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(54) Title: FIBER OPTIC CABLE BREAKOUT CONFIGURATION WITH RETENTION BLOCK

(57) Abstract: The present disclosure relates to a telecommunications cable including a distribution cable and a tether that branches from the distribution cable at a mid-span breakout location. A flexible closure covers the mid-span breakout location. Within the closure, fibers are broken out from the distribution cable and spliced to fibers of the tether. The lengths of broken out fibers within the flexible closure are provided with sufficient excess fiber length to allow the closure to be readily bent/flexed in any direction without damaging the fibers.



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FIBER OPTIC CABLE BREAKOUT CONFIGURATION
WITH RETENTION BLOCK

Technical Field

The principles disclosed herein relate to fiber optic cable systems. More particularly, the present disclosure relates to fiber optic cable systems having main cables and branch cables.

Background

Passive optical networks are becoming prevalent in part because service providers want to deliver high bandwidth communication capabilities to customers. Passive optical networks are a desirable choice for delivering high-speed communication data because they may not employ active electronic devices, such as amplifiers and repeaters, between a central office and a subscriber termination. The absence of active electronic devices may decrease network complexity and/or cost and may increase network reliability.

Figure 1 illustrates a network 100 deploying passive fiber optic lines. As shown in figure 1, the network 100 may include a central office 110 that connects a number of end subscribers 115 (also called end users 115 herein) in a network. The central office 110 may additionally connect to a larger network such as the Internet (not shown) and a public switched telephone network (PSTN). The network 100 may also include fiber distribution hubs (FDHs) 130 having one or more optical splitters (e.g., 1-to-8 splitters, 1-to-16 splitters, or 1-to-32 splitters) that generate a number of individual fibers that may lead to the premises of an end user 115. The various lines of the network can be aerial or housed within underground conduits (e.g., see conduit 105).

The portion of network 100 that is closest to central office 110 is generally referred to as the F1 region, where F1 is the "feeder fiber" from the central office. The F1 portion of the network may include a distribution cable having on the order of 12 to 48 fibers; however, alternative implementations may include fewer or more fibers. The portion of network 100 that includes an FDH 130 and a number of end users 115 may be referred to as an F2 portion of network 100. Splitters used in an FDH 130 may accept a feeder cable having a number of fibers and may split those

incoming fibers into, for example, 216 to 432 individual distribution fibers that may be associated with a like number of end user locations.

Referring to Figure 1, the network 100 includes a plurality of breakout locations 125 at which branch cables (e.g., drop cables, stub cables, etc.) are separated out from main cables (e.g., distribution cables). Breakout locations can also be referred to as tap locations or branch locations and branch cables can also be referred to as breakout cables. At a breakout location, fibers of the branch cables are typically spliced to selected fibers of the main cable. However, for certain applications, the interface between the fibers of the main cable and the fibers of the branch cables can be connectorized.

Stub cables are typically branch cables that are routed from breakout locations to intermediate access locations such as a pedestals, drop terminals or hubs. Intermediate access locations can provide connector interfaces located between breakout locations and subscriber locations. A drop cable is a cable that typically forms the last leg to a subscriber location. For example, drop cables are routed from intermediate access locations to subscriber locations. Drop cables can also be routed directly from breakout locations to subscriber locations hereby bypassing any intermediate access locations

Branch cables can manually be separated out from a main cable in the field using field splices. Field splices are typically housed within sealed splice enclosures. Manual splicing in the field is time consuming and expensive.

As an alternative to manual splicing in the field, pre-terminated cable systems have been developed. Pre-terminated cable systems include factory integrated breakout locations manufactured at predetermined positions along the length of a main cable (e.g., see U.S. Patent Nos. 4,961,623; 5,125,060; and 5,210,812). However, the installation of pre-terminated cables can be difficult. For example, for underground applications, pre-terminations can complicate passing pre-terminated cable through the underground conduit typically used to hold fiber optic cable (e.g., 1.25 inch inner diameter conduit). Similarly, for aerial applications, pre-terminations can complicate passing pre-terminated cable through aerial cable retention loops.

Summary

Certain aspects of the disclosure relate to mid-span breakout configurations for pre-terminated fiber optic distribution cables.

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

10

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 shows a prior art passive fiber optic network;

Figure 2 is a cross sectional view of an example distribution cable;

15 Figure 3 is a side view of a mid-span breakout location having features that are examples of inventive aspects in accordance with the principles of the present disclosure;

Figure 4 is a left end view of the mid-span breakout location of Figure 3;

Figure 5 is a right end view of the mid-span breakout location of Figure 3;

Figure 6 is a side view of the mid-span breakout location of Figure 3 with the overmold removed;

20 Figure 7 is a side view of the mid-span breakout location of Figure 3 with the overmold and protective sleeve removed;

Figure 7A is a cross sectional view taken along section line 7A-7A of Figure 7;

25 Figure 7B is a cross sectional view taken along section line 7B-7B of Figure 7;

Figure 8 is a cross sectional view of the tether taken along section line 8-8 of Figure 7;

Figure 9 is a perspective view of a base of a retention block used at the mid-span breakout location of Figure 3;

30 Figure 10 is a front side view of the base of Figure 9;

Figure 11 is a top view of the base of Figure 9;

Figure 12 is a bottom view of the base of Figure 9;

- Figure 13 is a left end view of the base of Figure 9;
Figure 14 is a right end view of the base of Figure 9;
Figure 15 is a perspective view of a cover adapted to mount to the base of Figure 9;
- 5 Figure 16 is a top view of the cover of Figure 15;
 Figure 17 is a front side view of the cover of Figure 15;
 Figure 18 is an underside view of the cover of Figure 15;
 Figure 19 is a right end view of the cover of Figure 15;
 Figure 20 is a perspective view of a splice stiffener used at the mid-span
10 breakout location of Figure 3;
 Figure 21 is a front side view of the splice stiffener of Figure 20;
 Figure 22 is a top view of the splice stiffener of Figure 20;
 Figure 23 is a bottom view of the splice stiffener of Figure 20;
 Figure 24 is a right end view of the splice stiffener of Figure 20;
- 15 Figure 25 is a cross sectional view taken along section line 25-25 of Figure 22;
 Figure 26 is a cross sectional view taken along section line 26-26 of Figure 21, the splice stiffener is shown mounted on a distribution cable;
 Figure 27 is a perspective view of a stiffener used at the mid-span breakout
20 location of Figure 3;
 Figure 28 is a front side view of the stiffener of Figure 27;
 Figure 29 is a cross sectional view taken along section line 29-29 of Figure 28;
- 25 Figure 30 is a cross sectional view taken along section line 30-30 of Figure 28;
 Figure 31 is a perspective view of a protective sleeve used at the mid-span breakout location of Figure 3;
 Figure 32 is a front side view of the protective sleeve of Figure 31;
 Figure 33 is a right end view of the protective sleeve of Figure 31;
- 30 Figure 34 is a left end view of the protective sleeve of Figure 31;
 Figure 35 is a top view of the protective sleeve of Figure 31;
 Figure 36 is a cross sectional view taken along section line 36-36 of Figure 32;

Figure 37 is a cross sectional view taken along section line 37-37 of Figure 32;

Figure 38 is a perspective view of a retention clip used to retain the protective sleeve of Figure 31 at the mid-span breakout location of Figure 3;

5 Figure 39 is a front side view of the retention clip of Figure 38;

Figure 40 is a top view of the retention clip of Figure 38;

Figure 41 is a bottom view of the retention clip of Figure 38;

Figure 42 is a right end view of the retention clip of Figure 38;

10 Figure 43 is a side view of an overmold used at the mid-span breakout location of Figure 3;

Figure 44 is a top view of the overmold of Figure 43;

Figure 45 is a bottom view of the overmold of Figure 43;

Figure 46 is a left end view of the overmold of Figure 43;

15 Figures 47 and 48 are schematic views showing a method for providing excess fiber length at the mid-span breakout location of Figure 3;

Figure 49 is a schematic view showing a distribution cable bent along a 90 degree curve at a maximum bend radius;

Figure 50 shows a first preparation step for a tether used at the mid-span breakout location of Figure 3;

20 Figure 51 shows a subsequent preparation step of the tether of Figure 50; and

Figure 52 shows an initial preparation of the distribution cable at the mid-span breakout location;

Figure 53 is a perspective view of an example mid-span breakout assembly;

Figure 54 is a perspective view of an example retention block;

25 Figure 55 is a perspective view of a base of the retention block of Figure 54;

Figure 56 is a top view of the base of Figure 55;

Figure 57 is a bottom perspective view of the base of Figure 55;

Figure 58 is a side view of the base of Figure 55;

Figure 59 is a transverse cross-sectional view of the base of Figure 55;

30 Figure 60 is a front view of the base of Figure 55;

Figure 61 is a top perspective view of a cover of the retention block of Figure 54;

Figure 62 is a bottom perspective view of the cover of Figure 61;

- Figure 63 is a side view of the cover of Figure 61;
Figure 64 is a top view of the cover of Figure 61;
Figure 65 is a transverse cross-sectional view of the cover of Figure 61;
Figure 66 is a front view of the cover of Figure 61;
5 Figure 67 is a top view of the cover of Figure 61 showing preparation of a tether cable at an example mid-span breakout location;
Figure 68 is a front perspective view of an example separation block;
Figure 69 is a front perspective view of an example first section of the separation block of Figure 68;
10 Figure 70 is a rear perspective view of the first section of Figure 69;
Figure 71 is a side view of the first section of Figure 69;
Figure 72 is a top view of the first section of Figure 69;
Figure 73 is a rear view of the first section of Figure 69;
Figure 74 is a rear perspective view of an example second section of the separation block of Figure 68;
15 Figure 75 is a front perspective view of the second section of Figure 74;
Figure 76 is a side view of the second section of Figure 74;
Figure 77 is a top view of the second section of Figure 74;
Figure 78 is a cross-sectional view of the first section of Figure 74; and
20 Figure 79 is a side view of the second section of Figure 74 showing preparation of a distribution cable at an example mid-span breakout location.

Detailed Description

The present disclosure relates to mid-span breakout arrangements provided on distribution cables. A typical distribution cable includes a relatively
25 large number of fibers (e.g., 72, 144 or more fibers). The fibers are typically segregated into separate groups with each group contained within a separate buffer tube. The fibers within each buffer tube can include either ribbon fibers or loose fibers.

For example, Figure 2 shows an example distribution cable 220
30 including six separate buffer tubes 222 each containing twelve fibers 224. The buffer tubes 222 may be gel filled. The distribution cable 220 also includes a central strength member 226 for reinforcing the cable 220, and an outer strength member

228 such as Kevlar for also reinforcing the cable. The distribution cable 220 further includes an outer jacket 230 that encloses the buffer tubes 222. Ripcords 232 can be provided for facilitating tearing away portions of the jacket 230 to access the fibers 224 within the jacket 230.

5 While distribution cables typically have a large number of fibers, the various aspects of the present disclosure are also applicable to distribution cables having fewer numbers of fibers (e.g., 2 or more fibers). For example, the distribution cable can include an outer jacket enclosing a single buffer tube and at least two strength members extending on opposite sides of the single buffer tube.

10 An outer strength member such as Kevlar can surround the single buffer tube within the jacket. The single buffer tube can enclose loose fibers or ribbon fibers.

 A typical mid-span breakout location is provided at an intermediate point along the length of a distribution cable. Commonly a tether (e.g., a drop cable or a stub cable) branches out from the distribution cable at the breakout location.

15 The tether most commonly has a fewer number of fibers as compared to the number of fibers provided within the distribution cable. In an example embodiment, the tether has no more than twelve fibers. The tether includes fibers that extend between first and second ends. The first ends of the tether fibers are preferably spliced to selected fibers of the distribution cable at the breakout location. The second ends of

20 the tether fibers can either be connectorized or unconnectorized.

 Figures 3-7 illustrate a mid-span breakout assembly 240 having features that are examples of inventive aspects in accordance with the principles of the present disclosure. The breakout assembly is positioned at a mid-span breakout location 241. As shown at Figure 3, 6 and 7, a tether 242 branches outwardly from a

25 main distribution cable 220 at the mid-span breakout location 241. The breakout location 241 is shown including a splice location 244 where selected fibers 224_{dc} of the main distribution cable 220 (e.g., typically less than twelve fibers) are spliced to corresponding fibers 224_t of the tether 242. The breakout assembly includes a splice sleeve 246 positioned over the splices, and a splice stiffener 248 for holding the

30 splice sleeve 246. The breakout assembly 240 also includes stiffeners 250₁, 250₂ between which the splice stiffener 248 is positioned. The fibers 224_{dc} from the distribution cable 220 pass through the stiffener 250₁ to reach the splice location 244. The fibers 224_t from the tether 242 pass through the stiffener 250₂ to reach the

splice location 244. The breakout assembly 240 further includes a protective sleeve 252 (e.g., a shell) that covers the breakout location 241. The stiffeners 250₁, 250₂ and the splice stiffener 248 are all enclosed within the sleeve 252. A first end 254 of the sleeve 252 forms a tapered nose, and a second end 256 of the sleeve 252 overlaps a retention block 258 through which the fibers 224_i of the tether 242 pass. Retention clips 243 are used to secure the protective sleeve 252 to the distribution cable 220. The breakout assembly 240 also includes an over-mold 260 that encloses and seals the protective sleeve 252, the clips 243 and the retention block 258. In certain embodiments, a wrap of heat resistant tape 263 can provide an intermediate layer between the protective sleeve 252 and the over-mold 260.

Referring to Figure 8, the tether 242 joined to the distribution cable 220 at the breakout location 241 is depicted as having a flat cable configuration. The flat cable configuration includes a central buffer tube 262 containing a plurality of fibers 224_i (e.g., typically one to twelve loose or ribbonized fibers). Strength members 264 (e.g., flexible rods formed by glass fiber reinforced epoxy) are positioned on opposite sides of the central buffer tube 262. An outer jacket 266 surrounds the strength members 264 and the buffer tube 262. The outer jacket 266 includes an outer perimeter having an elongated transverse cross-sectional shape. An additional strength layer 265 (e.g., Kevlar) can be positioned between the buffer tube 262 and the outer jacket 266. As shown at Figure 8, the transverse cross-sectional shape includes oppositely positioned, generally parallel sides 268 interconnected by rounded ends 270.

When the tether 242 is secured to the distribution cable 220, the tether 242 should preferably be able to withstand a pullout force of at least 100 pounds. To meet this pullout force requirement, the retention block 258 is used to strengthen the mechanical interface between the tether 242 and the distribution cable 220. As shown at Figure 7, the retention block 258 includes a base 280 and a cover 282 between which the tether 242 extends. In one embodiment, the retention block 258 has a plastic construction.

Referring to Figures 9-14, the base 280 of the retention block 258 includes a first end 284 positioned opposite from a second end 286. The base 280 is elongated along a length A that extends between the first and second ends 284, 286. The base also includes a first side 288 adapted to engage the outer surface of the

distribution cable jacket, and a second side 290 adapted to engage the tether 242. The first side 288 has a channel 292 that extends along the length L of the base 280. The channel 292 has a transverse cross-sectional shape that is curved to match the outer diameter of the distribution cable jacket 230. Thus, when the retention block 258 is mounted to the distribution cable 220, the distribution cable 220 nests within the channel 292 as shown at Figures 7A and 7B. The second side 290 of the base 280 includes a retention sleeve 294 defining an elongate opening 296 having a transverse cross-sectional shape that matches the transverse cross-sectional shape of the outer perimeter of the tether cable jacket 266. When the tether 242 is secured to the retention block 258, a jacketed portion of the tether 242 fits within the sleeve 294 (see Figure 7A). When the base is mounted on the distribution cable 220, the opening 296 is elongated in a direction generally perpendicular to a radial line B that extends outwardly from the center of the distribution cable 220. The second side 290 of the base 280 also includes a central groove 298a and two side grooves 300a. The grooves 298a, 300a are generally parallel and extend along the length of the retention block 258. The central groove 298a is sized to receive the buffer tube 262 of the tether 242. The side grooves 300a are sized to receive the strength members 264 of the tether 242.

The base 280 also includes structures for resisting axial movement between the retention block 258 and the over-mold 260. For example, as shown at Figures 9-12, surface depressions 302 are provided adjacent the second end 286 of the base 280. The surface depressions 302 (e.g., grooves, slots, cuts, notches, indentations) provide void regions for allowing over-mold material to fill-in during the over-molding process to provide a more secure connection between the retention block 258 and the outer over-mold 260. In this way, a mechanical interlock is formed that resists axial movement between the retention block 258 and the over-mold 260. In other embodiments, the base 280 can include outwardly projecting structures (e.g., flanges, bumps, ribs) that are embedded in the over-mold to further resist axial movement between the over-mold and the retention block.

The cover 282 of the retention block 258 mounts over the second side 290 of the base 280 adjacent the first end 284 of the base 280. As shown at Figures 15-19, the cover 282 includes a central groove 298b and two side grooves 300b. When the cover 282 is mounted on the base 280, the central groove 298b aligns with

the central groove 298a of the base 280, and the side grooves 300b align with the side grooves 300a of the base 280. Thus, when the retention block 258 is assembled, the buffer tube 262 of the tether 242 is captured within the central grooves 298a, 298b, and the strength members 264 of the tether 242 are captured within the side grooves 300a, 300b (see Figure 7B). An adhesive 299 (see Figure 7B) can be applied between the cover 282 and the base 280 to securely affix the tether 242 to the retention block 258. In one embodiment, the adhesive 299 is applied to the second side 290 of the base 280, the grooved side of the cover 282, the buffer tube 262 of the tether 242, and the strength members 264 of the tether 242.

10 The retention block 258 also includes structures for facilitating aligning the cover 282 on the base 280. For example, as shown at Figure 7B, the retention block 258 can include mating posts 304 and holes 306 provided on the cover 282 and the base 280. The posts 304 fit within the holes 306 to maintain alignment between the base 280 and the cover 282 during assembly.

15 The retention block 258 further includes an outer band groove 308 (see Figures 9 and 15) that extends around at least a portion of the perimeter of the retention block 258. The band groove 308 is sized to receive a strap or band 297 (see Figure 7) that is wrapped around the retention block 258 and the distribution cable 220 to secure the retention block 258 to the distribution cable 258. The band
20 can also function to assist in holding the cover 282 on the base 280.

 The splice stiffener 248 of the breakout assembly 240 preferably has a crush-resistant construction adapted to prevent the splices of the breakout location 241 from being damaged. In one embodiment, the splice stiffener 248 is made of a plastic material. As shown at Figures 20-26, the splice stiffener 248 includes an
25 elongated base portion 320 having a generally half-cylinder shape. The base portion 320 includes first and second sides 322, 324 that face in opposite directions. The first side 322 of the base portion 320 includes a concave surface 325 defining a channel 326 having an open side. When the splice stiffener 248 is mounted at the breakout location 241, the concave surface 325 is adapted to face toward the buffer
30 tubes 222 of the distribution cable 220. As shown in the cross-sectional view of Figure 26, the concave surface 325 has a semi-circular shape having a curvature that generally matches an outer diameter D circumscribing the buffer tubes 322 of the distribution cable 320. The concave surface 325 is shown covering approximately

one half the diameter D , and a plurality of the buffer tubes 222 are shown positioned within the channel 326. Depending upon how the break-out location is prepared (i.e., whether or not the outer strength members 228 of the distribution cable 220 have been removed), the layer formed by the strength members 228 may be
5 positioned between the surface 325 and the buffer tubes 222.

