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SHEET ADHESIVE MATERIAL FOR BONDING TWO MEMBERS
HAVING SMALL HOLES AND METHOD OF BONDING SAME

The present invention relates to a sheet adhesive material for bonding two members having small holes to each other and a method of bonding the two members.

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In a conventional ink jet type printer using an ink of a hot melt type as disclosed for example in an Unexamined Japanese Patent Application (OPI) No. Sho. 61-98547 or an ink jet type printer employing a print head of a superposed and contiguous type as disclosed in U.S. Patent 4,680,595, a nozzle plate is fixed onto the front surface of a head base member in such a manner that a number of nozzle ports for ejecting ink formed in the nozzle plate are arranged respectively to correspond to a number of ink communication chambers each communicating with an ink tank.

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However, in the conventional method an adhesive agent is simply applied to the contact surfaces of the two members to thereby bond the two members to each other, which may arise a problem that the adhesive agent penetrates and covers the

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nozzle holes : thereby cause the clogging of the nozzle holes and an undesired ink-failure.

The present invention was made in view of the foregoing drawbacks accompanying the conventional method as mentioned above. Accordingly, it is an object of the invention to provide a bonding method capable of bonding surely and fixedly two members to each other without causing the clogging of the nozzle holes or ink-failure condition.

This object is solved by the method of bonding two members, each having small holes, to each other according to independent claim 1, the sheet shaped adhesive member of independent claim 22 and the sheet shaped adhesive material according to independent claim 29. Further advantageous features, aspects and details of the invention are evident from the dependent claims, the description and the drawings. The claims are intended to be understood as a first non-limiting approach of defining the invention in general terms.

The invention according to a specific aspect provides a sheet-shaped adhesive member for bonding two plate-shaped members each having small holes, such as a nozzle plate employed in a recording head of an ink jet type recording apparatus.

It is another aspect of the invention to provide a sheet-shaped adhesive member capable of surely bonding two plate members each having small holes to form an integrated member without producing any clogging.

It is still another aspect of the invention to provide a sheet-shaped adhesive member capable of restricting the deformation of the sheet-shaped adhesive member in the thickness direction thereof to thereby further suppress an inward deformation of the escape holes.

According to another specific aspect, the invention provides a method for bonding together two members each having small holes which, comprises a step of provisionally bonding by pressurizing onto a contact surface of one of the two members a sheet-shaped adhesive member having thereon escape holes each corresponding to the small holes of the member and deformation preventive

holes for preventing the escape holes from being deformed, and a step of bonding by heating and pressurizing the other member onto the contact surface of the former member.

5 According to another aspect of the invention, a method of bonding together two members each having small holes comprises the steps of provisionally bonding by pressurizing onto a contact surface of one of the two members a sheet-shaped adhesive member having thereon escape holes corresponding in position to the respective small holes of the member, inserting
10 a space forming member, and bonding by heating and pressurizing the other member onto the contact surface of the former member.

Furthermore, according to still another aspect of the invention, there is provided a sheet-shaped adhesive member having escape holes each corresponding in position to the
15 respective small holes of the member and deformation preventive holes disposed adjacent to the escape holes capable of absorbing an extension of the sheet-shaped adhesive member in the surface direction thereof to thereby suppress an inward deformation of the escape holes.

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Fig. 1 is a view showing a structure of a print head in an ink jet type printer to which the present invention is applied;

Fig. 2 is a plan view of a sheet-shaped adhesive member employed in a first embodiment of a method of bonding together two



members each having small holes according to the present invention;

Fig. 3 is a side view of the sheet-shaped adhesive member shown in Fig. 2;

Fig. 4 is a side view of a positioning step employed in the first embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 5 is a view of a step of provisionally bonding the adhesive member employed in the first embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 6 is a view of a step of substantially bonding a head substrate, a nozzle plate and the above adhesive member to one another, which step is employed in the first embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 7 is a view of a completely bonded state achieved according to the invention;

Fig. 8 is a view of the deformed shapes of an escape hole formed in the adhesive member when no deformation preventive hole is formed;

Fig. 9 is a plan view of an adhesive member used in a method of bonding together two members each having small holes embodying the second embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 10 is a side view of the adhesive shown in Fig. 9;

Fig. 11 is a perspective view of a space forming member used in the second embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 12 is a view of a space forming member inserting step in the second embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 13 is a view of a bonded state achieved by the second embodiment of the invention;



Fig. 14 is a view of a structure of an ink jet recording head to which the second embodiment of the invention is applied;

Fig. 15 illustrate a third embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention;

Fig. 16 is an enlarged sectional view taken on the line A-A shown in Fig. 15;

Fig. 17 is an explanatory view of the third embodiment, illustrating a step of bonding operation employed in the invention;

Fig. 18 is a sectional view of the third embodiment, illustrating a state in which the two members of which are bonded together;

Fig. 19 is a plan view of a fourth embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention;

Fig. 20 shows a fifth embodiment of sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention;

Fig. 21 is an explanatory view to show a method of fitting a deformation restricting spacer into the above adhesive member;

Fig. 22A is a plan view of main portions of a sixth embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the present invention; and

Fig. 22B is a sectional view of the sixth embodiment, illustrating a state in which the two members of which are bonded together.



Fig. 1 is a view showing a structure of a print head of an ink jet type printer to which the present invention is applied.

5 As shown in Fig. 1, a head base member 1 is provided with an ink communication chamber 11 communicating with an ink tank 6. The head base member 1 is formed of a high molecular resin material such as polysulfone, polyethersulfone, polycarbonate or the like. A nozzle plate 2 is provided with a
10 nozzle hole 21 for ejecting an ink droplets 7 and is press-machined, which plate is formed of electroformed nickel, stainless steel, beryllium copper or the like. The head base member 1 and the nozzle plate 2 are strongly bonded to each other by means of an adhesive member 3 while keeping a
15 communication between the ink communication chamber 11 and the nozzle hole 21. After manufacturing the recording head, the ink droplets 7 is ejected by driving a PZT 5 onto a recording sheet 8 to thereby achieve printing.

During bonding the above mentioned two members, if the
20 adhesive member 3 penetrates into and covers the nozzle hole 21 of the nozzle plate 2 to cause the clogging, then the ink droplets 7 cannot be ejected out, which is a serious defect in a printer.

The sheet-shaped adhesive member and method of bonding
25 together the head substrate 1 and nozzle plate 2 by the sheet-shaped adhesive member according to a first embodiment will now



be described hereinbelow with reference to accompanied Figs. 2 to 8.

Fig. 2 is a plan view of a sheet-shaped adhesive member 3 employed in the first embodiment of a method of bonding together two members each having small holes according to the present invention, Fig. 3 is a side view of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 3 shown in Fig. 2, Fig. 4 is a side view of a positioning step employed in the first embodiment of the invention, Fig. 5 is a view of a step of provisionally bonding the adhesive member employed in the first embodiment of the invention, Fig. 6 is a view of a step of bonding a head base member, a nozzle plate and the adhesive member to one another according to the invention, Fig. 7 is a view of a completely bonded state achieved according to the invention.

The bonding steps will be described in detail as follows.

(1) First, there is prepared a composite member which consists of a material of a sheet-shaped adhesive member (Three Bond Co., No. 1604) laminated by a release sheet 30. As shown in Fig. 7, escape holes 31 are stamped out by a press at a position each corresponding to the respective nozzle hole 21 formed on the nozzle plate 2. In this stamping operation, as shown in Fig. 3, the diameter D of the escape hole 31 is set with respect to the diameter d of the nozzle hole 21 such that $D \geq d$, in consideration of a width for contraction occurring when heated and pressurized. A number of escape holes 31 are



arranged in a line in the central portion of the adhesive member 3. Further, a number of deformation preventive holes 32 are stamped out in upper and lower lines with the central line of the escape holes 31 disposed therebetween. The diameter of each of the deformation preventive holes 32 is set to be equal to that of the escape hole 31. Then, positioning holes 33 are provided to positioning the adhesive member 3 when bonding and the outer configuration of the above-mentioned material of the adhesive member 3 are stamped out to thereby produce the sheet-shaped adhesive member 3.

(2) As shown in Fig. 4, the nozzle plate 2 with the contact surface of which facing upwardly is put on a positioning jig 50 having pins 51 and further the adhesive member 3 with the release sheet 30 disposed on the upper surface thereof is mounted on the nozzle plate 2 before the nozzle plate 2 and adhesive member 3 are properly positioned with respect to each other.

(3) Next, as shown in Fig. 5, the positioned nozzle plate 2 and adhesive member 3 mounted on the nozzle plate 2, together with the positioning jig 50, are set in a heat-pressure bonding machine 60 (Japan Abionics Co. Type TCW-125) and then the adhesive member 3 is provisionally pressure bonded onto the nozzle plate 2 under the condition of a heating temperature of 80°C and a pressure of 3 kg/cm². After that, the release paper 30 is peeled off.



(4) Afterwards, as shown in Fig. 6, the head base member 1 is mounted on the adhesive member 3 and then the two members are positioned with respect to each other. Then, the head base member 1, adhesive member 3 and nozzle plate 2 are finally bonded to one another under the condition of a heating temperature of 120°C and a pressure of 3 kg/cm².

Consequently, as shown in Fig. 7, the escape hole 31 restricted to a uniform thickness by a space forming member and is bonded by heating and pressurizing, will be contracted between the nozzle hole 21 of the nozzle plate 2 and the ink communication chamber 11 of the head base member 1 compared to itself before the adhesive member 31 is heated and pressurized for bonding. That is, the adhesive member 3 will be contracted down to the same and uniform size as the ink through hole 11 to thereby bond the nozzle plate 2 and head base member 1 to each other strongly without clogging the nozzle hole 21.

A sheet-shaped adhesive member and method of bonding together a head base member and a nozzle plate by the sheet-shaped adhesive member according to a second embodiment will be described hereinbelow with reference to accompanying Figs. 9 to 14.

Fig. 9 is a plan view of an adhesive member used in a method of bonding together two members each having small holes embodying the second embodiment of the invention, Fig. 10 is a side view of the adhesive shown in Fig. 9, Fig. 11 is a perspective view of a space forming member employed in the



second embodiment of the invention, Fig. 12 is a view of a space forming member inserting step in the second embodiment, Fig. 13 is a view of a bonded state achieved by the second embodiment, and Fig. 14 is a view of a structure of an ink jet recording head to which the second embodiment of the invention is applied.

In the drawings, like parts and components are designated by the same reference numerals as the first embodiment according to Figs. 1 to 8. The method according to the second embodiment is similar to the first embodiment and, therefore, merely the different steps are described hereinbelow.

(1) The first step is substantially the same as the step (1) of the first embodiment described above. However, in the second embodiment, a plurality of insertion holes 132 for insertion of a space forming member 4 is stamped out on an sheet-shaped adhesive member 103 as shown in Figs. 9 and 10.

(2) Next, a space forming member 4 shown in Fig. 11 having a thickness t is manufactured in such a manner that the thickness t of which is not greater than the thickness T of the adhesive member 3 as shown in Fig. 10, that is, $t \leq T$, in consideration of an expansion of a width due to a deformation of the adhesive member 103 when the adhesive member is bonded by heating and pressurizing. The space forming member 4 is formed of stainless steel so that it will never be deformed when the adhesive member is bonded by heating and pressurizing.



The space forming member 4 is stamped out by a press-machining operation so as to have a circular shape which is easy to manufacture.

5 The bonding steps (3) and (4) of the first embodiment shown in Figs. 4 and 5 are the same in the second embodiment after the step (2) thereof and the explanations of these steps are omitted.

10 (5) As shown in Fig. 12, the space forming member 4 is inserted into the insertion hole 132 formed on the adhesive member 103.

The next bonding step of this embodiment is also the same as the step (6) of the first embodiment shown in Fig. 6.

15 By means of the above-mentioned operations, as shown in Fig. 13, in the adhesive member 103, which is restricted to a uniform thickness by the space forming member 4 and is then bonded by heating and pressurizing, the escape hole 31 is contracted when compared with itself before it is heated and pressurized and thus it is of the same and uniform size as the ink communication hole 11, so that the adhesive member 103 is
20 able to bond the head base member 1 and nozzle plate 2 to each other strongly without clogging the nozzle hole 21.

Examples:

25 With respect to the adhesive member 3 and 103, the present inventors have experimented, besides the method using the sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the first and second embodiments, a method which uses a conventional liquid



adhesive agent such as an epoxy contained adhesive member (Araldite Co. Type AW-106), a silicone contained adhesive member (Toray • Dow Corning • Silicone Co., Type SE 9157L) or the like. The result of the experimentation revealed that, when the conventional liquid adhesive member is used, it is difficult to apply the adhesive member to a clearance between the head base member 1 and the nozzle plate 2 in a uniform thickness. Also, the flow or penetration states of the adhesive member due to a capillary phenomenon occurring when pressure is applied are affected by the mixing ratio thereof, changes of environmental temperatures and the like and thus are caused to vary frequently according to such environmental conditions. As a result, it is difficult to secure stabilized communication between the nozzle hole 21 and ink communication chamber 11. Further, in the case of the sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention, the bonding processes were completed in several seconds when it is bonded by heating and pressurizing. On the other hand, the liquid adhesive member requires a long drying time ranging from 30 minutes to several hours.

For the escape holes 31 formed in the sheet-shaped adhesive member 3, besides the above-mentioned method according to the present embodiment in which each of the escape holes 31 is formed such that its diameter D is equal to or greater than the diameter d of the nozzle hole 21, the applicants have experimented another method in which no escape hole 31 is



formed at all and, after bonded by heating and pressurizing, the adhesive members 3 and 103 are post-worked from externally by use of an excimer laser (Sumitomo Juki Co., Type INDEX 200) through the nozzle hole 21 formed on the nozzle plate 2 or through the communication chamber 11 in the head base member 1. However, our experimentation showed that this method is affected by dross or the like. That is, it is found difficult to post-work the whole nozzle uniformly. Further, if the diameter D of the escape hole 31 is smaller than the diameter d of the ink communication chamber 11 in the head base member 1, then the ink communication chamber 11 or nozzle hole 21 may be clogged when the adhesive member is bonded by heating and pressurizing, that is, when the adhesive member is contracted.

With regard to the deformation preventive holes 32 and 132, the present inventors have also tested another method in which no deformation preventive holes are formed. This test revealed that the escape hole 31 can be caused to vary into a non-circular shape having a directional characteristic as shown in Fig. 8 due to the contraction of the adhesive member 3 when it is heated and pressurized for bonding, so that the escape hole 31 clogs the nozzle hole 21 or nozzle communication chamber 11 as shown by oblique lines in Fig. 8. Referring to the diameter, positions, number and the like of the deformation preventive holes 32 and 132, the above-mentioned method is found favorable.



Further, referring to the space forming member 4, the present inventors have tested another method which does not use the space forming member 4. According to the result of the test, however, the amount of deformation of the adhesive member 3, when it is heated and pressurized, is found to vary according to the heating temperatures and pressures, the conditions of the contact surfaces or the like, with the result that, after the adhesive member 3 is bonded by heating and pressurizing, the diameter of the escape hole is caused to vary, whereby the ink communication chamber 11 or nozzle hole 21 can be clogged. Further, the result of the test revealed that, if the thickness t of the space forming member 4 is greater than the thickness T of the adhesive member 3, then a width for deformation of the adhesive member exists no longer so that a practical bonding strength cannot be obtained.

Figs. 15 to 18 illustrate a third embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the present invention, which is constructed so as to bond a nozzle plate employed in an ink jet type recording head, and a method of bonding the nozzle plate by use of this sheet-shaped adhesive member.

In these figures, like parts and components are designated by the same reference numerals as the first and second embodiments shown in Figs. 1 to 14. As shown in these figures, a sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is used to bond a nozzle plate 2 to a head substrate 1. The sheet-shaped





adhesive member 203 is of a hot melt type which penetrates in a semi-melt state into fine undulations on the surfaces of materials to be bonded and is hardened therein owing to an anchor effect to thereby bond the two members to be bonded to each other. The sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is formed of a high molecular material consisting of a group comprising polyolefin, nylon, polyurethane, and a polyester. A release sheet 30 is adhered on the whole surface of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 for the purpose of reinforcement and, as shown in Fig. 17, the release sheet 30 will be peeled off after the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is provisionally mounted to the nozzle plate 2.

The fundamental structure of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 according to the third embodiment is the same as the member 3 according to the first embodiment shown in Fig. 2. Therefore, merely the different feature will be described.

In the third embodiment, the diameter D of the respective escape holes 31 is set about 1.8 times the diameter d of the nozzle hole 21 to correspond to an amount of compression Δt of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203. Further, the deformation preventive holes 32, which are formed on both sides of the escape holes 31, are formed in such a manner that the diameters thereof are substantially the same as the diameters D of the escape holes 31 and also that they are arranged in a zigzag line where the deformation preventive holes 32 are staggered with respect to the line of the escape holes or, as indicated in Fig. 15, where the three rows of escape holes 31 and the deformation preventive holes 32 are arranged such that each escape hole 31 with its adjoining deformation preventive holes 32 forms a column of three adjoining holes at a

distance δ which is substantially two times the diameter D of the escape hole 31.

Referring here in particular to the third embodiment of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203, in a sheet-shaped
5 adhesive member 203 having a thickness of 0.50 mm with a deformation width of 0.15 mm given, there are formed a number of escape holes 31 each having a diameter D of 0.38 mm with respect to the diameter of 0.15 to 0.18 mm of the nozzle hole 21 and, on both sides of the escape holes 31, there are formed
10 the same number of deformation preventive holes 32 at a distance of 0.70 mm between the two preventive hole lines.

In Fig. 15, reference numeral 33 designates a pair of positioning holes which are respectively disposed at both the ends of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203, and 205
15 represents a pair of dummy holes which are formed at both the ends of the escape hole 31 line in order to absorb the extension of the escape holes 31 in the longitudinal direction thereof to thereby restrict the deformation of the escape holes 31 in the longitudinal direction thereof.

20 Next, description will be given below of a process of bonding the substrate B and nozzle plate P to each other by use of the above-mentioned sheet-shaped adhesive member 1 with reference to Fig. 17.

At first, with two positioning pins 51 respectively
25 planted on a jig 50 as the reference thereof, the nozzle plate 2 is positioned on the jig 50 with the adhesive surface thereof



facing upward. Next, with the release sheet 30 mounted on the top surface thereof and also with the two positioning pins 51, corresponding in position to the positioning holes 33 the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is positioned and placed on the nozzle plate 2.

Since the bonding process of this embodiment is the same as that of the first and second embodiments described above and shown in Figs. 5 and 6, the description is omitted.

As a result of the bonding process, the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is compressed and deformed in the thickness direction thereof and at the same time it is expanded in the surface direction thereof. With respect to the longitudinal extension of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203, the respective escape holes 31 absorb the extensions thereof to one another and. Further, with respect to the extension of the adhesive member 203 in the width direction thereof, the deformation preventive holes 32, which are disposed on both sides of the escape holes 31, absorb the extensions in the width direction. Therefore, this can prevent the respective escape holes 31 from being deformed as much as possible and thus the inner edges of the escape holes 31 can be kept from coming into the nozzle holes 21. Furthermore, owing to the pair of dummy holes 205 formed at both the ends of the escape hole 31 line, the extension of the escape holes 31 in the longitudinal direction thereof is effectively suppressed to thereby restrict the deformation of the escape holes 31 in the



longitudinal direction thereof. Accordingly, the head base member 1 and nozzle plate 2 can be bonded together with high accuracy.

Fig. 19 shows a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the fourth embodiment of the invention.

In the fourth embodiment, on both sides of a number of escape holes 331 arranged in a line, there are formed a plurality of deformation preventive slits 332 each having a width corresponding to the diameter of the escape hole 331. Owing to this structure, the extension of a sheet-shaped adhesive member 303 caused when it is compressed and deformed is absorbed by the deformation of the deformation preventive slits 332 to thereby restrict the deformation of the escape holes 331 as much as possible.

Fig. 20 shows a fifth embodiment of sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention, in which deformation restricting spacers 404 are used for further restricting the deformation of escape holes 431.

In the present sheet-shaped adhesive member 403, on both sides of the escape holes 431 formed in a line, there are formed a number of deformation preventive holes 432 and further, on both sides of the deformation preventive holes 432, there are formed a plurality of spacer insertion holes 424 into which there is inserted deformation restricting spacers 404 each corresponding to the thickness of the sheet-shaped



adhesive member 403 obtained when an allowable compression amount Δt is subtracted.

5 In the fifth embodiment, as shown in Fig. 21, the sheet-shaped adhesive member 403 is provisionally mounted onto the nozzle plate 2 and is positioned just below a press machine 428 and, after that, the respective deformation restricting spacers 404, which are respectively stamped out from a steel plate 426, are allowed to fall down into the spacer insertion holes 424.

10 Owing to this structure, the compression amount of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 403 can be restricted within an allowable range and at the same time the deformation of the escape holes 431 can be prevented by the escape holes 431 and deformation preventive holes 432 formed on both sides thereof,
15 so that the nozzle plate 2 can be fitted to the head base member 1 without producing any clogging.

In this embodiment, if the deformation of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 403 is restricted by the deformation restricting spacers 404 to a sufficient extent, then the
20 deformation of the escape holes 431 can be restricted to such a degree that the inner edges of the escape holes cannot come into the nozzle holes 21, even when the deformation preventive holes 432 are not specially formed on both sides of the escape holes 431.



Figs. 22A and 22B show a sixth embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member in which deformation preventive holes are used for storing deformation restricting spacers.

In the sixth embodiment, there is used as a deformation preventive material a paste material which includes fine grains composed of a high molecular material such as an epoxy resin, urethane, polyimide or the like dispersed in a volatile solution and also which, when heated and compressed, is reduced in volume and hardened. Further, deformation preventive paste material 535 is previously applied into each of deformation preventive holes 532 respectively formed on both sides of escape holes 531 before the sheet-shaped adhesive member is actually used.

In the sixth embodiment, if the sheet-shaped adhesive member 503 interposed between the nozzle plate 2 and head base member 1 is heated and pressurized, then the deformation preventive paste material 535 is contracted in thickness by an amount corresponding to the compression amount width Δt of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 503 and, at the same time, the paste material 535 is contracted in the outside diameter thereof and is hardened. As a result, the deformation of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 503 in the thickness direction thereof is restricted by the deformation preventive paste material 535 and, at the same time, the extension of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 503 in the surface direction thereof is absorbed by a clearance formed between the paste material 535



and deformation preventive hole 532, so that the inward deformation of the escape holes 532 can be further suppressed.

As described above, according to the present invention, when bonding two members each having small holes to each other, a sheet shaped adhesive member including escape holes each
5 corresponding to the small holes of one member and deformation preventive holes for preventing the escape holes from being deformed is provisionally bonded by pressurizing onto one member and then the other member is bonded by heating and
10 pressurizing onto the contact surface of the one member, so that the two members can be bonded together strongly and efficiently without causing any hole clogging.

