



US 20050001021A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication** (10) **Pub. No.: US 2005/0001021 A1**  
Hutchinson (43) **Pub. Date: Jan. 6, 2005**

(54) **CERTIFIED MAILER WITH RETURN RECEIPT POSTCARD**

(22) Filed: **Jul. 2, 2003**

(76) Inventor: **Wilbur Hutchinson, Saint George, UT (US)**

**Publication Classification**

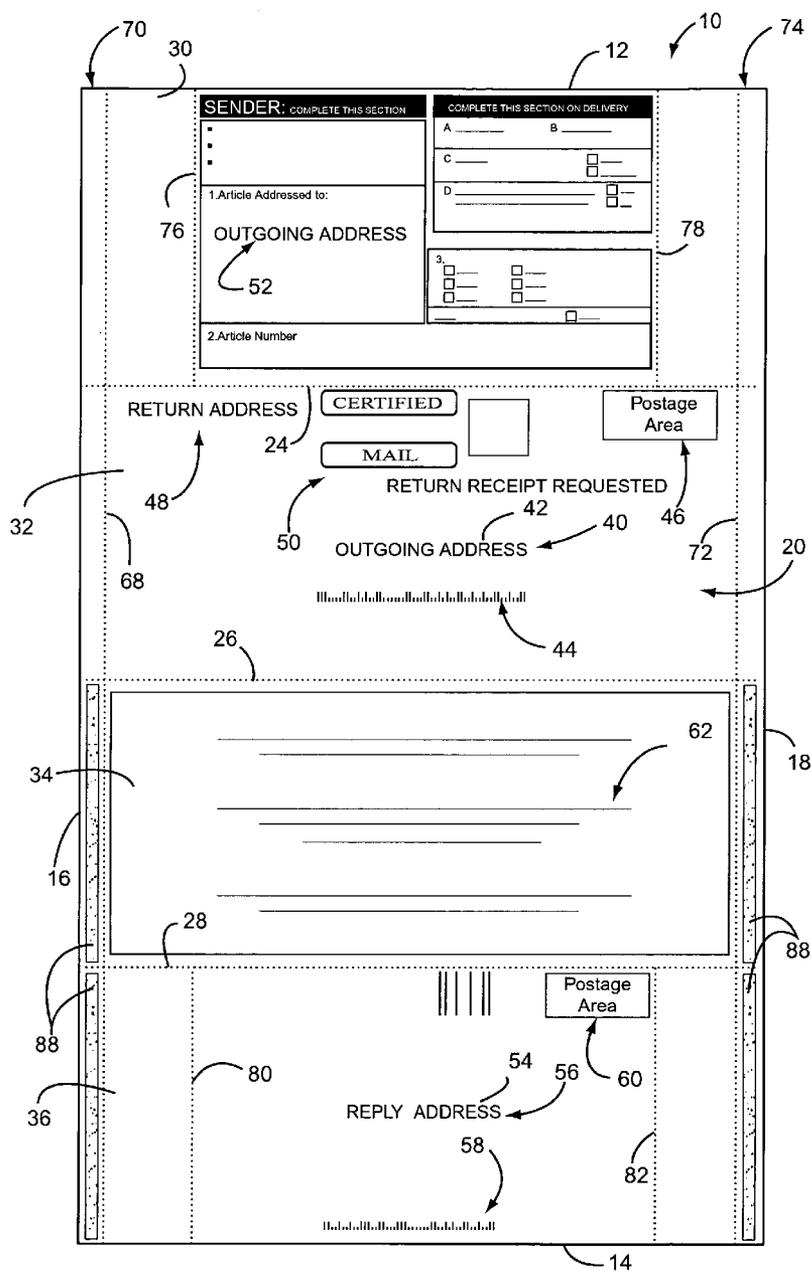
(51) **Int. Cl.<sup>7</sup> .....** **B65D 27/06**  
(52) **U.S. Cl. ....** **229/300; 229/92.1; 229/316**

