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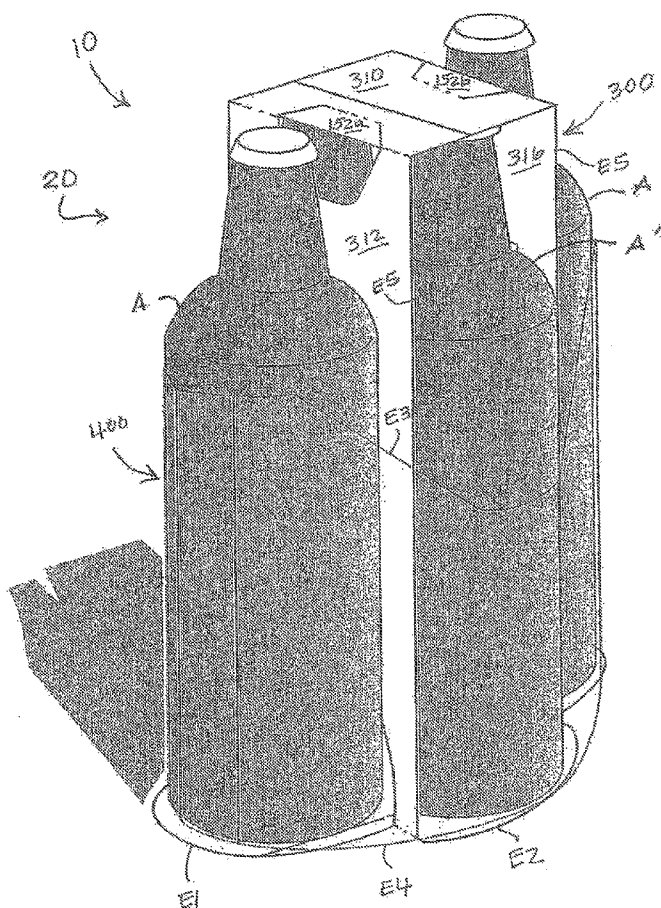
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(54) Title: ARTICLE CARRIER WITH RETENTION SLEEVE



(57) Abstract: An article carrier includes a support
structure (300) forming an internal sleeve (332), and
an external retention sleeve (400) securely disposed
around articles (A, A'). The retention sleeve provides
optimal visual access to the articles enclosed in the
article carrier. A group of articles rests on the bottom
wall (314) of the support structure, which includes
reinforced cantilevered portions (330a, 330b) to
enhance the stiffness of the support structure. The
internal sleeve of the support structure provides
partitioning, additional article retention, and defines
a handle for lifting the article carrier. The retention
sleeve and the support structure may be formed from
disparate materials, with the retention sleeve being
transparent, translucent, windowed, or contoured to
reveal an optimal amount of surface area of the articles.



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ARTICLE CARRIER WITH RETENTION SLEEVE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority to U.S. Application No. 60/735,082, filed
5 November 9, 2005.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Carrier style cartons are known in the art, and desirably facilitate a visually
appealing packaging alternative, while providing convenience for carrying, stacking,
10 and storing articles such as beverage containers. The typical carrier includes a
bottom surface for supporting the articles in an upright condition, perimeter walls for
retaining the articles on the bottom surface, and a handle or other means for lifting
the carrier, the handle extending above the tops of the upright articles.

To adequately retain the articles in the carrier, the perimeter walls of the
15 carrier must have at least a certain height, which limits the extent to which it is
possible to display the articles because the perimeter walls obscure the labels or
other surface ornamentation applied to the articles. The outside surfaces of the
perimeter walls can be used as a surface for ornamentation, which typically includes
trademarks, logos, marketing language, and the like. However, as consumers are
20 more likely to be desirous of an attractive product rather than attractive packaging, it
makes sense to reveal as much of each article as possible. Nonetheless,
conventional carriers are typically formed entirely from opaque paperboard or the
like, making the perimeter walls even more obstructive of the surface ornamentation
applied to the articles within.

25 To protect the labels on the articles from scuffing or other damage, the
conventional carrier is also commonly equipped with partitions between adjacent
articles. The partitions, like the perimeter walls, further obscure the articles and do
little to prevent undesired egress of the articles if the carrier is toppled or upturned.

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There is a need for a carrier that maximizes visibility of the articles contained therein, retains the articles even when the carrier is not ideally positioned, and allows for easy removal of individual articles when desired.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention addresses the shortcomings inherent in conventional carriers by providing an article carrier having a removable retention sleeve for retaining the articles, instead of the typical immovable perimeter walls of known carriers. The removable retention sleeve may bear corresponding graphics, or may
10 be translucent so as to reveal all of the graphics on the outward facing surfaces of the articles within. The article carrier of the present invention also includes a support structure having a fixed internal sleeve that retains the centermost articles in position even when the carrier is subjected to less than ideal positioning, and that provides partitioning between the centermost articles and peripheral articles disposed around
15 or adjacent to the centermost articles. The peripheral articles are snugly secured by the removable retention sleeve, which is formed around or dropped down over the support structure and all of the articles to form a package.

The article carrier can be loaded and assembled to form a package containing multiple articles, such as but not limited to beverage bottles. In the exemplary
20 embodiments, each of the articles is substantially cylindrical in shape so as to define an article axis, and the articles are arranged with their respective article axes parallel to each other. According to an aspect of the invention, the article carrier includes the aforementioned support structure that provides a bottom support surface for supporting all of the articles, and also defines the internal sleeve that is substantially
25 fixed in relation to the article carrier and that serves to partially enclose at least one of the articles. More specifically, the exemplary internal sleeve is essentially a rectangular cylinder the central axis of which extends from open end to open end and in parallel to the bottom support surface of the article carrier. The uppermost portion of the internal sleeve is a top wall that prevents the articles within the internal
30 sleeve from escaping if the package is upturned.

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The bottommost portion of the internal sleeve is defined by a bottom wall of the support structure that makes up the bottom support surface of the article carrier. More specifically, and in accordance with another aspect of the invention, certain of the articles rest upon a portion of the bottom wall that defines the bottommost portion of the internal sleeve, while other articles are supported on cantilevered portions of the bottom wall that extend outside of the internal sleeve. The exemplary embodiments described below include two cantilevered portions, although it is envisioned that one or more cantilevered portions would suffice.

