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Kawata

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(54) **ANIMATED HAND PUPPET & ANIMATOR THEREFOR**

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A63H 3/14 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **446/327**; 446/330; 446/339

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 446/268, 446/327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 337, 338, 339
See application file for complete search history.

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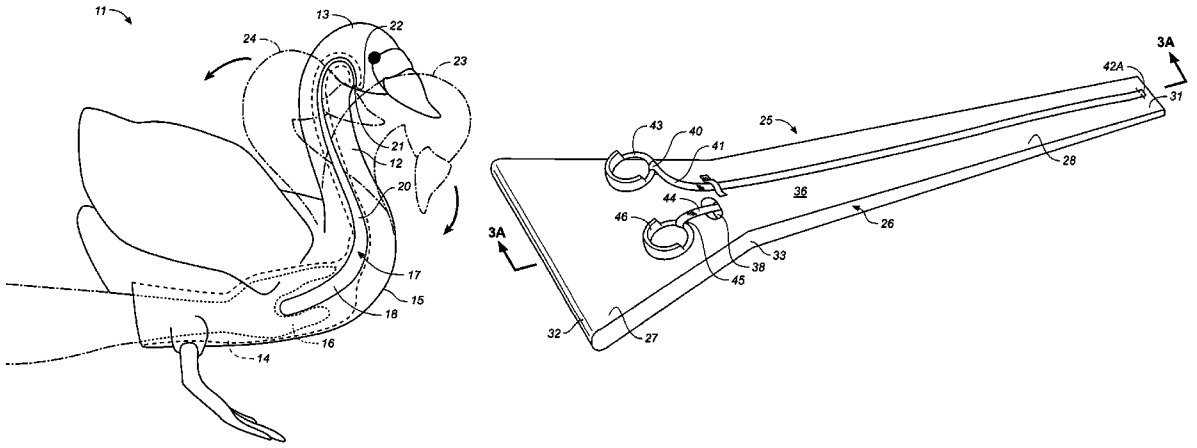
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A soft sculpture puppet and a pliable animator therefor which is in the form of an elongated member that is inserted in an appendage of the puppet in a position accessible to the hand of a puppeteer and which includes controls that can be manipulated to cause the animator to curve and bend and thereby move the appendage.

