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(54) Title: FILLER NECK FOR AN AUTOMOTIVE FLUID CONTAINER

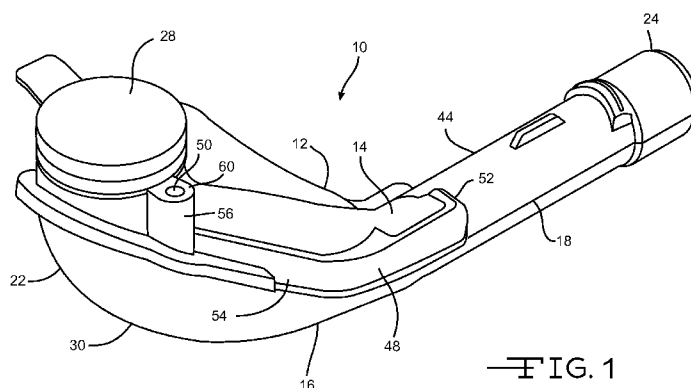


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: A filler neck for use with an automotive fluid container having a body that includes an opening in communication with a reservoir and a fluid passageway for allowing fluid to flow through the body into the container. The reservoir and the fluid passageway are configured to regulate fluid flow through the body. The reservoir has a fill limit section. The body further includes an air passageway, an air channel and an exhaust port for allowing displaced air from the container to flow through the body. The air passageway, the air channel and the exhaust port are integrally formed with the body. The exhaust port is positioned above the fill limit section to maximize air exhaust and minimize fluid leakage from the body.



FILLER NECK FOR AN AUTOMOTIVE FLUID CONTAINER

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The invention relates generally to filling devices for containers. More specifically, the invention is directed to filler necks for automotive fluid containers.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] In the past, automotive fluid containers, such as windshield washer fluid containers, were placed in engine compartments. This allowed for direct filling through openings in the tops of the containers without the need for air vents.

[0003] Due to space limitations in engine compartments, fluid containers have been positioned in other areas including spaces adjacent to fenders. This presents challenges to filling and venting these types of containers.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] In summary, the invention is a filler neck for use with an automotive fluid container having a body that includes an opening in communication with a reservoir and a fluid passageway for allowing fluid to flow through the body into the container. The reservoir and the fluid passageway are configured to regulate fluid flow through the body. The reservoir has a fill limit section. The body further includes an air passageway, an air channel and an exhaust port for allowing displaced air from the container to flow through the body. The air passageway, the air channel and the exhaust port are integrally formed with the body. The exhaust port is positioned above the fill limit section to maximize air exhaust and minimize fluid leakage from the body.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- [0005] Fig. 1 is a first top perspective view of an embodiment of a filler neck for an automotive fluid container according to the invention;
- [0006] Fig. 2 is a second top perspective view thereof;
- [0007] Fig. 3 is a bottom plan view thereof;
- [0008] Fig. 4 is a side elevational view thereof;
- [0009] Fig. 5 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 5-5 of Fig. 4;
- [0010] Fig. 6 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 6-6 of Fig. 4;
- [0011] Fig. 7 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 7-7 of Fig. 2;
- [0012] Fig. 8 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 8-8 of Fig. 4;
- [0013] Fig. 9 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 9-9 of Fig. 4;
- [0014] Fig. 10 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 10-10 of Fig. 4;
- [0015] Fig. 11 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 11-11 of Fig. 4; and
- [0016] Fig. 12 is a top perspective view of the filler neck positioned adjacent to an automotive fluid container.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0017] Referring to the drawings, an embodiment of the filler neck for an automotive fluid container according to the invention is generally indicated by the reference number "10." As shown in Figs. 1-4, the filler neck 10 has a body 12 including a top 14, a bottom 16, a first side 18, a second side 20, a first end 22 and a second end 24. The body 12 extends longitudinally between the first and second ends 22 and 24. The first end 22 is closed and the second end 24 is open.

[0018] Referring to Figs. 1, 2 and 4, the body 12 has a generally circular opening 26 positioned on the top 14 at the first end 22. A cap 28 is positioned on the body 12 adjacent to the opening 26. The cap 28 is movable from a closed position, as shown in Fig. 1, to an open position, as shown in Fig. 2, to seal and unseal the opening 26.

[0019] Referring to Figs. 1, 2, 4, 8, 9 and 11, the opening 26 is in communication with a reservoir 30 positioned at the first end 22 for receiving a fluid, such as washer fluid. As shown in Fig. 11, the reservoir 30 has an upper portion 32 and a lower portion 34. A fill limit section 36 is positioned in the upper portion 32. Referring again to Figs. 2, 4, 8, 9 and 11, the lower portion 34 of the reservoir 30 is in communication with a fluid passageway 38 that extends longitudinally from the reservoir 30 to the second end 24 along the bottom 16 of the body 12. This allows for fluid flow from the opening 26 to the second end 24. The reservoir 30 and the fluid passageway 38 are configured to regulate fluid flow through the body 12. In an embodiment, as shown in Figs. 2, 6, 7 and 11, the area A_1 of the reservoir 30 is larger than the area A_2 of the fluid passageway 38 to regulate fluid flow through the body 12. In an embodiment as shown in Fig. 7, the body 12 has a downwardly extending barrier 40 positioned at the intersection of the reservoir 30 and the fluid passageway 38. The barrier 40 acts to guide the fluid from the reservoir 30 in a downward direction into the fluid passageway 38 to regulate fluid flow through the body 12. In an embodiment, the reservoir 30 and the fluid passageway 38 are configured to allow for a predetermined rate of fluid flow. For example, this flow rate is about 2 gallons (US)/minute (about 3.785 liters/minute).

