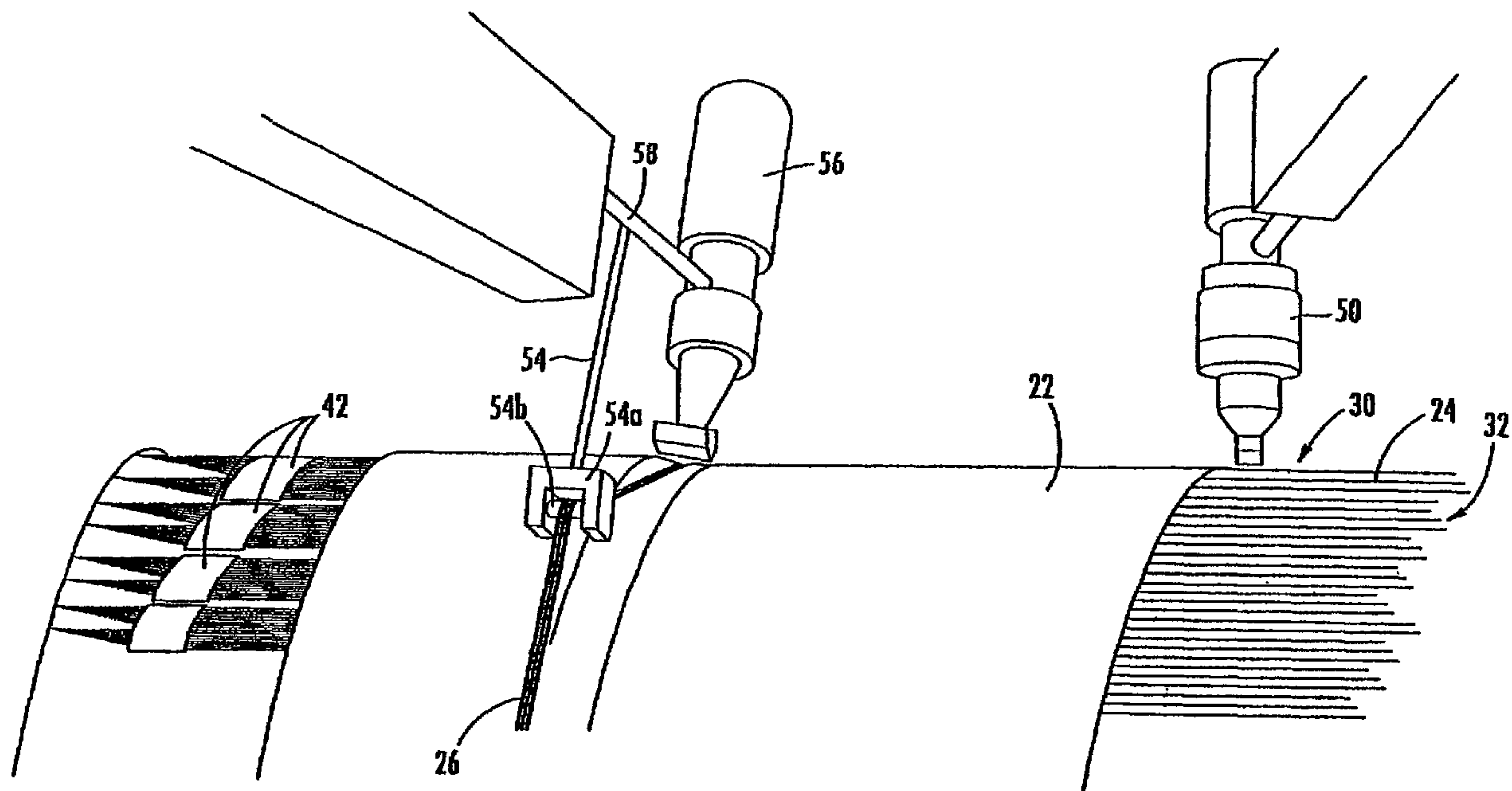




(86) Date de dépôt PCT/PCT Filing Date: 2003/05/07
(87) Date publication PCT/PCT Publication Date: 2003/11/27
(45) Date de délivrance/Issue Date: 2009/07/14
(85) Entrée phase nationale/National Entry: 2004/09/20
(86) N° demande PCT/PCT Application No.: US 2003/015319
(87) N° publication PCT/PCT Publication No.: 2003/097932
(30) Priorités/Priorities: 2002/05/14 (US60/378,146);
2003/05/02 (US10/428,406)

(51) Cl.Int./Int.Cl. *D21F 7/08* (2006.01),
D21F 3/02 (2006.01)
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(54) Titre : COURROIE POUR SYSTEME DE PRESSAGE A SABOT ET PROCEDE DE FABRICATION
(54) Title: BELT FOR A SHOE PRESS AND METHOD FOR FORMING SAME



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A method of producing an endless belt (20) includes the steps of: securing axial fibers (24) relative to a mandrel (20), the axial fibers being spaced apart from one another at desired intervals and extending substantially parallel to a longitudinal axis of the mandrel; applying a polymeric base layer (22) to the mandrel in a thickness sufficient to embed the axial fibers; wrapping circumferential fibers (26) onto the polymeric base layer with sufficient tension to partially embed the circumferential fibers in the polymeric base layer; applying a polymeric top stock layer (28) over the polymeric base layer and circumferential fibers; and curing the base layer and the top stock layer. This method can improve productivity and performance of endless belts, particularly if the wrapping and latter applying steps closely follow the first applying step.

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
27 November 2003 (27.11.2003)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 03/097932 A1

(51) International Patent Classification⁷: **D21F 3/02**

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US03/15319

(22) International Filing Date: 7 May 2003 (07.05.2003)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
60/378,146 14 May 2002 (14.05.2002) US
10/428,406 2 May 2003 (02.05.2003) US

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(81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW.

