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(54) **ARTICLE OF MANUFACTURE AND
METHOD FOR DETACHABLY SECURING
TWO OR MORE GARMENT ITEMS
TOGETHER**

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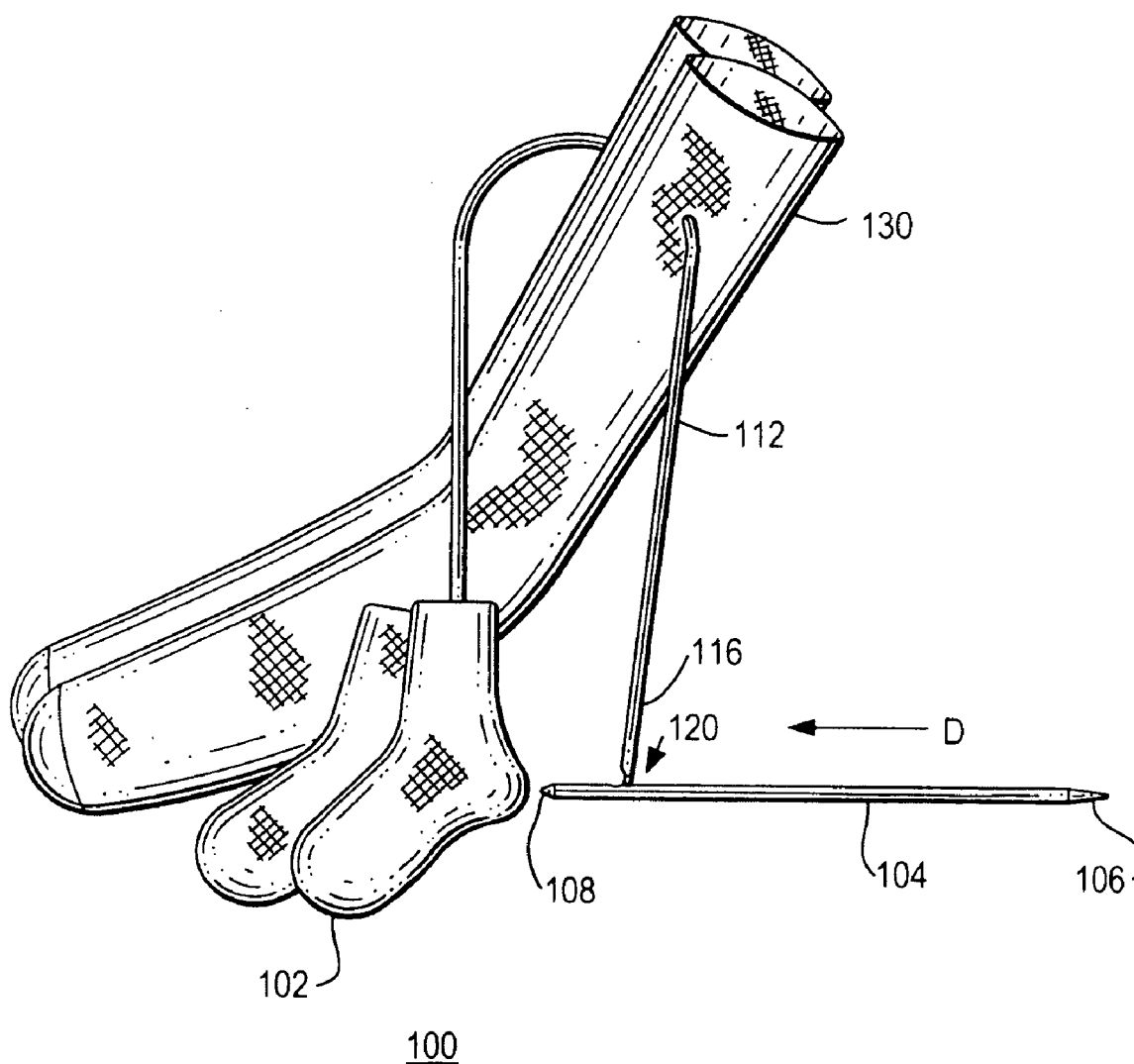
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Apparatus for attaching and detaching a first item and a second item of garments together includes a base member, a first filament having a first end, an opposing second end, and an intermediate portion formed between the opposing first and second ends. A second filament having a first end is attached to the base member. An opposing second end of the second filament is detachably secured to the intermediate portion of the first filament, where the second end of the second filament is formed as a hinge, and wherein the first and second filaments are movable relative to each other.



