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(54) **REMOVABLE AND INTERCHANGEABLE SHOE TONGUE**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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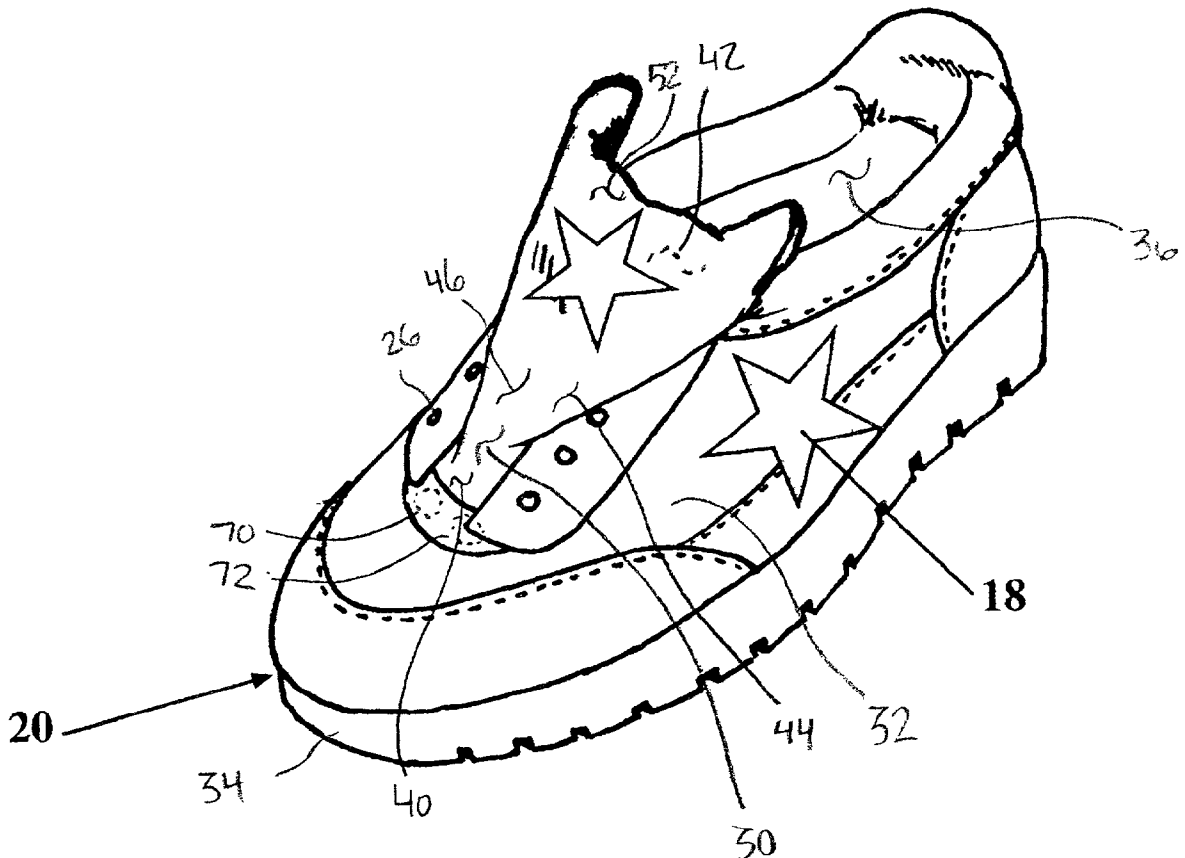
The present invention is a detachable tongue for a shoe. The shoe has an upper covering, disposed on a sole, which defines an instep opening and an ankle opening communicating therewith. The instep opening has a fore end and an aft end. The detachable tongue is an elongated strip of material having fore and aft ends which is disposed in the instep opening. The shoe with the detachable tongue includes means for removably fastening the strip to the upper covering at the instep opening. The fastening means includes fasteners such as a fabric fastener defining a hook and loop fastening system, one or more buttons, a snap system, a hook and eye system, a zipper, and a string system. In one embodiment the detachable tongue is removably disposed on the upper covering of the shoe at the fore end of the instep opening such that the fastener is hidden from view.

