



US 20090032412A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Ireland et al.

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2009/0032412 A1**

(43) **Pub. Date: Feb. 5, 2009**

(54) **ORGANIZING APPARATUS FOR
STRING-LIKE OBJECTS**

Publication Classification

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
B65D 79/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **206/216**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

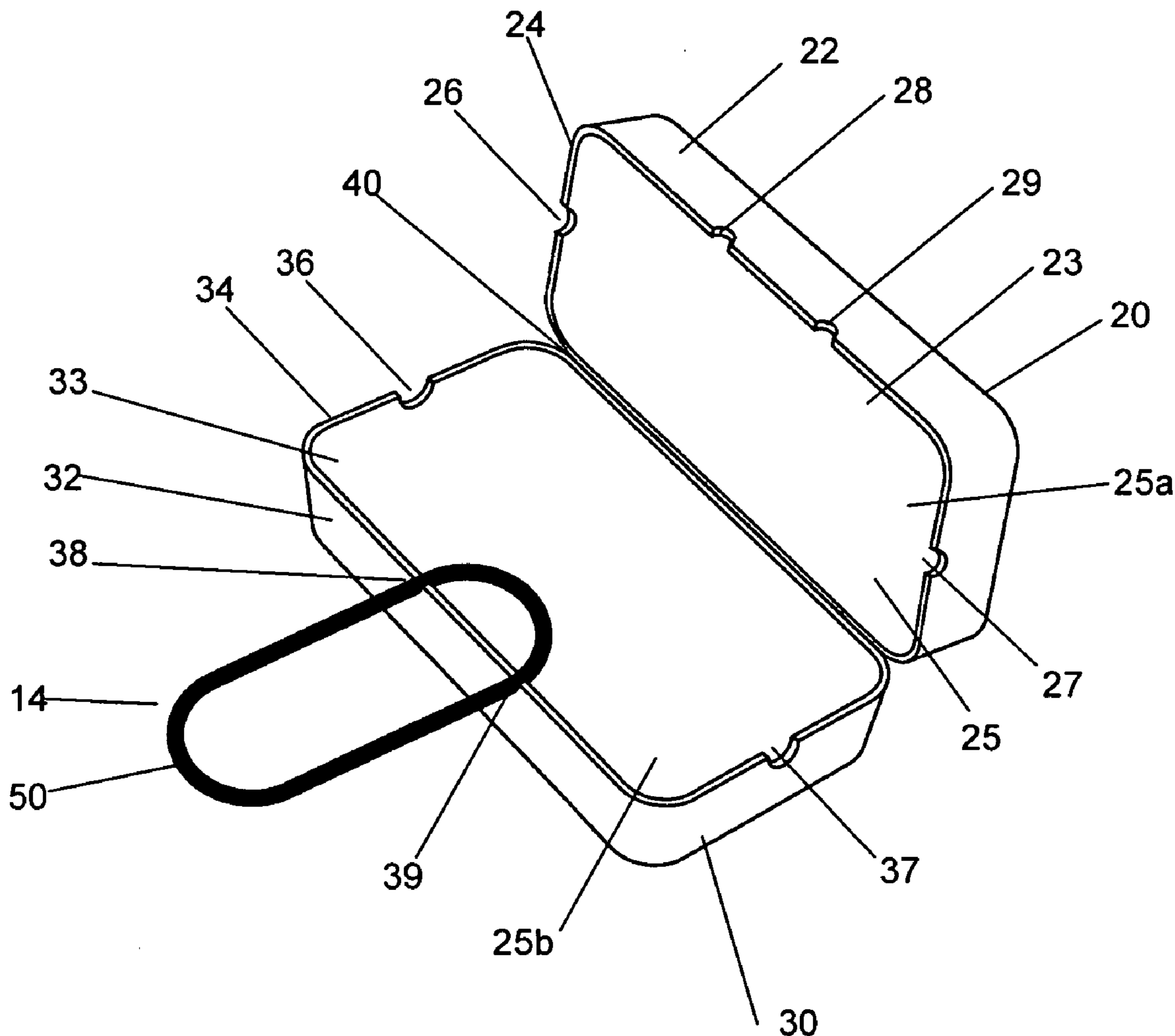
An organizing apparatus comprising a body, a wrap member and a wrap coupling member. The body defines a cavity with a plurality of object receiving openings. The body is positionable between a closed configuration and an open configuration. In a closed configuration, transverse access to the cavity is substantially precluded. In an open configuration, transverse access to the cavity is permitted. The wrap member is coupled to the body. The wrap coupling member is associated with the body and spaced apart from the wrap member.

(21) Appl. No.: **12/070,709**

(22) Filed: **Feb. 20, 2008**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/902,244, filed on Feb. 20, 2007.



