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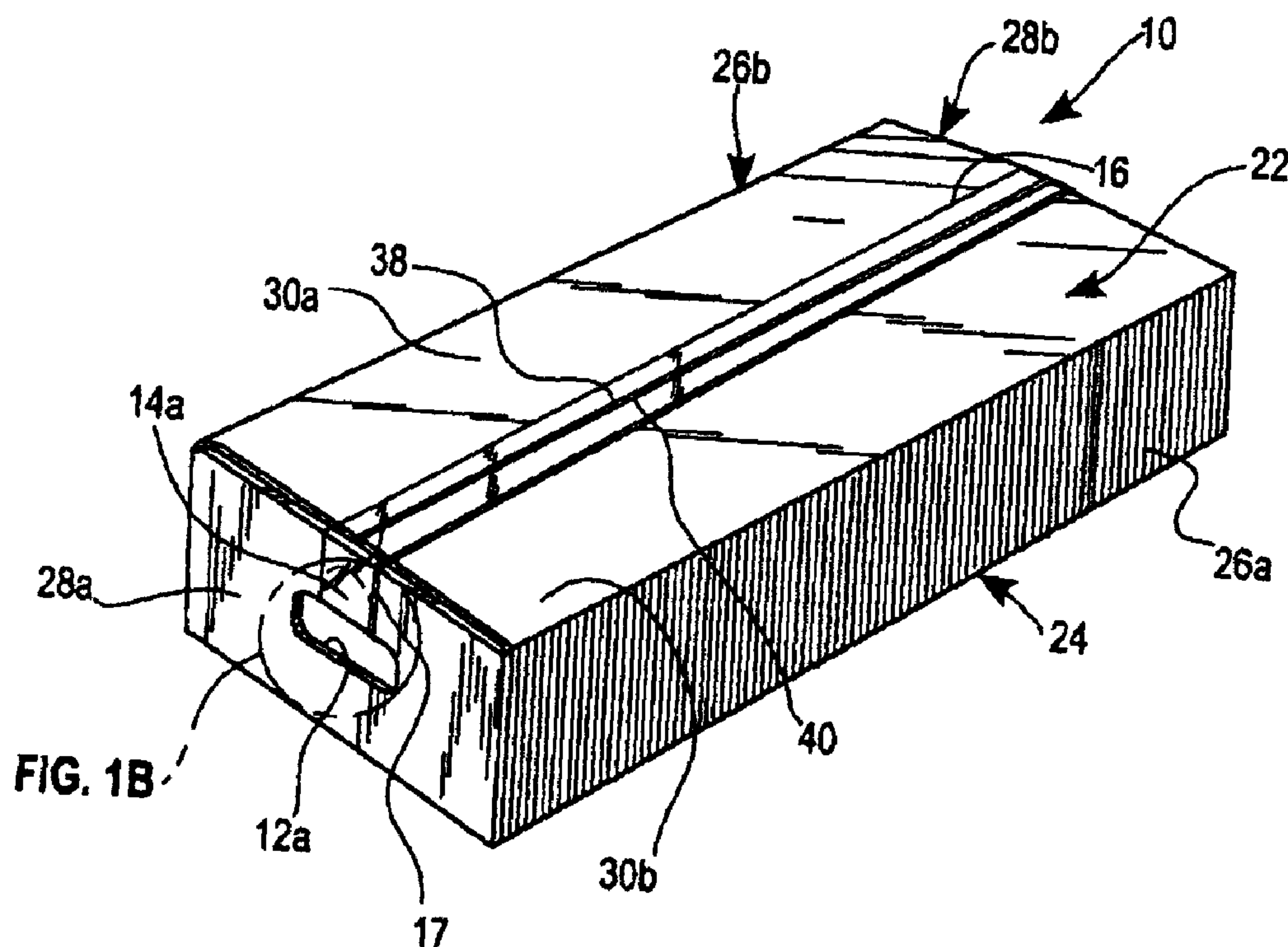
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(54) Titre : BANDELETTE D'ARRACHAGE POUR CARTON A FERMETURE PAR RUBAN, ET METHODE

(54) Title: EASY OPENING FEATURE FOR A TAPED CARTON AND METHOD THEREOF



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

An easy opening feature to open a sealed and taped carton, such as a partially perforated tab, adjacent an opening in an end panel of the carton where an adhesive strip is placed over a top panel of the carton and extends down the end panel and over at least a portion of the tab. Upon removing the tab from the carton the adhesive strip is removed along with the tab. A method for opening the carton comprises applying a force to lift up on the partially perforated tab to remove the tab from the carton and to continue lifting upward to remove the remainder of the adhesive strip from the top panel.