36 Claims, 15 Drawing Sheets



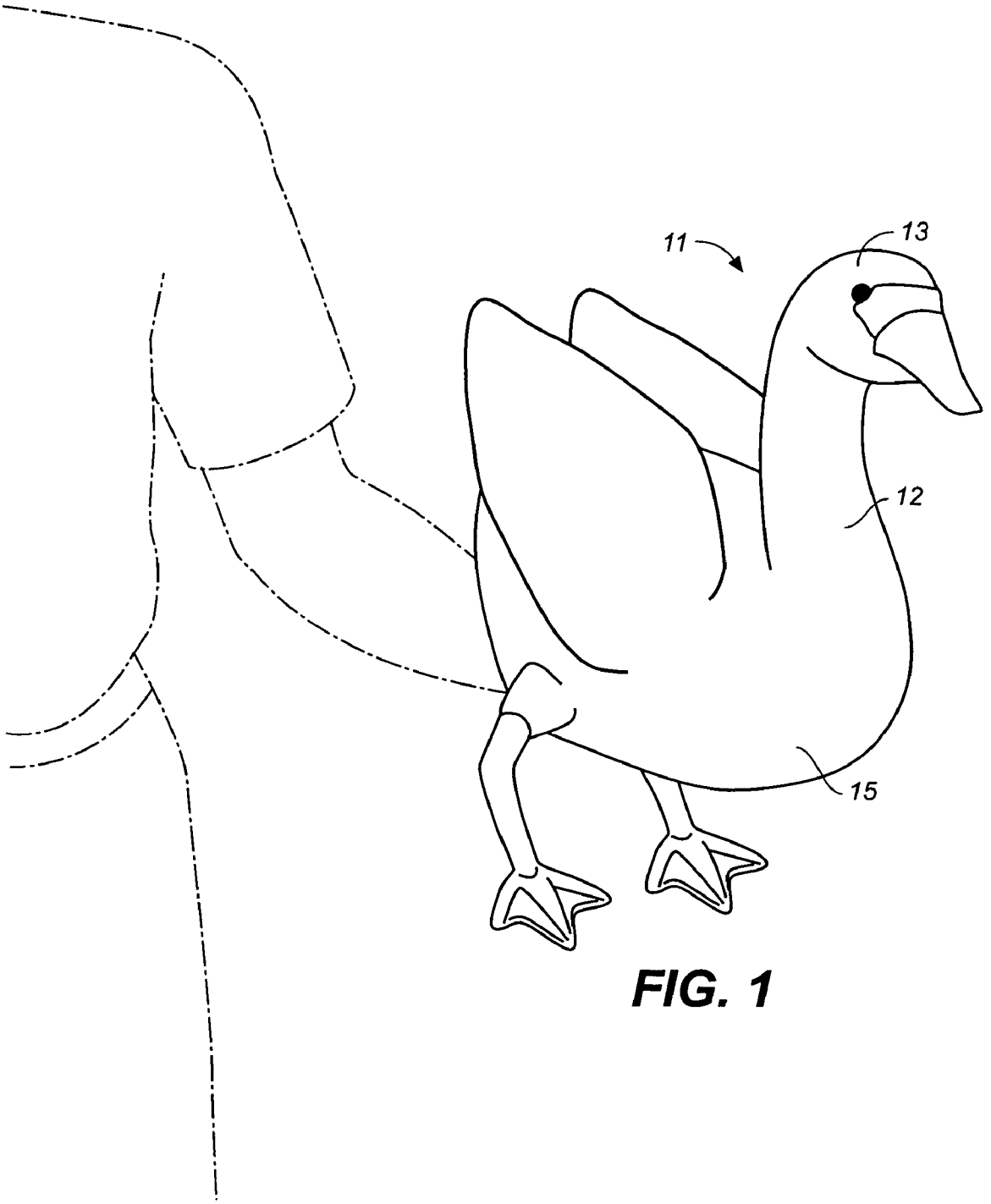


FIG. 1

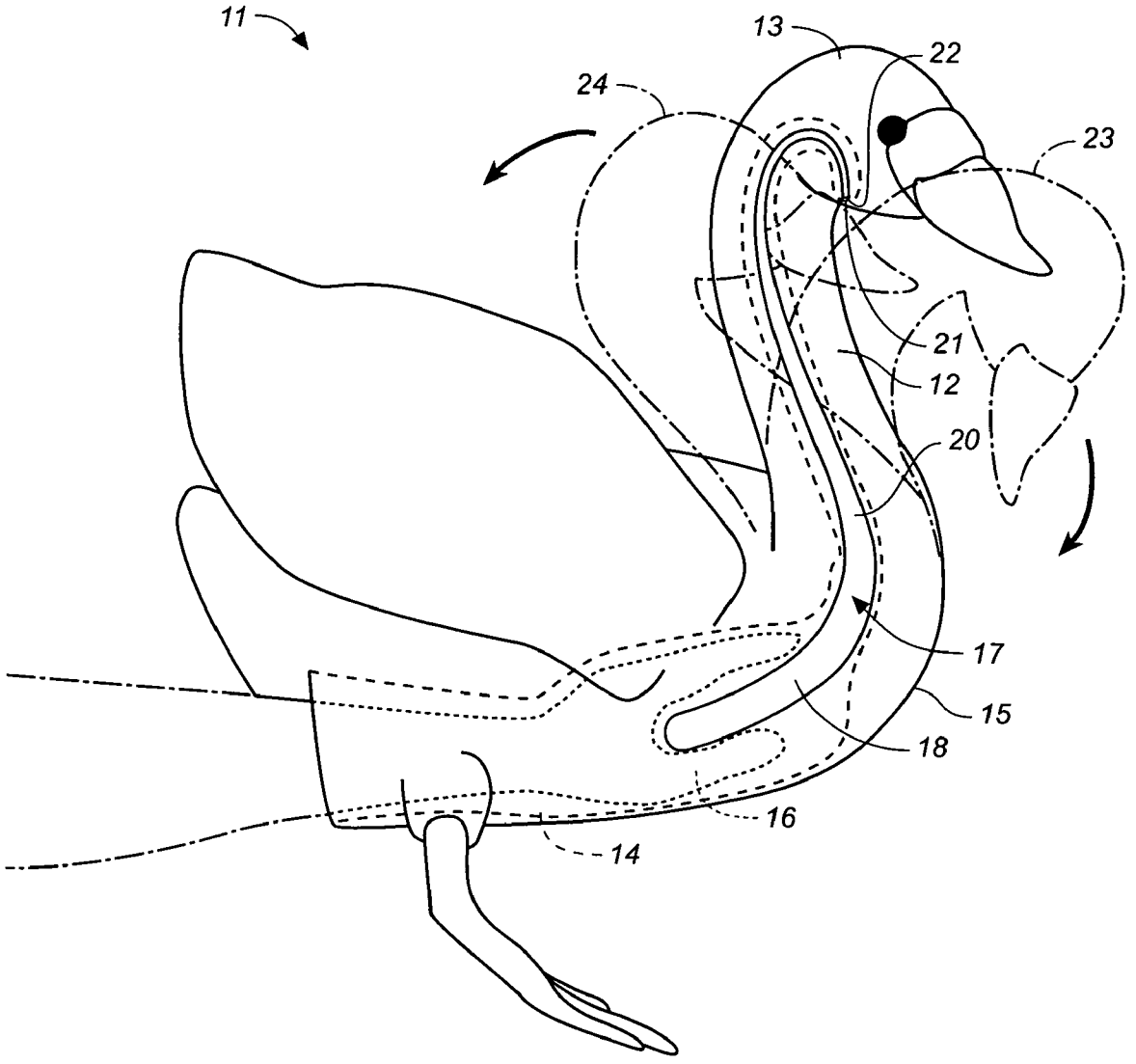


FIG. 2

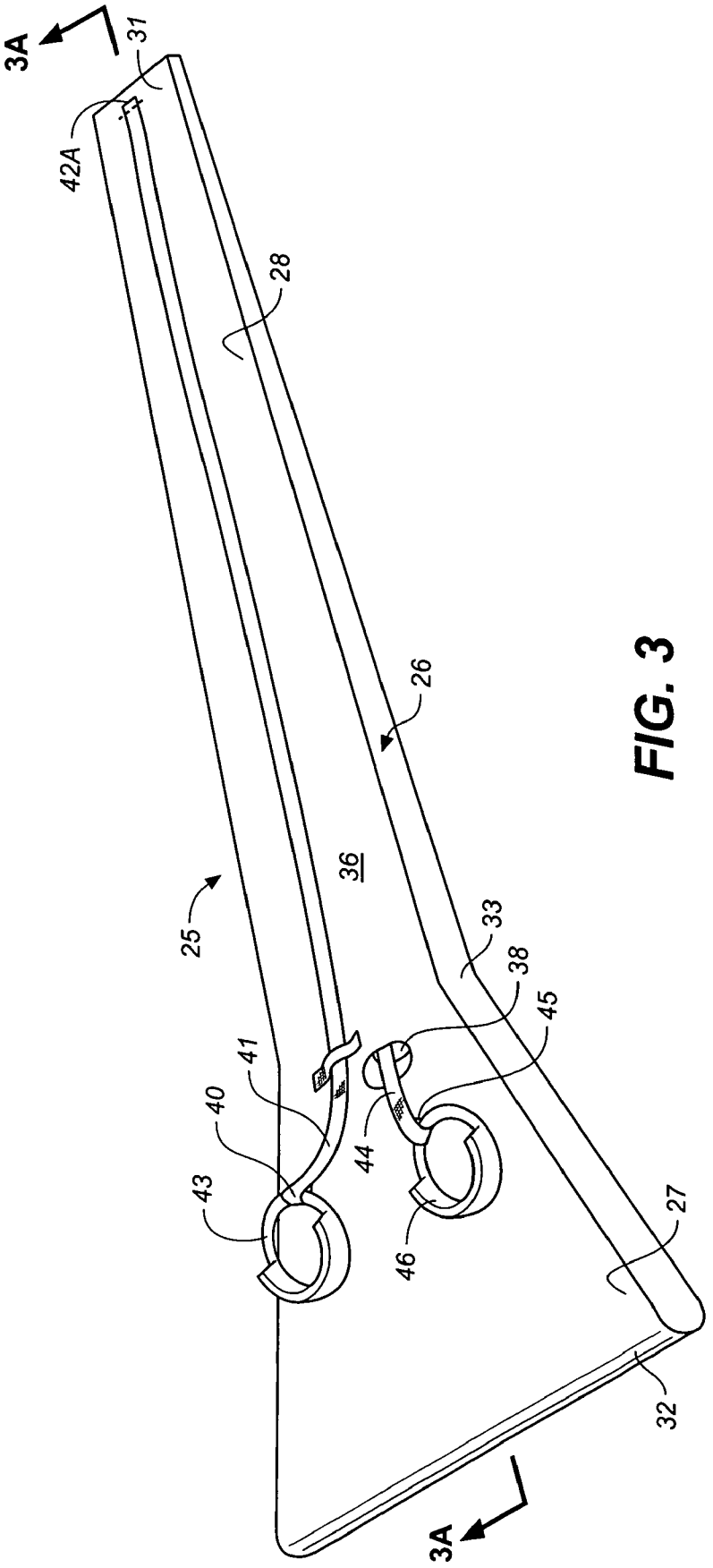
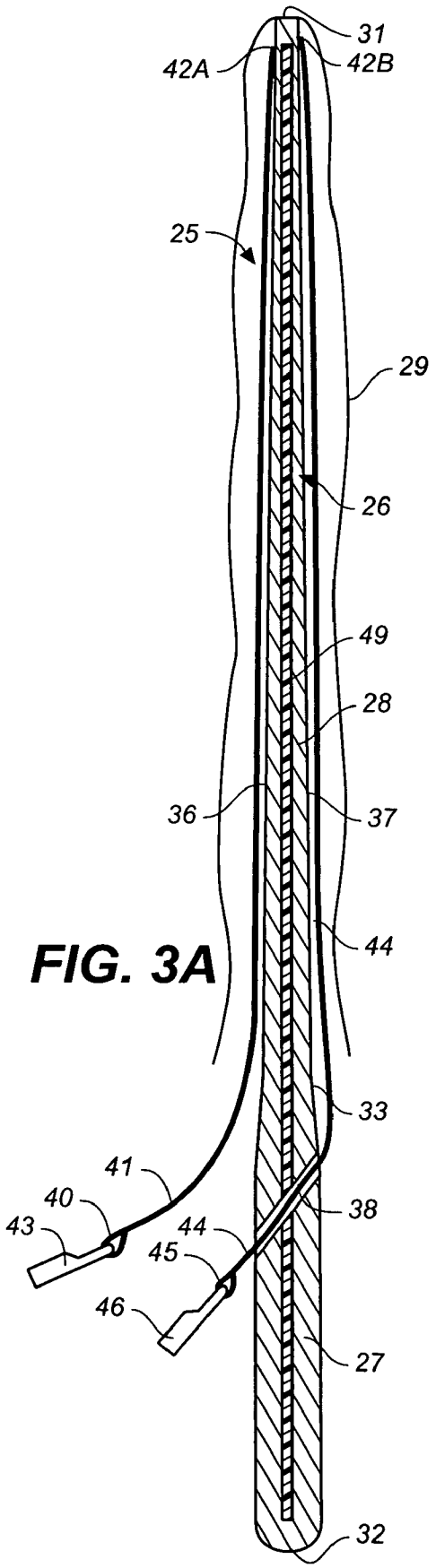


FIG. 3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42A
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FIG. 3A

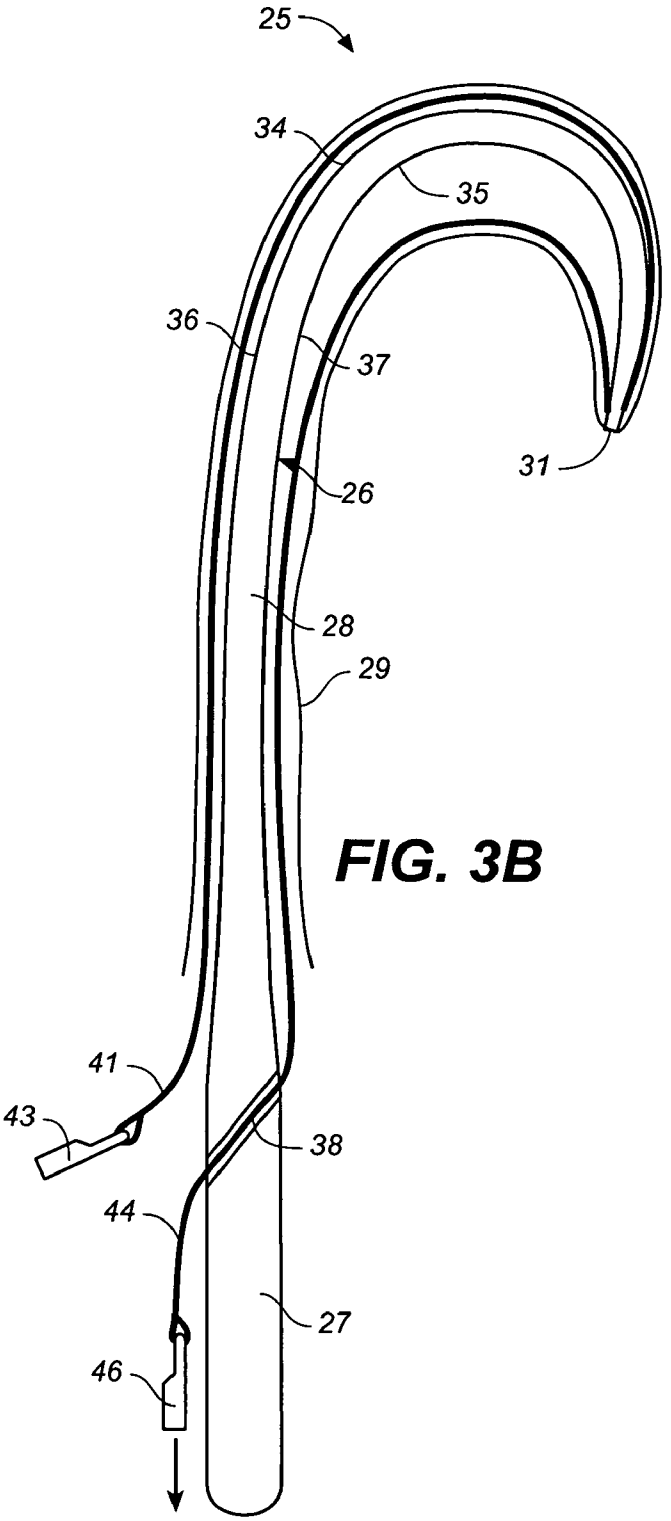
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FIG. 3B

