



(12) PATENT ABRIDGMENT (11) Document No. AU-B-69446/94
(19) AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE (10) Acceptance No. 686171

- (54) Title
PRESSURE SENSITIVE GAS VALVE FOR FLEXIBLE POUCH
- International Patent Classification(s)
(51)⁵ **B65D 033/01**
- (21) Application No. : **69446/94** (22) Application Date : **05.05.94**
- (87) PCT Publication Number : **WO94/26605**
- (30) Priority Data
- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| (31) Number | (32) Date | (33) Country |
| 057540 | 06.05.93 | US UNITED STATES OF AMERICA |
- (43) Publication Date : **12.12.94**
- (44) Publication Date of Accepted Application : **05.02.98**
- (71) Applicant(s)
MARK D. JAMISON
- (72) Inventor(s)
MARK D. JAMISON
- (74) Attorney or Agent
GRIFFITH HACK , GPO Box 4154, SYDNEY NSW 2001
- (56) Prior Art Documents.
AU 35299/89
FR 1367922
- (57) Claim

1. A sealed flexible pouch including means for releasing gas pressure from the interior thereof, said pouch being formed with a back wall panel of heat sealable polymeric material, and a front wall panel of heat sealable polymeric material, said front wall panel being superimposed on said back wall panel, and lateral edge portions of said front and back wall panels being joined by a heat seal in all areas thereof in facing registered relationship forming a lateral heat seal of said pouch, a tortuous gas pathway extending across said lateral edge portions of the back and front wall panels, said tortuous gas pathway having an inner end opening into the interior of said flexible pouch at an inner edge of said lateral heat seal and an outer end open to the ambient atmosphere at an outer edge of said lateral heat seal, said tortuous gas pathway comprising facing

registered pathways impressed in said front and back wall panels across an area of the lateral edge portion in which the lateral edge portions of the front and back wall panels are not joined by the lateral heat seal in the area of said tortuous gas pathways.

9. A method of forming a pressure sensitive gas valve in a flexible pouch for relieving gas pressure from the interior of a sealed flexible container comprising the steps of treating a selected surface area having the configuration of a tortuous gas pathway of a first heat sealable thin film web from which a front wall panel of a flexible pouch is formed to reduce the tendency of said film web to adhere to a like film web, treating a selected surface area having the configuration of a tortuous gas pathway of a second heat sealable thin film web from which a back wall panel of a flexible pouch is formed to reduce the tendency of said film web to adhere to a like film web, superimposing said first and second heat sealable film webs with said pathways in registered relationship, providing heat seal die plates having mirror imaged depressed areas in the configuration of said tortuous gas pathways disposed in facing relationship along a line corresponding to a lateral edge of a said pouch, positioning said superimposed film webs in said die plates with the area having said gas pathway impressed in the surface thereof in registered relationship with the mirror image depressed area in said die plates, closing said heat sealing die plates on said superimposed film webs to sealably join the said film webs in the area corresponding to the lateral edge

(11) AU-B-69446/94
(10) 686171

-3-

portions of said flexible pouch and forming lateral heat seals, cooling the heat seals in said film webs using cooling die plates similar to said heat seal die plates, and thereafter cutting said webs along a line corresponding to a lateral edge of said pouch opening the tortuous gas pathway and forming an unobstructed gas pathway extending across at least one of said lateral heat seals with the inner end of said pathway opening into the interior of said pouch and the outer end of said pathway open to the atmosphere at the outer edge of said lateral heat seal.



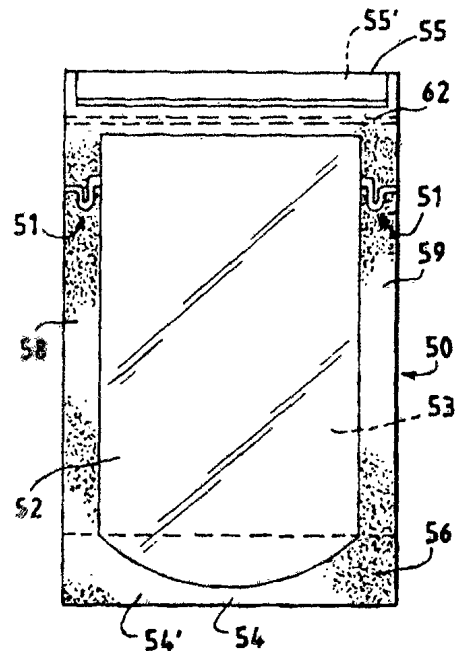
<p>(51) International Patent Classification ⁵ : B65D 33/01</p>	<p>A1</p>	<p>(11) International Publication Number: WO 94/26605 (43) International Publication Date: 24 November 1994 (24.11.94)</p>
---	-----------	--

<p>(21) International Application Number: PCT/US94/05004 (22) International Filing Date: 5 May 1994 (05.05.94) (30) Priority Data: 08/057,540 6 May 1993 (06.05.93) US (71)(72) Applicant and Inventor: JAMISON, Mark, D. [US/US]; 3333 Sharon Place, Zion, IL 60099 (US). (74) Agent: CHRYSTAL, John, J.; Ladas & Parry, 224 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60604 (US).</p>	<p>(81) Designated States: AT, AU, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CZ, DE, DK, ES, FI, GB, GE, HU, JP, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LK, LU, LV, MD, MG, MN, MW, NL, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SI, SK, TJ, TT, UA, UZ, VN, European patent (AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, ES, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, ML, MR, NI, SN, TD, TG).</p> <p>Published With international search report. Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; text-align: center;">686171</p>
--	---

