United States Patent [19]

Rovin et al.

[11] **3,865,058**

[45] **Feb. 11, 1975**

[54] **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR FORMING AND JOINING HEMS, PARTICULARLY ON TUBULAR ARTICLES**

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[22] Filed: **May 30, 1973**

[21] Appl. No.: **365,098**

[52] **U.S. Cl.**..... **112/63,** 112/10, 112/121.26, 112/121.29, 112/143, 112/218 R, 112/219 R, 270/93

[51] **Int. Cl.**...**D05b 23/00,** D05b 35/04, D05b 81/00

[58] **Field of Search** 112/63, 10, 11, 121.26, 112/262, 141, 143; 270/93

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Primary Examiner—H. Hampton Hunter

Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Mandeville and Schweitzer

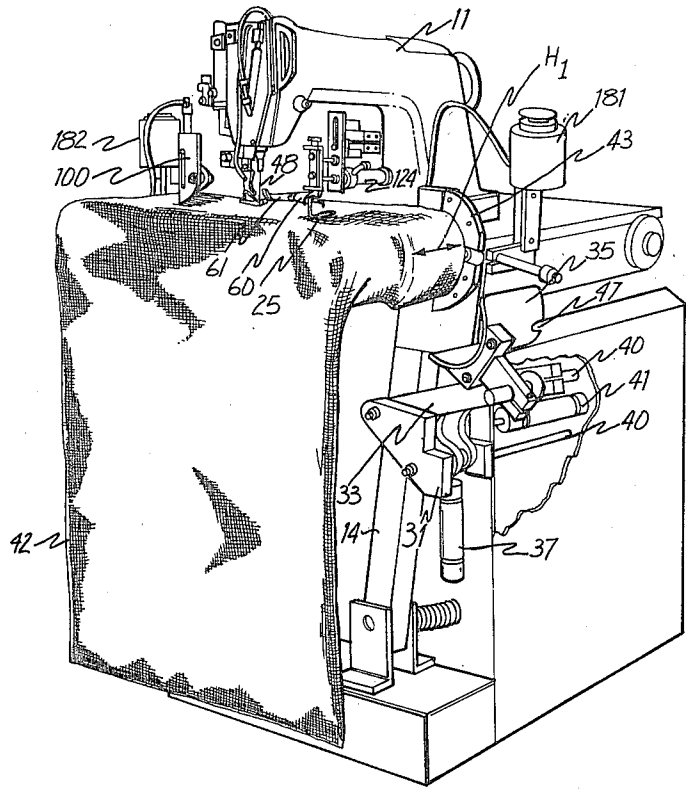
[57] **ABSTRACT**

The application discloses a method and apparatus for the substantially automated forming and sewing of hems on pillowcases and the like. The open end of a pillowcase is applied over hem folding forms, which first fold a large hem, and then a small blind hem is formed to conceal the raw edge of the fabric. Unique arrangements are provided for effecting these hem folding operations. The pillowcase is then partially inflated with air and advanced circumferentially, while the hem structure is sewed into the article.

The disclosure includes advantageous arrangements for the detection of an unsewn seam along the formed hem, and also advantageous arrangements for sensing the completion of the sewing operation. Automatic arrangements are provided for the insertion and sewing of a label, and the removal and stacking of the completed article after sewing.

The principles of the invention are applicable to great advantage in connection with the forming of hems or the like on any tubular article. In addition, certain features of the invention have applicability in the processing of non-tubular articles.

9 Claims, 24 Drawing Figures



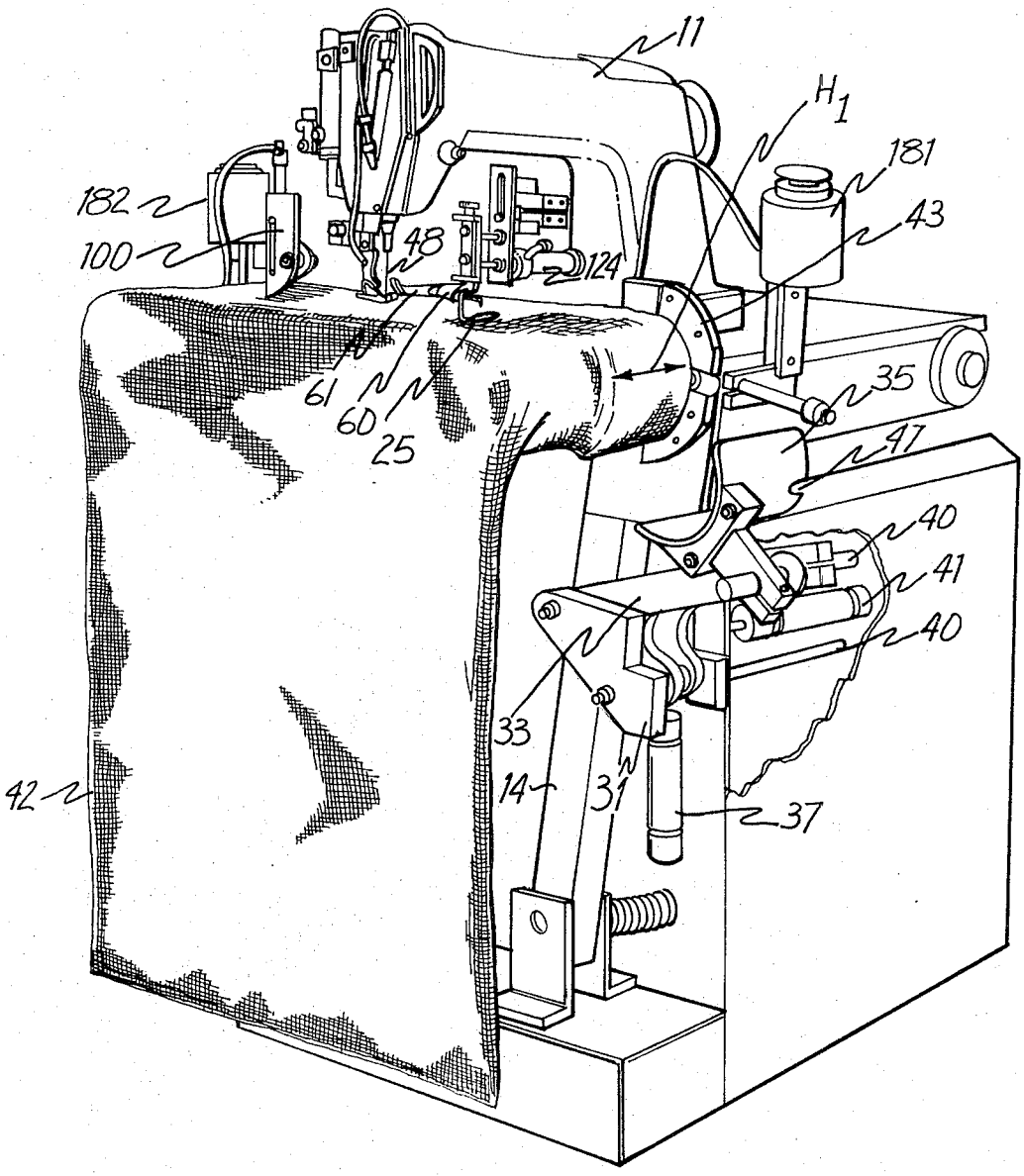


FIG. 1

FIG. 2

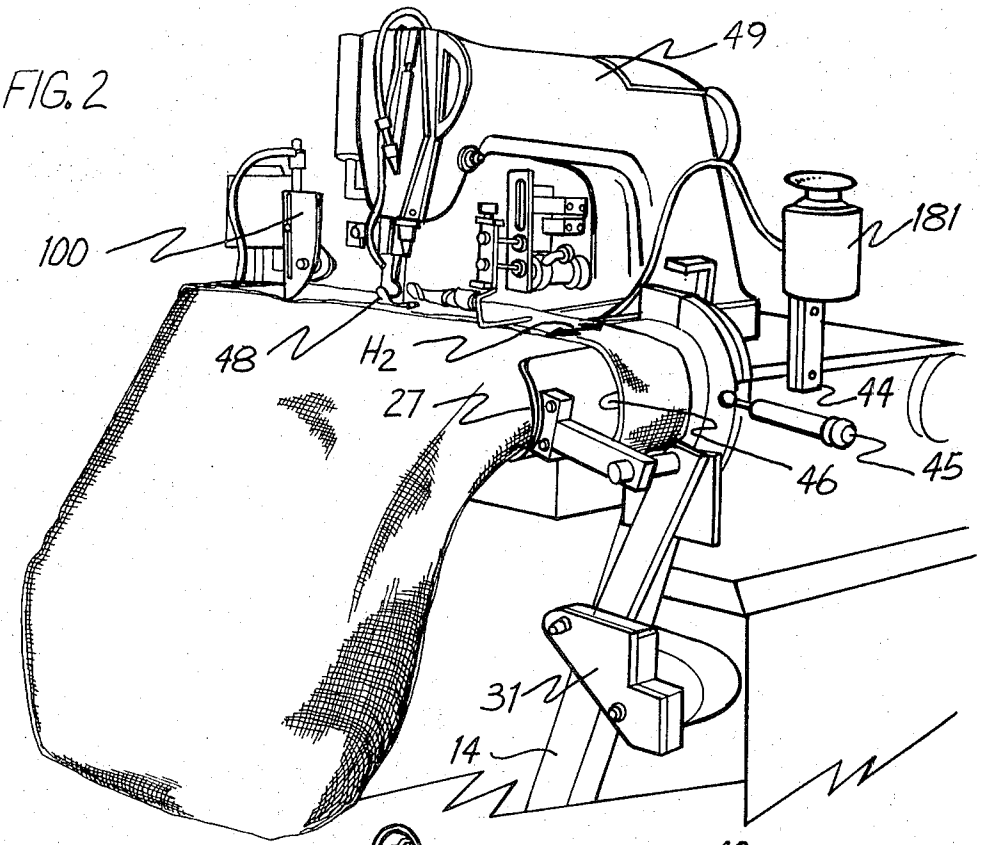
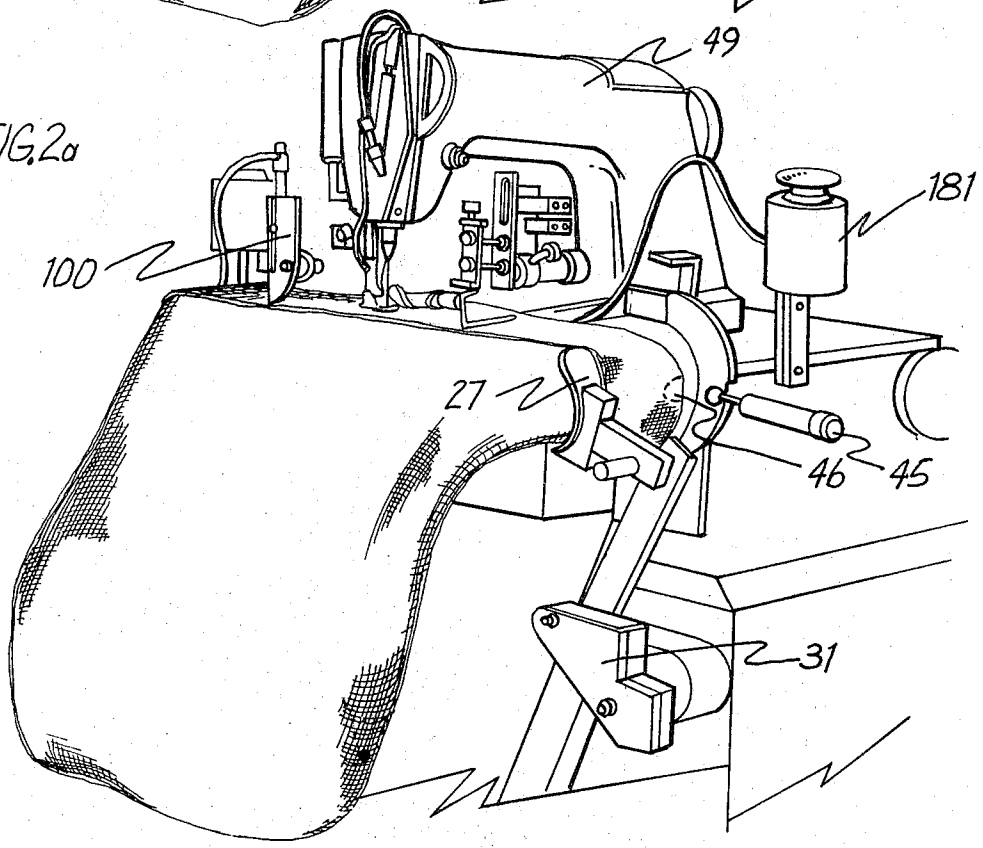


