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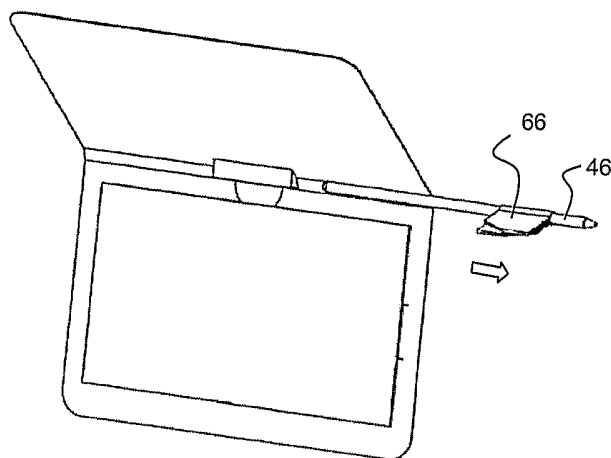
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(54) Title: POCKETABLE NOTE HOLDER WITH WRITING INSTRUMENT



(57) Abstract: A pocketable device includes a body preferably made from a single piece of thin material which holds a notepad 48 and writing instrument 46. Slits or cutouts at appropriate locations on the body create a writing instrument receptacle 32 and tabs 56 and 57 for removing the device from a small space such as a credit card slot in a wallet. Gripping tabs 66 on a small writing instrument provide a hard stop for instrument storage, a handle for instrument insertion and removal, and more surface area for a better grasp on the instrument by the user during writing. This abstract description is not intended to be a complete description of, or limit the scope of, the invention.

POCKETABLE NOTE HOLDER WITH WRITING INSTRUMENT

PRIORITY CLAIM

5 This application claims priority to the following applications:

U.S. Patent Application No. 11/074,624 entitled POCKETABLE NOTE
HOLDER WITH WRITING INSTRUMENT, by Alan C. Regala, filed March 8, 2005
(Attorney Docket No. ALAN-01000US0); and

10 U.S. Patent Application No. 11/120,021 entitled POCKETABLE WRITING
INSTRUMENT, by Alan C. Regala, filed May 2, 2005 (Attorney Docket No. ALAN-
010001US0).

FIELD OF INVENTION

15 This invention relates to notepad holders, to notepad holders including writing
instruments, and to writing instruments.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

20 People often find the need to capture random thoughts throughout the day,
wherever they may be. Without an appropriate capturing device at their disposal,
these thoughts can be forgotten or remembered too late.

The simplest solution to this unfulfilled need of on-the-go note taking combines a
notepad and a writing instrument in one convenient package. Examples of prior art
include paper-holding pens such as U.S. patents 4,872,775 to Chang (1989),
4,963,048 to Thomas et al. (1990), and 6,247,864 to Walsh (2001).

25 Each of these references discloses a conventional-sized pen, approximately 6
inches in length, which contain a roll of note papers within the body of the pen. Two
distinct disadvantages of this type of solution are 1) not having an included surface
onto which one can lay the note and write and 2) having to carry a standard-sized pen,
which is not convenient in some circumstances.

30 Different types of notepad holders with writing instruments have been
proposed, but each has its limitations. Two examples of prior art include U.S. patents
4,391,457 (1983) to Gassner and 6,554,519 to Kaplan (2003). Gassner's invention
contains a notepad within a flexible folded holder, and the writing instrument is
attached by means of a pen clip to the outside edge of the holder. Kaplan's invention

contains several plastic components, which make up a rigid notepad case with an integrated pen. Both of these designs suffer from a number of disadvantages:

5 a) Both devices are somewhat bulky. If one were to store either one of these in his pocket, the large size would compete for pocket space with other items such as a phone, wallet, and keys. Similarly, either device would consume a large amount of real estate in a purse or bag. Neither design lends itself to being thin enough to fit into small spaces, such as the credit card sleeve of a wallet.

10 b) Both housings contain multiple components, including plastic parts. The materials and number of components make the manufacturing of these devices relatively expensive.

15 c) In Kaplan's design, the integrated pen is not conducive to being user-friendly. In order to write a note, one must first remove a note (or entire notepad) from the device and grip the entire case in one's hand to use the pen. Not only is writing awkward and unintuitive, but one cannot use the case as a writing surface concurrently because the case is rigidly attached to the pen.

Another example of prior art is U.S. patent 5,769,213 (1998) to Chatterton. This device is comprised of a rigid plastic credit card-sized holder, which holds a small custom pen. This invention has several distinct disadvantages:

20 a) The device is made of plastic, which requires expensive capital tooling, and the material cost is high compared to that of paper.

b) The device needs adequate wall thickness, about 0.040", to maintain a rigid form. This increases the overall thickness of the device, especially around the pen. In contrast, sturdy paper is as thin as 0.010".

25 c) The rigidity of such a device in a wallet sleeve would make the entire wallet more rigid. Since many wallet-carrying people, particularly males, hold their wallets in a pants pocket, the wallet would be less likely to deform and adapt to varying loads (i.e. sitting on it in a back pocket), making it uncomfortable.

30 d) The printable space on the device is limited. Since the pen receptacle protrudes from the base section, it is more difficult and expensive to print on the surface of this base section.

Accordingly, it would be advantageous to provide a notepad holder with writing instrument which is practical and convenient, which is easily stored in a pocket, purse, wallet, or other small space, which is simple and easy to use, which is inexpensive to manufacture, and which will present a large surface for the reception

of graphics, including company logos, business card information, artwork, comics, text, etc.

SUMMARY

5 In accordance with specific embodiments of the present invention, a notepad holder includes a single generally rectangular body having multiple slits and folded in such manner that a stack of note paper and a writing instrument may be contained within. Specific embodiments of the present invention are also directed to the writing instrument, which can be held within the notepad holder, where the writing instrument
10 is small in diameter but still comfortable to use due to stabilizing tabs on the shaft of the instrument. Specific embodiments of the present invention are also directed to a notepad holder without a writing instrument therein.

This description is not intended to be a complete description of, or limit the scope of, the invention. Other features, aspects, and objects of the invention can be
15 obtained from a review of the specification, the figures, and the claims.

DRAWING FIGURES

In the drawings, closely related figures have the same number but different alphabetic suffixes. The distinctions between figures with different alphabetic
20 suffixes are readily understandable.

Figs. 1A to 1H show a basic embodiment of the present invention, containing a single body with slits or cutouts and multiple fold lines which create a notepad holder and a writing instrument receptacle.

Figs. 2A to 2C show a further embodiment of the present invention, containing
25 a single body with multiple slits or cutouts and fold lines which create a notepad holder, a writing instrument receptacle, and a closure mechanism.

Figs. 3A to 3C show a further embodiment of the present invention, containing a single body with multiple slits or cutouts and fold lines which create a notepad holder, a writing instrument receptacle, two device pull tabs, and a writing instrument
30 with dual grip tab.

Figs. 3D to 3G show the operation of the embodiment of Figs. 3A to 3C, specifically the device pull tabs.

Figs. 3H and 3J show the operation of the embodiment of Figs. 3A to 3C, specifically removal of the writing instrument.

Figs. 4A to 4B show the primary grip with a standard pen.

Figs. 5A to 5B show a small diameter writing instrument and associated holding technique.

5 Figs. 6A to 6D show a small diameter writing instrument with single tab grip and associated holding technique, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Figs. 7A to 7G show a small diameter writing instrument with dual tab grip and associated holding technique, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

10 Figs. 8A to 8D show a small diameter writing instrument with triple tab grip and associated holding technique, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Figs. 9A to 9B show an alternate gripping method with comfort nub.

15 Figs. 10A to 10D show a small diameter writing instrument with a finger loop grip and associated holding technique.

Figs. 11A to 11C show another embodiment of the present invention, which contains a device closure including collinear loops interlocking with the writing instrument.

20 Figs. 12A to 12B show still another embodiment of the present invention, containing a holder for flat objects like business cards.

DRAWINGS—REFERENCE NUMERALS

basic note device	
22 pre-formed device body	68 tab grip notch
24 top portion of device body	69 triple tab grip
25 top inner surface	70 finger loop grip
26 top outer surface	71 adhesive
28 bottom portion of device body	72 strip of material
29 bottom inner surface	73 hand
30 bottom outer surface	74 standard pen
32 instrument receptacle	76 note device with interlocking loop closure
33 separate material for receptacle	78 upper body loop
34 receptacle slits	80 lower body loop
35 receptacle cutouts	82 note device with business card holder
36 pull tab slit 1	84 business card
37 pull tab slit 2	86 card holder tab
38 female closure slit	88 card holder slits
40 male closure slit	
42 main hinge	
43 pocket fold line	
44 receptacle fold lines	
45 pocket	
46 writing instrument	
47 comfort nub	
48 note paper	
49 air hole	
50 note device with closure	
52 pre-formed device body with closure	
54 closure tab	
56 device pull tab 1	
57 device pull tab 2	
58 single tab grip	
59 wallet	
60 credit card slot	
61 note device with dual hinge and pull tabs	
62 pre-formed device body with dual hinge and pull tabs	
63 upper main hinge	
64 lower main hinge	
65 pull tab 2 hinge	
66 dual tab grip	
67 molded dual tab grip	

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

FIGS. 1A - 1C:

In accordance with an embodiment of the invention, a device body 22 is made of a single sheet material (e.g., paper or thin plastic), as shown in its pre-formed state in Fig. 1C. The body 22 preferably is generally rectangular with a lateral fold line 42 (approximately across the center) that separates a top portion 24 from a bottom portion 28 of the device, with each portion having a respective inner surface (25, 29) and outer surface (26, 30). In accordance with a preferred embodiment, when the device is folded, and thus in a closed position, (Fig. 1B), it is approximately the size of a credit card (about 3 3/8" x 2 1/8 "). The term "generally rectangular", as used herein, is meant to encompass a body that includes one or more rounded corner, as shown, e.g., in the Figs. 1C and 1H, as well a body where opposing edges are generally parallel to one another, but need not be exactly parallel.

