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(54) **ALIGNMENT DEVICE AND METHOD FOR ALIGNING GUIDE RAILS FOR A WOODWORKING TOOL**

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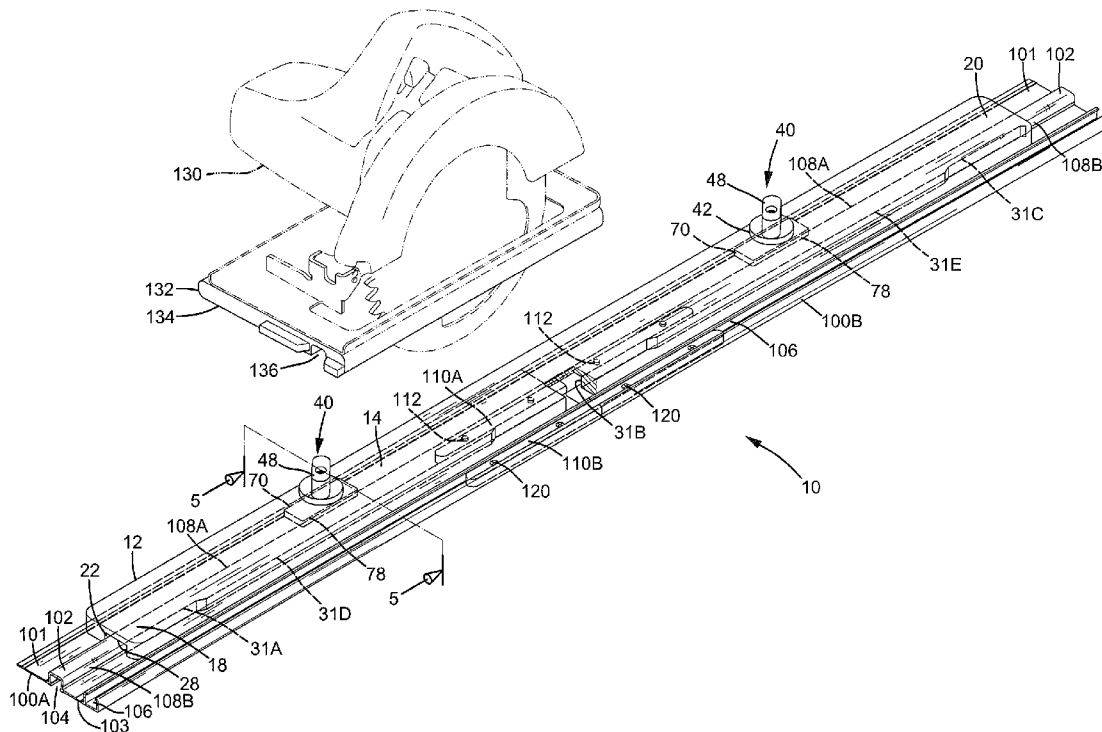
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

An alignment utensil includes two guide rails (100A, 100B), an alignment device (10) aligning the guide rails (100A, 100B), and connectors (110A, 110B, 120) fixing the aligned guide rails (100A, 100B) together. The alignment device (10) includes a body (12) having a lateral surface (31) extending across abutting ends of the guide rails (100A, 100B). Each of two clamping pads (70) mounted on the body (12) is moved to press against a first lateral wall (108A) of one of the guide rails (100A, 100B) to abut a second lateral wall (108B) of each guide rail (100A, 100B) against the first lateral surface (31), aligning the first lateral walls (108A) of the guide rails (100A, 100B) and aligning the second lateral walls (108B) of the guide rails (100A, 100B). A method of aligning the guide rails (100A, 100B) uses the alignment device (10) and the connectors (110A, 110B, 120).



