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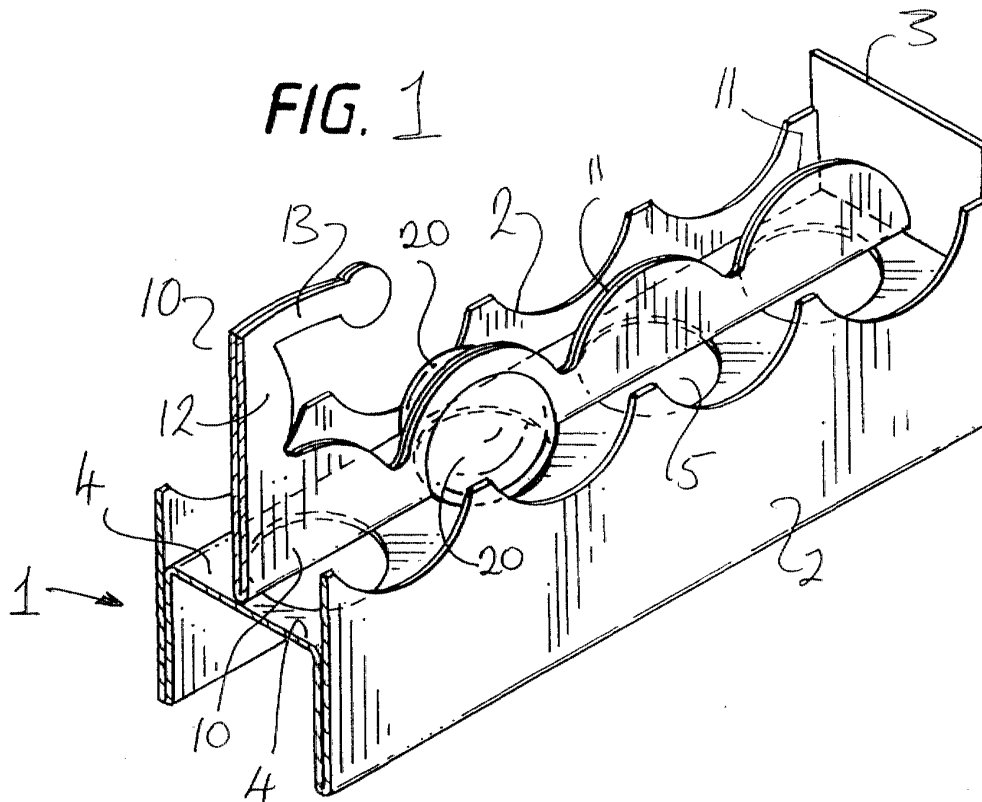
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(54) **Confectionery packaging**

(57) There is described a package, principally intended for confectionery items, wherein a plurality of items are attached to the exposed faces of an elongate

planar spine element. The spine element is preferably formed from a planar blank of flexible material such as card, and the items are preferably individually wrapped in foil or film and attached to the spine by an adhesive.



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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to packaging and packaging methods, and is primarily concerned with packaging for confectionery.

[0002] Confectionery such as chocolates has hitherto been sold either in loose form, with the chocolates individually wrapped, or in boxes wherein a selection of chocolates are received in respective wells in a tray lining the box.

[0003] Confectionery in loose form, even when individually wrapped, is prone to damage during transit, marring the appearance of the final product and reducing customer appeal. The provision of a box including a lining to hold individual chocolates in place is not only expensive in terms of the packaging materials involved, but also involves considerable labour in assembling the final package, or requires expensive machinery.

[0004] An objective of the present invention is to provide a low-cost package for confectionery items such as chocolates, wherein the items are protected from damage during transit, and are attractively presented to the consumer.

[0005] A first aspect of the invention provides a package for confectionery items in which pairs of confectionery items are bonded to opposite sides of a substantially rigid spine formed from a flexible sheet material.

[0006] A second aspect of the invention provides a method for packaging confectionery items including the steps of forming a substantially rigid spine from a folded blank of flexible material such as card, and bonding confectionery items to opposing faces of the spine.