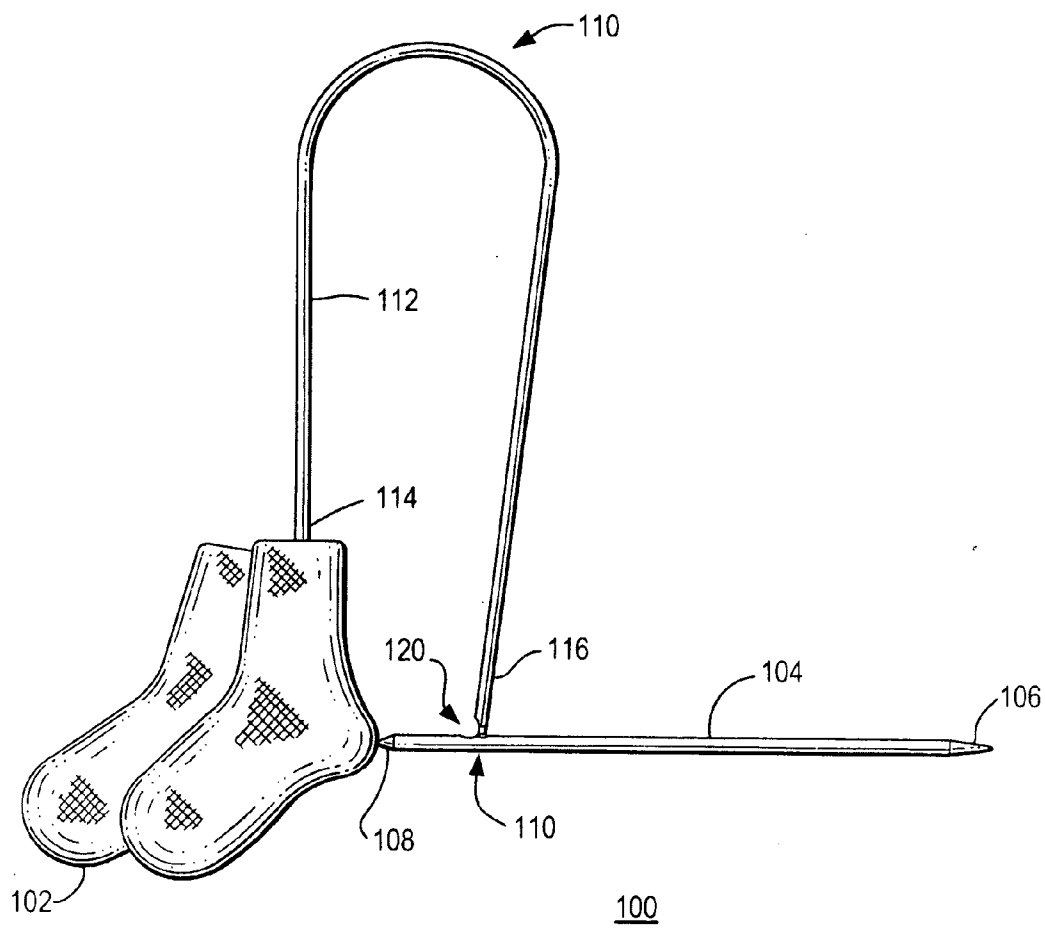


FIG. 1A

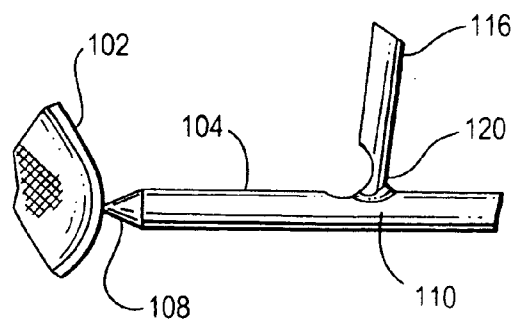


FIG. 1B

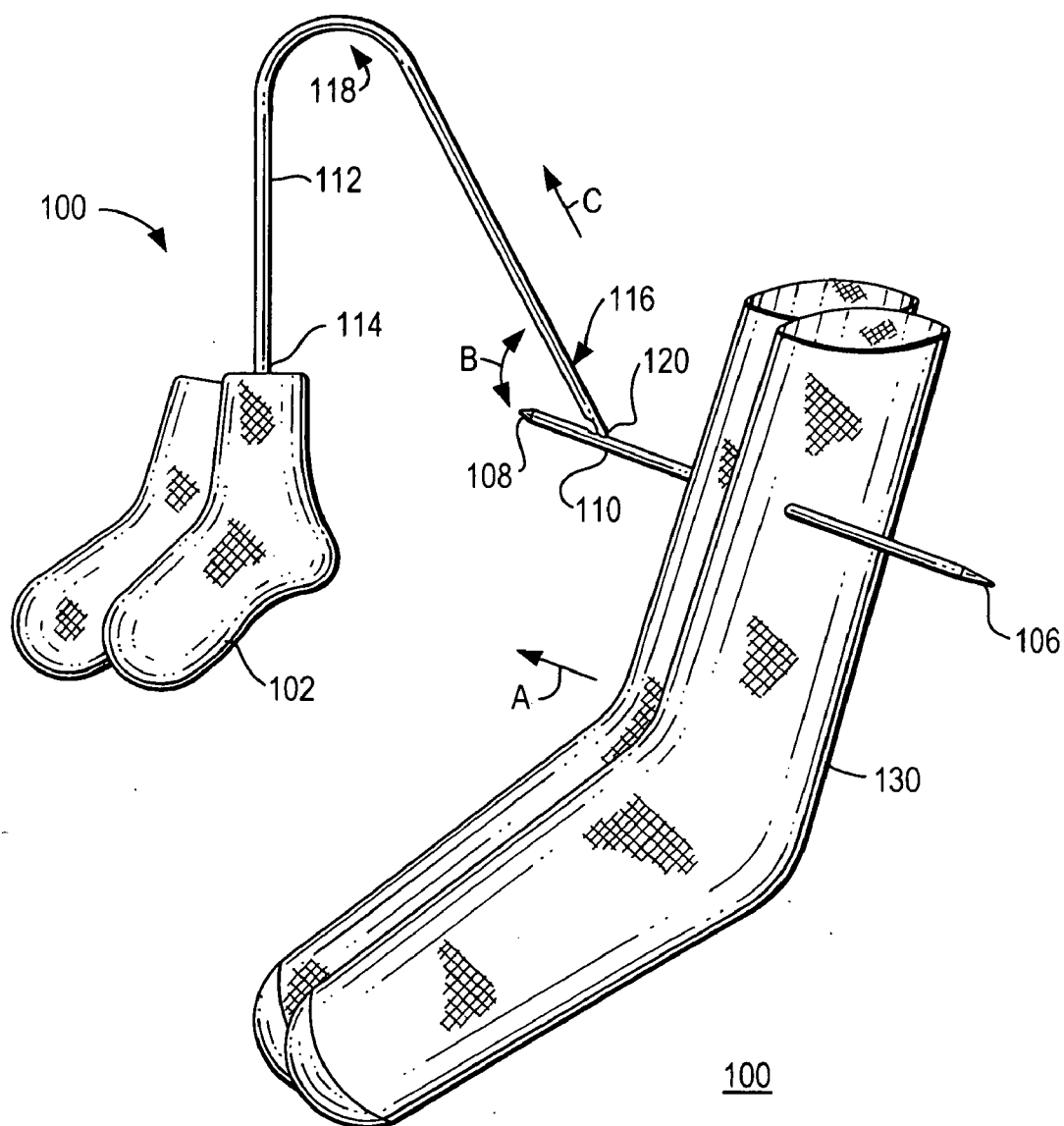


FIG. 2

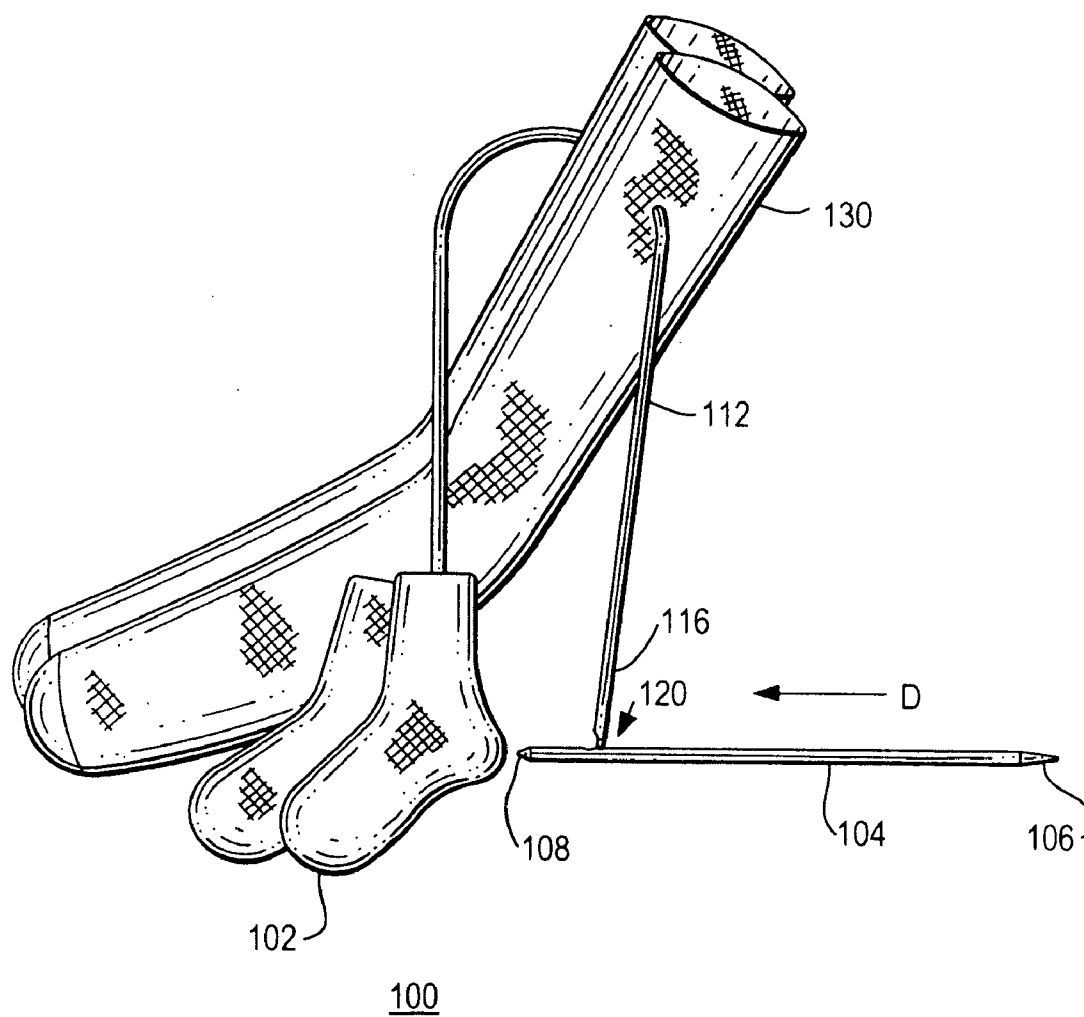


FIG. 3

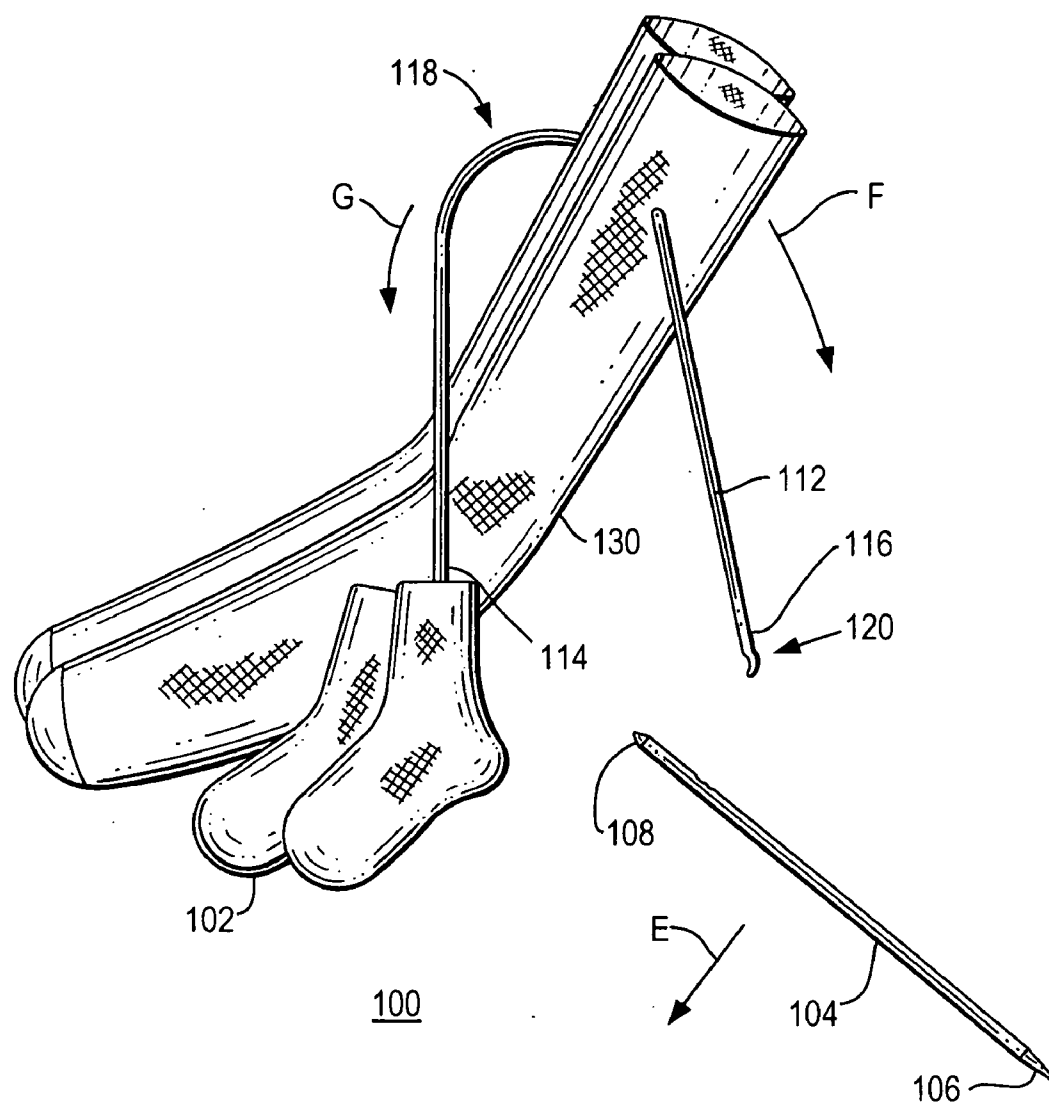


FIG. 4

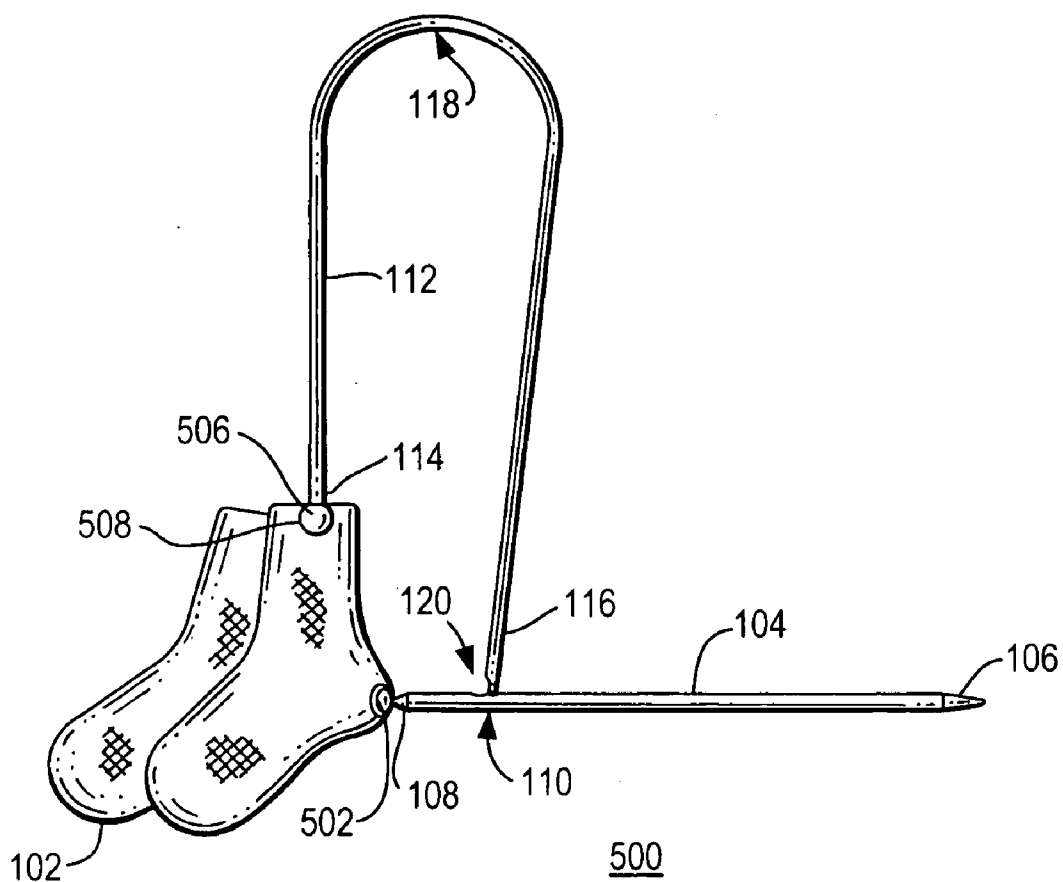


FIG. 5A

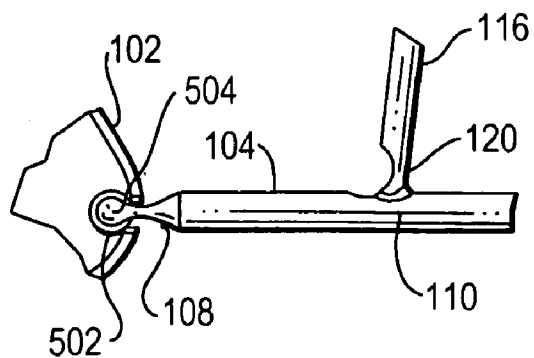


FIG. 5B

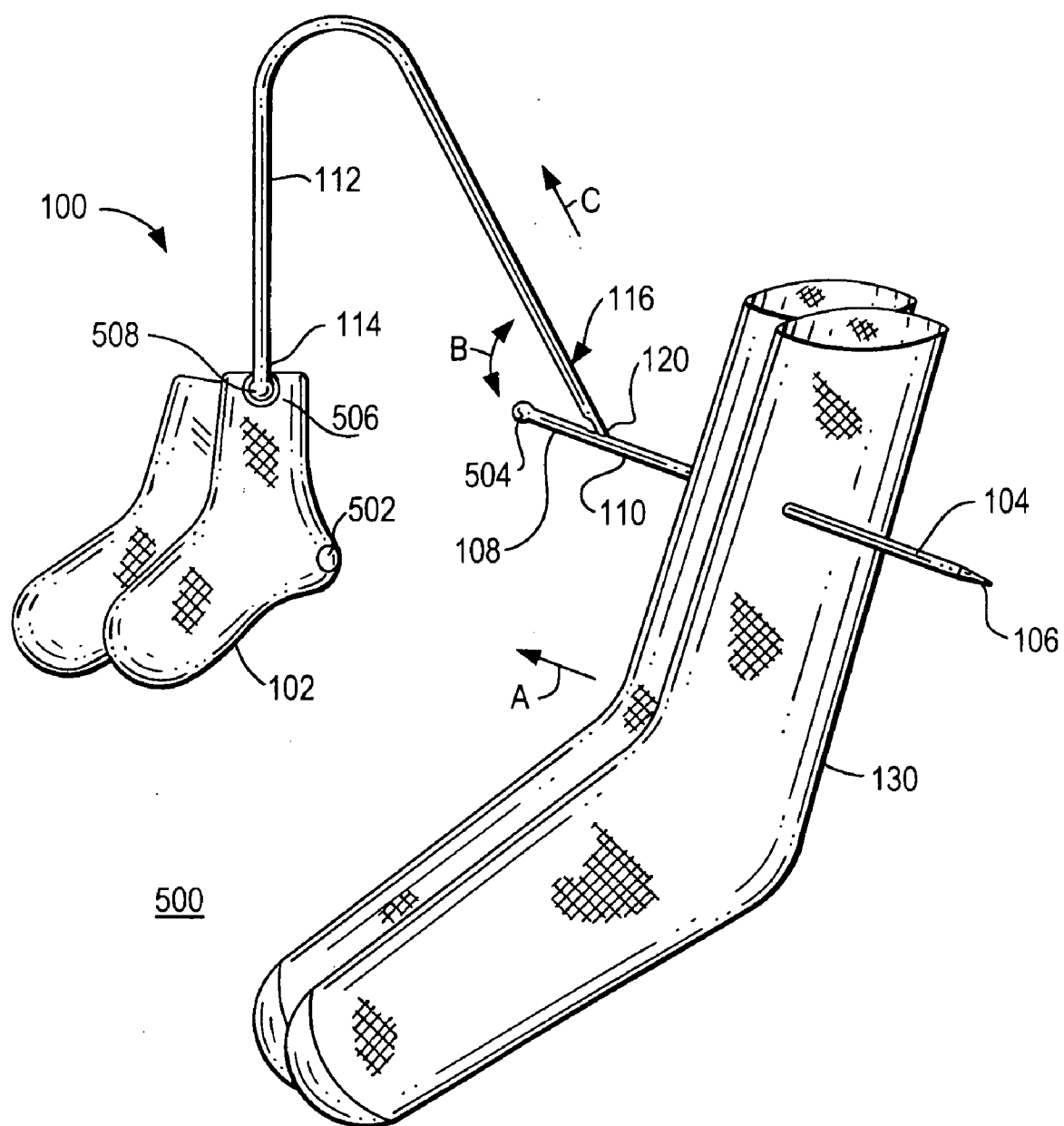


FIG. 6

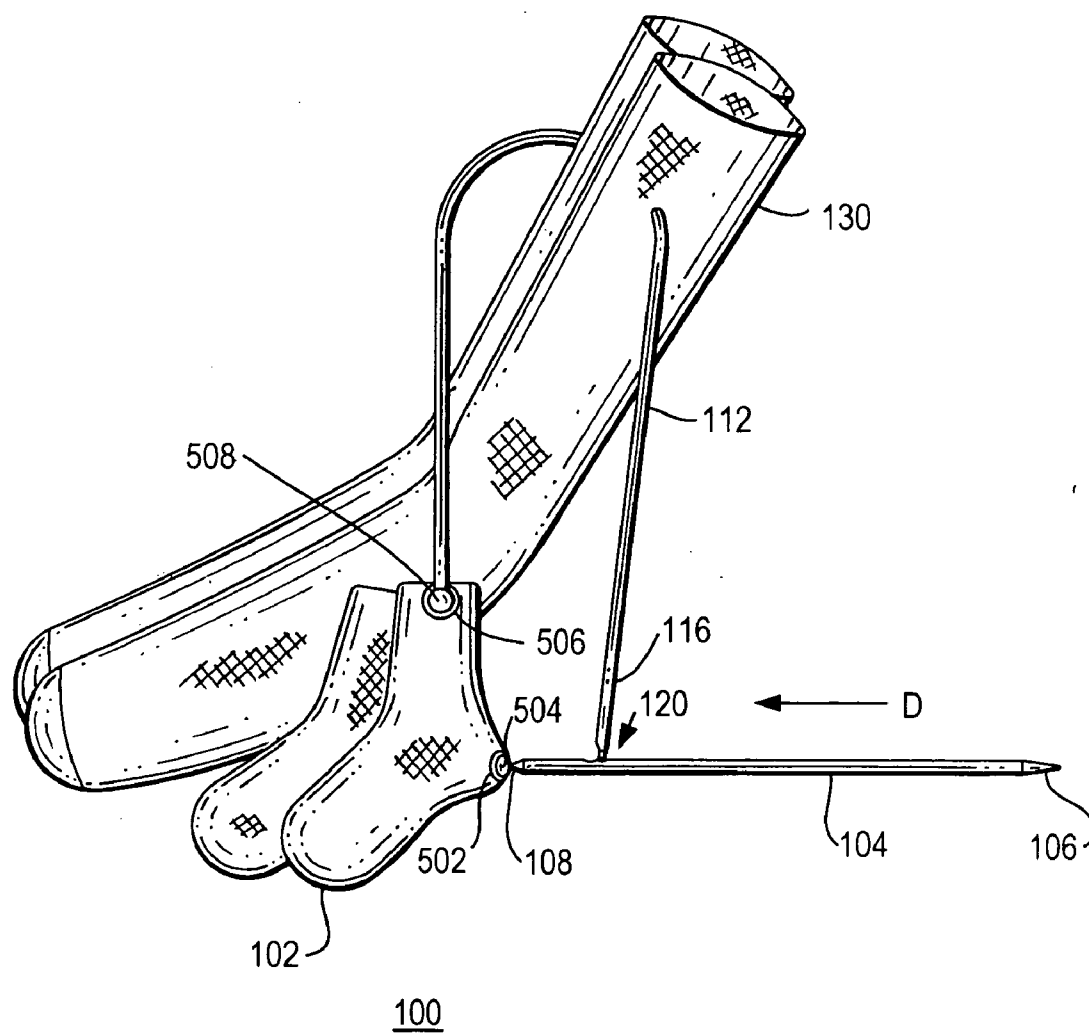


FIG. 7

FIG. 8

**ARTICLE OF MANUFACTURE AND
METHOD FOR DETACHABLY SECURING
TWO OR MORE GARMENT ITEMS
TOGETHER**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to an apparatus and method for fastening garments, and more particularly to an apparatus and method for securing two or more articles of clothing, such as paired garments together so that they are not lost or separated, illustratively during a laundry process.

[0003] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0004] It is oftentimes difficult to keep pairs of clothing items together when they are laundered or stored, or even when displayed for sale at retail outlets. At times, pairs of clothing items, most commonly socks, will become separated and one of the paired items becomes lost during a laundering process. In addition, while folding socks for storage after laundering, it is often difficult to sort matching pairs together, as there may be only slight variances in color, fabric patterns and/or sizes. Several known devices and innovations for securing garments together, such as socks, have been developed and patented to address these issues.

[0005] U.S. Pat. No. 5,044,051 discloses a nylon loop which has its opposing ends joined to swivel couplings that can be mated together. The swivel couplings include a threaded bore and an opposing screw that is threaded into the bore. During use, holes are formed in sock pairs to receive the projecting end of the screw, and a leading end of the screw threaded into the bore. Although, the holed sock pairs are held together for storing, laundering or like between the swivel couplings, the fabric material of the socks can get wrapped around the threads of the screw, and thereby become permanently damaged as the screw portion is being threaded into the bore.

