

ROTARY SURFACE CLEANING TOOL

CROSS REFERENCE

[0001] This application is a divisional of New Zealand Patent Application No. 599883, filed 9 May 2012, which claims priority from United States Patent Application No. 13/364,522, filed 2 February 2012, the entire contents of these Applications being incorporated herein by reference thereto.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to a rotary tool for cleaning surfaces, including rugs and carpets, and in particular to such apparatus and methods with brushes for coaction with cleaning liquid delivering means and suction extraction means.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Many apparatuses and methods are known for cleaning carpeting and other flooring, wall and upholstery surfaces. The cleaning apparatuses and methods most commonly used today apply cleaning fluid as a spray under pressure to the surface whereupon the cleaning fluid dissolves the dirt and stains and the apparatus scrubs the fibers while simultaneously applying suction to extract the cleaning fluid and the dissolved soil. Many different apparatuses and methods for spraying cleaning fluid under pressure and then removing it with suction are illustrated in the prior art. Some of these cleaning apparatuses and methods use a rotating device wherein the entire machine is transported over the carpeting while a cleaning head is rotated about a vertical axis.

[0004] Another category of carpeting and upholstery cleaning apparatuses and methods using the rotating device wherein the entire machine is transported over the carpeting while a cleaning head is rotated about a vertical axis includes machines having a plurality of arms, each of having one or more spray nozzles or a suction means coupled to a vacuum source. These rotary cleaning tools providing a more intense scrubbing action since, in general, more scrubbing surfaces contact the carpet. These apparatuses and

methods are primarily illustrated in U.S. Pat. No. 4,441,229 granted to Monson on April 10, 1984, and are listed in the prior art known to the inventor but not discussed in detail herein.

[0005] A third category of carpeting and upholstery cleaning apparatuses and methods that attempt to deflect or otherwise control the cleaning fluid are illustrated by U.S. Pat. No. 6,243,914, which was granted to the inventor of the present patent application June 12, 2001, and which is incorporated herein by reference. U.S. Pat. No. 6,243,914 discloses a cleaning head for carpets, walls or upholstery, having a rigid open-bottomed main body that defines a surface subjected to the cleaning process. Mounted within or adjacent to the main body and coplanar with the bottom thereof is a fluid-applying device which includes a slot at an acute angle to the plane of the bottom of the body located adjacent the plane of the bottom of the body, the slot configured such that the fluid is applied in a thin sheet that flows out of the slot and into the upper portion of the surface to be cleaned and is subsequently extracted by suction into the vacuum source for recovery. The cleaning head is alternatively multiply embodied in a plurality of arms which are rotated about a hub.

[0006] FIG. 1 illustrates a typical prior art professional fluid cleaning system as illustrated in U.S. Pat. 6,243,914. It is to be understood that this cleaning system is typically mounted in a van or truck for mobile servicing of carpets and flooring in homes and businesses. The typical truck-mounted fluid cleaning system 1 includes a main liquid waste receptacle 3 into which soiled cleaning fluid is routed. A cleaning head or nozzle 5 is mounted on a rigid vacuum wand 7 which includes a handle 8 for controlling cleaning head 5. A supply of pressurized hot liquid solution of cleaning fluid is supplied to cleaning head 5 via a cleaning solution delivery tube 9 arranged in fluid communication with a cleaning solution inlet orifice 11 of cleaning head 5 for delivering there through a flow of pressurized liquid cleaning solution to fluid cleaning solution spray jets 13 of cleaning head 5. Carpet cleaning head 5 typically includes a rectangular, downwardly open truncated pyramidal envelope 15 which contains the cleaning fluid spray that is applied to the carpet or other flooring, as well as forming a vacuum plenum for the vacuum retrieving the soiled liquid for transport to waste receptacle 3. An intake port 16 of the vacuum wand 7 is coupled in fluid communication with the vacuum plenum of cleaning head 5.

[0007] Mounted above the main waste receptacle 3 is a cabinet 17 housing a vacuum source and supply of pressurized hot liquid cleaning fluid. Soiled cleaning fluid is routed from cleaning head 5 into waste receptacle 3 via rigid vacuum wand 7 and a flexible vacuum return hose 19 coupled in fluid communication with an exhaust port 20 thereof, whereby spent cleaning solution and dissolved soil are withdrawn under a vacuum force supplied by the fluid cleaning system, as is well known in the art. A vacuum control valve or switch 21 is provided for controlling the vacuum source.

[0008] FIG. 2 illustrates details of operation of the typical truck-mounted fluid cleaning system 1 illustrated in FIG. 1. Here, the main waste receptacle 3, as well as the vacuum source and cleaning fluid supply cabinet 17, are shown in partial cut-away views for exposing details thereof. The cleaning fluid is drawn through cleaning solution delivery tube 9 from a supply 23 of liquid cleaning solution in the cabinet 17. The vacuum for vacuum return hose 19 is provided by a vacuum suction source 25, such as a high pressure blower, driven by a power supply 27. The blower vacuum source 25 communicates with the main waste receptacle 3 through an air intake 29 coupled into an upper portion 31 thereof and, when operating, develops a powerful vacuum in an air chamber 33 enclosed in the receptacle 3.

[0009] Vacuum return hose 19 is coupled in communication with waste receptacle 3 through a drain 35, for example, at upper portion 31, remote from intake 29. Vacuum return hose 19 feeds soiled cleaning fluid into waste receptacle 3 as a flow 37 of liquid soiled with dissolved dust, dirt and stains, as well as undissolved particulate material picked up by the vacuum return but of a size or nature as to be undissolvable in the liquid cleaning fluid. The flow 37 of soiled cleaning fluid enters into waste receptacle 3 through drain 35 and forms a pool 39 of soiled liquid filled with dissolved and undissolved debris. A float switch 41 or other means avoids overfilling the waste receptacle 3 and inundating the blower 25 through its air intake 29. A screen or simple filter may be applied to remove gross contaminants from the soiled liquid flow 37 before it reaches the pool 39, but this is a matter of operator choice since any impediment to the flow 37 reduces crucial vacuum pressure at the cleaning head 5 for retrieving the soiled liquid from the cleaned carpet or other surface.

[0010] Soiled liquid cleaning fluid effectively filters air drawn into the waste receptacle 3 by dissolving the majority of dust, dirt and stains, and drowning and sinking any undissolved debris whereby it is sunk into the pool 39 of soiled liquid and captured therein. Thus, the soiled liquid in the vacuum return hose 19 effectively filters the air before it is discharged into the enclosed air chamber 34, and no airborne particles of dust and dirt are available to escape into the enclosed air chamber 33 floating above the liquid pool 39.

[0011] In a rotary surface cleaning tool, cleaning head 5 utilizes cleaning liquid delivering means and suction extraction means in combination with a rotary cleaning plate that is coupled for high speed rotary motion.

[0012] One example of a rotary surface cleaning tool is illustrated by U.S. Pat. No. 4,182,001, SURFACE CLEANING AND RINSING DEVICE, issued to Helmuth W. Krause on January 8, 1980, which is incorporated herein by reference.

[0013] FIG. 3 illustrates the rotary surface cleaning and rinsing machine of Krause, indicated generally at 50, which includes a substantially circular housing 51 and frame 53 with its lower axial face open at 55, with this face 55 being disposed substantially parallel to the surface which is to be cleaned, such as a rug 57. Mounted on top of the housing 51 and frame 53 is an enclosure 59 from which extends a handle assembly 61. Handle assembly 61 is held by the operator during the manipulation of machine 50. Handle assembly 61 has operating levers 63 and 65. Control handle 65 regulates flow of cleaning or rinsing fluid to rotary surface cleaning tool 51 through feed line 67. For example, feed line 67 is coupled to cleaning solution delivery tube 9 from supply 23 of liquid cleaning solution in cabinet 17 in a truck-mounted unit, or another supply of liquid cleaning solution. Control handle 63 can be used to regulate the starting and stopping of drive motors.

[0014] An exhaust pipe or tube 69 is mounted on handle assembly 61 and is connected to the top of rotary surface cleaning tool 51 at a connection 71. Suction is created by the motor and fan assembly 73. Else, exhaust pipe or tube 69 is coupled for suction extraction to vacuum return hose 19 and vacuum source 25 in a truck-mounted

unit. Soiled cleaning fluid extracted by suction extraction from carpet or rug 57 is drawn off through outlet connection 71 and through discharge hose 69. Frame 53 may also be supported by a swivel wheel 75. A large rotor 77 is rotationally mounted within housing 51 and rotationally coupled within enclosure 59. Rotor 77 is drivingly connected by a drive belt or chain 79 to an output shaft 81 of an electric motor 83 mounted on the frame 53. Motor 83 serves to turn large rotor 77. A plurality of circular brushes 85 are located on rotor 77.

[0015] FIG. 4 illustrates brushes 85 are rotated as shown by arrows 87 in the opposite direction from the turning motion 89 of the rotor 77 by a rotating drive means for contrarotating brushes 85 with respect to rotor 77. Moreover, brushes 85 are rotated at significantly higher revolutions per minute (RPM) than rotor 77 for producing a very vigorous brush scrubbing action. For example, brushes 85 rotate more than seven times with respect to rug 57 for each full rotation of rotor 77. As a result, the brush elements or bristles in the peripheral region traveling very rapidly in a backward direction 87 relative to rotor 77 tend to lift up and to flip over the matted pile of rug 57 thereby exposing and scrubbing its underside. Then, in interior regions 91 where brush elements or bristles are traveling in the same direction as rotor 77, they flip the pile back into its original position for scrubbing it on the other side. Thus, the pile of rug 57 becomes thoroughly scrubbed on its underside as well as on its upper side. A cyclic scrubbing action is produced flipping the matted pile back and forth many times during one pass of machine 50.

[0016] Also positioned on rotor 77 are suction extraction nozzles 93 spaced between brushes 85 and communicating with discharge hose 69. Suction extraction nozzles 93 are fixed to rotor 77 and each is provided with a relatively narrow vacuum extraction slot 95. Each vacuum extraction slot 95 is positioned coplanar with the ends of the brush elements or bristles of brushes 85 distal from rotor 77.

[0017] Also mounted on rotor 77 is a plurality of spray nozzle means 97 for dispensing cleaning or rinsing liquid. Each of spray nozzle means 97 can be mounted for angular adjustment so as to direct sprays of cleaning or rinsing liquid through individual nozzles 99 onto rug 57 at different angles. The cleaning or rinsing fluid is conveyed to

nozzle means 97 through line 67 which leads to a supply of cleaning or rinsing fluid, such as either feed line 67 or solution delivery tube 9.

[0018] During operation of the cleaning device, rotor 77 rotates in the direction indicated by arrow 89. As the cleaning liquid is sprayed onto rug 57 through nozzles 99, rotating brushes 85 agitate the pile of rug 57 in conjunction with the cleaning liquid to loosen dirt in or on the surface. The spent cleaning liquid and loosened dirt are extracted up by the next succeeding suction extraction nozzle 93. Accordingly, the liquid-dwell-time is solely controlled by machine 50, and not by the rate at which the operator advances machine 50 over the floor.

[0019] However, known rotary surface cleaning tool are limited in their ability to effectively provide the desired cleaning of target floor surfaces and extraction of soiled cleaning liquid.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0020] The present invention is a rotary surface cleaning machine for cleaning floors, including both carpeted floors and uncarpeted hard floor surfaces including but not limited to wood, tile, linoleum and natural stone flooring. The rotary surface cleaning machine has a rotary surface cleaning tool mounted on a frame and coupled for high speed rotary motion relative to the frame. The rotary surface cleaning tool has a substantially circular operational surface that performs the cleaning operation. The rotary surface cleaning tool is driven by an on-board power plant to rotate at a high rate. The rotary surface cleaning tool is coupled to a supply of pressurized hot liquid solution of cleaning fluid and a powerful vacuum suction source.

[0021] A rotary surface cleaning machine, comprising: a rotary surface cleaning tool coupled for high speed rotary motion and further comprising a substantially circular operational surface; a plurality of individual arrays of cleaning solution delivery spray nozzles being angularly distributed across the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool and being coupled in fluid communication with corresponding liquid cleaning fluid distribution channels of a cleaning fluid distribution manifold portion of the

rotary surface cleaning tool, wherein each of the plurality of individual arrays of cleaning solution delivery spray nozzles further comprises at least one or more individual delivery spray nozzles that are radially oriented across a maximum annular portion of the substantially circular operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool between an inner radial limit and an outer radial limit; a plurality of suction extraction shoes being angularly distributed across the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool and being projected therefrom alternately between the arrays of cleaning solution delivery spray nozzles, and each of the suction extraction shoes further comprising a fluid extraction passage communicating with a vacuum manifold; and means for generating a pumping action in branch passages of the vacuum manifold between suction extraction shoes and the vacuum plenum.

[0022] Other aspects of the invention are detailed herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0023] The foregoing aspects and many of the attendant advantages of this invention will become more readily appreciated as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description, when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0024] FIG. 1 illustrates a typical prior art professional fluid cleaning system of a type that is typically mounted in a van or truck for mobile servicing of carpets and flooring in homes and businesses;

[0025] FIG. 2 illustrates details of operation of the typical truck-mounted fluid cleaning system illustrated in FIG. 1;

[0026] FIG. 3 illustrates one rotary surface cleaning and rinsing machine of the prior art;

[0027] FIG. 4 is another view of the rotary surface cleaning and rinsing machine of the prior art as illustrated in FIG. 3;

[0028] FIG. 5 illustrates the rotary surface cleaning machine of the invention for delivery of liquid cleaning fluid to a target surface to be cleaned, such as either carpeting or hard floor surfaces including but not limited to wood, tile, linoleum and natural stone flooring;

[0029] FIG. 6 is a side view of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5, wherein a plurality of suction extraction shoes are more clearly illustrated as being located on a rotary surface cleaning tool and projected from an open lower axial face of a housing dome;

[0030] FIG. 7 is a bottom view of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 and FIG. 6, wherein the plurality of suction extraction shoes are more clearly illustrated as being located on the rotary surface cleaning tool in the open lower axial face of the housing dome;

[0031] FIG. 7A is another bottom view of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 and FIG. 6, wherein a relatively narrow annular suction or vacuum extraction passage is formed as a substantially continuous annular slot between the bottom cleaning surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool and the housing dome at its lower axial face for closer approach to walls and other surfaces projected from the floor;

[0032] FIG. 8 illustrates the rotary surface cleaning tool of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIGS. 5 through FIG. 7, wherein the rotary surface cleaning tool is mounted on the support frame with an on-board power plant;

[0033] FIG. 9 is a partial cross-section view of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 8, wherein the rotary surface cleaning tool is mounted on the support frame through a rotary coupling;

[0034] FIG. 9A illustrates a relatively narrow annular suction or vacuum extraction passage formed as a substantially continuous annular slot between the bottom cleaning surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool and the housing dome, and further illustrates an alternative vacuum plenum that is useful for cleaning trapped debris from the vacuum passage;

[0035] FIG. 9B is an exploded view showing operation of the alternative vacuum plenum of FIG. 9A;

[0036] FIG. 9C is another exploded view showing operation of the alternative vacuum plenum of FIG. 9A and FIG. 9B;

[0037] FIG. 10 illustrates the rotary surface cleaning tool of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, wherein the rotary surface cleaning tool is drivingly connected, for example but without limitation, by a drive gear to the rotary drive output of the on-board power plant;

[0038] FIG. 11A illustrates an upper coupling surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool of the rotary surface cleaning machine of the prior art;

[0039] FIG. 11B illustrates an upper coupling surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, as further illustrated in FIG. 10, and further illustrates the vacuum manifold having an optional curved portion that actually generates a pumping action of the suction pressure;

[0040] FIG. 12 illustrates a bottom operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, as further illustrated in FIG. 10 and FIG. 11;

[0041] FIG. 13 is a detail view of one embodiment of the suction extraction shoe of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9;

[0042] FIG. 14 is a detailed cross-section view of one embodiment of the suction extraction shoe illustrated in FIG. 13, wherein the suction extraction shoe is shown as having a leading surface and a trailing surface as a function of the rotational direction of the rotary surface cleaning tool;

[0043] FIG. 15 illustrates the bottom operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, having the suction extraction shoe with an optional raised leading surface portion and a relatively lower trailing surface portion as illustrated in FIG. 13 and FIG. 14;

[0044] FIG. 16 illustrates bottom the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, having a spiral pattern of cleaning solution delivery spray nozzle arrays of individual delivery holes, wherein each spray nozzle array consists of one to about four individual delivery holes, and wherein the individual spray nozzle arrays are positioned in a spiral pattern across the bottom operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool;

[0045] FIG. 16A illustrates an alternative configuration of the spiral pattern of cleaning solution delivery spray nozzle arrays illustrated in FIG. 16;

[0046] FIG. 17 is a detail view of another embodiment of the suction extraction shoe of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, wherein the leading surface does not include the optional raised portion but is rather substantially coplanar with the trailing surface, but the leading surface rather includes one or more bristle brushes in one or more rows arranged along an outermost portion thereof;

[0047] FIG. 18 is a detailed cross-section view of the embodiment of the suction extraction shoe illustrated in FIG. 17;

[0048] FIG. 19 illustrates the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, wherein the suction extraction shoes are configured with substantially coplanar leading and trailing surfaces, and the shoe leading surfaces have one or more of the bristle brushes in one or more rows arranged along the outermost portions thereof;

[0049] FIG. 20 illustrates rotary surface cleaning tool of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, wherein each suction extraction shoe is supported in the bottom operational surface by a biasing means structured for individually biasing or "floating" each suction extraction shoe outwardly relative to the bottom operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool;

[0050] FIG. 21 is a cross-section view of the rotary surface cleaning tool of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, wherein the biasing means for individually biasing or "floating" each suction extraction shoe outwardly relative to the bottom operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool is structured, by example and without limitation, as a resilient cushion, such as a closed-cell foam rubber cushion of about one-quarter inch thickness or thereabout, that is positioned between a flange portion of each shoe and the rotary surface cleaning tool;

[0051] FIG. 22 is a detail view of another embodiment of the suction extraction shoe of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, wherein each suction extraction shoe is structured for accomplishing the "washboard" scrubbing effect of the moveable target surface, i.e. carpet surface, independently of the next consecutive suction extraction shoe;

[0052] FIG. 23 is a detailed cross-section view of the embodiment of the suction extraction shoe illustrated in FIG. 22, wherein the suction extraction shoe is shown as having the optional relatively lower or recessed portion formed on the leading surface and

the relatively raised portion is formed on the trailing surface as a function of the reversed clockwise rotational direction of the rotary surface cleaning tool; and

[0053] FIG. 24 illustrates the bottom operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool of the rotary surface cleaning machine illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, having the suction extraction shoe formed with the optional relatively lower or recessed surface portion on its leading surface, and the optional relatively raised surface portion formed on the trailing surface as illustrated in FIG. 22 and FIG. 23.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0054] In the Figures, like numerals indicate like elements.

[0055] FIG. 5 illustrates a rotary surface cleaning machine 100 of a type for delivery of liquid cleaning fluid to a target surface to be cleaned, such as either carpeting or hard floor surfaces including but not limited to wood, tile, linoleum and natural stone flooring. Rotary surface cleaning machine 100 is coupled to draw liquid cleaning fluid through cleaning solution delivery tube 9 from a supply 23 of liquid cleaning solution in the cabinet 17.

