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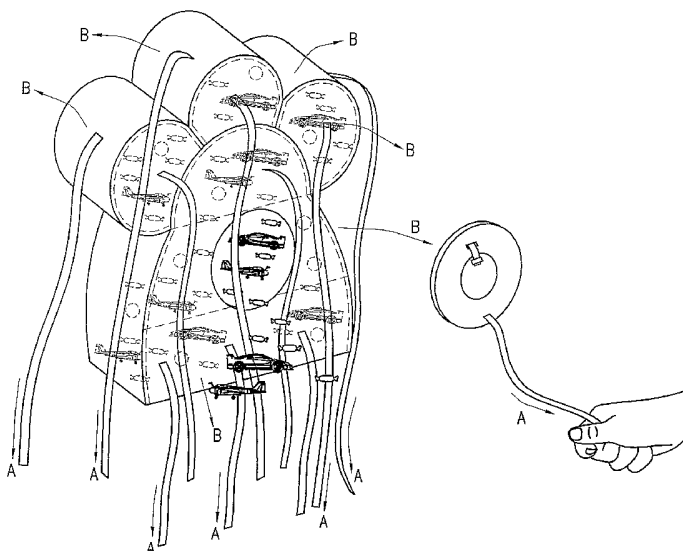
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(54) Title: BREAKAWAY PINATA



(57) Abstract: A pinata-like device is formed from cardboard panels and sub-panels. The structure is formed and held together by masking tape which is partially cut, across the seams of the panels and sub-panels. The container has an access opening to facilitate placement of goodies into the cavity. Each panel and sub-panel is provided with a ribbon. By pulling on the ribbons, the panels are frangibly detachable from one another. The strength of the attachment of the ribbons to the panels and sub-panels exceeds the strength of the masking tape holding the panels and sub-panels into a container form. When the ribbons are pulled, preferably substantially simultaneously, the panels substantially detach from one another, and any contents disposed within the cavity are made available, usually in a somewhat explosive manner. An end of each ribbon is passed through one or more slits in each panel and securely attached to a surface of the panel.

BREAKAWAY PIÑATA

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

The invention is directed to party favors and games, and more specifically it is directed to party favors and games that contain candy and toys that are destructively opened, e.g., piñatas.

Description of the Related Art

Piñatas are known fun party favors and have been in use for many, many years. A typical piñata is made out of cardboard, paper maché, or similar material, is at least partially hollow, and is filled (either by the consumer or the manufacturer) with candy or small toys. A typical piñata is hung from a ceiling, a tree limb, or other similar high structure, and then smashed with a bat or stick by children attending, for example, a party. Typically, the children take turns being blindfolded and trying to break the piñata, to have the candy and toys emerge from the piñata. In very common usage, each child is in turn blindfolded, handed the bat or stick, spun around one or more times, and then encouraged to hack at the piñata. This practice places a bat or stick in the hands of blindfolded children, and as one might expect, others may become injured during the attempt of smashing the piñata. In addition, the one child who successfully breaks the piñata is considered "a winner" while the other watching children, feel like "losers."

In response, some piñata makers created a piñata of similar shape, construction and material having multiple ribbons attached to its structure. The main body of the piñata has a trap door or opening, and one of the many ribbons is attached to this trap door. The other ribbons are attached to other parts of the piñata. Because of the decoration on the outside of the piñata, the

children do not know which ribbon is attached to the trap door. After this type of piñata is filled with candy or toys, each child, one at a time, pulls a ribbon from the suspended piñata. All but the one ribbon that is attached to the trap door are easily removed with no release of the candy or toys. The one ribbon attached to the trap door will, when pulled, release the candy or toys.

However, this approach is not without its own problems. For one, some parents are unhappy with the situation of providing a single "winner" in the piñata game, i.e., the child that had the fun of opening the piñata and releasing the candy while leaving the remainder of the children feeling unfulfilled or as "losers." The absence of the piñata exploding or being destroyed is also lost in this prior art piñata. Also, some parents prefer that the birthday child or other honored guest of the party be the puller of the ribbon attached to the trap door release mechanism.

Accordingly, there is a long felt need in the party favors art to provide a safe, piñata-like device that involves neither blindfolded children casting about with a bat, stick or other bludgeoning device nor a single child (a limited number of children) enjoying the feeling of breaking open the piñata to release the candy. There is a need in the party favors field to provide an inexpensive, colorful, safe, break-apart device where all participants feel like winners, i.e., where all of the children feel like they have had a role in the release of candy and toys. There is also a need in the prior art for a piñata having the door characteristic which enables it to easily sit flat on a table. This will facilitate sales of the device since shelf space in stores creates more of an impulse buy than suspended-from-the-ceiling devices and the flat bottom also allows the device to serve as a party table centerpiece until the moment of destruction. Also, a table top or free standing breakable toy and candy carrier will not require suspending the device from a ceiling or tree limb. This makes it more saleable, too. By providing a breakable, spreading

candy and toys virtually in all directions, piñata-like toy, the candy and small toys will not merely, as in the suspended items, fall through the opened trap door (when the correct attached ribbon is pulled,) but the toys and candy will seem to fly in all directions. This enhances the fun of using the party decoration.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