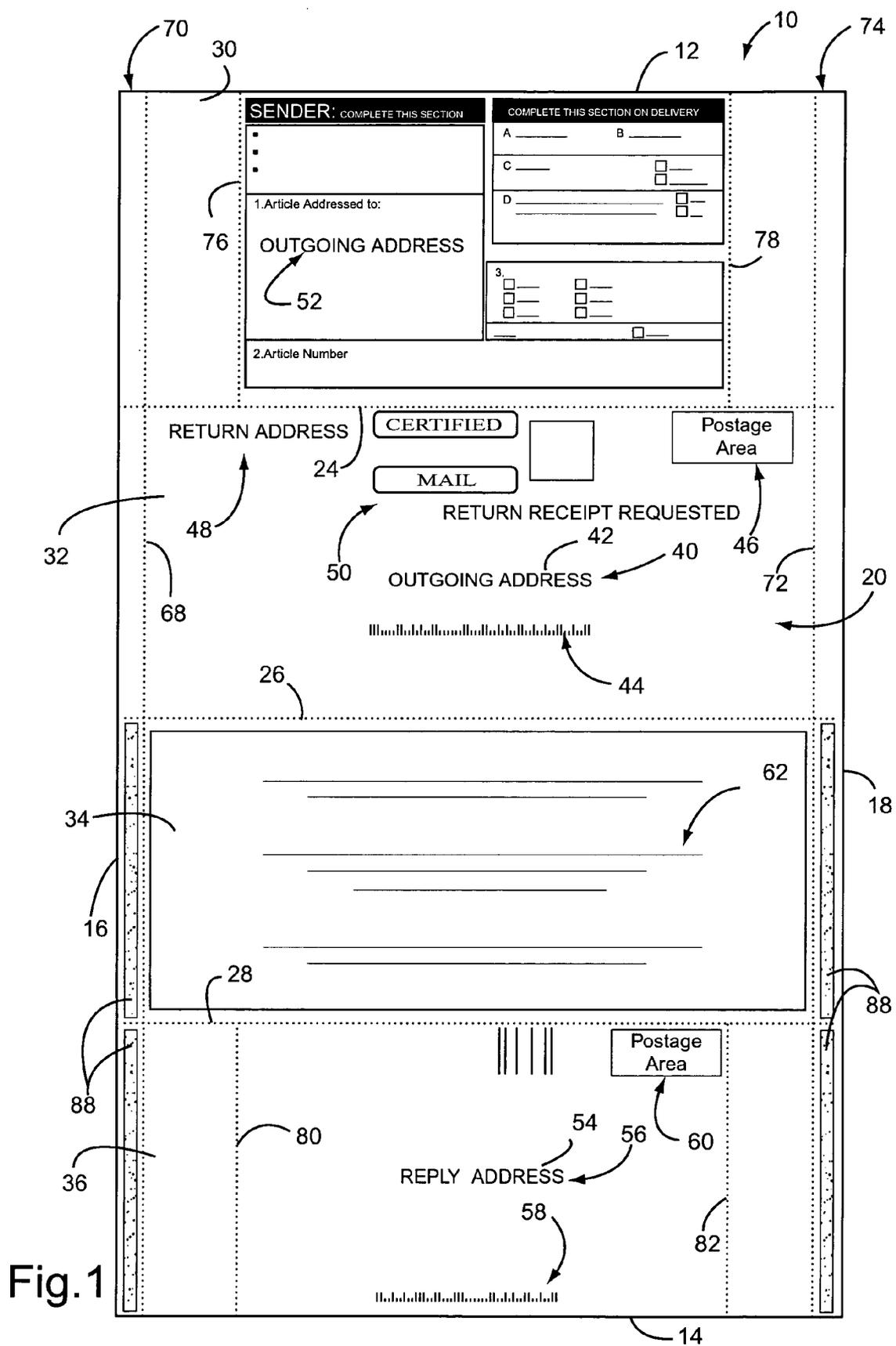
Correspondence Address:  
**NIXON & VANDERHYTE, PC**  
**1100 N GLEBE ROAD**  
**8TH FLOOR**  
**ARLINGTON, VA 22201-4714 (US)**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A mailer with return postcard formed from a single sheet of paper, such as 28# paper, utilizing pressure seal cohesive material. This is accomplished by applying cohesive material in a unique pattern and then folding the sheet of paper into a double V-fold construction.

