

[54] **AUTO TRIM**

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296/28 R, 29; D12/196; 156/71, 63; 161/31,
167, 413

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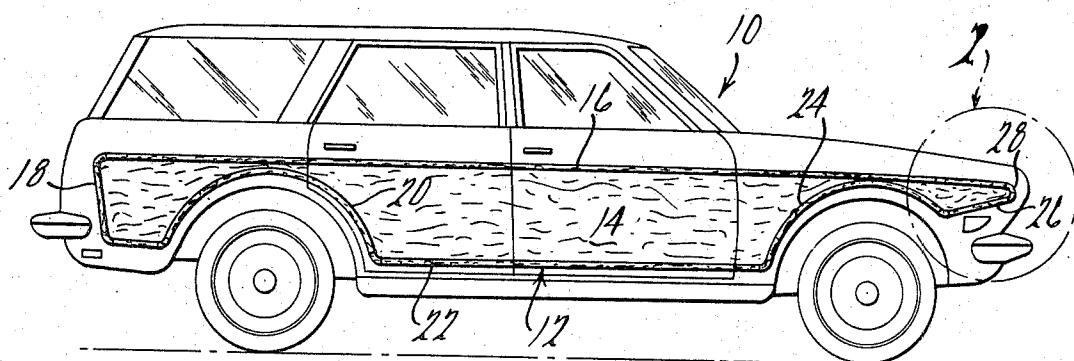
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A simulated wood decorative panel is provided with a continuous simulated wood molding around the marginal edge thereof. The molding comprises a plurality elongated relatively straight vinyl strips having a cross section that simulates the wood door frames used on early "station wagons." An annular blank having a cross section similar to the elongated strips is cut into sections to provide arcuate corners between adjacent trim strips.

2 Claims, 4 Drawing Figures



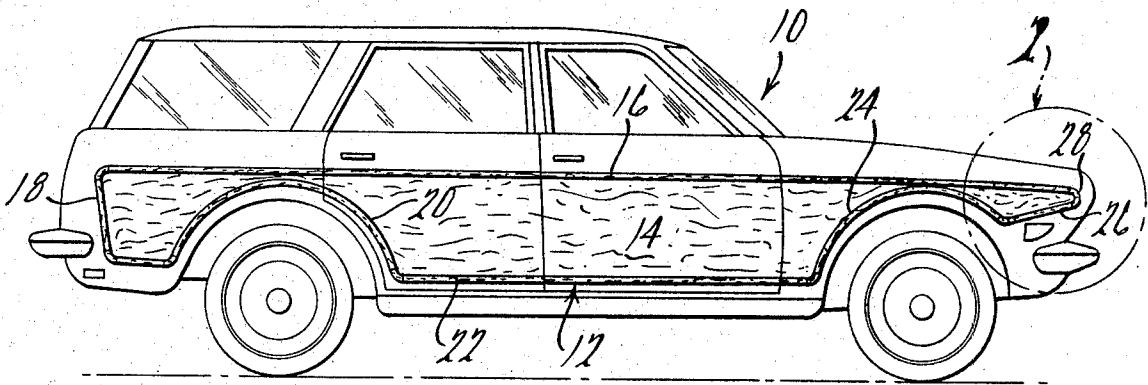


FIG. 1.

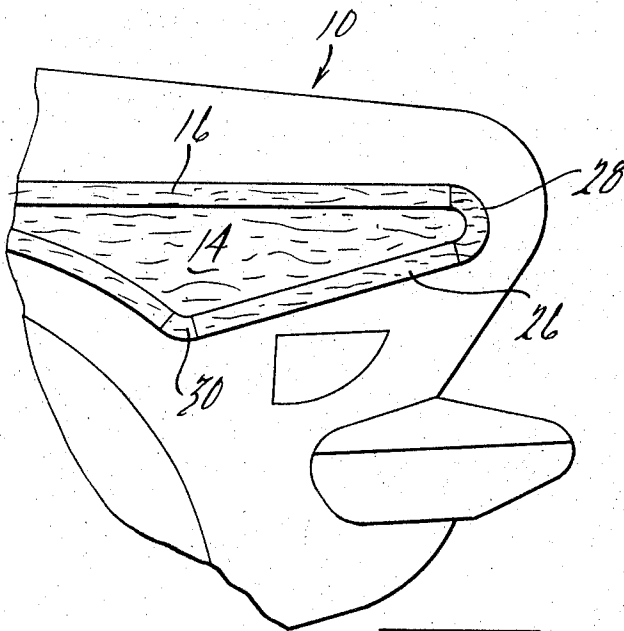


FIG. 2.