Abstract

An easy opening feature to open a sealed and taped carton, such as a partially perforated tab, adjacent an opening in an end panel of the carton where an adhesive strip is placed over a top panel of the carton and extends down the end panel and over at least a portion of the tab. Upon removing the tab from the carton the adhesive strip is removed along with the tab. A method for opening the carton comprises applying a force to lift up on the partially perforated tab to remove the tab from the carton and to continue lifting upward to remove the remainder of the adhesive strip from the top panel.

Easy Opening Feature for a Taped Carton and Method Thereof

Field

[0001] The invention relates generally to an easy open feature for a taped carton.

Background

[0002] Products are often packaged and shipped in a taped shipping carton or box in order to transport and deliver large quantities of products to a specific location. The cartons are often sized large enough to hold multiple products and/or packages. The shipping cartons are often made out of corrugated paperboard or other material that is shaped as a rectangle or square parallelepiped and has flaps that fold over on an upper surface and a lower surface to close the carton. As the flaps are folded, they are often secured by a strip of tape, or other similar adhering means, to keep the folded flaps together and sealed. The tape is often strongly bonded to the paperboard material of the carton and cannot easily be removed without tearing apart or cutting the carton, the tape, or both.

[0003] Once the sealed carton has reached its destination, the carton needs to be opened in order to gain access to the contents. One typical method to remove the tape can involve using a knife or other tool to slit the tape. However, with this method a user must take care not to cut too deeply so that the contents of the carton are not damaged by the knife. Another method is for the user to simply try to tear the tape and/or carton apart without any tools in order to gain access to the contents. This method can present a challenge if the user does not have enough force to tear off the tape or to tear apart the carton, and the carton and contents can become damaged or disfigured upon application of the necessary force.

[0004] As a result, there are various carton designs that try to improve upon the opening and/or sealing mechanisms of shipping cartons.

[0005] In U.S. Patent No. 3,302,857, a container has an opening feature that consists of a weakened line of separation along top flap closures and a removable area along a side end wall. Tape can be placed over the weakened line of separation and down the side end wall over the removable area. To open the container, the removable area

must be pressed inwardly, toward the interior of the container, to first free a portion of the edges of the removable area from the container side wall. The freed lower end of the removable area that is then exposed can be grasped and pulled outwardly to remove it from the interior of the container and then pulled upward. As the removable area is pulled upward, the container will continue to tear along the weakened portion of the top flap closures, which removes a portion of the top flap closures from the top flaps along with the tape that is adhered across the top of the weakened portions. To open the container, one must punch out the removable area from the side panel of the container, then pull up on the removable area to rip or separate the weakened portion of the top flap closures from the top part of the container. The top portion of the container and part of the side become torn in doing so. If the container were to be reclosed, the top flap closures would not close completely, having a gap therebetween. Additionally, there is a large amount of waste to dispose of after opening the container, *i.e.*, the tape plus a portion of the paperboard container.

[0006] U.S. Patent No. 6,471,120 describes a bag-in-box package or carton that can be closed or sealed without the use of tape simply by folding over and adhering the top panel to the carton. The top panel consists of a pair of major flaps and a pair of minor flaps, both visible from the top of the carton and both making up the top surface of the top panel. The carton is opened by pulling up on a tear strip grip that is attached to a tear strip which extends across the top panel of the carton and is ripped away upon pulling the grip upward across the top of the carton. The tear strip can consist of a weakened line, perforation, string, or other structure that aids in ripping and that divides the minor flaps into two segments to allow for the tear strip to pass therethrough. Upon opening the carton, the tear strip is pulled to tear or separate the minor flaps into two segments, while the minor flaps are still adhered to the carton, and to open the pair of major flaps. The carton only opens between the major flaps and not the minor flaps, which remain sealed or closed. Thus, access to the entire interior of the carton is limited. Furthermore, opening the carton requires effort to break apart a portion of the paperboard carton in order to open the top major flaps of the carton.

[0007] Therefore, a need remains for an easy to open feature that can enable

removal of a tape strip without requiring the use of tools.