FIG. 2a



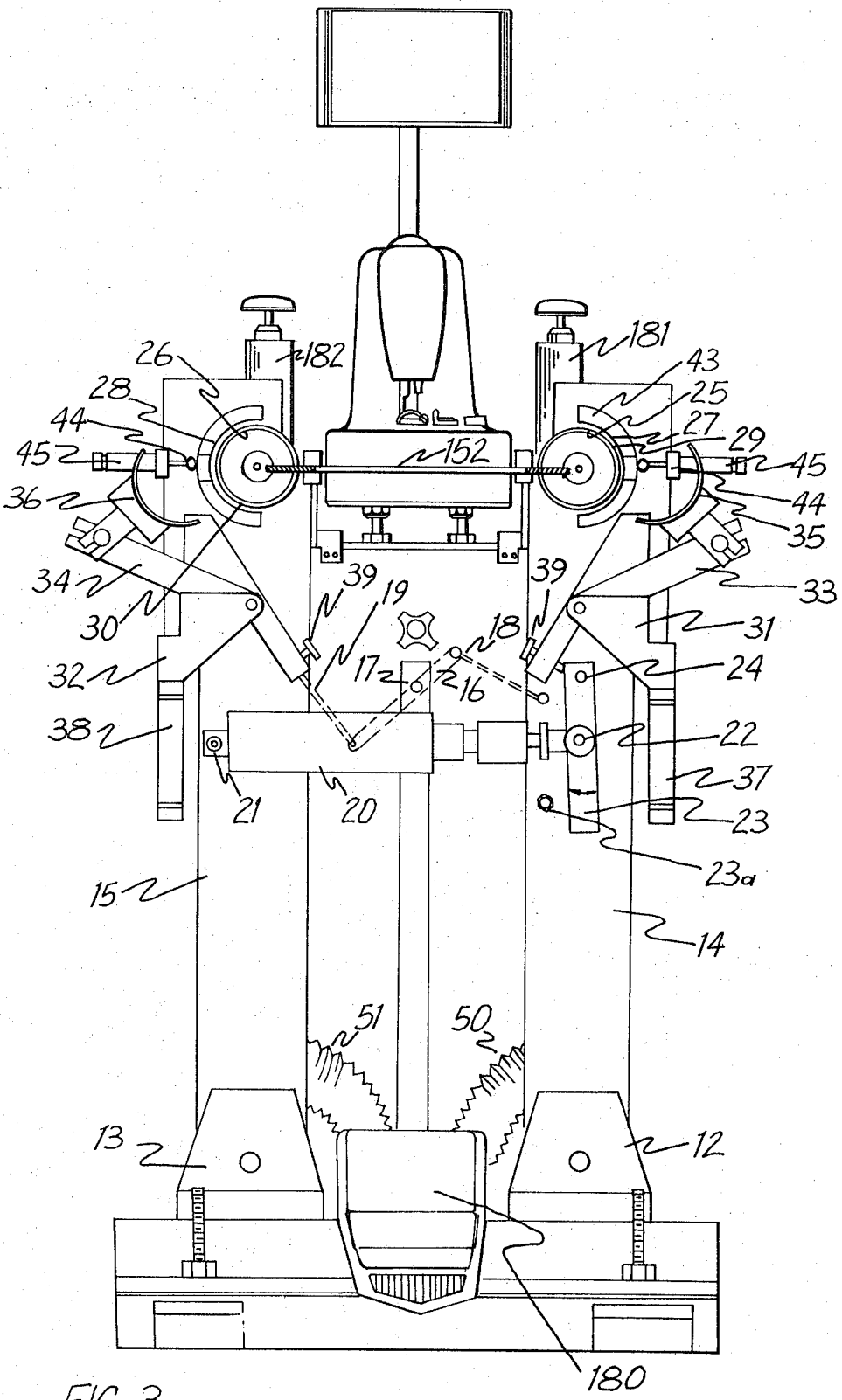

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FIG. 3

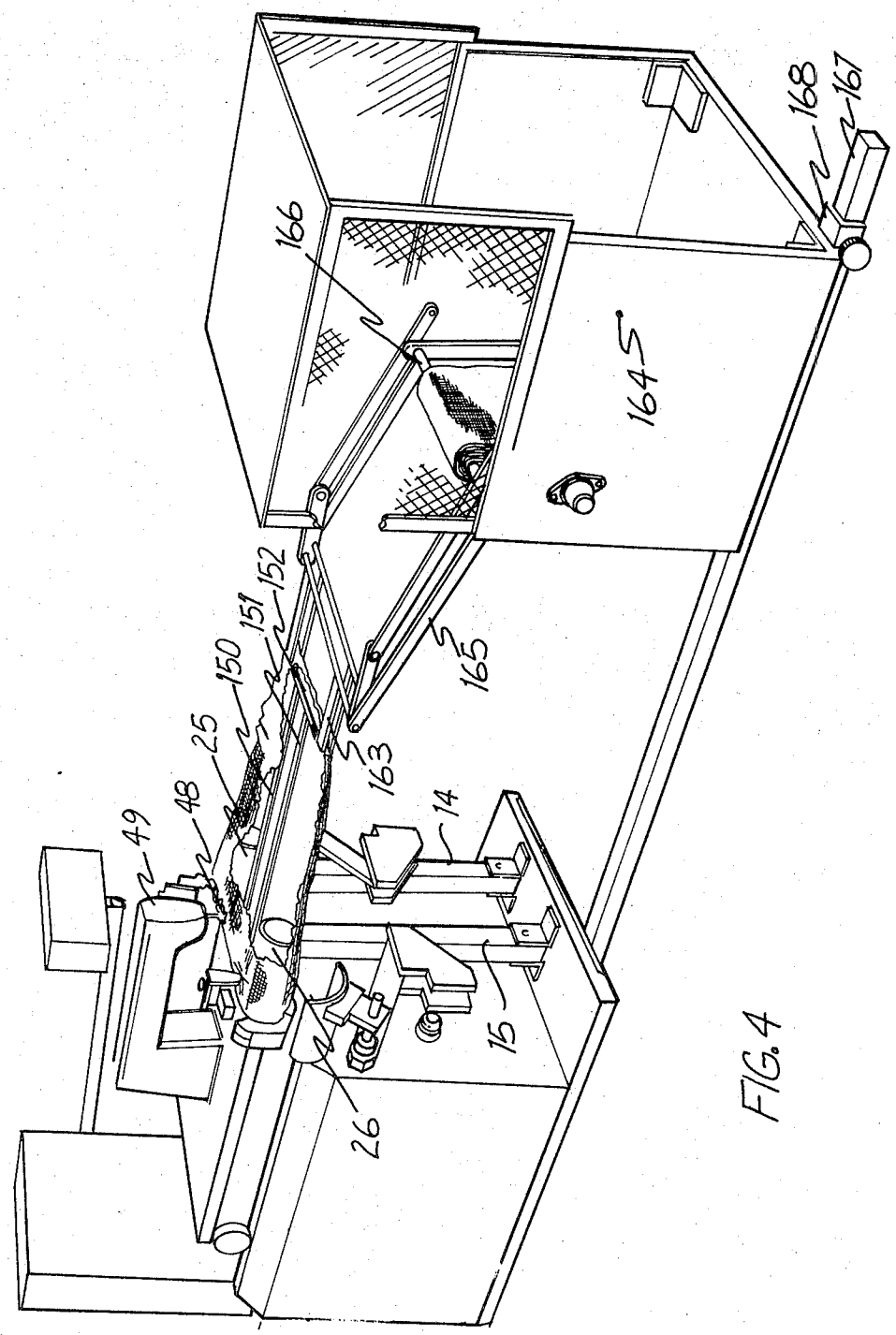


FIG. 4

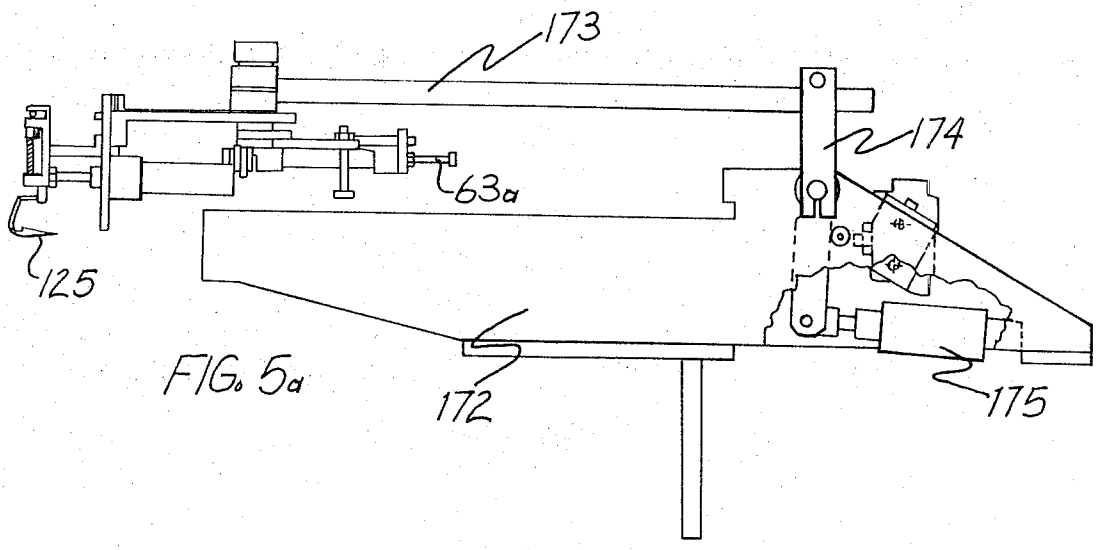

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FIG. 5a

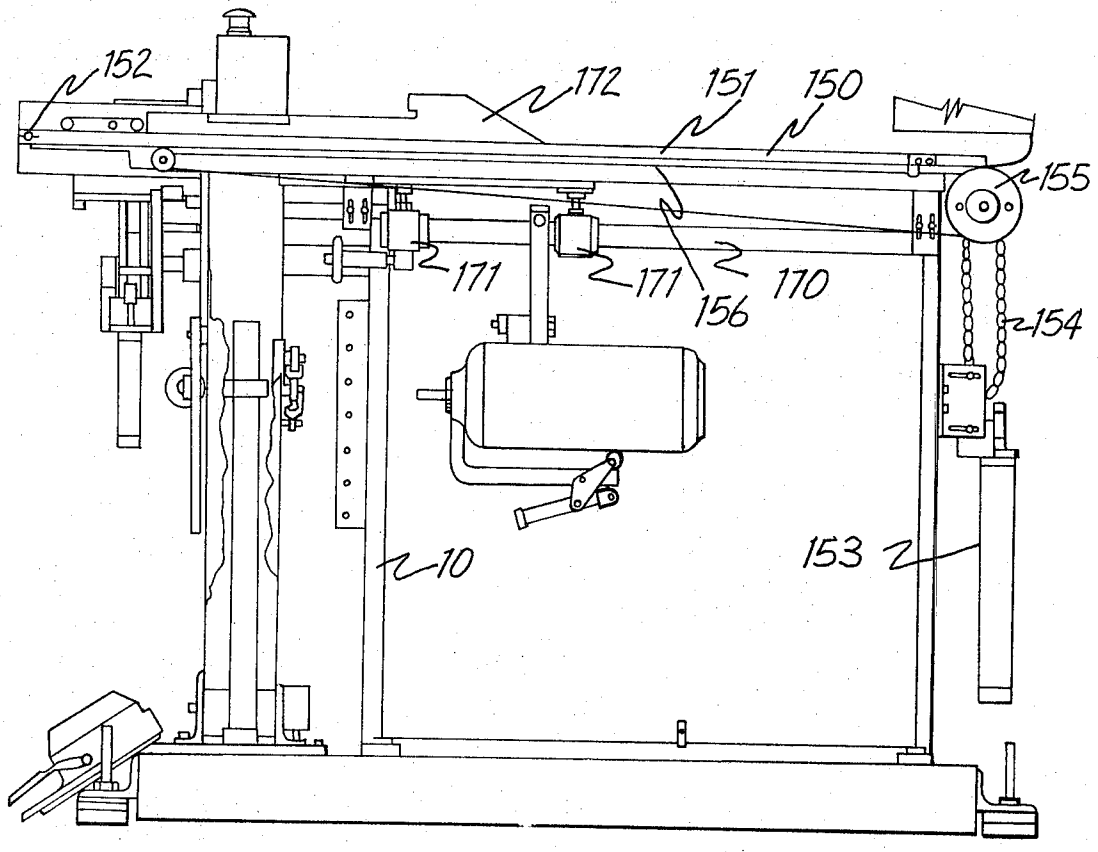
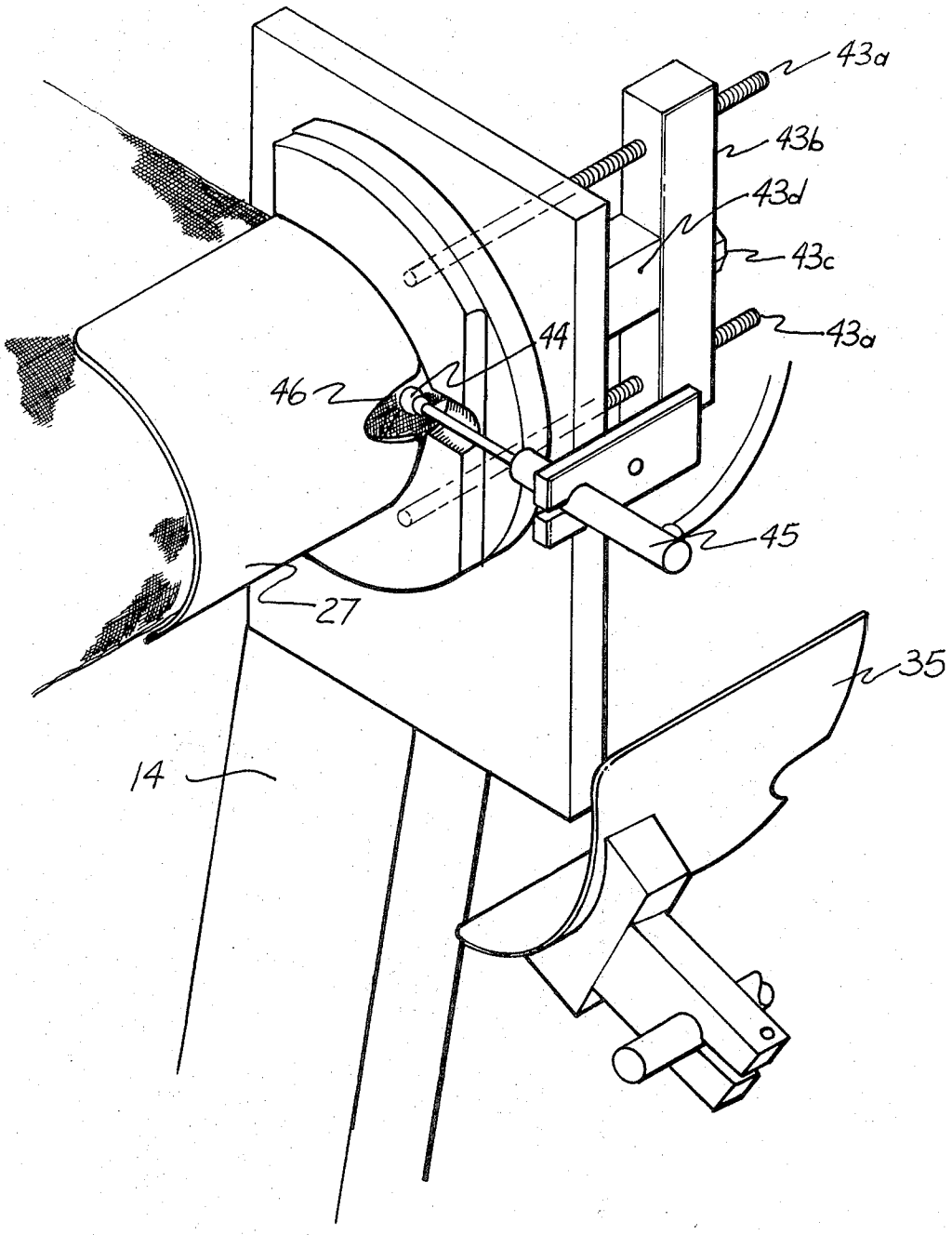

