(19) Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets

(11) EP 1 056 067 A2

(12) EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:
29.11.2000 Bulletin 2000/48

(51) Int. Cl.[7]: **G09F 3/18**

(21) Application number: **00304396.5**

(22) Date of filing: **24.05.2000**

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU MC NL PT SE
Designated Extension States:
AL LT LV MK RO SI

(30) Priority: **24.05.1999 GB 9912042**
29.06.1999 GB 9915209

(71) Applicant: **Esselte UK Limited**
Cowley, Uxbridge UB8 2HR (GB)

(72) Inventors:
- **TURFF, Martin**
  St Ives Cornwall, PR26 1JA (GB)
- **McCLEAVE, Christopher Michael**
  London, W6 9BE (GB)

(74) Representative:
Style, Kelda Camilla Karen et al
Page White & Farrer,
54 Doughty Street
London WC1N 2LS (GB)

(54) Stationery products and label covers

(57) A stationery product comprising a label cover for covering a label; and a recess for receiving said label cover, said label being received in said recess and being covered by said cover, said label cover and said recess having an oval shape.

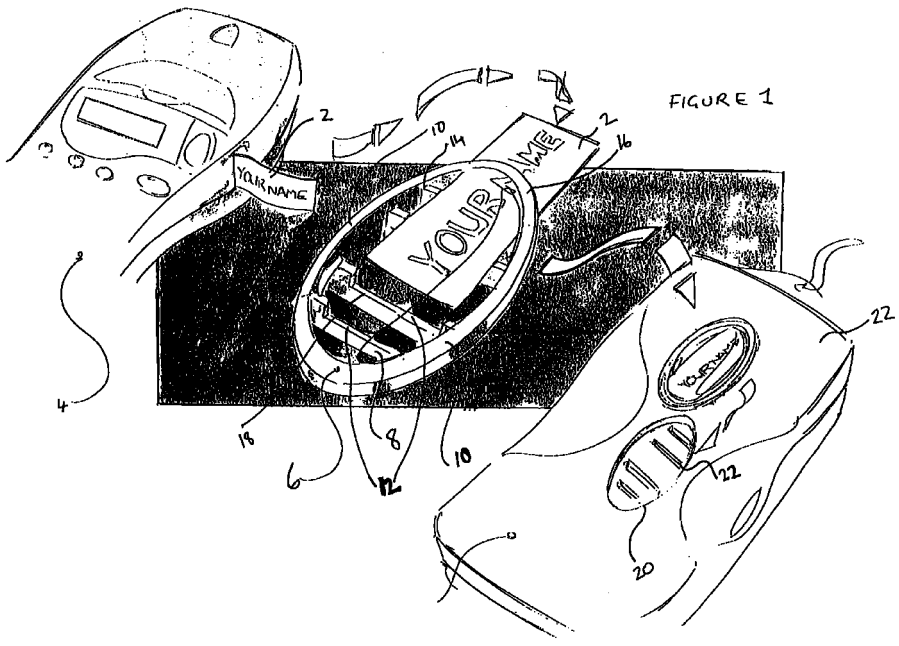


FIGURE 1

EP 1 056 067 A2

Description

[0001] The present invention relates to stationery products and in particular to stationery products having label covers. The present invention also relates to a cover for covering a label.

[0002] Stationery articles are typically used in office or school environments. In these environments, a relatively large number of people will have the same or similar items. It is therefore easy for these items to be stolen or lost. Labelling of these articles would make it harder for such items to be stolen or lost.

[0003] It is aim of embodiments of the present invention to provide a stationery products which can be labelled easily. It is also an aim of other embodiments of the invention to provide a cover for covering labels.

[0004] According to one aspect of the present invention, there is provided a stationery product comprising: a label cover for covering a label; and a recess for receiving said label cover, said label being received in said recess and being covered by said cover, said label cover and said recess having an oval shape.

[0005] According to a second aspect, there is provided a stationery product comprising: a label cover for covering a label; and a recess for receiving said label cover, said label being received in said recess and being covered by said cover, said label cover being retained in place by an interference fit between said cover and said recess.

[0006] According to a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided a stationery product comprising: a label cover for covering a label; and a elastomeric material for retaining said label cover in place, said label being under said cover, in use.

[0007] According to a fourth aspect of the present invention, there is provided a cover for covering a label, said label being retained in place by said cover, said cover having a curved outer surface through which said label is viewed in use.

[0008] According to a fifth aspect of the present invention, there is provided a cover for covering a label, said label being retained in place by said cover, said cover having an oval circumference. cover for covering a label, said label being retained in place by said cover, said cover comprising a planar surface which in use is arranged to be in contact with said label and a curved outer surface through which said label is viewed in use.

[0009] According to a sixth aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of labelling a stationery product, said method comprising the steps of: providing a label containing information; placing said label in a recess; and covering said label with a cover, said cover being retained in place in said recess.

[0010] According to a seventh aspect of the present invention, there is provide a kit for labelling a stationery product comprising: a cover for covering a label; and a recess providing means for attaching to said stationery product, a label being received in said recess in use and said cover being received in said recess in use.

[0011] For a better understanding of the present invention and as to how the same may be carried into effect, reference will now be made by way of example to the accompanying drawings in which:-

Figure 1 shows a first embodiment of the present invention;
Figure 2A shows a first cover applied to a ruler;
Figure 2B shows a cross-section along line A-A of Figure 2A;
Figure 2C shows a second cover applied to a ruler;
Figure 2D shows a cross-section along line B-B of Figure 2C;
Figure 3 shows a cover element applied to a pencil case;
Figure 4A shows a first stapler incorporating a cover embodying the present invention;
Figure 4B shows a second stapler incorporating a cover embodying the present invention;
Figure 5A shows a first perforator incorporating a cover embodying the present invention;
Figure 6 shows a tape printer which can be used to print the label used in any one of the preceding embodiments;
Figure 7 shows a view of a label under a cover;
Figure 8 shows a cross-section of a cover where an interference fit is provided;
Figure 9 shows a detailed view of the projection of Figure 8;
Figure 10 shows a cross-section of a cover where an elastic fit is provided;
Figure 11 shows a view of a first cover;
Figure 12 shows a view of a second cover; and
Figure 13 shows a view of a recess within an article for receiving a cover.

[0012] Reference will now be made to Figure 1 which shows a first embodiment of the present invention. A label 2 is printed by a label printer 4, which will be discussed in more detail hereinafter. Alternatively, the user may write, type or print an image on the label 2. The label 2 may be cut to size so as to be accommodated in a label holder 6. The label 2 printed by the tape printer 4 may be arranged to be cut to a length which can be accommodated in the label holder 6. Alternatively, the label may be precut to a size which fits into the label holder 6.