According to yet another aspect of the invention, at least the cantilevered portions of the bottom wall are reinforced to increase the stiffness and the integrity of the bottom support surface. To that end, in certain embodiments, reinforcing panels are hingedly connected to the bottom wall and optionally directly to the cantilevered portions, and are foldable into a face contacting arrangement with at least the cantilevered portions to be secured using hot glue, another adhesive, or other means for securing.

According to still another aspect of the invention, the articles that rest on the cantilevered portions are retained in the article carrier by the removable retention sleeve which is removably disposed around the internal sleeve such that the axis of the internal sleeve is substantially perpendicular to the axis of the second sleeve and such that the articles on the cantilevered portions are disposed between the internal sleeve and the removable retention sleeve. In this manner, the removable retention sleeve directly restrains the movement of the articles on the cantilevered portions and directly or indirectly prevents articles within the internal sleeve from escaping through its ends. The medial axis of the retention sleeve is substantially parallel to the axis defined by each individual article.

Advantageously, the retention sleeve is removable and replaceable to reveal the articles, and can be further configured to provide maximum exposure of the surface of each article. In certain embodiments at least a portion of the retention sleeve permits the passage of light, that is, is transparent, translucent, semitransparent, semiopaque, windowed, perforated, or the like. In any event, in these embodiments, it is possible to see the articles through the retention sleeve. It

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is contemplated that the support structure may also have this characteristic. In certain other embodiments, the retention sleeve may be formed from an opaque material but is contoured along either or both its upper or lower edge to reveal certain portions of at least some of the articles in the article carrier. It is envisioned that any portion or no portion of the bottom edge of the retention sleeve rests upon the support structure, and more specifically along ledges extending from the bottom wall. It follows that at least a portion of the bottom edge of the retention sleeve may be spaced apart from the support structure.

The support structure of the exemplary article is formed from a blank that includes a bottom panel with extension portions extending outwardly therefrom, and a pair of side panels each hingedly connected to the bottom panel along a pair of spaced apart fold lines. It can be said that the extension portions, although an integral part of the bottom panel, are each struck from the adjacent one of the side panels because each extension portion includes the area between the spaced apart fold lines and extends away from the main portion of the bottom panel and toward the adjacent side panel beyond the hinged connection between the bottom panel and the first side panel.

As mentioned above, the side panels can be folded out of the plane defined by the bottom panel to be substantially parallel to one another. A top panel is hingedly connected to one or both of the side panels so as to hingedly connect the side panels together when the side panels have been folded out of the plane, thereby forming the internal sleeve.

In certain embodiments, the distal end of each extension portion is hingedly connected to a reinforcing panel each of which is foldable into a face contacting arrangement with each extension portion. The reinforcing panels may also at least partially overlap the main portion of the bottom panel as well. In certain other embodiments, the reinforcing panel or panels are hingedly connected to the main portion of the bottom panel itself, and are foldable into face contacting arrangement with the extension portions in like fashion.

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According to another aspect of the invention, the retention sleeve is maintained in place around the articles in the article carriers. In certain embodiments, the position of the retention sleeve is removably established by snugly wrapping it around the articles such that the surface tension between the articles and the sleeve prevent relative motion therebetween. In other embodiments, retention tabs extend from the side panels so as to engage either or both the upper and lower edge of the retention sleeve. The user may easily remove the retention sleeve by squeezing or otherwise deforming the retention sleeve to overcome the retention tabs.

According to yet another aspect of the invention, a handle is formed in or integrally to the top wall for lifting the package. In the exemplary embodiments, a top gripping handle is formed from handle tabs struck from and hingedly attached to the top wall along opposing free edges of the top wall. The top wall may be double ply, being formed from top panels each connected to a respective side wall, and overlapped to form a composite top wall. In these embodiments, each ply includes corresponding handle tabs that are secured together to form composite handle tabs. To operate the top gripping handle, the user engages the handle tabs and folds them inwardly, preferably with one hand, to span the top wall of the carton in a gripping fashion.

The foregoing has broadly outlined some of the aspects and features of the present invention, which should be construed to be merely illustrative of various potential applications of the invention. Other beneficial results can be obtained by applying the disclosed information in a different manner or by combining various aspects of the disclosed embodiments. Accordingly, other aspects and a more comprehensive understanding of the invention may be obtained by referring to the detailed description of the exemplary embodiments taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in addition to the scope of the invention defined by the claims.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a plan view of a blank for forming a support structure according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a plan view of a panel for forming a retention sleeve, according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of support structure formed from the blank of FIG. 1.

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the support structure of FIG. 3, the support structure being loaded with articles.

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of a retention sleeve erected from the panel of FIG. 2.

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of a package including an article carrier formed from the support structure of FIG. 3 in combination with the retention sleeve of FIG. 5, the article carrier being loaded with articles.

FIG. 7 is a plan view of an alternative support structure blank, according to an alternative embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 8 is a plan view of an alternative panel for forming a retention sleeve according to another embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 9 is a perspective view of a package including an alternative article carrier formed from the blank of FIG. 7 in combination with the retention sleeve of FIG. 8.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

As required, detailed embodiments of the present invention are disclosed herein. It will be understood that the disclosed embodiments are merely examples to illustrate aspects of the invention that may be embodied in various and alternative forms. The figures are not necessarily to scale, and some features may be exaggerated or minimized to show details of particular components. In other instances, well-known materials or methods have not been described in detail to

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avoid obscuring the present invention. Therefore, specific structural and functional details disclosed herein are not to be interpreted as limiting, but as a basis for the claims and for teaching one skilled in the art to variously employ the present invention.

5 Referring now to the drawings in which like numerals indicate like elements throughout the several views, the drawings illustrate certain of the various aspects of exemplary embodiments of an article carrier. Generally described, the article carrier includes a support structure and a removable retention sleeve. The support structure includes a bottom wall that has cantilevered portions for supporting the
10 bottom portion of articles and the retention sleeve wraps around the support structure to secure the articles in place within the article carrier.

