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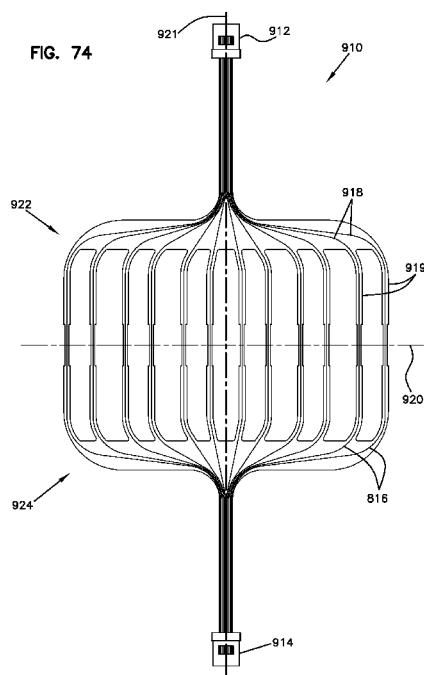
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(54) Title: MANUFACTURE AND TESTING OF FIBER OPTIC CASSETTE



(57) Abstract: A double flexible optical circuit includes: a flexible substrate supporting a plurality of optical fibers; a first connector terminating the optical fibers at a first end of the double flexible optical circuit; and a second connector terminating the optical fibers at a second end of the double flexible optical circuit. Each of the optical fibers is positioned in one of a plurality of separate extensions formed by the flexible substrate as the optical fibers extend from the first connector to the second connector. The first and second connectors are configured to be tested when the first and second connectors are connected through the double flexible optical circuit. The double flexible optical circuit is configured to be divided in half once the testing is complete to form two separate flexible optical circuits.



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MANUFACTURE AND TESTING OF FIBER OPTIC CASSETTE

Cross Reference to Related Applications

- 5 This application is being filed on 25 September 2013, as a PCT International Patent application and claims priority to U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 61/707,480 filed on 28 September 2012, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

10 Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a fixture for a flexible optical circuit.

Background of the Invention

- 15 As demand for telecommunications increases, fiber optic networks are being extended in more and more areas. Management of the cables, ease of installation, and ease of accessibility for later management are important concerns. As a result, there is a need for fiber optic devices which address these and other concerns.

- 20 It is generally desirable to overcome or ameliorate one or more of the above described problems, or at least provide a useful alternative.

Summary of the Invention

- 25 According to the present invention, there is provided a fixture for a flexible optical circuit, the fixture comprising:
- a base member defining a plurality of openings sized to receive ferrules and a plurality of pathways positioned to receive extensions of the flexible optical circuit; and
 - 30 a clamp member positioned to hold the ferrules in place within the openings during assembly of the flexible optical circuit.

A preferred embodiment of the present disclosure relates to fiber optic devices in the form of fiber optic cassettes that include at least one connector that provides a signal entry location and at least one connector that provides a signal exit location and a flexible fiber optical circuit thereinbetween for relaying the signal from the entry location to the exit location.

Another preferred embodiment of the present disclosure relates to a fiber optic cassette including a body defining a front and an opposite rear. A cable entry location is defined on the body for a cable to enter the cassette, wherein a plurality of optical fibers from the cable extend into the cassette and form terminations at non-conventional connectors adjacent the front of the body. A flexible substrate is positioned between the cable entry location and the non-conventional connectors adjacent the front of the body, the flexible substrate rigidly supporting the plurality of optical fibers. Each of the non-conventional connectors adjacent the front of the body includes a ferrule, a ferrule hub supporting the ferrule, and a split sleeve surrounding the ferrule.

According to another preferred embodiment of the present disclosure, a method of assembling a fiber optic cassette includes providing a body, mounting a multi-ferrule connector terminated to a multi-fiber cable to the body, separating out at least a plurality of the optical fibers of the multi-fiber cable and fixedly supporting the plurality of the optical fibers extending from the multi-ferrule connector on a flexible substrate, and terminating each of the plurality of optical fibers supported by the flexible substrate with a connector that includes a ferrule, a ferrule hub that supports the ferrule and a split sleeve surrounding the ferrule.

According to another preferred embodiment of the present disclosure, a double flexible optical circuit includes: a flexible substrate supporting a plurality of optical fibers; a first connector terminating the optical fibers at a first end of the double flexible optical circuit; and a second connector terminating the optical fibers at a second end of the double flexible optical circuit. Each of the optical fibers is positioned in one of a plurality of separate extensions formed by the flexible substrate as the optical fibers extend from the first

connector to the second connector. The first and second connectors are configured to be tested when the first and second connectors are connected through the double flexible optical circuit. The double flexible optical circuit is configured to be divided in half once the testing is complete to form two separate flexible optical circuits.

According to another preferred embodiment of the present disclosure, a fixture for a flexible optical circuit includes: a base member defining a plurality of openings sized to receive ferrules and a plurality of pathways positioned to receive extensions of the flexible optical circuit; and a clamp member positioned to hold the ferrules in place within the openings during assembly of the flexible optical circuit.

According to yet another preferred embodiment of the present disclosure, a method for assembling a flexible optical circuit includes: positioning a plurality of ferrules in a fixture; positioning the flexible optical circuit in the fixture so that optical fibers of the flexible optical circuit extend through the ferrules; curing and cleaving the optical fibers; polishing the ferrules; and removing the flexible optical circuit from the fixture.

A variety of additional preferred embodiments will be set forth in the description that follows. The inventive aspects can relate to individual features and combinations of features. It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description are exemplary and explanatory only and are not restrictive of the broad inventive concepts upon which the embodiments disclosed herein are based.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Preferred embodiments of the present invention are hereafter described, by way of non-limiting example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a top, front, right side perspective view of a fiber optic cassette having features that are examples of inventive aspects in accordance with the present disclosure;

FIG. 2 is a top, rear, right side perspective view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a top, front, left side perspective view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;

- FIG. 4 is a top, rear, left side perspective view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 5 is a top plan view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 6 is a bottom plan view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 7 is a front elevational view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;
 5 FIG. 8 is a rear elevational view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 9 is a right side view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 10 is a left side view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 11 is a partially exploded perspective view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 12 is another partially exploded perspective view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;
 10 FIG. 13 is a fully exploded perspective view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 14 is another top, front, right side perspective view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 14A is a close-up view illustrating the ferrule assemblies of the flexible optical circuit placed within the body of the cassette of FIG. 1;
 15 FIG. 15 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 15-15 of FIG. 7;
 FIG. 15A is a close-up view showing the internal features of one of the ferrule assemblies of the flexible optical circuit placed within the cassette of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 16 is a top, front, right side perspective view of the flexible optical circuit of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 1;
 20 FIG. 17 is a bottom, front, left side perspective view of the flexible optical circuit of FIG. 16;
 FIG. 18 is a bottom plan view of the flexible optical circuit of FIG. 16;
 FIG. 19 is a front elevational view of the flexible optical circuit of FIG. 16;
 FIG. 20 is a left side view of the flexible optical circuit of FIG. 16;
 25 FIG. 21 is a diagrammatic view illustrating a top cross-sectional view of one of the ferrule assemblies of the flexible optical circuit placed within the cassette of FIG. 1, the cross-section taken by bisecting the ferrule assembly along its longitudinal axis;
 FIG. 22 is a diagrammatic view illustrating a side cross-sectional view of the ferrule assembly of FIG. 21, the cross-section taken by bisecting the ferrule assembly along its
 30 longitudinal axis;
 FIG. 23 is a diagrammatic view illustrating the ferrule assembly of FIG. 21 from the rear side;

FIG. 24 is a diagrammatic view illustrating a side view of one of the pigtails extending from the substrate of the flexible optical circuit to be terminated to the ferrule assembly of FIG. 21;

FIG. 25 is a top, front, right side perspective view of a second embodiment of a fiber optic cassette having features that are examples of inventive aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, the fiber optic cassette shown in a fully-assembled configuration;

FIG. 26 is a partially exploded view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 25 taken from a top, rear, right side perspective of the fiber optic cassette;

FIG. 27 is a fully exploded view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 25 taken from a top, front, right side perspective of the fiber optic cassette;

FIG. 28 is a fully exploded right side view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 25;

FIG. 29 is a partially assembled view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 25 taken from a top, front, right side perspective of the fiber optic cassette, wherein the cover has been removed to expose the interior features of the fiber optic cassette;

FIG. 30 is a top plan view of the partially assembled fiber optic cassette of FIG. 29;

FIG. 31 is a right side view of the partially assembled fiber optic cassette of FIG. 29;

FIG. 32 is a bottom plan view of the cover of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 25;

FIG. 33 is a top, front, right side perspective view of the flexible optical circuit of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 25;

FIG. 34 is a top plan view of the flexible optical circuit of FIG. 33;

FIG. 35 is a front elevational view of the flexible optical circuit of FIG. 33;

FIG. 36 is a right side view of the flexible optical circuit of FIG. 33;

FIG. 37 is a top plan view of a flexible optical circuit illustrating a substrate of the circuit with a bend formed therein;

FIG. 38 is a perspective view of the flexible optical circuit of FIG. 37;

FIG. 39 is another perspective view of the flexible optical circuit of FIG. 37;

FIG. 40 is a top, front, right side perspective view of a third embodiment of a fiber optic cassette having features that are examples of inventive aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, the fiber optic cassette shown in a partially assembled configuration without the cover thereof;

FIG. 41 is another top, front, right side perspective view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 40;

FIG. 42 is a right side view of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 40;

FIG. 43 illustrates a top, front, right side perspective view of a flexible optical circuit including a twist-bend in the substrate of the circuit;

FIG. 44 is a top, front, left side perspective view of the flexible optical circuit of FIG. 43;

5 FIG. 45 is a top view of the flexible optical circuit of FIG. 43;

FIG. 46 is a perspective view of a multi-ferrule strip configured for use with the fiber optic cassettes of the present disclosure, the multi-ferrule strip including a plurality of ferrule hubs integrally molded together;

FIG. 47 is a top plan view of the multi-ferrule strip of FIG. 46;

10 FIG. 48 is a front elevational view of the multi-ferrule strip of FIG. 46;

FIG. 49 is a left side view of the multi-ferrule strip of FIG. 46;

FIG. 50 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 50-50 of FIG. 48;

FIG. 51 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a flexible optical circuit including loops of buffered fiber between the substrate of the circuit and the ferrule assembly for
15 repair/replacement;

FIG. 52 is a top plan view of the flexible optical circuit of FIG. 51;

FIG. 53 illustrates a perspective view of a plurality of duplex flexible optical circuits in an exploded configuration, the duplex flexible optical circuits configured to be placed within the fiber optic cassettes of the present disclosure in a stacked arrangement;

20 FIG. 54 illustrates a top, front, right side perspective view of the plurality of duplex flexible optical circuits of FIG. 53 in a stacked arrangement;

FIG. 54A is a close-up view illustrating the transition region of the stacked duplex flexible optical circuits of FIG. 54, wherein the fibers transition from a stepped configuration of the stacked circuits to a ribbonized flat section for termination to a multi-ferrule connector;

25 FIG. 55 illustrates a top, rear, left side perspective view of the plurality of duplex flexible optical circuits of FIG. 53 in a stacked arrangement;

FIG. 55A is a close-up view illustrating the transition region of the stacked duplex flexible optical circuits of FIG. 55, wherein the fibers transition from a stepped configuration of the stacked circuits to a ribbonized flat section for termination to a multi-ferrule connector;

30 FIG. 56 is a top, front, right side exploded perspective view of a clamp structure used for clamping the plurality of duplex flexible optical circuits of FIG. 53 in a stacked

arrangement, the clamp structure shown with the stack of the duplex flexible optical circuits placed therein;

FIG. 57 is a top, rear, left side exploded perspective view of the clamp structure of FIG. 56, the clamp structure shown with the stack of the duplex flexible optical circuits placed therein;

FIG. 57A is a close-up view illustrating the transition of the stacked duplex flexible optical circuits provided by the lower member of the clamp structure of FIG. 57;

FIG. 58 is a right side exploded perspective view of the clamp structure of FIG. 56 and the plurality of duplex flexible optical circuits of FIG. 53;

FIG. 59 is a rear exploded perspective view of the clamp structure of FIG. 56 and the plurality of duplex flexible optical circuits of FIG. 53;

FIG. 60 illustrates the clamp structure of FIG. 56 and the plurality of duplex flexible optical circuits of FIG. 53 in a clamped arrangement;

FIG. 60A is a close-up view illustrating the clamp structure of FIG. 60;

FIG. 61 illustrates the upper and lower members of the clamp structure of FIG. 56;

FIG. 62 is a top, rear, right side perspective view of a plurality of duplex flexible optical circuits similar to those of FIGS. 53-55 in a stacked arrangement, the duplex flexible optical circuits shown in an unterminated configuration;

FIG. 63 illustrates one of the duplex flexible optical circuits of FIG. 62, wherein one of the pigtails is shown as terminated to a ferrule assembly and the other of the pigtails shown exploded off a ferrule assembly;

FIG. 64 illustrates a plurality of ferrule assemblies that have been terminated to the pigtails of the flexible optical circuits of FIGS. 62-63, wherein one of the terminated ferrule assemblies is shown in a cross-sectional view bisecting the ferrule assembly along its longitudinal axis;

FIG. 65 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 65-65 of FIG. 64;

FIG. 66 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 66-66 of FIG. 64;

FIG. 67 is a top, rear, right side perspective view of another embodiment of a fiber optic cassette having features that are examples of inventive aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, the fiber optic cassette configured to house the duplex flexible optical circuits shown in FIGS. 62-64, the fiber optic cassette shown in a partially exploded configuration;

FIG. 68 illustrates the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 67 with the ferrule assemblies of the flexible optical circuits removed from the pockets of the adapter block of the cassette;

FIG. 69 is a close-up view of a portion of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 68;

FIG. 70 illustrates the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 67 from a front, bottom, right side perspective view, the cassette shown in a partially exploded configuration;

FIG. 71 illustrates the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 68 from a rear, bottom, right side perspective view;

FIG. 72 is a close-up view of a portion of the fiber optic cassette of FIG. 71;

FIG. 73 illustrates a fiber optic connector making electrical contact with media reading interfaces of the printed circuit board of the cassette of FIGS. 67-72;

FIG. 74 is a top plan view of a double flexible optical circuit having features that are examples of inventive aspects in accordance with the present disclosure;

FIG. 75 is a top perspective view illustrating the double flexible optical circuit of FIG. 74;

FIG. 76 is a bottom perspective view illustrating the double flexible optical circuit of FIG. 74;

FIG. 77 is a side view of a fixture for polishing the double flexible optical circuit illustrated in FIG. 74;

FIG. 78 is another side view illustrating the fixture of FIG. 77;

FIG. 79 is a top view illustrating the fixture of FIG. 77;

FIG. 80 is a side perspective view illustrating the fixture of FIG. 77;

FIG. 81 is a partially exploded side perspective view illustrating the fixture of FIG. 77;

FIG. 82 is a side view illustrating the fixture of FIG. 77;

FIG. 83 is a top perspective view of a sub-fixture for polishing a flexible optical circuit;

FIG. 84 is an exploded perspective view illustrating the sub-fixture of FIG. 83;

FIG. 85 is front view illustrating the sub-fixture of FIG. 83;

FIG. 86 is a top view of a fixture including two of the sub-fixtures illustrated in FIG. 83;

FIG. 87 is a side view illustrating the fixture of FIG. 86;

FIG. 88 is an opposite side view illustrating the fixture of FIG. 86;

FIG. 89 is an example method for manufacturing a flexible optical circuit using the fixture illustrated in FIG. 86;

FIG. 90 is a top perspective view of a fixture for polishing a flexible optical circuit;

FIG. 91 is a side view illustrating the fixture of FIG. 90;

FIG. 92 is another side view illustrating the fixture of FIG. 90;

FIG. 93 is a top view illustrating the fixture of FIG. 90;

FIG. 94 is a bottom illustrating a portion of the fixture of FIG. 90;

FIG. 95 is a side view of a duplex flex circuit;

5 FIG. 96 is a perspective view of another fixture configured to make an optical flex circuit;

FIG. 97 is another perspective view of the fixture of FIG. 96;

FIG. 98 is an enlarged view of a portion of the fixture of FIG. 97;

FIG. 99 is a perspective view of an example polishing fixture;

FIG. 100 is an enlarged view of a portion of the fixture of FIG. 96;

10 FIG. 101 is another perspective view of the fixture of FIG. 96;

FIG. 102 is another perspective view of the fixture of FIG. 96 mounted to a ribbonizing plate;

FIG. 103 is another perspective view of the fixture of FIG. 96;

FIG. 104 is another perspective view of the fixture of FIG. 96;

15 FIG. 105 is another perspective view of the fixture of FIG. 96; and

FIG. 106 is another perspective view of the fixture of FIG. 96.

Detailed Description of Preferred Embodiments of the Invention

20 The present disclosure is directed generally to fiber optic devices in the form of fiber optic cassettes. As will be described in further detail below, the different embodiments of the fiber optic cassettes of the present disclosure are designed to relay multiple fibers which terminate at a rear connector, such as an MPO style connector, to a plurality of ferrules positioned at a generally front portion of the cassette. The fiber optic cassettes of the
25 present disclosure, thus, provide a transition housing or support between multi-fibered connectors, such as the MPO style connectors having MT ferrules, and single or dual fiber connectors, such as LC or SC type connectors.

As will be described in further detail below, the different embodiments of the fiber optic
30 cassettes of the present disclosure utilize flexible optical circuits for the transition between the multi-fibered connectors positioned at one end of the cassette and the single or dual connectors positioned at an opposite end of the cassette.

Flexible optical circuits are passive optical components that comprise one or more (typically, multiple) optical fibers embedded on a flexible substrate, such as a Mylar™ or other flexible polymer substrate. Commonly, although not necessarily, one end face of each fiber is disposed adjacent one longitudinal end of the flexible optical circuit substrate and the other end face of each fiber is disposed adjacent the opposite longitudinal end of the flexible optical circuit substrate. The fibers extend past the longitudinal ends of the flexible optical circuit (commonly referred to as pigtails) so that they can be terminated to optical connectors, which can be coupled to fiber optic cables or other fiber optic components through mating optical connectors.

Flexible optical circuits essentially comprise one or more fibers sandwiched between two flexible sheets of material, such as Mylar™ or another polymer. An epoxy may be included between the two sheets in order to adhere them together. Alternately, depending on the sheet material and other factors, the two sheets may be heated above their melting point to heat-weld them together with the fibers embedded between the two sheets.

The use of flexible optical circuits within the fiber optic cassettes of the present disclosure provides a number of advantages, which will be discussed in further detail below. For example, the substrate of a flexible optical circuit is mechanically flexible, being able to accommodate tolerance variations in different cassettes, such as between connector ferrules and the housings that form the cassettes. The flexibility of the optical circuits also allow for axial movement in the fibers to account for ferrule interface variation. Also, by providing a rigid substrate within which the fibers are positionally fixed, use of flexible optical circuits allows a designer to optimize the fiber bend radius limits and requirements in configuring the cassettes, thus, achieving reduced dimensions of the cassettes. The bend radius of the fibers can thus be controlled to a minimum diameter. By utilizing optical fibers such as bend insensitive fibers (e.g., 8mm bend radius) in combination with a flexible substrate that fixes the fibers in a given orientation, allowing for controlled bending, small form cassettes may be produced in a predictable and automated manner. Manual handling and positioning of the fibers within the cassettes may be reduced and eliminated through the use of flexible optical circuits.

Now referring to FIGS. 1-24, a first embodiment of a fiber optic cassette 10 that utilizes a flexible optical circuit 12 is shown. In the fiber optic cassette 10 of FIGS. 1-24, the flexible optical circuit 12 is depicted as transitioning optical fibers 14 between a conventional connector 16 (e.g., an MPO connector) at the rear 18 of the cassette 10 and a plurality of non-conventional connectors 20 at the opposite front end 22 of the cassette 10, wherein portions of a substrate 24 of the flexible optical circuit 12 are physically inserted into the non-conventional connectors 20.

It should be noted that the term “non-conventional connector” may refer to a fiber optic connector that is not of a conventional type such as an LC or SC connector and one that has generally not become a recognizable standard footprint for fiber optic connectivity in the industry.

The elimination of conventional mating connectors inside the cassette 10 may significantly reduce the overall cost by eliminating the skilled labor normally associated with terminating an optical fiber to a connector, including polishing the end face of the fiber and epoxying the fiber into the connector. It further allows the fiber optic interconnect device such as the optical cassette 10 to be made very thin.

Still referring to FIGS. 1-24, the cassette 10 includes a body 26 defining the front 22, the rear 18 and an interior 28. Body 26 further includes a top 30, a bottom 32, and sides 34, 36.

A signal entry location 38 may be provided by the MPO connector 16, which, in the illustrated embodiment, is along the rear 18 of the cassette body 26. A pocket 40 seats the MPO connector 16 while flexible cantilever arms 42 may be provided for coupling a second mating MPO connector to the cassette 10 with a snap-fit interlock. Non-conventional connectors 20 are arranged linearly adjacent the front 22 of the cassette 10 and positioned along a longitudinal axis A defined by the body 26. In the depicted embodiment of the cassette 10, the MPO connector 16 of the cassette 10 is positioned to

extend parallel to the longitudinal axis A and generally perpendicular to ferrules 44 of the non-conventional connectors 20 at the front 22 of the cassette 10.

In general, cassette 10 includes the top 30 and bottom 32 which are generally parallel to each other and define the major surfaces of cassette body 26. Sides 34, 36, front 22, and rear 18 generally define the minor sides of cassette body 26. The cassette 10 can be oriented in any position, so that the top and bottom surfaces can be reversed, or positioned vertically, or at some other orientation.

In the embodiment of the fiber optic cassette 10 shown in FIGS. 1-24, the non-conventional connectors 20 that are positioned adjacent the front 22 of the cassette 10 each define a hub 46 mounted over the ferrule 44. A cross-section of the interface is seen in FIG. 15 and 15A. Each ferrule 44 is configured to terminate one of the fibers 14 extending out from the flexible circuit 12, as shown in FIGS. 21-24.

The non-conventional connectors 20 are placed within pockets 48 provided at a connection block or array 50 located at the front 22 of the cassette 10. A split sleeve 52 is also provided for ferrule alignment between the hub 46 and ferrule 44 of each non-conventional connector 20 and the ferrule of another mating connector that enters the cassette 10 from the front 22.

The mating connectors entering the cassette 10 from the front 22 of the cassette 10 may be connected through fiber optic adapters that are mounted on the connection block 50. The cassette 10 of FIGS. 1-24 is shown without the rows of adapters at the front 22 of the cassette 10 that would allow conventional connectors such as LC connectors to be mated to the non-conventional connectors 20 located within the interior 28 of the cassette 10. Such adapters or adapter blocks may be snap fit, ultrasonically welded, or otherwise attached to the rest of the cassette body 26. In the versions of the fiber optic cassettes 110, 210 illustrated in FIGS. 25-36 and 40-42, respectively, the rows of fiber optic adapters 5 are shown on the cassettes 110, 210.

In the illustrated embodiment of the cassette 10 of FIGS. 1-24, the adapters that would be used with the cassette 10 are sized to receive mating LC connectors. SC connectors can also be used with appropriate sized adapters.

- 5 The cassette 10 of FIGS. 1-24 can be sealed or can be openable, so as to allow repair, or cleaning of the inner hubs 46 and ferrules 44. In some cases, the adapter blocks can be snap fit to a rest of the body 26 for ease of assembly. Adapter blocks can also preferably be removed from a rest of the cassette 10 to allow for cleaning of the inner non-conventional connector 20. The flexible fiber optic circuit 12 allows the entire fiber
10 bundle, including the MPO connector 16 to be able to be removed for cleaning or replacement.

Referring specifically now to FIGS. 13 and 16-24, fiber pigtails 14 extending out from a rear end 54 of the substrate 24 forming the flexible optical circuit 12 are ribbonized for
15 termination to an MT ferrule 56 of the MPO connector 16. The fiber pigtails 14 extending out from a front end 58 of the substrate 24 are individually terminated to the ferrules 44 to be positioned at the front 22 of the cassette 10. As shown, the substrate 24 defines front extensions 60 (one per fiber 14) each provided in a spaced apart configuration for providing some flexibility to the substrate 24. The individual fibers 14 are separated out
20 from the ribbonized section at the rear 54 of the substrate 24 and are routed through the substrate 24 to the individual front extensions 60. Each ferrule hub 46 defines a notch or a cut-out 62 for receiving front portions 64 of the front extensions 60 of the substrate 24.

Fiber pigtails 14 that extend from each of the front extensions 60 of the substrate 24 are
25 illustrated in FIGS. 21-24 diagrammatically. Referring now to the diagrammatic views of FIGS. 21-24, according to one example embodiment, the fiber pigtails 14 extending from the substrate 24 may be defined by an optical fiber 66 that is made up of a fiber core surrounded by a cladding layer. A portion 68 of the front extension 60 of the substrate 24 forming the flexible optical circuit 12 is inserted into a cylindrical bore 70 extending
30 through the center of the ferrule hub 46, while an exposed optical fiber 66 that is made up of the fiber core and the surrounding cladding (after the primary coating has been stripped)

is inserted into the ferrule 44 (see FIG. 21). The cut-out 62 of the ferrule hub 46 receives the portion 68 of the front extension 60 of the substrate 24 in stabilizing the termination.

According to one example process step, by using a rigid substrate, when the fibers are being terminated to the ferrules 44, the ends of the fibers may be cleaved and ends of all of the ferrules 44 extending from the substrate 24 may be polished simultaneously.

As shown in FIGS. 11-13, 15, and 15A, in addition to the inherent ability of the substrate 24 of the flexible optical circuit 12 to provide a bias for the ferrules 44 of the non-conventional connectors 20 at the front 22 of the cassette 10 for ferrule interface variations, other structures may be used to supplement the inherent bias of the flexible circuit 12. For example, in the depicted embodiment of the cassette 10, a spring clip 72 is positioned within a pocket 74 in the cassette 10 and extends parallel to the longitudinal axis A of the cassette body 26. In a conventional fiber optic connector, the ferrule assemblies normally include springs such that when they are mated in an adapter, the ferrules are pressed together against the bias of the spring. In the depicted cassette 10, the spring clip 72 may be positioned to abut rear ends 75 of the ferrule hubs 46 so as provide some bias to the ferrules 44 when they are mating incoming connectors. The flexibility of the substrate 24 of the flexible optical circuit 12 allows the ferrules 44 of the non-conventional connectors 20 to flex back and the spring clip 72 provides additional bias to force them forwardly. The spring clip 72 may be adhered to the portions of the cassette 10 for rigidly fixing the spring clip 72 within the cassette 10.

It should be noted that a structure such as the spring clip 72 can be used on any of the embodiments of the fiber optic cassettes described and illustrated in the present application.

Referring now to FIGS. 25-36, another embodiment of a fiber optic cassette 110 is illustrated. The fiber optic cassette 110, similar to the cassette 10 of FIGS. 1-24, utilizes a flexible fiber optic circuit 112 within the body 126 for relaying fibers 114. In this embodiment, a multi-fiber connector 116 (in the form of an MPO connector) is oriented parallel to non-conventional connectors 120 that are at the front 122 of the cassette 110,

generally perpendicular to the longitudinal axis A defined by the cassette 110. The multi-fiber connector 116 is mounted to the cassette 110 via a multi-fiber adapter 111 seated within a pocket 140 at a rear 118 of the cassette 110.

5 The flexible circuit 112 is configured to transition fibers 114 from the multi-fiber connector 116 at the rear 118 defining the signal entry location 138 to non-conventional connectors 120 at the front 122 of the cassette 110. The cassette 110 is shown to include multiple rows of adapters 5 in the form of an adapter block 115 at the front 122 of the cassette 110. Via the adapters 5, conventional connectors such as LC connectors may be
10 mated with ferrules 144 of the non-conventional connectors 120 located at the front 122 of the cassette 110. The adapters 5 are arranged linearly and positioned along longitudinal axis A. In the illustrated embodiment, adapters 5 are sized to receive front LC connectors. SC connectors can also be used with appropriate sized adapters. In the illustrated embodiment, the adapters 5 are formed in a block construction 115 having a front end 117,
15 and an opposite rear end 119. Front end 115 includes a profile for receiving LC connectors. At the rear end 119 of the adapter block 115, the ferrule assemblies of the non-conventional connectors 120 including the ferrule hubs 146 and the ferrules 144 are seated in pockets 148 aligned with ports 121 of the adapters 5. For each connector pair, a split sleeve 152 is also provided for ferrule alignment between hub and ferrule of each
20 non-conventional connector 120 and the ferrule of a conventional LC connector.

As shown and as discussed previously, the adapter blocks 115 may be snap fit, ultrasonically welded or otherwise attached to a rest of the cassette body 126 or formed as part of the body 126. A cover 127 may be used to cover an area behind blocks 115. In
25 FIGS. 26-31, the cassette 110 has been shown without the cover 127 to illustrate the internal features of the cassette 110.

As in the first embodiment of the cassette 10, the cassette 110 of FIGS. 25-36 is configured such that it can be sealed or can be openable, so as to allow repair, or cleaning
30 of the inner hub 146 and ferrule 144. In some cases, the adapter blocks 115 can be snap fit to a rest of the body 126 for ease of assembly. Adapter blocks 115 can also preferably be removed from a rest of the cassette 110 to allow for cleaning of the inner non-conventional

connector 120. The flexible fiber optic circuit 112 allows the entire fiber bundle, including the MPO connector 116 to be able to be removed for cleaning or replacement.

5 The termination of the fiber pigtails 114 extending from a front 158 of the substrate 124 of the flexible circuit 112 is similar to the termination for the ferrule assemblies described above with respect to the cassette 10 of FIGS. 1-24. At the rear 154 of the substrate 124, as described previously, the fibers 114 are ribbonized for termination to an MT ferrule 156.

10 The substrate 124 includes extensions 160 at the front side 158. The extensions 160 define cut-outs 161 between each one. The cutouts 161 allow flexibility for the substrate 124 and essentially enable the ferrules 144 of the non-conventional connectors 120 to be generally free floating structures to allow for movement in two different axes (e.g., upward/downward, front/back).

15 Referring specifically to FIGS. 27, 28, 31, 33, and 36, the substrate 124 of the flexible optical circuit 112 is also illustrated with a bent portion 125 adjacent the rear pocket 140 of the cassette 110. As discussed previously, one advantage of using a flexible substrate 124 to anchor the fibers 114 is to allow limited controlled movement of the substrate 124 either to accommodate any tolerance variances between the internal components and the cassette body 126 or to accommodate any movement of the internal ferrules 144 during connection to incoming connectors.

25 An example of a simple flexible optical circuit 312 having a substrate 324 that includes a design for controlled bending and allowing axial movement in the fibers 314 is illustrated in FIGS. 37-39. Either a U-bend or an S-bend 325 can be provided in the substrate 324 of the flexible optical circuit 312 for allowing axial movement for the fibers 314. With the tolerances of connector ferrules and molded polymeric structures (such as the cassette body), there can be a significant build up of ferrule interface variation. By allowing the substrate 324 of the flexible circuit 312 to bend in a controlled way, these tolerances can be accommodated.

FIGS. 40-42 illustrate another embodiment of a fiber optic cassette 210 utilizing a flexible optical circuit 212, wherein the bend 225 is provided generally in the middle portion 227 of the substrate 224 of the circuit 212. The substrate 224 of the cassette 210 of FIGS. 40-42 provides similar advantages as the cassettes 10, 110 described in previous embodiments.

As another example, FIGS. 43-45 illustrate a flexible circuit 412 including a substrate 424 with a twist 425 in the ribbonized-fiber part of the substrate 424. Such a design can accommodate a large variation in distance between connector interfaces. As shown in the embodiment of the flexible circuit 412 of FIGS. 43-45, the MPO connector at the rear end of the substrate may define a longitudinal axis that is perpendicular to those of the non-conventional connectors at the front of the substrate 424. Thus, the fibers 14 extending from the MPO connector may follow an "S" or "Z" shaped pathway before being terminated to the front connectors. In the depicted embodiment, the optical fibers 14 enter the substrate 424 in a side-by-side, non-overlapping configuration and branch out therefrom as they extend to the non-conventional connectors at the front of the substrate. The substrate 424 allows the fibers 14 to follow such a path while preserving any minimum bend radius requirements. In a different example embodiment that will be discussed below shown in FIGS. 51, 52, the fibers entering the substrate at the back may be oriented parallel to the portions exiting from the front of the substrate. In such an example, the fibers may enter from the rear of the substrate, again, in a non-overlapping configuration and may branch out to the different non-conventional connectors at the front of the substrate, following minimum bend radius requirements.

Referring now to FIGS. 46-50, an embodiment of a ferrule strip 500 is illustrated. One of the issues normally encountered in assembly of the cassettes (e.g., 10, 110, 210) utilizing non-conventional connectors (e.g., 20, 120) at one end of the adapter blocks (e.g., 115) is the loading of the ferrule hubs (e.g., 46, 146) onto the flex circuit (e.g., 12, 112, 212) and handling of the ferrule hubs. According to one inventive method, the ferrules (e.g., 44, 144) may be overmolded with a polymeric multi-ferrule strip 500 that forms a plurality of integral hubs 546. The multi-ferrule strip 500 can be molded to hold the ferrules 544 at the

correct pitch for insertion into the pockets (e.g., 48, 148) of the cassettes (e.g., 10, 110, 210).

Now referring generally to FIGS. 51-61, when using a flexible circuit that includes a plurality of fibers embedded therein, production yield may be a big issue, especially given that all of the individual fibers have to be separately terminated into individual ferrules at the front of the flexible optical circuit. If there is any damage to one of the terminations (e.g., either to a fiber or to a ceramic ferrule), the entire flexible circuit may become unusable. The present disclosure contemplates methodologies for allowing individual retermination of the fibers if one of the optical fibers or ferrules fails.

Referring specifically now to FIGS. 51-52, according to one embodiment methodology, a looped length 613 of buffered fiber 614 may be stored within the cassette between the flexible substrate 624 and each of the non-conventional connectors 620. If one of the terminations fails, a technician would be able to unloop the length 613 of fiber 614 and reterminate, saving the rest of the flexible circuit 612.

According to another methodology, as illustrated in FIGS. 53-61, instead of utilizing a single flexible substrate for all of the fibers relayed from the multi-fiber connector 716, a plurality of separate duplex substrates 724 can be used in a stacked arrangement. Each duplex stack can be mounted removably on the cassette and may be removed for repair or replacement if one of the terminations fails.

As shown in FIGS. 53-61, according to one embodiment, there may be six duplex flex circuits 712 including six substrates 724, totaling the twelve fibers 714 coming from an MPO connector. In such an embodiment, all six of the substrates 724 may be provided by, for example, manufacturing three different shapes and then flipping the three differently shaped substrates 180 degrees to provide the six needed duplex substrates 724 for the whole stack. As shown in FIGS. 53-55, the three different shapes would be configured such that, when stacked, front extensions 760 of the substrates 724 would be spaced apart to resemble the front extensions (e.g., 60, 160) of a single integral substrate (e.g., 24, 124, 224) and to fit within the internal configuration of a given cassette.

Referring now to FIGS. 54-61, since the portion of the fibers 714 that are to be terminated to the MT ferrule of an MPO connector have to be provided in a flat, ribbonized configuration for the termination and since the stacked flex circuits 712 have the fibers 714 in a stepped configuration, a clamp structure 780 that acts as a fiber transition device may be used within the cassette 712.

As shown in FIGS. 54-61, the clamp structure 780 may include an upper member 782 that is snap fit to a lower member 784 with cantilever arms 786 that have tapered tabs 788. Both the upper and the lower members 782, 784 of the clamp structure 780 provide a fiber channel/guide 790 that includes steps 792 for transitioning the fibers 714 from a stepped configuration to a flat configuration for terminating to the MT ferrule 756 of an MPO connector 716. The clamp 780 is designed such that stacked flex fibers 714 are converted to a linear plane so they can be ribbonized while maintaining the minimum bend radius requirements of the fibers 714. The upper and lower members 782, 784 of the clamp structure 780 removably snap together for both holding the stacked substrates 724 in position and for controlling the transition of the fibers 714 while supporting bend radius limitations. If any of the flex substrates, the ferrules, or the fibers are damaged, the clamp structure 780 can be taken apart, removing the flex substrate 724 to be repaired or replaced.

According to certain embodiments, any of the cassettes described above and illustrated herein may have a length of 3 to 4 inches (parallel to the longitudinal direction A), a width of 2 to 3 inches (front to back), and a height of approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. More preferably, the length may be 3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the width may be 2 to $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and the height may be $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. The height can vary as needed, such as to accommodate different formats of adapters 5 or multiple rows of adapters 5.

Referring now to FIGS. 62-66, another example method for terminating a fiber pigtail 814 extending out from a front end 858 of a flex substrate 824 to a ferrule of a non-conventional connector is illustrated. In the depicted embodiment, duplex flex circuits 812 similar to flex circuits 712 discussed above are used to illustrate the example termination

method. As shown in FIG. 62, such duplex circuits 812 are provided in a stacked arrangement when being placed into a cassette body. According to the embodiment shown in FIGS. 62-66, the pigtails 814 that are to be individually terminated to ferrules 844 are formed by stripping a portion of the flex substrate 824 (including a primary coating layer of the fiber) such that an optical fiber 866 formed from a combination of a fiber core and a cladding layer is left. In certain embodiments, the optical fiber 866 formed from the fiber core and the cladding layer may be 125 micron in cross-dimension. The primary coating layer that is stripped is generally around 250 micron in cross-dimension according to one embodiment. The optical fiber 866 extends from a portion 868 of a front extension 860 of the flex substrate 824 that is to be inserted into the ferrule hub 846. According to certain embodiments, portion 868 defines a generally square cross-sectional shape having side dimensions of .5mm each. Thus, the square cross-sectional portion 868 is able to be inserted into a cylindrical bore 870 extending through the center of a ferrule hub 846, which may be about .9mm in diameter (see FIGS. 63-66). The exposed optical fiber 866 that is made up of the fiber core and the surrounding cladding (after the primary coating has been stripped) is inserted into the ferrule 844, as seen in FIGS. 64-66.

Now referring to FIGS. 67-73, an example of a cassette 810 that is configured for receiving stacked flex circuits such as the flex circuits 812 shown in FIGS. 62-66 is illustrated. The cassette 810 is similar in certain aspects to the cassettes 10, 110, and 210 shown in previous embodiments. However, the cassette 810 defines pockets 848 at the front end 822 of the cassette body that match the exterior shape of the ferrule hubs 846 (e.g., having hexagonal footprints), wherein the pockets 848 are configured to fully surround the ferrule hubs 846. The pockets 848 are formed from portions of the cassette body that are integrally formed with the adapter block 815 of the cassette 810. As shown, the adapter block 815 is removably inserted into the cassette body 826. The pockets 848, also having a hexagonal configuration, match the exterior shape of the ferrule hubs 846 and prevent rotation of the hubs therewithin. In this manner, the hubs are retained in a stable manner during termination, assembly, polishing, etc.

Even though the ferrule hubs 846 and the matching pockets 848 have been illustrated with a hexagonal cross-section in the depicted embodiment, in other embodiments, the keying

mechanism can be provided using different cross-sectional shapes having flat portions (such as square, rectangular, etc.). For example, an embodiment of a ferrule usable with the cassettes of the present disclosure having squared ferrule hubs has been shown in FIGS. 53-57 and 60.

As shown, the cassette body 826 defines pockets 840 for receiving a clamp structure 880 (similar to the clamp structure 780 of FIGS. 56-61) and an MPO connector 816 that is terminated to the rear ends of the individual duplex flex substrates 824.

Still referring to FIGS. 67-73, the embodiment of the cassette 810 used with the stacked duplex flex circuits 812 has been illustrated with further additional aspects that may be used on the cassettes (e.g., 10, 110, 210) of the earlier embodiments. For example, in accordance with some aspects, certain types of adapters that form the adapter blocks at the fronts of the cassettes may be configured to collect physical layer information from one or more fiber optic connectors (e.g., LC connectors) received thereat. Certain types of adapters may include a body configured to hold one or more media reading interfaces that are configured to engage memory contacts on the fiber optic connectors. The one or more media reading interfaces may be positioned in each adapter body in different ways. In certain implementations, the adapter body may define slots extending between an exterior of the adapter body and an internal passage in which the ferrules of the connectors are received. Certain types of media reading interfaces may include one or more contact members that are positioned in such slots. A portion of each contact member may extend into a respective one of the passages to engage memory contacts on a fiber optic connector.

In the depicted example of the cassette 810 of FIGS. 67-73, the contacts 801 that extend into each of the adapter passages of the block 815 are on a removable structure. The contacts 801 are defined on a printed circuit board 803 that is placed between the flexible circuits 812 and the cover 827 of the cassette 810. The contacts 801 align with the top sides of the adapter passages and extend into the adapter passages so as to engage memory contacts of fiber optic connectors inserted into the adapter passages. The printed circuit board 803 is designed to relay the electrical signals from the contacts 801 at the front of

the cassette 810 to the rear of the cassette 810 as shown in FIGS. 67-73. A conductive path may be defined by the printed circuit board 803 between the contacts 801 of the adapters at the front end with a master circuit board. The master circuit board may include or connect (e.g., over a network) to a processing unit that is configured to manage physical layer information obtained by the media reading interfaces. FIG. 73 illustrates a fiber optic connector making electrical contact with the media reading interfaces 801 of the printed circuit board 803 of the cassette 810.

Example adapters having media reading interfaces and example fiber optic connectors having suitable memory storage and memory contacts are shown in U.S. Application No. 13/025,841, filed February 11, 2011, titled "Managed Fiber Connectivity Systems," the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference.

In addition to the various uses and applications of the described cassettes, the cassettes can be used to terminate the fibers of a multi-fiber FOT cable, such as a 144-fiber cable, to make installation of the terminated cables easier and faster.

One advantage of the disclosed cassettes is that handling in the field of individual connectors, MPO connectors, or fanouts with upjackets are eliminated. The dimensions of the cassettes 10, 110, 210, 810 may be reduced by using flexible substrates (e.g., 24, 124, 224, 824) that allow optimization of the bend radius limits of the fibers by fixing the fibers in a given footprint or pattern. Also, manual handling and termination of individual fibers within the cassettes is reduced or eliminated, wherein automated, repeatable terminations may be provided within the cassettes.

The cassettes described and illustrated herein may be used by being mounted to different types of telecommunications fixtures. The cassettes of the present disclosure may be fixedly mounted or mounted, for example, as part of slidably movable modules or packs.

The example cassettes disclosed herein are further described in U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 61/707,323, Attorney Docket No. 02316.3554USP1, filed on even date herewith

and entitled "Fiber Optic Cassette." These cassettes can be manufactured using one or more of the apparatuses and processes described below.

Referring now to FIGS. 74-76, an example double flexible optical circuit 910 is shown.

5 The double flexible optical circuit 910 includes two flexible optical circuits 922, 924 (similar to fiber optic circuit 112 described above) joined together at a juncture or dividing line 920. Specifically, MPO connectors 912, 914 are connected by pigtails 916, 918 positioned in separate extensions 919 of the flexible optical circuits 922, 924.

10 In this "double" configuration, the double flexible optical circuit 910 acts as a patch cord for purposes of testing the double flexible optical circuit 910. Each of the MPO connectors 912, 914 can be connected to testing equipment, and the connectors and optical fibers in the double flexible optical circuit 910 can be tested for such attributes as geometry and attenuation.

15 Once testing of the double flexible optical circuit 910 is complete, the double flexible optical circuit 910 is cleaved at the junction 920 to form the two separate flexible optical circuits 922, 924. At this point, each of the flexible optical circuits 922, 924 can be terminated and further processed as described herein.

20 Referring now to FIGS. 77-82, an example fixture 930 for polishing the ferrules of the MPO connectors 912, 914 of multiple double flexible optical circuits 910 is shown. In this example, the fixture 930 is a fixture such as that disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 7,738,760 entitled "Optical Polishing Fixture," the entirety of which is hereby incorporated by
25 reference.

In this example, the fixture 930 is modified to hold the double flexible optical circuits 910 during polishing. A central member 934 is connected to a base 932 such as that disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 7,738,760. The central member 934 is configured to interface with a
30 plurality of holder members 936. Each holder member 936 holds one double flexible optical circuit 910 during polishing.

Specifically, the holder member 936 includes a curved body 940 sized to hold the double flexible optical circuit 910 in a folded configuration. The double flexible optical circuit 910 is folded along a mid-line 921 (see FIG. 74) to form a generally U-shaped configuration so that a plurality of double flexible optical circuits 910 can be loaded onto the base 932. The holder member 936 includes a termination member 938 sized to hold the MPO connector 912, 914 opposite to the MPO connector 912, 914 being polished.

In this configuration, multiple holder members 936, each holding one double flexible optical circuit 910, are loaded into the fixture 930 for polishing. When polishing of the ferrules in one of the MPO connectors 912, 914 is complete, the double flexible optical circuits 910 can be flipped to allow the other MPO connectors 912, 914 to be polished.

The fixture 930 is advantageous in that multiple double flexible optical circuits 910 can be polished using a standard polishing fixture. This results in increased compatibility with current polishing practices and enhances the speed at which the double flexible optical circuits 910 can be polished.

Referring now to FIGS. 83-94, example apparatuses and processes are shown for polishing the connectors to be positioned at the front of the cassette. In these examples, ferrules associated with the connectors are polished to optimize connections with the connectors.

In FIGS. 83-88, an example fixture 950 is shown. The fixture 950 includes two sub-fixtures 952, 954 that are connected to a base 956. In this example, the base 956 is similar to that disclosed in U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0182015, entitled "Polisher," the entirety of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

Each of the sub-fixtures 952, 954 holds one flexible optical circuit 922. The sub-fixture 952 includes a main body 958 that can be used to terminate the flexible optical circuit 922. Specifically, the flexible optical circuit 922 is terminated using the sub-fixture 952 as follows.

An example method 951 for terminating the flexible optical circuit 922 is shown in FIG. 89. Initially, ferrules 970 are positioned in holes 966 formed in the main body 958

(operation 953). An epoxy is positioned within each of the ferrules 970 (operation 955). A clamp member 972 is then affixed to the main body 958 using screws 974. The clamp member 972 includes grooves 976 formed to correspond to each of the ferrules 970 so that, when the clamp member 972 is attached to the main body 958, the clamp member 972 holds the ferrules 970 in place.

Next, the flexible optical circuit 922 is positioned within the main body 958 (operation 957). Bumpers 962 on the main body 958 form channels 964 so that each of the fibers and associated foil (i.e., the extensions 919) are directed properly towards the respective ferrule 970 in the main body 958. The fibers are fed through the ferrules 970 (operation 959), and the epoxy is cured in an oven (operation 961), thereby affixing the fibers within the ferrules. In addition, the MPO connector 912 is positioned in a termination member 960 sized to hold the MPO connector 912 at an appropriate distance from the free ends of the fibers.

Once the flexible optical circuit 922 has been terminated, the fibers are cleaved (operation 963), and the ferrules are ready to be polished. During polishing (operation 965), the two sub-fixtures 952, 954 are coupled back-to-back to the base 956 using bolts 982 that extend through holes 980 formed in each of the sub-fixtures 952, 954. See FIGS. 86-88. In this configuration, the X and Y axes for the ferrules 970 are fixed. Differences in the Z axis (i.e., the axis defining the relative heights of each of the ferrules to the polishing surface) are addressed by the polishing machine during polishing of the ferrules 970. In this position, the fixture 950 is loaded onto a polishing machine, and the ferrules are polished using known techniques.

Referring now to FIGS. 90-94, another example fixture 990 is shown. The fixture 990 includes sub-fixtures 992, 994 that are similar to that of the fixture 950 described above. However, the sub-fixtures 992, 994 include hinges 996, 998 that allow the sub-fixtures 992, 994 to form a generally curved profile. See FIGS. 93-94.

Specifically, the sub-fixture 992 includes hinges 996, 998 that allow the flat sub-fixture 992 to be pivoted to form a radius between components 992A, 992B, 992C of the sub-

fixture 992. When placed on a base 991 of the fixture 990, the sub-fixtures 992, 994 can be curved to generally form a hexagonal shape. As shown in FIG. 94, this hexagonal shape approximates a radius, so that when the ferrules held by the sub-fixtures 992, 994 are polished using standard polishing techniques, there is no significant difference in the travel
5 between ferrules upon the polishing surface. In other words, the ferrules held by the sub-fixtures 992, 994 travel in approximately a same amount during polishing. In one example, the ferrules are held so that the difference in travel is less than four percent. This assures that no ferrules are over- or under-polished.