Further, when bonding together two members each having small holes, there is provisionally bonded by pressurizing onto
15 one of the two members a sheet-shaped adhesive member which includes therein escape holes respectively corresponding to small holes of the one member, space forming members each having a proper thickness being inserted into the sheet-shaped adhesive member, and the other member is then bonded to the
20 contact surface of the one member by heating and pressurizing the adhesive member. Owing to this, the two members each having small holes can be bonded together strongly and highly efficiently without causing any hole clogging.

In the foregoing description, the present invention has
25 been described by way of an example in which the head base member 1 and nozzle plate 2 respectively used in a ink jet



printer are bonded to each other. However, the invention is not limited thereto or thereby, but it can also apply as means for bonding together other kinds of two members each having small holes which may be clogged with an adhesive member.

5 Further, the invention may also be applied to an adhesive member which bonds together two members such as a water sprinkler or the like, which respectively have small holes.



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CLAIMS

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1. A method of bonding two members each having small holes to each other, comprising the steps of:

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preparing first and second members each having a number of small holes;

preparing a sheet-shaped adhesive member;

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forming escape holes on said sheet-shaped adhesive member at a position each corresponding to said holes of said first members;

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mounting said sheet-shaped adhesive member onto said first member;

first heating and pressing said first member and said sheet-shaped adhesive member mounted on said first member for bonding to each other to form a preform;

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mounting said second member on said preform; and

second heating and pressing said preform and said second member mounted on said preform for bonding said first and second members to each other through said sheet-shaped adhesive member.

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2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising a step of forming a number of deformation preventive holes in upper and lower lines with the central line of said escape holes disposed therebetween at the same time of said step of forming said escape holes.

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3. The method of Claim 1 or 2, further comprising a step of forming a plurality of insertion holes for insertion of a space forming member on said sheet-shaped adhesive member at the same time of said step of forming said escape holes.
4. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, wherein said first heating and pressing step takes place under the condition of a heating temperature of about 80°C and a pressure of about 3 kg/cm², and said second heating and pressing step takes place under the condition of a heating temperature of about 120°C and a pressure of about 3 kg/cm².
5. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member is composed of a sheet-shaped adhesive material and a release sheet laminated onto said sheet-shaped adhesive material, said release sheet being peeled off said sheet-shaped adhesive material after said first heating and pressing step.
6. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, wherein said second member is a head base member of a printing head of an ink jet type recording apparatus and said first member is a nozzle plate having nozzle holes for ejecting ink droplets.
7. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member is of a hot melt type.
8. The method of Claim 7, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member is formed of a high molecular material consisting essentially of a group comprising a polyolefin, nylon, polyurethane, and polyester.





9. The method of Claim 6 or 7, wherein said head base member is formed of a high molecular resin material consisting of a group comprising polysulfone, polyethersulfone and polycarbonate, and said nozzle plate is formed of a material consisting of a group comprising electroformed nickel, stainless steel and beryllium copper.
10. The method of Claim 3, or any claim dependent on claim 3, wherein a thickness of said space forming member is not greater than a thickness of said sheet-shaped adhesive member.
11. The method of Claim 3 or any claim dependent on claim 3, wherein said space forming member is formed of stainless steel.
12. The method of Claim 3 or any claim dependent on claim 3, wherein said space forming member has a circular shape.
13. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, further comprising a step of forming positioning holes at both the ends on said sheet-shaped adhesive member preferably at the same time of said step of forming said escape holes.
14. The method of Claim 2 or any claim dependent on claim 2, further comprising a step of forming a pair of dummy holes at both ends of said escape hole line preferably at the same time of said step of forming said escape holes.
15. The method of Claim 6 or any claim dependent on claim 6, wherein a diameter of each said escape holes is set about 1.8 times the diameter of said nozzle hole to correspond





to an amount of compression of said sheet-shaped adhesive member.

- 5 16. The method of Claim 15, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member has a thickness of about 0.50 mm with a deformation width of about 0.15 mm given, said escape holes each has a diameter of about 0.38 mm and said nozzle hole has a diameter of 0.15 to 0.18 mm, and the same number of said deformation preventive holes are located at a distance of about 0.70 mm between said two preventive hold lines.
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- 15 17. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, further comprising a step of forming a plurality of deformation preventive slits each having a width corresponding to the diameter of said escape hole.
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18. The method of Claim 2 or any claim dependent on claim 2, further comprising a step of inserting spacers in said deformation preventive holes before said first heating and pressing step.
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19. The method of Claim 18, wherein said spacers comprise a deformation preventive paste material.
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20. The method of Claim 19, wherein said paste material comprises fine grains composed of a high molecular material dispersed in a volatile solution.
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21. The method of Claim 20, wherein said high molecular material consists of a group comprising an epoxy resin, urethane and polyimide.





22. A sheet-shaped adhesive member (3, 103, 203, 303, 403, 503) interposed between two members (1, 2) each having small holes (11, 21) for bonding the two members (1, 2) into an integrated member upon being heated and pressurized, the sheet-shaped adhesive member (3, 103, 203, 303, 403, 503) comprises escape holes (31, 331, 431, 531) formed on said sheet-shaped adhesive member, said escape holes (31, 331, 431, 531) corresponding in position to the small holes (11, 21) of the two members (1, 2).

23. The sheet-shaped adhesive material of Claim 22, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member further comprises deformation preventive holes (32, 132, 332, 432, 532).

24. The sheet-shaped adhesive material of Claim 23, wherein said deformation preventive holes (32, 132, 432, 532) are disposed adjacent of said escape holes (31, 331, 431, 531).

25. The sheet-shaped adhesive material of Claim 23 or 24, wherein said deformation preventive holes (32, 132, 332, 432, 532) are disposed on both sides of said escape holes (31, 331, 431, 531) arranged in a line.

26. The sheet-shaped adhesive material of Claim 23 or 24, wherein said deformation preventive holes are slit-shaped holes (332) extending along the two sides of said escape hole (31, 331, 431, 531) line.

27. The sheet-shaped adhesive material of any one of Claims 22 to 26, further comprising a deformation restricting piece (4, 404) embedded in said sheet-shaped adhesive





member for restricting an amount of contraction of said sheet-shaped adhesive member in the thickness direction thereof.

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28. The sheet-shaped adhesive material of any one of Claims 23 to 27, further comprising paste-shaped deformation restricting agent (535) inserted into said deformation preventive holes (532).

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29. A sheet-shaped adhesive material (103) interposed between two members (1, 2) each having small holes (11, 21) for bonding the two members (1, 2) into an integrated member upon being heated and pressurized, said sheet-shaped adhesive member (103) comprising escape holes (31) corresponding in position to the small holes (11, 21) of the members and a deformation restricting piece (4) for restricting an amount of contraction of said sheet-shaped adhesive member (103) in the thickness direction thereof.

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ABSTRACT

10 A method of bonding together two members (1, 2) each having
small holes (11, 21), the method comprising the steps of
provisionally bonding by pressurizing onto the contact
surface of one of the members (1, 2) each having small holes
a sheet-shaped adhesive member (3) including escape holes
(31) respectively corresponding to the small holes (11, 21)
and deformation preventive holes (32) for preventing the
15 escape holes (31) from being deformed, and bonding by heating
and pressurizing the other member onto the contact surface.

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Fig. 8

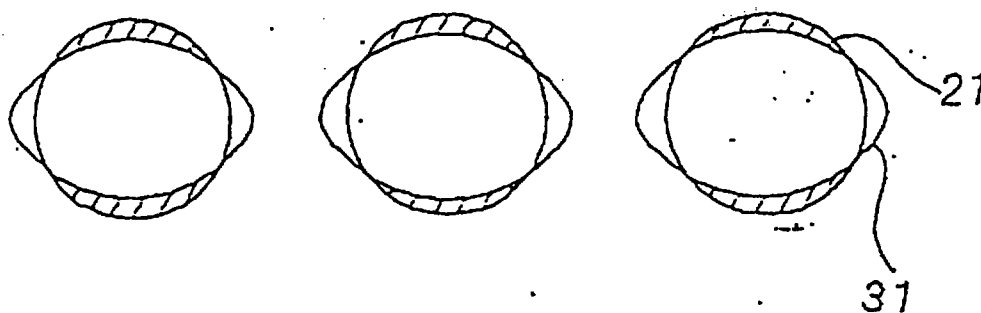
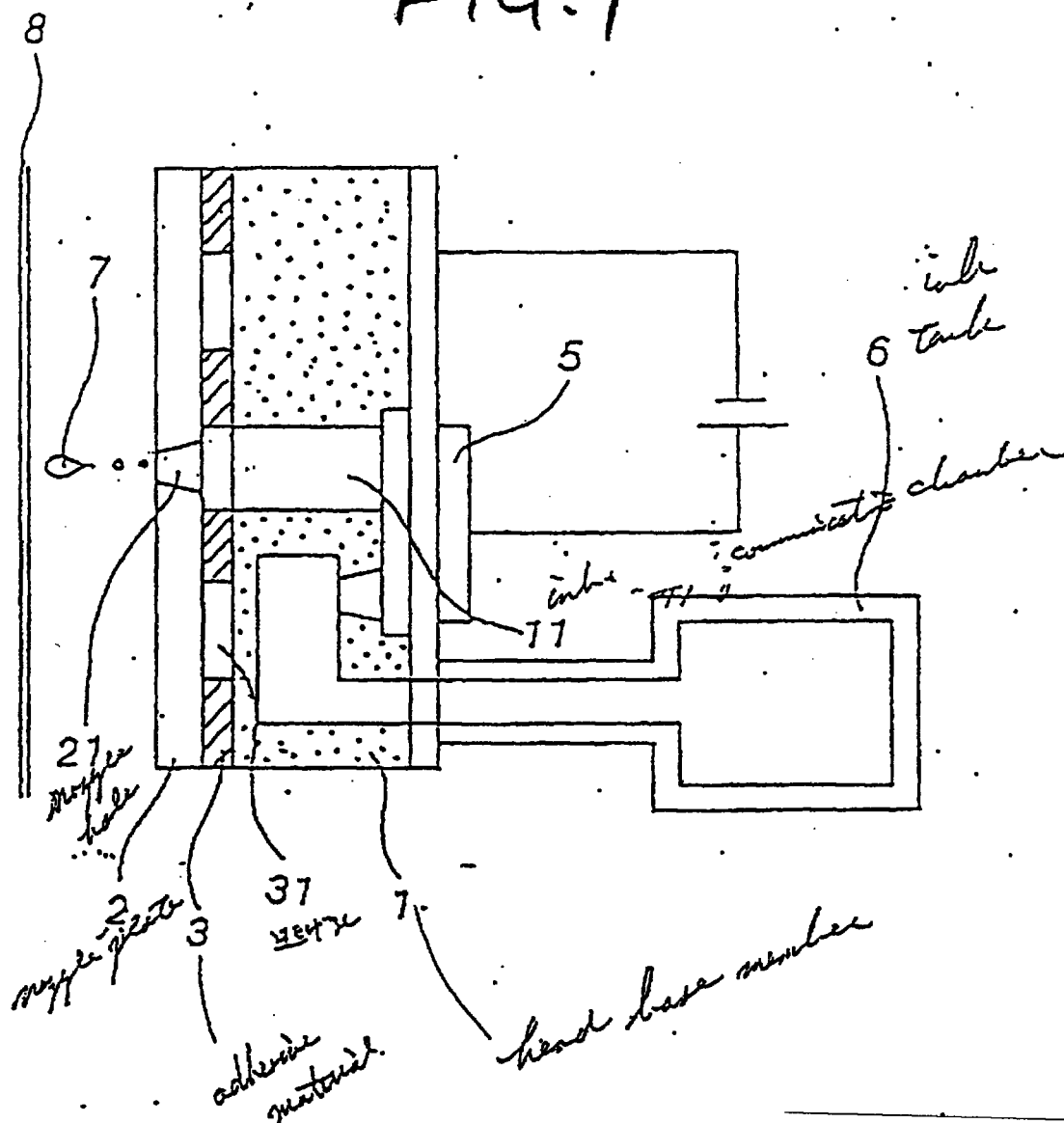


FIG. 1



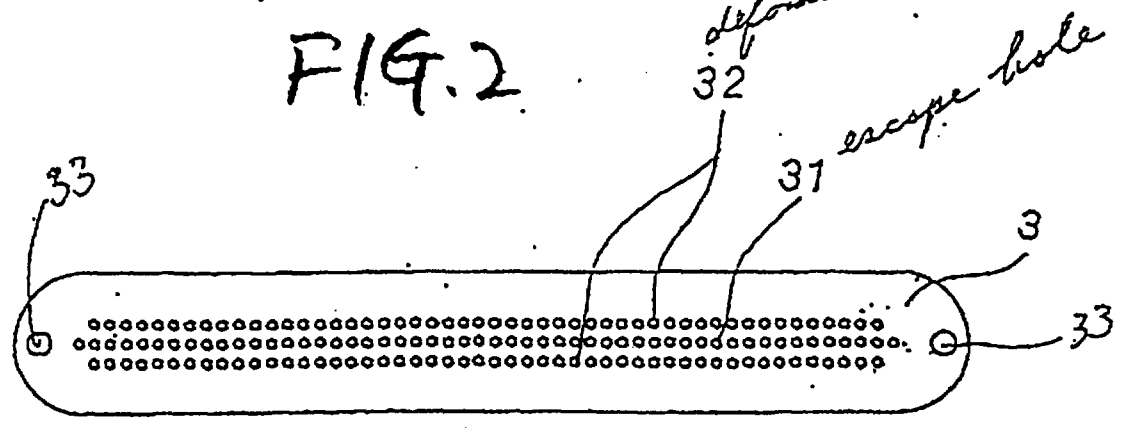
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FIG. 2

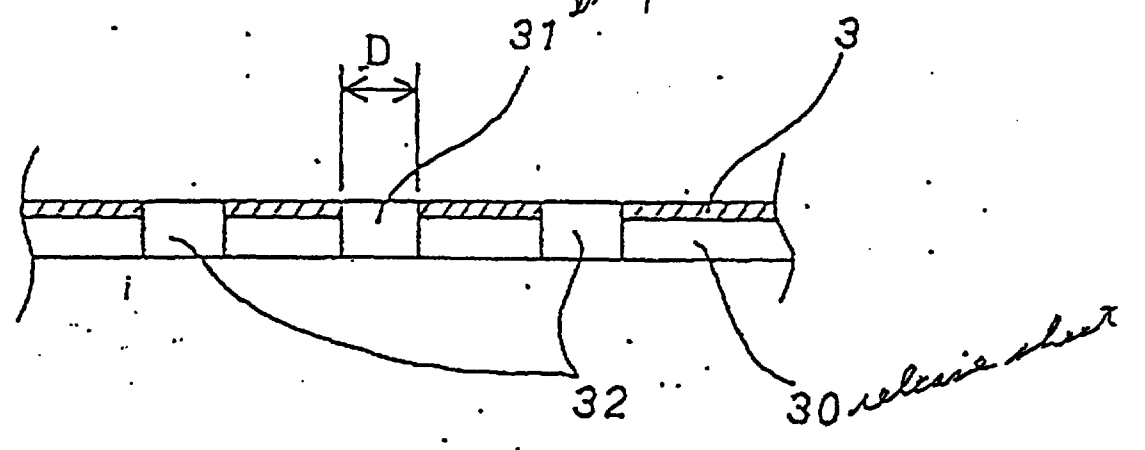
deformation preventive holes



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FIG. 3

escape hole



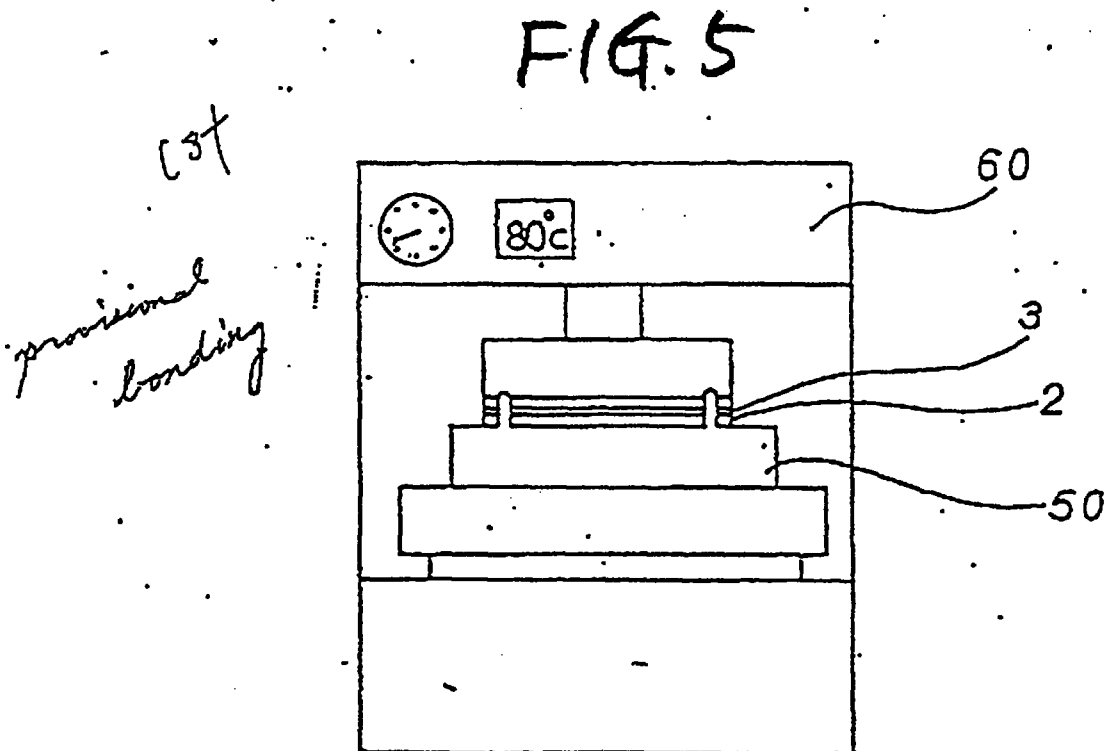
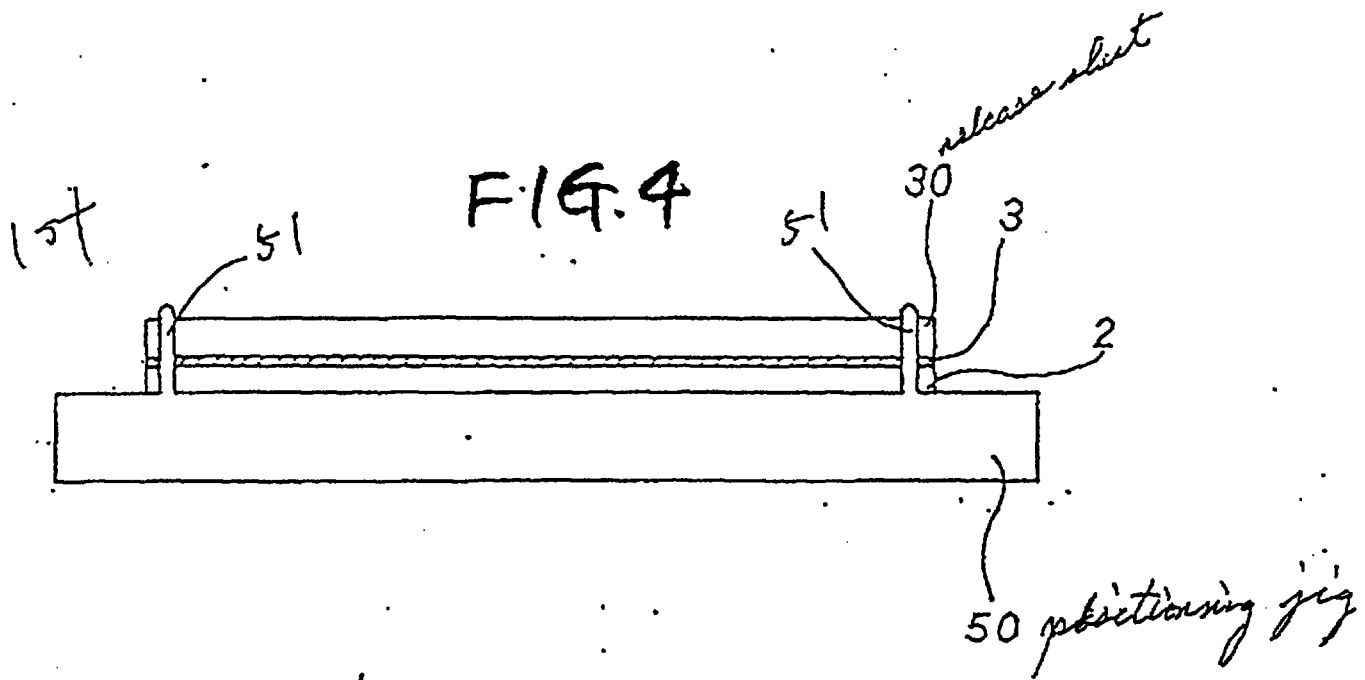