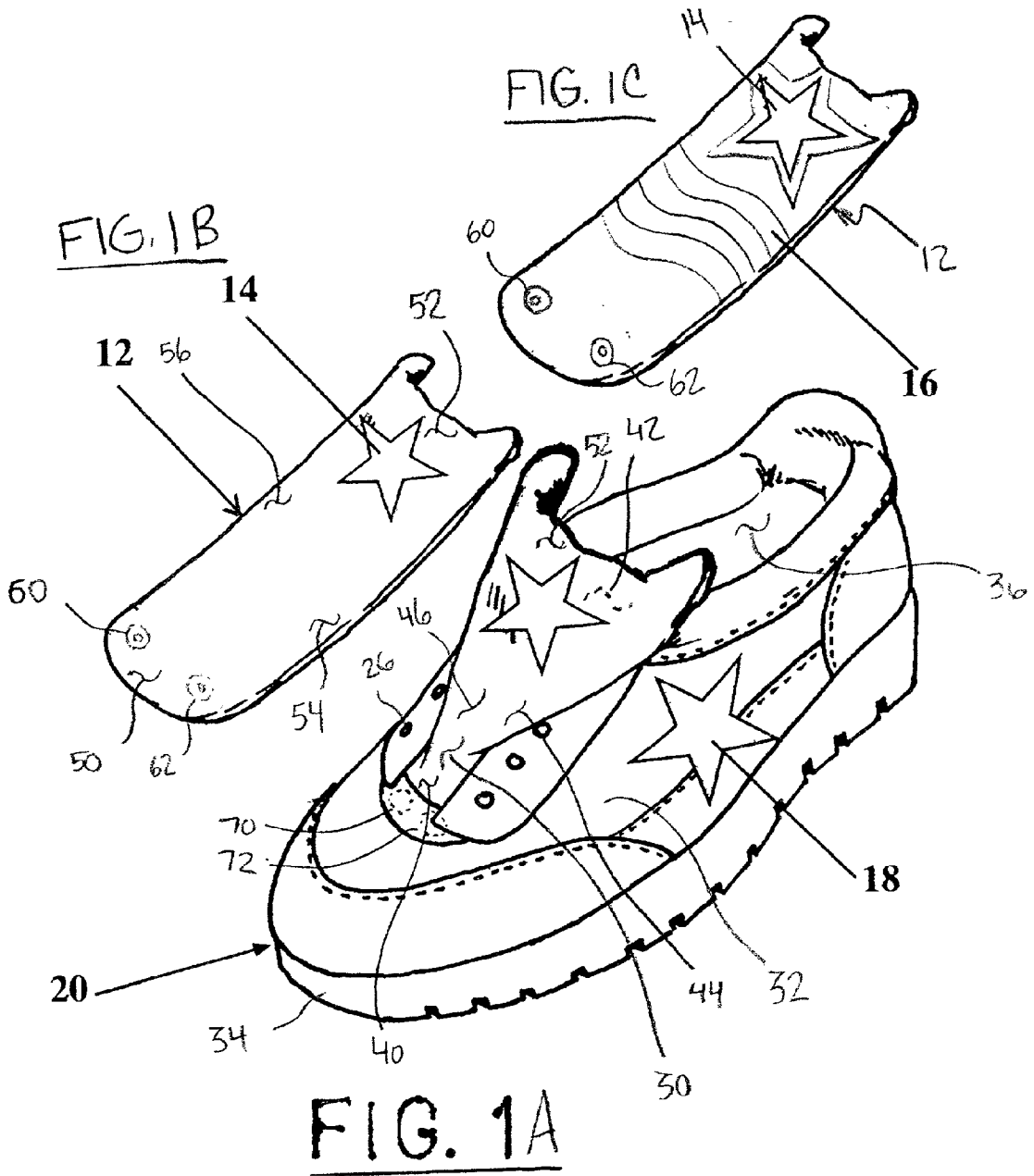
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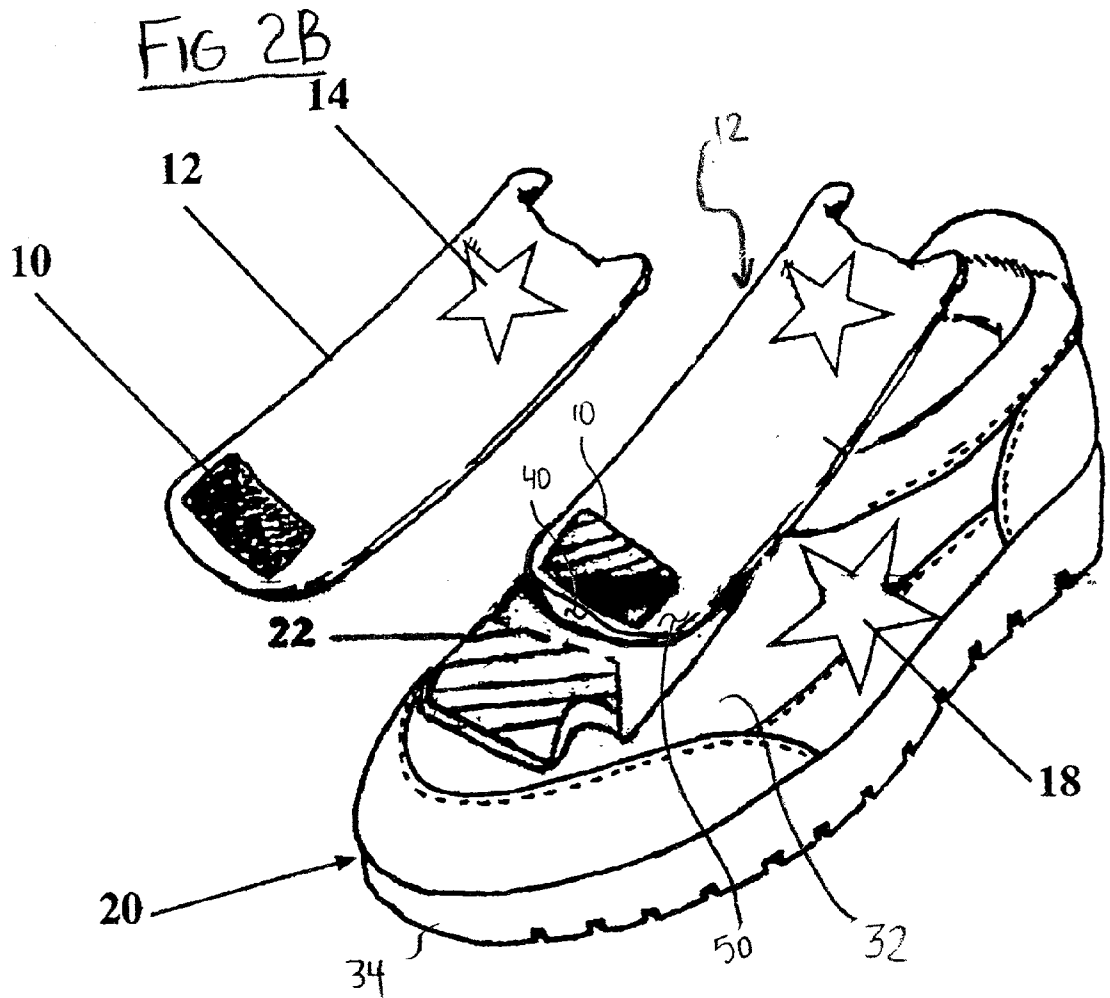