Summary

[0008] An easy-open pull tab feature and method of opening is provided for a sealed and taped shipping carton. In a preferred embodiment, at least one partially perforated shape or removable pull tab is cut into the side of a shipping carton blank at the time of manufacture. The pull tab can be adjacent a hand-hold opening or can have its own access hole therein. Through the adjacent opening, the user can insert a finger behind the back of the tab and lift the tab upward in order to lift up and remove the partially perforated pull tab from the carton and as a result lift with it the tape that was applied to a top panel to seal the filled carton. The pull tab can then act as an anchor to pull and separate the tape from the carton along the remainder of the top panel in order to open the carton.

[0009] The partially perforated pull tab is positioned on an end panel of the shipping carton such that when the carton is taped to seal major flaps along the top panel together, the tape extends down the side end panel of the carton and covers a portion of the pull tab. No additional glues or adhesives are required to seal the flaps of the carton in order to close the carton. Furthermore, an end of the tape extends down along a side of the end panel of the carton and terminates at the tab, without leaving any loose end of tape exposed that may adhere to other surfaces such as other portions of the carton. Additionally, the user pulls up on an anchor, *i.e.*, the tab, to initiate tape removal, rather than pulling on the tape strip itself which can tear or rip before removal of the entire strip can be effected.

[0010] As a result of the tab being provided adjacent to the opening, a lower edge of the tab is already accessible and free-standing from the rest of the carton, with only a portion of the tab connected to the carton along a perforated area or weakened region. This allows one to grasp the lower edge of the tab and to place one's fingers behind the tab in order to pull on the tab and lift it up and away from the perforated area of the carton without requiring excessive force and without requiring one to first push in the tab, since not all of the tab's edges are attached to the carton. The tab can be joined to the end wall by at least a portion of the weakened region yet have sufficient strength to permit the filled

carton to be supported thereat by manual engagement of the tab at the opening without fracturing the weakened region. Thus, the tab can be removable by application of an outward manual force in excess of the outward manual force associated with supporting the filled carton by the tab so that the tape can be peeled off of the carton by fracturing the weakened region and then pulling the tab up and across the top of the carton.

[0011] Additionally, as the portion of the tab connected to the carton is released along its perforated area and lifted up, the tape strip placed over the top panel and part of the side end panel is also lifted up with the tab. As the tab is continually lifted upward, the tape strip from the top panel of the carton is also removed. Therefore, with the exception of the small piece of tab removed from the end panel of the carton, there is no significant ripping or tearing of the carton itself in order to remove the tape strip from the top panel of the carton.

[0012] After the tape strip is removed from the carton, the top panel and, in particular, a pair of flaps, *i.e.*, major flaps, having adjacent edges can be pivotable between an open and closed position such that the carton can be completely opened to expose the entire interior area of the carton allowing complete accessibility to the contents packaged inside. If desired, the carton can be completely reclosed by folding the major flaps into a closed position without having any gaps between the flaps due to opening the carton. Furthermore, the remaining waste from opening the carton only consists of the tape strip and the small tab piece, rather than a large portion of the carton being ripped up with the tape strip.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0013] FIG. 1A is a perspective view of an assembled carton that is sealed with tape across its top panel and down a portion of its end panel and tab;

[0014] FIG. 1B is a detailed view of an end panel of the carton of FIG. 1A;

[0015] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of FIG. 1A showing the tab being lifted up and removed from the end panel;

[0016] FIG. 3 is another perspective view of FIG. 1A showing the tape being removed from the top panel of the carton using the tab to initiate the removal; and

[0017] FIG. 4 is a plan view of a blank used to make the carton shown in FIG. 1A.

Detailed Description of the Drawings

[0018] A carton having an easy-opening feature, such as a removable tab, that can be easily removed from the carton while also removing a tape strip along with it, and methods for opening the carton, are disclosed herein and illustrated in FIGS. 1-4.

[0019] In particular, as illustrated in FIG. 1A, an assembled and sealed carton 10 is shown having a bottom panel 24, a top panel 22, a pair of side panels 26a and 26b that connect the top 22 and bottom 24 panels, and a pair of end panels 28a and 28b adjacent the side panels 26a and 26b and also connecting the top 22 and bottom 24 panels and further comprising at least one opening 12a therein having a partially perforated removable tab 14a adjacent the opening 12a. Alternatively, the tab provided on the end panel can have its own access opening or hole. A tape strip 16 can be applied to the top panel 22 of the carton 10 to seal and close the carton 10 while an end 17 of the tape strip 16 terminates at the tab 14a. Upon removing the partially perforated tab 14a from a perforated area 18 of the end panel 28a, the tape strip 16 is removed along with it.

