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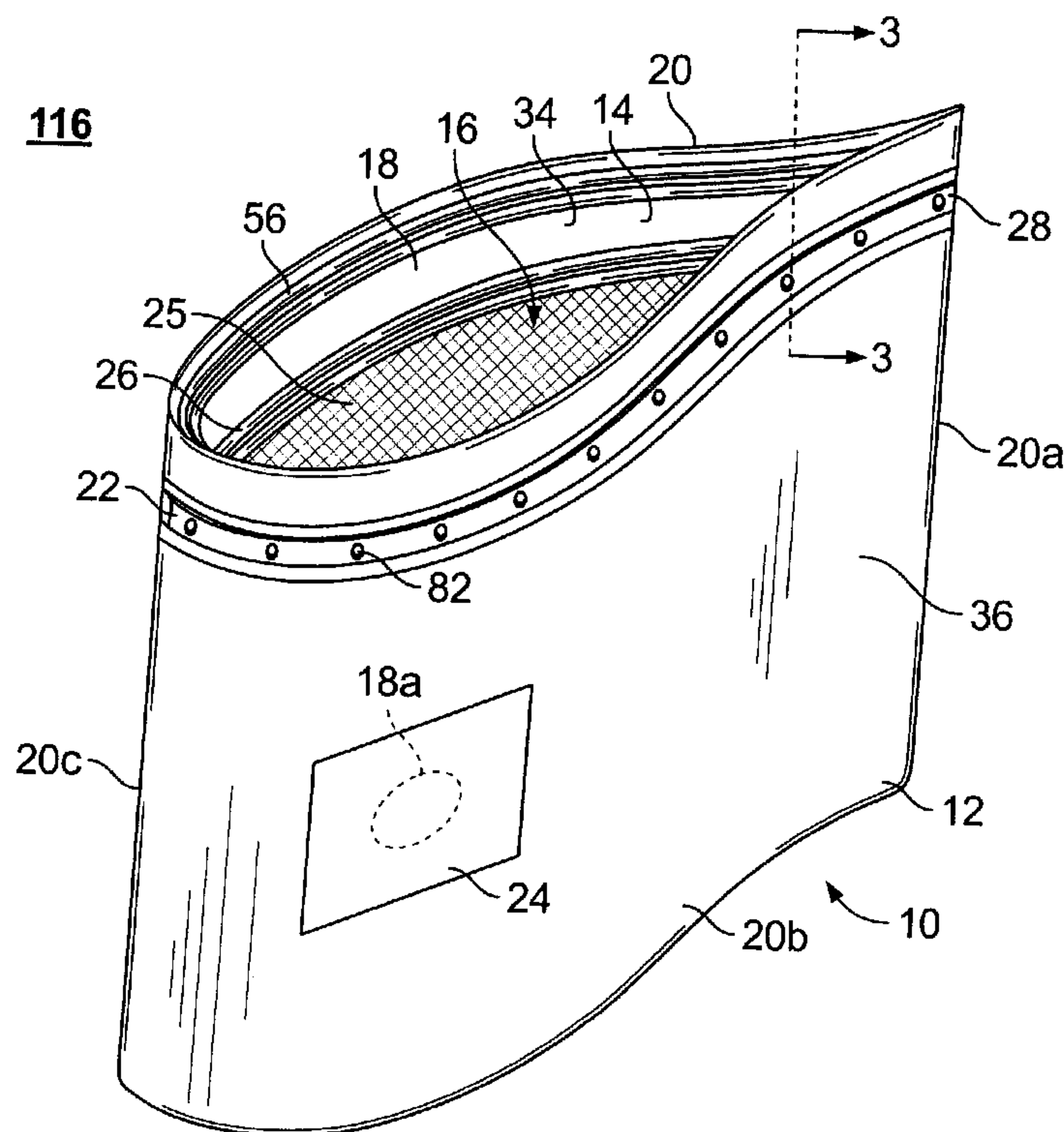
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(54) Titre : MECANISME DE FERMETURE DECALE POUR SAC REUTILISABLE

(54) Title: OFFSET CLOSURE MECHANISM FOR A RECLOSABLE POUCH



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

An offset resealable closure mechanism adapted to provide an airtight seal for a pouch includes a first elongate closure element and a second elongate closure element. The first elongate closure element includes a first elongate closure profile extending therefrom and a second elongate closure element includes first and second legs extending therefrom to define a channel. A sealing flange extends across the channel and includes a slit therethrough adapted to receive the first elongate closure profile. The sealing flange forms an airtight seal with the first elongate closure profile when the closure mechanism is occluded.



OFFSET CLOSURE MECHANISM FOR A RECLOSABLE POUCH

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An offset resealable closure mechanism adapted to provide an airtight seal for a pouch includes a first elongate closure element and a second elongate closure element. The first elongate closure element includes a first elongate closure profile extending therefrom and a second elongate closure element includes first and second legs extending therefrom to define a channel. A sealing flange extends across the channel and includes a slit therethrough adapted to receive the first elongate closure profile. The sealing flange forms an airtight seal with the first elongate closure profile when the closure mechanism is occluded.

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TITLE

OFFSET CLOSURE MECHANISM FOR A RECLOSABLE POUCH

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] Not applicable

REFERENCE REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] Not applicable

SEQUENTIAL LISTING

[0003] Not applicable

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0004] The present invention relates to a resealable closure mechanism, such as may be used on a thermoplastic pouch.

2. Description of the Background of the Invention

[0005] Thermoplastic pouches having one or more resealable closure mechanisms extending along an opening into an interior thereof are often used to store perishable contents, such as food. In order to keep the food stored inside the pouch fresh for an extended period, a user may expel excess air out of the pouch before completely sealing the closure mechanism. Some pouches allow a vacuum to be formed inside the pouch and then be sealed so as to vacuum pack the contents of the pouch. Other pouches have been

developed that have a separate air evacuation route so that air may be removed from the pouch after the closure mechanism has already been sealed. Sometimes, a resealable closure mechanism is included that has specialized features for providing beneficial sealing characteristics beyond simple interlockability.

