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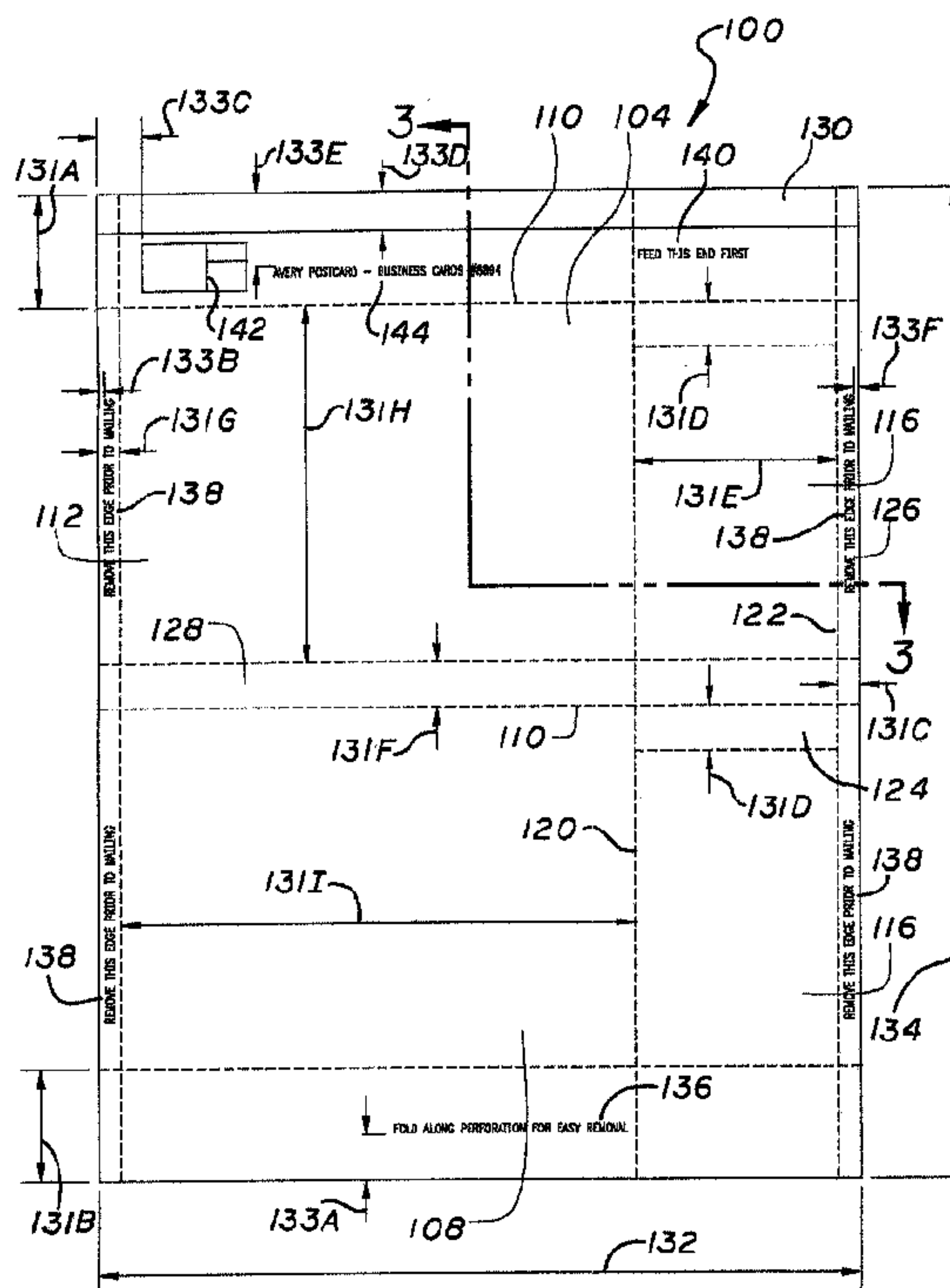
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D'AFFAIRES ET FICHES ROTATIVES COMBINEES

(54) Title: COMBINATION POSTCARD-BUSINESS CARD/ROTARY CARD MAILER SYSTEMS AND METHODS



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A pattern of horizontal and vertical perforation lines are cut into a sheet to define a pair of combination mailers with a disposable sheet margin around them and a sheet margin between them. Other formats aside from this "two-up" format can be used if desired. Each of the mailers includes a postcard connected to and adjacent either a business card or a rotary card. The user then designs on his computer the desired indicia to be printed on the postcard and the business card or rotary card of each of the mailers on the sheet. The sheet is then passed through a printer and the selected indicia printed on the mailers. The sheet can have a calendered infeed end to improve printer pickup and feed. The printed mailers are then separated from the sheet along the perforation lines, stamped and mailed to the intended recipients. The recipients then separate the custom printed business or rotary card from the postcard and retain the separated card for future reference.

COMBINATION POSTCARD – BUSINESS CARD/ROTARY CARD MAILER SYSTEMS AND METHODS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A pattern of horizontal and vertical perforation lines are cut into a sheet to define a pair of combination mailers with a disposable sheet margin around them and a sheet margin between them. Other formats aside from this “two-up” format can be used if desired. Each of the mailers includes a postcard connected to and adjacent either a business card or a rotary card. The user then designs on his computer the desired indicia to be printed on the postcard and the business card or rotary card of each of the mailers on the sheet. The sheet is then passed through a printer and the selected indicia printed on the mailers. The sheet can have a calendered infeed end to improve printer pickup and feed. The printed mailers are then separated from the sheet along the perforation lines, stamped and mailed to the intended recipients. The recipients then separate the custom printed business or rotary card from the postcard and retain the separated card for future reference.

COMBINATION POSTCARD – BUSINESS CARD/ROTARY CARD MAILER SYSTEMS AND METHODS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] *1. Field of the Invention:*

[0002] The present invention relates to constructions, systems and methods for making and using combination postcard-business card mailers and combination postcard-rotary card mailers.

[0003] *2. General Background and State of the Art:*

[0004] When announcements are sent in the mail such as by businesses to prospective customers, the announcements are typically discarded by the prospective customers. An example of a prior art product is shown in U.S. Patent 5,076,490 (Dulin), whose entire contents are hereby incorporated by reference. There is thus a need for a system that encourages the prospective customers to keep the announcements or portions thereof containing information on the business and preferably which can be designed and printed by the new business on its personal computer system.

INVENTION SUMMARY

[0005] Directed to solving the problems and meeting the needs in the prior art, disclosed herein are perforated sheet constructions of the present invention. One embodiment has the perforation lines forming two combination postcard-business card mailers on the sheet, and the perforation lines of the other form two combination postcard-rotary card mailers on the sheet. The user custom designs on his personal computer the indicia to be printed on front and back sides of the postcard portions and the business or rotary card portions of each of the combination mailers on the sheet. The indicia on the postcard portions can be oriented perpendicular to that on the business or rotary card portions.

[0006] Each of the sheets is preferably calendered at its infeed end to assist in feeding the sheet into the user's printer. The user then instructs the printer to print the custom-designed indicia on the two combination mailers on the sheet. The printed combination mailers are then separated from the surrounding sheet material and from each other along the perforation lines. Stamps can be applied to the

postcard portions and the combination mailers mailed to desired recipients. The desired recipients, when they receive the combination mailers, will read the messages printed on the mailers, separate the custom-printed business card or rotary card from the postcard along the perforation (or other weakened) lines separating them, and keep the cards with the user's (advertising) information thereon (and will likely discard the postcards).

