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(54) **HUMIDIFIER WITH STRUCTURE TO PREVENT BACKFLOW OF LIQUID THROUGH THE HUMIDIFIER INLET**

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See application file for complete search history.

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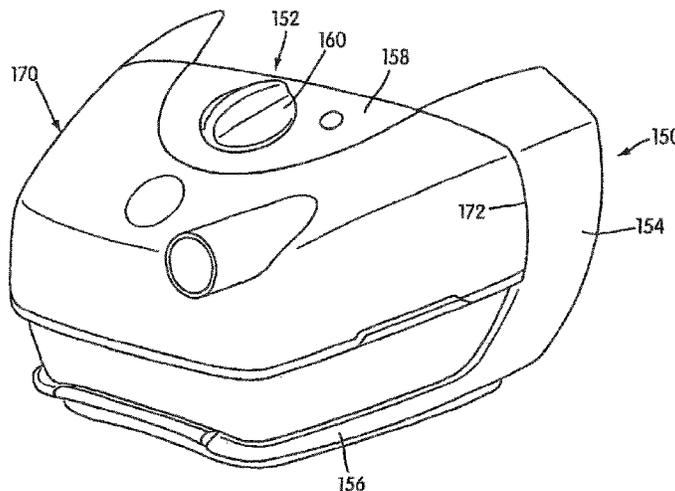
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A humidifier includes a base configured to retain a body of liquid therein, a top cover, and a seal disposed between the top cover and the base. At least a portion of the base is constructed of a heat conducting material. The top cover defines both an inlet and an outlet communicated with an interior of the base. The inlet is configured to receive pressurized breathable gas and the outlet is configured to deliver the pressurized breathable gas with added humidity.

78 Claims, 20 Drawing Sheets



Related U.S. Application Data

application for the reissue of Pat. No. 7,614,398, said application No. 13/944,960 is a continuation of application No. 13/100,783, filed on May 4, 2011, now Pat. No. Re. 44,453, which is a continuation of application No. 10/467,382, filed as application No. PCT/AU02/00155 on Feb. 14, 2002, now Pat. No. 6,935,337.

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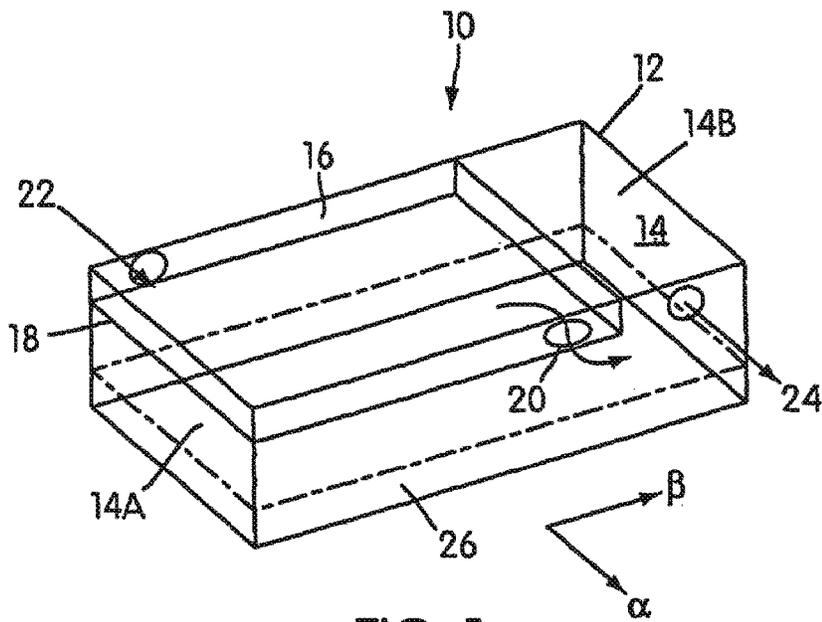


