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(54) Accessory for beverage container and method

(57) An accessory for use with a container has a body defining a generally circular upper opening and a base. The body may also have at least one expansion slot extending downwardly from the upper opening through the body towards the base. The body may also have at least one tab or nub extending inward near the upper opening. The body may also have feet at the base and the accessory flexes when squeezed and when released forms a secure grip on the container such that the container can be moved with the accessory remaining attached until the accessory is squeezed again to release it.

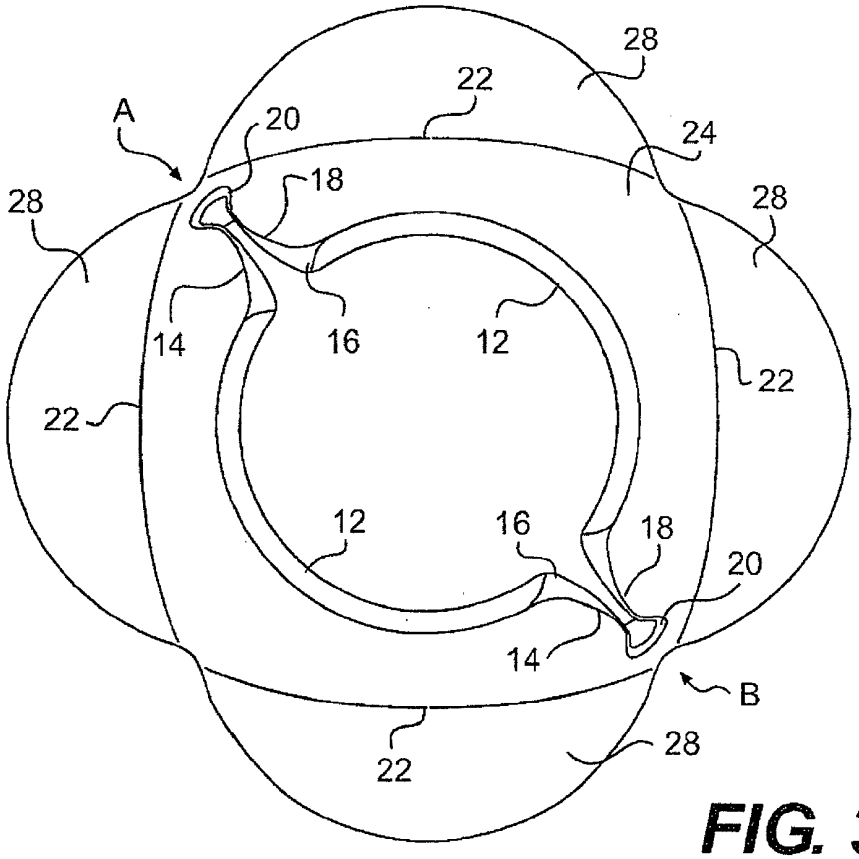

FIG. 3

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Description

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 13/235,736, filed on September 19, 2011, entitled ACCESSORY FOR BEVERAGE CONTAINERS, in the name of Allison M. Roesser, the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The invention pertains generally to the field of containers such as, for example, beverage containers. Further, the invention pertains to accessories for such containers.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Many types of containers are known, including, for example, beverage containers. Many beverage containers are in the form of a general circular cylindrical container with a closed bottom, cylindrical sides, and an open top. In some examples, the cylinder may be tapered outward over part or all of the sides, and the taper may be relatively straight or curved, or a combination thereof. Some examples of beverage containers include glassware, ceramic cups, plastic cups, paper cups, cardboard cups, and foam cups. Other examples of beverage containers are also known.

[0004] Some beverage containers suffer the disadvantage that they may be relatively easy to tip over. For example, tall, thin beverage containers will tend to tip over if accidentally bumped. Tipping or spilling of a beverage can waste the beverage, cause stains or damage, and can require time, effort and materials to clean the spill. Further, certain individuals such as young children, the elderly, or individuals with limited vision may be especially prone to tipping over beverage containers. Further, sometimes a beverage container will be relatively transparent and it may be difficult for the user to visualize the location of the container, making it difficult to grasp the container without bumping it.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] Some embodiments provide an accessory that can be used with various types of containers, such as, for example, beverage containers. In some embodiments, the accessory may be in the form of a stabilizing base ring that is used to surround the lower portion of the container, by engaging the sides of the container. In some embodiments, the accessory may provide such a stabilizing base ring around the lower portion of the container. In some embodiments the accessory may be made of a resilient and somewhat flexible material. In some embodiments the accessory may have one or more slotted expansion grooves, slots, or notches around a top opening, in order to provide accommodation of various sizes, and provide a resilient gripping force onto the container around the top opening of the accessory. In some embodiments, the accessory may have two such expansion grooves extending downward from the top opening of the accessory, and spaced oppositely apart from each other. In some embodiments, with or without the expansion notch(es), the top opening may have one or more engaging features, such as flexible tabs or compressible bumps that contact the container. In some embodiments, the accessory may have a flared base, which in some embodiments may include one or more protruding feet. In some embodiments, the accessory may be manufactured of a relatively constant thickness material such that the underside profile of the accessory is substantially complimentary to the upper side profile of the accessory allowing multiple accessories to be stacked on top of one another in a stable and compact configuration. In some embodiments, the accessory may have three or more of such feet, extending outward at or near the bottom edge of the accessory, and in some cases spaced evenly around a periphery of the accessory relative to each other.

[0006] In some embodiments, the accessory may provide a visual identification to a user where the beverage container is located, due to its color or indicia or the surface of the accessory.

[0007] Some embodiments provide an accessory for a container having a body defining a generally circular upper opening and a base; and at least one expansion slot extending downwardly from the upper opening through the body towards the base.

[0008] Some embodiments provide a method including attaching to a lower end of the container to an accessory, the accessory having a body defining a generally circular upper opening and a base and at least one expansion slot extending downwardly from the upper opening towards the base through the body towards the base.