[0013] In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, a die cut label corresponding to the shape of the cover may be provided with the cover. In the case of an oval label cover or label holder an oval label may be provided.

[0014] The label holder 6 is oval in shape. The use of a completely curved label holder shape is advantageous over the use of a label holder shape having corners. This is because the strength of a curved label holder will tend to be greater than one having corners.

This is because the corners can act as points of weakness. The curved shape may also be easier to mould if the label holder is to be moulded. The label holder can have any other suitable curved shape such as a circle or the like. The oval shape is preferred as it may better match the typical elongated shape of labels.

[0015] Whilst the use of the oval shape for the label holder 6 is preferred, it should be appreciated that in some embodiments of the present invention, the label holder may be rectangular, square or indeed any other shape having corners.

[0016] The label holder 6 shown in Figure 1 has four support slats 8 which extend between the longer sides 10 of the label holder 6. The label 2 is supported between the upper surfaces 12 of the slats and the lower surface of the cover part 14 of the label holder 6. The lower surface of the cover part 14 of the label holder is preferably planar. However, in some embodiments, the lower surface may be concave, following the convex upper surface 15 of the cover part. The upper surfaces of the label holder is itself curved so that it extends above the plane of the label. The outer profile of the upper surface forms part of an ovoid shape or any other suitable shape.

[0017] The label holder 6 has a frame 16 to which the four slats 8 are attached. The outside of this frame may be different from the cover part 14 of the label holder. The cover part 14 is transparent and may be clear or coloured. The frame 16 may be transparent or opaque. The frame 16 may be moulded together with the cover 14 or the frame 16 may be joined to the cover 14 after the components have been made.

[0018] As can be seen from Figure 1, the slats have a cutaway portion 18 which is arranged to accommodate the label. The length of the cutaway portion 18, in the longitudinal direction of each slat 8, corresponds generally to the width of the label 2 to be supported in the label holder. The label 2 is supported on the upper surfaces 12 at the base of each cutaway portion 18. The lower part of the slats may be coplanar with the plane containing the bottom of the frame 16, extend below the plane containing the frame 16 or be above the plane containing the frame 16.

[0019] The label holder 6 is received in an oval recess 20 of a product 22. The recess 20 extends below the planar surface of the product. The product 22 can be any suitable product, particularly an office or stationery item. The oval recess 20 has a shape corresponding to the outer circumference of the label holder 6. The slats 8 are arranged to be received in correspondingly shaped recesses 22 arranged in the oval recess 21. A snap fit connection, press fit connection, interference connection or any other suitable type of connection is made between the slat recesses 22 and the slats 8. For example, the slats 8 may be sized so that they only fit in the corresponding recesses 22 on the application of force and cannot subsequently be removed. The frame 16 may have a press fit connection, snap fit connection, interference fit connection or any other suitable type of connection with the sides of the oval recess 20.

[0020] In an alternative embodiment of the present invention, the slats 8 are provided in the oval shaped recess 20 for receiving the label and are not part of the label holder. Indeed, the label holder may be considered to be a cover. The cover part 14 of the label holder is held in place in the oval recess using any suitable type of connection, such as discussed hereinbefore.

[0021] Various different types of connection between the cover and the recess are possible and are described in relation to some of the alternative embodiments hereinafter.

[0022] Reference is now made to Figures 2A and 2B which shows the application of embodiments of the present invention to a elastomeric product. In particular, Figure 2A shows the application of a cover 26 to an elastomeric ruler 24. Figure 2B shows the ruler in cross section, with the cover 26 in place. In this embodiment, there is a cover 26 which protects a label 2 (not shown). The cover 26 is made of a rigid material.

[0023] The cover 26 is arranged to be received in a recess 28 in the elastomeric ruler 24. As shown in Figure 2B, the bottom surface 30 of the cover 26 is planar. A label is sandwiched between this lower surface 30 and the bottom 32 of the recess 28. The sidewalls 34 of the recess are inwardly inclined from the bottom of the recess to the top. The sidewalls 36 of the cover 26 are inclined inwardly towards the lower surface 30. The cover 26 is put in place by pushing the cover 26 firmly into the recess. A interference fit, which is permanent, results and the cover 26 cannot then be removed again.

[0024] In this embodiment, the cover is made from a clear material with optical properties. In particular, the cover 26 is arranged to act as a magnifier glass to magnify the image on the label.

[0025] As can be seen in Figure 2B the upper surface 36 of the cover 26 is curved to define a convex surface. The outer profile of the cover 26 corresponds to part of an ovoid. There may be a frame portion 25 which extends around the circumference of the cover 26 and is planar before merging into the ovoid profile. The frame may be plain or decorated. The frame may be transparent or opaque.

[0026] Figure 2C and 2D show a cover 40 which is arranged to be received in a more rigid ruler 42 which is for example of a polypropylene material. The cover 40 is again received in a correspondingly shaped recess 44. The cover 40 has a similar outer profile 46 to the cover shown in Figures 2A and 2B. The cover 40 additionally has two flexible engagement projections 48. These engagement projections 14 are received in corresponding grooves 50 arranged in the bottom and side of the recess 44, as shown in Figure 2C.

[0027] These projections 14 are arranged on the two longer sides 52 of the cover 40. The projections 14 extend below the plane of the lower surface of the cover 40 and outwardly from the plane containing the sides 52

of the cover. When the cover is pushed into the recess 44, the projections 48 are received in the grooves 50. The grooves 50 each have a wider cut portion 55 into which the sidewardly extending part of the projections 48 are received. Once the cover 40 has been inserted into the recess it cannot then be removed. Any other suitable number of projections can be provided and at any suitable location.

[0028] In order to hide the projections 48 from view, the lens is provided with a frame region 54. This region may be opaque or have a textured surface so that the projections 48 are not visible from above the cover 40. This frame can take any suitable shape and, in preferred embodiments of the present invention, follows the oval shape of the cover 40.

[0029] As with the embodiment shown in Figures 2A and 2B, the cover preferably has optical properties so as to magnify the label received in the recess 44.

[0030] Reference will now be made to Figure 3 which shows a further embodiment of the present invention. The cover 58 is held in place by an elastomeric skin 60. This elastomeric skin may be over a polypropylene body 63 of a stationery item, such as for example a pencil case. The elastomeric skin 60 has an opening 62 which is slightly smaller than the cover 58. The cover 58 protrudes from the opening 62. The cover 58 is thus partially under the elastomeric skin 60. The fact that the opening 62 is smaller than the cover 58 ensures that the cover is held in place. In embodiments of the present invention, the skin 60 is generally much thinner than the cover 58. The sides of the cover 58 may be inclined inwardly from the base of the cover 58 which is in contact with the article 63. Alternatively, the sidewalls of the cover 58 may be perpendicular to the plane of the article 62.