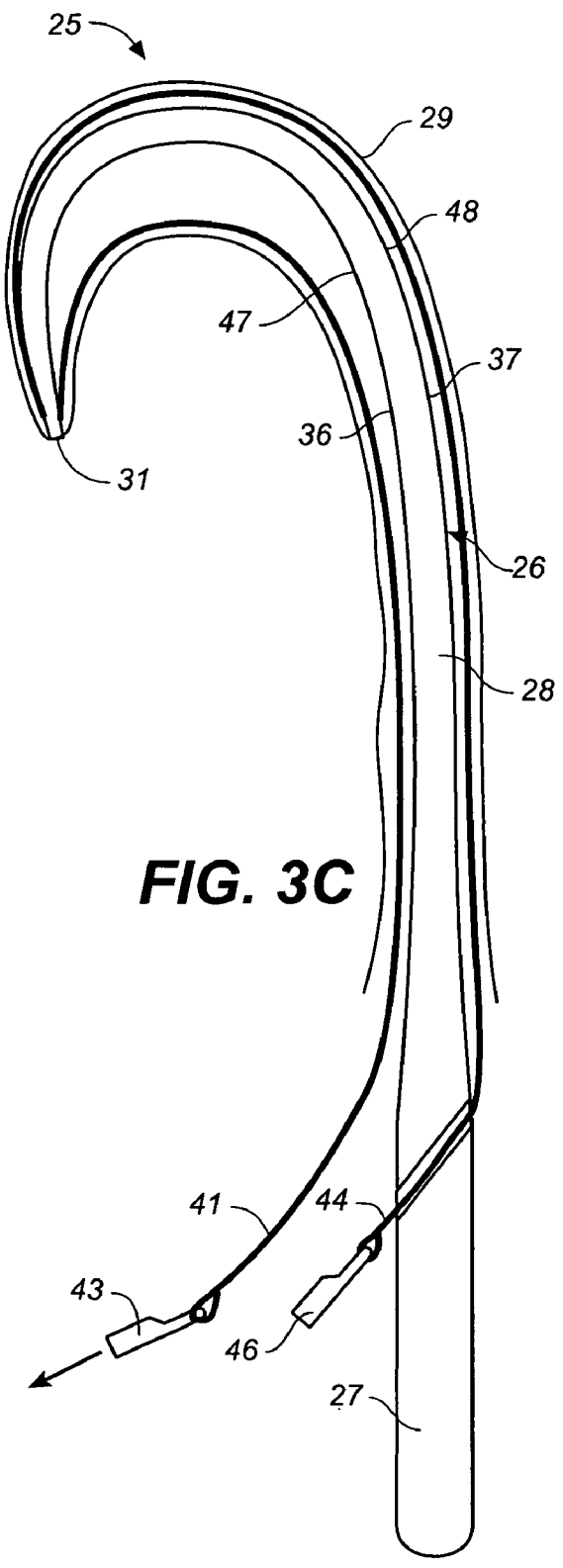

FIG. 3C

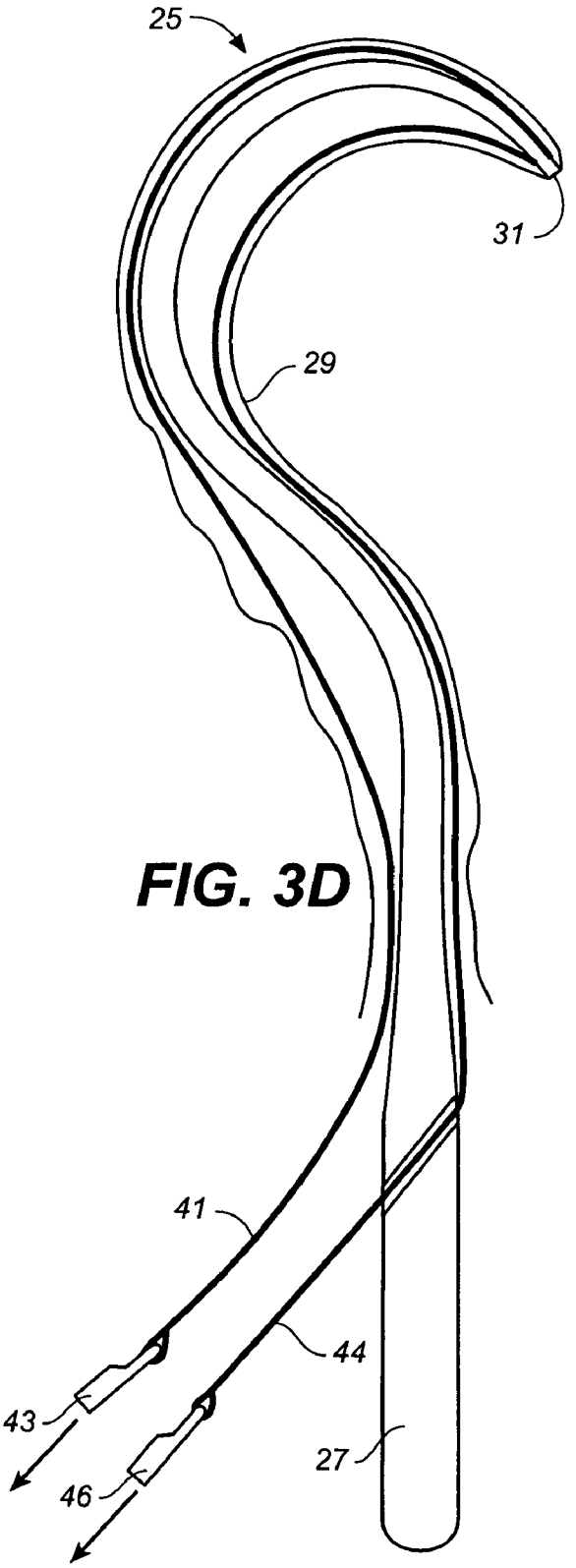

FIG. 3D

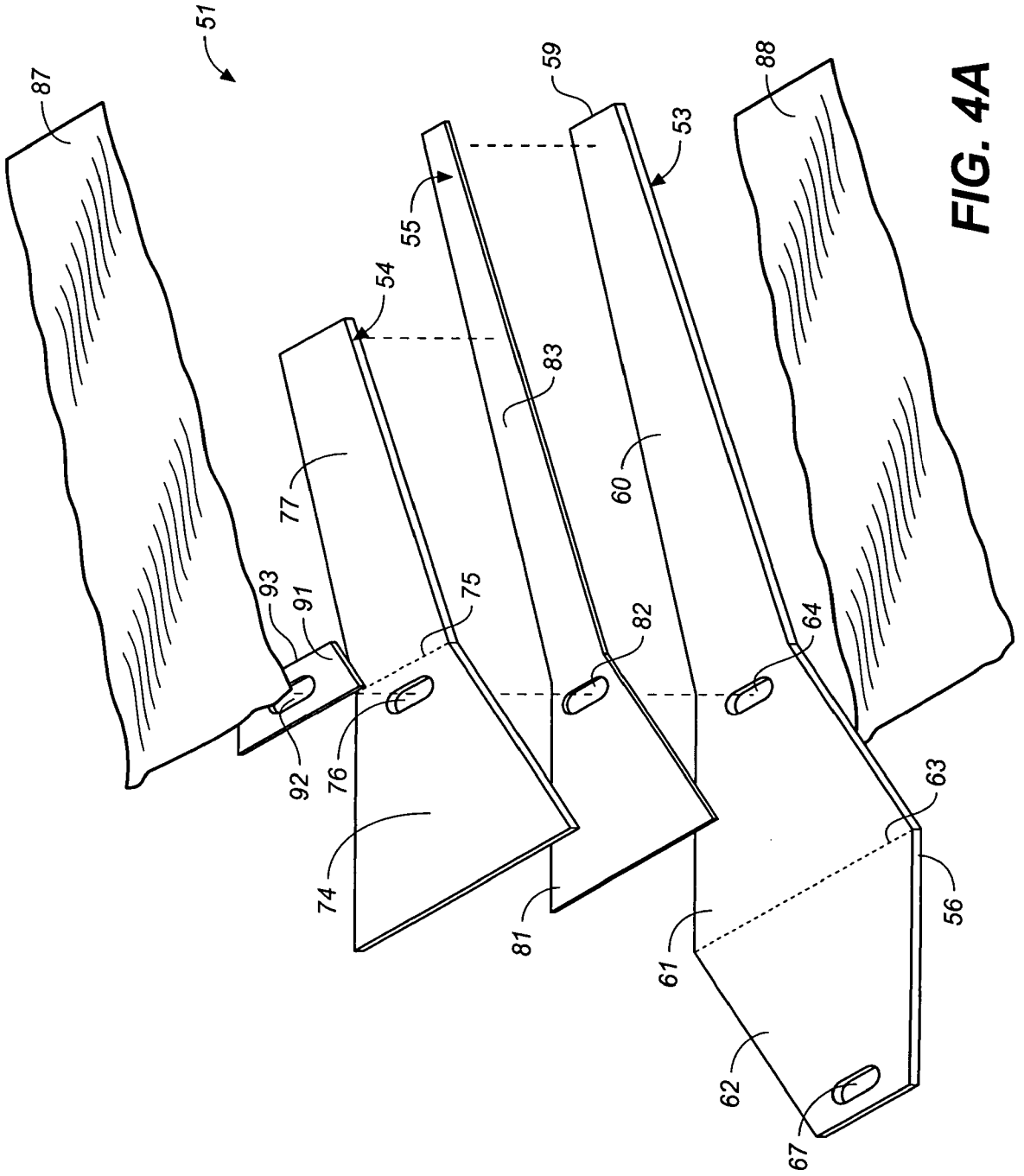

FIG. 4A

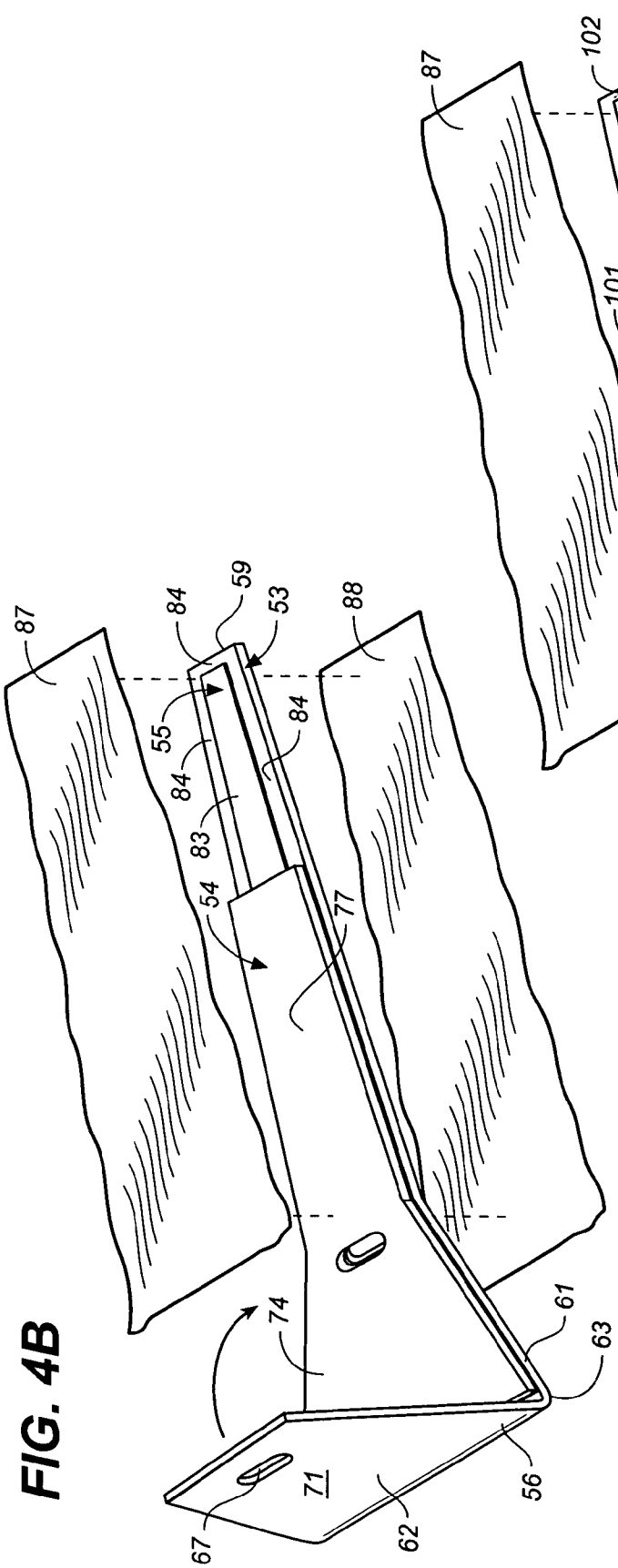
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FIG. 4B

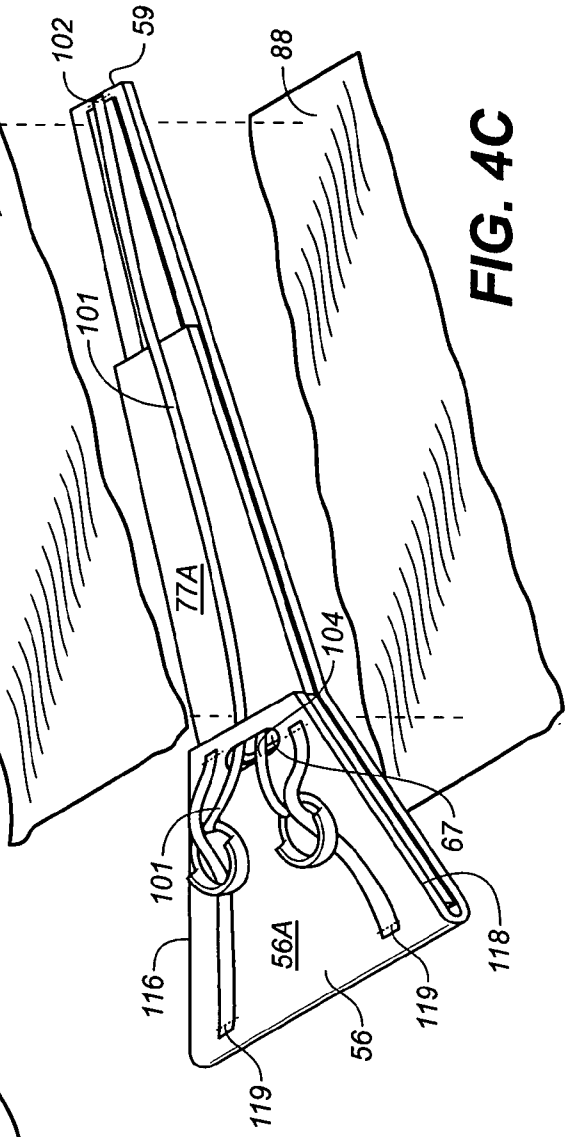
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FIG. 4C