(54) Title: PRESSURE SENSITIVE GAS VALVE FOR FLEXIBLE POUCH

(57) Abstract

A flexible pouch (10) having a pressure sensitive gas valve (11) for releasing gas from a sealed flexible pouch is disclosed. The gas valve is integrally formed in the lateral edge portions of the front and back wall panels (12, 14) which are heat sealed to form the flexible pouch. The gas valve has an unobstructed tortuous gas pathway (22), preferably having convoluted channels, extending across at least one and preferably both of the lateral heat seals (20, 21) of the pouch with one end (27) of the gas pathway opening into the interior of the flexible pouch and the outer end (29) of the gas pathway open to the ambient atmosphere at the outer edge of the lateral heat seal. A method of forming a pressure sensitive gas valve in each lateral heat seal of a flexible pouch is also disclosed.



BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In the packaging of certain products, such as freshly roasted coffee beans, in a sealed flexible container or pouch a significant amount of gas is released from the product which creates considerable pressure within the pouch and which is capable of rupturing the pouch. Consumers are reluctant to purchase or use a product within a bloated container, so it is important to avoid gas build up within a flexible container. Thus, it is important to provide a flexible container which provides for the release of gases from products packaged in a sealed flexible container or pouch. Moreover, many products packaged in flexible containers are damaged by oxygen entering the flexible container and the means which allows gas to escape from a sealed flexible pouch must also prevent air from entering the sealed container.

Many flexible container or pouch structures have been devised having a self-sealing gas valve which allows gas within a sealed flexible pouch to escape before the internal gas pressure causes the pouch to have a bloated appearance which causes the pouch to rupture. One such recent U.S. patent typical of the prior art sealed flexible pouch structures having a pressure sensitive gas valve is U.S. Patent No. 5,059,036 issued to Richison et al. The Richison et al structure and all other known relevant prior art structures have self-sealing pressure sensitive gas relief valves which are mounted on a wall of the container as an adjunct to the container, usually



after the container has been formed, in a time consuming operation which increases the cost of the pouch significantly due to increased labor and material costs.

FR-A-1 367 922 discloses a sealed pouch formed by heat sealing two flexible panels with a labyrinthian passage or passages being formed across the sealed area by interruptions in the sealing of the two flexible panels.

When a gas flow pathway or channel is formed between films of heat sealable polymeric material, any change in direction of the flow pathway from linear flow and the mere heat sealing of the film causes stress points within the channels creating a tendency for contiguous thin polymeric films to adhere to each other and causes the pathway to collapse from front to back and close the channels to the flow of gas through the gas pathway when there is no gas pressure from within the pouch. Also, because polymeric film material has a memory and tends to return to its original planar state, any pathway formed in the said film, as by impressing a tortuous pathway in the surface of the film, will tend to flatten out and collapse in the absence of pressure from within the flexible pouch or container. And, when the films forming the tortuous gas pathway adhere to each other, the pathway formed in the lateral heat seal closes and acts as a one-way valve so that air is not able to enter the pouch and damage material within the pouch.

In a gas pressure relief valve for a flexible film pouch, it is of critical importance to insure that the



gas valve pathway does not remain closed when the gas pressure within the pouch reaches a predetermined pressure to avoid rupturing the pouch or allowing the sealed pouch to become bloated. Thus, in order to provide an effective gas relief valve having continuous films of polymeric material, it has been found necessary to counteract to a controlled degree the several characteristics of superimposed thin films of polymeric material to adhere to each other and close a narrow tortuous gas pathway formed therebetween.

The object of the present invention is to provide a flexible sealed pouch in which a gas valve formed across the sealed area which will be triggered by a certain internal pressure to vent the pouch while preventing inward passage of air from outside the pouch.

The present invention provides a sealed flexible pouch including means for releasing gas pressure from the interior thereof, said pouch being formed with a back wall panel of heat sealable polymeric material, and a front wall panel of heat sealable polymeric material, said front wall panel being superimposed on said back wall panel, and lateral edge portions of said front and back wall panels being joined by a heat seal in all areas thereof in facing registered relationship forming a lateral heat seal of said pouch, a tortuous gas pathway extending across said lateral edge portions of the back and front wall panels, said tortuous gas pathway having an inner end opening into the interior of said flexible pouch at an inner edge of said lateral heat seal and an



outer end open to the ambient atmosphere at an outer edge of said lateral heat seal, characterized by said tortuous gas pathway comprising facing registered pathways impressed in said front and back wall panels across an area of the lateral edge portion in which the lateral edge portions of the front and back wall panels are not joined by the lateral heat seal in the area of said tortuous gas pathways.

When the gas pressure within the sealed flexible pouch does not exceed the ambient atmospheric pressure, the tortuous gas pathway collapses at one or more points along the length thereof to prevent air from entering the pouch, but when the gas pressure within the pouch exceeds a predetermined value the tortuous gas pathway will open to allow gas to escape from the pouch.

One of the methods of controlling the normal tendency of the superimposed films of polymeric material to stick together which can be used to provide the herein disclosed novel gas relief valve is controlled stretching of the films in the area which must not remain closed (i.e. the area forming the tortuous gas pathway).

