

Jan. 26, 1971

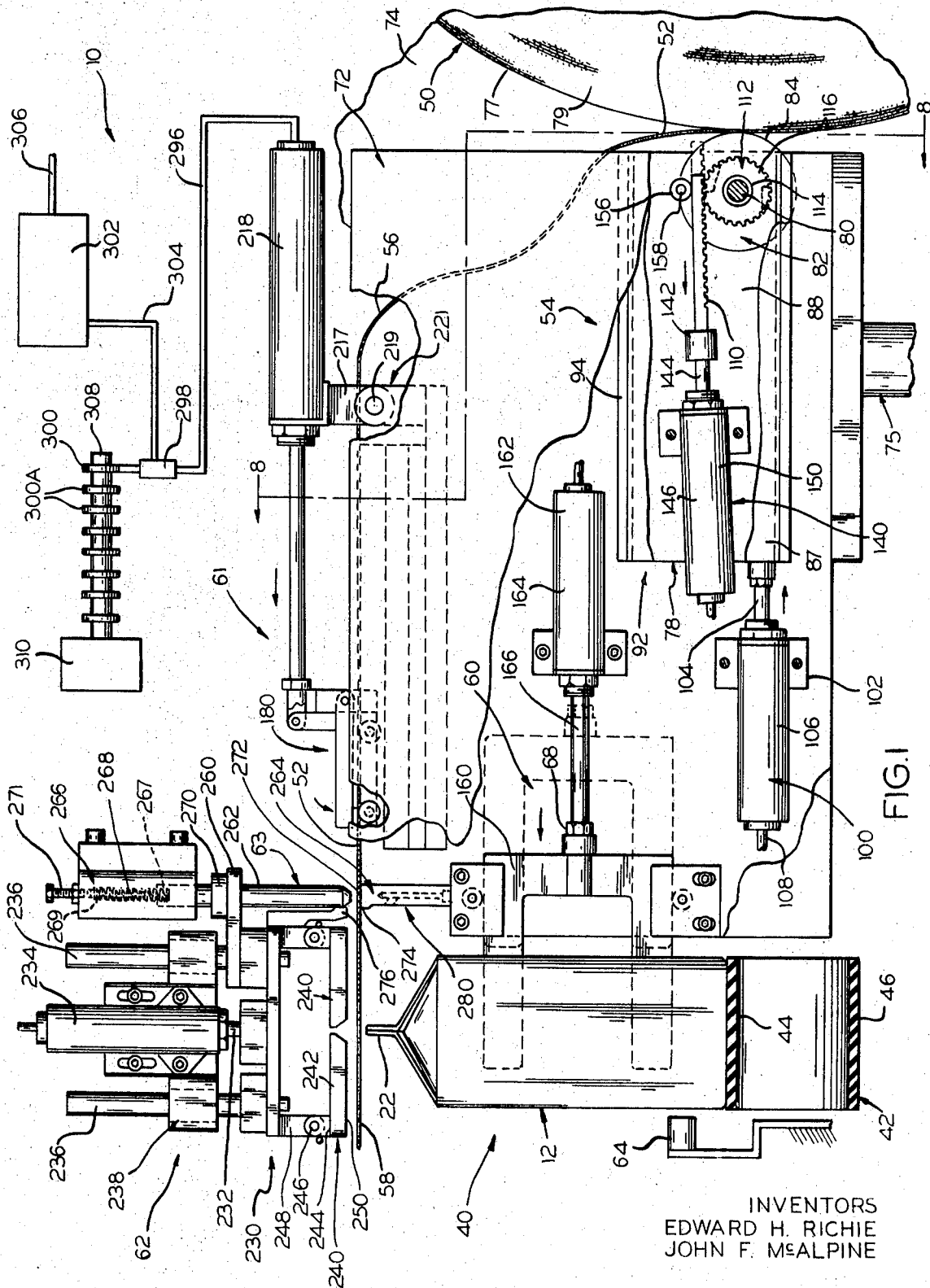
E. H. RICHIE ET AL

3,558,403

APPARATUS FOR OVER-LABELING GABLE TOP CONTAINERS

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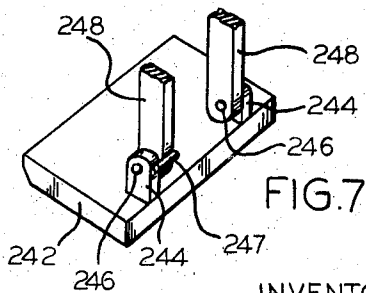
