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(71) Applicant(s)
The Gillette Company

(72) Inventor(s)
Neville Sonnenberg; Andrew Zhuk; Charles White; Steven Hahn; Colin John Clipstone

(74) Agent/Attorney
SPRUSON and FERGUSON,GPO Box 3898,SYDNEY NSW 2001

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(71) Applicant *(for all designated States except US)*: THE GILLETTE COMPANY [US/US]; Prudential Tower Building, Boston, MA 02199 (US).

(72) Inventors; and
(75) Inventors/Applicants *(for US only)*: SONNENBERG, Neville [US/US]; 101 Hanson Road, Newton, MA 02459 (US). ZHUK, Andrew [RU/US]; 117 Central Street, Apt. F-11, Acton, MA 01720 (US). WHITE, Charles [US/US]; 72 Forest Hill Avenue, Lynnfield, MA 01940 (US). HAHN, Steven [US/US]; 7 Trinity Court, Wellesley, MA 02481 (US). CLIPSTONE, Colin, John [GB/US]; 154 Newton Street, Weston, MA 02493 (US).

(74) Agents: GALLOWAY, Peter, D.; Ladas & Parry, 26 West 61st Street, New York, NY 10023 et al. (US).

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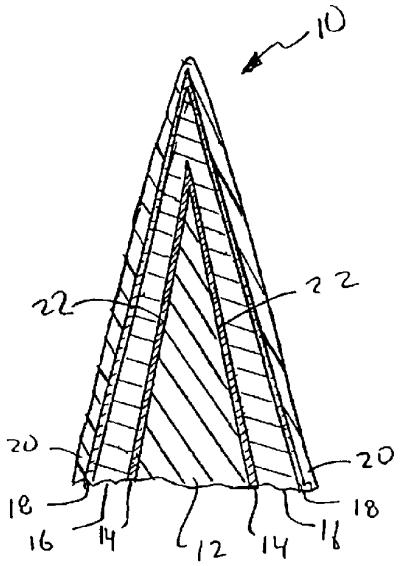
(54) Title: RAZOR BLADE TECHNOLOGY



(57) Abstract: A razor blade including a substrate with a cutting edge defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets, a layer of hard coating on the cutting edge, an overcoat layer of a chromium containing material on the layer of hard carbon coating, and an outer layer of polytetrafluoroethylene coating over the overcoat layer.

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RAZOR BLADE TECHNOLOGY

The invention relates to improvements to razors and razor blades.

A razor blade is typically formed of a suitable substrate material such as stainless steel, and a cutting edge is formed with a wedge-shaped configuration with an ultimate tip having a radius less than about 1000 angstroms, e.g., about 200-300 angstroms. Hard coatings such as diamond; amorphous diamond, diamond-like carbon (DLC) material, nitrides, carbides, oxides or ceramics are often used to improve strength, corrosion resistance and shaving ability, maintaining needed strength while permitting thinner edges with lower cutting forces to be used. Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) outer layer can be used to provide friction reduction. Interlayers of niobium or chromium containing materials can aid in improving the binding between the substrate, typically stainless steel, and hard carbon coatings, such as DLC. Examples of razor blade cutting edge structures and processes of manufacture are described in U.S. Patents Nos. 5,295,305; 5,232,568; 4,933,058; 5,032,243; 5,497,550; 5,940,975; 5,669,144; EP 0591334; and PCT 92/03330, which are hereby incorporated by reference.

In use, the ultimate tip of the edges having hard coatings and polytetrafluoroethylene outer layers can become more rounded after repeated shaves such that there is an increase in the tip radius and a generally perceived decrease in shaving performance.

According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a razor blade comprising:

a substrate with a cutting edge,

a layer of hard coating on said cutting edge,

an overcoat layer of a chromium containing material on said layer of hard coating, and

an outer layer of polytetrafluoroethylene coating over said overcoat layer, wherein the cutting edge is defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets and the layer of hard coating is made of amorphous material containing carbon.

According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a shaving razor including:

a housing, and

at least one razor blade according to the first aspect, mounted in said housing.

