

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO  
EASTERN DIVISION

MPT, INC.  
38601 MPT Parkway  
Willoughby, Ohio 44094

*Plaintiff,*

vs.

MARATHON LABELS, INC.  
attn: John Hurley, registered agent  
612 Oaktree Ct  
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46845

*Defendant, and*

MARATHON DURABLE LABELING  
SYSTEMS LLC  
attn: John Hurley, registered agent  
612 Oaktree Ct  
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46845

POLYMERIC CONVERTING LLC  
5 Old Depot Road  
Enfield, CT 06082

and

SUNBELT CONSULTING GROUP, INC.  
PO Box 8630  
Atlanta, GA 31106

*New Party Defendants.*

CASE NO. 1:04CV2357

JUDGE GAUGHAN

**FIRST AMENDED COMPLAINT FOR  
PATENT INFRINGEMENT**

**JURY TRIAL DEMANDED**

Pursuant to the Court's Case Management Order dated January 28, 2005, permitting amendment of pleadings and joinder of new parties prior to April 8, 2005, Plaintiff MPT, Inc.

(“MPT”) alleges as follows with regarding to Defendant Marathon Labels, Inc., (“Marathon”) and New Parties Defendant Marathon Durable Labeling Systems LLC (“MDLS”), Polymeric Converting LLC (“Polymeric”) and Sunbelt Consulting Group, Inc. (“Sunbelt”) (together, Marathon, MDLS, Polymeric and Sunbelt are jointly referred to herein as “Defendants”).

### **Background and Parties**

1. This is a civil action under the patent laws of the United States, specifically 35 U.S.C. §§ 271, 281, 283, 284 and 285, for infringement of U.S. Patent No. 5,417,790 and U.S. Reissue Patent No. RE37164 by defendants Marathon, Polymeric and Sunbelt.

2. Plaintiff MPT, is a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Ohio and having a regular and established place of business at 38601 Kennedy Parkway, Willoughby, Ohio 44094.

3. Marathon is, on information and belief, an Indiana corporation that manufactures, offers for sale, sells and/or distributes placards (believed to be referred to as “Smart Surface Placards™”) and labels for use in labeling reusable containers (the “Reusable Labels”) commercially in the United States, having its principal place of business at 612 Oaktree Ct, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46845. On information and belief, Marathon offers the said Reusable Labels for sale within the State of Ohio including the Northern Judicial District thereof, Eastern Division.

4. MDLS is, on information and belief, an Indiana limited liability company that assists or participates in the manufacture, offering for sale, marketing, selling and/or distributing of the Reusable Labels, having its principal place of business at 612 Oaktree Ct, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46845.

5. Polymeric is, on information and belief, a Connecticut limited liability company

that assists or participates in the manufacture, offering for sale, marketing, selling and/or distributing of the Reusable Labels, having its principal place of business at 5 Old Depot Road, Enfield, CT 06082.

6. Sunbelt is, on information and belief, a Georgia corporation that assists or participates in the manufacture, offering for sale, marketing, selling and/or distributing of the Reusable Labels, having its principal place of business at 633 Sherwood Road, Atlanta, Georgia 30324, and having a mailing address as set forth in the caption hereof.

7. Marathon, MDLS, Polymeric and Sunbelt are, on information as set out below, believed to be jointly engaged in the manufacture and/or marketing of the Reusable Labels, and thereby jointly engaged in inducing purchasers of the Reusable Labels in wrongfully practicing the methods of the patents at issue in this action, with knowledge of the said patents. Evidence of the joint activity includes the following:

- a. Polymeric, MDLS and Sunbelt are described (at reel/frame 012696/0969 in the Patent Assignment database of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office) as joint owners by assignment of U.S. Patent No. 6,667,086.
- b. Polymeric, MDLS and Sunbelt are described (in the application therefore open to the public on February 24, 2003) as joint owners of Canadian Patent Application 2,396,416; that application claims priority from U.S. Patent application Ser. No. 09/938,343, which U.S. patent application matured into U.S. Patent No. 6,667,086.
- c. Marathon, through its counsel herein, has maintained that the said '086 U.S. patent describes the nature of and details of the Reusable Labels, which are the product accused of infringement in this action.

d. In Marathon's Initial Disclosures, served February 11, 2005, Marathon has indicated that representatives of Marathon, Polymeric and Sunbelt have knowledge of "ownership of the '086 patent" as well as "the design of the accused products."

On this basis, Marathon, MDLS, Polymeric and Sunbelt are believed to be, and therefore are alleged herein to be, conspirators in the making, marketing and selling of the accused Reusable Labels within the United States.

8. This action, insofar as it makes claims of patent infringement, is authorized by 35 U.S.C. § 281. The federal courts have original and exclusive jurisdiction of the action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1338(a).

#### **The Patents At Issue**

9. On May 23, 1995, the United States Patent and Trademark Office issued U.S. Patent No. 5,417,790, to Robert J. Petrou, entitled "Label Systems For Reusable Containers And The Like" (the "'790 Patent"). A copy of the '790 Patent is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

10. MPT is the assignee of all rights in the '790 Patent and has not granted any rights to Defendants to practice the '790 Patent.

11. On May 8, 2001, the United States Patent and Trademark Office issued U.S. Patent No. RE 37,164 E, to Robert J. Petrou, entitled "Label Systems For Reusable Containers And The Like" (the "'164 Patent"). A copy of the '164 Patent is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

12. MPT is the assignee of all rights in the '164 Patent and has not granted any rights to Defendants to practice the '164 Patent.

