



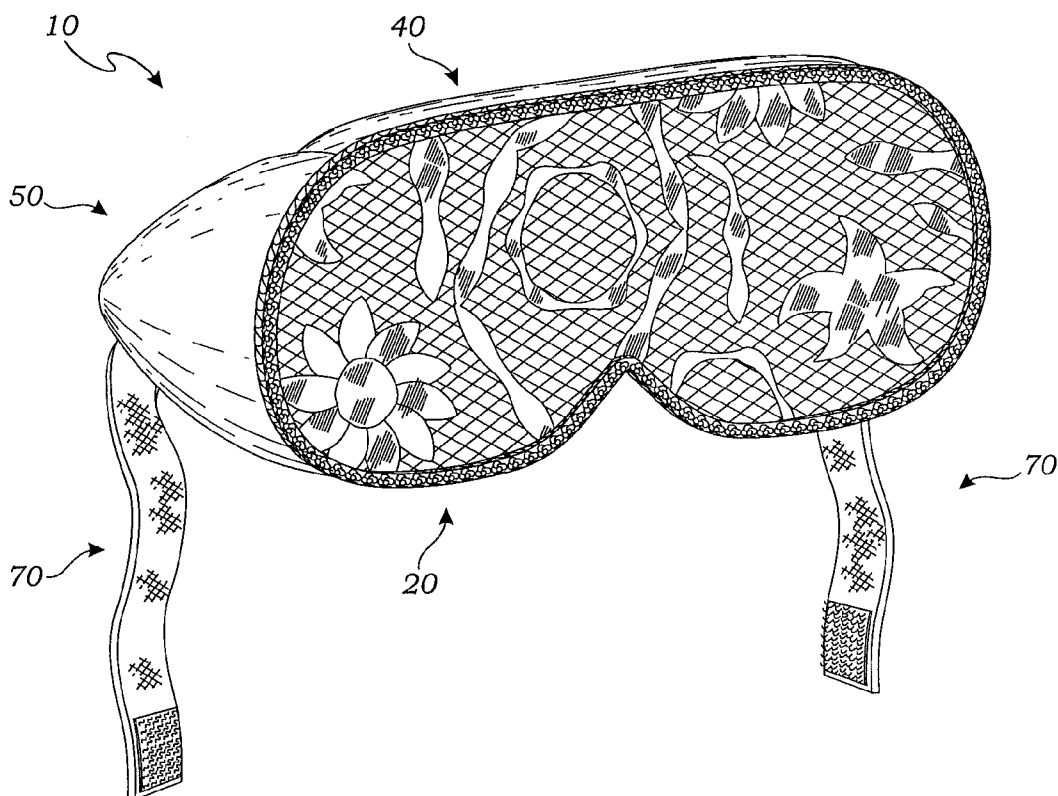
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(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Luciano(10) **Pub. No.: US 2010/0122398 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: May 20, 2010**(54) **SLEEP MASK****Publication Classification**(76) **Inventor:** **Noelle Elizabeth Luciano**, Laguna
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A sleep mask apparatus for protecting a wearer's eyelashes during sleep, comprising a face portion configured for covering an area of the wearer's face generally bounded by the wearer's forehead, beneath the wearer's eyes, and across the wearer's nose bridge, a relatively thick, resilient perimeter portion integral about an inner surface of the face portion, and a pair of relatively rigid side portions integral with opposing left and right edges of the face portion in a position substantially perpendicular to the face portion, whereby, during use of the sleep mask, the perimeter portion contacts the wearer's face and the side portions contact the sides of the wearer's head, such that the wearer's eyelashes are spaced from the inner surface of the face portion as well as the side portions, even when the wearer is side sleeping.

(21) **Appl. No.:** **12/618,340**(22) **Filed:** **Nov. 13, 2009****Related U.S. Application Data**(60) **Provisional application No. 61/114,789, filed on Nov. 14, 2008.**