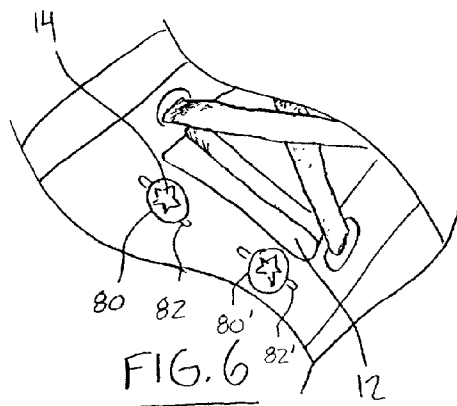
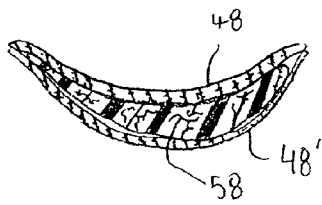
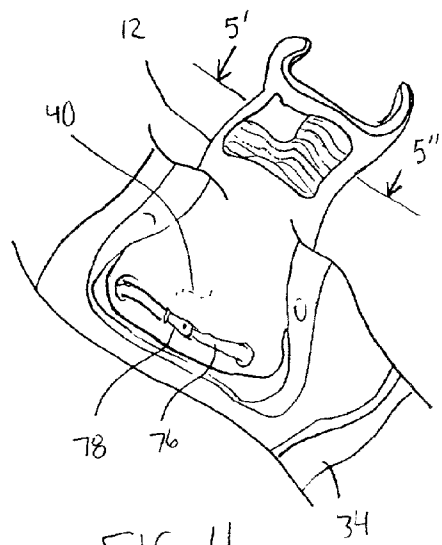
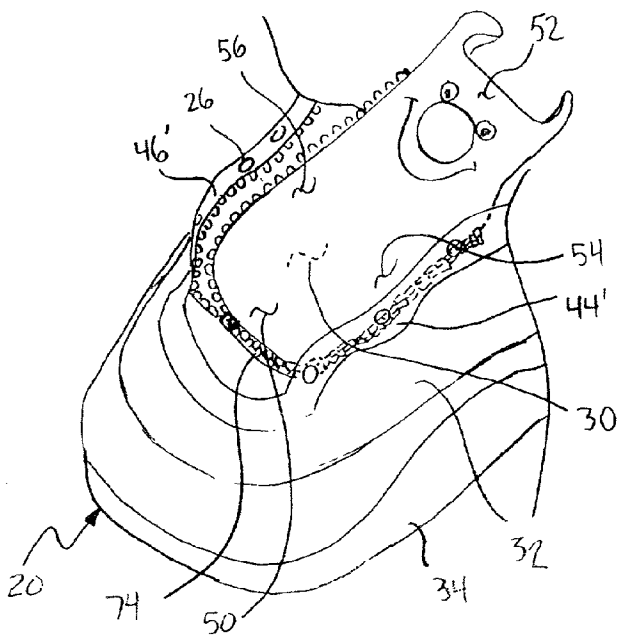