Two slits 34 are formed across the main fold line 42, which is the device hinge. In accordance with an embodiment, the two slits 34 are generally parallel to one another and perpendicular to the device hinge 42. These slits 34 are made across the fold line such that when the top and bottom portions of the body, 24 and 28, are folded together, and the slit region 32 is urged into the encased region (in a direction opposite the hinge 42), three additional fold lines 44 are created between the slits. The region or portion 32 between the slits then becomes a receptacle for holding such articles as writing instruments, toothpicks, and any other relatively thin and elongated member, as shown, e.g., in Fig. 1A. The slits 34 may also be other than a straight line, provided the end points of each slit crosses the main hinge line, as shown with two curves, e.g., in Fig. 1E. A minimum of two slits is required to create one receptacle; however, multiple receptacles can be created with multiple pairs of slits if so desired. For instance, two shorter receptacles separated by a distance may be created rather than one long receptacle. The multiple receptacles can be used for holding more than one article, or for holding a single article at more than one location along the article.

Alternatively, as shown in Fig. 1F, two small sections 35 (i.e., cutouts 35) may be cut out to form the receptacle region 32, provided the cut crosses the main hinge line. Two advantages to the triangular cutouts 35 shown are 1) easier insertion of elongated member due to the tapered holes and 2) easier visual recognition of the

receptacle ends. It is also possible to form the receptacle region 32 between a slit 34 and a cutout 35.

In an alternative embodiment, it is also possible to affix a separate piece of material 33 to the body 22 to obtain a similar shaped receptacle feature, as shown in Fig. 1D. However, such an embodiment is less cost effective from both a material and manufacturing standpoint.

Referring again to Fig. 1A, the formed device 20 may be equipped with a notepad 48 on the bottom inner surface 29. It may also be positioned on the top inner surface 25. In accordance with an embodiment, the notepad is generally rectangular in order to maximize the writing area. Various types of notepads may be used, including pressure-sensitive adhesive notes, glue-top notes, and perforated notes. The notepad can be affixed directly to the device body by several methods, including permanent adhesive, pressure-sensitive adhesive, heat bonding, stapling, etc. In accordance with a specific embodiment, the device body could have an extra fold line 43 which creates an integrated pocket 45 (see Figs. 1G and 1H) to hold notes or other flat items. Since the device may be manufactured cheaply and sold to consumers inexpensively, it is also feasible that no note papers are attached, and the user writes directly on a surface (e.g., surface 25 and/or 29) of the device.

The formed device may also be equipped with a writing instrument 46, which can be secured in the formed receptacle 32. The writing instrument 46 is generally elongated and preferably cylindrical (and preferably no greater than approximately 0.125" in diameter), and its axis resides alongside the main hinge line 42 of the device. The total length of the instrument 46 preferably does not exceed the length of the device along the main hinge line so it remains protected within the device. In the case of a pencil or ball point pen without a cap, the tip should be positioned within the device to prevent the tip from possibly contacting an external surface and inadvertently writing on it. The instrument is preferably thin enough such that the device with the instrument therein is easy to carry in small places like a wallet, pocket, or purse. However, during the act of writing, it is desirable that the instrument is also comfortable. These two comments will be discussed in further detail below.

The top outer surface 26 (Fig. 1B) and bottom outer surface 30 (Fig. 3B) preferably have large areas for containing graphics such as artwork, company logos, comics, cartoon characters, photographs, calendars, business card information, etc.

To efficiently and cost effectively accommodate high volumes in manufacturing, these graphics can be printed directly on the material before the cutting and slitting operations occur. This can be done inexpensively through existing printing processes. In contrast, smaller volumes may be assembled with graphics printed on adhesive-backed paper. The outer surfaces may also be sold blank so that the user can customize the cover himself. For example, children may draw on it or add stickers of their choice. The top inner surface 25 (Fig. 1A) also has a large area for containing graphics, for which the previous statements apply. In the scenario in which one desires to save a used note from the notepad, this area may also be used as a note storage area (assuming the notes have pressure-sensitive adhesive backing). The bottom inner surface 29 (Fig. 1A) may mostly be obstructed by a notepad. However, graphics may still be printed on this surface.

In the embodiment shown in Fig. 1A, the receptacle 32 created at the hinge line 42 of the device body leaves a discontinuity or void of material in the body. This is evident when viewing the device in the closed position (Fig. 1B), in which a portion of the writing instrument 46 is visible. This void in material provides the user with the ability to quickly verify the presence of the instrument, and it also provides the manufacturer with a viewable region to imprint a small graphic or text on the instrument in that region.

The closed device 20 (Fig. 1B) is preferably thin enough that it can comfortably be carried in a pocket, a purse, and even a wallet. Accordingly, the writing instrument should not be so large that the overall device becomes burdensome in the aforementioned locations. Likewise, the amount of note paper stored within should not be excessive. In accordance with an embodiment, the total thickness of the closed device should generally not exceed 0.150" in the notepad region when considering this device for storage in the wallet, as this is approximately the thickness of 3 credit cards back-to-back.

FIGS. 2A - 2C:

The embodiment of the present invention shown in Fig. 2A is similar to that of Fig. 1A, except that the preformed body 50 has additional slits 38 and 40.

A closure mechanism is desirable in order to keep the device as slim and organized as possible, especially when the device is being carried loosely within a pocket or bag. A closed device will also apply more pressure around the writing

instrument, thus increasing the coefficient of friction and preventing the instrument from inadvertently sliding out of the device. Without a closure method, top and bottom portions of an unused device may tend to open up due to the writing instrument placed closely to the hinge line, the stack of note papers, and the inherent elastic properties of the body.

Referring to Figs. 2A-2C, in this embodiment, a male tab 54 is inserted into slit 38 to keep the device in a closed orientation (Fig. 2B) when so desired. A cross-section of this closure feature is shown in Fig. 2C. The male tab is created by two slits 40 in the upper portion of the body, generally perpendicular to the main hinge line 42, but preferably slightly angled such that the tab is trapezoidal in shape with the short base on the outer edge of the body and the long base as the tab's pivot point. In accordance with an embodiment, the width of the tab 54 (or distance between slits) is about 0.6" to 1", and the height of the tab (perpendicular from trapezoidal base to base) is about 0.15" to 0.40". The tab is preferably large enough to use easily but not so large that it detracts from the aesthetics of the device. In accordance with an embodiment, slit 38 is generally parallel to the main hinge line 42 and located on the lower portion of the body such that the male tab 54 aligns appropriately and can be easily inserted. The length of the closure slit should be equal to or greater than the width of the male tab. Positioning the slit too close to the edge will result in weak points in the body which may tear, and positioning it too far from the edge will detract from the amount of useable note space within the device. In accordance with an embodiment, the closure slit is positioned about 0.15" to 0.40" from the bottom edge of the body.

FIGS. 3A-3E:

The embodiment of the present invention shown in Fig. 3A is similar to that of Fig. 1A, except that the pre-formed body 62 has additional slits 36 and 37 and two main hinge fold lines 63 and 64.

To decrease the resistance of the body to closing due to interference with the instrument, the main hinge section of the body may be formed with two fold lines, 63 and 64, such that the inner surface of the formed body does not contact the outer surface of the writing instrument when the device is closed (Figs. 3B). Since the top portion 24 no longer contacts the instrument in the closed position and the resistance to closure is minimized, there is less need for an additional closure mechanism. The

aforementioned details of creating the instrument receptacle 32 apply to this embodiment, provided the slits or cut-outs cross one or both fold lines 63 and 64.

In specific embodiments, the device also contains a writing instrument which has a minimum of one thin tab protruding radially from the shaft. Fig. 3A shows the preferred embodiment of the dual tab grip 66. The tab grip performs three functional tasks: it provides an axial stop for the instrument such that it can be repeatedly placed in the same position within the holder (preventing instrument protrusion from the device); it allows the user to easily insert and remove the instrument from the receptacle, whereas this action might otherwise be awkward with a small elongate object; and it also provides the user with additional surface area with which to grip the instrument during writing. This tab feature can be made in a variety of ways, including: it is injection molded as part of the instrument body, either as a single shot or overmolded; a separate injection molded part is adhered, pressed, or heat bonded to the shaft of the instrument; extruded plastic is adhered, pressed, or heat bonded to the shaft of the instrument; a thin sheet of material (e.g., paper or plastic) is folded and adhered or heat bonded to the shaft of the instrument. These processes may be used to create one or more tabs on a single instrument.