The splice stiffener 248 also includes a pair of parallel retaining members 328 that project outwardly from the second side 324 of the base portion 320. A splice retention channel 330 having an open side is defined between the retaining members 328. A bed 332 of the channel 330 is generally planar. Splice
10 sleeve retention ridges or shoulders 334 project outwardly from the bed 332 adjacent opposite ends of the channel 330. Snap fit tabs 336 project laterally into the channel 330 from the retaining members 328. In use, the splice sleeve 246 is snap fit between the tabs 336 and into the channel 330. Once the splice sleeve 246 is in the splice retention channel 330, the tabs 336 prevent the splice sleeve 246 from
15 unintentionally exiting the splice retention channel 330 through the open side. Also, the retention shoulders 334 prevent the splice sleeve 246 from sliding out of the splice retention channel 330 through the ends of the splice retention channel 330. Preferably, the splice sleeve 246 is free to slide back and forth between the shoulders 334 within the channel 330.

20 The stiffeners 250_1 , 250_2 of the breakout assembly 240 are preferably configured to provide increased crush resistance to the protective sleeve 252. In certain embodiments, the stiffeners 250_1 , 250_2 have a stiffer construction than the protective sleeve 252 and are made of a plastic material. Referring to Figures 27-30, the stiffeners 250_1 , 250_2 have a generally tubular configuration and each define a
25 through-passage 340 for receiving their respective fibers 224_{dc} and 224_t . The through-passages 340 preferably have large enough cross-sectional areas to allow the fibers 224_{dc} , 224_t to freely slide therein when the breakout location 241 is bent. Ends 342 of the passages 340 preferably include contours that extend around the perimeter of the passages 340 for preventing the fibers from being bent beyond
30 acceptable bend radius requirements.

Referring to Figure 30, the stiffeners 250_1 , 250_2 each include a base portion 344 spaced from an arcuate dome portion 346. The stiffeners 250_1 , 250_2 each also include a pair of planar, generally parallel side walls 348 that connect the

base portion 344 to the dome portion 346. The base portions 344 define concave channels 350 adapted to receive buffer tubes 222 of the distribution cable 220 when the stiffeners 250₁, 250₂ are positioned at the breakout location 241. The sidewalls 348 and the dome portion 346 define an exterior shape that generally matches the interior shape of the protective sleeve 252.

The protective sleeve 252 of the mid-span breakout assembly 240 is adapted to form a protective shell over the breakout location 241. The protective sleeve 252 is preferably sufficiently flexible to allow the pre-terminated cable (i.e., the distribution cable 220 with the tethers terminated 242 thereto) to be readily stored on a spool. The stiffeners 248, 250₁, 250₂ provide regions/segments of increased crush resistance separated by regions/segments of increased flexibility.

Referring to Figures 31-37, the protective sleeve 252 is elongated along a length that extends between the first end 254 and the second end 256 and has a generally U-shaped transverse cross section forming a channel 360 (see Figure 36) with an open side sized to be inserted over the distribution cable. The channel 360 has a cross sectional shape sized to conform generally with the outer cross sectional shape of the stiffeners 250₁, 250₂. Preferably, the internal transverse cross sectional shape of the channel 360 is sized to accommodate sufficient slack or excess fiber length to allow the breakout location 241 to be bent without negatively affecting performance or damaging the fibers of the breakout location. The channel 360 of the protective sleeve 252 is defined between opposing sidewalls 362 defining openings 364 for receiving snap-fit tabs 366 of the retention clips 243. The sidewalls 362 are interconnected by a curved portion 363.

The first end 254 of the protective sleeve 252 includes a low profile portion 365 that fits closely to the distribution cable 220. The low profile portion 365 includes a channel 367 that receives the outer jacket 230 of the distribution cable 220. The channel 367 has a diameter that generally matches the outer diameter of the distribution cable 220. The first end 254 also includes a transition portion 369 that provides a smooth taper/contour between the low profile portion 365 and a main body of the protective sleeve 252. The low profile portion 365 and the transition portion 369 cooperate to provide a smooth transition from the distribution cable 220 to the main outer surface of the protective sleeve 252. The smooth taper provided by the first end (i.e., the leading end/nose) of the protective

sleeve 252 assists in pulling the cable through underground conduit without snagging the breakout location 241. The second end 256 of the protective sleeve 252 forms an enlarged receptacle 372 sized sufficiently large to receive the retention block 258. A tapered transition portion 370 is provided between the main body of the protective sleeve 252 and the enlarged receptacle 372. When the sleeve 252 is mounted on the distribution cable 220, the low profile portion 365 overlaps the jacket 230 at the upstream end of the breakout location and the enlarged receptacle 372 overlaps the retention block adjacent the downstream end of the breakout location.

As shown at Figures 38-42, the retention clips 243 of the mid-span breakout assembly 240 include curved portions 380 that receive the distribution cable 220 on the opposite side of the protective sleeve 252 such that the distribution cable 220 is captured between the clips 243 and the protective sleeve 252. The clips 243 also include straight extensions 382 that project upwardly from the curved portion 380. The extensions 382 of the clips 243 fit inside the protective sleeve 252 and assist in preventing fibers 224_{dc}, 224_t from being pinched between the protective sleeve 252 and the distribution cable 220 or the clips 243. The extensions 382 include snap-fit tabs 366 that fit within the openings 364 of the protective sleeve 252. The clips 243 also include discrete stops 384 for engaging bottom edges of the protection sleeve 252. The stops 384 are located at the exteriors of the clips 343 and project outwardly from the curved portions 380.

The over-mold 260 of the mid-span breakout assembly 240 is preferably made of a polymer plastic material. As shown at Figures 43-46, the over-mold 260 has a primary contour 390 at a leading edge configured to coincide generally with the contour of the leading end of the protective sleeve 252. A trailing end 392 of the over-mold 260 is also slightly contoured. The transverse cross sectional shape of the over-mold includes first and second curved portions 395, 396 interconnected by generally planar portions 397, 398.

It is preferred for the over-mold 360 to be sized with a cross sectional shape sufficient to allow the breakout location to be readily passed through a one and one-half inch inner diameter conduit or a one and one-quarter inch diameter conduit. In certain embodiments, the breakout location has a cross sectional area that can be passed through a one inch inner diameter conduit.

The mid-span breakout location 241 is preferably configured to allow the mid-span breakout location to be bent/flexed in any orientation without damaging the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_i and without significantly negatively affecting cable performance. In one embodiment, this flexibility is provided by making sure that the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_i have sufficient excess fiber length (i.e., slack) to allow the breakout location to be bent/flexed the requisite amount. In one embodiment, the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_i that extend along the mid-span breakout location 241 are provided with at least 2% excess fiber length. In other embodiments, the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_i are provided with at least 3% excess fiber length. In still other embodiments, the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_i are provided with an excess fiber length in the range of 1 to 5% or in the range of 2 to 5%. In one example embodiment, the length of the mid-span breakout location 241 is about 32 centimeters and about 1 centimeter of excess fiber length is provided to the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_i as they extend along the mid-span breakout location 241.

When the mid-span breakout assembly 240 is assembled, measures are taken to provide the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_i with excess fiber length. For example, after the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_i have been fused together, the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_i are pulled taut and the retention block 258 is positioned against the outer jacket 230 of the distribution cable 220 (see Fig. 47). The retention block 258 is then slid a distance X along the distribution cable 220 to the position of Fig. 48. With the retention block 258 in the position of Figure 48, and adequate amount of excess slack/excess fiber length has been provided to the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_i. Once the retention block 258 is in the position of Figure 48, a securement structure 297 (e.g., a band, strap, clamp or other type of structure) is used to fix the retention block 258 in position relative to the distribution cable 220. Thereafter, the remainder of the mid-span breakout assembly 240 can be assembled over the mid-span breakout location 241.

In determining the amount of excess fiber length to be provided at the mid-span breakout location 241, it is desirable for the distribution cable 220 to be able to be bent in a minimum bend radius R_m in any orientation without compromising the mid-span breakout assembly 240. In one embodiment, an example minimum bend radius R_m is ten times the outer diameter of the distribution cable 220. When the distribution cable is flexed to a bend having a radius R_m as shown at Figure 49, a portion 500 of the distribution cable 220 at the outside of the

curve elongates and a portion 501 of the distribution cable at the inside of the curve shortens. The centerline of the distribution cable does not change in length. Taking the above factors into consideration, the amount of slack fiber length required to accommodate the elongation at the outer portion 500 of the bend can be calculated
 5 by the following formula:

$$\alpha \frac{\pi}{180^\circ} (R_m + R_{dc}) - \alpha \frac{\pi}{180^\circ} R_m = \alpha \frac{\pi}{180^\circ} R_{dc}$$

In the above formula, where R_{dc} equals the outer radius of the
 10 distribution cable measured from the centerline to the outer surface of the outer jacket. R_{dc} provides a value that is representative of the distance between the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_i and the centerline of the distribution cable. The angle of the bend is represented in α in degrees. For a 90° bend, the excess fiber length equals at least $\pi R_{dc}/2$. For a 180° bend, the excess fiber length equals πR_{dc} .

15 To prepare the tether 242 to be incorporated into the mid-span breakout assembly 240, a portion of the outer jacket 266 is stripped away to expose the central buffer tube 262 and the strength members 264 (see Fig. 50). As shown at Figure 50, the central buffer tube 262 and the strength members 264 project outwardly beyond an end 271 of the outer jacket 266. As shown at Figure 50, the
 20 strength layer 265 has been removed from around the buffer tube 262. After removing the end portion of the outer jacket 266, the strength members 264 are trimmed as shown at Figure 51, and an end portion of the central buffer tube 262 is removed to expose the fibers 224_i. The tether 242 is then mounted to the base 280 of the retention block 258. For example, as shown at Figure 51, the jacketed end
 25 271 of the tether 242 is inserted into the retention sleeve 294. Also, the strength members 264 are positioned within the side grooves 300a of the base 280, and the central buffer tube 262 is inserted within the central groove 298a of the base 280. As shown in Figure 51, the central buffer tube 262 has a length that extends beyond the first end 284 of the base 280, and the strength members 264 have lengths that
 30 terminate generally at the first end of the base 280.

To prepare the mid-span breakout location on the distribution cable 220, a portion of the outer jacket 230 is first stripped away to provide a stripped

region 400 having an upstream end 402 and a downstream end 404. Portions of a cable netting can then be removed adjacent the upstream and downstream ends 402, 404 so that the buffer tubes 222 are exposed. The outer strength member 228 can also be displaced (e.g., bunched at the bottom side of the cable) adjacent the ends 402, 404 to facilitate accessing the buffer tubes 222. Tape 406 can be used to prevent the intermediate length of netting that remains at the mid-span breakout location 241 from unraveling. One of the buffer tubes 222 is then selected and a first window 408 is cut into the buffer tube adjacent the upstream end 402 of the stripped region 400 and a second window 410 is cut into the buffer tube 220 adjacent the downstream end 404 of the stripped region 400. The fibers 224_{dc} desired to be broken out are then accessed and severed at the second window 410. After the fibers 224_{dc} have been severed, the fibers 224_{dc} are pulled from the buffer tube 222 through the first window 408 (see Fig. 52). With the distribution cable 220 prepared as shown in Figure 52, the fibers 224_{dc} are ready to be terminated to the prepared tether 242 of Figure 51.

To connect the tether 242 to the fibers 224_{dc}, the splice sleeve 246 and the two stiffeners 250₁, 250₂ are first slid over the fibers 224_t of the tether and up against the retention block 258. In certain embodiments, the stiffeners 250₁, 250₂ and splice sleeve 246 can be configured to nest inside one another to minimize the space occupied by such components during the fusion process. In certain embodiments, the components can be slid up over the buffer tube 262 of the tether 242. With the stiffeners 250₁, 250₂ and the splice sleeve 246 mounted on the tether 242, the fibers 224_t of the tether are fused to the fibers 224_{dc} of the distribution cable 220. After the fusion process is complete, the splice sleeve 246 can be slid over the fusion location to protect the splice. The fibers are then tested to confirm that the fibers meet minimum insertion loss requirements. After verifying insertion loss, the cover 282 can be adhesively bonded to the base 280 of the retention block 258 to complete the assembly of the retention block.

Once the retention block 258 has been assembled, the retention block 258 is used to pull the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_t generally taut. With the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_t pulled taut, the splice stiffener 248 is positioned beneath the location of the splice sleeve 246 to ensure that the splice sleeve 246 is generally centered relative to the splice stiffener 248. The splice stiffener 248 can then be secured to the distribution

cable 220 with tape. Preferably, the splice stiffener 248 is generally centrally located between the ends 402, 404 of the stripped region 400 of the distribution cable 220.

After the positioning of the splice stiffener 248 has been determined, the retention block 258 is slid back along the distribution cable 220 to provide the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_t with sufficient excess fiber length to allow bending of the mid-span access location. The retention block 258 is then affixed to the distribution cable 220.

Once the retention block 258 has been affixed to the distribution cable 220, the stiffeners 250₁, 250₂ are preferably slid along the fibers 224_{dc}, 224_t to their appropriate stiffening positions. In a preferred embodiment, the stiffener 250₁ is placed generally at a midpoint between the upstream end 402 of the stripped region 400 and the splice stiffener 248, and the stiffener 250₂ is positioned generally at a midpoint between the splice stiffener 248 and the downstream end 404 of the stripped region 400. Once the stiffeners 250₁, 250₂ are in position, the splice sleeve 246 can be snapped within the splice stiffener 248.

To finalize the assembly process, the protective sleeve 252 is secured over the stripped region 400 by the retention clips 243, and the heat resistant tape 263 is wrapped around the mid-span breakout location 241. Thereafter, the process is completed by applying the over mold 260 over the taped mid-span breakout location. The over mold layer functions to seal and protect the underlying components of the mid-span breakout assembly 240. Thereafter, the distribution cable 220 can be spooled. It is preferred for the fibers 224_t of the tether to be pre-terminated to the fibers 224_{dc} of the distribution cable. "Pre-terminated" means that the fibers 224_t are fused or otherwise connected to the fibers 224_{dc} of the distribution cable 220 at the factory as part of the cable manufacturing process rather than being field terminated. The remainder of the mid-span breakout assembly is also preferably factory installed.

Referring now to Figures 53-79, another example embodiment a mid-span breakout assembly 240' is shown having features that are examples of inventive aspects in accordance with the principles of the present disclosure. The mid-span breakout assembly 240' includes a separation block 700 located on an upstream end 402' of a breakout location 241' and a retention block 600 located on a downstream

end 404' of the breakout location 241'. The retention block 600 strengthens the mechanical interface between the tether cable 242 and the distribution cable 220. The separation block 700 routes the optical fibers 224_{dc} accessed from the buffer tube 222 of the distribution cable 220 to the splice point with the tether cable 242. A
5 tube 800 extends from the separation block 700 to the retention block 600. The tube 800 protects the spliced optical fibers 224_{dc}, 224_t along the length of the breakout location 241'.

As shown in Figure 54, the retention block 600 includes a base 610 and a cover 650 between which the tether 242 extends. In one embodiment, the
10 retention block 600 has a plastic construction. Referring to Figures 55-60, the base 610 of the retention block 600 extends along a length A (Figure 56) from a first end 620 to a second end 622. The base 610 also includes a first side 626 (Figure 57) adapted to engage the outer strength member 228 of the distribution cable 220, and a second side 628 (Figure 55) adapted to engage the tether 242. The base 610
15 includes a first section 605 and a second section 615 (Figure 56). The first section 605 of the base 610 includes side surfaces 601, elongated along a length L, that extend from one end 622 of the base 610 to an intermediate end 621 of the base 610. The second section 615 protrudes outwardly from the intermediate end 621 to the end 620 of the base 610.

20 The first side 626 of the base 610 has a channel 630 that extends along the length L of the first section 605 (Figure 57). In some embodiments, the channel 630 has a transverse cross-sectional shape (Figure 59) that is curved to generally match the inner diameter of the distribution cable jacket 230. The channel 630 of the base 610 is configured to couple to a stripped region of the distribution
25 cable 220 (Figure 53). In some embodiments, the channel 630 couples to the outer strength member 228 of the distribution cable. In one example embodiment, the outer strength member 228 includes multiple loose strands of Kevlar positioned around the buffer tubes 222. Thus, when the retention block 600 is mounted to the outer strength member 228, the outer strength member 228 and the buffer tubes 222
30 of the distribution cable 220 nest within the channel 630.

The second side 628 of the first section 605 of the base 610 includes a central groove 602 and two side grooves 603, 604. The grooves 602-604 are generally parallel and extend along the length L of the first section 605 of the base

610. A transverse cross-section of the first section 605 is shown in Figure 59. The central groove 602 is sized to receive the buffer tube 262 of the tether 242. The side grooves 603, 604 are sized to receive the strength members 264 of the tether 242.

The second section 615 of the base 610 includes a transition flange 612 that extends outwardly from the intermediate end 621 of the base 610. In some embodiments, the transition flange 612 has a generally U-shaped transverse cross-section. In one embodiment, the transition flange 612 defines a groove 617 (Figure 55).

The cover 650 of the retention block 600 mounts over the second side 628 of the base 610. As shown at Figure 64, the cover 650 includes a first section 655 and a second section 665. The cover 650 also includes a first side 676 (Figure 61) and a grooved side 678 (Figure 62). The first side 676 of the first section 655 includes a curved top surface 651 extending from the intermediate end 671 to the first end 672. A transition flange 662 having a generally U-shaped transverse cross-section extends outwardly from the intermediate end 671 to a second end 670. The grooved side 678 of the first section 655 of the cover 650 includes a central groove 652 and two side grooves 653, 654.

In use, the cover 650 is mounted onto the base 610 to align the central groove 652 of the cover 650 with the central groove 602 of the base 610, and to align the side grooves 653, 654 of the cover 650 with the side grooves 603, 604 of the base 610. Thus, when the retention block 600 is assembled, the buffer tube 262 of the tether 242 is captured within the central grooves 602, 652, and the strength members 264 of the tether 242 are captured within the side grooves 603, 653, 604, 654 (Figure 67). An adhesive can be applied between the cover 650 and the base 610 to securely affix the tether 242 to the retention block 600. In one embodiment, the adhesive is applied to the second side 628 of the base 610, the grooved side 678 of the cover 650, the buffer tube 262 of the tether 242, and the strength members 264 of the tether 242.

In some embodiments, the retention block 600 also includes structures for facilitating aligning the cover 650 on the base 610. For example, as shown at Figures 55 and 62, the retention block 600 can include mating posts 668 and surface depressions (e.g., grooves, slots, cuts, notches, indentations) 608 provided on the cover 650 and the base 610. The posts 668 fit within the notches

608 to maintain alignment between the base 610 and the cover 650 during assembly. For example, in the embodiment shown, mating posts 668 protrude downwardly from the cover 650 to engage with slots 608 on the side surfaces 601 of the base 610. In other embodiments, however, other suitable alignment members could also
5 be used.