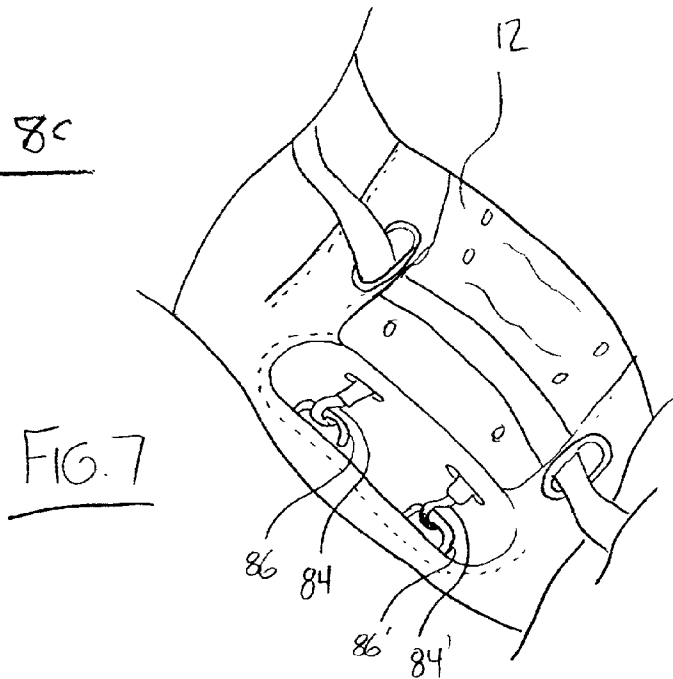
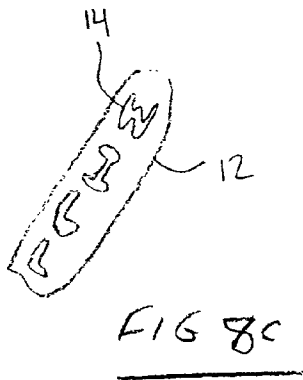
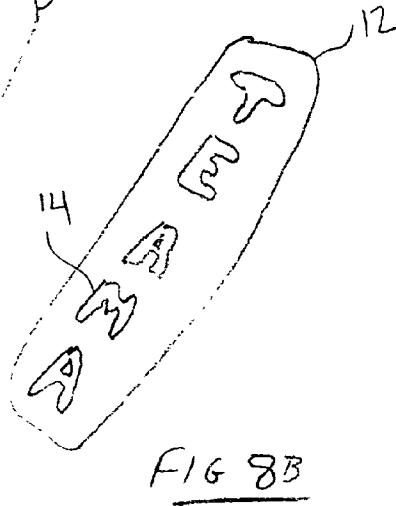
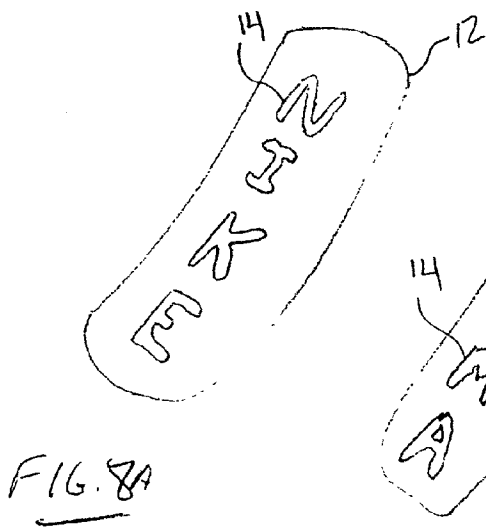