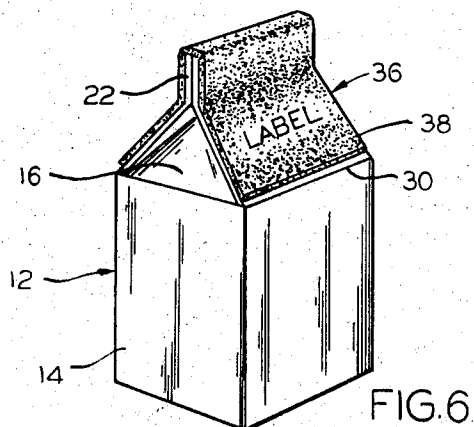
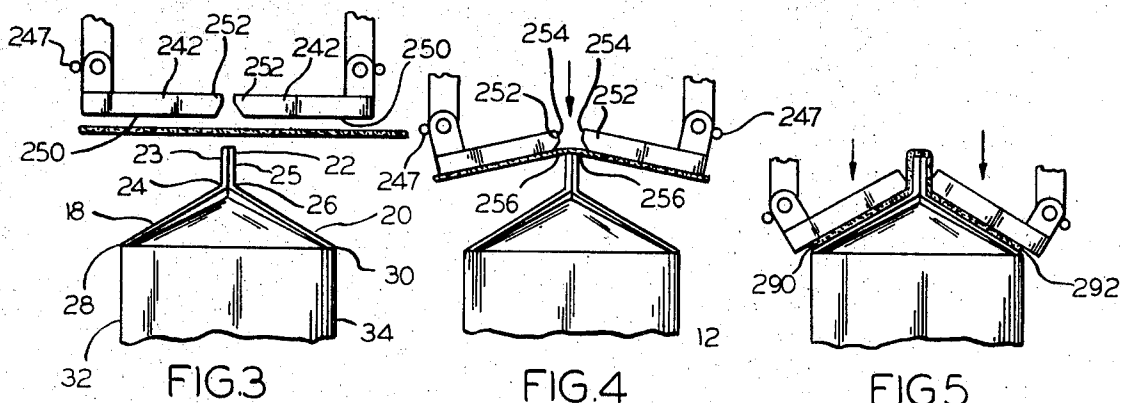
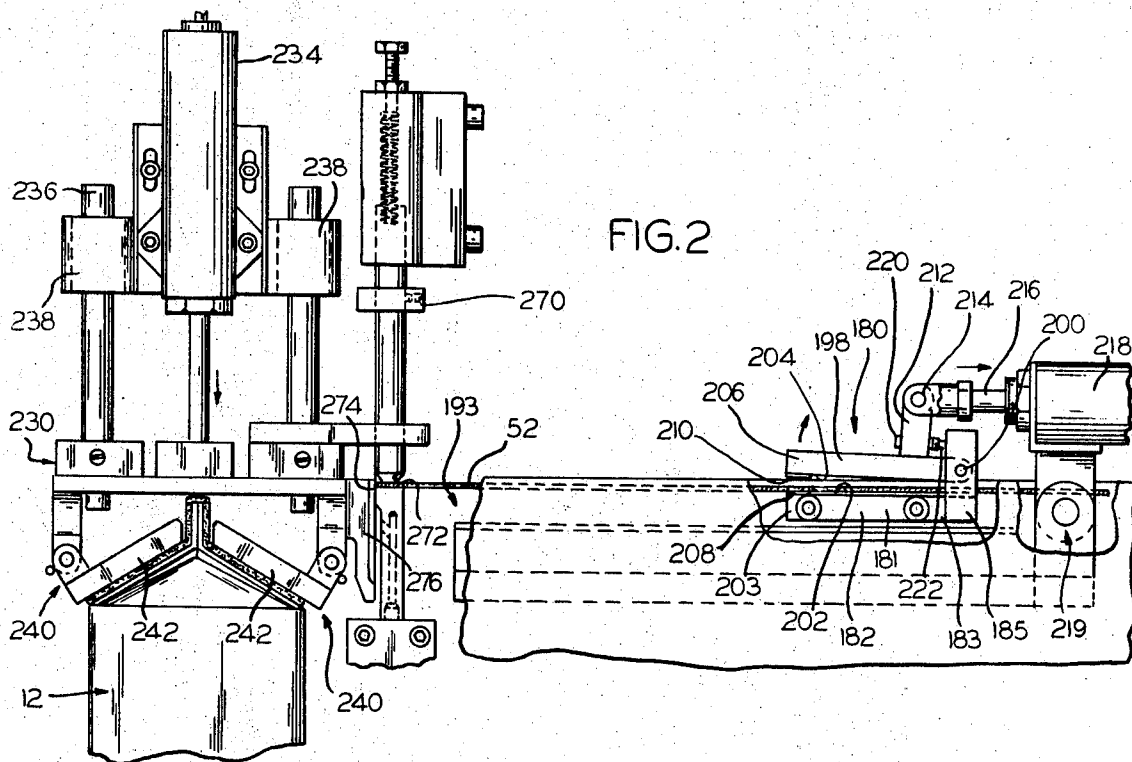
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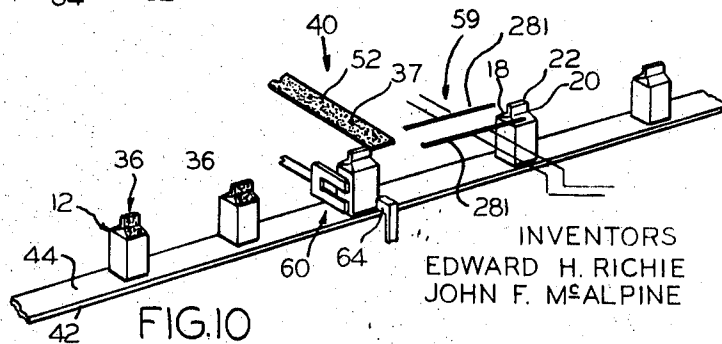