[0031] Reference is now made to Figure 4A which shows a first stapler 66 which has a jacket 68 which fits over the existing stapler body. Any removable parts covering the stapler basic body may be removed prior to the fitting of the jacket 68. The jacket 68 includes a cover 70 which is received in a recess 72. A label is arranged between the cover 70 and the recess 72. The recess 72 may have a side lip 74 which extends over the outer periphery of the upper surface of the cover to retain the cover 70 in place. If the jacket 68 is of a resilient material, the fitting of the type described in relation to for example Figure 2A may be used. If the moulding 68 is of a more rigid type, a fitting such as disclosed in relation to Figure 2C may be used or any of the other relevant embodiments may be used.

[0032] Figure 4B shows an alternative embodiment of the present invention when applied to a second stapler 78. The cover 80 is placed on top of an existing part of the stapler 78. A jacket 82 is then applied on top of the existing stapler and the cover 80. The jacket 82 has an opening 83 through which the cover 80 extends. The cover 80 is then retained in place by the jacket 82 which is fitted on top of it. The opening 83 is smaller than the cover 80.

[0033] In both of the embodiments shown in Figures 4A and 4B, the jacket can be arranged to provide a base 85 at one end of the stapler on which the stapler can stand. The jacket can be retained on the stapler body in any suitable manner including by adhesive or the resilience of the jacket body.

[0034] In the arrangement shown in Figures 4A and 4B, the jacket may be a moulded element. Alternative any other technique can of course be used to provide the jacket. The jacket is generally thicker than the skin shown in Figure 3.

[0035] Reference will now be made to Figure 5A which shows a hole punch or perforator 81. The cover 84 is provided with a plurality of clips 86. These clips extend outwardly from the cover, coplanar with the bottom surface of the cover. Any suitable number of clips can be provided. In some embodiments, two clips may be provided on opposite sides of the cover. An elastomeric material 88 is then attached to the appropriate surface of the perforator or hole punch 81. The elastomeric material 88 has an opening 90 through which the cover 84 projects. The clips 86 are between the surface of the perforator 81 and the lower surface of the elastomeric covering. The opening 90 has the same or slightly smaller size than the outer circumference of the cover. The clips retain the cover 90 in place. The elastomeric moulding may be as thin as that described in Figure 3 or may be substantially thicker.

[0036] Reference is now made to Figure 5B which shows a second perforator 92. A base 94 is attached to the front of the perforator 96. This base is of polypropylene and relatively thick. A recess 98 is provided in this base. The cover 100 is then received in this recess 98 using a pressfit, interference fit, snap fit or any other suitable type of connection.

[0037] By way of further explanation of embodiments of the invention, reference will now be made to Figures 7 to 13.

[0038] Figure 7 shows a view of a label under a cover 200.

[0039] Figure 8 shows a cross-section of the cover 200 where the cover 200 makes an interference fit with the stationery product 202 or the like. A label 204 is arranged between the cover 200 and the stationery product.

[0040] Reference is made to Figure 9 which shows the interference fit of Figure 8 in more detail. As can be seen from Figure 9, the cover 200 has a projection portion 206 which is received in a groove 210 of the product 202. The projection portion may, but not necessarily be biased outwardly. The projection 206 has one side 208 which when the cover 200 is in place is against a side wall of the groove 210. The projection 206 also has an engaging portion 212 which projects in the radially outward direction of the projection. The engaging portion 212 is received in a wider portion 214 within the groove. The wider portion 214 may itself be groove like or alter-

natively be a stepped portion of the groove. The interaction between the engaging portion 212 and the wider portion 214 retains the cover 200 in place once the cover has been pushed into the groove. The projection portion 206 is flexible enough to permit the engaging portion 212 to be pushed past the one side 208 of the groove 214.

[0041] Reference is made to Figure 10 which shows a cross section of a cover 222 which makes an elastic fit in a recess. The projection portions 206 may be omitted. The cover 222 is retained in position by the side walls 224 of the recess 226 for the cover. The sides 224 of recess may be bevelled. The bevelled sides can be peeled back to allow the cover 222 to be received in the recess. As can be seen the sides of the recess may cover the periphery of the upper surface of the cover.

[0042] Reference is made to Figure 11 which shows a cover 230 having a clear central part 232. The outer portions 234 of the cover are opaque, for example, as a result of texturing.

[0043] Figure 12 shows a clear cover 236 with a oval label 238 under it.

[0044] Figure 13 shows part of a stationery article with a recess 240 for receiving a cover. Within the recess is a further recess 242 for receiving the label. Slots 244 are provided at opposite ends of the bigger recess 240 for receiving projecting portions of the cover, such as described hereinbefore.

[0045] The cover may be styrene or any other suitable material.

[0046] Reference is now made to Figure 6 which shows a tape printer which can be used to print the labels to be inserted under the covers.

[0047] Figure 6 shows a plan view of a tape printing tape apparatus 102. The tape printer apparatus 102 comprises a keyboard 104, a display 106 and a cassette receiving bay 108. The tape printing apparatus houses at least one cassette 110 or tape holding case. The cassette houses a substrate tape 112. The substrate tape can be of any suitable form. For example, the heat substrate tape may be heat sensitive or alternatively may be one to which an image may be applied via an ink ribbon. If an ink ribbon is required, the ink ribbon may be provided in the same cassette or tape holding case or in a separate cassette or tape holding case. The substrate tape may be provided with a layer of adhesive in order to adhere the label to a surface. Alternatively, this adhesive layer may be omitted.

[0048] Where an ink ribbon is provided, the substrate tape passes an overlap with the ink ribbon to a print zone 114 consisting of a fixed printhead 116 and a platen 118 against which the printhead can be pressed to cause an image to transfer from the ink ribbon to the thermal printing tape. Thermal printing is one way in which this can be achieved although other techniques such as dry lettering or dry film impression may be used. Where no ink ribbon is provided, the printhead may be in direct contact with the thermally sensitive substrate tape so that when the printhead is heated, an image is printed on the image receiving tape.

[0049] The keyboard 104 allows the user to enter data to define the image to be printed on the label. The keyboard may also be used to select label layout attributes and character attributes.

[0050] The display 106 may be a liquid crystal display which allows the data to be viewed as it is entered. The user can view all or part of the label to be printed. This facilitates the editing of the label prior to its printing as well as the data entry. The display 106 is also used to display various options which can be selected by the user. The display 106 may also display messages to the user, for example error messages or an indication that the print key should be pressed or actuated.