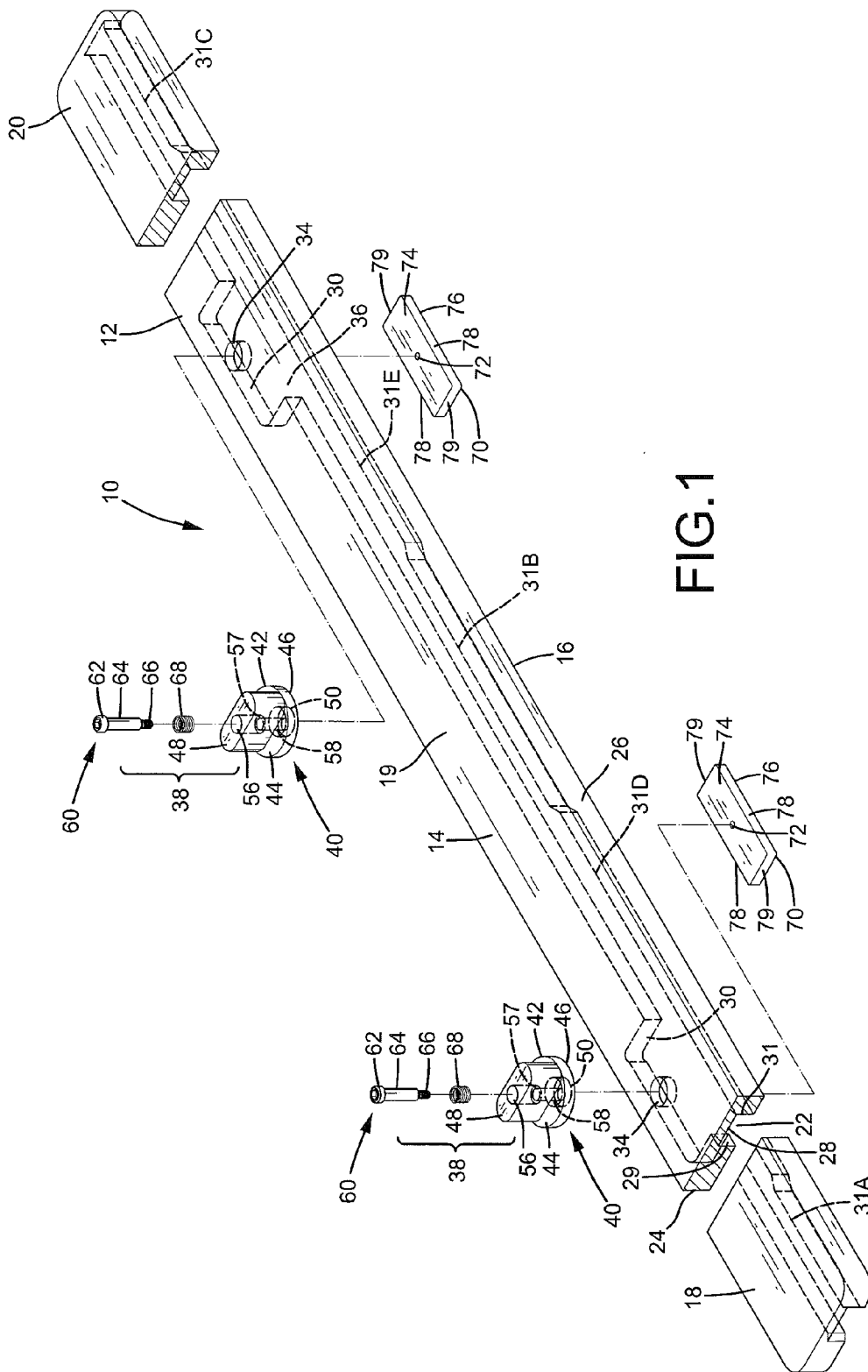


FIG. 1

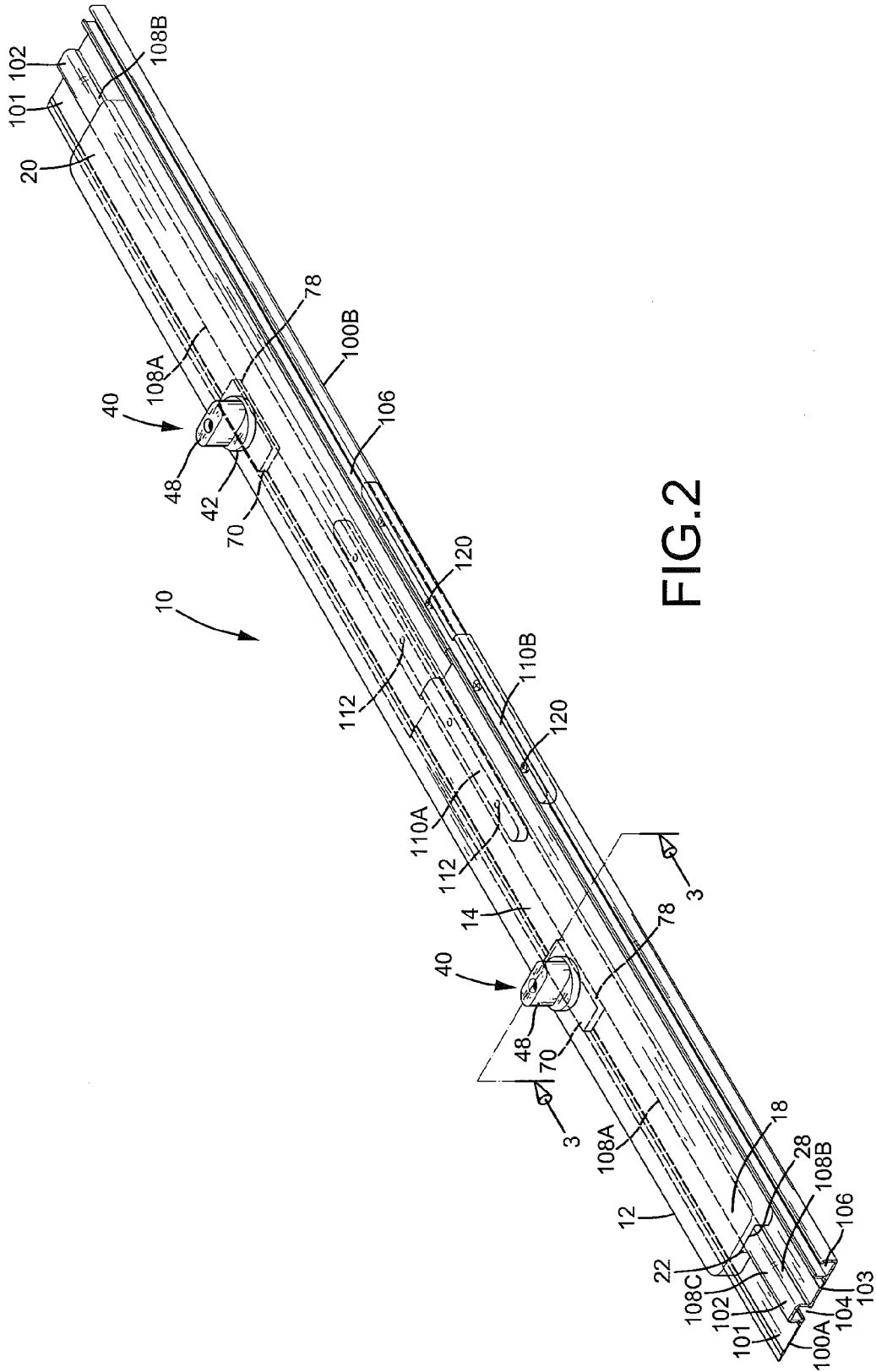


FIG. 2

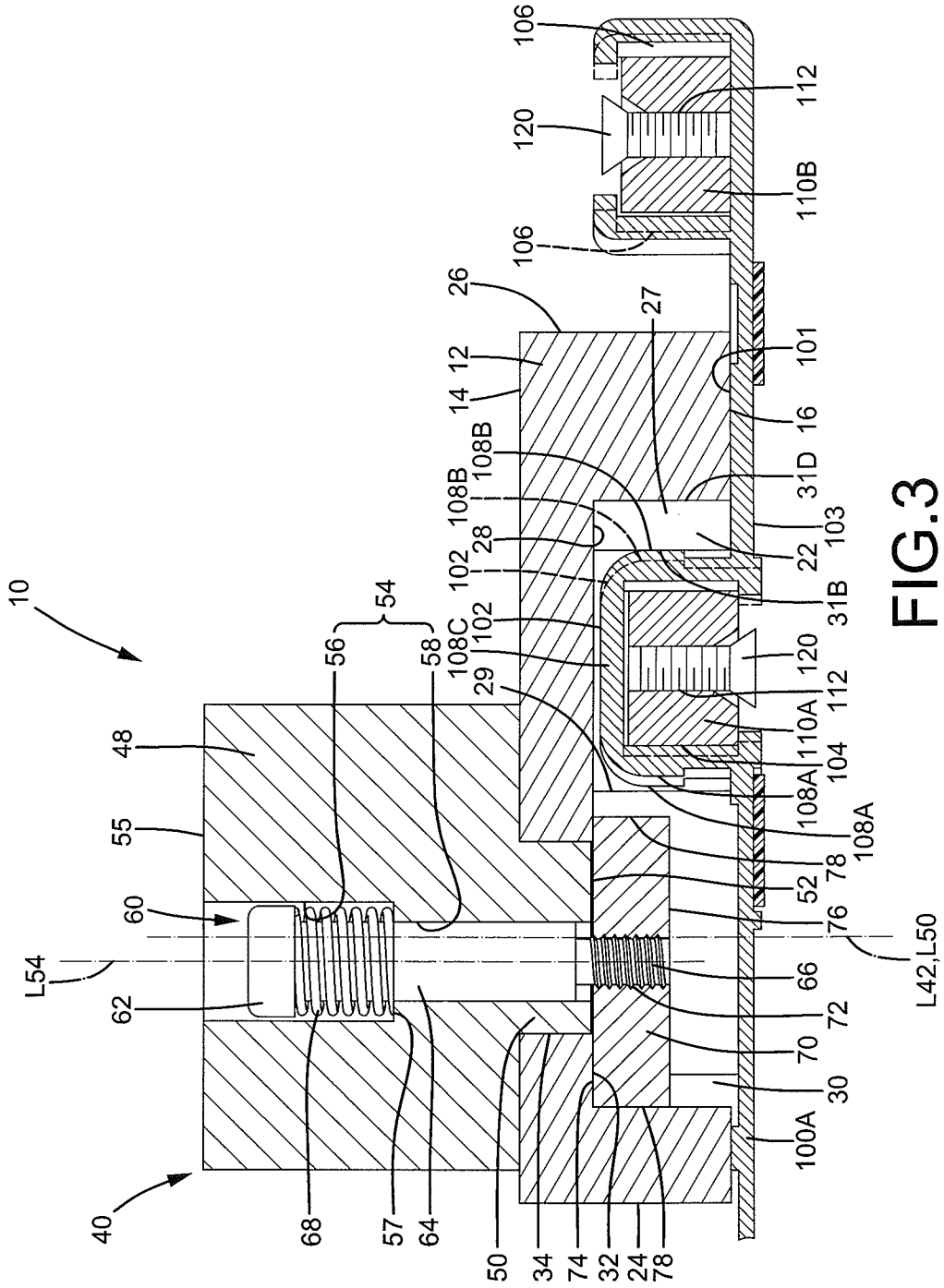


FIG. 3

L42,L50

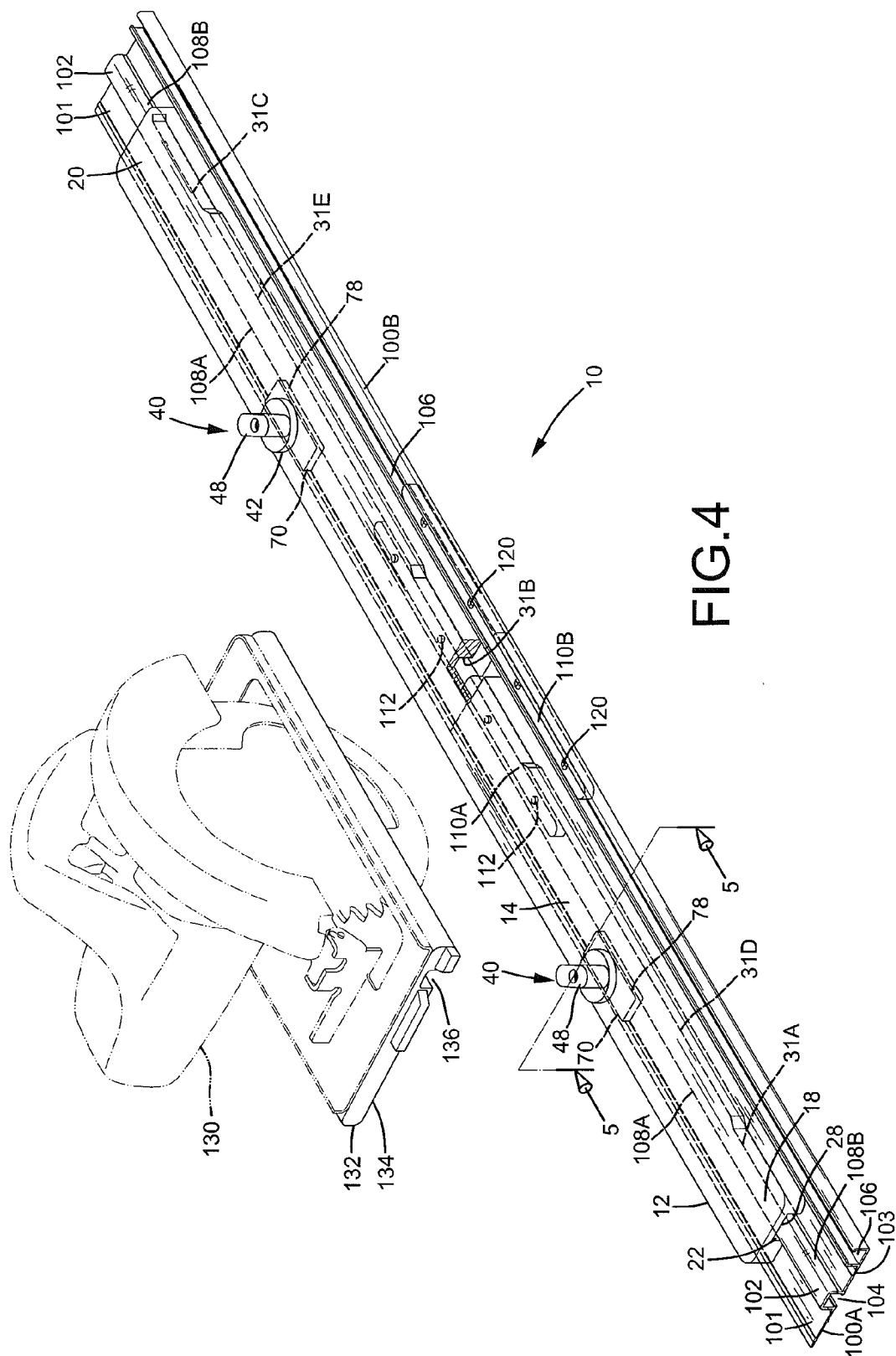


FIG. 4

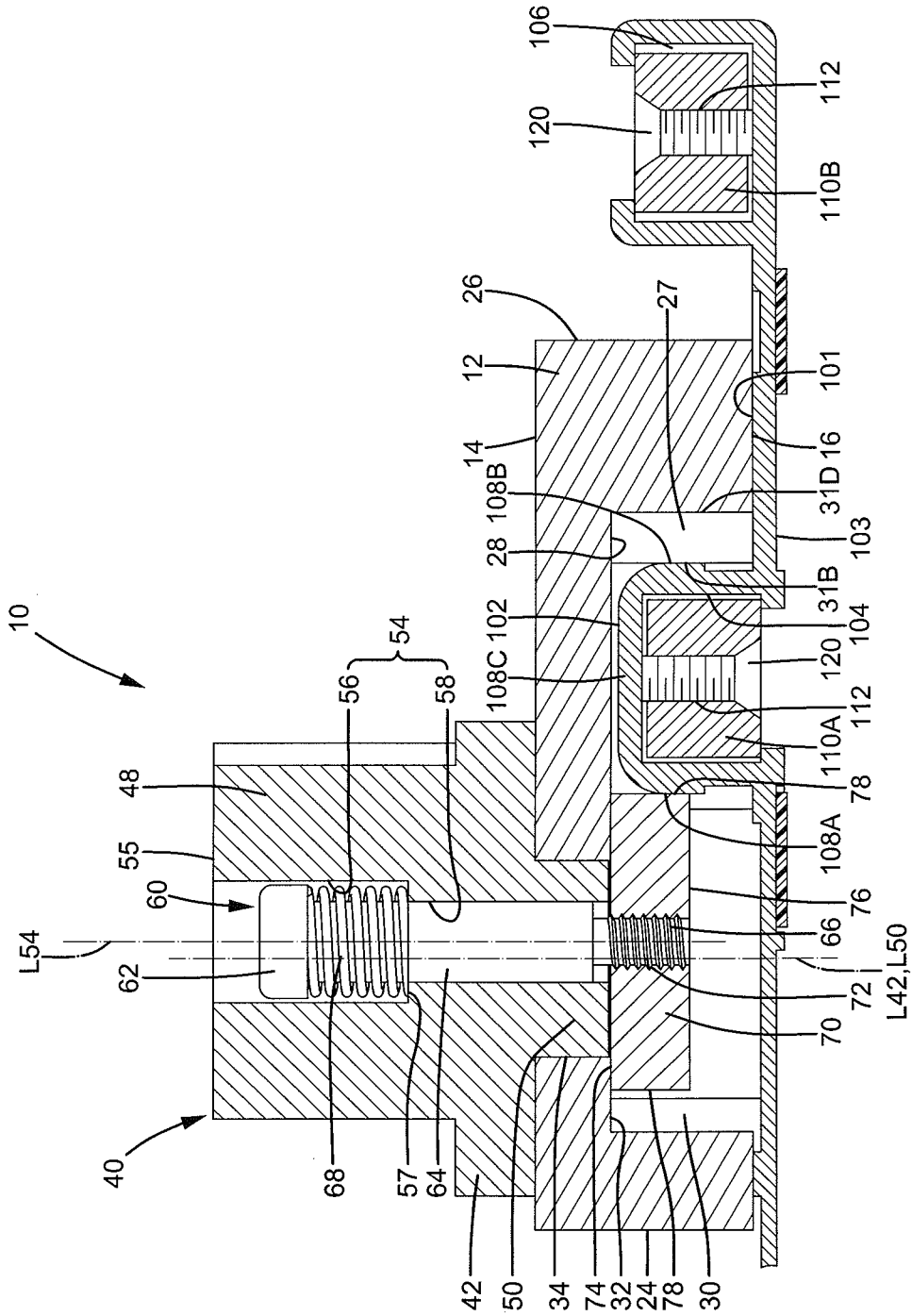


FIG. 5

**ALIGNMENT DEVICE AND METHOD FOR  
ALIGNING GUIDE RAILS FOR A  
WOODWORKING TOOL**

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED  
APPLICATIONS

**[0001]** This application is related to and claims benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/615,470 filed Mar. 26, 2012.