10 In some examples, the sub-fixtures 992, 994 are biased into the flat position. In other words, when no pressure is exerted onto the sub-fixture 992, the components 992A, 992B, 992C align linearly (i.e., flat) with respect to one another, similar to that of the sub-fixtures 952, 954. When force is applied, the components 992A, 992C can be rotated relative to the component 992B to form the radiused shape shown in FIGS. 93-94. When the force is
15 released, the components 992A and 992C again align linearly. In this example, a spring, such as a leaf spring, can be positioned on the components 992A and 992C to bias the components 992A and 992C into the linear alignment.

Referring now to FIG. 95, a duplex flex circuit 900 is shown. In this example, the duplex
20 flex circuit 900 includes a substrate 904 with fibers 906, 908 running therethrough, similar to that shown in FIGS. 53-61. The fibers 906, 908 are terminated with ferrules 911.

At an end opposite the termination, the fibers 906, 908 form a single loop 902 such that the fiber 906 is optically coupled to the fiber 908. In this manner, the duplex flex circuit 900
25 can be tested using the ferrules 911 that can be connected to testing equipment. Signals can be sent through either fiber 906, 908 and received using the opposite fiber for testing.

Once testing is complete, the loop 902 can be cut, thereby forming two separate fiber optic pathways. The resulting free fiber ends can be terminated using one or more conventional
30 methods, such as those described above.

Referring now to FIGS. 96-106, another example fixture 1920 and process for making flex circuits is shown.

5 In FIGS. 96-98, the fixture 1920 includes a fixture body 1922 defining a plurality of channels 1929 into which duplex flex circuits 1932 are positioned. At an end 1926 of the fixture 1920, ferrule hubs 1928 are positioned (which are similar to ferrule hubs 846 described above) prior to placement of the duplex flex circuits 1932.

10 Next, duplex flex circuits 1932, which have been stripped, are loaded into the channels 1929 formed in the fixture body 1922. Fibers 1934 associated with each of the duplex flex circuits 1932 are positioned within and extend through the ferrule hubs 1928.

15 The fixture 1920 is then placed into a curing station (not shown) so that an epoxy within the ferrule hubs 1928 is cured to thereby bond the ferrule hubs 1928 to the respective duplex flex circuits 1932. After curing, the fibers 1934 are cleaved.

20 Referring now to FIG. 99, once the fibers 1934 are cleaved, the duplex flex circuits 1932 are removed from the fixture 1920 and placed onto a fixture 1940 for polishing. The fixture 1940 includes a plurality of locations 1942 into which the ferrule hubs 1928 are loaded, allowing the fibers 1934 to extend below the fixture 1940. The duplex flex circuits 1932 are then polished using known techniques, as described above. After polishing, the duplex flex circuits 1932 can be tested.

25 Referring now to FIGS. 100-101, a lower member 1946 of a clamp structure (see clamp structure 780 described above) is positioned within an opening 1944 formed within a member 1924 of the fixture body 1922. Next, the duplex flex circuits 1932, which have been polished and tested, are loaded back into the fixture 1920.

30 As shown in FIG. 102-106, the fixture 1920 is mounted to a ribbonizing plate 1950, and a clamp 1952 holds a free end of the duplex flex circuits 1932. Next, an adapter 1954 is fitted to the fixture 1920, and then heating and stripping tool components 1956, 1960 are

mounted to strip the duplex flex circuits 1932. The upper member 1960 is mounted to the lower member 1946 of the clamp.

The fibers are thereupon cleaved, and a cure adapter 1958 is mounted to the fixture 1920. An MPO connector 1964 is positioned in place on the cure adapter 1958, and epoxy is applied. The fixture 1920 is then loaded into a curing station to cure the epoxy to thereby couple the fibers of the flex circuits 1932 to the MPO connector 1964, and the ferrules associated with the MPO connector 1964 are cleaved. Finally, the flex circuit is removed from the fixture 1920, the ferrules associated with the MPO connector 1964 are polished and tested.

Although in the foregoing description, terms such as "top," "bottom," "front," "back," "right," "left," "upper," and "lower" were used for ease of description and illustration, no restriction is intended by such use of the terms. The telecommunications devices described herein can be used in any orientation, depending upon the desired application.

Having described the preferred aspects and embodiments of the present disclosure, modifications and equivalents of the disclosed concepts may readily occur to one skilled in the art. However, it is intended that such modifications and equivalents be included within the scope of the claims which are appended hereto.

Throughout this specification and the claims which follow, unless the context requires otherwise, the word "comprise", and variations such as "comprises" and "comprising", will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated integer or step or group of integers or steps but not the exclusion of any other integer or step or group of integers or steps.

The reference in this specification to any prior publication (or information derived from it), or to any matter which is known, is not, and should not be taken as an acknowledgment or admission or any form of suggestion that that prior publication (or information derived from it) or known matter forms part of the common general knowledge in the field of endeavour to which this specification relates.

Claims Defining the Invention

1. A fixture for a flexible optical circuit, the fixture comprising:
a base member defining a plurality of openings sized to receive ferrules and a
5 plurality of pathways positioned to receive extensions of the flexible optical circuit; and
a clamp member positioned to hold the ferrules in place within the openings during
assembly of the flexible optical circuit.
2. The fixture of claim 1, further comprising a member sized to hold a connector
10 positioned at an end of the flexible optical circuit opposite to that of the extensions.
3. The fixture of claim 1, wherein the fixture includes two halves, with each half
holding one flexible optical circuit during polishing of the ferrules.
- 15 4. The fixture of claim 1, wherein the fixture is configured to hold the flexible optical
circuit during assembly, curing, polishing and testing.
5. The fixture of claim 1, wherein the base member of the fixture includes three
components, with each of the three components being hinged relative to an adjacent
20 component.
6. The fixture of claim 5, wherein the three components are pivotable to form a
radius.
- 25 7. The fixture of claim 5, wherein the fixture includes two bases, with each of the
bases being hinged, and the two bases forming a hexagonal shape during polishing.
8. The fixture of claim 5, wherein the three components are biased into a linear
arrangement.

30

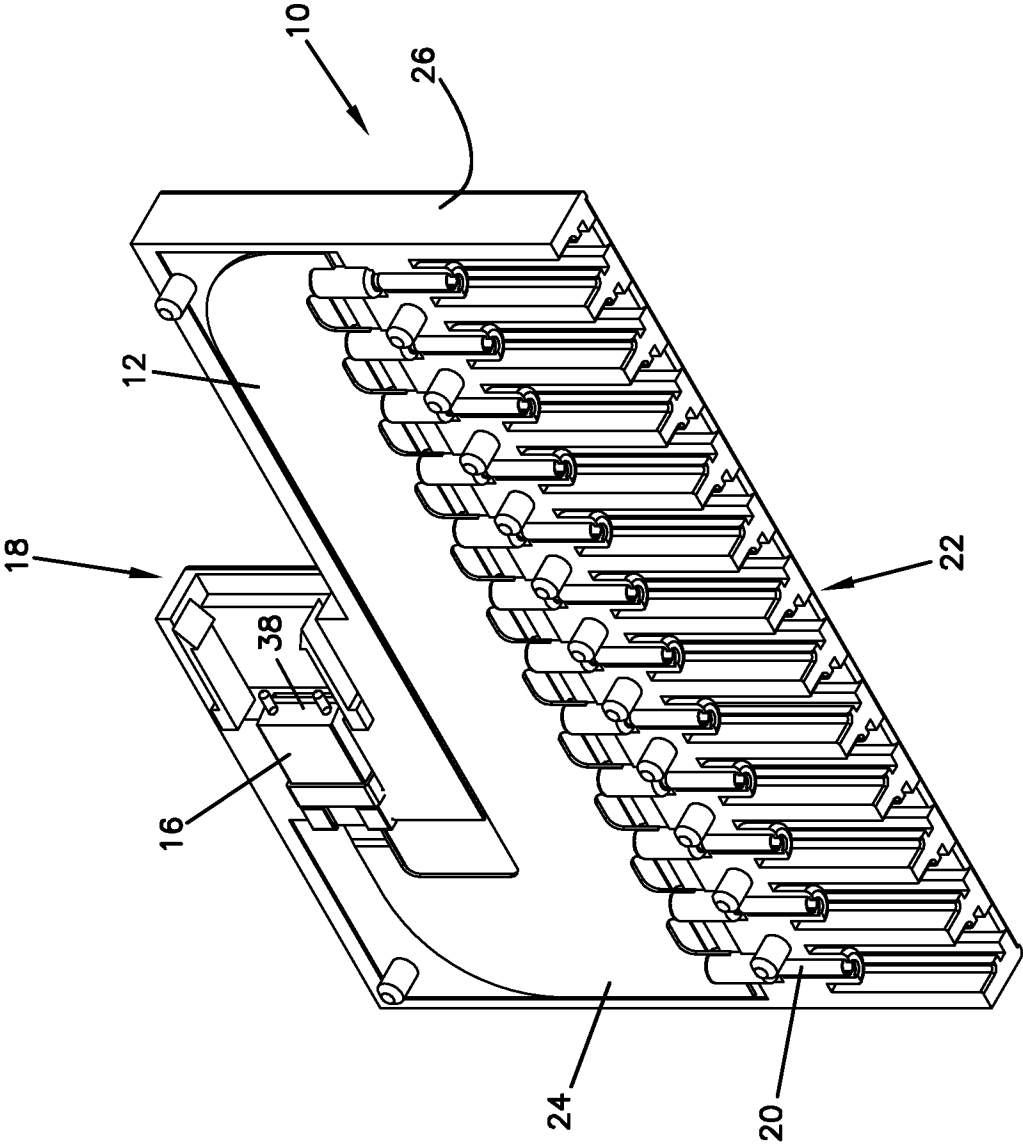


FIG. 1

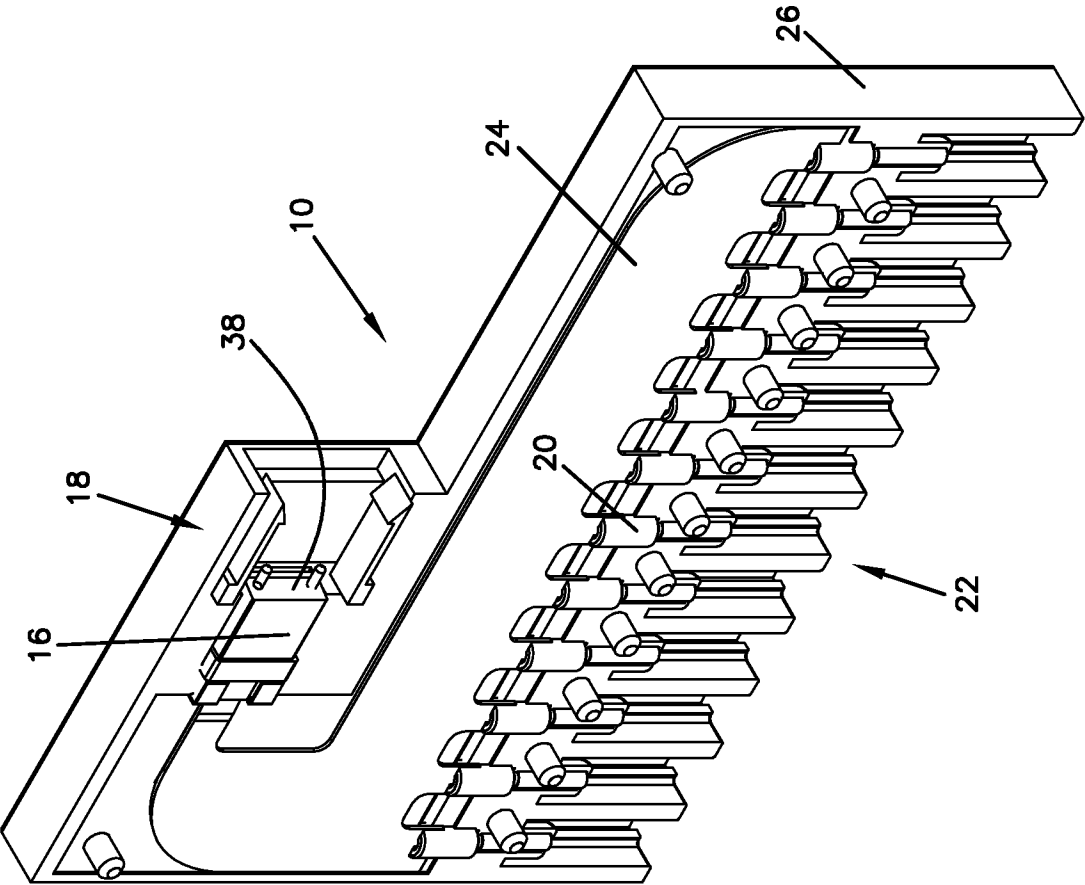


FIG. 2

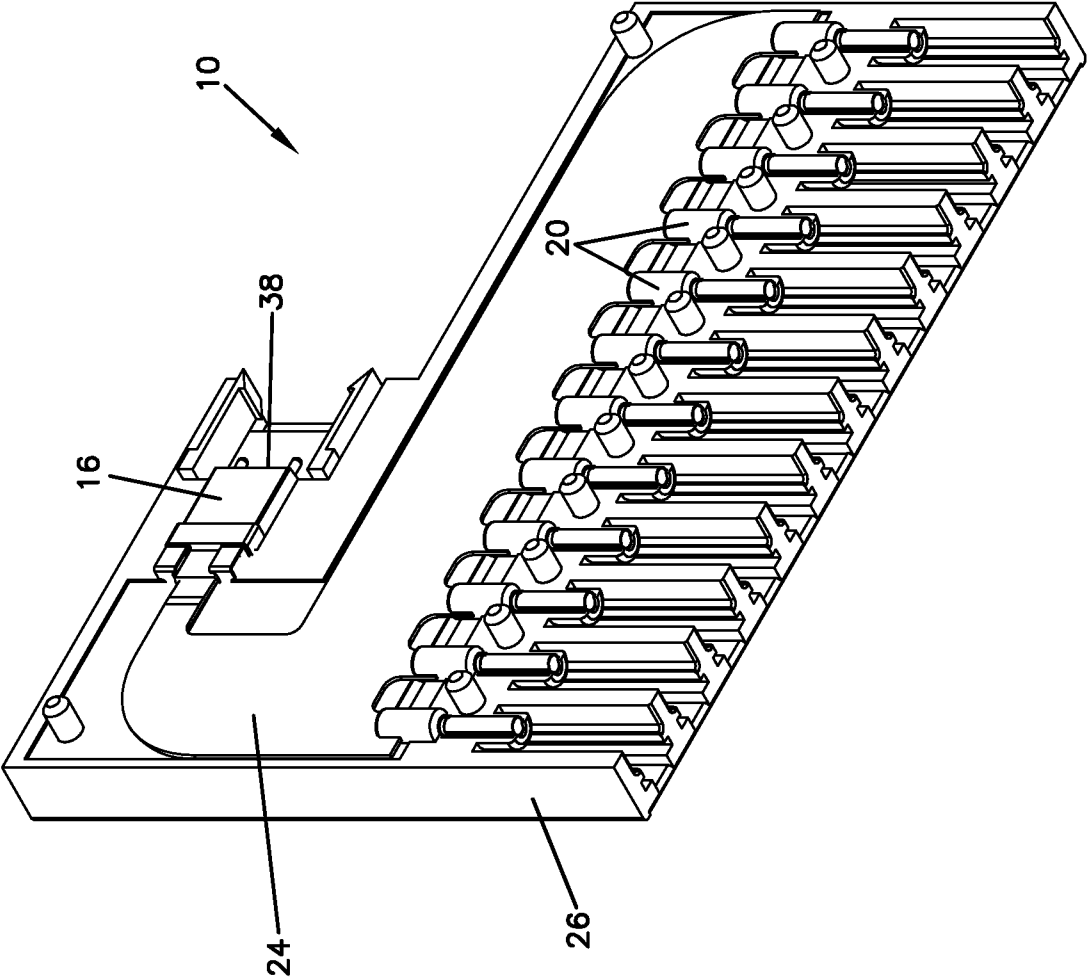


FIG. 3

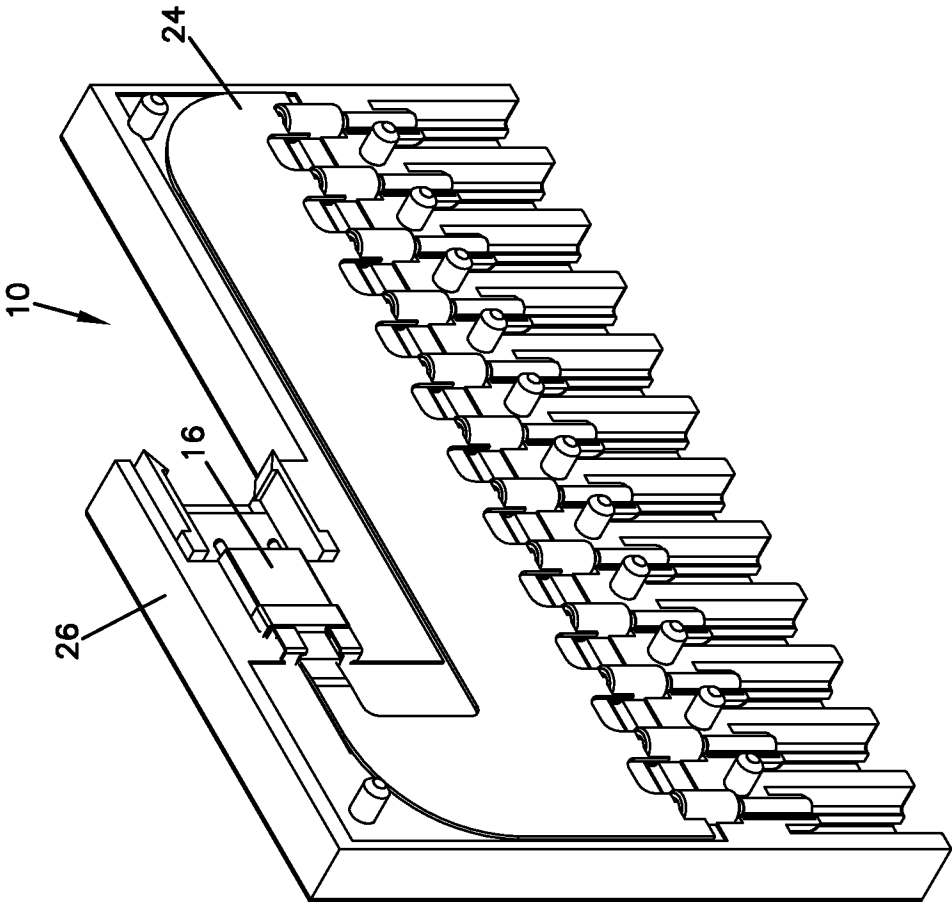


FIG. 4

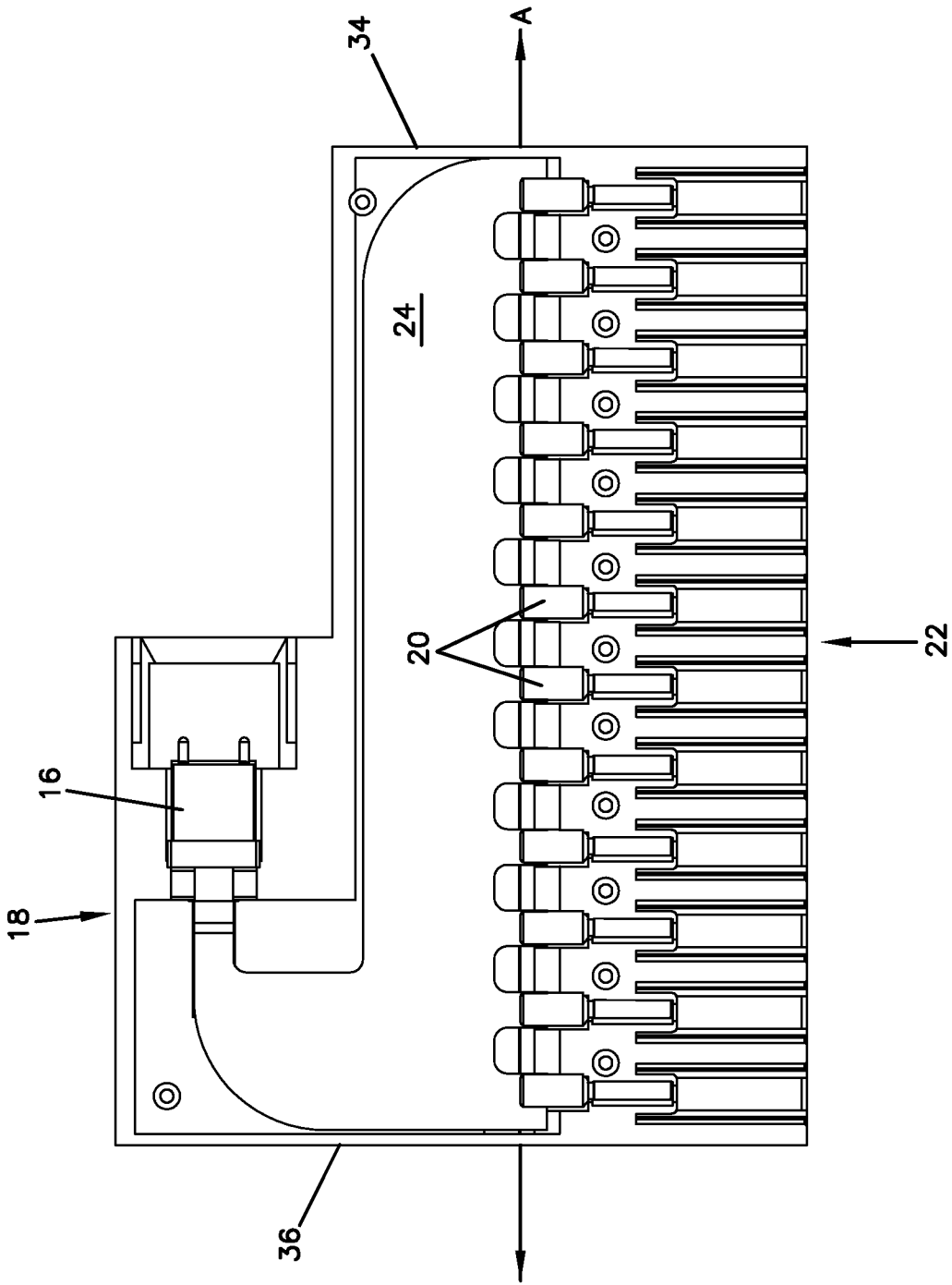


FIG. 5

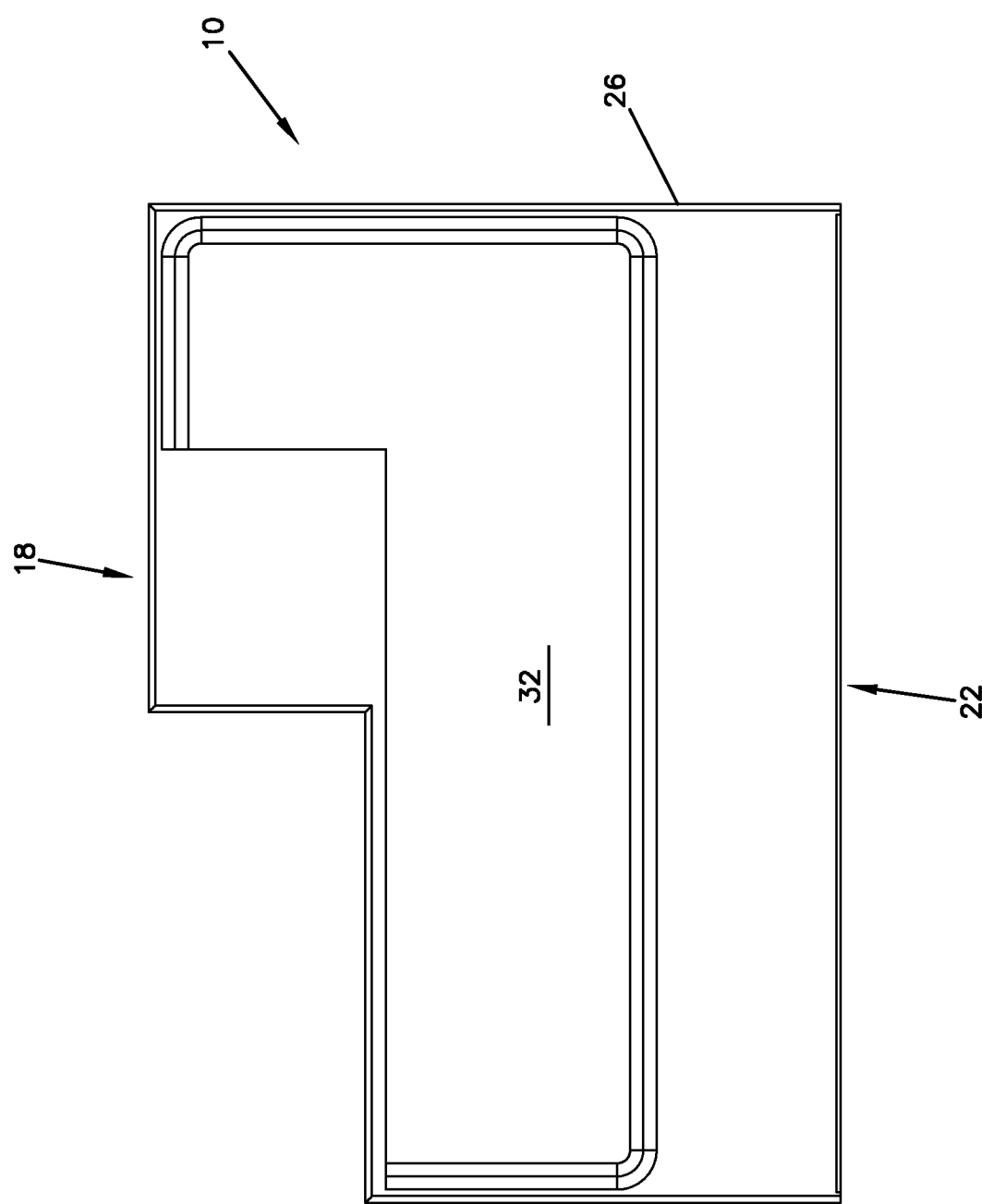


FIG. 6

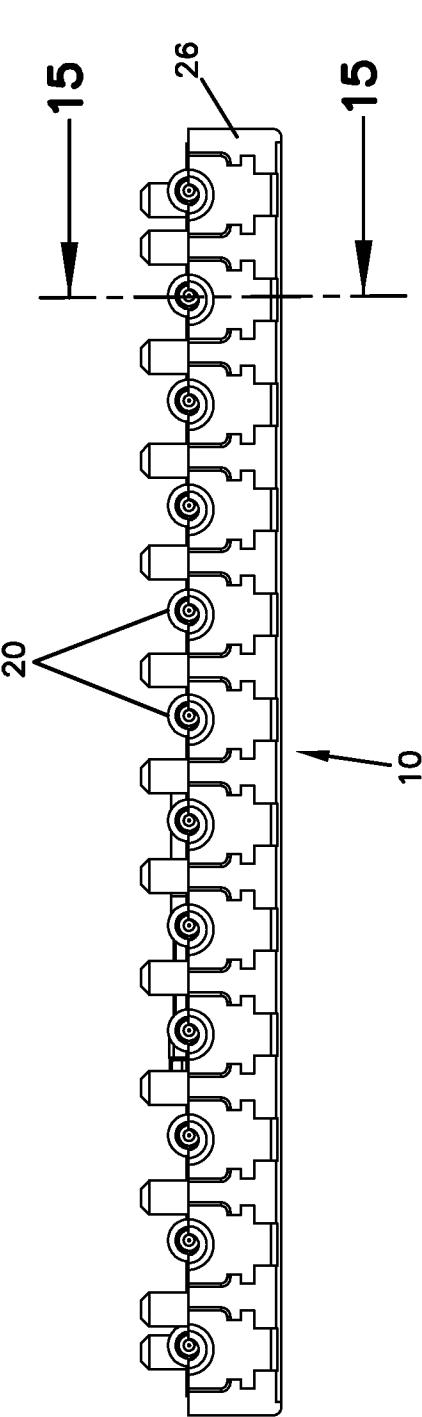


FIG. 7

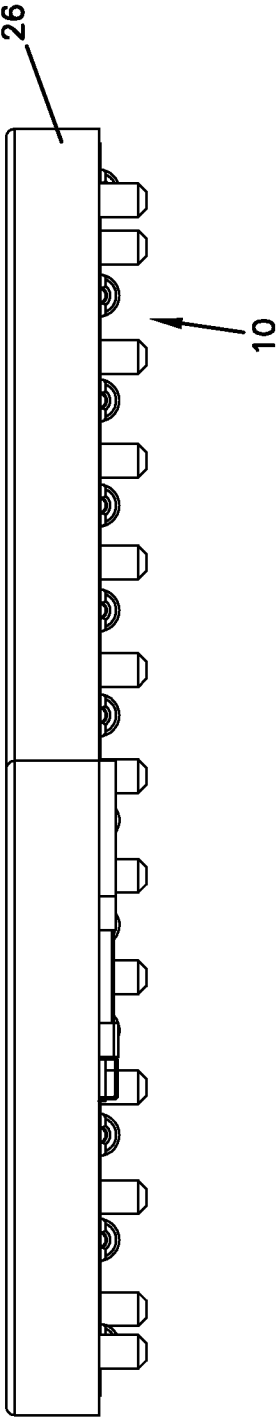


FIG. 8

FIG. 9

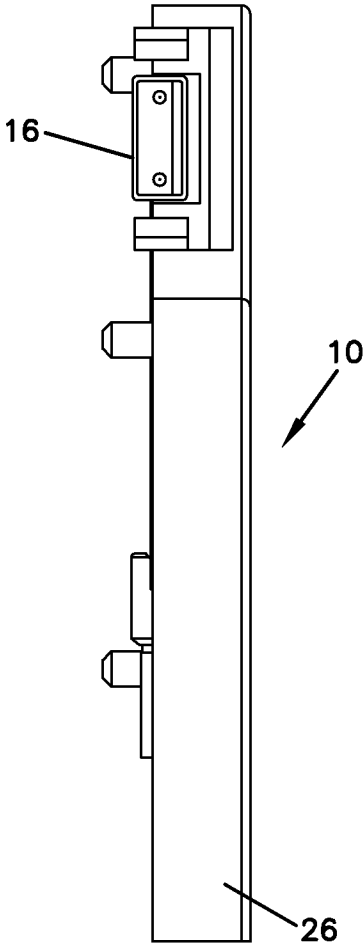


FIG. 10

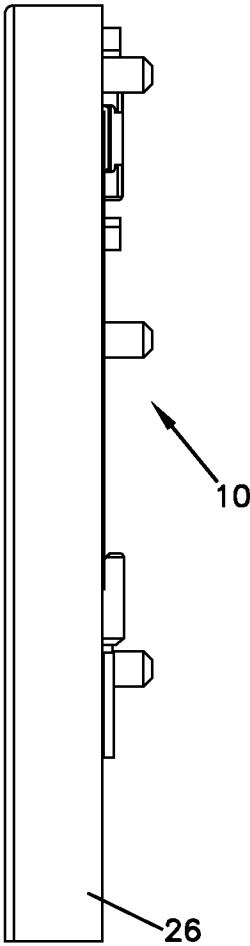
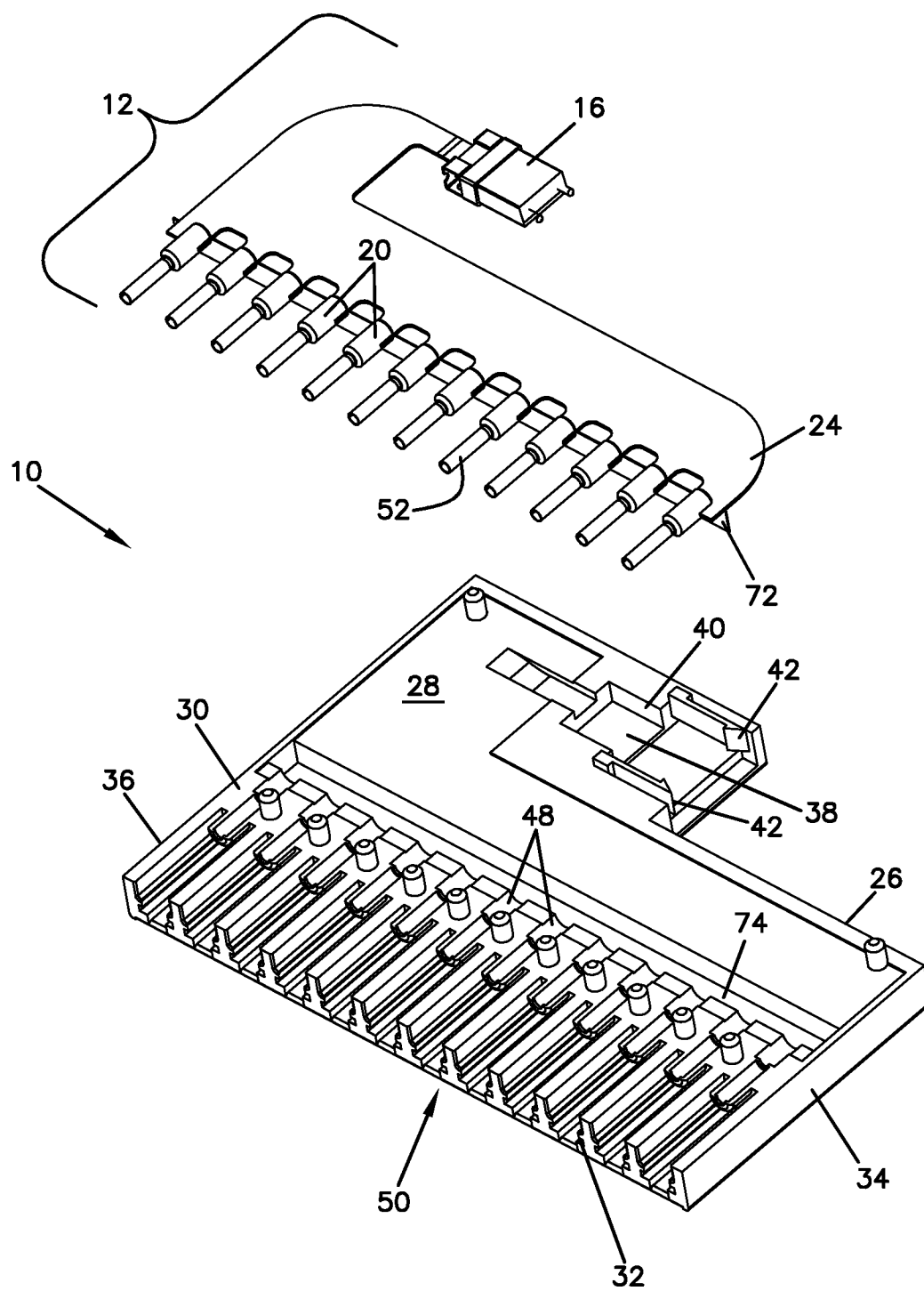
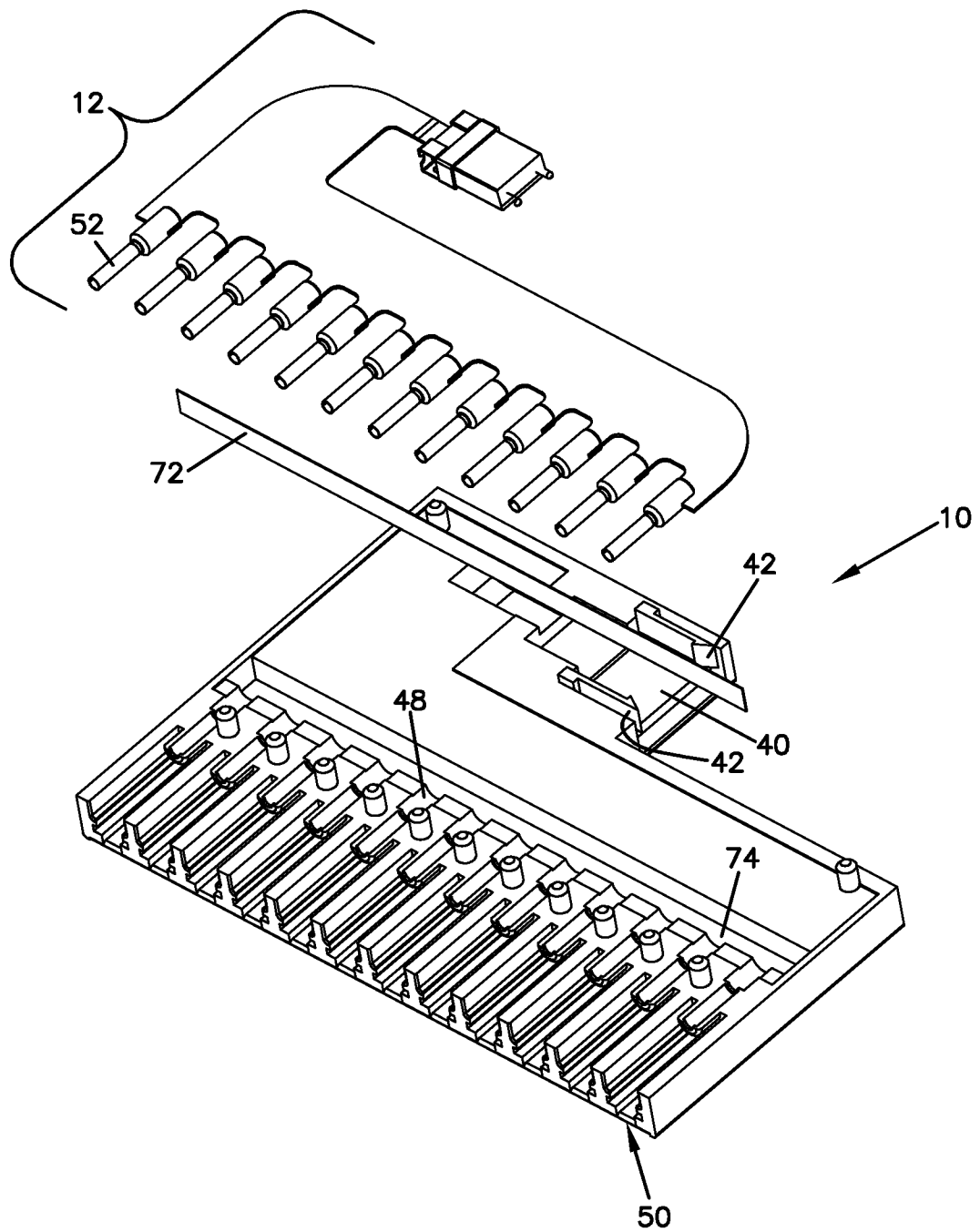


FIG. 11



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FIG. 12



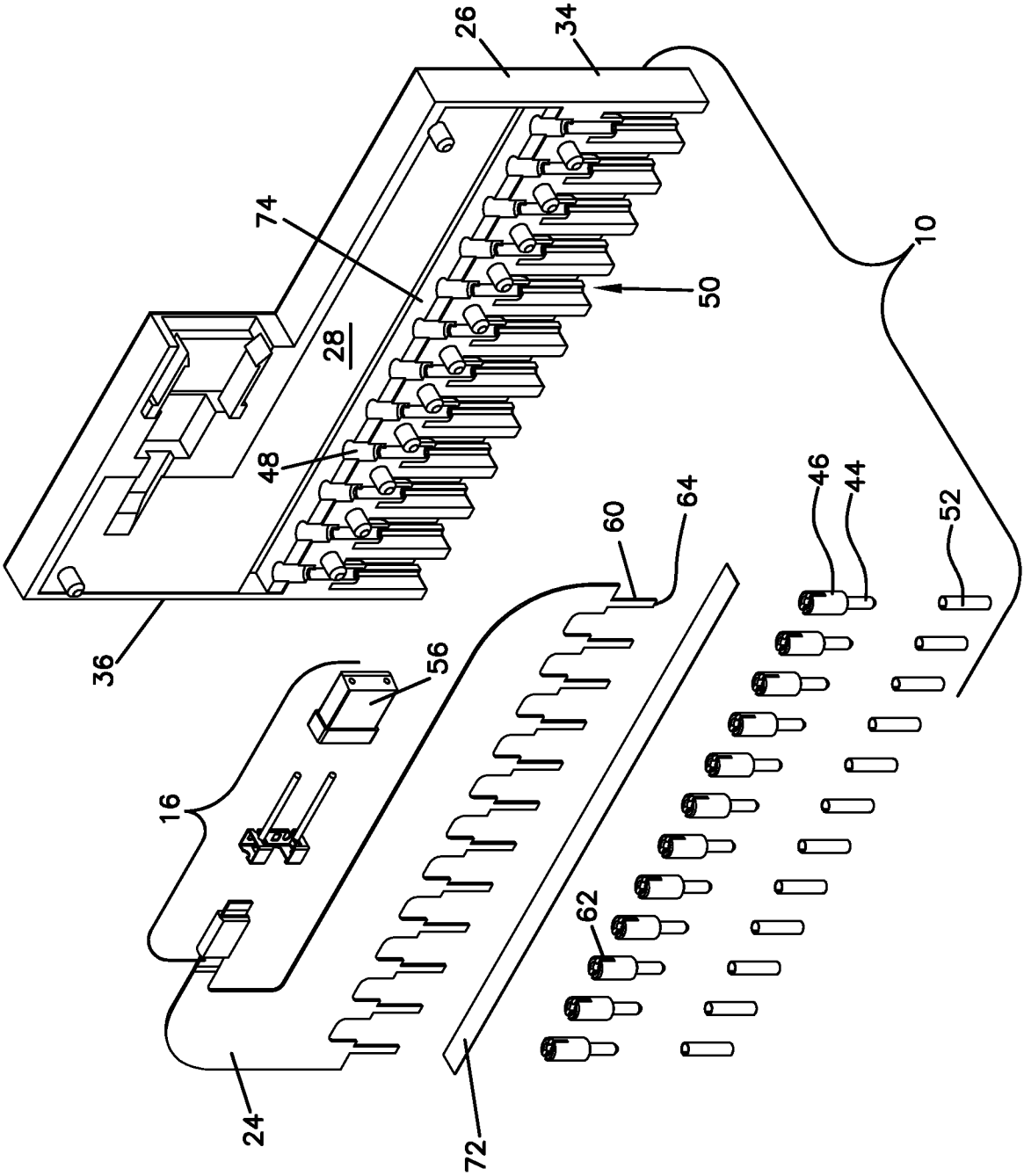
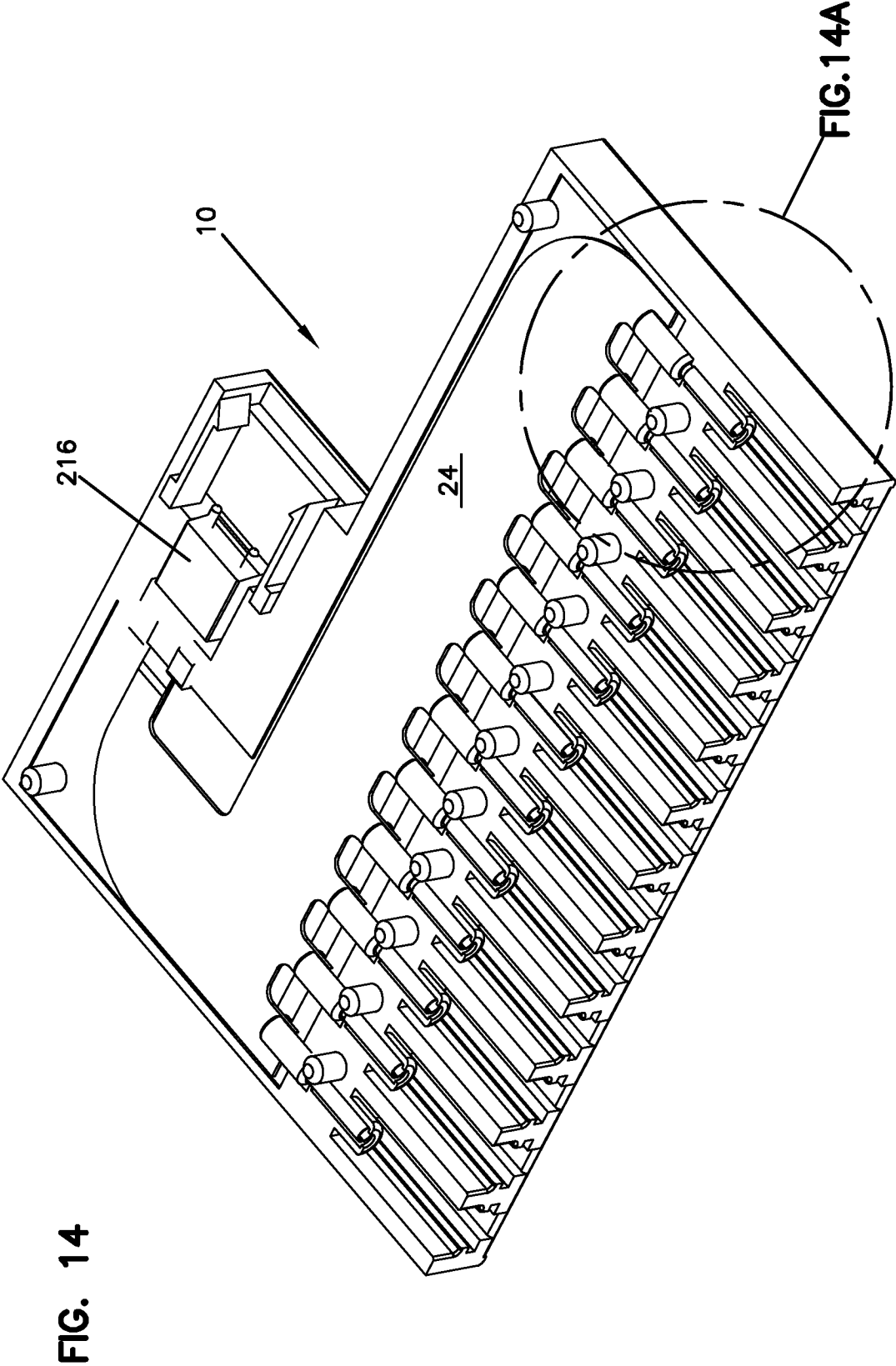


