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(54) **SEALING MECHANISMS FOR USE IN LIQUID-STORAGE CONTAINERS**

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This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

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(63) Continuation of application No. 10/365,910, filed on Feb. 13, 2003, now Pat. No. 6,997,354, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 10/199,618, filed on Jul. 19, 2002, now Pat. No. 6,843,389.

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B65D 5/72 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **222/567; 222/111**

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 222/567, 222/111, 542, 109, 546, 568-570; 215/343-345
See application file for complete search history.

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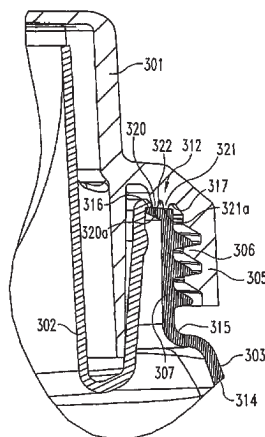
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A container for the storage and dispensing of a liquid and which incorporates a sealing mechanism includes a blow-molded container body including a neck portion having a series of external threads and defining an annular, non-planar sealing surface, a pouring spout assembled into the body and a unitary closing lid including a series of internal threads constructed and arranged to engage the threads of the neck portion. The unitary closing lid includes the sealing mechanism in the form of a pair of annular sealing lips constructed and arranged to be compressed against the annular, non-planar sealing surface to establish a sealed interface between the closing lid and the body.

8 Claims, 26 Drawing Sheets



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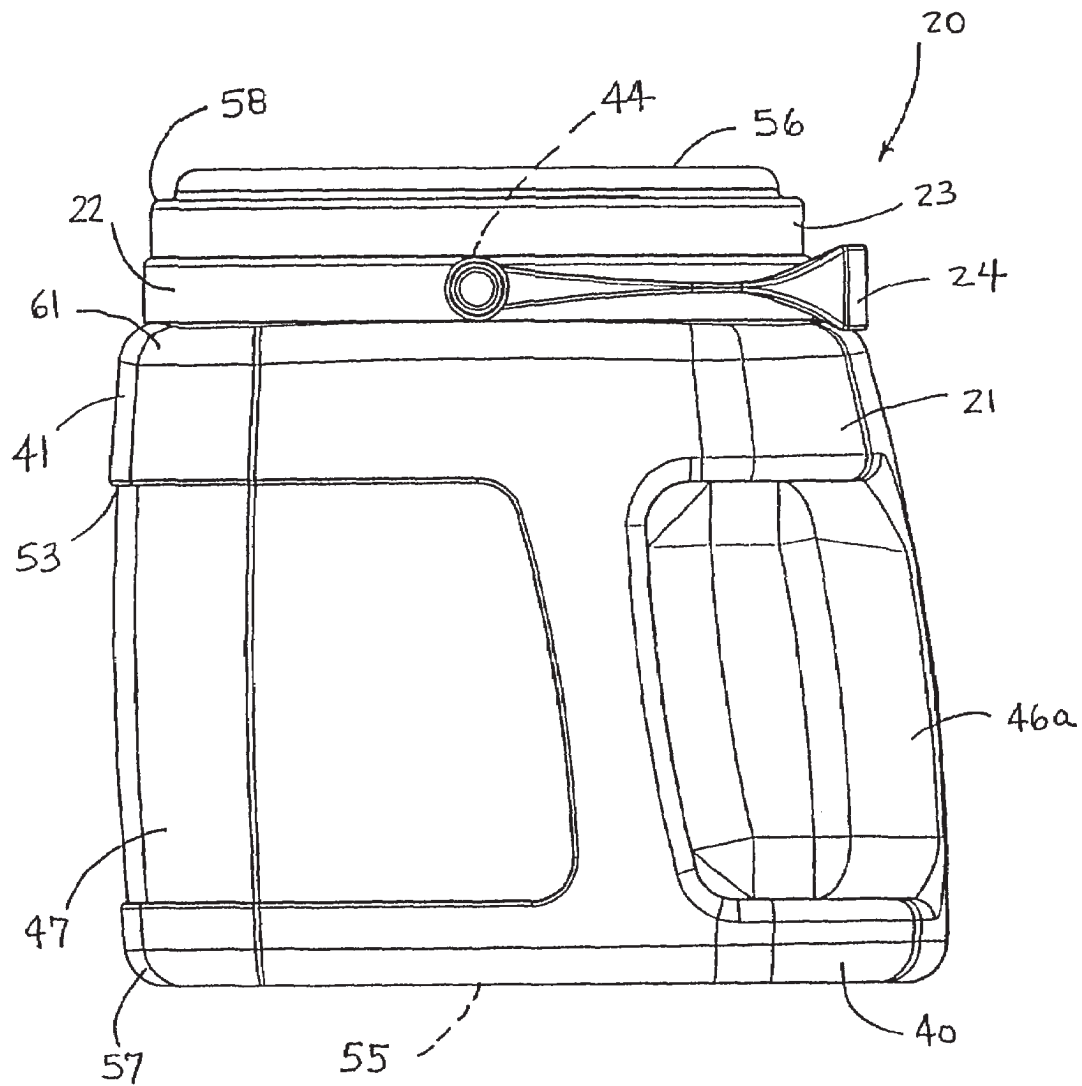


FIG. 1

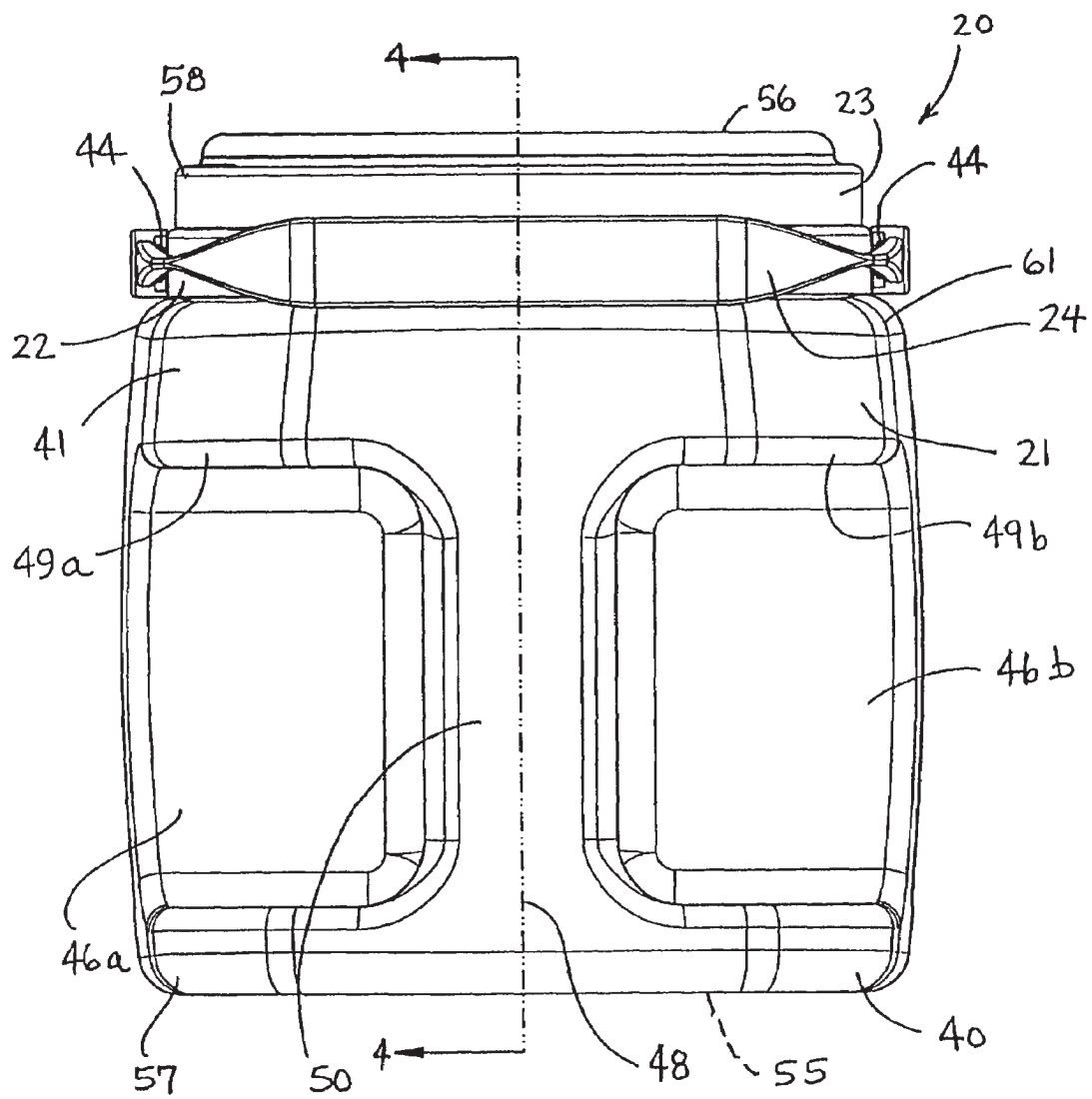
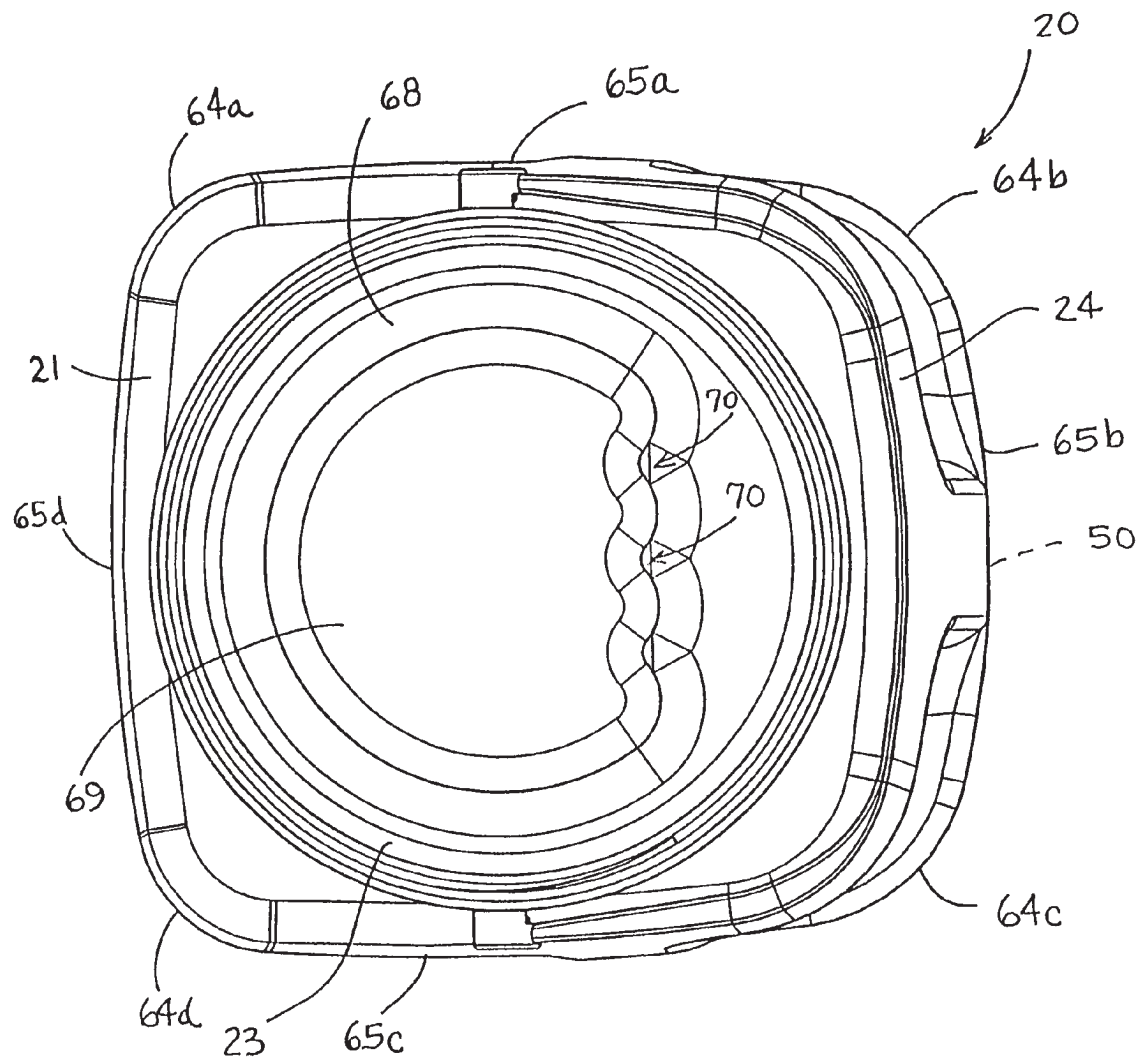