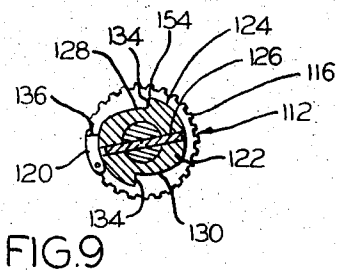
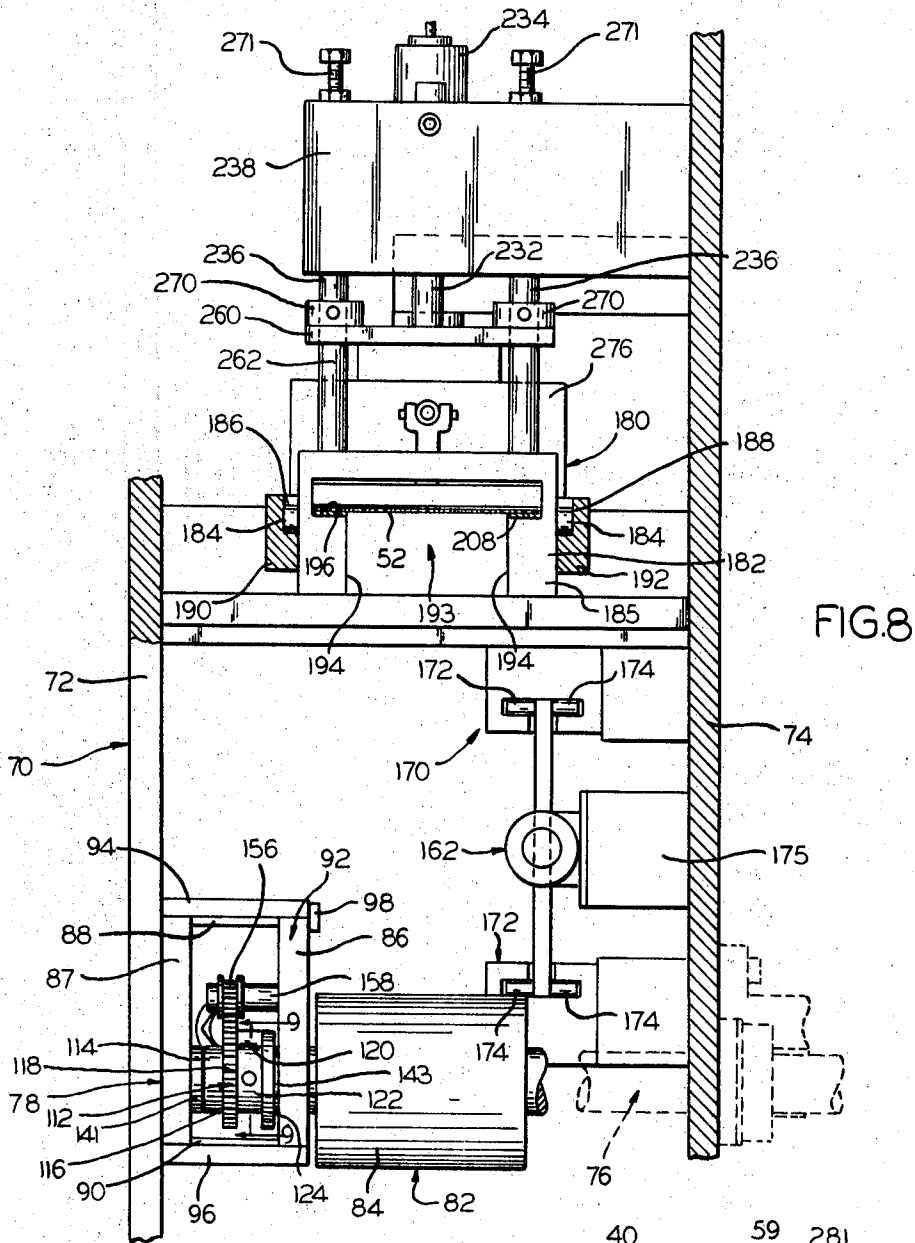
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APPARATUS FOR OVER-LABELING GABLE TOP CONTAINERS

