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(54) **KEY HOLDER**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

(21) Appl. No.: **12/252,250**

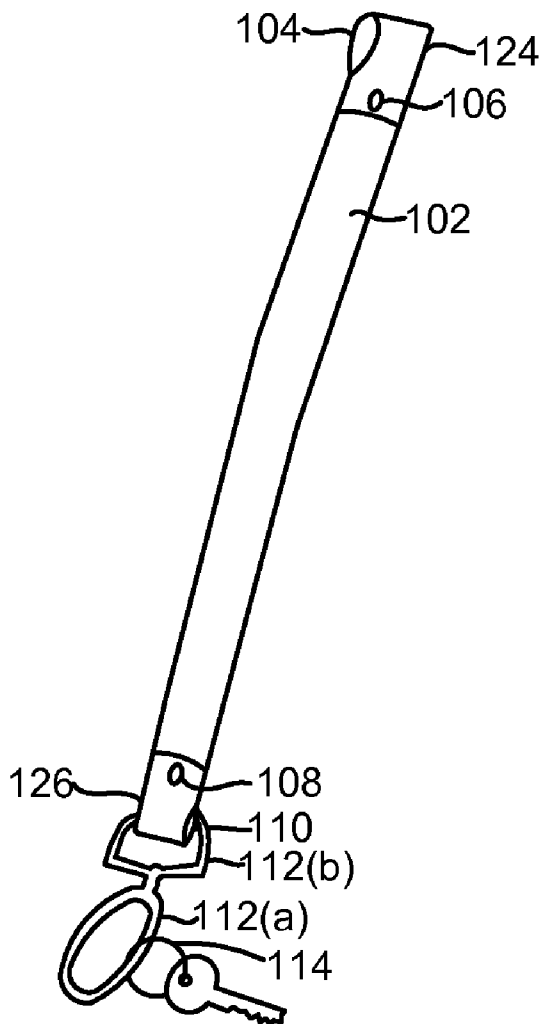
An apparatus and method for attaching keys to a purse are disclosed. The apparatus includes a strap, a key-retaining device, a metal clip, and a long strap with a loop on the proximal end through which the distal end may be threaded. The method of the invention includes attaching one or more keys to the key-retaining device, wrapping the apparatus around the handle of a purse, threading the distal end through the loop on the proximal end, and tightening the strap such that the distal end hangs freely while the loop secures the apparatus to the purse.

(22) Filed: **Oct. 15, 2008**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/999,297, filed on Oct. 16, 2007.

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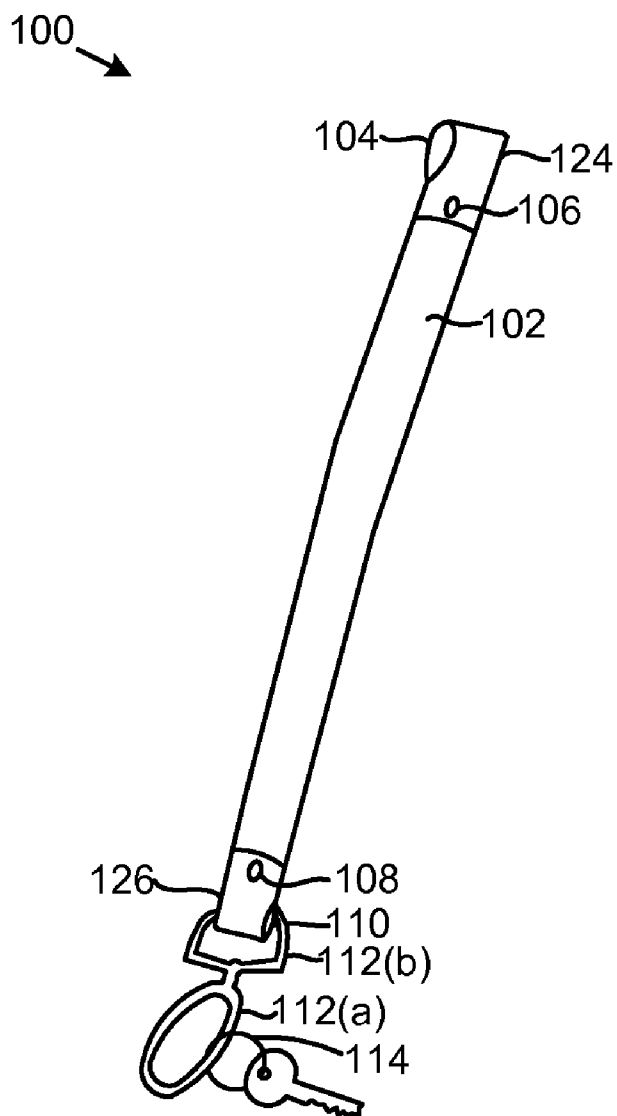


