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(54) **FINGER-TIP CONTROLLED WRITING
UTENSIL AND ASSOCIATED METHOD**

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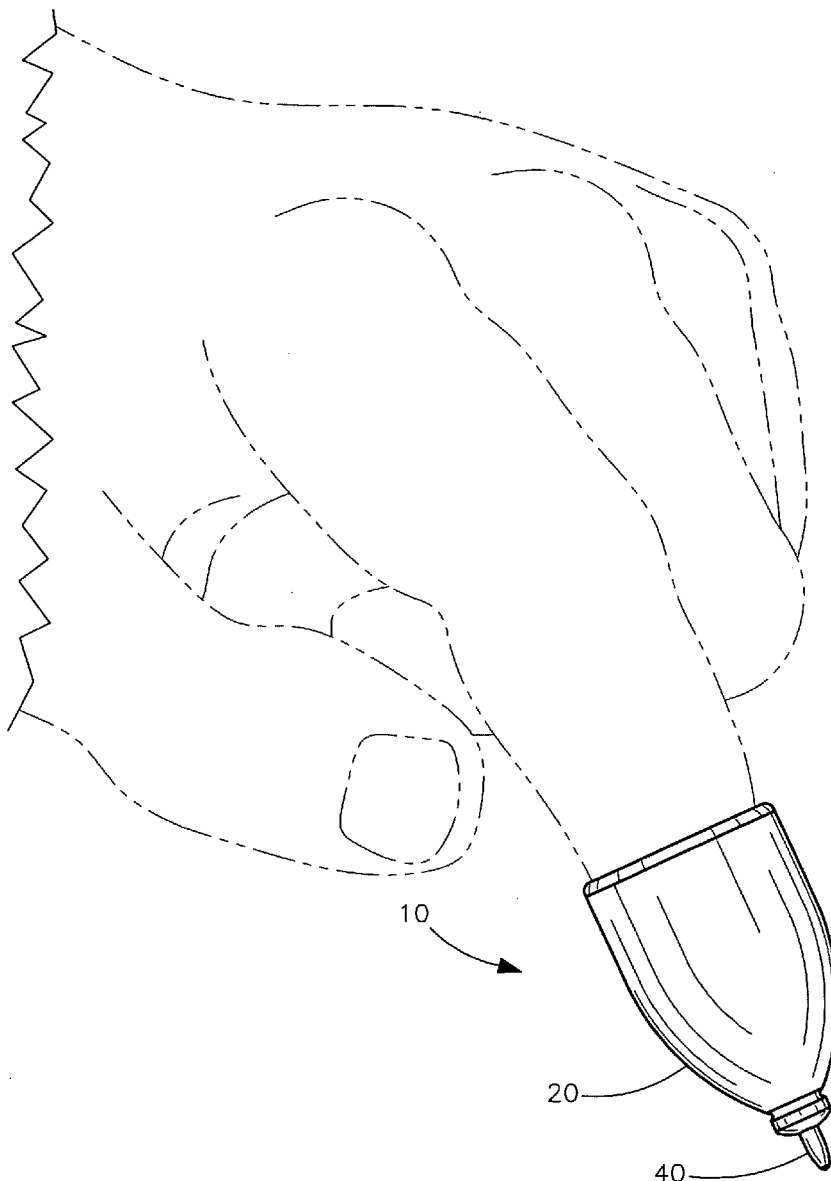
(57) **ABSTRACT**

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A writing utensil includes a body including a sleeve to receive a single finger tip of the user during writing conditions. A reservoir contains the ink and releases it via an orifice formed at a distal-most end of the body. A mechanism may be included for releasing the ink from a distal end of the body when an external force is applied against the sleeve and towards the distal end of the body. The mechanism may include a nozzle may additionally be conjoined directly to the orifice and contiguously abutted thereagainst so that the ink may be discharged away from the reservoir past the ball bearing while exiting the distal tip of the nozzle.

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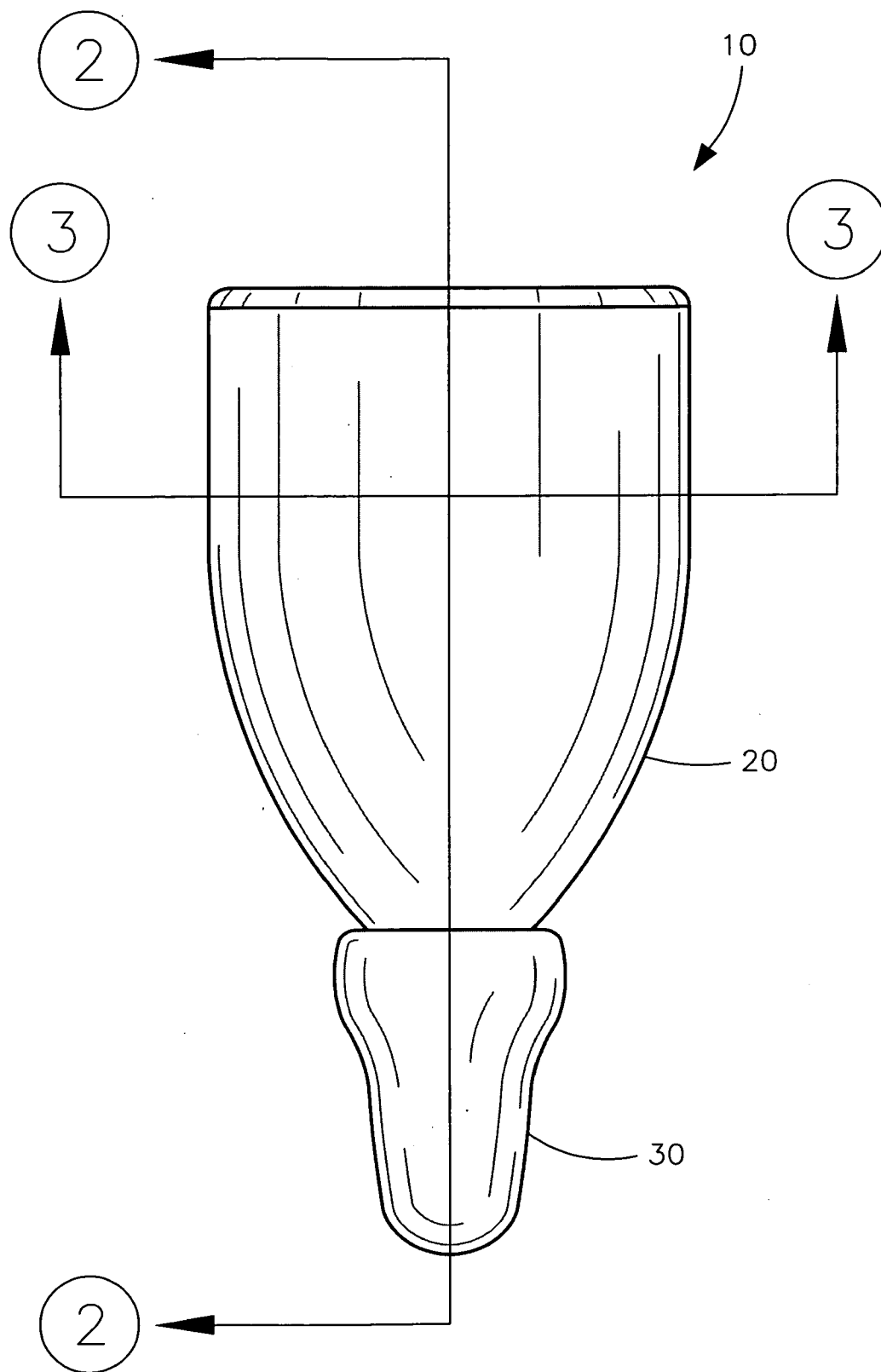