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8 Claims

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The invention is concerned with a method and apparatus for over-labeling gable top containers or cartons for milk and the like in which the containers are fed past a labeling station at which they are consecutively halted for application thereto of the label across the top thereof. A strip of labels is intermittently fed from a roll, in timed sequence to the presence of a container to be labeled at said labeling station, to dispose the label forming segment of the strip in label applying position over the halted container, after which the label is severed from the strip and pressed against the container top to apply it thereto, with the label being oriented to extend transversely of the container peak.

This invention relates to a method and apparatus for labeling gable top containers, and more particularly to a method and apparatus for applying a label across the top of such containers in the manner that advertising and/or trademark indicia applied thereto will be shown to best advantage.

Products such as milk or the like have come to be widely distributed in the familiar gable topped paperboard carton or container and are merchandised on a large scale in supermarket facilities or the like where they are displayed in the familiar dairy case that ordinarily contains milk and other similar products. It has occurred to us that since something on the order of 90 per cent of the people who shop at supermarkets go by the dairy case, the display of milk cartons usually contained by same offers a significant opportunity for advertising that is not sufficiently taken advantage of due to the lack of suitable means to inexpensively apply suitable advertising to the cartons in such a manner that it will be advantageously displayed.

A principal object of this invention is to provide a labeling arrangement for the familiar gable top milk carton and the like that may be readily applied to the container following mass production techniques whereby advertising may be advantageously displayed at the point of sale of the carton.

Another principal object of the invention is to provide a method and apparatus for efficiently over-labeling the familiar gable top carton or container on a mass production basis at the locale of the carton filling location.

Other objects of the invention are to provide an apparatus for feeding a strip of labels from a roll of same to a labeling station, to provide apparatus for severing the individual labels from the strip at the labeling station and apply same to the individual cartons, and to provide labeling apparatus that is economical to make, install, and operate, is reliable and consistent in use, and that provides an advertising label for milk cartons and the like that insures advantageous displays of advertising indicia right at the point of sale of the carton.

Still other objects, uses, or advantages will be obvious or become apparent from a consideration of the following detailed description and the application drawings in which like reference numerals indicate like parts throughout the several views.

In the drawings:

FIG. 1 is a diagrammatic side elevational view of one specific embodiment of the invention, with parts broken away to expose other parts and with the control mechanism involved shown largely in schematic block diagram form, and showing the machine positioned to apply a label to a gable topped carton;

FIG. 2 is similar to FIG. 1, showing the manner in which the label is applied to the carton;

FIGS. 3, 4 and 5 illustrate the sequential positions that the machine label engaging feet go through in applying the label to the carton;

FIG. 6 is a diagrammatic perspective view showing a carton having the label contemplated by this invention applied thereto;

FIG. 7 is a diagrammatic perspective view of one of the label engaging feet of the machine;

FIG. 8 is a diagrammatic end elevational view, partially in section, and taken substantially along line 8—8 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 9 is a fragmental cross-sectional view substantially along line 9—9 of FIG. 8; and

FIG. 10 is a diagrammatic perspective view illustrating basic aspects of the label applying procedure contemplated by this invention.

However, it is to be distinctly understood that the specific drawing illustrations provided are supplied primarily to comply with the requirements of the patent code, and that the invention may have other specific embodiments which will be obvious to those skilled in the art that are intended to be covered by the appended claims.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Reference numeral 10 of FIG. 1 generally indicates one embodiment of our invention arranged to apply labels to the familiar gable topped carton 12 that is widely used for packaging milk and similar products, one of which is shown diagrammatically in FIG. 6. Such cartons or containers are conventionally formed from a paperboard material laminated on either side with a polyethylene coating for liquidproofing and sealing purposes, which usually takes the form illustrated including a body portion 14 of generally quadrilateral transverse cross-sectional configuration and a gable top 16 defined by the familiar sloping side surfaces 18 and 20 separated by a peak 22 that projects upwardly a short distance above the upper ends 24 and 26 of surfaces 18 and 20. Surfaces 18 and 20 at their lower portions terminate in edges 28 and 30, respectively, which merge into the opposed side walls 32 and 34 of the container 12.

In accordance with our invention, a label 36 is applied to the container top 16, and specifically to the sloping surfaces 18 and 20 thereof, over the peak 22, as indicated in FIG. 6. The label 36 is quadrilateral (usually rectangular) in configuration and when applied to the container 14 defines an upwardly or outwardly facing surface 38 that extends substantially between the edges 28 and 30 and thus provides a broad surface for displaying advertising and trademark indicia.

In applying the label 36 of the invention to the carton 12, apparatus 10 or its equivalent is employed, which preferably is located at the plant or other facility where cartons 12 are filled. Apparatus 10 may be located between the carton filler apparatus and the carton caser in which the filled cartons are put into packing cases of twelve each.

In accordance with this invention, the individual cartons 12 are conveyed single file and in spaced apart relation through a labeling station 40 (FIGS. 1 and 10) at which apparatus 10 or its equivalent is mounted, and this may be done by employing an endless belt conveyor

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42 defining upper and lower runs 44 and 46 that are trained for operation as an endless conveyor in any suitable manner, the cartons 12 being positioned on the conveyor upper run 44 in upright position with the peaks 22 of the cartons extending longitudinally of the conveyor. Conveyor 12 is arranged in any conventional manner so that the cartons proceed in a stable manner as they are conveyed by conveyor 42.

In practicing this invention, the individual labels 36 are supplied integrally united in strip form wound on a supply reel 50 from which the strip 52 is unwound by an unrolling mechanism 54 to form a slack portion 56 from which the strip is intermittently pulled by positioning mechanism 61 to dispose the leading end 58 of the strip in labeling position over a carton 12, which is briefly halted by gate mechanism 60 as the carton 12 moves through labeling station 40 for application of the label. The slack portion should contain at least one label length of slack over that which would make it taut to avoid pulling against anything but the weight of the label strip portion 56 when mechanism 61 is operated.

The strip 52 and carton 12 being appropriately positioned relative to each other for application to the carton of the label severing mechanism 63, mechanism 63 is operated to sever the label 36 from strip 52, as at 37 (see FIG. 10) in moving from the positions of FIGS. 1 and 3 to the position of FIG. 4, and then the label applying mechanism 62 deflects the label against the carton peak and presses it into place against the carton top side surfaces 18 and 20 as well as the side surfaces 23 and 25 of the peak, in the manner shown in FIG. 5. For this purpose, the cartons 12 have their tops 16 heated, as they move up to station 40, by passing them in close adjacency to a suitable heating device, such as a Calrod heater diagrammatically illustrated at 59, in FIG. 10, to make their outer surfaces tacky, so that the label will adhere to the container.