[0020] As shown in Figs. 1, 2 and 4-1 1, the body 12 has an air passageway 42 that extends longitudinally from the second end 24 along the top 14 of the body 12. In an embodiment, the body 12 has a tubular-shaped member 44 in which the fluid and air passageways 38 and 42 are positioned immediately adjacent to one another and separated by a dividing wall 46. The fluid passageway 38 is positioned below the air passageway 42. In this embodiment, the fluid and air passageways 38 and 42 have generally semi-circular cross sections as shown in Fig. 6.

[0021] Referring to Figs. 1, 2, 4, and 7-1 1, the air passageway 42 is in communication with an air channel 48 that extends from the air passageway 42 to an

exhaust port 50 that is positioned immediately adjacent to the opening 26. This allows for air flow from the second end 24 to the exhaust port 50. The air passageway 42, the air channel 48 and the exhaust port 50 are integrally formed on the body 12 to provide unitary construction for performance, strength and compactness. The air passageway 42 and the air channel 48 are configured to guide air flow through the body 12. In an embodiment, the air channel 48 creates a tortuous path for air flow. In an embodiment, the air channel 48 has a first segment 52 that extends along the top 14 toward the first side 18 in a generally perpendicular relationship with the air passageway 42. A second segment 54 extends along the first side 18 in a generally perpendicular relationship to the first segment 52. As shown in Fig. 4, the second segment 54 curves gradually upwardly along the first side 18. A third segment 56 is positioned on the first side 18 in a generally perpendicular relationship to the second segment 54. As shown in Fig. 7, the air channel 48 has a raised portion 58 that allows for air flow over any fluid that might enter the air channel 48 from the air passageway 42 during filling. As shown in Figs. 4 and 11, the third segment 56 has a terminal end 60 that includes the exhaust port 50. The exhaust port 50 is positioned above the fill limit section 36 of the reservoir 30. Further, the exhaust port 50 is positioned above the fluid and air passageways 38 and 42. This maximizes air exhaust and minimizes fluid leakage during filling.

[0022] The body 12 and the cap 28 can be made from a variety of materials. In an embodiment, the body 12 and the cap 28 are made of a plastic material such as polypropylene for strength, durability and cost.

[0023] Referring to Figs. 4, 5 and 12, the filler neck 10 is used with an automotive fluid container 62, such as a washer fluid container, that is positioned adjacent to a fender 64 and an engine compartment 66. In an embodiment, as shown in Figs. 4 and 5, the second end 24 of the body 12 is configured and adapted for insertion through a round orifice 68 positioned on the upper side of the container 62. In this regard, the

second end 24 has a substantially round configuration to correspond to the shape of the orifice 68. Further, the second end 24 is formed to be seamless to provide a smooth exterior surface 70. In an embodiment, the second end 24 includes a chamfered edge 72. As it will be appreciated, the configuration of the second end 24 allows for ease of installation, especially for situations in which the installer must blindly insert the second end 24 in the orifice 68. Further, the configuration of the second end 24 provides a seal between the second end 24 and the orifice 68 to prevent fluid leakage from the container 62. The body 12 has a flange 74 for mounting the filler neck 10 during installation. After installation, the filler neck 10 extends into the engine compartment 66 to allow for access to the opening 26 and the cap 28.

[0024] To fill the container 62 using the filler neck 10, the cap 28 is removed from the opening 26. Fluid, such as washer fluid, is poured through the opening 26 into the reservoir 30 in a manner not to exceed the fill limit section 36. The fluid then flows through the fluid passageway 32 and into the container 62 through the open second end 24. During filling, the reservoir 30 and the fluid passageway 32 regulate the flow of fluid through the body 12 as described above. Displaced air from the container 62 flows through the open second end 24 into the air passageway 42. The air then flows through the air channel 48 and escapes through the exhaust port 50 as described above. The filling process is completed when the fluid level in the reservoir 30 reaches the fill limit section 36 and no more fluid flows into the container 62. The cap 28 is then placed over the opening 26.

[0025] While the invention has been described with reference to particular embodiments, it should be understood that various changes may be made and equivalents may be substituted for elements thereof without departing from the essential scope of the invention. In addition, many modifications may be made to adapt a particular situation or material to the teachings of the invention without departing from the essential scope thereof. Therefore, it is intended that the invention

not be limited to the particular embodiments, but that the invention shall include all embodiments falling within the scope of the claims.

