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(54) Title: RELEASABLY CLOSABLE PRODUCT ACCOMMODATING PACKAGE

(57) Abstract: A releasable closure provides for the opening and closing of a package assembly which accommodates a plurality of elongate consumable products. The assembly includes a package housing for supporting the products. The package housing includes a first product accommodating compartment and a second product accommodating compartment separated by a hinge. Each of the product accommodating compartments has an open end adjacent the hinge. The product accommodating compartments are foldable about the hinge in a book-like fashion. The releasable closure is applied to each compartment and positioned to be in aligned facing relationship for mutual engagement upon closably folding the compartments about the hinge.

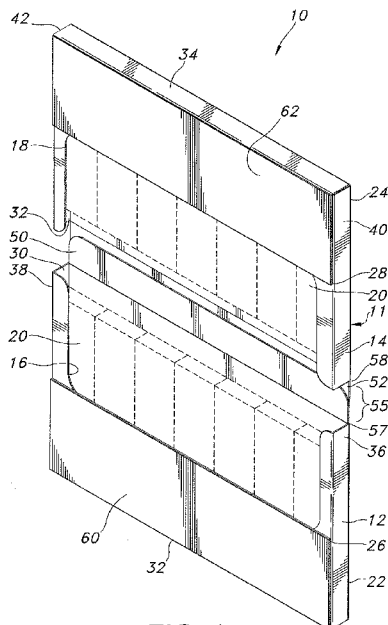


FIG. 1



GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, RW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

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**RELEASABLY CLOSABLE PRODUCT ACCOMMODATING PACKAGE****CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS:**

This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/407,385 filed on October 27, 2010; U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/408,091 filed on October 29, 2010; and U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/408,112 filed on October 29, 2010, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

**FIELD OF THE INVENTION:**

The present invention relates generally to a package for accommodating and dispensing product. More particularly, the present invention relates to a dual compartment package having a releasable closure which permits repeated opening and closing of the compartments of the package.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION:**

Various packaging devices exist for accommodating and dispensing consumable products. Such packages may be designed to permit repeated opening and closing to access the product contained therein. One type of reopenable package includes a package having a product accommodating compartment and a foldable flap cover.

An example of one such package for accommodating and dispensing sticks or slabs of gum is shown in commonly assigned U.S. Patent No. 7,159,717 where the package includes two compartments separated by a hinge where the two compartments may be foldably closed over one another to arrange the package between an open position permitting dispensing of the chewing gum slabs therefrom to a closed position.

In order to maintain the folded package in a closed position, the package shown in the '717 patent includes a foldable flap which is folded over the two compartments and tucked into a slot. To open the package, the flap must be removed from the slot and hingedly lifted to permit opening of the package compartments.

Another example of a package for gum sticks or slabs is shown in commonly assigned U.S. Patent No. 7,533,773. In this embodiment, a cover overlies a packet. The cover has an openable flap which also opens the packet. As with the embodiment of the '717 packet, the flap is closed by tucking the flap into a slot on the front wall of the cover.

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Other examples of gum packages are known which use a foldable flap to cover a dispensing opening.

It is desirable to provide a dual compartment package for accommodating and dispensing consumable products such as chewing gum which provides a further releasable closure mechanism.

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### **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION:**

In an embodiment of the present invention, a package assembly is provided for accommodating and dispensing a plurality of elongate consumable products. A package housing is provided for supporting the products. The package housing includes a first product accommodating compartment and a second product accommodating compartment which are separated by a hinge. Each product accommodating compartment has an open end adjacent the hinge. The product accommodating compartments are foldable about the hinge in a book-like fashion. A releasable closure is applied to each compartment and positioned to be in aligned facing relationship for mutual engagement upon closably folding the compartments about the hinge. The releasable closure is selected from the group consisting of a clip, mating hook and loop fasteners, magnetic fasteners, pressure sensitive labels, static clinging film, pressure sensitive adhesives and interfitting mechanical devices.

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### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS:**

Figure 1 is a perspective showing of one embodiment of a package of the present invention, for accommodating gum slabs, shown in the opened condition.

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Figure 2 is a perspective showing of the package of Figure 1 in the closed condition.

Figures 3-13 show examples of releasable closures and/or releasable closure devices for packages in accordance with the present invention.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT:**

The present invention provides a releasable closure for packaging. It is contemplated that the releasable closure may be used to permit the reopenable closure of a package. In its broad aspect, the present invention employs a closure device to hold two compartments of the package closed. When these packaging components are opened, they provide access to the contents of the package.

As used herein throughout, the term “releasable closure” or “releasable closure device” may refer to a wide variety of mechanisms and/or materials, which when joined together form a releasable coupling. When such materials and/or mechanisms are placed on two portions or compartments of a package, it provides for the releasable coupling of those portions. Various non-limiting examples will be described hereinbelow.

The present invention in one aspect applies or affixes a releasable closure to a product package having two product accommodating compartments or portions mutually closable about a hinge member.

Figures 1 and 2 show one embodiment of the present invention. The package shown herein is a hand-held, pocket-sized package for accommodating and dispensing a plurality of consumable products. In the present embodiment, the products may include gum slabs which may have individual wrappers thereover. The package includes a pair of compartments in a book-like configuration where the package may be opened and closed about either side of a hinge member. The package is releasably maintained in the closed position by use of a releasable closure affixed or otherwise applied to the compartments on one or both sides of the hinge member.

Package 10 may also be provided with an overwrap (not shown) to environmentally seal the contents of the package. If desired, the overwrap may employ a tamper evident strip.

Package 10, includes a package housing 11, and is generally formed of paperboard material folded from a flat blank. While paperboard is the preferred material, other well known materials and combinations thereof may also be employed. Such materials may include paperboard, cardboard, laminates, foils and combinations thereof. The package 10 of

the present invention may be formed from a single flat paperboard blank or a pair of paperboard blanks secured to one another.