[0006] For example, one closure mechanism has a male and female closure element attached to inner surfaces of opposing pouch sidewalls, respectively. A frangible diaphragm extends across an opening of the female closure element to prevent complete engagement of the closure elements during manufacture, handling, and stacking.

[0007] Another closure mechanism has a gasket flange loosely disposed between opposing first and second closure elements attached to opposing first and second sidewalls, respectively, of a pouch. The gasket flange is attached to one or both of the first and second sidewalls of the pouch on the interior and/or exterior of the profiles and the gasket flange extends into an interior of the pouch. The profiles are interlocked with the gasket flange interposed therebetween to improve the efficacy of the seal therealong.

[0008] Yet another closure mechanism has a female profile having a base with a first pouch sidewall extending therefrom. Apertures through the base of the female profile provide communication between a space between first and second female legs that extend from the base and an opposite side of the base so that a male profile inserted into the female profile will urge any particles lodged in the space to pass through the apertures and out of the closure mechanism.

[0009] A further closure mechanism has first and second profiles that interlock in a closed state to form a space therebetween extending longitudinally along the length of the zipper. The bases of both zipper profiles are provided with apertures for enabling particulate matter trapped in the space between the profiles to pass through the apertures into the interior volume of the package.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] According to one aspect of the invention, a closure mechanism includes a first base and a second base. An elongate channel is defined by a first leg spaced apart from a second leg, wherein each leg extends from the first base. A respective distal end of each of the first and second legs is attached to an outer surface of a sealing flange that includes a slit therethrough that extends along a length of the channel. An elongate profile extends laterally from the second base, wherein the profile extends through the slit into the channel to releasably engage with the elongate channel when the closure mechanism is in an occluded state.

[0011] According to another aspect of the invention, a pouch includes first and second opposing pouch sidewalls attached to one another and defining a mouth between opposing inner surfaces thereof. A first base includes an elongate channel comprising first and second spaced apart legs extending therefrom, wherein a distal end of each of the first and second spaced apart legs is attached to an outer surface of a sealing flange proximate the mouth and the sealing flange includes a slit therethrough that extends along a length of the channel. A second base includes an elongate profile extending therefrom and is attached to an inner surface of the second pouch sidewall opposite the channel. A flange extends angularly from the distal end of the first leg, wherein the flange is sealingly disposed on the first pouch sidewall and the profile extends into the channel through the slit when the elongate channel and the elongate profile are occluded.

[0012] According to yet another aspect of the invention, a pouch includes first and second opposing pouch sidewalls attached to one another and defining a mouth between opposing inner surfaces thereof. A first closure element includes an elongate channel having first and second spaced apart legs extending from a first base and an aperture that extends through one of the first and second legs or the first base between the legs. A distal end of each of the first and second legs is attached to an outer surface of a sealing flange proximate the mouth and the sealing flange includes a slit therethrough that extends along a length of the channel. A

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second closure element comprises an elongate profile that extends from a second base, wherein the second base is attached to an inner surface of the second pouch sidewall opposite the channel. A flange extends angularly from the distal end of the first leg, wherein the flange is sealingly disposed on the first pouch sidewall and air may be evacuated from within the pouch through the aperture.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. 1 is an isometric view of a pouch and a closure mechanism according to one embodiment of the present invention;

[0014] FIG. 2 is a partial isometric cutaway view of one embodiment of an offset closure mechanism that can be used with the pouch of FIG. 1 with first and second closure profiles of the closure mechanism spaced apart;

[0015] FIG. 3 is a partial cross-sectional view of the offset closure mechanism of FIG. 2 taken along the lines 3-3 of FIG. 1 with the closure profiles interlocked; and

[0016] FIG. 4 is a partial isometric cutaway view of another embodiment of an offset closure mechanism that can be used with the pouch of FIG. 1.

[0017] Other aspects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent upon consideration of the following detailed description, wherein similar structures have similar reference numerals.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0018] FIGS. 1-3 illustrate a resealable pouch 10 having a first sidewall 12 and a second sidewall 14 that are connected by, for example folding, heat sealing, and/or an adhesive, along three peripheral edges 20a, 20b, and 20c to define an interior space 16 therebetween and an opening 18 along a top edge 20 where the first and second sidewalls 12, 14 are not connected so as to allow access to the interior space 16. A resealable elongate closure

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mechanism 22 along the first and second sidewalls 12, 14 near the opening 18 extends between the peripheral edge 20a and the peripheral edge 20c of the pouch 10 to allow the opening 18 to be repeatedly occluded and deoccluded, thereby respectively sealing and unsealing the opening.

[0019] When occluded, the closure mechanism 22 provides an airtight seal such that a vacuum may be maintained in the pouch interior 16 for a desired period of time, such as days, months, or years, when the closure mechanism is sealed fully across the opening 18. In one embodiment, the pouch 10 may include a second opening 18a through one of the sidewalls 12, 14 that is covered by a valve 24, such as a check or one-way valve, to allow air to be evacuated from the pouch interior 16 and maintain a vacuum when the closure mechanism 22 has been sealed. As shown in FIG. 1, the valve 24 may be disposed on the first sidewall 12 spaced from the closure mechanism 22. The valve 24 provides a fluid path with fluid communication between the interior 16 and an exterior 116 of the pouch 10. Illustrative valves useful in the present invention include those disclosed in, for example, Newrones et al. U.S. Patent application publication No. 2006/0228057. Other valves useful in the present invention include those disclosed in, for example, Attorney Docket Nos. J-4598 and J-4702 (U.S. Patent Application Nos. to be assigned), each filed on the same day as the present application.

[0020] Although not shown, in some embodiments an evacuation pump or device may be used to evacuate fluid from the pouch 10 through, for example, the valve 24 disposed in one of the side walls 12, 14, or in or through the closure mechanism 22 or one of the peripheral edges 20a-20c of the pouch. Illustrative evacuation pumps or devices useful in the present invention include those disclosed in, for example, Attorney Docket No. J-4705, (U.S. Patent Application No. to be assigned), filed on the same day as the present application.