CLAIMS

1. A filler neck for use with an automotive fluid container comprising:

a body being adapted for connection to an automotive fluid container, the body having an opening in communication with a reservoir and a fluid passageway for allowing fluid to flow through the body into the container, the reservoir and the fluid passageway being configured to regulate fluid flow through the body, the reservoir having a fill limit section, the body having an air passageway, an air channel and an exhaust port for allowing displaced air from the container to flow through the body, the air passageway, the air channel and the exhaust port being integrally formed with the body, the exhaust port being positioned above the fill limit section for allowing air to flow out of the body and for preventing fluid leakage from the body.

2. The filler neck of claim 1, wherein the filler neck has a movable cap positioned adjacent to the opening.

3. The filler neck of claim 1, wherein the reservoir and the fluid passageway are configured to allow for a predetermined rate of fluid flow.

4. The filler neck of claim 3, wherein the predetermined rate is about 2 gallons (US)/minute (about 3.785 liters/minute).

5. The filler neck of claim 1, wherein the area of the reservoir is larger than the area of the fluid passageway.

6. The filler neck of claim 1, wherein the body has a barrier for guiding fluid in a downward direction into the fluid passageway.

7. The filler neck of claim 1, wherein the fluid passageway and the air passageway are positioned immediately adjacent to one another.

8. The filler neck of claim 1, wherein the filler neck has a tubular-shaped member and a dividing wall, the fluid passageway and the air passageway being positioned in the tubular-shaped member, the dividing wall separating the fluid passageway from the air passageway.

9. The filler neck of claim 8, wherein the fluid passageway and the air passageway have generally semi-circular cross sections.

10. The filler neck of claim 8, wherein the fluid passageway is positioned below the air passageway.

11. The filler neck of claim 1, wherein the air channel has a raised portion for allowing air flow over fluid.

12. The filler neck of claim 1, wherein the air channel is tortuous.

13. The filler neck of claim 1, wherein the air channel has a first segment positioned in a generally perpendicular relationship to the air passageway, a second segment positioned in a generally perpendicular relationship to the first segment, and a third segment positioned in a generally perpendicular relationship to the second segment, the third segment having a terminal end including the exhaust port.

14. The filler neck of claim 13, wherein the second segment curves toward the third segment.

15. The filler neck of claim 1, wherein the second end of the body is configured for insertion in an orifice of the container.

