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Craig N. Evans

REUSABLE VIBRATION
RESISTANT INTEGRATED
CIRCUIT MOUNTING SOCKET

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Patent Application for

REUSABLE VIBRATION RESISTANT INTEGRATED CIRCUIT MOUNTING SOCKET

Craig Norman Evans

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The current invention is a novel design for an integrated circuit (IC) connector socket that is simultaneously reusable and shock and vibration resistant by virtue of temperature activated mechanical means to make electrical contact with the IC leads. The socket comprises a plastic body containing metal spring contacts which grip each of the IC leads and extensions from the spring contacts which are used to create electrical connections with the balance of the circuit. The socket contacts are barb-shaped so that the gripping force on the IC lead increases if the IC begins to fall out or shake out of the socket due to vibration or shock. The socket contacts are made of plated bimetallic strips which are in firm contact with the IC leads over the design temperature range of the electrical circuit. The IC is removed by cooling the socket below the minimum design temperature of the circuit. The cooling causes the spring contacts to retract and release the grip of their barbs on the IC leads. Thus this design combines a vibration resistant barb-type spring contact with the reusability of traditional sockets by means of a new temperature activated bimetallic contact design.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The environment experienced by integrated circuits and printed circuit boards in both industrial and military applications require them to withstand substantial shock and vibration. The method of mounting an integrated circuit (IC) on a printed circuit board must enable the connections to withstand substantial shock and vibration because these forces can cause an IC mounting device to loosen, open the connection, and thereby result in failure of the circuit.

There are two generally distinct types of IC connections, reusable and non-reusable. Non-reusable connections are sometimes hard soldered. Soldered connections are inherently vibration and shock proof because the mechanical connection is through solidified metal. However, they do not permit flexibility in the maintenance of the circuit. Another type of non-reusable connection is through vibration and shock resistant sockets. Such sockets available before the present invention are not reusable because the mechanical design of the contact necessary to keep the IC lead in the socket under shock and vibration inherently involves damage to the socket contacts when the IC leads are intentionally removed from the socket.

The other main type of socket is the reusable socket. Such sockets are becoming much more common in printed circuit design since sockets permit the IC to be removed for troubleshooting or replacement without the risk of damage to the IC due to the heat necessary for desoldering a soldered in device. Unfortunately reusable sockets known in the prior art are not vibration and shock resistant because the metal contacts inside the socket that grip the IC leads are designed to release the IC leads without harm.

As shown in Fig. 1, current reusable IC socket designs (1) employ spring contacts (3) to grasp the IC leads but the contacts are designed only to pinch the leads and can release the lead as a result of shock or vibration. The prior art socket comprises the plastic body (2), metal contacts (3) that grasp

each IC lead (4), and contact extensions (5) that pass through the circuit board to be used for electrical connection to the balance of circuit.

5 Current vibration resistant IC socket designs, as shown in Fig. 2, employ spring contacts that are shaped like a barb (10). The IC lead (11) enters the socket contact (12) easily but when the user attempts to remove the IC lead from the socket the socket contact is damaged to the point that the socket is not reusable.

10 Because both manufacturing and maintenance of circuits and circuit boards need to be more flexible in a world where vast quantities of circuits using board-mounted IC's are produced, a need exists for an IC connector socket which is simultaneously reusable and vibration and shock resistant. This invention is
15 responsive to that need.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 shows the prior art reusable socket in isometric and the prior art contact in transverse section.
20 Figure 2 illustrates the prior art non-reusable vibration and shock resistant socket contact. Figure 3 shows the socket contact of the current invention, with the body of the socket in isometric and the contact itself in transverse section. Figure 4 demonstrates the mode of operation of the temperature-dependent
25 contact-making and -breaking of this invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The current invention is a reusable IC socket that is highly resistant to shock and vibration induced loosening of the
30 connection between the IC lead and the socket because the vibration-resistant barb-shaped socket contacts open or close on the IC leads as a function of temperature. The contact is fabricated from a bimetallic strip and the temperature dependent behavior of the bimetallic strip enables the socket contacts to
35 grip firmly the IC leads over the circuit design temperature

range. The contacts release their grip when the socket is cooled below the minimum design temperature of the circuit, thereby allowing the IC to be removed from the socket without damaging either the socket contact or the IC lead.