To satisfy the above long felt need and other similar objects, the invention is a piñata-like device having a main exterior housing and an interior cavity. Preferably the main structure is made of simple cardboard. The main housing includes multiple panels - - a front panel, and a back panel, and, more preferably, at least one side panel. Each panel may preferably be made into sub-panels by scoring, partially cutting, or cutting entirely through the main panels. Each panel and/or sub-panel has attached thereto at least one ribbon, string, or similar structure. The panels and sub-panels are held together by masking tape which preferably is partially cut to simultaneously hold the device together and yet make it easily breakable when the ribbons are pulled. Preferably, each panel and/or sub-panel is provided with a slit or small hole through which one end of the ribbon is passed, and the end travels a small distance on the inside of the panel and then emerges through a second slit. The ends are then taped to the exterior of the panels. The device is preferably provided with at least one bottom or flat surface so that it may easily be displayed for sale on a shelf in a store or be used at a party on a table-top or on a similar flat surface. Alternatively or in addition, the inventive piñata-like device can be suspended from a high structure like a ceiling, tree limb, or the like. The device is decorated with fringe tissue, of many colors.

In operation, the main cavity is filled with candies, toys, or similar party favors (either at the manufacturer, the retailer or by the customer); a large hole in the main housing may be provided for such filling. Such large hole is subsequently covered-up with a decal, sticker, or similar covering. Each child then takes hold of one or more of the ribbons attached to the main housing of the device, and all children or guests pull on the ribbons simultaneously or substantially simultaneously. Because the main housing is made of a number of panels and sub-panels that are secured together by partially cut masking tape, the pulling force generated by all of the participants pulling on all or most of the ribbons literally pulls the device apart into a number of pieces, resulting in an "explosion" of the contents inside. Much merriment is had by all. The passage of the end of the ribbon into the interior through a first slit, along the interior of the panel and sub-panel and then securing it to the exterior, by passing it out through a second opening, causes the panel/sub-panel to spin while the ribbon is pulled. This tends to cause the enclosed toys/candy to "fly" away from the device as it is destroyed. This, too, adds to the merriment of use of the device.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a front elevational view of a typical embodiment of a device according to the invention.

Figure 2 is an exploded perspective view of the device of Figure 1.

Figure 3 is a perspective view of the device in Figure 2 fully assembled and showing the insertion of candy and party favors inside the device.

Figure 4 is a rear perspective view of one of the inside surfaces of the main (front or

back) panels of the device according to the invention.

Figure 5 is a perspective view of a fully assembled device in accordance with the invention.

Figure 6 is a perspective view of the device of Figure 5 showing a person's hand pulling on one of the multiple ribbons of the device. A ribbon is attached to the trap door for facilitating placement of toys/candy therein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION, DRAWINGS AND PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Description of the invention will now be given with reference to the appended Figures 1 through 6. It should be noted that these figures are exemplary in nature and in no way serve to limit the scope of the invention, which is defined by the claims appearing here and below.

Figures 1 through 6 show the basic configuration and construction of a tabletop piñata 8 in accordance with the invention. Of course, it can be suspended from above, too. As shown in Figure 1, tabletop piñata 8 includes a main body 10 comprised of a front panel 12, a rear panel 14, and a side panel 16. In the preferred embodiment the panels are made from regular corrugated cardboard which is then decorated with fringe tissue. Preferably, the invention is shaped to have a certain "look," whether a device, e.g., a boat, an airplane, a car, star, etc.; an animal, for example, a dinosaur, dog, cow, etc.; a licensed character, or any other shape. The device is decorated with fringe tissue (usually multi-colored) which is glued to the outside surface to enhance the overall pleasing look.

The main body is provided with a hole or opening 30 passing through one of the panels, in the illustrated embodiment through the front panel 12, which is covered by, in this example, a disc-shaped cover 32. Attached to and emanating from various sections of the main body 10 are a plurality of ribbons or strings 40 or similar long, flexible, but substantially inelastic, hand-holdable elements. It is preferred that the bottom surface of (or at least one surface of the) main body 10 is flat so that the device may rest on a shelf or tabletop 50 or similar flat surface. The base of the shaped device will allow the device to stand erect or upright with respect to its shape. So, for example, a star shape will stand up on two points of the star. A car shape will sit on a shelf supported on at least three of its tires. This would be in contrast to a star which would lean on its star shape on a shelf or a car shape, on its side. Alternatively, tabletop piñata 8 may be suspended from a high structure 60 (a ceiling, a tree limb, or a overhead chandelier, for example) by securing means 62 which can be any known piñata securing structure known in the art. Alternatively, the bottom surface need not be flat but can have 3 or more resting points for supporting the device on a flat surface. As yet another alternative, the bottom can, of course, be irregularly shaped, as more traditional piñatas. These latter configurations, however, may need to be laid flat on their side on a shelf for display at a retail location or hung from the ceiling.

Figure 2 affords an exploded perspective view of main housing 10. The main housing is comprised of at least two sections and at least one ribbon or string attached to each section. In the preferred embodiment, as will be explained, the main housing actually comprises about 20 sections or sub-sections. In the preferred and illustrated embodiment, main housing 10 includes a substantially flat, front panel 12, a similarly shaped and sized, flat rear panel 14, and one or more side piece or panel 16 secured between front and rear panels 12 and 14. In the preferred

embodiment, side pieces or panels 16, extending between the front and rear panels 12 and 14, includes a flat base 18 which provides the flat bottom surface of main housing 10 described above. Alternatively, of course, the base need not be flat to sit on a flat surface but, of course, can have three points or legs to hold the same upright for its shape on a flat shelf or table top. As yet another alternative, the base need not be capable of sitting on a shelf or table top and can be irregularly shaped. Here, then, it would be intended to be suspended from above in traditional piñata style. Front 12 may be provided with an opening or hole 30 so that the cavity formed when panels 12, 14, and 16 are assembled can be filled with candy, party favors, toys, or the like (hereinafter often referred to as "goodies.") This filling of the cavity with goodies can be done by the retailer or the device can be sold empty and the consumer can fill the same at his/her home (or office). A disc-like cover 32 may be removably secured and placed over opening or hole 30 to allow placement of goodies therein and to then seal the party favors inside the cavity.