FIG. 2



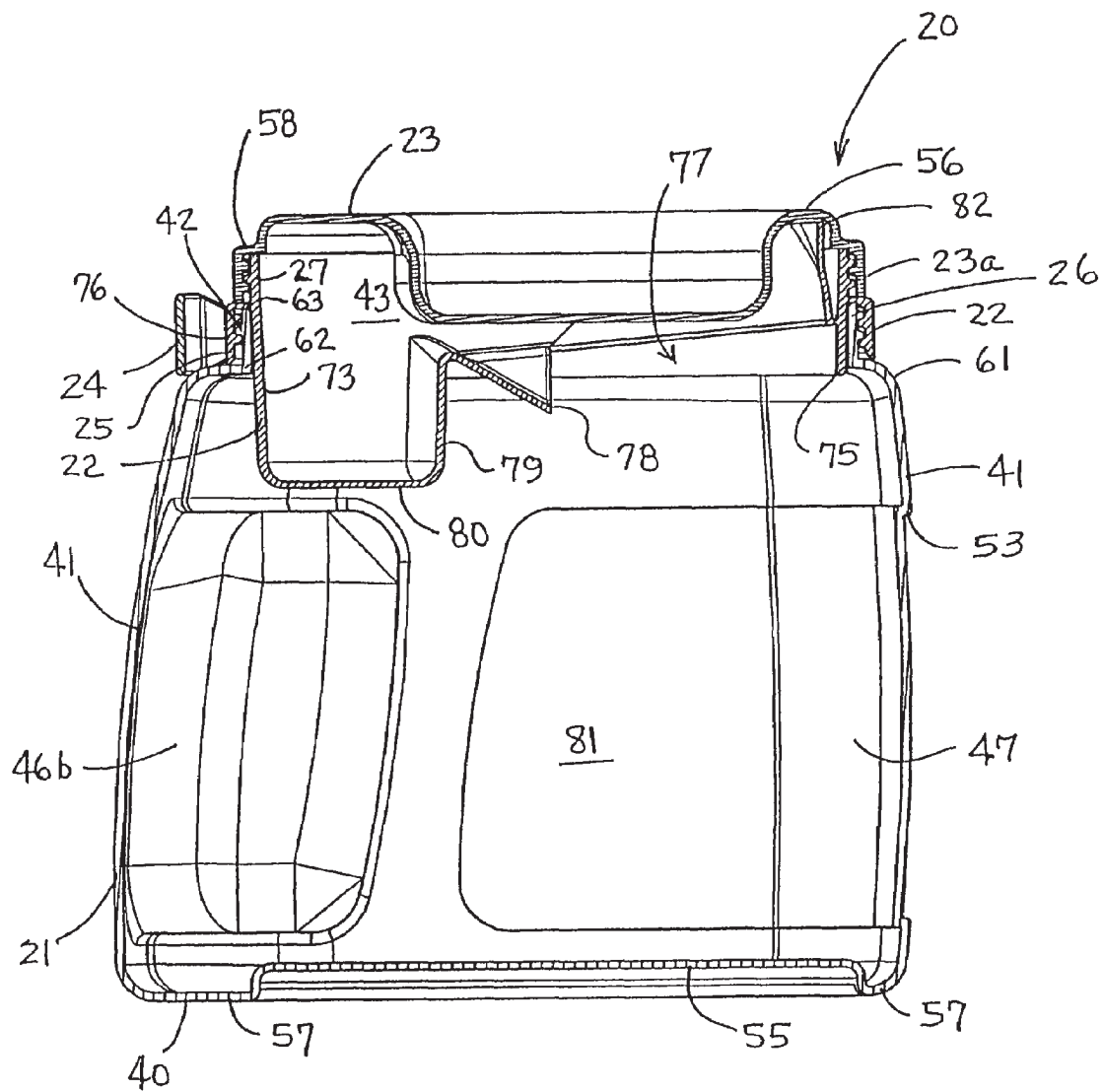


FIG. 4

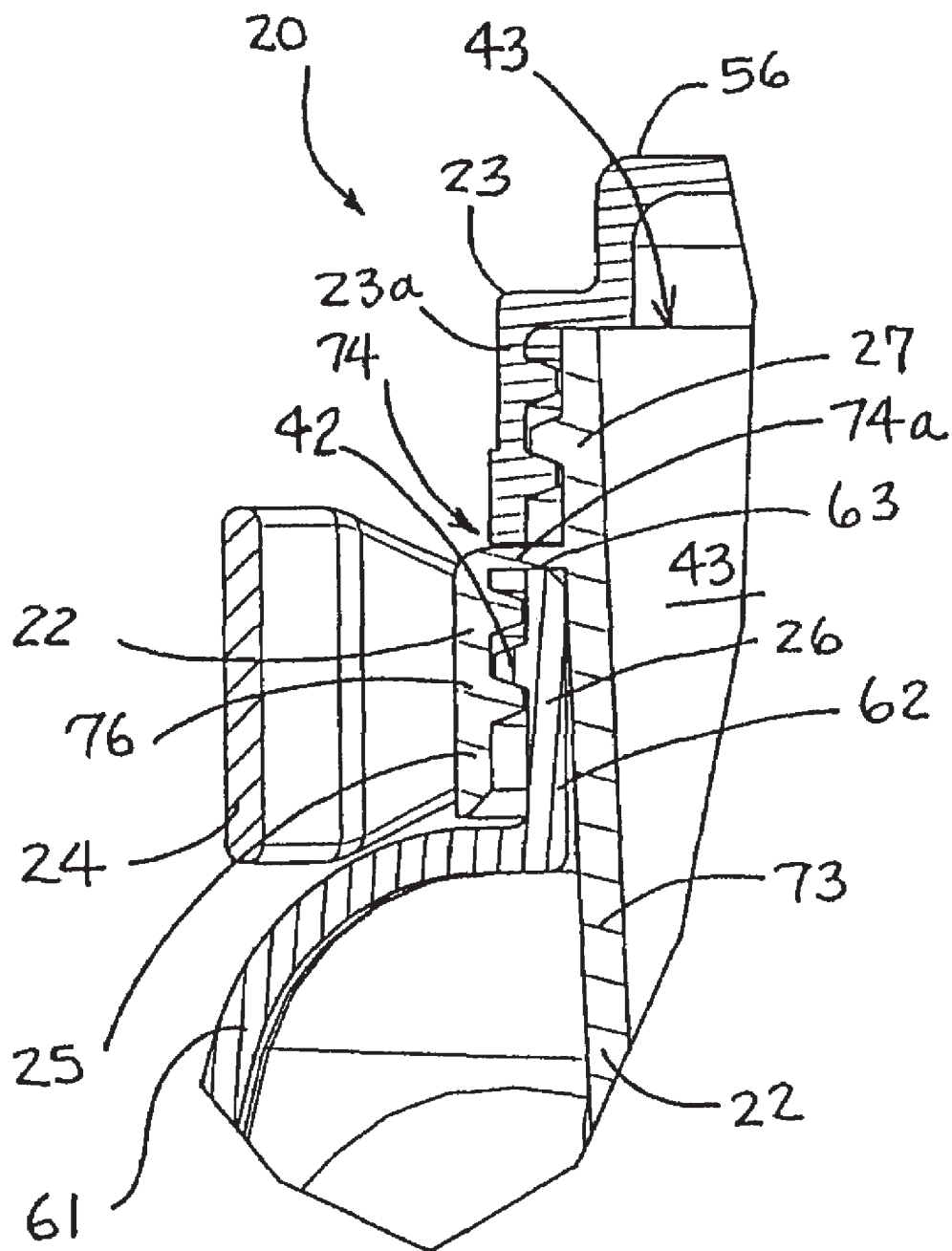


FIG. 5

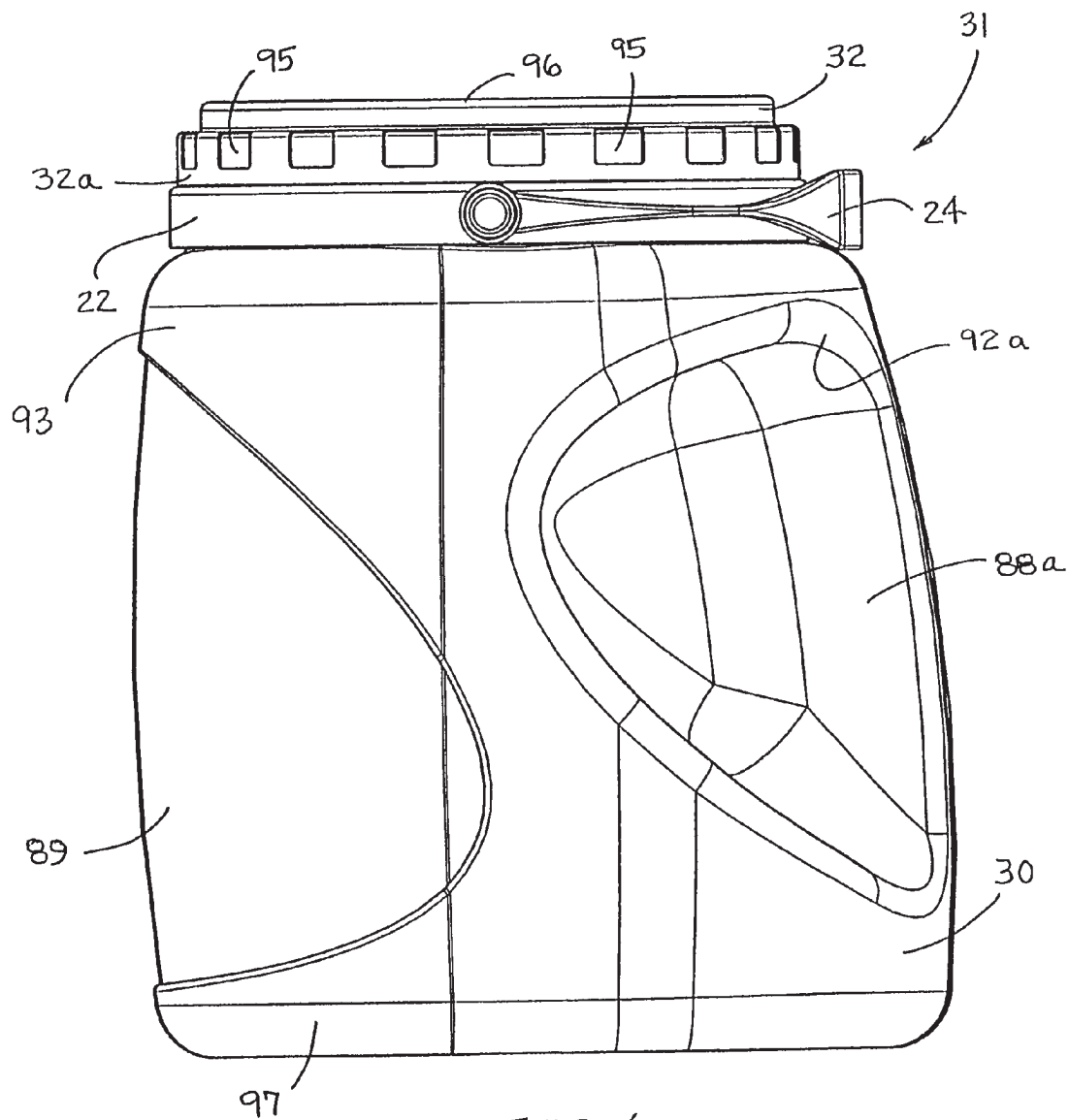


FIG. 6

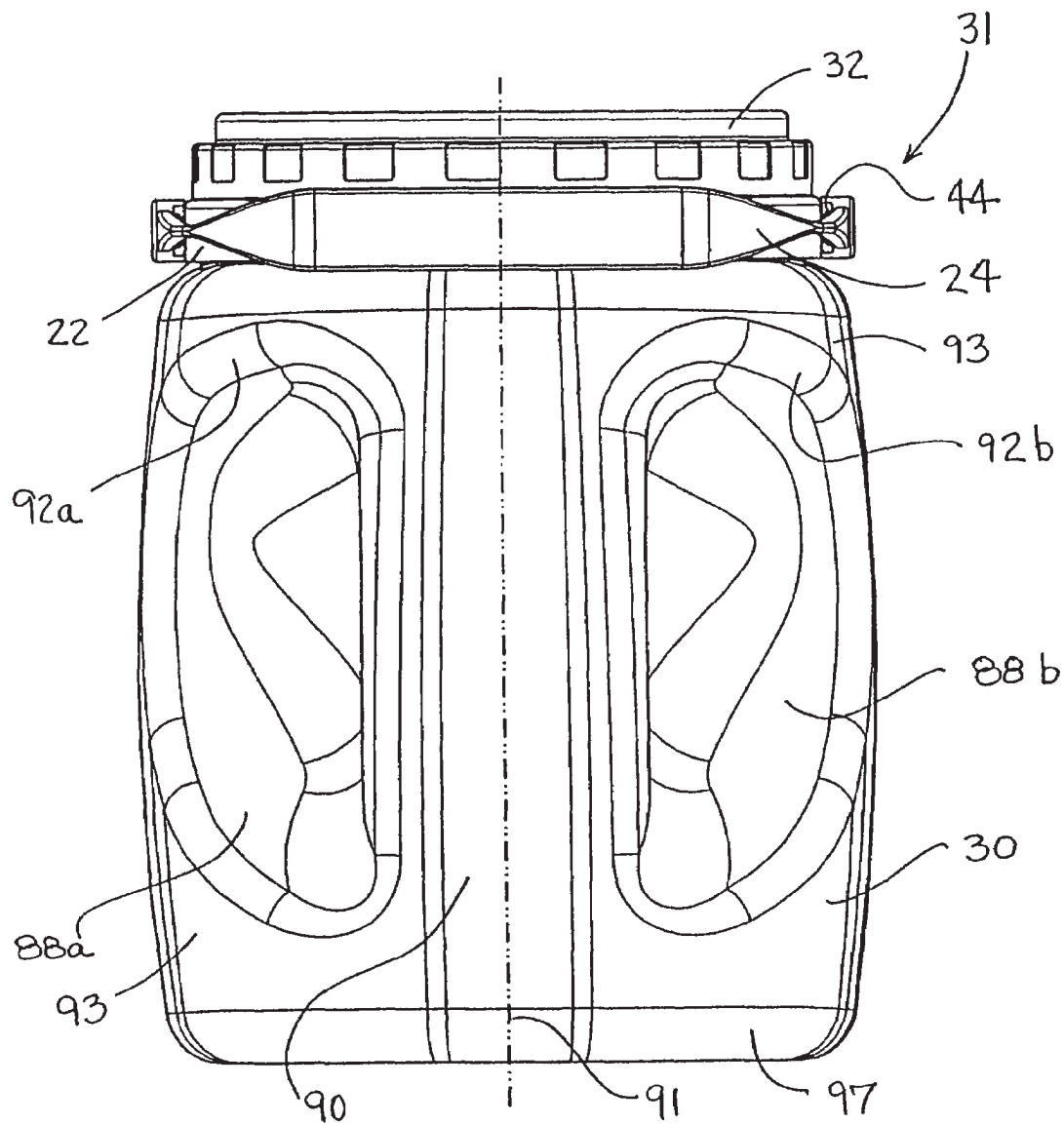


FIG. 7

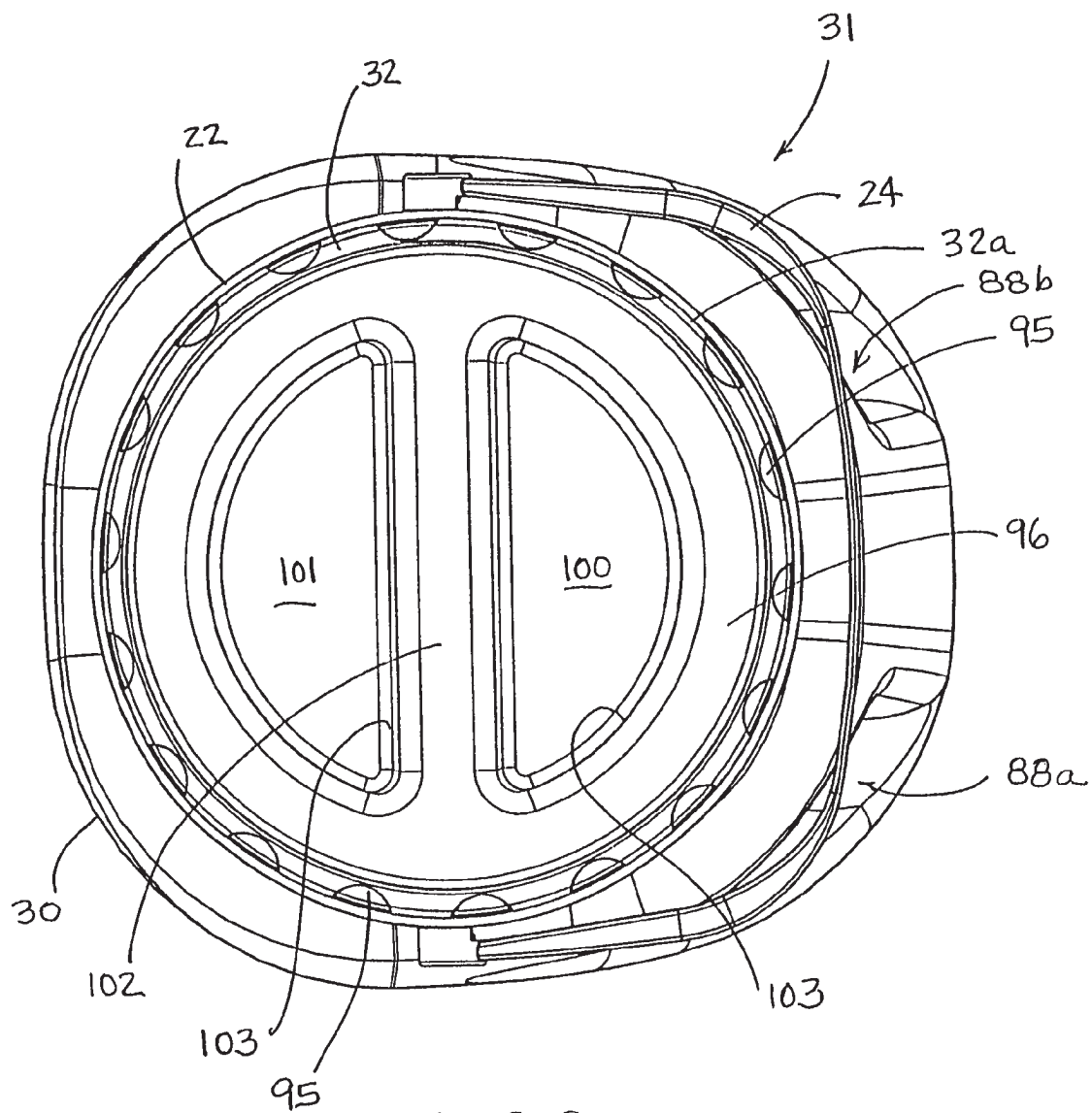


FIG. 8

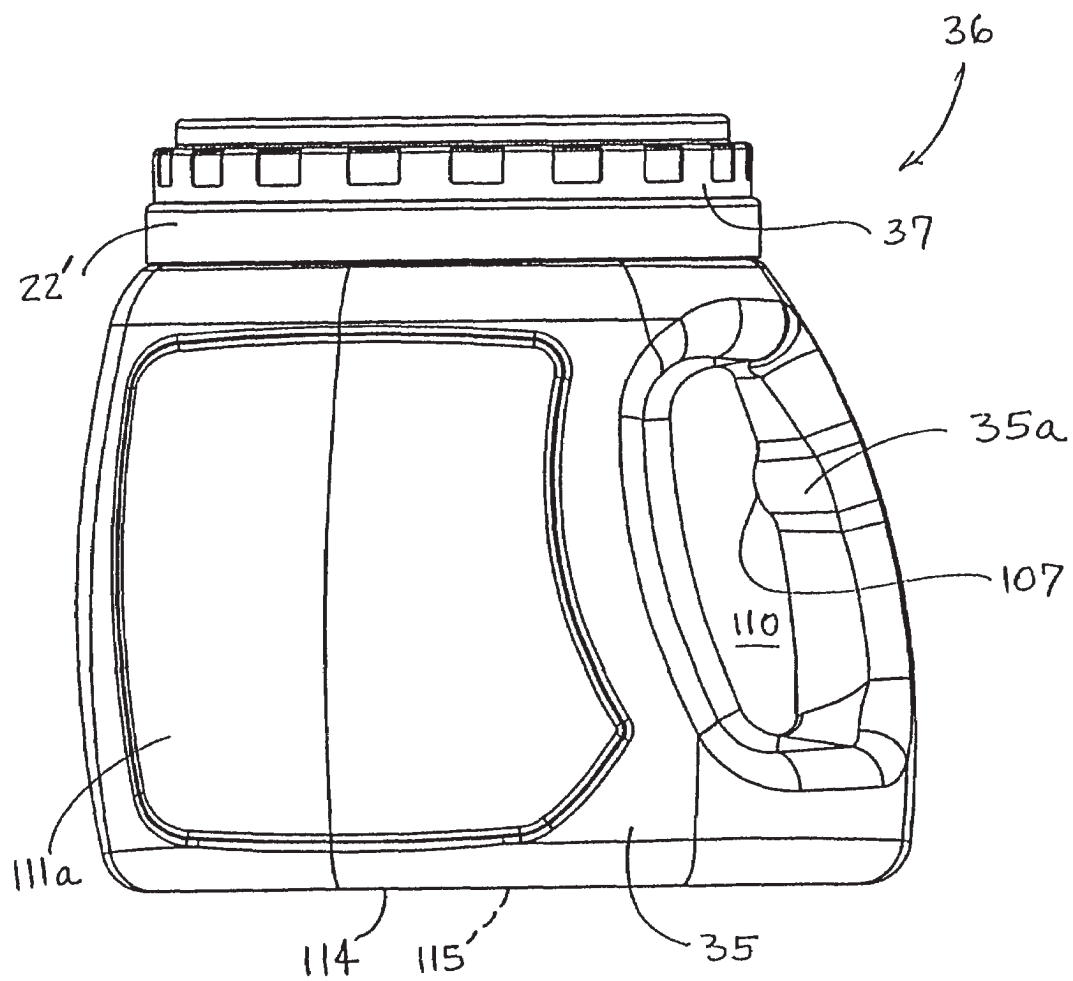
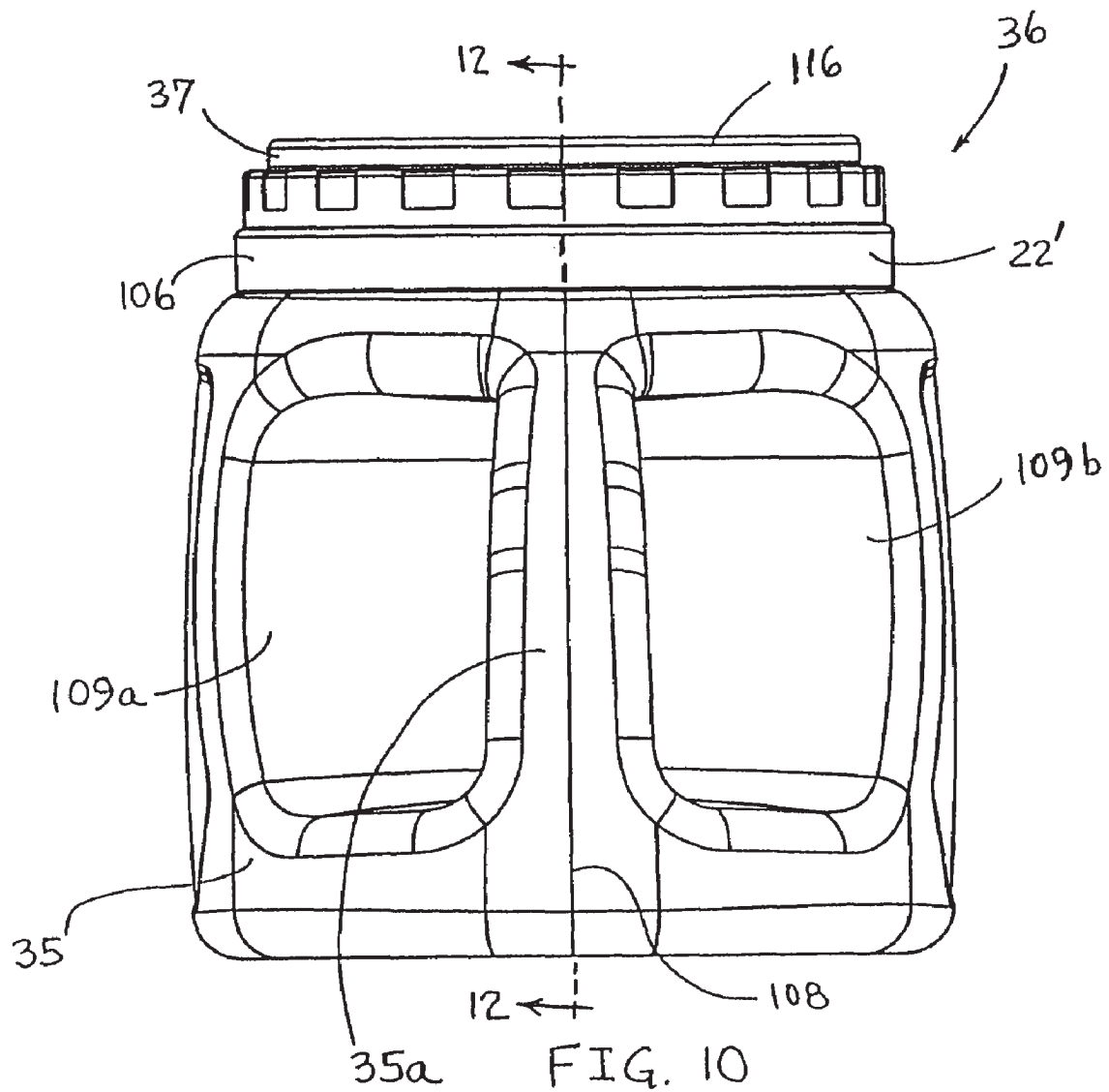


