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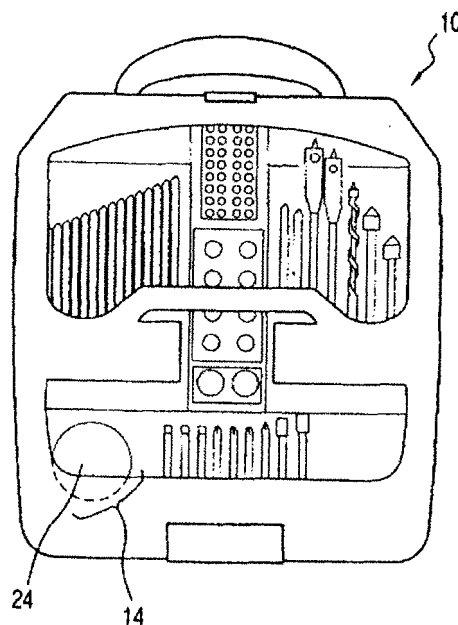
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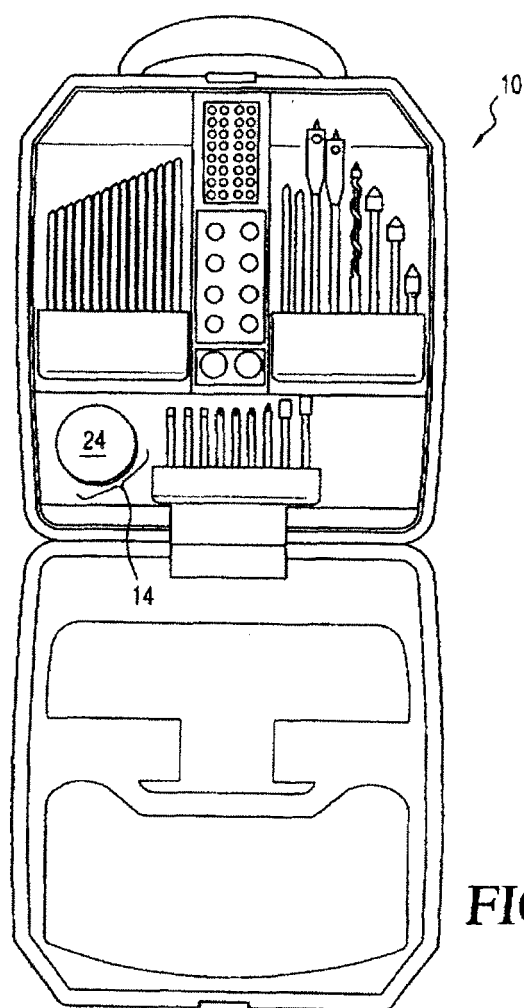
Amended claims in accordance with Rule 86 (2) EPC.

(54) **Accessory case**

(57) An accessory case includes a pair of molded matable sections with each defining a peripheral ridge about a body region for mating with the other section of the pair. One of the matable sections defines an interior pocket for releasably retaining an optional accessory magnet. The magnet may be disc shaped or formed as an elongate ruler. A reusable writing surface is optionally retained by a body region of one of the pair of molded matable sections. The writing surface and instrument may be a dry erase board and marker, a chalk board and chalk, or a note pad and pen or pencil.

FIG. 5





Description

[0001] The present invention relates to accessory cases. More particularly, the present invention relates to accessory cases including magnetic accessory holders and/or writing surfaces.

[0002] Individuals and workers commonly use a variety of tools and accessories in order to complete every day tasks and construction jobs. For example, a construction worker will typically use a measuring tool, a hammer and nails, and power tools such as drills. In fact, many times the tools and accessories must be used simultaneously in order to complete the job. For instance, hanging pictures on a wall may require the use of a measuring tape to measure distance, a level to align the pictures, and fasteners to support the pictures. The ability to multi-task is an important element in the completion of many jobs.