FIG. 1

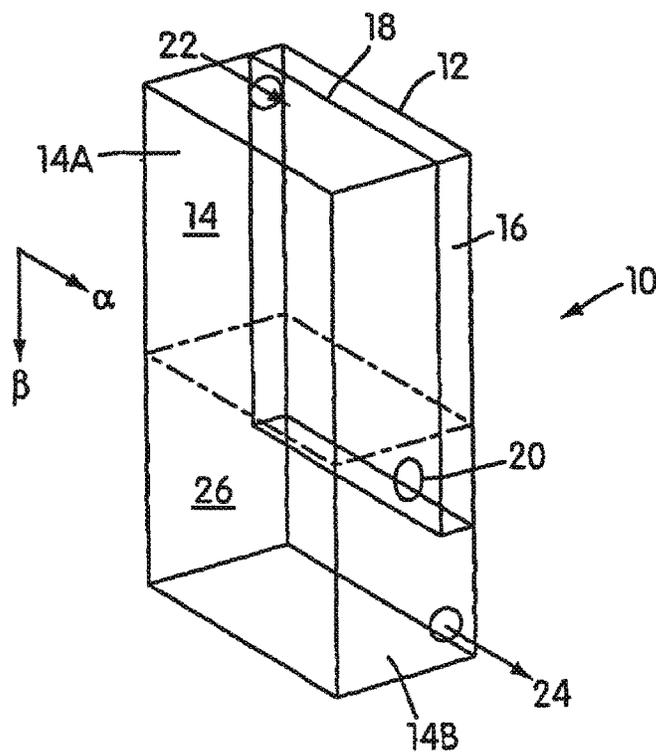


FIG. 2

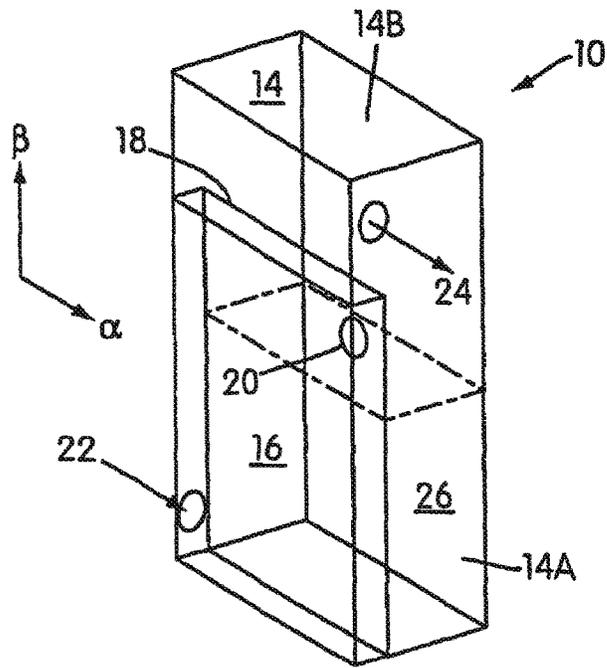


FIG. 3

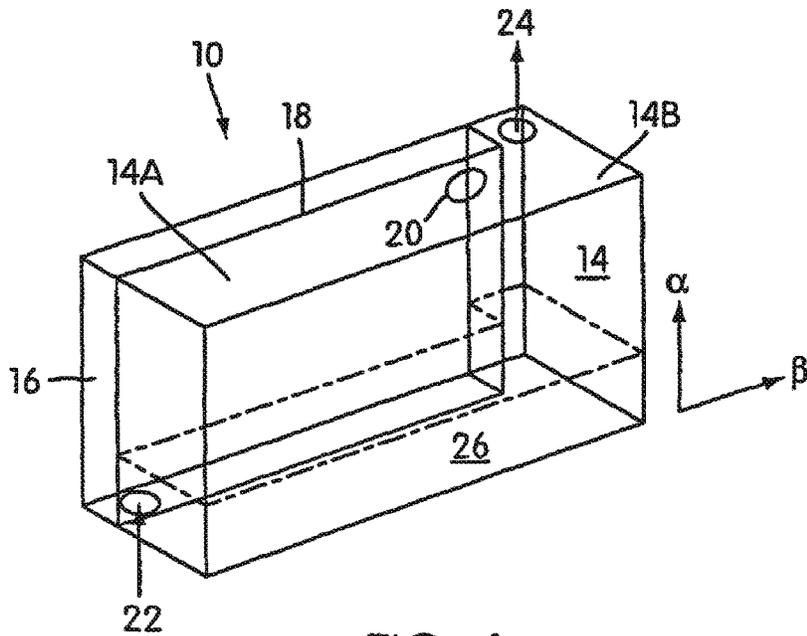


FIG. 4

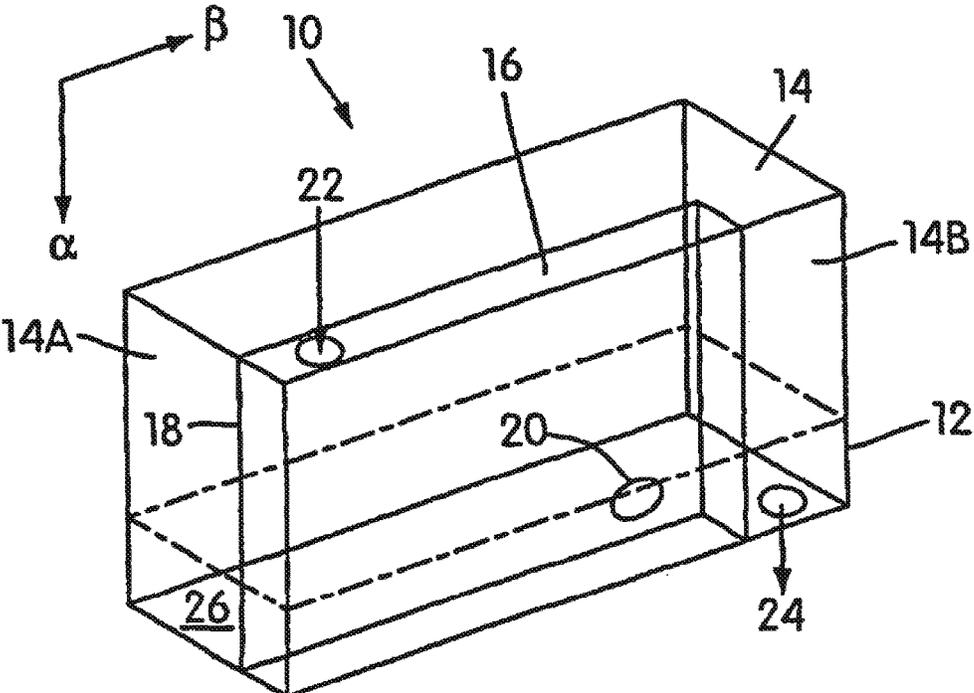


FIG. 5

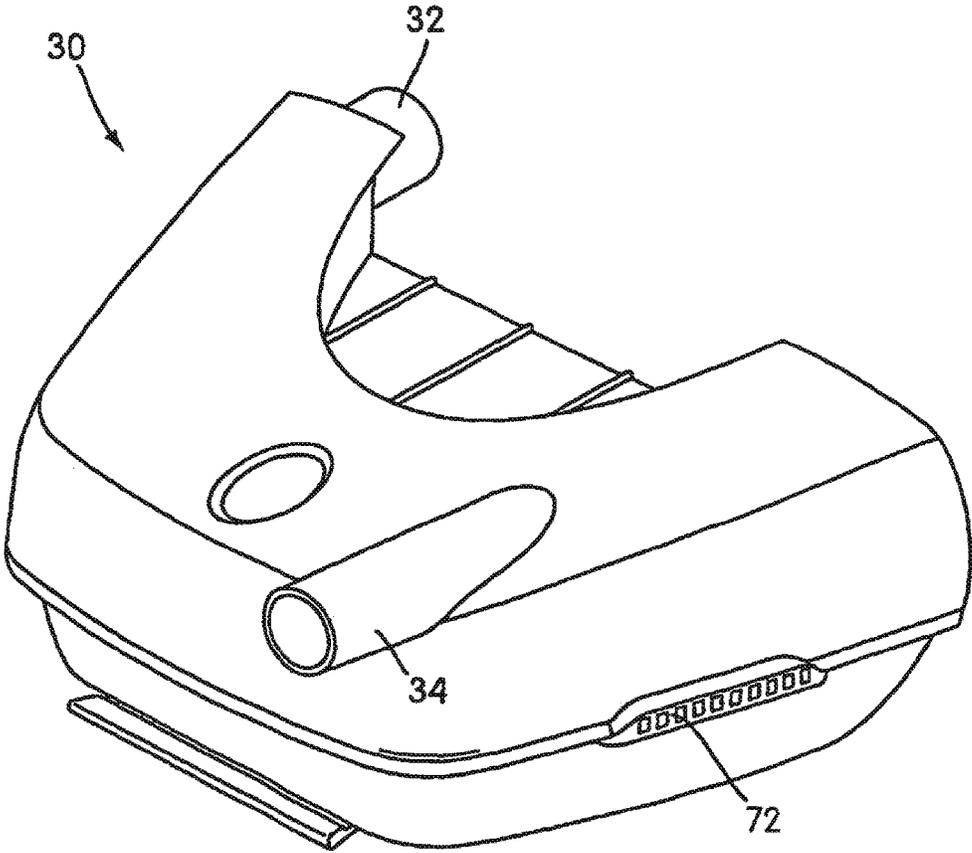


FIG. 6

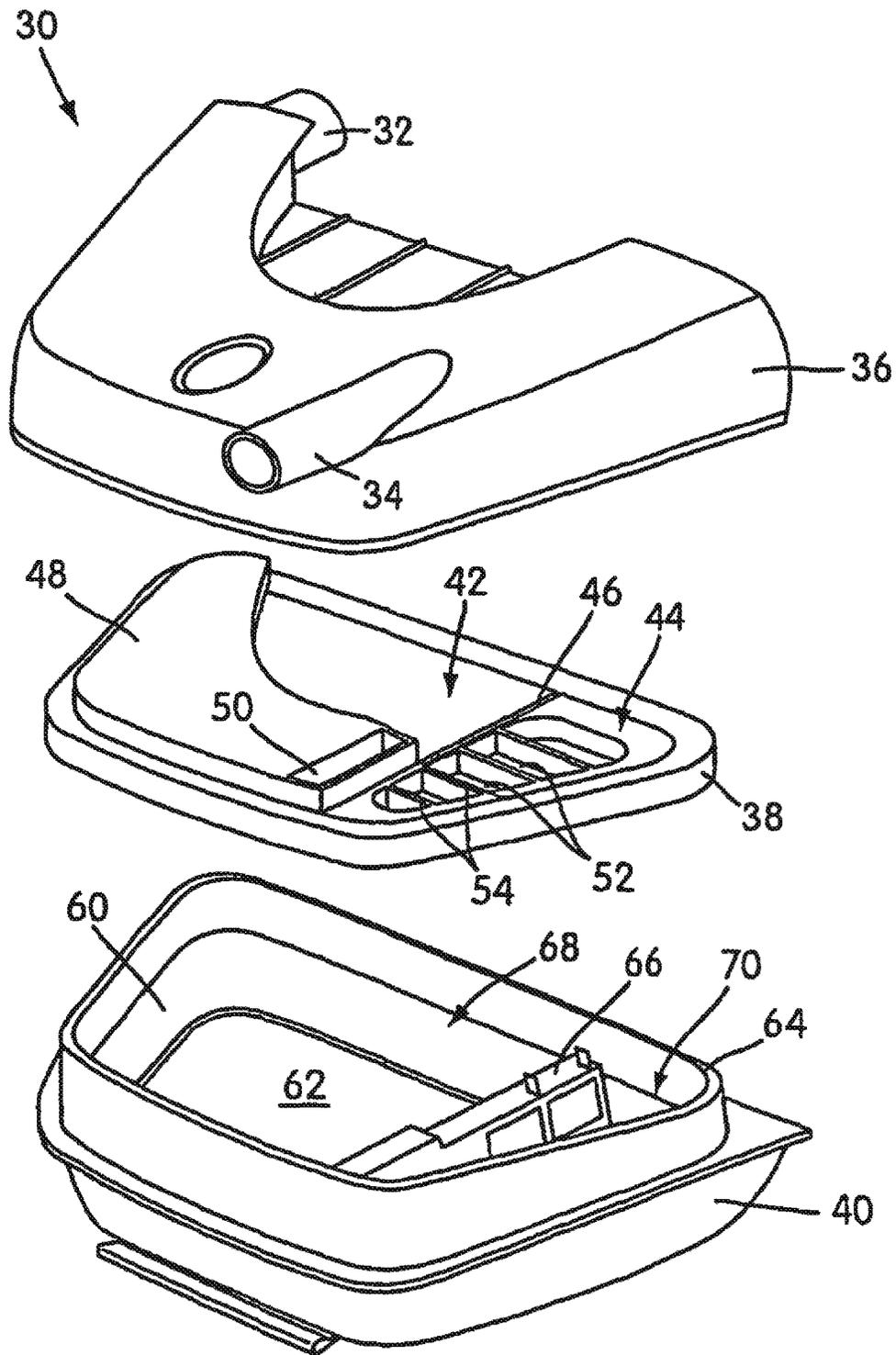


