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(54) **VACUUM PACKAGING APPLIANCES INCLUDING SUPPORT ASSEMBLIES FOR CARRYING BAG MATERIAL**

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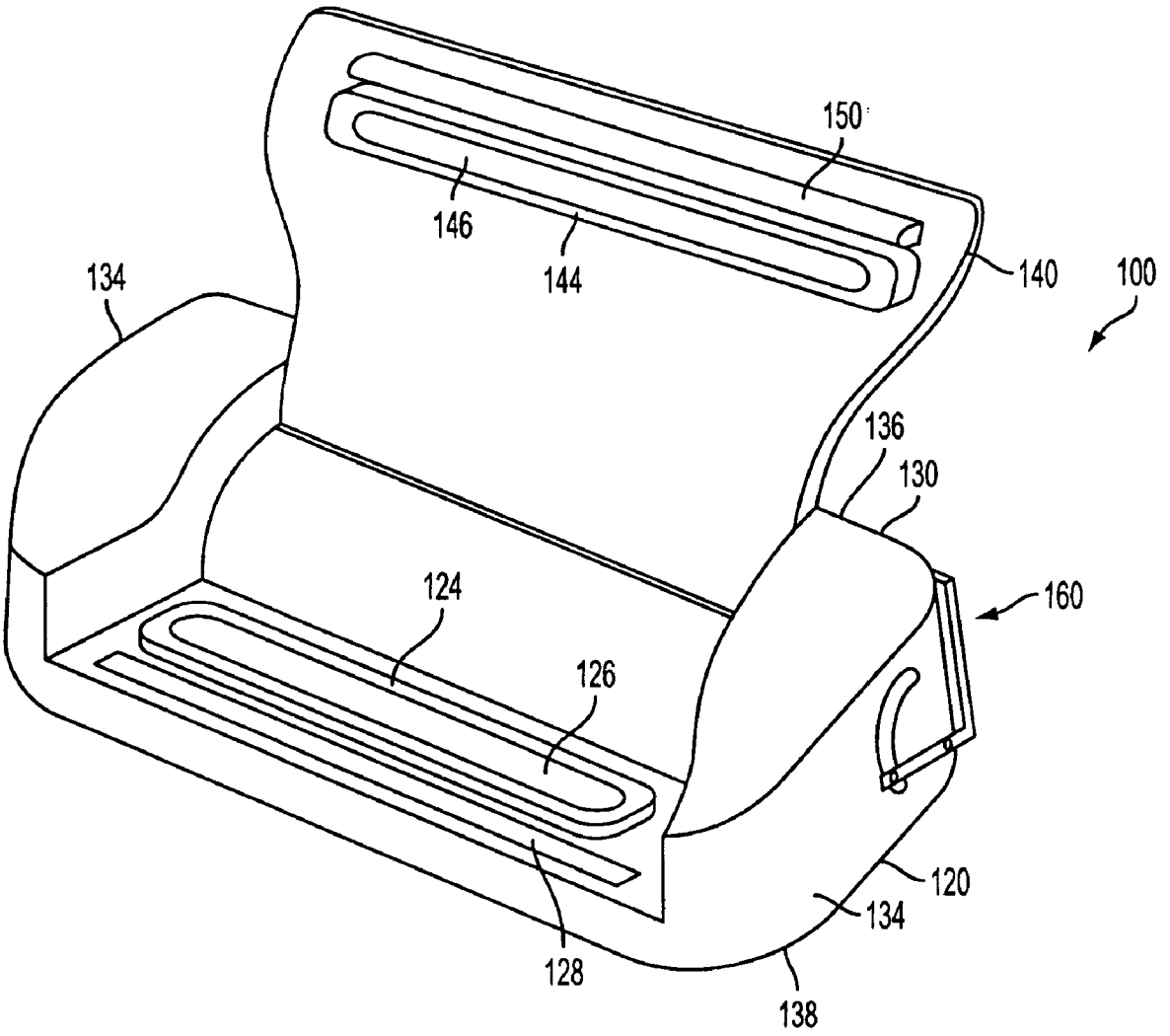
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **53/512**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Vacuum packaging appliances and vacuum packaging bag material receptacles are disclosed herein. In one embodiment, a vacuum packaging appliance includes a base, a lid movably coupled to the base, a vacuum chamber at least partially within the base and/or the lid, a vacuum pump operably coupled to the vacuum chamber to remove gas from the vacuum chamber, and a support assembly coupled to the base and/or the lid. The support assembly is configured to support bag material. The support assembly can be movable between a stowed position and a deployed position.