FIG. 13



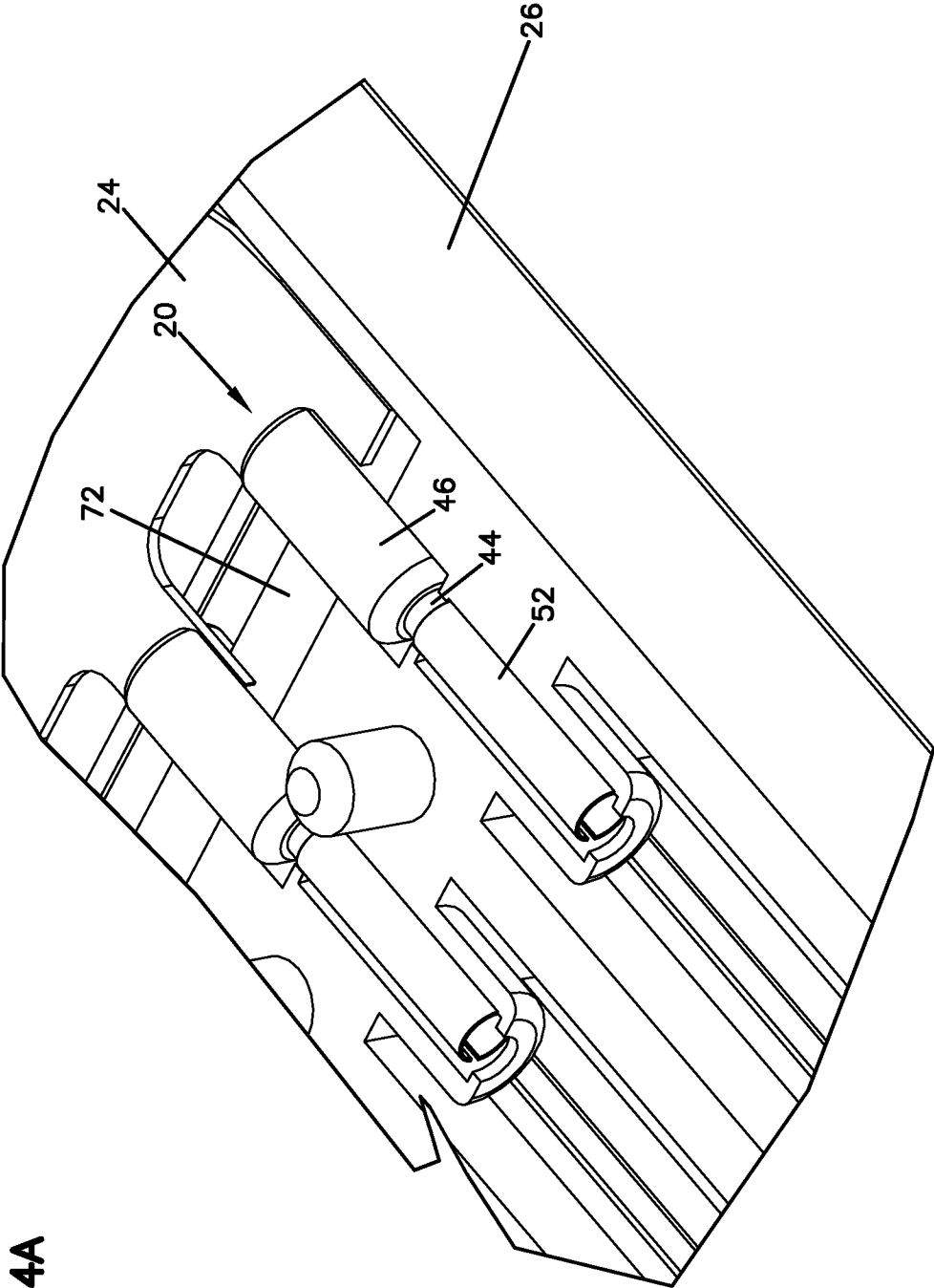


FIG. 14A

FIG. 15

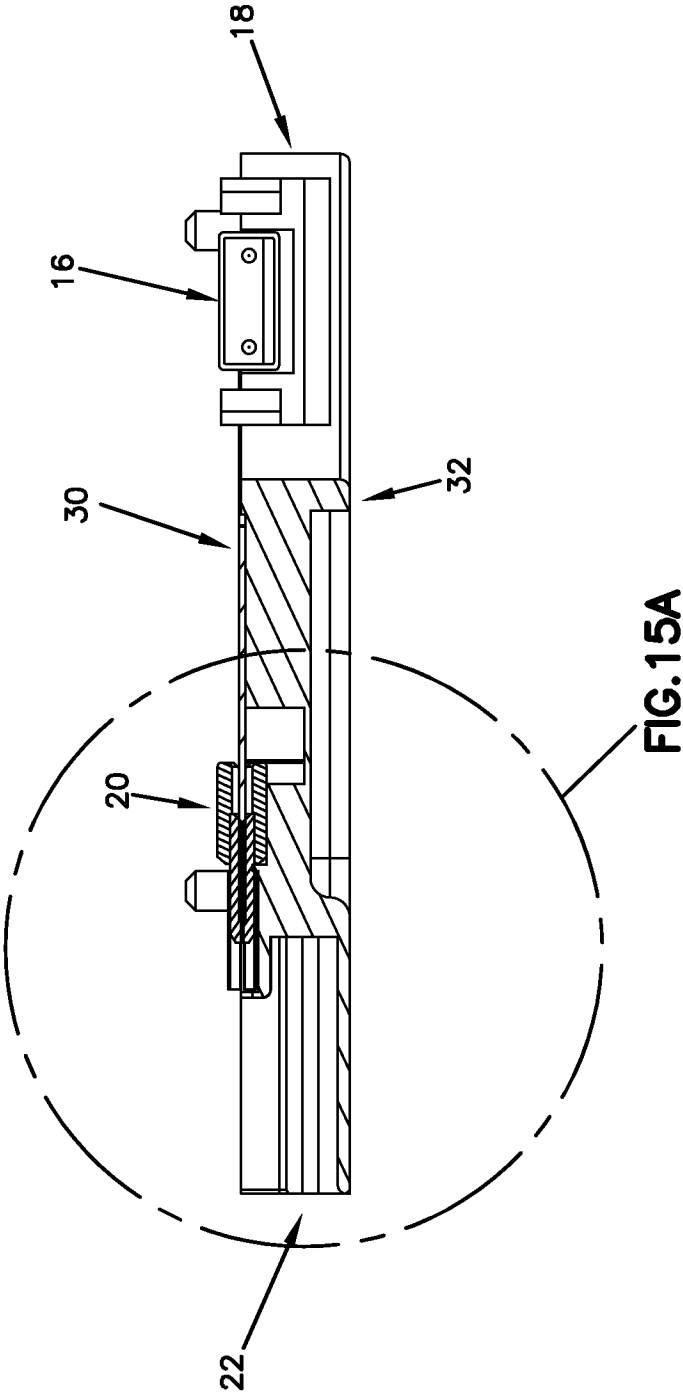


FIG. 15A

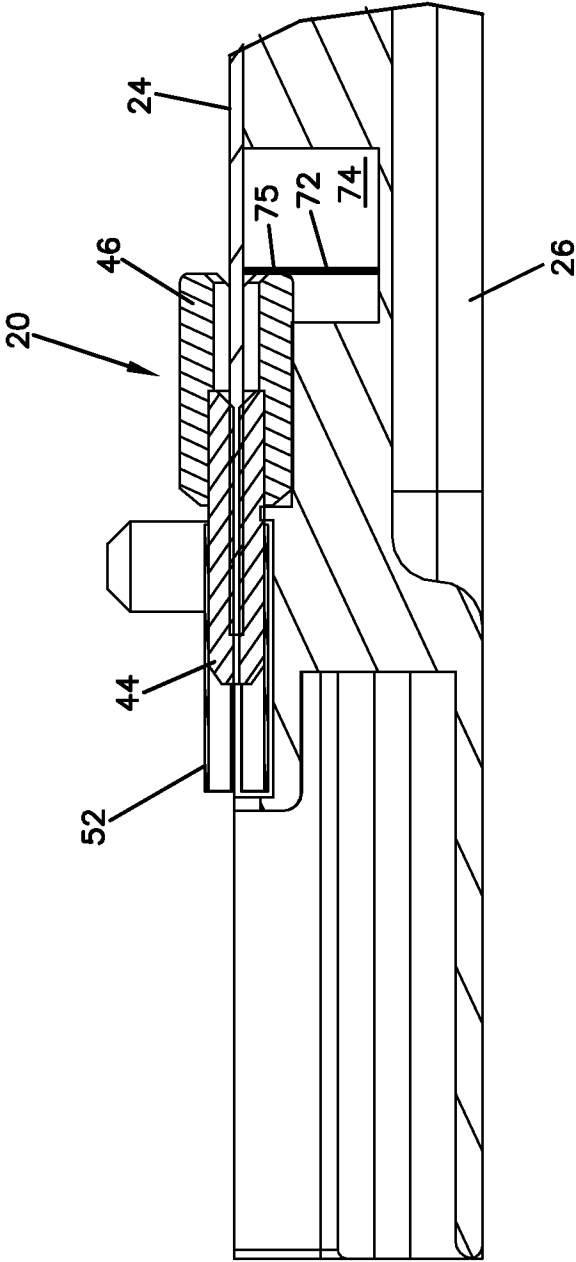


FIG. 16

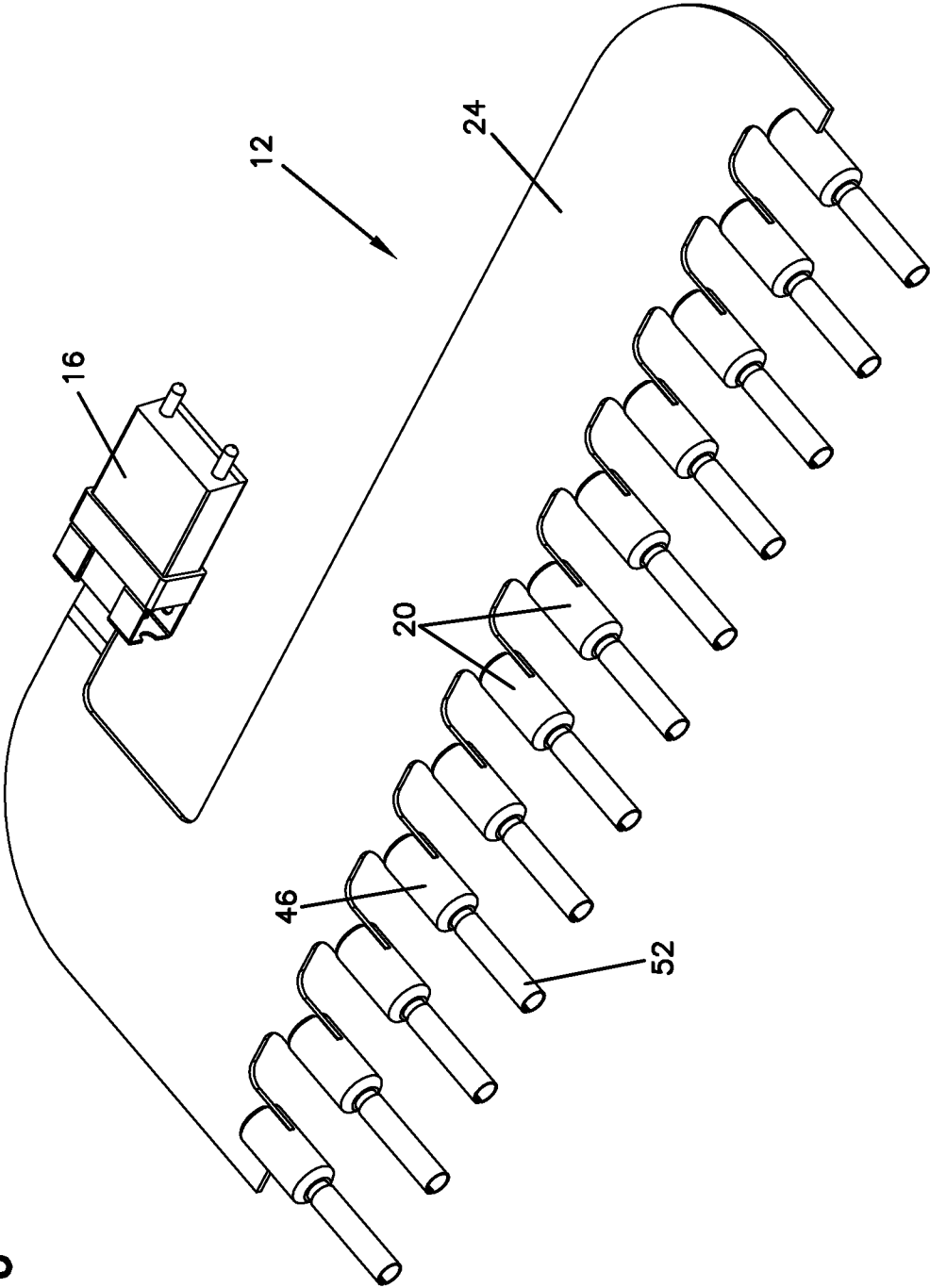
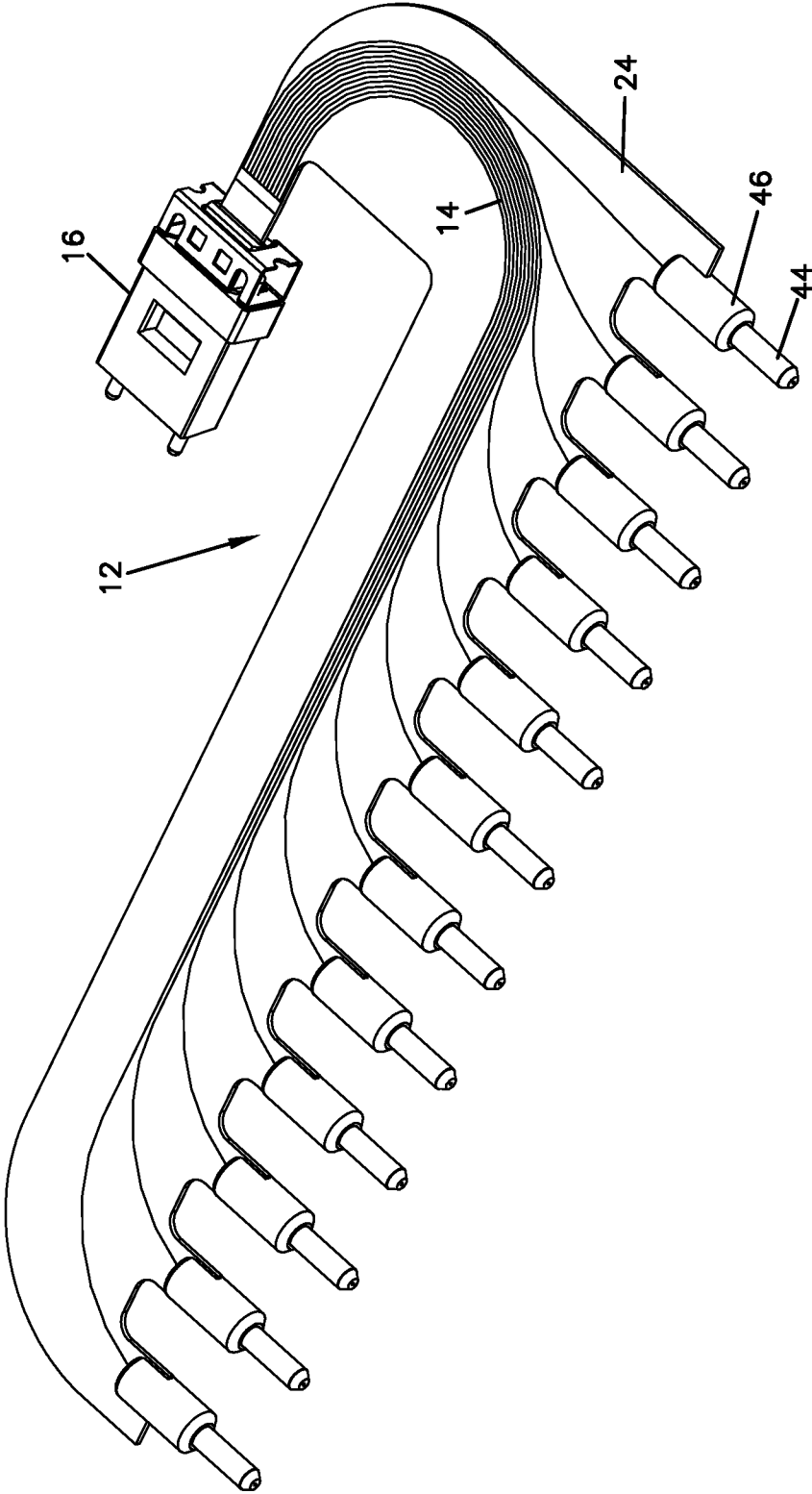


FIG. 17



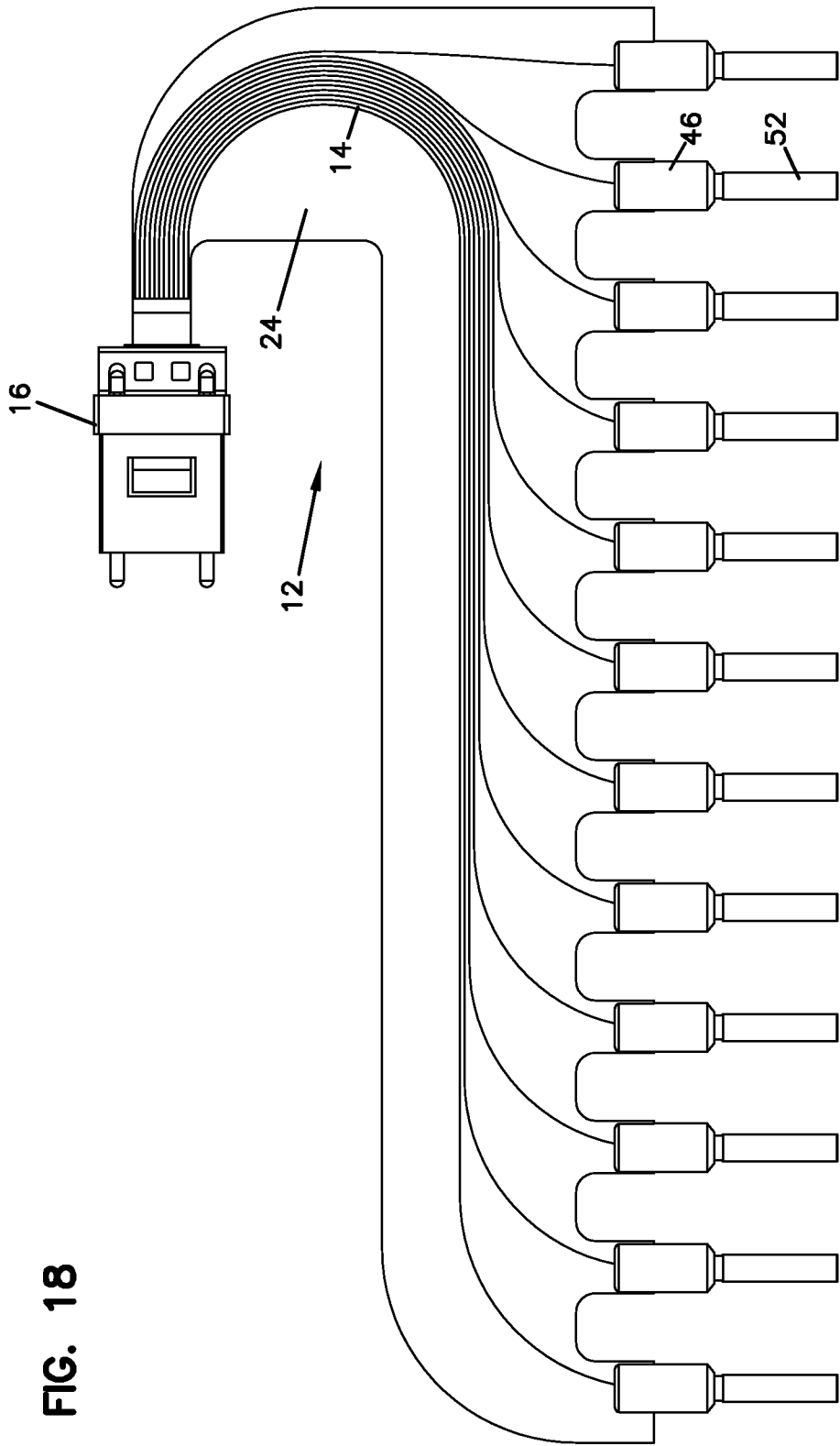


FIG. 18

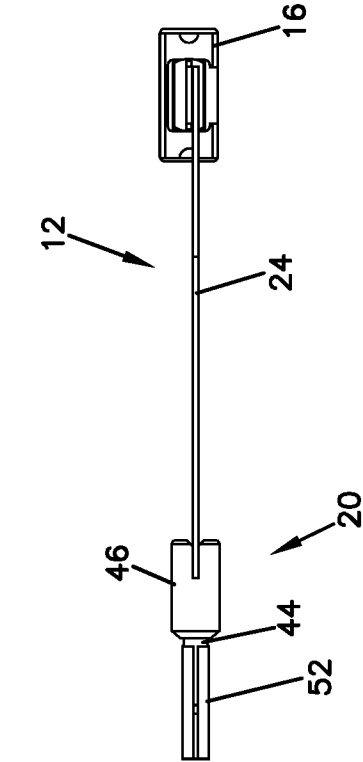
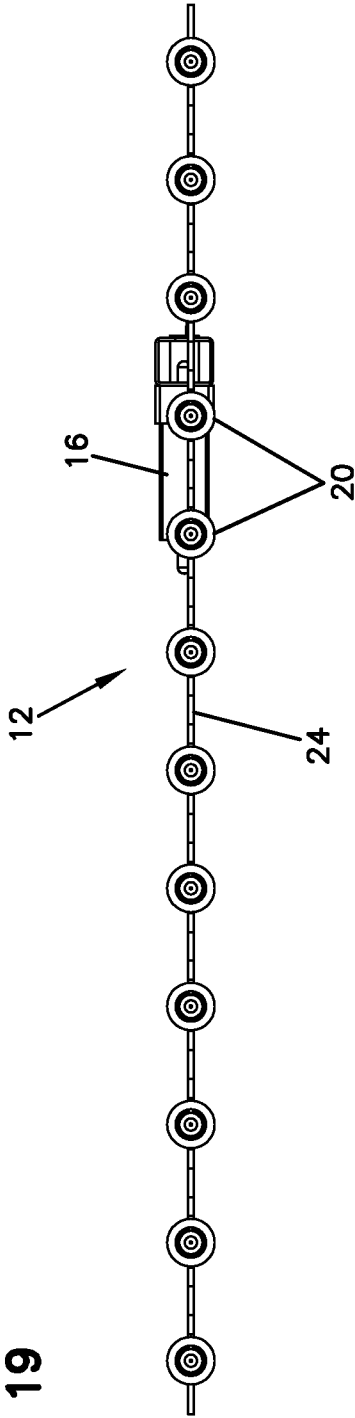


FIG. 21

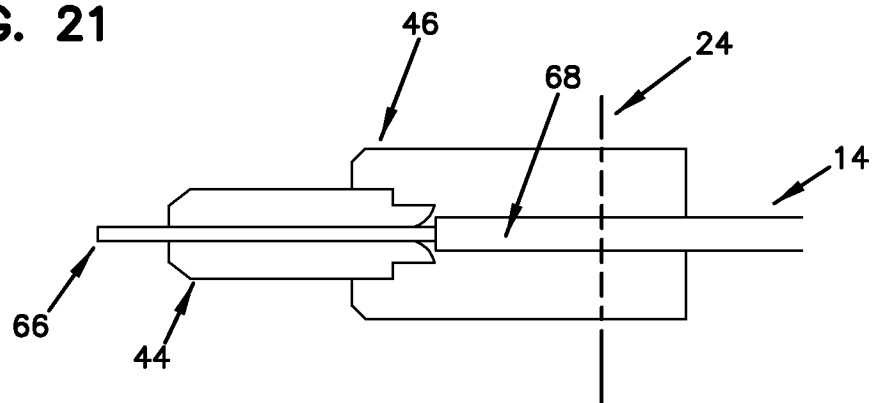


FIG. 22

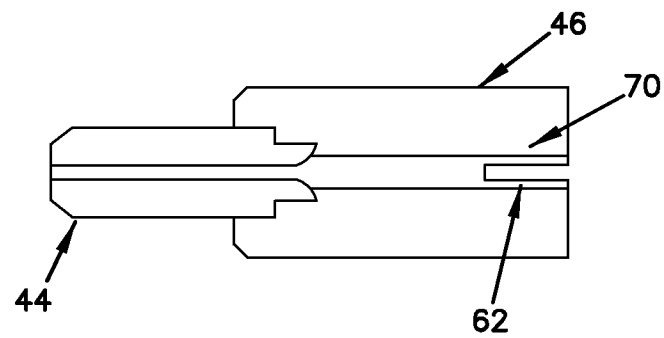


FIG. 23

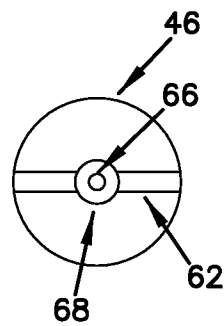
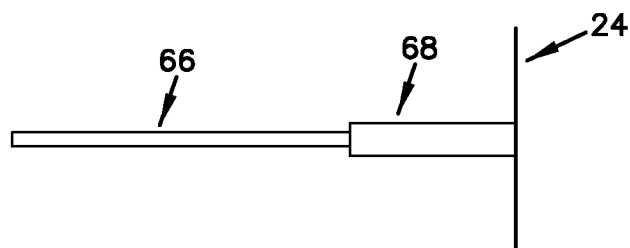


FIG. 24



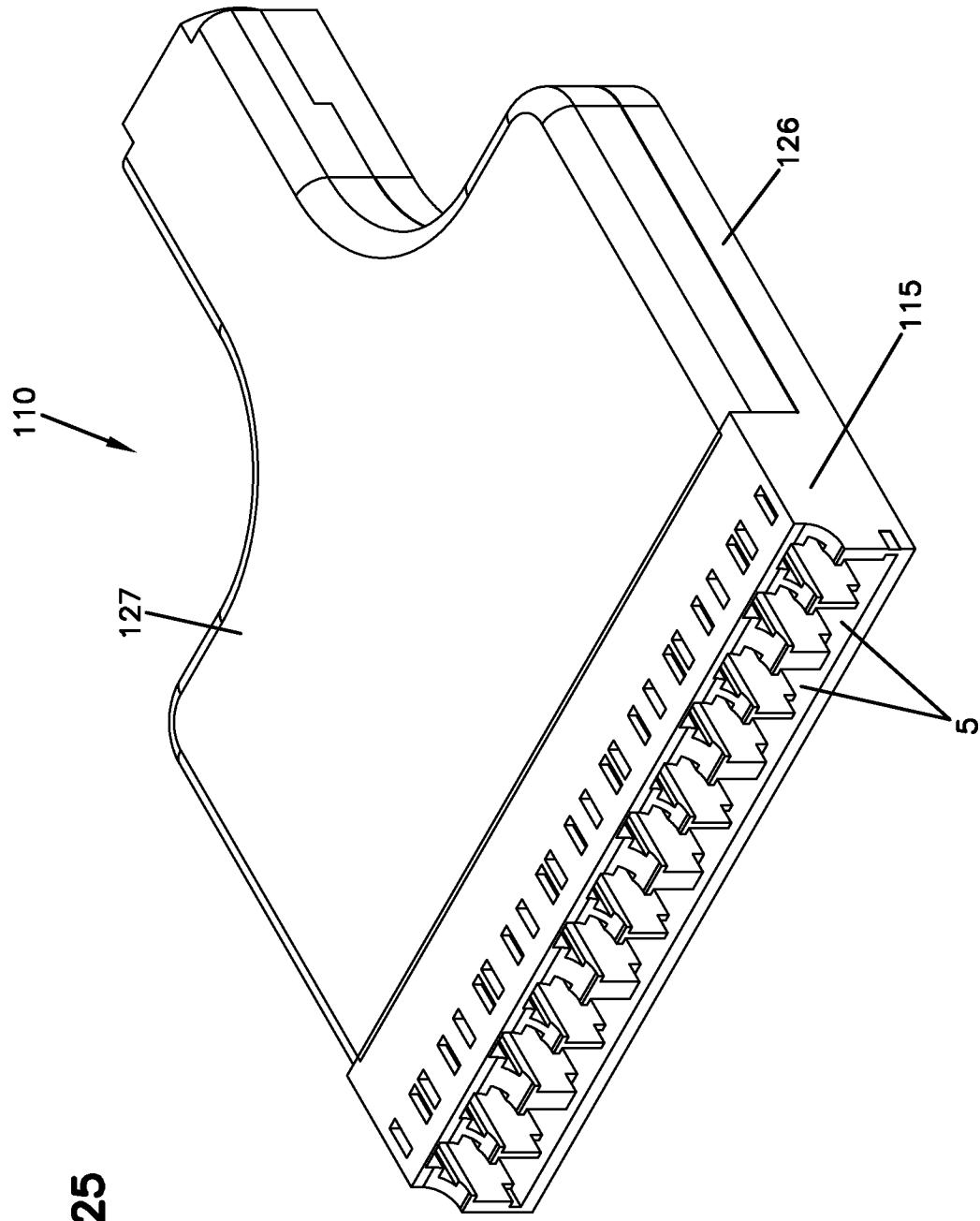


FIG. 25

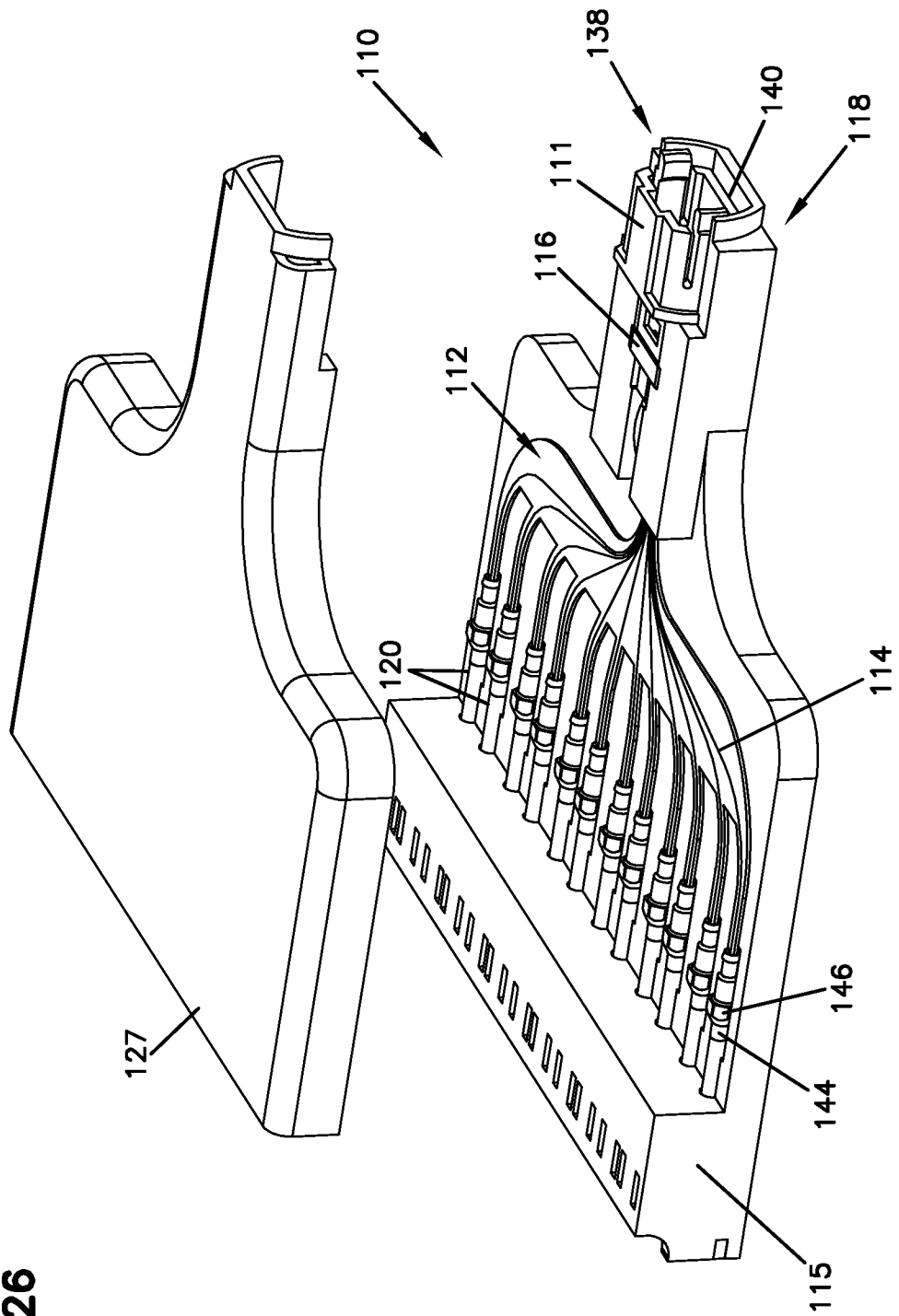


FIG. 26

FIG. 27

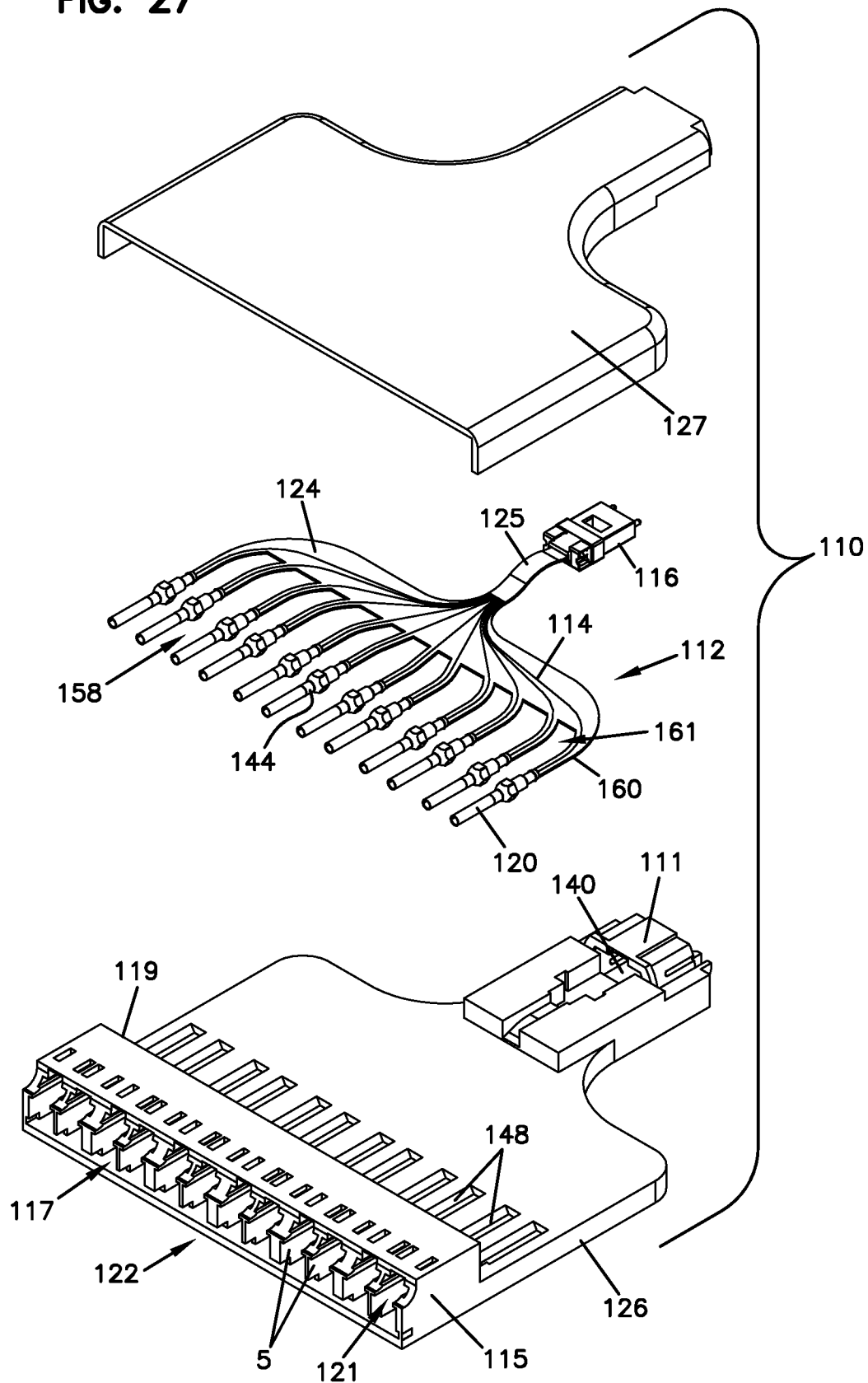


FIG. 28

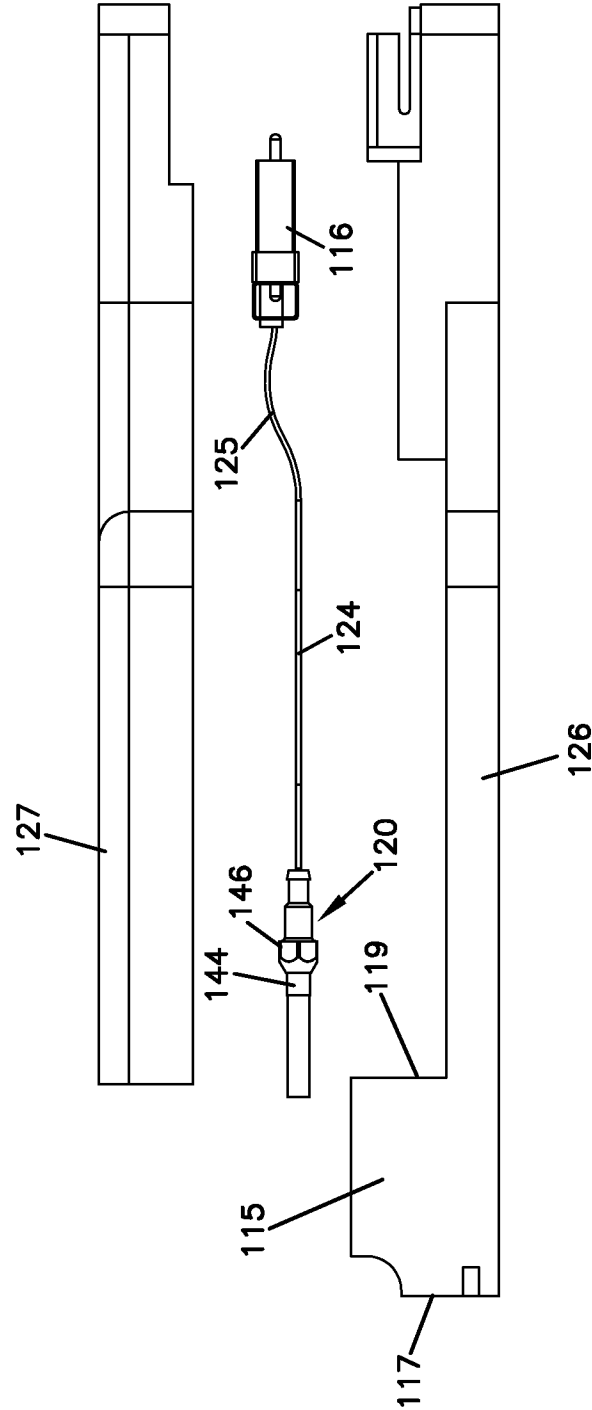


FIG. 29

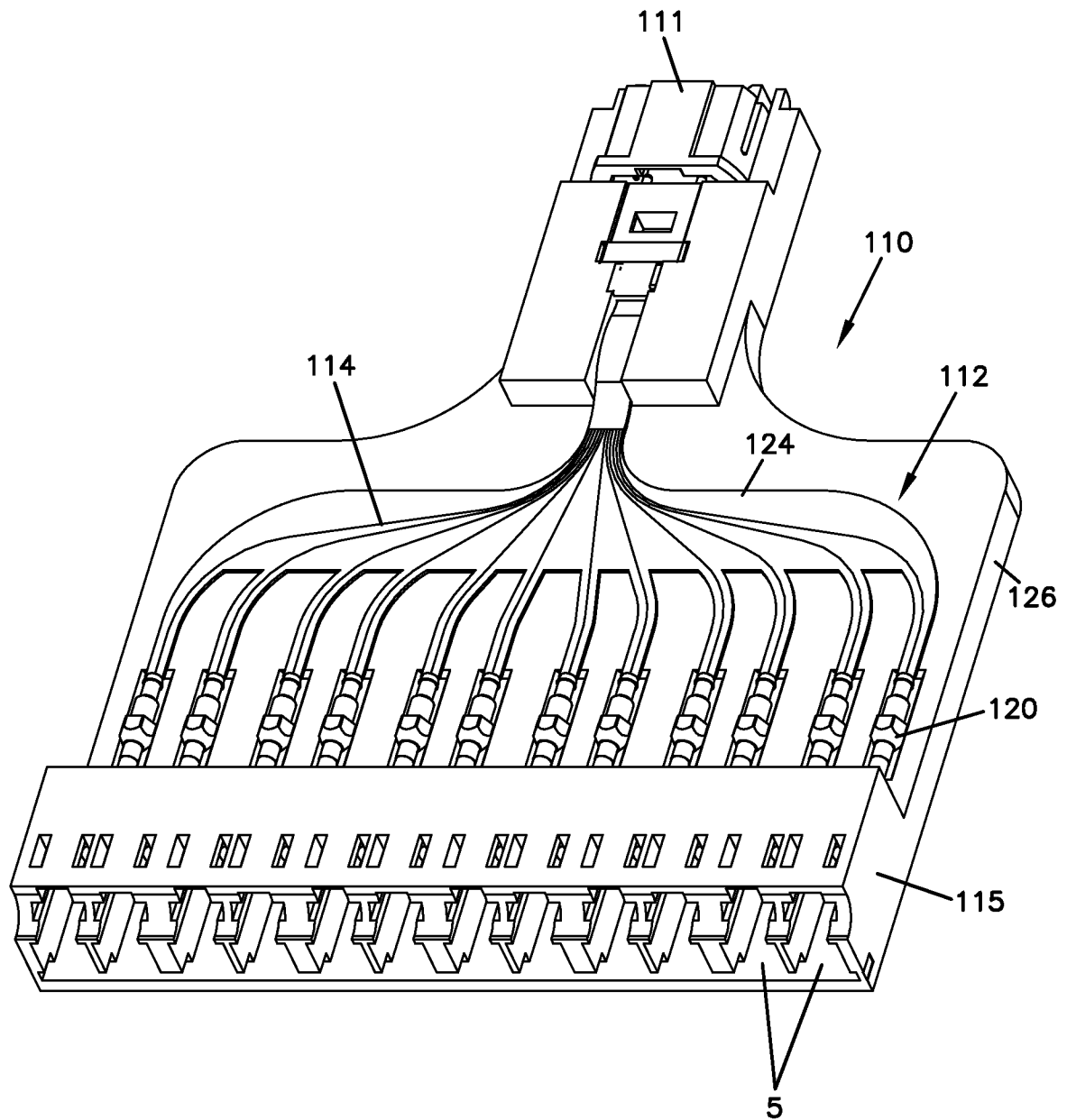


FIG. 30

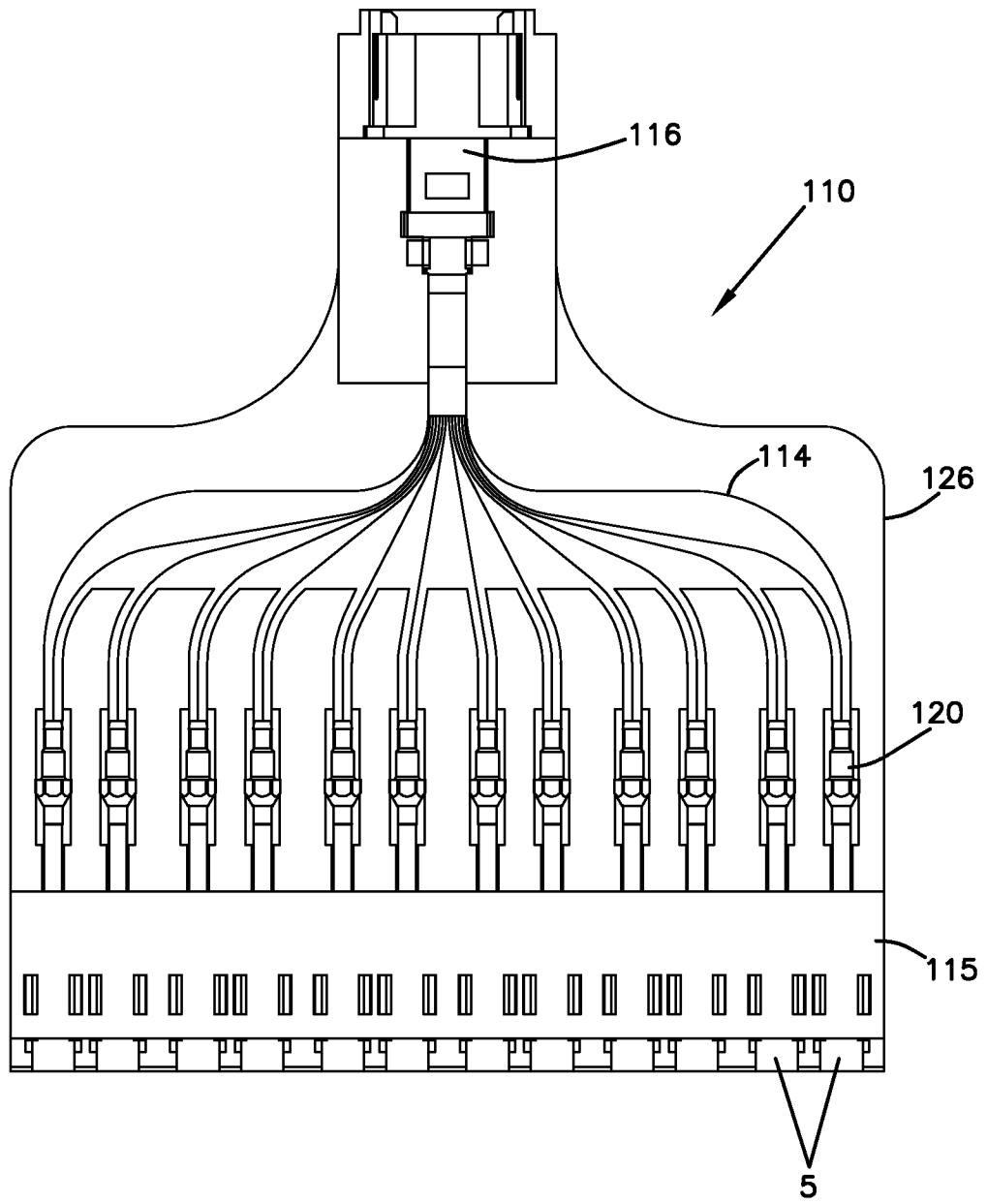


FIG. 31

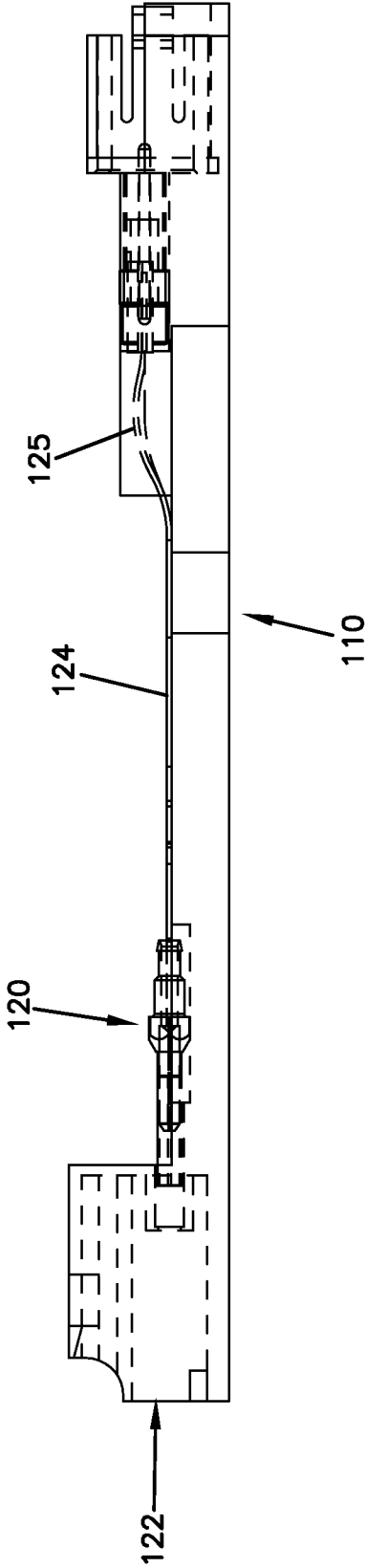


FIG. 32

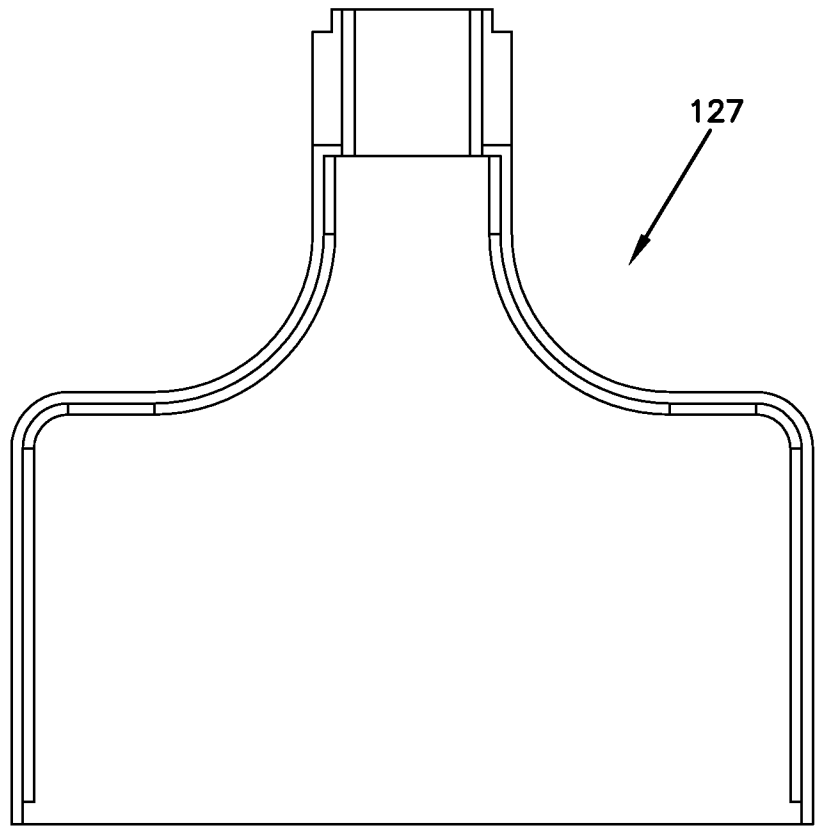
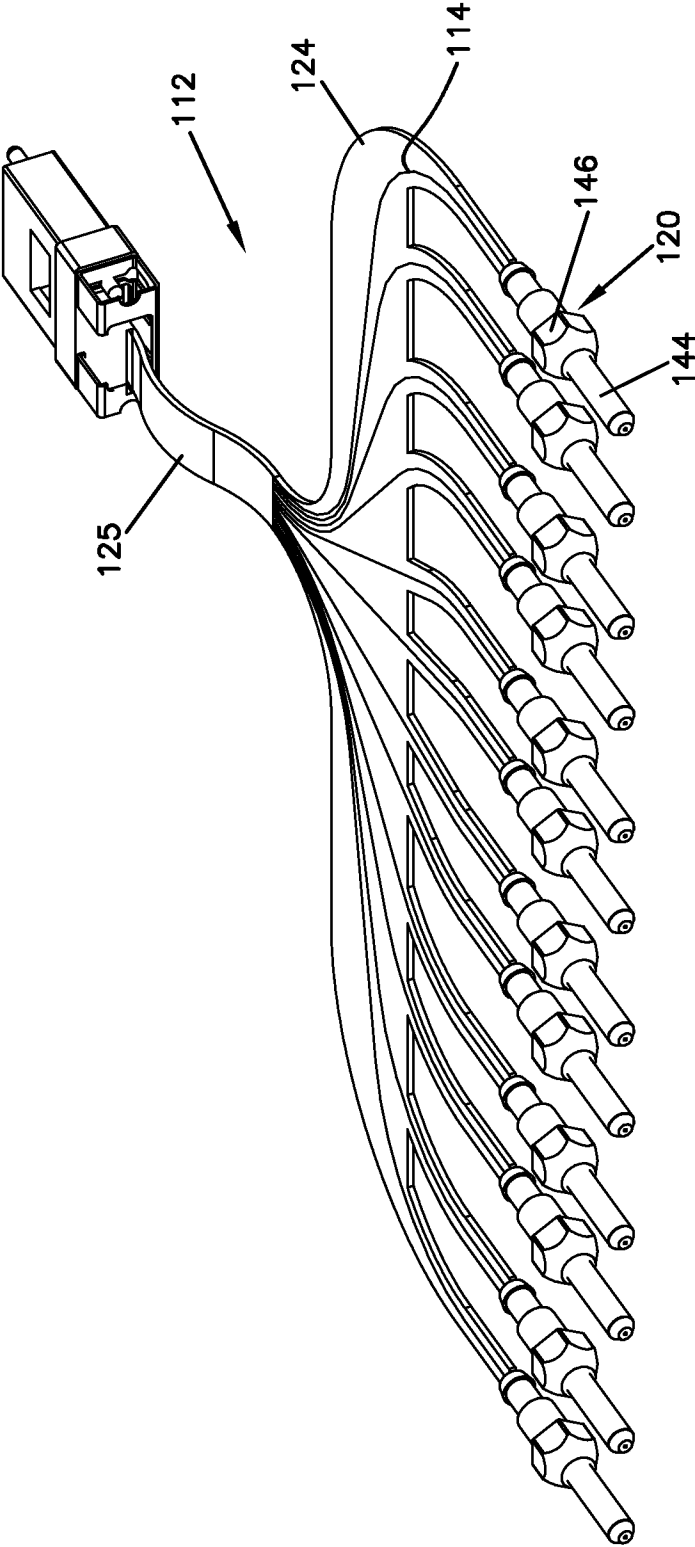


