar fans used in portable and built in configurations. A ventilation fan can be used for exhausting air out from underneath roofs, and/or for being portable in use and application. The fan can include optimized airflow blades having a twisted configuration that can move at a rotational speed operation of up to approximately 500 rpm. The approximately 15 inch diameter twisted blades can be pre-molded on a hub that together form a single molded unit of plastic. They can also be fabricated using metal. The unit can be mounted in an exhaust outlet having a conical diffuser on or adjacent to a roof. Another embodiment allows for portable solar powered fans used anywhere there is a need for ventilation and moving of air. The blades can rotate by a solar powered motor, where the blades and motor can generate up to approximately 1040 cfm while using no more than approximately 16 Watts. Portable fans can be powered by solar panels. One embodiment has solar panels mounted to a handtruck. Another embodiment has solar panels in a carrying case with a handle having leg(s) which can bend downward to different angled positions. The solar panel carrying case and the fan can each have single handles that allows for the portable fan assembly to carried and transported by both hands of a single user.
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FIG. 10

[Diagram of a solar-powered fan system]

Key components:
- 400: Solar panel
- 410: Fan unit
- 420: Mechanical linkage
- 430: Base
- 440: Wheels
- 450: Electrical connection
- 460: Support structure
- 470: Battery pack
- 475: Charge controller
- 480: Solar panel frame
- 482: Photovoltaic cells
- 485: Connection box
- 488: Solar panel connector
- 490: Charging port
- 495: Connection cable
HIGH EFFICIENCY SOLAR POWERED FANS

This invention is a Continuation-In-Part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/443,888 filed May 12, 2006, now issued as U.S. Pat. No. 7,507,151.

FIELD OF INVENTION

This invention relates to solar powered fans, and in particular to apparatus, devices, systems and methods of using optimized twisted blades as efficient attic exhaust fans and portable fans which are also solar powered and the portable fan modular components which are also easily carryable by users and include carrying cases with handles and fold down legs, and to methods of operating, using, housing and transporting the novel fans.

BACKGROUND AND PRIOR ART

Fans have been used over the years in semi-permanent mounts for ventilation of buildings, as well as in smaller configurations which allow the fan housings to be moved place to place. These types of fans traditionally require power supplies where power to the fan motors is derived through existing wiring in the buildings and/or through wall mounted power supplies. Additionally, most fans use planar shaped blades to move airflow which limits the amount of airflow that is moved at any given time.

Ventilation fans for venting hot air from attic areas underneath roofs have been increasing in popularity over the years. Hot air is known to accumulate under roof tops especially in attic areas. This buildup of hot air can lead to poor cooling conditions within the building and increased utility costs to run air conditioning systems and cooling systems, and the like. Thus, it is desirable to improve and maximize air removal rates from under roofs and from attic spaces, and the like.

Existing attic ventilation fans have been used but have substantial power requirements from existing building electrical supplies. For example, the GRAINGER® catalog sells a 4YN78 metal blade attic ventilator model number having metal type blades that rotate at 1050 RPM (revolutions per minute) generating 1320 cfm (cubic feet per minute) and requires 200 Watts of power. Another GRAINGER® attic fan model 4YN77 generates a higher level of cfm (1620 cfm) but requires 225 Watts of power.

Most existing attic ventilation fans use standard stamped generally flat metal fan blades that have only fair air moving performance. Flat type blades are not designed to maximize moving of air.

Various type ventilation fans have been proposed over the years. See for example, U.S. Patents: Des. 261,803 to Bohanon, Jr.; 4,501,194 to Brown; 5,078,047 to Wimberly; 6,306,030 to Wilson; and 6,695,692 to York. However, none of the cited references, individually or in combination overcome all the problems with the prior art described above.

The inventors and assignee of the subject invention have been at the forefront of inventing high efficiency ceiling fans by using novel twisted blade configurations. See for example, U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,884,034 and 6,659,721 and 6,039,541 to Parker et al. However, these fans are designed for maximizing air flow from ceiling fans that have much larger diameters (approximately 42 inches to 64 inches, etc.) and that operate at different speeds (less than approximately 200 RPM) than small diameter ventilation fans that are needed to exhaust air from underneath roofs and from attic spaces.

Additionally, the inventors and assignee have worked on air conditioner condenser fan blades (see for example, U.S. patents D510,998 to Parker et al. and 7,014,423 to Parker et al. However, the air conditioner condenser fans are not optimized for the ventilation and removal of air from underneath roofs and from attic spaces.

Aircraft, marine and automobile engine propeller type blades have been altered over the years to shapes other than flat rectangular. See for example, U.S. Pat. Nos. 1,903,823 to Lougheed; 1,942,688 to Davis; 2,283,956 to Smith; 2,345,047 to Houghton; 2,450,440 to Mills; 4,197,057 to Hayashi; 4,325,675 to Gallot et al.; 4,411,598 to Okada; 4,416,434 to Tibbert; 4,730,985 to Rothman et al.; 4,794,633 to Hickey; 4,844,698 to Gornstein; 5,114,313 to Vorus; and 5,253,979 to Fradenburgh et al.; Australian Patent 19,987 to Eather. However, these patents are generally used for high speed water, aircraft and automobile applications where the propellers are run at high revolutions per minute (rpm) generally in excess of 500 rpm. None of these propellers are designed for optimizing airflow to remove undesirable air from attics and from underneath roofs.