[0009] Some embodiments provide an accessory for use with a container having a body defining a generally circular upper opening and a base; and gripping means for gripping the container, disposed proximate to the upper opening and projecting inwardly from the upper opening to grip the container. In some cases, an accessory for use with a container is provided, comprising: a body defining a generally circular upper opening and a base; and at least one expansion slot extending downwardly from the upper opening through the body towards the base, wherein the expansion slot has an upper mouth portion, an elongated intermediate portion that is narrower than the upper mouth portion, and a terminating end portion that is wider than the intermediate portion, such that the accessory flexes when squeezed and when released forms a secure grip on the container such that the container can be moved with the accessory remaining attached until the accessory is squeezed again to release it. Some embodiments provide a method of stabilizing a beverage container, comprising: attaching to a lower end

of the container to an accessory, the accessory comprising a body defining a generally circular upper opening and a base and at least one expansion slot extending downwardly from the upper opening towards the base through the body towards the base, such that the accessory flexes when squeezed and when released forms a secure grip on the container such that the container can be moved with the accessory remaining attached until the accessory is squeezed again to release it. In such a method the expansion slot may have an upper mouth portion, an elongated intermediate portion that is narrower than the upper mouth portion, and a terminating end portion that is wider than the intermediate portion, and wherein attaching the accessory further comprises applying pressure to opposite sides of a lower portion of the accessory to flex the body so as to open the expansion slot and increase the diameter of the top opening.

[0010] Also to achieve desired gripping in some embodiments the body may be entirely or partially formed from a material comprised of one of silicone and thermoplastic polyurethane, which preferably may have a durometer value of approximately 55.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an accessory for a beverage container according to a first embodiment.

[0012] FIG. 2 is a side view of the accessory shown in FIG. 1.

[0013] FIG. 3 is a top view of the accessory shown in FIG. 1.

[0014] FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional side view taken through line 4-4 in FIG. 2.

[0015] FIG. 5 is a bottom view of the accessory of FIG. 1.

[0016] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of an accessory according to a second embodiment.

[0017] FIG. 7 is a perspective view of an accessory according to a third embodiment.

[0018] FIG. 8 is a perspective view of an accessory according to a fourth embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0019] Some embodiments provide an accessory that can be used with various types of containers, such as, for example, beverage containers. In some embodiments, the accessory may be in the form of a stabilizing base ring that is used to surround the lower portion of the container, by engaging the sides of the container. In some embodiments, the accessory may provide such a stabilizing base ring around the lower portion of the container. In some embodiments the accessory may be made of a resilient and somewhat flexible material. In some embodiments the accessory may have one or more slotted expansion grooves, slots or notches around a top opening, in order to provide a combination of various sizes, and provide a resilient gripping force onto the container around the top opening of the accessory. In some embodiments, the accessory may have two such expansion grooves extending downward from the top opening of the accessory, and spaced oppositely apart from each other. In some embodiments, with or without the expansion notch(es), the top opening may have one or more engaging features, such as flexible tabs or compressible bumps that contact the container. In some embodiments, the accessory may have a flared base, which in some embodiments may include one or more protruding feet. In some embodiments, the accessory may be manufactured of a relatively constant thickness material such that the underside profile of the accessory is substantially complimentary to the upper side profile of the accessory allowing multiple accessories to be stacked on top of one another in a stable and compact configuration. In some embodiments, the accessory may have three or more of such feet, extending outward at or near the bottom edge of the accessory, and in some cases spaced evenly around a periphery of the accessory relative to each other.

[0020] In some embodiments, the accessory may provide a visual identification to a user where the beverage container is located, due to its color or to indicia on the surface of the accessory.

[0021] The detailed description herein will refer to some embodiments that may be, used, in an example, with a beverage container. The term beverage containers is used broadly herein in its typical sense to include various types of glassware, plasticware, cardboard cups and the like. Further, although a beverage container is described as an example for context, it will be appreciated that some embodiments will be suitable for use with other generally cylindrical containers such as, for example, office supply containers, floral vases, paint cans, dishware such as small bowls or other generally cylindrical devices that may or may not hold liquids or other materials and may or may not be desired to be placed on, and/or moved around, a generally horizontal resting surface. Therefore, while it will be appreciated that one use of some embodiments may be in connection with beverage glassware or cups used on a tabletop, a wide range of other applications are available for uses of the accessory. Unless otherwise indicated, reference to beverages or types of containers in the description herein is not intended to be limiting, but rather is given by way of example.

[0022] Further, the description herein will describe some possible functions of accessories described herein including, for example, providing stabilization of a beverage container and/or creating higher visibility to a beverage container. These functions are by way of example only, and the accessory itself may find desired uses beyond these functions, and/or without providing these functions.

[0023] An embodiment will now be described with reference to the drawing figures in which like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout.

[0024] FIGs. 1 through 5 illustrate a beverage contain-

er accessory 10 according to a preferred embodiment. The accessory 10 in this example is in the form of a single piece structure. In this example, the accessory is molded from a flexible material, such as a flexible plastic or rubber. In some embodiments, the accessory may be manufactured entirely from a single material, which in some examples may be a urethane based material, such as thermoplastic polyurethane.

[0025] The accessory 10 is in the form of a generally ring shape having an outwardly flared body that forms a top opening 12. The top opening 12 provides a surface that can grip the exterior surface of the beverage container (as shown in FIG. 2). The surface of the top opening 12 may be smooth and rounded in profile, or may be provided with a roughened surface finish in order to enhance the frictional gripping contact with the side of the beverage container.

[0026] The top opening 12 may be provided with one or more expansion slots 14. In the illustrated example of FIGS. 1-5, two expansion slots 14 are provided and located opposed 180° apart from each other. The expansion slots 14 include an upper open mouth portion 16 that extends to a narrowed intermediate portion 18 that terminates in a wider slot terminating end portion 20. In the illustrated example, an overall expansion slot 14 is therefore formed which includes the portions 16, 18 and 20. In the illustrated example, each expansion slot 14 can be described as having a somewhat keyhole or teardrop shape. However, other embodiments are possible where the width of the mouth portion 16 and the intermediate position 18 remains constant, leading to a larger width slot end 20. Further, in some embodiments, the entire expansion slot 14 may have a constant width, and the lower termination 20 may be a part circle, or alternately have a squared off end.

[0027] The accessory 10 also includes a dome shaped wall portion 24, which generally extends from the top opening 12 to a bottom surface 26. The bottom surface 26 forms a bottom periphery of the accessory 10. Besides the dome shaped wall portion 24, a number of feet portions 28 may be provided extending outward from the dome 24. A transition region 22 may be provided where the feet 28 join the dome shaped wall portion 24. These feet 28 in the illustrated embodiment are a generally hemispherical bubble shaped wall protruding out from the dome portion 24. However, the feet portions 28 may also be in the form of struts or flanges extending out from the dome portion 24. Further, although the dome portion 24 itself is shown as being partly hemispherical, the dome portion 24 may alternatively may have a frusto-conical or other profile. The bottom edge 26 may have a somewhat rounded profile, and if desired may have a roughened surface similar to that described above with respect to the top opening 12.