FIG. 33



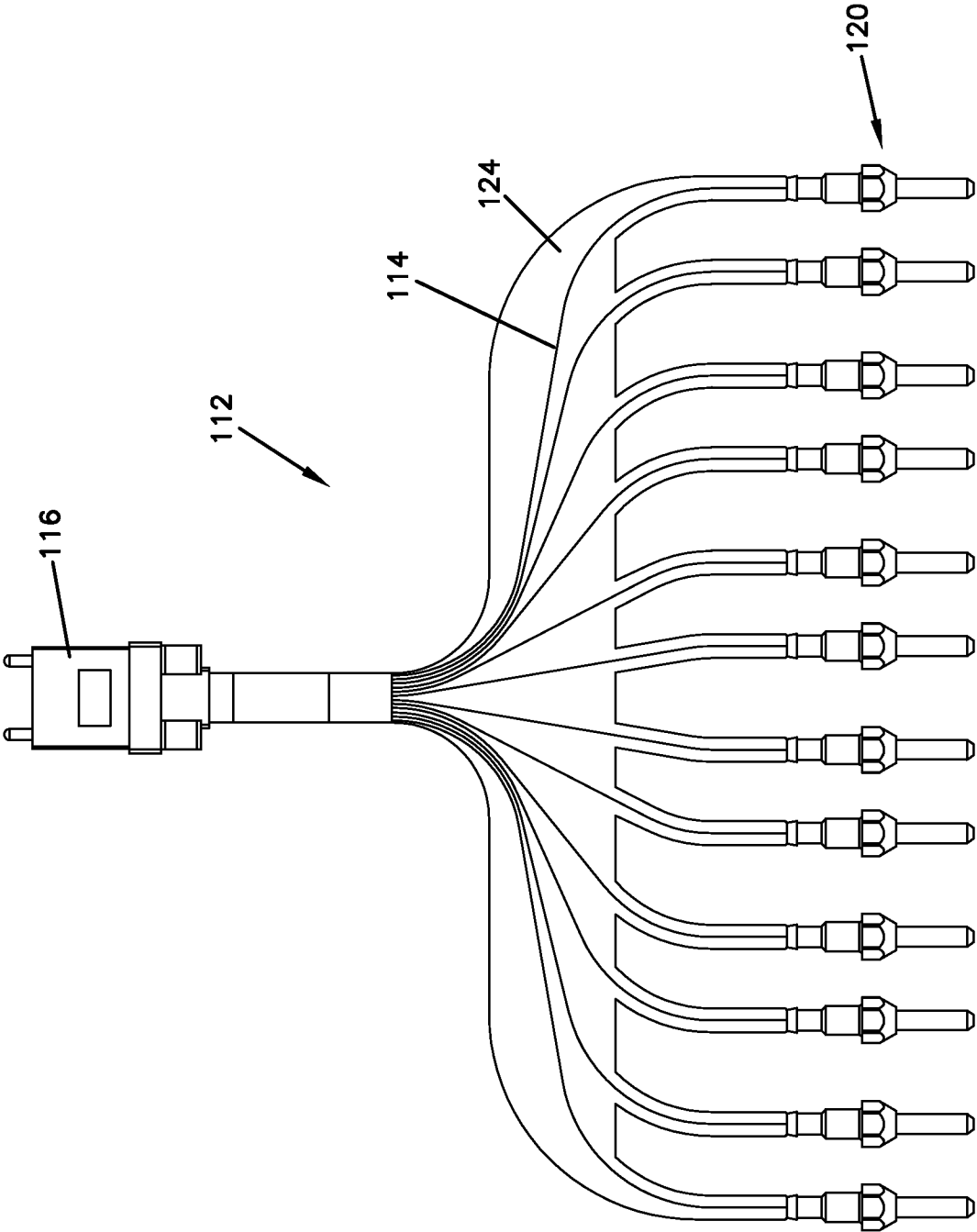


FIG. 34

FIG. 35

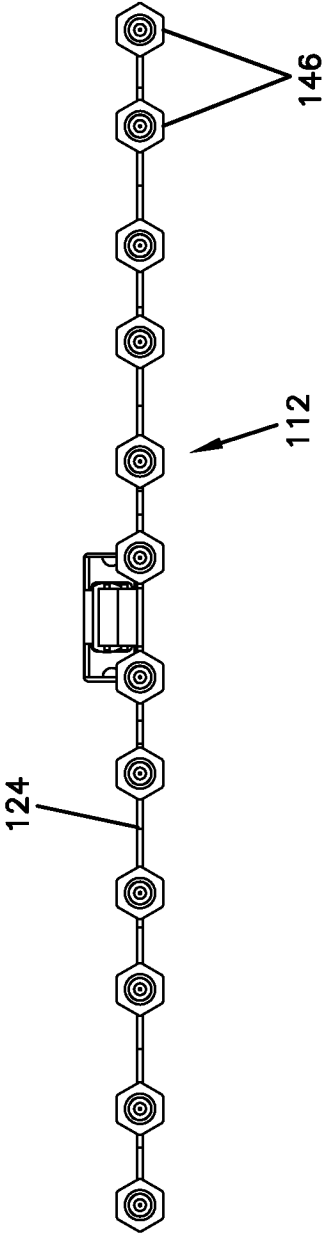
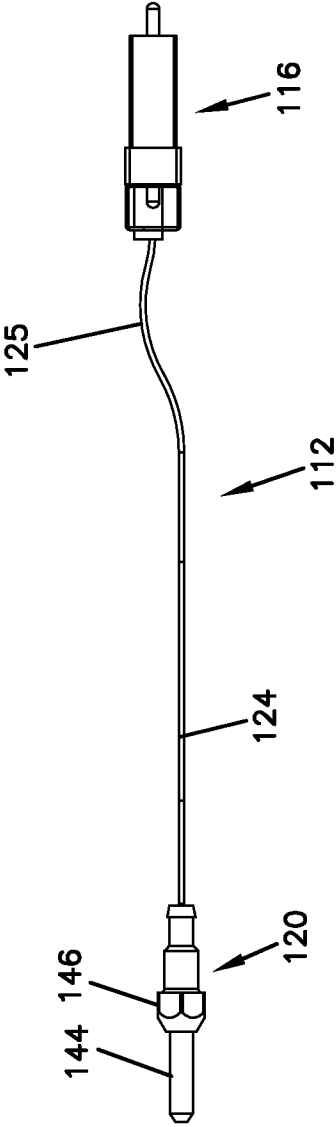


FIG. 36



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FIG. 37

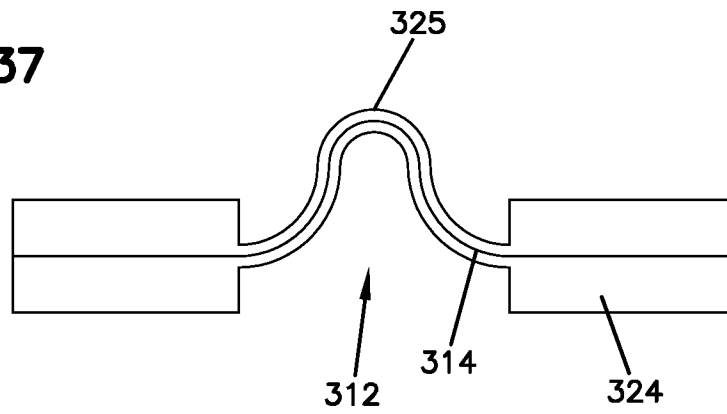


FIG. 38

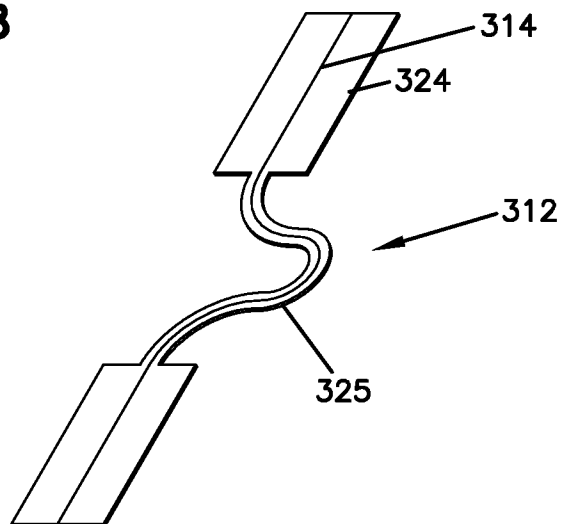
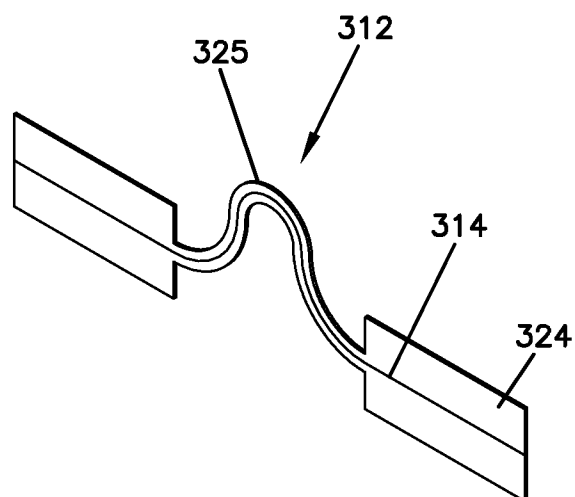
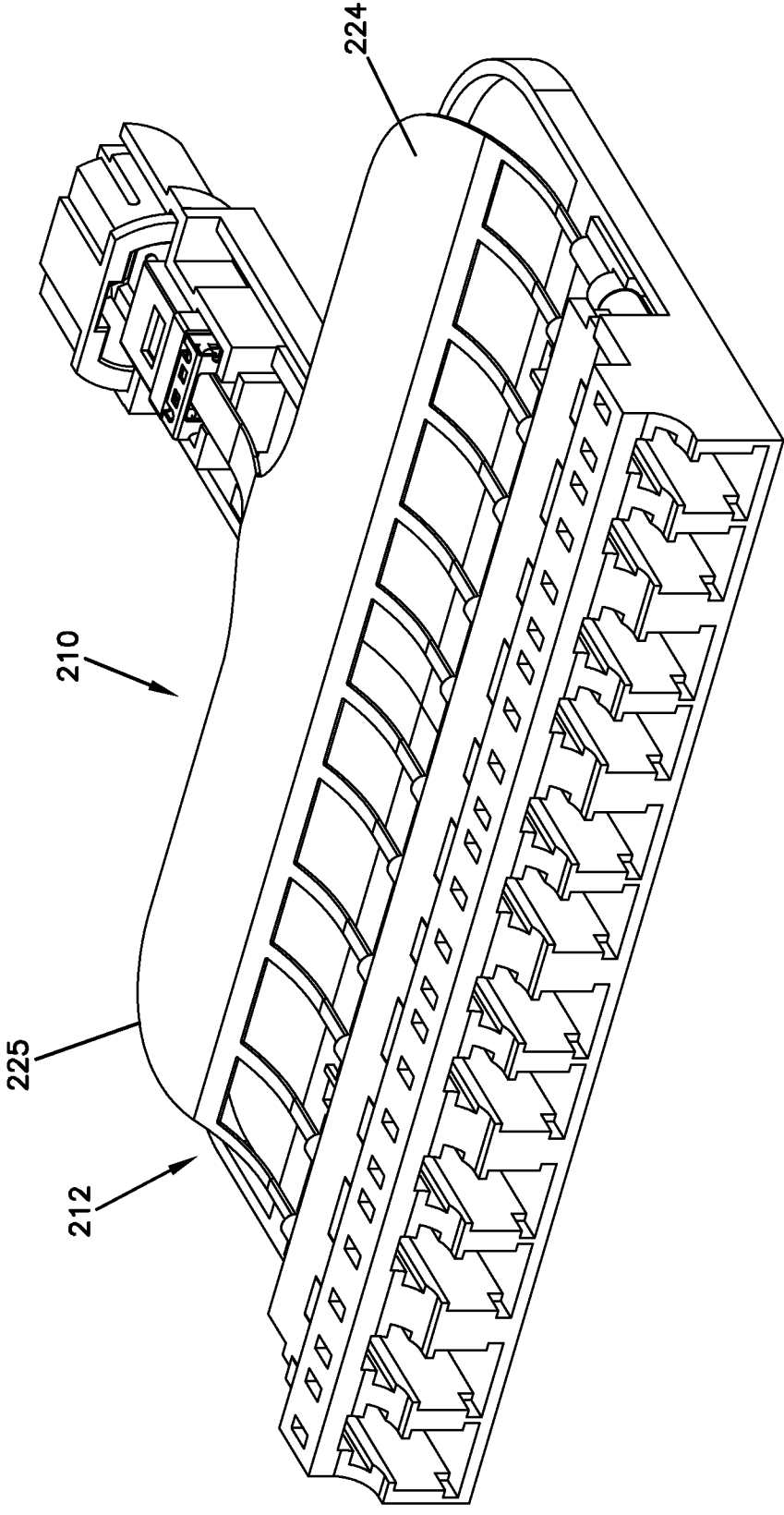


FIG. 39



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FIG. 40



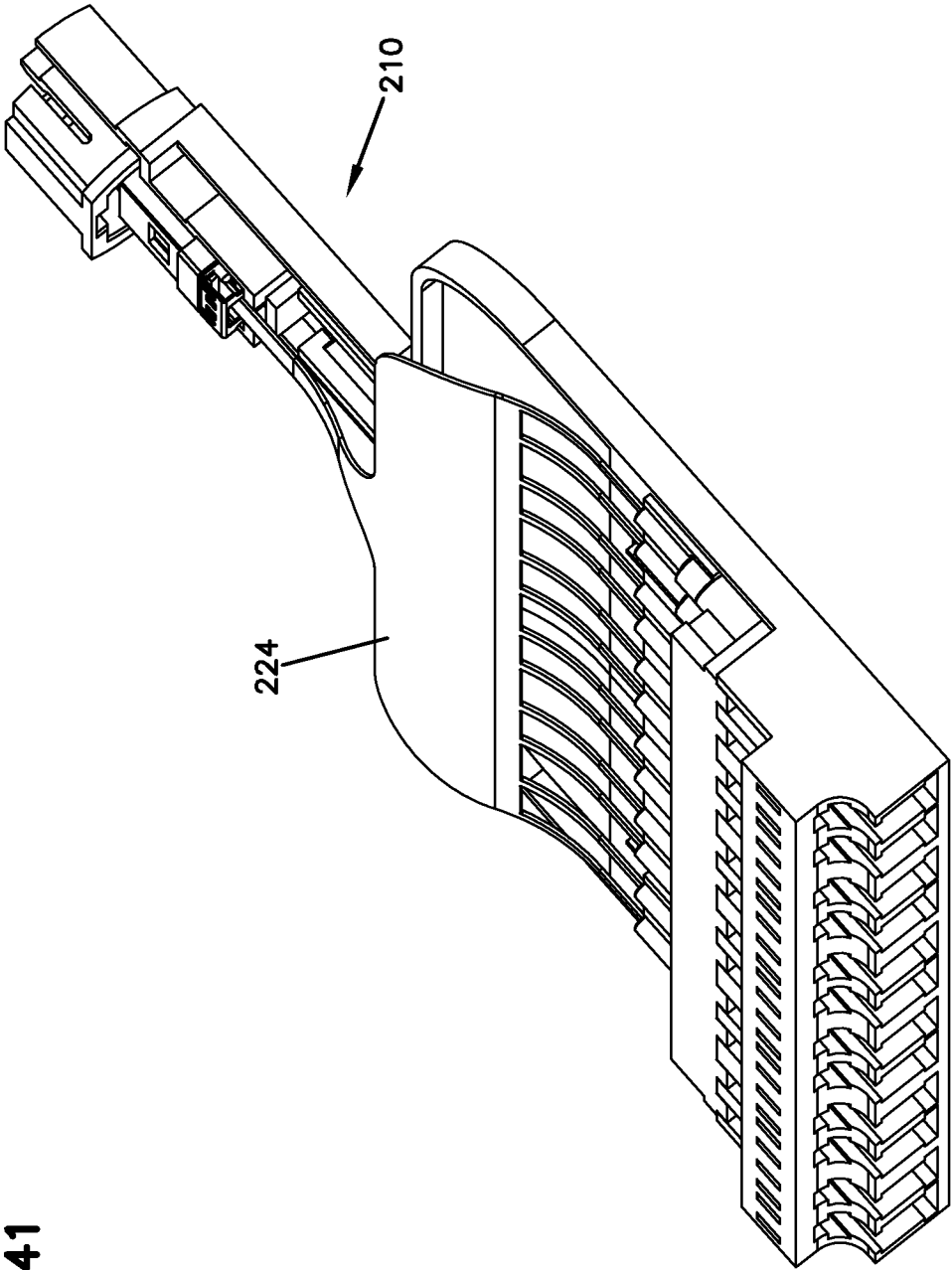
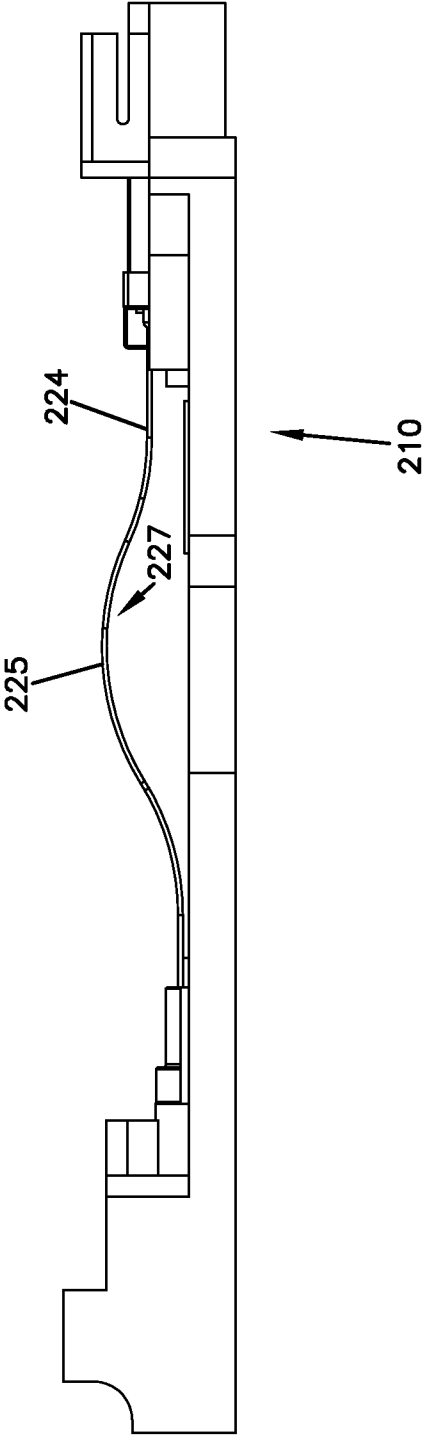


FIG. 41

FIG. 42



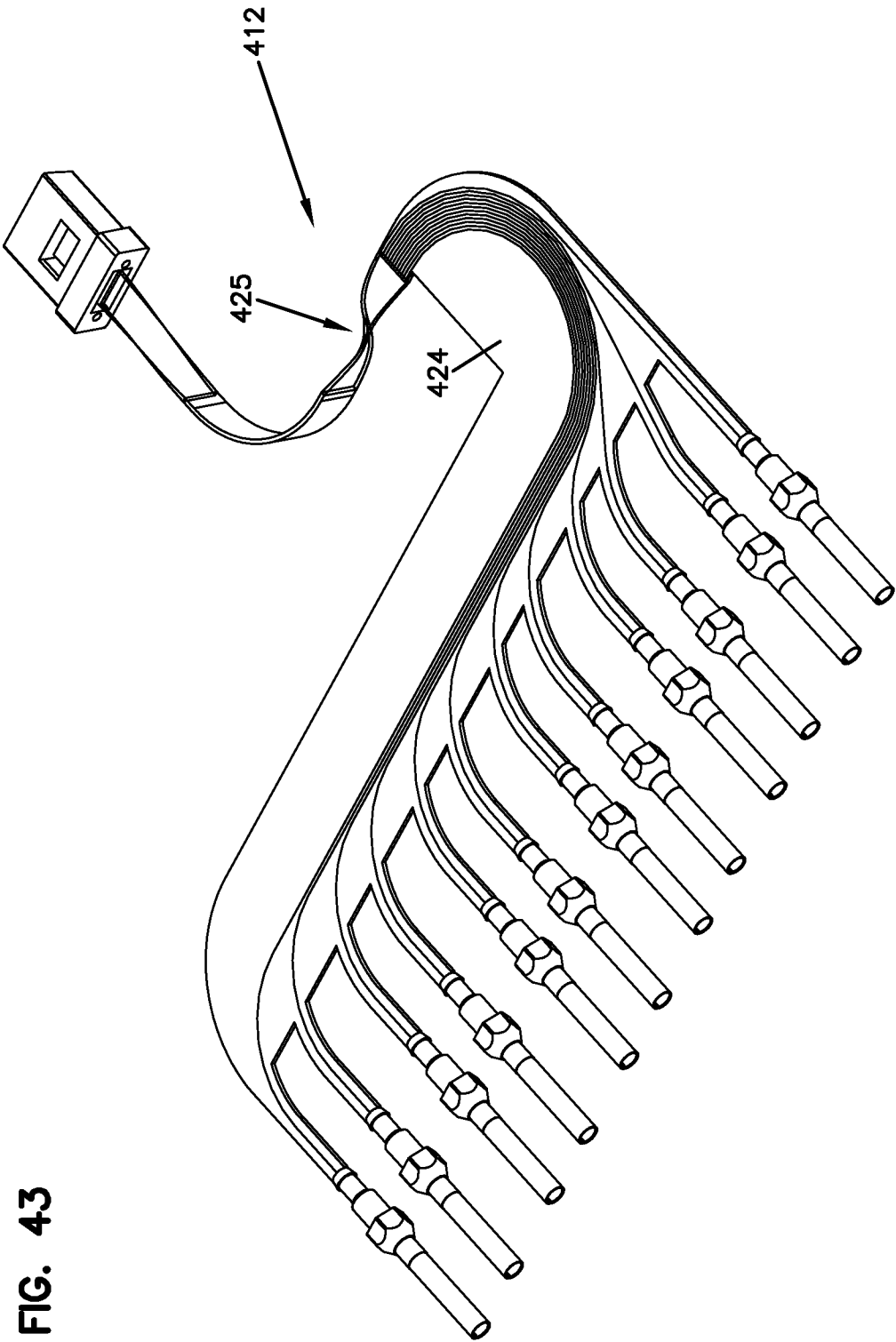


FIG. 43

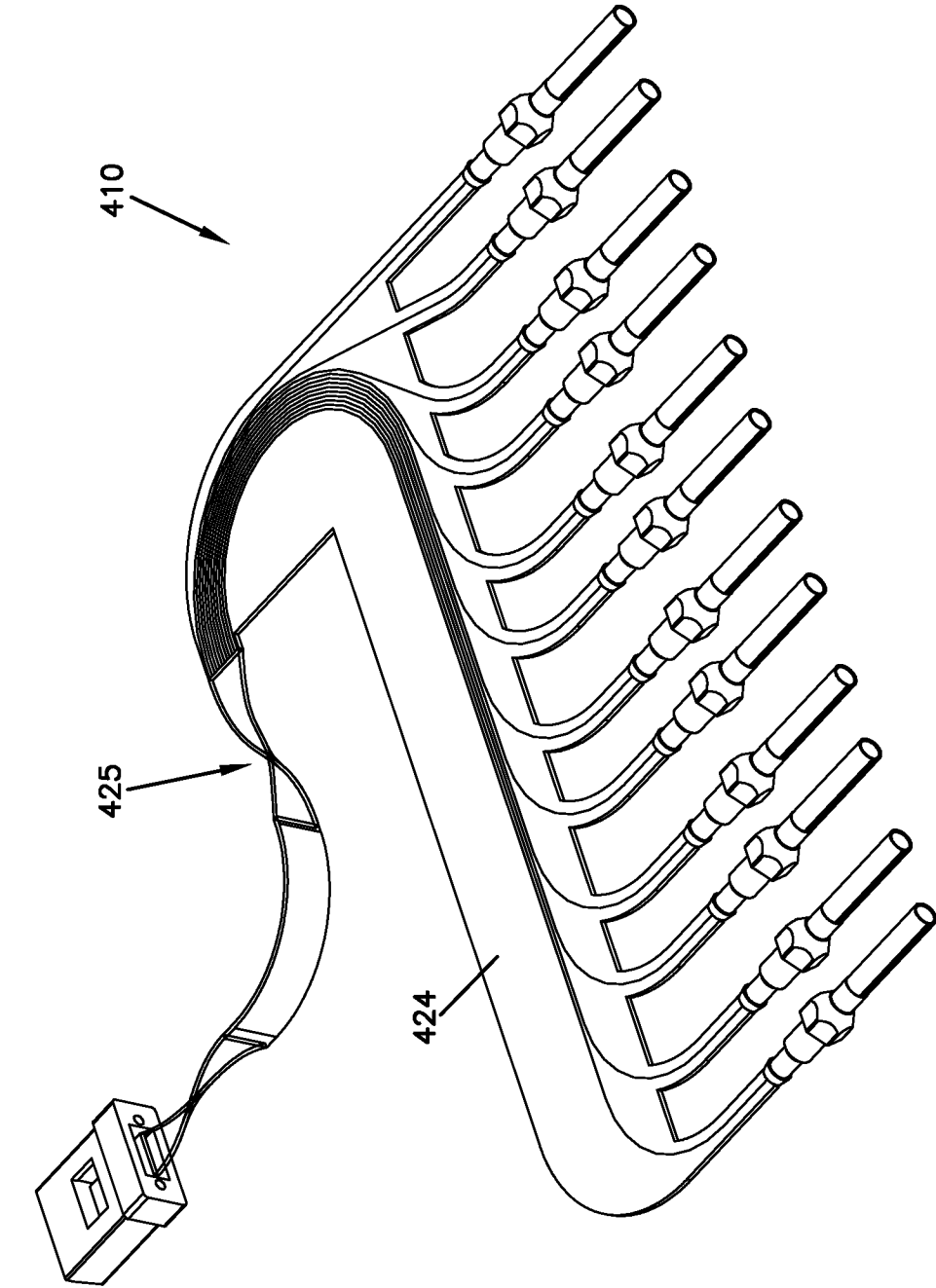


FIG. 44

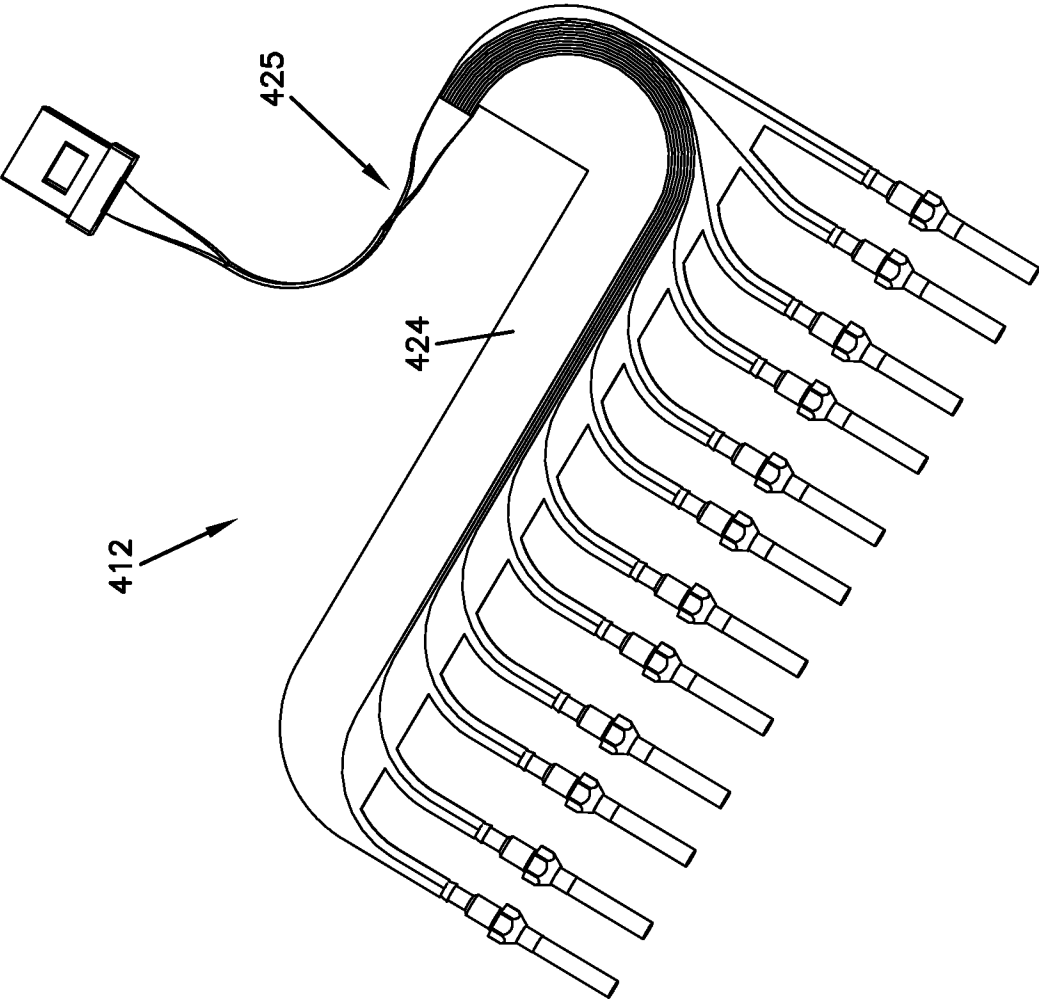


FIG. 45

FIG. 46

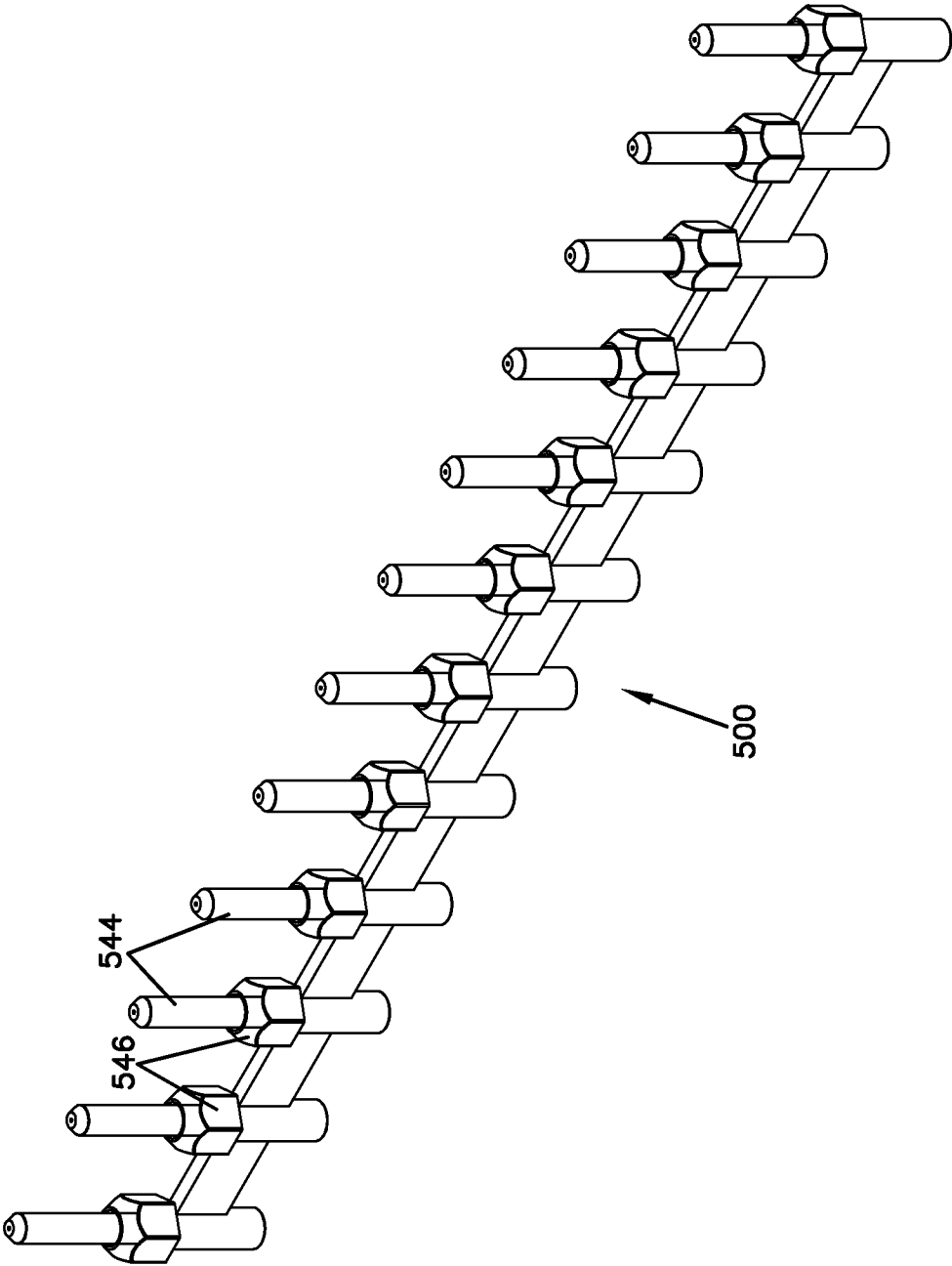


FIG. 47

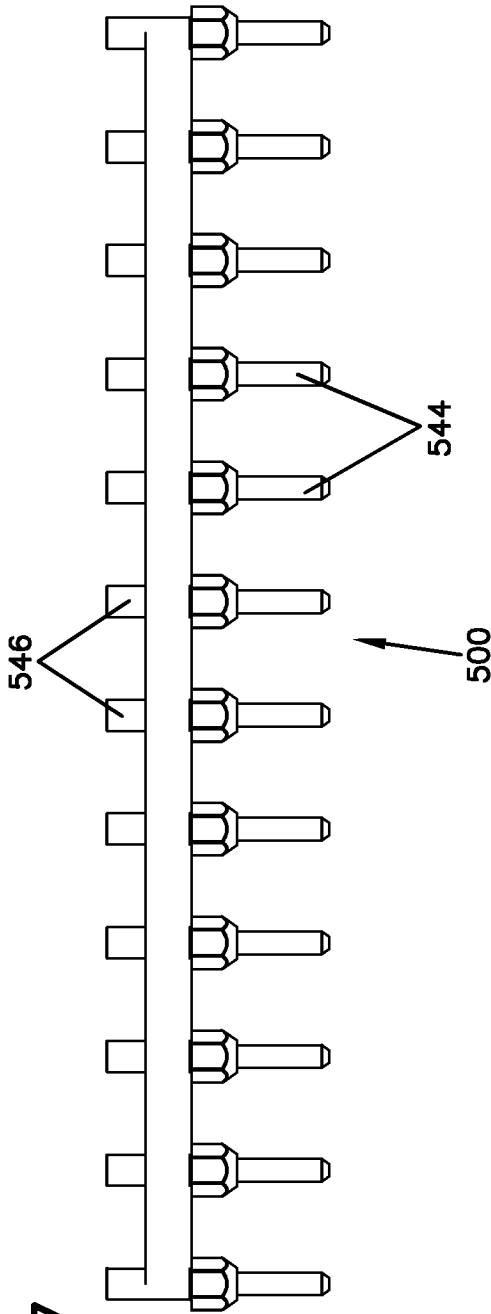


FIG. 48

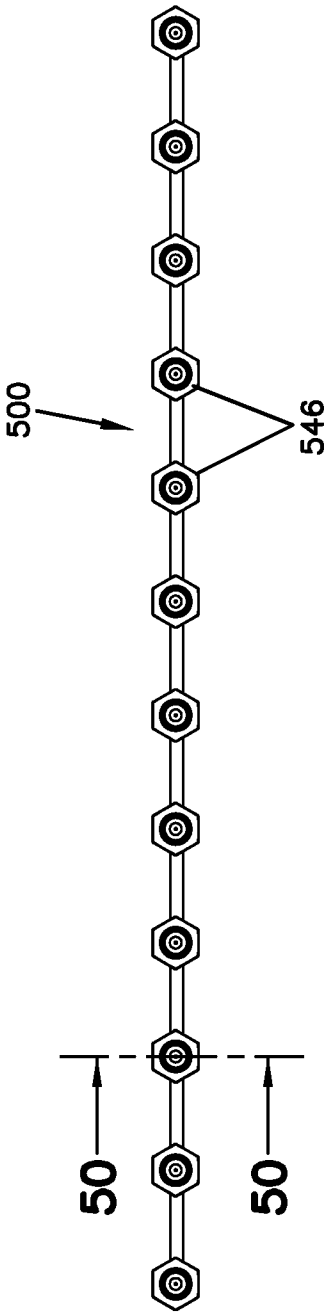


FIG. 49

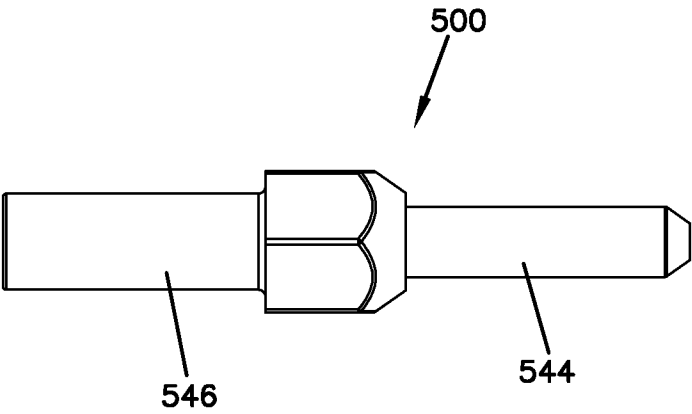


FIG. 50

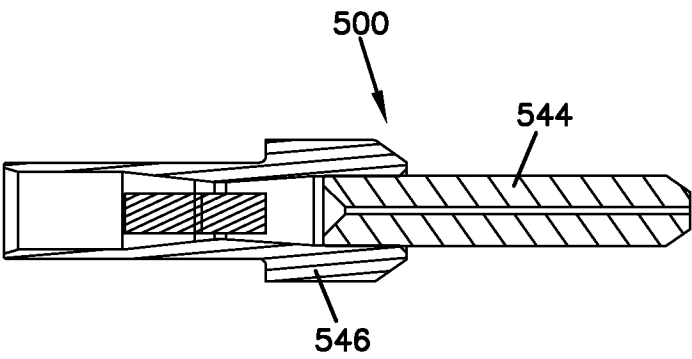


FIG. 51

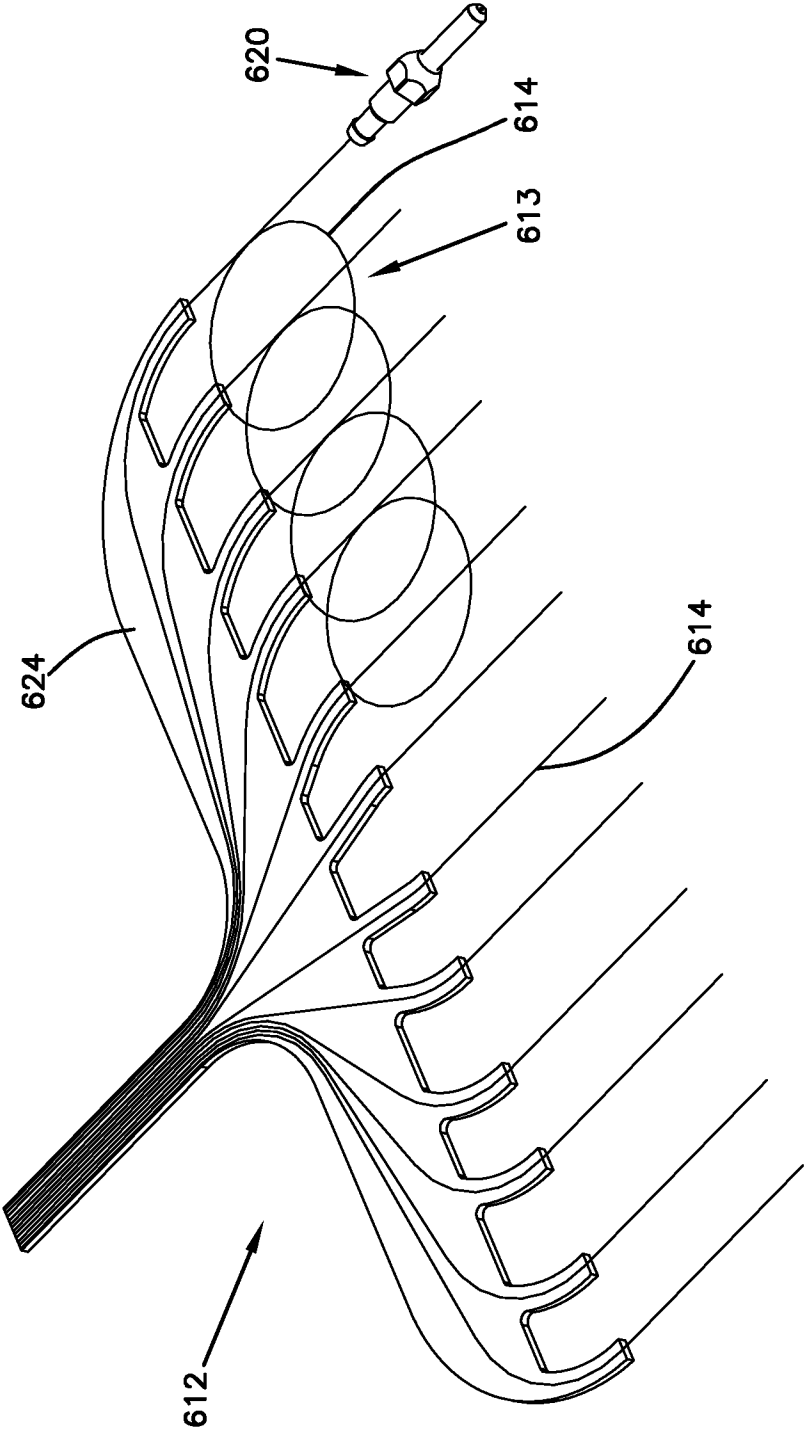


FIG. 52

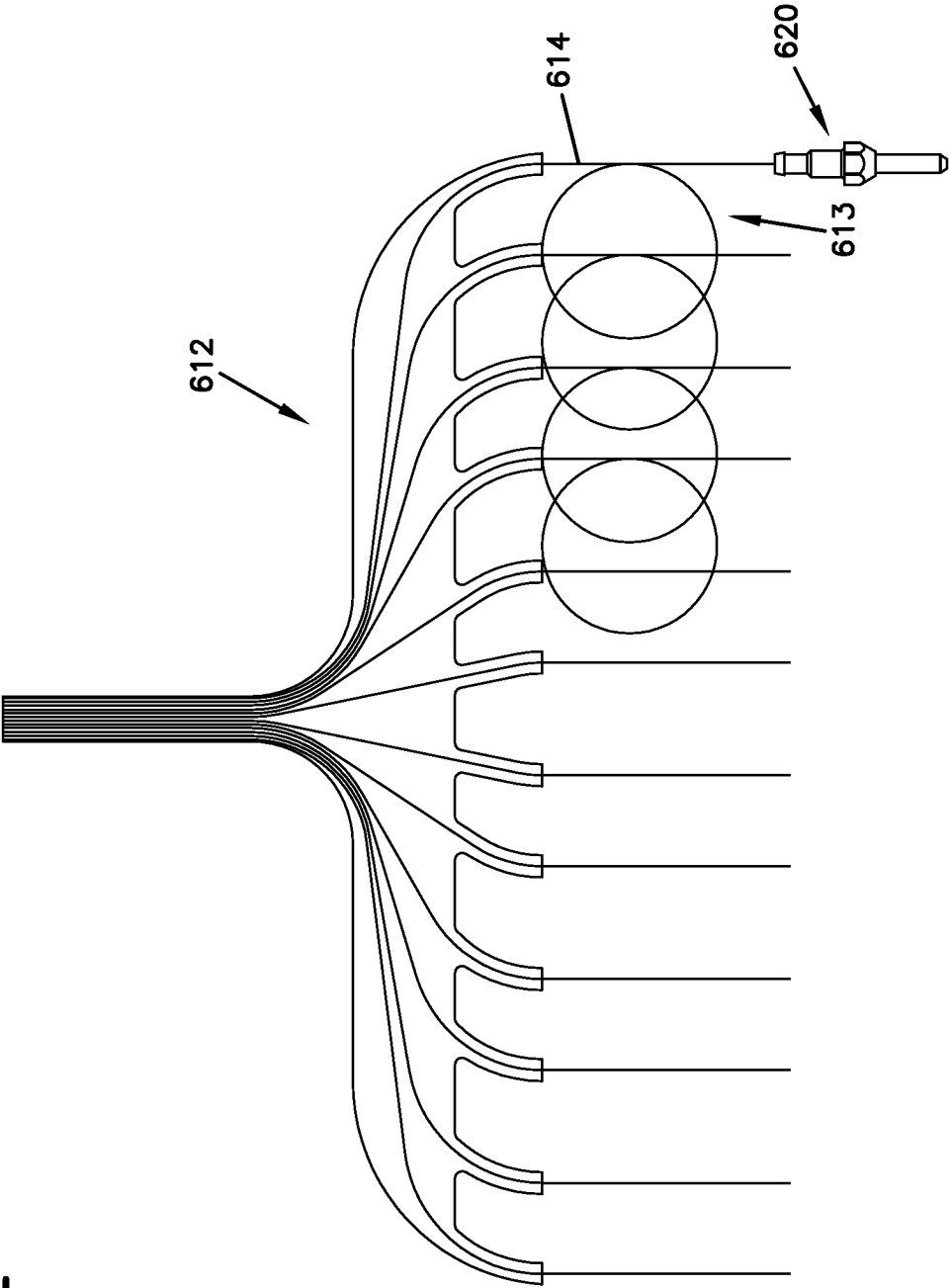
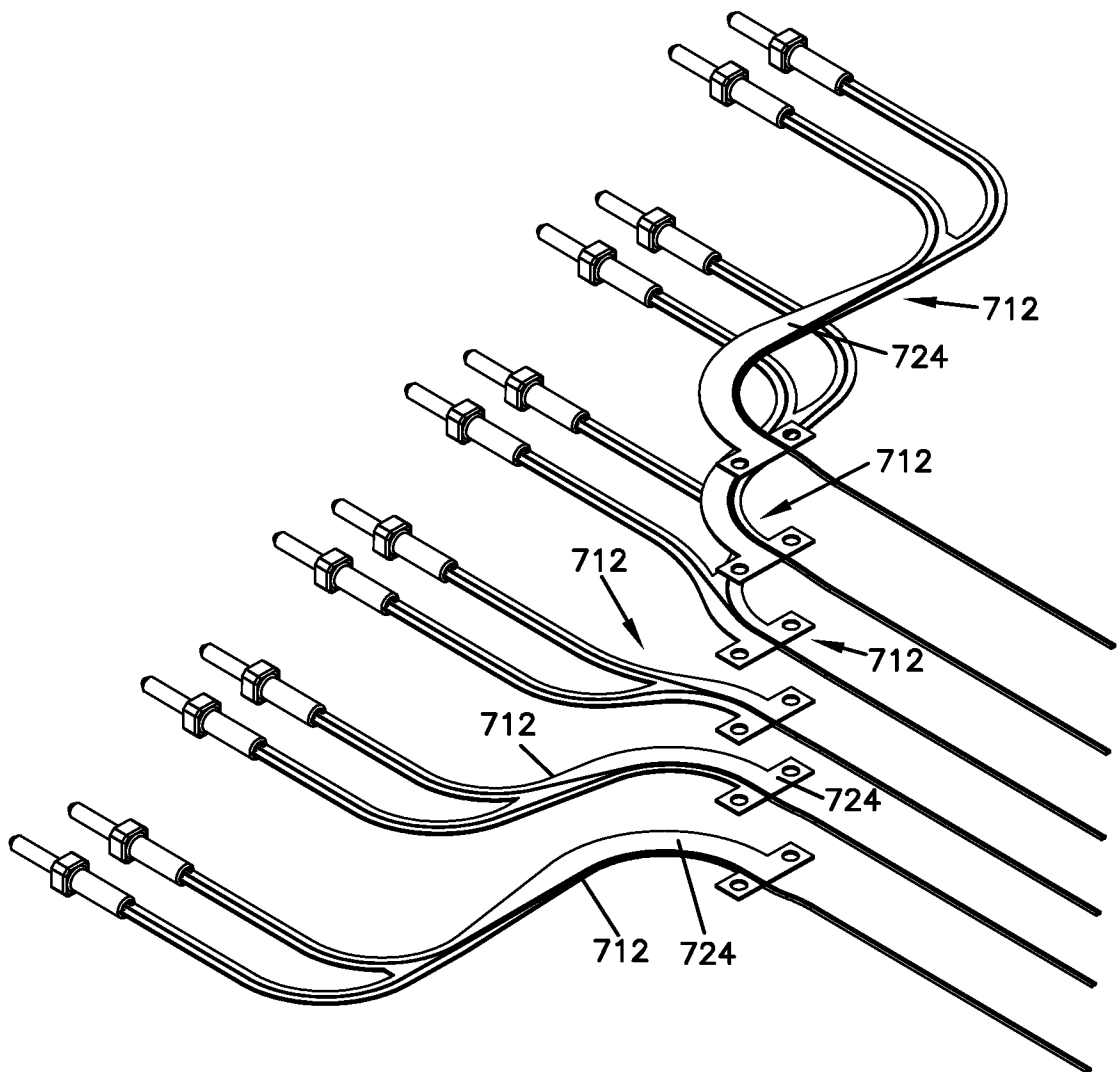