(21) Appl. No.: **10/610,708**





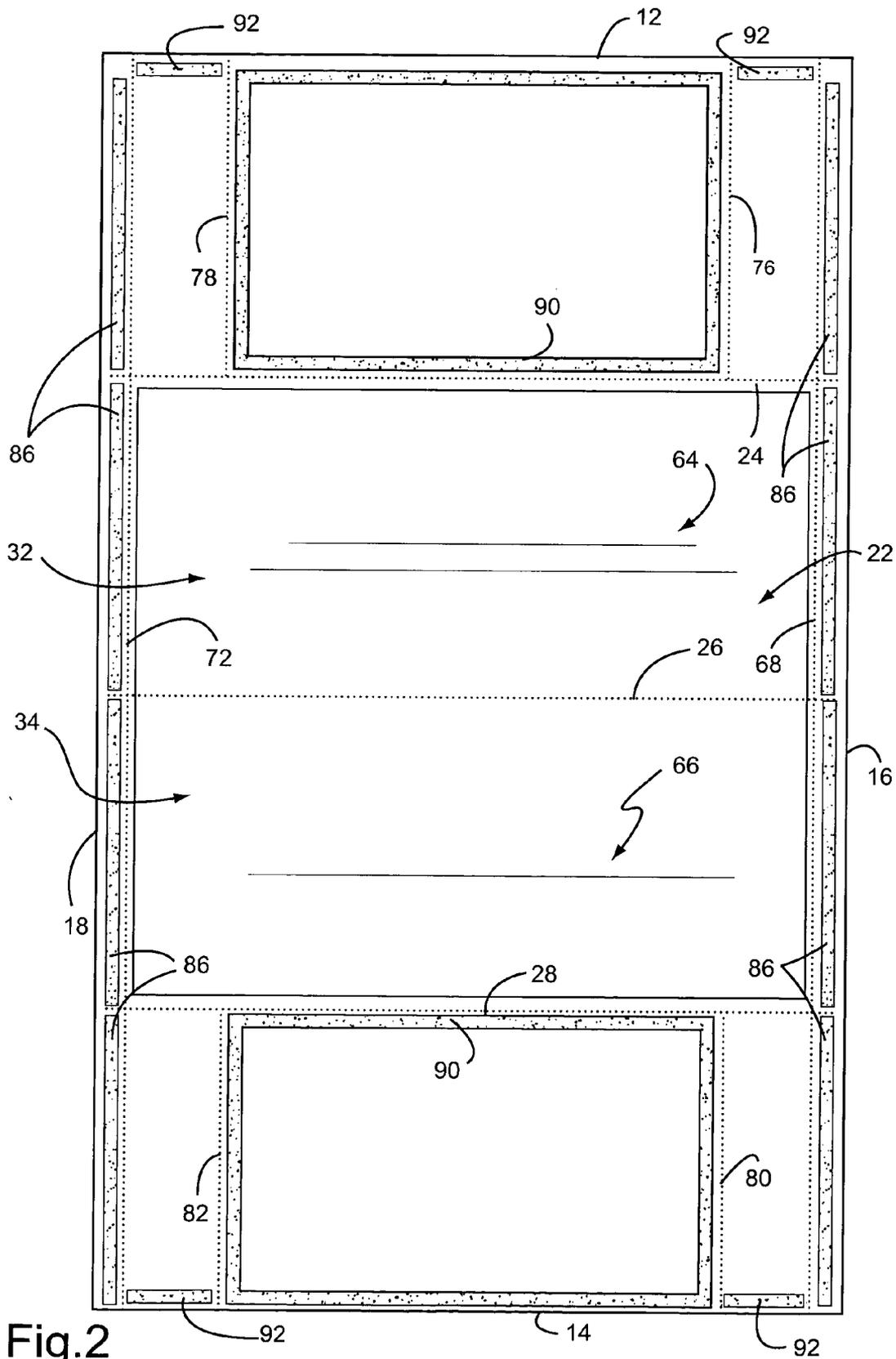


Fig. 2



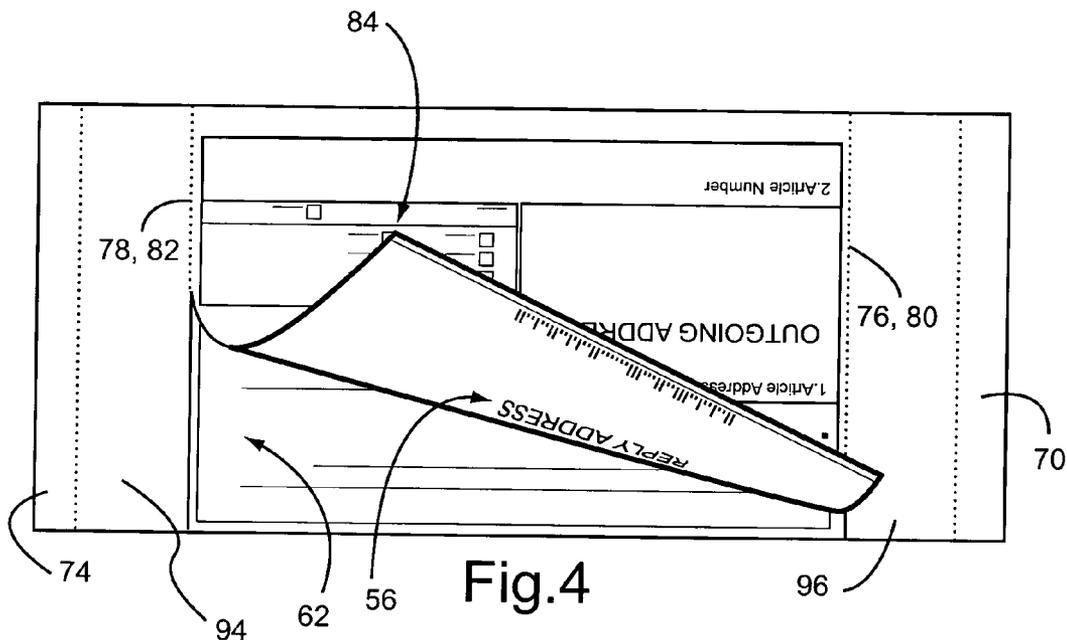


Fig.4

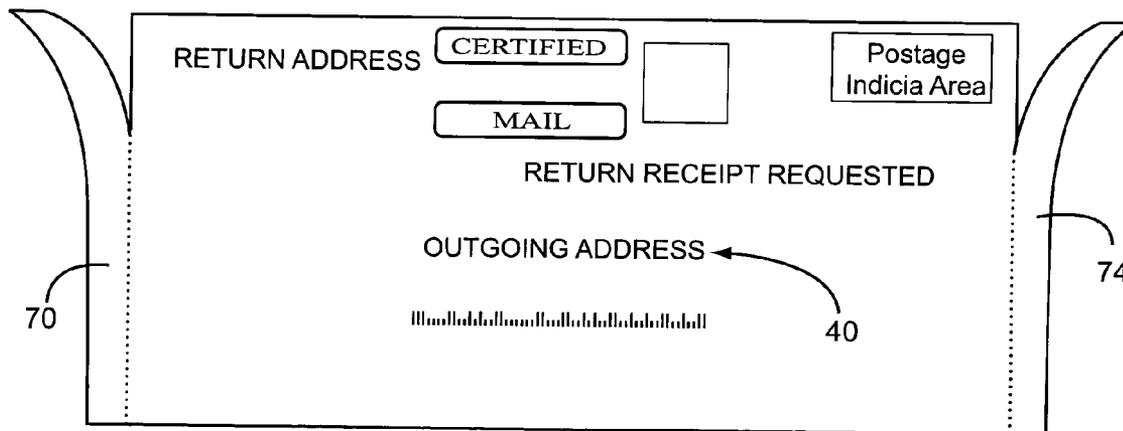


Fig.5

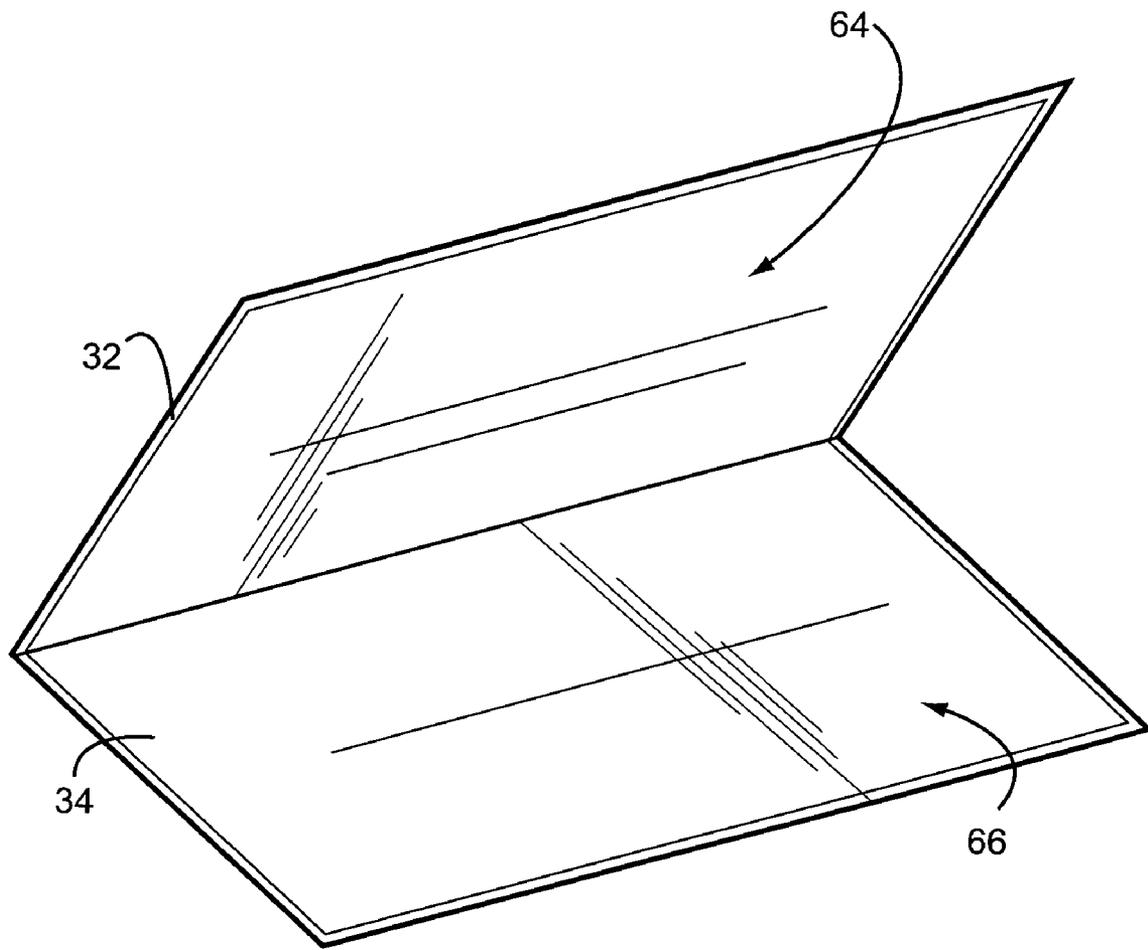


Fig.6

## CERTIFIED MAILER WITH RETURN RECEIPT POSTCARD

### BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0001] Conventional return receipt postcards for certified mail are created from heavy paper stock having a minimum thickness of about 0.007 inches, such as 91# or 100# tag paper stock, to meet the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) minimum thickness requirement for a postcard. Heavy papers are very difficult to process on the most commonly used laser printers (10-50 ppm range) used in business today. Furthermore, conventional laser compatible pressure seal certified mailers require duplex (2-sided) printing which is even more complex when processing heavy weight papers.

[0002] The present invention provides a USPS certified, registered or other mailer with return receipt postcard using a single sheet of paper, for example 28# paper, utilizing pressure seal cohesive material. This is accomplished by applying cohesive material in a unique pattern and then folding the sheet of paper into a double V-fold construction to create the return receipt postcard required by and meeting the requirements of the USPS certified mail, insured mail and registered mail. The invention may also be adapted to create other mailable return postcard such as courtesy or business reply formats.