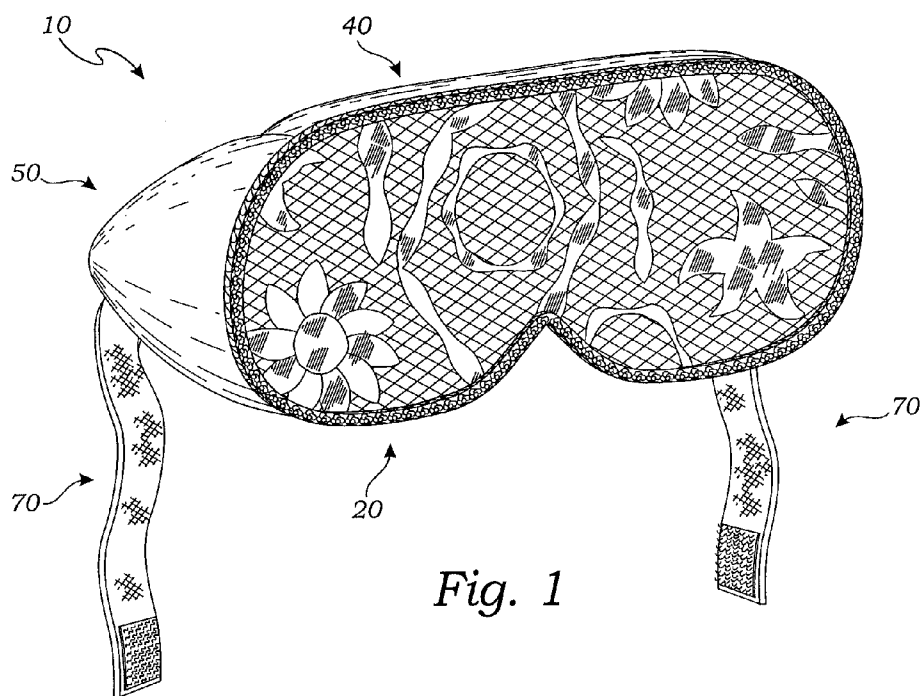


Fig. 1

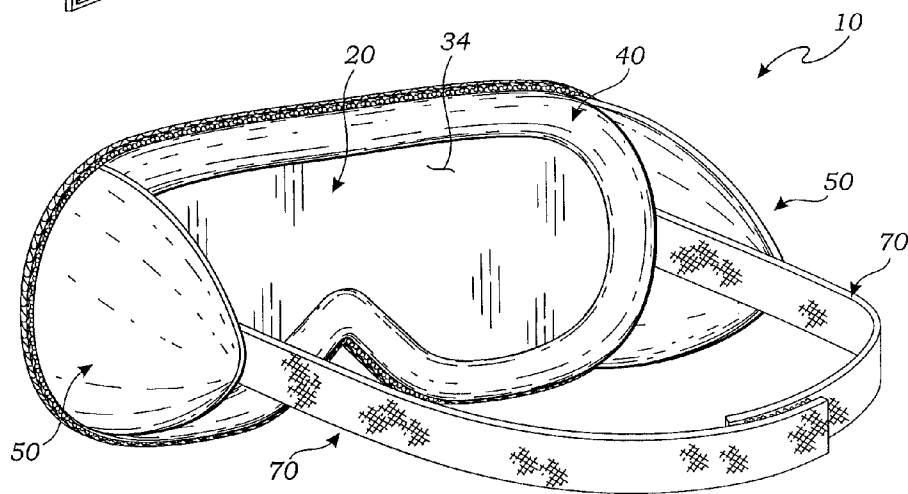


Fig. 2

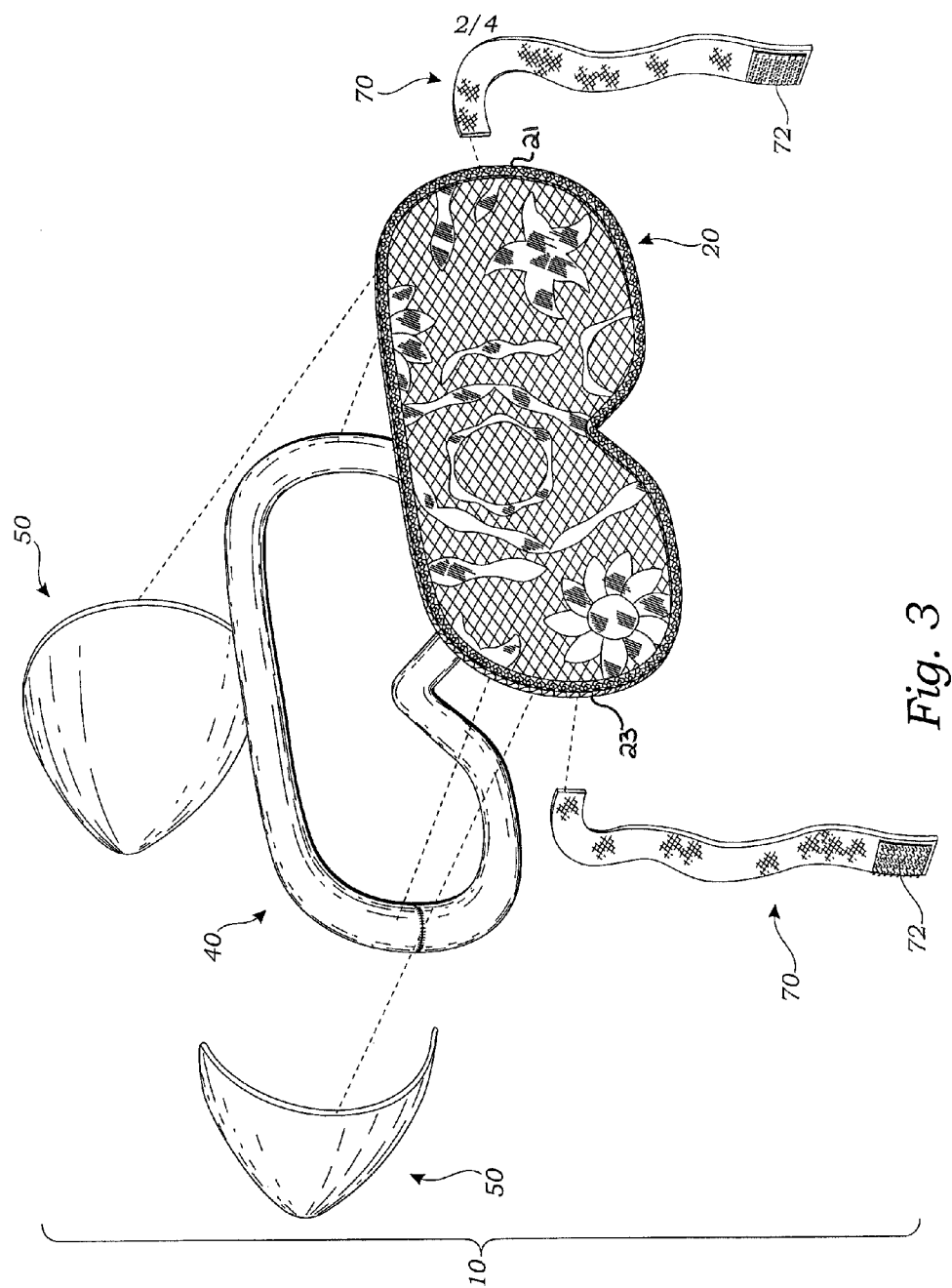


Fig. 3

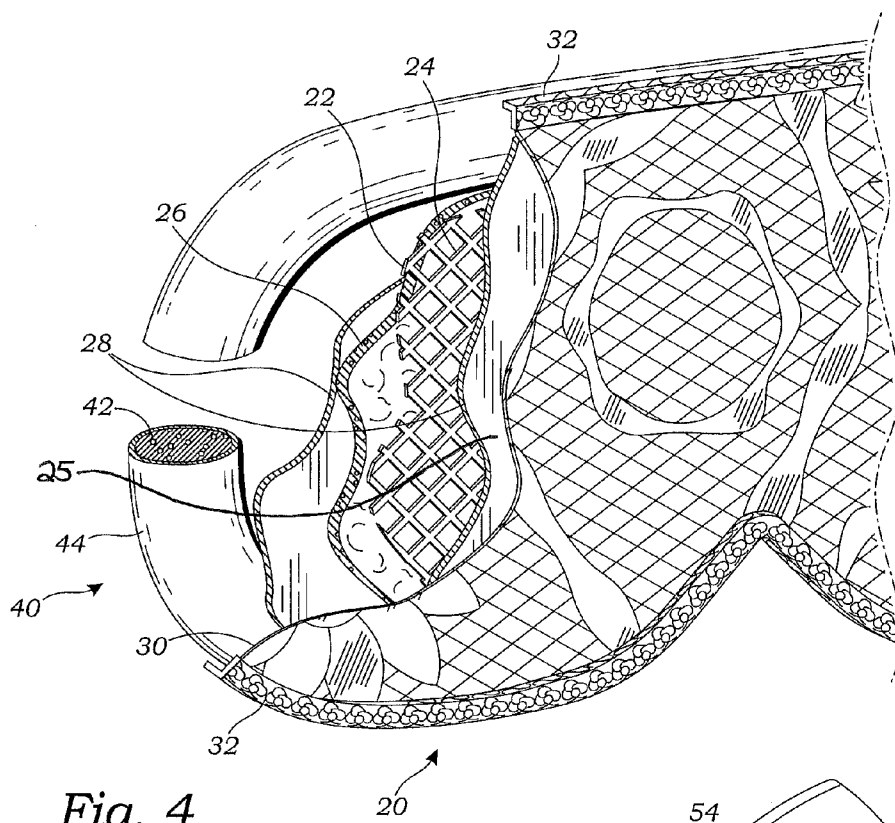


Fig. 4

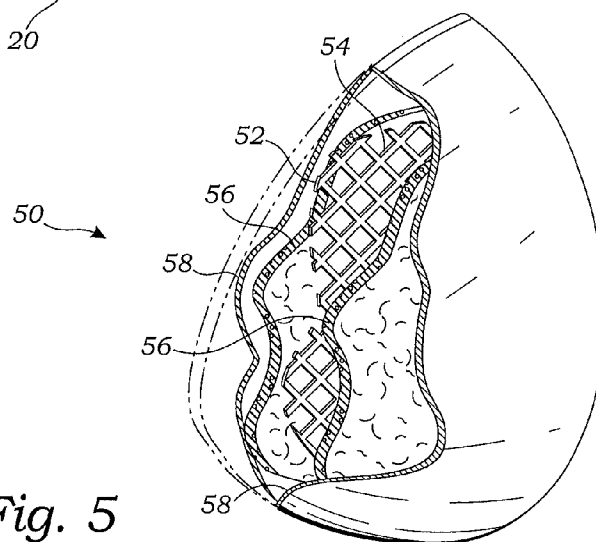


Fig. 5

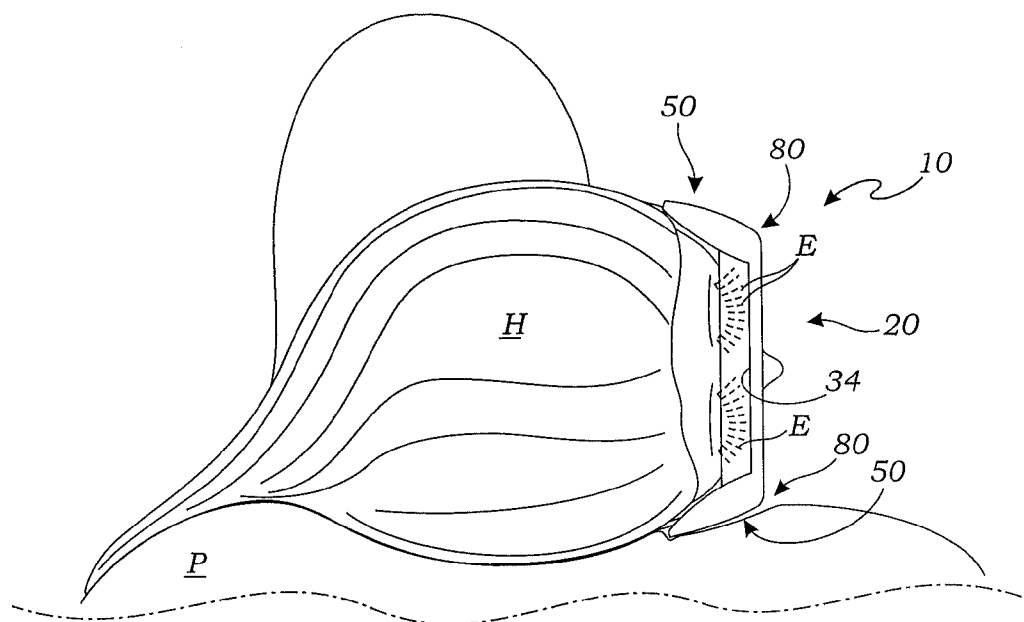


Fig. 6

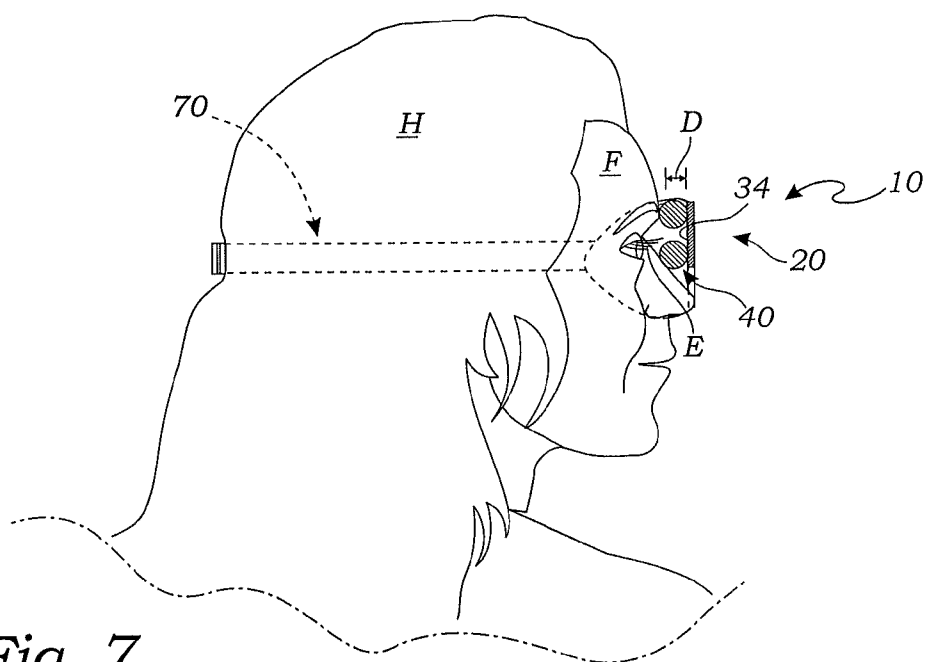


Fig. 7

SLEEP MASK**RELATED APPLICATIONS**

[0001] This application claims priority and is entitled to the filing date of U.S. Provisional application Ser. No. 61/114,789 filed Nov. 14, 2008, and entitled "Sleep Mask." The contents of the aforementioned application are incorporated by reference herein.

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

[0002] Applicant(s) hereby incorporate herein by reference any and all U.S. patents and U.S. patent applications cited or referred to in this application.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] 1. Field of the Invention

[0004] Aspects of this invention relate generally to sleep masks, and more particularly to an improved sleep mask that substantially protects against damage to the wearer's eyelashes or eyelash extensions.

[0005] 2. Description of Related Art

[0006] In the art, many people who have eyelash extensions or other work done to their eyelashes often complain about the condition of their lashes upon awakening from several hours of sleep. One key to good eyelash or eyelash extension maintenance is no rubbing, touching, or pulling, which of course is difficult to prevent during sleep. Many people then may have trouble sleeping or resting well during the night for fear of damaging their lashes while being unconscious, such as by turning their heads while asleep or by side sleeping.

[0007] Traditional sleep masks are inadequate for solving this problem, as they apply direct pressure to the lash area or otherwise do not support the body of the mask away from the wearer's lashes, particularly when side sleeping, thus damaging the lashes or extensions and causing premature lash loss.

[0008] The following art defines the present state of this field:

