



- (51) International Patent Classification:
A47B 95/02 (2006.01)
- (21) International Application Number:
PCT/US2014/044473
- (22) International Filing Date:
27 June 2014 (27.06.2014)
- (25) Filing Language: English
- (26) Publication Language: English
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ford, CT 06901 (US).
- (81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every
kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM,
AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BN, BR, BW, BY,
BZ, CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM,

DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT,
HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IR, IS, JP, KE, KG, KN, KP, KR,
KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME,
MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ,
OM, PA, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, QA, RO, RS, RU, RW, SA,
SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TH, TJ, TM,
TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM,
ZW.

- (84) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every
kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH,
GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, RW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ,
UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, RU, TJ,
TM), European (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK,
EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV,
MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM,
TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW,
KM, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

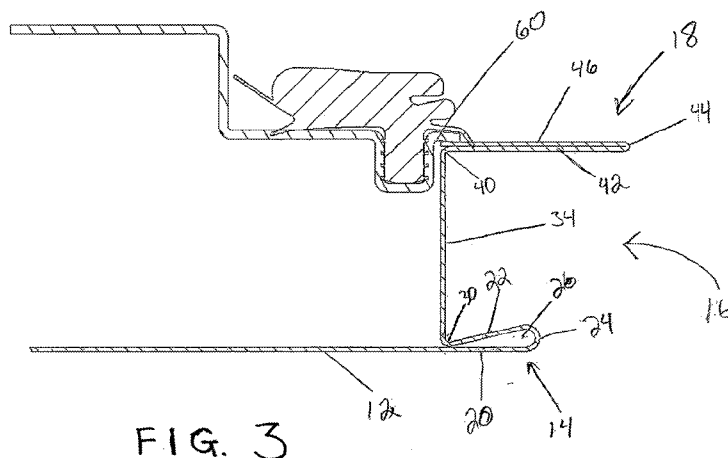
Declarations under Rule 4.17:

— of inventorship (Rule 4.17(iv))

Published:

— with international search report (Art. 21(3))

(54) Title: INTEGRATED DOOR/DRAWER HANDLE



(57) Abstract: The present disclosure provides a single piece sheet metal design incorporating two individual hem bend configurations forming the door/drawer front, a functional door/drawer handle, and a gasket protecting barrier. Because the front and handle are one integrated piece, there is nothing to be exposed to the dangers of a busy kitchen, and cleaning becomes much easier from a user maintenance standpoint.

INTEGRATED DOOR/DRAWER HANDLE

BACKGROUND OF THE DISCLOSURE

1. Field of the Disclosure

[0001] The present disclosure relates to an assembly having a handle integrated into a front panel of door or drawer.

2. Field of the Related Art

[0002] Typical foodservice door or drawer assemblies require additional components to achieve a "handle" for opening, closing, or generally changing the position of the door or drawer. These handles can vary from simple plastic or other non-steel components snapped into a door or drawer front panel or others purchased or formed and secured to the door or drawer front panel by mechanical fasteners or welding.

[0003] Typical handles in the food service industry have recesses, corners, coves, or similar crevasses to clean. Silicone may be required to close these areas and over time re-applying silicone is required. Commonly, this is neglected or forgotten about and does not happen, so food particles become lodged in the areas. Over time, these food particles begin to decompose and create sanitary risks.

[0004] Typical handle designs are vulnerable to a high probability of breakage. For example, carts that are pushed through a restaurant kitchen can collide with protruding handles or crush flush plastic handles.

[0005] Additionally, some handle designs provide a less than adequate gripping capability. Handle position, i.e., height above the floor, as well as depth of gripping area are both causes for this. Doors with handles of less gripping capability may require an "eagle claw" gripping method to open a door. Exposed door gaskets in this gripping area are frequently damaged, or at minimum soiled and require additional cleaning.

[0006] Accordingly, there is a need for a handle which overcomes the deficiencies of conventional handle designs.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT DISCLOSURE

[0007] The present disclosure provides an assembly having a handle integrated into a front panel or door which eliminates the need for additional parts and purchased components. Because the front panel and handle are one integrated piece, there is nothing to be exposed to the dangers of a busy kitchen, such as injury to a person or damage to the handle.

[0008] The present disclosure provides an assembly having a handle integrated into a front panel which makes cleaning easier and eliminates the possibility of food particles and other debris from becoming lodged in seams and crevices. Cleaning the front panel and handle becomes much easier from a user maintenance standpoint, especially when used in busy environments with high levels of activity.

[0009] The present disclosure provides an assembly having a flat continuous front surface which can be easily wiped clean and a "U" shaped continuous trough

which is open at both ends and easily wipeable. Both areas can utilize the same type of restaurant equipment cleaner.

