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(54) **DUAL-DIRECTIONAL DISPLAY SHELF**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

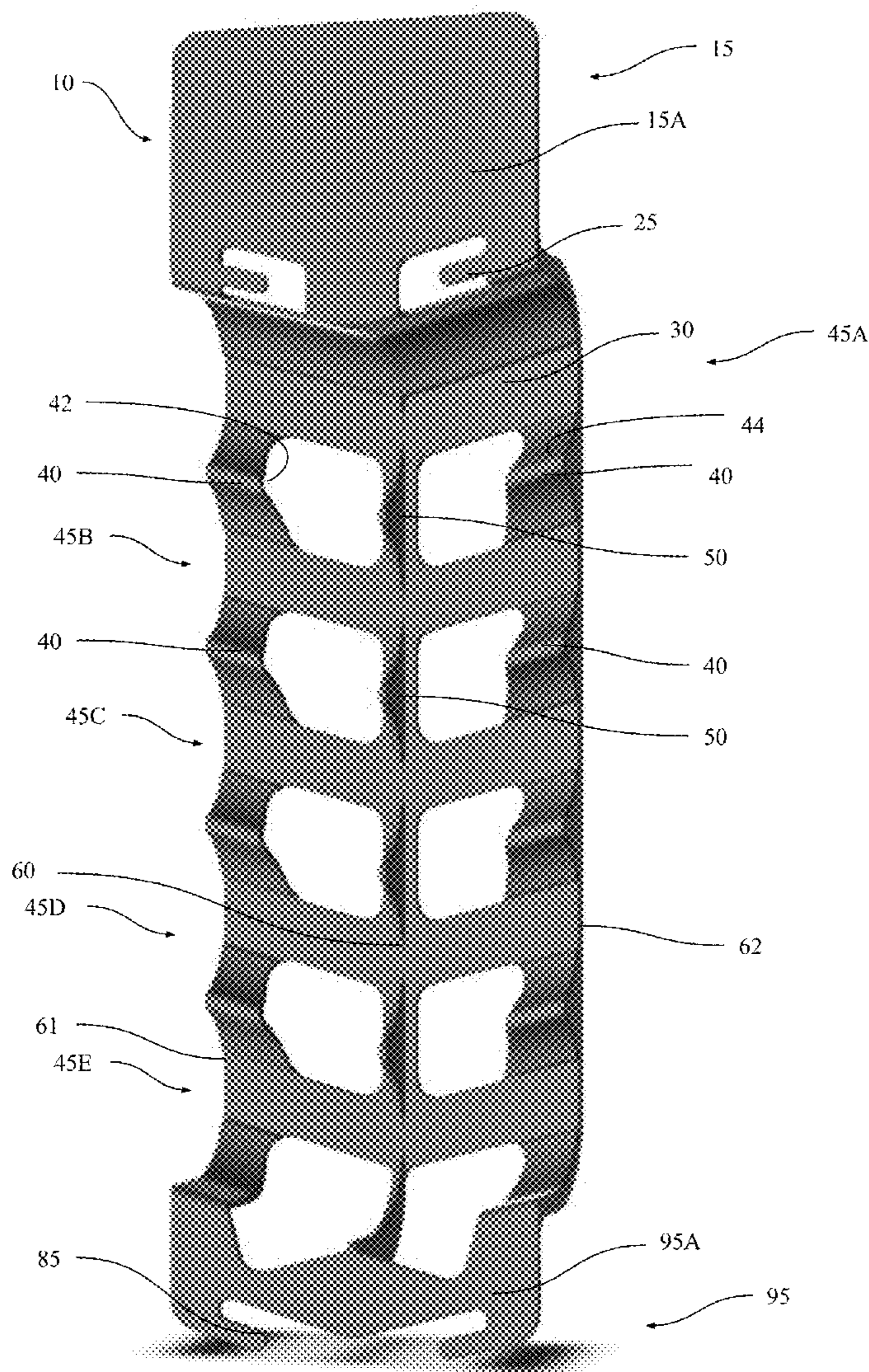
A shelf has been disclosed, which provides a level with a support bridge, a first vertical support, and a second vertical support. The support bridge, the first vertical support, and the second vertical support forming three points in the level that support an object in alternative right or left arrangements at an angle where the objects extend upward and outward from the support bridge. In particular configurations, each of the first vertical support and the second vertical support comprise a shelving portion and each of the first vertical support and the second vertical support comprise an end support.