Fig. 1

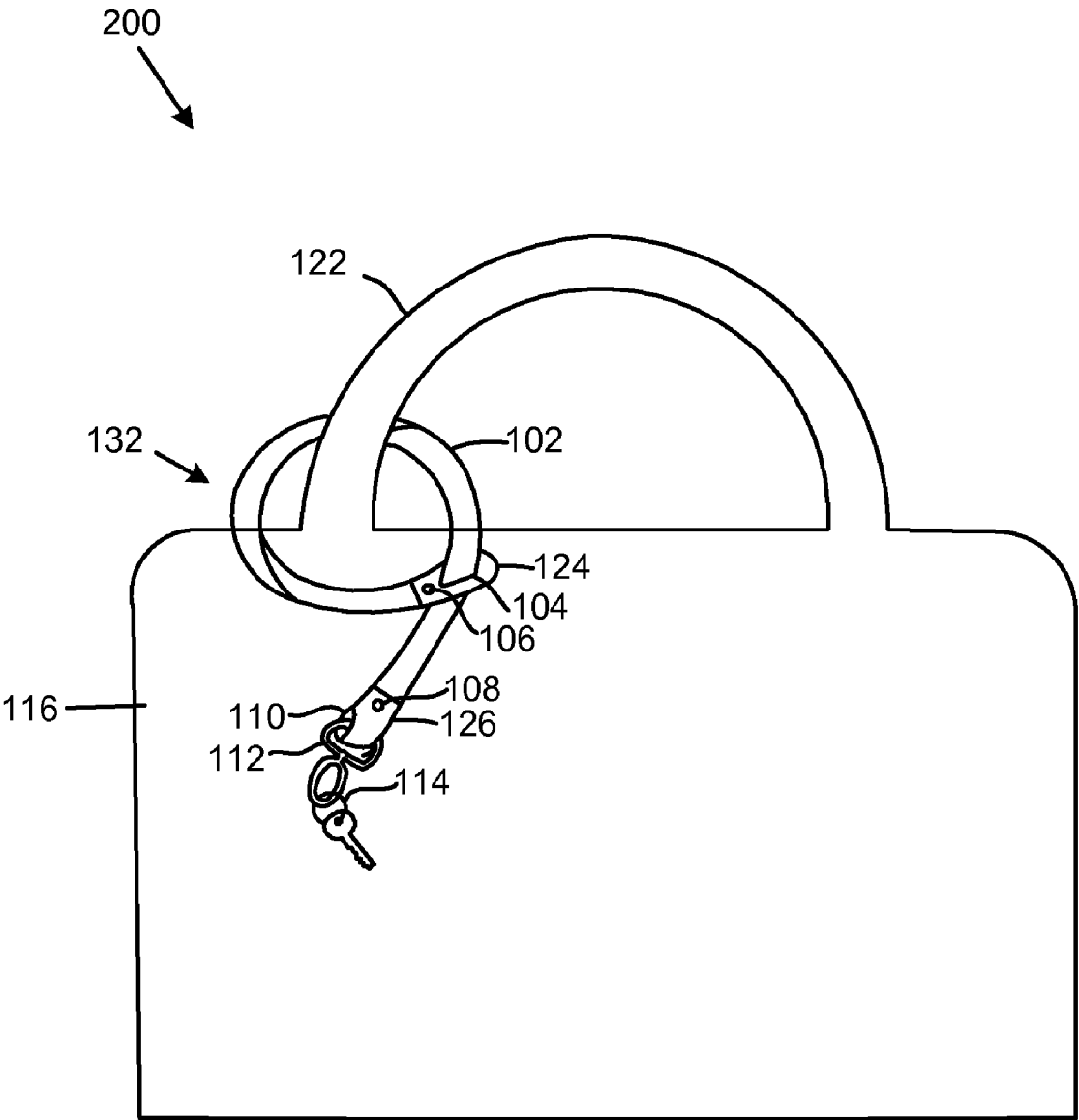


Fig. 2

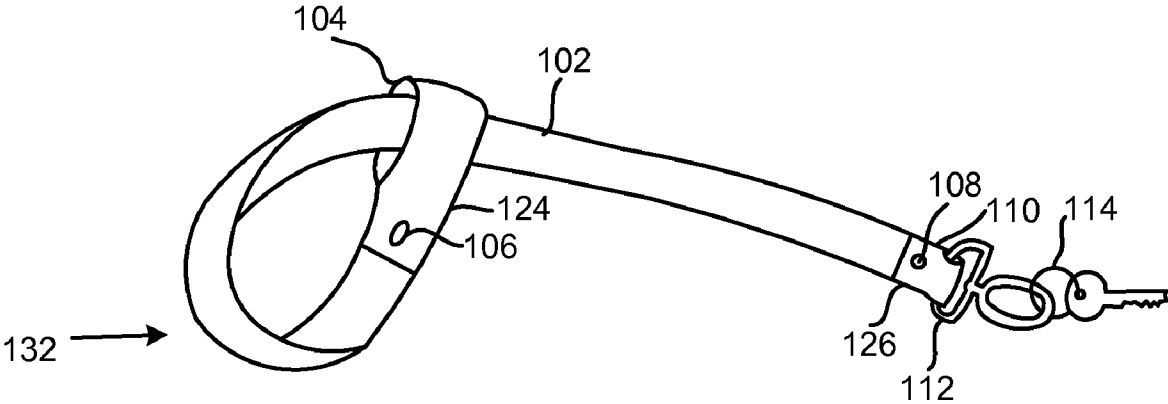


Fig. 3

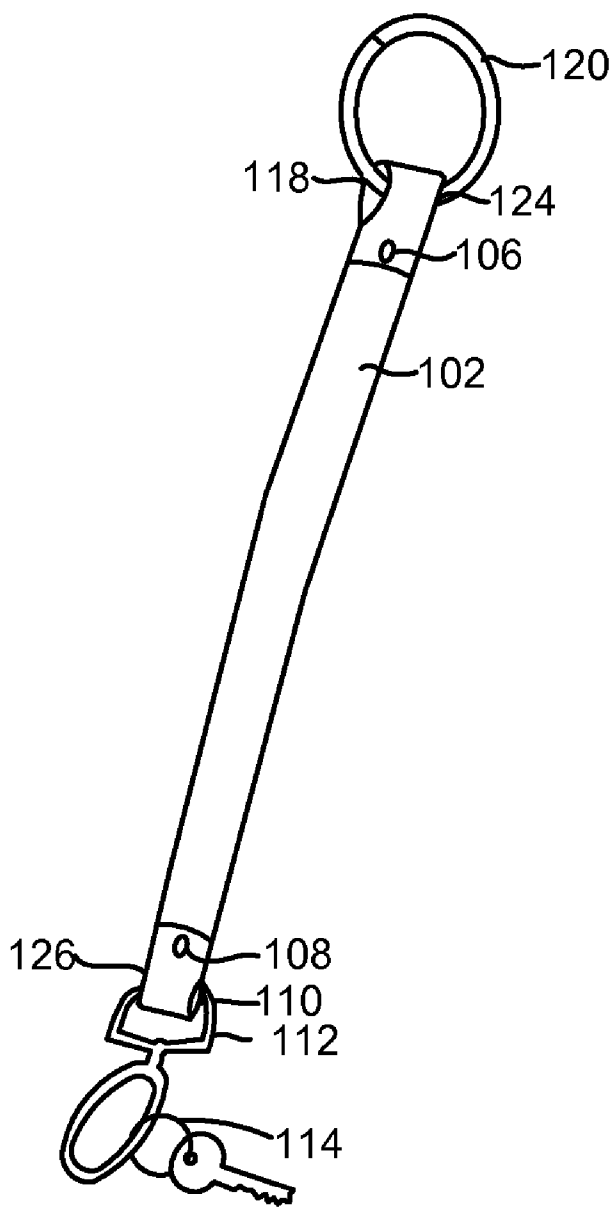


Fig. 4

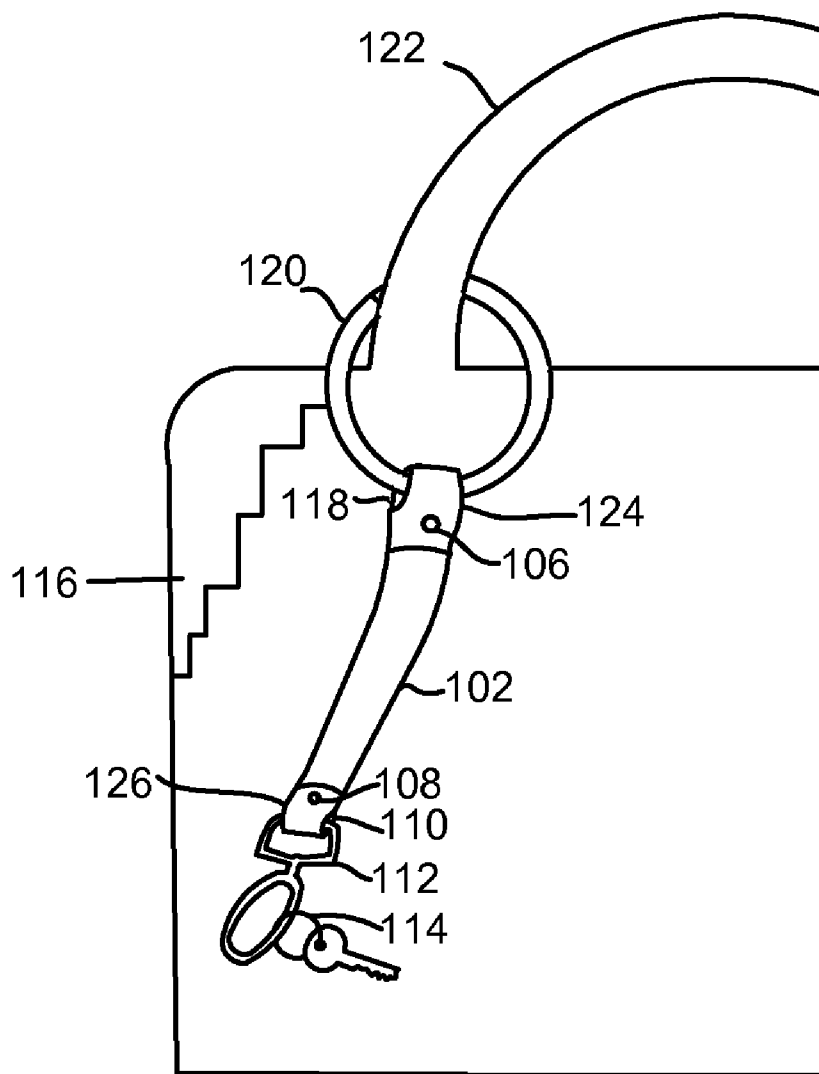


Fig. 5