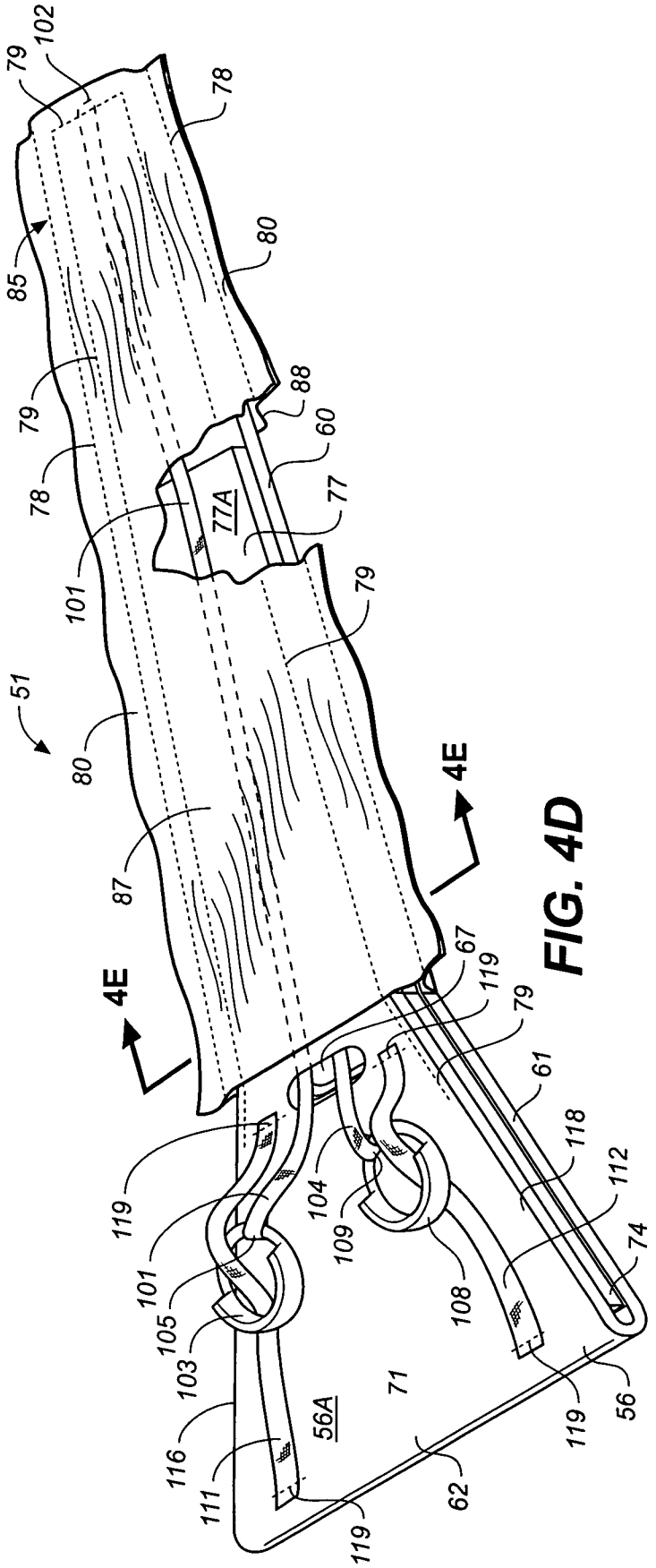
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FIG. 4D

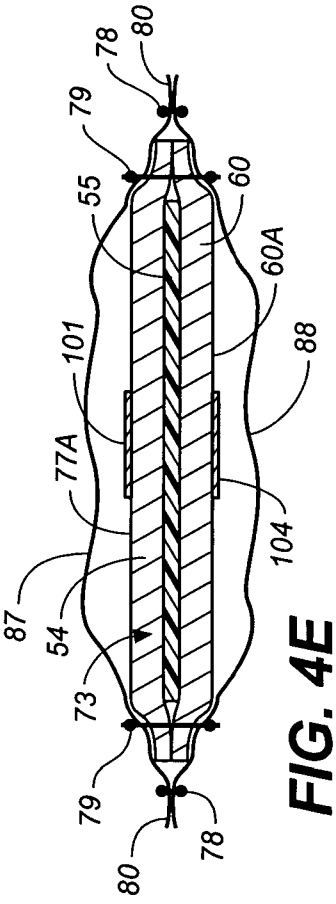
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FIG. 4E

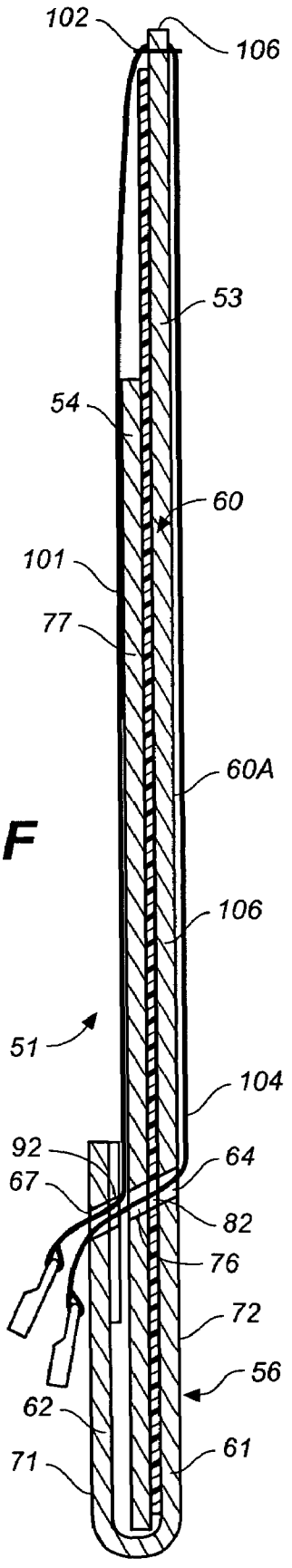
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FIG. 4F

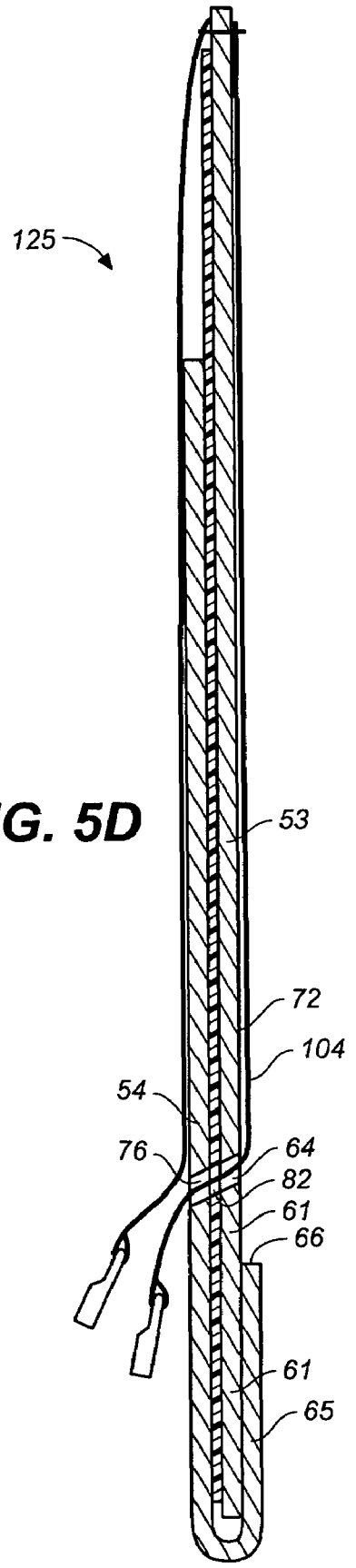
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FIG. 5D