Referring now to Figure 67, to prepare the tether 242 to be incorporated into the mid-span breakout assembly 240', a portion of the outer jacket 266 of the tether cable 242 is stripped away to expose the central buffer tube 262 and the strength members 264. As shown at Figure 67, the central buffer tube 262
10 and the strength members 264 project outwardly beyond an end 271 of the outer jacket 266. The strength layer 265 has been displaced from around the buffer tube 262. After removing the end portion of the outer jacket 266, the strength members 264 are trimmed as shown at Figure 67, and an end portion of the central buffer tube 262 is removed to expose the fibers 224_i.

15 The tether 242 is then mounted to the base 610 of the retention block 600. For example, as shown at Figure 67, the strength members 264 are positioned within the side grooves 603, 604 of the base 610, and the central buffer tube 262 is inserted within the central groove 602 of the base 610. The central buffer tube 262 has a length that extends beyond the intermediate end 621 of the base 610, and the
20 strength members 264 have lengths that terminate generally at the intermediate end 621 of the base 610. In some embodiments, the central buffer tube 262 extends beyond the end 620 of the retention block 600. In other embodiments, however, the central buffer tube 262 terminates between the intermediate end 621 and end 620.

Referring now to Figures 68-80, a separation block 700 provides
25 support for transitioning fibers 224_{dc} from the distribution cable 220 to a fusion location. As shown in Figure 68, the separation block 700 includes a Y-shaped housing 701 defining a first opening 711 on an upstream end of the separation block 700, a second opening 712 on a downstream end of the separation block, and a third opening 714 also located on the downstream end. A generally tubular section 716 of
30 the housing 701 forms the first opening 711 and generally tubular sections 718, 719 of the housing 701 form the second and third openings 712, 714.

The second opening 712 is generally aligned with the first opening 711 to form a first channel 715 (Figures 71 and 76). The third opening 714 leads to

a second channel 717 (see Figures 71 and 76) that joins with the first channel 715 at the tubular section 716 of the housing 701. Tubular sections 716, 718 forming the first channel 715 are sized and shaped to enclose the buffer tubes 222 and central strength member 226 of the distribution cable 220. Tubular section 719 forming the second channel 717 is sized and shaped to fit within the tube 800 and to enclose the fibers 224_{dc} accessed from the distribution cable 220 for splicing with the fibers 224_t of the tether cable 242.

In some embodiments, the separation block 700 is formed from a first section 710 and a second section 750. In the example shown, the first and second sections 710, 750 each include grooves 715a, 715b that align and combine to form the channel 715. Similarly, aligning and combining grooves 717a, 717b forms the channel 717. A protruding section 720a defines the grooves 715a, 717a and a protruding section 720b defines the grooves 715b, 717b.

In some embodiments, the first and second sections 710, 750 are fastened together with complementary surface depressions 722 and protrusions 724 (Figures 70 and 75). In one example embodiment, the protruding section 720a on the first section 710 defines a hole 722 and the protruding section 720b on the second section 750 includes a protrusion 724 sized to fit within the hold 722. Adhesive can also be used to secure the first section 710 to the second section 750.

The mid-span breakout location on the distribution cable 220 can be prepared in a similar manner to the preparation discussed above with respect to Figure 52. A portion of the outer jacket 230 of the distribution cable 220 is first stripped away to provide a stripped region 400' (Figure 53). One of the buffer tubes 222 is selected and a first window 408' and a second window are cut into the selected buffer tube 222. The fibers 224_{dc} desired to be broken out are then accessed, severed, and pulled from the buffer tube 222 through the first window 408'. With the distribution cable 220 prepared as shown in Figure 80, the severed fibers 224_{dc} are ready to be fused with the tether fibers 224_t.

To connect the tether 242 to the fibers 224_{dc}, the splice sleeve 246 and the tube 800 (Figure 53) are first slid over the fibers 224_t of the tether 242, and the tube 800 is further slid up over the tether jacket 266. With the splice sleeve 246 and tube 800 mounted on the tether 242, the fibers 224_t of the tether are fused to the

fibers 224_{dc} of the distribution cable 220. The fibers are then tested to confirm that the fibers meet minimum insertion loss requirements.

After the fusion process is complete, the splice sleeve 246 can be slid over the fusion location to protect the splice. In some embodiments, the splice sleeve 246 has a length of less than 40 mm. Preferably, the splice sleeve 246 has a length of less than 35 mm. In one example embodiment, the splice sleeve 246 has a length of about 30 mm. Decreasing the length of the splice sleeve 246 increases the degree to which the mid-span breakout assembly can bend. Increasing the flexibility of the breakout assembly 240, 240' facilitates wrapping the distribution cable 220 having the breakout assembly 240, 240' around a spool.

After verifying the insertion loss, the tube 800 can be slid over the splice sleeve 246 and the fusion location to protect the spliced fibers 224_{dc}, 224_t. The separation block 700 can then be added to the upstream location 402' of the stripped portion 400' of the distribution cable 220. The buffer tubes 222 are routed through the first channel 715 of the separation block 700 and the severed fibers 224_{dc} are routed through the second channel 717 of the separation block 700 (Figure 80). To route the fibers, in some embodiments, the buffer tubes 222 are laid within the first groove 715a of the first section 710 of the separation block 700 and the fibers 224_{dc} are laid within the second groove 717a of the first section 710 as shown in Figure 79. The second section 750 of the separation block 700 can be secured to the first section as discussed above.

Typically, the separation block 700 does not enclose the outer strength member 228. In some embodiments, the outer strength member 228 can be redistributed uniformly about the buffer tubes 222 of the distribution cable 220 at the upstream and downstream ends 402', 404' after installing the separation block 700. In such embodiments, the outer strength member 228 extends across the breakout location 241'.

After installing the separation block 700, the tube 800 can be slid onto section 719 of the separation block 700. In some embodiments, the tube 800 can optionally be taped or otherwise temporarily secured to the separation block 700. In other embodiments, the tube 800 is permanently secured to the separation block 700 with adhesive. In still other embodiments, the tube 800 is not secured to the separation block 700.

The retention block 600 is then mounted to the tether cable 242. The retention block 600 is preferably positioned so that one end of the tube 800 is slid over the transition flanges 612, 662 of the retention block 600 and the other end of the tube 800 remains over section 719 of the separation block 700. In general, the tube 800 has an appropriate length to provide the fibers 224_{dc} , 224_t with sufficient excess fiber length to allow bending of the mid-span access location 241'. The retention block 600 is then affixed to the distribution cable 220. In some embodiments, the groove 630 of the base 610 of the retention block is affixed (e.g., with adhesive) to the outer strength member 228 wrapped around the distribution cable 220.

To finalize the assembly process, the heat resistant tape/foil can be wrapped around the mid-span breakout location 241'. Thereafter, the process is completed by applying an over mold 260' over the mid-span breakout location 241'. The over mold layer 260' functions to seal and protect the underlying components of the mid-span breakout assembly 240'. Thereafter, the distribution cable 220 can be spooled. It is preferred for the fibers 224_t of the tether to be pre-terminated to the fibers 224_{dc} of the distribution cable. The remainder of the mid-span breakout assembly 240' is also preferably factory installed.

As used herein, with respect to buffer tubes, the term "fiber access location" can be any type of location where a fiber can be routed out of a buffer tube. Example fiber access locations include windows, ring cut regions, or other openings in a buffer tube. Additionally, when the fibers 224_{dc} , 224_t have been spliced together, the fibers 224_{dc} , 224_t can collectively be referred to as an optical fiber structure. In such a case, the optical fiber structure includes a first length of optical fiber within the distribution cable, a second length of optical fiber that extends through the breakout location and a third length of optical fiber that extends through the tether. The first, second and third lengths are in optical communication with one another so as to define a signal path that extends from the distribution cable, through the breakout location, to the end of the tether. The term optical fiber structure also includes lengths of optical fibers that do not include intermediate splices. As used herein, the term "breakout portions" of optical fiber include portions of optical fiber that extend along the length of a breakout location.

From the forgoing detailed description, it will be evident that modifications and variations can be made in the devices of the disclosure without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A telecommunications cable comprising:
 - a distribution cable including a cable jacket and a plurality of buffer tubes positioned within the cable jacket, the plurality of buffer tubes including a first buffer tube, the distribution cable including a mid-span location where a portion of the cable jacket has been removed and where at least the first buffer tube includes a fiber access location;
 - a closure including an overmold that surrounds the distribution cable and covers the mid-span location, the closure being factory installed, the overmold being elongated along a length that extends along the distribution cable;
 - a tether that branches from the distribution cable at the closure, the tether including a tether jacket, a tether buffer tube positioned within the jacket and at least one strength member;
 - a tether retention block affixed to the distribution cable, the tether buffer tube passing through the retention block and at least the strength member of the tether being affixed to the retention block, the overmold covering at least a portion of the tether retention block;
 - a first optical fiber that extends through the first buffer tube of the distribution cable, the first optical fiber being routed out of the first buffer tube through the fiber access location;
 - a second optical fiber that extends through the tether buffer tube, the second fiber being routed into the closure; and
 - the first optical fiber being spliced to the second optical fiber at a splice location located within the closure to form a spliced length of optical fiber extending through the closure.
2. The telecommunications cable of claim 1, wherein the spliced length of optical fiber has an excess fiber length range of about 2-5%.
3. The telecommunications cable of claim 1, wherein the tether retention block is strapped to the distribution cable.

4. The telecommunications cable of claim 1, wherein the tether retention block is clamped to the distribution cable.
5. The telecommunications cable of claim 1, wherein a portion of the retention block is not covered by the overmold.
6. The telecommunications cable of claim 1, wherein a mechanical interlock exists between the retention block and the overmold.
7. The telecommunications cable of claim 6, wherein the mechanical interlock includes a groove defined about an exterior of the tether retention block, and the mechanical interlock also includes a portion of the overmold that is molded into the groove.
8. The telecommunications cable of claim 1, wherein the strength member is adhesively affixed to the tether retention block.
9. The telecommunications cable of claim 8, wherein the tether buffer tube is adhesively secured to the tether retention block.
10. The telecommunications cable of claim 9, wherein the tether retention block defines a first groove for receiving the strength member and a second groove for receiving the tether buffer tube.
11. The telecommunications cable of claim 1, wherein the tether retention block includes a sleeve in which a jacketed portion of the tether is received, a first groove for receiving a portion of the strength member that extends beyond the jacketed portion of the tether, and a second groove for receiving a portion of the tether buffer tube that extends beyond the jacketed portion of the tether.
12. The telecommunications cable of claim 11, wherein the strength member and the tether buffer tube are respectively adhesively secured within the first and second grooves.

13. The telecommunications cable of claim 1, wherein the tether has a flat cable configuration including first and second strength members positioned on opposite sides of the tether buffer tube, wherein the tether retention block includes a sleeve in which a jacketed end portion of the tether is received, wherein the retention block also defines a central channel and two side channels positioned on opposite sides of the central channel, wherein portions of the strength members that extend beyond the jacketed end portion of the tether are received within the side channels of the retention block, and wherein a portion of the tether buffer tube that extends beyond the jacketed end portion of the tether is received within the central channel of the retention block.

14. The telecommunications cable of claim 13, wherein the retention block includes a base and a cover, wherein the side channels of the retention block are defined by opposing grooves provided at the base and at the cover, wherein the central channel is defined by opposing grooves provided at the base and the cover, and wherein adhesive is provided between the base and the cover.

15. The telecommunications cable of claim 1, wherein the telecommunications cable is sized to be pulled through a conduit having a 1.25 inch inner diameter.

16. The telecommunications cable of claim 1, wherein the tether is a stub cable or a drop cable.

17. A telecommunications cable comprising:
a distribution cable including a distribution cable jacket and a plurality of buffer tubes positioned within the cable jacket, the plurality of buffer tubes including a first buffer tube, the distribution cable including a mid-span location where a portion of the distribution cable jacket has been removed and where at least the first buffer tube includes a fiber access location;
a tether that branches from the distribution cable, the tether including a tether jacket, a tether buffer tube positioned within the jacket and at least one strength member;

a tether retention block affixed to the distribution cable, the tether buffer tube passing through the retention block and at least the strength member of the tether being affixed to the retention block;

a protective sleeve that extends along the mid-span location wherein the portion of the distribution cable jacket has been removed, the protective sleeve including a first end that overlaps the distribution cable jacket and a second end that overlaps the tether retention block;

an overmold that covers the protective sleeve;

a first optical fiber that extends through the first buffer tube of the distribution cable, the first optical fiber being routed out of the first buffer tube through the fiber access location;

a second optical fiber that extends through the tether buffer tube, the second fiber being routed into the flexible closure; and

the first optical fiber being spliced to the second optical fiber at a splice location located within the protective sleeve.

18. The telecommunications cable of claim 17, further comprising clips for securing the protective sleeve to the distribution cable.

19. The telecommunications cable of claim 17, further comprising stiffeners for providing the protective sleeve with regions of increased crush resistance.

20. The telecommunications cable of claim 19, wherein the stiffeners are separate pieces from the protective sleeve.

21. A telecommunications cable comprising:

a distribution cable including a distribution cable jacket and a plurality of buffer tubes positioned within the cable jacket, the plurality of buffer tubes including a first buffer tube, the distribution cable including a mid-span location where a portion of the distribution cable jacket has been removed and where at least the first buffer tube includes a fiber access location;

a tether that branches from the distribution cable;

a first optical fiber that extends through the first buffer tube of the distribution cable, the first optical fiber being routed out of the first buffer tube through the fiber access location;

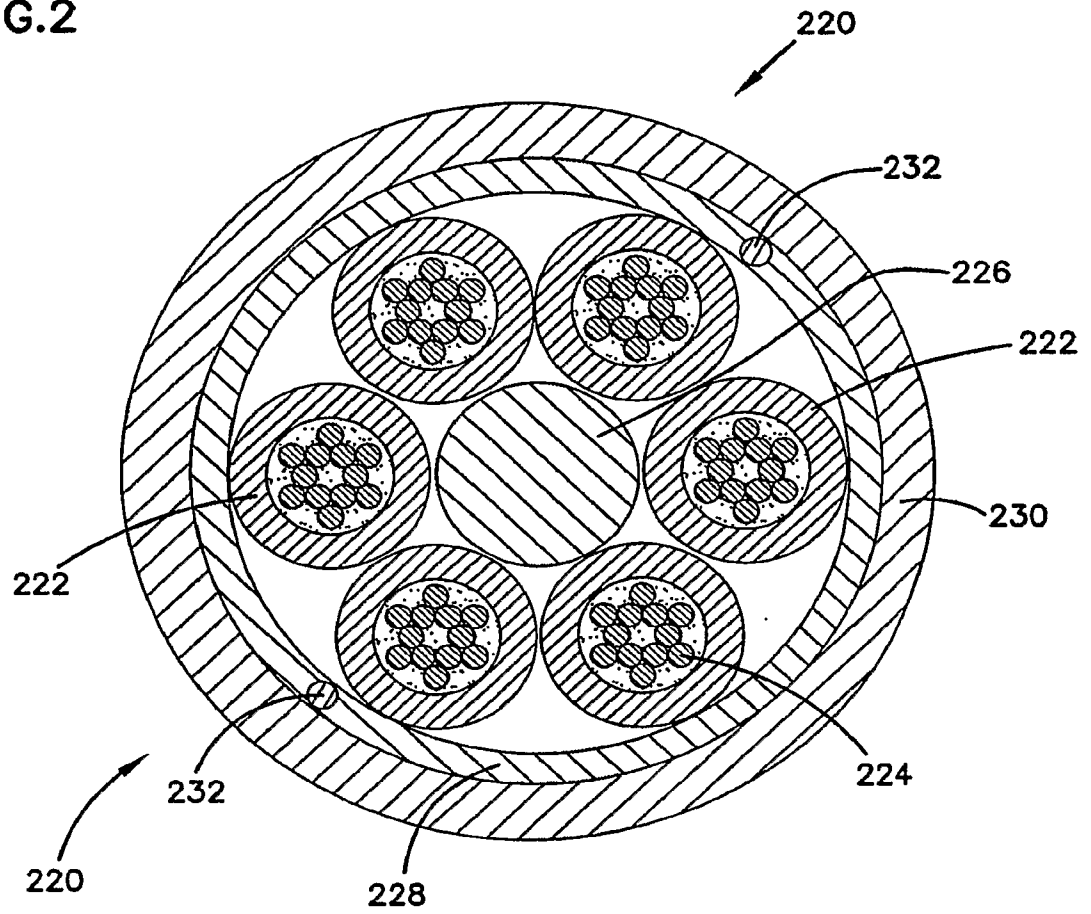
a second optical fiber that extends through the tether;

the first optical fiber being spliced to the second optical fiber at a splice location; a splice sleeve that surrounds the splice location; and

a splice stiffener that holds the splice sleeve, the splice stiffener being positioned at the mid-span location where the portion of the distribution cable jacket has been removed, the splice stiffener including a base defining a channel in which a plurality of the buffer tubes of the distribution cable are received.