Portable fans such as handheld battery fans have been used over the years. Similar to the problems presented above, small portable fans do not have blades aerodynamically optimized for airflow.

In addition, portable fans have batteries that have limited lifespans since the batteries either need to be constantly recharged from a 120 volt power supply or the batteries need to be constantly replaced.

The need for efficient powered portable fans has been growing much more in recent years. Natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes have caused extensive power outages that can last from several hours to weeks or more in the United States. Conventional battery powered fans, cannot be used effectively during these disaster conditions. The prior art listed above does not fix the problems with portable fan use.

Thus, the need exists for better performing fans over the prior art.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The first objective of the subject invention is to provide efficient roof/attic exhaust fans, blades, devices, apparatus and methods of operating the fans, that have optimized twisted nonmetal blades for maximizing removal of air from spaces underneath roofs.

The second objective of the subject invention is to provide efficient roof/attic exhaust fans, blades, devices, apparatus and methods of operating the fans, that can be solar powered.

The third objective of the subject invention is to provide efficient roof/attic exhaust fans, blades, devices, apparatus and methods of operating the fans, that can generate air flow up to at least approximately 30% above existing ventilation fans.

The fourth objective of the subject invention is to provide efficient roof/attic exhaust fans, blades, devices, apparatus and methods of operating the fans, that moves more air than existing ventilation fans and requires less power than existing ventilation fans. The invention reduces electrical power consumption and is more energy efficient over traditional flat planar ceiling fan blades.

The fifth objective of the subject invention is to provide efficient roof/attic exhaust fans, blades, devices, apparatus and methods of operating the fans, having fan blade aerodynamics optimized to maximize airflow in an approximately 15 inch diameter fan operating at up to approximately 500 (revolutions per minute) RPM.
The sixth objective of the subject invention is to provide efficient roof/attic exhaust fans, blades, devices, apparatus and methods of operating the fans, where the blades and hub are a single molded piece of plastic.

The seventh objective of the subject invention is to provide portable fans that can be used anywhere, and blades, devices, apparatus and methods of operating the fans, having optimized twisted nonmetal blades for maximizing air ventilation.

The eighth objective of the subject invention is to provide portable fans that can be used anywhere, and blades, devices, apparatus and methods of operating the fans, that can be solar powered.

The ninth objective of the subject invention is to provide portable fans that can be used anywhere, and blades, devices, apparatus and methods of operating the fans, that can generate air flow up to at least approximately 30% above existing portable fans.

The tenth objective of the subject invention is to provide portable fans that can be used anywhere, and blades, devices, apparatus and methods of operating the fans, that move more air than existing ventilation fans and require less power than existing ventilation fans. The invention reduces electrical power consumption and is more energy efficient over traditional flat planar ceiling fan blades.

The eleventh objective of the subject invention is to provide portable fans that can be used anywhere, and blades, devices, apparatus and methods of operating the fans, having fan blade aerodynamics optimized to maximize airflow in an approximately 15 inch diameter fan operating at up to approximately 500 (revolutions per minute) RPM.

The twelfth objective of the subject invention is to provide portable fans, blades, devices, apparatus and methods of operating the fans, that can be used anywhere such as during and after natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and the like, as well as in environments having limited power supplies such as in construction sites, at picnics and other outings, on camping, hiking and fishing trips and at the beach.

The thirteenth objective of the invention is to provide apparatus and methods of operating the fans, having fan blade with hub that can be used with an attic fan.

The fourteenth objective of the invention is to provide apparatus and methods of operating the fans, having a portable fan to be recharged used using solar power and a battery powered fan assembly to be easily carried in one hand while a folded solar panel assembly can be easily carried in another hand, where the fan and solar panel assemblies are portable and easily deployed. The folded solar panel can be mounted in a rectangular type case such as a briefcase where the user can easily transport the panel by a single handle on the case.

Further objects and advantages of this invention will be apparent from the following detailed descriptions of the presently preferred embodiments which are illustrated schematically in the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

FIG. 1A is a perspective view of the novel three twisted blades with hub that can be used with an attic fan.

FIG. 1B is a bottom view of the blades with hub of FIG. 1A.

FIG. 1C is a side view of the blades and hub of FIG. 1B along arrow 1CX.

FIG. 2A is an upper top perspective view of a single twisted blade of FIGS. 1A-1C.

FIG. 2B is a top view of the single twisted blade of FIG. 2A.

FIG. 2C is a root end view of the single twisted blade of FIG. 2B along arrow 2C.

FIG. 2D is a tip end view of the single twisted blade of FIG. 2B along arrow 2D.

FIG. 2E is a lower bottom perspective view of the twisted blade of FIG. 2A.

FIG. 2F is a bottom view of the twisted blade of FIG. 2E.

FIG. 3 is a side perspective view of the twisted blade of FIG. 2B along arrow 3x with labeled cross-sections A, B, C, D, E.

FIG. 4 is an end view of FIG. 3 showing the different cross-sections A, B, C, D, and E.

FIG. 5A shows the cross-section A of FIGS. 3-4.

FIG. 5B shows the cross-section B of FIGS. 3-4.