FIG. 9



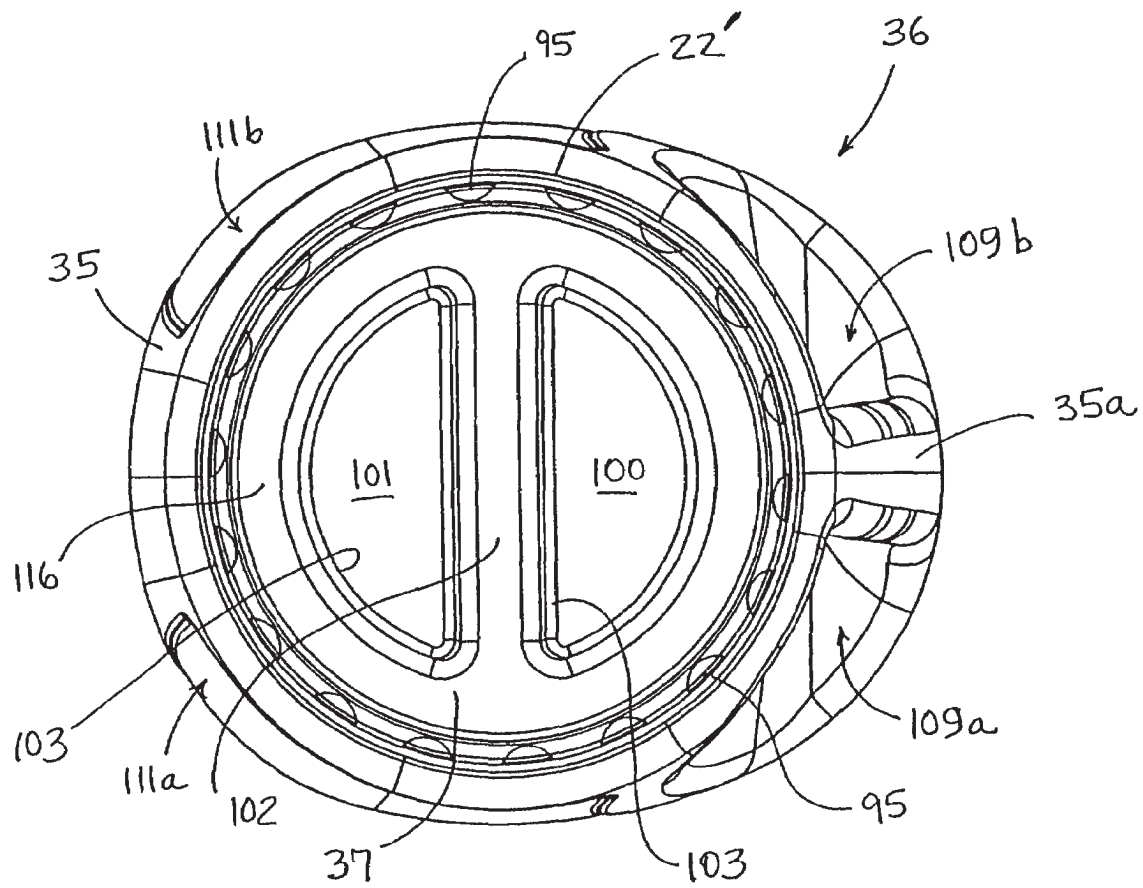


FIG. 11

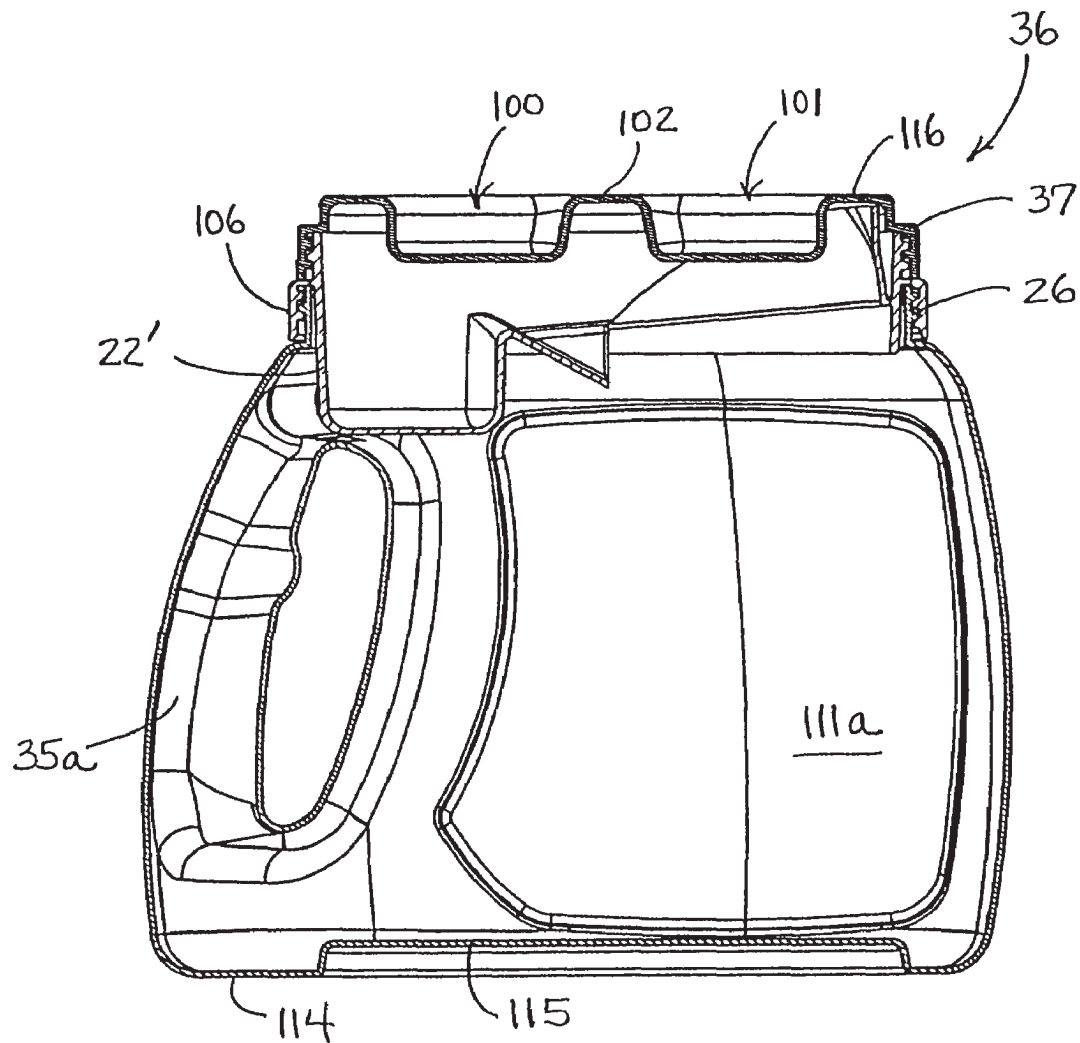
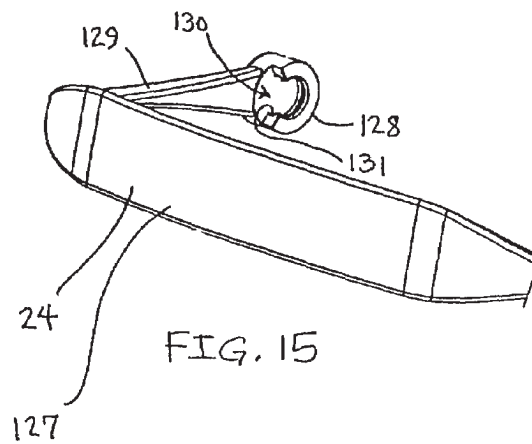
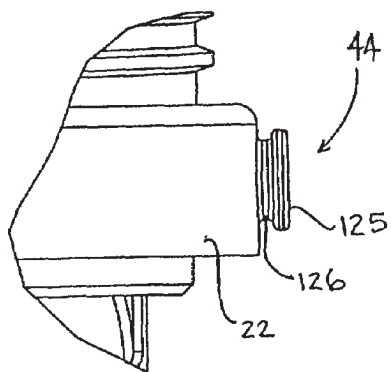
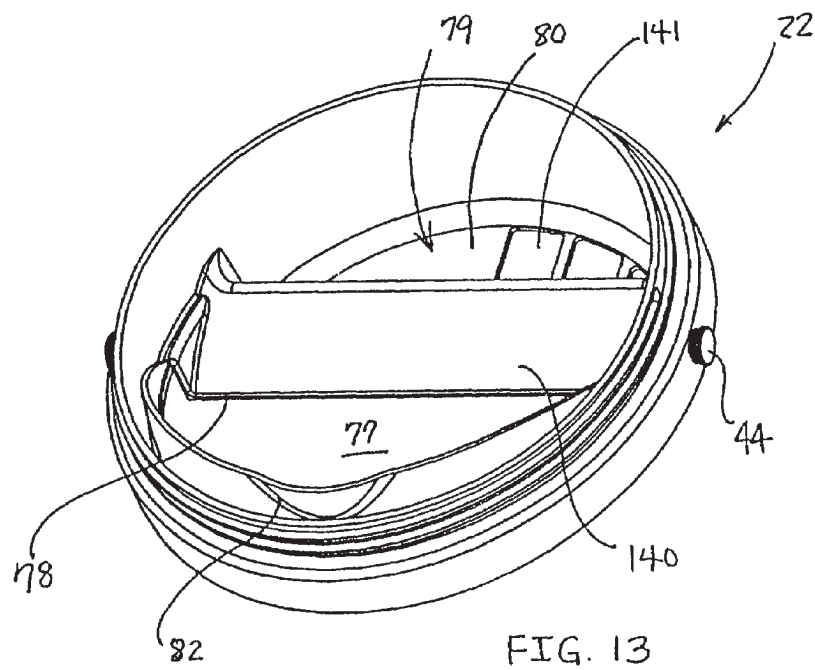
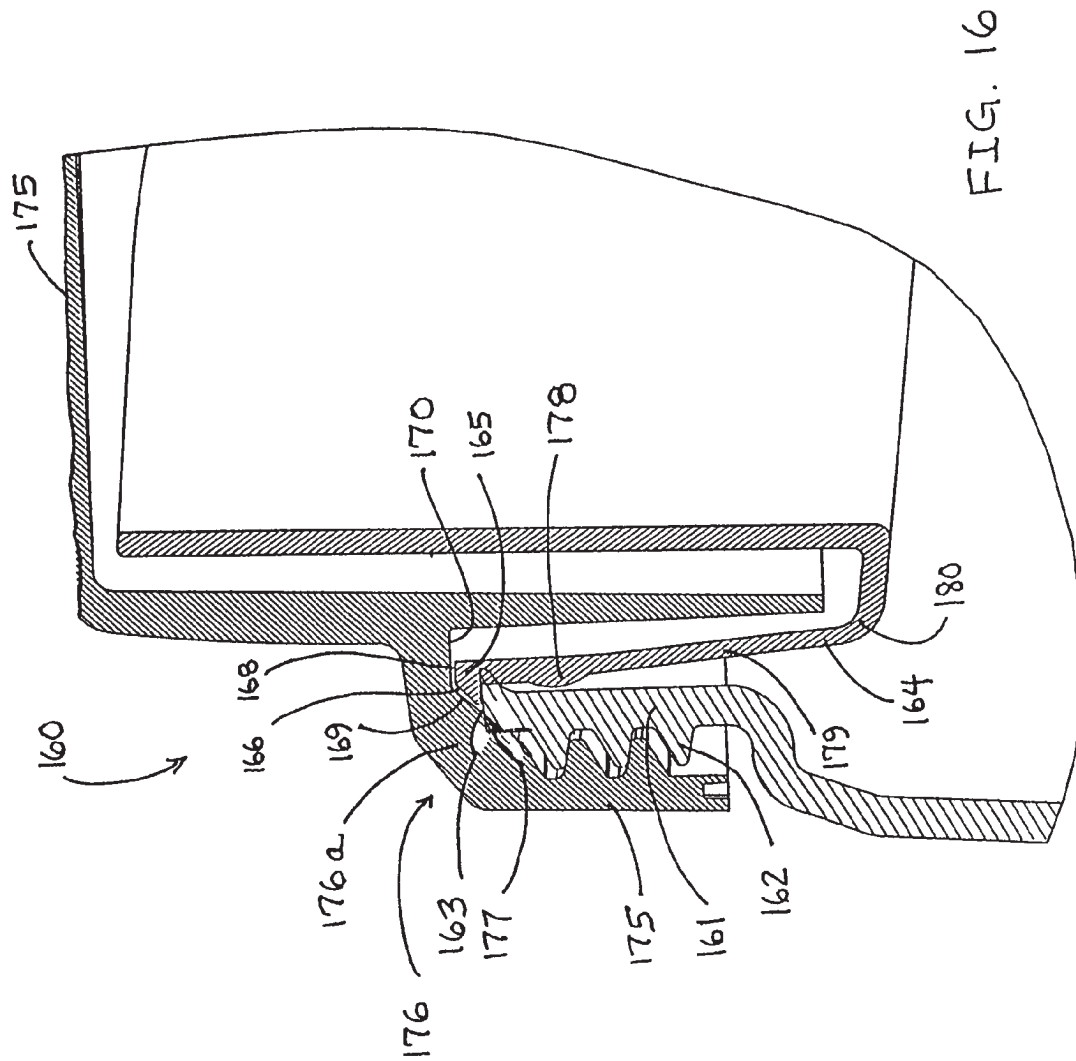


