extending the serviceable life of blade 30. Blades 30 are susceptible to nicks and erosion as well as bird strikes. As is known in the art, nicks and other small imperfections can serve as crack initiation sites, and can occur despite the inclusion of various erosion and corrosion resistant coatings.

However, blades 30 can be repaired, often several times, by machining out dents and other sharp corners. This repair is common in titanium-based blades to increase their serviceable life before being recycled into new blades or into other articles. In most titanium blades or sheaths, there is often a limited amount of excess material because of the inherent motivation to reduce weight and the physical constraints of producing sheaths with large thickness via processes like electroforming. But in blade 30, substituting a lower density metallic material in airfoil 32 provides substantial weight savings without sacrificing overall strength as previously described. This substantial weight savings provides some leeway for the size of sheath 34 to be increased in its chordwise and thickness dimensions while still achieving significant weight savings in blade 30.

Blade 30 as shown in FIGS. 2-3 can be made according to the following steps. Airfoil 32 is formed from a lightweight metallic material according to the description above, such as from an aluminum alloy. One example aluminum alloy is a 7XXX-series alloy. Other example aluminum alloys include Al-Li alloys such as AA 2050, AA 2060, AA 2098 and AA 2195. Example methods of making airfoil 32 include forging, casting, rolling or machining. Airfoil 32 is hollow or solid depending on relevant design requirements such as engine size and relative material and processing costs. Airfoil 32 has at least a forward edge, a first surface, and a second surface. Hollow airfoils 32 can be formed by any method, such as by diffusion bonding two metal plates around their perimeters. Hollow airfoils, such as the hollow fan blade described in the incorporated ~~'944 application~~US application no. 12/713,944, can also be made from aluminum alloys, including but not limited to Al-Li alloys such as those described above.

Sheath 34 is formed from a high-strength metallic material according to the description above, such as from a titanium or nickel alloy. One example alloy is Ti-6Al-4V. Sheath 34 is also fabricated using one or more conventional metal processing techniques, such as casting, forging, rolling, or machining, and can be manufactured directly into its final shape with first flank 52A and second flank 52B extending chordwise from sheath head section 50. Additive manufacturing methods such as