[0010] The present disclosure provides an assembly having a handle integrated into a front panel with a recessed gripping area suitable for any person, no matter the person's size because a comfortable grip location can be found anywhere along the entire length of the integrated door/drawer handle.

[0011] Wet foam insulation leakage, which is a manufacturing complication, is lessened by the assembly of the present disclosure. Eliminating seams in the front assembly eliminate possible areas for foam to escape during the insulation process. Leaked wet foam adheres and hardens to the front exterior and requires additional time for removal.

[0012] The present disclosure also provides for a rear closed hem of the handle that affords gasket protection. The gasket is further protected from hands as well as protection from foreign matter spilled or spattered on the front of the hem. As used herein, a hem is the result of folding metal back on itself. Hemming is a bending operation that bends and folds an edge of sheet metal back upon itself. Hemming conceals the sharp edge of sheet metal.

[0013] The present disclosure provides for an integrated door/drawer and handle that is symmetrical about either a horizontal or vertical axis. Thus, the door/drawer is capable of being mounted to a fixture such that it can be opened left, right, up, or down.

[0014] An assembly having a handle integrated into a front panel of door or drawer is constructed from a single piece of sheet metal and has a front panel, a handle, a trough, and a gasket barrier. The handle is formed by a tear drop hem. The gasket barrier is formed by a closed hem. The trough is formed by the area between the handle and the gasket barrier.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] Figure 1 is a top down perspective view of the integrated door and handle assembly of the present disclosure.

[0016] Figure 1a is a detail view of the integrated door and handle of Figure 1.

[0017] Figure 2 is bottom up perspective view of the integrated door and handle of Figure 1.

[0018] Figure 2a is a detail view of the integrated door and handle as shown in Figure 2.

[0019] Figure 3 is top down cross sectional view of the integrated door and handle of Figure 1.

[0020] Figure 4 is a perspective view of a pair of integrated door and handle assemblies shown in a food service cabinet.

[0021] Figure 5 is a perspective view of a pair of integrated door and handle assemblies shown in another food service cabinet.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0022] Referring to the drawings and, in particular, Figures 1-3, there is shown a door or drawer assembly with an integrated handle generally represented by reference numeral 10.

[0023] Assembly 10 is formed from a single sheet of metal. Assembly 10 has a front panel 12, a handle 14, a trough 16, and a gasket barrier 18. Front panel 12 is flat.

[0024] Handle 14 has a front surface 20, a rear surface 22, and is formed by a tear drop hem 24, creating opening 26. Surface 20 is coplanar and thus flush with front panel 12. Surface 22 contacts the rear of front panel 12 at a bend 30.

[0025] Trough 16 is generally "U" shaped and formed between handle 14 and gasket barrier 18, by bends 30 and 40. Trough 16 is has a surface 34 extending from bend 30 and away from front panel 12.

[0026] Gasket barrier 18 has a front side 42 formed at bend 40 and rear side 46. Gasket barrier 18 extends from a bend 40 and is formed by a closed hem 44. Front side 42 and rear side 46 are generally parallel.

[0027] In a closed position, i.e. the door or drawer assembly being shut, gasket barrier 18 forms a seal with gasket 60.

[0028] Surface 34 is generally perpendicular to front panel 12.

[0029] Gasket barrier 18 can be parallel to front panel 12.

[0030] Handle 14 can have a texture (not shown), preferably on surface 22.

Advantageously, a textured surface increases gripability and reduces slippage of a user's hand(s) when the handle is wet or moist.

[0031] The texture can be formed of a series of ridges that are preferably parallel to the length of tear drop hem 24. Alternatively, the texture can be ridges perpendicular to the length of tear drop hem 24 or cross hatched ridges. The texture can also be a sandpaper-like texture.

[0032] Texturizing, or applying the texture can be achieved by grinding, etching, laser, and the like.

[0033] The texture can be etched onto the surface for the metal. Alternatively, handle 14 can have a textured strip adhered to the interior of the handle. Such a strip can be, for example plastic, or metal. The strip is preferably waterproof and/or resistant to movement or dislocation once applied to the interior of the handle. The material for the textured strip is optionally anti-microbial to reduce the transmission of bacteria among users and prevent bacteria and fungus from growing on the surface and/or spreading to other surfaces.

[0034] Handle 14 is between 0.25 and 2 inches wide, or at least large enough for a user to grip the handle. Front side 42 of gasket barrier 18 is dimensioned between 0.75 and 3 inches, preferable between 1 and 1.3 inches, and most preferably about 1.15 inches. Surface 20 and rear side 46 are spaced apart by between 1 and 3 inches, preferably between 1.5 and 2 inches, and most preferably about 1.75 inches.

[0035] In a preferred embodiment, handle 14 is uniform in cross-section and extends substantially the length of the door/drawer.