FIG. 5C shows the cross-section C of FIGS. 3-4.

FIG. 5D shows the cross-section D of FIGS. 3-4.

FIG. 5E shows the cross-section E of FIGS. 3-4.

FIG. 6 is a perspective exterior view of a roof alcove exhaust incorporating the fan and blades of the preceding figures with a solar power source.

FIG. 7 is a view of the separate components of FIG. 6.

FIG. 8 is another perspective exterior view of a roof top exhaust incorporating the fan and blades of the preceding figures with a solar power source.

FIG. 9 is a view of the separate components of FIG. 8.

FIG. 10 is a perspective front view of a portable fan assembly incorporating the fan and blades of the preceding figures with a solar power source.

FIG. 11 is a rear view of the portable of FIG. 10.

FIG. 12 is a front perspective view of DC powered fan assembly with portable solar panel assembly.

FIG. 13 is a rear perspective view of FIG. 12.

FIG. 14 is a rear perspective view showing charge cables disconnected.

FIG. 15A is a rear perspective view showing remote battery charging.

FIG. 15B shows the rechargeable battery pack and AC powered battery charger detached from one another.

FIG. 15C shows the rechargeable battery pack and AC powered battery charger of FIG. 15B attached to one another.

FIG. 16 shows a left side view of the DC fan of FIG. 12.

FIG. 17 shows a front view of the DC fan of FIG. 16.
DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Before explaining the disclosed embodiments of the present invention in detail it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of the particular arrangement shown since the invention is capable of other embodiments. Also, the terminology used herein is for the purpose of description and not of limitation. The labeled components will now be described.

1 hub and blade assembly
10 First blade
20 Second blade
30 Third blade
40 Hub
50 Motor
55 Power line
12 Root end of blade
18 Tip end of blade
14LE leading edge of blade
16TE trailing edge of blade
15 upper surface of blade
17 lower surface of blade
100 Solar power source
110, 120 PV (photovoltaic panels)
130 Solar panel frame
140 Optional stand
150 Optional Additional panels, frame and stand
200 Roof Alcove Exhaust
210 Roof
215 Opening in roof
220 Cable wall
225 Opening in gable wall
230 Hood
235 Louvers
240 housing
300 Roof Top Exhaust
330 Domed hood cover
335 Louver Opening about overhanging edges of Dome Cover
340 Housing under roof
350 Cylindrical Housing outside of roof
400 Portable Fan
410 Cylinder cover

FIG. 18 shows a right view of the DC fan of FIG. 16.
FIG. 19 shows a rear view of the DC fan of FIG. 16.
FIG. 20 is a front perspective view of the portable solar panel assembly deployed.
FIG. 21 is a rear perspective view of the portable solar panel assembly deployed.
FIG. 22 is a front perspective view of the portable solar panel assembly folded for transport.
FIG. 23 is a rear perspective view of the portable solar panel assembly folded for transport.
FIG. 24 is a left side view of the solar panel assembly folded with ghosted leg and cover function.
FIG. 25 is a front view of the folded solar panel assembly.
FIG. 26 is a right side view of the folded solar panel assembly.
FIG. 27 is a rear view of the folded solar panel assembly.
FIG. 28 is another rear view of the folded solar panel assembly.
FIG. 29 is a bottom view of the deployed solar panel assembly.
FIG. 30 is a side view of the deployed solar panel assembly.
FIG. 31 is a front view of the deployed solar panel assembly.

FIG. 2A is an upper top perspective view of a single twisted blade 10 of FIGS. 1A-1C. FIG. 2B is a bottom view of the blades 10, 20, 30 with hub 40 that can be used with an attic fan. FIG. 2C is a rear end view of the blades 10, 20, 30 with hub 40 of FIG. 2B. FIG. 2D is a side view of the blades 10, 20, 30 and hub 40 of FIG. 2E.

FIG. 2A is an upper top perspective view of a single twisted blade 10 of FIGS. 1A-1C. FIG. 2B is a top view of the single twisted blade 10 of FIG. 2A. FIG. 2C is a root end view of the single twisted blade 10 of FIG. 2B along arrow 2C. FIG. 2D is a tip end view of the single twisted blade 10 of FIG. 2B along arrow 2D. FIG. 2E is a lower bottom perspective view of the twisted blade 10 of FIG. 2A. FIG. 2F is a bottom view of the twisted blade 10 of FIG. 2E.

Referring to FIGS. 1A-2F, the novel fan can have three twisted blades 10, 20, 30 each having a positive twist between their root ends adjacent to the hub 40 and their tip ends. The overall diameter of the fan 1 can be approximately 15 inches across the blade tip ends. The blades 10, 20, 30 and hub 40 can be formed into a single molded unit, such as being formed from injection molded plastic, and the like.
Referring to FIGS. 2B-2D, the single twisted blade 10 can have a length of approximately 5.23 inches between the root end 12 and the tip end 18. The twisted blade 10 can be attached to the hub 40 of FIGS. 1A-1C with the leading edge 14LE of the root end 12 having an angle of approximately 47.03 degrees above horizontal plane HP with the trailing edge 16TE of the root end 12 being below the horizontal plane HP. The tip end 18 of the blade 10 can have a twist from the root end so that the leading edge 14LE is approximately 27.54 degrees above the horizontal plane HP. FIG. 3 is a side perspective view of the blade of FIG. 2B along arrow 3X with labeled cross-sections A, B, C, D, E in between the root end 12 and tip end 18. FIG. 4 is an end view of FIG. 3 showing the different cross-sections A, B, C, D, and E, in curved views superimposed over one another showing the varying degrees of twist between the root end and tip end of the blade 10.