FIG. 6

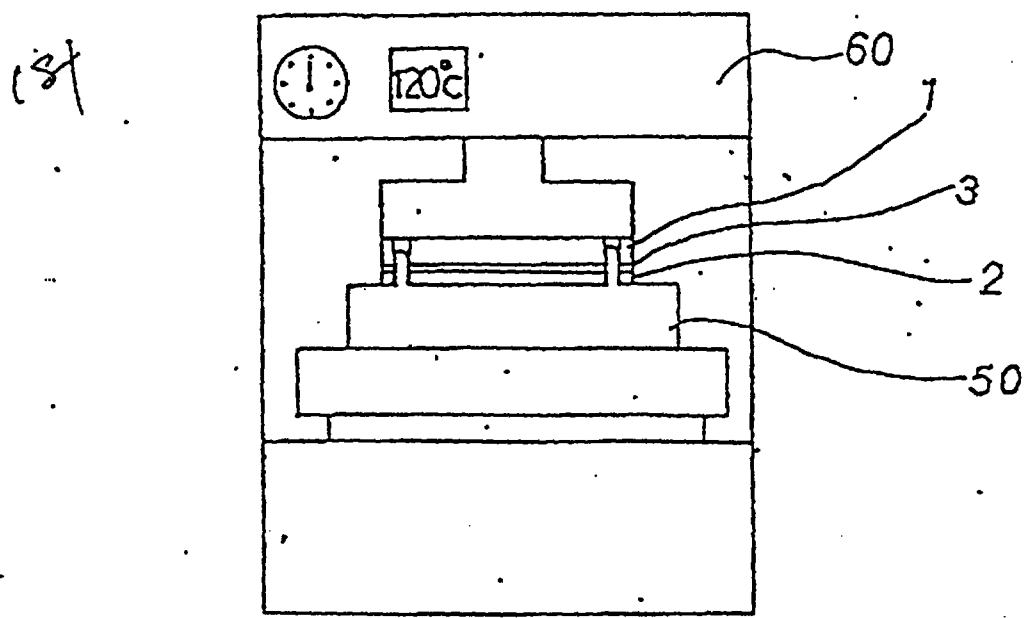
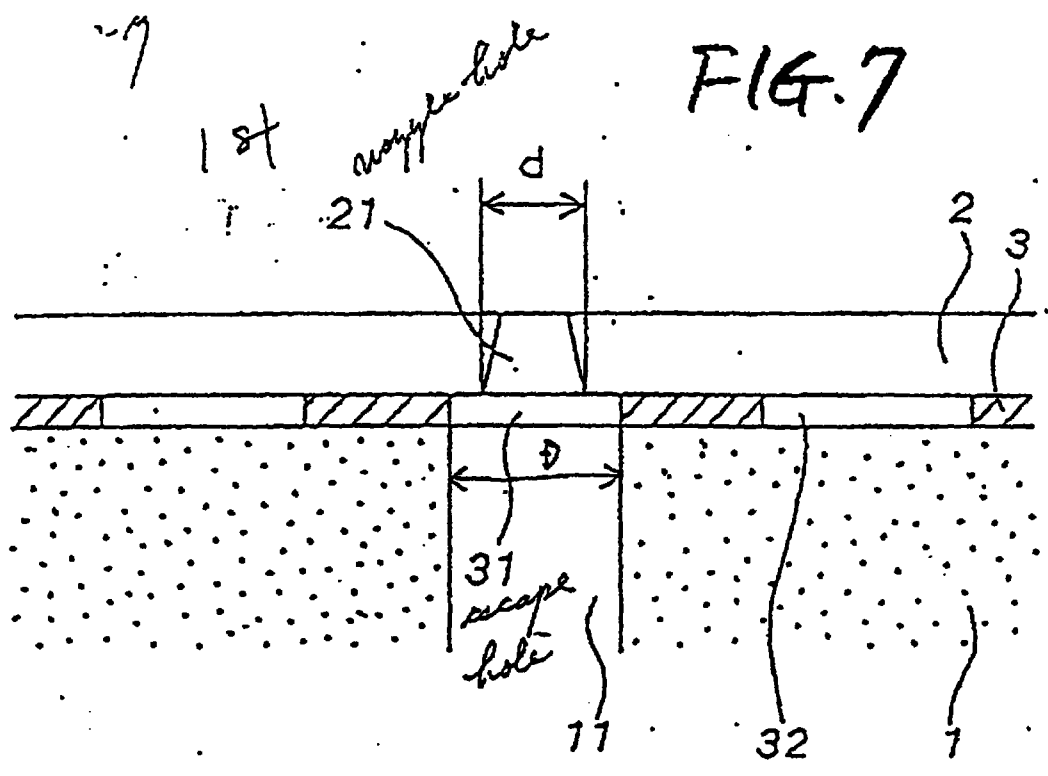


FIG. 7



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FIG. 9

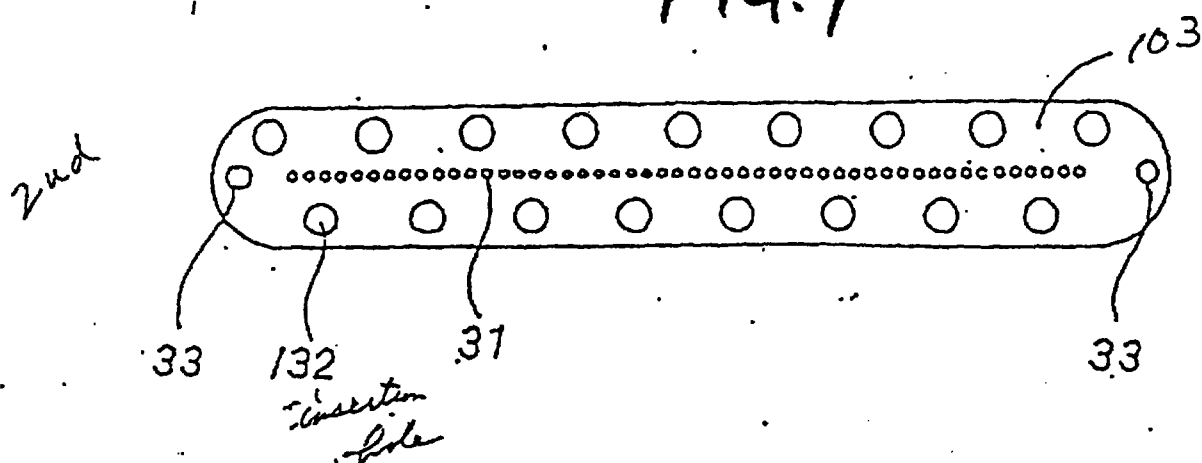


FIG. 10

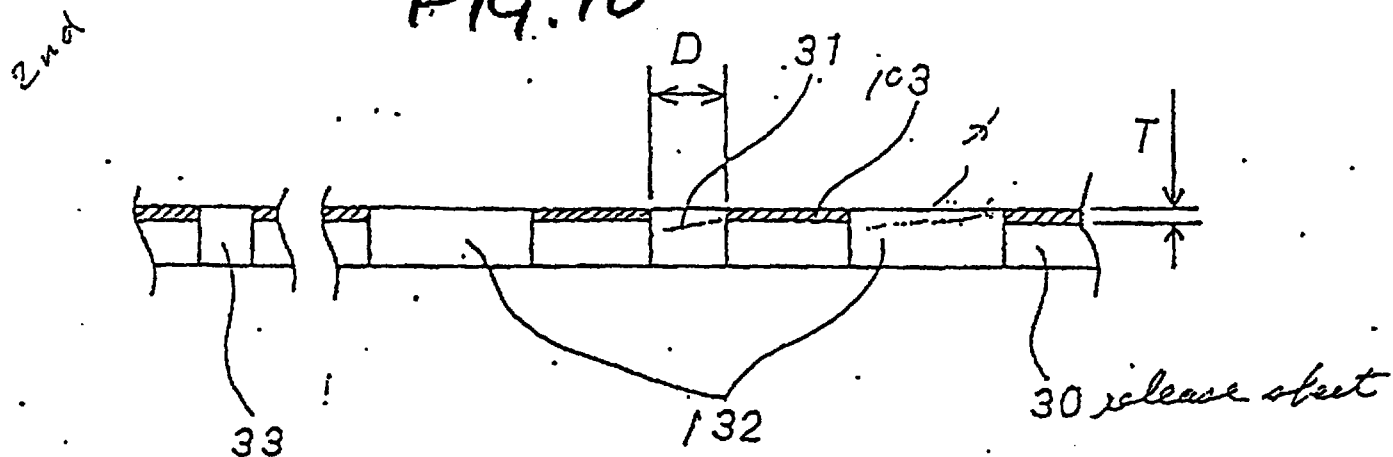
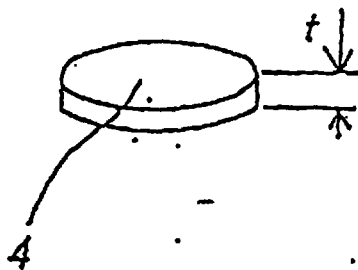


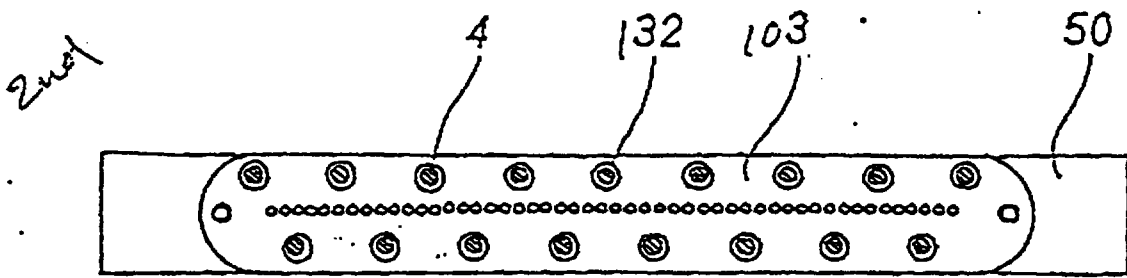
FIG. 11



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FIG. 12



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FIG. 13

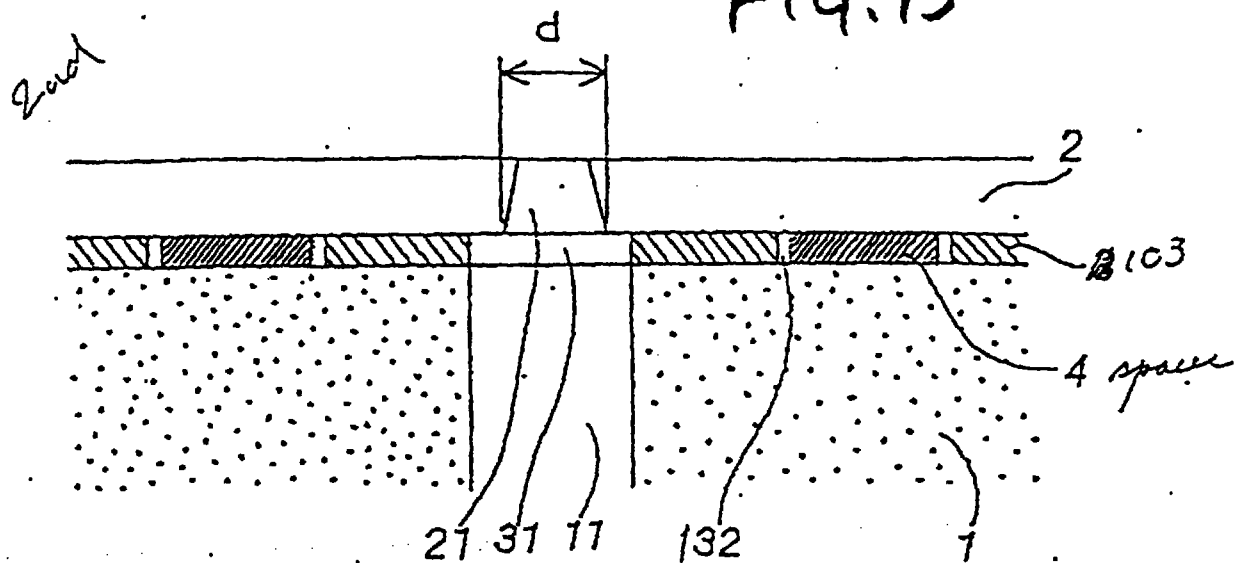
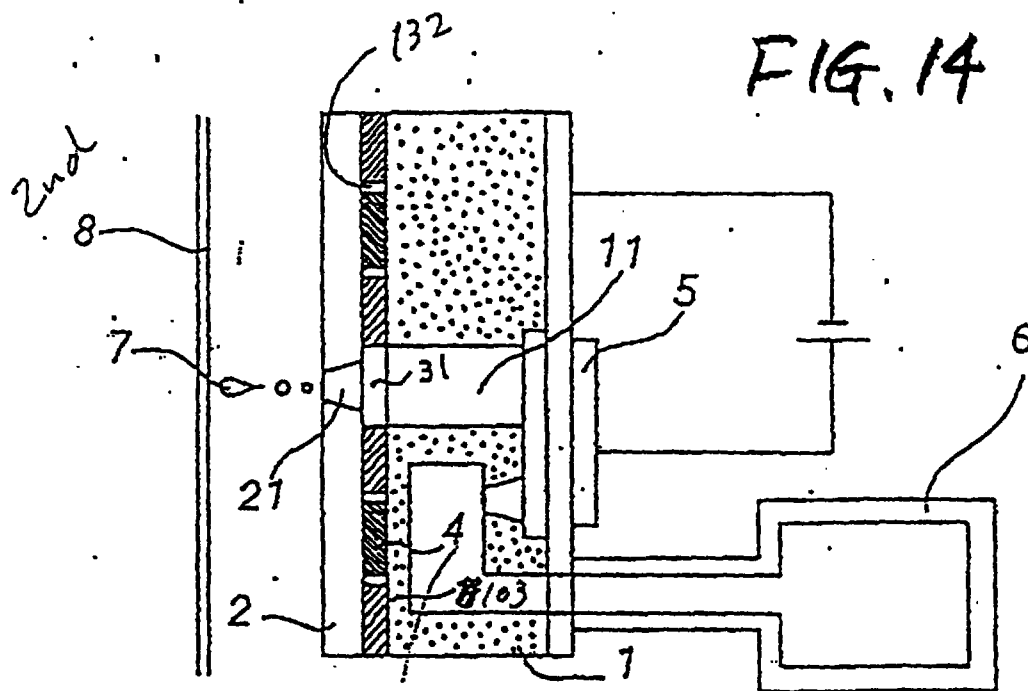


FIG. 14



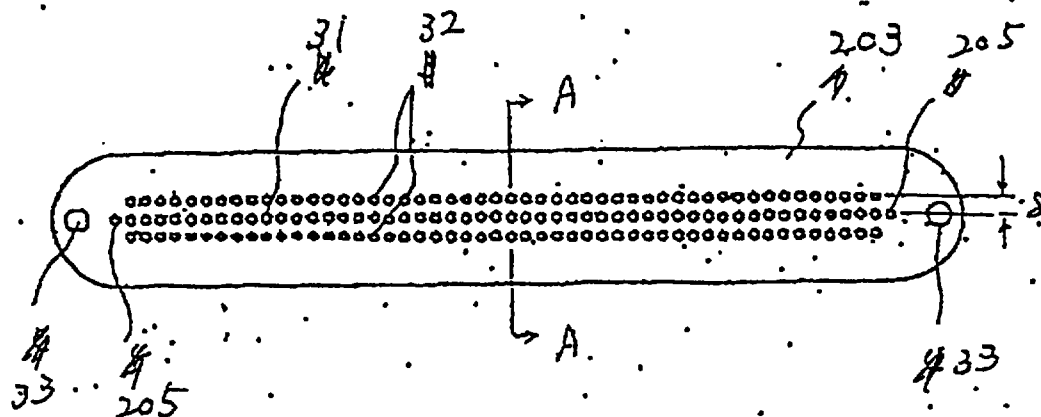
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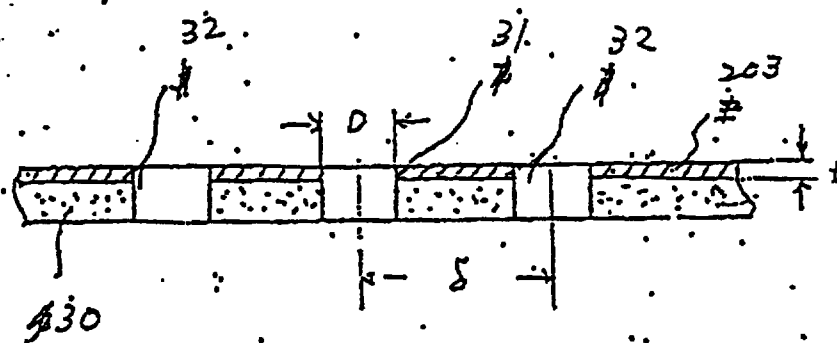
3rd

FIG. 15



3rd.

FIG. 16



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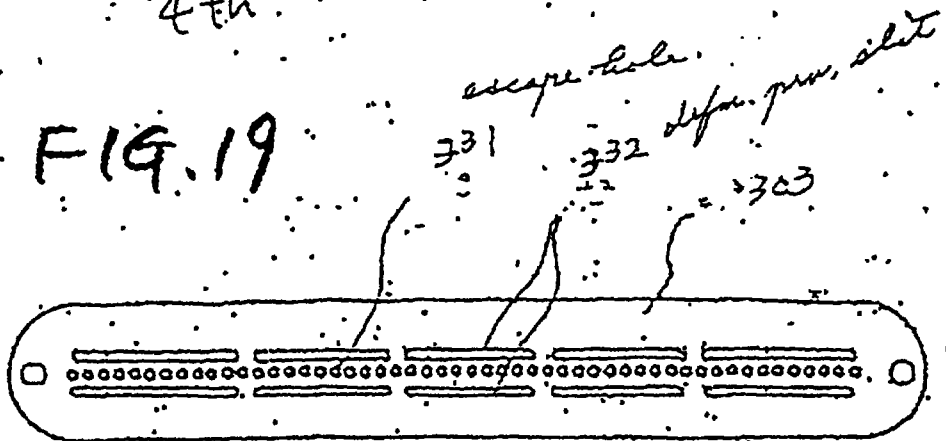




10/11

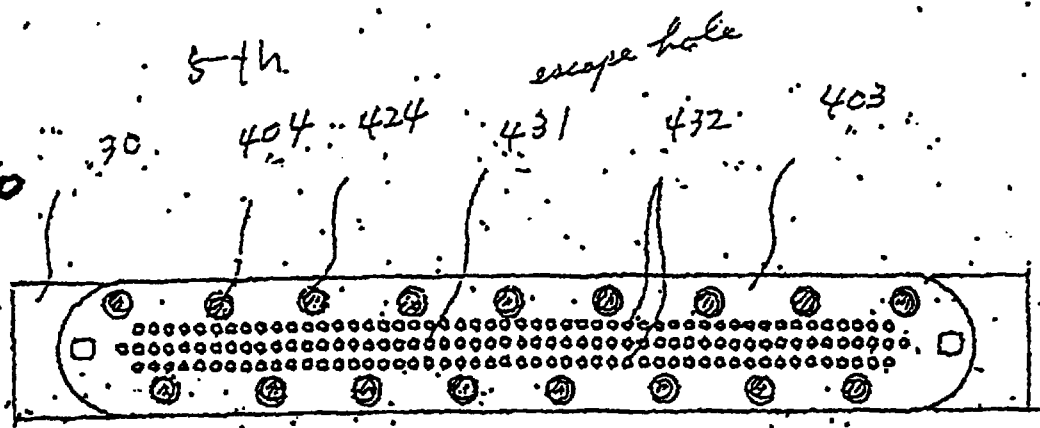
4th

FIG. 19



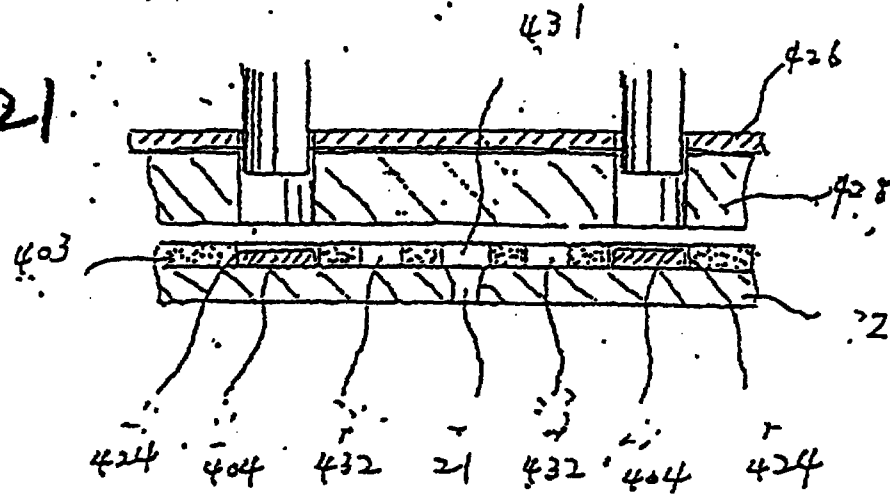
5th

FIG. 20



5th

FIG. 21



11/11

FIG. 22A

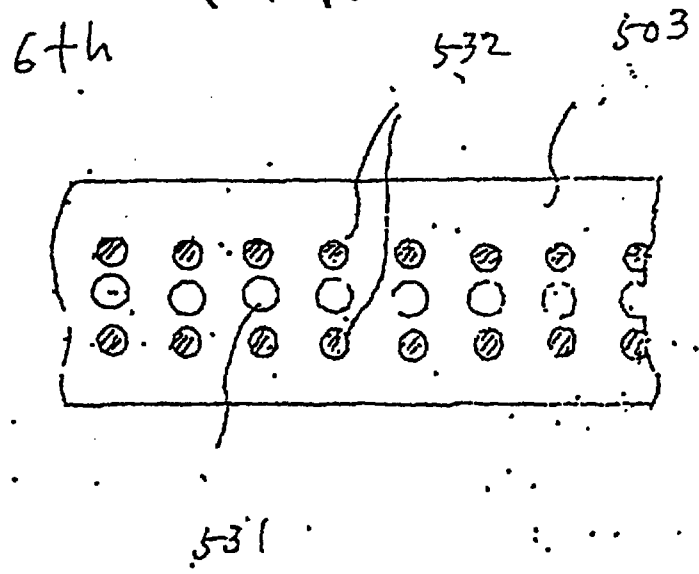
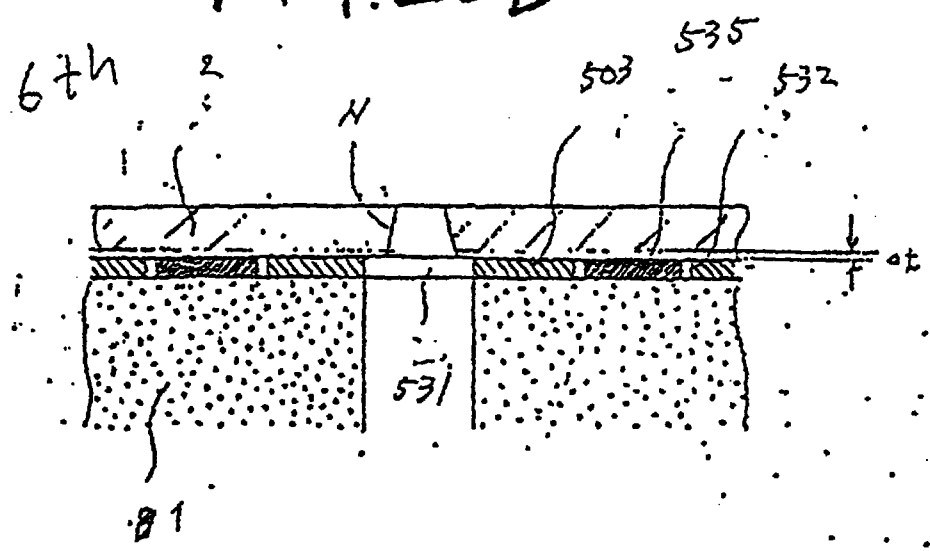