FIG. 1
(Prior Art)

FIG. 2



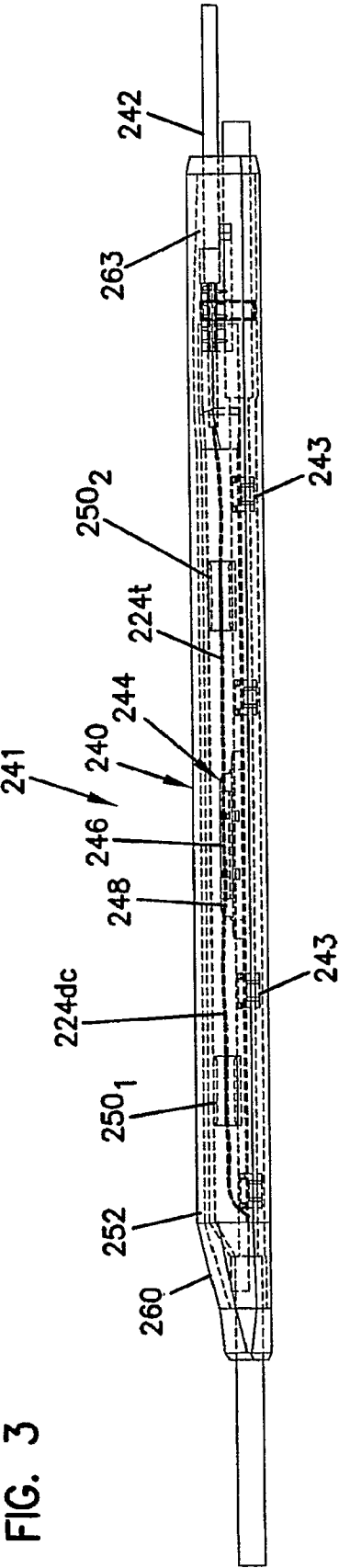


FIG. 5

FIG. 4



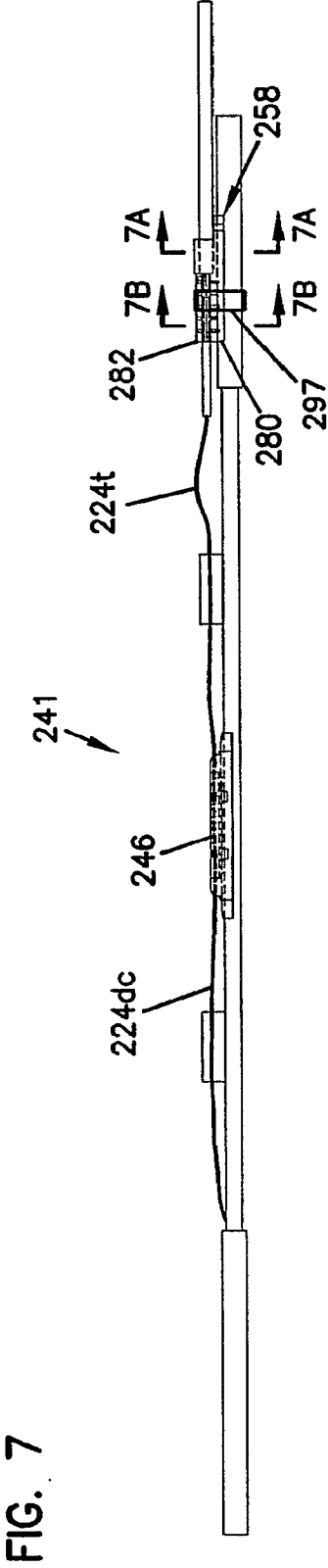
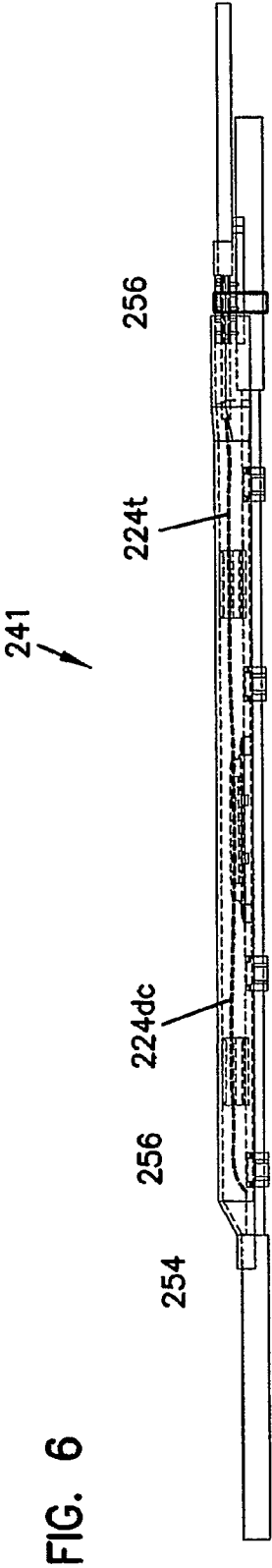