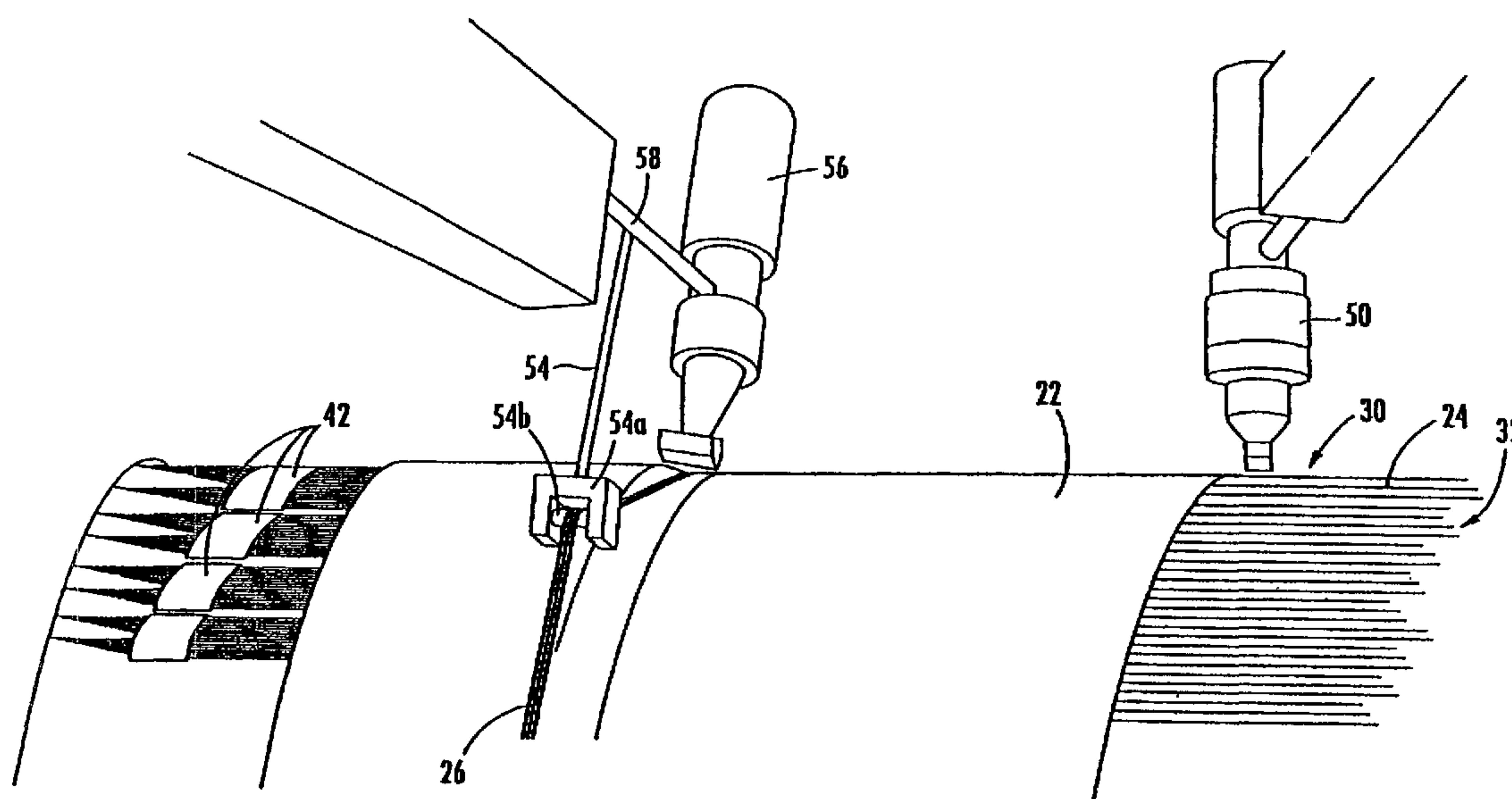
(84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HU, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

- with international search report
- before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of amendments

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: BELT FOR A SHOE PRESS AND METHOD FOR FORMING SAME



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For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

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BELT FOR A SHOE PRESS AND METHOD FOR FORMING SAME

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Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to nip presses, and more particularly to shoe
10 presses.

Background of the Invention

In a typical papermaking process, a water slurry, or suspension, of cellulosic fibers
(known as the paper "stock") is fed onto the top of the upper run of an endless belt of woven
15 wire and/or synthetic material that travels between two or more rolls. The belt, often referred
to as a "forming fabric," provides a papermaking surface on the upper surface of its upper run
which operates as a filter to separate the cellulosic fibers of the paper stock from the aqueous
medium, thereby forming a wet paper web. The aqueous medium drains through mesh
openings of the forming fabric, known as drainage holes, by gravity or vacuum located on the
20 lower surface of the upper run (*i.e.*, the "machine side") of the fabric.

After leaving the forming section, the paper web is transferred to a press section of the
paper machine, where it is passed through the nips of one or more presses (often roller
presses) covered with another fabric, typically referred to as a "press felt." Pressure from the
presses removes additional moisture from the web; the moisture removal is often enhanced
25 by the presence of a "batt" layer of the press felt. The paper is then transferred to a dryer

section for further moisture removal. After drying, the paper is ready for secondary processing and packaging.

Over the last 25 or 30 years, a "shoe press" has been developed for the press section of the papermaking machine. A shoe press includes a roll or similar structure that mates with
5 a "shoe" of an opposed roll or press structure; the surface of the shoe is somewhat concave and approximates in curvature the convex profile of the mating roll. This arrangement can increase the width of the nip in the direction of paper travel, thereby enabling greater amounts of water to be removed therein.

Endless belts or blankets have traditionally been used in shoe press operations. The
10 belt overlies and contacts the shoe of the press; in turn, a press felt such as that described above overlies the shoe press belt, and the paper web overlies the press felt. The shoe press belt and press felt travel through the nip and, in doing so, convey the paper web through the nip. The press felt is driven by a set of drive rollers arranged around the shoe or by the press roll itself. In older embodiments, shoe press belts were also driven by sets of drive rollers
15 arranged around the shoe. In some newer configurations, however, the shoe press belt is clamped or otherwise fixed to the edges of circular head plates located on either end of the shoe, such that rotation of the head plates causes the shoe press belt to rotate and travel through the nip.

Given the performance requirements, a shoe press belt should be sufficiently flexible
20 to pass around the drive rollers or head plates and through the shoe and sufficiently durable to withstand the repeated application of pressure within the nip. Because of these performance parameters, most endless belts are formed entirely or predominantly of a polymeric material (often polyurethane). Many shoe press belts also include reinforcing fibers or a reinforcing fabric between or embedded in polymeric layers. Also, shoe press belts may be configured to
25 encourage water to pass from the paper web. To this end, some shoe press belts have grooves or blind-drilled holes in the surface adjacent the press felt that serve to vent water from the paper that is exiting the press felt.

Some of the issues that arise with the manufacture of a shoe press belt are the accurate placement of reinforcing fibers within the belt (and the application of material around them).

Proposed approaches to the creation of shoe press belts are discussed in, for example, U.S.
30 Patent Nos. 5,525,194 to Jermo, 5,134,010 to Schiel, 5,320,702 to Matuschczyk, and

5,118,391 to Matuschczyk. However, there still exists a need for expediting and improving the manufacturing processes for shoe press belts.

Summary of the Invention

5 The present invention can facilitate the production of shoe press belts, and in particular shoe press belts having axially-extending reinforcing fibers that are positioned radially inwardly of circumferentially-extending fibers. As a first aspect, the present invention is directed to an endless belt for a shoe press, comprising: a polymeric matrix formed into an endless loop; multiple bands of axial fibers, the fibers being embedded in the
10 polymeric matrix, the bands including spacing material at each end that maintains a desired circumferential spacing between the fibers and further including securing structure that is adapted for securing the fibers to a mandrel; and circumferential fibers that circumferentially overlie and are spaced from the axial fibers, the circumferential fibers being embedded in the polymeric matrix. In some embodiments, the polymeric matrix comprises a base layer in
15 which the axial fibers are embedded and a top stock layer that overlies the circumferential fibers. The sheet material and securing structure can maintain the axial fibers in a desired position and spacing during the production of the belt.