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FIG. 5

FIG. 6



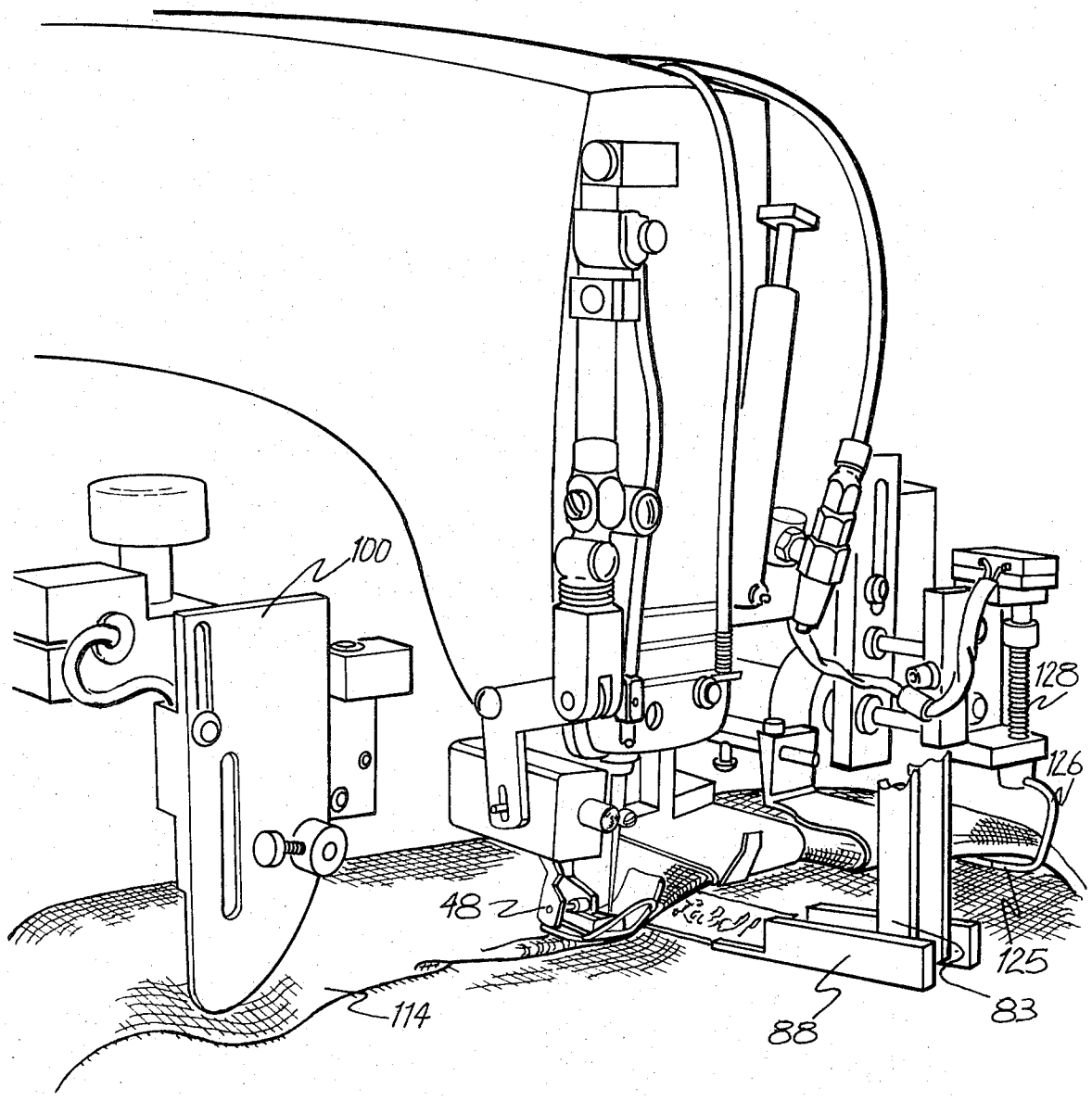


FIG. 7

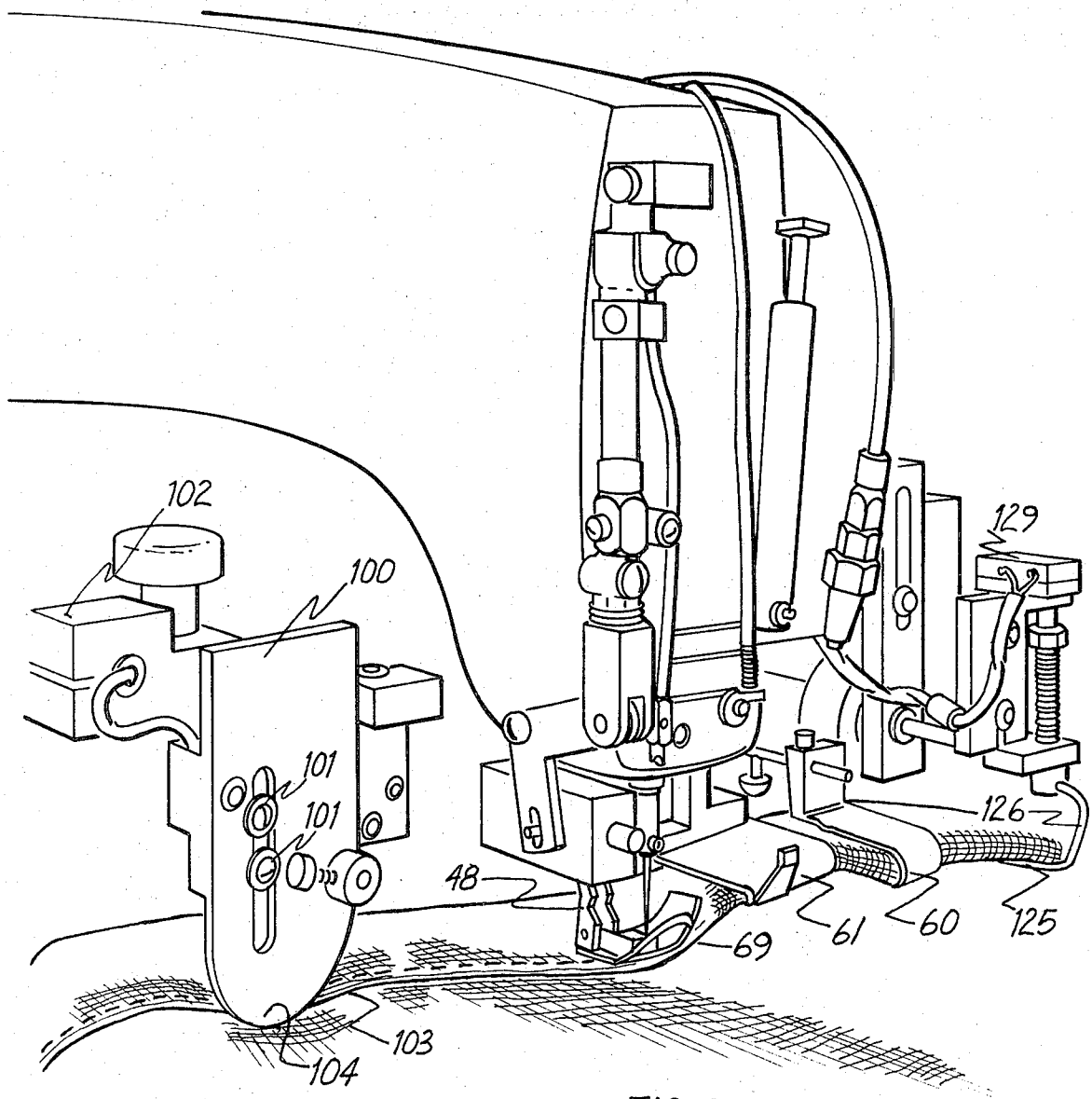


FIG. 8

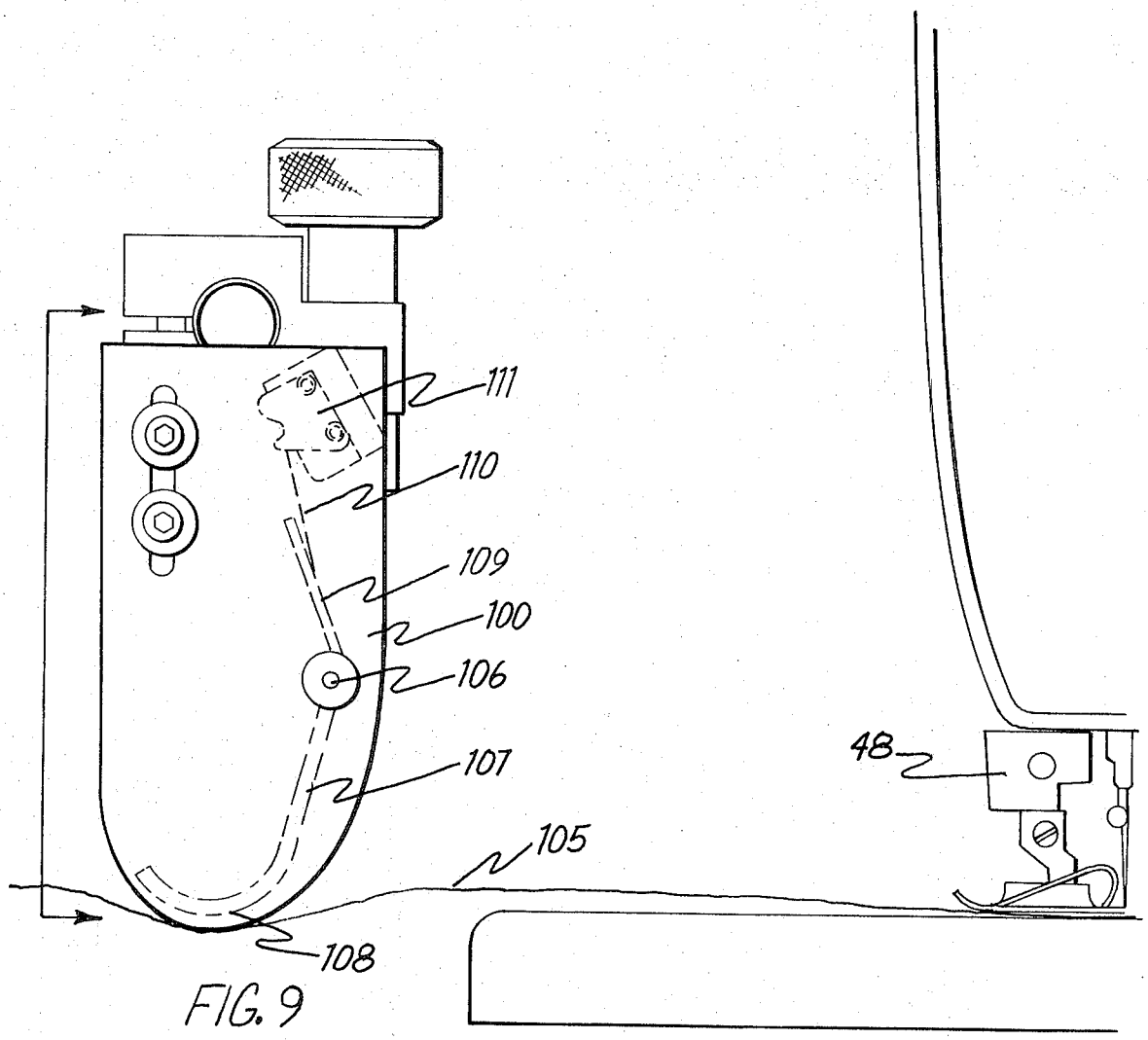


FIG. 9

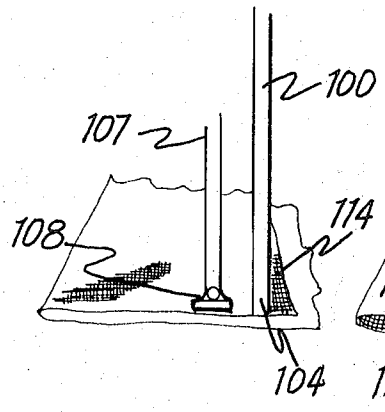


FIG. 10

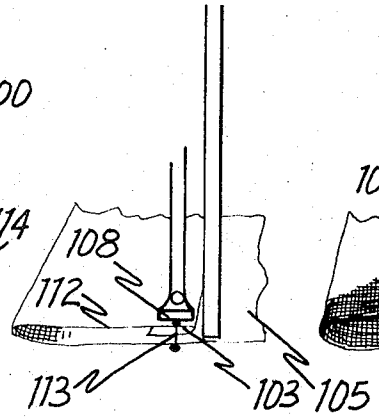


FIG. 11

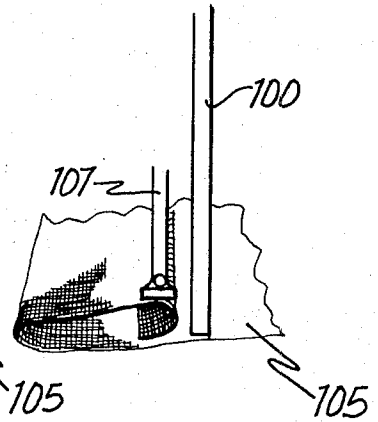


FIG. 12

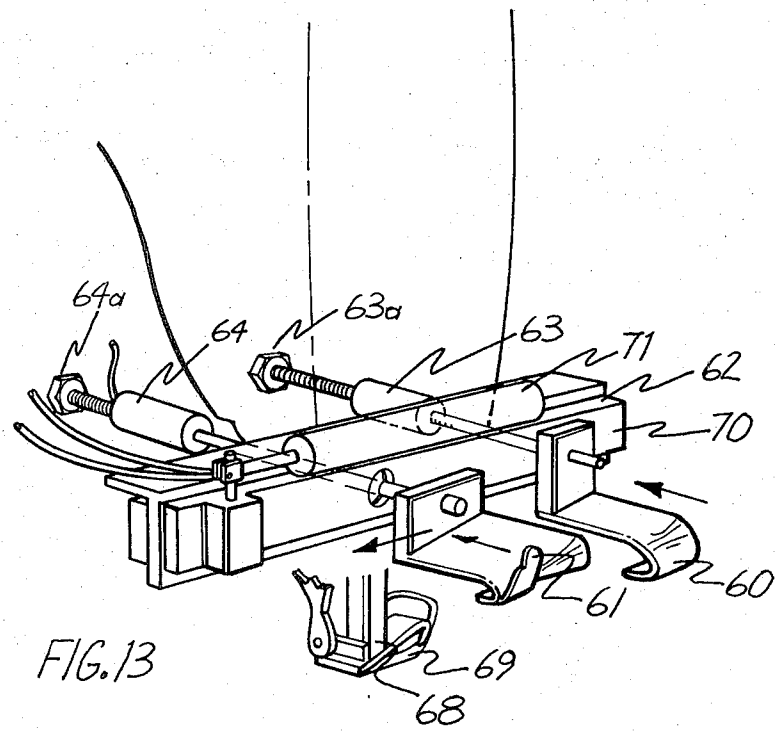


FIG. 13

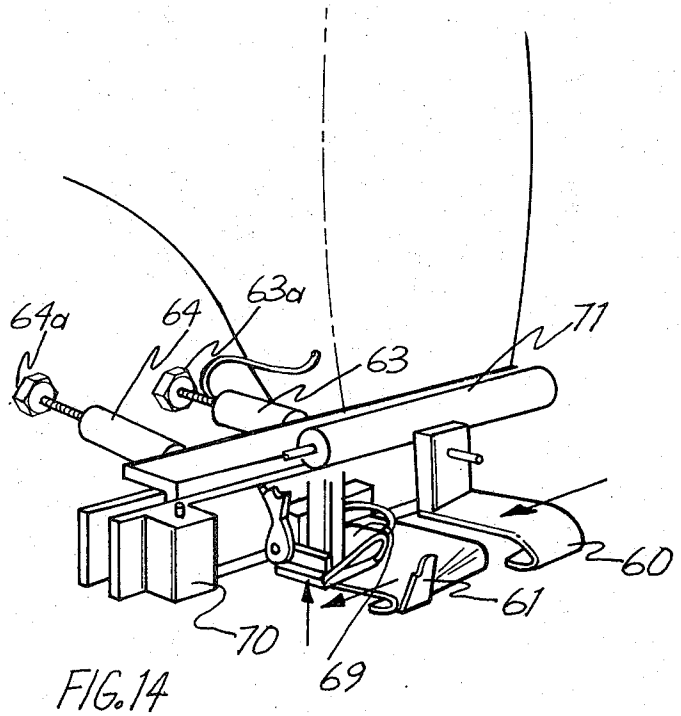


FIG. 14

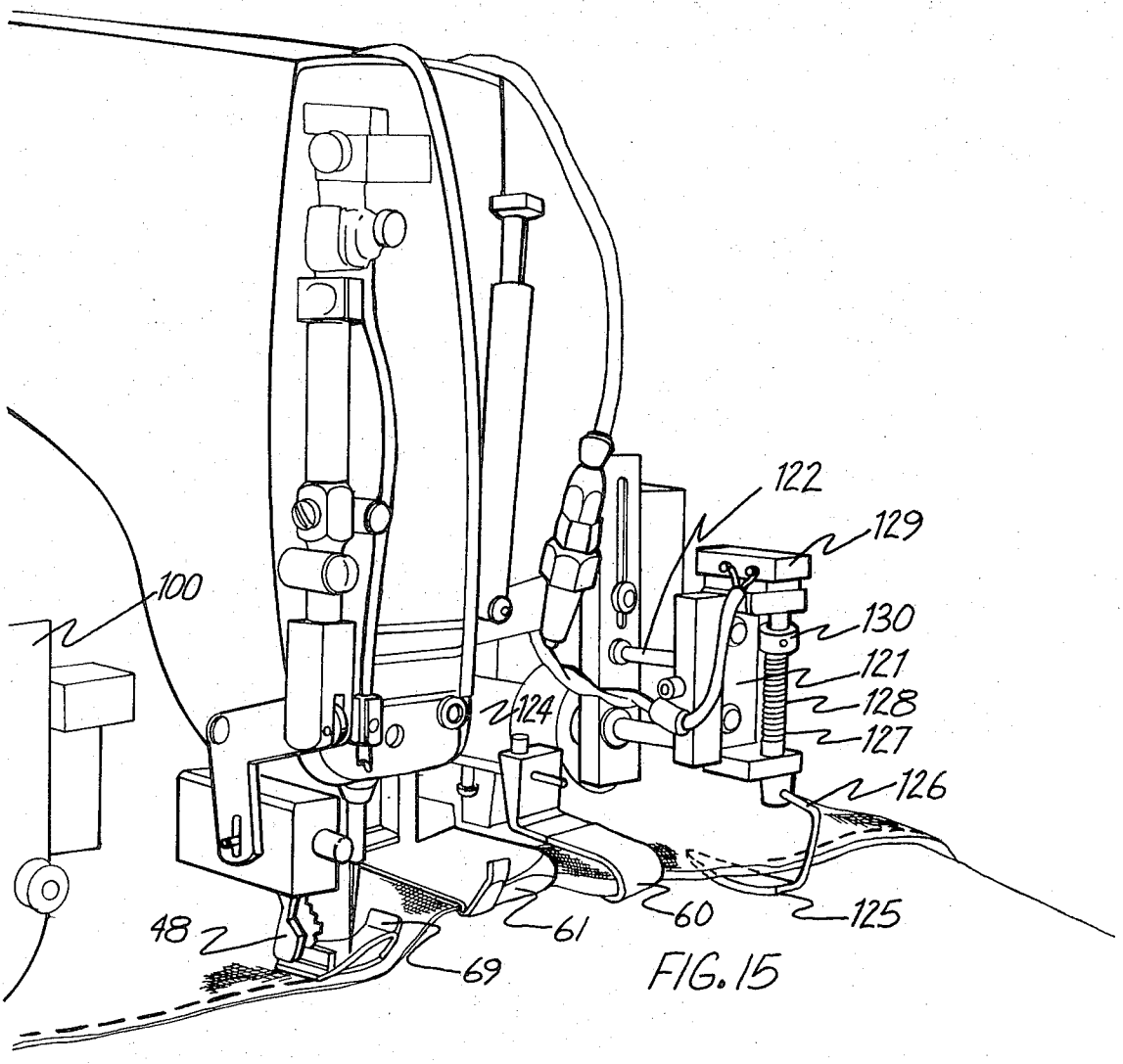


FIG. 15

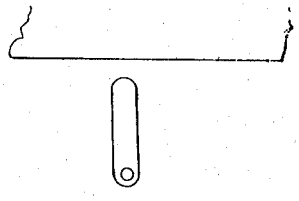


FIG. 16

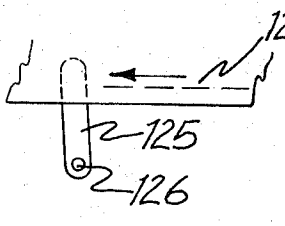


FIG. 17

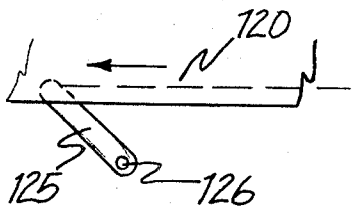


FIG. 18

FIG. 19

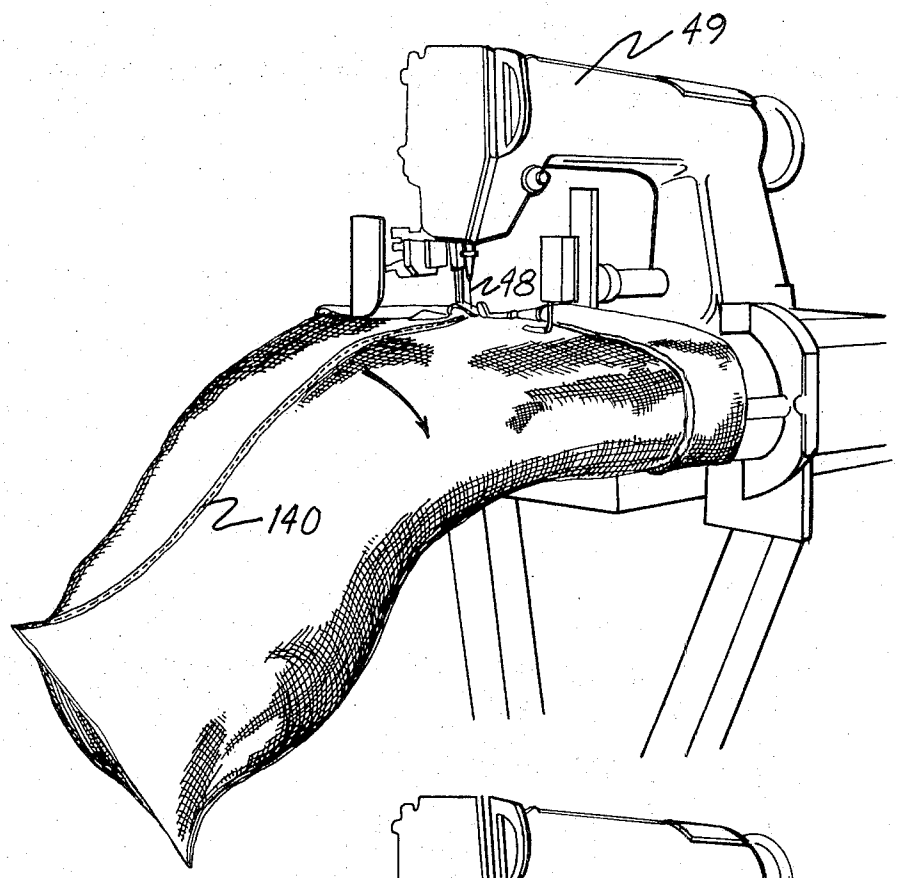
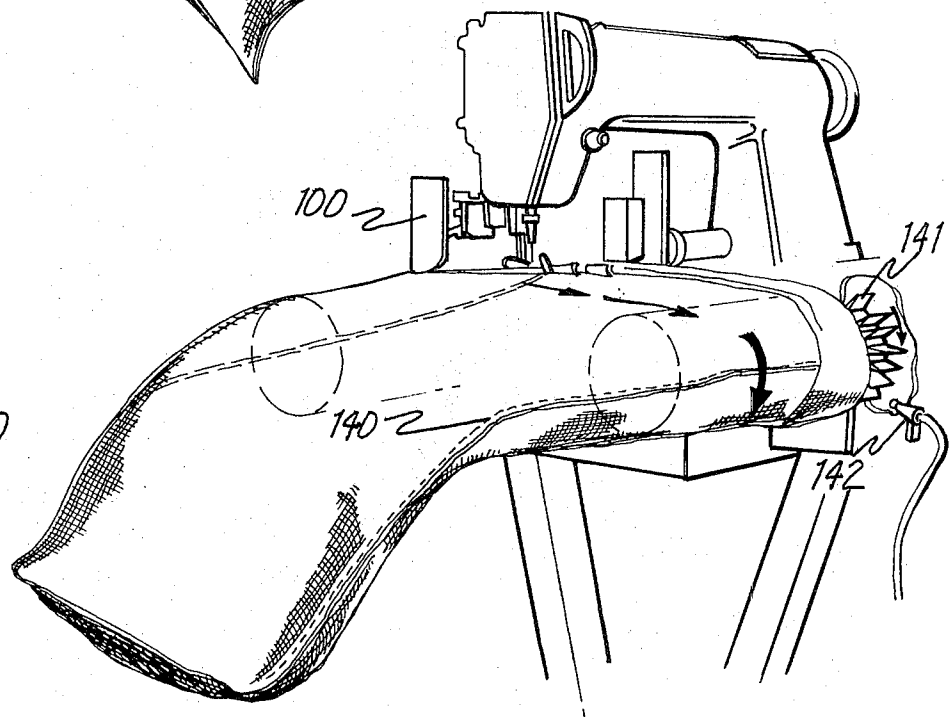


FIG. 20



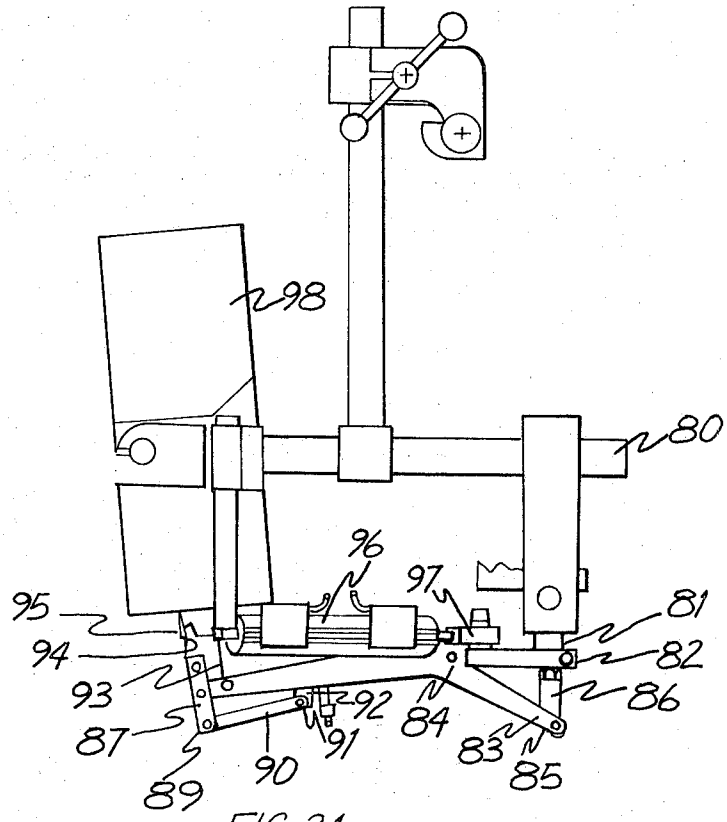


FIG. 21

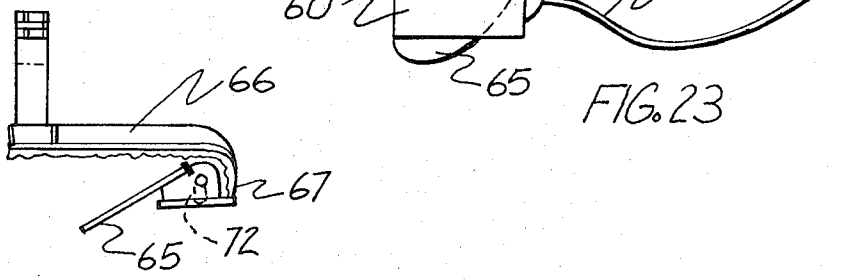


FIG. 23

FIG. 22

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR FORMING AND JOINING HEMS, PARTICULARLY ON TUBULAR ARTICLES

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a method and means for the forming and progressive joining (as by sewing, adhering, fusing, etc.) of hems on fabric articles, particularly articles of tubular construction. The invention has particular applicability to the forming and joining of hems on pillowcases and the like, but many of its principles may be utilized to advantage in the manufacture of other articles, both tubular and in some cases non-tubular. While the specific illustrations of this application relate to the processing of pillowcases, it will be understood throughout that the invention is not limited thereto.

In the production of a typical pillowcase, for example, it is conventional to form a so-called large hem, typically of one to four inches in length at the open end of the case. The raw edge of the fabric forming this large hem is then tucked under to form a blind or "small" hem having a width on the order of one-fourth inch or so. The case is stitched in the margin of the underfolded small hem, so that both the large and small hems are secured in place by a single line of stitching. In addition, it is customary for an identifying label to be inserted under the hem and secured by the hem stitching, usually in the region of the side seam of the pillowcase.

In accordance with the present invention, a facility is provided for the highly automated forming and securing of the large hem and small hem folds of a pillowcase, and for performing similar operations on other articles. The apparatus of the invention includes a pair of freely rotating drums, constituting inner forms, which are arranged to receive the open end of the pillowcase and accommodate its free movement in a circumferential direction. Adjacent and outside the drums are arcuate plates, closely embracing the rotatable drums about a portion of their peripheries but spaced slightly therefrom. The arcuate plates and the drums, constituting outer and inner forms respectively, are arranged to be received internally of a tubular pillowcase and arranged to be urged apart under controlled pressure to apply circumferential tension to the hem forming region of the case. When the pillowcase is thus positioned, hem forming shoes of arcuate configuration are inserted axially in the arcuate spaces between the outer and inner forms to effect an outward fold of an end margin of the pillowcase, thereby forming the large hem. When the shoes are withdrawn, the pillowcase remains supported under tension on the spaced, freely rotatable drums, in a position to be advanced circumferentially to effect sewing and other operations.