#### **Claim I. – Infringement of the '790 Patent**

13. Defendants infringe claims of the '790 Patent, induce others so to infringe, and/or

contribute to the infringement thereof by others, by making, using, selling and/or offering for sale the Reusable Labels, either literally or by virtue of the Doctrine of Equivalents.

14. Defendants are not authorized to practice the invention of the '790 Patent.

15. If Defendants are permitted to make, use, sell or offer for sale the invention claimed in the '790 Patent, MPT will suffer irreparable injury from the erosion of its patent rights in the '790 Patent.

16. MPT has suffered injury from Defendants' infringement and is entitled to be made whole by an award of money damages in its favor.

17. Defendants' continued infringement of the '790 Patent with knowledge of that Patent is willful and without reasonable justification, entitling MPT to enhanced damages pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 284, and to an award of its attorneys' fees and costs in the bringing and maintaining of this action pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 285.

**Claim II. – Infringement of the '164 Patent**

18. Defendants infringe claims of the '164 Patent, induce others so to infringe, and/or contribute to the infringement thereof by others, by making, using, selling and/or offering for sale the Reusable Labels, either literally or by virtue of the Doctrine of Equivalents.

19. Defendants are not authorized to practice the invention of the '164 Patent.

20. If Defendants are permitted to make, use, sell or offer for sale the invention claimed in the '164 Patent, MPT will suffer irreparable injury from the erosion of its patent rights in the '164 Patent.

21. MPT has suffered injury from Defendants' infringement and is entitled to be made whole by an award of money damages in its favor.

22. Defendants' continued infringement of the '164 Patent with knowledge of that

Patent is willful and without reasonable justification, entitling MPT to enhanced damages pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 284, and to an award of its attorneys' fees and costs in the bringing and maintaining of this action pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 285.

**Request For Relief**

WHEREFORE, MPT demands a trial by jury and demands judgment against Defendants as follows:

A. For a permanent injunction enjoining Defendants, their successors and assigns, and their officers, directors, agents, servants, employees, and all entities and individuals acting in concert with them or on their behalf, from continued infringement of the '790 Patent and the '164 Patent;

B. For an accounting of all damages and a judgment for general damages against Defendants, jointly and severally, as compensation for their use, exploitation and infringement of the '790 Patent and the '164 Patent;

C. For an increase of all such damages to three times their amount, pursuant to 35 U.S.C. §284, for willful infringement of the said patents;

D. For the cost of this action, together with an assessment of interest and reasonable attorney fees pursuant to 35 U.S.C. §285;

E. For an award of pre-judgment interest; and

F. For such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

**Demand For Jury Trial**

MPT demands a trial by jury as to all issues tryable by a jury in this action.

Dated: April 8, 2004

          /s/ Thomas H. Shunk            
Thomas H. Shunk (0025793)  
Kyle B. Fleming (0064644)  
BAKER & HOSTETLER LLP  
3200 National City Center  
1900 East Ninth Street  
Cleveland, Ohio 44114-3485  
(216) 621-0200  
(216) 373-6557 (fax)  
tshunk@bakerlaw.com  
kfleming@bakerlaw.com  
*Attorneys for Plaintiff MPT, Inc.*

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

A copy of the foregoing First Amended Complaint was served by the Court's electronic filing system upon counsel for defendant Marathon on April 8, 2005. Service of process upon the new-party defendants MDLS, Polymeric and Sunbelt is being sought pursuant to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

          /s/ Thomas H. Shunk            
An attorney for Plaintiff





US005417790A

**United States Patent** [19]

[11] **Patent Number:** 5,417,790

**Petrou**

[45] **Date of Patent:** May 23, 1995

- [54] **LABEL SYSTEMS FOR REUSABLE CONTAINERS AND THE LIKE**
- [75] **Inventor:** Robert J. Petrou, Hudson, Ohio
- [73] **Assignee:** Michael R. Kennedy, Gates Mills, Ohio
- [21] **Appl. No.:** 292,882
- [22] **Filed:** Aug. 19, 1994

- 4,642,256 2/1987 Sato .
- 4,767,654 8/1988 Riggsbee ..... 428/40 X
- 4,863,772 9/1989 Cross ..... 156/248 X
- 4,872,707 10/1989 Debruin ..... 283/102
- 4,876,131 10/1989 Ashby ..... 428/42 X
- 4,928,874 5/1990 Henry ..... 229/74
- 4,932,684 6/1990 Vermeulen .
- 4,933,124 6/1990 Duncan .
- 4,938,414 7/1990 Lippert ..... 229/92.8 X
- 5,019,436 5/1991 Schramer et al. .
- 5,021,273 6/1991 Kobayashi .
- 5,129,976 7/1992 Horikiri ..... 156/249 X
- 5,248,536 9/1993 Du Katz ..... 40/594

**Related U.S. Application Data**

- [63] Continuation-in-part of Ser. No. 955,119, Oct. 1, 1992, abandoned.

- [51] **Int. Cl.<sup>6</sup>** ..... B32B 31/00
- [52] **U.S. Cl.** ..... 156/249; 40/594; 156/344
- [58] **Field of Search** ..... 156/247, 248, 249, 344; 428/40; 40/594

**FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS**

- 1090590 11/1967 United Kingdom ..... 40/594

*Primary Examiner*—David A. Simmons  
*Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Watts, Hoffmann, Fisher & Heinke Co.