FIG.7A

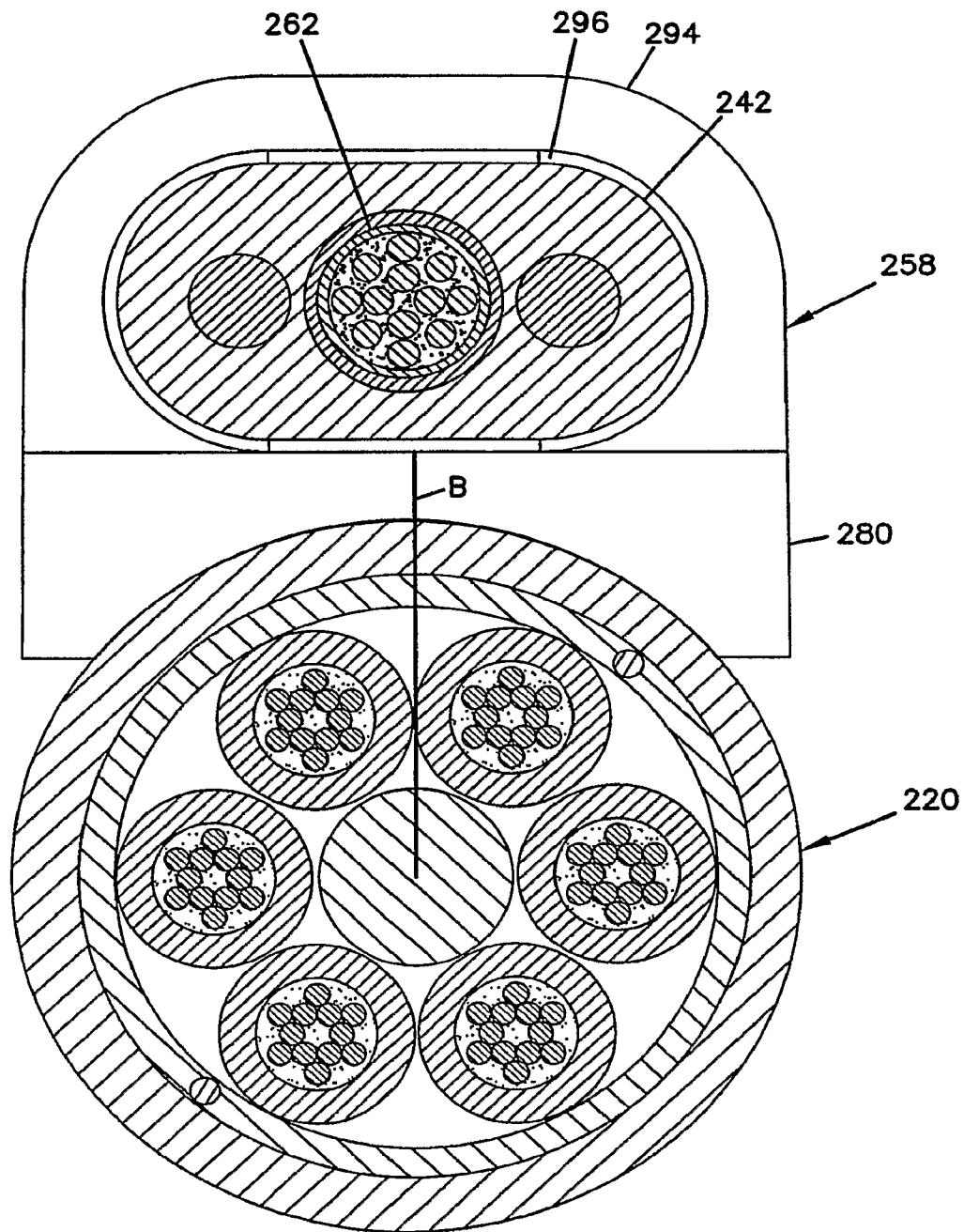


FIG. 7B

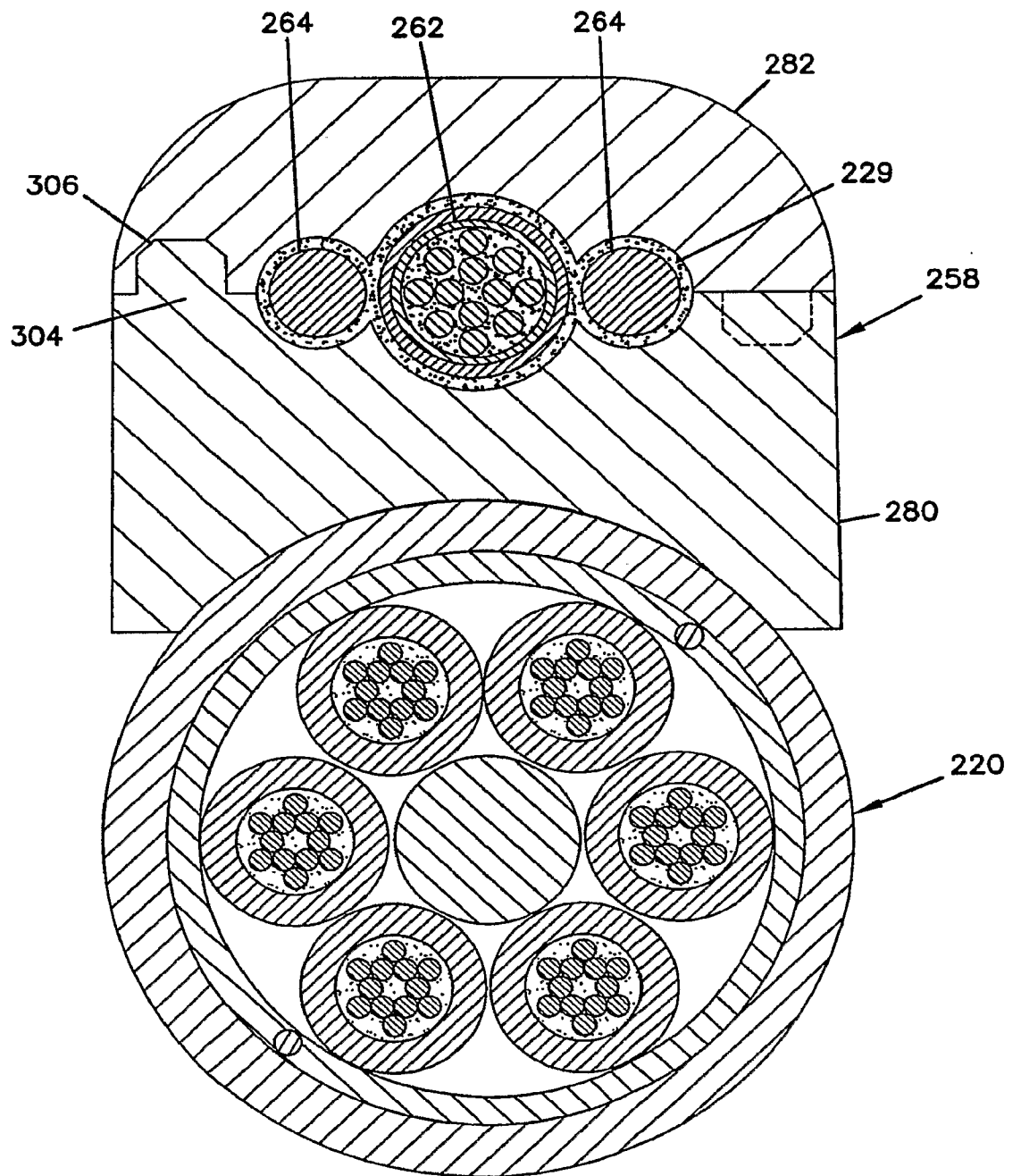


FIG. 8

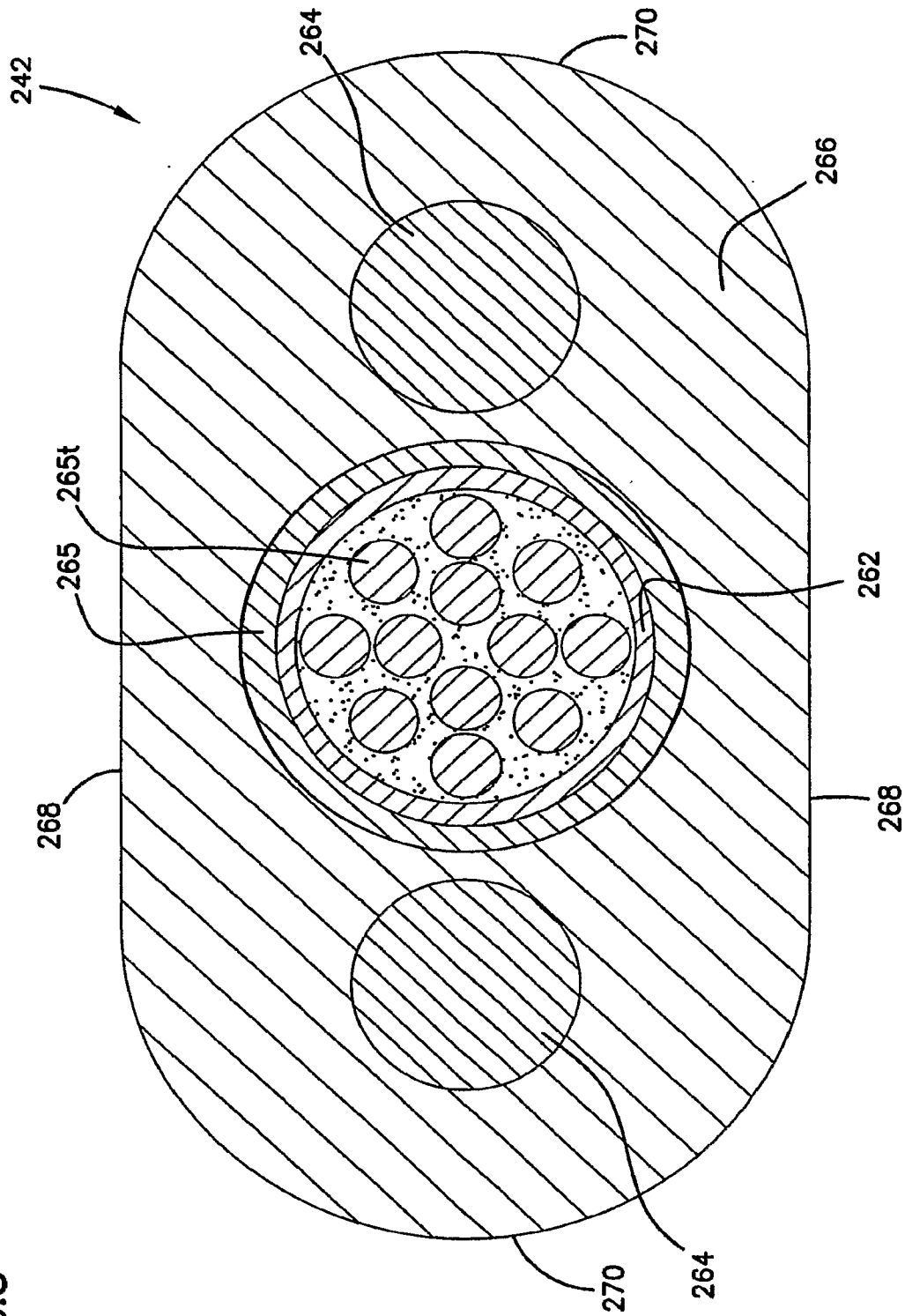


FIG. 9

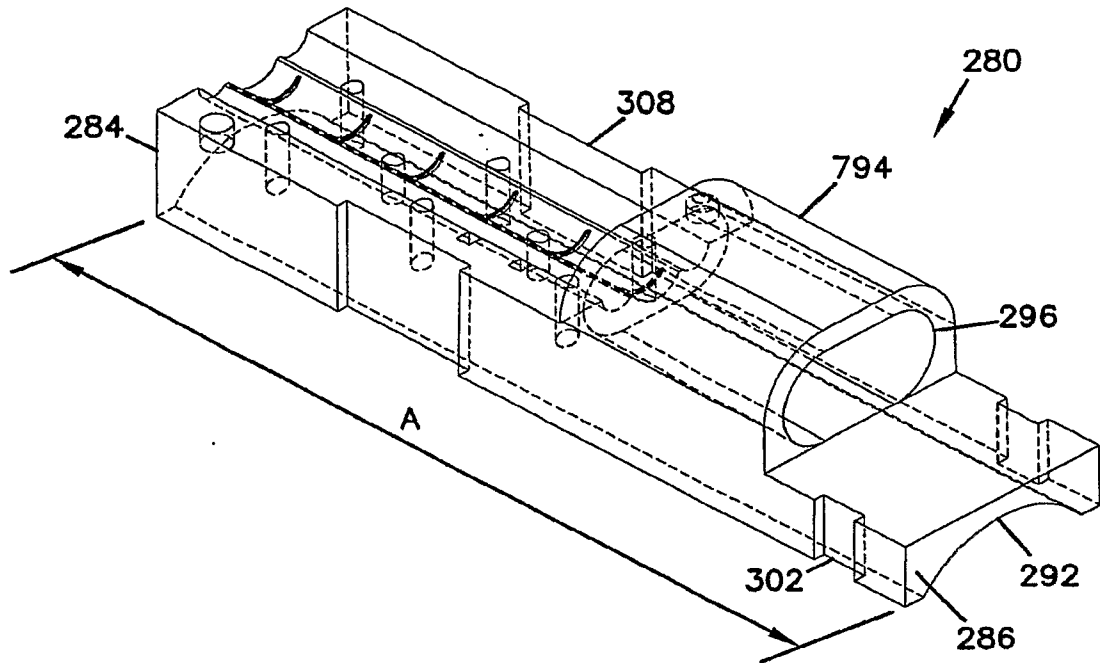


FIG. 10

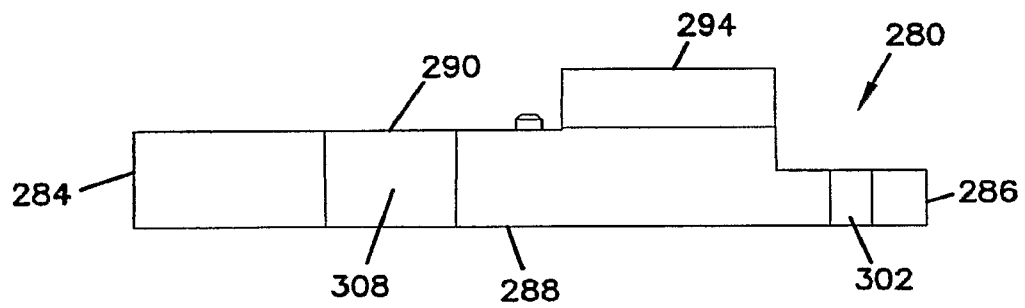


FIG. 11

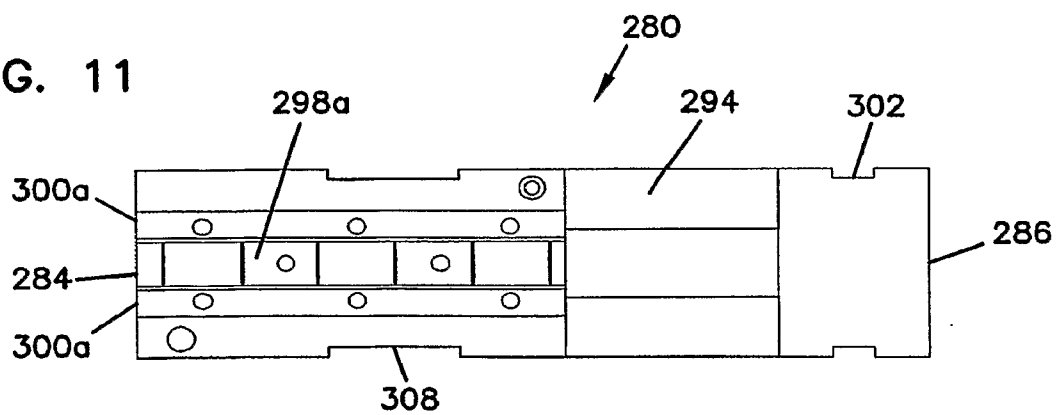


FIG. 12

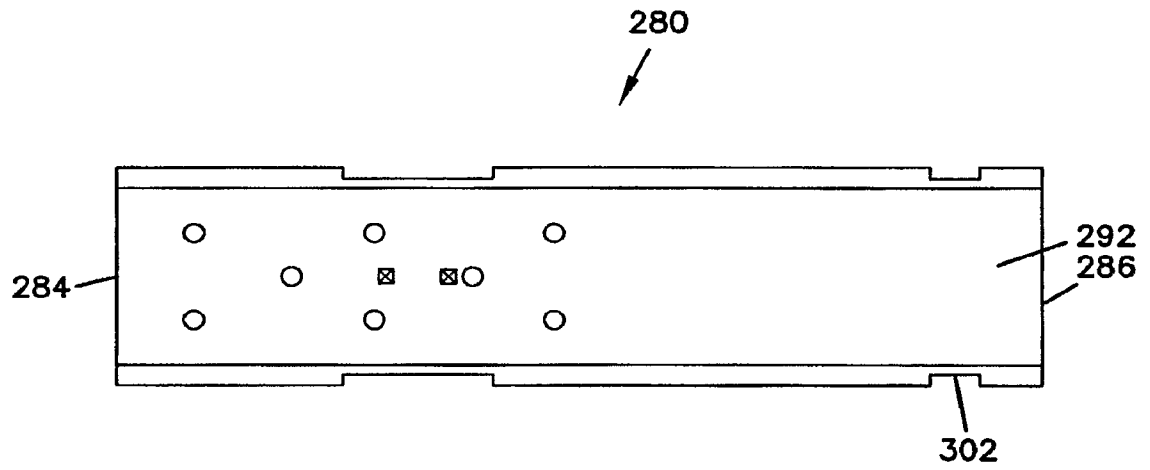


FIG. 13

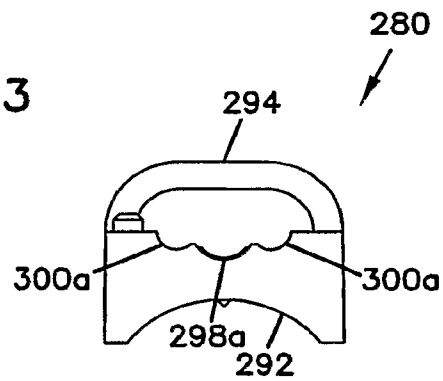


FIG. 14

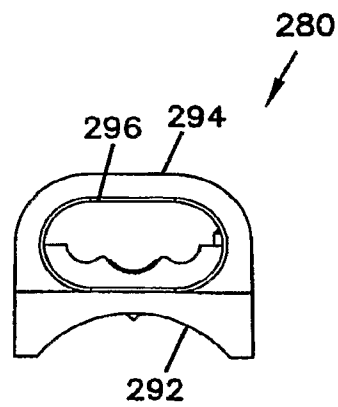


FIG. 15

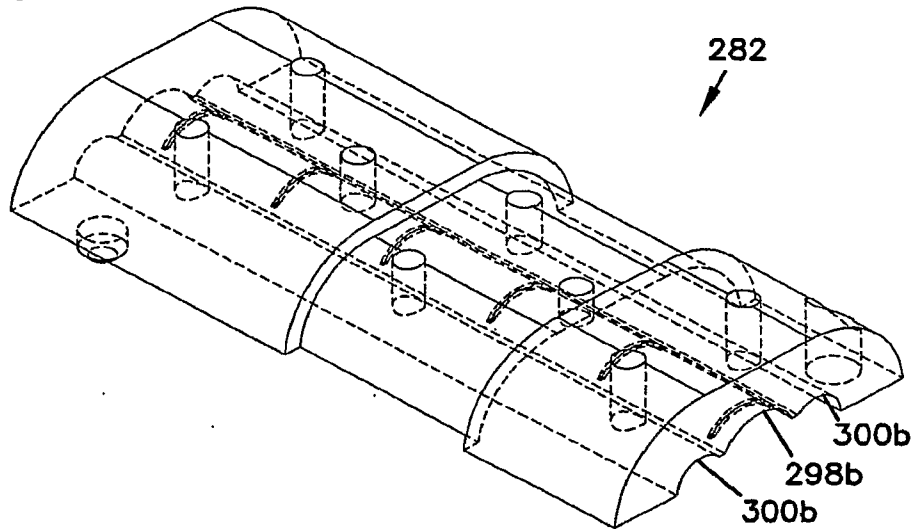


FIG. 16

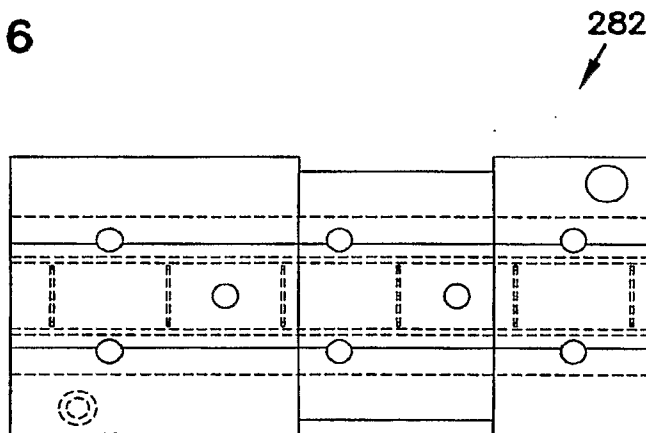


FIG. 17

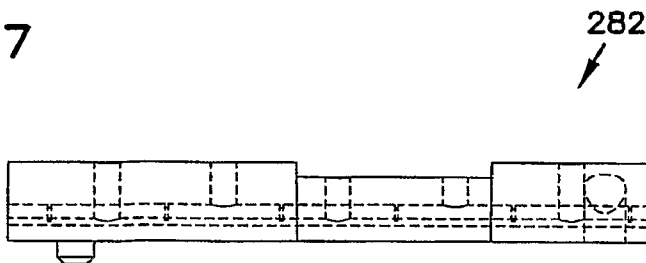


FIG. 18

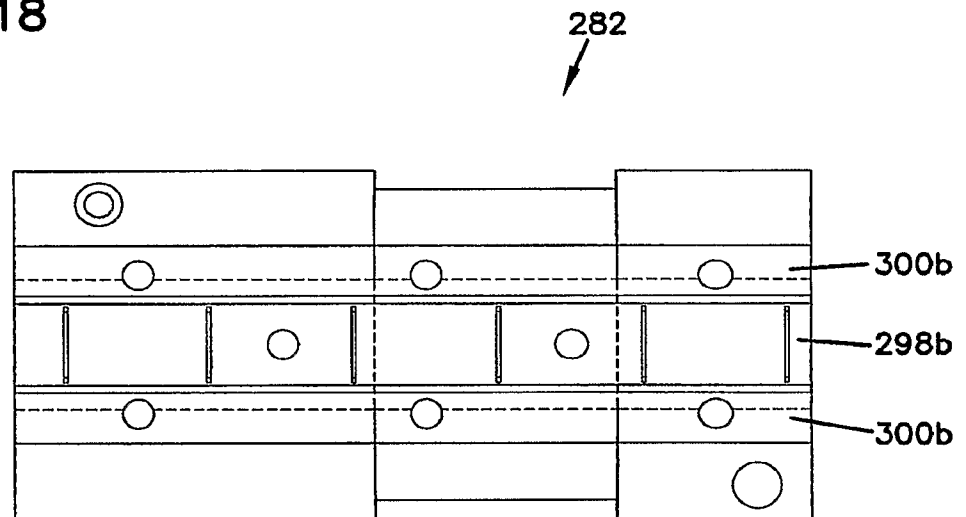


FIG. 19

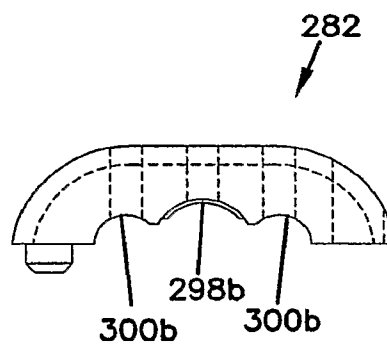


FIG. 20

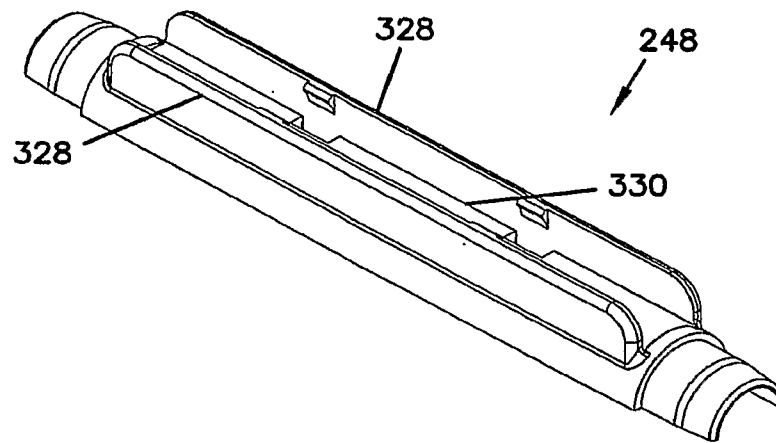


FIG. 21

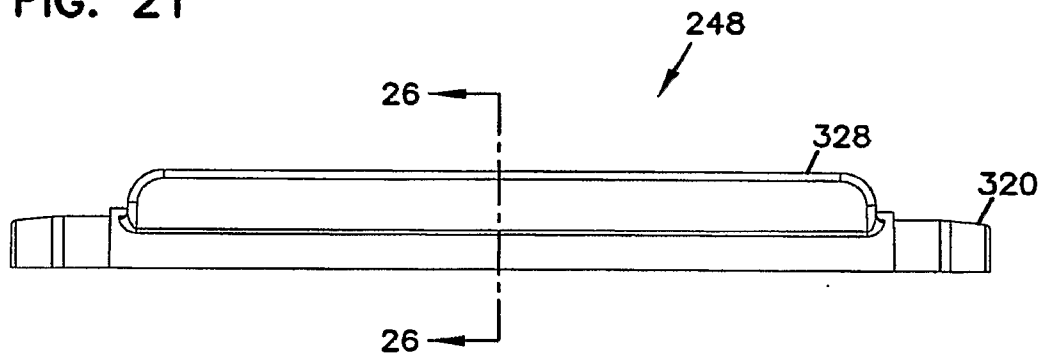


FIG. 22