[0051] The tape printing apparatus may have a predetermined mode which can be used for printing labels suitable for use with any one or all of the covers described hereinbefore. In this mode, a predetermined length for the label is defined, the length being such that the label can be accommodated underneath the cover. The user selects this mode using the keyboard 104. Menu options may be displayed to the user which can be selected using a combination of cursor and enter keys. The user inputs the text or image to be printed on the label. The text or image may be automatically scaled in order to fit into the predetermined length. Alternatively, the user may be prevented from entering too many characters or from printing a label which is too long.

[0052] The printed label is cut by a cutter 120 to the predetermined length.

[0053] The label may be printed by any other suitable apparatus using any suitable printing technique or image applying technique.

[0054] Embodiments of the present invention are particularly applicable to office or school products such as:

scissors, rulers, hole punches (perforators), pencil cases, staplers, staple removers, envelope openers, files, filing trays, folders, small electronic items such as calculators or label printers and similar articles, plugs, computer equipment, printers.

[0055] The above list is not exhaustive and any other office or school commodity or any other product can incorporate a label cover embodying the present invention.

[0056] Embodiments of the invention can additionally be used in relation to any other product which requires labelling.

[0057] The label covered by the cover may include the name of the owner of the product in question, information identifying the product or information concerning the use of the product or any other type of information.

Claims

1. A stationery product comprising:

   a label cover for covering a label; and
   a recess for receiving said label cover, said label being received in said recess and being covered by said cover, said label cover and said recess having an oval shape.

2. A stationery product comprising:

   a label cover for covering a label; and
   a recess for receiving said label cover, said label being received in said recess and being covered by said cover, said label cover being retained in place by an interference fit between said cover and said recess.

3. A stationery product comprising:

   a label cover for covering a label; and
   a elastomeric material for retaining said label cover in place, said label being under said cover, in use.

4. A cover for covering a label, said label being retained in place by said cover, said cover having a curved outer surface through which said label is viewed in use.

5. A cover as claimed in claim 4, wherein said cover has an oval circumference.

6. A cover for covering a label, said label being retained in place by said cover, said cover having an oval circumference.

7. A cover as claimed in claim 6, wherein said cover has a curved outer surface through which said label is viewed in use.

8. A cover as claimed in claim 4 or 7, wherein said curved outer surface forms part of an ovoid.

9. A cover as claimed in any of claims 4 to 8, comprising fixing means for applying said cover to an article.

10. A cover as claimed in claim 9, wherein said fixing means comprises at least one projecting portion.

11. A cover as claimed in claim 10, wherein two projections are provided on opposing sides of the cover.

12. A cover as claimed in claim 9 or 10, wherein said at least one projecting portion is sidewardly extending from an outer circumference of said cover.

13. A cover as claimed in claim 12, wherein a lower surface of the or each sidewardly extending portion is coplanar with the lower surface of said cover.

14. A cover as claimed in claim 9 or 10, wherein said at least one projection extends away from the lower planar surface of said cover.

15. A cover as claimed in any of claims 10 to 14, wherein said at least one projection is substantially flexible.

16. A cover as claimed in claim 10, wherein said at least one projection comprises a plurality of support elements for supporting said label, in use, between said support elements and the lower surface of the cover.

17. A cover as claimed in claim 16, wherein said support elements have cut away portions in which said label is supported in use.

18. A cover as claimed in any of claims 4 to 17, wherein said cover has optical properties which, in use, change the magnification of an image on a label.

19. A cover as claimed in any one of claims 4 to 18, wherein said cover has at least a portion which is transparent so that in use, the label is visible.

20. A cover as claimed in any of claims 4 to 19, wherein said cover is provided with a frame portion in the outer periphery of said cover.

21. A cover as claimed in claim 20, wherein said frame portion is substantially opaque.

22. A cover as claimed in any of claims 4 to 21, wherein said cover is substantially rigid.

23. A cover as claimed in any of claims 4 to 22 in combination with a member to be applied to said article.

24. A combination as claimed in claim 23, wherein said member comprises an elastomeric skin which is applied to said article.

25. A combination as claimed in claim 24, wherein said skin has an opening through which the cover projects.

26. A combination as claimed in claim 25, wherein the opening is smaller than an outer circumference of said cover so that said cover is retained in place by said skin.

27. A combination as claimed in claim 25 when appended to claim 12, wherein said at least one

sidewardly extending projection is arranged between said skin and said article so as to retain the cover in position.

28. A combination as claimed in claim 23, wherein said member has a recess which is sized to receive said cover.

29. A combination as claimed in claim 28, wherein said member is of an elastomeric material.

30. A combination as claimed in claim 29, wherein said cover is fitted into said recess with one of the following types of fitting: interference fit; press fit; snap fit.

31. A combination as claimed in any of claims 23 to 30, with an article to which said member is attached.

32. A combination of a cover as claimed in any one of claims 4 to 22, with a article, said article being provided with means for receiving said cover.

33. A combination as claimed in claim 32, wherein said means for receiving comprises a recess shaped to accommodate said cover.