FIG. 12





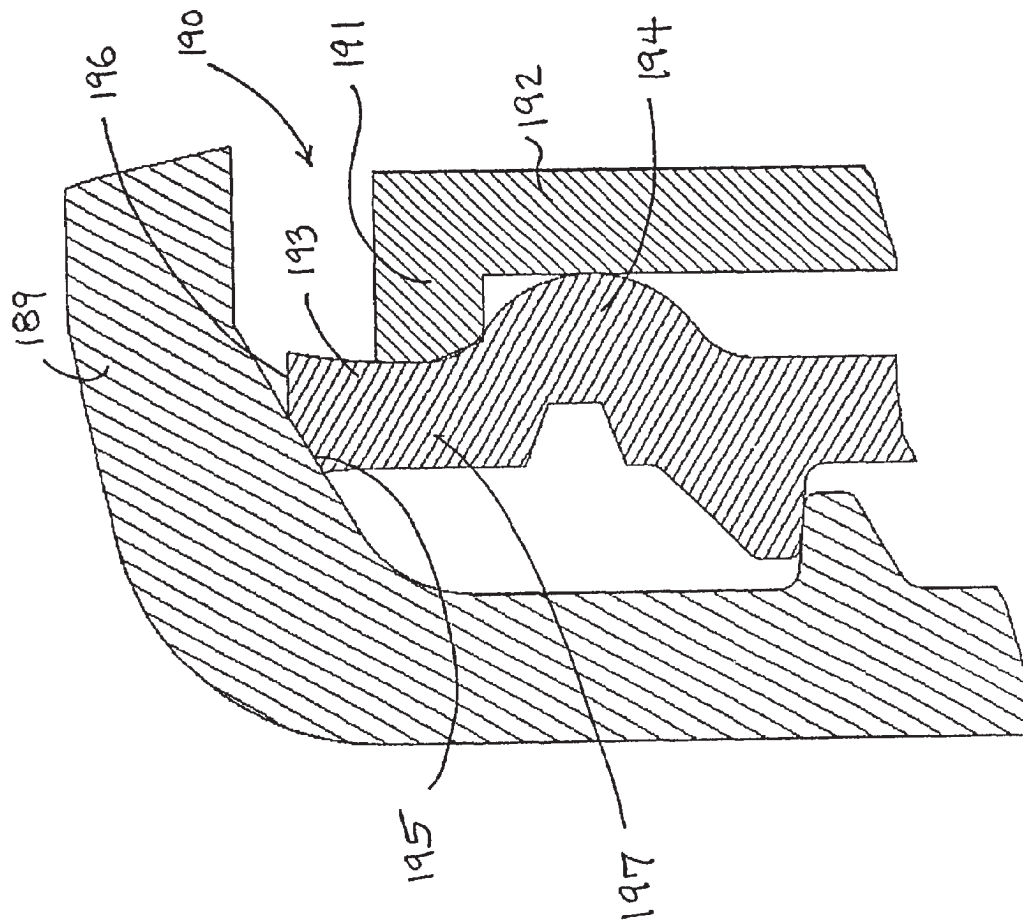


FIG. 17

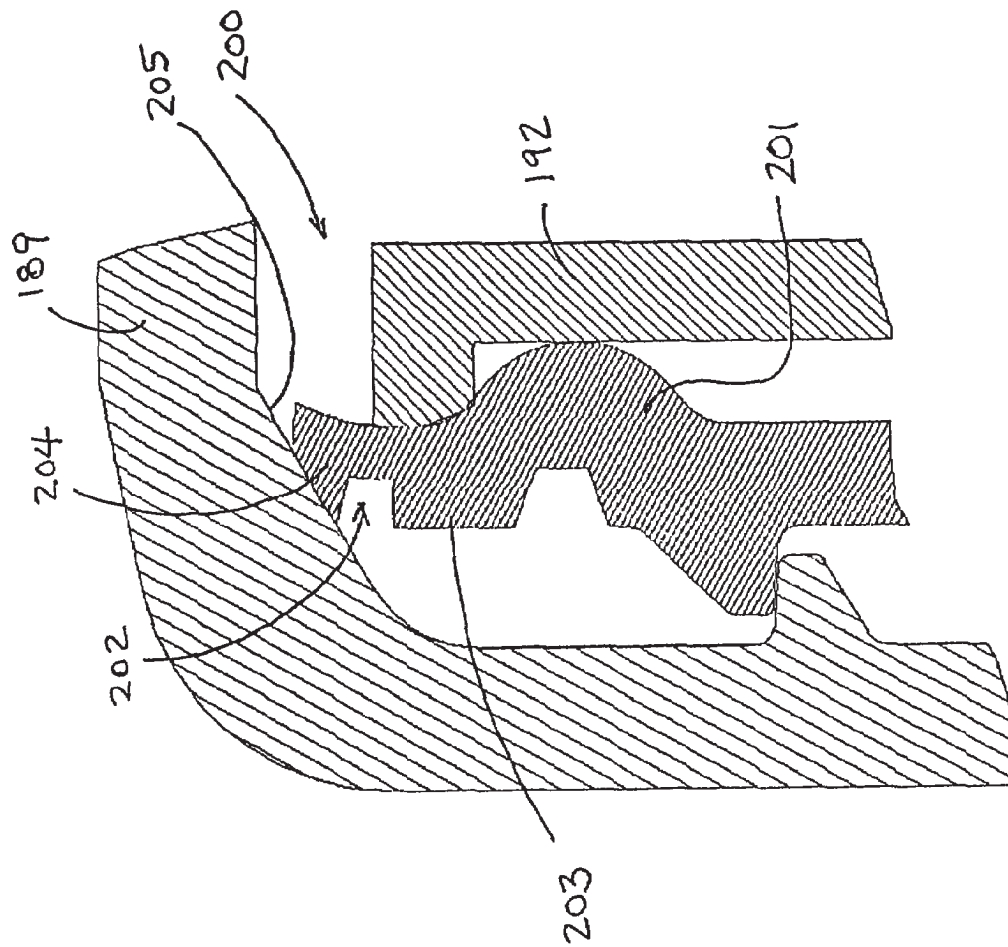


FIG. 18

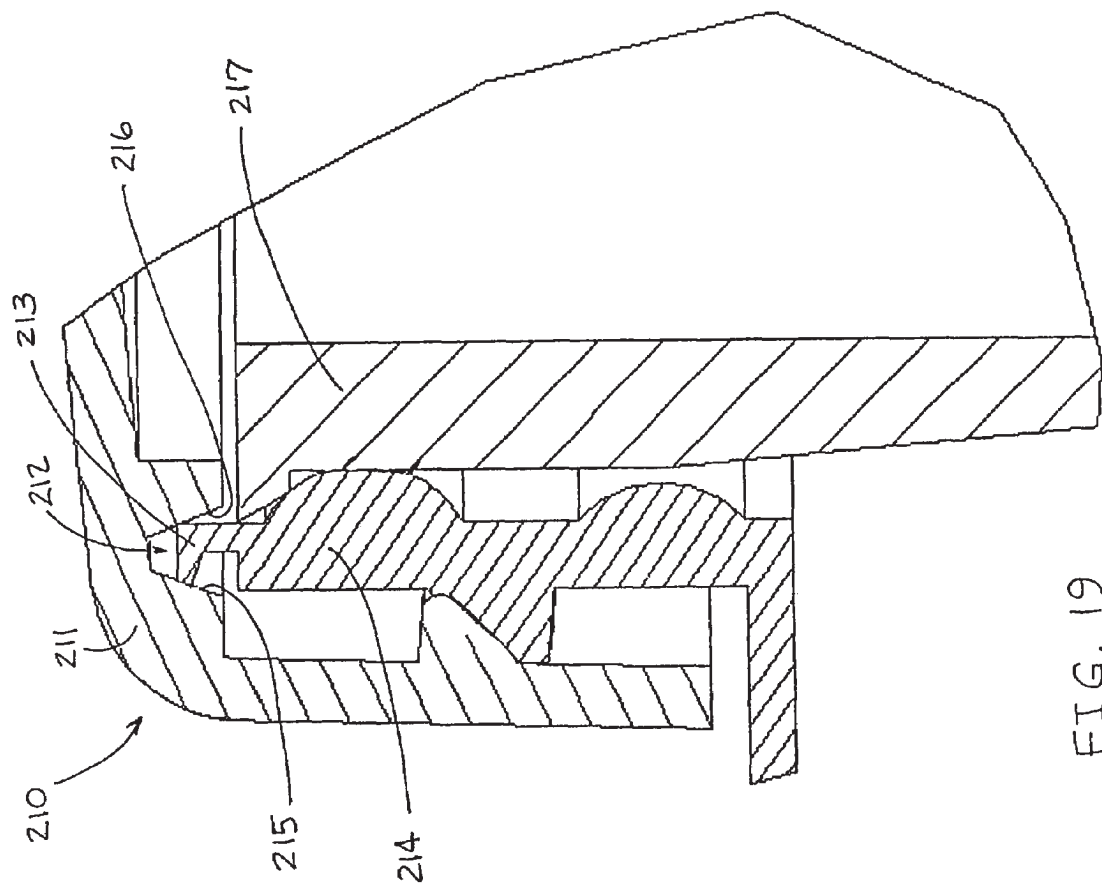


FIG. 19

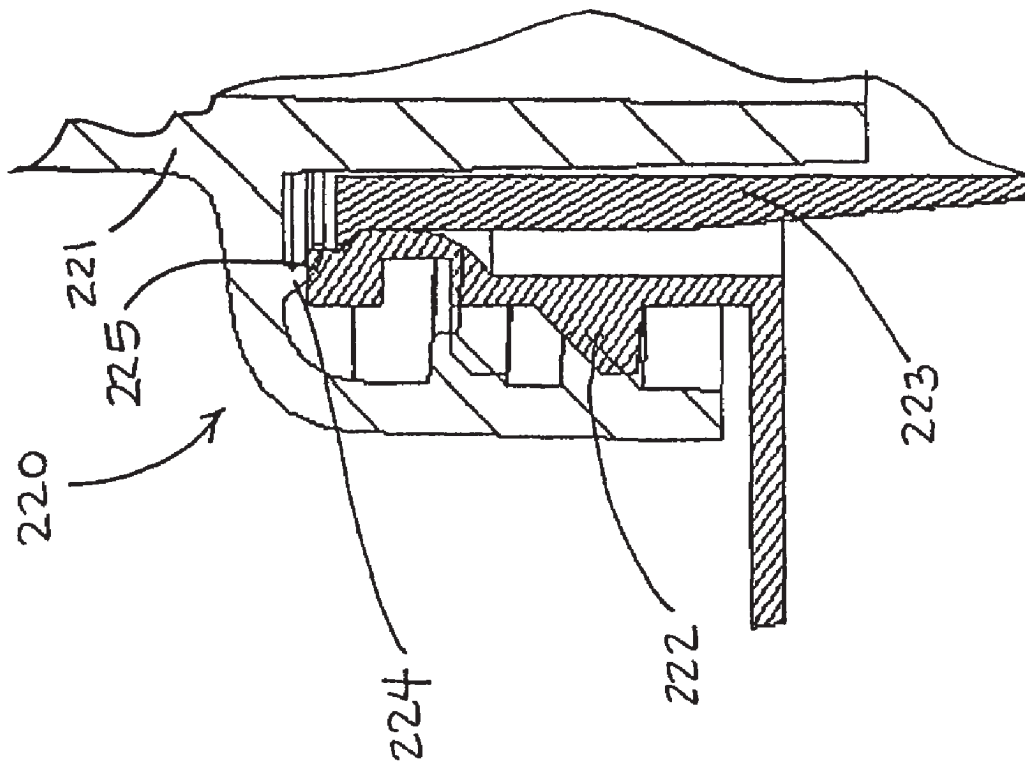
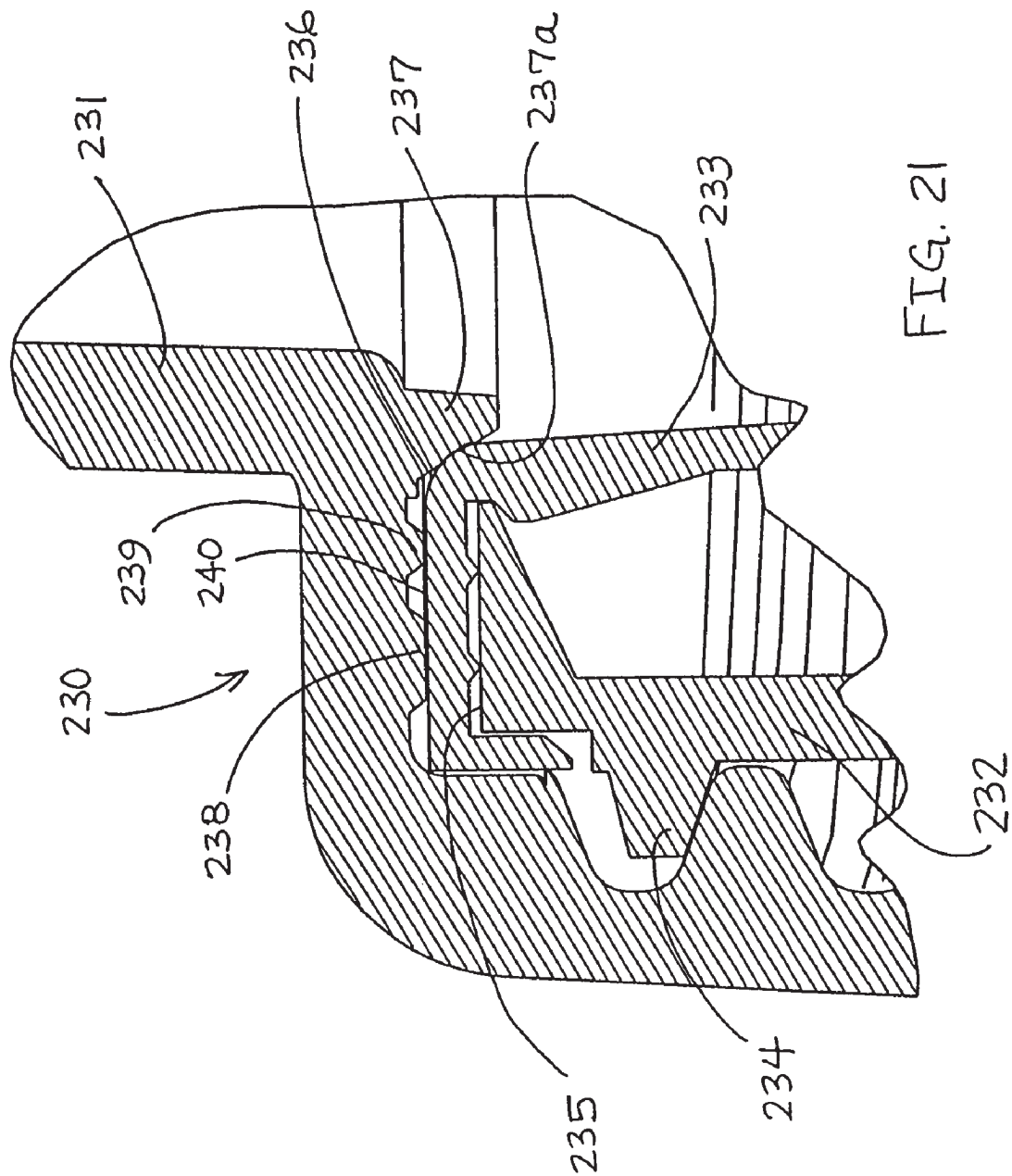


