Nov. 19, 1963 J. R. PEACH 3,111,257

RETURNABLE BILLING ENVELOPE

Filed Jan. 16, 1961 2 Sheets-Sheet 1

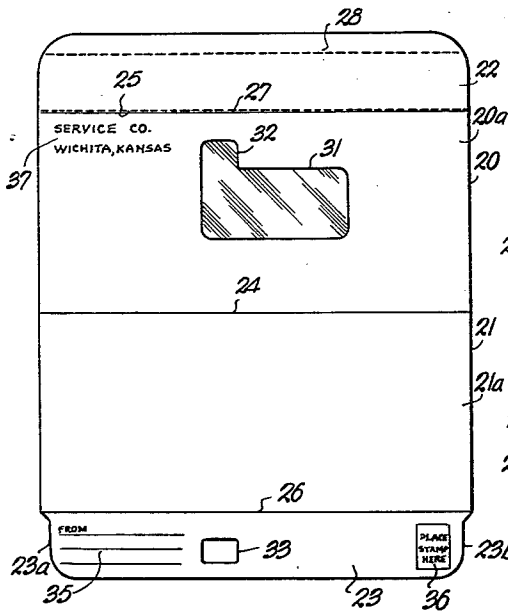


Fig. 1.

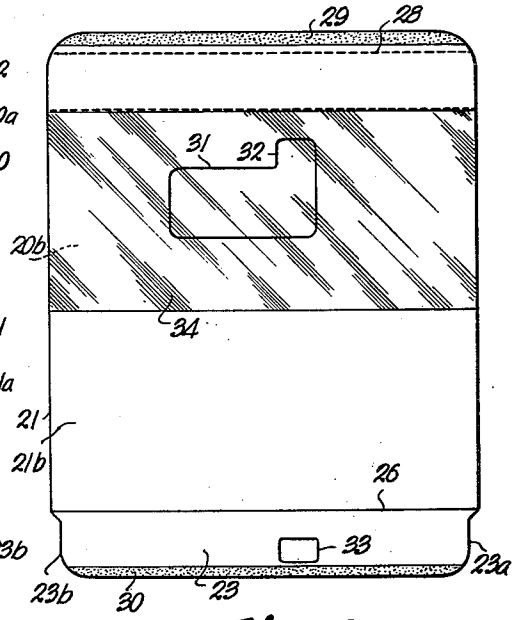


Fig. 2.

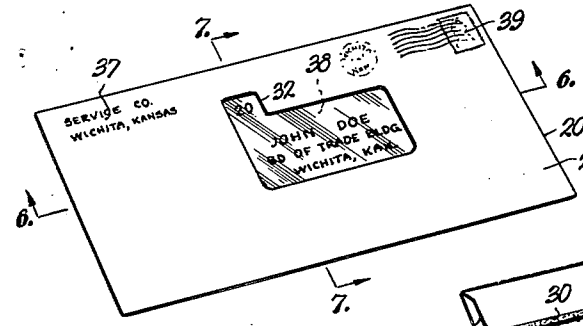


Fig. 3.

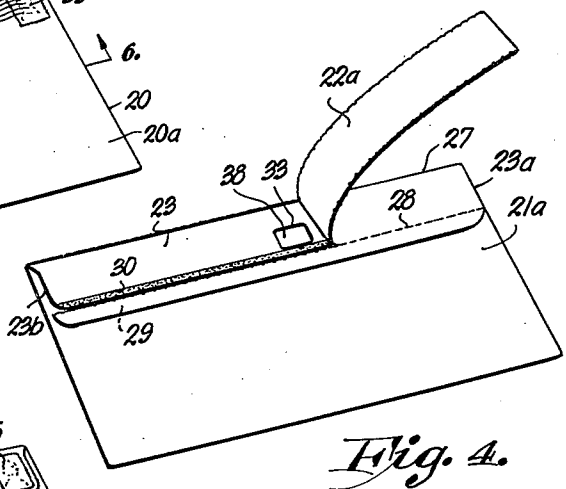


Fig. 4.