[0021] The closure mechanism 22 includes a first closure element 26 that releasably interlocks and seals with an opposing second closure element 28. Each of the closure elements 26, 28 has a substantially constant elongate cross-sectional profile that extends longitudinally between the peripheral edge 20a and the peripheral edge 20c of the pouch 10

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to form a continuous seal therealong when fully interlocked with the opposing closure element. In one embodiment, the first closure element 26 is disposed on an interior surface 34 of the second sidewall 14 and the second closure element 28 is disposed along an exterior surface 36 of the first sidewall 12. In other embodiments, the orientation of the closure elements 26, 28 with respect to the sidewalls 12, 14 may be reversed accordingly.

[0022] The pouch 10 may include relief on or along an interior surface of one or both of the first and second sidewalls 12, 14 to provide fluid or air flow channels 25 between the sidewalls 12, 14 when a vacuum, for example, is being drawn through the check valve 24. In this manner, the pouch 10 provides a complete evacuable system within which items, for example food, may be stored. One or both sidewalls, such as the second sidewall 14, may also be embossed or otherwise textured with a pattern, such as a diamond pattern, to provide the air flow channels 25 on one or both surfaces spaced between the bottom edge 20b and the closure mechanism 22 and including a smooth area adjacent the bottom edge for attachment of opposing sidewalls 12, 14 and a smooth area adjacent the top edge 20 for attachment of the closure mechanism, or a separate textured and embossed patterned wall may be used to provide additional flow channels (not shown) within the pouch interior 16. Illustrative air flow channels 25 useful in the present invention include those disclosed in Zimmerman et al. U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2005/0286808 and Tilman et al. U.S. Patent Application Publication No 2006/0048483. Other air flow channels 25 useful in the present invention include those disclosed in, for example, Attorney Docket No. J-4601 (U.S. Patent Application No. to be assigned), filed on the same day as the present application.

[0023] As best illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 3, the first closure element 26 includes a base 38 attached to the interior surface 34 of the second sidewall 14 and spaced apart parallel walls, for example, posts 42a-42d, projecting generally perpendicularly from an interior side 44 of the base 38 away from the second sidewall 14. The posts 42a-42d are disposed between an inner edge 46 of the base 38 on an interior side 48 of the closure profiles 26, 28 and an outer edge 50 of the base 38 on a user side of the closure elements 26, 28. An arrow-shaped head 52 is disposed at a distal end 54 of each post 42a-42d. Protuberances, such as ridges 56, are

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disposed near the outer edge 50 of the base 38 to provide increased traction in a convenient area for a user to grip, such as a gripping flange, when trying to open a sealed pouch.

[0024] The second closure element 28 includes spaced apart walls or legs that extend from a base 68 including at least a pair of exterior legs 166 and 168 or, for example, 66e and 66a, to define a channel 60 therebetween as shown in FIGS. 2 and 3. The second closure element 28 may also include interior legs 170, for example, 66b, 66c, and 66d, that may also define channels 60 therebetween. An upper flange 70 extends generally perpendicularly from a distal end 72 of the exterior leg 166, for example, leg 66e, toward the user side of the second closure element 28, and a lower flange 74 extends generally perpendicularly from a distal end 76 of the exterior leg 168, for example, the leg 66a, toward the interior side 48 of the closure elements 26, 28. A sealing flange 13, such as the first sidewall 12, is connected to the inner side 78 of the upper and lower flanges 70, 74 and extends across the channels 60, such that the channels 60 are disposed on the exterior side 36 of the first sidewall 12.

[0025] In this embodiment, the sealing flange 13 is integral with the first sidewall 12. In other embodiments not shown, the sealing flange 13 may be a distinct member separate from the first sidewall 12, such as a thermoplastic film, including for example a polyolefin plastomer, independently applied across the second closure element 28 and that extends from the upper flange 70 to the lower flange 74. In this embodiment, it is contemplated that the sealing flange 13 may be applied to the second closure element 28 across the channels 60 by a coextrusion process with the second closure element. The closure element 28 is then attached to the outer surface 36 of the first sidewall 12 by, for example, an adhesive. In another embodiment, it is further contemplated that the sealing flange 13 may be independently applied to the second closure element 28 across the channels 60 and that an outer surface 180 of the lower flange 74 may be attached to an inner surface 36a of the first sidewall 12.

[0026] The sealing flange 13 may include an opening or a slit 64 along each of the channels 60, thereby forming a cantilevered flap 80 extending from each leg 66a-66e. In one embodiment, each slit 64 extends along the entire length of the channel 60 between the

peripheral edges 20a and 20c of the pouch 10. In other embodiments not shown, the opening or slit 64 may be disposed at selected regions of the second closure element 28, which may correspond, for example, to the air flow channels 25 disposed in the first or second sidewalls 12, 14. The second closure element 28 may also include ridges 56 that are disposed near an exterior edge 88 of the upper flange 70 to provide traction for gripping, thereby forming a gripping flange region.

[0027] The cantilevered flaps 80 extend across the channel 60, yet also provide fluid communication through the slits 64 between the channel 60 and the interior space 16 within the pouch. When the closure elements 26 and 28 are urged together into sealed engagement by opposing lateral forces, each post 42a-42d and arrow-shaped head 52 extends through the corresponding slit 64 into the opposing channel 60, as best seen in FIG. 3, thereby rotating or bending the flaps 80. The cantilevered flaps 80 may sealingly engage each post 42a-42d to provide an airtight vacuum seal between the posts 42a-42d and the corresponding flaps 80 and/or releasably engage and/or interlock the first closure element 26 and the second closure element 28.