FIG. 1 shows an exemplary blank 100 from which the support structure 300 (best shown in FIG. 3) is formed. The blank 100 includes various cut out portions, fold lines, severance lines that define a number of primary panels that are hinged
15 connected one to another, and which can be folded together to form the support structure 300. More specifically, the blank 100 includes a first top panel 110, a first side panel 112, a bottom panel 114, a second side panel 116, and a second top panel 118. The first top panel 110 is hingedly connected to the first side panel 112 along fold line 120, the first side panel 112 is hingedly connected to the bottom panel
20 114 along fold line 122, the bottom panel 114 is hingedly connected to the second side panel 116 along fold line 124, and the second side panel 116 is hingedly connected to the second top panel 118 along fold line 126.

The bottom panel 114 may be sized and shaped to supportingly engage a portion of the lower edge of the external sleeve and to support the articles A as
25 described in further detail below. In the exemplary embodiment, the transverse width W1 of bottom panel 114 is greater than the transverse width W2 of side panels 112, 116 and edges E2 of the bottom panel 114 are contoured according to the shape and size of the intended articles A. In the illustrated embodiments, the intended articles A are glass beverage bottles, although the principles of the
30 invention are equally applicable to any type of article having compatible characteristics, including size, shape, material of manufacture, orientation, and the

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like. The bottom panel 114 includes cantilevered panels 130a, 130b and reinforcing panels 132a, 132b that are hingedly connected to the bottom panel 114 along fold line 134a, 134b and that are at least partially formed from material struck from side panels 112, 116, respectively. The size and shape of the extension panels 130a, 130b and the reinforcing panels 132a, 132b are determined such that each cantilevered panel 130a, 130b and respective reinforcing panel 132a, 132b can be secured together to create a cantilevered portion having the necessary surface area and stiffness to support the bottom portion of an article A. In the exemplary embodiment, severance lines 136a, 138a, 140a, 142a, 136b, 138b, 140b, 142b and apertures 144a, 146a, 148a, 144b, 146b, 148b are formed in side panels 112, 116 to at least partially define the extension portions 130a, 130b and the reinforcing panels 132a, 132b. In alternative embodiments, the reinforcing panels 132a, 132b may extend further along side panel 112, 116 such that apertures 148a, 148b are smaller or nonexistent.

As used herein, the terms "fold line" and "severance line" refer to all manner of lines indicating optimal respective fold or cut locations. A fold line is typically a scored line, an embossed line or a debossed line. Severance lines, and sometimes fold lines, may be frangible or otherwise weakened lines, perforations, a line of perforations, a line of short slits, a line of half-cuts, or a single half-cut. A severance line may also be a cut line or slit. Either or both a fold line and a severance line may include some combination of the above lines, and the like. For ease of differentiation, fold lines are shown in the figures as broken lines, while solid lines indicate severance lines and edges.

The blank 100 includes means for lifting or carrying the support structure 300. In the exemplary embodiment, the means for lifting or carrying include handle apertures 150a, 150b that are disposed in the side panels 112, 116 and handle tabs 152a, 152b that are defined by severance lines 154a, 154b, fold lines 156a, 156b, and apertures 150a, 150b, respectively. In alternative embodiments, the apertures 150a, 150b may be tabs or flaps that are folded inward. The blank 100 includes optional fold lines 158a, 158b, 160a, 160b that will be described in further detail below.

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FIG. 2 shows an exemplary retention sleeve panel 200 prior to being erected to form a retention sleeve 400 (shown in FIG. 5). The retention sleeve panel 200 may be formed of any suitable material including, but not limited to, paperboard, plastic, metal, or the like and is preferably formed of an at least partially transparent, translucent, frosted, webbed, or otherwise visually permeable material such that a greater portion of the articles in the package 10 are viewable. Furthermore, the retention sleeve panel 200 is preferably formed from a material that resists undesirable deformation during normal use. The retention sleeve panel 200 includes several sections 210, 212a, 212b, with the section 210 being hingedly connected to the sections 212a, 212b along fold lines 214, 216, respectively. Additionally, the retention sleeve panel 200 includes fold lines 220, 222, 224, 226, which control the shape of the retention sleeve 400. The retention sleeve panel 200 has a contoured top edge E3 and a substantially straight bottom edge E4, and has a minimum height H1 and a maximum height H2.

According to an exemplary method, a package 10 as shown in FIG. 6, is assembled by first forming the support structure 300 (shown in FIG. 3) from the support structure blank 100. The side panels 112, 116 are folded along the fold lines 122, 124 out of the plane defined by the extension panels 130a, 130b and the reinforcing panels 132a, 132b, respectively, to form side walls 312, 316. It should be noted that since the cantilevered panels 130a, 130b and reinforcing panels 132a, 132b are struck from a respective side panel 112, 116, the extension panels 130a, 130b and the reinforcing panels 132a, 132b are configured and arranged such that any corresponding void or window N that remains in each side wall 312, 316 (shown in FIG. 3) has a size and shape that does not compromise the weight bearing capacity and other structural integrity of the support structure 300 as the support structure 300 is loaded with articles A, A', stacked, or is otherwise made operational. The first top panel 110 and second top panel 118 are folded along the fold lines 120, 126, respectively, such that the first top panel 110 and second top panel 118 at least partially overlap one another and are secured together to form composite top wall 310, thereby forming a partially enclosed tubular structure. The tubular structure is

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thereby assembled into a fixed sleeve 332 having an axis that extends between the open ends of the fixed sleeve 332.

To continue forming the support structure 300 from the blank 100, the reinforcing panels 132a, 132b are folded along fold lines 134a, 134b to at least partially overlap the extension panels 130a, 130b, respectively to create reinforced cantilevered portions 330a, 330b. In the embodiment shown, the reinforcing panels 132a, 132b further extend onto the bottom panel 114, of bottom wall 314. The reinforcing panels 132a, 132b may extend even further such that the distal ends of each are overlapped and may be interlocked or otherwise secured to one another. Each of the cantilevered portions 330a, 330b includes a support ledge E1 for engaging the retention sleeve 400 as will be described. The primary support structure 300 is thereby formed as shown in FIG. 3 and may be loaded with articles A, A' as shown in FIG. 4, where some articles A' are at least partially enclosed in the fixed sleeve 332 portion of the support structure 300 and supported by the bottom wall 314, while other articles A are disposed on the cantilevered portions 330a, 330b. The side walls 312, 316 may bend or flex in the region of fold lines 158a, 158b, 160a, 160b, which may be positioned to coincide with the shoulders of the articles A', such that fixed sleeve 332 conforms to the shape of or otherwise more tightly wraps around the articles A' therein. The retention sleeve 400 is erected by forming the flattened retention sleeve 200 into a somewhat cylindrical structure such that the panels 212a, 212b at least partially overlap. The panels 212a, 212b are secured to one another to form composite side wall 410 and opposing side wall 412. Similarly, the cylindrical structure is more specifically described as the removable retention sleeve 400 having an axis that extends in the longitudinal direction between the open ends of the sleeve and is substantially perpendicular to and centered on a lateral cross section.