As a second aspect, the present invention is directed to an endless belt for a shoe press comprising: a polymeric base layer formed of a first polymeric material; axially extending
20 fibers embedded in the base layer; circumferential fibers that circumferentially overlie the polymeric base layer; and a polymeric top stock layer that circumferentially overlies the circumferential fibers, the top stock layer being formed of a second polymeric material that differs from the first polymeric material. In this configuration, the belt can include one material that is particularly suited for contact with a shoe press and another material that is
25 particularly suited for contact with a press felt.

As a third aspect, the present invention is directed to a method of producing an endless belt, comprising the steps of: securing axial fibers relative to a mandrel, the axial fibers being spaced apart from one another at desired intervals and extending substantially parallel to a longitudinal axis of the mandrel; applying a polymeric base layer to the mandrel
30 in a thickness sufficient to embed the axial fibers; wrapping circumferential fibers onto the polymeric base layer with sufficient tension to partially embed the circumferential fibers in the polymeric base layer; applying a polymeric top stock layer over the polymeric base layer

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and circumferential fibers; and curing the base layer and the top stock layer. This method can improve productivity and performance of endless belts, particularly if the wrapping and latter applying steps closely follow the first
5 applying step.

In another aspect of the invention, there is provided an endless belt for a shoe press, comprising: a polymeric matrix formed into an endless loop; multiple bands of axial fibers, the fibers being embedded in the polymeric
10 matrix, the bands including spacing material at each end such that the fibers are spaced apart at a desired circumferential spacing between the fibers and further including securing structure for securing the fibers to a mandrel; and circumferential fibers that circumferentially
15 overlies and are spaced from the axial fibers, the circumferential fibers being embedded in the polymeric matrix.

In a further aspect of the invention, there is provided an endless belt for a shoe press, comprising: a
20 polymeric base layer formed of a polymeric material; axially extending fibers embedded in the base layer; circumferential fibers that circumferentially overlies the polymeric base layer; and a polymeric top stock layer that circumferentially overlies the circumferential fibers, the
25 top stock layer being formed of a second polymeric material that differs from the first polymeric material.

In a still further aspect of the invention, there is provided a method of forming an endless belt for a shoe press, comprising the steps of: securing axial fibers
30 relative to a mandrel, the axial fibers being spaced apart from one another at desired intervals and extending substantially parallel to a longitudinal axis of the

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mandrel; applying a polymeric base layer to the mandrel in a thickness sufficient to embed the axial fibers; wrapping circumferential fibers onto the polymeric base layer with sufficient tension to partially embed the circumferential
5 fibers in the polymeric base layer; applying a polymeric top stock layer over the polymeric base layer and circumferential fibers; and curing the base layer and the top stock layer.

In yet another aspect of the invention, there is
10 provided a method of forming an endless belt for a shoe press, comprising the steps of: securing axial fibers relative to a mandrel, the axial fibers being spaced apart from one another at desired intervals and extending substantially parallel to a longitudinal axis of the
15 mandrel; applying a polymeric base layer to the mandrel in a thickness sufficient to embed the axial fibers, the base layer being formed of a first polymeric material; wrapping circumferential fibers onto the polymeric base layer; applying a polymeric top stock layer over the polymeric base
20 layer and circumferential fibers, the top stock layer being formed of a second material that differs from the first material; and curing the base layer and the top stock layer.

In still another aspect of the invention, there is provided a method of forming an endless belt for a shoe
25 press, comprising the steps of: securing axial fibers relative to a mandrel, the axial fibers being spaced apart from one another at desired intervals and extending substantially parallel to a longitudinal axis of the mandrel, the axial fibers being maintained in spaced
30 relationship by a spacing material applied at the ends of the fibers; then applying a polymeric base layer to the mandrel in a thickness sufficient to embed the axial fibers;

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wrapping circumferential fibers onto the polymeric base layer; applying a polymeric top stock layer over the polymeric base layer and circumferential fibers; and curing the base layer and the top stock layer.

5

Brief Description of the Figures

Figure 1 is a front section view of a shoe press belt manufactured by the process of the present invention.

Figure 2 is a front view of a mandrel employed in the process of the present invention.

10

Figure 3 is an enlarged partial front view of an end portion of the mandrel of **Figure 2** with axial fibers mounted thereon.

Figure 4 is a front view of the mandrel of **Figure 2** with axial fibers mounted thereon.

15

Figure 5A is a top view of a band of axial fibers (including its laminated ends) to be included in a shoe press belt according to the present invention being formed on a fixture.

Figure 5B is a front view of the band of axial
20 fibers and the fixture of **Figure 5A**.

Figure 6A is an enlarged top view of one end of the band of axial fibers of **Figure 5A**.

Figure 6B is an enlarged top view of one end of an alternative laminated section of a band of axial fibers
25 according to the present invention.

Figure 7 is a perspective view of the mandrel of **Figure 2** with base layer and top stock nozzles and a circumferential fiber applicator.

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Detailed Description of the Invention

The present invention will now be described more fully hereinafter, in which preferred embodiments of the invention are shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein.

5 Rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the scope of the invention to those skilled in the art. In the drawings, like numbers refer to like elements throughout. Thicknesses and dimensions of some components may be exaggerated for clarity.

10 Referring now to the drawings, a portion of a shoe press belt, designated broadly at 20, is illustrated in Figure 1. The belt 20 has an endless looped polymeric matrix 21 that, in

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the illustrated embodiment, includes a base layer 22, axially-extending reinforcing fibers 24, circumferentially extending reinforcing fibers 26, and a top stock layer 28. In the illustrated embodiment, the base layer 22 completely encapsulates the axial fibers 24 (which are typically positioned about 0.025" – 0.050" above the bottom surface of the base layer 22) and extends about 0.020" above the tops of the axial fibers 24. The circumferential fibers 26 are partially embedded (typically buried about halfway) in the base layer 22. The top stock layer 28 covers and seals the circumferential fibers 26; the top stock layer 28 cross-links with the base layer 22 and provides adequate thickness (typically between about 0.050 and 0.300 inches) for further finishing operations. A typical belt 20 may be between about 40 and 80 inches in diameter, 50 and 400 inches in length, and 0.100 and 0.300 inches in thickness.

Both the base layer 22 and top stock layer 28 are typically formed of a polyurethane-based material (*i.e.*, one that is primarily formed of polyurethane), preferably one having a hardness of between about 29 and 60 on the Shore D scale, or alternatively may be formed of polyester. The material may have fillers, additives and the like (for exemplary materials, see U.S. Patent No. 4,859,396 to Krenkel et al.). It may be preferable to employ two different polyurethane-based materials for the base and top stock layers 22, 28. For example, a slightly harder material (*e.g.*, one with a Shore D hardness of between about 29 and 45) may be used for the base layer 22, which will be in contact with the shoe of a shoe press, and a slightly softer material (*e.g.*, one with a Shore D hardness of between about 45 and 60) may be used for the top stock layer 28, which will be in contact with a press felt.