[0009] G.B. Patent No. 517,113 to Findlay discloses a face mask and/or eye protector for use when washing the hair to prevent soapy water from entering the eyes and to protect artificial make up, the mask comprising a pouch of waterproof material removably enclosing a pad of absorbent material exposed through a single opening in one side of the pouch, the said opening being large enough to extend over both eyes of the wearer, and the ends of the pouch being attached to the opposite ends of a one-piece elastic band of such length that the pad will be pressed against the eyes of the wearer when the band is passed around the back of the wearer's head. The pouch is preferably made from two sheets of material seamed at their peripheral edges to a distance. Alternatively the pouch may be made from one sheet of material folded twice. A modification comprises a backing sheet with two pockets one at either end.

[0010] U.S. Pat. No. 4,122,847 to Craig discloses a protective eye shield for patients during surgery comprising a flexible face mask, preferably soft, foamed plastic, for lying across the patient's brow or forehead, around the eyes and upper cheeks, and across the nose bridge, and having a pair of openings covered by transparent eye covers secured to the mask member, and a contact adhesive inner surface for securing the periphery of the mask to the face of the patient.

[0011] U.S. Pat. No. 6,098,628 to Funk discloses an invention providing eye-protecting shields or chambers that are sealed against the facial skin by an adhesive pliable foam or sponge rubber layer about a face conforming flange with a bulbous clear portion not touching eyelids or the eyelashes. The shields can be ventilated to the atmosphere through a planar flap outwardly of a flat cutout adjacent an outer corner of an eye. Access to the eye may be secured via openable flap for the introduction of medicaments to the eye. In a specific embodiment the access to environmental air may be controlled by a selective access valve and a moisture or medicant pad may be carried by the flap inwardly of the shield. A releasable catch between the flap and the bulbous portion permits self-closing and retention of the flap. A pair of shields with an elastic member therebetween provides a pair of spectacles which may include an elastic or adjustable headband with releasable fastener(s).