[0056] Rotary surface cleaning machine 100 is optionally a stand-alone unit coupled to a supply of pressurized hot liquid solution of cleaning fluid and a having an on-board motor or other power plant coupled for driving a fan assembly for generating a suction as, for example, rotary tool for cleaning surfaces disclosed by U.S. Pat. No. 4,182,001, which is incorporated herein by reference. Alternatively, rotary surface cleaning machine 100 is part of a truck-mounted fluid cleaning system such as illustrated in FIG. 1 and FIG. 2 and disclosed in U.S. Pat. 6,243,914, which is incorporated herein by reference. When part of a truck-mounted fluid cleaning system, rotary surface cleaning machine 100 is coupled to vacuum return hose 19 and truck-mounted vacuum source 25 by means of an exhaust pipe or hose 102 coupled to an exhaust port 104. Fluid extraction suction is generated by the vacuum force supplied by vacuum source 25. Soiled cleaning fluid

extracted from carpet or rug 57 is drawn off through exhaust port 104 and carried through flexible vacuum return hose 19 to main waste receptacle 3.

[0057] As illustrated here by example and without limitation, rotary surface cleaning machine 100 includes a support frame member 106, which may be supported by a wheel assembly 108. Support frame 106 carries a substantially circular housing dome 110 having its lower axial face open at 112 with this face 112 being disposed substantially parallel to the surface which is to be cleaned, such as rug 57. A pivotally mounted handle assembly 114 is used by the operator during operation for manipulating machine 100. Handle assembly 114 supports one or more operating control mechanisms mounted thereon for the convenience of the operator. For example, one flow control mechanism 116 regulates flow of cleaning fluid through cleaning solution delivery tube 9. A conventional quick connection can be used for supplying the liquid cleaning solution. Another vacuum control mechanism 118 can be used to regulate the suction extraction of spent cleaning liquid and loosened dirt. A rotary control mechanism 120 can be used to regulate the starting and stopping of the rotary surface cleaning tool through control of an on-board power plant 122, such as an electric motor or other power plant, mounted on support frame 106.

[0058] A rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is configured as a large rotor that is journaled with support frame 106 for high speed rotary motion within housing dome 110. On-board power plant 122 is coupled for driving the high speed rotary motion of rotary surface cleaning tool 124.

[0059] A plurality of suction extraction shoes 126 are located on rotary surface cleaning tool 124 and project from open lower axial face 112 of housing dome 110. Each suction extraction shoe 126 is coupled in fluid communication with vacuum source 25 through exhaust port 104 and exhaust pipe or hose 102 for the suction extraction of spent cleaning liquid and loosened dirt.

[0060] FIG. 6 is a side view of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 illustrated in FIG. 5, wherein the plurality of suction extraction shoes 126 are more clearly illustrated

as being located on rotary surface cleaning tool 124 and projected from open lower axial face 112 of housing dome 110.

[0061] FIG. 7 is a bottom view of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 illustrated in FIG. 5 and FIG. 6, wherein the plurality of suction extraction shoes 126 are more clearly illustrated as being located on rotary surface cleaning tool 124 in open lower axial face 112 of housing dome 110.

[0062] As disclosed herein, a rotary drive output 128 of on-board power plant 122 is coupled for driving the high speed rotary motion of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. For example, rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is rotationally mounted within housing dome 110 and is drivingly connected, for example but without limitation by any of: a drive belt, a drive chain, or a drive gear, to rotary drive output 128 of on-board power plant 122 mounted on frame 106. Here, by example and without limitation, rotary drive output 128 of on-board power plant 122 is a drive gear coupled to drive a circumferential tooth gear 130 disposed about the circumference of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. Accordingly, drive means alternative to the rotary gear drive disclosed herein by example and without limitation are also contemplated and may be substituted without deviating from the scope and intent of the present invention. Power plant 122 thus serves to turn rotary surface cleaning tool 124 at a high speed rotary motion under the control of rotary control mechanism 120.

[0063] Rotary surface cleaning tool 124 includes a plurality of arrays 132 of cleaning solution delivery spray nozzles each coupled in fluid connection to the pressurized flow of cleaning fluid delivered through cleaning solution delivery tube 9. Spray nozzle arrays 132 deliver pressurized hot liquid solution of cleaning fluid to target carpeting or hard floor surface. Spray nozzle arrays 132 are distributed on rotary surface cleaning tool 124 in groups positioned between the plurality of suction extraction shoes 126. Accordingly, when rotary surface cleaning tool 124 turns at 150 RPM during operation, each spray nozzle array 132 delivers the pressurized hot liquid solution of cleaning fluid to the target floor surface at least one, two or more times each second. Consecutively with arrays 132 of spray nozzles, each of the plurality of suction extraction shoes 126 also covers the same area of the target floor as spray nozzle arrays 132 at least

one, two or more times each second. Furthermore, each of the plurality of suction extraction shoes 126 includes a relatively narrow suction or vacuum extraction passage 136 oriented substantially radially of rotary surface cleaning tool 124.

[0064] FIG. 7A illustrates a relatively narrow annular auxiliary suction or vacuum extraction passage 136a formed as a substantially continuous annular slot between bottom cleaning surface of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 and housing dome 110 at lower axial face 112 thereof. Auxiliary annular suction or vacuum extraction passage 136a is coupled in fluid communication with vacuum source 25 through exhaust port 104 and exhaust pipe or hose 102 for the suction extraction of spent cleaning liquid and loosened dirt. Auxiliary annular suction or vacuum extraction passage 136a is positioned adjacent to an outermost surface of housing dome 110, which permits minimum approach distance to walls and other surfaces projected from the floor or rug 57. Accordingly, housing dome 110 of the invention having auxiliary annular vacuum extraction passage 136a in combination with the plurality of suction or vacuum extraction passages 136 oriented substantially radially of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is a significant novel improvement over conventional vacuum extraction structures of the prior art as to be an independently patentable feature, as discussed in more detail herein below. Furthermore, auxiliary vacuum extraction slot 136a need not completely surround rotary surface cleaning tool 124 to be effective. For example, auxiliary vacuum extraction slot 136a need not extend into area adjacent to support frame member 106 under mounted handle assembly 114.

[0065] FIG. 8 illustrates the rotary surface cleaning tool 124 of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 illustrated in FIGS. 5, 6 and 7, wherein rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is mounted on support frame 106 with on-board power plant 122. Here, by example and without limitation, rotary drive output 128 of on-board power plant 122 is a drive gear coupled to drive circumferential tooth gear 130 disposed about the circumference of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. However, as disclosed herein, drive means alternative to the rotary gear drive are also contemplated and may be substituted without deviating from the scope and intent of the present invention.

[0066] FIG. 9 is a partial cross-section view of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 8, wherein rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is

mounted on support frame 106 through a rotary coupling. For example, rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is mounted through a cylindrical sleeve extension 138 of a rotor hub member 140 that is journaled in a bushing 142.

[0067] Each of the plurality of spray nozzle arrays 132 is coupled in fluid communication with the pressurized hot liquid solution of cleaning fluid through a cleaning fluid distribution manifold 144 that is in fluid communication with cleaning solution delivery tube 9. Cleaning fluid distribution manifold 144 includes a central sprue hole 146 for receiving the pressurized cleaning fluid and an expansion chamber 148 for reducing the pressure of the cleaning fluid to below a delivery pressure provided by the supply of pressurized cleaning solution, such as but not limited to supply 23 of pressurized cleaning solution in the cabinet 17 of a truck-mounted system, or another supply of pressurized cleaning solution. Expansion chamber 148 is connected for distributing the liquid cleaning fluid outward along a plurality of radial liquid cleaning fluid distribution channels 150 for delivery by the plurality of spray nozzle arrays 132 uniformly distributed across bottom cleaning surface 72 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. Individual radial cleaning fluid distribution channels 150 are uniformly angularly distributed within rotary surface cleaning tool 124, wherein each of cleaning fluid distribution channels 150 communicates with one of the plurality of spray nozzle arrays 132 for delivery thereto of the pressurized hot liquid solution of cleaning fluid. Radial liquid cleaning fluid distribution channels 150 are optionally extended to an outer circumference 124a of the large rotor of surface cleaning tool 124 for ease of manufacturing, and later sealed with plugs 151.

[0068] Between adjacent arrays 132 of spray nozzles are distributed radially-oriented suction or vacuum extraction passage 136 each coupled to a vacuum source for retrieving a quantity of soiled cleaning fluid. Radially-oriented plurality of suction extraction shoes 126 are uniformly distributed angularly about rotary surface cleaning tool 124 for uniformly angularly distributing the suction or vacuum extraction passages 136 about rotary surface cleaning tool 124. Exhaust port 104 communicates with a vacuum plenum 152 within rotor hub member 140, which in turn communicates through respective suction extraction shoes 126 with each suction or vacuum extraction passage 136. For example, radially-oriented suction or vacuum extraction passages 136

communicate through individual vacuum manifold branch passages 154 of a vacuum manifold 155 that each communicate in turn with a substantially cylindrical central vacuum passage 156 within rotor hub member 140. Central vacuum passage 156 communicates at its upper end through vacuum plenum 152 and exhaust port 104 with exhaust pipe or hose 102.

[0069] As indicated by rotational arrow 158, rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is rotated at high speed during application of cleaning solution to the target surface. Rotary surface cleaning tool 124 successfully delivers a generally uniform distribution of liquid cleaning solution to a target surface, such as rug 57, between the quantity of arrays 132 of spray nozzles and the large number of passes, i.e. at least one, two or more passes per second, of each spray nozzle array 132 occasioned by the high rotational speed rotary surface cleaning tool 124 regardless of any lack of uniformity in the instantaneous fluid delivery of any individual spray nozzle array 132. Additionally, the instantaneous fluid delivery of each individual spray nozzles array 132 tends to be generally uniform at least because the length of the spray nozzle array 132 is minimal as compared with the size of rotary surface cleaning tool 124.

[0070] FIG. 9A illustrates auxiliary annular suction or vacuum extraction passage 136a formed as a substantially annular slot between outer circumference 124a of surface cleaning tool 124 and circumferential skirt 111 of housing dome 110 adjacent to its lower axial face 112. Annular vacuum extraction passage 136a communicates with central vacuum passage 156 within rotor hub member 140. By example and without limitation, annular vacuum extraction passage 136a communicates with central vacuum passage 156 through extensions 157 formed in one or more individual vacuum manifold branch passages 154 and through outer circumference 124a of surface cleaning tool 124. As discussed herein, individual vacuum manifold branch passages 154 each communicate in turn with central vacuum passage 156 within rotor hub member 140, whereby annular vacuum extraction passage 136a communicates with central vacuum passage 156 and exhaust port 104.

[0071] Alternatively, annular vacuum extraction passage 136a communicates with a vacuum passage 136b formed between housing dome 110 and vacuum manifold cover

159 which is fixed to top of surface cleaning tool 124 and seals individual vacuum manifold branch passages 154. Vacuum passage 136b communicates with central vacuum passage 156 within rotor hub member 140 either indirectly through one or more vacuum manifold apertures 161 formed through vacuum manifold cover 159 in communication with individual vacuum manifold branch passages 154, else directly through one or more vacuum passage apertures 163 formed in direct communication with central vacuum passage 156 directly through cylindrical sleeve extension 138 of rotor hub member 140. According to yet another alternative, vacuum passage 136b communicates directly to a second independent exhaust port 104a that is coupled through a portion 113 of housing dome 110, exhaust port 104a is in turn coupled to truck-mounted vacuum source 25 by means of either exhaust hose 102 or another exhaust hose, whereby vacuum pressure is not reduced in vacuum manifold branch passages 154 and vacuum extraction passages 136 communicating therewith. Other means for coupling annular vacuum extraction passage 136a in communication with central vacuum passage 156 or directly with either exhaust hose 102 or another exhaust hose are also contemplated and may be included and or substituted without deviating from the scope and intent of the present invention.

[0072] According to one embodiment, at least circumferential skirt 111 of housing dome 110 forming annular vacuum extraction passage 136a is formed of a resiliently pliable material, such as a plastic or rubber material. The material is pliable enough to collapse skirt 111 of housing dome 110 when cleaning machine 100 is forced into contact with an immovable object, such as a wall. Yet the material is resilient enough to substantially automatically reform collapsed skirt 111 and annular vacuum extraction passage 136a when cleaning machine 100 is moved away from contact such immovable object. Accordingly, cleaning machine 100 can be moved closely enough to such immovable objects that spray nozzle arrays 132 and suction extraction shoes 126 of cleaning tool 124 can be positioned almost directly against a wall for cleaning solution delivery and retrieval. This flexibility of circumferential skirt 111 of housing dome 110 is thus advantageous, for example, for cleaning wall-to-wall carpet.

[0073] FIG. 9A also illustrates an alternative vacuum plenum 152a communicating with central vacuum passage 156, for example at an upper portion thereof. Alternative vacuum plenum 152a is useful for emptying and cleaning central vacuum passage 156

during operation of rotary surface cleaning machine 100. Alternative vacuum plenum 152a optionally includes means 218 for visually inspecting central vacuum passage 156. For example, visual inspecting means 218 is formed as a visually clear sight window set into a side wall 220 of alternative vacuum plenum 152a. Else, in another example, visual inspecting means 218 is provided as all, or at least a portion of side wall 220 of alternative vacuum plenum 152a being formed substantially entirely of a visually clear material, such as glass or a visually clear polyvinyl chloride (PVC) or polycarbonate material, whereby central vacuum passage 156 is clearly visible through some or substantially all of vacuum plenum side wall 220. Visual inspecting means 218 is a unique attribute of alternative vacuum plenum 152a. In inventor's long years and vast experience, prior art vacuum plenums have all been opaque whereby operator must determine levels of undissolved dust, dirt and debris entrapped in the vacuum plenum either by physically disassembling the vacuum plenum for visual inspection, else by noticing a reduction in the suction level at the suction extraction ports. Either prior art means for determining a build-up of entrapped contaminants at least reduces efficiency of the cleaning tool, and may be detrimental to the cleaning tool, and potentially to the entire cleaning system. Therefore, vacuum plenum visual inspecting means 218 of the present invention advantageously provides both increased cleaning efficiency of rotary surface cleaning machine 100, and means for protecting rotary surface cleaning machine 100 from damage, as from clogging or even possible over heating.

[0074] Another advantageous unique attribute of alternative vacuum plenum 152a is a removable vacuum inlet cap assembly 230 which operates as a clean-out for advantageously emptying and cleaning central vacuum passage 156 during operation of rotary surface cleaning machine 100, whereby rotary surface cleaning machine 100 is provided with increased cleaning efficiency and protection from damage, as from clogging or even possible over heating. For example, removable vacuum inlet cap assembly 230 includes a removable machined or molded inlet cap 232 that fits over a substantially round open end 152b of tubular alternative vacuum plenum 152a. Inlet cap 232 is formed with a stem or plug 234 that is sized to enter into and mate with open end 152b of tubular alternative vacuum plenum 152a. Inlet cap 232 is structured to seal open end 152b of vacuum plenum 152a. For example, cap plug 234 is formed with one or more seal seats 236 each sized to receive a seal 238 which is compressed between cap plug 234 and open

end 152b of vacuum plenum 152a. For example, seal seats 236 each accept thereinto an elastomeric o-ring seal 238 sized to be compressed between cap plug 234 and open end 152b of vacuum plenum 152a. Alternatively, inlet cap 232 is sized to fit outside diameter of side wall 220 of vacuum plenum 152a similarly to a lid fitting a jar, wherein one or more seal seats 236 are formed into inner surface of lid side wall similarly to lid screw threads, and o-ring seals 238 are fit into seal seats 236 and compressed between lid inner side wall and outer surface of side wall 220 of vacuum plenum 152a. According to another alternative, whether inlet cap 232 has cap plug 234 sized to fit into open end 152b of tubular alternative vacuum plenum 152a, or has external wall sized to fit outside diameter of side wall 220, underside of inlet cap 232 is alternatively formed with one or more seal seats 236 and one or more seals 238 are positioned between underside of inlet cap 232 and top surface of vacuum plenum side wall 220 at open end 152b of tubular alternative vacuum plenum 152a, which seals 238 are compressed between inlet cap 232 and vacuum plenum side wall 220 as by negative pressure of vacuum in central vacuum passage 156 during operation of rotary surface cleaning machine 100. Inlet cap 232 is thus retained in connection with alternative vacuum plenum 152a by application of negative pressure of vacuum in central vacuum passage 156 during operation of rotary surface cleaning machine 100, and seal 238 maintains the negative vacuum pressure in vacuum passage 156, whereby no mechanical connection is required. Furthermore, because no mechanical connection, i.e., clamp or threads, is necessary between inlet cap 232 and alternative vacuum plenum 152a, inlet cap 232 is readily removable from alternative vacuum plenum 152a as soon as negative vacuum pressure is released from vacuum passage 156 and seal 238 is broken. In other words, inlet cap 232 is just pulled off of alternative vacuum plenum 152a as soon as vacuum is cut from vacuum passage 156, or rotary surface cleaning machine 100 is shut down, without releasing any clamps or unscrewing any joints.

[0075] According to another aspect of removable vacuum inlet cap assembly 230, cleaning solution delivery tube 9 is inserted through an aperture 240 formed through inlet cap 232, for example substantially at the center thereof. Delivery tube 9 is sealed in aperture 240 of inlet cap 232, for example by a threaded joint, an o-ring joint, or another sealed coupling 242 therebetween.

[0076] Delivery tube 9 is removably extended through central vacuum passage 156 into cleaning fluid expansion chamber 148 of cleaning fluid distribution manifold 144 through a sealing plate 244 thereof positioned between vacuum passage 156 and cleaning fluid expansion chamber 148. Delivery tube 9 is removably extended into cleaning fluid expansion chamber 148 through an another sealing coupling 246 and forms central sprue hole 146. For example, a smooth tubular end 9a of delivery tube 9 distal of inlet cap 232 extends through an aperture 248 in a hub or stem portion 250 of sealing plate 244 in sealed coupling 246. For example, sealing coupling 246 includes one or more seals which are compressed in aperture 248 between delivery tube 9 and stem portion 250 of sealing plate 244. Here, sealed coupling is one, two, three (shown) or more elastomeric o-ring seals compressed between delivery tube 9 and stem portion 250 of sealing plate 244, whereby smooth tubular end 9a of delivery tube 9 is slidably engageable with sealed coupling 246 in sealing plate 244 simply by pushing inlet cap 232 into engagement with open end 152b of alternative vacuum plenum 152a. Likewise, smooth tubular end 9a of delivery tube 9 is slidably disengageable from sealed coupling 246 with sealing plate 244 simply by pulling inlet cap 232 from open end 152b of alternative vacuum plenum 152a, as disclosed herein.

[0077] FIG. 9B is an exploded view showing smooth tubular end 9a of delivery tube 9 slidably withdrawn from aperture 248 in stem portion 250 of sealing plate 244 and disengaged from sealing coupling 246 therewith when vacuum inlet cap assembly 230 is at least partly removed from alternative vacuum plenum 152a.