As one of the more specific aspects of the invention, advantageous arrangements are provided for urging the article holding drums in a separating direction, to apply circumferential tension to the article, without danger of damaging the side seam thereof. In addition, novel arrangements are provided for injecting air into the interior of the pillowcase, while it is movably supported on the rotatable drums, to partially inflate the case and facilitate its manipulation during the performance of further operations.

To effect the formation of the infolded small seam, the apparatus of the invention includes a novel small seam folder which is uniquely adapted to effect the initiation of the small seam folding action in a tubular article, such as a pillowcase. The small seam folder device is arranged for a three-stage startup action. In the first two stages, separate, sequentially arranged sections of the small seam folder are advanced, axially of the tubular article, into engagement with the raw edge area of the large hem. The first stage of the folder serves to effect approximately 90° of the required fold, while the second stage engages the prefolded edge and completes the 180° hem fold. In addition, since the small hem folder is aligned with and precedes the sewing station, the invention provides for a third stage of operation, in which the small hem folder is reciprocated in a circumferential direction to and beyond the sewing foot, and then returned. The arrangement is such that, prior to the commencement of a sewing operation, the inturned small hem fold is made to underlie the sewing foot, and the stitching will at the outset engage a properly folded margin of small hem.

To advantage, a label inserting device is synchronized with the initiating operations of the small hem folder, enabling a desired identifying label to be inserted under the sewing foot prior to the commencement of sewing operations. Desirably, then, the label is provided with a row of stitching at the outset, and also at the termination of the sewing operation, such that a limited, desired degree of stitch overlap will occur within the confines of the label.

As another feature of the invention, there is provided an advantageous sewn-seam detector facility operative, as the hem seaming operation nears completion, to sense the approach of the starting point of the stitching and cause the sewing operation to be terminated with the desired, limited degree of overlap. Usually, although not necessarily, it is desirable that the area of stitch overlap coincide with the position of the label, making it less obtrusive. The novel sewn-seam detector includes an element received under the folded hem, on the "upstream" side of the sewing foot, lying in the path of the stitching. As the starting point of the seam reaches the detector element, continued advancement of a pillowcase or other article causes the detector to be physically displaced to control termination of the sewing operation. The special arrangement of the invention enables an effectively continuous circumferential seam to be formed with a controlled minimum overlap, sufficient to derive a desired degree of interlocking of the seam ends.

The invention also includes an advantageous form of device for sensing failure of the sewing machine to properly effect the seaming operation, whether by reason of thread break or otherwise. The new arrangement takes advantage of the fact that the fabric is held under tension, extended unsupported across a predetermined span, between the spaced drums. The main portion of the fabric is forcibly deflected out of the plane which it seeks under tension, and a movable sensing element engages the sewn hem in adjacent area. As long as the hem is attached to the body of the fabric by proper stitching, the hem will follow the deflected contours of the main portion of the fabric. However, if the sewing machine is not functioning properly, and the hem is not being secured to the body of the fabric, the hem will return to the tension plane, while the body of the fabric