34. A combination as claimed in claim 31, 32 or 33, wherein said article is a stationery article.

35. A stationary product as claimed in claim 1, 2 or 3 wherein said cover is as claimed in any one of claims 4 to 22.

36. A method of labelling a stationery product, said method comprising the steps of:

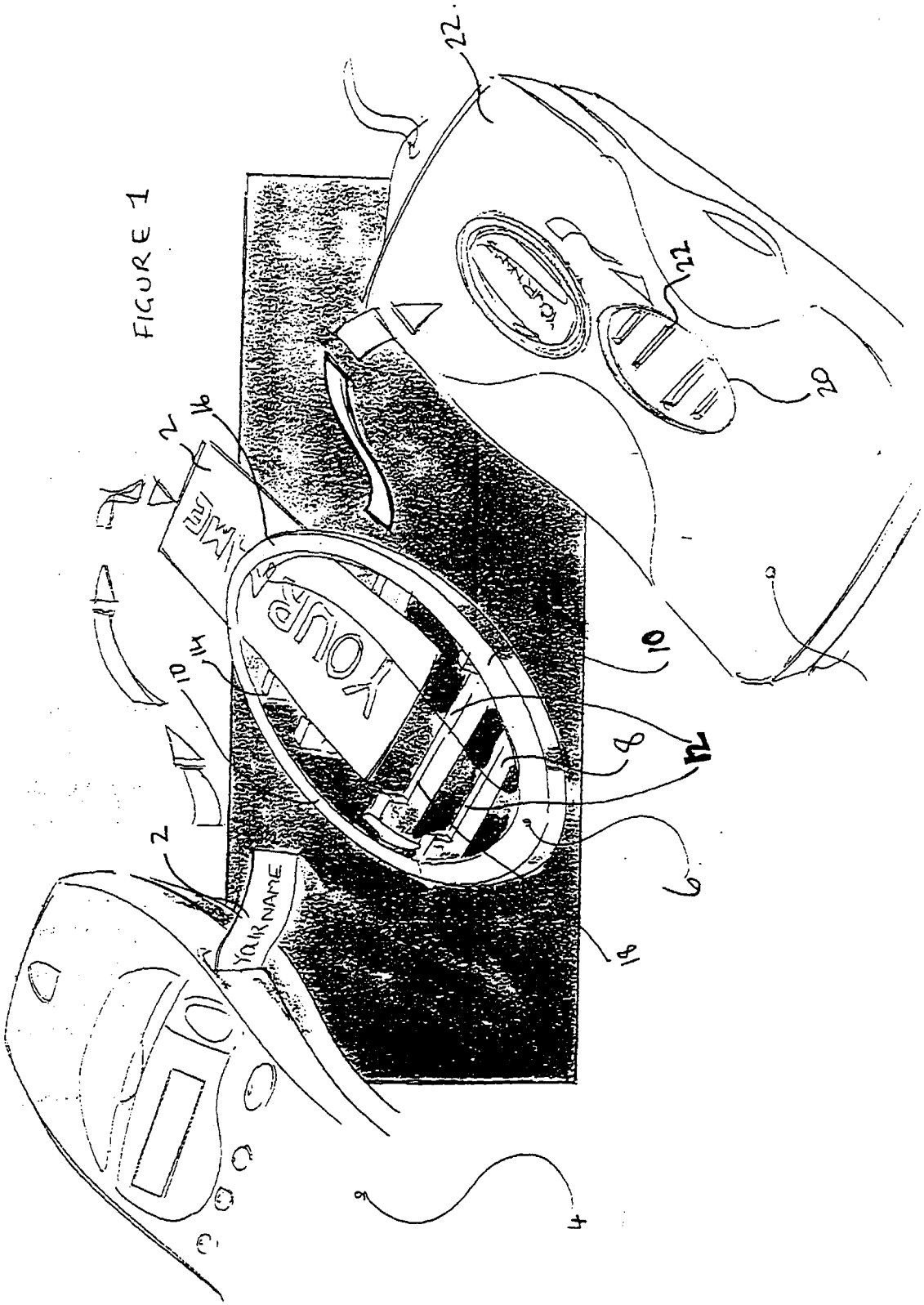
providing a label containing information;
placing said label in a recess; and
covering said label with a cover, said cover being retained in place in said recess.

37. A method as claimed in claim 36, wherein said cover is as claimed in any of claims 4 to 22.

38. A kit for labelling a stationery product comprising:

a cover for covering a label; and
a recess providing means for attaching to said stationery product, a label being received in said recess in use and said cover being received in said recess in use.

FIGURE 1



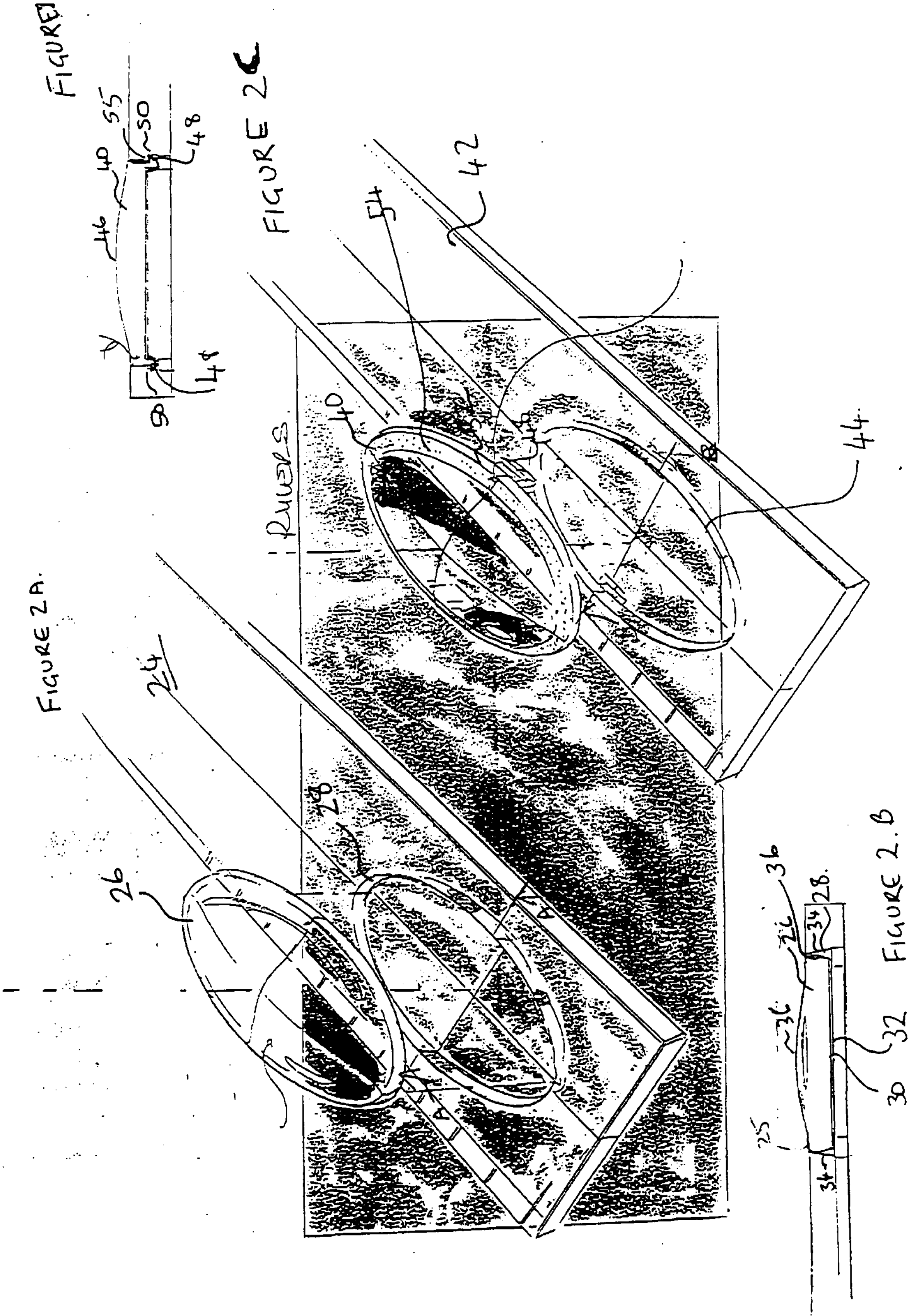


FIGURE 2A.