The exemplary package 10 is formed by fitting the erected removable retention sleeve 400 over the support structure 300 after the support structure 300 has been loaded with articles A, A'. In other words, the removable retention sleeve is brought down over the upper portion of the support structure 300 which is thereby received by the retention sleeve 400. Alternatively, the flattened sleeve panel 200

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may be wrapped around the sides of the support structure 300 and secured in place in its cylindrical condition. More specifically, the fixed sleeve and the removable sleeve are disposed such that the medial axis of the fixed sleeve is substantially perpendicular to the medial axis of the removable retention sleeve 400. As such, the package 10 includes the combination of the articles A, A' and the article carrier 20.

In the exemplary embodiment, the sleeve 400 wraps around the primary support structure 300 and articles A, A' such that at least a portion of its bottom edge E4 engages each support ledge E1. A portion of the bottom edge E4 may additionally engage each edge E2. The sleeve 400 is positioned relative to the support structure 300 such that the minimum height H1 of contoured edge E3 provides adequate support and maximum visual exposure to the sides of articles that are enclosed in and supported by the tubular fixed sleeve portion of support structure 300. The maximum height H2 of contoured edge E3 provides increased support to articles that are disposed on cantilevered portions 330a, 330b and that would otherwise not be enclosed. The malleability of the shape of the retention sleeve 400 is controlled in part by fold lines 220, 222, 224, 226 wherein a portion of the retention sleeve 400 conforms to the shape of adjacent articles that are disposed on cantilevered portions 130a, 130b. Further, in the exemplary embodiment, the articles A that are partially enclosed in the tubular fixed sleeve portion of support structure 300 are engaged by an adjacent portion of the retention sleeve 400 to hold the articles in place and to shape the retention sleeve 400. It should be noted however, that in the exemplary embodiment, the edges E5 of the tubular portion of the support structure 300 are spaced apart from the retention sleeve 400 to give the retention sleeve a smoother shape and allow the retention sleeve 400 to increasingly lighten around the articles A, A'. In alternative embodiments, the width of the side walls 312, 316 may be increased or otherwise altered to as a design choice to change the shape of the retention sleeve 400.

FIG. 7 is an alternative configuration of a blank 700 from which a support structure 900 (shown in FIG. 9) is formed, according to another embodiment of the invention. The blank 700 is somewhat similar to the blank 100, and thus only certain non-duplicative aspects of the blank 700 will be described as follows. Here, each of

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a pair of reinforcing panels 732a, 732b is hingedly connected to opposing outer edges of bottom panel 714 along fold lines 734a, 734b such that the reinforcing panels 732a, 732b need not be struck from the side panels 712, 716. The bottom panel 714 is enlarged relative to the bottom panel 114 to support a greater number of articles. More specifically, bottom panel 714 is designed to support six articles and bottom panel 114 is designed to support four articles. Handle tabs 752a, 752b and 752a', 752b' are defined by severance lines and fold lines, in a similar manner as are the handle tabs 152a, 152b but are in contrast positioned adjacent to opposing outer edges of top panel 710 and top flap 718. The support structure blank 700 further includes retention tabs 760a, 760b, 762a, 762b, which will be described in further detail below.

FIG. 8 is an alternative sleeve panel 800 shown here in flattened condition prior to being formed into a cylindrical removable sleeve 910 condition (as shown in FIG. 9). The sleeve panel 800 is somewhat similar to the sleeve panel 200, and thus only certain non-duplicative aspects of the sleeve panel 800 will be described as follows. The sleeve panel 800 includes a contoured lower edge E6 that optionally mirrors or otherwise maintains a constant distance S from contoured top edge E7 for increased visibility of articles as described in further detail below. In alternative embodiments, the sleeve panel 800 may include apertures that similarly allow increased visibility of articles.

FIG. 9 is a perspective view of an alternative package 950 including the support structure 900 and the retention sleeve 910. The support structure 900 is formed from the support structure blank 700 and loaded with articles A, A' using substantially the same method as described above for forming the support structure 300 from the support structure blank 100, including folding the reinforcing panels 732a, 732b to overlap the bottom panel 714 in a face contacting arrangement to form the bottom wall 914 and the cantilevered portions 930a, 930b and folding the panels 710, 712, 716, 718 to form a tubular structure such that the panels 710, 718 overlap and are secured to one another to form a top wall 910. More specifically, panels 710, 718 overlap such that handle tabs 752a, 752b align with handle tabs 752a', 752b', respectively, to form composite handle tabs H. The retention sleeve

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910 is formed from the sleeve panel 800 using substantially the same method as described above for erecting the retention sleeve 400 from its flattened condition including securing panels 812a, 812b to one another to form a substantially cylindrical structure. The retention sleeve 910 is wrapped around the support structure 900 and articles A, A' to enclose the loaded article carrier 960 and form the package 950, as shown in FIG. 9.

The package 950 is somewhat similar to the package 10, and thus only certain non-duplicative aspects of the package 950 will be described as follows. In the alternative embodiment, the package 950 includes six articles A, A' wherein four articles A, A' are included in the tubular internal sleeve portion 932 of support structure 900 and two articles are disposed on cantilevered portions 930a, 930b. Further, the upper edge E7 of retention sleeve 910 is engaged by retention tabs 760a, 760b, 762a, 762b to secure the retention sleeve 910 to the support structure 900 or otherwise impede the retention sleeve 910 from being slidably removed. The composite handle tabs H are disposed on the outer edge of top wall 910 where each outer edge is adjacent to a respective open end of the tubular portion of support structure 900 such that the package 950 may be more easily grasped by a user. Additionally, the contoured bottom edge E6 of the retention sleeve 910 provides windows N2 in which articles A are additionally visible.