FIG. 22B



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FIG. 1

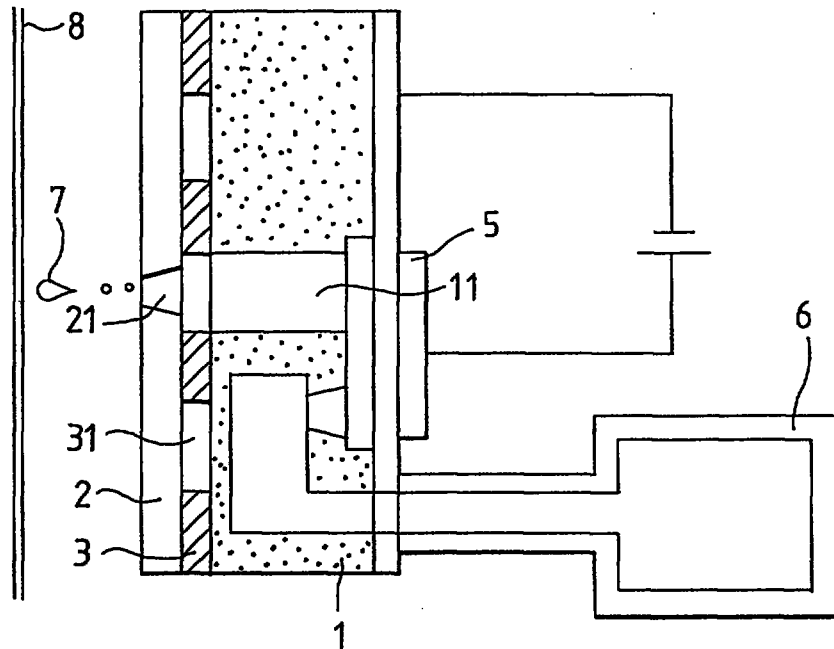


FIG. 2

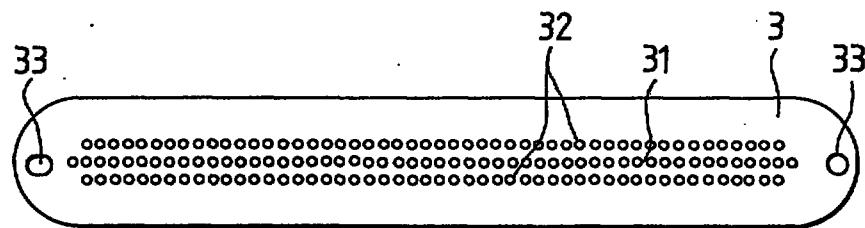


FIG. 3

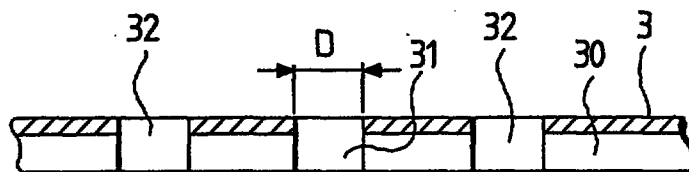


FIG. 4

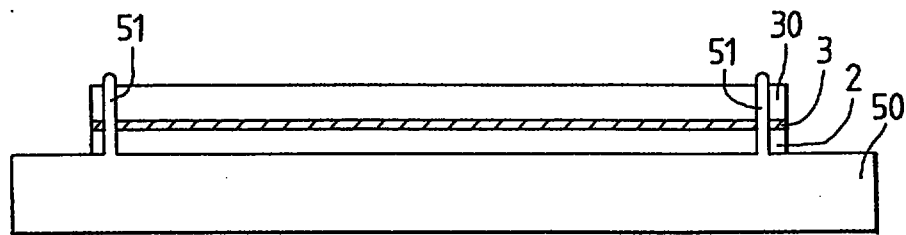


FIG. 5

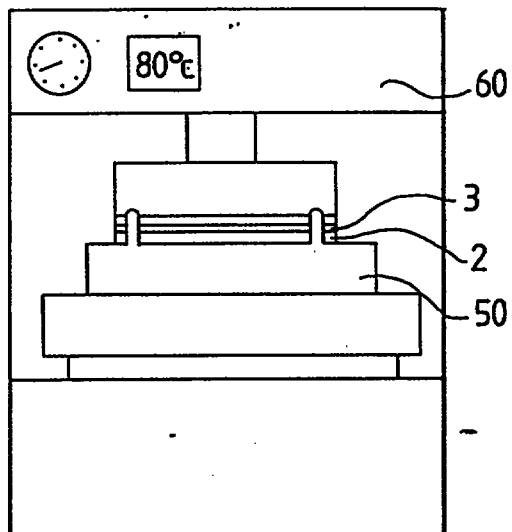
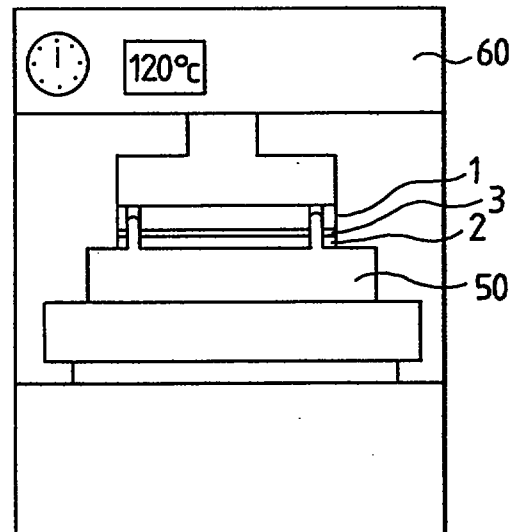


FIG. 6



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FIG. 7

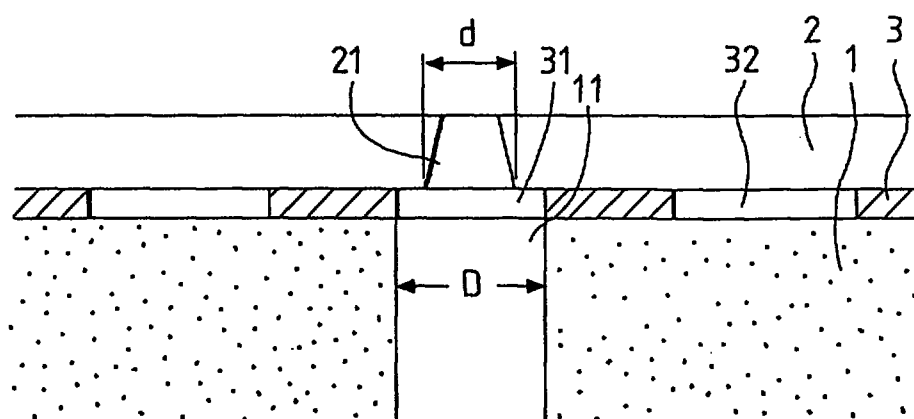


FIG. 8

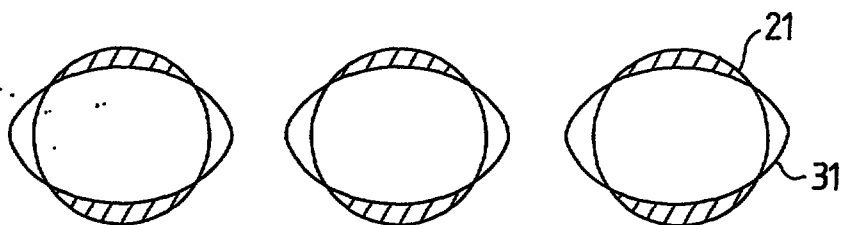
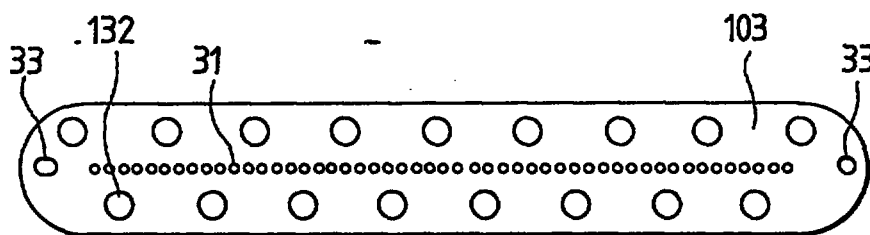


FIG. 9



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FIG. 10

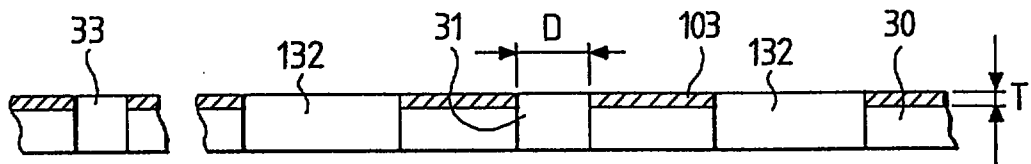


FIG. 11

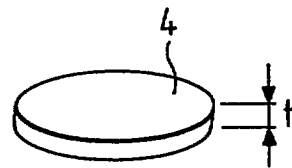
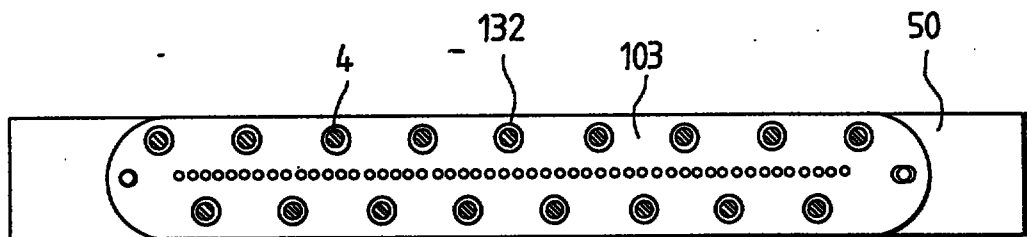


FIG. 12



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FIG. 13

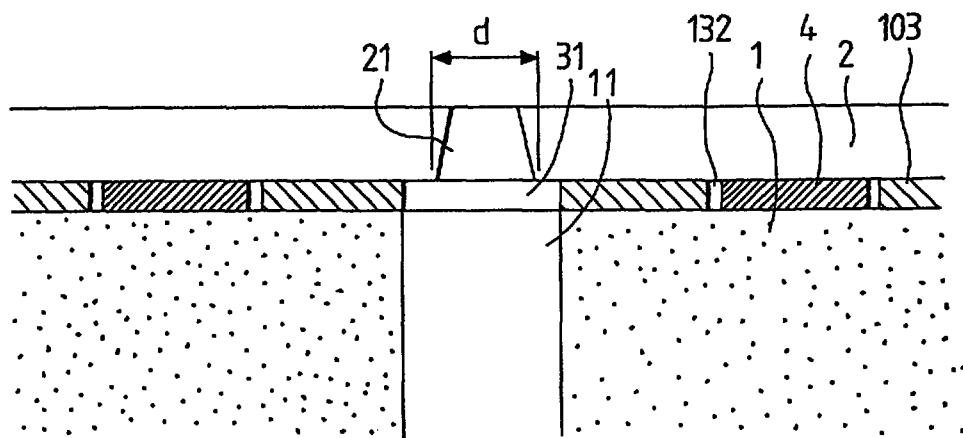
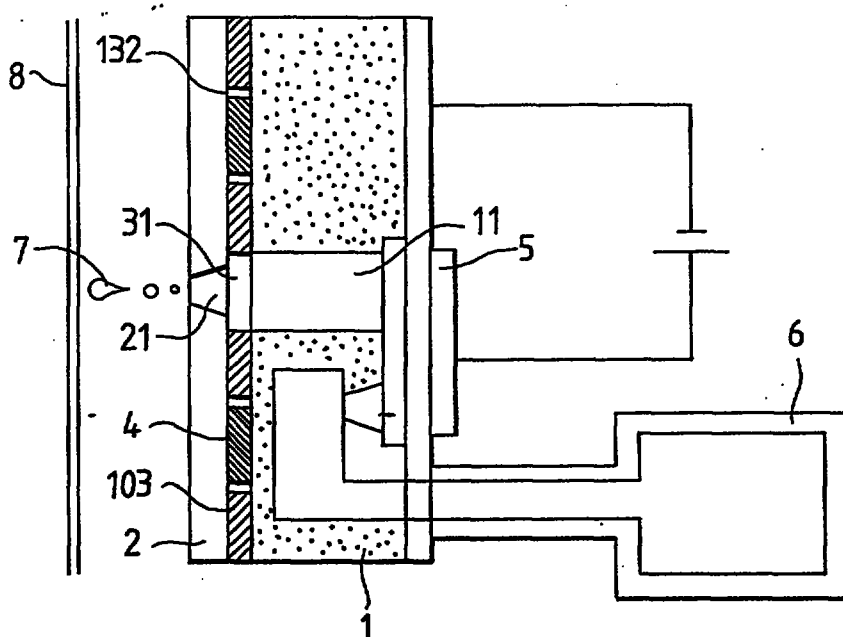


FIG. 14



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FIG. 15

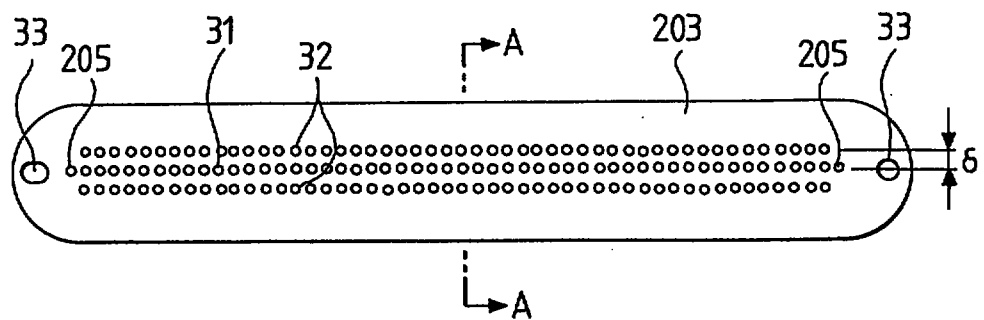


FIG. 16

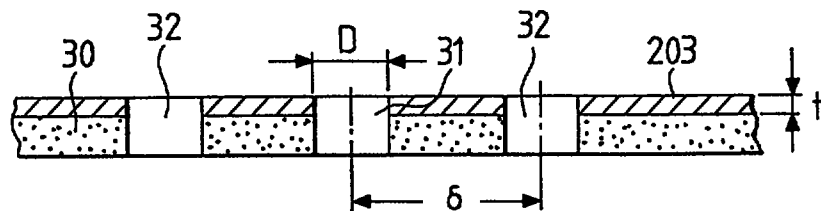


FIG. 17

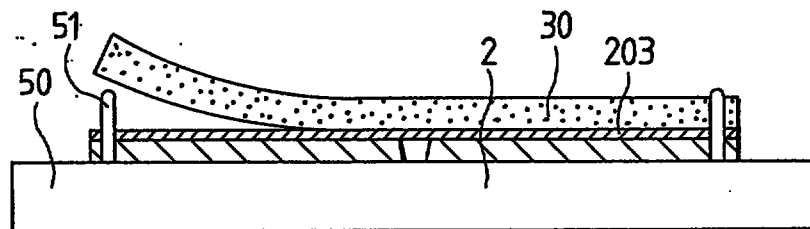
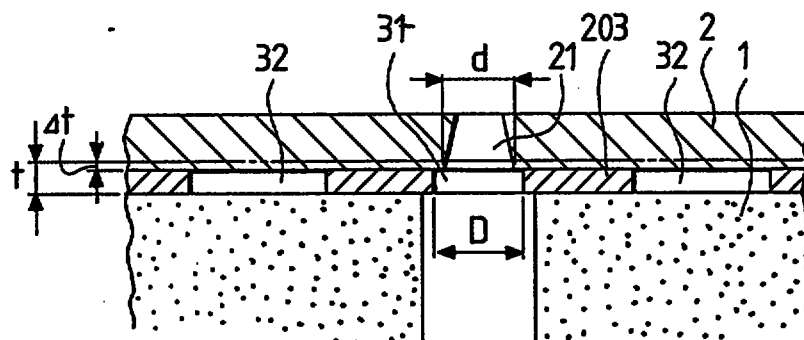


FIG. 18



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FIG. 19

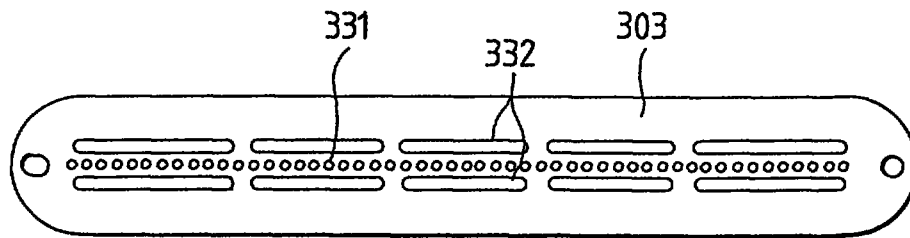


FIG. 20

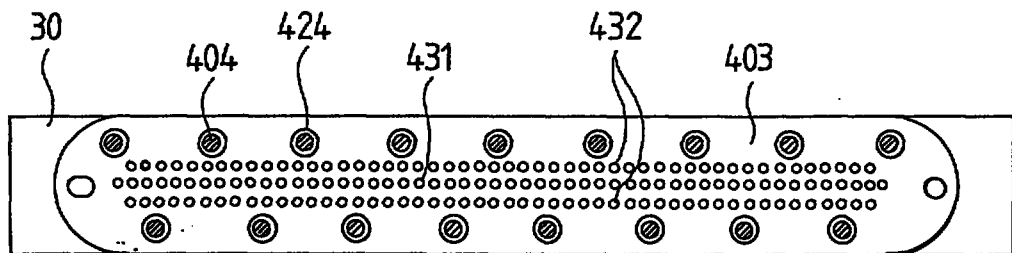


FIG. 21

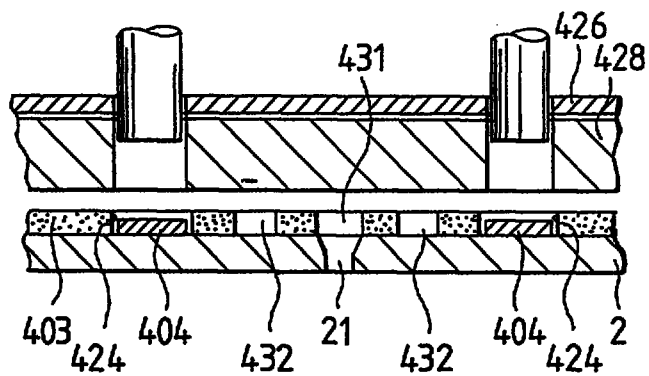


FIG. 22A

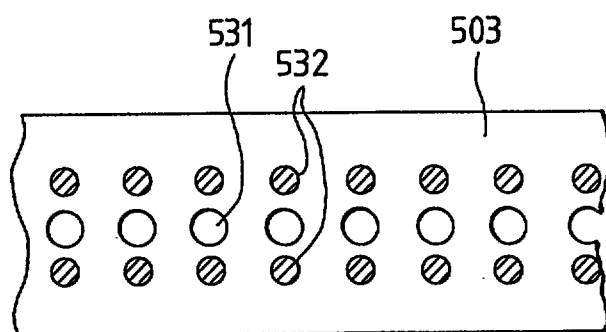
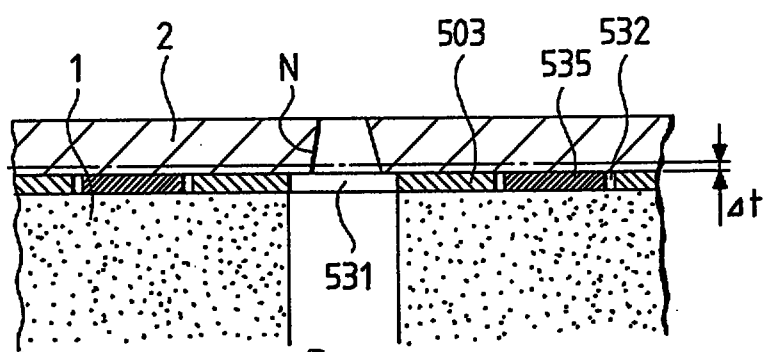


FIG. 22B



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REPLACEMENT SHEETS		SG
☒	Description : paged 1 to paged 20	
☒	Claim(s) : paged 23 to paged 28	
☒	Drawing(s) : paged 1/8 to paged 8/8	
☒	Abstract : paged 1 to paged 1	
DATE OF RECEIPT 08/11/96		

REPLACED SHEETS		SG	605716-3
☒	Description : paged 1 to paged 20		POS.
☒	Claim(s) : paged 23 to paged 28		
☒	Drawing(s) : paged 1/8 to paged 8/8		
☒	Abstract : paged 1 to paged 1		

**SHEET ADHESIVE MATERIAL FOR BONDING TWO MEMBERS
HAVING SMALL HOLES AND METHOD OF BONDING SAME**

The present invention relates to a sheet adhesive material for bonding two members having small holes to each other and a method of bonding the two members.

In a conventional ink jet type printer using an ink of a hot melt type as disclosed for example in an Unexamined Japanese Patent Application (OPI) No. Sho. 61-98547 or an ink jet type printer employing a print head of a superposed and contiguous type as disclosed in U.S. Patent 4,680,595, a nozzle plate is fixed onto the front surface of a head base member in such a manner that a number of nozzle ports for ejecting ink formed in the nozzle plate are arranged respectively to correspond to a number of ink communication chambers each communicating with an ink tank.

However, in the conventional method an adhesive agent is simply applied to the contact surfaces of the two members to thereby bond the two members to each other, which may arise a problem that the adhesive agent penetrates and covers the

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nozzle holes thereby cause² the clogging of the nozzle holes and an undesired ink-failure.

The present invention was made in view of the foregoing drawbacks accompanying the conventional method as mentioned above. Accordingly, it is an object of the invention to provide a bonding method capable of bonding surely and fixedly two members to each other without causing the clogging of the nozzle holes or ink-failure condition.

This object is solved by the method of bonding two members, each having small holes, to each other according to independent claim 1, the sheet shaped adhesive member of independent claim 22 and the sheet shaped adhesive material according to independent claim 29. Further advantageous features, aspects and details of the invention are evident from the dependent claims, the description and the drawings. The claims are intended to be understood as a first non-limiting approach of defining the invention in general terms.

The invention according to a specific aspect provides a sheet-shaped adhesive member for bonding two plate-shaped members each having small holes, such as a nozzle plate employed in a recording head of an ink jet type recording apparatus.

It is another aspect of the invention to provide a sheet-shaped adhesive member capable of surely bonding two plate members each having small holes to form an integrated member without producing any clogging.

It is still another aspect of the invention to provide a sheet-shaped adhesive member capable of restricting the deformation of the sheet-shaped adhesive member in the thickness direction thereof to thereby further suppress an inward deformation of the escape holes.

According to another specific aspect, the invention provides a method for bonding together two members each having small holes which, comprises a step of provisionally bonding by pressurizing onto a contact surface of one of the two members a sheet-shaped adhesive member having thereon escape holes each corresponding to the small holes of the member and deformation preventive

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holes for preventing the escape holes from being deformed, and a step of bonding by heating and pressurizing the other member onto the contact surface of the former member.

