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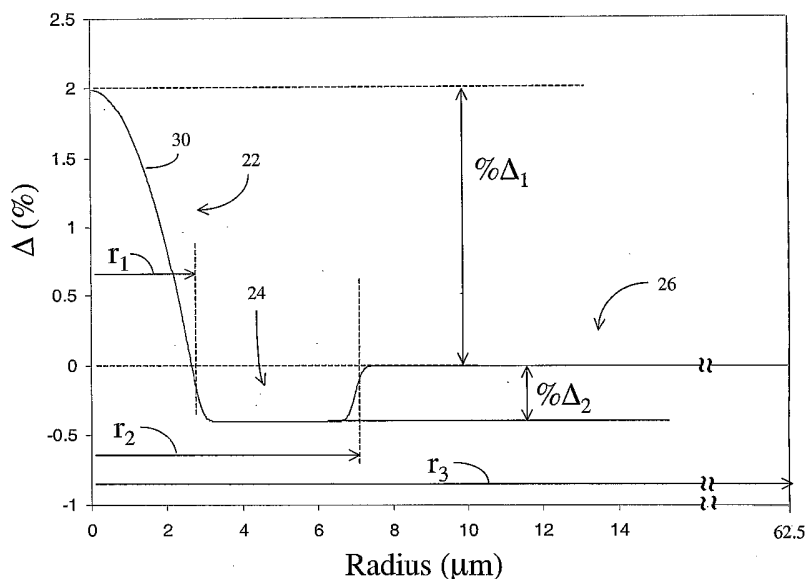
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(54) Title: NON-LINEAR POSITIVE DISPERSION OPTICAL FIBER



(57) Abstract: The present invention comprises an optical fiber have a small effective area and a positive dispersion suitable for use in the reshaping and regeneration of optical signals. The optical fiber according to the present invention has an effective area between about 10 μm^2 and 16 μm^2 , and a total dispersion between about 4 ps/nm/km and 8 ps/nm/km. Also disclosed is a method of making the inventive fiber wherein a high core relative refractive index can be achieved.



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NON-LINEAR POSITIVE DISPERSION OPTICAL FIBER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention relates to an optical fiber having a refractive index profile, a core radius, and a refractive index profile which provide a high non-linearity coefficient.

TECHNICAL BACKGROUND

[0002] Refractive index profile design has evolved as optical telecommunications systems requirements have changed. The study of the refractive index profile has been driven by the need for such optical fiber features as:

- positioning of cut off wavelength;
- positioning of zero dispersion wavelength;
- lower attenuation;
- improved bend resistance; and,
- lower total dispersion and dispersion slope.

[0003] More recently, the very high performance telecommunication systems, i.e., those which include multiplexing, high data rates, long regenerator spacing, soliton propagation, or optical amplifiers, have resulted in a broader study of refractive index profiles to include designs which yield a high effective area to minimize signal distortion and dispersion due to non-linear effects.

[0004] In certain devices, however, an increase in the non-linear index of refraction or decrease in effective area can improve performance. One notable case in which performance is enhanced by increased non-linearity is the reshaping and regeneration of optical signals (2-R regeneration).

[0005] Whenever a digital optical signal is processed, the signal is subject to distortion. Distortion is typically cumulative over time and distance, and therefore the signal must be periodically restored to maintain the information carried by the signal. Regenerators are utilized to provide this periodic restoration and restore the quality of the original data signal. Regenerators are opto-electronic devices wherein optical data is converted to an electrical signal, the signal is amplified and restored, and then the signal is converted back to an optical signal.

[0006] Previous all-optical regenerator designs have used an optical fiber that employs nonlinear propagation characteristics as a means of spectrally broadening optical pulses through self phase modulation (SPM) effects. The spectrally broadened pulses are then optically filtered, passing only light within a selected bandwidth. It has been suggested that optical fibers having a very small and negative (normal) dispersion are preferably used in such regenerators. However, the pulse broadening resulting from negative dispersion makes such fibers unattractive for wavelength division multiplexed (WDM) systems having a plurality of transmitted signals. When an optical regenerator is operated with several wavelength division multiplexed (WDM) spectral channels, small fiber dispersion will result in a strong inter-channel cross-talk through a cross-phase modulation (XPM). Using a fiber with larger negative dispersion will result in optical pulses quickly broadening in time domain and overlapping. On the other hand, if a nonlinear fiber with a relatively large positive (anomalous) dispersion is used, not only will it help minimize XPM crosstalk, but also the combined effects of SPM and dispersion will cause optical pulses to compress, so that the degree of spectral broadening required for the device operation can be achieved with less optical power and/or shorter nonlinear fiber.

[0007] What is required by devices which make use of highly non-linear waveguide fiber is that the non-linear waveguide retain such characteristics as those noted above. The difficulty of making non-linear optical fibers is therefore compounded because increased non-linearity usually requires an increased concentration of glass forming metal oxide dopants which alter the optical fiber core refractive index. The increased dopant concentration results in higher attenuation and affects mode power distribution which in turn affects the optical fiber properties required for efficient operation of a device using the non-linear optical fiber. In particular, it is difficult to attain high levels of dopant concentration in some vapor deposition methods, such as outside vapor deposition. Thus, there is a need for a positive dispersion optical fiber having a high degree of nonlinearity, and an improved method of making the high nonlinear fiber.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] The optical fiber according to the present invention comprises a refractive index profile comprising a core region, a first annular region disposed about and in contact with the outer periphery of the core region, a cladding region disposed about and in contact with the outer periphery of the first annular region, and wherein the refractive index profile is selected to provide an effective area between about $10\ \mu\text{m}^2$ and $16\ \mu\text{m}^2$, and a total dispersion between about 4 ps/nm/km and 8 ps/nm/km, both at a wavelength of 1550 nm. Preferably the optical fiber has a total dispersion between about 6 ps/nm/km and 8 ps/nm/km at a wavelength of 1550 nm. Preferably the optical fiber has an α profile. Preferably α is about 2. More preferably the optical fiber has a step index core refractive index profile.

[0009] It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description are merely exemplary of the invention, and are intended to provide an overview or framework for understanding the nature and character of the invention as it is claimed.

[0010] The accompanying drawings are included to provide a further understanding of the invention, and are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification. The drawings are not necessarily to scale, and sizes of various elements may be distorted for clarity. The drawings illustrate one or more embodiment(s) of the invention, and together with the description serve to explain the principles and operation of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] Fig. 1 is a schematic of a cross section of the optical fiber of the present invention.

[0012] Fig. 2 is a schematic showing the refractive index profile of an embodiment of the optical fiber of the present invention having a core region with an α profile.

[0013] Fig. 3 is a schematic showing the refractive index profile of an embodiment of the optical fiber of the present invention having a core region with a step index profile.

[0014] Figs. 4-7 are schematics showing additional examples of refractive index profiles according to the present invention having a core region with a step index profile.

[0015] FIGs 8-9 depict dispersion and effective area as a function of fiber diameter for several optical fibers according to the present invention.

[0016] FIG. 10 illustrates the application of a coating of glass soot to a mandrel.

[0017] FIG. 11 is a schematic showing a porous glass preform.

[0018] FIG. 12 is a detailed view of one end of a porous glass preform.

[0019] FIG. 13 is a cross-sectional view of a consolidated glass preform.

[0020] FIG. 14 is a schematic diagram illustrating the drawing of a core cane from a consolidated preform.

[0021] FIG. 15 illustrates the application of a coating of glass cladding soot to a core cane.

[0022] FIG. 16 is a schematic representation of a consolidation furnace and consolidation atmosphere system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

DEFINITIONS

[0023] The effective area is $A_{\text{eff}} = 2\pi (\int E^2 r dr)^2 / (\int E^4 r dr)$, where the integration limits are 0 to ∞ , and E is the electric field associated with the propagated light.

[0024] The relative refractive index, Δ , is defined by the equation,

[0025] $\Delta = (n_i^2 - n_c^2) / 2n_i^2$, where n_i is the maximum refractive index of the index profile segment i, and n_c is the refractive index in the reference region which is usually taken to be the minimum index of the clad layer. The relative refractive index is generally expressed as a percent and is indicated herein by the term % Δ .

[0026] For the particular profiles according to the present invention, the core region has one segment. The notation % Δ_1 is used to describe the relative refractive index of this single core segment. The notation % Δ_2 is used to describe the relative refractive index of a first annular region surrounding the core region and having a reduced refractive index, while the notation % Δ_3 is used to describe the relative refractive index of a cladding region surrounding the first annular region.

[0027] The term refractive index profile or simply index profile is the relation between Δ and radius over a selected portion of the core.

[0028] The term alpha profile refers to a core refractive index profile which follows the equation,

$$n(r) = n_0 (1 - \Delta[r/a]^\alpha) \quad (1)$$

where r is core radius, a is the last point in the core profile, r is chosen to be zero at the first point of the profile, n_0 is the maximum refractive index of the core, and α is an exponent which defines the core profile shape. Other core refractive index profile shapes include a step index, a trapezoidal index and a rounded step index, in which the rounding is due to dopant diffusion in regions of rapid refractive index change.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0029] The invention disclosed and described herein relates to a single mode optical fiber in which the non-linearity of the optical fiber is enhanced. This is in contrast to recent core design work which was undertaken to reduce non-linear effects by increasing the effective area of the waveguide. Also disclosed is a method for making the novel optical fiber.