FIG. 5A shows the cross-section A of FIGS. 3-4 having a leading edge 14LE slightly curved down being approximately 41.06 degrees above the horizontal plane HP. Cross-section A has a convex shaped upper surface 15 and a lower surface 17 with a concave bend configuration, and trailing edge 16TE below the horizontal plane HP. The leading edge 14LE having a more blunt rounded edge than the trailing edge 16TE. Cross-section A can have a width of approximately 3.78 inches between the trailing edge 16TE and leading edge 14LE. The thickness of the cross-section A can expand from the trailing edge 16TE to being approximately 0.09 inches half way to a midpoint of the cross-section which has a thickness of approximately 0.14 inches, and the thickness halfway between the midpoint and the leading edge 14LE being approximately 0.18 inches.

FIG. 5B shows the cross-section B of FIGS. 3-4 having a leading edge 14LE slightly curved down being approximately 35.93 degrees above the horizontal plane HP. Cross-section B has a convex shaped upper surface 15 and a lower surface 17 with a concave bend configuration, and trailing edge 16TE below the horizontal plane HP. The leading edge 14LE having a more blunt rounded edge than the trailing edge 16TE. Cross-section B can have a width of approximately 3.81 inches between the trailing edge 16TE and leading edge 14LE. The thickness of the cross-section B can expand from the trailing edge 16TE to being approximately 0.09 inches half way to a midpoint of the cross-section which has a thickness of approximately 0.14 inches, and the thickness halfway between the midpoint and the leading edge 14LE being approximately 0.18 inches.

FIG. 5C shows the cross-section C of FIGS. 3-4 having a leading edge 14LE slightly curved down being approximately 32.69 degrees above the horizontal plane HP. Cross-section C has a convex shaped upper surface 15 and a lower surface 17 with a concave bend configuration, and trailing edge 16TE below the horizontal plane HP. The leading edge 14LE having a more blunt rounded edge than the trailing edge 16TE. Cross-section C can have a width of approximately 3.91 inches between the trailing edge 16TE and leading edge 14LE. The thickness of the cross-section C can expand from the trailing edge 16TE to being approximately 0.08 inches half way to a midpoint of the cross-section which has a thickness of approximately 0.13 inches, and the thickness halfway between the midpoint and the leading edge 14LE being approximately 0.18 inches.

FIG. 5D shows the cross-section D of FIGS. 3-4 having a leading edge 14LE slightly curved down being approximately 30.26 degrees above the horizontal plane HP. Cross-section D has a convex shaped upper surface 15 and a lower surface 17 with a concave bend configuration, and trailing edge 16TE below the horizontal plane HP. The leading edge 14LE having a more blunt rounded edge than the trailing edge 16TE. Cross-section D can have a width of approximately 4.0 inches between the trailing edge 16TE and leading edge 14LE. The thickness of the cross-section D can expand from the trailing edge 16TE to being approximately 0.09 inches half way to a midpoint of the cross-section which has a thickness of approximately 0.14 inches, and the thickness halfway between the midpoint and the leading edge 14LE being approximately 0.18 inches.

FIG. 5E shows the cross-section E of FIGS. 3-4 having a leading edge 14LE slightly curved down being approximately 28.56 degrees above the horizontal plane HP. Cross-section E has a convex shaped upper surface 15 and a lower surface 17 with a concave bend configuration, and trailing edge 16TE below the horizontal plane HP. The leading edge 14LE having a more blunt rounded edge than the trailing edge 16TE. Cross-section E can have a width of approximately 4.09 inches between the trailing edge 16TE and leading edge 14LE. The thickness of the cross-section E can expand from the trailing edge 16TE to being approximately 0.09 inches half way to a midpoint of the cross-section which has a thickness of approximately 0.14 inches, and the thickness halfway between the midpoint and the leading edge 14LE being approximately 0.19 inches.

Roof Alcove Exhaust

FIG. 6 is a perspective exterior view of a roof alcove exhaust embodiment 200 incorporating the fan 1 and blades 10, 20, 30 of the preceding figures with a solar power source 100. FIG. 7 is a view of the separate components of FIG. 6. Referring to FIGS. 6-7, the novel fan 1 can be mounted with blades 10-30 facing to exhaust sideways in a housing 240 inside of an opening 225 in a gable side wall 220 below a roof 210. The outer hood 230 with louvers 235 can cover the opening 225 in the gable side wall 220. The fan motor 50 can draw power through cable/power line 55 from a rooftop mounted solar power source 100, which can include two PV (photovoltaic) panels 110, 120 in a frame 130 that can be directly attached (by screws, and the like) into the roof 210. An optional stand 140 can be used to elevate the solar panels 110, 120 and frame 130 above the roof 210. Additional power can be provided by another solar power source 150.