[56] **References Cited**

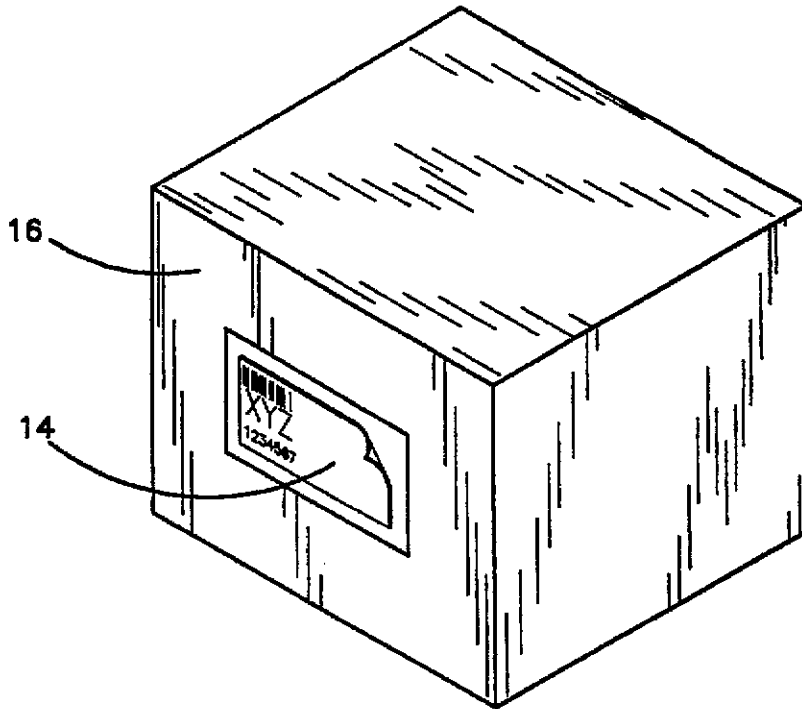
**U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS**

- 3,854,229 12/1974 Morgan .
- 3,974,311 8/1976 Cherrin .
- 4,090,464 5/1978 Bishopp ..... 40/594 X
- 4,104,816 8/1978 Pingeton .
- 4,253,899 3/1981 Takemoto et al. .
- 4,359,358 11/1982 Hattmer ..... 156/248
- 4,363,685 12/1982 White ..... 156/212
- 4,398,985 8/1983 Eagon ..... 156/233
- 4,479,838 10/1984 Dunsirn ..... 156/247
- 4,521,267 6/1985 Jacobson .
- 4,534,582 8/1985 Howard .

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A method of labeling reusable containers is disclosed. A placard having a release coating on one side is adhesively secured to the container. The placard is transparent with instructional printing applied to one surface. Pressure-sensitive labels are placed on the exposed surface of the placard. The labels contain indicia relating to the status of the container. When the status of the container changes, the label is removed and a new label is substituted on the placard.