[0006] U.S. Pat. No. 4,503,591 discloses a circular loop made of stainless steel spring wire, which loop has one end mounting a locking member so that the other end of the loop may be inserted in the locking member to lock the two ends together and prevent separation of the articles stored on the loop. The pointed end of the loop slides into a U-shaped channel in the locking member for locking the two ends together, to thereby prevent separation of the articles of clothing. However, the pointed end of the loop can easily become disengaged from the U-shaped channel during the laundry process, which can result in separation of the paired garments, as well as damage to other articles of clothing being laundered.

[0007] U.S. Pat. No. 6,775,849 provides a method for releasably binding paired articles together by using short strips or tabs, coated with a film adhesive on one side, adhesively-bonded at both ends to the top outside edge of paired cloth items to form a loop on each item (or garment item). The pair of socks is joined by a connector threaded through the loop on each sock and locked with the anchor through a keyhole. Although this device and technique is suitable for storing paired articles of clothing, the adhesive fabric is not suitable to resist the shearing and centrifugal forces that occur during a laundry process.

[0008] U.S. Pat. No. 2,779,076 discloses a metal connecting pin having an eyelet at one end and two elongated leg members extending longitudinally in an opposing direction. The leg members are closely spaced and somewhat flexible to

retain paired socks therebetween while being hung from the eyelet along a clothesline. Although this device will retain the paired socks together during a drying process, the paired socks can easily become separated during the washing of the clothing during the laundry process.