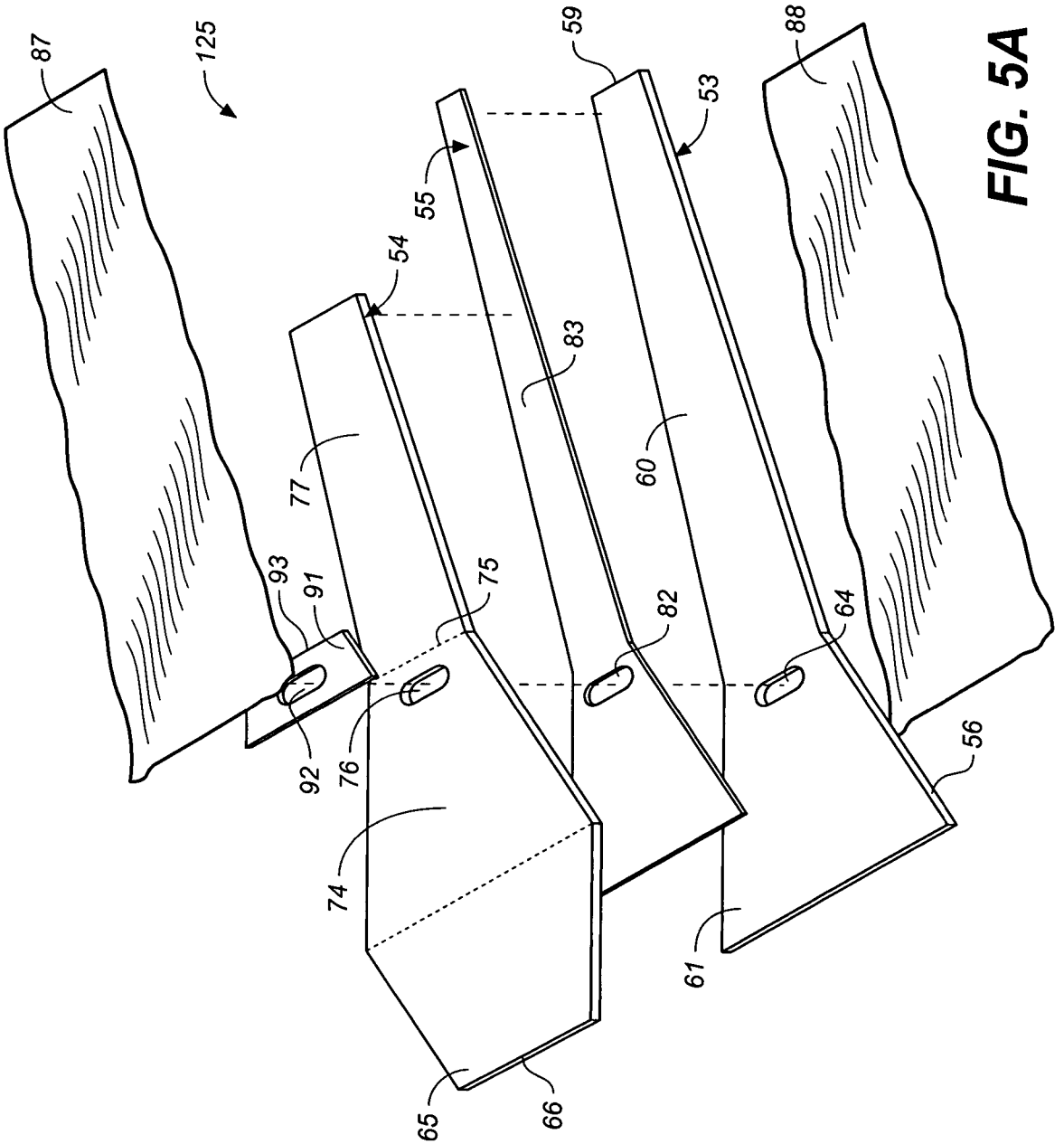

FIG. 5A

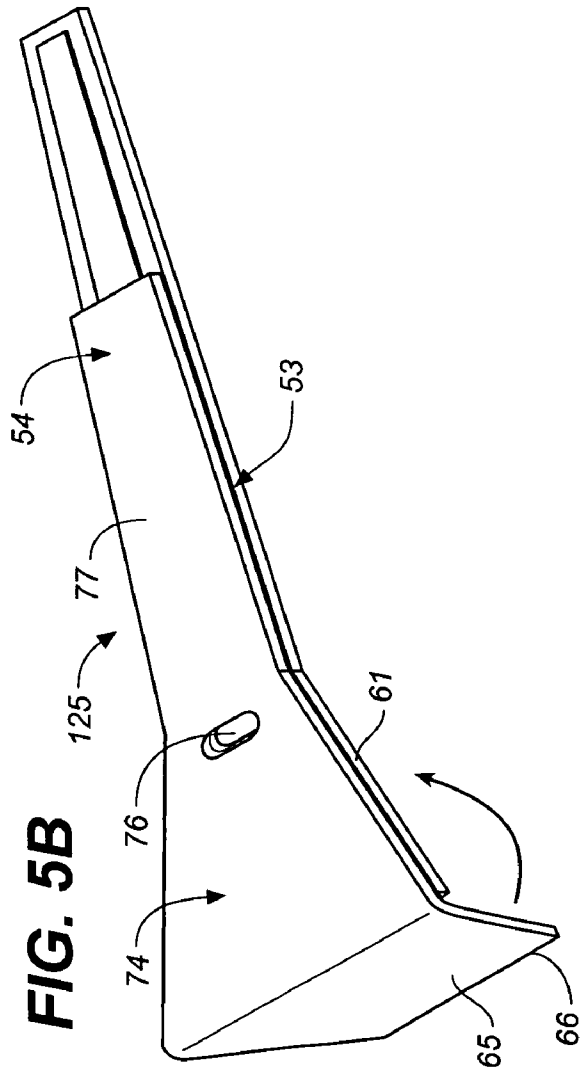

FIG. 5B

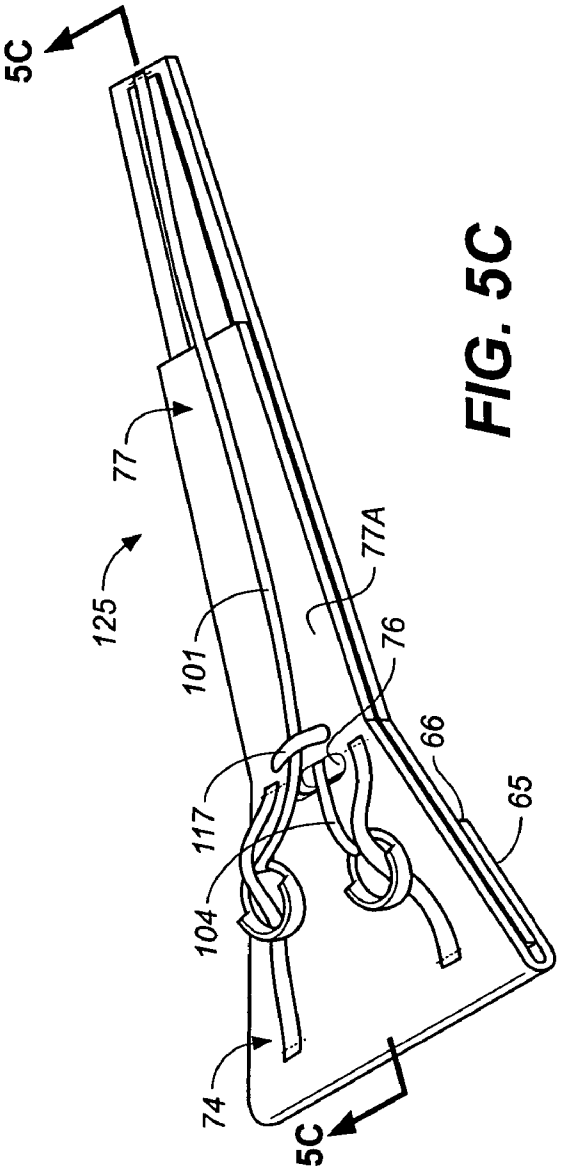

FIG. 5C

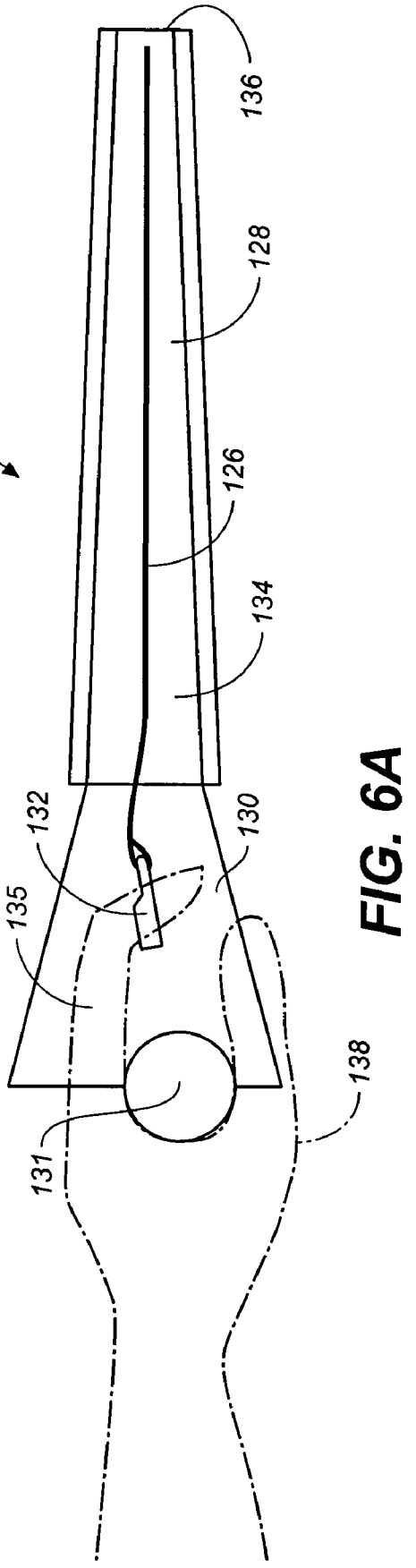

FIG. 6A

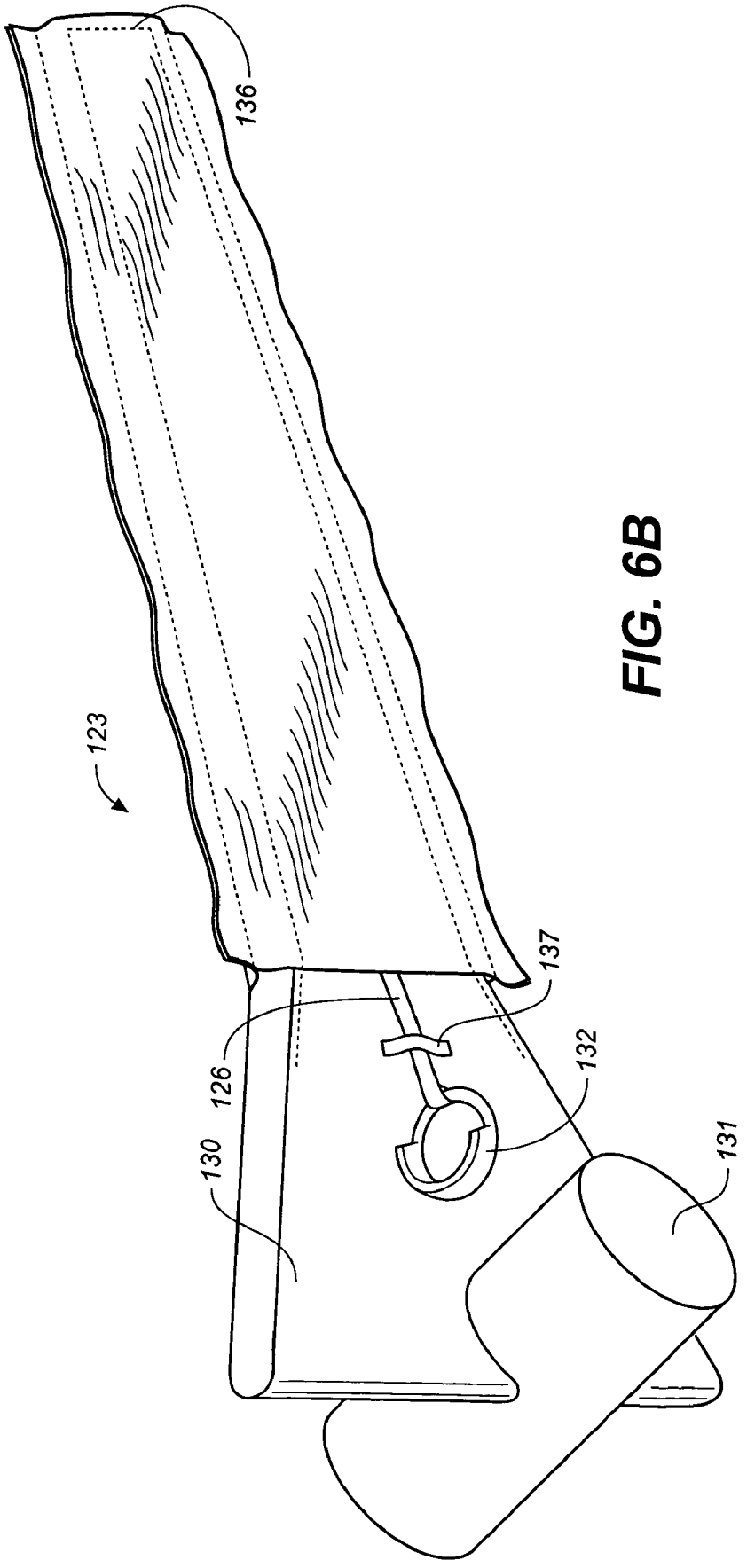

FIG. 6B

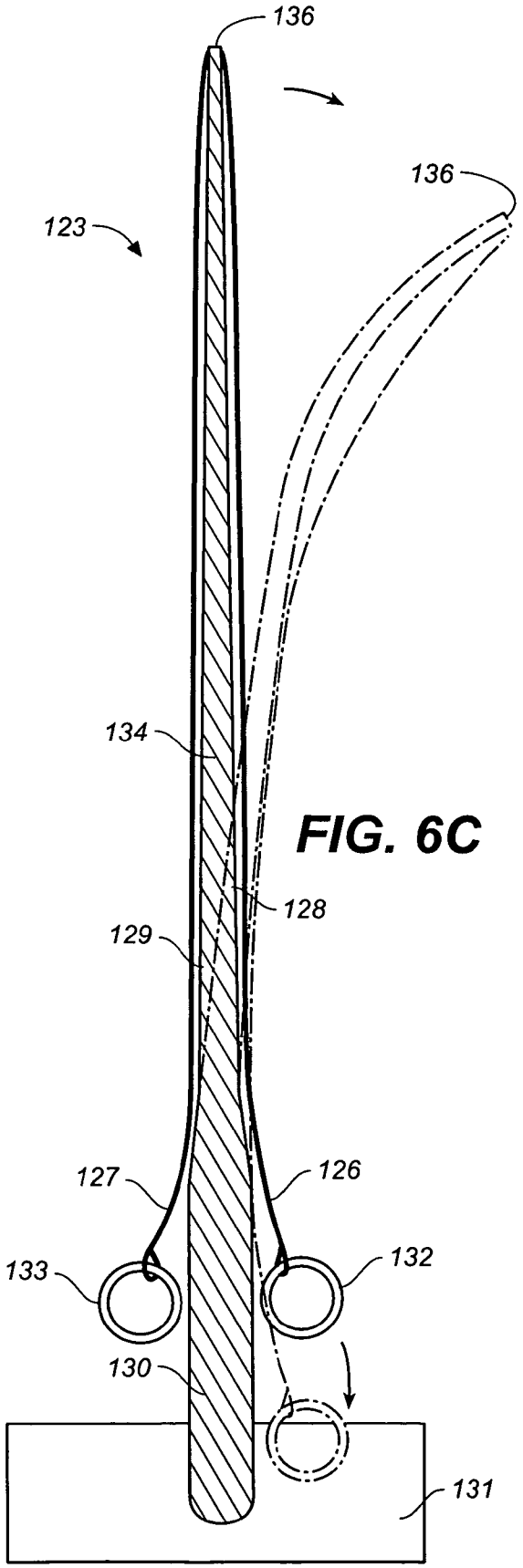
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FIG. 6C