[0030] A cross section of the nonlinear positive dispersion optical fiber **20** according to the present invention is depicted in FIG. 1. The nonlinear positive dispersion optical fiber comprises a longitudinal center axis, a core region **22** disposed about the center axis, a first annular region (sometimes referred to as a moat) **24**, and a cladding region **26**. The core region has an outer radius r_1 , a maximum refractive index value of n_1 , and a relative refractive index with respect to cladding **26** of Δ_1 . Preferably r_1 is between about 1.7 μm and 3 μm , more preferably between about 1.7 μm and 2.2 μm , and most preferably between about 1.8 μm and 2 μm . Preferably Δ_1 is between about 2% and 2.6%, more preferably between about 2% and 2.2%. Moat **24** is disposed about and in contact with an outer periphery of the core region **22**, and has an outer radius r_2 , a minimum refractive index value of n_2 (where $n_2 < n_1$), and a relative refractive index with respect to the cladding Δ_2 . Preferably r_2 is between about 6 μm and 8 μm , more preferably about 7 μm . Preferably Δ_2 is between about -0.4% and -1%, more preferably between about -0.4% and -0.8%. Cladding region **26** is disposed about

and in contact with an outer periphery of first annular region **24** and has an outer radius r_3 , a maximum refractive index value of n_3 (where $n_2 < n_3 < n_1$), and a relative refractive index with respect to pure silica Δ_3 . Preferably, r_3 is about 62.5 μm . Preferably, cladding region **26** is pure silica and $\Delta_3=0$. Preferably nonlinear positive dispersion optical fiber **20** is coated with a protective polymer coating **28**. The protective coating **28** may comprise one or more layers. Preferably the protective coating comprises at least two layers.

[0031] Core region **22** of nonlinear positive dispersion optical fiber **20** is comprised of SiO_2 doped with a pre-determined amount of a dopant to raise the refractive index of core region **22** to n_1 ($n_1 > n_0$, where n_0 is the refractive index of pure SiO_2). Preferably the core region **22** dopant comprises GeO_2 .

[0032] Moat **24** has an outer diameter of r_2 and is formed by doping SiO_2 glass with a predetermined amount of a dopant for lowering the refractive index, wherein its refractive index attains a minimum value of n_2 ($n_2 < n_0$, $n_2 < n_1$). Preferably moat **24** is doped with F. Cladding region **26** has an outer radius of r_3 . Cladding region **26** may be comprised of pure silica, or cladding region **26** may be formed by doping SiO_2 glass with a predetermined amount of a dopant suitable for adjusting the refractive index, wherein the refractive index of cladding region **26** attains a maximum value of n_3 ($n_3 \geq n_0$, $n_2 < n_3 < n_1$). Preferably, cladding region **26** is pure silica.

[0033] Preferably, nonlinear positive dispersion optical fiber **20** has a total dispersion at a wavelength of 1550 nm of between about 4 ps/nm/km and 8 ps/nm/km, more preferably between about 6 ps/nm/km and 8 ps/nm/km. It is desirable that the dispersion slope at 1550nm be as low as possible. Preferably, the nonlinear positive dispersion optical fiber has a dispersion slope less than about 0.06 ps/nm²/km at a wavelength of 1550 nm, more preferably less than 0.04 ps/nm²/km, and most preferably less than 0.03 ps/nm²/km.

[0034] A parameter useful for characterizing the dispersion properties of an optical fiber is the ratio of the total dispersion divided by the dispersion slope, referred to as kappa (K) and having units of nanometers (nm). Preferably the nonlinear positive dispersion optical fiber disclosed herein has a K at a wavelength of 1550 nm

between about 250 nm and 550 nm, more preferably between about 290 nm and 455 nm, and most preferably between about 390 nm and 525 nm.

[0035] Preferably, nonlinear positive dispersion optical fiber **20** according to the present invention has a ratio of the radius of core region **22** divided by the radius of moat **24** (r_1/r_2 , core/moat ratio) between about 0.15 and 0.40, more preferably between about 0.3 and 0.4, and most preferably between about 0.20 and 0.30.

[0036] Preferably, nonlinear positive dispersion optical fiber **20** has a cutoff wavelength λ_{cf} , as measured on a two meter length of optical fiber, of less than 1400 nm.

[0037] Although the modeled attenuation values in Table 1, *infra*, suggest an attenuation less than about 0.3 dB/km for the inventive fiber, actual optical fibers according to the present invention are expected to have an attenuation value much higher than the modeled value. Attenuation values between 0.5 dB/km and 1 dB/km are anticipated. Consequently, the nonlinear positive dispersion optical fiber according to the present invention preferably has an optical attenuation less than about 1 dB/km, more preferably less than about 0.5 dB/km, and most preferably less than about 0.3 dB/km.

[0038] In one embodiment of the present invention, the core region **22** of optical fiber **20** has an α -profile. Fig. 2 shows an exemplary refractive index profile **30** depicting relative refractive index as a function of radius for this embodiment of nonlinear positive dispersion fiber **20**. Figure 2 further illustrates various regions and parameters of the optical fiber refractive index profile **30** as referenced herein. The optical fiber of this embodiment has a core region **22**, a moat **24** and a cladding region **26**. Core region **22** of the nonlinear positive dispersion optical fiber of this embodiment has an outer radius, r_1 , a maximum refractive index n_1 , and a relative refractive index with respect to cladding region **26** of $\% \Delta_1$. In this embodiment, core region **22** preferably has an α of about 2. Moat **24** is disposed about and in contact with the outer periphery of core region **22**. Moat **24** has an outer radius r_2 , a minimum refractive index n_2 (where $n_2 < n_1$), and a relative refractive index $\% \Delta_2$. Cladding region **26** is disposed about and in contact with the outer periphery of moat **24**. Cladding region **26** has an outer radius r_3 , a maximum refractive index n_3 (where $n_2 < n_3 < n_1$), and a relative refractive index with respect to pure silica of $\% \Delta_3$.

Preferably, $\% \Delta_3 = 0$. In FIG. 2, radius r_1 is defined as the radius of refractive index profile **30** where core region **22** crosses the Δ (%) axis at a value of zero, r_2 is defined as the radius of refractive index profile **30** profile at $\% \Delta_2/2$ and r_3 is the radius at the outer periphery of cladding region **26**. Preferably r_3 is about 62.5 μm . A summary of optical fiber attributes modeled at a wavelength of 1550 nm for refractive index profile **30** displayed in FIG. 2 is provided in Table 1, infra.

[0039] The effective area of the inventive optical fiber can be decreased by changing the core from an alpha profile to a step index design. In another embodiment of the present invention, nonlinear optical fiber **20** has a core region **22** generally in the shape of a step (step index), a moat **24** and a cladding region **26**. This embodiment is shown by refractive index profile **32** in FIG. 3. FIG. 3 further illustrates various regions and parameters of the optical fiber refractive index profile **32** as referenced herein. It is intended that these regions and parameters apply also to the refractive index profiles (**34-40**) depicted in FIGs. 4-7. Core region **22** of the nonlinear positive dispersion optical fiber of this embodiment has an outer radius, r_1 , a maximum refractive index n_1 , and a relative refractive index of $\% \Delta_1$. Moat **24** is disposed about and in contact with the outer periphery of core region **22**. Moat **24** has an outer radius r_2 , a minimum refractive index n_2 (where $n_2 < n_1$), and a relative refractive index $\% \Delta_2$. Cladding region **26** is disposed about and in contact with the outer periphery of moat **24**. Cladding region **26** has an outer radius r_3 , a maximum refractive index n_3 (where $n_2 < n_3 < n_1$), and a relative refractive index with respect to pure silica $\% \Delta_3$. Preferably cladding region **26** is pure silica and $\% \Delta_3 = 0$. In FIG. 3, radius r_1 is defined as the radius of refractive index profile **32** at a delta value of $\% \Delta_1/2$ and radius r_2 is defined as the radius of refractive index profile **32** at a delta value of $\% \Delta_2/2$. In FIG. 3 (and FIGs. 4 - 7), $\% \Delta_3 = 0$ and is not shown. Radius r_3 is defined as the radius at the outer periphery of cladding region **26**. A summary of optical fiber attributes modeled at a wavelength of 1550 nm for refractive index profile **32-40** displayed in FIG. 3 is provided in Table 1, infra.

Table 1

Profile	30	32	34	36	38	40
λ_{cf} (nm)	1243	1267	1363	1145	1314	1390
MFD (μm)	4.47	4.05	3.72	3.79	4.1	4.1
A_{eff} (μm^2)	15.2	12.9	11.0	11.4	13.3	13.4
D (ps/nm/km)	4.0	4.1	4.1	4.1	7.0	10
S (ps/nm ² /km)	0.0475	0.0281	0.0251	0.0236	0.0312	0.0345
K (nm)	84.2	145.9	163.3	173.7	224.4	289.9
Att (dB/km)	0.232	0.266	0.281	0.278	0.264	0.265
r_1 (μm)	2.9	1.89	1.79	1.8	1.96	2.02
Δ_1 (%)	2	2	2.5	2	2	2.1
r_2 (μm)	7	7	7	7	7	7
Δ_2 (%)	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4	-0.8	-0.4	-0.4
r_3 (μm)	62.5	62.5	62.5	62.5	62.5	62.5
Δ_3 (%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
r_1/r_2	0.41	0.27	0.26	0.26	0.28	0.29

[0040] In Table 1, λ_{cf} is the fiber cutoff wavelength when measured on a 2 meter length of optical fiber, MFD is the mode field diameter, A_{eff} is the effective area, D is the total dispersion, S is the dispersion slope, K is the ratio of dispersion divided by the dispersion slope, Att. is the optical fiber attenuation, and r_1/r_2 is the ratio of core radius r_1 divided by moat radius r_2 .