[0009] U.S. Pat. No. 3,673,639 discloses the use of a single-body clasping device that includes a head section having a narrower neck portion, an opposing end portion, and a body portion connected between the neck portion and the end portion. The body portion includes an opening formed therein which is sufficiently large to admit the head portion. The end portion has a slot which is sized to receive only the neck portion and prevent passage there through of the head portion. A sock pair is laid across the body portion and the head portion is inserted through the body opening such that the neck portion slides through the slot to retain the sock pair together.

[0010] Other well known techniques for securing pairs of garments together by the use of a "gun," "stapler" or other type of machine are illustratively disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,950,901; 6,561,406; 4,483,066; 3,880,339; 3,735,908; and 3,734,375. These mechanical devices insert filaments through the clothing to fasten them together. However, the force exerted by the mechanical devices to insert the filaments can often damage the fabric material of the garments. Moreover, an individual using the mechanical devices may be susceptible to injury during use of such mechanical devices.

[0011] Accordingly, it is desirable to provide an improved laundry fastener that can be easily inserted and pulled by hand through the fabric of clothing without damaging the threads or fibers forming the clothes. Additionally, it is desirable to provide an inexpensive device for maintaining paired articles of clothing, such as socks, gloves or mittens together while being laundered to prevent the misplacement or loss thereof, and without the use of a gun, stapler or other mechanical device to insert the filament into the garments. Moreover, it is desirable to provide a laundry fastener that is user-friendly, reliable, is less costly to manufacture and maintain, and of significantly higher quality than is presently available.