US008262014B1

(12) **United States Patent**
Selby

(10) **Patent No.: US 8,262,014 B1**
(45) **Date of Patent: Sep. 11, 2012**

(54) **DEVICE FOR STORING AND DISPENSING FLEXIBLE TUBING**

(76) Inventor: **William J. Selby**, Stoughton, MA (US)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 40 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **12/964,809**

(22) Filed: **Dec. 10, 2010**

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 12/786,715, filed on May 25, 2010.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
B65H 49/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **242/588.3**; 242/588.4; 242/588.6; 242/615.4; 206/395

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 242/588.3–588.4, 242/588.6, 129, 615.4; 206/395, 409
See application file for complete search history.

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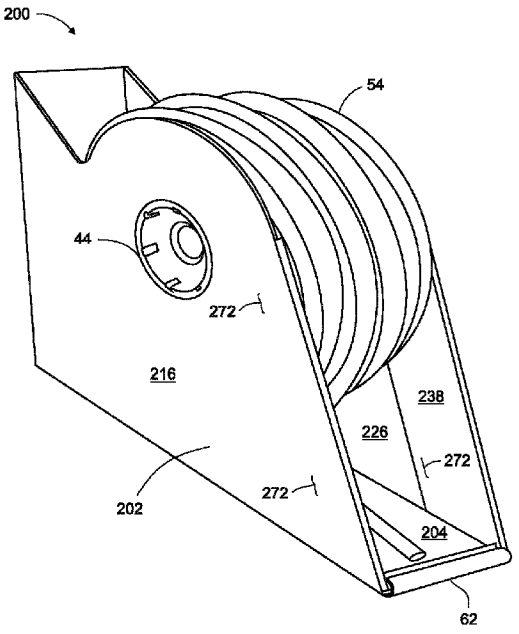
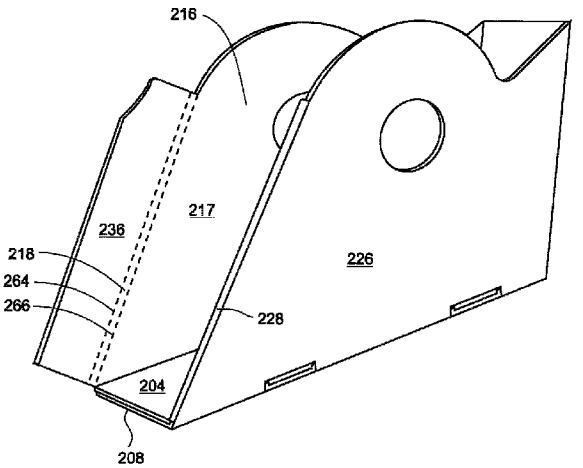
(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present invention is a device for storing, displaying, and dispensing flexible tubing upon a store shelf. In one embodiment, the device comprises a one-piece housing having inner and outer bottom walls, a rear wall extending upward from the outer bottom wall, and first and second sidewalls. The first sidewall extends upward from the inner bottom wall and is substantially perpendicular to the rear wall. The first sidewall comprises a smooth leading wall, a curved edge, and a trailing straight edge. The second sidewall extends upward from the outer bottom wall and is substantially perpendicular to the rear wall and parallel to the first sidewall. The second sidewall comprises a smooth leading wall, a curved edge, and a trailing straight edge. The smooth leading walls of the first and second sidewalls may be formed by first and second flaps that are folded upon inside surfaces of the first and second sidewalls, respectively.

6 Claims, 11 Drawing Sheets





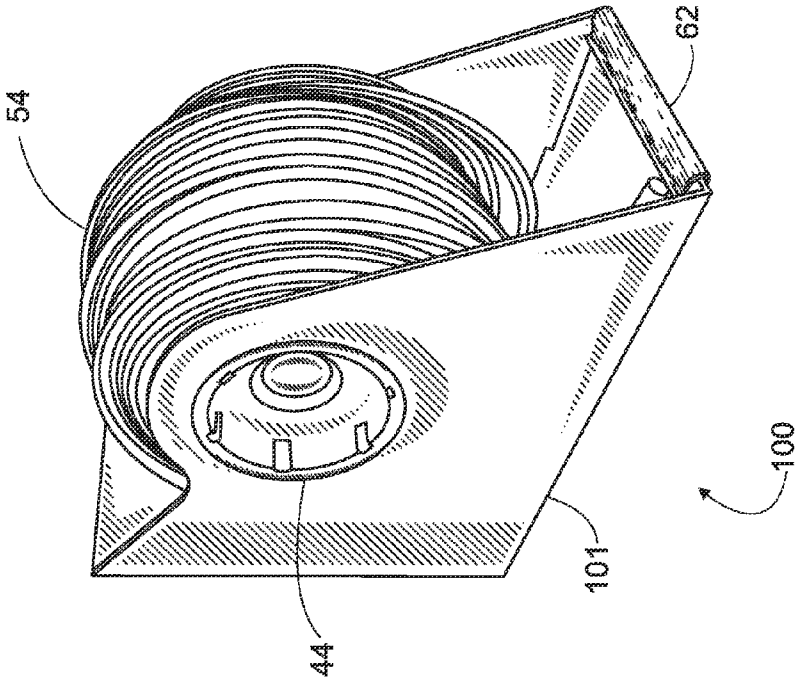
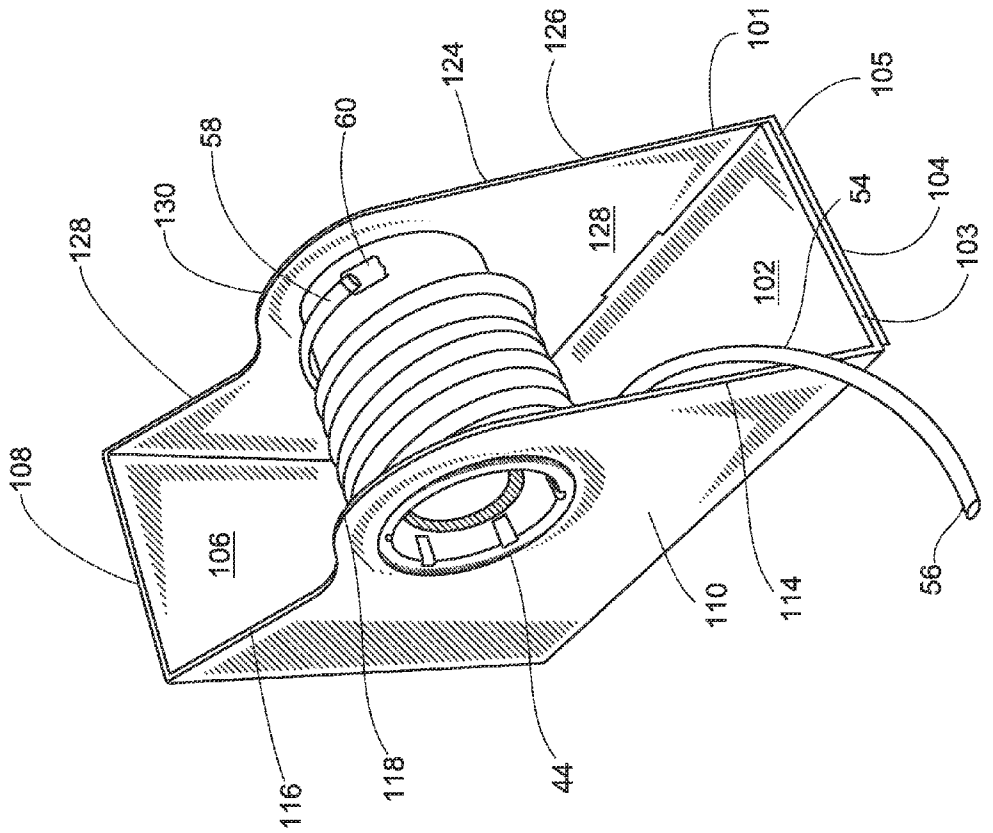