The newly formed label 36 is then released, and gate mechanism 60 is operated to again permit forward movement of the carton 12 under the action of conveyor 42.

The mechanisms 54, 60, 61, 62 and 63 are preferably arranged to operate in split second timing relation with respect to each other and the movement of the cartons 12 through labeling station 40, and for this purpose are preferably operably associated by a centralized actuating mechanism for controlling them which is operated by a suitable sensing mechanism that senses the approach or presence of a carton 12 entering station 40, such as electric eye 64.

It is contemplated that the reel 50 will contain a label forming strip 52 of sufficient length to last the usual eight hour work day, and apparatus 10 is capable of labeling cartons 12 at the rate of seventy-five labels a minute.

SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION

In the specific form illustrated, the apparatus 10 is associated with a suitable housing 70 that is only partially illustrated since it may be of any convenient type, and which includes spaced side walls 72 and 74 (see FIG. 8) between which the principal components of apparatus 10 are mounted. Housing 70 may be mounted on a suitable support 75.

The reel 50 is suitably removably journaled on appropriate shaft 76 (shown in dashed lines in FIG. 8) that may be journaled between housing in any suitable manner. It may comprise a suitable drum (not shown) fixed to shaft 76 and on which strip 52 is wound, which drum is provided on one end thereof with a suitable backing plate 77 against which the roll 79 of strip 52 is placed in applying same to the reel.

The unrolling mechanism 54 comprises a frame structure 78 mounted for movement toward and away from the reel 50 and journalling a shaft 80 (see FIG. 1) to which is keyed a feed roller 82 defining a cylindrical

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label strip engaging surface 84 formed of rubber or other resilient material of suitable frictional and non-wearing characteristics for engaging the roll 79. The frame structure 78 in the form shown is defined by spaced side plates 86 and 87 between which the shaft 80 is journaled, which are joined together by upper and lower plates 88 and 90, with the frame structure 78 being mounted in trackway 92 defined by spaced plates 94 and 96 that are fixed to housing side plates 70 in any suitable manner, as by welding. Guide bar 98 (see FIG. 8) affixed to plate 94 retains frame 78 against lateral displacement.

The feed roller 82 is biased against the reel 50 by any suitable biasing mechanism, such as the air operated cylinder 100 of FIG. 1 that is fixed to housing side wall 72 by suitable bracket 102 and includes an air operated piston that biases piston rod 104 outwardly of cylinder 106 under the action of a suitable supply of air supplied to air cylinder device 100 through line 108, the intention being that as roll 79 is reduced in diameter by the un-reeling of label forming strip 52, the feed roller 82 is advanced to the right of FIG. 1 to maintain the desired frictional engagement with the strip 52.

The feed roller 82 is rotated to supply one label length of strip 52 to slack portion 56 in the aforementioned time relation by a rack 110. In the form shown, rack 110 engages gear 112 that is mounted on shaft 80 for free wheeling movement with respect thereto. The gear 112 comprises a hub portion 114 and a flange portion 116 in which gear teeth 118 are formed. The gear flange portion 116 has pivoted thereto (see FIG. 9) a pawl 120 that is spring biased in any suitable manner to ride on the periphery 122 of the hub 124 that is keyed to shaft 80 by pin 126.

The periphery 122 of hub 124 is formed with a pair of diametrically spaced notches 128 and 130 each respectively defining abutment surfaces 132 and 134 that are respectively engaged by the end surface 136 of the pawl 120 when the gear 112 is rotated in the appropriate direction by operation of rack 110.

Gear 112 and hub 124 are mounted on shaft 80 between suitable spacers 141 and 143, in the form shown.

Rack 110 is connected to air cylinder device 140 by a suitable coupling 142 which connects same to the air cylinder device piston rod 144 that is actuated by supplying air to the cylinder 146 of device 140 in any suitable manner to move the rack 110 from the dashed line extended position of FIG. 1 to the full line position thereof, at the end of which stroke cylinder device 146 returns the rack 110 to its dashed line position of FIG. 1.

As the rack 110 moves to the right of FIG. 1, the gear free wheels with respect to the shaft 80 and pawl 120 rides over the periphery 124 of hub 122 until the end 136 of pawl 120 drops over the edge 154 of hub 124 and behind the abutment surface 132 or 134 of the notches 128 and 130, respectively, depending on which notch is disposed at the lower position indicated in FIG. 1. This marks the end of return stroke of rack 110 and air cylinder device 140 is operated to retract piston rod 144 and move rack 110 to the left, with the pawl 120 bearing against the abutment surface of the notch in which it is now received to rotate the shaft 80 the amount required to advance strip 52 one label length.

Rack 110 is held against teeth 118 by suitable hold down roller 156 suitably journaled on pin 158 affixed to frame structure 78.

The gate mechanism 60 comprises a gate member 160 that is suitably mounted to be moved between the extended full line position of FIG. 1 and the retracted dashed line position of the same figure by connection to suitable air cylinder device 166 provided with cylinder 164 from which piston rod 166 extends for connection to gate member 160 by suitable coupling 168. In the form shown, the gate member 160 is of bifurcated configuration and rides in suitable guide devices 170 and 172 (see FIG. 8), respectively, that are mounted in any suitable manner on the

housing wall 74 and have journaled therein suitable guide rollers 172 and 174 that engage the opposite sides of the gate member 160.