FIG. 53



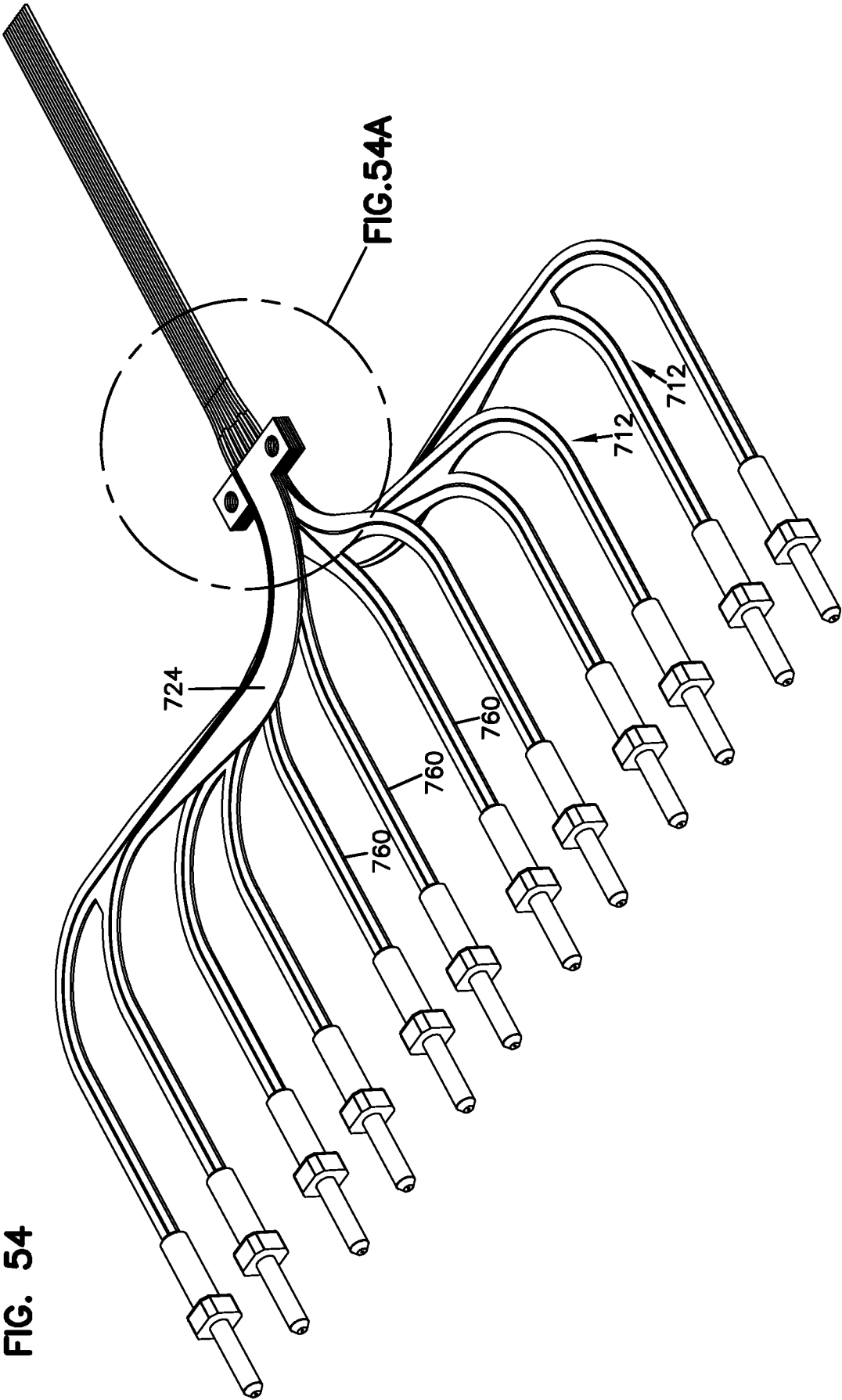


FIG. 54

FIG. 54A

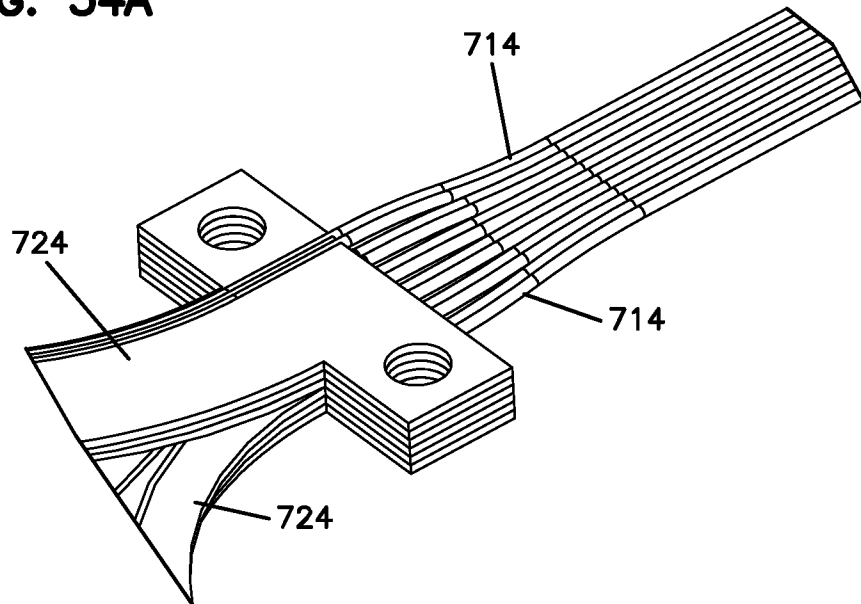
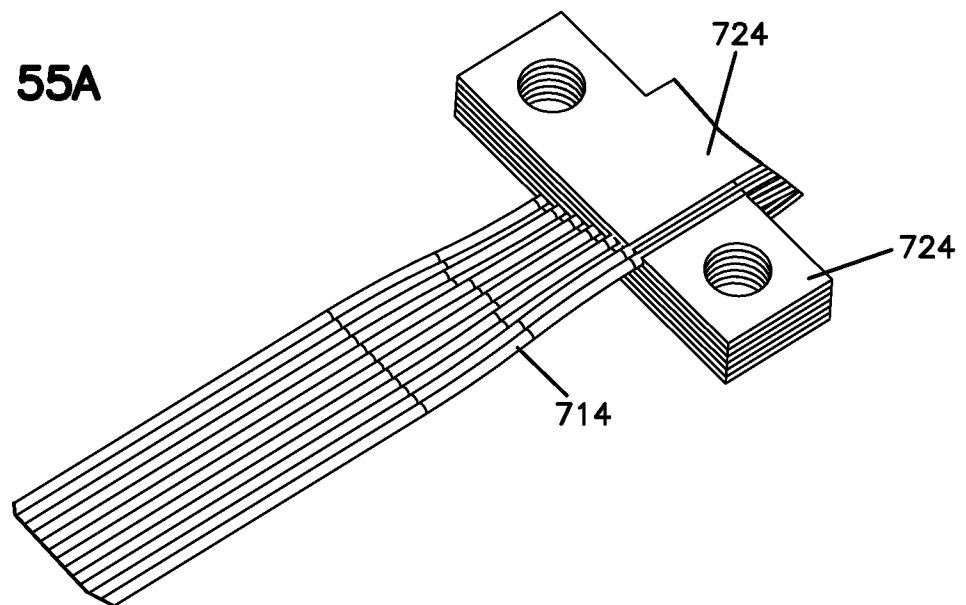
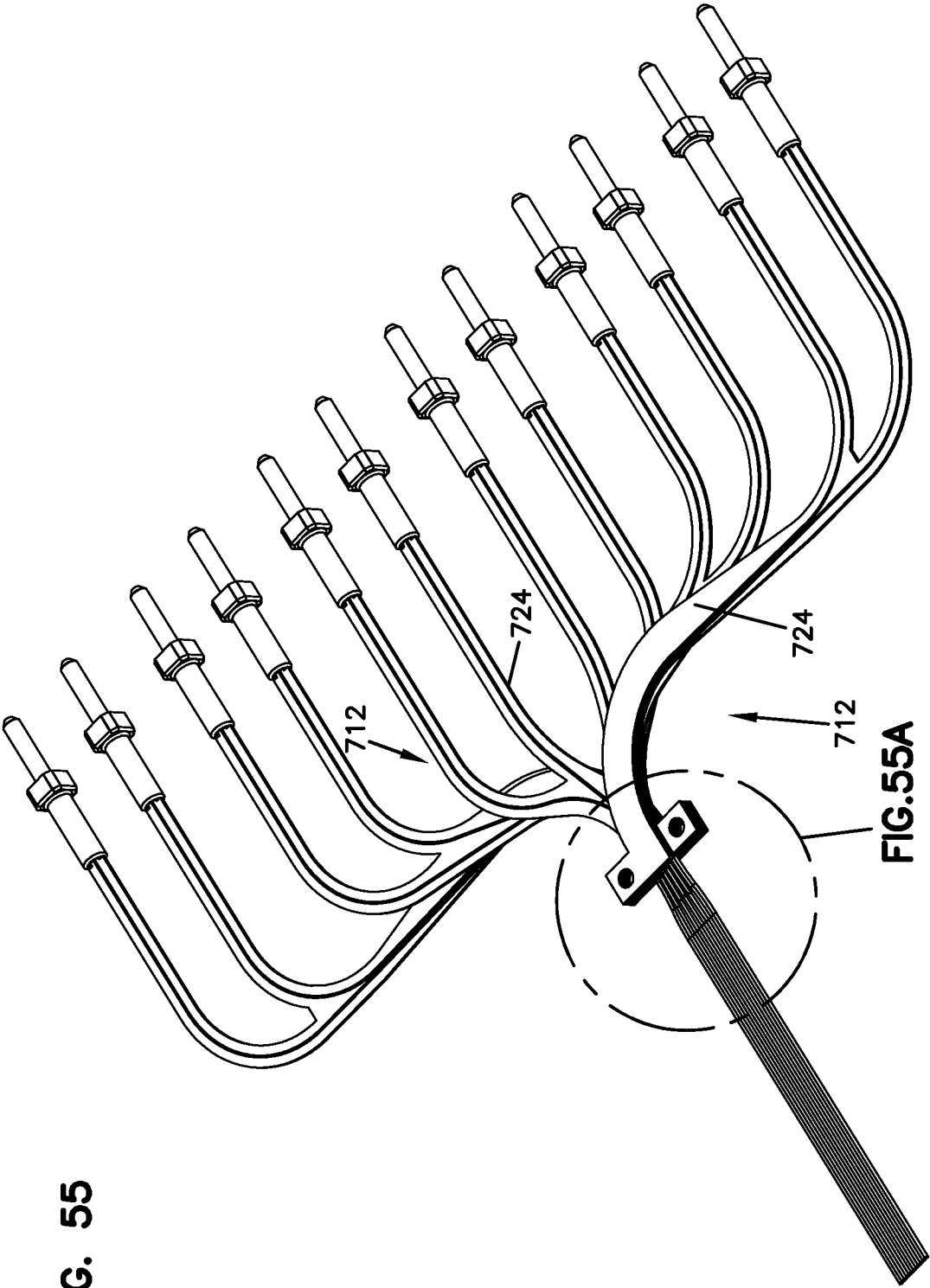


FIG. 55A





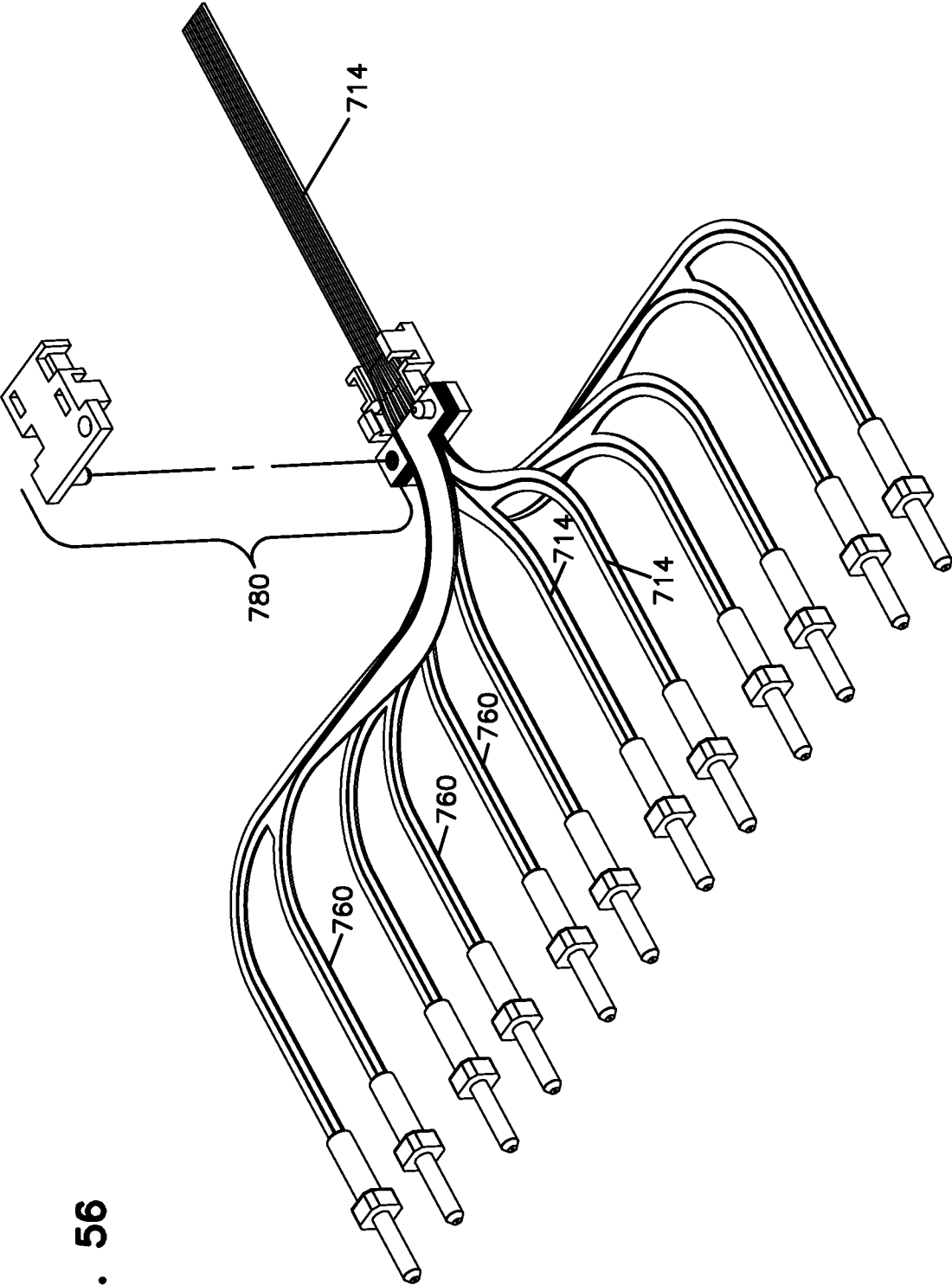


FIG. 56

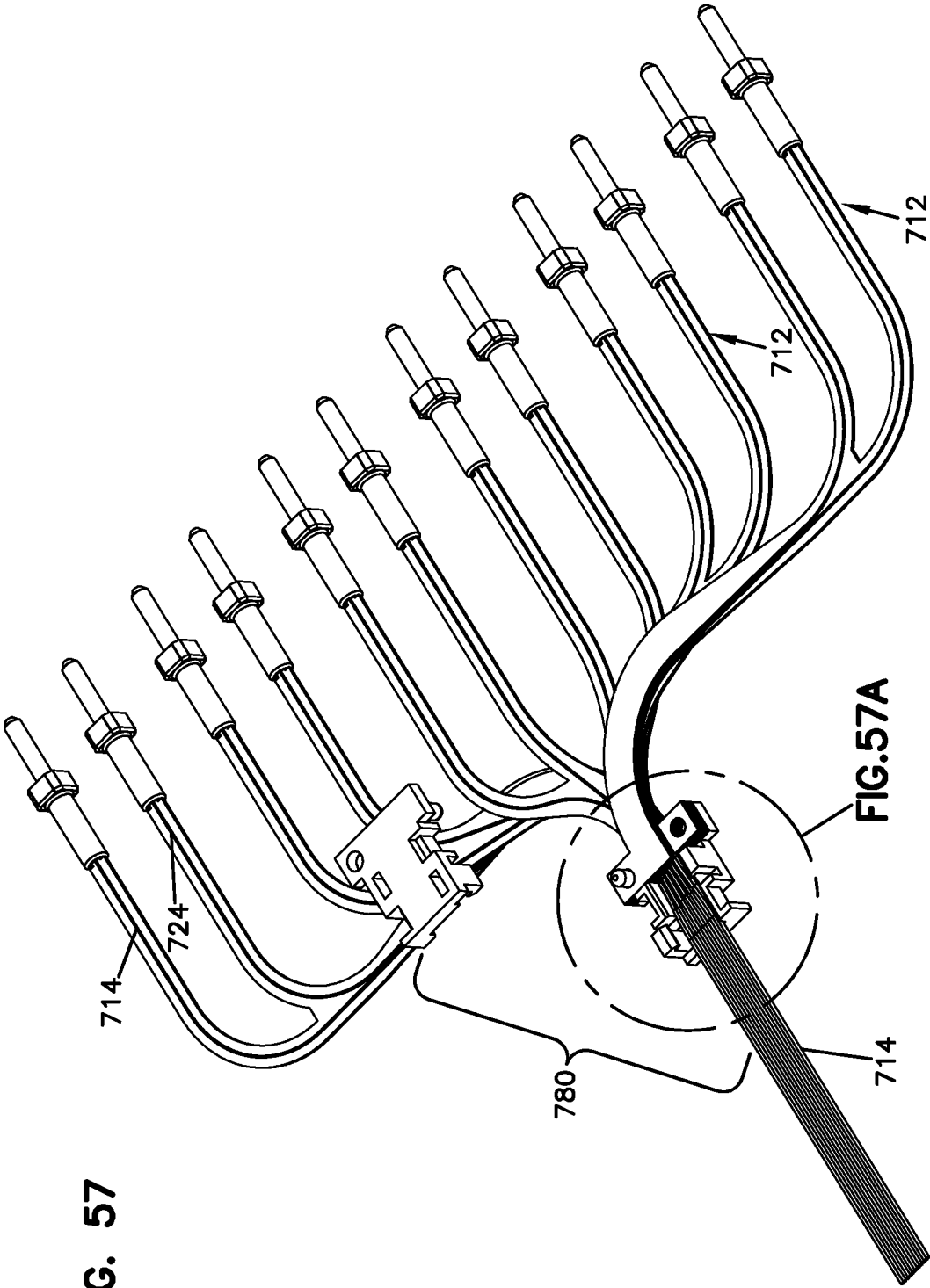


FIG. 57

FIG. 57A

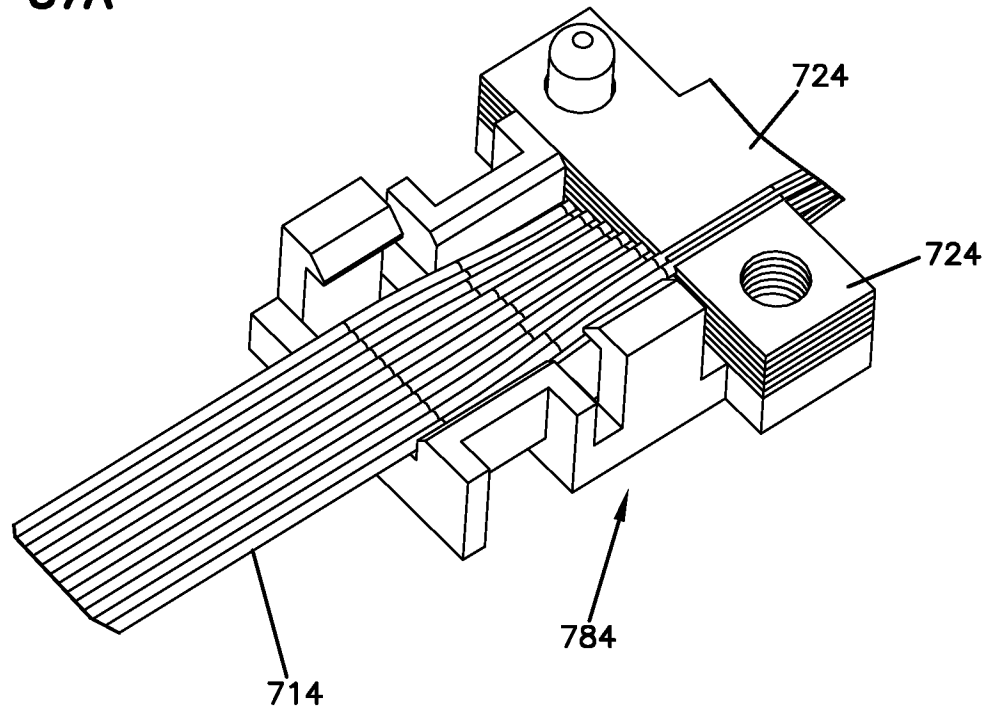


FIG. 60A

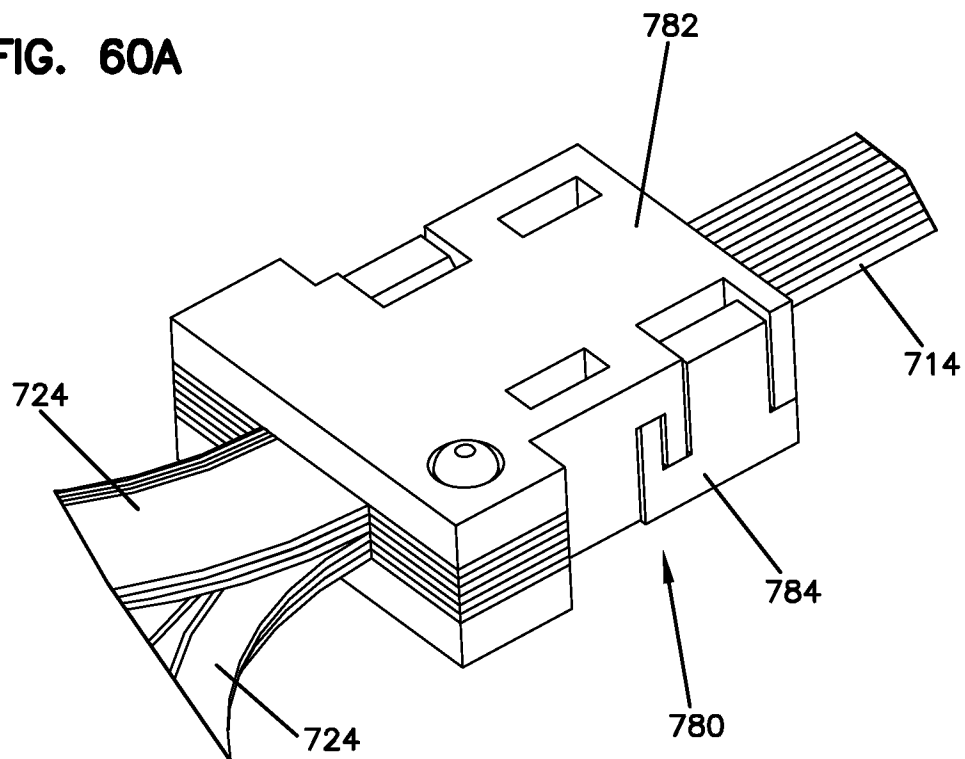


FIG. 58

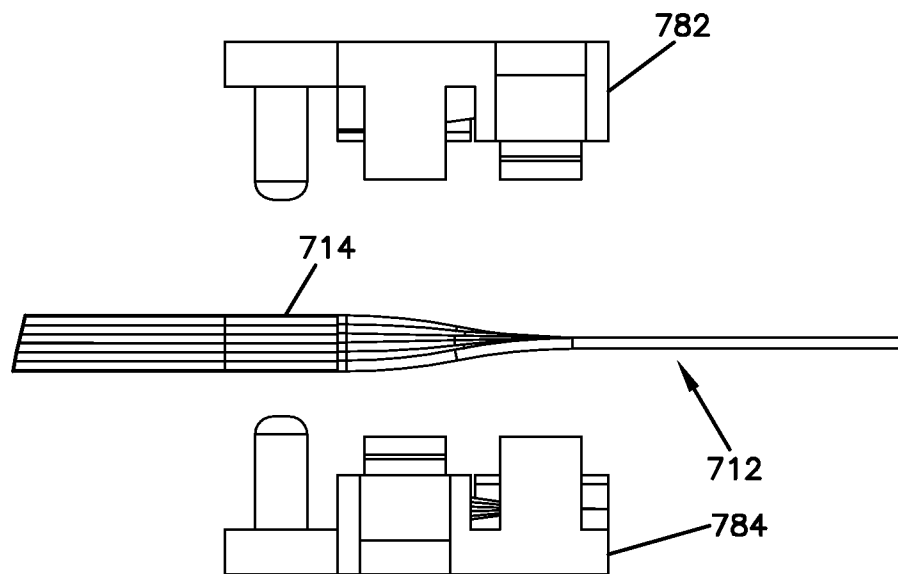


FIG. 59

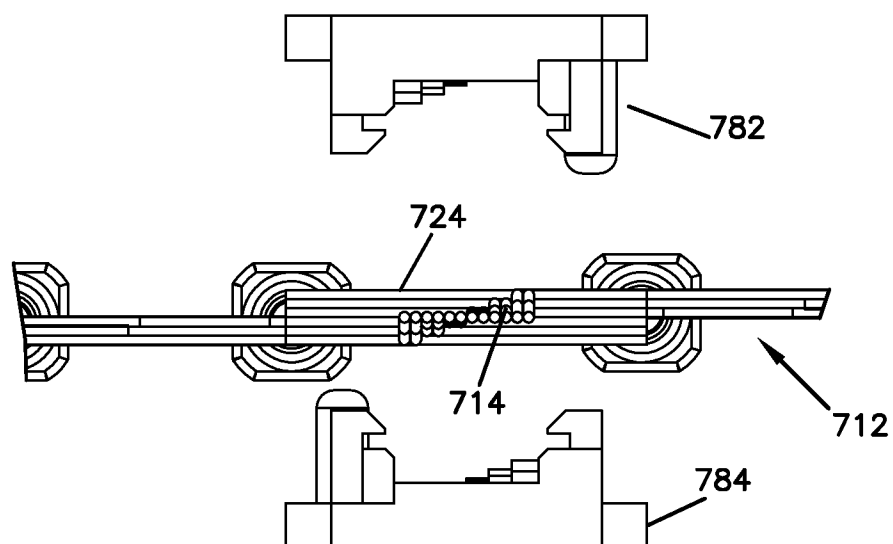
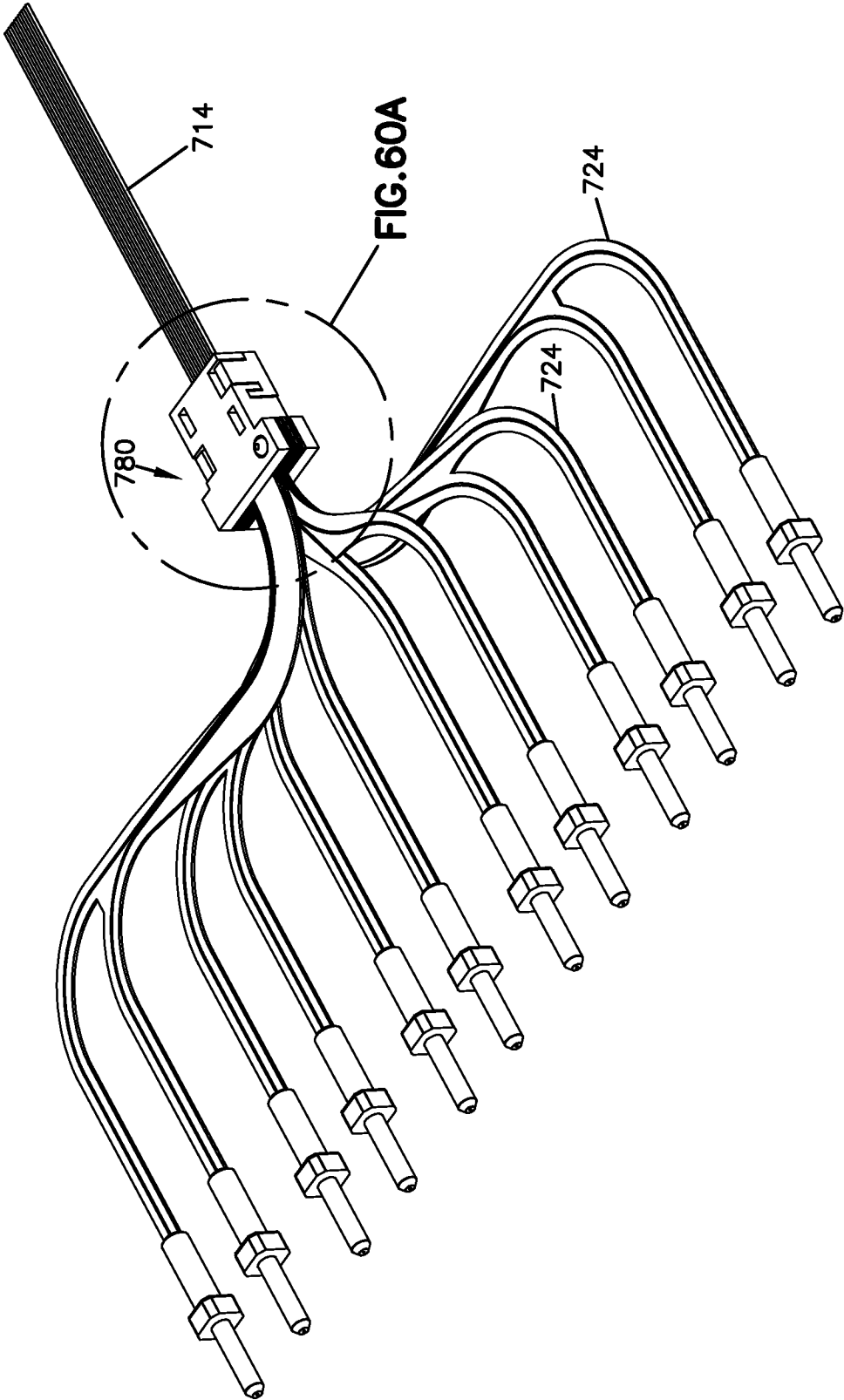


FIG. 60



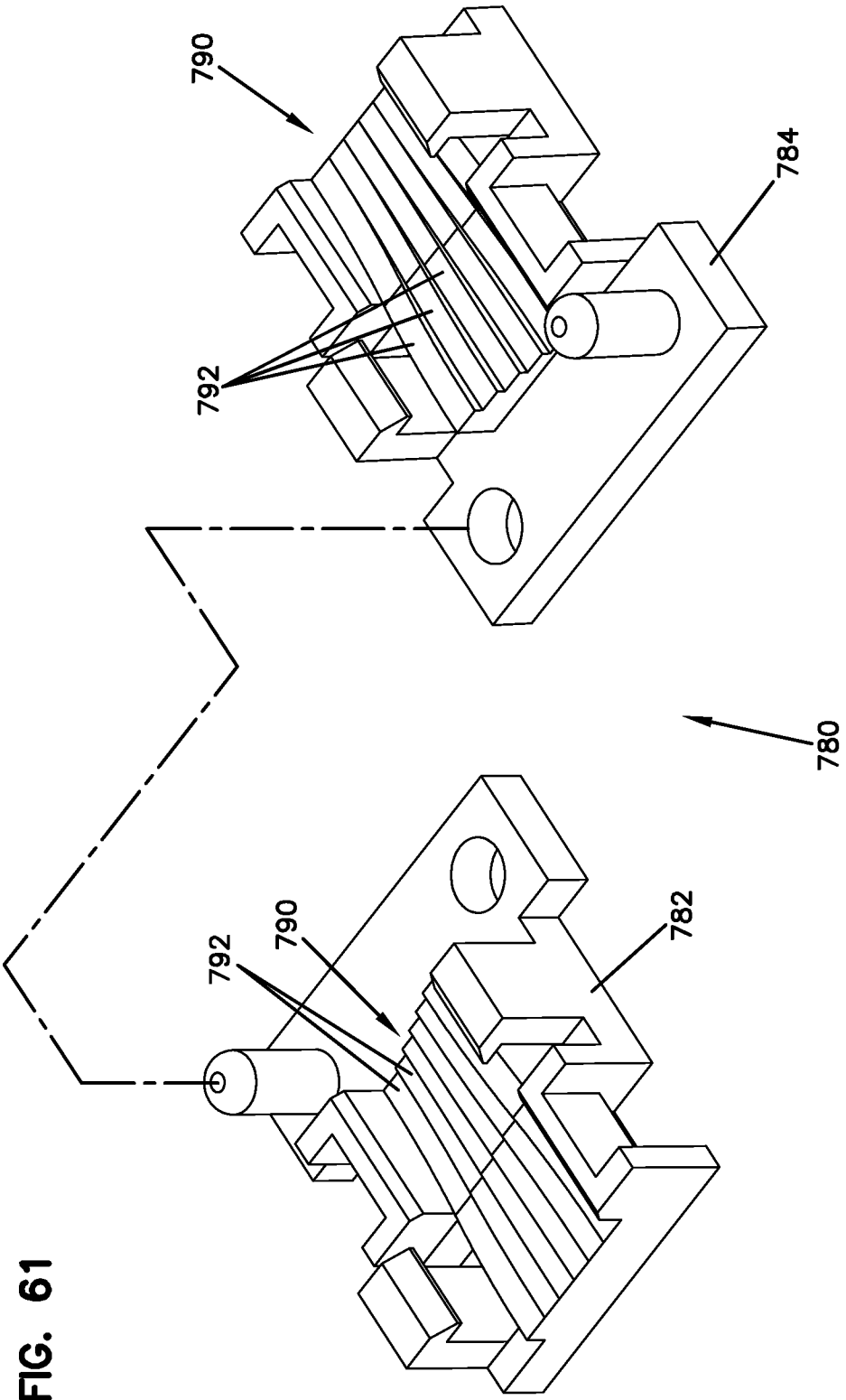


FIG. 61

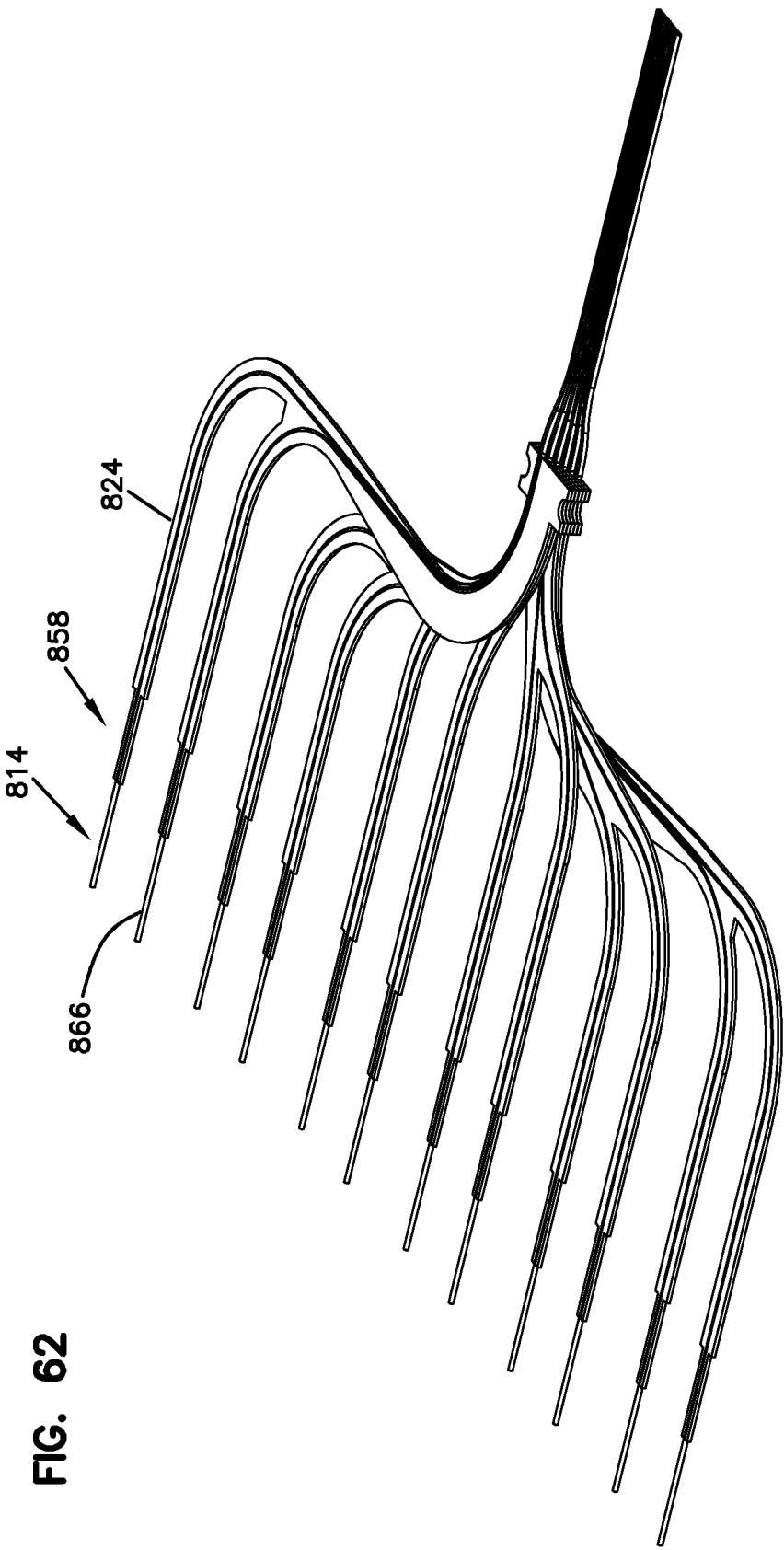


FIG. 63

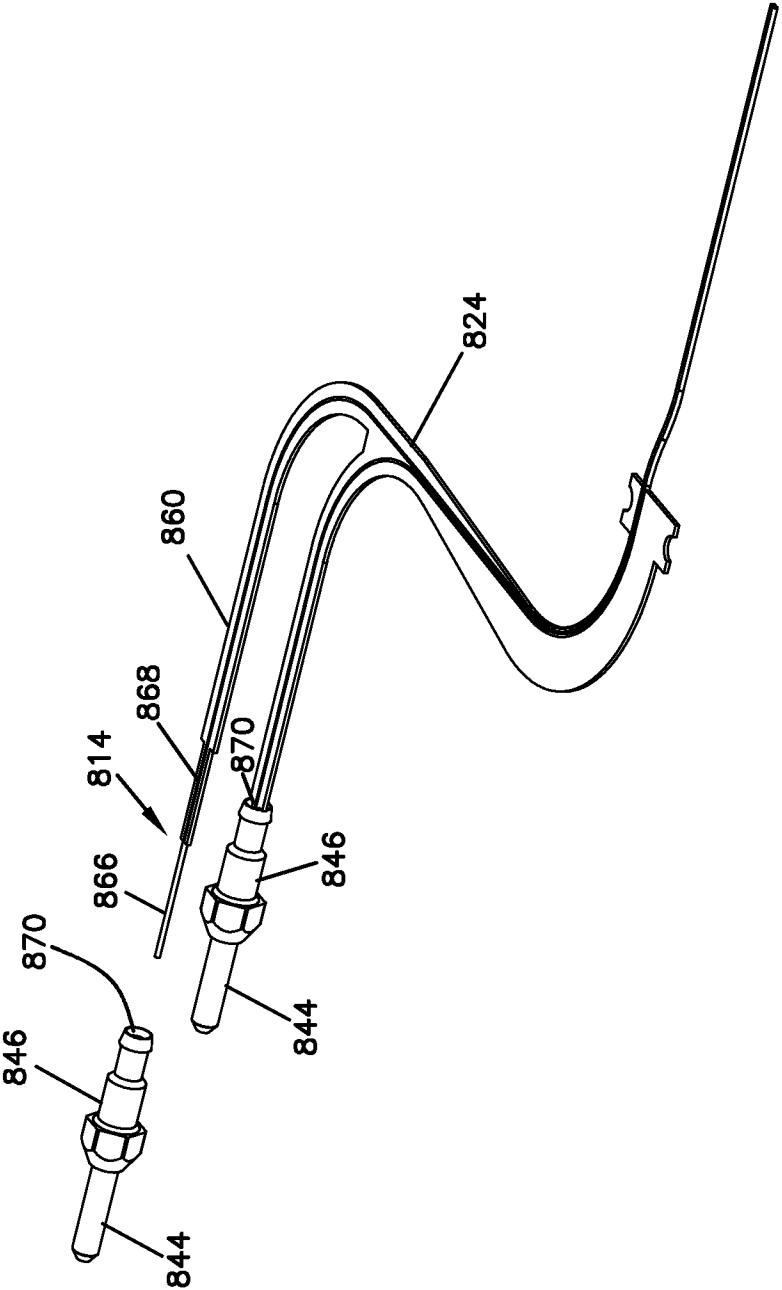


FIG. 64

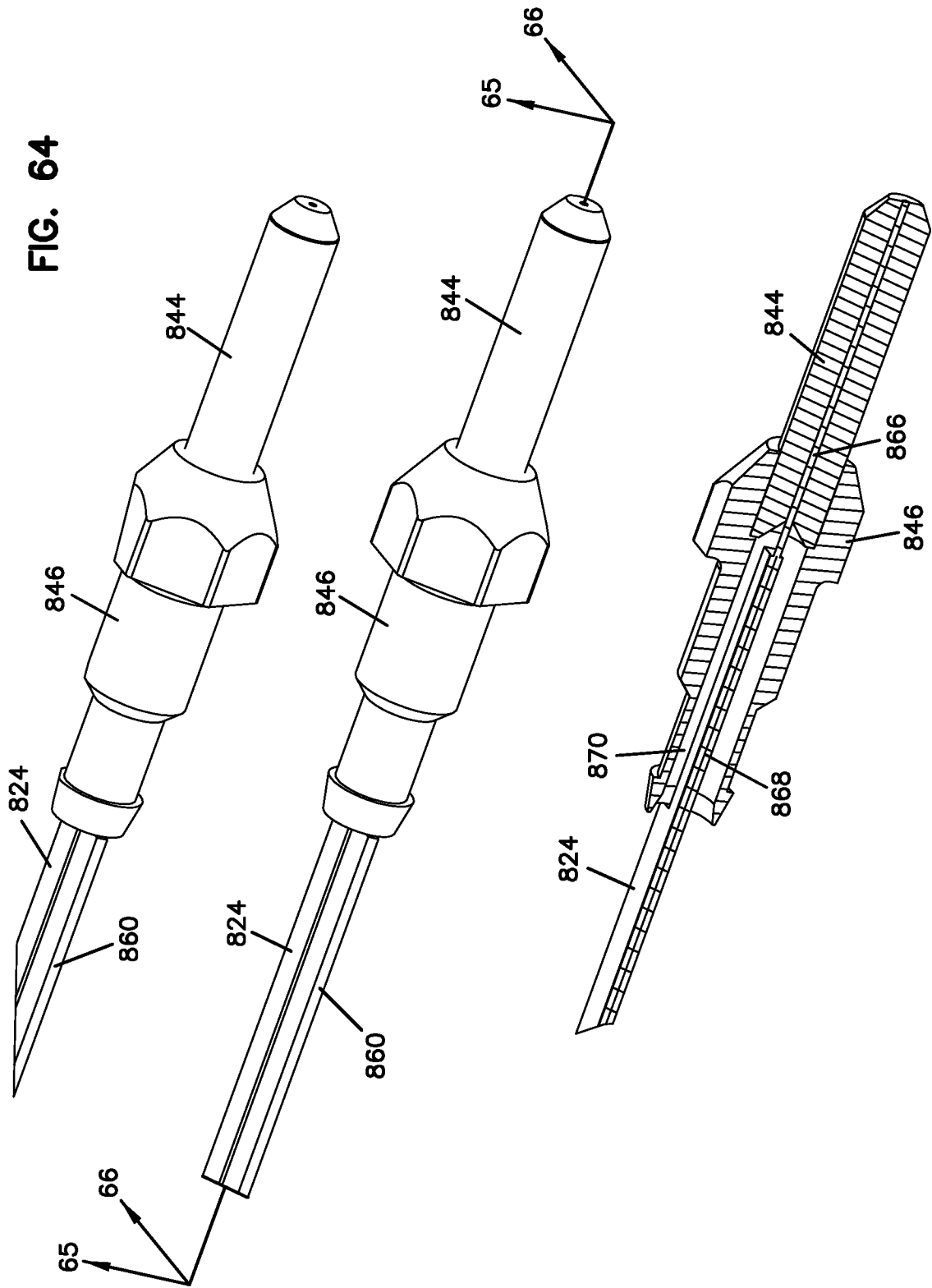


FIG. 65

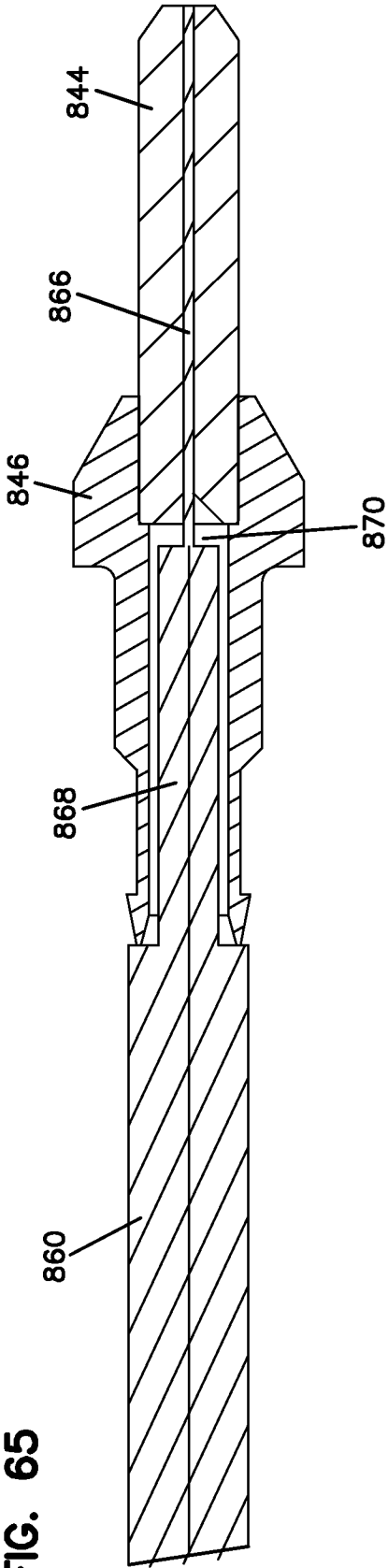
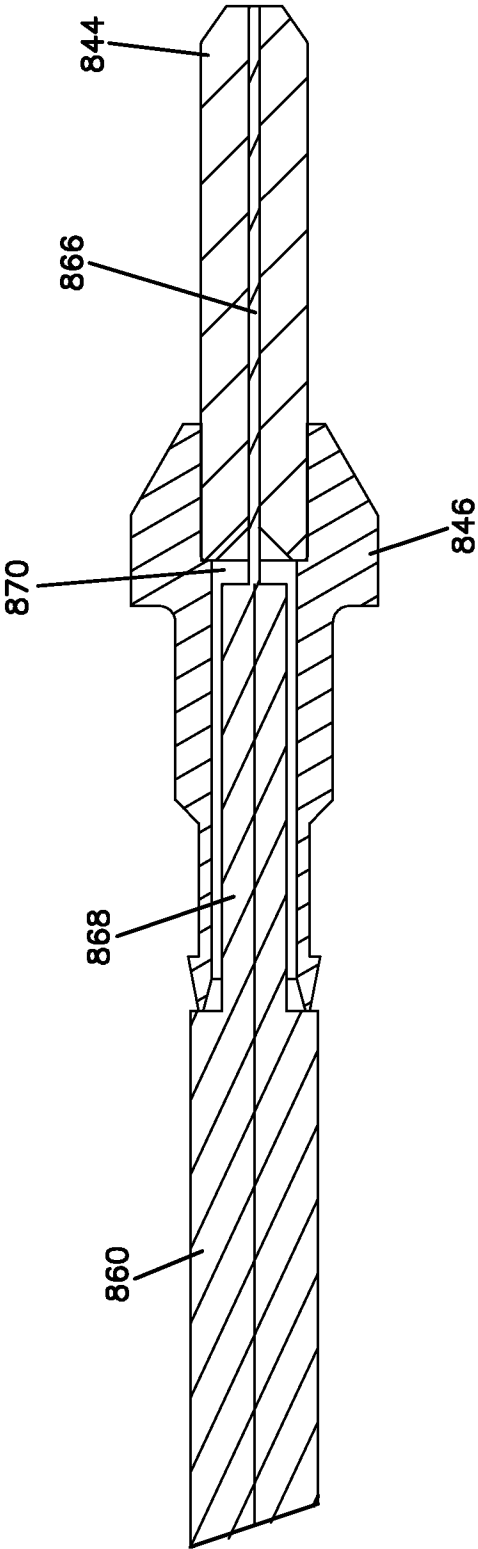