FIG. 1


108
128
130
58
60
124
126
101
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103
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114
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116
118
44

FIG. 2

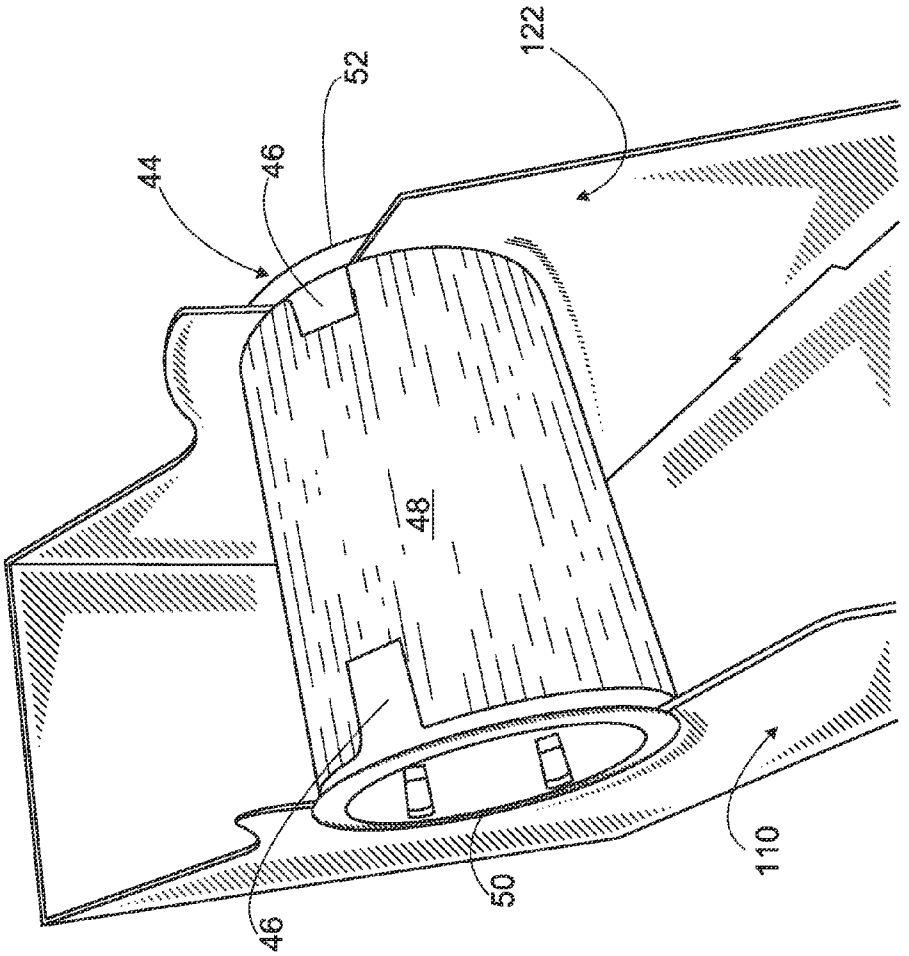


FIG. 3

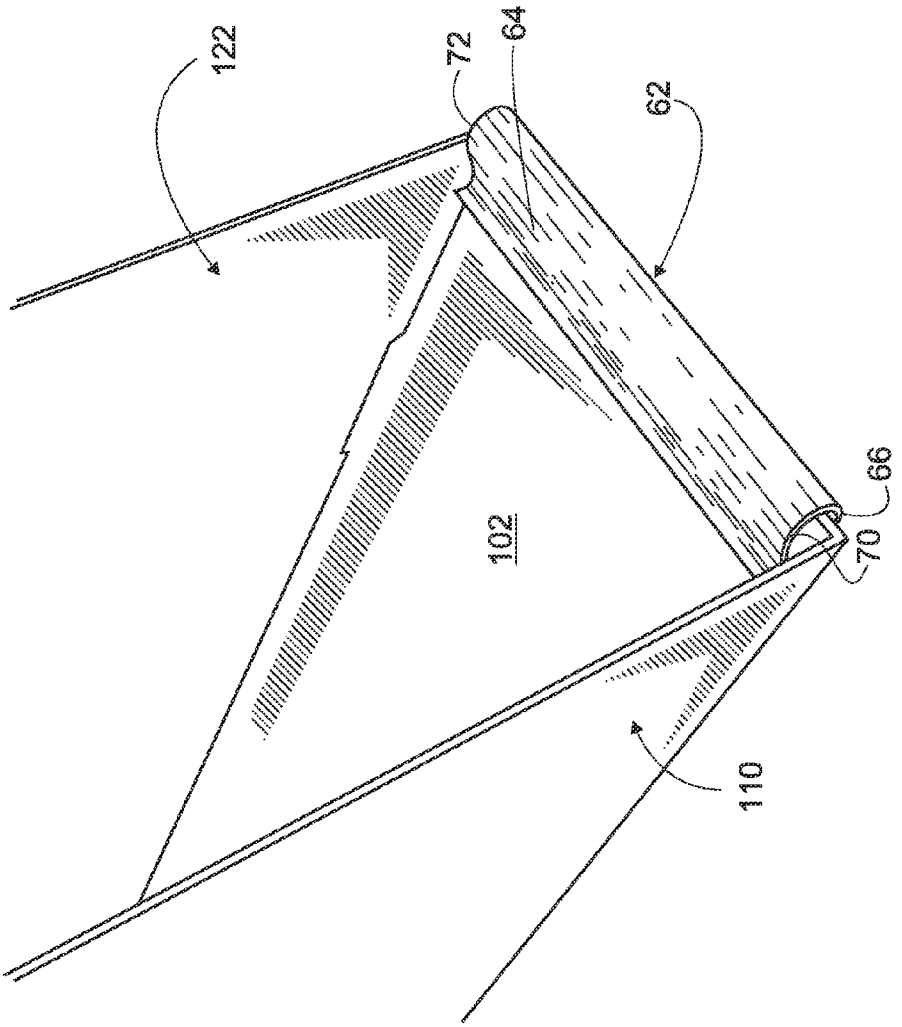


FIG. 4

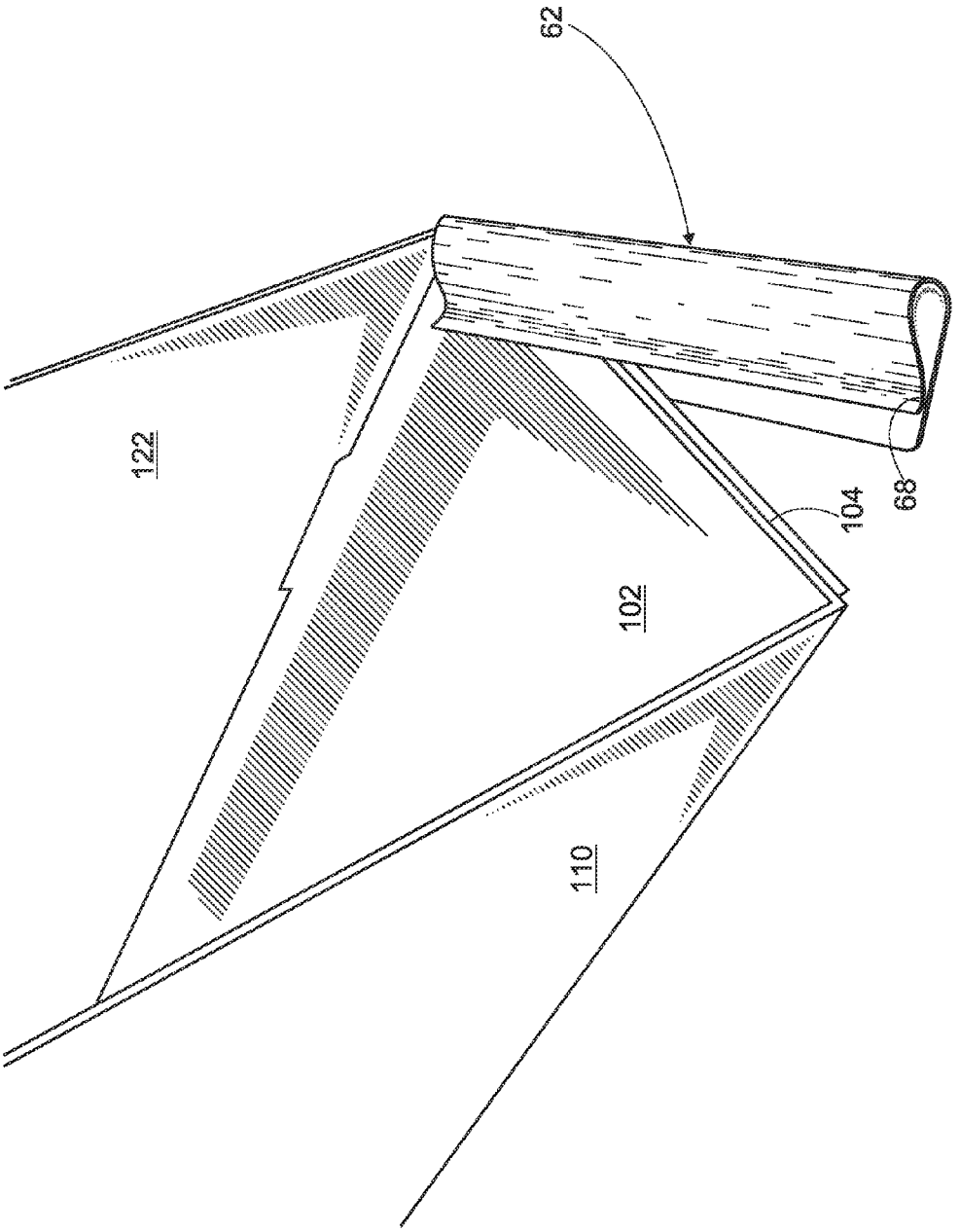
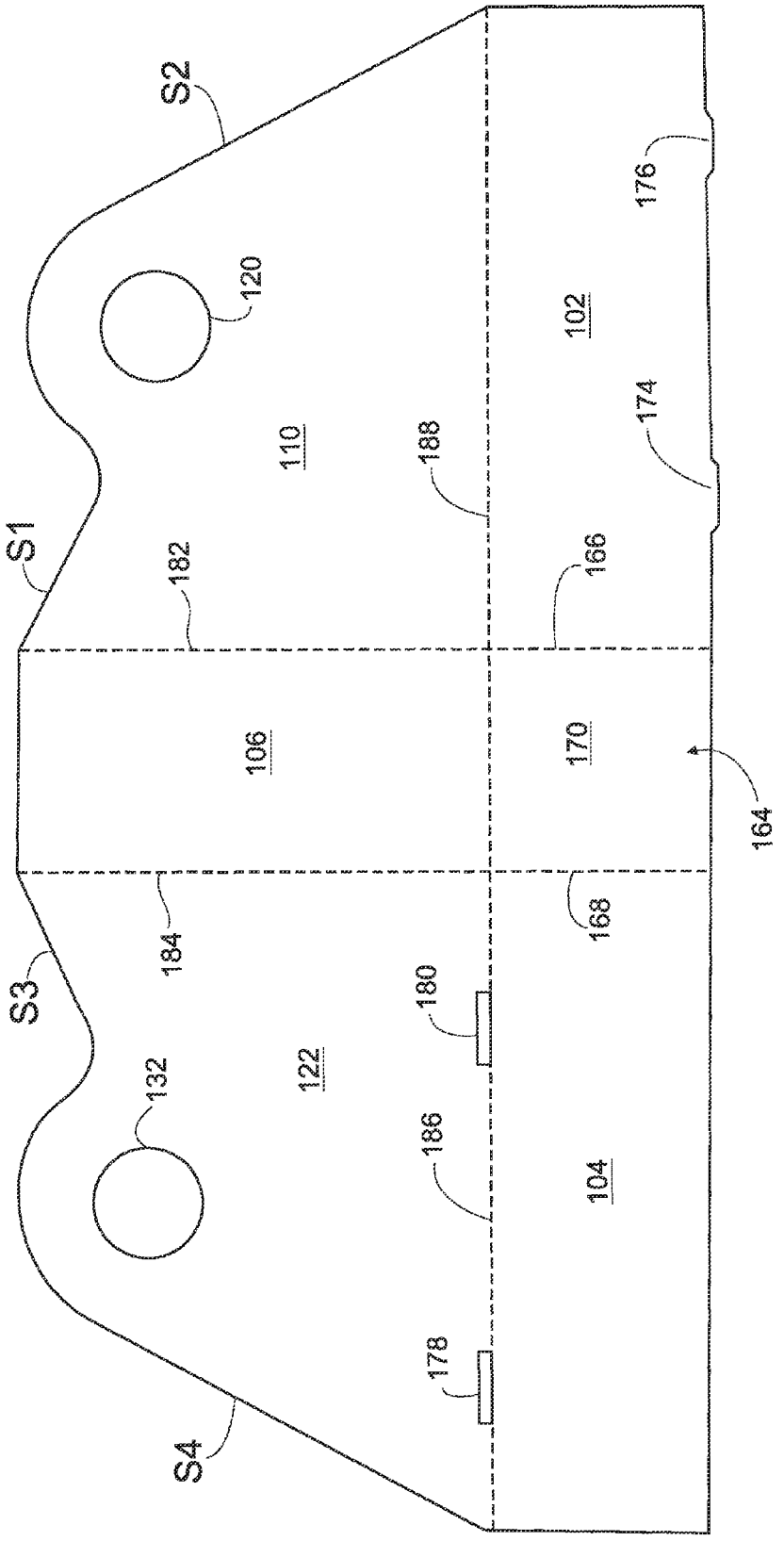