FIG. 7

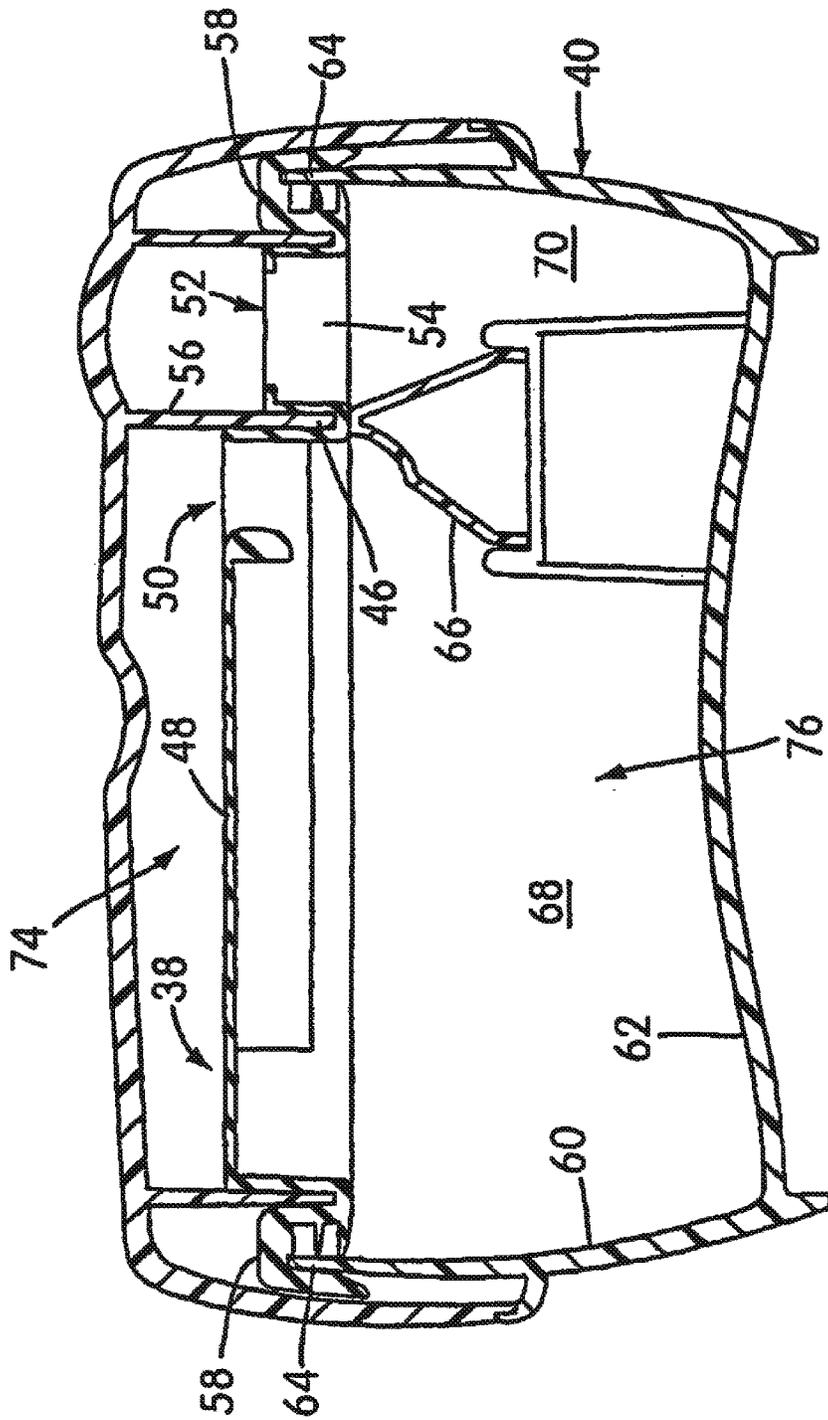


FIG. 8

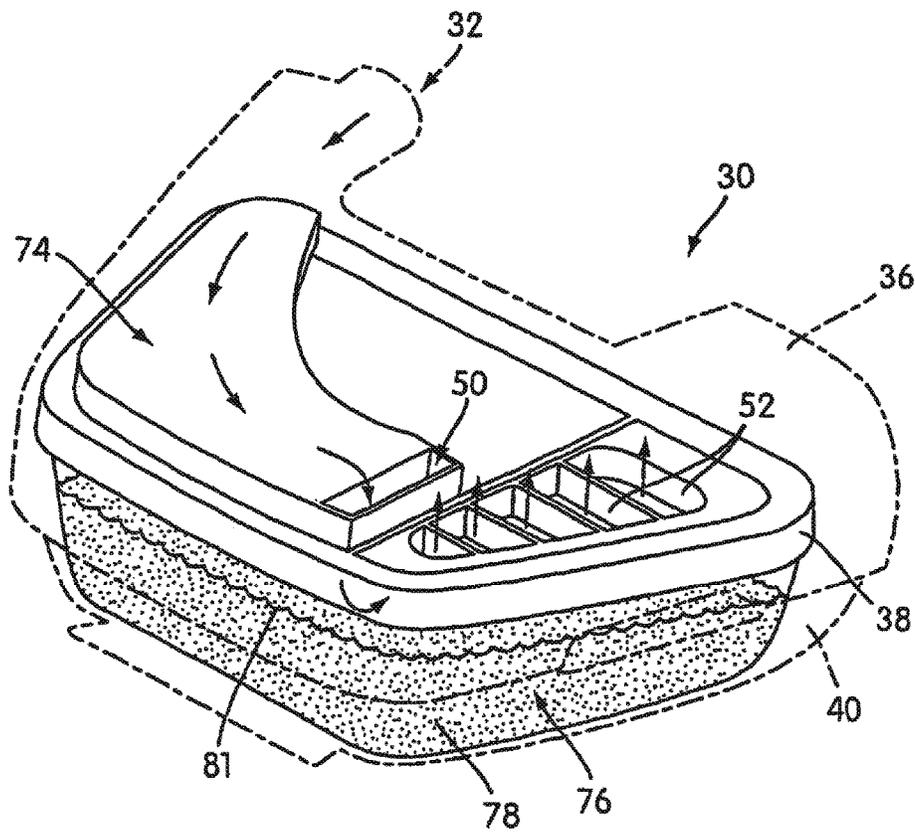


FIG. 9

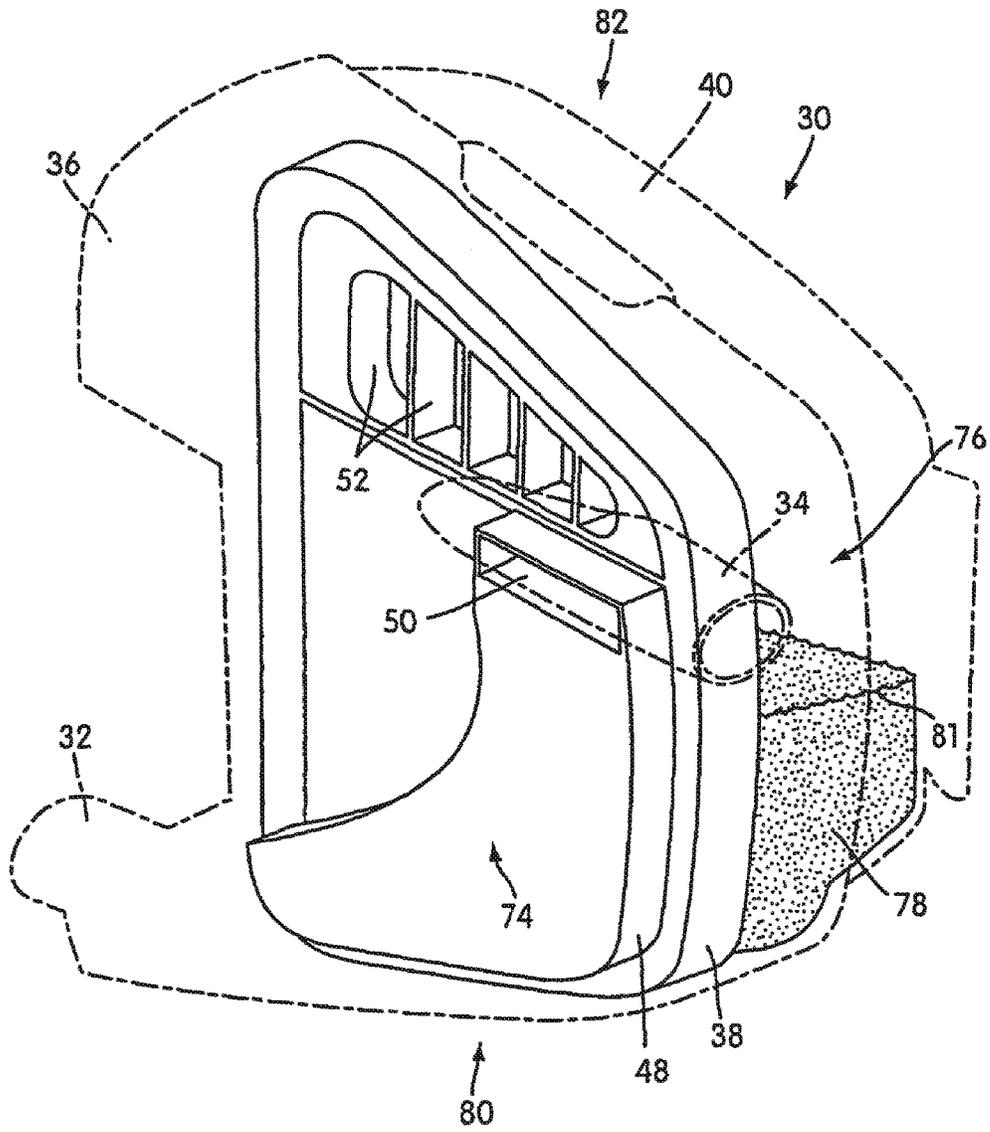


FIG. 10

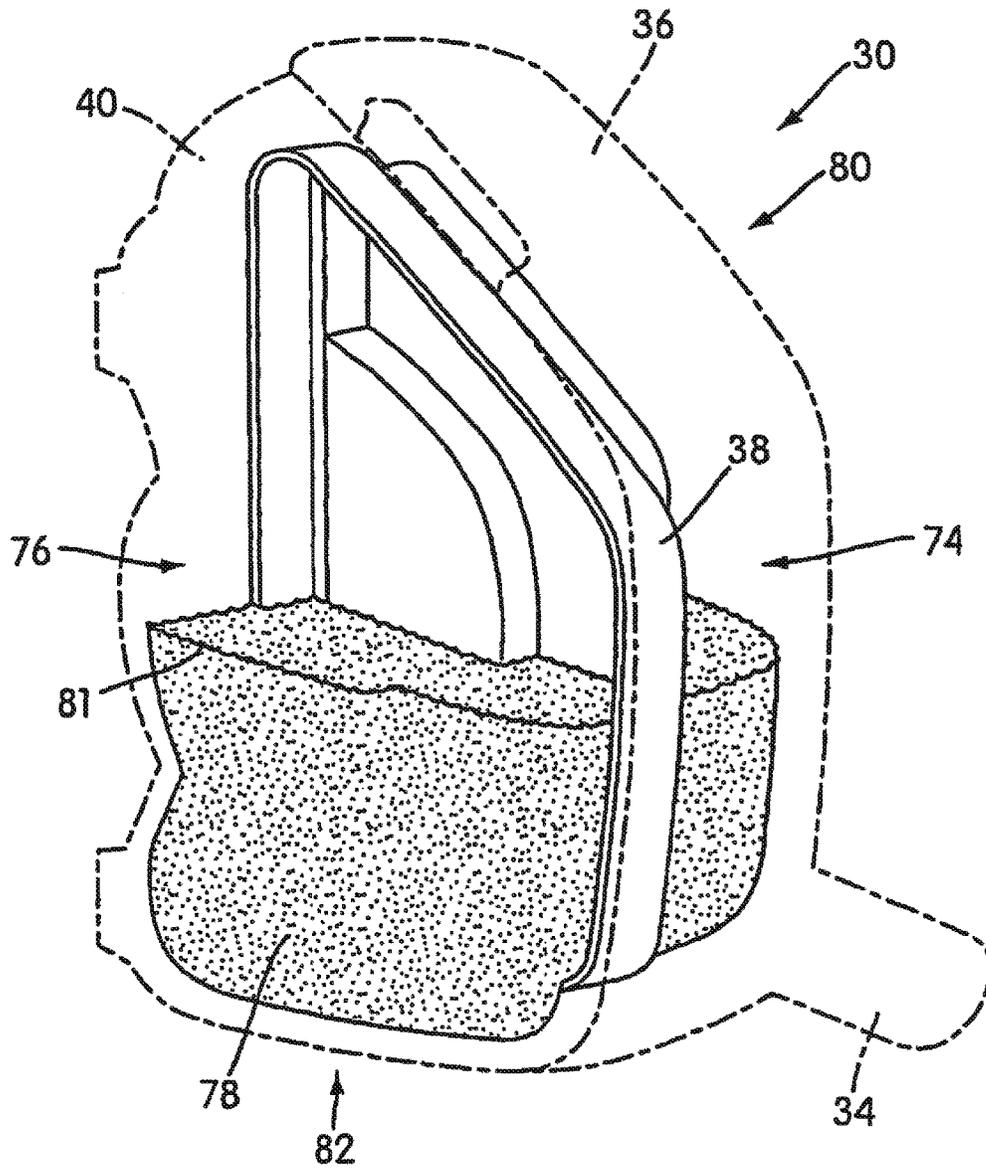


FIG. 11

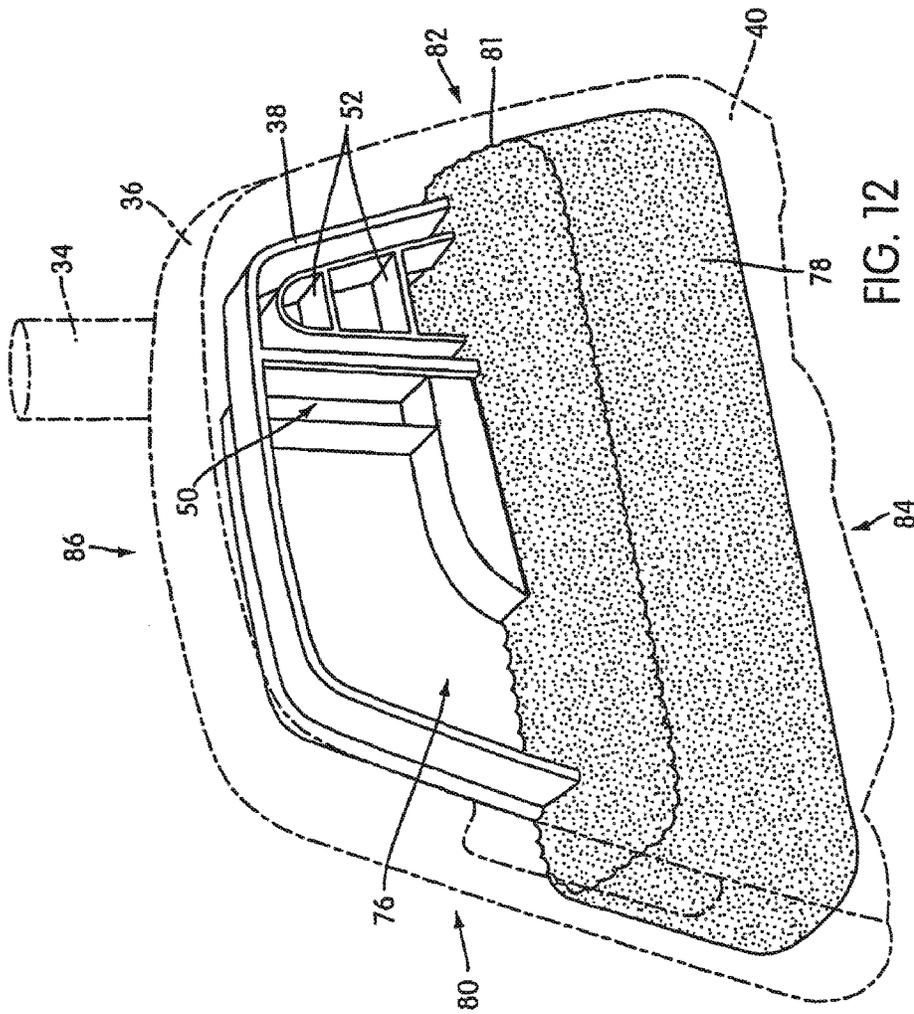
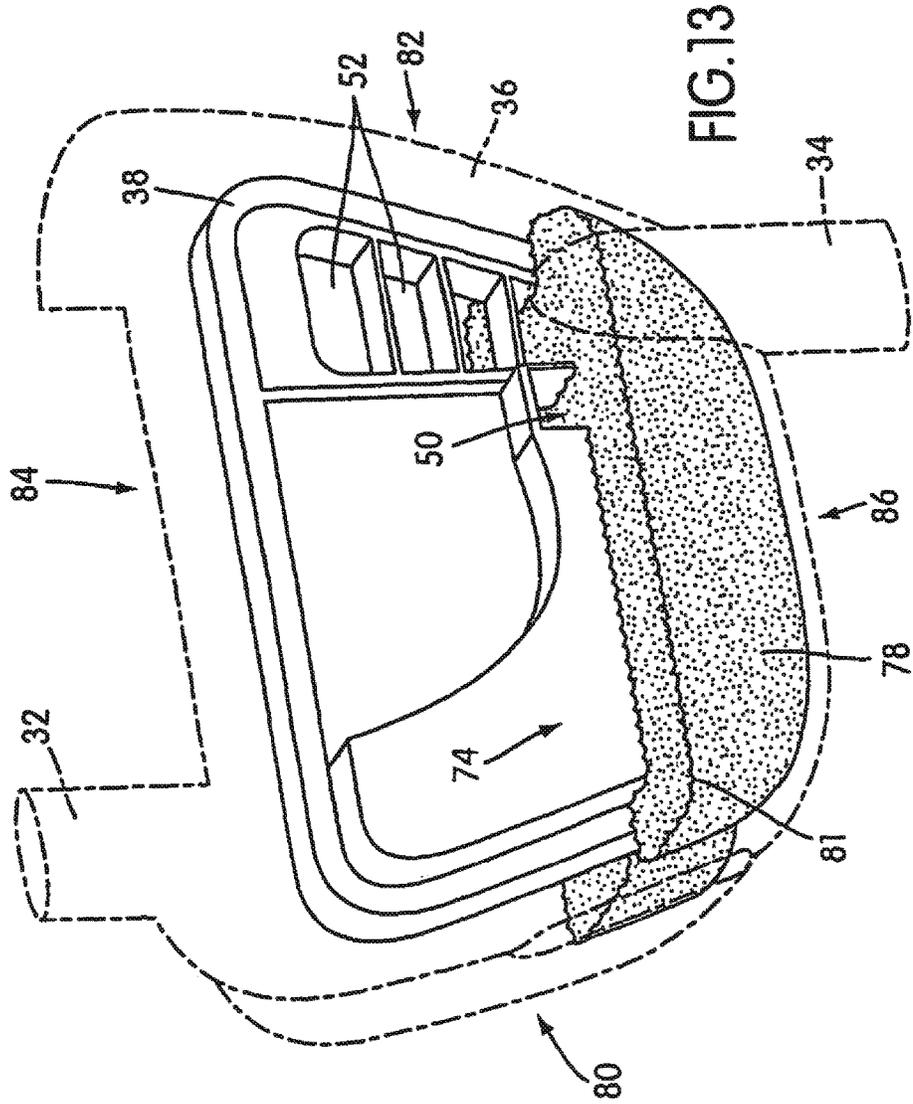