will continue to be deflected. The spaced relationship between the adjacent portions of fabric is easily sensed, and an appropriate control function is derived therefrom.

At the end of the hem sewing operation, an extender element is projected into the blind or closed end of the pillowcase, automatically effecting its axial withdrawal from the supporting drums. A stacker device, located in front of the machine, is arranged to engage the leading edge of the pillowcase and withdraw it from the extender bar for folding and collection. The method and apparatus of the invention are highly versatile, and accommodate the forming of hems of various widths in connection with pillowcases and other tubular articles in particular. As will become apparent, however, certain principles of the invention are applicable to the processing of non-tubular articles.

For a better understanding of the above and other features of the invention, reference should be made to the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment of the invention, and to the accompanying drawings.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of the hem forming and sewing machine constructed in accordance with the principles of the invention, shown with an article in position prior to the commencement of hem folding operations.

FIGS. **2** and **2a** are sequential perspective views, similar to FIG. **1**, illustrating the apparatus in the process of forming a large hem.

FIG. **3** is a front elevational view of the apparatus of FIG. **1**.

FIG. **4** is a perspective view of the apparatus of the invention, shown in conjunction with a folder-stacker apparatus arranged to receive completed articles as they are discharged from the apparatus.

FIG. **5** is a side elevational view of the apparatus, with parts broken away to illustrate details of the sewing machine mounting arrangements.

FIG. **5***a* is an enlarged side elevational view of the sewing machine mounting means of FIG. **5**, illustrating supporting means carried thereby for the small hem folder and related mechanisms.

FIG. **6** is a fragmentary perspective view of the apparatus of FIG. **1**, illustrating spacer means incorporated therewith for adjusting the length of the folded hem, and illustrating means providing for retaining the folded hem in position during withdrawal of the folding means.

FIGS. **7** and **8** are enlarged, fragmentary perspective views of the apparatus of FIG. **1**, illustrating the sewing head, small hem folding means, no-sew detector and sewn hem detector. FIG. **7** additionally illustrates the manner of inserting a label prior to the commencement of a hem sewing operation.

FIG. **9** is a fragmentary elevational view illustrating details of the no-sew detector.

FIGS. **10–12**, inclusive, are simplified, schematic views, illustrating the functioning of the no-sew detector.

FIGS. **13** and **14** are enlarged, fragmentary perspective views of the apparatus of the invention, illustrating details of the arrangement and operation of the small hem folder mechanism incorporated in the new apparatus.

FIGS. **15–18** are sequential views reflecting the manner of operation of the sewn seam detector.

FIGS. **19–20** are sequential views illustrating the manipulation of a pillowcase at the end of a seaming operation.

FIG. **21** is a top plan view illustrating an advantageous form of mechanism for effecting insertion of an identifying label.

FIGS. **22** and **23** are end and front elevational views, respectively, of the first stage section of the two stage small hem folder utilizes in the apparatus of FIG. **1**.

DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION

Referring now to the drawing, and initially to FIGS. **1–6** thereof, the reference numeral **10** designates generally a base or frame structure on which is mounted a sewing machine and related mechanism **11** and means for manipulating a pillowcase or similar article in the manner provided by the invention. As reflected in FIG. **3**, the base **10** includes a pair of pivot supports **12, 13** to which are secured a pair of upstanding tension arms **14, 15.** The tension arms are interconnected by a suitable equalizer mechanism, such that the arms are caused to pivot in symmetrical relation either toward or away from the central axis of the machine. In the illustrated apparatus, the equalizer mechanism comprises a rotatable equalizer arm **16,** pivoted about an axis **17,** and connected to the respective tension arms **14, 15** by means of pivoted links **18, 19.**

Interconnecting the tension arms **14, 15** is a fluid cylinder **20,** which can be controllably actuated to urge the tension arms toward or away from each other. In accordance with one aspect of the invention, the fluid actuator **20** may be pivotally secured directly to one of the tension arms **15,** as at **21.** The other end of the actuator is connected at **22** to a balance lever **23,** which is in turn pivotally connected at **24** to the opposite tension arm **14.**

When the fluid actuator **20** is energized to extend, and thereby urge the tension arms in a separating direction, the full force of the actuator is not applied directly to the tension arms. Rather, the balance arm **23** is caused to pivot outwardly, gently urging the tension arms in a separating direction, because of the weight unbalance inherent in the system with the balance lever **23** pivoted outwardly. The substantial mass of the actuator **20** and its associated balance lever **23** serves to impart a firm initial urging force to the tension arms to start them quickly moving in a desired direction. At the same time, the full extent of the force exerted on the tension arms is carefully limited and controlled by the indirect operation of the actuator.

Suitable spring means (not shown) interconnect the tension arms and assist in controlling and limiting the effective separating force acting on the arms.

For effecting more positive return or closing movement of the tension arms, a stop lug **23***a* is located on the tension arm **14,** inside the balance arm **23.** When the actuator **20** is retracted the balance arm swings in until it engages the stop lug, after which the arms **14,** 23 are effectively locked together.

Near the upper ends of the tension arms **14, 15** there are mounted a pair of hollow cylindrical drums **25, 26.** These drums are journaled in cantilever fashion from the tension arms, and to advantage are arranged to be freely rotated. The drums are spaced well apart, and

are of a diameter and spacing appropriate to the circumferential dimension of the tubular article to be processed, such that the article may be trained over the drums, with an ample space being provided therebetween to receive the necessary sewing machine and other mechanisms to be described. The axial length of the drums may be, and typically is, substantially less than the overall length of the article being processed, but typically somewhat larger than the length of the hem being formed. By way of example only, in a machine adapted particularly to the forming of hems of one to four inches in length in pillowcases in a length range of around 30–46 inches and having a circumference of around 37–46 inches, the drums **25, 26** typically may have a diameter on the order of four inches and a length on the order of nine inches. As will be apparent hereinafter, the drums **25** and **26** constitute a set of inner hem-folding forms functional in the large hem folding operation, and they also serve to support the article during that folding operation as well as during subsequent processing of the article.

Also mounted on the tension arms **14, 15,** and disposed in coaxial relation to the respective drums **25,** 26, are semi-cylindrical arcuate plates **27, 28.** These plates, constituting a set of outer hem-folding forms, are fixed to the tension arms **14, 15,** embracing the outwardly facing portions of the drum surfaces in spaced relation so as to form semi-cylindrical spaces **29, 30** between the outer surfaces of the drums and the inner surfaces of the semi-cylindrical plates.

Below the cylindrical drums **25, 26,** the tension arms carry brackets **31, 32** having pivoted thereto arms **33,** 34. For convenience, these may be referred to as hem-folder arms. Attached to these respective arms are hem-folding shoes **35, 36,** in the form of semi-cylindrical plates. These are of a size and shape to be received within the arcuate spaces **29, 30,** with sufficient clearance to accommodate two thicknesses of the material forming the tubular article to be processed.

Each of the brackets **31, 32** carries a fluid actuator **37, 38,** and these are connected to the respective hem-folder arms **33, 34.** When the actuators **37, 38** are energized, the arms **33, 34** are pivoted inwardly to fixed stop positions determined by adjustable stops **39.** When the levers have reached their stop positions, the arcuate folding shoes **35, 36** are properly aligned with the arcuate spaces **29, 30** surrounding the drums.

As reflected in FIG. **1,** the brackets **31, 32** of the large hem folding mechanism are slidably mounted by guide rods **40,** for linear movement in a forward-rearward direction, parallel to the axes of the article supporting drums **25, 26.** Each of the brackets **31, 32** is connected to a fluid actuator **41** arranged to effect linear forward-rearward movement of the brackets and the arcuate shoes **35, 36** carried thereby. The arrangement of the respective actuators **37, 38** and **41** is such that, with the linear movement actuator **41** extended, the pivoting movement actuators **37, 38** may be energized to swing the arcuate shoes **35, 36** into position closely embracing the outer ends of the drums **25, 26,** in an area beyond the end extremities of the arcuate outer forms **27, 28.** This is reflected in FIG. **1.** Thereafter, the linear motion actuators **41** are energized to retract, and this causes the arcuate shoes **35, 36** to move axially into the arcuate clearance space between the drums **25, 26** and the surrounding form plates **27, 28.**

To carry out a hem folding operation by means of the apparatus as thus far described, a tubular article, such as the pillowcase **42** shown in FIG. **1,** is manipulated (typically manually) to apply its open end over the arcuate outer form plates **27, 28,** until the raw end edge of the fabric engages abutment flanges **43** carried by the tension arms. The actuator **20** is thereupon energized, caused to extend through a relatively short, fixed stroke, to swing the balance lever **23** outward and apply controlled separating force to the arms. The pillowcase **42** is thereby placed under a controlled amount of circumferential tension, with the end extremities of the case being supported by the outer form plates **27, 28,** and the adjacent regions of the case being supported on the outer surfaces of the drums **25, 26,** all as reflected in FIG. **1.** Final positioning of the pillowcase may be accomplished after the case is placed under tension.

With the pillowcase properly positioned and under circumferential tension, the arcuate shoes **35, 36** are brought into embracing position about the outer ends of the drums **25, 26,** by appropriate energizing of the actuators **37, 38.** The linear motion actuators **41** may then be energized to retract, drawing the arcuate shoes **35, 36** into the arcuate spaces **29, 30.**

When the shoes **35, 36** are pivoted inwardly, fabric surrounding the drums **25, 26** is engaged with sufficient friction, in relation to that exerted by the drums themselves, that the entire case is moved bodily in an axial direction for a distance equal to the full stroke of the linear movement actuators **41.** In this respect, the stroke of the actuators **41** is equal to or perhaps slightly greater than the length of the largest hem to be formed in the large hem folding operation.

As the shoes **35, 36** are advanced in the arcuate spaces **29, 30,** carrying the fabric bodily along with them, the end extremities of the fabric, initially received over the outer form plates **27, 28** are progressively turned inside-out and drawn into the spaces **29,** 30, with the end edge being progressively retracted outward along the outside surfaces of the plates, as will be understood. At the end of the full stroke of the shoes **35, 36,** the entire end margin of the fabric, initially received over the plates **27, 28,** will have been folded outward to constitute an out-turned large hem. The free end portions of the shoes **35, 36** will be received underneath a portion of the folded large hem. The pertinent relationships are illustrated in FIGS. **1** and **2,** in which the hem-forming margin is designated by the reference character in FIG. **1,** and the folded-over hem is designated by the reference character H_2 in FIG. **2,** it being understood that the dimensions of H_1 and H_2 are substantially equal in practice.

To enable the hem-forming shoes to be withdrawn from their fully inserted positions, without disrupting the newly folded large hem, each of the tension arms **14, 15** is provided with a retaining finger **44** carried by a fluid actuator **45.** The retaining fingers **44** are arranged to be projected by the actuators **45** radially toward the article supporting drums **25, 26,** being received through openings **46** in the outer form plates **27,** 28 (FIG. **2**) and through arcuate slots **47** in the hem-folding shoes **35, 36** (FIG. **1**). The actuators **45** are energized in appropriate sequence, after full penetration of the shoes **35, 36,** and serve to press the folded hem tightly against the surfaces of the drums **25, 26** while the folding shoes **35, 36** are withdrawn linearly and pivoted to their initial retracted positions. Desirably, the

linear movement actuators **41** are retracted at this stage to move the folding shoes **35, 36** and their respective mounting arms rearward. This keeps them out of the way during the sewing operations, and they are returned to forward positions at the end of the machine cycle.

At this stage, the pillowcase **42** or other tubular article remains supported solely by the rotatable drums **25, 26**, under predetermined circumferential tension sufficient to hold the article in position and enable it to be handled effectively. It will be understood, in this respect, that while the arcuate hem-folding shoes **35, 36** engage only a limited portion of the circumference of the tubular article, the action of these shoes, in conjunction with the drums and form plates, serve to effect an outward fold-over of the large hem about the entire circumference of the article. In accordance with the invention, it is neither necessary nor desirable to impart a circumferential movement to the tubular article during the large hem folding operation to effect a folding of the complete hem.

To afford adjustability in the length of the large hem, provision is made for adjustably positioning the abutment flanges **43**, utilizing spacer blocks of various predetermined thicknesses. The abutment flanges are cylindrically recessed to be received about the outside surfaces of the arcuate outer form plates **27, 28.** The length of exposed forward portions of the plates **27, 28** corresponds to the length of the desired hem.

As reflected in FIG. **6**, the abutment flanges **43** are mounted on pairs of guide rods **43***a* extending slidably through and behind the respective tension arms **14, 15.** The respective pairs of guide rods are connected behind the tension arms by yoke bars **43***b*, which are in turn secured to the tension arms by bolts **43***c*. Appropriately sized gage blocks **43***d* are selectively interposed between the yoke bars and the tension arms to fix the location of the abutment flanges **43** and thereby the effective length of the large hem. For a hem of maximum length, spacer blocks **43***d* of maximum thickness would be utilized, and vice versa.

Since it is contemplated that the forward-rearward stroke of the shoes **35, 36** will be held constant with varying large hem length, provision is made for adjusting the position of the sewing head and other hem-tracking elements in a manner to be hereinafter described.

As reflected in FIG. **2**, when the pillowcase **42** is supported by the drums **25, 26,** with the large hem having been folded, the hem region of the pillowcase extends in a more or less unsupported manner from one drum to the other, being held in a relatively flat condition, however, by reason of the circumferential tension applied by the outwardly urged drums. The upper reach of the fabric, thusly held under tension, passes through the jaws of a sewing head **48** forming part of a sewing machine unit **49.** The sewing machine **49** may be a conventional, commercial unit, such as a Singer 281-1 or Union Special 63400 lock stitch machine. The specific machine is not pertinent to the invention.

Indeed, the hem need not, within the invention, be sewed, but may be secured or joined in any suitable manner such as by adhesives, or by fusing, for example. In the illustrated system, the sewing head is provided with a conventional incremental feed mechanism, adapted to controllably advance the fabric past the sewing head **48** as a sewing operation proceeds. In this respect, the illustrated apparatus relies upon the feeding capability of the sewing machine itself to effect fabric manipulation during the sewing operation, the article supporting drums **25, 26** being freely rotatable to accommodate the demands of the sewing machine feed. In some cases, however, it is desirable to effect synchronous driving of the drums.

To facilitate the proper manipulation of the pillowcase **42,** during its circumferential advancement by the sewing machine, arrangements are provided in accordance with the invention for placing the interior of the pillowcase under increased air pressure, to impart a "ballooning" effect to the pillowcase, as shown in FIG. **2,** rather than to permit the case to drape in a limp fashion downward from the ends of the drums, as reflected in FIG. **1.** To this end, the tension arms **14, 15** are in the form of hollow air ducts, connecting near the lower ends with air supply tubes **50, 51.** Air under pressure from a suitable blower (not shown) flows upward through the tension arms and is discharged therefrom through tubular drum supports into the hollow interiors of the cylindrical drums **25, 26.** Other arrangements may, of course, be provided for injecting air into the interior of the pillowcase. However, the described arrangements are considered optimum, as they provide for a free flow of air into the pillowcase with a minimum interference with the article and the necessary manupulations of it.

In accordance with the invention, the forming of the large hem fold is followed, prior to the commencement of sewing, by the formation of the so-called small hem. In the small hem folding operation, the outwardly facing raw edge of the fabric, constituting the extremity of the large hem, is turned in and under for a short distance (e.g., one-fourth inch). Sewing then proceeds along the small hem, simultaneously securing both the large and small hems in a manner generally well known. With the method and apparatus of the present invention, however, a special sequence of operations is observed, in order to effect a proper commencement of the small hem fold, and to assure that the folded small hem extends underneath the sewing machine foot at the commencement of the sewing operation.

Referring now to FIGS. **7, 13, 14, 22** and **23** of the drawing, the small hem folder is shown to comprise first and second stage folding elements **60, 61** mounted by a bracket **62** carried by the sewing machine mount for limited vertical movement. While the forming of a small hem fold in successive stages is in itself known, the arrangement of the present invention is considered unique in that the first and second folding stages **60, 61** are secured to the bracket **62** by individual, independently controllable fluid actuators **63, 64** arranged to move the hem folding elements in a direction transversely of the circumferential direction of the article, along which the small hem is progressively formed.