FIG. 20



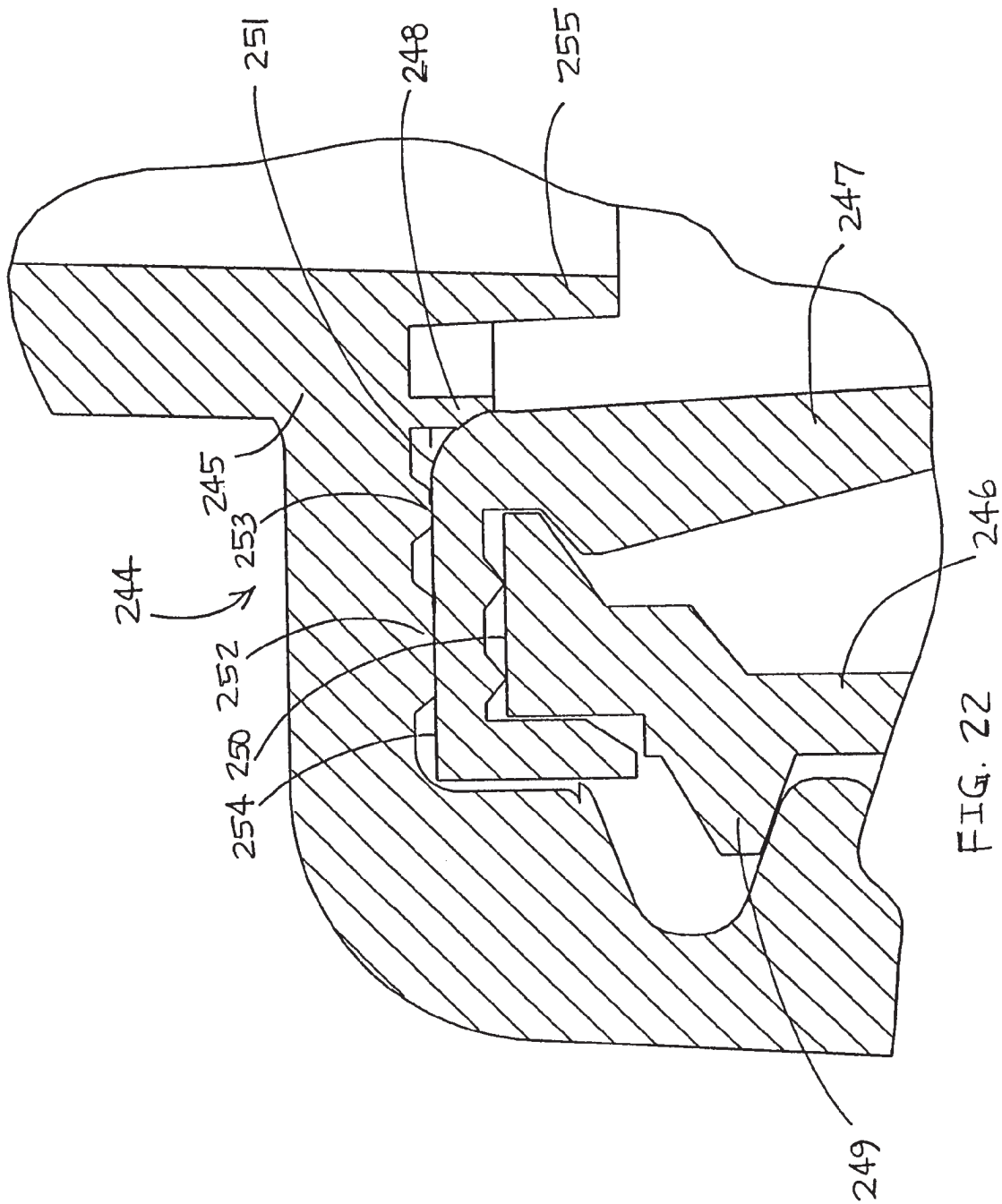


FIG. 22

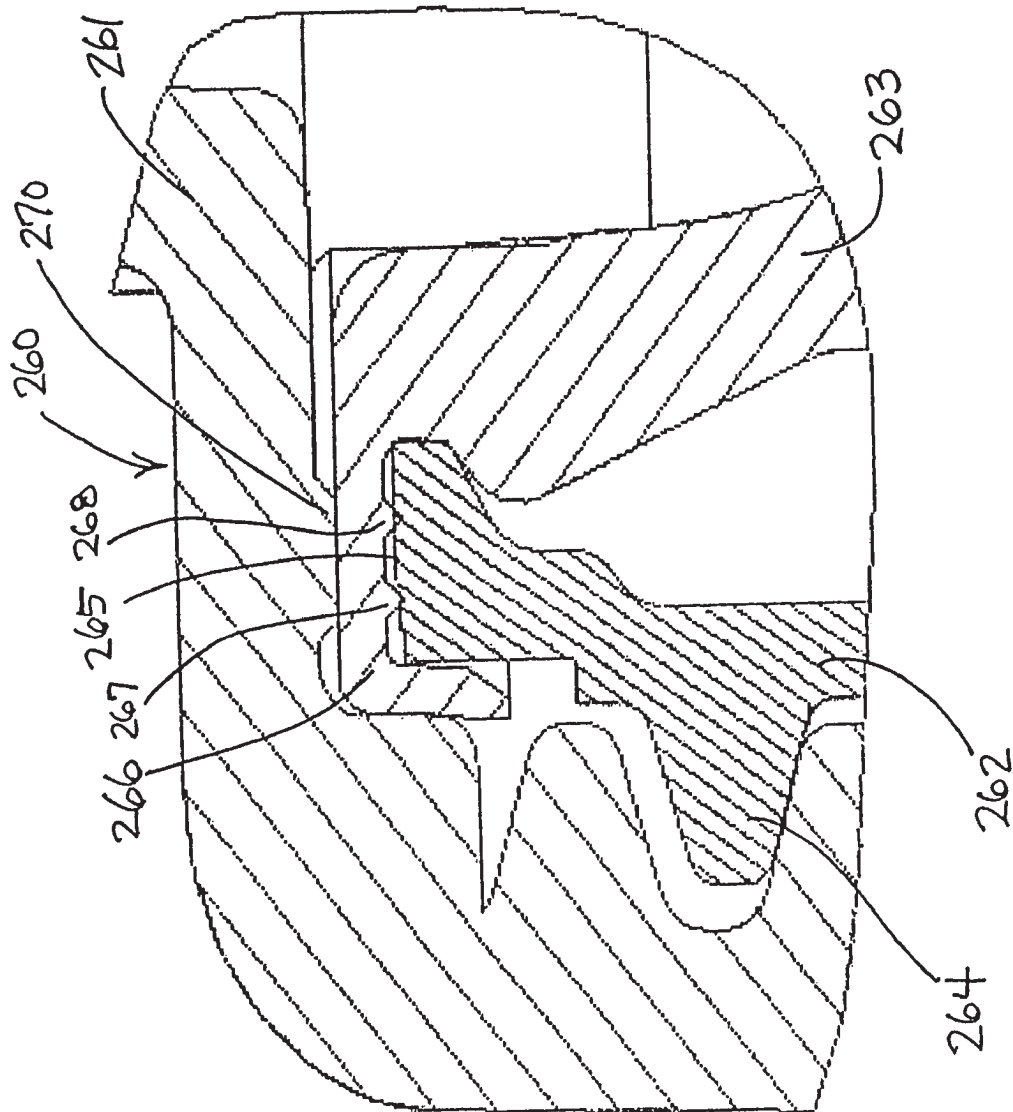


FIG. 23

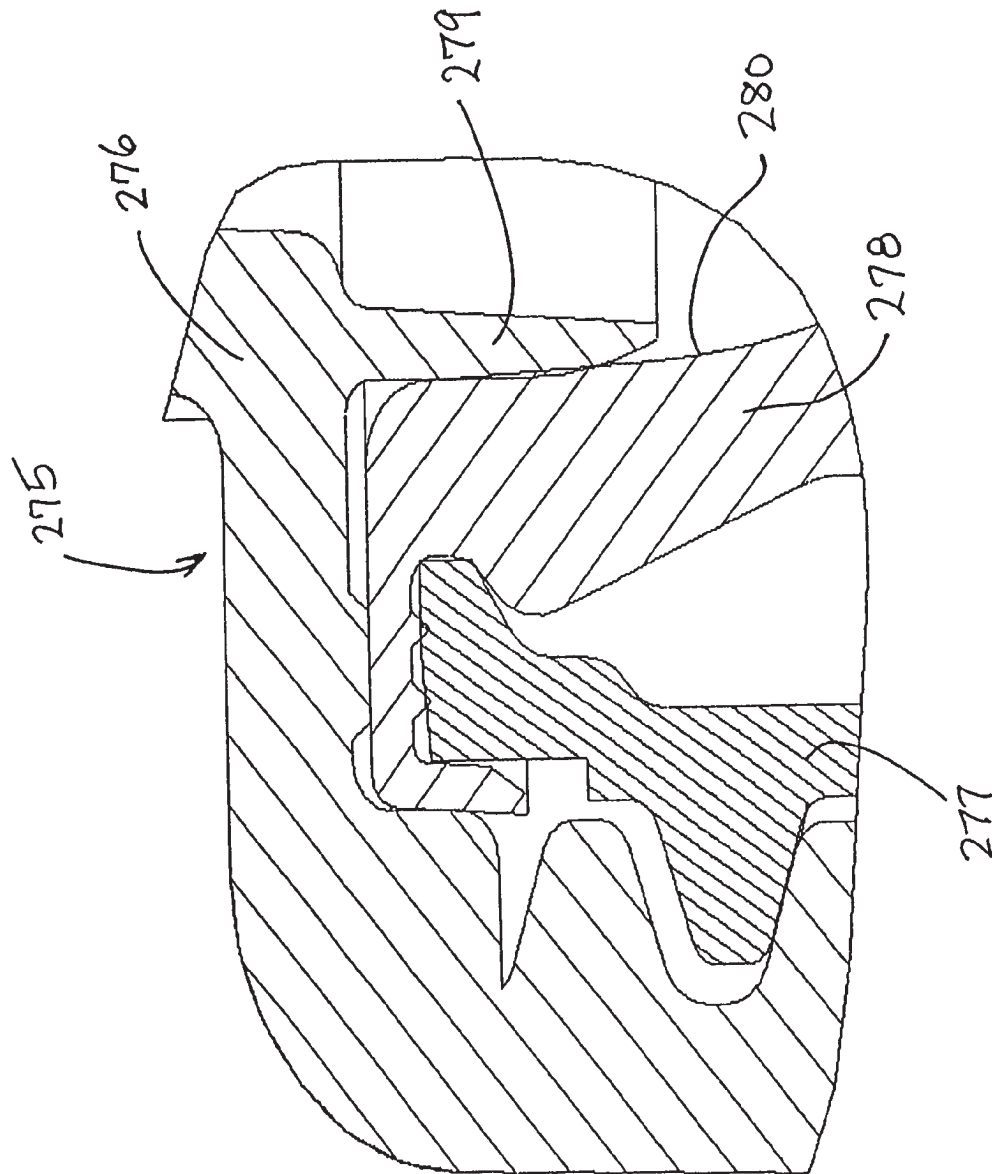


FIG. 24

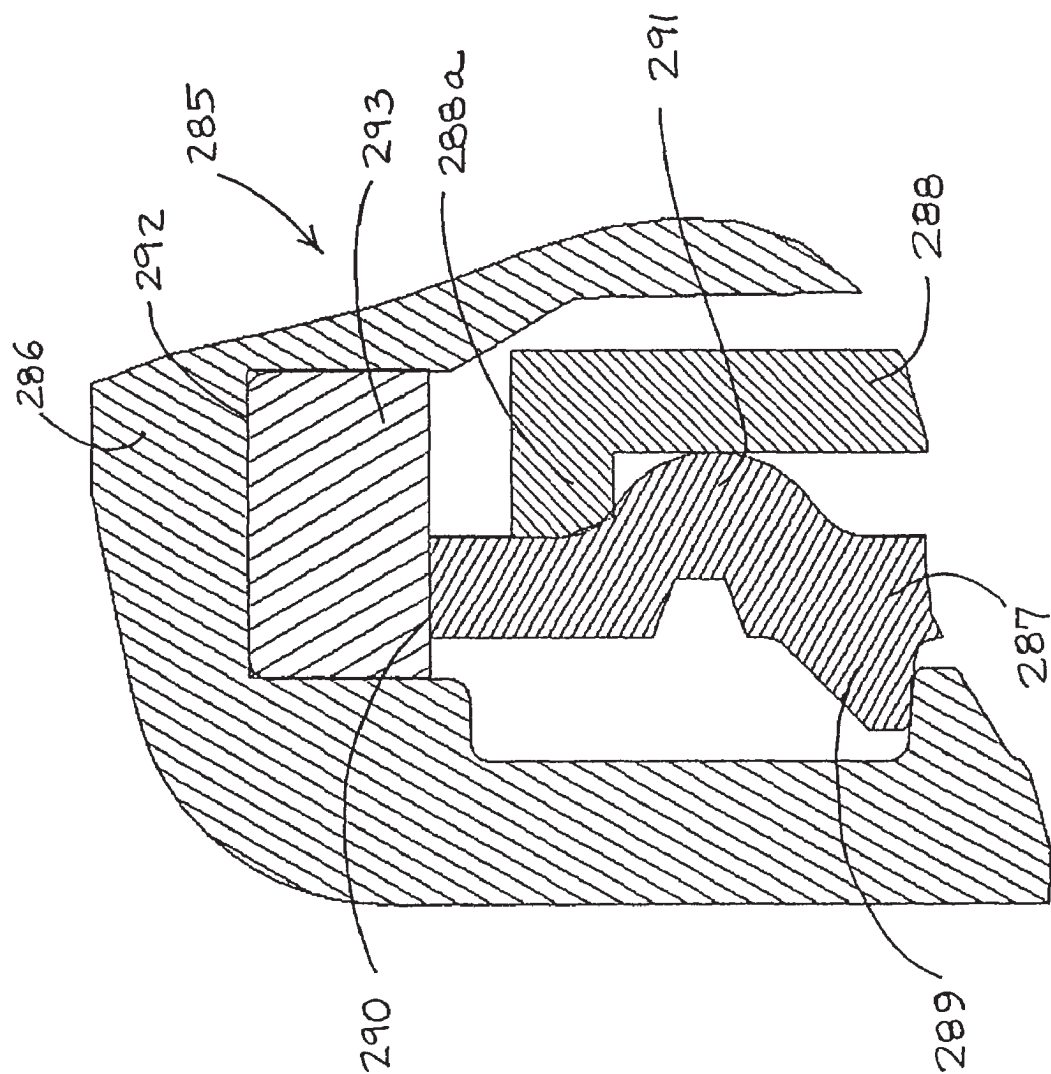


FIG. 25

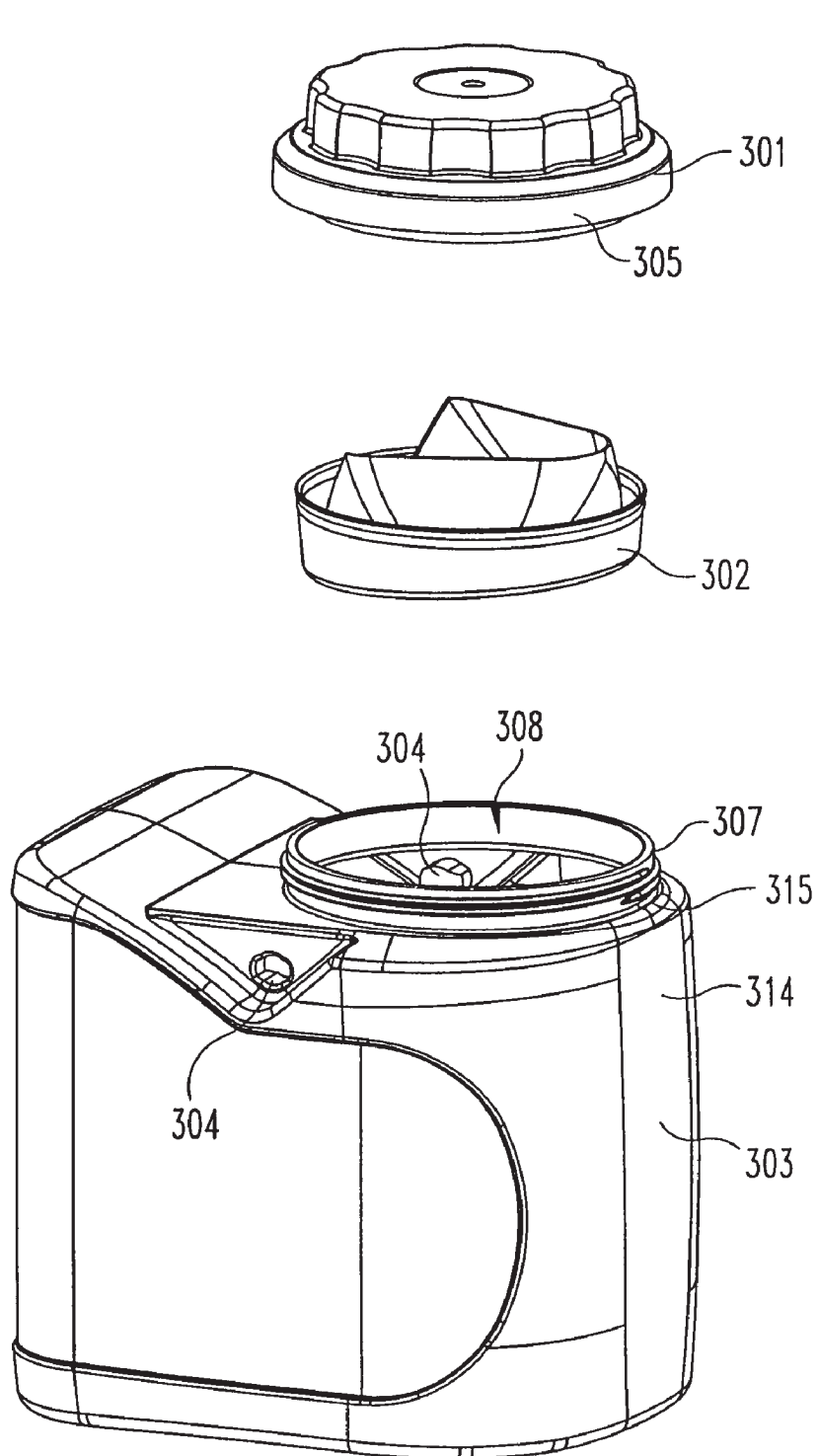


Fig. 26

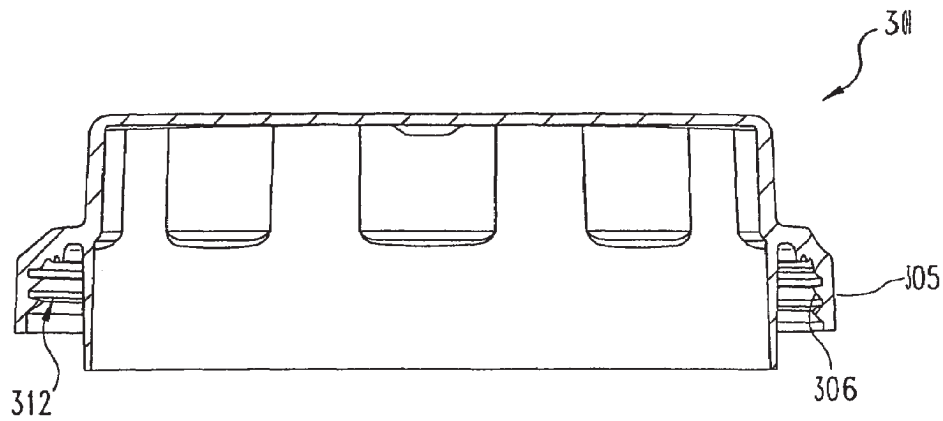


Fig. 27

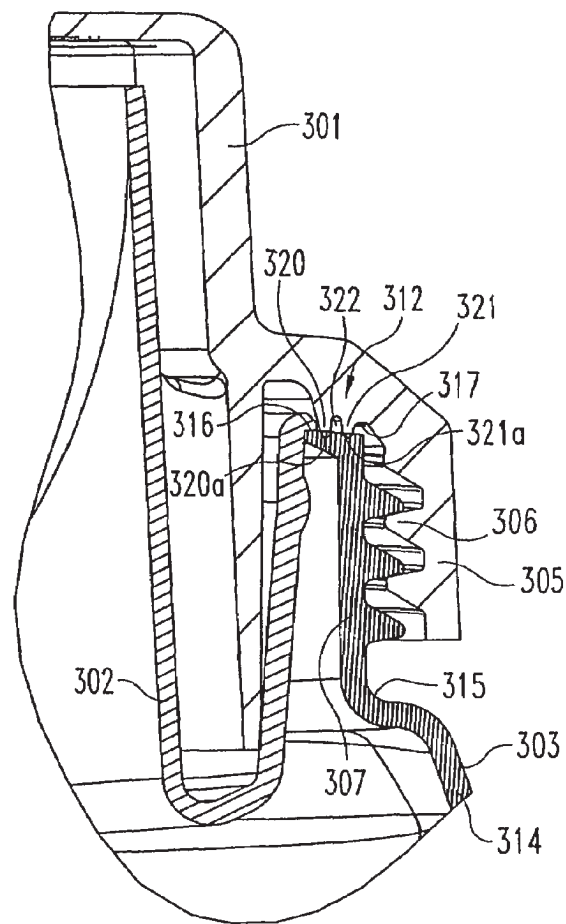


Fig. 28

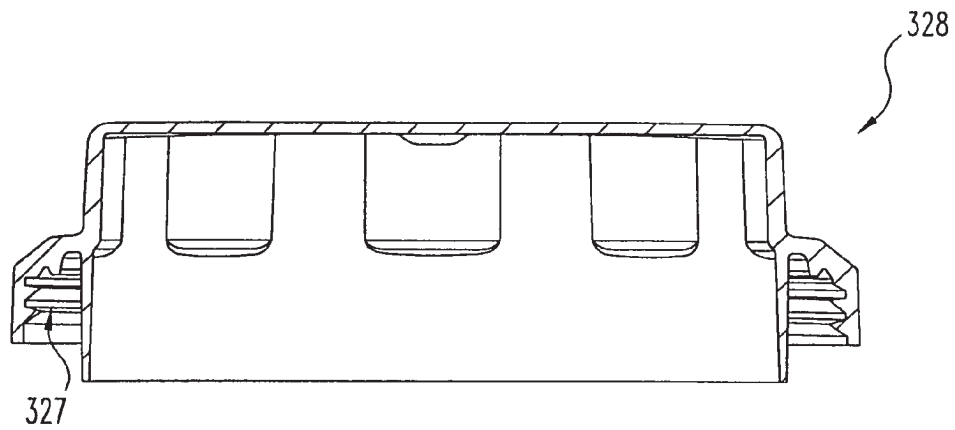


Fig. 29

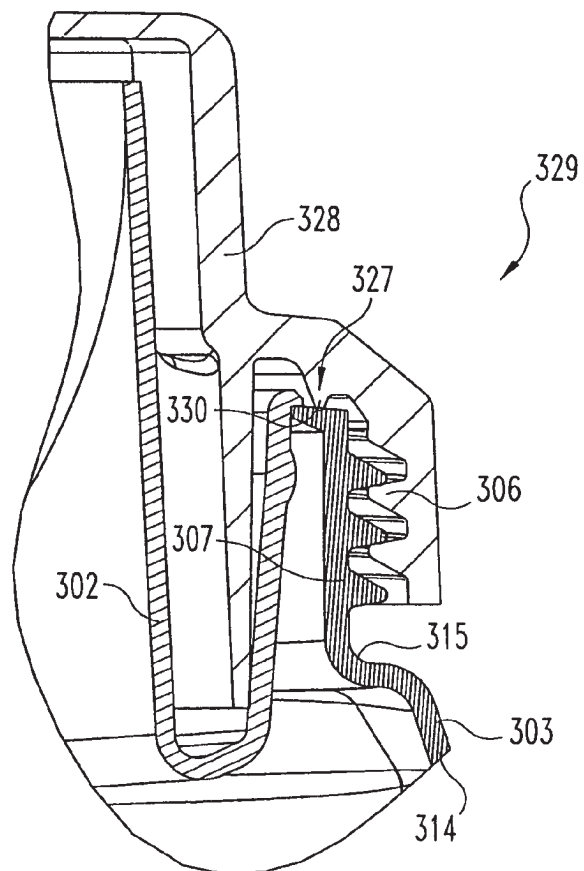


Fig. 30

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SEALING MECHANISMS FOR USE IN LIQUID-STORAGE CONTAINERS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present application is a continuation patent application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/365,910, file Feb. 13, 2003, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,997,354, entitled "Sealing Mechanisms for Use in Liquid-Storage Containers", which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/199,618, filed Jul. 19, 2002, entitled "Sealing Mechanisms for Use in Liquid-Storage Containers", now U.S. Pat. No. 6,843,389, which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates in general to the sealing of an interface between two (or more) members, such as between a container body and a container lid.

More specifically, the present invention relates to sealing mechanisms, structures, and techniques to be used in combination with liquid-storage containers which may be used to store (and dispense) various liquid substances such as paint, household cleaners, laundry products, and beverages, to name a few. The sealing mechanisms of the present invention may be formed portions of the actual members which define the interface to be sealed or may be separate sealing components or may be a combination of both.

In the design of liquid-storage containers, a first location to incorporate some type of sealing mechanism or structure is at the interface between the body of the container and the closing lid. Whether the lid snaps into or onto or in some fashion over the upper opening of the container neck portion, or whether the lid threads into or onto the neck, some type of sealing mechanism or gasket would likely improve the sealed integrity of that interface. Depending on the size and shape of the container and depending on the material to be placed in the container, the choice for the preferred style of sealing mechanism may change. Another factor in the selection or design of the preferred sealing mechanism or structure is the fabrication method for the container and any shape change or distortion that might occur. Yet another factor in the selection or design of the preferred sealing mechanisms or structure is the frequency of opening and closing the container.

When the liquid-storage container includes a pouring spout, additional sealing considerations come into play. How the spout is positioned in the container body will dictate to some extent what sealing mechanisms may be required and what type of sealing mechanisms or structures would be possible to employ and which types would be preferred.

The present invention focuses on various sealing mechanisms which offer a variety of design options for a variety of applications and interfaces. These various sealing mechanisms of the present invention have a general applicability for sealing between two (or more) members. However, these sealing mechanism are also described in the context of molded plastic paint containers with a screw-on lid and a pouring spout. As described, the sealing mechanisms of the present invention may be configured using shaped portions of the members which define the interface to be sealed, or may be provided by the use of separate sealing components, or may be a combination of both. Injection-molded as well as blow-molded containers are considered.

While the use of a pouring spout as part of a liquid-storage container is now commonly used for liquid laundry deter-

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gents and fabric softeners, the present invention is directed to how this broad concept can be adapted to other liquid-product containers, specifically containers for paint. While the preferred embodiment of the present invention is described in the context of a molded plastic, one-gallon paint container, the present invention is not size restrictive.