[0078] FIG. 9C illustrates one novel attribute of removable vacuum inlet cap assembly 230 operating with alternative vacuum plenum 152a, which novel attribute is an ability to easily and substantially automatically clean built-up hair, fibers and other debris 252 from a position wrapped and twisted around solution delivery tube 9. Inventor has determined a tendency for longer hair, fibers and other debris to twist around delivery tube 9 where it passes through vacuum passage 156. Such elongated contaminants are sucked into vacuum passage 156 through shoe vacuum extraction passages 136 and annular suction or vacuum extraction passage 136a during operation of rotary surface cleaning machine 100. Build-up of such long fibers can exacerbate entrapment of smaller contaminants that can reduce efficiency of the cleaning tool, and may be detrimental to the cleaning tool, and potentially to the entire cleaning system, as disclosed herein. Therefore,

it is beneficial to the operational efficiency and longevity of rotary surface cleaning machine 100 to clean delivery tube 9 of such longer hair, fibers and other debris as may become wrapped and twisted there around. To this end, delivery tube 9 is substantially smooth over a lengthwise portion 9b thereof between inlet cap 232 of vacuum inlet cap assembly 230 and smooth tubular distal end 9a of delivery tube 9. Lengthwise portion 9b of delivery tube 9 may be substantially straight, as shown, or may taper toward distal end 9a. Inventor has determined that such contaminants may be easily removed from lengthwise portion 9b of delivery tube 9 by operation of vacuum suction source 25. It has been determined that merely presenting distal end 9a of delivery tube 9 to vacuum suction source 25, whereby built-up hair, fibers and other debris 252 are sucked from smooth lengthwise portion 9b of delivery tube 9 over smooth distal end 9a.

[0079] Accordingly, alternative vacuum plenum 152a of the invention having removable vacuum inlet cap assembly 230 is a significant novel improvement over conventional vacuum plenums of the prior art as to be an independently patentable feature.

[0080] FIG. 10 illustrates rotary surface cleaning tool 124 of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, wherein rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is drivingly connected, for example but without limitation, by a drive gear to rotary drive output 128 of on-board power plant 122. Here, by example and without limitation, rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is a large rotor that is fixedly attached to a rotary drive member 160 through a fixed coupling 162, such as a plurality of threaded fasteners (shown) or other conventional fixed coupling means. Rotary drive member 160 includes circumferential tooth gear 130 disposed about the circumference thereof for operating as the drive gear coupled to rotary drive output 128 of on-board power plant 122.

[0081] Rotary drive member 160 is mounted to cylindrical sleeve extension 138 of rotor hub member 140 that is in turn journaled in bushing 142. See, for example, FIG. 9. The large rotor of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is fitted with central sprue hole 146 and includes expansion chamber 148 and the plurality of individual closed liquid cleaning fluid distribution channels 150, as well as the plurality of spray nozzle arrays 132 that are uniformly distributed across the bottom cleaning surface of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. The large rotor of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 also includes individual vacuum

manifold branch passages 154 that each communicate in turn with central vacuum passage 156 of rotor hub member 140, as well as the plurality suction or vacuum extraction passages 136 of respective suction extraction shoes 126 located on rotary surface cleaning tool 124 and projected from open lower axial face 112 of housing dome 110.

[0082] FIG. 11 illustrates vacuum manifold 155 formed in an upper coupling surface 164 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, as further illustrated in FIG. 10. The large rotor of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is again illustrated as including expansion chamber 148 and the plurality of individual closed liquid cleaning fluid distribution channels 150 that communicate with the plurality of spray nozzle arrays 132 distributed across the bottom cleaning surface of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. Here, rotary drive member 160 is removed to more clearly show vacuum manifold 155 having individual vacuum manifold branch passages 154 that each communicate in turn with central vacuum passage 156 of rotor hub member 140. Each individual vacuum manifold branch passage 154 terminates in a fluid extraction passage 166 of about identical radial lengths 168 positioned adjacent to the circumference of the large rotor of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. In assembly, each shoe 126 is coupled to the lower face of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 with respective suction or vacuum extraction passages 136 in communication with a respective fluid extraction passage 166 of one of the individual vacuum manifold branch passages 154. As illustrated here by example and without limitation, individual vacuum manifold branch passages 154 optionally include a curved portion 170 inwardly of respective fluid extraction passage 166. Optional curved portion 170 of vacuum manifold branch passages 154, when present, operate to urge generation of a Coriolis effect in a suction or vacuum fluid extraction airstream received into central vacuum passage 156 of rotor hub member 140.

[0083] FIG. 11A illustrates one rotary surface cleaning tool 125 of a rotary surface cleaning machine of the prior art having a vacuum manifold 123, wherein individual vacuum manifold branch passages 127 each communicate with a central vacuum passage (not shown) through an expansion chamber 129. As illustrated here, vacuum manifold branch passages 127 each form a substantially straight radial passages radiating from central expansion chamber 129 to fluid extraction passages 131. Suction action (arrows

133) generated by vacuum source 25 operates to pull air and soiled liquid cleaning fluid inwardly away from fluid extraction passages 131 and toward central expansion chamber 129. However, centrifugal force (arrows 135) generated by high speed rotary motion (arrow 139) of rotary surface cleaning tool 125 simultaneously operates to push such air and soiled liquid cleaning fluid outwardly away from central expansion chamber 129 and toward fluid extraction passages 131. Thus, in prior art machines, centrifugal force (arrows 135) of rotary surface cleaning tool 125 generated by its high speed rotary motion (arrow 139) operates oppositely in vacuum manifold branch passages 127 from suction action (arrows 133) generated by vacuum source 25. Therefore, centrifugal force (arrows 135) of rotary surface cleaning tool 125 opposes and actually reduces the force of suction action (arrows 133) which is relied upon by the rotary surface cleaning machine for retrieving the soiled cleaning fluid. In effect, the centrifugal force (arrows 135) of rotary surface cleaning tool 125 opposes and actually reduces the effectiveness of the rotary surface cleaning machine by reducing the force of suction action (arrows 133) for retrieving the soiled cleaning fluid since suction action force (arrows 133) must first overcome centrifugal force (arrows 135) of rotary surface cleaning tool 125 before operating to extract soiled liquid cleaning fluid from carpet 57 and pull extracted cleaning fluid inwardly away from fluid extraction passages 131.

[0084] Referring again to FIG. 11, in contrast to prior art rotary surface cleaning tools wherein vacuum manifold branch passages 127 consist of substantially straight radial passages radiating from central expansion chamber 129 to fluid extraction passages 131, the present invention rather provides optional curved portion 170 that, when present, actually generates a pumping action (arrows 270) of the suction pressure generated in vacuum manifold branch passages 154 by vacuum source 25. Pumping action 270 is actually driven by centrifugal force (arrow 135) generated by high speed rotary motion (arrow 139) of rotary surface cleaning tool 125, whereby centrifugal force (arrow 135) operates in combination with shape of curved portion 170 to accelerate extracted air and soiled liquid cleaning fluid rapidly inwardly away from fluid extraction passages 131 and toward central expansion chamber 129. Accordingly, curved portion 170 of vacuum manifold branch passages 154 of the invention is a significant novel improvement over the substantially straight radial vacuum manifold branch passages 127 of the prior art as to be an independently patentable feature.

[0085] FIG. 12 illustrates a bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, as further illustrated in FIG. 10 and FIG. 11. The large rotor of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is again illustrated as including expansion chamber 148 and the plurality of individual closed liquid cleaning fluid distribution channels 150 that communicate with the pluralities of spray nozzle arrays 132 distributed across the bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. Spray nozzle arrays 132 are illustrated here by example and without limitation as radially oriented arrays of pluralities of individual delivery spray nozzles 174 of about 0.01 to about 0.03 inch in diameter formed through bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124, for example by mechanical, chemical or laser drilling, into communication with respective individual closed liquid cleaning fluid distribution channels 150 for delivery therethrough of the pressurized hot liquid solution of cleaning fluid. As illustrated here by example and without limitation, each spray nozzle array 132 consists of a plurality of individual delivery spray nozzles 174 substantially uniformly distributed over a substantially identical annular portion 176 of bottom operational surface 172 extended between an inner radial limit 178 and an outer radial limit 180 thereof, wherein annular portion 176 covered by delivery spray nozzles 174 has about the same radial extents as radial length 168 of fluid extraction passages 166 of suction extraction shoes 126, and wherein inner radial limit 178 is about identical with an inner terminus 166a of fluid extraction passages 166 and outer radial limit 180 is about identical with an outer terminus 166b of fluid extraction passages 166. Therefore, delivery spray nozzles 174 are distributed over annular portion 176 that is substantially radially coextensive with fluid extraction passages 166.

[0086] Each individual fluid extraction passage 166 is positioned adjacent to the circumference of the large rotor of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 and oriented substantially radially thereof approximately halfway between adjacent cleaning solution delivery spray nozzle arrays 132. As illustrated here by example and without limitation, each individual fluid extraction passage 166 is positioned in a shoe recess 182 formed into rotary surface cleaning tool 124 below bottom operational surface 172 thereof. Each shoe recess 182 is appropriately sized and shaped to receive thereinto one suction extraction shoe 126 with its surrounding flange portion 184 being substantially flush with bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124.

[0087] Optionally, a plurality of lightening holes or recesses 186 are provided to reduce the weight of rotary surface cleaning tool 124.

[0088] FIG. 13 is a detail view of one embodiment of suction extraction shoe 126 of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9. As disclosed herein above, suction extraction shoe 126 is structured to sit in recess 182 flush or below bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. Accordingly, flange portion 184 surrounding each suction extraction shoe 126 is structured for being fixed to bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 within shoe recess 182. Optionally, suction extraction shoe 126 may include a sealing member 187 structured to fit into preformed slots in bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 and form a substantially airtight seal therewith to concentrate the force of the fluid extraction suction generated by the vacuum force supplied by vacuum source 25 into individual fluid extraction passages 136 of shoes 126.

[0089] Here, suction extraction shoe 126 is shown as having a leading surface 188 and a trailing surface 190 as a function of the rotational direction (arrow 158) of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. As shown here, leading surface 188 is shown by example and without limitation as having an optional relatively raised portion 192 thereof that stands out further from bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 than a relatively lower or recessed portion 194 of trailing surface 190. When optional raised portion 192 of suction extraction shoe 126 is present, optional raised portion 192 of suction extraction shoe 126 causes a "washboard" scrubbing effect of a moveable target surface, i.e. carpet surface, wherein up-down oscillations of the moveable carpet are caused by alternate application of vacuum suction and shoe compression of carpet 57. In other words, the target carpet 57 is initially sucked up toward recessed trailing portion 194 of shoe 126 and operational surface 172 by one suction extraction passage 136, and then squeezed back down by optional raised portion 192 of leading surface 188 of a next consecutive suction extraction shoe 126, as illustrated in FIG. 15, before being immediately sucked up again by the suction extraction passage 136 of the same next consecutive suction extraction shoe 126. This alternate vacuum suction and shoe compression of carpet 57 is repeated by each next consecutive suction extraction shoe 126 as a function of the combination of recessed trailing portion 194 and raised leading surface portion 192. Since rotary surface cleaning

tool 124 turns at a high speed rotary motion these up-down oscillations of the moveable carpet are repeated at least one, two or several times each second, which results in significantly aggressive agitation of the target carpet 57 in combination with the fluid cleaning.

[0090] Alternatively, rotational direction (arrow 158) of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is reversed, whereby optional raised portion 192 is positioned on trailing surface 190 as a function of the reversed rotational direction (arrow 158a shown in Figure 15). Accordingly, the “washboard” scrubbing effect of the moveable target surface, i.e. carpet surface, is accomplished by the recessed leading surface 188 and optional raised portion 192 of each suction extraction shoe 126 in turn. Furthermore, as illustrated here each suction extraction shoe 126 optionally further includes an extension portion 126a that overhangs an outer end portion 184a of its surrounding flange portion 184. Extension portion 126a permits extraction passages 136 to extend radially outwardly of cleaning tool operational surface 172 beyond the radial extent of fluid extraction passages 166 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. Accordingly, when optional extension portion 126a is present, suction extraction passages 136 extend nearly to outer circumference 124a of the large rotor of surface cleaning tool 124, as illustrated in FIG. 15.

[0091] FIG. 14 is a detailed cross-section view of one embodiment of suction extraction shoe 126 illustrated in FIG. 13, wherein suction extraction shoe 126 is shown as having leading surface 188 and trailing surface 190 as a function of the rotational direction (arrow 158) of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. As shown here, leading surface 188 is shown by example and without limitation as having optional raised portion 192 thereof that stands out further from bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 than relatively lower or recessed portion 194 of trailing surface 190.

[0092] FIG. 15 illustrates bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, having suction extraction shoe 126 with optional raised surface portion 192 formed on leading surface 188 and relatively lower or recessed surface portion 194 formed on trailing surface 190 as illustrated in FIG. 13 and FIG. 14. Here, suction extraction shoe 126 is illustrated having optional raised surface portion 192 leading and relatively lower or

recessed surface portion 194 trailing as a function of the optional counterclockwise rotational direction (arrow 158) of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. It will be understood that suction extraction shoes 126 and rotational direction 158 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is optional and can be reversed such that the functional leading surface 188 and functional trailing surface 190 portions thereof are maintained. Accordingly, reversal of rotational directionality 158 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 disclosed herein by example and without limitation is also contemplated and may be substituted without deviating from the scope and intent of the present invention. Suction extraction shoe 126 are attached to bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 by attachment means 196, such as but not limited to one or more threaded fasteners.

[0093] Furthermore, during rotational direction (arrow 158) of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 wherein leading surface 188 of suction extraction shoe 126 includes relatively raised portion 192, relatively raised portion 192 of leading surface 188 operates to compress or squeeze carpet 57 down upon passing, while relatively recessed portion 194 of trailing surface 190 permits vacuum source 25 through operating through vacuum extraction passage 136 to lift carpet 57.

[0094] Alternatively, during opposite rotational direction (arrow 158a shown in Figure 15) of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 wherein leading surface 188 of suction extraction shoe 126 includes relatively recessed portion 194, relatively recessed portion 194 of leading surface 188 permits vacuum source 25 through operating through vacuum extraction passage 136 to lift carpet 57, while relatively raised portion 192 of trailing surface 190 operates to compress or squeeze carpet 57 down upon passing. Therefore, regardless of rotational direction (arrow 158 or arrow 158a) of rotary surface cleaning tool 124, each individual suction extraction shoe 126 having relatively raised and recessed portions 192, 194 further operates as a scrub board for generating a “washboard” scrubbing effect on the moveable carpet 57 by alternately compressing and lifting thereof. Accordingly, suction extraction shoe 126 of the invention having the combination of relatively raised and recessed portions 192, 194 is a significant novel improvement over conventional suction extraction shoes of the prior art as to be an independently patentable feature.

[0095] FIG. 16 illustrates bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, having a spiral pattern of cleaning solution delivery spray nozzle arrays 132 of individual delivery spray nozzles 174, wherein each spray nozzle array 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d and 132e is shorter in extent than annular portion 176. For example, each spray nozzle array 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d and 132e consists of one to about four individual delivery spray nozzles 174, and wherein individual spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e are positioned in a spiral pattern 198 across bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 that is substantially radially coextensive with radial lengths 137 of fluid extraction passages 136 of shoes 126 between the extremes of annular portion 176 between inner radial limit 178 and outer radial limit 180. The spiral pattern 198 of spray nozzle array 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e optionally proceeds in a uniform stepwise manner around bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124, with nozzle array 132a being nearest to a center point 200 of operational surface 172 and substantially radially coextensive with inner radial limit 178 and each consecutive nozzle array 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e stepping further outwardly therefrom toward outer radial limit 180 of operational surface 172. Alternatively, the stepwise manner of spiral pattern 198 of spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e alternatively proceeds in a non-uniform manner (shown) wherein one or more of spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e is optionally out of step with an adjacent one of spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e. Thus, spiral pattern 198 of spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e is optionally either uniformly stepwise between inner radial limit 178 and outer radial limit 180 of radial lengths 168 of fluid extraction passages 136 of shoes 126, else spiral pattern 198 proceeds in a non-uniform manner. Spiral pattern 198 of spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e proceeds in either a clockwise manner between inner radial limit 178 and outer radial limit 180 of radial lengths 137 of fluid extraction passages 136 of shoes 126, else spiral pattern 198 proceeds in a counterclockwise manner without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

[0096] The spiral pattern 198 of spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e is effective for delivery of cleaning solution at least because, as disclosed herein, rotary surface cleaning tool 124 turns at a high rate during operation, whereby each spray nozzle array 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e delivers the pressurized hot liquid solution of cleaning

fluid to the target floor surface at least one, two or more times each second. Furthermore, dividing spray nozzle arrays 132 into several spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e reduces the number of individual delivery spray nozzles 174 that have to be drilled or otherwise formed through bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 by a factor of the number of spray nozzle arrays 132 otherwise provided in rotary surface cleaning tool 124. Here, as illustrated in FIG. 12, there are five radial rows of spray nozzle arrays 132 across operational surface 172. By dividing spray nozzle arrays 132 into several spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e, the total number of individual delivery spray nozzles 174 that have to be provided in bottom operational surface 172 is reduced by a factor of five, so that only one-fifth or twenty percent of the number of delivery spray nozzles 174 that have to be provided in bottom operational surface 172. Delivery spray nozzles 174 are very expensive to drill or otherwise form because they are only about 0.02 inch in diameter. Therefore, a large cost savings is gained, while the delivery of cleaning solution does not suffer. A further advantage of dividing spray nozzle arrays 132 into several spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e is that the cleaning solution is delivered with substantially uniform pressure across the entire radius of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 between inner radial limit 178 and outer radial limit 180, without resorting to special design features normally required in the prior art to provide uniform pressure across each spray nozzle arrays 132 that extends all of the entire annular portion 176 between inner radial limit 178 and outer radial limit 180 and substantially radially coextensively with fluid extraction passages 136 of suction extraction shoes 126. Therefore, the optional spiral pattern 198 of spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e, when present, provides both the economic advantage not known in the prior art of forming fewer expensive delivery spray nozzles 174 for multiple spray nozzle arrays 132 provide across the entire length of annular portion 176 coextensively with fluid extraction passages 136 of shoes 126, and the technological advantage not known in the prior art of providing substantially uniform cleaning solution delivery pressure across bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 for the entire length of annular portion 176 without developing special fluid delivery features normally required in the prior art.

[0097] Optionally, one or more bristle brushes 202 may be provided across bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 adjacent to cleaning solution

delivery spray nozzle arrays 132, or the optional spiral pattern 198 of spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e, when present. Bristle brushes 202 may be provided substantially radially coextensively with fluid extraction passages 136 of suction extraction shoes 126 and either adjacent cleaning solution delivery spray nozzle arrays 132, or the optional spiral pattern 198 of spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d, 132e, when present. Optionally, either multiple radial rows bristle brushes 202 may be provided, else single radial rows of bristle brushes 202 may be provided. Bristle brushes 202 both (1) separate fibers of rug 57 for dry removal of dust, dirt and other particles, and (2) provide a more aggressive cleaning action in cleaning when provided in combination with fluid cleaning of carpet or other target flooring surface.

[0098] FIG. 16A illustrates bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 having an alternative configuration of the spiral pattern of cleaning solution delivery spray nozzle arrays 132 of individual delivery spray nozzles 174 from that shown in FIG. 16, with or without brushes 202. Here, at least one or more of the plurality of spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d and 132e is shorter in extent than annular portion 176, and at least one or more of the plurality of spray nozzle arrays 132a, 132b, 132c, 132d and 132e is replaced by array 132 that across substantially the entire annular portion 176 between inner radial limit 178 and outer radial limit 180, as illustrated for example in FIG. 12.