FIG. 2A





REMOVABLE AND INTERCHANGEABLE SHOE TONGUE

[0001] This is a regular patent application based upon provisional patent application Ser. No. 60/231,871 filed Sep. 12, 2000, now pending.

[0002] The present invention relates to a removable and interchangeable shoe tongue.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Most shoes are made with an opening having a tongue originating near the front of the shoe which allows a person to more easily insert a foot into the shoe. The shoe's tongue protects the foot from the elements and/or protects a person's instep from fastening means which may be present above the tongue. The shoe's tongue usually runs along the instep up to the point where the person's shin meets the foot at or about the ankle line. Shoes with tongues are constructed such that the tongue is permanently attached to the shoe, i.e. the tongue cannot be removed without causing damage or destroying the shoe.

[0004] There is a need for a shoe with a removable tongue. A removable tongue allows a person to change the aesthetic appearance of the shoe by exchanging one tongue for another. In addition, a removable tongue makes cleaning the shoe easier, as the areas of the shoe below the laces or other fastening means is often times the most difficult to access for cleaning and/or polishing.

OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

[0005] It is an object of the present invention to provide a shoe with a removable tongue.

[0006] It is a further object of the present invention to provide an interchangeable tongue for a shoe.

[0007] It is a further object of the present invention to provide a removable tongue such that the shoe tongue can be removed and reattached by a simple method.

[0008] It is another object of the present invention to provide an interchangeable tongue for a shoe with indicia such that the shoe can be customized for a particular purpose or event.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] The present invention is a detachable tongue for a shoe. The shoe has an upper covering, disposed on a sole, which defines an instep opening and an ankle opening communicating therewith. The instep opening has a fore end near the front of the shoe and an aft end adjacent the ankle opening. The openings permit insertion of a person's foot in the shoe such that the instep opening is adjacent the person's instep when the foot is in the shoe. The detachable tongue is an elongated strip of material having fore and aft ends which is disposed in the instep opening such that the fore and aft ends of the strip substantially align with the fore and aft ends of the instep opening, respectively. The shoe with the detachable tongue includes a fastener at the fore end of the strip to attach the tongue to the upper covering near the fore end of the instep opening. The fastener for the detachable tongue includes a fabric fastener defining a hook and loop fastening system, one or more buttons, a snap system, a hook and eye system, a zipper, and a string system. The fastener

can be hidden from view such as by locating it on an underside of the upper covering. The detachable tongue can include cushioning.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] Further objects and advantages of the present invention can be found in the detailed description of the preferred embodiments when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

[0011] **FIG. 1A** diagrammatically illustrates a shoe with a removable tongue;

[0012] **FIG. 1B** diagrammatically illustrates the removable tongue separate from the shoe;

[0013] **FIG. 1C** diagrammatically illustrates an interchangeable tongue;

[0014] **FIGS. 2A and 2B** diagrammatically illustrate a shoe with a removable tongue having a fabric fastener;

[0015] **FIG. 3** diagrammatically illustrates a partial view of a shoe with a removable tongue having a zipper fastener;

[0016] **FIG. 4** diagrammatically illustrates a partial view of a strap or string system fastener between the removable tongue and a shoe;

[0017] **FIG. 5** diagrammatically illustrates a cross-sectional view of the removable tongue;