[0036] A method for forming Assembly 10 is as follows. A single sheet of metal is selected. A first bending forms tear drop hem 24 with surface 20 coplanar to front panel 12 and a surface 22, yielding front panel 12 and handle 14. A second bending at bend 30 creates surface 34. An outside surface of bend 30 can contact an inside surface of front panel 12. A third bending at bend 40 creates surface 42, yielding trough 16. A fourth bending forms closed hem 44, yielding gasket barrier 18 and surface 46.

[0037] Referring to Figure 3, another method for forming Assembly 10 can be as follows. A first 135 degree bend is made at 44 (i.e., closed hem 44). An 88 degree bend is made at 40 (i.e., bend 30). A second 135 degree bend is made at 24 (i.e., tear drop hem 24). A 30 degree bend is made at 44 (i.e., closed hem 44). The first 135 degree bend is flattened to finish tear drop hem 24. The second 135 degree bend is flattened to finish closed hem 44. A 90 degree bend is made at 30 (i.e., bend 30).

[0038] Assembly 10 can be made of steel, stainless steel, aluminum, copper, zinc, or the like. Assembly 10 should be made of a material that is easy to keep clean and sanitary.

[0039] Advantageously, using stainless steel is generally low maintenance and will prevent assembly 10 from readily corroding, rusting, or staining from water over time. Stainless steel is generally highly resistant to acids and bases. Further, stainless steel is a relatively poor conductor of electricity.

[0040] Stainless steel can be easily cleaned with a soft cloth and water, mild detergent, and even glass cleaner.

[0041] The steel gauge of assembly 10 can be 8–28 gauge, while most preferably 22 gauge.

[0042] As shown in Figures 2 and 2a, assembly 10 can further include panels 50 and 55, each formed by additional bends 52 and 54 in front panel 12. Panels 50 and 55 can have holes for mounting hardware such as bracket 80, by which assembly 10 can be mounted to a cabinet, drawer, or other structure requiring a door or front drawer panel. A hollow cavity 65 behind front panel 12 is formed.

[0043] Referring now to Figure 5, there are shown two assemblies 10 and handles 14 in a closed position mounted to a typical food services cabinet 100.

[0044] The integrated door/drawer and handle of the present disclosure can be adapted to fit a typical cabinet construction and can be used in a side by side double door arrangement. For example, in a closed position, the gasket barrier of each door forms a boundary or is substantially adjacent with the other. The handles meet each other in the center of the cabinet. Thus the doors can swing and create a single opening.

[0045] Referring now to Figure 6, a preferred embodiment is shown wherein front panel 12 rests flush with a cabinet frame having a border 90. Border 90 can have a top portion (not shown), bottom portion 93, and/or side portions 95 and 96.

[0046] Preferably, border 90 has at least a first and second fixed member 91 and 92, each with a first and second front face 95 and 96.

[0047] Front panel 12 can fit flush between first and second fixed members 95 and 96, while a countertop surface 98 extends over the opening in a frontward direction. Thus, the front of the cabinet, i.e., the first front face, second front face, and front panel, is in a single plane with a gap 99 between the handle and the second front face, allowing a user to grip the handle. The gasket barrier 18 rests flush with the second fixed member.

[0048] The techniques described herein are exemplary, and should not be construed as implying any particular limitation on the present disclosure. It should be understood that various alternatives, combinations, and modifications could be devised by those skilled in the art from the present disclosure. For example, steps associated with the processes or methods described herein can be performed in any order, unless otherwise specified or dictated by the steps themselves. The present disclosure is intended to embrace all such alternatives, modifications, and variances that fall within the scope of the appended claims.

IT IS CLAIMED

1. An integrated door/drawer and handle comprising:
 - a first side wall having a first end portion and a second end portion;
 - a second side wall having a first end portion and a second end portion;
 - wherein said first and second side walls are disposed substantially adjacent to one another and disposed apart from one another by a thickness;
 - wherein said first end portions of each of said first side wall and said second side wall are substantially adjacent to one another; and
 - wherein said second end portion of said first side wall terminates or protrudes beyond said second end portion of said second side wall, thereby forming a handle therebetween.
2. The integrated door/drawer and handle of claim 1, wherein said second end portion is formed by a closed hem.
3. The integrated door/drawer and handle of claim 1, wherein said first end portion is formed by a teardrop hem.
4. The integrated door/drawer and handle of claim 1, wherein the thickness is larger enough for a user's fingers to fit therein.
5. The integrated door/drawer and handle of claim 1, wherein said handle is a continuous surface along a length of the integrated door/drawer and handle.

