

FIG. 4 illustrates a resiliently flexible U-shaped key 120 intended for mounting to each sidewall adjacent the pocket region 110 to thereby provide a throat region 112. The axle of the spindle can be inserted within the mouth 122 of the key 120, fit through the tabs 124, and into the pocket region 126 of the key 120.

It is understood that while the description above illustrates a throat region 112 associated with every slot 92, these throat regions 112 need not be provided in every (or any) slot 92. However, throat regions 112 are preferably located in slots 92 situated adjacent the drive means so that spindles inserted within these slots will resist ejection when the drive means are actuated.

It is understood that other control means apart from the slide switch 116 may be provided. A wide variety of other controls could be used to provide the same functions as those described above, or to provide functions which result in winding either or both spindles in either or both of a clockwise or counterclockwise direction. For example, a rotary knob could be actuated to provide the same functions as the slide switch 116. However, variable speed control and multidirectional operation is not necessary to the practice of the invention.

It is also understood that the platform 64 may include structure for enhancing the readability of tape riding on the platform 64. As examples, the platform 64 may include structures such as a needle, a shroud with a window therein, or a transparent window with a magnifying region. The tape may then ride beneath the structure, and the structure will draw the user's attention to a particular area on the tape. The platform 64 may also include lighting within the enclosure 90 which backlights the tape riding across the platform 64. The lighting may be specially chosen to emit light at wave lengths which make printing on the tape most visible.

Finally, it is to be remembered that the description set out above is of a preferred embodiment of the invention, and the words used to describe this preferred embodiment are used for the purposes of description and not limitation. For example, while the sidewalls 66 and 70 are described above as preferably being formed as a "sidewall unit" 82 and the sidewalls 68 and 72 are described above as preferably being formed as a "sidewall unit" 84, these sidewalls need not in fact be formed as units and may instead be formed separately. Thus, it is understood that the invention is not confined to the particular construction of parts and uses described above, and that it additionally includes modified embodiments that come within the scope of the following claims. Further, it is understood that in these claims, means plus function clauses are intended to cover the particular structures described in this disclosure which perform their stated function, and also both structural equivalents and equivalent structures. As an example, though a nail and a screw may not be structural equivalents insofar as a nail employs a cylindrical surface to secure parts together whereas a screw employs a helical surface, in the context of fastening parts, a nail and a screw are equivalent structures.

What is claimed is:

1. A tape winder comprising:

- a. a housing including two pairs of opposing sidewalls, each sidewall including an upper surface and a slot descending from the upper surface and terminating in a pocket region,

wherein at least one slot includes a throat region adjacent the upper surface, the throat region being generally narrower than the pocket region, whereby the spindle axis of at least one spindle may be closely fit through the throat region to rest within the pocket region;

- b. first and second spindles, each spindle having a spindle axle sized for removable insertion into the slots on one pair of opposing sidewalls, whereby the spindle axle may be rotatably mounted in the pocket region of that pair of sidewalls; and

- c. drive means for releasibly engaging and rotatably driving at least one spindle, the drive means being located on at least one sidewall adjacent the pocket region on that sidewall.

2. The tape winder of claim 1 further comprising:

- a. a roll of tape wrapped about each of the first and second spindles and extending between the first and second spindles, one of the first and second spindles defining a supply spindle and the other spindle defining a take-up spindle, wherein the take-up spindle takes up tape supplied from the supply spindle;

- b. tensioning means on the supply spindle for maintaining tension on the tape.

3. The tape winder of claim 1 in combination with at least one additional spindle having a spindle axle sized for removable insertion into the slots on one pair of opposing sidewalls, each additional spindle having a diameter which is differently sized than the first and second spindles.

4. The tape winder of claim 1 wherein at least one of the first and second spindles includes a corrugated region thereon, and further including a disk with a bore therein, the wall of the bore including locking means for releasibly engaging the corrugated region.

5. A tape winder comprising:

- a. a housing including two pairs of opposing sidewalls, each sidewall including an upper surface and a slot descending from the upper surface and terminating in a pocket region;

- b. first and second spindles, each spindle having a spindle axle sized for removable insertion into the slots on one pair of opposing sidewalls, whereby the spindle axle may be rotatably mounted in the pocket region of that pair of sidewalls; and

- c. a roll of tape wrapped about each of the first and second spindles and extending between the first and second spindles, one of the first and second spindles defining a supply spindle and the other spindle defining a take-up spindle, wherein the take-up spindle takes up tape supplied from the supply spindle;

- d. tensioning means on the supply spindle for maintaining tension on the tape;

- e. drive means for releasibly engaging and rotatably driving at least one spindle, the drive means being located on at least one sidewall adjacent the pocket region on that sidewall;

wherein the tensioning means comprises the drive means simultaneously driving both of the take-up and supply spindles, and wherein the supply spindle is driven with lesser torque than the take-up spindle.

6. The tape winder of claim 5 wherein the supply spindle is driven with negative torque.

7. A tape winder comprising:

- a. a housing including two pairs of opposing sidewalls, each sidewall including an upper surface and a slot descending from the upper surface and terminating in a pocket region;

- b. first and second spindles, each spindle having a spindle axle sized for removable insertion into the slots on one pair of opposing sidewalls, whereby the spindle axle may be rotatably mounted in the pocket region of that pair of sidewalls;