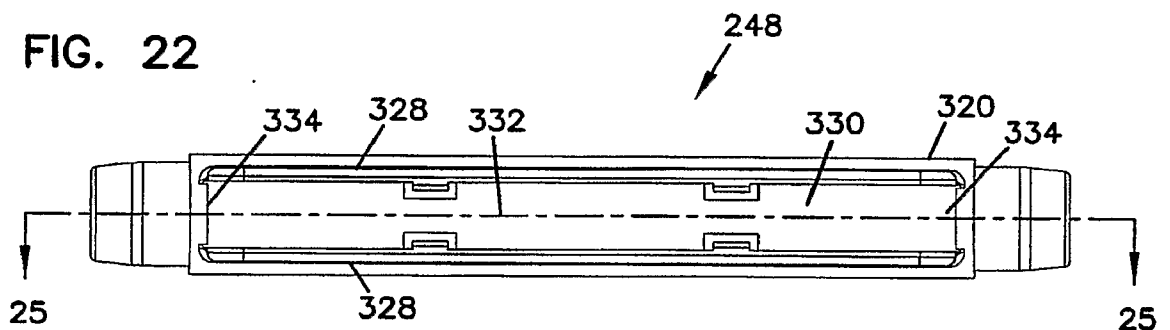


FIG. 23

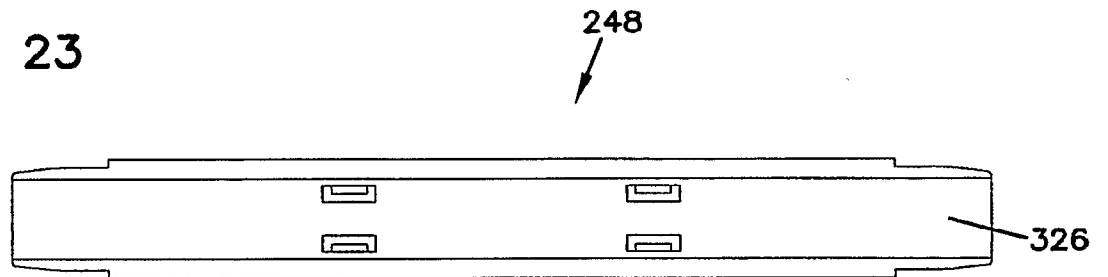


FIG. 24

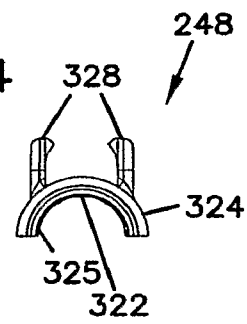


FIG. 25

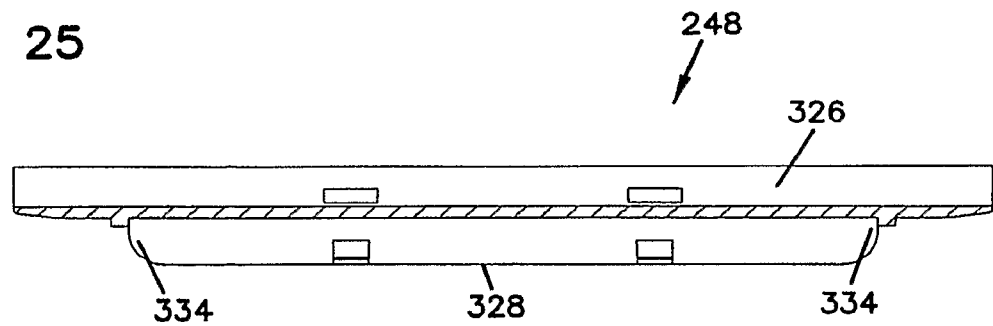


FIG. 26

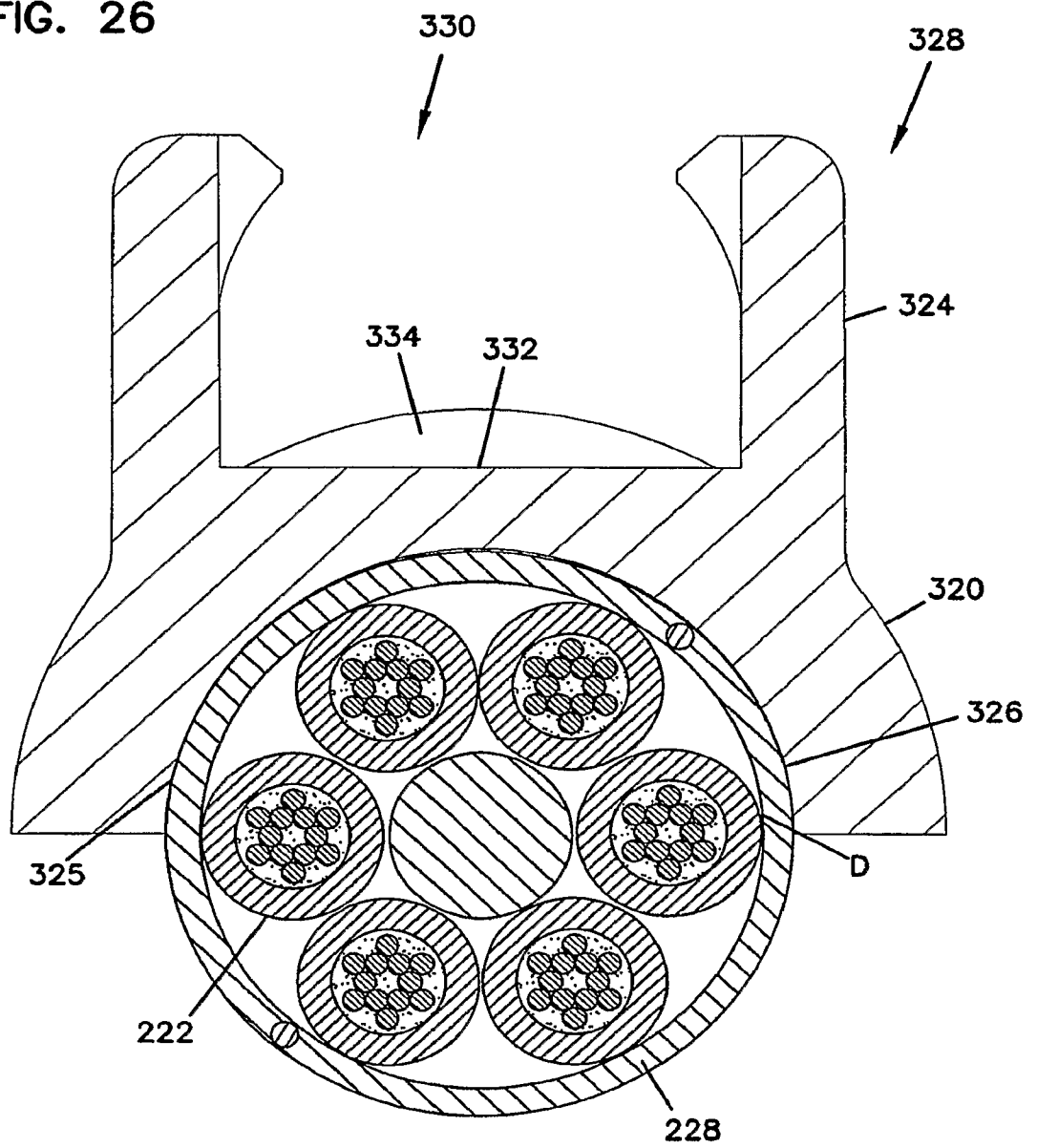


FIG. 27

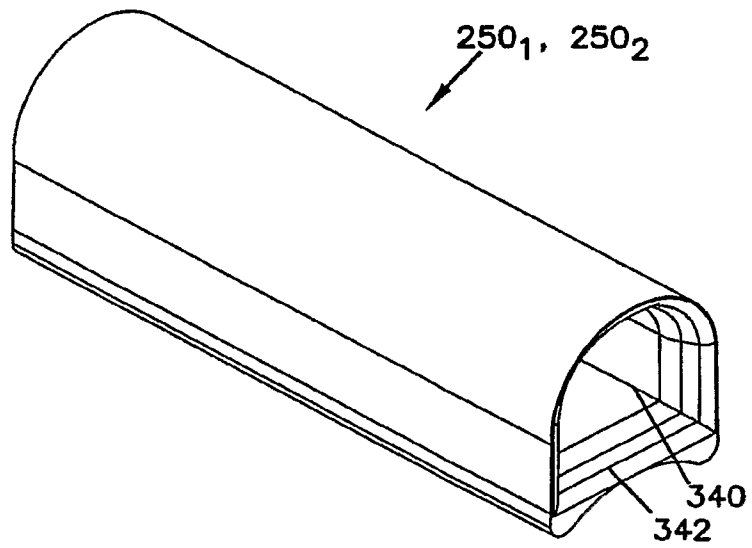


FIG. 28

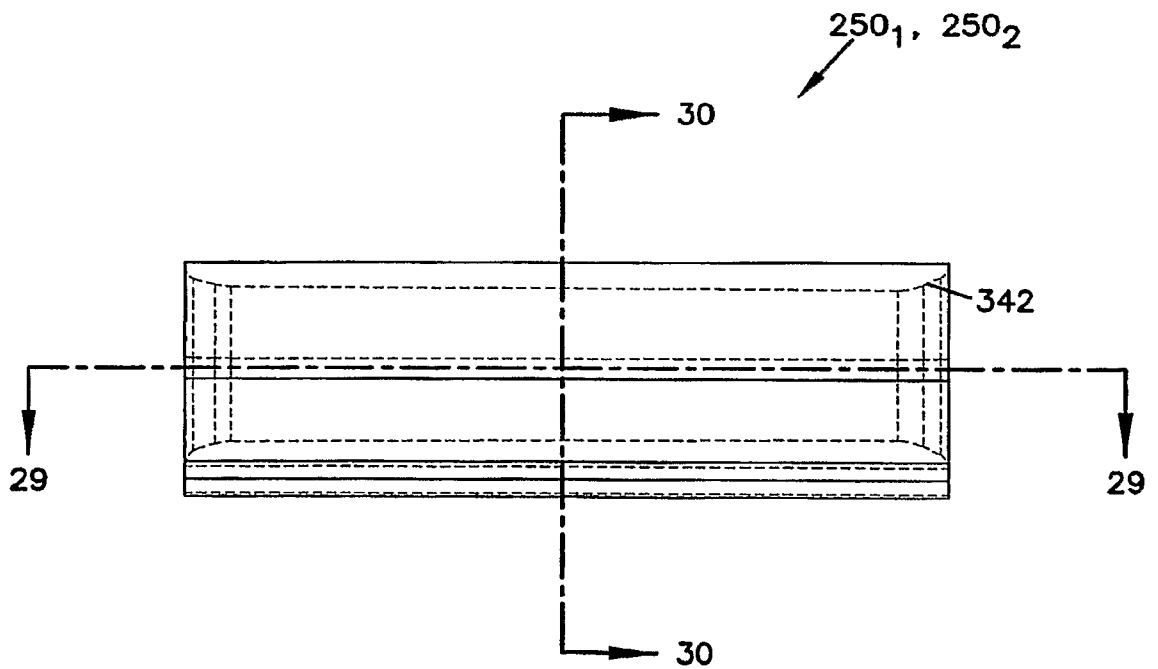


FIG. 29

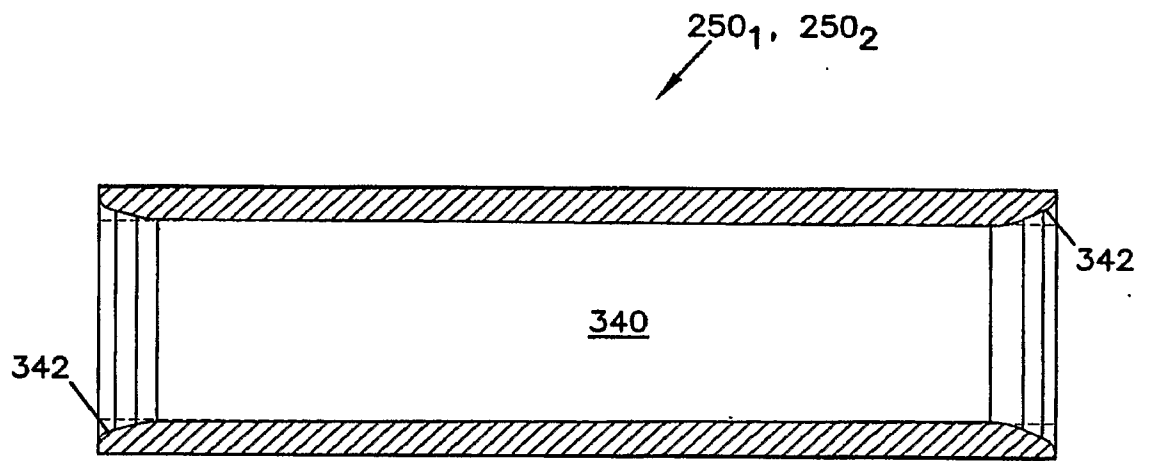
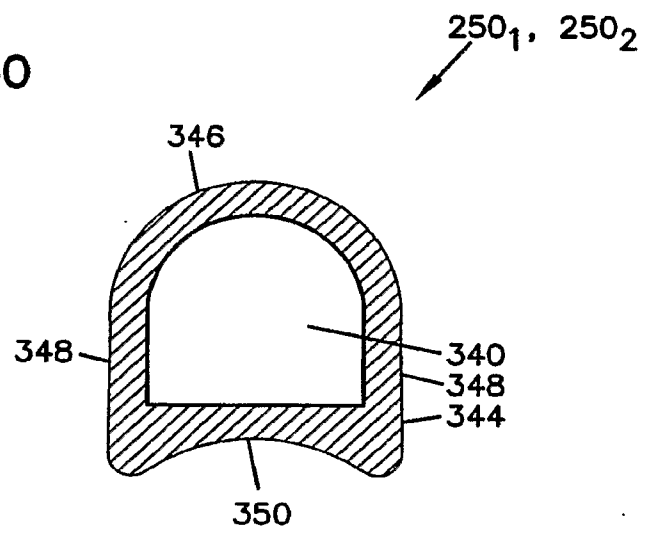


FIG. 30



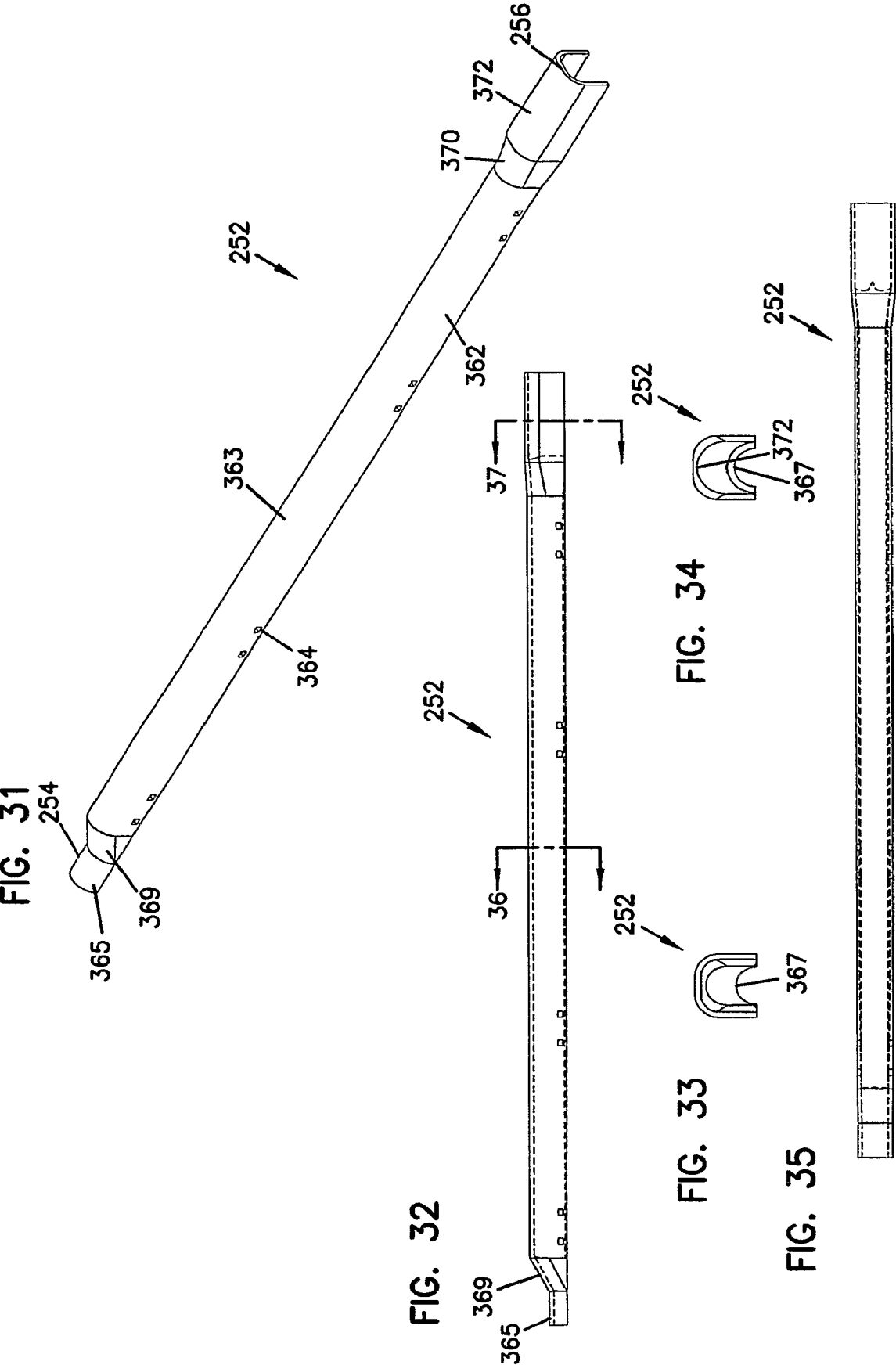


FIG. 36

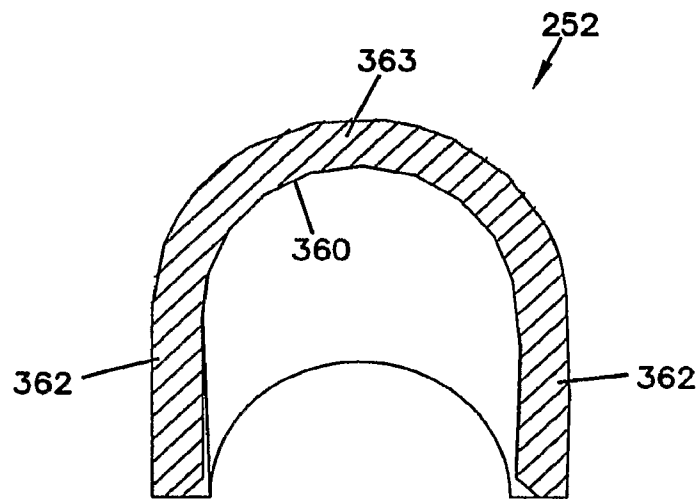


FIG. 37

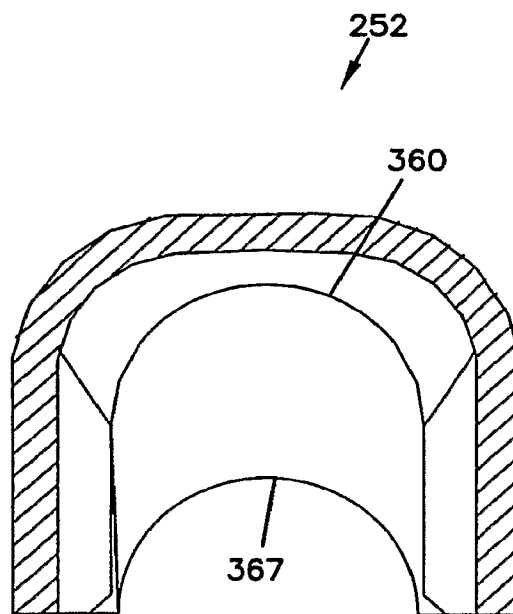


FIG. 38

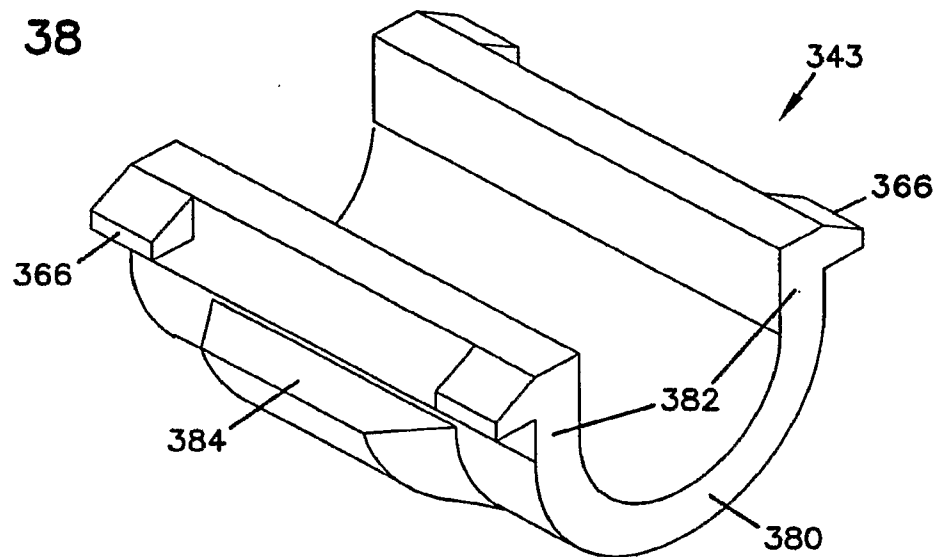


FIG. 39

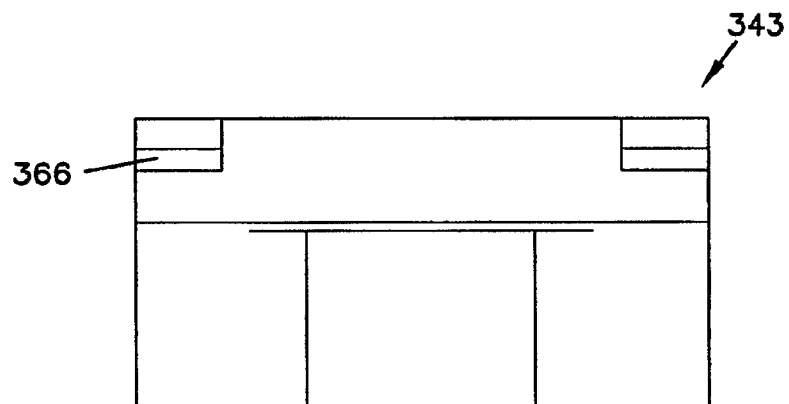


FIG. 40

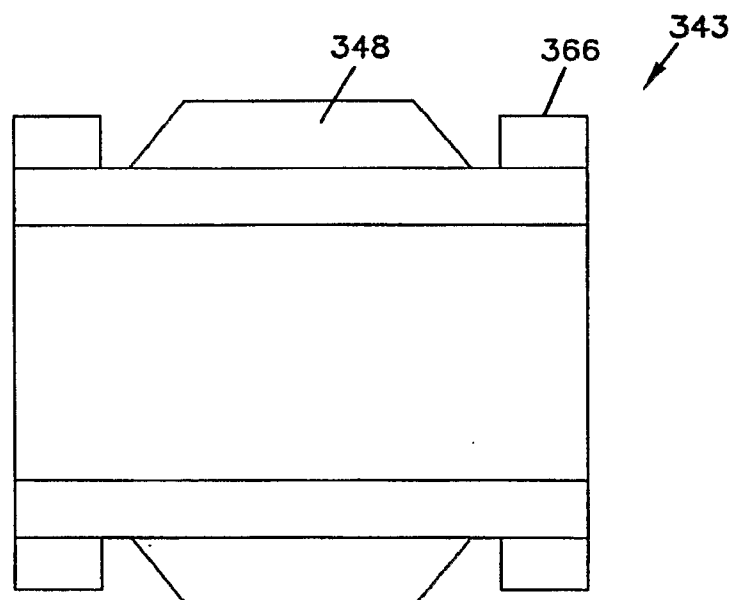


FIG. 41

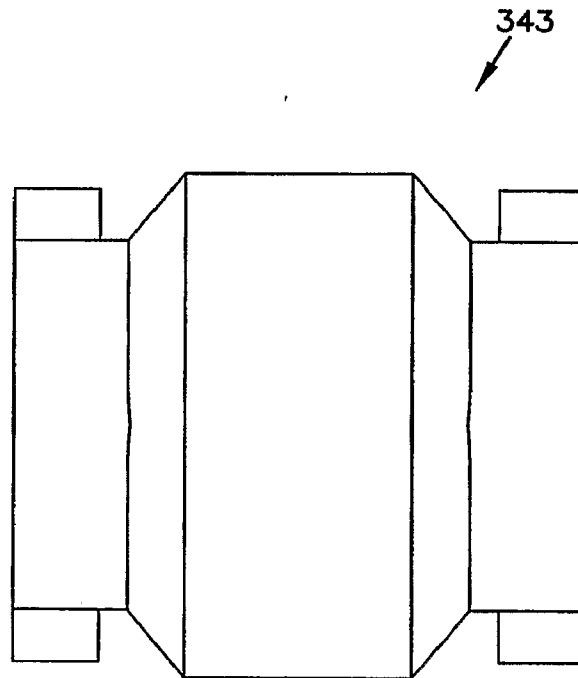
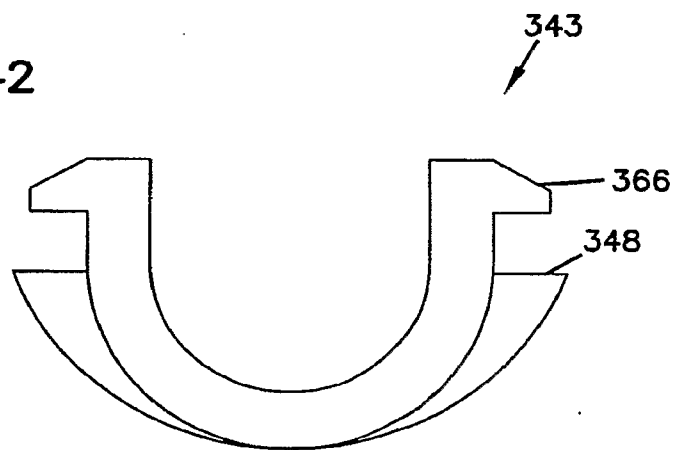