5 This invention employs a barb-type contact (10) in the socket that maintains a tight and vibration-resistant grip on the IC leads in the range of design temperatures. The design temperature range of the electrical circuit or panel is defined by the minimum storage temperature and the maximum allowable
10 operating temperature of the IC. The minimum storage temperature is lower than the minimum operating temperature since the electrical components generate heat during operation. The spring contact is made of bimetallic material so that when the socket is cooled below a design minimum temperature typically at or just
15 below the minimum storage temperature, the contact barb retracts and releases its grip on the IC lead. The IC is then removed without damaging the socket contacts or the IC leads.

 This temperature activated vibration-resistant socket design, Fig. 3, comprises a plastic body (21) that houses metal
20 contacts (22) which in turn grasp the IC leads by means of barbed ends. There is one spring contact for each lead of the IC. The spring contacts are inserted in individual holes (23) cast in the body of the socket, and metal contact extensions (24) are rigidly
25 connected to or integral with the contact and protrude below the body. The extensions are used to connect the IC socket with the remainder of the circuit. The bimetallic spring contacts (25) are made of bimetallic strips (26) such as aluminum/phosphor bronze or aluminum/nickel-steel and are plated with an
30 appropriate metal, e.g., tin, gold, silver, to improve the electrical contact with the IC lead. The materials should be carefully chosen in each particular combination to minimize dissimilar-metal corrosion.

 The end of the contact with the barbed end (27) is turned away from the socket entrance so that it grips the
35 inserted IC lead in the same manner as does the non-reusable

contact shown in Fig. 2. Within the design temperature range, the IC lead may be easily inserted but the lead cannot be removed from the socket without deforming the spring contact. During shock and vibration of the circuit board, the spring contact will retain the IC lead by virtue of the wedging or jamming action that occurs. The contact dimensions are designed so that the barb end of the contact will stay in contact with the IC lead over the design temperature range of the circuit board. As the socket temperature increases, the contact lengthens and the contact force on the IC lead increases.

The IC is removed from the socket by cooling the socket below the design minimum temperature. As shown in Fig. 4, the bimetallic contact retracts (30) due to the cooling and the grip on the IC lead is released. The IC can then be removed without damaging the IC or the socket contacts. The IC lead (31) can be inserted into this new socket contact design at any temperature since the spring contact design allows easy entry of the IC lead. This property facilitates economical assembly of circuits. Figure 4 shows the contact configuration at both the minimum design temperature and at the socket release temperature.

The key to the design of the bimetallic contact is to obtain the desired deflection over the temperature range available for contact release. The contact must retain its grip on the IC lead over the design temperature range of the circuit but must release its grip in the range of temperatures from the minimum allowable IC temperature to the bottom of the circuit design temperature range. The temperature ranges of currently available IC's are:

| | |
|------------|-------------------|
| Industrial | -25 °C to +85 °C |
| Military | -55 °C to +125 °C |

A representative minimum design temperature for electrical equipment is +5 °C (+40 °F), though lower temperatures can be used. In this example, the release temperature range for the socket design is:

| | |
|------------|-----------------|
| Industrial | -25 °C to +5 °C |
|------------|-----------------|

Military

-55 °C to +5 °C.

Socket cooling for IC release was chosen over socket heating since the IC itself can operate up to the IC temperature limits, at least in certain cases. Therefor, no safe release temperature range would exist for release by heating. Designing for release after cooling also allows the grip on the IC leads to improve as the IC heats up during normal operation.

Cooling can be performed by spraying the socket with a readily available refrigerant such as refrigerant-12. As shown in Fig. 3, cooling slots (32) are cast in the sides of the contact to permit the refrigerant to reach the contacts. The refrigerant should be chosen such that its boiling point is above the minimum allowable IC temperature to prevent IC damage due to excessive cooling. To minimize the possibility of damage to the IC from thermal shock, temperature sensitive paints or crayons can be used on the IC surface to signify when the IC has cooled sufficiently in air for the refrigerant cooling to begin.