8 Claims, 1 Drawing Sheet



**Ex. A**

U.S. Patent

May 23, 1995

5,417,790

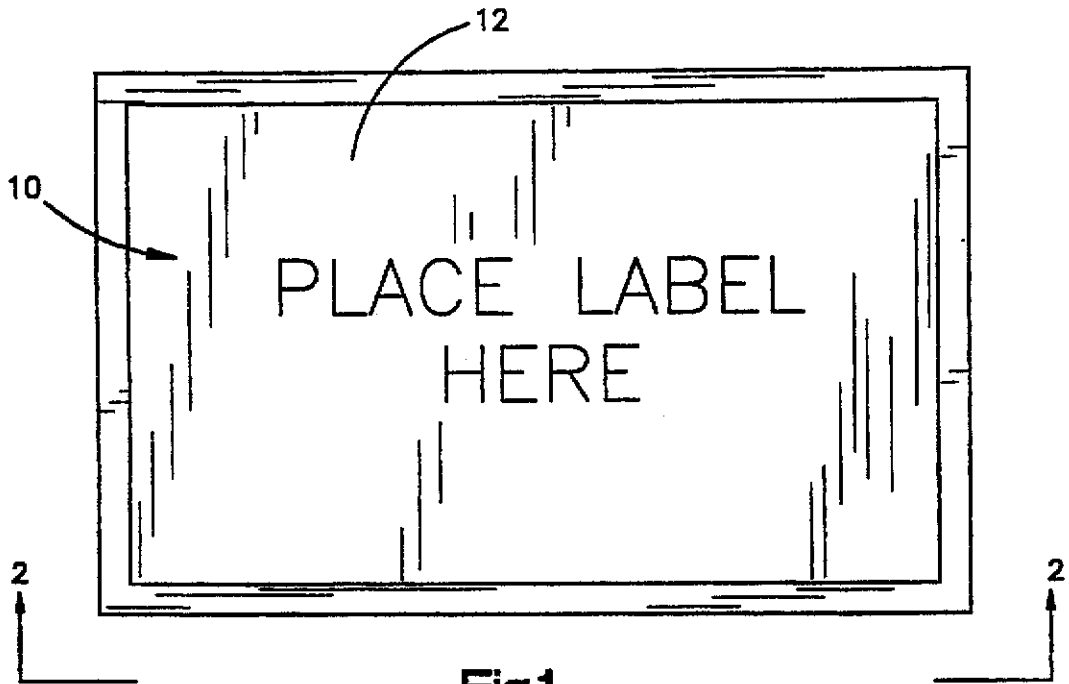


Fig.1

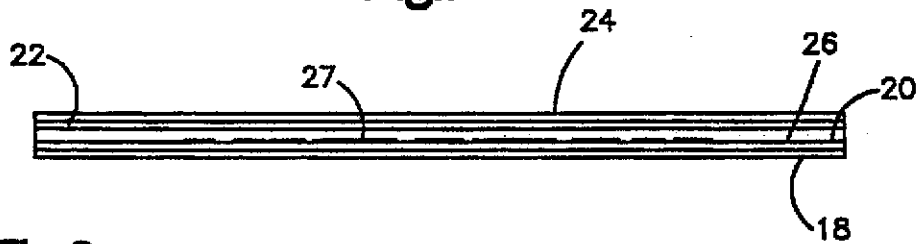


Fig.2

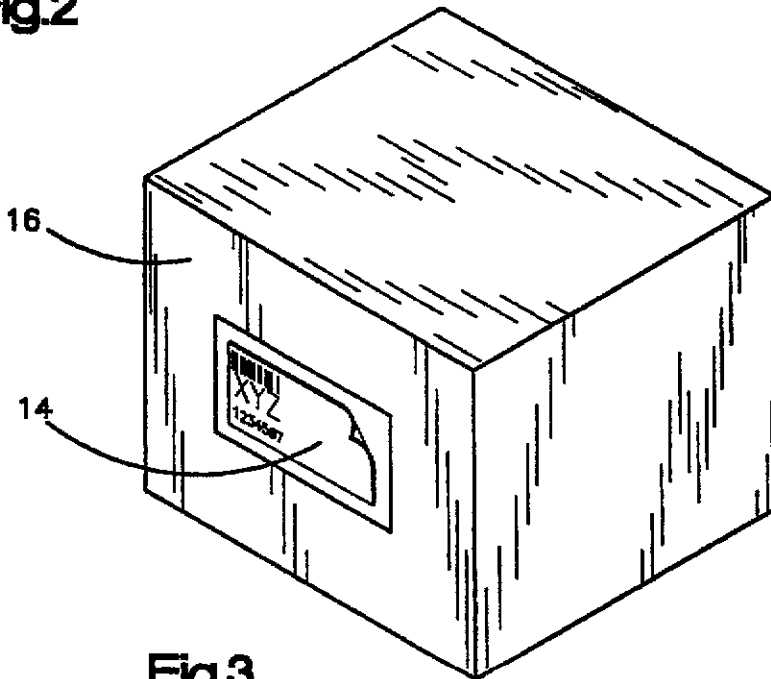


Fig.3

5,417,790

1

## LABEL SYSTEMS FOR REUSABLE CONTAINERS AND THE LIKE

This is a continuation-in-part of application Ser. No. 07/955,119, filed on Oct. 1, 1992, now abandoned.

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

#### 1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a method of labeling reusable containers, and more particularly, a method which provides a reusable surface for pressure-sensitive adhesive labels.

#### 2. Description of Related Art

Reusable containers often require a labeling system to identify the contents and status of each container. The label provides information such as the origin and destination of the contents, batch number, part number, serial number, quantity, and description.

In one proposed labeling system, a transparent envelope is secured to the container. A label is placed inside the envelope where it can be viewed. When the status of the container changes such as when its content is changed, a new label is substituted in the envelope. Often times, bar codes are printed on the labels. A transparent envelope will sometimes interfere with proper scanning of the bar code. This is particularly true where, after time, the transparent envelope becomes stained or dusty. Also, the transparent envelopes are sometimes bulky and subject to tearing and catching on objects.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An object of the invention is to provide a method of labeling using pressure-sensitive adhesive-backed labels and a reusable placard for supporting said labels.

Another object is to provide a method of labeling using an adhesive-backed placard having a disposable liner covering the adhesive.

In a preferred embodiment, the invention comprises provision of a placard having an adhesive coated inner face and a release coated outer face. In use the adhesive coated face of the placard is applied to a surface with the release coated surface outermost. The placard is transparent and includes printing on the inner face which is visible and readable after the placard is applied to a surface to provide instructional information such as "place label here". A label is applied to the placard outer face such that a pressure sensitive adhesive backing of the label is releasably attached to the release coated surface even if the label has a so called permanent adhesive backing. When desired the label is easily removed when desired and replaced with another.

In the preferred embodiment the placard is provided with a disposable liner having a release coating on one face for covering the placard's adhesive coating. The liner is removed prior to applying the placard.

Other object and advantages and a fuller understanding of the invention will be had from the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment and the accompanying drawings.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A preferred embodiment of the invention is shown in the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a top plan view of a placard constructed in accordance with the present invention;

2

FIG. 2 is a side elevation view seen approximately from the plane indicated by lines 2--2 in FIG. 1; and FIG. 3 is a perspective view of a reusable container labeled in accordance with the present invention.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring to FIGS. 1, 2 and 3, a multi-layer lamination 10 is shown. The lamination 10 includes a placard 12 for supporting replaceable adhesive-backed pressure-sensitive labels 14 on reusable containers 16 in the method of the present invention.

Referring to FIG. 2, the lamination 10 includes a disposable liner layer 18 which is preferably paper. The liner is provided with a silicone release layer 20.

The placard 12 includes a layer of transparent polypropylene film 22. The film 22 is provided on one face with a silicone release coating 24 and on the opposite face with a coating of adhesive 26. The opposite face bears printing 27 which is readily observed and read when the placard is in use to provide instructional information such as "place label here". The thickness of the printing 27 is exaggerated in FIG. 2 for clarity of illustration. The adhesive coating 26 is in contact with the release layer 20 prior to use. The liner 18 is easily removed, leaving the adhesive 26 exposed.

The lamination 10 is preferably assembled from commercially available products. For example, transparent polypropylene film 22, having a silicone release coating 24 on one face is commercially available from the Mobil Chemical Corporation. A paper liner 18, having a release coating 20 and a layer of white modified acrylic adhesive 26 laminated to one side, is commercially available from the 3M Corporation. The non-release coated side of the film 22 is laminated to the adhesive-coated surface of the 3M lamination 18, 20, 26 to produce the multilayer lamination 10. Then, the lamination 10 is die-cut to remove a marginal portion of the film 22 and the adhesive 26. Thus, as seen in FIG. 1, the liner 18 is larger than the placard 12 to facilitate its removal. The white adhesive 26 is visible through the transparent film 22 to produce a highly visible placard 12 and a light background for the printing 27.