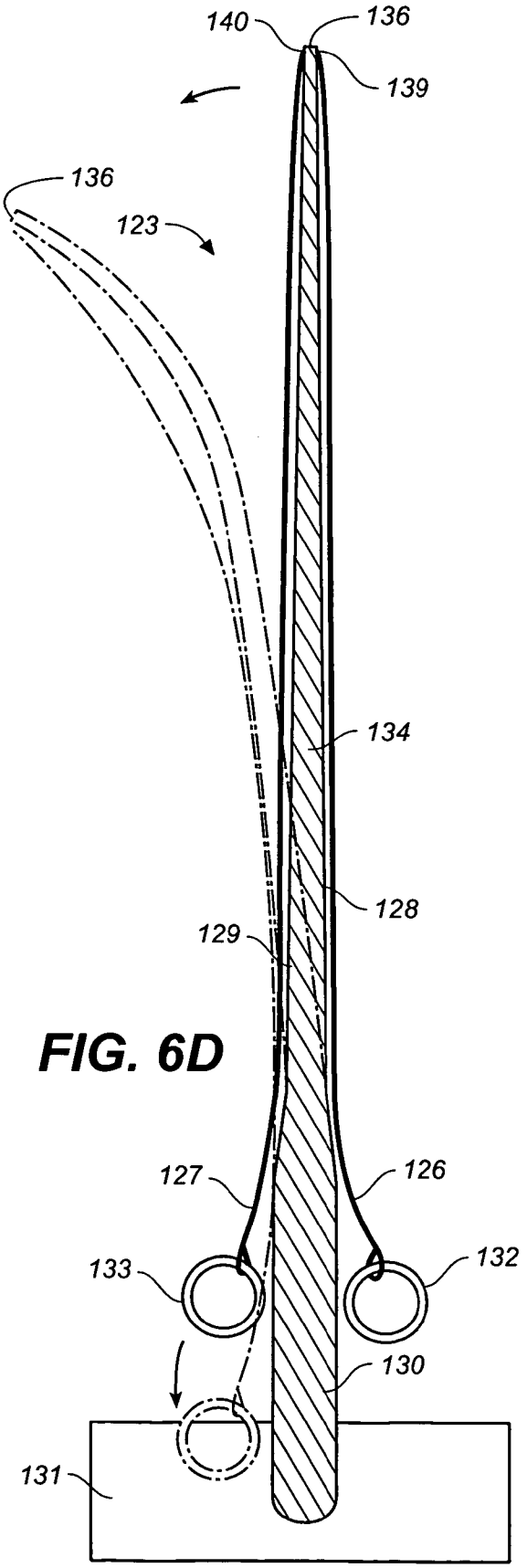
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FIG. 6D

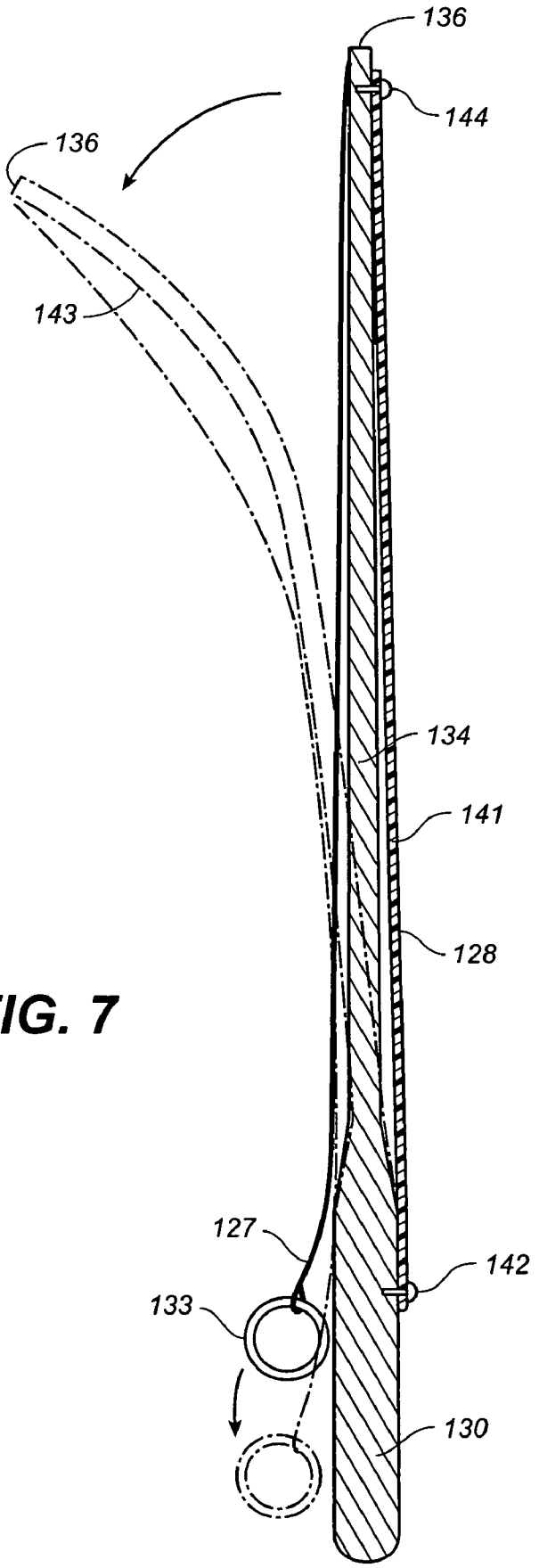

FIG. 7

ANIMATED HAND PUPPET & ANIMATOR THEREFOR

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to hand puppets, and, more particularly, to hand puppets of the soft sculpture variety equipped with an internal animator that produces life-like movement of various appendages.

BACKGROUND

Hand puppets featuring a chamber for receiving a human hand and appendages that can be manipulated by the inserted hand and/or its fingers have delighted children of all ages for many decades. Frequently, such puppets are in the form of animals and the chamber is situated to permit the fingers of a hand to work such parts as the mouth, arms, legs, wings and/or head, whereupon the puppet can be made to appear to come to life.

What has not been achieved with such puppets, prior to the present invention, is a way of using the inserted hand to give life-like movement to long narrow appendages, such as a neck (swans, flamingos, giraffes, etc.), an elephant's trunk, or the like, when the passages are too small to allow the insertion of a hand and too long to be worked by a finger.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

In order to be able to produce life-like animation to the head and neck of a swan, or trunk of an elephant, or other long narrow appendage of a soft sculpture hand puppet, the present invention provides a flexible, elongated animator having a base section, an elongated body section terminating in a tip end, a top side and a generally parallel bottom side. A first control strap extends along the top side of the animator from its base section to the tip end. A second control strap extends along the top side of the base section, and then through the base section and along the bottom side to the tip end. Pulling one strap causes the animator to bend in one direction; pulling the other strap causes the animator to bend in an opposite direction; pulling both straps causes the animator to form a curve having a shape depending on the animator's construction.

A ring is attached to the end of each control strap by which the straps are pulled by fingers inserted into the puppet body chamber. In this way, a hand in the body chamber can insert a finger in each ring and pull the control straps in combinations that produce life-like motion of the long narrow appendage in which the animator is affixed. A one strap, one ring embodiment is also disclosed.

The structure of the body of the animator allows for variations which produce particular bending curves that most nearly emulate the actual movement of the animal appendage being vitalized.

So as not to change the soft and cuddly character of the soft sculpture puppets, the animator of the invention is made from soft and pliable materials.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a soft sculpture hand puppet having a long narrow appendage that can be hand animated.

It is another object of the invention to provide an animator which can be incorporated into a soft sculpture hand puppet having a long narrow appendage so that the appendage can be animated.

Yet another object of the present invention is to provide an animator for a soft sculpture hand puppet that is soft and pliable.

The foregoing and other objectives, features and advantages of the invention will be more readily understood upon consideration of the following detailed description of the invention taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of a soft sculpture puppet of the present invention in the form of a swan;

FIG. **2** is a side view of the swan of FIG. **1** with certain internal parts revealed in relationship to a user's hand and with the range of animated positions illustrated;

FIG. **3** is a perspective, more detailed view of the internal animator of the invention shown in FIG. **2**;

FIG. **3**A is a sectional view of the animator of the invention taken along the line **3**A-**3**A of FIG. **3** with a sheath added;

FIG. **3**B is a side view of the animator of FIG. **3**A with the body section shown curved as a result of one of the control straps being pulled:

FIG. **3**C is similar to FIG. **3**B, but shows the body section curved as a result of pulling the other control strap;

FIG. **3**D is similar to FIG. **3**B, but shows the body section curved as a result of pulling both control straps;

FIG. **4**A is an exploded perspective view of various components of a laminate construction embodiment of the animator of the invention;

FIG. **4**B is a perspective view similar to FIG. **4**A with some components shown in their assembled positions;

FIG. **4**C is similar to FIG. **4**B showing the animator in a more advanced stage of assembly;

FIG. **4**D is similar to FIG. **4**C with the animator fully assembled and with certain internal components revealed;

FIG. **4**E is a sectional view taken along the line **4**E-**4**E of FIG. **4**D;

FIG. **4**F is a side sectional view of the animator of FIG. **4**D with the sheath not shown for purposes of clarity;

FIG. **5**A is a perspective, exploded view similar to FIG. **4**A, but of an alternative embodiment having a modified base section;

FIG. **5**B is a perspective view similar to FIG. **5**A showing the modified parts of the base section in a more operative relationship;

FIG. **5**C is a perspective view of the animator of FIG. **5**A with additional parts illustrated;

FIG. **5**D is a side sectional view of the animator of FIG. **5**C;

FIG. **6**A is a semi-schematic side view of an alternative embodiment of the animator of the invention;

FIG. **6**B is a perspective view of the animator of FIG. **6**A;

FIG. **6**C is a top sectional view of the animator of FIG. **6**B showing the position assumed when one of the control straps is pulled;

FIG. **6**D is a top sectional view of the animator of FIG. **6**B showing the position assumed when the other control strap is pulled; and

FIG. **7** is a top sectional view of an alternative embodiment similar to that of FIG. **6**B, but with only a single pullable control strap.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to FIGS. **1** and **2**, a soft sculpture puppet **11** in the form of a swan having a body **15** and an elongated neck **12** supporting a head **13**. A chamber **14** within the puppet **11** is

sized to receive a human hand **16** which animates the puppet **11**. In order to animate the neck **12** and head **13**, both of which are too small to receive the hand **16**, an animator **17** of the present invention is affixed within puppet **11** to extend from the chamber **14**, where it is accessible to the hand **16**, through the neck **12** to the head **13**.