[0028] An illustrative example of the first and second closure elements 26, 28 is described previously herein. However, the configuration and geometry of the first and second closure elements 26, 28 shown herein may vary. In a further embodiment, one or both of the first and second closure elements 26, 28 may include one or more textured portions, such as a bump or crosswise groove in one or more of posts 42a-42d in order to provide a tactile and/or audible sensation, such as a series of clicks, as a user draws the fingers along the closure mechanism 22 to seal the closure elements across the opening 18. Further, in some embodiments, a sealing material such as a polyolefin material or a caulking composition such as silicone grease may be disposed on or in the channels 60, posts 42a-42d, flaps 80, heads 52, or generally on or in the closure elements 26, 28 to fill in any gaps or spaces therein when occluded. The ends of the channels 60, posts 42a-42d, or closure elements 26, 28 may also be welded or sealed by ultrasonic vibrations as is known in the art. It is also contemplated that the closure mechanisms 22 described herein may also be used in conjunction with or in addition to other closure profiles and closure elements. Illustrative

interlocking profiles, closure elements, sealing materials, tactile or audible closure elements, and/or end seals useful in the present invention include those disclosed in, for example, Pawloski U.S. Patent No. 4,927,474, Dais et al. U.S. Patent Nos. 5,070,584, 5,478,228, and 6,021,557, Tomic et al. U.S. Patent No. 5,655,273, Sprehe U.S. Patent No. 6,954,969, Kasai et al. U.S. Patent No. 5,689,866, Ausnit U.S. Patent No. 6,185,796, Wright et al. U.S. Patent No. 7,041,249, Pawloski et al. U.S. Patent No. 7,137,736, Anderson U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0091179, Pawloski U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0234172, Tilman et al. U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2006/0048483, and Anzini et al. U.S. Patent Application Publication Nos. 2006/0093242 and 2006/0111226. Other interlocking profiles and closure elements useful in the present invention include those disclosed in, for example, U.S. Patent Application No. 11/725,120, filed March 16, 2007, and Attorney Docket Nos. J-4712, and J-4714B (U.S. Patent Application Nos. to be assigned), each filed on the same day as the present application. It is further appreciated that the closure elements 26, 28 disclosed herein may be operated by hand, or a slider (not shown) may be used to assist in occluding and de-occluding the closure elements.

[0029] In one embodiment, shown in FIG. 3, attachment of the second closure element 28 to the exterior surface 36 of the first sidewall displaces the closure mechanism 22 such that it is offset from an imaginary centerline between the first and second sidewalls 12, 14. This offset geometry also disposes the closure mechanism 22 outside of the first and second sidewalls 12, 14. In this example, because the first and second sidewalls 12, 14 directly oppose and lie flat on one another at the ends of the closure mechanism 22, the first and second sidewalls may be sealed to one another without excess material of one or both of the closure elements 26, 28 disposed therebetween. The ends of the closure mechanism 22 may be sealed at the peripheral edges 20a, 20c of the pouch 10, for example, by crushing, heat, and/or ultrasonic sealing. Excess material disposed between the first and second sidewalls 12, 14 may only partially flatten during this sealing process resulting in the formation of crush gaps above and below the excess material, wherein the crush gaps allow leakage through the peripheral edges 20a, 20c of the pouch 10. The offset geometry of the closure mechanism 22 may eliminate the formation of crush gaps that may occur when the closure

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mechanism is on the interior surface 36a, 34 of one or more of the respective sidewalls 12, 14. The crush gaps may require extra filling material or extra compression force to fill or close. Therefore, end seals may be created using less material, less energy, and less time when the offset geometry closure mechanism 22 is utilized. Further, the sealed engagement of the closure mechanism 22, as shown in FIG. 3, may provide an airtight seal between the closure elements 26, 28 while requiring a relatively low closing force to engage the closure elements.

[0030] In the embodiment of FIGS. 2 and 3, one or more apertures 82 extend through the base 68 or one or both of the exterior legs 166, 168 into at least one or, for example, into all of the channels 60, thereby providing fluid communication between the respective channel 60 and the exterior 116 of the pouch 10. An evacuation device (not shown) may be placed over the one or more apertures 82 that extend through the base 68 or one or both of the exterior legs 166, 168 to evacuate the pouch 10. One or more apertures 82 may also extend through one or more of the interior legs 66b-66d between two of the channels 60, thereby providing fluid communication between the respective channels. Illustratively, a plurality of spaced apart apertures 82 may extend through the base 68 or through the legs 66a-66e along each channel 60. In an embodiment that includes the plurality of apertures 82 as shown illustratively in FIG. 1, the evacuation device (not shown) may be placed over the plurality of apertures 82 to evacuate the pouch. If any of the apertures 82 through the base 68 or through one or both of the exterior legs 166, 168 are not covered by the evacuation device, the fluid communication provided by the apertures 82 between the channels 60 and the external side of the base 68 prevents the evacuation device from evacuating the pouch 10.

[0031] In this embodiment, the flaps 80 may function as a one-way check valve such that positive pressure inside the pouch 10 causes air to evacuate past the flaps 80 and through the apertures 82 to the exterior. For example, positive pressure inside the pouch 10 causes the flaps 80 to rotate or bend away from the posts 42a-42d and allow air to be expelled through the aperture 82, whereas the flaps 80 seal more tightly against the posts 42a-42d in response to an inward flow of air, such as would be caused by a negative pressure or vacuum inside the pouch 10. When the closure mechanism 22 is deoccluded, the arrow-head 52 of each post 42

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may rotate or bend the respective flaps 80 back to their original position, thereby causing each flap 80 to touch the opposing adjacent flap 80 and potentially slowing the rate at which the flaps 80 might suffer from stress creep over a long period of time.

[0032] In other embodiments, different numbers of complementary posts 42a-42d and corresponding channels 60 may be provided, such as, for example, as few as one post 42a and one channel 60 or more than four posts having a like or greater number of opposing complementary channels and slits through the sealing flange 13. Further, various shaped heads, such as hooks, barbs, cross-bars, or simply no apparent head may be attached to the distal end 54 of the various posts 42a-42d instead of or supplemental to the arrow-shaped heads 52 shown.

[0033] The embodiment shown in FIG. 4 is substantially identical to the closure mechanism 22 of FIGS. 2 and 3, with a difference being that the second closure element 28 does not have any apertures 82 through the base 68 or the exterior legs 166, 168. This embodiment may include one or more apertures 82 through one or more of the interior legs 170. In this embodiment, a user may evacuate air from within the pouch 10 through the check valve 24 and the flaps 80 of the sealing flange 13 act as one-way valves in response to both positive and negative pressure inside the pouch. The addition of one or more apertures 82 through one or more of the interior legs 170 may serve to inhibit any pressure imbalances between the channels 60 that may otherwise cause unwanted lateral displacement of the interior legs.