[0012] J.P. Patent Application Publication No. 2001-178764 to Sachikazu et al. discloses an eye mask comfortable to eyes and properly applicable thereto for giving stimulus to temples and satisfactorily removing the fatigue of the eyes. A flat main bag portion for covering eyes and subsidiary bag portions for covering temples are mounted on a face with a band. An upper bag for an upper lid and a lower bag for an lower lid in the main bag portion, and the subsidiary bag portions are filled with a number of far infrared radiating particulate matters. An eyelash storage recessed portion and a pupil storage recessed portion are also provided.

[0013] U.S. Pat. No. 6,293,900 to Bove et al. discloses an eye mask or face mask incorporating sources of spatially alternating yet static magnetic fields that provides magnetotherapy to the eyes and/or face. In one embodiment, an eye mask is provided that has an opaque eye plate and opaque rearwardly projecting cushion about its perimeter. A sheet of alternating magnetic material provides alternating magnetic fields when travel is made in any direction. The eye mask may be attached to the face by elastic straps or other means which may be adjusted for comfort. The perimeter cushion serves to hold the eye mask away from the eyes and projecting eyelashes of the wearer so that greater comfort is achieved. The opaque nature of both the eye plate and the cushion serves to keep light out, allowing the eyes to enjoy a dark environment, especially appropriate for sleep. The eye mask may be worn during lengthy periods of repose such as sleeping. In an alternative embodiment, a face mask incorporating alternating magnetic field forces may have optional eye apertures as well as nose and mouth apertures. Elastic straps serve to hold the face mask to the wearer's face. Alternative embodiments of sources of alternating magnetic fields may be achieved through the use of magnets in a triangular or square checkerboard pattern or alternating patterns of circle-centered toroids having alternating magnetic fields.