FIG. 1a

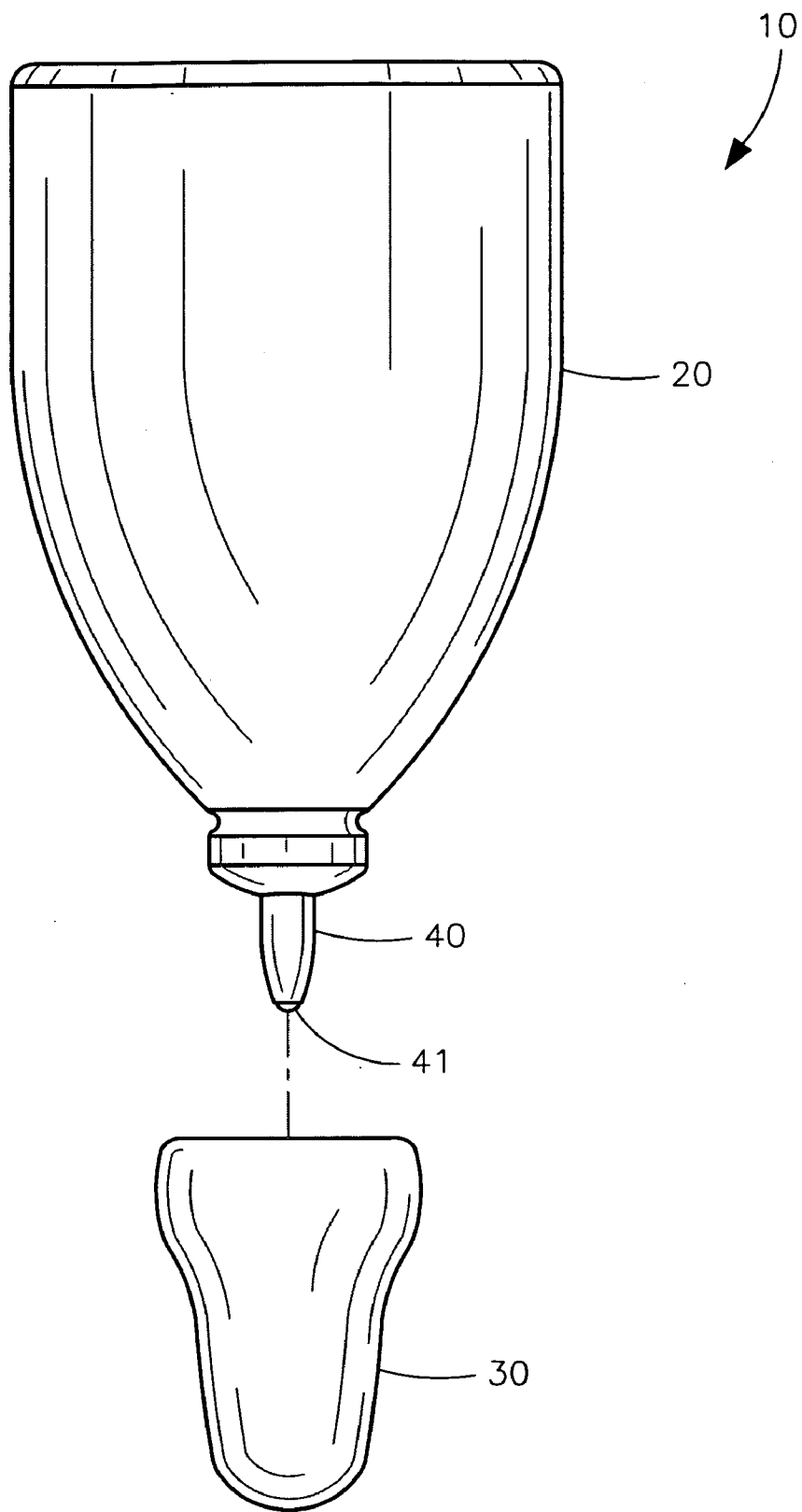


FIG. 1b

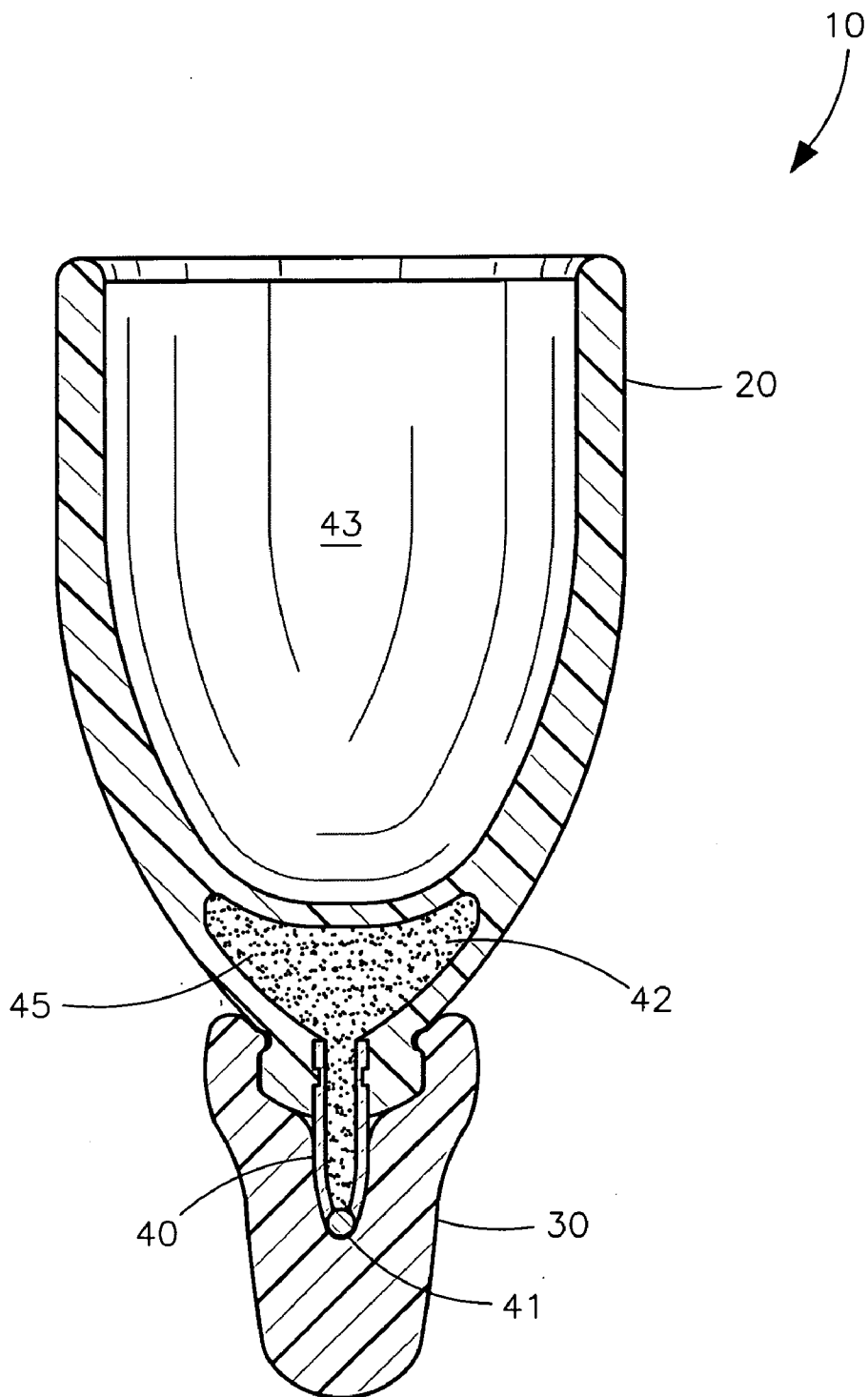