Currently used metal paint cans include a generally cylindrical can body with a circular upper opening configured with a generally U-shaped peripheral channel which captures the outer peripheral lip or protrusion of a circular lid. A wire-like metal handle is provided and hinged at opposite ends to the paint can body. Anyone who has done any painting using such a paint can is no doubt familiar with the many problems in the sense of wasted and splattered paint. The awkwardness of pouring paint from the can into a tray for a roller is also seen as a drawback with this particular design. Dipping a paint brush into the can and then using the can edge as a wiping edge also creates a mess and causes paint to be deposited in the annular U-shaped channel. As paint collects in this peripheral channel, resealing the lid becomes particularly messy as the captured paint is pushed out and may either splatter or run down the side of the paint can. Aside from the mess, the current metal paint can design results in wasted paint, not only from what drips, splatters, or runs down the side of the can, but also from not being able to tightly reseal the lid onto the can body. If the lid is not tightly resealed on the can body, the paint can dry out or skim over, causing obvious problems of continued use and often resulting in the leftover portion of paint being discarded.

By designing a paint container with a screw-on lid and a pouring spout with an excess paint drain-back feature, a number of the disadvantages with metal paint cans and the use of such cans can be eliminated. While plastic containers with spouts are now in use for laundry products, there are a number of reasons why such containers are not suitable for paint and why significant design changes must be invented to be able to create a suitable paint container with these structural features. For example, the size of the opening in the container body needs to be expanded for a paint container as compared to a liquid laundry detergent and, as such, the spout design must change. As this occurs, the sealing mechanisms or structures have to be considered. There is a desire to have a wiping edge for the paint brush as part of a suitable paint container, a factor which is not a consideration with a liquid laundry detergent. The attempt to incorporate this type of wiping edge as part of the pouring spout presents additional design challenges. The drain-back feature is also an important part of any new and improved paint container. Any paint which is wiped off of the brush or drips from the brush and any paint which might run down the lip of the pouring spout needs to have a path to reenter the body of the paint container.

A further consideration for a suitable paint container is the overall shape and balance, not only for handling and transporting convenience, including the possibility of stacking, but also for the practical consideration of being able to tint to a particular color by adding pigment to a base color, such as white. This tinting requires access to the interior of the paint container body and also requires some type of vibratory shaking of the paint container. This in turn focuses some attention on the design in terms of the size and shape of the container as well as the design of the sealing mechanisms which are employed as part of the paint container at those interfaces where leakage could conceivably occur.

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The present invention provides an improvement to the current designs in this field of art in a novel and unobvious manner.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A container for the storage and dispensing of a liquid according to one embodiment of the present invention comprises a blow-molded body including a neck portion having a first series of threads and defining an annular sealing surface, a pouring spout assembled into the body, and a closing lid including a second series of threads constructed and arranged to engage the first series of threads for securing the closing lid to the neck portion, the closing lid including a pair of annular sealing lips constructed and arranged to be compressed against the sealing surface in order to establish a sealed interface between the closing lid and the body.

One object of the present invention is to provide an improved container incorporating an improved sealing mechanism.

Related objects and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a right side elevational view of a paint container according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a rear elevational view of the FIG. 1 paint container.

FIG. 3 is a top plan view of the FIG. 1 paint container.

FIG. 4 is a left side elevational view, in full section, of the FIG. 1 paint container as viewed along line 4-4 in FIG. 2.

FIG. 5 is a partial, enlarged detail view, in full section, of the spout connection of the FIG. 1 paint container.

FIG. 6 is a right side elevational view of a paint container according to another embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 7 is a rear elevational view of the FIG. 6 paint container.

FIG. 8 is a top plan view of the FIG. 6 paint container.

FIG. 9 is a right side elevational view of a paint container according to another embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 10 is a rear elevational view of the FIG. 9 paint container.

FIG. 11 is a top plan view of the FIG. 9 paint container.

FIG. 12 is a left side elevational view, in full section, of the FIG. 9 paint container as viewed along line 12-12 in FIG. 10.

FIG. 13 is a perspective view of the spout of the FIG. 1 and FIG. 6 paint containers.

FIG. 14 is a partial, front elevational view of a pivot post comprising one portion of the FIG. 13 spout.

FIG. 15 is a partial perspective view of the handle of the FIG. 1 and FIG. 6 paint containers.

FIG. 16 is a partial, side elevational view, in full section, of a sealing mechanism for use with a container according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 17 is a partial, side elevational view, in full section, of a sealing mechanism for use with a container according to another embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 18 is a partial, side elevational view, in full section, of a sealing mechanism for use with a container according to another embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 19 is a partial, side elevational view, in full section, of a sealing mechanism for use with a container according to another embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 20 is a partial, side elevational view, in full section, of a sealing mechanism for use with a container according to another embodiment of the present invention.

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FIG. 21 is a partial, side elevational view, in full section, of a sealing mechanism for use with a container according to another embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 22 is a partial, side elevational view, in full section, of a sealing mechanism for use with a container according to another embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 23 is a partial, side elevational view, in full section, of a sealing mechanism for use with a container according to another embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 24 is a partial, side elevational view, in full section, of a sealing mechanism for use with a container according to another embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 25 is a partial, side elevational view, in full section, of a sealing mechanism for use with a container according to another embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 26 is a front elevational, exploded view of a paint container according to another embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 27 is a front elevational view, in full section, of a closing lid comprising one component of the FIG. 26 paint container.

FIG. 28 is a partial, enlarged, front elevational view of the FIG. 26 paint container, as assembled.

FIG. 29 is a front elevational view, in full section, of an alternate closing lid that is suitable for use as part of the FIG. 26 paint container.

FIG. 30 is a partial, enlarged, front elevational view of the FIG. 26 paint container, as assembled with the FIG. 29 closing lid.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

For the purposes of promoting an understanding of the principles of the invention, reference will now be made to the embodiments illustrated in the drawings and specific language will be used to describe the same. It will nevertheless be understood that no limitation of the scope of the invention is thereby intended, such alterations and further modifications in the illustrated device, and such further applications of the principles of the invention as illustrated therein being contemplated as would normally occur to one skilled in the art to which the invention relates.

The present invention relates to the design and construction of various sealing mechanisms and these are described in combination with various containers, preferably a molded plastic paint container with a pouring spout.

Referring to FIGS. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, there is illustrated a molded plastic paint container 20 according to a representative example for use with the preferred embodiments of the present invention.

Referring to FIGS. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, there is illustrated a molded plastic paint container 20 according to one embodiment of the present invention. Paint container 20 includes a contoured body 21, pouring spout 22, and threaded lid or cap 23. A hinged, bail-like handle 24 is attached to the pouring spout 22. In the illustrated embodiment, the spout 22 includes a lower threaded portion 25 which threads onto the neck portion 26 of body 21 and an upper threaded portion 27 to which the cap 23 is threaded.

FIGS. 6, 7, and 8 illustrate a second configuration for the contoured body 30 of paint container 31 and a second configuration for the cooperating cap 32. The spout and handle which are used in container 31 are identical to spout 22 and handle 24. The only difference between these first and second

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paint container designs resides in the shape and contouring of the container body and in the shape and contouring of the cooperating cap.

Referring to FIGS. 9, 10, 11, and 12, a third configuration for the contoured body 35 of paint container 36 is illustrated. Included is a third configuration for the cooperating cap, though in many respects cap 37 is similar to cap 32. The spout 22' which is used in container 36 is substantially identical to spout 22. However, due to the molded-in handle 35a as part of the contoured body 35, a separate handle 24, as might be hinged to the spout 22, is not included. Accordingly, the spout of the FIGS. 9-12 embodiment has been referenced as 22' to reflect the design change to omit the two pivot posts for handle 24. Other differences between the first, second and third paint container designs reside in the shape and contouring of the container body and the shape and contouring of the cooperating cap. Additionally, the third paint container design omits the hinged, bail-like handle 24 from spout 22' in exchange for the molded-in handle 35a. Additional details of spout 22 (and in part spout 22') are illustrated in FIGS. 13 and 14 and these drawings should be referred to for a more complete understanding of the paint container 20 of FIGS. 1-5. These spout details are also part of paint containers 31 and 36. Similarly, additional details of the handle 24 and its connection to the pivot posts of spout 22 are illustrated in FIGS. 14 and 15 and these drawings should be referred to for a more complete understanding of the paint container 20 of FIGS. 1-5. These handle details are also part of paint container 31.

With continued reference to FIGS. 1-5, paint container 20 is a molded plastic container with a contoured body 21 sized to hold approximately, but at least, one gallon of paint within the defined interior volume. The contoured body 21 includes a base 40, sidewall 41, and a series of external threads 42 on neck portion 26 which defines a circular opening 43. The circular opening 43 provides the means to initially fill the container 20 with paint. Thereafter, the spout 22, handle 24, and cap 23 are attached to securely close the circular opening 43 and thus securely close paint container 20. It is envisioned that the internally-threaded cap 23, via threaded outer wall 23a, will be threaded onto the upper threaded portion 27 of the spout and that the handle 24 will be attached to the spout, by means of two pivot posts 44, before threading the spout to the neck portion 26 by way of threads 42. In this way the cap, spout, and handle can be preassembled as a cap subassembly and attached as a single subassembly unit directly to the contoured body 21 as the lower threaded portion 25 of the spout 22 threads onto the neck portion 26 of the contoured body 21.

If the initial fill of paint is of the final color or tint which is desired, such that it is ready to be used as initially packaged, then the preassembled subassembly of the cap 23, spout 22, and handle 24, would not need to be removed from the contoured body 21 prior to first use. The purchaser/end user would then merely unscrew the cap 23 in order to gain access to the paint. However, if the initial fill of paint is a base color or tint which is going to be further colored or tinted by the addition of other pigment, then the store personnel would typically remove the preassembled subassembly of the cap 23, spout 22, and handle 24 in order to gain access to the paint in the body 21 in order to add the required pigment to create the selected color. After adding the pigment, the container body 21 is closed by (re)attaching the spout 22 to the neck portion 26, while the cap and handle remain assembled to the spout. The paint mixture is then blended by a vibratory shaking process. One advantage of attaching the transporting handle 24 directly to an exterior wall surface of the spout is to simplify the container body 21 design. The handle 24 in this

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location does not interfere with the equipment for the vibratory shaking process. Also, by raising the handle pivot location to an upper location as compared to the body of the container, the balance of the container when dispensing paint is improved.

In describing the interior volume of contoured body 21 as being designed to hold at least one gallon of paint, two important points need to be made. First, the details of the present invention are not size restrictive nor size limited. Whether considering the inventive features relating to the container structure or the inventive features relating to the various sealing mechanisms, the present invention details can be incorporated into virtually any size of container which can be used for virtually any type of product, most likely a liquid product. A one-gallon paint container was selected as the preferred embodiment to be used to describe the container structure and to describe the various sealing mechanisms disclosed herein and comprising part of the present invention. In this context, the purchaser/end user expects to receive at least one gallon of paint since that is how the package is marked and that is what is advertised. Secondly, some clearance space (air volume) is required inside of the closed container after it is initially filled with paint so that there will be some space left in order to permit movement of the paint during any vibratory mixing. Further, space needs to be provided so that if pigment is added, there is space to do so while still having some clearance space left so that the vibratory mixing can be performed in order to blend the added pigment into the base paint color.

Continuing with FIGS. 1-5, contoured body 21 includes three recessed portions 46a, 46b, and 47. The size, shape, and location of these three recessed portions are important in view of their described functions. Portions 46a and 46b are best illustrated in FIG. 2 and are seen as being virtually identical to each other and symmetrically positioned on opposite sides of contoured body centerline 48. The depth of each recessed portion 46a and 46b is approximately 1/2 inch at its deepest location, noting that there is a smooth and gradual transition by means of the rounded peripheral edges 49a and 49b which connect the interior of portions 46a and 46b, respectively, to the outer surface of sidewall 41.

The area of each recessed portion 46a and 46b, as well as the depth of each portion, is adequate for the fingers on one side and the thumb on the other side of the end user to be placed on opposite sides of land portion 50 for gripping of the contoured body via land portion 50, to assist in pouring paint from the body 21 by way of spout 22. The symmetrical design and the virtually identical configuration of portions 46a and 46b allows the paint container to be used in an equally convenient manner by both right-handed and left-handed end users.

It should also be noted that centerline 48 is the lateral centerline for handle 24 and for spout 22, especially the pouring lip portion of spout 22 which will be described in greater detail later. In this way, the container 20 can be lifted by the handle 24 by one hand and the body gripped by the other hand for tilting the body, with the cap 23 removed, in order to pour out paint by way of the pouring spout. Since the handle is attached to the spout as opposed to the container body, it moves the handle support line location closer to the pouring location and this yields better control and balance. If done correctly, the pouring paint is not able to contact any part of the handle and this lessens any spillage or mess. Further, there is an ergonomic balance and convenience to this method of use and container manipulation in view of the way the hands of the end user are positioned relative to the container body (land portion 50) and relative to the handle 24. This enables a more controlled dispensing of the paint, not only

due to the addition of the pouring spout, but also due to the design of the handle, the design of the contoured body, and the centerline positioning of these structural features. The recessed portions **46a** and **46b** provide the necessary clearance for the hand of the end user to be able to grip around land portion **50** as part of the overall handling and manipulation of the container **20**.

Recessed portion **47** is continuous from one side of contoured body **21** to a corresponding location on the opposite side such that portion **47** is substantially symmetrical, in size, shape and location, relative to centerline **48** and effectively located opposite to portions **46a** and **46b**. As will be noted from the edge views, the depth of portion **47** is relatively shallow, approximately $\frac{1}{16}$ inch in depth, and is generally uniform throughout and is separated from the outer surface of sidewall **41** by a substantially flat, lateral peripheral edge **53** which surrounds and helps to define recessed portion **47**. This recessed portion **47** is used to receive a product label. Whether the product label is applied by adhesive or some other technique, possibly a molded-in-place design to be described later, the label thickness is such that it fits within recessed portion **47** below the outer surface of sidewall **41**. In this way, by actually recessing the label in portion **47**, the outer peripheral edge **53** which surrounds the label protects and guards the peripheral edge of the label such that the label edge will not be caught or contacted in such a way that the label might either tear or begin to peel off from the container.

The base **40** is contoured with a recessed circular portion **55** which is sized, shaped, and positioned so as to be compatible with the size, shape and position of raised portion **56** of cap **23**. In this way, it is possible to safely stack one paint container **20** on top of another, similarly styled paint container **20**. Although the raised portion **56** is uniquely contoured for easier gripping of cap **23**, the outer peripheral shape is part cylindrical and is capable of being inserted into a cylindrical recess, so long as the cylindrical recess is slightly larger and slightly deeper. By sizing the recessed circular portion **55** in this manner, the outer portion **57** of base **40** that surrounds recessed circular portion **55** then actually rests on the radial collar **58** of cap **23** so as to give added support to the weight of the upper paint container. The stack of two or more paint containers **20** thus utilizes the interfit of portion **56** into portion **55** to help steady and stabilize the stacked combination.

The contoured body **21** extends above the recessed portions **46a**, **46b**, and **47** into a curved portion **61** extending around the periphery of the upper part of the contoured body **21**. The curved portion **61** then extends inwardly in a radial direction, at which point it joins neck portion **26**. The neck portion **26** is annular with a substantially cylindrical inner surface **62**, terminating at top edge **63** which is substantially flat but which includes a slight unevenness and slight surface irregularities due to the molding process. Top edge **63** defines circular opening **43**. The exterior of the neck portion **26** is externally threaded with threads **42**. With added reference to FIG. 3, the overall outer shape of body **21** includes four sides for sidewall **41** and the rounded "corners" **64a-64d** between adjacent sides **65a-65d**. This top plan view also helps to illustrate the location of land portion **50** as well as the contoured and tapered sides of the land portion **50** which helps (ergonomically) with the comfort of the grip by the hand of the user.

With continued reference to FIG. 3, it will be seen that the interior region of the top surface of cap **23** is recessed with an annular channel **68** which surrounds a gripping island **69** which is shaped with a series of three finger recesses **70** used to receive the first three fingers of the end user's hand for

opening and closing the paint container by unscrewing (opening) the cap and by screwing the cap back in place in order to close the container. Since container **20** is designed for paint and since this suggests the value of a large opening in the neck portion, i.e., circular opening **43**, the ergonomics of opening and closing the container by removing and reapplying the cap must be factored into the final design. Recognizing that the outside diameter size of cap **23** is approximately $6\frac{3}{16}$ inches, it is awkward to try and unscrew the cap from a tightly closed container with only one hand. Using two hands to grip a larger diameter cap precludes the ability to also hold the container body stationary with the other hand. The awkwardness of trying to single-handedly manipulate a larger diameter cap exists whether the cap is being removed or is being reapplied. In order to help solve this problem, as provided by this embodiment of the present invention, cap **23** is contoured with a smaller gripping portion in the form of gripping island **69**. Additionally, land portion **50** is provided and is able to be held with one hand when unscrewing the cap (and reapplying it) in order to hold the contoured body **21** relatively stationary. The other hand grasps gripping island **69** and uses finger recesses **70** to manipulate the cap **23**.

Although the pouring spout **22** will be described in greater detail later, a few brief remarks are appropriate here in the context of generally describing paint container **20**. The pouring spout **22** includes an annular sidewall **73** which is slightly tapered in its lower portion, leading away from annular collar **74** in a downward axial direction toward lower edge **75**. The exterior surface of sidewall **73** above collar **74** provides the upper threaded portion **27**. The outer annular wall **76**, depending from the radial wall **74a** of collar **74**, is internally threaded and provides the lower threaded portion **25**. The pouring spout includes an interior opening **77**, a wiping edge **78**, and a brush receptacle **79** which defines a series of apertures in bottom wall **80** for the drain-back of surplus paint into the interior volume **81** of the contoured body **21**. The pouring lip **82** is positioned opposite to the brush receptacle **79** and extends in an upwardly direction as illustrated in FIG. 4.

By sizing the annular sidewall **73** with a gradual taper and with an interference fit relative to inner surface **62** at an upper location adjacent collar **74**, a sealed interface by means of this interference fit can be created between spout **22** and neck portion **26** of the contoured body. This interference fit also helps secure the pouring spout **22** within the neck portion **26** of container **21**. By having an interference fit, there is less tendency for the spout to back off of or out of the threaded engagement to the neck portion **26**. The threading of the spout onto the neck portion **26** begins with what can best be described as interference free fit due to the taper adjacent lower edge **75**. However, as the threaded advancement continues, an interference fit gradually begins to occur. The threading of the spout onto the neck portion continues until the top edge of the neck portion seats against the underside surface of the radial wall **74a**. As the threaded advancement occurs, the degree of interference between sidewall **73** and inner surface **62** progressively becomes tighter and tighter in an effort to try and achieve or facilitate achieving a sealed interface at that location between the two members. This interference fit is also intended to help hold the spout **22** in position in the container body **21** while cap **23** is removed and reapplied.

