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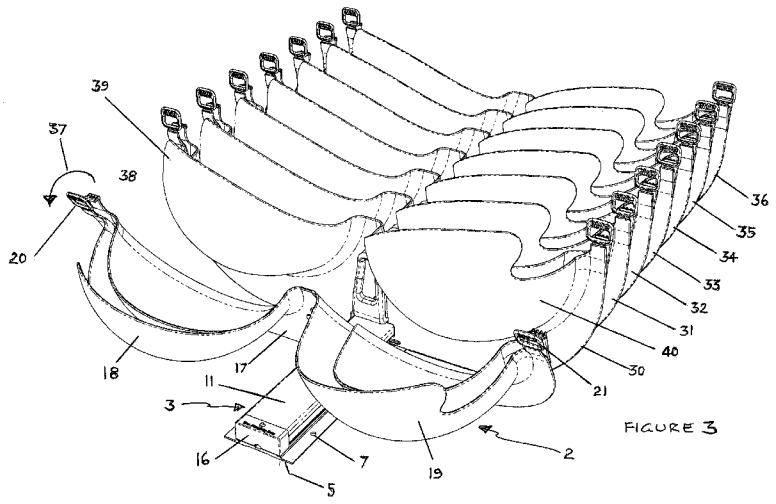


FIGURE 3

(57) Abstract: A brassiere support assembly comprising: a base including a bearing surface; at least one brassiere support member supported by the base and including formations each having a surface contoured to conform generally to the shape of a brassiere cup thereby allowing the at least one brassiere to be supported by the support member; wherein the brassiere support member is adjustable relative to the base.

BRASSIERE STORAGE ASSEMBLY

BACKGROUND

The present invention relates to women's undergarments and more specifically to the storage of brassieres to ensure the protection of the structural integrity of the brassiere. The invention further relates to a brassier support assembly which allows bra storage in a manner which prevents damage to bra cups. The invention further relates to an assembly having adjustable and selectively detachable elements which receive and retain thereon individual brassieres so that a plurality of brassieres can be stored in a generally stacked arrangement in a box, drawer or the like.

PRIOR ART

There have been a number of attempts to address the known problem of bra cup damage which is often occasioned when a brassiere is inadequately stored. Bra storage is an important consideration in prolonging the life of a bra and to avoid structural damage to a bra cup.

Brassiere cups are usually made from soft pliable material with an elastic memory but bra cups are not rigid enough to withstand light point loads tending to distort the cup contour. If a point load is applied in a particular location on a cup plastic deformation can result which effectively renders the bra un wearable as the deformed region cannot be restored by elastic memory or by application of a load in the opposite direction to the cup distortion. If a distortion takes place the bra is unwearable as the defective cup contour shows through garments and therefore gives an unsightly appearance. .

Maintenance of design cup shape is a desirable objective as brassieres are relatively expensive since damage even to the cups can shorten the life of the brassiere leading to unwanted additional expense.

There have been a number of attempts to provide brassiere storage facilities some attempting to prevent distortion of brassiere cups.

One example of such facilities is disclosed in Japanese JP 8332123 which discloses a case for storing an object to be stored without deforming it by partitioning a space for storing the object to be stored into two storage spaces with an expanded member having an expanded part and supporting the object to be stored at the expanded part . The storage case is provided with first and second main bodies having erected walls. The second main body of the case to be functioned as a lid pair is fitted freely attachably and detachably to the first main body of the case. An expanded wall expanded in the form of a turned-down cup is formed on the inner wall of the first erected wall. A gap between the erected walls and the expanded wall is defined as a first storage space, and the outer surface side of the expanded wall is defined as a second storage space . The inner surfaces of cup parts of a brassiere touch the outer surface of the expanded wall and the other parts of the brassiere are stored in the storage space so that the storage with no deformation can be performed. This is a cumbersome and rudimentary solution to the well known but unwanted problem of bra cup distortion.

Another attempt to address the problem of bra storage is disclosed in JP2003237865 The brassiere storage container comprises an approximately rectangular base, and is equipped with creases at borders between peripheral and bottom walls at four corners. A pair of semispherical cup holding projections are provided on the bottom wall. The peripheral walls are folded onto a rear of the bottom wall and also folded into a plane, providing a mount-formed showcase. The peripheral walls are folded onto a front from the folded state to stand from a periphery of the bottom wall, providing a brassiere storage box with an upper surface opened.

Another assembly is disclosed in Japanese patent application JP 2004269037 which provides a brassiere storage case, which prevents loss of shape of the brassiere and saves a space for storage to store the brassiere elegantly and neatly, to allow convenient storage and carrying the brassiere.

In another example of a storage assembly, United States patent US 2005020182 discloses a receptacle for protectively storing at least one brassiere and includes a garment support deck and a pair of brassiere cup support members. Each of the support members is rotatable with respect to the support deck and is coupled to the support deck during storage of at least one brassiere. The support members are rotatable relative to the support deck so that non-concentrically positioned domed-shaped contacting surfaces of the support members can be moved toward and away from each other to correspond to the natural distance between the cups of the brassiere(s).

In a further example of brassiere storage assemblies US Patent 2006086740 discloses a brassiere travel and storage system and method to facilitate storing a plurality of padded brassieres such that the cups of the brassieres do not degenerate and/ or become crushed during storage, such as when a person travels. A container is provided that is capable of situating and positioning the one or a plurality of brassieres in a predetermined position, such as an angled position, so that the brassieres or at least a portion of them can be viewed for identification and selection by a user. The storage system and method described is adapted to be received in a suitcase an is capable of protecting a plurality of brassieres stored therein so that they do not become crushed or deformed from storage.

In a further example United States patent US 2007123144 discloses a frame for maintaining the shape of a brassiere during drying and storage. The frame includes one or more hemispherically-shaped shells having a plurality of apertures formed therethrough. The shells may be formed from a first polymeric

material and may further include a second polymeric material disposed on an outer surface thereof, to frictionally retain a cup of the brassiere. In one embodiment, first and second shells are joined by an interconnection extending therebetween. The interconnection may maintain the shells in a tandem arrangement, or may permit the shells to be positioned such that their respective peripheral edges confront one another.