6. The integrated door/drawer and handle of claim 1, wherein the first side wall further comprises a surface that is continuous along a length of the integrated door/drawer and handle.
7. The integrated door/drawer and handle of claim 1, wherein the integrated door/drawer and handle is formed from a single sheet of stainless steel.
8. The integrated door/drawer and handle of claim 1, wherein the handle comprises a texture.
9. The integrated door/drawer and handle of claim 8, wherein said texture is etched into a surface of the handle.
10. The integrated door/drawer and handle of claim 8, wherein said texture is a plurality of ridges parallel to said tear drop hem.
11. The integrated door/drawer and handle of claim 8, wherein said texture is a plurality of crosshatches.
12. The integrated door/drawer and handle of claim 8, wherein said texture is a gripable material adhered to a surface of the handle.
13. The integrated door/drawer and handle of claim 12, wherein said gripable material further comprises an anti-microbial coating.

14. A method for forming a door and/or drawer assembly with an integrated handle comprising:

selecting a single sheet panel, wherein said single sheet panel has a front panel surface;

first bending said front panel surface to form first hem thus yielding a handle having an interior handle surface and outer handle surface; wherein said outer handle surface is coplanar to said front panel surface;

second bending said interior handle surface thus yielding a trough surface;

third bending said trough surface thus yielding an interior gasket barrier surface; and

fourth bending said interior gasket barrier surface with a second hem, thus yielding a gasket barrier.

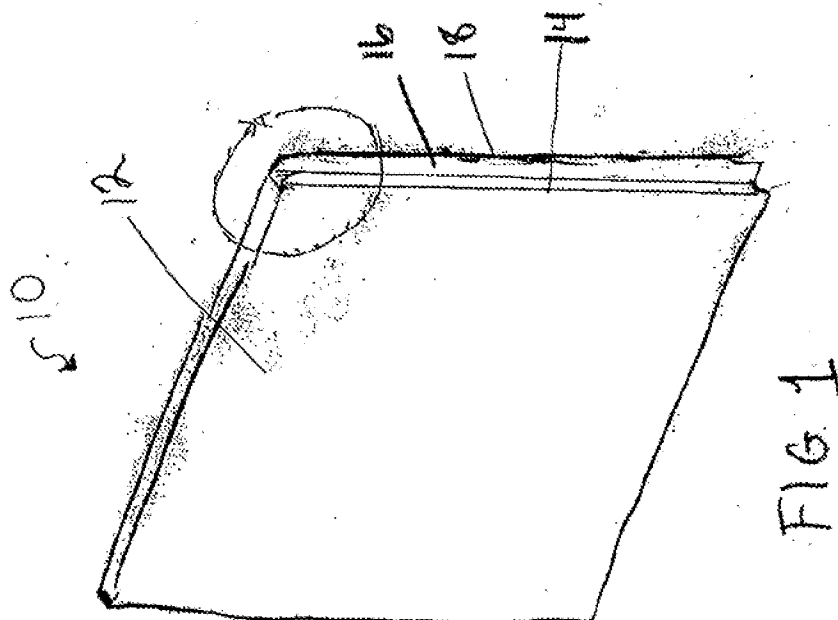
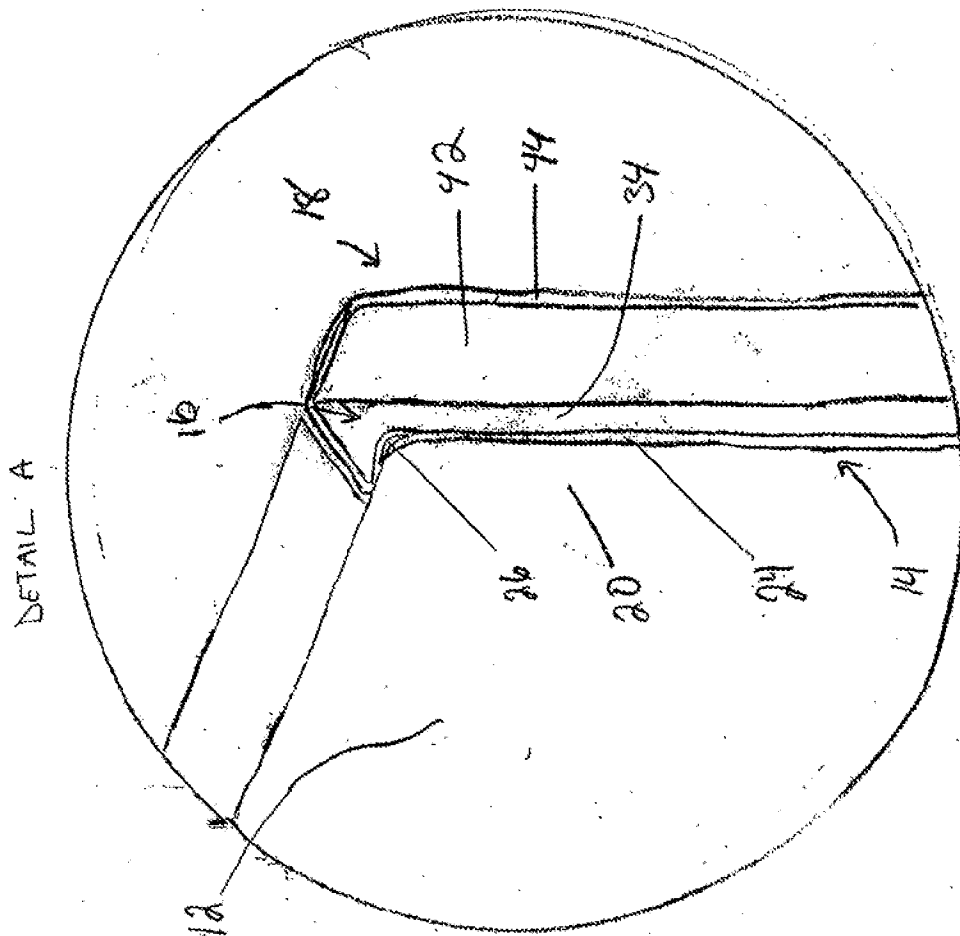
15. The method of claim 14, wherein said first hem is a teardrop hem.