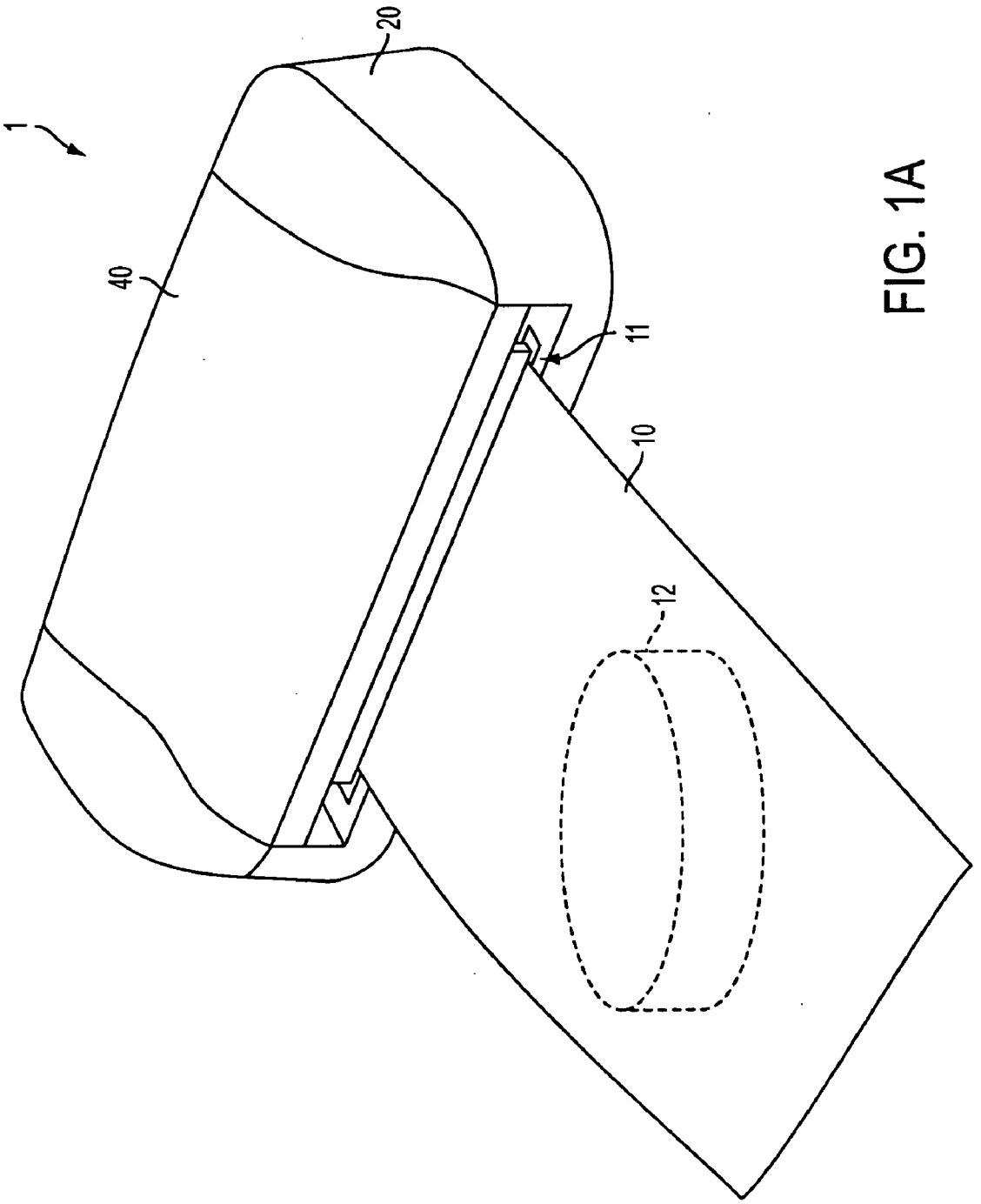


FIG. 1A

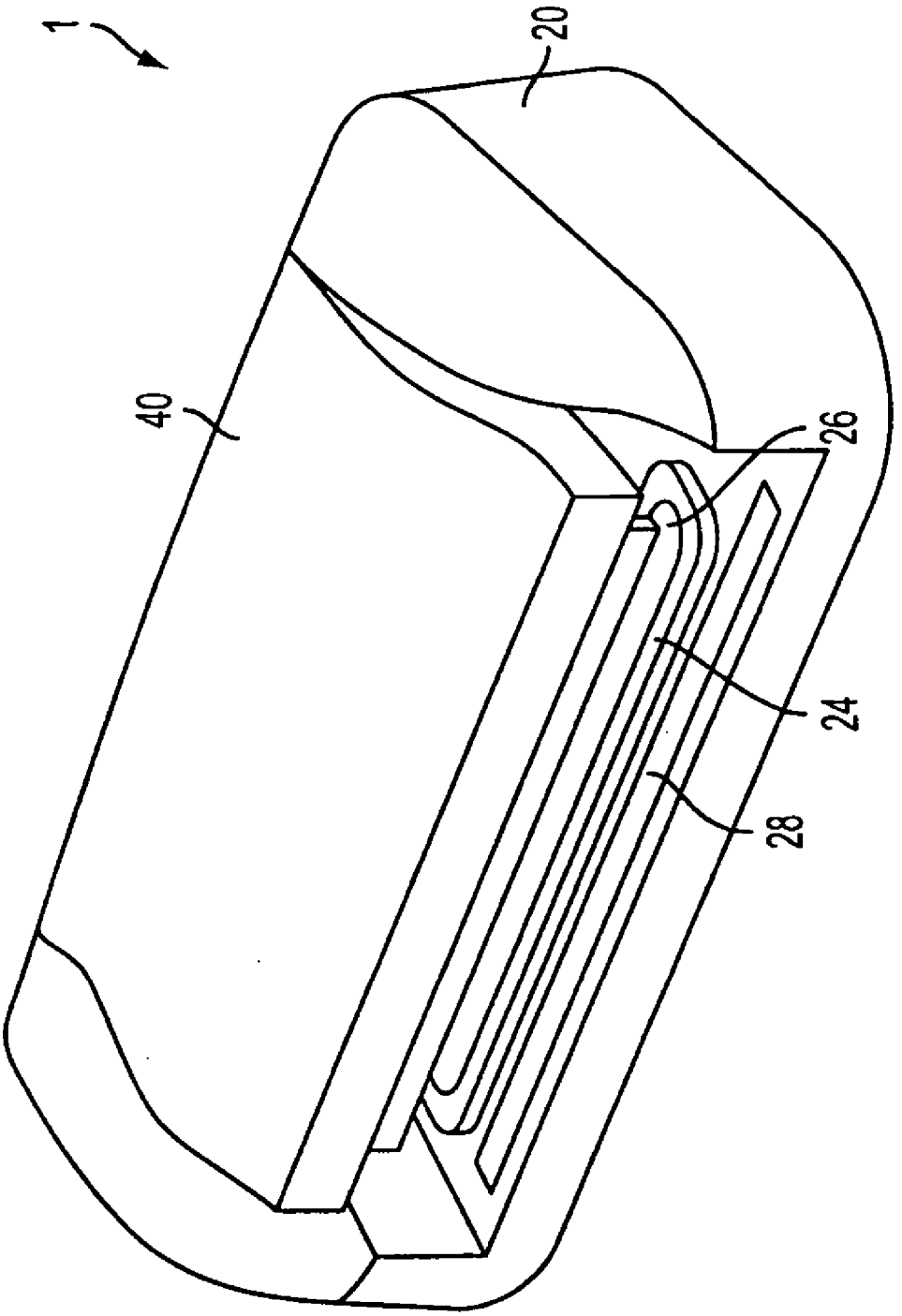


FIG. 1B

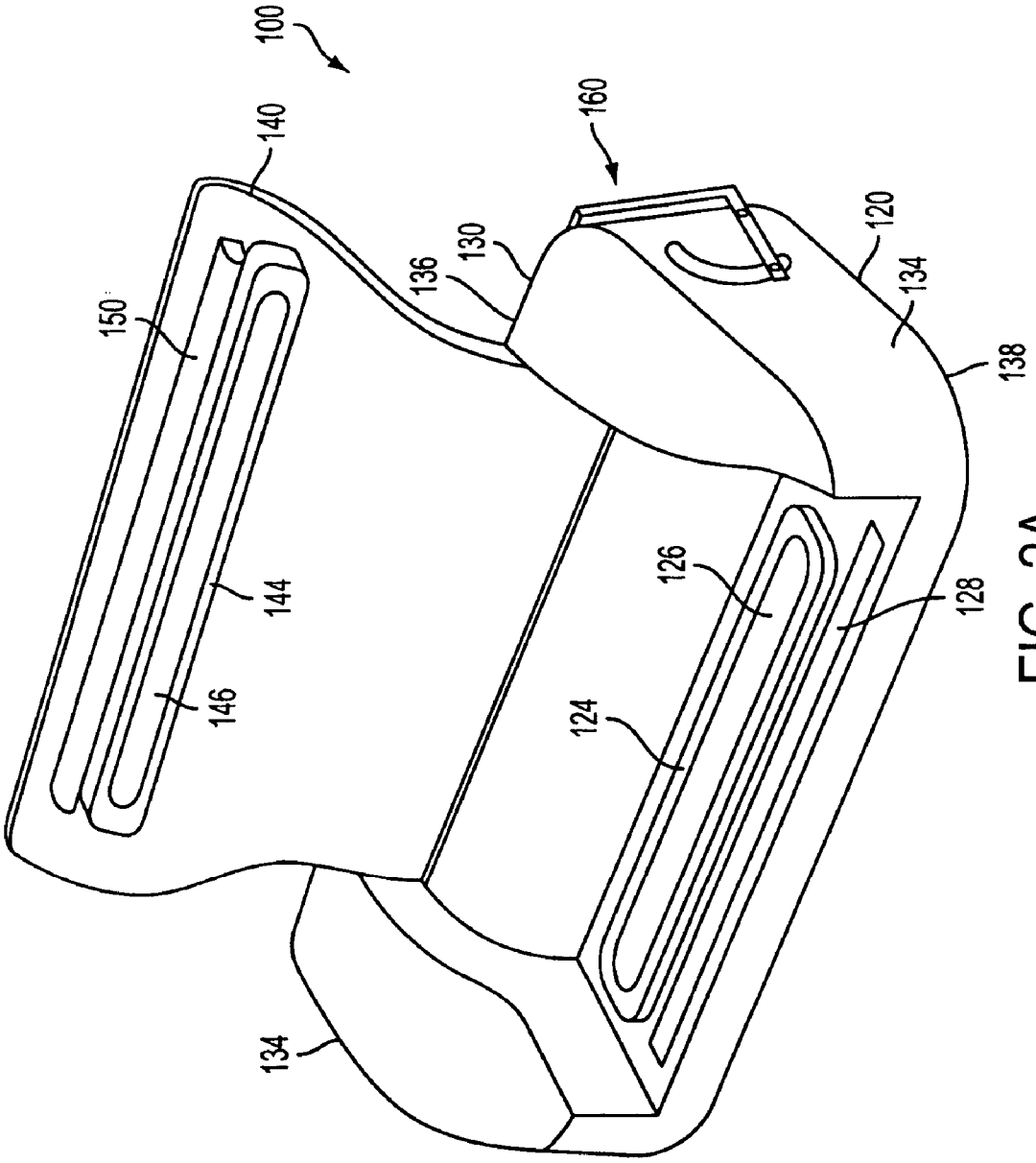


FIG. 2A

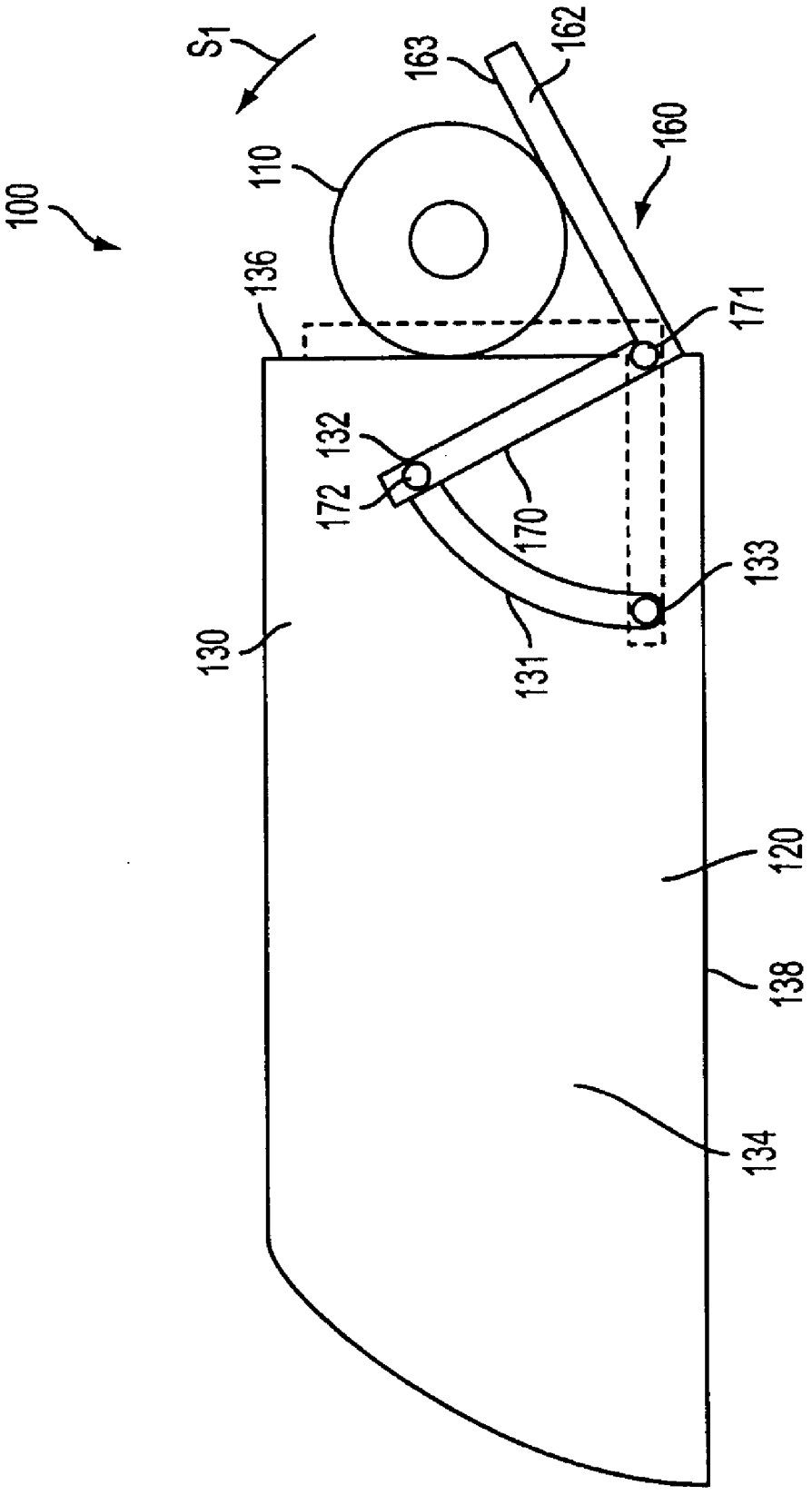

S1
163
162
160
110
100
136
171
132
172
170
133
130
131
120
138
134

FIG. 2B

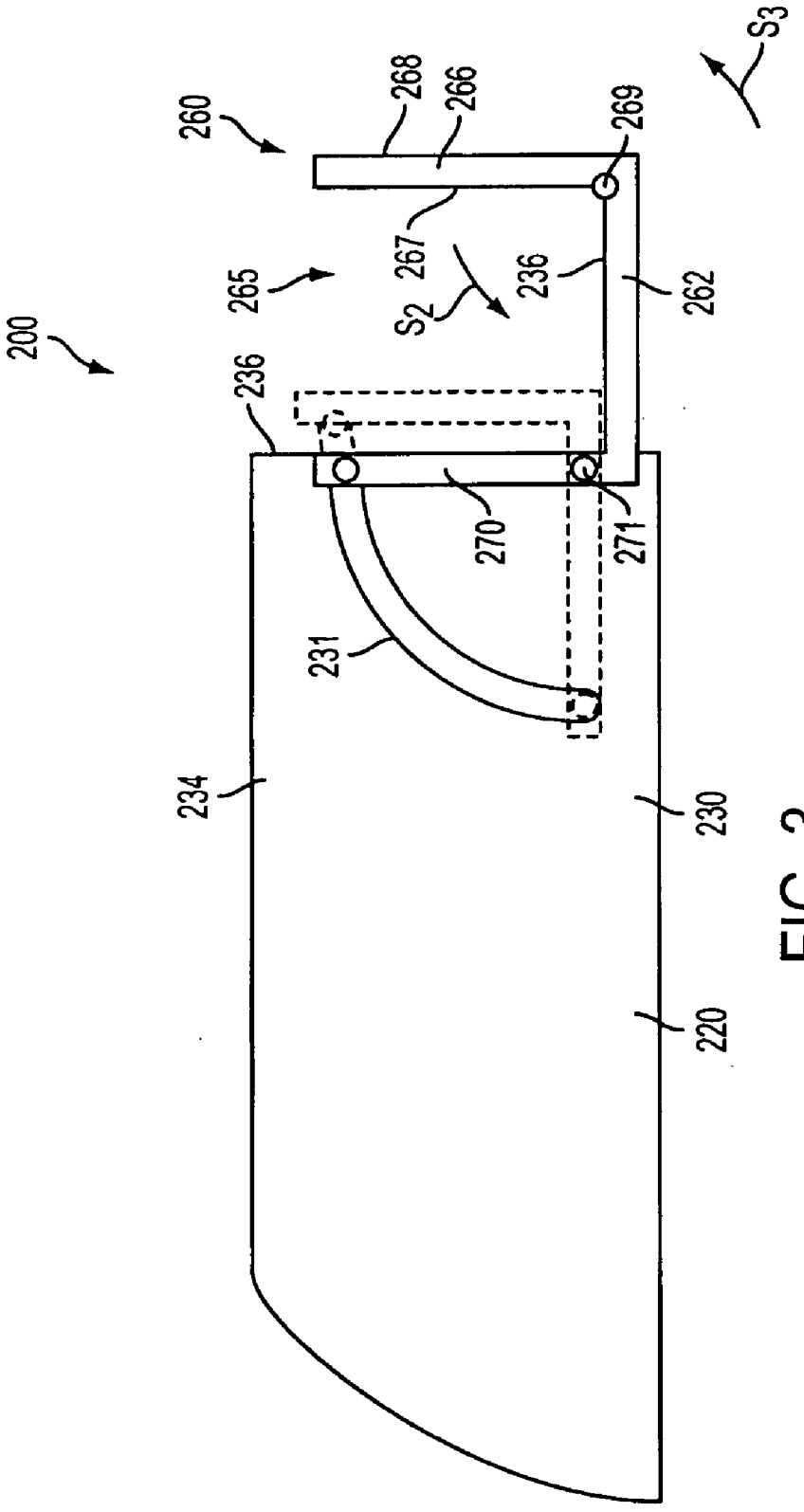

200
260
268
266
269
S3
267
265
S2
236
262
236
270
271
231
234
230
220

FIG. 3

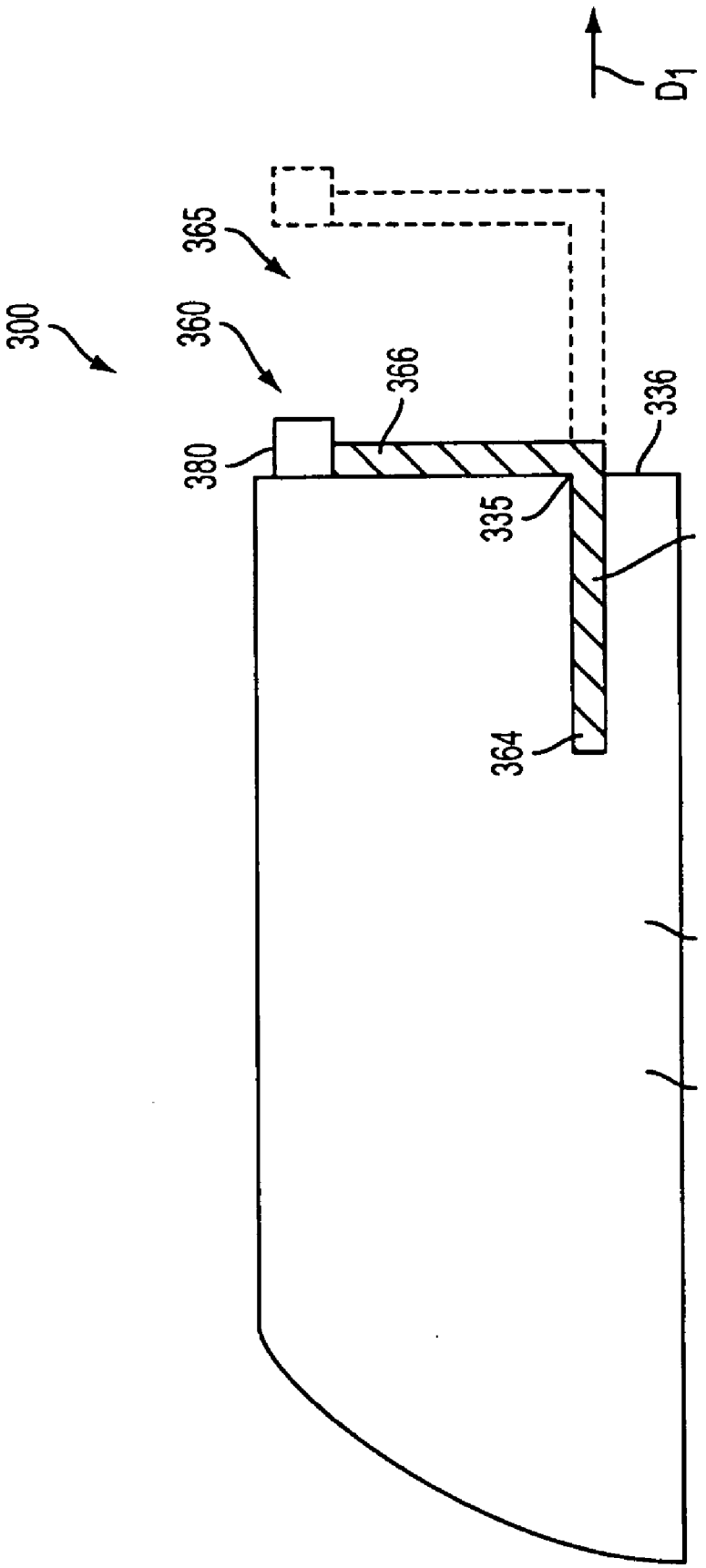


FIG. 4

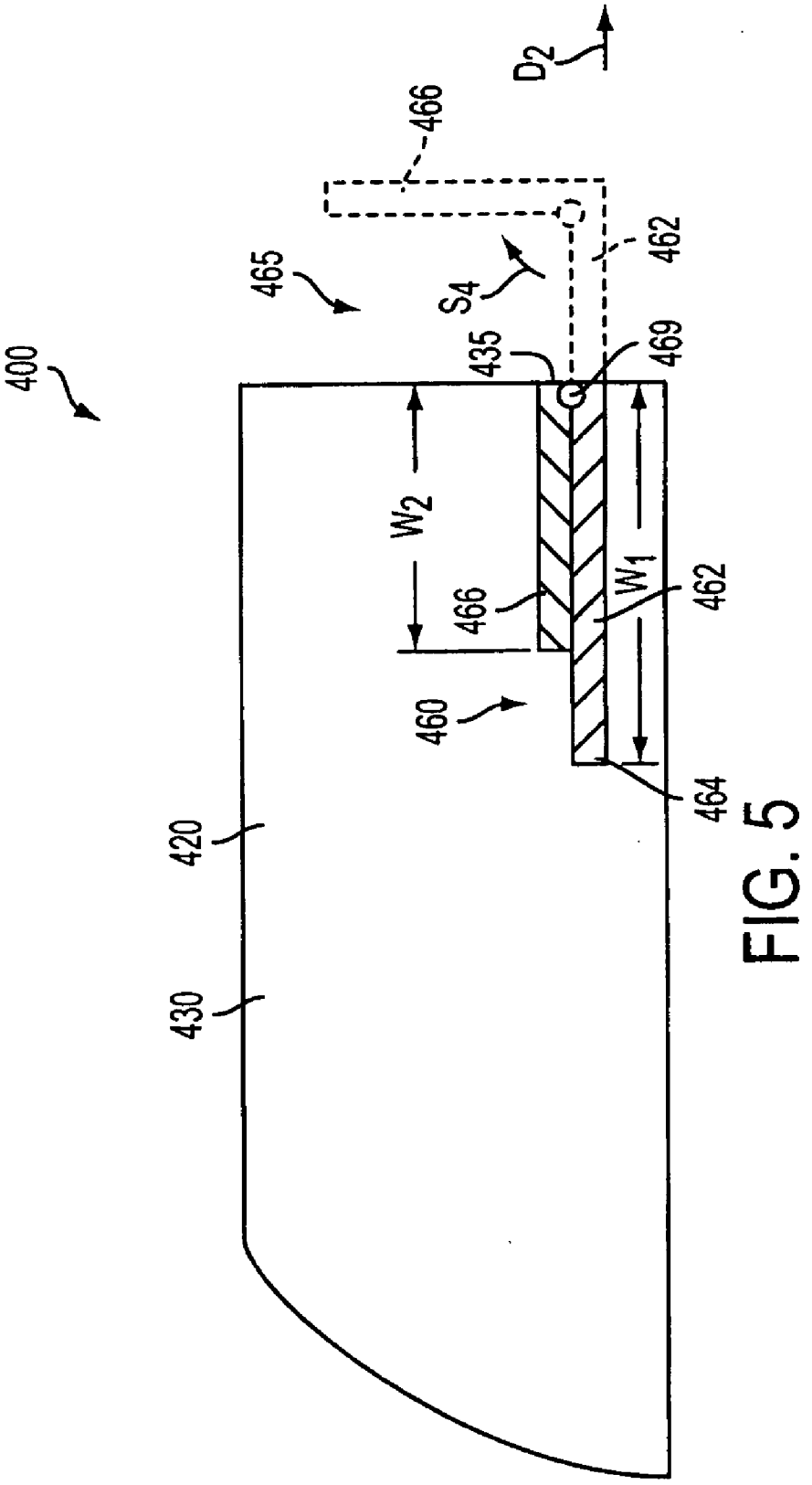


FIG. 5

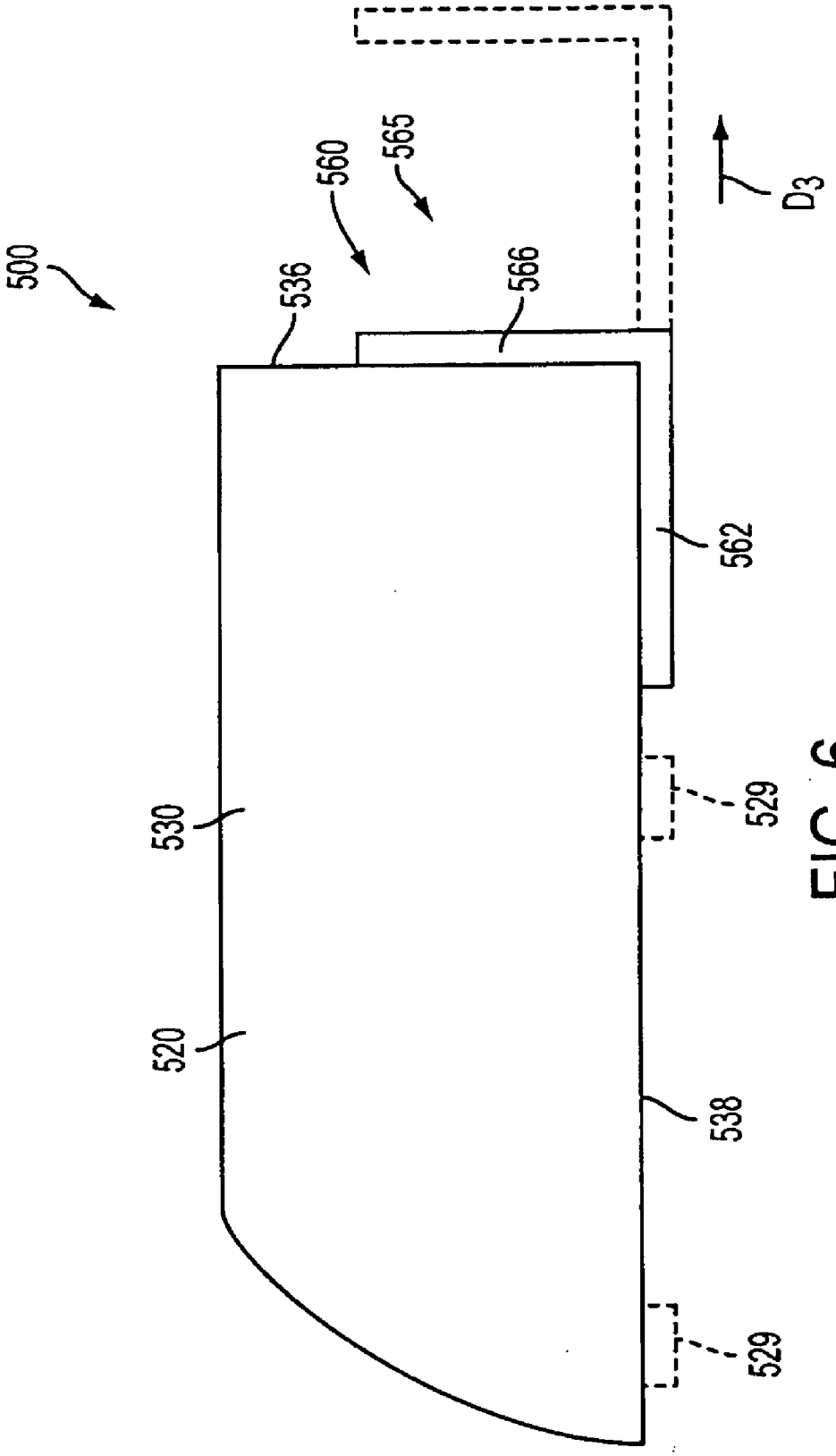