A further control over the pressure required to open a tortuous gas pathway to allow gas to flow outwardly from a sealed flexible pouch is effected by controlling the dimensions of the tortuous gas pathway, including but not limited to the configuration of the tortuous gas pathway, the length of the gas pathway and the presence or absence of parallel sections in the gas pathway. It has also been found that when the gas pathway formed in



the lateral heat seal has two convoluted channel sections which are parallel and preferably parallel to a lateral edge of the pouch, these parallel convoluted channels open more readily under gas pressure from within the pouch. It has also been found that having the length of the inner depending parallel convoluted channel slightly longer than the length of the upwardly extending outer convoluted channel with the opening of the gas pathway into the flexible pouch slightly higher or approximately opposite the gas pathway outlet having a direct positive influence on the ability of the channel to open readily. Figures 3a-3e show different tortuous gas pathways which are suitable for forming a gas valve in a flexible pouch but responds to a slightly different gas pressure from within a flexible container. In general, the smaller the diameter and the longer the tortuous gas pathway, the greater the gas pressure within the pouch required to open the pathway. In the absence of gas pressure within the sealed flexible container the several gas pathway disclosed remains closed.

While the configuration of the tortuous gas pathway can be varied considerably, it has been found that pressure sensitive gas valves which respond readily to pressure within a flexible pouch have tortuous gas pathways which comprise two parallel convoluted channels. Varying the lengths of the convoluted channels changes the properties of the gas valve, and in a preferred embodiment the inner depending convoluted channel is slightly longer than the outer convoluted channel. By



combining and controlling the above mentioned variables in the design of the tortuous gas pathway, it is possible to design a gas valve having the convoluted channels which are best suited for storing a particular material within a sealed flexible container. For example, where a flexible container or pouch is to contain a product which gives off a large volume of gas during storage, such as freshly roasted coffee beans, the configuration of the tortuous gas pathway will be different from the configuration of the gas pathway in a container for packaging dried beans.

The invention disclosed herein also provides a method of forming a pressure sensitive gas valve in a flexible pouch for relieving gas pressure from the interior of a sealed flexible container characterized by the steps of treating a selected surface area having the configuration of a tortuous gas pathway of a first heat sealable thin film web from which a front wall panel of a flexible pouch is formed to reduce the tendency of said film web to adhere to a like film web, treating a selected surface area having the configuration of a tortuous gas pathway of a second heat sealable thin film web from which a back wall panel of a flexible pouch is formed to reduce the tendency of said film web to adhere to a like film web, superimposing said first and second heat sealable film webs with said pathways in registered relationship, providing heat seal die plates having mirror imaged depressed areas in the configuration of said tortuous gas pathways disposed in facing



relationship along a line corresponding to a lateral edge of a said pouch, positioning said superimposed film webs in said die plates with the area having said gas pathway impressed in the surface thereof in registered relationship with the mirror image depressed area in said die plates, closing said heat sealing die plates on said superimposed film webs to sealably join the said film webs in the area corresponding to the lateral edge portions of said flexible pouch and forming lateral heat seals, cooling the heat seals in said film webs using cooling die plates similar to said heat seal die plates, and thereafter cutting said webs along a line corresponding to a lateral edge of said pouch opening the tortuous gas pathway and forming an unobstructed gas pathway extending across at least one of said lateral heat seals with the inner end of said pathway opening into the interior of said pouch and the outer end of said pathway open to the atmosphere at the outer edge of said lateral heat seal.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a flexible pouch having a pressure sensitive gas valve in the lateral heat seals thereof according to the present invention,

Figure 2 is a front elevational view of a stand-up flexible container in a folded position having a pressure sensitive gas valve according to the present invention,

Figure 3, Figure 3a, Figure 3b, Figure 3c, Figure 3d, and Figure 3e are schematic views of several tortuous gas pathways useful in forming a pressure sensitive gas



6b

valve of the present invention,

Figure 4 is a vertical section view of tortuous gas pathway pre-forming dies,

Figure 5 is a schematic representation of pre-formed film webs having mirror image tortuous gas pathways impressed therein in registry with like mirror image gas pathways formed in heat sealing dies formed along a film web split line corresponding to a lateral edge of a pouch, and

Figure 6 is a schematic diagram of the operational steps used in forming a flexible pouch having a pressure sensitive gas valve according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

In Figure 1 a flexible container or pouch 10 is shown having pressure sensitive gas valves 11 of the present invention formed integrally therewith. The pouch 10 is formed of generally rectangular front wall and rear wall panels 12, 14, respectively, of thin heat sealable polymeric material. The panels 12, 14 have upper ends 13,

5
6
7
8
9



13' and lower ends 15, 15', respectively. The lateral edges 18, 18' of the panel 12 and the lateral edges 19, 19' of the panel 14, are joined by heat seals to form lateral heat seals 20, 21 of the pouch 10. The lower ends of the panels 12, 14 are joined by heat seal 25, with upper ends of the panels 12, 14 only partially heat sealed to allow for filling of the pouch 10 with the product.