[0014] PCT Patent Application Publication No. 2004/019727 to Song discloses a disposable adhesive shampoo mask that prevents water from dripping on the face during shampooing providing sanitation and comfort using aromatic oil for mental health. The present disposable adhesive shampoo mask is an ecologically and biologically harmless invention embodying unique characteristics such as a mouth-cover, handle, eye-cover, slit, absorbing layer of outside, absorbing layer of inside, and glue.

[0015] U.S. Pat. No. 6,745,397 to Magidson discloses an eye shade including a first side connected to an intermediate layer. A second side is connected to the intermediate layer. A

first outer eye portion and a second outer eye portion are formed from the first side, the intermediate layer and the second side. The first and second outer eye portions extend outward. The first outer eye portion and the second outer eye portion are convex shaped.

[0016] U.S. Pat. No. 7,202,774 to Hoyle discloses an eye shield sleeping device that has a strap, a pair of eye shields, a pair of ear covers, a timer, one or more speakers, a microphone, and a voice recognition system. The timer creates an awakening sound when the time on the timer expires. The sound is produced by the speaker mounted inside the ear cover. The user can control the device using commands issued to the voice recognition system. The device can be connected to a media and communication appliance, such as a cell phone, a computer, and a digital player, which can play through the speakers. The voice recognition system can also be used to control a connected appliance. The principal function of the device is to create a restful environment for the user for a controlled period of time. Anticipated applications include naps while traveling and in sleep rooms at work.

[0017] The prior art described above teaches various types of face masks for shielding the wearer's eyes from such things as light, soapy water, and surgical procedures, some of those masks even providing elevated eye portions so as not to interfere with the free movement of the wearer's eyelashes. However, the prior art does not teach a sleep mask configured for not interfering with the wearer's eyelashes, even when the wearer is side sleeping. Aspects of the present invention fulfill these needs and provide further related advantages as described in the following summary.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0018] Aspects of the present invention teach certain benefits in construction and use which give rise to the exemplary advantages described below.

[0019] Aspects of the present invention are directed to providing a sleep mask configured for guarding the eyelashes or eyelash extensions of a wearer during sleep. In the exemplary embodiment shown and described herein, the mask is generally constructed having a round, dense foam lining around the interior surface of the mask and elevating it from the eyelash area, with the right and left sides of the mask having fabric-and/or foam-covered, soft plastic guards to provide further protection, preventing the eye area from resting upon the pillow or mattress even during side sleeping. Though a particular such sleep mask is disclosed, including its configuration and materials of construction, it will be appreciated that these details are merely for illustration of aspects of the invention and that a number of other shapes and materials and means of construction are possible without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

[0020] A primary objective inherent in the above described apparatus and method of use is to provide advantages not taught by the prior art.

[0021] Another objective is to provide such an apparatus that protects against damage to the wearer's eyelashes or eyelash extensions while sleeping, even during side sleeping.

[0022] A still further objective is to provide such an apparatus that provides a sufficient amount of padding for the wearer's comfort.

[0023] Other features and advantages of aspects of the present invention will become apparent from the following more detailed description, taken in conjunction with the

accompanying drawings, which illustrate, by way of example, the principles of aspects of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0024] The accompanying drawings illustrate aspects of the present invention. In such drawings:

[0025] FIG. 1 is a front perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of the invention;

[0026] FIG. 2 is a rear perspective view thereof;

[0027] FIG. 3 is an exploded front perspective view thereof;

[0028] FIGS. 4 and 5 are partial cross-sectional views thereof;

[0029] FIG. 6 is an elevational view of a user wearing an exemplary embodiment of the invention while side sleeping; and

[0030] FIG. 7 is an elevational view of a user wearing an exemplary embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0031] The above described drawing figures illustrate aspects of the invention in at least one of its exemplary embodiments, which are further defined in detail in the following description.

[0032] Turning first to FIGS. 1 and 2, there are shown front and rear perspective views of an exemplary embodiment of a sleep mask **10** according to aspects of the present invention. The mask **10** generally includes a face portion **20**, a perimeter portion **40** installed about an inner surface **34** of the face portion **20**, opposing right and left side portions **50** installed on the face portion **20** adjacent the perimeter portion **40**, and opposing right and left strap portions **70** also attached to the face portion **20** in the vicinity of the side portions **50** so as to hold the mask **10** in position on a wearer's head **H** in a conventional fashion. As explained in more detail below, it will be appreciated that, during use of the present invention, the perimeter portion **40** is configured to contact the wearer's forehead, beneath the wearer's eyes, and across the wearer's nose bridge, such that the inner surface **34** of the face portion **20** is sufficiently spaced away from the wearer's eyelashes **E** (or eyelash extensions). Additionally, the right and left side portions **50** provide structural stability of the mask **10** about the wearer's eyes even during side sleeping, further preventing contact of the interior surfaces of the mask **10** with the wearer's eyelashes **E**, as best illustrated in FIGS. 6 and 7 discussed further below in connection with the mask **10** in use.

[0033] Referring to FIG. 3, there is shown an exploded front perspective view of the mask **10** for better appreciation of the components that make up the mask **10** in its exemplary embodiment. Once again, the mask **10** essentially comprises the face portion **20** onto which the relatively resilient, preferably foam, perimeter portion **40** is installed. Then, flanking the perimeter portion **40** on opposite sides of the mask **10** there are installed the right and left side portions **50**, which are each configured as substantially triangular wedges with a concavity or curvature generally corresponding both to the right and left profiles of the face portion **20** and to the anatomy of the wearer's head **H** roughly in the temple region. As such, it will be appreciated that the right and left side portions **50** are installed on opposing left and right edges **21** and **23** of the face portion **20** roughly perpendicular thereto so as to form corner areas **80** that function to guard, or create sufficient space for, the outer eye area even during side sleeping, as

illustrated particularly in FIG. 6. In the exemplary embodiment, as explained in more detail below in connection with FIGS. 4 and 5, each of the face portion 20, the perimeter portion 40, and the side portions 50 may include a covering material 28, 44 and 58, such as fabric or the like, positioned over an underlying padded material 26 and 56, such as foam or batting material or the like, for comfort. For at least the face portion 20 and side portions 50, the structure further includes a perforated plastic or mesh internal face portion frame 22 and side portion frame 52, respectively, for structural support while not compromising the comfort and breathability of the mask 10. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that while such an exemplary overall structure is shown and described, the invention is not so limited, and a number of other assemblies and sub-assemblies can be formed embodying aspects of the present invention. In any case, it will be further appreciated that the components of the mask 10 being so constructed from any suitable materials or processes now known or later developed may then be assembled as appropriate to arrive at the finished mask 10 shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 through bringing the respective components together as shown in the exploded view of FIG. 3.