FIG. 2a

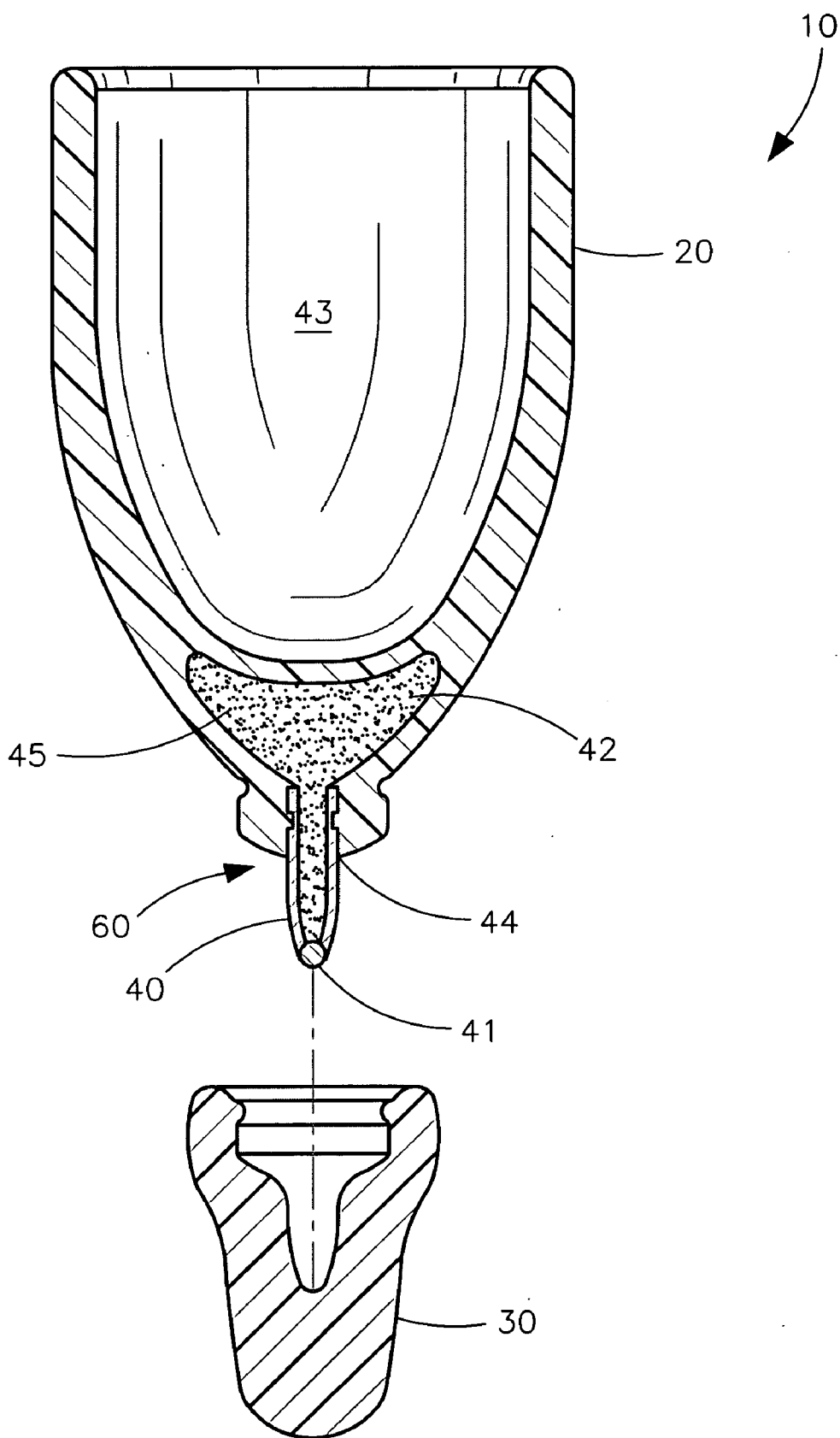


FIG. 2b

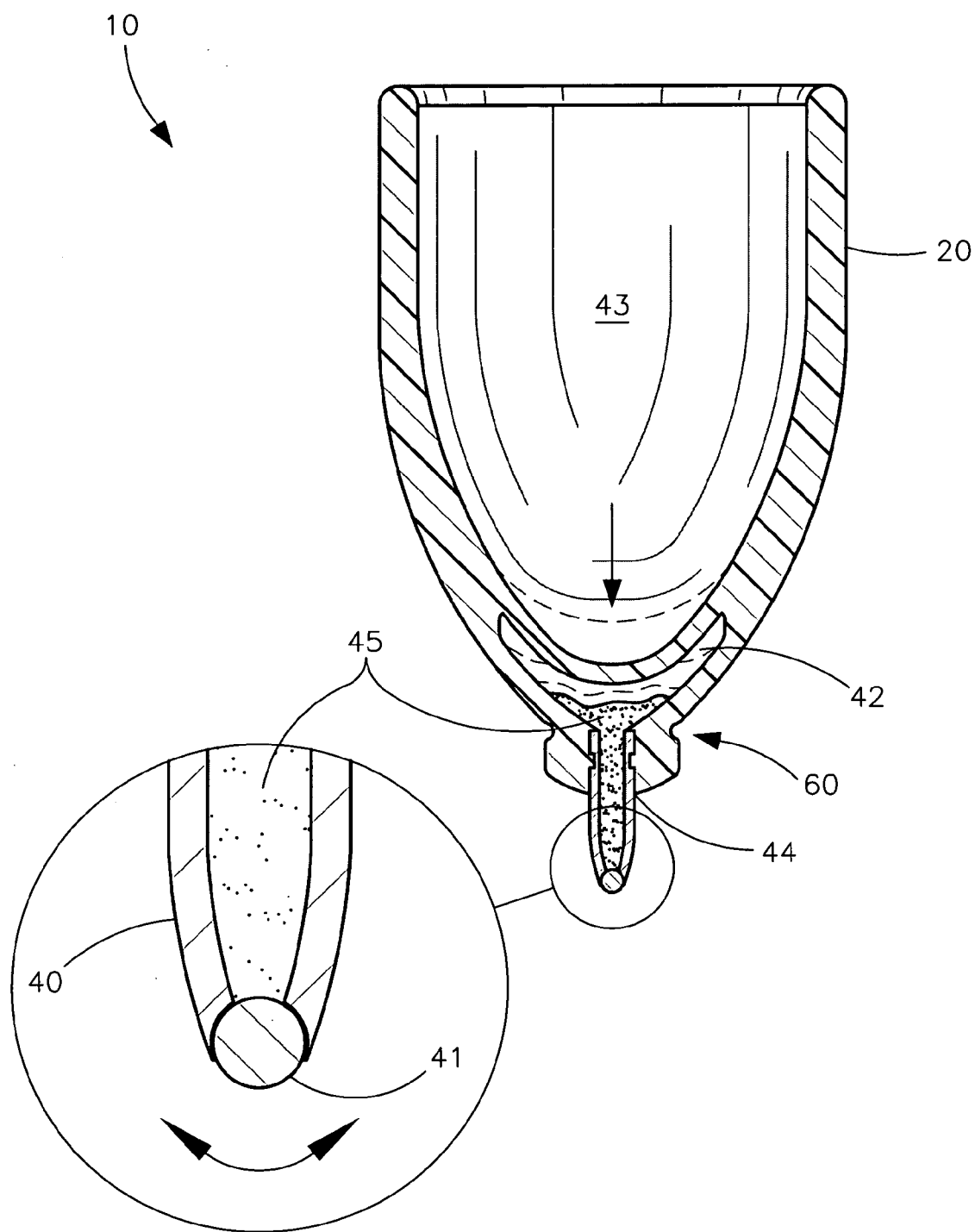