According to a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of making a razor blade comprising the steps of:

providing a substrate with a cutting edge defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets,

adding a layer of hard coating on said cutting edge, said hard coating being made of amorphous material containing carbon,

adding an overcoat layer of a chromium containing material on said layer of hard coating, and

adding an outer layer of polytetrafluoroethylene coating over said overcoat layer.

According to a fourth aspect of the present invention, there is provided a shaving razor comprising a handle,

a housing connected to said handle, and

at least one razor blade mounted in said housing, said blade comprising

a substrate with a cutting edge defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets,

a layer of hard coating on said cutting edge, said hard coating being made of amorphous material containing carbon,

an overcoat layer of a chromium containing material on said layer of hard coating, and

an outer layer of a chromium containing material on said layer of hard coating, and

an outer layer of polyetrafluoroethylene coating over said overcoat layer.

According to a fifth aspect of the present invention, there is provided a razor blade comprising

a substrate with a cutting edge defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets;

a layer of a hard carbon containing material, doped with another element, on the cutting edge;

an overcoat of a chromium containing material on the layer of the hard carbon containing material; and

an outer layer of polytetrafluoroethylene over the overcoat layer.

According to a sixth aspect of the present invention, there is provided a shaving razor comprising:

a handle;

a housing connected to the handle; and

at least one razor blade within the housing, the razor blade comprising:

a substrate with a cutting edge defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets;

a layer of a hard carbon containing material, doped with another element, on the cutting edge, wherein the layer of hard coating is made of amorphous material containing carbon;

an overcoat layer of a chromium containing material on the layer of the hard carbon containing material; and an outer layer of polytetrafluoroethylene over the overcoat layer.

There is disclosed herein, in general, a razor blade including a substrate with a cutting edge defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets, a layer of hard coating on the cutting edge, an overcoat layer of a chromium containing material on the layer of hard coating, and an outer layer of polytetrafluoroethylene coating on the overcoat layer.

There is also disclosed herein, in general, a shaving razor including a handle and a razor head with a blade having a substrate with a cutting edge defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets, a layer of hard coating on the cutting edge, an overcoat layer of a chromium containing material on the layer of hard coating, and an outer layer of polytetrafluoroethylene coating on the overcoat layer.

Particular embodiments of the invention may include one or more of

the following features. In particular embodiments, the hard coating material can be made of carbon containing materials (e.g., diamond, amorphous diamond or DLC), nitrides, carbides, oxides or other ceramics. The hard coating layer can have a thickness less than 2,000 angstroms. The overcoat layer can be made of chromium or a chromium containing alloy compatible with polytetrafluoroethylene such as a chromium platinum alloy. The overcoat layer can be between 100 and 500 angstroms thick. The blade can include an interlayer between the substrate and the layer of hard coating. The interlayer can include niobium or a chromium containing material. The polytetrafluoroethylene can be Krytox LW1200 available from DuPont. The PTFE outer layer can be between 100 and 5000 angstroms thick.

In another aspect, the invention features, in general, making a razor blade by providing a substrate with a cutting edge defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets, adding a layer of hard coating on the cutting edge, adding an overcoat layer of a chromium containing material on the layer of hard coating, and adding an outer layer of polytetrafluoroethylene coating over the overcoat layer.

Particular embodiments of the invention may include one or more of the following features. In particular embodiments the layers can be added by physical vapor deposition (i.e., sputtering) or by chemical vapor deposition. The chromium containing layer, preferably chromium, can be sputter deposited under conditions that result in a compressively stressed coating. The sputter deposition of chromium containing materials can include applying a DC bias to the target that is more negative than -50 volts, preferably more negative than -200 volts. Alternatively an appropriate RF bias scheme can be used to achieve an equivalent chromium layer.

Embodiments of the invention may include one or more of the following advantages. The use of a chromium containing overcoat layer provides improved adhesion of the polytetrafluorethylene outer layer to the hard coating layer. The razor blade has improved edge strength provided by hard coating and has reduced tip rounding with repeated shaves. Reduced tip rounding minimizes the increase in cutting force thereby maintaining excellent shaving performance. The razor blade has excellent shaving characteristics from the first shave onwards.

Other features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from

the following description of a particular embodiment and from the claims.

FIG. 1 is a vertical sectional view of a cutting edge portion of a razor blade.

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a shaving razor including the FIG. 1 razor blade.