In another example, US patent No. 2008099518 discloses a container for supporting a brassiere or a similar garment for cleaning and storage. The container includes opposed flat plate members connected by a hinge, and opposed container cup members connected to the respective plate members at hinge connections for folding the container cup members over the plate members and for folding the plate members with respect to each other to form a closed container for supporting a brassiere. The plate members include hinged support members, each having an arcuate cross shape, for supporting brassiere cups between the plate members and the container cup members. Spaced apart clips secure the brassiere straps to the plate members. Spaced apart latches releasably secure the cup members to the plate members and the plate members to each other for placing the container in a compact folded position. This device is unnecessarily complicated to use and manufacture and does not provide the simplicity which is ultimately required to address the problem of the invention.

There are already various methods to preserve the shape and appearance of brassiers to ensure that they do not lose their structural integrity. Known methods to store brassiers are either complicated to use or too expensive to make.

One drawback with the known brassiere storage assemblies is that they are not versatile and requires considerable hardware to protect the brassiere from distortion damage. The problem of cup distortion is well known but the has not been in the past a convenient effective and versatile bra storage assembly which

can be used in a container or outside and moved to another storage location such as a drawer. There has not been a bra storage assembly in the past which meets all of the above objectives and which is convenient to use in comparison to the known assemblies.

There is a long felt want in the brassiere industry to provide a brassiere storage assembly which allows a user the versatility to protect brassiere cup shape and which has the versatility required to enable transportation and relocation and which is relatively economic to manufacture.

INVENTION

The present invention seeks to ameliorate the problem of brassiere storage to preserve the integrity of the brassiere by providing a brassier support assembly which allows bra storage in a manner which prevents damage to bra cups. The invention further provides an assembly having adjustable and selectively detachable elements which receive and retain thereon individual brassieres so that a plurality of brassieres can be stored in a generally stacked arrangement in a box, drawer or the like.

In its broadest form the present invention comprises:
a brassiere support assembly comprising:
a base including a bearing surface;
at least one brassiere support member supported by the base and capable of movement along the base;
formations on the support member each contoured to conform generally to the shape of a brassiere cup thereby allowing the at least one brassiere to be supported by the support member.

In another broad form the present invention comprises:

a brassiere support assembly comprising a base including an upper region and a lower region which engages a support surface;

at least one brassiere support member extending from the base and including first and second formations each having a surface contoured to conform to the shape of a brassiere cup received thereon to allow support of the cups by the formations,

the upper region including a connection which enables releasable connection of the brassiere support member to the base;

wherein the formations prevent deformation of the brassiere cups when the brassiere is mounted on the support member.

In another broad form the present invention comprises:

a container for retaining at least one brassiere support assembly each said assemblies comprising; a base including an upper region and a lower region which engages a support surface;

at least one brassiere support member extending from the base and including first and second formations each having a surface contoured to conform to the shape of a brassiere cup received thereon to allow support of the cups by the formations,

the upper region including a connection which enables releasable connection of the brassiere support member to the base;

wherein the formations prevent deformation of the brassiere cups when the brassiere is mounted on the support member.

In another broad form the present invention comprises:

a drawer mountable brassiere support assembly comprising a base including an upper region and a lower region which engages a support surface;

at least one brassiere support member extending from the base and including first and second formations each having a surface contoured to conform to the shape of a brassiere cup received thereon to allow support of the cups by the formations,

the upper region including a connection which enables releasable connection of the brassiere support member to the base;

wherein the formations prevent deformation of the brassiere cups when the brassiere is mounted on the support member.

In another broad form the present invention comprises:

a brassiere support assembly kit comprising a plurality of mounted support members mounted on a spine including an upper region and a lower region which engages a support surface;

each said plurality of brassiere support members including means to allow movement between a first state in which the support members are detached from or folded against the spine and a second state in which the support members are attached to the spine or unfolded; each said support members extending from the spine and including first and second formations each having a surface contoured to conform to the shape of a brassiere cup received thereon to allow support of the cups by the formations,

the upper region including a connection which enables releasable connection of the brassiere support member to the spine;

wherein the formations prevent deformation of the brassiere cups when the brassiere is mounted on the support member and wherein the spacing of the support members is adjustable along the spine.

According to a preferred embodiment the base comprises a spine which receives and retains thereon a plurality of like support members. Preferably the each support member is moveable relative to the base to enable rotation of one support member relative to another support member so as to create a gap between support members. According to one embodiment each support member is attached via hinge to the spine and is adjustable therealong.

According to a preferred embodiment the first and second formations are capable of displacement relative to each other.

Preferably the connection is a hinge which allows the formations to rotate through an arc along the longitudinal axis. The formations are spaced part along the spine to allow a plurality of formations to be mounted on the spine to enable support and storage of a plurality of brassieres.

Preferably the formations are convex outward to receive opposing concave breast cups mounted thereon. The formations are capable of displacement to enable placement of a brassiere cup and then replacement to an original position Thus the formations have multiple degrees of freedom and are capable of movement relative to an adjacent formation or relative to the spine to facilitate ease of placement and removal of a brassiere for storage of same. Movement of the formations relative to the spine may be effected by pivotal or other form of mutual engagement. The formations are removable from the spine and may be moved along the spine.

The present invention provides an alternative to the known prior art and the shortcomings identified. The foregoing and other objects and advantages will appear from the description to follow. In the description reference is made to the accompanying representations, which forms a part hereof, and in which is shown by way of illustration specific embodiments in which the invention may be practiced. These embodiments will be described in sufficient detail to enable those skilled in the art to practice the invention, and it is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized and that structural changes may be made without departing from the scope of the invention. In the accompanying illustrations, like reference characters designate the same or similar parts throughout the several views.

The following detailed description is, therefore, not to be taken in a limiting sense, and the scope of the present invention is best defined by the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Figure 1 shows an exploded view of a simple form of brassiere support assembly with one brassiere support element according to one embodiment.

Figure 2 shows a front elevation view of the assembly of figure 1 with brassiere support fully assembled.

Figure 3 shows a perspective view of a brassiere assembly with a plurality of bra support elements fitted to a support runner.

Figure 4 shows a top rear perspective view of the assembly of figure 3.

Figure 5 shows a side elevation view of the brassiere assembly of figure 4.

Figure 6 shows a long sectional view of the assembly of figure 5.

Figure 7 shows a perspective view of a brassiere support assembly inserted in a container.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The embodiments referred to herein are illustrative and are not to be regarded as limiting the scope of the invention. While various embodiments of the invention have been described herein, it will be appreciated that these are capable of modification, and therefore the disclosures herein are not to be construed as limiting of the precise details set forth, but to avail such changes and alterations as fall within the scope of the description .