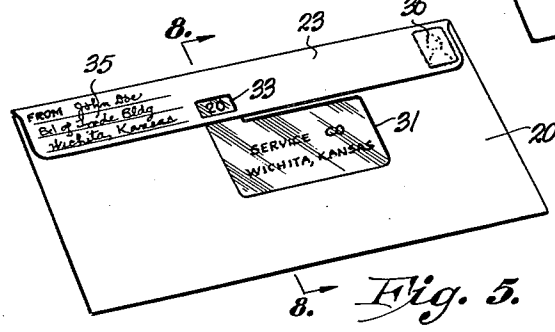


Fig. 5.

INVENTOR.
John R. Peach
BY
Thos. E. Scofield
ATTORNEY.

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Fig. 6.

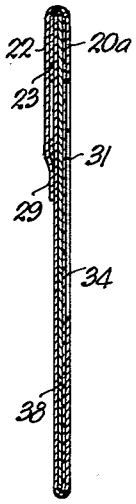


Fig. 7.

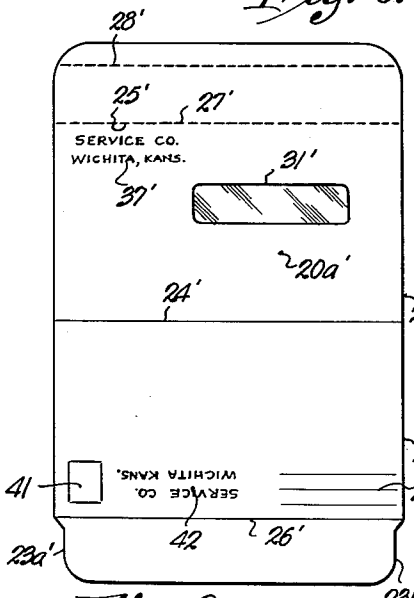


Fig. 9.

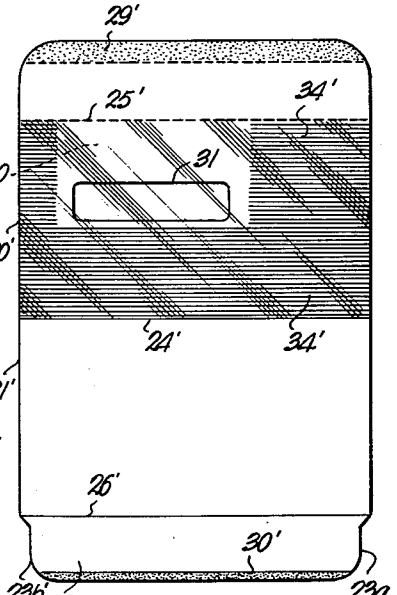


Fig. 10.

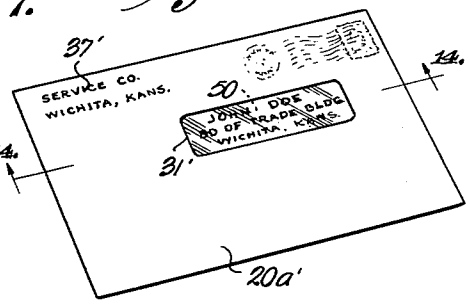


Fig. 11.

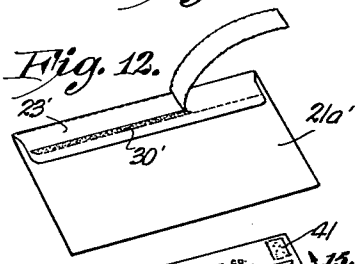


Fig. 12.

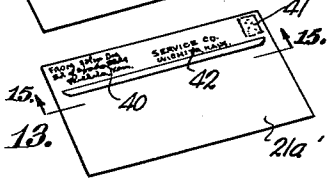


Fig. 13.

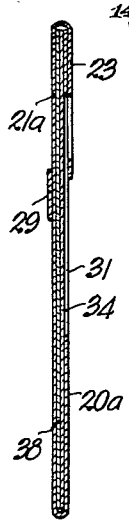


Fig. 8.



Fig. 14.

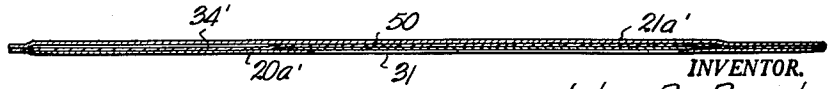


Fig. 15.

INVENTOR.
John R. Peach
BY
Thos E. Scofield
ATTORNEY.