[0003] A variety of small tools, instruments, and accessories are often required for the completion of a construction job. Convenient storage, access, and control of such items are often required in preparation for the job, during execution of the job, and upon completion of the job. Moreover, convenient storage, access, and control of items are often required during Performance of the job itself or during intermittent breaks. In an effort to improve tool storage and access, some tool boxes or belts are fitted with specialized compartments. For example, a conventional molded drill bit case provides a storage compartment that may be used to temporarily or permanently store required drill bits. However, tool access remains problematic, as the worker must search within the tool box or belt for the specialized compartment as well as the specific tool within the specialized compartment. Moreover, such specialized compartments do little to improve access to small tool accessories such as screws and other fasteners, because even when consistently stored within a particular compartment, such small items tend to move around the compartment while remaining difficult for workers to grasp. Access is even more difficult for a variety of tool boxes and kits, most of which include a covering lid, as the lid must be raised each time the worker wishes to find a particular tool.

[0004] A writing surface is often required for the completion of a job along with a writing instrument such as a pencil or pen. Indeed, the need to take notes during a job is quite common. For example, a construction worker typically needs to write down measurements as such measurements are taken. Moreover, a worker may need to mark a particular item for some action, for instance marking a plank for the drilling of holes, while simultaneously making written notes concerning the placement and dimensions of such markings. The convenient access and use of tools in combination with a writing surface is therefore important for many jobs.

[0005] Accordingly, there is a need for an accessory case for temporarily storing tool accessories during a construction project. There is a further need for an ac-

cessory case including a convenient and accessible writing surface.

[0006] In one preferred form, the present invention provides an accessory case including a pair of molded matable sections with each defining a peripheral ridge about a body region for mating with the other section of the pair. One of the matable sections defines an interior pocket for releasably retaining an accessory magnet. The magnet is configured and arranged to releasably retain a plurality of tool accessories. The magnet may be removable from the pocket and is capable of releasably retaining a plurality of metallic tool accessories on the at least one planar surface. Alternatively, the magnet may be placed on an exterior surface of the accessory case for holding an elongate metal ruler thereon. The metallic tool accessories include nuts, bolts, screws, nails, nut runners, screwdriver bits, hex bits, torx bits, and drill bits.

[0007] In another preferred form, the present invention provides an accessory case including a pair of molded matable sections with each defining a peripheral ridge about a body region for mating with the other section of the pair. A reusable writing surface is retained by a body region of one of the pair of molded matable sections. A writing instrument holding section is attached to one of the molded sections and a writing instrument is configured to be removably received by the writing instrument holding section. The writing surface and instrument may be a dry eraser board and marker, a chalk board and chalk, or a note pad and pen or pencil.

FIG. 1 is an elevated perspective view of an accessory case in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is an elevated rear perspective view of the accessory case of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a front view of a removable ruler;

FIG. 4 is a bottom view of the accessory case of FIG. 1 showing writing instrument holding sections attached thereto and a writing instrument;

FIG. 5 is a front view of an accessory case including a magnetic accessory holder in accordance with a second embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 6 is a front view of the accessory case of FIG. 5 in the open position; and

FIG. 7 is a rear view of the accessory case of FIG. 5.

[0008] With reference now to the figures, and in particular FIGS. 1 and 2, an embodiment of the present invention is described herein. In one preferred embodiment, the accessory case of the present invention may be viewed as a body 10 which defines the accessory case. The body 10 may include at least one writing surface 12. At least one portion of the body 10 may serve as an attachment area 14 for at least one attachment item 16, wherein the attachment item 16 is magnetically attachable with the attachment area 14. Preferably, as shown in FIG. 3, the attachment item 16 is a ruler or scale.

[0009] Those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize

that body 10 may take any number of forms. Preferably, the body 10 is in a form which may serve as a vehicle for those items (e.g., hand tools, other work accessories) that are used in the performance of a particular task or job. Thus, in one preferred embodiment, the body 10 is in the form of a toolbox. In another preferred embodiment, as shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, the body 10 is in the form of a briefcase. As alternately shown in FIGS. 5-7, the body 10 may take the form a case for carrying certain tools.

[0010] Those of ordinary skill in the art will also recognize that a variety of materials may be used in manufacturing the body 10 that defines the accessory case. Such materials include, but are not limited to, plastics, metal, stainless steel, leather and a variety of other materials. In one preferred embodiment, the body 10 is made of stainless steel. In another preferred embodiment, the body 10 is made of plastic. Moreover, in preferred embodiments, the body 10 may be manufactured to include structural overmolds 18, for instance at each corner of the body 10 as shown in the preferred embodiments of FIGS. 1-2. Those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that the overmolds 18 may have various functions, including imparting skid resistance to the body 10 and/or protecting the body 10 from damage when struck (as might occur during air travel or regular work activities). A variety of materials may be used in the manufacture of such overmolds 18 including, but not limited to, rubber, steel and plastic, while a most preferred material is rubber.