FIG. 6

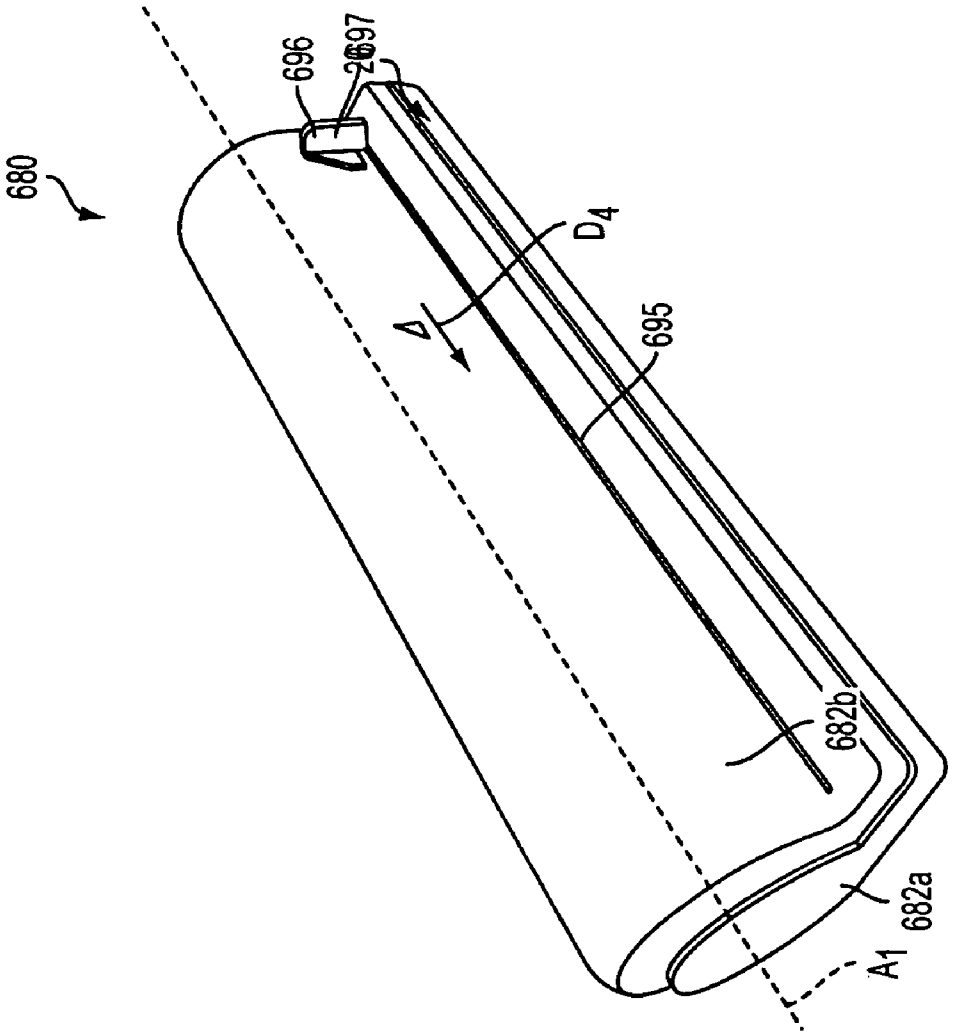


FIG. 7A

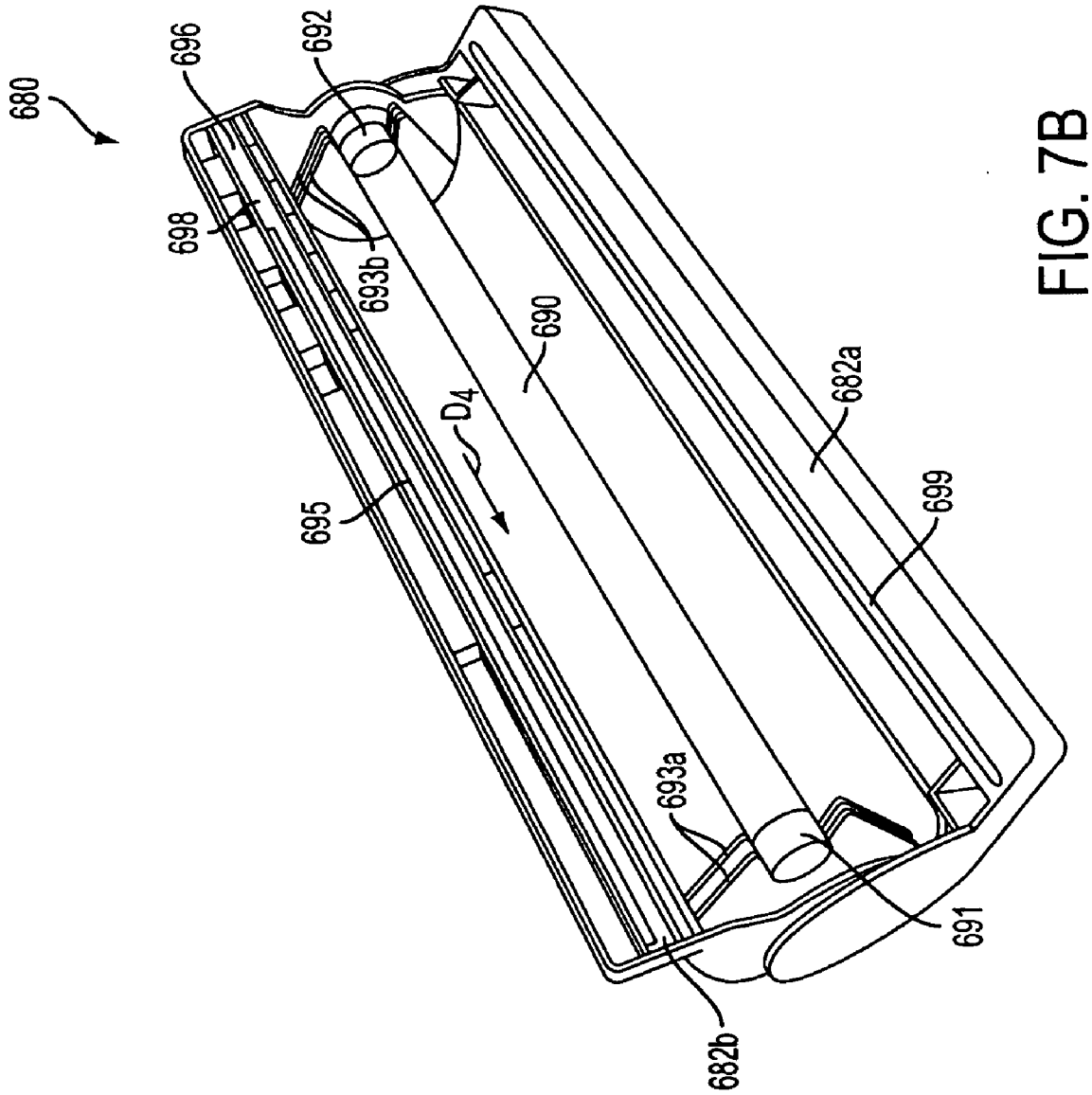


FIG. 7B

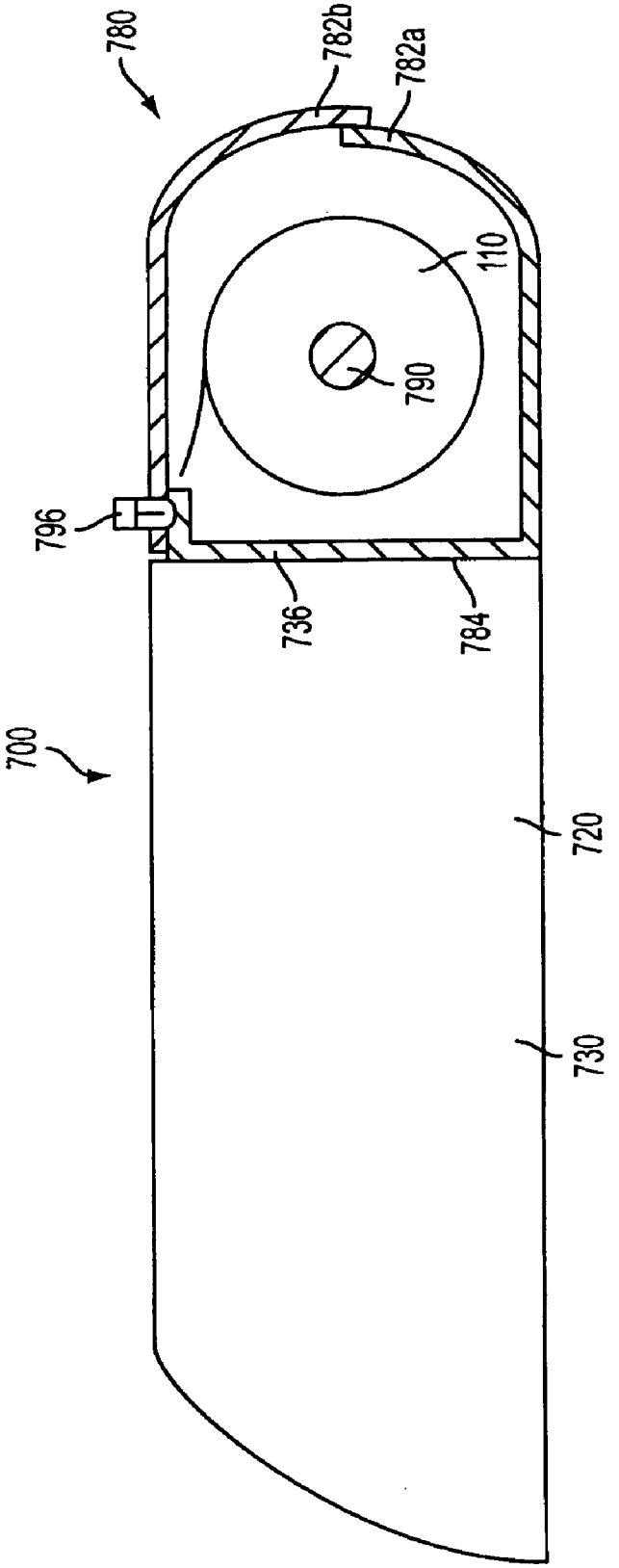


FIG. 8

VACUUM PACKAGING APPLIANCES INCLUDING SUPPORT ASSEMBLIES FOR CARRYING BAG MATERIAL

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application claims priority to U.S. provisional application No. 60/492,726, filed Jul. 29, 2003 by Brakes and entitled VACUUM PACKAGING APPLIANCES INCLUDING SUPPORT ASSEMBLIES FOR CARRYING BAG MATERIAL, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present invention generally relates to vacuum packaging. More particularly, the invention is directed to vacuum packaging appliances including support assemblies for carrying bag material.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Vacuum packaging involves removing air or other gases from a storage container and then sealing the container to prevent the contents from being exposed to the air. Vacuum packaging is particularly useful in protecting food and other perishables against oxidation. Oxygen is a main cause of food spoilage and contributes to the growth of bacteria, mold, and yeast. Accordingly, vacuum packaged food often lasts three to five times longer than food stored in ordinary containers. Moreover, vacuum packaging is useful for storing clothes, photographs, silver, and other items to prevent discoloration, corrosion, rust, and tarnishing. Furthermore, vacuum packaging produces tight, strong, and compact packages, reducing the bulk of articles and allowing for more space to store other supplies.