A preliminary and currently preferred embodiment of this invention is according to Fig. 3 with the following dimensions and parameters:

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Circuit minimum temperature | = +5 °C |
| IC minimum temperature | = -55 °C |
| Refrigerant boiling temperature | = -29 °C (Refr.-12) |
| IC lead thickness | = .025 inch |
| Bimetal materials | = aluminum/ni-steel |
| Metal thickness | = .003 inch each |
| Wave contact length | = .300 inch |

For the above release temperature range (+5 °C to - 29 °C) the contact retracts 0.026 inches. This contraction is enough to release completely the preload on the IC lead. If greater contraction is required for a particular application, additional "half-wave" shapes can be added to the contact. The semicircle contact shape was chosen to obtain a high ratio of temperature deflection to contact space. A high ratio minimizes the contact recess size and therefore the socket size. The footprint of the

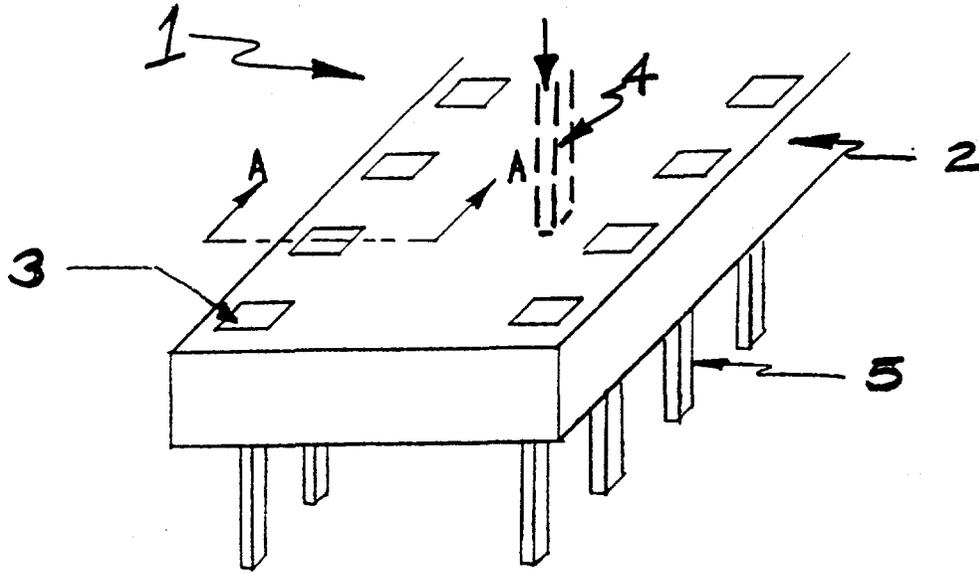
socket design of the present embodiment of this invention is somewhat larger than that of the prior art sockets; for example, a 16 pin conventional socket footprint is 0.4 in by 0.8 in. The socket of the current embodiment would be approximately 0.8 in by 0.8 in. It is believed that further application of techniques known to those skilled in the art will bring the dimensions of the socket of this invention down to the size of prior art sockets.

ABSTRACT

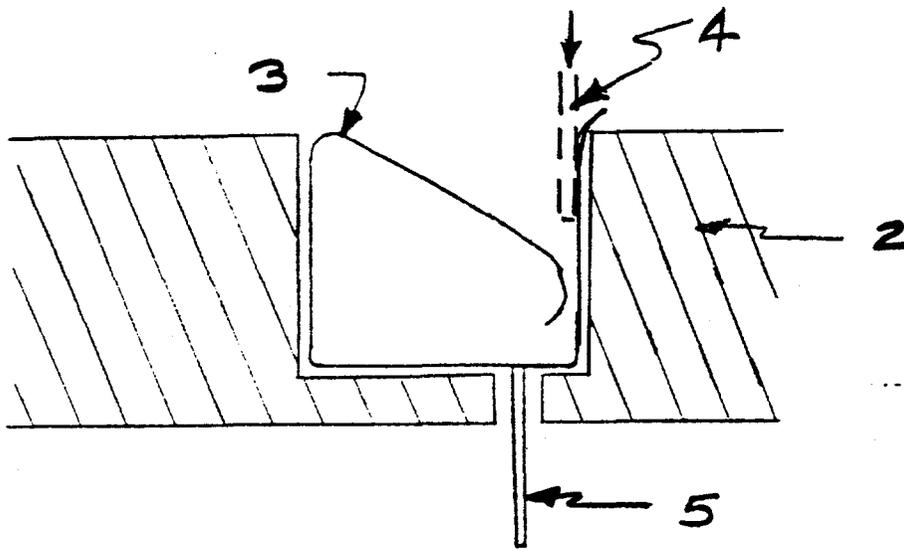
This invention discloses a novel form of socket for integrated circuits to be mounted on printed circuit boards. The socket uses a novel contact which is fabricated out of a bimetallic strip with a shape which makes the end of the strip move laterally as temperature changes. The end of the strip forms a barb which digs into an integrated circuit lead at normal temperatures and holds it firmly in the contact, preventing loosening and open circuits from vibration. By cooling the contact containing the bimetallic strip the barb end can be made to release so that the integrated circuit lead can be removed from the socket without damage either to the lead or to the socket components.

