



US 20060214397A1

(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication****Dotsey et al.**(10) **Pub. No.: US 2006/0214397 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Sep. 28, 2006**(54) **STROLLER****Publication Classification**

(75) Inventors: **Michael A. Dotsey**, Pottstown, PA
(US); **Todd D. Sorzano**, Atglen, PA
(US); **Roy L. Dean**, Pottstown, PA (US)

(51) **Int. Cl.**
B62B 7/00 (2006.01)
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **280/647**

Correspondence Address:
LEMPIA IP GROUP, LLC
223 WEST JACKSON BLVD.
SUITE 1100, BROOKS BLDG.
CHICAGO, IL 60606 (US)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A stroller has a collapsible frame structure with a pair of laterally spaced apart rear legs each with a lower end. The frame structure is collapsible in vertical, horizontal, and side-to-side lateral directions from an in-use arrangement to a compact arrangement. The stroller has a seat supported by the frame structure and the seat has a seat bottom. A storage area is beneath the seat bottom when the stroller is in the in-use arrangement. An access opening into the storage area when the stroller is in the in-use arrangement is bounded by the seat bottom, the rear legs, and a lower boundary. A frame cross-brace is connected to the rear legs when the stroller is in the in-use arrangement. The entire cross-brace is positionable vertically at or below the lower boundary of the access opening.

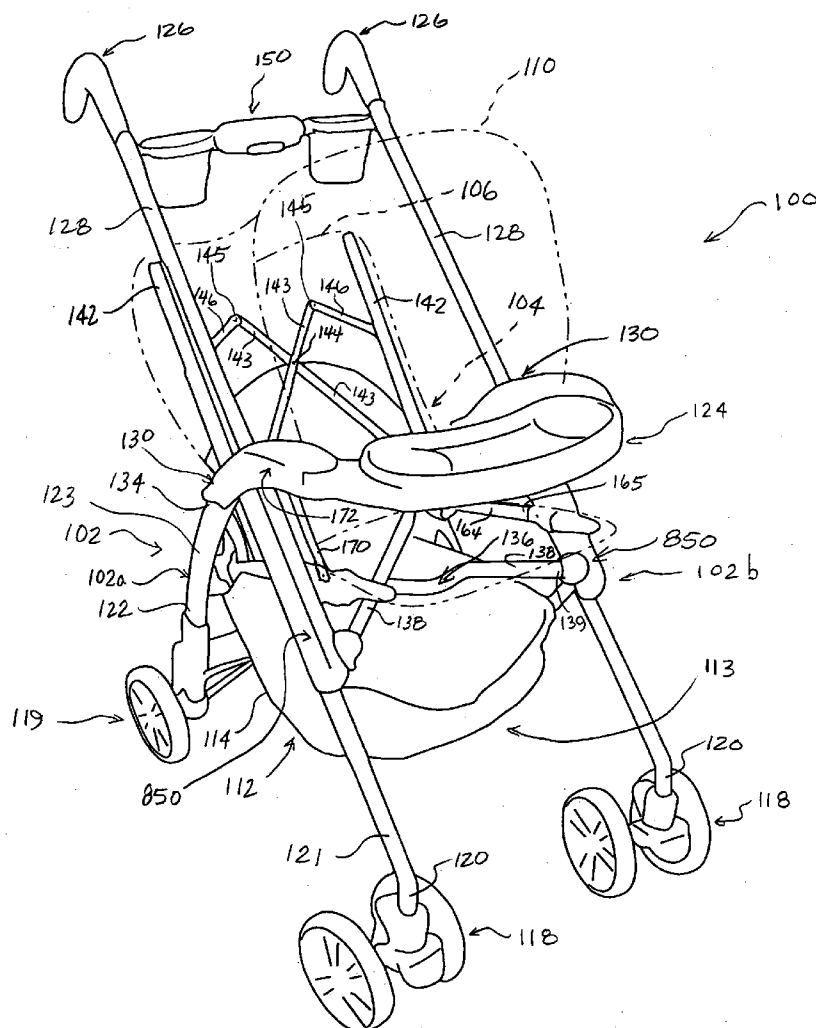
(73) Assignee: **Graco Children's Products Inc.**, Exton, PA

(21) Appl. No.: **11/337,962**

(22) Filed: **Jan. 23, 2006**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/645,047, filed on Jan. 21, 2005.



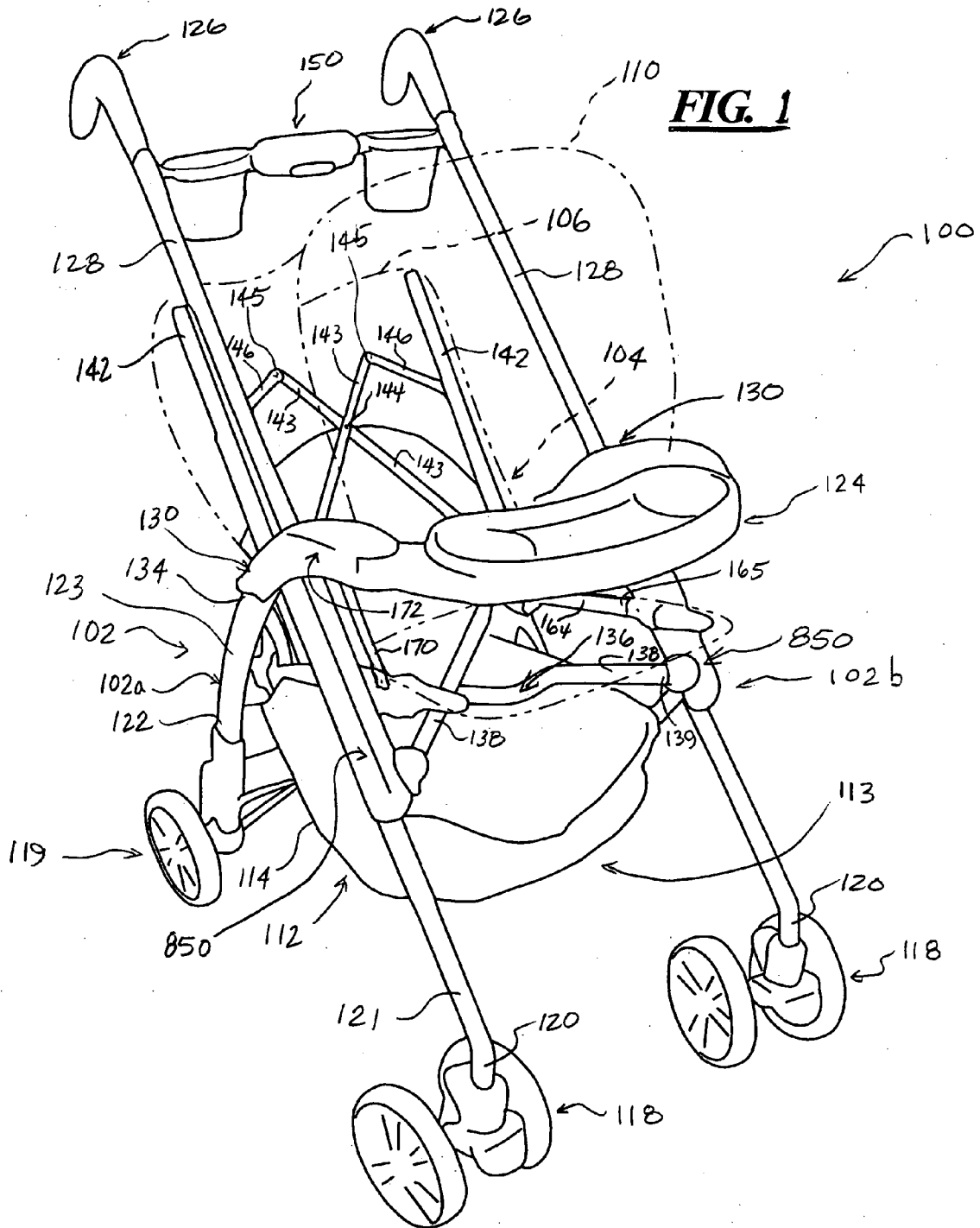
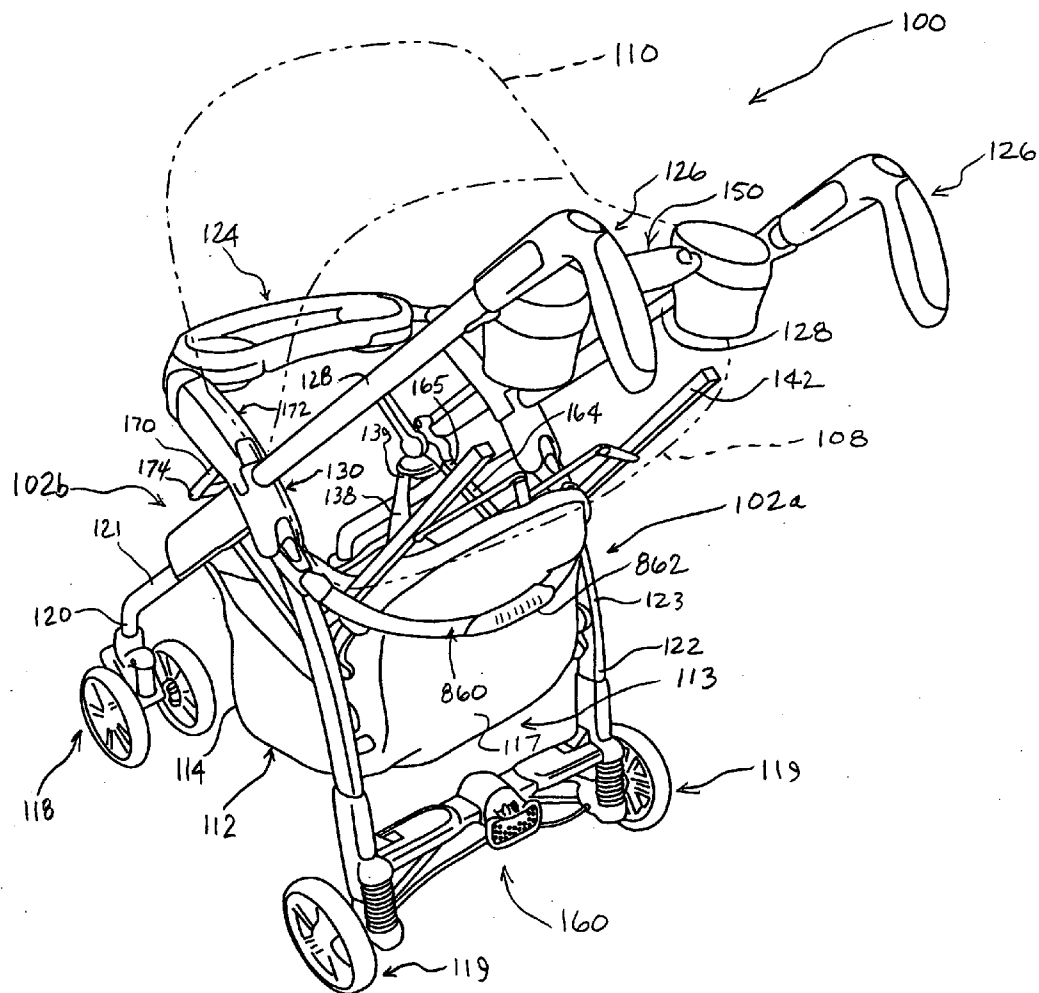
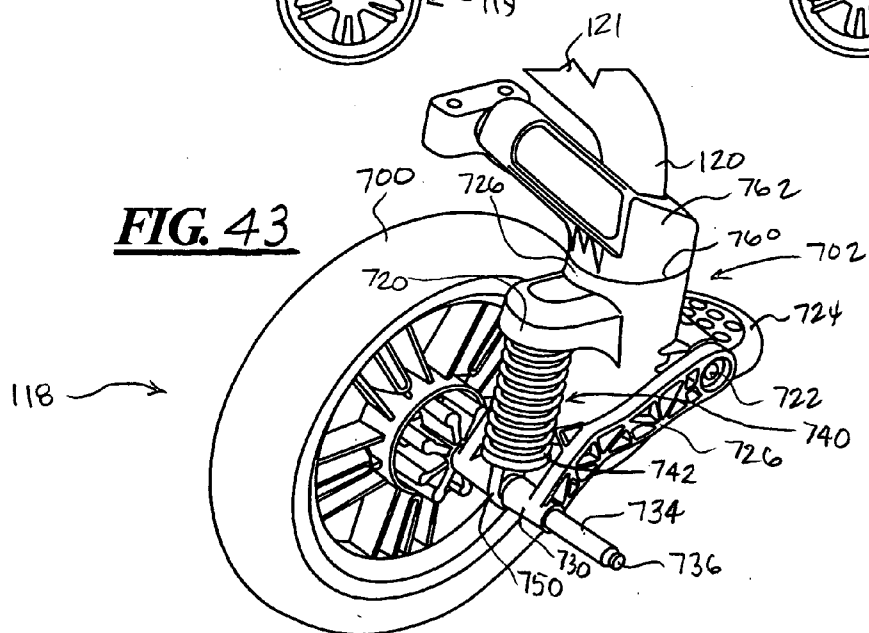
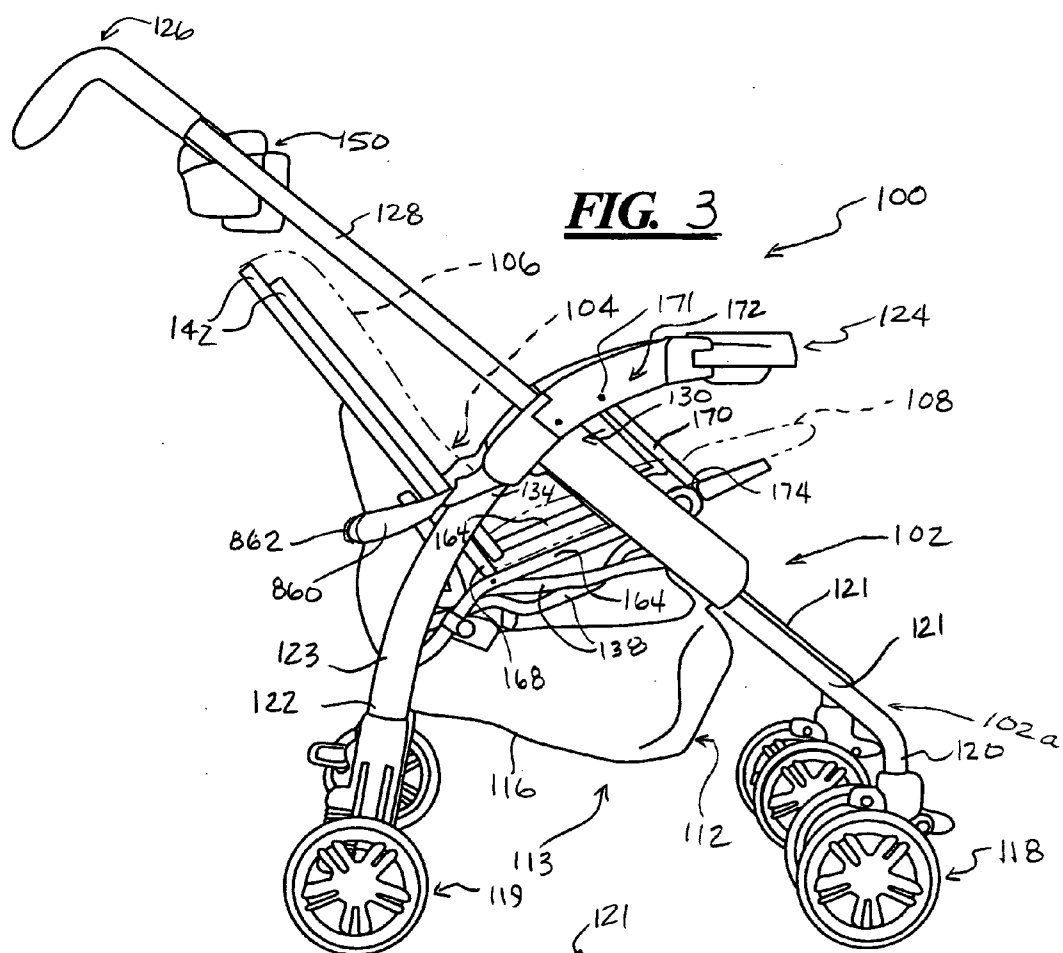
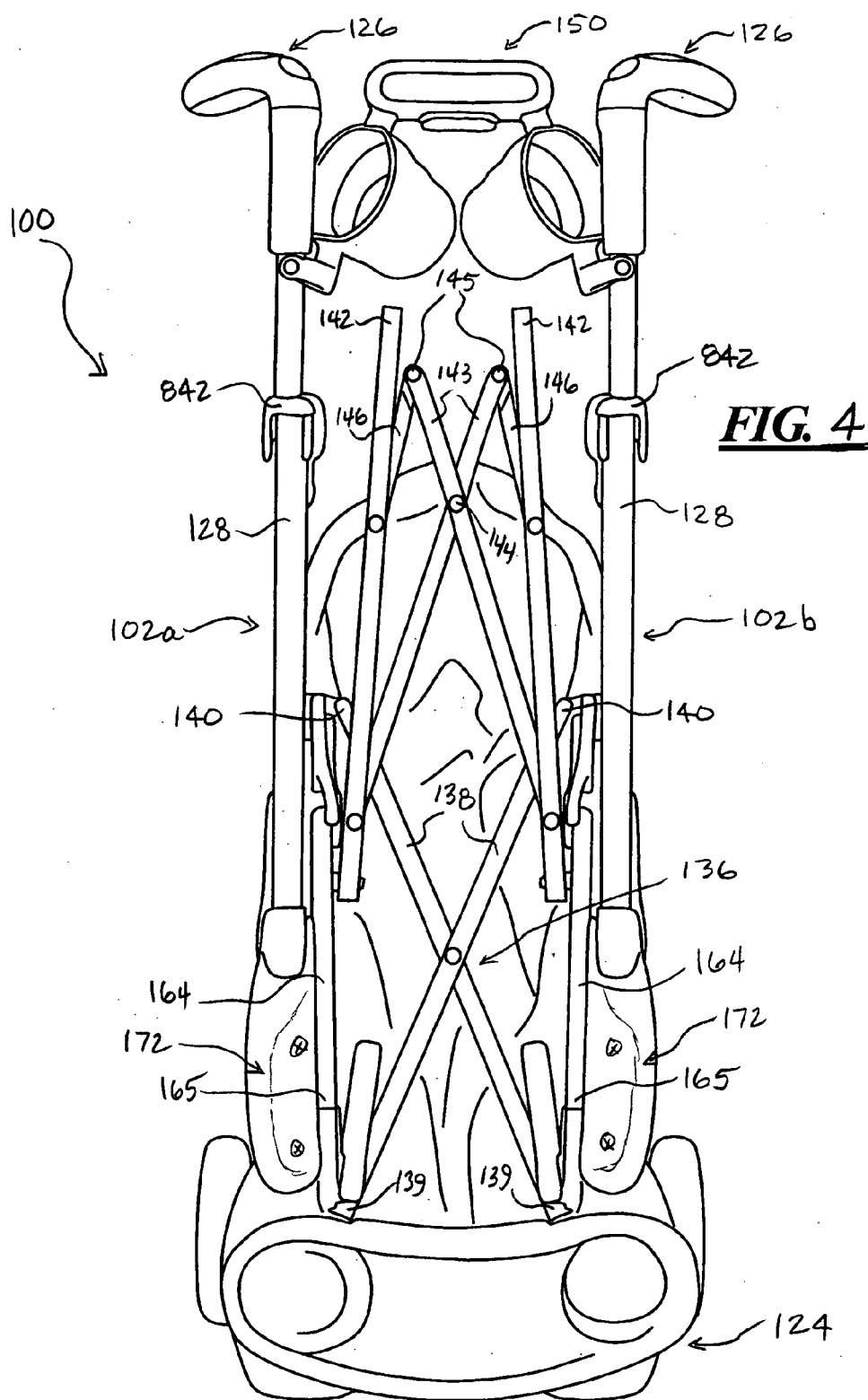