[0020] The opening is located at one of the end panels 28a or 28b. The tab 14a is at least partially perforated and adjacent the opening 12a. Optionally, an opening 12 may be provided at each end panel 28a and 28b, and each opening 12 may also have a tab 14 adjacent the opening 12, such that the tape strip 16 and tab 14 can be removed at either end. As can be seen in more detail in FIG. 1B, the tab 14a has a weakened area 18, such as a score line, a perforated portion, or the like, along one portion of the tab 14a, and a lower edge 20 that is not perforated or weakened. The lower edge 20 defines a portion of an upper edge of the opening 12a, and further provides for a grasping point or anchor upon removal of the tab 14a, as will be described herein.

[0021] The tab 14a can have any shape, and in one aspect, it can have a semi-circular shape where a curved edge portion is at least partially perforated, as shown in FIG. 1B, and is attached to the end panel 28a via the curved edge portion, which in this aspect can comprise both a perforated portion 18 and a non-perforated portion 19. The perforated portion 18 can make up the majority of the curved edge of the tab 14, with a small, *i.e.*, less than 10 percent, of the edge being a non-perforated portion 19. The tab 14 is preferably partially perforated with a small section 19 adjacent the opening 12 being non-

perforated. The non-perforated section 19 just adjacent the opening 12 gives the tab 14 extra durability and strength, such that the tab 14 cannot be accidentally removed or ripped away from the carton 10, such as when carrying the carton 10 via its opening 12. The straight edge 20 is not perforated and abuts a portion of the opening 12a.

[0022] The carton 10 can be sealed with an adhesive strip, such as a tape strip 16, that is placed over adjacent inner edges 38 and 40 of a pair of major flaps 30a and 30b on the top panel 22 of the carton 10 to keep the carton 10 closed and can extend down over the edges of the carton 10 between the top panel 22 and the end panels 28a and 28b and along a portion of the end panels 28a and 28b. At least one end 17 of the tape strip 16 can terminate at the tab 14a, at least partially covering the tab 14a, such that the end 17 of the tape strip 16 generally does not extend past the lower edge 20 of the tab 14a and into the opening 12a. The opposite end of the tape strip 16 can also extend down the other side of the end panel 28b and if an opening and tab is also present, then the opposite end of the tape strip 16 can likewise terminate at the opposite tab 14b. If the end 17 of the tape strip 16 is longer than the lower edge 20 of the tab 14a, then the tape strip 16 can be folded up and behind the tab 14a so that it wraps around the bottom or lower edge 20 of the tab 14a and seals to a back surface of the tab 14a, rather than extending into the opening 12a.

[0023] The tab 14a further can have a width, w , that is at least as wide as a width, w_T , of the tape strip 16 placed over the tab 14, as shown in FIG. 1B. The width, w , can also be wider than the tape strip width, w_T . In one aspect, the tab 14a is semi-circular and has a width of about 2 inches and a radius of about 1 inch, with the width of the tape strip 16 not greater than about 2 inches. Preferably, the width, w , of the tab 14a will be wider than the width, w_T , of the tape strip 16. Where a second tab 14b is provided on the opposite end panel 28b the same features as discussed herein regarding the first tab 14a can likewise apply to the second tab 14b.

[0024] Furthermore, the carton 10 can contain two openings 12a and 12b, as can be seen in FIG. 4, where a first opening 12a is on one of the end panels 28a and a second opening 12b is on the other end panel 28b. Accordingly, the carton 10 can also contain two tabs 14a and 14b. A first tab 14a is adjacent to the first opening 12a, and a second

tab 14b is adjacent the second opening 12b. The second opening 12b is positioned generally opposite the first opening 12a when the carton is assembled. Where the carton 10 contains two openings 12a and 12b, the openings 12a and 12b can also be used as a handhold, such as for carrying or lifting the carton. The openings 12a and 12b can be used as such without disturbing the perforated area 18 of the tabs 14a and 14b, *i.e.*, without also tearing or removing the tabs 14a and 14b from their respective end panel 28a or 28b. To offer additional strength to the tab 14 upon using its respective opening 12 as a handhold, the inner edges 19 of the tab 14 just adjacent the opening 12 can remain non-perforated to provide more durability upon transporting the carton 10, with the remaining portion 18 of the tab 14 contained within the end panel 28a being perforated. The application of an outward manual force to remove the tab 14 is preferably in excess of the outward manual force associated with supporting a filled carton 10 at its tab 14 utilizing it as a handhold. Similarly, where only one opening 12 is provided, it may also be used as a handhold without a complimentary handhold or opening on the opposite end panel.

