



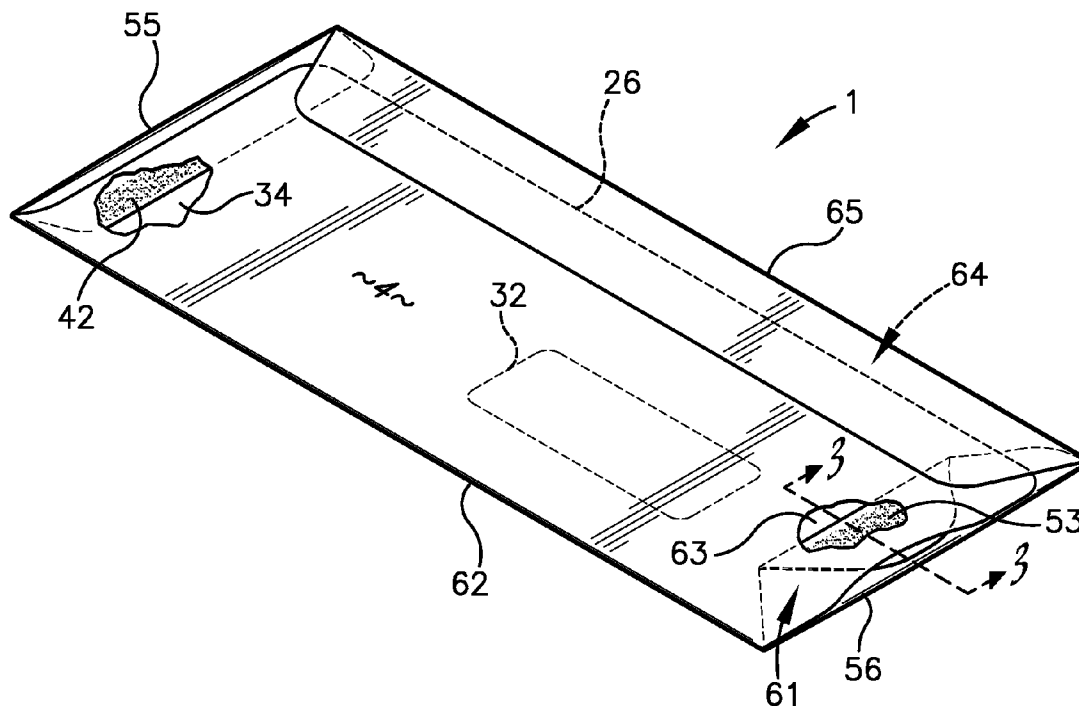
US 20100089991A1

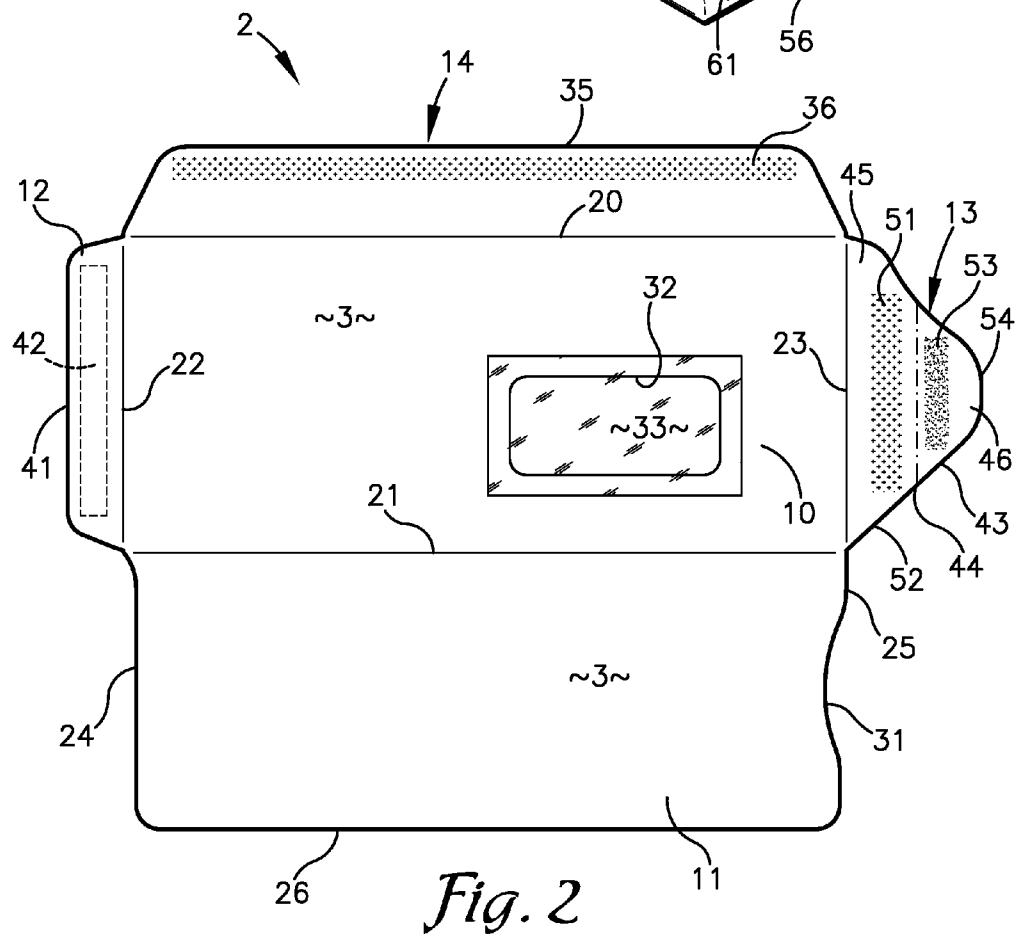
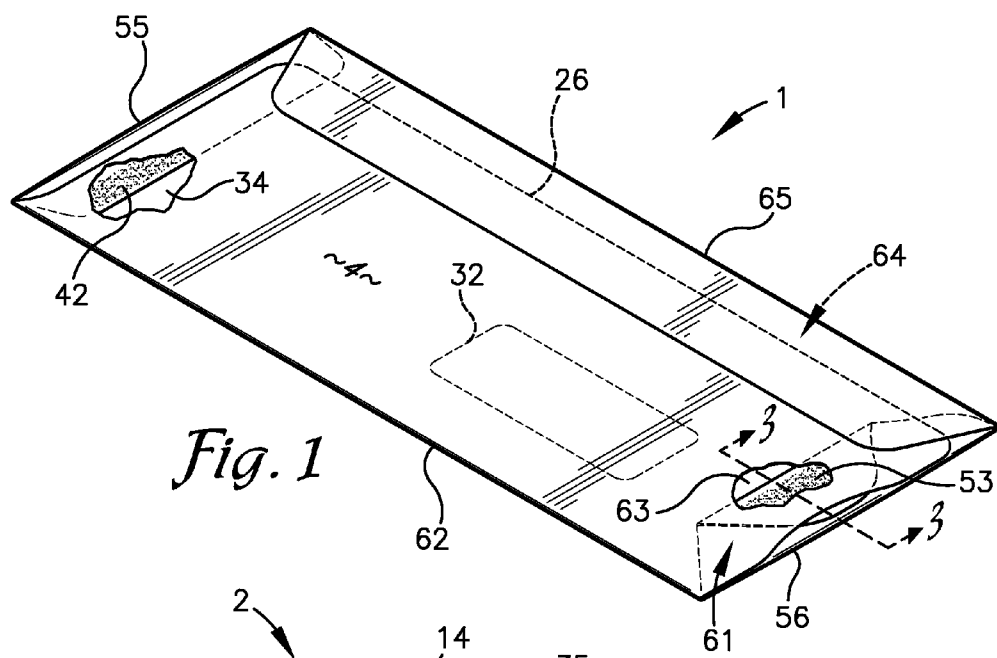
(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
ROBINSON, III(10) **Pub. No.: US 2010/0089991 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Apr. 15, 2010**(54) **TWO-WAY ENVELOPE**(52) **U.S. Cl. 229/302; 229/301; 229/307; 229/76**(76) **Inventor: Lon Stephen ROBINSON, III,**
Independence, MO (US)