[0007] In other words, the present invention provides for a system where the postcard announcement can be sent to the recipients, and attached thereto is a business card or rotary card with the business's identifying information, such as name, address, phone number, fax number, e-mail address, logo and so forth, as are typically provided on such cards. These cards would be separable from the announcements by the recipient such as by tearing along a perforation line. The separated, printed cards then are of a traditional size and shape and adapted to be retained by the recipient such as by placing in his rotary card file or in a business card box or album. Thus, instead of the recipient throwing away the mailer that he receives in the mail, he retains a portion thereof as a traditional business card or rotary card with the desired identifying information of the sender, thereby benefiting both the sender and the recipient.

[0008] Other objects and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent to those persons having ordinary skill in the art to which the present invention pertains from the foregoing description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. 1 is a front view of a combination postcard-business card mailer sheet of the present invention;

[0010] FIG. 2 is a front view of a combination postcard-rotary card mailer sheet of the present invention;

[0011] FIG. 3 is a flow chart of a process of the present invention for making and using either of the embodiments of FIGS. 1 and 2;

[0012] FIGS. 4-8 are first, second, third, fourth and fifth computer screenshots, which can be used in the process of FIG. 3;

[0013] FIG. 9 is a flow chart of an alternative process of the invention;

[0014] FIG. 10 is a perspective view of a computer and printer system of the present invention for printing the embodiment of FIG. 1 (or FIG. 2);

[0015] FIG. 11 is a retail package showing the sheets of FIG. 1 (or 2) being removed from retail packaging together with a CD-ROM program and an instruction or advertising sheet; and

[0016] FIG. 12 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken on line 12-12 of FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0017] A number of different embodiments of the present invention as well as processes for using and making them are disclosed herein and will now be described. FIGS. 1 and 2 are front or top views of alternative sheet constructions of the present invention. The sheet construction of FIG. 1 shown generally at 100 is a combination postcard-business card mailer and shows two mailers formed thereon at 104 and 108 by perforation lines 110. Both are identical with one positioned above the other. Each includes a postcard 112 and a business card 116 adjacent thereto and separated by a perforation line 120. A disposable rectangular portion 124 is positioned at the end of the business card and adjacent to the postcard. This disposable paper portion 124 is provided because the business card has a length of three and one-half inches while the postcard has a length or width of four inches. This allows a rectangle to be formed by the horizontal and vertical perforation lines 110. However, a less preferred alternative is to eliminate the disposable portion 124 such as by making the length of the business card 116 equal to the width of the postcard 112.

[0018] Each of the combination mailers is surrounded by a margin or edge 126, and a central gutter portion 128 separates them. The edges and gutter portions 126, 128 protect the edges of the mailers 104, 108 and also provide for the desired dimensions of the combinations within the overall preferred 8½ x 11 inch dimension of the sheet construction 100. The preferred dimensions for the placement of the perforation lines, and thereby the dimensions of the postcards 112, business cards 116 and disposable portions 124 will now be described. Referring to FIG. 1, preferred dimensions in inches for each of the reference numerals are:

Additionally, the instructional printing on the sheet construction assists the user in using this product.

[0019] Further, the forward or infeed ends 160 of the sheet constructions are calendered about twenty-five percent to assist in the feeding of the sheet 100 into the printer shown in FIG. 10 for a printing operation. The printing can be on both sides of the postcard and/or both sides of the business card. One preferred embodiment includes the printing or indicia 170 on the postcard to be in the portrait direction of the sheet that is running from left to right in FIG. 1, with the printed indicia 180 on the business card oriented in the opposite landscape direction, that is, up and down relative to FIG. 1.

[0020] The sheet construction 200 of FIG. 2 is similar to sheet construction 100 except that instead of a business card, a rotary card 210 is provided with the rotary card punch out slots 214 illustrated. The rotary card 200 preferably will be the same length as the width of the postcard and therefore the small disposable rectangle 124 may not be needed.

[0021] A preferred material for the sheet constructions 100, 200 is a cardstock material weighing approximately one hundred and sixty grams per square meter with a thickness of at least 0.008 inch and a color optimized coating on both sides that enhances the appearance of ink applied by a typical desk top inkjet printer (See FIG. 10). An alternative cardstock material weighs approximately one hundred and forty grams per square meter with a minimum thickness of 0.007 inch and has no color optimizing coating.

[0022] The preferred perforation or micro-perforation dimensions are 0.020 inch cut with a 0.007 inch tie. Additional ties of 1/32 inch at key points to ensure that the business card, rotary card and rotary card punch-outs do not detach from the postcard during the mailing process can be provided. That is, additional (wider) ties can be included at key areas around the business card and rotary card to prevent premature separation from the postcard, while going through the U.S. Postal Service. The cut and tie dimensions depend on the physical properties of the material, the perforation pattern, the overall strength (to prevent premature separation in desktop printers), ease of separation and appearance of the card after separation. Alternative perforation dimensions are cut and tie dimensions of 0.013 inch/0.005 inch; 0.010 inch/0.005 inch; and 0.125 inch/0.09375 inch.

[0023] Preferred and alternative micro-perforation lines and dimensions have been described. However, it is also within the scope of the invention to provide for other types of weakened separation lines such as scored lines, from one or both sides of the sheet, perforation lines from both sides of the sheet, or other means as would be apparent to those skilled in the art. If the mailer combination is intended to be sent through the U.S. Postal Service, the weakened separation lines between the postcard and the business card 116 or rotary card 210 should be adapted to survive the delivery service and to be in compliance with any postal regulations.

[0024] The sheet constructions 100, 200 are fed into printers 300 so that the indicia as custom designed by the user as will be apparent from the flow charts herein, can be printed thereon. Examples of the printers 300 are the following inkjet printers: Hewlett Packard-DeskJet Models 560C, 694C, 722C and 870C; Canon-BJC Models 600 and 4200; Epson-Stylus Color Models II and 600; and Lexmark Model 1020.

[0025] Instead of printing the product in a desktop printer 300, alternative indicia applying methods include handwriting information or having it professionally printed, that is, offset printed. A further alternative is to have the indicia on adhesive labels, which are adhered to the mailer.

[0026] FIG. 3 shows software instructions for the sheet constructions of FIGS. 1 and 2. References to product codes 8824 and 8894 are to the rotary card embodiment of FIG. 2 and the business card embodiment of FIG. 1, respectively. The labels 1, 2, 3 and 4 refer, respectively, to postcard front, business card front, postcard back, and business card back.

[0027] To help in the understanding of the flow chart various screen shots are provided as FIGS. 4-9. For each of them, the front view or the front of the card is defined as the message side. This is the side where the consumer would design the business card and the postcard. In contrast, the back view or the back of the card is defined as the address side where the consumers would place the address and the stamp.

[0028] FIG. 4 is a screen shot showing how a new template is selected. The user first goes to NEW, then clicks on the desired template. A preview is available on the upper right hand corner of the pop-up box. When the item number has been selected, the user clicks OK.

[0029] FIG. 5 is a front formatting view of the 8894 template. This screen allows the consumer to incorporate graphics and text on the front of the card. He can get to this screen by clicking NEW in the tool bar and then clicking on the item number 8894.

[0030] FIG. 6 is a back formatting view of the 8894 template. This screen allows the consumer to incorporate graphics and text on the back of the card. The consumer can get to this screen by clicking on NEW in the tool bar and then clicking on the item number 8894.

[0031] FIG. 7 is a front formatting view of the 8824 template. This screen allows the consumer to incorporate graphics and text on the front of the card. The consumer can get to the screen by clicking NEW in the tool bar and then clicking on item 8824.