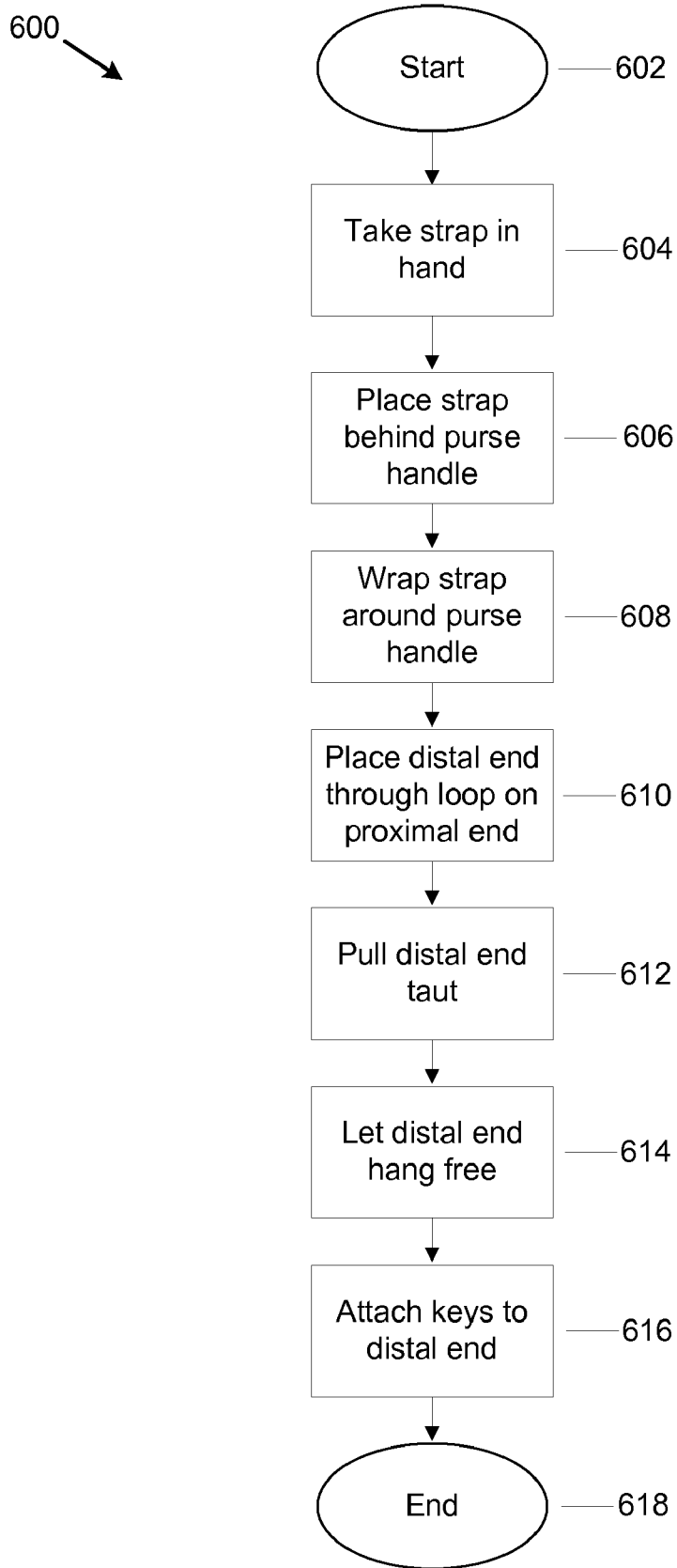


Fig. 6

900 →

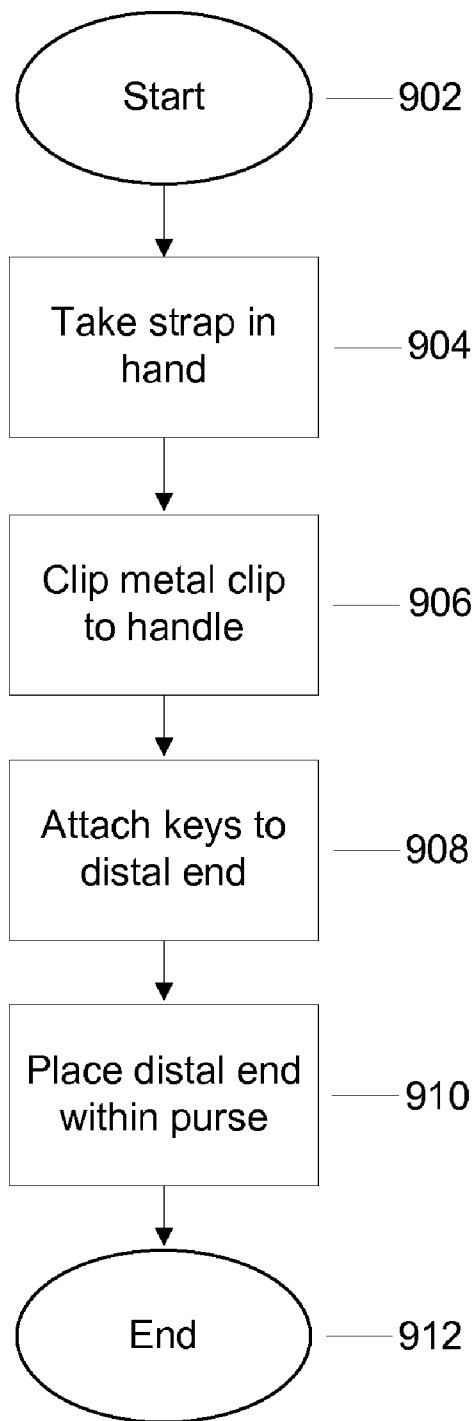


Fig. 7

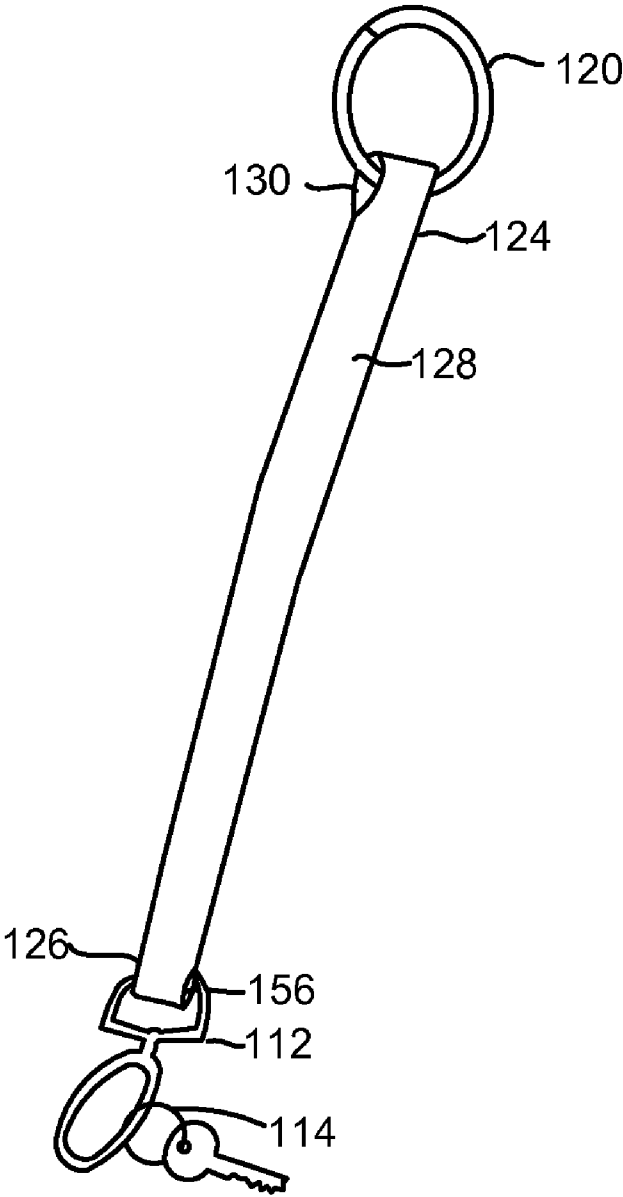


Fig. 8

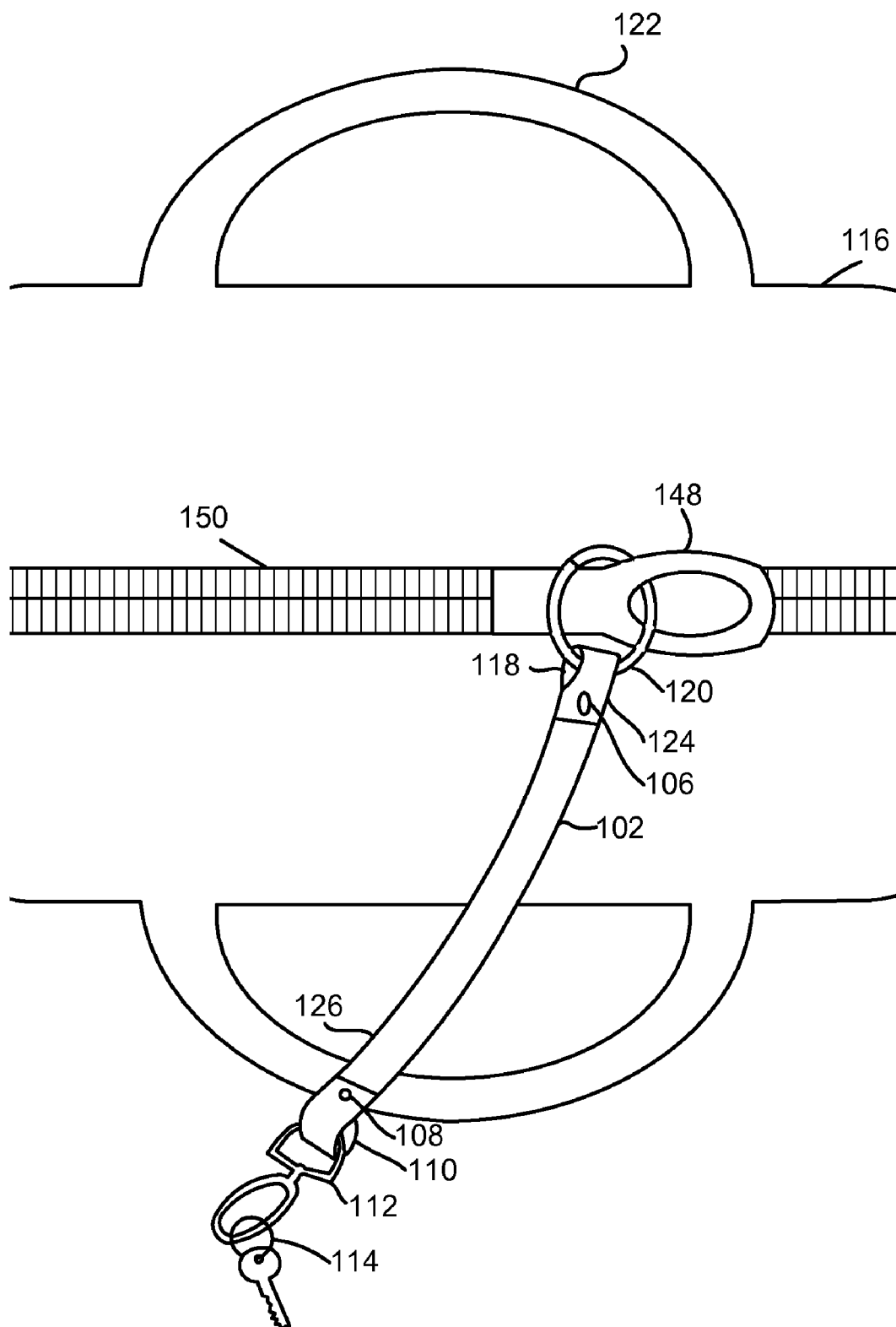


Fig. 9

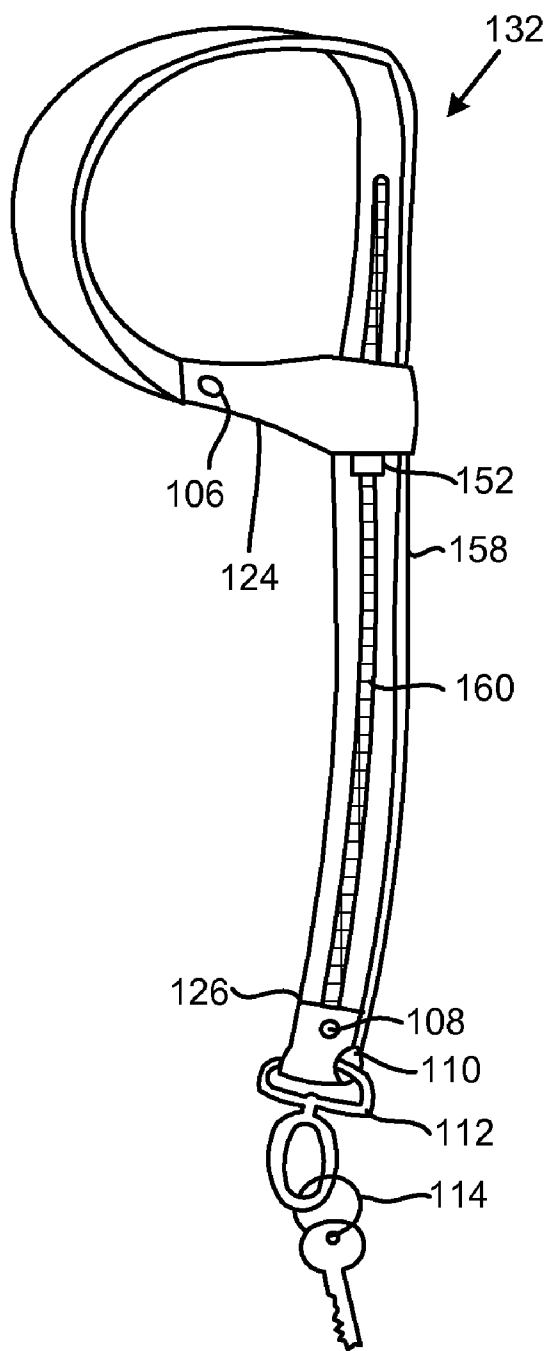