According to another aspect of the invention, a method of bonding together two members each having small holes comprises the steps of provisionally bonding by pressurizing onto a contact surface of one of the two members a sheet-shaped adhesive member having thereon escape holes corresponding in position to the respective small holes of the member, inserting a space forming member, and bonding by heating and pressurizing the other member onto the contact surface of the former member.

Furthermore, according to still another aspect of the invention, there is provided a sheet-shaped adhesive member having escape holes each corresponding in position to the respective small holes of the member and deformation preventive holes disposed adjacent to the escape holes capable of absorbing an extension of the sheet-shaped adhesive member in the surface direction thereof to thereby suppress an inward deformation of the escape holes.

Fig. 1 is a view showing a structure of a print head in an ink jet type printer to which the present invention is applied;

Fig. 2 is a plan view of a sheet-shaped adhesive member employed in a first embodiment of a method of bonding together two



members each having small holes according to the present invention;

Fig. 3 is a side view of the sheet-shaped adhesive member shown in Fig. 2;

Fig. 4 is a side view of a positioning step employed in the first embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 5 is a view of a step of provisionally bonding the adhesive member employed in the first embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 6 is a view of a step of substantially bonding a head substrate, a nozzle plate and the above adhesive member to one another, which step is employed in the first embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 7 is a view of a completely bonded state achieved according to the invention;

Fig. 8 is a view of the deformed shapes of an escape hole formed in the adhesive member when no deformation preventive hole is formed;

Fig. 9 is a plan view of an adhesive member used in a method of bonding together two members each having small holes embodying the second embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 10 is a side view of the adhesive shown in Fig. 9;

Fig. 11 is a perspective view of a space forming member used in the second embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 12 is a view of a space forming member inserting step in the second embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 13 is a view of a bonded state achieved by the second embodiment of the invention;

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Fig. 14 is a view of a structure of an ink jet recording head to which the second embodiment of the invention is applied;

Fig. 15 illustrate a third embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention;

Fig. 16 is an enlarged sectional view taken on the line A-A shown in Fig. 15;

Fig. 17 is an explanatory view of the third embodiment, illustrating a step of bonding operation employed in the invention;

Fig. 18 is a sectional view of the third embodiment, illustrating a state in which the two members of which are bonded together;

Fig. 19 is a plan view of a fourth embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention;

Fig. 20 shows a fifth embodiment of sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention;

Fig. 21 is an explanatory view to show a method of fitting a deformation restricting spacer into the above adhesive member;

Fig. 22A is a plan view of main portions of a sixth embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the present invention; and

Fig. 22B is a sectional view of the sixth embodiment, illustrating a state in which the two members of which are bonded together.



Fig. 1 is a view showing a structure of a print head of an ink jet type printer to which the present invention is applied.

As shown in Fig. 1, a head base member 1 is provided with an ink communication chamber 11 communicating with an ink tank 6. The head base member 1 is formed of a high molecular resin material such as polysulfone, polyethersulfone, polycarbonate or the like. A nozzle plate 2 is provided with a nozzle hole 21 for ejecting an ink droplets 7 and is press-machined, which plate is formed of electroformed nickel, stainless steel, beryllium copper or the like. The head base member 1 and the nozzle plate 2 are strongly bonded to each other by means of an adhesive member 3 while keeping a communication between the ink communication chamber 11 and the nozzle hole 21. After manufacturing the recording head, the ink droplets 7 is ejected by driving a PZT 5 onto a recording sheet 8 to thereby achieve printing.

During bonding the above mentioned two members, if the adhesive member 3 penetrates into and covers the nozzle hole 21 of the nozzle plate 2 to cause the clogging, then the ink droplets 7 cannot be ejected out, which is a serious defect in a printer.

The sheet-shaped adhesive member and method of bonding together the head substrate 1 and nozzle plate 2 by the sheet-shaped adhesive member according to a first embodiment will now

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be described hereinbelow with reference to accompanied Figs. 2 to 8.

Fig. 2 is a plan view of a sheet-shaped adhesive member 3 employed in the first embodiment of a method of bonding together two members each having small holes according to the present invention, Fig. 3 is a side view of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 3 shown in Fig. 2, Fig. 4 is a side view of a positioning step employed in the first embodiment of the invention, Fig. 5 is a view of a step of provisionally bonding the adhesive member employed in the first embodiment of the invention, Fig. 6 is a view of a step of bonding a head base member, a nozzle plate and the adhesive member to one another according to the invention, Fig. 7 is a view of a completely bonded state achieved according to the invention.

The bonding steps will be described in detail as follows.

(1) First, there is prepared a composite member which consists of a material of a sheet-shaped adhesive member (Three Bond Co., No. 1604) laminated by a release sheet 30. As shown in Fig. 7, escape holes 31 are stamped out by a press at a position each corresponding to the respective nozzle hole 21 formed on the nozzle plate 2. In this stamping operation, as shown in Fig. 3, the diameter D of the escape hole 31 is set with respect to the diameter d of the nozzle hole 21 such that $D \geq d$, in consideration of a width for contraction occurring when heated and pressurized. A number of escape holes 31 are

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arranged in a line in the central portion of the adhesive member 3. Further, a number of deformation preventive holes 32 are stamped out in upper and lower lines with the central line of the escape holes 31 disposed therebetween. The diameter of each of the deformation preventive holes 32 is set to be equal to that of the escape hole 31. Then, positioning holes 33 are provided to positioning the adhesive member 3 when bonding and the outer configuration of the above-mentioned material of the adhesive member 3 are stamped out to thereby produce the sheet-shaped adhesive member 3.

(2) As shown in Fig. 4, the nozzle plate 2 with the contact surface of which facing upwardly is put on a positioning jig 50 having pins 51 and further the adhesive member 3 with the release sheet 30 disposed on the upper surface thereof is mounted on the nozzle plate 2 before the nozzle plate 2 and adhesive member 3 are properly positioned with respect to each other.

(3) Next, as shown in Fig. 5, the positioned nozzle plate 2 and adhesive member 3 mounted on the nozzle plate 2, together with the positioning jig 50, are set in a heat-pressure bonding machine 60 (Japan Abionics Co. Type TCW-125) and then the adhesive member 3 is provisionally pressure bonded onto the nozzle plate 2 under the condition of a heating temperature of 80°C and a pressure of 3 kg/cm². After that, the release paper 30 is peeled off.

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(4) Afterwards, as shown in Fig. 6, the head base member 1 is mounted on the adhesive member 3 and then the two members are positioned with respect to each other. Then, the head base member 1, adhesive member 3 and nozzle plate 2 are finally bonded to one another under the condition of a heating temperature of 120°C and a pressure of 3 kg/cm².

Consequently, as shown in Fig. 7, the escape hole 31 restricted to a uniform thickness by a space forming member and is bonded by heating and pressurizing, will be contracted between the nozzle hole 21 of the nozzle plate 2 and the ink communication chamber 11 of the head base member 1 compared to itself before the adhesive member 31 is heated and pressurized for bonding. That is, the adhesive member 3 will be contracted down to the same and uniform size as the ink through hole 11 to thereby bond the nozzle plate 2 and head base member 1 to each other strongly without clogging the nozzle hole 21.

A sheet-shaped adhesive member and method of bonding together a head base member and a nozzle plate by the sheet-shaped adhesive member according to a second embodiment will be described hereinbelow with reference to accompanying Figs. 9 to 14.

Fig. 9 is a plan view of an adhesive member used in a method of bonding together two members each having small holes embodying the second embodiment of the invention, Fig. 10 is a side view of the adhesive shown in Fig. 9, Fig. 11 is a perspective view of a space forming member employed in the

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second embodiment of the invention, Fig. 12 is a view of a space forming member inserting step in the second embodiment, Fig. 13 is a view of a bonded state achieved by the second embodiment, and Fig. 14 is a view of a structure of an ink jet recording head to which the second embodiment of the invention is applied.

In the drawings, like parts and components are designated by the same reference numerals as the first embodiment according to Figs. 1 to 8. The method according to the second embodiment is similar to the first embodiment and, therefore, merely the different steps are described hereinbelow.

(1) The first step is substantially the same as the step (1) of the first embodiment described above. However, in the second embodiment, a plurality of insertion holes 132 for insertion of a space forming member 4 is stamped out on an sheet-shaped adhesive member 103 as shown in Figs. 9 and 10.

(2) Next, a space forming member 4 shown in Fig. 11 having a thickness t is manufactured in such a manner that the thickness t of which is not greater than the thickness T of the adhesive member 3 as shown in Fig. 10, that is, $t \leq T$, in consideration of an expansion of a width due to a deformation of the adhesive member 103 when the adhesive member is bonded by heating and pressurizing. The space forming member 4 is formed of stainless steel so that it will never be deformed when the adhesive member is bonded by heating and pressurizing.

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The space forming member 4 is stamped out by a press-machining operation so as to have a circular shape which is easy to manufacture.

The bonding steps (3) and (4) of the first embodiment shown in Figs. 4 and 5 are the same in the second embodiment after the step (2) thereof and the explanations of these steps are omitted.

(5) As shown in Fig. 12, the space forming member 4 is inserted into the insertion hole 132 formed on the adhesive member 103.

The next bonding step of this embodiment is also the same as the step (6) of the first embodiment shown in Fig. 6.

By means of the above-mentioned operations, as shown in Fig. 13, in the adhesive member 103, which is restricted to a uniform thickness by the space forming member 4 and is then bonded by heating and pressurizing, the escape hole 31 is contracted when compared with itself before it is heated and pressurized and thus it is of the same and uniform size as the ink communication hole 11, so that the adhesive member 103 is able to bond the head base member 1 and nozzle plate 2 to each other strongly without clogging the nozzle hole 21.

Examples:

With respect to the adhesive member 3 and 103, the present inventors have experimented, besides the method using the sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the first and second embodiments, a method which uses a conventional liquid

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adhesive agent such as an epoxy contained adhesive member (Araldite Co. Type AW-106), a silicone contained adhesive member (Toray • Dow Corning • Silicone Co., Type SE 9157L) or the like. The result of the experimentation revealed that, when the conventional liquid adhesive member is used, it is difficult to apply the adhesive member to a clearance between the head base member 1 and the nozzle plate 2 in a uniform thickness. Also, the flow or penetration states of the adhesive member due to a capillary phenomenon occurring when pressure is applied are affected by the mixing ratio thereof, changes of environmental temperatures and the like and thus are caused to vary frequently according to such environmental conditions. As a result, it is difficult to secure stabilized communication between the nozzle hole 21 and ink communication chamber 11. Further, in the case of the sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention, the bonding processes were completed in several seconds when it is bonded by heating and pressurizing. On the other hand, the liquid adhesive member requires a long drying time ranging from 30 minutes to several hours.

For the escape holes 31 formed in the sheet-shaped adhesive member 3, besides the above-mentioned method according to the present embodiment in which each of the escape holes 31 is formed such that its diameter D is equal to or greater than the diameter d of the nozzle hole 21, the applicants have experimented another method in which no escape hole 31 is

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formed at all and, after bonded by heating and pressurizing, the adhesive members 3 and 103 are post-worked from externally by use of an excimer laser (Sumitomo Juki Co., Type INDEX 200) through the nozzle hole 21 formed on the nozzle plate 2 or through the communication chamber 11 in the head base member 1. However, our experimentation showed that this method is affected by dross or the like. That is, it is found difficult to post-work the whole nozzle uniformly. Further, if the diameter D of the escape hole 31 is smaller than the diameter d of the ink communication chamber 11 in the head base member 1, then the ink communication chamber 11 or nozzle hole 21 may be clogged when the adhesive member is bonded by heating and pressurizing, that is, when the adhesive member is contracted.

With regard to the deformation preventive holes 32 and 132, the present inventors have also tested another method in which no deformation preventive holes are formed. This test revealed that the escape hole 31 can be caused to vary into a non-circular shape having a directional characteristic as shown in Fig. 8 due to the contraction of the adhesive member 3 when it is heated and pressurized for bonding, so that the escape hole 31 clogs the nozzle hole 21 or nozzle communication chamber 11 as shown by oblique lines in Fig. 8. Referring to the diameter, positions, number and the like of the deformation preventive holes 32 and 132, the above-mentioned method is found favorable.



Further, referring to the space forming member 4, the present inventors have tested another method which does not use the space forming member 4. According to the result of the test, however, the amount of deformation of the adhesive member 3, when it is heated and pressurized, is found to vary according to the heating temperatures and pressures, the conditions of the contact surfaces or the like, with the result that, after the adhesive member 3 is bonded by heating and pressurizing, the diameter of the escape hole is caused to vary, whereby the ink communication chamber 11 or nozzle hole 21 can be clogged. Further, the result of the test revealed that, if the thickness t of the space forming member 4 is greater than the thickness T of the adhesive member 3, then a width for deformation of the adhesive member exists no longer so that a practical bonding strength cannot be obtained.

Figs. 15 to 18 illustrate a third embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the present invention, which is constructed so as to bond a nozzle plate employed in an ink jet type recording head, and a method of bonding the nozzle plate by use of this sheet-shaped adhesive member.

In these figures, like parts and components are designated by the same reference numerals as the first and second embodiments shown in Figs. 1 to 14. As shown in these figures, a sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is used to bond a nozzle plate 2 to a head substrate 1. The sheet-shaped

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adhesive member 203 is of a hot melt type which penetrates in a semi-melt state into fine undulations on the surfaces of materials to be bonded and is hardened therein owing to an anchor effect to thereby bond the two members to be bonded to each other. The sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is formed of a high molecular material consisting of a group comprising polyolefin, nylon, polyurethane, and a polyester. A release sheet 30 is adhered on the whole surface of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 for the purpose of reinforcement and, as shown in Fig. 17, the release sheet 30 will be peeled off after the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is provisionally mounted to the nozzle plate 2.

The fundamental structure of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 according to the third embodiment is the same as the member 3 according to the first embodiment shown in Fig. 2. Therefore, merely the different feature will be described.

In the third embodiment, the diameter D of the respective escape holes 31 is set about 1.8 times the diameter d of the nozzle hole 21 to correspond to an amount of compression Δt of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203. Further, the deformation preventive holes 32, which are formed on both sides of the escape holes 31, are formed in such a manner that the diameters thereof are substantially the same as the diameters D of the escape holes 31 and also that they are arranged in a zigzag line where the deformation preventive holes 32 are staggered with respect to the line of the escape holes as indicated in Fig. 15, where the three rows of escape holes and the deformation preventive holes 32 are arranged such that each escape hole 31 with its adjoining deformation preventive holes 32 forms a column of three adjoining holes at a

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distance 8 which is substantially two times the diameter D of the escape hole 31.

Referring here in particular to the third embodiment of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203, in a sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 having a thickness of 0.50 mm with a deformation width of 0.15 mm given, there are formed a number of escape holes 31 each having a diameter D of 0.38 mm with respect to the diameter of 0.15 to 0.18 mm of the nozzle hole 21 and, on both sides of the escape holes 31, there are formed the same number of deformation preventive holes 32 at a distance of 0.70 mm between the two preventive hole lines.

In Fig. 15, reference numeral 33 designates a pair of positioning holes which are respectively disposed at both the ends of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203, and 205 represents a pair of dummy holes which are formed at both the ends of the escape hole 31 line in order to absorb the extension of the escape holes 31 in the longitudinal direction thereof to thereby restrict the deformation of the escape holes 31 in the longitudinal direction thereof.

Next, description will be given below of a process of bonding the substrate B and nozzle plate P to each other by use of the above-mentioned sheet-shaped adhesive member 1 with reference to Fig. 17.

At first, with two positioning pins 51 respectively planted on a jig 50 as the reference thereof, the nozzle plate 2 is positioned on the jig 50 with the adhesive surface thereof

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facing upward. Next, with the release sheet 30 mounted on the top surface thereof and also with the two positioning pins 51, corresponding in position to the positioning holes 33 the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is positioned and placed on the nozzle plate 2.

Since the bonding process of this embodiment is the same as that of the first and second embodiments described above and shown in Figs. 5 and 6, the description is omitted.

As a result of the bonding process, the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is compressed and deformed in the thickness direction thereof and at the same time it is expanded in the surface direction thereof. With respect to the longitudinal extension of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203, the respective escape holes 31 absorb the extensions thereof to one another and. Further, with respect to the extension of the adhesive member 203 in the width direction thereof, the deformation preventive holes 32, which are disposed on both sides of the escape holes 31, absorb the extensions in the width direction. Therefore, this can prevent the respective escape holes 31 from being deformed as much as possible and thus the inner edges of the escape holes 31 can be kept from coming into the nozzle holes 21. Furthermore, owing to the pair of dummy holes 205 formed at both the ends of the escape hole 31 line, the extension of the escape holes 31 in the longitudinal direction thereof is effectively suppressed to thereby restrict the deformation of the escape holes 31 in the

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longitudinal direction thereof. Accordingly, the head base member 1 and nozzle plate 2 can be bonded together with high accuracy.

Fig. 19 shows a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the fourth embodiment of the invention.

In the fourth embodiment, on both sides of a number of escape holes 331 arranged in a line, there are formed a plurality of deformation preventive slits 332 each having a width corresponding to the diameter of the escape hole 331. Owing to this structure, the extension of a sheet-shaped adhesive member 303 caused when it is compressed and deformed is absorbed by the deformation of the deformation preventive slits 332 to thereby restrict the deformation of the escape holes 331 as much as possible.

Fig. 20 shows a fifth embodiment of sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention, in which deformation restricting spacers 404 are used for further restricting the deformation of escape holes 431.

In the present sheet-shaped adhesive member 403, on both sides of the escape holes 431 formed in a line, there are formed a number of deformation preventive holes 432 and further, on both sides of the deformation preventive holes 432, there are formed a plurality of spacer insertion holes 424 into which there is inserted deformation restricting spacers 404 each corresponding to the thickness of the sheet-shaped

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adhesive member 403 obtained when an allowable compression amount Δt is subtracted.

In the fifth embodiment, as shown in Fig. 21, the sheet-shaped adhesive member 403 is provisionally mounted onto the nozzle plate 2 and is positioned just below a press machine 428 and, after that, the respective deformation restricting spacers 404, which are respectively stamped out from a steel plate 426, are allowed to fall down into the spacer insertion holes 424.

Owing to this structure, the compression amount of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 403 can be restricted within an allowable range and at the same time the deformation of the escape holes 431 can be prevented by the escape holes 431 and deformation preventive holes 432 formed on both sides thereof, so that the nozzle plate 2 can be fitted to the head base member 1 without producing any clogging.

In this embodiment, if the deformation of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 403 is restricted by the deformation restricting spacers 404 to a sufficient extent, then the deformation of the escape holes 431 can be restricted to such a degree that the inner edges of the escape holes cannot come into the nozzle holes 21, even when the deformation preventive holes 432 are not specially formed on both sides of the escape holes 431.

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Figs. 22A and 22B show a sixth embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member in which deformation preventive holes are used for storing deformation restricting spacers.

In the sixth embodiment, there is used as a deformation preventive material a paste material which includes fine grains composed of a high molecular material such as an epoxy resin, urethane, polyimide or the like dispersed in a volatile solution and also which, when heated and compressed, is reduced in volume and hardened. Further, deformation preventive paste material 535 is previously applied into each of deformation preventive holes 532 respectively formed on both sides of escape holes 531 before the sheet-shaped adhesive member is actually used.

In the sixth embodiment, if the sheet-shaped adhesive member 503 interposed between the nozzle plate 2 and head base member 1 is heated and pressurized, then the deformation preventive paste material 535 is contracted in thickness by an amount corresponding to the compression amount width Δt of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 503 and, at the same time, the paste material 535 is contracted in the outside diameter thereof and is hardened. As a result, the deformation of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 503 in the thickness direction thereof is restricted by the deformation preventive paste material 535 and, at the same time, the extension of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 503 in the surface direction thereof is absorbed by a clearance formed between the paste material 535

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and deformation preventive hole 532, so that the inward deformation of the escape holes 532 can be further suppressed.

As described above, according to the present invention, when bonding two members each having small holes to each other, a sheet shaped adhesive member including escape holes each corresponding to the small holes of one member and deformation preventive holes for preventing the escape holes from being deformed is provisionally bonded by pressurizing onto one member and then the other member is bonded by heating and pressurizing onto the contact surface of the one member, so that the two members can be bonded together strongly and efficiently without causing any hole clogging.

Further, when bonding together two members each having small holes, there is provisionally bonded by pressurizing onto one of the two members a sheet-shaped adhesive member which includes therein escape holes respectively corresponding to small holes of the one member, space forming members each having a proper thickness being inserted into the sheet-shaped adhesive member, and the other member is then bonded to the contact surface of the one member by heating and pressurizing the adhesive member. Owing to this, the two members each having small holes can be bonded together strongly and highly efficiently without causing any hole clogging.

In the foregoing description, the present invention has been described by way of an example in which the head base member 1 and nozzle plate 2 respectively used in a ink jet

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printer are bonded to each other. However, the invention is not limited thereto or thereby, but it can also apply as means for bonding together other kinds of two members each having small holes which may be clogged with an adhesive member. Further, the invention may also be applied to an adhesive member which bonds together two members such as a water sprinkler or the like, which respectively have small holes.

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CLAIMS

1. A method of bonding two members each having small holes to each other, comprising the steps of:

preparing first and second members each having a number of small holes;

preparing a sheet-shaped adhesive member;

forming escape holes on said sheet-shaped adhesive member at a position each corresponding to said holes of said first members;

mounting said sheet-shaped adhesive member onto said first member;

first heating and pressing said first member and said sheet-shaped adhesive member mounted on said first member for bonding to each other to form a preform;

mounting said second member on said preform; and

second heating and pressing said preform and said second member mounted on said preform for bonding said first and second members to each other through said sheet-shaped adhesive member.

2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising a step of forming a number of deformation preventive holes in upper and lower lines with the central line of said escape holes disposed therebetween at the same time of said step of forming said escape holes.



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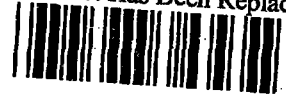


3. The method of Claim 1 or 2, further comprising a step of forming a plurality of insertion holes for insertion of a space forming member on said sheet-shaped adhesive member at the same time of said step of forming said escape holes.
4. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, wherein said first heating and pressing step takes place under the condition of a heating temperature of about 80°C and a pressure of about 3 kg/cm², and said second heating and pressing step takes place under the condition of a heating temperature of about 120°C and a pressure of about 3 kg/cm².
5. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member is composed of a sheet-shaped adhesive material and a release sheet laminated onto said sheet-shaped adhesive material, said release sheet being peeled off said sheet-shaped adhesive material after said first heating and pressing step.
6. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, wherein said second member is a head base member of a printing head of an ink jet type recording apparatus and said first member is a nozzle plate having nozzle holes for ejecting ink droplets.
7. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member is of a hot melt type.
8. The method of Claim 7, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member is formed of a high molecular material consisting essentially of a group comprising a polyolefin, nylon, polyurethane, and polyester.