[0007] In another aspect, the invention provides a blank for folding into a product package, the blank comprising a pair of spine halves adapted to be brought into overlying relationship and bonded together to form a substantially rigid spine

[0008] Embodiments of the invention will now be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a sectional perspective view of a first package according to the invention;

Figure 2 is a perspective view similar to Figure 1 showing a second package according to the invention;

Figure 3 is a partial perspective view of a variation of the package shown in Figure 2;

Figure 4 is a perspective view of a further embodiment of the invention;

Figure 5 is a plan view of a blank for forming the package of Figure 4; and

Figure 6 is a partial perspective view of a variant of the package shown in Figures 4 and 5.

[0009] Referring now to the Figures, Figure 1 shows a package formed from two card blanks, containing ten confectionery items of a generally hemispherical shape.

The package comprises a main body 1, a spine 10, and ten confectionery items 20 attached to the spine 10. In the Figure only two of the confectionery items are shown, for clarity. The confectionery items may be chocolates, boiled sweets, gum, toffees, or any other snack food item. The package may also be used for savoury items, or a mixture of sweet and savoury items, provided that each of the items is individually wrapped.

[0010] The main body 1 is generally rectangular in plan, having a pair of sidewalls 2 and a pair of end walls 3, of which only one is shown. The main body 1 further comprises a shelf 4 extending between the sidewalls and the end walls, the shelf 4 being formed with four generally circular openings 5. The main body 1 is preferably formed from a single sheet of card or other similar flexible material. The face of the card which forms the outer surfaces of the sidewalls 2 and end walls 3 may be printed with decoration or indicia relating to the confectionery items.

[0011] The spine 10 is preferably formed from a single sheet of card or similar material folded and glued to itself to form a double thickness. This folding of the spine not only produces a stronger structure, but enables a spine which is decorated on both its visible faces to be formed from card which has been printed only on one side.

[0012] The confectionery items 20 are substantially hemispherical in shape, and are individually wrapped in foil or plastics film material. The confectionery items 20 are bonded to the spine 10, preferably using a food-safe hot-melt adhesive, or other suitable bonding agent. In the illustrated embodiment, the spine 10 is formed with four generally arcuate convex curves 11 on its upper edge, and the confectionery items 20 are bonded in pairs to the respective opposite sides of the spine substantially concentrically with these arcuate curves 11. The spine 10 and wrappings of the confectionery items 20 may be printed so that when assembled the spine generally represents a segmented body such as of a stylized insect or other creature. The spine 10 may have an upstanding projection 12 at one end, to which a further pair of confectionery items may be bonded to resemble a "head". The spine 10 may be further formed with extensions 13 projecting from the "head" so as to resemble antennae.

[0013] To assemble the package, the printed blank of the spine is laid flat, printed side uppermost, and the confectionery items 20 are bonded to the spine in their respective positions using hot-melt or other suitable adhesive. The spine 10 is then folded about a central fold line and bonded to itself with the printed side and confectionery items outermost. Alternatively, the spine 10 may first be folded and bonded to itself, and the confectionery items thereafter bonded to the respective faces of the folded spine.

[0014] The main body 1 is then folded from its generally one-dimensional blank to a three-dimensional structure comprising upstanding sidewalls 2 and end walls 3, and a shelf 4 extending between the sidewalls and end

walls. The spine 10 with attached confectionery items 20 is then offered up to the shelf 4, so that the four pairs of confectionery items 20 bonded to the spine 10 adjacent the fold line are received in the openings 5 formed in the shelf 4. In the embodiment shown, the confectionery items 20 extend beyond the fold line of the spine, and the openings 5 are so shaped as to engage with their edges the confectionery items 20. In the preferred embodiments, the majority of the flat face of each confectionery item 20 is bonded to the spine 10.

[0015] If desired, the assembled package comprising the main body 1 and the spine 10 with its bonded confectionery items 20 may be encased in a generally parallelepipedal outer package (not shown), preferably formed from transparent plastics material.