Still referring to Figure 2, the various panels 12, 14, and 16 of main housing 10 may be divided into sub-panels 20 by one of several methods. The illustrated example has several sub-panels for side panel 16. Some sub-panels 20 may be formed by scoring or partially cutting the originally die-cut front and rear panels 12, 14, or side panel 16 into smaller sections. This results in many sub-sections. Preferably the device comprises, as mentioned, about 20 sub-sections. In addition or in the alternative (and this is preferred), some or all sub-panels 20 of side panel 16 are cut from separate cardboard blanks. However, the front and rear panels are cut into many sub-panels, i.e., they are detached from their respective original die-cut panels. Certainly, for the side panels 16, it is contemplated that they be formed of individual pieces which are then taped together. This would be done, however, after the ribbons are first attached to the sub-panel

pieces, as explained below, to provide a device which has some structural rigidity for holding the candy or toys and, yet, will easily be destroyed when the ribbons are pulled, as will be described.

Each piece or sub-panel 20 is preferably provided with at least one or possibly more than one slit 22 (two per ribbon is preferred) or similar small hole, the purpose of which will be described below. The slits are preferably die cut at the same time that the panels are die cut and formed. Preferably each sub-panel is to be provided with a single ribbon. In the preferred embodiment, about 20 ribbons are provided to the device. The disc-shaped cover is also provided with a ribbon, just like the other pieces or sub-panels, to facilitate removal of the cover for goodies insertion and to assist in the destruction or disassembly of the device as will be described.

As best illustrated in Figures 3 and 4, each pair of spaced but parallel, rectangularly shaped slits 22 is threaded with the end of a single ribbon 40. According to the preferred embodiment of the invention, one end 42 of each ribbon is passed through a first of one of the paired slits 22. The ribbon is then passed a short distance over the interior surface of the sub-panel or piece and the end of the ribbon 42 is then threaded out of the second of the paired set of slits 22. There, the ribbon's end 42 is taped, glued, or otherwise secured to the outside of the sub-panel. It is important that the strength of the attachment of end 42 of each ribbon 40 to each sub-panel 20 (i.e., tape 44) be stronger than the securing means, i.e., the masking tape, in the preferred embodiment, holding the sub-panels to one another.

After the sub-panels or pieces of the device are first separated and ribbons attached to each sub-panel, as described, the sub-panels are then taped or glued back together (or secured

together in similar fashion) at seams 26. This reforms the original perimeter and shape of the panels and when the panels and side panel pieces are all taped together, again, by use of masking tape (about 3/4" in width), the container is formed. Of course, the ribbons can be secured to the panels before the pieces are cut apart to form sub-panels or after. Preferably, the ribbons are secured to the pieces or sub-panels before separation.

In addition or in the alternative, some or all of sub-panels 20 may simply be originally cut from cardboard stock as separate pieces which are then taped or glued (or the like) together to reform or form the panels. In the preferred embodiment, the sub-panels are secured together by short pieces of masking tape. The masking tape does not follow or cover the entirety of the connecting edges (or seams) of adjacent pieces but, rather, a small piece of tape extends from one sub-panel to an adjacent sub-panel and from front panel pieces to side panel pieces and back panel pieces to side panel pieces. A three dimensional structure is formed, with some rigidity, but maximizing strength of connection of panel and sub-panels is really not essential. In the preferred embodiment, the masking tape connections are then cut, preferably about 50% through their widths, i.e., cuts are made along the edges on seams connecting the adjacent sub-panels. This ensures that the device will be easily destroyed when the ribbons are pulled outwardly, as will be described. Again, the manufacturing process is intended to provide a structurally integral body, capable of being supported on a shelf or table or suspended, a container capable of holding a small quantity of goodies and, yet, the device needs to be easily disassembled or "exploded" when the ribbons are desirably pulled.

The taping of adjacent sub-panels 20 occurs across seams 26. The intention is to make the bond between a ribbon 40 and its respective sub-panel 20 relatively strong and permanent, while making the bond between adjacent sub-panels 20 relatively frangible and somewhat detachable upon application of appropriate force. The purpose of having the ribbon pass through one slit, along an inside surface of a sub-panel piece and then out through a second slit of a pair of parallel and spaced slits is to enhance the exploding effect, when the ribbons are pulled. More specifically, with the ribbons threaded and secured as indicated, the outward pull on the ribbons not only destroys the device because the force on the ribbons is greater than the strength of the masking tape holding the sub-panels together, but, in addition, pulling on the ribbon will cause the sub-panel pieces to tend to rotate about an axis passing perpendicular to the ribbon, but in the plane of the sub-panel piece. This rotation cause the goodies of the container to move upwardly, outwardly, in many directions, all at once and the visual effect of exploding the device is enhanced.