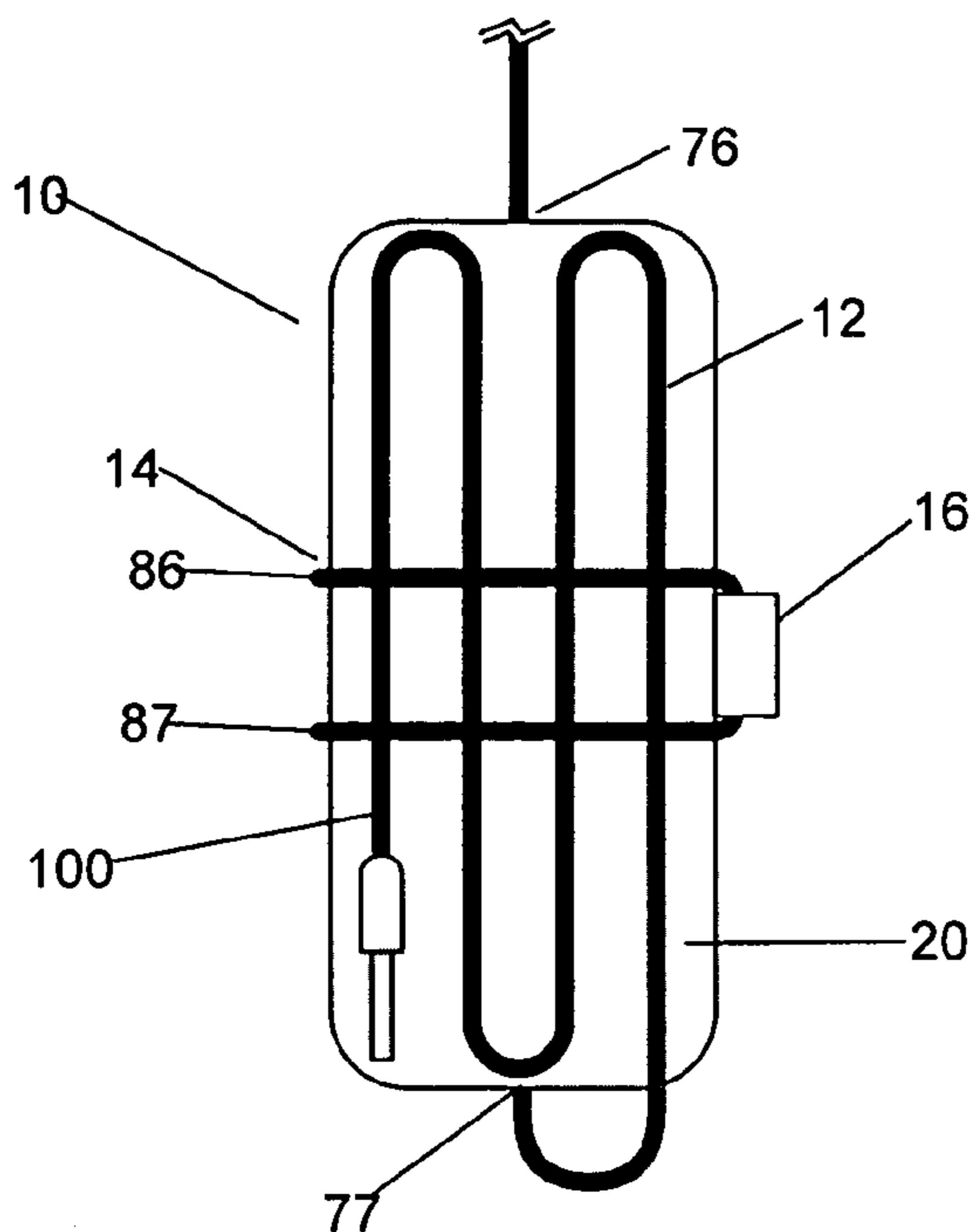


Figure 1

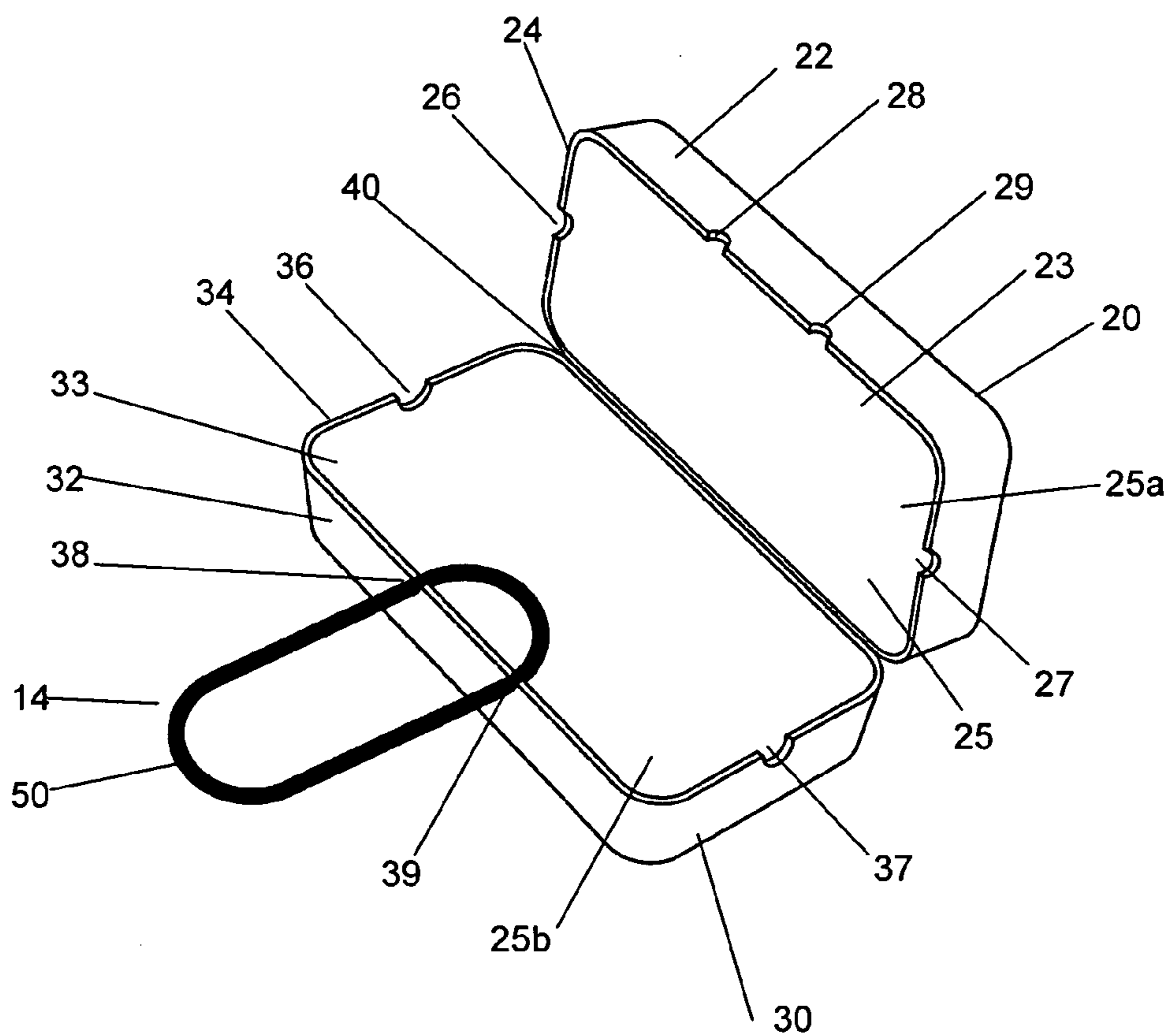


Figure 2