The paperboard blank or blanks are arranged into the configuration shown in Figure 1 to form a pair of compartments 12 and 14. Each of compartments 12 and 14 forms, respectively, product accommodating pockets 16 and 18. The pockets 16 and 18 support a plurality of gum slabs 20 in a side-by-side upright array. While such an arrangement of gum slabs is shown, other arrangements of the gum slabs in the pockets are contemplated. Also, the gum slabs may be releasably retained in the pockets by a releasable adhesive or other means. An example of such a releasable adhesive is a low temperature hot melt glue which may be applied inside pockets 16 and 18. Each of pockets 16 and 18 is defined by respective back walls 22 and 24 and respective front walls 26 and 28. While the back walls extend fully upwards over the supported gum slabs, the front walls extend only partially upwards to provide an open end 30 and 32, respectively, for providing dispensing access to the gum slabs 20. End walls 32 and 34, as well respective side walls 36, 38 and 40, 42, bound the open ended pockets 16 and 18. Each of the back walls 22 and 24 of the compartments 12 and 14 has an upwardly extending edge 50 and 52. As particularly shown in Figures 1-2, the edges 50 and 52 may be overlapped and secured together in the situation where the compartments are formed by separate blanks to form the assembled package housing 11. As is shown in Figure 1, in the open condition, the open ends 30 and 32 of packets 16 and 18 are preferably in facing relationship.

As will be described in further detail hereinbelow, the location where edges 50 and 52 overlap, forms a hinge member 55 for providing foldable closure of the package housing 11 in book-like fashion from an opened condition shown in Figure 1 to a closed condition shown in Figure 2. The hinge member 55 is defined by a hinge spine 56 and a pair of hinge joints 57 and 58 on either side thereof. As may be appreciated from Figures 1 and 2, the package housing 11 may be opened in book-like fashion about hinge member 55 to render accessible the gum slabs 20 and to dispense the gum slabs from the open pockets 16 and 18. The package housing 11 may be moved to a foldably closed position as shown in Figure 2 to prevent access to the open pockets 16 and 18 and prevent removal of the gum slabs 20 therefrom. Thus, in typical use, the consumer will maintain the package housing 11 in a closed condition as shown in Figure 2 until such time as it is desired to remove one or more

gum slabs therefrom. At that time, the consumer would open the package housing 11 about hinge member 55 to the opened condition shown in Figure 1. The desired number of gum slabs 20 can be removed from pockets 16 and 18 and then the consumer can reclose the package housing 11 to a condition shown in Figure 3. The package is designed to be repeatedly opened and closed as required by the needs of the consumer.

While the package of the present invention is opened about a hinge, other types of openable movement between these compartments are contemplated. Such other types of structure may include, for example, a slide cover.

In order to maintain the package housing 11 in a closed condition, the present invention employs a releasable closure applied or otherwise affixed to the compartments 12 and 14.

In the present embodiment, the locations 60 and 62 on front walls 26 and 28 schematically represent the general placement of the releasable closure material. The package housing will be releasably retained in closed condition by the engagement of the locations 60 and 62. However, this engagement is such that, while maintaining the package housing 11 in a closed condition, it can be easily released by the consumer and the package housing can be articulated from the closed condition to the open condition. This allows repeated opening and closing of the package. The closure is such that while it may be easily opened, it maintains closure under gravitational forces.

Non-limiting examples of releasable closures or releasable closure devices are described herein. In addition, one example of a releasable closure is shown and described in the above incorporated provisional applications and in PCT International Application No. PCT/US2011/054119, filed September 30, 2011, which is incorporated herein by reference for all purposes. Each of the below embodiments are employed on packages substantially similar to that shown and described above. Therefore, similar reference numerals will be used to denote similar elements.

Referring now to Figures 3 and 4, one example of releasable closure device of the present invention is described. Package 110 includes a pair of product accommodating

compartments 112 and 114 coupled by a hinge 155 for foldable movement between open and closed positions. In order to maintain the compartments 112 and 114 in closed position, as particularly shown in Figure 4, a plastic clip 160 is employed. Plastic clip 160 includes a member 162 for adhesive securement to the back 112a of compartment 112. A U-shaped clip 166 portion is connected to the member 162 at a living hinge 164. The clip portion 166 is hingedly movable about the living hinge 164 so that the clip can be manipulated over the upper edges of the closed compartments 112 and 114 to provide releasable closure thereof. It is contemplated that the dimension of the clip portion is such that it provides a frictional engagement with the compartments. When the clip portion is positioned as shown in Figure 3, the compartments can be opened. The clip portion can be moved to the position shown in Figure 4 to close the compartments. The clip is releasable so as to provide for repeated opening and closing of the package.

Referring now to Figure 5, package 210 is shown. Package 210 includes a pair of product accommodating compartments 212 and 214 separated by a hinge member 255 for foldable movement between open and closed positions. The closure shown in Figure 5 includes hook and loop fasteners which may be of the type sold under the trademark Velcro®. One such fastener 260 is applied to the front wall 226 of compartment 212. A mating fastener 262 is applied to the front wall 228 of compartment 214. The fasteners 260 and 262 are arranged to be in opposing mutual alignment. When the compartments 212 and 214 are closed about hinge 255, the fasteners 260 and 262 engage maintaining the package 210 in releasably closed position.

Referring now to Figure 6, a package 310 is shown. Package 310 includes a pair of product accommodating compartments 312 and 314 separated by a hinge member 355 for foldable movement between open and closed positions. The closure shown in Figure 6 includes magnetic fasteners to effect reopenable closure of the package 310. The magnetic fasteners may be of the type including magnets, magnetic material or magnetizable material. It is contemplated that the magnetic fasteners may include two mutually engageable magnetic materials or a magnet in combination with a magnetic attractive material.

One such magnetic device 360 is applied to the front wall 326 of compartment 312. Another magnetic device 362, which is attractive to device 360, is applied to the front wall

328 of compartment 314. The magnetic devices 360 and 362 are arranged to be in opposing mutual alignment. When the compartments 312 and 314 are closed about the hinge 355, the magnetic devices 360 and 362 engage maintaining the package 310 in releasably closed position.

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Turning now to Figure 7, package 410 is shown. Package 410 includes a pair of product accommodating compartments 412 and 414 separated by a hinge member 455 for foldable movement between open and closed positions. The closure shown in Figure 7 includes pressure sensitive labels. The pressure sensitive labels include pressure sensitive adhesive thereon which is of the type which is releasably co-engageable. Thus, one such label 460 is applied to the front wall 426 of compartment 412. Another such label 462 is applied to the front wall 428 of compartment 414. The labels are positioned and arranged to be in opposing mutual alignment. When the compartments 412 and 414 are closed about hinge 455, the labels 460 and 462 engage maintaining the package in releasably closed position.