Figure 1 shows an exploded view of a simple form of brassiere support assembly 1 with one brassiere support member 2 according to one embodiment. Brassiere storage assembly 1 includes a base structure 3 which incudes ground engaging member 4 having a lower surface 5 and upper surface 6 which is connectable to a ground surface, such as a drawer base, with fasteners (not shown) via openings 7, 8 and 9 in member 4. Base 3 further comprises frame

10 comprising web 11 and depending therefrom flanges 12 and 13 which together with web 11 and member 4 define channels 14 and 15. channels 14 and 15 are closed by end capping 16. Brassiere support member 2 comprises body 17 including convex formations 18 and 19 which in use receive and support brassiere cups so that the convex formations generally retain the optimal shape of a brassiere cup during storage on the assembly. Formations 18 and 19 are preferably contoured to conform to the shape of a brassiere cup received thereon to allow support of and protection for the shape of the cups.

Body 17 of support member 2 includes retaining eyelets 20 and 21 which receive and retain bra straps to secure the brassiere. Reinforcing frame 22 provides a central rigidity to member 2 at a region of load transfer when member 2 is mounted on base 3. Body 17 further comprises opening 23 in which there is disposed wheel 24 mounted on axle 25 and wheel 26 mounted on axle 27. When member 2 is coupled to base 3 wheel 24 travels in channel 14 and wheel 25 travels in channel 15. Once support member 2 is mounted on base 3 channels are closed via end capping 28. Wheels 24 and 25 allow support member 2 to be rotated through an arc of travel up to 180 degrees relative to base assembly 3. . This allows displacement and more space for the purposes of mounting a brassiere on the support assembly particularly when a plurality of support members are mounted on base assembly 3. Once a brassiere is mounted the support member 2 if initial displacement is required, it may be returned back to its original position by contra rotation.

According to an alternative embodiment, formations 18 and 19 may be arranged for separate rotation such that one formation may be displaced to receive a first brassiere cup and the other may be displaced to receive a second brassiere cup. In this case, formations 18 and 19 are restored to their original position once the brassiere is mounted.

Figure 2 shows with corresponding numbering for corresponding parts, a front elevation view of the assembly 1 of figure 1 with brassiere support

member 2 fully assembled on base assembly 3. Base 3 is shown in cross section so that it can be seen that wheel 24 travels in channel 14 and wheel 25 travels in channel 15. This arrangement allows releasable connection of member 2 to base 3 and in the same manner a plurality of like brassiere support members.

Figure 3 shows with corresponding numbering for corresponding parts perspective view of the brassiere assembly 1 with support member 2 and a plurality of bra support members 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36. Support member 2 is shown advanced along base assembly 3 and rotated in a direction of arrow 37 to form an increased space 38 which allows clearance to enable a user to mount a brassiere on formations 39 and 40 of support member 30. Likewise each support member may be advanced along and /or rotated relative to base 3.

Figure 4 shows with corresponding numbering a top rear perspective view of the assembly of figure 3. **Figure 5** shows with corresponding numbering a side elevation view of the brassiere assembly of figure 3. Support members 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36 are respectively mounted on wheels 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, and 47 each of which travel along channel 15. As described the wheels allow axial travel along the channel 15 and arcuate rotation relative to web 11. **Figure 6** shows with corresponding a long sectional view of the assembly of figure 5.

Figure 7 shows a perspective view of a brassiere support assembly 50 associated with a container 51 which may be a box, drawer, case or the like for use when a user requires storage of a variety of brassieres. Figure 7 shows container 51 as a storage box comprising walls 52 defining internal space 53 which receives and retains therein assembly 50. Support assembly 50 comprises base 54 which forms a spine which may be secured to the bottom of a support surface in container 51 and brassiere support member 55.

Rotation allows more space for the purposes of mounting a brassiere on the support assembly without interference from an adjacent support member. In one embodiment brassieres may be 'sandwiched' between adjacent support members so that convex outer surfaces presents to a concave inner surface of an adjacent support member. Once a brassiere is mounted, the support assembly may be returned back to its original upright position by contra rotation.

Preferably each of support members 21 – 30 are moveable relative to the spine 31 such that the spacing between adjacent formations can be altered according to individual spacing requirements. This arrangement may, according to one embodiment, be effected by sliding engagement. Alternatively, the support members may be advanced by using a ratchet mechanism. Various other forms of releasable engagement between support members and the base may be used such as snap fit adjustment. Preferably, the base and support members are manufactured from separate plastics moulds with size variable according to requirements. According to one embodiment, the support assembly is adapted for inclusion in a storage box to prolong the life of brassiere stored in the box. The box may typically include a storage location for bra accessories other than the cup. In another embodiment the assembly is locatable in a drawer such that brassieres which would otherwise be randomly thrown in a drawer can be carefully protected from unwanted damage. The underside of the assembly may be adapted with adhesive means such as peel and stick elements or tapes to secure the assembly via its base to a drawer base.

It will be appreciated that with this versatility integrated into brassiere storage assembly a user has wide capacity to adjust the configuration of the assembly according to the number of brassieres to be stored. Also formations may be adapted to suit a variety of brassiere sizes and types all of which may be stored in the one container. The support members are detachable and can be arranged with alternative spacing depending upon bra size.

It will be recognised by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and modifications may be made to the invention broadly described herein without departing from the overall spirit and scope of the invention.

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1 A brassiere support assembly comprising:

a base including a bearing surface;

at least one brassiere support member supported by the base and including formations each having a surface contoured to conform generally to the shape of a brassiere cup thereby allowing the at least one brassiere to be supported by the support member;

wherein the brassiere support member is adjustable relative to the base.

2 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 1 wherein the brassiere support member includes two convex formations which receive brassiere cups enabling support of the brassiere thereon.

3 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 2 wherein the support assembly is capable of rotation about a horizontal axis to facilitate mounting of a brassiere thereon.

4 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 3 wherein the base is elongated to receive and support a plurality of like support members.

5 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 4 wherein the mounting member is slidable along the base.

6 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 5 wherein the base includes means to enable fixation of the base to a support.

7 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 6 wherein the base further comprises a frame which defines in conjunction with the base at least one channel along which the support members slide.