[0034] Specifically, in the exemplary embodiment, wherein the covering material is formed on each of the components, namely, the face portion 20, the perimeter portion 40, and the side portions 50, these components may then be assembled as through a stitching process or any other such process now known or later developed to join at least two such components together. Moreover, the joining process may also involve the internal face portion frame 22 and side portion frame 52 for additional integrity and durability, whether the stitching passes through such plastic parts or the parts themselves are joined in some other manner, such as by being bonded, ultrasonically welded, or simply molded integrally, with the foam and/or fabric or other such materials then covering the unitary plastic internal structure that is the face portion frame 22 and side portion frame 52 in one or more finishing operations. Again, those skilled in the art will appreciate that any appropriate materials and methods of construction now known or later developed may be employed in the mask 10 of the present invention without departing from its spirit and scope.

[0035] With continued reference to FIG. 3, the right and left strap portions 70 are shown as being attached generally at the right and left edges 21 and 23 of the face portion 20. As best seen in FIG. 2, in the exemplary embodiment, such strap portions 70 are installed between the opposite sides of the perimeter portion 40 and the respective side portions 50, whereby it will be appreciated that the attached ends of the strap portions 70 may be secured as by stitching to one or more of the face portion 20, the perimeter portion 40, and the side portions 50 for sufficient assembly strength. Again, locations other than that shown and means other than stitching may be employed in securing the respective strap portions 70 onto the mask 10. It is also noted that while the strap portions 70 are shown in FIG. 3 dangling down as if already attached to the mask 10 rather than unattached as in the exploded view, whereby the ends at which the strap portions 70 are attached appear to be curved, those skilled in the art will appreciate that such strap portions 70 are typically formed of substantially straight, rectangular-shaped pieces of material of the appropriate length to facilitate removable attachment of their respective free ends at the back of the wearer's head H. In the exemplary embodiment, the strap portions 70 are formed from an elastic material and have hook and loop fastener

swatches 72 installed at their free ends for removably securing the free ends of the strap portions 70 during use. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that a variety of other strap configurations and means for removably securing their free ends, such as by buttons, snaps, clips or any other such means now known or later developed, may be employed without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention. Moreover, where the means of removable attachment of the free ends of the strap portions 70 is a hook-and-loop fastener, it will be appreciated that while the swatches 72 shown in FIG. 3 are substantially located only at the free ends of the respective strap portions 70, instead the swatches 72 may be formed as strips covering substantially all of the mating or overlapping surfaces of the strap portions 70. In a further alternative exemplary embodiment, the strap portions 70 may be of a unitary construction from one perimeter edge of the face portion 20 of the mask 10 to the other, so as to form a continuous strap with variance in the head sizes of the wearers of the mask 10 being taken up by the elasticity of the strap portions 70 alone, for example. Accordingly, once more, those skilled in the art will appreciate that while a particular configuration of the strap portions 70 is shown, a number of other configurations are possible without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

[0036] Turning now to FIG. 4, there is shown an enlarged partial perspective view, partially in section, of the face portion 20 and perimeter portion 40 of the mask 10 according to aspects of the present invention. First, it can be seen that the face portion 20 comprises, in the exemplary embodiment, the substantially central face portion frame 22 preferably formed of a plastic mesh material so as to have perforations or apertures 24 for breathability of, or heat exchange through, the face portion 20 when the mask 10 is being worn, while still providing structure to the mask 10. In the exemplary embodiment, the face portion frame 22 is formed of a plastic "hardware cloth" material having a nominal half inch ($\frac{1}{2}$ ") mesh. In an alternate embodiment, the face portion frame 22 is formed of a molded plastic; though, again, those skilled in the art will appreciate that a variety of other materials now known or later developed may be employed without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, including a number of other plastics formed with perforations or the like through any suitable manufacturing process. In the exemplary embodiment, the raw mesh material is then simply formed to the desired profile shape, as through a molding, stamping, or die-cutting process, by which process the resulting face portion frame 22 may also be formed or induced with a nominal curvature to substantially conform to the shape of the face in the area of the eyes. With continued reference to FIG. 4, next, overlaying at least the back side of the face portion frame 22, or the side facing the wearer during use, there is a piece of padded material 26 for comfort. This face portion padded material 26 may be foam, batting, or other such material now known or later developed. Though not shown, such face portion padded material 26 may also cover the front side of the face portion frame 22, or the side of the face portion frame 22 away from the wearer during normal use. Over the face portion padded material 26 and/or directly over the face portion frame 22, or on both the front and back sides of the face portion 20 of the mask 10, a piece of face portion covering material 28 may be installed essentially to secure the integrity and positioning of the one or more pieces of face portion padded material 26 and to render the mask 10 more aesthetically pleasing by not having the face portion frame 22 or the face portion padded

material 26 exposed. The back side or inwardly-facing face portion covering material 28 defines a face portion inner surface 34, as best shown in FIG. 2, more about which is said below in connection with FIGS. 6 and 7.