The reinforcing fibers 24, 26 may be formed of any suitable reinforcing material, but will ordinarily be formed of polyester, aramid, liquid crystal polymer, or other high performance fibers between about 0.008 and 0.050 inches in diameter. The fibers 24, 26 may be monofilament or multifilament strands. It is also contemplated that the fibers 24, 26 make take a flat, ribbonlike form, as this configuration may provide performance and manufacturing advantages.

Those skilled in this art will appreciate that, although a shoe press belt is described herein, a belt of similar structure may also be employed as a shoe calender belt; reference herein to a belt for a shoe press is intended to also include a belt for a shoe calender.

Referring now to Figure 2, the belt 20 may be formed on a mandrel 30. Ordinarily, the mandrel 30 is supported at either end by bearings 35 on which it is rotatably mounted.

The mandrel **30** should have a cylindrical working surface **32** that is long enough to accommodate the largest anticipated paper machine working width (typically 400 inches), the additional length required to reach the shoe press heads (10 – 20 inches per end), the additional length required to form any belt tabs (10 – 20 inches per end) (*see* U.S. Patent No. Re 33,034 to Schiel for a description of belt tabs), and the space required to start and end the rotational cast process (12 inches per end). The length of the working surface **32** should be selected accordingly.

Preferably, the mandrel **30** includes a slightly undersized inner metallic or composite core **33** and a hard outer layer **34** (formed of rubber or some other easily worked material) that provides the working surface **32**. It is preferred that, if a separate outer layer is used and it is formed of an elastic or polymeric material, the outer layer is "bone-hard" (typically between 0 and 2 on the Pusey and Jones hardness scale), and that it be of sufficient thickness that, through grinding, the diameter can be modified to enable the formation of belts of slightly different diameters.

Prior to the application of polyurethane or other suitable polymeric material to the mandrel **30**, provisions may be made to the working surface **32** to assist with belt removal. Exemplary surface treatments include coating with mold release, wrapping with sheets of Teflon® or other low friction material, or the like.

After the mandrel **30** has been prepared, the axial reinforcing fibers **24** are loaded onto the ends of the mandrel **30**. In one embodiment of the invention, the axial fibers **24** are first formed into laminated multifiber bands (one of which is illustrated in **Figures 3** through **6A** and designated therein at **40**). The band **40** includes a plurality of fibers **24** (for example, 70 at a time) strung in parallel relationship and laminated at each end with lamination sheets **42** or other sheet material. Adhesive on the lamination sheets **42** can adhere the sheets **42** together; alternatively, the lamination sheets **42** can be heat-bonded. Other spacing material, such as a slotted card, may also be used to maintain the axial fibers in a desired spacing.

In the illustrated embodiment, tails **44** of the fibers **24** extend beyond the lamination sheets **42** and are knotted together. The knotted portions **46** of the band **40** are then secured to the ends of the mandrel **30** with tensioning hooks (not shown) mounted in a ring **36** located on the end of the mandrel **30**; if desired, the tensioning hooks may include a spring mechanism to maintain relatively consistent tension in the fibers **24**. In other embodiments, a grommet (designated at **48** in **Figure 6B**) or other suitable securing structure for attachment

to the mandrel 30 may be included in the lamination sheets 42 in place of the knotted portions 46.

The lamination sheets 42 may maintain the fibers 24 at a desired uniform spacing between adjacent fibers 24 and at a desired distance from the working surface 32.

5 Alternatively, a spacer ring or toothed belt or chain (not shown) can be attached to the ends of the mandrel 30 to maintain the fibers 24 in these positions.

The axial fiber bands 40 can be formed, for example, with a fixture such as that designated at 49 in **Figures 5A and 5B**. Axial fibers 24 are dispensed from individual creels 51 and threaded sequentially through a spacer board 53, between vertically stacked rollers 55, 10 through second and third spacer boards 57a, 57b (passing through a tensioning weight 59 between the spacer boards 57a, 57b), and through a narrower spacing card 61 that positions the fibers 24 in a desired regular gapped relationship (typically, the gap between adjacent fibers is between about 0.030 and 0.250 inches). The fibers 24, while remaining in the gapped relationship, extend to a platform 63 that slides on rails 67 (driven by a screw 65) 15 away from the spacing card 61. The platform 63 includes hooks (not shown) onto which the knotted portions 46 of the band 40 are hooked.

Referring still to **Figures 5A and 5B**, the band 40 is produced by locking the holding rollers 55 so that the fibers 24 do not slip, creating a desired tension in the fibers 24 by sliding the platform 63 along the rails 67 with the screw 65, and laminating either one or, preferably 20 and as shown, two sections of the fibers 24 near the spacer card 61 with the lamination sheets 42a, 42b. Doing so completes the production of one band 40, which now has lamination sheets 42, 42a on both ends, and begins the production of the next band 40, which now has one end laminated with lamination sheet 42b. The portions of the fibers 24 between the lamination sheets 42a, 42b are cut and knotted, the band 40 is removed and stored, and the 25 lamination sheet 42b and its attached fibers are moved to and mounted on the platform 63 to complete the production cycle.

Referring now to **Figure 7**, after the axial fibers 24 have been loaded onto the mandrel 30 and are positioned as desired, the base layer 22 and circumferential fibers 26 are applied. The base layer 22 may be applied by a casting nozzle such as that designated at 50 30 in **Figure 7**. The base layer 22 is preferably applied to a thickness that fully embeds the axial fibers 24 (a thickness that exceeds the top of the axial fibers 24 by about 0.020 inches is preferred. During application, the nozzle 50 begins at one end of the mandrel 30 and moves

axially on a track (not shown) as the mandrel 30 rotates about its axis; in this manner, the working surface 32 of the mandrel 30 becomes coated with the base layer 22.

Referring still to **Figure 7**, the circumferential fibers 26 are applied after application of the base layer 22 (preferably while the base layer 22 is still semi-soft) and before, during, or immediately after the application of the top stock layer 28 (in the illustrated embodiment, the circumferential fibers 26 are applied immediately before the application of the top stock layer 28). Individual creels of fibers (not shown) are mounted on a cart (also not shown) that is attached to and moves axially in concert with a nozzle 56 that applies the top stock layer 28; as many as six or more fibers 26 may be wound into the base layer 22 at once. In the illustrated embodiment, a rod 54 extends downwardly from the nozzle arm 58; the rod 54 has a forked lower end 54a that includes a cross-roller 54b over which the circumferential fibers 26 are fed prior to application to the base layer 22. The circumferential fibers 26 are tensioned by means known to those skilled in this art in order to control penetration of the circumferential fibers 26 into the base layer 22. Preferably, the circumferential fibers 26 are tensioned such that they are buried halfway (i.e. half of the cross-section of the fiber 26 is buried) in the base layer 22 (this tension is typically between about 0.25 and 5 pounds). It is also preferred that the top stock layer 28 be applied shortly after (i.e., within 15 minutes) or almost simultaneous with of the winding of the circumferential fibers 26, as doing so can encourage cross-linking between the base layer 22 and the top stock layer 28.