In the starting position, with the bracket **62** lowered into operative position, the small hem folding elements **60, 61** are initially positioned by extension of the actuators **63, 64** to lie beyond the raw end edge of the fabric after folding of the large hem. When the large hem folding operation has been completed, the actuator **63** is energized to advance the first stage folding element transversely into engagement with the raw edge of the fabric. The fabric edge is guided between an inclined tongue **65** (FIGS. **22, 23**) and the upper wall **66** of the folding element, so that the raw edge **67** of the fabric

enters the folding channel and is guided through a bend or fold of approximately 90°. Thereafter, in sequence, the second stage folding element is drawn toward the fabric edge by energizing of the actuator **64.** The first and second stage folding elements **60, 61** are located in a closely adjacent upstream-downstream relationship, relative to the axis of the hem. Thus, as the second stage element is brought into adjacency and alignment with the first stage element, the partially folded hem is reliably carried through a second 90° of fold, so that the portion of fabric embraced by the small hem folding element has the desired 180° underfold. In their operative positions, the hem folding elements **60, 61** are appropriately aligned with the sewing needle **68,** immediately upstream of the sewing machine foot **69,** so that, as the sewing operation proceeds, the raw edge of the fabric is progressively folded in the first and second stages and drawn immediately through the sewing head.

To advantage, the actuators **63, 64** for the small hem folders are provided with adjustable retraction stops **63***a*, **64***a* to limit the retracting stroke. By this means, the operating portions of the small hem folders may be adjusted in relation to the sewing axis to control or adjust the gage of the small hem.

In order that the sewing operation may commence with the sewing of an already formed small hem, rather than being initiated with the sewing of a short length of unhemmed fabric, provision is made for the reciprocation of the small hem folder in the direction of the hem axis to or slightly beyond the sewing foot. Thus, prior to the lowering of the sewing foot and the commencement of the sewing operation, there is a short length of preformed small hem extending on the downstream side of the regular operating position of the small hem folder. To this end, both of the first and second stages of the small hem folder, together with the associated actuators **63, 64,** are mounted on a slide bar **70** forming part of the bracket **62.** The slide bar **70** is connected to a fluid actuator **71.** After successive energizing of the actuators **63, 64** to bring the small hem folder stages sequentially into position, the actuator **71** is energized in a third phase of a small hem folding operation to shift the slide bar **70** and the folder stages **60, 61** laterally to the left, to a point extending underneath the upraised sewing foot **69,** as reflected in FIG. **14.** The actuator **71** is then energized in a return direction, and the sewing foot **69** is lowered, providing a start-up condition as reflected in FIG. **7.** Thereafter, as the sewing operation commences and proceeds, the small hem is progressively formed and folded as the raw edge of the fabric is drawn through the first and second stages of the small hem folder. To assure proper commencement of the first stage of folding, during the circumferential advancement of the fabric during a sewing operation, the first folding stage **60** is provided with a guide element **72,** extending in an upstream direction from the folding cavity. The guide element, in addition to initiating the folding action, serves to depress the main body of the fabric downward, away from the edge of the large hem, in the region immediately in advance of the first folding stage. This provides an adequate clearance space, permitting the initial folding movements of the fabric edge to commence well upstream of the folding stage and to progress cleanly thereinto, without becoming doubled over or otherwise defective.

In the procedure of the present invention, dealing primarily with tubular articles, the hem stitching operation proceeds until the starting point of the stitching returns to the sewing head. Typically, then, stitching is overlapped for a very short distance to lock in the ends of the stitching. Typically, a manufacturer's identifying label is inserted under the hem and secured in place by the hem stitching. To advantage, in the processing of tubular articles, according to the invention, the manufacturer's label is initially inserted under the sewing foot, so that the sewing operation is both commenced and terminated within the confines of the label. For this purpose, the apparatus of the invention includes a label-inserting device which is actuated in timed relationship to the small hem folders and the sewing head, and serves to inject a label underneath the just-formed small hem as the sewing foot descends upon it. The end of the label is thus gripped under the folded small hem, while the inserting device is withdrawn, and the sewing operation can then proceed, stitching the label in its inserted position.

Referring now more particularly to FIGS. **21** and **7,** the label-inserting mechanism includes a support arm **80** carried by the sewing machine mount and journalling a member **81** for pivoting movement. The member **81** is, in this instance, the body of a fluid actuator, to the forward end of which is secured a transfer arm **82.** A tucking lever **83** is pivoted at **84** to the transfer arm and is connected by a link **85** at its upper end to the movable rod **86** of the actuator.

At its lower or outer end, the tucking lever carries a foot member **87** pivotally secured by a pin **88.** One end of the foot member is pivotally connected at **89** to a linking arm **90,** which is in turn pivoted at **91** to an element **92** extending from the transfer arm **82.** A presser spring **93** is carried by the tucking arm **83** and has an end **94** arranged normally to contact a holding plate **95** secured to the foot member **87.** A transfer actuator **96** is secured to the sewing machine mount at one end and engages the transfer arm **82** at a pivot point **97.** Energizing of the actuator **96** swings the label inserter between horizontal and vertical positions.

In the horizontal position of the label inserter, the foot portion is positioned adjacent a label supply mechanism **98,** which may be of a conventional, commercially available type. A folded label may then be automatically inserted in the holding plate and retained therein by the spring **93.** The transfer actuator **96** is subsequently energized to bring the transfer arm **82** into an upright position, substantially as reflected in FIG. **7.** The actuator **81** is then energized to extend, pivoting the tuck arm **83** clockwise. The alignment of the label-inserter mechanism is such that, when the actuator **81** is extended at this stage, the spring holding plate **95** inserts the leading edge of the label underneath a previously formed small hem, in the region directly underneath the sewing foot. In properly timed sequence, the sewing foot then descends to apply clamping force to the label. At the same time the lever action of the inserter mechanism causes the spring **93** to release the label. Thereafter, the actuator **81** may be retracted to withdraw the spring jaws, leaving the label properly positioned, with a portion projecting out from under the small hem. The label inserter may then be returned to its horizontal position by the transfer actuator **96.** It will be understood, of course, that the label inserting sequence typically will immediately follow the

moving into operative position of the small hem folder stages and the reciprocation thereof in a circumferential direction to initiate the small hem fold.

In accordance with another feature of the invention, a novel and highly effective arrangement is provided for detecting a properly (or improperly) joined hem seam, downstream from the sewing head **48.** The sewn seam detector, shown particularly in FIGS. **7–12,** comprises a deflecting blade **100,** which is adjustably mounted by bolts **101** to a bracket **102** carried by the sewing machine mount. The blade **100** is adjustably positioned in a forward-rearward direction to lie just outside of the folded over edge extremity **103** of the small hem, and the blade is adjusted vertically to a position in which its lower edge **104** lies below the tension plane **105** of the fabric (FIG. **9**). The tension plane extends between the upper portions of the article supporting drums **25, 26** and the fabric of the tubular articles substantially assumes that plane when it is held under circumferential tension. The arrangement is such that, as the fabric passes progressively by the detector blade **100,** the body portion **106** of the fabric, which lies outside of the folded hem, is deflected downward, below the tension plane.

Pivotally mounted behind the blade **100,** by means of a pivot pin **106** is a sensing lever **107** having a curved lower foot portion **108,** which is normally substantially coincident with the lower edge **104** of the detector blade. The upper portion **109** of the sensing lever is positioned to engage the actuator **110** of a control switch **111,** which is mounted on the blade. The arrangement is such that, when the foot of the sensing lever **107** is permitted to coincide substantially with the bottom edge of the blade **100,** the switch **111** is in one condition, indicating a properly sewn seam. If the foot of the lever is raised, causing the lever to pivot in a clockwise direction as viewed in FIG. **9,** the switch **111** is actuated to a different condition, reflecting an improperly sewn seam.

As particularly shown in FIGS. **10–12,** the foot portion **108** of the sensing lever is arranged to lie immediately adjacent and on the backside of the blade **100.** When the sensor is properly positioned over the fabric, the blade **100** will thus contact the body portion **105** of the fabric, while the sensing foot **108** will ride along the hem **112,** most advantageously directly above the region of the under-folded small hem **113.** As long as the sewing operation is being carried out properly, and the hem is secured tightly to the body fabric **105,** the deflection of the body fabric by the blade end **104** will cause a similar downward deflection of the hem portion itself. However, if a broken thread or other malfunction causes a defect in the seam, such that the hem is no longer secured to the body fabric **105,** the hem portion will tend to spring upward toward the tension plane, as reflected in FIG. **12.** This action lifts up the sensing foot **108** and causes the control switch **111** to be actuated to stop the equipment.

At the commencement of the sewing operation, there obviously can be no sewn seam under the sensing foot **108.** Nevertheless, as reflected in FIGS. **7, 10** and **11,** by locating the sensor blade **100** to lie on an axis immediately outside of the folded small hem edge **103** during normal sewing, the unfolded raw edge **114** of the large hem will be caused to underlie the blade tip **104** at the commencement of sewing. This causes the hem portion **112** of the fabric to be depressed out of the tension plane just as if a properly sewn hem were passing under the detector. As the sewing operation is commenced, the sewn hem progresses downstream from the sewing head **48** toward the detector blade **100,** and the raw edge **114** is gradually withdrawn from underneath the blade as the commencement of the sewn seam approaches. Assuming that the sewing operation has commenced properly, the sewn seam will arrive at the sensor as the raw edge is withdrawn therefrom, so that the sensor is not prematurely actuated.

As will be understood the sewn seam detector functions indirectly as a broken thread detector, because a break in either the main thread or the bobbin thread will reflect itself in an unsewn seam.

In accordance with another aspect of the invention, the equipment includes a novel and advantageous form of sewn seam detector, which automatically senses the return toward the sewing head **48** of the starting point **120** of the sewn seam. The arrangements for this purpose are shown particularly in FIGS. **15–18.** The illustrated sewn seam detector includes a mounting bracket **121,** which is supported by a guide rod **122** and by the rod **123** of a fluid actuator **124.** The actuator **124** can be energized to move the bracket **121** in the forward-rearward directions to position the bracket and sewn seam detector in operative or inoperative positions.

In the illustrated arrangement of sewn seam detector, a detecting finger **125,** extending in the rearward direction, is supported by a wire offset **126** from the lower end of a shaft **127.** A spring **128** urges the shaft **127** to rotate to a stop position, in which the sensing finger **125** is directed toward the rear of the machine. However, the spring yieldably accommodates counterclockwise rotation of the shaft (as viewed from the top). A control switch **129** is mounted on top of the bracket **121** and is actuated by a cam **130** carried by the shaft. In the sensing position of the shaft and finger, shown in FIGS. **15, 17,** the switch **29** is in one control condition, reflecting the absence of a sewn seam. However, as the sewn seam advances circumferentially toward and comes into engagement with the sensing finger **125,** the finger is pushed aside by the advancing seam (FIG. **18**), rotating the shaft **127** and actuating the switch **129** to a second control condition, reflecting the return of the seam. By suitable timing means, not specifically shown but of a conventional and well known type, the sewing operation is permitted to continue for a desired interval following actuation of the switch **129,** sufficient to bring the ends of the seam together and, desirably, to cause a slight overlap of the seam ends.

In the sewing of a pillowcase, the label preferably is positioned to coincide with the overlapped area of the stitching, and all this is located immediately adjacent the side seam **140** of the pillowcase (see FIG. **19**) so as to be relatively unobtrusive. Thus, the commencement and completion of the sewing operation desirably occur with the side seam **140** of the pillowcase under the sewing head **48.** For removal and stacking, however, it is advantageous to have the side seam located at the side edge of the pillowcase, as reflected in FIG. **20.** To this end, provision is advantageously made for rotating one or both of the supporting drums **25, 26** after completion of the sewing operation and severing of the threads, to relocate the side seam **140.** To advantage, the means for rotation may include a turbine-like arrangement of blades **141** associated with one of the supporting drums and arranged to be acted upon by an

air nozzle **142.** When the sewing operation has been completed, the air nozzle **142** is energized momentarily to reverse the rotation of the drums for a sufficient period of time to properly relocate the side edge **140** as shown in FIG. **20.**

The apparatus of the invention includes an extender bar **150,** shown in FIG. **4,** having a pair of elongated rods **151** supporting at their forward ends a transversely disposed bar **152.** In its retracted position, the extender bar assembly **150** is positioned so that the cross bar **152** lies directly in front of the drums **25, 26,** extending therebetween. When the sewing operation has been completed, and the side seam **140** properly relocated, the pillowcase can be ejected from the sewing machine by activating the extender bar assembly to project the cross bar **152** in a forward direction. The projected length of the extender bar **150** is controlled by a fluid actuator **153** driving a chain **154** to rotate sheaves **155** and advance extender cables **156.** The extender bar assembly **150** is secured to the extender cables **156,** and the projected length of the extender bar is adjusted to accommodate different sizes of articles by controlling the stroke length of the actuator **153** with appropriately located control switches (not specifically illustrated). When the extender is actuated, the cross bar **152** engages the blind end or bottom of the pillowcase and carries it outward to withdraw the pillowcase from the supporting drums.