The pressure sensitive valve 11 is formed integrally with the pouch 10 by providing on facing surface areas of each lateral edge portion of the front wall panel 12 and the back wall panel 14 mirror image tortuous gas pathways 22, 22', as by treating or stretching the surface areas to impress thereon the configuration of the gas pathways 22, 22'. Thereafter the facing lateral edge portions of the panels 12, 14 are joined by heat sealing all areas thereof except in the stretched areas having the form of the tortuous gas pathway.

While a certain level of adherence of the film webs is desirable so that the gas pathway remains closed when there is no excess gas pressure within the pouch 10, in order to provide a pressure sensitive gas valve 11 which responds readily to the pressure inside a sealed flexible container or pouch 10 and opens before the internal gas pressure ruptures the pouch 10 or causes the pouch 10 to become bloated, it is necessary to treat the contiguous surface areas of the front wall panel 12 and the rear wall panel 14 where a tortuous gas pathway is defined to overcome the tendency of contiguous surfaces of thin polymeric film to adhere to each other. Any treatment to reduce the tendency of thin polymeric film to adhere to each other can be used. Preferably, the surfaces of the panels 12, 14, in which a tortuous gas pathway is formed are subjected to stretching in a preforming treatment which heretofore has been shown to

reduce the tendency of contiguous thin polymeric film to adhere to each other.

A conventional method of pre-forming by stretching of a single film web is shown in Figure 4. The film web 32 is positioned above a pre-forming die plate 40 which comprises a pre-forming die insert 41 having grooves 43 formed therein with the configuration of the desired tortuous gas pathway. The film web 32 is positioned in the die insert 41 so that the gas pathway formed in the insert 41 will engage the web 32 in an area which will form a lateral edge portion of the pouch. Co-acting with the die plate 40 is an air pressure die plate 45 which has an insert 46 and a gas chamber 47 for receiving pressurized gas, such as air. The insert 46 has passages facing the grooves 43 in the die insert 41. When the cold die plates 40 and 45 are closed on the section of film web 32, air at a pressure of between 80-100 psi is introduced into the chamber 47, and the film web of metalized polymeric material, such as poly-ester film having a film thickness of about 0.004-005 mills is forced into the grooves 43 of the cold forming dies causing the configuration of the tortuous gas pathway to be impressed into the surface of the film web 32.

A similar pre-forming method is shown in Figure 6 wherein a pair of film webs 33, 36 are positioned at a pre-forming station 38. Film web 33 is positioned above a pre-forming die plate 140 which corresponds to the die plate 40 of Figure 4. An air pressure die plate 145 is positioned above the film web 33 and corresponds to the die plate 45 of Figure 4. The film web 36 is similarly positioned adjacent a pre-forming die plate 240 and the common air pressure die plate 145 which is a modified version of the die plate 45 so as to provide simultaneous pre-forming of both film webs 33, 36.

With the configuration of the tortuous gas pathway impressed or stretched into the surfaces of the

film webs 33, 36, the film webs 33, 36, are next positioned at heat sealing station 48 between heat sealing die plates 49, 49', to form the lateral heat seals 20, 21, of the pouch 10. The die plates 49, 49', each have mirror image depressed areas therein corresponding to the tortuous gas pathway 22, 22', formed along a line therein which will form when the webs 33, 36 are cut a lateral edges of a pouch 10. The film webs 33, 36 are positioned between die plates 49, 49', with the impressed tortuous gas pathways 22, 22', in registry with the mirror image depressed areas in the die plates 49, 49', so that when the die plates 49, 49', are closed upon the film webs 33, 36, with a die pressure of about 80 psi and a temperature of about 280 degrees F. for 1.2 seconds, the lateral edge portions of the pouch 10 are sealably joined except in the area impressed with the configuration of the tortuous gas pathway, forming lateral heat seals 20, 21, with an unobstructed tortuous gas pathway extending across at least one of said lateral heat seals 20, 21, so that the inner end of said pathway opens into the interior of the flexible pouch and the outer end of the pathway is open to the ambient atmosphere at the outer edge of a lateral heat seal when the film webs are cut.

Figure 5 represents schematically the film webs 33, 36, after having the tortuous gas pathways 22, 22', impressed therein at the pre-forming stations 38, with the film web positioned in the heat sealing dies 49, 49', in superimposed registry with mirror image gas pathways like pathways 22, 22', formed in the die insert 46. The film webs 33, 36, are labeled to designate the relationship of adjoining pouches in the film webs and to identify the several parts of the pouches before the webs are cut to form individual pouches. It should be evident that the upper gas pathway 22 of the interconnected mirror image gas pathways is formed adjacent the trailing edge of the leading pouch while the lower gas pathway 22' of the

mirror image gas pathways is formed adjacent the leading edge of the trailing pouch and that the gas pathways 22, 22' are interconnected at the lateral edge common to the leading and trailing pouches. The gas pathways 22, 22' are open to the ambient atmosphere only when the film webs 33, 36, are cut to form individual pouches along the split line 23 formed by the lateral edge common to the leading and trailing pouches in the film webs. By providing contiguous mirror image gas pathways in the film webs 33, 36, with gas pathway 22 and gas pathway 22' on opposite sides of each pouch lateral edge along which the film webs are split to form individual pouches, a pressure sensitive gas valve is formed in each lateral heat seal of the flexible pouch 10 when the film web is cut to form individual pouches.