FIG. 5


S1
S2
S3
S4
110
102
106
170
122
104
120
132
176
174
188
182
166
164
184
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180
186
178

FIG. 6

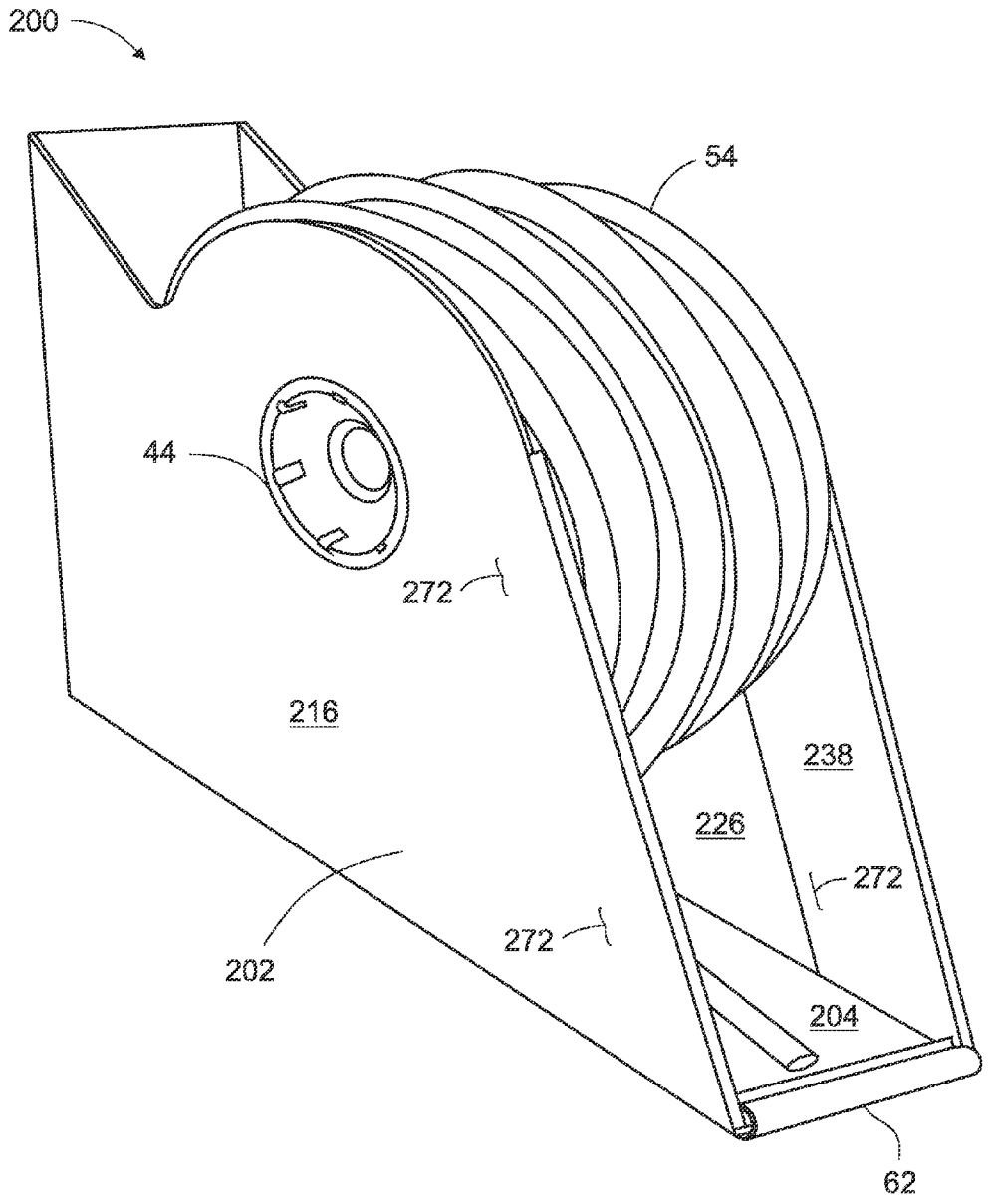
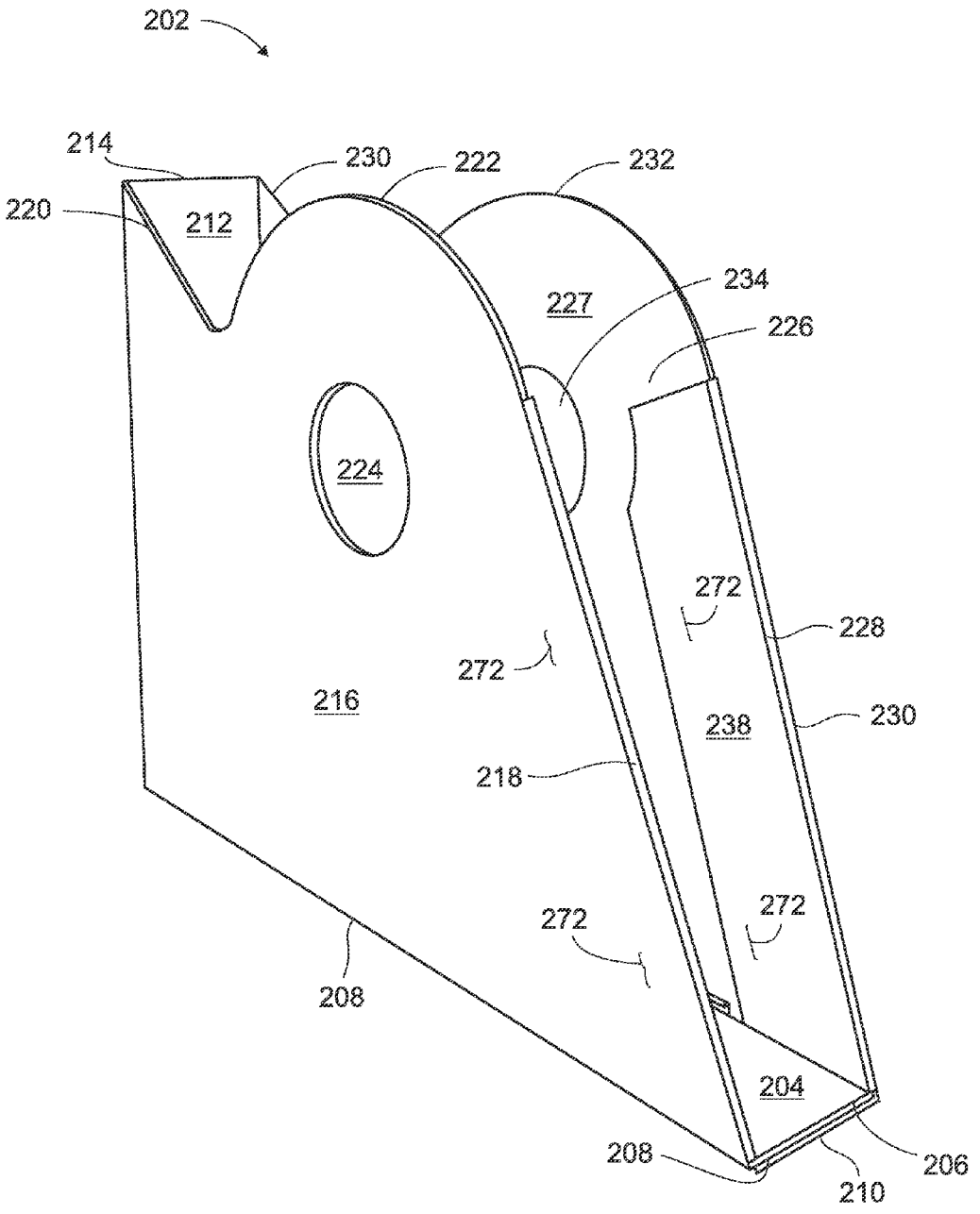