[0025] Turning again to FIG. 4, a blank 100 is illustrated that can be used to make the carton 10 as described herein. The manufacture of the blank 100 can be kept simple by providing one unitary piece that can have the openings 12a and 12b cut into the blank 100 as well as creating the perforated areas 18 of the tabs 14a and 14b all without the addition of extraneous materials to the blank 100. If preferred, a small section 19 of the tab 14 just adjacent the opening 12 can remain non-perforated, as shown in FIG. 4. Additionally, the top panel 22 and the bottom panel 24 each contain a pair of major flaps and minor flaps which can be folded over upon each other to create a closure at the top 22 or bottom 24 panels. For instance, the bottom panel 24 has a pair of minor flaps 36a and 36b which can be folded at approximately a right angle to the adjacent end panel 28a or 28b, and can further have a pair of major flaps 34a and 34b that are then folded over the minor flaps 36a and 36b covering the minor flaps 36a and 36b to provide a closed surface for the bottom panel 24. The major flaps 34a and 34b are also folded at approximately right angles to their adjacent side panels 26a or 26b. Once the major flaps 34a and 34b are folded to provide the closed bottom panel 24, an adhesive or tape strip can be applied to adjacent edges 44 and 46 of the major flaps 34a and 34b and around the edge of the

carton 10 to extend along a portion of the end panels 28a and 28b to keep the bottom panel 24 closed.

[0026] Similarly, the top panel 22 also has a pair of minor flaps 32a and 32b and a pair of major flaps 30a and 30b that can be folded at approximately right angles to adjacent end and side panels, respectively. The major flaps 30a and 30b are also folded over the folded minor flaps 32a and 32b, covering them, and are kept closed by the tape strip 16 applied at their adjacent edges 38 and 40, respectively, the tape strip 16 further extending around the edge of the carton 10 to a portion of the end panels 28a and 28b, terminating at a tab 14a or 14b where one is present. The flaps, *i.e.*, both the major 30a and 30b and minor 32a and 32b flaps, can be pivotable between an open and closed position. The major flaps 30a and 30b have a length that is generally the same as the length of the carton 10, therefore, upon removing the tape strip 16 the entire interior length of the carton 10 can be accessed. Furthermore, the interior of the carton 10 can be used for storing packaged or unpackaged products therein which can be accessed upon opening of the carton 10.

[0027] The blank further comprises multiple gaps 42 or slits that separate adjacent major and minor flaps. This gap 42 allows for the major and minor flaps to remain connected to their respective side or end panel yet be foldable, apart from the adjacent flap, to form the top or bottom panel. Additionally, an extension 48 of the end panel 28a can be provided to aid in keeping the carton 10 assembled. This extension 48 can extend beyond the edge of the blank 100 and can be folded under the opposite side panel 26b when the blank 100 is folded and assembled into a carton 10. The extension 48 can also contain an adhesive to aid in keeping the carton 10 together. Optionally, the extension 48 can also be positioned on the opposite end of the blank 100 such that it is connected to a side panel 26b and folds under the opposite end panel 28a when assembled.

[0028] The assembled carton 10 can have any shape and size that is adequate for storing and transporting items therein. Typically, the carton 10 will have a rectangular shape. In one aspect, the carton 10 may have dimensions such as about 24 inches x about 12 inches, with a height between about 4 ½ inches to about 8 ½ inches. The opening 12 in the end panel 28 can be sized large enough for a person's fingers to be

inserted therein for carrying purposes and to remove the tab 14, yet small enough so that any products stored inside do not escape or pass through the opening 12. Alternatively, the opening 12 and its associated tab 14, if present, can be provided on a side panel 26 instead of an end panel 28, as long as the adjacent edges 38 and 40 of the major flaps 30a and 30b would also be oriented along the same axis as the opening 12 such that removing the tape strip 16 upwards from the tab 14 also removes the tape 16 in a relatively straight line from the edges 38 and 40 of the major flaps 30a and 30b. The size of the tab 14, as mentioned previously, should be about the same size as the tape 16 (*i.e.*, the width of the tape) or larger. Therefore, the size of the tab 14 should correlate to standard widths of packing tape that are typically used for sealing shipping cartons. The material of construction of the carton 10 is any conventional material, such as corrugated board and the like.