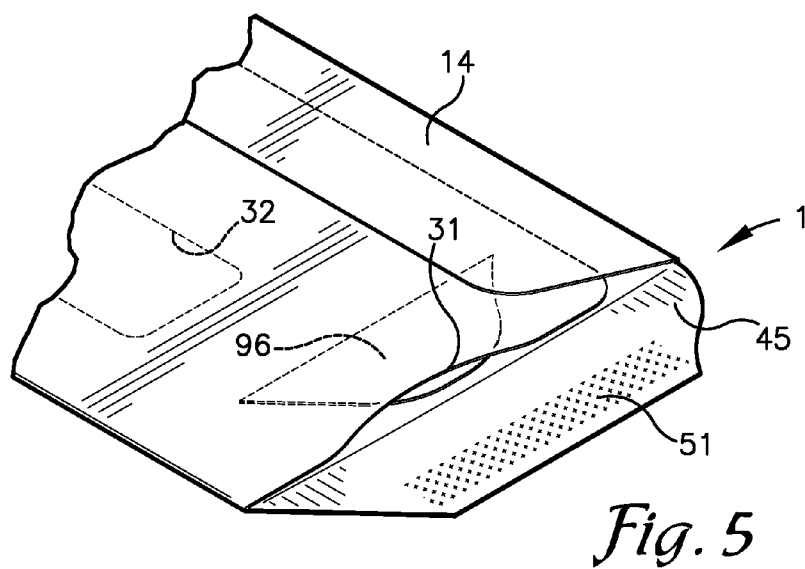
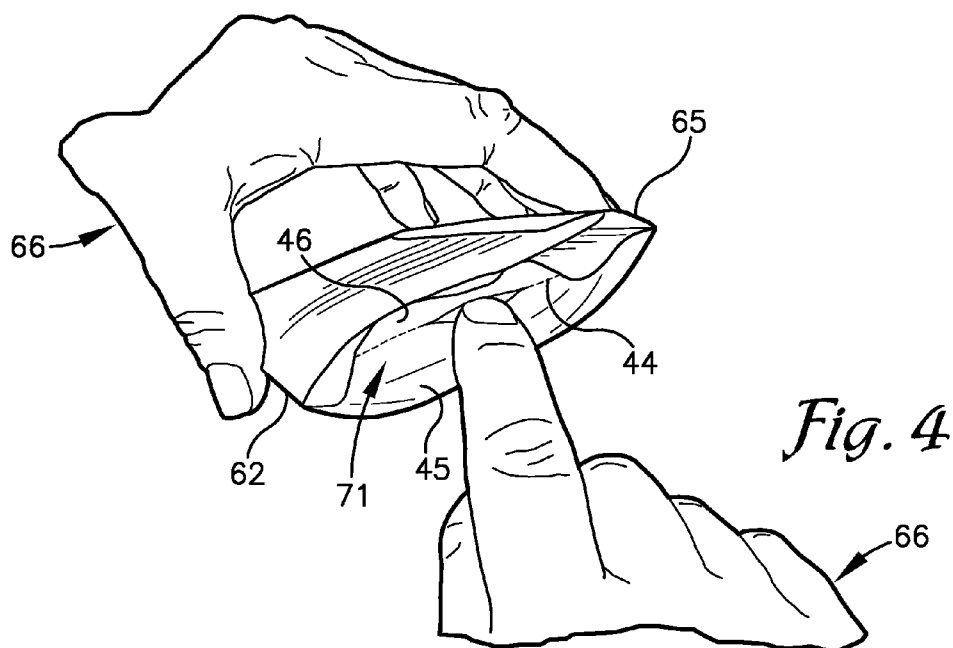
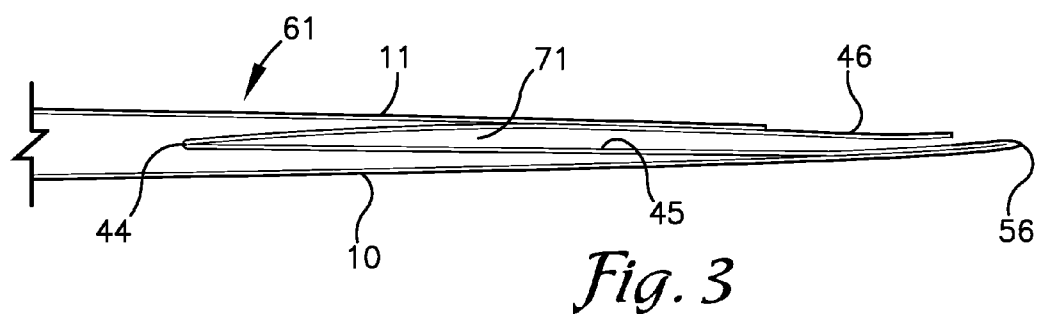
Correspondence Address:
POLSINELLI SHUGHART PC
700 West 47th Street, Suite 1000
KANSAS CITY, MO 64112 (US)