[0041] As shown in Table 1, the effective area for optical fiber refractive index profile **32** is $12.9 \mu\text{m}^2$. The effective area may be further reduced by increasing the core region delta, $\% \Delta_1$. This can be seen by examining refractive index profile **34** depicted in FIG. 4. Here, the optical fiber represented by refractive index profile **34** has attained a modeled effective area of $11.0 \mu\text{m}^2$ by increasing $\% \Delta_1$ by 0.5%

compared to profile **30**. Meanwhile, the total dispersion at 1550 nm has been maintained at approximately 4.1 ps/nm/km.

[0042] Alternatively, the effective area of the optical fiber of the present step index embodiment may also be reduced by decreasing Δ_2 . In the refractive index profile of the present embodiment depicted in FIG. 5 as refractive index profile **36**, the Δ_2 has been reduced to -0.8%. The result is an effective area of about $11.4 \mu\text{m}^2$, approximately equivalent to the effective area in the case above (profile **34**) wherein Δ_1 was increased.

[0043] The total dispersion of the inventive fiber may be changed by varying other refractive index profile parameters, such as, for example, core radius. Refractive index profile **38**, shown in FIG. 6, has a modeled total dispersion of about 7 ps/nm/km at a wavelength of 1550 nm. The core radius of this refractive index profile is about $1.96 \mu\text{m}$. By way of comparison, refractive index profile **40**, shown in FIG. 7 has a core radius of about $2.02 \mu\text{m}$ and the total dispersion is increased to about 10 ps/nm/km.

[0044] The nonlinear positive dispersion optical fiber according to the present invention is also suitable for making dispersion decreasing optical fiber. This can be done by varying the cladding diameter during the optical fiber draw process. To illustrate a varying total dispersion property, FIGs. 8 and 9 plot total dispersion, shown by the solid line, as a function of fiber diameter for refractive index profiles **32** and **36**, respectively. In the same figures, the effective area change with optical fiber cladding diameter, shown by the dashed line, is also shown. It is clear from FIGs. 8 and 9 that when optical fiber cladding diameter is reduced, both the total dispersion and the effective area decrease. For application involving so-called soliton pulse propagation regime, this is a preferred result because the decrease in dispersion and effective area both result in a decrease of the fundamental soliton power which may compensate some power loss due to the attenuation of the optical fiber.

[0045] The nonlinear positive dispersion fibers disclosed herein can be fabricated by the skilled artisan, for example, using germanium and fluorine-doping of silica glass with standard OVD, MCVD, PCVD or VAD methods. However, regardless of the method employed, the relatively high core region delta required for the optical fiber requires a means of incorporating sufficient GeO_2 in the core. Moreover, some

profile designs according to the present invention may require core region α eritas as high as 4%, which may be difficult to achieve because the high GeO_2 concentration required in the core region may be as high as 63 weight % (wt. %) or more. Such high GeO_2 concentrations in the core region may lead to high CTE mismatch between the core region and the outlying first annular region or the cladding region. CTE mismatch may in turn lead to spontaneous fracturing (crizzling) of the optical fiber preform as the preform cools. CTE mismatch may also result in high residual stress and increased attenuation after drawing of the fiber.

[0046] In a method of making the optical fiber according to the present invention, an optical fiber core preform is manufactured by outside vapor deposition (OVD) as illustrated in Figs. 10-16. A circularly symmetric porous preform may be formed in accordance with the method illustrated in FIG. 10. In the method shown in FIG. 10, an optical fiber core blank is formed by a method similar to that disclosed in U.S. Pat. 4,486, 212 (Berkey). Referring to FIG. 10, the large diameter end of a tapered mandrel **42** is inserted into glass tube **44**, hereinafter referred to as handle **44**, having annular protrusion **46**. Shims (not shown) can be used to secure handle **44** to mandrel **42** as disclosed in U.S. Pat. 4,289,517. The mandrel may be provided with a layer of carbon soot to facilitate removal of the soot preform. Mandrel **42** is rotated and translated with respect to a burner **48** of the type disclosed in U.S. Pat. 4,165,223. Fuel gas and oxygen or air are supplied to burner **48** from a source (not shown). This mixture is burned to produce a flame which is emitted from burner **48**. A gas-vapor mixture is oxidized within the flame to form a soot stream **50** which is directed toward mandrel **42**. Suitable means for delivering the gas-vapor mixture to burner **48** are well known in the art; for an illustration of such means reference is made to U.S. Pat. Nos. 3,826,560, 4,148,621 and 4,173,305. One or more auxiliary burners (not shown) may be employed to direct a flame toward one or both ends of the porous soot preform during deposition to prevent breakage; the use of auxiliary burners is taught in U.S. Pat. 4,810, 276 (Gilliland).

[0047] Burner **48** is generally operated under conditions that will provide acceptably high laydown rates and efficiency while minimizing the buildup of soot on the face thereof. Under such conditions, the flow rates of gases and reactants from the burner orifices and the sizes and locations of such orifices as well as the axial

orientation thereof are such that a well focused stream of soot flows from burner **48** toward mandrel **42**. In addition, a cylindrical shield (not shown) which is spaced a short distance from the burner face, protects the soot stream from ambient air currents and improves laminar flow. Porous soot core preform **52** is formed by traversing mandrel **42** many times with respect to burner **48** to cause a build-up of many layers of silica soot. The translating motion could also be achieved by moving burner **48** back and forth along rotating mandrel **42** or by the combined translational motion of both burner **48** and mandrel **42**. Core preform **52** may contain only core glass, or alternatively, the core preform may contain at least a portion of the cladding glass. After the deposition of soot core preform **52**, mandrel **42** is pulled therefrom, and the mandrel is removed through handle **44**, thereby leaving a longitudinal aperture **54**, as shown in FIG. 11, in the porous preform through which drying gas **56** may be flowed during consolidation. Protrusion **46** causes preform **52** to adhere to handle **44**; handle **44** supports preform **52** during subsequent processing.

[0048] The steps of drying and consolidating the optical fiber core preform may be performed in accordance with the teachings of U.S. Patent No. 4,165,223, which patent is hereby incorporated by reference.

[0049] During consolidation, core preform **52** may be suspended by handle **44**. Prior to the introduction of drying gas **56**, optical fiber core preform **52** is heat treated in the presence of oxygen to stabilize the GeO₂ content of optical fiber core preform **52**. During the laydown step Ge takes on two forms – an amorphous Ge and a crystalline Ge. The amorphous Ge is stable and will be retained in the preform during the consolidation step. However, crystalline Ge is very volatile and may be easily removed during the drying step by the chlorine drying gas. The presence of oxygen serves to stabilize the crystalline Ge, and therefore improving Ge retention in the core region. Preferably, between 0.05 and 30 volume % (vol.%) oxygen is employed, more preferably between about 0.05 vol.% and 10 vol.%, and most preferably between about 0.05 vol.% and 5 vol.%. The oxygen may be combined with an inert gas, such as, for example, helium, argon, or nitrogen. Preferably core preform is exposed to oxygen between 15 and 360 minutes at a temperature between 800°C and 1200°C.

[0050] After stabilizing the Ge content of the optical fiber core preform, the preform is dried. Drying can be facilitated by inserting a short section of capillary tube **58** into that end **60** of the porous preform aperture **54** opposite handle **44**. Capillary tube **58** initially permits some of the drying gas to flush water from the central region of the core preform. As porous preform **52** is inserted into a consolidation furnace to dry and consolidate the preform, the capillary tube aperture closes to form a solid plug, thereby causing all drying gas **56** to thereafter flow through the preform interstices. A detailed view of end **60** is shown in FIG. 12.

[0051] The consolidation atmosphere may contain helium and oxygen and an amount of chlorine. Chlorine gas is included to aid in water removal from the preform. In particular, chlorine permeates the interstices of the soot preform and flushes out any OH, H₂ or H₂O contained therein. Core preform **52** is then heated at a high temperature (generally in the range of between about 1450° C. to about 1600° C., depending upon preform composition) until the deposited soot consolidates and transforms into a solid, high-purity glass having superior optical properties. Once preform **52** is consolidated, it is removed from the furnace and transferred to an argon-filled holding vessel.

[0052] After consolidation, the consolidated optical fiber core preform aperture **54** will be closed at end **60** as shown in Fig. 13 due to the presence of the aforementioned capillary plug. If no plug is employed the entire aperture will remain open. In this event end **60** is closed after consolidation by a technique such as heating and pinching the same.

[0053] Consolidated core preform **52** of Fig. 13, which will form at least a portion of the core of the resultant optical fiber, is etched to remove a thin surface layer. It is then stretched into at least one intermediate article (core cane), which is thereafter provided with additional core glass or with a cladding glass.

[0054] For certain soot compositions including pure silica, conventional soot deposition techniques result in the formation of a devitrified layer on the aperture-forming surface of the resultant glass preform during the consolidation process. If such a devitrified layer exists in the preform, it should be removed by etching to prevent the formation of seeds in the resultant fiber. If aperture **54** closes during consolidation, end **60** must be severed to permit an acid wash to flow freely through

aperture **54** in order to effectively remove the devitrified layer. Thereafter, the aperture is rinsed and dried, and end **60** is heated and sealed.

[0055] A preferred method of forming a silica soot preform, which is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,453,961, prevents devitrification of the aperture-forming surface during consolidation. That method comprises depositing the first plurality of layers of glass soot on the mandrel at a deposition rate that is sufficiently low that no spiral pattern of deposited soot is visible. The deposition of a fine, spiral-free coating on mandrel **42** can be accomplished by supplying burner **48** with a greatly reduced flow of reactant. The absence of a high velocity reactant vapor stream emanating from the burner tends to generate a defocused soot stream **50** that is incapable of depositing a coating of soot having a sufficient density variation to appear as a spiral. After many layers are deposited, the fine soot stream becomes continuous.

[0056] After the unfocused soot stream has been employed for a time sufficient to build up a continuous layer, the flow of reactants to the burner is increased to conventional rate, and the remainder of preform **52** is deposited at a normal high deposition rate.