Fig. 10

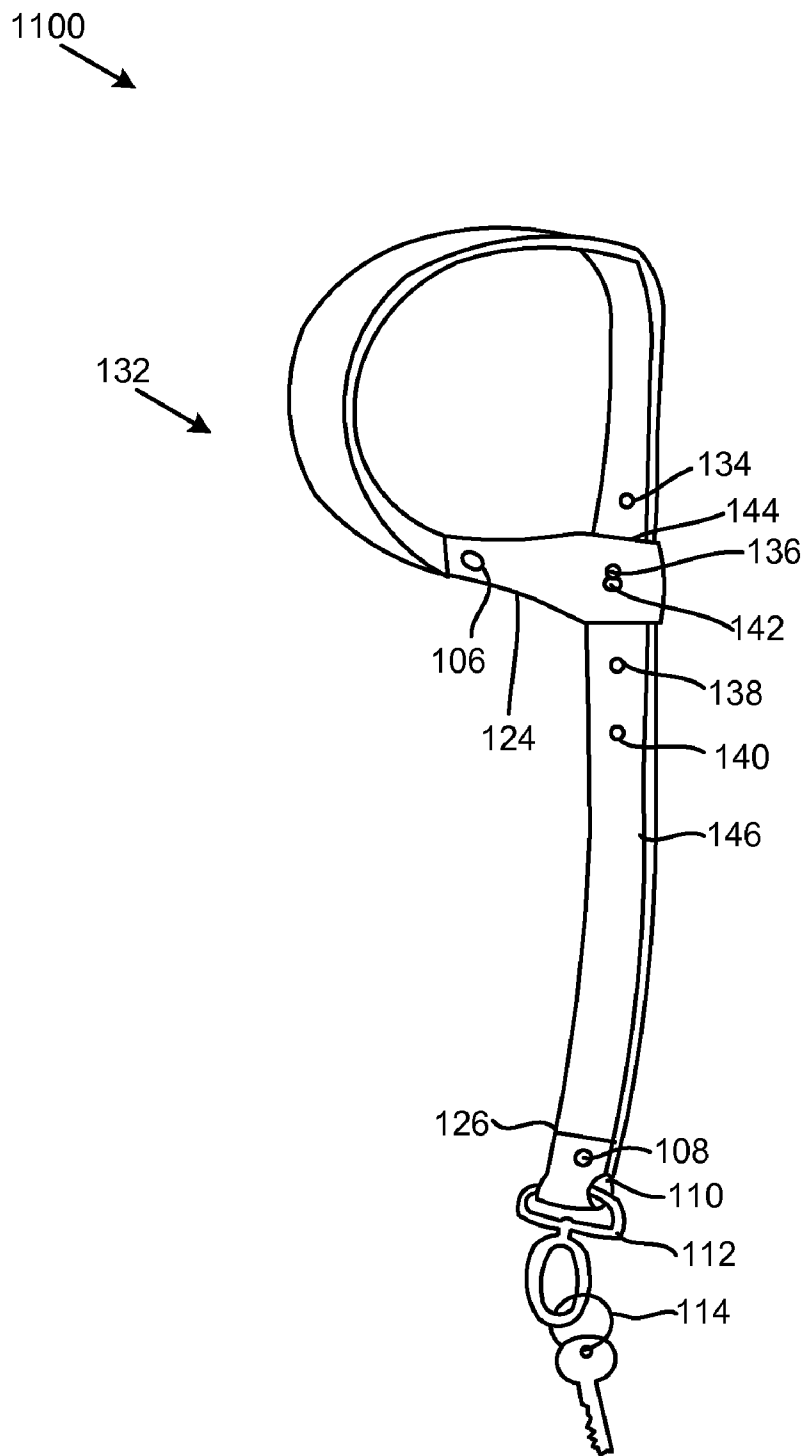


Fig. 11

KEY HOLDER

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/999,297 entitled “Key Strap and Finder,” filed on Oct. 15, 2007 for Linda Nagamine, incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] This invention relates to devices and methods for carrying objects, and more particularly to a devices for retaining keys within or adjacent to a purse or bag.