[0016] Figure 2 shows an alternative embodiment of the present invention, in which the main body of the package and the spine of formed from a single card blank, by folding. In Figure 2, the package comprises a pair of upstanding outer sidewalls 30, joined at the lower edges by a fold line 31 to a pair of inner sidewalls 32. The inner sidewalls 32 extend upwardly in contact with the outer sidewalls 30 to a point intermediate the height of the outer sidewalls 30. The upper edges of the inner sidewalls 32 are formed by fold lines 33, which join the inner sidewalls 32 to shelf sections 34 which extend inwardly from the sidewalls to meet on the longitudinal centerline of the package. The shelf sections 34 are formed with openings 35 which perform similar functions to the openings 5 in the embodiment illustrated in Figure 1. The adjacent edges 36 of the shelf sections 34 are joined by fold lines to respective halves 40a and 40b of an upstanding spine portion 40. A fold line 41 extends along the top edge of the spine 40, joining the two halves.

[0017] To assemble the package of figure 2, a card blank is first folded to form the main body and spine of the package, and confectionery items 20 are then bonded to the spine, located by the edges of the openings 35. The openings 35 are shaped to correspond to the form of the confectionery items. As in the previous case, the package and confectionery may be enclosed in an outer casing, preferably of transparent material.

[0018] Figure 3 shows a variation of the embodiment shown in Figure 2. Corresponding parts to those of Figure 2 have been given corresponding reference numbers in Figure 3. The principal difference between the embodiments of Figure 2 and Figure 3 is that in the figure 3 embodiment the spine halves 40a and 40b extend upwardly from the shelf sections 34 by a distance sufficient for the confectionery items 20 to be bonded to the spine halves without penetrating the shelf sections 34. The shelf sections 34 thus do not need to be formed with openings 35, and a more rigid package can result.

[0019] It will be appreciated that in the embodiment shown in Figures 2 and 3, if printed indicia are to be visible on the outside surfaces of the outer sidewalls 30 and on the visible surfaces of the spine 40, both sides

of the cardboard blank forming the package will require printing. In an alternative embodiment, not illustrated, the direction of the fold at fold line 31 may be reversed so that the sidewalls are of a double thickness, with the outer thickness of each sidewall being joined to a respective shelf section 34. Such a construction allows the card blank to be printed on one side only, yet to display printed indicia on the outer surfaces of the sidewalls and the spine 40.

[0020] In a further alternative embodiment, the card blank may be configured so that each spine half is joined to a shelf section, and each shelf section is joined to an upstanding inner sidewall portion, the upper edge of which is joined to an outer sidewall portion extending downwardly in contact with the inner sidewall portion. This structure also enables the exposed surfaces of the spine and the outer sidewalls to bear indicia, while requiring only one face of the card blank to be printed. The shelf portions may be spaced from the lower edges of the sidewalls, or may be substantially coplanar therewith.

[0021] Figures 4 and 5, respectively, show an alternative package according to the invention, and a card blank from which the package is formed. The card blank of Figure 5 comprises four rectangular sections 51 to 54 joined side-by-side by fold lines 51a, 50, and 52a. The outermost edges 53a, 54a of the sections 53 and 54 are joined by fold lines to respective halves 55, 56 of a shaped spine having areas 20a to which confectionery items will be bonded. Fold line 50 defines a central axis of symmetry of the card blank. On either side of fold line 50 are situated rectangular lower base sections 51 and 52, and these are attached at their respective edges 51a and 52a remote from fold line 50 to the edges of respective ones of a pair of upper base sections 53 and 54.

[0022] To the outer edges of upper base sections 53 and 54 are attached spine halves 55 and 56, respectively. The spine halves 55 and 56 may be shaped and decorated, as seen at 57, to resemble stylized or lifelike animals, cartoon characters or the like. Alternatively, other forms of decoration may be used. An important feature of the spine halves 55 and 56 is that they are symmetrical about the central fold line 50 in shape.