Roof Top Exhaust

FIG. 8 is another perspective exterior view of a roof top exhaust 300 incorporating the fan 1 and blades 10, 20, 30 of the preceding figures with a solar power source 100. FIG. 9 is a view of the separate components of FIG. 8. Referring to FIGS. 8-9, the novel fan 1 can be mounted with blades 10-30 facing to upward in a housing 340 underneath an opening 215 in roof 210. The domed hood cover 330 can overhang a cylindrical housing 350 outside roof 210 having side edges which overhang the housing 350 with an exhaust opening 335 thereunder. Similar to FIGS. 6-7, the fan motor 50 can draw power through cable/power line 55 from a rooftop mounted solar power source 100, which can include two PV (photovoltaic) panels 110, 120 in a frame 130 that can be directly attached (by screws, and the like) into the roof 210. An optional stand 140 can be used to elevate the solar panels 110, 120 and frame 130 above the roof 210. Additional power can be provided by another solar power source 150.

Testing of the solar powered fan will now be described. A single 10W panel with an open circuit voltage of approximately 14 to approximately 15 vdc (volts direct current) was connected to the fan 1 previously described having twisted blades 10, 20, 30.
**TABLE 1**

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</tbody>
</table>

A conventional fan was compared to the novel fan of the invention with the results shown in Table 1. The conventional fan tested was a KING OF FANS® Solar Gable Ventilation Fan (22-607-690) using a Brushless DC motor: BOM-ZYW 92/22A-03. The conventional fan used a 1.5 inch metal blade operating at 7.3 vdc (Volts DC current) @835 mA (milliamps) approximately 1.4 amp current (approximately 15.7 Watts). A calibration factor was found to be approximately 15.7 inches; Fan diameter: approximately 15 inches; Tip clearance: 0.25 inches; Overall height of diffuser: 15.5 inches. The region in the diffuser where the fan sweeps approximately 13.75 inches (can shorten to about 12.75 inches with lip to inlet bell); Exhaust diameter: approximately 17.25 inches; and Inlet diameter: approximately 16.0 inches. The region in the diffuser where the fan sweeps (about 4 inches in height as indicated by the hub) should be the narrowest section (approximately 15.5 inches). Above that the diffuser smoothly increases in diameter to 17.25 inches. The diffuser has an optimal angle of divergence of 7-10 degrees.

In summary, the novel fan can generate airflow of at least approximately 900 cfm (cubic feet per minute) from the rotating blades while running the fan with the twisted blades and the motor at an efficiency of at least approximately 60 CFM per watt. The blades can be rotated up to approximately 500 RPM while generating an airflow of at least approximately 1000 cfm and up to at least approximately 1040 cfm or more.

**Table 1** further compared the GRAINGER® fan (another fan) as well. Unlike the conventional fan and the novel fan, the GRAINGER® fan used a standard AC shaded pole motor instead of being solar powered.

The standard conventional fan (KING OF FANS®) and housing was found to move approximately 802 cfm (cubic feet per minute) at approximately 0.0 external static pressure. The improved fan I with the conical diffuser housing moved approximately 1043 cfm at zero static pressure. The novel fan also operated at a lower RPM (revolutions per minute) and was observed to be more quiet than the conventional fan.

The test results represented an approximately 30% increase in flow at the same power. Given that shaft power is increasing between the square and the cube of the air mass flow, this presents about an approximately 90% increase in the work being accomplished.

The GRAINGER® catalogue shows that comparable AC attic vent fans provide about 1320 cfm @200 Watts of AC power. The GRAINGER® attic vent fan retails for about $50; but that doesn’t include the cost for an electrician to wire them up. Assuming that the AC attic fans might be operating 10 hours per day, the solar fans would be saving about $6 a month compared to a conventional AC powered one.

The prototype diffuser used with the novel fan had the following dimensions: Narrow point in diffuser throat: 15.5 inches; Fan diameter: approximately 15 inches; Tip clearance: approximately 0.25 inches; Overall height of diffuser: 15.5 inches; Fan diameter: approximately 15 inches. The motor at an efficiency of at least 90% can be used indoors with the PV panels located outdoors.

**Portable Fans**

Fig. 10 is a perspective front view of a portable fan incorporating the fan of the invention and blades of the preceding figures with a solar power source. Fig. 11 is a rear view of the portable fan of Fig. 10. The portable fan embodiment combines a high efficiency fan and a cylindrical housing with a portable stand that can consist of a telescoping height adjustable pole and triangular shaped base having wheels. The triangular shaped base can have a rear generally straight edge with wheels mounted at each end, angled sides meeting at a rounded apex. The shape of the base allows the fan to be easily tilted back in the direction of arrow B so that a user can move the fan with only two wheels by gripping the handle that is attached to the upper pole of the portable fan.

A handtruck type stand having an L-shape with wheels can be moved for portable cooling anywhere outdoors where the cable line can be extended up to approximately 50 feet or more in length from the PV powered charger. Similar to the preceding embodiments, the fan and blades can be connected by another cable to control supply power to the fan and the portable fan can be moved for portable cooling anywhere outdoors where the cable line can be extended up to approximately 50 feet or more in length from the PV powered charger.