FIG. 2







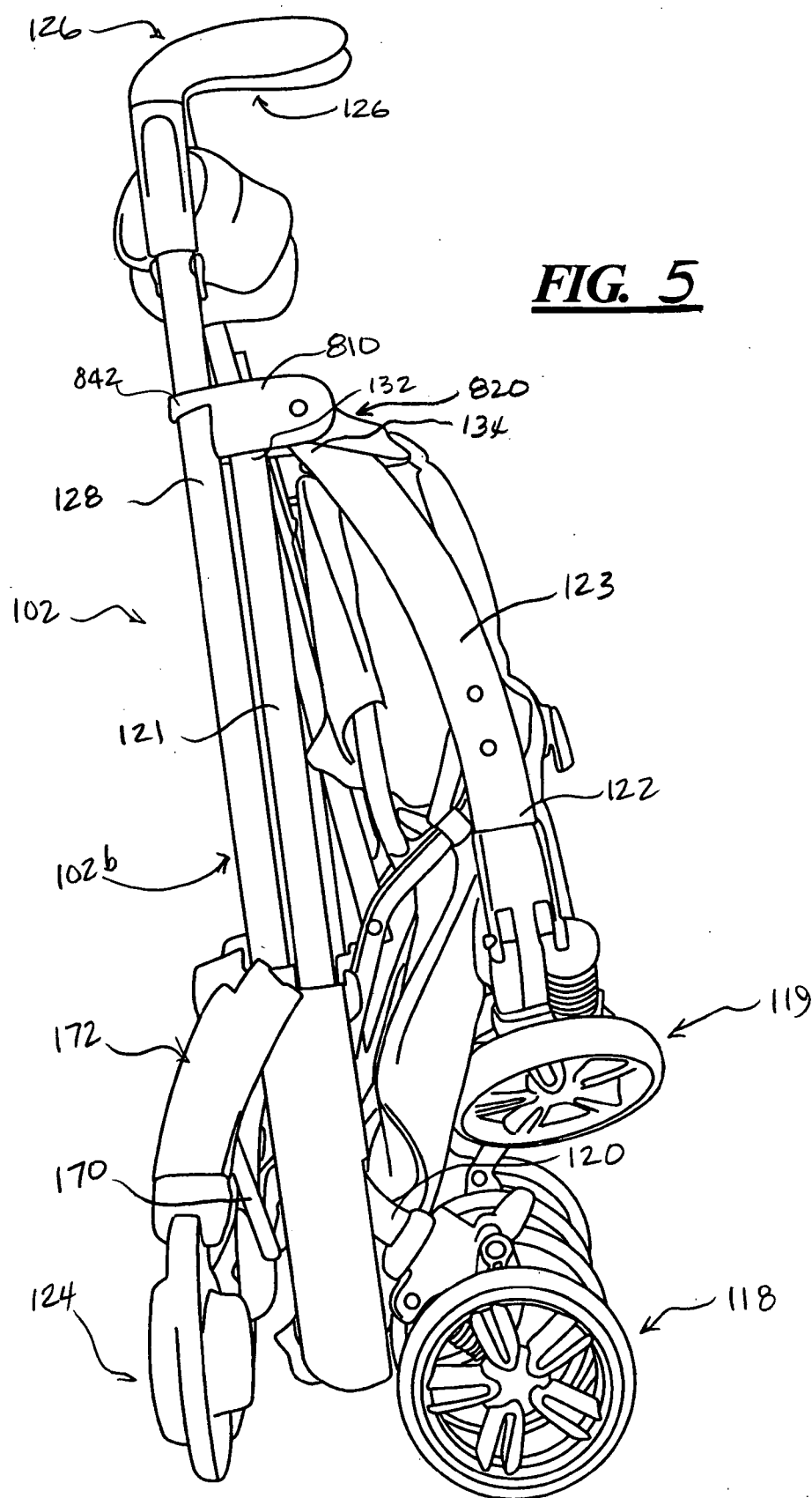
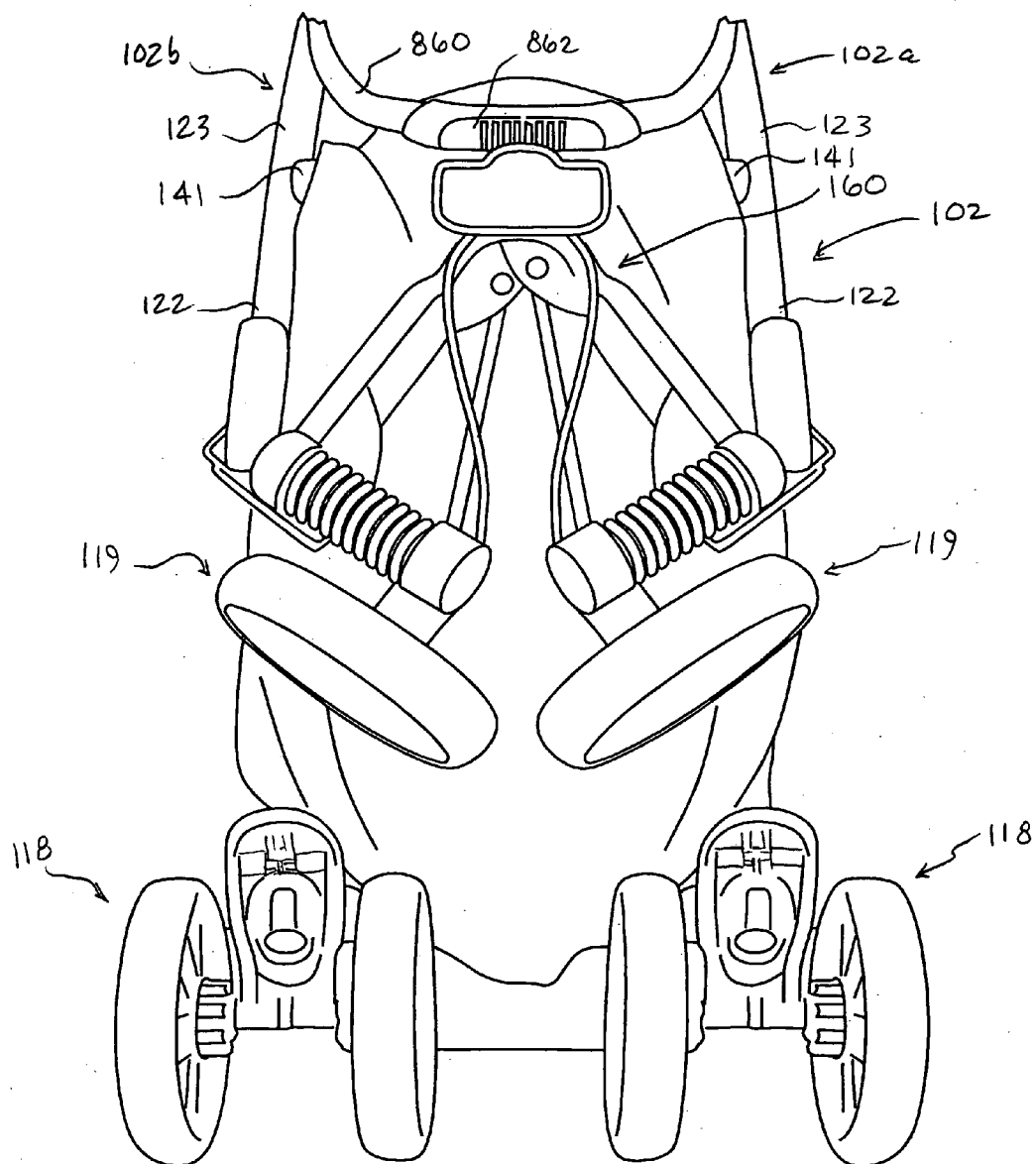
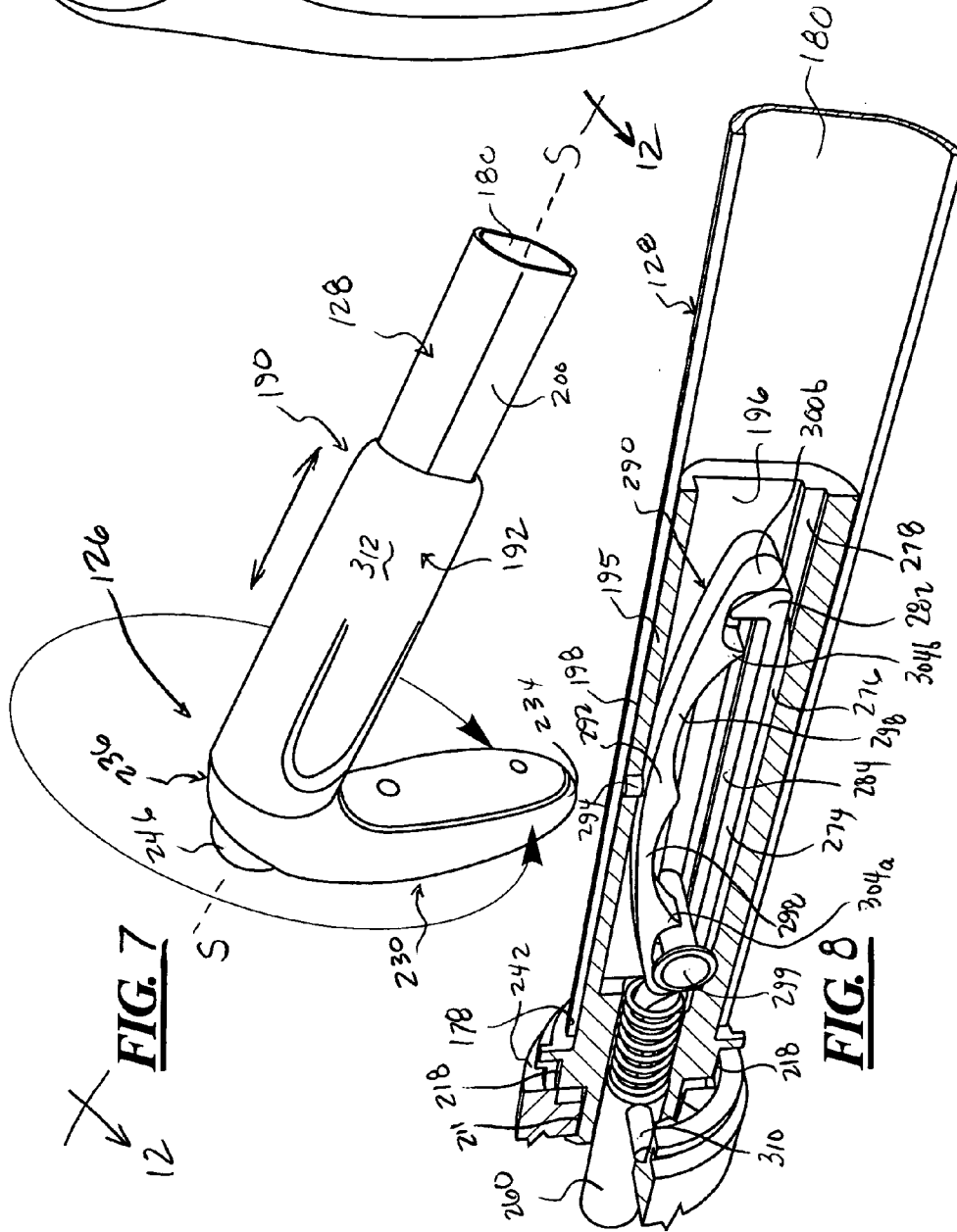
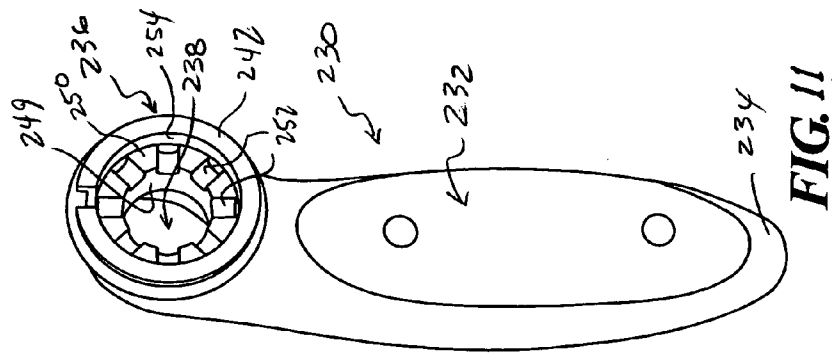
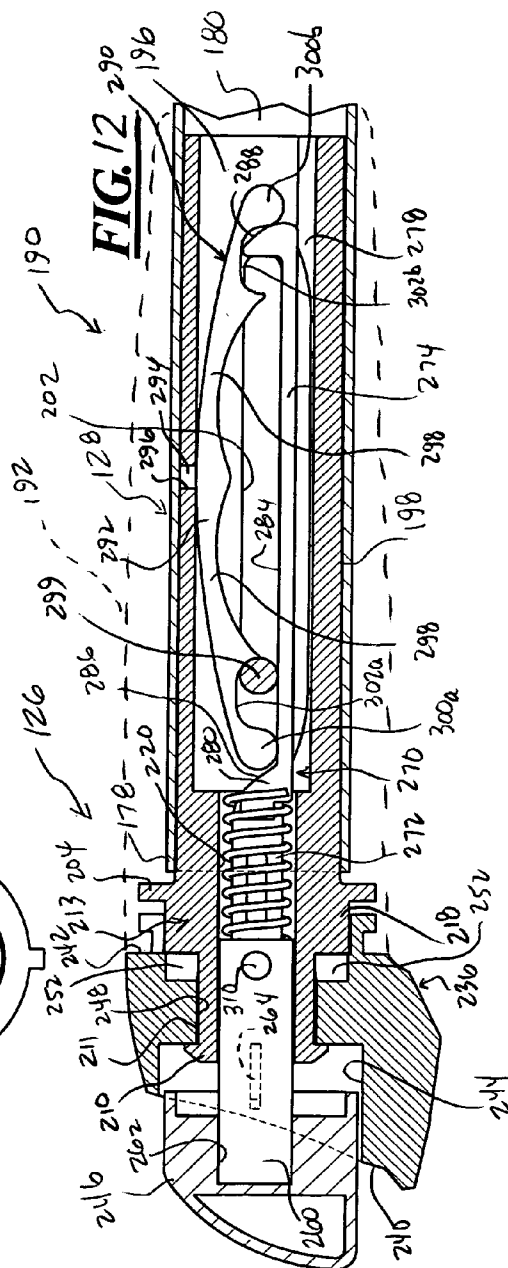
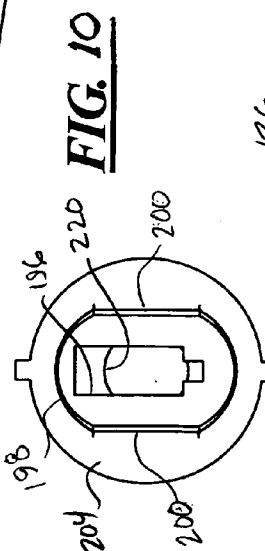
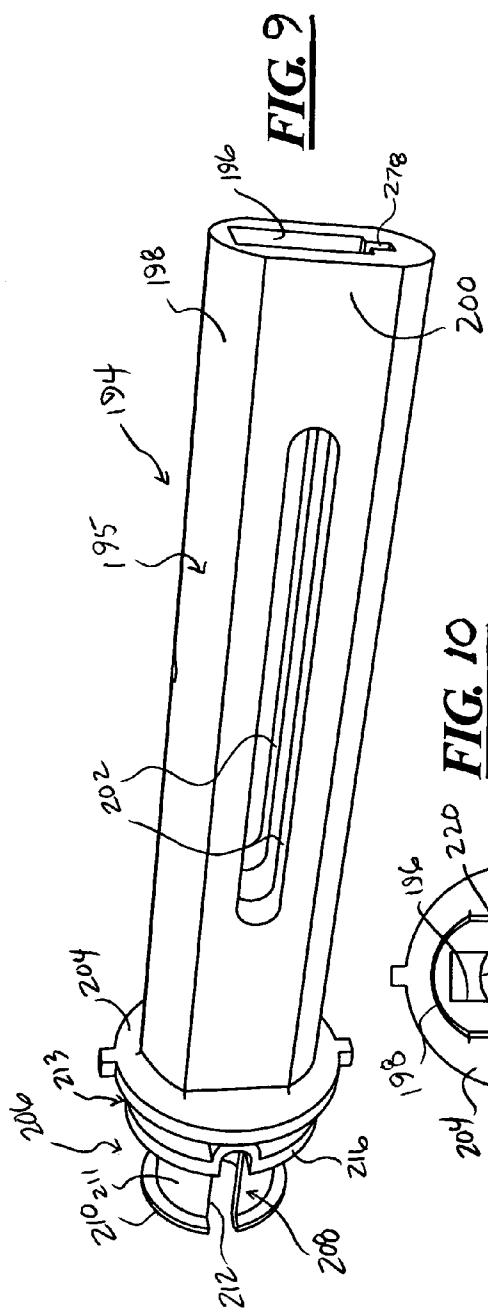


FIG. 6







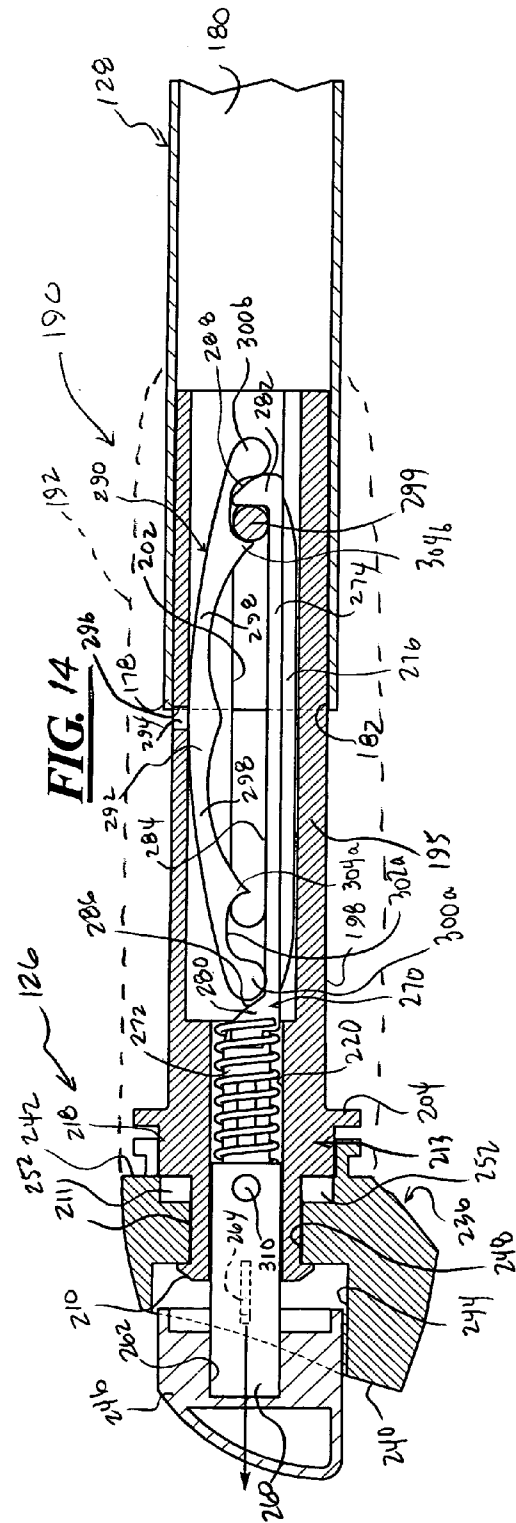
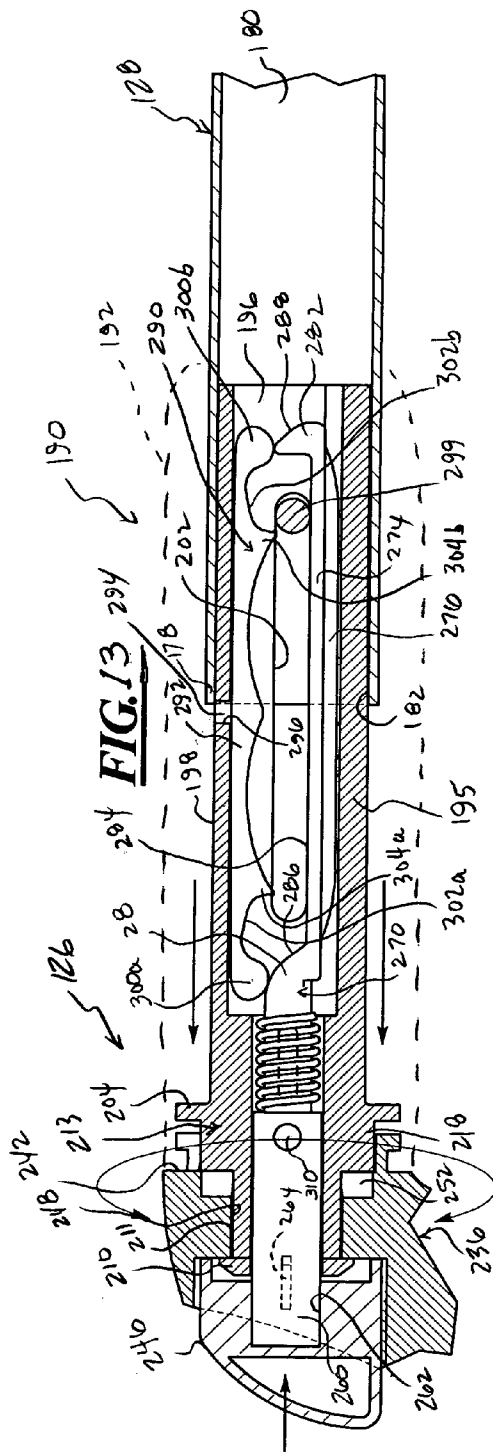


FIG. 15

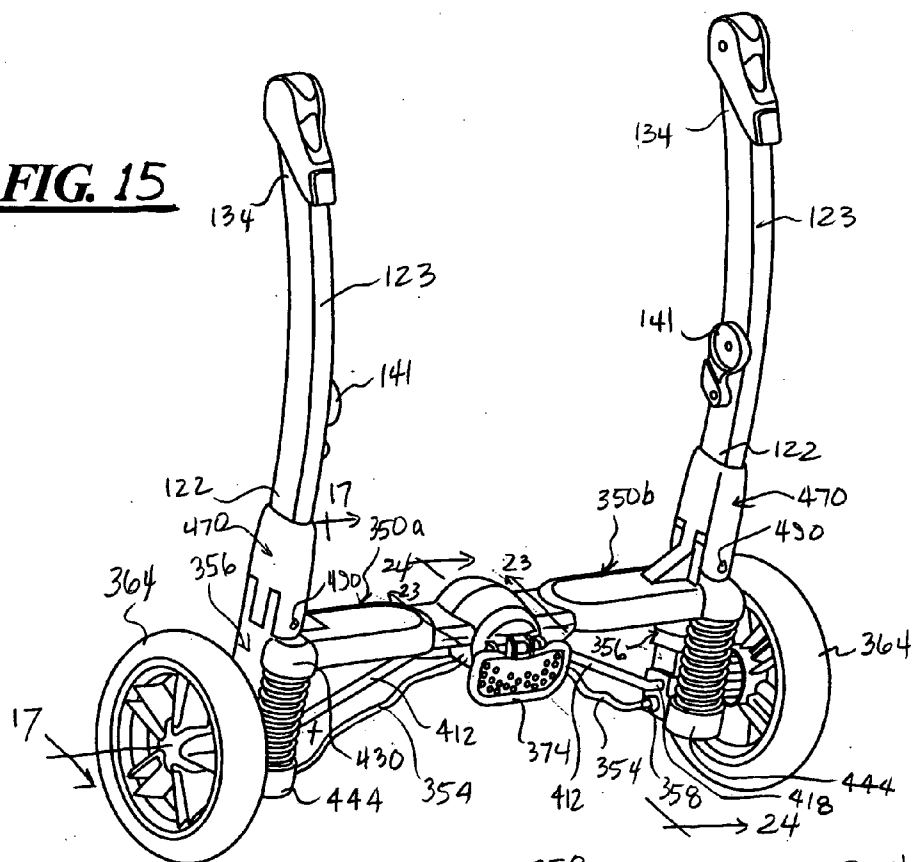
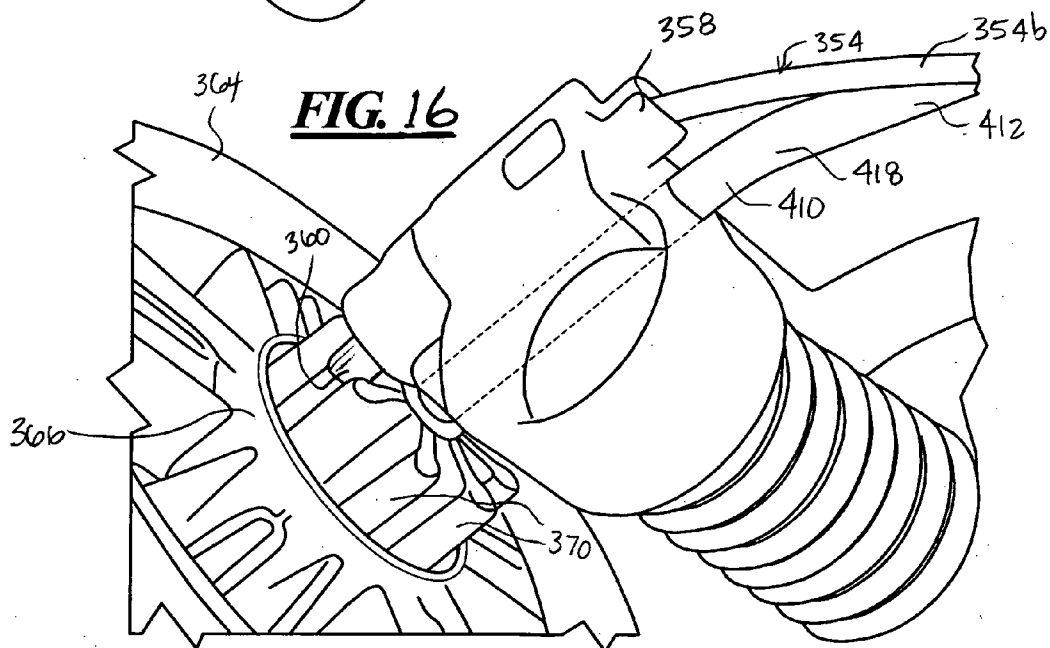
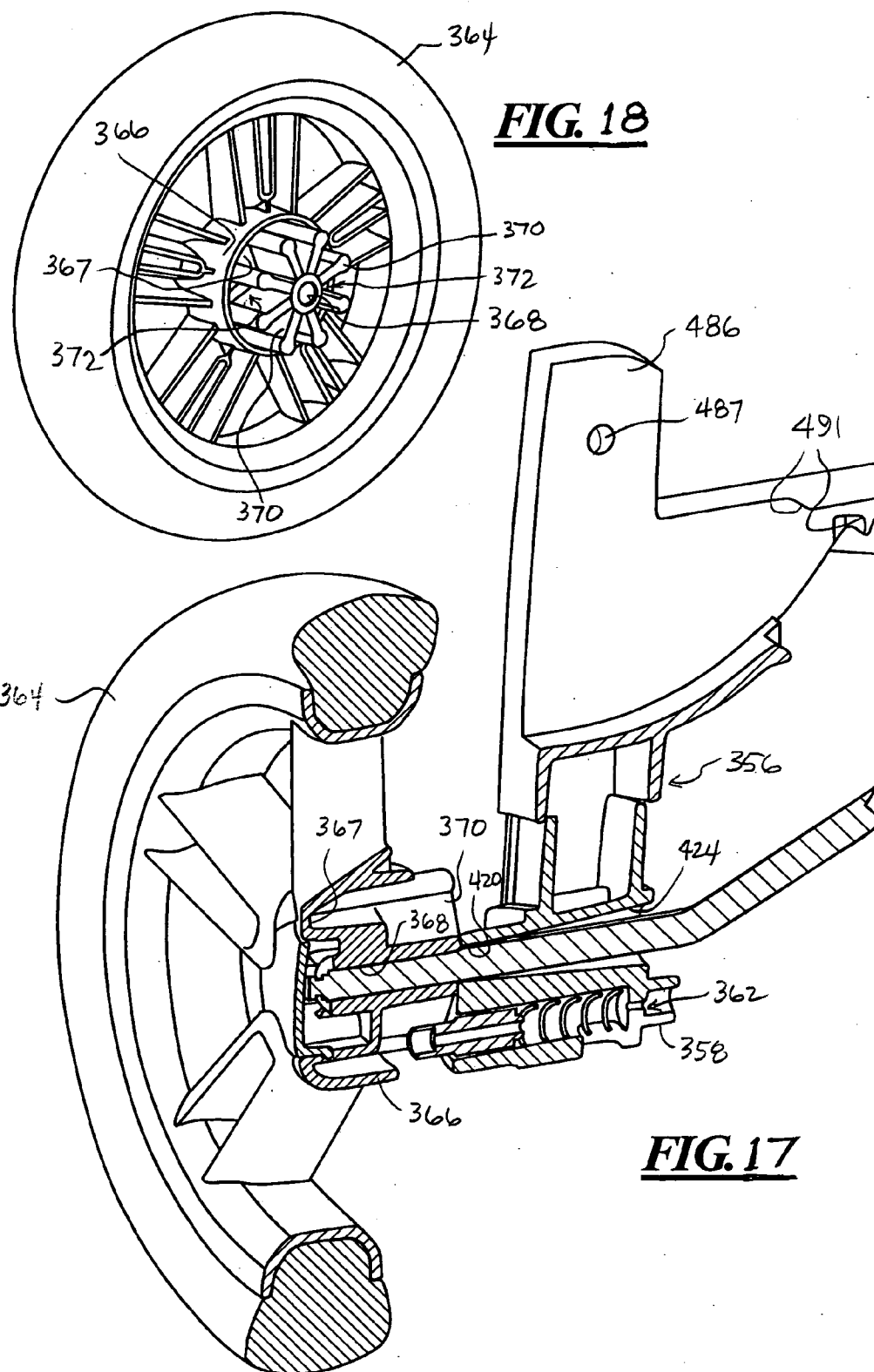
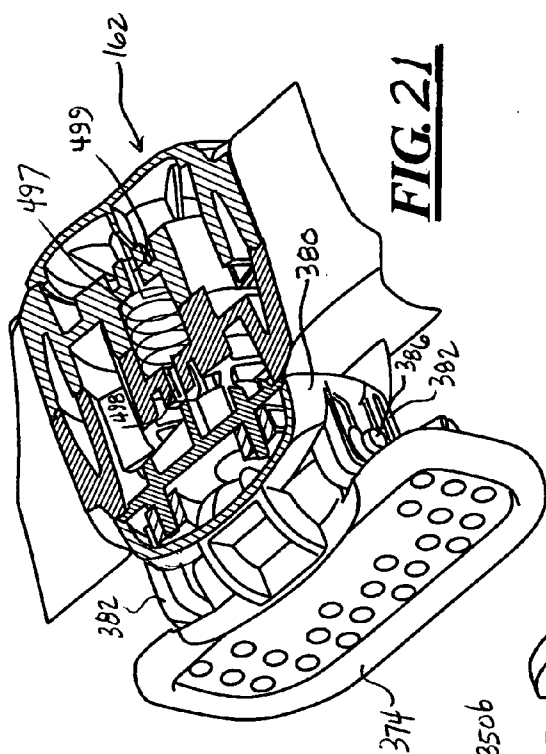
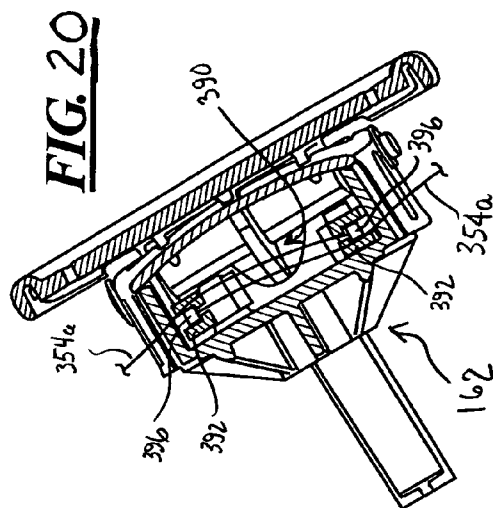
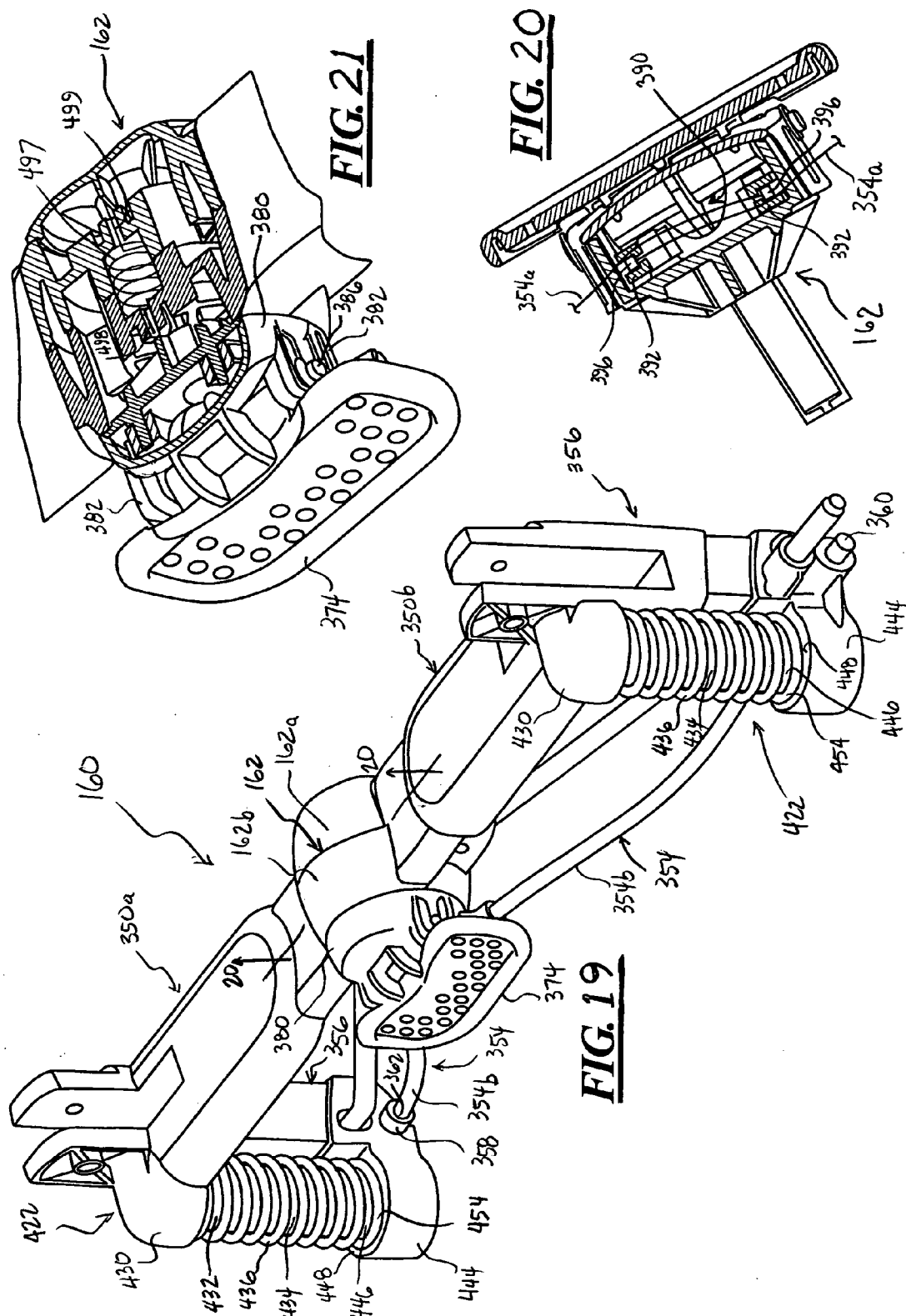
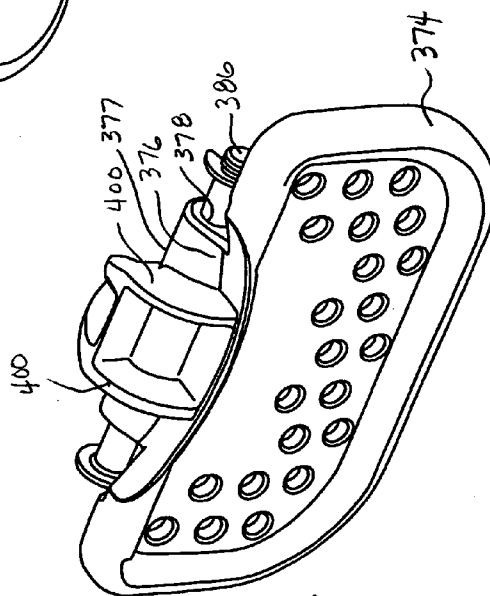
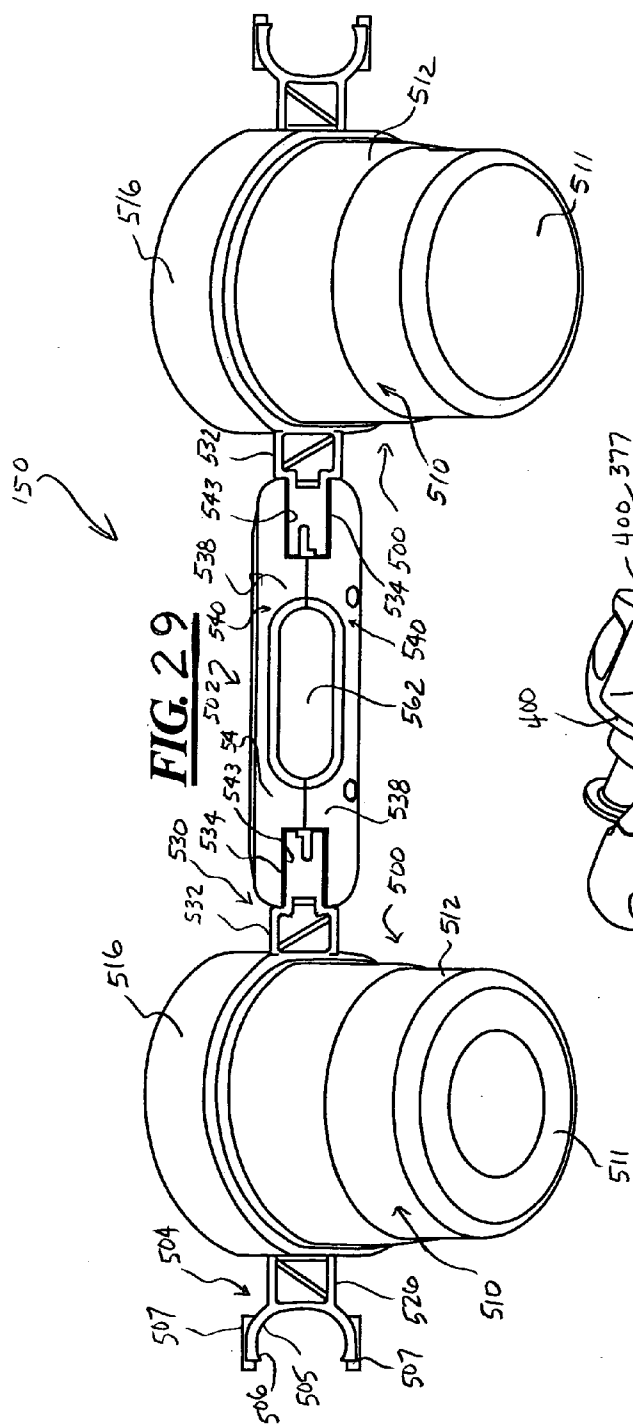