16. The filler neck of claim 15, wherein the second end has a smooth exterior surface.

17. The filler neck of claim 15, wherein the second end has a chamfered edge.

18. The filler neck of claim 1, wherein the body has a flange for mounting the filler neck.

19. The filler neck of claim 1, wherein the body is made of a plastic material.

20. The filler neck of claim 19, wherein the plastic material is polypropylene.

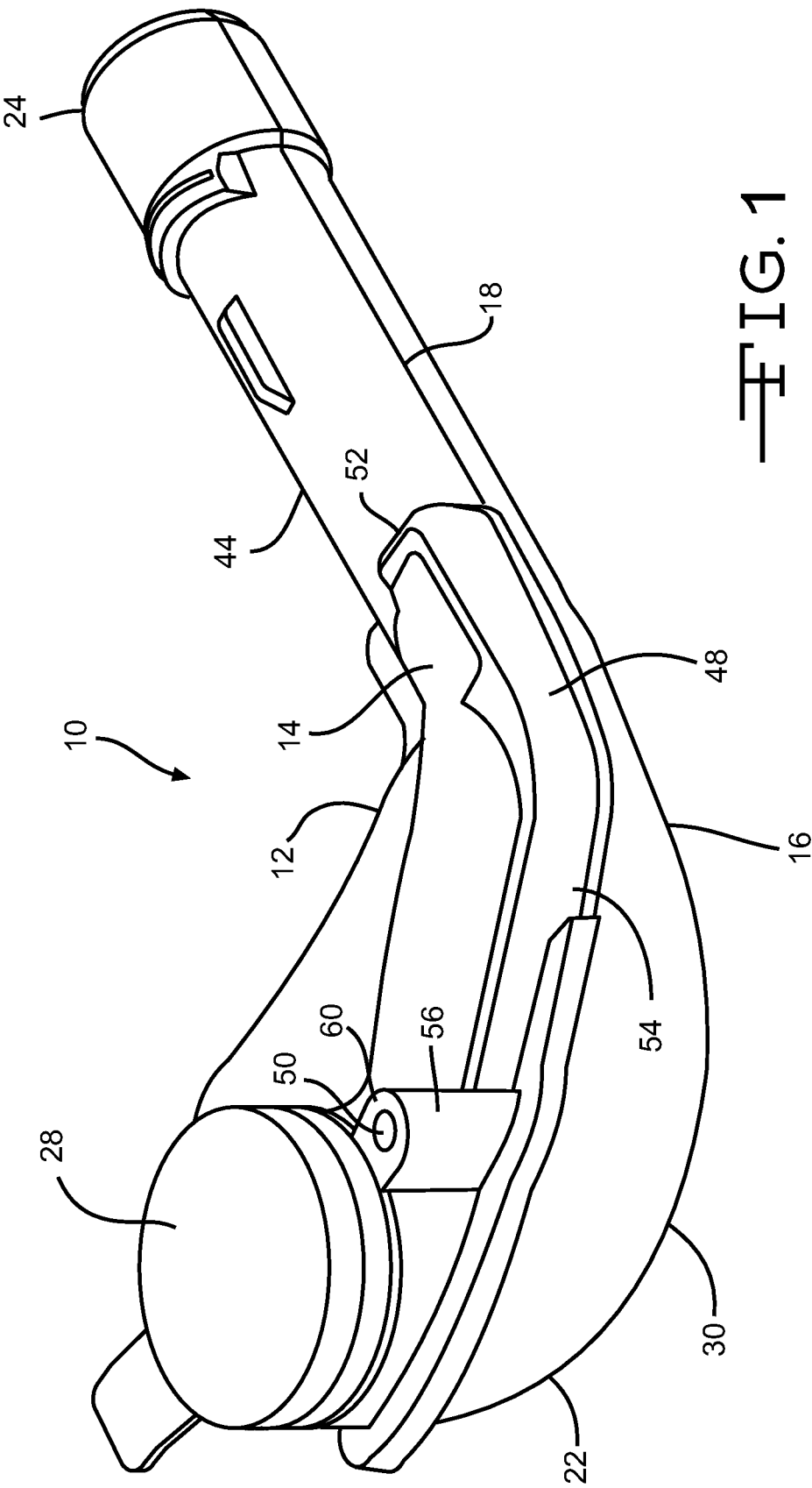
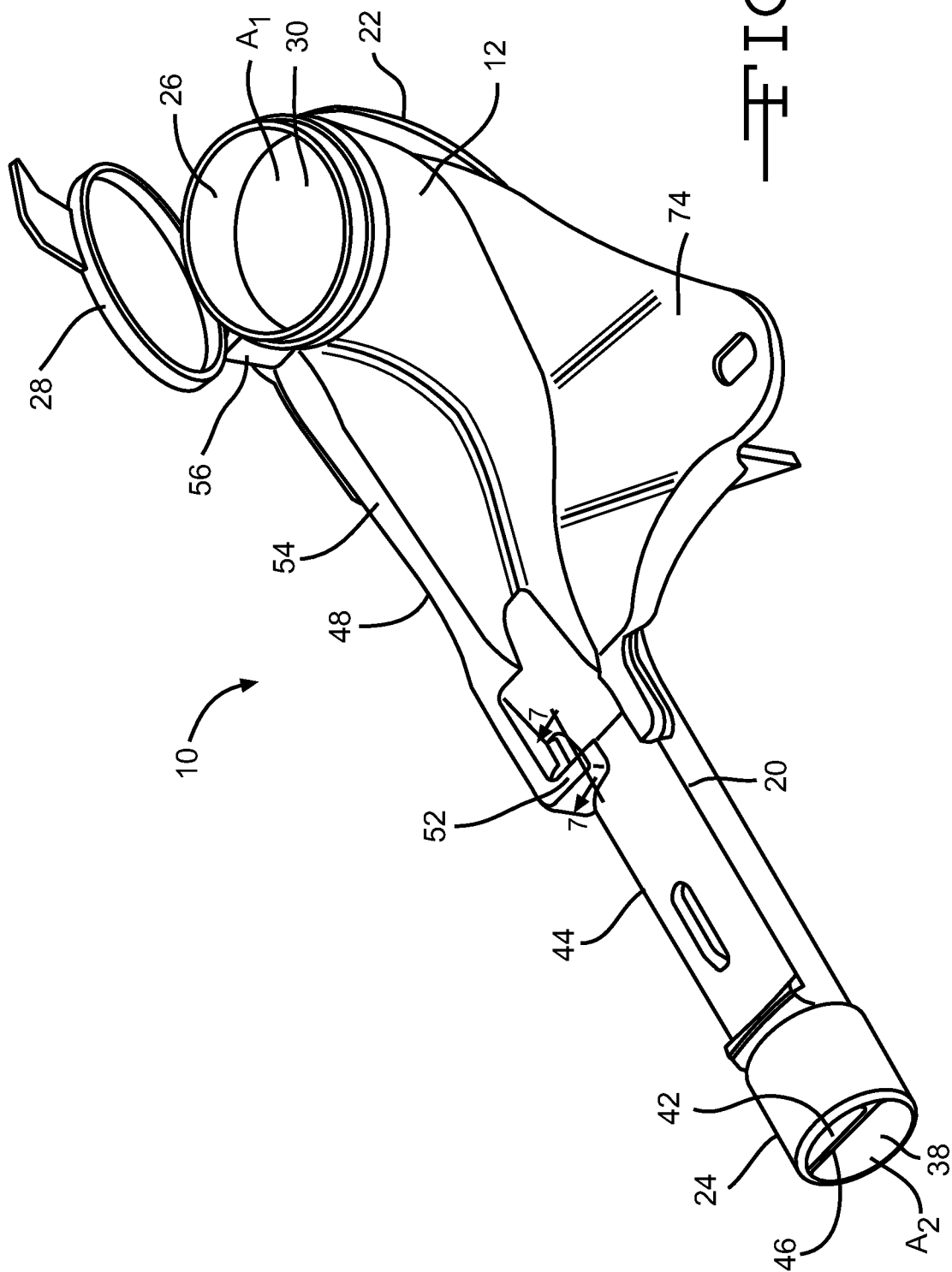
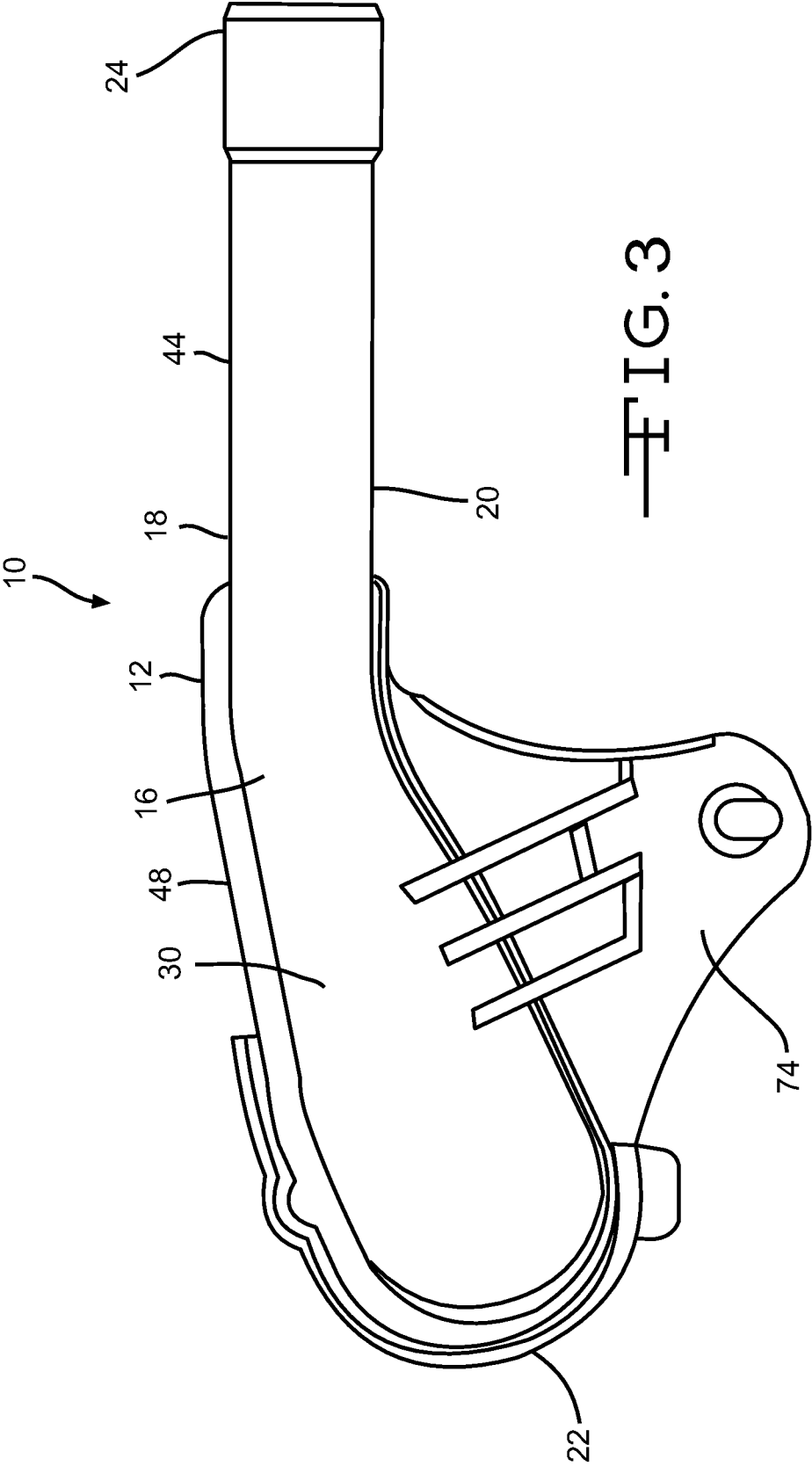