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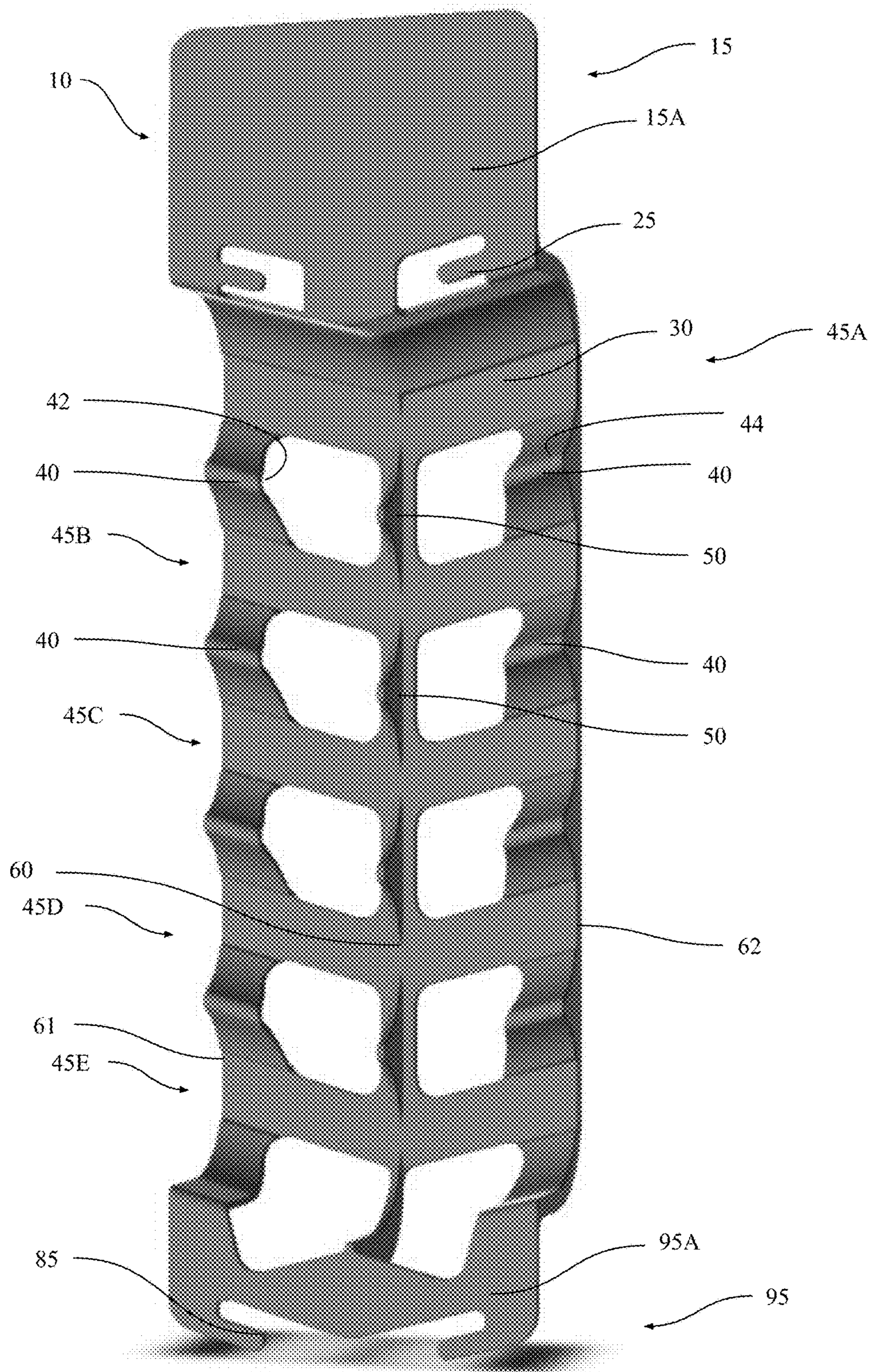