After all the required heat seals have been formed in one or more heat sealing operations the pouch is transferred to a cooling die station 60 where the heat seals are cooled in cold die plates 61, 61', having structure similar in structure to die plates 49, 49', but maintained at cool tap water temperature until the heat seals are sufficiently cooled to avoid distortion of the seals. Thereafter, the film webs are cut, trimmed and the pouches are made ready for shipping or filling with the product.

In a preferred embodiment of gas valve 11 adapted for use in a flexible pouch for packaging freshly roasted coffee beans the tortuous gas pathway is formed of two parallel convoluted channels 24, 26, with the inner convoluted channel 24 having an enlarged lateral opening 27 extending into the interior of pouch 10 and the outer slightly shorter upwardly extending convoluted channel 26 having a laterally extending outlet channel 28 which extends to the outer edge of the lateral heat seal. The lateral openings 27 of the convoluted channel 24 and the outer end 29 of the convoluted channels 26, are only

slightly displaced with the inner opening 27 slightly higher than the outer open end 29 of the channel 28. The foregoing tortuous gas pathway has convoluted channels formed from metalized polyester film having a thickness of between 0.0015 to 0.008 mills with an average thickness of 0.004 and 0.005 mills. The convoluted channels forming the tortuous gas pathway may have an interior diameter of about 0.03 to 0.375 inches depending on the size of the pouch and the length of the tortuous gas pathway. As noted previously, the gas valve 51 will open when the gas pressure within the preferred pouch 10 reaches a predetermined value ranging between about 0.006 to 0.11 psi.

In Figure 2 of the drawing a pressure sensitive gas valve 51 embodying the present invention is provided in the lateral heat seals of a stand-up type flexible container or pouch 50 of known construction. The stand-up flexible pouch is shown in Figure 2 in folded position and is formed with opposed front wall section 52 and back wall section 53 each with lower end edges 54, 54', and upper end edges 55, 55'. A foldable base section 56 is provided to facilitate the pouch 50 standing upright. Also, the pouch 50 is provided with a Ziploc (R) type closure strip 62 in the front wall panel 52 spaced below the upper heat seal to permit opening and closing the pouch for removal of some of the contents without breaking any of the heat seals of the pouch.

The pressure sensitive gas valve 51 is incorporated into the lateral heat seals 58, 59 of the pouch 50 at a point slightly below the level of the closure strip 62, in the same manner as described in connection with the pouch 10. As in the pre-forming treatment to which webs 33, 36, are subjected, selected portions of the heat sealable thin polymeric film webs which form the lateral wall sections 52, 53, are subjected to a pre-forming treatment in which the webs are stressed

to effect a stretching of the film out of its normal planar state to impress in the surface thereof the tortuous gas pathway and reduce the tendency of the film webs to adhere to each other. And, before transferring the web sections to the heat sealing dies, the foldable base section 56 is heat sealed to the front and back wall sections 52, 53, at a gusset spot welding station 57 using spot welding dies 42, 42'. The film webs from which the front and back wall sections are formed with the base section 56 heat sealed to the film webs are positioned between heat sealing dies having depressed areas with mirror image tortuous gas pathways formed therein, as in die plates 49, 49'. The portions of the webs from which the wall sections 52, 53, are formed and positioned in the heat sealing dies with the stretched film web area having the configuration of the gas pathway impressed therein in registry with the dies having mirror image depressed areas in the form of a tortuous gas pathway, and the dies closed to heat seal the lateral edge portions of the webs to form the lateral edges of the flexible stand-up pouch having an unobstructed tortuous gas pathway formed therein extending across at least on one of the lateral heat seals 58, 59, of the flexible pouch 50, in the same manner as described in connection with the fabrication of pouch 10.

Various thin heat sealable polymeric films can be used in the constructions of a flexible pouch embodying the pressure sensitive gas valve of the present invention including but not limited to metalized and non-metalized polyester, polyolefin, polyester/polyolefin laminates, nylon and laminated foil polymeric film material. Many converters of co-polymer film structures are suppliers of the preferred thin metalized polyester film for fabricating the pressure sensitive gas valve of the present invention, such as Clear-Lam Packaging Company, Elk Grove Village, Illinois.

What we claim is:

1. A sealed flexible pouch including means for releasing gas pressure from the interior thereof, said pouch being formed with a back wall panel of heat sealable polymeric material, and a front wall panel of heat sealable polymeric material, said front wall panel being superimposed on said back wall panel, and lateral edge portions of said front and back wall panels being joined by a heat seal in all areas thereof in facing registered relationship forming a lateral heat seal of said pouch, a tortuous gas pathway extending across said lateral edge portions of the back and front wall panels, said tortuous gas pathway having an inner end opening into the interior of said flexible pouch at an inner edge of said lateral heat seal and an outer end open to the ambient atmosphere at an outer edge of said lateral heat seal, said tortuous gas pathway comprising facing registered pathways impressed in said front and back wall panels across an area of the lateral edge portion in which the lateral edge portions of the front and back wall panels are not joined by the lateral heat seal in the area of said tortuous gas pathways.

2. The pouch of claim 1, characterized in that said tortuous pathway is formed with a pair of parallel convoluted channels.

3. The pouch of claim 2, wherein said convoluted channels extend generally parallel to a lateral heat seal of said pouch.

4. The pouch of claim 3, wherein the convoluted channel which is innermost of the plurality of channels extends downwardly and has a greater length than the



convoluted channel which is outermost of the plurality of channels the outermost channel being coupled to the innermost channel and extending upwardly.