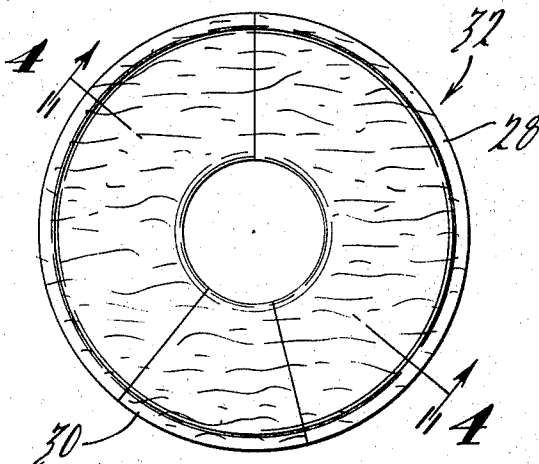


FIG. 3.

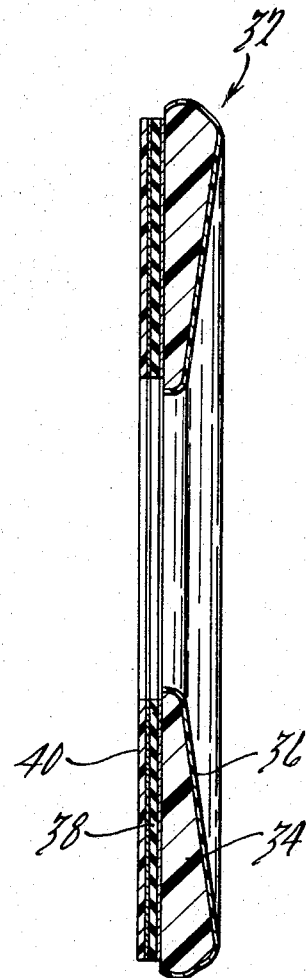


FIG. 4.

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AUTO TRIM

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to the art of decorative moldings and more particularly to a molding adapted to frame a decorative panel on an automotive vehicle or the like.

Historically, automotive vehicles known as "station wagons" utilized wood door panels set into relatively massive wood frames. While aesthetically pleasing, such early door constructions were hard to maintain and deteriorated rapidly.

The advent of wood grained vinyl decorative film offered the automotive stylist the opportunity to provide the aesthetic quality of wood without its negative maintenance characteristics. However, to complete the simulation of earlier wood constructions, the relatively heavy wood frames used on early station wagons had to be simulated. This problem has been heretofore solved by a molded fiberglass reinforced plastic shell to which a wood applique is applied. Alternative solutions to the problem have been aluminum stampings, rolled aluminum sections or one piece vacuum formed plastic frames, to which a wood grain applique is bonded.

In providing such decorative panel system suitable for the after market in kit form as well as for original equipment manufacturers, a problem has been found to exist in forming arcuate corners between adjacent relatively straight molding strips. More particularly, it has been found that while molding strips formed of plastic material such as polyvinyl chloride can be flexed to frame the wheel well openings of the vehicle, the minimum radius of curvature to which such moldings can be flexed is approximately five times the width thereof. Thus, corners which must have a smaller radius for aesthetic reasons must be treated differently.

This problem is solved, in accordance with the present invention, by a novel annular molding, the outer radius of which can be of any radius less than five times the width of the straight moldings. Segments are cut from the blank to accommodate any corner situation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a side elevational view of an exemplary station wagon having a wood grained decor panel framed by a continuous molding in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the subject invention;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged fragmentary view of the station wagon illustrated in FIG. 1 encircled in the dash/dot lines designated by the numeral 2;

FIG. 3 is a plan view of a blank utilized in framing the corner sections of the continuous molding framing the decor panel; and