[0032] FIG. 8 is a back formatting view of the 8824 template. The screen allows the consumer to incorporate graphics and text on the back of the card. To get to this screen the consumer clicks on the NEW in the tool bar and then clicks on item 8824.

[0033] The program as shown in the flow chart of FIG. 3 and in the screen shots can be provided on a CD included in the package with the sheet constructions 100 and/or 200 (as shown in FIG. 11). For example, fifty sheet constructions, each having two mailers thereon, can be provided in the packaging together with an instruction sheet. Instead of providing the software on a CD, it can be provided to the consumer on a floppy disk. Alternatively, it can be downloaded by the consumer from an Internet site. In other words, the template can be downloaded onto base software such as Avery DesignPro 2000, Microsoft Publisher or Broderbund The Print Shop.

[0034] A further alternative is to have the software or template designated in general publishing software such as that as might be available from Microsoft.

[0035] Referring to FIGS. 3-8, the following steps can be followed to format and print Promotion Mailers using DesignPro software of this invention.

1. Open DesignPro 2000 Special Edition.
2. Click **File > New**.

3. At the **Select Template** windows, select the **8824 Front** or **8894 Front** template. Click **OK**. There are two templates, **Front** and **Back**, for each product.

4. Click **File > Save As**. Name and save the file. This allows the user to save his work regularly by going to **File > Save** or using **Ctrl S**.

5. The user should then familiarize himself with the DesignPro features, the Menu bar and the Toolbar. Many of these features and tools are similar or the same as those found in other programs.

6. a. Creating identical designs (or design elements on all labels:

The **Master** tab at the bottom left corner of the design area is selected. Using DesignPro features and tools, the design to be repeated on each label is created. For example, the user can use this feature to include his return address on the postcard, create identical business cards or create identical labels.

b. Creating different designs on each label:

Label 1 is selected to create and design the first label. Create a design using the DesignPro features and tools. Next, click the icon to the left of the **Master** tab to create and design **Label 2**. To create **Label 3**, click the icon again, etc.

The word "**Label**" is used generically even though it refers to a card product. For these products a "**Label**" refers to one postcard and business card or one postcard and rotary card combination. (There are two combinations on each sheet construction.)

7. Repeat the steps above to design the back of the product. This time, at the **Select Template** window, choose the **8824 Back** or **8894 Back** template.

8. To print the card products with the file open, select **File > Print Preview**, and the design is checked. Click **Close**. Make any necessary adjustments to your design.

9. The user inserts a plain sheet of paper into his printer. He selects **File > Print**, checks his printer settings and changes the **Page Orientation** to **Portrait**. Click **OK** to print.

10. When the user is satisfied the test print matches the layout of the practice sheet (included in the package), he inserts the card product 100 or 200 into his printer. Click **File > Print**. Select how many labels (postcard combinations) to print and click **OK**. When printing the **Back** of his product, change the **Page Orientation** to **Portrait** and be sure to insert the correct end of the card product into the printer.

[0036] Tips for Using the Software

a. To view sample card designs, from the menu bar click on **File > Open**, then double click on **Samples** folder and then click on **Cards**. (It may be necessary to navigate to the **Samples** folder on the DesignPro CD. When he clicks **File > Open**, he will not automatically go to this location.)

b. Use the **F1** key or select **Help > DesignPro Help** from the **Menu** bar for information on DesignPro features and tools.

c. Hold the cursor over each tool of the Toolbar to display its function

d. Insert graphics by clicking on the **Insert Picture** icon on the Toolbar.

e. Insert the DesignPro CD to access graphics files that are available with this Special Edition. In the **Graphics** folder, **.wmf Clipart** and **.jpg Photo** files can be found.

f. Move a design element from one label to another by selecting it and dragging it to the desired **Label** tab you want to move it to. Hold the **Ctrl** key while dragging to copy the element.

g. With an object selected, (text or picture box), select the **Rotate** tool to rotate the object. However, Windows Metafiles (.wmf) graphics included on the DesignPro CD cannot be rotated.

- h. Turn off **Snap to Grid** to fine-tune the spacing of your design elements (View > Snap to Grid).
- i. Select **Database** from the Menu bar to import and use a mailing list.

[0037] Sheet Construction Manufacturing Process

[0038] Preferred steps for manufacturing the sheet constructions 100, 200 will now be described. A roll of card material is loaded onto an unwind spindle of a converting press. The web material is threaded through the various printing, calendering, die-cutting/perforating and sheeting stations of the press. When the press is started, the web passes through the printing station where the desired artwork (product number, name, feeding directions, etc.) are printed on a top surface of the web. The web then passes through the calendering station where an edge of the web is compressed, reducing its thickness by approximately twenty-five percent.

[0039] The web then enters one of the perforation die stations where horizontal or vertical microperforation pattern is cut into the web. And the web next enters a second perforation station where the final horizontal or vertical microperforation pattern is cut into the web. Different stations for perforation die cutting the web in the horizontal and vertical directions may be useful, as different cutting pressures may be needed. Typically cutting parallel to the paper fibers in the machine direction is easier and requires less die cutting pressure, while cutting across the fibers requires more die pressure. And the web then goes through a sheeting station, which cuts the web into the final sheet size of eight-and-a-half by eleven inches. The finished sheets are then stacked and moved down a conveyor for placement into the desired package (packets or boxes). Preferably a stack of fifty sheets are placed with a CD containing the indicia design software and with an instruction sheet into retail packaging, and the package can then be shipped through normal distribution channels.

[0040] From the foregoing detailed description, it will be evident that there are a number of changes, adaptations and modifications of the present invention which come within the province of those skilled in the art. However, it is intended that all

such variations not departing from the spirit of the invention be considered as within the scope thereof.

WE CLAIM:

1. A sheet construction, comprising:

a sheet having a plurality of weakened separation lines thereon defining an outline of a combination postcard-card mailer separable therealong from the rest of the sheet after indicia has been applied to the mailer wherein at least one of the lines defines a line of separation between a postcard and a card of the combination mailer.
2. The construction of claim 1 wherein the sheet includes a margin encircling the outline.
3. The construction of claim 1 wherein the sheet includes a sheet perimeter and the outline is spaced inwardly from the entire sheet perimeter.
4. The construction of claim 1 wherein the weakened separation lines are perforation lines.
5. The construction of claim 1 wherein the sheet has a calendered printer-infeed edge.
6. The construction of claim 1 wherein the combination postcard-card mailer defines a first combination postcard-card mailer, the postcard defines a first postcard and the card defines a first card, and the weakened separation lines also define an outline of a second combination postcard-card mailer separable therealong from the rest of the sheet after indicia has been applied to the second mailer, wherein at least one of the lines defines a line of separation between a second postcard and a second card of the second combination mailer.
7. The construction of claim 6 wherein the lines define a throw-away sheet strip between the first and second combination mailers.

8. The construction of claim 1 wherein card defines a rectangular business card, and the separation lines define a disposable small sheet rectangle positioned at an end of and adjacent to the postcard and at an end of and adjacent to the business card, whereby the combination mailer and the small sheet rectangle together define a rectangle on the sheet.

9. The construction of claim 8 wherein the small sheet rectangle is smaller than the business card and than the postcard.

10. The construction of claim 1 wherein the postcard is oriented in a portrait direction of the sheet and the card is oriented in a landscape direction of the sheet.

11. The construction of claim 1 wherein the indicia is applied to the postcard in a portrait direction of the sheet and the indicia is applied to the card in a landscape direction of the sheet.