[0037] In the exemplary embodiment, the two face portion covering materials 28 are both satin; though it will be appreciated that a virtually infinite variety of covering materials, whether natural or synthetic and whether now known or later developed, may be employed in a sleep mask according to aspects of the present invention without departing from its spirit and scope. As also shown in FIG. 4, a decorative overlay 30 may be installed on an outer surface 25 of the face portion 20, or directly over the outside face portion covering material 28 to further render the finished mask 10 more attractive. The decorative overlay 30 may be any material in any color deemed suitable for a particular sleep mask design. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that all the covering materials thus comprising the exemplary structure of the face portion 20 of the mask 10 may then be sewn together as by a conventional stitching about the perimeter thereof, whereby the face portion frame 22 is thus secured in place within the face portion 20 by simply being bounded about its perimeter and its front and back sides by the overlaying and joined covering materials. It will be further appreciated that any or all such materials may instead be joined by other bonding or assembly techniques now known or later developed in the art, including but not limited to a spray adhesive. Finally with respect to the face portion 20, as a further alternative feature, an edge material 32, such as fabric or the like, may be installed as by stitching, gluing, or other such technique about the perimeter of the face portion 20 of the mask 10, whereby the stitched or otherwise joined edges of the various fabrics comprising the face portion 20 are covered, which in turn not only renders the finished face portion assembly more aesthetically pleasing, but also leaves the assembled edges less compromised or vulnerable to fraying or separating during use. Again, it will be appreciated that any other materials now known or later developed may be substituted or employed in one or more components of the sleep mask of the present invention without departing from its spirit and scope. That is, other configurations and materials of construction whereby, for example, less or more layers or components are included in the finished face portion 20 are all possible without departing from the spirit and scope of the sleep mask according to aspects of the present invention.

[0038] With continued reference to FIG. 4, the perimeter portion 40 of the mask 10 is shown as including a core 42 covered by a perimeter portion covering material 44. In the exemplary embodiment, the core 42 is a nominal one inch (1") diameter annular foam material; though, once again, those skilled in the art will appreciate that any such material now known or later developed by which the face portion 20 of the mask 10 is effectively and comfortably spaced from the wearer's face F during use may be employed in the present invention without departing from its spirit and scope. Similarly, while the perimeter portion covering material 44, like the face portion covering material 28, is, in the exemplary embodiment, formed of a satin fabric, it will be appreciated that virtually an infinite number of materials may be employed instead. In such scenario, just as the edges of the various materials of the face portion 20 are to be attached using stitching, gluing, or other such assembly techniques now known or later developed, so too may the installation of the perimeter portion covering material 44 over the foam core

42 be accomplished. Such an overlay over the core 42 again renders the product more attractive and more durable. The perimeter portion 40 so configured and cut or otherwise formed to the desired overall length, most often initially as a substantially linear construction, is then manipulated and attached about the perimeter of the face portion 20 through a further stitching, bonding, or other such process now known or later developed so as to tack the perimeter portion 40 about the inner surface 34 of the face portion 20 as best shown in FIG. 2. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the resulting perimeter portion 40 will be soft and plush and provide a comfortable surface against which the wearer's face F comes into contact during use of the mask 10, more about which will be said below in connection with FIGS. 6 and 7.

[0039] Referring now to FIG. 5, there is shown an enlarged partial perspective view, partially in section, of a side portion 50 of the mask 10 according to aspects of the present invention. As with the face portion 20, it can be seen that each side portion 50 comprises, in the exemplary embodiment, a substantially central side portion frame 52 again formed of a plastic mesh material so as to have perforations or apertures 54 for breathability through the side portions 50 when the mask 10 is being worn, while still providing structure to the mask 10; particularly in the case of the side portions 50 while the wearer is side sleeping, more about which is said below. In the exemplary embodiment, the side portion frame 52 is also formed of a plastic "hardware cloth" material having a nominal half inch (1/2") mesh. In an alternate embodiment, the side portion frame 52 is formed of a molded plastic; though again those skilled in the art will appreciate that a variety of other materials now known or later developed may be employed without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, including a number of other plastics formed as required. In the exemplary embodiment, the raw mesh material is once more simply formed to the desired profile shape, as through a molding, stamping, or die-cutting process, by which process the resulting side portion frame 52 may also be formed or induced with a nominal curvature to substantially conform to both the profile of the face portion 20 and the anatomy of the head in the temple region.

[0040] With continued reference to FIG. 5, again much like the construction of the face portion 20 in the illustrated embodiment, next, here shown overlaying both the front and back sides of the side portion frame 52 there is a piece of padded material 56 for added comfort. This side portion padded material 56 may again be foam, batting, or other such material now known or later developed. Over the side portion padded material 56 and/or directly over the side portion frame 52, in the case where the padded material 56 is only positioned on the side of the side portion frame 52 toward the wearer during use, a piece of side portion covering material 58 may be installed to secure the integrity and positioning of the one or more pieces of side portion padded material 56 and to once again render the mask 10 more aesthetically pleasing by not having the side portion frame 52 or the side portion padded material 56 exposed, as the case may be. In the exemplary embodiment, the two side portion covering materials 58 are both satin, chosen to match the face portion covering materials 28 for a consistent and attractive overall appearance of the mask 10, though it will be appreciated that a virtually infinite variety of covering materials, whether natural or synthetic, whether now known or later developed, and whether being the same in type or appearance as those of the face portion 20 of the mask 10, may be employed in a sleep mask

according to aspects of the present invention without departing from its spirit and scope. While a decorative overlay **30** and edge material **32** is not shown in conjunction with the side portions **50** as on the face portion **10**, it will be appreciated that such further decorative and/or functional materials may be installed on the side portions **50** to further render the finished mask **10** more attractive, comfortable, or durable.

[0041] Turning to FIGS. **6** and **7**, there are shown two schematics of the mask **10** according to aspects of the present invention in use. First, in FIG. **6**, the mask **10** is placed on the head **H** of the wearer who is side sleeping on a pillow **P**. As shown schematically from the top of the head **H**, even when side sleeping with the wearer's head **H** partially sunken into the pillow **P**, the mask **10** and particularly the side portions **50** and the corner areas **80** where the side portions **50** join the face portion **20** all substantially retain their shape due to the materials and method and construction as described above, particularly the design by which the side portions **50** include side portion frames **52**, internal plastic supports that help the side portions **50** retain their shape and their position and orientation relative to the face portion **20**, even when under load or pressure. Thus, as shown in FIG. **6**, the eyelashes **E** are spaced from both the inner surface **34** of the face portion **20** of the mask **10** and from the side portions **50**, even when the wearer is side sleeping.