The air cylinder device 162 is mounted in place in the form shown by being applied to base 175 affixed to housing wall 74.

The label strip positioning mechanism 61 comprises a gripper device 180 in the form of a lower jaw 182 composed of a pair of spaced apart bars 181 journaled rollers 184 that ride in trackways 186 and 188 formed in the respective support members 190 and 192 that may be fixed in place in any suitable manner to define a trackway 193 for gripper device 180 that is aligned with labeling station 40 and extends transversely of the path of movement of the containers 12.

The bars 181 at their respective ends 183 are fixed to a U-shaped member 185 defining arm portions 194 that are notched as at 196 to receive upper jaw 198 that is pivoted within U-shaped member 185 by suitable pins 200. The upper surfaces 202 of the bars 181 at their forward ends 203 are provided with a layer 208 of wear resistant material such as rubber, steel, combinations of same, or the like and the jaw 198 at its end 206 is provided with a similar oppositely disposed layer 210, between which the strip 52 is extended. Connected to jaw 198 is an arm 212 that is pivotally connected as at 214 to piston rod 216 of air cylinder device 218 that is mounted on legs 217 disposed on either side of the path of movement of strip 52 and pivotally connected as at 219 to a suitable support structure 221. Device 218 is operated in accordance with this invention to move the gripper device 180 between the positions of FIG. 2 and FIG. 1, respectively, to feed the strip 52 one label length ahead to dispose the strip leading end above the position that a container 12 will take at the labeling station 40.

In the form shown, the arm 212 of the jaw 198 includes a screw member 220 that bears against a spring biased detent 222 mounted in the U-shaped member 185 of the jaw 182. The air cylinder device 218 is arranged so that in the retracted position of gripper device 180, the jaw 198 is biased to the illustrated open position of FIG. 2 and against detent 222 and this may be done either pneumatically or by using a suitable spring arrangement within device 218. When the air cylinder device 218 is operated to move the gripper device 180 to the right of FIG. 2 to the position of FIG. 1, the jaw 198 closes against the jaw 182 to grip the strip 52 therebetween and move it forwardly as the gripper device 180 is moved to the left of FIG. 2 under the motivating action of air cylinder 218. On the return stroke of cylinder 218, jaw 198 automatically opens due to the relation between the piston rod 216 and jaw 190 through arm 212, and the action of device 218 to pull gripper device 180 to the right of FIG. 2, leaving the strip 52 in its advanced position while permitting the gripper device 180 to return to the position of FIG. 2 under the action of the piston rod 216 of device 218 moving to the right of FIG. 2, with the lower jaw 182 sliding along strip 52.

The range of reciprocating movement of gripper device 180 must be confined to the length of the labels 36, and for this purpose suitable stops (not shown) may be built into trackway 193 or trackways 186, or cylinder device 218 may be built to suitably limit its stroke, to define the limits of movement of device 180.

The label applying mechanism 62 comprises a head 230 that is connected to piston rod 232 of suitable air cylinder device 234 suitably mounted within the housing 70. Movement of the head 230 is guided by having guide posts 236 of the head suitably received for guiding purposes within guide blocks 238 suitably affixed to the housing.

The head 230 carries a pair of leaves or feet 240, each in the form of a plate member 242 provided with spaced lugs 244 pivotally connected, as by suitable pins 246, to corresponding lugs 248 that are fixed to head 230. The feet or leaves 240 each define a flat or planar undersur-

face 250 and opposed end portions 252 each defining an end surface 254 that is perpendicular to the respective surfaces 250 and a beveled surface 256 that is angled so as to urge the label portion overlying the carton peak into engagement with the side surfaces 23 and 24 thereof during the application of the individual labels to the carton (see FIG. 5) as the feet 240 pivot upwardly under the pressure applied to the carton top. The leaves or feet 240 should be spaced apart at their surfaces 254 such that as the head 230 descends on operation of air cylinder 234, the label portions overlying the carton peak 22 are in effect cammed against the peak surfaces 23 and 25. Each foot 240 includes a suitable movement stop device so that on return of head 230 to the position of FIGS. 1 and 3, the feet take the respective positions illustrated in those figures, under the action of gravity or a suitable biasing spring, and for this purpose, feet 240 are shown each provided with a stop element 247 (FIG. 7) that engages an adjacent lug 248 of head 230 in the released position of the head.

Head 230 has fixed thereto a plate 260 through which slidably extend a pair of hold down rods 262 that are spaced apart laterally of the label strip 252 (see FIG. 8) to engage the side edges of the latter and press same against abutment structure 264 that is fixed in any suitable manner to the housing 70. Rods 262 extend into suitable spring chambers 266 formed in housing structure 269 and against suitable compression springs 268 (as at 267) that are respectively mounted in the housings 266 and seat at one end thereof against the respective spring seats 269 that may be adjusted to adjust the action of springs 268 by adjusting screws 271 to which the respective seats 269 are respectively connected. Each hold down bar 262 has fixed thereto a collar 270 that is engaged by plate 260 when the head 230 is raised toward the position of FIG. 1, which action lifts the hold down bars 262 above the path of movement of the label forming strip 52.