BACKGROUND

Description of the Related Art

[0003] In day-to-day activities, small items such as keys are frequently lost, often in the most inopportune moments. Because people are constantly coming and going from home, work, school, and other commitments, they are constantly carrying different keys with them so as to be able to get in and out of each location; the keys are often grouped together on a key ring, or key chain, so as not to lose track of each key. Although the key rings assist in not losing track of individual keys, losing the entire key ring is still a common problem that many people encounter; key rings are often misplaced and schedules consequently upset.

[0004] For people who carry their keys in purses or bags, the purses or bags can be quite large and the pockets quite deep; the key rings are often easily lost in any of these pockets, and it can require a substantial amount of time and effort to find the rings within the purse or bag. Many women are familiar with the ordeal of trying to locate a set of keys in an overstuffed purse with a disapproving husband looking on.

[0005] Various apparatuses and methods have been devised for retention of keys and similar personal objects in general, and in conjunction with purses specifically. Some have the keys attached within the interior of the purse, others outside the purse, but while many of these prior art mechanisms confer various advantages, each has commensurate shortcomings and none has yet satisfactorily solved the problem. Some of them continue to allow the keys to indiscriminately fall and be lost within the purse’s jungle interior, for example, while others make the keys difficult to connect or disconnect to the purse, whether on the interior or exterior. Others secure the keys in hard-to-reach locations or create additional pockets or hooks on or in a purse already overloaded with accessories.

[0006] There is a thus a need for an apparatus, system, and method for attaching personal objects such as keys to a purse or bag that overcomes the shortcomings of the prior art.

SUMMARY

[0007] From the foregoing discussion, it should be apparent that a need exists for an apparatus, system, and method that assist a user in quickly finding and removing keys from a convenient, semi-permanent location of a purse or bag. Beneficially, such an apparatus, system, and method would be long enough for the keys to hang inside or outside of the bag, and semi-permanently attached to the bag.

[0008] The present invention has been developed in response to the present state of the art, and in particular, in

response to the problems and needs in the art that have not yet been fully solved by currently available key chains and finders. Accordingly, the present invention has been developed to provide an apparatus, system, and method for a key holder that overcomes many or all of the above-discussed shortcomings in the art.

[0009] The apparatus is provided with a plurality of modules configured to functionally execute the necessary steps of securing the removing the key strap to the purse.

[0010] The apparatus, in one embodiment, is configured to comprise a long strap. The strap comprises a main body section with a loop at the proximal end, a loop at the distal end, a metal clip attached to the distal end, and a key-retaining device, which is attached to the metal clip.

[0011] The apparatus is further configured, in one embodiment, to comprise a long strap with a metal clip on the proximal end and a metal clip on the distal end. The strap comprises a main body section with a loop at the proximal end, which attaches to a metal clip, and a loop at the distal end, which attaches to a metal clip.

[0012] A system of the present invention is also presented to connect the purse to the strap. The system may be embodied by a purse, a long strap, a metal clip on the distal end, a loop on the proximal end, and a key-retaining device attached to the metal clip on the distal end. The strap may be wrapped around the handle of the purse for attachment of the strap to the purse. In particular, the system, in one embodiment, includes a strap with a loop on the proximal end through which the loop on the distal end may be threaded.

[0013] In another embodiment, the system may be embodied by a purse, a long strap with a metal clip at the proximal end and a metal clip at the distal end, and a key-retaining device. The metal clip on the proximal end is clipped onto the handle of the purse, while the metal clip on the distal end is attached to a key-retaining device.

[0014] A method of the present invention is also presented for attachment of the strap to the purse. The method in the disclosed embodiments substantially includes the steps necessary to carry out the functions presented above with respect to the operation of the described apparatus and system. In one embodiment, the user lays the long strap perpendicular to and behind the upright handle, while being parallel to the body of the purse. The user then takes the distal end attached to the key-retaining device and places it through the loop on the proximal end of the strap, forming a noose around the handle of the purse. The user then pulls the distal end taught, so that the keys hang freely and the loop tightens around the handle. The user then places the keys either inside or outside of the purse.

[0015] In a second embodiment, the method may include a purse, a long strap, a loop on the proximal end, a metal clip attached to the proximal loop, a loop on the distal end, a metal clip attached to the distal loop, and a key-retaining device attached to the metal clip on the distal end. The user takes the clip on the proximal end of the strap and attaches it to the handle of the purse. A key-retaining device is then left to hang freely either inside or outside of the purse.

[0016] In a further embodiment, the method includes a purse, a long strap consisting of an inflexible material, a metal clip on the proximal end, a metal clip on the distal end, a key-retaining device attached to the metal clip on the distal end. The user takes the clip at the proximal end of the strap

and attaches it to the handle of the purse. The key-retaining device is then left to hang freely, either inside or outside of the purse.

[0017] Reference throughout this specification to features, advantages, or similar language does not imply that all of the features and advantages that may be realized with the present invention should be or are in any single embodiment of the invention. Rather, language referring to the features and advantages is understood to mean that a specific feature, advantage, or characteristic described in connection with an embodiment is included in at least one embodiment of the present invention. Thus, discussion of the features and advantages, and similar language, throughout this specification may, but do not necessarily, refer to the same embodiment.

[0018] Furthermore, the described features, advantages, and characteristics of the invention may be combined in any suitable manner in one or more embodiments. One skilled in the relevant art will recognize that the invention may be practiced without one or more of the specific features or advantages of a particular embodiment. In other instances, additional features and advantages may be recognized in certain embodiments that may not be present in all embodiments of the invention.