5. The pouch of claim 4, wherein the convoluted channel which is innermost of the plurality of channels has at an upper end a short transverse opening extending into the interior of said pouch and the convoluted channel which is outermost of the plurality of channels has extending laterally from the upper end a transverse channel terminating at the outer edge of said lateral heat seal.

6. The pouch of claim 1, wherein the inner end of said tortuous gas pathway lies in a transverse plane above the outer end of said tortuous gas pathway.

7. The pouch of any of claims 1 to 6, wherein said heat sealable polymeric material has a film thickness of from about 0.0015 to 0.008 mills.

8. The pouch of claim 1, wherein said tortuous gas pathway has an internal diameter of about 0.076 to 0.95 cm.

9. A method of forming a pressure sensitive gas valve in a flexible pouch for relieving gas pressure from the interior of a sealed flexible container comprising the steps of treating a selected surface area having the configuration of a tortuous gas pathway of a first heat sealable thin film web from which a front wall panel of a flexible pouch is formed to reduce the tendency of said film web to adhere to a like film web, treating a selected surface area having the configuration of a tortuous gas pathway of a second heat sealable thin film web from which a back wall panel of a flexible pouch is



'formed to reduce the tendency of said film web to adhere to a like film web, superimposing said first and second heat sealable film webs with said pathways in registered relationship, providing heat seal die plates having mirror imaged depressed areas in the configuration of said tortuous gas pathways disposed in facing relationship along a line corresponding to a lateral edge of a said pouch, positioning said superimposed film webs in said die plates with the area having said gas pathway impressed in the surface thereof in registered relationship with the mirror image depressed area in said die plates, closing said heat sealing die plates on said superimposed film webs to sealably join the said film webs in the area corresponding to the lateral edge portions of said flexible pouch and forming lateral heat seals, cooling the heat seals in said film webs using cooling die plates similar to said heat seal die plates, and thereafter cutting said webs along a line corresponding to a lateral edge of said pouch opening the tortuous gas pathway and forming an unobstructed gas pathway extending across at least one of said lateral heat seals with the inner end of said pathway opening into the interior of said pouch and the outer end of said pathway open to the atmosphere at the outer edge of said lateral heat seal.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said selected surface areas of said first and second heat sealable film webs are impressed with the configuration of said tortuous gas pathway by stretching said selected surface areas.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein said tortuous



gas pathway is formed with two convoluted channels extending parallel to a lateral edge of said pouch.

12. The method of claim 9, wherein said tortuous gas pathway is formed with an internal diameter of about 0.317 cm.

13. The method of claim 9, wherein said first and second film webs are formed of a polymeric film material having a thickness of from 0.0015 to 0.008 mills.

14. The method of claim 9, wherein said film webs which have their lateral edge portions sealably jointed except in said treated areas having said tortuous gas pathways are subjected to a further heat sealing treatment in a second set of die plates identical in construction with the first mentioned heat seal die plates to reinforce said heat seals.

15. The method of claim 9, wherein said film webs have formed therein contiguous pouch portions having tortuous gas pathways formed in the lateral edge portions of said pouch portions with said pouch portions in contact along a common lateral edge and said gas pathways interconnecting across said common lateral edge, and after said lateral edge portions are joined by heat sealing except in said treated areas having said tortuous gas pathways, cutting said film webs along said common lateral edge to open each said gas pathway to the ambient atmosphere and forming two individual flexible pouches with a pressure sensitive gas valve in each lateral heat seal of the flexible pouch.