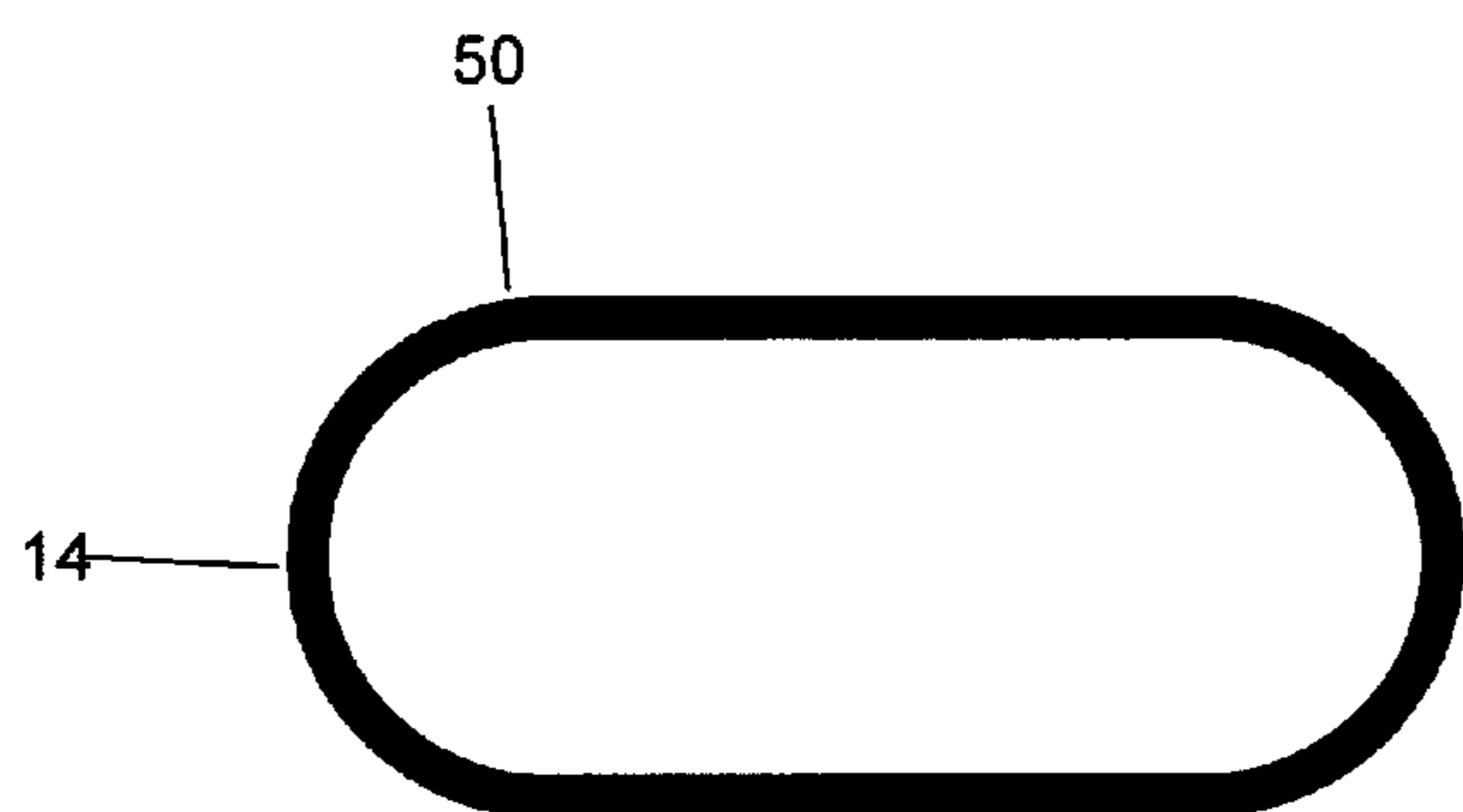


Figure 3A

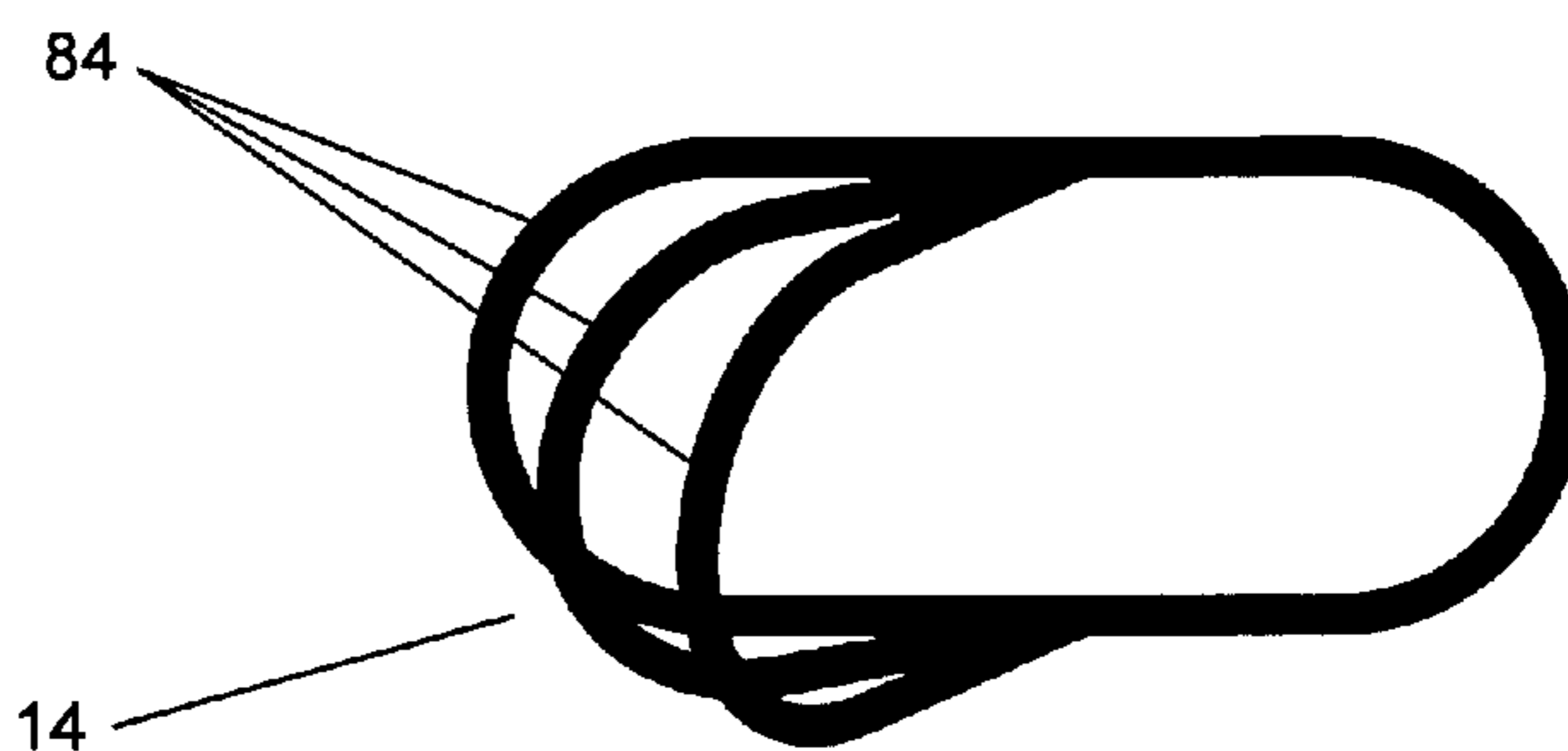


Figure 3B

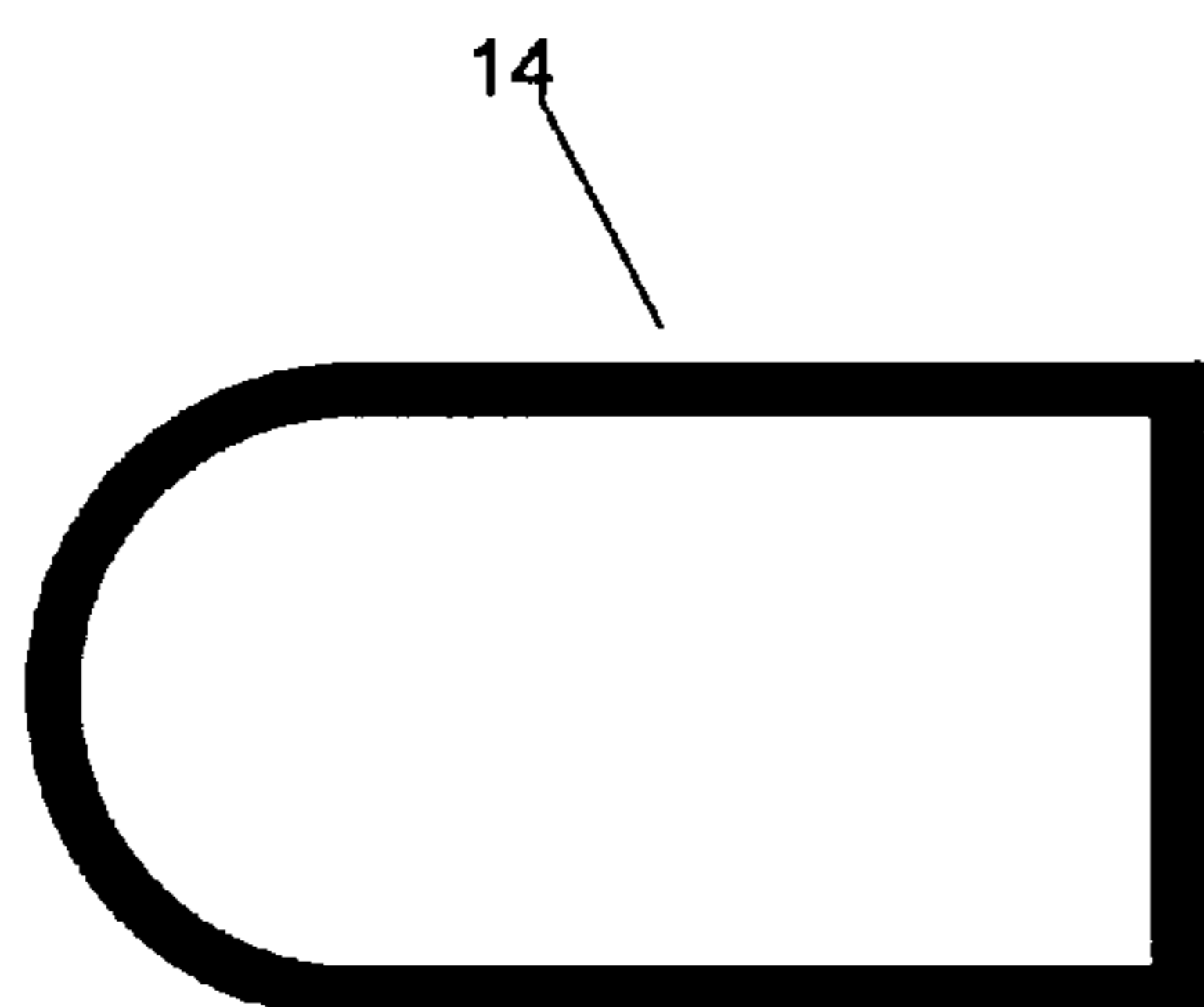