BACKGROUND

**[0002]** A woodworking utensil including two guide rails and an alignment device for a woodworking tool are shown. A method using the alignment device to align the guide rails is also disclosed.

**[0003]** Guide rails are used to guide woodworking tools, such as circular saws, routers, jigsaws, and the like, in a straight line, allowing increased accuracy and ease of use of the woodworking tools. The guide rails are generally constructed of aluminum and include a substantially flat bottom surface that rests on the workpiece in use and include one or more tool base guiding tracks on a top surface to engage with one or more channels in a base of the woodworking tool being guided. The tool base guiding tracks have provisions to accept accessories, such as clamps, stops, and connectors. In a case that the workpiece is longer than the length of a single guide rail, two or more guide rails have to be connected end-to-end. Although connectors for securing the guide rails together are available, the connectors can not insure that the guide rails are connected in a straight line. In use, it is difficult to connect guide rails together in a straight line.

**[0004]** Thus, a need exists for a novel alignment device for insuring alignment of two guide rails connected end-to-end and for a novel method for reliably aligning the guide rails.

BRIEF SUMMARY

**[0005]** These needs and other problems in the field of reliable alignment of two guide rails for a woodworking tool are solved by providing, in a first aspect, a woodworking utensil including two guide rails each having a tool base guiding track with first and second lateral walls. The tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails are adapted to be slideably received in a channel of a base of a woodworking tool. An alignment device is provided for aligning the guide rails abutting end-to-end in a straight line. The alignment device includes a body including a first lateral surface extending in a length direction. The body slideably rests on the guide rails abutting end-to-end, with the first lateral surface extending across the abutting ends of the guide rails, and with the second lateral wall of each guide rail located between the first lateral wall of each guide rail and the first lateral surface of the body in a width direction perpendicular to the length direction. The alignment device further includes two clamping pads mounted on the body and spaced from each other in the length direction and on opposite sides of the abutting ends of the guide rails. Each clamping pad is moveable between a clamping position and a non-clamping position, with the clamping position having a spacing to the first lateral surface in the width direction smaller than the non-clamping position. The guide rails in the straight line are fixed together by a plurality of connectors.

**[0006]** In a second aspect, an alignment device for woodworking tool guide rails includes a body having a first lateral

surface extending in a length direction. The body is adapted to be slideably rested on two guide rails abutting end-to-end. Each guide rail includes a tool base guiding track having first and second lateral walls. The first lateral surface of the body is adapted to extend across abutting ends of the guide rails. The second lateral wall of each guide rail is located between the first lateral wall of each guide rail and the first lateral surface of the body in a width direction perpendicular to the length direction. Two clamping pads are mounted on the body and spaced from each other in the length direction. The clamping pads are adapted to be located on opposite sides of the abutting ends of the guide rails. Each clamping pad is moveable between a clamping position and a non-clamping position, with the clamping position having a spacing to the first lateral surface in the width direction smaller than the non-clamping position.

**[0007]** In either of the first and second aspects, each clamping pad presses against the first lateral wall of one of the guide rails to abut the second lateral wall of each guide rail against the first lateral surface of the body when the clamping pads are in the clamping position. Thus, the first lateral walls of the guide rails are aligned with each other, and the second lateral walls of the guide rails are aligned with each other.

**[0008]** In a form shown, a longitudinal groove extends from a bottom face towards but spaced from the top face of the body and includes the first lateral surface and a second lateral surface parallel to the first lateral surface and spaced from the first lateral surface in the width direction. The top and bottom faces of the body are spaced from each other in a height direction perpendicular to the length and width directions and extend perpendicularly to the first and second lateral surfaces. The tool base guiding tracks of the guide rails are slideably received in a space between the first and second lateral walls. The body is slideable relative to the tool base guiding tracks in the length direction when the clamping pads are in the non-clamping position.

**[0009]** In the form shown, a first side of each clamping pad is located between a second side of each clamping pad and the tool base guiding tracks of the guide rails in the width direction. Two recesses are defined in the bottom face of the body and spaced from each other in the length direction. Each recess has an opening in communication with the longitudinal groove and a bottom wall spaced from the top face of the body in the height direction. A through-hole extends from the bottom wall of each recess through the top face of the body.

**[0010]** In the form shown, the alignment device further includes two knobs rotatably mounted on the top face of the body. Each knob includes a disc having upper and lower faces spaced from each other in a longitudinal axis of the disc. A stub is formed on the lower face of each knob and has a longitudinal axis coaxial to the longitudinal axis of the disc. The stub of each knob is rotatably received in one of the through-holes of the body. A handle is formed on the upper face of the disc of each knob. An eccentric through-hole extends from a top of the handle through a bottom of the stub of each knob and has a longitudinal axis radially offset from the longitudinal axis of the stub. A bolt is received in the eccentric through-hole of each knob and holds the knob and one of the clamping pads together. A spring mounted around each bolt biases the corresponding knob and the corresponding clamping pad toward each other. Rotation of the knobs causes movement of the clamping pads in the width direction between the clamping position and the non-clamping position. The first sides of the clamping pads are spaced from the

tool base guiding tracks of the guide rails in the width direction when the first clamping pads are in the non-clamping position, and the body is slideable relative to the tool base guiding tracks of the guide rails in the length direction. The first sides of the clamping pads press against the first lateral walls of the guide rails to abut the second lateral walls of the guide rails against the first lateral surface of the longitudinal groove when the clamping pads are in the clamping position.

[0011] In the form shown, the body further includes first and second ends spaced from each other in the length direction, with the longitudinal groove extending from the first end through the second end of the body. The first lateral surface includes first, second, and third sections respectively at the first end, an intermediate portion between the first and second ends, and the second end of the body. The first lateral surface further includes a first recessed portion between the first and second sections and a second recessed portion between the second and third sections. The first and second recesses respectively face the recessed portions of the first lateral surface. The first and second recessed portions are adapted to receive dust in the longitudinal groove or on the tool base guiding tracks of the guide rails.

[0012] The first side of each clamping pad can be coated with a layer of plastic material to provide friction when engaged with the tool guiding tracks of the guide rails.

[0013] In a third aspect, a method for aligning guide rails for a woodworking tool includes abutting an end of a guide rail with an end of another guide rail. Each guide rail includes first and second lateral walls. An alignment device is placed on the abutting guide rails. The alignment device includes a body having a lateral surface extending in a length direction across the ends of the guide rails. The second lateral wall of each guide rail is located between the first lateral wall of each guide rail and the lateral surface of the body in a width direction perpendicular to the length direction. The alignment device further includes two clamping pads mounted on the body and spaced from each other in the length direction and on opposite sides of the abutting ends of the guide rails. The clamping pads of the placed alignment device are moved in the width direction to respectively press against the first lateral walls of the guide rails to abut the second lateral walls of the guide rails against the lateral surface of the body. Thus, the first lateral walls of the guide rails are aligned with each other, and the second lateral walls of the guide rails are aligned with each other. The aligned guide rails are fixed together. The clamping pads are moved away from the guide rails fixed together, with the guide rails fixed together remaining aligned with each other. The alignment device is then removed from the guide rails after the clamping pads are moved away.

[0014] Illustrative embodiments will become clearer in light of the following detailed description described in connection with the drawings.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] The illustrative embodiments may best be described by reference to the accompanying drawings where:

[0016] FIG. 1 shows an exploded, perspective view of an alignment device for guide rails, with portions of the alignment device cut away to show detailed structure.

[0017] FIG. 2 shows a perspective view of the alignment device of FIG. 1 and two guide rails on which the alignment device is mounted.