The fully assembled product is shown in Figure 5. In addition to the basic container structure shown, tissue fringe, tissue paper, or any other known decoration may be attached to the outside of main body 10. Generally, tissue fringe of many colors is employed to visual effect. The tissue fringe is simply glued to the outside surface of the device. Here, too, some additional integrity is provided to the device by the addition of the tissue fringe but it is still easily overcome by outward pulling on the ribbons since the masking tape holding together sub-panels is, as mentioned, at least partially cut (in the preferred embodiment) and the strength added by the tissue fringe is not significant.

In operation, the invention works as follows and as shown in Figure 6. First, referring to Figure 3, cover 32 is removed from hole 30, and party favors or goodies 70 are inserted within cavity 80 of piñata 8. Cover 32 is replaced over hole 30. The device can sit on a table or be suspended. Each of the ribbons 40 is grasped by a different child, hand or participant as shown in Figure 6. Even the ribbon of the cover 32 can be grasped for helping to explode the device. Each child or participant is then encouraged to pull on his or her ribbon(s), outwardly, i.e., in the direction of arrow "A" as shown in Figure 6. Since each child or participant pulls on his or her respective ribbons relatively simultaneously, a lot of force is generated and substantially evenly distributed around piñata device 8. Each ribbon, when pulled in the direction of arrow "A," yanks the sub-panel 20 to which it is attached in the direction of arrow "B" as shown in Figure 6. Since each of the sub-panels are being yanked in a different direction, the container "explodes", and candy and party favors, the goodies, scatter accordingly, to the delight of all. As mentioned, the distribution of the goodies and the exploding effect is believed enhanced by the manner of threading the ribbons through the pairs of slits and attaching the ribbons to the outside of the sub-panels. Force generated by each child or participant pulling on each ribbon 40 in the direction of arrows "A" is more than sufficient to overcome the securing force (the partially cut masking tape) at seams 26.

The invention is not limited to the above description. For example, instead of masking tape or similar securing of adjacent sub-panels at seams 26, glue may also be used. As another possible variation, the end 42 of ribbon 40 may be connected to a disk or button 46 that is larger than the size of slit or hole 22 and constructed preferably of a more durable material than sub-panel 20. Disks 46 may or may not be glued, taped, or secured to sub-panels 20. The disks 46

will be on the inside of the container and prevent the ribbons from passing out through the single associated slits. Rather, the diameter or size of the disks or buttons will be greater than the widths of the slits so that the ribbon will, upon outward pulling, cause the sub-panels to become detached, one from adjacent other. Also, the invention need not have discrete front, back, and rear panels but may be made in any shape, including but not limited to a soccer ball, a football, an animal, a geometric shape, a person's head, etc. As one may infer from this list, the panels and/or sub-panels need not be flat but may be curvilinear, stepped, or otherwise varied in contour.

Having described the invention, it should be realized that the invention is not limited by the above description or the drawings appended hereto but is rather defined by the claims appearing here and below and all equivalence thereto known by those of ordinary skill of the art.

What is claimed is:

1. A piñata-like device, comprising:
at least two panels forming an at least partially hollow container;
a plurality of ribbons, at least one of said ribbons being attached to each of said panels,
said panels being secured by securement means to one another to form said container, yet
frangibly detachable from one another; and
wherein when said ribbons are pulled, said panels substantially detach from one another,
and any contents held within said cavity are made available.
2. A piñata-like device according to Claim 1, wherein at least one of said panels is provided
with at least one slit, wherein an end of said ribbon for said panel is passed through said slit and
securely attached to the surface of said panel.
3. A piñata-like device according to Claim 1, wherein said plurality of panels comprise a
front panel and a rear panel and further comprising at least one side panel.
4. A piñata-like device according to Claim 3, wherein at least one of said panels is formed
into sub-panels.
5. A piñata-like device according to Claim 1, wherein said securement means is masking
tape.

6. A piñata-like device according to Claim 1, further comprising:
an access hole formed through at least one of said panels.
7. A piñata-like device according to Claim 6 further comprising a cover securably attachable to said access hole.
8. A piñata-like device according to Claim 1 wherein said ribbons are secured to said panel(s) by tape.
9. A piñata-like device according to Claim 2, further comprising a second slit associated with at least one of said provided slits, wherein said ribbon passes first through said first slit, then through said second slit and is securely attached to the outside of said panel.
10. A piñata-like device according to Claim 4 wherein substantially all of said panels are provided with at least one ribbon.
11. A piñata-like device according to Claim 1 wherein the strength of said attachment of said ribbons to said panels is stronger than said securement means.
12. A piñata-like device according to Claim 1 wherein said device is capable of standing in an upright manner on a level surface in reference to the shape of the device.

13. A piñata-like device according to Claim 12 wherein said device is supported by at least 3 points.
14. A piñata-like device according to Claim 1 wherein said device has a flat surface on its bottom.
15. A piñata-like device according to Claim 3 wherein said front panel, said rear panel, and said side panel are formed into about 20 sub-panels and each sub-panel is provided with a ribbon.
16. A piñata-like device according to Claim 1 wherein said securement means comprises masking tape which is pre-cut across its width to decrease the strength of said securement means.
17. A piñata-like device according to Claim 16 wherein said pre-cut of said masking tape is across about 50% of the width of said masking tape.
18. A piñata-like device according to Claim 1 further comprising covering at least a portion of said panels with tissue fringe.
19. A piñata-like device according to Claim 1 wherein said panels are formed from cardboard.
20. A piñata-like device according to Claim 9, wherein said ribbons, when pulled, cause said panels and sub-panels to rotate about an axis perpendicular to said ribbons attached thereto.