The preferred method is one for labeling reusable containers 28. First, the release-coated liner 18 is removed from the lamination 10. The placard 12 is applied to a container 28 such that the adhesive 26 secures the placard 12 firmly to the container 28 with the release coating 24 outermost and the printing 27 clearly visible. Then label 14, having an exposed adhesive layer, is applied to the placard 12 such that the label's adhesive contacts the release coating 24. The label carries printed indicia relating to the container and/or its contents. When desired, such as when the container is refilled, the label is removed and a new label 14 carrying new information is applied to the placard 12.

The placard allows pressure-sensitive labels to be easily removed and replaced as many times as necessary. The labels can be removed without ripping or tearing. The labels are not covered by a plastic envelope which results in better bar code scanning. In addition, the container stays free of label and adhesive build-up. Moreover, because of the release coating 24 any commercially available label can be used including those with inexpensive permanent pressure sensitive adhesive coatings rather than more expensive removable coatings.

5,417,790

3

While a preferred embodiment of this invention has been described in detail, it will be apparent that certain modifications or alterations can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A method of labeling and relabeling a reusable container comprising:

- a) providing a placard for supporting pressure-sensitive adhesive-backed labels, said placard having a release coated face and an adhesive coated face, and a liner covering said adhesive coating;
- b) removing said liner from said adhesive coated face;
- c) substantially permanently attaching the placard to the object by adhering said placard to said container using said adhesive coated face;
- d) placing a pressure-sensitive adhesive coated label on the release coating of said placard wherein said label has indicia printed thereon;
- e) removing said label from the placard while leaving the placard adhered to the container, replacing said label with another adhesive coated label having different indicia printed thereon by adhering the adhesive coating of said another label to the release coating of the placard.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the provided placard is substantially transparent and printing is applied to one of the faces under the coating of said one of the faces.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the one face is the adhesive coated face.

4. A method of using a reusable container for products comprising:

- a) substantially permanently affixing a placard to the container with a release coated face oriented outwardly by pressing a pressure sensitive placard adhesive layer against the container;
- b) inserting a first product into the container;
- c) at a selected one of a time prior to and a time subsequent to the first product insertion step, adhering a pressure sensitive adhesive coating of a first label

4

bearing first product information to the release coating of the placard;

- d) removing the first product from the container;
- e) inserting another product into the container; and,
- f) at a selected one of a time prior to or subsequent to the another product insertion step, removing the first label while leaving the placard affixed to the container and thereafter adhering a pressure sensitive adhesive coating of a second label bearing second product information to the release coating of the placard.

5. The method of claim 4 further including prior to the placard adhering step, the step of exposing the placard layer of pressure sensitive adhesive by removing a backing liner having a release layer adhered to the placard pressure sensitive layer.

6. A process for providing product information on objects for retaining product quantities comprising:

- a) substantially permanently affixing a placard to one such structure with a release coated surface of the placard oriented outwardly;
- b) providing a first label bearing information related to a first set of products carried by the object;
- c) applying the first label to the placard by securing a pressure sensitive adhesive coating of the first label to the placard release coating;
- d) at a selected one of a time prior to and a time subsequent to the first label applying step positioning a first product set on the object;
- e) removing the first product set from the object and replacing it with a second product set; and,
- f) at a selected one of a time prior to and subsequent to the first set removal step removing the first label from the placard while leaving the placard affixed to the object and applying to the release coated surface of the placard a pressure sensitive surface of a second label bearing information related to products of the second set.

7. The process of claim 6 wherein the object is a product container.

8. The process of claim 6 wherein the step of removing the first label includes removing the pressure sensitive adhesive of the first label from the release coating.

\* \* \* \* \*

45

50

55

60

65



US00RE37164E

(19) **United States**  
 (12) **Reissued Patent**  
**Petrou**

(10) **Patent Number:** **US RE37,164 E**  
 (45) **Date of Reissued Patent:** **May 8, 2001**

(54) **LABEL SYSTEM FOR REUSABLE CONTAINERS AND THE LIKE**

(76) **Inventor:** **Robert J. Petrou**, 8 Pitkin Dr., Hudson, OH (US) 44236

(\*) **Notice:** This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

(21) **Appl. No.:** **09/309,811**

(22) **Filed:** **May 11, 1999**

**Related U.S. Patent Documents**

Reissue of:

(64) **Patent No.:** **5,628,858**  
**Issued:** **May 13, 1997**  
**Appl. No.:** **08/443,202**  
**Filed:** **May 18, 1995**

4,363,685	*	12/1982	White .	
4,398,985	*	8/1983	Eagon .	
4,479,838	*	10/1984	Dunsirn et al. .	
4,521,267	*	6/1985	Jacobson .	
4,534,582	*	8/1985	Howard .	
4,642,256	*	2/1987	Salo .	
4,767,654	*	8/1988	Riggsbee .	
4,863,772	*	9/1989	Cross .	
4,872,707	*	10/1989	Debruin .	
4,876,131	*	10/1989	Ashby et al. .	
4,928,874	*	5/1990	Henry et al. .	
4,932,684	*	6/1990	Vermeulen .	
4,933,124	*	6/1990	Duncan .	
4,938,414	*	7/1990	Lippert .	
5,019,436	*	5/1991	Schramer et al. .	
5,056,827	*	10/1991	Sasso .	
5,129,976	*	7/1992	Horikiri .	
5,248,536	*	9/1993	Du Katz .	
5,383,568	*	1/1995	Tusick et al. .	
5,417,790	*	5/1995	Petrou .....	156/249
5,628,858	*	5/1997	Petrou .....	156/249

U.S. Applications:

(63) Continuation of application No. 08/292,882, filed on Aug. 19, 1994, now Pat. No. 5,417,790, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 07/955,119, filed on Oct. 1, 1992, now abandoned.