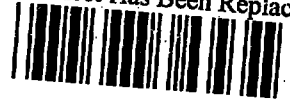
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9. The method of Claim 6 or 7, wherein said head base member is formed of a high molecular resin material consisting of a group comprising polysulfone, polyethersulfone and polycarbonate, and said nozzle plate is formed of a material consisting of a group comprising electroformed nickel, stainless steel and beryllium copper.
10. The method of Claim 3, or any claim dependent on claim 3, wherein a thickness of said space forming member is not greater than a thickness of said sheet-shaped adhesive member.
11. The method of Claim 3 or any claim dependent on claim 3, wherein said space forming member is formed of stainless steel.
12. The method of Claim 3 or any claim dependent on claim 3, wherein said space forming member has a circular shape.
13. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, further comprising a step of forming positioning holes at both the ends on said sheet-shaped adhesive member preferably at the same time of said step of forming said escape holes.
14. The method of Claim 2 or any claim dependent on claim 2, further comprising a step of forming a pair of dummy holes at both ends of said escape hole line preferably at the same time of said step of forming said escape holes.
15. The method of Claim 6 or any claim dependent on claim 6, wherein a diameter of each said escape holes is set about 1.8 times the diameter of said nozzle hole to correspond





to an amount of compression of said sheet-shaped adhesive member.

16. The method of Claim 15, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member has a thickness of about 0.50 mm with a deformation width of about 0.15 mm given, said escape holes each has a diameter of about 0.38 mm and said nozzle hole has a diameter of 0.15 to 0.18 mm, and the same number of said deformation preventive holes are located at a distance of about 0.70 mm between said two preventive hold lines.
17. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, further comprising a step of forming a plurality of deformation preventive slits each having a width corresponding to the diameter of said escape hole.
18. The method of Claim 2 or any claim dependent on claim 2, further comprising a step of inserting spacers in said deformation preventive holes before said first heating and pressing step.
19. The method of Claim 18, wherein said spacers comprise a deformation preventive paste material.
20. The method of Claim 19, wherein said paste material comprises fine grains composed of a high molecular material dispersed in a volatile solution.
21. The method of Claim 20, wherein said high molecular material consists of a group comprising an epoxy resin, urethane and polyimide.



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22. A sheet-shaped adhesive member (3, 103, 203, 303, 403, 503) interposed between two members (1, 2) each having small holes (11, 21) for bonding the two members (1, 2) into an integrated member upon being heated and pressurized, the sheet-shaped adhesive member (3, 103, 203, 303, 403, 503) comprises escape holes (31, 331, 431, 531) formed on said sheet-shaped adhesive member, said escape holes (31, 331, 431, 531) corresponding in position to the small holes (11, 21) of the two members (1, 2).
23. The sheet-shaped adhesive material of Claim 22, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member further comprises deformation preventive holes (32, 132, 332, 432, 532).
24. The sheet-shaped adhesive material of Claim 23, wherein said deformation preventive holes (32, 132, 432, 532) are disposed adjacent of said escape holes (31, 331, 431, 531).
25. The sheet-shaped adhesive material of Claim 23 or 24, wherein said deformation preventive holes (32, 132, 332, 432, 532) are disposed on both sides of said escape holes (31, 331, 431, 531) arranged in a line.
26. The sheet-shaped adhesive material of Claim 23 or 24, wherein said deformation preventive holes are slit-shaped holes (332) extending along the two sides of said escape hole (31, 331, 431, 531) line.
27. The sheet-shaped adhesive material of any one of Claims 22 to 26, further comprising a deformation restricting piece (4, 404) embedded in said sheet-shaped adhesive

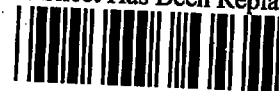
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member for restricting an amount of contraction of said sheet-shaped adhesive member in the thickness direction thereof.

28. The sheet-shaped adhesive material of any one of Claims 23 to 27, further comprising paste-shaped deformation restricting agent (535) inserted into said deformation preventive holes (532).
29. A sheet-shaped adhesive material (103) interposed between two members (1, 2) each having small holes (11, 21) for bonding the two members (1, 2) into an integrated member upon being heated and pressurized, said sheet-shaped adhesive member (103) comprising escape holes (31) corresponding in position to the small holes (11, 21) of the members and a deformation restricting piece (4) for restricting an amount of contraction of said sheet-shaped adhesive member (103) in the thickness direction thereof.



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**SHEET ADHESIVE MATERIAL FOR BONDING TWO MEMBERS
HAVING SMALL HOLES AND METHOD OF BONDING SAME**

ABSTRACT

A method of bonding together two members (1, 2) each having small holes (11, 21), the method comprising the steps of provisionally bonding by pressurizing onto the contact surface of one of the members (1, 2) each having small holes a sheet-shaped adhesive member (3) including escape holes (31) respectively corresponding to the small holes (11, 21) and deformation preventive holes (32) for preventing the escape holes (31) from being deformed, and bonding by heating and pressurizing the other member onto the contact surface.

FIGURE 7.

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FIG. 1

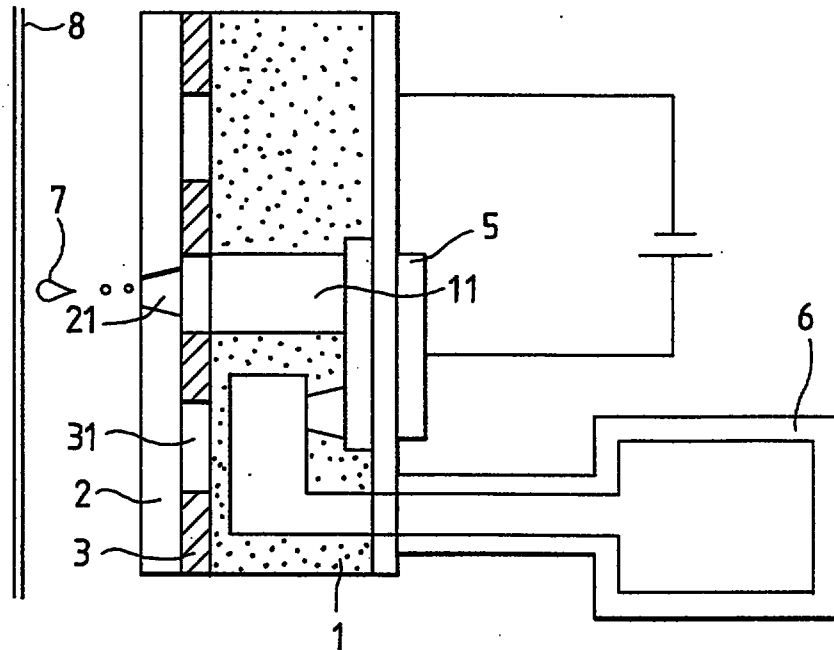


FIG. 2

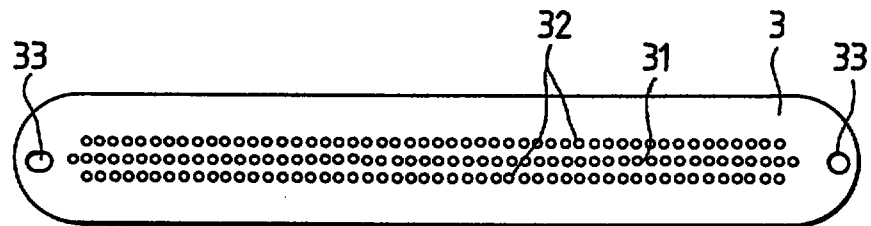
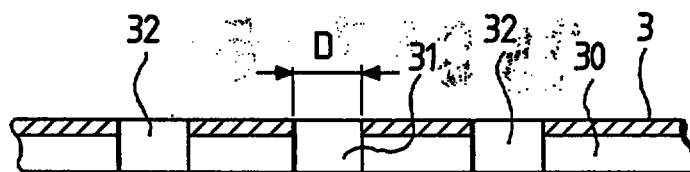


FIG. 3



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FIG. 4

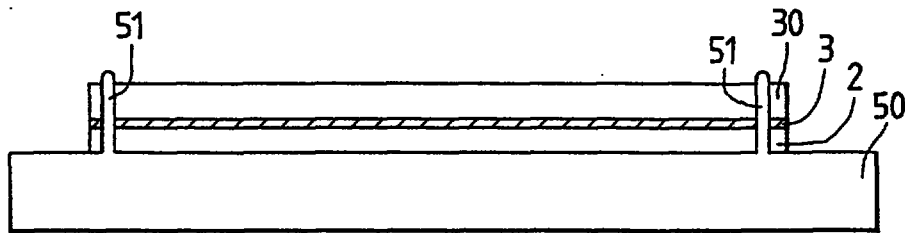


FIG. 5

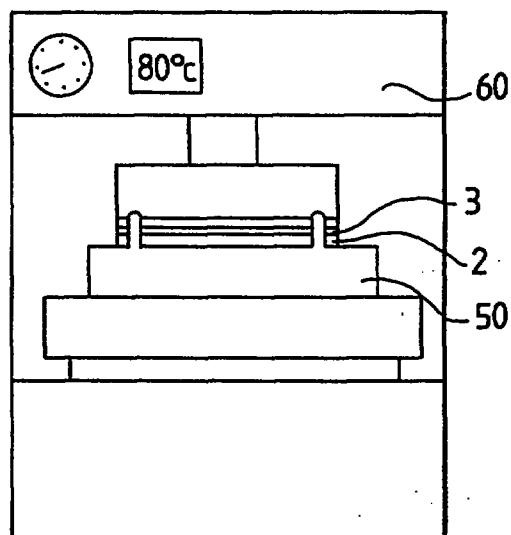
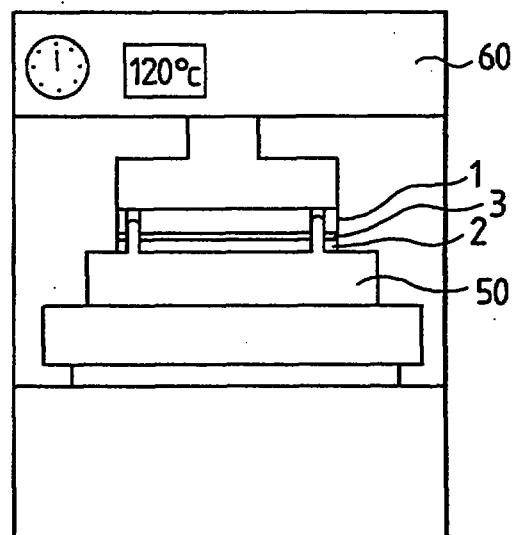


FIG. 6



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FIG. 7

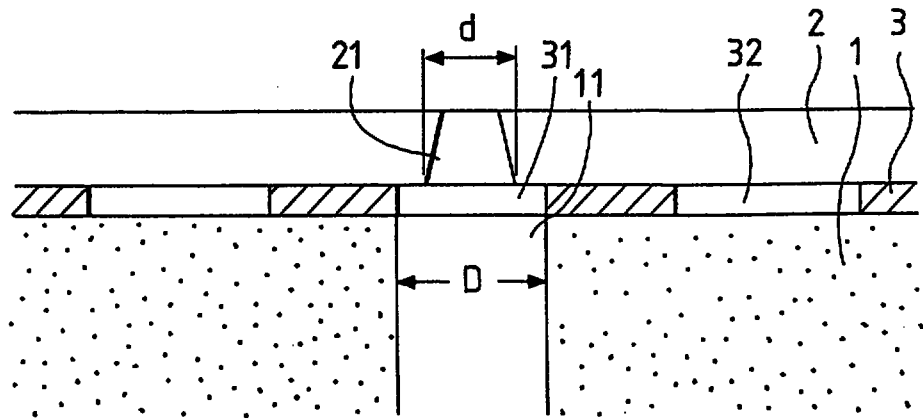


FIG. 8

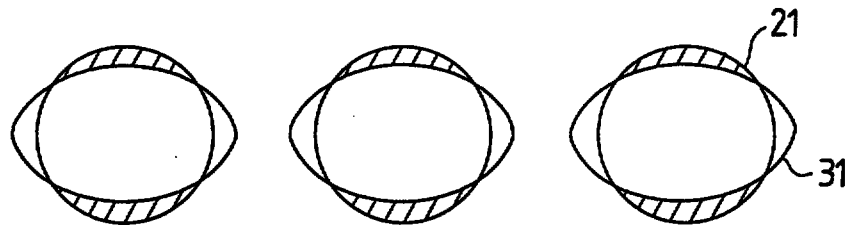
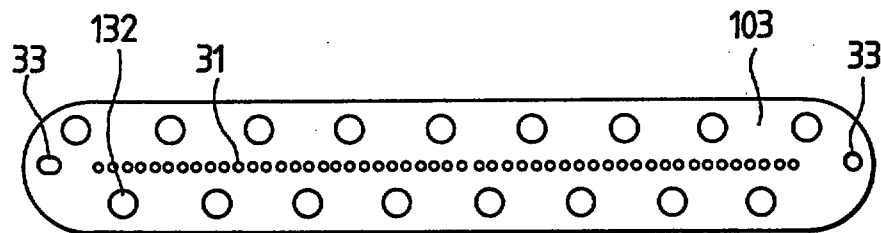


FIG. 9



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FIG. 10

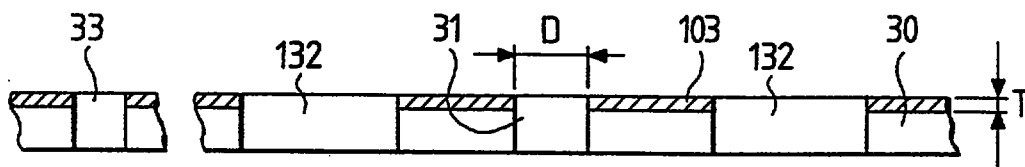


FIG. 11

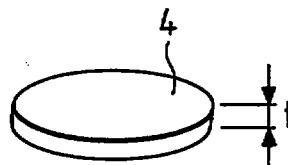
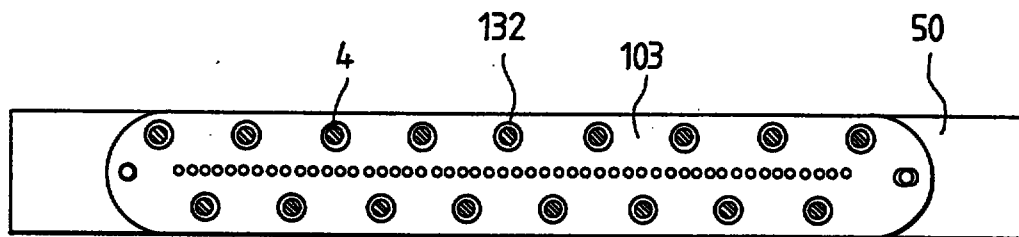


FIG. 12



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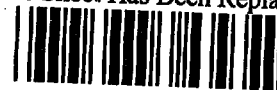


FIG. 15

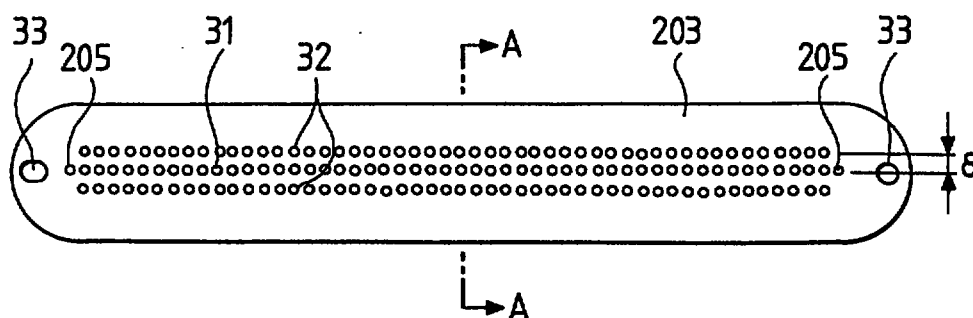


FIG. 16

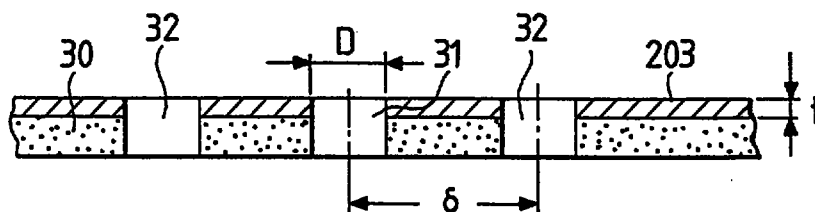


FIG. 17

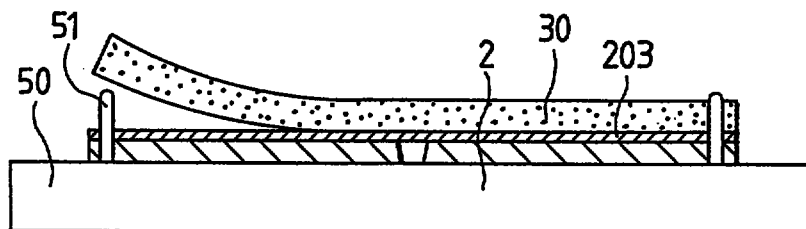


FIG. 18

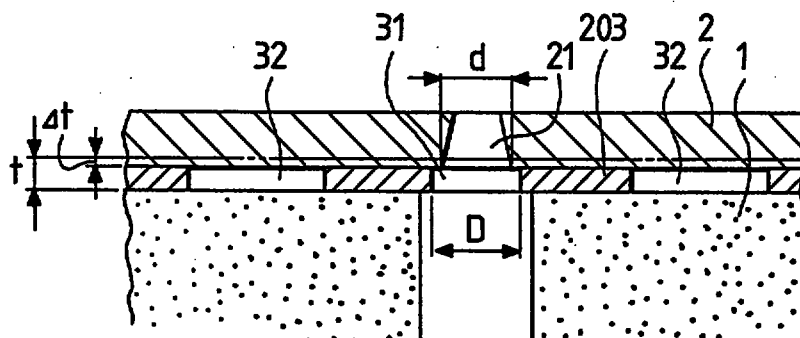


FIG. 19

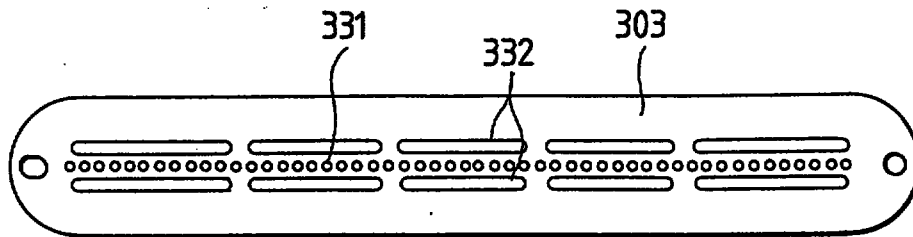


FIG. 20

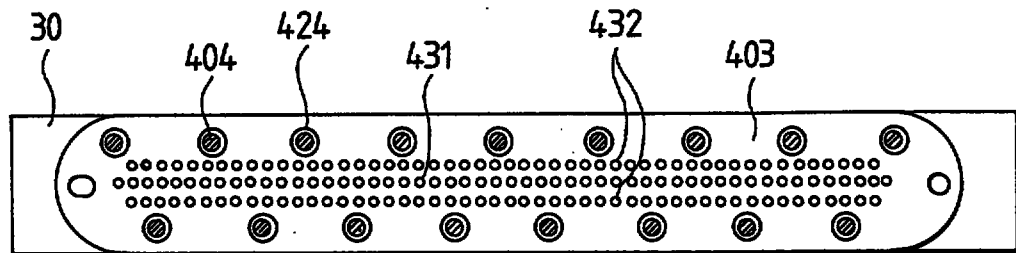
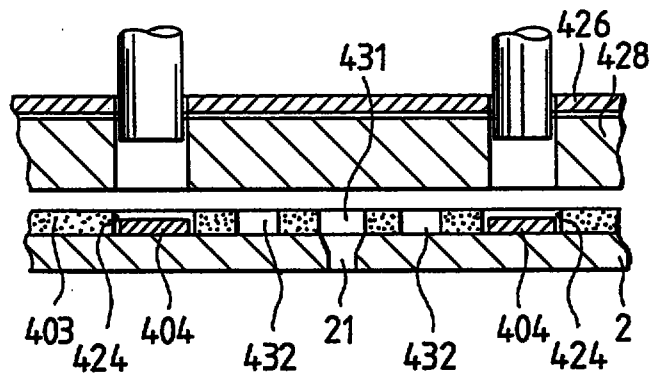


FIG. 21



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FIG. 22A

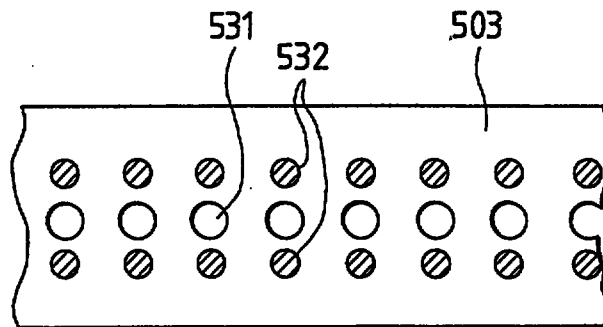
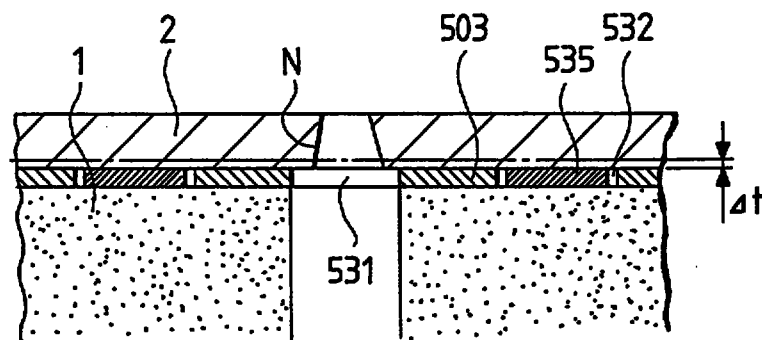


FIG. 22B



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REPLACEMENT SHEETS SG

- ☒ Description : paged 1 to paged 16
☒ Claim(s) : paged 16 to paged 20
☒ Drawing(s) : paged 1/3 to paged 3/2
☒ Abstract : paged 1 to paged 1

- 1 -

SHEET ADHESIVE MATERIAL FOR BONDING TWO MEMBERS HAVING
SMALL HOLES AND METHOD OF BONDING SAME.

DATE OF RECEIPT 20/01/98 Description

The present invention relates to a sheet adhesive material for bonding two members having small holes to each other and a method of bonding the two members.

In a conventional ink jet type printer using an ink of a hot melt type as disclosed for example in an Unexamined Japanese Patent Application (OPI) No. Sho. 61-98547 or an ink jet type printer employing a print head of a superposed and contiguous type as disclosed in U.S. Patent 4,680,595, a nozzle plate is fixed onto the front surface of a head base member in such a manner that a number of nozzle ports for ejecting ink formed in the nozzle plate are arranged respectively to correspond to a number of ink communication chambers each communicating with an ink tank.