It must be emphasized that the above-described embodiments are merely exemplary illustrations of implementations set forth for a clear understanding of the principles of the invention. Many variations and modifications may be made to the above-described embodiments without departing from the scope of the claims. All such modifications, combinations, and variation are included herein by the scope of this disclosure and the following claims.

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CLAIMS

1. A package, comprising:

a plurality of articles ;

an article carrier for supporting said articles, comprising:

a support structure, comprising:

a pair of opposed top and bottom walls hingedly
interconnected by a pair of opposed first and second side walls
to define an internal sleeve for accommodating at least one of
said articles, said bottom wall comprising at least one
cantilevered portion that extends beyond a hinged connection
between said bottom wall and one of said side walls and that at
least partially supports at least one of said articles; and

a retention sleeve for retaining said articles together and with the
support structure, said retention sleeve being disposed around said articles ,

2. The package of claim 1, wherein said at least one cantilevered portion
of said bottom wall further comprises at least one reinforcing panel secured to an
extension panel.

3. The package of claim 2, wherein said reinforcing panel and said
extension panel are struck from an adjacent one of said side walls.

4. The package of claim 1, said cantilevered portion further comprising a
support ledge wherein said retention sleeve is at least partially supported upon said
support ledge.

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5. The package of claim 1, said at least one of said side walls further comprising at least one retention tab wherein said at least one retention tab engages an upper edge of said retention sleeve.

5 6. The package of claim 1, wherein said top wall further comprises means for lifting said package.

7. The package of claim 6, wherein said means comprises handle tabs.

10 8. The package of claim 1, wherein at least one of said side walls is disposed between said at least one article accommodated in said internal sleeve and an article resting on said at least one cantilevered portion of said bottom wall.

15 9. The package of claim 1, wherein at least a portion of said retention sleeve permits the passage of light therethrough.

10. A blank, comprising:
a bottom panel including a first extension portion; and
a first side panel hingedly connected to said bottom panel along a pair of
20 spaced apart fold lines;

wherein said first extension portion of said bottom panel extends toward said first side panel and beyond the hinged connection between said bottom panel and said first side panel.

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11. The blank of claim 10, further comprising a second side panel hingedly connected to said bottom panel along a pair of spaced apart fold lines;

wherein:

said bottom panel further includes a second extension portion; and

5. said second extension portion of said bottom panel extends toward said second side panel and beyond the hinged connection between said bottom panel and said second side panel.

12. The blank of claim 11, wherein said first side panel and said second side panel can be folded out of the plane defined by said bottom panel to be substantially parallel to one another.

13. The blank of claim 12, further comprising a top panel hingedly connected to at least one of said side panels, said top panel being hingedly connecting said side panels when said side panels have been folded out of said plane.

14. The blank of claim 11, wherein each said first and second extension portion is hingedly connected to a reinforcing panel, respectively, each of which is foldable into a face contacting arrangement with each said first and second extension portion.

15. The blank of claim 11, further comprising at least one reinforcing panel hingedly connected to said bottom panel, said at least one reinforcing panel being foldable into a face contacting arrangement with each said first and second extension portion.

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16. A package, comprising:

a plurality of articles; and

a support structure for supporting said plurality of articles and for defining a first sleeve, the first sleeve being substantially fixedly disposed around at least one of the articles; and

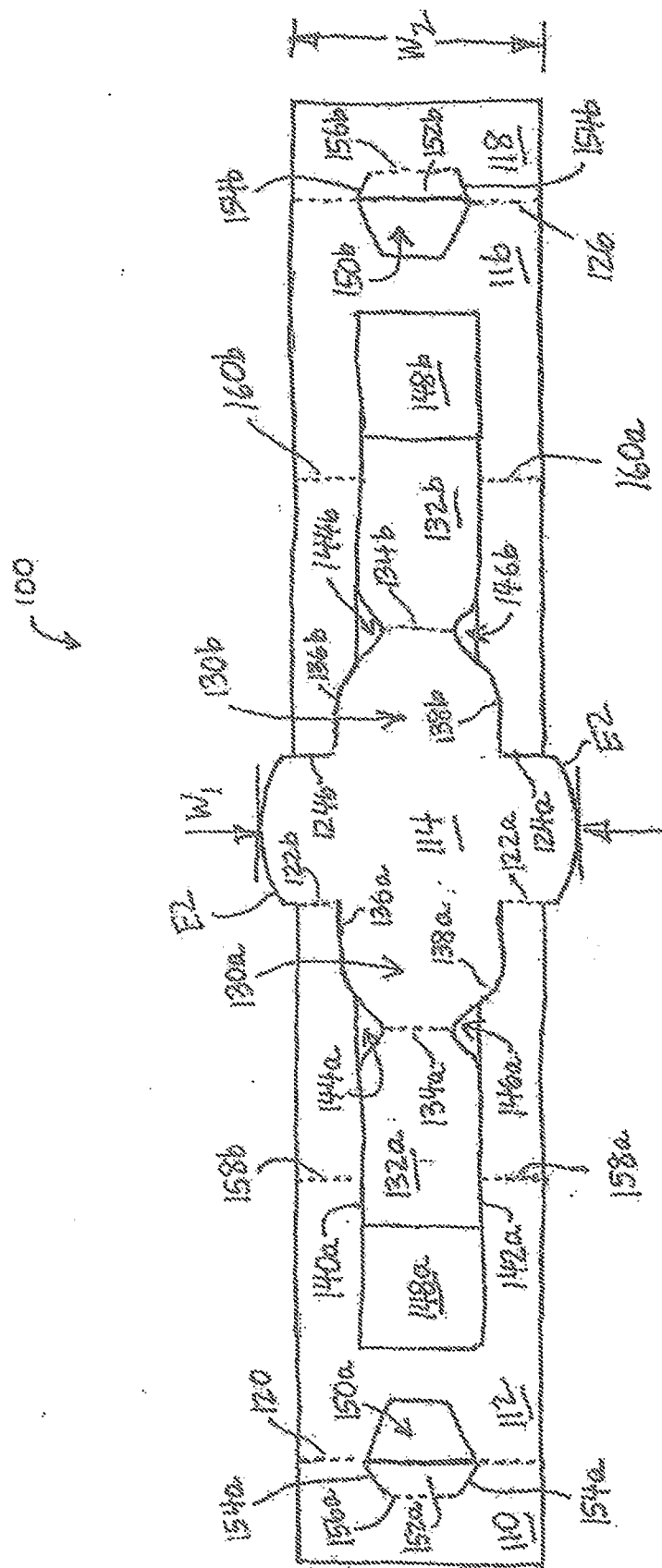
a second sleeve removably disposed around the first sleeve such that the axis of the first sleeve is disposed substantially perpendicular to the axis of the second sleeve and such that at least one other article is disposed between the first sleeve and the second sleeve.