[0023] To assemble the package shown in Figure 4 from the blank shown in Figure 5, the blank is first printed with the required decoration on one face only. The blank is then folded about central fold line 50, and adhesive is applied to the spine halves 55 and 56 to bond them together, with the printed sides outward. In this condition, the blanks are still flat, and may be shipped economically. In an alternative embodiment (not illustrated), the central fold line 50 may be omitted, and lower base sections 51 and 52 replaced by a single lower base section. In this configuration, however, the folding of the blank to join the spine halves 55 and 56 together results in a three-dimensional structure unsuitable for economical transportation.

[0024] To complete the package, confectionery items

20 are bonded to the faces of the spine halves 55 and 56, at the designated areas 20a. The lower base sections 51 and 52 are then brought into a substantially coplanar relationship by unfolding the fold line 50 and simultaneously folding the junctions 51a and 52a between the upper and lower base sections and the junctions 53a and 54a between upper base sections and their respective spine halves. The lower base sections 51 and 52 may form a substantially flat undersurface on which the package may rest, or may be inclined to one another to form a reentrant undersurface. In this latter configuration, the package will stand on a horizontal surface with only the junctions 51a and 52a in contact with the surface. The upper base sections 53 and 54 of the finished package are inclined inwardly and upwardly from the edges 51a, 52a of the undersurface, and the bonded spine halves extend upwardly from the upper edges of the upper base sections. The decoration 57 on the spine may resemble a procession of stylized animals, or any other desired decorative effect such as mountain ranges or the like.

[0025] Figure 6 shows a modified package similar to that of Figures 4 and 5. In the embodiment shown in Figure 6, like reference numerals are used to indicate parts corresponding to those shown in Figures 4 and 5. In the Figure 4 embodiment, the upper and lower base sections 51 to 54 form a generally triangular prism extending longitudinally of the package. In the Figure 6 embodiment, two additional rectangular panels are formed in the blank between the upper and lower base sections, one on either side of the central fold line 50. When the blank is folded and the spine halves bonded together, these additional panels 60 and 61 form upstanding sidewalls extending substantially vertically between the lower base sections 51 and 52 and their respective upper base sections 53 and 54. The additional panels 61 and 62 provide exterior vertical surfaces for decoration or product information, and give a more substantial appearance to the base of the package.

[0026] In yet a further alternative configuration a package similar to that of Figures 4 and 6 may be formed from a blank in which the spine halves are centrally positioned and joined by a fold line. The panels forming the base are attached to the outer edges of the spine halves, and the undersurface of the finished package may be a single panel joined at one edge to an upper base panel or to a sidewall panel by a fold line, and a fixing tab may be provided to attach its opposite edge to the other upper base of sidewall panel. The undersurface may in a further alternative be formed from two halves, each joined by a fold line to a respective upper base or sidewall panel, and the two halves being joined on the centreline of the finished package by a fixing tab integral with one half and attachable to the other, for example by bonding.

[0027] It will be appreciated that the package is shown in Figures 4 to 6 require card blanks to be printed on one side only, but provide a package in which every external

surface of the package is or can be a printed surface.

[0028] In the package is shown in Figures 4 to 6, the decoration on the spine comprises a procession of four stylized animals. It will be understood that the decoration may be other than animals, and the number of repeats of the decoration, and therefore the number of confectionery items attached to the spine, may be more or less than four on each side of the spine. It is further foreseen that the decoration of the spine is not necessarily limited to a repetitive decoration, but for example a procession of assorted animals may be provided. In a further embodiment, not illustrated, numerical indicia may be associated with each of the confectionery items so that the package may be sold and used as an Advent calendar or the like.