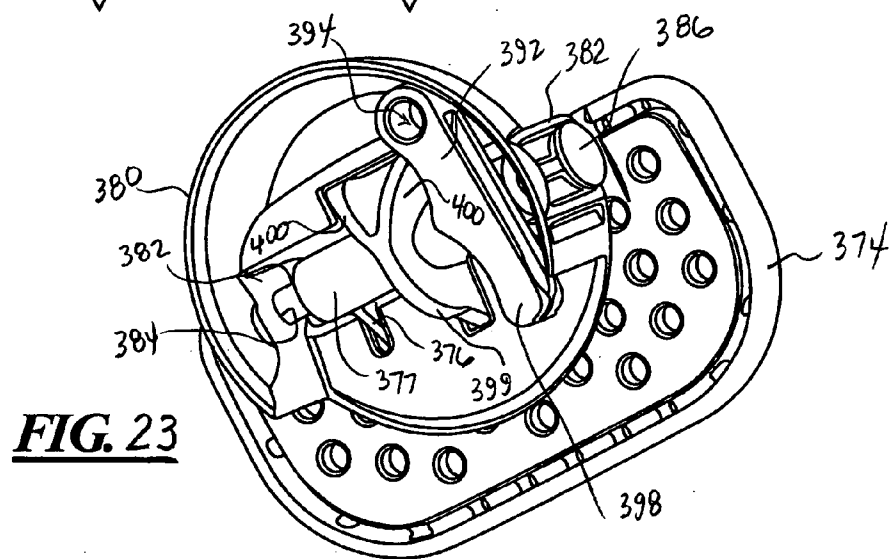
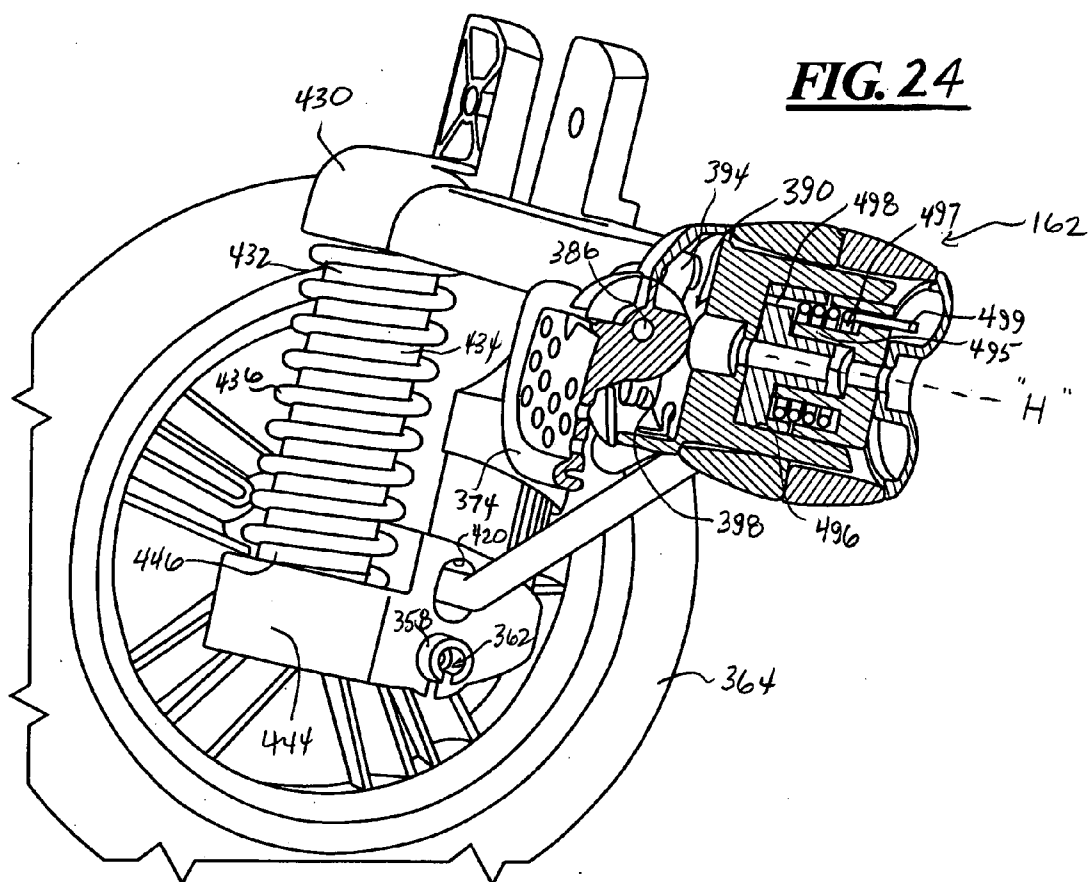
FIG. 16











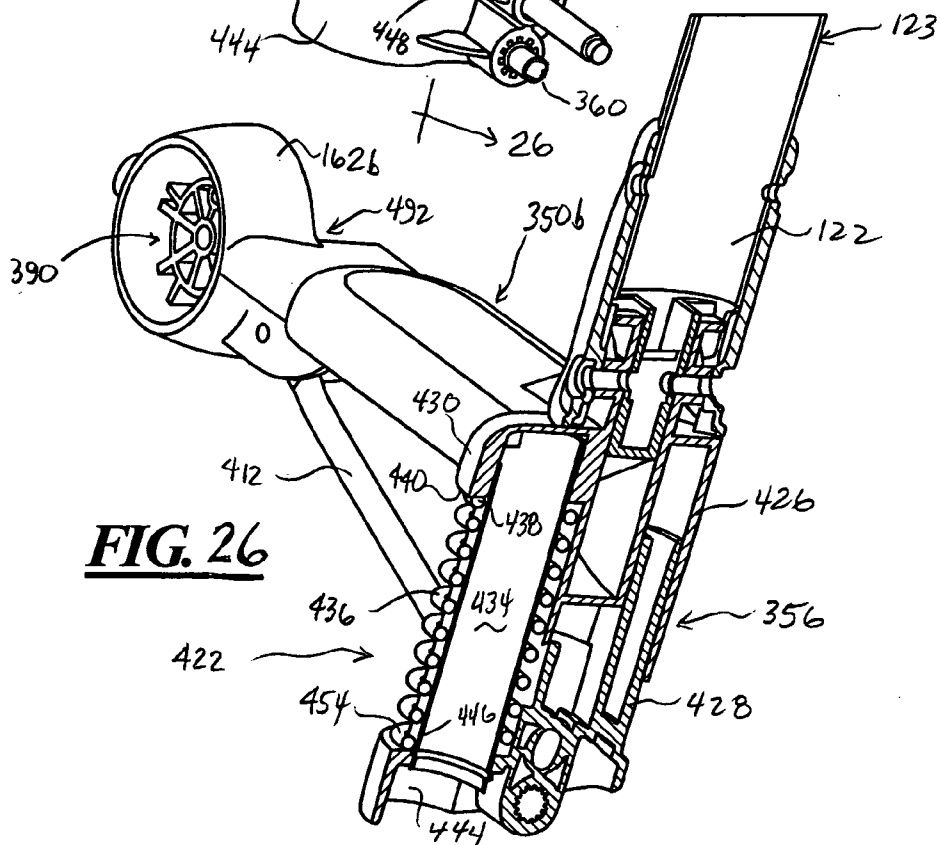
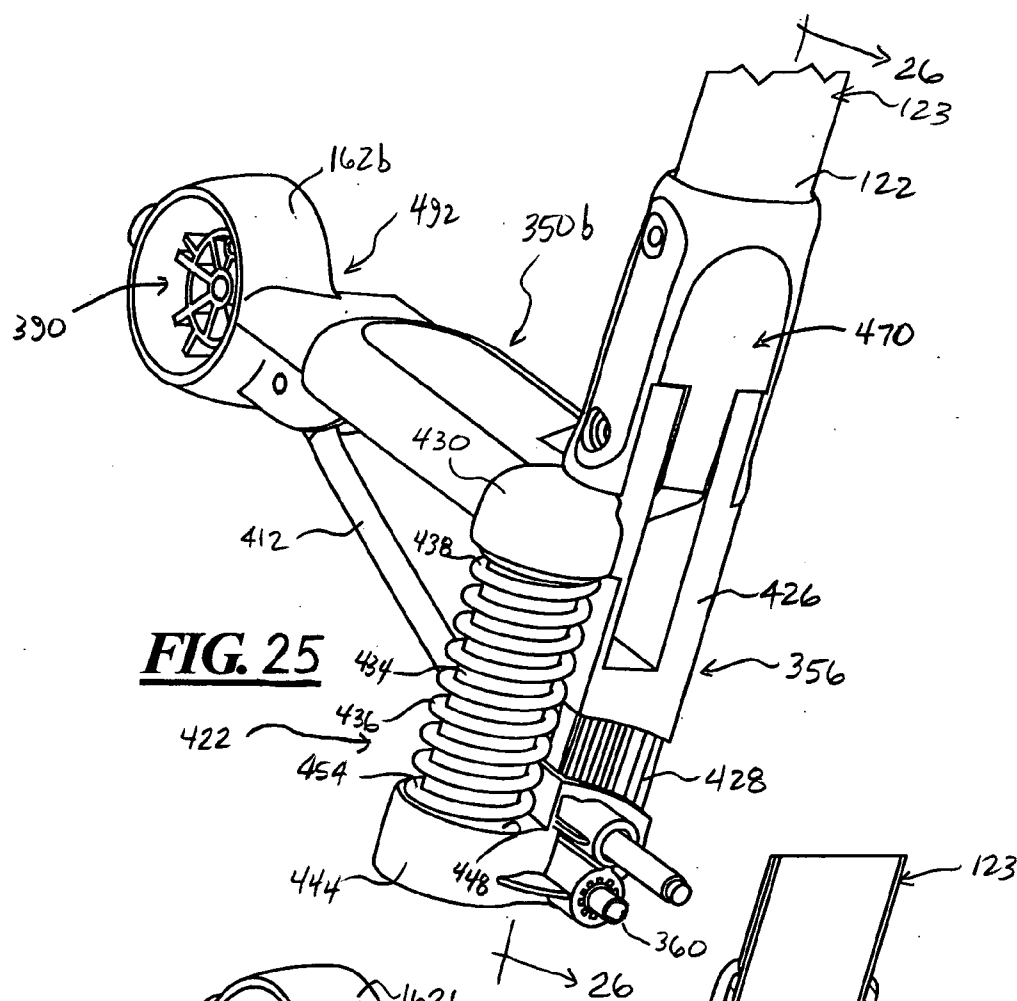
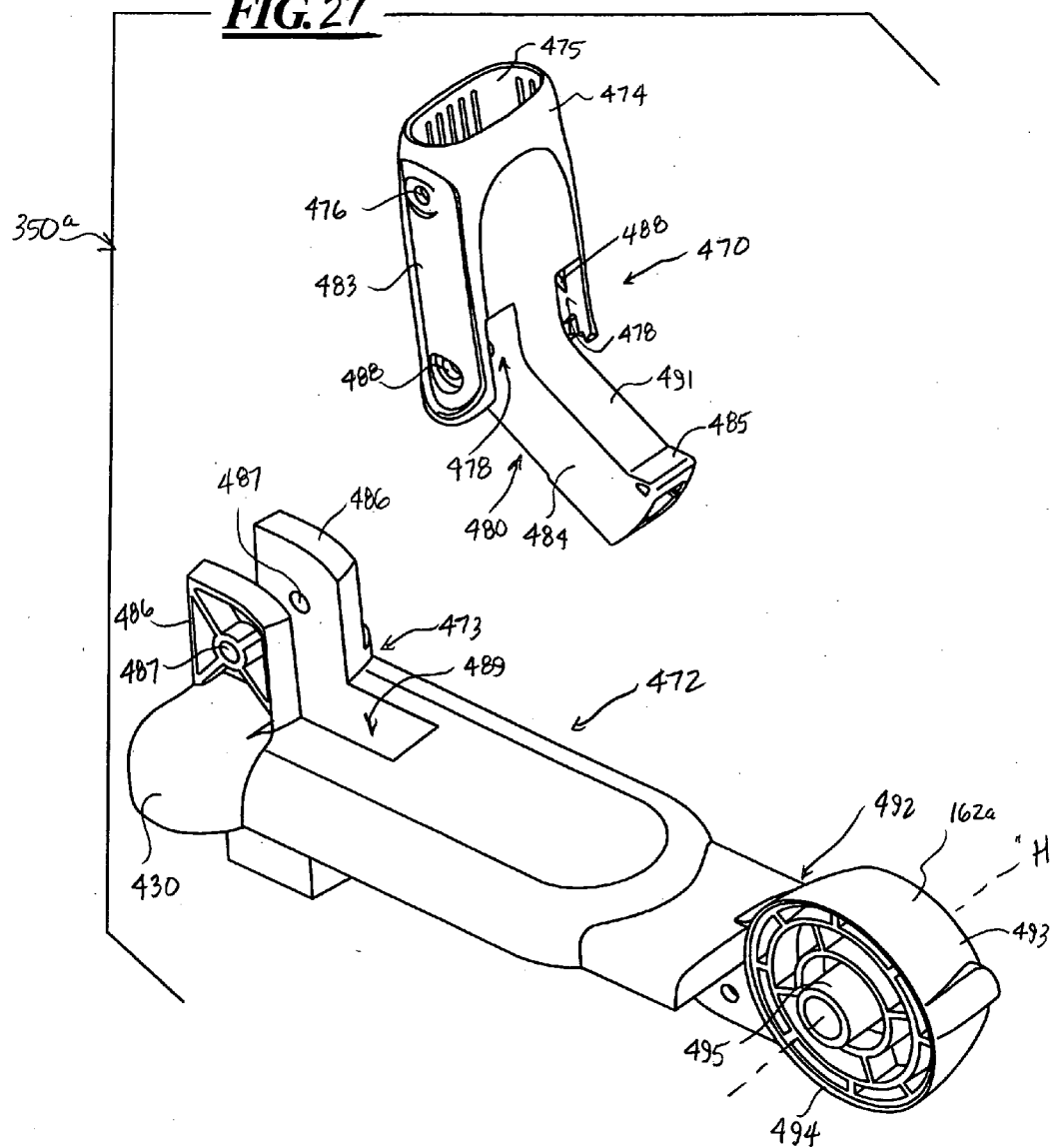
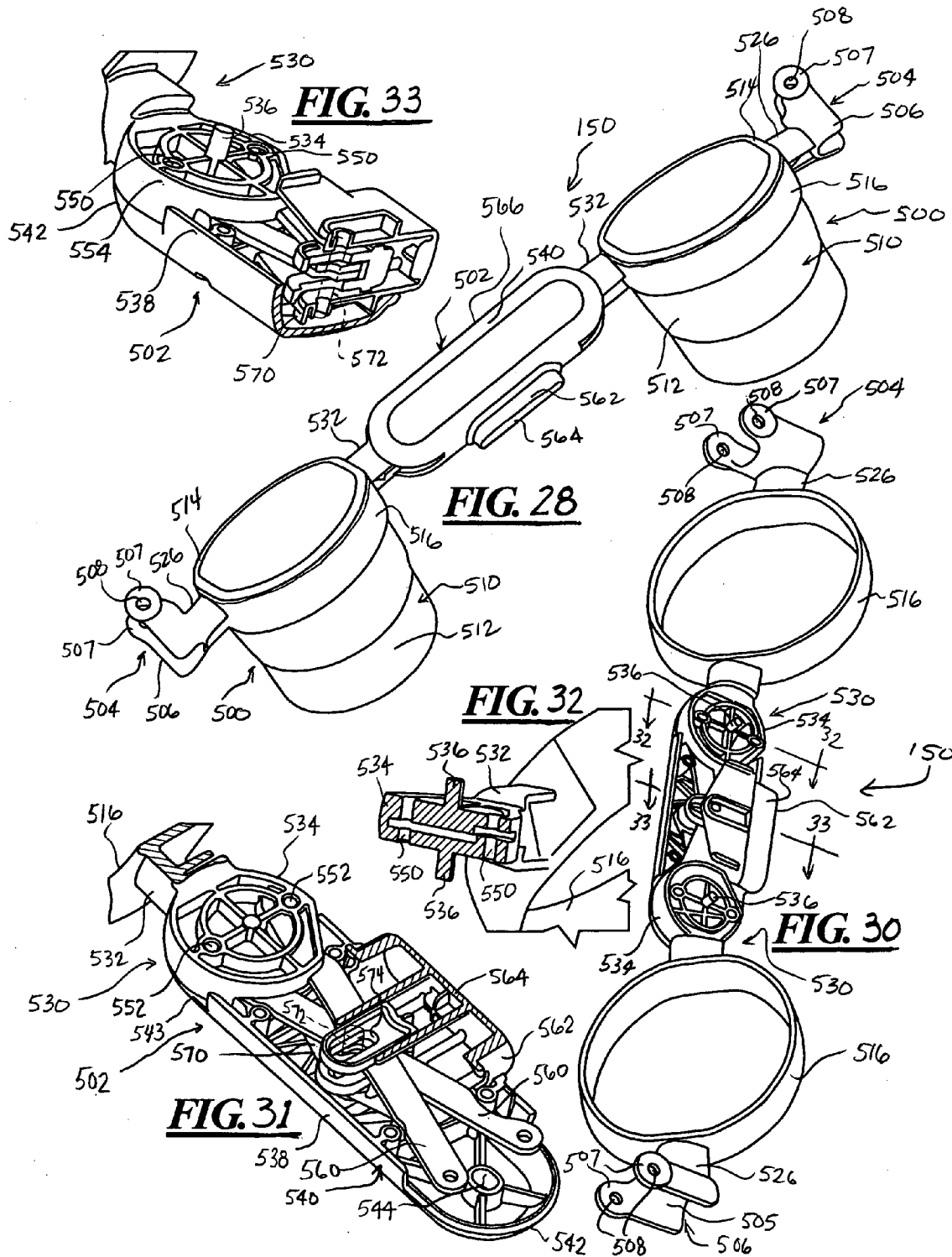