[0028] FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view of the embodiment of FIGs 1 through 5, and illustrates an embodiment that has a substantially, but not completely, constant cross-sectional thickness of the material at the dome wall portion 24 and foot wall portions 28. However, in this embodiment, a slight increase in thickness may be present, and the transition region 22 where the dome wall portion 24 meets the foot wall portion 26.

[0029] FIGs. 4 and 5 illustrate an embodiment where the inner surface of the walls portions 24 and 28 form at least a generally complimentary shape to the outer surface of the wall portions 24 and 28. This permits relatively compact stacking one accessory 10 on top of another accessory 10.

[0030] The feet 28 also provide a location for decorative indicia 30, if desired.

[0031] The illustrated embodiment shows two expansion slots 14 located 180° apart from each other. However, in some embodiments there may be only one expansion slot 14. In other embodiments there may be three or more expansion slot 14. In the illustrated embodiment, the two expansion slot 14 are each respectively aligned with a corner where two adjacent bubble shaped feet 26 meet. In one mode of operation, the user may place one finger at each of these meeting locations (A and B in FIG. 3), near the base, where the corners are located, and apply an inward pressure. The inward pressure tends to flex the accessory structure such that the top opening 12 is expanded outward to have a larger circumference. The user then may insert the beverage container and release the finger pressure. Due to the resilient nature of the material, the accessory will tend to return to its original shape, thus providing an inward force onto the beverage container around the location of the top opening 12.

[0032] In another mode of operation, the user may begin by holding the beverage container, and slide the accessory 10 over the top of the beverage container and down towards the base of the beverage container. In so doing, because of the inwardly flared shape of the accessory, the top opening 12 will tend to expand itself to fit over and around the top of the beverage container and be slidable down the length of the beverage container. This will occur even if the user does not squeeze at the points A and B. However, the user can further facilitate expansion of the accessory to fit over the top of the beverage container by applying finger pressure at points A and B.

[0033] In other uses, the user can hold the accessory underneath the beverage container, optionally apply pressure at points A and B, and lower the beverage container down so its base extends down into the accessory.

[0034] FIG. 6 shows an alternative embodiment 100. Like reference numerals refer to items similar to those in the previous embodiment. However, this embodiment has a different shaped expansion slot 114. The expansion slot 114 has a top mouth opening 116, an intermediate portion 118, and a lower end 120. The lower end 120 has the shape of a portion of a circle or an ellipse. The embodiment of FIG. 6 also shows indicia 30 located on the feet 28. The indicia 30 is illustrated schematically by a rectangle, but could be any image printed, molded, or otherwise visible on the accessory 100.

[0035] FIG. 7 shows an alternative embodiment 200. In another embodiment, this embodiment features flexible inwardly projecting tabs 140. In this embodiment, two expansion slots 114 are shown, and four inwardly directing tabs 140. However, any other number of expansion slots 114 or tabs 140 may be utilized. Further, in this embodiment, the expansion slots 114 can be omitted, while the tabs 140 are present. The tabs 140 can be any resilient or flexible inwardly projecting shape. In the illustrated embodiment, they are relatively thin, flat type members which normally project horizontally inward from the top opening 12, and are deflected either downwardly or upwardly by the side of the container once it has been inserted.

[0036] FIG. 8 illustrates another alternative embodiment 300. This embodiment includes inwardly directed nubs or protrusions 150. This embodiment shows eight nubs or protrusions, and a structure where the top opening 12 has no expansion slots. This embodiment can also be provided with expansion slots if desired. The inwardly projecting nubs 150 can be of any suitable shape. They differ from the flaps 140 in that they have a vertical thickness as well as a peripheral thickness. That is, rather than being flaps that bend upwardly or downwardly, the nubs 150 are radially compressible. The nubs 150 can be a soft material that compresses easily, or may be in the form of a hollow hemisphere that can be radially compressed.

[0037] The accessory may be made of various materials, and of various colors. The use of certain colors, and/or the provision of indicia on outer surfaces of the accessory may make the accessory more visually attention getting, thus providing the benefit of indicating the location of the beverage container to a user, compared to if the beverage container was at the same location without the accessory.

[0038] Turning now to some of the above and other embodiments, there is described a beverage container accessory or stabilizer, that may, depending on the embodiment have one or more of the following attributes: (1) that is compatible with, conforms to the shape and diameter of, and holds a wide range of beverage containers such as, but not limited to, a drinking glass, plastic or glass bottle, aluminum can, child's cup, and the like, with a diameter sufficient to accommodate a range of common beverage containers; (2) with a method of attachment located at the top portion of the stabilizer whereby the device material can conform to the shape and size of the beverage container so that the stabilizer can accommodate a wide variety of differently shaped and sized beverage containers, upon the connection of which, the device will grip the container and securely hold it in place until the beverage container is manually released; (3) that will laterally support the inserted beverage container in an upright position by restricting the lateral movement of the beverage container and have dimensions that will provide a wide base of support so as to prevent the inserted beverage container from easily tipping over on a flat surface, thereby stabilizing it; (4) that may be manufactured of sufficiently light weight material (e.g., plastics, foam, composites or any other lightweight and sufficiently durable material) so that the stabilizer can adequately stabilize the beverage container without adding substantial bulk or weight to the beverage container; and (5) that may be stackable for ease of storage and transport.

[0039] The accessory, or stabilizer in some instances, may be designed to accommodate a wide range of common beverage containers. The top portion of the stabilizer has an opening that can conform to and accommodate the size and shape of a wide range of beverage containers. Once inserted, the stabilizer may conform to the diameter of the beverage container and the beverage container may be in constant, non-shifting contact with the inner wall of the stabilizer. The stabilizer may include one or more expansion slots or protrusions that may allow it to conform to the shape and diameter of the beverage container and to allow the beverage container to be gripped and securely connected to the stabilizer whereby the stabilizer will move with the beverage container and remain attached until it is manually released.

[0040] The expansion slots or protrusions may allow the stabilizer to attach and conform to, and maintain contact with a range of sizes and shapes of beverage containers. When the beverage container is inserted into the opening of the stabilizer, the cut away or protrusion may allow the stabilizer to conform to the shape and diameter of the inserted beverage container, resulting in a firm connection between the beverage container and the stabilizer.