FIGURE 1

STANDARD REUSABLE IC SOCKET



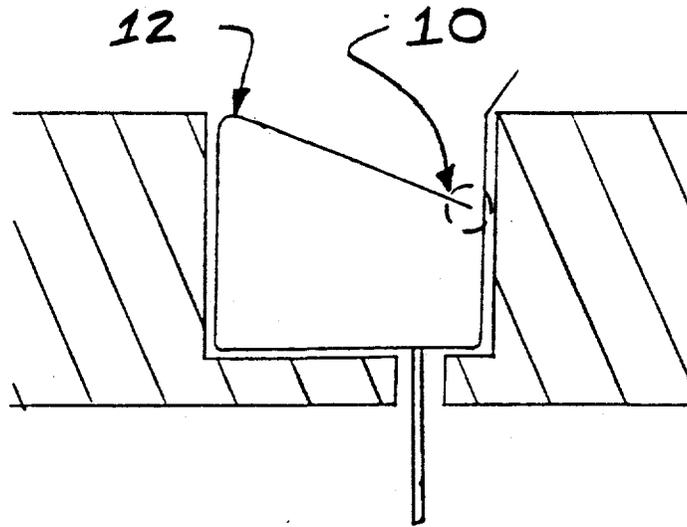
ISOMETRIC VIEW



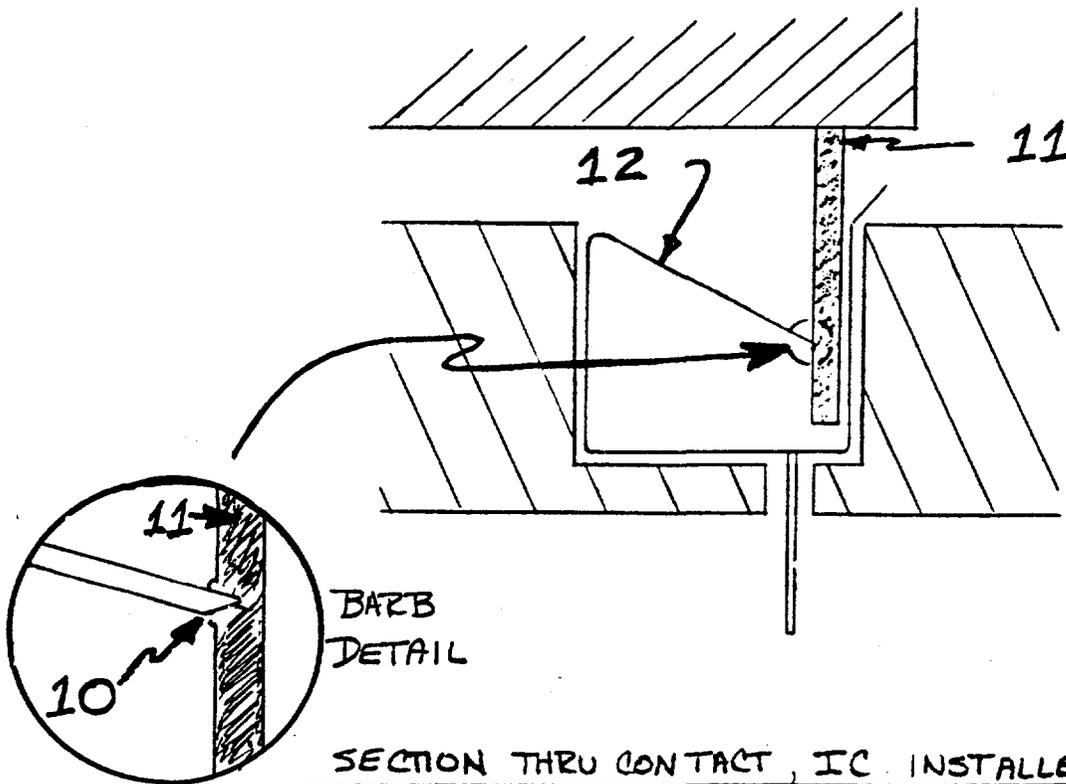
SECTION A-A

FIGURE 2

VIBRATION-RESISTANT IC SOCKET CONTACT