[0042] Similarly, as shown in FIG. **7** with the mask **10** again on the head **H** of a wearer, here upright simply for illustration, it will be appreciated that the perimeter portion **40** of the mask **10**, as shown and described above in connection with FIGS. **1-4**, serves to space the mask **10** from the face **F** of the wearer, and particularly the inner surface **34** of the face portion **20** again from the eyelashes **E**. In the exemplary embodiment, the amount the face portion **20** is spaced from the wearer's head **H** and face **F**, specifically, is denoted by distance **D**, which is essentially the thickness or diameter of the perimeter portion **40**, in the exemplary embodiment a nominal one inch (1"). Accordingly, once more, the construction of the mask **10** having such a perimeter portion **40** positioned on the face portion inner surface **34** and having right and left side portions **50** that serve as guards giving sufficient structural firmness or rigidity to the mask **10**, particularly when side sleeping, cooperate to at all times protect the wearer's eyelashes **E** from inadvertent or unwanted rubbing, touching, or pulling during sleep, which is known in the art to contribute to premature lash loss. Furthermore, such protection is yet achieved by way of a comfortable, stylish and functional mask **10** which, as shown in FIG. **7**, is simply held in place on the wearer's head **H** by way of the strap portions **70**, with the portions of the mask **10** actually in contact with the wearer's face **F** really only being the relatively soft, pliable perimeter portion **40** and the foam- or batting- and fabric-covered side portions **50**. Again, those skilled in the art will appreciate that while a particular exemplary sleep mask according to aspects of the present invention has been shown and described, the invention is not so limited, but instead can take on a number of forms without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

[0043] To summarize regarding the exemplary mask **10** of the present invention, it will be appreciated that a device is provided for protecting the wearer's eyelashes **E** or eyelash extensions during sleep by sufficiently spacing the mask **10** from the wearer's face **F** and by forming the mask **10** with supportive side portions **50** having reinforced frames **52** for maintaining the shape of the mask **10** even during side sleep-

ing, whereby the eyelashes **E** are not inadvertently contacted during use and so are protected against premature lash loss or other damage. Because the principles of the invention may be practiced in a number of configurations of the sleep mask beyond that shown and described, it is to be understood that the invention is not in any way limited by the exemplary embodiment and is able to take numerous forms without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

[0044] While aspects of the invention have been described with reference to at least one exemplary embodiment, it is to be clearly understood by those skilled in the art that the invention is not limited thereto. Rather, the scope of the invention is to be interpreted only in conjunction with the appended claims and it is made clear, here, that the inventor(s) believe that the claimed subject matter is the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A sleep mask apparatus for protecting a wearer's eyelashes during sleep, the apparatus comprising:

a face portion;

a relatively thick, resilient perimeter portion integral about an inner surface of the face portion; and

a pair of relatively rigid side portions integral with opposing left and right edges of the face portion in a position substantially perpendicular to the face portion;

whereby, during use of the sleep mask, the perimeter portion contacts the wearer's face and the side portions contact the sides of the wearer's head, such that the wearer's eyelashes are spaced from the inner surface of the face portion as well as the side portions, even when the wearer is side sleeping.

2. The sleep mask apparatus of claim **1** wherein the side portions are each further configured as substantially triangular wedges with a curvature generally corresponding to the wearer's head.

3. The sleep mask apparatus of claim **1** wherein the perimeter portion is a substantially round, dense, foam material.

4. The sleep mask apparatus of claim **1** wherein each of the face portion, perimeter portion, and side portions provide a covering material positioned over an underlying padded material for comfort.

5. The sleep mask apparatus of claim **1** wherein each of the face portion and side portions further comprises an internal frame configured for providing further structural support.

6. The sleep mask apparatus of claim **5** wherein each of the internal frames provides a plurality of apertures configured for allowing heat exchange therethrough when the sleep mask is in use.

7. The sleep mask apparatus of claim **1** further comprising a decorative overlay integral with an outer surface of the face portion.

8. The sleep mask apparatus of claim **1** further comprising an edge material integral about a perimeter of the face portion.

9. The sleep mask apparatus of claim **1** further comprising a strap portion integral with the opposing left and right edges of the face portion, proximal the side portions.

10. A sleep mask apparatus for protecting a wearer's eyelashes during sleep, the apparatus comprising:

a face portion configured for covering an area of the wearer's face generally bounded by the wearer's forehead, beneath the wearer's eyes, and across the wearer's nose bridge;

a relatively thick, resilient perimeter portion integral about an inner surface of the face portion;

a pair of relatively rigid side portions integral with opposing left and right edges of the face portion in a position substantially perpendicular to the face portion; and each of the face portion and side portions having an internal frame configured for providing further structural support;

whereby, during use of the sleep mask, the perimeter portion contacts the wearer's face and the side portions contact the sides of the wearer's head, such that the wearer's eyelashes are spaced from the inner surface of the face portion as well as the side portions, even when the wearer is side sleeping.

11. A sleep mask apparatus for protecting a wearer's eyelashes during sleep, the apparatus comprising:

a face portion configured for covering an area of the wearer's face generally bounded by the wearer's forehead, beneath the wearer's eyes, and across the wearer's nose bridge;

a relatively thick, resilient perimeter portion integral about an inner surface of the face portion;

a pair of relatively rigid, substantially triangular-shaped side portions integral with opposing left and right edges of the face portion and extending distally therefrom in a substantially perpendicular direction, the side portions having a curvature generally corresponding to the sides of the wearer's head; and

whereby, during use of the sleep mask, the perimeter portion contacts the wearer's face and the side portions contact the sides of the wearer's head, such that the wearer's eyelashes are spaced from the inner surface of the face portion as well as the side portions, even when the wearer is side sleeping.

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