[0004] **FIGS. 1A and 1B** are schematic isometric views of a conventional appliance **1** for vacuum packaging an object **12** (shown in broken lines) in accordance with the prior art. The vacuum packaging appliance **1** includes a base **20**, a lid **40** pivotably coupled to the base **20**, a lower trough **26**, an upper trough (not shown) aligned with the lower trough **26**, and a vacuum pump (not shown) operably coupled to the upper trough. The lid **40** pivots between an open position (shown in **FIG. 1B**), in which a bag **10** can be placed between the lid **40** and the base **20**, and a closed position (shown in **FIG. 1A**), in which the bag **10** can be evacuated and thermally sealed. In the closed position, the upper trough and the lower trough **26** form a vacuum chamber to remove gas from the interior of the bag **10**. The base **20** also includes a seal **24** surrounding the vacuum chamber to seal the chamber from ambient air while gas is removed from the interior of the bag **10**. The vacuum packaging appliance **1** also includes a heating element **28** to thermally seal the bag **10** after the gas has been evacuated. A vacuum packaging appliance of this type is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,941,310, which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

[0005] Conventional vacuum packaging bags include two panels attached together with an open end. Typically, the panels each include two or more layers. The inner layer can be a heat sealable material, and the outer layer can be a gas impermeable material to provide a barrier against the influx of air. The plasticity temperature of the inner layer is lower than the outer layer. Accordingly, the bag can be heated to thermally bond the inner layer of each panel together to seal the bag without melting or puncturing the outer layer during the heat sealing cycle.

[0006] A conventional vacuum packaging process includes depositing the object **12** in the bag **10** and positioning an open end **11** of the bag **10** in the lower trough **26** of the vacuum packaging appliance **1**. Next, the lid **40** pivots downward to form the vacuum chamber with the open end **11** of the bag **10** disposed within the vacuum chamber. The vacuum pump then removes gas from the vacuum chamber and the interior of the bag **10**, which is in fluid communication with the vacuum chamber. After the gas has been removed from the interior of the bag **10**, the heating element **28** heats a strip of the bag **10** proximate to the open end **11** to melt the inner layer of each panel and thermally seal the bag **10**.

[0007] Vacuum packaging bags are typically formed from a roll of bag material that is cut into sections. The roll generally includes a strip of bag material having two panels sealed together along each lengthwise side. It is desirable to store the roll of bag material so that the material can be dispensed easily and conveniently for use with the vacuum packaging appliance. In some appliances, the base includes an opening adjacent to the lower trough to receive the roll of bag material. These vacuum packaging appliances are typically larger than other vacuum packaging appliances because the bag material is stored internally within the appliance. Bigger vacuum packaging appliances have larger footprints and consequently use more space on a countertop or other surface. Accordingly, there is a need to store the bag material at a convenient location without increasing the size of the vacuum packaging appliance.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] **FIGS. 1A and 1B** are schematic isometric views of a conventional appliance for vacuum packaging objects in accordance with the prior art.

[0009] **FIG. 2A** is a schematic isometric view of a vacuum packaging appliance having a support assembly in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

[0010] **FIG. 2B** is a schematic side view of the vacuum packaging appliance of **FIG. 2A** with the support assembly carrying bag material.

[0011] **FIG. 3** is a schematic side view of a vacuum packaging appliance including a support assembly in accordance with another embodiment of the invention.

[0012] **FIG. 4** is a schematic side cross-sectional view of a vacuum packaging appliance including a support assembly in accordance with yet another embodiment of the invention.

[0013] **FIG. 5** is a schematic side cross-sectional view of a vacuum packaging appliance including a support assembly in accordance with still another embodiment of the invention.

[0014] **FIG. 6** is a schematic side view of a vacuum packaging appliance including a support assembly in accordance with yet another embodiment of the invention.

[0015] **FIGS. 7A and 7B** are schematic isometric views of a vacuum packaging bag material receptacle in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

[0016] **FIG. 8** is a schematic side cross-sectional view of a vacuum packaging appliance and a bag material receptacle in accordance with another embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0017] A. Overview

[0018] The present invention is directed to vacuum packaging appliances including support assemblies for carrying bag material. In the following description, numerous specific details are provided of particular configurations of vacuum packaging appliances and support assemblies to provide a thorough understanding of and an enabling description for embodiments of the invention. Those of ordinary skill in the art, however, will recognize that the invention can be practiced without one or more of the specific details explained in the following description. In other instances, well-known structures and operations are not shown or described in detail to avoid obscuring aspects of the invention.

[0019] One aspect of the invention is directed to vacuum packaging appliances. In one embodiment, a vacuum packaging appliance includes a base, a lid movably coupled to the base, a vacuum chamber at least partially within the base and/or the lid, a vacuum pump operably coupled to the vacuum chamber to remove gas from the vacuum chamber, and a support assembly coupled to the base and/or the lid. The support assembly is movable between a stowed position and a deployed position. In the deployed position, the support assembly is configured to support bag material. In one aspect of this embodiment, the support assembly includes a support member and the base includes a housing. The support member can be positioned within the housing when the support assembly is in the stowed position.

[0020] In another embodiment, a vacuum packaging appliance includes a base, a lid movably coupled to the base, a vacuum chamber at least partially within the base and/or the lid, a vacuum pump operably coupled to the vacuum chamber to remove gas from the vacuum chamber, and an external support assembly coupled to the base and/or the lid. The external support assembly includes a support member configured to support bag material. In one aspect of this embodiment, the support member can be fixed or movable relative to the base. Moreover, the support assembly can be configured to be detached from the base and/or the lid. The appliance can further include a cutting device coupled to the support assembly to selectively cut the bag material.

[0021] Another aspect of the invention is directed to vacuum packaging bag material receptacles. In one embodiment, a receptacle includes a first housing portion, a second housing portion coupled to the first housing portion, a support member within the first and second housing portions, and a cutting device carried by the first and/or second housing portion. The second housing portion is movable relative to the first housing portion between an open position and a closed position. The support member is configured to carry bag material, and the cutting device is configured to selectively cut the bag material. In one aspect of this embodiment, the first housing portion is pivotably coupled to the second housing portion. The second housing portion can include a plurality of supports, and the support member can be removably coupled to the supports.

[0022] Another aspect of the invention is directed to methods for positioning bag material on vacuum packaging appliances. In one embodiment, a method includes providing a vacuum packaging appliance including a base, a lid pivotably coupled to the base, a vacuum chamber within the base and/or the lid, a vacuum pump operably coupled to the vacuum chamber, and a support assembly movably coupled to the base and/or the lid. The method further includes moving the support assembly from a stowed position to a deployed position and placing the bag material on a support member of the support assembly.

[0023] B. Embodiments of Vacuum Packaging Appliances Including Support Assemblies

[0024] **FIG. 2A** is a schematic isometric view of a vacuum packaging appliance **100** having a support assembly **160** in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. The vacuum packaging appliance **100** includes a base **120** and a lid **140** pivotably coupled to the base **120**. The lid **140** is accordingly movable between an open position (shown in **FIG. 2A**) and a closed position. The base **120** includes a housing **130** having a rear surface **136**, a bottom surface **138**, and two side surfaces **134**. The base **120** further includes a first chamber portion **126** and a first seal **124** surrounding the first chamber portion **126**. The lid **140** can include a second chamber portion **146** and a second seal **144** surrounding the second chamber portion **146**. Accordingly, when the lid **140** is in the closed position, the first and second chamber portions **126** and **146** define a vacuum chamber. In other embodiments, the vacuum packaging appliance **100** can have other configurations. For example, the base **120** and/or the lid **140** may not include a chamber portion and/or a seal.

[0025] The vacuum packaging appliance **100** further includes a vacuum pump (not shown) operably coupled to the first and/or second chamber portion **126** or **146** to remove gas from the vacuum chamber and the interior of a bag when the lid **140** is in the closed position. For example, in operation, the open end of the bag is positioned in the first chamber portion **126**, and then the lid **140** is pivoted to the closed position. Conventional vacuum packaging bags, such as those disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. Re. 34,929, which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety, are configured so that the interior of the bag is in fluid communication with the vacuum chamber when the lid **140** is in the closed position. Accordingly, the vacuum pump can remove gas from the vacuum chamber and the interior of the bag.

[0026] In the illustrated embodiment, the vacuum packaging appliance **100** further includes a heating element **128** and a member **150** for pressing the bag against the heating element **128**. The heating element **128** can be carried by the base **120**, and the member **150** can be carried by and project from the lid **140**. The heating element **128** is configured to thermally seal the bag after the gas has been substantially evacuated from the interior of the bag. Conventional vacuum packaging bags include panels that have a gas impermeable layer and a heat sealable layer inside the gas impermeable layer. The heating element **128** heats the bag sufficiently to bond the heat sealable layer of the panels together. The member **150** is configured to press the bag against the heating element **128** to ensure a seal is formed across the bag.

[0027] **FIG. 2B** is a schematic side view of the vacuum packaging appliance **100** with the support assembly **160**

carrying bag material **110**. In the illustrated embodiment, the support assembly **160** includes a support member **162** and an arm **170** projecting from the support member **162**. The support member **162** can be a generally flat, elongated member having a length approximately equal to the length of the base **120** and an upper surface **163** to carry the bag material **110**. The arm **170** is pivotably coupled to the side surface **134** of the housing **130** with a fastener **171**. Accordingly, the support assembly **160** is movable between a deployed position and a stowed position (shown in broken lines).

[**0028**] In the illustrated embodiment, the housing **130** includes a slot **131** to limit the range of motion of the support assembly **160**. More specifically, the slot **131** includes a first end **132** and a second end **133**, and the support assembly **160** includes a pin **172** slideably received in the slot **131**. In the deployed position, the pin **172** contacts the first end **132** of the slot **131** to limit the movement of the support member **162**. Similarly, in the stowed position, the pin **172** can contact the second end **133** of the slot **131** to limit the movement of the support member **162**.