[0018] **FIG. 6** illustrates a partial view of a button system fastener between the interchangeable tongue and the upper covering of the shoe;

[0019] **FIG. 7** illustrates a partial view of a hook and eye fastening system between the detachable tongue and the shoe; and

[0020] **FIGS. 8A, 8B and 8C** illustrate the detachable tongue with various indicia.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0021] The present invention relates to a detachable tongue for a shoe. The detachable tongue can be utilized on all types of shoes with an instep area accommodating a flexible material utilized for fastening and removing the shoes. For example, the detachable tongue can be used for dress shoes, deck shoes, tennis shoes, cleats, or other athletic shoes. The detachable tongue permits the wearer to customize the shoes by replacing one tongue for another. For example, the members of a sporting team could replace the tongues on their shoes to have their team insignia, logo or mascot displayed on the tongue of their shoes.

[0022] **FIG. 1A** diagrammatically illustrates a shoe **20** with a removable or detachable tongue **12**. The shoe **20** illustrated in **FIG. 1A** is a tennis shoe-style athletic shoe, commonly referred to as a sneaker. The shoe does not have a shoe string or lace threaded through its eyelets **26**. The tongue **12** protrudes upward through the instep opening **30** defined by the upper covering **32** of the shoe. The upper covering **32** refers to the entire upper portion of the shoe, which would include what is traditionally referred to as the shoe's vamp, tip, collar, quarter, foxing and mudguard. The upper covering **32** is attached to the sole **34** and defines an instep opening **30** and an ankle opening **36** communicating

therewith. The instep opening **30** has a fore end **40** near the front of the shoe, an aft end **42** adjacent the ankle opening **36**, and two opposing sides **44**, **46**. The instep opening **30** and ankle opening **36** are large enough to permit insertion of a person's foot in the shoe **20**. The shoe's tongue **12** is disposed within the instep opening **36** and typically covers a person's instep, that is, the upper surface of the arched middle portion of the foot in front of the ankle joint. Similar items are identified by similar reference numbers throughout the drawings.

[0023] The detachable tongue **12** is an elongated strip of material having fore and aft ends **50**, **52** which is disposed in the instep opening **36** such that the fore and aft ends of the strip **50**, **52** substantially align with the fore and aft ends of the instep opening **40**, **42**, respectively. The strip or detachable tongue **12** can be made of any material suitable for the particular type of shoe and known by those skilled in the art, such as leather, cloth, canvas, vinyl, or a combination thereof. In one embodiment, the detachable tongue **12** includes cushioning **58** (see FIG. 5) which can be a synthetic sponge material, for example, or similar material.

[0024] FIGS. 1B and 1C diagrammatically illustrate two interchangeable, detachable tongues **12**. Tongue **12** in FIG. 1B includes indicia **14** in the form of a star. Tongue **12** in FIG. 1C illustrates a star and stripes indicia **14**, **16**.

[0025] In one embodiment, the shoe **20** with the detachable tongue **12** includes one or more fasteners at the fore end of the strip to attach the tongue to the upper covering **32** near the fore end **40** of the instep opening **30**. FIGS. 1A, 1B and 1C illustrate the use of a snap system to removably fasten the tongue **12** to the upper covering **32**. In FIGS. 1B and 1C, two snaps **60**, **62** are disposed on the fore end **50** of strip **12**. The snaps **60**, **62** correspond to the snap counterparts **70**, **72** (shown in dashed circles) located on the underside or beneath the upper covering **32** at the fore end **40** of the instep opening **30**. This embodiment allows the fastening means to be hidden from view.

[0026] FIGS. 2A and 2B diagrammatically illustrate another embodiment of the shoe **20** and detachable tongue **12** in which the fastening means between the interchangeable tongue **12** and upper covering **32** is a fabric fastener **22**. The fabric fastener **22** defines a hook and loop fastening system in which a strip of fabric having small hooks is affixed to one surface and another strip of fabric having miniature loops is affixed to the other surface, such that a mechanical bond is formed when the two strips come in contact with each other. In FIG. 2A, one part of the fabric fastener system **22** is attached to the underside of the upper covering **32** at the fore end **40** of the instep opening and the other part of the fabric fastener **10** is attached to the fore end **50** of the detachable tongue **12**.