Referring to FIG. 1, there is shown razor blade 10 including substrate 12, interlayer 14, hard coating layer 16, overcoat layer 18, and outer layer 20. The substrate 12 is typically made of stainless steel (though other substrates can be employed) and has an ultimate edge sharpened to a tip radius of less than 1,000 angstroms, preferably 200 to 300 angstroms, and has a profile with side facets 22 at an included angle of between 15 and 30 degrees, preferably about 19 degrees, measured at 40 microns from the tip.

Interlayer 14 is used to facilitate bonding of the hard coating layer to the substrate. Examples of suitable interlayer material are niobium and chromium containing material. A particular interlayer is made of niobium greater than 100 angstroms and preferably less than 500 angstroms thick. PCT 92/03330 describes use of a niobium interlayer.

Hard coating layer 16 provides improved strength, corrosion resistance and shaving ability and can be made from carbon containing materials (e.g., diamond, amorphous diamond or DLC), nitrides (e.g., boron nitride, niobium nitride or titanium nitride), carbides (e.g., silicon carbide), oxides (e.g., alumina, zirconia) or other ceramic materials. The carbon containing materials can be doped with other elements, such as tungsten, titanium or chromium by including these additives, for example in the target during application by sputtering. The materials can also incorporate hydrogen, e.g., hydrogenated DLC. Preferably coating layer 16 is made of diamond, amorphous diamond or DLC. A particular embodiment includes DLC less than 2,000 angstroms, preferably less than 1,000 angstroms. DLC layers and methods of deposition are described in U.S. Patent No. 5,232,568. As described in the "Handbook of Physical Vapor Deposition (PVD) Processing," DLC is an amorphous carbon material that exhibits many of the desirable properties of diamond but does not have the crystalline structure of diamond.

Overcoat layer 18 is used to reduce the tip rounding of the hard

coated edge and to facilitate bonding of the outer layer to the hard coating while still maintaining the benefits of both. Overcoat layer 18 is preferably made of chromium containing material, e.g., chromium or chromium alloys that are compatible with polytetrafluoroethylene, e.g., CrPt. A particular overcoat layer is chromium about 100-200 angstroms thick. Blade 10 has a cutting edge that has less rounding with repeated shaves than it would have without the overcoat layer.

Outer layer 20 is used to provide reduced friction and includes polytetrafluorocthylene and is sometimes referred to as a telomer. A particular polytetrafluoroethylene material is Krytox LW 1200 available from DuPont. This material is a nonflammable and stable dry lubricant that consists of small particles that yield stable dispersions. It is furnished as an aqueous dispersion of 20% solids by weight and can be applied by dipping, spraying, or brushing, and can thereafter be air dried or melt coated. The layer is preferably less than 5,000 angstroms and could typically be 1,500 angstroms to 4,000 angstroms, and can be as thin as 100 angstroms, provided that a continuous coating is maintained. Provided that a continuous coating is achieved, reduced telomer coating thickness can provide improved first shave results. U.S. Patents Nos. 5,263,256 and 5,985,459, which are hereby incorporated by reference, describe techniques which can be used to reduce the thickness of an applied telomer layer.

Razor blade 10 is made generally according to the processes described in the above referenced patents. A particular embodiment includes a niobium interlayer 14, DLC hard coating layer 16, chromium overcoat layer 18, and Krytox LW1200 polytetrafluoroethylene outer coat layer 20. Chromium overcoat layer 18 is deposited to a minimum of 100 angstroms and a maximum of 500 angstroms. It is deposited by sputtering using a DC bias (more negative than -50 volts and preferably more negative than -200 volts) and pressure of about 2 millitorr argon. The increased negative bias is believed to promote a compressive stress (as opposed to a tensile stress), in the chromium overcoat layer which is believed to promote improved resistance to tip rounding while maintaining good shaving performance. Blade 10 preferably has a tip radius of about 200 - 400 angstroms, measured by SEM after application of overcoat layer 18 and before adding outer layer 20.