[0057] The core cane can be formed in a conventional draw furnace wherein the tip of the consolidated preform from which the core cane is being drawn is heated to a temperature which is slightly lower than the temperature to which the preform would be subjected to draw optical fiber therefrom. A temperature of about 1900°C is suitable for a silica preform. A suitable method for forming a core cane is illustrated in FIG. 14. Preform **52** is mounted in a conventional draw furnace by yoke **62**, within which handle **44** is seated, and the tip of preform **52** is heated by resistance heater **64**. A vacuum connection **66** is attached to handle **44**, and preform aperture **54** is evacuated. A glass rod **68**, which is attached to the bottom of preform **52**, is pulled by motor-driven tractors **70**, thereby causing the core cane **72** to be drawn at a suitable rate. A rate of 15 to 23 cm/min has been found to be adequate. As core cane **72** is drawn, aperture **54** readily closes since the pressure therein is low relative to ambient pressure. The diameter of core cane **72** that is to be employed as a mandrel upon which cladding soot is to be deposited is preferably in the range of 4 to 10 mm.

[0058] Core cane **72** is mounted in a lathe where it is rotated and translated with respect to burner **48** shown in Fig. 15. A coating **74** of silica soot is thereby built up on the surface thereof to form a composite preform **76**. Composite preform **76** is heated in consolidation furnace **78**, shown in Fig. 16, to form a complete, consolidated optical fiber preform. Consolidation furnace **78** comprises a high silica content muffle **80** surrounded by heating elements **82**. A high silica content liner **84** separates heating elements **82** from muffle **80**. The term "high silica content" as used herein means pure fused silica or a high silica content glass such as a borosilicate glass. Consolidation gases **86** are fed to the bottom of muffle **84** through a conical section **88** which is affixed thereto. Silica muffle **84** is supported at its upper end by a ring **90**. Conical section **88** is supported by ringstand **92**. The consolidation gases **86** flow through one or more holes in conical section **88**. The complete consolidated optical fiber preform is then further heated in a drawing furnace and drawn into optical fiber.

[0059] It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made to the present invention without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Thus, it is intended that the present invention cover the modifications and variations of this invention provided they come within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.

We claim:

1. An optical fiber comprising:
 - a refractive index profile comprising a core region;
 - a first annular region disposed about and in contact with the outer periphery of the core region;
 - a cladding region disposed about and in contact with the outer periphery of the first annular region; and
 - wherein the refractive index profile is selected to provide an effective area at a wavelength of 1550 nm between about $10 \mu\text{m}^2$ and $16 \mu\text{m}^2$, and a total dispersion at a wavelength of 1550 nm between about 4 ps/nm/km and 8 ps/nm/km.
2. The optical fiber of claim 1 wherein the core region further comprises a refractive index n_1 , the first annular region has a refractive index n_2 , the cladding region has a refractive index n_3 , and $n_2 < n_3 < n_1$.
3. The optical fiber of claim 1 wherein the core region is a step index profile.
4. The optical fiber of claim 1 wherein the core region is an α -profile.
5. The optical fiber of claim 4 wherein α is about 2.
6. The optical fiber of claim 1 wherein the total dispersion is between about 6 ps/nm/km and 8 ps/nm/km at a wavelength of 1550 nm.
7. The optical fiber of claim 1 wherein the effective area is between about $11 \mu\text{m}^2$ and $14 \mu\text{m}^2$ at a wavelength of 1550 nm.
8. The optical fiber of claim 1 wherein the optical fiber has an attenuation less than about 1 dB/km at a wavelength of 1550 nm.

9. The optical fiber of claim 8 wherein the optical fiber has an attenuation less than about 0.5 dB/km.
10. The optical fiber of claim 1 wherein the optical fiber has a dispersion slope is less than about $0.06 \text{ ps/nm}^2/\text{km}$ at a wavelength of 1550 nm.
11. The optical fiber of claim 1 wherein the optical fiber has a dispersion slope is less than about $0.04 \text{ ps/nm}^2/\text{km}$ at a wavelength of 1550 nm.
12. The optical fiber of claim 1 further comprising a K value between 80 nm and 300 nm.
13. The optical fiber of claim 10 wherein K is between 140 nm and 225 nm.
14. The optical fiber of claim 1 further comprising a core relative refractive index $\% \Delta_1$ between 2% and 2.5%.
15. The optical fiber of claim 1 wherein the core region has a radius r_1 , the first annular region has a radius r_2 , and r_1/r_2 is between 0.25 and 0.5.
16. The optical fiber of claim 2 wherein a relative refractive index of the first annular region $\% \Delta_2$ is between -0.4% and -1% .
17. A method of making the optical fiber of claim 1 comprising heat treating a porous optical fiber core preform in the presence of a mixture of oxygen and an inert gas prior to consolidation, where the mixture is between 0.5% by volume and 10% by volume oxygen.
18. The method of claim 17 wherein the heat treating step further comprises treating the core preform at a temperature between 800°C and 1200°C .