[0029] In one aspect, the carton 10 can be used to package already packaged food products, such as packaged frozen pizzas, and the like. The approximate weight of an empty carton 10 can be about 1.5 pounds to about 2 pounds for a carton 10 large enough to package about 12 packaged pizzas. A packaged carton, such as one containing about 12 packaged pizzas, can have a weight of approximately 11 pounds to about 25 pounds when full. Therefore, when the openings 12 are used as handholds to carry and transport the filled carton 10, the tabs 14 should be able to withstand such weights without prematurely tearing away from the carton 10, as well as the tabs 14 being easily removable and tearable from the carton 10 upon desired removal from the carton 10. Accordingly, in one aspect the tabs 14 can have a tab strength of approximately 2.5 pounds per square inch (psi), such that at least about 2.5 psi of force are required to fully remove or tear the tab 14 from the carton 10. Likewise, in the same aspect, upon continued application of force to the tape 16, a bond strength of the tape 16 would need to be overcome to remove the tape 16 from the carton 10, such as a bond strength of at least about 3.5 psi. However, any variations of these bond strengths and/or tear strengths can be utilized as long as the criteria discussed herein is maintained.

[0030] A method of opening the sealed carton is described herein, and is illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 3. The carton 10 is sealed as described herein with an adhesive strip, such

as the tape strip 16 shown in FIG. 1A, which keeps the top panel 22 of the carton 10 closed. The tape strip 16 can extend down a portion of the end panel 28a to terminate at the tab 14a, at least partially covering the tab 14a. To open the carton 10 at its top panel 22 it is desired to remove the tape strip 16. This can be done by inserting a finger behind the back of the tab 14a and applying a slight force to pull or lift the tab 14a upwards to release the tab 14a from the carton 10 along the weakened area 18 of the end panel 28a, and along a non-perforated portion 19, if used. Where a non-perforated portion 19 is also incorporated about a portion of the tab 14, a slightly greater force may be required to initially remove the tab 14 from the carton 10 and to begin tearing it from the carton 10, however, the amount of force required is still not as great as that needed to tear or remove a tab with no perforated area. The removed tab 14a is shown in FIG. 2 after the lower edge 20 and/or the back of the tab 14 was grasped and pulled in the direction of arrow A. As the tab 14a is removed from the carton 10, the end 17 of the tape strip 16 remains attached to the tab 14a and is likewise lifted from the end panel 28a of the carton 10 with the tab 14a, as the tab 14a is continually being lifted upwards. Upon continually applying a force to the tab 14a and the tape strip 16 in the direction of arrow B, as shown in FIG. 3, the tape strip 16 begins to peel off of the top panel 22 and continues to be removed from the edges 38 and 40 of the major flaps 30a and 30b, respectively.

[0031] Where the tape strip 16 is also adhered to the opposite end panel 28b, the tearing force can be continually applied in the direction of arrow B and then down the opposite end panel 28b until the tape strip 16 is also removed from the opposite end panel 28b. Once the tape strip 16 has been completely removed from the carton 10, generally the only waste that is created is the remainder of the tape strip 16 and a small piece of the tab 14a.

[0032] From the foregoing, it will be appreciated a sealed carton with an easy to open tab for removal of an adhesive strip is provided such that numerous modifications and variations could be made thereto by those skilled in the art without departing from the scope of the easy open feature set forth in the claims. Therefore, the disclosure is not limited to the aspects and embodiments described hereinabove, or to any particular embodiments. Various modifications to the easy open feature can result in substantially

the same carton and various other modifications to the method of opening the carton could be made.