As shown in Figs. 3B-3E, a slit 36 centered on the lower receptacle fold line 44 midway between the receptacle slits 34 (e.g., with a radius of about 0.25") creates a pull tab 56, which can be pivoted about its fold line 44. More specifically, in the embodiment shown in Fig. 3C, the pull tab 56 is formed by a continuous slit that starts at one of the fold lines 44, extends away from the fold line and into one of the top and bottom portions 24 and 28, and returns to the fold line 44 a distance apart from where the continuous slit starts. This tab can be used to remove the device from a narrow slot in which the device is stored, such as that from the credit card slot 60 of a wallet 59 (Fig. 3F) in which the slot is open lengthwise. If the device shares a credit card slot with one or more credit cards or the like, this pull tab is convenient for easily identifying and removing the device. The slit defining the tab need not be confined to a semi-circle on the receptacle fold line, as any continuous slit with endpoints which create a fold line generally parallel to the main hinge fold line 42 will work. For further examples the pull tab can be semi-oval, rectangular or triangular, but is not limited thereto. The fold line of the pull tab may be located anywhere on the top or bottom (preferably) portions 24 and 28 of the main body, as long as the resulting pull tab in its folded position extends beyond the perimeter of the closed device. For

example, in one embodiment, the pull tab is formed by a continuous slit that starts at the main hinge 42, extends away from the main hinge and into one of the top and bottom portions 24 and 28, and returns to the main hinge 42 a distance apart from where the continuous slit starts.

5 In the case of a wallet with a credit card slot 60 oriented widthwise (Fig. 3G), an additional pull tab 57 is created by slit 37 (Figs. 3C and 3E). The tab is composed of a continuous slit whose beginning and end points create a hinge 65 perpendicular to the main hinge lines 63 and 64. The length of the tab is such that it protrudes beyond the envelope of the device when extended. Both tabs 56 and 57 can be perforated
10 such that the user can pull out the appropriate tab corresponding to their wallet, or if the device is to be stored loosely in a purse or pocket, the user need not extend either tab.

In another embodiment (not specifically shown), the pull tab 57 can be formed directly from the die-cutting process, such that the tab 57 is not a slit in the body but
15 rather a protrusion from the nominally rectangular body shape. This protrusion would eliminate the need for the user to fold out the tab because the tab is inherently extended beyond the device envelope, but it may cost more to manufacture due to extra scrap material. Further, where a credit card slot is oriented lengthwise (Fig. 3F), it may be necessary to fold over such a die-cut tab 57 to enable the device to fit within
20 the slot.

FIGS. 3H and 3J:

Fig. 3H shows that the dual tab grip 66 can be used to facilitate the removal of the writing instrument 46. With the device in the closed configuration, the tabs lie flat within, and generally parallel to, the notepad. Once the top portion of the body is
25 lifted to open the device, the grip 66 is accessible. The user can rotate the grip upward such that it can be grasped easily (Fig. 3H), normally with index finger and opposing thumb. The instrument 46 can then be removed from the receptacle by simply sliding the gripping tab 66 and instrument unit 46 outward along the axis of
30 the receptacle, as shown in Fig. 3J. Inserting the instrument into the device can be easily accomplished by reversing the aforementioned steps. The proximal, or non-writing, end of the instrument is rounded to allow easy insertion of the instrument into the receptacle. Fig 3H shows the rounded end as a comfort nub 47 inserted into the end of the writing instrument. The nub may be injection molded or extruded and

turned plastic. In the case of a ball point pen barrel, the nub has a small hole 49 through it allowing the passage of air into the ink chamber (Fig. 9B). This comfort nub 47 also provides benefits to the user during writing, as described in the following section.

5

FIGS. 4A - 9D:

The gripping technique for holding pens and pencils that is currently taught in most schools is known as the primary grip. This is done by relaxing the hand, joining the tips of the thumb and middle finger, laying the shaft of the instrument in the cleft
10 between, and finally laying the index finger on top of the instrument. The resulting grip is depicted in Figs. 4A (side view) and 4B (a view looking directly into the long axis of the instrument with a standard-sized pen 74). There are four main points of contact with this grip: one at each of the three digits, near the tip of the instrument, and one adjacent to the first knuckle of the index finger, where the mid-section the
15 instrument typically resides.

In the basic embodiment of Fig. 1A, a small diameter instrument 46 can be gripped using the primary grip (Fig. 5B). One's grasp on this straight shaft (Fig. 5A) is inherently less stable than that on a larger diameter shaft because the three digits are in contact with each other in addition to contacting the instrument. Some of the
20 pressure is thereby distributed to the other fingers instead of the pen. In this embodiment, it is important that the shaft diameter is not too small, a minimum of about 0.090". Also, the shaft should be relatively stiff so it does not flex between the fingers and the proximal contact point in the users hand while he is writing. This flexure reduces comfort and control. Good material choices include extruded metal
25 and rigid plastics. Extruded non-rigid plastic with stiffening ribs will also work. The shaft is preferably cylindrical, much like a regular pen or a regular pencil (made up a multiple flat surfaces that from a cylinder), and as just mentioned, due to its small diameter may include stiffening ribs or the like to increase the rigidity of the instrument 46.

30 In the embodiment of Fig. 3A, the small diameter instrument 46 contains a grip with a minimum of one tab. As previously mentioned, the grip provides a stop during insertion; it allows easier instrument insertion into and removal from the device; and it also affords the user a better grasp on the instrument. As shown in Fig. 6A, the single tab 58 offers more surface area (compared to no tab) which the user can

grasp typically between his thumb and index finger or between his thumb and middle finger (normally, little pressure is applied directly between the index and middle fingers). The tab 58 preferably protrudes radially at least 3/8th of an inch from the shaft of the writing instrument 46, to thereby provide a substantial surface area. The surface area of the tab transfers pressure from the fingers to the instrument, whereas with the same small diameter shaft and no tab, some of that pressure would be transferred to adjacent fingers. Thus, the diameter of the instrument with a tab grip 58 can be smaller than an instrument without one. Not only does the tab increase comfort and control, but it allows a smaller diameter instrument to be carried in the device, making the overall device more pocketable.

Similarly, the user can gain even more control of the instrument with a dual tab grip 66 as shown in Fig. 7A. More pressure is transferred from the fingers to the instrument via the enlarged surface area in contact with the digits and less finger-to-finger contact. As shown in Figs. 7F and 7G, there are a variety of ways in which the instrument can be held: with tabs between the index finger and thumb and between the thumb and middle finger (Fig. 7F); with tabs between the middle and index fingers and between the index finger and thumb (Fig. 7G); both tabs can be folded together to resemble a single tab (Fig. 7C) so that grips of Figs. 6C and 6D can also be used. The two tabs are flexible and conform to the desired grip. When the instrument is stored in the note device, the tabs can be folded together to aid in insertion (Figs. 7C), and once the instrument is in place, closing the device will naturally deflect and orient the tabs. In accordance with an embodiment, the dual tab grip can be made with a generally rectangular strip of adhesive-backed paper or plastic approximately 1.5" long by 0.5" wide by 0.004" to 0.010" thick; the strip is folded generally lengthwise in half; the inner surfaces are adhered together with the instrument positioned perpendicularly and centered therein. See Fig. 7B for an enlarged cross-sectional view. The dual tab grip may also be injection molded or extruded from plastic. The tabs may have living hinges, at the base of each tab, which allow for greater flexibility.

If the tabs remain folded (Fig. 7C) in the closed note holder device for an extended period of time, they may have a tendency to remain folded together when removed from the device. Tab notches 68, as shown in Figs. 7D and 7E, allow the user to easily separate the tabs if so desired.

As shown in Fig. 8A, yet another tab can be added to create a triple tab grip 69. This grip provides surface area between each of the three digits involved in the primary grip, as seen in Fig. 8D, such that little or no contact is made between the digits, and the transfer of pressure from the hand to the instrument is most efficient.

5 One of the tabs can be folded alongside the instrument axis such that it rests alongside a neighboring tab, allowing the grip to be held in any of the dual tab configurations (Figs. 7F and 7G). Similarly, all three tabs can be folded together (Fig. 8C), allowing the grip to be held in any of the single tab configurations (Figs. 6C and 6D); this is how the instrument would be stored in the note device. The triple tab grip may be the
10 most comfortable and versatile grip, but there is a greater tendency for the tabs to open up, making it more difficult for the device to remain in the closed position. One method of manufacture is starting with a generally rectangular strip of adhesive-backed paper or plastic approximately 2.25" long by 0.5" wide by 0.004" to 0.010" thick; with the adhesive side facing up, the instrument is placed on top
15 perpendicularly and centered; the two strip ends are folded back onto the main strip and on the instrument such that the two fold lines are each at about 1/3 the total length from the center- this completes two tabs; the final tab is created by two more fold lines where the remaining material meets at the instrument and the material is adhered together (Fig. 8B).

20 FIGS. 9A – 9B:

Any of the small writing instruments mentioned above can be held with the primary grip such that the proximal end of the instrument contacts the area on the side of the hand adjacent to the first knuckle of the index finger knuckle, similar to the grip
25 in Fig. 4A. In order to better facilitate this grip, the shaft of the instrument may be composed of two or more concentric tubes which telescope to provide a longer effective shaft, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

The instrument can also be held such that the proximal tip of the shaft rests inside the hand, pressing axially along the length of the shaft against the hand just underneath the index finger, as shown in Fig. 9A (shown with dual tab grip). This
30 technique of holding provides an additional element of stability. This proximal end may be treated such that it is more comfortable when held in this position. In an embodiment of Fig. 3A, the instrument contains a comfort nub 47 (Fig. 9B), a soft plastic plug which is rounded and smooth. Additional treatments include attaching a

soft and/or elastic material such as rubber or felt and enlarging the surface area to distribute the force to the hand.