21. A method of making a piñata-like device comprising the steps of:

- a) cutting a front panel and a rear panel from cardboard;
- b) cutting into either said front panel or said rear panel an access opening;
- c) separating at least said front panel or said rear panel into at least 2 sub-panel sections;
- d) attaching said panels and said sub-panels with securement means to form a container-like device;
- e) securing at least one ribbon to each of said sub-panels, and said front and said rear panels such that the strength of securing said ribbons to said sub-panels and said front and rear panels is greater than the strength of said securement means.

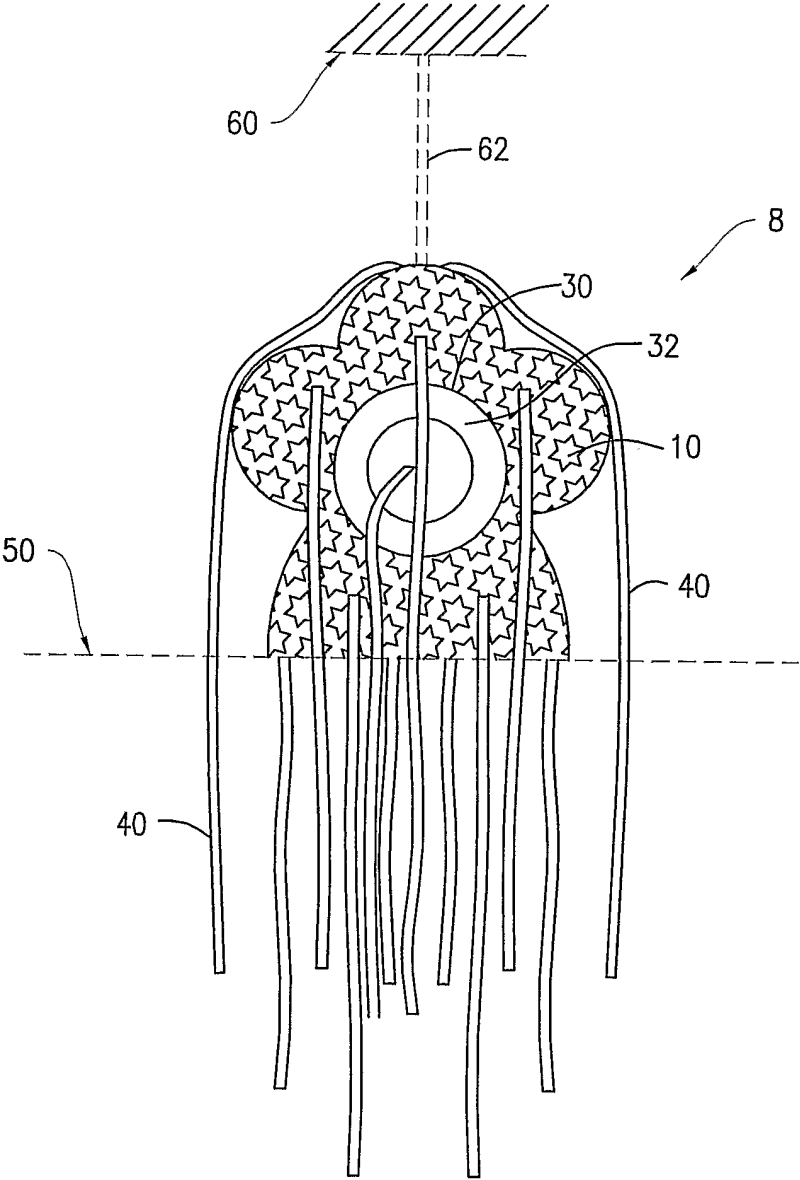


FIG. 1

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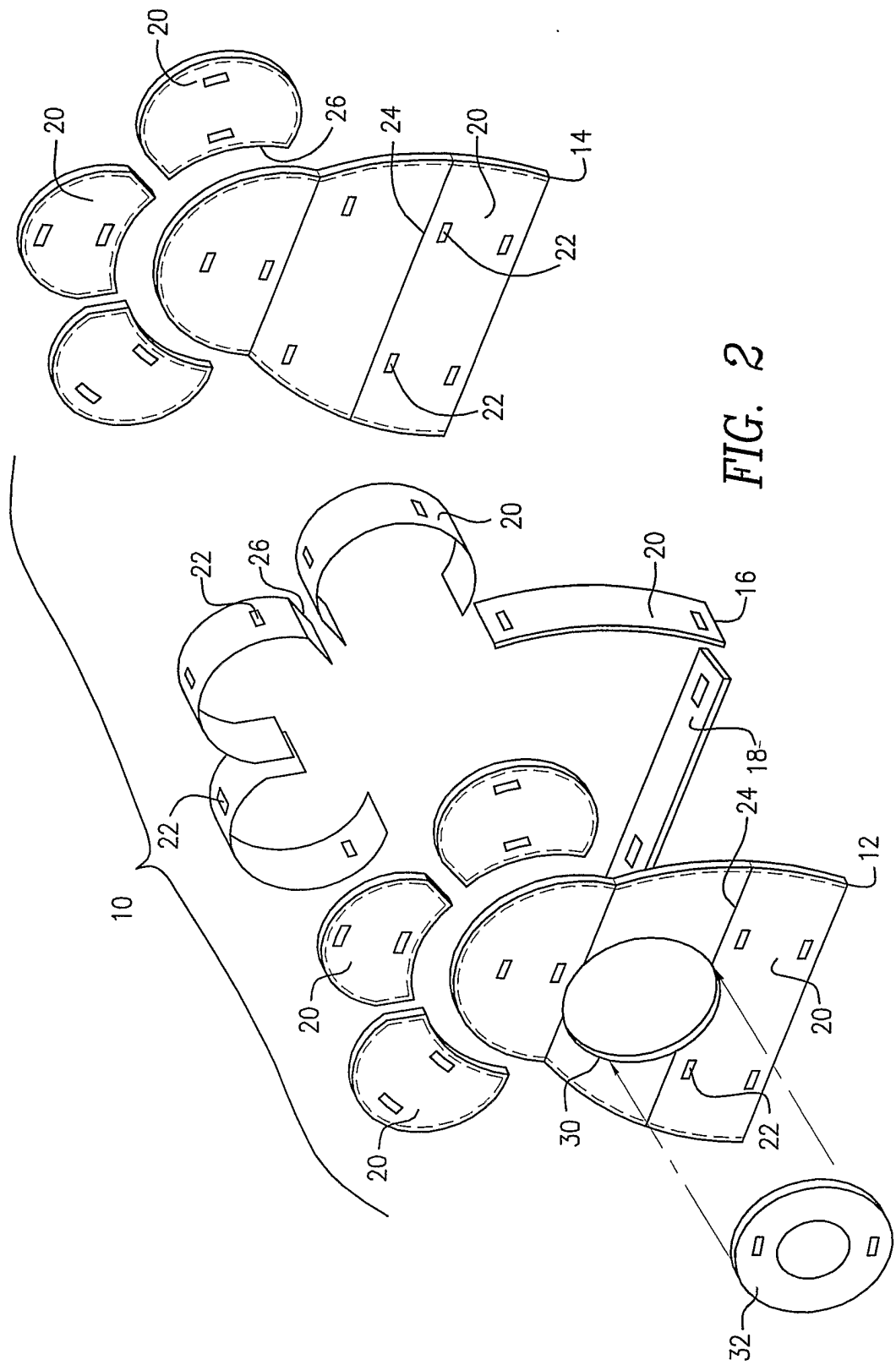


FIG. 2

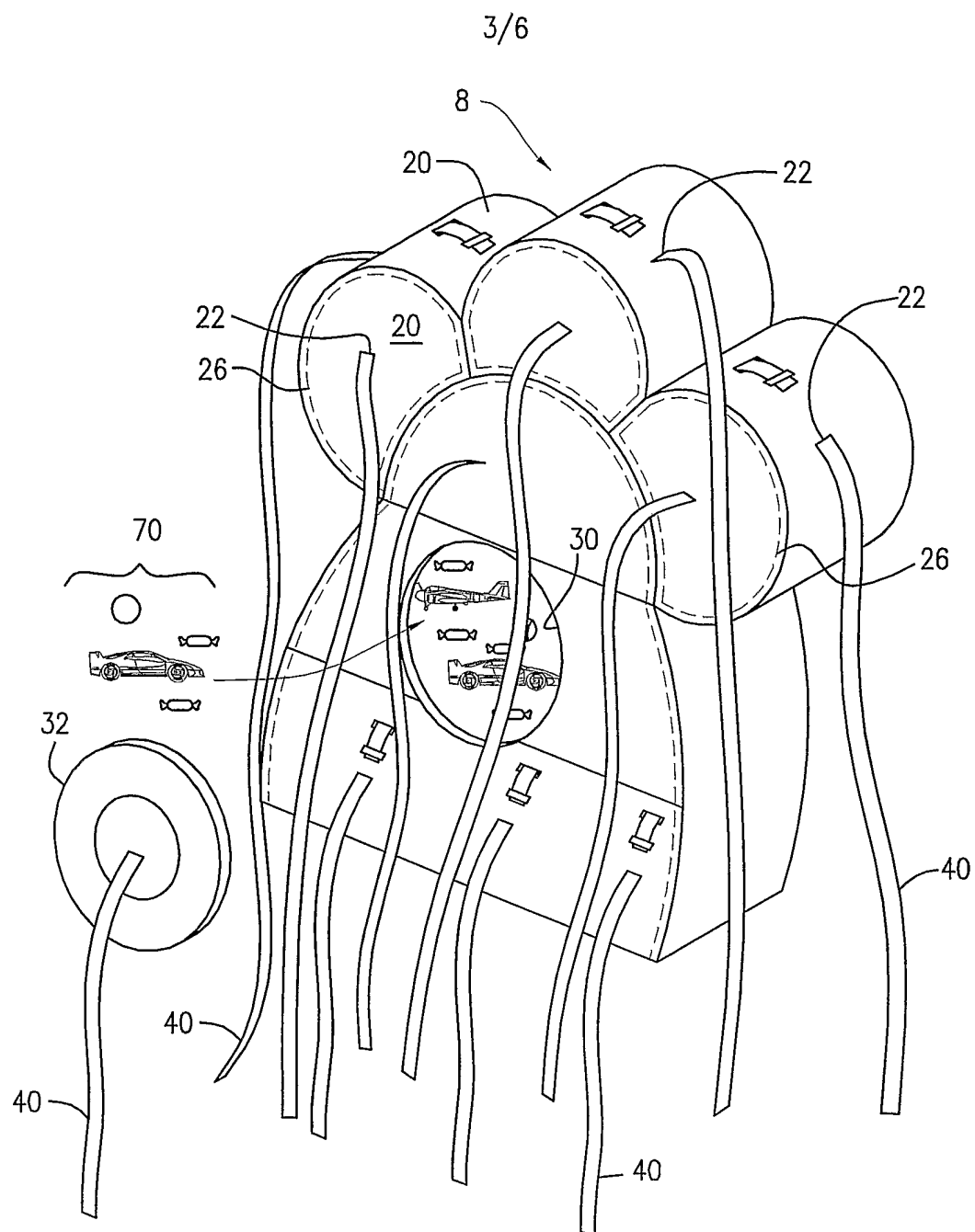
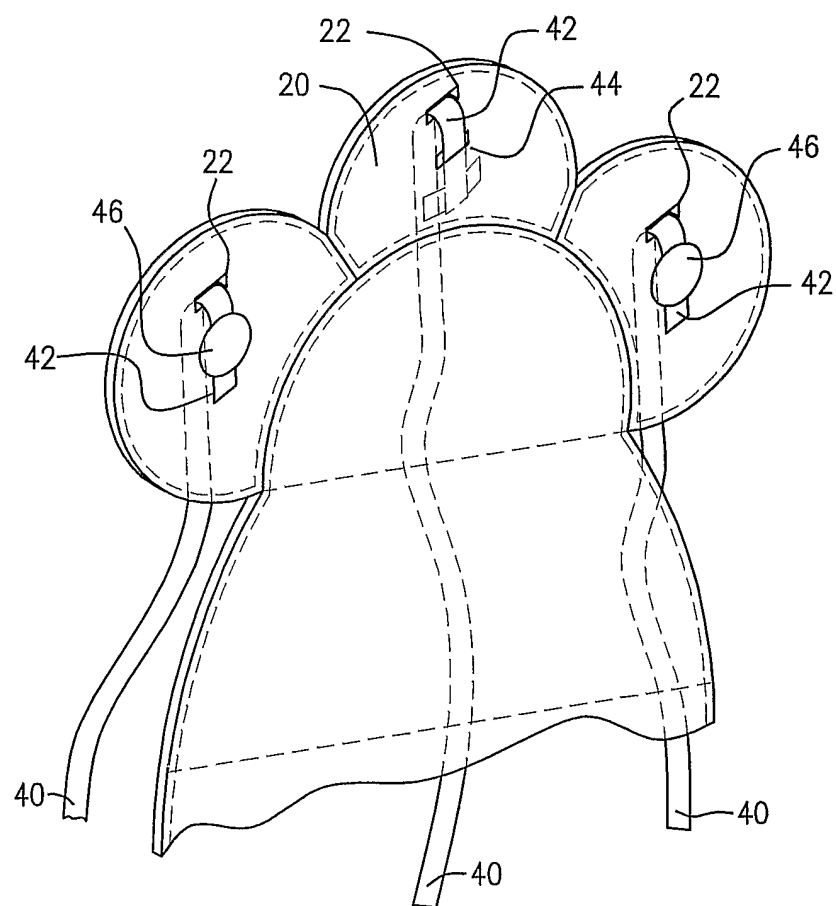