[0041] This can be accomplished by a number of variations, such as, for example, providing one or more expansion slots or cut-outs in the top portion of the stabilizer, or anywhere along the interior wall of the stabilizer. In addition to the expansion slots or cut-outs as represented in the figures, the compatibility function can be accomplished through a number of variations. For example, rather than two cut outs, as represented in some drawings, the stabilizer could have more or fewer cut outs; could have cut outs in similar or varying sizes and shapes; and could have alternate gripping mechanisms such as various protruding shapes on the interior wall of the stabilizer, including, but not limited to tabs, ribs, bubbles, tendons, teeth, grooves, and flanges, that can fold, bend, contract or flex to conform the stabilizer to the shape and diameter of the beverage container.

[0042] The stabilizer may be designed to stabilize the beverage container. In addition to the self-adjusting compatibility component, which allows the stabilizer to conform to and grip a range of sites of beverage containers, this may be accomplished in the following manner.

[0043] The stabilizer may have an outer dimension that is greater at the base of the device than at the top to provide a wide base of support so as to prevent the inserted beverage container from easily tipping over on a flat surface, thereby stabilizing it.

[0044] Some drawings represent a clover-shaped version of the stabilizer, with two cut-outs accomplishing the universal compatibility component of the stabilizer. Although these drawings show a clover-shaped embodiment, the stabilizer may be shaped differently, e.g., the four stabilizing bubbles represented in the drawings may be fewer or greater, extend out further, be thinner, have a rounded base to allow for a rocking motion or a completely different shape. The design may be geared towards children or adults, taking the shape of a variety of unique designs such as, but not limited to, animals, sports related shapes, and the like. In some embodiments, decorative designs can be added to the stabilizer.

[0045] The stabilizer may be manufactured of sufficiently light weight material (e.g., plastics, foam, composites or any other lightweight and durable material) so that the stabilizer can adequately stabilize the beverage container without adding substantial bulk or weight to the beverage container.

[0046] For ease of storage and transport, the stabilizer may have an outer and inner shape so that it can be stacked on another similarly shaped device by inserting the stabilizer into the cavity of the other similarly shaped stabilizer so they can nest.

[0047] The beverage container in some examples may be placed into the stabilizer either by placing the beverage container into the top of the stabilizer or, if the beverage container shape allows, the stabilizer may stretch and slide over the complete beverage container until the stabilizer meets with the horizontal surface upon which the beverage container is resting. In both instances, the bases of both the beverage container and the stabilizer may be resting completely on the horizontal surface.

[0048] The stabilizer can be made out of different materials such as plastics, foam or composites and the material will have some flexibility to allow the stabilizer to accommodate, grip and hold the beverage container until it is manually released. The bottom of the stabilizer may be made of tacky or easy glide material to better assist the device in maintaining the beverage container in an upright position. The material may be selected to allow the stabilizer to adequately stabilize the beverage container without adding substantial weight or bulk.

[0049] A benefit of some embodiments are features that enhance the method of use of the accessory. In particular, referring to the embodiment of FIGS. 1 - 5 for example, the user can squeeze the accessory and thus change the shape of the top opening 12 so it expands. The elongated slots 14 having the three portions including the open mouth 16 leading to a narrower and elongated portion 18 and the wider portion 20 open to allow easy insertion of the container (such as a glass or cup as described above). Next, the container can be inserted into the opening 12. In this way in particular the three part shape and elongation of the slots 14 is a significant feature that contributes to easy flexing of the accessory and insertion of the container. Another significant feature that contributes to flexing is the material, which preferably can be silicone or low denisty polyurethane, having good flexibility. Preferably the material may have a durometer value of approximately 55, to achieve the flexibility, in combination with the elongated and three part slot shape.

[0050] After the container is insterted as described above, the user releases the sideways squeezing pressure, and the accessory returns to a normal shape, but with its top opening 12 securely gripping the container. The material type, durometer and the elongated three part slot shape each serve as indpendent features that each help with secure gripping, and in combination further help with secure gripping. In many cases the grip of the accessory on the container will be so strong that the user may pick up the container and the accessory will remain attached. That is, the grip on the container remains intact and the accessory and container are not separated until manually released by squeezing the accessory as a reverse of the original insertion method. The user can carry the container/accessory combination around by holding the container. The user can determine a release of the two by squeezing the accessory when desired.

[0051] Another benefit of the durometer of the material being near a value of 55 it that although secure attachment is provided, the lower edges of the accessory are able to slide to some extent (while preventing or reducing tipping of the container) on a horizontal surface such as a table on which the container/accessory may be resting.

[0052] What has been described and illustrated herein is a preferred embodiment of the invention along with some of its variations. The terms, descriptions and figures used herein are set forth by way of illustration only and are not meant as limitations. Those skilled in the art will recognize that many variations are possible within the spirit and scope of the invention in which all terms are meant in their broadest, reasonable sense unless otherwise indicated.

Claims

1. An accessory for use with a container, comprising:

a body defining a generally circular upper opening and a base; and

at least one expansion slot extending downwardly from the upper opening through the body towards the base, wherein the expansion slot has an upper mouth portion, an elongated intermediate portion that is narrower than the upper mouth portion, and a terminating end portion that is wider than the intermediate portion, such that the accessory flexes when squeezed and when released forms a secure grip on the container such that the container can be moved with the accessory remaining attached until the accessory is squeezed again to release it.

2. An accessory according to claim 1, further comprising a second expansion slot, extending downwardly from the upper opening through the body towards the base.

3. An accessory according to claim 1, wherein the base defines a lower opening.

4. An accessory according to claim 1, wherein the body is in the form of a side wall having an upper region and a lower region, at least one region having an increasing outer diameter from the top towards the bottom of the body.

5. An accessory according to claim 4, wherein the lower region further comprises a plurality of feet regions extending downwardly and outwardly from the upper region.

6. An accessory according to claim 5, wherein the feet are generally partially hemispherically shaped.

7. An accessory according to claim 5, wherein the upper region is generally dome shaped, and the feet are generally partially hemispherical shaped.

8. An accessory according to claim 1, wherein the body is at least partially formed from theremoplastic polyurethane.

9. An accessory according to claim 1, wherein the body is entirely formed from a material comprised of one of silicone and thermoplastic polyurethane.

10. An accessory according to claim 9, wherein the material has a durometer value of approximately 55.

11. An accessory according to claim 1, wherein the body at least partially includes a material that has a durometer value of approximately 55.

12. An accessory according to claim 1, wherein the expansion slot is teardrop shaped.

13. An accessory according to claim 1, wherein the surface finish of the body at the upper opening has a rougher surface finish than the surface finish of other portions of the body.

14. An accessory according to claim 1, further comprising indicia disposed on an outer surface of the body.

15. An accessory according to claim 1, wherein a bendable region is formed in the body between the terminal end of the expansion slot and the bottom surface of the body.