[0019] These features and advantages of the present invention will become more fully apparent from the following description and appended claims, or may be learned by the practice of the invention as set forth hereinafter.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0020] In order that the advantages of the invention will be readily understood, a more particular description of the invention briefly described above will be rendered by reference to specific embodiments that are illustrated in the appended drawings. Understanding that these drawings depict only typical embodiments of the invention and are not therefore to be considered to be limiting of its scope, the invention will be described and explained with additional specificity and detail through the use of the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0021] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of one embodiment of a key holder in accordance with the present invention;

[0022] FIG. 2 is a front elevational view of the key holder of FIG. 1 in use with a purse;

[0023] FIG. 3 is a side view of the strap of the key holder of FIG. 1 as looped through itself;

[0024] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a key holder in accordance with the present invention;

[0025] FIG. 5 is a partial front elevational view of the key holder of FIG. 4 in use with a purse;

[0026] FIG. 6 is a schematic block diagram of one embodiment of a method of attaching the key holder of FIG. 1 to a purse;

[0027] FIG. 7 is a schematic block diagram of another embodiment of a method of attaching the key holder of FIG. 1 to a purse;

[0028] FIG. 8 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a key holder according to the present invention;

[0029] FIG. 9 is a top view of the inside of a purse, with the key holder attached to the zipper tab within the purse;

[0030] FIG. 10 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a key holder according to the present invention;

[0031] FIG. 11 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a key holder according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0032] Reference throughout this specification to “one embodiment,” “an embodiment,” or similar language means that a particular feature, structure, or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment is included in at least one embodiment of the present invention. Thus, appearances of the phrases “in one embodiment,” “in an embodiment,” and similar language throughout this specification may, but do not necessarily, all refer to the same embodiment.

[0033] Furthermore, the described features, structures, or characteristics of the invention may be combined in any suitable manner in one or more embodiments. In the following description, numerous specific details are provided, to provide a thorough understanding of embodiments of the invention. One skilled in the relevant art will recognize, however, that the invention may be practiced without one or more of the specific details, or with other methods, components, materials, and so forth. In other instances, well-known structures, materials, or operations are not shown or described in detail to avoid obscuring aspects of the invention.

[0034] The schematic flow chart diagrams included herein are generally set forth as logical flow chart diagrams. As such, the depicted order and labeled steps are indicative of one embodiment of the presented method. Other steps and methods may be conceived that are equivalent in function, logic, or effect to one or more steps, or portions thereof, of the illustrated method. Additionally, the format and symbols employed are provided to explain the logical steps of the method and are understood not to limit the scope of the method. Although various arrow types and line types may be employed in the flow chart diagrams, they are understood not to limit the scope of the corresponding method. Indeed, some arrows or other connectors may be used to indicate only the logical flow of the method. For instance, an arrow may indicate a waiting or monitoring period of unspecified duration between enumerated steps of the depicted method. Additionally, the order in which a particular method occurs may or may not strictly adhere to the order of the corresponding steps shown.

[0035] FIG. 1 depicts a key holder 100, comprising a strap 102 having a proximal end 124 and a distal end 126, a metal fastener 106 on the proximal end 124, a second metal fastener 108 on the distal end 126, a loop 104 on the proximal end 124, a loop 110 on the distal end 126, a metal clip 112 attached to the distal end 126, and an key-retaining device or key ring 114.

[0036] The strap 102 may be configured in a plurality of materials. Under different embodiments, the strap 102 may be configured in the material of leather, whether pebbled, smooth grain, embossed, stamped, woven, or any other sort. For aesthetic and fashion purposes, the leather may be from a cowhide, pig, ostrich, alligator, lizard, eel, stingray, shark, or other animal source. The strap may also be made of a fabric ribbon, chain, nylon, pvc/plastic, rope, laminated paper, cardboard, or any kind of flexible material that allows the strap to be threaded through the loop on the end. In one embodiment, the dimensions of the strap are 2.5 inches through 20 inches in length, 0.125 inch through 1 inch in width, and 0.5 inch through 5 inches in the loop. FIG. 1 shows a strap using the material of cowhide leather.

[0037] In one embodiment, the strap 102 comprises a textured material, embellished with one or several elements, including but not limited to, embroidery, crystals, patterned leather, pvc, fabric, lasered initials, names, logos, and/or embossing.

[0038] In one embodiment, the fastener 106 is attached at the proximal end 124 of the strap 102, in order to form and secure the loop 104 through which the distal end 126 may be threaded, as described below. The second fastener 108 is attached at the distal end 126, in order to form and secure the loop 110 through which the metal clip 112 may be attached.

[0039] The fasteners 106, 108 may be comprised of metal, stitched (sewn down), embroidered, snap, hook and loop, glued, metal clamp, plastic clamp, grommet, band, screw, nail, crystal stud, or diamond stud. In FIG. 1 the fasteners 106 and 108 comprise a metal stud.

[0040] In one embodiment, the metal clip 112 is composed of two metal pieces 112(a) and 112(b). The piece 112(a) is oval shaped, with a broken side, which, when pressure is placed, opens for placement of the key ring 114. The piece 112(b) is shaped like a gum-drop. At one end of the piece 112(a) is an appendage with a circular stud on the end, connecting it to gum-drop shaped metal piece 112(b). The gum-drop shaped piece 112(b) sits with the curved portion of metal through the loop 110 on the distal end 126 of the strap 102.

[0041] In one embodiment, the metal clip 112 may comprise one or a combination of silver, nickel, brass, stainless steel, titanium, platinum, palladium, zinc or gold. The clip 112 may be from 1 inch through 2 inches in length and from 0.5 inch through 1 inch in width. In FIG. 1, the clip 112 is constructed from stainless steel.

[0042] FIG. 2 depicts a system 200 by which the strap 102 is attached to a purse 116. The system 200 comprises the strap 102, loop 104, fastener 106 on the proximal end 124, fastener 106 on the distal end 126, metal clip 112, loop 110, key-retaining device 114, purse 116, and a purse handle 122. The distal end 126 is threaded through the loop 104 on the proximal end 124, as the strap 102 is wrapped around the handle 122, forming a noose 132. The strap 102 may be wrapped around the handle 122 either back to front or front to back. The distal end 126 is pulled taut to ensure the secure attachment of the strap 102 to the handle 122, securing the key-retaining device 114 to the purse 116. It can be seen that the key ring 114 is thus secured to the purse. The keys may be kept loose outside the purse 116, while remaining secured to the handle 122 at the proximal end 124 to ensure against loss, or for further security, and as further described below, placed inside the purse for further security, while ensuring that the keys are easily findable within the purse 116.

[0043] FIG. 3 depicts the strap 102 as threaded through itself for attachment to a purse 116. The distal end 126 with the metal clip 112 and the key-retaining device 114 are threaded through the loop 104 on the proximal end 124 and pulled through the loop 104, forming a noose 132.

[0044] FIG. 4 depicts another embodiment of the invention, with the strap 102 having a metal clip 120 at the proximal end 124, and the metal clip 112 at the distal end 126. The metal clip 120 is attached to the loop 118 on the proximal end 124. The key-retaining device 114 is attached to the metal clip 112 on the distal end 126.

[0045] In this embodiment, the metal clip 120 is attached to the handle 122 on the purse 116 directly, with no necessity for forming a noose as described above.