FIG. 42



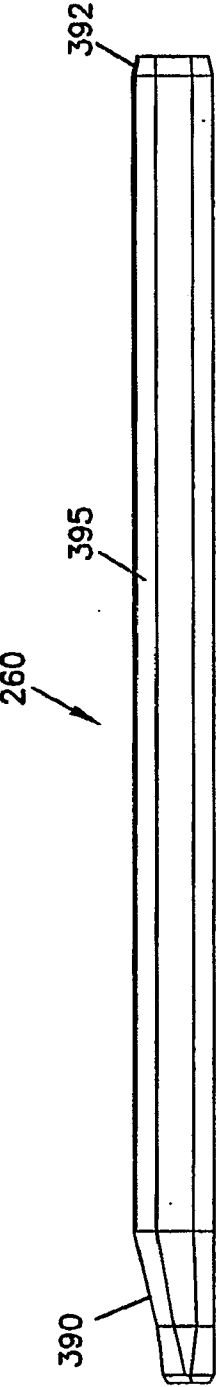


FIG. 43

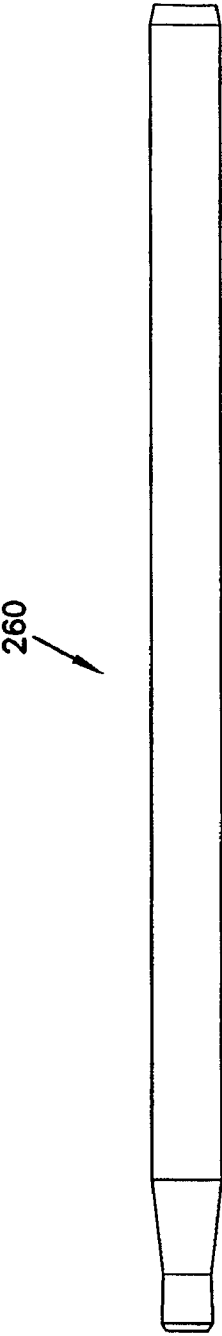


FIG. 44

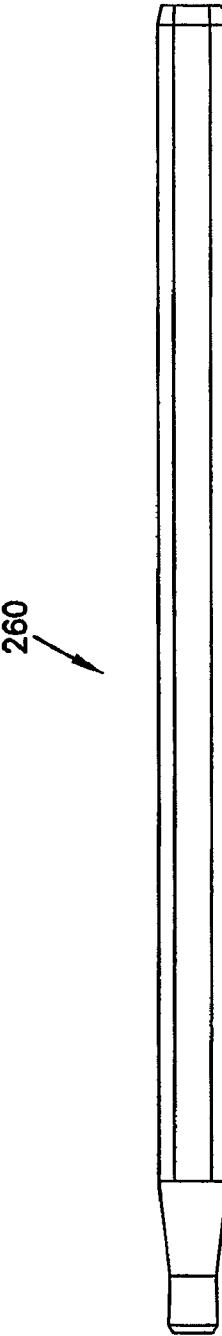


FIG. 45

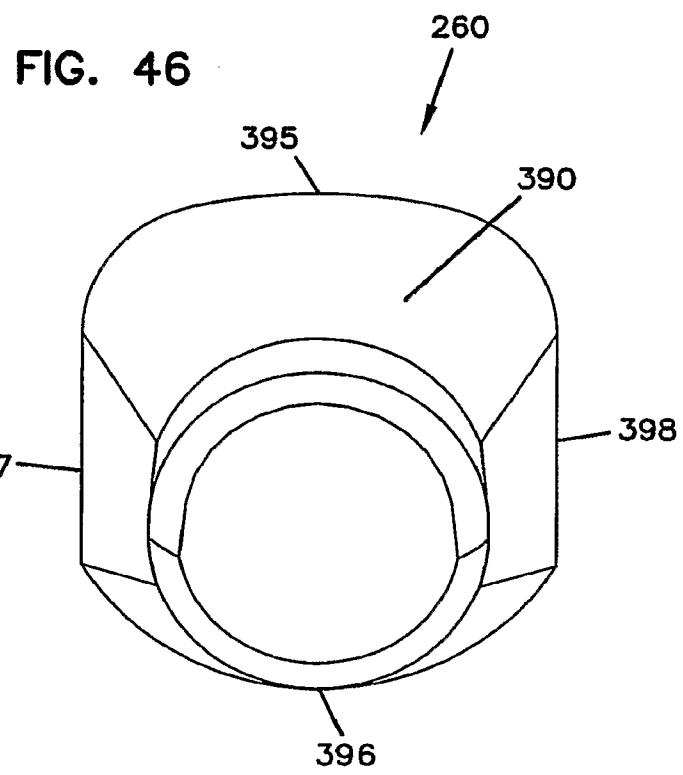


FIG.47

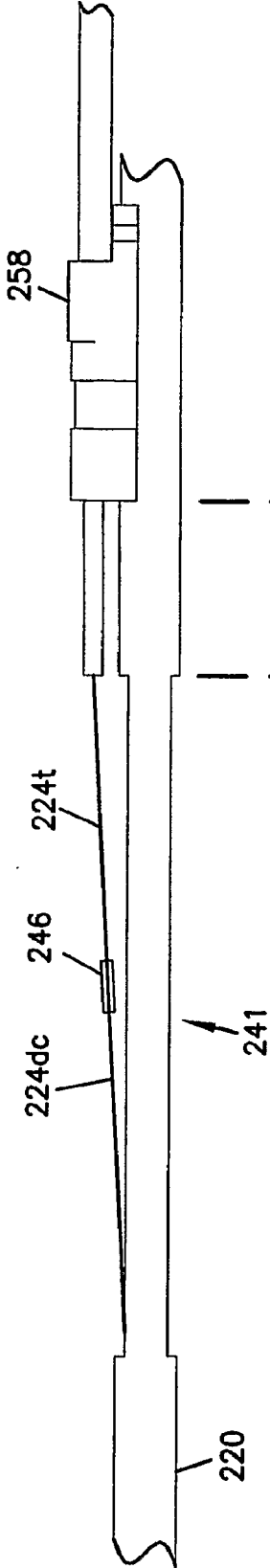


FIG.48

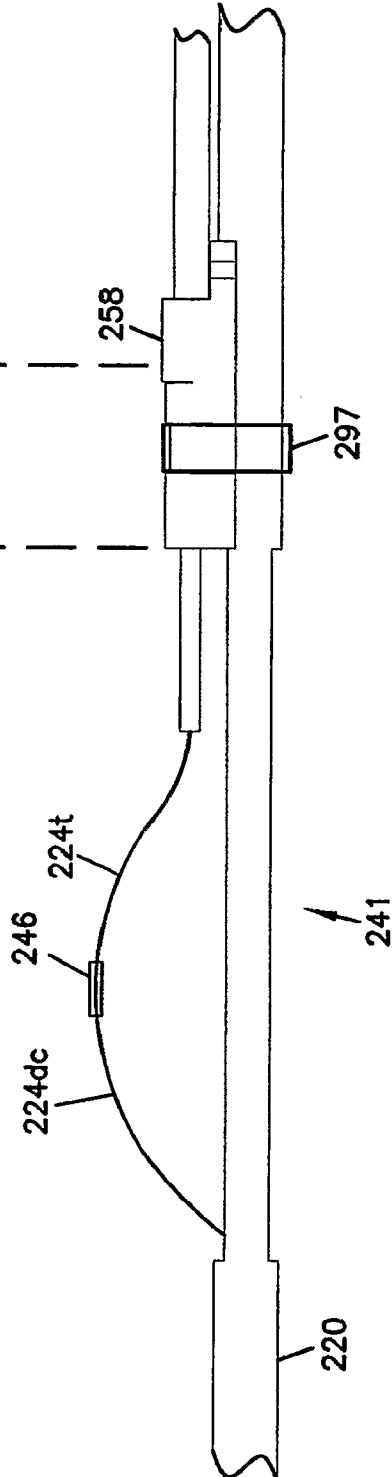


FIG.49

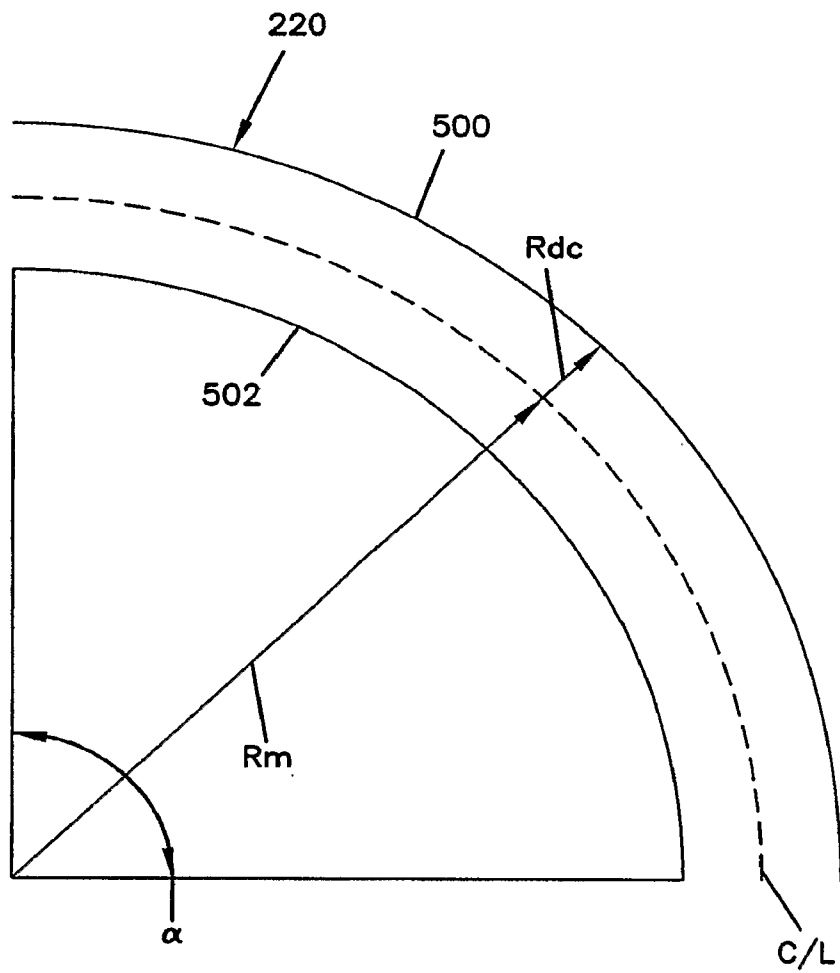


FIG.52

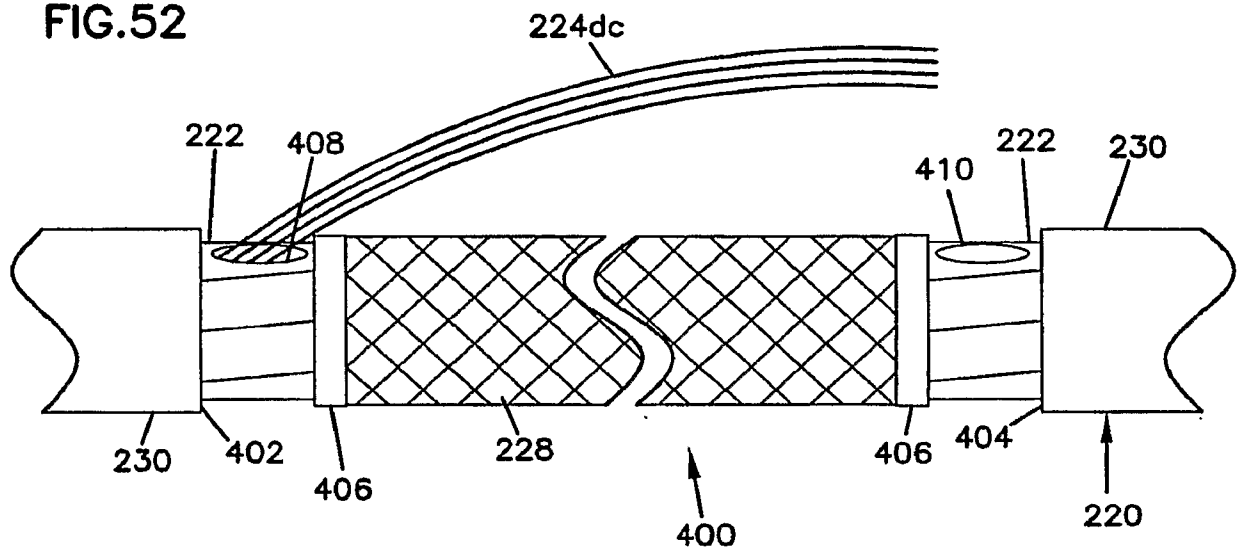


FIG.50

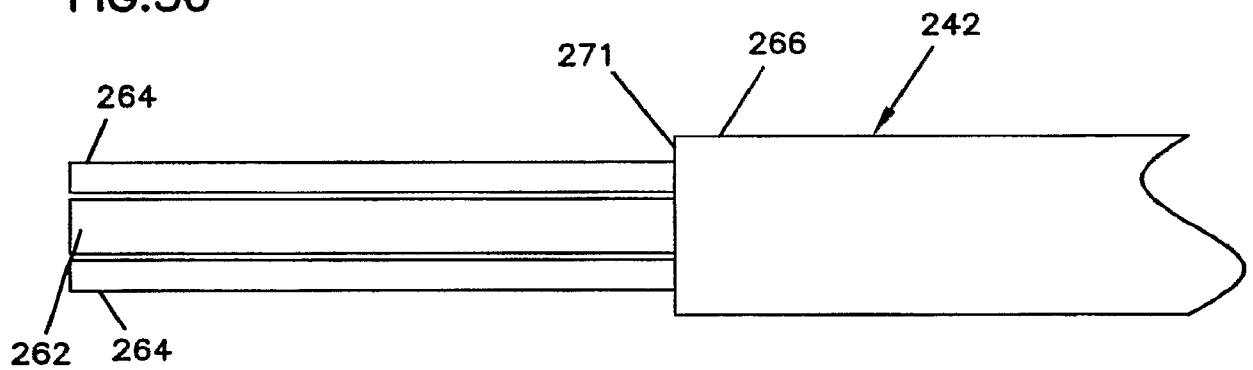
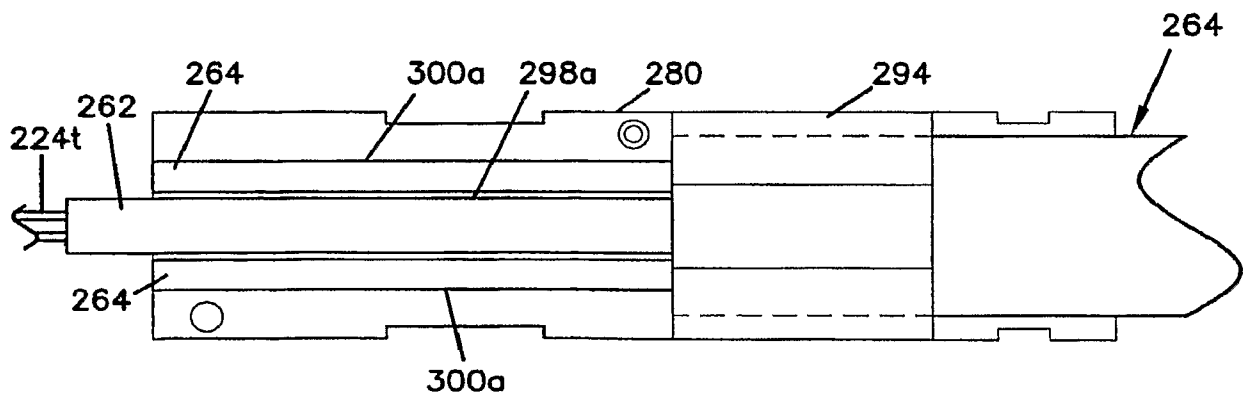


FIG.51



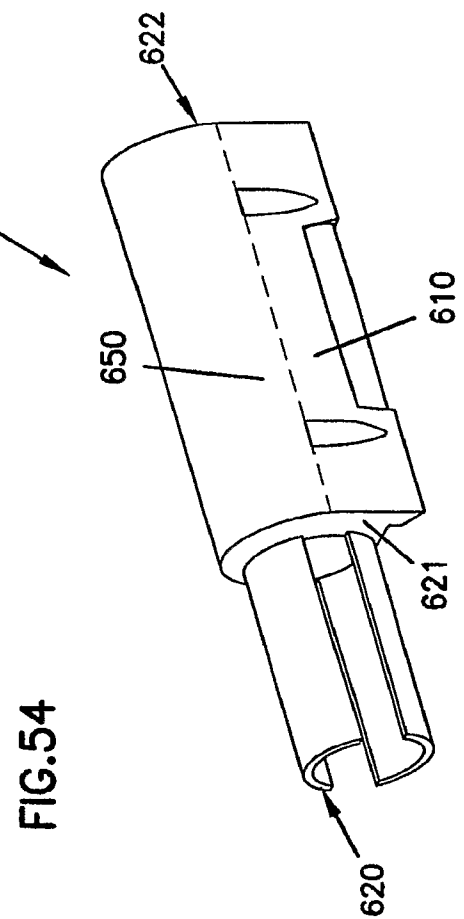
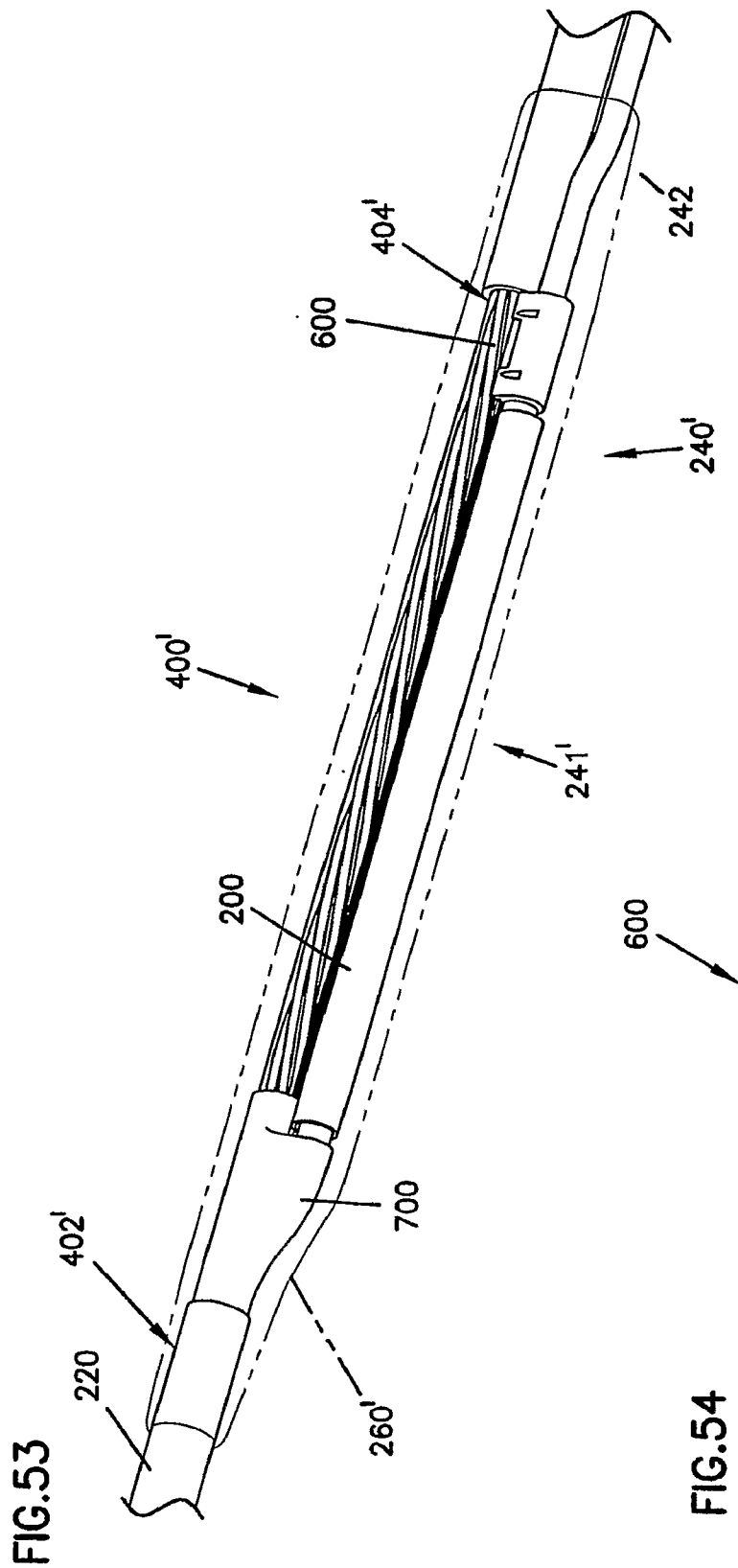