16. An accessory according to claim 1, wherein an overall outer surface shape of the body is substantially complimentary to an overall inner surface shape of the body, to facilitate stacking of one accessory to another.

17. A method of stabilizing a beverage container, comprising:

attaching to a lower end of the container to an accessory, the accessory comprising a body defining a generally circular upper opening and a base and at least one expansion slot extending downwardly from the upper opening towards the base through the body towards the base, such that the accessory flexes when squeezed and when released forms a secure grip on the container such that the container can be moved with the accessory remaining attached until the accessory is squeezed again to release it.

18. A method according to claim 17, wherein the expansion slot has an upper mouth portion, an elongated intermediate portion that is narrower than the upper mouth portion, and a terminating end portion that is wider than the intermediate portion, and wherein attaching the accessory further comprises applying pressure to opposite sides of a lower portion of the accessory to flex the body so as to open the expansion slot and increase the diameter of the top opening.

19. An accessory for use with a container comprising:

a body defining a generally circular upper opening and a base; and
gripping means for gripping the container, disposed proximal to the upper opening and projecting inwardly from the upper opening to grip the container, such that the accessory flexes when squeezed and when released forms a secure grip on the container such that the container can be moved with the accessory remaining attached until the accessory is squeezed again to release it.

20. An accessory according to claim 19, wherein the gripping means includes at least one of a flexible tab, or a compressible nub.

21. An accessory according to claim 19, comprising a plurality of feet disposed around the lower portion of the body, and wherein at least one expansion slot is located at a circumferential location on the body that is aligned with a space between the feet.

22. An accesory according to claim 21, wherein the at least one expansion slot extends downwardly from the upper opening towards the base through the

body towards the base, and wherein the expansion slot has an upper mouth portion, an elongated intermediate portion that is narrower than the upper mouth portion, and a terminating end portion that is wider than the intermediate portion.

23. An accessory according to claim 19, wherein the body is at least partially formed from theremoplastic polyurethane.

24. An accessory according to claim 19, wherein the body is entirely formed from a material comprised of one of silicone and thermoplastic polyurethane.

25. An accessory according to claim 19, wherein the material has a durometer value of approximately 55.

26. An accessory according to claim 19, wherein the body at least partially includes a material that has a durometer value of approximately 55.

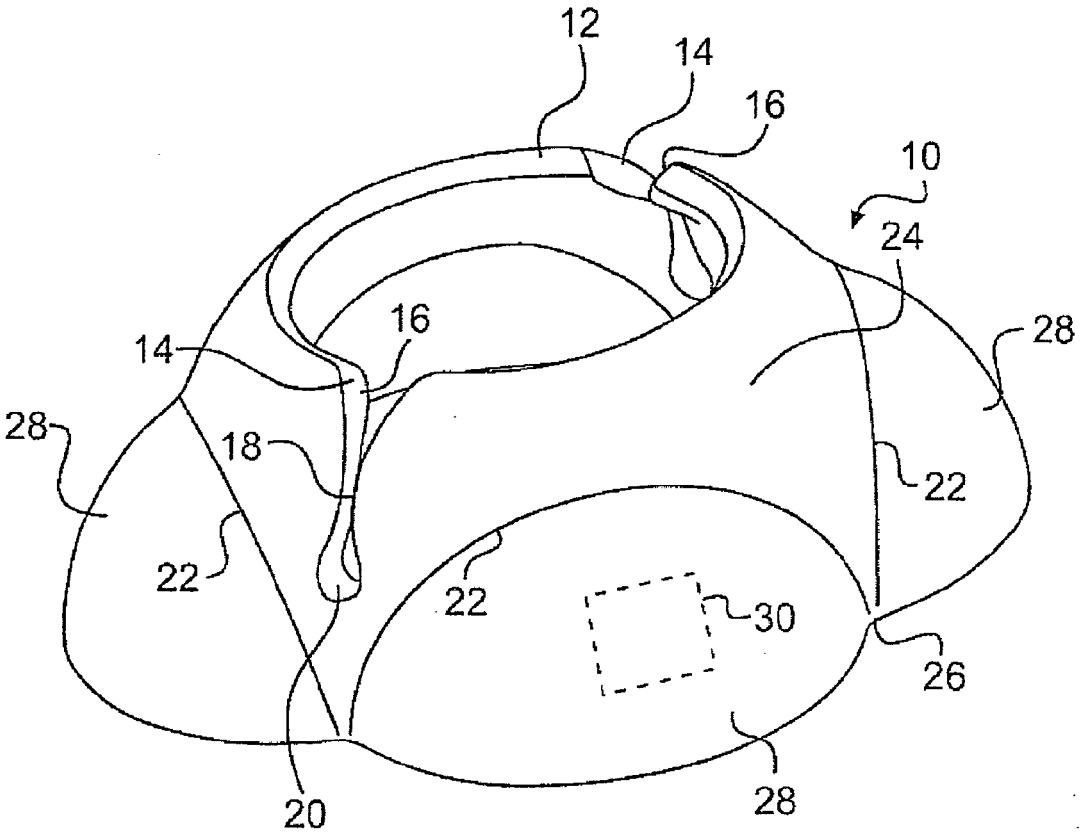

FIG. 1

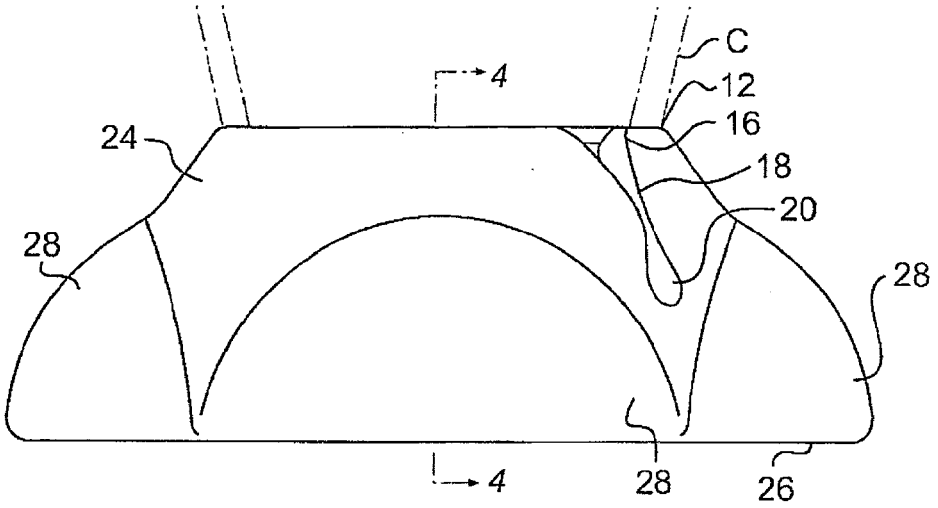
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FIG. 2