8 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 7 wherein the support member includes runners which engage said channels and travel therealong.

9 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 8 wherein the runners are wheels.

10 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 9 wherein the frame is generally T shaped and includes outstanding flanges which define said channels.

11 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 10 wherein each support member has a pair of wheels, each of which travel in said channels of the base to allow spatial adjustment of one support member relative to an adjacent support member.

12 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 11 wherein the formations prevent deformation of the brassiere cups when the brassiere is mounted on the support member.

13 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 12 wherein the base includes end caps which provide a limit of travel of support members attached to the base

14 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 13 wherein the base comprises a spine which receives and retains the plurality of like support members.

15 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 14 wherein each support member is rotatable relative to the base to enable adjustment of the

position on one support member relative to another support member so as to create a gap between support members to facilitate mounting of a brassiere thereon.

16 A brassiere support assembly according to claim 15 wherein the wheels are mounted spaced apart on opposing axles so that then the support member engages the base the wheels are separated by a web which extends along the length of the base.

17 A container for retaining a brassiere support assembly therein;
the assembly comprising;
a base including an upper surface and a lower surface which engages a support surface; the base having a profile which defines parallel longitudinal channels;
at least one brassiere support member connectable to the base and including first and second formations each having a surfaces contoured to conform to the shape of a brassiere cup when a brassiere is mounted on the support member;
the brassiere support members each including means to allow movement of said at least one brassiere support member relative to the base.

18 A container according to claim 17 wherein each brassiere support member includes a carriage which enables the support member to travel along the channels

19 A drawer mountable brassiere support assembly comprising a base including an upper surface and a lower surface which engages an inside surface of a drawer; the base having a profile which defines parallel longitudinal channels;
at least one brassiere support member connectable to the base and including first and second formations each having a surfaces contoured to conform to the shape of a brassiere cup when a brassiere is mounted on the support member;

the brassiere support members each including means to allow movement of said at least one brassiere support member relative to the base.

20 A drawer mountable brassiere support assembly according to claim 19 wherein the formations prevent deformation of the brassiere cups when the brassiere is mounted on the support member.

21 A brassiere support assembly comprising:
a base including a bearing surface;
at least one brassiere support member supported by the base and capable of movement along the base;
formations on the support member each contoured to conform generally to the shape of a brassiere cup thereby allowing the at least one brassiere to be supported by the support member.

22 A brassiere support assembly kit comprising a plurality of mounted support members mounted on an elongated spine including an upper region and a lower region which engages a support surface;
each said plurality of brassiere support members including means to allow movement between a first state in which the support members are detached from or folded against the spine and a second state in which the support members are attached to the spine or unfolded; each said support members extending from the spine and including first and second formations each having a surface contoured to conform to the shape of a brassiere cup received thereon to allow support of the cups by the formations,
wherein the formations prevent deformation of the brassiere cups when the brassiere is mounted on the support member and wherein the spacing of the support members is adjustable along the spine.