Figure 3C

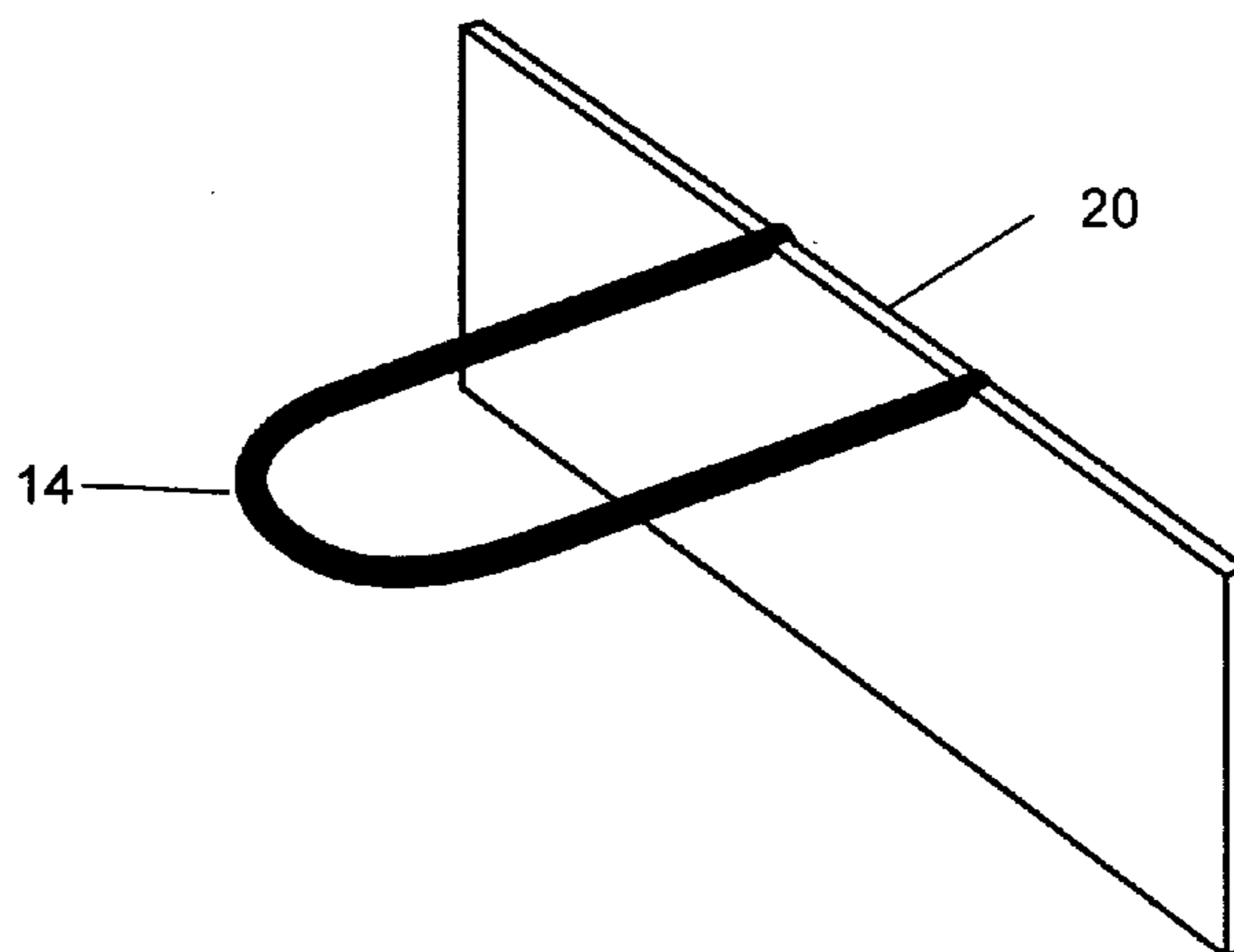


Figure 3D

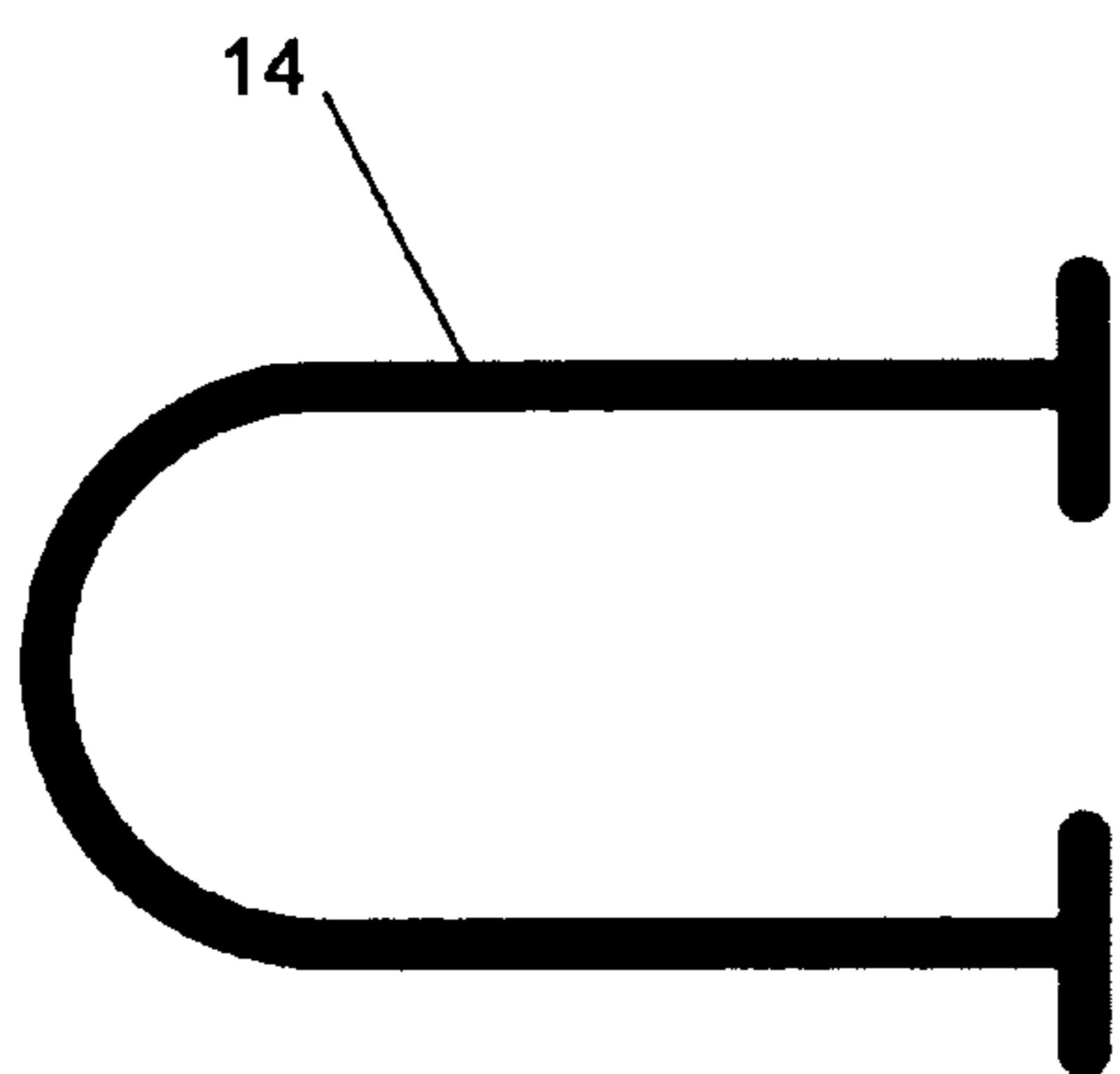