Referring to FIG. 2, blade 10 can be used in shaving razor 110, which includes handle 112 and replaceable shaving cartridge 114. Cartridge 14 includes housing 116, which carries three blades 10, guard 120 and cap 122. Blades 10 are movably mounted, as described, e.g., in U.S. Patent No. 5,918,369, which is incorporated by reference. Cartridge 114 also includes interconnect member 124 on which housing 116 is pivotally mounted at two arms 128. Interconnect member 124 includes a base 127 which is replaceably connected to handle 112. Alternatively, blade 10 can be used in other razors having one, two or more than three blades, double-sided blades, and razors that do not have movable blades or pivoting heads where the cartridge is either replaceable or permanently attached to a razor handle.

In use, razor blade 10 has excellent shaving characteristics from the first shave onwards. Blade 10 has improved edge strength provided by hard coating and has reduced tip rounding with repeated shaves provided by the overlayer coating while maintaining excellent shave characteristics.

Other embodiments of the invention are within the scope of the appended claims.

The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. A razor blade comprising:

a substrate with a cutting edge,

a layer of hard coating on said cutting edge,

an overcoat layer of a chromium containing material on said layer of hard coating, and

an outer layer of polytetrafluoroethylene coating over said overcoat layer, wherein the cutting edge is defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets and the layer of hard coating is made of amorphous material containing carbon.

2. The blade of claim 1, wherein said hard coating comprises diamond-like carbon material.

3. The blade of claim 1, wherein said hard carbon coating comprises amorphous diamond material.

4. The blade of claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein said overcoat layer consists of chromium.

5. The blade of any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein said overcoat layer consists of a chromium containing alloy compatible with polytetrafluoroethylene.

6. The blade of claim 5, wherein said alloy is a chromium platinum alloy.

7. The blade of any one of claims 1 to 6, further comprising an interlayer between said substrate and said layer of hard coating.

8. The blade of claim 7, wherein said interlayer comprises niobium.

9. The blade of claim 7 or 8, wherein said interlayer comprises a chromium containing material.

10. The blade of any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein said overcoat layer is compressively stressed.

11. The blade of any one of claims 1 to 10, wherein said polytetrafluoroethylene is Krytox LW1200.

12. The blade of any one of claims 1 to 11, wherein said hard coating layer has a thickness less than 2,000 angstroms.

13. The blade of any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein said overcoat layer is between 100 and 500 angstroms thick.

14. The blade of any one of claims 1 to 13, wherein said outer layer is between 100 and 5,000 angstroms thick.

15. The blade of any one of claims 1 to 14, wherein said blade has a cutting edge that has less rounding with repeated shaves than it would have without said overcoat layer.

16. The blade of any one of claims 1 to 15, wherein said hard coating is doped with another element.

17. A shaving razor including:

a housing, and

at least one razor blade according to any one of the preceding claims, mounted in said housing.

18. The shaving razor according to claim 17, wherein the razor further comprises a handle wherein said housing is connected to said handle.

19. A shaving razor comprising a handle,

a housing connected to said handle, and

at least one razor blade mounted in said housing, said blade comprising

a substrate with a cutting edge defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets,

a layer of hard coating on said cutting edge, said hard coating being made of amorphous material containing carbon,

an overcoat layer of a chromium containing material on said layer of hard coating, and

an outer layer of a chromium containing material on said layer of hard coating, and

an outer layer of polyetrafluoroethylene coating over said overcoat layer.

20. A method of making a razor blade comprising the steps of:

providing a substrate with a cutting edge defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets,

adding a layer of hard coating on said cutting edge, said hard coating being made of amorphous material containing carbon,

adding an overcoat layer of a chromium containing material on said layer of hard coating, and

adding an outer layer of polytetrafluoroethylene coating over said overcoat layer.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein said adding a layer of hard coating includes vapour depositing a carbon containing material.

22. The method of claim 20 or 21, wherein said adding a layer of chromium containing material includes vapour depositing said chromium containing material.

23. The method of claim 20 or 21, wherein said adding a layer of chromium containing material includes sputter depositing under conditions to result in compressively stressed material.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein said sputtering includes applying a DC bias to said target that is more negative than -50 volts or an equivalent RF bias scheme.

25. The method of claim 23, wherein said sputtering includes applying a DC bias to said target that is more negative than -200 volts or an equivalent RF bias scheme.