[0034] In one embodiment, the first and second sidewalls 12, 14, the sealing flange 13, and/or the closure mechanism 22 are formed from thermoplastic resins by known extrusion methods. For example, the sidewalls 12, 14 and the sealing flange 13 may be independently extruded of thermoplastic material as a single continuous or multi-ply web, and the closure mechanism 22 may be extruded of the same or different thermoplastic material(s) separately as continuous lengths or strands. The first or second sidewall 12, 14 and the sealing flange 13 may then be independently attached to the closure mechanism 22. In other embodiments where the sealing flange 13 is integral with the first or second sidewalls 12, 14, the closure

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mechanism 22 may be directly applied to the sealing flange and the respective first or second sidewall 12, 14. Illustrative thermoplastic materials include polypropylene (PP), polyethylene (PE), metallocene-polyethylene (mPE), low density polyethylene (LDPE), linear low density polyethylene (LLDPE), ultra low density polyethylene (ULDPE), biaxially-oriented polyethylene terephthalate (BPET), high density polyethylene (HDPE), polyethylene terephthalate (PET), among other polyolefin plastomers and combinations and blends thereof. Further, sealing flange 13, or a portion or area thereof, and/or inner surfaces of the respective sidewalls 12, 14 or a portion or area thereof 112, 114, respectively, or the inner surface 44 of the base 38 or a portion or area thereof 114a, may, for example, be composed of a polyolefin plastomer such as an AFFINITY™ resin manufactured by Dow Plastics. The polyolefin plastomer may also be applied as an independent layer (not shown) to, for example, the sealing flange 13 or the first or second sidewalls 12, 14. Such portions or areas include, for example, the area of one or both of the sidewalls 12, 14 proximate and parallel to the closure mechanism 22 to provide an additional cohesive seal between the sidewalls when the pouch 10 is evacuated for the area forming the seal between one or more of the posts 42a-42d and one of the cantilevered flaps 80, for example.

[0035] One or more of the sidewalls 12, 14 in other embodiments may also be formed of air-impermeable film. An example of an air-impermeable film includes a film having one or more barrier layers, such as an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer (EVOH) ply or a nylon ply, disposed between or on one or more of the plies of the sidewalls 12, 14. The barrier layer may be, for example, adhesively secured between the PP and/or LDPE plies to provide a multilayer film. The sealing flange 13 may be made of the same material as the sidewalls 12, 14 or may be made of a material different than the sidewalls. Illustratively, the sealing flange 13 is made substantially of only a polyolefin plastomer such as an AFFINITY™ resin.

[0036] Other additives such as colorants, slip agents, and antioxidants, including for example talc, oleamide or hydroxyl hydrocinnamate may also be added as desired. In another embodiment, the closure mechanism 22 may be extruded primarily of molten PE with various amounts of slip component, colorant, and talc additives in a separate process. The fully formed closure mechanism 22 may be attached to the pouch body using a strip of molten

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thermoplastic weld material, or by an adhesive known by those skilled in the art, for example. Other thermoplastic resins and air-impermeable films useful in the present invention include those disclosed in, for example, Tilman et al. U.S. Patent application publication No 2006/0048483.

[0037] The resealable pouch described herein can be made by various techniques known to those skilled in the art including those described in, for example, Geiger, et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,755, 248. Other useful techniques to make a resealable pouch include those described in, for example, Zieke et al., U. S. Patent No. 4,741,789. Additional techniques to make a resealable pouch include those described in, for example, Porchia et al., U. S. Patent No. 5,012,561. Additional examples of making a resealable pouch as described herein include, for example, a cast post applied process, a cast integral process, and/or a blown process.

[0038] The fully formed closure elements 26, 28 may be attached along opposite edges of one side of the web by placing or extruding a strip of molten thermoplastic weld material onto the web along or adjacent to each edge of the web and immediately placing a closure element 26, 28 onto each strip of molten thermoplastic weld material. The thermoplastic weld material may then allowed to cool, the web folded together between the opposite edges to place the closure elements 26, 28 in opposing resealable relation, and the web severed transverse to the web direction into discrete pouches, in a manner well known in the art, to form the pouch 10. According to another embodiment, the web, intermediate layer of connecting material, and the closure elements 26, 28 may be extruded together simultaneously, and subsequently cooled, folded, and cut. If used, the check valve 24 may be formed on and/or attached to the web prior to folding or after folding.

[0039] Various details shown in FIGS. 1-4 may be modified as will be apparent to those of skill in the art without departing from the disclosed principles. For example, the orientation of the closure elements 26, 28 with respect to the interior space 16 may be altered from the orientation shown in the figures, such that, for example, the closure element 26 may be disposed on an exterior surface of the second sidewall 14 and the closure element 28 may be disposed on an interior surface of the first sidewall 12. Other methods and materials suitable for forming structures of the present invention may also be utilized.

INDUSTRIAL APPLICABILITY

[0040] A closure mechanism according the present disclosure may be useful for sealing reclosable openings, such as the mouth of a thermoplastic pouch. Further, the closure mechanisms of the present disclosure may provide an improved airtight seal suitable for maintaining a vacuum inside an airtight pouch. Some closure mechanisms of the present disclosure may also be useful for providing a convenient evacuation check valve integrated with the closure mechanism. Clearly the closure mechanisms and pouches of the present disclosure may also have many other possible uses, and the present disclosure is not limited to the few specific uses enumerated herein.

[0041] Numerous modifications to the present invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art in view of the foregoing description. Accordingly, this description is to be construed as illustrative only and is presented for the purpose of enabling those skilled in the art to make and use the invention and to teach the best mode of carrying out same. The exclusive right to all modifications within the scope of the impending claims is expressly reserved. All patents, patent publications and applications, and other references cited herein are incorporated by reference herein in their entirety.

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WE CLAIM:

1. A closure mechanism, comprising:
 - a first base and a second base;
 - an elongate channel defined by a first leg spaced apart from a second leg, each leg extending from the first base and having a respective distal end;
 - a sealing flange attached to and extending from the respective distal ends of each of the first and second legs, the sealing flange includes a slit therethrough that extends along a length of the channel between the first leg and the second leg; and
 - an elongate profile that extends laterally from the second base, wherein the profile extends through the slit into the channel to releasably engage with the elongate channel when the closure mechanism is in an occluded state.
2. The closure mechanism of claim 1, wherein the sealing flange forms a seal against the elongate profile.
3. The closure mechanism of claim 2, wherein at least one of the first base the first leg or the second leg includes an aperture therethrough.
4. The closure mechanism of claim 3, wherein the sealing flange is integral to a first pouch sidewall.