Mark D. Jamison
By Their Patent Attorneys
GRIFFITH HACK



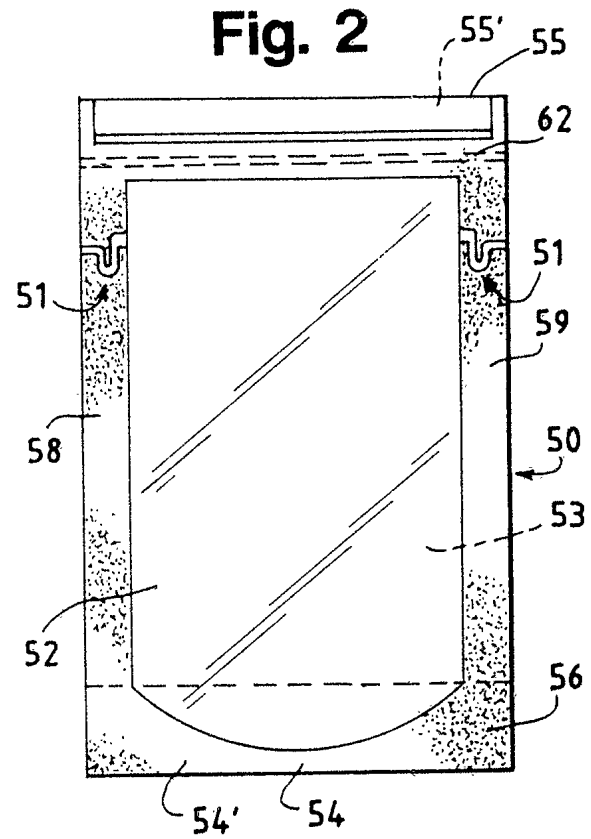
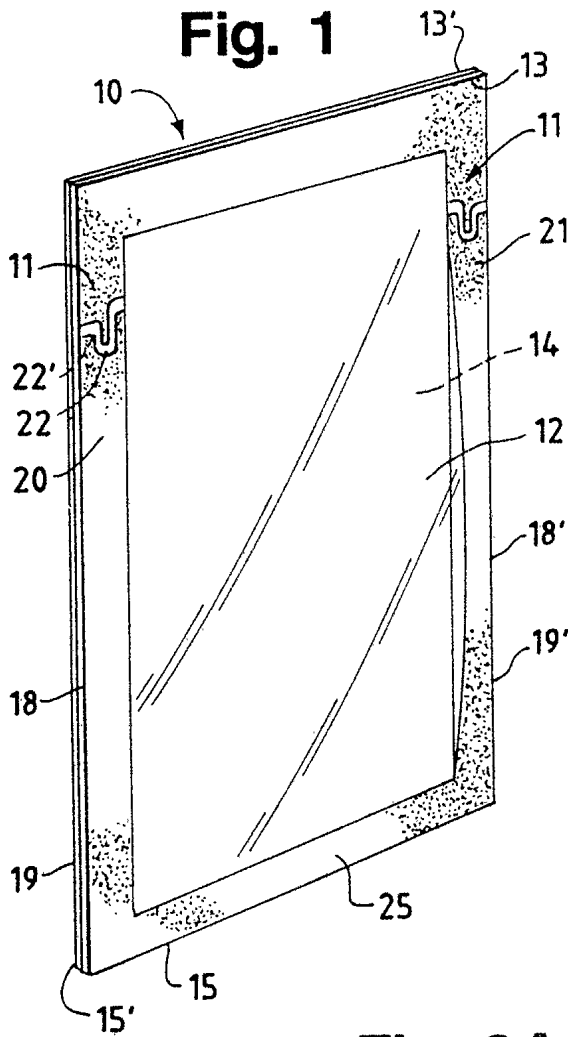