[0003] Thus, the invention may be embodied in an intermediate for a mailer-type business form, comprising: a quadrate sheet of paper having parallel top and bottom edges, parallel first and second side edges perpendicular to the top edge and first and second faces; at least first, second and third fold lines parallel to said top and bottom edges dividing said sheet into at least first, second, third, and fourth panels, said first and fourth panels being substantially the same size and said second and third panels being substantially the same size; a first line of weakness formed in said first, second, third and fourth panels parallel to and spaced from said first side edge, said first line of weakness defining a tear off strip providing for ready opening of a mailer constructed by folding said sheet about said fold lines; a second line of weakness formed in said first, second, third and fourth panels parallel to and spaced from second side edge, said second line of weakness defining a tear off strip providing for ready opening of a mailer constructed by folding said sheet about said fold lines; first adhesive areas provided at least on the second face of one of said first and fourth panels in said tear off strips, on the second face of at least one of and second and third panels in said tear off strips and on the first face of at least one of said third and fourth panels for holding said second and third panels together said first and fourth panels together and said third and fourth panels together as an outgoing mailer when said sheet is double V-folded about said fold lines; and a second adhesive pattern provided on said second face of at least one of said first and fourth panels to at least peripherally adhere reply card defining, mutually facing portions of the first and fourth panels between said first and second lines of weakness, whereby said reply card portions of said first and fourth panels are permanently adhering to define a reply card when said first through fourth panels are folded along said first through third fold lines to form an outgoing mailer.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0004] These and other objects and advantages of this invention will be more completely understood and appreciated by careful study of the following more detailed description of the presently preferred exemplary embodiments of the invention taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0005] **FIG. 1** is a plan view of a first face of an exemplary intermediate according to the present invention;

[0006] **FIG. 2** is a plan view of the second face of the intermediate of **FIG. 1**;

[0007] **FIG. 3** is a perspective view showing the intermediate of **FIGS. 1 and 2** being folded into a mailer having a return postcard;

[0008] **FIG. 4** is a perspective view showing the removal of the return postcard of the mailer of **FIG. 3** by the postal carrier;

[0009] **FIG. 5** is a perspective view showing the opening of the mailer of **FIG. 3** by the end user; and

[0010] **FIG. 6** is a perspective view showing the open mailer after return postcard removal, revealing additional data if duplex imaging occurred.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0011] An exemplary intermediate for a mailer-type business form having a return postcard is shown generally by reference number **10** in **FIGS. 1 and 2**. It includes a quadrate sheet of substantially opaque paper having parallel top and bottom edges **12,14** and parallel first and second side edges **16,18**, respectively. The side edges are perpendicular to the top edge. The sheet further defines first and second faces **20,22**, **FIGS. 1 and 2**, respectively. First, second and third fold lines **24,26,28** are provided parallel to the top and bottom edges for dividing the sheet into four panels **30,32, 34,36**. The first and fourth panels are substantially equal size and the second and third panels are substantially equal size. According to an exemplary embodiment, as illustrated, all four panels are the same size. This allows finishing the document with simple folding/sealing equipment having only two fold plates; the benefit being lower equipment cost to customers.

[0012] With reference to the presently preferred, illustrated embodiment, the first panel **30** is disposed as the top panel of the form, the second panel **32** is disposed as the second panel of the form, the third panel **34** is disposed as the third panel of the form so that the second panel is between the first and third panels, and the fourth panel **36** is disposed as the bottom panel of the form so that the third panel is between the second and fourth panels.

[0013] In the presently proposed embodiment, where a return postcard formed by the first and fourth panels is adapted to be removed and mailed by, e.g., the postal carrier, fold lines **24** and **28** comprise lines of weakness that facilitate separation of the return postcard formed by the first and fourth panels (as described in greater detail below) from the second and third panels. Fold lines **24** and **28** thus comprise lines of weakness such as perforation lines or die cut lines. Second fold line **26** may also comprise a line of

weakness such as a perforated line or die cut line, or may merely be scored or creased to facilitate folding of the mailer where the mailer is adapted to maintain the second and the third panels attached. As will be apparent below, the invention is not limited to the described series and orientations of panels, except as required by the appended claims.

[0014] The intermediate **10** includes an outgoing address area **40** on the first face of the second panel **32** as required to meet USPS requirements. The outgoing address area is of a size and adapted to receive, e.g., a laser printed address or pre-printed address label. The outgoing address area can include indicia corners or other indicator such as a change in texture, tone or color of the paper to facilitate the determination of the proper location of the outgoing address. Such indicators, however, are not critical to the implementation of the invention. Human readable address indicia such as shown only schematically by indicia **42** in **FIG. 1** is ultimately provided on the intermediate, for example, as it is passed through a printer. Other human or machine readable indicia may also be printed or pre-printed on the first face of the second panel, such as postal address bar coding **44**, indicia for postal stamp application **46** and/or indicia for the sender's return address **48**. Because the intermediate is adapted to form a mailer for certified mail with a return postcard, certified mail indicia **50** is also provided on the first face of the second panel. Where the return postcard is provided for courtesy or business reasons, the certified mailer indicia is omitted or other indicia may be provided in this region of the envelope.