Figure 3E

Figure 3F

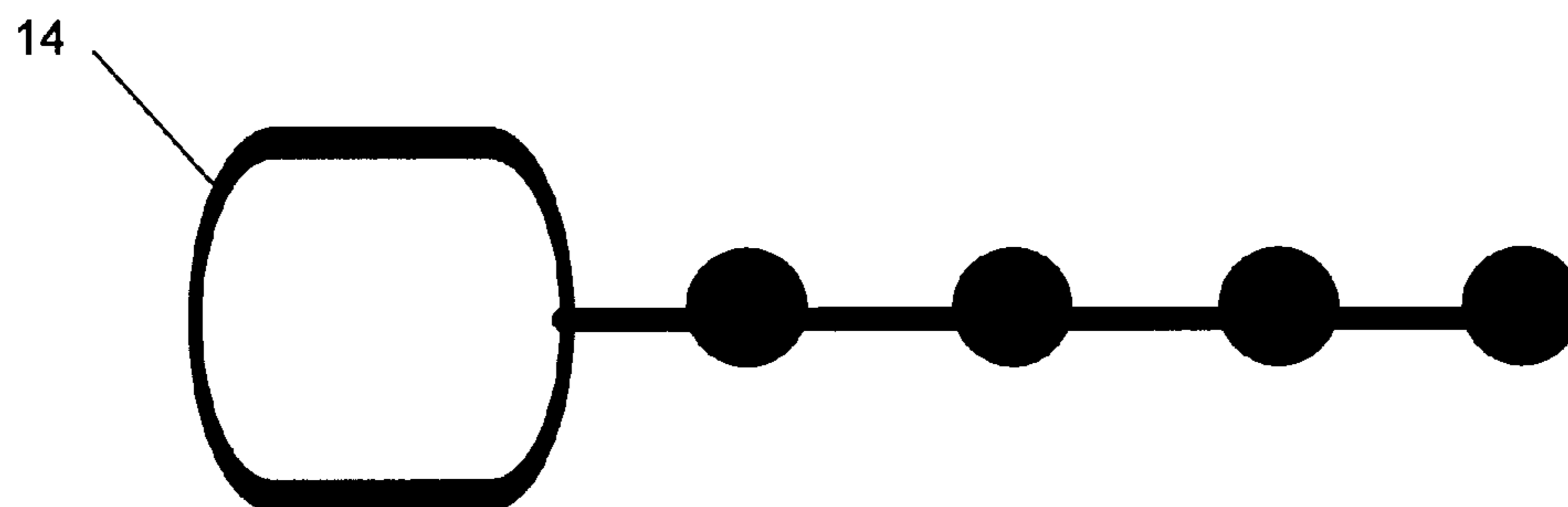
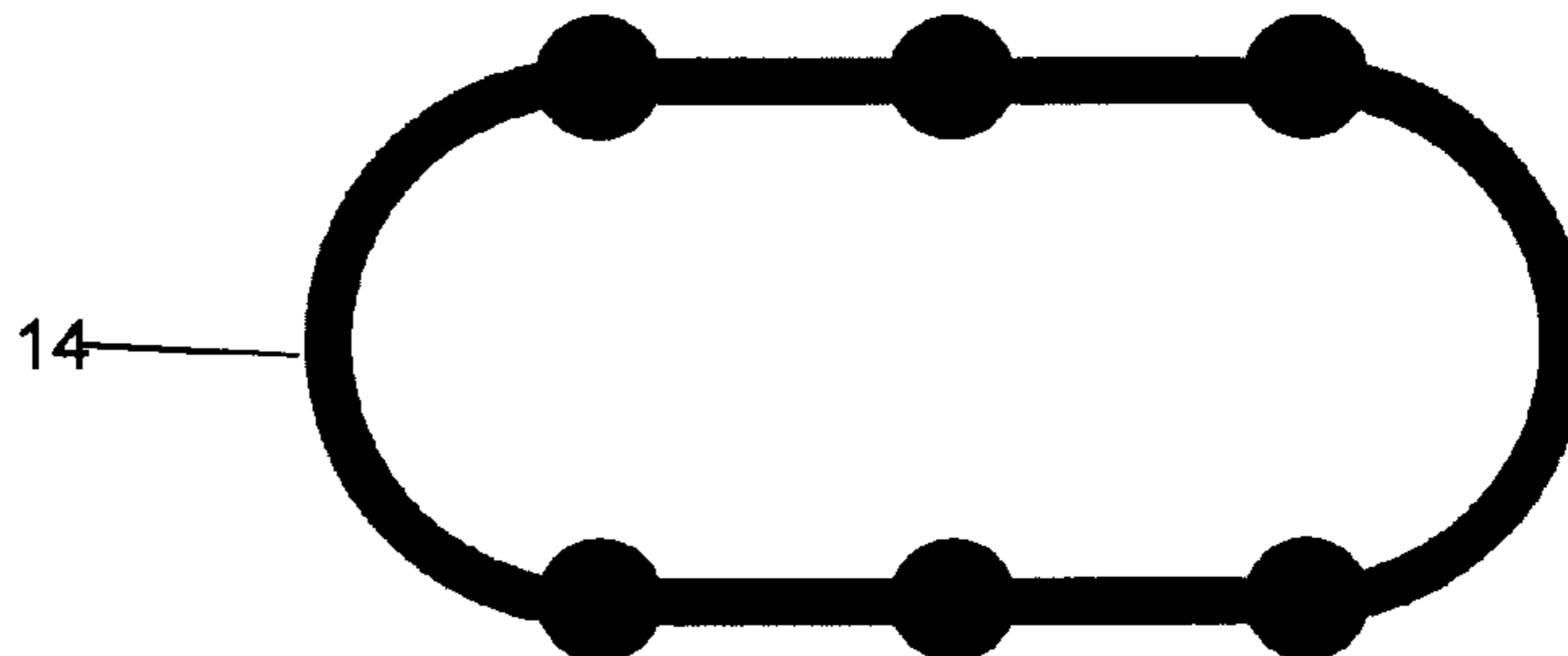