The outdoor portable fan can also use a high-efficiency brushless DC motor instead of the previously described motor and can be hinged to a 30 Watt PV panel charging two sealed lead acid 12.7 amp-hr cells in the battery. As previously described, a power cord can allow the fan to be located up to approximately 50 feet or more from the solar powered panels where the fan can be used outdoors, the cord allows the fan to be able to be used indoors with the PV panels located outdoors.

Fan speed of the DC motor or the basic motor can be modulated with a knob altered pulse width modulated (PWM) or resistance based control to accordingly adjust speeds.

With the invention using the more efficient fan it is possible to move more air than conventional portable fans. It is possible to run the fan longer on a limited battery pack or to use smaller and less expensive PV panels with the invention.

The novel portable fan can be operated where no electric power is available, such as in remote locations or with disaster.
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relief (post hurricane/post earthquake environments). The portable fan can have use in construction sites, at picnics and other outings, on camping, hiking and fishing trips and at the beach, and can be used both during the day and at night. At full speed, the fan 400 can draw approximately 1.4 amps at approximately 11 volts (approximately 15 Watts). At half speed, the fan 400 can draw approximately 5 Watts. With its 34 amp per hour backup, the fan can operate for approximately 11 hours with an approximate 50% discharge with no sun. The fan 400 can use the plastic molded blades previously described and as a result can be more efficient than metal blades.

With an average of approximately 6 hours of sun per day, the portable fan 400 can potentially provide a continuous eight hours of daily operation at full speed, and a continuous 24 hours of operation at half speed.

Portatable Fan Assemblies and Solar Power Panel Case Assemblies

FIG. 12 is a front perspective view 500 of DC powered fan assembly 510 with portable solar panel assembly 520. FIG. 13 is a rear perspective view of FIG. 12. FIG. 14 is a rear perspective view showing charge cables 640, 650 disconnected. FIG. 15A is a rear perspective view showing the rechargeable battery pack 530 separated from DC power supply 540. FIG. 15B shows the rechargeable battery pack 530 and AC powered battery charger 670 detached from one another. FIG. 15C shows the rechargeable battery pack 530 and AC powered battery charger 670 of FIG. 15B attached to one another.

Referring to FIGS. 12-19, the portable embodiment 500 can include the combination of a battery powered fan assembly 510 with a portable solar panel assembly 520. The portable solar panel assembly 520 can include a carrying case having a generally rectangular configuration with a handle 562 and a solar panel assembly 570 that can mounted to an inside of a thin depth rectangular box 575. The bottom edges of the rear box 575 can be attached to a solar panel cover 580 with a cover hinge pin(s) 580. The cover 580 can have angled side edges 582, 588 with an open end portion 585, where the side edges can wrap about the outer side walls 572, 578 of the rear box 575.

Across the back of the carrying case assembly 520 can be horizontal support bar 574, that has a support stand 590 attached thereto. Attached to the support bar 574 can be cylindrical tabs 591, 599, with inwardly angled ends 592, 598 pivotally attached thereto. There are two vertical side legs 594, 596 that extend downward with a horizontal bottom leg 595 attached to the bottom of the two vertical side legs 594, 596. A handle 600 on top of the base 575 allows for the panel assembly 520 to be easily hand carried. The carrying case configuration allows for the panel(s) to be easily transported in a secure and safe manner and contains the solar panel(s) in a briefcase type housing.

Attached to the back of the panel assembly 520 is a solar charge cable 630A that attaches to another solar charge cable 630B by a plug and socket connector 640. The second charge cable 630B can be attached to a DC power supply 540 that powers fan assembly 510 by another cable 545, where the DC power supply 540 can be powered by a rechargeable battery pack 530. The battery pack 530 can be attached to a wall plug with transformer 660 by a charge cables 6203, 620A that can be attached to one another by another plug and socket con-

nector 650. When the battery pack 530 is charged a switch 550 on the DC power supply 540 can switch on power to the motor 560 to the fan 560.

Referring to FIGS. 15A-15C, the rechargeable battery pack 530 can be charged when not being used by having a plug portion 532 that plugs into a receptacle 675 on an AC powered battery charger 670, the latter of which can be plugged into a wall power supply by AC wall plug 680. Referring to FIGS. 12-31, the rechargeable backup power pack 530 can be used to run the fan assembly 520 when solar power is not available such as during night-time. The fan 560 can be powered by the solar panel 570. Additionally, the rechargeable backup power pack 530 can also be recharged by the solar panel 570. With the backup power pack 530 charged the fan can be also used indoors as well as when wall power supplies are no longer available. Also, with the plug/transformer 660, the fan assembly 510 can be powered directly by a wall power supply and not need the use of either the rechargeable battery pack or the solar panel.

Referring to FIGS. 12-19, a fan speed switch 530 on the back of the drum fan 560 can control operational speeds of the blades. The blades can be similar in size and dimensions to those previously described, and include twisted blades for enhanced airflow.

A carrying handle 562 on top of the cylindrical drum fan housing 560 can allow for the drum fan assembly 510 to be easily carried. A U shaped floor stand 568 having upper bent ends can be pivotally attached to opposite sides of the cylindrical drum fan housing 560. The bottom of the flat U shaped floor stand 568 can be supported off the floor by rubber footers 569. The DC power supply 540 can be fixably mounted to an upper portion of the U shaped floor stand 568, so that the power supply 540 can be carried with the drum fan 560 by the carrying handle 562 on the drum fan assembly 510.