Animator **17** has a base section **18** disposed in the internal chamber **14** where it can be grasped by the hand **16**, and a flexible body section **20** that extends from the base section **18** through the neck **12** to the head **13** where it terminates in tip end **22** which is attached at **21**.

As more fully described below, the animator **17** includes a hand-operated mechanism (not shown) by which the body section **20** can be made to selectively bend in opposing directions, causing the neck **12** and head **13** to make life-like movements between the positions illustrated by dashed lines **23** and **24**. One of the outstanding features of the invention is that the animator **17** does not merely cause the neck **12** and head **13** to move back and forth, but also causes the neck **12** to curve as it moves forward or backward, making the movements more life-like.

Referring to FIGS. **3** and **3**A, in one embodiment of the invention, an animator **25** is formed from a generally flat, flexible, unitary (possibly molded) member **26** having a base section **27** and a flexible body section **28** terminating in a tip end **31**. The base section **27** has a width that tapers from its base end **32** to the juncture **33** with the body section **28**. The body section **28** can also have a slight width taper toward the tip end **31** (wider at juncture **33** than at tip end **31**).

Member **26** which has a top side **36** and a generally, but not precisely, parallel bottom side **37** and an aperture **38** in the base section **27** near the juncture **33** with body section **28** can, in addition to a taper in its width, have a taper in its thickness, with the thickness being greatest at the base section **27** and least at the tip end **31**. When the unitary member **26** has a width taper and a thickness taper, the flexibility of the member **26** increases along its length, with it being most flexible at tip end **31**.

A first non-elastic control strap **41** extends along the top side **36** of member **26** to the tip end **31** where it is attached at **42**A as by stitching or the like. A first finger-engagable device, such as pull ring **43**, is attached to the free end **40** of control strap **41**. A second non-elastic control strap **44** extends generally parallel to the first control strap **41** along the top side **36** of member **26**, but is threaded through aperture **38** and runs along the bottom side **37** of member **26** to the tip end **31** where it is attached at **42**B as by stitching or the lie. A second finger-engagable device, such as pull ring **46**, is attached to the free end **45** of second control strap **44**. The control straps **41** and **44** can advantageously be made of polyester ribbon.

The end **32** of base section **27** provides a structure that the thumb of a manipulating hand can press against when a finger of the hand is pulling one or both of the rings **43** and **46**.

FIGS. **3** and **3**A illustrate the animator **25** in the configuration assumed when neither strap **41** or **44** is being pulled. The invention includes a loose-fitting sheath cover **29** that covers the body section **28**. The sheath cover **29** has been left out of FIG. **3** to reveal the path of strap **41** and its connection at **42**A. The sheath cover **29** is more fully illustrated as sheath cover **85** in FIG. **4**D. The loose-fitting sheath cover **29** both permits the strap **44** to pull away from body section **28**, but also limits the distance therebetween. In this way, the body member can curve smoothly and naturally.

Referring to FIG. **3**B, when control strap **44** is pulled, the tip end **31** is drawn toward bottom side **37** of the member **26**, forming a concave curve **34** in the top side **36** of member **26**, and concomitantly, a convex curve **35** in bottom side **37**.

Pulling on control strap **41** (FIG. **3**C) draws tip end **31** toward the top side **36** of member **26** which produces a concave curve **47** on the top side **36** and a convex curve **48** on the bottom side **37**.

Pulling both straps **41** and **44** produces a complex curve such as that illustrated in FIG. **3**D.

It will be understood by those skilled in the art that the particular curves produced by pulling on the control straps of an animator of the present invention depends on a number of factors including the construction of the animator (as more fully explained below), the particular puppet appendage in which the animator is operatively disposed and the construction of the puppet. The neck **12** and head **13** of the swan puppet **11** of FIGS. **1** and **2**, for example, do not need to make a reverse curve when moving toward the swan's body **15**, since that is not how a live swan moves. Thus, the construction of the animator **17** and the construction of the puppet **11** restrains the swan's neck **12** and head **13** from bending backwards (a reverse curve) as it moves towards the body **15** (see dashed lines **24**) from a position of the head and neck curved forward (see dashed lines **23**) such as when the swan might be feeding.

Both the width taper and thickness taper along the body section **28** help determine the shape of the curves caused by manipulating control straps **41** and **44** and can be varied to produce the shape that best emulates the movement of a particular animal that the puppet strives to emulate. For example, to emulate the movement of an elephant's trunk when putting something in its mouth, it is desirable for the body section **28** nearest tip end **31** to curl before the rest of the body section **28** curves.

When the animator **25** of the present invention is incorporated into a soft sculpture puppet, it is advantageous for its member **26** to be made from a generally soft material to retain the soft and cuddly character of the toy. A material particularly well suited to that purpose is ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA). As best seen in FIG. **3**A, where desirable, to add stiffness and elasticity to the member **26**, a thin sheet of flexible, elastic plastic **49** can be imbedded in the member **26** extending from the base section **27** to or near the tip end **31**. In the case of the swan **11**, the sheet **49** keeps the neck from drooping when not acted on by animator **17**. While sheet **49** will always extend into the body section **28**, whether or not it extends all the way to tip end **31** or only part way, depends on the curve characteristics and support needs required to achieve realistic movement for a particular animal puppet.

Referring to FIGS. **4**A, **4**B, **4**C, **4**D, **4**E and **4**F in an alternative embodiment, an animator **51** of the present invention has a laminate body structure **52** of several sheets of material including a primary body member **53** and an auxiliary body member **54**. In one embodiment, a stiff but flexible elastic sheet member **55** is disposed between the primary body member **53** and the auxiliary body member **54** to increase the stiffness and overall elasticity of the laminate body structure **52**.

Primary body member **53**, which can be made from sheet ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA) or like material, includes a base section **56** and a flexible body section **60** terminating in a tip end **59**. The base section **56** has the geometric shape of two isosceles trapezoids formed by a first trapezoid segment **61** and a second, mirror image trapezoid segment **62** which share a common base **63**. A generally elliptical aperture **64** is formed near the short end of trapezoid segment **61** and a generally elliptical aperture **67** is formed near the short end of trapezoid segment **62**.

When the base trapezoid segment **62** is folded over toward base trapezoid segment **61** along the common base line **63** (see FIG. **4**B), apertures **67** and **64** are aligned, forming a pass-through between the top side **71** of base section **56** and the bottom side **72** thereof (as best seen in FIG. **4**F).

The auxiliary body member **54** has an isosceles trapezoid-shaped base section **74** generally matching the size and shape of isosceles trapezoid base segment **61** of primary body member **53** with a generally elliptical aperture **76** near its short end generally matching apertures **64** and **67** in base section **56**. Extending from base section **74** is a body section **77** which generally matches the shape of body section **60** of primary body member **53**, but which may or may not be as long, depending on the curve characteristics to be achieved. Auxiliary body member **54** can also advantageously be formed from a sheet of EVA or equivalent material.

The flexible elastic sheet member **55**, preferably of plastic, has an isosceles trapezoid-shaped base section **81** generally matching the shape of isosceles trapezoid base segment **61** of primary body member **53** and a generally elliptical aperture **82** near its short end generally matching the size and shape of apertures **64** and **67** in base section **56**. Extending from base section **81** is a body section **83** which generally matches the shape of body section **60** of primary body member **53**, but which may or may not be as long. While the shape of elastic sheet member **55** generally matches the shape of primary body member **53**, its overall dimensions are smaller, producing a margin **84** around the sides and end of primary body member **53** extending outwardly of sheet member **55** when sheet member **55** is placed on top of the primary body member **53** and its aperture **82** is aligned with aperture **67** (see FIG. **4**B). Whether or not the sheet member **55** extends all the way to tip end **59**, depends, once again, on the bending and stiffness requirements for a particular application.

One embodiment of the invention includes a generally rectangular-shaped aperture reinforcing member **91** (see FIG. **4**A) made of a soft but durable material, such as pellon (Vilene), having a generally elliptical aperture **92** which generally matches the aperture **76** of auxiliary member **54**.

A sheath cover **85** (see FIG. **4**D) is formed by substantially identical panels **87** and **88** (see FIGS. **4**A, B and C) of a lightweight, stretchable material such as nylon or an equivalent material. Panels **87** and **88** have the general shape of the body section **60** of primary body member **53**, but are larger so that their edges extend beyond the edges of the primary body member **53** (see FIG. **4**D) and are loose-fitting when attached. The sheath cover **85** has been left out of FIG. **4**F for purposes of illustrative clarity.

The various pieces of the laminate body structure **52** described above are combined as follows. The flexible elastic sheet member **55** is placed onto the primary body member **53** with their respective apertures **82** and **67** aligned. While the embodiment illustrated shows the sheet member **55** extending almost all the way to the tip end **59**, as mentioned above, that is not always necessary and, in some cases, it is preferred for it to only extend part way. The auxiliary member **54**, which can also vary from extending all the way to tip end **59** to only part way, depending on the curve response desired, is then placed onto the sheet member **55** with the apertures **76** and **82** aligned. In an embodiment without flexible sheet member **55**, auxiliary member **54** is placed directly onto primary body member **53**. The length of body section **77** of auxiliary member **54** is illustrated as only extending part way to tip end **59** of primary body member **53**, but, in other configurations, it can extend all the way to tip end **59**. The reinforcing member **91** is sized so that its edge **93** does not extend beyond the juncture **75** between base section **74** and body section **77** of auxiliary member **54** when member **91** is placed onto auxiliary member **54** and their respective apertures **92** and **76** are aligned.

With flexible sheet **55** in place on primary body member **53**, auxiliary member **54** in place on sheet **55**, and reinforcing member **91** on auxiliary member **54** and all of their respective apertures aligned, the segment **62** of base section **56** of primary body member **53** is folded over toward segment **61**, capturing therebetween flexible sheet **55**, auxiliary member **54** and reinforcing member **91** (see FIGS. **4**B and **4**F). At this point, the various pieces can be joined into a unitary member by stitching along the margin **84** that surrounds the body sections of primary body member **53** and auxiliary body member **54**. It is, however, advantageous to do the stitching after the sheath panels **87** and **88** are in place.

The panels **87** and **88** are placed above and below the laminated structure to loosely cover the body sections, but not the base section and, in particular, do not extend over aperture **67**.

With the panels **87** and **88** in place, the various parts are secured into a unitary member by stitches **79** sewn along the sides and tip edges at the margin **84** which does not include the flexible sheet member **55**. Thus secured, a combined body section **73** is formed (see FIG. **4**E). The panels **87** and **88** are then stitched together at **78**, outward of the edges of the body section **73** (see FIG. **4**E) to encapsulate the body sections **60**, **83** and **77** and form a seam allowance **80** by which the animator is attached within a puppet, such as swan **11** (see FIG. **1**).

Referring particularly to FIGS. **4**C, D , E and F, a first control strap **101**, preferably of sturdy but lightweight, non-stretchable material, such as polyester ribbon, is disposed to extend along the top surface **56**A of base section **56**, through aperture **67** only and along the surface **77**A of body section **77** of auxiliary member **54** to tip end **59** of primary body member **53** where it is secured as by stitching at **102**. A first pull ring **103** is attached to the free end **105** of strap **101**.