[0099] For example, spray nozzle arrays 132b, 132c, 132d are shorter in extent than annular portion 176 and each consists of one to about four (three shown) individual delivery spray nozzles 174 that are positioned in spiral pattern 198 across bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 between inner radial limit 178 and outer radial limit 180 and between the extreme positions of spray nozzle array 132a and 132e shown in FIG. 16. Additionally, full length spray nozzle arrays 132 are substituted for shorter spray nozzle arrays 132a and 132e adjacent to inner radial limit 178 and outer radial limit 180 at the extremes of annular portion 176 as shown in FIG. 16. Accordingly, spray nozzle arrays 132 extend substantially the full length of annular portion 176 between inner radial limit 178 and outer radial limit 180, as illustrated for example in FIG. 12. Thus, spiral pattern 198 is replaced by a combination semi-spiral pattern 199 consisting of a combination of a plurality of full length spray nozzle arrays 132 with a

plurality of shorter spray nozzle arrays 132b, 132c, 132d forming a spiral pattern between the extreme positions of spray nozzle array 132a and 132e, as shown in FIG. 16.

[0100] Combination semi-spiral pattern 199 of full length spray nozzle arrays 132 and shorter spray nozzle arrays 132b, 132c, 132d is believed to most efficiently deliver the pressurized hot liquid solution of cleaning fluid to the target floor surface, while minimizing the number of delivery spray nozzles 174 that have to be provided in bottom operational surface 172 and simultaneously delivering a substantially uniform supply of cleaning solution to the target floor or rug 57 surface. Combination semi-spiral pattern 199 simultaneously delivers a minimal quantity of cleaning solution to the target floor or rug 57 surface, which in turn minimizes the amount of spent fluid to be extracted by cleaning machine 100 and also minimized the time required to dry the rug 57.

[0101] Accordingly, combination semi-spiral pattern 199 of the invention having full length spray nozzle arrays 132 in combination with a plurality of shorter spray nozzle arrays 132b, 132c, 132d is a significant novel improvement over conventional patterns of spray nozzle arrays of the prior art as to be an independently patentable feature, as discussed in more detail herein below.

[0102] Furthermore, orifices 175 of a first plurality of individual delivery spray nozzles 174 are optionally sized larger, and orifices 177 of a first plurality of individual delivery spray nozzles 174 are optionally sized smaller than orifices 175. Larger and smaller spray nozzle orifices 175, 177 cause cleaning machine 100 to provide a deep clean of rug 57, while simultaneously providing a surface clean of rug 57. Here, larger sized orifices 175 of spray nozzles 174 deliver cleaning solution at a lower pressure that penetrates only the surface of rug 57, while smaller sized orifices 177 of spray nozzles 174 deliver cleaning solution at a higher pressure that penetrates to the core of rug 57. For example, the larger sized orifices 175 of spray nozzles 174 are as much as 2 to 3 times larger than the smaller sized orifices 177 of spray nozzles 174. Accordingly, smaller sized orifices 177 of a portion of spray nozzles 174 may be sized on the order of about 0.01 inch in diameter to 0.03 inch in diameter. The larger sized orifices 175 of a portion of spray nozzles 174 may be sized relatively larger than smaller sized orifices 177.

[0103] According to one embodiment, one of full length spray nozzle arrays 132 and one or more of shorter spray nozzle arrays 132b, 132c, 132d consist of spray nozzles 174 having smaller sized orifices 177, while a different one of full length spray nozzle arrays 132 and a different one or more of shorter spray nozzle arrays 132b, 132c, 132d consist of spray nozzles 174 having larger sized orifices 175, whereby combination semi-spiral pattern 199 of the invention includes a substantially uniform combination of spray nozzles 174 having both larger and smaller sized orifices 175, 177 for substantially simultaneously delivering cleaning solution at both lower and higher pressure.

[0104] Alternatively, one or more of full length spray nozzle arrays 132 and one or more of shorter spray nozzle arrays 132b, 132c, 132d optionally consist of spray nozzles 174 having a combination of both larger and smaller sized orifices 175, 177.

[0105] Furthermore, the pattern of spray nozzle arrays 132 illustrated in FIG. 12 optionally consist of spray nozzles 174 having a combination of both larger and smaller sized orifices 175, 177. For example, alternating ones of full length spray nozzle arrays 132 in FIG. 12 consist of spray nozzles 174 having both larger and smaller sized orifices 175, 177. Alternatively, each of full length spray nozzle arrays 132 in FIG. 12 consist of spray nozzles 174 having both larger and smaller sized orifices 175, 177, for example alternating between larger and smaller sized spray nozzle orifices 175, 177.

[0106] Accordingly, a combination of the invention having a plurality of spray nozzles 174 having relatively larger sized nozzle orifices 175 in combination with a plurality of spray nozzles 174 having relatively smaller sized nozzle orifices 177 is a significant novel improvement over conventional patterns of spray nozzles of the prior art having nozzle orifices of only a single size as to be an independently patentable feature, as discussed in more detail herein below.

[0107] FIG. 17 is a detail view of another embodiment of suction extraction shoe 126 of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, and FIG. 18 is a detailed cross-section view of the embodiment of suction extraction shoe 126 illustrated in FIG. 17. Here, leading surface 188 does not include the optional raised portion 192. Therefore, leading surface 188 of suction extraction shoe 126 is substantially

coplanar with trailing surface 190. However, leading surface 188 rather includes one or more bristle brushes 204 in one or more rows arranged along an outermost portion 206 thereof. Accordingly, bristle brushes 204 are substituted for optional raised portion 192 of shoe leading surface 188 and stands out further from bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 than relatively lower or recessed portion 194 of trailing surface 190. Raised bristle brushes 204 of shoe leading surface 188 operate similarly to optional raised portion 192 disclosed herein. When optional raised bristle brushes 204 of suction extraction shoe 126 is present on shoe leading surface 188, optional raised bristle brushes 204 cause a “washboard” scrubbing effect of the moveable target surface, i.e. carpet surface, wherein up-down oscillations of the moveable carpet is caused by alternately application of vacuum suction and shoe compression of carpet. In other words, the target carpet is sucked up into narrow suction or vacuum extraction passage 136, and then squeezed back down by optional raised bristle brushes 204 of leading surface 188 of next consecutive suction extraction shoe 126, as illustrated in FIG. 15.

[0108] Similarly to optional bristle brushes 202 on bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124, optional raised bristle brushes 204 on leading surfaces 188 of suction extraction shoes 126 provide a more aggressive cleaning action in cleaning when provided in combination with fluid cleaning of carpet or other target flooring surface.

[0109] Furthermore, when present optional raised bristle brushes 204 effectively raise bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 slightly away from target floor surface. Accordingly, rotary surface cleaning tool 124 can be alternated between carpeting and hard floor surfaces such as wood, tile, linoleum and natural stone flooring, without possibility of scarring or other damage to either operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 or the hard floor surfaces.

[0110] FIG. 19 illustrates operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124, wherein suction extraction shoes 126 are configured with substantially coplanar leading and trailing surfaces 188, 190 and shoe leading surfaces 188 are configured with one or more bristle brushes 204 in one or more rows arranged along outermost portions 206 thereof.

[0111] FIG. 20 illustrates rotary surface cleaning tool 124 as disclosed herein, wherein each suction extraction shoe 126 is supported in bottom operational surface 172 by a biasing means 208 structured for individually biasing each suction extraction shoe 126 outwardly relative to bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124.

[0112] Additionally, it is generally well known that if a suction slot directly contacts rug 57 or another floor, the suction tool virtually locks onto the rug 57 or floor and becomes immovable. Therefore, the suction tool must be spaced away from the rug 57 or floor to permit some airflow which prevents such vacuum lock-up. Airflow is also necessary for drying the carpet 57 or floor. However, the airflow must be very near the rug 57 or floor to be effective for drying. Also, excessive airflow decreases the vacuum force supplied by the fluid cleaning system. Thus, there is a trade-off between distancing the suction slot from the rug 57 or floor to prevent vacuum lock-up and ensuring mobility on the one hand, and on the other hand positioning the suction slot as near to the rug 57 or floor as possible for maintaining the vacuum force supplied by the fluid cleaning system for maximizing airflow to promote drying.

[0113] As disclosed herein, suction extraction passages 136 are oriented substantially perpendicular to the counterclockwise or clockwise rotary motion (arrows 158, 158a) of cleaning tool 124, i.e., oriented substantially radially with respect to cleaning tool operational surface 172. Here, suction extraction shoe 126 includes a plurality of shallow vacuum or suction relief grooves 216 formed across its leading surface 188 and oriented substantially perpendicular to suction extraction passages 136, whereby suction relief grooves 216 lie substantially along the rotary motion (arrows 158, 158a) of cleaning tool 124. Shallow suction relief grooves 216 operate to increase airflow to suction extraction passages 136, while permitting the cleaning tool operational surface 172 to be positioned directly against the rug 57 or floor, whereby moisture extraction is maximized. Another advantage of orienting suction relief grooves 216 along the rotary motion (arrows 158, 158a) of cleaning tool 124 is that suction relief grooves 216 are carpet pile enters into suction relief grooves 216 when cleaning tool operational surface 172 moves across rug 57. This permits airflow to be pulled through the rug 57 between fiber bundles that make up the carpet pile so that the rotary motion of cleaning tool 124 is not wasted.

[0114] The quantity and actual dimensions of suction relief grooves 216 on suction extraction shoes 126 is subject to several factors, including but not limited to, the size and number of suction extraction shoes 126 on operational surface 172 of rotary cleaning tool 124, width and length dimensions of suction extraction passages 136, and the vacuum force generated by the suction source, as well as the rotational velocity of cleaning tool operational surface 172. When relatively raised portion 192 is present in contrast to relatively lower or recessed portion 194, the resulting height differences between leading surface 188 and trailing surface 190 also affect the quantity and actual dimensions of suction relief grooves 216 on suction extraction shoes 126. Optionally, suction relief grooves 216 are also optionally positioned on either one or both of leading surface 188 and trailing surface 190 of suction extraction shoes 126. When positioned on both leading surface 188 and trailing surface 190 of suction extraction shoes 126, suction relief grooves 216 are also optionally staggered between leading and trailing surfaces 188, 190 as shown. Furthermore, the inventors have found that, when optional suction relief grooves 216 of suction extraction shoe 126 are present, suction relief grooves 216 of suction extraction shoe 126 is effective for producing the completely unexpected and unpredicted yet desirable result of generating the “washboard” scrubbing effect of a moveable target surface, i.e. carpet surface, wherein up-down oscillations of the moveable carpet are caused by alternate application of vacuum suction and shoe compression of carpet 57. In other words, the target carpet is initially sucked up toward recessed suction relief grooves 216 of shoe 126 and operational surface 172 by one suction extraction passage 136, and then squeezed back down by surrounding leading or trailing surfaces 188, 190 of suction extraction shoe 126, before being immediately sucked up again by the suction extraction passage 136 of the same or an adjacent suction relief grooves 216. This alternating vacuum suction and shoe compression of carpet 57 is repeated constantly by each alternate encounter with surrounding leading or trailing surfaces 188, 190 of suction extraction shoe 126 between encounters with adjacent suction relief grooves 216 as a function of the frequency of combination of recessed suction relief grooves 216 within surrounding leading or trailing surfaces 188, 190. The high speed rotary motion of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 causes these up-down oscillations of the moveable carpet are repeated at least one, two or several times each second as a function of the rotational speed (arrows 158, 158a) of rotary surface cleaning tool 124, which results in significantly aggressive agitation of the target carpet 57 in combination with the fluid cleaning. The size, quantity,

relative positioning and distribution and of suction relief grooves 216 is a function of all these factors, but can be determined for any rotary surface cleaning machine 100 without undue experimentation.

[0115] FIG. 21 is a cross-section view of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 as disclosed herein, wherein both leading surface 188 and trailing surface 190 of suction extraction shoes 126 are illustrated as including suction relief grooves 216.

[0116] Here, biasing means 208 is structured by example and without limitation as a resilient cushion, such as a closed-cell foam rubber cushion of about one-quarter inch thickness or thereabout, that is positioned between flange portion 184 of each shoe 126 and rotary surface cleaning tool 124. For example, each shoe recess 182 is recessed deeper into bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 than a thickness of shoe flange portion 184, whereby each shoe recess 182 is appropriately sized to receive resilient biasing cushion 208 between an interface surface 210 of flange portion 184 of suction extraction shoe 126 and a floor portion 212 of shoe recess 182, while a clamping plate 214 is positioned over shoe flange 184 and arranged substantially flush with bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. Accordingly, resilient biasing means 208 permits each suction extraction shoe 126 to "float" individually relative to rotary surface cleaning tool 124. Individually "floating" each suction extraction shoe 126 both effectively balances rotary surface cleaning tool 124, and causes each individual suction extraction shoe 126 to be pushed deeper into portions of carpet that may be positioned over small recesses in a non-flat substrate floor surface, as well as pushing causes each individual suction extraction shoe 126 deeper into portions of a non-flat smooth floor surface such as natural rock, distressed wood, and other non-flat or pitted floor surfaces. Therefore, individually "floating" each suction extraction shoe 126 in bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 cleans carpet and non-carpeted smooth floors alike more effectively than cleaning tools having fixed suction extraction shoes, as known in the prior art.

[0117] When present as a closed-cell foam cushion, biasing means 208 optionally also operates as a sealing means between suction extraction shoe 126 and rotary surface cleaning tool 124. Accordingly, biasing means 208 is structured to form a substantially

airtight seal with shoe recess 182 in bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 to concentrate the force of the fluid extraction suction generated by the vacuum force supplied by vacuum source 25 into individual fluid extraction passages 136 of shoes 126. Optionally, closed-cell foam cushion biasing means 208 is substituted for sealing member 187 for sealing suction extraction shoe 126 relative to rotary surface cleaning tool 124. However, although disclosed herein by example and without limitation as a closed-cell foam rubber cushion, biasing means 208 is optionally provided as any resilient biasing structure, including one spring or a series of springs, without deviating from the scope and intent of the present invention. Accordingly, biasing means alternative to the closed-cell foam rubber cushion biasing means 208 disclosed herein by example and without limitation are also contemplated and may be substituted without deviating from the scope and intent of the present invention.

[0118] Optionally, clamping plate 214 is formed of a non-metallic material, such as but not limited to a plastic material, while suction extraction shoe 126 is formed of a metallic material, such as but not limited to stainless steel material.

[0119] FIG. 22 is a detail view of another embodiment of suction extraction shoe 126 of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, wherein each suction extraction shoe 126 is structured for accomplishing the “washboard” scrubbing effect of the moveable target surface, i.e. carpet surface, independently of the next consecutive suction extraction shoe 126. Here, suction extraction shoe 126 is again shown as having functional leading surface 188 and functional trailing surface 190 both as a function of the reversed rotational direction (arrow 158a) of rotary surface cleaning tool 124, shown as clockwise in Figure 24. As shown here, leading surface 188 is shown by example and without limitation as having optional relatively lower or recessed portion 194, while trailing surface 190 is shown as having optional raised portion 192 thereof that stands out further from bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 than relatively lower or recessed leading surface portion 194.

[0120] When optional recessed portion 194 and raised portion 192 of suction extraction shoe 126 are present on leading surface 188 and trailing surface 190, respectively, the relative difference in height of recessed leading portion 194 and raised

trailing portion 192 combine in each suction extraction shoe 126 to independently operate the “washboard” scrubbing effect of a moveable target surface, i.e. carpet surface, wherein up-down oscillations of the moveable carpet are caused by alternate application of vacuum suction and shoe compression of carpet 57. In other words, the target carpet 57 is initially sucked up toward recessed leading portion 194 of suction extraction shoe 126 by the action of suction or vacuum extraction passage 136, and then squeezed back down by optional raised trailing portion 192 of trailing surface 190 of the same suction extraction shoe 126, as illustrated in FIG. 24. Each consecutive suction extraction shoe 126 operates independently of the other suction extraction shoes 126 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 to operate suction or vacuum extraction passage 136 to initially suck up the target carpet 57 toward recessed leading portion 194, before the raised trailing portion 192 of the same suction extraction shoe 126 consecutively compresses the target carpet 57 back down toward the underlying floor surface. This alternate vacuum suction and shoe compression of carpet 57 is repeated independently by each consecutive suction extraction shoe 126. Since rotary surface cleaning tool 124 turns at a high speed rotary motion these up-down oscillations of the moveable carpet are repeated at least one or several times each second, which results in significantly aggressive agitation of the target carpet 57 in combination with the fluid cleaning.

[0121] Additionally, suction extraction shoe 126 is illustrated having a plurality of shallow vacuum or suction relief grooves 216 formed across relatively raised portion 192 thereof and oriented substantially perpendicular to suction extraction passages 136. Suction relief grooves 216 are formed across either leading surface 188 or trailing surface 190 as a function of the counterclockwise or clockwise rotary motion (arrows 158, 158a) of cleaning tool 124. As disclosed herein, suction extraction passages 136 are oriented substantially radially with respect to cleaning tool operational surface 172 and substantially perpendicular to the counterclockwise or clockwise rotary motion (arrows 158, 158a) of cleaning tool 124, whereby suction relief grooves 216 lie substantially along the rotary motion (arrows 158, 158a) of cleaning tool 124. Suction relief grooves 216 formed across relatively raised portion 192 of suction extraction shoe 126 and oriented substantially radially with respect to cleaning tool operational surface 172 and along the rotary motion (arrows 158, 158a) of cleaning tool 124 provide the advantages disclosed herein. Suction relief grooves 216 permit suction extraction passages 136 of suction extraction shoes 126

to be positioned as near to the rug 57 or floor as possible for maintaining the vacuum force supplied by the fluid cleaning system for maximizing airflow to promote drying, while preventing vacuum lock-up and ensuring mobility on the one hand.

[0122] Again, as disclosed herein, the quantity and actual dimensions of suction relief grooves 216 on suction extraction shoes 126 are subject to such factors as the size and number of suction extraction shoes 126 on operational surface 172 of rotary cleaning tool 124, the width and length dimensions of suction extraction passages 136, and the vacuum force generated by the suction source, as well as the rotational velocity of cleaning tool operational surface 172. When relatively raised portion 192 is present in contrast to relatively lower or recessed portion 194 as shown, the resulting height difference between leading surface 188 and trailing surface 190 also affects the quantity and actual dimensions of suction relief grooves 216 on suction extraction shoes 126. Optionally, suction relief grooves 216 are also optionally positioned on relatively raised portion 192 of either of leading surface 188 or trailing surface 190 of suction extraction shoes 126. The size, quantity, relative positioning and distribution and of suction relief grooves 216 is a function of all these factors, but can be determined for any rotary surface cleaning machine 100 without undue experimentation.

[0123] FIG. 23 is a detailed cross-section view of the embodiment of suction extraction shoe 126 illustrated in FIG. 22, wherein suction extraction shoe 126 is shown as having leading surface 188 and trailing surface 190 as a function of the reversed clockwise rotational direction (arrow 158a) of rotary surface cleaning tool 124. As shown here, leading surface 188 is shown by example and without limitation as having optional relatively lower or recessed portion 194, while trailing surface 190 is formed with relatively raised portion 192 thereof that stands out further from bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 than relatively lower or recessed portion 194 of leading surface 188.