FIG. 2c

10
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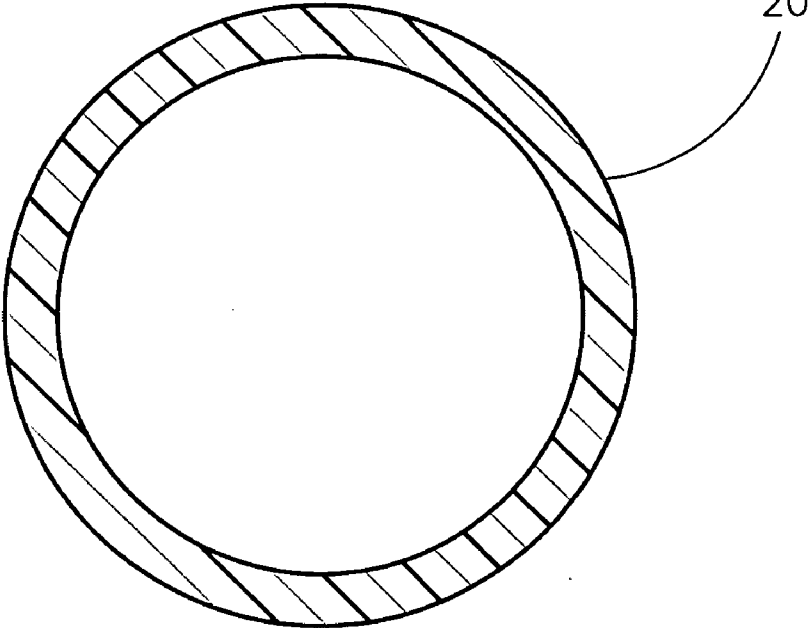