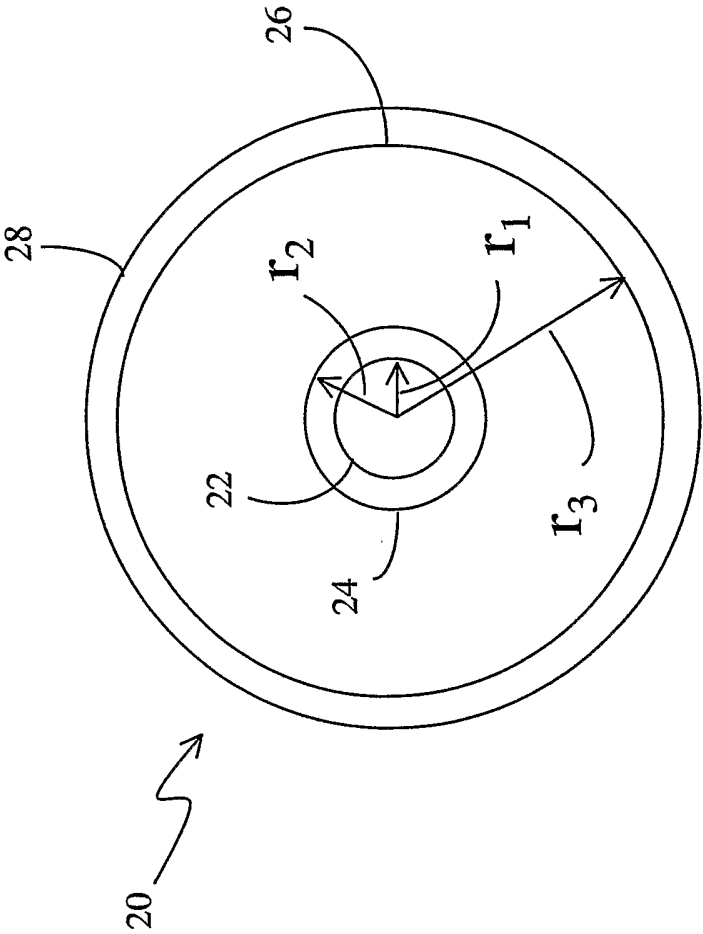


FIG. 1

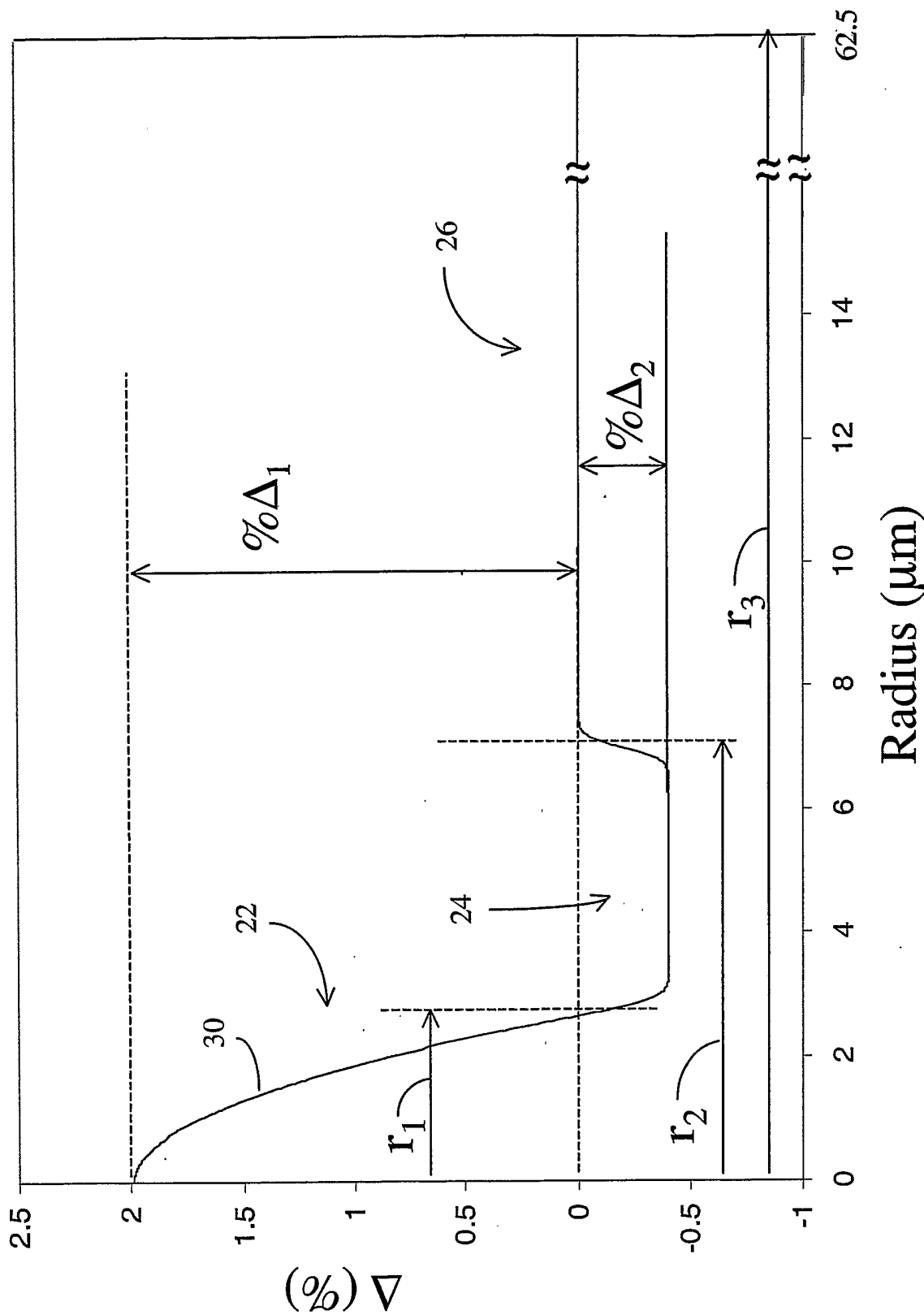
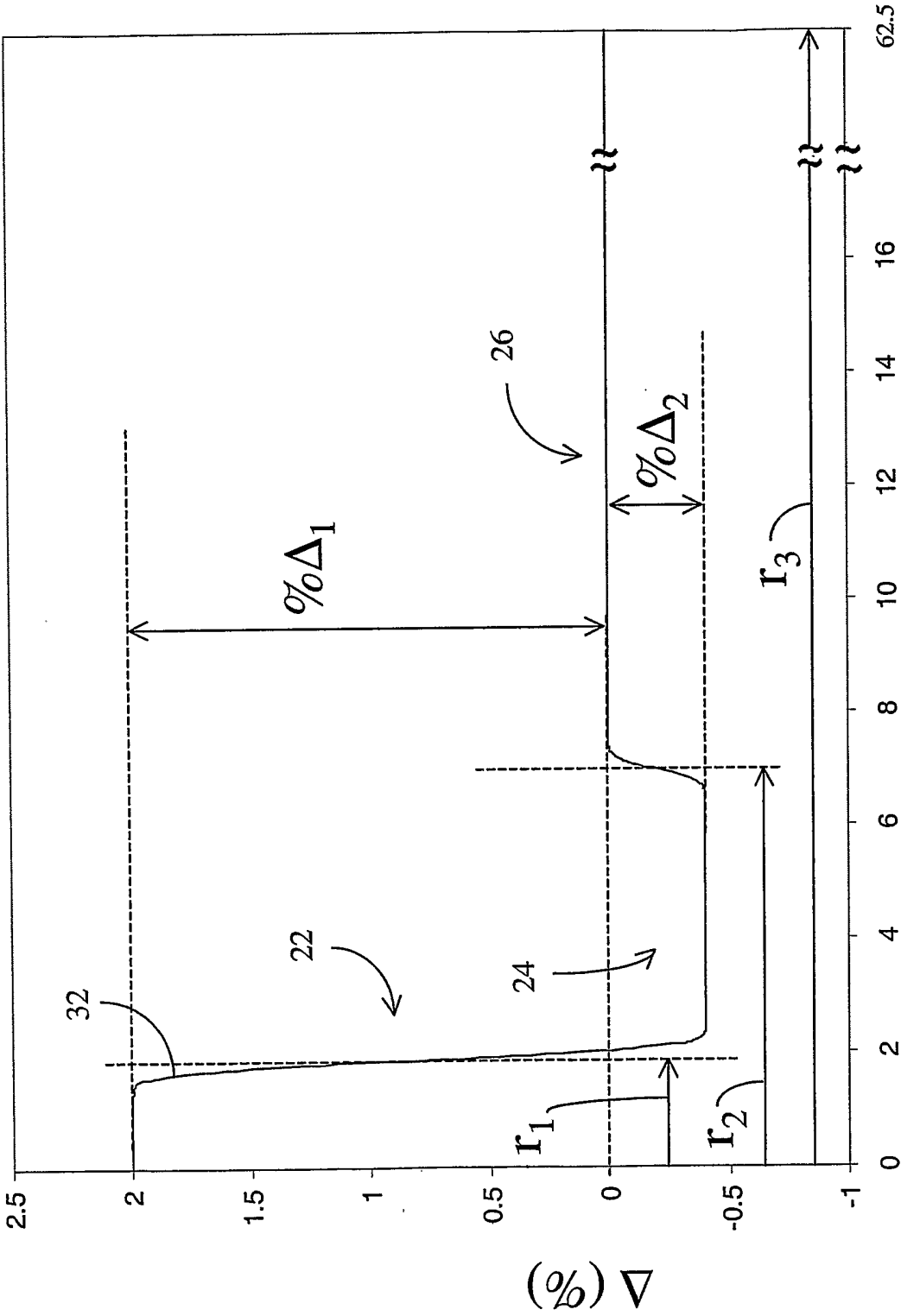


FIG. 2



Radius (μm)