12. The construction of claim 11 further comprising media containing program instructions allowing a user to design and print on a personal computer system the indicia on the postcard and the indicia on the card.

13. The construction of claim 1 further comprising a computer programmed to allow a user to design and print the indicia.

14. The construction of claim 1 wherein the card is a rectangular business card.

15. The construction of claim 1 wherein the card is a rotary card.

16. A mailer system, comprising:

a sheet having a plurality of weakened separation lines thereon defining an outline of a combination postcard-card mailer separable therealong from the rest of the sheet after indicia has been applied to the mailer wherein at least one of the lines defines a line of separation between a postcard and a card of the combination mailer; and

media containing program instructions allowing a user to design and print on a personal computer system the indicia on the mailer.

17. The system of claim 16 wherein the media is a CD.

18. The system of claim 16 wherein the indicia is printed on the postcard in a portrait direction of the sheet and the indicia is printed on the card in a landscape direction of the sheet.

19. The system of claim 16 wherein card is a rectangular business card, and the separation lines define a disposable small sheet rectangle positioned at an end of and adjacent to the postcard and at an end of and adjacent to the business card, whereby the combination mailer and the small sheet rectangle together define a rectangle on the sheet.

20. The system of claim 16 wherein the card is a rectangular business card.

21. The system of claim 16 wherein the card is a rotary card.

22. The system of claim 16 wherein the sheet includes a calendered printer-infeed end edge.

23. A method, comprising:

providing a sheet having a plurality of weakened separation lines thereon defining an outline of a combination postcard-card mailer separable therealong from the rest of the sheet after indicia has been applied to the mailer wherein at least one of the lines defines a separation line separating a postcard and a card of the combination mailer;

applying indicia on at least one of the postcard and the card; and

after the applying, separating the combination mailer from the rest of the sheet.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein the applying includes designing the indicia on a personal computer using a user's existing software.

25. The method of claim 23 wherein the applying includes designing the indicia on a personal computer using new software specific to the combination mailer.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein the new software is supplied to the user in a retail package with the combination mailers.

27. The method of claim 23 further comprising after the separating, mailing the combination mailer to a recipient.

28. The method of claim 24 further comprising the recipient separating the card from the postcard along the separation line.

29. The method of claim 23 wherein the applying includes passing the sheet through a printer which prints the indicia on the mailer.

30. The method of claim 26 wherein the sheet includes a calendered edge, and the passing includes feeding the sheet calendered edge first into the printer.

31. The method of claim 23 further comprising custom designing on a personal computer system the indicia.

32. The method of claim 23 wherein the indicia includes indicia on the postcard and indicia on the card.

33. The method of claim 23 wherein the indicia is printed by a printer on the postcard in a portrait direction on the sheet and on the card in a landscape direction on the sheet.

34. The method of claim 23 wherein the card is a rectangular business card.

35. The method of claim 24 wherein the card is a rotary card.

36. The method of claim 23 further comprising applying a stamp to the postcard.

37. A method of making a sheet construction, comprising:

forming on a web a plurality of weakened separation lines defining an outline of a combination postcard-business card mailer separable therealong from the rest of the web after indicia has been applied to the combination mailer wherein at least one of the lines defines a separation line between a postcard and a business card of the combination mailer; and

sheeting the web into a sheet which includes the outline.

38. The method of claim 37 wherein the weakened separation lines include perforation lines.

39. The method of claim 37 further comprising before the sheeting, printing on the web.

40. The method of claim 37 further comprising calendering the web.

41. A method of making a combination postcard-card mailer sheet construction, comprising:

- (a) printing artwork on a portion of a web;
- (b) calendering an edge of the web portion;
- (c) forming on the web portion a plurality of perforation lines defining an outline of a combination postcard-card mailer separable therealong from the rest of the web portion after indicia has been applied to the mailer wherein at least one of the lines defines a perforation line between a postcard and a card of the combination mailer; and
- (d) sheeting the web into a sheet which includes the web portion.

42. The method of claim 41 wherein the forming includes cutting the perforation lines in a direction parallel to the paper fibers at a first station with a first die cutting pressure and cutting the perforation lines in a direction perpendicular to the paper fibers at a second different station with a second greater die cutting pressure.

43. The method of claim 41 wherein the combination postcard-card mailer defines a first combination postcard-card mailer, the postcard defines a first postcard and the card defines a first card, and (c) includes the plurality of perforation lines defining an outline of a second combination postcard-card mailer separable therealong from the rest of the web portion after indicia has been applied to the

second combination mailer wherein at least one of the lines defines a perforation line between a second postcard and a second card of the second combination mailer.