(51) **Int. Cl.<sup>7</sup>** ..... **C09J 7/00**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** ..... **156/249; 156/247; 156/248; 156/344; 40/594**

(58) **Field of Search** ..... **156/247, 248, 156/249, 344; 40/306, 310, 312, 594; 428/41.7, 41.8**

(56) **References Cited**

**U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS**

3,854,229	*	12/1974	Morgan .	
3,974,311	*	8/1976	Cherrin .	
4,090,464	*	5/1978	Bishopp et al. .	
4,104,816	*	8/1978	Pingeton .	
4,253,899	*	3/1981	Takemoto et al. .	
4,264,657	*	4/1981	Tollette .....	428/35
4,359,358	*	11/1982	Hattemer .	

**FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS**

40 28 276 A1		3/1992	(DE) .	
1090590	*	11/1967	(GB) .	

\* cited by examiner

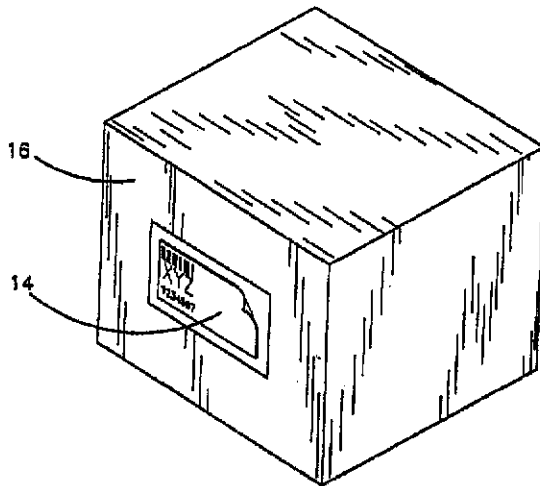
*Primary Examiner*—Curtis Mayes

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Cort Flint

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method of labeling reusable containers is disclosed. A placard having a release coating on one side is adhesively secured to the container. The placard is transparent with instructional printing applied to one surface. Pressure-sensitive labels are placed on the exposed surface of the placard. The labels contain indicia relating to the status of the container. When the status of the container changes, the label is removed and a new label is substituted on the placard.