FIG.55

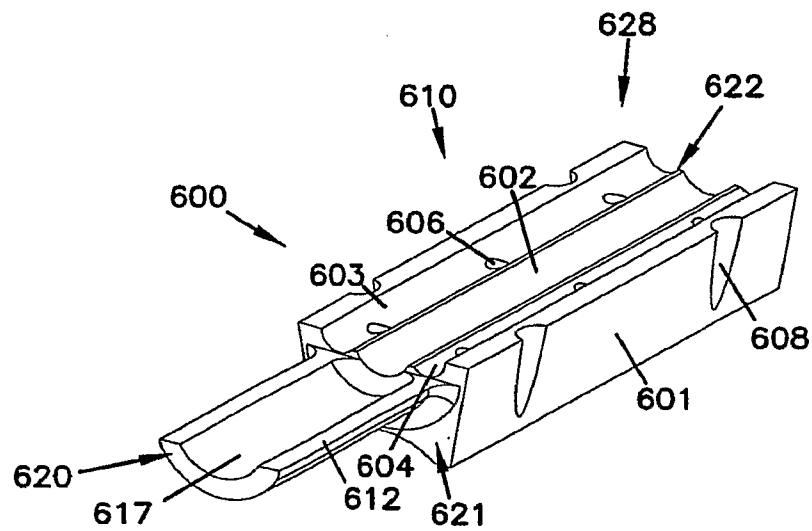


FIG.56

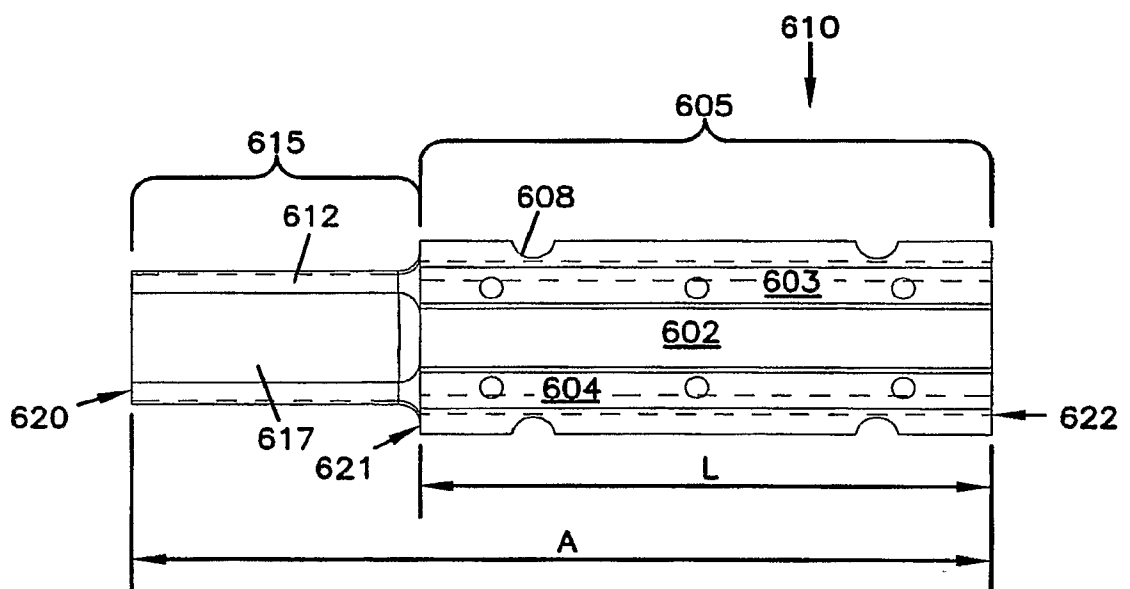


FIG.57

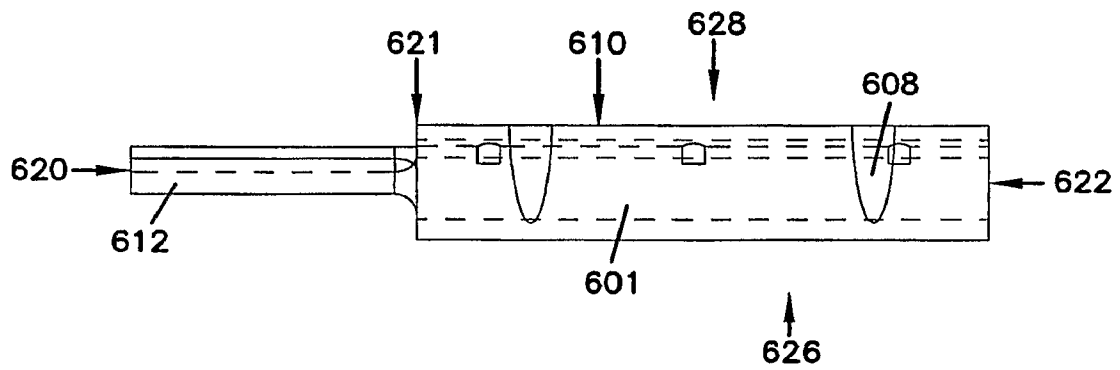


FIG.58

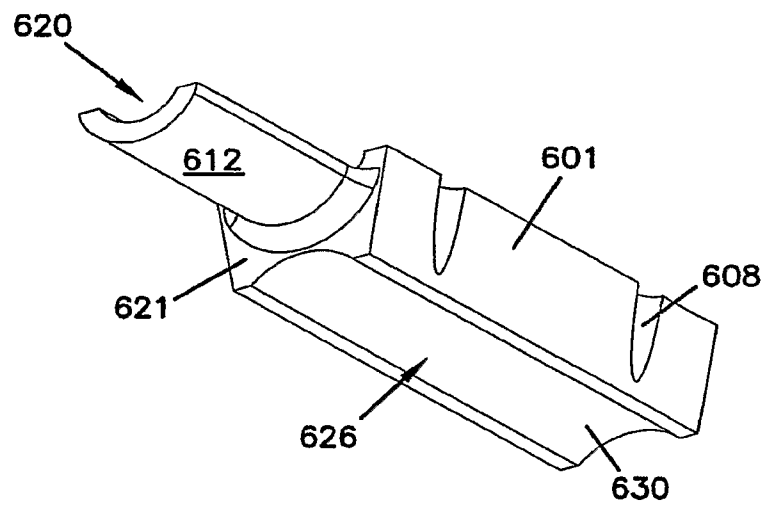


FIG.59

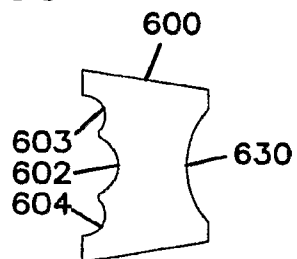
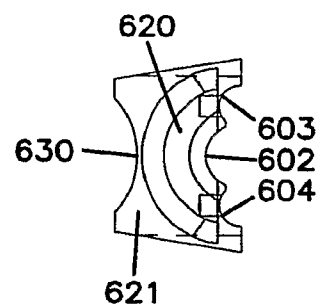


FIG.60



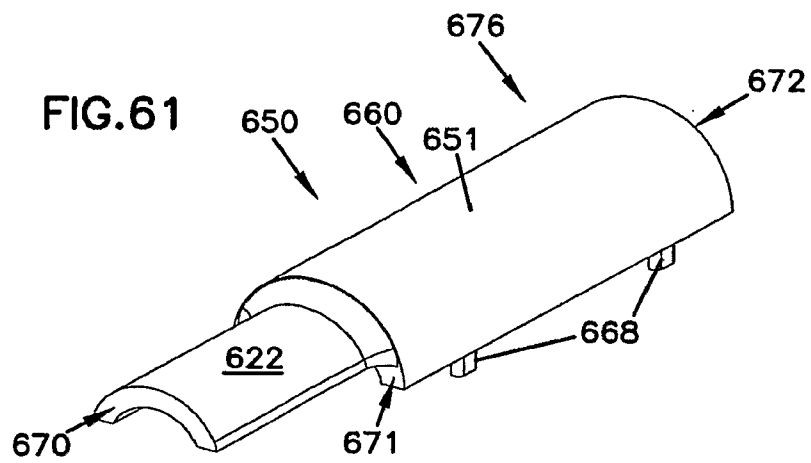


FIG.62

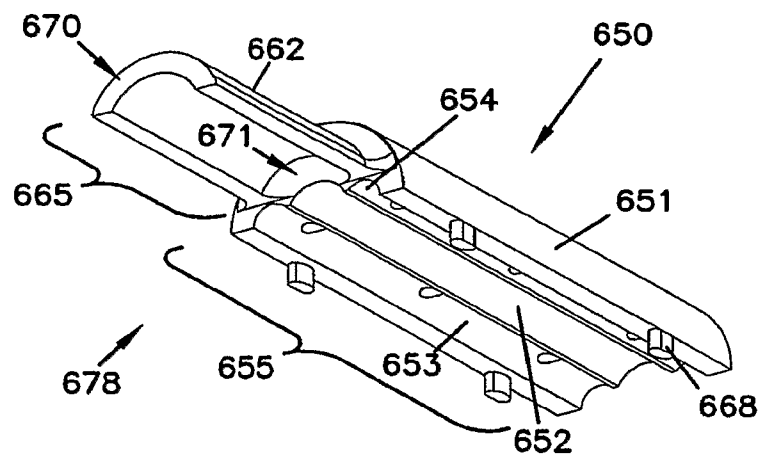


FIG.63

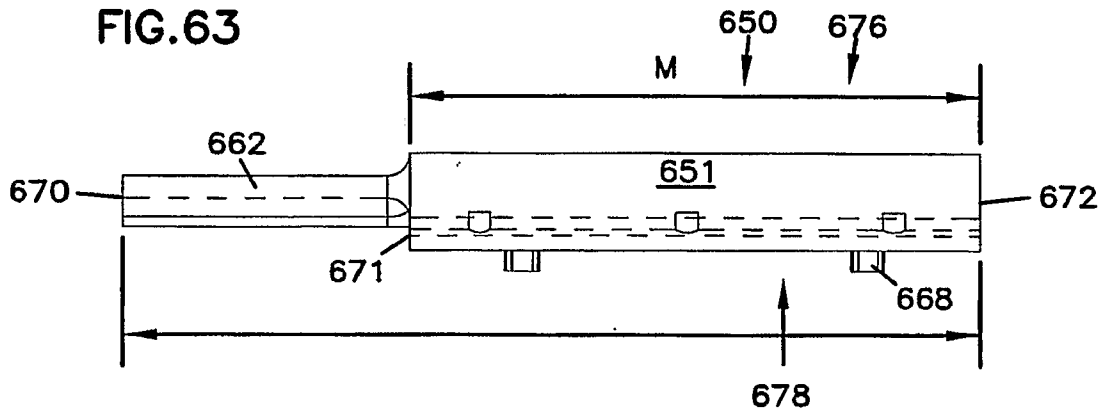


FIG.64

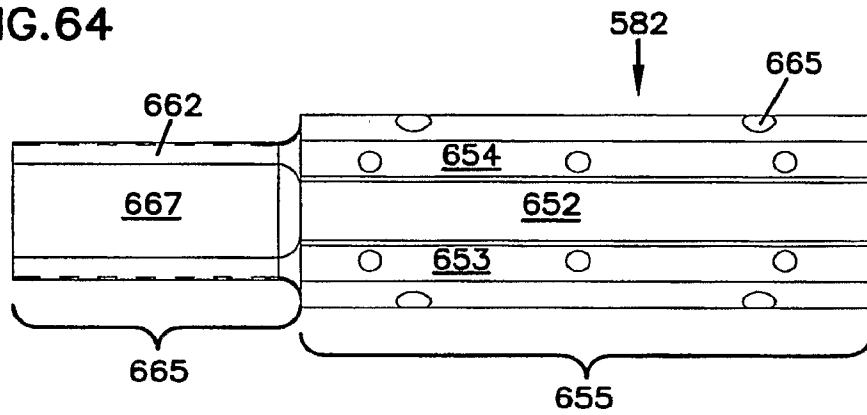


FIG.65

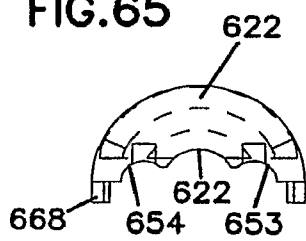


FIG.66

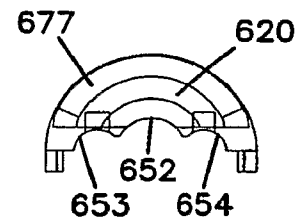
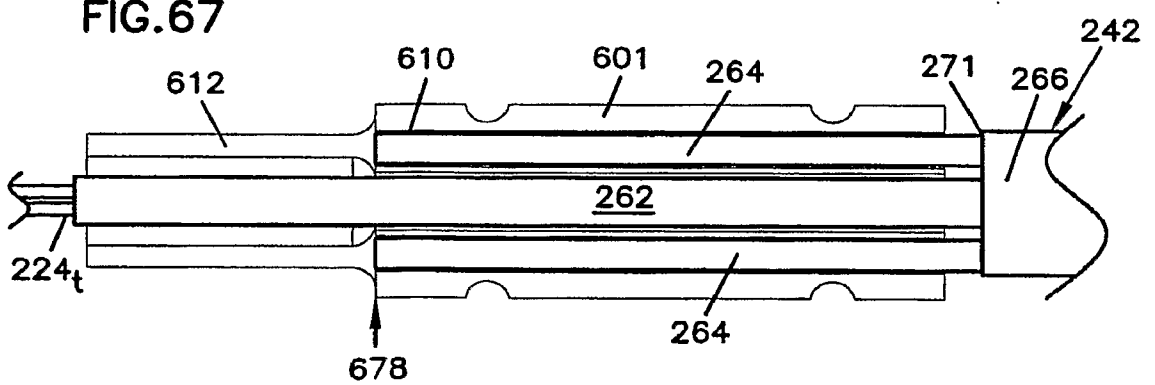


FIG.67



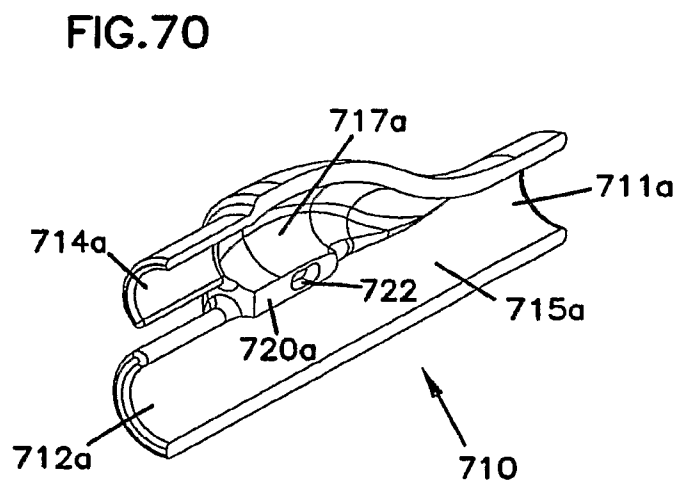
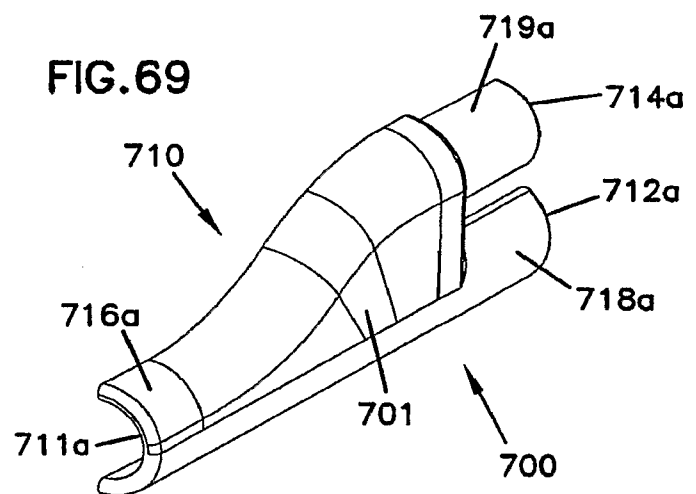
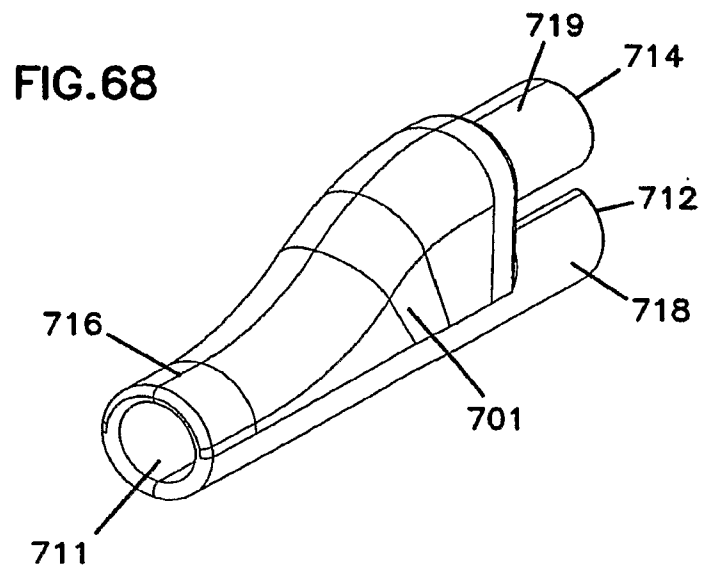


FIG.71

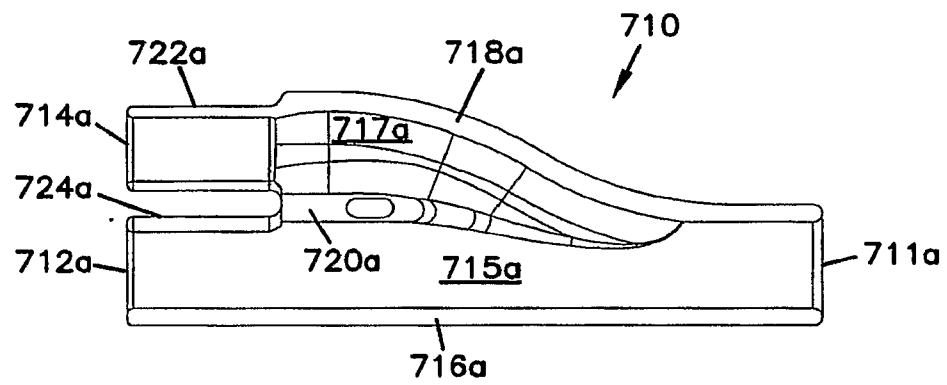


FIG.72

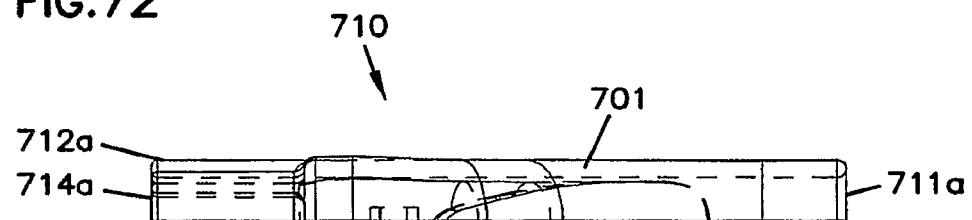


FIG.73