FIG. 1

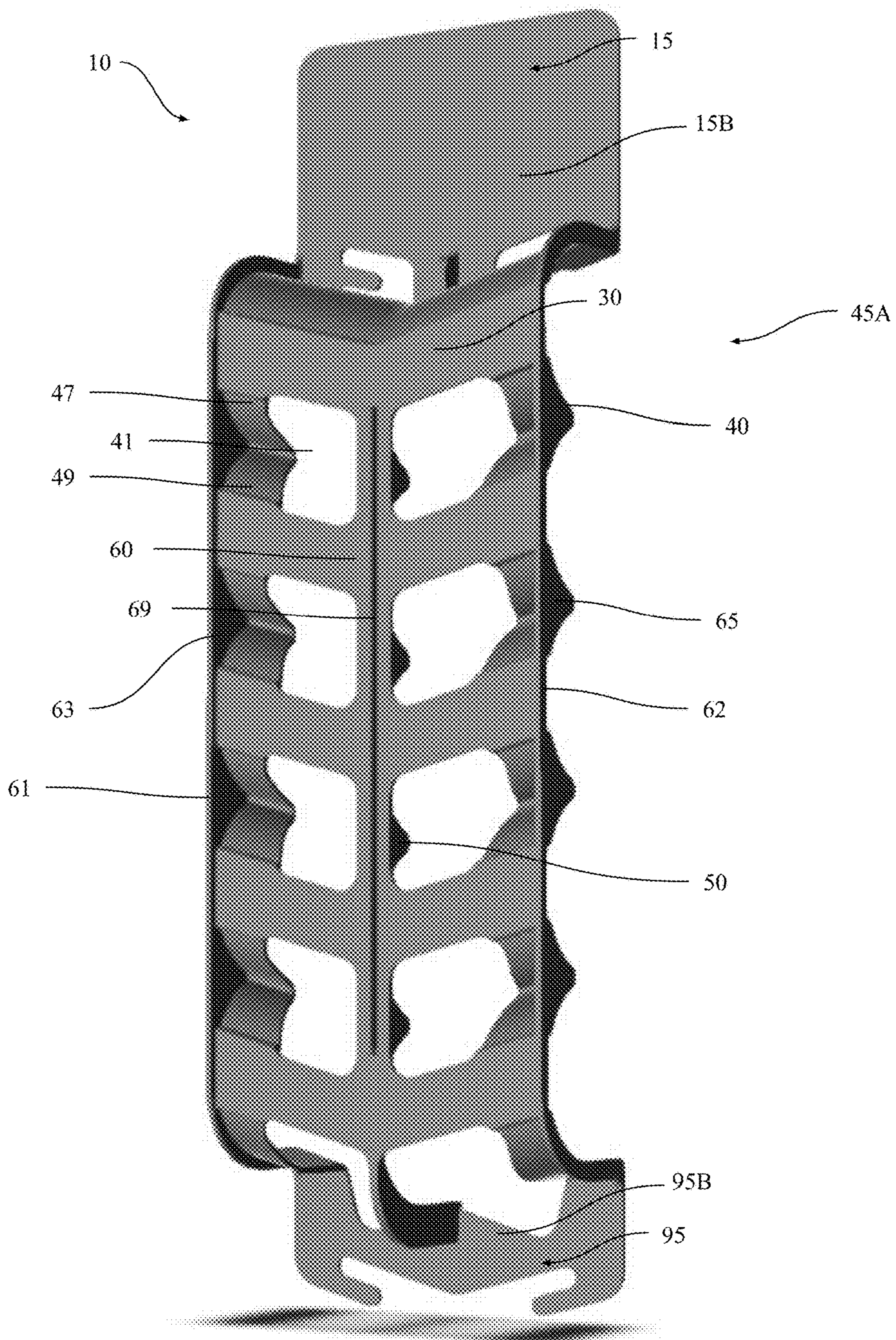


FIG. 2

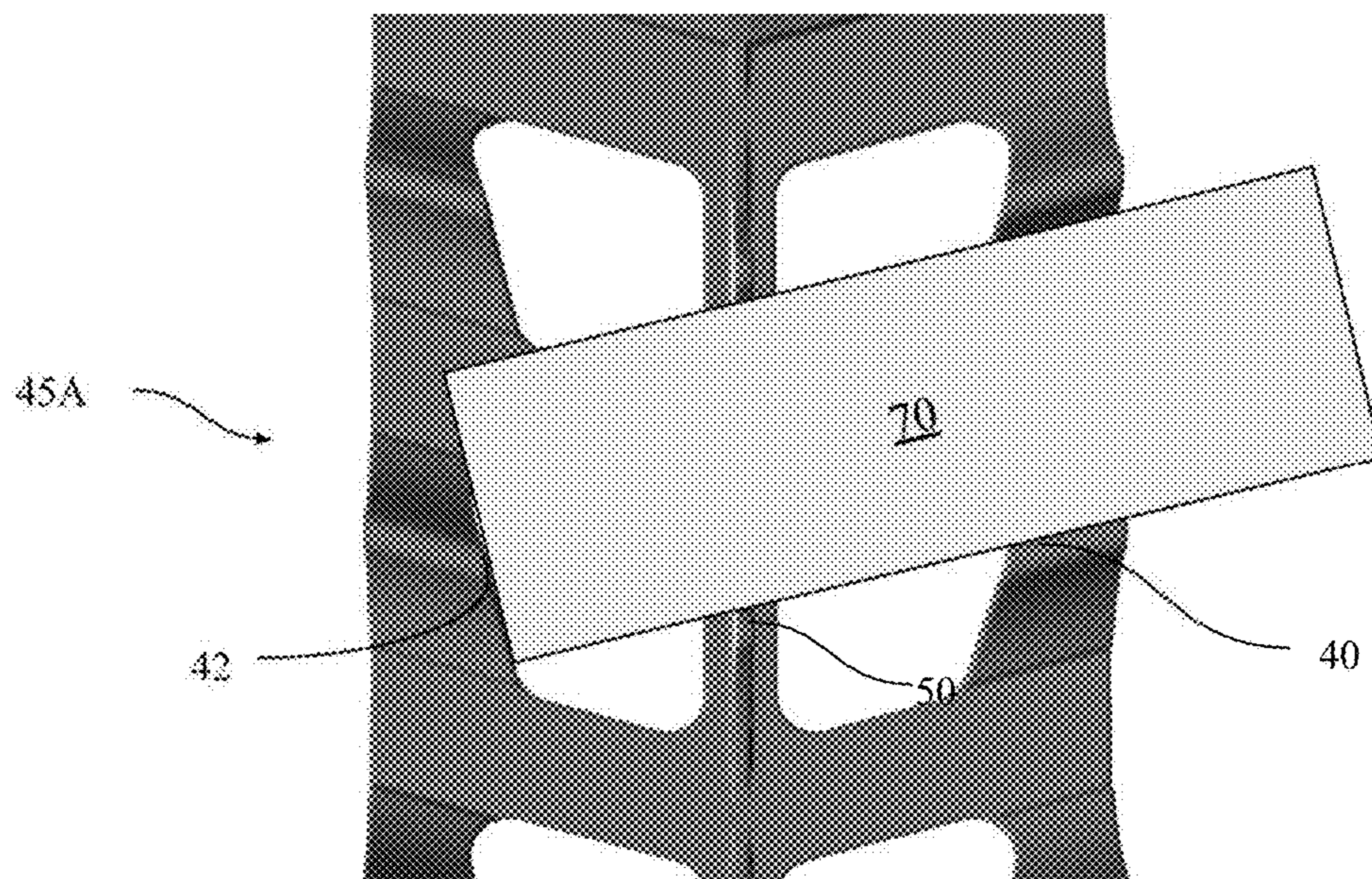


FIG. 3A

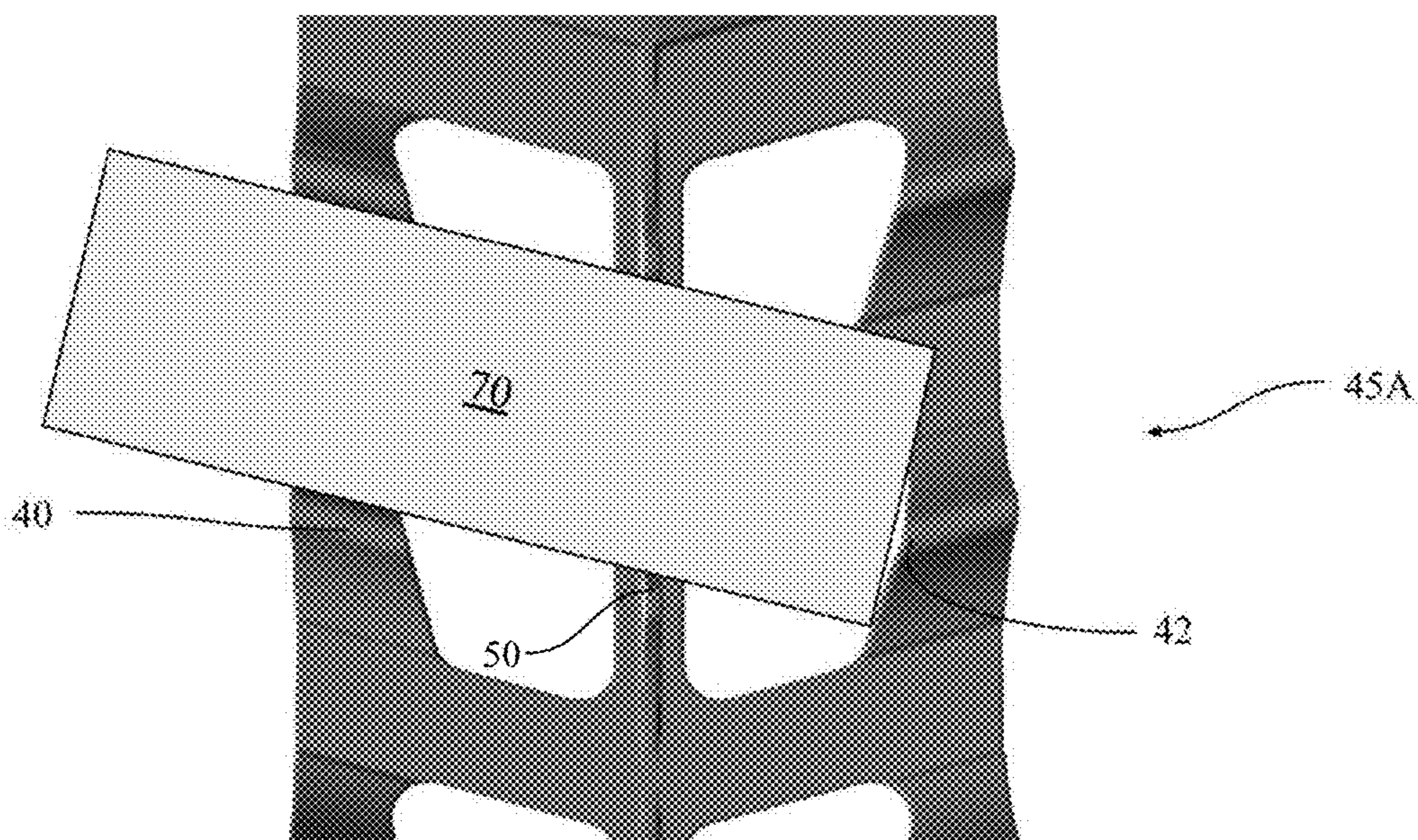


FIG. 3B