FIG. 20 is a front perspective view of the portable solar panel assembly 520 deployed. FIG. 21 is a rear perspective view of the portable solar panel assembly 520 deployed. FIG. 22 is a front perspective view of the portable solar panel assembly 520 folded for transport. FIG. 23 is a rear perspective view of the portable solar panel assembly 520 folded for transport. FIG. 24 is a left side view of the solar panel assembly 520 folded with gusseted leg 590 and cover 580 in closed and deployed positions. FIG. 25 is a front view of the folded solar panel assembly 520. FIG. 26 is a right side view of the folded solar panel assembly 520. FIG. 27 is a rear view of the folded solar panel assembly 520. FIG. 28 is another rear view of the folded solar panel assembly 520.

FIG. 29 is a bottom view of the solar panel assembly 520 in a deployed position. FIG. 30 is a side view of the solar panel assembly 520 in a deployed position. FIG. 31 is a front view of the solar panel assembly 520 in a deployed position.

Referring to FIGS. 20-31, the solar panel carrying case assembly 520 can include cylindrical tabs 591, 599 attached with a support bar 574 on the back 575 of a rectangular box, with inwardly angled ends 592, 598 pivotally attached thereto. Two vertical side legs 594, 596 that extend downward with a horizontal bottom leg 595 attached to the bottom of the two vertical side legs 594, 596. The stand components 592-598 can have a U-shape that can fold substantially flush against the back of the rectangular box 575 when not being used to allow the assembly 520 to be easily carried similar to a briefcase by the handle 600. The pivotal hinge portions 591, 599 allow for the stand components 592-598 to be set at different deployed angles so that the solar panel 570 can be oriented at different selected angles.

Referring to FIGS. 12-31, the novel fan assembly 510 and panel assembly 520 can be carried by a single person using
the like.

two blades, four blades or more. ing:

ticularly reserved especially as they fall within the breadth

tments as may be suggested by the teachings herein are par­

be, limited thereby and such other modifications or embodi­

trated and shown in various terms of certain embodiments or

metals, and the like. Metal materials that can be used include

ing plastic blades and a plastic hub molded into a single unit, 5

needed.

hub. While the blades are described as preferably being made

A portable fan assembly comprising:

A fan housing having fan blades attached to a motor, the fan

housing having one carrying handle; and

a separate portable rectangular carrying case having a front

rigid half wall section hingedly attached to a rear rigid

half wall section, the front half wall section having left

and right rigid angled side edges and an open end with no

angled side edges, the left and right rigid angled side edges

wrap about outer side walls of the rear half wall section

when the front half wall section and the rear half

wall section are in a closed position; the front wall sec­

tion folds downward into an open position; a solar panel

being mounted inside of the case and attached to the rear

half section; the front half wall section containing no

solar panel mounted thereon, the solar panel for provid­
ing power to the motor, the solar panel being used when

the front wall section is in the open position, and one

carrying handle projecting upward from the rigid half

wall section of the carrying case between the open end of

the front half wall section, and wherein the fan and panel

are adapted to be carried by a single user.

The portable fan assembly of claim 1, wherein the fan

blades include:

a plurality of twisted blades attached to the motor, each

blade having a twist between a root end and a tip end.

The portable fan assembly of claim 2, wherein the blades

include:

da diameter across tip ends of the blades of approximately

15 inches.

The portable fan assembly of claim 1, wherein the fan

housing is in the form of

cylindrical housing for mounting the blades and motor

therewith; and wherein the fan further includes

a U-shaped stand having upwardly bent ends pivotally

attached to opposite sides of the cylindrical housing for

supporting the fan over a ground surface.

The portable fan assembly of claim 1, wherein the solar

panel includes:

a leg assembly pivotally attached across a back of the solar

panel; the leg assembly having a folded position with the

leg assembly substantially flush against the back, and a

deployed position with the leg assembly at a bent angle

so that the solar panel is oriented at a selected position.

the respective handles 562, 600, allowing the invention to be

easily transported as a portable fan that can be used wherever

needed.

While the preferred embodiments describe the fan as hav­
ing plastic blades and a plastic hub molded into a single unit,

the invention can have separate blades attached to a separate

hub. While the blades are described as preferably being made

from plastic, the blades can be made from composite mater­i

als and/or from other materials, such as but not limited to

metals, and the like. Metal materials that can be used include

but are not limited to aluminum, galvanized metal, steel, and

the like.

Although the preferred embodiments show the fan with

three twisted blades, the invention can apply to fans having

two blades, four blades or more.

While the invention has been described, disclosed, illus­

trated and shown in various terms of certain embodiments or

modifications which it has presumed in practice, the scope of

the invention is not intended to be, nor should it be deemed to

be, limited thereby and such other modifications or embodi­

ments as may be suggested by the teachings herein are par­

ticularly reserved especially as they fall within the breadth

and scope of the claims here appended.