44. The method of claim 41 wherein the card defines a rectangular business card.

45. The method of claim 41 wherein the card defines a rotary card.

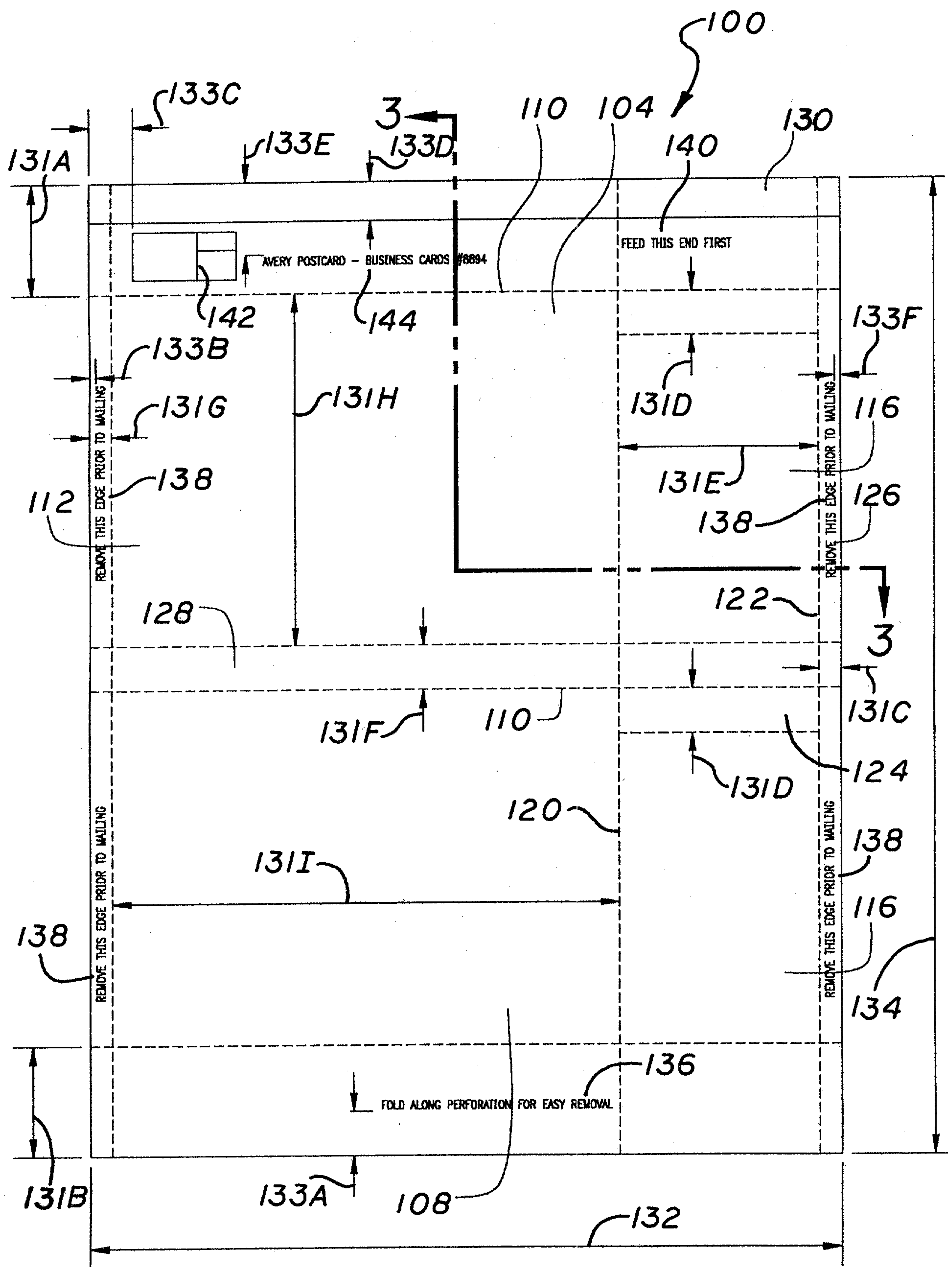


FIG. 1

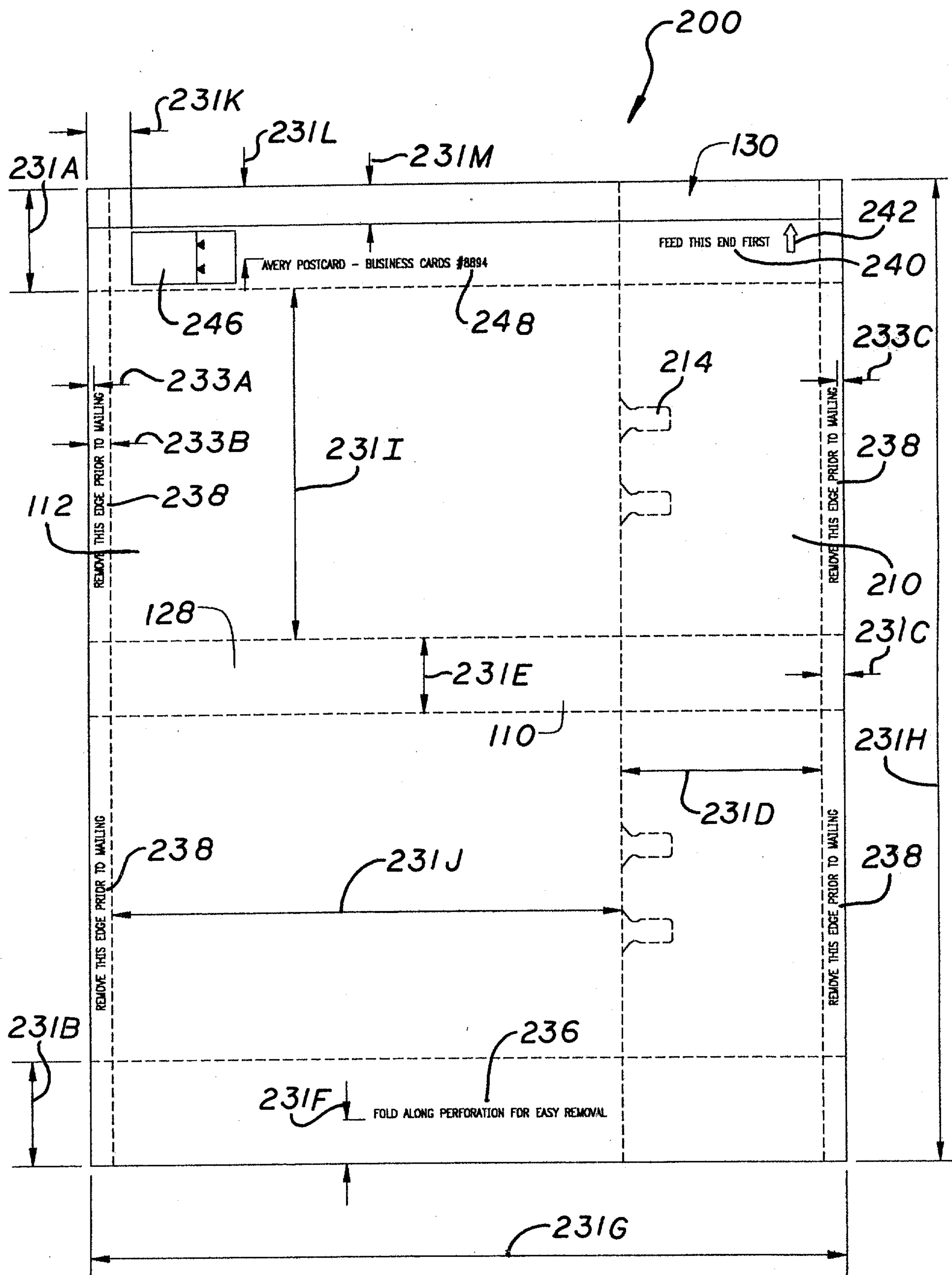
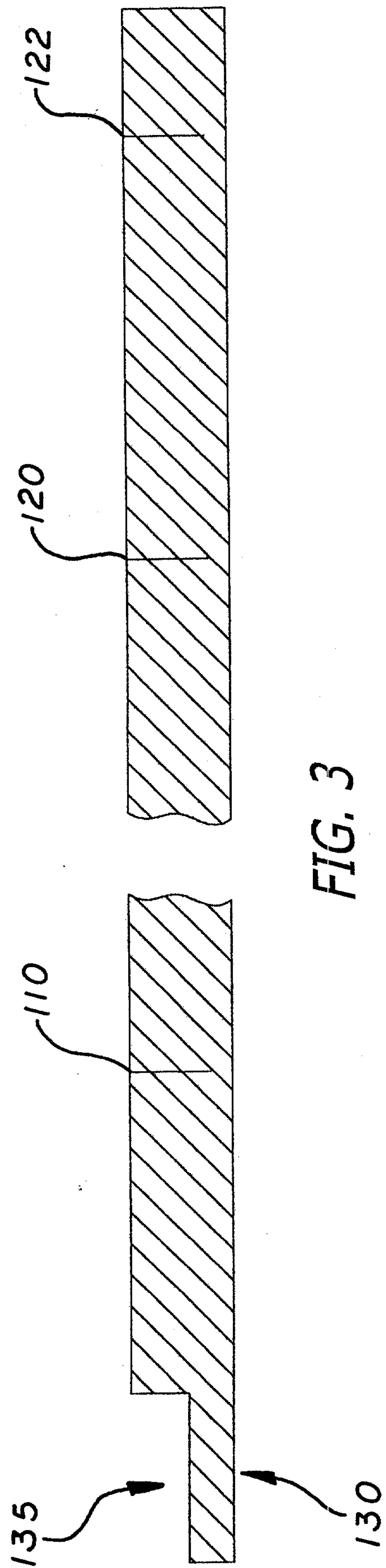
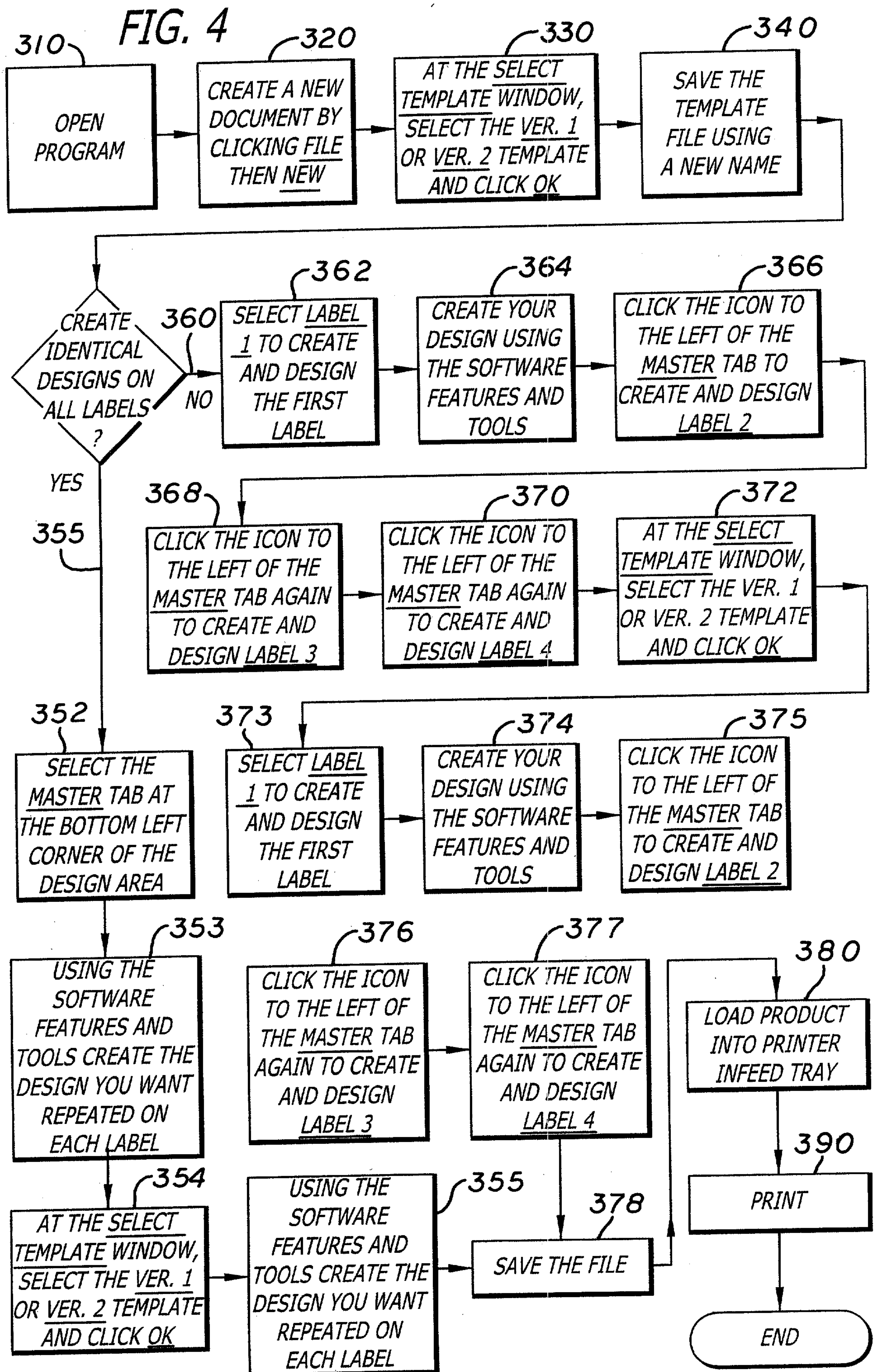


