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- 1 -

METHOD OF AND APPARATUS FOR
SORTING SLIDE FASTENERS

This invention relates to a method of and an
apparatus for sorting out slide fasteners with sliders
5 mounted thereon from slide fasteners without sliders.

Finished slide fasteners discharged one by one
from a slide fastener processing machine are separated
into two groups depending on the existence of sliders
on the respective slide fasteners while they are moved
10 on a belt conveyer. When a slide fastener having a
slider is detected, the belt conveyer is stopped
whereupon a pusher is actuated to displace the slide
fastener laterally off the belt conveyer. The
displaced slide fastener is allowed to fall into a
15 container and stored therein as a good slide fastener.
Slide fasteners without respective sliders mounted
thereon are discharged from an unloading end of the
belt conveyer and collected in another container as bad
slide fasteners. According to such prior sorting
20 practice, frequent intermittent operation of the

conveyor is liable to cause a misalignment between the pusher and the good slide fasteners with the result that the slide fasteners displaced off the conveyor by the pusher are disposed in the container at random.

5 According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of sorting out slide fasteners with sliders mounted thereon from slide fasteners without sliders, comprising the steps of:

(a) feeding the slide fasteners longitudinally one
10 at a time along a path in flattened form by means of at least one stream of air flowing along the path;

(b) introducing the slide fastener while being thus fed, into a gate which is narrow enough to prevent the passage of sliders so that one slide fastener having a
15 slider is stopped at the gate whilst another slide fastener without a slider is allowed to pass through the gate;

(c) directing air against the slide fastener to flatten the same while the slide fastener is stopped at the gate; and

(d) interrupting said stream of air to thereby allow
20 the slide fastener while being stopped at the gate in flattened form, to fall from the path.

According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided an apparatus for sorting out slide fasteners with sliders mounted thereon from slide fasteners without
25 sliders, comprising:

(a) an elongate first guide having a first guide surface for guiding slide fasteners longitudinally therealong;

(b) an elongate second guide extending from one end

of said first guide and having a pair of juxtaposed guide members, said guide members being relatively movable toward and away from each other to selectively define a second guide surface extending in longitudinal alignment with
5 said first guide surface for guiding the slide fasteners longitudinally therealong;

(c) means disposed on the other end of said first guide for producing at least one stream of air to flow along said first and second guide surfaces, thereby to feed
10 the slide fasteners longitudinally along said first and second guide surfaces one by one in flattened form;

(d) means disposed above said second guide and engageable with a slider of a respective one of the slide fasteners for temporarily arresting the movement of the slide fastener
15 over said guide members;

(e) means for ejecting air against the slide fastener to flatten the same while the slide fastener is arrested over said guide members; and

(f) means operatively connected to said guide members
20 for actuating them to move toward and away from each other.

It is believed possible by means of the present invention to provide a method of and apparatus for sorting out slide fasteners with sliders mounted thereon from slide fasteners without sliders and then neatly stacking the slide fasteners with sliders in juxtaposition.

It is also believed possible by means of the present invention to provide a sorting apparatus which is simple in structure and can be constructed inexpensively.

The invention will be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:-

Figure 1 is a fragmentary perspective view, with parts cut away for clarity, of a sorting apparatus embodying the present invention;

Figure 2 is a cross sectional view showing slide fastener guide members of the sorting apparatus as they are in a slide fastener holding position;

Figure 3 is a view similar to Figure 1, showing the slide fastener guide members in a slide fastener releasing position; and

Figure 4(a) and 4(b) are schematic front elevational view, with parts in cross section, of the apparatus of Figure 1, showing the manner in which good slide fasteners are sorted out from bad slide fasteners.

As shown in Figure 1, a sorting apparatus 10 embodying the invention comprises a substantially U-shaped frame 11 (only the upper portion being illustrated) having a pair of spaced heads 12, 13, and a pair of parallel spaced elongate support bars 14, 14.