[0124] FIG. 24 illustrates bottom operational surface 172 of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 of the rotary surface cleaning machine 100 illustrated in FIG. 5 through FIG. 9, having suction extraction shoe 126 with relatively lower or recessed surface portion 194 formed on leading surface 188, and optional raised surface portion 192 formed on trailing

surface 190 as illustrated in FIG. 22 and FIG. 23. Here, rotational direction of rotary surface cleaning tool 124 is reversed, whereby rotary cleaning tool 124 operates in a clockwise direction (arrow 158a) in contrast to the counterclockwise direction 158 illustrated in FIG. 15. As illustrated here, optional relatively recessed portion 194 is positioned on leading surface 188 of suction extraction shoe 124, while relatively raised portion 192 is positioned on trailing surface 190 as a function of the reversed clockwise rotational direction (arrow 158a). Accordingly, the "washboard" scrubbing effect of the moveable target carpet 57 is accomplished by each suction extraction shoe 126 as a function of the combination therein of recessed portion 194 of leading surface 188 and raised portion 192 of trailing surface 190 in turn engaging the movable target carpet 57.

[0125] While the preferred and additional alternative embodiments of the invention have been illustrated and described, it will be appreciated that various changes can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Therefore, it will be appreciated that various changes can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the inventor makes the following claims.

[0126] 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.

[0127] The reference to any prior art in this specification is not and should not be taken as an acknowledgement or any form of suggestion that the prior art forms part of the common general knowledge.

Claims:

1. A rotary surface cleaning machine, comprising:
 - a rotary surface cleaning tool coupled for high speed rotary motion and further comprising a substantially circular operational surface;
 - a plurality of individual arrays of cleaning solution delivery spray nozzles being angularly distributed across the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool and being coupled in fluid communication with corresponding liquid cleaning fluid distribution channels of a cleaning fluid distribution manifold portion of the rotary surface cleaning tool, wherein each of the plurality of individual arrays of cleaning solution delivery spray nozzles further comprises at least one or more individual delivery spray nozzles that are radially oriented across a maximum annular portion of the substantially circular operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool between an inner radial limit and an outer radial limit;
 - a plurality of suction extraction shoes being angularly distributed across the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool and being projected therefrom alternately between the arrays of cleaning solution delivery spray nozzles, and each of the suction extraction shoes further comprising a fluid extraction passage communicating with a vacuum manifold; and means for generating a pumping action in branch passages of the vacuum manifold between suction extraction shoes and the vacuum plenum.

2. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 1, wherein means for generating a pumping action in branch passages of the vacuum manifold further comprises a means for generating a Coriolis effect in a suction or vacuum fluid extraction airstream received through the branch passages of the vacuum manifold into a central vacuum passage of a rotor hub member in fluid communication with the vacuum manifold.

3. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 1 or claim 2, wherein means for generating a pumping action in branch passages of the vacuum manifold further comprises a curved portion formed in the individual branch passages of the vacuum

manifold inwardly of the fluid extraction passage communicating with respective suction extraction shoes.

4. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 1 or claim 2 or claim 3, wherein means for generating a pumping action in branch passages of the vacuum manifold further comprises generating a centrifugal force by means of the high speed of the rotary; motion rotary surface cleaning tool in combination with a shape of the curved portion to accelerate extracted air and soiled liquid cleaning fluid rapidly inwardly away from the fluid extraction passage communicating with respective suction extraction shoes and toward a central expansion chamber of the vacuum manifold from which the branch passages radiate.

5. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 1, further comprising a target surface scrubbing means structured for causing oscillations of a moveable target surface to be cleaned alternately toward and away from the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool by alternate application of vacuum suction and compression thereof, the target surface scrubbing means further comprising a plurality of surfaces that are raised relative to the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool alternated with surfaces that are recessed relative to the raised surfaces.

6. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 1 or claim 5, wherein the rotary surface cleaning machine comprises the plurality of the individual array of cleaning solution delivery spray nozzles extending across a different fractional portion of the maximum annular portion of the operational surface, and further comprises at least one or more of the individual array of cleaning solution delivery spray nozzles extending across substantially the entire maximum annular portion of the operational surface.

7. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 6, wherein individual ones of the arrays of spray nozzles extending across a different fractional portion of the annular portion of the operational surface are further positioned in a substantially

spiral pattern across the annular portion of the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool from the inner radial limit of the annular portion and receding therefrom toward the outer radial limit thereof.

8. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 1 or claim 5, wherein the operational surface of each suction extraction shoe further comprises a plurality of suction relief grooves formed thereacross and oriented substantially crosswise of the fluid extraction passage thereof.

9. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 8, wherein the plurality of suction relief grooves are further formed across a functional leading surface portion of each suction extraction shoe.

10. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 1 or claim 5, wherein the plurality of surfaces of the target surface scrubbing means that are raised relative to the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool and the surfaces that are recessed relative to the raised surfaces and alternated therewith each further comprises a surface that is oriented substantially radially of the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool.

11. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 10, wherein the plurality of surfaces raised relative to the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool each further comprises a relatively raised surface portion of each suction extraction shoe, and the surfaces that are recessed relative to the raised surfaces each further comprises a relatively lower surface portion thereof wherein the relatively raised surface portion of each suction extraction shoe projects further from the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool than the relatively lower surface portion thereof

12. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 11, wherein at least the relatively raised surface portion of each suction extraction shoe further comprises a plurality of suction relief grooves formed thereacross and oriented substantially

along a direction of the rotary motion of the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool.

13. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 12, wherein each suction extraction shoe is further coupled to the rotary surface cleaning tool in an independently movable manner for moving both inwardly and outwardly relative to the operational surface thereof, and further comprising biasing means for biasing each suction extraction shoe outwardly relative to the operational surface of the rotary surface cleaning tool.

14. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 13, wherein the rotary surface cleaning machine further comprises the vacuum plenum communicating with the rotary surface cleaning tool and further comprising the removable vacuum inlet cap assembly.

15. The rotary surface cleaning machine of claim 12, further comprising a housing coupled to the rotary surface cleaning tool, the housing further comprising a substantially resiliently pliable skirt portion at least partially surrounding the rotary surface cleaning tool and forming therewith a slot at least partially surrounding the rotary surface cleaning tool, wherein the slot is in communication with the vacuum plenum.

16. A rotary surface cleaning machine, according to any one of the preceding claims, substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to Figures 5 to 24 of the accompanying representations.

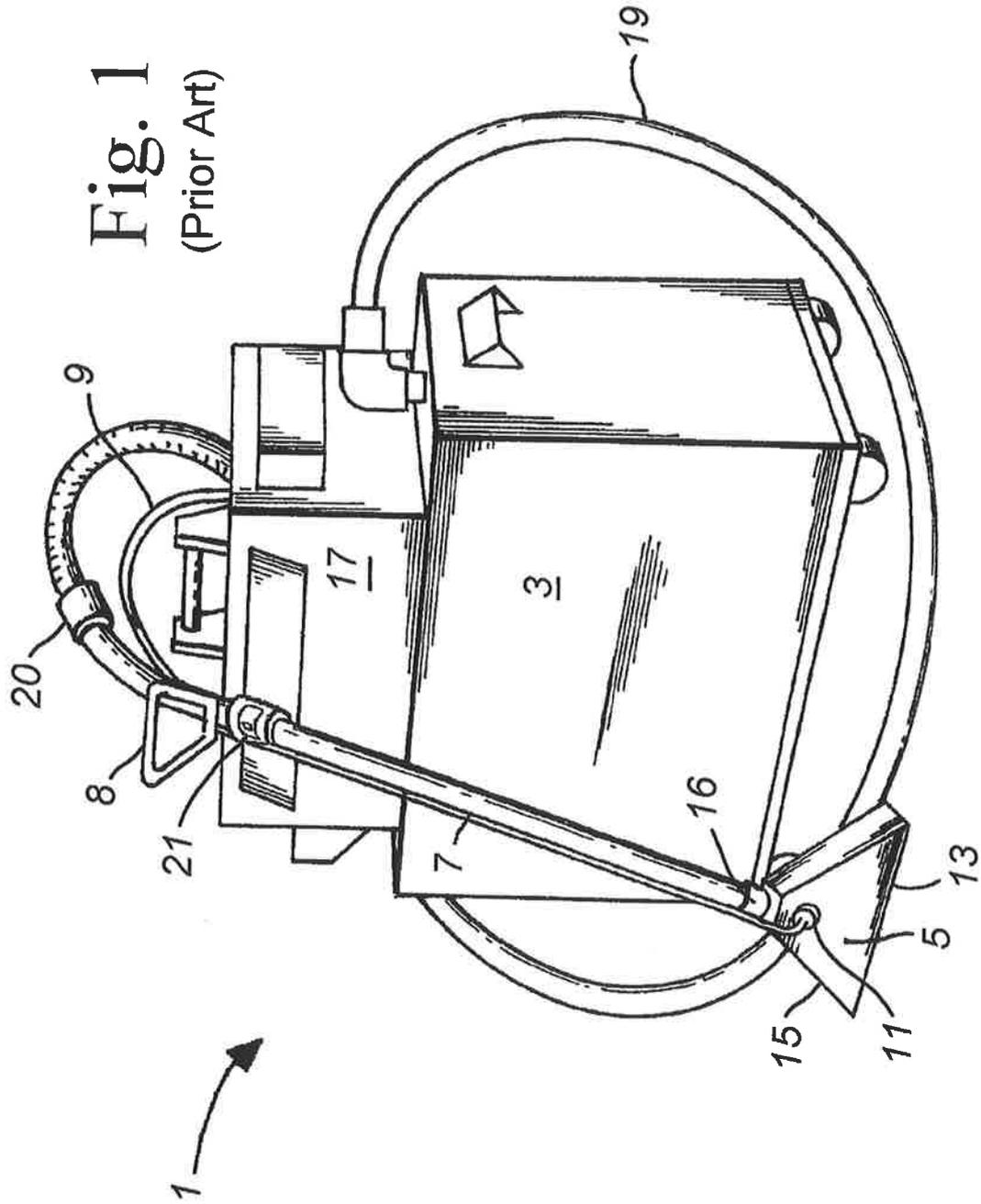


Fig. 2
(Prior Art)

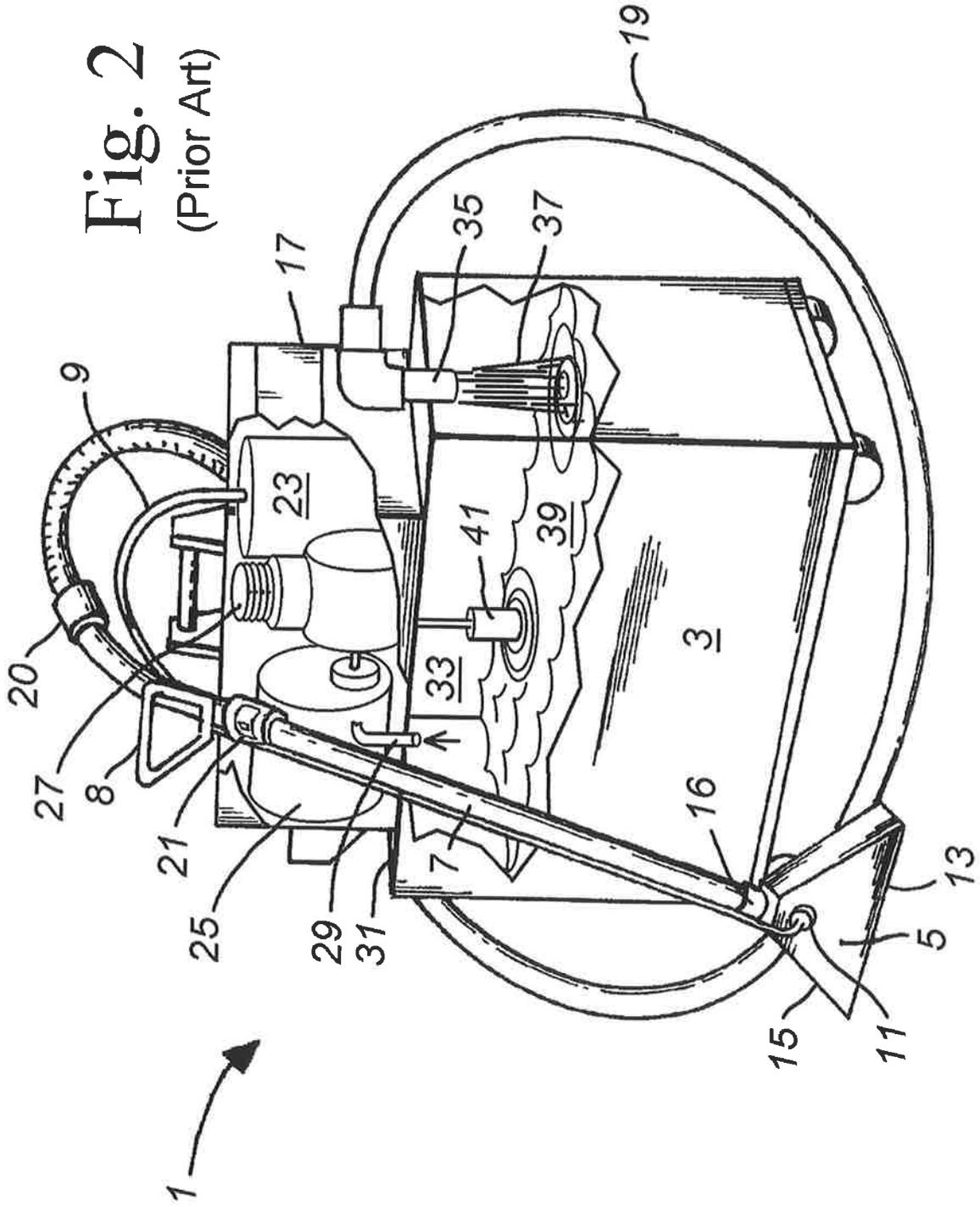


Fig. 5

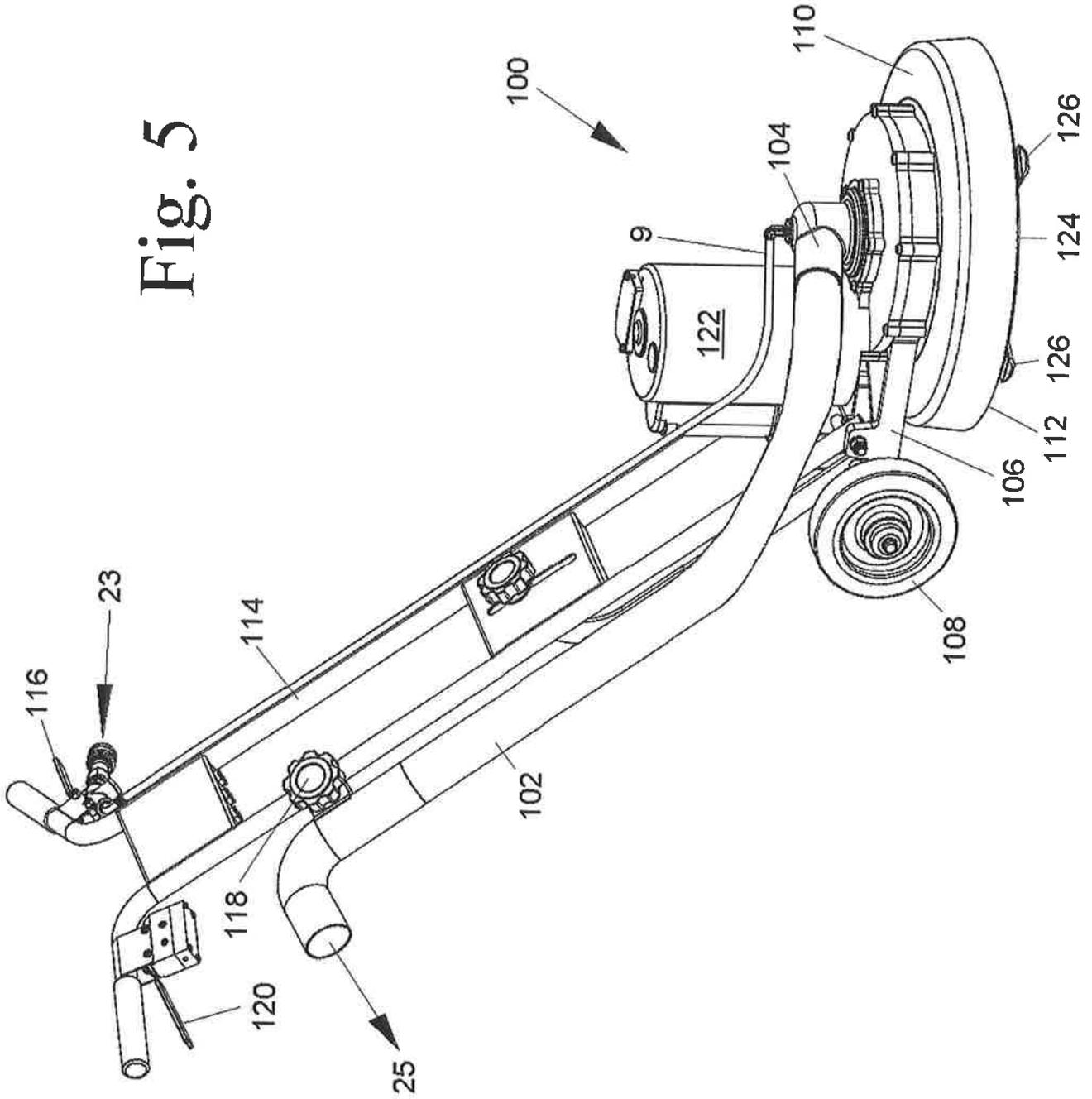
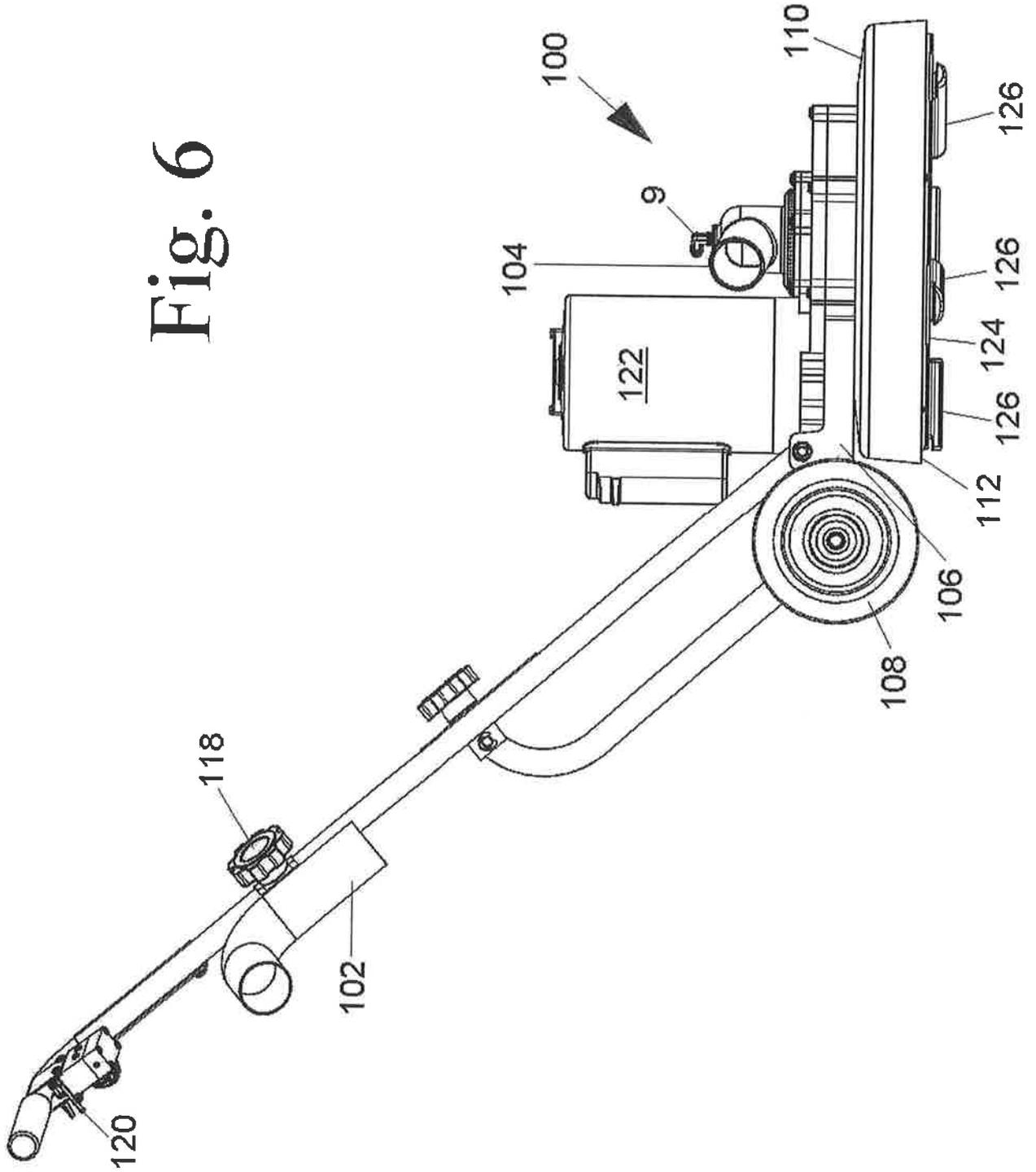