FIG. 66



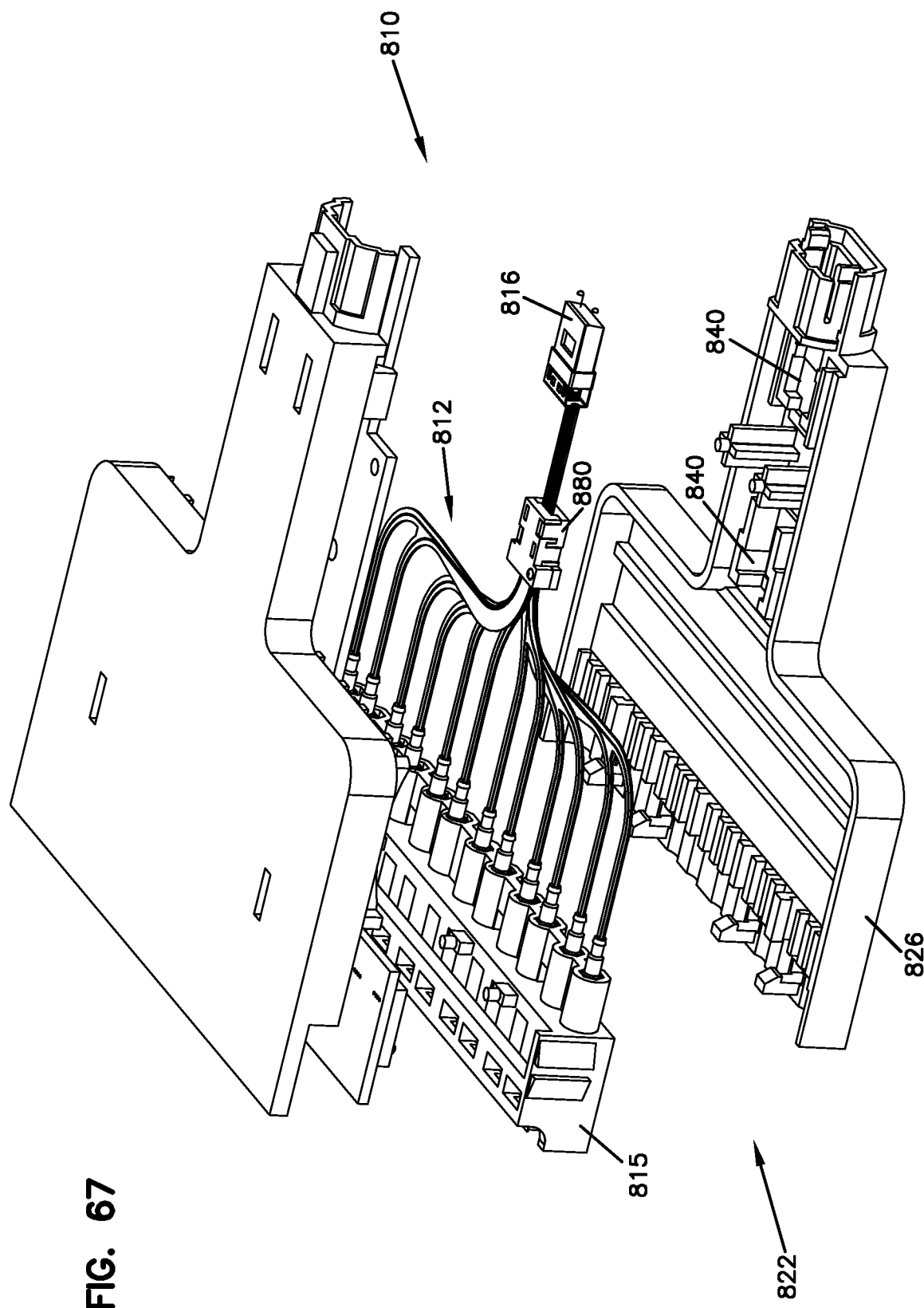


FIG. 67

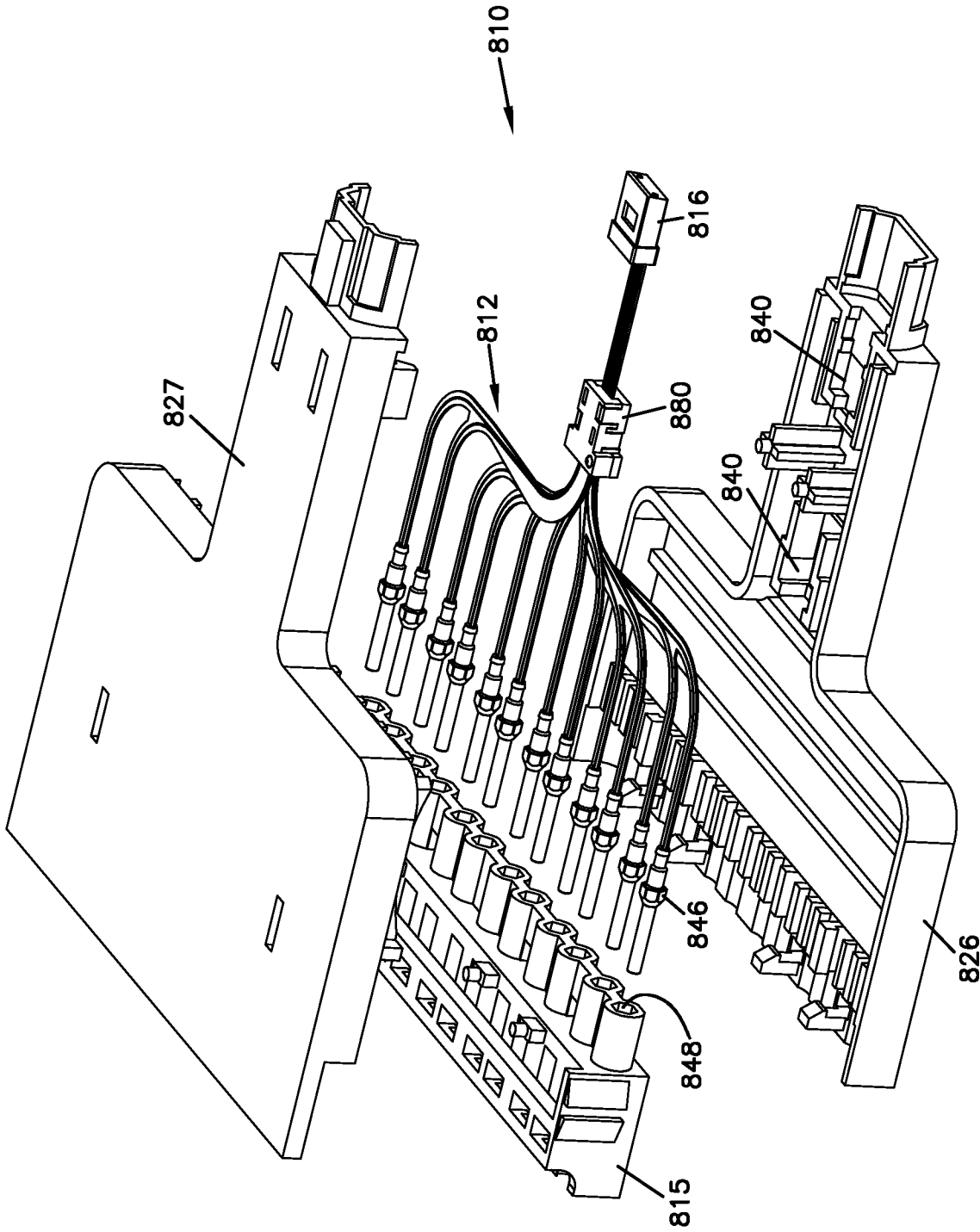


FIG. 68

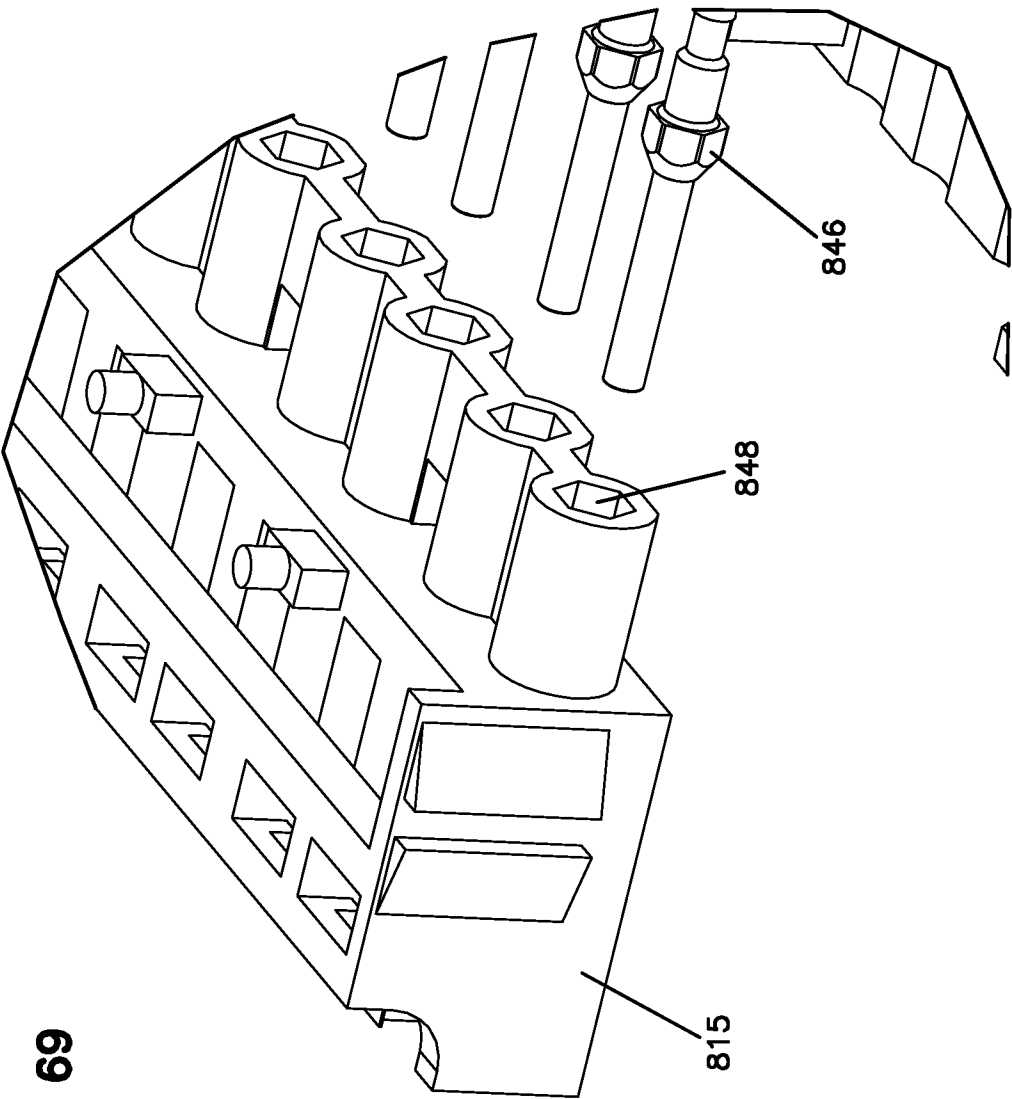


FIG. 69

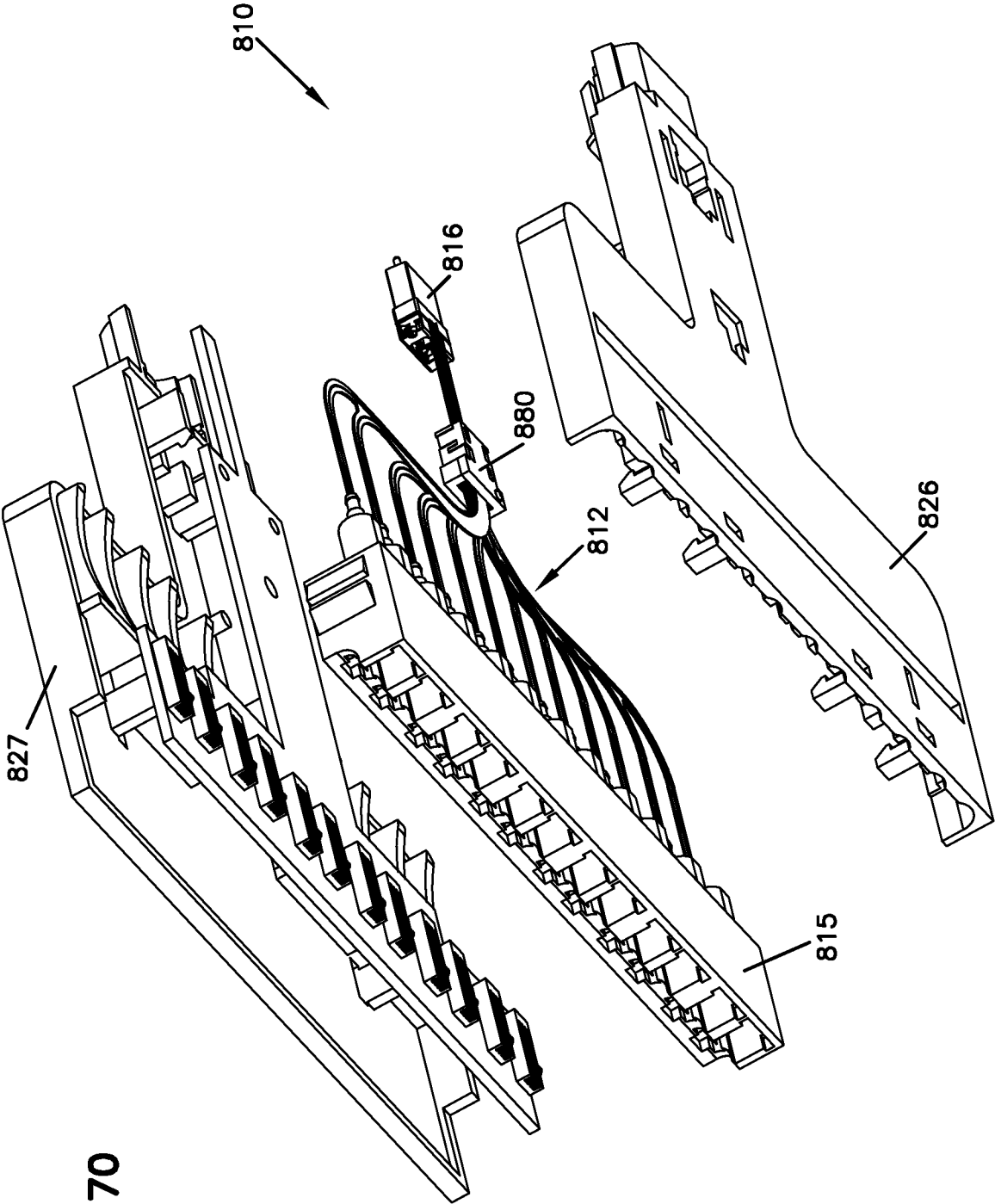


FIG. 70

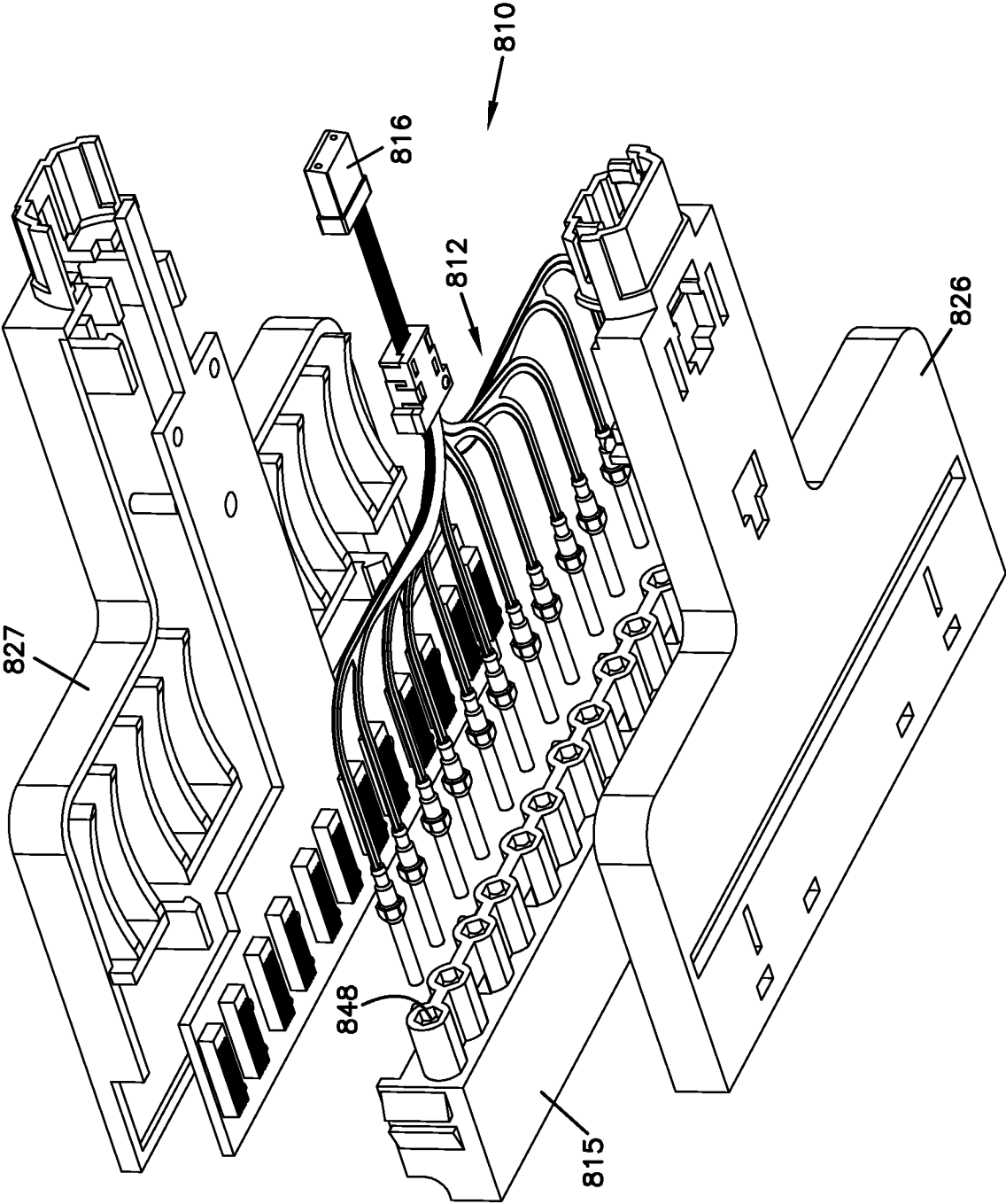


FIG. 71

FIG. 72

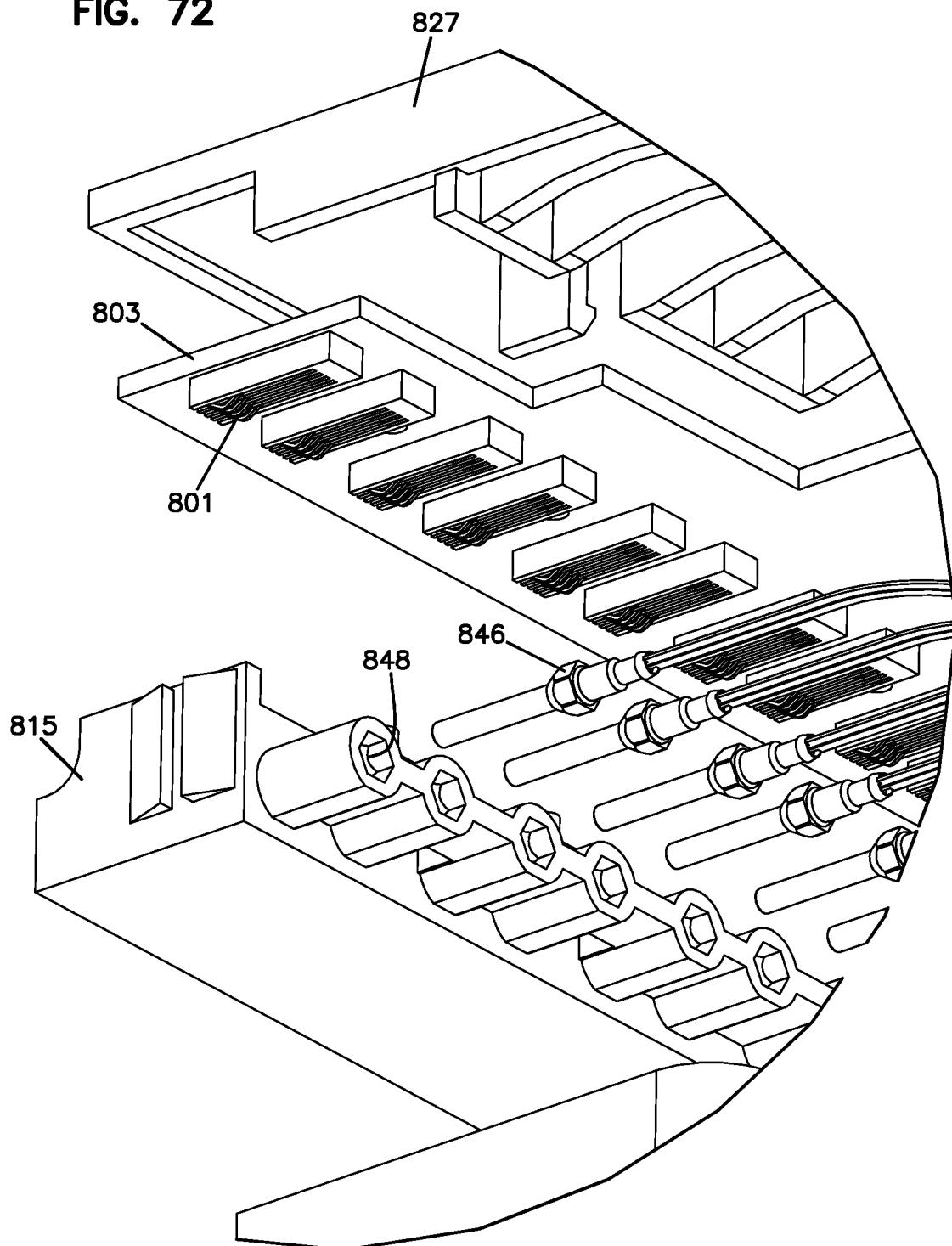
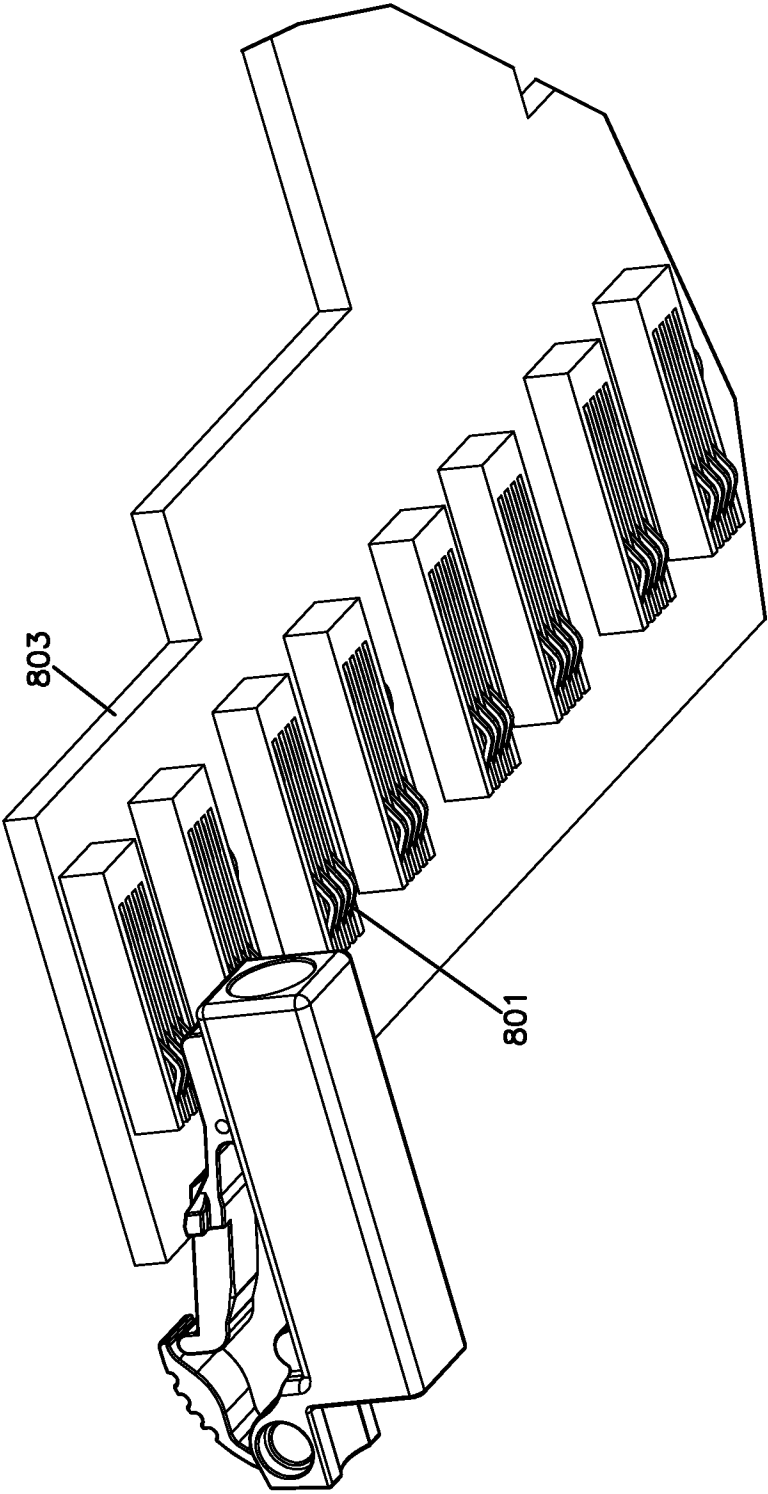