- 5 -

mounted on and extending between the heads 12, 13.
Each of the support bars 14 is connected at one end to the head 12 and at the other end to the head 13 with a spacer block 15 disposed between the support bar 14 and the head 13. The support bar 14 has a generally Z-shaped cross section and includes a vertical wall 16 and a pair of upper and lower horizontal walls 17, 18 extending from opposite edges of the vertical wall 16 in opposite directions. The upper walls 17, 17 of the support bars 14, 14 confront each other with an elongate space 19 (Figures 2 and 3) defined therebetween.

The apparatus 10 further includes a pair of elongate first and second guides 20, 21 mounted on the support bars 14 in end-to-end connection with each other, the first guide being disposed adjacent to the head 12.

The first guide 20 is received in the elongate space 19 between the support bars 14, 14 and supported at one end on the head 12. The guide 20 has a substantially U-shaped cross section and includes a bottom wall 22 and a pair of sidewalls 23, 23 extending from the opposite edges of the bottom wall 22 upwardly in a common direction. The bottom wall 22 has a first guide surface 24 along which slide fasteners F (Figures 4(A) and 4(B)) advance one by one in closed condition with sliders S disposed substantially at the trailing

ends of the respective slide fastener F. The first guide surface 24 includes a substantially horizontal major portion 24a extending parallel to the support bars 14 and a sloped end portion 25 disposed remotely from the second guide 21. The sloped end portion 25 inclines upwardly away from the head 12 and is directed to a pair of feed rollers 26, 27 disposed above the head 12. The feed rollers 26, 27 are rotatably mounted on a slide fastener processing machine (not shown) and cooperate with each other in supplying the slide fasteners F one by one from the processing machine to the sorting apparatus 10. One of the rollers 26 has a circumferential guide groove 28 for the passage of sliders S (Figures 4(A) and 4(B)) mounted on the slide fasteners F. An auxiliary guide plate 29 is mounted on the first guide 20 and extends in overlapping relation to the sloped end portion 25 of the first guide surface 24, the guide plate 29 having a substantially horizontal end portion 30 located near the nip between the rollers 26, 27. A first air ejector in the shape of a pipe 31 is disposed between the bottom wall 22 and the guide plate 29 and extends transversely across the guide surface 24. The pipe 31 has a plurality of nozzles or orifices 32 facing toward the other end of the first guide 20 so that when compressed air is supplied from a suitable source (not shown) to the pipe 31, streams of air ejected from the orifices 32 flow

- 7 -

along the guide surface 24.

The second guide 21 includes a pair of guide members 33, 33 pivotably mounted on the undersides of the respective support bars 14. Each of the guide members 33, 33 has a generally Z-shaped cross section and includes a vertical wall 34 and a pair of upper and lower walls 35, 36 extending perpendicularly from opposite edges of the vertical wall 34 in opposite directions. As shown in Figure 2, the upper walls 35 are connected to the vertical walls 16 of the respective support bars 14 by means of a pair of hinges 37, and the lower walls 36 normally engage edgewise together to close the space 19. A second air ejector is in the form of a pair of flat hollow blocks 38, 38 disposed respectively on the lower walls 36 of the guide members 33 adjacent to the first guide 20. Each of the hollow blocks 38 has a nozzle or orifice 39 through which compressed air supplied from the air source is ejected to flow along the upper surface of the lower wall 36.

A pair of rods 40, 40 is secured at one end to the undersides of the respective upper walls 35 and projects from the respective guide members 33, 33 in a direction away from the first guide 20. The rods 40, 40 are supported at their distal ends on a horizontal support plate 41 connected to a piston rod 42 of a fluid-pressure actuator 43 which is vertically mounted

- 8 -

on the head 13. With this construction, when the actuator 43 is driven to retract its piston rod 42, the rods 40, 40 move downwardly with the result that the guide members 33, 33 pivotably move away from each other to open the elongate space 19, as shown in Figure 3.