As reflected in FIG. **4,** when the extender bar **150** has been fully projected, it comes into range of the gripping jaws **163** of a folder stacker assembly generally designated by the numeral **164.** The folder stacker has a parallelogram linkage **165** which, when operated by a fluid actuator (not shown) tilts the gripping jaws **163** toward the extender bar, meeting the cross bar **152** as it reaches the full extent of its projection. The jaws **163** are then actuated to close lightly and to engage the end of the pillowcase. Both the extender bar and the folder stacker can then be actuated in a retracting direction. The completed pillowcase is then released by the folder stacker and draped over a stacking bar **166.** The details of the folder stacker do not form a significant part of the present invention. Desirably, however, the entire folder stacker unit **164** can be adjustably positioned in a forward-rearward direction along tracks or rails **167,** to accommodate the processing of articles of various lengths. A suitable clamping device **168** may be provided to secure the folder stacker in its adjusted position.

To prevent possible snagging and tearing of the completed pillowcase as it is withdrawn from the extender bar, the end extremities **157** of the cross bar **152** are formed of coil springs secured at their inner ends to the main portion of the cross bar. The spring sections readily give way if resistance is met during removal of the pillowcase therefrom.

As heretofore mentioned, to accommodate adjustment of the machine to process articles with various hem lengths, it is appropriate after each change of the hem spacer blocks **43d,** to reset the position of the sewing machine head and the various hem tracking elements to be in proper alignment with the location of the adjusted hem edge. The various hem tracking elements concerned are the small hem folder, the label inserter, the no-sew detector, and the sewn seam detector. Since each of the seam tracking elements is desirably maintained in appropriate alignment with the sewing head itself, it is advantageous to mount all of them in normally fixed relation to the sewing machine itself. To this end, as illustrated in FIG. **5***a*, the machine frame **10** is provided with a plurality of longitudinally extending guide rails **170** which slidably receive bearing **171** mounting a sewing machine oil pan **172.** The sewing machine itself, not shown in FIG. **23,** is appropriately secured to the oil pan **172** and can be adjustably positioned in the forward-rearward direction by sliding the oil pan along the guide rods **170.** A cantilever frame **173** is secured to the oil pan by a pivot arm **174,** which is in turn connected to a fluid actuator **175.** In the illustrated apparatus, all of the hem tracking elements are carried by the cantilever frame **173.** Each of the elements has its own individual adjustment relative to the frame, for initial alignment purposes. Thereafter, the various hem tracking elements may be retained in a fixed relation with the sewing machine head, with all the units being adjusted simultaneously by repositioning of the oil pan **172** on the guide rods **170.**

The fluid actuator **175,** when energized to extend, pivots the cantilever frame **173** upward to raise the various hem tracking elements above their normal operating positions. Thus, the actuator will be energized to extend at the end of a sewing operation, permitting a completed article to be removed and a new article to be applied to the machine. The cantilever frame **173** is then lowered to bring the hem tracking elements into their normal operating positions.

SUMMARY OF OPERATION

In the starting condition of the apparatus of the invention, the tension arms **14, 15** are in their closed or upright positions, the hem folding shoes **35, 36** are retracted laterally and projected to their forward positions, the frame **173** and the various hem tracking elements carried thereby are in an upraised position, and the sewing foot is also in a raised position. At this stage, an operator, positioned directly in front of the machine between the sewing head and the folder stacker unit, grasps the open end of a pillowcase or other tubular article and applies it axially over the supporting drums **25, 26** and the embracing form plates **27, 28.** The raw edge of the article is placed in engagement with the abutment flanges **43.** By stepping on a conveniently located foot switch **180** (FIG. **3**), the actuator **20** is energized to swing the tension arms outwardly. This causes circumferential tension to be applied to the end margin area of the pillowcase.

At this point, the operator may commence the large hem folding operation, and this is accomplished for safety purposes by requiring the operator to place both hands upon and to depress plunger switches **181, 182** mounted atop the respective tension arms **14, 15.** This initiates operation of the hem folding shoes, causing the actuators **37, 38** to be energized to swing the shoes inward against the supporting drums and, in sequence, to energize the actuators **40** to pull the shoes in a rearward direction into the arcuate spaces between the drums and the outer forms **27, 28.**

At the end of the full rearward stroke of the hem folding shoes, switches are actuated to energize actuators **45,** projecting the retaining fingers **44** into engagement with the article. In sequence, the actuators **40** and **37, 38** are energized to first axially withdraw the folding shoes **35, 36** and then retract them laterally and then axially to out-of-the-way positions.

Energization of the blowers, to "balloon" the pillowcase, desireably coincides with the commencement of sewing.

With the large hem having thus been folded, the cantilevered frame **173** is automatically lowered by appropriate sequencing switches, to bring the several hem-tracking elements into operative elevation. At this stage, the label inserter is in its upraised or horizontal position, and the small hem folder stages and the sewn seam detector are all projected by their respected actuating cylinders to forward positions. The no-sew detector is, at this stage, in its normal operating position.

After initial lowering of the hem tracking elements, the actuator **124** may be retracted to bring the sewn seam detector into normal operating position, sliding the sensing finger **125** underneath the edge of the folded large hem. In addition, the small seam folder is actuated in the three-stage sequence previously described to commence formation of the small seam underfold and to extend it downstream underneath the still uplifted sewing foot **69.**

Upon initiation of the small seam fold, the label inserter mechanism is actuated, first to bring down the transfer arm **82** and then to pivot the tucking arm **83** to project a portion of label underneath the small hem in the region of the sewing foot. By appropriate sequencing controls, the sewing foot is then lowered and the sewing operation commences, desirably in the region of the upstream edge of the label. The label inserter is then automatically retracted as the sewing operation proceeds, engaging and being loaded with a subsequent label for the next operation. The sewing operation proceeds, with the advancing mechanism of the sewing machine drawing the hem of the tubular article progressively through the sewing foot in a well known manner. At completion of the operation, the sewn seam sensing finger **25** is tripped, timing the end of the sewing operation to provide the slight overlap of the stitching. Thereupon, the sewing foot **69** is raised, as is the cantilever frame **173** carrying the several hem tracking elements. Actuation of the sewn seam detector also serves to energize the actuators **63, 64,** immediately projecting forward the small seam folders, so that these elements are out of the way by the time the sewn seam approaches. In addition, the actuator **124** for the sewn seam detector itself may be energized to project forward that element, as its function for the cycle has been completed.

When the sewing head and related elements have been raised, the thread connections to the machine are snipped, typically by conventional automatic means, and the extender bar is brought into operation by energizing of the actuator **153.** At this time, the actuator **20** can be de-energized to return the tension arms **14, 15** to their upright positions and permit the easy removal of the completed article by the extender bar. As soon as the folder stacker mechanism has engaged and removed the completed article, an appropriate sequence switch is tripped to retract the extender bar, readying the machine for a further cycle of operations.

The method and apparatus of the present invention are uniquely advantageous in connection with the forming of hems and seams on tubular articles. In connection with the manufacture of pillowcases, for example, an operator need simply apply the open end of the pillowcase bag, with previously formed side and bottom seam, over the article supporting drums **25, 26** and depress the starting switches. The large hem fold, the small hem fold, the label insert and the seaming operations are all then completed in appropriate sequence in a few seconds, after which the pillowcases are automatically ejected from the machine. In practice, a single machine operator of minimum skills can easily attend to the operation of two machines, alternately feeding one while the other is completing a folding-sewing sequence.

Of significance to the invention is the unique arrangements provided for supporting the article and forming the so-called large hem. This arrangement includes cooperating inner and outer forms, on which the article is initially supported and placed under circumferential tension, and which cooperate with insertable hem folding shoes. The inner forms, pursuant to the invention, constitute rotatable article supporting drums such that, at the completion of the large hem folding operations, the article is supported on the drums in a condition to be manipulated for the necessary small hem folding and sewing operations.

For the production of a tubular article having both large and small hems, the invention contemplates the forming of the first or large hem in a single fold-over operation, by which the large hem is formed simultaneously about the entire circumference of the article. This initial hem folding operation is then followed by a progressive forming of the so-called small hem. In the system of the invention, commencement of the small hem folding operation is uniquely advantageous in providing for a three-stage starting sequence, followed by the circumferentially progressive continuation of the hem fold. In the three phase starting sequence, a first stage folder is advanced laterally toward and into contact with the raw edge of the fabric to bring about a 90° fold. This is followed immediately by moving a second stage folder laterally into contact with the fabric edge, immediately adjacent and downstream of the first stage folder, to complete a 180° underfold. A third phase of the start-up procedure involves a short reciprocation of the two folding stages, first in a downstream direction and then return, so that a prefolded section of the small hem extends downstream from the folder to and under the sewing foot, enabling the sewing operation to commence on a pre-formed section of the small hem fold.

The sewn seam detector incorporated in the apparatus of the present invention, while particularly useful in the association with the handling of tubular articles, would also be useful in conjunction with other articles held under tension in the direction of sewing. In this respect, the sewn seam detector relies upon the principle of deflecting the main body of fabric out of a plane in which it is held under tension. An immediately adjacent sensor rides along a layer of material intended to be sewed to the body portion. As long as the adjacent sections are properly sewed together, the deflection of the body portion will cause a similar deflection of the adjacent hem portion. If the seam is defective, however, the hem portion will be drawn by tension back toward the tension plane, allowing the sensor to detect a special difference between the adjacent fabric sections. The illustrated device has additional advantages in connection with the processing of tubular articles, in that it accommodates the start-up phase without creating a "false" no-sew signal, even though at the outset there is no seam underneath the sensor.

The sewn seam detector described herein also is particularly advantageous in conjunction with the sewing of tubular articles, providing a simple yet reliably effective means of timing the end of the sewing operation and the clearing away of the small hem folder, as the beginning of the sewn seam returns to the starting point.

In the apparatus of the invention, the sewing machine head, as well as the several hem tracking elements are provided with a common adjustable mount, enabling the apparatus to be quickly set up and readjusted for the processing of hems of various sizes.

It should be understood, of course, that the specific form of the invention herein illustrated and described is intended to be representative only, as many changes may be made therein without departing from the clear teachings of the disclosure. Accordingly, reference should be made to the following appended claims in determining the full scope of the invention.

We claim:

1. The method of forming a continuous hem on a tubular article, which comprises

a. applying the tubular article endwise over spaced sets of inner and outer forms,

b. exerting outward pressure on at least the outer forms to place an open end of the tubular article under circumferential tension,

c. engaging portions of the article adjacent the forms and advancing said portions toward said open end between the inner and outer forms, whereby to progressively withdraw the end margin of fabric from over said outer forms and fold it outward to form a hem fold between said inner and outer forms, and

d. exerting outward pressure on at least the inner forms to maintain the folded hem under circumferential tension.

2. The method of claim **1,** further characterized

a. by said folded hem being advanced progressively past a stationary joining head and stitched while being maintained under circumferential tension.

3. The method of claim **2,** further characterized by

a. said outwardly folded hem constituting a large hem,

b. the raw edge of said large hem being engaged in a limited region adjacent said sewing head to effect an inward folding of said edge and a partial formation of a small hem, and

c. progressively continuing the formation of the small hem while the previously folded large hem is being advanced past the joining head.

4. An apparatus for forming a continuous hem on a tubular article, which comprises

a. a set of movably mounted outer forms positioned for axial reception within an open end of a tubular article,

b. means for urging said outer forms to move in a transversely outward direction relative to the axis of the article to place the open end region of said article under controlled circumferential tension,

c. a set of movably mounted inner forms positioned in closely spaced relation to and transversely inside of the set of outer forms,

d. a set of folding plates mounted for axial advancement between adjacent pairs of inner and outer forms, and

e. means for advancing said folding plates axially into the space between said pair of forms to carry into said space a portion of the tubular article adjacent its end, while said portion is maintained under tension, and to withdraw a margin of fabric from said outer forms and effect a progressive outward fold-over of said margin.

5. An apparatus according to claim **4,** further characterized by

a. said set of inner forms comprising a spaced pair of rotatable cylindrical elements,

b. said set of outer forms comprising a pair of arcuate plates mounted radially outward of but adjacent to said cylindrical elements, and forming in conjunction therewith a pair of arcuate slots,

c. said set of folding plates comprising a pair of arcuate plates of a size and configuration to be received within said arcuate slots.

6. The method of automatically machine hemming a tubular article, which comprises

a. placing an open end of the article under circumferential tension,

b. simultaneously automatically outwardly folding a large hem over its entire circumference at said open end of the article by simultaneously engaging and effecting outward folding of a limited plurality of widely spaced limited areas thereof, and

c. thereafter forming a small hem underfold in a circumferentially progressive manner by progressively advancing the edge of said large hem circumferentially past a folding form.

7. The method of claim **6,** further characterized by

a. said article being maintained under circumferential tension during the progressive forming of said small hem.

8. The method of automatically machine folding an end area of a tubular article which comprises

a. placing the article under circumferential tension in the region to be folded, and

b. simultaneously automatically folding said area throughout the entire circumference of said article, while said region remains under said tension, by engaging and folding a limited number of widely spaced areas of limited circumferential extent.

9. The method of claim **8,** further characterized by

a. said article being placed under said tension by urging outwardly upon said widely spaced areas thereof in said region.

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