FIG. 27





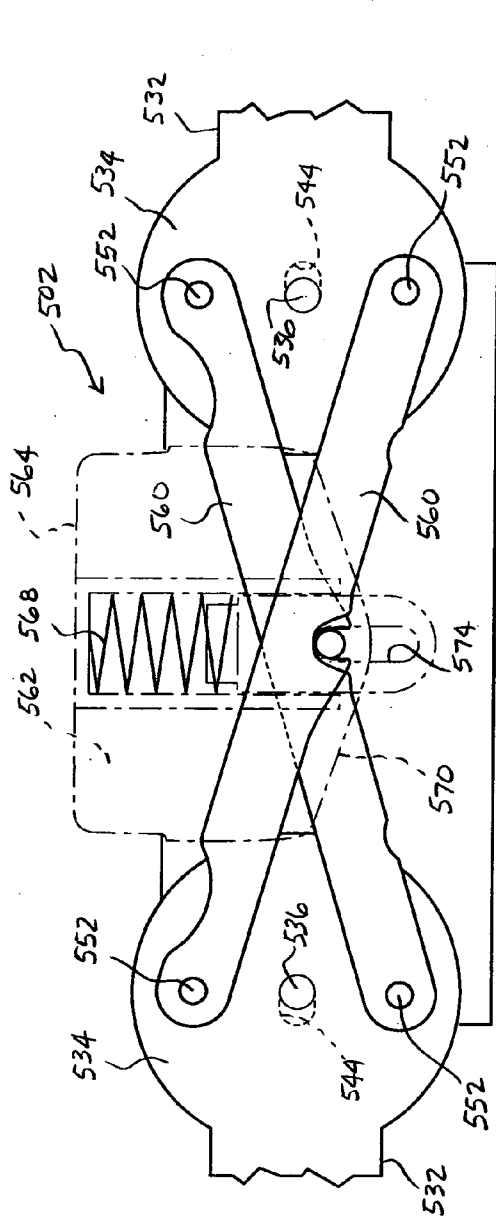


FIG. 34

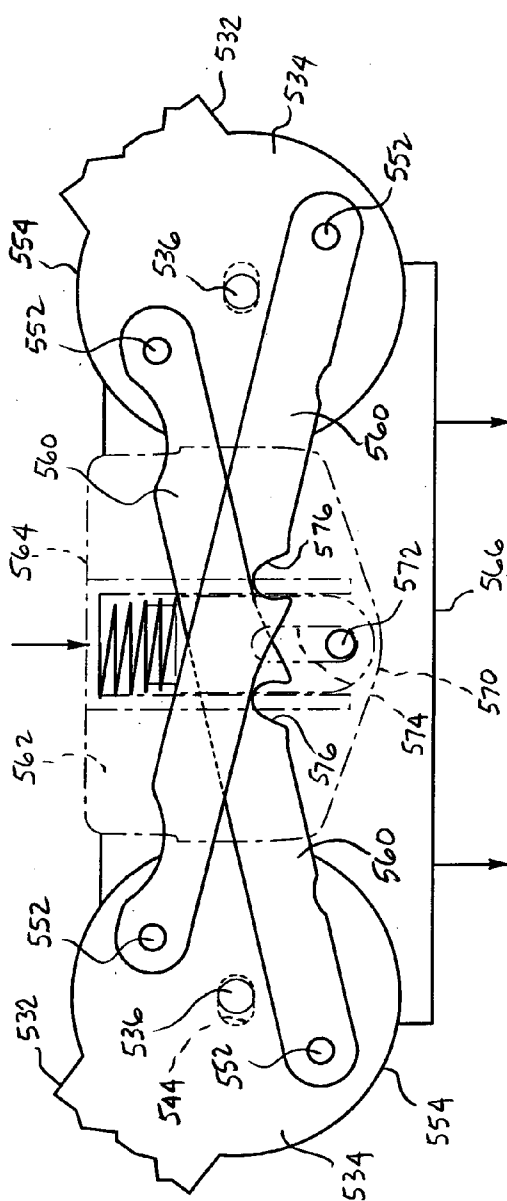
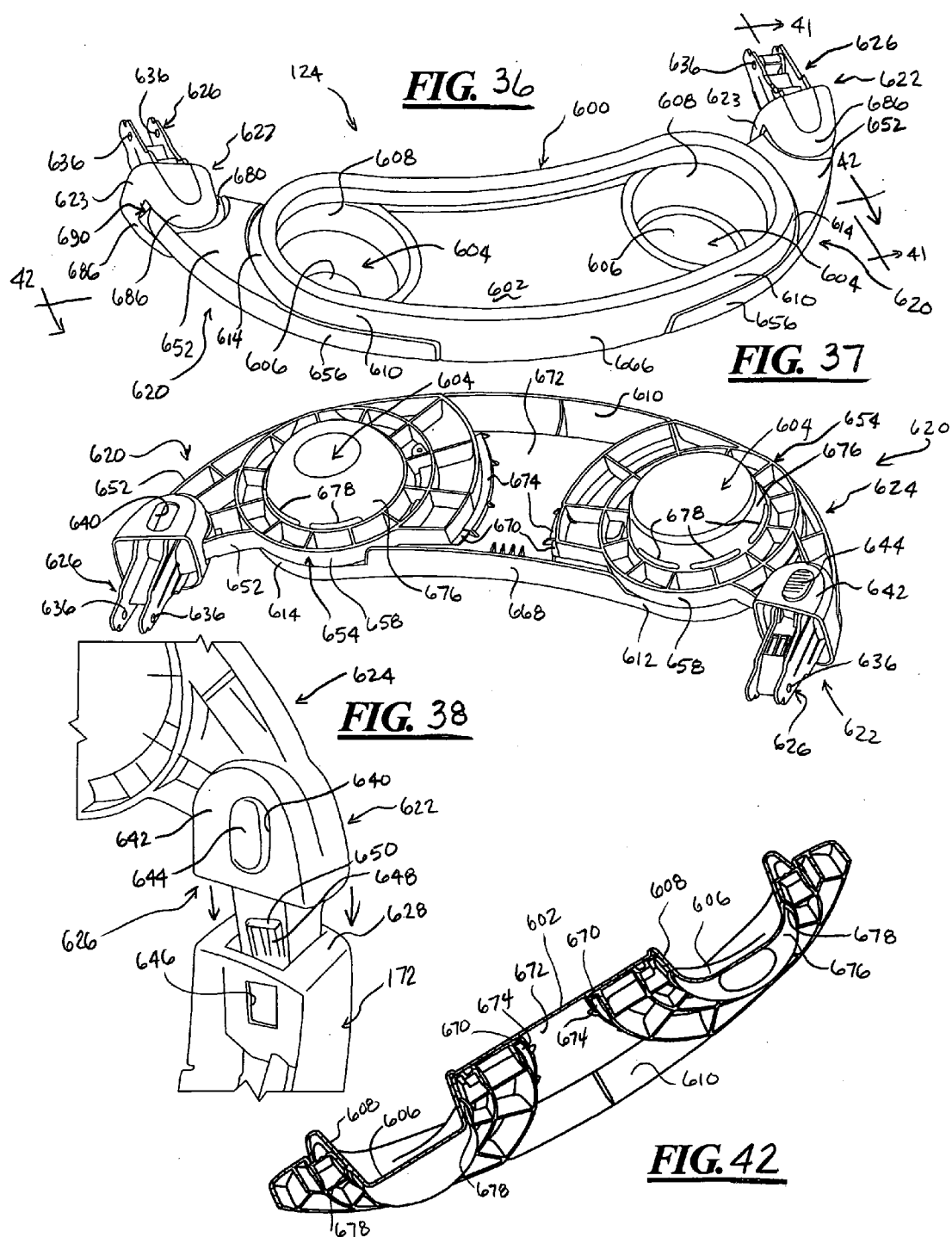
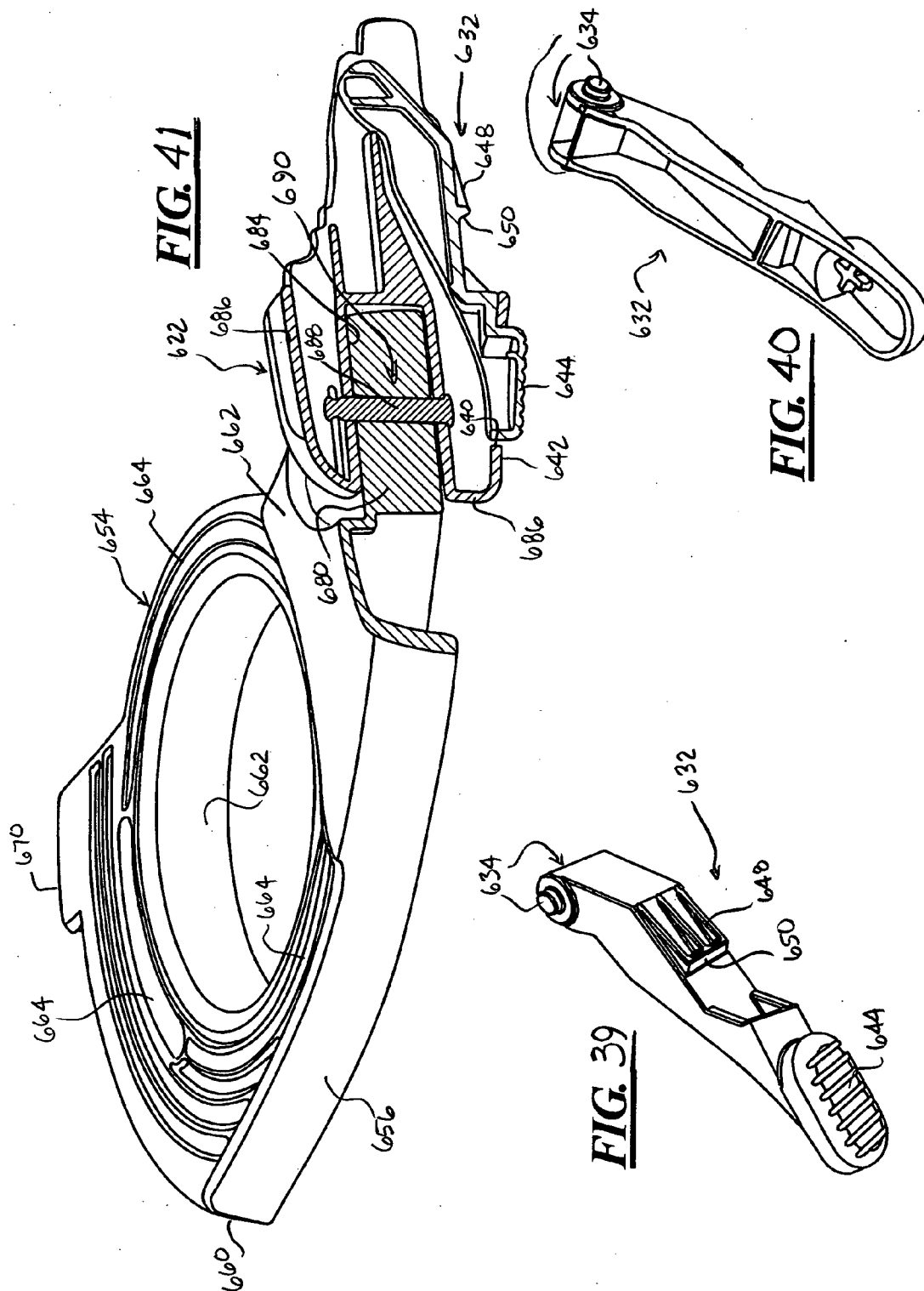
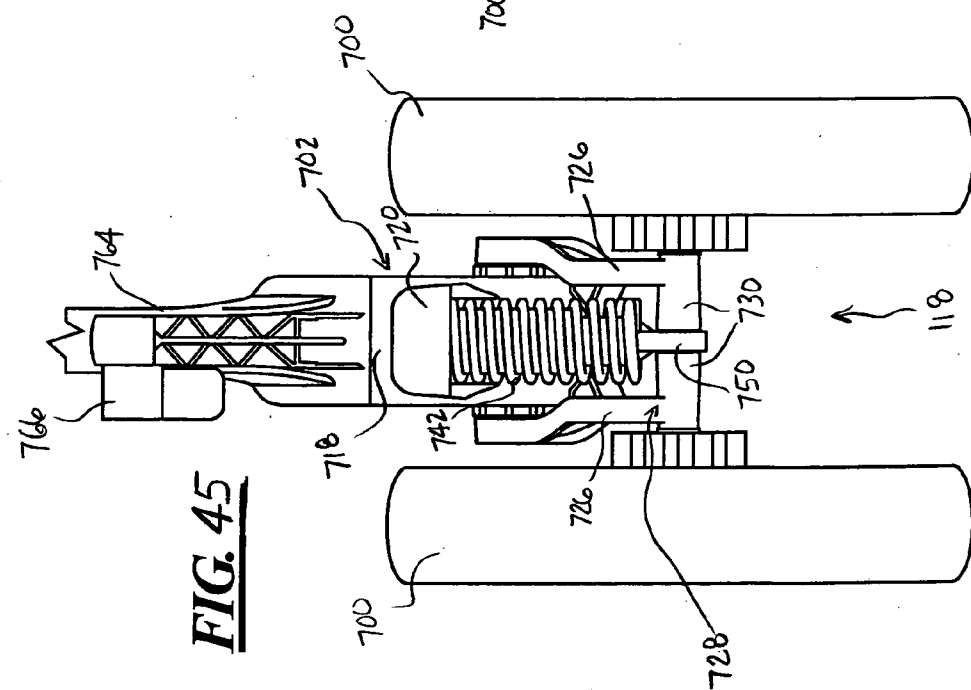
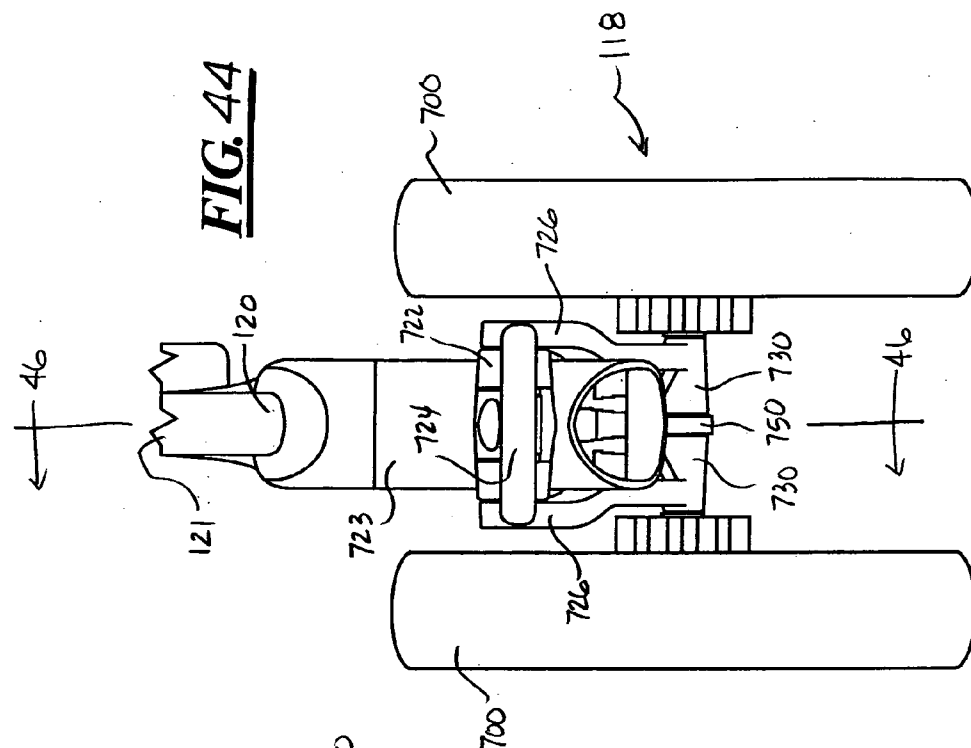
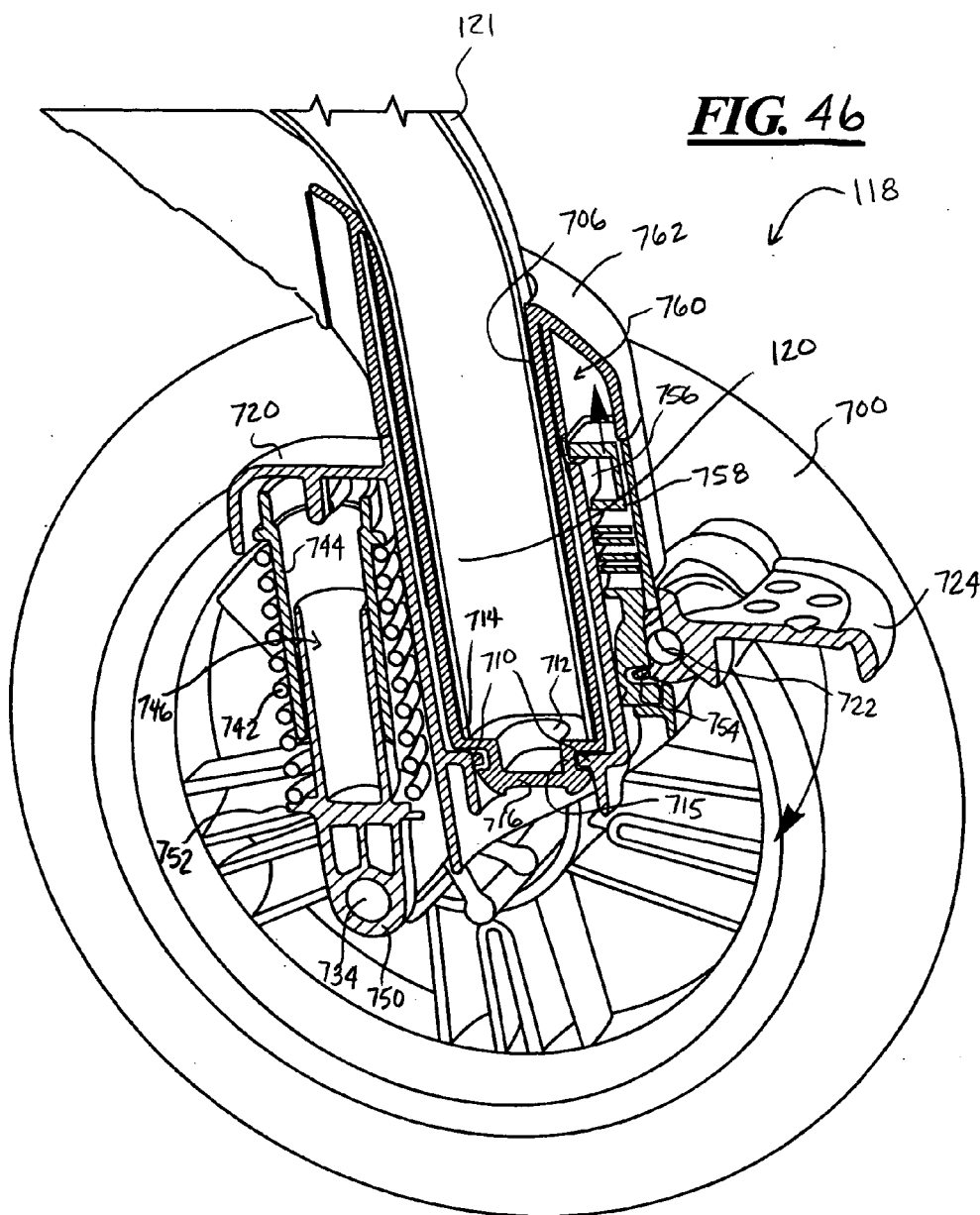


FIG. 35









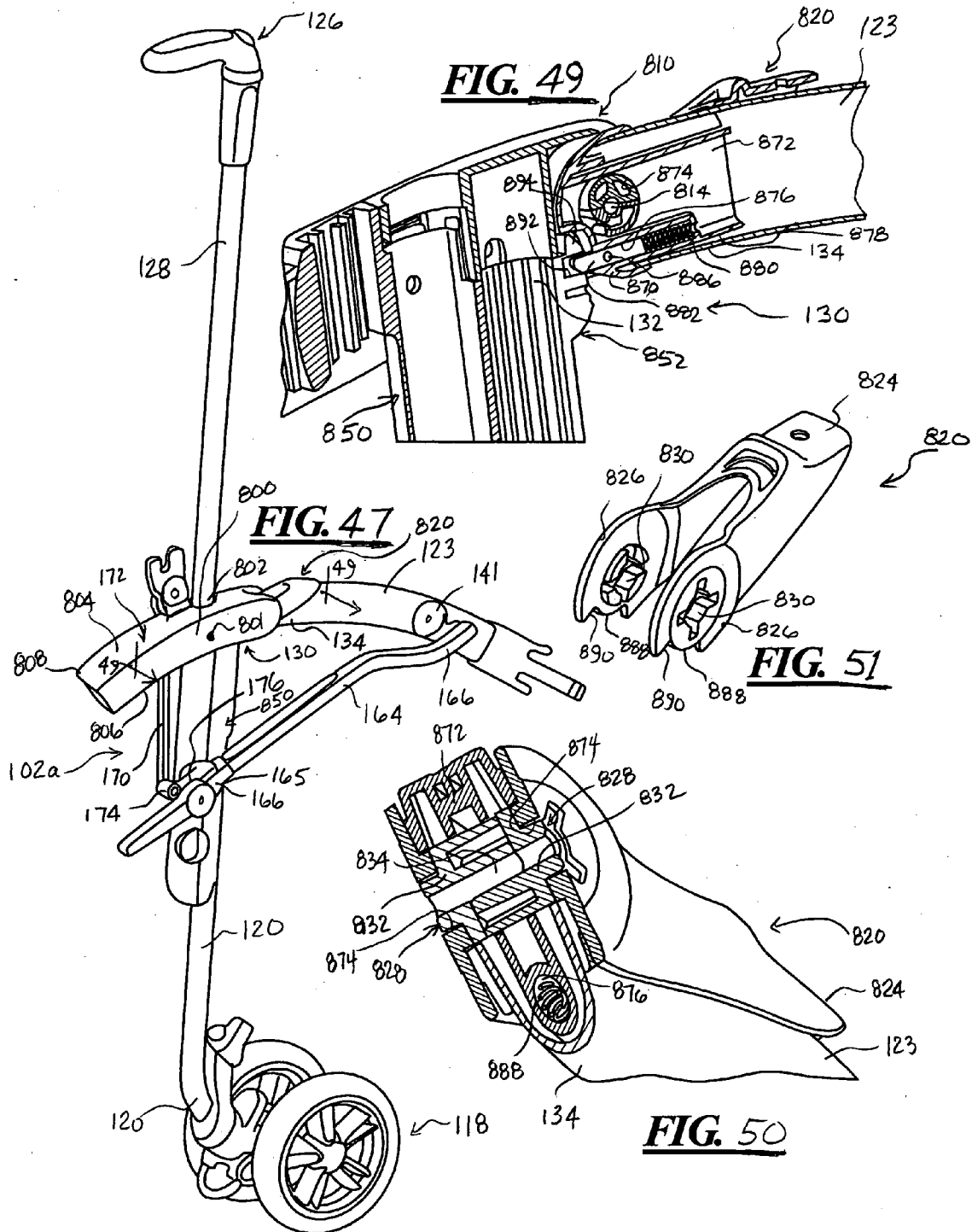
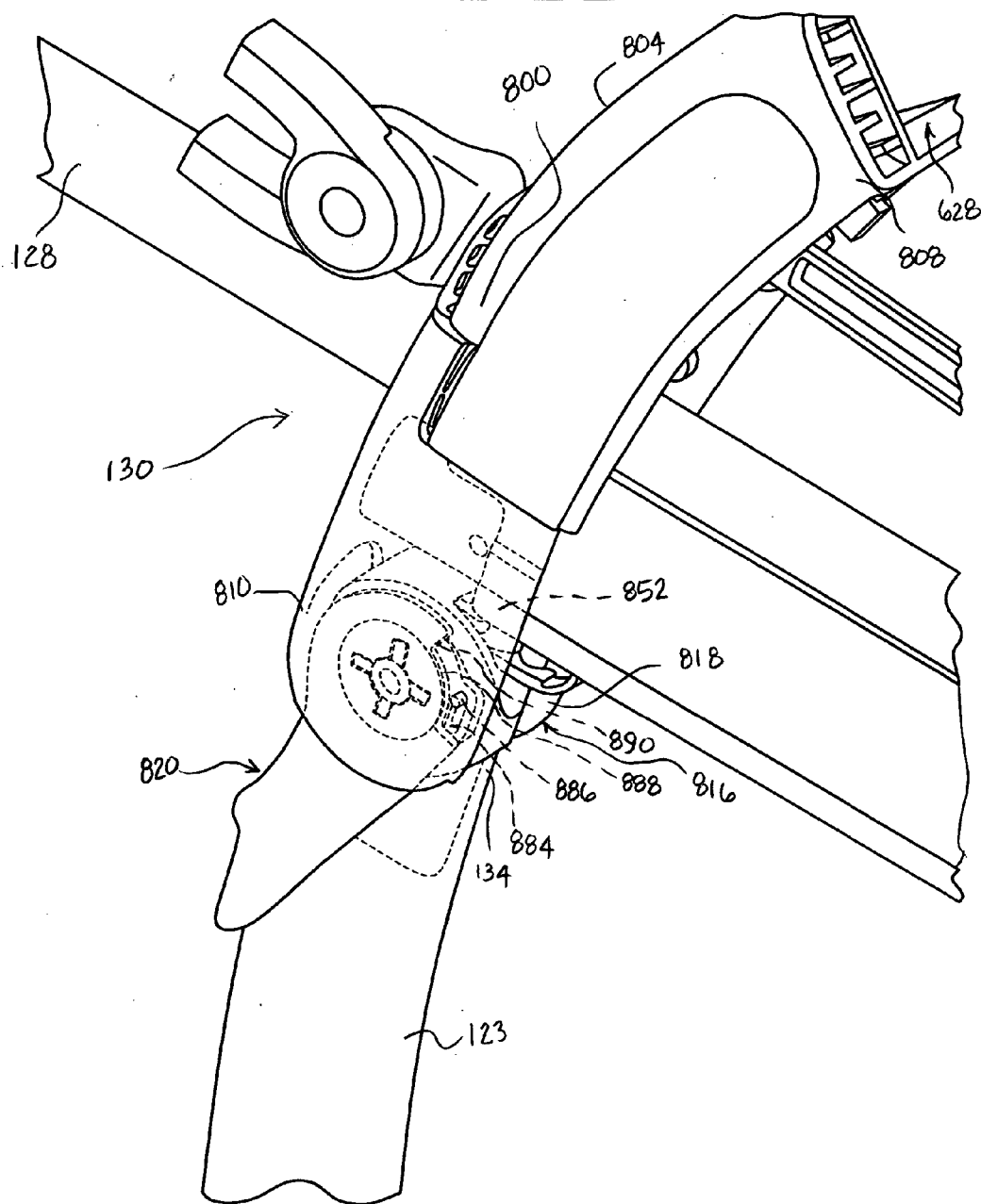