FIGS. 10A – 10C:

5 As shown in Fig. 10A, another type of grip can be made that includes a loop of material 70 inside which a finger is inserted. Fig. 10D shows the holding technique with the index finger within the loop. This loop 70 provides additional writing control to the user by increasing contact surface area between the instrument and fingers as well as by securely fitting the loop onto the finger, which decreases the squeezing force required by the remaining fingers. Fig. 10C shows a cross section of
10 the loop 70 as made by a single strip of material. Fig. 10B shows the loop flattened such that it can be compactly stored in the note holder.

FIGS. 11A - 11C:

15 In accordance with embodiment of the present invention, alternative types of closure mechanisms are used. These include variations of the male tab and slit configuration (Fig. 2A). Additionally, a matchbook style closure (not shown) would work- a narrow section of the bottom portion of the device is folded inward and stapled or adhered such that the top portion of the device can be inserted and held in
20 the gap created. Another closure mechanism is achieved by applying a pressure-sensitive adhesive to the inner top and/or bottom portion of the body near the periphery.

 Figs. 11A-11C illustrate yet another closure. This one uses the writing instrument as a lock which holds the top and bottom portions together. A loop 78 is
25 created at the top edge of the body by folding and adhering an extended tab. One or more loops 80 are created in a similar manner at the opposing edge of the body. The device open position is shown in Fig. 11A. When the top and bottom portions of the body are brought together to close the device, the loops 78 and 80 become collinear (Fig. 11B). A writing instrument 46 can be inserted through the loops such that the
30 writing instrument prevents separation of the loops from the instrument axis (Fig. 11C).

FIGS. 12A - 12B:

In another embodiment, the device in Fig. 12A is similar to Fig. 1A but contains features which allow the device to hold additional flat items within, such as a business card 84 (Fig. 12B). To accommodate a business card, the body is slightly wider and longer than that of Fig. 1C since business cards are typically longer than credit cards. The standard card measures 3.5" by 2", so the closed device would measure approximately 3.6" by 2.5". The business card can also be held on an exterior surface of the device. The card is held in place by tabs created 86 from two semi-circular slits 88, about 0.25" radius, in the upper portion of the body 24. The slits are oriented such that they are generally centered laterally within the device, and the tabs created oppose each other in a direction along the length of the preformed body. The distance between the tabs is slightly longer than the narrow dimension of the object being held- for a business card, about 2.1". The tabs can be lifted out of the plane of the body toward the inner or outer surface of the top portion of the body such that the object can be inserted between the tabs and the surface of the body. The tabs do not need to be semi-circular in shape since many shapes will work, provided that there is sufficient overlap of the tabs onto the held object and there is sufficient material adjoining the tab and body for adequate stiffness. There may also be more than two tabs used to secure the object.

A generally rectangular object can also be held by slits made in the device body at two diagonal corners of the object. One set of diagonal corners of a business card can slide through the slits. Additional slits at the remaining corners may be made for a more secure fit. In this embodiment the body of the device should be larger to accommodate the slits and extra material which prevents the slits from tearing through to the body edge.

From the description above, a number of advantages of the aforementioned note devices become evident:

- a) The main body, which may contain a notepad and writing instrument and may have additional features for closure and holding other items such as business cards, may be made of a single part.
- b) The main body is simple, cheap, and easy to manufacture.
- c) There is ample room for graphics on all surfaces, which can be applied inexpensively through existing printing processes. The device can be

graphically treated such that it resembles more of an accessory than it does a standard office supply.

d) The device can fit easily into a pocket, purse, and even the credit card slot in a wallet. The integrated pull tabs allow the device to be easily identified and removed from a wallet.

e) The device is simple and intuitive to use.

f) The writing instrument is small enough to fit easily into tight spaces such as a wallet, yet the gripping tab features allow the user to have a comfortable writing experience.

g) The main body can be made completely of recyclable and renewable materials (i.e. paper).

Although the description above contains many specifications, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention but as merely providing illustrations of some of the presently preferred embodiments of this invention. It should be apparent to those skilled in the art that my invention may be modified in arrangement and detail without departing from the principles outlined. I claim as my invention all such modifications as come within the true spirit and scope of the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A note holder, comprising:
 - a bottom portion that includes a bottom inner surface and a bottom outer surface;
 - a top portion that includes a top inner surface and a top outer surface;
 - a hinge that separates said bottom portion and said top portion;
 - an instrument receptacle formed by a loop capable of holding an instrument generally adjacent an inner surface of said hinge; and
 - a writing instrument that fits within said instrument receptacle, wherein said writing instrument has a length that does not exceed a length of said hinge so that said writing instrument remains protected within the note holder when the note holder is closedwherein the note holder when in a closed position is about the size of a standard credit card, thereby allowing the note holder, with said writing instrument within said instrument receptacle, to fit within a credit card slot of a wallet.
2. The note holder of claim 1, further comprising:
 - at least one sheet of note paper affixed to at least one of said inner bottom surface and said inner top surface.
3. The note holder of claim 1, further comprising:
 - a pull tab that extends from the note holder when the note holder is closed,
 - wherein said pull tab is to assist a user with pulling the note holder out of a slot of a wallet.
4. The note holder of claim 3, wherein said top and bottom portions, said hinge, said instrument receptacle and said pull tab are made from a single sheet of material.
5. The note holder of claim 3, wherein said pull tab is formed by a continuous slit into one of said bottom and top portions, such that said pull tab in an extended position protrudes beyond said hinge when the note holder is in the closed position.

6. The note holder of claim 3, wherein said pull tab is formed by a continuous slit into one of said bottom and top portions, such that said pull tab in an extended position protrudes beyond said hinge or another edge of said bottom and top portions when the note holder is in the closed position.

7. The note holder of claim 3, wherein said pull-tab generally has one of said following shapes:

a semi-oval shape;

a semi-circular shape;

a rectangular shape; and

a triangular shape.

8. The note holder of claim 1, further comprising first and second pull tabs that extend from the note holder when the note holder is in the closed position,

wherein said first pull tab is to assist a user with removing the note holder from a wallet slot intended to hold a credit card lengthwise; and

wherein said second pull tab, which extends in a direction generally perpendicular to said first pull tab, is to assist a user with removing the note holder from a wallet slot intended to hold a credit card widthwise.

9. The note holder of claim 1, wherein said writing instrument includes at least one tab that protrudes generally radially from a shaft of said writing instrument, and wherein said tab of said writing instrument is to assist a user with both removing said writing instrument from said instrument receptacle and gripping said writing instrument during writing.

10. The note holder of claim 1, wherein:

said top and bottom portions, said hinge and said instrument receptacle are made from a single sheet of material;

said hinge is formed by a pair of parallel fold lines in said sheet of material;

said instrument receptacle is formed by a portion of said sheet of material, between a first slit or cutout in said sheet of material and a second slit or cutout in said sheet of material, that is urged in a direction opposite said hinge to thereby form a

loop capable of holding an instrument generally adjacent said inner surface of said hinge; and

each said slit or cutout extends across at least one of said fold lines.

11. A note holder, comprising:

a sheet of material;

a hinge formed by a pair of parallel fold lines in said sheet of material, said hinge separating said sheet of material into a bottom portion and a top portion;

a first slit or cutout in said sheet of material that extends across at least one of said fold lines; and

a second slit or cutout in said sheet of material that extends across said at least one of said fold lines; and

an instrument receptacle formed by a portion of said sheet of material between said first slit or cutout and said second slit or cutout that is urged in a direction opposite said hinge to thereby form a loop capable of holding an instrument generally adjacent said inner surface of said hinge;

wherein the note holder is in a closed position when folded such that inner surfaces of said bottom and top portions face one another; and

wherein the note holder is in an open position when unfolded such that inner surfaces of said bottom and top portions are exposed

12. The note holder of claim 11, wherein the note holder when in a closed position is about the size of a standard credit card, thereby allowing the note holder to fit within a credit card slot of a wallet.

13. The note holder of claim 11, further comprising:

a pull tab to assist a user with pulling the note holder out of a credit card slot of a wallet.

14. The note holder of claim 11, further comprising a writing instrument that fits within said instrument receptacle, wherein said writing instrument has a length that does not exceed a length of said main hinge so that said writing instrument remains protected within the note holder when the note holder is closed, and so the note holder

with said writing instrument within said instrument receptacle fits within a credit card slot of a wallet.

15. The note holder of claim 14, wherein said writing instrument has a diameter that is not greater than about 0.125".

16. The note holder of claim 14, wherein said writing instrument includes at least one tab that protrudes generally radially from a shaft of said writing instrument; wherein said tab is to assist a user with both removing said writing instrument from said instrument receptacle and gripping said writing instrument during writing; and wherein said tab is substantially flat such that it does not contribute to a thickness of the note holder when said writing instrument is within said instrument receptacle.

17. A note holder, comprising:

- a generally rectangular first body portion;
- a generally rectangular second body portion;
- a hinge that separates said first body portion and said second body portion;

and

- a closure mechanism including a first loop that is located adjacent an edge of said first body portion that is opposite said hinge; and a second loop that is located adjacent an edge of said second body portion that is opposite said hinge;

- wherein the note holder is in a closed position when folded such that said first and second loops are collinear; and

- wherein a writing instrument can be inserted through said first and second loops when the note holder is in the closed position, to thereby maintain the note holder in the closed position until the writing instrument is removed.