Those skilled in this art will recognize that a belt can be formed with a single material pass (*i.e.*, formed as a one polymeric layer that embeds both the axial and the circumferential fibers 24, 26) rather than the two-shot process described above. In that instance the polymeric matrix 21 is a single unitary layer. Other embodiments may include more than two layers. Such embodiments may include one layer the embeds the axial fibers 24, another layer that embeds the circumferential fibers 26, and a third layer that provides the contact surface with a press felt.

After application of the top stock layer 28, the base layer 22 and top stock layer 28 of the polymer matrix 21 are cured to form the belt 20. Once the belt 20 has been cured, post-curing operations can be carried out as the belt 20 remains on the mandrel 30. Such operations may include trimming to the proper length and approximate thickness, grinding to its finished thickness, and venting (typically with the formation of blind drilled holes or

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grooves). Other operations are described in PCT Application No. US02/06520, filed March 4, 2002.

Once the post-curing processing of the belt 20 has been completed, the belt 20 is removed from the mandrel 30. Removal can be carried out in any manner known to those
5 skilled in this art.

The foregoing is illustrative of the present invention and is not to be construed as limiting thereof. Although exemplary embodiments of this invention have been described, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that many modifications are possible in the exemplary embodiments without materially departing from the novel teachings and
10 advantages of this invention. Accordingly, all such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of this invention as recited in the claims. The invention is defined by the following claims, with equivalents of the claims to be included therein.

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CLAIMS:

1. An endless belt for a shoe press, comprising:
a polymeric base layer formed of a polymeric material;
5 axially extending fibers embedded in the base layer;
circumferential fibers that circumferentially overlie the polymeric base layer; and
a polymeric top stock layer that circumferentially
10 overlies the circumferential fibers, the top stock layer being formed of a second polymeric material that differs from the first polymeric material.
2. The endless belt defined in Claim 1, wherein the
axially extending fibers are selected from the group
15 consisting of polyester and aramid fibers.
3. The endless belt defined in Claim 1, wherein the
circumferential fibers are partially embedded in the base layer.
4. The endless belt defined in Claim 1, wherein the
20 first and second polymeric materials are, respectively, polyurethane-based materials having different hardnesses.
5. The endless belt defined in Claim 4, wherein the
first polymeric material has a hardness of between 29 and 60 Shore D.
- 25 6. The endless belt defined in Claim 5, wherein the
second polymeric material has a hardness of between 29 and 60 Shore D.

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7. A method of forming an endless belt for a shoe press, comprising the steps of:

securing axial fibers relative to a mandrel, the axial fibers being spaced apart from one another at desired intervals and extending substantially parallel to a longitudinal axis of the mandrel;

applying a polymeric base layer to the mandrel in a thickness sufficient to embed the axial fibers, the base layer being formed of a first polymeric material;

10 wrapping circumferential fibers onto the polymeric base layer;

applying a polymeric top stock layer over the polymeric base layer and circumferential fibers, the top stock layer being formed of a second material that differs from the first material; and

curing the base layer and the top stock layer.