[0011] In one preferred embodiment, the accessory case may include a writing surface 12. Those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize a variety of writing surfaces 12 suitable for use in the present invention including, but not limited to, notepads, chalkboards and dry marker eraser boards. In a preferred embodiment, the writing surface 12 is an integral part of the body 10, as is shown in the preferred embodiment of FIG. 2. By integral, it is meant that the writing surface 12 is manufactured as part of the body 10, so that the writing surface 12 is one of the parts that constitute the whole of the body 10. In another preferred embodiment, the writing surface 12 may be permanently affixed to the body 10, but not necessarily integral to the body 10, for example where the writing surface 12 is permanently affixed to a surface of the body 10 (e.g., a chalkboard permanently secured to the outer surface of the body). In another preferred embodiment, the writing surface 12 may be releasably attached to the body 10. For example, as shown in FIG. 7, the body 10 may include a frame 22 by which the writing surface 12 can be attached. In this preferred embodiment, the frame 22 provides grooves into which corresponding tongues on the writing surface 12 are slid. Those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that the tongue and groove structure shown in the figures may be replaced by adhesive strips, VELCRO®, or any other attachment means.

[0012] FIG. 4 illustrates a hinged bottom of the accessory case of FIG. 1, showing a writing instrument 28 and two writing instrument holding sections 20 capable of se-

curing the writing instrument 28. The writing instrument holding section 20 includes multiple protruding fingers 29 which serve to receive and removably secure the writing instrument 28. A variety of writing instruments 28 are suitable for use in the present invention including, but not limited to, pencils, pens, chalk and markers. Additionally, those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize a variety of holding sections 20 that may be used to attach a writing instrument 28 including, but not limited to, adhesive strips or Velcro®. Those of ordinary skill in the art will further recognize that such writing instrument holding sections 20 can be located almost anywhere within or without the body 10 including, but not limited to, the outer surface of the body 10 or as part of a handle located on the body 10.

[0013] As illustrated in FIG. 1, at least one portion of the body 10 may serve as an attachment area 14 for at least one attachment item 16, wherein the attachment item 16 is preferably magnetically attachable with the attachment area 14. By attachment area 14, it is meant a portion of the body 10 onto which an attachment item may be attached directly or indirectly through a variety of mechanisms. By attachment item 16, it is meant any item which can be attached directly or indirectly to the attachment area 14 of the body 10. Preferably, the attachment item 16 is removably attached to the attachment area 14. Examples of attachment items include, but are not limited to, common tools such as levels, rulers or scales, and measuring tapes. Attachment items may also include smaller accessory tools such as drill bits, screws, nuts and bolts, and nails. Preferably, the attachment item 16 is a ruler or scale, which is attached to the attachment area 14, as shown in FIG. 1.

[0014] Those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize numerous mechanisms through which an attachment item 16 may be attached to an attachment area 14. Preferably, the attachment item 16 is magnetically attachable with the attachment area 14 by way of a magnet located in attachment area 14 (located behind attachment item 16 in FIG. 1). Alternatively, the attachment item 16 (e.g., a scale) may include a magnet or be manufactured of a magnetic material so as to form a magnetic attachment item. For example, in one embodiment of FIG. 1, a scale 16 may be manufactured from or with magnets, thereby exhibiting a magnetic attraction for a stainless steel body 10 (e.g., any stainless steel portion of the body 10 might serve as an attachment area 14).

[0015] In yet another embodiment shown in FIGS. 5-7, a magnet 24 is located in interior cavity in the body 10 to secure various attachment items 16, in particular smaller attachment items 16 such as drill bits, screws, nuts and bolts. Here the attachment area 14 forms a pocket to assist in securing any attachment items.

[0016] In one preferred embodiment of the invention, the accessory case includes at least one storage Container 26, for example as shown in the preferred embodiment of FIG. 7. Those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that the storage container 26 may be used to hold a variety of items, in particular smaller items such as

screws, washers, nuts and bolts. In a preferred embodiment, the storage container 26 is located within an interior space and/or surface as defined by the body 10. In another preferred embodiment, the storage container 26 is located on an exterior surface of the body 10 and is attached using a tongue and groove structure as shown in FIG. 7. It should be understood that the storage container 26 may be secured to the body 10 through a variety of means which are encompassed by the present invention.