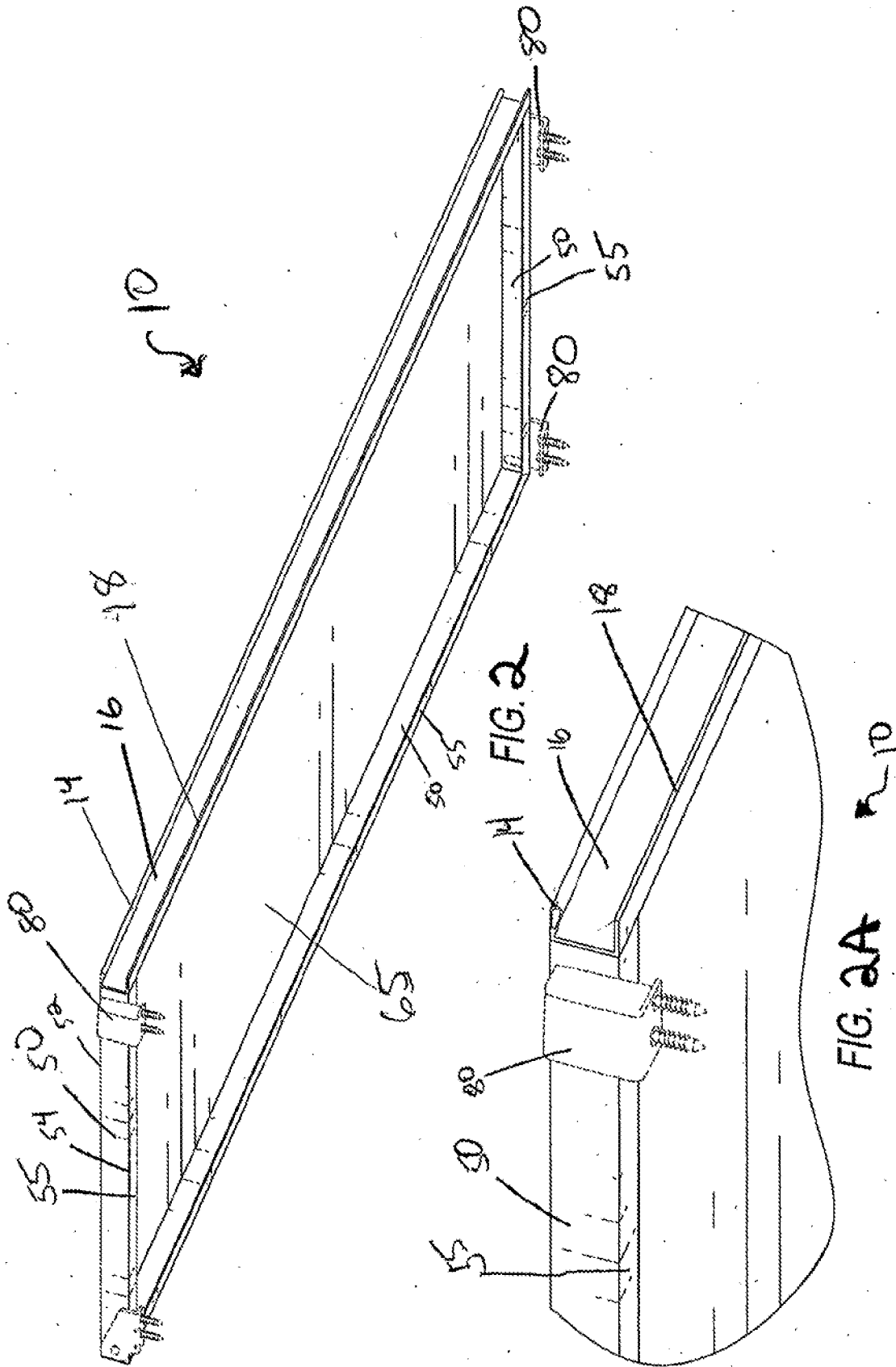
16. The method of claim 14, wherein said second hem is a closed hem.