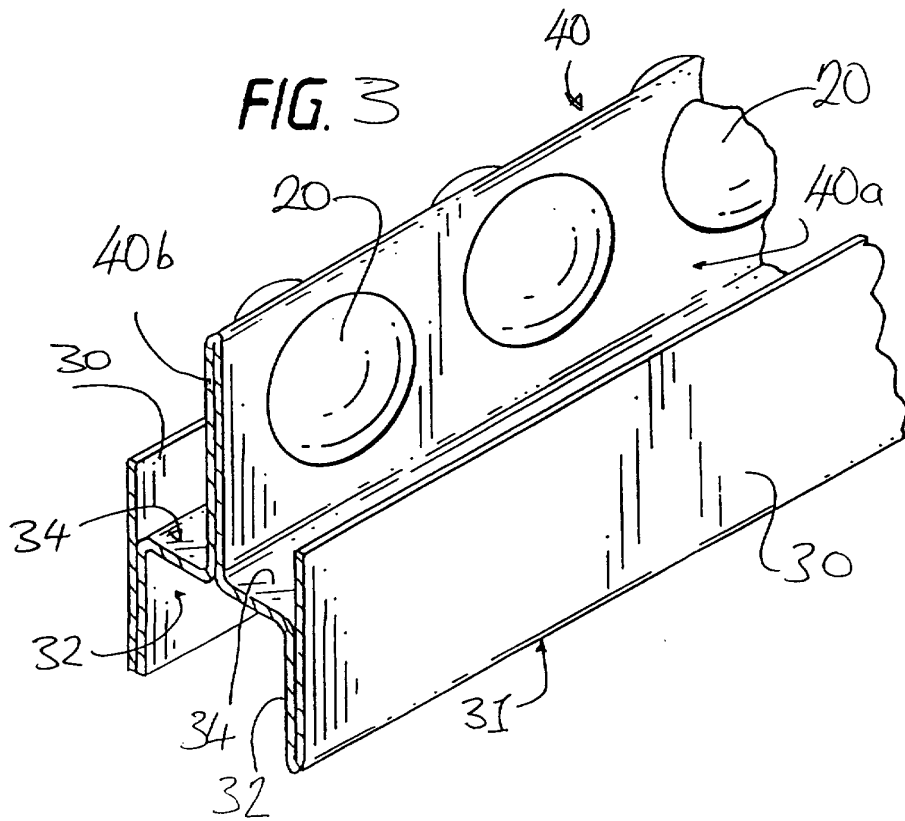
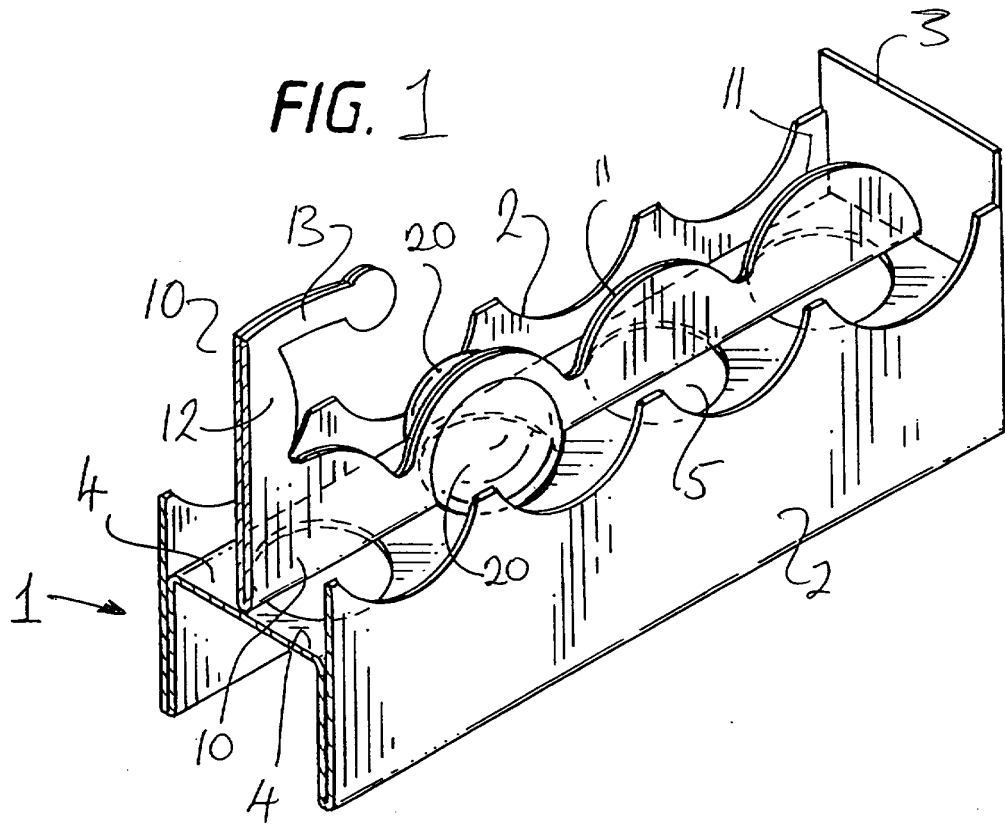
[0029] In the packages described, the confectionery items have been bonded to the spine at corresponding locations along the length of the spine. However, it is foreseen that a staggered or alternating arrangement may be adopted wherein a confectionery item is bonded on one side of the spine at a longitudinal position corresponding to a gap between two confectionery items bonded to the other side of the spine.