[0017] The present invention can be further described in view of particularly preferred embodiments and the improvements/advantages provided thereby. With reference to FIGS. 1-2, it is seen that in one particularly preferred embodiment, the invention is an accessory case which includes a body 10 defining the accessory case, wherein the body 10 is in the form of a briefcase or briefcase like structure. The body 10 includes a writing surface 12 as well as a writing instrument holding section 20 for removably securing a writing instrument 28. In accordance with the above discussions, an exterior surface of the body 10 serves as an attachment area 14 for an attachment item 16 (e.g., a scale), wherein the attachment item 16 is magnetically attachable to the attachment area 14.

[0018] Those of ordinary skill in the art will readily recognize the advantages provided by such a preferred embodiment of the invention. At the very least, such an embodiment provides a quick and convenient way for a worker to simultaneously access a writing surface 12 and common work tools such as a scale 16. Not only does placement of the writing surface 12 and instrument 28 as well as the scale 16 eliminate any cumbersome search for necessary tools, but the manner of attachment of each tool allows the worker to easily access and use all items, even simultaneously. For example, in performing a particular job, a worker may remove the magnetically attached scale 16 in order to take necessary measurements, while simultaneously making written notes of the measurements on the writing surface 12. However, if more attention is required for any particular task, the scale 16, the writing instrument 28 or both may be re-attached to the accessory case, thereby freeing the workers hands. Through such convenience, the worker is more effective, and job performance more efficient.

[0019] With reference to FIGS. 5-7, it is seen that in another preferred embodiment, the invention is an accessory case which includes a body 10 defining the accessory case, wherein the body 10 is in the form of a case for storing certain tools, wherein the body 10 includes a writing surface 12. As seen in FIG. 5 (wherein the case cover is closed) and FIG. 6 (wherein the case cover is open), a magnet 24 is located in an interior portion of the body 10 to serve as an attachment area 14. The attachment area 14 serves to attach at least one attachment item 16 (not shown), for example drill bits, washers, screws, nut and/or bolts. As seen in FIG. 7, the accessory case may also include multiple storage con-

tainers 26 which are affixed to the body 10.

[0020] Although the present invention has been described in detail with particular reference to preferred embodiments thereof, it should be understood that the invention is capable of other different embodiments, and its details are capable of modifications in various obvious respects. As is readily apparent to those skilled in the art, variations and modifications can be affected while remaining within the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the foregoing disclosure, description, and figures are for illustrative purposes only, and do not in any way limit the invention, which is defined only by the claims.

Claims

1. An accessory case, comprising:

a body for holding tool accessories;
a magnet located on the body, the magnet being configured to releasably retain a plurality of tool accessories; and
a writing surface located on the body.

2. The accessory case according to claim 1 wherein the body is formed by a pair of matable sections that can open and close, and said one of the matable sections defines an interior attachment area for retaining the magnet.

3. The accessory case according to claim 1, wherein the magnet is located on an exterior surface of the body such that the plurality of metallic tool accessories can be releasably retained on the exterior surface.

4. The accessory case according to claim 3, wherein a removable ruler is attached to the magnet on the exterior surface of the body.

5. The accessory case according to claim 1, wherein the body is formed by a pair of matable sections, the magnet being located on one of the matable sections and the writing surface being located on the other matable section.

6. The accessory case according to claim 5, further comprising a writing instrument for writing on the writing surface and being releasably attached to the body.

7. The accessory case according to claim 6, wherein the matable sections are hinged together to open and close, and a writing instrument holding section is located adjacent the hinge, the writing instrument holding section releasably securing the writing instrument.

8. The accessory case according to claim 1 wherein the writing surface is reusable.

9. The accessory case according to claim 1 wherein the writing surface comprises a writing pad that is secured to the body using a tongue and groove structure.

10. The accessory case according to claim 1 further comprising storage compartments located on an exterior surface of the body for holding tool accessories.

11. An accessory case, comprising:

a body having a pair of molded matable sections, each defining a peripheral ridge about the body for mating with the other section of said pair; and a writing surface retained by one of the pair of molded matable sections.

12. The accessory case according to claim 11, further comprising a writing instrument holding section attached to one of said molded sections; and a writing instrument configured and arranged to be removably received by said writing instrument holding section.