[**0029**] In the deployed position, the upper surface **163** of the support member **162** and the rear surface **136** of the housing **130** support the bag material **110** in the illustrated embodiment. The bag material **110** can be a generally tubular receptacle that is arranged in a roll. The tubular receptacle can include two panels that are sealed together along each lengthwise side. The bag material **110** can be cut into sections, and the two open ends of each section can be sealed to form a sealed bag. In other embodiments, the support assembly **160** can carry bag material that is arranged differently.

[**0030**] The support member **162** is pivoted in a direction S_1 to move the support assembly **160** from the deployed position to the stowed position. In the stowed position, the upper surface **163** of the support member **162** can be positioned against the rear surface **136** of the housing **130**. In other embodiments, the support assembly **160** can have other configurations and/or be fixed relative to the housing **130**. For example, the support assembly **160** can be pivotably attached to the lid, and/or the support assembly **160** can include an elongated support member sized and configured to be received in a hole at the center of a roll of bag material. In additional embodiments, the support assembly **160** can include a cutting device such as the device described below with reference to **FIG. 4**.

[**0031**] One feature of the illustrated vacuum packaging appliance **100** is that a user can selectively store bag material **110** on the support assembly **160**. An advantage of this feature is that the support assembly **160** gives the user the flexibility to selectively store the bag material **110** at a convenient location on the vacuum packaging appliance **100** without permanently increasing the footprint of the appliance **100**. For example, the bag material **110** may be temporarily placed on the support assembly **160** while the user vacuum packages several items. Thereafter, the user may return the bag material **110** to a drawer or store the material **110** at another location and reduce the footprint of the vacuum packaging appliance **100** by stowing the support assembly **160**. Another advantage of the illustrated appliance **100** is that the support assembly **160** conveniently dispenses the bag material **110**. For example, if the bag material is arranged in a roll, the roll can be easily rotated on the support assembly **160**.

[**0032**] **FIG. 3** is a schematic side view of a vacuum packaging appliance **200** including a base **220** and a support assembly **260** coupled to the base **220** in accordance with another embodiment of the invention. The base **220** can be generally similar to the base **120** described above with reference to FIGS. **2**A-B. For example, the base **220** includes a housing **230** having a rear surface **236**, a side surface **234**, and a slot **231** in the side surface **234**. The support assembly **260** includes a first support member **262**, a second support member **266** movably coupled to the first support member **262**, and an arm **270** projecting from the first support member **262**. The second support member **266** can be pivotably coupled to the first support member **262** with a hinge **269**, and the arm **270** can be pivotably coupled to the base **220** with a fastener **271**. Accordingly, the support assembly **260** is movable between a deployed position and a stowed position (shown in broken lines).

[**0033**] In the deployed position, the first and second support members **262** and **266** define an opening **265** sized to receive bag material. To move the support assembly **260** from the deployed position to the stowed position, the second support member **266** is pivoted in a direction S_2 toward the first support member **262** so that a first surface **267** of the second support member **266** contacts a surface **236** of the first support member **262**. Next, the first and second support members **262** and **266** are pivoted in a direction S_3 so that a second surface **268** of the second support member **266** contacts the rear surface **236** of the housing **230**. In other embodiments, the support assembly **260** can have other configurations.

[**0034**] **FIG. 4** is a schematic side cross-sectional view of a vacuum packaging appliance **300** including a base **320** (shown schematically) and a support assembly **360** coupled to the base **320** in accordance with another embodiment of the invention. The base **320** includes a housing **330** with a rear surface **336** and an opening **335** sized to receive at least a portion of the support assembly **360**. The support assembly **360** includes a first support member **362** and a second support member **366** projecting from the first support member **362**. The support assembly **360** is movable relative to the base **320** between a stowed position and a deployed position (shown in broken lines).

[**0035**] In the stowed position, the first support member **362** is received within the housing **330** and the second support member **366** is positioned against the rear surface **336**. To move from the stowed position to the deployed position, the support assembly **360** moves in a direction D_1. In the deployed position, the first and second support members **362** and **366** define an opening **365** sized to receive bag material. In the illustrated embodiment, the first support member **362** includes an end portion **364** that remains within the housing **330** and interacts with the base **320** to support the first and second support members **362** and **366** and the bag material when the support assembly **360** is in the deployed position. The first support member **362** and/or the housing **330** can include a stop mechanism (not shown) or a detent to prevent a user from moving the end portion **364** out of the housing **330**. In other embodiments, the first support member **362** can be removed from the housing **330**.

[**0036**] In the illustrated embodiment, the support assembly **360** further includes a cutting device **380** (shown sche-

matically) coupled to the second support member **366**. The cutting device **380** can be a knife or other suitable device to cut the bag material to form bags. The cutting device **380** can be fixed to the second support member **366** or slideable along the length of the member **366**. In other embodiments, the vacuum packaging appliance **300** may not include the cutting device **380**, or alternatively, the cutting device **380** can be coupled to the base **320** or the lid.

[**0037**] **FIG. 5** is a schematic side cross-sectional view of a vacuum packaging appliance **400** including a base **420** (shown schematically) and a support assembly **460** coupled to the base **420** in accordance with another embodiment of the invention. The base **420** can be generally similar to the base **320** described above with reference to **FIG. 4**. For example, the base **420** includes a housing **430** having an opening **435** sized and configured to receive the support assembly **460**. The support assembly **460** includes a first support member **462** and a second support member **466** pivotably coupled to the first support member **462** by a hinge **469**. The support assembly **460** is movable relative to the base **420** between a stowed position and a deployed position (shown in broken lines).

[**0038**] In the stowed position, the support assembly **460** is received within the housing **430**. More specifically, the first support member **462** is juxtaposed to the second support member **466** in the housing **430**. To move from the stowed position to the deployed position, the support assembly **460** slides in a direction D_2 to move the second support member **466** and a portion of the first support member **462** out of the housing **430**. Next, the second support member **466** pivots in a direction S_4. In the deployed position, the first and second support members **462** and **466** form an opening **465** to receive bag material. In the illustrated embodiment, the first support member **462** has a first width W_1 and the second support member **466** has a second width W_2 less than the first width W_1 so that an end portion **464** of the first support member **462** can remain within the housing **430** to support the first and second support members **462** and **466** and the bag material when the support assembly **460** is in the deployed position.

[**0039**] **FIG. 6** is a schematic side view of a vacuum packaging appliance **500** including a base **520** and a support assembly **560** in accordance with another embodiment of the invention. The base **520** can include a plurality of supports **529** (shown in broken lines) and a housing **530** with a rear surface **536** and a bottom surface **538**. The support assembly **560** includes a first support member **562** and a second support member **566** projecting from the first support member **562**. The first support member **562** can be movably coupled to the housing **530**. For example, the first support member **562** can include a projection and the housing **530** can include a slot to receive the projection and thereby limit the movement of the support assembly **560**. Accordingly, the support assembly **560** is movable between a stowed position and a deployed position (shown in broken lines). To move from the stowed position to the deployed position, the support assembly **560** slides in a direction D_3. In the deployed position, the first and second support members **562** and **566** define an opening **565** to receive bag material.

[**0040**] C. Embodiments of Vacuum Packaging Bag Material Receptacles

[**0041**] **FIGS. 7A and 7B** are schematic isometric views of a vacuum packaging bag material receptacle **680** in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. The bag material receptacle **680** can carry a roll of vacuum packaging bag material for use with a vacuum packaging appliance. The bag material receptacle **680** includes a first housing portion **682***a*, a second housing portion **682***b* pivotably coupled to the first housing portion **682***a*, and a support member **690** within the first and second housing portions **682***a-b*. The second housing portion **682***b* is pivotable about an axis A_1 between a closed position (shown in **FIG. 7A**) and an open position (shown in **FIG. 7B**). The support member **690** is sized and configured to carry the bag material within the first and second housing portions **682***a-b*.

[**0042**] In the illustrated embodiment, the second housing portion **682***b* includes a first support **693***a* and a second support **693***b*, and the support member **690** includes a first end **691** releasably coupled to the first support **693***a* and a second end **692** releasably coupled to the second support **693***b*. For example, the first and second supports **693***a-b* can each include two generally thin, spaced-apart ears that project from the second housing portion **682***b* and include an opening. The first and second ends **691** and **692** can have a taper and accordingly snap into the corresponding openings.

[**0043**] The bag material receptacle **680** of the illustrated embodiment further includes a cutting device **696** carried by the second housing portion **682***b*. The cutting device **696** can include a handle **697** and a blade **698** coupled to the handle **697**. A portion of the blade **698** projects through a slot **695** in the second housing portion **682***b* and into a groove **699** in the first housing portion **682***a* when the second housing portion **682***b* is in the closed position. The cutting device **696** is movable across the bag material receptacle **680** in a direction D_4 to cut bag material. For example, when the support member **690** carries a roll of bag material, a user can pull a portion of the bag material off the roll and out of the bag material receptacle **680**, close the second housing portion **682***b*, and slide the cutting device **696** in the direction D_4 to cut the bag material. The cut portion of the bag material can then be used with a vacuum packaging appliance.