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5. The closure mechanism of claim 1, wherein a plurality of elongate channels is each defined by first and second spaced apart legs, each of the first and second legs extending from the first base, a respective distal end of each of the first and second legs is attached to the sealing flange that includes a plurality of slits therethrough, wherein each of the plurality of slits extends along each of the plurality of channels, and each of a plurality of profiles laterally extends from the second base through each slit into each of the corresponding plurality of channels to releasably engage with each of the corresponding plurality of elongate channels when the closure mechanism is in an occluded state.

6. The closure mechanism of claim 5, wherein the first base or an exterior leg includes an aperture that extends between the channel and an exterior environment.

7. The closure mechanism of claim 5, wherein an interior leg includes an aperture therethrough.

8. The closure mechanism of claim 1, wherein the sealing flange comprises a polyolefin plastomer.

9. The closure mechanism of claim 1, wherein the elongate profile includes a post and an arrow-shaped head disposed at a distal end of the post, and a textured portion along the length of the elongate profile to provide tactile and/or audible sensations when the closure mechanism is occluded.

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10. A pouch, comprising:

first and second pouch sidewalls, each having respective outer and inner surfaces and attached to one another to define a mouth between the respective inner surfaces thereof;

a closure element attached to the first pouch sidewall and having an upper flange and a lower flange and an elongate channel comprising first and second legs extending from a first base with each leg having a respective distal end;

a sealing flange attached to and extending from the upper flange and the lower flange, the sealing flange having a slit therethrough that extends along a length of the elongate channel, wherein the distal end of each of the first and second legs is attached to the sealing flange; and

a second base attached to the second pouch sidewall and having an elongate profile extending therefrom;

wherein the elongate profile extends into and releasably engages the channel through the slit when the elongate channel and the elongate profile are occluded.

11. The pouch of claim 10, wherein the sealing flange forms an airtight seal against the elongate profile.

12. The pouch of claim 11, wherein at least one of the first base the first leg or the second leg includes an aperture therethrough.

13. The pouch of claim 10, wherein the sealing flange is integral to the first pouch sidewall.

14. The pouch of claim 10, wherein the closure element and the second base are attached to the outer surfaces of the first and second pouch sidewalls, respectively.

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15. The pouch of claim 10, wherein the sealing flange comprises a layer made of a polyolefin plastomer.

16. The pouch of claim 10 further comprising a one-way valve disposed in or on at least one of the first and second pouch sidewalls or an edge thereof and a textured portion along the length of the elongate profile to provide tactile and/or audible sensations when the elongate channel and the elongate profile are occluded.

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17. A pouch, comprising:

first and second pouch sidewalls, each having respective outer and inner surfaces and attached to one another to define a mouth between the respective inner surfaces thereof;

a first closure element comprising an elongate channel having first and second spaced apart legs extending from a first base having an aperture extending therethrough between the legs;

a sealing flange attached to and extending between the first and second spaced apart legs and having a slit therethrough that extends along a length of the elongate channel; and

a second closure element attached to the second pouch sidewall and comprising an elongate profile extending from a second base;

wherein the first and second spaced apart legs are attached at a respective distal end thereof to the sealing flange, and the elongate profile forms an airtight seal with the sealing flange when the first and second closure elements are in an occluded state.

18. The pouch of claim 17, wherein the first and second closure elements are attached to the outer surfaces of the first and second pouch sidewalls, respectively.