FIG. 3

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*FIG. 4*

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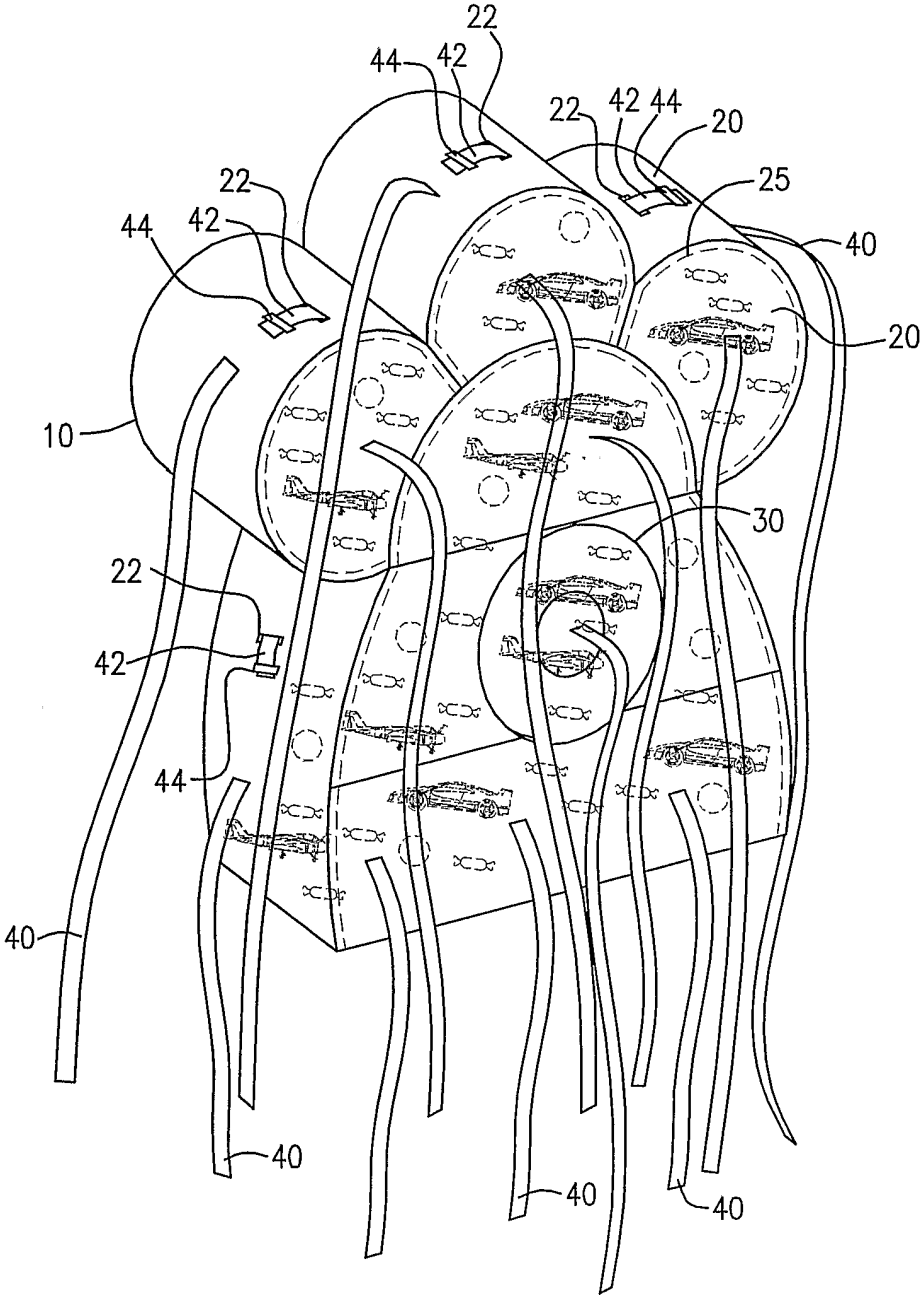