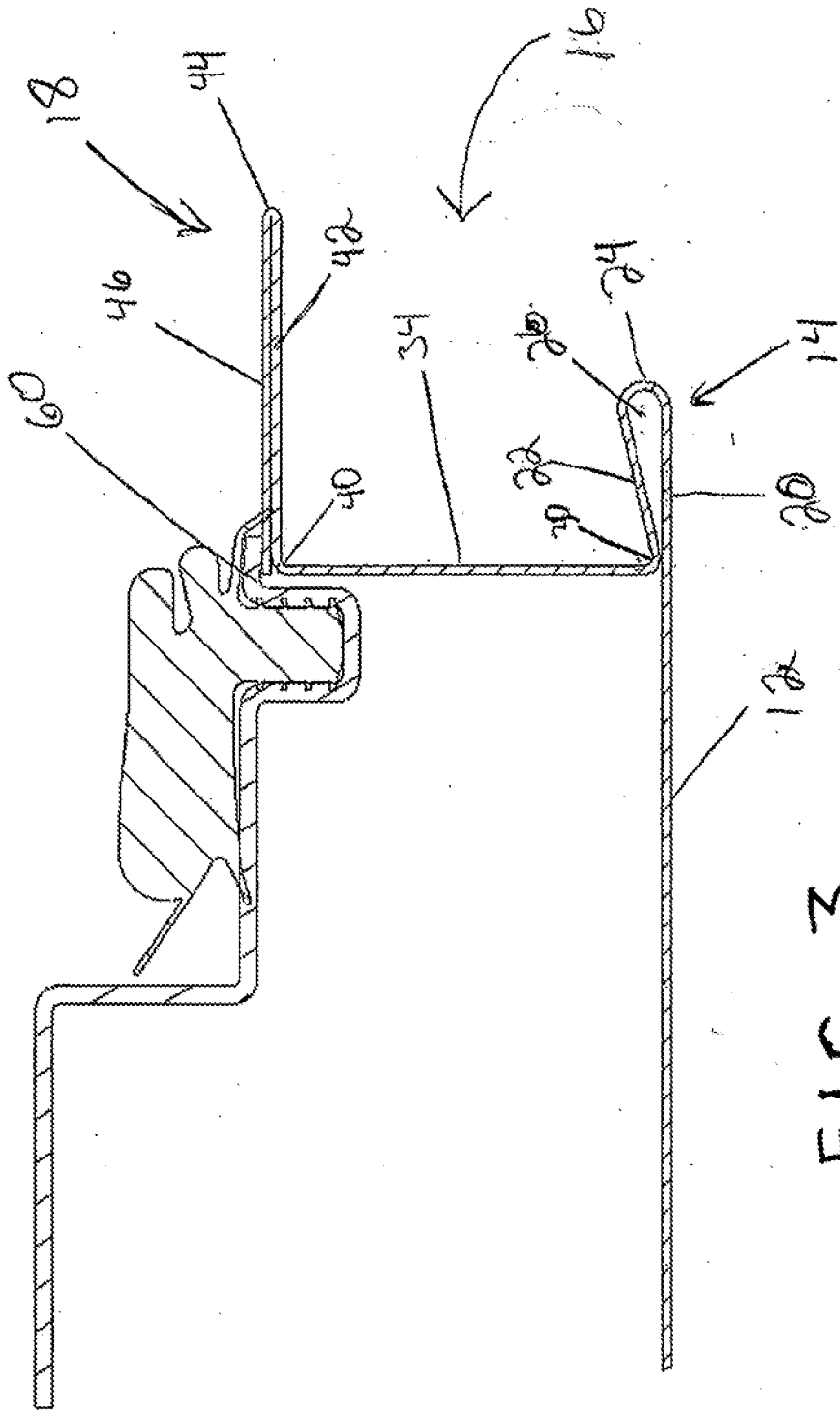
17. The method of claim 14, further comprising: applying a textured adhesive strip to said interior handle surface, wherein said interior handle surface is opposite the front panel.

18. The method of claim 14, further comprising: texturizing said interior handle surface, wherein said interior handle surface is opposite the front panel.