FIG. 12



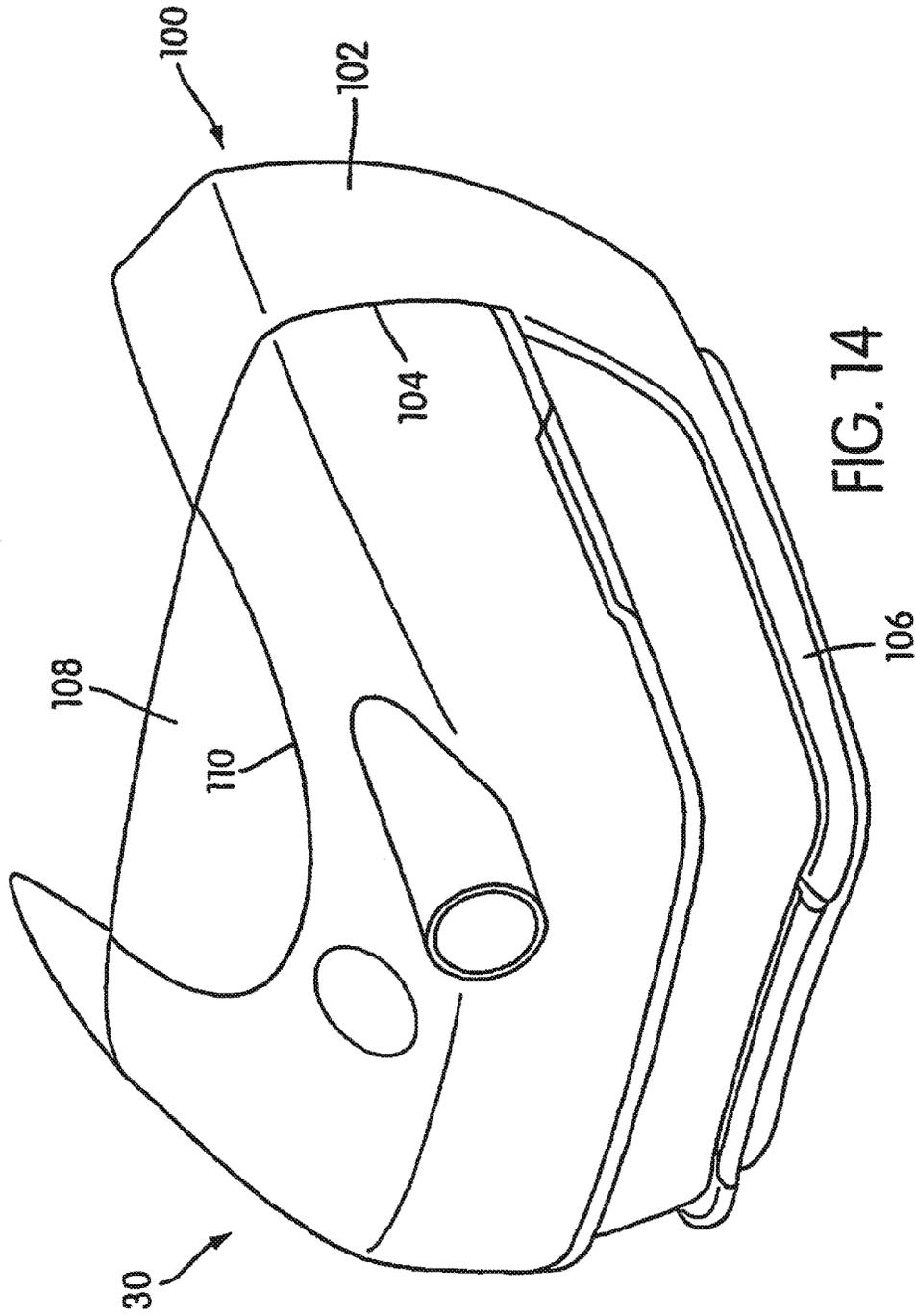


FIG. 14

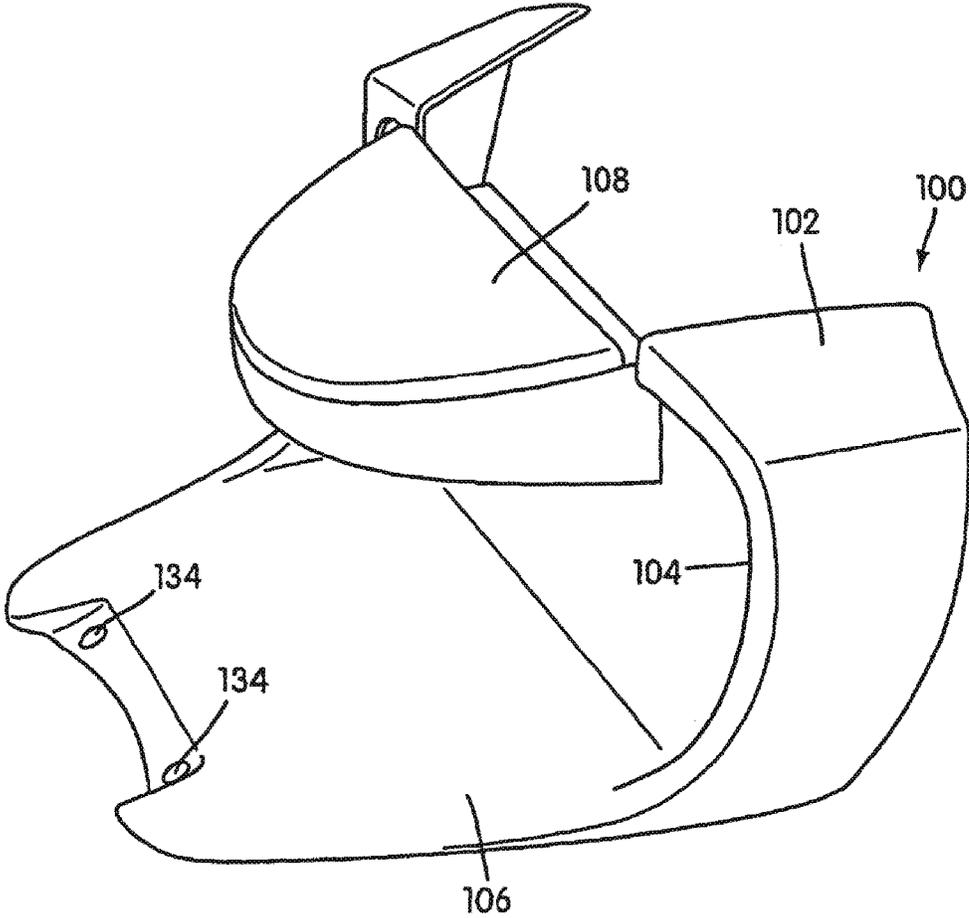


FIG. 15

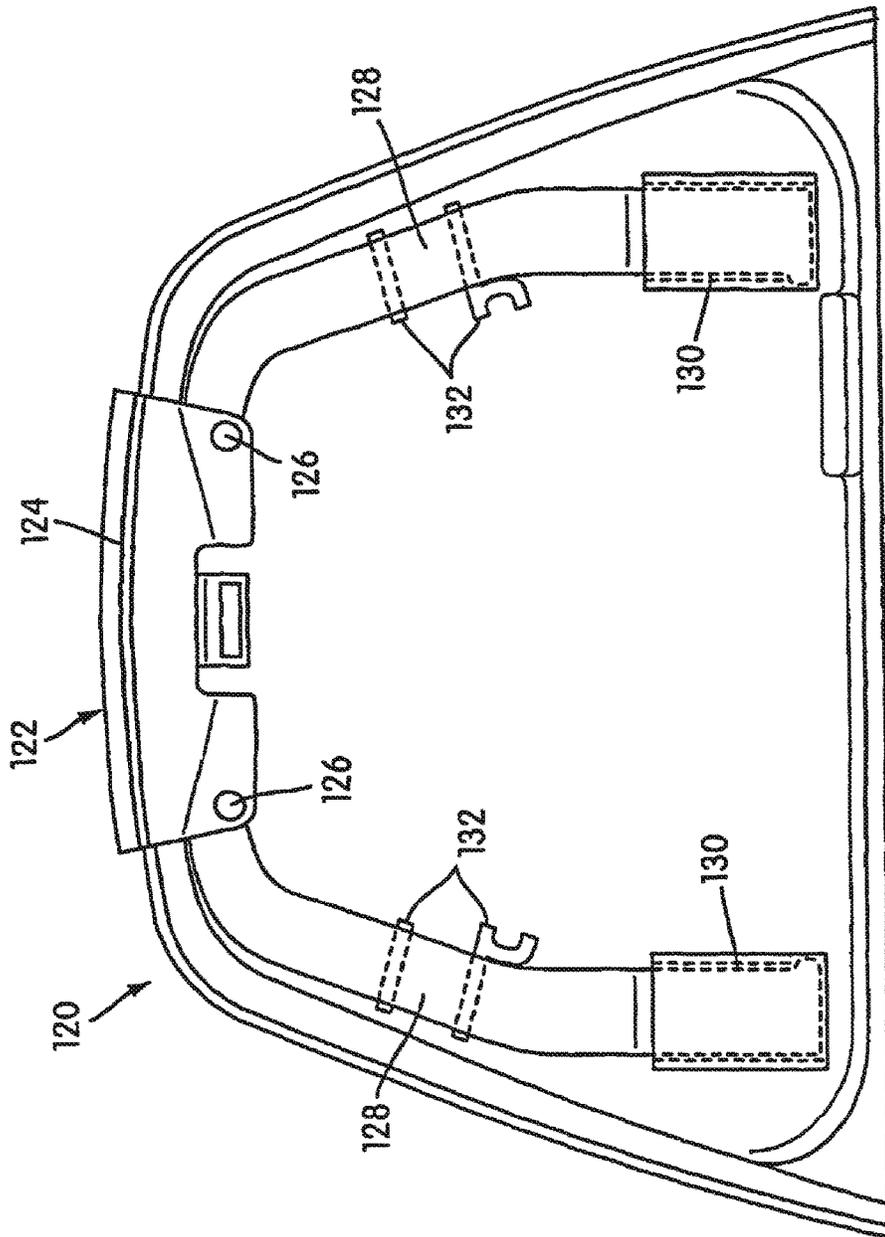


FIG. 16

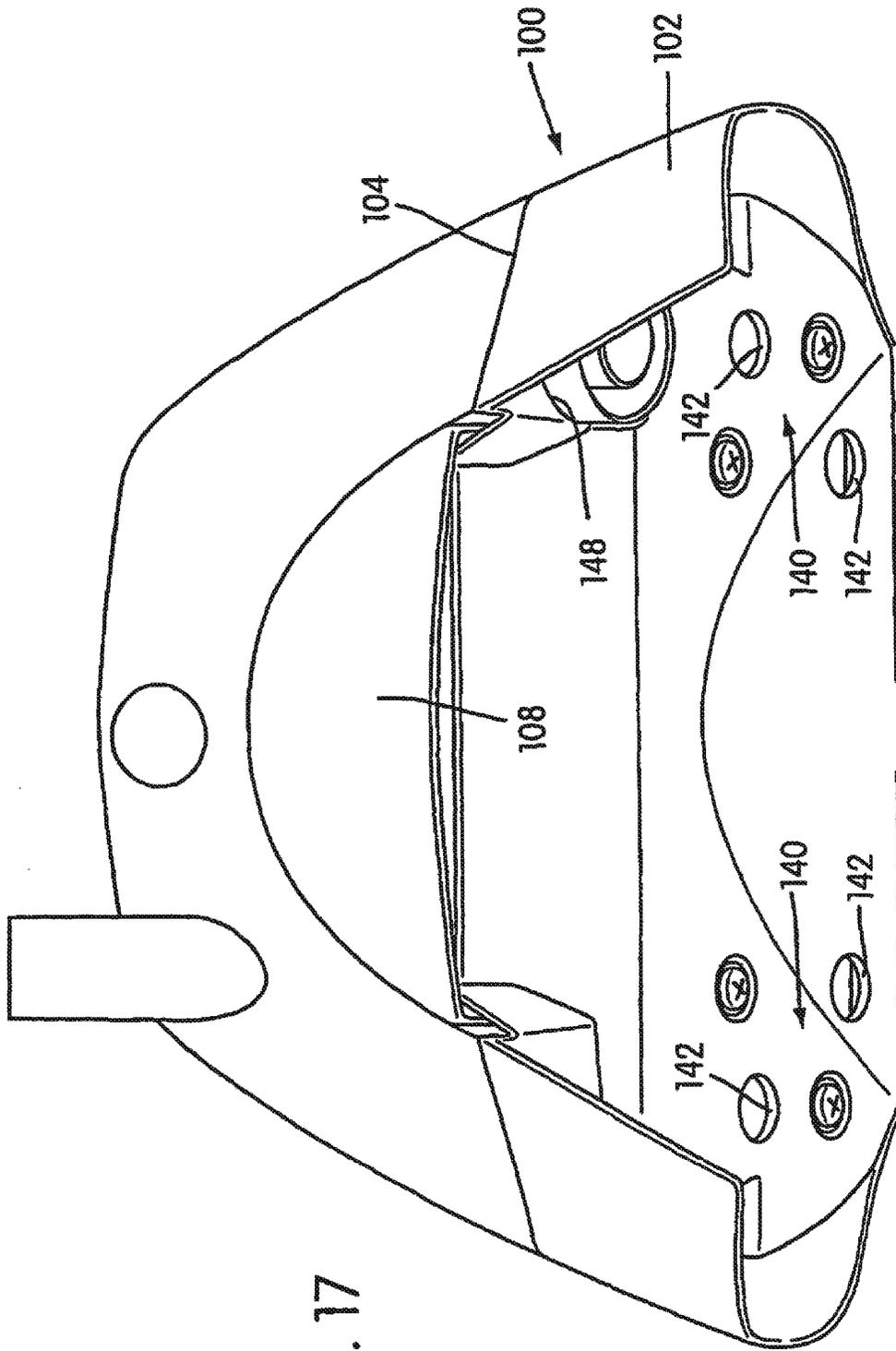


FIG. 17

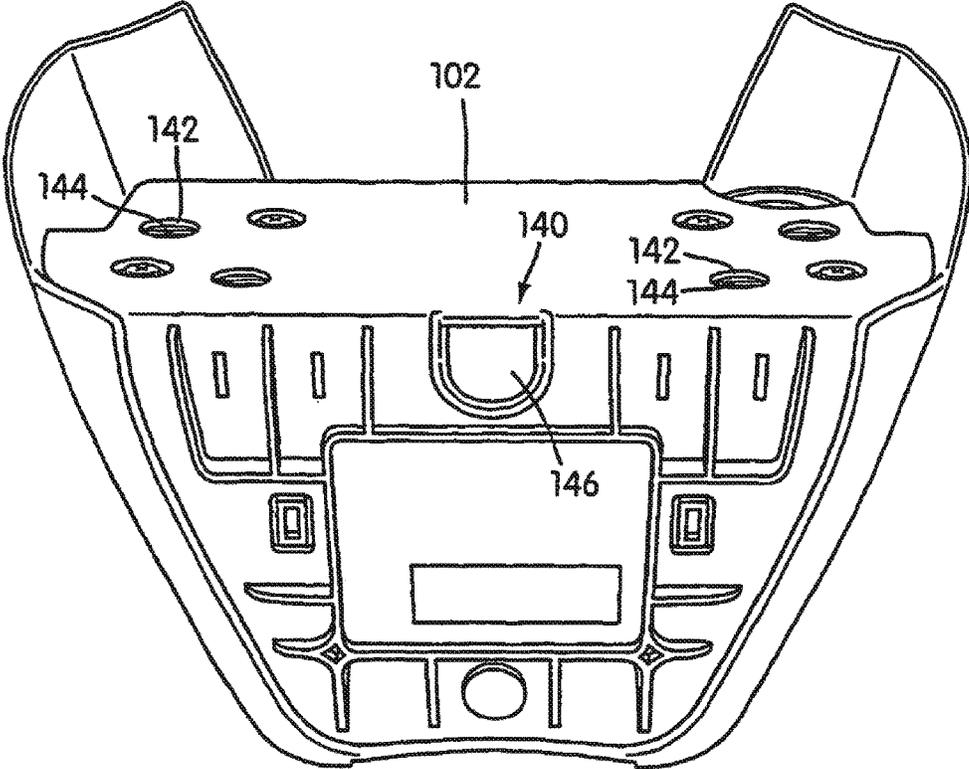


FIG. 18

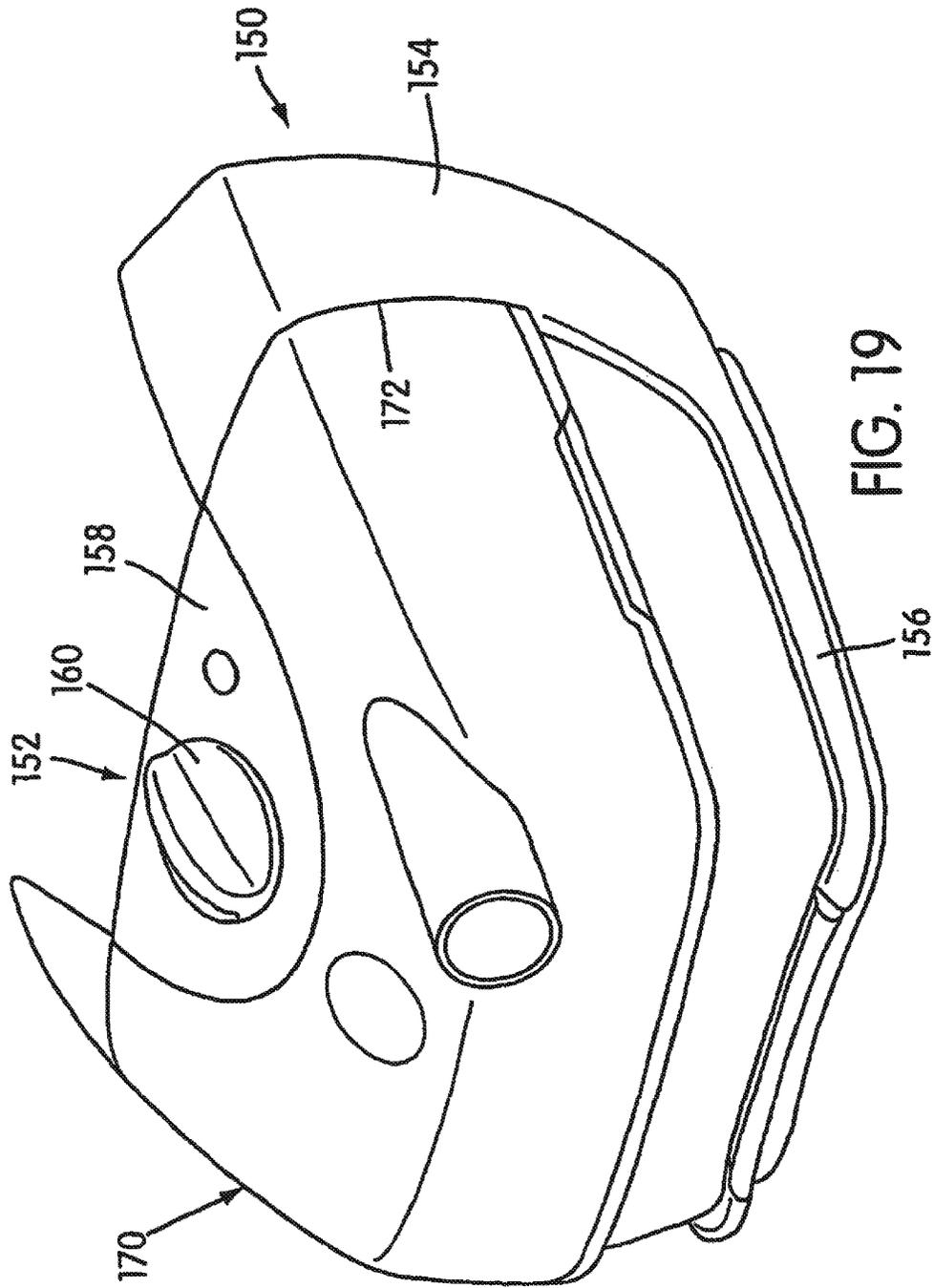


FIG. 19

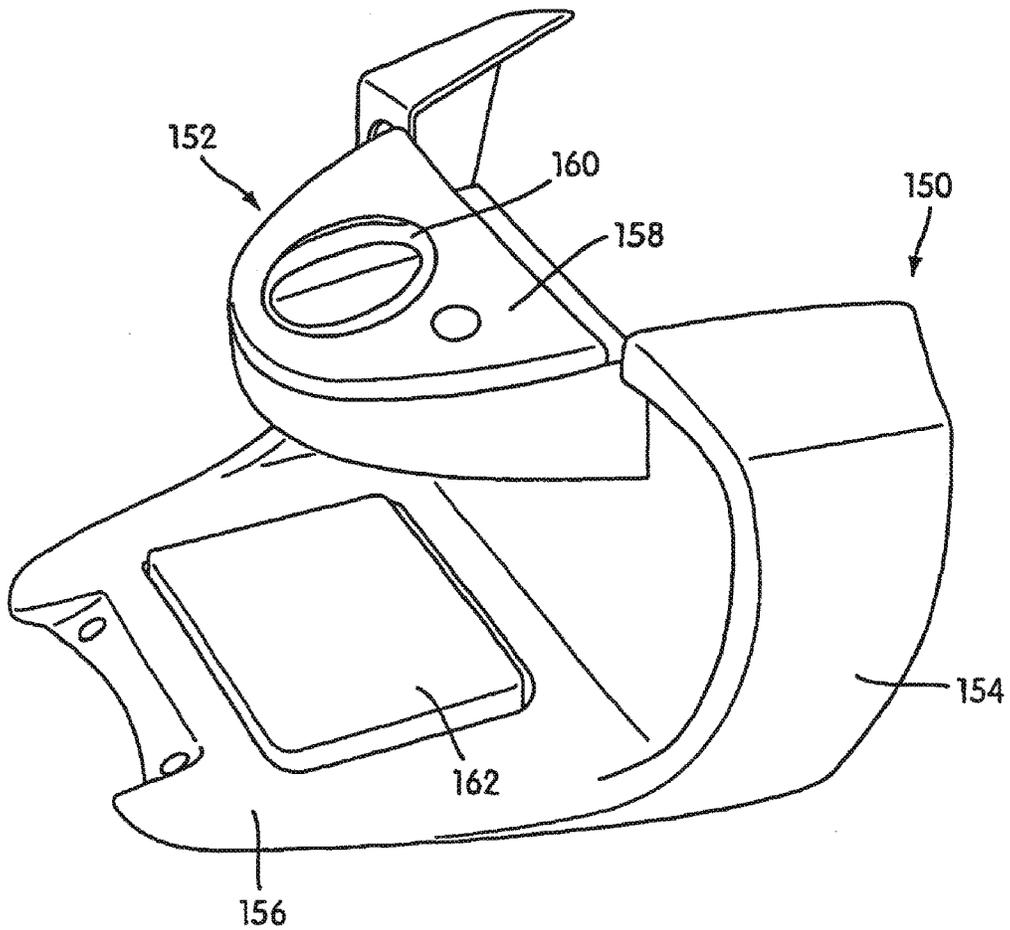


FIG. 20

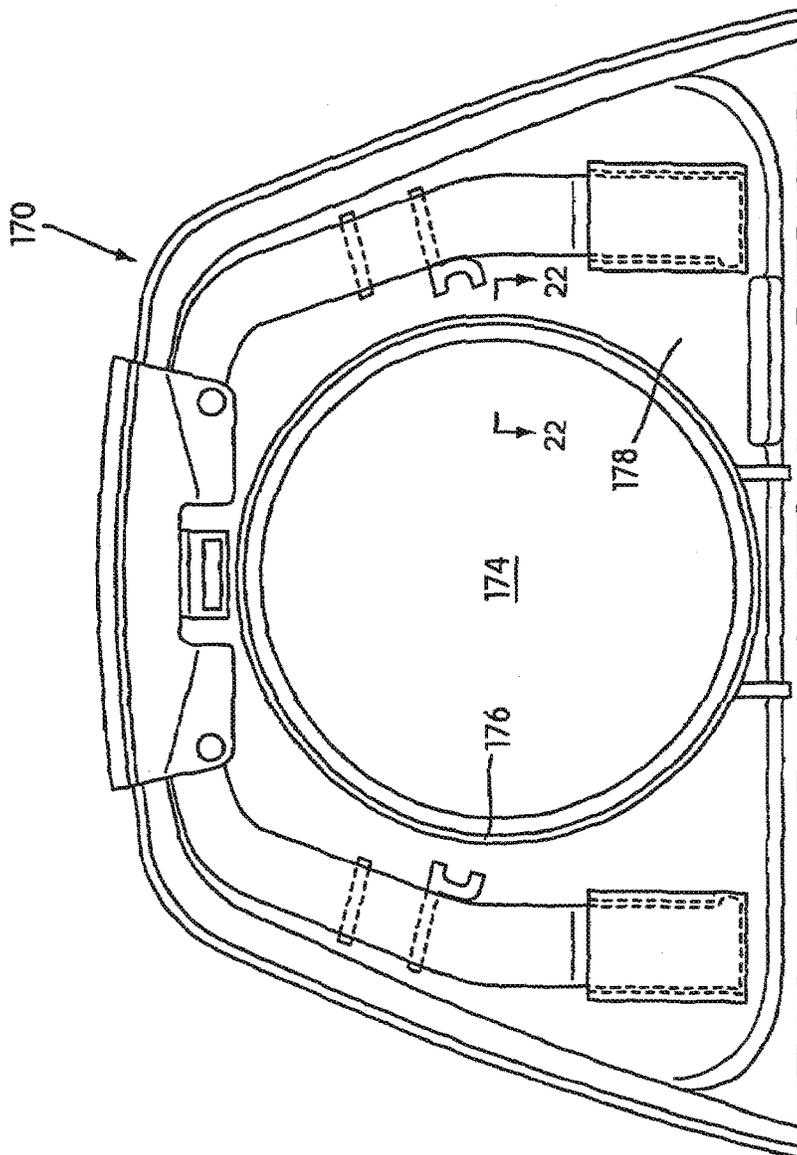


FIG. 21

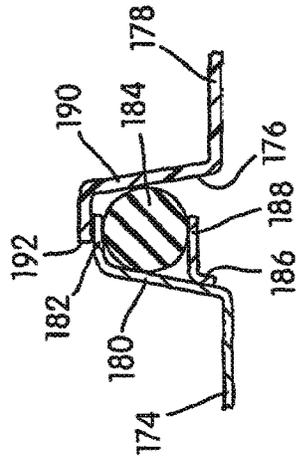


FIG. 22

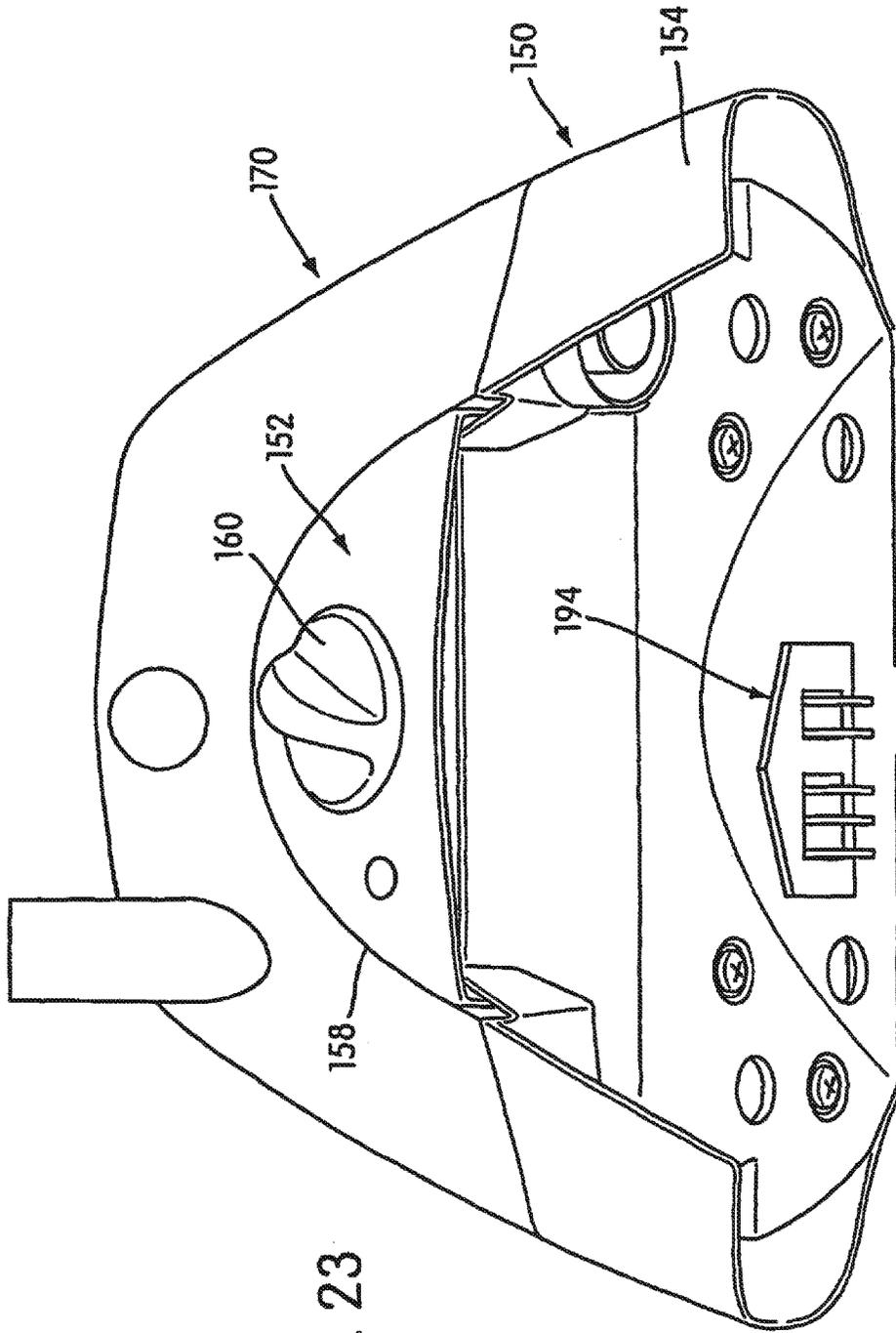


FIG. 23

**HUMIDIFIER WITH STRUCTURE TO
PREVENT BACKFLOW OF LIQUID
THROUGH THE HUMIDIFIER INLET**

Matter enclosed in heavy brackets [] appears in the original patent but forms no part of this reissue specification; matter printed in italics indicates the additions made by reissue; a claim printed with strikethrough indicates that the claim was canceled, disclaimed, or held invalid by a prior post-patent action or proceeding.

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation *reissue of Ser. No. 13/944,960, filed Aug. 23, 2013, which is a continuation reissue of Ser. No. 13/100,783, now U.S. Pat. No. Re. 44,453, which is an application for reissue of U.S. Pat. No. 7,614,398, filed as Ser. No. 11/181,807 filed Jul. 15, 2005, which is a continuation of Ser. No. 10/467,382, filed 7 Aug. 2003, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,935,337, which is the US national phase of international application PCT/AU02/00155 filed 14 Feb. 2002, which designated the United States, and claims the benefit of Australia Application Nos. PR3117, filed Feb. 16, 2001, and PR 7288, filed Aug. 27, 2001, each of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.*

The present application claims priority to Australian Provisional Applications PR3117, filed on Feb. 16, 2001 and PR7288, filed on Aug. 27, 2001, the specifications and drawings of which are incorporated by reference in their entireties.

The present invention relates to a humidifier for use with an apparatus for supplying breathable gas such as those used for Non-invasive Positive Pressure Ventilation (NIPPV) or Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP).

An apparatus for NIPPV or CPAP typically comprises a blower whose output is connected to a patient interface, such as a mask, via an air delivery conduit. Some patients find NIPPV or CPAP more comfortable when provided with humidified air. To this end, manufacturers often supply humidifiers which may be attached in the air circuit between the blower outlet and the patient interface. Humidifiers typically include a water reservoir and are configured such that ambient air from the blower entering the humidifier collects moisture through contact with the water, before continuing on to the patient interface.

Typically, the blower and humidifier are separate components connected via a flexible conduit. An air delivery conduit connects the humidifier outlet to a patient interface mask. Alternatively, the blower and humidifier may be rigidly-connected together. Air from the blower outlet passes into the humidifier inlet where it is humidified and then passes to the air delivery conduit. A potential problem with either arrangement is that if the humidifier is tilted relative to its normal orientation, water may run or spill from the humidifier into the blower outlet which may damage the electrical circuits of the blower and potentially cause infection control problems.

It is one aspect of the present invention to substantially overcome or at least ameliorate the prior art disadvantages.

It is another aspect to provide a humidifier for a CPAP apparatus that is adapted to substantially prevent liquid contained thereto from undesirably exiting an inlet of the humidifier.