Fig. 6



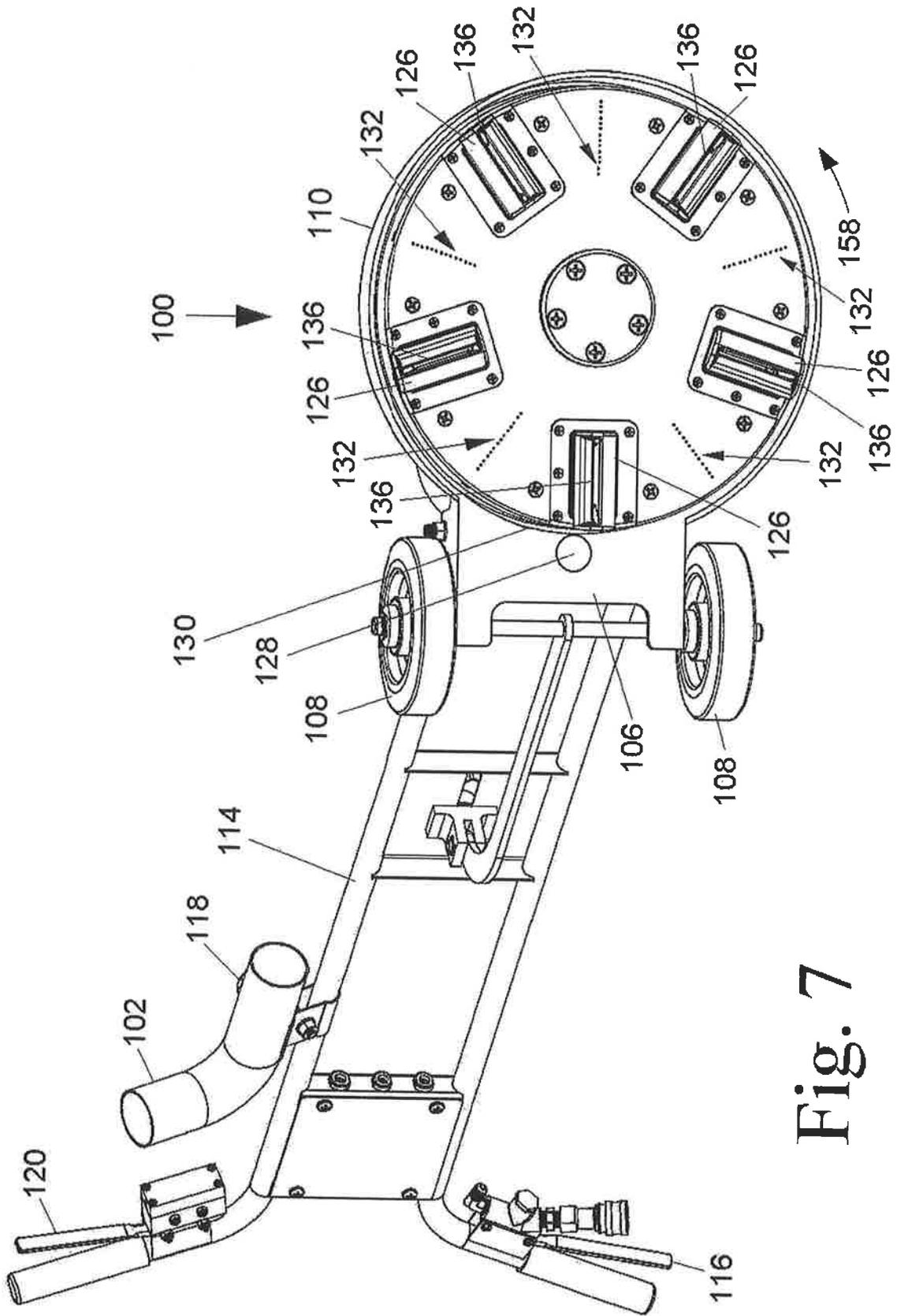


Fig. 7

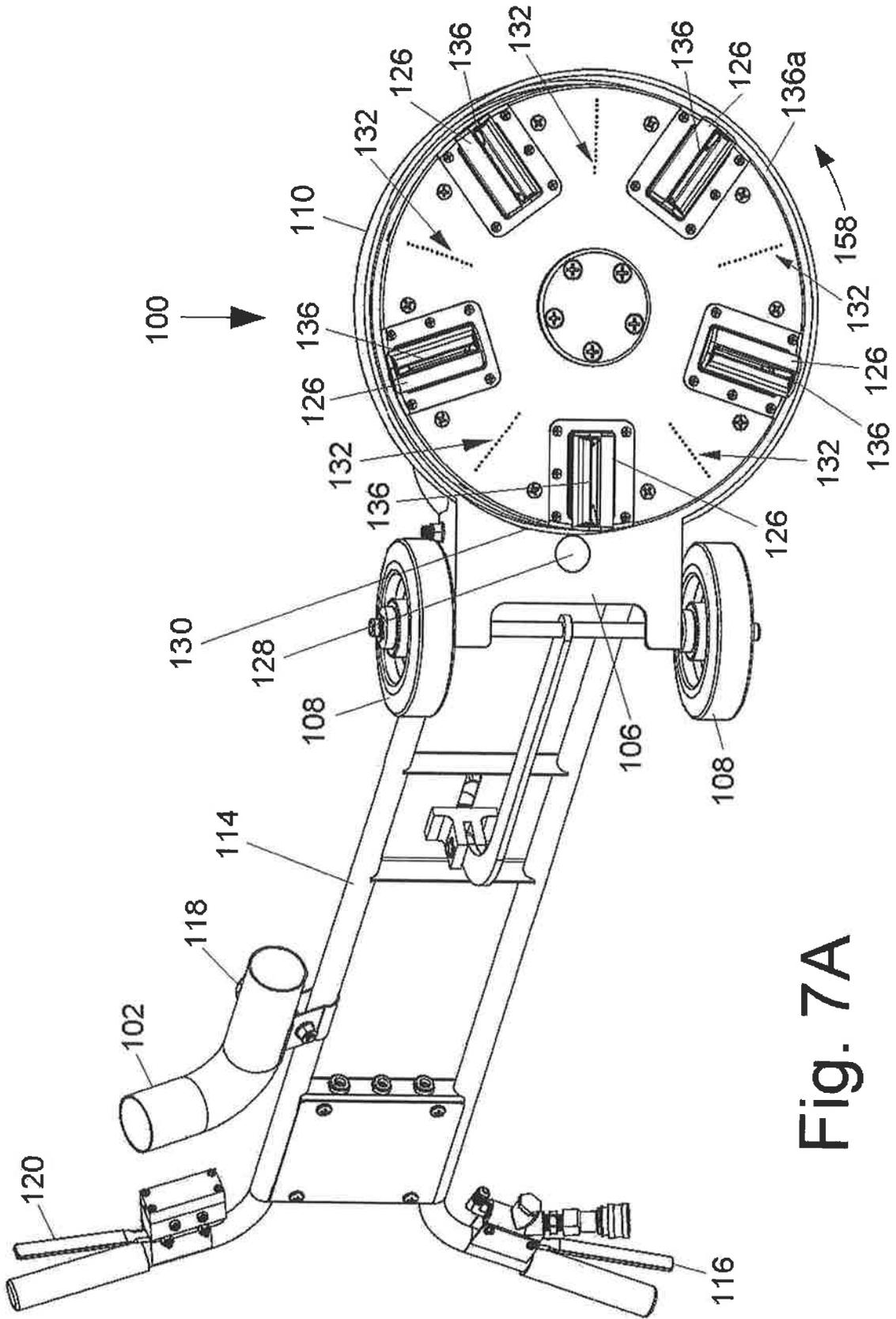


Fig. 7A

Fig. 8

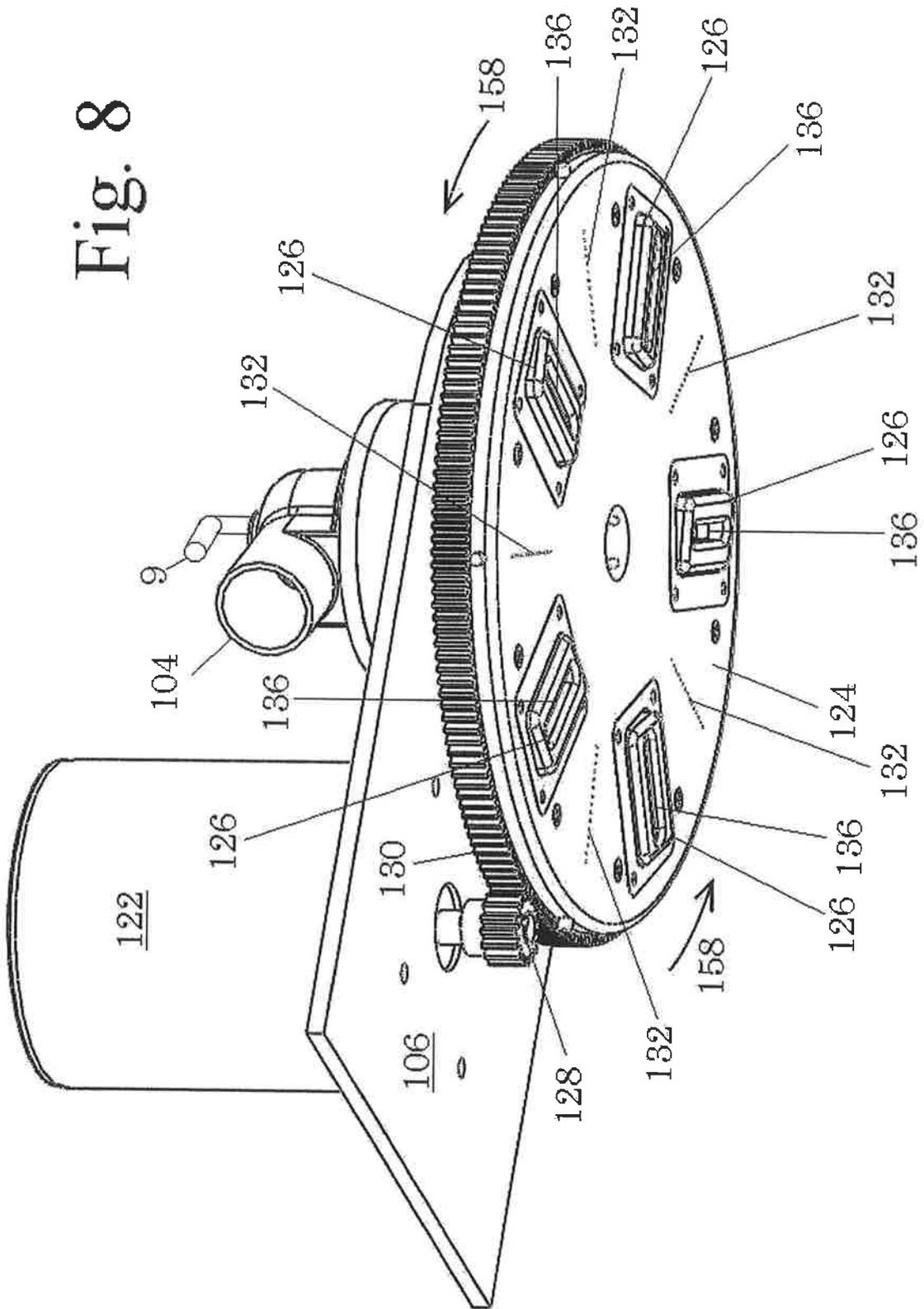
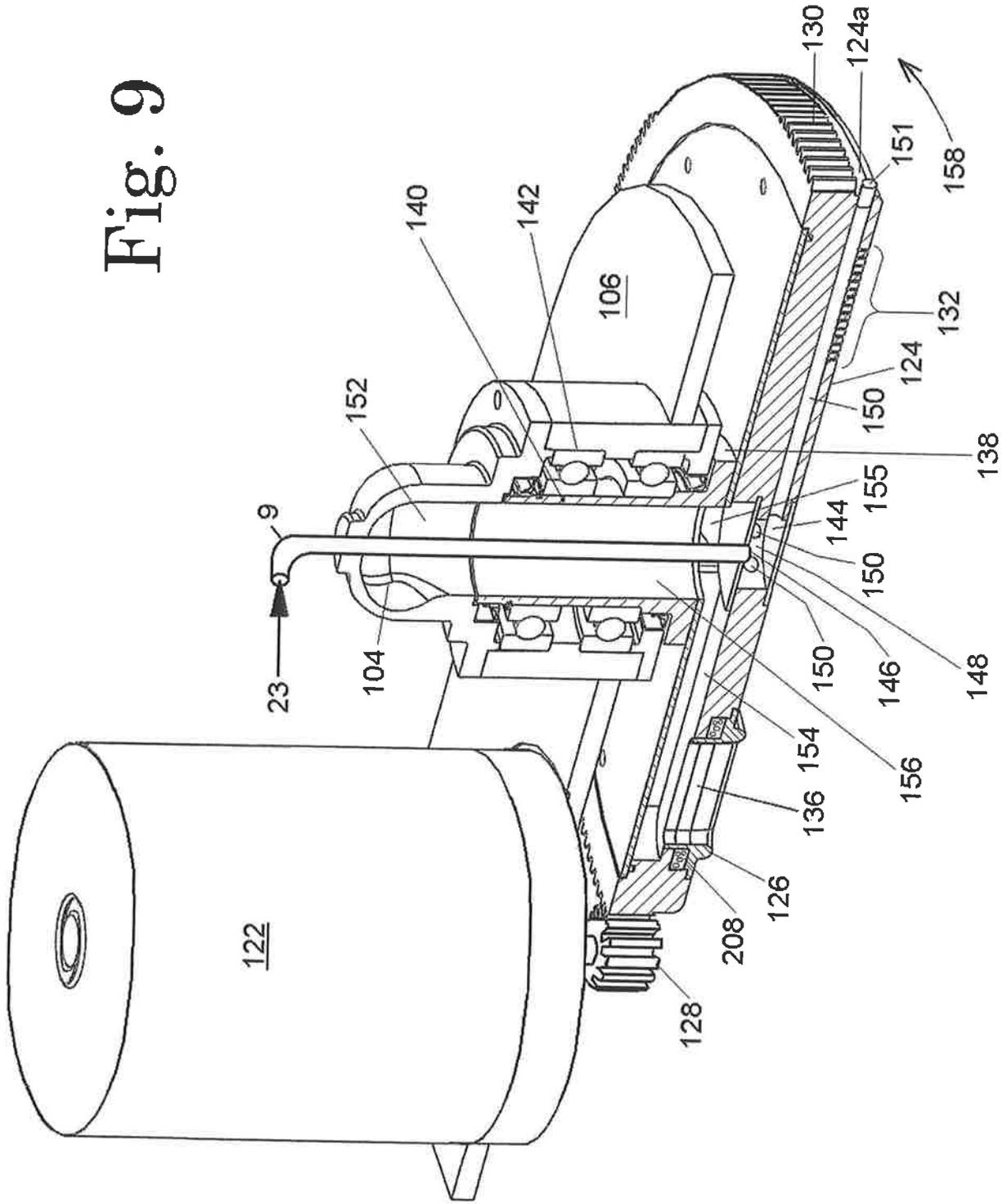