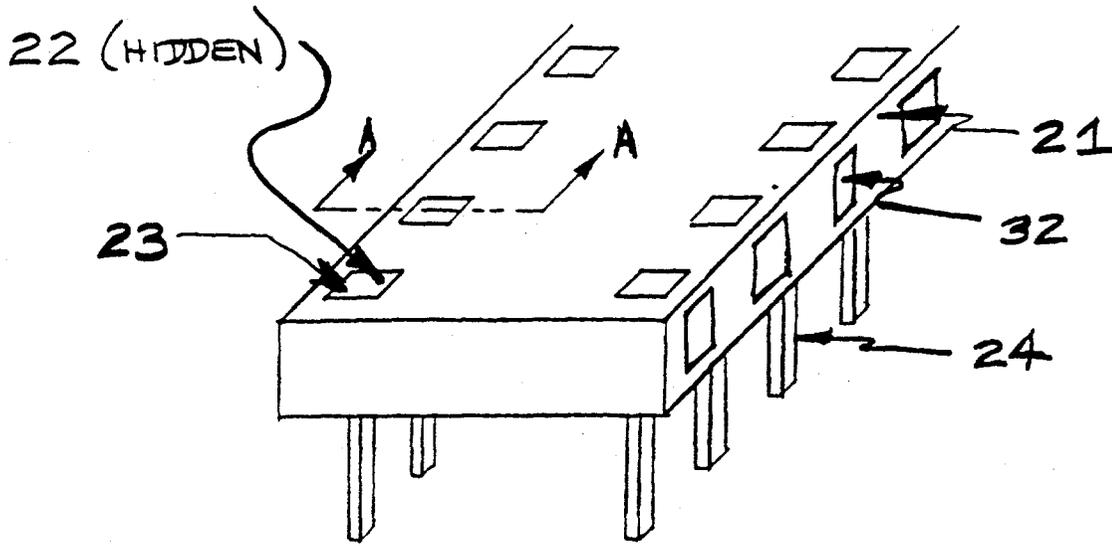
SECTION THRU CONTACT, NO IC INSTALLED



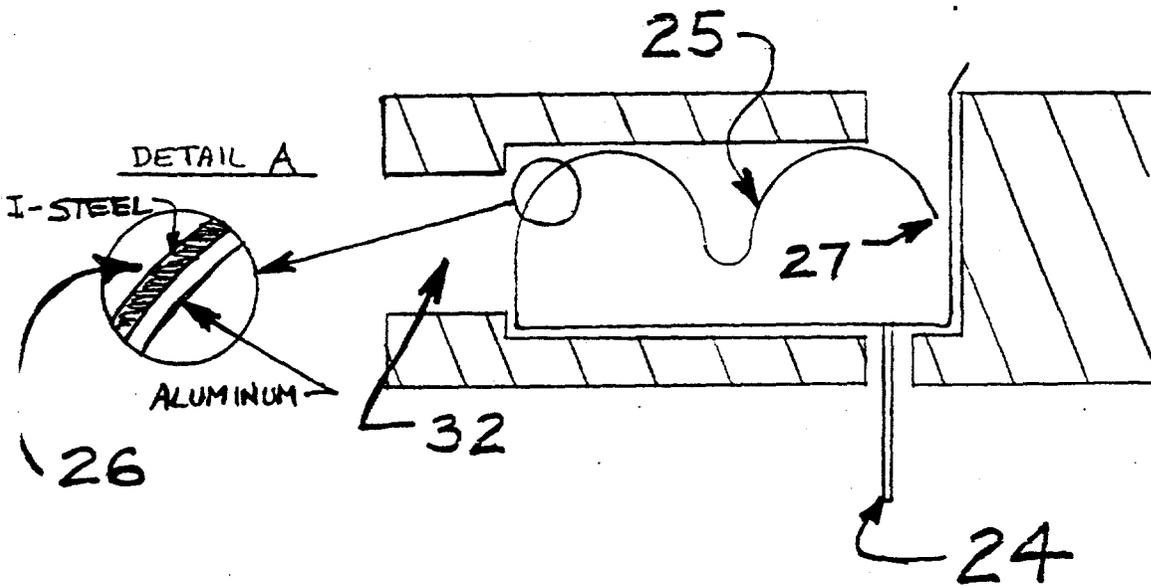
SECTION THRU CONTACT, IC INSTALLED

FIGURE 3