[0018] FIG. 3 shows a cross sectional view of the alignment device and the guide rails of FIG. 2 according to section line 3-3 of FIG. 2, with the guide rails not in a straight line.

[0019] FIG. 4 shows a perspective view similar to FIG. 2, with two knobs rotated to a clamping position to align the guide rails, and with a woodworking tool adapted to be engaged with the guide rails after the alignment device is removed.

[0020] FIG. 5 shows a cross sectional view of the alignment device and the guide rails of FIG. 4 according to section line 5-5 of FIG. 4.

[0021] All figures are drawn for ease of explanation of the basic teachings only; the extensions of the figures with respect to number, position, relationship, and dimensions of the parts to form the illustrative embodiments will be explained or will be within the skill of the art after the following teachings have been read and understood. Further, the exact dimensions and dimensional proportions to conform to specific force, weight, strength, and similar requirements will likewise be within the skill of the art after the following teachings have been read and understood.

[0022] Where used in the various figures of the drawings, the same numerals designate the same or similar parts. Furthermore, when the terms “first”, “second”, “lower”, “upper”, “top”, “bottom”, “end”, “portion”, “section”, “spacing”, “longitudinal”, “radially”, “upward”, “length”, “width”, “height”, and similar terms are used herein, it should be understood that these terms have reference only to the structure shown in the drawings as it would appear to a person viewing the drawings and are utilized only to facilitate describing the illustrative embodiments.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0023] An alignment device for guide rails for a woodworking tool 130 is shown in the drawings and generally designated 10. Woodworking tool 130 includes a base 132 with provisions for engaging with a guide rail 100A, 100B for the purposes of increasing accuracy and ease of use. Two or more guide rails 100A, 100B are required when the workpiece is longer than the length of a single guide rail 100A, 100B. Alignment device 10 is used to insure that two guide rails 100A, 100B are connected in a straight line. Although woodworking tool 130 is a circular saw in the form shown, other woodworking tools, such as routers, jigsaws, and the like, can be used with guide rails 100A, 100B.

[0024] According to the form shown, alignment device 10 includes a body 12 including a top face 14 and a bottom face 16 spaced from top face 14 in a height direction. Body 12 further includes a first end 18 and a second end 20 spaced from first end 18 in a length direction perpendicular to the height direction. Body 12 further includes a first side 24 and a second side 26 spaced from first side 24 in a width direction perpendicular to the length and height directions. A longitudinal groove 22 extends from first end 18 through second end 20 and extends from bottom face 16 towards but spaced from top face 14. Longitudinal groove 22 includes substantially U-shaped cross sections. Specifically, longitudinal groove 22 includes parallel, first and second lateral surfaces 31 and 29 spaced in the width direction and defining a space 27 therebetween. Longitudinal groove 22 further includes a bottom surface 28 extending perpendicularly to and between first and second lateral surfaces 31 and 29. First lateral surface 31 includes first section 31A at first end 18, a second section 31B at an intermediate portion 19 of body 12 between first and



second ends **18** and **20**, and a third section **31C** at second end **20**. First, second, and third sections **31A**, **31B**, and **31C** are spaced from and aligned with each other in the length direction. A first recessed portion **31D** is defined between first and second sections **31A** and **31B**. A second recessed portion **31E** is defined between second and third sections **31B** and **31C**. Each of first and second recessed portions **31D** and **31E** has a spacing to second lateral surface **29** in the width direction larger than each of first, second, and third sections **31A**, **31B**, and **31C**. Bottom surface **28** is located between top and bottom faces **14** and **16** in the height direction. Two recesses **30** are defined in bottom face **16** and spaced from each other in the length direction. Recesses **30** face first and second recessed portions **31D** and **31E**, respectively. Each recess **30** has an opening **36** in communication with longitudinal groove **22** and a bottom wall **32** spaced from top face **14** in the height direction. Bottom wall **32** of each recess **30** is at the same level as bottom surface **28** in the form shown. A through-hole **34** extends from bottom wall **32** of each recess **30** through top face **14** of body **12**.

[0025] In the form shown, alignment device **10** further includes two sets of knob assemblies **38** each including a knob **40**, a bolt **60**, a spring **68**, and a clamping pad **70**. Knob **40** includes a disc **42** having circular cross sections perpendicular to a longitudinal axis **L42** of disc **42**. Disc **42** includes upper and lower faces **44** and **46** spaced from each other along longitudinal axis **L42** of the disc **42**. A stub **50** is formed on lower face **46** of disc **42**. Stub **50** is substantially cylindrical and includes a bottom **52** having a spacing to upper face **44** larger than to lower face **46**. Stub **50** has a longitudinal axis **L50** coaxial to longitudinal axis **L42** of disc **42**. Stub **50** is rotatably received in one of through-holes **34** of body **12**. A handle **48** is formed on upper face **44** and has a shape suitable for manual operation. An eccentric through-hole **54** extends from a top **55** of handle **48** through bottom **52** of stub **50**. Eccentric through-hole **54** includes a larger section **56** having an upper end in top **55** of handle **48** and a smaller section **58** having an upper end connected to a lower end of larger section **56** and a lower end in bottom **52** of stub **50**, forming a shoulder **57** between larger and smaller sections **56** and **58**. Eccentric through-hole **54** has a longitudinal axis **L54** radially offset from longitudinal axis **L50** of stub **50** coaxial to longitudinal axis **L42** of disc **42**. Bolt **60** includes a shank **64**, a head **62** on an end of shank **64**, and a threaded section **66** on the other end of shank **64**. Bolt **60** is received in eccentric through-hole **54**, with head **62** received in larger section **56**, with threaded section **66** located outside of eccentric through-hole **54**, and with spring **68** located between head **62** and shoulder **57**. Bolt **60** is a shoulder bolt in the form shown. However, bolt **60** of other types and shapes can be used.

[0026] In the form shown, each clamping pad **70** is a parallelepiped made of metal in the form shown and includes a top **74** and a bottom **76** opposite to top **74**. Each clamping pad **70** further includes first and second sides **78** extending perpendicularly to and between top and bottom **74** and **76**. Each clamping pad **70** further includes two ends **79** extending perpendicularly to and between top and bottom **74** and **76** and extending perpendicularly to and between first and second sides **78**. A length between ends **79** of each clamping pad **70** is smaller than a length of each recess **30** of body **12** in the length direction. A width between first and second sides **78** of each clamping pad **70** is smaller than a width of each recess **30** of body **12** in the width direction. A screw hole **72** extends from top **74** through bottom **76**. Screw hole **72** has an equal

spacing to first and second sides **78** and has an equal spacing to ends **79**. Each clamping pad **70** is received in one of recesses **30**, with threaded section **66** of bolt **60** engaged with screw hole **72**. Thus, each bolt **60** holds a corresponding clamping pad **70** and a corresponding knob **40** together, and each spring **68** biases the corresponding knob **40** and the corresponding clamping pad **70** toward each other. This keeps each knob **40** and the corresponding clamping pad **70** tight and still allows rotation of knob **40** and movement of clamping pad **70** in a plane generally perpendicular to longitudinal axis **L50** of stub **50**.