What is Claimed is:

1. A sealed, filled carton having an easy-opening feature, the carton comprising:
a bottom panel, a top panel, a pair of side panels connecting the top and bottom panels, and an adjacent pair of end panels also connecting the top and bottom panels, at least one end panel having an opening therein;
a removable tab adjacent the opening;
a pair of major flaps and a pair of minor flaps on both the bottom and top panels, the major flaps covering the minor flaps when sealed; and
a tape strip covering adjacent edges of the major flaps on the top panel to seal the carton, the tape having an end that extends along a portion of the end panel containing the opening and terminates at the tab.
2. The carton according to claim 1, wherein the tab contains a weakened area along one portion of the tab to form an area of perforation.
3. The carton according to claim 1, wherein the end of the tape strip at least partially covers the tab and does not extend into the opening.
4. The carton according to claim 1, wherein the tab has a lower edge that is not perforated, the lower edge further defining a portion of an upper edge of the opening.
5. The carton according to claim 1, wherein the tab is semi-circular in shape with only a curved edge portion being perforated.
6. The carton according to claim 1, wherein the carton contains two openings, one opening on each end panel, and accordingly two tabs, one tab adjacent each of the openings.
7. The carton according to claim 1, wherein the tab has a width that is at least as wide as a width of the tape strip placed over the tab.

8. The carton according to claim 7, wherein the width of the tab is about 2 inches and a radius of the tab is about 1 inch.
9. The carton according to claim 1, wherein the opening is used as a handhold to carry the carton, which can be used without disturbing the partially perforated tab.
10. The carton according to claim 1, wherein the carton is used for storing packaged or unpackaged products therein.
11. A method of opening a taped carton having an easy-opening feature, the carton having a bottom panel, a top panel, a pair of side panels connecting the top and bottom panels, and an adjacent pair of end panels also connecting the top and bottom panels, at least one end panel having an opening therein, the method comprising the steps of:
 - grasping a partially perforated tab having a weakened area along a portion of the tab, the tab being adjacent the opening in the end panel and at least partially covered by an end portion of a tape strip extending across adjacent edges of a pair of major flaps on the top panel and further extending along a portion of the end panel;
 - lifting up on the tab to remove it from the weakened area in the end panel; and
 - removing the tape strip from the end panel and the edges of the major flaps as the tab is continually lifted up.
12. The method according to claim 11, wherein the end of the tape strip at least partially covers the tab and does not extend into the opening.
13. The method according to claim 11, wherein the tab has a lower edge that is not perforated, the lower edge also defining a portion of an upper edge of the opening.
14. The method according to claim 11, wherein the tab is semi-circular in shape with only a curved edge portion being perforated.

15. The method according to claim 11, wherein the end of the tape strip remains adhered to the tab as the tab is lifted up and removed from the weakened area.
16. The method according to claim 11, further comprising the step of carrying the carton utilizing the opening as a handhold, which can be used without disturbing the perforated tab.
17. The method according to claim 11, wherein the carton contains two openings, one opening on each of the two end panels, and accordingly two tabs, one tab adjacent each of the openings.
18. The method according to claim 11, wherein the end of the tape strip remains adhered to the tab as the tab is being lifted away from the weakened area and is continually lifted up.
19. The method according to claim 11, further comprising the step of storing items within the interior of the carton.
20. A sealed carton having an easy-opening feature, the carton comprising:
a bottom panel, a top panel, a pair of side panels connecting the top and bottom panels, and an adjacent pair of end panels also connecting the top and bottom panels and each end panel having an opening therein;
two partially perforated tabs, one tab adjacent each opening;
a pair of major flaps and a pair of minor flaps on both the bottom and top panels, the major flaps covering the minor flaps when sealed; and
a tape strip covering adjacent edges of the major flaps on the top panel and extending along the end panels to seal the carton, the tape having an end that terminates at a portion of one of the tabs without extending into its respective opening.

21. A sealed, filled carton having an easy-opening feature, the carton comprising:
- a bottom panel, a top panel, a pair of side panels connecting the top and bottom panels, and an adjacent pair of end panels also connecting the top and bottom panels, at least one end panel having an opening therein;
 - a removable tab adjacent the opening;
 - the top panel comprising a pair of flaps having adjacent edges, the flaps being pivotable between an open and a closed position;
 - a tape strip covering adjacent edges of the flaps to seal the carton, the tape having an end that extends along a portion of the end panel containing the opening and terminates at the tab;
 - product contained within the carton;
 - the tape strip being adhered to the edges of the pair of flaps and having a bond strength of at least 3 ½ pounds per square inch;
 - the tab being at least partially joined to the end wall by a weakened region having sufficient strength to permit the filled carton to be supported by manual engagement of the tab without fracturing the weakened region;
 - the tab being removable by application of outward manual force in excess of the outward manual force associated with supporting the filled carton by the tab so that the tape can be peeled off of the carton by fracturing the weakened region, then pulling the tab up and across the top of the carton.