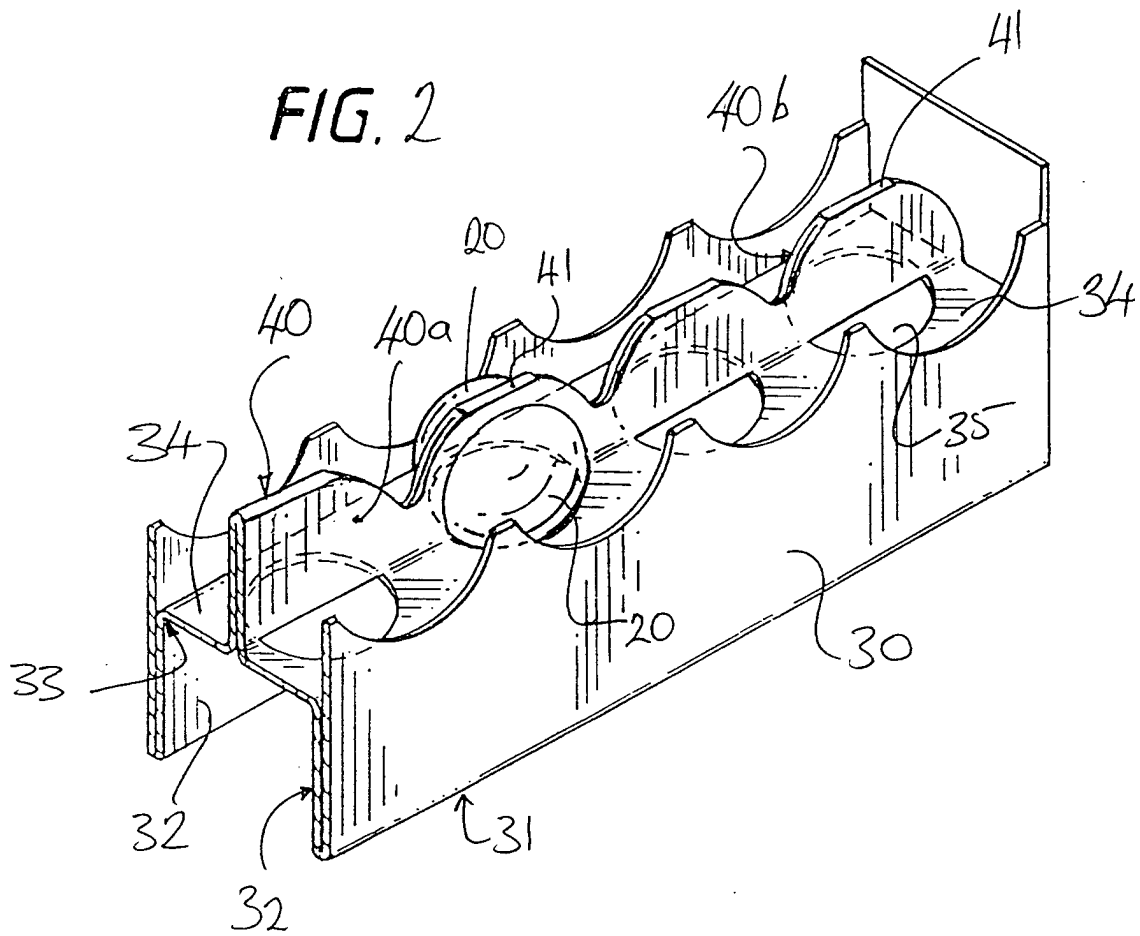
[0030] In order to enhance the utility of the product package, it is foreseen that promotional material may be printed on the areas 20a of the spine to which confectionery items are to be attached, so that when users detach the confectionery items from the spine, the promotional material becomes visible. The promotional material may comprise prize draw information or any other promotional information.