We claim:

1. A portable fan assembly comprising:

a fan housing having fan blades attached to a motor, the fan

housing having one carrying handle; and

a separate portable rectangular carrying case having a front

rigid half wall section hingedly attached to a rear rigid

half wall section, the front half wall section having left

and right rigid angled side edges and an open end with no

angled side edges, the left and right rigid angled side edges

wrap about outer side walls of the rear half wall section

when the front half wall section and the rear half

wall section are in a closed position; the front wall sec­

tion folds downward into an open position; a solar panel

being mounted inside of the case and attached to the rear

half section; the front half wall section containing no

solar panel mounted thereon, the solar panel for provid­
ing power to the motor, the solar panel being used when

the front wall section is in the open position, and one

carrying handle projecting upward from the rigid half

wall section of the carrying case between the open end of

the front half wall section, and wherein the fan and panel

are adapted to be carried by a single user.

2. The portable fan assembly of claim 1, wherein the fan

blades include:

a plurality of twisted blades attached to the motor, each

blade having a twist between a root end and a tip end.

3. The portable fan assembly of claim 2, wherein the blades

include:

da diameter across tip ends of the blades of approximately

15 inches.

4. The portable fan assembly of claim 1, wherein the fan

housing is in the form of

cylindrical housing for mounting the blades and motor

therewith; and wherein the fan further includes

a U-shaped stand having upwardly bent ends pivotally

attached to opposite sides of the cylindrical housing for

supporting the fan over a ground surface.

5. The portable fan assembly of claim 1, wherein the solar

panel includes:

a leg assembly pivotally attached across a back of the solar

panel; the leg assembly having a folded position with the

leg assembly substantially flush against the back, and a

deployed position with the leg assembly at a bent angle

so that the solar panel is oriented at a selected position.

6. The portable fan assembly of claim 5, wherein the leg

assembly includes:

a U-shape having inwardly projecting angled ends pivot­

ally attached to cylindrical tabs located on the back of

the solar panel, the U-shape having a lower horizontal

leg portion for allowing the leg assembly to be supported

over the ground surface.

7. The portable fan assembly of claim 5, wherein the leg

assembly includes:

a U-shaped configuration having two upper ends; each of

the upper ends having inwardly angled edges that pivot­

ally attach to cylindrical tabs that are mounted behind

the rear half section of the carrying case.

8. The portable fan assembly of claim 1, further compris­
ing:

a rechargeable battery power supply for providing power to

the motor of the fan when the solar panel is not being

used.

9. The portable fan assembly of claim 1, further compris­
ing:

a charging adapter having a wall plug for recharging the

battery power supply.

10. The portable fan assembly of claim 1, further compris­
ing:

a wall plug adapter for directly providing power to the fan

and bypassing the solar panel, so that the solar panel is

not needed.

11. A portable modular fan system, comprising:

a single fan assembly having fan blades attached to a motor,

the fan having a carrying handle, and a pivotally attached

floor stand for allowing the fan to be oriented at different

angles;

a separate portable rectangular carrying case having a solar

panel, the carrying case having a single carrying handle, and

pivotally attached leg assembly, the leg assembly having

inwardly protruding upper ends that are rotatable

attached to cylindrical tabs that are spaced between side

ends of a rear side of the carrying case, the leg assembly

having a folded position with the leg assembly substan­
tially flush against the rear side of the carrying case, the

leg assembly having a deployed position with the solar

panel being pivotal to different angles, the solar panel for

providing power to the motor, wherein the fan and panel

are adapted to be carried by a single user; and a power

supply with a removable battery mounted on the floor

stand of the single fan assembly.

12. The portable modular fan system of claim 11, wherein

the carrying case includes a front half wall section hingedly

attached to a rear half wall section, the front half wall section

having left and right rigid angled side edges and an open end

with no angled side edges, the left and right rigid angled side edges

wrap about outer side walls of the rear half wall section

when the front half wall section and the rear half wall section

are in a closed position, the front wall section folds downward

into an open position, the solar panel being mounted inside of

the case and attached to the rear half section, the handle

projecting upward from the rear half wall section within the

open end of the front half wall section of the carrying case,

wherein the front wall section folds downward into an open

position when the solar panel is being used.

13. A method of providing a portable fan and solar power

supply, comprising the steps of:

providing a fan housing having a plurality of blades

mounted to a single motor, the blades being held within

a grilled cage;

mounting a single handle on top of the fan housing;

providing a solar panel in a rectangular case;
providing the case with a front half wall section having left and right angled side edges, and an open end, and a rear half wall section, the rear half wall section having the solar panel mounted thereon, and the front half wall section containing no solar panel mounted thereon; hingedly attaching the front half wall section to a rear half wall section; wrapping the left and right angled side edges about outer side walls of the rear half wall section when the front half wall section and the rear half wall section are in a closed position; mounting another single handle on the rear half wall section of the rectangular case; extending the another single handle up from the open end of the front half wall section when the front half wall section and the rear half wall section of the rectangular case are in the closed position; operating the solar panel when the front half wall section is folded downward from the rear half wall section when the rectangular case is in an open position; carrying the fan housing by gripping the single fan housing handle; and carrying the rectangular case by gripping the single rectangular case handle.

14. The method of claim 13, further including the steps of: providing a U-shaped leg assembly with inwardly protruding upper ends; pivotally attaching the inwardly protruding upper ends of the leg assembly to cylindrical tabs behind the rear half wall section of the case; and unfolding the leg assembly as a stand for the case when the solar panel is used.

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