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Figure 8 shows a further embodiment of a package 510 in accordance with the present invention. Package 510 includes a pair of product accommodating compartments 512 and 514 separated by a hinge 555 for foldable movement between open and closed positions. As shown in Figure 8, a closure is provided by a static cling films which are mutually engageable by static friction. One such film 560 is applied to the front wall 526 of compartment 512. Another such film 562 is applied to the front wall 528 of compartment 514. The static cling films 560 and 562 are arranged to be in opposing mutual alignment. When the compartments 512 and 514 are closed about hinge 555, the static cling films 560 and 562 engage maintaining the package in releasably closed position.

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Figure 9 shows a package 600 constructed in accordance with the present invention. Package 600 includes a pair of product accommodating compartments 612 and 614 separated by a hinge member 655 for foldable movement between open and closed positions. The closure shown herein includes pressure sensitive adhesive applied to the package and which is releasably attachable to various surfaces. In the present illustrative embodiment, pressure sensitive adhesive is applied at locations 660 on the front wall 626 of compartment 612. The pressure sensitive adhesive locations 660 are releasably engageable with locations 662

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defined by the front wall 628 of compartment 614. Thus, when compartment 614 is closed upon compartment 612, the pressure sensitive adhesive locations 660 provide for releasable closure of the package 610. The pressure sensitive adhesive location may be provided in a wide variety of configurations.

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Figures 10-13 show various interfitting mechanical devices which may be employed as releasable closures. These devices typically include two components which interfit or interlock to provide removable connection therebetween. One component is placed on the front wall of one compartment while the other interfitting component is placed on the front wall of the other compartment.

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Referring now to Figure 10, a package 710 in accordance with the present invention is shown. Package 710 includes a pair of product accommodating compartments 712 and 714 separated by a hinge member 755 for foldable movement between open and closed positions.

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The closures shown in Figure 10 include a zipper-type or “zip lock” closure of generally conventional construction similar to those found on resealable bags. As is well known, the zip lock fastener includes an extending member which is insertable into a receiving member. One such zip lock member 760 is applied to the front wall 726 of compartment 712. The mating zip lock member 762 is applied to the front wall 728 of compartment 714. The zip lock fasteners are arranged to be in opposing mutually alignment. Thus, when the compartments 712 and 714 are closed about hinge 755, the zip lock fasteners 760 and 762 engage maintaining the package 710 in releasably closed position. Sliding pressure along the edge of the closed package may be used to effect “locking” of the closure.

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Referring now to Figure 11, a further embodiment of the present invention is shown. Package 810 includes a pair of product accommodating compartments 812 and 814 separated by a hinge member 855 for foldable movement between open and closed positions. The closure shown in Figure 11 is of the type described as a latch and receptacle. The closure includes a latch 862 having a protruding portion 862a and a receptacle 860 which receives protruding portion 862a. As an example, the receptacle 860 is applied to the front wall 826 of compartment 812, the latch 862 is applied to front wall 828 of compartment 814. The compartments 812 and 814 are closed about hinge 855. The protruding portion 862a of latch

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862 is inserted into receptacle 816 and frictionally retained therein in a manner which permits release therefrom. This provides for releasable closure of package 810.

Referring now to Figures 12 and 13, two embodiments of tab-like closures are shown.

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Figure 12 shows a package 910 having a pair of compartments 912 and 914 separated by a hinge member 955 for foldable movement between open and closed positions. The closure device employed herein is a tab and receptacle closure. In the embodiment in Figure 12, a centrally located extending tab 962 formed from the paperboard blank forming the package 910 extends perpendicularly outward from front wall 928 of compartment 914 along the distal edge 928a thereof. A receiving aperture 960 is formed on the front wall 926 of compartment 912 at a location adjacent the distal edge 926a thereof. In the embodiment shown in Figure 12, a single tab 962 is centrally located to be received in a centrally located receptacle 960. The tab 962 is received in the receptacle 960 in frictional engagement. When the compartments 912 and 914 are closed about hinge 955, the tab 962 enters the receptacle 960 and is held therein in releasable frictional engagement thereby maintaining the package 912 in releasably closed position.

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Figure 13 shows a similar embodiment to that shown in Figure 12 where package 900' includes compartments 912' and 914' arranged about hinge 955' for foldable movement between open and closed positions. In the embodiment in Figure 13, two spaced apart tabs 962' along edge 928a' of compartment 914' are engageable with a pair of aligned receptacles 960' along edge 926a' of compartment 912'.

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One or more of the embodiments described above, with respect to the releasable closure and/or releasable closure devices, provide various consumer benefits. For example, the particular closures described herein may provide the consumer with the ability to operate the opening and closing of the package by one hand. The release of the closure mechanism to open the package from the closed position to the open position may be capable by the consumer using a thumb in a sliding fashion or a fingernail between the closed compartments.

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Additionally, in certain situations and with the use of certain closure materials and closure devices, the opening and closing of the package would be noiseless. However, in other situations, it may be desirable to employ a releasable closure in accordance with the present invention which provides an audible click upon closing to indicate that the package is closed.

In addition, the releasable closures or closure devices of the present invention may be employed in combination with a wide variety of materials forming the package.

It is further contemplated that one or more of the above-described closures can be placed in various numbered arrangements and configurations on the package compartments. Also, the strength of the releasable closure can be varied depending on the particular closure, its arrangement, number and configuration. For example, the amount of adhesive and the adhesive properties of the adhesive can be adjusted. The magnetic strength of the magnetic materials employed can be adjusted. The size and location and amount of releasable closures can be provided and arranged to suit various needs.

#### ITEMS:

Item 1. A package assembly for accommodating and dispensing a plurality of elongate consumable products comprising:

a package housing for supporting said products;

said package housing including a first product accommodating compartment and a second product accommodating compartment separated by a hinge;

each said product accommodating compartment having an open end adjacent said hinge, said product accommodating compartments being foldable about said hinge in a book-like fashion; and

a releasable closure on each compartment and positioned to be in aligned facing relationship for mutual engagement upon closably folding said compartments about said hinge;

wherein said releasable closure is selected from the group consisting of: a clip, mating hook and loop fasteners, magnetic fasteners, pressure sensitive labels, static cling film, pressure sensitive adhesives and interfitting mechanical devices.