It is another aspect to provide a humidifier that is capable of directly connecting to a CPAP apparatus.

It is another aspect to provide a humidifier that has an inlet that is directly connectable with a CPAP apparatus to effectively eliminate a supply tube.

It is another aspect to provide a humidifier that is capable of heating the liquid contained therein.

One embodiment of the present invention includes an apparatus for humidifying breathable gas including a humidifier body configured to retain a body of liquid therein, an inlet communicated with an interior of the humidifier body and connectable to a blower outlet, and an outlet communicated with the interior of the humidifier body and connectable to a patient supply conduit. The interior of the humidifier is arranged such that liquid from the body of liquid is prevented from exiting the humidifier body through the inlet thereof when the humidifier body is rotated from a working, upright orientation.

In this manner, the liquid is substantially prevented from entering the blower outlet and possibly damaging the blower.

It is contemplated that the apparatus may also include a first chamber having an inlet and an outlet, the first chamber inlet preferably being connectable to a blower outlet, a second chamber having an inlet preferably connected to the first chamber outlet, and an outlet preferably connectable to the patient supply conduit, the second chamber preferably having the carrying capacity for the body of liquid. The first chamber inlet and outlet and volumes of the first and second chambers may be adapted such that, when the humidifier is disposed in the working upright orientation, the body of liquid is contained in the second chamber and, in other relative positions of the humidifier, the body of liquid is retained in at least one of the second chamber and the first and second chambers at a level therewithin below a level of the first chamber inlet.

A volume of the second chamber may be larger than a volume of the first chamber.

The first chamber may be located substantially above the second chamber in the working upright orientation of the apparatus.

The first chamber inlet and outlet may be located adjacent opposing sections of the first chamber.

The second chamber outlet may be located closer to the first chamber outlet than the first chamber inlet.

At least a portion of a base of the second chamber may be made of a heat conducting material.

The heat conductive portion may be in the form of a metallic cap which covers an opening of the base.

The apparatus may also include a top cover, a base, and a divider disposed between the top cover and base, wherein the base defines a receptacle formed therewithin, which preferably retains the body of liquid in the working orientation of the apparatus.

The top cover and the divider together may define the first chamber and the receptacle and the divider together form the second chamber.

The first chamber inlet and the second chamber outlet may be formed in the top cover and is the first chamber outlet and the second chamber inlet may be formed in the divider, the first chamber outlet and the second chamber inlet may be defined by a single aperture in the divider which communicates the first and second chambers.

The divider may define first and second sections, the first section together with the top cover preferably defining the first chamber.

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The divider may include a plurality of apertures, separated by ribs, which may provide fluid communication from the second chamber to the second chamber outlet formed in the top cover.