A container 44 is disposed beneath the second guide 21 for receiving therein the slide fasteners F having the slider S. A chute 45 extends from the end of the second guide 21 which is remote from the first guide 20, for discharging the slider fasteners F without the sliders S from the sorting apparatus 10.

A stopper plate 46 is disposed above the second ejector or the flat hollow blocks 38 and is connected to a piston rod 47 of a fluid-pressure actuator 48 mounted on the frame 11. Thus the stopper plate 46 is vertically movable toward and away from the flat hollow blocks 38 upon operation of the actuator 48. The stopper plate 46 has a lower edge 46a extending normal to the direction of movement of the slide fastener F.

When the actuator 48 is driven to extend its piston rod 47, the stopper plate 46 projects into a space between the vertical walls 34 of the guide members 33, 33 with a clearance defined between the flat hollow blocks 38 and the lower edge 46a of the stopper plate 46. The clearance is large enough to allow the passage of individual slide fastener stringers but is narrow

- 9 -

enough to prevent passage of the sliders S. The stopper plate 46 has a central opening 49 for the passage therethrough of the streams of air ejected from the orifices 32.

5 The sorting apparatus 10 thus constructed operates as follows: For the purposes of illustration, operation of the apparatus 10 begins from the position of Figures 1 and 2 in which the stopper plate 46 is in the lowermost or holding position, the second guide 21
10 is in a closed position and air is ejected from the orifices 32. A slide fastener F is discharged from the fastener processing machine onto the guide plate 29 by means of the rollers 26, 27 with the slider S disposed substantially at the trailing end of the slide fastener
15 F. The slide fastener F slides downwardly along the guide plate 29 until its leading end reaches the sloped end portion 25 of the guide surface 24. Thereafter, the slide fastener F is advanced along the sloped end portion 25 and then along the horizontal portion 24a of
20 the guide surface 24 on the first guide 20 by means of the streams of air ejected from the orifices 32, as shown in Figure 4(A). Due to a layer of air extending between the guide surface 24 and the slide fastener F, the slide fastener F is fed in flattened form. When
25 the leading end of the slide fastener F is arrived at the second guide 21, air is ejected from the orifices 39 to flow along the upper surface of the bottom walls

36, whereupon the slide fastener F is further advanced by the streams of air ejected from the orifices 39.

When the slide fastener F has no slider mounted thereon, it is advanced to pass through the clearance between the stopper 46 and the hollow blocks 38 by means of the streams of air ejected from the orifices 39, and is finally discharged from the apparatus 10 through the chute 45, as shown in Figure 4(B). The slide fastener F without the slider S is collected in a container (not shown) as a bad slide fastener.

On the contrary, when the slide fastener F has a slider S mounted thereon, the stopper plate 46 engage the slider S to thereby arrest the movement of the slide fastener F, as shown in Figure 4(A). The slide fastener F is flattened on the lower walls 36 of the guide members 33 by means of the streams of air ejected from the orifices 39 as its is arrested by the stopper plate 46. Then, the streams of air from the orifices 32, 39 are interrupted and the actuator 43 is driven to retract its piston rod 42, whereupon the guide members 33 pivot about the respective hinges 27 to angularly move away from each other, as shown in Figure 3. Thus, the slide fastener F with the slider S is allowed to fall into the container 44 and stored therein as a good slide fastener. The slide fasteners F thus fallen from the guide members 33, 33 are disposed in the container 44 in juxtaposition. Thereafter, the actuator 43 is

- 11 -

again driven to extend its piston rod 42 for returning the guide member 33, 33 in the closed position of Figure 2. At the same time, air is ejected from the orifices 32.

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CLAIMS:-

1. A method of sorting out slide fasteners with sliders mounted thereon from slide fasteners without sliders, comprising the steps of:

5 (a) feeding the slide fasteners longitudinally one at a time along a path in flattened form by means of at least one stream of air flowing along the path;

(b) introducing the slide fastener while being thus fed, into a gate which is narrow enough to prevent the
10 passage of sliders so that one slide fastener having a slider is stopped at the gate whilst another slide fastener without a slider is allowed to pass through the gate;

(c) directing air against the slide fastener to flatten the same while the slide fastener is stopped at the gate; and

15 (d) interrupting said stream of air to thereby allow the slide fastener while being stopped at the gate in flattened form, to fall from the path.