**10 Claims, 1 Drawing Sheet**



**Ex. B**

U.S. Patent

May 8, 2001

US RE37,164 E

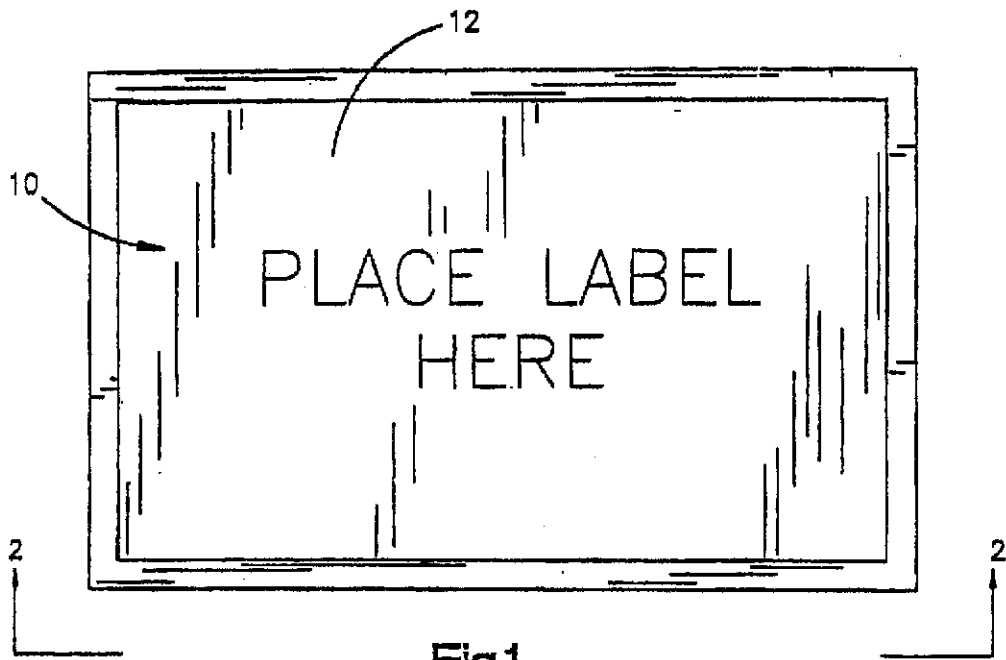


Fig.1

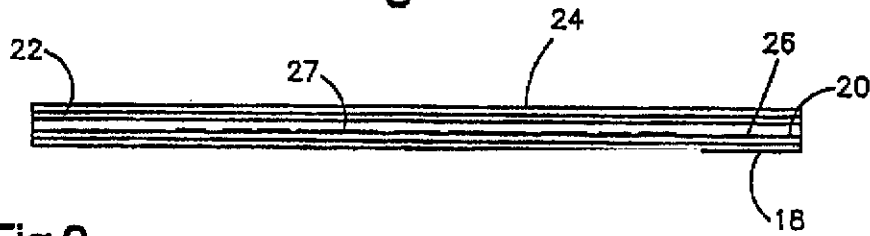


Fig.2

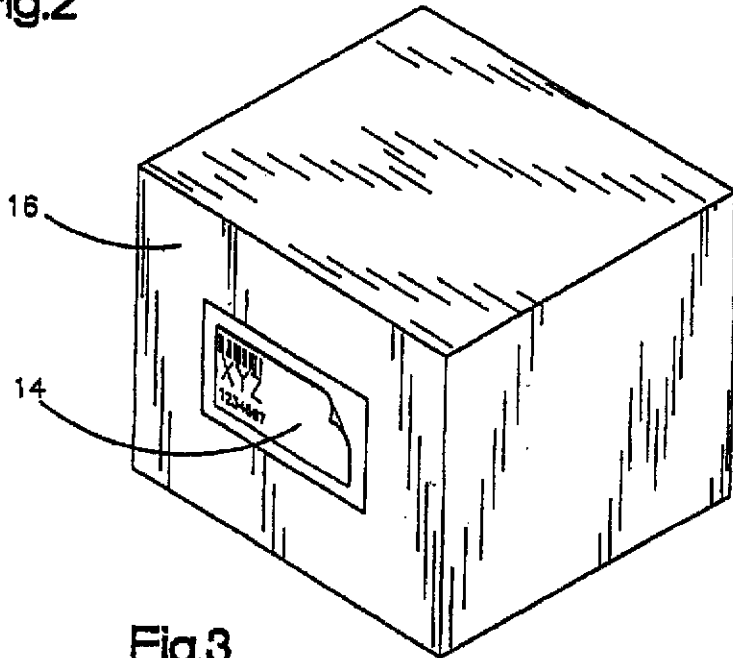


Fig.3

## US RE37,164 E

1

**LABEL SYSTEM FOR REUSABLE  
CONTAINERS AND THE LIKE**

**Matter enclosed in heavy brackets [ ] appears in the original patent but forms no part of this reissue specification; matter printed in italics indicates the additions made by reissue.**

This is a continuation of application Ser. No. 08/292,882, filed on Aug. 19, 1994, now U.S. Pat. No. 5,417,790, issued May 23, 1995, which was a continuation-in-part of then application Ser. No. 07/955,119, filed on Oct. 1, 1992, now abandoned.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

**1. Field of the Invention**

The present invention relates to a method of labeling reusable containers, and more particularly, a method which provides a reusable surface for pressure-sensitive adhesive labels.

**2. Description of Related Art**

Reusable containers often require a labeling system to identify the contents and status of each container. The label provides information such as the origin and destination of the contents, batch number, part number, serial number, quantity, and description.

In one proposed labeling system, a transparent envelope is secured to the container. A label is placed inside the envelope where it can be viewed. When the status of the container changes such as when its content is changed, a new label is substituted in the envelope. Often times, bar codes are printed on the labels. A transparent envelope will sometimes interfere with proper scanning of the bar code. This is particularly true where, after time, the transparent envelope becomes strained or dusty. Also, the transparent envelopes are sometimes bulky and subject to tearing and catching on objects.

**SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

An object of the invention is to provide a method of labeling using pressure-sensitive adhesive-backed labels and a reusable placard for supporting said labels.

Another object is to provide a method of labeling using an adhesive-backed placard having a disposable liner covering the adhesive.

In a preferred embodiment, the invention comprises provision of a placard having an adhesive coated inner face and a release coated outer face. In use the adhesive coated face of the placard is applied to a surface with the release coated surface outermost. The placard is transparent and includes printing on the inner face which is visible and readable after the placard is applied to a surface to provide instructional information such as "place label here". A label is applied to the placard outer face such that a pressure sensitive adhesive backing of the label is releasably attached to the release coated surface even if the label has so called permanent adhesive backing. When desired the label is easily removed when desired and replaced with another.

In the preferred embodiment the placard is provided with a disposable liner having a release coating on one face for covering the placard's adhesive coating. The liner is removed prior to applying the placard.

Other object and advantages and a fuller understanding of the invention will be had from the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment and the accompanying drawings.

2

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

A preferred embodiment of the invention is shown in the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a top plan view of a placard constructed in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a side elevation view seen approximately from the plane indicated by lines 2—2 in FIG. 1; and

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of a reusable container labeled in accordance with the present invention.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**

Referring to FIGS. 1, 2 and 3, a multi-layer lamination 10 is shown. The lamination 10 includes a placard 12 for supporting replaceable adhesive-backed pressure-sensitive labels 14 on reusable containers 16 in the method of the present invention.

Referring to FIG. 2, the lamination 10 includes a disposable liner layer 18 which is preferably paper. The liner is provided with a silicone release layer 20.

The placard 12 includes a layer of transparent polypropylene film 22. The film 22 is provided on one face with a silicone release coating 24 and on the opposite face with a coating of adhesive 26. The opposite face bears printing 27 which is readily observed and read when the placard is in use to provide instructional information such as "place label here". The thickness of the printing 27 is exaggerated in FIG. 2 for clarity of illustration. The adhesive coating 26 is in contact with the release layer 20 prior to use. The liner 18 is easily removed, leaving the adhesive 26 exposed.

The lamination 10 is preferably assembled from commercially available products. For example, transparent polypropylene film 22, having a silicone release coating 24 on one face is commercially available from the Mobil Chemical Corporation. A paper liner 18, having a release coating 20 and a layer of white modified acrylic adhesive 26 laminated to one side, is commercially available from the 3M Corporation. The non-release coated side of the film 22 is laminated to the adhesive-coated surface of the 3M lamination 18, 20, 26 to produce the multi-layer lamination 10. Then, the lamination 10 is die-cut to remove a marginal portion of the film 22 and the adhesive 26. Thus, as seen in FIG. 1, the liner 18 is larger than the placard 12 to facilitate its removal. The white adhesive 26 is visible through the transparent film 22 to produce a highly visible placard 12 and a light background for the printing 27.