The abutment structure 264 defines a planar abutment surface 272 on which the strip leading end rests the abutment structure 264 also defines a planar surface 274 that is positioned to cooperate with cutting blade 276. The abutment structure 264 and its surface 274 as well as blade 276 are proportioned to extend somewhat in excess of the width of the label forming strip 52 (see FIG. 8) so that when the head 230 is moved downwardly of the position of FIG. 1 to the position of FIG. 4, hold down rods 262 are lowered into engagement with the strip 52 while at the same time cutting blade or knife 276 is lowered to sever a label 36 just after the hold down rods 262 clamp the strip 52 to abutment structure 272 under the biasing action of springs 268.

The abutment structure 264 preferably is formed with one or more air jets where indicated at 280 that are upwardly directed to support the forward edge of the strip 52 as it is moved into position under head 230 and to provide support for the label just prior to the time it is formed and after it is severed until the head 230 reaches the position wherein the leaves or feet 240 are disposed as shown in FIG. 4 to bring the newly formed label 36 into contact with the carton 12 that is located in the label forming station 40. Alternately or additionally, feet 240 may be provided with a series of vacuum orifices suitably connected to a source of vacuum to hold the label in its illustrated position under the head 230.

It is preferred that, for the particular type of carton 12 that is described, some means be provided upstream of the labeling station 40 to heat the carton surfaces 18 and 20 sufficiently so that they will be tacky by the time they are in the label applying station 40, whereby the downward pressure illustrated in FIG. 5 is adequate to bond the label 36 to the container. This may be done in any suitable manner as by employing a Calrod heater 59 of any suitable type that includes heating element 281 (see FIG. 10), spaced to be closely disposed to the respective

carton surfaces indicated as they move toward and into labeling position within the label applying station 40.

It will be noted that, as the head 230 goes through its label applying stroke, the pivotally mounted leaves or feet tilt or pivot upwardly from their substantially coplanar positions of FIGS. 1 and 3 as the label ends are biased downwardly in the direction of the container top surfaces 18 and 20. The result is that the particular shape of the leaves or feet 240 deforms the label 36 into exact conformity with the transverse configuration of the container gable top, as indicated in FIGS. 2 and 5. After the leaves or feet 240 reach the position of FIG. 5, the action of the air cylinder device 234 is reversed to return the head 230 to the retracted position of FIG. 1 to permit advancement of the label forming strip to dispose the next segment thereof over the labeling station 40 for direct application to the container. The label length employed ordinarily should be such that its edges 290 and 292 extend to or just short of the side surfaces 32 and 34 of the carton when the label is applied thereto.

The machine 10 illustrated is especially adapted for applying the labels contemplated by this invention to half gallon milk cartons, which comprise 75 to 80 percent of the market, though obviously the machine in practice may be arranged to apply labels to any size carton of the type illustrated.

As already indicated, it is preferred that the various components of machine 10 be arranged for automatic operation and this may be done in any suitable manner. For completeness of disclosure, one suitable arrangement is illustrated in a largely block diagram manner in which all of the air cylinders involved in the apparatus 10 are operated in a manner illustrated for the device 218 in which its air conduit 296 is connected to an air valve 298 of any suitable construction controlled by a cam member 300 suitably contoured to regulate the air supply to cylinder device 218 in the time sequence that is desired to have it operate in the time sequence desired relative to the other operations of the apparatus 10. Air valve 298 is connected to a suitable air pressure regulator 302 through a suitable line 304, with regulator 302 being connected to a suitable source of air under pressure by suitable line 306.

The cam member 300 is keyed to rotating shaft 308 rotated by suitable electric motor 310, which shaft 308 also has keyed thereto cam members 300A for operating in a similar manner and other air cylinder devices herein disclosed and any others that may be involved for conventional purposes.

The motor 310 may be continuously operating and include an electrically controlled clutch arrangement operated by electric eye 64 to operate the various mechanisms making up apparatus 10 in the time sequence required to advance label forming strip 52, form a label 36, and apply same to a carton 12 located at the label applying station 40. As to sequence of operation, this is somewhat optional as the functions of the label strip advancing apparatus 54 and the gate apparatus 60 can be performed together or sequentially, as can the strip advancing apparatus 61 and the gate apparatus 60. However, the label forming and applying apparatus 62 must be operated by itself as a separate sequence. The gate apparatus should be operated to stop the individual cartons 12 directly under and in alignment with the feel 240 at head 230.

While air cylinder devices have been disclosed as the operating means for the individual devices making up apparatus 10, it will be appreciated that other suitable arrangements may be employed for the same purposes, which may be electrically or even hydraulically controlled. However, air cylinder devices of the type indicated are preferred because of their relatively inexpensive nature and speed and reliability of operation, and double acting devices of this type are preferred, though if desired they

may be single acting with their return strokes achieved by building suitable compression springs into them.

Apparatus 10 may be adjusted to accommodate application of different size label lengths by employing a diameter size for gear 112 and stroke length for gripper device 180 in proportion to the label length to be applied. The timing of the operation of the various components of the apparatus 10 should in that event be adjusted accordingly.

The apparatus 10 will also operate to form the labels 36 from gummed tape, which will feed through apparatus 10 in the manner already described. In using gummed tape, the heating device 59 may be omitted and instead tops 16 of the individual cartons are damped in any suitable manner as they approach the labeling position, as by employing a suitable spray.