FIG. 3

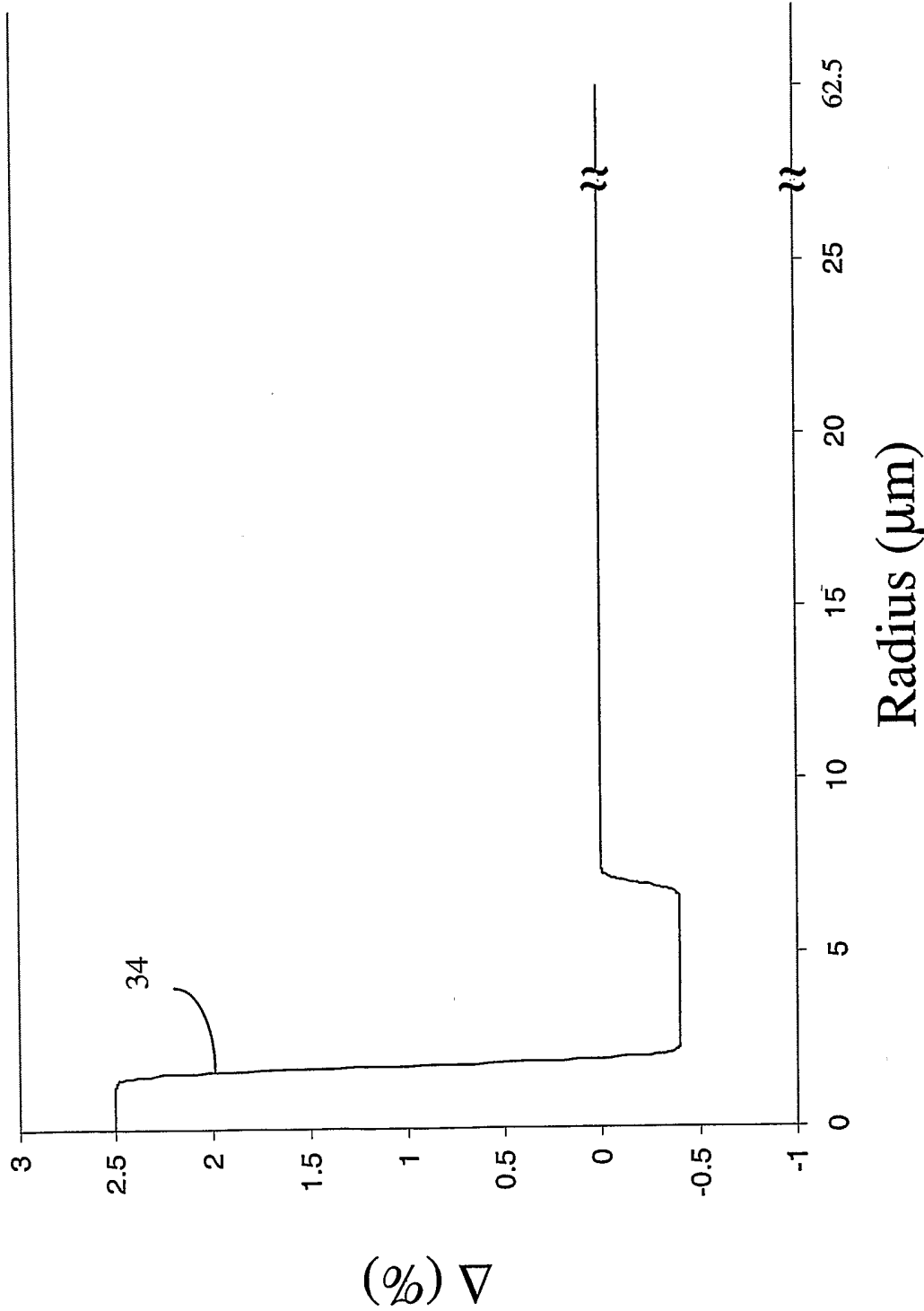


FIG. 4

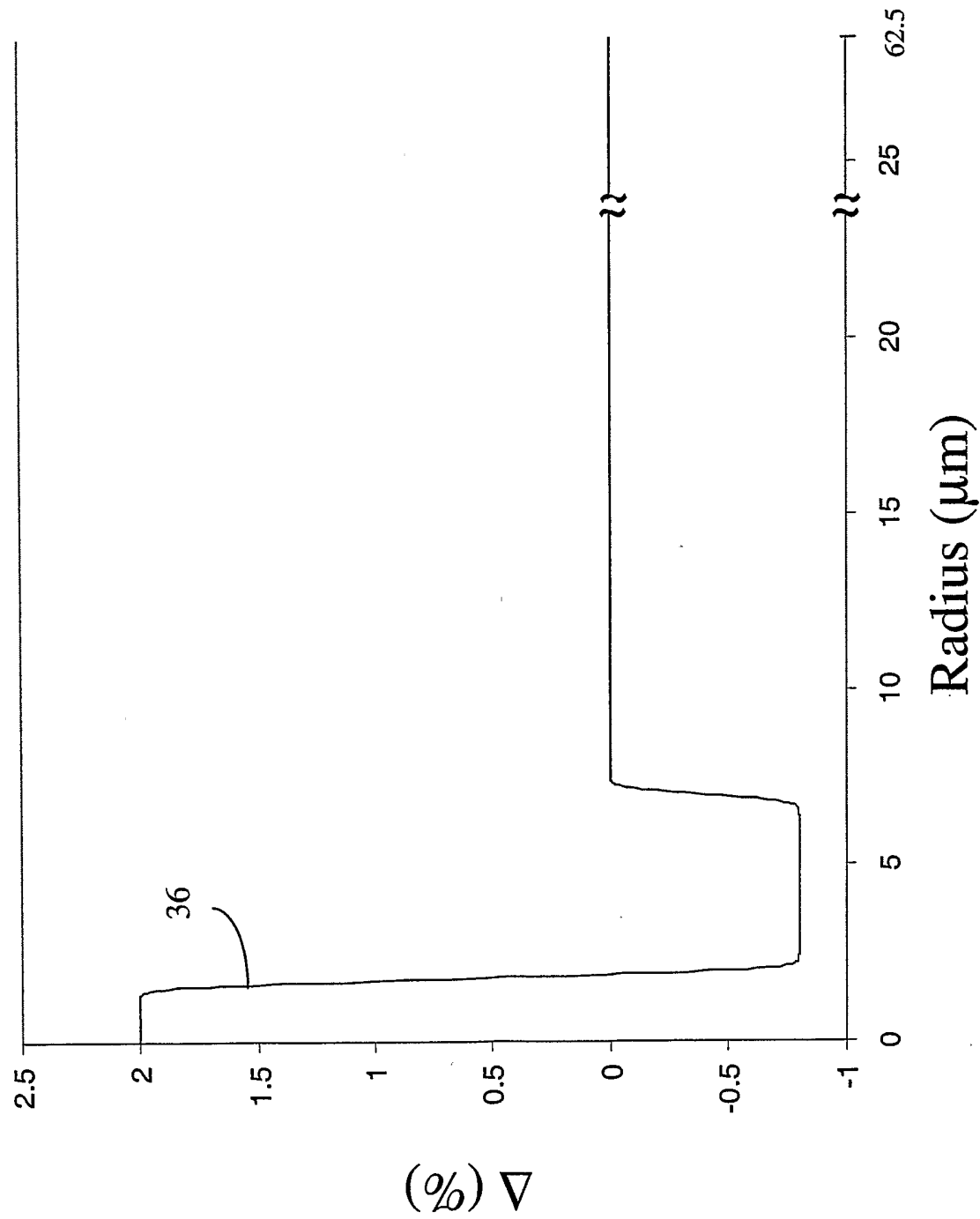


FIG. 5

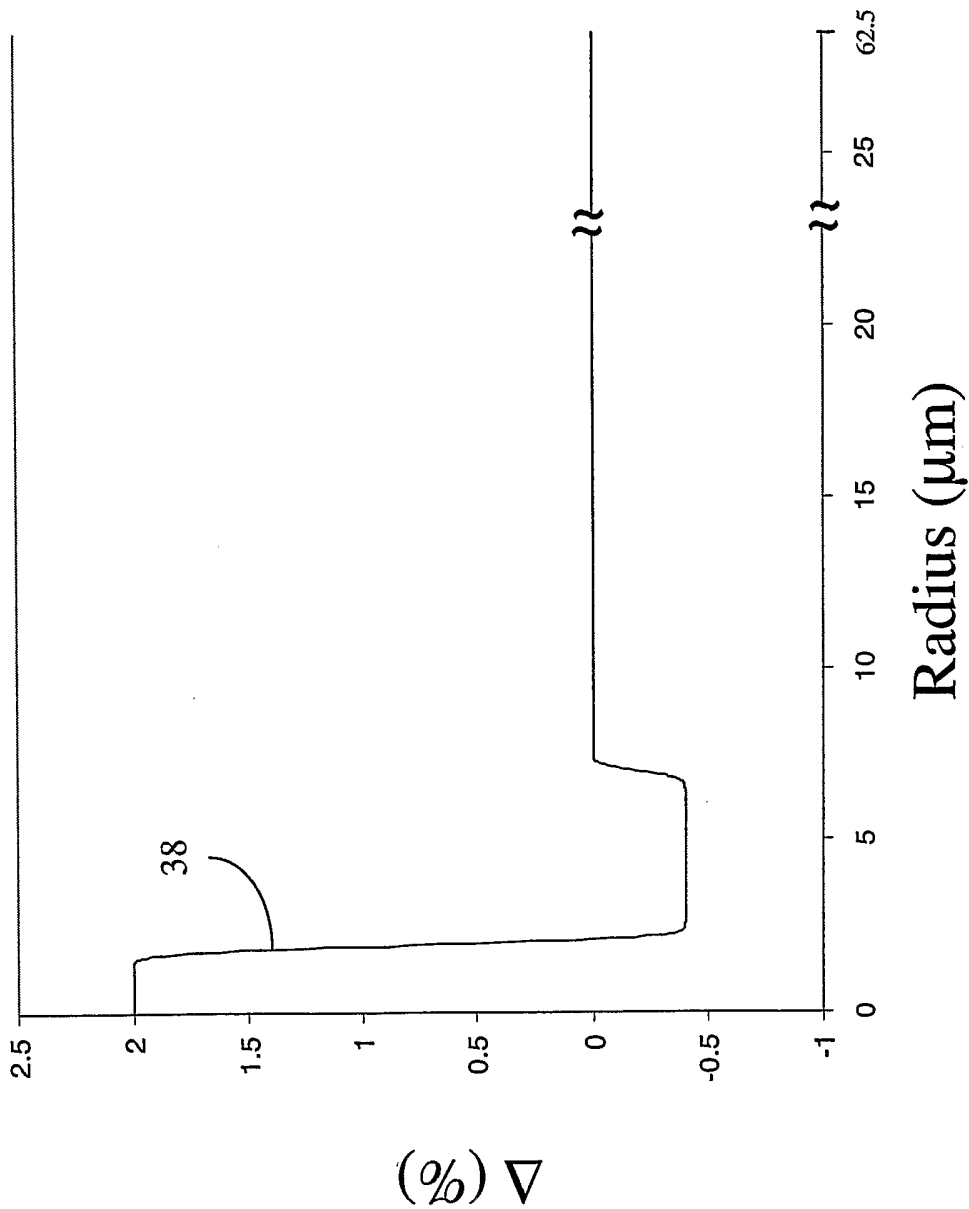


FIG. 6

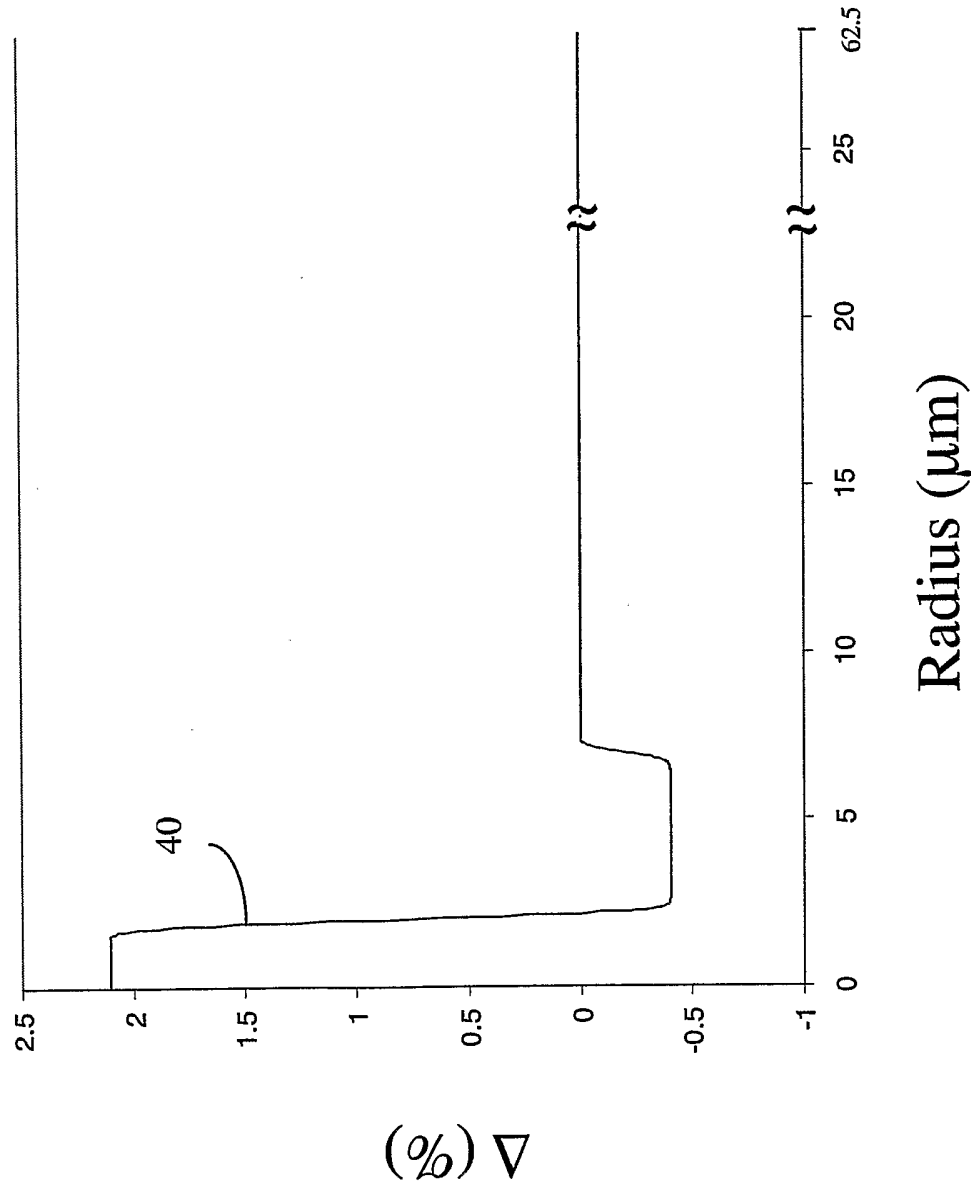


FIG. 7

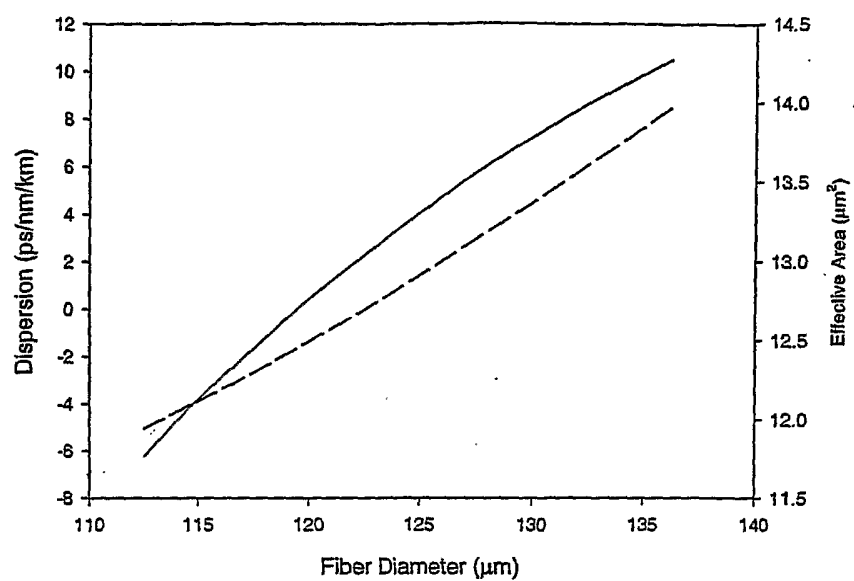


FIG. 8

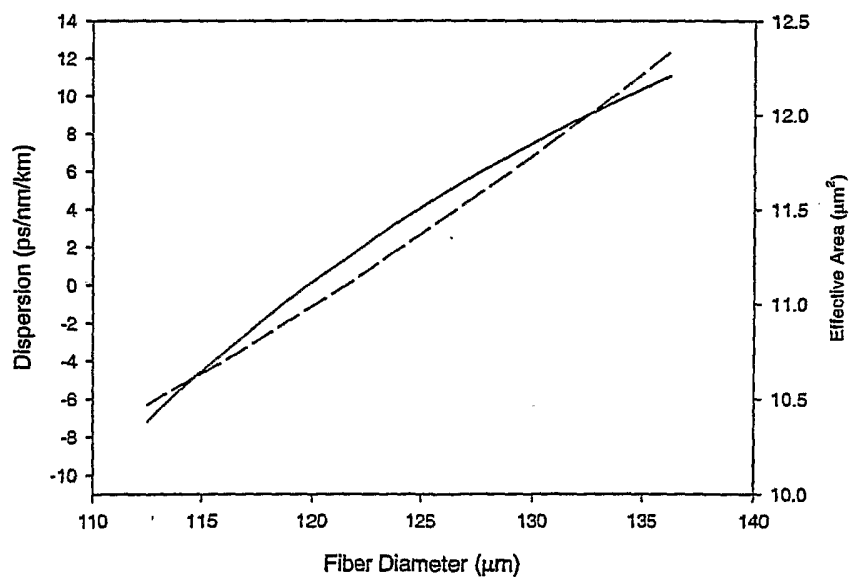


FIG. 9

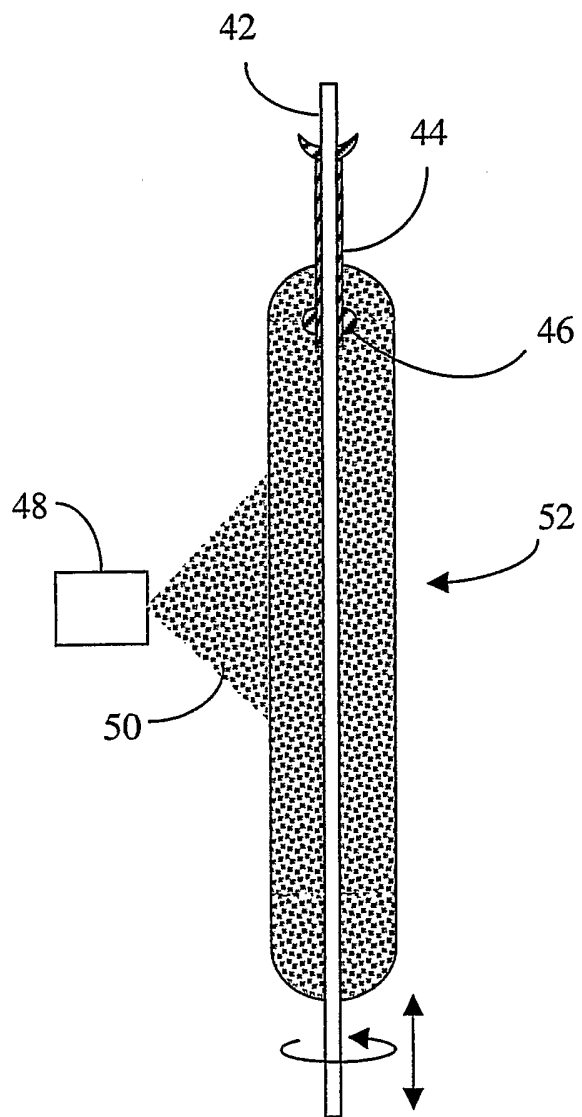


FIG. 10

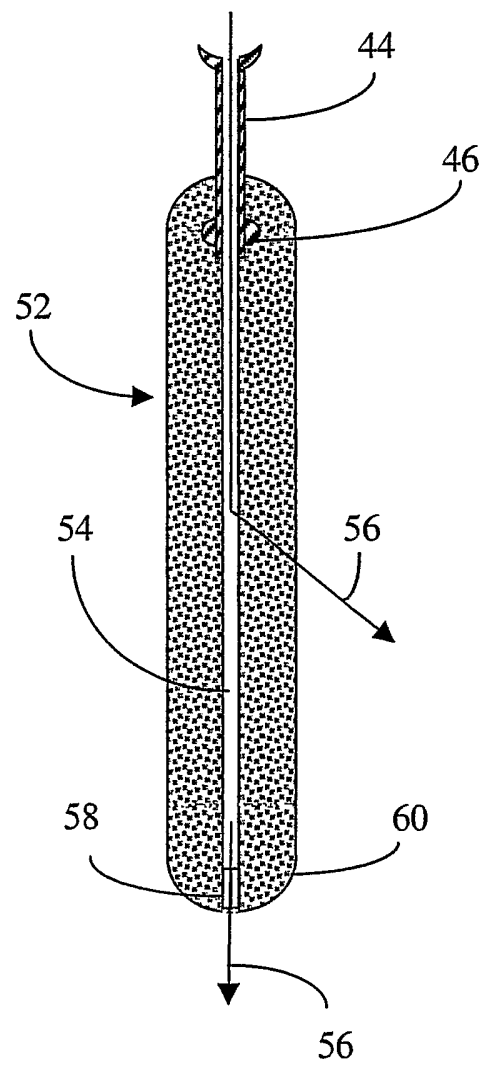


FIG. 11

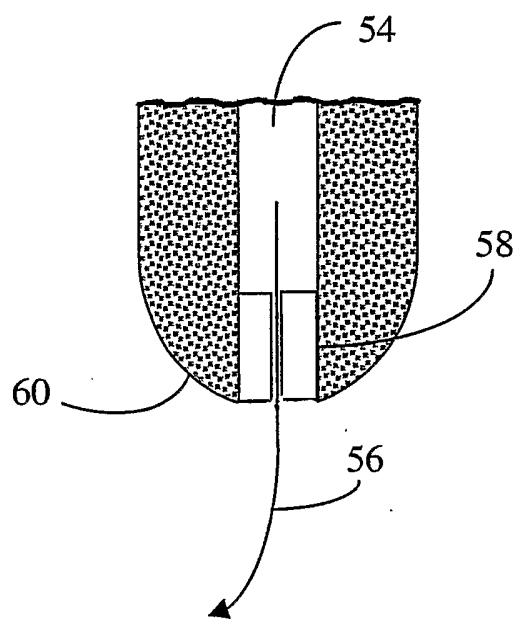


FIG. 12

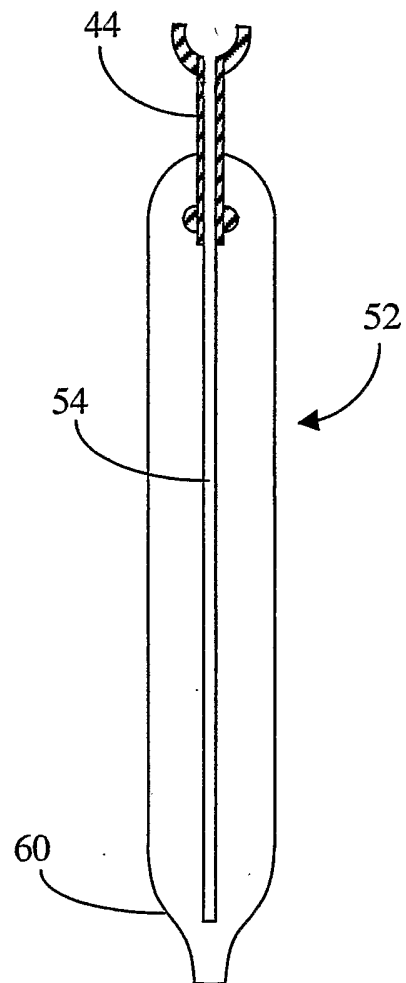


FIG. 13

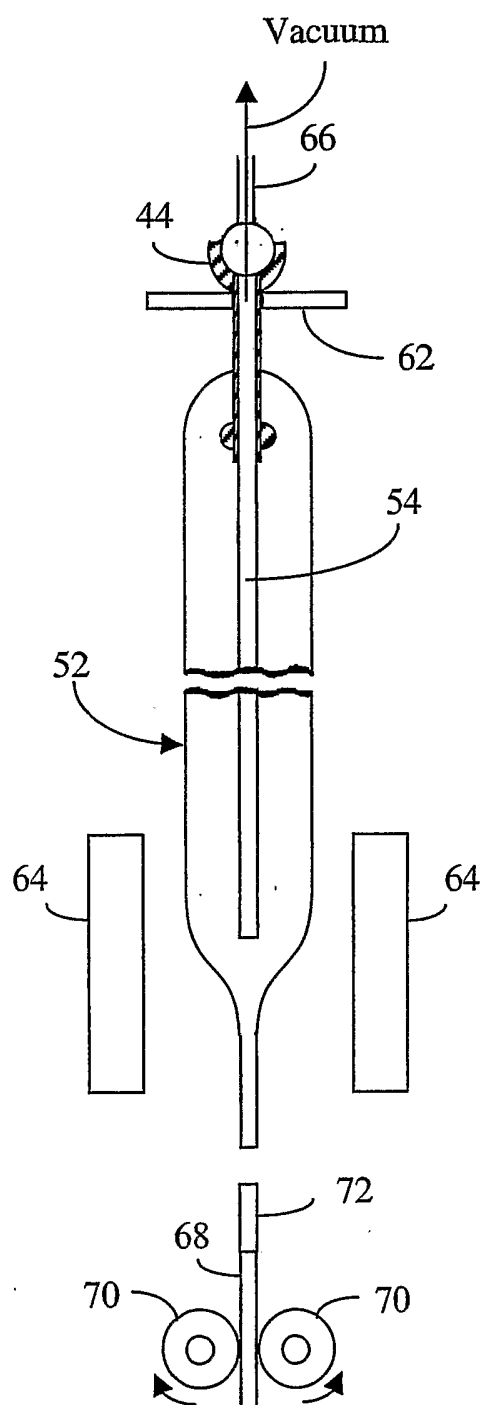


FIG. 14

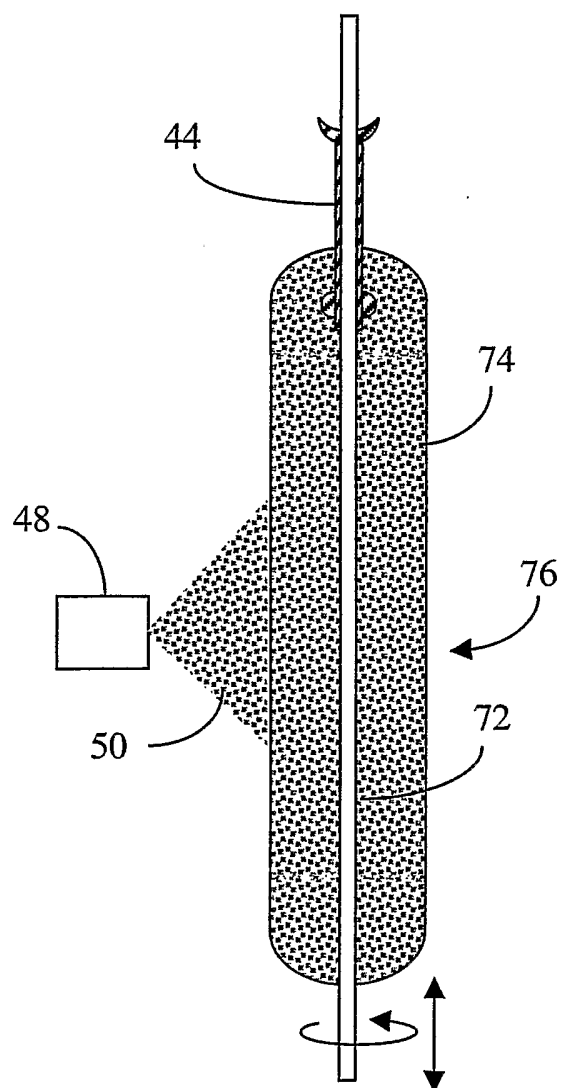


FIG. 15