[0027] FIG. 3 diagrammatically illustrates a partial view of another embodiment of the fastening system between the shoe **20** and a corresponding detachable tongue **12**. The tongue **12** in FIG. 3 is attached or fastened to the shoe **20** by a zipper system **74** in which the fore end **50** of the strip and the two opposing sides **54**, **56** are connected to the instep opening **30**. A portion of the aft end **52** of the strip is not attached. The zipper system **74** can also be utilized to connect only a portion of the tongue **12** to the upper covering **32**. For example, the zipper **74** can be used to connect only the fore end **50** of the tongue **12** to the upper covering **32** at

the fore end **40** of the instep opening **30**. Likewise, two zipper systems can be utilized to fasten the tongue **12** to either of the upper covering opposing sides **44'**, **46'**.

[0028] FIG. 4 diagrammatically illustrates a partial view of another embodiment of the fastener between the detachable tongue **12** and shoe **20**. In FIG. 4, a string or lace system is utilized in which the detachable tongue **12** is laced to the fore end of the upper covering **32**. The laces **76** are held taut or fastened through the use of a buckle **78**. The strings or laces **76** can also be tied together as regular shoe laces are traditionally tied.

[0029] FIG. 6 diagrammatically illustrates a partial view of a button fastening system. In FIG. 6, buttons **80**, **80'** are attached to the tongue **12**. The buttons substantially align with button slits **82**, **82'**, respectively. Besides fastening the tongue **12** to the upper covering **32** of the shoe, the buttons also serve to change the appearance of the shoe through the indicia **14** marking the surface of the button.

[0030] FIG. 7 diagrammatically illustrates a partial view of one embodiment of a hook and eye fastening system. The detachable tongue **12** includes small hooks **84**, **84'** which latch on to small eyelets or loops **86**, **86'** attached to the shoe's upper covering.

[0031] There are numerous fasteners that can be utilized to securely attach the tongue **12** to the upper covering **32** of the shoe **20** commonly known by those skilled in the art. For example, the previously described hook and eye system could be used throughout the tongue. Also, the fabric hook and loop system described earlier can be used in conjunction with small straps. The fasteners included in the drawings are merely exemplary, and not intended to limit the scope of the present invention.

[0032] FIG. 5 diagrammatically illustrates a cross-sectional view of the detachable tongue **12** from the perspective of reference line 5'5" in FIG. 4. The detachable tongue in FIG. 5 is constructed with three layers. The outer layers **48**, **48'** are made on leather or similar material commonly used to construct shoes. The inner layer **58** is made of a cushioning material, such as a synthetic sponge material to add comfort.

[0033] The detachable tongue **12** allows the wearer to interchange one tongue for another to change the look, and sometimes the style of the shoe. For example, the shoe **20** and interchangeable, detachable tongues **12** depicted in FIGS. 1A, 1B and 1C have indicia **14**, **16**, **18**. The shoe **20** includes a star **18** on the side of the upper covering **32**. The tongue **12** in FIG. 1B includes a star **14** at the aft end **52** of the strip. The interchangeable tongue **12** in FIG. 1C includes a double-star **14** and stripes **16**. By taking out one tongue and replacing it with another with different indicia, the shoe can be customized. The wearer or owner of the shoe could attach a tongue with the wearer's indicia, for example, the wearer's initials or name. See indicia **14** in FIG. 8C. Several members of a team could change the tongues of their shoes to include indicia bearing the team's letters, colors, mascot, etc. See indicia **14** in FIG. 8B. Children's shoes could include several tongues bearing favorite cartoon characters. The tongue can also include trademark indicia or be used to advertise a particular brand as illustrated in FIG. 8A.

[0034] The claims appended hereto are meant to cover modifications and changes within the scope and spirit of the present invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A detachable tongue for a shoe, said shoe having an upper covering disposed on a sole, said upper covering defining an instep opening and an ankle opening communicating therewith, said instep opening having a fore end and an aft end, said detachable tongue comprising:

an elongated strip of material having fore and aft ends adapted to be disposed in said instep opening; and

means for removably fastening said fore end of said strip to said upper covering near said fore end of said instep opening.

2. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 1 wherein said fastening means is disposed at the strip fore end.

3. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 1 wherein said fastening means is a fastener from the group of a fabric fastener defining a hook and loop fastening system, one or more buttons, a snap system, a hook and eye system, a zipper, and a string system.

4. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 1 wherein said fastening means is disposed at the strip fore end and beneath said upper covering such that said fastening means is hidden from view.

5. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 1 wherein said elongated strip of material includes cushioning.

6. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 1 wherein said fastening means permits said strip to be removed.

7. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 1 wherein said strip is one of a plurality of strips adapted to be interchanged.

8. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 1 wherein said strip bears indicia including indicia from the group of advertising indicia, wearer indicia, team member indicia, and trademark indicia.

9. A shoe, comprising:

a sole;

an upper covering disposed on said sole, said upper covering defining an instep opening and an ankle opening communicating therewith, said instep opening having a fore end and an aft end;

a detachable tongue having fore and aft ends, said tongue removably disposed in said instep opening; and

means for removably fastening said fore end of said tongue with said upper covering near said fore end of said instep opening.

10. A shoe as claimed in claim 9 wherein said fastening means are disposed at the tongue fore end and the instep opening fore end.

11. A shoe as claimed in claim 9 wherein said fastening means is a fastener from the group of a fabric fastener defining a hook and loop fastening system, one or more buttons, a snap system, a hook and eye system, a zipper, and a string system.

12. A shoe as claimed in claim 9 wherein said fastening means are disposed at the tongue fore end and on an underside of said upper covering.

13. A shoe as claimed in claim 9 wherein said tongue includes cushioning.

14. A shoe as claimed in claim 9 wherein said fastening means permits said tongue to be removed.

15. A shoe as claimed in claim 9 wherein said tongue is one of a plurality of tongues adapted to be interchanged.

16. A shoe as claimed in claim 9 wherein said tongue bears indicia including indicia from the group of advertising indicia, wearer indicia, team member indicia, and trademark indicia.

17. A detachable tongue for a shoe, said shoe having an upper covering disposed on a sole, said upper covering defining an instep opening and an ankle opening communicating therewith, said instep opening having a fore end, an aft end, and side walls, said detachable tongue comprising:

an elongated strip of material having a fore end, an aft end, and opposing side walls, said strip adapted to be disposed in said instep opening; and

one or more fasteners disposed on said strip at one or more locations from the group consisting of a fore end location and opposing side wall locations, for removably fastening said said strip to said upper covering.

18. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 17 wherein said one or more fasteners is disposed at the strip fore end.

19. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 17 wherein said one or more fasteners is disposed at the strip fore end and one of the strip side walls.

20. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 17 wherein said one or more fasteners is disposed at the strip fore end and both of the opposing side walls.

21. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 17 wherein said one or more fasteners is disposed at both of the opposing side walls.

22. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 17 wherein said one or more fasteners is a fastener from the group of a fabric fastener defining a hook and loop fastening system, one or more buttons, a snap system, a hook and eye system, a zipper, and a string system.

23. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 17 wherein said one or more fasteners is disposed on the strip and beneath said upper covering such that said one or more fasteners is hidden from view.

24. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 17 wherein said elongated strip of material includes cushioning.

25. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 17 wherein said strip is one of a plurality of strips adapted to be interchanged.

26. A detachable tongue as claimed in claim 17 wherein said strip bears indicia including indicia from the group of advertising indicia, wearer indicia, team member indicia, and trademark indicia.

27. A shoe, comprising:

a sole;

an upper covering disposed on said sole, said upper covering defining an instep opening and an ankle opening communicating therewith, said instep opening having a fore end, an aft end and opposing side walls;

a detachable tongue having a fore end, an aft end, and opposing side walls, said tongue removably disposed in said instep opening; and

one or more fasteners disposed on said tongue at one or more locations from the group consisting of a fore end location and opposing side wall locations.

28. A shoe as claimed in claim 27 wherein said one or more fasteners is a fastener from the group of a fabric

fastener defining a hook and loop fastening system, one or more buttons, a snap system, a hook and eye system, a zipper, and a string system.

29. A shoe as claimed in claim 27 wherein said one or more fasteners is disposed on said tongue and on an underside of said upper covering.

30. A shoe as claimed in claim 27 wherein said tongue includes cushioning.

31. A shoe as claimed in claim 27 wherein said tongue is one of a plurality of tongues adapted to be interchanged.

32. A shoe as claimed in claim 27 wherein said tongue bears indicia including indicia from the group of advertising indicia, wearer indicia, team member indicia, and trademark indicia.

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