FIG. 3

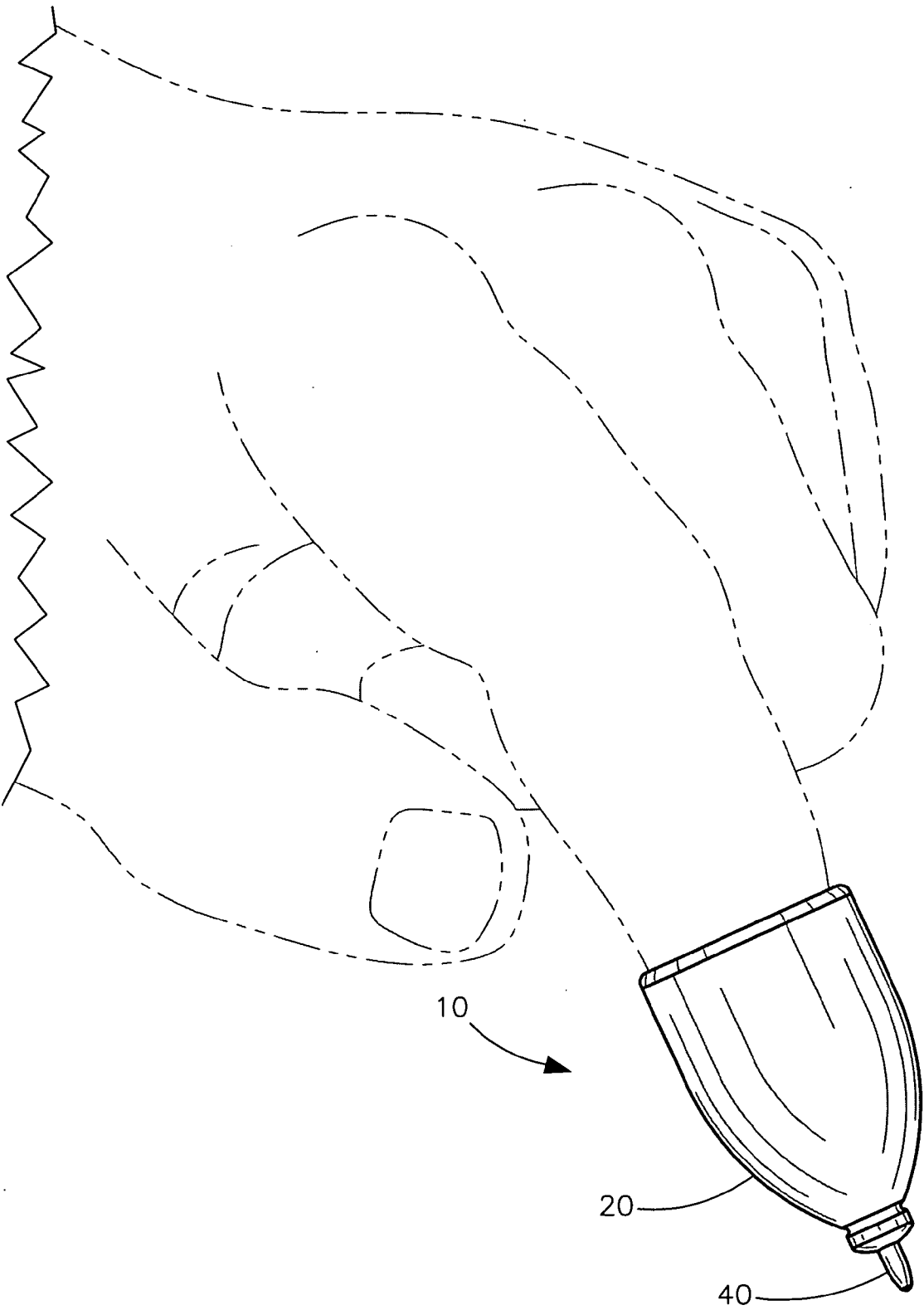


FIG. 4

FINGER-TIP CONTROLLED WRITING UTENSIL AND ASSOCIATED METHOD

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] Not Applicable.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] Not Applicable.

REFERENCE TO A MICROFICHE APPENDIX

[0003] Not Applicable.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0004] 1. Technical Field

[0005] This invention relates to writing utensils and, more particularly, to a writing utensil controlled by a single finger tip for enabling a user to easily write with the single finger tip.

[0006] 2. Prior Art

[0007] With today's heightened awareness of health concerns and constantly improving medical care, Americans are living longer than ever before. As the baby boomer generation gets older, dramatic increases are expected in the elderly population. In fact, the U.S. Bureau of the Census estimates that people 65 and older will comprise 20.4 percent of the country's population by the year 2030, up from the current 13 percent. However, if the unprecedented increase in life expectancy has a downside, it is the exposure of risk to chronic age-related disorders. Such serious ailments as diabetes, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases are but a few of the disabling disorders that keep many older persons from enjoying their longevity. Additionally, the elderly also have to deal with physical infirmities brought on by the inevitability of aging. The scientific journal Age and Aging reports that some 50% of persons over the age of 65 have osteoarthritis, and one-half of those are seriously disabled by the disease. However, challenges presented to those with limited mobility are not exclusive to the elderly. According to other statistics provided by the Census Bureau, nearly 8 percent of Americans between the ages of 15 and 64 suffer from some form of disability that hinders independent movement. Adding to these numbers are those with temporary ailments, such as broken bones or postoperative conditions.

[0008] As many with limited mobility can easily attest, attempting to complete day to day tasks without assistance can be daunting and frustrating. Arthritic patients often find it very difficult, if not impossible, to lower themselves to or rise from a seated position without experiencing extreme pain. Even simple endeavors, such as signing one's own name to important documents, can be fraught with challenges for those with arthritis, as well as individuals who experience paralysis as a result of a stroke. Unable to achieve a firm grip on a writing instrument, something that was once second nature, has become an impossibility for many Americans.

[0009] U.S. Pat. No. 5,529,415 to Bishop discloses a fingertip pen writer comprised of a finger portion adapted to be removably secured to a fingertip of a user. The finger portion has a holding chamber formed in an upper portion thereof. The finger portion has a ball point pen tip secured to an open end portion outwardly extending therefrom. An ink supply tube is secured within the holding chamber of the finger portion. The ink supply tube couples with the ball point pen

tip of the finger portion for supplying ink to the ball point pen tip. Unfortunately, this prior art reference requires an ink supply tube that is cumbersome to hold and control during writing procedures.

[0010] U.S. Pat. No. 4,738,556 to Brown discloses a finger-mounted ball point pen utilizing a padded tray that passes along the ventral side of the index finger, with a padded tip, and a hook and loop strap which secures the end of the index finger to the tray. Once secured to the index finger, the user can write in a normal fashion with little or no support from the other fingers or the thumb. Unfortunately, this prior art reference requires use of a strap, which can become loose and uncomfortable when rubbed against the user skin.

[0011] U.S. Pat. No. 4,986,682 to Chin Lu discloses a fingertip-receiving pen including a short hollow penholder for receiving a finger and a writing element coupled with a compression spring and attached to a socket within the penholder. The socket includes a unitary resilient hook member which can be forced to be seated in a hole extending through the side wall of the penholder so that the writing element can be firmly positioned when it is pushed by a finger to protrude beyond the front through-hole of the penholder. As soon as the resilient hook member is pressed to disengage the penholder from within the hole, the writing element is immediately pushed by the compression spring to completely move back inside the penholder so that the pen conveniently can be carried by oneself. Unfortunately, this prior art reference requires a spring member that can become distorted due to fatigue over repeated use.