However, in the conventional method an adhesive agent is simply applied to the contact surfaces of the two members to thereby bond the two members to each other, which may arise a problem that the adhesive agent penetrates and covers the nozzle holes to thereby cause the clogging of the nozzle holes and an undesired ink-failure.

Document JP-A-4014458 discloses a method of applying an adhesive material to the entire surface of one side of at least one of a plurality of perforated plates. An excimer laser is used to remove adhesive that may clog the perforations.

The present invention was made in view of the foregoing drawbacks accompanying the conventional method as mentioned above. Accordingly, it is an object of the invention to provide a bonding method capable of bonding surely and fixedly two members to each other without causing the clogging of the nozzle holes or ink-failure condition.

This object is solved by the method of bonding two members, each having small holes, to each other according to independent claim 1 and the sheet shaped adhesive member of independent claim 22. Further advantageous features, aspects and details of the invention are evident from the dependent claims, and description and the drawings.

The invention according to a specific aspect provides a sheet-shaped adhesive member for bonding two

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plate-shaped members each having small holes, such as a nozzle plate employed in a recording head of an ink jet type recording apparatus.

It is another aspect of the invention to provide a sheet-shaped adhesive member capable of surely bonding two plate members each having small holes to form an integrated member without producing any clogging.

It is still another aspect of the invention to provide a sheet-shaped adhesive member capable of restricting the deformation of the sheet-shaped adhesive member in the thickness direction thereof to thereby further suppress an inward deformation of the escape holes.

According to another specific aspect, the invention provides a method for bonding together two members each having small holes which comprises a step of provisionally bonding by pressurizing onto a contact surface of one of the two members a sheet-shaped adhesive member having thereon escape holes each corresponding to the small holes of the member and deformation preventive holes for preventing the escape holes from being deformed, and a step of bonding by heating and pressurizing the other member onto the contact surface of the former member.

According to another aspect of the invention, a method of bonding together two members each having small holes comprises the steps of provisionally bonding by pressurizing onto a contact surface of one of the two members a sheet-shaped adhesive member having thereon escape holes corresponding in position to the respective small holes of the member, inserting a space forming member, and bonding by heating and pressurizing the other member onto the contact surface of the former member.

Furthermore, according to still another aspect of the invention, there is provided a sheet-shaped adhesive member having escape holes each corresponding in position to the respective small holes of the member and deformation preventive holes disposed adjacent to the escape holes capable of absorbing an extension of the sheet-shaped adhesive member in the surface direction thereof to thereby suppress an inward deformation of the escape holes.

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Fig. 1 is a view showing a structure of a print head in an ink jet type printer to which the present invention is applied;

Fig. 2 is a plan view of a sheet-shaped adhesive member employed in a first embodiment of a method of bonding together two members each having small holes according to the present invention;

Fig. 3 is a side view of the sheet-shaped adhesive member shown in Fig. 2;

Fig. 4 is a side view of a positioning step employed in the first embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 5 is a view of a step of provisionally bonding the adhesive member employed in the first embodiment the invention;

Fig. 6 is a view of a step of substantially bonding a head substrate, a nozzle plate and the above adhesive member to one another, which step is employed in the first embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 7 is a view of a completely bonded state achieved according to the invention;

Fig. 8 is a view of the deformed shapes of an escape hole formed in the adhesive member when no deformation preventive hole is formed;

Fig. 9 is a plan view of an adhesive member used in a method of bonding together two members each having small holes embodying the second embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 10 is a side view of the adhesive shown in Fig. 9;

Fig. 11 is a perspective view of a space forming member used in the second embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 12 is a view of a space forming member inserting step in the second embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 13 is a view of a bonded state achieved by the second embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 14 is a view of a structure of an ink jet recording head to which the second embodiment of the invention is applied;

Figs 15 illustrate a third embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention;

Fig. 16 is an enlarged sectional view taken on the line A-A shown in Fig. 15;

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Fig. 17 is an explanatory view of the third embodiment, illustrating a step of bonding operation employed in the invention;

Fig. 18 is a sectional view of the third embodiment, illustrating a state in which the two members of which are bonded together;

Fig. 19 is a plan view of a fourth embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention;

Fig. 20 shows a fifth embodiment of sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention;

Fig. 21 is an explanatory view to show a method of fitting a deformation restricting spacer into the above adhesive member;

Fig. 22A is a plan view of main portions of a sixth embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the present invention; and

Fig. 22B is a sectional view of the sixth embodiment, illustrating a state in which the two members of which are bonded together.

Fig. 1 is a view showing a structure of a print head of an ink jet type printer to which the present invention is applied.

As shown in Fig. 1, a head base member 1 is provided with an ink communication chamber 11 communicating with an ink tank 6. The head base member 1 is formed of a high molecular resin material such as polysulfone, polyethersulfone, polycarbonate or the like. A nozzle plate 2 is provided with a nozzle hole 21 for ejecting an ink droplets 7 and is press-machined, which plate is formed of electroformed nickel, stainless steel, beryllium copper or the like. The head base member 1 and the nozzle plate 2 are strongly bonded to each other by means of an adhesive member 3 awhile keeping a communication between the ink communication chamber 11 and the nozzle hole 21. After manufacturing the recording head, the ink droplets 7 is ejected by driving a PZT 5 onto a recording sheet 8 to thereby achieve printing.

During bonding the above mentioned two members, if the adhesive member 3 penetrates into and covers the nozzle hole 21 of the nozzle plate 2 to cause the clogging, then the ink droplets 7 cannot be ejected out, which

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is a serious defect in a printer.

The sheet-shaped adhesive member and method of bonding together the head substrate 1 and nozzle plate 2 by the sheet-shaped adhesive member according to a first embodiment will now be described hereinbelow with reference to accompanied Figs. 2 to 8.

Fig. 2 is a plan view of a sheet-shaped adhesive member 3 employed in the first embodiment of a method of bonding together two members each having small holes according to the present invention, Fig. 3 is a side view of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 3 shown in Fig. 2, Fig. 4 is a side view of a positioning step employed in the first embodiment of the invention, Fig. 5 is a view of a step of provisionally bonding the adhesive member employed in the first embodiment of the invention, Fig. 6 is a view of a step of bonding a head base member, a nozzle plate and the adhesive member to one another according to the invention, Fig. 7 is a view of a completely bonded state achieved according to the invention.

The bonding steps will be described in detail as follows.

(1) First, there is prepared a composite member which consists of a material of a sheet-shaped adhesive member (Three Bond Co., No. 1604) laminated by a release sheet 30. As shown in Fig. 7, escape holes 31 are stamped out by a press at a position each corresponding to the respective nozzle hole 21 formed on the nozzle plate 2. In this stamping operation, as shown in Fig. 3, the diameter D of the escape hole 31 is set with respect to the diameter d of the nozzle hole 21 such that $D \geq d$, in consideration of a width for contraction occurring when heated and pressurized. A number of escape holes 31 are arranged in a line in the central portion of the adhesive member 3. Further, a number of deformation preventive holes 32 are stamped out in upper and lower lines with the central line of the escape holes 31 disposed therebetween. The diameter of each of the deformation preventive holes 32 is set to be equal to that of the escape hole 31. Then, positioning holes 33 are provided to positioning the adhesive member 3 when bonding and the outer configuration

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of the above-mentioned material of the adhesive member 3 are stamped out to thereby produce the sheet-shaped adhesive member 3.

(2) As shown in Fig. 4, the nozzle plate 2 with the contact surface of which facing upwardly is put on a positioning jig 50 having pins 51 and further the adhesive member 3 with the release sheet 30 disposed on the upper surface thereof is mounted on the nozzle plate 2 before the nozzle plate 2 and adhesive member 3 are properly positioned with respect to each other.

(3) Next, as shown in Fig. 5, the positioned nozzle plate 2 and adhesive member 3 mounted on the nozzle plate 2, together with the positioning jig 50, are set in a heat-pressure bonding machine 60 (Japan Abionics Co. Type TCW-125) and then the adhesive member 3 is provisionally pressure bonded onto the nozzle plate 2 under the condition of a heating temperature of 80°C and a pressure of 3 kg/cm². After that, the release paper 30 is peeled off.

(4) Afterwards, as shown in Fig. 6, the head base member 1 is mounted on the adhesive member 3 and then the two members are positioned with respect to each other. Then, the head base member 1, adhesive member 3 and nozzle plate 2 are finally bonded to one another under the condition of a heating temperature of 120°C and a pressure of 3 kg/cm².

Consequently, as shown in Fig. 7, the escape hole 31 restricted to a uniform thickness by a space forming member and is bonded by heating and pressurizing, will be contracted between the nozzle hole 21 of the nozzle plate 2 and the ink communication chamber 11 of the head base member 1 compared to itself before the adhesive member 31 is heated and pressurized for bonding. That is, the adhesive member 3 will be contracted down to the same and uniform size as the ink through hole 11 to thereby bond the nozzle plate 2 and head base member 1 to each other strongly without clogging the nozzle hole 21.

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plate by the sheet-shaped adhesive member according to a second embodiment will be described hereinbelow with reference to accompanying Figs. 9 to 14.

Fig. 9 is a plan view of an adhesive member used in a method of bonding together two members each having small holes embodying the second embodiment of the invention, Fig. 10 is a side view of the adhesive shown in Fig. 9, Fig. 11 is a perspective view of a space forming member employed in the second embodiment of the invention, Fig. 12 is a view of a space forming member inserting step in the second embodiment, Fig. 13 is a view of a bonded state achieved by the second embodiment, and Fig. 14 is a view of a structure of an ink jet recording head to which the second embodiment of the invention is applied.

In the drawings, like parts and components are designated by the same reference numerals as the first embodiment according to Figs. 1 to 8. The method according to the second embodiment is similar to the first embodiment and, therefore, merely the different steps are described hereinbelow.

(1) The first step is substantially the same as the step (1) of the first embodiment described above. However, in the second embodiment, a plurality of insertion holes 132 for insertion of a space forming member 4 is stamped out on an sheet-shaped adhesive member 103 as shown in Figs. 9 and 10.

(2) Next, a space forming member 4 shown in Fig. 11 having a thickness t is manufactured in such a manner that the thickness t of which is not greater than the thickness T of the adhesive member 3 as shown in Fig. 10, that is, $t \leq T$, in consideration of an expansion of a width due to a deformation of the adhesive member 103 when the adhesive member is bonded by heating and pressurizing. The space forming member 4 is formed of stainless steel so that it will never be deformed when the adhesive member is bonded by heating and pressurizing. The space forming member 4 is stamped out by a press-machining operation so as to have a circular shape which is easy to manufacture.

The bonding steps (3) and (4) of the first embodiment shown in Figs. 4 and 5 are the same in the

second embodiment after the step (2) thereof and the explanations of these steps are omitted.

(5) As shown in Fig. 12, the space forming member 4 is inserted into the insertion hole 132 formed on the adhesive member 103.

The next bonding step of this embodiment is also the same as the step (6) of the first embodiment shown in Fig. 6.

By means of the above-mentioned operations, as shown in Fig. 13, in the adhesive member 103, which is restricted to a uniform thickness by the space forming member 4 and is then bonded by heating and pressurizing, the escape hole 31 is contracted when compared with itself before it is heated and pressurized and thus it is of the same and uniform size as the ink communication hole 11, so that the adhesive member 103 is able to bond the head base member 1 and nozzle plate 2 to each other strongly without clogging the nozzle hole 21.

Examples:

With respect to the adhesive member 3 and 103, the present inventors have experimented, besides the method using the sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the first and second embodiments, a method which uses a conventional liquid adhesive agent such as an epoxy contained adhesive member (Araldite Co. Type AW-106), a silicone contained adhesive member (Toray · Dow Corning · Silicone Co., Type SE 9157L) or the like. The result of the experimentation revealed that, when the conventional liquid adhesive member is used, it is difficult to apply the adhesive member to a clearance between the head base member 1 and the nozzle plate 2 in a uniform thickness. Also, the flow or penetration states of the adhesive member due to a capillary phenomenon occurring when pressure is applied are affected by the mixing ratio thereof, changes of environmental temperatures and the like and thus are caused to vary frequently according to such environmental conditions. As a result, it is difficult to secure stabilized communication between the nozzle hole 21 and ink communication chamber 11. Further, in the case of the sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention, the

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bonding processes were completed in several seconds when it is bonded by heating and pressurizing. On the other hand, the liquid adhesive member requires a long drying time ranging from 30 minutes to several hours.

For the escape holes 31 formed in the sheet-shaped adhesive member 3, besides the above-mentioned method according to the present embodiment in which each of the escape holes 31 is formed such that its diameter D is equal to or greater than the diameter d of the nozzle hole 21, the applicants have experimented another method in which no escape hole 31 is formed at all and, after bonded by heating and pressurizing, the adhesive members 3 and 103 are post-worked from externally by use of an excimer laser (Sumitomo Juki Co., Type INDEX 200) through the nozzle hole 21 formed on the nozzle plate 2 or through the communication chamber 11 in the head base member 1. However, our experimentation showed that this method is affected by dross or the like. That is, it is found difficult to post-work the whole nozzle uniformly. Further, if the diameter D of the escape hole 31 is smaller than the diameter d of the ink communication chamber 11 in the head base member 1, then the ink communication chamber 11 or nozzle hole 21 may be clogged when the adhesive member is bonded by heating and pressurizing, that is, when the adhesive member is contracted.

With regard to the deformation preventive holes 32 and 132, the present inventors have also tested another method in which no deformation preventive holes are formed. This test revealed that the escape hole 31 can be caused to vary into a non-circular shape having a directional characteristic as shown in Fig. 8 due to the contraction of the adhesive member 3 when it is heated and pressurized for bonding, so that the escape hole 31 clogs the nozzle hole 21 or nozzle communication chamber 11 as shown by oblique lines in Fig. 8. Referring to the diameter, positions, number and the like of the deformation preventive holes 32 and 132, the above-mentioned method is found favorable.

Further, referring to the space forming member 4, the present inventors have tested another method which does not use the space forming member 4. According to the result of the test, however, the amount of deformation

of the adhesive member 3, when it is heated and pressurized, is found to vary according to the heating temperatures and pressures, the conditions of the contact surfaces or the like, with the result that, after the adhesive member 3 is bonded by heating and pressurizing, the diameter of the escape hole is caused to vary, whereby the ink communication chamber 11 or nozzle hole 21 can be clogged. Further, the result of the test revealed that, if the thickness t of the space forming member 4 is greater than the thickness T of the adhesive member 3, then a width for deformation of the adhesive member exists no longer so that a practical bonding strength cannot be obtained.

Figs. 15 to 18 illustrate a third embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the present invention, which is constructed so as to band a nozzle plate employed in an ink jet type recording head, and a method of bonding the nozzle plate by use of this sheet-shaped adhesive member.

In these figures, like parts and components are designated by the same reference numerals as the first and second embodiments shown in Figs. 1 to 14. As shown in these figures, a sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is used to bond a nozzle plate 2 to a head substrate 1. The sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is of a hot melt type which penetrates in a semi-melt state into fine undulations on the surfaces of materials to be bonded and is hardened therein owing to an anchor effect to thereby bond the two members to be bonded to each other. The sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is formed of a high molecular material consisting of a group comprising polyolefin, nylon, polyurethane, and a polyester. A release sheet 30 is adhered on the whole surface of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 for the purpose of reinforcement and, as shown in Fig. 17, the release sheet 30 will be peeled off after the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is provisionally mounted to the nozzle plate 2.

The fundamental structure of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 according to the third embodiment is the same as the member 3 according to the first embodiment shown in Fig. 2. Therefore, merely the different feature will be described.

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In the third embodiment, the diameter D of the respective escape holes 31 is set about 1.8 times the diameter d of the nozzle hole 21 to correspond to an amount of compression Δt of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203. Further, the deformation preventive holes 32, which are formed on both sides of the escape holes 31, are formed in such a manner that the diameters thereof are substantially the same as the diameters D of the escape holes 31 and also that they are arranged in a zigzag line where the deformation preventive holes 32 are staggered with respect to the line of the escape holes or, as indicated in Fig. 15, where the three rows of escape holes 31 and the deformation preventive holes 32 are arranged such that each escape hole 31 with its adjoining deformation preventive holes 32 forms a column of three adjoining holes at a distance δ which is substantially two times the diameter D of the escape hole 31.

Referring here in particular to the third embodiment of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203, in a sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 having a thickness of 0.50 mm with a deformation width of 0.15 mm given, there are formed a number of escape holes 31 each having a diameter D of 0.38 mm with respect to the diameter of 0.15 to 0.18 mm of the nozzle hole 21 and, on both sides of the escape holes 31, there are formed the same number of deformation preventive holes 32 at a distance of 0.70 mm between the two preventive hole lines.

In Fig. 15, reference numeral 33 designates a pair of positioning holes which are respectively disposed at both the ends of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203, and 205 represents a pair of dummy holes which are formed at both the ends of the escape hole 31 line in order to absorb the extension of the escape holes 31 in the longitudinal direction thereof to thereby restrict the deformation of the escape holes 31 in the longitudinal direction thereof.

Next, description will be given below of a process of bonding the substrate B and nozzle plate P to each other by use of the above-mentioned sheet-shaped adhesive member 1 with reference to Fig. 17.

At first, with two positioning pins 51 respectively planted on a jig 50 as the reference thereof, the nozzle plate 2 is positioned on the jig 50 with the adhesive sur-

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face thereof facing upward. Next, with the release sheet 30 mounted on the top surface thereof and also with the two positioning pins 51, corresponding in position to the positioning holes 33 the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is positioned and placed on the nozzle plate 2.

Since the bonding process of this embodiment is the same as that of the first and second embodiments described above and shown in Figs. 5 and 6, the description is omitted.

As a result of the bonding process, the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203 is compressed and deformed in the thickness direction thereof and at the same time it is expanded in the surface direction thereof. With respect to the longitudinal extension of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 203, the respective escape holes 31 absorb the extensions thereof to one another and. Further, with respect to the extension of the adhesive member 203 in the width direction thereof, the deformation preventive holes 32, which are disposed on both sides of the escape holes 31, absorb the extensions in the width direction. Therefore, this can prevent the respective escape holes 31 from being deformed as much as possible and thus the inner edges of the escape holes 31 can be kept from coming into the nozzle holes 21. Furthermore, owing to the pair of dummy holes 205 formed at both the ends of the escape hole 31 line, the extension of the escape holes 31 in the longitudinal direction thereof is effectively suppressed to thereby restrict the deformation of the escape holes 31 in the longitudinal direction thereof. Accordingly, the head base member 1 and nozzle plate 2 can be bonded together with high accuracy.

Fig. 19 shows a sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the fourth embodiment of the invention.

In the fourth embodiment, on both sides of a number of escape holes 331 arranged in a line, there are formed a plurality of deformation preventive slits 332 each having a width corresponding to the diameter of the escape hole 331. Owing to this structure, the extension of a sheet-shaped adhesive member 303 caused when it is compressed and deformed is absorbed by the deformation of the deformation preventive slits 332 to thereby restrict the deformation of the escape holes 331 as much as possible.

Fig. 20 shows a fifth embodiment of sheet-shaped adhesive member according to the invention, in which

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deformation restricting spacers 404 are used for further restricting the deformation of escape holes 431.

In the present sheet-shaped adhesive member 403, on both sides of the escape holes 431 formed in a line, there are formed a number of deformation preventive holes 432 and further, on both sides of the deformation preventive holes 432, there are formed a plurality of spacer insertion holes 424 into which there is inserted deformation restricting spacers 404 each corresponding to the thickness of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 403 obtained when an allowable compression amount Δt is subtracted.

In the fifth embodiment, as shown in Fig. 21, the sheet-shaped adhesive member 403 is provisionally mounted onto the nozzle plate 2 and is positioned just below a press machine 428 and, after that, the respective deformation restricting spacers 404, which are respectively stamped out from a steel plate 426, are allowed to fall down into the spacer insertion holes 424.

Owing to this structure, the compression amount of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 403 can be restricted within an allowable range and at the same time the deformation of the escape holes 431 can be prevented by the escape holes 431 and deformation preventive holes 432 formed on both sides thereof, so that the nozzle plate 2 can be fitted to the head base member 1 without producing any clogging.

In this embodiment, if the deformation of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 403 is restricted by the deformation restricting spacers 404 to a sufficient extent, then the deformation of the escape holes 431 can be restricted to such a degree that the inner edges of the escape holes cannot come into the nozzle holes 21, even when the deformation preventive holes 432 are not specially formed on both sides of the escape holes 431.

Figs. 22A and 22B show a sixth embodiment of a sheet-shaped adhesive member in which deformation preventive holes are used for storing deformation restricting spacers.

In the sixth embodiment, there is used as a deformation preventive material a paste material which includes fine grains composed of a high molecular material such as an epoxy resin, urethane, polyimide or the

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like dispersed in a volatile solution and also which, when heated and compressed, is reduced in volume and hardened. Further, deformation preventive paste material 535 is previously applied into each of deformation preventive holes 532 respectively formed on both sides of escape holes 531 before the sheet-shaped adhesive member is actually used.

In the sixth embodiment, if the sheet-shaped adhesive member 503 interposed between the nozzle plate 2 and head base member 1 is heated and pressurized, then the deformation preventive paste material 535 is contracted in thickness by an amount corresponding to the compression amount width Δt of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 503 and, at the same time, the paste material 535 is contracted in the outside diameter thereof and is hardened. As a result, the deformation of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 503 in the thickness direction thereof is restricted by the deformation preventive paste material 535 and, at the same time, the extension of the sheet-shaped adhesive member 503 in the surface direction thereof is absorbed by a clearance formed between the paste material 535 and deformation preventive hole 532, so that the inward deformation of the escape holes 532 can be further suppressed.

As described above, according to the present invention, when bonding two members each having small holes to each other, a sheet shaped adhesive member including escape holes each corresponding to the small holes of one member and deformation preventive holes for preventing the escape holes from being deformed is provisionally bonded by pressurizing onto one member and then the other member is bonded by heating and pressurizing onto the contact surface of the one member, so that the two members can be bonded together strongly and efficiently without causing any hole clogging.

Further, when bonding together two members each having small holes, there is provisionally bonded by pressurizing onto one of the two members a sheet-shaped adhesive member which includes therein escape holes respectively corresponding to small holes of the one member, space forming members each having a proper thickness being inserted into the sheet-shaped adhesive

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member, and the other member is then bonded to the contact surface of the one member by heating and pressurizing the adhesive member. Owing to this, the two members each having small holes can be bonded together strongly and highly efficiently without causing any hole clogging.