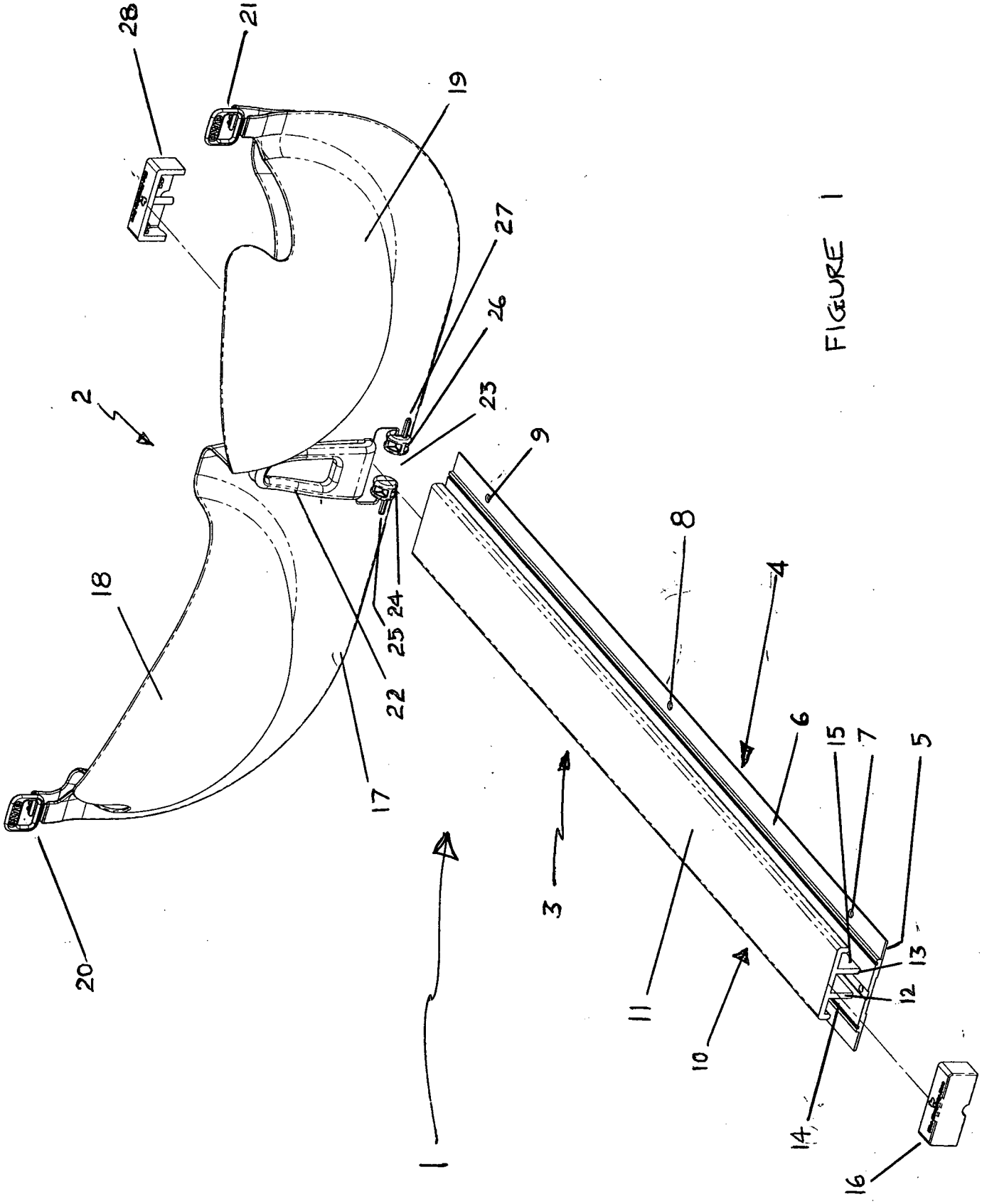


FIGURE 1

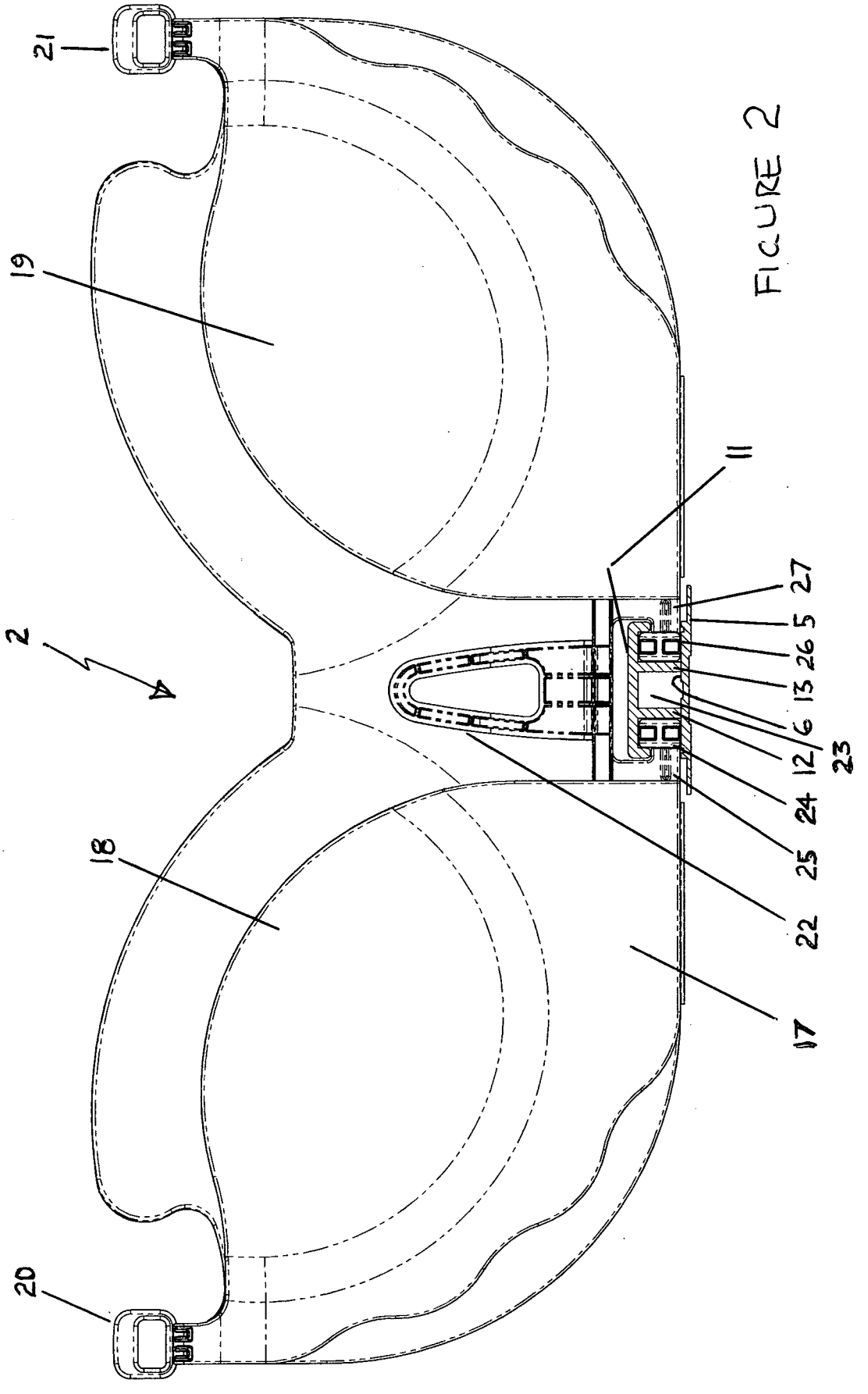


FIGURE 2

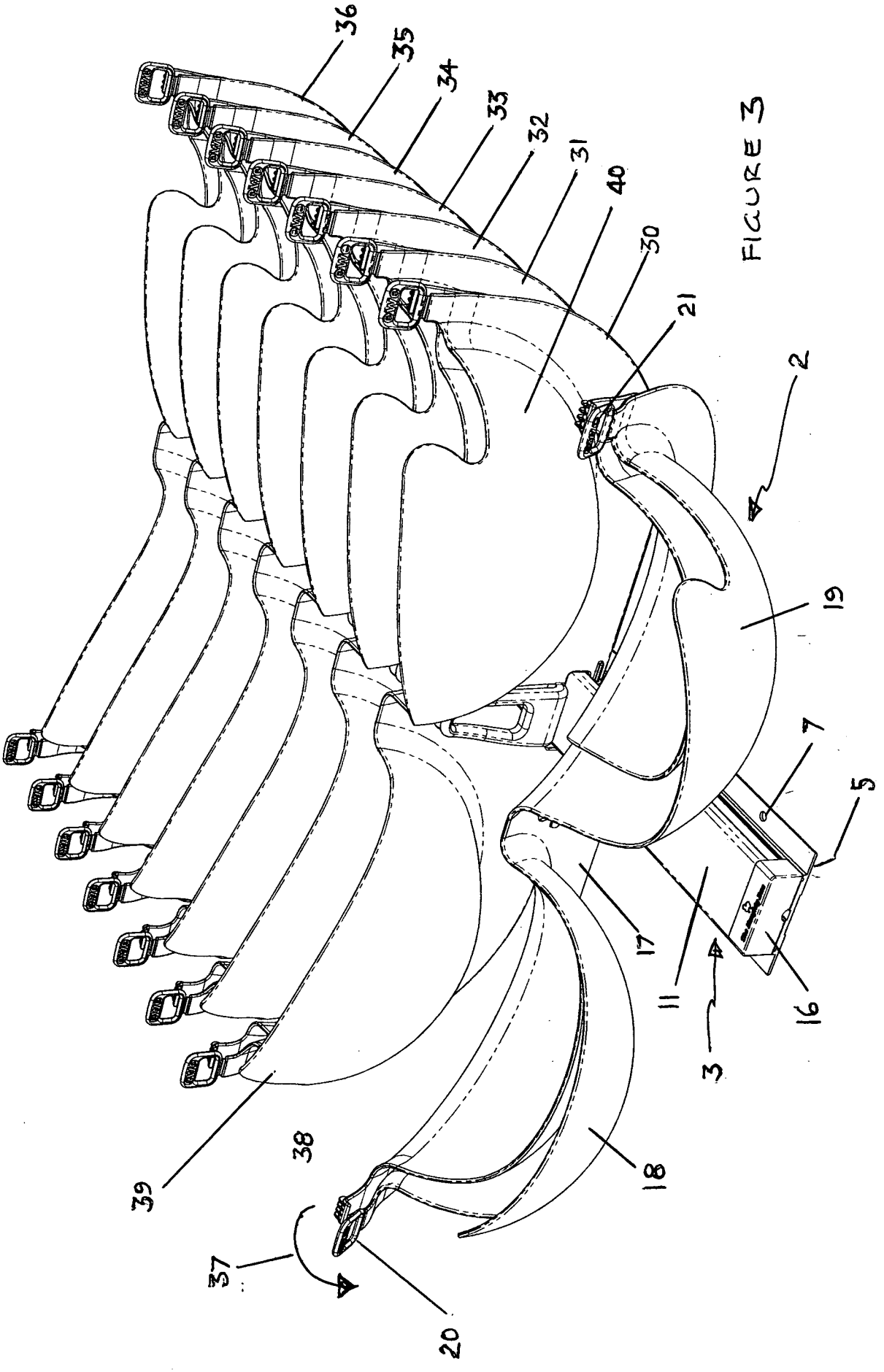


FIGURE 3

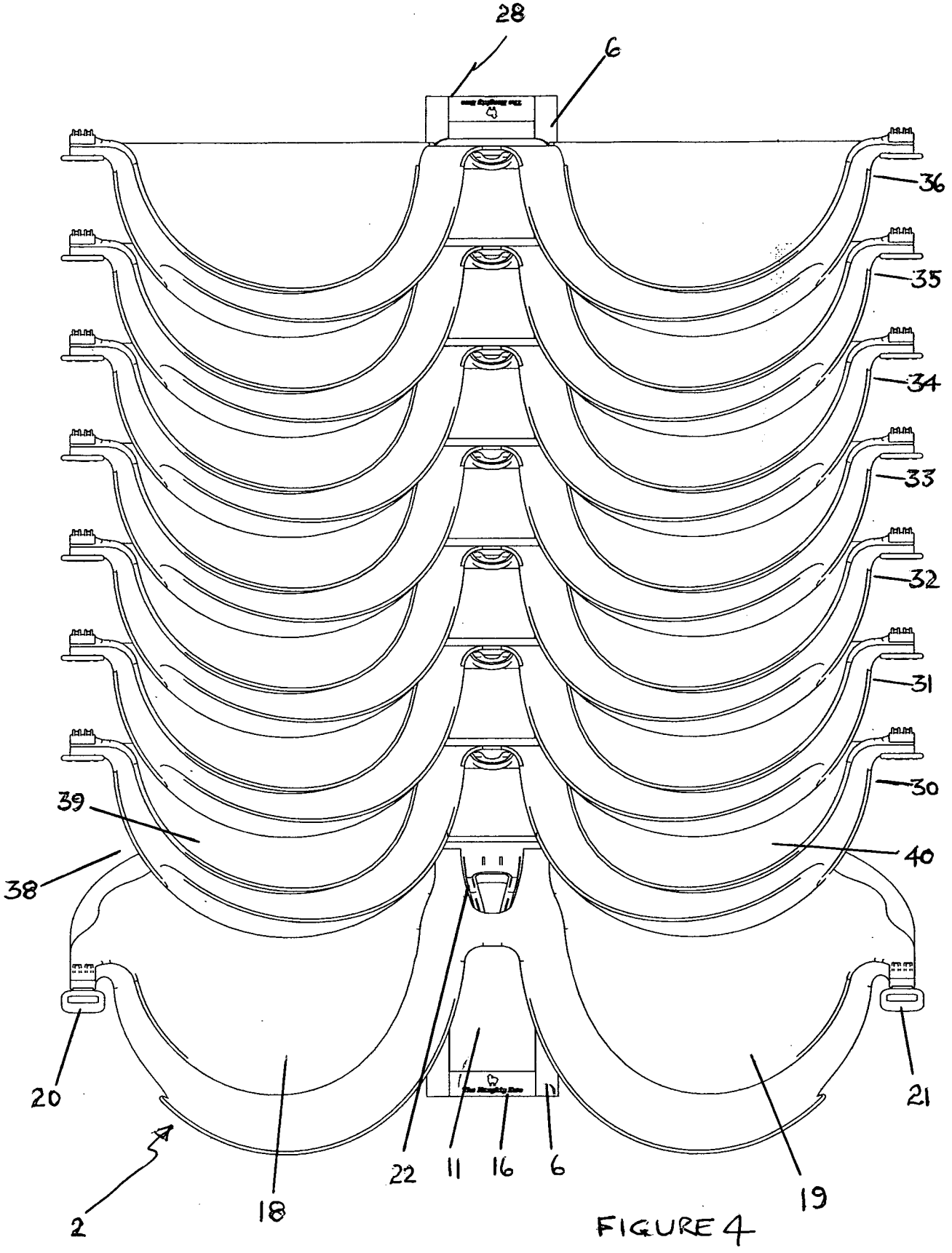


FIGURE 4

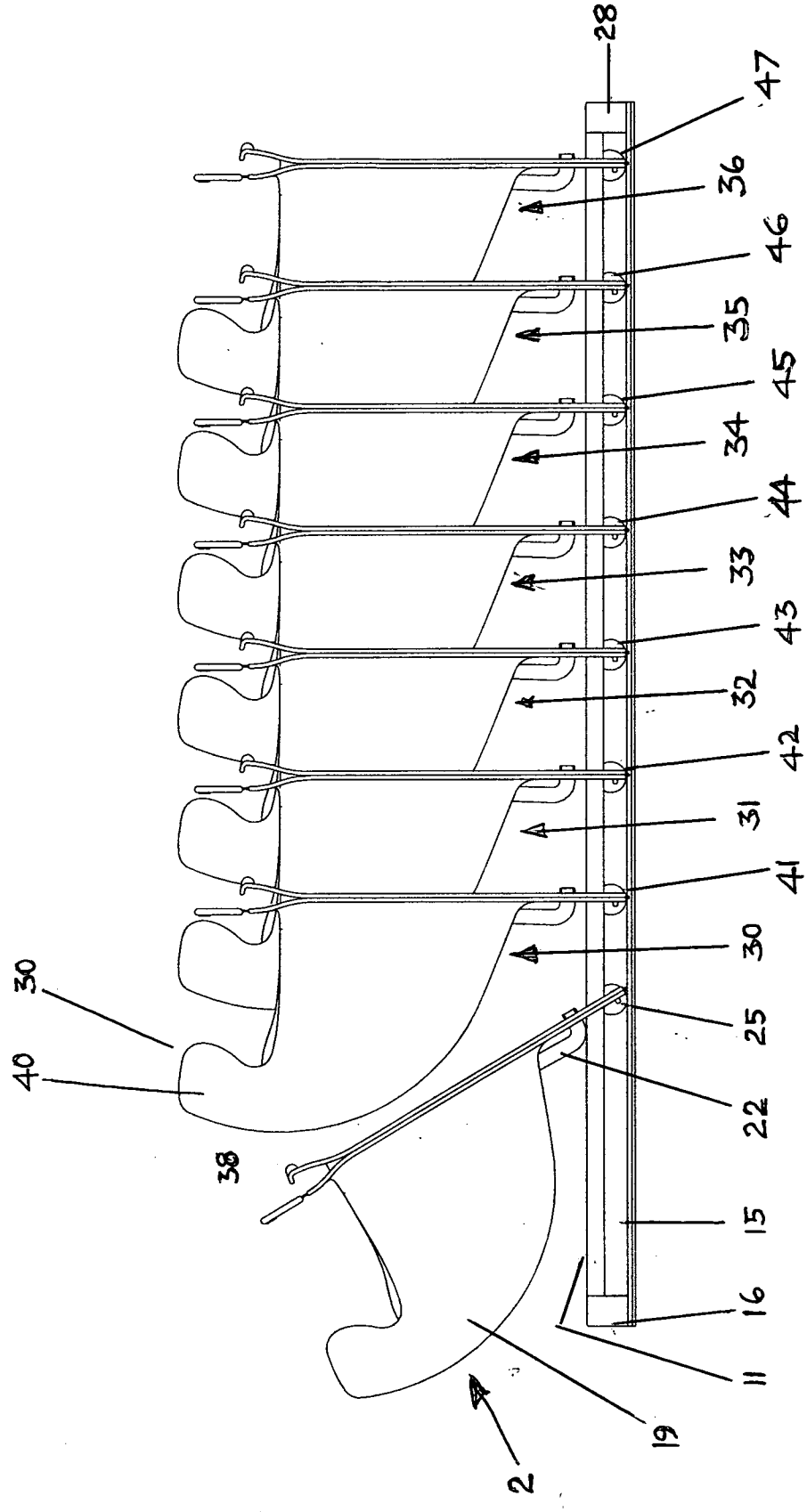


FIGURE 5

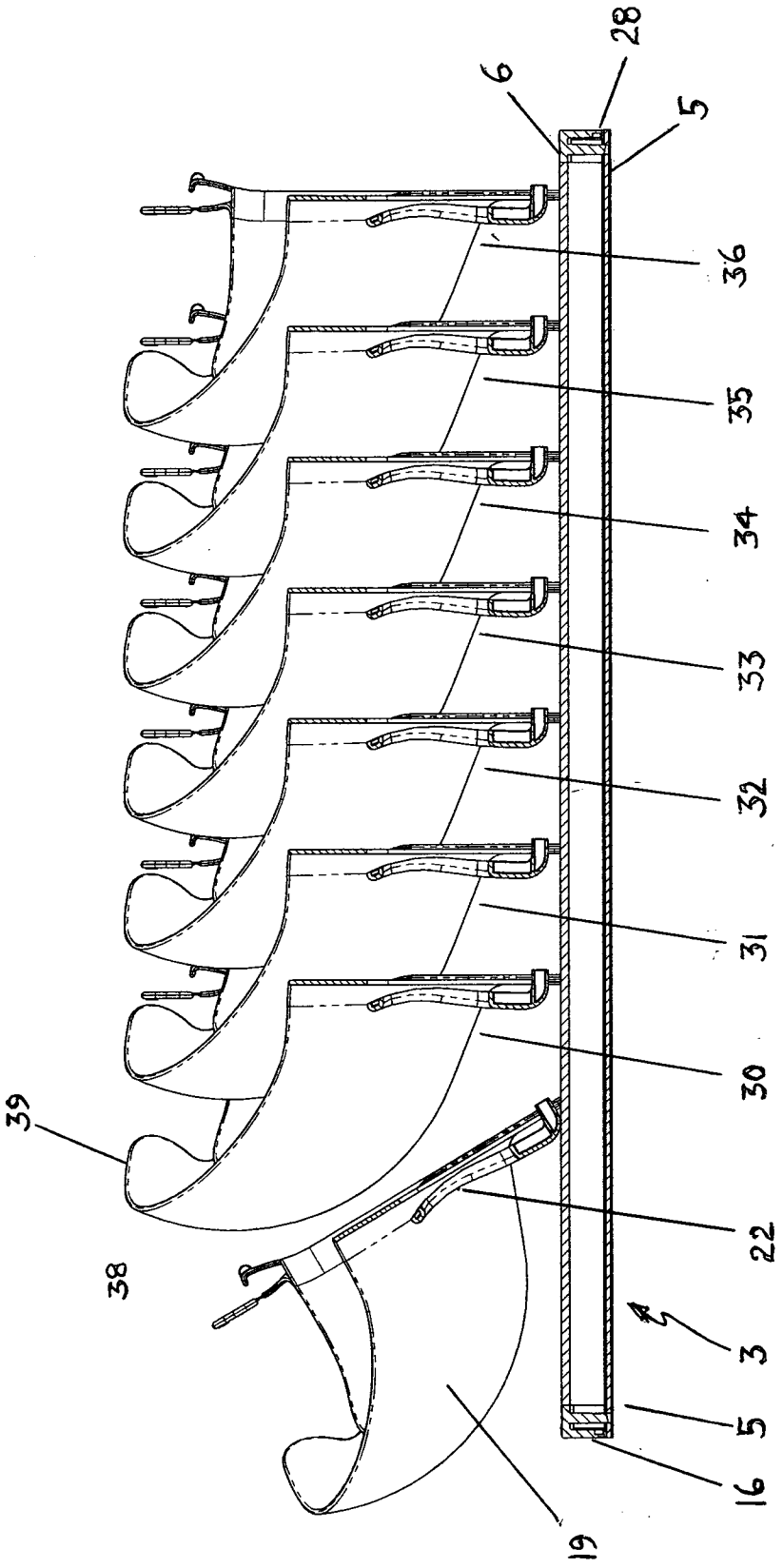


FIGURE 6

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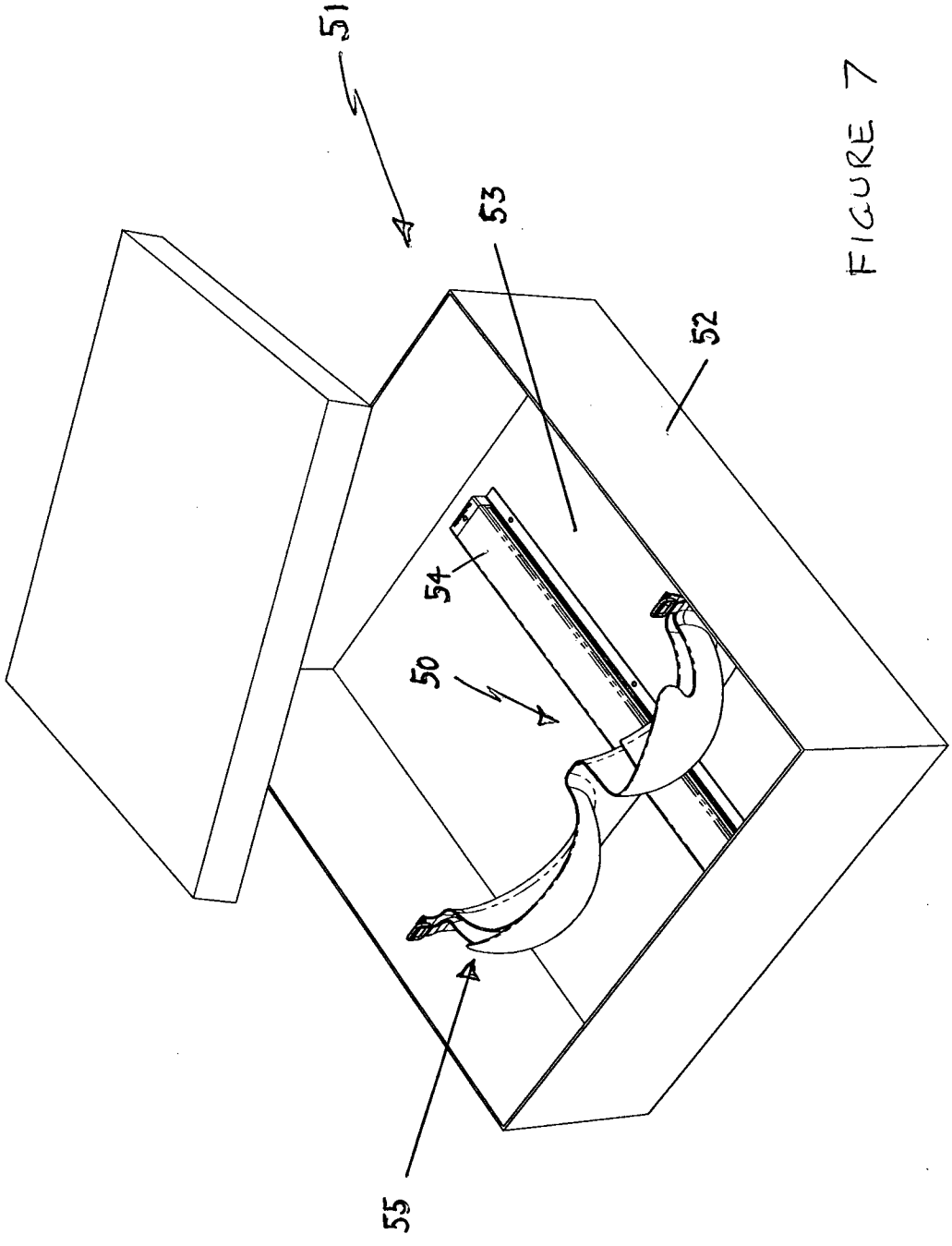


FIGURE 7

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/AU2009/000683

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

Int. Cl.