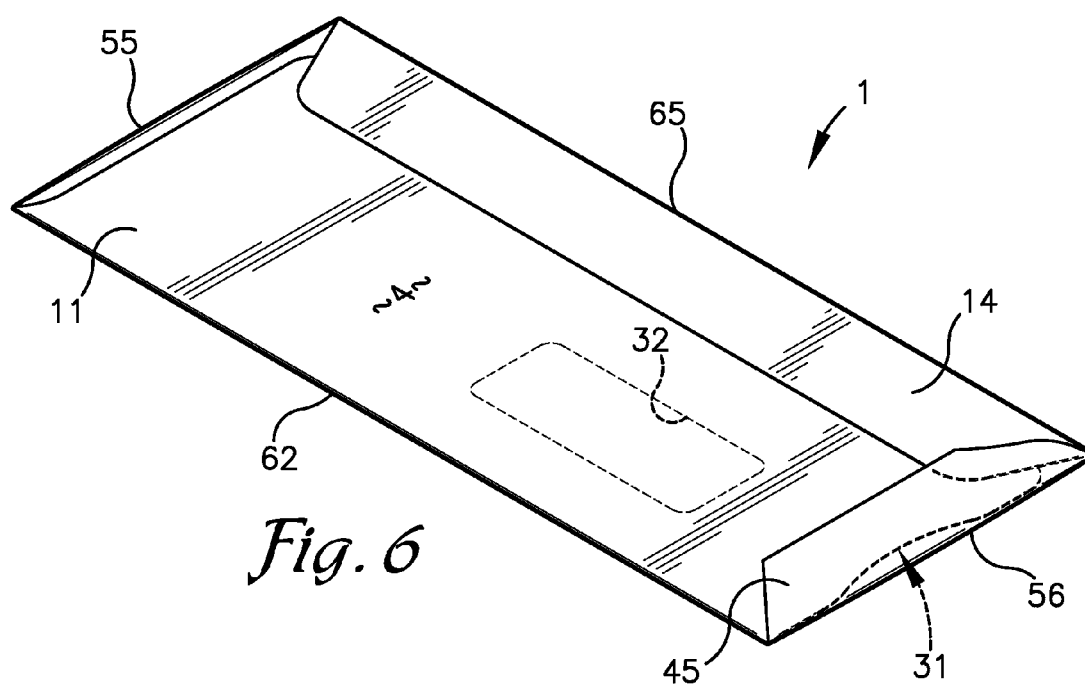
(21) **Appl. No.: 12/249,607**(22) **Filed: Oct. 10, 2008****Publication Classification**(51) **Int. Cl.**
B65D 27/06 (2006.01)
B65D 27/32 (2006.01)(57) **ABSTRACT**

A two-way envelope includes first and second panels forming a content receiving pocket having multiple edges. A side flap is joined to one of the panels folded into the pocket on a fold line, and adhesively connected to the other panel within the pocket, sealing one edge of the pocket. The side flap includes a tear line spaced from the fold line. When not torn, the tear line provides a portion of the edge seal. The tear line, when torn, opens the pocket along the edge and forms a second flap edge, facilitating withdrawal of the flap from the pocket and removal or replacement of the contents of the envelope. The flap may be folded along the fold line over the other panel and adhered to the outside surface of the other panel to reseal the pocket for reuse of the envelope.









TWO-WAY ENVELOPE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present disclosure is broadly concerned with envelopes. More particularly, it is concerned with an envelope that can be opened by a recipient and then resealed for subsequent remailing.

[0002] Two-way or return envelopes have long been favored by businesses for their efficiency. In an era of constantly rising postage costs, they enhance return rates because the return envelope is conveniently at hand when the recipient first reviews the communication. Because a preprinted address is typically provided, they also reduce the likelihood that the reply will be misdirected through error or illegibility. Two-way return envelopes are more cost efficient than separate, enclosed return envelopes because their unitary construction conserves labor and materials. They are also less likely to be lost by the recipient because their construction is integral with the initial correspondence envelope, so that they cannot become separated.

[0003] There have been many attempts to construct a two-way envelope that will permit a recipient to resealed an envelope after opening and then remail it to the original sender or a preselected third party. So-called foldable sheet "mailers" are widely used for some purposes because they can be easily opened and then refolded in reverse for return mail. However, sheet mailers generally have open or spot sealed sides, and so are not well-suited for initial or return mailings that include an enclosure, such as an invoice and return payment. Standard envelope construction, including a pocket enclosed on three sides with a foldable top flap, is preferred for automated stuffing and sealing by machines that are employed by large mailing operations.

[0004] Attempts to modify standard envelopes for two-way use have produced envelopes that are expensive to manufacture, confusing to the recipient, difficult to open or use and consequently not well-accepted or widely used. To avoid damage to the envelope on opening, such prior envelopes generally relied on small or flimsy seals, which made them vulnerable to tampering. Once the reusable seal was defeated, such envelopes could be resealed without the knowledge of the recipient. They were also subject to failure and loss of the enclosed content when spot or so-called "fugitive" adhesives failed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The present disclosure provides a greatly improved two-way envelope that is of relatively simple construction and can be easily manufactured and stuffed using conventional high speed envelope equipment, is easily recognized, understood and used by a recipient and provides a secure mailing means to both the original recipient and a return recipient. An embodiment of the envelope includes first and second panels joined to form a content receiving pocket having multiple edges. A first side flap is joined to one of the panels and is folded over and adhesively secured to the other panel to seal one edge of the pocket. A second side flap is joined to one of the panels at a fold line, folded into the pocket on the fold line, and adhesively connected to the other panel within the pocket, thereby sealing another edge of the pocket. The side flap includes a tear line spaced from the fold line. When not torn, the tear line provides a portion of the edge seal. The tear line, when torn, opens the pocket along the edge

and forms a second flap edge, facilitating withdrawal of the flap from the pocket and removal and/or replacement of the contents of the envelope. The flap configuration may be folded along the fold line over the other panel and adhered to the outside surface of the other panel to resealed the pocket for reuse of the envelope. The side flap includes a first adhesive area for securing the flap to the other panel when the flap is folded back within the pocket, and a second adhesive area for securing the flap to the other panel outside the pocket to resealed the pocket edge. When the side flap is folded within the pocket an outer lift tab portion protrudes outside the tear line and is exposed by an indentation in the envelope panel. A closure flap is joined to one of the panels and is folded onto and adhered to the other panel to seal the panels together.