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0012] The disadvantages associated with the prior art are overcome by the present invention which provides a laundry fastener to secure together pairs of clothing items or garments, such as socks, gloves or mittens, so that the pairs will not become separated during laundering or drying processes and to provide ease in sorting clothing after laundering or drying, as well as to prevent the pairs from becoming lost or separated during storage. The laundry fastener of the present invention secures pairs of clothing or garments together by means of a filament, which is easily manually inserted through the garments and without the need for complex mechanical devices.

[0013] In a preferred embodiment, an apparatus is provided for releasably attaching at least two fabric items together. The apparatus can be used as a laundry fastener that includes a base member and a first filament having a first end, an opposing second end, and an intermediate portion formed between the opposing first and second ends. A second filament has a first end attached to the base member and an opposing second end that is detachably secured to the intermediate portion of the first filament. The second end of the second filament forms a pivotal hinge, such that the first and second filaments are movable relative to each other.

[0014] Prior to using the laundry fastener to temporarily retain the paired garments together, in one embodiment, the second end of the second filament is positioned substantially normal with respect to the second end of the first filament in a first state. The hinge enables the first filament to be moved to a different position with respect to the second filament while the fastener is being inserted through the paired garments. In an embodiment, the second filament can be positioned substantially parallel to the first filament in a second state. More specifically, the second end of the second filament is positioned substantially parallel to the second end of the first filament in the second state.