Item 2. A package assembly of item 1 wherein each said product compartment includes an open area defined by said open end and a closed area, and wherein said open area is greater than said closed area.

5 Item 3. A package assembly of item 2 wherein said closed area is defined by a front wall.

Item 4. A package assembly of item 3 wherein said front wall includes said releasable closure.

10 Item 5. A package assembly of items 1-4 wherein said clip is adhesively secured to one of said product accommodating compartments, said clip having a hinge and a portion removably attachable to said other product accommodating compartment for providing said releasable closing of said package housing.

15 Item 6. A package assembly of items 1-4 wherein said mating hook and loop fasteners includes said hook fastener being placed on one said compartment and said loop fastener being placed on the other said compartment.

Item 7. A package assembly of items 1-4 wherein said magnetic fasteners are separately  
20 applied to said compartments and are mutually attractable.

Item 8. A package assembly of items 1-4 wherein said pressure sensitive labels are separately applied to said compartments.

25 Item 9. A package assembly of items 1-4 wherein said static cling film is separately applied to said compartments.

Item 10. A package assembly of items 1-4 wherein said pressure sensitive adhesive is separately applied to said compartments.

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Item 11. A package assembly of item 10 wherein said pressure sensitive adhesive is separately applied to selective locations on said front wall of said compartments.

Item 12. A package assembly of items 1-4 wherein said interfitting mechanical device includes mating zipper type locks.

5 Item 13. A package assembly of item 12 wherein said zipper type lock includes an extending member applied to one said compartment and an interfitting receiving member applied to the other said component.

10 Item 14. A package assembly of items 1-4 wherein said interfitting mechanical device includes a mating latch and receptacle, wherein said latch is placed on one of said compartments and said receptacle is placed on the other said compartment.

15 Item 15. A package assembly of items 1-4 wherein said interfitting mechanical device includes at least one mating tab and receptacle, wherein said tab is placed on one of said compartments and said receptacle is placed on the other said compartment.

Various changes to the foregoing described and shown structures would now be evident to those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the particularly disclosed scope of the invention is set forth in the following claims.

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A package assembly for accommodating and dispensing a plurality of elongate consumable products comprising:

a package housing for supporting said products;

5 said package housing including a first product accommodating compartment and a second product accommodating compartment separated by a hinge;

each said product accommodating compartment having an open end adjacent said hinge, said product accommodating compartments being foldable about said hinge in a book-like fashion; and

10 a releasable closure on each compartment and positioned to be in aligned facing relationship for mutual engagement upon closably folding said compartments about said hinge;

wherein said releasable closure is selected from the group consisting of: a clip, mating hook and loop fasteners, magnetic fasteners, pressure sensitive labels, static cling  
15 film, pressure sensitive adhesives and interfitting mechanical devices.

2. A package assembly of claim 1 wherein each said product compartment includes an open area defined by said open end and a closed area, and wherein said open area is greater than said closed area.

3. A package assembly of claim 2 wherein said closed area is defined by a front wall.

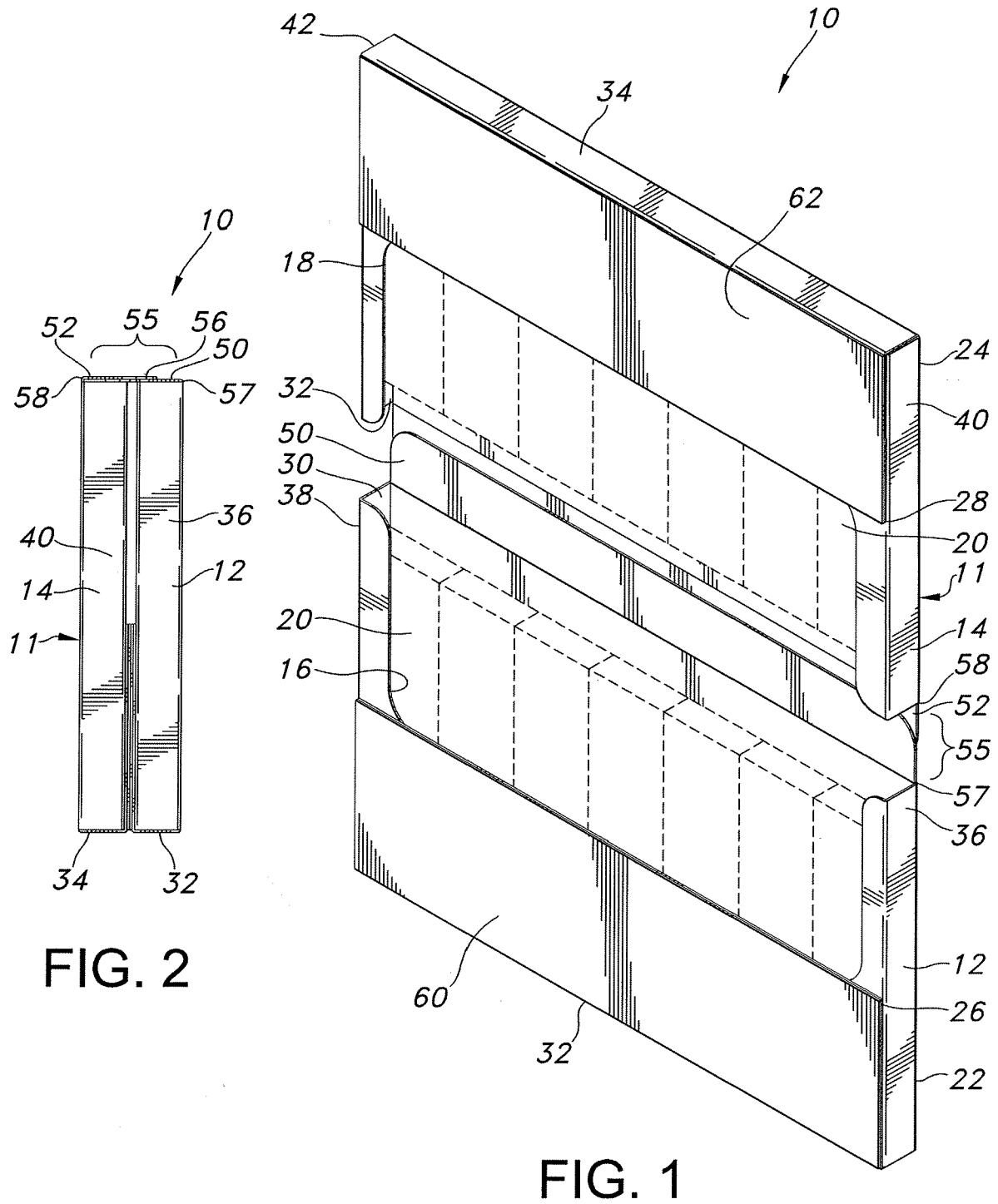
4. A package assembly of claim 3 wherein said front wall includes said releasable closure.