Claims

1. A package for a plurality of items, comprising a substantially planar elongate spine element and at least one item attached to each face of the spine element.
2. A package according to claim 1, wherein the items are attached to the spine element by adhesive bonding.
3. A package according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the items are individually wrapped in flexible film material, and the film material is attached to the spine element.
4. A package according to any preceding claim, wherein a base is attached to one longitudinal edge of the spine element.
5. A package according to claim 4, wherein the base comprises a pair of upper base panels attached at one of their respective edges to the spine element and diverging therefrom, and a lower base panel joining the edges of the upper base panels remote from the spine.

6. A package according to claim 5, wherein the lower base panel comprises a pair of lower base panel halves joined by a longitudinal fold line.
7. A package according to claim 5, wherein the lower base panel is integral with the package at one longitudinal edge and is attachable to the package at its other longitudinal edge. 5
8. A package according to any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the spine element extends substantially perpendicularly from a planar shelf element extending along one longitudinal edge of the spine element. 10
9. A package according to claim 8, wherein the shelf element comprises two shelf portions, each integrally attached to the spine along one edge. 15
10. A package according to claim 8 or claim 9, wherein sidewalls are provided at the edges of the shelf element remove from the spine, the sidewalls extending in planes substantially parallel to that of the spine. 20
11. A package according to any of claims 8 to 10, wherein the shelf element is formed with opening to receive the items attached to the spine element. 25
12. A blank of planar flexible material for forming a package comprising first and second complementary spine portions each having an exposed surface and a faying surface, wherein the faying surfaces are inversely congruent so as to be attachable in superimposed relation to each other to form a spine, and the exposed surfaces being provided with areas for the attachment of items to be packaged. 30
35
13. A blank according to claim 12, wherein the spine portions are joined together at a fold line. 40
14. A method of forming a package of a plurality of items, comprising:
 providing an elongate planar spine element;
 and
 attaching at least one item to each face of the spine element. 45
15. A package substantially as described herein, or with reference to Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4 or Figure 6 of the accompanying drawings. 50
16. A blank for a package substantially as described herein, or with reference to Figure 5 of the accompanying drawings. 55
17. A method of forming a package substantially as described herein.