A47G 25/44 (2006.01) ***A47F 10/00*** (2006.01) ***A47G 29/00*** (2006.01)

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)

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
EPODOC, WPI: IPC A47G 25/-, 29/-, A41C, A47F AND KEYWORDS (BRA, CUP, ADJUST, SUPPORT, BASE, STORAGE, RACK AND LIKE TERMS)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	JP 2003-237865 A (THREE KK K) 27 August 2003 See figures 1-4	1-22
A	JP 2003-225151 A (SUGIYAMA ELECTRON KK) 12 August 2003 See figures 1 and 7	1-22
A	JP 2004-269037 A (MICHIKO) 30 September 2004 See figures 1, 3, 7 and 9	1-22

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C ☒ See patent family annex

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"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

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
02 September 2009	- 8 SEP 2009
Name and mailing address of the ISA/AU AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE PO BOX 200, WODEN ACT 2606, AUSTRALIA E-mail address: pct@ipaustralia.gov.au Facsimile No. +61 2 6283 7999	Authorized officer **PARMINDER SINGH** AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE (ISO 9001 Quality Certified Service) Telephone No : +61 2 6225 6135

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.
PCT/AU2009/000683

This Annex lists the known "A" publication level patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The Australian Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

Patent Document Cited in Search Report		Patent Family Member
JP	2003237865	NONE
JP	2003225151	NONE
JP	2004269037	NONE

Due to data integration issues this family listing may not include 10 digit Australian applications filed since May 2001.

END OF ANNEX