[0015] Once the garments have been moved past the parallel positioned second ends of the first and second filaments, the resiliency of the filaments biases the second end of the second filament to return to its original orientation which is substantially normal to the second end of the first filament, i.e., in a third state.

[0016] In one aspect of the present invention, the first filament is detached at its intermediate portion from the hinge of the second filament in a fourth state. The first end of the second filament can be fixedly secured to the base member. Alternatively, the first end of the second filament is detachably secured to the base member, e.g., as by a weakened section that can be flexed and broken manually, thereby allowing the items to be slipped off the filament.

[0017] In an embodiment, the first and second filaments are generally round. Preferably, the first end of the first filament has a tapered tip, the second filament is a U-shaped filament, and the intermediate portion is positioned closer to the second end of the first filament than to the first end of the first filament. Where the first and second garment items include a fabric weaved from a thread-like material, the base is preferably dimensioned greater than the open weave of the fabric to thereby prevent the first end of the second filament from passing through the first and second items of garments.

[0018] In yet another embodiment, a method of detachably securing two or more garments together using a laundry fastener is provided, where the laundry fastener includes a base member, a first filament having a first end, an opposing second end, and an intermediate portion formed between the opposing first and second ends; a second filament having a first end attached to the base member, and an opposing second end being detachably secured to the intermediate portion of the first filament, the second end of the second filament being formed as a hinge, and wherein the first and second filaments are movable relative to each other. The method includes pairing a first garment with a second garment, the first and second garments being fabricated from a fabric weave material; inserting the first end of the first filament through the fabric weave materials of the paired garments; detaching the second end of the first filament from the base; sliding the first filament through the fabric weave materials to the intermediate portion of the first filament; moving the second ends of the first and second filaments together at the hinge, wherein the second end of the first filament and the second end of the second filament are substantially parallel; sliding the second ends of the first and second filaments through the fabric materials toward the base; releasing the second ends of the first and second filaments, wherein second end of the first filament returns to a position substantially normal to the second end of the second filament to thereby lock the paired garments between the base, the second end of the second filament and the second end of the first filament.

[0019] In one aspect of the invention, the second end of the filament is detached at the hinge from the intermediate portion of the first filament. The garments can then be slidably removed from the second end of the second filament. In another aspect of the invention, the first end of the second filament is detached from the base member. The garments can then be slidably removed from the first end of the second filament. The base can optionally include design patterns and/or contain a trademark or logo relating to the manufacture of the items to which it is attached and/or can be used to receive a price, size identifier, or other relevant information.

[0020] In yet another embodiment, an article of manufacture for detachably securing two or more items together includes a base member having at least one socket, a first filament having a first end, an opposing second end, an intermediate portion formed between the opposing first and second ends, a second filament having a first end attached to the base member, and an opposing second end being secured to the intermediate portion of the first filament in a pivotal hinged relation. The first and second filaments are movable relative to each other, wherein the second end of the first filament is sized and configured for insertion into and removal from a first socket of the at least one socket.

[0021] In one aspect, the second end of the first filament has a bulbous end-portion. In another aspect, the first end of the second filament is sized and configured for insertion into and removal from a second socket of the at least one socket. In yet another aspect, the first end of the second filament has a bulbous end-portion.

[0022] In further embodiments, the fastener of the present invention can be used to temporarily secure a plurality of fabric or textile items together for retail sale and then be easily removed by the consumer after purchase.

[0023] Additional objects and features of the invention will become apparent from the detailed description, which follows taken in conjunction with the specification and the accompanying drawings in which a preferred embodiment is depicted for exemplification.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0024] The teachings of the present invention can be readily understood by considering the following detailed description in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

[0025] FIG. 1A depicts a side elevational view of an embodiment of a laundry fastener of the present invention suitable for retaining at least two garments for laundering or other purpose;

[0026] FIG. 1B is an exploded view of a detachable hinge portion of the laundry fastener of FIG. 1A;

[0027] FIG. 2 shows the free end portion of the laundry fastener of FIG. 1 being inserted through the fabric of a pair of garments;

[0028] FIG. 3 shows the laundry fastener of FIG. 2 with the pair of garments secured on the fastener;

[0029] FIG. 4 shows the laundry fastener of FIG. 3 broken at the hinge in preparation for removal of the pair of garments from the remainder of the fastener;

[0030] FIG. 5A depicts a side elevational view of another embodiment of a laundry fastener of the present invention suitable for retaining at least two garments for laundering or other purpose;

[0031] FIG. 5B is an exploded view of a hinge portion and detachable filament portion of the laundry fastener of FIG. 5A;

[0032] FIG. 6 shows the free end portion of the laundry fastener of FIG. 5 being inserted through the fabric of a pair of garments;

[0033] FIG. 7 shows the laundry fastener of FIG. 6 with the pair of garments secured on the fastener; and

[0034] FIG. 8 shows the base member of the laundry fastener of FIG. 5 being separated from the remainder of the fastener in preparation for removal of the pair of garments.

[0035] To facilitate an understanding of the invention, the same reference numerals have been used, when appropriate, to designate the same or similar elements that are common to the figures. Unless stated otherwise, the features shown in the figures are not drawn to scale, but are shown for illustrative purposes.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0036] The present invention is a laundry fastener for retaining articles of clothing together. The laundry fastener is especially suitable for temporarily fastening paired garments, such as socks, mittens or gloves together while conducting a laundry process. The laundry fastener is also useful for temporarily fastening articles of clothing during storage thereof.

[0037] Referring to FIGS. 1A and 1B, the laundry fastener 100 of the present invention illustratively comprises a base member 102, a first elongated filament 104 and a second elongated filament 112. The first filament 104 is substantially linear in shape and includes opposing first and second ends 106 and 108. The second filament 112 is substantially U-shaped at 118 and includes opposing first and second ends 114 and 116. A person of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that variations in the shape and/or size (i.e., configuration) of the second filament 112 can be provided. For example, the second filament 112 can be oval, circular or any other curvilinear shape.

[0038] The first and second filaments 104 and 112 preferably have circular cross-sectional areas, although such circular shape is not considered as being limiting. The first filament 104 preferably has tapered or pointed tips at the opposing ends 106 and 108. Preferably, at least the first end 106 has a pointed tip that can readily pierce or otherwise be inserted through the fabric weave of the garments. A person of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that such tapered shapes are not considered to be limiting. For example, the tips can be rounded or any other shape that will diminish snagging of the fabric material of the garments 130. The laundry fastener 100 is preferably fabricated by injection molding from a flexible plastic material, such as polyvinylchloride (PVC), or any other plastic material that has the characteristics of being lightweight, heat resistant, and water resistant. Further, the first and second filaments 104 and 112 are resilient such when an external force is applied thereon they will flex, and then return substantially to their original shape when the application of the external force is removed.

[0039] The base member 102 is illustratively shaped as a pair of socks, although such shape is not considered as limiting. Rather, the base member 102 can have any curvilinear shape (e.g., spherical, oval, star-shaped, rectangular, and the like). The base member 102 is sized greater than the diameter of the first and second filaments 104 and 112. The larger sized base serves as a stop-member or anchor to prevent passage of the fabric material of an article of clothing past the first end 114 of the second filament 112, as described in greater detail with respect to FIG. 3.