FIGURE 2.B

FIGURE 2C

FIGURE3

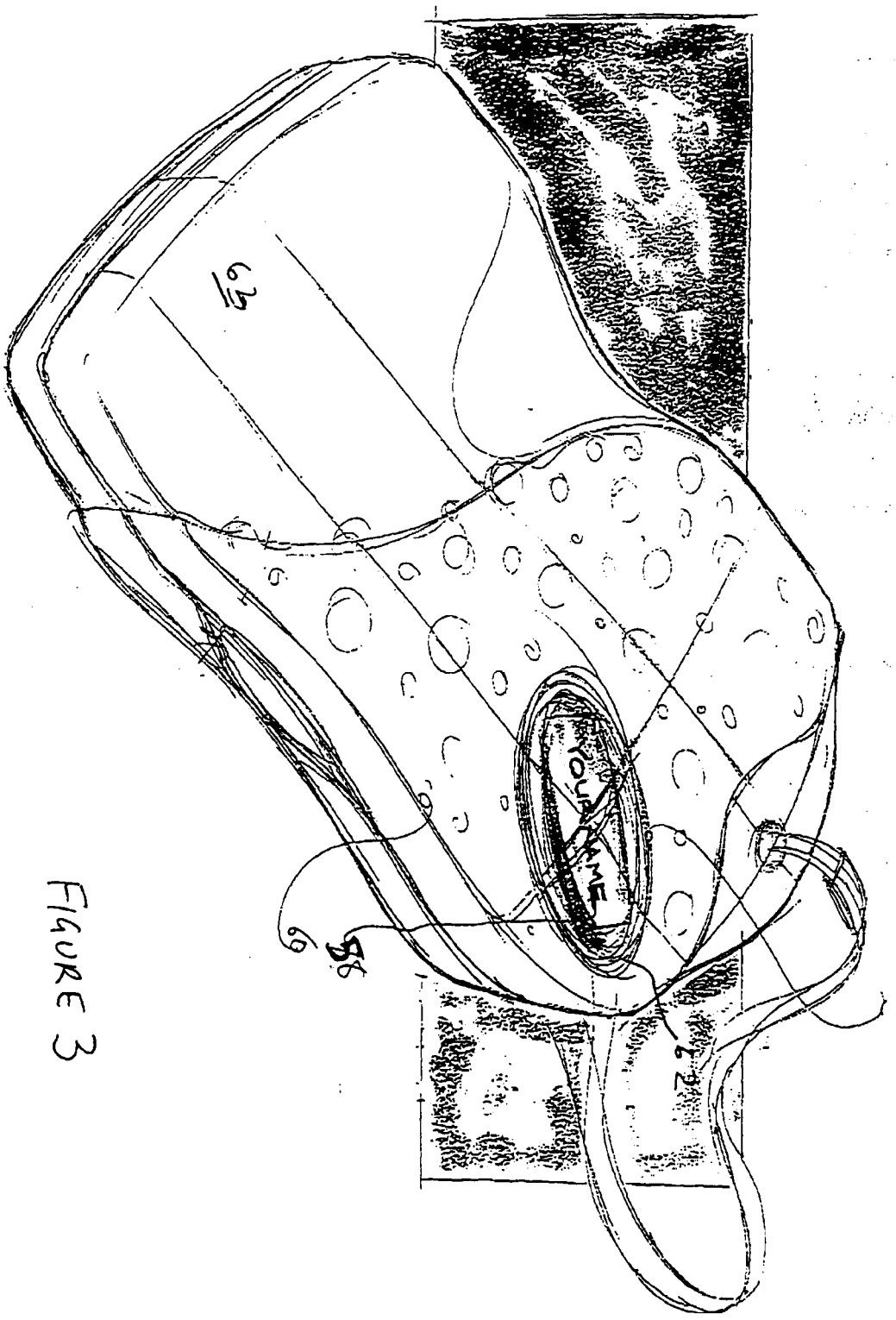


FIGURE 3

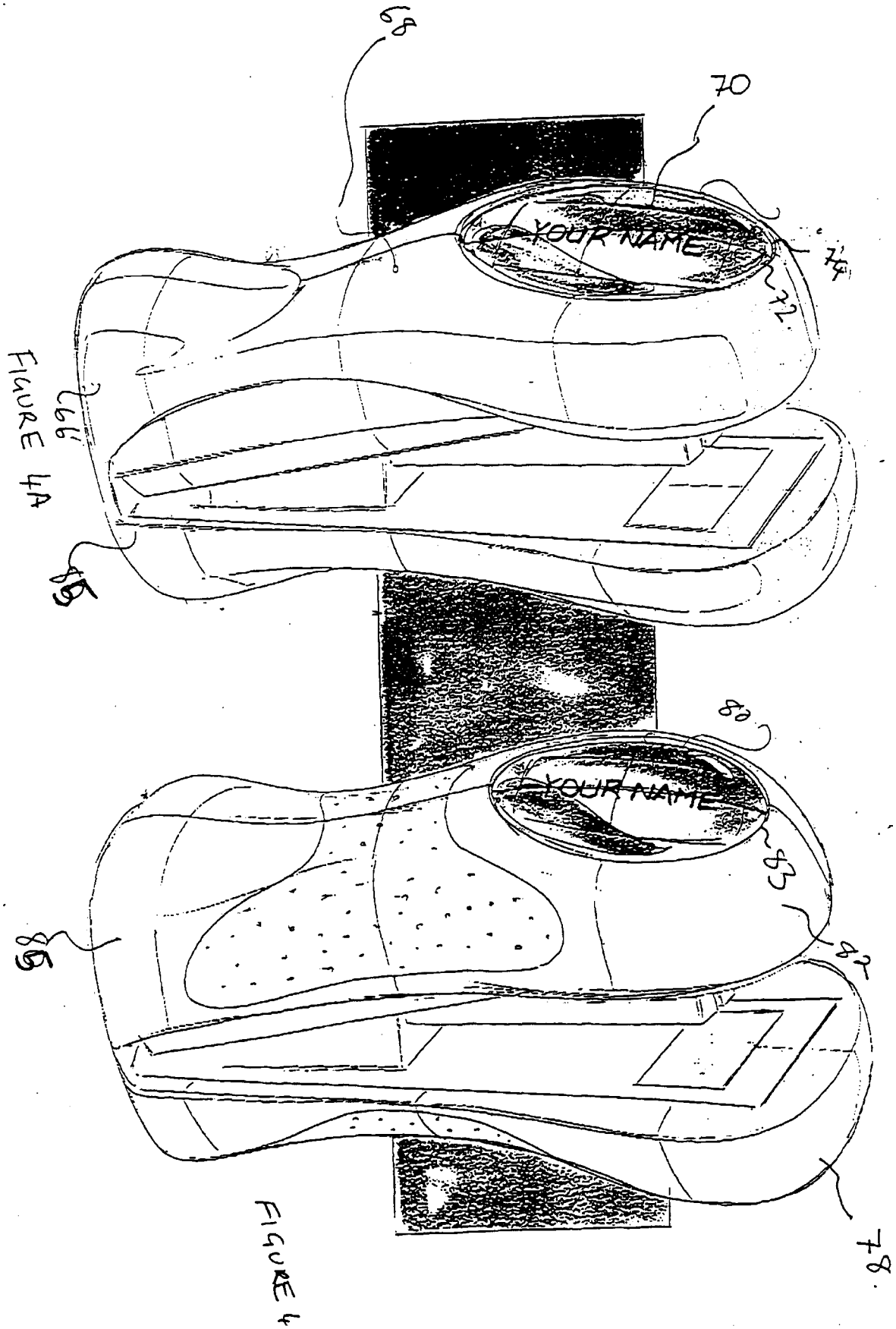