[0012] Accordingly, a need remains for a writing utensil controlled by a single finger tip in order to overcome the above-noted shortcomings. The present invention satisfies such a need by providing a device that is convenient and easy to use, is durable yet lightweight in design, is versatile in its applications, and provides a user with a means of easily writing with the single finger tip.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0013] In view of the foregoing background, it is therefore an object of the present invention to provide an apparatus for enabling a user to easily write with a single finger tip. These and other objects, features, and advantages of the invention are provided by a writing utensil controlled by a single finger tip.

[0014] The present invention includes a writing utensil controlled by a single finger tip for enabling a user to easily write with the single finger tip may include a single and unitary body. Such a body may include a sleeve formed therein and may be adapted to receive a single finger tip of the user during writing conditions. Of course, one skilled in the art understands that the body may be produced in a variety of sizes to accommodate different user's fingertips, including a user's thumb if desired. A predetermined quantity of ink may be housed within the body and maintained distal to the sleeve. The ink is preferably injected into the reservoir and sealed with a conventional sealant, in a manner well known in the art. The body may house a variety of ink colors, or other highly viscous illuminating liquids as desired by the user, as is understood by one skilled in the art.

[0015] Further, a mechanism may be included for releasing the ink from a distal end of the body when an external force is applied against the sleeve and towards the distal end of the body. In addition, the body may be formed from flexible and non-porous material for prohibiting the ink from prematurely

leaking through the body which is vital and advantageous for prohibiting the ink from coming in contact with the user and thereby preventing the mess that would otherwise result. Also, the sleeve may have a closed distal end disposed proximal to the ink and the ink releasing mechanism respectively.

[0016] The ink releasing mechanism may further include a reservoir oppositely positioned from the sleeve such that the reservoir is distally spaced away from the sleeve. The reservoir contains the ink and releases it via an orifice formed at a distal-most end of the body. Such an orifice is in fluid communication with the reservoir for channeling the ink away from the reservoir. The orifice is preferably formed through the outer surface of the body and directly enters the reservoir. The nozzle may additionally be conjoined directly to the orifice and contiguously abutted thereagainst so that the ink may be discharged away from the reservoir past the ball bearing while exiting the distal tip of the nozzle. Such a direct interconnection between the nozzle and orifice solves the problem of premature and undesirable leaks from the reservoir by providing an unpredictable and unexpected result which is not rendered obvious by one skilled in the art. Further, the nozzle may be provided with a plug dynamically fitted at a distal tip of the plug. The plug may include a ball bearing permanently connected to the nozzle during writing and non-writing conditions. Such a ball-bearing is rotatably mated to the nozzle and carries ink on its outer surface wherein it is transferred to a writing surface as the ball-bearing rotates against the nozzle.

[0017] In an alternate embodiment, the plug may also be linearly retracted along a longitudinal length of the nozzle when an upward force is exerted thereagainst, to release the ink from the reservoir. The distal tip of the nozzle may be expanded to a tensed position when the external force is exerted against the plug to thereby permit the ink to flow beyond the plug during writing procedures. The plug may return to a distally-oriented equilibrium position when the external force is removed from the plug. Thus, the plug does not rotate at the distal end of the nozzle. Rather, it linearly slides up and down the longitudinal length of the nozzle. Thus, the proximal end of the nozzle remains statically affixed to the orifice while the distal tip of the nozzle is expanded to the tensed position so that the plug is prohibited from traveling too far up the nozzle and thereby maintained downstream of the reservoir.

[0018] The sleeve may further have a deformably resilient inner layer adjoining the reservoir. Such an inner layer may be displaced towards the reservoir during writing conditions such that the reservoir may become compressed and thereby urge the ink towards the distal tip of the nozzle. This feature is advantageous for overcoming prior art shortcomings of not adequately releasing ink from the reservoir.

[0019] Additionally, the reservoir may be compressed when an external force is urged against an outer surface of the distal end of the body such that the ink is downwardly discharged through the orifice and the nozzle respectively. The deformably resilient nature of the sleeve and reservoir allows the use to press down towards the reservoir and discharge air-pockets therefrom so that the ink freely egresses from the nozzle tip.

[0020] The present invention, as claimed, provides the unexpected and unpredictable benefit of allowing the user to massage the outer layer of the reservoir which is distally situated adjacent to the distal end of the sleeve and thereby agitate the ink inside the reservoir during writing procedures

for effectively discharging the ink out from the nozzle. Such a feature of the present invention provides an unpredictable and unexpected result which is not rendered obvious by one skilled in the art because conventional writing utensils maintain the ink in a rigid casing that is not deformably resilient or agitated from an external force exerted by a tip of the user's finger during writing conditions.

[0021] The writing utensil may further include a cap removably attached to the distal end of the body. Such a cap may thereby shield the nozzle from undesirably foreign debris during non-writing conditions.

[0022] The present invention may further include a method for using a writing utensil that is controlled by a single finger tip of a user. Such a method may include the chronological steps of first providing a single and unitary body. The body may include a sleeve formed therein and preferably has an orifice formed at a distal end of the body. The sleeve preferably has a closed distal end disposed proximal to the ink and the orifice respectively.

[0023] A second step of the method may include housing a predetermined quantity of ink within the body by injecting the ink upwardly through the orifice. The method may include a third step of maintaining the ink distal to the sleeve by attaching a nozzle to the orifice.

[0024] Fourthly, the method may include inserting a single finger tip into the sleeve during writing conditions such that the single finger tip abuts against the closed distal end of the sleeve. Finally, a fifth step may include releasing the ink from the distal end of the body by applying an external force against the closed distal end of the sleeve and towards the distal end of the body and thereby urging the ink out from the nozzle. The body may be formed from flexible and non-porous material for prohibiting the ink from prematurely leaking through the body.

[0025] There has thus been outlined, rather broadly, the more important features of the invention in order that the detailed description thereof that follows may be better understood, and in order that the present contribution to the art may be better appreciated. There are additional features of the invention that will be described hereinafter and which will form the subject matter of the claims appended hereto.