FIG. 1





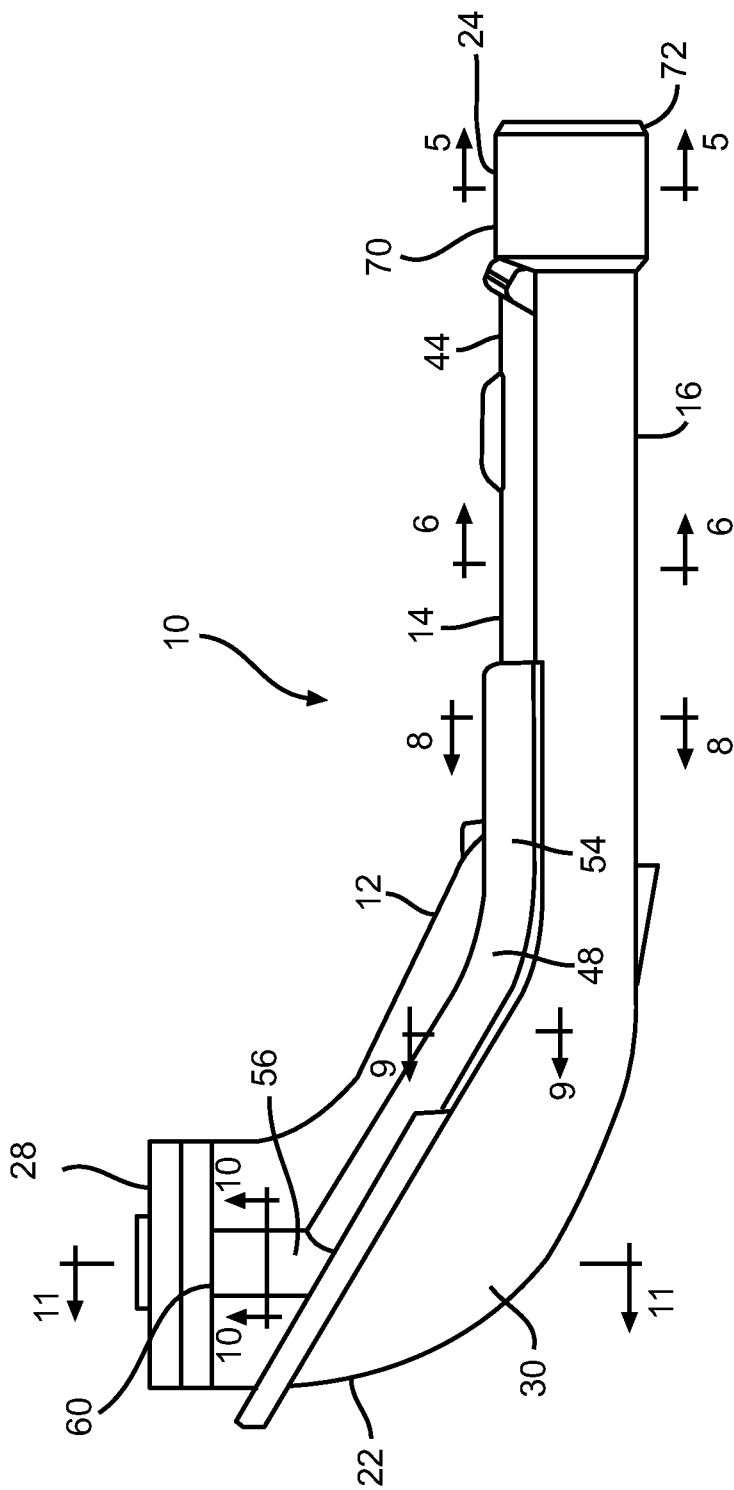


FIG. 4

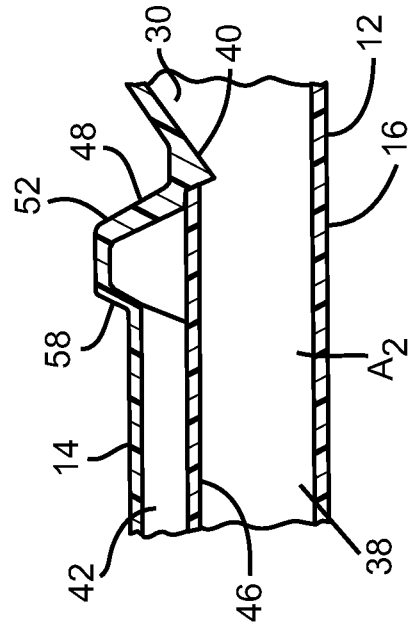


FIG. 5

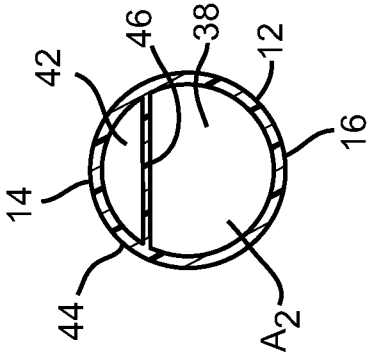


FIG. 6

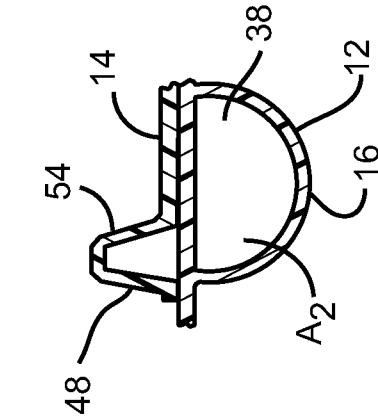


FIG. 7

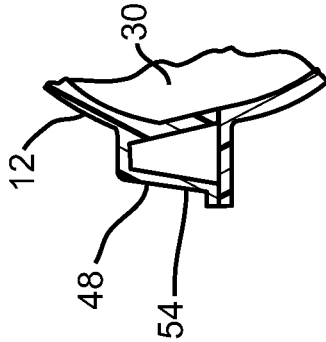


FIG. 8

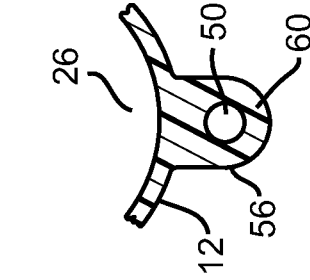


FIG. 9

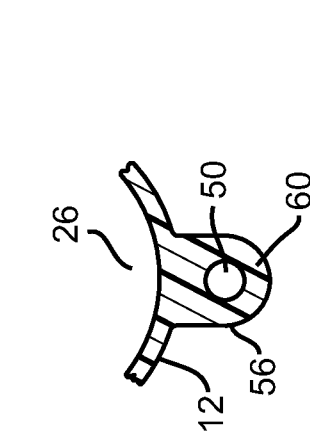


FIG. 10

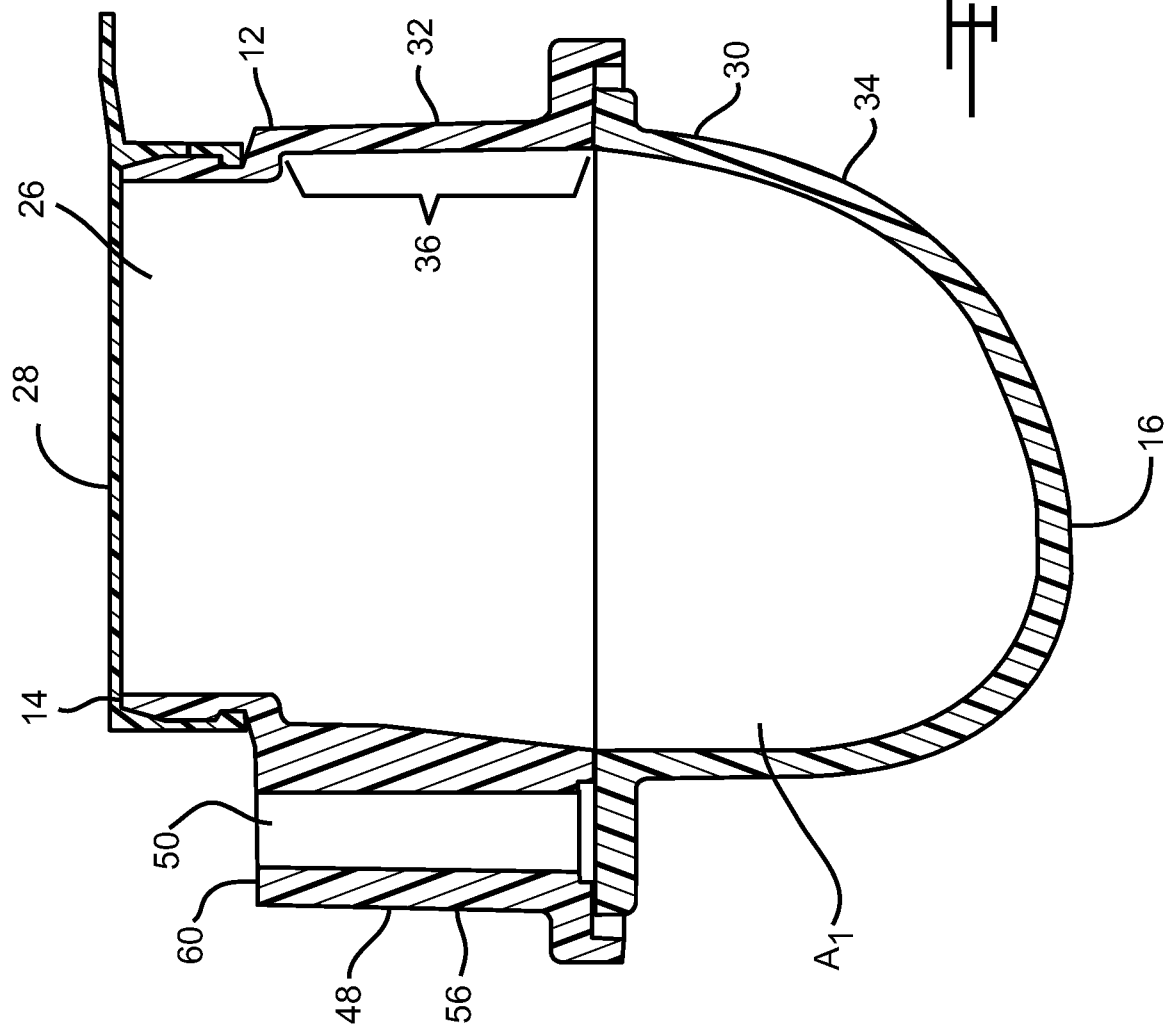
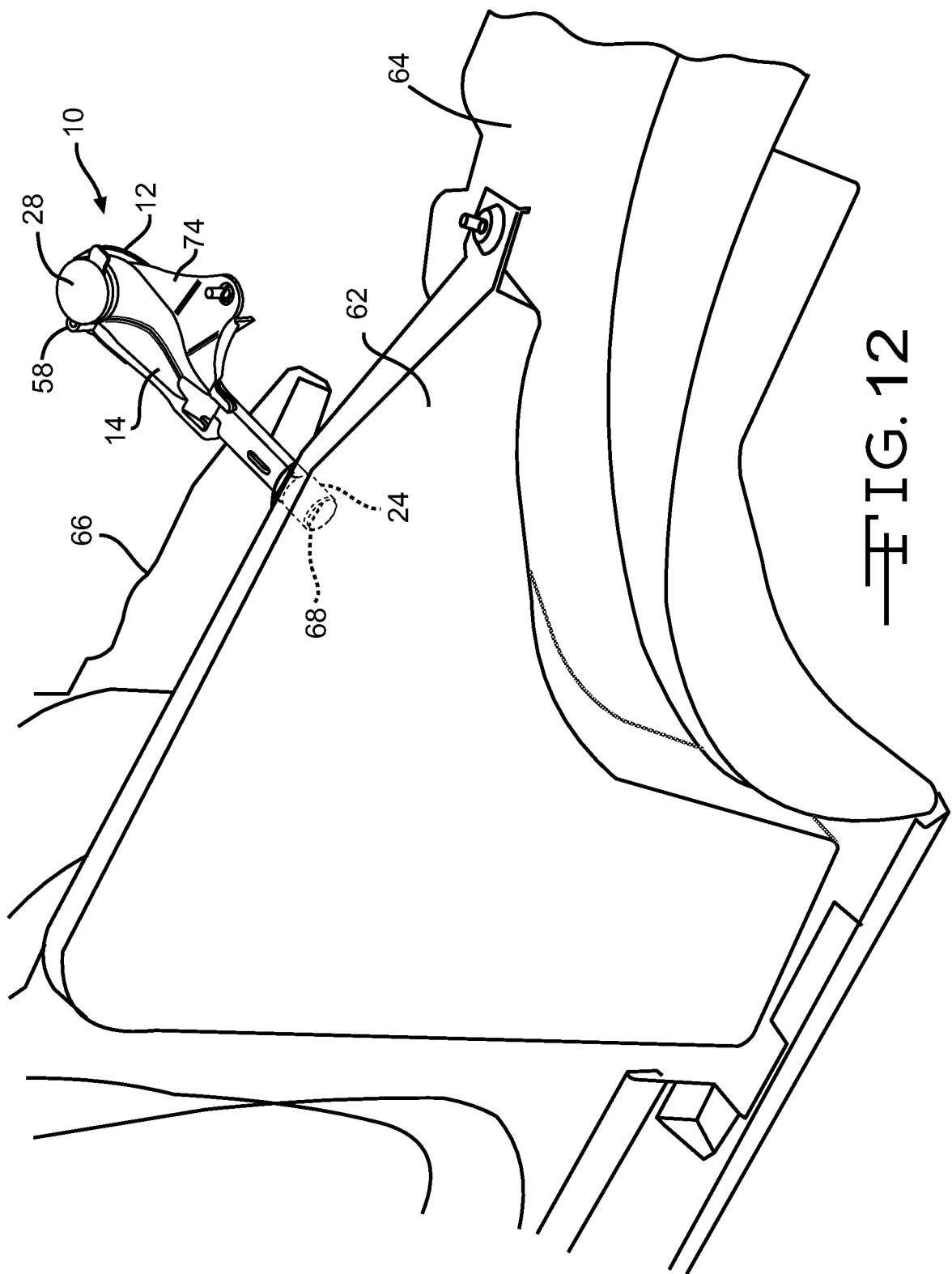


FIG. 11



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - B65B 39/04 (2012.01)

USPC - 141/285

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(8) - B65B 39/04 (2012.01)

USPC - 141/285-286, 325-327, 350; 220/86.2, 86.3, 746

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 practicable, search terms used)

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C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 7,017,629 B2 (WINTERLING) 28 March 2006 (28.03.2006) entire document	1-20
Y	US 7,721,774 B2 (COOK et al) 25 May 2010 (25.05.2010) entire document	1-20
Y	US 6,508,275 B1 (SADR et al) 21 January 2003 (21.01.2003) entire document	6
Y	US 5,000,333 A (PETRELLI) 19 March 1991 (19.03.1991) entire document	18



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Date of the actual completion of the international search

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Date of mailing of the international search report

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