The top cover and the base may be formed from a relatively rigid polymer material and the divider may be formed from a relatively resilient material.

The first chamber inlet may be connected to a blower outlet, the first chamber outlet may be connected to the second chamber inlet, the second chamber outlet may be connected to the patient supply conduit, and a portion of the second chamber below and behind the second chamber inlet may define a volume thereof greater than a volume of the body of liquid.

A portion of the second chamber between the first chamber inlet and the second chamber inlet and below the second chamber inlet may define a volume thereof greater than the volume of the body of liquid.

Portions of the first chamber and second chamber between the first chamber inlet and the second chamber outlet may define a volume thereof greater than the volume of the body of liquid.

Another embodiment of the present invention includes a CPAP apparatus including an apparatus for humidifying breathable gas as described above.

Another embodiment of the present invention includes a humidifier for a CPAP apparatus having a humidifier body defining a fluid reservoir and a fluid passage therein. The humidifier body has first and second chambers with a dividing member therebetween. The dividing member includes an orifice therethrough to communicate the first and second chambers with one another. Air from a blower (not shown) arrives in the first chamber via a first chamber inlet and departs from the second chamber via a second chamber outlet. The fluid passage includes the inlet, outlet, the orifice, and, at least, portions of the first and second chambers. The humidifier is designed to carry a body of liquid having a maximum volume, V_{max} . In a working orientation of the humidifier, the liquid body lies in a bottom portion of the second chamber. With respect to the working orientation of the humidifier the orifice lies forward of and to the side of the inlet. The first and second chambers are configured such that a volume of a first portion of the second chamber, which lies directly beneath the first chamber, is greater than V_{max} . Additionally, the volume of a second portion of the second chamber, which is disposed to the side of the first chamber, is greater than V_{max} . Furthermore, the volume of a portion of the second chamber forward of the inlet plus a portion of the first chamber forward of the inlet is greater than V_{max} . Additionally, the volume of a portion of the second chamber to the side of the inlet plus a portion of the first chamber to the side of the inlet is greater than V_{max} .

Yet another embodiment of the present invention includes a humidifier for a CPAP apparatus having first and second chambers, wherein an inlet to the humidifier is communicated with the first chamber, an outlet from the humidifier is communicated with the second chamber, and the first and second chambers are intercommunicated via an orifice extending therebetween. The inlet and orifice are arranged relative to one another such that a level of a volume of liquid present within the humidifier is below at least one of the inlet and orifice for any orientation of the humidifier.

Although certain embodiments of the invention are illustrated and described herein as having certain features, one skilled in the art would recognize that alternative embodiments of the invention could be provided based on at least

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one or more features, either individually or in combination, of the illustrated and described embodiments.