A second control strap **104** is disposed to extend along the top surface **56**A of base section **56**, through all of the apertures **67**, **92**, **76**, **82** and **64** to and along the bottom surface **60**A of the body section **60** of primary body member **53** to the tip end **59** where it, too, is secured as by stitching at **102**. A second pull ring **108** is attached to the free end **109** of strap **104**.

Referring primarily to FIGS. **4**C and **4**D, a pair of spaced-apart guide straps **111** and **112** are disposed on the upper surface **56**A of segment **62** of base section **56** to keep pull rings **103** and **108**, respectively, on base section **56** where they can be readily located and grasped. The guide straps **111** and **112** are best located along the edges **116** and **118** of the base section **56** and inserted through the rings **103** and **108**, respectively, before being secured at their respective ends by stitching **119** or some other appropriate affixing means. In this way, the rings **103** and **108** are always on the base section **56** where they can be readily found, but do not restrict the movement of control straps **101** and **104**.

Referring to FIGS. **5**A, **5**B, **5**C and **5**D, in an alternative embodiment, an animator **125** is substantially identical to the embodiment of FIG. **4**A, except the base section **56** is modified by eliminating base segment **62** from primary body member **53** and adding a base segment **65** to base section **74** of auxiliary body member **54**. Segment **65** is shorter than base section **74** such that when folded under toward section **74**, its end **66** does not extend to aperture **76** (see in particular FIG. **5**D).

The advantage of this embodiment is that second control strap **104** does not have to pass through base segment **65**,

thereby reducing the friction on control strap **104**. This permits the elimination of aperture reinforcing member **91**. To maintain strap **101** in place on body section **77**, a guide strap **117** is provided on upper surface **77**A of body section **77**. The control strap **101** is placed through guide strap **117** and thereby maintained in position (see FIG. **5**C).

Referring to FIGS. **6**A, **6**B, **6**C and **6**D, in an alternative embodiment, an animator **123** has a base section **130**, a body section **134** with opposing sides **128** and **129**. A first control strap **126** extends from base section **130** along side **128** to tip end **136** where it is secured at **139**. A second control strap **127** extends from base section **130** along side **129** to tip end **136** where it is secured at **140**. Rings **132** and **133**, attached to the free ends of straps **126** and **127**, respectively, are used to pull on the straps **126** and **127** to operate the animator. A soft cylindrical handle **131** is attached to base section **130**. This embodiment is most appropriate for producing sideways motion such as to move the head of an alligator or the like.

The animator **123** is affixed in the puppet (not shown) in a generally vertical orientation, as illustrated in FIG. **6**A, that automatically places the base section **130** between fingers **135** (only one of which is shown) of an operating hand **138**. Fingers **135** grasp rings **132** and **133** attached to the free ends of straps **126** and **127**, respectively, and by pulling thereon, cause the body section **134** to bend and move from side to side (see FIGS. **6**C and **6**D). The base section **130** and body section **134** of animator **123** can, in all other respects, be the same as described above in connection with the embodiments of FIGS. **3** and **5**A. The significant difference is that because the control straps **126** and **127** are always on opposite sides of the animator **123**, there is no need for apertures to permit one of the control straps to be threaded to the other side.

A guide strap **137** on base section **130** keeps strap **126** and ring **132** in place to be conveniently grasped. A like guide strap (not shown) is provided for strap **127** and ring **133**. Alternatively, guide strap **137** can be of the type that passes through the ring **133** as shown in FIGS. **4**C and **4**D.

Referring to FIG. **7**, another embodiment of the invention involves a slight modification to the embodiment of FIG. **6**A. Control strap **126** and its ring **132** are replaced by an elastic strap **141** which is affixed at **144** near tip end **136** and the base section **130** at **142**. When ring **133** is pulled, causing the body section **134** to curve and bend (dashed lines **143**), the elastic strap **141** is stretched, creating a force in a direction tending to return the body section **134** to its original position. Thus, ring **133** and strap **127** alone control the movement of the animator by pulling and releasing without the necessity of a second control strap and ring.

In all of the embodiments, two straps are disposed on opposite sides of a body section, with each strap capable of providing a force bending the body section in one direction or another with at least one strap being adapted to be controlled by a user.

It will be obvious to those skilled in the art that numerous modifications can be made in the various components described above without departing from the invention. By way of example, and without being exhaustive, the shape of the components forming the base member, the relative lengths of the components, the materials from which the components are made, the presence or absence of a flexible sheet member, the existence, shape and size of the apertures, the use of a solid structure or a laminate structure, the presence and degrees of taper, and the presence or absence of a sheath, are all matters of choice that are within the scope of the invention. As such, it is intended that the present invention only be limited by the terms of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A puppet animator comprising:

a generally flat, unitary, elongate flexible body section having a first external side and an opposing second external side and terminating in a tip end;

a first control strap having two ends and extending along said first external side of said body section to said tip end where one of said first strap ends is affixed, while the other of said first strap ends is free; and

a second control strap having two ends and extending along said second external side of said body section to said tip end where one of its ends is affixed; whereby a pulling force on said first control strap causes said flexible body section to bend in one direction and a pulling force on said second control strap causes said flexible body section to bend in a second direction;

and a first pull ring attached to the free end of said first control strap whereby a pulling force can be applied to said first strap by pulling on said pull ring.

2. The puppet animator of claim **1** wherein said second control strap is elastic and is affixed at both of its ends whereby it is stretched when said body section is caused to bend by a pulling force on said pull ring of said first control strap.

3. The puppet animator of claim **1** wherein said second control strap has a free end and further comprising:

a second pull ring attached at the free end of said second control strap whereby a pulling force can be applied to said first and second straps separately or together by pulling on said first and second rings.

4. The puppet animator of claim **1** further comprising:

a base section that is contiguous with and extends from said elongate flexible body section, said base section having a first external side generally aligned with said first external side of said body section and a second external side generally aligned with said second external side of said body section; and

wherein said first control strap and said second control strap are disposed on at least one external side of said base section.

5. The puppet animator of claim **4** further comprising:

a first guide strap disposed on said base section maintaining said first control strap in position on said base section; and

a second guide strap disposed on said base section maintaining said second control strap in position on said base section.

6. The puppet animator of claim **5** wherein each of said guide straps passes through the ring attached to its respective control strap.

7. The puppet animator of claim **1** further comprising:

a base section from which said elongate flexible body section extends, said base section having a first side generally aligned with said first side of said body section and a second side generally aligned with said second side of said body section;

an aperture in said base section providing a passage from said first side to said second side thereof; and

wherein said first control strap is disposed on said first side of said base section and said first side of said body section and said second control strap is disposed on said first side of said base section, and through said aperture to said second side of said body section.

8. The puppet animator of claim **7** wherein said second control strap has a free end and further comprising:

a second pull ring attached to the free end of said second control strap:

whereby a pulling force can be applied to said first and second control straps by pulling on said first and second pull rings;

a first guide strap disposed on said first side of paid base section passing through said first pull ring attached to said first control strap; and

a second guide strap spaced apart from said first guide strap and disposed on said first side of said base section passing through said second pull ring attached to said second control strap whereby said first and second pull rings are maintained on said first side of said base section.

9. The puppet animator of claim **7** wherein said body section is a unitary member.

10. The puppet animator of claim **9** further comprising:

an elongate flexible, plastic sheet member embedded in said body section.

11. The puppet animator of claim **10** wherein said elongate flexible sheet member does not extend to said tip end.

12. The puppet animator of claim **11** wherein said body section is further described as having a width wherein said width tapers toward said tip end.

13. The puppet animator of claim **7** further comprising:

a stretchable sheath enclosing said body section and said control straps disposed thereon.

14. The puppet animator of claim **13** wherein said sheath has a seam allowance by which said animator can be attached to a puppet.

15. The puppet animator of claim **1** further comprising:

a stretchable sheath enclosing said body section and said control straps disposed thereon.

16. The puppet animator of claim **15** wherein said sheath has a seam allowance by which said animator can be attached to a puppet.

17. The puppet animator of claim **1** wherein said elongate flexible body section has a laminate structure including:

a flexible primary body member extending the length of said body section to its tip end; and

an flexible auxiliary body member extending along said primary body member no further than the tip end of said body section.

18. The puppet animator of claim **17** wherein said auxiliary body member extends along said primary body member to a point short of the tip end of said body section.

19. The puppet animator of claim **17** wherein said laminate structure further includes:

a flexible elastic sheet member disposed between said primary body member and said auxiliary body member and extending to a point short of the tip end of said body section.

20. The puppet animator of claim **19** wherein said base section is a laminate structure including extensions of said primary body member, said auxiliary body member and said flexible elastic sheet member.

21. The puppet animator of claim **20** further comprising:

a stretchable sheath enclosing said body section and said control straps disposed thereon.

22. The puppet animator of claim **21** wherein said sheath has a seam allowance by which said animator can be attached to a puppet.

23. The animator of claim **20** wherein said primary body member and said auxiliary body member are formed from sheets of ethylene vinyl acetate.

24. The puppet animator of claim **17** wherein said base section is a laminate structure including extensions of said primary body member, and said auxiliary body member.

25. The puppet animator of claim **24** further comprising:

a stretchable sheath enclosing said body section and said control straps disposed thereon.

26. The puppet animator of claim **25** wherein said sheath has a seam allowance by which said animator can be attached to a puppet.

27. The animator of claim **17** wherein said primary body member and said auxiliary body member are formed from sheets of ethylene vinyl acetate.

28. A soft sculpture puppet having disposed therein any of the animators of any one of claims **1-4**, **5-19**, or **20**.

29. The puppet animator of claim **1** further comprising:

a base section from which said elongate flexible body section extends, said base section having a first, side generally aligned with said first side of said body section and a second side generally aligned with said second side of said body section; and

wherein said first control strap is disposed on said first side of said base section and said second control strap is disposed on said first side of said base section.

30. The puppet animator of claim **1** further comprising:

a base section that is contiguous with and extends from said elongate flexible body section, said base section having a first side generally aligned with said first side of said body section and a second side generally aligned with said second side of said body section; and

wherein said first control strap is disposed on said first side of said base section and said second control strap is disposed on said second side of said base section.

31. An animated soft sculpture puppet having a body with an internal chamber sized to receive a person's hand and an elongated member extending from the body comprising:

a flexible elongated animator having a base section, and a body section terminating in a tip end, wherein at least a portion of said base section is disposed within the internal chamber and said body section extends into the elongated member; and

hand-manipulable controls attached to said animator and accessible from the internal chamber by which said animator is made to bend and wherein said hand-manipulable controls include at least one strap having an end disposed in the internal chamber and attached to a ring.

32. The animated soft sculpture puppet of claim **31** wherein said hand manipulable controls include a pair of straps each having an end disposed in the internal chamber and attached to a ring.

33. The animated soft sculpture puppet of claim **32** wherein said flexible elongated animator has a top side and a generally parallel bottom side and one of said control straps is disposed along the top side and the other along the bottom side and both said straps are attached at said tip end.

34. The animated soft sculpture puppet of claim **33** further comprising:

a stretchable sheath encasing a portion of said animator including said tip end and including portions of said straps.

35. The animated soft sculpture puppet of claim **34** further comprising:

a seam allowance on said sheath by which said animator is attached within the soft sculpture puppet.

36. The animated soft sculpture puppet of claim **34** wherein said animator is a laminated structure including sheets of ethylene vinyl acetate.

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