19. The pouch of claim 18, wherein the sealing flange is integral to the first pouch sidewall.

20. The pouch of claim 17, wherein the sealing flange comprises a layer made of a polyolefin plastomer.

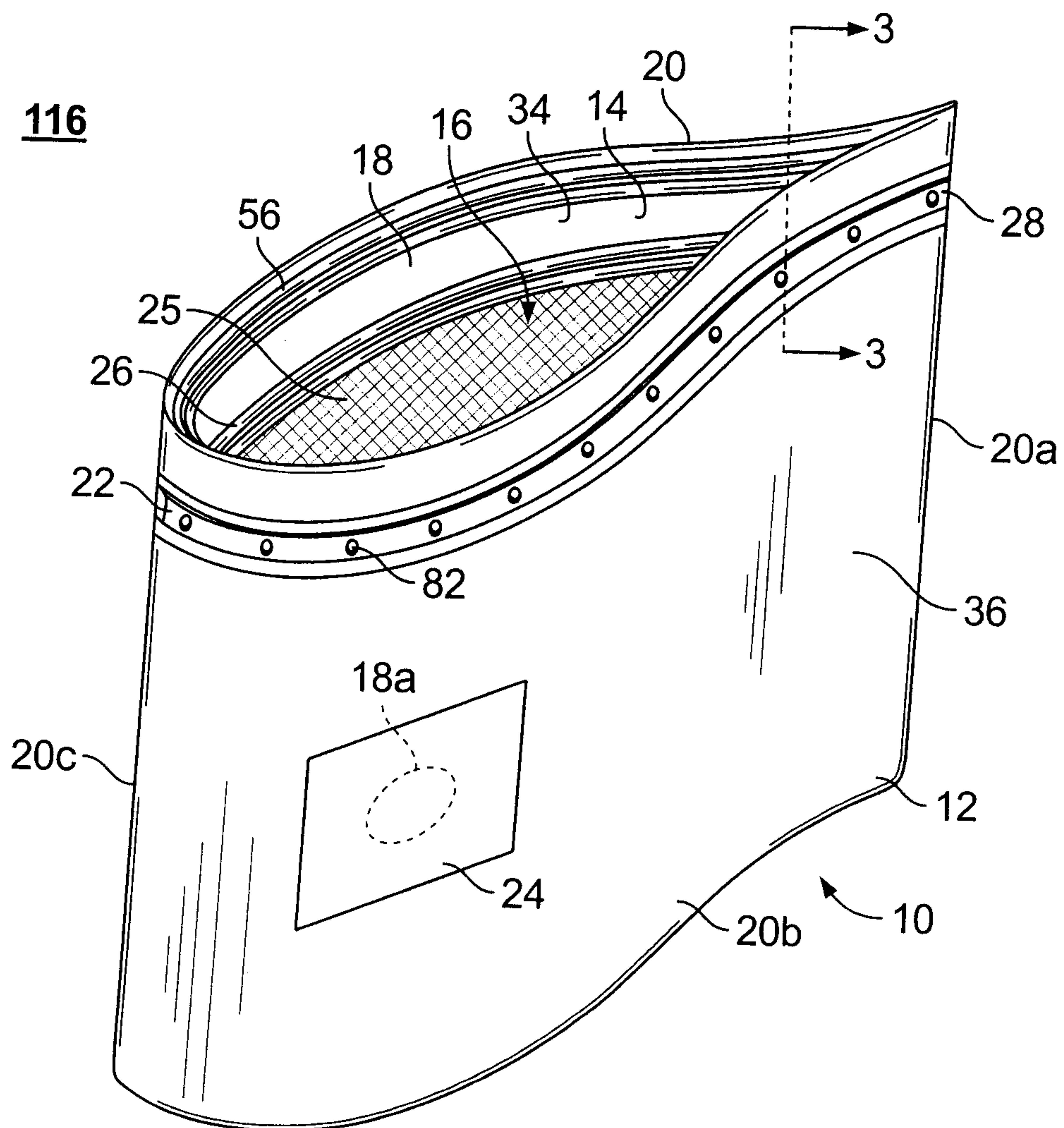