[0046] FIG. 5 depicts a system by which the strap 102 is attached to the handle 122 of the purse 116. The metal clip 120 is clipped to the handle 120 and attached to the strap 102 by means of the loop 118 on the proximal end 124. The strap 102 then hangs freely, with the metal clip 112 and the key-retaining device 114 hanging at the distal end 126. As illustrated in this cut-away view, the distal end 126, together with the key ring 114 and keys, is placed within the purse. Given the proximal end 124's attachment to the handle 122, the keys may then be easily retrieved from within the purse 116 no matter what manner of junk the user might have stuffed the purse 116 with.

[0047] FIG. 6 depicts a schematic flow chart 600 of an embodiment of a method of attaching keys to a purse according to the invention, using the apparatus 100. The method begins as depicted in block 602. The user takes the strap in hand, block 604, the strap 102 is placed perpendicular to and behind the handle 122, block 606. The strap 102 is wrapped around the purse handle 112, block 608, and the distal end 126 is placed through the loop 104 on the proximal end 124, block 610, forming a noose around the handle 122. The distal end 126 is then pulled so that the noose 132 tightens around the handle 122, block 612, and the distal end 126 is allowed to hang free, block 614. The user attaches keys to the distal end 126, block 616, and the method ends, block 618.

[0048] FIG. 7 depicts a schematic flow chart of another embodiment of a method according to the invention, using the apparatus depicted in FIG. 4. The method begins in block 902, the strap 102 is taken in hand, block 904, after which the metal clip 120 is clipped to the handle 122 of the purse 116, block 906. The keys are attached to the distal end 126, block 908, and the distal end 126 is placed within the purse 116, block 910. The method then ends, block 912.

[0049] FIG. 8 depicts the strap of a key holder according to the invention as a wooden stick 128, with a metal clip 120 on the proximal end 124, metal clip 112 on the distal end 126, which is attached to a key-retaining device 114. The metal clip 120 is attached through an aperture 130 in the proximal end 124. The metal clip 112 is attached through an aperture 128 in the distal end 126. This embodiment of the invention, with an inflexible strap, is less useful than a flexible strap, but can still be used, for example, if the user desires even quicker access to her keys.

[0050] FIG. 9 depicts another embodiment of the strap 102 with a varied attachment such that the keys are able to be stored inside the purse 116. The strap 102 is attached by the metal clip 120, which clips through a metal tab 148 of a zipper 150. The distal end 126 hangs freely inside the purse with the key-retaining device 114.

[0051] FIG. 10 depicts an embodiment of the strap 148 with a groove 150 and slider 152. The distal end 126 is looped through the proximal end 124, forming a noose 132. The noose 132 is tightened or loosened by the slider 152, which may be pushed along the groove 150 to adjust the length of the apparatus.

[0052] FIG. 11 depicts the strap 146 as looped through the loop 144 on the proximal end 124, and pulled through by the distal end 126. The loop 144 has a metal pin 142, which metal pin 142 buckles into one of the apertures 134-140 to change the length of the key holder 1100. The distal end 126 then hangs freely, attached to the metal clip 112 and the key-retaining device 114.

[0053] The present invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from its spirit or essential

characteristics. The described embodiments are to be considered in all respects only as illustrative and not restrictive. The scope of the invention is, therefore, indicated by the appended claims rather than by the foregoing description. All changes which come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are to be embraced within their scope.

What is claimed is:

- 1. An apparatus for connecting a personal item to a purse, the apparatus comprising:
an elongated strap having a proximal end and a distal end;
the proximal end being configured to attach to the purse;
the distal end being configured to attach to the personal item.
- 2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the strap is principally constructed of a flexible material.
- 3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the strap is principally constructed of leather.
- 4. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the strap is principally constructed of one or more of the following: pvc, plastic, nylon, fabric, ribbon, rope, metal, chain, laminated paper, cardboard.
- 5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the strap is principally constructed of an inflexible material.
- 6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the strap comprises a wooden rod.
- 7. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the strap is between 2.5 and 20 inches in length and between 0.125 inches and 1 inch in width.
- 8. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the strap comprises a metal rod.
- 9. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the purse comprises a handle, and wherein the proximal end of the strap is configured for attachment to the purse handle.
- 10. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the proximal end of the strap is configured for attachment at a point within the purse.
- 11. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a proximal loop disposed on the proximal end.
- 12. The apparatus of claim 11, further comprising a noose, the noose being formed by threading the strap, beginning at the distal end, through the proximal loop.
- 13. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the noose is configured for attachment to a purse handle.
- 14. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the noose is between 0.5 inches and 5 inches in diameter.
- 15. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the personal item comprises a key.
- 16. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the personal item comprises an ornament.
- 17. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the proximal loop is formed by folding the proximal end back onto the strap, and further comprising a proximal fastener disposed between the proximal loop and the distal end, the proximal fastener securing the proximal loop.
- 18. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a distal loop disposed on the distal end, the distal loop being formed by folding the distal end back onto the strap, and further

comprising a distal fastener disposed between the distal loop and the proximal end, the distal fastener securing the distal loop.

- 19. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the proximal fastener comprises one or more of the following: embroidery, snap, hook and loop, glue, metal clamp, grommet, band, plastic claim, screw, nail, crystal stud, diamond stud.
- 20. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:
a proximal loop disposed on the proximal end;
a proximal clip disposed on the proximal loop, the proximal clip being configured for attachment to the purse;
a distal clip disposed on the distal loop, the distal clip being configured for attachment to the personal item.
- 21. A key-attachment system comprising:
a purse;
a handle disposed on the purse;
a flexible strap having a proximal end and a distal end;
a proximal loop disposed on the proximal end;
a noose created by threading the distal end through the proximal loop and around the handle;
an attachment mechanism disposed on the distal end for attachment to a personal item.
- 22. The system of claim 21, wherein the personal item is a key.
- 23. A method for attaching a personal item to a purse, the method comprising:
providing a purse, the purse having a handle, and further providing an elongated strap with proximal and distal ends;
wrapping the strap around the handle of the purse;
threading the distal end of the strap through a loop on the proximal end;
pulling the distal end tight, creating a noose around the handle and securing the strap to the purse;
attaching a key to the distal end.
- 24. A method for attaching a personal item to a purse, the method comprising:
providing an elongated strap, the strap having a proximal end with a clip attached thereto, and a distal end with a clip attached thereto, and a purse, the purse having a handle;
clipping the proximal clip to the handle of the purse;
clipping the distal end clip to a key.
- 25. A key holder apparatus comprising:
an elongated strap having a proximal end and a distal end;
a fastener on the proximal end;
a fastener on the distal end;
a loop on the proximal end;
a loop on the distal end;
a clip attached to the distal end;
a key-retaining device attached to the clip;
a key attached to the key-retaining device;
a purse, having a handle, the distal end being threaded through the loop on the proximal end, forming a noose around the handle, the distal end being pulled taut and being left to hang free.

* * * * *