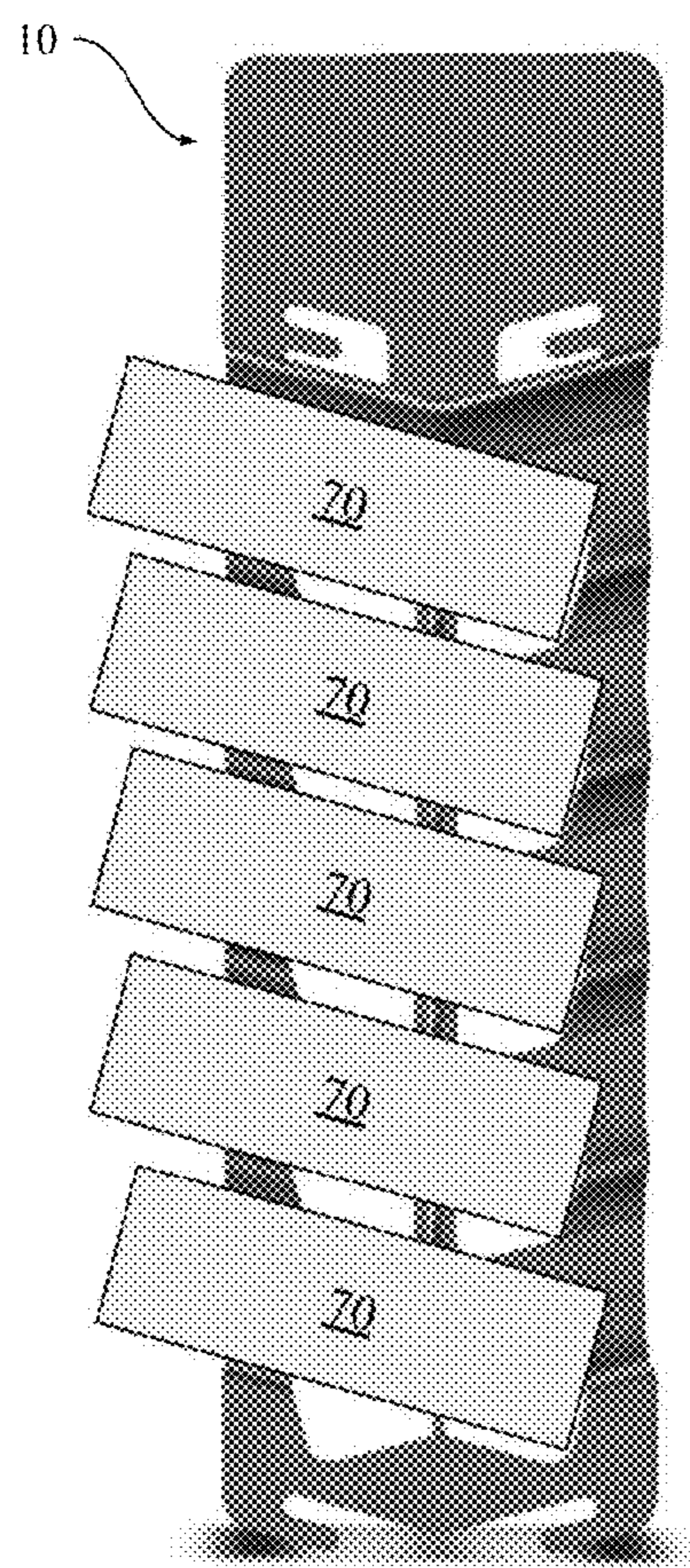


FIG. 4A

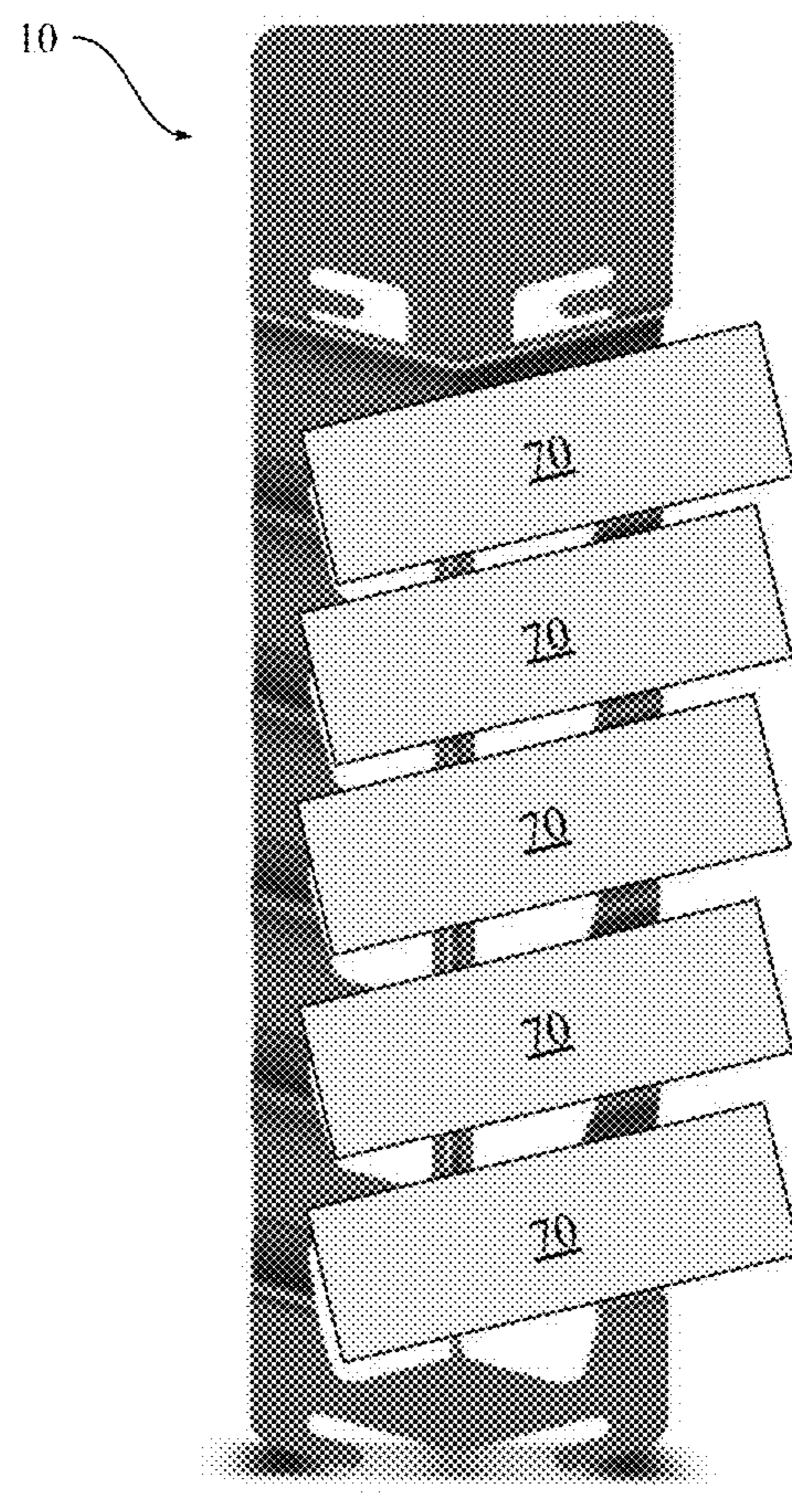


FIG. 4B

DUAL-DIRECTIONAL DISPLAY SHELF

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] This disclosure is generally directed to display shelves. More specifically, this disclosure is directed to a dual-directional display shelf.