[0006] Various objects and advantages of this two-way envelope will become apparent from the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein are set forth, by way of illustration and example, certain embodiments of this envelope.

[0007] The drawings constitute a part of this specification, include exemplary embodiments of the two-way envelope, and illustrate various objects and features thereof.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a two-way envelope constructed in accordance with the present disclosure and shown in a condition as received by a recipient.

[0009] FIG. 2 is a plan view of the inner side of an envelope blank showing the surfaces that will form the two-way envelope upon assembly.

[0010] FIG. 3 is an enlarged fragmentary cross section taken along line 3-3 of FIG. 1.

[0011] FIG. 4 is a fragmentary perspective view of the two-way envelope of FIG. 1, showing a step in opening the envelope for reuse.

[0012] FIG. 5 is a fragmentary perspective view similar to that shown in FIG. 1, with the tear line separated and the reuse flap withdrawn.

[0013] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of the envelope after folding and sealing the opening flap to cover the removal opening for reuse of the two-way envelope.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0014] As required, detailed embodiments of the two-way envelope are disclosed herein; however, it is to be understood that the disclosed embodiments are merely exemplary of the device, which may be embodied in various forms. Therefore, specific structural and functional details disclosed herein are not to be interpreted as limiting, but merely as a basis for the claims and as a representative basis for teaching one skilled in the art to variously employ the invention in virtually any appropriately detailed structure.

[0015] Referring now to the drawing figures, the reference numeral 1 refers to an embodiment of a two-way envelope constructed in accordance with the present invention and depicted in FIG. 1. The envelope 1 is constructed from a blank 2, shown in FIG. 2, which may be cut directly from a continuous roll of stock or from stock that has previously been cut into sheets. The blank 2 has an inner or inside, normally content contacting surface 3 and an outer or outside surface 4 (FIG. 1).

[0016] The illustrated blank has a first or front panel 10, integrally connected or joined to a second or back panel 11, a

first side or end panel or flap 12, a second side or end panel or reuse flap 13, and a closure or seal flap 14. The front panel 10 is bounded by upper, lower, and first and second side score lines 20, 21, 22 and 23 which respectively separate the front panel 10 from the seal flap 14, the back panel 11, the first side flap 12 and the reuse flap 13. The envelope 1, including the front and back panels 10 and 11, is depicted in FIG. 1 as having a generally rectangular overall configuration. It is foreseen, however, that the envelope may be of any suitable shape, for example, another quadrilateral such as square, or a multilateral, rounded or mixed-geometric shape.

[0017] The back panel 11 is integrally joined to the front panel 10 at the lower score or fold line 21 and presents first and second side or end edges 24 and 25 and an outer, normally top edge 26. A shallow indent or recess 31 is generally centered on the second end edge 25 to facilitate access to the second, openable side flap 13.

[0018] The top or seal flap 14 is integrally joined to the front panel 10 at the upper score or fold line 20 and is bounded by an edge 35 that extends from the first side score line 22 to the second side score line 23. The outer portion of the seal flap 14 adjacent the edge 35 includes an elongated pattern of an adhesive substance or adhesive area 36. The adhesive substance 36 may be a gum, glue or any other suitable adherent composition or mixture thereof. The adhesive 36 may also be of a type which facilitates mechanical insertion of content 34 into the envelope 1. Where a pressure adhesive composition is employed to render the seal flap 14 self-adhering, the adhesive area 36 may be covered by a peel strip (not shown) to prevent adhesion until the time of use.

[0019] The front panel 10 may also include a die cut slot, opening or window 32, which may be open or covered by a transparent patch 33 (FIG. 2) to permit a mailing address (not shown) to be imprinted on an enclosed content or enclosure 34 (FIG. 1) and displayed through the window 32. The window patch 33 may also be positioned on the rear panel 10. The patch 33 may be constructed of clear or glassine paper, a synthetic resin composition, or it may be absent entirely.

[0020] The first, normally closed, side flap 12 is integrally connected to the front panel 10 at the first side fold or score line 22 and is bounded by an edge 41 that extends from the top fold or score line 20 to the bottom fold or score line 21. The outer area of the outer surface 4 of the side flap 12 adjacent the edge 41 includes an elongated pattern of an adhesive substance or adhesive area 42. Although the seal flap 14 and first side flap 12 are depicted as generally trapezoidal in shape, with relieved shoulders and rounded outer corners, it is foreseen that each of these flaps may have any suitable configuration, such as, for example, quadrilateral, triangular or curved, that permits them to be folded respectively over or under the back panel 11 in sealing relation.