2. A method according to claim 1, said path being substantially horizontal.

20 3. A method according to claim 1 or 2, said directed air being directed in the same direction as the flow of said stream of air.

4. A method according to any preceding claim, the slide fasteners being fed in closed condition with the sliders
25 disposed substantially at the trailing ends



of the respective slide fasteners.

5. An apparatus for sorting out slide fasteners with sliders mounted thereon from slide fasteners without sliders, comprising:

5 (a) an elongate first guide having a first guide surface for guiding slide fasteners longitudinally therealong;

(b) an elongate second guide extending from one end of said first guide and having a pair of juxtaposed guide members, said guide members being relatively movable toward
10 and away from each other to selectively define a second guide surface extending in longitudinal alignment with said first guide surface for guiding the slide fasteners longitudinally therealong;

(c) means disposed on the other end of said first guide
15 for producing at least one stream of air to flow along said first and second guide surfaces, thereby to feed the slide fasteners longitudinally along said first and second guide surfaces one by one in flattened form;

(d) means disposed above said second guide and engageable
20 with a slider of a respective one of the slide fasteners for temporarily arresting the movement of the slide fastener over said guide members;

(e) means for ejecting air against the slide fastener to flatten the same while the slide fastener is arrested
25 over said guide members; and

(f) means operatively connected to said guide members for actuating them to move toward and away from each other.

6. An apparatus according to claim 5, said first and second guide surfaces being substantially horizontal.



7. An apparatus according to claim 5 or 6, said first guide surfaces having an upwardly sloped end portion, said air ejecting means being disposed on an upper end of said sloped end portion.

5 8. An apparatus according to claim 7, including a guide plate extending substantially parallel to said sloped end portion in overlapping relation to said upper end of said sloped end portion.

10 9. An apparatus according to any one of claims 5 to 8, including a substantially U-shaped frame having a pair of spaced heads, and a pair of parallel spaced elongate support bars disposed on and extending between said heads, said first guide being disposed between said support bars adjacent to one of said heads, said guide members being pivotably mounted on
15 said support bars, respectively, and angularly movable toward and away from each other.

20 10. An apparatus according to claim 9, said actuating means comprising a fluid-pressure actuator vertically mounted on the other head and including a support plate connected to a piston rod of said actuator, said second guide including a pair of rods respectively secured at one end to said guide members and supported at the other end on said support plate.

25 11. An apparatus according to any one of claims 5 to 10, said air directing means comprising a pipe extending transversely across said first guide surface and having at least one orifice facing toward the other end of said first guide.



12. An apparatus according to any one of claims 5 to 11, said arresting means comprising a stopper plate vertically movable toward and away from said second guide surface and having a lower edge extending transversely across said second guide surface, said stopper plate being normally held in a position where said lower edge being spaced from said second guide surface with a clearance therebetween, said clearance being narrow enough to prevent the passage of the slider but large enough to allow the passage of the slide fastener without the slider.

13. An apparatus according to claim 12, said stopper plate having an opening for allowing the passage of said stream of air.

14. An apparatus according to any one of claims 5 to 13, said air ejecting means comprising a pair of flat hollow blocks respectively disposed on said guide members adjacent to said one end of said first guide, each of said hollow blocks having at least one orifice facing toward the distal end of said second guide.

15. An apparatus according to any one of claims 5 to 14, including a container disposed below said guide members for receiving therein the slide fasteners which have fallen from said second guide.

16. An apparatus according to any one of claims



5 to 15, including a chute extending downwardly from the distal end of said second guide for discharging slide fasteners without the sliders.

5 17. A method substantially as described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

18. An apparatus substantially as described with reference to and as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.