FIG. 48



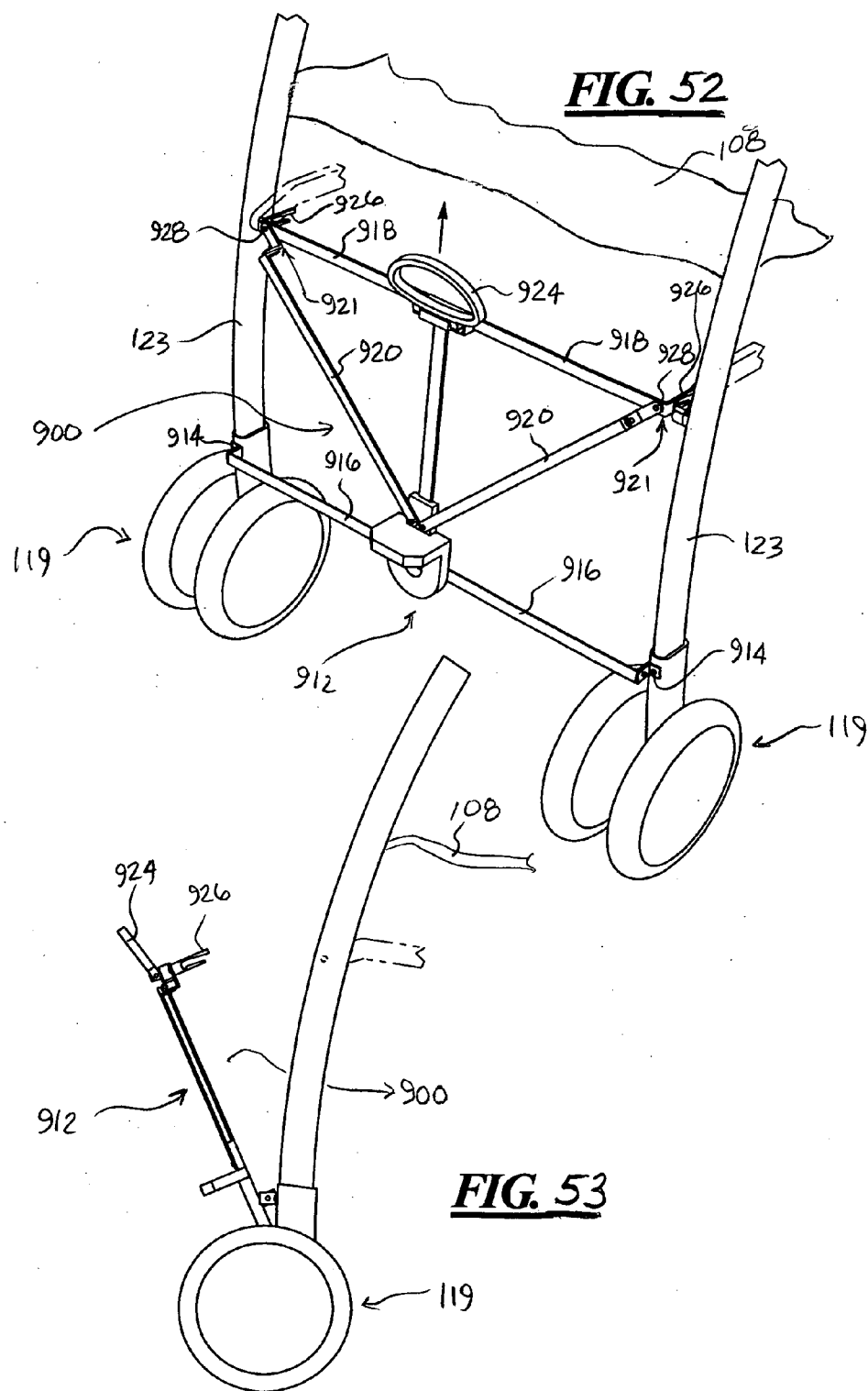


FIG. 54

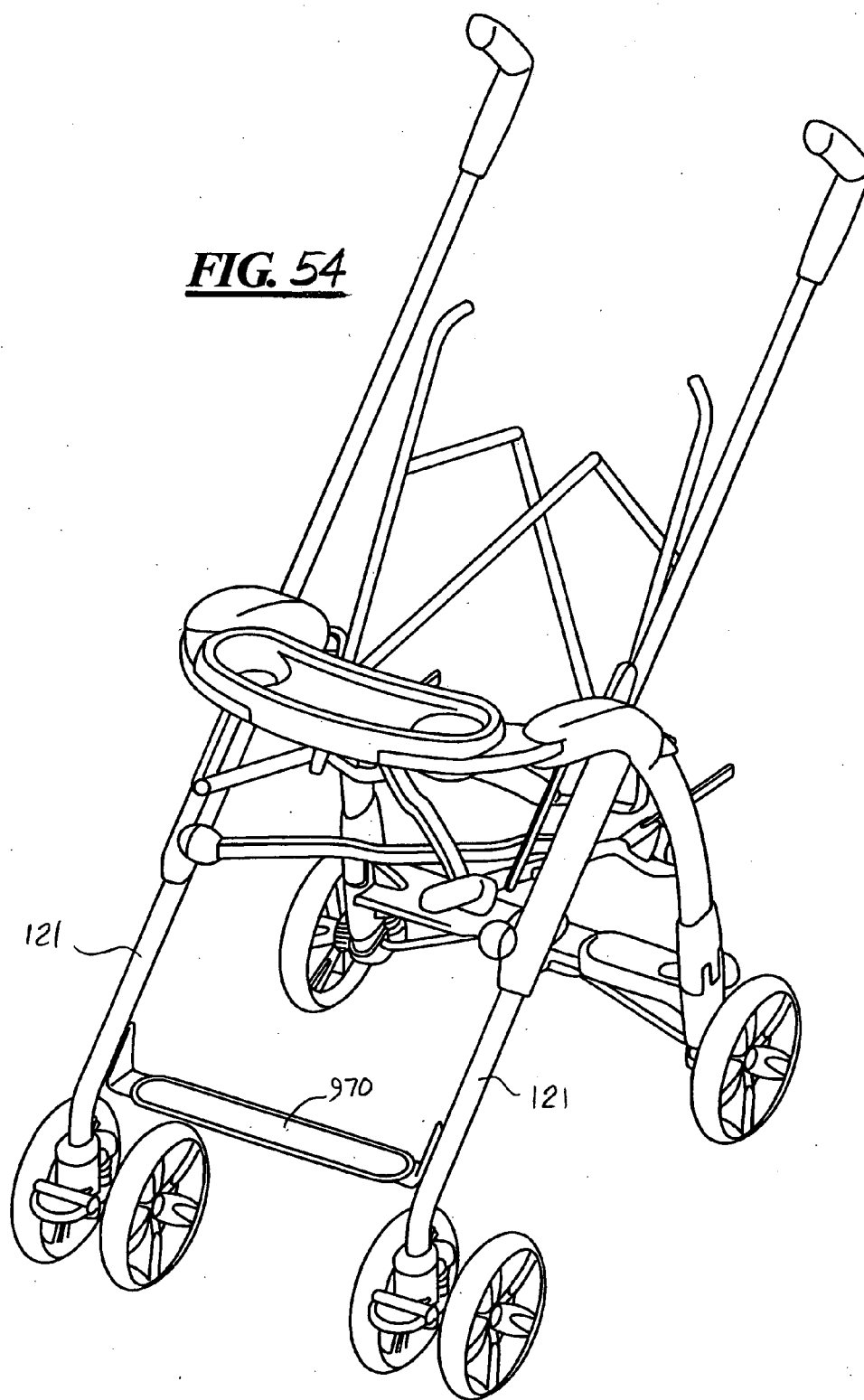
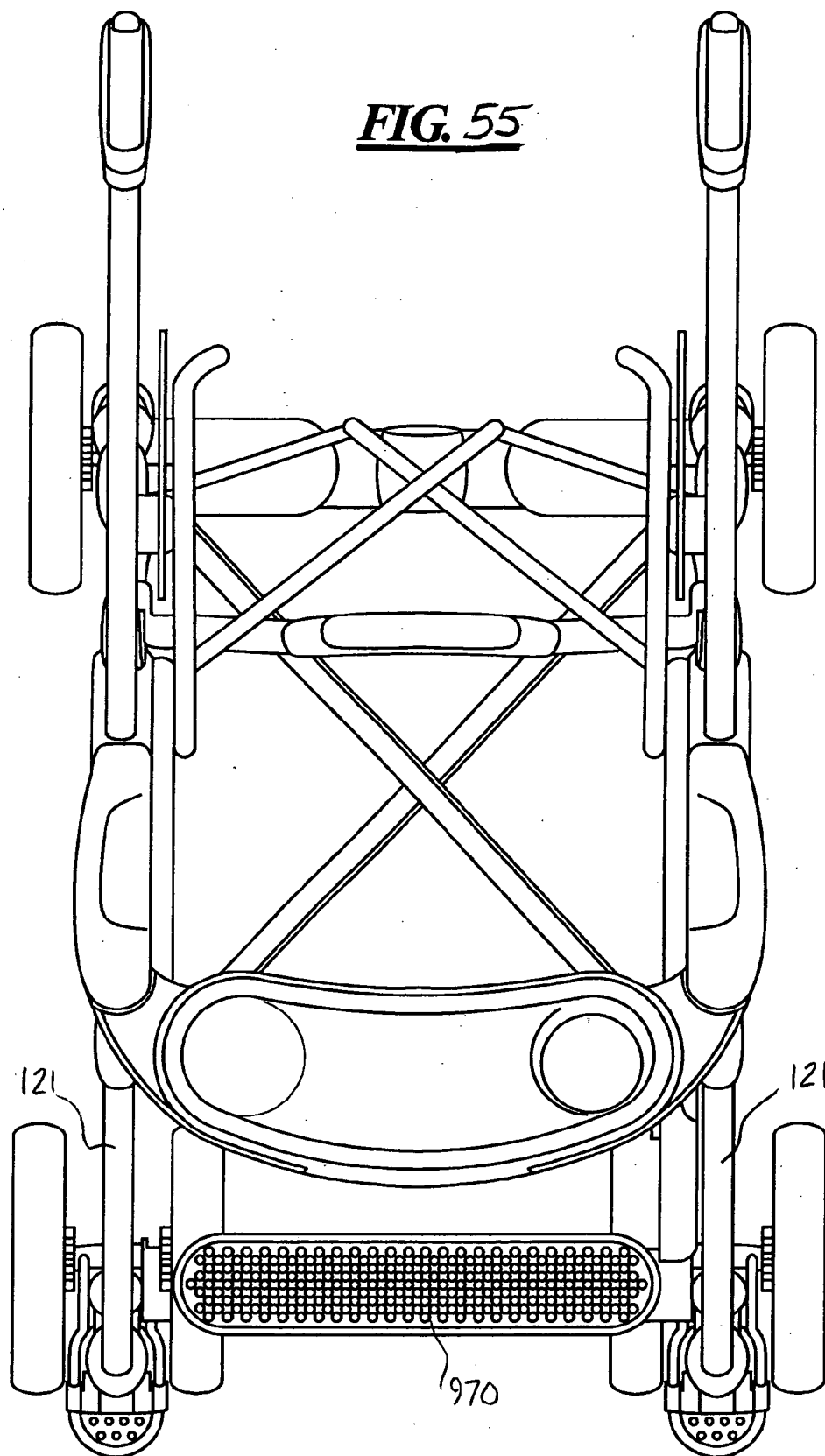


FIG. 55



STROLLER

RELATED APPLICATION DATA

[0001] This patent claims priority benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/645,047, which was filed on Jan. 21, 2005. The entire disclosure of the provisional application is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Disclosure

[0003] The present invention is for a stroller, and more particularly to a collapsible stroller that can be reconfigured between a collapsed configuration when not in use and an in-use expanded configuration for use.

[0004] 2. Description of Related Art

[0005] Collapsible strollers are known in the art. Many strollers fold in two-dimensions in that they can collapse vertically and horizontally forward and rearward. There are also strollers available that fold in three-dimensions. Such strollers also fold vertically and horizontally fore and aft, but additionally fold horizontally side-to-side. There are problems, design deficiencies, and limitations associated with both types of strollers.

[0006] A three-dimensional stroller typically has a scissor-like cross-brace structure extending between rear legs of the stroller for stability. The cross-brace structure typically includes at least two, and sometimes more, components connected to the rear legs and pivotally joined to one another between the rear legs to form an X-shaped structure. The structure collapses in a scissor-like fashion. These types of cross-brace structures inhibit access to the area beneath the seat of the stroller. The X-shaped brace reduces storage space beneath the seat, making it difficult for a user to fully utilize the storage space under the seat. Further, such a prohibitive cross-brace structure reduces the overall utility and functionality of the three-dimensional strollers.

[0007] A typical three-dimensional collapsible stroller requires a number of distinct user actions to facilitate reconfiguring the stroller from the set-up or expanded configuration to the collapsed configuration. A user typically must independently release one or two cross-braces supporting the stroller in the set-up configuration. The user then must also independently release two latches, one on each side of the stroller frame structure in order to facilitate horizontal and vertical collapsing. The result is that a user must coordinate three, and often four, different maneuvers in order to collapse their three-dimensional stroller.

[0008] Most strollers incorporate rear wheel brakes for safety purposes. Two-dimensional strollers are known that incorporate a solid cross-bar interconnecting the rear wheels on either side of the stroller. The opposed ends of the bar are known to incorporate devices that can either lock or release a brake at each rear wheel. The brakes can often be set or released using a single foot lever or paddle provided on the bar. Three-dimensionally collapsible strollers do not incorporate a solid cross-bar extending between the rear wheels of the stroller. Otherwise, the stroller could not collapse from side-to-side. A typical three-dimensionally collapsible stroller instead incorporates the use of two separate brake levers, one on each rear wheel, which can be actuated by

separate split-bar brake links or linear actuator cables to engage and disengage the brakes at each wheel.

[0009] Strollers currently available on the market employ a variety of different types of handles or grips that are held by a user to push and manipulate the stroller. Cross-bar type handles are well known. Umbrella-type single grip handles are also known. Many strollers offer no handle position adjustment. A number of strollers do offer handle adjustment but most of these offer adjustment in only a single direction, whether it be tilt, fore and aft, or rotational adjustment (for umbrella-type handles). Where a stroller does offer multi-direction handle adjustment, adjustment is typically performed utilizing a different actuation sequence for each adjustment direction.

[0010] A typical three-dimensionally collapsible stroller does not offer integrated cup holders for an adult standing behind and pushing the stroller. These types of stroller may offer an add-on cup holder that must be removed when the stroller is collapsed and that must be clipped, snapped, or otherwise attached to the stroller when desired. This is because cup holders are usually integrated in a solid tray spanning between the rear legs near the handle of a two-dimensional collapsible stroller. In a three-dimensionally collapsible stroller, no such rigid tray can be incorporated unless it can be entirely removed when the stroller is to be collapsed. Any structure extending between the two sides of a three-dimensionally collapsible stroller must be capable of collapsing.

[0011] When a stroller is collapsed, a user often wishes to either stand the stroller up on one end either to limit the amount of floor space the stroller takes up when not in use, or to stow the stroller out of the way in a small space behind other objects. Many strollers do not easily stand on end when in a collapsed configuration. This is because parts of the collapsed stroller on either end do not properly align in order to provide a level, stable base to support the stroller in a standing orientation. Some strollers when collapsed are known to be able to stand on one set of wheels and on a front edge of the child's tray. Over time, the tray can become scuffed and damaged when used in such a manner. The scuffs and scratches can collect dirt, which can be unsanitary for a child using the tray, and can simply become visually unpleasant in appearance.

[0012] Strollers that compact in three-dimensions typically do not come in a full-size or full-featured stroller product. This is because the strength requirements and complexity necessary for such a stroller will limit the stability of the frame structure and the overall useful characteristics and functionality of its features, including basket access as described above. Another problem with strollers that fold in three-dimensions is that they typically have a large vertical dimension when folded. If such a stroller compacts vertically, it typically would have a large dimension in one of the other folded directions. One problem with conventional strollers that fold in three-dimensions is that the rear wheels are typically offered in four wheel sets incorporating two rear wheels on each side of the stroller. The rear wheels typically do not fold or reposition when the stroller is collapsed. Thus, the stroller height when folded does not compact in this area of the stroller.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] Objects, features, and advantages of the present invention will become apparent upon reading the following description in conjunction with the drawing figures, in which:

[0014] **FIG. 1** is a front perspective view of a stroller in an in-use configuration and constructed in accordance with the teachings of the present invention.

[0015] **FIG. 2** is a rear perspective view of the stroller of **FIG. 1**.

[0016] **FIG. 3** is a side view of the stroller of **FIG. 1**.

[0017] **FIG. 4** is a front view of the stroller of **FIG. 1** in a collapsed configuration.

[0018] **FIG. 5** is a side view of the collapsed stroller of **FIG. 4**.

[0019] **FIG. 6** is a rear view of the collapsed stroller of **FIG. 4**.

[0020] **FIG. 7** is a perspective view of a handle assembly and part of the frame structure of the stroller of **FIG. 1**.

[0021] **FIG. 8** is a partial cross section and partial cut-away view of the handle assembly of **FIG. 7**.

[0022] **FIG. 9** is a perspective view of a stem core of the handle of **FIG. 7**.

[0023] **FIG. 10** is an end view of the stem core of **FIG. 9**.

[0024] **FIG. 11** is a perspective view of a grip body of the handle of **FIG. 7**.

[0025] **FIG. 12** is a cross section of the handle assembly and taken along line 12-12 of **FIG. 7**.

[0026] **FIG. 13** is the cross section of **FIG. 12** but with the handle actuator depressed.

[0027] **FIG. 14** is the cross section of **FIG. 12** but with the handle extended on the frame structure to a different position.

[0028] **FIG. 15** is a perspective view of a rear wheel and rear leg subassembly of the stroller of **FIG. 1**.

[0029] **FIG. 16** is an enlarged view from underneath one of the rear wheel assemblies shown in **FIG. 15**.

[0030] **FIG. 17** is a cross section of a rear wheel assembly and taken along line 17-17 of **FIG. 15**.

[0031] **FIG. 18** is a perspective view of a rear wheel of the stroller subassembly of **FIG. 15**.

[0032] **FIG. 19** is a portion of the subassembly of **FIG. 15** but with the rear legs and wheels removed.

[0033] **FIG. 20** is a cross section of the rear wheel cross-brace hub and taken along line 20-20 of **FIG. 19**.

[0034] **FIG. 21** is a cut away perspective view of the rear wheel cross-brace hub of **FIG. 19**.

[0035] **FIG. 22** is a perspective view of the foot paddle of the brake system of **FIG. 19**.

[0036] **FIG. 23** is a cross section view of the foot paddle and one brake link taken along line 23-23 of **FIG. 19**.

[0037] **FIG. 24** is a cross section of part of the rear wheel and leg subassembly and taken along line 24-24 of **FIG. 15**.

[0038] **FIG. 25** is a view of one half of the cross-brace assembly and rear wheel suspension of the subassembly of **FIG. 15**.

[0039] **FIG. 26** is a cross section of the rear wheel suspension and taken along line 26-26 of **FIG. 25**.

[0040] **FIG. 27** is an exploded perspective view of one of the cross-brace sections of the subassembly of **FIG. 15**.

[0041] **FIGS. 28 and 29** are perspective view from different orientations of the upper cross-brace of the stroller of **FIG. 1**.

[0042] **FIG. 30** is a perspective view of the cross-brace of **FIG. 28** with parts removed for clearer understanding of internal components.

[0043] **FIG. 31** is a perspective view of the handle assembly of the cross-brace of **FIG. 28** with parts removed for clearer understanding of the internal components.

[0044] **FIG. 32** is a cross section of one cup holder ring and puck and taken along line 32-32 of **FIG. 30**.

[0045] **FIG. 33** is a cross-section of the handle assembly and taken along line 33-33 of **FIG. 30**.

[0046] **FIGS. 34 and 35** are schematic views of the handle assembly of the cross-brace of **FIG. 28** and showing movement of the internal components.

[0047] **FIG. 36** is a perspective top view of the child's tray of the stroller of **FIG. 1**.

[0048] **FIG. 37** is a perspective bottom view of the child's tray of **FIG. 36**.

[0049] **FIG. 38** is an enlarged view of one end of the child's tray of **FIG. 36** and being inserted into a part of the stroller of **FIG. 1**.

[0050] **FIGS. 39 and 40** are perspective views of a finger of a latching mechanism of the child's tray of **FIG. 36**.

[0051] **FIG. 41** is a cross section of one support arm of the child's tray and taken along line 41-41 of **FIG. 36**.

[0052] **FIG. 42** is a cross section of the child's tray and taken along line 42-32 of **FIG. 36**.

[0053] **FIG. 43** is a perspective view of one front wheel and suspension assembly of the stroller of **FIG. 1**.

[0054] **FIG. 44** is a front view of the front wheel assembly of **FIG. 43**.

[0055] **FIG. 45** is a rear view of the front wheel assembly of **FIG. 43**.

[0056] **FIG. 46** is a cross section of a front wheel assembly and taken along line 46-46 of **FIG. 44**.

[0057] **FIG. 47** is a perspective view of a front wheel assembly, a rear leg, and a handle portion of the frame assembly of the stroller of **FIG. 1**.

[0058] **FIG. 48** is a perspective view of a joint assembly of one side of the frame of the stroller of **FIG. 1**.

[0059] **FIG. 49** is a cross section of part of the joint assembly and taken along line 49-49 of **FIG. 47**.

[0060] FIG. 50 is a cross section of part of the joint assembly and taken along line 50-50 of FIG. 47.

[0061] FIG. 51 is a perspective view of a latch lever of the joint assembly of stroller frame portion of FIGS. 47 and 48.

[0062] FIG. 52 is a rear perspective view of an alternative embodiment of a three-dimensionally foldable stroller.

[0063] FIG. 53 is a side view of the stroller of FIG. 52 with a part of the rear cross-brace structure pivoted out of the way of the under seat storage space access.

[0064] FIG. 54 is a perspective view of a three-dimensionally collapsible stroller with all soft goods removed.

[0065] FIG. 55 is a top view of the stroller of FIG. 54.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0066] Various features of the stroller examples described herein solve or improve upon one or more of the above-noted problems, deficiencies, and limitations of prior art strollers. In one example, a disclosed stroller that folds in three dimensions has one brake actuator that can be manipulated to lock and release the brake mechanisms on both rear wheel assemblies. In one example, a disclosed stroller can be collapsed and stood on one end both while providing a stable base for standing, and while not causing damage to visible, ordinarily useful portions of the stroller structure. In another example, a disclosed stroller includes a handle that can be adjusted in more than one adjustment direction or mode using the same adjustment actuator. In yet another example, a disclosed stroller is collapsible in three dimensions and yet provides storage space beneath the seat of the stroller with clear, unencumbered access to the storage space. In a further example, a disclosed stroller can be manipulated from the in-use or expanded configuration to the collapsed configuration using only two, single hand single handed maneuvers. In a still further example, a disclosed stroller is collapsible in a side-to-side or width direction and yet integrates one or more adult-use cup holders into a cross-brace of the frame structure. In a still further example, a disclosed stroller has front and rear suspension components integrated into multi-function front and rear wheel assemblies. These and other features can be achieved in a stroller constructed in accordance with the teachings of the present invention.

[0067] Turning now to the drawings, FIGS. 1 and 2 are perspective views of one example of a stroller 100 constructed in accordance with the teachings of the present invention. The soft goods are only shown in phantom herein, other than a loose, under-seat storage basket or pouch. The soft goods are removed in order to better illustrate all of the basic structural and functional components of the stroller. FIG. 3 is a side view of the stroller shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, all in an in-use expanded configuration. The stroller 100 generally has a frame assembly 102 with a pair of opposed and spaced apart frame sides 102a and 102b. A seat 104 is supported above a ground surface between the frame sides. The seat 104 in this example is formed of soft goods including padding and fabric material supported by various portions of the frame assembly 102. The typical seat 104 has a seat back 106 and a seat bottom 108. A bonnet or cover 110 is shown in phantom in an extended position covering a portion of the seat 104. The bonnet 110 can be optional and

can be removable or even reconfigurable to a collapsed condition against the seat back or a portion of the frame assembly, as is known.