Fig. 9



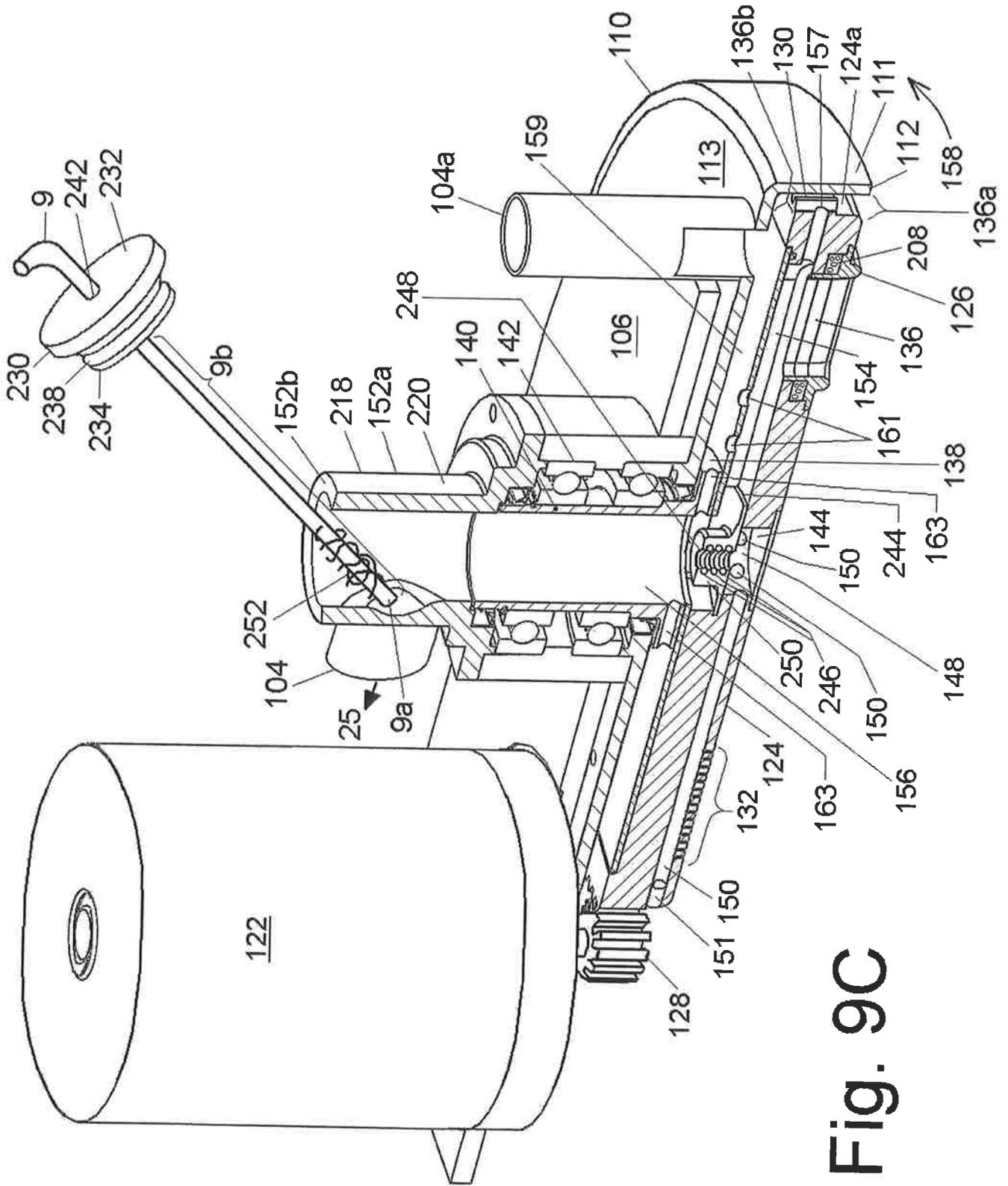


Fig. 9C

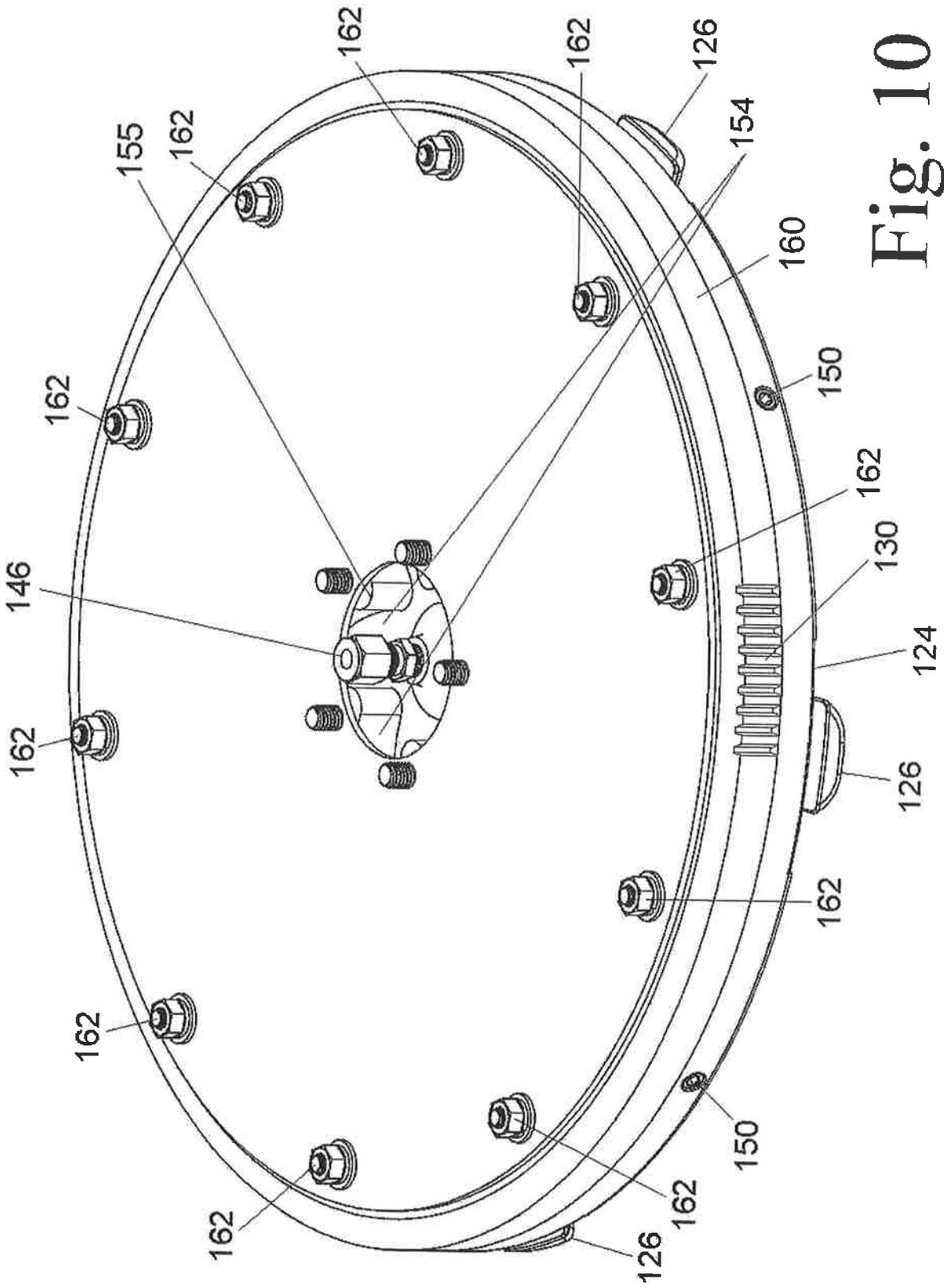


Fig. 10

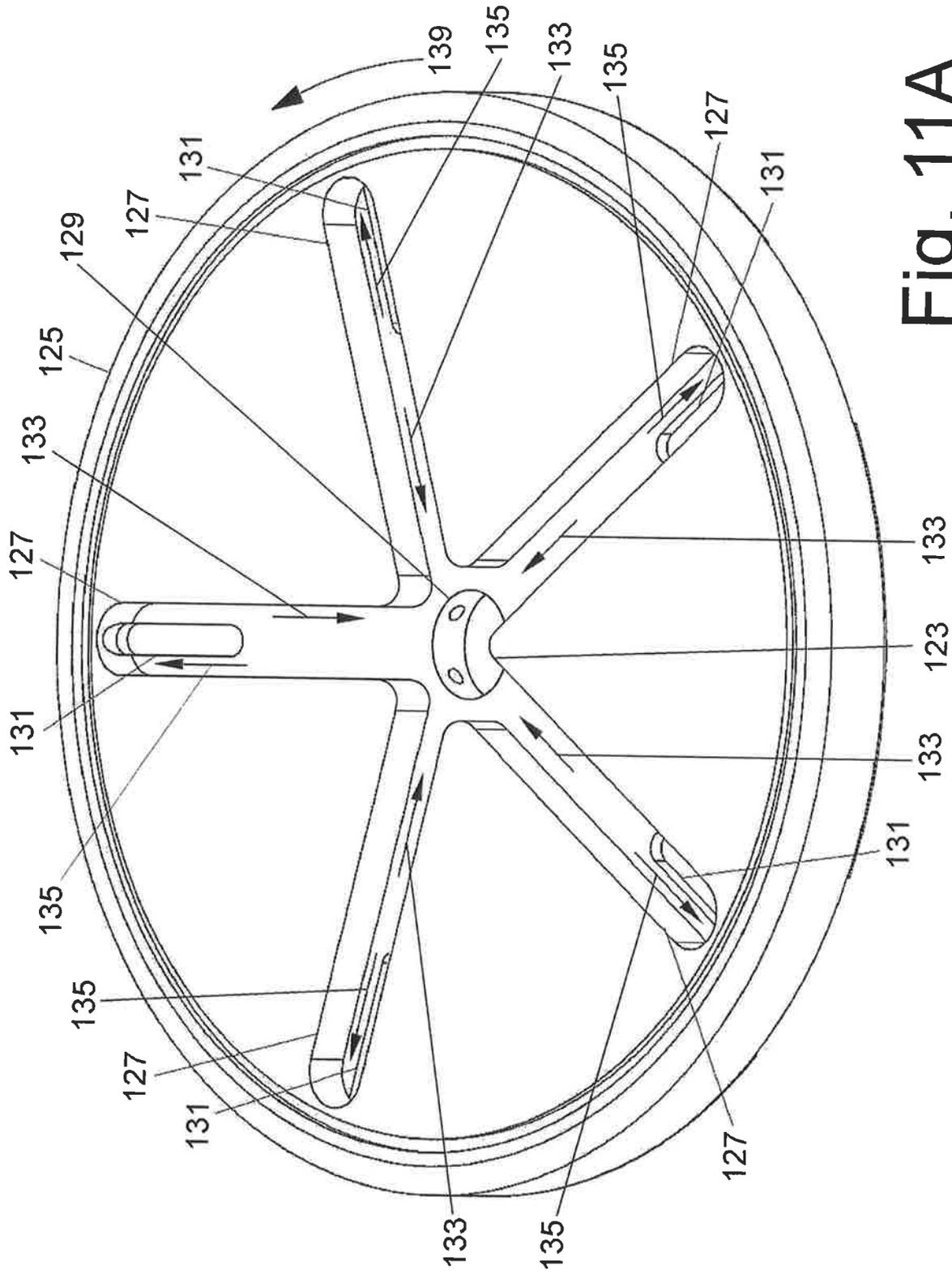


Fig. 11A

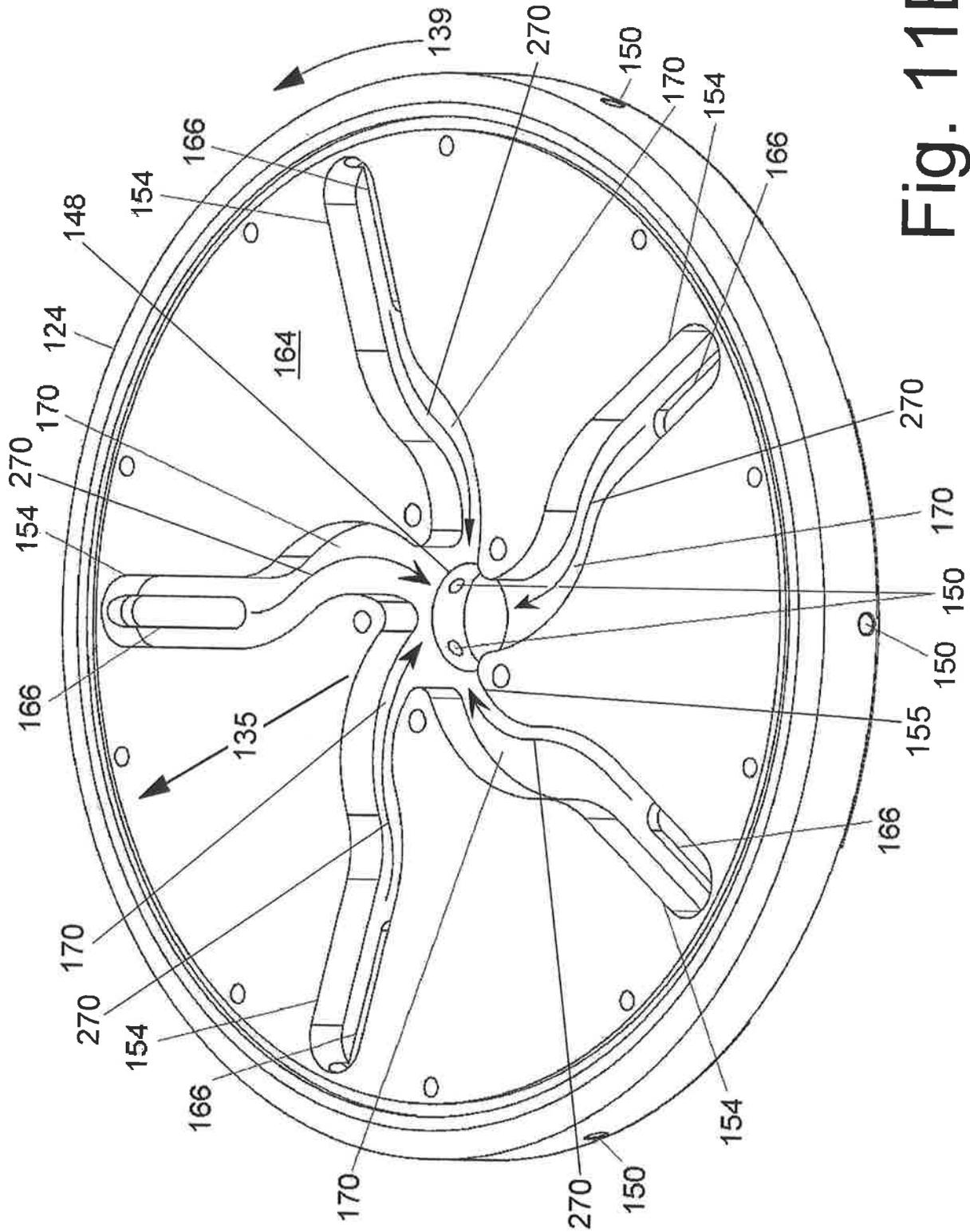


Fig. 11B

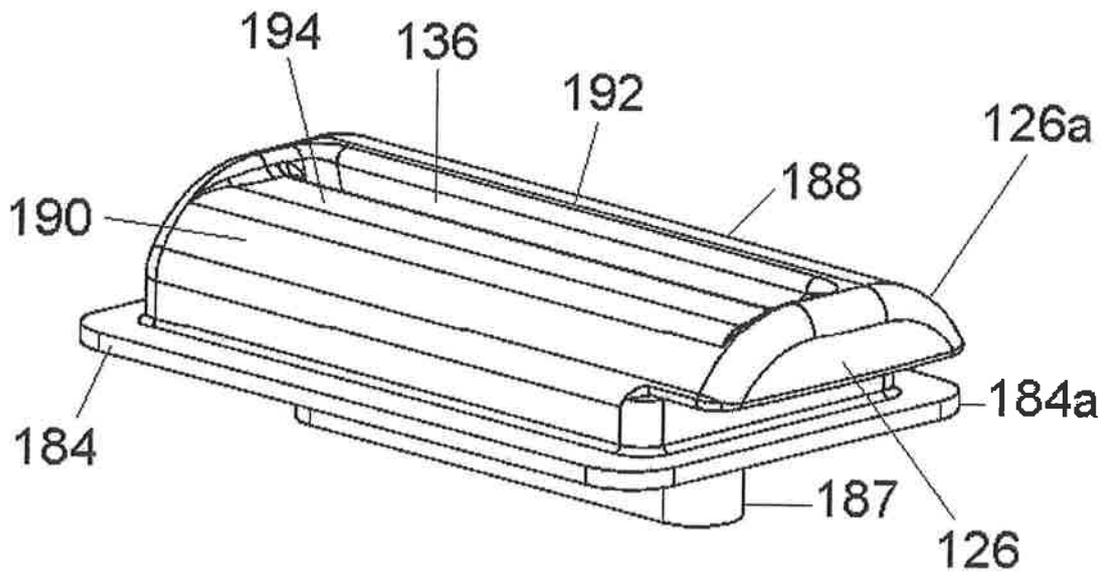


Fig. 13

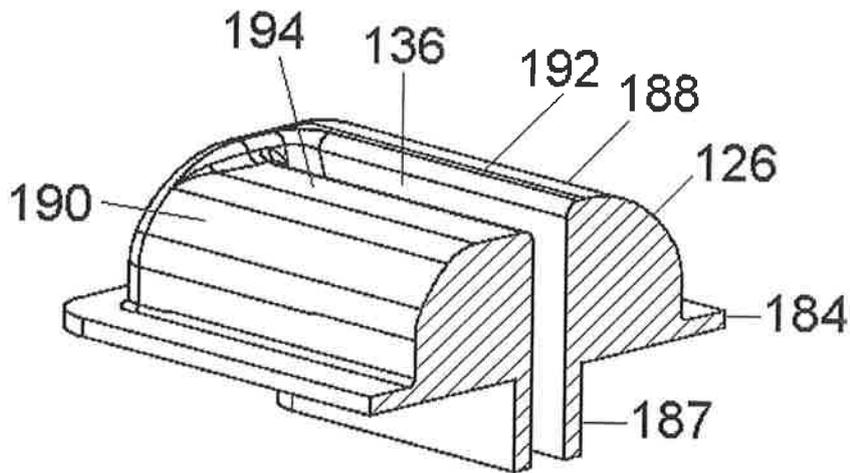


Fig. 14

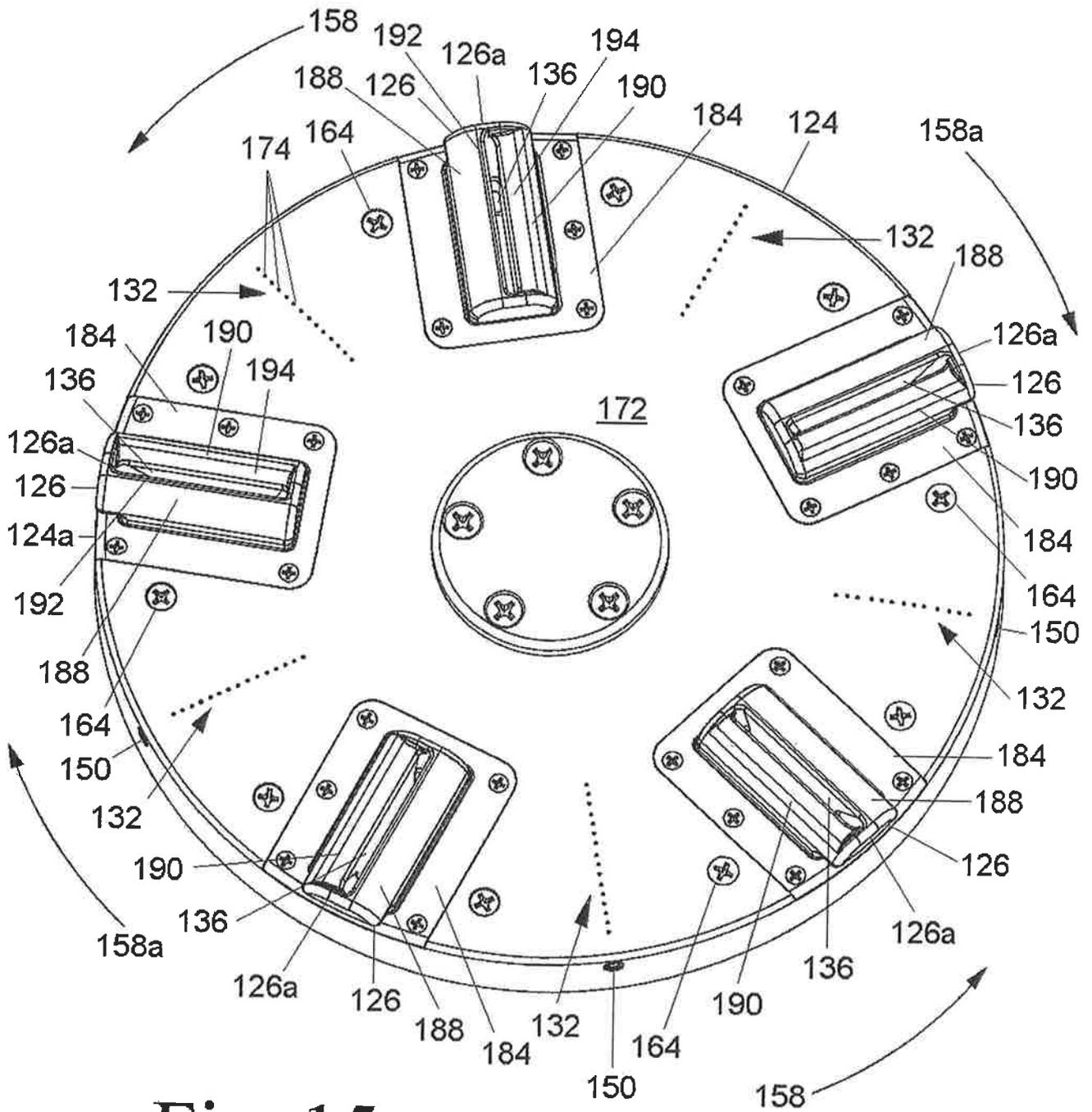