5. A package assembly of claim 1 wherein said clip is adhesively secured to one of said product accommodating compartments, said clip having a hinge and a portion removably attachable to said other product accommodating compartment for providing said releasable closing of said package housing.

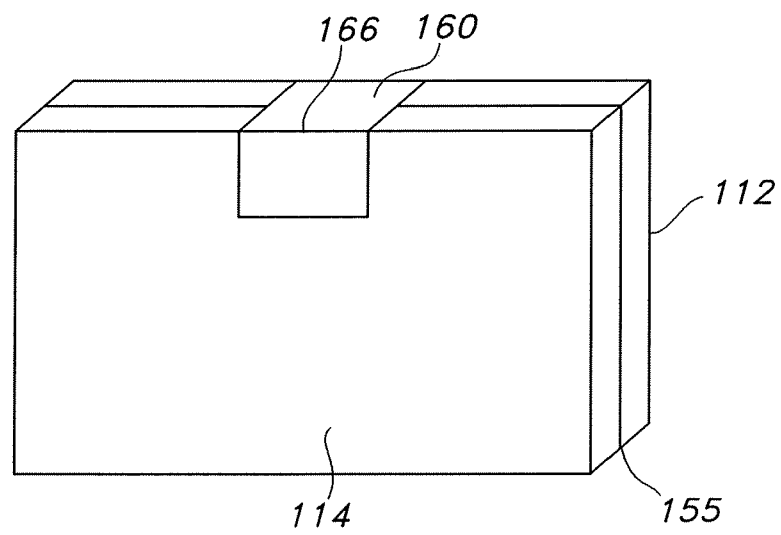
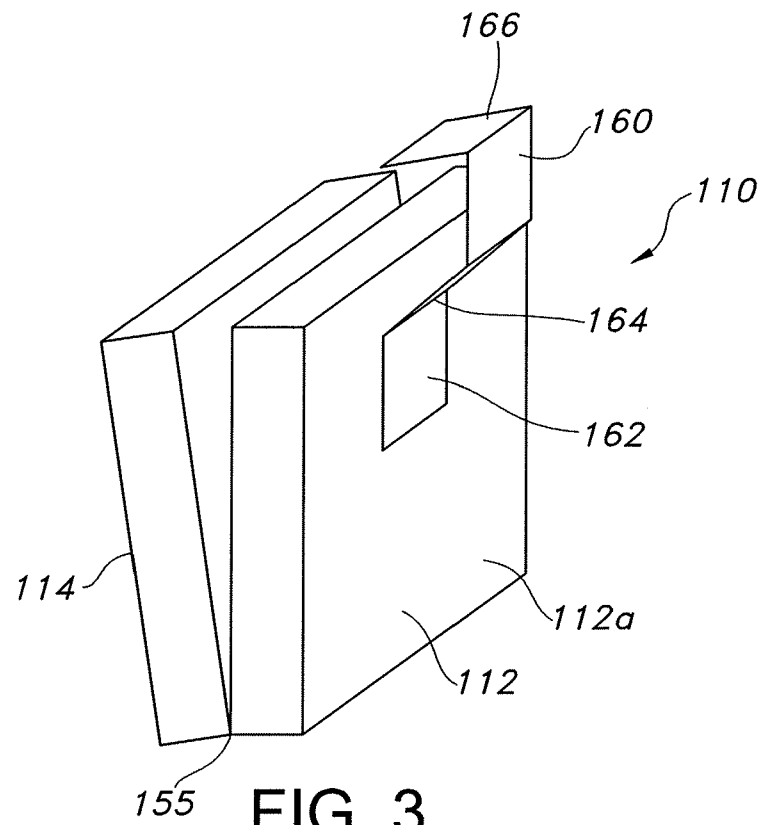
6. A package assembly of claim 4 wherein said mating hook and loop fasteners includes said hook fastener being placed on one said compartment and said loop fastener being placed on the other said compartment.