[0068] The stroller 100 also incorporates one of many possible examples of a storage basket 112 or fabric pouch beneath the seat bottom 108. The storage basket 112 in this example is positioned in a storage area 113 beneath the seat and is highly space efficient. The disclosed basket 112 has a soft fabric perimeter sidewall 114 extending upward from a bottom 116. The basket has a rear panel 117 that can be selectively raised or lowered and fastened or unfastened to portions of the stroller. As will be evident to those having ordinary skill in the art, the configuration of the storage basket 112 can vary considerably and yet fall within the spirit and scope of the present invention. The basket can be a simple droopy pouch as shown in FIGS. 1-3. Alternatively, the basket can include a rigid horizontal storage surface or a semi-rigid article support surface positioned well below the seat bottom 108. Such a basket can also include upstanding side walls including a rear wall. The rear wall of such a basket can also be of a type that can be raised or lowered to either assist in retaining objects in the storage area or provide clear access to the storage area to insert or remove large objects as needed.

[0069] In this disclosed example, the frame assembly 102 incorporates multiple parts that are movably interconnected with one another. The parts can be arranged and retained in the in-use or expanded configuration as depicted in FIGS. 1-3. As shown in FIGS. 4-6, the frame assembly 102 can be reconfigured and folded to a collapsed condition for stowing or storage. In the in-use configuration of FIGS. 1-3, the stroller 100 and its frame assembly 102 are supported by a pair of front wheel assemblies 118 and a pair of rear wheel assemblies 119 in this example.

[0070] The remaining major parts of the overall structure of the frame assembly 102 are described with reference to FIGS. 1-6. The frame sides 102a and 102b are interconnected by a plurality of transversely oriented structures. The frame sides in this example are oriented generally vertically when viewed from the front or back and when in the in-use configuration. In this example, each frame side 102a and 102b is essentially identical.

[0071] The frame sides 102a and 102b have an overall X-shaped configuration when viewed from the side. The frame 102 is supported by a pair of front wheel assemblies 118 and a pair of rear wheel assemblies 119. Each front wheel assembly 118 is carried on a lower end 120 of a front leg 121 and each rear wheel assembly 119 is carried on a lower end 122 of a rear leg 123. The front legs 121 extend upward and rearward from the respective front wheel assemblies. The rear legs 123 extend upward and forward in this example from the respective rear wheel assemblies 119.

[0072] The stroller 100 in this example also has a child's or occupant's tray 124 that extends across the frame assembly 102 above the seat 108 and forward of the seat back 106. The tray 124 can be configured to provide a surface or surfaces on which a child can place various types of objects. In this example, the tray 124 traverses the stroller between the front legs 121. The stroller 100 in this example also has a pair of "umbrella" type handles 126. A user will typically grasp the handles, one in each hand, in order to push, pull, and otherwise manipulate the stroller during normal use.

Each handle **126** extends rearward from a rear frame extension **128**, one on each frame side **102a** and **102b**. A joint structure **130** on each side of the stroller **100** joins and links the rear leg **123**, front leg **121**, and rear frame extension **128** of each frame side **102a** and **102b**. The rear frame extensions **128** extend rearward and upward from the joint structures **130** on the frame sides. An upper end **132** of the front leg **121** and an upper end **134** of the rear leg **123** extend up to the joint structures **130** on each frame side **102a** and **102b** in the disclosed stroller.

[0073] A number of linking and traversing structures connect or support various parts of the stroller. Many of these parts provide stability and rigidity to the overall stroller frame assembly, particularly during normal use when in the in-use configuration. The child's tray **124** can be considered one of the traversing structures because the tray will add stability to the overall stroller structure when fully installed and seated as described below. Another traversing structure is a seat bottom cross-member **136** as shown in **FIGS. 1 and 3**. The cross-member **136** is an X-shaped structure with two links **138** pivotally joined at their intersection. Front ends **139** of the cross-member links **138** are pivotally coupled to the joint assemblies **130** at the front legs **121** on each side of the stroller. Rear ends **140** of the cross-member links **138** are pivotally coupled to connectors **141** on the rear legs **123**. The cross-member **136** can fold or expand in a scissor-like manner to accommodate the stroller configuration.

[0074] A further traversing structure supports the seat back **106** and can also collapse and expand as needed. The seat back is supported by a pair of seat risers **142**, one each pivotally linked at their respective bottom ends to a part of each frame side **102a** and **102b**. The seat risers extend upward near but positioned behind and below the rear frame extensions **128**. The risers **142** are linked to one another by a four link structure. Two lengthier links **143** pivotally connect to a respective one of the risers **142**, extend upward toward the opposite riser, and intersect one another at a pivot joint **144** between the risers. The upper end of each link **143** is pivotally connected at a second pivot **145** to a shorter link **146**. Each shorter link then angles downward and pivotally connects to the adjacent riser **142**. The link structure formed by the links **143** and **146** expands and collapses as the risers **142** move away and toward one another as the stroller is set up or collapsed, respectively. The risers and links also add some stability and rigidity to the overall frame structure.

[0075] Yet another of the traversing structures is an upper cross-brace **150** that extends between the rear frame extensions **128** near the handles **126**. The upper cross-brace **150** is reconfigurable between a stiff condition and a loose, collapsible condition as described below. When in the stiff condition, the upper cross-brace **150** adds additional stability and rigidity to the overall frame assembly when in the in-use configuration.

[0076] A lower cross-brace **160** interconnects and extends between the lower ends **122** of the rear legs **123** in this example. The lower cross-brace **160** has a center hub **162** that allows the cross-brace to pivot and collapse in a width or side-to-side direction. When in the in-use configuration as shown in **FIGS. 1-3**, the lower cross-brace adds significant rigidity and stability to the overall frame assembly **102**.

[0077] One linking structure of the frame **102** includes a pair of seat side links **164**, one on each side **102a** and **102b**

of the frame assembly **102**. Each side link **164** supports a side of the seat bottom **108**. A forward end **165** of each link **164** is pivotally connected at a pivot **166** to the joint assembly **130**. The pivot **166** in this example is aligned with a bottom or forward end of the respective rear frame extension **128**. A rear end **167** of each seat side link **164** is pivotally connected to a respective rear leg **123**. The bottom ends **168** of the seat risers **142** pivotally connect to the respective seat link **164** near to but forward of the rear leg to seat link connection.

[0078] Another linking structure includes an armrest link **170** pivotally coupled at a pivot **171** to an armrest **172** that is part of each joint assembly **130** on each frame side. The armrest links **172** each depend down and connect at a pivot **174** to a fixed link **176** that projects forward from each joint assembly **130**. The pivots **174** for the fixed link to armrest link connections are positioned forward of the location of both the rear frame extensions and the front legs in the joint assemblies.

[0079] The stroller **100** disclosed herein collapses in three-dimensions. In other words, the stroller can collapse in an up and down vertical height direction, a fore and aft horizontal length direction, and a side-to-side width direction. Herein, these collapsing directions are also referred to synonymously with regard to reference planes. A horizontal reference plane refers to a vertical up and down collapsing direction. A vertical transverse reference plane refers to fore and aft collapsibility. A vertical longitudinal reference plane refers to side-to-side or width-wise collapsibility. The stroller **100** can be collapsed from the in-use or expanded condition shown in **FIGS. 1-3** to the collapsed condition shown in **FIGS. 4-6**. Various structure details and features of the disclosed strollers are first described. Subsequently, the specific structures, configurations, and methods that permit and facilitate collapsing the disclosed strollers are described.

[0080] Referring now to **FIGS. 7-13**, one example of a handle **126** is described, keeping in mind that the two handles **126** in this example are essentially identical to one another. The handle **126** in this example is connected to a free end **178** of the respective rear extension **128** of the frame assembly **102**. In this example, the rear extension **128** is a hollow, non-circular cylindrical tube with an interior **180** and a distal open end **182**. In this example, the handle has a stem assembly **190** connected to the distal open end **182** of the rear extension **128**. The free end portion **178** of one of the frame extensions **128** and an assembled and installed handle **126** are shown in **FIG. 7**. The handle **126** disclosed herein is adjustable using a single actuator in two different directions or modes. As shown in **FIG. 7**, the handle can slide longitudinally along an axis **S** of the stem assembly **190** to extend or retract the rearward position of the handle **126** on the rear extension **128**. The handle **126** can also be rotated in this example about the axis **S** to adjust the angular orientation of the handle. One example of a mechanism arrangement that can accomplish dual-mode adjustment using a single actuator is described herein.

[0081] **FIG. 8** shows a partial cut-away, partial cross section of a portion of the handle **126** and tube extension **128** shown in **FIG. 7**. The stem assembly **190** as shown has an exterior decorative cover **192** that is sized and shaped to slip over the free end **178** of the rear frame extension **128**. The stem assembly **190** has an interior core **194** with a body

section **195** that is sized to closely but slidably fit within the interior **180** of the rear extension **128**. **FIG. 9** shows a perspective view and **FIG. 10** shows an end view of the stem core **194**, which has a hollow interior divided into different shaped regions. The hollow interior extends the length of the stem core **194** along the stem axis **S**. In this example, the stem axis **S** is concentric with the rear frame extension axis when the handle **126** is installed.

[0082] An open interior section **196** of the hollow interior within the elongate body section **195** has a generally rectangular cross-section. The interior section **196** extends over a substantial portion of the body section's length. The body section **195** has an exterior surface **198** that corresponds to the shape of the rear extension interior **180**. In this example, the exterior surface **198** of the stem core body section **195** has a pair of flat sides **200**, a pair of rounded sides, and a pair of elongate slots **202**. One slot **202** extends along a substantial portion of the length of the stem core and is located on each of the flat sides. Each slot **202** extends through the core body from the exterior surface **198** to the interior section **196**.

[0083] An annular collar **204** has a generally circular configuration sized larger than the circumference of the exterior surface **198** of the body section **195**. The collar **204** terminates one end of the body section **195**. A connector **206** extends beyond the collar **204** in a direction opposite the body section **195** on the stem core **194**. The connector **206** in this example has a circular cylindrical tip **208** that terminates in a radially outwardly extending annular flange **210**. The connector tip **208** has an exterior cylindrical surface **211** adjacent the flange **210** and a pair of opposed relief slots **212**. The slots extend axially along and through the surface **211** from the open end at the flange **210**. The slots **212** serve a dual purpose, each of which is described in greater detail below. A ribbed region **214** is positioned between the surface **211** of the tip **208** and the collar **204**. The ribbed region **214** includes an annular flange **216** extending around the circumference of the tip. A plurality of ribs **218** in the ribbed region **214** extends axially between the flange **216** and the collar **204**. The ribs **218** project radially outward from the tip **208** and add strength and rigidity to the connector end **204**.

[0084] As shown in **FIG. 9**, the relief slots **212** in the connector tip **208** extend longitudinally and are opposed 180° from one another in the surface **211**. The length or extent of the relief slots **212** in the direction of the collar **204** is such that the slots impinge on the location of the flange **216**. Thus, in the ribbed region **214**, the flange **216** is curved toward and connects to the collar **204** and follows the contour of the ends of the slots **212**. A cylindrical bore section **220** of the core's hollow interior extends from the end of the tip **208** along the stem core **194** to the interior section **195** of the body section **195**.

[0085] The handle **126** also has a grip body **230** shown in perspective view in **FIG. 7**. The grip body **230** in this example is sized and configured to be grasped by one hand of a user. The grip body **230** has an elongate exterior gripping surface **232**, a free end **234**, and an attachment end **236**. The attachment end **236** is shown detached from the stem assembly **190** in **FIG. 11**. The grip body **230** in this example has a grip axis **G** oriented generally along the length of the body. In this example, the attachment end **236**

has a contoured through-opening **238** in the grip body that is oriented generally perpendicular to the grip axis **G**. As shown in the cross section view of **FIG. 12**, the attachment end **236** of the grip body **230**, including the through-opening **238**, is clearly visible. The opening **238** extends (with respect to the stroller front and rear) from a rear side **240** of the grip body **230** to a forward facing or front side **242**.

[0086] A relatively wide, deep recess **244** defines a portion of the through-opening **238** on the rear side **240** of the grip body **230**. In this example, the handle actuator is a push-button **246**, which is slidably received in the recess **244**. A connector bore **248** is smaller in size than the recess **244**, communicates at one end with the recess **244**, and forms an intermediate portion of the through-opening **238** in this example. The connector bore **248** has an interior surface **249** sized to closely match the exterior surface **211** of the connector tip **208** on the stem core **194**. Near the front side **242** of the grip body **230**, an intermittent relief region **250** forms another part of the through-opening **238** and communicates with the other end of the connector bore **248**. A plurality of radially outwardly recessed ways or relief notches **252** are intermittently recessed into the grip body material. The notches are circumferentially spaced apart around the relief region **250**. A guide bore **254** defines the opposite end of the through-opening **238** on the front side **242** of the grip body **230**. The guide bore **254** is sized to receive the exterior surface **256** of the flange **216** on the stem core **194**. The interior surface **258** of the guide bore **254** bears against the exterior surface **256** of the flange **216** as depicted in **FIGS. 12-14**, when the handle **126** is assembled.

[0087] To connect the grip body **230** to the stem assembly **190**, the tip **208** of the stem core **194** is inserted in the through-opening, first through the guide bore **254** and the relief region **250**. The tip **208** is then snapped through the connector bore **248** portion of the through-opening **238**. The relief slots **212** permit the tip **208** to collapse, including the size of the flange **210** at the end of the tip **208**, in order to fit through the connector bore **248**. As can be seen in **FIGS. 12-14**, the tip **208** can snap back to its original configuration once the flange **210** clears the connector bore **248** and is positioned in the actuator recess **244** and retains the grip body **230** on the stem core **194**.

[0088] The actuator, which in the disclosed example is a biased push-button **246**, operates a mechanism in order to accomplish the dual mode handle adjustment. In this example, the button **246** is coupled to a slug **260**. The button **246** is longitudinally fixed to the slug and, in this example, can rotate relative to the slug's axis, which is essentially the axis **S**. The slug **260** is received in a slug receptacle **262** on the bottom side or interior side of the button **246**. A retainer **264** connects the button to the slug, but allows rotation of the button relative to the slug. In this example, the button **246** is a non-cylindrical shape, and matches the contour of the recess **244**. Thus, as the grip portion **230** rotates about the axis **S**, so does the actuator or button **246**. In an alternative example, the button can have a round cylindrical shape matching a circular cylindrical recess in the handle. In such an example, the actuator or button could remain stationary as the handle grip portion **230** rotates about the axis **S**. The opposite end of the slug **260** is connected to a driver mechanism **266** that actuates various components in the handle.

[0089] The driver mechanism in the disclosed handle example has a cam rod 270 extending longitudinally along the hollow interior of the stem core 194. A first section 272 of the cam rod 270 is positioned substantially in the bore 220 of the core's connector 206 and is coupled to the slug 260. A cam section 274 of the cam rod 270 extends longitudinally from the first section 272 along a substantial majority of the length of the core body's interior section 196. An underside of the cam section 274 has a longitudinal rib 276 received in a narrow longitudinal guide slot 278 formed in a surface of the interior section 196. A top side of the cam section 274 has a contoured surface. The surface has a proximal end 280 near the first section 272 of the cam rod, a distal cam projection 282 at the free end of the cam rod, and a flat region 284 between the end 280 and the projection 282. The flat region in this example has a length that is slightly greater than the length of the pair of opposed open slots 202 in the sides of the stem core body section 195. A proximal cam or ramped surface 286 is positioned at the proximal end 280. A distal cam or ramped surface 288 is positioned on the cam projection 282. Each of the cam surfaces 286 and 288, respectively, is angled facing the same direction (toward the free end of the cam rod) in this example.

[0090] The flat surface 284 is aligned along one edge of each of the core slots 202. The cam surface 286 and the projection 282 extend in a direction from the flat surface 284 toward the opposite edge of each of the slots 202. Thus, the core body section 195 is open through the slots 202 and across the adjacent flat region 284. Movement of the button or actuator 246 slides the driver mechanism 266 and the entire cam rod 270 along the hollow interior of the stem core 194. The cam driver in this example has a thin elongate blade-like shape over its length and its top and bottom surfaces are generally flat when viewed in cross-section. A spring 289 surrounds the first section 272 and is captured within the connector bore 220. One end of the spring 289 bears against the end of the slug 260 and the other end bears against a stop surface at the juncture between the bore 220 and the narrower width interior section 196 in the core's body section 195. The spring 289 biases the actuator or button 246 outward to its home position shown in FIG. 12.

[0091] A bow 290 is positioned within the core interior section 196 and has an arcuate or curved body 292. The body is curved concavely on the side facing the flat surface 284 of the cam driver 270. A nub or projection 294 protrudes from the opposite convex side of the bow 290. The nub is received in a receptacle 296 extending through a side of the core body section 195. The nub and receptacle retain the bow in a fixed longitudinal position along the stem core 194. As shown in FIG. 12, the bow 290 in side view has reduced thickness or thin regions 298 on either side of the nub 294. The thin regions permit the bow 290 to flex from its natural arcuate shape to a more linear shape as shown in FIG. 13.

[0092] A fixed pin 299 is inserted laterally across the interior 180 of the frame extension tube 128 and passes through both of the core slots 202. As shown in FIG. 12, a rounded, enlarged end 300a, 300b is formed on each of the opposed ends of the bow 290. Each end 300a, 300b has a curved external bearing surface 301a, 301b, respectively, that contacts the cam surfaces 286 and 288. The bearing surfaces 300a, 300b each smoothly and gradually curves and transitions from the top convex surface of the bow to the bottom concave surface in this example. A recessed surface

302a, 302b is formed into the body 292 of the bow positioned adjacent each end 300a, 300b. Each recessed surface 302a, 302b is sandwiched between the respective ends 300a, 300b on one side and a respective raised projection 304a, 304b spaced inward from the ends. The bow 290 can be formed from any number of suitable resilient, flexible, and yet somewhat stiff materials and perform the intended purpose as described below.

[0093] The end of the slug 260 coupled to the cam rod 270 also has an elongate pin 310 passing laterally or transversely through and extending beyond opposite sides of the slug. The exposed ends of the transverse pin 310 extend into the slots 212 in the connector tip 208. The terminal ends of the relief slots 212 match the curvature of the pin 310 circumference and the exposed pin ends bears against the ends of the relief slots 212. As a result, the slug 260 and the pin 310 do not rotate within the stem core 194. As can be seen in FIG. 12, the ends of the pin 310 extend radially beyond the surface 211 of the connector tip 208. The pin 310 aligns longitudinally along the stem axis S with the relief region 250 of the grip body 230 when the button is biased to its home position of FIG. 12. The pin ends can thus be seated in an opposed pair of the notches 252 in the attachment end 236 of the grip body. The grip body 230 in this configuration can not rotate because it is restrained by interference of the pin 310 seated within the notches 252.

[0094] The dual mode function of the handle 126 in this example is described with reference to FIGS. 12-14. FIG. 12 shows the handle 126 in a retracted position on the rear frame extension 128 and with the actuator or button 246 in the outwardly biased or home position. In this arrangement, the pin 299 is captured between the projection 304a near the proximal enlarged end 300a of the bow 290 and a proximal end of the slots 202. The pin 299 is also captured between the recessed surface 302a and the flat surface 284 near the proximal end 280 of the cam section 274.

[0095] As shown in FIG. 13, the actuator or button 246 can be depressed to a release position within the recess 244. This frees the handle 126 to be either extended, rotated, or both as desired by the user. Adjustment of the handle extended position is described first.

[0096] When the button 246 is pushed into the recess 244 of the grip body 230, the slug 260, its pin 310, and the cam rod 270 are all move longitudinally in unison in the same direction. The bearing surfaces 301a, 301b on the opposite ends 300a, 300b of the bow 290 ride along the respective ramp or cam surfaces 286 and 288. The ends 300a, 300b of the bow 290 are pushed away from the cam rod 270, which flattens out the bow as shown in FIG. 13. The projections 304a, 304b move away from the driver 270 when the bow flattens or flexes. This provides clearance for the frame extension pin 299 to freely travel along the slots 202. The handle 126 can then be slid along the frame extension tube 128 from its retracted position (FIG. 12) to an extended position (FIG. 14) until the pin 299 seats against the opposite ends of the slots 202. A portion of the stem core body 195 extends from the open end 182 of the frame extension tube 128 in this configuration.

[0097] If a user only wishes to adjust the handle extension and has done so, they can then release the button 246. The spring 289 biases the button 246, the slug 260, the pin 310, and the cam rod 270 back to the home, locked positions of

FIG. 12. When the components return to the locked positions, the bearing surfaces **301a**, **301b** on the ends **300a**, **300b** of the bow **290** to ride back down the ramps or cam surfaces **286** and **288**. The resiliency of the bow material returns the bow **290** to its curved shape. The frame extension pin **299** is captured on one side by the projection **304b** and on the other side by both the cam projection **282** and the ends of the slots **202**. The pin **299** also seats against the recessed surface **302b** and the flat surface **284** in the extended, locked configuration of the handle **126**.

[0098] If the user wishes to adjust the handle rotational position, they can do so either at the same time they adjust the handle extended position or independently. With the button **246** depressed to the release position as shown in **FIG. 13**, the grip body **230** can also be rotated about the stem axis to a desired angular orientation. In the release position, the slug **260** and its pin **310** move longitudinally and exit the notches **252** in which the ends of the pin previously resided. The grip body **230** is free to rotate about the connector **206** of the stem core **194**. A user can orient the grip body to the desired rotational position and then release the actuator or button. The spring **289** biases the components to the release position, during which the pin **310** will drop into the nearest adjacent opposed pair notches **252**.

[0099] The cover **192** of the stem assembly **190** can be a tube having an exterior surface **312** contoured to achieve desired aesthetic characteristics. During assembly of the stroller, the cover **192** can be slipped over the open end **182** of the frame extension tube **128** prior to installation of the stem core **194**. The frame extension pin **299** can then be installed to secure the stem assembly **190** on the extension **128**. As the handle is fully assembled and installed, the cover can be slid up to the installed stem assembly and snapped on, twisted and locked, or otherwise connected to the collar **204** or other portion of the stem assembly. When installed, the cover **192** hides the fixed pin **299** and other core components. In one example, a ring (not shown) can be provided covering the abutting surfaces of the grip body **230** and the cover **192**. Such a ring can be utilized as an aesthetic attachment or, in addition, as a device to add some stability to the assembled handle **126**.

[0100] As will be evident to those having ordinary skill in the art, the particular details of the handle construction can vary and yet fall within the spirit and scope of the present invention. Mechanisms in the handle stem can be altered to provide more than two linear travel stop positions selected by a user. Details of the bow and driver can also be varied considerably. Alternative mechanisms can also be utilized. The shapes, contours, orientation angles, and the like of the handles and handle components can be varied from the example disclosed without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

[0101] The disclosed handles **126** are umbrella-type handles provided for grasping by a single hand of a user. Each handle has an actuator that can be manipulated by a user to render the handle adjustable in more than one direction, mode, plane or axis of movement. In this example, by simply pressing the actuator on the handle, a user can rotationally adjust the handle as well as extend or retract the handle longitudinally along its axis. The handles **126** can be utilized on virtually any type of stroller. Their use is not intended to be limited only to a three-dimensional collapsible

stroller. The collapsible stroller **100** is described herein merely as a platform to illustrate a number of different stroller features of the invention. The dual mode adjustable handle can be used on non-collapsible strollers, two-dimensional collapsible strollers, multiple occupant strollers, or the like.

[0102] The stroller **100** disclosed herein includes a rear brake system that can be actuated by a user using the same brake actuator to both lock and release the brake mechanisms on both rear wheel assemblies **119**. In the disclosed example, the brake actuator is center-mounted on the hub **162** of the rear, lower cross-brace **160** of the stroller, and yet the stroller **100** is capable of collapsing in three dimensions.

[0103] Each rear wheel assembly **119** has a brake mechanism. One example of a wheel brake mechanism is described herein with reference to **FIGS. 15-24**. As noted above, the lower cross-brace **160** in this example interconnects portions of the frame sides **102a** and **102b** near the rear wheel assemblies **119**. The lower cross-brace **160** in this example is divided into two brace sections **350a** and **350b**. These sections are interconnected at the center of the cross-brace at the hub **162**. The cross-brace sections **350a** and **350b** are pivotable relative to one another at the hub **162** as described below. **FIG. 15** shows a subassembly of the stroller **100** including the rear frame legs **123**, the rear wheel assemblies **119**, and the cross-brace **160**. **FIG. 16** shows an underside, close-up perspective view of one of the wheel assemblies **119**.

[0104] The disclosed brake system uses a pair of linear actuator cables **354** each having a proximal end coupled to the brake actuator at the hub **162**. The distal end of each cable **354** is routed to a respective one of the rear wheel assemblies **119** and is connected to an interior side of a rear wheel strut housing **356**. As shown in **FIGS. 16 and 17**, one end of the actuator cable **354** is received in a cable receptacle **358** in the housing **356** at each wheel assembly **119**. A push-pull core **354a** of the cable extends through a sleeve **354b** as is conventionally known. A brake lug **360** is carried on the distal end of the core **354a**. The brake lug **360** extends through a cable bore **362** in the strut housing **356** to the opposite exterior side of the strut housing. Each wheel assembly carries only a single rear wheel **364** in this example. The brake lug **360** faces the rear wheel **364**.