[0040] In the preferred embodiment of FIG. 1A, the laundry fastener 100 has an overall height of approximately 2.0-2.5 inches, where the base 102 has an area of approximately 0.50-1.0 in² with a height of approximately 1.0 inch, the first filament 104 has a length of 1.5 inches, and the height from the first filament 104 to the top of the U-Shaped portion 118 of the second filament 112 is 1.75-2.0 inches. Preferably, the diameter of the first and second filaments 104 and 112 are approximately $\frac{1}{32}$ (0.031) inches. A person of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the aforementioned dimensions are not considered limiting, as other component dimensions can be readily provided.

[0041] Preferably, the first end 114 of the second filament 112 is fixedly attached to the periphery of the base member 102. Alternatively, the first end 114 of the second filament 112 can be detachably coupled to the periphery of the base member 102, as described with respect to FIG. 4. Further, the second end 108 of the first filament 104 is detachably coupled to the base member 102. Preferably, the tip of the second end 108 of the first filament 104 and the first end 114 of the second filament 112 are integrally formed with the base member 102 during the injection molding process for fabricating the laundry fastener 100. The first end 106 extends radially outward from the base member 102. The second end 116 of the second filament 112 is detachably coupled to an intermediate portion 110 located between the opposing ends 106 and 108 of the first filament 104. The ends of each filament can be detachably secured (i.e., attached) to each other and the base member by a flexible portion of the plastic material forming the laundry fastener 100. This flexible portion is preferably thin and/or has a small diameter which can be separated by applying a shearing or normal force thereto by hand.

[0042] Referring to FIG. 1B, second end 116 of the second filament 112 is hinged to the intermediate portion 110 of the first filament 104. The hinge 120 is detachable by applying a shearing and/or normal force to the second end 116 of the second filament 112 with respect to the intermediate portion 110 of the first filament 104. The second end 108 of the first filament 104 is attached at its tip (e.g., pointed end) to the base member 102. The second end 108 is detachable from the base member 102 by manually applying a shearing and/or normal force to the second end 108 of the first filament 104 with respect to the base member 102. The detachment of the first and second filaments is described below in further detail with respect to FIGS. 3 and 4. In one embodiment, the one or more points of detachment at the hinge 120 and/or ends of the filaments 108, 114 are weakened areas.

[0043] Referring to FIG. 2, the second end 108 of the first filament 104 is illustratively shown detached from the base member 102. Further, the opposing first end 106 of the first filament 104 is illustratively shown being inserted through the fabric material of a pair of socks. The first end 106 is preferably tapered or pointed to prevent damage to the fabric material of the garments. The garments (i.e., pair of socks) are moved along the length of the first filament 104 from the first end 106 to the intermediate portion 110 as shown by arrow "A". The final position for the pair of socks is between the opposing ends 114 and 116 of the second filament 112, and is preferably positioned along the U-shaped portion 118 of the fastener 100, as shown in FIG. 3.

[0044] Referring again to FIG. 2, as the first end 106 of the first filament 104 is moved through the fabric of the paired clothing 130, second end region 116 of the second filament 112 moves downward at the hinge 120 along the path design-

nated with arrow “B”, so that the second filament 112 is substantially parallel with the first filament 104. The paired garments 130 are then pushed (and/or the first end 106 of the first filament 104 is pulled) past the intermediate portion 110 and over the second end 116 of the second filament 112 and the second end 108 of the first filament 104. This push/pull process continues until the second end 108 of the first filament 104 is completely through the paired garments 130. The garments 130 can then be slid along the second filament 112 as shown by arrow “C” to, for example, the U-shaped portion 118.

[0045] Referring to FIG. 3, the paired garments 130 are shown positioned along the U-shaped portion 118 of the second filament 112. Further, the resilient U-shaped filament 112 and first filament 104 both return (i.e., arrow “D”) to their original orientation at the hinge 120, such that the second end 116 of the second filament 112 is substantially perpendicular to the first filament 104. In this manner, the paired garments 130 are locked between the base member 102, the U-shaped second filament 112 and the second end 108 of the first filament 104. The secured pair of socks or other garments can now be laundered, dried, sorted or stored with ease, and without the pair becoming separated or lost.

[0046] Referring to FIG. 4, to remove the laundry fastener 100 from the garments 130, the first filament 104 is separated (arrow “E”) from the hinge 120 at the second filament 112. In particular, the hinge 120 can be separated by applying a shearing and/or normal force to the second end 116 of the second filament 112 with respect to the intermediate portion 110 of the first filament 104. Once the first filament 104 is separated from the second filament 112, the garments 130 can be removed (e.g., pulled through) from the second filament 112 of the laundry fastener along the path designated by arrow “F”.

[0047] In an alternative embodiment, the first end 114 of the second filament 112 can be detached from the base 102 instead of the detachment at the hinge 120. The detachment at the base is provided by applying a shearing and/or normal force to the first end 114 of the second filament 112 with respect to the base member 102. Once the first filament 104 is separated from the base member 102, the garments 130 can be removed (e.g., pulled through) from the second filament 112 of the laundry fastener along the path designated by arrow “G”. The base member 102 and first filament 104 of the laundry fastener can then be discarded.

[0048] The hand held fastener of the present invention can be used for securing a pair of socks, gloves or any other garment that is often found in pairs together so that they do not become lost or separated during storage or especially during a laundering process. Advantageously, machine devices are not required to force a filament through articles of clothing to secure them together have long been utilized. Rather, the laundry fastener that can be easily inserted and pulled (or pushed) manually by hand through the fabric of clothing without damaging the threads or fibers (i.e., fabric weave) forming the cloths. Additionally, the laundry fastener of the present invention is user-friendly, reliable, is less costly to manufacture and maintain, and of significantly higher quality than presently available products.

[0049] Referring to FIGS. 5A and 5B, another embodiment of the laundry fastener 500 of the present invention is illustratively shown. The laundry fastener 500 comprises a base member 102, a first elongated filament 104 and a second elongated filament 112 as described above with respect to

FIGS. 1-4. The laundry fastener 500 is the same as the laundry fastener 100 of the previous embodiments, except that the second end 108 of the first filament 104 and/or the first end 114 of the second filament 112 are detachably coupled to the base member 102 in a manner so that the laundry fastener 500 can be reused again, for example, during another laundry process. Specifically, the second end 108 of the first filament 104 and the first end 114 of the second filament 112 are not integrally formed with the base member 102. Rather, the ends 108, 114 are and base member 102 configured in a male/female connector or socket/connector arrangement.

[0050] In one aspect of the present invention, the base member 102 includes a first bore or socket 502 sized and configured to receive the second end 108 of the first filament 104 in a snap-fit, socket-like arrangement. In one embodiment, the second end 108 of the first filament 104 includes a bulbous end 504 sized and configured to be detachably inserted into and out of the socket 502. Although the second end 108 of the first filament 104 is illustratively described as being bulbous in shape, such shape is not considered as limiting. For example, the second end 108 can be circular, rectilinear, triangular and/or any other shape or keyed configuration that can be tightly or snugly snap-fitted and retained in the socket 502 by at least frictional forces. Accordingly, the second end 108 of the first filament 104 can be repeatably attached to and detached from the first socket 502 of the base member 102 to permit the first and second filaments 104, 112 to be inserted through the fabric material of the items of clothing 130 as described above.