FIG. 7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214
230
222
232
220
212
234
227
226
224
272
228
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216
238
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218
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272
208
204
208
206
210

FIG. 8

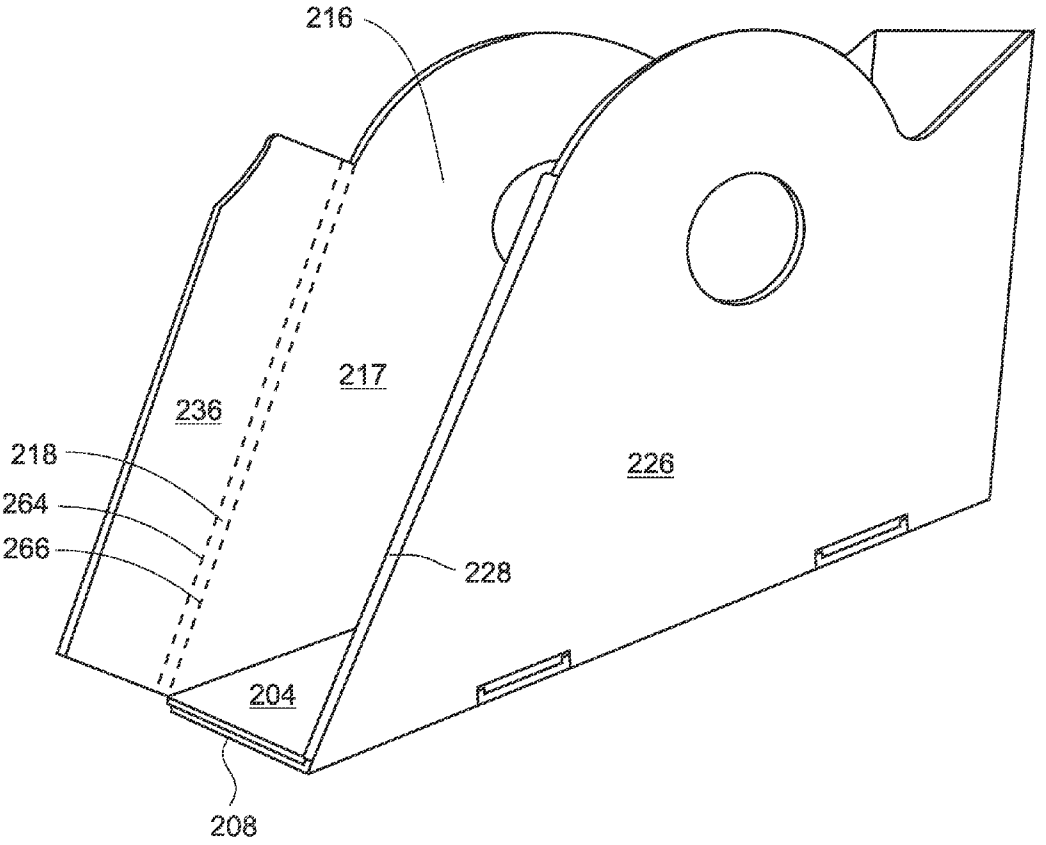

FIG. 9

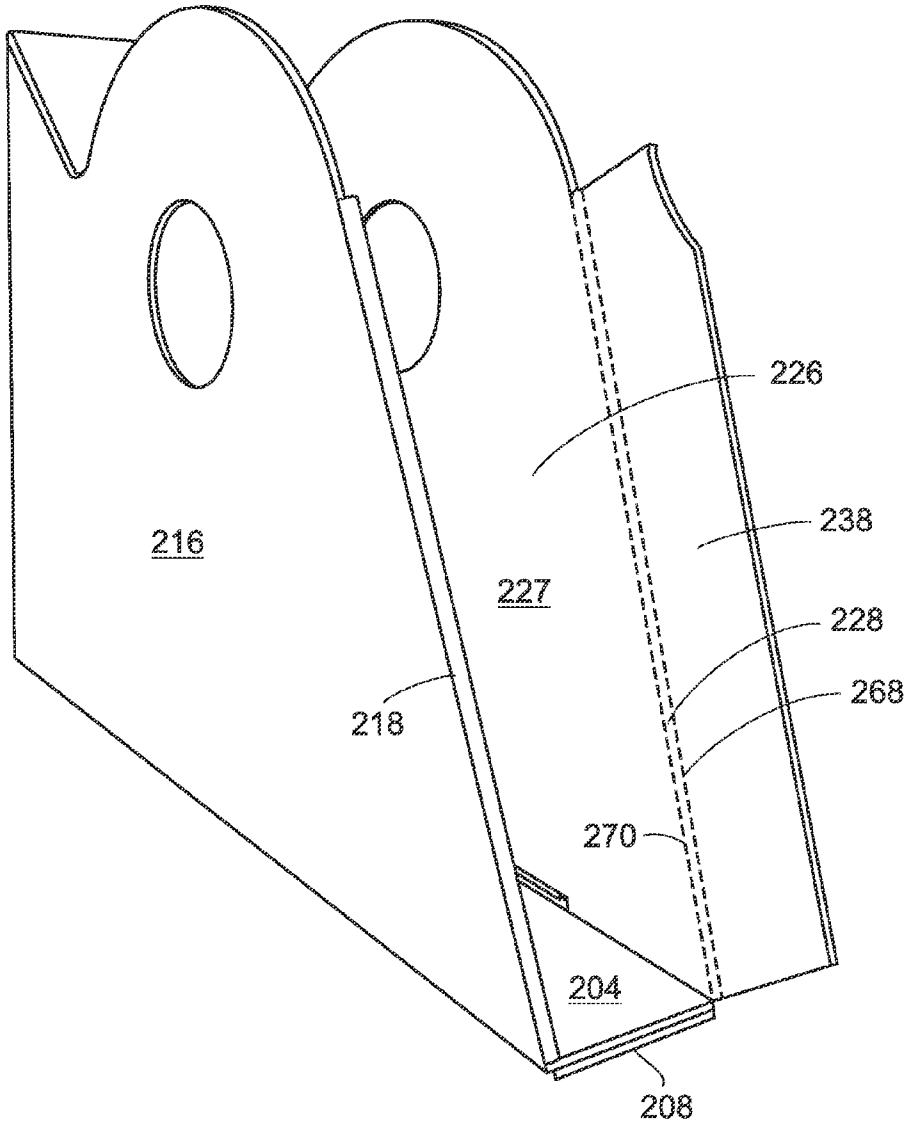

FIG. 10

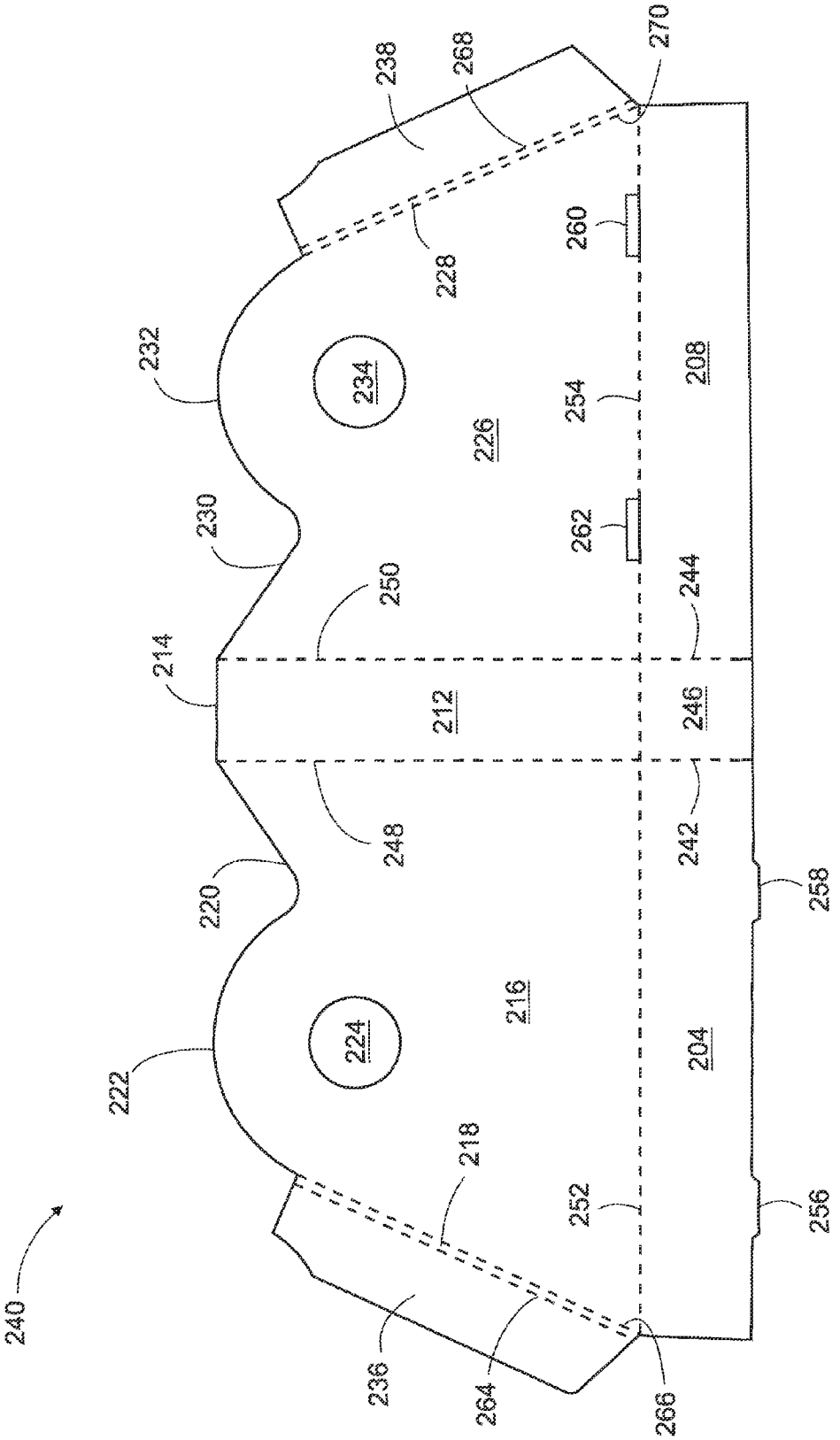
240
222
220
230
232
214
238
268
270
228
260
234
226
254
208
262
250
244
212
246
248
242
258
224
216
204
218
252
256
236
264
266

FIG. 11

DEVICE FOR STORING AND DISPENSING FLEXIBLE TUBING

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority to and is a continuation-in-part of application Ser. No. 12/786,715 filed on May 25, 2010, now pending, which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety into this specification.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Various types of devices have been developed for storing, displaying, and dispensing of materials such as flexible tubing. U.S. Pat. No. 5,826,817 discloses a cardboard box having a bottom wall, sidewalls, a front end wall with a window, a rear end wall, and a spool member spanning from first sidewall to second sidewall. Flexible tubing is wrapped around the spool member and dispensed thru the window. Such conventional devices have enjoyed considerable success. However, such conventional devices often slip on the shelf when the tubing is pulled by the customer causing damage to the front of the cardboard box. Another disadvantage with conventional devices is that a significant amount of material is employed increasing the overall cost of the device. These conventional devices are typically made from a one-piece corrugated card board that is cut and folded into the shape of the desired box. Another problem with such conventional storing and dispensing devices is the sharpness of the outside edges of the sidewalls. Such conventional devices dispense the flexible tube from the front of the box which have exposed sharp paper edges that might cause cut a paper cut to the consumer.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

One object of the present invention to provide a device for storing, displaying, and dispensing flexible tubing on a store shelf that will resist slipping and damage when the flexible tubing is dispensed by the customer.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a device for storing, displaying, and dispensing flexible tubing that uses less material and is significantly less expensive to manufacture than conventional devices.