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RETURNABLE BILLING ENVELOPE

John R. Peach, 823 Quincy Bldg., Topeka, Kans.

Filed Jan. 16, 1961, Ser. No. 82,777
5 Claims. (Cl. 229—73)

This invention relates to billing envelopes and refers more particularly to returnable billing envelopes which may be employed twice, a first time by the billing agency or company sending the bill to the customer, and the second by the customer in returning payment to the company with or without the bill also enclosed.

An object of the invention is to provide a returnable envelope construction adapted for both sending the bills and returning the payment which is cheap to manufacture and serviceable in operation.

Another object of the invention is to provide an envelope of the type described which requires no gluing together of parts thereof in the forming operation, merely glue application to tabs, die cutting, printing and heat sealing.

Another object of the invention is to provide a returnable billing envelope having a window therein adapted for both sending of bills and returning the payment therefor which does not require addressing for return by the recipient of the bill and wherein the same address window may be utilized for both the sending and return passages of the envelope.

Another object of the invention is to provide a returnable billing envelope which may be provided in various shapes and sizes whereby to adapt to different types and sizes of billing cards and letters.

Another object of the invention is to provide a returnable billing envelope which may be employed with punch card type bills, the envelope so formed that the punch card itself may be employed to provide both the customer's name and address printed on one side thereof and the return addressee has his or its address printed on the other side thereof, the envelope adapted to display one in separate billing and payment return mail passages.

Another object of the invention is to provide a billing and return envelope having an address window in one panel thereof, the address window covered by a transparent material which also reinforces the entire panel containing the window thereby adding strength to the most exposed envelope portion, namely, the window edges.

Another object of the invention is to provide a reinforced billing and return envelope having a window in one panel thereof, the reinforcement of the window and panel containing same such as to permit the fabrication of the envelope out of a lighter weight paper stock than previously possible.

Another object of the invention is to provide a window billing and return envelope which can be manufactured more cheaply than standard envelopes as well as conventional window-type envelopes.

Another object of the invention is to provide a billing and return envelope which has a transparency covered window therein, the envelope alternatively providable with a sealed window or a pocket window whereby, in the latter form, to permit the insertion and removable of an address card.

Another object of the invention is to provide a billing and return envelope which is easily opened by the customer, of simple, neat construction whereas to be readily understood for resealing and reuse and which is of rugged construction whereby to safely both transmit the bill and the return payment therefor without loss of or damage to the envelope.

Other and further objects of the invention will appear in the course of the following description thereof.

In the drawings, which form a part of the instant specification and are to be read in conjunction therewith, embodiments of the invention are shown and, in the various views, like numerals are employed to indicate like parts.

FIGS. 1–8, inclusive, illustrate a first form of the envelope constituting the instant improvement, while FIGS. 9–14, inclusive, illustrate a second form thereof.

FIG. 1 is a view of a return envelope blank showing the side thereof which constitutes the outside of the envelope when formed into the finished envelope.

FIG. 2 is a view similar to that of FIG. 1, but of the other side of the said envelope.

FIG. 3 is a view of the front side of the assembled return envelope from the blank of FIGS. 1 and 2 in the use of the envelope in its first passage from the billing agency to the customer.

FIG. 4 is a view of the rear side of the envelope of FIG. 3 with the envelope being opened to provide access to the contents thereof and also access to the mechanism for resealing the envelope to return same to the billing agency from the customer.

FIG. 5 is a view of the front side of the assembled return envelope of FIGS. 3 and 4 illustrating the resealing of the envelope for return to the billing agency from the customer, the envelope shown after a 360° rotation of the seal flap released in FIG. 4 to reach the position shown in FIG. 5.

FIG. 6 is a view taken along the line 6—6 of FIG. 3 in the direction of the arrows.

FIG. 7 is a view taken along the line 7—7 of FIG. 3 in the direction of the arrows.

FIG. 8 is a view taken along the line 8—8 of FIG. 5 in the direction of the arrows.

FIG. 9 is a view of a return envelope blank of a modified form from that shown in FIGS. 1–8, inclusive, the view the same as that of FIG. 1, namely, of the side of the blank which would be the outside of the assembled envelope.

FIG. 10 is a view of the blank of FIG. 9 from the opposite side thereof.

FIG. 11 is a view of the assembled envelope blank of FIGS. 9 and 10 assembled for the first passage from the billing agency to the customer.