[0051] In another aspect, the base member 102 includes a second bore or socket 506 sized and configured to receive the first end 114 of the second filament 112 in a snap-fit, socket-like arrangement. Preferably, the first end 114 of the second filament 112 includes a bulbous end-portion 508 that is sized and configured to be inserted into a second bore or socket 506 formed in the base member 102 in a snap-fit, socket-like arrangement. As described above, the first end 114 of the second filament 112 can be circular, rectilinear, triangular and/or any other shape or keyed configuration that can be tightly or snugly snap-fitted and retained in the socket 506 by at least frictional forces. Accordingly, the first end 114 of the second filament 112 can be repeatably attached to and detached from the second socket 506 of the base member 102 to permit the removal of the second filament 112 from the fabric material of the items of clothing 130 as described above with respect to FIG. 4.

[0052] Referring to FIG. 6, the free end portion 106 of the laundry fastener 500 is illustratively shown being inserted through the fabric of a pair of garments 130. In particular, the first end 108 (e.g., bulbous end-portion 504) of the second filament 104 is detached from the first bore 502 formed in the base member 102. The first and second filaments 104 and 112 are inserted through the pair of garments 130 in a similar manner described above with respect to FIG. 2.

[0053] Referring to FIG. 7, the paired garments 130 are shown positioned along the U-shaped portion 118 of the second filament 112. Once the pair of garments 130 are retained along the second filament 112 between the base member 102 and the first filament 104 as described above with respect to FIG. 3, the first end 108 (e.g., bulbous end-portion 504) of the second filament 104 is inserted into the first bore 502 formed in the base member 102 and retained therein by a snap-fit configuration and/or frictional forces therebetween.

[0054] Removal of the garment fastener 500 can be performed in a reverse operation or path along which the garment fastener 500 was inserted though the fabric material of the garments. Specifically, removal of the garment fastener 500 can be performed by detaching the second end 108 of the first filament 104 from the first socket 502 and sliding the fabric material over the first and second filaments, across the hinge 120 and then over the free end 106 of the second filament. The second end 108 of the first filament 104 can then be reinserted into the first socket 502 of the base member 102 for future use.

[0055] Referring to FIG. 8, removal of the garment fastener 500 can alternatively be performed by detaching the first end 114 of the second filament 112 from the second socket 506 as shown by arrow “H”, and sliding the fabric material over the first end 114 of the second filament 112 as shown by arrow “I”. The base member 102 can then be reinserted into the first end 114 of the second filament 112 for use again, illustratively during another laundry process.

[0056] Although various embodiments that incorporate the teachings of the present invention have been shown and described in detail herein, those skilled in the art can readily devise many other and varied embodiments that incorporate these teachings, and the scope of the invention is to be determined by the claims that follow.

What is claimed is:

1. An article of manufacture for detachably securing two or more items together comprising:

a base member;

a first filament having a first end, an opposing second end, and an intermediate portion formed between the opposing first and second ends; and

a second filament having a first end attached to the base member, and an opposing second end being detachably secured to the intermediate portion of the first filament in a pivotal hinged relation, wherein the first and second filaments are movable relative to each other.

2. The article of claim 1, wherein the second end of the second filament is positioned substantially normal to the second end of the first filament in a first state.

3. The article of claim 2, wherein the second filament is moveable to a position that is substantially parallel to the first filament in a second state.

4. The article of claim 3, wherein the second end of the second filament is moveable to a position that is substantially parallel to the second end of the first filament in a second state.

5. The article of claim 3, wherein the second end of the second filament is moveable to a position that is substantially normal with respect to the second end of the first filament in a third state.

6. The article of claim 5, wherein the first filament is detached at its intermediate portion from the hinge of the second filament in a fourth state.

7. The article of claim 1, wherein the first and second filaments are generally round.

8. The article of claim 1 wherein the first end of the first filament has a tapered tip.

9. The article of claim 1 wherein the second filament is U-shaped.

10. The article of claim 1 wherein the intermediate portion is positioned closer to the second end of the first filament than to the first end of the first filament.

11. The article of claim 1 wherein the items include a fabric woven from a thread-like material, said base being dimensioned greater than the fabric weave to thereby prevent the

first end of the second filament from passing through the first and second items of garments.

12. The article of claim 1 wherein the first end of the second filament is detachably secured to the base member.

13. The article of claim 1 wherein the first end of the second filament is fixedly secured to the base member.

14. The article of claim 1 which is integrally molded from a resilient polymeric material.

15. The article of claim 1 in which one or more points of detachment of the filaments are weakened areas.

16. An article of manufacture for detachably securing two or more items together comprising:

a base member having at least one socket;

a first filament having a first end, an opposing second end, and an intermediate portion formed between the opposing first and second ends; and

a second filament having a first end attached to the base member, and an opposing second end being secured to the intermediate portion of the first filament in a pivotal hinged relation, wherein the first and second filaments are movable relative to each other, wherein the second end of the first filament is sized and configured for insertion into and removal from a first socket of said at least one socket.

17. The article of claim 16 wherein the second end of the first filament has a bulbous end-portion.

18. The article of claim 16 wherein the first end of the second filament is sized and configured insertion into and removal from a second socket of said at least one socket.

19. The article of claim 18 wherein the first end of the second filament has a bulbous end-portion.

20. A method of detachably securing a pair of garments together using a laundry fastener, the laundry fastener including a base member; a first filament having a first end, an opposing second end, and an intermediate portion formed between the opposing first and second ends; a second filament having a first end attached to the base member, and an opposing second end being detachably secured to the intermediate portion of the first filament, said second end of the second filament being formed as a hinge, and wherein the first and second filaments are movable relative to each other, said method comprising:

pairing a first garment with a second garment, the first and second garments being fabricated from a woven fabric material;

inserting the first end of the first filament through the fabric of the paired garments;

detaching the second end of the first filament from the base; sliding the first filament through the fabric to the intermediate portion of the first filament;

moving the second ends of the first and second filaments together at the hinge, wherein the second end of the first filament and the second end of the second filament are substantially parallel;

sliding the second ends of the first and second filaments through the fabric toward the base;

releasing the second ends of the first and second filaments, wherein the second end of the first filament returns to a position substantially normal to the second end of the second filament to thereby secure the paired garments between the base, the second end of the second filament and the second end of the first filament.

21. The method of claim **20** further comprising the step of detaching the second end of the filament at the hinge from the intermediate portion of the first filament.

22. The method of claim **21** further comprising the step of slidably removing the paired garments from the second end of the second filament.

23. The method of claim **20** further comprising the step of detaching the first end of the second filament from the base member.

24. The method of claim **23** further comprising the step of slidably removing the paired garments from the first end of the second filament.

25. The method of claim **20**, wherein the base member includes one or more sockets, the second end of the first

filament being sized and configured for removable insertion into a first of the one or more sockets, and wherein the step of detaching the second end of the first filament from the base comprises applying a substantially normal force to remove the second end of the first filament from the first socket.

26. The method of claim **25** wherein the first end of the second filament is sized and configured for removable insertion into a second of the one or more sockets, the method further comprising the step of detaching the first end of the second filament from the base by applying a substantially normal force to remove the first end of the second filament from the second socket.

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