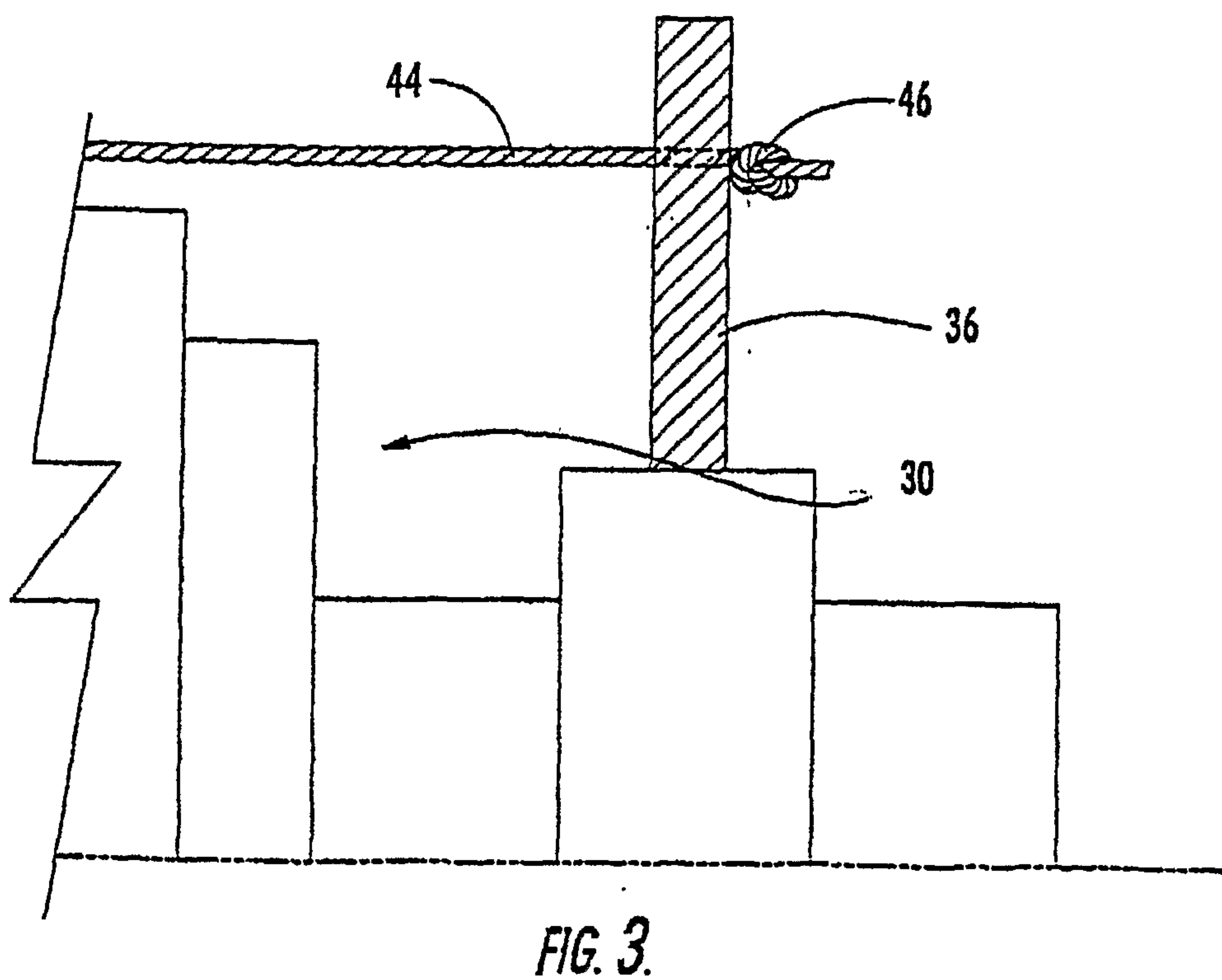
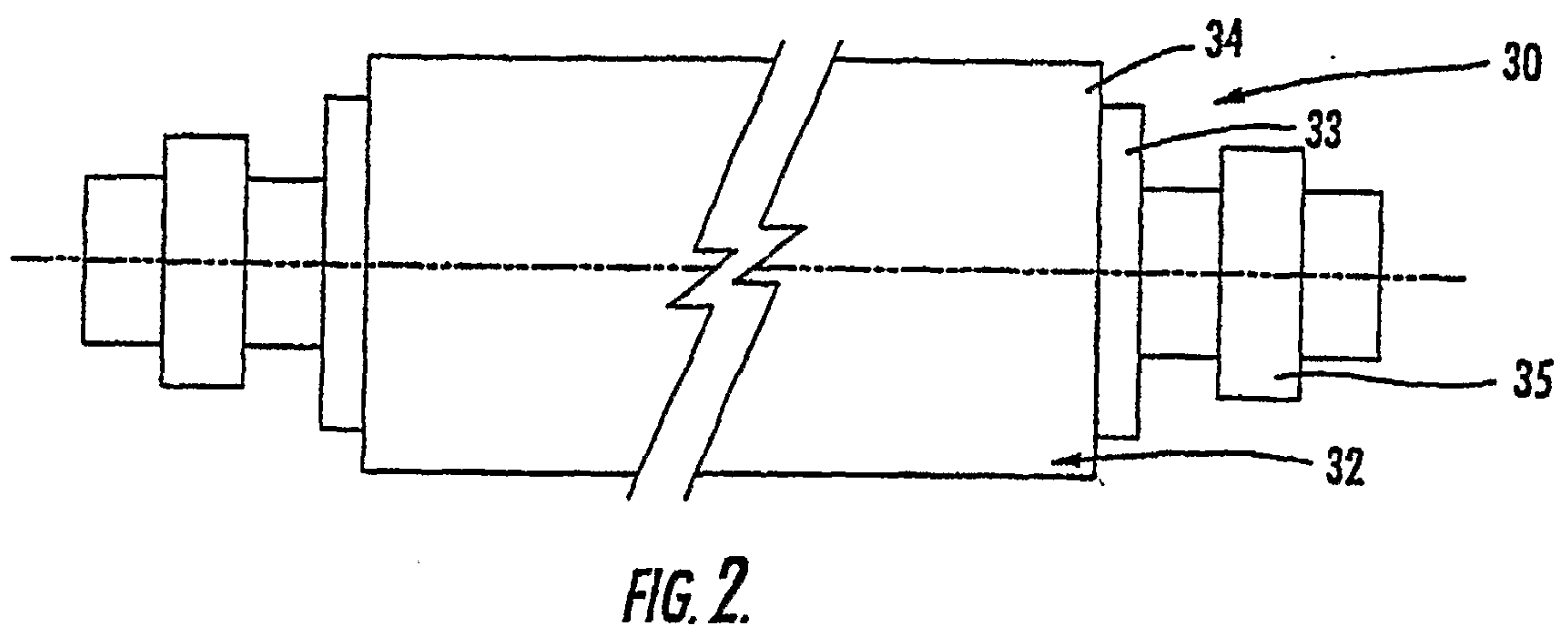
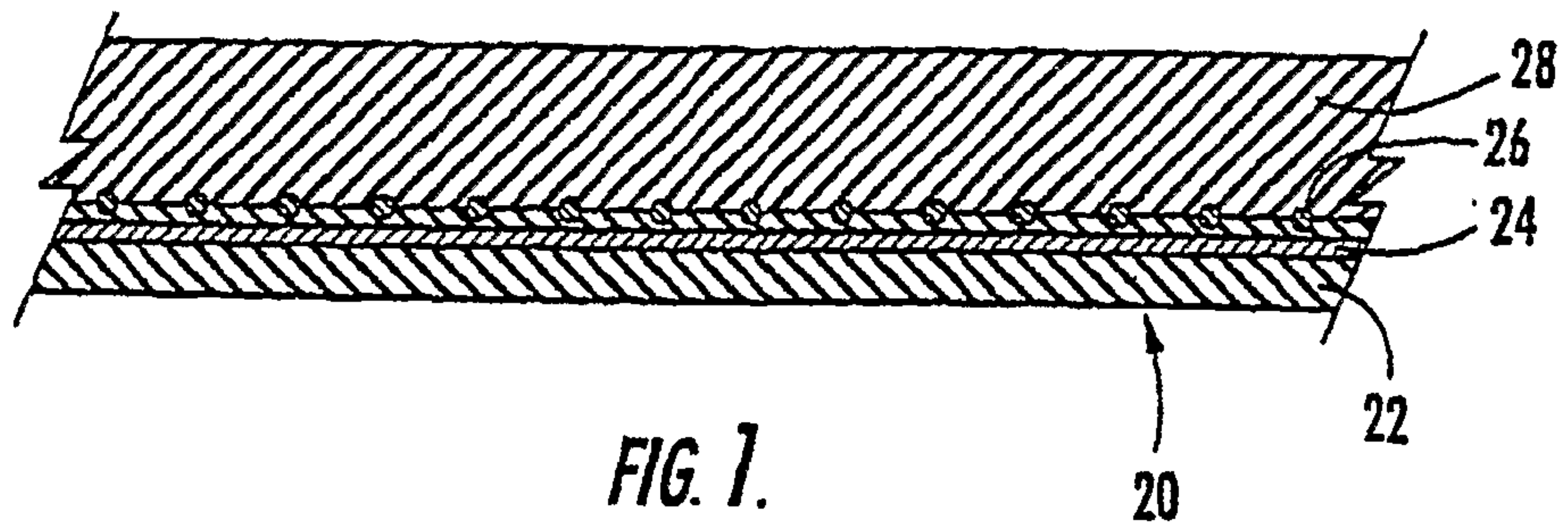
8. The method defined in Claim 7, wherein the first and second polymeric materials are polyurethane-based materials.

20 9. The method defined in Claim 7, wherein the first polymeric material has a hardness of between 29 and 60 Shore D.

10. The method defined in Claim 9, wherein the second polymeric material has a hardness of between 29 and 60 Shore D.

11. The method defined in Claim 7, wherein the wrapping step immediately precedes the step of applying the top stock layer.