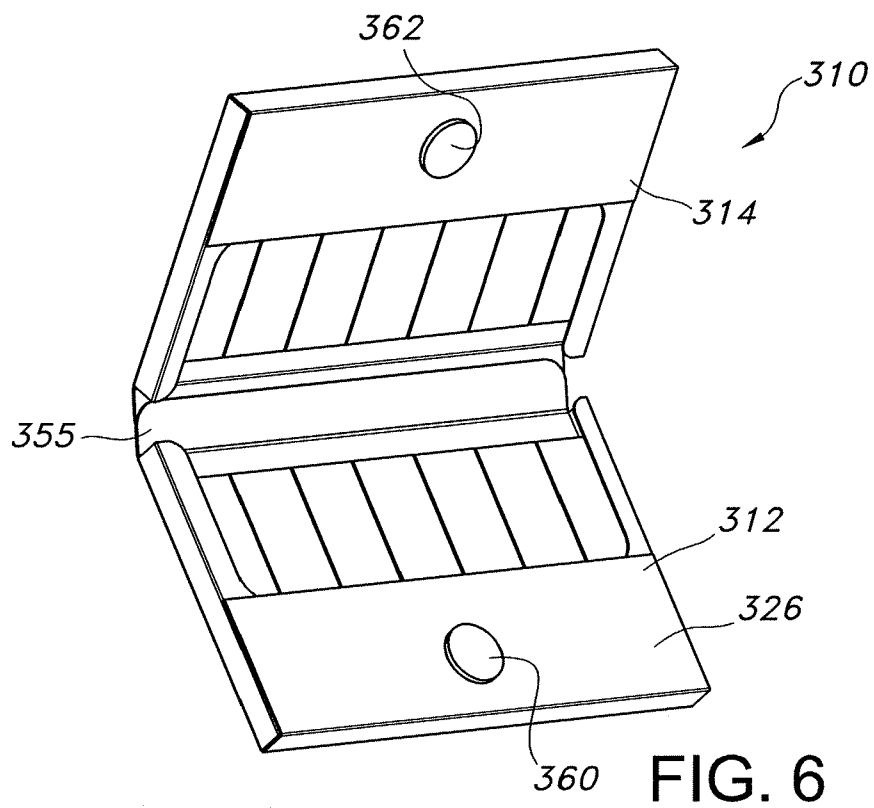
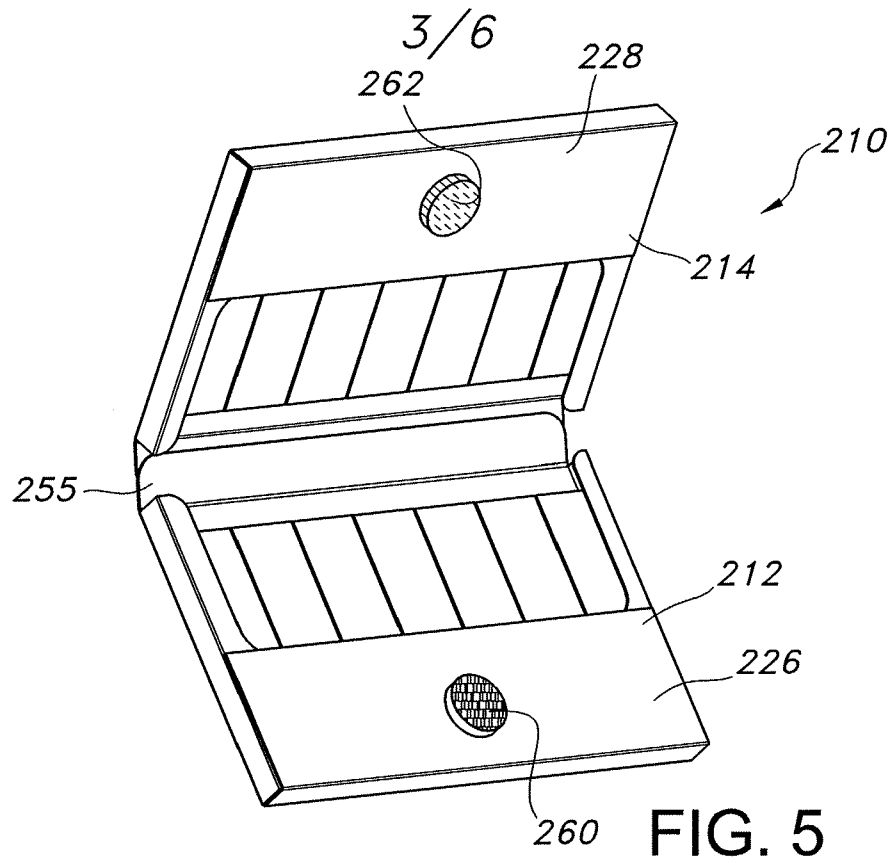
7. A package assembly of claim 4 wherein said magnetic fasteners are separately applied to said compartments and are mutually attractable.
8. A package assembly of claim 4 wherein said pressure sensitive labels are separately  
5 applied to said compartments.
9. A package assembly of claim 4 wherein said static cling film is separately applied to said compartments.
10. A package assembly of claim 4 wherein said pressure sensitive adhesive is separately  
10 applied to said compartments.
11. A package assembly of claim 10 wherein said pressure sensitive adhesive is separately applied to selective locations on said front wall of said compartments.  
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12. A package assembly of claim 4 wherein said interfitting mechanical device includes mating zipper type locks.
13. A package assembly of claim 12 wherein said zipper type lock includes an extending  
20 member applied to one said compartment and an interfitting receiving member applied to the other said component.
14. A package assembly of claim 4 wherein said interfitting mechanical device includes a mating latch and receptacle, wherein said latch is placed on one of said compartments and  
25 said receptacle is placed on the other said compartment.
15. A package assembly of claim 4 wherein said interfitting mechanical device includes at least one mating tab and receptacle, wherein said tab is placed on one of said compartments and said receptacle is placed on the other said compartment.

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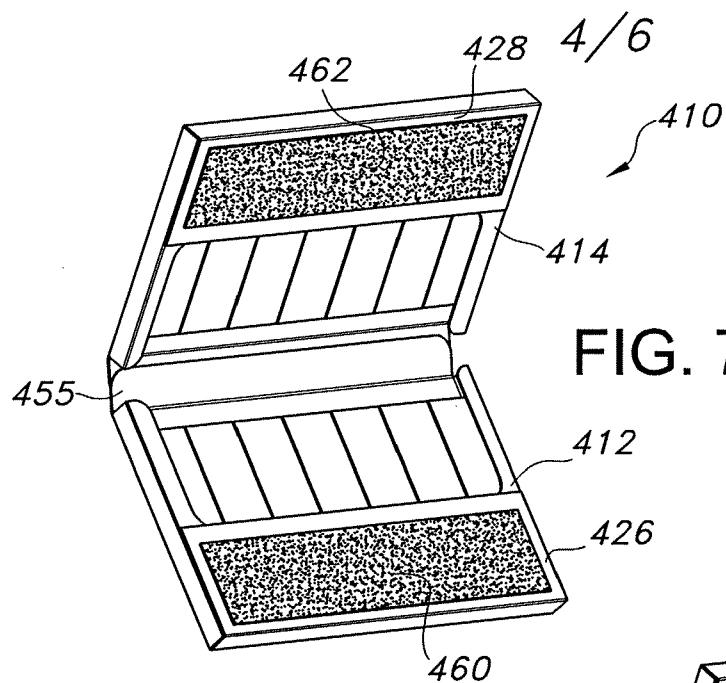