Fig. 15

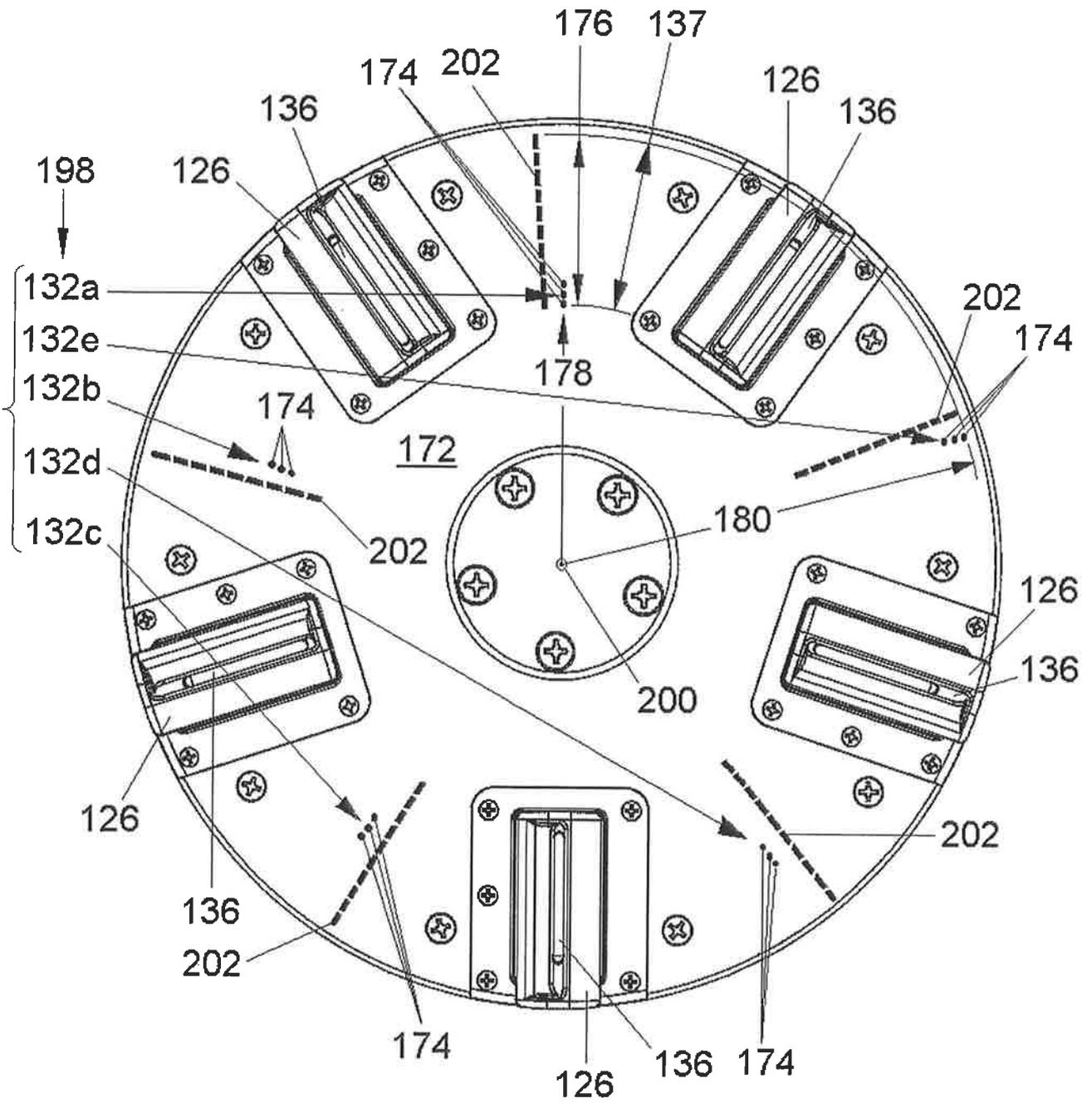


Fig. 16

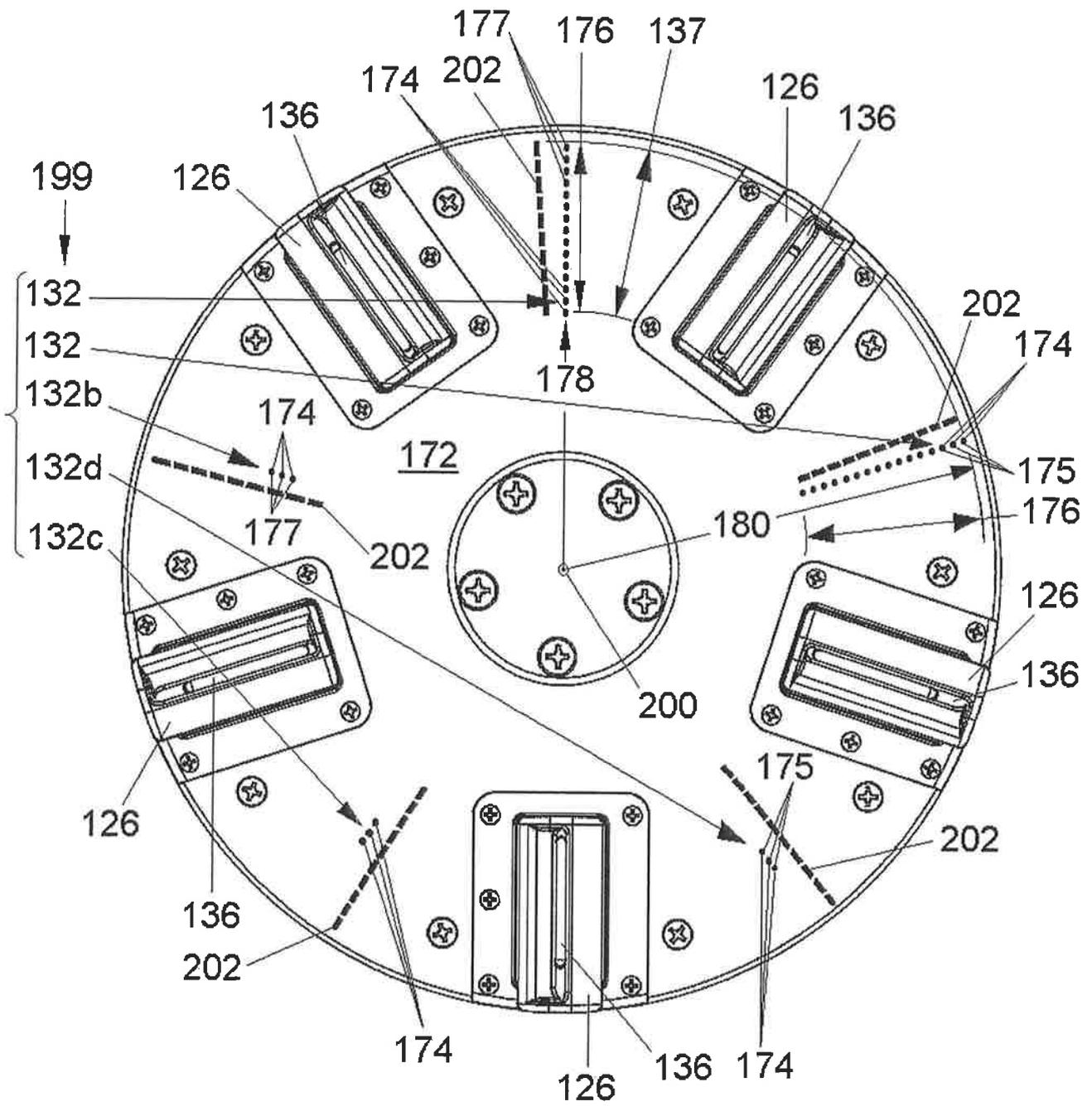


Fig. 16A

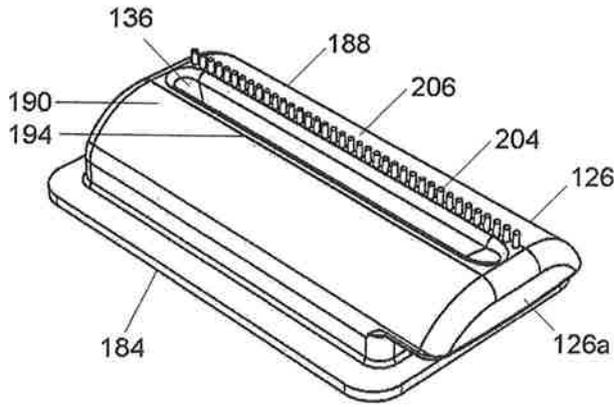


Fig. 17

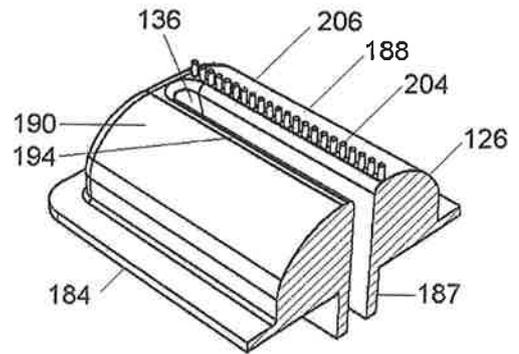


Fig. 18

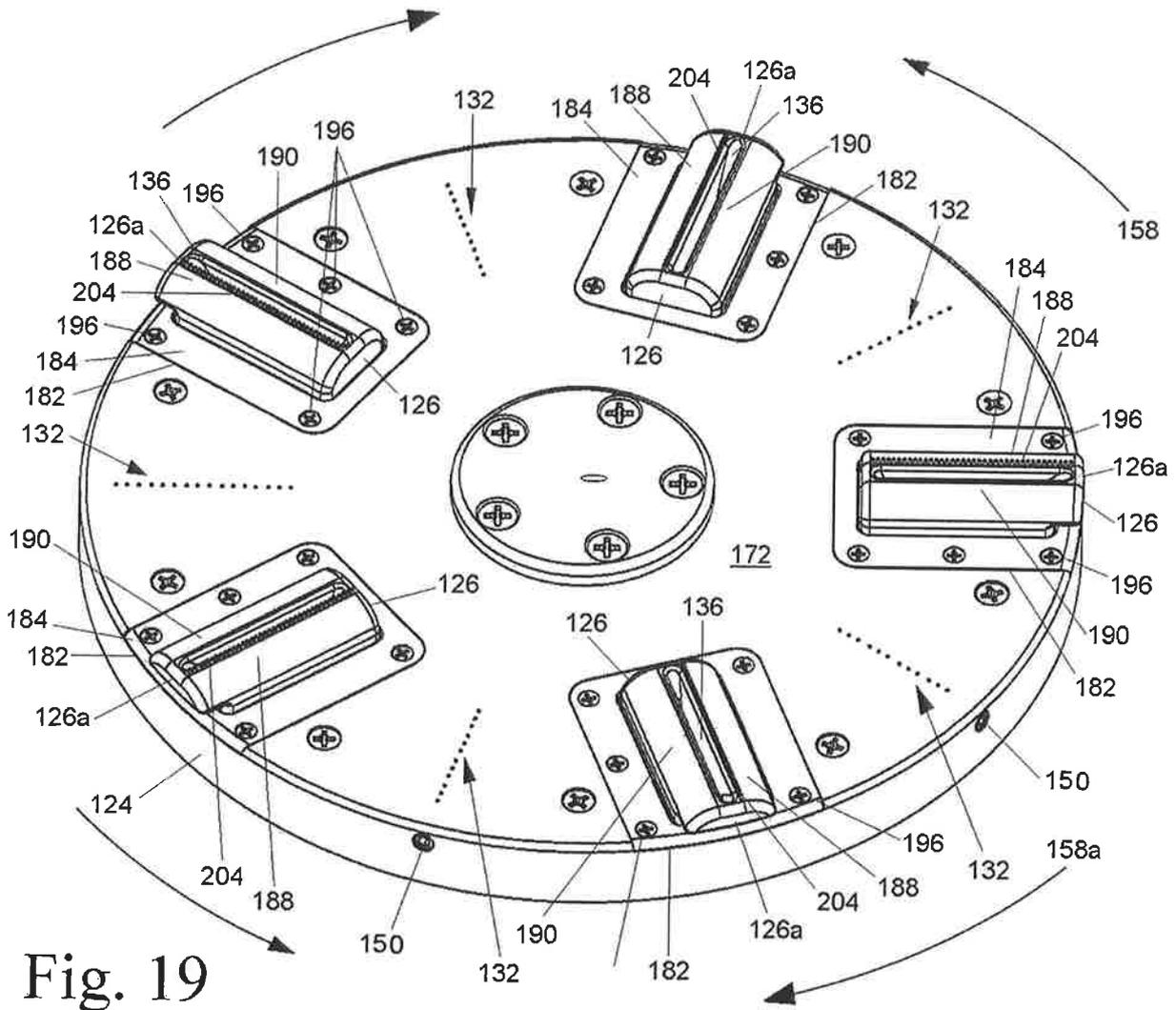


Fig. 19

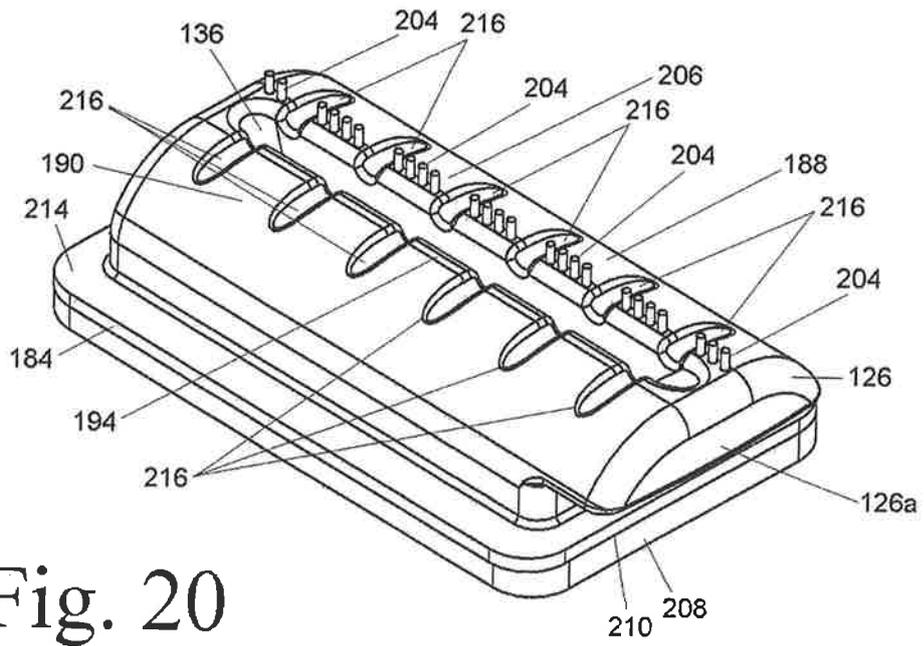


Fig. 20

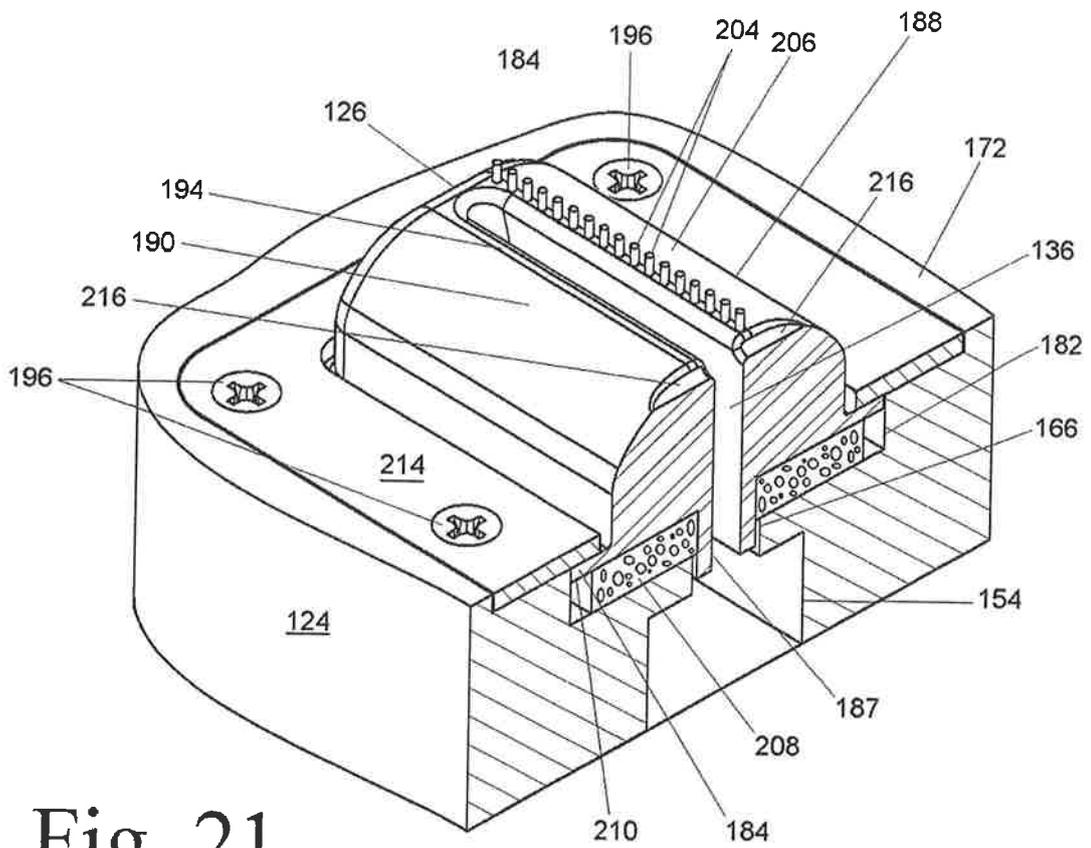


Fig. 21