It is still another object of the present invention to provide a device for storing, displaying, and dispensing flexible tubing that substantially prevents paper cuts to the user's fingers from sharp outside edges at the front of the device during dispensing.

The present invention is a device for storing, displaying, and dispensing flexible tubing upon a store shelf. In one embodiment, the device comprises a one-piece housing having inner and outer bottom walls, a rear wall extending upward from the outer bottom wall, and first and second sidewalls. The first sidewall extends upward from the inner bottom wall and is substantially perpendicular to the rear wall. The first sidewall comprises a smooth leading wall, a curved edge, and a trailing straight edge. The second sidewall extends upward from the outer bottom wall and is substantially perpendicular to the rear wall and parallel to the first sidewall. The second sidewall comprises a smooth leading wall, a curved edge, and a trailing straight edge. The smooth leading walls of the first and second sidewalls may be formed by first and second flaps that are folded upon inside surfaces of the first and second sidewalls, respectively. The device further comprises a spool assembly engaged with the first and second sidewalls. The device further comprises a flexible tubing wrapped about the spool member. The device further comprises a bumper engaged with the front edges of the inner and outer bottom walls. The bumper extends substantially from the first sidewall to the second sidewall. In use, the bumper provides frictional support to the device against the pulling force applied by a customer when dispensing the flexible tubing. The smooth leading walls of the first and second sidewalls along with the bumper substantially reduce the likelihood of a customer receiving a paper-cut while dispensing the flexible tubing.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The following description of the invention shall be further understood with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of a device according to a first embodiment of the present invention with flexible tubing fully wound upon the spool assembly;

FIG. **2** is a perspective view of the device of the first embodiment shown with the flexible tubing substantially dispensed;

FIG. **3** is a perspective view of the device of the first embodiment wherein the left and right sidewalls are partially cut away to show the spool assembly;

FIG. **4** is a perspective view of the device of the first embodiment showing a bumper engaged with a front edge of the bottom wall;

FIG. **5** is a perspective view of the device of the first embodiment showing the bumper partially removed from the front edge of the bottom wall;

FIG. **6** is a top plan view of a cardboard sheet showing various cut and fold lines to form the one-piece housing of the first embodiment;

FIG. **7** is a perspective view of a device according to a second embodiment of the present invention showing left and front sidewalls having smooth leading walls;

FIG. **8** is a perspective view of an assembled one-piece housing of the device according to the second embodiment;

FIG. **9** is a perspective view of the one-piece housing according to the second embodiment showing a left or first flap in an open position extending from a front portion of the first sidewall of the one-piece housing;

FIG. **10** is a perspective view of the one-piece housing according to the second embodiment showing a right or second flap in an open position extending from a front portion of the second sidewall of the one-piece housing; and

FIG. **11** is a top plan view of a cardboard sheet showing various cut and fold lines to form the one-piece housing of the second embodiment.

DESCRIPTION OF INVENTION

Referring to FIG. **1**, the present invention is a package or device **100** for storing, displaying, and dispensing articles such as flexible tubing **54** on a store self (not shown). Device **100** generally comprises a one-piece housing **101**, a spool assembly **44**, flexible tubing **54** wound upon a spool assembly **44**, and a bumper **62**.

Referring to FIG. **2**, one piece housing **101** generally comprises an inner bottom wall **102**, an outer bottom wall **104**, a rear wall **106**, a first side wall **110**, and a second side wall **122**. Inner and outer bottom walls **102** and **104** comprise a front edge **103** and a front edge **105**, respectively. Rear wall **106** comprises an outside edge **108**. First and second sidewalls **110** and **122** further comprise outside edges **112** and **124**,

respectively. First and second sidewalls **110** and **122** extend upward from inner bottom wall **102** and are substantially perpendicular to rear wall **106**. Outside edge **112** of first sidewall **110** further comprises a leading straight edge **114**, a trailing straight edge **116**, and a curved edge **118**. Curved edge **118** is disposed between leading and trailing straight edge portions **114** and **116**. Outside edge **124** of second sidewall **122** further comprises a leading straight edge **126**, a trailing straight edge **128** and a curved edge **130**. Curved edge **130** is disposed between leading and trailing straight edges **126** and **128**. As will be described more fully herein, one-piece housing **101** is fabricated from a sheet of cardboard (FIG. **6**) by cutting, folding, and stapling operations.

Referring to FIG. **3**, spool assembly **44** comprises an inner spool **46**, an outer spool **48**, a left flange **50** and a right flange **52**. Left and right flanges **50** and **52** are engaged with the open ends of inner spool **46** thru openings **120** and **132** (FIG. **6**) of first and second sidewalls **110** and **122**, respectively. Outer spool **48** freely rotates about inner spool **46**.

Referring back to FIG. **2**, flexible tubing **54** is wrapped about outer spool **48** toward a substantially radial position outward of leading and trailing straight edges **114** and **116** of first sidewall **110** and leading and trailing straight edges **126** and **128** of second sidewall **122**. Flexible tubing **54** further comprises an inside end **58** and an outside end **56**. Inside end **58** is attached to spool assembly **44** by a fastener **60**. In the embodiment shown, fastener **60** is a conventional piece of adhesive tape. In other embodiments, fastener **60** may be staples or any other well-known type of fastener.

Referring to FIGS. **4** and **5**, device **100** further comprises a bumper **62** engaged with front edge **103** and front edge **105** of inner and outer bottom walls **102** and **104**, respectively. Bumper **62** extends along upper front edge **103** and lower front edge **105** of inner bottom wall **102** and outer bottom wall **104** from first sidewall **110** to second sidewall **122**. Bumper **62** is made from a flexible material such as, but not limited to, rubber or plastic or any combination thereof. Bumper **62** further comprises an upper wall **64**, a lower wall **66**, a channel **68** (FIG. **5**), a first end **70**, and a second end **72**. As shown in FIG. **5**, bumper **62** engages with or is mounted to front edge **103** of inner bottom wall **102** and front edge **105** of outer bottom wall **104** between upper and lower walls **64** and **66** of bumper **62**. Bumper **62** provides frictional support to device **10** against the pulling force applied by a customer when dispensing flexible tubing **54** (FIG. **1**). Bumper **62** also prevents a consumer from contacting front edge **103** of inner bottom wall **102** and front edge **105** of outer bottom wall **104**. Bumper **62** also prevents damage to front edges **103** and **105** of inner and outer bottom walls **102** and **104**. Bumper **62** may take different forms. By way of example only, bumper **62** may employ multiple pieces engaged with front edges **103** and **105** rather than one-piece.

Device **100** may employ products other than flexible tubing **54**. By way of example only, device **100** may employ a rope, a chain, a wire or wall paper, or any other elongated flexible product suited for dispensing from a spool.