FIG. 73



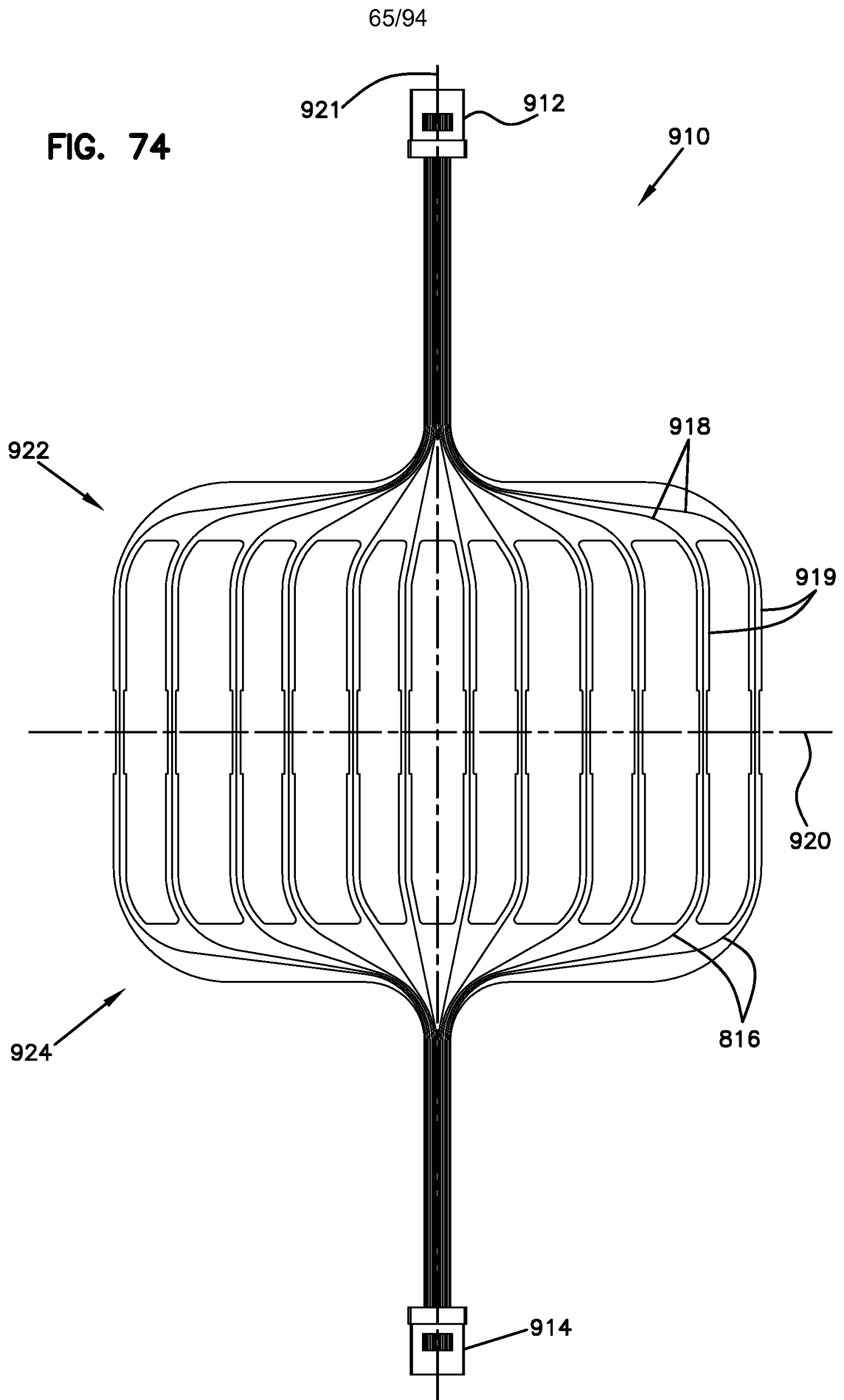


FIG. 75

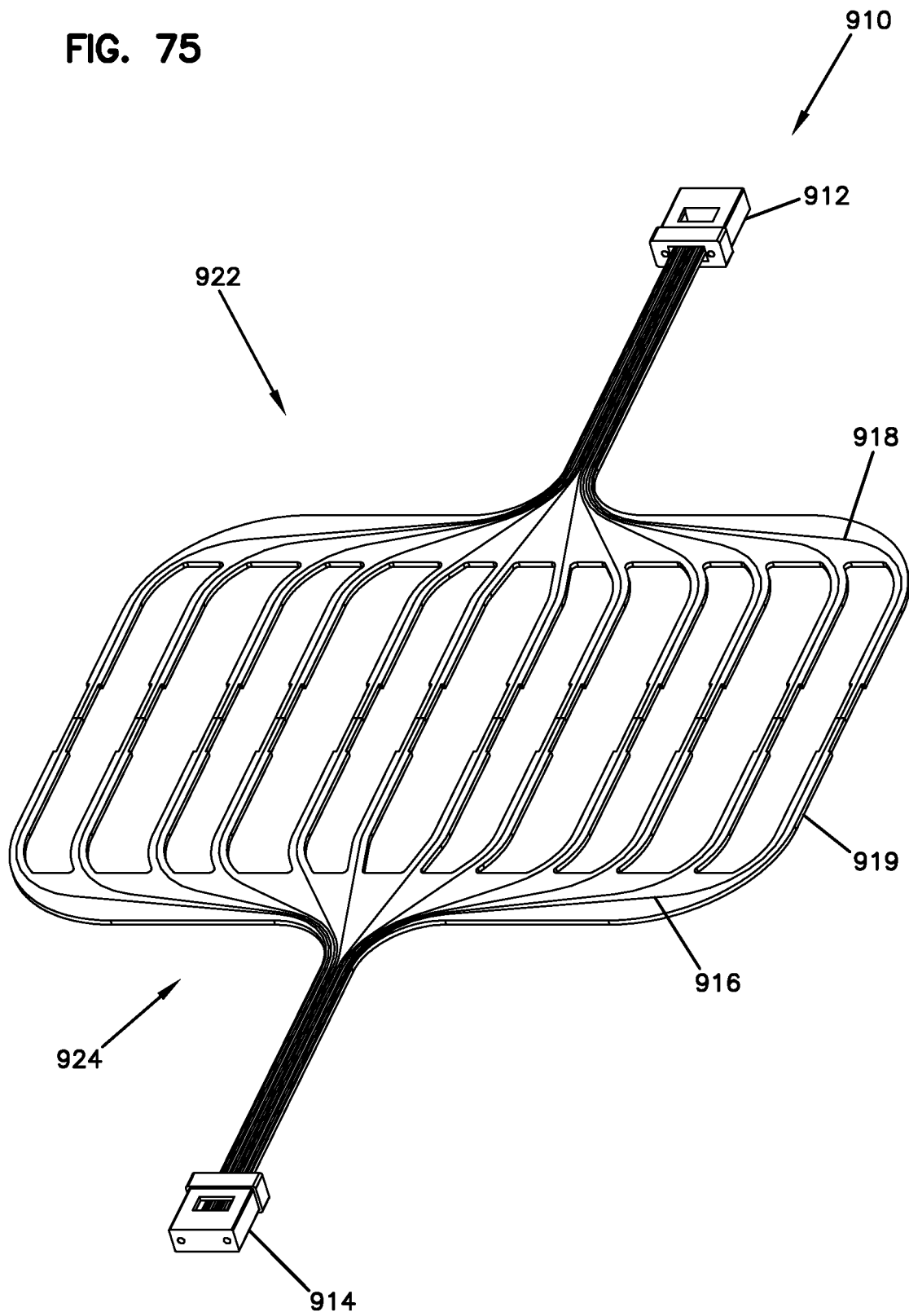


FIG. 76

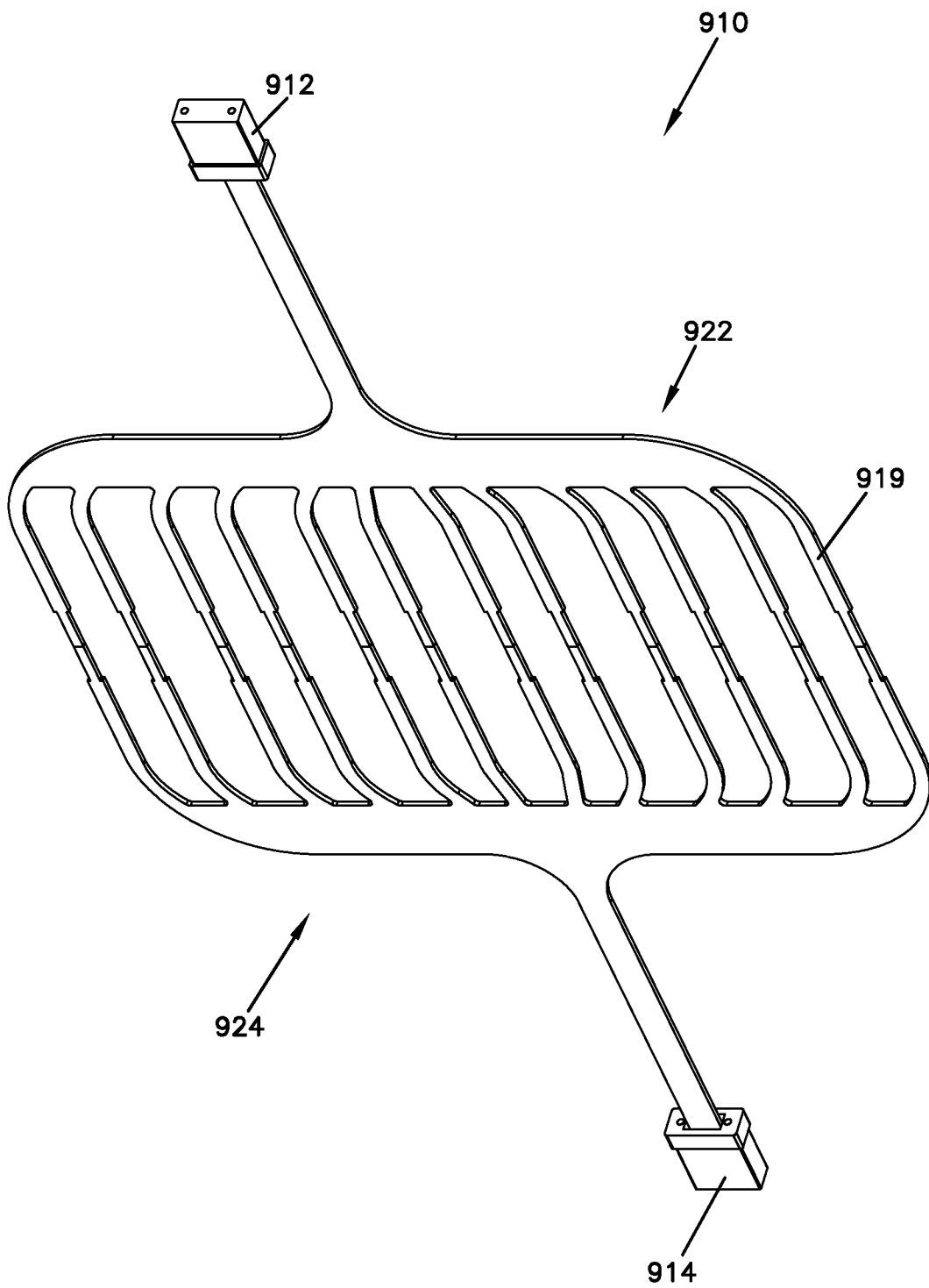


FIG. 77

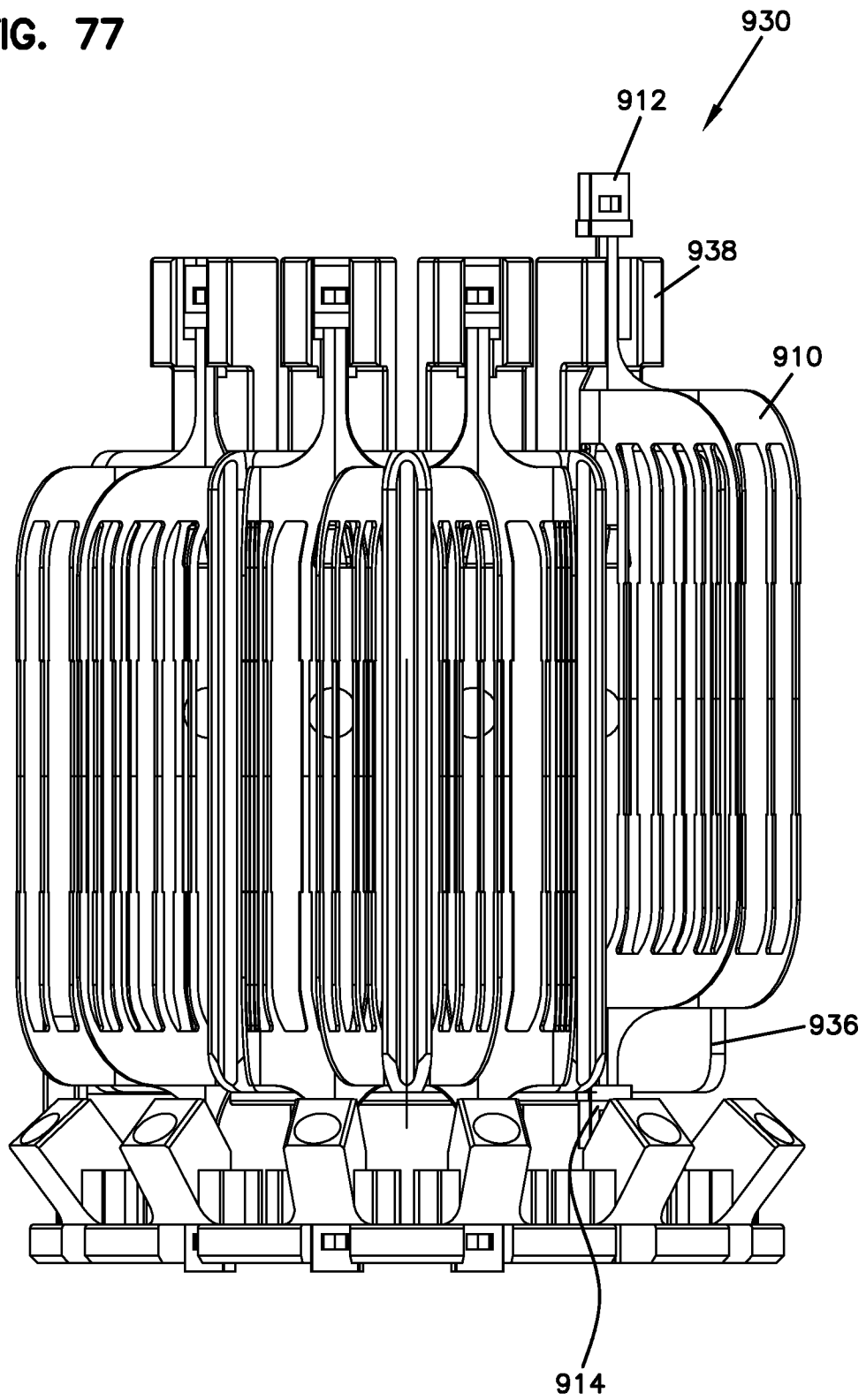


FIG. 78

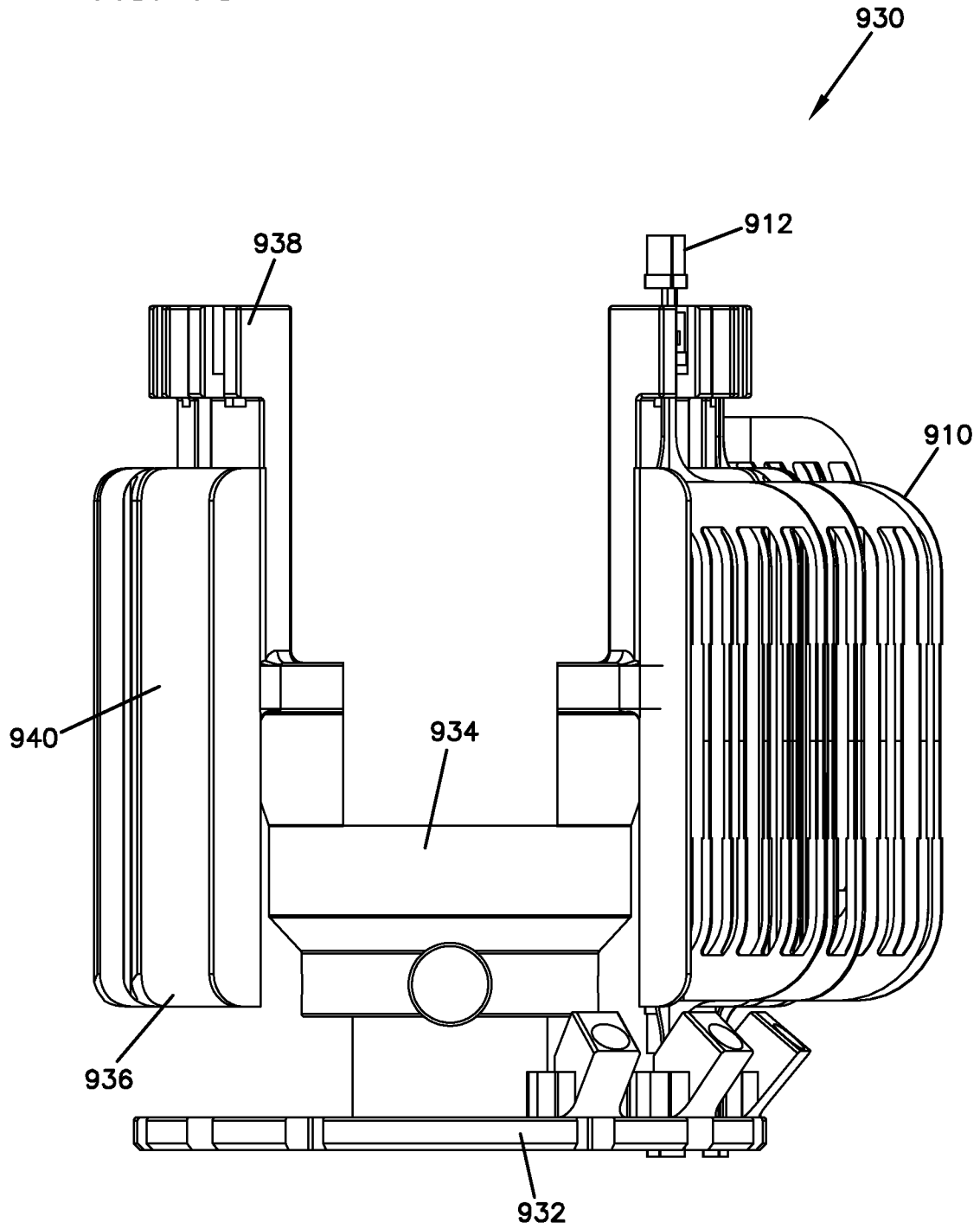
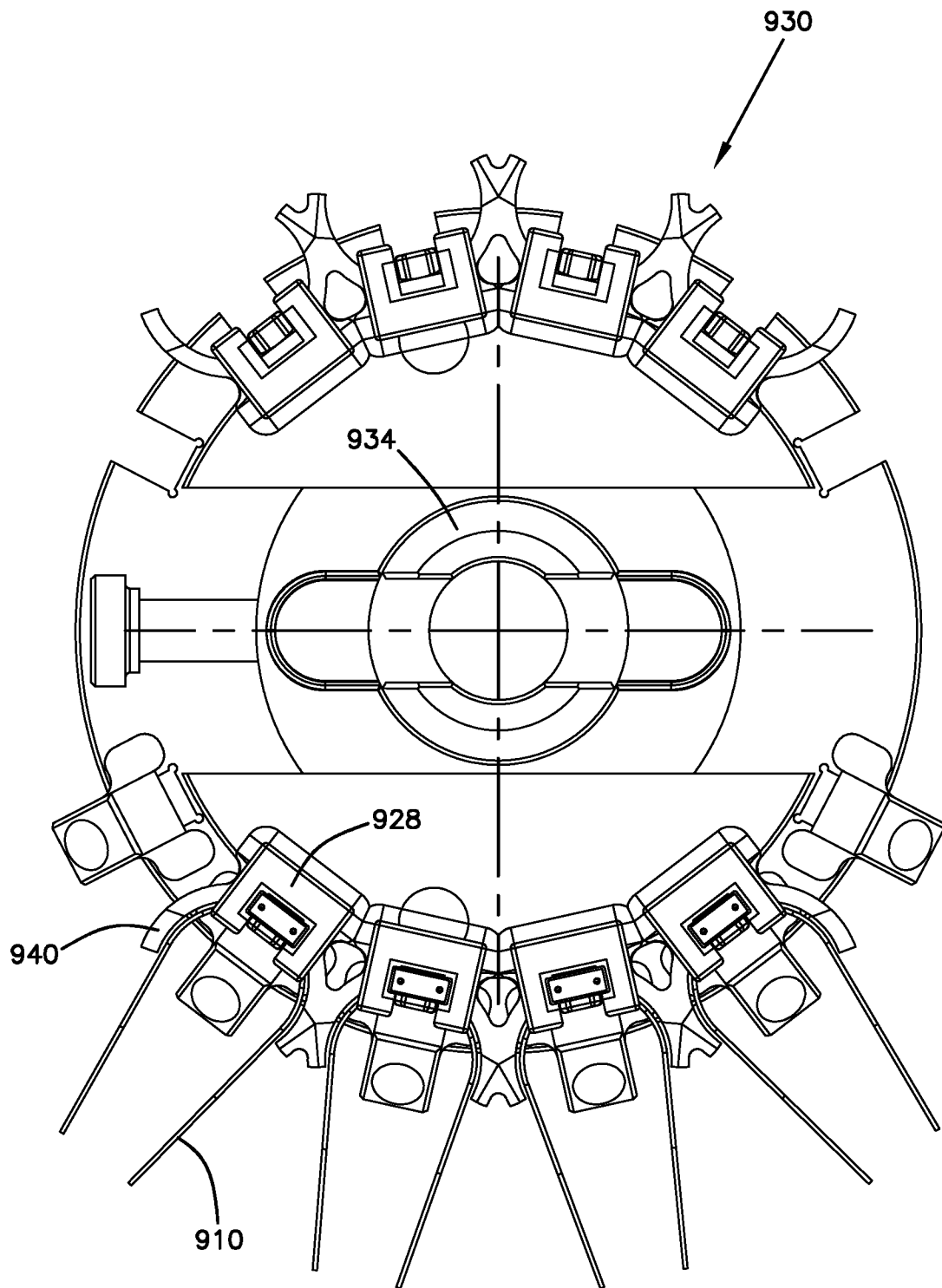
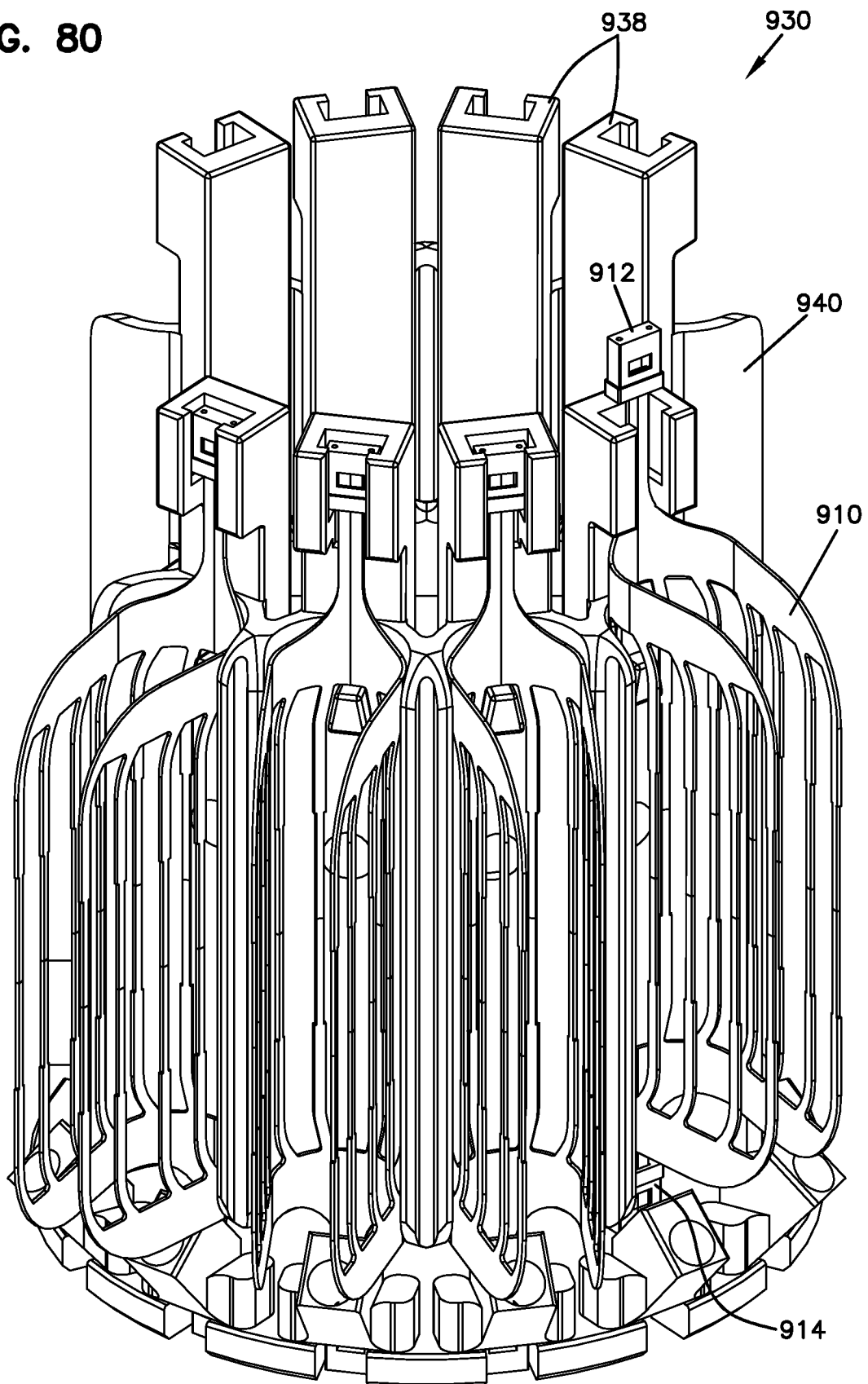


FIG. 79

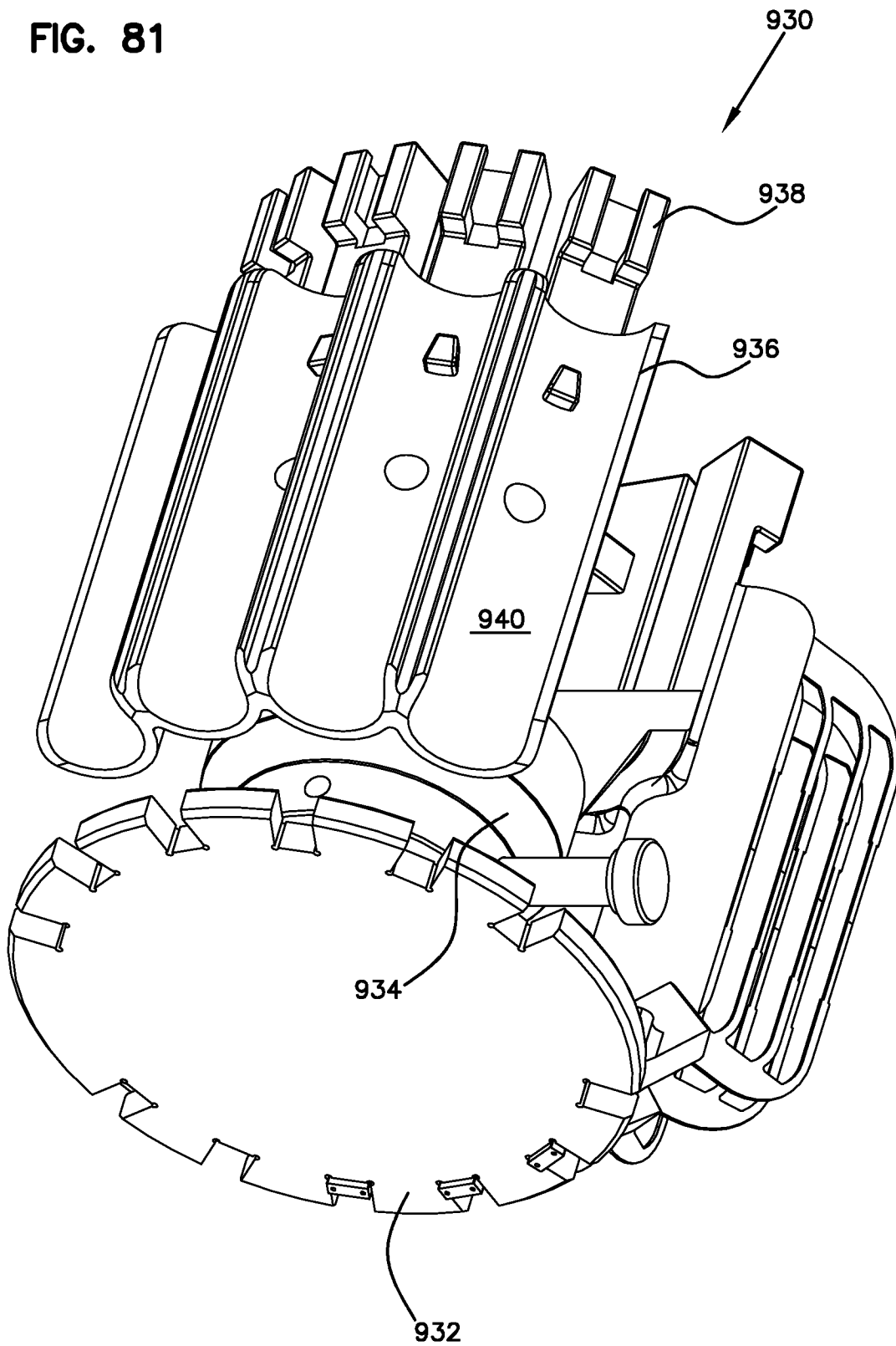


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FIG. 80

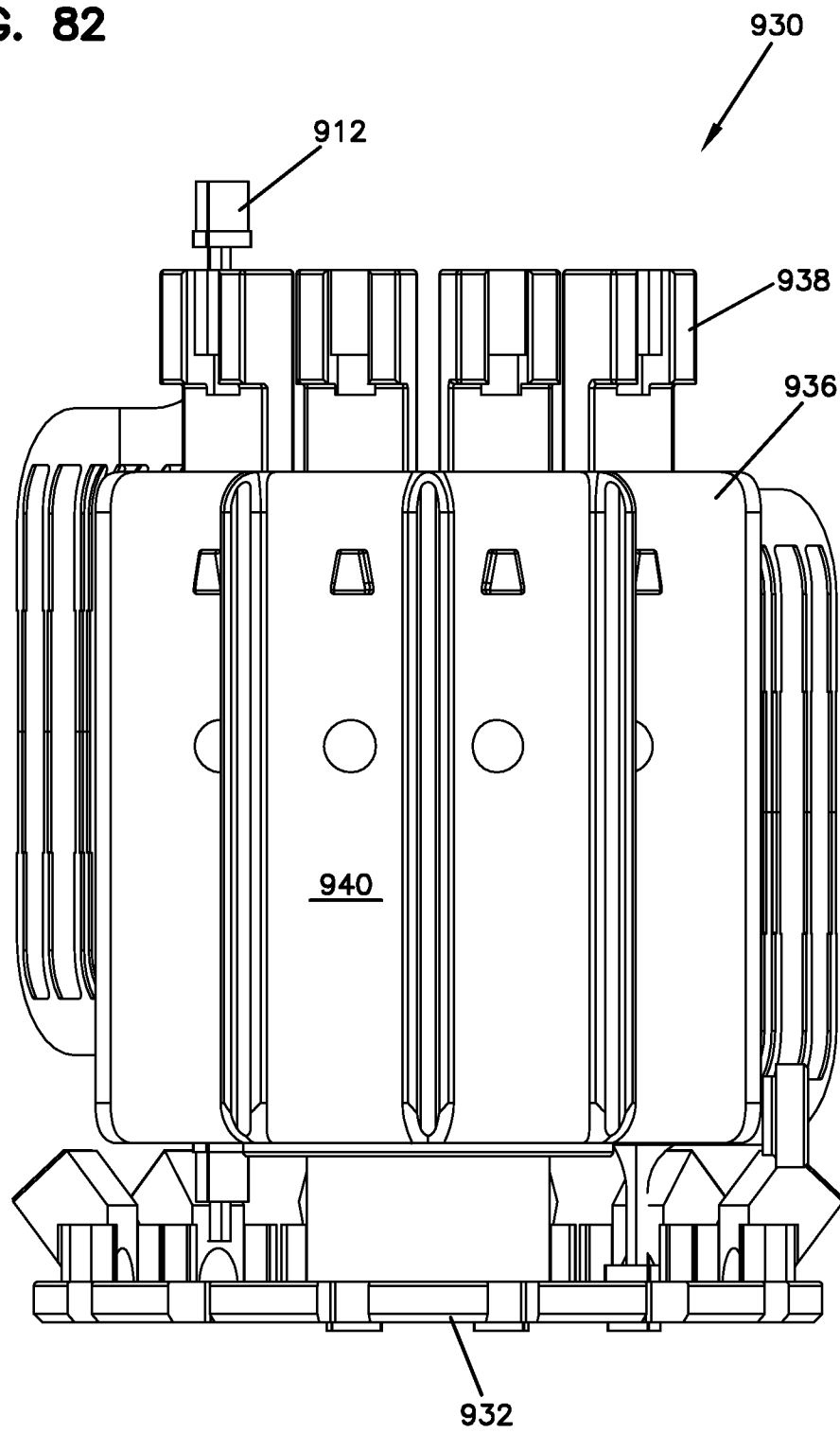
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FIG. 81



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FIG. 82



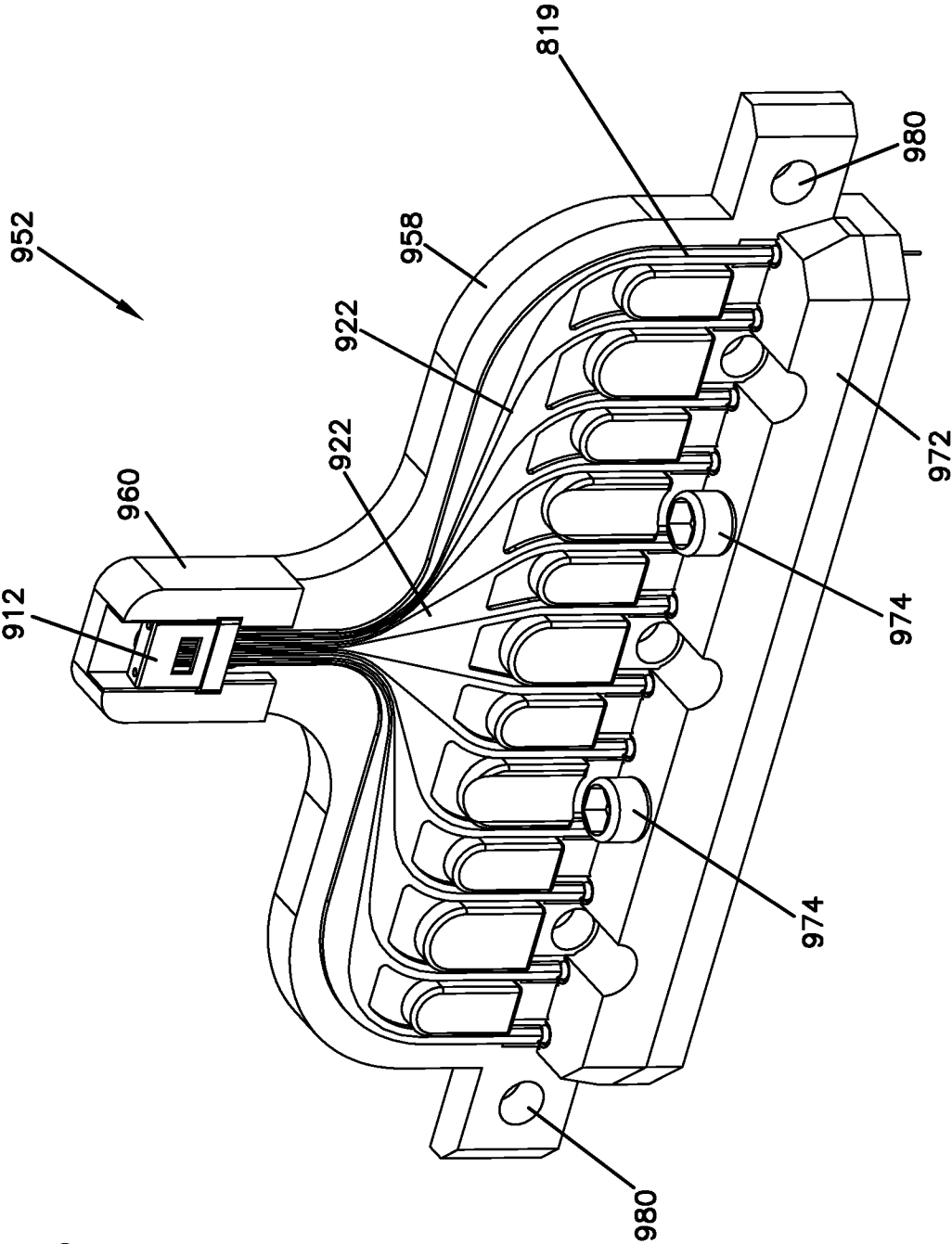
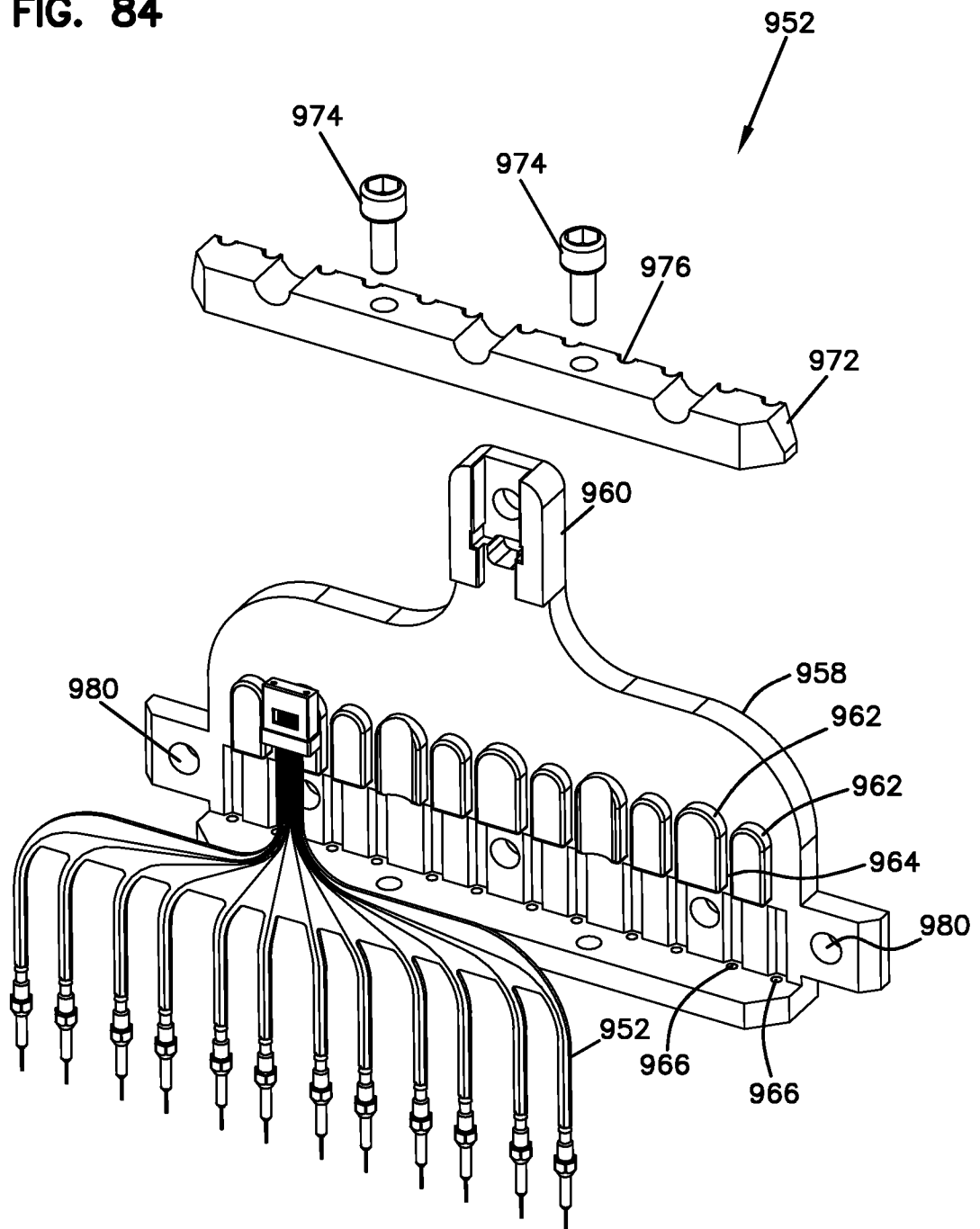


FIG. 83

FIG. 84



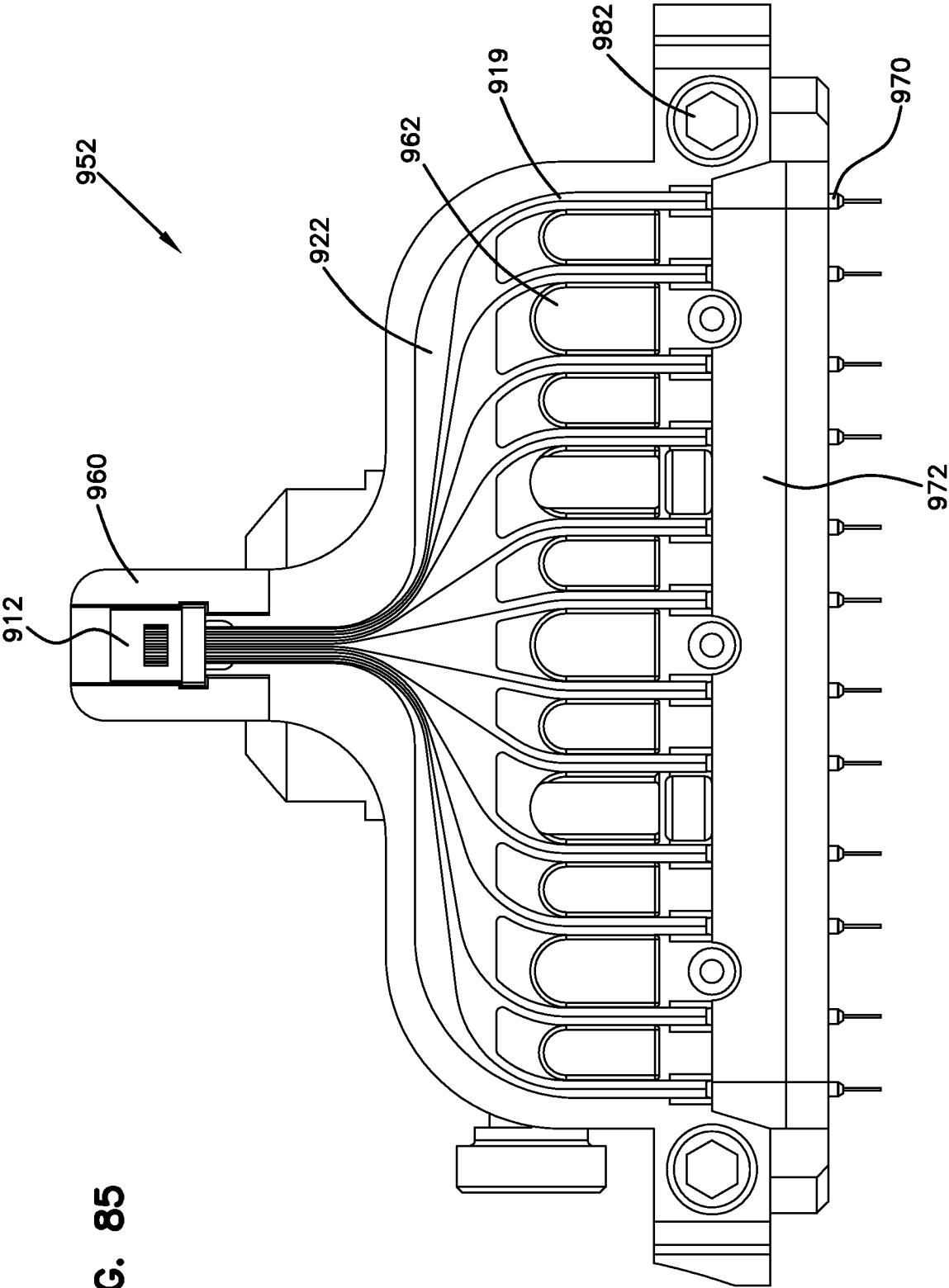


FIG. 85

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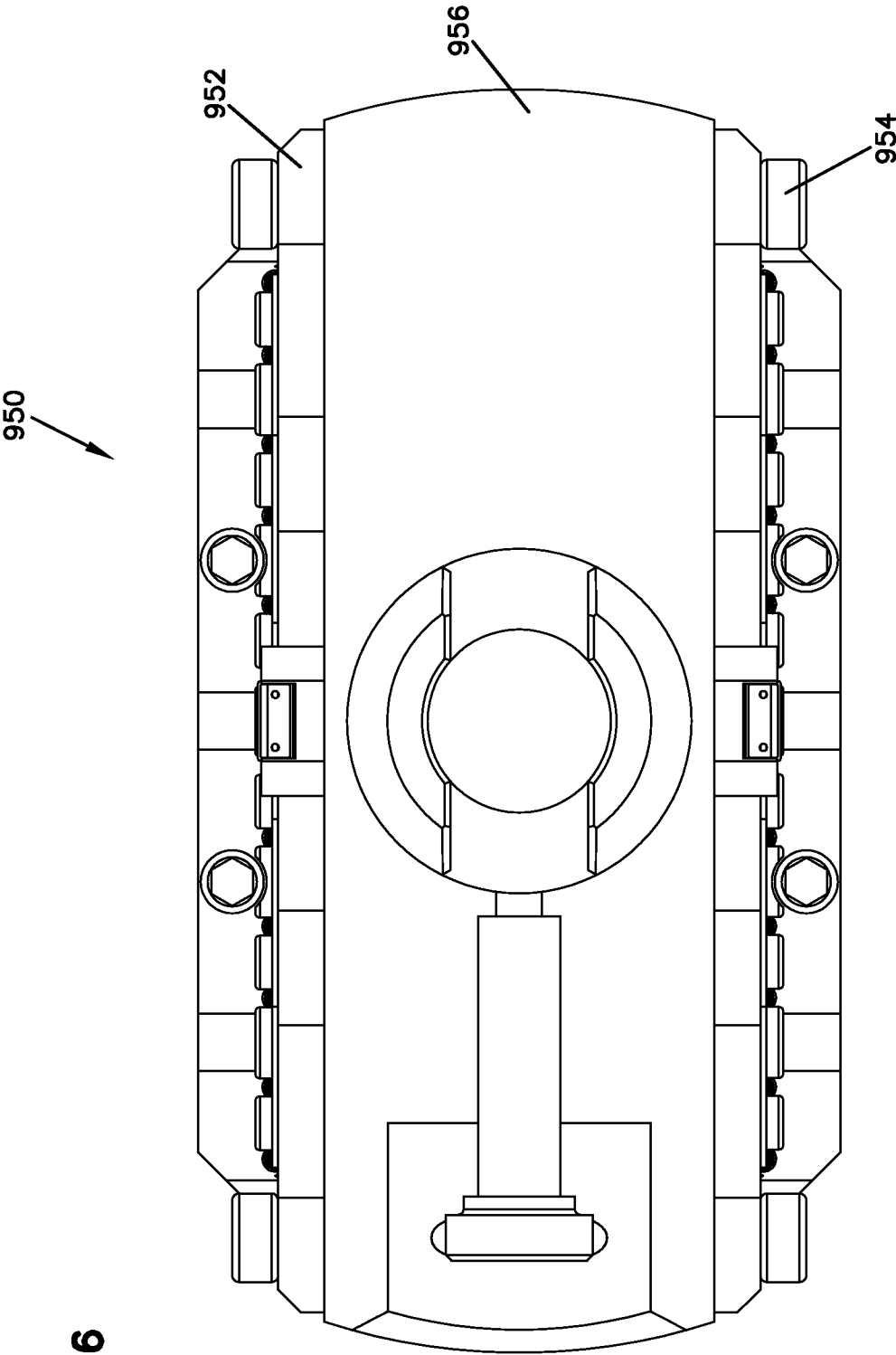


FIG. 86

FIG. 88

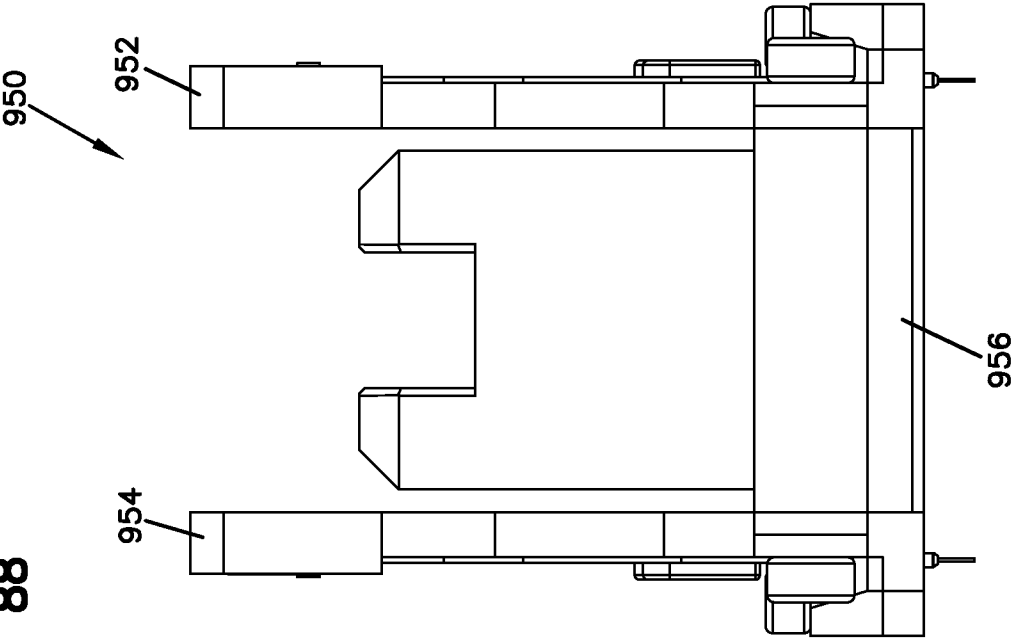
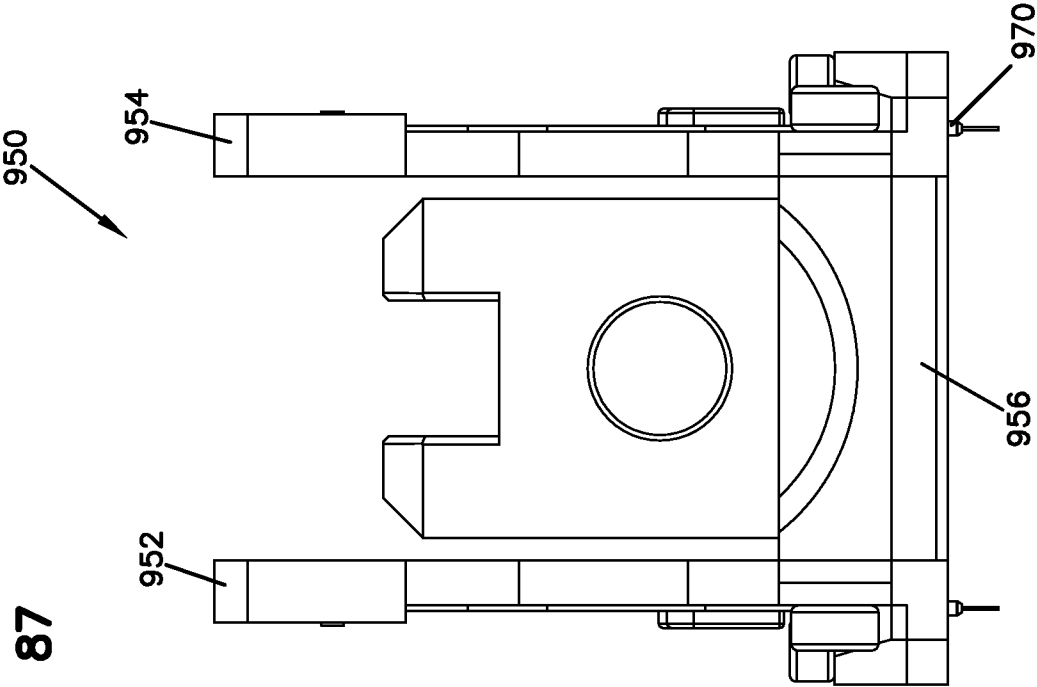
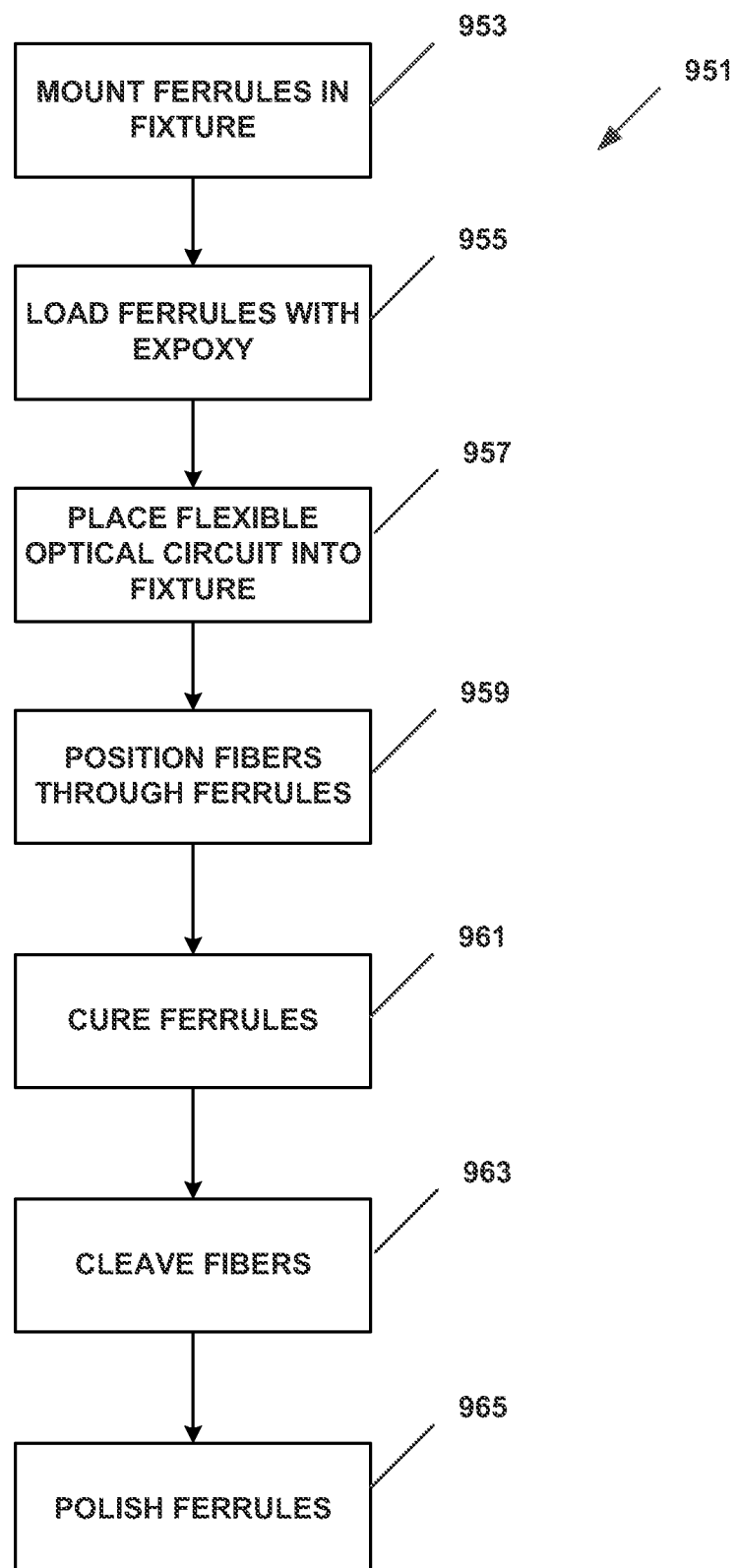