BACKGROUND

[0002] A problem that arises with point of purchase cooler display shelves relates to the fact that cooler doors open in different directions. Certain types of display shelves are specifically oriented to the direction the door opens. These displays shelves often have two models referred to as left or right arrangements for a single design. When such left and right arrangements exist for such shelves, a customer may unfortunately purchase the wrong shelf for a particular door. Additionally, two models must be created for each design.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0003] A shelf has been disclosed, which provides a level with a support bridge, a first vertical support, and a second vertical support. The support bridge, the first vertical support, and the second vertical support form three points in the level that support an object in alternative right or left arrangements at an angle where the objects extends upward and outward from the support bridge. In particular configurations, each of the first vertical support and the second vertical support comprise a shelving portion and each of the first vertical support and the second vertical support comprise an end support.

[0004] Before undertaking the DETAILED DESCRIPTION below, it may be advantageous to set forth definitions of certain words and phrases used throughout this patent document: the terms “include” and “comprise,” as well as derivatives thereof, mean inclusion without limitation; the term “or,” is inclusive, meaning and/or; the phrases “associated with” and “associated therewith,” as well as derivatives thereof, may mean to include, be included within, interconnect with, contain, be contained within, connect to or with, couple to or with, be communicable with, cooperate with, interleave, juxtapose, be proximate to, be bound to or with, have, have a property of, or the like. The phrase “at least one of,” when used with a list of items, means that different combinations of one or more of the listed items may be used, and only one item in the list may be needed. For example, “at least one of: A, B, and C” includes any of the following combinations: A; B; C; A and B; A and C; B and C; and A and B and C. Definitions for certain words and phrases are provided throughout this patent document, those of ordinary skill in the art should understand that in many if not most instances, such definitions apply to prior, as well as future uses of such defined words and phrases.

[0005] Additionally, it should be understood that while certain advantages may be described with reference to certain embodiments, other embodiments may have some or none of such advantages.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] For a more complete understanding of this disclosure and its features, reference is now made to the following description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0007] FIG. 1 shows a front view of a shelf, according to an embodiment of the disclosure;

[0008] FIG. 2 shows a backside view of the shelf, according to an embodiment of the disclosure;

[0009] FIGS. 3A and 3B show the alternative positioning of an object in a shelf for a particular same level, according to an embodiment of the disclosure; and

[0010] FIGS. 4A and 4B show positioning of multiple objects in respective left and right arrangement for the same shelf.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0011] The FIGURES described below, and the various embodiments used to describe the principles of the present disclosure in this patent document are by way of illustration only and should not be construed in any way to limit the scope of the disclosure. Those skilled in the art will understand that the principles of the present disclosure invention may be implemented in any type of suitably arranged device or system. Additionally, the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale.

[0012] A problem that arises with point of purchase cooler display shelves relates to the fact that cooler doors open in different directions. Certain types of display shelves are specifically oriented to the direction the door opens. These displays shelves often have two models referred to as left or right arrangements for a single design. When such left and right arrangements exist for such shelves, a customer may unfortunately purchase the wrong shelf for a particular door. Additionally, two models must be created for each design.

[0013] To alleviate such concerns, certain embodiments of the disclosure provide a display shelf that is dual-directional. That is, a single shelf can be used on both left and right doors—while still retaining certain qualities traditionally reserved for left or right arrangement models. In particular configurations, such a dual-directional design is accomplished by having dual purpose features that re-use particular components for a left arrangement and right arrangement.

[0014] While providing such a dual-directional design, certain embodiments of the disclosure further minimize materials used to provide such a dual-directional shelf—resulting in manufacturing and shipping efficiencies. In yet other configurations, while minimizing materials, certain configurations provide support mechanisms in certain places to balance structural integrity with minimal materials.

[0015] FIG. 1 shows a front perspective view of a shelf 10, according to an embodiment of the disclosure. This front perspective view is from the perspective of one who might be looking through a glass cooler at the shelf 10. In FIG. 1, the shelf 10 has a first end 15 with a first face 15A and a second end 95 with a first face 95A. Adjacent the first end 15 are suction cup mounting brackets 25. Adjacent the second end 95 are suction cup mounting brackets 85. In particular configurations, the respective mounting brackets 25, 85 may support POWER CUP® suction cups sold by Displays by Martin Paul, Inc. of Denton, Tex. Other configurations with other types of suction cups may also avail from the teachings of this disclosure. In particular configurations, the face may support positioning of an advertisement for objects to be positioned on the shelf.

[0016] Although a particular configuration for mounting the shelf 10 to a plane (e.g. a glass door) have been shown in FIG. 1, one of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that other mounting techniques may be utilized in other configura-

rations. Additionally, although described as being mounted to a plane, one of ordinary may also mount other designs disclosed herein to other items using other coupling techniques.

[0017] The first end **15** and the second end **95** of the shelf **10** interface with the plane of another item (e.g., a glass cooler door) to which the shelf is coupled (e.g., using suction cups or the like). When a suction cup (e.g., POWER CUP® suction cup sold by Displays by Martin Paul, Inc. of Denton, Tex.) is utilized, the suction cup contacts the plane as the coupling mechanism. The respective first faces **15A**, **95A** of the first and second ends **15**, **95** are the next closest structural component of the shelf **10** to the plane. In certain embodiments, the first faces **15A**, **95A** may contact the plane. In other embodiments, the first faces **15A**, **95A** may not contact the plane. In supporting the remainder of the shelf **10**, the first end **15** generally creates a tensile force upward on the shelf **10** (as the shelf **10** hangs downward therefrom) whereas the second end **95** creates a compressive force forward upward (pushing up on the holding the shelf **10**).