[0026] It is noted the purpose of the foregoing abstract is to enable the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and the public generally, especially the scientists, engineers and practitioners in the art who are not familiar with patent or legal terms or phraseology, to determine quickly from a cursory inspection the nature and essence of the technical disclosure of the application. The abstract is neither intended to define the invention of the application, which is measured by the claims, nor is it intended to be limiting as to the scope of the invention in any way.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

[0027] The novel features believed to be characteristic of this invention are set forth with particularity in the appended claims. The invention itself, however, both as to its organization and method of operation, together with further objects and advantages thereof, may best be understood by reference to the following description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings in which:

[0028] FIG. 1 is a front elevational view showing a writing utensil controlled by a single finger tip, in accordance with the present invention;

[0029] FIG. 2 is an exploded view of FIG. 1, showing the cap detached from the body;

[0030] FIGS. 2a-2b are cross-sectional views taken along line 2-2 in FIG. 1, showing the ink discharging mechanism adjacently positioned to the distal end of the sleeve;

[0031] FIG. 2c is an enlarged partial cross-sectional view of the nozzle and plug (ball bearing);

[0032] FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view showing the hollow interior of the sleeve and open top end thereof; and

[0033] FIG. 4 is perspective view of the writing utensil positioned on a finger tip of the user during writing procedures.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0034] The present invention will now be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which a preferred embodiment of the invention is shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiment set forth herein. Rather, this embodiment is provided so that this application will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the true scope of the invention to those skilled in the art. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout the figures.

[0035] The apparatus of this invention is referred to generally in FIGS. 1-4 by the reference numeral 10 and is intended to provide a writing utensil controlled by a single finger tip. It should be understood that the writing utensil 10 may be controlled many different fingers and should not be limited to use with only an index finger.

[0036] Referring to FIGS. 1-4, the invention includes a writing utensil 10 controlled by a single finger tip for enabling a user to easily write with the single finger tip may include a single and unitary body 20. Such a body 20 may include a sleeve 43 formed therein and may be adapted to receive a single finger tip of the user during writing conditions. Of course, one skilled in the art understands that the body 20 may be produced in a variety of sizes to accommodate different user's fingertips, including a user's thumb if desired. A predetermined quantity of ink 45 may be housed within the body 20 and maintained distal to the sleeve 43. The ink 45 is preferably injected into the reservoir 42 and sealed with a conventional sealant, in a manner well known in the art. The body 20 may house a variety of ink colors, or other highly viscous illuminating liquids as desired by the user, as is understood by one skilled in the art.

[0037] Further, a mechanism 60 may be included for releasing the ink 45 from a distal end of the body 20 when an external force is applied against the sleeve 43 and towards the distal end of the body 20. In addition, the body 20 may be formed from flexible and non-porous material for prohibiting the ink 45 from prematurely leaking through the body 20 which is vital and advantageous for prohibiting the ink 45 from coming in contact with the user and thereby preventing the mess that would otherwise result. Also, the sleeve 43 may have a closed distal end disposed proximal to the ink 45 and the ink 45 releasing mechanism 60 respectively.

[0038] The ink 45 releasing mechanism 60 may further include a reservoir 42 oppositely positioned from the sleeve 43 such that the reservoir 42 is distally spaced away from the sleeve 43. The reservoir 42 contains the ink 45 and releases it via an orifice 44 formed at a distal-most end of the body 20. Such an orifice 44 is in fluid communication with the reservoir 42 for channeling the ink 45 away from the reservoir 42.

The orifice 44 is preferably formed through the outer surface of the body 20 and directly enters the reservoir 42. The nozzle 40 may additionally be conjoined directly to the orifice 44 and contiguously abutted thereagainst so that the ink 45 may be discharged away from the reservoir 42 past the ball bearing while exiting the distal tip of the nozzle 40. Such a direct interconnection between the nozzle 40 and orifice 44 solves the problem of premature and undesirable leaks from the reservoir 42 by providing an unpredictable and unexpected result which is not rendered obvious by one skilled in the art.

[0039] Further, the nozzle 40 may be provided with a plug 41 dynamically fitted at a distal tip of the plug 41. The plug 41 may include a ball bearing permanently connected to the nozzle 40 during writing and non-writing conditions. Such a ball-bearing is rotatably mated to the nozzle 40 and carries ink 45 on its outer surface wherein it is transferred to a writing surface as the ball-bearing rotates against the nozzle 40.

[0040] In an alternate embodiment, the plug 41 may also be linearly retracted along a longitudinal length of the nozzle 40 when an upward force is exerted thereagainst, to release the ink 45 from the reservoir 42. The distal tip of the nozzle 40 may be expanded to a tensed position when the external force is exerted against the plug 41 to thereby permit the ink 45 to flow beyond the plug 41 during writing procedures. The plug 41 may return to a distally-oriented equilibrium position when the external force is removed from the plug 41. The term plug 41 is not intended to define a stop member. Rather, the term plug 41 is used in the present application to mean a round and rotatable object that permits ink to adhere to its outer surface and thereby transferred to a writing surface.

[0041] Thus, the plug 41 does not rotate at the distal end of the nozzle 40. Rather, it linearly slides up and down the longitudinal length of the nozzle 40. Thus, the proximal end of the nozzle 40 remains statically affixed to the orifice 44 while the distal tip of the nozzle 40 is expanded to the tensed position so that the plug 41 is prohibited from traveling too far up the nozzle 40 and thereby maintained downstream of the reservoir 42.

[0042] The sleeve 43 may further have a deformably resilient inner layer adjoining the reservoir 42. Such an inner layer may be displaced towards the reservoir 42 during writing conditions such that the reservoir 42 may become compressed and thereby urge the ink 45 towards the distal tip of the nozzle 40. This feature is advantageous for overcoming prior art shortcomings of not adequately releasing ink 45 from the reservoir 42.

[0043] Additionally, the reservoir 42 may be compressed when an external force is urged against an outer surface of the distal end of the body 20 such that the ink 45 is downwardly discharged through the orifice 44 and the nozzle 40 respectively. The deformably resilient nature of the sleeve 43 and reservoir 42 allows the use to press down towards the reservoir 42 and discharge air-pockets therefrom so that the ink 45 freely egresses from the nozzle 40 tip.

[0044] The present invention, as claimed, provides the unexpected and unpredictable benefit of allowing the user to massage the outer layer of the reservoir 42 which is distally situated adjacent to the distal end of the sleeve 43 and thereby agitate the ink 45 inside the reservoir 42 during writing procedures for effectively discharging the ink 45 out from the nozzle 40. Such a feature of the present invention provides an unpredictable and unexpected result which is not rendered obvious by one skilled in the art because conventional writing utensils maintain the ink 45 in a rigid casing that is not

deformably resilient or agitated from an external force exerted by a tip of the user's finger during writing conditions.

[0045] The writing utensil 10 may further include a cap 30 removably attached to the distal end of the body 20. Such a cap 30 may thereby shield the nozzle 40 from undesirably foreign debris during non-writing conditions.

[0046] The present invention may further include a method for using a writing utensil 10 that is controlled by a single finger tip of a user. Such a method may include the chronological steps of first providing a single and unitary body 20. The body 20 may include a sleeve 43 formed therein and preferably has an orifice 44 formed at a distal end of the body 20. The sleeve 43 preferably has a closed distal end disposed proximal to the ink 45 and the orifice 44 respectively.