FIGURE 4A

FIGURE 4

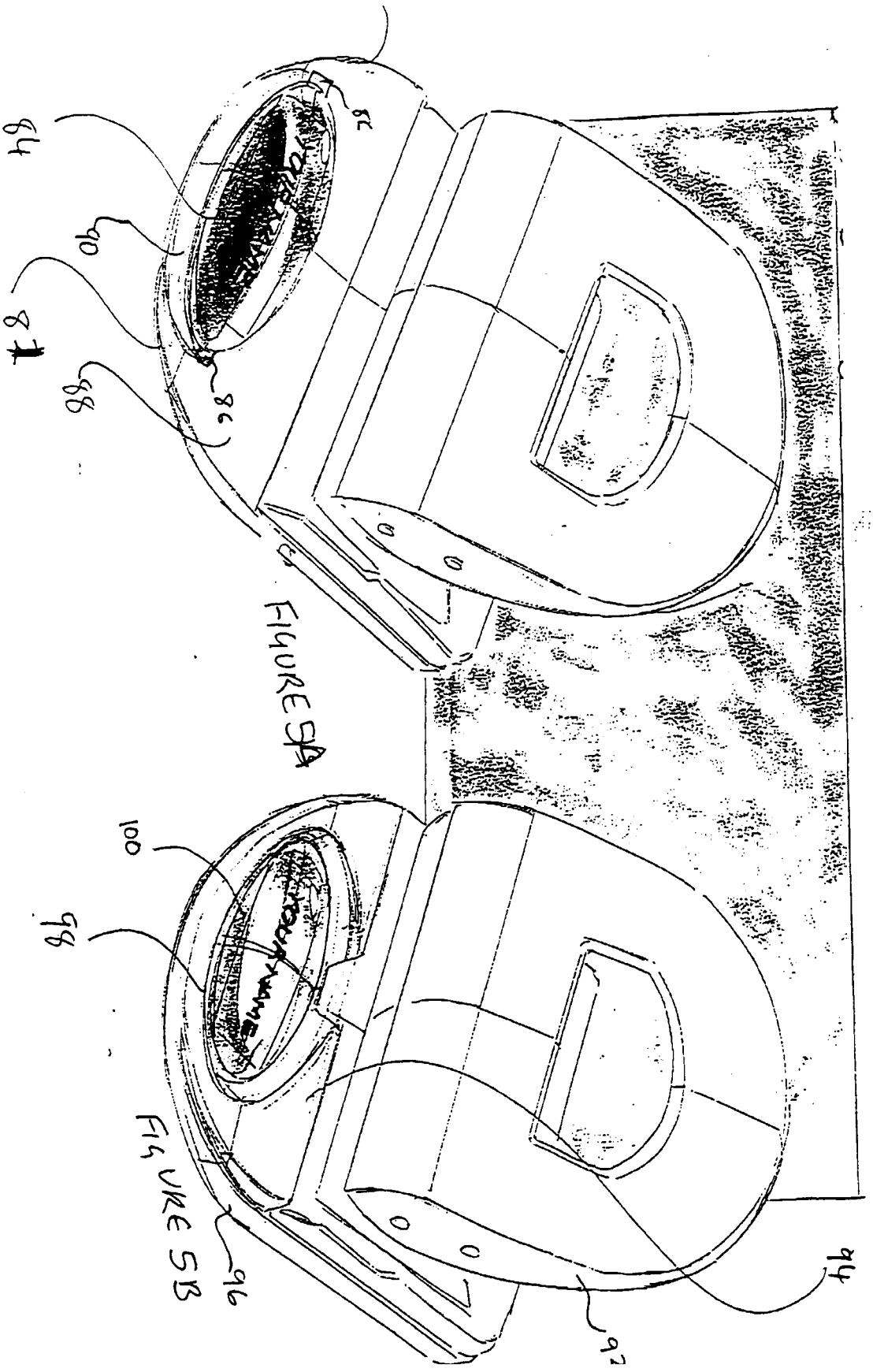
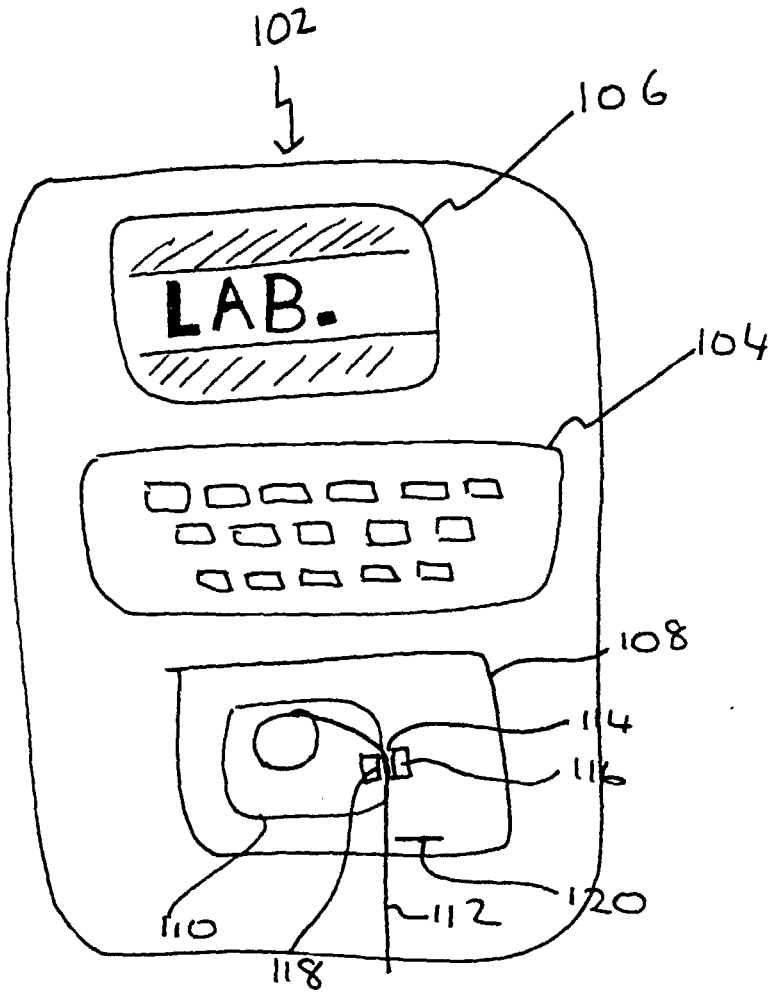