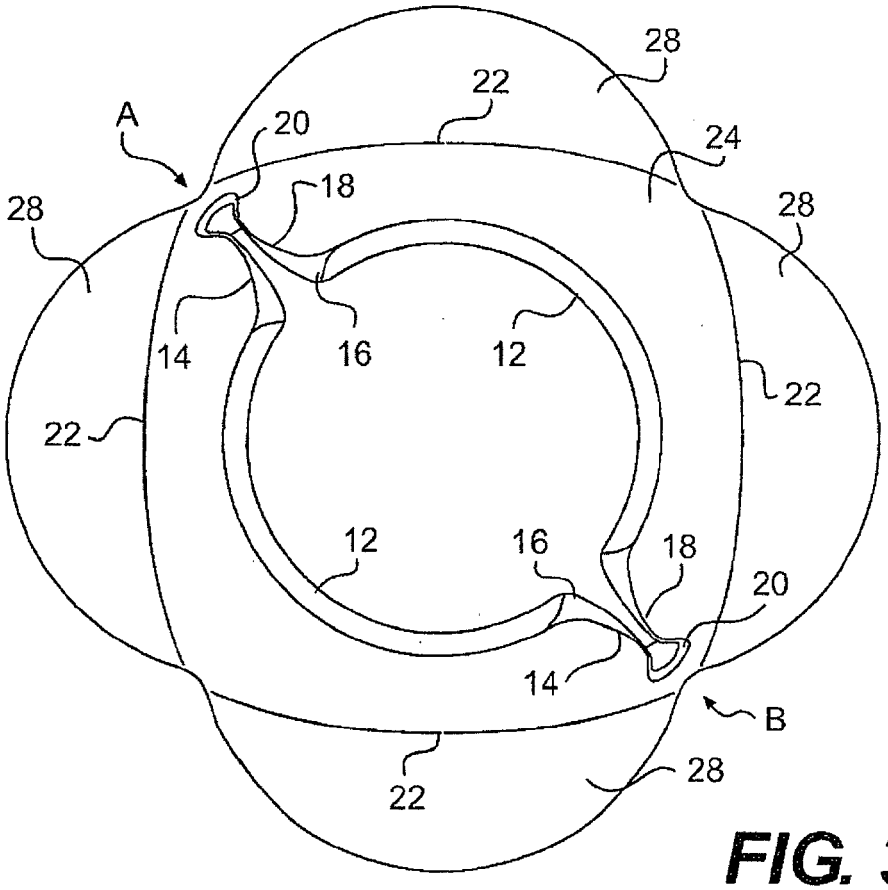
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FIG. 3