[0015] In the illustrated embodiment, the first face of the first panel is also pre-printed according to the type of return postcard provided. Since the illustrated embodiment provides a certified mail return receipt, printed indicia corresponding to at least a portion of the outgoing address indicia **42** is preferably variably printed on the first face of the first panel as shown at **52**. The first face of the fourth panel is also pre-printed or variably printed to include reply address indicia **54** in a reply address area **56**. Again, the reply address area **56** can include indicia corners or other indicator as described above with reference to the outgoing address area **40** to facilitate the determination of the proper location of the reply address where such indicia is variably printed.

[0016] In the illustrated embodiment, the indicia **52,54** preprinted and variably printed on the first face of the first and/or fourth panels is oriented in the same manner as the outgoing address indicia **42** provided on the first face of the second panel. This facilitates the variable printing process, improving the efficiency and reducing the complexity of processing. It is to be understood, however, that the indicia, particularly on the first face of the first and fourth panels, can be inverted from the orientation shown, if deemed necessary or desirable for effective implementation of the invention. In this regard, as will be understood from a consideration of **FIGS. 1, 2** and **3**, when the intermediate is folded to form a mailer, the indicia provided on the first panel first face will be inverted relative to the indicia provided on the fourth panel first face. If it is preferred to have the indicia on each face of the return postcard commonly oriented, either the indicia on the first face of the first panel or the indicia on the first face of the fourth panel must be inverted so that when the intermediate is folded, the indicia is commonly directed on each face of the postcard.

[0017] In the illustrated embodiment, a human or machine readable indicia may also be printed or pre-printed on the first face of the fourth panel such as postal address bar coding **58** and indicia for postal stamp application and/or prepaid postal permit indicia **60**. As noted above, the indicia on any of the panels noted may be provided upside down relative to the orientation provided in the illustrated embodiment without departing from this invention.

[0018] In the illustrated and presently preferred embodiment, the mailer is adapted so that all imaging or personalization is accomplished on one side of the document in order to minimize the time required to computer print the form. Thus, the area **62** on the first face of the third panel may be reserved as a variable data space when the mailer is adapted to carry semi-confidential information and to be simplex printed. In this regard, when the mailer is formed (**FIG. 3**), the mailer will not be completely sealed along the bottom edge defined between the top edge of the first face of the third panel (at fold line **28**) and the bottom edge **14** of the first face of the fourth panel, so that only non-confidential or semi-confidential information should be included at **62** on the first face of the third panel. If the intermediate is duplexed printed, then the areas **64,66** defined by the second faces of the second and third panels **32,34** may be variably printed with additional confidential data as this space is fully enclosed and sealed when the mailer is formed.

[0019] A first line of weakness **68** is formed in the first through fourth panels parallel to and spaced from the first side edge **16**. The first line of weakness defines a tear off strip **70** (**FIGS. 4-5**) provided for readily opening one side of a mailer constructed by double V-folding the intermediate about fold lines **24,26** and **28**, as shown in **FIG. 3**. A second line of weakness **72** is further formed in the first through fourth panels parallel to and spaced from the second side edge **18**. The second line of weakness defines a tear off strip **74** provided for ready opening of the other side of the mailer constructed by double V-folding the intermediate about fold lines **24-28**.

[0020] In the illustrated embodiment, the first and fourth panels are adapted to together define a return postcard. To this end, at least a portion of the first panel is adhered to at least a portion of the fourth panel so that the mutually attached portions of the first and fourth panels each comprise one ply or layer of the postcard. While the entire panel area between lines of weakness **68,70** may define a reply card/mailer, in general this panel area will be larger than a postcard, so that at least one line of weakness is preferably provided in each of the first and fourth panels to provide a truncated panel portion as a reply postcard. Thus, in a preferred embodiment, at least one third line of weakness **76,78** is formed in the first panel parallel to and spaced from the first and second side edges **16,18** and at least one fourth line of weakness **80,82** is formed in the fourth panel parallel to and spaced from the first and second side edges **16,18** to define a return postcard **84** having a width less than the width of the mailer between lines of weakness **68** and **72**. In the illustrated embodiment, the postcard **84** is centered with respect to the mailer so that there are two third lines of weakness **76** and **78**. In the alternative the postcard may be right or left justified so that one ply or layer of the postcard is defined between one third line of weakness **78** or **76** and one of the lines of weakness **68** or **72**, respectively, and the other ply or layer of the postcard is defined between one

fourth line of weakness **82** or **80** and one of the lines of weakness **68** or **72**, respectively.

[0021] The intermediate further comprises a first plurality of adhesive patterns provided along at least some of the edges of the panels for holding the first through fourth panels together in the outgoing mailer configuration when the sheet is double V-folded about fold lines **24,26,28**, as illustrated in **FIG. 3**. In the illustrated embodiment, the first adhesive patterns include elongated strips **86** provided on the second face of the first and/or fourth panels and on the second face of the second and/or third panels in tear off strips **70,74**. The first plurality of adhesive patterns further include elongated strips **88** provided on the first face of the third and/or fourth panels in the tear off strips **70,74** to hold the third and fourth panels in opposed facing relation in the folded configuration. As illustrated, the first adhesive patterns may also include adhesive strip(s) **92** on the second face of the first panel and/or the second face of the fourth panel adjacent the top and bottom edges, respectively, of the intermediate, between the at least one third line of weakness **76, 78** and the adjacent line of weakness **68, 72** and between the at least one fourth line of weakness **80,82** and the adjacent line of weakness **68, 72**.