FIG. 7

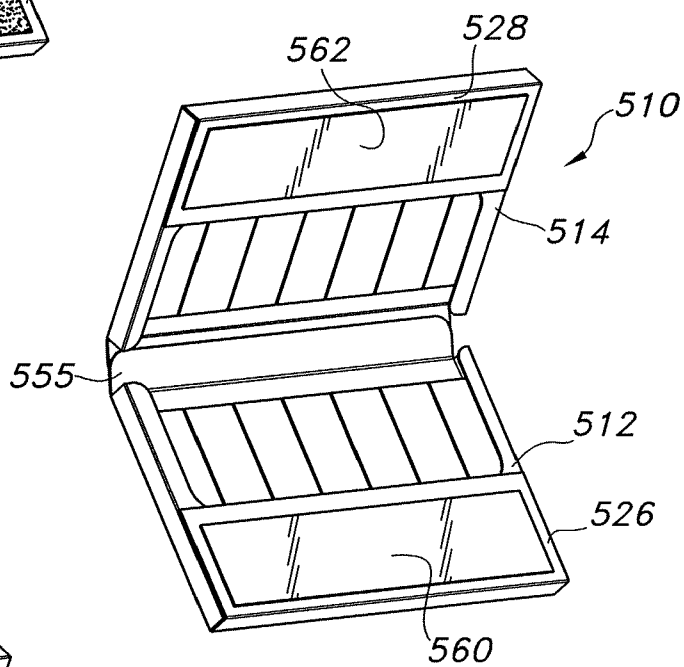


FIG. 8

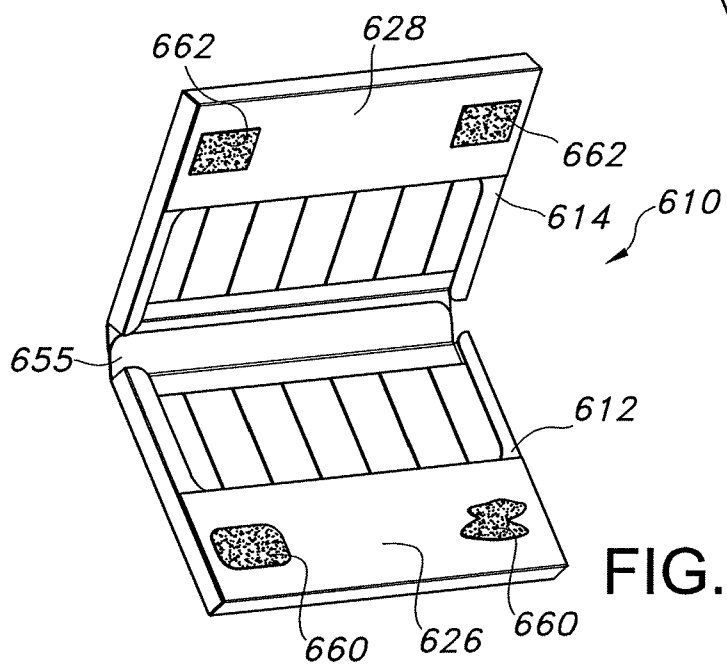
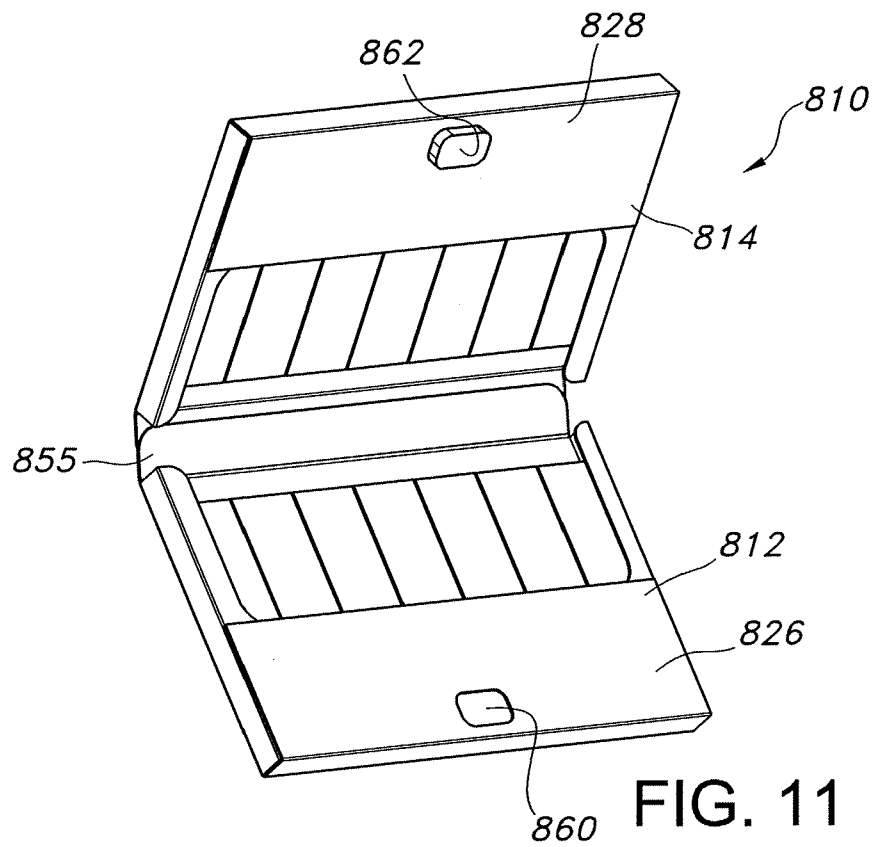
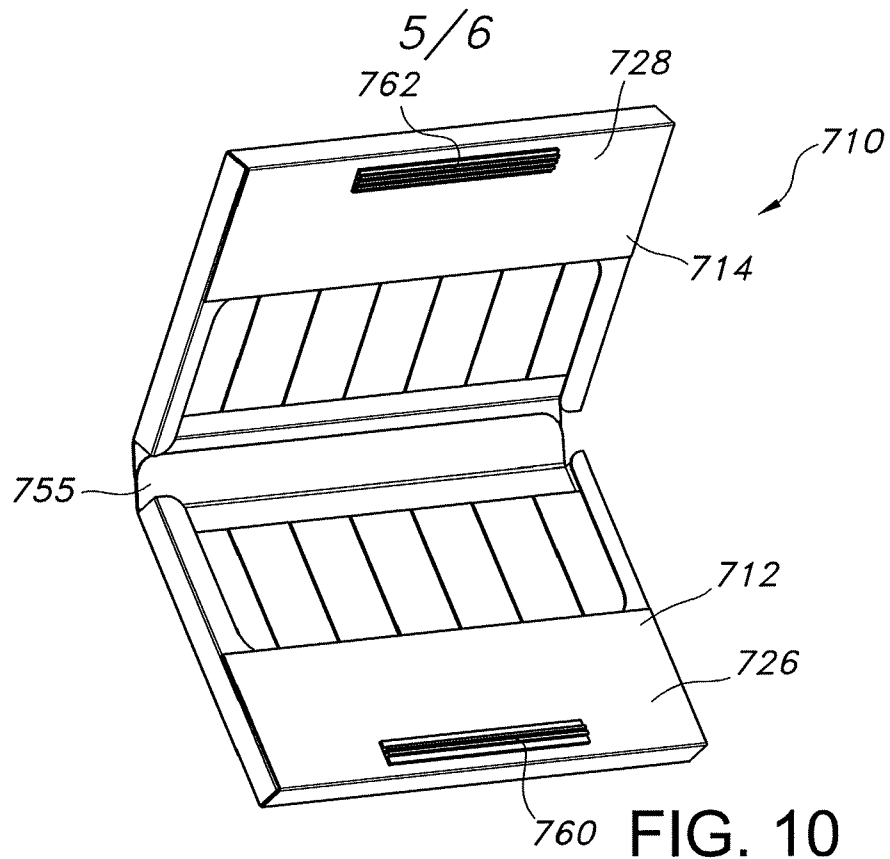