Sealing of the interface between the spout **22** and neck portion **26** can be provided by the interference fit between sidewall **73** and inner surface **62**, or at the interface between the radial wall **74a** of collar **74** and top edge **63** of the neck portion, or at both locations. While the achievement of suitable sealing can be attempted by merely surface-to-surface

contact, the degree of tightness of the fit and the force required for tightly screwing the spout onto the neck, can be a consideration. To lessen the reliance on only the surface-to-surface contact between these two members, one or more sealing mechanisms can be incorporated into the design of paint container 20. Since many of the sealing mechanisms or structures disclosed herein as part of the present invention can be used in cooperation with other types of containers and enclosures, these sealing structures are disclosed in a more generic form relative to the two (or more) corresponding members which define the interface to be sealed. More specifically, the structural members which are disclosed generically represent any two (or more) structural members which have an interface where some degree of sealing is desired. In the context of the preferred paint container embodiments of the present invention, one interface for sealing is between the spout and the contoured body. Another interface to be sealed is between the spout and the cap. It would also be possible to consider a secondary seal between the cap 23 and the collar 74 of the spout 22, as a back up if the primary spout-to-cap sealed interface would be prone to exhibit leakage. While the preferred embodiments of the sealing mechanisms of the present invention utilize formed portions of the members which define the interface to be sealed, other techniques can be used, such as the use of separate sealing components or a combination of formed portions and separate components.

As should be understood, paint container 20 is generally symmetrical about centerline 48 and thus includes the associated component parts. The spout 22 includes a pouring lip 82 which is centered on centerline 48, while the handle 24, land portion 50, and recessed portion 49 are also entered in centerline 48. The centerline alignment of the various portions and components of paint containers 20, 31, and 36 is important for several reasons. From the standpoint of stacking and arranging the paint containers on a store shelf, it is preferable to have some uniformity as to the location or orientation of handle 24 and preferably to have it centered on the sides of the container so that the product label in the front is unobstructed. The threading of the spout is also an important consideration as a way to properly orient the spout relative to the corresponding container body with a minimum of handling machinery complexity.

When lifting and tilting the paint container in order to pour out an amount of paint, the centerline of the pouring lip 82 is preferably coincident with the centerline of handle 24 and with the centerline of land portion 50 or alternatively the molded-in handle 35a. While the unitary construction of spout 22 (or spout 22') can guarantee pouring lip 82 and handle 24 alignment, their centerline alignment to land portion 50 or handle 35a depends on the position of the spout 22 within the container body 21. If a spout is merely inserted into a container neck portion without any specific detents, indentations, keys, or some other indexing means to guarantee proper alignment, then the handling machinery which is used to deliver the various components to the installation location and the machinery used to actually install one component into the other must be arranged in some manner so as to either recognize and then orient the components in the proper alignment prior to assembly or deliver the components to the assembly location in the properly aligned orientation.

In contrast, the present invention uses the threaded engagement between the spout 22 and neck portion 26 as well as the configuration of the threads on the neck portion and/or the configuration of the threads on the spout in order to guarantee the desired centerline alignment. The circumferential starting location for the threaded engagement can be controlled based on the mold design for the container neck portion and/or

based on the mold design for the spout. The thread pitch and thread length can also be controlled and effectively these can be used to control the number of turns or revolutions of the spout 22 as it threads onto the neck portion 26. A fixed position stop can also be used as part of one or both sets of threads to precisely control where the threading of the spout onto the neck portion will stop. Given the starting location of threaded engagement, the number of turns or revolutions or fractions thereof, and the precise stopping location, it is possible to guarantee centerline alignment between the pouring lip 82 and land portion 50. In practical terms, with any type of automated filling and capping procedure, the container body will be provided in an upright orientation with the cap, spout, and handle removed. Paint is then added to the interior volume and the container body moves down the assembly line to the location where the cap, spout, and handle subassembly will be assembled. Regardless of how the container body might be turned at the point where the spout is to be assembled and to some extent regardless of how the spout might be rotated or turned when it is lowered into engagement with the neck portion, threaded engagement will begin at a precise location and the number of turns or portions thereof prior to stopping the threaded engagement will enable the spout to be assembled to the neck portion such that the centerline of the pouring lip 82 is coincident with the centerline of land portion 50 or handle 35a.

While paint container 20 and the other two paint container embodiments disclosed herein are not illustrated with any specific sealing mechanisms or structures, this was done to create a more generic container structure. It should be understood that one or more of those sealing mechanism embodiments disclosed herein can be used and preferably will be used as part of container 20 when container 20 is used for a liquid such as paint. The disclosed sealing mechanisms of the present invention can also be used as part of other container designs, even those that would not be directed to the storing and dispensing of paint. The structure of container 20 or either of the other two embodiments (containers 31 and 36) can be used for storing and dispensing other product, such as fine granular material which is pourable. For such materials, no further sealing would be required beyond what is illustrated for the container embodiments of FIGS. 1-2. The various sealing mechanisms of the present invention and how they can be adapted into paint container 20, into the other two paint container embodiments, or into other container designs will be described herein.

With references to FIGS. 6, 7, and 8, a second embodiment for a paint container 31 is illustrated. To begin, it should be understood that the same style of pouring spout 22 and handle 24 are used in this embodiment (container 31) and their attachment or engagement with the cap 32 and neck portion 26 are the same as that illustrated as part of paint container 20. The interior size and shape of the neck portion 26 of the FIGS. 6-8 container embodiment is substantially the same as the neck portion 26 of the FIGS. 1-5 container embodiment. As such, with the identical spout being used, the threaded engagement is the same and the surface-to-surface interference fit on the interior of the neck portion is the same.

The overall design of cap 32 is different from the overall design of cap 23, but the size, shape and arrangement of the interior of threaded outer wall 32a of cap 32 is virtually identical to the size, shape and arrangement of the interior of threaded outer wall 23a of cap 23. As such, the threaded engagement between the internal threads on the cap 32 and the upper threaded portion 27 on the spout 22 is virtually the same in paint containers 20 and 31. The differences between paint container 20 and paint container 31 are found in the

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shaping and contouring of contoured body 30 and in the shaping and contouring of the exterior of cap 32.

Referring first to contoured body 30, it includes recessed portion 88a, 88b, and 89. Portions 88a and 88b are similarly configured as hand gripping recesses on opposite sides of land portion 90 and are symmetrically arranged relative to centerline 91. The peripheral edges 92a and 92b of each recessed portion 88a and 88b, respectively, are smoothly contoured and curved as they extend from the base or bottom of each recessed portion upwardly and outwardly to outer surface 93 of contoured body 30.

Land portion 90, which is centered in centerline 91, is contoured and tapered along its (longitudinal) sides for easy gripping by the hand of the user. While the actual shapes of recessed portions 88a, 88b, and 89 are different from portions 46a, 46b, and 47, they are intended to function and perform in virtually the same manner. This includes recessed portion 89 which is intended to receive a product label. The same is true for land portion 90 as compared to land portion 50. While the corresponding shapes of these two land portions are slightly different, albeit in fairly minor ways, these two land portions 90 and 50 are intended to function and perform in virtually the same manner.

With regard to cap 32, it includes a generally cylindrical outer wall 32a which defines a series of equally spaced, recessed pockets 95 which serve as finger indents to facilitate gripping of cap 32 by the hand of the user. The raised upper portion 96 of cap 32 is generally cylindrical and cooperates with a recessed circular portion (not illustrated) in base 97 so as to enable to one (or more) paint containers 31 to be stacked by placing portion 96 of one container into portion 97 of another container.

The upper surface of the raised upper portion 96 is contoured with two recessed segment-shaped pockets 100 and 101 which are separated by dividing ridge 102. The peripheral edges 103 of each pocket 101, 102 are smoothly contoured and curved as they extend from the bottom of each pocket to the outer surface of portion 96. These two recessed pockets 100 and 101 in cooperation with the dividing ridge 102 enable the cap 32 to be grasped in an ergonomically-convenient manner so as to more easily remove the cap 32 from the spout 22 in order to open container 31 and also to more easily reapply cap 32 to spout 22 to close container 31.

With reference to FIGS. 9, 10, 11 and 12, a third embodiment for a paint container 36 is illustrated. To begin, it should be understood that virtually the same style of pouring spout 22' is used in this embodiment (container 36) and its engagement with the cap 37 and with neck portion 26 is basically the same as that illustrated for spout 22 as part of paint containers 20 and 31. The one difference between spout 22' and 22 is the elimination of pivot posts 44 from spout 22'. With regard to paint container 36, a hinged, bail-like handle is not used and thus there is no need for the handle pivot posts 44 as part of the annular collar 106. While this third preferred embodiment for a paint container includes a molded-in handle 35a, and thus the decision to not include a separate hinged, bail-like handle 24, spout 22' could be replaced by spout 22 if such a handle might be desired as part of the overall container 36 design. Closing cap 37 of container 36 is virtually identical to closing cap 32 of container 31.

The interior size and shape of the neck portion 26 of the FIGS. 9-12 paint container embodiment is substantially the same as the neck portion 26 of the FIGS. 1-5 and FIGS. 6-8 embodiments. As such, with virtually the identical spout being used, the threaded engagement between the cap 37 and spout 22' is the same as in the prior two embodiments using spout 22. Likewise, the threaded engagement between the

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spout 22' and container body 35 is the same as in the prior two embodiments. Further, the surface-to-surface interference fit on the interior between the neck portion 26 and spout inner sidewall 73 is the same as in the prior two embodiments.

As noted, the overall design of cap 37 is virtually identical to the design of cap 32. The same recessed pockets 95 are included as part of cap 37 as well as the two recessed segment-shaped pockets 100 and 101 and dividing ridge 102. The contouring of the pockets 100 and 101 is the same between cap 37 and cap 32, including the same contoured peripheral edges 103.

In addition to the removal of handle 24 from the FIGS. 9-12 embodiment of paint container 36, the most noticeable change with respect to either of the other two embodiments is the replacement of the recessed portions 46a, 46b, 88a, and 88b and replacement of the land portions 50 and 90, by the molded-in handle 35a. Handle 35a is centered on parting centerline 108 and is bounded on opposite sides by clearance spaces 109a and 109b. These clearance spaces help to provide hand clearance for the hand of the user to be able to reach around and fully grasp handle 35a, allowing the fingers to extend into aperture 110. The handle 35a clearance spaces 109a and 109b and aperture 110 are smoothly shaped and contoured for ergonomic comfort and convenience. In view of the fact that this handle 35a is intended to be used to lift the filled paint container 36 and to pour out paint by way of spout 22', the circumferential size of handle 35a is ergonomically important, as is the contoured shape, including ridge 107, in order to handle the weight and to dispense paint smoothly and in a controlled fashion.

The single recessed portion of the prior two embodiments which is designed to receive a product label has been replaced with two recessed portions 111a and 111b located symmetrically on opposite sides of centerline 108. The addition of handle 35a and its configuration, as part of contoured body 35, requires that for the most cost effective mold design, the mold parting line coincides with centerline 108. With this parting line, any attempt to incorporate a molded-in label would not be possible with a single, wrap-around, recessed portion for the product label, as shown in the first two embodiments, noting portions 47 and 89. In those embodiments using the referenced centerline (48 and 91, respectively) as the mold parting line would mean that the mold parting line would pass through the center of the label. Accordingly, this third embodiment for paint container 36 discloses another feature of the present invention. Specifically, this embodiment discloses the concept and structure of two separate recessed portions for product labeling which portions are on opposite sides of the mold parting line such that molded-in-place labels can be used.

The base 114 of contoured body 35 is contoured with a recessed pocket 115 which is sized and shaped to receive the raised upper portion 116 of cap 37 for achieving the stackable capability for paint container 36. The configuration of base 114 including pocket 115 and the configuration of upper portion 116 are such that the stacking of paint container 36 can be achieved in basically the same manner as achieved for the first two paint container embodiments.

Referring to FIGS. 14 and 15, the details of handle 24 and its connection to spout 22 are illustrated. In the context of handle 24 and its attachment to spout 22, FIGS. 13 and 14 illustrate the details of the pair of oppositely-disposed pivot posts 44. In the context of the description of these components, it should be understood that each of the basic structural elements that are part of each paint container described herein, including paint containers 20, 31, and 36, are molded out of plastic as unitary members. This means that each con-

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toured body, each spout, each cap, and each separate handle, is a unitary, molded plastic member. It is intended that the selected materials will be recyclable materials. Suitable materials for the contoured body include various grades of polyethylene, ranging from medium to high-density resins. Suitable materials for the spout and cap include a high-density, injection-molding grade, polyethylene resin. Suitable materials for the handle include a low to medium density polyethylene resin.

Returning to the description of the handle **24** and pivot posts **44**, it will be seen that each pivot post **44** includes an enlarged cylindrical head **125** and a concentric, reduced diameter stem **126** integrally connecting the head **125** to the outer cylindrical surface of spout **22**. The cooperating handle **24** includes a wider gripping portion **127** which connects to the oppositely-disposed, open sockets **128** by more narrow, tapered portions **129**. Each socket **128** is substantially cylindrical with a pivot post entry opening **130** and a part-cylindrical groove **131**. The axial height or width of groove **131** in each socket **128** is sized and arranged to receive the enlarged cylindrical head **125** of the corresponding pivot post **44**.

In order to initially attach handle **24** to spout **22**, the preferred approach is to do so with the spout separated from the remainder of the corresponding paint container. By orienting the body of handle **24** below the spout, the handle **24** is able to snap onto the two pivot posts **44** by first positioning the sockets above the posts such that each opening **130** is aligned with its corresponding pivot post **44**. Then, by pulling the handle down in the direction of the posts, the heads **125** are able to slide into the corresponding opening **130** and from there into the corresponding groove **131**. The handle body is then pivoted upwardly to a generally horizontal orientation. When the spout is attached to the container body, the handle is able to rest in this horizontal orientation by actually resting on a portion of the container body. However, the handle is able to freely pivot on pivot posts **44** from its horizontal, stowed condition to a vertical, dispensing condition. In order to separate handle **24** from the pivot posts **44**, the handle has to be moved so that the enlarged cylindrical head **125** of each pivot post can slide out of the receiving groove **131**.

Referring to FIGS. **13** and **14**, the details of spout **22** are illustrated. Included as part of spout **22** are a pouring lip **82**, a brush-wiping edge **78**, a brush-holding receptacle **79**, and drain-back apertures in bottom wall **80**. The pouring lip **82** and brush-wiping edge **78** cooperate to define interior opening **77**. It should be understood that spout **22** is identical to spout **22'** except for the elimination of pivot posts **44** from spout **22'**. Spout **22** has a substantially annular form for ease of insertion into neck portion **26** and for the described interference fit (around the entire circumference) due to the annular form of neck portion **26**. The interior opening **77** is sized to receive a paint brush for dipping the brush into the paint contained within the interior volume **81**. As the paint brush is withdrawn, it can be rubbed across wiping edge **78** in order to wipe the excess paint from the brush bristles. The brush-wiping edge **78** is actually part of blade **140** which is inclined with edge **78** being the lower point. Blade **140** is of a unitary construction with the inner surface of spout **22** and separates the interior opening **77** from the brush-holding receptacle **79**.

The pouring lip **82** includes a contoured center portion **82a** in order to help center the dispensing flow of paint and control the size and location of the existing stream of paint. Bottom wall **80** is substantially flat and defines three drain-back apertures **141**. These apertures **141** allow any paint that drips or runs off of the paint brush when placed or stored in the receptacle **79** to return to the interior volume **81** of the container body. As the brush is wiped across edge **78** so as to

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remove excess paint, it is anticipated that some excess paint will actually collect on the surface of blade **140**. Due to the inclined nature of blade **140** which is directed toward interior opening **77**, any excess paint that collects on the surface of blade **140** is able to run down and back into the interior volume **81** by way of interior opening **77**. If the volume of paint being collected on blade **140** is such that some of the paint actually cascades over the opposite edge of blade **140** into receptacle **79**, this excess paint is also able to return to the interior volume **81** by way of drain-back apertures **141**. By locating posts **44** in a location which is axially close to pouring lip **82** and in particular portion **82a**, an improved balance for container **20** is achieved and this helps to smoothly dispense paint from container **20** by tilting and pouring.

As explained herein, it is contemplated, as part of the present invention, that one or more sealing mechanisms or structures will be arranged as part of paint containers **20**, **31**, and **36**. Since these sealing mechanisms according to the present invention have a broad application to other types of containers and for sealing an interface between two or more members, they are described in a more generic manner. In the context of the present invention, the locations within paint containers **20**, **31**, and **36** where one or more of the sealing mechanisms can be utilized are identified. Any minor details of exactly how to configure the two (or more) cooperating sealing portions of the two (or more) interface members in the context of the three paint container embodiments should be clear to one of ordinary skill in the art.

Continuing with the description of the various sealing structures or mechanisms of the present invention, reference will be made to FIGS. **16-25**.

Referring first to FIG. **16**, there is illustrated sealing mechanism **160** which includes an annular container neck finish **161** fabricated from a mono block tool design with buttress threads **162** and squared, annular land area **163** at the upper surface. An integrated spout **164** includes an outer radial projection **165** which rests on the inside edge of the land area **163**. The upper land portion **166** of the spout is angled to allow minimal clearance between the spout outer surfaces of upper land portions **166** and **168** and the inside cap surfaces **169** and **170**, respectively. The cap **175** includes an outer collar **176** with an angled portion **176a** which, when tightened onto a container (via surface **169**), contacts the outer, upper edge **177** of the upper land area **163** with surface-to-surface interference. Sealing is achieved by deforming the upper edge **177** of land area **163** at an angle of between approximately 15 and 85 degrees. This may be accomplished either with a single angled surface or with a compound angled surface. As deformation continues to increase following multiple uses, the spout **164** is compressed onto the upper, annular land area **163** of the container, thereby providing additional sealing. The spout **164** also serves to provide structural support for the corresponding container by preventing collapse of the neck as the cap is tightened. The spout is retained in the container by a small raised rib **178**, which may preferably be either solid or segmented, located on the outer surface **179** of wall **180** below the radial projection **165**. The combination of materials between cap **175** and container neck **161** is such that one component has a lower modulus of elasticity relative to the other. This difference permits material deformation more readily of the component with the lower modulus in order to achieve sealing.

Referring to FIG. **17**, sealing mechanism **190** is illustrated. Sealing mechanism **190**, which includes cap **189**, spout **192**, and annular container neck **193**, is similar in certain respects to sealing mechanism **160**. One difference between these two designs relates to the fact that the radial lip **191** of the spout

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192 is located below the upper surface 196 of the container neck 193 and is retained by a raised rib 194 formed by a choker ring from the mono block tool design. Sealing is achieved by deforming the upper outer edge 195 at an angle of between approximately 15 and 85 degrees, either with a single angled surface as part of cap 189 or with a compound angled surface. By locating the spout 192 (including lip 191) below the upper surface 196 of the container neck 193, radial deformation of the container neck is permitted and provides a means of conforming to inconsistent surfaces and ovality.