FIG. 1

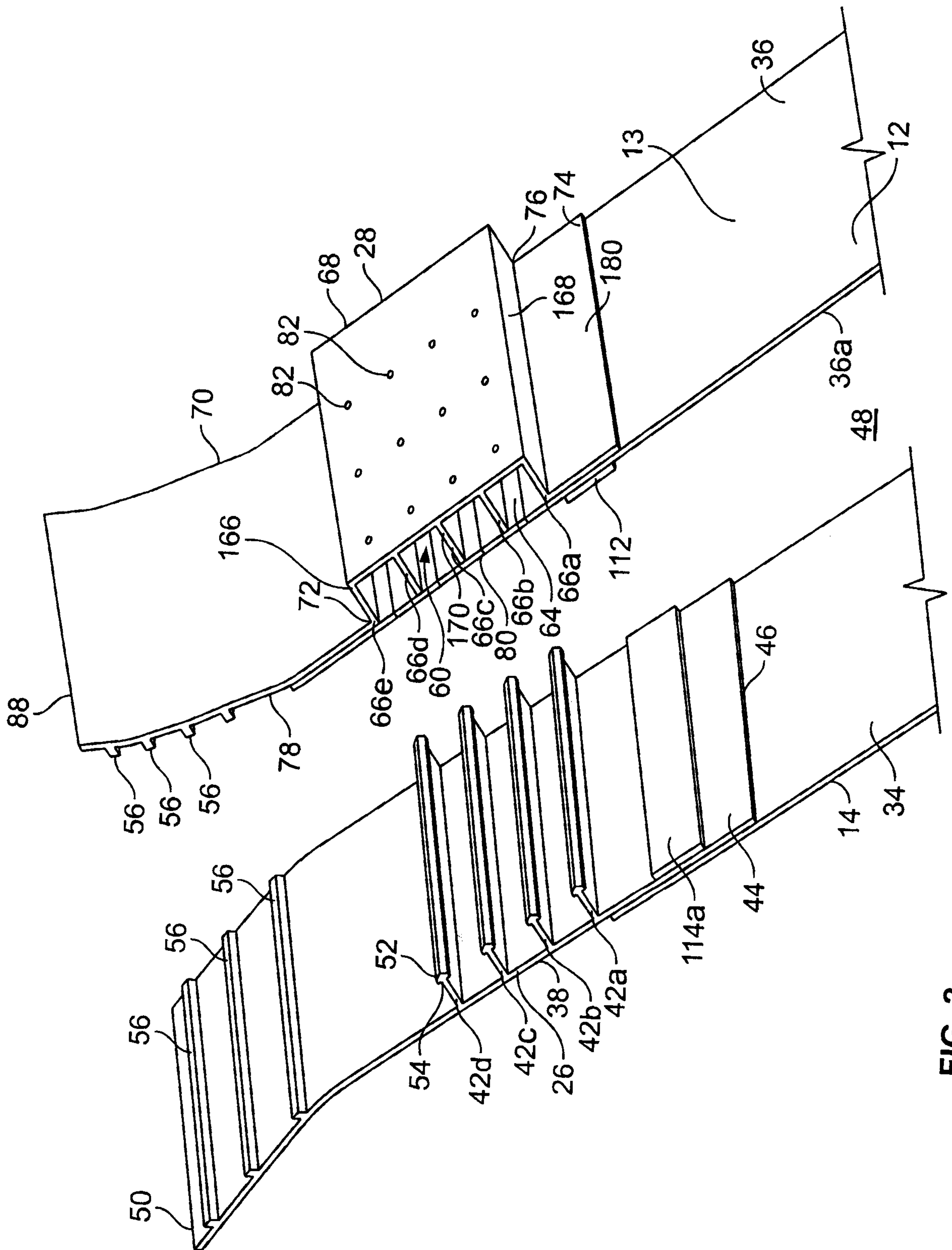


FIG. 2

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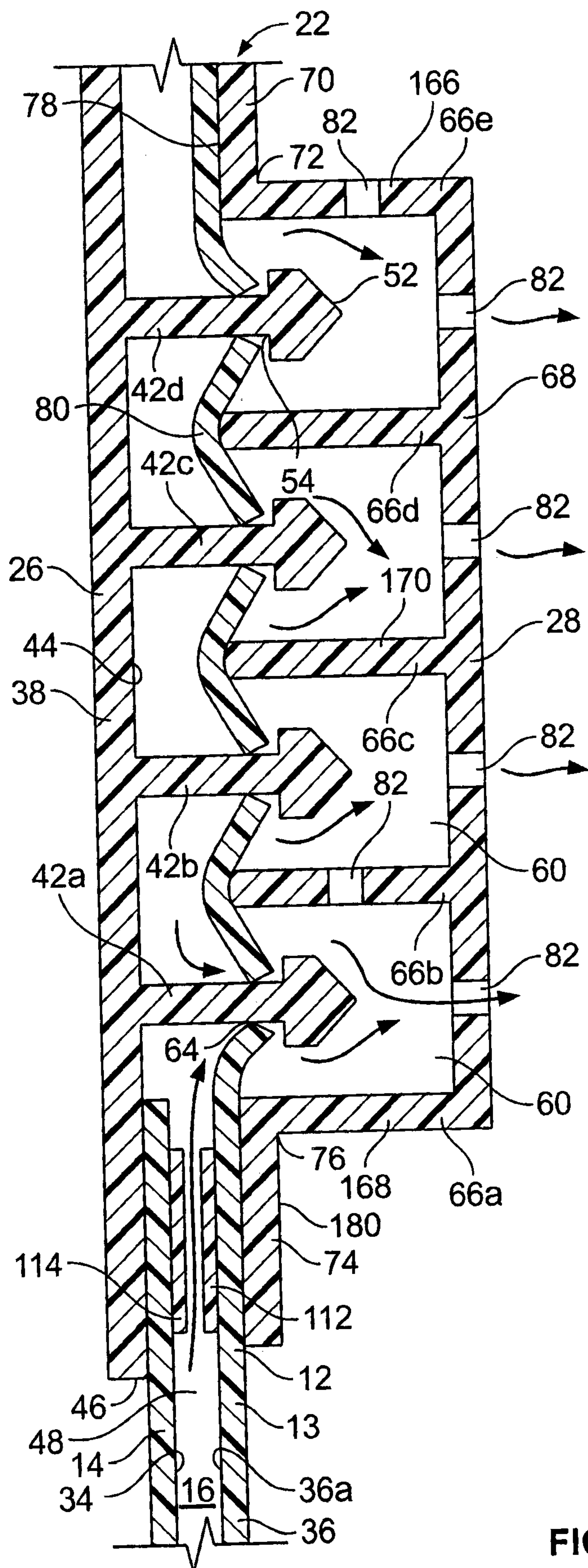


FIG. 3

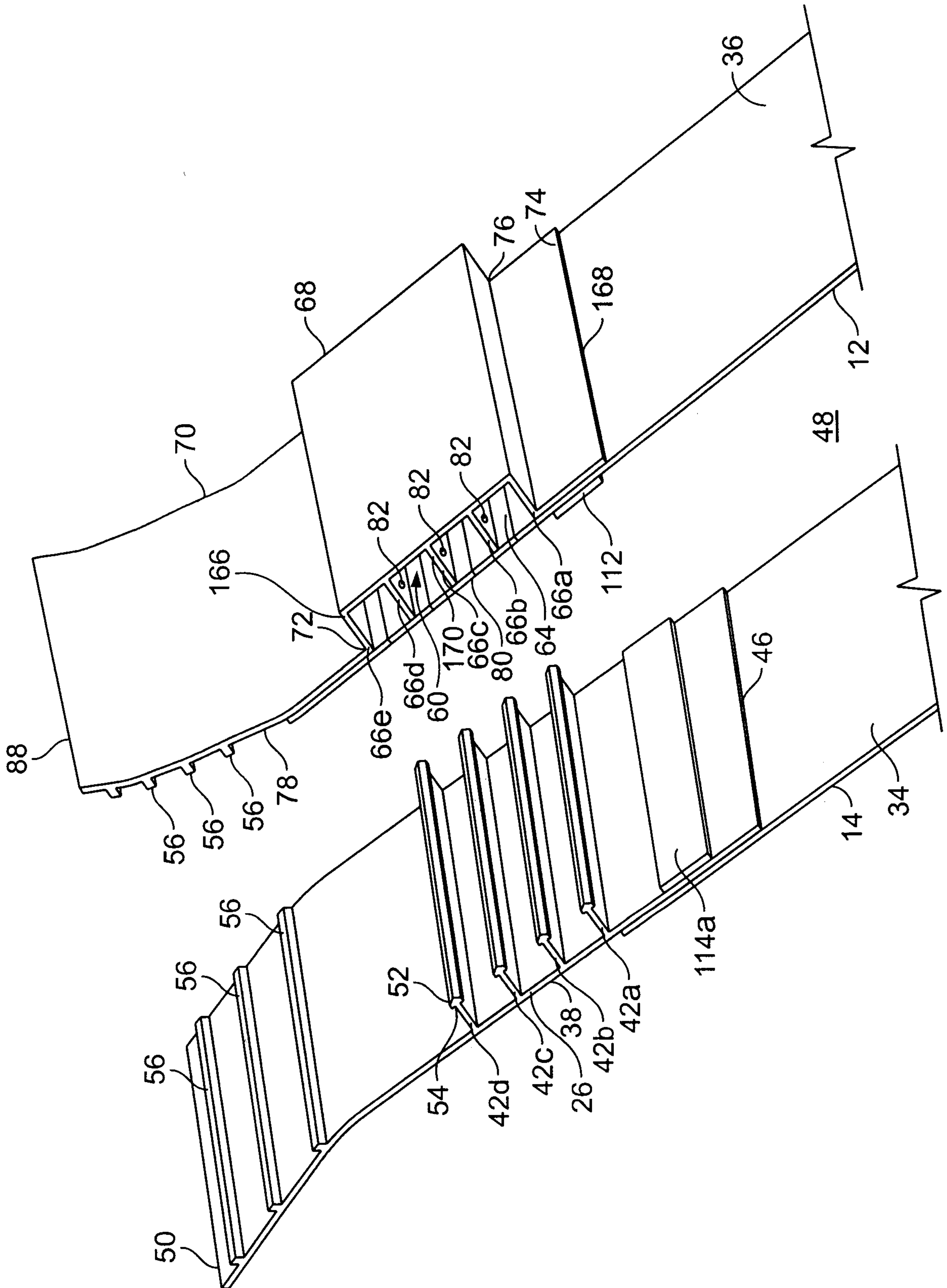


FIG. 4