Referring to FIG. **6**, one-piece housing **101** is fabricated from a single cardboard sheet **164** having various cut-lines and fold lines which allow sheet **164** to be folded to the desired shape. Sheet **164** comprises a cut line **166**, a cut line **168**, a rear wall flap **170**, inner bottom wall **102**, outer bottom wall **104**, a first tab **174**, and a second tab **176** extending outward from inner bottom wall **102**. Sheet **164** further comprises a first slot **178** and a second slot **180** cut in second sidewall **122**. Sheet **164** further comprises a first vertical fold line **182**, a second vertical fold line **184**, a first horizontal fold line **186** and a second horizontal fold line **188**. One-piece housing **101** is formed by pre-folding cardboard sheet **164** along fold lines **182**, **184**, **186**, and **188**. After pre-folding, cuts are made along cut lines **166** and **168**. After cutting, sheet **164** is folded along fold lines **182**, **184**, **186**, and **188**. Inner bottom wall **102** is then folded above outer bottom wall **104** and tabs **174** and **176** are inserted into slots **180** and **178**, respectively. Leading straight edge **114** of first sidewall **110** has a slope S**2** and trailing straight edge **116** of first sidewall **122** has a slope S**1**. Slope S**2** is larger than slope S**1**. Leading straight edge **126** of second sidewall **122** has a slope S**4**. Trailing straight edge **128** of second sidewall **122** has a slope S**3**. Slope S**4** is larger than slope S**3**. The sloped walls of device **100** reduce the consumption of material and overall cost. The sloped walls of device **100** further provide structural stability during dispensing. Sheet **164** further comprises openings **120** and **132** which as previously described are cut into sidewalls **110** and **122**, respectively.

Referring to FIG. **7**, a device **200** according to a second embodiment of the present invention generally comprises a one-piece housing **202**, a spool assembly **44**, a flexible tubing **54** wound upon a spool assembly **44**, and a bumper **62**. Spool assembly **44**, flexible tubing **54**, and bumper **62** have been described in connection with device **100** (FIGS. **1-3**).

Referring to FIGS. **8-10**, one-piece housing **202** generally comprises an inner bottom wall **204**, an outer bottom wall **208**, a rear wall **212**, a first sidewall **216**, and a second sidewall **226**. Inner and outer bottom walls **204** and **208** comprise a front edge **206** and a front edge **210**, respectively. Rear wall **212** comprises an outside edge **214**. First and second sidewalls **216** and **226** extend upward from bottom walls **204** and **208** and are substantially perpendicular to rear wall **212**. First sidewall **216** comprises a smooth leading wall **218**, a trailing straight edge **220**, and a curved edge **222**. Curved edge **222** is disposed between smooth leading wall **218** and trailing straight edge **220**. Second sidewall **226** comprises a smooth leading wall **228**, a trailing straight edge **230** and a curved edge **232**. Curved edge **232** is disposed between smooth leading wall **228** and trailing straight edge **230**. Smooth leading walls **218** and **228** substantially reduce the likelihood of a customer obtaining a paper-cut while dispensing flexible tubing **54**. Smooth leading wall **218** is formed by a flap **236** that is folded upon inside surface **217** of first sidewall **216** (FIG. **9**). Smooth leading wall **220** is formed by a flap **238** that is folded upon inside surface **227** of second sidewall **226** (FIG. **10**). Flaps **236** and **238** are securely attached to first and second sidewalls **216** and **226** by conventional means such as staples **272**.

Referring to FIG. **11**, one-piece housing **202** is fabricated from a sheet **240** of cardboard by cutting, folding, and stapling operations. Sheet **240** comprises inner and outer bottom walls **204** and **208**, rear wall **212**, and first and second sidewalls **216** and **226**. Sheet **240** further comprises cut-lines **242** and **244** that form a rear wall flap **246**. Sheet **240** further comprises horizontal fold lines **252** and **254** that allow inner and outer bottom walls **204** and **208** to be folded. Sheet **240** further comprises vertical fold lines **248** and **250** that allow first and second sidewalls **216** and **226** to be folded. Sheet **240** further comprises tabs **256** and **258** extending outward from inner bottom wall **204**. Sheet **240** further comprises slots **260** and **262** cut in second sidewall **226** adjacent horizontal fold line **254**. When folded, tabs **256** and **258** of inner bottom wall **204** are inserted into slots **260** and **262** of second sidewall **226**. For added stability, inner bottom wall **204** may be stapled to outer bottom wall **208** by staples **272**. Sheet **240** further comprises openings **224** and **234** cut into first and second sidewalls **216** and **226** to receive spool assembly **44** as described in connection with device **100** (FIGS. **1-3**). Sheet

240 further comprises flaps 236 and 238 extending outward from first and second sidewalls 216 and 226, respectively, below curved edges 222 and 232. Sheet 240 further comprises folds lines 264 and 266 so flap 236 may be folded upon inside surface 217 of first sidewall 216 to form smooth leading wall 218. Sheet 240 further comprises folds lines 268 and 270 so flap 238 may be folded upon inside surface 227 of second sidewall 226 to form smooth leading wall 228.

In another embodiment, smooth leading walls 218 and 228 of first and second sidewalls could be formed by replacing flaps 236 and 238 with plastic strips attached to leading straight edges 114 and 126 of first and second sidewalls 110 and 122 (FIG. 2) by conventional means such as adhesive or they may be self attaching or clip-on type plastic strips.

While particular embodiments of the invention have been shown and described, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that changes and modifications may be made without departing from the scope of the claimed invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A device for dispensing flexible tubing upon a shelf comprising:

(a) a one-piece housing comprising an inner bottom wall comprising a front edge; an outer bottom wall comprising a front edge; a rear wall extending upward from said outer bottom wall; a first sidewall extending upward from said inner bottom wall; said first sidewall is substantially perpendicular to said rear wall; said first sidewall comprises a smooth leading wall, a trailing straight edge, and a curved edge disposed between said smooth leading wall and said trailing straight edge; and a second sidewall extending upward from said outer bottom wall; said second sidewall is substantially perpendicular to said rear wall and parallel to said first sidewall; said second sidewall comprises a smooth leading wall, a trailing straight edge, and a curved edge disposed between said smooth leading wall and said trailing straight edge; said smooth leading wall of said first sidewall is a first flap folded upon said first sidewall;

(b) a spool assembly engaged with said first and second sidewalls; and

(c) flexible tubing wrapped about said spool member.

2. The device of claim 1, wherein said smooth leading wall of said second sidewall is a second flap folded upon said second sidewall.

3. The device of claim 2, wherein said first and second flaps are secured to said first and second sidewalls, respectively, by staples.

4. The device of claim 3, wherein said first and second flaps are integrally formed with said first and second sidewalls, respectively.

5. The device of claim 4, further comprising a bumper engaged with said front edge of said inner and outer bottom walls; said bumper extending substantially from said first sidewall to said second sidewall.

6. The device of claim 5, wherein said one piece housing is made from card board.

* * * * *