FIG. 12 is a view like that of FIG. 4 but involving the envelope of FIGS. 9 and 10.

FIG. 13 is a view of the return front side of the billing envelope of the four previous figures, but assembled and sealed for the return passage from the customer to the billing agency.

FIG. 14 is a view taken along the line **14—14** of FIG. 11 in the arrows.

FIG. 15 is a view taken along the line **15—15** of FIG. 13 in the direction of the arrows.

Referring first to the modification of the return envelope shown in FIGS. 1–8, inclusive, the blank in FIGS. 1 and 2 has an upper panel generally indicated **20** having front and rear sides **20***a* and **20***b*, a lower panel generally indicated **21** having front and rear sides **21***a* and **21***b*, an upper seal flange **22** and a lower seal flange **23**. Fold line **24** divides the upper and lower panels from one another. Fold line **25** divides the upper seal flange **22** from upper panel **20**. Fold line **26** divides lower panel **21** from lower seal flange **23**. A first weakened line of severance **27** is positioned on or closely adjacent to the upper fold line **25**. A second weakened line of severance **28** is positioned parallel to but below the free end of upper seal flange **22** whereby to provide for a gummed area **29** (FIG. 2). An elongate gummed area **30** is provided along the free edge of the lower seal flange **23** on the same side of the blank as that carrying the gummed zone **29**.

An opening or window 31 is formed through upper panel 20 between the edges thereof, preferably of substantially rectangular form. The upper extension 32 of said window may be provided for certain types of billing cards and systems. A small window 33 to overlie the window portion 32 in the condition of FIG. 5 may be provided in lower seal flange 23. A transparent sheet of resilient material such as polyethylene film or the like is heat sealed to or otherwise uniformly attached to the rear face of top panel 20 between fold lines 24 and 25. Sheet 34 is sealed around the edges of the window 31.

The return envelope blank is preferably of substantially rectangular form with parallel side and end edges. The corners of seal flanges 22 and 23 are preferably rounded off, as shown, with the side edges of seal flange 23 inwardly formed as at 23*a* and 23*b* whereby to fit inside of seal flange 22 (see FIG. 4). The distance between fold lines 24 and 26 and 24 and 27 is preferably equal whereby the upper and lower panels will lie in congruent relationship in the formed envelope. The distance from the fold line 26 to the free edge of seal flange 23 is preferably equal to or less than the distance from fold line 25 to line of severance 28.

A return address blank 35 is optionally but preferably printed on seal flange 23 on the side of the blank opposite sheet 34 with a stamp placement square 36 also preferably printed on the same side at the opposite end of seal flange 23. The biller's return address is preferably printed on the same side of the blank as the printed indicia immediately described and on the side opposite sheet 34 as at 37. The nature of sheet 34 must be such as to permit heat sealing to the paper of which panel 21 is formed, in order to form the sealed side edges of the envelope.

To assemble the envelope for its passage from the billing agency to the customer, reference is made to FIG. 2. Panel 21 is folded upwardly over panel 20 (in the view of FIG. 2) whereby seal flange 23 lies against seal flange 22. Application of heat from any suitable conventional means then seals the side edges of panels 20 and 21 to one another. The billing agency may then insert the billing card 38 (FIGS. 3–8, inclusive) between the edges of panels 20 and 21 in the manner of filling an envelope. To seal the envelope to send the billing card or slip to the customer, upper seal flange 22 is folded toward the observer in the view of FIG. 2 and over seal flange 23 to form a seal in the manner of FIGS. 3 and 4. The right-hand side of FIG. 4 shows the rear side of the envelope with seal flange 22 sealed to face 21*a* of panel 21 by gummed portion 29. FIG. 3 shows the front side of the envelope with the addressed billing card visible through the window 31. It should be pointed out that billing card 38 has the address of the customer on one side thereof and the address of the billing agency on the other, printed or typed there by the billing agency. A stamp is then emplaced as at 39 on face 20*a* of upper panel 20 and the billing letter sent to the customer.

FIG. 4 shows the act of opening the envelope by the customer by ripping off the panel defined on seal flange 22 by lines of severance 27 and 28. As this panel is ripped off, the lower seal flange 23 becomes visible on the side thereof seen in FIG. 2. Thus gummed portion 30 is also visible. Since the panel (the torn off portion thereof being designated 22*a* in FIG. 4) in its torn off portion being of greater width than the width of the entire seal flange 23, seal flange 23 is not caught under the remaining attached gummed portion of seal flange 22.