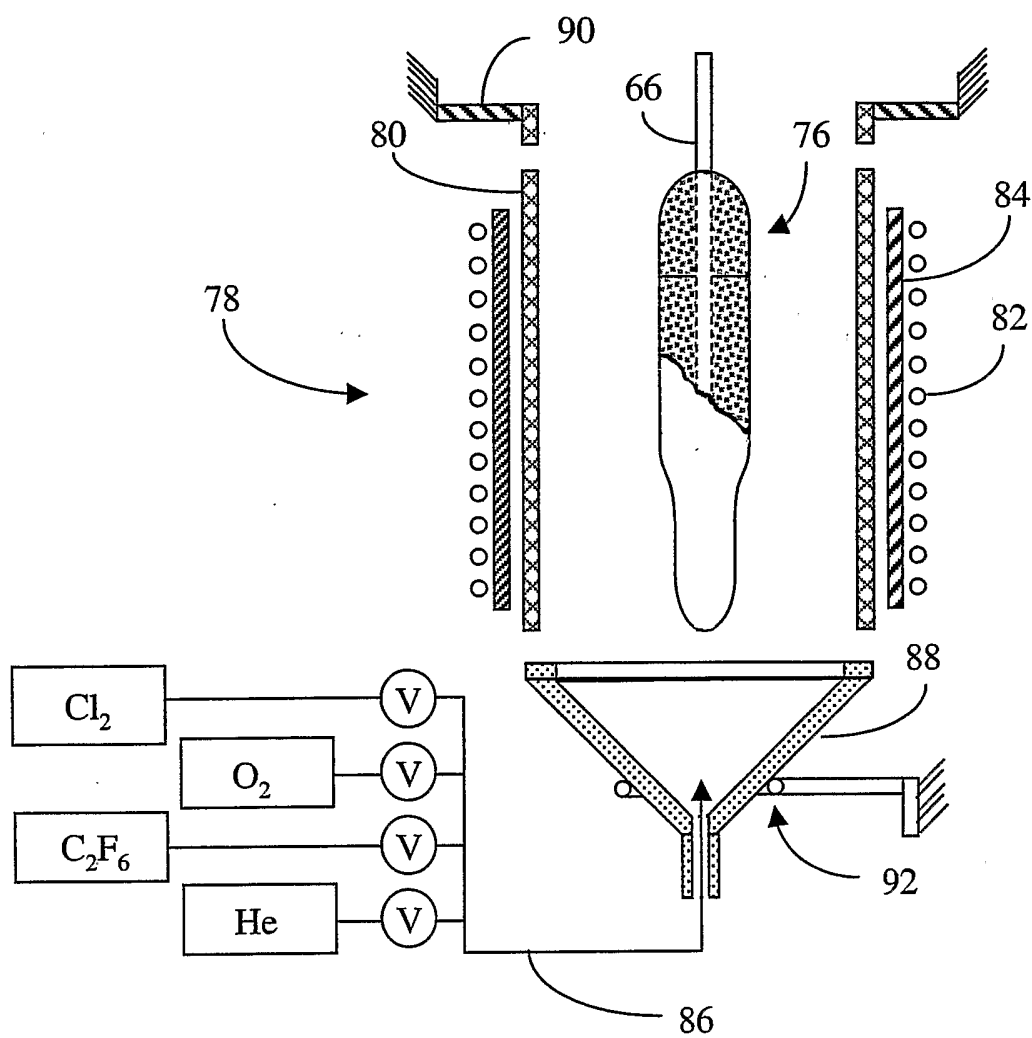


FIG. 16

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

/US2004/011039

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 G02B6/22

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 G02B G02F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the International search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, INSPEC

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2002/135866 A1 (NAITO TAKAO ET AL) 26 September 2002 (2002-09-26) abstract figure 1A	1
X	EP 1 130 428 A (SUMITOMO ELECTRIC INDUSTRIES) 5 September 2001 (2001-09-05)	2, 10-16
Y	paragraph '0062! - paragraph '0063!; figures 11, 12	3-5, 17, 18
Y	EP 1 054 275 A (SUMITOMO ELECTRIC INDUSTRIES) 22 November 2000 (2000-11-22) figure 1B	3
Y	US 2002/102082 A1 (SARCHI DAVIDE ET AL) 1 August 2002 (2002-08-01) paragraph '0163! - paragraph '0165!; figure 10A	4, 5
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☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

4 October 2004

Date of mailing of the international search report

21/10/2004

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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/US2004/011039

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