[0027] In use, first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** are placed with an end of first guide rail **100A** abutting an end of second guide rail **100B**. Specifically, in the form shown, each of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** includes a top **101** and a bottom **103** opposite to top **101**. A tool base guiding track **102** protrudes upward from top **101**, forming a first engagement groove **104** in bottom **103**. A height of tool base guiding track **102** from top **101** is smaller than a depth of longitudinal groove **22** in the height direction. Tool base guiding track **102** includes first and second lateral walls **108A** and **108B** and a top wall **108C** extending between first and second lateral walls **108A** and **108B**. First and second lateral walls **108A** and **108B** are straight and parallel to each other. A second engagement groove **106** is defined by two inverted L-shaped walls on top **101** and is parallel to and spaced from first engagement groove **104**. Each of first and second engagement grooves **104** and **106** and tool base guiding track **102** extends throughout an overall length of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B**. A first connector **110A** has a section engaged in first engagement groove **104** of first guide rail **100A**. The remaining section of first connector **110A** is engaged in first engagement groove **104** of second guide rail **100B**. Likewise, a second connector **110B** has a section engaged in second engagement groove **106** of first guide rail **100A**. The remaining section of second connector **110B** is engaged in second engagement groove **106** of second guide rail **100B**. Thus, first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** are connected end-to-end. Each of first and second connectors **110A** and **110B** includes a plurality of through-holes **112** each extending from top **101** through bottom **103**.

[0028] Alignment device **10** is placed on first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B**, with space **27** in longitudinal groove **22** receiving portions of tool base guiding tracks **102** of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B**, with body **12** approximately centered between first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B**, with first side **78** of each clamping pad **70** located between second side **78** and first lateral wall **108A** of a corresponding guide rail **100A**, **100B**, and with bottom surface **28** of longitudinal groove **22** of body **12** spaced from top walls **108C** of tool base guiding tracks **102** of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** in the height direction. Second lateral wall **108B** of each of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** is located between first lateral wall **108A** of each of first and second guide rails **100A** and **108B** and first lateral surface **31** of body **12**. When knobs **40** are in a non-clamping position shown in FIGS. 2 and 3, first side **78** of each clamping pad **70** is spaced from first lateral wall **108A** of tool base guiding track **102** of a corresponding guide rail **100A**, **100B**. Thus, body **12** of alignment device **10** can be moved freely relative to first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B**. Note that first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** may not be in a straight line such that first and second lateral walls **108A** and **108B** of first guide rail **100A** are not aligned

with first and second lateral walls **108A** and **108B** of second guide rail **100B**, respectively (see phantom lines indicating second lateral wall **108B**, tool base guiding track **102**, and second engagement groove **106** of second guide rail **100B** in FIG. 3).

**[0029]** Knobs **40** can be rotated through an angle to a clamping position (FIGS. 4 and 5) to align first and second lateral walls **108A** and **108B** of first guide rail **100A** with first and second lateral walls **108A** and **108B** of second guide rail **100B** so that first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** are in a straight line. Specifically, since longitudinal axis **L54** of eccentric through-hole **54** of each knob **40** is offset from longitudinal axis **L50** of stub **50** (and also offset from longitudinal axis **L42** of disc **42**), a longitudinal axis of each bolt **60** rotates in a circular path around longitudinal axis **L50** of stub **50** while the whole knob assembly **38** rotates about longitudinal axis **L42** of disc **42** coaxial to longitudinal axis **L50** of stub **50**. Clamping pad **70** secured to each bolt **60** is moved in a plane perpendicular to longitudinal axis **L42** of disc **42**. Movement of clamping pad **70** includes displacement of clamping pad **70** in the width and length directions. Displacement of clamping pad **70** in the width direction causes first side **78** of clamping pad **70** to press against first lateral wall **108A** of tool base guiding track **102** of a corresponding guide rail **100A**, **100B** and to move guide rail **100A**, **100B** to a position in which second lateral wall **108B** of guide rail **100A**, **100B** abuts against first lateral surface **31** of longitudinal groove **22**. Namely, second lateral walls **108B** of both of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** facing away from clamping pad **70** abut against first lateral surface **31** of longitudinal groove **22** of body **12** and are, thus, aligned with each other.

**[0030]** Specifically, rotation of knob **40** adjacent to first end **18** of body **12** causes movement of a corresponding clamping pad **70** to abut first guide rail **100A** against first and second sections **31A** and **31B** of first lateral surface **31** of longitudinal groove **22**. Likewise, rotation of knob **40** adjacent to second end **20** of body **12** causes movement of a corresponding clamping pad **70** to abut second guide rail **100B** against second and third sections **31B** and **31C** of first lateral surface **31** of longitudinal groove **22**. Thus, first lateral wall **108A** of first guide rail **100A** is aligned with first lateral wall **108A** of second guide rail **100B**. Note that tool base guiding track **102** of each of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** is securely clamped between one of clamping pads **70** and first lateral surface **31** of longitudinal groove **22** of body **12** to assure alignment of first lateral walls **108A** of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B**. Screws **120** received in through-holes **112** of first and second connectors **110A** and **110B** are tightened to securely fix first and second connectors **110A** and **110B** in first and second engagement grooves **104** and **106** of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** while alignment device **10** keeps first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** in a straight line.

**[0031]** After fixing first and second connectors **110A** and **110B** in place to maintain first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** in a straight line, knobs **40** are rotated back to the non-clamping position. The longitudinal axis of each bolt **60** rotates in the circular path around longitudinal axis **L50** of stub **50** in a reverse direction while the whole knob assembly **38** rotates about longitudinal axis **L42** of disc **42** coaxial to longitudinal axis **L50** of stub **50**. Each clamping pad **70** is moved in the plane perpendicular to longitudinal axis **L50** of stub **50** in a reverse direction to disengage first side **78** of

clamping pad **70** from first lateral wall **108A** of tool base guiding track **102** of the corresponding guide rail **100A**, **100B**, allowing free movement of body **12** along tool base guiding tracks **102**. Body **12** is then removed from first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B**. After placing first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** on a workpiece longer than a single guide rail **100A**, **100B**, woodworking tool **130** can be placed on first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B**. Base **132** of woodworking tool **130** includes a bottom **134** having a channel **136** slideably receiving tool base guiding tracks **102** of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** such that woodworking tool **130** can slide along tool base guiding tracks **102** of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** to perform its woodworking function on the workpiece longer than a single guide rail **100A**, **100B**. It can be appreciated that more than two guide rails **100A**, **100B** can be connected in a straight line by using the same or another alignment device **10**.

**[0032]** First and second recessed portions **31D** and **31E** can receive dust, debris, and the like in longitudinal groove **22** of alignment device **10** or on tool base guiding tracks **102** of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B**, further insuring the alignment function.

**[0033]** Thus, first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B**, alignment device **10**, and connectors (including first and second connectors **110A** and **110B** and screws **120** in the form shown) together form a useful woodworking utensil to reliably align first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** in a straight line and fixed by the connectors. After removal of alignment device **10**, woodworking tool **130** can be used with first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** for cutting a workpiece longer than a single guide rail **100A**, **100B**. The operation for aligning first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** and for removing alignment device **10** after alignment can be easily accomplished even by an ordinary user. It can be appreciated that other forms of first and second guide rails and/or connectors fixing aligned first and second guide rails together can be used.

**[0034]** First side **78** of each clamping pad **70** abutting first lateral wall **108A** of tool base guiding track **102** is coated with a layer of plastic material, so that damage to tool base guiding tracks **102** of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B** is avoided. Furthermore, the layer of plastic material on first sides **78** of clamping pads **70** provide friction when engaged with tool base guiding tracks **102** of first and second guide rails **100A** and **100B**.

**[0035]** Now that the basic teachings have been explained, many extensions and variations will be obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art. For example, longitudinal groove **22** can extend from first side **24** towards but spaced from second side **26** without having second lateral surface **29**. Furthermore, clamping pads **70** can be actuated by provisions other than knob assemblies **38**. As an example, clamping pads **70** can be moved by a single bar having a portion connected to clamping pads **70** and manually movable to move clamping pads **70** between the clamping and non-clamping position. Further, first lateral surface **31** does not have to include first and second recessed portions **31D** and **31E** to allow easy formation of longitudinal groove **22** while achieving the alignment function. Further, body can include only one recess **30** to accommodate clamping pads **70**.