Figure 3G

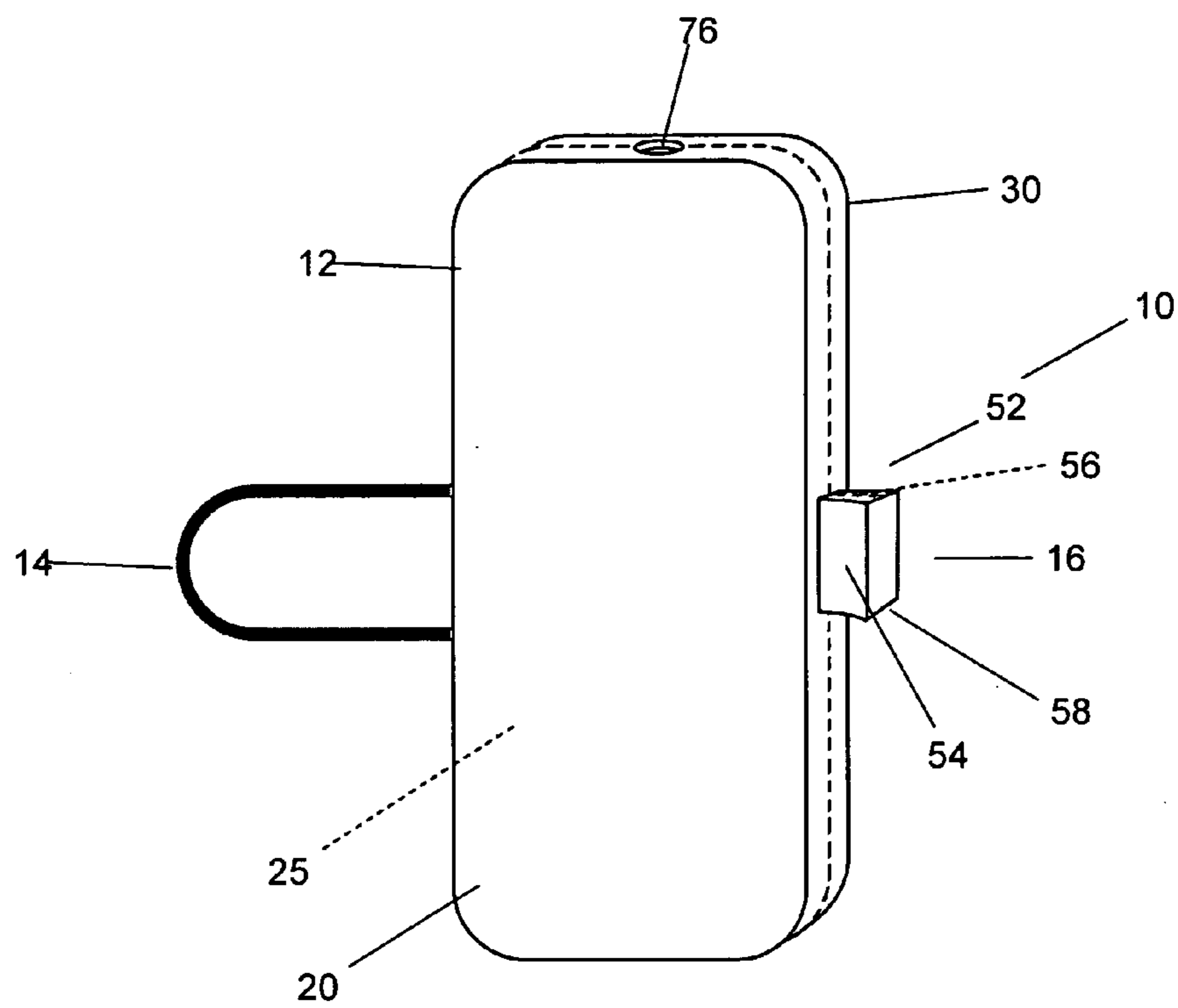


Figure 4

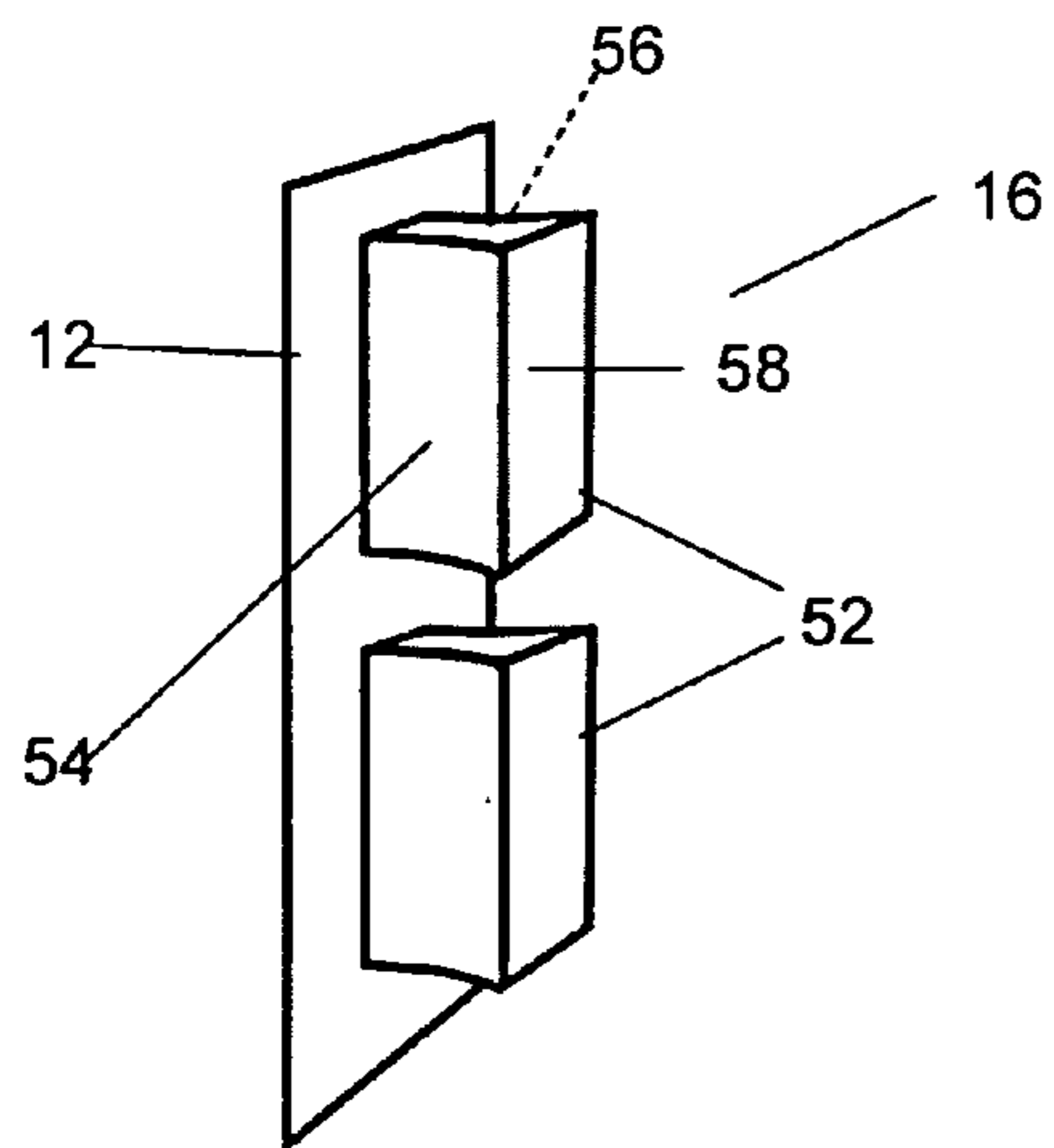


Figure 5A

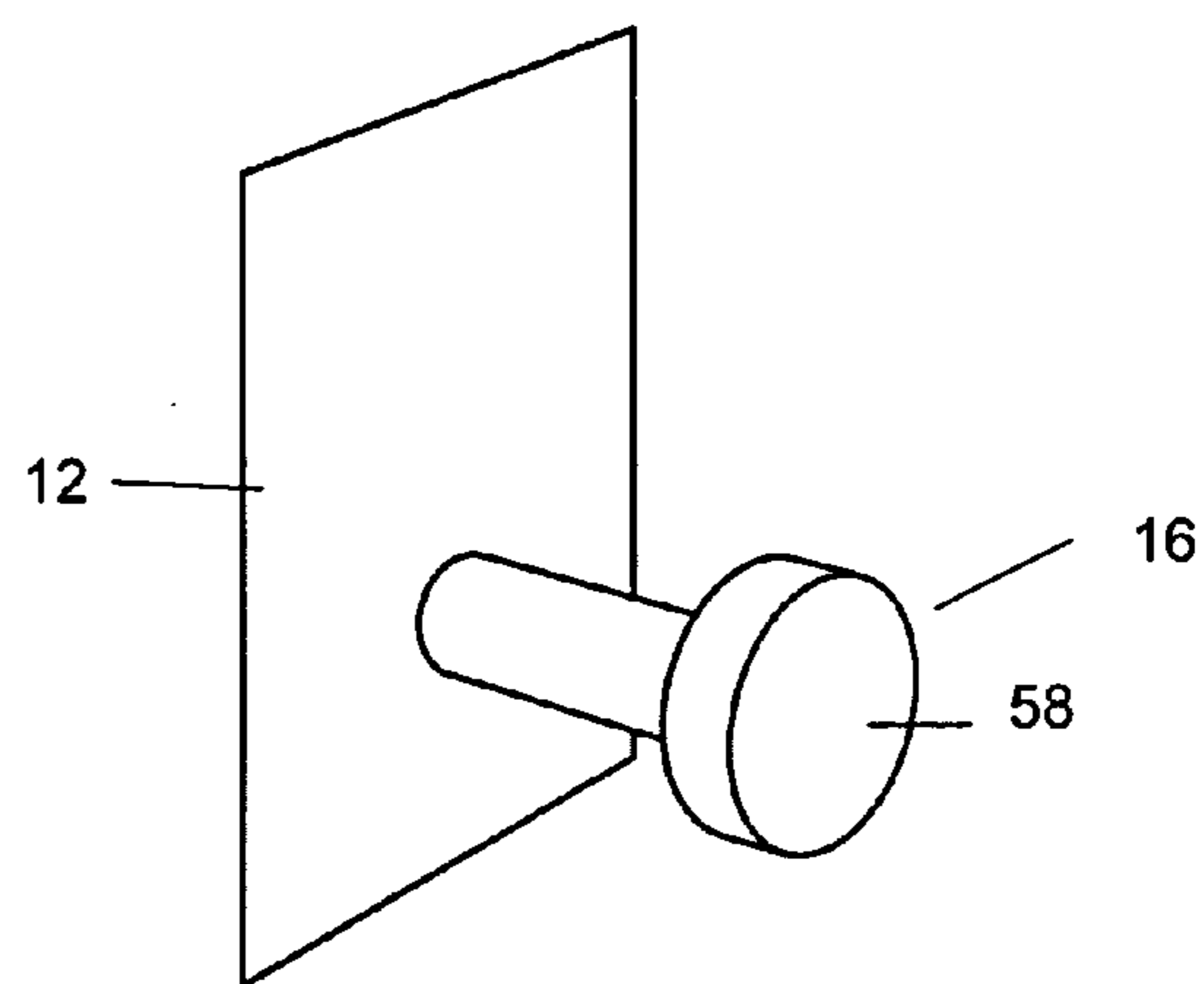


Figure 5B

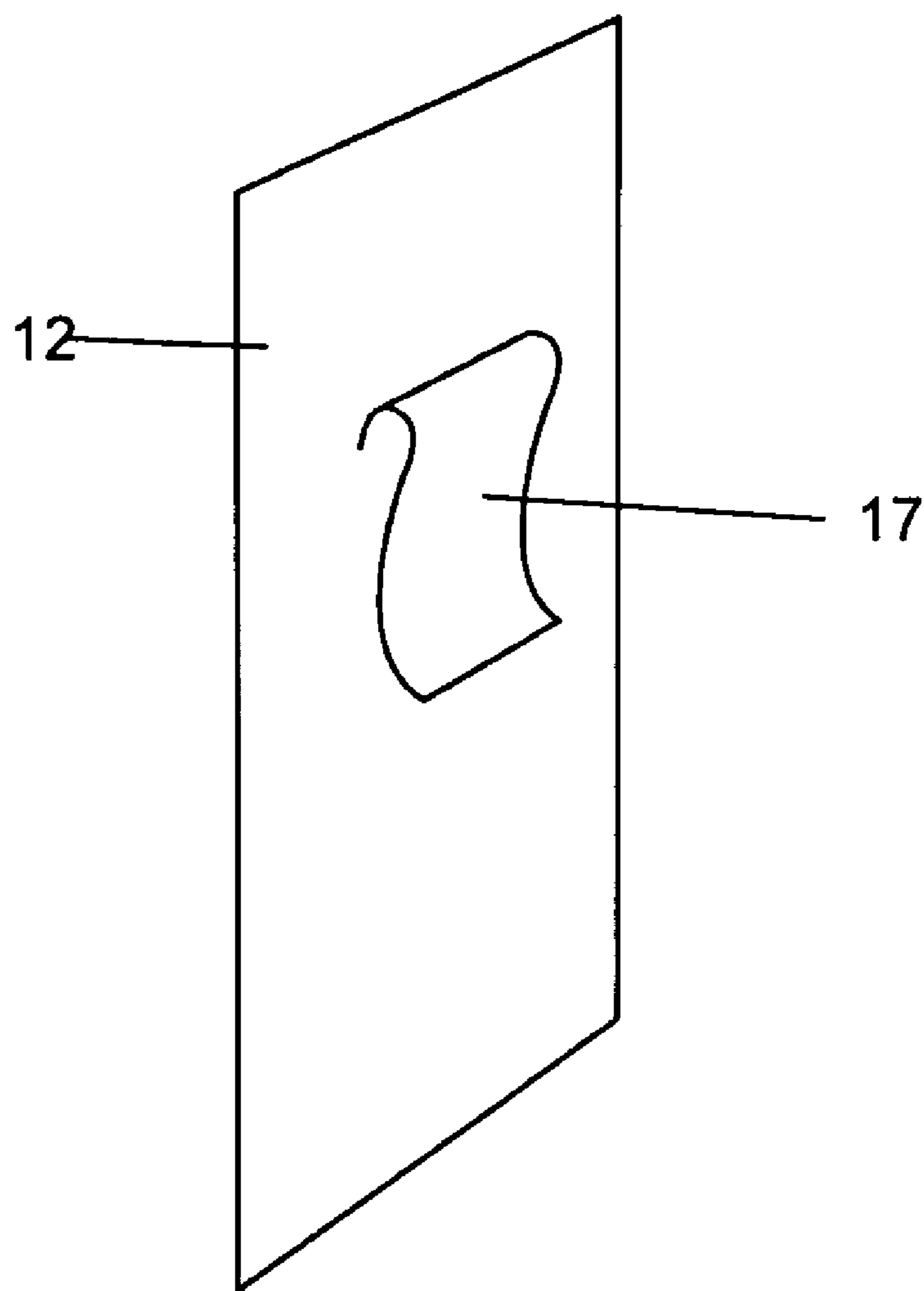


Figure 6

ORGANIZING APPARATUS FOR STRING-LIKE OBJECTS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application is claims priority from U.S. Pat. No. 60/902,244 filed Feb. 20, 2007, entitled Organizing Apparatus for String-like Objects, the entire specification of which is incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The invention relates in general to organizational aids and apparatuses, and more particularly, to an organizing apparatus intended for releasably maintaining string-like objects. The apparatus facilitates stowage of the string-like object when not in use. The apparatus remains attached, yet unobtrusive, while the object is in use.

[0004] 2. Background Art

[0005] The use of organizational apparatuses for management of hose, cable, rope, cords, wire, and other similar elongated string-line objects (hereinafter sometimes referred to as "object" or "objects") is known in the art. For example, many such devices provide a structure wherein a portion of the object is wrapped around the device. Additionally, with certain devices an additional member is provided to secure the wrapped object.

[0006] One disadvantage of such a device is that typically, when the object is in use, a user must find a place to stow the organizing apparatus. While in certain instances, such stowage is easily found, in other cases, the stowage of the organizing apparatus becomes burdensome. Often, the organizing apparatus is lost when not in use, or not readily available when needed.

[0007] Another disadvantage of such organizational apparatuses is that the organizing apparatus is, in many instances, larger than the object. Thus, to stow the object properly, a device is provided which in summary provides more disadvantages to the user than simply rolling or folding up the object without any organizational aid.

[0008] Yet another disadvantage of prior art organizational apparatuses is that they are difficult to apply and utilize. Certain devices require damaging the object to be organized. Other devices require permanent modification to the object so that it can be utilized in conjunction with the organizing apparatus. Furthermore, other organizing apparatuses become permanently coupled with the object, which may be undesirable in many applications as the organizing apparatus is limited to use with the object and it is incapable of later separation.

[0009] It is an object of the present invention to provide an organizing apparatus for string-like objects.

[0010] It is another object of the present invention to provide an organizing apparatus that facilitates stowage of the string-like object when not in use, while remaining attached, unobtrusively, while the string-like object is in use.

[0011] It is another object of the invention to overcome the deficiencies, including the deficiencies set forth above, of the prior art.

[0012] These objects as well as other objects of the present invention will become apparent in light of the present specification, claims, and drawings.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0013] The objects of the invention are achieved through an organizing apparatus that can be coupled to the object, in a releasable manner. As such, when needed, the organizing apparatus can be quickly employed. However, when not in use, the apparatus remains close at hand as needed.

[0014] More specifically, the invention is directed to an organizing apparatus comprising a body, a wrap member and a wrap coupling member. The body defines a cavity with a plurality of object receiving openings. The body is positionable between a closed configuration and an open configuration. In a closed configuration, transverse access to the cavity is substantially precluded. In an open configuration, transverse access to the cavity is permitted. The wrap member is coupled to the body. The wrap coupling member is associated with the body and spaced apart from the wrap member.

[0015] In certain embodiments, the shape and the configuration of the body can be varied to achieve a desired ornamental or functional appearance. Furthermore, the configuration of the wrap member can be modified to suit a number of different and specific uses and situations.