13. The accessory case according to claim 12, wherein the writing surface is a dry erase board and the writing instrument is a dry erase marker.

14. The accessory case according to claim 12, wherein the writing surface is a chalk board and the writing instrument is chalk.

15. The accessory case according to claim 12, wherein the writing surface is a note pad and the writing instrument is a pen or pencil.

16. The accessory case according to claim 11, further comprising:

an accessory magnet retained by the body region of one of the matable sections, the magnet being configured and arranged to releasably retain a plurality of tool accessories.

17. An accessory case, comprising:

a pair of molded matable sections, each defining a peripheral ridge about a body region for mating with the other section of said pair; and an accessory magnet releasably retained by the body region of one of the matable sections, the magnet being configured and arranged to releasably retain a plurality of tool accessories.

18. The accessory case according to claim 17, further comprising a reusable writing surface retained by a body region of one of the pair of molded matable sections.

19. The accessory case according to claim 17, wherein the accessory magnet is disc shaped.

20. The accessory case according to claim 17, further comprising a writing instrument holding section attached to one of said molded sections; and a writing instrument configured and arranged to be removably received by said writing instrument holding section.

21. The accessory case according to claim 20, wherein the writing surface is a dry erase board and the writing instrument is a dry erase marker.

22. The accessory case according to claim 20, wherein the writing surface is a chalk board and the writing instrument is chalk.

23. The accessory case according to claim 20, wherein the writing surface is a note pad and the writing instrument is a pen or pencil.

Amended claims in accordance with Rule 86(2) EPC.

1. An accessory case, comprising:

a body (10) for holding tool accessories, having a pair of molded matable sections, each section defining a peripheral ridge about the body for mating with the other section of said pair; and a writing surface (12) retained by one of the pair of molded matable sections.

2. The accessory case according to claim 1, further comprising

a writing instrument holding section (20) attached to one of said molded sections; and a writing instrument (28) configured and arranged to be removably received by said writing instrument holding section (20).

3. The accessory case according to claim 2, wherein the matable sections are hinged together to open and close, and the writing instrument holding section (20) is located adjacent the hinge.

4. The accessory case according to any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein the writing surface (12) is reusable.

5. The accessory case according to any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein the writing surface (12) comprises a

writing pad that is secured to the body using a tongue and groove structure (22).

6. The accessory case according to claim 4, wherein the writing surface (12) is a dry erase board and the writing instrument is a dry erase marker. 5

7. The accessory case according to claim 4, wherein the writing surface (12) is a chalk board and the writing instrument is chalk. 10

8. The accessory case according to claim 2, wherein the writing surface (12) is a note pad and the writing instrument is a pen or pencil. 15

9. The accessory case according to claim any one of the preceding claims, further comprising:

an accessory magnet (14) retained by the body region of one of the matable sections, the magnet (14) being configured and arranged to releasably retain a plurality of tool accessories. 20

10. The accessory case according to claim 9 wherein one of the matable sections defines an interior attachment area (24) for retaining the magnet (14). 25

11. The accessory case according to claim 9, wherein the magnet (14) is located on an exterior surface of the body such that the plurality of metallic tool accessories can be releasably retained on the exterior surface. 30

12. The accessory case according to claim 11, wherein a removable ruler (16) is attached to the magnet (14) on the exterior surface of the body (10). 35

13. The accessory case according to claim 9, wherein the magnet (14) is located on one of the matable sections and the writing surface (12) being located on the other matable section. 40

14. An accessory case according to any one of claims 9 to 13, wherein the accessory magnet (14) is releasably retained by the body region of one of the matable sections. 45

15. The accessory case according to any one of claims 9 to 14, wherein the accessory magnet (14) is disc shaped. 50

16. The accessory case according to any one of the preceding claims, further comprising storage compartments (26) located on an exterior surface of the body (10) for holding tool accessories. 55