[0105] **FIGS. 16 and 18** show an interior side of the wheel **364**. Each rear wheel **364** has a wheel hub **366** with a center axle bore **368** and a plurality of fanned out ribs **370**. The ribs **370** extend radially outward relative to the axle bore **368**, are spaced apart circumferentially around the axle bore, and have a length in an axial direction. The spaces between the fanned out ribs **370** form brake lug receivers **372**. To lock the brake mechanism, the core **354a** of the cable **354** must push the brake lug **360** toward the wheel **364** and into one of the receivers **372** (see **FIG. 19**). The lug will be sandwiched between a pair of the ribs **370** and prevent the wheel from rotating. To release the brake mechanism at each wheel, the core **354a** of the cable must pull the lug **360** out of the receiver **272**.

[0106] **FIGS. 20-24** show features of the brake actuator located at the hub **162** in the present example. The brake actuator has a lever or paddle **374** that extends rearward from the hub **162**. A stanchion **376** extends from the paddle and carries a cylinder **377** with a transverse pivot bore **378**

extending through the cylinder in a direction generally parallel to the width of the paddle in this example. A hub cap **380** covers a portion of the rear facing side of the hub **162**. The hub cap in this example includes a pair of rear projection stanchions **382** that are spaced apart on the cap. Each of the stanchions has a pivot hole **382** formed therein that align with the pivot bore **378** of the paddle **374**. A pivot pin **386** is received through the pivot holes **384** and the aligned pivot bore **378**, pivotally mounting the paddle **374** to the cap **380**.

[0107] The cap **380** covers a component recess **390** in the rear side of the hub **162**. A pair of brake links **392** is pivotally mounted in the recess **390**. One end of each link **392** is mounted at a respective dedicated pivot **394** about which the links can rotate. The core **354a** of each linear actuator cable **354** has a proximal end with a second lug **396** (see FIG. 20) secured to the free end **398** of a respective one of the links **392**. In this example, the cable of one side of the stroller is connected to the opposite link. Thus, the links **392** in this example are rotated outward away from one another to release the brake lugs and rotated toward one another to lock the brake lugs.

[0108] The brake paddle **374** has an annular flange **399** that extends radially outward around the cylinder **377**. The flange gradually splits apart around part of its circumference into a pair of cam surfaces **400** that spiral axially in opposite directions along the axis of the cylinder **377**. The cam surfaces **400** are best shown in FIGS. 21-23 to be above the pivot axis of the paddle when the paddle is downwardly positioned as in FIGS. 23 and 24. The cam surfaces rotated downward when the paddle is lifted or pivoted upward. The cam surfaces bear against portions of the links **392** and rotate the links about their respective pivots **394** according to movement of the paddle **374**. In this example, a user lowers the paddle **374** to lock the brakes and raises the paddle to release the brakes. As shown in FIG. 17, a spring **402** in the cable bore **362** of each strut housing biases each brake lug **360** toward the braking position, drawing the lower ends of the links **392** toward one another. As the paddle is raised, the cam surfaces **400** rotate downward, pushing the links apart and pulling the cables **354** to release the brakes.

[0109] The brake mechanism parts, functions, and operation can vary within the spirit and scope of the present invention. The paddle can be provided with an over center feature to assist in holding it in the selected paddle position. The brakes can lock and release with different or the reverse paddle movements from the disclosed example. As will be evident to those having ordinary skill in the art, the particular configuration of each of the parts that form the brake system disclosed herein can vary in configuration and construction and yet fall within the spirit and scope of the present invention. The wheel hub and brake rib arrangement can be replaced with other suitable brake mechanism configurations. Similarly, the linear actuator cable routing can vary from that disclosed herein. Further, the particular arrangement, shape, and orientation of the brake lever paddle **374**, pivot parts, cam surfaces, actuator links, and hub can vary in configuration and construction as well and yet fall within the spirit and scope of the present invention.

[0110] The rear wheel assembly suspension system is next described with reference to FIGS. 15-17 and 24-26. Each rear wheel assembly **119** in this example has a single rear

wheel **364** supporting on an axle **410**. In this example, each axle **410** is formed integrally as part of a stabilizer rod **412**. The rods **412** each have one end **414** pivotally connected to a bracket **416** carried by the respective brace sections **350a** and **350b** on opposite sides of the hub **162**. Each rod **412** extends from the bracket toward the corresponding strut housing **356**. The rods each have a bend **418** in this example. The axles are those parts of the rods beyond the bend **418**.

[0111] An axle bore **420** is formed through each of the strut housings forward of a rear suspension unit **422** in this example. As shown in FIG. 17, the axle bore is tapered and has a larger diameter section **424** on the interior side of the strut housing. This tapered section **424** region permits some play for the axle **410** of the stabilizer rod **412**, both for when the stroller is folded as shown in FIGS. 4-6 and when the suspension moves as intended during use of the stroller. The rear wheels **364** can be mounted to the free end of the axle portions **410** of the stabilizer rods **412** in a conventional manner.

[0112] In this example, a strut housing **356** is carried on one end of each respective cross-brace section **350a** and **350b**. Each strut housing **356** in the disclosed example has an upper housing component **426** and a lower housing component **428** as shown in FIGS. 25 and 26. The two housing components telescope relative to one another as part of the function of the rear suspension units **422**. The upper housing component **426** carries a strut cup **430** on the rear side of the housing. The strut cup **430** faces downward and retains a top end **432** of a tubular strut **434** in each rear suspension unit **422**. A helical spring **436** surrounds each of the strut tubes **434**. An upper end **438** of the spring **436** abuts against an exposed surface **440** of the cup **430**.

[0113] The lower housing component in each rear suspension unit **422** has a strut guide sleeve **444** that is completely open. The sleeves each have a diameter sized to slidably receive a bottom end **446** of the respective strut tube **432**. Each of the lower housing components **428** has an upper face **448** surrounding the guide sleeve **444** that acts as a lower spring stop surface for a lower end **454** of the spring **436**.

[0114] The axle bore **420**, the axle portion **410** of the stabilizer rod **412**, the cable end receptacle **358**, and the distal end of the actuator cable **354** on each wheel assembly **119** are carried by the lower housing components **428**. Thus, each rear wheel **364** is rotationally fixed to a respective one of the lower housing components **428**. In the disclosed example, each upper housing component **426** is integrally formed on one end of each respective cross-brace section **350a** and **350b**. As upward force is applied to each wheel **364** during use of the stroller, the lower strut housing components **428** can telescopically slide upward relative to the upper housing component **426s**. The strut tubes **434** can slide down through the guide sleeves **444** as the springs **436** compress. The springs **436** will bias each of the rear suspension units to their unloaded or home condition when unloaded. Thus, the springs **436** provide shock absorbing and dampening capability for the stroller.

[0115] The rear wheel assemblies **119** fold inward when the disclosed stroller is collapsed. The disclosed components that accomplish this motion are next described with reference to FIGS. 6, 16, 26, and 27. An exploded view of the two major components of each brace section **350a** and **350b**

is shown in **FIG. 27**. Each brace section includes a lower leg connector **470** and a cross-member **472**. In the disclosed example, each leg connector **470** is pivotally connected to an outer end **473** of a respective one of the cross-members. Each connector **470** has an end cap **474** that has a hollow, open top **475**. The end caps **474** are oblong shaped cylinders that are vertically oriented. The end caps slip over and are attached to the lower ends **122** of the rear legs **123**, with the legs received in the open tops **475**. The end caps in this example are secured to the legs **123** in a conventional manner using fasteners installed through a pair of upper fastener openings **476**. These openings are positioned near and on opposite sides of the open top **475** in the end cap.

[0116] The bottom of the end cap **474** has a pair of upwardly open slots **478**. A downward extending guide and stabilizer **480** is positioned between the slots **478** in each of the connectors **470**. The stabilizers project downward from their respective connectors **470**. The stabilizers **480** act as a rotational travel limiter, a rotational guide, and a structural stabilizer for the joint in the cross-brace sections. In the disclosed example, the side surfaces **481** of the stabilizers **480** are substantially smooth. The stabilizers **480** in this example have a downward depending part **482** positioned between the slots **478** and defining the inner limits of the slots for each connector **470**. The outer parameters of the slots **478** are defined by various exterior sidewalls **483** of the oblong cylinder shaped end caps **474**.

[0117] Each stabilizer **480** also has an angled part that extends down, but angles inward toward the center of the lower cross-brace **160**. In the disclosed example, the angled parts are oriented at an angle of about 45° relative to an axis of the connectors **470**. If such a stabilizer structure is in a stroller, that angle can vary considerably and yet fall within the spirit and scope of the present invention. The angled parts each terminate at a distal end, which are each configured to define a stop surface **485**. In this example the stop surfaces **485** face upward and are oriented in this example at about 45° relative to the angled parts and about 90° relative to the connector vertical axes. The stop surfaces **485** bear against an underside portion of the cross-member **472** when the stroller is in the in-use configuration. The stop surfaces **485** can act as travel limiters to properly orient the cross-members **472** relative to the leg connectors **470**, and can add structural stability to the stroller, when the stroller **100** is in the in-use configuration.

[0118] Each cross-member **472** has a pair of upstanding pivot arms **486** on the outer end **473**. The arms are configured and sized to slip into the slots **478** of the connectors. The pivot arms **486** each include a pivot opening **487** which are aligned with one another. Each leg connector **470** has a pair of similar pivot openings **488** in opposed portions of the sidewalls **483** near the slot openings in the bottom of the connector. When the cross-members **472** are connected to the connectors **470**, the openings **487** align with the openings **488**. A stabilizer slot **489** extends into the outer end **473** of each of the cross-members **472** and is positioned between the spaced apart pivot arms **486**. As shown in **FIGS. 17 and 27**, each stabilizer slot is sized to receive the respective stabilizer **480** and to permit rotation of the stabilizer within the slot.

[0119] A pivot pin or hinge pin **490** is installed separately through each pair of pivot openings **487** and **488** in each of

the pivot arms **486** and the adjacent sidewall **483** of the connectors. In an alternative example, a single pin can be extended through the entire assembly as long as opening is provided through the depending part **482** of the stabilizer **480** in this example.

[0120] When the stroller is in the in-use configuration, each leg connector **470** and cross-member **472** assembly is arranged in a right angle in this example. The angled part **484** of the stabilizer **480** is partially exposed at the joint between these two components and adds stability to the structure. The distal ends of the stabilizers **480**, including the stop surfaces **485**, are positioned beneath the respective cross-members **472**. The stop surfaces **485** and top surfaces **491** of the stabilizer bear against complimentary surfaces **492** on the underside of the cross-members for stability and to limit travel.

[0121] As shown in **FIGS. 26 and 27**, the hub **162** is formed of two hub halves or parts **162a** and **162b**, one each carried on the inner end **492** of each of the cross-members **472**. Each hub part **162a** and **162b** has a generally rounded side **493** and a flat side **494**. The rounded side **493** of one of the cross-members formed the brake component or hub recess **390**. The flat sides **494** are configured to bear and slidably rotate against one another when the cross-brace **160** is assembled. One of the hub parts **162a** has a centered male cylinder **495** that projects beyond a plane of the flat side **494** of that part. The male cylinder **495** is received in a female cylinder **496** of the other hub part **162b**. The male and female cylinder align the hub parts with one another but permit rotation between the two parts about an axis H of the hub. A torsion spring **497** is provided within the assembled hub **162**. An end **498** and **499** is connected to each of the cross-members **472** within the hub parts **162a** and **162b** and assists to bias the cross-brace to its extended, unfolded orientation.

[0122] As will be evident to those having ordinary skill in the art, the cross-members **472** and connectors **470** can vary in construction. In one example, the components can be injection molded plastic with ribs and projections added for strength and rigidity. Alternately, the parts can be made from metal, and can be cast, stamped, welded, and/or the like. The particulars of the pivot joint can also vary from that shown. The shape and arrangement of the parts can vary, and the components can be switched between the parts. The stabilizer **480**, slots, and pivot arms can be altered from that shown at yet provide the desired pivoting joint function. Various alternative travel or rotation limiters can also be provided to supplement or replace the structures disclosed.

[0123] The upper cross-brace **150** is next described with reference to **FIGS. 28-35**. In the disclosed example, the upper cross-brace **150** incorporates a pair of adult or parent cup holders **500** in the brace. The cup holders **500** are integral with the brace and yet the brace can collapse or break down to permit the stroller **100** to collapse in a width or side-to-side direction. The upper cross-brace **150** in this example is reconfigurable between a loose, collapsible condition (see **FIG. 4**) and a stiff condition as shown in **FIGS. 28-30**, wherein the brace assists to stiffen and stabilize the stroller frame **102**.

[0124] As shown in **FIGS. 28 and 30**, the upper cross-brace **150** has three basic components pivotally connected to one another. The brace **150** has a handle assembly **502**

positioned centrally on the brace between the pair of cup holder assemblies 500. The opposed distal ends of the cross-brace 150 each include a saddle shaped brackets or devises 504. Each bracket or clevis 504 is U-shaped in cross section, but has an elongate length in an axial direction. Each clevis 504 has an elongate interior surface 505, a lengthwise axis, and an open side 506. The surface 505 is semi-cylindrical and contoured to match the shape of the rear frame extension tubes 128. A pair of extensions 507 project axially from one end of each clevis 504. The extensions 507 on each clevis 504 are spaced apart across the open side 506. A hole 508 is formed through each extension 507 of each clevis 504. The holes 508 are for pivotally attaching each clevis 504 to a respective one of the frame extensions 128.

[0125] In this example, the devises are oriented so that the extensions project toward the handles 126. The devises are positioned between the frame extensions 128 with the interior surfaces 505 facing outward. Each bracket 504 can pivot about the attachment points 508 in an arc toward and away from the respective frame extension 128. In the disclosed example, the interior surfaces 505 will pivot downward and outward by gravity into contact with their respective frame extension 128. Each clevis 504 can be secured to the top and bottom of the exterior surface 180 of the corresponding frame extension 128 using each pair of holes 508. A single clevis pin, rivets, or other conventional fasteners can be used to attach the devises 504. In the disclosed example, devises or brackets can not rotate circumferentially around the frame extension tubes 128.

[0126] In the stiff brace configuration of FIGS. 28 and 29, the interior surface 505 of each bracket lies adjacent the exterior surface 180 of the respective frame extension 128. In this configuration, the brackets are forced against and can not swing away from the frame extensions. When in the collapsed or loose configuration, the devises 504 are free to swing within their travel arc relative to the frame extensions 128 about the attachment points 508.

[0127] In the disclosed example, the devises 504 are integrally connected to a portion of the cup holders 500. The longitudinal axis along each clevis is oriented at an angle relative to a plane of the cup holder assemblies in this example. This is so that the open sides 506 and surfaces 505 of each clevis 504 align with the frame extensions while the cup holder assemblies 500 are positioned in a proper, level orientation when the stroller is in the in-use configuration as depicted in FIG. 1.

[0128] In the disclosed example, each cup holder assembly 500 has a cup-shaped receptacle 510 with a closed bottom, a cylindrical side wall 512, and an annular, radially outwardly extending lip 514. Each assembly 500 also has a support ring 516 and a bridge 526 extending from a side surface of the ring. In this example, the bridge 526 of each assembly is formed with the ring 516 and the clevis 504 as a unitary or one-piece structure. The rings each have an opening sized to slip over the bottom and side wall 512 of one of the receptacles 510. The lips 514 are sized to rest upon an upper edge of the rings 516. When in use, the bridges 526 and the devises 504 are positioned at the outermost ends of the cross-brace 150.

[0129] Each support ring 516 has a handle connector 530 extending from a side of the ring opposite the bridge 526 and clevis 504. The handle connectors 530 each have a stem 532

projecting toward the handle 502. The handle connectors 530 each also have a puck 534 carried by the stem 532 as can be seen in FIGS. 31 and 32. In the disclosed example, each puck is a disk-shaped body that has a puck plane, a thickness, a center, and a generally circular perimeter. A pair of axles 536 project in opposite directions from the center of each puck 534 and generally perpendicular to the puck plane. Each of the axles 536 and stems 532 in this example is formed integrally with its respective puck.

[0130] The handle assembly 502 has a pair of oblong cover plates 540 positioned facing or confronting one another. Each plate has a perimeter lip 538 extending around portions of the plate perimeters and projecting out of plane from the plate toward the opposite plate. Each plate 540 also has rounded opposed ends 542. The pucks 534 are positioned at the opposite ends 542 of the cover plates 540 and are sandwiched between the plates. When the cover plates 540 are assembled together, a gap 543 is formed on each end of the handle assembly 502 between adjacent perimeter lips 538. A portion of the perimeter of each puck 534 from which the stem 532 projects is exposed at each gap 543. The gaps permit the pucks 534 and the respective stems 532 to rotate about the axle pins 536 relative to the handle assembly 502. As shown in FIG. 31, an inward facing, oval-shaped axle receptacle 544 is formed near each end 542 of each cover plate 540. When the cover plates sandwich the pucks 534 between them, each axle pin 536 of each puck 534 is received in a corresponding one of the oval receptacles. The pucks 534 are thus rotationally retained in position in the handle assembly. The oval receptacles permit slight movement of the pucks toward and away from one another.

[0131] Each of the pucks 534 also has a pair of openings 550 extending axially through the puck, i.e., perpendicular to the puck plane. The openings 550 are spaced slightly inward from the puck perimeter and positioned about 180° opposed to one another around the puck circumference. The openings 550 on each puck 534 are also positioned about 90° circumferentially offset from the position of the stem 532. The openings 550 are for receiving link pins 552 as shown in FIG. 31. Each of the pucks 534 in this example also has a radially extending slot formed into a perimeter side wall 554 on a side opposite the puck stem 532. Each slot extends from the puck side wall 554 parallel to the puck plane and continues to the openings 550. In the disclosed example, the pucks 534, stems 532 and rings 516 are also formed as unitary or one piece integral components.

[0132] A pair of links 560 is oriented to form an X-shaped scissor link arrangement. The links 560 crisscross in the middle of the handle assembly as shown in FIGS. 30, 31, 34, and 35. One end of each link 560 is connected to the link pins 552 on one puck. The links crisscross one another and the other ends of the links are connected to the link pins 552 on the other puck 534.

[0133] A release button 562 is mounted within the handle assembly 502 and sandwiched between the two cover plates 540 and between the pivotal pucks 534. A part of the button 562 projects from a side edge of the handle assembly 502 between spaced apart and adjacent portions of the lips 538 of the cover plates 540. The button 562 has a relatively large exposed face 564 for gripping by a user, either with the palm of their hand or a plurality of their fingers. In this example, the gripping face 564 faces forward on the stroller and thus

would be most often grasped by a user's fingers. The opposite edge 566 of the handle assembly 502 can be gripped by a portion of the user's hand, in this case the user's palm, and the button 562 drawn inward into the handle assembly 502. The button 562 can be depressed inward against the biasing force of a spring 568 or other biasing element as shown in FIGS. 34 and 35.

[0134] A leading end 570 of the button 562 within the handle assembly has a link release pin 572. The release pin 572 extends in a direction perpendicular to the direction of travel of the button in this example. A guide slot 574 is provided in a plate 576 sandwiched within the cover plates 540. The link release pin 572 can travel within the guide slot 574 from one end to the other according to movement of the button 562. As best illustrated in FIGS. 34 and 35, each of the links 560 has a relief or notch 578 formed in one edge. Each relief or notch 578 faces a direction opposite the button 562 and toward the link release pin 572. Each notch is at a slight angle relative to a side edge of the link in this example. This is because the notches are intended to lie parallel to the guide slot 574 even though the links are at a shallow angle to the slot 574.

[0135] As depicted in FIG. 34, when the cross-brace 150, including its three major components 500 and 502, is arranged in a generally linear orientation, the three major components are held in a relatively stiff or rigid condition. In this orientation, the notch or relief 576 in each link aligns with and overlies the other. The spring 568 biases the button 562 to its outward non-depressed condition. In this button position, the link release pin 572 is also drawn via the spring biasing force into the notches 576 in the links. The links 560 can not move and, thus, the pucks can not rotate in this arrangement. In this condition, the cross-brace 150 is essentially locked or held in the stiff structural support orientation.

[0136] As shown in FIG. 35, when the button 562 is depressed inward into the handle 502, the link pin 572 is released from the notches 576. This permits the links to move freely within the handle assembly with rotation of the pucks 532 about their axial pins 536. When the links move far enough so that the respective notches 576 or relieves no longer overlie or align with one another, the link release pin 572 can not drop into the notches and can not lock the cross-brace in the stiff, linear orientation. Also in this condition, the cross-brace is free to fold or collapse. The three major components 500 and 502 are pivotally loosely connected to one another and the puck pivot pins 536. This permits the cross-brace to fold when the disclosed stroller is collapsed. To return the cross-brace 150 to the stiff condition, a user need only linearly align the two cup holder assemblies 500 with the handle assembly 502, which in turn will rotate the links and pucks. The spring 568 will bias the button 562 and release pin 572 back into the aligned notches 576.

[0137] Features of the passenger or child's tray assembly 124 are next described with reference to FIGS. 36-42. The passenger tray 124, when installed on the stroller 100 in the disclosed example extends across the frame assembly sides 102a and 102b and is positioned upward and forward of the seat 104 so that an occupant can utilize the tray as is conventionally known. The tray 124 in the disclosed example has essentially three primary parts. One of those components is a tray insert 600 that provides a support

surface 602, and in the disclosed example, a pair of recessed receptacles or bowls 604. In this example, each of the receptacles is essentially a cup-shaped bowl having a bottom surface 606 and a tapered upstanding side wall 608.

[0138] The tray insert 600 has a slight arcuate or curved shape with a bowed convex front wall 610 and a concave rear wall 612. The insert also has semi-spherical ends which surround and follow the contour of the bowls 604 and which are positioned at opposite ends of the insert. In the disclosed example, the bowls 604 have different contours and can be used for different purposes. One bowl has a continuously or smoothly curved shape for storing food items. The shape makes it easier for a toddler to remove the food items. The other bowl has a more angular shape that can be used as a cup holder. As will be evident to those having ordinary skill in the art, the particular contour of the tray insert 600, including its surfaces and receptacles, if any, can vary and yet fall within the spirit and scope of the present invention. Alternatively, one or more of the receptacles 604 can be eliminated entirely; although as described below, certain structures that perform tray folding or collapsing functions provided by these receptacles would have to be replaced in some manner.

[0139] The other primary tray parts include a pair of mounting components 620 that connect to and support the tray insert 600 when installed on the stroller. Each of the mounting components 620 is a mirror image of the other in the disclosed example. However, that certainly need not be the case. In the disclosed example, each of the mounting components can be attached or removed from the stroller independently. Each of the mounting components 620 includes a connector assembly 622 that attaches to part of the stroller. Each also includes a support arm 624 pivotally connected at one end to the connector 622 and pivotally connected to the tray insert at a respective end.

[0140] In this example, each connector assembly 622 has a body 623 with a projection 626 extending rearward from the body. The projections are configured to be received in a forward open end 628 of the armrests 172 of the stroller 100. As depicted in FIGS. 37-41, each connector assembly 622 also includes a latch mechanism that in the disclosed example removably but securely latches the connector 622 to the arm rest 172 when installed.

[0141] In this example, the latch mechanisms each include an elongate flexible finger 632 snapped into place within the projection 626. Each finger has a trunnion on one end with a pair of aligned pins 634. The projection has openings 636 provided in spaced apart surfaces 638 in the projection. The trunnion pins snap into the openings 636 to retain the finger in place. A button hole 640 is formed in an underside 642 of each of the connector bodies 623. A button 644 projects from the finger at its other end and is received in the button hole when the finger is installed. In the disclosed example, the button is biased downward through the hole 640 via resiliency of the finger. The button 644 can be depressed upward into the connector body, which flexes the finger 632. A bottom surface of the arm rest 172 has a latch opening 646 that receives a ramped tab 648 protruding from a bottom of the flexible finger 632.

[0142] The ramped tab 648 will automatically flex the finger upward as the projection 626 of the connector 622 is slid into place into the forward open end 628 of the arm rest

172. Once the latching face 650 on the edge of the ramped tab 648 is within latch opening 646 in the arm rest, the flexible finger 632 snaps into place. The latch tab or ramped tab 648 snaps into the latch opening 646. The connector 622 is retained in the arm rest open end 628 by interference between an edge of the latch opening 640 and the latch face 650. To remove the connector 622, one need only press upward on the button 644 to release the tab 648.

[0143] In the disclosed example, each of the support arms 624 has a bridging section 652 with one end pivotally coupled to one of the connectors 622. Each of the bridging sections 652 continues away from the connector to a supporting section 654. Each supporting section of the support arms 624 is received beneath and rotationally coupled to the tray insert 600.

[0144] As shown in FIG. 38, each of the support arms 624 is curved, but generally wedged shaped. Each has a front facing surface 656, a rear surface 658, and an end surface 660. Each supporting section 654 is also formed with a round cylindrical opening 662 surrounded by a perimeter supporting structure 664. When the tray is in the in-use configuration, the end surfaces 660 are positioned beneath the tray insert and out of view.

[0145] In the disclosed example, the front surface 610 of the tray insert has a mid-section 666 that has a length in this example that extends generally between the two storage receptacles 604, or about the length of the storage surface 602 between the storage receptacles. This mid-section 666 has a greater height dimension than the remaining portions of the front wall 610, the curved side walls 614, and slight end portions of the rear wall 612. In this example, the rear wall 612 also has a mid-section 668 that has a height dimension similar to the front mid-section 666. In the disclosed example, the remaining portions of the perimeter surfaces of the tray insert, including the ends 614 and the end portions of the front and rear walls 610 and 612 have a height about one-half that of the mid-sections 666 and 668.

[0146] The thickness or heights of the perimeter structures 664 of the support arms 624 also have a height in this example that is about one-half the height of the mid-section walls 666 and 668. When the tray 124 is assembled, the bowls 604 each drop into a respective one of the round openings 662 in the support sections of the support arms. As can be seen in FIGS. 36 and 37, when the tray is assembled, the front and rear surfaces 656 and 658, respectively, of the bridging sections 652 of the support arms form continuations of the assembled tray insert walls and generally match and follow the contours of the tray insert walls.