[0016] The organizing apparatus is well suited for use in association with the organizing of electronic equipment, marine equipment, household items, among others. Indeed, the invention is not limited to use with any particular type of object.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0017] The invention will now be described with reference to the drawings wherein:

[0018] FIG. 1 of the drawings is a side elevational view of the organizing apparatus of the present invention, showing, in particular, the organizing apparatus in use retaining a power cord;

[0019] FIG. 2 of the drawings is a perspective view of the organizing apparatus of the present invention, showing, in particular, the organizing apparatus in an open configuration exposing the cavity defined thereby;

[0020] FIGS. 3A through 3G are side elevational and perspective views of various wrap members of the organizing apparatus of the present invention;

[0021] FIG. 4 of the present invention comprises a perspective view of the organizing apparatus of the present invention, showing, in particular, the wrap coupling member;

[0022] FIGS. 5A through 5B comprise partial perspective views of various wrap coupling members of the organizing apparatus of the present invention; and

[0023] FIG. 6 of the drawings is a partial perspective view of a outside engaging member of the organizing apparatus of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0024] While this invention is susceptible of embodiment in many different forms, there is shown in the drawings and described herein in detail a specific embodiment with the understanding that the present disclosure is to be considered as an exemplification of the principles of the invention and is not intended to limit the invention to the embodiment illustrated.

[0025] It will be understood that like or analogous elements and/or components, referred to herein, may be identified throughout the drawings by like reference characters. In addition, it will be understood that the drawings are merely schematic representations of the invention, and some of the components may have been distorted from actual scale for purposes of pictorial clarity.

[0026] Referring now to the drawings and in particular to FIG. 1, the organizing apparatus of the present invention is shown generally at 10. The organizing apparatus includes body 12, wrap member 14, wrap coupling member 16, and outside object engaging member 17 (FIG. 6). The apparatus may be provided in a variety of sizes so as to retain a variety of string-like objects. For example, a small version of the apparatus may be provided to organize objects such as headphone cords and antenna wires. Larger versions may be provided to retain laptop cords and chargers. Still larger versions may be provided to retain ropes (for example, for marine applications) and relatively long extension cords. Of course, the number of different sizes and shapes of the apparatus are not intended to be limiting. In the embodiment shown, the apparatus 10 is configured for use in association with a power cord 100.

[0027] With reference to FIG. 2, body 12 is shown as comprising first body portion 20, second body portion 30 and hinge member 40. The first body portion comprises a substantially concave configuration which includes outer surface 22 and inner surface 23 which cooperate to define first cavity portion 25a. The inner and outer surfaces further cooperate to define first perimeter edge 24 which, in the embodiment shown, is substantially planar. In other embodiments, the perimeter edge 24 may be other than planar, wherein the perimeter edge 34 of the second body portion is configured in a corresponding manner.

[0028] The first body portion further includes object receiving slot regions 26, 27 which are configured to facilitate the partial receipt of the object transversely across the first perimeter edge 24 from slot region 26 to slot region 27. Similarly, wrap receiving slot regions 28, 29 are provided on the first body portion to partially receive portions of the wrap coupling member 16.

[0029] In the embodiment shown, the second body portion has structures similar to that of the first body portion. In particular, the second body portion is substantially concave and includes outer surface 32 with corresponding inner surface 33. The surfaces cooperate to define second cavity portion 25b. The inner and outer surfaces further cooperate to define second perimeter edge 34 which, in the embodiment shown, is substantially planar.