The benefits of the present invention will be readily appreciated and understood from consideration of the following detailed description of embodiments of this invention, when taken with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a schematic view of a humidifier according to one embodiment of the present invention in a working, upright orientation;

FIGS. 2-5 are schematic views of the humidifier shown in FIG. 1 in corresponding non-working, upright orientations;

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of a humidifier according to another embodiment of the present invention in a working, upright orientation;

FIG. 7. Is an exploded perspective view of the humidifier shown in FIG. 6;

FIG. 8 is a partial sectional view of the humidifier shown in FIG. 6;

FIG. 9 is schematic view of the humidifier shown in FIG. 6 showing an air flow path through the humidifier;

FIGS. 10-13 are schematic views of the humidifier shown in FIG. 6 in corresponding non-working, upright orientations;

FIG. 14 is a perspective view of a humidifier and connecting structure according to another embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 15 is a perspective view of the connecting structure shown in FIG. 14;

FIG. 16 is a bottom plan view of the humidifier shown in FIG. 14;

FIG. 17 is a rear perspective view of the humidifier and connecting, structure shown in FIG. 14;

FIG. 18 is a bottom perspective view of the connecting structure shown in FIG, 14;

FIG. 19 is a perspective view of a humidifier and heater according to another embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 20 is a perspective view of the heater shown in FIG. 19;

FIG. 21 is a bottom view of the humidifier shown in FIG. 19;

FIG. 22 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 22-22 in FIG. 21; and

FIG. 23 is a rear perspective view of the humidifier and heater shown in FIG. 19.

FIG. 1 schematically illustrates one embodiment of the humidifier of the present invention, indicated at 10. The humidifier 10 includes a humidifier body 12 defining a fluid reservoir and fluid passage therein. Additionally, there are two chambers 14,16 defined by the humidifier body 12 and a dividing member 18. The dividing member 18 includes an orifice 20 therethrough to communicate the chambers 14, 16 to one another. Air from a blower (not shown) arrives in the first chamber 16 via a first chamber inlet 22. Air departs from the second chamber 14 via a second chamber outlet 24. The fluid passage includes the inlet 22, outlet 24, the orifice 20, and, at least, portions of the chambers 14, 16. The humidifier 10 is designed to carry a body of liquid 26 having a maximum volume, V_{max} .

In a working orientation represented in FIG. 1, the liquid body 26 lies in a bottom portion of the second chamber 14. With respect to the orientation of the humidifier 10 depicted in FIG. 1, e.g., the orifice 20 lies forward of and to the side of the first chamber inlet 22 (e.g., at a diagonally opposite end of the chamber 16). As shown, the volume of a first portion 14A of the second chamber 14, which lies directly beneath the first chamber 16, is greater than V_{max} due to its relatively increased height. Additionally, the volume of a

second portion 14B of the second chamber 14, which is disposed to the side of the first chamber 16, is greater than V_{max} . Furthermore, the volume of a portion of the second chamber 14 forward of the inlet 22 plus a portion of the first chamber 16 forward of the inlet 22 is greater than V_{max} . Additionally, the volume of a portion of the second chamber 14 to the side of the inlet 22 plus a portion of the first chamber 16 to the side of the inlet 22 is greater than V_{max} . Hence, in order to minimize the volume of the humidifier 10, the first chamber inlet 22 is positioned as far to one side of the humidifier body 12 and as far rearward of the humidifier body 12 as possible.

The embodiment of the humidifier 10 shown in FIGS. 1-5 is configured to prevent liquid from the liquid body 26 from exiting through the inlet 22 thereof, such as when inadvertently rotated from an upright, normal working position (generally illustrated in FIG. 1). For this reason, it is preferable for the humidifier 10 to be capable of being rotated from the upright, working position by about 120° without allowing liquid to exit from the inlet 22. It is more preferable for the humidifier 10 to be capable of being rotated from the upright, working position by about 80°-110° without allowing liquid to exit from the inlet 22. It is contemplated that for the embodiment of the humidifier 10 shown in FIG. 1, it may be especially preferable for the humidifier 10 to be capable of being rotated from the upright, working position by about 90° without allowing liquid to exit from the inlet 22, since the humidifier 10 is readily able to be placed on one side thereof due to the substantially fiat, normal sides thereof. However, of course, it may be desirable for the humidifier 10 to be capable of being rotated more or less than 90°, depending on the particular configuration of the humidifier 10. It is noted that while the humidifier 10 is designed to prevent liquid from exiting the inlet thereof when inadvertently oriented in other than the upright working position, it may be possible to purposefully enable liquid to exit from the inlet, such as by jostling or rapidly and/or repeatedly rotating the humidifier 10. In situations wherein it is highly undesirable for liquid to exit the inlet of the humidifier, the configuration (e.g., volume) of the chambers, size and placement of the inlet and outlet, and size and placement of the aperture intercommunicating the chambers may be altered from the illustrated embodiment to decrease the possibility of liquid exiting the inlet of the humidifier.

As shown in FIG. 2, the arrangement of the chambers 14, 16, inlet 22, and outlet 24 means that, if the humidifier 10 is rotated in a clockwise direction by up to 90° about axis α , then the liquid body 26 will accumulate in the second portion 14B of the second chamber 14 and a portion of the first chamber 16 adjacent the outlet 24. In this situation, liquid of the liquid body 26 may run out of the outlet 24, but will not run out of the inlet 22 back into the blower.

Similarly, as shown in FIG. 3, if the humidifier 10 is rotated in a counter-clockwise direction (relative to the position illustrated in FIG. 1) by up to 90° about axis α , then the liquid body 26 will accumulate in the first portion 14A of the second chamber 14, but will not spill over orifice 20 into the first chamber 16.

As shown in FIG. 4, if the humidifier 10 is rotated in a clockwise direction (relative to the position illustrated in FIG. 1) up to 90° about axis β , then the liquid body 26 will accumulate in a rearward portion of the second chamber 14 but will not spill over orifice 20 into the first chamber 16.

As shown in FIG. 5, if the humidifier 10 is rotated in a counter-clockwise direction (relative to the position illustrated in FIG. 1) up to 90° about axis β , then the liquid body

26 will accumulate in forward portions of the first and second chambers 14, 16 and will not spill back through first chamber inlet 22. Furthermore, liquid of the liquid body 26 will drain out of the humidifier 10 through second chamber outlet 24.

In the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 1-5, the humidifier 10 has an exterior shape that is generally rectangular and the humidifier 10. As illustrated, the inlet 22 is positioned to correspond to a blower outlet being on the upper left-hand side when viewed from the front in an upright position. Therefore the humidifier inlet 22 is positioned at the back of the humidifier 10 on the upper left-hand side, when viewed from the front in an upright position. The humidifier outlet 24 lies on the front upper right-hand side, when viewed from the front in an upright position. However, it is, of course, possible for the inlet and outlet to be repositioned corresponding to the position of the blower outlet.

For each of the orientations of the humidifier 10 shown in FIGS. 1-5, the level of the liquid body 26 is always below the level of at least one of the inlet 22 and orifice 20 intercommunicating the first and second chambers 16, 14. In this manner, in a case wherein the inlet 22 is disposed below the level of the liquid body 26 (such as in orientations illustrated in FIGS. 3 and 4), the orifice 20 is disposed above the level of the liquid body 26, which prevents liquid from flowing therethrough and exiting the inlet 22. Conversely, in a case wherein the orifice 20 is disposed below the level of the liquid body 26 (such as in orientations illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 5), the inlet 22 is disposed above the level of the liquid body 26. Accordingly, liquid may flow through the orifice 20, but is prevented from exiting through the inlet 22.

FIG. 6 shows another embodiment of a humidifier 30 according to the present invention. The humidifier 30 includes an inlet 32 and an outlet 34, both of which are communicated with an interior of the humidifier 30. The interior of the humidifier 30 defines a reservoir for a body of liquid and a fluid passage. The fluid passage is communicated to each of the inlet 32 and outlet 34 and is configured such that fluid (e.g., breathable gas at an elevated pressure) flowing therethrough is exposed to the body of liquid. Additionally, the humidifier 30 is adapted for detachable connection to an NIPPV or CPAP apparatus (not shown) which includes a blower. When connected, the output of the blower is attached to the inlet 32. Air from the blower enters the inlet 32, flows through the fluid passage, and collects moisture through contact with the liquid body, before continuing on to the outlet 34 and then to the patient.

It is also contemplated that the humidifier 30 may include an additional internal passage to allow monitoring of the CPAP pressure without degrading signal strength or necessitating relatively large correction factors due to signal attenuation within the humidifier, such as described in co-pending Applications incorporated above, as well as co-pending Application No. WO 02/066107, entitled "Air Pressure Signal Monitoring in Apparatus for Treating Sleep Disordered Breathing", filed on even date herewith and hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

As shown in FIG. 7, the humidifier 30 includes a top cover 36, a gasket 38, and a base 40. The gasket 38 is disposed between the top cover 36 and base 40, which are secured together via sliding clips 72. (See FIG. 6.) Of course, other suitable fastening arrangements and constructions are possible. For example, the top cover 36 and base 40 may be formed with snap-fit or other cooperating constructions. Alternatively, other types of mechanical fasteners may be utilized. It is contemplated that the top cover 36 may be formed from a relatively rigid polymer material, such as

polysulfone (for example, grade UDEL P1700, manufactured by BP Amoco Polymers), and includes the inlet 32 and the outlet 34. The gasket 38 may be formed from a relatively resilient material, such as silicone rubber (for example, SILASTIC 94595-IIC, manufactured by Dow Corning) and is divided into first and second sections 42 and 44 by a channel structure 46. The first section 42 includes a raised portion 48 having a first aperture 50 extending vertically therethrough. The second section 44 includes a plurality of second apertures 52 extending vertically therethrough and being separated from one another by ribs 54. The top cover 36 may also include a divider wall structure 56 (FIG. 8) which corresponds to and is received within the channel structure 46 of the gasket 38. The gasket 38 includes a sealing flange 58 formed about a periphery thereof. The base 40 may be formed from the same or similar rigid polymer material as the top cover 36 and may include a receptacle 60 formed therewithin, a bottom portion 62, and side walls 64 extending upwardly from the bottom portion 62. The base 40 may also include a removable bridge structure 66, which divides the receptacle 60 into two sections 68 and 70, which correspond to the sections [22] 42 and [24] 44 of the gasket 38.

As shown in FIG. 8, to assemble the humidifier 30, the gasket 38 is attached to the base 40. The flange 58 of the gasket 38 forms a sealing engagement with an upper edge portion of the side walls 64 of the base 40. The top cover 36 is then attached to the base 40 via sliding clips 72 (FIG. 6) on opposite sides of the humidifier 30, such that the top cover 36 covers and seals with the gasket 38. The removable bridge structure 66 vertically supports an intermediate portion of the gasket 38. As shown, a downwardly facing surface of the channel structure 46 of the gasket 38 engages an upwardly facing surface of the bridge structure 66. When assembled, the gasket first section 42, the top cover 36, and the divider wall structure of the top cover 36 together form a first chamber 74. The receptacle 60 of the base 40 together with the gasket 38 form a second chamber 76. The first chamber 74 is thus located above the second chamber 76 and the volume of the second chamber 76 is larger than the volume of the first chamber 74. The first and second chambers 74, 76 are in communication with one another via the first aperture 50 within the gasket 38. The second chamber 76 is in communication with the outlet 34 via the second apertures 52 within the gasket 38.

In use, a predetermined maximum volume of liquid is poured into the receptacle 60 of the base 40 after removing the top cover 36 and the sealing gasket 38 from the base 40. The top cover 36 and the sealing gasket 38 are then reattached to the base 40. As shown in FIG. 9, a body of liquid 78 is held in the second chamber 76 when the humidifier 10 is in the upright working orientation of the humidifier 30. Breathable gas from the blower enters the inlet 32 and travels through the first chamber 74 and into the first aperture 50. The gas passes through the aperture 50 and enters the second chamber 76 where it is humidified by contact with the body of liquid 78, before exiting through apertures 52 in the gasket 38, and then out through outlet 34 (FIG. 6).

In the working upright orientation of the humidifier 30, as shown in FIG. 9, a liquid level, indicated at 81, of the body of liquid 78 is below the aperture 50. Thus, liquid from the body of liquid 78 cannot exit via the inlet 32 and there is no risk of damaging the electronic components of the NIPPV or CPAP apparatus. The body of liquid 78, however, will be displaced in the humidifier 30 according to the orientation of the humidifier 30. Accordingly, the humidifier 30 is config-

ured to substantially prevent liquid of the body of liquid 78 from exiting through the inlet 32 in non-upright orientations to avoid damage to the NIPPV or CPAP apparatus connected to the humidifier 30.