[0147] As shown in the underside view of FIG. 38 and the cross-section view of FIG. 42, each end surface 660 of the wedged-shaped support arms 624 has a curved contour and a lip 670 that extends radially outward from an upper edge of the surface. The lip 670 follows a continuous arch of the wedged-shaped end surfaces 660. The underside 672 of the tray insert 600 includes a pair of tracks 674 that correspond in shape to the curvature and depth of the lips 670. Each of the tracks 674 has an L-shaped cross-section in this example. A lip 670 is received in and captured by each track 672 as shown in FIGS. 38 and 42. In this configuration, each of the support arms 624 can be rotated relative to the tray insert about an axis of the bowls 604 and round openings 604. The lips 670 remain at least partly captured within the tracks to smoothly guide rotation of the support arms 624.

[0148] As depicted in FIG. 38, the exterior surface 676 of each of the bowls 604 has one or more protruding annular ridges 678 extending around the bowl circumference. The ridges are formed at a position on the bowls 604 to snap through the round openings 662 in the supporting sections 654. The ridges bite beneath an underside of the perimeter structures 664 around the round openings 662. When the tray insert 600 is installed on the support arms 624, the bowls 604 snap into place in the round openings 662 to retain the insert 600 on the mounting components 620.

[0149] The bridging section 652 of each support arm 624 has a flat end 680 with a pivot opening. Each connector body 623 has a C-shaped end with a pocket 684 formed between two spaced apart extensions 686 and sized to receive the flat end 680 therein. Aligned openings are also formed one in each extension. A pivot pin 688 extends through the aligned openings in the extensions and the opening in the flat end 680 to form a pivot joint 690 between the connector assemblies 622 and the support arms 624. The support arms can pivot about the joints 690 relative to the connector assemblies.

[0150] The disclosed tray 124 can be removed completely from the stroller 100 by detaching the connector assemblies 622 from the arm rests 172. Alternatively, either end of the tray 124 can be removed from an arm rest of the stroller simply by depressing the button 644 on the underside of a selected one of the connectors 662 and detaching only that connector. The tray can be easily be pivoted out of the way of the seat using the pivot joint 690 at the opposite connector assembly 622 as well as the pivoting relationship between bowls 604 and the support arms 624.

[0151] The tray 124 provides another function described with reference to FIG. 4. When the stroller 100 is collapsed, the support arms 624 rotate about the joints 690 outward and away from one another. When rotated in this direction, the end surfaces 660, normally hidden beneath the tray insert 600 in the in-use tray configuration, rotate forward and become exposed when the tray is collapsed along with the stroller. The contour and extent of the perimeter structure 664 that defines the end surfaces 660 can be designed to create feet that project forward of the tray front surface 610 as depicted in FIG. 4 so that the stroller can stand easily when in the collapsed configuration.

[0152] The front wheel assemblies 118 are described in greater detail herein with respect to FIGS. 43-46. Each front wheel assembly 118 in the disclosed example has a pair of front wheels 700 including an inner wheel and an outer wheel. Each of the front wheel assemblies provides a dual function. A first wheel suspension function is to provide a smoother ride for the occupant of the stroller 100 disclosed herein. The second is to selectively render the front wheel assemblies either fixed or locked in a forward-only direction or rotationally free to permit the wheel assemblies to turn, i.e., spin, about the lower ends 120 of the front legs 121.

[0153] Each of the front wheel assemblies 118 has a front strut housing 702 attached to the lower end 120 of the frame front legs 121. A leg receiving bore 706 is provided in each strut housing 702 for insertion of the lower end 120 in the housing. Fasteners or other suitable means can be used to secure the strut housings to the lower ends 120 of the front legs 121. In this example, each lower leg bore 706 is a through bore and has near its lower end a radially inwardly

extending annular flange 710. An end cap 712 is received over the open end 714 of the lower end 120 of the front legs 121. Each end cap 712 has a downward extending stem portion 715 of a first diameter and a larger diameter head portion 716 spaced from the end cap and carried by the stem. The space between the end cap 712 and head 716 created around the smaller diameter stem 715 forms an annular groove. The lower ends 120 of the front legs 121 and the end cap 712 can be slipped into the leg bore 706 until the end cap reaches the inward extending flange 710 within the bore. The end cap head 716 snaps over the flange 710, which is then retained in the groove to hold the strut housings 702 on the front legs 121. With this arrangement, the strut housings 702 are free to rotate about the axis of the front legs 121.

[0154] Each strut housing 702 has a rear side 718 that carries a downward facing strut cup 720 extending rearward from the rear side. A horizontally oriented pivot 722 is carried by and extends forward from a front side 723 of the strut housing. A lock lever 724 pivots up and down about the pivot 722 and is pivotally attached at the pivot to the housing. Each wheel assembly 118 has a pair of swing arms 726. One swing arm 726 is pivotally coupled to each end of the pivot 722. A swing arm 726 extends from the front side to the back side on both sides of each strut housing 702 in this example. The rear ends 728 of the swing arms 726 each carry a horizontally oriented axle sleeve 730 with a through bore 732 extending through each sleeve.

[0155] As best shown in FIG. 43, each wheel assembly 118 includes a single elongate axle 734 with opposed ends 736. One of the wheels 700 is attached to each end 736 of each axle 734. The swing arm sleeves 730 align with one another and the axle 734 extends through the bore 732 of each swing arm on each wheel assembly 118. A strut assembly is mounted to each strut housing. Each strut assembly includes a helical spring 742 and a two-part front strut. Each front strut has an upper strut tube 744 and a telescoping strut rod 746 that is slidably received in the interior of the strut tube in this example. A lower end of the strut rod 746 includes a loop connector 748. The loop connector 750 is sandwiched between the confronting ends of the pair of swing arm sleeves 730 on each front wheel assembly and the axle 734 also passes through the loop connector. An upper end of the strut tube 744 bears against the interior surface of the strut cup 720. An upper end of the helical spring 742 bears against a downward facing surface of an annular flange 751 on the strut tube 744 in this example. Similarly, a lower end of the spring 742 in this example bears against an upward facing surface of an annular flange 752 on the strut rod 746 in this example.

[0156] In operation, the upper end of the spring 742 and strut assembly are fixed into position by the housing 702. The axle 734, the strut rod 746, and the swing arms 726 move upward against the biasing force of the spring. The telescopic movement of the strut rod 746 within the strut tube 744 permits such movement.

[0157] As shown in FIG. 46, the lock lever 724 of each front wheel assembly 118 pivots between a downward position and an upward position. A drive link 754 is positioned extending from the pivot 722 generally opposite the lock lever 724. A slide compartment 756 is provided on the front side of each front strut housing 702 and is oriented vertically. The drive link 754 of the lock lever is positioned

within the slide housing 756 and is coupled to a slidable lock bar 758. The slide compartment 756 is formed by two adjacent parts. A portion of the slide compartment 756 is carried integrally on the front 723 of the strut housing 702, which can spin about the axis of the front leg 121. An upper end 760 of the slide compartment 756 is carried on a separate component 762 that is fixed to the lower end 120 of the front leg 121 and abuts the top of the strut housing 702. The upper end 760 of the slide compartment 756 is closed on four sides and is sized to fit the top end of the lock bar 758. The upper end 760 of the slide compartment can not rotate relative to the front leg 121.

[0158] As shown in FIG. 46, when the lock lever 724 is in the raised position, the drive link 754 draws the lock bar 758 downward so that it sits only in the lower portion of the slide compartment 756. In this position, the lock bar lies entirely below the top end of the strut housing 702. Thus, the entire front strut housing and front wheel assembly can rotate or spin freely around the axis of the front leg 121. In order to rotationally lock the front wheel assemblies 118, each lock lever is rotated to its lowered or downward position. This moves the drive link 754 in an upward direction which in turn drives the top end of the lock bar 758 upward into the upper end 760 of the slide compartment 756. The fixed position upper end 760 does not permit the lock bar to move. Thus, the front wheel assemblies 118 are locked in the forward rolling position in this lock lever position.

[0159] In the disclosed example, the separate component 762 positioned above each of the strut housings 702 also integrally provides a mounting bracket 764 for an optional front foot rest of the stroller. A front foot rest (not shown) can be mounted to the end 766 of the mounting brackets 764 on each side of the stroller and span the width of the stroller.

[0160] The stroller 100 disclosed herein can be folded to a compact collapsed size in three dimensions. The folding structures and methods are now described herein. Other than the joint assemblies, the basic parts of the stroller 100 in the disclosed example were previously described. The joint assemblies 130 are best illustrated in FIGS. 47-51. The joint assemblies 130 on each of the frame sides 102a and 102b function to latch or release many of the stroller components and to provide connection points for many of the stroller components. Only one side of the stroller is described in this section for convenience, knowing that both stroller sides are the same in this example.

[0161] In this example, the joint assemblies 130 include one of the arm rests 172. Each arm rest in this example is a curved plastic part with its rear end 800 pivotally connected at an arm rest pivot 801 to the outer side of a lower end 802 of the frame extension 128. The top surface 804 of the arm rest 172 is convex and the bottom surface 806 is concave. The arm rest extends upward and forward of the frame extension in the in-use configuration. The front end 808 of the arm rest 172 forms the open end 628 to which the tray 124 is attached.

[0162] A leg connector 810 is pivotally attached to the upper end 134 of the rear leg 123 at a leg pivot 814. The leg connector is also a plastic part and has a hollow end 816. The upper end 134 of the rear leg 123 is received in the hollow end 816. The rear leg 123 is bowed in a rearward direction and the leg connector 810 is curved to match the contour. When in the in-use configuration, the leg connector curva-

ture and the rear leg curvature to coincide. The leg connector **810** is cut away on an underside **818** to permit the leg connector to pivot to a lesser angle relative to the leg **123** from the in-use coincident curvature.

[0163] A latch lever **820** is carried on the top or back side of the leg **123** and has a hinge part **822** that is pivotally coupled to the leg at the same leg connector pivot **814**. The lever **820** has a handle part **824** extending rearward from the hinge part **822**. The hinge part **822** has two spaced apart sides **826** that create a gap in which the rear leg upper end **134** is captured. A split plastic pin **828** has two halves, one each insertable through a shaped hole **830** in each of the hinge part sides **826**. The pin has a shaped head **832** on each half that interlocks with the shaped holes **830** so that the pin and lever rotate together. A bore **834** through the assembled pin **828** can receive a fastener such as a bolt, rivet, or the like to secure the leg connector to the same pivot point, while permitting the leg connector to pivot independent of the lever **820**.

[0164] As shown in FIGS. 47 and 48, the leg connector **810** is received over the upper end **132** of the front leg **121** and is affixed to the front leg. A slide loop **842** extends further forward from the leg connector **810**. The rear extension **128** passes through the loop **842** and can slide relative to the loop. A linear coupler **850** has an elongate body and the lower end **802** of the frame extension **128** extends within and along a portion of the body over a majority of length of the coupler. The arm rest pivot **801** secures the leg extension to the coupler and pivotally connects the coupler to the arm rest. The front leg **121** extends through and along a portion of the coupler **850**. The front leg is oriented parallel to the frame extension **128** along and within the coupler in this example, but can slide longitudinally along the coupler.

[0165] In the in-use configuration, a top end **852** of the coupler **850** abuts the leg connector **810** where it is fixed to the upper end **132** of the front leg **121**. In the in-use configuration, the forward end of the leg connector **810** also nests within the back end **854** of the arm rest **172**. Thus, the joint assembly **130** is formed by the coupler **850**, the arm rest **172**, and the leg connector **810** which abut and nest relative to one another in a side of the frame **102** when in the in-use configuration. A strap **860** extends from the latch lever **820** on one side to the latch lever on the other frame side and has a center grip **862**. The strap **860** can be used to actuate both of the latch levers with one hand.

[0166] As shown in FIGS. 48-50, a latch assembly **870** is housed within the hollow upper end **134** of the rear leg **123**. The latch assembly includes a housing **872** secured in place via the pin **828** also passing through a hole **874** in the housing. A forward extending bore **876** is provided in the bottom side **878** of the housing **874** and opens generally facing the front leg **121** and coupler **850**. A spring **880** is received in the slot and biases a latch slug **882** in a forward direction also toward the coupler **850**. A slot **884** is provided on each side of the housing **874** and each opens into the interior of the bore **876**. A drive pin **886** extends transversely through the slug **882** and laterally through and beyond each of the slots **884**. A radial arc notch **888** is formed into the perimeter edges on the bottom of each hinge part side **826**. The ends of the drive pin **886** are captured between the ends **890** of the notches **888**. The pin **886** is also captured within the confines of the slots **884**. Thus, the slug is biased forward

by the spring to a latch position where the pin **886** contacts the forward ends of the slots **884**. The slug can be moved rearward only until the pin contacts the rear ends of the slots.

[0167] The latch lever **820** is pivoted to drive the slug. When the lever is lifted or rotated about its pivot at the pin **828**, one end of the notch will bear against the pin **884** on each side of the housing **874** and drive the slug rearward to its release position. When the lever is released or lowered back onto the rear leg, the slug can return under force of the spring to the latched position.

[0168] The upper end **852** of the coupler **850** has a latch hole **892** facing rearward. The latch hole is sized to receive the slug. A ramp surface **994** is positioned around the latch hole so that when the joint assembly **130** of the stroller is returned to its in-use configuration, the ramp **994** will drive the slug **882** automatically to its release position until the hole **892** realigns with the slug. The spring **880** will then push the slug into the hole to latch the joint assembly **130** in the in-use configuration.

[0169] Turning to FIGS. 1-6, the collapsing structure and function is now described. From the in-use configuration, a user grasps the strap **860** by the grip **862** using one hand and lifts upward. The latch levers **820** will rise, releasing the latch slug **882** from the latch holes **892** in both sides of the stroller. The user also presses the button **562** of the upper brace **150** into the handle assembly **502**. This releases the upper cross-brace and renders it loose. By further lifting the strap, the stroller will collapse in the following manner.

[0170] The leg connectors **810** will pivot about the upper ends **134** of the legs **123** and release from the arm rests **172**. The upper ends of the front legs, fixed inside the leg connectors, are then able to move upward away from the couplers **850**. The couplers **850** will slide down the front legs **121**, as will the frame extensions **128**, which are fixed within the couplers. The lower rear cross-brace **160** will pivot about the hub **162** and the rear wheel assemblies will fold inward between the rear legs **123**. The frame sides **102a** and **102b** will collapse toward one another. The seat cross-members will collapse laterally to accommodate.

[0171] As the coupler **850** slide down the front legs **121**, the arm rests **172**, which are pivotally connected to the couplers will fold down upon the couplers and also slide down the front legs. The arm rests push the links **170** downward applying downward force upon the front ends **165** of the seat side links **164**, which are also pivotally coupled to the couplers **850**. The seat bottom cross-member **136** collapses upward from the rear ends of its links as do the seat side links. The seat back risers collapse toward the frame extensions **128** and toward one another. The rear legs **123** collapse forward toward the couplers **850** as the couplers slide down the front legs. FIGS. 4-6 show the stroller **100** in the collapsed configuration.

[0172] To unfold the stroller **100** to the in-use condition, the reverse steps are applied, except that the strap **860** need not be utilized. The lower cross-brace can be pushed down to fully expand it, but the torsion spring in the hub will assist in unfolding the brace as well as other. The handles **126** can be manipulated to push down on the stroller in order to pivot the rear legs and front legs apart to further unfold the stroller. The handles can be pushed down until the latch slugs pop into the latch holes in the joint assemblies. The upper brace **150** will become stiff when the parts linearly align.

[0173] The under-seat basket access aspects of the invention are described in detail herein with respect to **FIGS. 1-3, 52, and 53**. The stroller **100** disclosed herein provides a significant improvement for under-seat basket access over previous known three-dimensionally collapsible strollers. As described previously, the rear stroller legs **123** and the lower cross-brace **160** are positioned such that the lower brace is at a significantly low elevation. In this example, the lower cross-brace **160** is collapsible, provides significant structural stability to the stroller **100** when in the in-use configuration, and yet is positioned fairly near the rear wheel assemblies **119**. There is no X-shaped cross-member or other linkage in the stroller **100** that inhibits access to the storage region or area **113** via an access opening **900** defined between the rear legs **123**, the lower cross-brace **160**, and the underside of the seat **104** in this example. The transverse release strap **860** can easily be moved out of the way if a user needs full access to this region. Alternatively, the release strap in another example need not be so loose that it hangs downward (see **FIGS. 54 and 55**). Instead, the strap can be fairly taught so that it stretches nearly straight across the width of the stroller.

[0174] As a result, a user can access the region **113** defined between the rear frame legs **123**, the lower cross-brace **160**, and the underside of the seat **104**. If desired, a storage surface can be provided suspended beneath and spaced from an underside of the stroller seat and can have fabric, semi-rigid, or rigid side walls that extend upward. The side wall or rear panel at the rear side of the stroller can be suspended by a fabric strap that is easily separable from the rear panel of the basket wall.

[0175] In one example, the rear basket wall can be substantially vertically oriented or can be aligned with the rear legs whether straight or curved. In another example, the side walls of a storage space underneath the seat can extend rearward beyond the rear legs to a desired distance. The fabric or other rear panel of the storage area can be angled rearwardly providing even greater access to the storage space underneath the seat **104** because there is no inhibiting stroller frame structure in the access opening. In such an example, the user need not lower the rear panel in order to access the space. The opening for many instances would be large enough simply because the rear wall extends rearward enough to create a significant access opening.

[0176] In one example, the access opening **900** can be the entire area above the rear cross-brace **160**, below the seat bottom **108**, and between the rear legs **123**. In another example the access opening can have a bottom boundary defined by a rear wall or panel of the storage area **133**, such as a basket panel. In another example, the rear wall can be such that it can be lowered out of the way to enlarge the access opening when needed. This is again because there is no inhibiting frame structure in the way.

[0177] **FIGS. 52 and 53** illustrate another alternative embodiment of a three-dimensionally foldable stroller **910** wherein the stroller does not include a lower cross-brace **160** or the prior example. Instead, the stroller **910** can include a structure in the form of a multi-part bracing system **912**, similar to those found in prior art three-dimensionally foldable strollers. However, in this example, the structure **912** can be pivotally mounted at the bottom outer corners **914** to the rear legs **123**. The type of structure can vary and yet fall

within the spirit and scope of the present invention. For example, a conventional X-shaped cross-brace or a more complex cross-brace structure can be used.

[0178] The disclosed example utilizes a pair of vertically spaced apart cross-members **916** and **918**, each pivotally collapsible in the middle and pivotally attached to the rear legs **123**. The lower cross-member ends define the outer bottom corners **914** of the structure **912** in this example. A pair of transverse braces **920** extends one each from the middle of the lower cross-member **916** to the opposite outer ends of the upper cross-member **918**. These braces **920** are also pivotable about both of their ends. The junction between the upper cross-member **918** and the top ends of the braces **920** define outer upper corners **921** of the structure **912**.

[0179] The structure **912** also has a vertical strut **922** extending between the middle of the two horizontal cross-members **916** and **918**. A handle **924** is attached to the middle of the upper cross-member **918**. When collapsing the stroller **910**, the handle is lifted to collapse the structure upward and inward upon itself. In this example, the upper corners **921** of the structure **912** are removably attached to the rear legs **123** as shown in **FIGS. 52 and 53**.

[0180] In the in-use condition, the upper corners **921** of the cross-brace structure **912** are attached to the rear legs **123** to provide structural stability to the stroller. These can remain attached as the stroller is collapsed because the structure **912** can collapse in a scissor-like fashion. However, if a user wishes to have clear access to the storage space beneath the seat **104**, they can detach the upper corners **921** from the rear legs **123** and rotate the structure **912** about the bottom corners **914** and out of the way for clear and full access to the storage space beneath the seat as shown in **FIG. 53**. The top corners **921** can have detachable slots, pins, latches, or other devices **926** on the structure **912** that are coupled to pins, brackets, latches, or other devices on the rear legs **123**, as long as the structure can be retain on the legs and selectively detached from the legs in this example.

[0181] In an alternative embodiment, the structure can be pivoted at its top end and rotated upward out of the way. And a further additional embodiment, one side of the structure can be pivotally attached and the other side removably attached so that the structure can be rotated either left or right to clear the access opening of the storage space.

[0182] **FIG. 54** is a perspective view of a three-dimensionally collapsible stroller with all soft goods removed. This stroller frame structure is substantially similar to that of the stroller **100** described herein. The frame assembly components are clearly visible in this view. A foot rest **970** extends across the frame structure and is mounted directly to the front legs **121** in this example. In an alternate example, the foot rest could be mounted to the previously described brackets **764** and mounts **766** on the additional part **762** carried on the front strut housings **702**. Also, the upper cross-brace **150** is not present in this example. **FIG. 55** is a top view of the stroller of **FIG. 54** and clearly shows the lever strap **860**, the seat bottom cross-member **136** and seat back risers **142** and the cross-links **143** and **144**.

[0183] Although certain stroller structures, features, sub-assemblies, and methods have been described herein in accordance with the teachings of the present disclosure, the

scope of coverage of this patent is not limited thereto. On the contrary, this patent covers all embodiments of the teachings of the disclosure that fairly fall within the scope of permissible equivalents.

What is claimed is:

1. A stroller comprising:
 - a frame structure having a pair of laterally spaced apart rear legs each with a lower end, the frame structure being collapsible in vertical, horizontal, and side-to-side lateral directions from an in-use arrangement to a compact arrangement;
 - a seat supported by the frame structure and having a seat bottom;
 - a storage area beneath the seat bottom when the stroller is in the in-use arrangement;
 - an access opening into the storage area when the stroller is in the in-use arrangement, the access opening bounded by the seat bottom, the rear legs, and a lower boundary; and
 - a frame cross-brace connected to the rear legs when the stroller is in the in-use arrangement, the cross-brace is positionable entirely vertically at or below the lower boundary of the access opening.
2. A stroller according to claim 1, further comprising a storage receptacle within the storage area and having a rear panel with an upper edge that defines the lower boundary of the access opening.
3. A stroller according to claim 2, wherein the upper edge of the rear panel is positioned rearward of a position of the rear legs and upward of a bottom panel of the storage receptacle.
4. A stroller according to claim 1, further comprising a generally horizontal storage surface positioned beneath and spaced from the seat bottom.
5. A stroller according to claim 4, further comprising a storage receptacle within the storage area and having a rear panel with an upper edge positioned upward relative to a rear edge of the storage surface.
6. A stroller according to claim 5, wherein the rear panel and the upper edge can be lowered to selectively lower the access opening lower boundary to increase the size of the access opening.
7. A stroller according to claim 6, wherein the upper edge of the rear panel is also positioned rearward of the rear edge of the storage surface.
8. A stroller according to claim 1, wherein the frame cross-brace is generally horizontally oriented when in the in-use arrangement and is connected to the rear legs vertically at or below the lower boundary of the access opening.
9. A stroller according to claim 8, further comprising:
 - a hub separating the cross-brace into two sections that are pivotable relative to one another about the hub to facilitate movement of the frame structure between the compact and the in-use arrangements.
10. A stroller according to claim 1, wherein the frame cross-brace has two brace components forming a collapsible X-shaped structure within at least a portion of the access opening, a portion of the frame cross-brace being pivotally connected to the frame structure and a portion of the frame

cross-brace being removably connected to the frame structure so that the frame cross-brace can be pivotally moved out of the access opening.

11. A stroller according to claim 10, wherein a first end of each the brace components is connected to a respective one of the rear legs at a pivot point, and a second end of each brace component is removably connected to the opposite rear leg at a position above the pivot point of the first end of the other brace component.

12. A stroller collapsible in three dimensions, the stroller comprising:

- a frame structure with a pair of laterally spaced apart rear legs each having a lower end, the frame structure being movable relative to horizontal, vertical longitudinal, and vertical lateral reference planes between an in-use configuration and a compact configuration;

- a seat having a seat bottom;

- a storage space beneath the seat bottom; and

- an access opening for accessing the storage space, the access opening positioned between the rear legs and below the seat bottom, wherein the frame structure can be configured so that no part of the frame structure encroaches the access opening when the stroller is in the in-use configuration.

13. A stroller according to claim 12, wherein the frame structure includes a lower cross-brace interconnecting the rear legs near their respective lower ends, the cross-brace having two brace sections pivotally connected to one another at a center hub and having only two opposed ends, one connected to each of the rear legs.

14. A stroller according to claim 13, wherein the lower cross-brace does not encroach upon the access opening upon moving the stroller to the in-use configuration.

15. A stroller according to claim 12, further comprising a rear cross-brace of the frame structure that interconnects the rear legs.

16. A stroller according to claim 15, wherein the rear cross-brace does not encroach upon the access opening upon moving the stroller to the in-use configuration.

17. A stroller according to claim 16, wherein the access opening is the entire area below the seat bottom, between the rear legs, and above the rear cross-brace.

18. A stroller according to claim 15, wherein the rear cross-brace encroaches upon the access opening upon moving the stroller to the in-use configuration, but can be moved so as not to encroach on the access opening while remaining at least partly attached to the frame structure.

19. A stroller according to claim 17, wherein the rear cross-brace has two brace components pivotally connected to one another at a joint in a scissor-like fashion.

20. A stroller collapsible in three dimensions, the stroller comprising:

- a frame structure that is movable between an in-use configuration and a compact configuration, each of an in-use frame structure length, height, and width being larger than a compact frame structure length, height, and width;

- a seat having a seat bottom;

- a storage receptacle positioned beneath the seat bottom;

a pair of laterally spaced apart rear frame legs each having a lower end;

a transverse cross-brace interconnecting the rear legs, the cross-brace having two sections pivotally connected to one another at a center hub, the cross-brace having only two free ends, one end connected to the lower end of

each of the rear legs, the cross-brace being the only part of the frame structure that extends between and interconnects the rear legs at an elevation below the seat bottom when the stroller is in the in-use arrangement.

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