19. The method of claim 14, wherein said sheet panel is stainless steel.
20. A cabinet assembly comprising:
- an opening defined by a first fixed member having a first front face and a second fixed member having a second front face, wherein said first and second front face are coplanar; and
 - a front panel comprising
 - an outer surface and inner surface disposed in offset planes by a partition surface;
 - wherein said partition surface is substantially perpendicular to said outer surface and said inner surface; and
 - a handle surface proximate to said outer surface and disposed between said outer surface and said inner surface;
 - wherein said inner surface is longer than said handle surface,
 - wherein said outer surface forms said front panel
 - wherein said front panel is adapted to be mounted to the cabinet to be positioned in said opening, wherein said outer surface is coplanar to said first and second front face,
 - wherein said inner surface is positioned adjacent to said second member, and
 - wherein a spatial gap formed between said second member and said handle surface is large enough to receive a user's fingers.







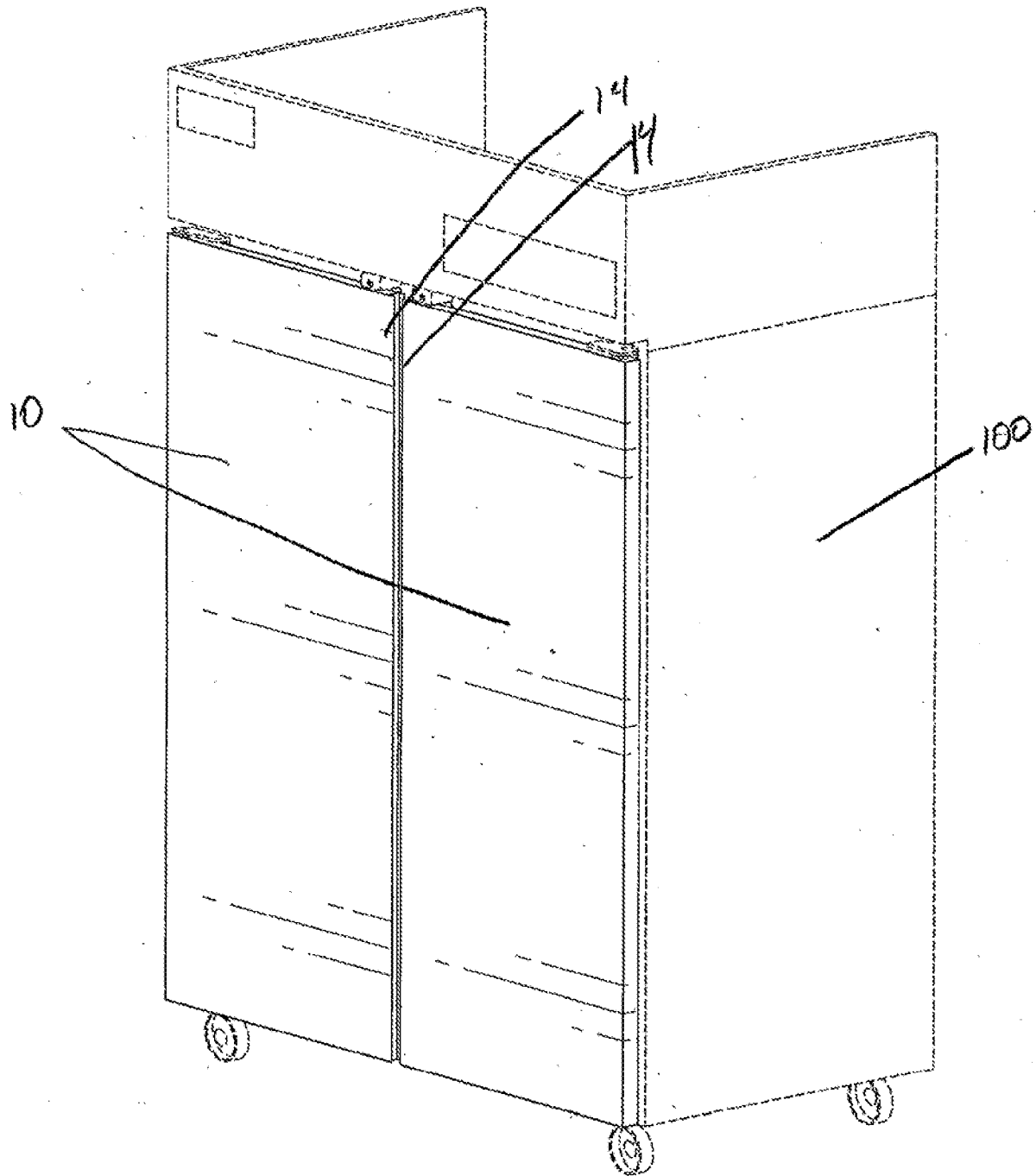


FIG. 4

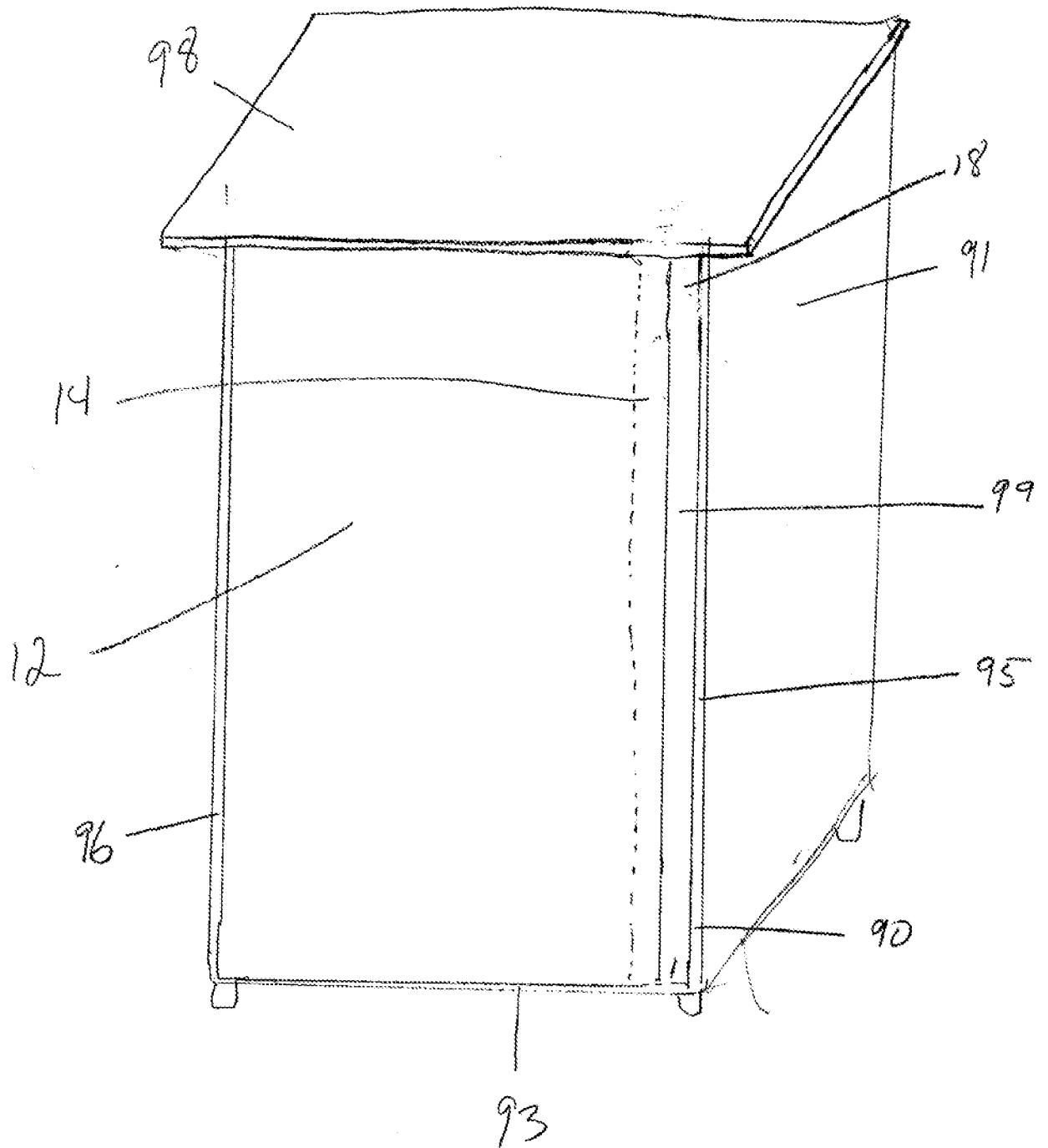


FIG 5

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US2014/044473

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - A47B 95/02 (2014.01)

CPC - A47B 88/0003 (2014.09)

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC(8) - A47B 95/02, 96/20; E05B 1/06; H01B 7/14 (2014.01)

CPC - A47B 88/0003, 95/02, 96/201; E06B 3/04; F25D 23/02 (2014.09)

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
USPC - 70/207; 312/348.6

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

PatBase, Google Patents, Google Scholar, Google, YouTube

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X ----- Y	US 4,662,114 A (SUTTLES) 05 May 1987 (05.05.1987) entire document	1-6, 8, 14-16, 20 ----- 7, 9-13, 17-19
Y	US 3,819,247 A (EVANS) 25 June 1974 (25.06.1974) entire document	7, 19
Y	US 2013/0042434 A1 (ROTHWELL et al) 21 February 2013 (21.02.2013) entire document	9-13, 17-18
A	GB 2482527 A (SWANN) 08 February 2012 (08.02.2012) entire document	1-20

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

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"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

29 September 2014

Date of mailing of the international search report

14 NOV 2014

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