[0022] The adhesive patterns preferably also include a second plurality of adhesive patterns for forming the return postcard from the first and fourth panels. In the illustrated embodiment, the second plurality of adhesive patterns comprise adhesive strips **90** provided around the perimeter of at least one of the postcard parts defined by lines of weakness **76,78,80,82** (and/or **68, 70** if the postcard is right or left justified), fold lines **24,28** and the top and bottom edges **12,14** of the intermediate. Where cohesive is provided, such patterns **90** are provided on the second face of each of the first and fourth panels as in the illustrated embodiment. It is to be understood that as an alternative to or in addition to strips about the perimeter of the formed card, adhesive may be provided within said perimeter.

[0023] Preferably the adhesive **86,88** holding the intermediate in the double V-fold mailer configuration is of substantially permanent adhesive that is defined by pressure seal adhesive or cohesive for sealing the mailer upon folding and the application of suitable pressure to the adhesive region. In the alternative, however, the adhesive may be re-wettable adhesive, or a pressure sensitive adhesive covered by a release strip. Also, rather than continuous elements, the adhesive may be provided as discontinuous (segmented cohesive pattern) elements and/or in a pattern, shape or density other than that shown. Thus, the adhesive areas **86,88** may take any configuration including dash lines, discontinuous dot configurations and the like. However, it is preferred that the amount and spacing of such adhesive material be at least sufficient to allow the mailer to be processed by U.S. Postal Service automated systems. Furthermore, the second adhesive areas **90** for defining the return postcard are preferably substantially continuous to preclude delamination of the return postcard.

[0024] Although not shown, detachable tractor drive strips may be provided for the intermediate during processing. These strips are conventional for facilitating handling of the intermediate for printing or the like during manufacture of the mailer. The strips are typically provided where the intermediate is in continuous form so that the top and bottom

edges are lines or weakness between longitudinally adjacent intermediates. During normal processing, such strips (not shown) are slit off at an appropriate stage to define the side edges **16,18**. In constructing the mailer, after the intermediate is detached from the adjacent intermediate(s) continuously printed therewith (if any), and after slitting of any tractor drive strips (if provided), the intermediate is double V-folded as illustrated in **FIG. 3**, typically by conventional folding equipment, and then run through a suitable sealing machine (typically conventional equipment, either heat sealing or pressure sealing having only two folding plates) for activating the first and second adhesive patterns. Typically, the intermediate shown in **FIGS. 1 and 2** has a length between top and bottom edges of about 14 inches to produce a standard size envelope following double V-folding.

[0025] When the outgoing addressee receives the mailer, the mailer is then comprised of first, second and third plys or panels with the third ply being defined by the adhered first and fourth panels **30, 36** that comprise the return postcard **84**, with the second or bottom face of the second panel **32** in face to face relation with the second or bottom face of the third panel **34**, and further with the first or top face of the third panel **34** in face to face relation with the first or top face of the fourth panel **36**.

[0026] The return postcard can easily be removed as illustrated in **FIG. 4** by disrupting the postcard along its edges as defined by line(s) of weakness **78,82** and/or along lines of weakness **76,80** (and/or along lines of weakness **68, 70** if the postcard is right or left justified). Once the postcard **84** has been separated along its side edges, it can be removed from the mailer by tearing along lines of weakness **24,28**. In the event the reply postcard **84** is not to be immediately removed or is a courtesy or business reply card, as opposed to a return receipt, the mailer may be opened before or after detachment of the postcard by tearing off tear-off strips **70,74** and then tearing along lines of weakness **24,28**. Unfolding the second and third panels **32,34** will then reveal any information duplex printed in areas **64,66** on the second or bottom face of the intermediate, as shown in **FIG. 6**. Any information printed in area **62** on the first face of the third panel is also revealed by lifting and/or removing the first and fourth panels, e.g., by tearing along lines **24,28**. The postcard **84** may be then be detached and mailed as desired by removing the side edge panel(s) **94,96** defined by the lines of weakness **76,80; 78,82**.

[0027] As is apparent from the foregoing, in an embodiment of the invention, all laser imaging can be in the same orientation for efficient processing without complex software to rotate image within a page. Furthermore, the printed document can be finished using folding/sealing equipment having only two folding plates, thereby reducing the cost of processing equipment required by the customer.