18. A writing instrument, comprising:

- a main shaft having first and second axial ends;
- a writing tip extending axially from said first axial end of said main shaft; and
- first and second tabs each protruding radially from said main shaft such that said first tab can be grasped between a thumb and index finger of a user, while said second tab can be grasped between the thumb and middle finger of the user or between the middle finger and index finger of the user;

wherein said first and second tabs are foldable toward one another such that a surface of said first tab and a surface of said second tab face one another, and such that a collective thickness of said first and second tabs when folded toward one another is less than a diameter of said main shaft.

19. The writing instrument of claim 18, wherein said first and second tabs extend radially from said main shaft at a location that is closer to said first axial end than to said second axial end.

20. The writing instrument of claim 18, wherein said first and second tabs are generally the same size.

21. The writing instrument of claim 20, wherein at least one of the first and second tabs includes a notch that is useful for separating said first and second tabs from one another after they have been folded toward one another.

22. The writing instrument of claim 18, wherein said first and second tabs are each generally planar.

23. The writing instrument of claim 18, wherein said first and second tabs comprise a flexible material so that they can conform to a user's grip.

24. The writing instrument of claim 18, wherein said second axial end of said main shaft is rounded to provide a comfortable anchor against a palm of a user.

25. The writing instrument of claim 18, further comprising:
a rounded soft nub that extends axially from said second axial end of said main shaft to provide a comfortable anchor against a palm of a user.

26. The writing instrument of claim 18, wherein said main shaft includes two concentric tubes that telescope to adjust a length of said main shaft.

27. The writing instrument of claim 26, wherein said concentric tubes telescope such that said length of said main shaft can be adjusted between a length that is less

than the length of a credit card to a length that is greater than the length of a credit card.

28. The writing instrument of claim 18, further comprising:

a third tab extending axially from said main shaft such that said third tab can be grasped between the middle finger and index finger of the user while said first tab is grasped between the thumb and index finger of the user and said second tab is grasped between the thumb and middle finger of the user.

29. The writing instrument of claim 28, wherein said first, second and third tabs can be folded toward one another such that a collective thickness of said first, second and third tabs is less than a diameter of said main shaft.

30. The writing instrument of claim 18, wherein said main shaft is generally cylindrical.

31. A writing instrument, comprising:

a main shaft having first and second axial ends;

a writing tip extending axially from said first axial end of said main shaft; and

a generally planar tab protruding in only one direction radially from said main shaft at a location along said shaft that is closer to said first axial end than said second axial end;

wherein said tab protrudes radially from said main shaft a sufficient distance such that said tab can be grasped between an index finger and thumb, or a middle finger and thumb, of a user.

32. The writing instrument of claim 31, wherein said single tab protrudes radially from said main shaft at least 3/8th of an inch.

33. The writing instrument of claim 31, wherein the diameter of the main shaft is not greater than 0.125 inches.

34. The writing instrument of claim 33, wherein said single tab has a thickness that is less than a diameter of said main shaft.

35. The writing instrument of claim 31, wherein the main shaft is generally cylindrical.

36. The writing instrument of claim 31, wherein said tab comprises a flexible material, allowing it to conform to a user's grip.

37. The writing instrument of claim 31, wherein said second axial end of said main shaft is rounded to allow a comfortable anchor against an inside of a user's hand.

38. The writing instrument of claim 31, further comprising:
a rounded soft nub that extends axially from said second axial end of said main shaft to provide a comfortable anchor against a palm of a user.

39. The writing instrument of claim 31, wherein the main shaft is composed of two concentric tubes which telescope such that said main shaft has an adjustable length.

40. The writing instrument of claim 39, wherein said concentric tubes telescope such that said length of said main shaft can be adjusted between a length that is less than the length of a credit card to a length that is greater than the length of a credit card.

41. A writing instrument, comprising:
a main shaft having first and second axial ends;
a writing tip extending axially from said first axial end of said main shaft; and
first and second tabs each protruding radially from said main shaft such that said first tab can be grasped between a thumb and index finger of a user, while said second tab can be grasped between the thumb and middle finger of the user or between the middle finger and index finger of the user;
wherein said first and second tabs are foldable toward one another such that a surface of said first tab and a surface of said second tab can touch one another when folded toward one another.

42. The writing instrument of claim 41, wherein said first and second tabs are each generally planar, and wherein said first and second tabs lie in generally a same plane when folded toward one another.

43. The writing instrument of claim 41, wherein said second tab includes a living hinge that enables said second tab to be folded toward said first tab.

44. The writing instrument of claim 41, wherein said first tab include a living hinge that enable said first tab to be folded toward said second tab.

45. A writing instrument, comprising:

- a main shaft having first and second axial ends;

- a writing tip extending axially from said first axial end of said main shaft; and

- a loop extending from said main shaft at a location along said shaft that is closer to said first axial end than said second axial end;

- wherein said loop is sized such that an index finger of a user can be inserted inside said loop while a thumb and middle finger of the user contact an outer surface of said loop; and

- wherein said loop can be flattened such that its thickness is less than a diameter of said main shaft.