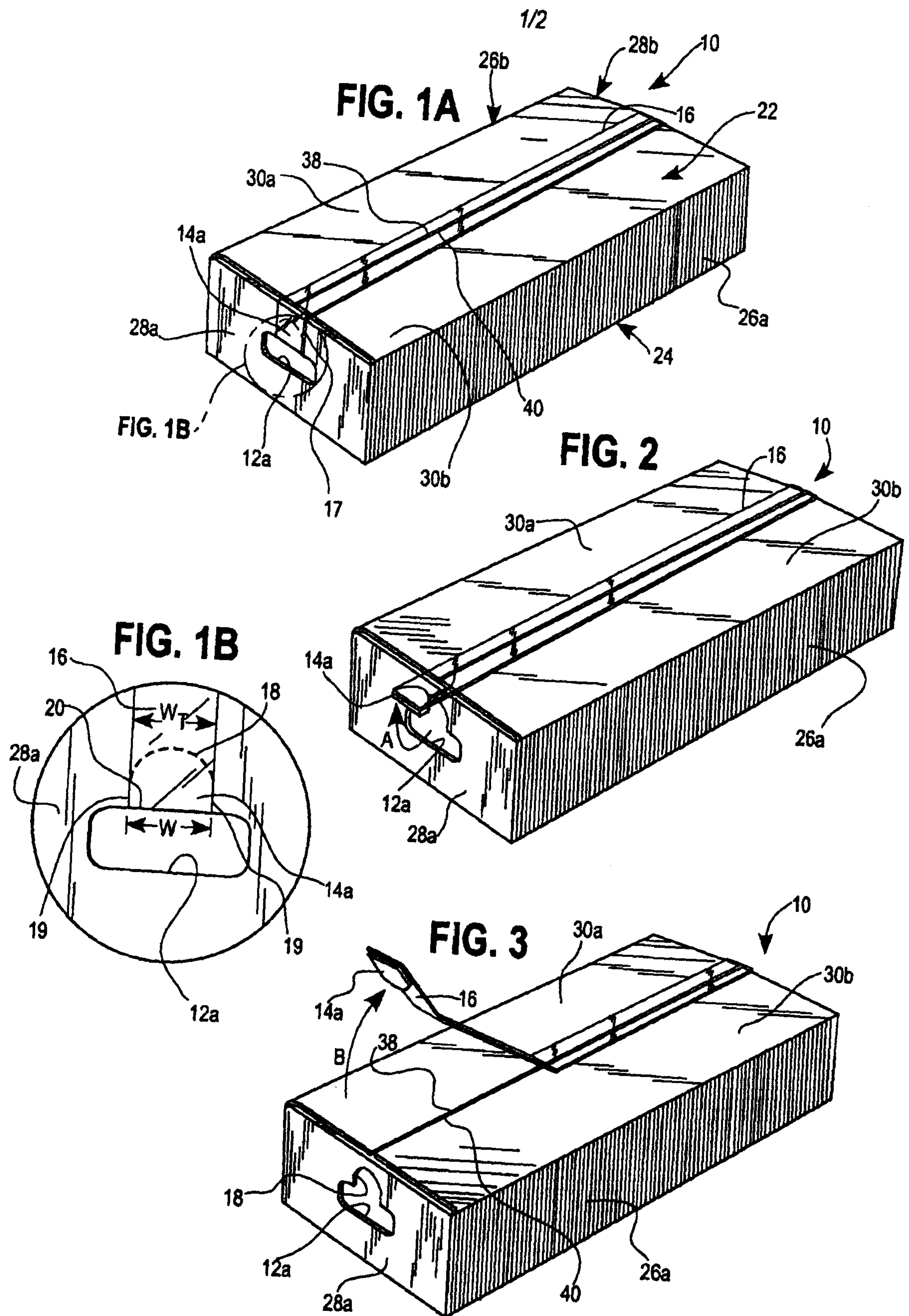


FIG. 4