[0028] While the invention has been described in connection with what is presently considered to be the most practical and preferred embodiment, it is to be understood that the invention is not to be limited to the disclosed embodiment, but on the contrary, is intended to cover various modifications and equivalent arrangements included within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. An intermediate for a mailer-type business form, comprising:

a quadrature sheet of paper having parallel top and bottom edges, parallel first and second side edges perpendicular to the top edge and first and second faces;

at least first, second and third fold lines parallel to said top and bottom edges dividing said sheet into at least first, second, third, and fourth panels, said first and fourth panels being substantially the same size and said second and third panels being substantially the same size;

a first line of weakness formed in said first, second, third and fourth panels parallel to and spaced from said first side edge, said first line of weakness defining a tear off strip providing for ready opening of a mailer constructed by folding said sheet about said fold lines;

a second line of weakness formed in said first, second, third and fourth panels parallel to and spaced from second side edge, said second line of weakness defining a tear off strip providing for ready opening of a mailer constructed by folding said sheet about said fold lines;

first adhesive areas provided at least on the second face of one of said first and fourth panels in said tear off strips, on the second face of at least one of said second and third panels in said tear off strips and on the first face of at least one of said third and fourth panels for holding said second and third panels together said first and fourth panels together and said third and fourth panels together as an outgoing mailer when said sheet is double V-folded about said fold lines; and

a second adhesive pattern provided on said second face of at least one of said first and fourth panels to at least peripherally adhere reply card defining, mutually facing portions of the first and fourth panels between said first and second lines of weakness, whereby said reply card portions of said first and fourth panels are permanently adhering to define a reply card when said first through fourth panels are folded along said first through third fold lines to form an outgoing mailer.

2. An intermediate for a mailer-type business form as in claim 1, further comprising at least one third line of weakness in said first panel between said first and second lines of weakness and at least one fourth line of weakness in said fourth panel between said first and second lines of weakness to define reply card portions having at least one dimension less than the corresponding dimension of the respective panel.

3. An intermediate for a mailer-type business form as in claim 2, wherein said third and fourth lines of weakness are parallel to said first and second lines of weakness.

4. An intermediate for a mailer-type business form as in claim 3, wherein there are at least two third lines of weakness and at least two fourth lines of weakness so that the reply card is spaced from each of said first and second lines of weakness in first and fourth panels.

5. An intermediate for a mailer-type business form as in claim 1, wherein the second adhesive area is provided about a periphery of said reply card portions.

6. An intermediate for a mailer-type business form as in claim 1, further comprising an outgoing address area defined on said first face of said second panel, said outgoing address area being spaced from said first and second lines of weakness.

7. An intermediate for a mailer-type business form as in claim 1, further comprising certified mail indicia on said first face of said second panel.

8. An intermediate for a mailer-type business form as in claim 1, further comprising a reply address area defined on said first face of one of said first and fourth panels, said reply address area being defined in said reply card portion of said fourth panel.

9. An intermediate for a mailer-type business form as in claim 6, further comprising an outgoing address area defined on said first face of said first panel in said reply card portion of said first panel.

10. A folded mailer including an integral two-ply reply mail piece which is detachable from said mailer without opening said mailer, said mailer comprising:

a quadrature sheet of paper having parallel top and bottom edges, parallel first and second side edges perpendicular to the top edge and first and second faces;

at least first, second and third fold lines parallel to said top and bottom edges dividing said sheet into at least first, second, third, and fourth panels, said first and fourth panels being substantially the same size and said second and third panels being substantially the same size;

a first line of weakness formed in said first, second, third and fourth panels parallel to and spaced from said first side edge, said first line of weakness defining a tear off strip providing for ready opening of a mailer constructed by folding said sheet about said fold lines;

a second line of weakness formed in said first, second, third and fourth panels parallel to and spaced from second side edge, said second line of weakness defining a tear off strip providing for ready opening of a mailer constructed by folding said sheet about said fold lines;

first adhesive areas provided at least on the second face of one of said first and fourth panels in said tear off strips, on the second face of at least one of said second and third panels in said tear off strips and on the first face of at least one of said third and fourth panels for holding said second and third panels together said first and fourth panels together and said third and fourth panels together as an outgoing mailer when said sheet is double V-folded about said fold lines; and

a second adhesive pattern provided on said second face of at least one of said first and fourth panels to at least peripherally adhere reply card defining, mutually facing portions of the first and fourth panels between said first and second lines of weakness, whereby said reply card portions of said first and fourth panels are permanently adhering to define a reply card when said first through fourth panels are folded along said first through third fold lines to form an outgoing mailer, said sheet being folded such that (1) said second surfaces of said first and fourth panels lie in contact and are adhered together by said second adhesive pattern to form said two-ply reply mail piece, and (2) said second surfaces of said second and third panels lie in contact and are

adhered together by said first adhesive pattern and said first surfaces of said third and fourth panels lie in contact and are adhered together by said first adhesive pattern.

**11.** A folded mailer as in claim 10, wherein said reply mail piece is a two-ply card.

**12.** A folded mailer as in claim 10, further including at least one line of weakness provided in at least one of said first and fourth panels, thereby defining a truncated reply mail piece.

**13.** A folded mailer as in claim 10, wherein said first and second adhesive patterns are pressure activatable adhesives.

**14.** A folded mailer **10**, further comprising at least one adhesive area defined on the second face of the first panel and/or the second face of the fourth panel, the at least one further adhesive strip being defined generally parallel to said first/top and bottom edges of said sheet and being defined intermediate said third/fourth lines of weakness and said first/second lines of weakness.

\* \* \* \* \*