TEMPERATURE-ACTIVATED, VIBRATION RESISTANT IC SOCKET



ISOMETRIC VIEW



SECTION A-A

TEMPERATURE DEPENDENT CONTACT CONDITION

SECTION THROUGH CONTACT

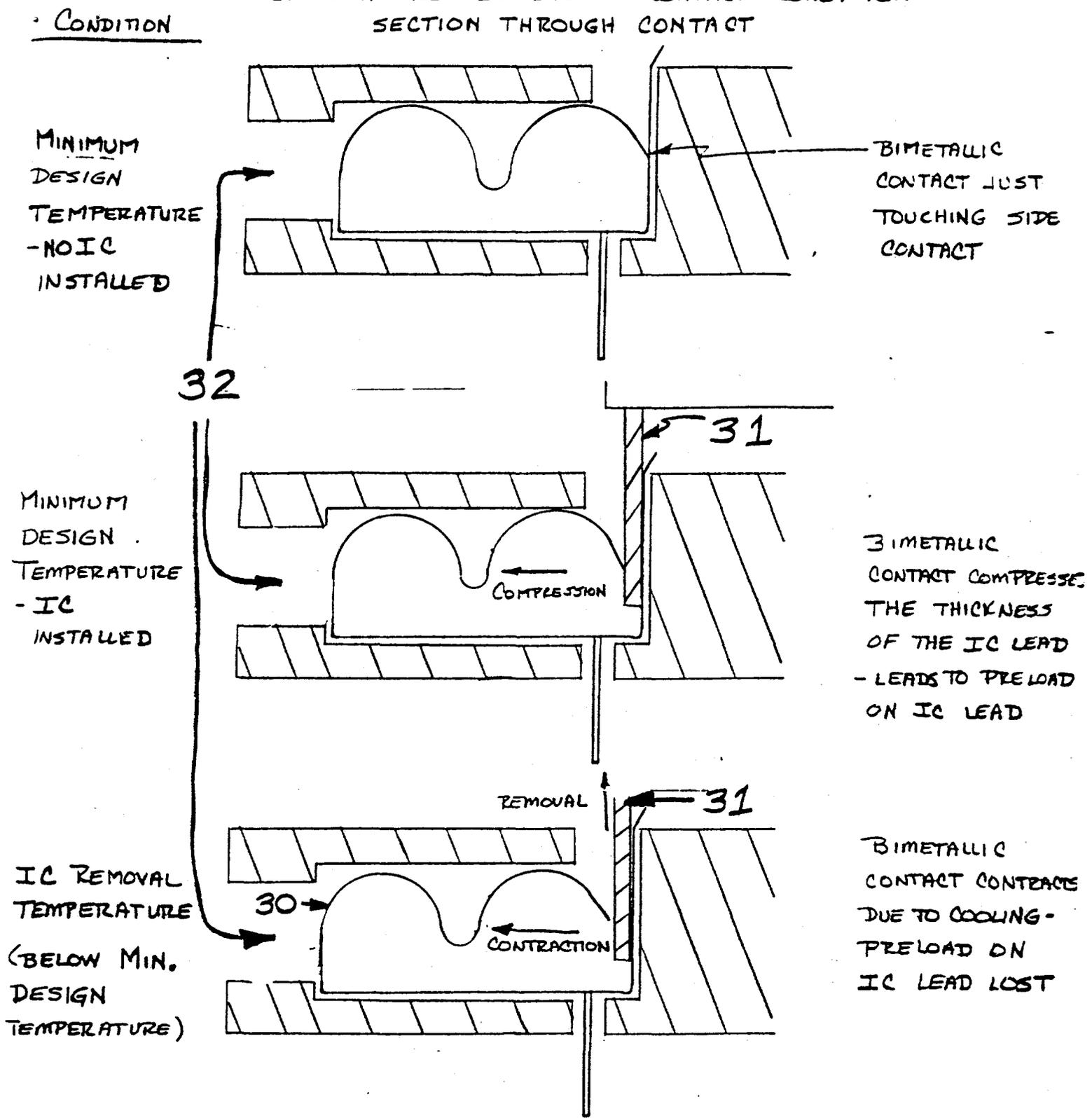


Figure 4