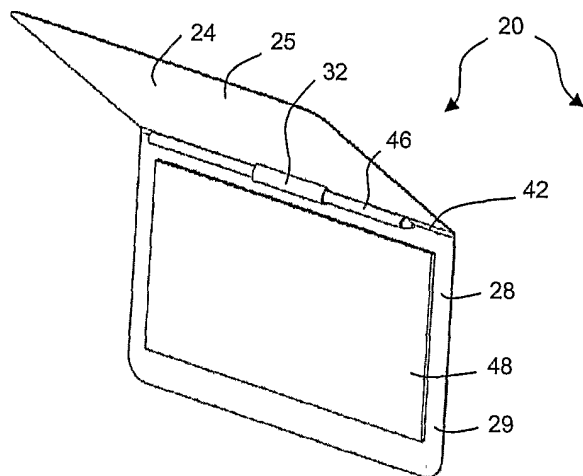


FIG. 1A

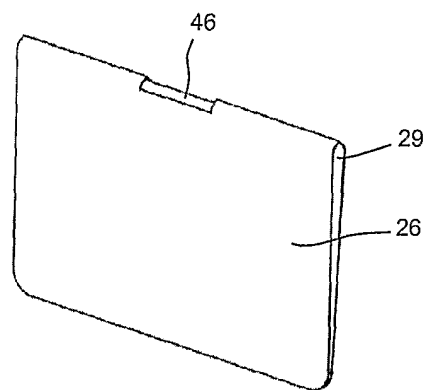


FIG. 1B

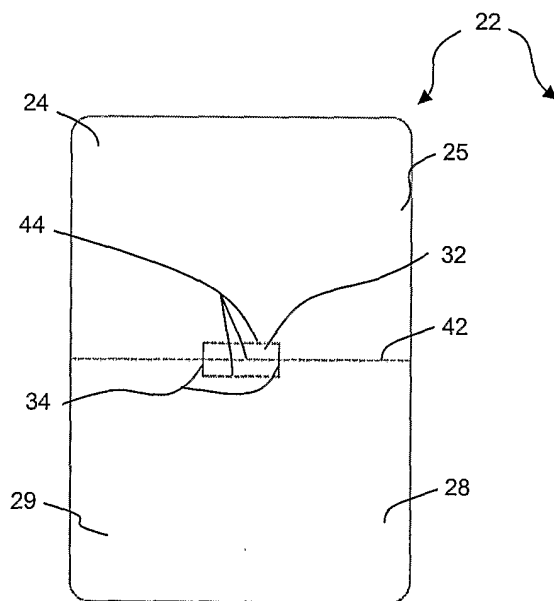


FIG. 1C

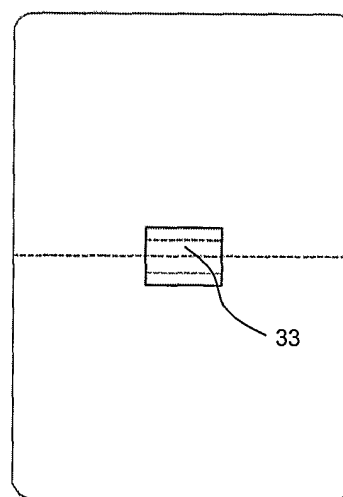


FIG. 1D

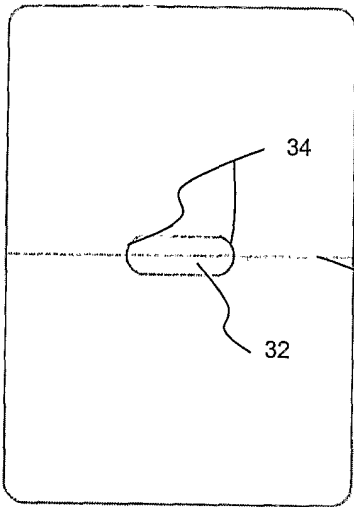


FIG. 1E

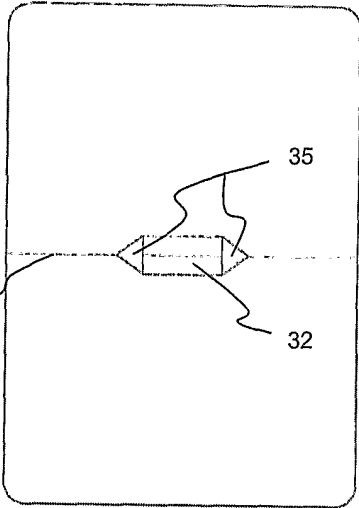


FIG. 1F

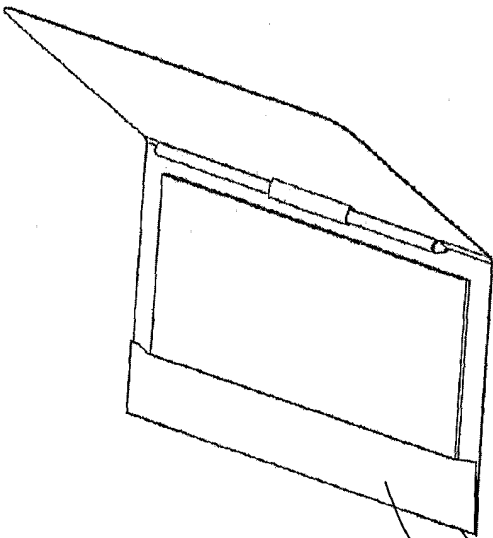


FIG. 1G

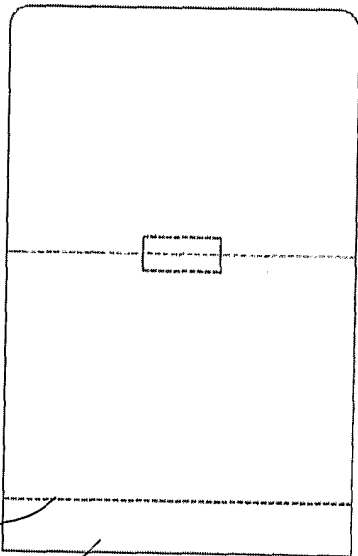
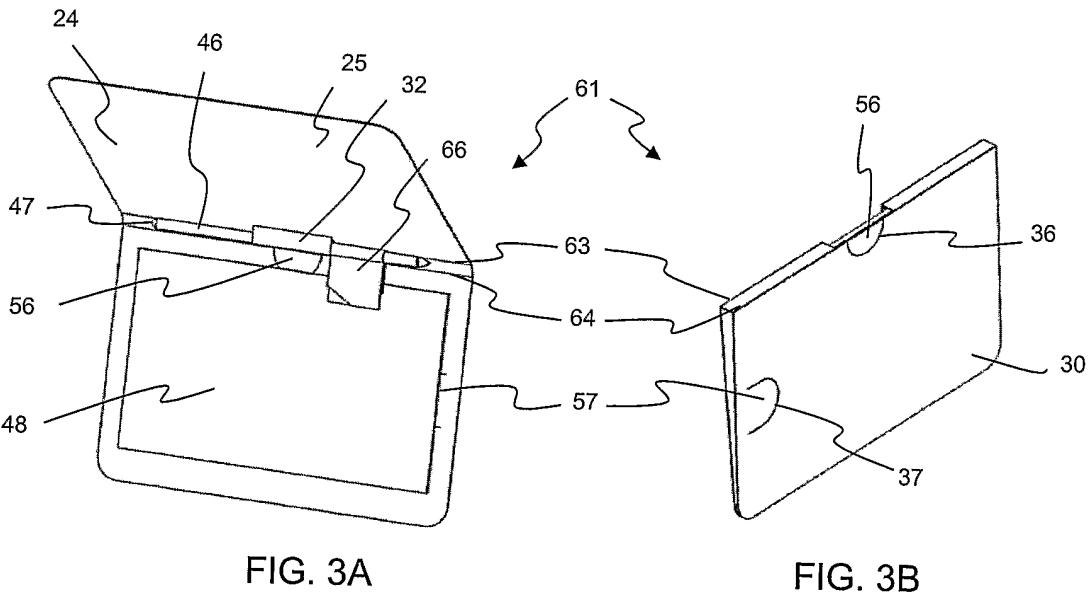
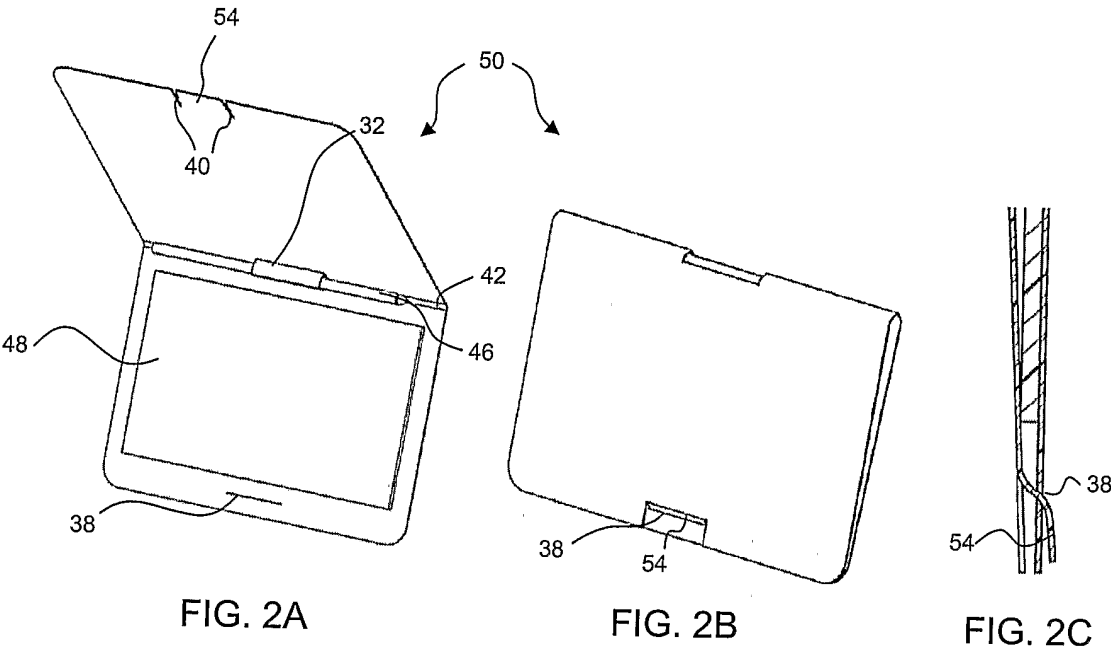