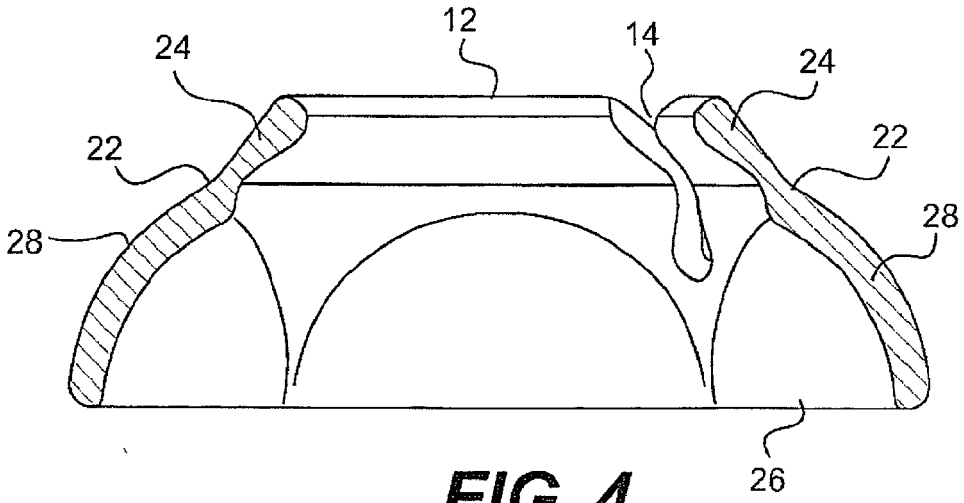


FIG. 4

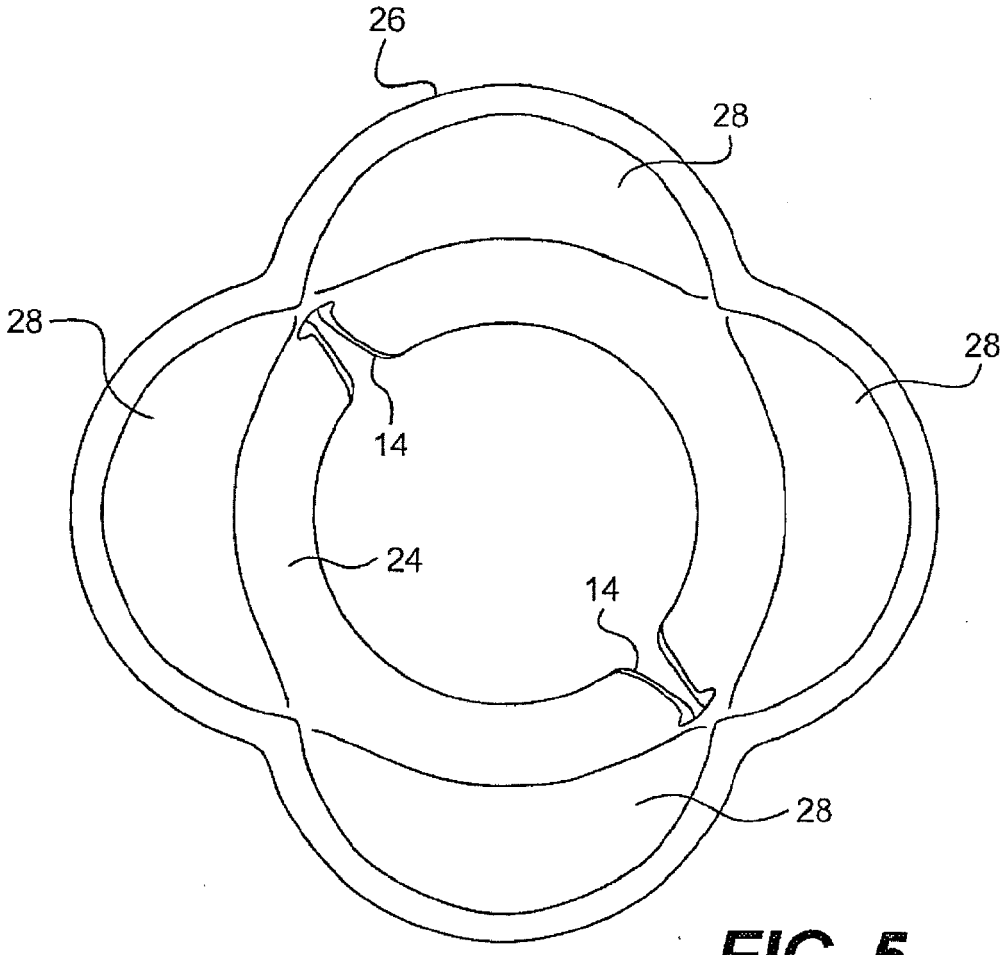
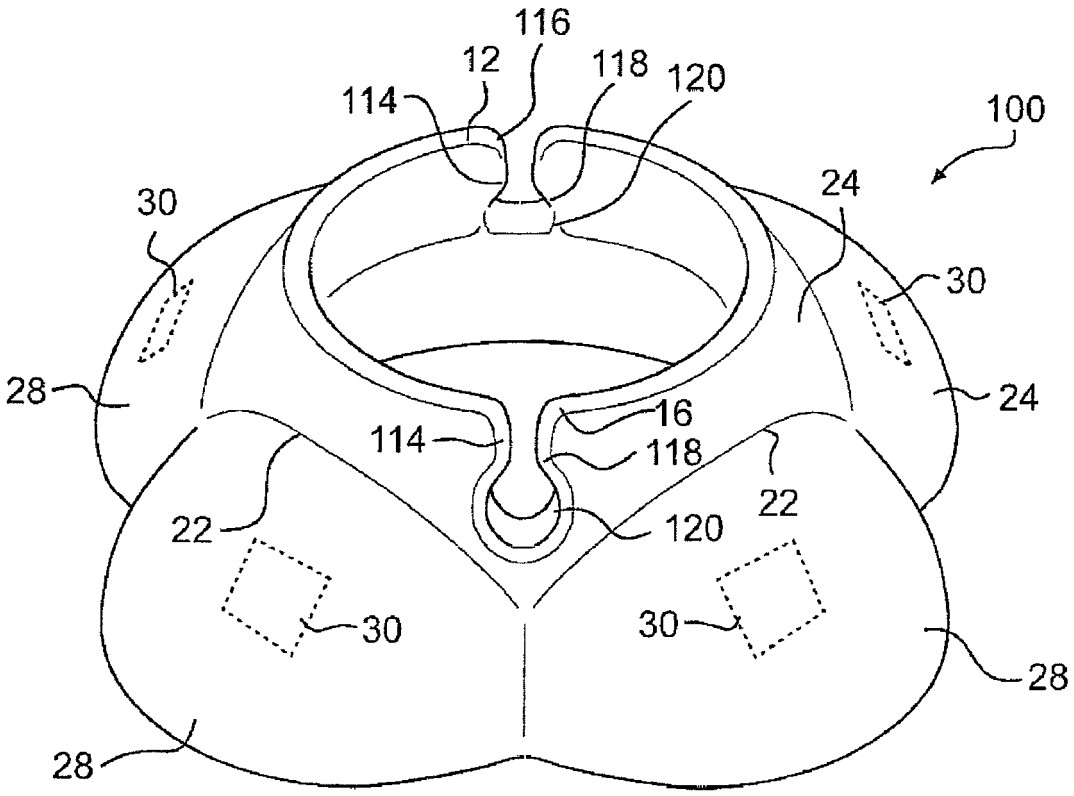


FIG. 5


116
12
118
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28
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FIG. 6