[0047] A second step of the method may include housing a predetermined quantity of ink 45 within the body 20 by injecting the ink 45 upwardly through the orifice 44. The method may include a third step of maintaining the ink 45 distal to the sleeve 43 by attaching a nozzle 40 to the orifice 44.

[0048] Fourthly, the method may include inserting a single finger tip into the sleeve 43 during writing conditions such that the single finger tip abuts against the closed distal end of the sleeve 43. Finally, a fifth step may include releasing the ink 45 from the distal end of the body 20 by applying an external force against the closed distal end of the sleeve 43 and towards the distal end of the body 20 and thereby urging the ink 45 out from the nozzle 40. The body 20 may be formed from flexible and non-porous material for prohibiting the ink 45 from prematurely leaking through the body 20.

[0049] While the invention has been described with respect to a certain specific embodiment, it will be appreciated that many modifications and changes may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit of the invention. It is intended, therefore, by the appended claims to cover all such modifications and changes as fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention.

[0050] In particular, with respect to the above description, it is to be realized that the optimum dimensional relationships for the parts of the present invention may include variations in size, materials, shape, form, function and manner of operation. The assembly and use of the present invention are deemed readily apparent and obvious to one skilled in the art.

What is claimed as new and what is desired to secure by Letters Patent of the United States is:

1. A writing utensil controlled by a single finger tip for enabling a user to easily write with the single finger tip, said writing utensil comprising:

- a body comprising a sleeve formed therein and being adapted to receive the single finger tip during writing conditions;
- a predetermined quantity of ink housed within said body and maintained distal to said sleeve; and
- means for releasing said ink from a distal end of said body when an external force is applied against said sleeve and towards said distal end of said body;
- wherein said body is formed from flexible and non-porous material for prohibiting said ink from prematurely leaking through said body.

2. The writing utensil of claim 1, wherein said ink releasing means comprises:

- a reservoir oppositely positioned from said sleeve such that said reservoir is distally spaced away from said sleeve;
- an orifice formed at a distal-most end of said body and being in fluid communication with said reservoir; and

a nozzle provided with a plug dynamically fitted at a distal tip of said plug,

wherein said nozzle is conjoined directly to said orifice and contiguously abutted thereagainst so that said ink is discharged away from said reservoir past said ball bearing while exiting said distal tip of said nozzle.

3. The writing utensil of claim 2, wherein said sleeve has a deformably resilient inner layer adjoining said reservoir, said inner layer being displaced towards said reservoir during writing conditions such that said reservoir becomes compressed and thereby urges said ink towards said distal tip of said nozzle.

4. The writing utensil of claim 2, wherein said distal tip of said nozzle is expanded to a tensed position when the external force is exerted against said plug to thereby permit said ink to flow beyond said plug during writing procedures.

5. The writing utensil of claim 2, wherein a proximal end of said nozzle remains statically affixed to said orifice while said distal tip of said nozzle is expanded to the tensed position.

6. The writing utensil of claim 2, wherein said plug comprises: a ball bearing permanently connected to said nozzle during writing and non-writing conditions.

7. The writing utensil of claim 2, wherein said reservoir is compressed when an external force is urged against an outer surface of said distal end of said body such that said ink is downwardly discharged through said orifice and said nozzle respectively.

8. The writing utensil of claim 2, further comprising: a cap removably attached to said distal end of said body and thereby shielding said nozzle from undesirably foreign debris during non-writing conditions.

9. A writing utensil controlled by a single finger tip for enabling a user to easily write with the single finger tip, said writing utensil comprising:

- a single and unitary body comprising a sleeve formed therein and being adapted to receive the single finger tip during writing conditions;
- a predetermined quantity of ink housed within said body and maintained distal to said sleeve; and
- means for releasing said ink from a distal end of said body when an external force is applied against said sleeve and towards said distal end of said body;
- wherein said body is formed from flexible and non-porous material for prohibiting said ink from prematurely leaking through said body;
- wherein said sleeve has a closed distal end disposed proximal to said ink and said ink releasing means respectively.

10. The writing utensil of claim 9, wherein said ink releasing means comprises:

- a reservoir oppositely positioned from said sleeve such that said reservoir is distally spaced away from said sleeve;
- an orifice formed at a distal-most end of said body and being in fluid communication with said reservoir; and
- a nozzle provided with a plug dynamically fitted at a distal tip of said plug,
- wherein said nozzle is conjoined directly to said orifice and contiguously abutted thereagainst so that said ink is discharged away from said reservoir past said ball bearing while exiting said distal tip of said nozzle.

11. The writing utensil of claim 10, wherein said sleeve has a deformably resilient inner layer adjoining said reservoir, said inner layer being displaced towards said reservoir during

writing conditions such that said reservoir becomes compressed and thereby urges said ink towards said distal tip of said nozzle.

12. The writing utensil of claim **10**, wherein said distal tip of said nozzle is expanded to a tensed position when the external force is exerted against said plug to thereby permit said ink to flow beyond said plug during writing procedures.

13. The writing utensil of claim **10**, wherein a proximal end of said nozzle remains statically affixed to said orifice while said distal tip of said nozzle is expanded to the tensed position.

14. The writing utensil of claim **10**, wherein said plug comprises: a ball bearing permanently connected to said nozzle during writing and non-writing conditions.

15. The writing utensil of claim **10**, wherein said reservoir is compressed when an external force is urged against an outer surface of said distal end of said body such that said ink is downwardly discharged through said orifice and said nozzle respectively.

16. The writing utensil of claim **10**, further comprising: a cap removably attached to said distal end of said body and thereby shielding said nozzle from undesirably foreign debris during non-writing conditions.

17. A method for using a writing utensil that is controlled by a single finger tip of a user, said method comprising the chronological steps of:

- a. providing a single and unitary body comprising a sleeve formed therein, said body further having an orifice formed at a distal end of said body, said sleeve having a closed distal end disposed proximal to said ink and said orifice respectively;
- b. housing a predetermined quantity of ink within said body by injecting said ink upwardly through said orifice;
- c. maintaining said ink distal to said sleeve by attaching a nozzle to said orifice;
- d. inserting the single finger tip into said sleeve during writing conditions such that the single finger tip abuts against said closed distal end of said sleeve; and
- e. releasing said ink from said distal end of said body by applying an external force against said closed distal end of said sleeve and towards said distal end of said body and thereby urging said ink out from said nozzle; wherein said body is formed from flexible and non-porous material for prohibiting said ink from prematurely leaking through said body.

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