**[0036]** Thus since the illustrative embodiments disclosed herein may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or general characteristics thereof,

some of which forms have been indicated, the embodiments described herein are to be considered in all respects illustrative and not restrictive. The scope is to be indicated by the appended claims, rather than by the foregoing description, and all changes which come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are intended to be embraced therein.

**1.** A woodworking utensil comprising:

first and second guide rails each including a tool base guiding track having first and second lateral walls, with each of the first and second guide rails having an end, with the end of the first guide rail adapted to abut the end of the second guide rail, with the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails adapted to be slideably received in a channel of a base of a woodworking tool; an alignment device for aligning the first and second guide rails abutting end-to-end in a straight line, with the alignment device including:

a body including a first lateral surface extending in a length direction, with the body slideably rested on the first and second guide rails abutting end-to-end, with the first lateral surface extending across the abutting ends of the first and second guide rails, with the second lateral wall of each of the first and second guide rails located between the first lateral wall of each of the first and second guide rails and the first lateral surface of the body in a width direction perpendicular to the length direction; and

first and second clamping pads mounted on the body and spaced from each other in the length direction and on opposite sides of the abutting ends of the first and second guide rails, with each of the first and second clamping pads moveable between a clamping position and a non-clamping position, with the clamping position having a spacing to the first lateral surface in the width direction smaller than the non-clamping position; and

at least one connector fixing the first and second guide rails in the straight line together,

wherein the first clamping pad presses against the first lateral wall of the first guide rail to abut the second lateral wall of the first guide rail against the first lateral surface of the body with the first clamping pad in the clamping position, wherein the second clamping pad presses against the first lateral wall of the second guide rail to abut the second lateral wall of the second guide rail against the first lateral surface of the body with the second clamping pad in the clamping position, aligning the first lateral wall of the first guide rail with the first lateral wall of the second guide rail, and aligning the second lateral wall of the first guide rail with the second lateral wall of the second guide rail.

**2.** The woodworking utensil as claimed in claim 1, with the body further including a second lateral surface parallel to the first lateral surface and spaced from the first lateral surface in the width direction, with the first and second lateral surfaces defining a space therebetween, with each of the first and second clamping pads moveably received in the space, with the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails slideably received in the space, with the body slideable relative to the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails in the length direction with the first and second clamping pads in the non-clamping position.

**3.** The woodworking utensil as claimed in claim 2, with the body further including a bottom face extending perpendicularly to the first and second lateral surfaces, with the bottom face of the body slideably resting on the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails.

**4.** The woodworking utensil as claimed in claim 3, with the body further including a top face spaced from the bottom face in a height direction perpendicular to the length and width directions, with the body further including a longitudinal groove extending from the bottom face towards but spaced from the top face of the body, with the longitudinal groove including the first and second lateral surfaces, with the longitudinal groove further including a bottom surface extending between the first and second lateral surfaces and located between the top and bottom faces of the body in the height direction, with the first and second lateral surfaces being continuous in the length direction.

**5.** The woodworking utensil as claimed in claim 4, with the alignment device further including:

first and second knobs rotatably mounted on the top face of the body, with each of the first and second clamping pads including first and second sides spaced from each other in the width direction, with the first side of each of the first and second clamping pads located between the second side of each of the first and second clamping pads and the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails in the width direction; and

first and second recesses defined in the bottom face of the body and spaced from each other in the length direction, with each of the first and second recesses having an opening in communication with the longitudinal groove and a bottom wall spaced from the top face of the body in the height direction, with a through-hole extending from the bottom wall of each of the first and second recesses through the top face of the body,

with the first and second knobs respectively and operatively coupled to the first and second clamping pads through the through-holes, with rotation of the first and second knobs causing movement of the first and second clamping pads in the width direction between the clamping position and the non-clamping position,

wherein the first sides of the first and second clamping pads are spaced from the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails in the width direction with the first and second clamping pads in the non-clamping position, wherein the body is slideable relative to the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails in the length direction, and

wherein the first sides of the first and second clamping pads press against the first lateral walls of the first and second guide rails to abut the second lateral walls of the first and second guide rails against the first lateral surface of the longitudinal groove with the first and second clamping pads in the clamping position.

**6.** The woodworking utensil as claimed in claim 5, with the alignment device further including first and second bolts, with each of the first and second knobs including a disc having upper and lower faces spaced from each other in a longitudinal axis of the disc, with a stub formed on the lower face of each of the first and second knobs and having a longitudinal axis coaxial to the longitudinal axis of the disc, with the stub of each of the first and second knobs rotatably received in one of the through-holes of the body, with the stub of each of the first and second knobs including a bottom

having a spacing to the upper face larger than to the lower face of the disc, with a handle formed on the upper face of the disc of each of the first and second knobs and having a top, with an eccentric through-hole extending from the top of the handle through the bottom of the stub of each of the first and second knobs and having a longitudinal axis radially offset from the longitudinal axis of the stub, with the first bolt received in the eccentric through-hole of the first knob and fixed to the first clamping pad, with the second bolt received in the eccentric through-hole of the second knob and fixed to the second clamping pad.

7. The woodworking utensil as claimed in claim 6, with the alignment device further including first and second springs, with each of the first and second clamping pads including a screw hole, with each of the first and second bolts including a shank, a head on an end of the shank and a threaded section on another end of the shank, with the eccentric through-hole of each of the first and second knobs including a larger section and a smaller section located below the larger section in the height direction, forming a shoulder between the larger section and the smaller section,

with the head of the first bolt received in the larger section of the eccentric through-hole of the first knob, with the threaded section of the first bolt engaged with the screw hole of the first clamping pad, with the first spring mounted around the first bolt and located between the head and the shoulder of the first bolt, with the first bolt holding the first clamping pad and the first knob together, with the first spring biasing the first knob and the first clamping pad toward each other, and

with the head of the second bolt received in the larger section of the eccentric through-hole of the second knob, with the threaded section of the second bolt engaged with the screw hole of the second clamping pad, with the second spring mounted around the second bolt and located between the head and the shoulder of the second bolt, with the second bolt holding the second clamping pad and the second knob together, with the second spring biasing the second knob and the second clamping pad toward each other.

8. The woodworking utensil as claimed in claim 7, with the first side of each of the first and second clamping pads coated with a layer of plastic material, with the layer of plastic material on the first side of each of the first and second clamping pads providing friction when engaged with the tool guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails.

9. The woodworking utensil as claimed in claim 7, with the body further including first and second ends spaced from each other in the length direction, with the longitudinal groove extending from the first end through the second end of the body, with the body further including an intermediate portion between the first and second ends, with the first lateral surface including a first section at the first end of the body, a second section at the intermediate portion of the body, and a third section at the second end of the body, with the first, second, and third sections aligned with each other in the length direction, with the first lateral surface further including a first recessed portion between the first and second sections and a second recessed portion between the second and third sections, with the first recess facing the first recessed portion of the first lateral surface, with the second recess facing the second recessed portion of the first lateral surface, with the first and second recessed portions adapted to receive dust in

the longitudinal groove or on the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails.

10. An alignment device for woodworking tool guide rails, comprising, in combination:

a body including a first lateral surface extending in a length direction, with the body adapted to be slideably rested on first and second guide rails abutting end-to-end, with each of the first and second guide rails including a tool base guiding track having first and second lateral walls, with the first lateral surface of the body adapted to extend across abutting ends of the first and second guide rails, with the second lateral wall of each of the first and second guide rails located between the first lateral wall of each of the first and second guide rails and the first lateral surface of the body in a width direction perpendicular to the length direction; and

first and second clamping pads mounted on the body and spaced from each other in the length direction, with the first and second clamping pads adapted to be located on opposite sides of the abutting ends of the first and second guide rails, with each of the first and second clamping pads moveable between a clamping position and a non-clamping position, with the clamping position having a spacing to the first lateral surface in the width direction smaller than the non-clamping position,

wherein the first clamping pad is adapted to press against the first lateral wall of the first guide rail to abut the second lateral wall of the first guide rail against the first lateral surface of the body with the first clamping pad in the clamping position, wherein the second clamping pad is adapted to press against the first lateral wall of the second guide rail to abut the second lateral wall of the second guide rail against the first lateral surface of the body with the second clamping pad in the clamping position, aligning the first lateral wall of the first guide rail with the first lateral wall of the second guide rail, and aligning the second lateral wall of the first guide rail with the second lateral wall of the second guide rail.