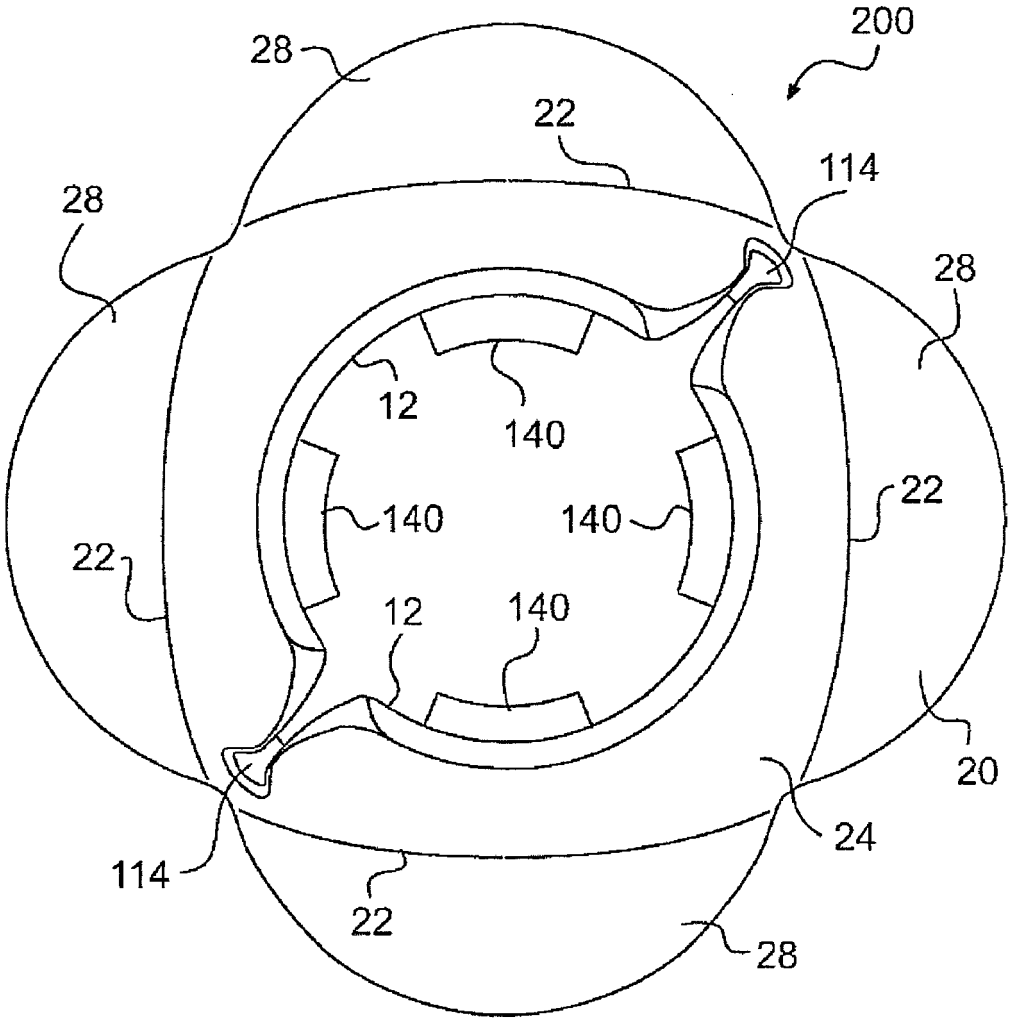

FIG. 7

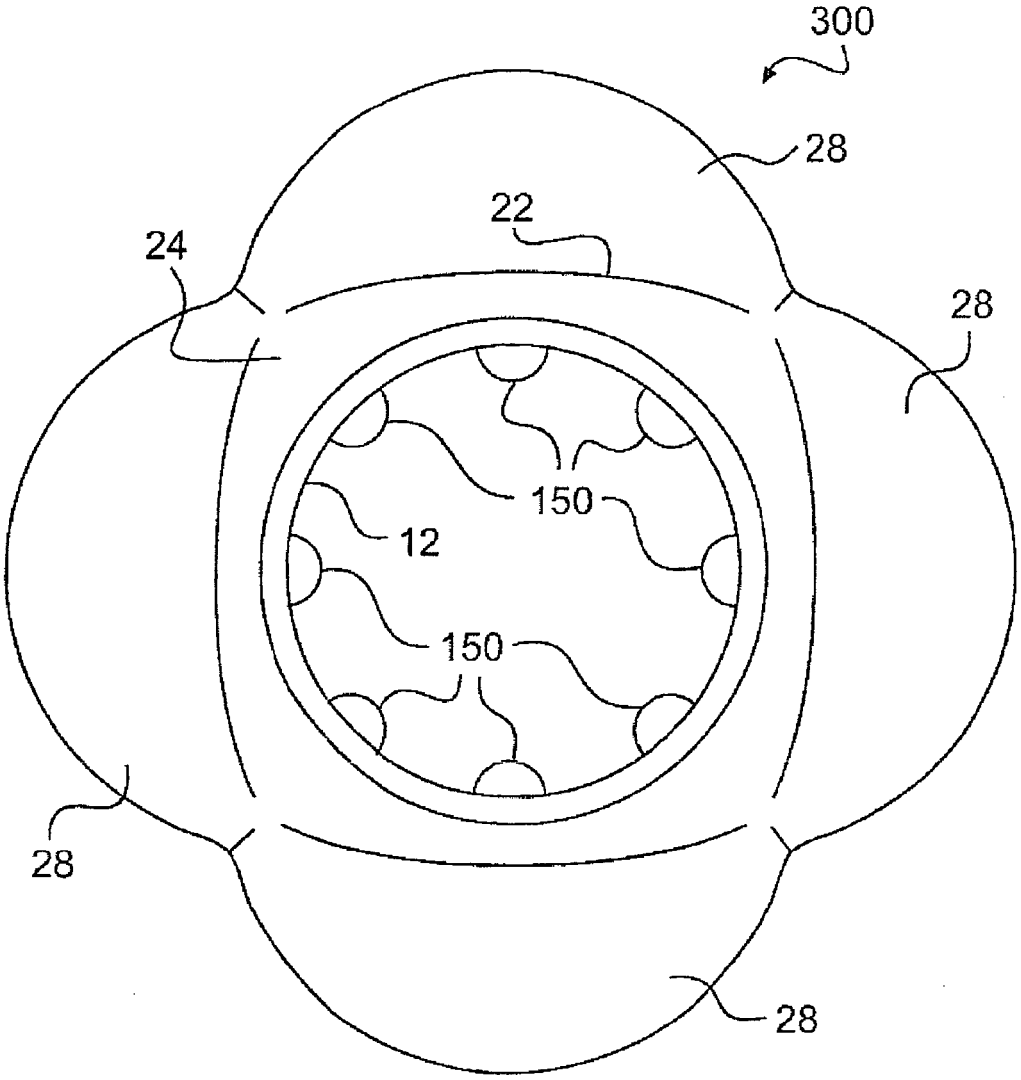

FIG. 8

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PARTIAL EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

under Rule 62a and/or 63 of the European Patent Convention. This report shall be considered, for the purposes of subsequent proceedings, as the European search report

Application Number
EP 12 00 6568

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
X	AU 2010 100 690 A4 (FLEGLER ROBYN) 29 July 2010 (2010-07-29) * page 3, line 5 - line 32; figures 1-12 * -----	1,3,4, 8-11, 15-18	INV. A47G23/02
X	US 2005/056654 A1 (LEUNG BERNARD [US]) 17 March 2005 (2005-03-17) * paragraph [0011] - paragraph [0053]; figures 1-9v * -----	1-3, 12-18	
A	US 2006/278769 A1 (PINEDA ANDRES [US]) 14 December 2006 (2006-12-14) * figures 1-22 * -----	1-18	
A	US D 516 872 S1 (RIGBERG ALLAN [US] ET AL) 14 March 2006 (2006-03-14) * figures 1-7 * -----	1,17	

TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC)

B65D
A47G

INCOMPLETE SEARCH

The Search Division considers that the present application, or one or more of its claims, does/do not comply with the EPC so that only a partial search (R.62a, 63) has been carried out.

Claims searched completely :

Claims searched incompletely :

Claims not searched :

Reason for the limitation of the search:

see sheet C

Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner
The Hague	7 March 2013	Hinrichs, Wiebke

CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS

X : particularly relevant if taken alone
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D : document cited in the application
L : document cited for other reasons

& : member of the same patent family, corresponding document

2

EPO FORM 1503 03.82 (P04E07)

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INCOMPLETE SEARCH
SHEET C

Application Number
EP 12 00 6568

Claim(s) completely searchable:
1-18

Claim(s) not searched:
19-26

Reason for the limitation of the search:

Rule 62(a) EPC

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07-03-2013

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US 2005056654 A1	17-03-2005	NONE	
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US D516872 S1	14-03-2006	NONE	

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For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82

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