FIG. 2





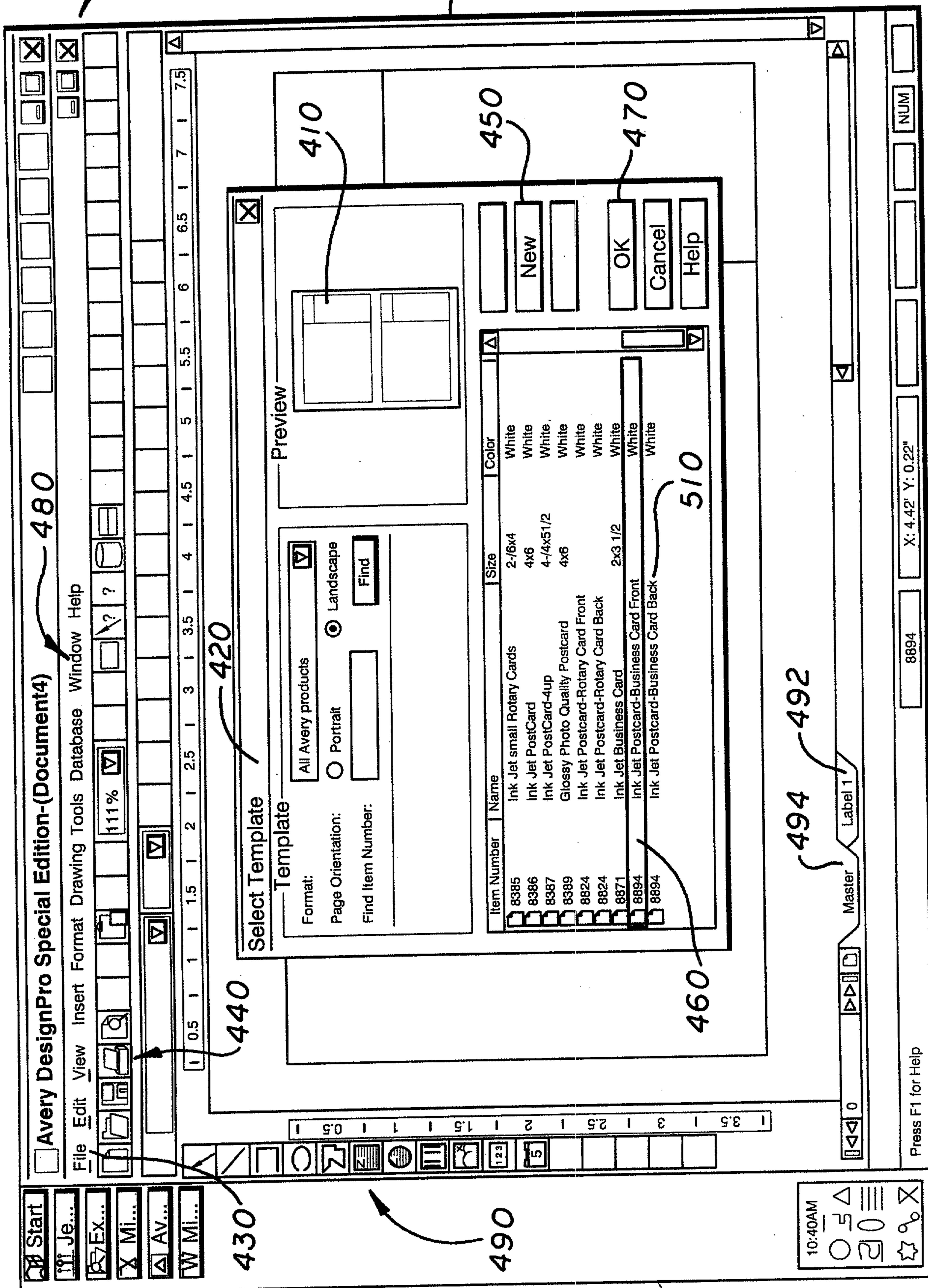


FIG. 5

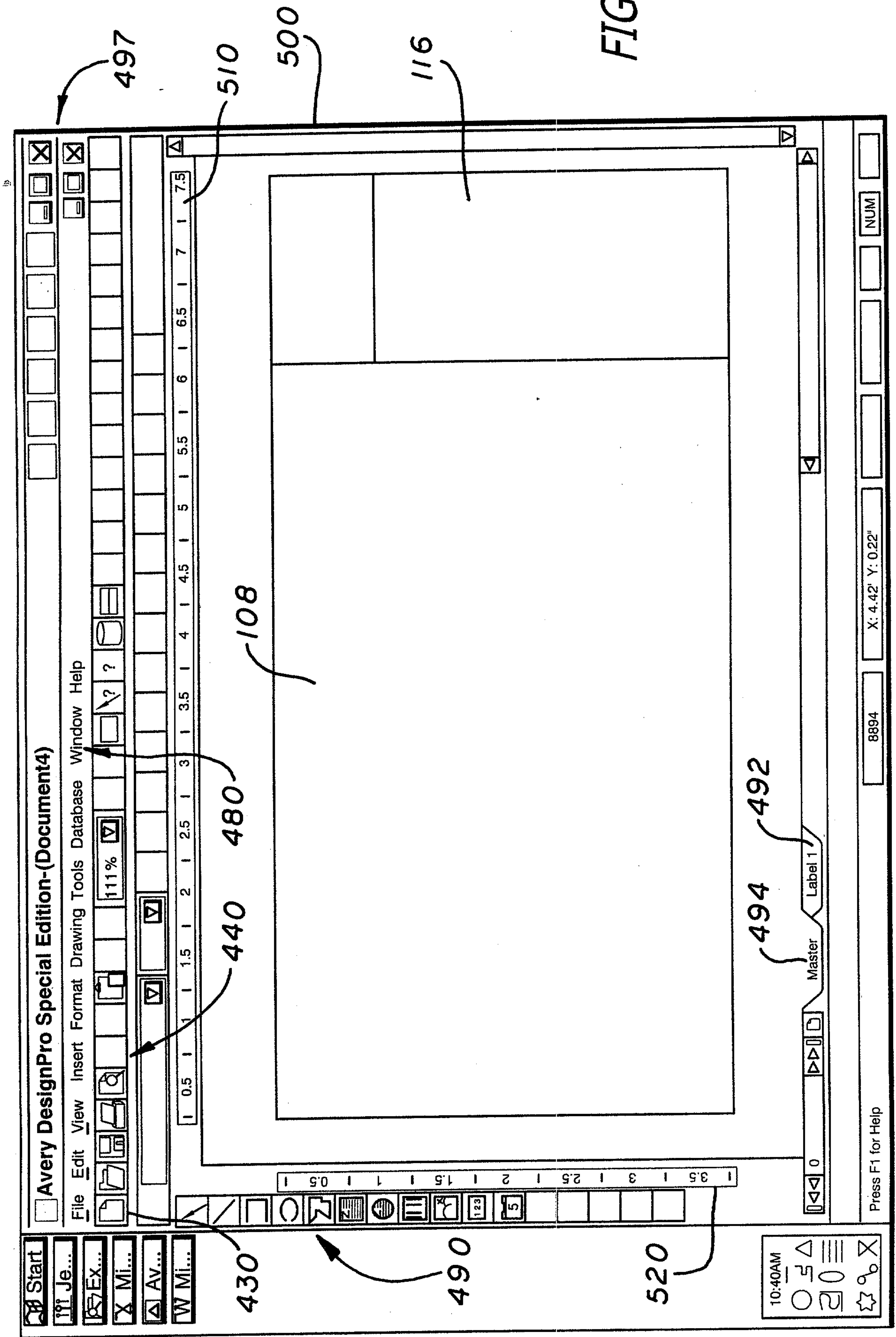


FIG. 6