FIG. 1

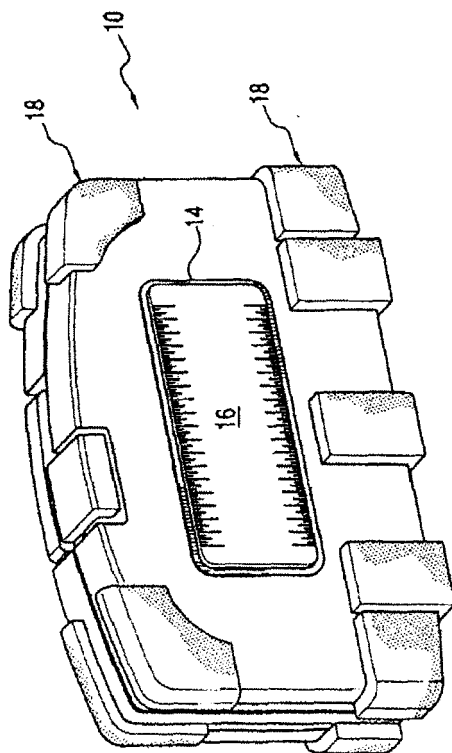


FIG. 2

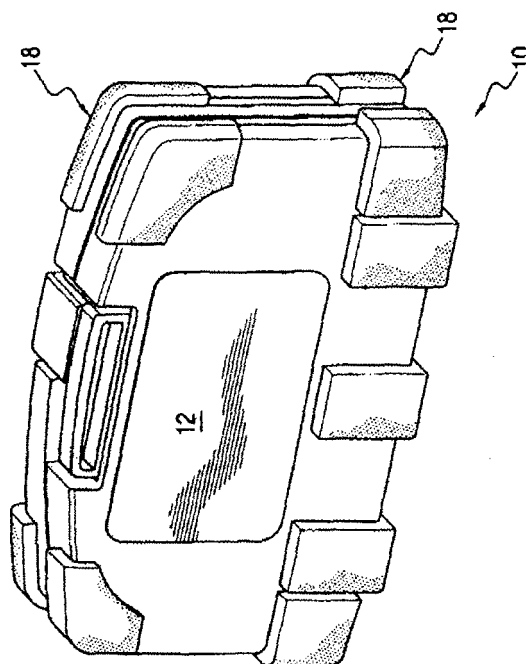
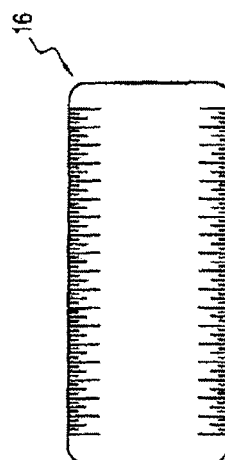