FIG. 1H



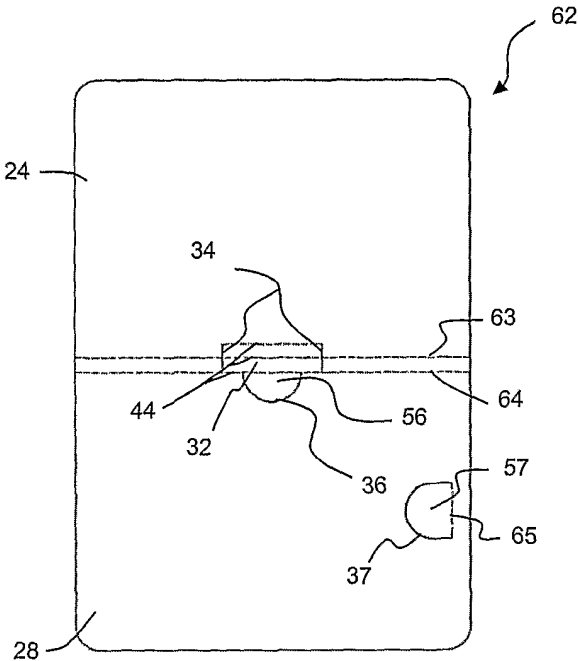


FIG. 3C

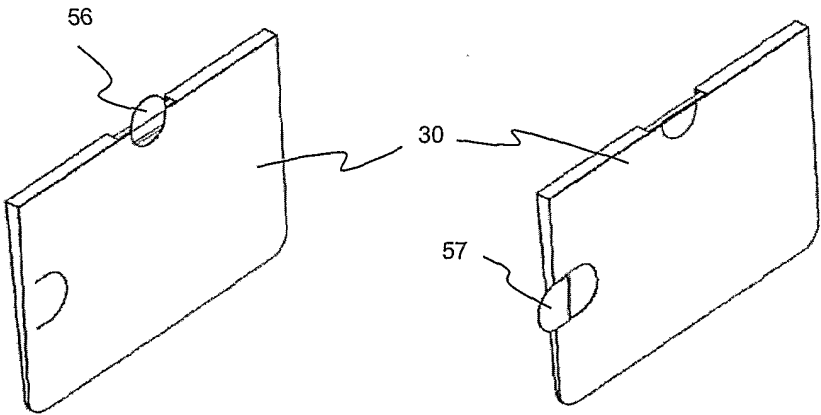


FIG. 3D

FIG. 3E

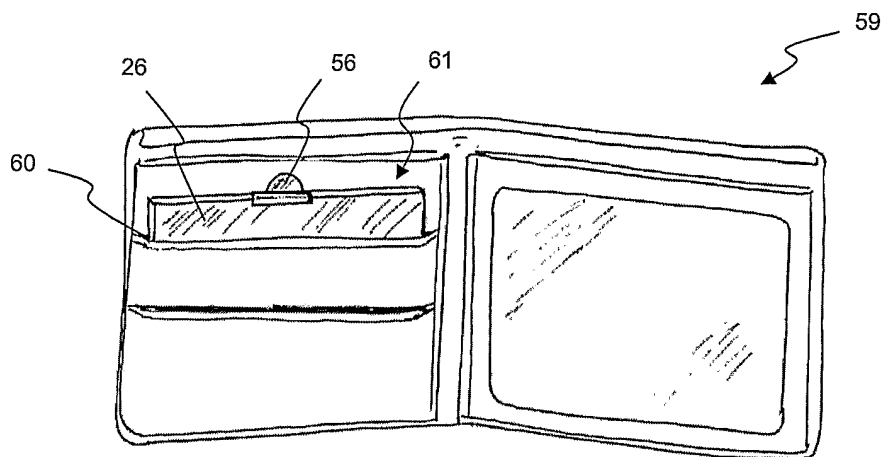


FIG. 3F

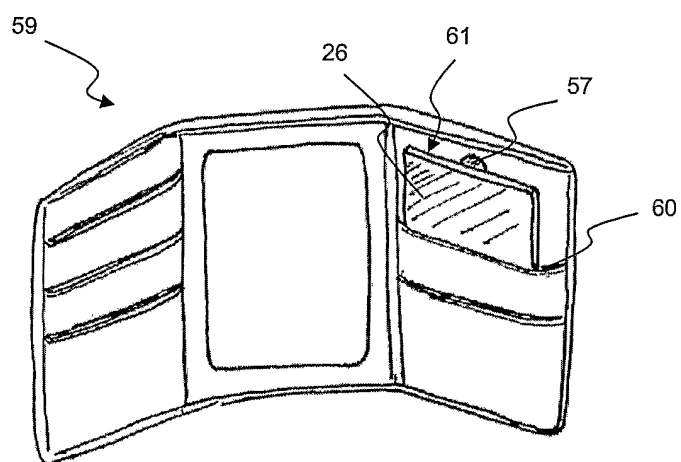


FIG. 3G

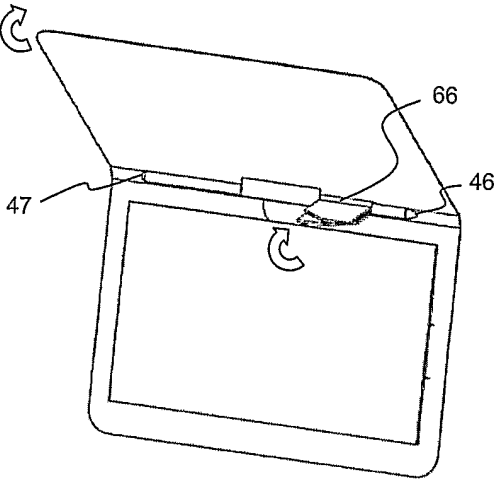


FIG. 3H

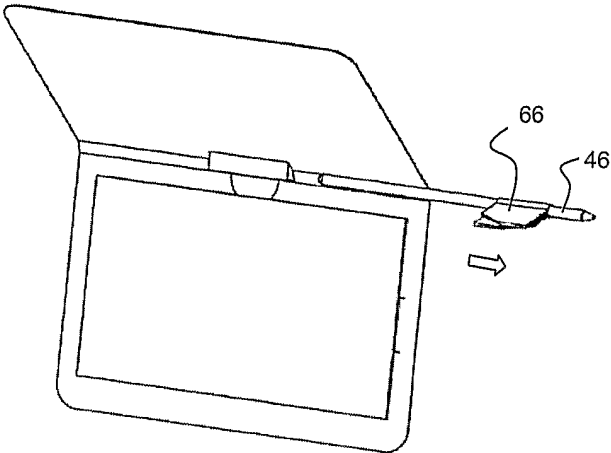


FIG. 3J

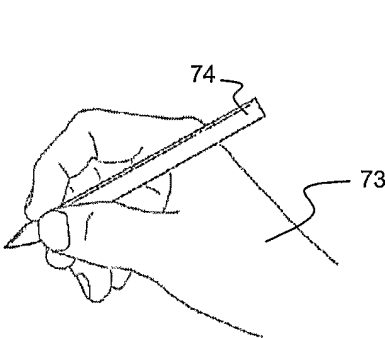


FIG. 4A

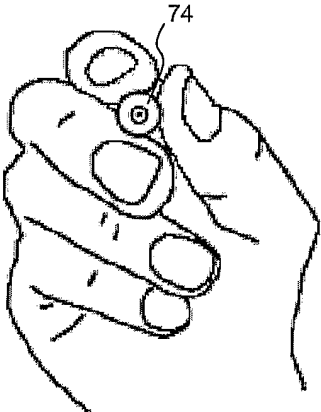


FIG. 4B

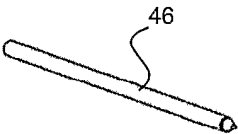


FIG. 5A

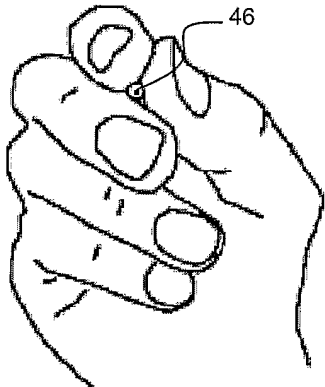


FIG. 5B

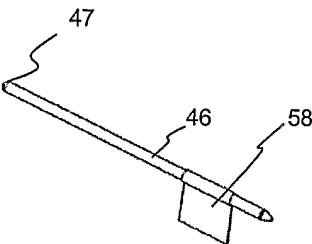


FIG. 6A

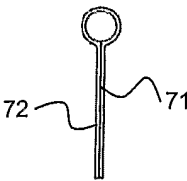


FIG. 6B

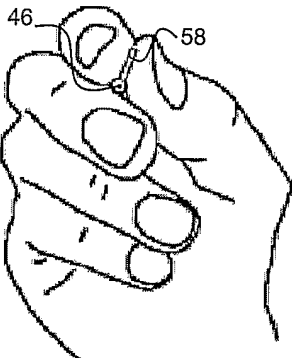


FIG. 6C

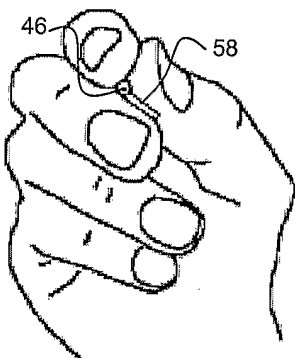


FIG. 6D

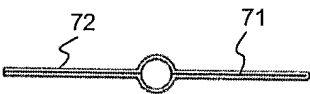


FIG. 7B

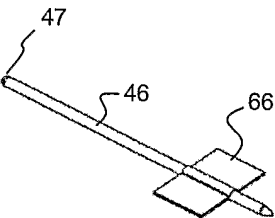


FIG. 7A

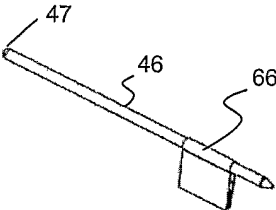


FIG. 7C

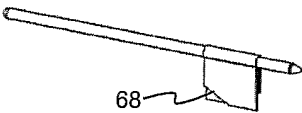


FIG. 7D

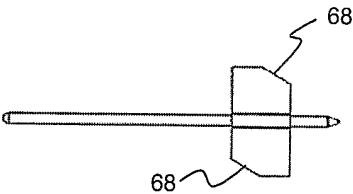


FIG. 7E

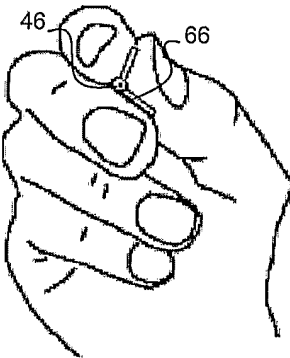


FIG. 7F

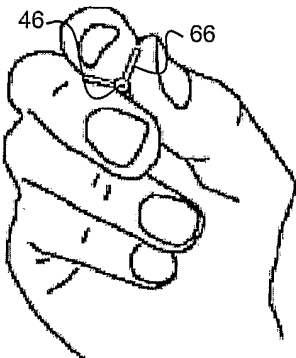


FIG. 7G

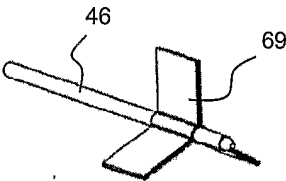


FIG. 8A

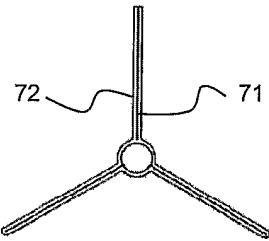


FIG. 8B

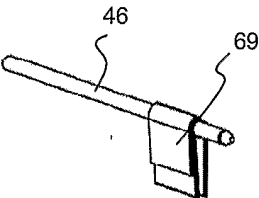


FIG. 8C

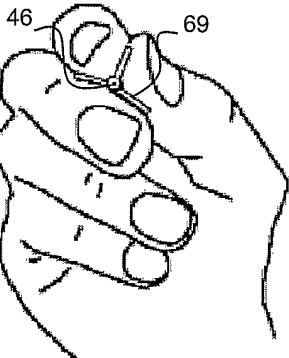


FIG. 8D

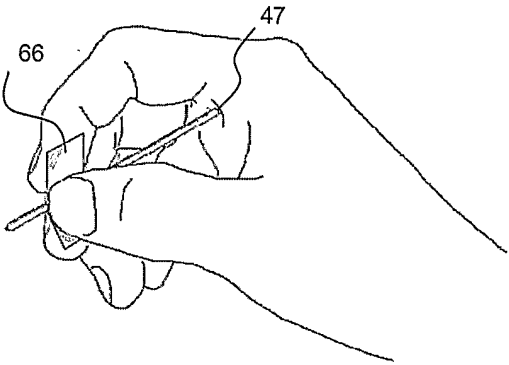


FIG. 9A

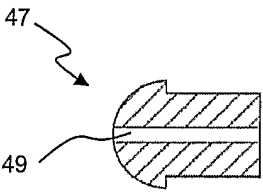


FIG. 9B

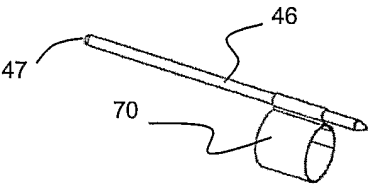


FIG. 10A

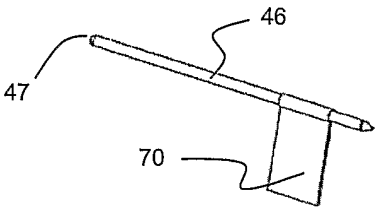


FIG. 10B

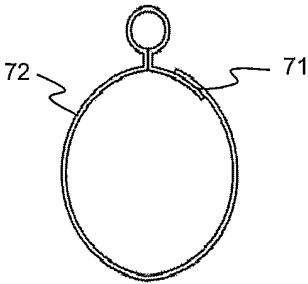


FIG. 10C

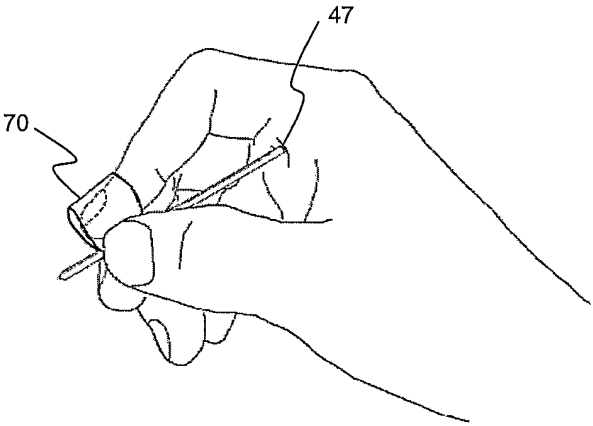


FIG. 10D

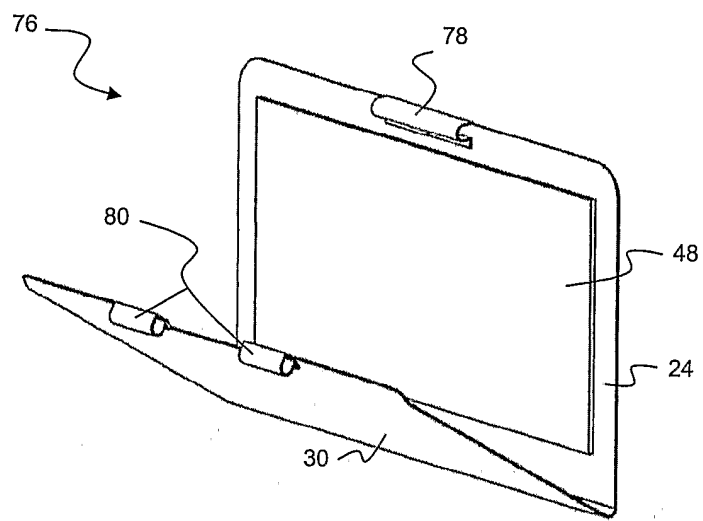


FIG. 11A

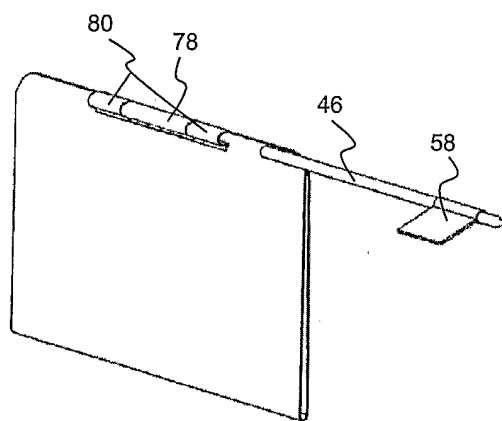


FIG. 11B

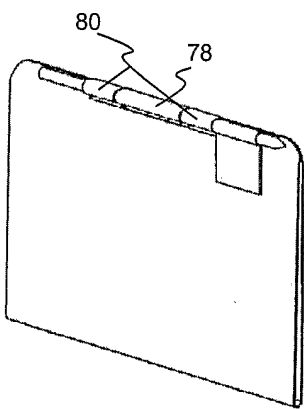


FIG. 11C

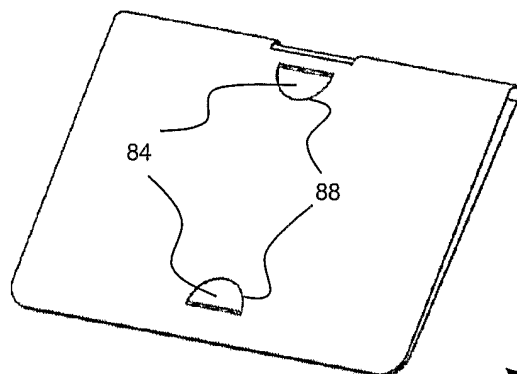


FIG. 12A

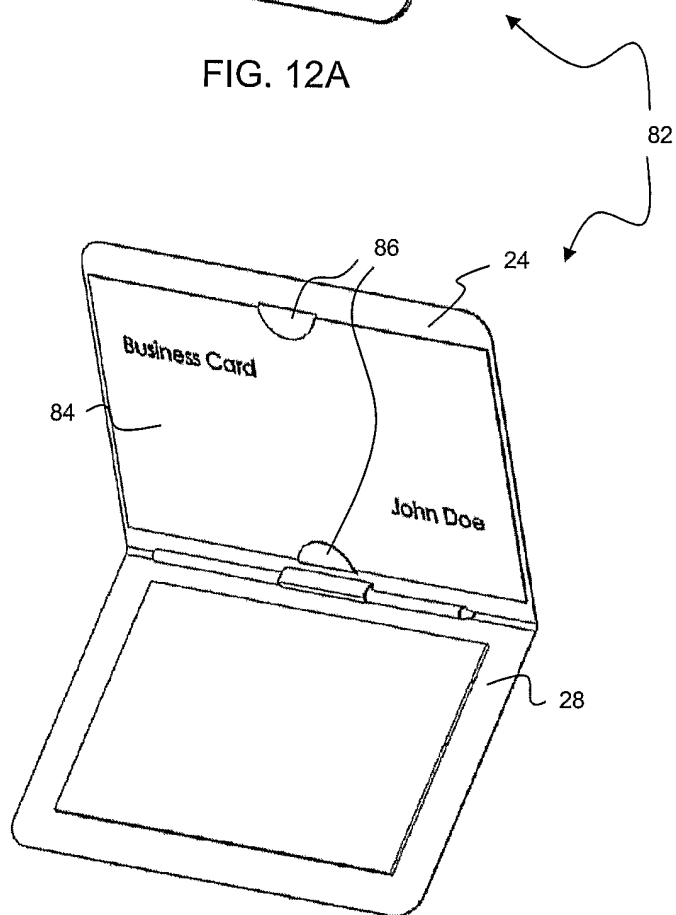


FIG. 12B

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US06/06856

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC: **B43K 23/02**(2006.01);**A45C 11/18**(2006.01);**B65D 85/28**(2006.01)