Referring to FIG. 18, there is illustrated a sealing mechanism 200 which has similarity to sealing mechanism 190. Sealing mechanism 200 includes cap 189, spout 192, and annular container neck 201. Container neck 201 is designed with an annular undercut groove 202 formed into the outer surface 203 of the container neck finish 201. The undercut groove 202 forms a more conforming and flexible sealing lip 204 to the angled surface 205 of the cap 189. This sealing mechanism 200 would preferably require the spout 192 to be located below the upper surface of the container neck finish 201.

Referring to FIG. 19, there is illustrated sealing mechanism 210 which is similar to what is illustrated in FIG. 18 for sealing mechanism 200. Sealing mechanism 210 includes a cap 211 with an angled groove 212 therein which is provided to locate and form multiple sealing edges with container neck 214. Sealing is achieved by wedging the upper lip portion 213 of the container neck 214 into a groove 212 which is located generally at the same diameter as that of container neck 214. The groove 212 is designed with angled side walls 215 and 216, allowing optimal engagement and compression to the lip portion 213 of container neck 214 within the desired rotation and axial travel of caps 211. The spout 217 has a design which is substantially the same as spout 192.

Referring to FIG. 20, there is illustrated sealing mechanism 220 which includes closing cap 221, annular container neck 222, and spout 223. Sealing mechanism 220 further includes a flexible, annular lip 224 (or alternatively a plurality of annular lips) as part of cap 221. The flexible lip 224 is oriented in a slanting, inward direction and is constructed and arranged so as to sealingly contact the upper land surface 225 of the container neck 222. The flexible lip 224 is constructed and arranged to deform as the cap 221 is tightened onto the container neck, forming a concentrated sealing force applied onto the upper land surface 225.

Referring to FIG. 21, there is illustrated sealing mechanism 230 which includes closing cap 231, annular container neck 232, and spout 233. The uniform container neck finish 232 is formed from a mono block tool design with buttress threads 234 and squared, annular land area 235 at the upper surface. The integrated spout 233 is constructed and arranged to cover the upper surface of land area 235 of the container neck 232. Cap 231 includes an inner angled surface 237a on annular protrusion 237 which, when tightened onto a container, creates contact with the inner edge 236 of the spout. Sealing is achieved by means of short flat land seals 238 and 239 which make contact with the upper surface 240 of the spout 233. The cap has an inner angled surface 237a which deforms the inner edge 236 of the spout and container to form a complying sealing surface at that interface. Spout 233 is preferably made from a material having a lower modulus of elasticity than that of annular protrusion 237 so as to bias sealing deflection into the spout. There are though cases when annular protrusion 237 is preferred to be biased and create sealing through deformation using a lower modulus material than that of spout 233.

Referring to FIG. 22, there is illustrated sealing mechanism 244 which includes closing cap 245, annular container neck

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246, and spout 247. Sealing mechanism 244, which has a number of similarities to sealing mechanism 230, further includes a flexible, annular member 248 which acts as a secondary seal and replaces the inner annular protrusion 237. Container neck 246 includes a uniform container neck finish fabricated from a mono block tool design with buttress threads 249 and squared land area 250 at the upper surface. Spout 247 is constructed and arranged to cover the upper surface of the container neck. The flexible member 248 protrudes downward from the deck of the cap which, when tightened onto a container, yields contact with the inner surface 251 of the spout. Sealing is achieved by means of short, flat land seals 252 and 253 which make contact with the upper surface 254 of the spout and from the flexible member 248 in contact with the spout. An additional, axially protruding, annular member 255 is located radially inwardly of the flexible member 248 and extends axially below the flexible member 248. This additional member 255 provides protection (preventing damage) for the flexible member 248 during manufacturing, handling, and shipping and assembly. Means for preventing spout rotation may be employed with this sealing mechanism design. Member 255 also provides a product baffle or shield that limits direct product influence when being shaken vigorously.

Referring to FIG. 23, there is illustrated sealing mechanism 260 which includes closing cap 261, annular container neck 262, and spout 263. The container neck 262 of sealing mechanism 260 includes a uniform neck finish fabricated from a mono block tool design with buttress threads 264 and squared, land area 265 at the upper surface. The spout 263 is constructed and arranged to cover the upper land area 265 of the container neck 262. The cap 261 extends over and around spout 263 and thus the outer radial collar 266 of the spout is sandwiched between the neck 262 and cap 261. Sealing is achieved by means of tapered and projecting land seals 267 and 268 which are in the form of "V"-beads and which make contact with the land area 265 of the spout. The cap 261 will also seal to the spout by means of flat, land seal 270. The preferred embodiment is to have the "V"-beads 267 and 268 of a softer material so as to achieve deformation and provide sealing relative to container neck 262.

Referring to FIG. 24, there is illustrated sealing mechanism 275 which includes closing cap 276, annular container neck 277, and spout 278. Sealing mechanism 275 is similar to sealing mechanism 260 with the lone exception of including flexible member 279 protruding downwardly from the deck of cap 276. Member 279 is used to establish a sealed interface against the inner surface 280 of spout 278. As the cap is tightened onto the neck 277 of the container, the size, shape and location of member 279 relative to the spout causes member 279 to deflect due to the interference which is experienced and this in turn creates a contact seal.

Referring to FIG. 25, there is illustrated sealing mechanism 285 which includes closing cap 286, annular container neck 287, and spout 288. The container neck 287 includes a uniform bottle neck finish fabricated from a mono block tool design with buttress threads 289 and squared land area 280 at the upper surface. The spout 288 includes a radial lip 288a which is located below the upper surface 290 of the container neck and is retained by raised rib 291 formed by a choker ring from the mono block tool design. The upper inside surface of the cap includes (and defines) an annular groove 292 which receives a flexible, annular, square-cut gasket 293. Alternatively the gasket 293 shape could be round in lateral section or O-ring shaped. Sealing is achieved by means of compressing the gasket 293 against the upper surface 290 of the container neck in order to form a complying sealing surface at reduced

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torque amounts over other sealing means. The key to effective sealing is to select a gasket material which is compliant relative to sealing surface 290.

The sealing mechanisms disclosed as part of the present invention (see FIGS. 16-25) are illustrated, in one general application, as they can be used for sealing an interface or interfaces between two or more structural members. As should be understood, the structural members selected as one means to describe the specifics of each sealing mechanism include a container body with a threaded neck portion, a pouring spout inserted into the neck portion, and a removable closing cap which is threadably attachable to the container neck portion. However, one or more of the disclosed sealing mechanisms can also be used as part of other container configurations, including the paint container embodiments of FIGS. 1-15, as one example of other compatible container configurations which are suitable to be configured with one or more of the disclosed sealing mechanisms.

As one example of how one or more of the sealing mechanisms disclosed herein can be adapted for use with one of the disclosed paint container embodiments, consider the sealing mechanism 210 of FIG. 19. If we consider only the cap 211 and the container neck 214, these two structural members have a wedge-type seal between lip portion 213 and groove 212. This type of sealing mechanism could be used in paint container 20 by shaping cap 23 with groove 212 and spout 22 with lip portion 213. In addition, or alternatively, this type of sealing mechanism could be used in paint container 20 by shaping spout 22 with groove 212 and the container neck portion 26 with lip portion 213.

The sealing mechanism 220 of FIG. 20 can also be adapted for use with paint container 20. In this arrangement, one location for sealing is between the cap 23 and the upper edge (land area) of spout 22. In order to incorporate the design principles of sealing mechanism 220, the cap 23 needs to be shaped so as to include flexible lip 224. In addition or alternatively, another location for sealing is between the spout 22 and the top edge (land area) 63 of neck portion 26.

In a similar manner, the sealing mechanism 230 of FIG. 21 can be adapted to be incorporated into paint container 20 at the location between the upper edge of the spout 22 and cap 23. The improvement of sealing mechanism 244 of FIG. 22 in the form of protective member 255 can be included as part of the modification of paint container 20 in order to incorporate this sealing mechanism.

Referring to FIGS. 26-28, there is illustrated another container 300, that would preferably be used for paint, that is constructed and arranged according to the present invention. Container 300 includes a screw-on closing lid 301, a pouring spout 302, and a blow-molded container body 303. Body 303 includes a pair of oppositely-positioned receiving sockets 304 for receipt of a carrying/lifting handle (not illustrated). The closing lid 301 is a unitary, molded plastic component that has an annular skirt 305 formed with internal threads 306 for attaching to the container body 303. Closing lid 301 further includes an upper wall portion 301a and a transition portion 301b with one end 301c integral with wall portion 301a and an opposite end 301d integral with skirt 305. The body 303 includes an externally-threaded annular neck portion 307 that receives closing lid 301. The neck portion 307 defines a circular opening 308 and includes an annular, upwardly facing upper sealing surface 316. As used herein, "upwardly facing" means that the entire surface is exposed based on a top plan view of the FIG. 26 illustration of container body 303. The pouring spout 302, also a unitary, molded plastic component, is constructed and arranged to fit into circular opening 308.

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The overall construction and use of container 300 is substantially the same as what has previously been illustrated and described in the context of FIGS. 1-25. This similarity extends to the positioning of the annular lip portion 302a of spout 302 on the upper sealing surface 316, similar to the positioning of projection 165 as it rests on land area 163 in FIG. 16. However, there are differences and these differences are the focus of the following description.

To begin, container body 303 is a blow-molded container body, as contrasted to injection molding, and this method of fabrication can result in some distortion within the area of the neck portion 307. In order to address the issue of possible distortion within the area of the neck portion, a unique sealing mechanism 312 is added as part of closing lid 301. This sealing mechanism 312 is illustrated as part of closing lid 301 in FIG. 27 and as part of the assembled container in FIG. 28. The sealing mechanism 312 is part of the transition portion 301b.

What has been learned by the present inventors relates to blow-molded container body construction and the realities of the molding process. When container body 303 is blow molded, there are two design or fabrication parameters that can cause a sealing challenge at the closing lid 301 to body 303 interface. First, it will be noted that the container body 303 includes a more rigid front vertical portion 314 that transitions into neck portion 307. The transition portion 315 between the neck portion 307 and body 303 is not as rigid. Secondly, with a blow-molded container body there is some degree of shrinkage. The shrinkage creates a pulling force that pulls the neck portion 307 downwardly while causing an outward deflection or pivoting motion about transition portion 315 due to its less rigid nature. What results is illustrated in FIG. 28, noting specifically the tilted or canted orientation of neck portion 307 and the outwardly, downwardly inclined nature of upper sealing surface 316. While upper sealing surface 316 is annular in overall form, a cross sectional view taken laterally through one portion clearly shows the tilted or inclined nature of the surface. The overall annular form and extent of upper sealing surface 316 is a surface which is more conical and is clearly in a non-planar condition. This inclined nature or non-planar condition for upper sealing surface 316 is the result of the construction and design parameters mentioned and the realities of blow-molded fabrication.

The underside surface 317 of the closing lid 301 is intended to provide a cooperating sealing surface for upper sealing surface 316. However, since upper sealing surface 316 is of a non-planar condition, this condition needs to be specifically addressed in the design of the closing lid 301. As mentioned, the non-planar nature of the upper sealing surface 316 is due in part to the overall design of the container body as well as the blow-molding fabrication method. In order to address the sealing requirement between the closing lid 301 and the body 303, the closing lid 301 has been designed with sealing mechanism 312 added to the underside surface 317 at a location above threads 306 and at a location radially inwardly of annular skirt 305.

Sealing mechanism 312 includes a pair of annular, spaced-apart sealing lips 320 and 321. Sealing lip 320 is radially inward of sealing lip 321, but otherwise the axial length and lateral cross sectional shape of sealing lips 320 and 321 are virtually identical. These two sealing lips 320 and 321 are part of the molded plastic, unitary construction of closing lid 301.

As is illustrated, each sealing lip 320 and 321 has a tapered lateral cross section with a rounded tip or lower end 320a and 321a, respectively. Annular space 322 that is defined by and located between sealing lips 320 and 321 provides sufficient clearance for these two sealing lips in order to deflect either

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radially inwardly or radially outwardly, as they are compressed against the upper sealing surface 316. Additionally, the radial positioning of sealing lips 320 and 321 is such that, as closing lid 301 is threaded onto body 303, specifically onto neck portion 307, the two sealing lips 320 and 321 are generally centered over upper sealing surface 316 radially outwardly of the annular lip portion 302a. This positioning means that even with some variation in the final location and orientation of the upper sealing surface 316, the two sealing lips 320 and 321 will be located for sealing compression against upper sealing surface 316 as the closing lid 301 is tightened onto neck portion 307. The dimensions and material of sealing lips 320 and 321 is such that these sealing lips remain flexible and within their elastic range such that repeated opening and closing of container 300 does not deteriorate the sealed interface between the closing lid 301 and body 303 by means of sealing mechanism 312.

Referring now to FIGS. 29 and 30, another sealing mechanism 327 embodiment, that is suitable for container 300, is disclosed. Closing lid 328 (see FIG. 29) is virtually identical to closing lid 301 except for the replacement of sealing mechanism 312 by sealing mechanism 327. Similarly, the assembled container 329 of FIG. 30 is virtually identical to the assembled container 300 of FIG. 28, except for the replacement of sealing mechanism 312 by sealing mechanism 327.

Container 329 includes closing lid 328, pouring spout 302, and container body 303. As before, the container body is blow-molded and includes the receiving sockets for a carrying/lifting handle. The use of the same reference numbers is intended to convey an understanding that the only difference between container 329 and container 300 is embodied within closing lid 328 that is different from closing lid 301, due to the incorporation of a different sealing mechanism.

While sealing mechanism 327 is in fact different from sealing mechanism 312, they are similar in that sealing mechanism 327 includes a single sealing lip 330 as contrasted to the pair of sealing lips 320 and 321 of sealing mechanism 312. Sealing lip 330 has an axial length and lateral cross sectional shape that are virtually identical to sealing lips 320 and 321. The materials are the same and the fabrication method is the same. The only other difference is that with a single sealing lip 330, it is radially positioned at a more central location relative to upper sealing surface 316 though still radially outwardly of the annular lip portion 302a. In effect, sealing lip 330 can be thought of as being positioned at the approximate location of annular space 322 of sealing

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mechanism 312. Space 322 is between lips 320 and 321 and this location is more appropriate for sealing lip 330 so that variations in the final positioning of upper sealing surface 316 can be accommodated while still ensuring a suitably sealed interface between closing lid 328 and container body 303 by means of sealing mechanism 327.

While the invention has been illustrated and described in detail in the drawings and foregoing description, the same is to be considered as illustrative and not restrictive in character, it being understood that only the preferred embodiment has been shown and described and that all changes and modifications that come within the spirit of the invention are desired to be protected.

What is claimed is:

1. A container for the storage and dispensing of a liquid, said container comprising:
 - a blow-molded body including a neck portion having a first series of threads and defining an annular, upwardly facing upper sealing surface;
 - a pouring spout assembled into said body, said pouring spout including an annular lip that is positioned in contact against said sealing surface; and
 - a closing lid including a second series of threads constructed and arranged to engage said first series of threads for securing said closing lid to said neck portion, said closing lid including a pair of annular sealing lips that are constructed and arranged to be compressed against said sealing surface at a location that is radially outwardly of said annular lip to establish a sealed interface between said closing lid and said body.
2. The container of claim 1 wherein said annular sealing surface is inclined in lateral section.
3. The container of claim 2 wherein each sealing lip is axially extending toward said annular sealing surface.
4. The container of claim 3 wherein said sealing lips are spaced apart from each other.
5. The container of claim 4 wherein said closing lid is a unitary member, including said pair of annular sealing lips.
6. The container of claim 5 wherein each of said sealing lips are constructed and arranged with a tapered form in lateral cross section.
7. The container of claim 1 wherein said closing lid is a unitary member, including said pair of annular sealing lips.
8. The container of claim 1 wherein each of said sealing lips are constructed and arranged with a tapered form in lateral cross section.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 7,677,423 B2
APPLICATION NO. : 11/353929
DATED : March 16, 2010
INVENTOR(S) : Kasting et al.

Page 1 of 2

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

Block (73).

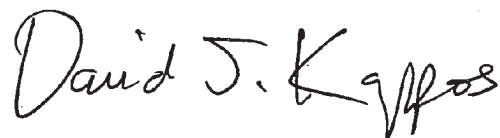
Assignee: Rieke Corporation, [[Arburn]] -- Auburn --, IN (US)

In the Drawings:

For FIG. 28, please replace the current FIG. 28 with the corrected, formal FIG. 28 which is attached.

Signed and Sealed this

Tenth Day of August, 2010

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Kappos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David J. Kappos
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office

U.S. Patent

Mar. 16, 2010

Sheet 25 of 26

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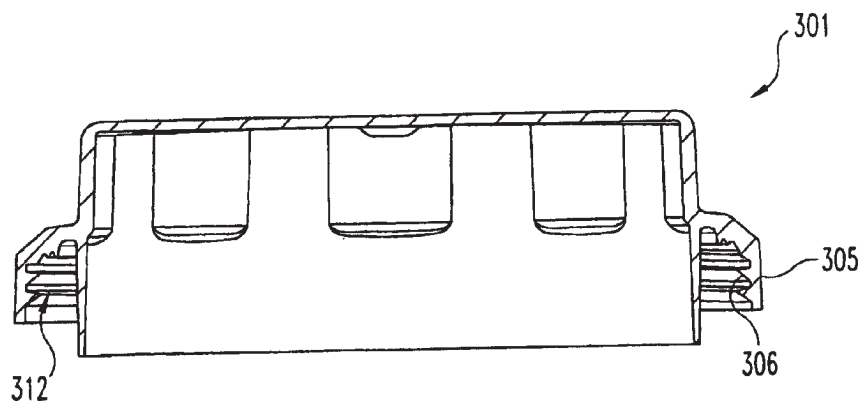


Fig. 27

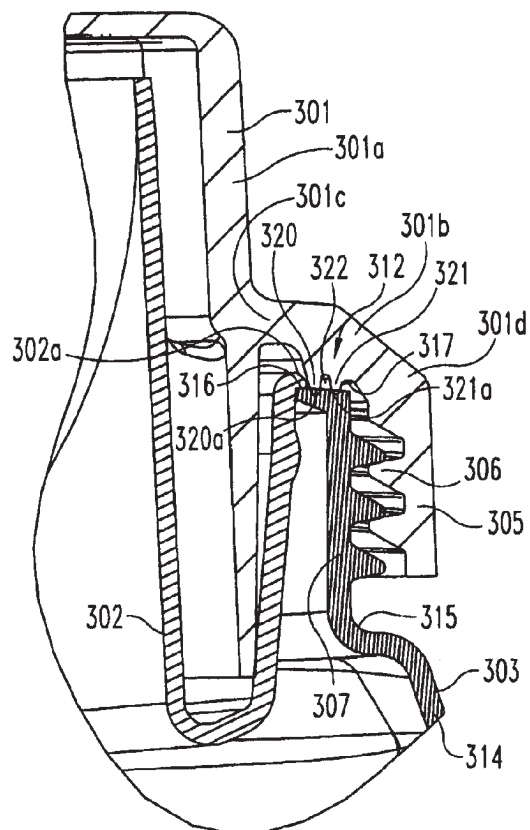


Fig. 28