FIG. 3



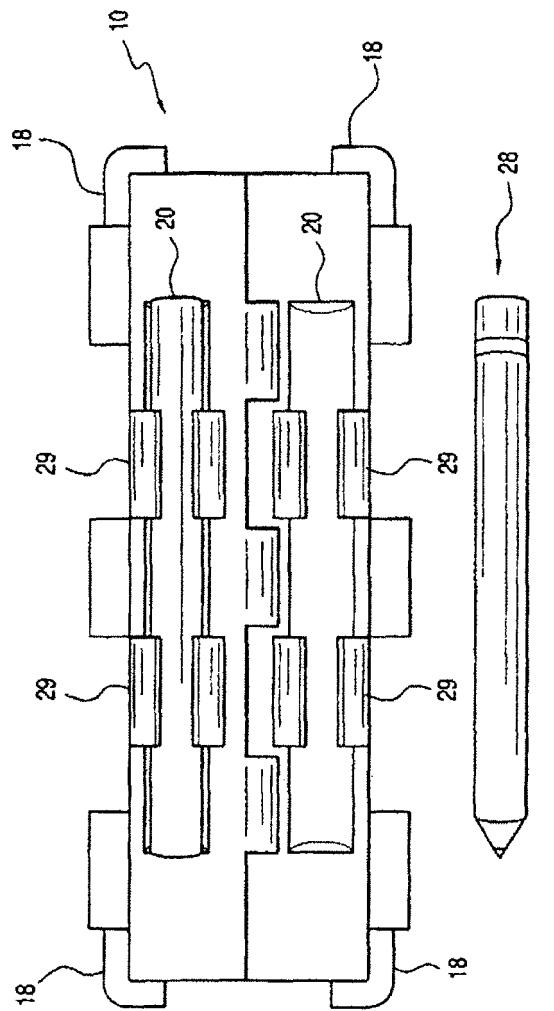
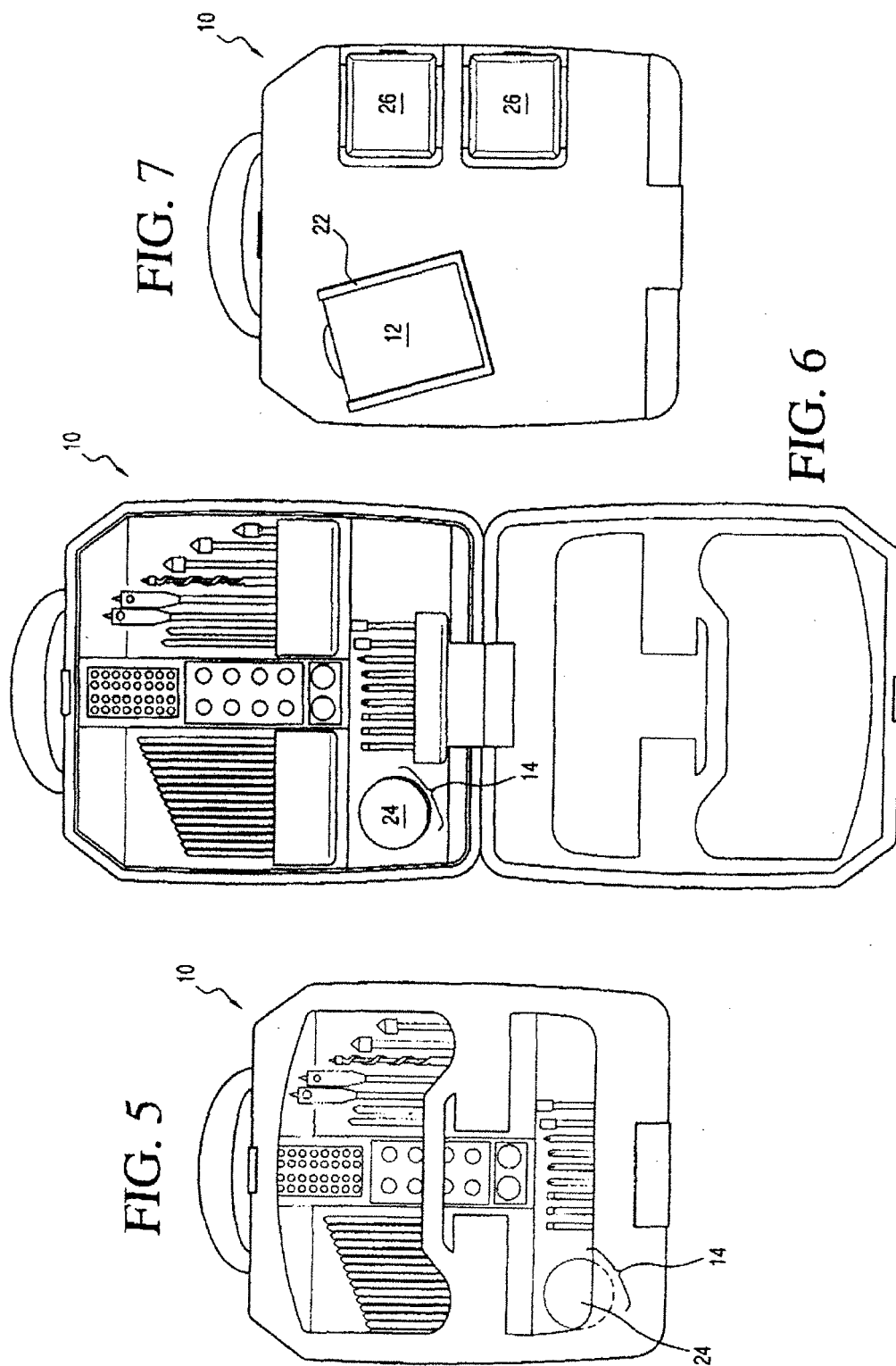


FIG. 4





European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 07 10 9605

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Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
X	US 2003/062279 A1 (LAM) 3 April 2003 (2003-04-03) * page 1, paragraph 6; figures 1,2 * * page 2, paragraphs 22,23,26; figures 1,2 *	1-3,5-8, 17,19,20	INV. A45C11/00
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search The Hague		Date of completion of the search 25 July 2007	Examiner IONESCU, C
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

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EPO FORM 1503 03 82 (P04C01)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 07 10 9605

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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