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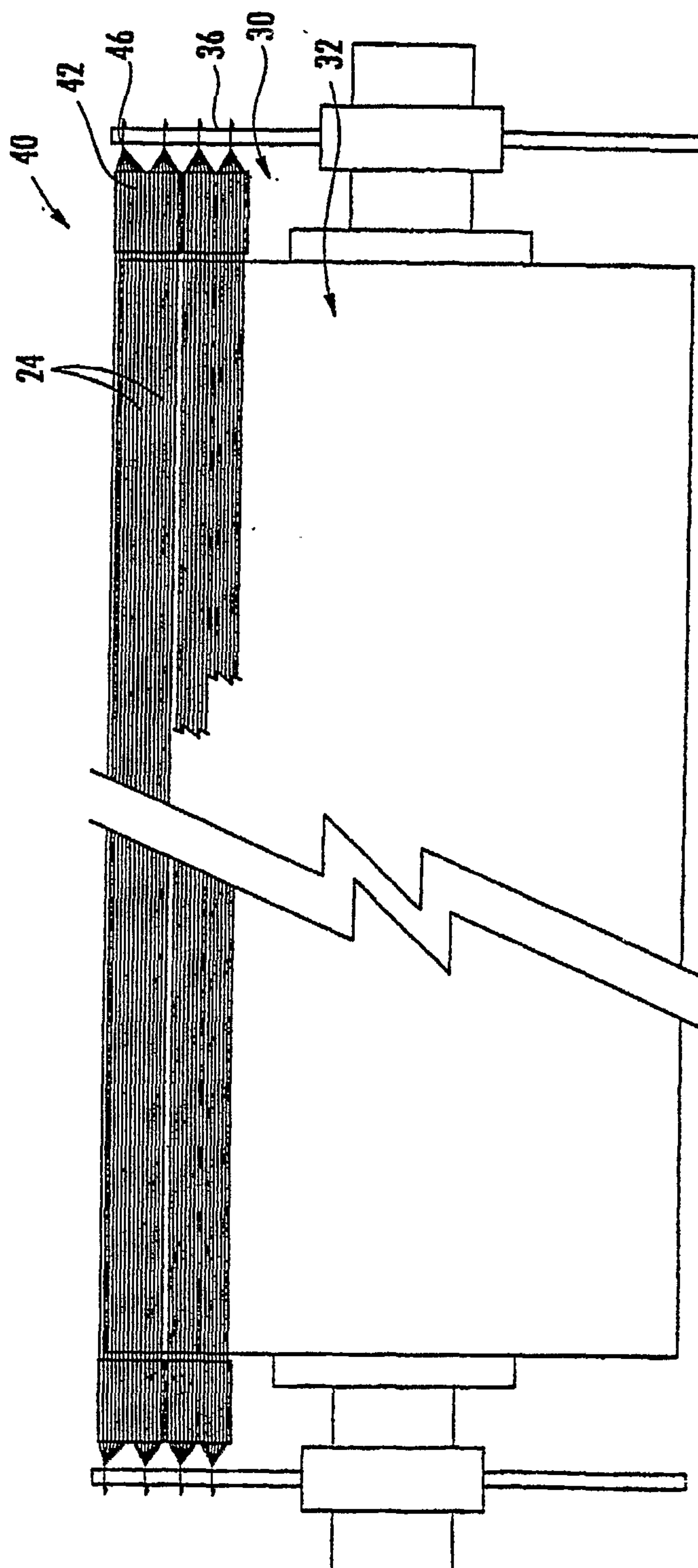


FIG. 4.

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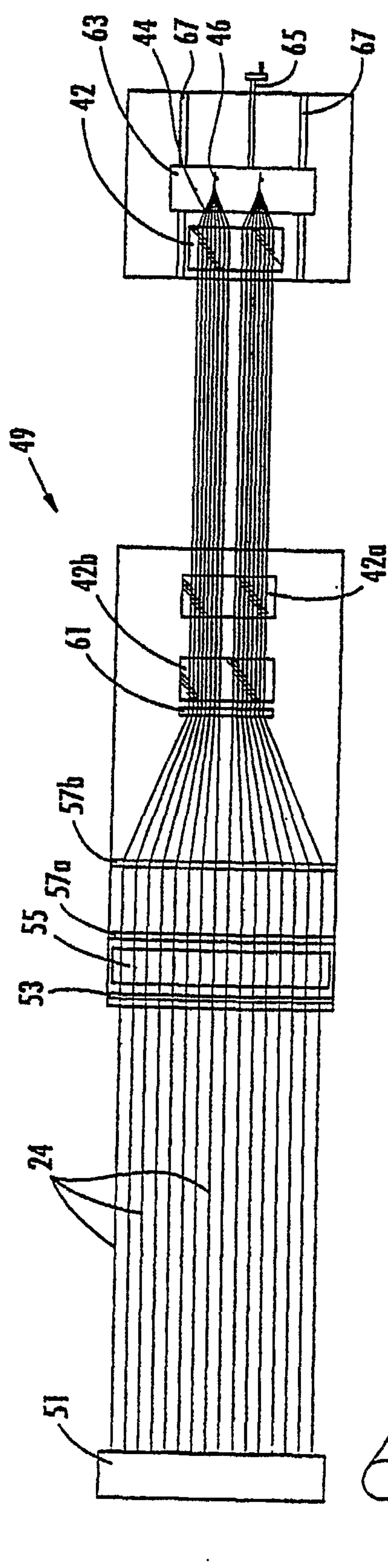


FIG. 5A.