Fig. 3

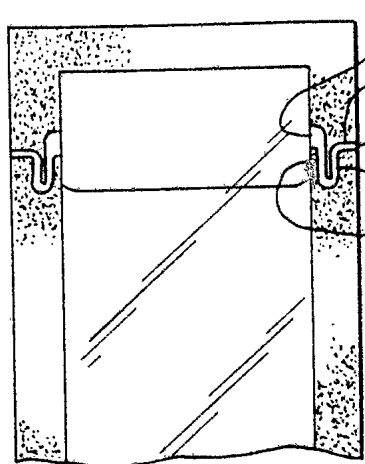


Fig. 3A

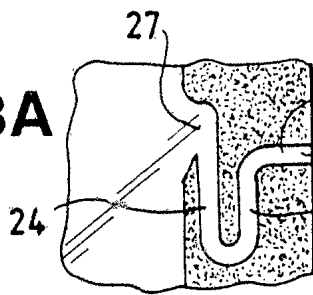


Fig. 3D

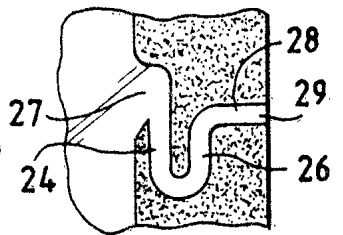


Fig. 3B

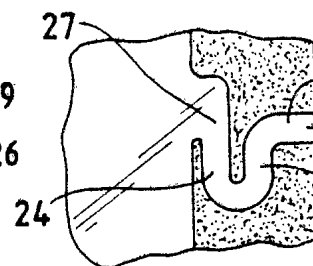


Fig. 3E

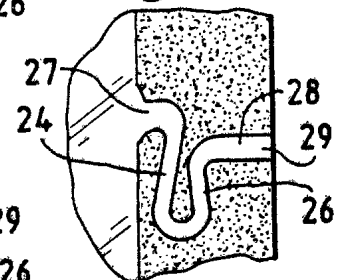


Fig. 3C

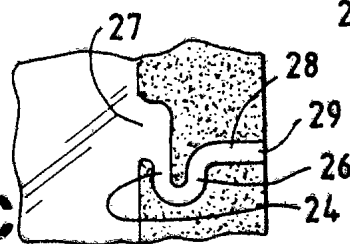


Fig. 4

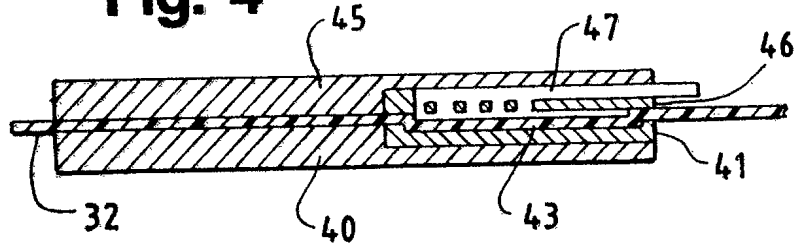


Fig. 5

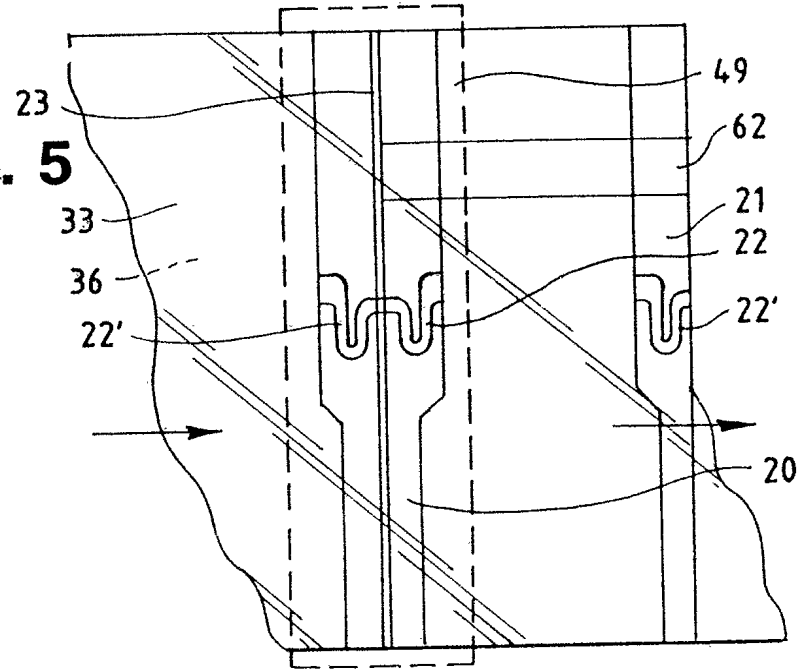
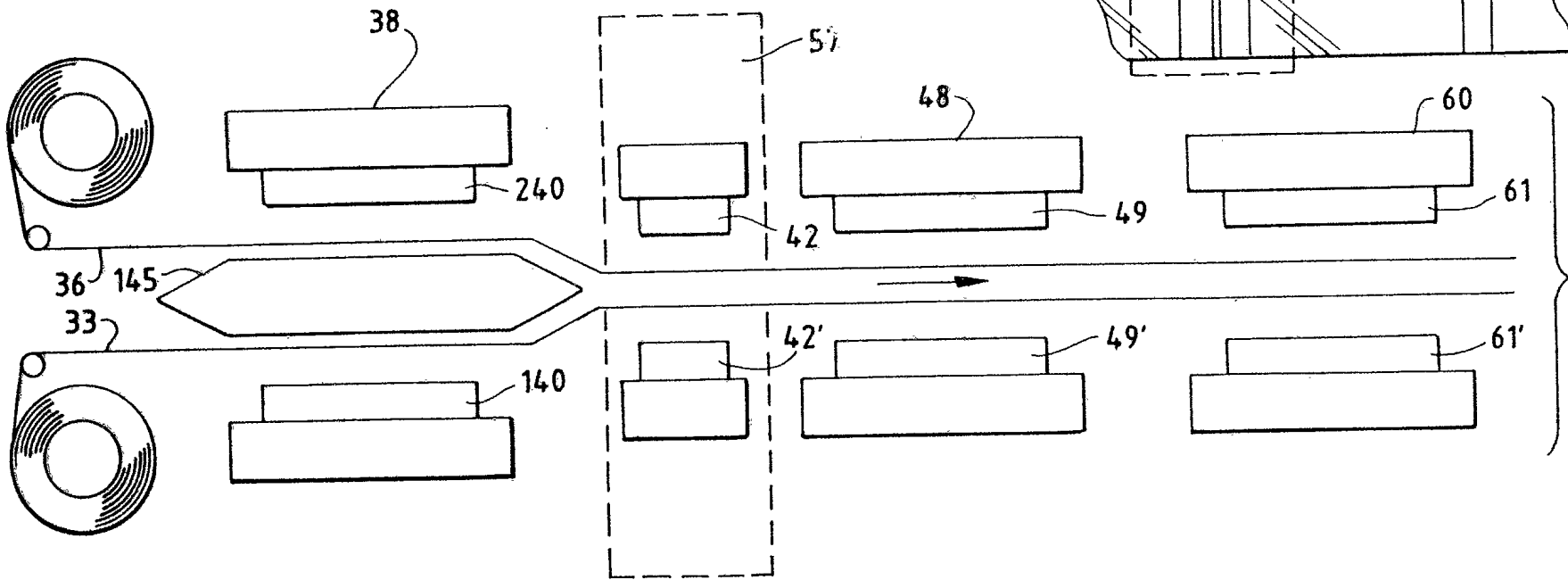


Fig. 6



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

PCT/US 94/05004

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 5 B65D33/01

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 5 B65D

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

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	FR,A,1 367 922 (THE BOWATER RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LIMITED) 15 June 1964 see the whole document ---	1-3,6,8, 12
A	EP,A,0 243 750 (WINDMÖLLER & HÖLSCHER) 4 November 1987 see the whole document ---	1
A	EP,A,0 144 011 (RAACKMANN'S FABRIKER A/S) 12 June 1985 see the whole document -----	1

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C. Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

- "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- "I" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

- "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
- "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
- "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.
- "&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

8 September 1994

Date of mailing of the international search report

22.09.94

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+ 31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,
Fax: (+ 31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Smith, C

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No.

PCT/US 94/05004

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
FR-A-1367922	NONE		
EP-A-0243750	04-11-87	DE-A- 3705891 JP-A- 62260657	29-10-87 12-11-87
EP-A-0144011	12-06-85	DE-A- 3474282	03-11-88