[**0044**] **FIG. 8** is a schematic side cross-sectional view of a vacuum packaging appliance **700** (shown schematically) and a bag material receptacle **780** in accordance with another embodiment of the invention. The vacuum packaging appliance **700** can be generally similar to the vacuum packaging appliance **100** described above with reference to FIGS. **2**A-B. For example, the vacuum packaging appliance **700** includes a base **720** having a housing **730** with a rear surface **736**. The bag material receptacle **780** is generally similar to the bag material receptacle **680** described above with reference to FIGS. 7A-B. For example, the bag material receptacle **780** includes a first housing portion **782***a*, a second housing portion **782***b* pivotably coupled to the first housing portion **782***a*, a support member **790** disposed within the first and second housing portions **782***a-b*, and a cutting device **796**. In the illustrated embodiment, the bag material receptacle **780** is removably attached to the vacuum packaging appliance **700**. More specifically, the first housing portion **782***a* includes a surface **784** juxtaposed to the rear surface **736** of the housing **730**. In one embodiment, the surface **784** can include a projection that is received in a recess in the housing **730**. In other embodiments, the bag

material receptacle **780** can be removably attached to the housing **730** by Velcro, snaps, or other suitable fastening devices.

[**0045**] From the foregoing, it will be appreciated that specific embodiments of the invention have been described herein for purposes of illustration but that various modifications may be made without deviating from the spirit and scope of the invention. For example, even though many of the above-mentioned embodiments include support assemblies coupled to the base of vacuum packaging appliances, the support assemblies can be coupled to the lid of the appliances. Accordingly, the invention is not limited except as by the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A vacuum packaging appliance, comprising:

a base;

a lid movably coupled to the base;

a vacuum chamber at least partially within the base and/or the lid;

a vacuum pump operably coupled to the vacuum chamber to remove gas from the vacuum chamber; and

a support assembly coupled to the base and/or the lid, the support assembly being movable between a stowed position and a deployed position, the support assembly being configured to support bag material when in the deployed position.

2. The appliance of claim 1 wherein:

the support assembly includes a support member;

the base includes a housing; and

the support member is received at least partially within the housing when the support assembly is in the stowed position.

3. The appliance of claim 1 wherein:

the support assembly includes a support member;

the base includes a housing having a lower surface; and

the support member is positioned proximate to the lower surface and external to the housing when the support assembly is in the stowed position.

4. The appliance of claim 1 wherein:

the support assembly includes a support member;

the base includes a housing having a rear surface; and

the support member is positioned proximate to the rear surface and external to the housing when the support assembly is in the stowed position.

5. The appliance of claim 1 wherein the support assembly includes an elongated support member to carry the bag material.

6. The appliance of claim 1 wherein the support assembly is configured to be detached from the base and/or the lid.

7. The appliance of claim 1 wherein the support assembly includes a first support member movably coupled to the base and/or the lid and a second support member movably coupled to the first support member.

8. The appliance of claim 1 wherein the support assembly is pivotably coupled to the base and/or the lid.

9. The appliance of claim 1 wherein the support assembly includes a support member configured to slide between the stowed position and the deployed position.

10. The appliance of claim 1, further comprising a cutting device coupled to the support assembly, the cutting device configured to selectively cut the bag material.

11. A vacuum packaging appliance, comprising:

a base;

a lid movably coupled to the base;

a vacuum chamber at least partially within the base and/or the lid;

a vacuum pump operably coupled to the vacuum chamber to remove gas from the vacuum chamber; and

an external support assembly coupled to the base and/or the lid, the external support assembly including a support member configured to support bag material.

12. The appliance of claim 11 wherein the support member is fixed relative to the base or the lid.

13. The appliance of claim 11 wherein the support member is movable between a stowed position and a deployed position.

14. The appliance of claim 11 wherein the support member has a generally flat surface to carry the bag material.

15. The appliance of claim 11 wherein the support assembly is configured to be detached from the base and/or the lid.

16. The appliance of claim 11 wherein:

the support member is a first support member movably coupled to the base and/or the lid; and

the external support assembly further includes a second support member movably coupled to the first support member.

17. The appliance of claim 11 wherein the support member is pivotably coupled to the base and/or the lid.

18. The appliance of claim 11, further comprising a cutting device coupled to the support assembly, the cutting device configured to selectively cut the bag material.

19. A vacuum packaging appliance for forming at least a portion of bag material into a substantially evacuated and sealed bag, the appliance comprising:

a base;

a lid movably coupled to the base;

a vacuum chamber defined at least partially by the base and/or the lid;

a vacuum pump operably coupled to the vacuum chamber to remove gas from the vacuum chamber; and

a support assembly including a first support member movably coupled to the base and/or the lid and a second support member movably coupled to the first support member, the first and/or second support member configured to support the bag material.

20. The appliance of claim 19 wherein the support assembly is movable between a deployed position and a stowed position.

21. The appliance of claim 19 wherein the support assembly is configured to be detached from the base and/or the lid.

22. The appliance of claim 19 wherein the first support member is pivotably coupled to the base and/or the lid.

23. The appliance of claim 19 wherein the first support member is slideable relative to the base and/or the lid.

24. A vacuum packaging appliance, comprising:

a base having a first housing;

a lid movably coupled to the base, the lid having a second housing;

a vacuum chamber at least partially within the first and/or second housing;

a vacuum pump operably coupled to the vacuum chamber to remove gas from the vacuum chamber; and

a means for supporting bag material, the means for supporting bag material being external to the first and second housings and coupled to the base and/or the lid.

25. The appliance of claim 24 wherein the means for supporting bag material includes an elongated support member having a generally flat surface.

26. The appliance of claim 24 wherein the means for supporting bag material is movable between a stowed position and a deployed position.

27. The appliance of claim 24 wherein the means for supporting bag material is configured to be detached from the base and/or the lid.

28. The appliance of claim 24 wherein the means for supporting bag material includes a first support member movably coupled to the base and/or the lid and a second support member movably coupled to the first support member.

29. A vacuum packaging appliance, comprising:

a base;

a lid movably coupled to the base;

a vacuum chamber at least partially within the base and/or the lid;

a vacuum pump operably coupled to the vacuum chamber to remove gas from the vacuum chamber; and

a means for supporting bag material coupled to the base and/or the lid, the means for supporting bag material being movable between a stowed position and a deployed position.

30. The appliance of claim 29 wherein the means for supporting bag material includes an elongated support member having a generally flat surface.

31. The appliance of claim 29 wherein the means for supporting bag material is configured to be detached from the base and/or the lid.

32. The appliance of claim 29 wherein the means for supporting bag material includes a first support member movably coupled to the base and/or the lid and a second support member movably coupled to the first support member.

33. A vacuum packaging system, comprising:

a vacuum packaging appliance including a base, a lid movably coupled to the base, a vacuum chamber within the base and/or the lid, and a vacuum pump operably coupled to the vacuum chamber to remove gas from the vacuum chamber; and

a support assembly attachable to the vacuum packaging appliance, the support assembly including a support member configured to support bag material.

34. The system of claim 33 wherein the support assembly further includes a first housing portion and a second housing portion movable relative to the first housing portion.

35. The system of claim 33 wherein the support member has an elongated cylindrical configuration to carry the bag material.

36. The system of claim 33 wherein the support assembly further includes a cutting device configured to selectively cut the bag material.

37. A vacuum packaging bag material receptacle, the receptacle comprising:

a first housing portion;

a second housing portion coupled to the first housing portion, the second housing portion being movable relative to the first housing portion between an open position and a closed position;

a support member within the first and second housing portions, the support member configured to carry bag material; and

a cutting device carried by the first and/or second housing portion, the cutting device configured to selectively cut the bag material.

38. The receptacle of claim 37 wherein:

the second housing portion includes a plurality of supports; and

the support member is removably coupled to the supports.

39. The receptacle of claim 37 wherein the support member has an elongated cylindrical configuration.

40. The receptacle of claim 37 wherein:

the second housing portion includes a slot;

the cutting device is carried by the second housing portion with at least a portion of the cutting device received in the slot; and

the cutting device is slideable within the slot between a first position and a second position.

41. The receptacle of claim 37 wherein the first housing portion is pivotably coupled to the second housing portion.

42. A method for positioning bag material on a vacuum packaging appliance, the method comprising:

providing a vacuum packaging appliance including a base, a lid pivotably coupled to the base, a vacuum chamber within the base and/or the lid, a vacuum pump operably coupled to the vacuum chamber, and a support assembly movably coupled to the base and/or the lid;

moving the support assembly from a stowed position to a deployed position; and

placing the bag material on a support member of the support assembly.

43. The method of claim 42 wherein:

the base includes a housing; and

moving the support assembly includes moving the support member from the stowed position within the housing to the deployed position outside the housing.

44. The method of claim 42 wherein moving the support assembly includes moving the support member from the stowed position proximate to a bottom surface of the base to the deployed position proximate to a rear surface of the base.

45. The method of claim 42 wherein:

the bag material is arranged in a roll with a center hole; and

placing the bag material on the support member includes positioning the support member in the center hole of the bag material.

46. The method of claim 42 wherein moving the support assembly includes pivoting the support assembly relative to the base.

47. The method of claim 42 wherein moving the support assembly includes sliding the support member relative to the base.

48. The method of claim 42 wherein:

the support member is a first support member coupled to the base;

the support assembly further includes a second support member coupled to the first support member; and

moving the support assembly includes moving the first support member relative to the base and moving the second support member relative to the first support member.

49. The method of claim 42, further comprising cutting the bag material with a cutting device movably coupled to the support assembly.

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