17. The package of claim 16, wherein at least a portion of said second sleeve permits the passage of light therethrough.

18. The package of claim 16, said second sleeve having a bottom edge at least a portion of which rests upon said support structure.

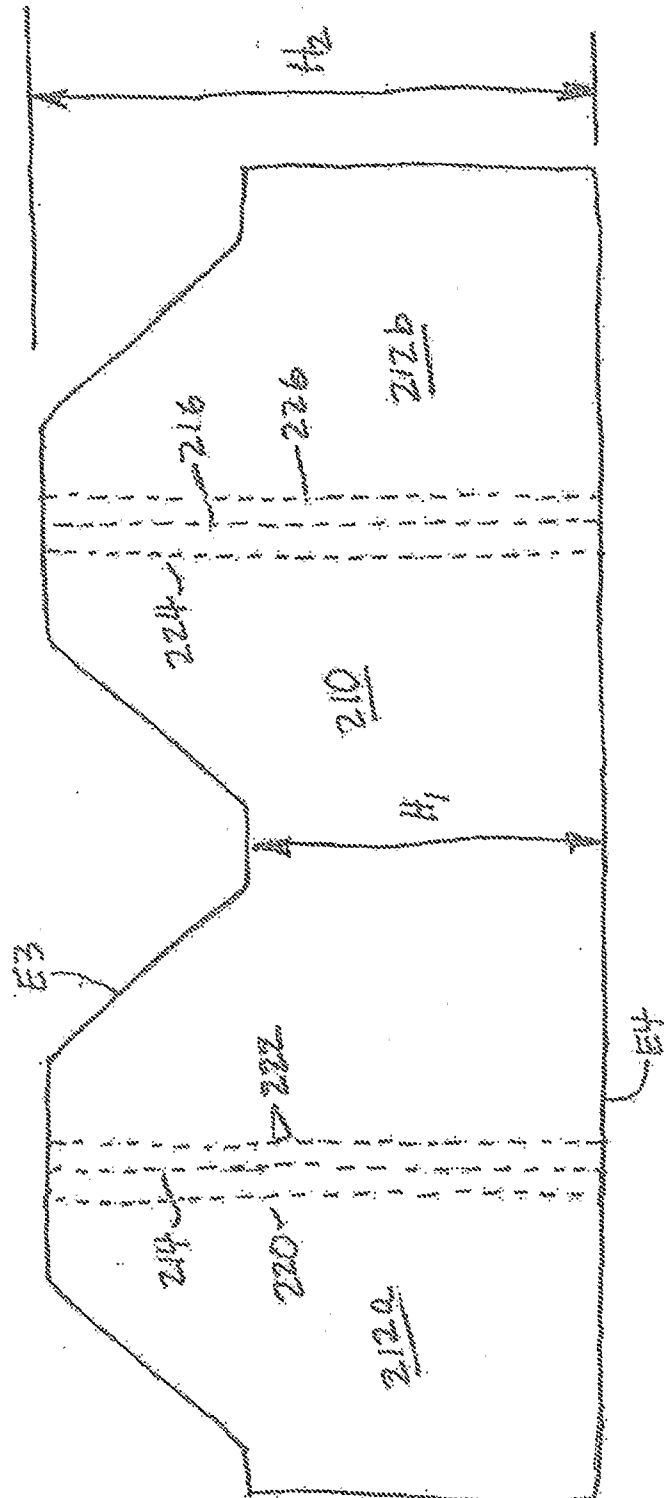
19. The package of claim 16, said second sleeve having a bottom edge at least a portion of which is spaced apart from said support structure.

20. The package of claim 16, wherein each of said articles is substantially cylindrical in shape such that said each article defines an article axis, said articles are arranged with said article axes parallel to each other, and said axis of said second sleeve is disposed substantially parallel with said article axes.