[0021] The illustrated second side or reuse flap 13 is integrally joined to the front panel 10 at the second side fold or score line 23 and is bounded by an edge 43 that extends from the opposite side of the top fold or score line 20 to the corresponding opposite side of the bottom fold or score line 21. The illustrated flap 13 is generally triangular in overall shape with a rounded apex. The reuse flap 13 includes a line of weakness or tear line 44 is illustrated in generally parallel spaced relation to the fold line 23. It is foreseen that the tear line 44 may also be skewed or non-straight in relation to the fold line 23. The line of weakness 44 may be formed by scoring, or it may be mechanically perforated, laser perforated, punched, notched, slit, embossed, stamped or die cut

with a suitable release pattern that, in combination with subsequent folding, enables a user to easily breach or tear the line 44 to gain entry into the envelope 1. The tear line 44 serves to define or separate a first or inner section 45 of the reuse flap 13, that is joined to the front panel 10 at the second side fold 23, from a second or outer section of the reuse flap 13 that functions as a lifting tab 46. The tear line 44 also functions as a fold line between the sections 45 and 46 of the reuse flap 13.

[0022] The inner section 45 includes a pattern of an adhesive composition or reseal adhesive 51 positioned adjacent or in close spaced relation to the line of weakness 44. The reseal adhesive 51 may be similar to the adhesive 36 used on the seal flap 14, as long as it is of a type which can be activated by a user to seal the reuse flap 13. In the illustrated embodiment, the portion of the edge 43 bounding the inner section 45 forms a sloping shoulder edge portion 52. The outer section or lifting tab 46 includes a pattern of an adhesive composition or side seam adhesive 53 for sealing the lifting tab to the inside surface 3 of the second panel 11. The portion of the edge 43 bounding the lifting tab 46 forms a rounded lifting edge 54, although other shapes may be employed.

[0023] Referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, the blank 2 shown in FIG. 2 is folded and glued to form an envelope 1 as shown in FIG. 1, preferably using a conventional envelope making machine (not shown). The illustrated first side flap 12 is folded inwardly along the first side score line 22 to overlie a side portion of the inner surface 3 of the front panel 10, forming a first side fold 55. In this folded position, the adhesive 42 is directed forwardly or outwardly, for contacting the inner surface 3 of the rear panel 11 when it is folded.

[0024] The reuse flap 13 is also folded inwardly along the second side fold line 23 to overlie a portion of the opposed side portion of the inner surface 3 of the front panel 10, forming a second side fold 56. The outer section 46 of the reuse flap 13 is folded back to overlie a portion of the inner section 45 of the reuse flap 13, forming a reverse or generally Z-shaped fold 61 (FIG. 3). In this folded position, the side seam adhesive 53 of the outer section 46 is directed forwardly or outwardly, for contacting an interior surface of the back panel 11 when it is folded. Back gum or another such strong adhesive or glue is generally employed to seal the first and second side flaps 12 and 13 to the inner surface 3 of the back panel 11 so that the finished envelope 1 will not become opened inadvertently.

[0025] The reverse fold 61 also serves to position the line of weakening 44 within the envelope in a location where it will be covered by the front and back panels 10 and 11 and protected against breach. It also positions the lifting tab 46 in an outwardly directed orientation and projecting slightly beyond the edge of the indent 31 of the back panel 11, so that it can be easily grasped and lifted. It is foreseen that an instruction to lift tab 46 may be imprinted with colored ink on the tab 46 or edge of the back panel 11, or otherwise suitably marked to draw attention to its location. Because the lift tab 46 is tightly sealed to the inner surface of the back panel 11, any attempt to pull out the tab 46 will tear the tab 46 or the envelope 1, which will be an obvious sign of tampering to a recipient.

[0026] The back panel 11 is folded along the bottom score line 21 to overlie the front panel 10 and form a bottom fold 62 (FIG. 1). The illustrated back panel 11 also overlies the first side flap 12 and the reuse flap 13 with the adhesives 42 and 53 in sealing relation with the back panel 11. Thus folded along the bottom and folded and sealed on both sides or side seams, the envelope 1 forms a pouch or pocket 63 suitable for receiving

ing and, when sealed, retaining an enclosure 34. The pocket 63 is initially accessible through an opening or entry void 64 (FIG. 1) between the top edge 26 of the back panel 11 and the top fold 65 of the front panel 10. To close the envelope 1, the closure or seal flap 14 is folded along the top score line 20 to overlies the back panel 11 and form fold 65. This fold brings the adhesive 36 into sealing contact with the outer surface 4 of the back panel 11, and seals the envelope 1, for mailing (FIGS. 1, 2). The seal flap 14 may include a printed instruction to warn the recipient not to open the envelope 1 by cutting or tearing along the top fold 65.