The customer inserts the billing slip or card with payment, preferably in check form, in the envelope with the billing agency address visible through window 31 as in FIG. 5 and then folds the lower seal panel in the direction of the arrow in FIG. 4 whereby the lower seal flange 23 overlies face 20*a* of panel 20 in the manner shown in FIG. 5. The gummed portion 30 of seal flange 23 then seals the said flange to the said face of the said panel. Application of a stamp on the portion 36 and indication of the sender's return address on portion 35 complete the preparation of the envelope for the return passage. The billing company opens the envelope by slitting same under the seal flange 23.

Turning to the modification of the invention shown in FIGS. 9–15, inclusive, much of the construction of the return envelope blank and the envelope constructable therefrom are identical to like parts of the blank and envelopes in FIGS. 1–8, inclusive, with the exception of (1) the manner of attachment of the transparent sheets 34′ to the face 20*a*′ of panel 20′ and (2) the manner of displaying the address in the envelope and (3) the portion of the envelope used to indicate the return address. Therefore, all of the parts identical between the two forms will be numbered the same, but primed.

Referring first to the manner of inserting the forwarding address and particularly to FIG. 10, sheet 34′ is preferably heat sealed or fixed uniformly to the face 20*b*′ of panel 20′ and is of such material as to heat seal to form the envelope in the manner previously described. However, in a zone between window 31′ and fold line 25′, and to the sides of window 31′ and slightly therebelow, the sheet 34′ is not sealed to face 20*b*′ whereby to provide a pocket 40 between the sheet 34′ and face 20*b*′ whereby a slip or card 50 may be slipped into and out of said pocket. The slip or card 50 is typed or printed on only one side with the billing agency's name, the name so spaced as to be visible through the window 31′ when positioned in the pocket. The company inserts the card or slip; the customer removes it and then employs the envelope as described below for return.

Referring particularly to FIG. 9, and comparing FIG. 9 to FIG. 1, it may be seen that the FIG. 9 form does not have the customer's return address and the stamp blank (designated at 35 and 36, respectively, in FIG. 1) on the flap 23′. Instead, a customer return address indication 40 is placed (in the view shown) in the lower right-hand corner of sheet 21*a*′, the stamp blank in the lower left-hand corner thereof as at 41 and the service firm's return address placed centrally of sheet 21*a*′, upside down in the view shown, at 42.

Referring to FIGS. 3 and 11, it will be seen that the envelope, as sent to the customer, is identical in arrangement in both these figures. The customer, on receiving the envelope of FIG. 11, treats it exactly as shown in FIG. 4, namely, by tearing off flap 22′ from the rear side of envelope of FIG. 11 whereby to (1) open the envelope for inspection of the contents and (2) reveal flap 23′ therebelow.

For return of the envelope with the customer's check, however, instead of the replacement of the address slip in the pocket of the glassed sheet of the envelope, in the manner of FIG. 5 of the first modification, instead, the customer merely folds over flap 23′ and seals it to the rear side of the envelope (sheet 20*a*′) utilizing sheet 21*a*′ as the carrier of the return address to the service company and to carry the customer's return address and the stamp.

From the foregoing it will be seen that this invention is one well adapted to attain all of the ends and objects hereinabove set forth together with other advantages which are obvious and which are inherent to the structure.

It will be understood that certain features and subcombinations are of utility and may be employed without reference to other features and subcombinations. This is contemplated by and is within the scope of the claims.

As many possible embodiments may be made of the invention without departing from the scope thereof, it is to be understood that all matter herein set forth or shown in the accompanying drawings is to be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense.