[0018] The shelf **10** itself generally holds the object contained therein right up against the plane. In particular configurations, there is generally no component of the shelf **10** between an object being held and the plane. When the plane is glass, such a configuration desirably maximizes the view of the object being displayed in the shelf **10**.

[0019] Between the respective first and second ends **15**, **95**, much of the structural support is provided by three spines that are seen more clearly in FIG. 2: center spines and first and second edge spines **61**, **62**). These spines **60**, **61**, and **62** are designed to maximize support while minimize materials needed for such support. According to particular configurations, the reduced material not only reduces manufacturer costs, but also reduces shipping costs attributable to weight.

[0020] In addition to the spine **60**, **61**, and **62**, the shelf **10** may generally be viewed as containing material that forms a webbing that interconnects a plurality of different levels **45A**, **45B**, **45C**, **45D**, and **45E**. A portion of such webbing is a retaining portion **30** in each level, for example as labeled in level **45A**. Such a retaining portion **30** prevents a particular object being stored in the shelf from falling, for example, into a cooler. Further webbing discussion is provided below with reference to FIG. 2.

[0021] Each of the levels **45A**, **45B**, **45C**, **45D**, and **45E** also include two vertical supports **40** and a support bridge **50** that is interconnected to the spine **60**. The respective vertical supports **40** are angled downward towards the support bridge **50**. Each vertical support **40** includes an end support **42** and shelving support **44**. The shelving support **44** in particular configurations may be configured to correspond to the shape of the object being supported thereon. In FIG. 1, the shelving support **44** is rounded to support tubular objects; however, in other configurations, the shelving support **44** may take on other configurations and shapes. To support tubular objects, in this configuration, the vertical supports **40** and support bridges **50** take on the shape of a curvilinear bell curve when viewed from a plane orthogonal the plane of the face **15A** (e.g., a side view). In other configurations, the vertical supports **40** and support bridges **50** may have other configurations.

[0022] In supporting the alternative arrangements of objects on a particular level, both vertical supports **40** and the support bridge **50** are utilized as described below.

[0023] Although six levels **45A**, **45B**, **45C**, **45D**, and **45E** are shown in the configuration of FIG. 1, more than or less than five levels may be utilized in other configurations.

[0024] While the configuration of FIG. 1 is generally described as having alternative configurations, the levels may provide different options. For example, in some configurations, all the objects may be stored on the shelf **10** all on one side (e.g., left or right). In other configurations, the objects may be stored on alternating sides per level (e.g., left, right, left right). In particular configurations, given the re-use of components in the shelf **10** as described below, only one object may be stored on each level in particular configurations.

[0025] FIG. 2 shows a backside perspective view of the shelf **10**, according to an embodiment of the disclosure. The second face **15B** of first end **15** and the second face **95B** of second end **95** can be seen. From the view of FIG. 2, one may see the center spine **60** and first and second edge spines **61** and **62** extending between first end **15** and the second end **95** of the shelf **10**. In addition to the spines **60**, **61**, and **62** the various levels **45A**, **45B**, **45C**, **45D**, **45E**, and **45F** (labeled in FIG. 1) are interconnected by other webbing pieces balancing structural integrity with reduced material. As seen in FIG. 2, the spine also may include a ridge **69** that provides additional structural integrity while minimizing material use. Also seen in FIG. 2 are edge pieces **63**, **65** that extend from respective first and second edge spines **61** and **62**. The edge pieces **63** and **65** in this configuration generally have the same shape as the vertical supports **40**. These edge pieces **63**, **65** provide structural support for the vertical supports **40**. Other configurations may have different designs.

[0026] With reference to level **45A**, extending between the spine **60** and respective first and second edge spines **61** and **62**, on each level is the retaining portion **30**. Extending from the retaining portion **30** are web interconnects **47**, **49** of a vertical support **40**. In the configuration shown, the web interconnects **47**, **49** are curvilinear and form the bell curve shape of the vertical support on the opposite side. In other configurations, the web interconnects **47**, **49** may have different shapes.

[0027] These webbing features provide open spaces **41** that minimize materials (while retaining structural integrity). Such open spaces **41** also allow the objects being stored to be viewed without additional potential obstruction by the shelf **10**.

[0028] One may also see how the support bridge **50** extends from the spine **60**.

[0029] FIGS. 3A and 3B show the alternative positioning of an object **70** for a particular same level, according to an embodiment of the disclosure. In FIGS. 3A and 3B, a zoomed-in portion for level **45A** of FIG. 1 is shown. FIG. 3A shows an object **70** positioned from the right side of the shelf **10** whereas FIG. 3B shows how the same object **70** can, also, be positioned from the left side of the shelf **10**.

[0030] When positioned from the right side of the shelf **10** as seen in FIG. 3A, a vertical support **40** on the same corresponding right side vertically supports the object **70**, for example, using the shelving support **44** (not seen from this view, but shown in FIG. 1). And, an end support **42** on the opposing left side (e.g., of the same level **45A**) provides support.