[0027] This manner of construction produces an envelope 1 that is completely and securely sealed with conventional quantities of standard adhesives, yet includes a flap 13 that may be easily opened and resealed for remailing. The tear line 44 forms a part of the seal of the second side flap, while also permitting the envelope 1 to be easily opened. As shown in FIG. 3, the back-folded flap 13 portion comprises four layers in combination with the front and rear panels 10 and 11, only one layer more than the conventional closed side flap 12. This permits the reuse flap 13 to be flat-folded, to form a finished envelope 1 with a generally uniform thickness.

[0028] Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the envelope 1 may be alternatively configured so that the first side flap 12 and/or the reuse tab 13 are joined to the outer surface of the back panel 11. In such a construction, it may be desirable to locate the indent 31 on the front panel 10.

[0029] In use, the sealed envelope 1, containing an enclosure 34 (FIG. 1), is delivered, as by the postal service or a private carrier, to a first recipient 66 (FIG. 4). The envelope 1 includes a reuse flap 13 inwardly folded into the pocket 63 of the envelope into a first configuration. The envelope enclosure 34 may include one or more items, for example, a printed invoice, renewal notice, advertisement and order form, or any other communication requesting or requiring a response from the recipient by return mail.

[0030] As best shown in FIG. 4, a recipient 66 grasps the envelope in one hand and inserts one or more fingers into the throat 71 of the infolded reuse flap 13. This may be accomplished as shown in FIG. 4 by pinching the top and bottom folds 65 and 62 to cause the envelope 1 to bow and the Z-fold of the reuse flap 13 to open up slightly to accommodate insertion of the fingers, or it may be accomplished by lifting the exposed lift tab 46 with a finger of one hand and inserting a finger of the other hand into the throat 71 formed by the resulting slight opening of the Z-fold 61. Alternatively, a user may simply slide one or more fingers into the throat 71 of the Z-fold 61 in its flat-folded position as shown in FIG. 3, thereby opening up the fold 61.

[0031] The recipient inserts one or more fingers into the fold 61 until they contact the line of weakness 44 and cause a tear, as shown in FIG. 4. Continued advancement of the fingers causes the tear line 44 to fully separate the inner section 45 of the flap 13 from the lift tab 46. The adhesive 53 retains the lift tab 46 in adhered relation to the inner surface 3 of the back panel 11 (FIG. 1). The finger of the user may then catch the free edge of the inner section 45 as the user withdraws it from the pocket 63, pulling the inner section 45 into the plane of the front panel and thereby fully opening a side of the envelope 1 (FIG. 5).

[0032] As shown in FIGS. 5 and 6, after withdrawing and perusing the enclosure 34, the user may insert an enclosure, which may comprise the original enclosure imprinted with a return address for display through the window 32, as well as

any additional desired enclosures, such as, for example, a remittance, completed order form or the like. The user folds the inner section 45 of the reuse flap 13 along the second side fold 56 in overlapping relation to the side portion of the second panel 11 as well as a side portion of the seal flap 14. The user next seals the envelope 1 by moistening or otherwise adhering the reseal adhesive 51 (FIG. 5) to the outer surface 4 of the panel 11 as shown in FIG. 6. The fully sealed return envelope 1, correctly addressed and containing appropriate enclosures 34 may then be remailed to the original sender or to a preselected third party.

[0033] Advantageously, the envelope 1 may be constructed, stuffed and sealed using automated machinery, and mailed to a first recipient who is able to quickly locate the lift tab 46 and tear line 44 and easily open the envelope 1 without the need to breach or open the seal flap 14 which would impair reuse of the envelope 1. The first recipient can withdraw the enclosed contents, reinsert the original enclosure along with any additional preferred materials, seal the reuse flap 13 to achieve a robust seal, and remail the original envelope 1 to a preselected recipient, without the need to manually address the envelope 1.

[0034] While the two-way envelope 1 has been described and illustrates having the re-use flap 13 located in association with the second fold line 23, it is foreseen that an alternative embodiment could provide such a re-use flap on the opposite side, the top side, or even the bottom side of the envelope 1.

[0035] It is to be understood that while certain forms of a two-way envelope have been illustrated and described herein, the invention is not to be limited to the specific forms or arrangement of parts described and shown.

The following is claimed and desired to be secured by Letters Patent:

1. A two-way envelope comprising:

- (a) a first panel and a second panel, said first and second panels being joined to form a content receiving pocket having multiple edges;
- (b) a side flap having a first configuration and joined to one of said panels at a fold line, said side flap being folded into said pocket on said fold line, said side flap being adhesively connected to the other of said panels within said pocket thereby sealing at least one of said edges;
- (c) said flap including a tear line spaced from said fold line, said tear line, when not torn, providing a portion of a seal of the one edge; and
- (d) said tear line, when torn, opening said pocket along said one edge and forming a second flap configuration.

2. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 1 wherein:

- (a) said first panel comprises a front panel; and
- (b) said side flap being connected to said front panel.

3. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 1 wherein:

- (a) said tear line, when torn, forms a second side flap configuration edge facilitating withdrawal of said side flap from said pocket.

4. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 1 wherein said side flap further includes:

- (a) a first adhesive area for securing said side flap first configuration to the other of said panels within said pocket; and
- (b) a second adhesive area for securing said side flap second configuration to the other of said panels outside said pocket thereby resealing said one of said edges.

5. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 1 wherein:
 - (a) said side-flap first configuration includes an outer lift tab portion outside said tear line.
6. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 5 wherein:
 - (a) one of said first and second panels includes an indentation for exposing a portion of said lift tab.
7. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 1 wherein:
 - (a) said envelope further includes a second side flap joined to one of said panels at a fold line, said side flap being folded over and adhesively secured to the other of said panels thereby sealing one of said edges.
8. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 1 wherein,
 - (a) said envelope further includes a second side flap having a third configuration and joined to one of said panels at a second fold line, said second side flap being folded into said pocket on said second fold line, said second side flap being adhesively secured to the other of said panels within said pocket thereby providing a second seal of a second of said edges;
 - (b) said second side flap including a second tear line spaced from said second fold line, said second tear line, when not torn, providing a portion of the seal of the second edge; and
 - (c) said second tear line, when torn, opening said pocket along said second edge and forming a fourth flap configuration.
9. A two-way envelope comprising:
 - (a) a front panel joined to a back panel to form a content receiving pocket;
 - (b) a side flap joined to one of said panels at a fold line, folded into said pocket on said fold line, and adhered to the other of said panels within said pocket to seal said pocket;
 - (c) said flap including a tear line spaced from said fold line to enable opening said pocket to remove content therefrom; and
 - (d) said flap including an adhesive between said fold line and said tear line to enable adherence of said flap to said other of said panels to thereby reseal said pocket after placement of content therein.
10. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 9 wherein said side flap is a first side flap and wherein:
 - (a) said envelope further includes a second side flap joined to one of said panels at a fold line, said side flap being folded and adhesively connected to the other of said panels thereby sealing an edge thereof.
11. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 10 wherein:
 - (a) said first side flap and said second side flap are joined to said front panel.
12. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 9 wherein:
 - (a) said side flap is joined to said front panel.
13. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 9 wherein:
 - (a) said side flap is folded back toward said fold line within said pocket and has a rounded end for grasping by a user to lift said end and expose said tear line.
14. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 9 wherein:
 - (a) said tear line, when torn, forms a flap edge facilitating withdrawal of a portion of said flap from said pocket.
15. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 9 wherein:
 - (a) said side flap includes an outer lift tab portion positioned in spaced relation to said fold line.
16. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 15 wherein:
 - (a) one of said panels includes an indentation for exposing a portion of said lift tab portion.
17. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 9 wherein:
 - (a) a closure flap is joined to said front panel at a closure fold line; and
 - (b) said closure flap being folded onto said back panel on said closure fold line and adhered to said back panel to seal said front panel to said back panel.
18. A two-way envelope comprising:
 - (a) front and back panels, joined to form a pocket therebetween;
 - (b) a first side flap connected to a first end of said front panel along a first fold line;
 - (c) said first side flap having a first adhesive area for securing said first side flap to an inside surface of a first edge of said back panel;
 - (d) a second side flap having a first configuration and joined to said front panel at a second fold line, said second side flap being folded into said pocket on said second fold line;
 - (e) said second side flap having a second adhesive area for securing said second side flap first configuration to said back panel within said pocket thereby forming an edge seal of a second edge of said pocket;
 - (f) said second side flap including a tear line spaced from said second fold line, said tear line, when not torn, providing a portion of said edge seal;
 - (g) said tear line, when torn, opening said pocket along said edge seal and forming a second flap configuration facilitating withdrawal of a portion of said second side flap from said pocket; and
 - (h) said second side flap having a third adhesive area for securing said portion of said second side flap second flap configuration to said back panel outside said pocket thereby resealing said second edge of said pocket.
19. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 18 wherein:
 - (a) said second side flap is folded back toward said second fold line within said pocket and has a rounded end for grasping by a user to lift said end and expose said tear line.
20. A two-way envelope as set forth in claim 18 wherein:
 - (a) said tear line, when torn, forms a flap edge which facilitates withdrawal of said portion of said second side flap from said pocket.
21. In a mailing envelope, the configuration which includes:
 - (a) a folded flap recessed therein, forming a tear line providing access thereto.

* * * * *