In the foregoing description, the present invention has been described by way of an example in which the head base member 1 and nozzle plate 2 respectively used in a ink jet printer are bonded to each other. However, the invention is not limited thereto or thereby, but it can also apply as means for bonding together other kinds of two members each having small holes which may be clogged with an adhesive member. Further, the invention may also be applied to an adhesive member which bonds together two members such as a water sprinkler or the like, which respectively have small holes.

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Claims

1. A method of bonding two members each having small holes to each other, comprising the steps of:
preparing first and second members each having a number of small holes;
preparing a sheet-shaped adhesive member;
forming escape holes on said sheet-shaped adhesive member at a position each corresponding to said holes of said first member;
mounting said sheet-shaped adhesive member onto said first member;
first heating and pressing said first member and said sheet-shaped adhesive member mounted on said first member for bonding to each other to form a preform;
mounting said second member on said preform; and
second heating and pressing said preform and said second member mounted on said preform for bonding said first and second members to each other through said sheet-shaped adhesive member.
2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising a step of forming a number of deformation preventive holes in upper and lower lines with the central line of said escape holes disposed therebetween at the same time of said step of forming said escape holes.
3. The method of Claim 1 or 2, further comprising a step of forming a plurality of insertion holes for insertion of a space forming member on said sheet-shaped adhesive member at the same time of said step of forming said escape holes.
4. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, wherein said first heating and pressing step takes place under the condition of a heating temperature of about 80°C and a pressure of about 3 kg/cm², and said second heating and pressing step takes place under the condition of a heating temperature of about 120°C and a pressure of about 3 kg/cm².



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5. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member is composed of a sheet-shaped adhesive material and a release sheet laminated onto said sheet-shaped adhesive material, said release sheet being peeled off said sheet-shaped adhesive material after said first heating and pressing step.
6. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, wherein said second member is a head base member of a printing head of an ink jet type recording apparatus and said first member is a nozzle plate having nozzle holes for ejecting ink droplets.
7. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member is of a hot melt type.
8. The method of Claim 7, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member is formed of a high molecular material consisting essentially of a group comprising a polyolefin, nylon, polyurethane, and polyester.
9. The method of Claim 6 or 7, wherein said head base member is formed of a high molecular resin material consisting of a group comprising polysulfone, polyethersulfone and polycarbonate, and said nozzle plate is formed of a material consisting of a group comprising electroformed nickel, stainless steel and beryllium copper.
10. The method of Claim 3, or any claim dependent on claim 3, wherein a thickness of said space forming member is not greater than a thickness of said sheet-shaped adhesive member.
11. The method of Claim 3 or any claim dependent on claim 3, wherein said space forming member is formed of stainless steel.
12. The method of Claim 3 or any claim dependent on



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claim 3, wherein said space forming member has a circular shape.

13. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, further comprising a step of forming positioning holes at both the ends on said sheet-shaped adhesive member preferably at the same time of said step of forming said escape holes.
14. The method of Claim 2 or any claim dependent on claim 2, further comprising a step of forming a pair of dummy holes at both ends of said escape hole line preferably at the same time of said step of forming said escape holes.
15. The method of Claim 6 or any claim dependent on claim 6, wherein a diameter of each said escape holes is set about 1.8 times the diameter of said nozzle hole to correspond to an amount of compression of said sheet-shaped adhesive member.
16. The method of Claim 15, wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member has a thickness of about 0.50 mm with a deformation width of about 0.15 mm given, said escape holes each has a diameter of about 0.38 mm and said nozzle hole has a diameter of 0.15 to 0.18 mm, and the same number of said deformation preventive holes are located at a distance of about 0.70 mm between said two preventive hold lines.
17. The method of any one of the preceding Claims, further comprising a step of forming a plurality of deformation preventive slits each having a width corresponding to the diameter of said escape hole.
18. The method of Claim 2 or any claim dependent on claim 2, further comprising a step of inserting spacers in said deformation preventive holes before said first heating and pressing step.
19. The method of Claim 18, wherein said spacers comprise a deformation preventive paste material.



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20. The method of Claim 19, wherein said paste material comprises fine grains composed of a high molecular material dispersed in a volatile solution.
21. The method of Claim 20, wherein said high molecular material consists of a group comprising an epoxy resin, urethane and polyimide.
22. An integrated member, comprising:
two members (1,2) each having small holes (11,21);
and a sheet-shaped adhesive member (3, 103, 203, 303, 403, 503) interposed between said two members and adapted to bond the two members (1, 2) to form said integrated member, wherein the sheet-shaped adhesive member (3, 103, 203, 303, 403, 503) comprises escape holes (31, 331, 431, 531) formed on said sheet-shaped adhesive member, said escape holes (31, 331, 431, 531) corresponding in position to the small holes (11, 21) of the two members (1, 2); and wherein said sheet-shaped adhesive member further comprises deformation preventive holes (32, 132, 332, 432, 532).
23. The integrated member of Claim 22, wherein said deformation preventive holes (32, 132, 432, 532) are disposed adjacent of said escape holes (31, 331, 431, 531).
24. The integrated member of Claim 23, wherein said deformation preventive holes (32, 132, 332, 432, 532) are disposed on both sides of said escape holes (31, 331, 431, 531) arranged in a line.
25. The integrated member of Claim 23, wherein said deformation preventive holes are slit-shaped holes (332) extending along the two sides of said escape hole (31, 331, 431, 531) line.
26. The integrated member of any one of Claims 22 to 25, further comprising a deformation restricting

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piece (4, 404) embedded in said sheet-shaped adhesive member adapted to restrict an amount of contraction of said sheet-shaped adhesive member in the thickness direction thereof.

27. The integrated member of any one of Claims 23 to 26, further comprising paste-shaped deformation restricting agent (535) inserted into said deformation preventive holes (532).



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FIG. 1

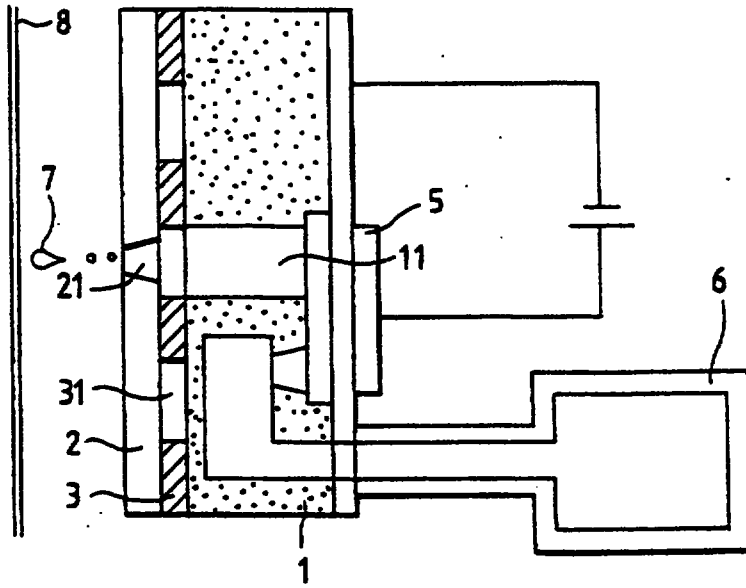


FIG. 2

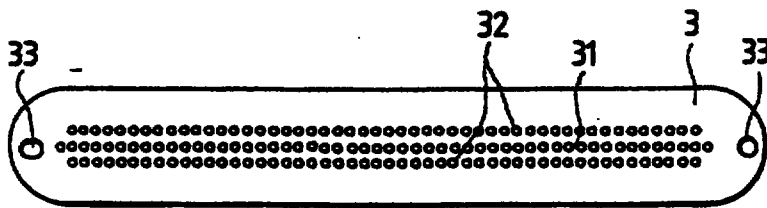
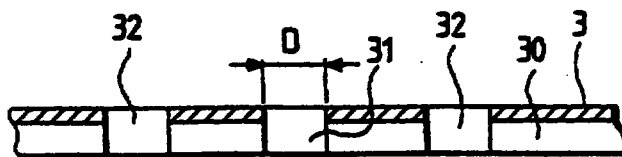


FIG. 3



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FIG. 4

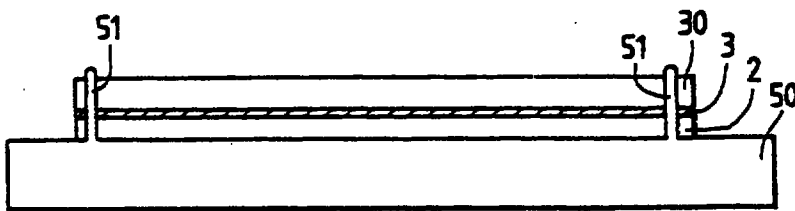


FIG. 5

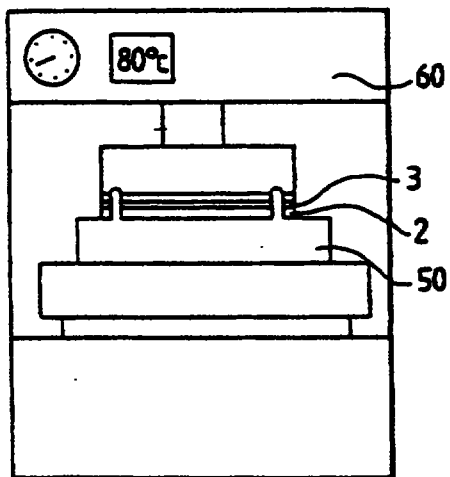


FIG. 6

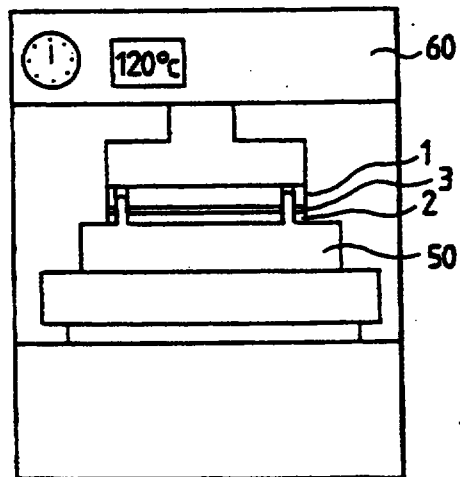


FIG. 7

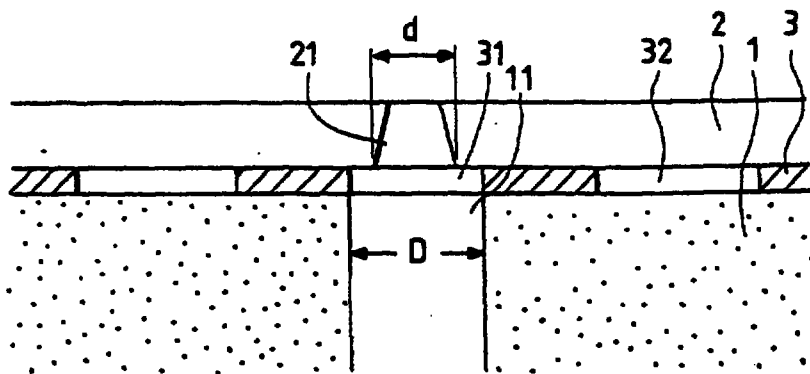


FIG. 8

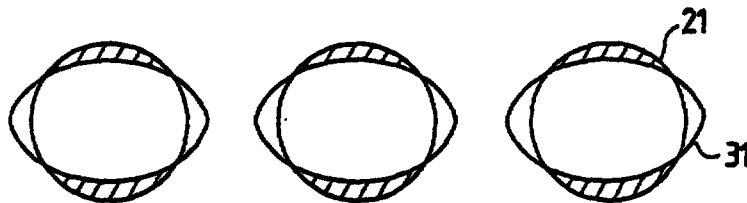
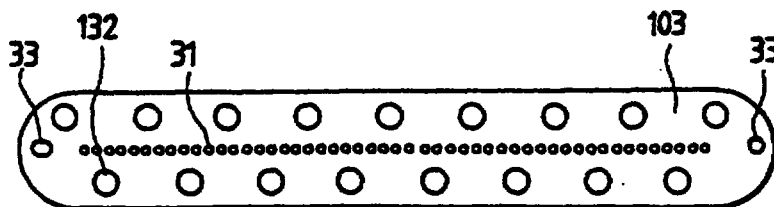


FIG. 9



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FIG. 10

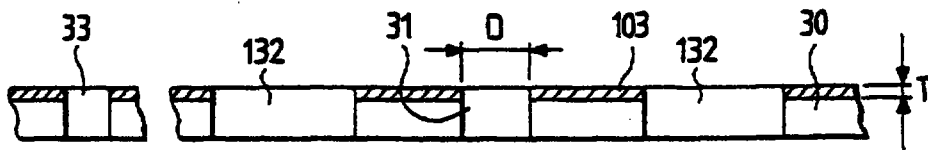


FIG. 11

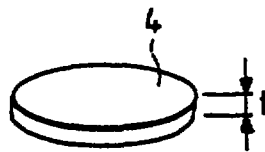
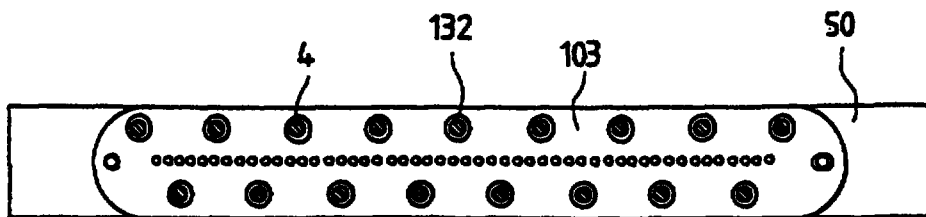


FIG. 12



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FIG. 13

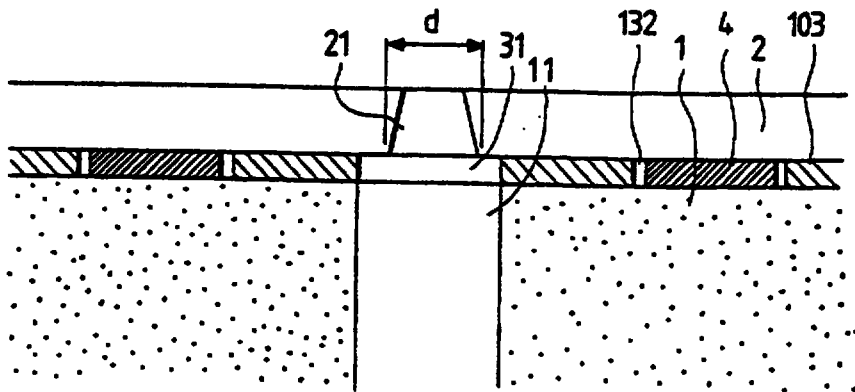
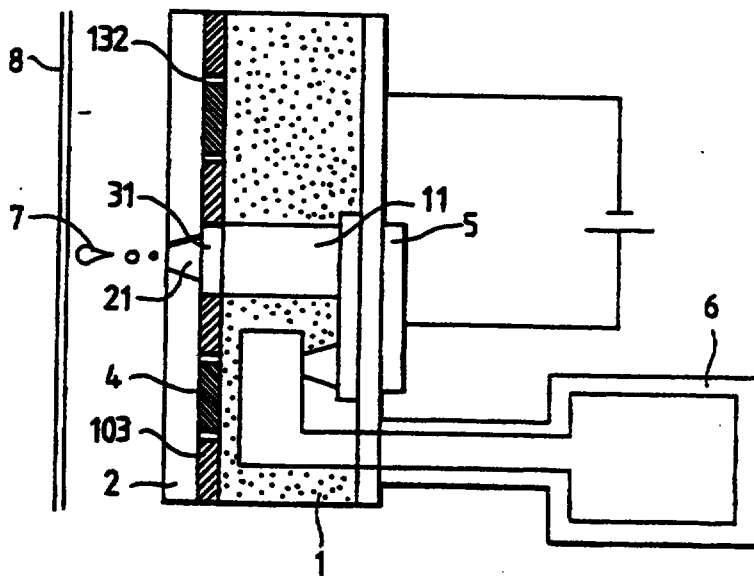


FIG. 14



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FIG. 15

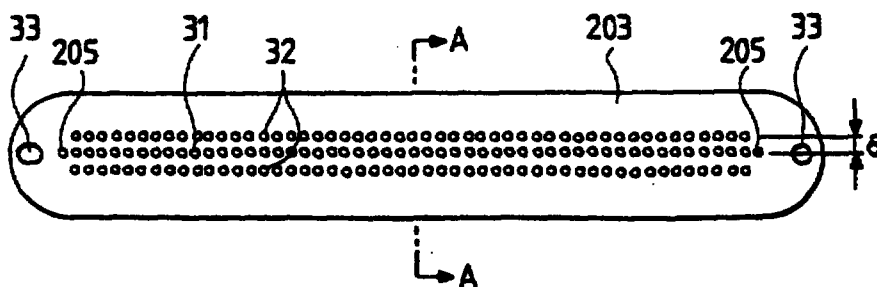


FIG. 16

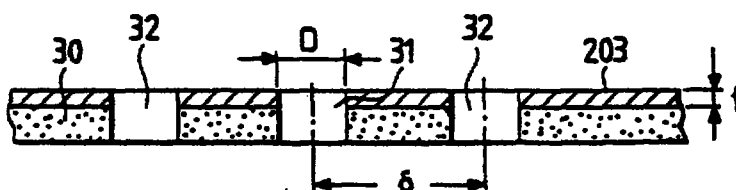


FIG. 17

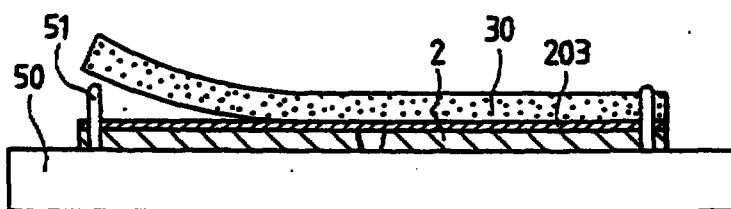
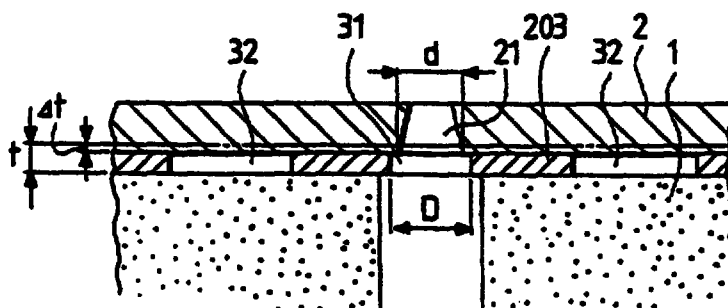


FIG. 18



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FIG. 19

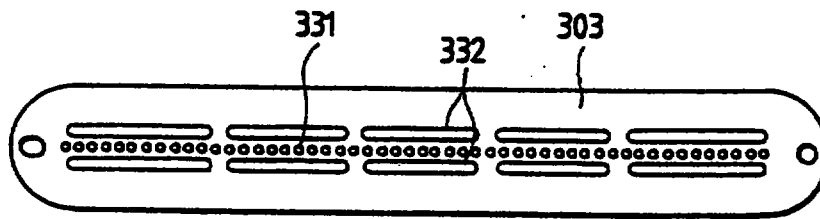


FIG. 20

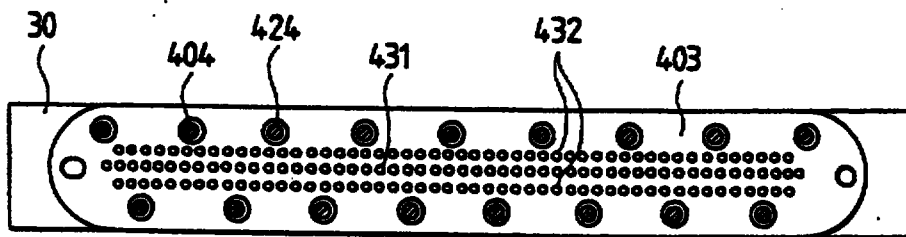


FIG. 21

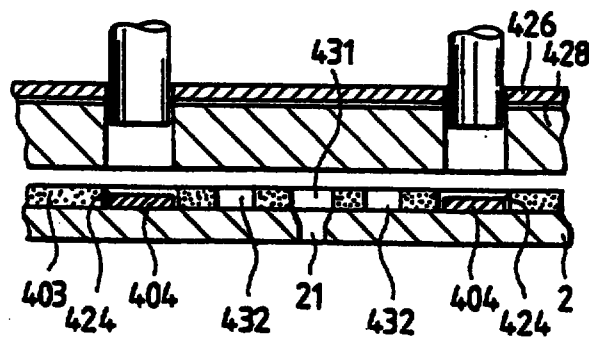


FIG. 22A

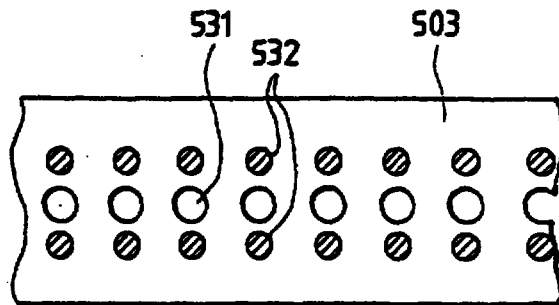
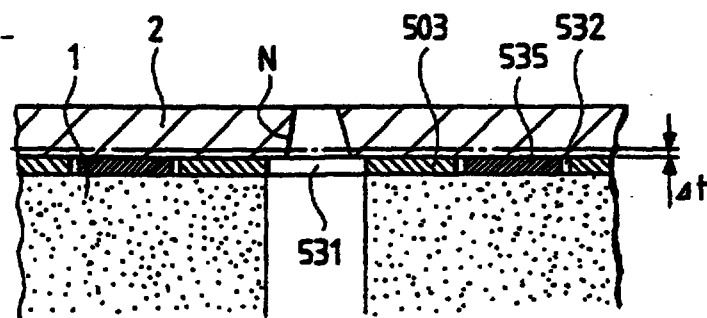
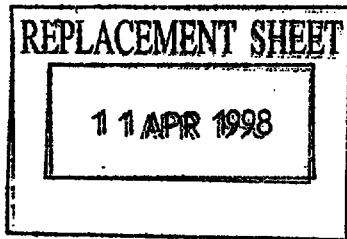


FIG. 22B



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REPLACEMENT SHEET

**SHEET ADHESIVE MATERIAL FOR BONDING TWO MEMBERS
HAVING SMALL HOLES AND METHOD OF BONDING SAME**

ABSTRACT

A method of bonding together two members (1, 2) each having small holes (11, 21), the method comprising the steps of provisionally bonding by pressurizing onto the contact surface of one of the members (1, 2) each having small holes a sheet-shaped adhesive member (3) including escape holes (31) respectively corresponding to the small holes (11, 21) and deformation preventive holes (32) for preventing the escape holes (31) from being deformed, and bonding by heating and pressurizing the other member onto the contact surface.

FIGURE 7.