FIGURE 5A

FIGURE 5B

FIGURE 6



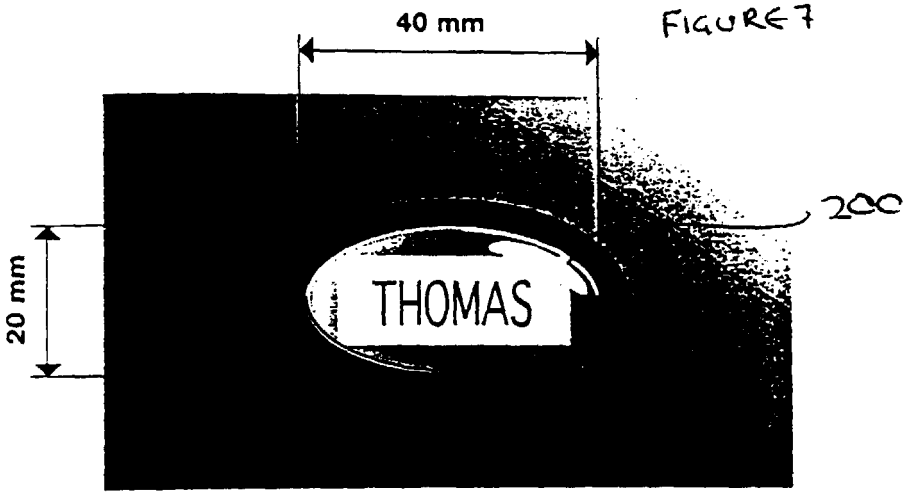


FIGURE 7

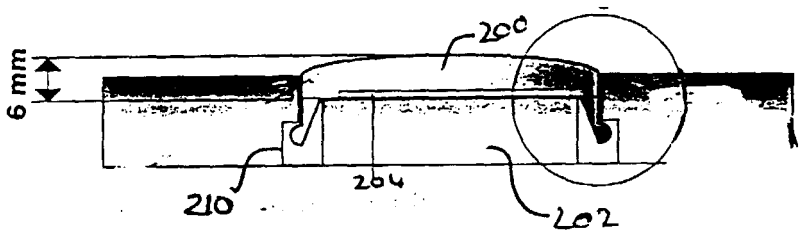


FIGURE 8

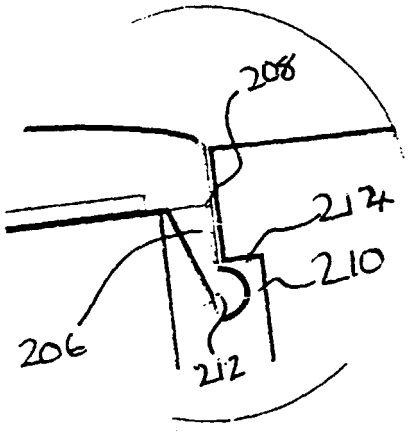


Figure 9

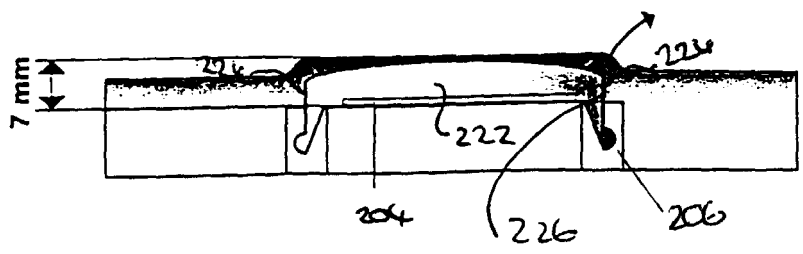


FIGURE 10

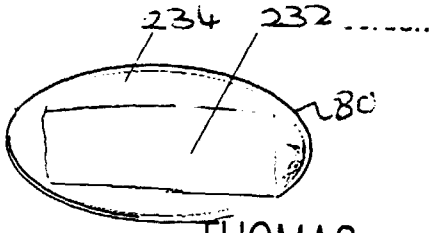


FIGURE 11

Letratag label

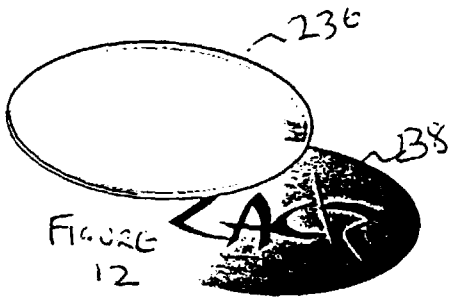


FIGURE 12

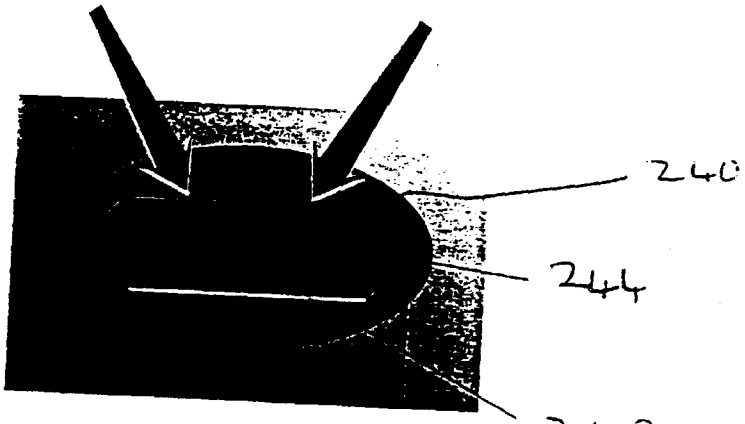


FIGURE 13