FIG. 5

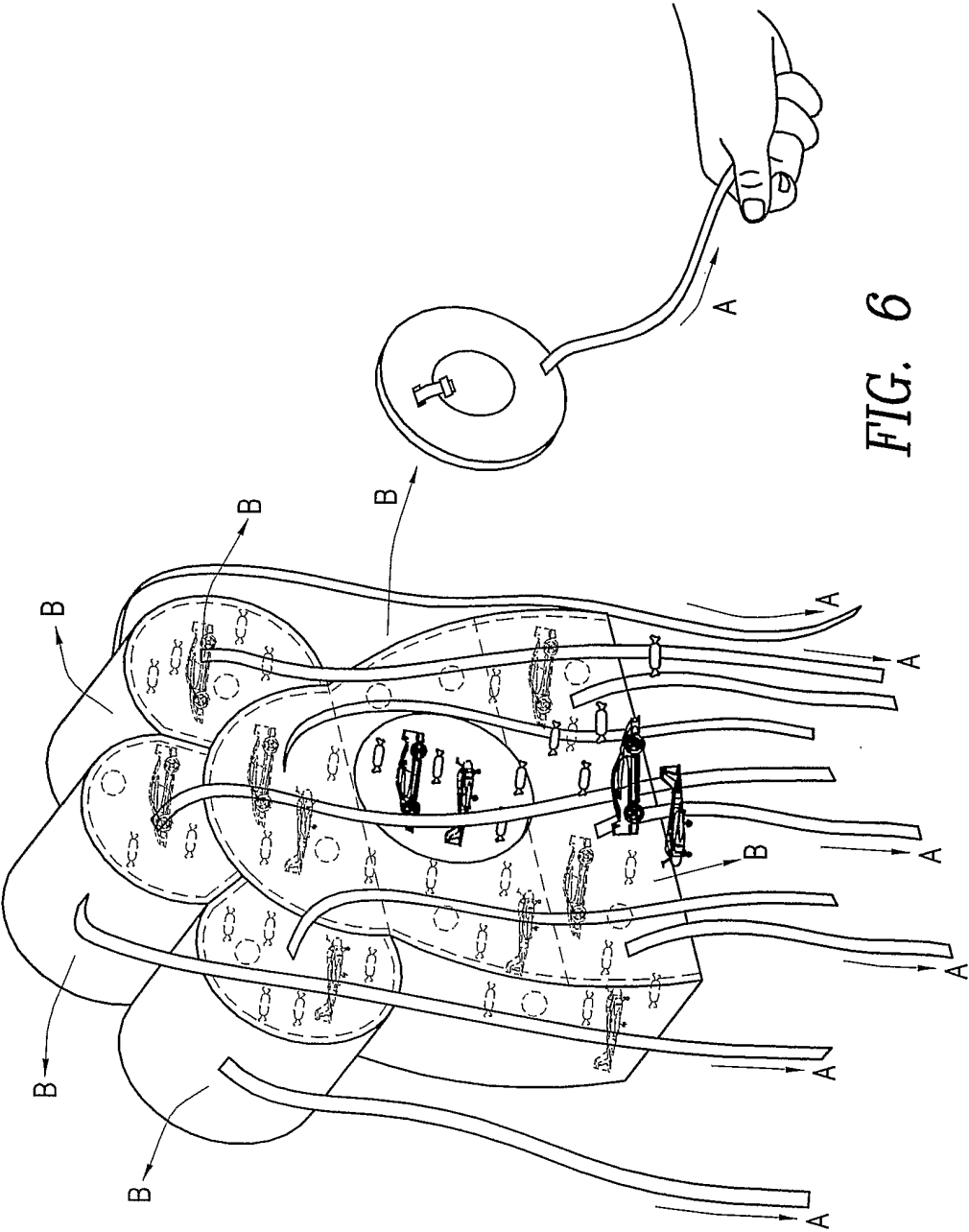


FIG. 6