FIG. 9



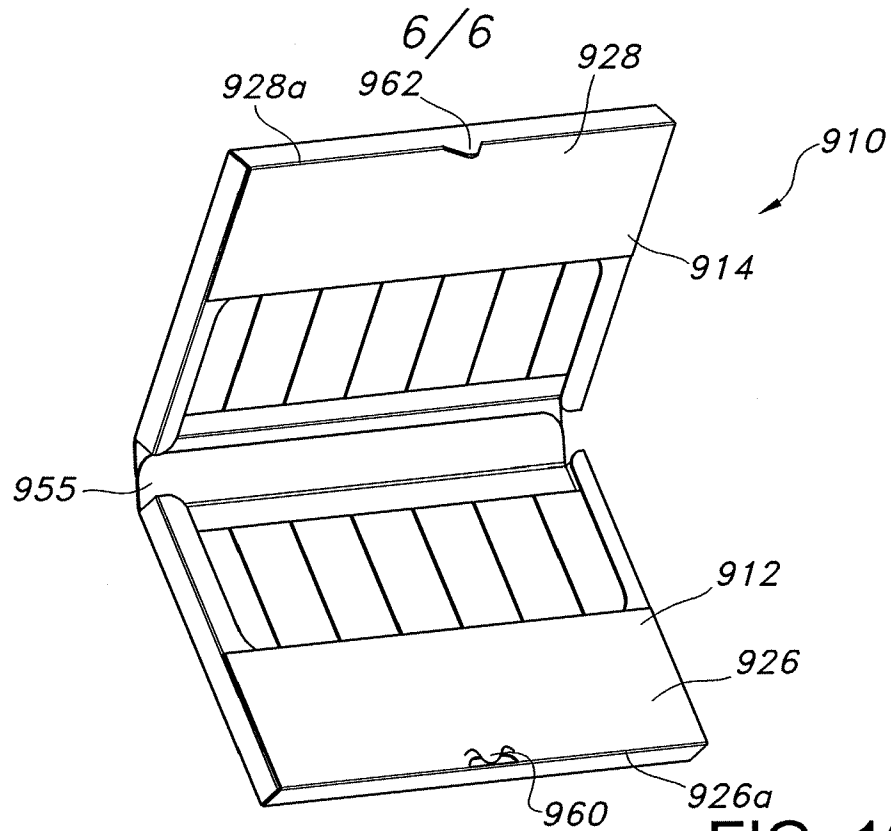


FIG. 12

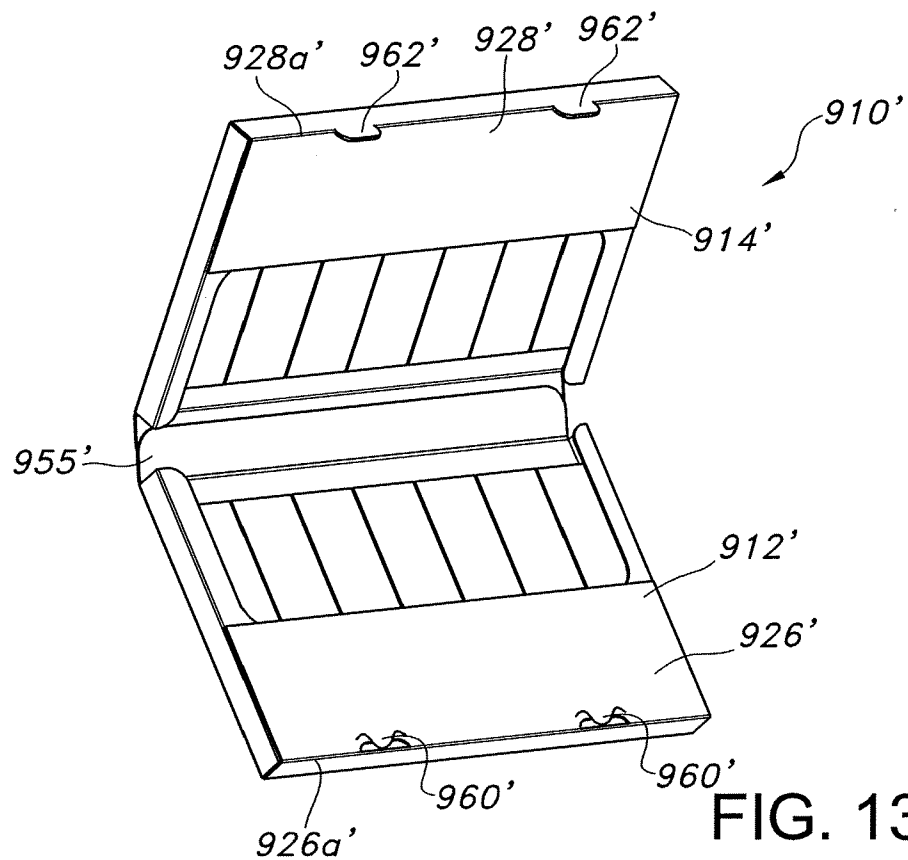


FIG. 13