The preferred method is one for labeling reusable containers 28. First, the release-coated liner 18 is removed from the lamination 10. The placard 12 is applied to a container 28 such that the adhesive 26 secures the placard 12 firmly to the container 28 with the release coating 24 outermost and the printing 27 clearly visible. Then label 14, having an exposed adhesive layer, is applied to the placard 12 such that the label's adhesive contacts the release coating 24. The label carries printed indicia relating to the container and/or its contents. When desired, such as when the container is refilled, the label is removed and a new label 14 carrying new information is applied to the placard 12.

The placard allows pressure-sensitive labels to be easily removed and replaced as many times as necessary. The labels can be removed without ripping or tearing. The labels are not covered by a plastic envelope which results in better bar code scanning. In addition, the container stays free of label and adhesive built-up. Moreover, because of the release coating 24 any commercially available label can be

US RE37,164 E

3

used including those with inexpensive permanent pressure sensitive adhesive coatings rather than more expensive removable coatings.

While a preferred embodiment of this invention has been described in detail, it will be apparent that certain modifications or alterations can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A process for providing identifying information as to the contents of an object on such an object, the process comprising:

- a) substantially permanently affixing a placard to one such object with a release coated surface of the placard oriented outwardly;
- b) providing a first label bearing information related to a first set of object contents;
- c) applying the first label to the placard by securing a pressure sensitive adhesive coating of the first label to the placard release coating;
- d) at a selected one of a time prior to and a time subsequent to the first label applying step positioning a first contents set in the object;
- e) removing the first contents set from the object and replacing it with a second contents set; and,
- f) at a selected one of a time prior to and subsequent to the first set removal step removing the first label from the placard while leaving the placard affixed to the object and applying to the release coated surface of the placard a pressure sensitive surface of a second label bearing information related to contents of the second set.

2. The process of claim 1 wherein the step of removing the first label includes removing the pressure sensitive adhesive of the first label from the release coating.

3. The method according to claim 1, wherein said placard is provided with a disposable liner having a release coating for covering the adhesive coated surface of said placard prior to attachment of said placard to the object.

4. A method of labeling and relabeling an object with replaceable pressure-sensitive adhesive-backed labels comprising:

- a) providing a plurality of pressure sensitive adhesive coated labels having indicia printed thereon;
- b) providing a placard having an adhesive coated surface and a release coated surface;
- c) substantially permanently affixing the placard to the object by applying the adhesive coated surface of said placard to a surface of the object with the release coated surface oriented outward;
- d) applying a first label to the placard by securing the pressure sensitive adhesive coating of the first label to the placard release coated surface;
- e) at a selected one of a time prior to and subsequent to the first label applying step, positioning a first contents set in the object;
- f) removing the first contents set from the object and replacing it with a second contents set; and
- g) at a selected one of a time prior to and subsequent to the first set removal step, removing the first label by separating the pressure sensitive adhesive coating of the first label from the release coated surface of the placard while leaving the placard fully attached to the object and applying to the release coated surface of the placard a pressure sensitive adhesive coating of a second label having indicia related to the contents of the second set.

4

5. The method according to claim 4, wherein said placard is provided with a disposable liner having a release coating for covering the adhesive coated surface of said placard prior to attachment of said placard to the object.

6. A process for providing identifying information as to the contents of a reusable object on such an object, the process comprising:

- a) providing an object having a placard substantially permanently affixed to said object with a release coated surface of the placard oriented outwardly of said object;
- b) providing a first label bearing information related to a first set of object contents;
- c) applying the first label to the placard by securing a pressure sensitive adhesive coating of the first label to the placard release coated surface;
- d) at a selected one of a time prior to and a time subsequent to applying the first label, placing a first contents set in the object;
- e) removing the first contents set from the object and replacing it with a second contents set; and,
- f) at a selected one of a time prior to and subsequent to removing the first set, removing the first label from the placard while leaving the placard affixed to the object, and applying to the placard release coated surface, a pressure sensitive surface of a second label bearing information related to the second contents set.

7. The process of claim 6 wherein the step of removing the first label includes removing the pressure sensitive adhesive of the first label from the placard release coating.

8. The method according to claim 6 including providing said object having said placard substantially affixed by providing said placard having a disposable liner with a release coating for covering a placard adhesive coated surface, and removing said disposable liner prior to affixing said placard to the object by means of said placard adhesive coated surface.

9. A method of using a reusable container for products by labeling and relabeling the container comprising:

- a) providing said reusable container having a placard substantially permanently affixed to said container by means of a placard adhesive coated surface of said placard pressure against the container, and with a placard release coating of said placard oriented outwardly of said container;
- b) inserting a first product into the container;
- c) at a selected one of a time prior to and a time subsequently to inserting said first product into said container, adhering a pressure sensitive adhesive coating of a first label bearing information about said first product to said placard release coating;
- d) removing the first product from the container;
- e) inserting another product into the container; and
- f) at a selected one of a time prior to or subsequent to inserting said another product into said container, removing the first label while leaving the placard affixed to the container, and thereafter adhering a pressure sensitive adhesive coating of a second label bearing second product information to the placard release coating.

10. The method of claim 9 including exposing the placard adhesive coated surface by removing a disposable backing liner having a release layer adhered to the placard adhesive coated surface prior to affixing said placard to said container.

\* \* \* \* \*