FIG. 4 is an enlarged, cross-sectional view of the blank illustrated in FIG. 3 taken on the lines 4-4 thereof.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring to the drawings, an automotive vehicle 10, for example a "station wagon," is provided with a decor panel 12 which extends substantially across the side sheet metal portions thereof. The decor panel 12 comprises a polyvinyl chloride film 14 printed with a wood grain and covered with a clear, ultra-violet resistant film, e.g. polyetra fluoride or acrylic. The film 14

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is sized to accommodate various automotive body panels and doors and is adhesively bonded thereto. Relatively larger decorative moldings 16, 18, 20, 22, 24 and 26 are disposed about the marginal edges of the panel 14 to provide the so-called "town and country" appearance. The moldings 16, 18, 20, 22, 24 and 26, each having edge portions tangentially related to arcuate corner sections, hereinafter described in detail.

The moldings 16, 18, 20, 22, 24 and 26 are preferably formed from extruded thermoplastic polymeric material, for example, polyvinyl chloride, having a simulated wood grain finish layer approximately .007 inches thick on one side and a pressure sensitive adhesive backing on the opposite side. Characteristically, the moldings 16-26 have a cross-sectional configuration such that they can be bowed or flexed to the contour of the wheel openings formed in the front and rear sheet metal panels of the vehicle 10. In this regard, it has been found that the moldings 16-26 can be flexed to form an arc having a minimum radius of curvature approximately five times the width of the moldings. Accordingly, if a radius of curvature of less than five times the width of one of the moldings is required at, for example, corners between adjacent moldings, a relatively small arcuately shaped section is required to interfit between the terminal ends thereof.

In accordance with the present invention, and as best seen in FIGS. 2 and 3, a section 30 is cut from an annular shaped blank 32 and removed therefrom for interfitting between adjacently located moldings 24 and 26. In a similar manner, a section 28 is removed from the blank 32 and interfitted between the moldings 16 and 26, the section 28 providing a return bend of almost 180°. In view of the exemplary sections 28 and 30, it will be observed that additional sections can be cut from the blank 32 for acceptance between the remaining adjacently located moldings resulting in continuous framing of the marginal edges of the decor panel 14.

With respect to the construction of the blank 32 and with reference to FIG. 4, each of the blanks 32 comprises an annular shaped core 34 formed from vinyl and covered by an exterior layer 36 having a wood grained finish which corresponds to the exterior finish of the moldings 16-26. The opposite side of the blank 32 has a relatively thin layer of an adhesive 38 thereon to affix the sections 28 and 30 to the sheet metal panels of the vehicle 10. To facilitate handling, a removable protective sheet may be applied over the adhesive surface 38 which is peeled off upon assembly.

It will be seen that by utilization of the blank 32, the number of components necessary to complete the installation of a decorative panel is reduced to only two items, namely, an elongated molding that can flex to a minimum radius of approximately five times its width, and an annular blank that can be cut to accommodate any desired corner configuration having a radius less than five times the width thereof.

Thus, a decorative simulated wood trim assembly in accordance with the present invention is not limited to a specific model or manufacturer and can be supplied in kit form for installation by the vehicle owner.

It will be apparent that the preferred embodiment of the invention disclosed is susceptible to modification, variation, and change without departing from the proper scope or fair meaning of the claims hereof.

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What is claimed is:

1. In a simulated wood decorative assembly for the sides of a vehicle, a panel of plastic material having a simulated wood exterior surface, a plurality of relatively straight moldings of plastic material having a simulated wood exterior surface substantially framing said panel with the end portions thereof spaced from one another, a circular element of plastic material having a radial cross-section similar to said moldings which is cut into arcuate sections and disposed between adjacent ends of said moldings, and adhesive means for affixing said moldings and arcuate sections to said panel to form a continuous frame thereabout.

2. In a method of trimming the sides of a vehicle with a simulated wood decorative assembly which includes

the steps of: bonding a panel of plastic material having a simulated wood exterior surface to the sides of the vehicle, bonding a plurality of relatively straight moldings of plastic material having a simulated wood exterior surface about the periphery of said panel with the end portions thereof spaced from one another, forming an annulus of plastic material having a radial cross-section and exterior finish similar to that of said moldings, cutting corner sections from said annulus, and bonding said corner sections between said spaced end portions so as to have the outer edge of said moldings disposed tangentially related to the outer periphery of said corner sections.

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