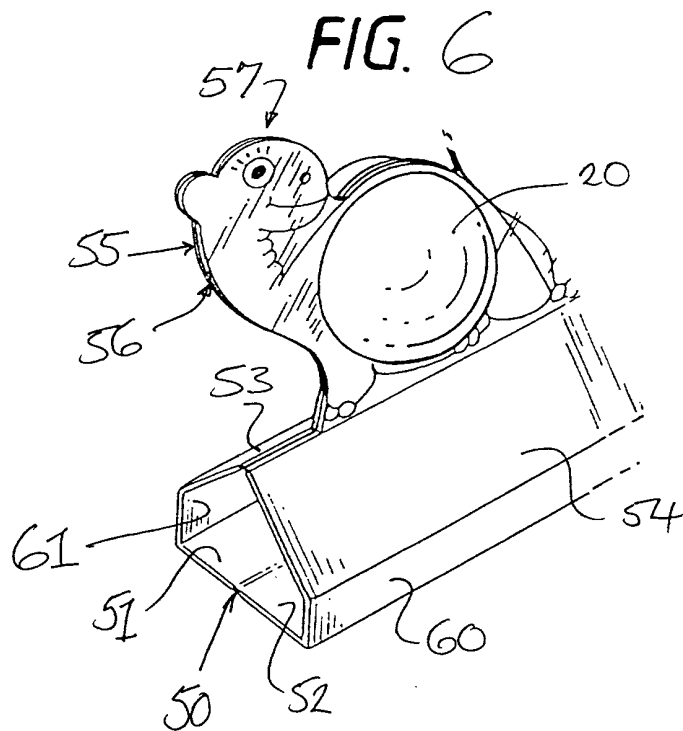
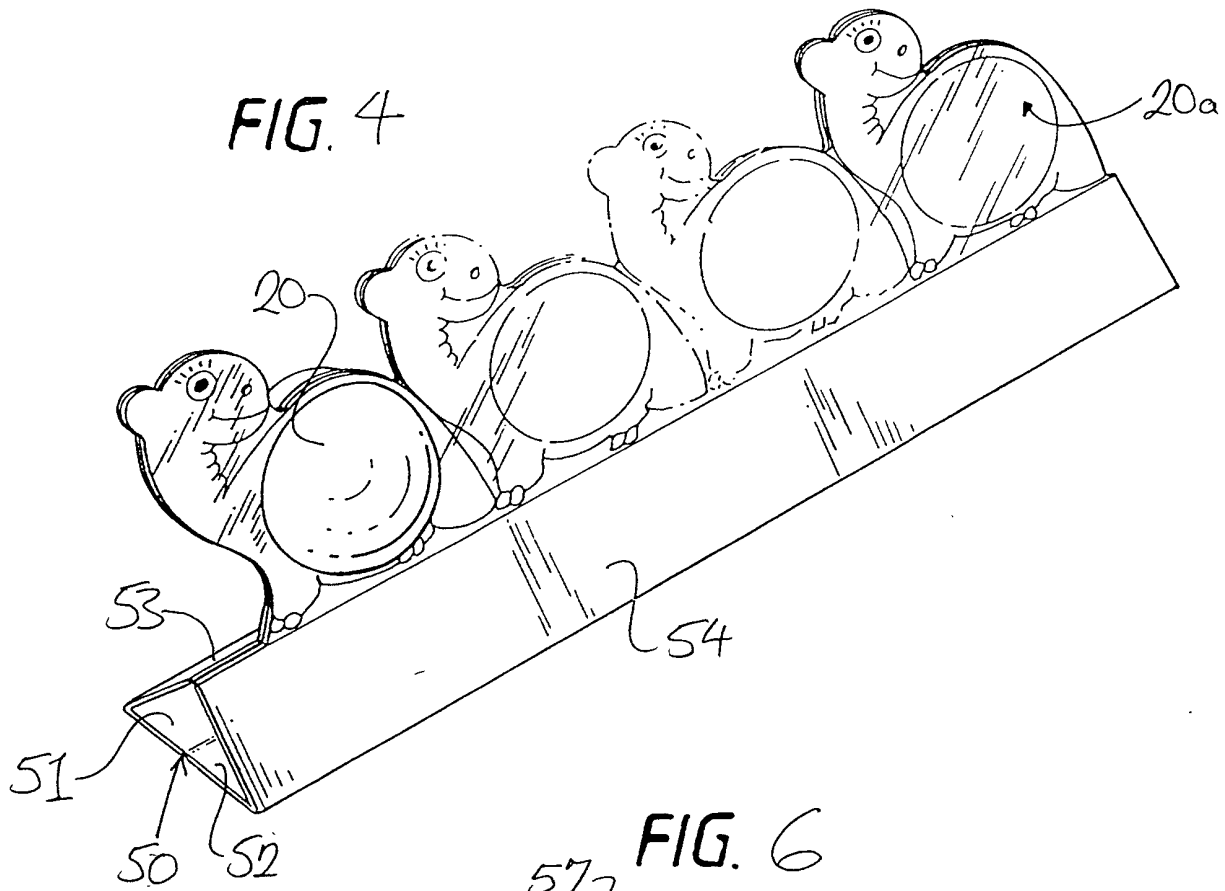


FIG 5