It will therefore be seen that we have provided a novel method and apparatus for applying labels to gable topped cartons on a mass production basis is well as a novel label therefore which permits advertisers to take advantage of the always prominently displayed upper ends of milk cartons or the like that so many people have access to in supermarkets or the like.

The foregoing description and the drawings are given merely to explain and illustrate our invention and the invention is not to be limited thereto, except insofar as the appended claims are so limited, since those skilled in the art who have our disclosure before them will be able to make modifications and variations therein without departing from the scope of the invention.

We claim:

1. A labeling machine for applying labels over the top of gable topped containers of the type in which the top comprises a pair of downwardly sloping upwardly facing surfaces separated at the middle of the top by a peak characterized by a vertical planar surface on either side thereof merging into the top upwardly facing surface adjacent same in an obtuse angle, said machine comprising:

a container labeling station,

means for feeding a strip of labels from a source of supply to a position overlying the container labeling station,

means for positioning a gable topped container in upright position at said labeling station with the peak of the container extending transversely of the path of movement of the strip,

means for severing a label from said strip adjacent said station in a position to overlie the container disposed at said station in substantially centered relation therewith and be disposed transversely of the gable peak with the ends thereof respectively disposed above the container respective sloping surfaces, and means for applying the severed label against and over the top of the container transversely of the gable peak and in contact with said container surfaces, said applying means comprising:

a head mounted above said station and said label position for reciprocating movement vertically thereof and including a pair of spaced apart depending feet proportioned to respectively substantially complement the respective sloping sides of the container gable top when disposed thereagainst on either side of its peak, and positioned to reciprocate in vertical alignment with said label position,

and means for reciprocating said head to lower said feet against the severed label and press the respective feet against same to in turn press the severed label against the container peak and bend and press same into conformity with the peak and sloping surfaces of the container top to apply the label thereto, and to raise said feet from pressing engagement with the label to per-

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mit removal of the labeled container from said station.

2. A labeling machine for applying labels over the top of gable topped containers of the type in which the top comprises a pair of downwardly sloping upwardly facing surfaces separated at the middle of the top by a peak characterized by a vertical planar surface on either side thereof merging into the top upwardly facing surface adjacent same in an obtuse angle, said machine comprising:

a container labeling station,

means for conveying the containers one by one through said station in spaced apart relation while standing in upright position,

means for feeding a strip of labels from a source of supply to a position overlying said station and in a path of movement that extends transversely of the peak of a container disposed at said station,

means for temporarily halting forward movement of the respective containers at said station for application of the labels thereto,

means for severing a label from said strip in a position to overlie a container disposed at said station in substantially centered relation therewith and be disposed transversely of the gable peak thereof with the ends of the severed label respectively disposed above the container respective sloping surfaces,

and means for applying the severed label against and over the top of the halted container transversely of the gable peak thereof and in contact with said container surfaces,

said applying means comprising:

a head mounted above said station and said label position for reciprocating movement vertically thereof and including a pair of spaced apart depending feet proportioned to respectively substantially complement the respective sloping sides of the container gable top when disposed thereagainst on either side of its peak, and positioned to reciprocate in vertical alignment with said label position,

and means for reciprocating said head to lower said feet against the severed label when at said label position and press the respective feet against same to in turn press the severed label against the container peak and bend and press same into conformity with the container peak and sloping surfaces of the container top to apply the label thereto, and to raise said feet from pressing engagement with the label to permit further conveying of the labeled container on release of said movement halting means.

3. The machine set forth in claim 2 wherein:

said container forward movement halting means comprises:

a gate mounted for movement into and out of the path of movement of the containers as they are conveyed through said station by said conveying means,

and means for retractably positioning said gate in front of a container to be labeled when the latter is disposed at said station.

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4. The machine set forth in claim 2 wherein said feeding means comprises:

reciprocating gripper means mounted adjacent said station for releasably engaging the strip of labels and moving same toward said label position a distance of one label length,

and means for feeding the strip to said gripper means in increments of one label length,

the last mentioned feeding means and said gripper means being disposed relative to each other to dispose said strip in slack relation therebetween.

5. The machine set forth in claim 2 wherein said label severing means comprises:

abutment means disposed adjacent said label position over which the strip of labels passes in moving toward said position,

blade means operating in timed relation with said head for severing a label disposed in said label position from said strip as said feet engage the label to be severed on movement of said head toward the container in said station to be labeled,

and clamping means operating in timed relation with said blade means for clamping the strip of labels to said abutment means as the label in said label position is severed therefrom.

6. The machine set forth in claim 5 including:

air jet means playing on the label in said label position for supporting same.

7. The machine set forth in claim 5 including:

means adjacent said station but upstream thereof for conditioning the tops of the containers being labeled for adherence of the severed label thereto.

8. The machine set forth in claim 2 wherein said feet of said applying means comprise:

a pair of foot members each comprising a leaf element each suspended from said head and each mounted for pivotal movement about a horizontal axis, said pivotal axes being in substantially coplanar relation and in substantial parallelism,

and means for normally disposing said feet in substantially horizontal relation in the raised position thereof,

whereby when said head is lowered to dispose said feet in their label applying positions against the severed label and the container top underlying same, said feet respectively freely pivot into conformity with the respective container sloping walls to press the label into firm engagement therewith.

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