[0031] When positioned from the left side of the shelf **10** as seen in FIG. 3B, a vertical support **40** on the same

corresponding left side vertically supports the object 70, for example, using the shelving support 44 (not seen from this view, but shown in FIG. 1). And, an end support 42 on the opposing right side (e.g., of the same level 45A) provides support.

[0032] For both FIGS. 3A and 3B, the support bridge 50 is used (or, reused) for both orientations to provide further support.

[0033] Thus, as can be seen in the configuration of FIGS. 3A and 3B, the object 70 is supported from three points for a particular level—the shelving support 44, the end support 42, and the support bridge 50. In particular configurations, the shelving support 44 may effectively be reduced to a point where the end support 42 and shelving support 44 are seen as one in the same (given both are part of the vertical support 40). Viewed from such a perspective, all three are used/re-used—regardless of the mounting arrangement, left or right.

[0034] The object 70 may be a variety of materials, including cans, plastic bottles, and the like. The shelf may be made of any suitable material including, but not limited to plastic.

[0035] FIGS. 4A and 4B show positioning of multiple objects 70 in respective left and right arrangement for the same shelf 10. While five levels are shown in these configurations, the shelf may include more than or less than five levels. Additionally, the shelf may be adapted to accommodate objects of different shapes—including non-tubular objects.

[0036] It will be understood that well known features have not been described in detail and have been omitted for brevity. Although specific structures and materials may have been described, the present disclosure is not limited to these specifics, and others may substituted as is well understood by those skilled in the art, and various steps may not necessarily be performed in the sequences shown.

[0037] While this disclosure has described certain embodiments and generally associated methods, alterations and permutations of these embodiments and methods will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the above description of example embodiments does not define or constrain this disclosure. Other changes, substitutions, and alterations are also possible without departing from the spirit and scope of this disclosure, as defined by the following claims.

1. A shelf comprising:

a level with a support bridge, a first vertical support, and a second vertical support, the support bridge, the first vertical support, and the second vertical support forming three points in the level that support an object alternatively in one of a left arrangement in which the object extends outwardly from a left side of the shelf, and a right arrangement in which the object extends outwardly from a right side of the shelf; and

a first end and a second end coupled to the level, the first end and the second end to be releasably coupled to a plane of another item such that the object is held against the plane.

2. The shelf of claim 1, wherein

each of the first vertical support and the second vertical support comprise an end support;

the right arrangement of the object in the level is supported by the end support of the first vertical support, the second vertical support, and the support bridge; and

the left arrangement of the object in the level is supported by the end support of the second vertical support, the first vertical support, and the support bridge.

3. The shelf of claim 2, wherein

each of the first vertical support and the second vertical support comprise a shelving portion;

the right arrangement of the object in the level is supported by the end support of the first vertical support, the shelving portion of the second vertical support, and the support bridge; and

the left arrangement of the object in the level is supported by the end support of the second vertical support, the shelving portion of the first vertical support, and the support bridge.

4. The shelf of claim 3, wherein the shelving portion of the first vertical support and the second vertical support is rounded to support a tubular object.

5. The shelf of claim 1, wherein a portion of the first vertical support and the second vertical support is rounded to support a tubular object.

6. The shelf of claim 1, wherein each of the alternative right and left arrangement supports the object at an angle such that the object extends upward and outward from the support bridge.

7. The shelf of claim 1, further comprising:

a plurality of the levels configured between the first end and the second end of the shelf; and

a spine connecting the plurality of levels between the first end and the second end.

8. The shelf of claim 7, further comprising:

webbing between respective levels, the webbing connecting the first vertical support of a first level with the first vertical support of a second level, the webbing forming at least two open spaces in the shelf between the first and second levels.

9. The shelf of claim 8, wherein the webbing is curvilinear.

10. A shelf comprising:

a level with a support bridge, a first vertical support, and a second vertical support, the support bridge, the first vertical support, and the second vertical support forming three points in the level that support an object alternatively in one of a left arrangement in which the object extends outwardly and upwardly at an angle from a left side of the shelf, and a right arrangement in which the object extends outwardly and upwardly at an angle from a right side of the shelf; and

a first end and a second end coupled to the level, the first end and the second end to be releasably coupled to a plane of another item such that the object is held against the plane.

11. The Shelf of claim 10, wherein

each of the first vertical support and the second vertical support comprise an end support;

the right arrangement of the object in the level is supported by the end support of the first vertical support, the second vertical support, and the support bridge; and

the left arrangement of the object in the level is supported by the end support of the second vertical support, the first vertical support, and the support bridge.

12. The shelf of claim 11, wherein

each of the first vertical support and the second vertical support comprise a shelving portion;

the right arrangement of the object in the level is supported by the end support of the first vertical support, the shelving portion of the second vertical support, and the support bridge; and

the left arrangement of the object in the level is supported by the end support of the second vertical support, the shelving portion of the first vertical support, and the support bridge.

13. The shelf of claim **12**, wherein the shelving portion of the first vertical support and the second vertical support is rounded to support a tubular object.

14. The shelf of claim **10**, further comprising:
a plurality of the levels configured between the first end and the second end of the shelf; and
a spine connecting the plurality of levels between the first end and the second end.

15. The shelf of claim **14**, further comprising:
webbing between respective levels, the webbing connecting the first vertical support of a first level with the first vertical support of a second level, the webbing forming at least two open spaces in the shelf between the first and second levels.

16. The shelf of claim **15**, wherein the webbing is curvilinear.

17. The shelf of claim **1**, wherein the other item comprises a glass door of a cooler.

18. The Shelf of claim **10**, wherein the other item comprises a glass door of a cooler.

* * * * *