11. The alignment device for woodworking tool guide rails as claimed in claim 10, with the body further including a second lateral surface parallel to the first lateral surface and spaced from the first lateral surface in the width direction, with the first and second lateral surfaces defining a space therebetween, with each of the first and second clamping pads moveably received in the space, with the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails adapted to be slideably received in the space, with the body adapted to be slideable relative to the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails in the length direction with the first and second clamping pads in the non-clamping position.

12. The alignment device for woodworking tool guide rails as claimed in claim 11, with the body further including a bottom face extending perpendicularly to the first and second lateral surfaces, with the bottom face of the body adapted to slideably rest on the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails.

13. The alignment device for woodworking tool guide rails as claimed in claim 12, with the body further including a top face spaced from the bottom face in a height direction perpendicular to the length and width directions, with the body further including a longitudinal groove extending from the bottom face towards but spaced from the top face of the body, with the longitudinal groove including the first and second lateral surfaces, with the longitudinal groove further includ-

ing a bottom surface extending between the first and second lateral surfaces and located between the top and bottom faces of the body in the height direction, with the first and second lateral surfaces being continuous in the length direction.

**14.** The alignment device for woodworking tool guide rails as claimed in claim **13**, further comprising, in combination:

first and second knobs rotatably mounted on the top face of the body, with each of the first and second clamping pads including first and second sides spaced from each other in the width direction, with the first side of each of the first and second clamping pads adapted to be located between the second side of each of the first and second clamping pads and the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails in the width direction; and

first and second recesses defined in the bottom face of the body and spaced from each other in the length direction, with each of the first and second recesses having an opening in communication with the longitudinal groove and a bottom wall spaced from the top face of the body in the height direction, with a through-hole extending from the bottom wall of each of the first and second recesses through the top face of the body,

with the first and second knobs respectively and operatively coupled to the first and second clamping pads through the through-holes, with rotation of the first and second knobs causing movement of the first and second clamping pads in the width direction between the clamping position and the non-clamping position,

wherein the first sides of the first and second clamping pads are adapted to be spaced from the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails in the width direction with the first and second clamping pads in the non-clamping position, with the body adapted to be slideable relative to the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails in the length direction, and wherein the first sides of the first and second clamping pads are adapted to press against the first lateral walls of the first and second guide rails to abut the second lateral walls of the first and second guide rails against the first lateral surface of the longitudinal groove with the first and second clamping pads in the clamping position.

**15.** The alignment device for woodworking tool guide rails as claimed in claim **14**, further comprising, in combination:

first and second bolts,

with each of the first and second knobs including a disc having upper and lower faces spaced from each other in a longitudinal axis of the disc, with a stub formed on the lower face of each of the first and second knobs and having a longitudinal axis coaxial to the longitudinal axis of the disc, with the stub of each of the first and second knobs rotatably received in one of the through-holes of the body, with the stub of each of the first and second knobs including a bottom having a spacing to the upper face larger than to the lower face of the disc, with a handle formed on the upper face of the disc of each of the first and second knobs and having a top, with an eccentric through-hole extending from the top of the handle through the bottom of the stub of each of the first and second knobs and having a longitudinal axis radially offset from the longitudinal axis of the stub, with the first bolt received in the eccentric through-hole of the first knob and fixed to the first clamping pad, with the second bolt received in the eccentric through-hole of the second knob and fixed to the second clamping pad.

**16.** The alignment device for woodworking tool guide rails as claimed in claim **15**, further comprising, in combination: first and second springs,

with each of the first and second clamping pads including a screw hole, with each of the first and second bolts including a shank, a head on an end of the shank and a threaded section on another end of the shank, with the eccentric through-hole of each of the first and second knobs including a larger section and a smaller section located below the larger section in the height direction, forming a shoulder between the larger section and the smaller section,

with the head of the first bolt received in the larger section of the eccentric through-hole of the first knob, with the threaded section of the first bolt engaged with the screw hole of the first clamping pad, with the first spring mounted around the first bolt and located between the head and the shoulder of the first bolt, with the first bolt holding the first clamping pad and the first knob together, with the first spring biasing the first knob and the first clamping pad toward each other, and

with the head of the second bolt received in the larger section of the eccentric through-hole of the second knob, with the threaded section of the second bolt engaged with the screw hole of the second clamping pad, with the second spring mounted around the second bolt and located between the head and the shoulder of the second bolt, with the second bolt holding the second clamping pad and the second knob together, with the second spring biasing the second knob and the second clamping pad toward each other.

**17.** The alignment device for woodworking tool guide rails as claimed in claim **16**, with the first side of each of the first and second clamping pads coated with a layer of plastic material, with the layer of plastic material on the first side of each of the first and second clamping pads adapted to provide friction when engaged with the tool guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails.

**18.** The alignment device for woodworking tool guide rails as claimed in claim **16**, with the body further including first and second ends spaced from each other in the length direction, with the longitudinal groove extending from the first end through the second end of the body, with the body further including an intermediate portion between the first and second ends, with the first lateral surface including a first section at the first end of the body, a second section at the intermediate portion of the body, and a third section at the second end of the body, with the first, second, and third sections aligned with each other in the length direction, with the first lateral surface further including a first recessed portion between the first and second sections and a second recessed portion between the second and third sections, with the first recess facing the first recessed portion of the first lateral surface, with the second recess facing the second recessed portion of the first lateral surface, with the first and second recessed portions adapted to receive dust in the longitudinal groove or on the tool base guiding tracks of the first and second guide rails.

**19.** A method for aligning guide rails for a woodworking tool, with the method comprising:

abutting an end of a first guide rail with an end of a second guide rail, with each of the first and second guide rails including first and second lateral walls;

placing an alignment device on the abutting first and second guide rails, with the alignment device including a

body having a lateral surface extending in a length direction across the ends of the first and second guide rails, with the second lateral wall of each of the first and second guide rails located between the first lateral wall of each of the first and second guide rails and the lateral surface of the body in a width direction perpendicular to the length direction, with the alignment device further including first and second clamping pads mounted on the body and spaced from each other in the length direction and on opposite sides of the abutting ends of the first and second guide rails;

moving the first and second clamping pads of the placed alignment device in the width direction to respectively press against the first lateral walls of the first and second guide rails to abut the second lateral walls of the first and second guide rails against the lateral surface of the body, aligning the first lateral wall of the first guide rail with the first lateral wall of the second guide rail, and aligning the second lateral wall of the first guide rail with the second lateral wall of the second guide rail;

fixing the aligned first and second guide rails together; moving the first and second clamping pads away from the first and second guide rails fixed together, with the first and second guide rails fixed together remaining aligned with each other; and

removing the alignment device from the first and second guide rails after the first and second clamping pads are moved away.

**20.** The method as claimed in claim **19**, with moving the first and second clamping pads to respectively press against the first lateral walls of the first and second guide rails including using first and second knobs rotatably mounted on a top face of the body of the alignment device, with the first and second knobs operatively coupled to the first and second clamping pads, with rotation of the first and second knobs causing movement of the first and second clamping pads in the width direction between the clamping position and the non-clamping position.

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