26. A razor blade comprising

a substrate with a cutting edge defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets;

a layer of a hard carbon containing material, doped with another element, on the cutting edge;

an overcoat of a chromium containing material on the layer of the hard carbon containing material; and

an outer layer of polytetrafluoroethylene over the overcoat layer.

27. The razor blade of claim 26, wherein the element is a metal.

28. The razor blade of claim 27, wherein the metal is selected from the group consisting of tungsten and titanium.

29. The razor blade of claim 27 wherein the metal is chromium.

30. The razor blade of claim 29, wherein the hard carbon containing material is diamond-like carbon.

31. The razor blade of any one of claims 26 to 30, wherein the hard carbon containing material is selected from the group consisting of diamond-like carbon and amphorous diamond.

32. The razor blade of any one of claims 26 to 31, wherein the layer of hard carbon material has a thickness less than 2,000 angstroms, the overcoat layer has a thickness between 100 and 500 angstroms, and the outer layer has a thickness between 100 and 5,000 angstroms.

33. A shaving razor comprising:

a handle;

a housing connected to the handle; and

at least one razor blade within the housing, the razor blade comprising:

a substrate with a cutting edge defined by a sharpened tip and adjacent facets;

a layer of a hard carbon containing material, doped with another element, on the cutting edge, wherein the layer of hard coating is made of amorphous material containing carbon;

an overcoat layer of a chromium containing material on the layer of the hard carbon containing material; and an outer layer of polytetrafluoroethylene over the overcoat layer.

34. The shaving razor of claim 33, wherein the element is a metal.

35. The shaving razor of claim 33 or 34, wherein the metal is chromium.

36. The shaving razor of any one of claims 33 to 35, wherein the hard carbon containing material is selected from the group consisting of diamond-like carbon and amorphous diamond.

37. A razor blade, substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of the accompanying drawings.

38. A method of making a razor blade, said method substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of the accompanying drawings.

39. A razor blade prepared by the method of any one of claims 20 to 25 or 38.

40. A shaving razor, substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of the accompanying drawings.

Dated 20 December 2005

The Gillette Company

Patent Attorneys for the Applicant/Nominated Person

SPRUSON & FERGUSON

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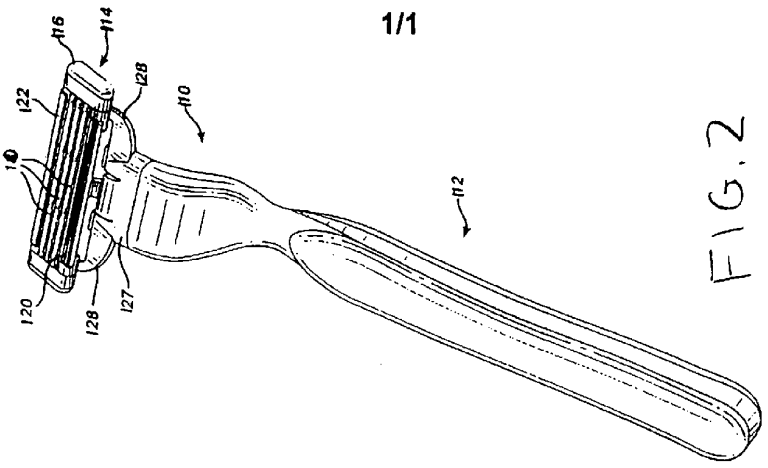
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FIG. 2

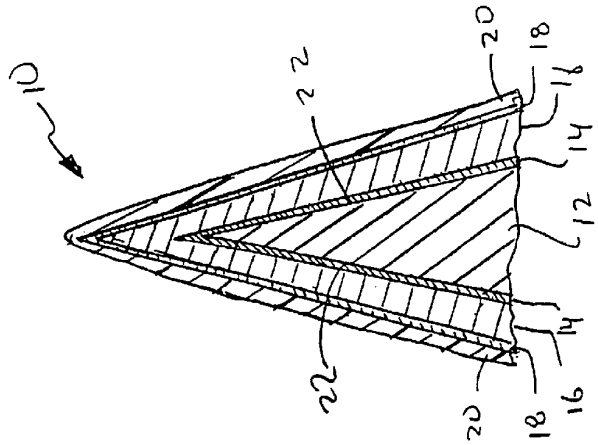
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FIG. 1