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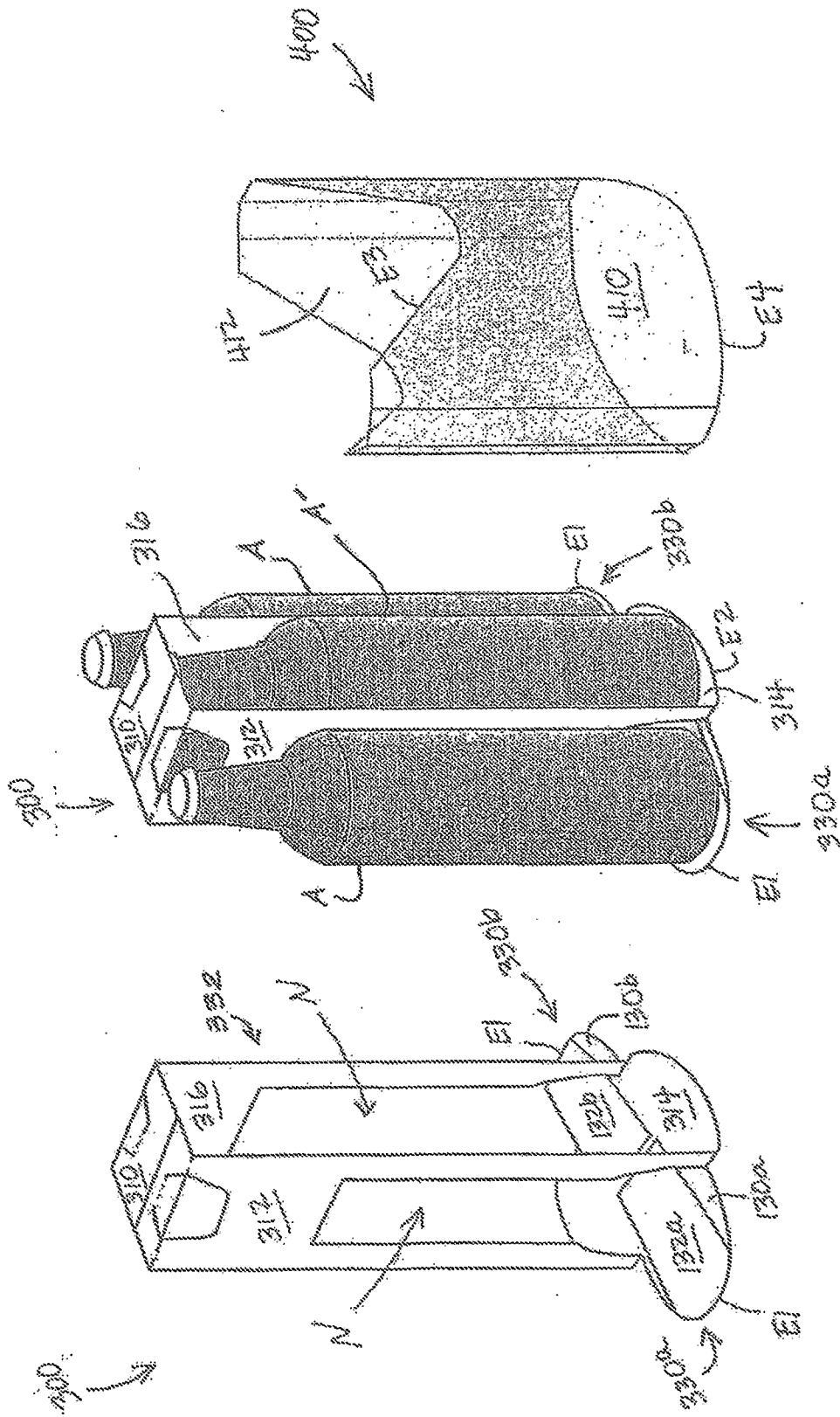
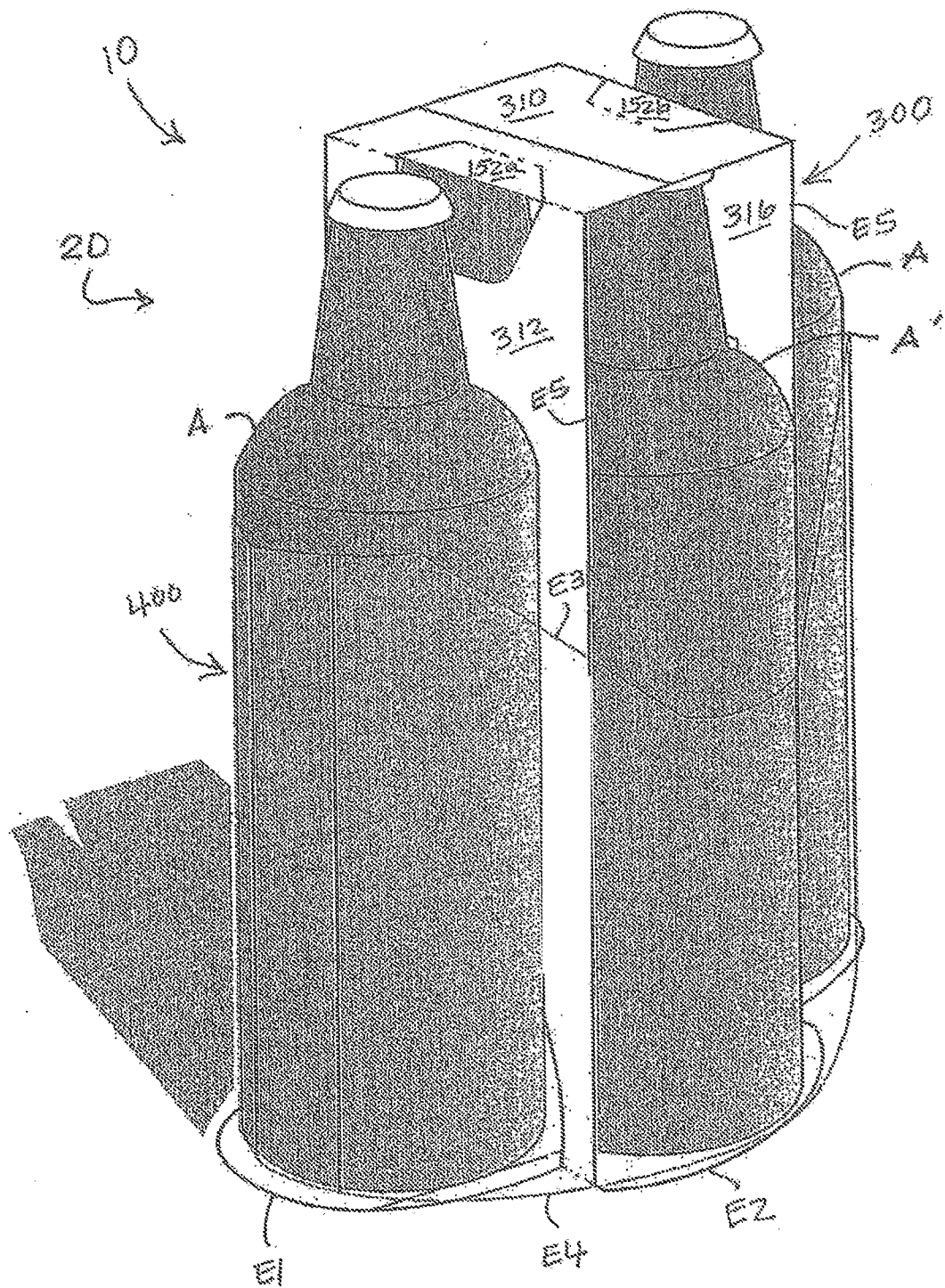