Having thus described my invention, I claim:

1. A return envelope blank comprising an elongate strip of sheet material, three vertically spaced, parallel fold lines dividing the strip into an upper seal flange, an upper panel, a lower panel and a lower seal flange, said fold

lines comprising an upper, a middle and a lower fold line, respectively, a first weakened line of severance adjacent to the upper fold line, a second weakened line of severance on said upper seal flange parallel to and above said first weakened line of severance but below the upper strip extremity, a portion of the strip above the second weakened line of severance adhesively coated, said upper panel having a window opening therein, said lower panel of substantially the same height as said upper panel whereby when one of the panels is folded over on the fold line therebetween, the panels are substantially congruent with one another, an integral transparent sheet of material on the same side of said strip as the adhesive coating, said integral transparent sheet covering the entire panel including any window therein and attached thereto, said transparent sheet of heat sealable material at least in the side edge portions thereof, whereby to permit heat sealing of said sheet side edges and upper and lower panel side edges to one another to form an envelope, said sheet additionally at least heat sealed to said upper panel side around all sides of said window except that side thereof next to the upper fold line, means for sealing the side edges of the panels to one another when folded on one another, a portion of said lower seal flange adhesively coated adjacent the free edge thereof on the same side of the strip as the adhesive coating on the upper seal flange, and at least one of the lower seal flange and upper seal flange being of a height no greater than the height of the other seal flange from the fold line defining the same to the adhesive thereon.

2. A return mailing envelope comprising a front panel of rectangular form having upper, lower and side edges, inner and outer sides and a window therethrough, a transparent sheet of material positioned on the inner side of said front panel and covering the entire inner side thereof, including said window and attached to said front panel inner side, said sheet of heat sealable material at least in the portions thereof adjacent the side edges of said panel whereby to permit heat sealing of said panel side edges to the side edges of another panel of said mailing envelope, said sheet heat sealed to said front panel inner side around all sides of said window except that side thereof next to the upper edge of said front panel, a rear panel congruent in form with said front panel and secured to the lower and side edges of the inner side thereof by means of said transparent sheet, a primary sealing flange connected to the upper edge of said front panel, extending along substantially the length thereof, and separated by a first fold line therefrom, a pair of weakened lines of severance along said primary sealing flange extending substantially parallel to said first fold line, a first one of said lines of severance adjacent the first fold line and a second one adjacent the free edge of said flange, an adhesive coating between the free edge of said flange and the second line of severance on the side of the primary flange next the rear panel when the primary flange is folded thereover, a second sealing flange connected to the upper edge of said rear panel, extending along substantially the length thereof and separated by a second fold line therefrom, said second sealing flange having an adhesive coating on the upper edge thereof on the side thereof next the front panel when the second sealing flange is folded thereover, the second flange of an extension above the rear panel being less than the extension of the first flange above the front panel at least by the width of the adhesive on the latter.

3. In a return envelope blank the combination comprising an elongate strip of sheet material, two vertically spaced, parallel fold lines dividing the strip into an upper seal flange, an upper panel and a lower panel, the upper edge of the upper seal flange adhesively coated, said lower panel of substantially the same height as said upper panel whereby when one of the panels is folded over on the fold line therebetween the panels are substantially congruent with one another, and a sheet of material on the same side of the strip as the adhesive coating thereon covering the entire upper panel and attached thereto, said sheet of heat sealable material at least adjacent the side edges of said upper panel, whereby to permit sealing of the side edges of the upper and lower panel to one another to form an envelope.

4. In a mailing envelope the combination comprising a front panel of rectangular form having upper, lower and side edges and inner and outer sides, a sheet of material on the inner side of said panel covering the entire said panel and attached thereto, said sheet of heat sealable material at least adjacent the side edges of said panel whereby to permit sealing of the side edges thereof to the side edges of a rear panel, a rear panel congruent in form with said front panel and secured to the lower and side edges thereof, the securement to the side edges thereof by means of said transparent sheet and heat sealing employing same, a sealing flange connected to the upper edge of said front panel, extending along substantially the length thereof and separated by a fold line therefrom and an adhesive coating along the free edge of said sealing flange.

5. In a mailing envelope, the combination comprising a front panel of rectangular form having upper, lower and side edges and inner and outer sides, a rear panel congruent in form with said front panel and secured to the lower and side edges thereof, a sheet of material between said front and rear panels congruent in form therewith and covering the entire surface of one of said panels and attached thereto, said sheet of heat sealable material at least adjacent the side edges of the panel to which it is attached whereby to permit heat sealing of the side edges thereof to the side edges of the other said panel, the securement of the front and rear panels to one another by the side edges thereof by means of said transparent sheet and heat sealing employing same, a sealing flange connected to the upper edge of one of said panels, extending along substantially the length thereof and separated by a fold line therefrom, and an adhesive coating along the free edge of said sealing flange.

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