USPC: 401/6,8,95,131,195;206/39,224,371;150/147

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)

U.S. : Please See Continuation Sheet

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)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 1,407,239 A (WEISS) 21 February 1922 (21.02.1922), entire document.	17
X	US AI00120 A (HANSON) 10 April 1855 (10.04.1855), drawings.	31, 35
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Y		18-23, 30, 32-34, 36, 41-44
Y	US 5,029,903 A (PENNOCK) 9 July 1991 (09.07.1991), entire document.	1, 2, 10-12, 14, 15
Y	US 1,716,016 A (UPP) 04 June 1929 (04.06.1929), entire document.	1, 2, 10-12, 14, 15
Y	US 5,203,457 A (GARCIA) 20 April 1993 (20.04.1993), entire document.	3-7, 13
Y	US 5,713,406 A (DRURY) 3 February 1998 (03.02.1998), Fig. 1.	8

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

☐ See patent family 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 application or patent published on or after the international filing date

"L" 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

25 May 2006 (25.05.2006)

Date of mailing of the international search report

30 JUN 2006

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US06/06856

C. (Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 2,845,047 A (MCKENDREE) 29 July 1958 (29.07.1958), entire document.	9, 16
Y	US 2004/0265039 A1 (BUCK) 30 December 2004 (30.12.2004), entire document.	24, 25, 37, 38
Y	US 3,174,461 A (POMPA) 23 March 1965 (23.03.1965), entire document.	26, 27, 39, 40
Y	US 3,250,255 A (CRUICKSHANK) 10 May 1966 (10.05.1966), column 1, lines 56-67.	18-23, 30, 36, 41-44
Y	US 564,178 A (AHRENS) 21 July 1896 (21.07.1896), entire document.	28, 29
Y	US 5,722,575 A (SMITH) 3 March 1998 (03.03.1998), entire document.	45

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US06/06856

Continuation of B. FIELDS SEARCHED Item 1:

401/6- 8, 48, 52, 88, 95, 131, 195; 15/443; 16/421, 430; 81/489; 206/37, 39, 39.7, 214, 224, 371, 525.1; 281/15.1, 29-31, 45, 51, 402/4, 73, 80R; 150/147, 148; 229/67.1