[0030] The second body portion further includes object receiving slot regions 36, 37 which correspond to first body portion object receiving regions 26, 27 so that cooperatively, they define the slot receiving openings 76, 77 in the closed configuration (FIG. 1). The openings capture the object to be received so that a portion extends through the cavity. Similarly, the second body portion includes wrap receiving slot regions 38, 39 which correspond to first body portion wrap receiving regions 26, 27 so as to define openings 86, 87 in the closed configuration (FIG. 1). The openings capture the wrap coupling member 16 therebetween.

[0031] In the embodiment shown, the first body portion and the second body portion are mated along their respective perimeter edges 24, 34 so as to substantially define a generally rectangular cubic configuration, and so that the coopera-

tively define cavity 25a and cavity 25b form a collective cavity 25. In other embodiments, the body portions may be different in spatial configuration, such as spherical (with flattened ends), square cubic, arbitrary configurations. Indeed, the configuration of the combination of the body portions is not limited to any particular cross-sectional configuration or any particular surface configuration.

[0032] Preferably, the first and second body portions comprise a polymer material which may be molded in any number of different manners. In other embodiments, the first and second body portions may comprise a metal, an alloy thereof. In still further embodiments, the first and second body portions may comprise a natural fibrous material such as wood, or the like, or, a composite material. Moreover, various combinations of the foregoing may be utilized in a single embodiment.

[0033] With reference to FIG. 2, the first and second body portions are maintained together by hinge member 40 in cooperation with an interference fit, or a tab and slot retention system (not shown) about the outer perimeters 24, 34. The hinge member, in the embodiment shown comprises a living hinge that is molded into each of the first and second body portion. In other embodiments, the two components may be snapped together so as to be releasably retained together (through, for example, tab and slot configurations), in the place of hinge member 40. Release adhesive, snaps, clips or other structures may be utilized to maintain the members together.

[0034] While two body portions are shown in the present invention, it is contemplated that a greater number of body components may be utilized wherein the combination of the body portions results in the defining of a cavity with at least two openings facilitating the passage of at least a portion of the object through the cavity when in use.

[0035] Wrap member 14 is shown in FIGS. 2 and 3A as comprising a loop of elastic material 50. With reference to FIG. 2, the wrap member is configured so as to be positionable through the openings defined by the cooperation of wrap receiving slot regions 28, 38 and wrap receiving slot regions 29, 39. In the embodiment shown, the loop configuration extends into the cavity 25 defined by cavity regions 25a, 25b.

[0036] It is contemplated that the wrap member comprises an elastic natural or synthetic polymer member (i.e., rubber, elastic polymer, silicone, etc.) which has a substantially uniform cross-sectional configuration (i.e., circular, square, etc.). With reference to FIGS. 3B and 3C, the wrap member may be varied so that the portion within the cavity is different from the portion outside of the cavity. As is shown in FIG. 3D, the wrap member may be co-molded with one of the body portions. As is shown in FIG. 3E, the wrap member may comprise a u-shaped member with lugs or other structures at each end, wherein the lugs are positioned within the cavity and sized larger than the cooperatively formed wrap receiving slot regions. As such, they cannot be withdrawn from there-within. FIG. 3F has a plurality of nubs coupled along the length thereof. The nubs in cooperation with the openings can limit the length of the wrap member that remains outside of the cavity 25. FIG. 3G is a variation thereof, wherein a single nubbed member extends into the cavity, and the loop remains outside of the cavity for engagement with the wrap coupling member 16.

[0037] With particular reference to FIG. 3B, it is further contemplated that multiple wrap members 84 may be provided, or that multiple wrap members may extend from a

single wrap member (i.e., a frayed configuration) which is positioned inside of the cavity.

[0038] Wrap coupling member 16 is shown in FIG. 4 as comprising body member 52 which extends from one or more of the body portions. The body includes opposite sides 54, 56 and terminates at outer end 58. In the embodiment shown, the body is substantially rectangular cubic in configuration wherein the outer end 58 is somewhat flared outwardly. Further, the wrap coupling member is positioned between the wrap receiving slot regions and the wrap receiving slot regions. In other embodiments, such as the embodiment shown in FIG. 5B, the wrap coupling member may comprise a lug or post member (which may include a ball or other member at its outward end). Additionally, as shown in FIGS. 5A and 5B, multiple body members 52 may be provided.

[0039] In another embodiment, and with reference to FIG. 6, an outside object engaging member 17 may be provided on body 12. In the embodiment shown, the outside object engaging member comprises a clip wherein an outside object can be clamped between the outside object engaging member and the surface of the body. In another embodiment, the outside engaging member may comprise a hook or loop which is provided on, for example, the wrap coupling member. In such an embodiment, the outside object engaging member may comprise a separate loop of material coupled to the body or stemming from the wrap coupling member.

[0040] In operation, a user first selects an organizing apparatus 10 which is suitably sized for the particular application desired. Once selected, the user first exposes cavity 25 and the object receiving slot regions. In the embodiment shown, the user separates the first body portion and the second body portion and rotates one or both about hinge member 40. Once opened, cavity 25 is exposed. The object is positioned into each of the object receiving slot regions 26, 27 so as to traverse across the first body portion.

[0041] Once positioned, the wrap member is deposited into wrap receiving slot regions 28, 29 so that a portion of the wrap extends outside of cavity 25 and a portion is positioned within the cavity 25. Once the object and the wrap member are positioned as desired, the user can utilize the hinge member so as to position the body portions in the desired orientation. Next, the retention structure is employed to releasably maintain the first and second body portions in a closed configuration.

[0042] Once in the closed configuration, a portion of the object is trapped within the cavity 25 of the body 12. Due to the relative sizing of the object receiving openings 76, 77, the object can slide within the cavity of the body 12, however, as the ends of the object typically include a larger dimension, the object cannot be easily detached without opening the body 12. Similarly, a portion of the wrap member 14 is trapped within the cavity 25 of the body 12. Again, the wrap member may be able to translate about openings 86, 87. The wrap and object receiving slots can be sized to permit a predetermined resistance to sliding of the respective wrap or object when the wrap or object is positioned within the slots. In certain embodiments, the openings 86, 87 may include a immediate portion or region surrounding the opening which is softer than the remainder of the body. As such, this softer portion can surround the object so as to provide some resistance to move-

ment of the object, and so as to provide a seal for cavity 25. The wrap receiving regions may be similarly configured.

[0043] After the body 12 has been placed in the closed configuration, the object can be utilized as desired. When stowage is required, with reference to FIG. 1, the string-like object 100 can be folded or otherwise wrapped about itself or the body 12 (i.e., collapsed into a small configuration). Next the object can be positioned so that a portion overlies a portion of the outer surface of either of the first or second body portions.

[0044] Once the object is in such an orientation, the wrap member 14 can be extended across the body (and over at least a portion of the body) and over the wrap coupling member 16. When released the wrap member, now in tension, is trapped on a far side of the wrap coupling member and retained thereby. As a result, the object becomes trapped between the wrap member and the outer surface of the body and substantially precluded from movement. In short, the object is in a stowed configuration. The entire device, with the aid of the outside object engaging member 17, can be hung or otherwise coupled to an outside device (i.e., hung on a wall).

[0045] When the object is again desired for use, the wrap member can be manipulated so as to disengage the wrap member from the opposing side of the wrap coupling member. The wrap member returns to a release configuration and the object is no longer trapped between the wrap member and the body. The object can then be moved, articulated, and utilized. Inasmuch as the object extends through the cavity of the body 12, the organizing apparatus remains associated with the object (such that it is not lost or misplaced). In turn, the object can be utilized, but the organizing apparatus remains close at hand and ready for use.

[0046] The foregoing description merely explains and illustrates the invention and the invention is not limited thereto except insofar as the appended claims are so limited, as those skilled in the art who have the disclosure before them will be able to make modifications without departing from the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An organizing apparatus comprising:

a body having a first body portion and a second body portion movably coupled to each other, the body portions together defining a cavity therebetween, wherein in an open configuration, access to the cavity is permitted, whereas in a closed configuration, access to the cavity is substantially precluded;

the first and second body portions cooperating to form a pair of object receiving openings spaced apart from each other, the pair of object receiving openings providing ingress into the cavity formed by the first and second body portions and permit passage of at least a portion of an outside member therebetween and within the cavity;

a wrap member is coupled to the body and comprising an elongated member forming a loop, the wrap member being elastic;

a wrap coupling member extending from the body spaced apart from the wrap member, the wrap coupling member configured to engage the loop of the elongated member of the wrap member, to, in turn, retain an outside member between the wrap member and the body.

* * * * *