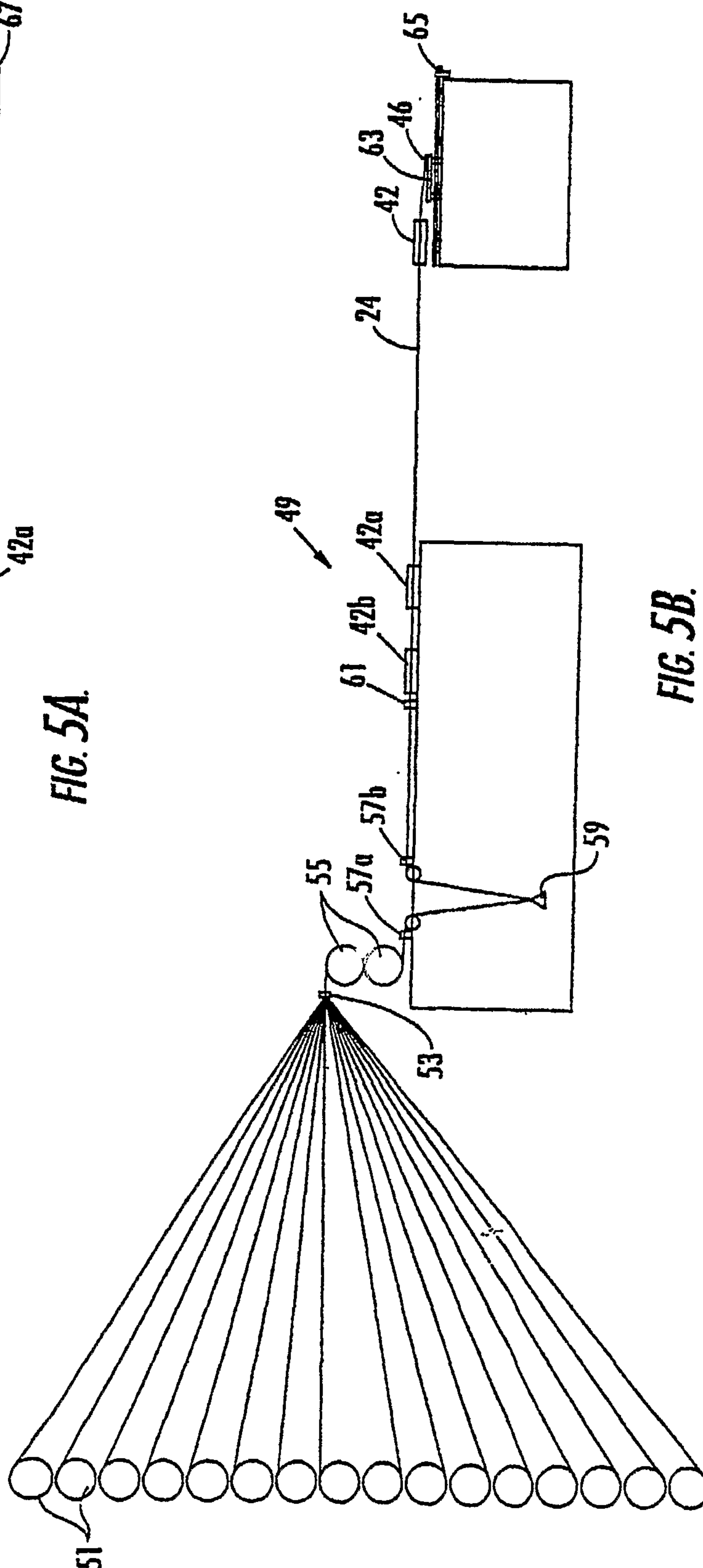


FIG. 5B.

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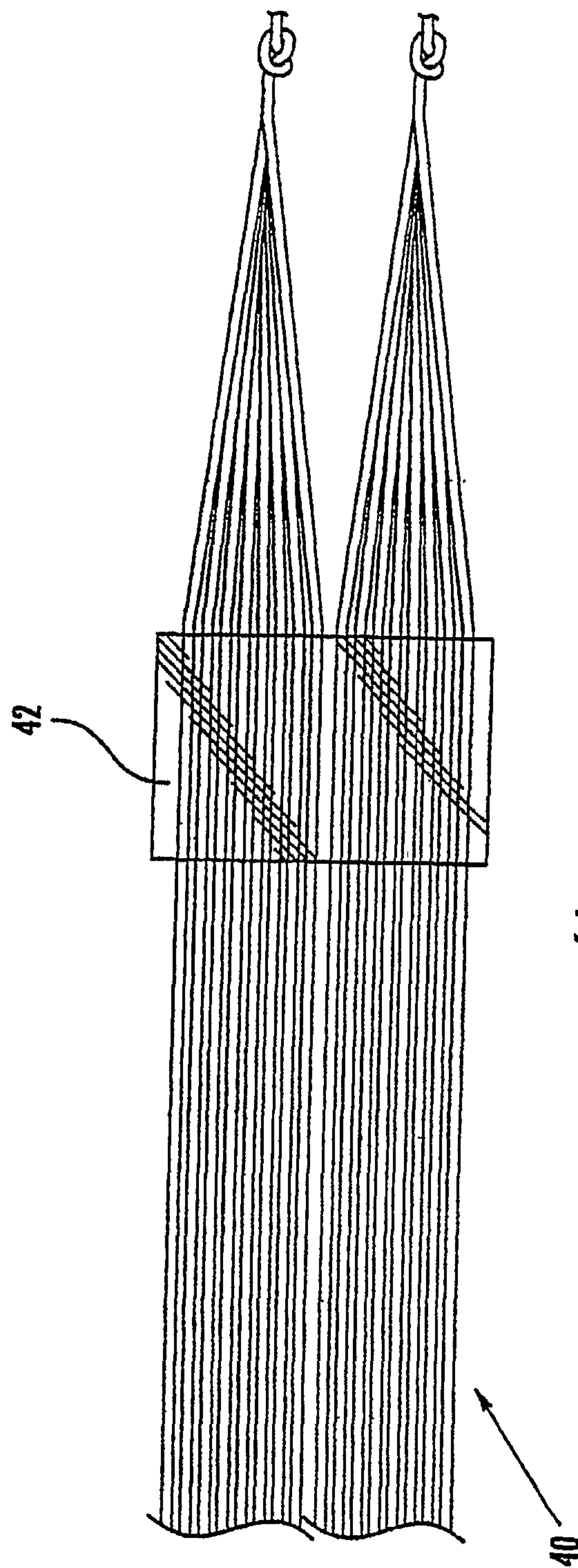
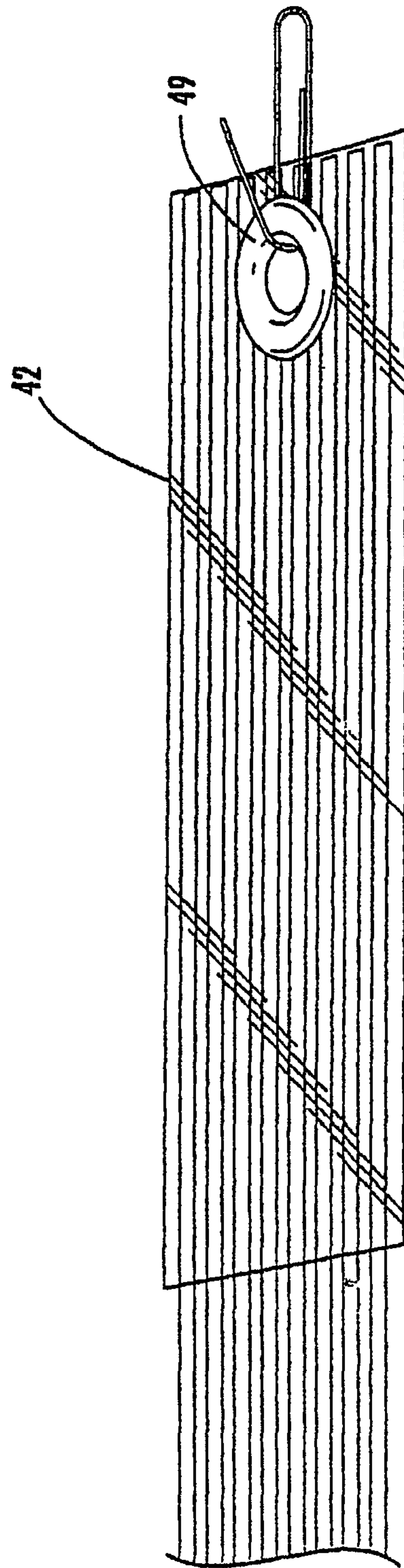


FIG. 6A.

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*FIG. 6B.*