FIG. 87



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FIG. 89

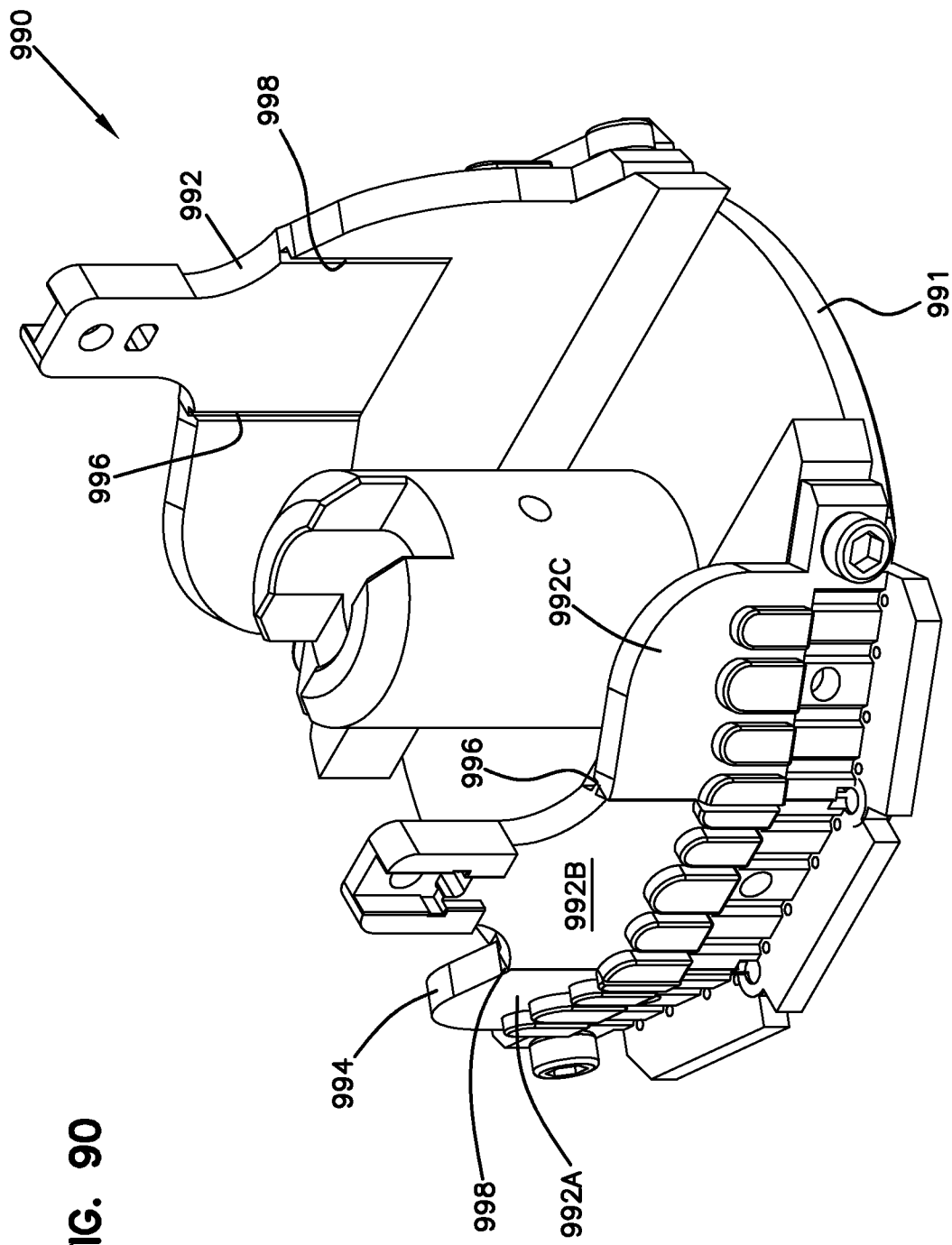


FIG. 90

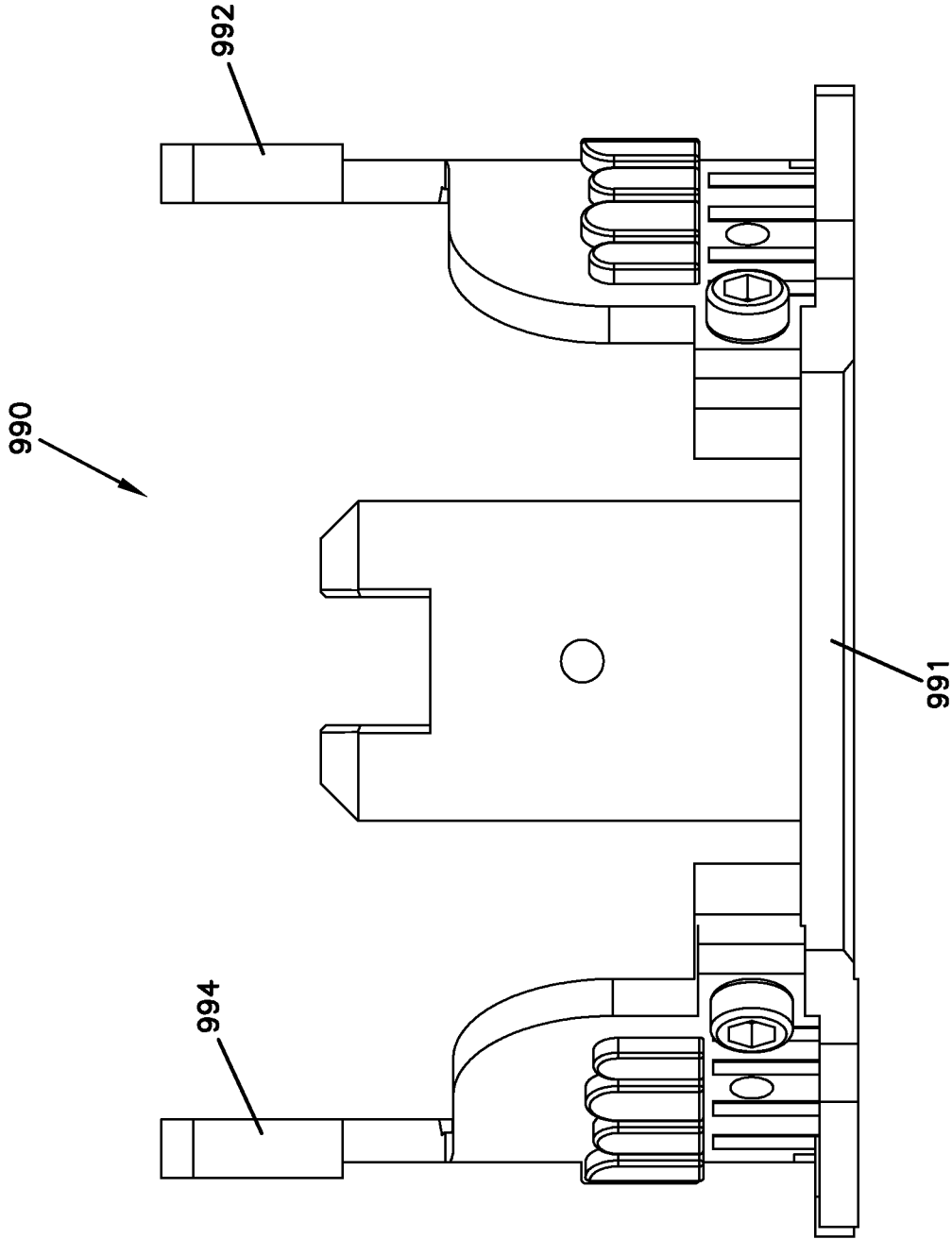


FIG. 91

FIG. 92

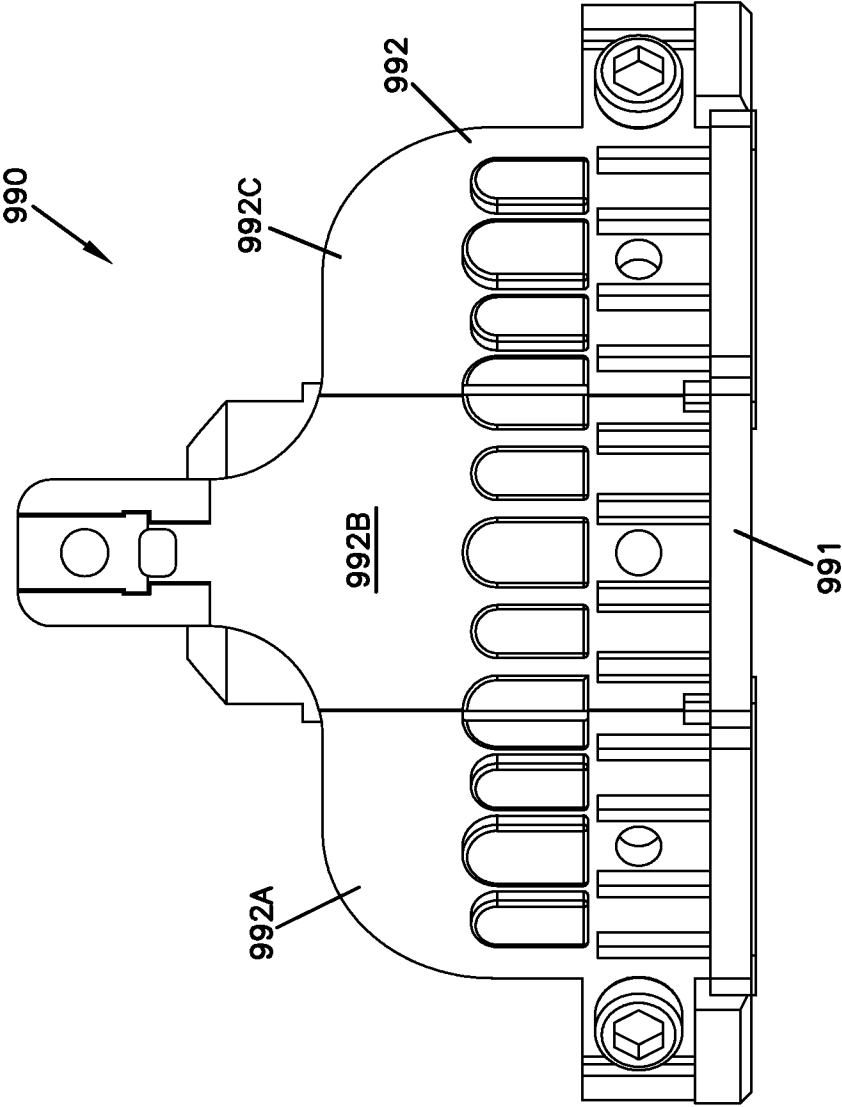


FIG. 93

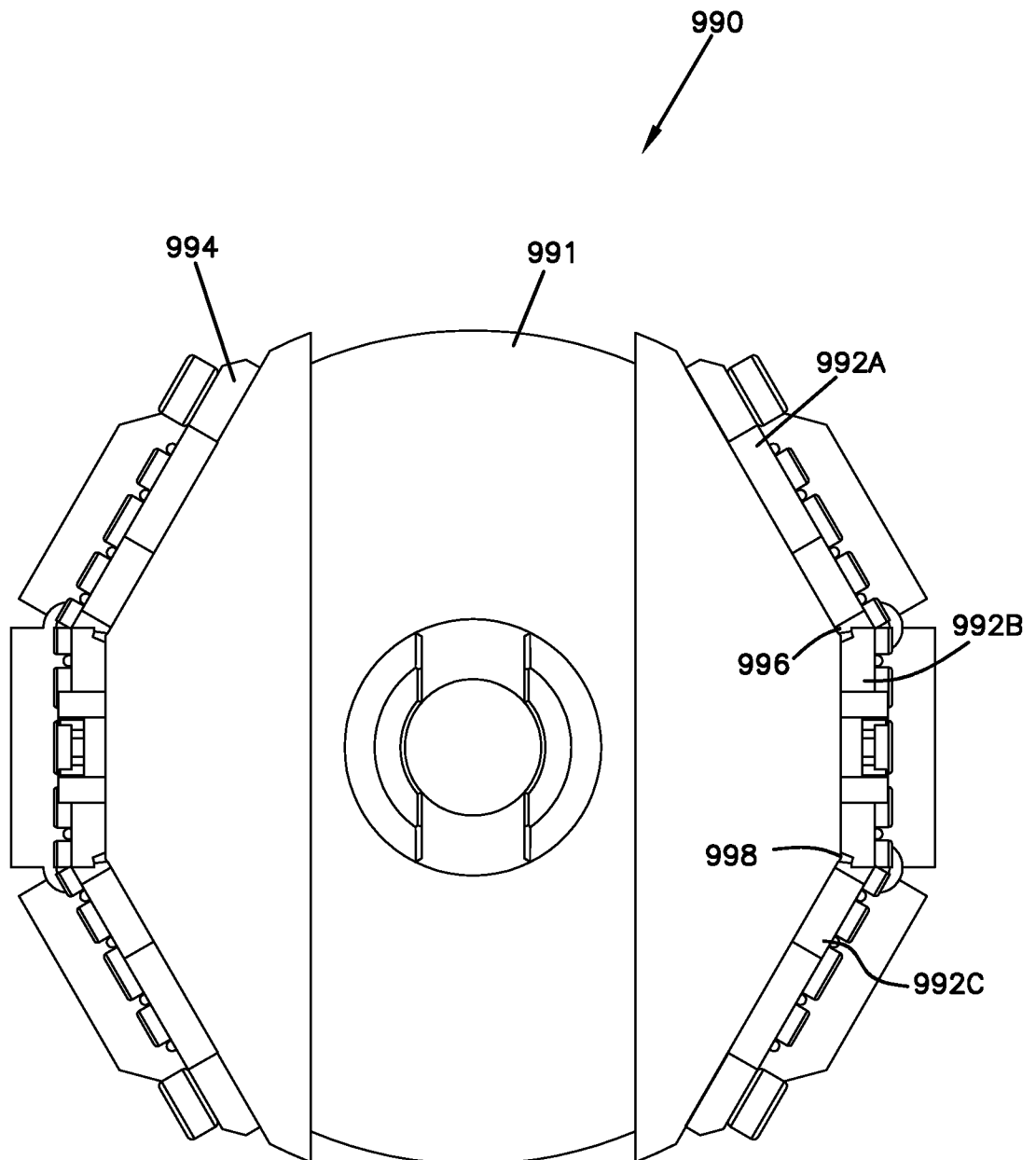


FIG. 94

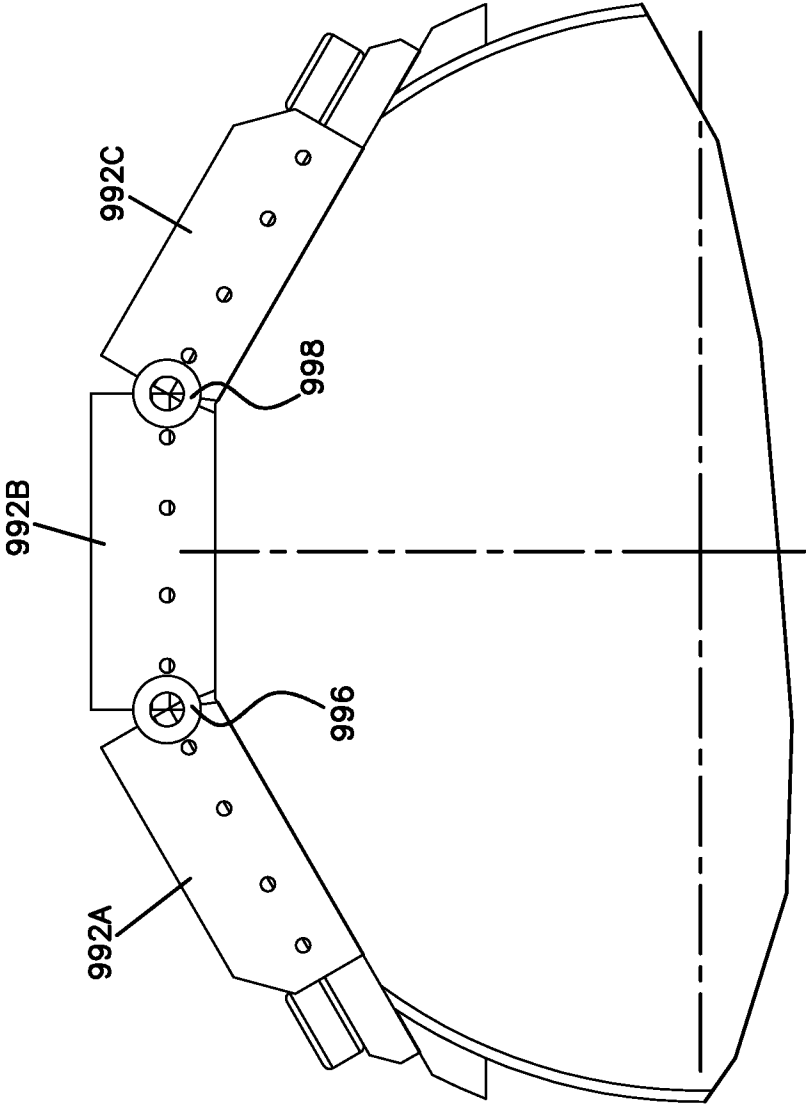
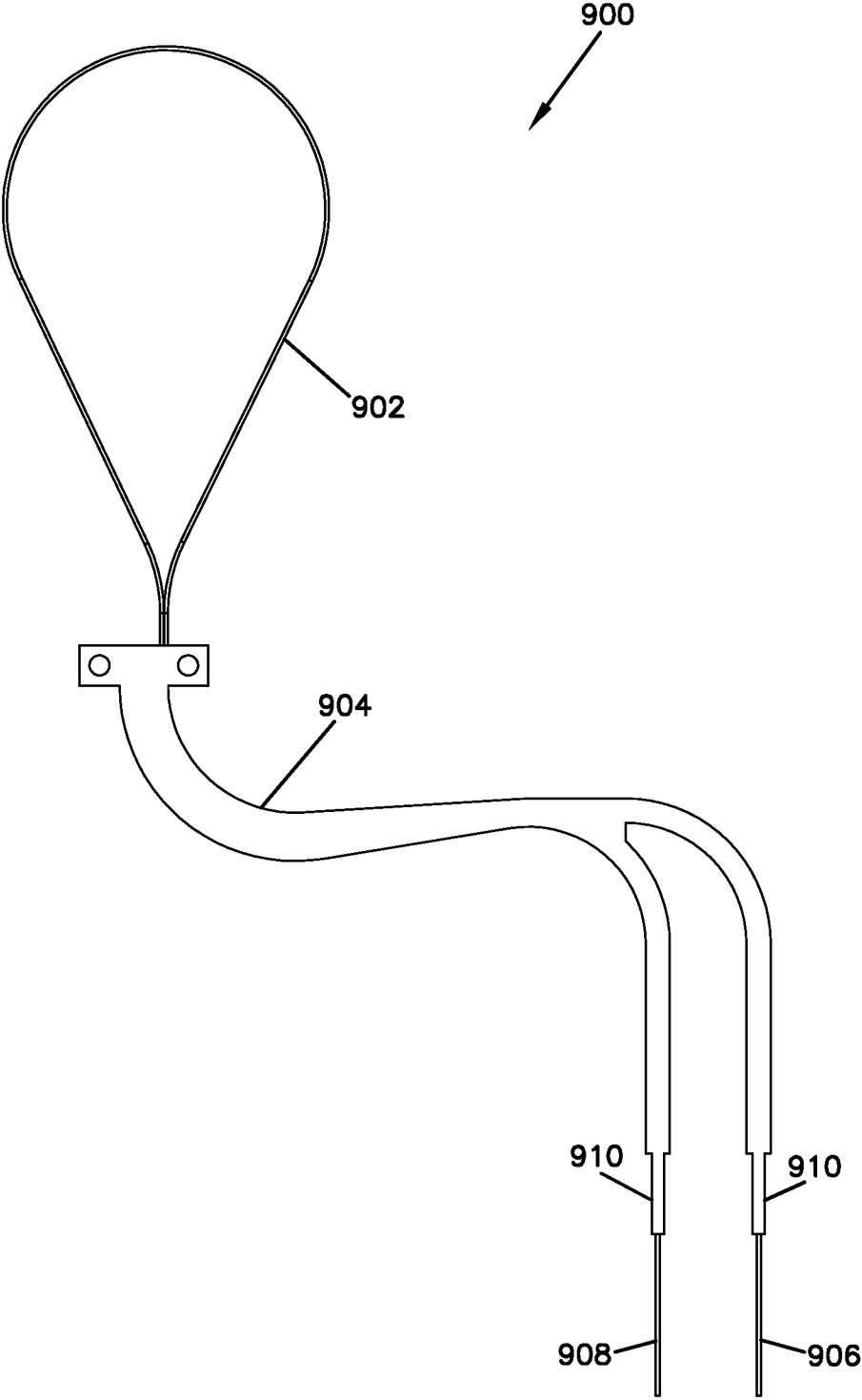


FIG. 95



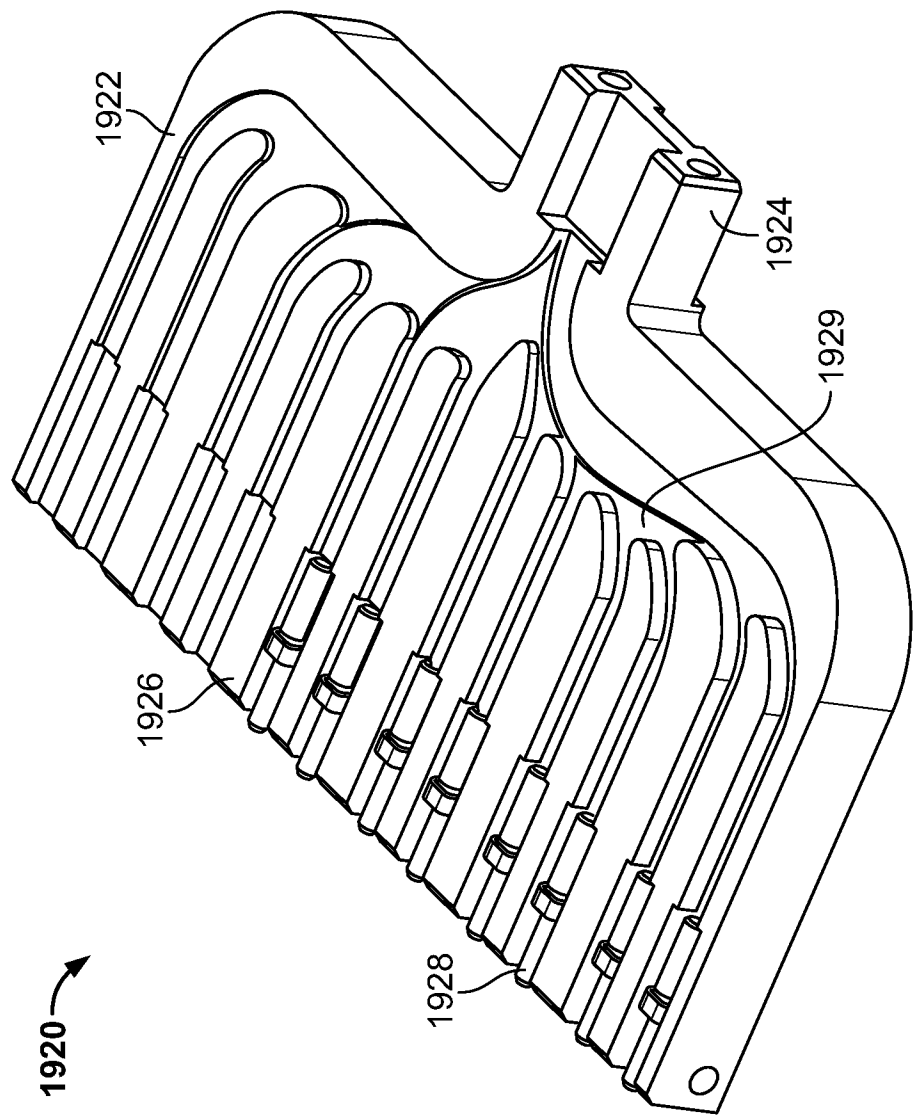


FIG. 96

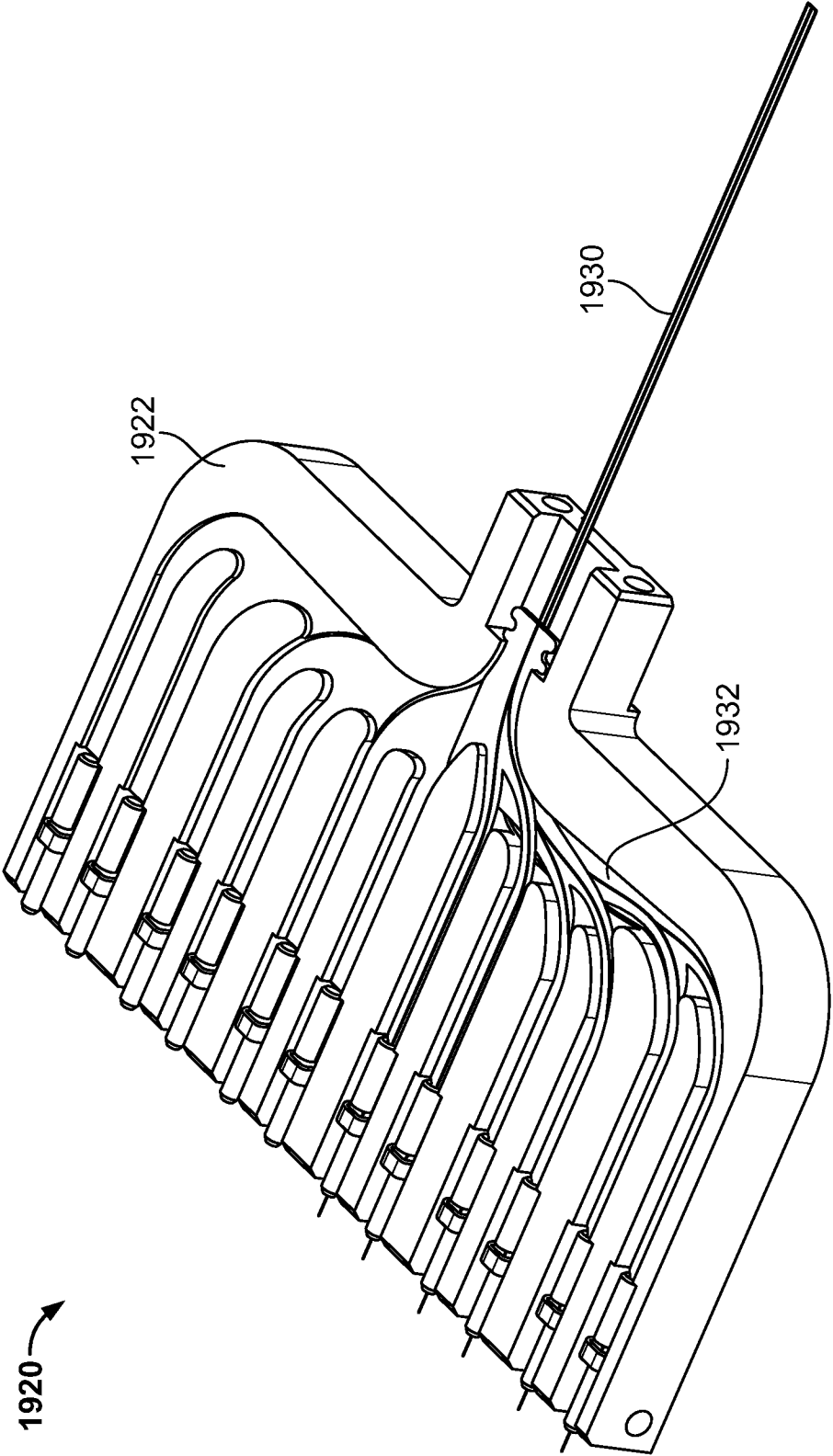


FIG. 97

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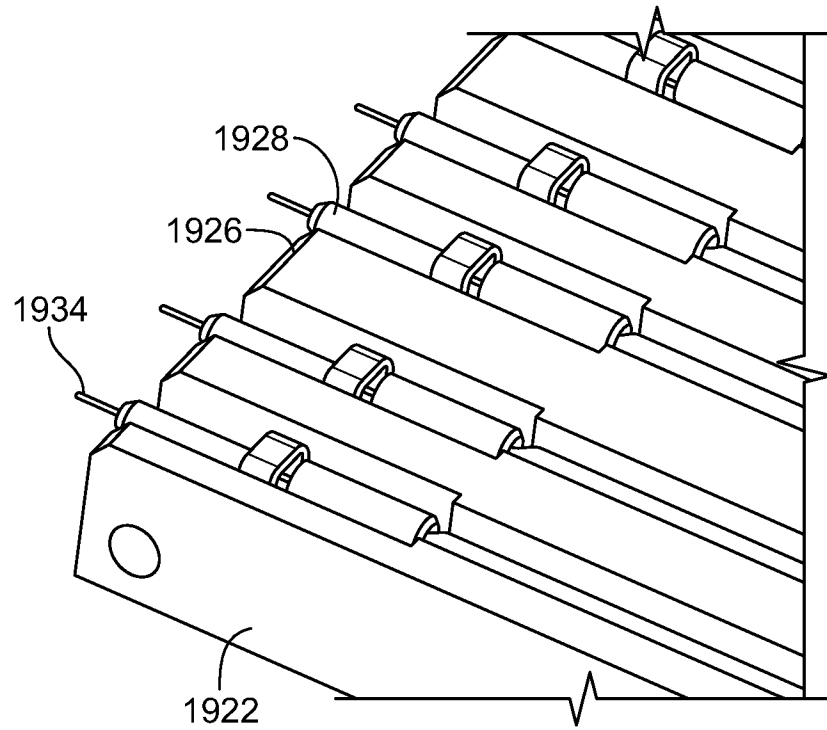


FIG. 98

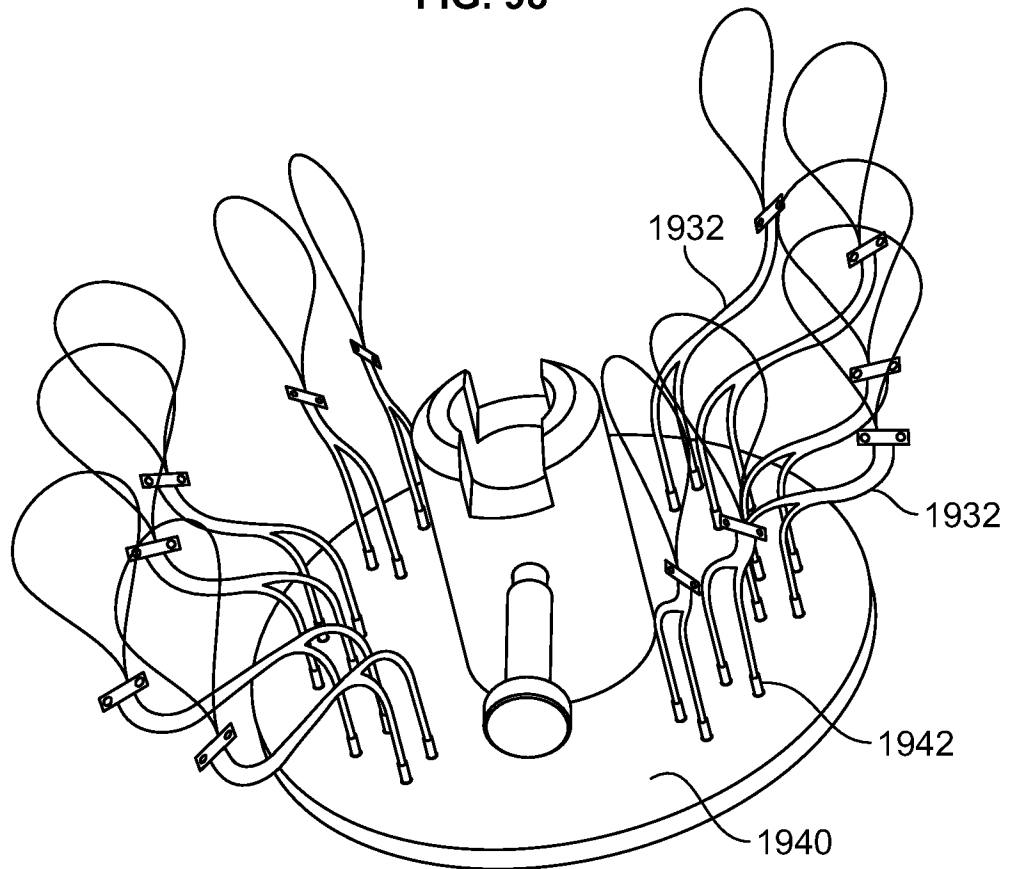
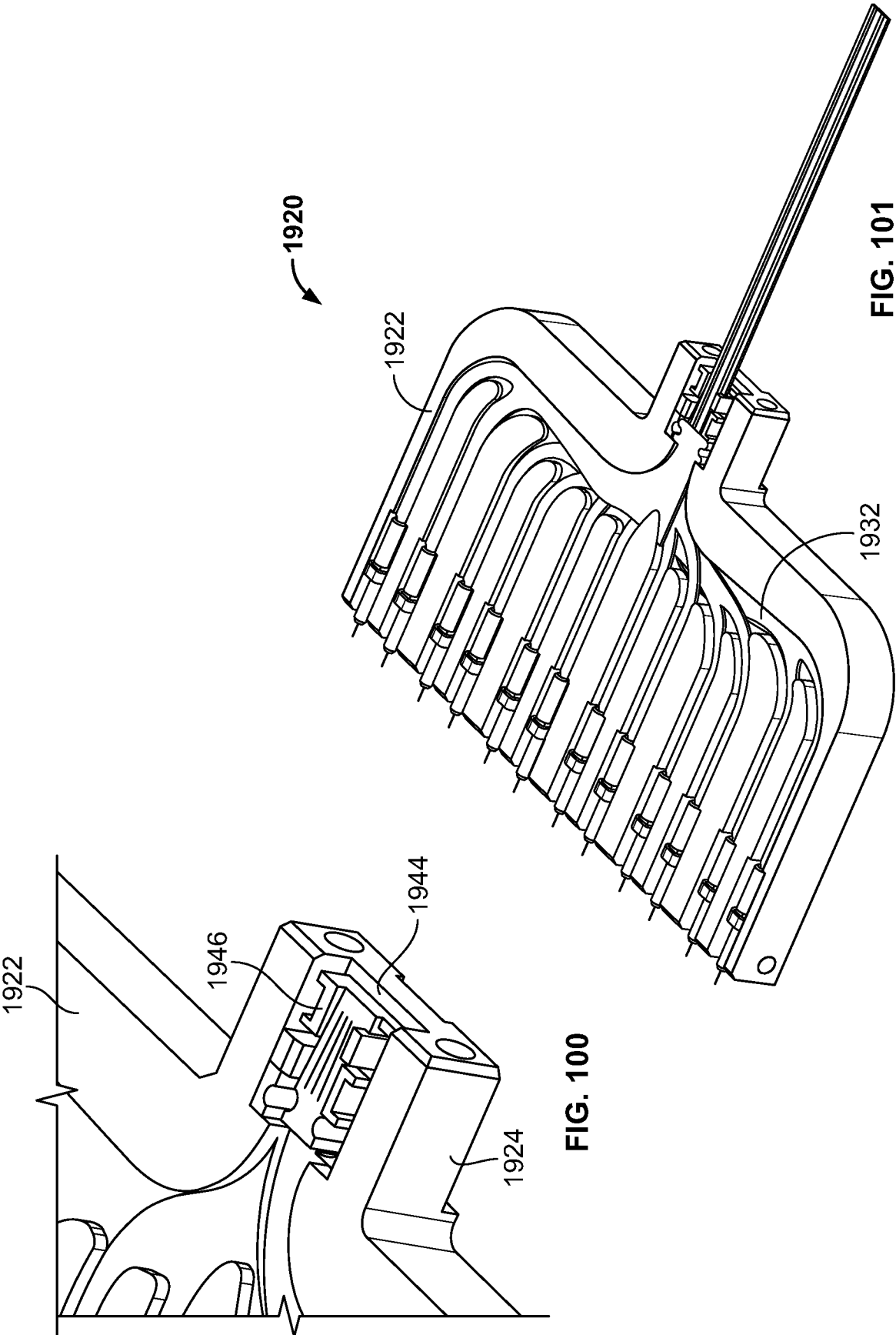


FIG. 99



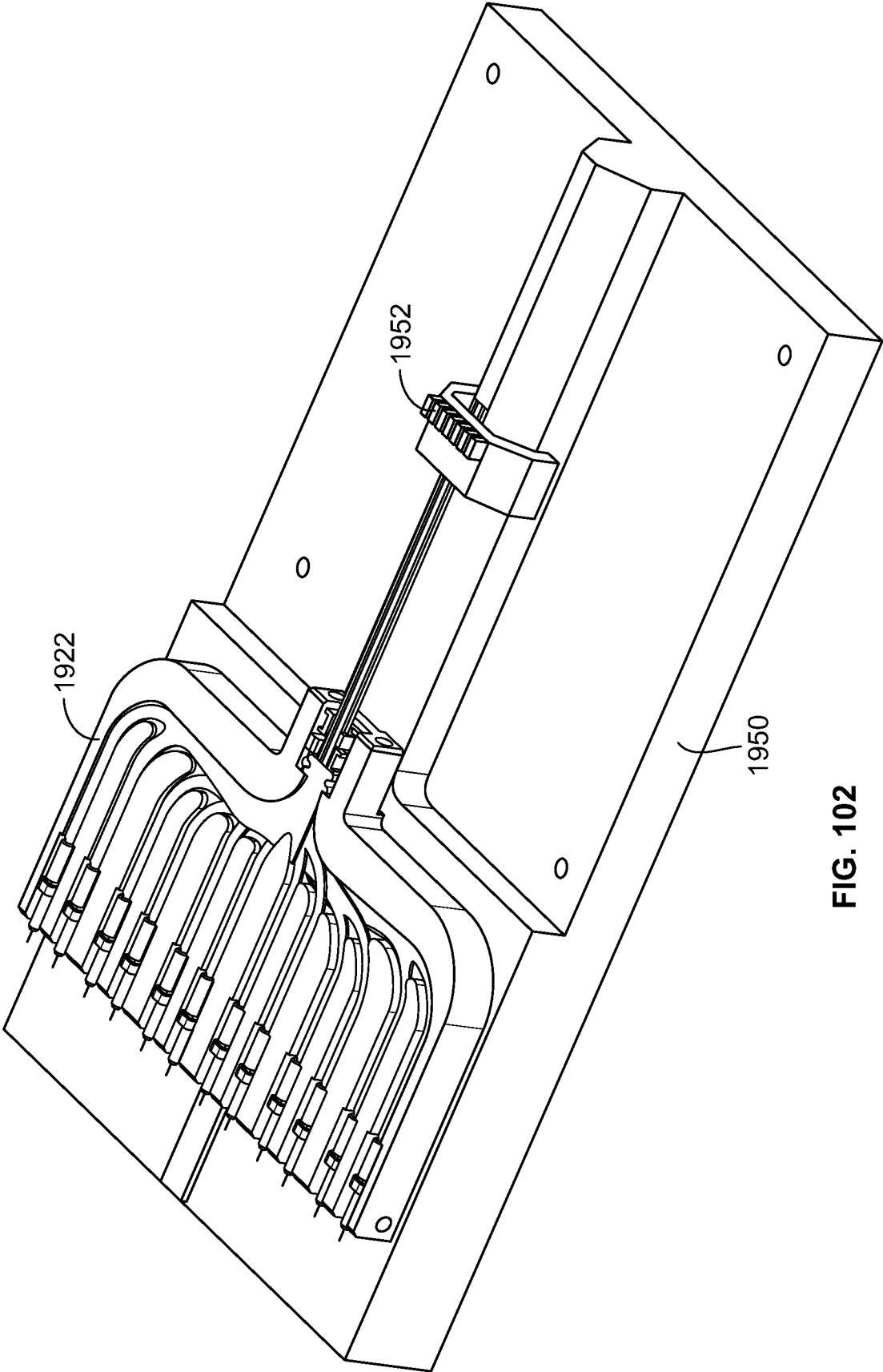


FIG. 102

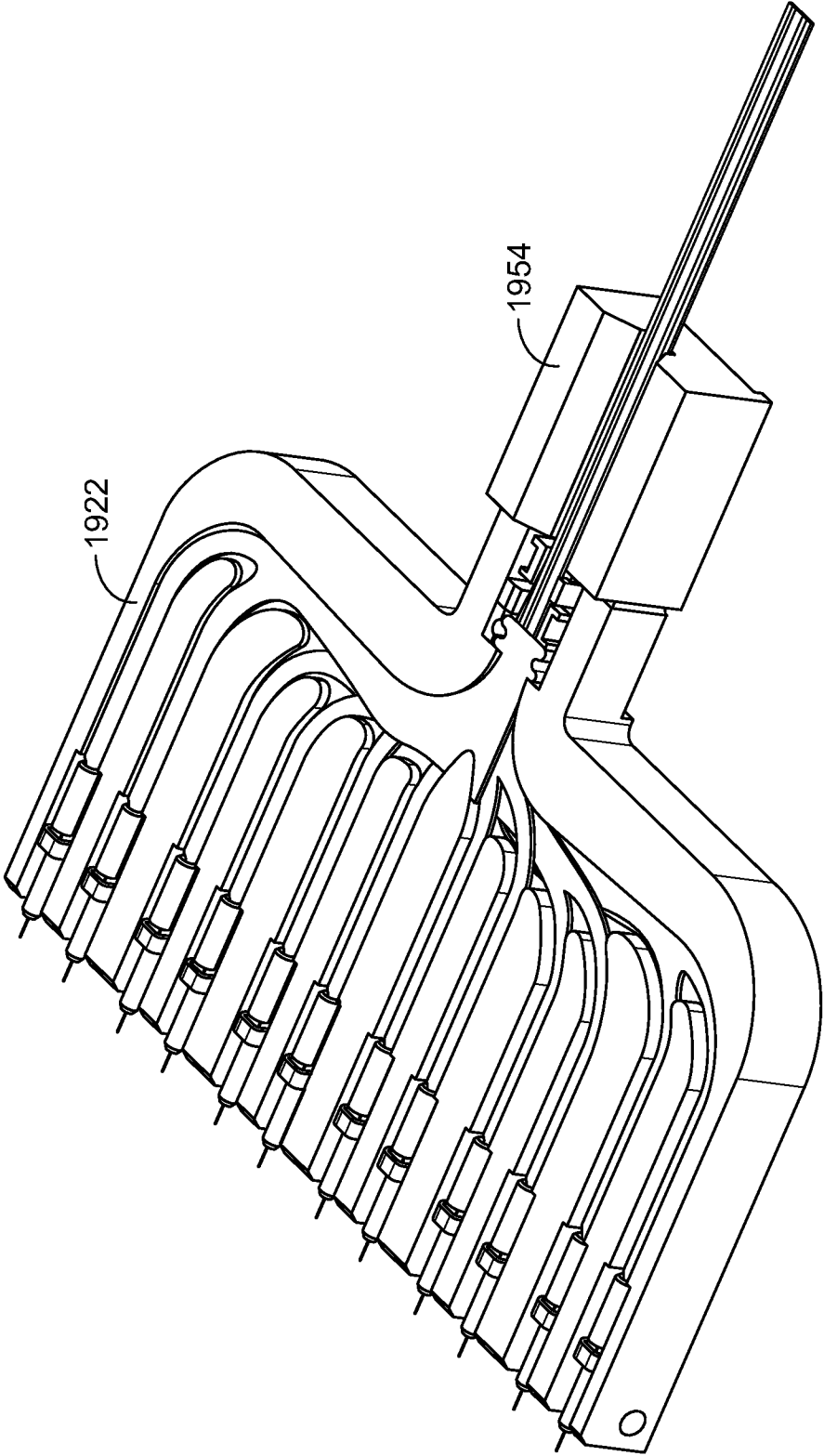


FIG. 103

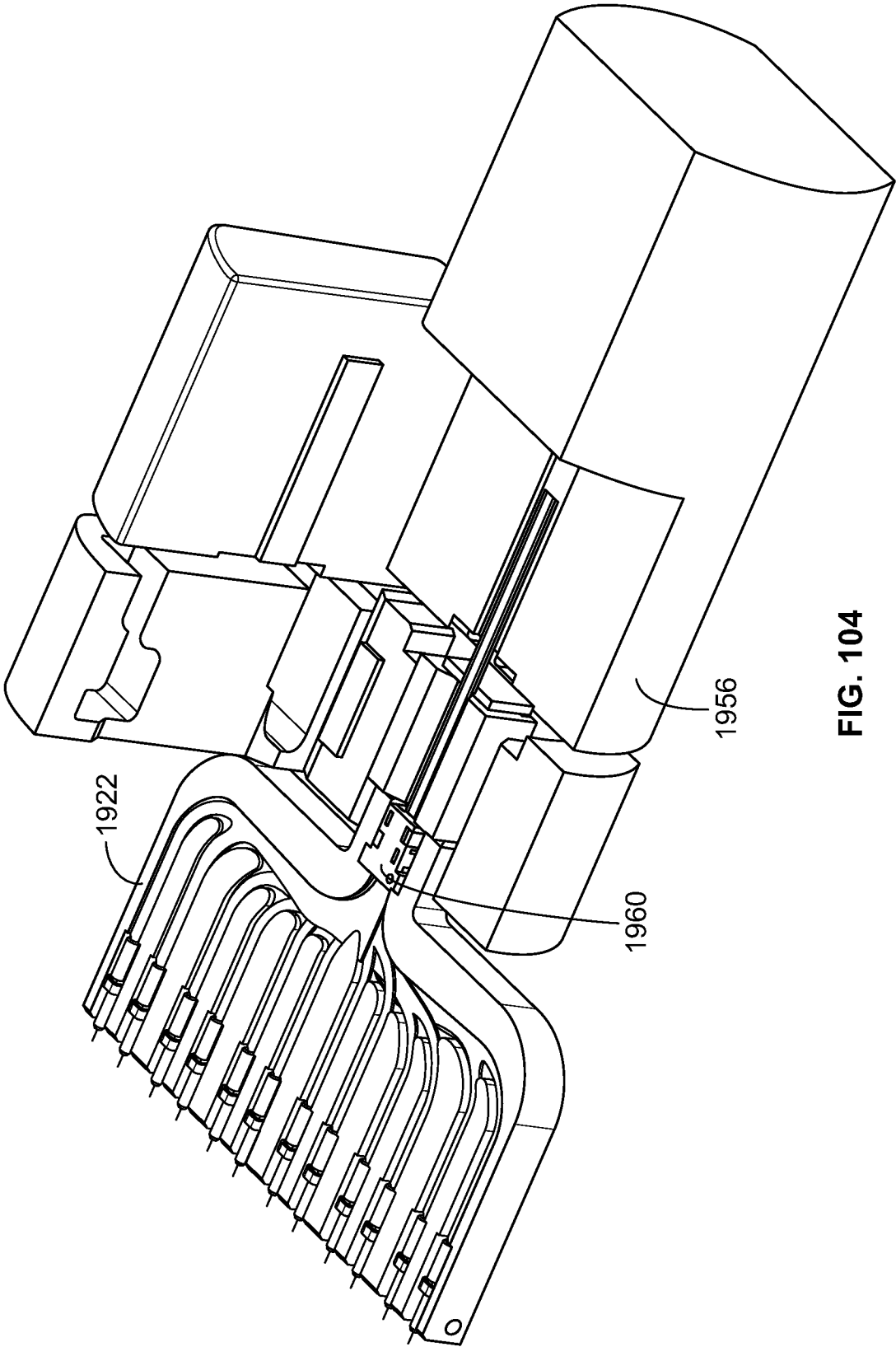


FIG. 104

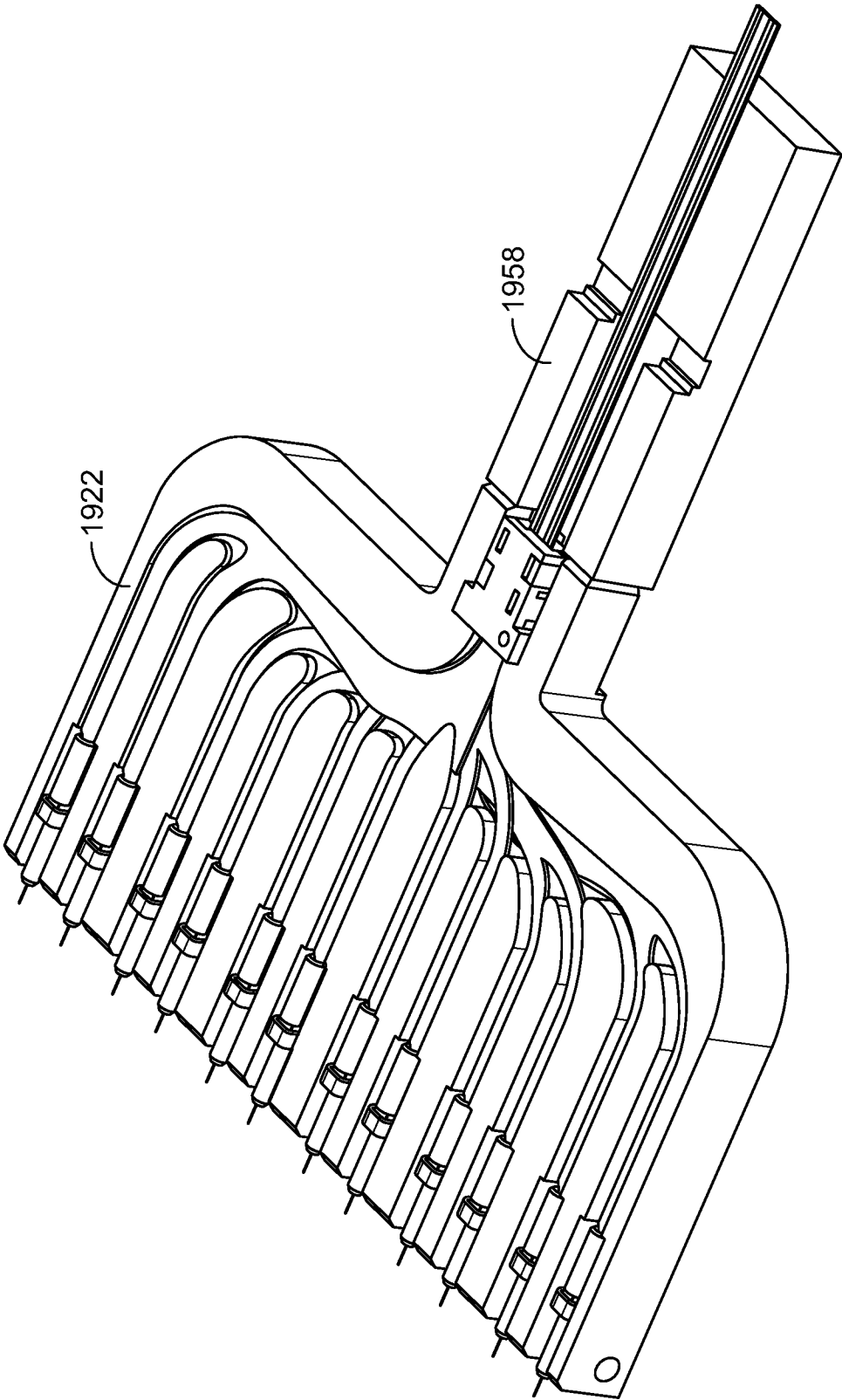


FIG. 105

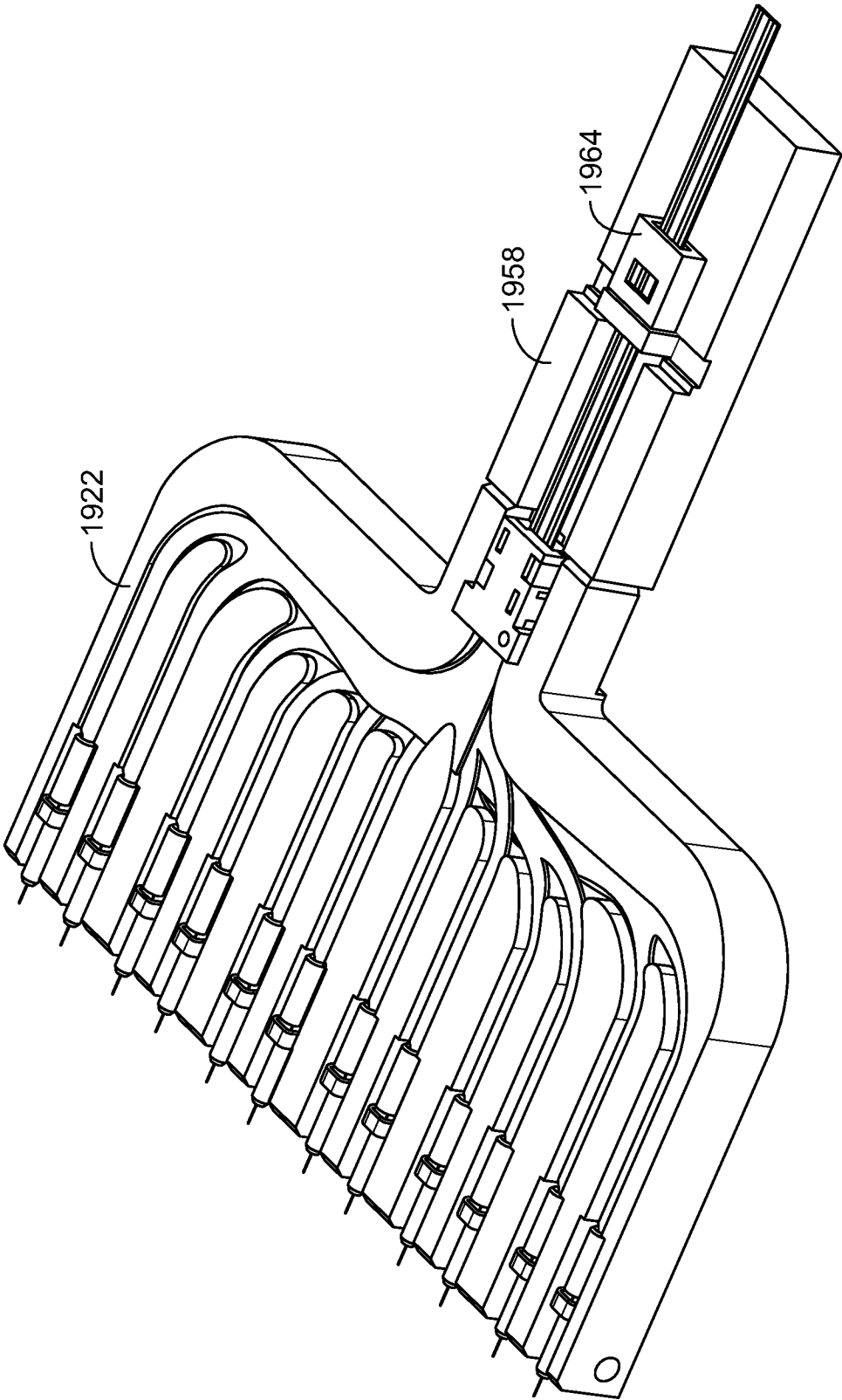


FIG. 106