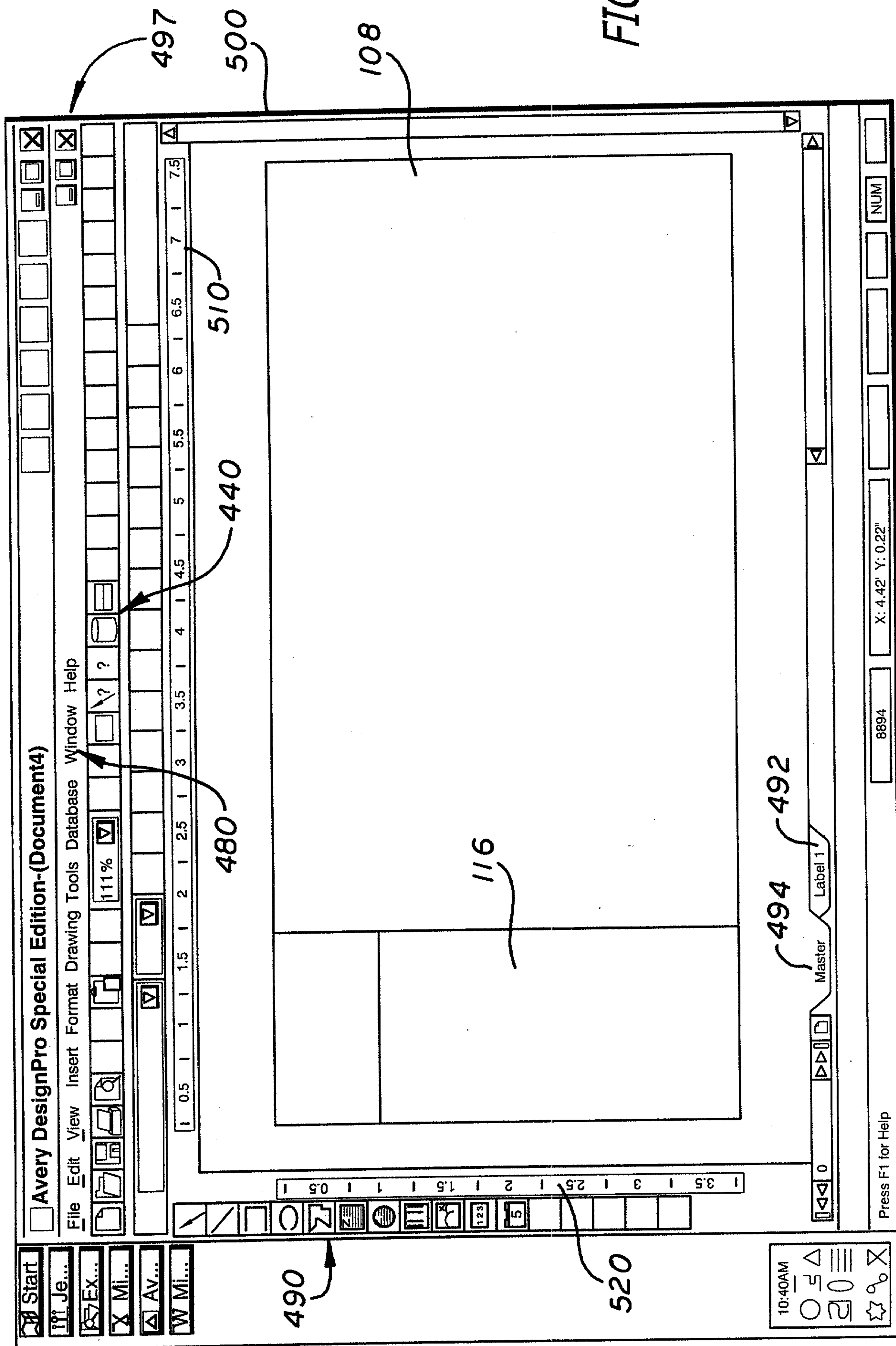


FIG. 7

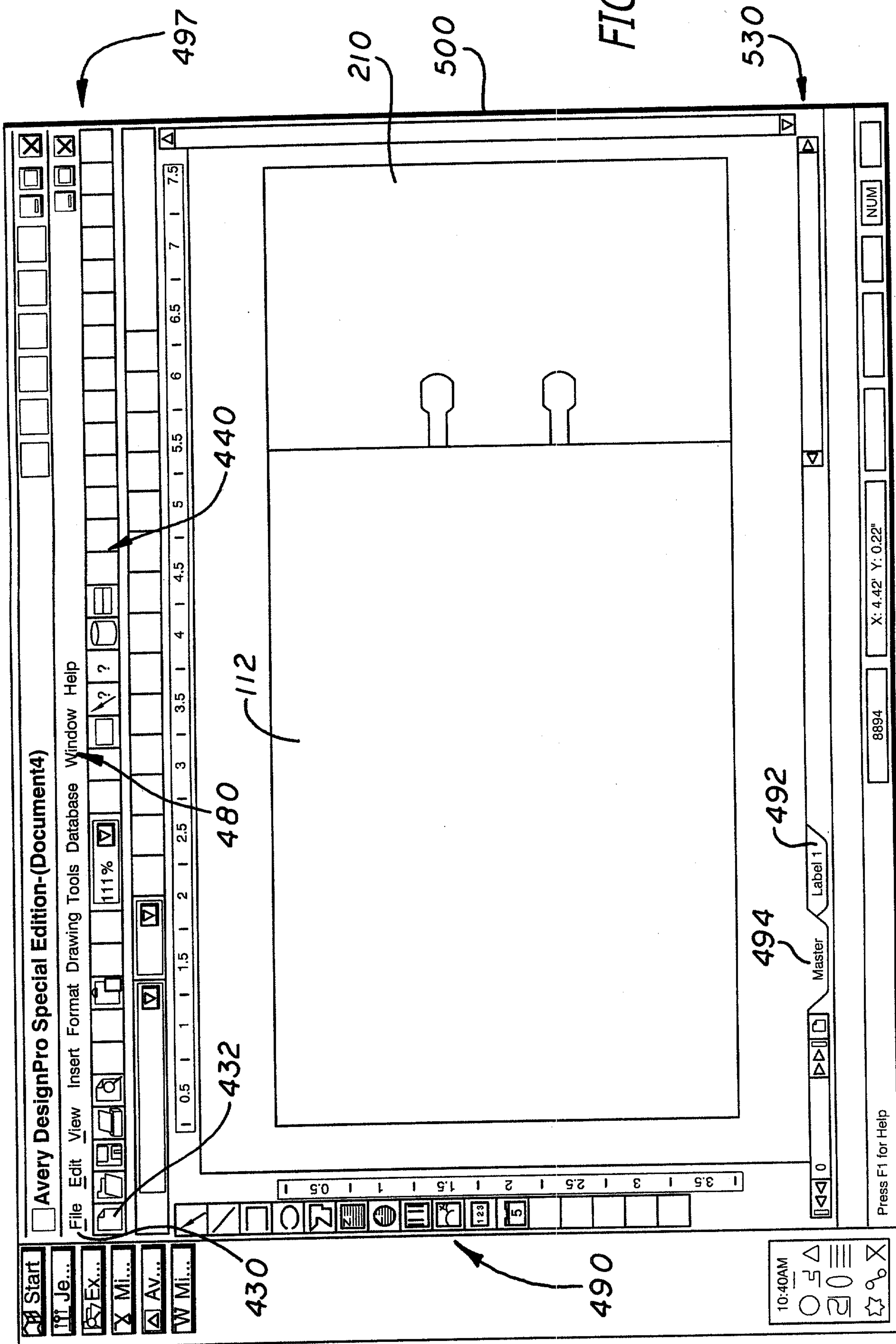


FIG. 8

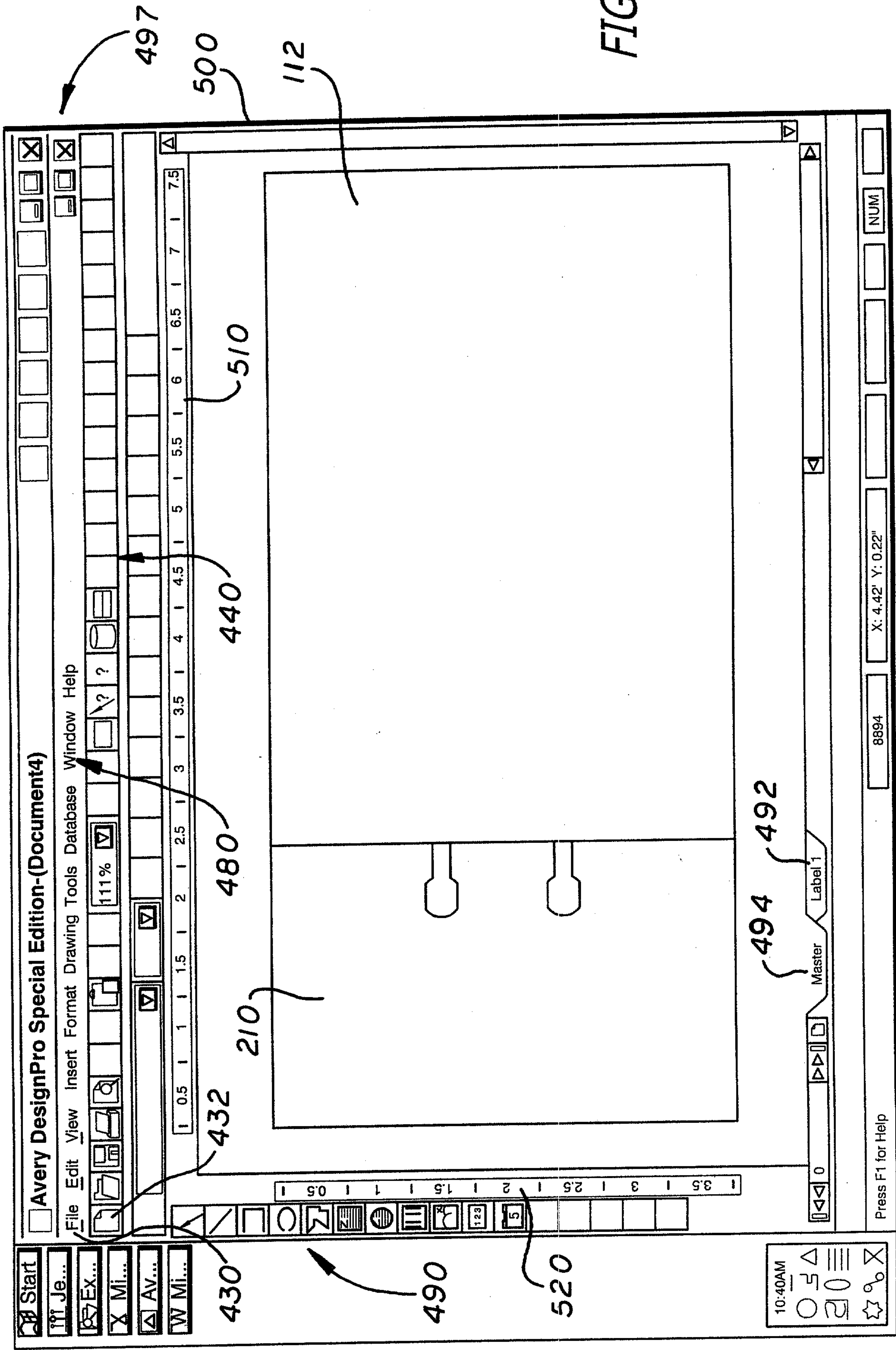


FIG. 10