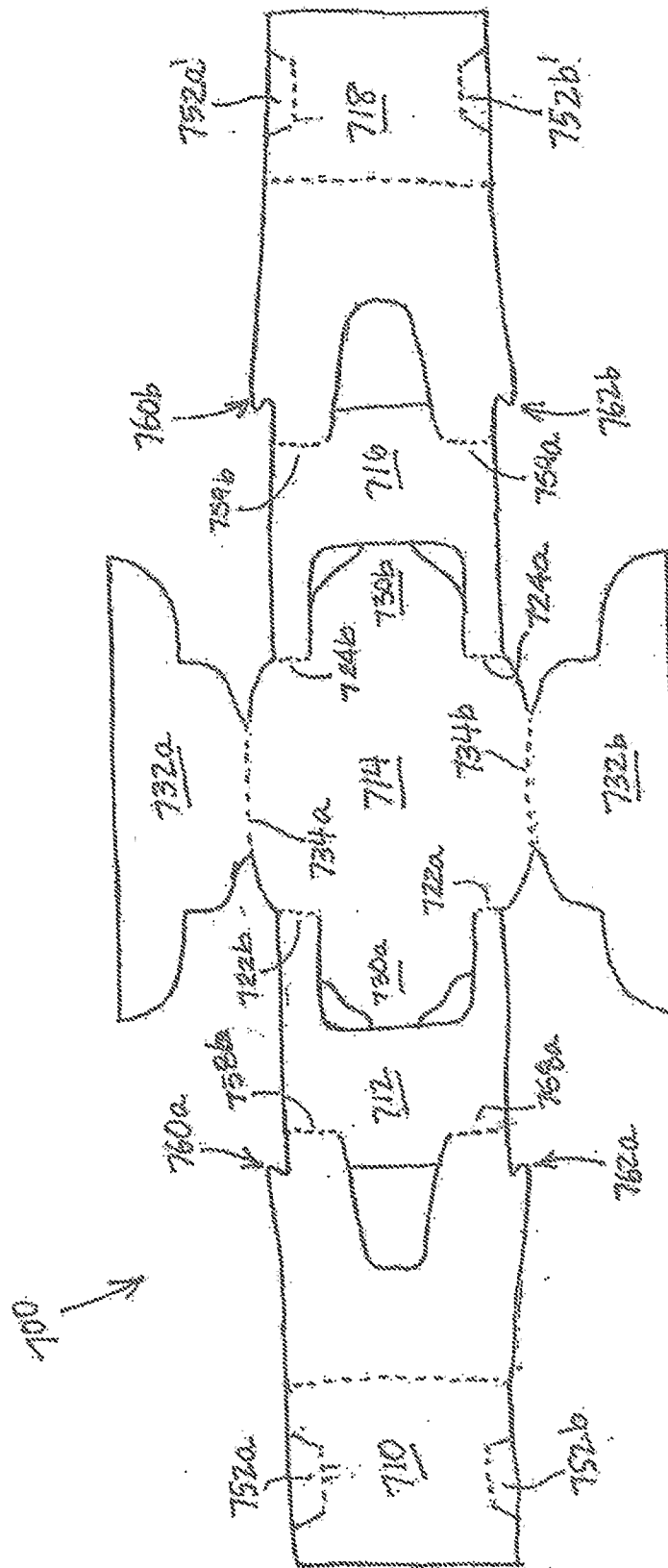
FIGURE 5

FIGURE 4

FIGURE 3



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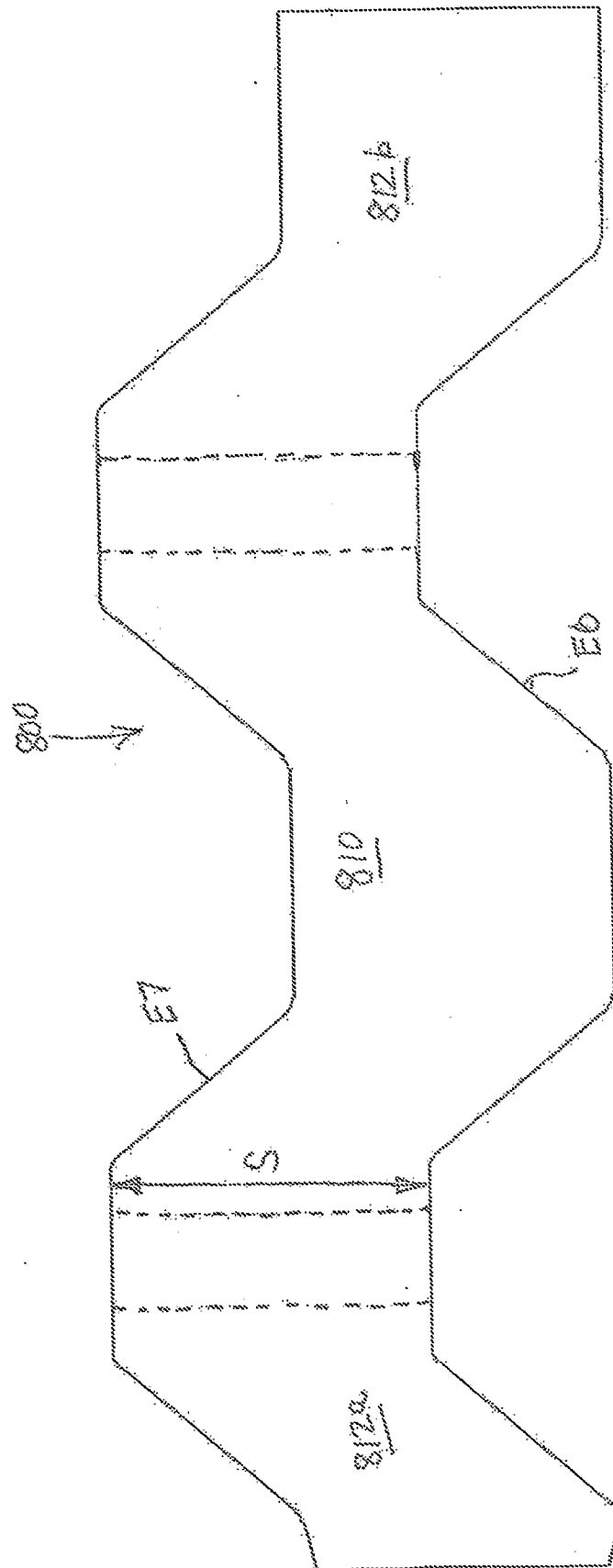


FIGURE 8