Similarly as with the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 1-5, the embodiment of the humidifier 30 shown in FIGS. 6-13 is configured to prevent liquid from the liquid body 78 from exiting through the inlet 32 thereof, such as when inadvertently rotated from an upright normal working position (generally illustrated in FIG. 6). For this reason, it is preferable for the humidifier 30 to be capable of being rotated from the upright, working position by about 120° without allowing liquid to exit from the inlet 32. It is more preferable for the humidifier 30 to be capable of being rotated from the upright, working position by about 80°-110° without allowing liquid to exit from the inlet 32. It may be especially preferable for the humidifier 30 to be capable of being rotated from the upright, working position by about 90° without allowing liquid to exit from the inlet 32. However, of course, it may be desirable for the humidifier 30 to be capable of being rotated more or less than 90°. It is noted that while the humidifier 30 is designed to prevent liquid from exiting the inlet thereof when inadvertently oriented in other than the upright working position, it may be possible to purposefully enable liquid to exit from the inlet, such as by jostling or rapidly and or repeatedly rotating the humidifier 30. In situations wherein it is highly undesirable for liquid to exit the inlet of the humidifier, the configuration (e.g., volume) of the chambers, size and placement of the inlet and outlet, and size and placement of the aperture intercommunicating the chambers may be altered from the illustrated embodiment to decrease the possibility of liquid exiting the inlet of the humidifier.

For each of the orientations of the humidifier 30 shown in FIGS. 10-13, the level of the liquid body 78 is always below the level of at least one of the inlet 32 and aperture 50 intercommunicating the first and second chambers 74, 76. In this manner, in a case wherein the inlet 32 is disposed below the level of the liquid body 78 (such as in orientations illustrated in FIGS. 10 and 12), the aperture 50 is disposed above the level of the liquid body 78, which prevents liquid from flowing therethrough and exiting the inlet 32. Conversely, in a case wherein the aperture 50 is disposed below the level of the liquid body 78 (such as in orientations illustrated in FIGS. 11 and 13), the inlet 32 is disposed above the level of the liquid body 78. Accordingly, liquid may flow through the aperture 50, but is prevented from exiting through the inlet 32.

In FIG. 10, the humidifier 30 is rotated to an angle about 90° from the working upright orientation, such that a side 80 thereof corresponding to the side of the humidifier 30 adjacent the inlet 32, is oriented below a side 82 thereof corresponding to the side of the humidifier 30 adjacent the outlet 34. Because the raised portion 48 of the gasket 38 increases the volume of the second chamber 76, the body of liquid 78 remains only in the second chamber 76 and the level 81 of the liquid body 78 remains below the first aperture 50. Thus, the liquid will not exit through the inlet 32.

In FIG. 11, the humidifier 30 is rotated to an angle about 90° from the working upright orientation, such that the side 82 is below the side 80 (i.e., flipped 180° from the orientation illustrated in FIG. 11). As the level 81 of the body of liquid 78 is above (at least initially) the apertures 52, liquid will pass therethrough and exit the outlet 34. However, since the level 81 of the liquid body 78 is below the inlet 32, liquid will not exit through the inlet 32. Liquid exiting through the

outlet **34** is generally acceptable as there is not generally a risk in damaging the NIPPV or CPAP apparatus.

In FIG. **12**, the humidifier **30** is rotated to an angle about 90° from the working upright orientation, such that a rear side thereof indicated at **84**, corresponding to the side at which the inlet **32** is located, is below a forward side thereof indicated at **86**, corresponding to the side at which the outlet **34** is located. As shown, the body of liquid **78** remains substantially in the second chamber **76** and the level **81** of the liquid body **78** remains below the first aperture **50**. Thus, water cannot exit through the inlet **32**.

FIG. **13** illustrates when the humidifier **30** is tilted to an angle about 90° from the working upright orientation, such that the forward side **86** is below the rear side **84**. As shown, the body of liquid **78** is disposed within forward portions of the first and second chambers **74**, **76**. As the level **81** of the body of liquid **78** is at least initially above the level of the aperture **50**, liquid will flow through the aperture **50** into the first chamber **74**. However, since the inlet **32** is disposed above the level of the body of liquid **78** in this orientation, no liquid exits through the inlet **34**.

The humidifier **30** thus ensures that the body of liquid **78** is disposed in one of (a) only the second chamber **76**, or (b) portions of the first and second chambers **74**, **76** at a level below the inlet **32**, to prevent liquid from exiting through the inlet **32** at orientations of the humidifier **30** up to an angle of about 90° from the working upright orientation. In the illustrated embodiment, a number of features of the humidifier **30** contribute to ensuing this function. These include relative positions of the inlet **32** and first aperture **50**. More particularly, the inlet **32** and first aperture **50** are located on opposing ends of the first chamber **74**. Also, the volume of the second chamber **76** is larger than the volume of the first chamber **74**, which is assisted by the raised portion **48** of the gasket **38** so that liquid displaced from the first chamber **74** may be accommodated within the second chamber **76** without overflow through aperture **50**. Furthermore, the outlet **34** is located closer to the first aperture **50** than the inlet **32**, which assists in ensuing that liquid will exit via the outlet **34**, rather than through the inlet **32**.

The humidifier **30** therefore substantially prevents or reduces the risk of water exiting through the inlet **32**, which may damage the NIPPV or CPAP apparatus, when the humidifier **30** is in other orientations up to an angle of about 90° from its working upright orientation.

It is contemplated that the humidifier **30** may be used as a retrofit or add-on component for a CPAP apparatus. To facilitate this usage, it may be preferable to provide a connecting structure **100** that is configured to connect between the CPAP apparatus and humidifier **30**. As shown in FIGS. **14** and **15**, the connecting structure **100** includes a housing **102**, which provides a generally horizontally extending receptacle **104** within which the humidifier **30** may be disposed. The housing **102** provides a base portion **106** that is configured to support the humidifier **30** thereon and a retaining portion **108** configured to secure the humidifier **30** in position. As shown in FIG. **16**, the retaining portion **108** extends generally parallel to the base portion **106** and is spaced above the base portion **106**. Referring back to FIG. **14**, the humidifier **30** may be formed with a recess **110** that is open and of a complimentary shape to receive the retaining portion **108** therein.

To facilitate connection of the humidifier **30** to the connecting strut **100**, it is contemplated that another embodiment of a humidifier, indicated at **120** in FIG. **16**, may include a securing mechanism **122**. As shown, the securing mechanism **122** includes a resiliently biased pull member

124 that includes one or more locking lugs **126** extending generally downwardly therefrom. The pull member **124** is disposed at a forward end (assuming the rearward end of the humidifier **120** is adjacent the connecting structure **100**) of the humidifier **120** and is resiliently biased by a pair of resilient legs **128**. Rearward portions of the legs **128** are relatively securely retained within corresponding pocket structures **130** provided on a bottom side of the humidifier **120**. Ribs **132** extend downwardly from the bottom side of the humidifier **120** and engage an intermediary portion of the legs **128** to define a space between the resilient legs **128** and the bottom side of the humidifier **120**. In this manner, the pull member **124** is biased generally downwardly by the resilient legs **128**, but may be manually moved (e.g., pulled) upward against a resilient bias of the legs **128**.

As shown in FIG. **15**, a forward portion of the base portion **106** includes generally upwardly open lug receiving recesses **134** within which the lugs **126** may be disposed when the humidifier **120** is disposed within the receptacle **104**. As the humidifier **120** is inserted within receptacle **104**, the legs **128** resiliently bias the lugs **126** into recesses **134**. The lugs **126** and recesses **134** thereby secure the humidifier **120** within the receptacle **104**. To remove the humidifier **120** from the receptacle **104**, the pull member **124** is pulled upwardly to withdraw the lugs **126** from the recesses **134**. The humidifier **120** may then be pulled generally horizontally out of the receptacle **104**.

FIG. **17** shows a rearward side of the connecting structure **100**. The rearward side of the connecting structure **100** provides a retaining mechanism **140** to secure the connecting structure **100** to the CPAP apparatus. It is contemplated that the retaining mechanism **140** may include a series of apertures **142** within the rearward portion of the housing **102**. The apertures **142** may receive therein, for example, prongs or tabs (not shown) provided by the CPAP apparatus. As shown in FIG. **18**, within each aperture **142**, a locking member **144** may be provided that is resiliently biased toward a position that partially encloses the respective aperture **142**. As also shown in FIG. **18**, a button structure **146** may be coupled to the locking members **144**, such that manual movement of the button structure **146** moves the locking members **144** out of their biased positions to substantially fully open the apertures **142**. It is contemplated that the tabs or prongs on the CPAP apparatus are provided with a groove therein such that when positioned within the apertures **142**, the locking members **144** engage within respective grooves to thereby securely and detachably retain the connecting structure **100** to the CPAP apparatus.

Referring back to FIG. **17**, the housing **102** of the connecting structure **100** may be provided with an opening **148** that allows the inlet of the humidifier to extend therethrough so as to be connected to the CPAP apparatus.

In certain circumstances, it may be desirable to provide heated humid air to the respirator mask. Accordingly, another embodiment of the connecting structure, indicated at **150** in FIG. **19**, may include a heater **152**. The connecting structure **150** may include a housing **154**, which provides a base portion **156** and retaining portion **158**, similar to the housing **102** described above. As shown in FIG. **19**, the retaining portion **158** may include a controller such as a knob or other selecting device **160** thereon to control a heat setting of the heater **152**. It is also contemplated that the controller **160** may include a display device, such as an LCD screen.

As shown in FIG. **20**, the base portion **156** may include a heating element **162** thereon. The heating element **162** may be in the form of a substantially flat plate-like resistance

heater, which heat generated thereby may be directly controlled by the controller 160. As shown in FIG. 19, another embodiment of the humidifier is indicated at 170. The humidifier 170 is disposed within a receptacle 172 provided by the housing 154. It is contemplated that the humidifier 170 has the same basic construction as the humidifiers 10 and 120 described above. However, it is contemplated that the humidifier 170 may include a heating plate 174 (also referred to as a metallic cap) to facilitate heating of the liquid contained therein. In particular, an opening 176 is provided within a bottom wall 178 of the humidifier 170. The heating plate 174 is shaped to fit within the opening 176, as shown in FIG. 21. As shown in more detail in FIG. 22, the heating plate 174 includes an upstanding peripheral wall 180 which includes an outwardly extending peripheral lip 182. A resilient seal member 184 is disposed about an outer periphery of the peripheral wall 180 in contact with the peripheral lip 182. A ring-like retaining member 186 may be press-fit onto the peripheral wall 180 to retain the seal 184 in position on the peripheral wall 180. The retaining member 186 includes an outwardly extending flange structure 188. The seal 184 is disposed between the peripheral lip 182 and flange structure 188. It is contemplated that the retaining member 186 may be press fit onto the heating plate 174, as described above, or may be formed in one piece therewith. The bottom wall 178 of the humidifier 170 is formed with an annular upstanding flange 190 which receives the heating plate 174. It is contemplated that the flange 190 may be slightly tapered inwardly in the upward direction to ease insertion of the heating plate 174. As shown, the flange 190 may include a generally horizontally extending lip structure 192 that vertically retains the heating plate 174.

Referring to FIG. 19, with the humidifier 170 in position within the receptacle 172, a bottom surface of the heating plate 174 is in contact with an upper surface of the heating element 162. In this manner, a heat generated by the heating element 162 is conductively transferred to the heating plate 174. The liquid within the humidifier 170 is exposed to an upper surface of the heating plate 174 and conducts heat therefrom. It is contemplated that a temperature of the liquid within the humidifier 170 may be controlled by manipulation of the controller 160.

It is also contemplated that the heating element 162 may be upwardly resiliently biased to ensure adequate contact between the heating element 162 and the heating plate 174.

As shown in Ha 23, a rearward portion of the connecting suture 150 may include a plurality of generally outwardly extending contact elements 194. It is contemplated that the contact element 194 may communicate with a power supply within the CPAP apparatus and/or a controller and/or sensors. In this manner, power may be delivered to the heater 152 directly from the CPAP apparatus. Additionally, a controller within the CPAP apparatus itself may control the heater 152. Furthermore, it is contemplated that sensors within the CPAP apparatus may monitor a heat output of the heater 152. Moreover, it may be possible for a CPAP apparatus to automatically adjust a heat output of the heater 152 based on a measured temperature thereof or of the water within the humidifier or of the breathable air exiting the humidifier.

The invention claimed is:

1. A humidifier assembly for a CPAP apparatus, comprising
 - a humidifier including
 - a base configured to retain a body of liquid therein, at least a portion of the base being constructed of a heat conducting material,

- a top cover, and
 - a seal disposed between the top cover and the base; and
 - a connecting structure configured to connect between the CPAP apparatus and humidifier and allow communication of an outlet of the CPAP apparatus with the inlet of the humidifier, the connecting structure including
 - a housing providing a base portion to support the humidifier thereon, and
 - a retaining mechanism configured to secure the connecting structure to the CPAP apparatus,
 wherein the base portion includes a heating element in contact with the heat conducting material of the base of the humidifier.]

2. A humidifier assembly according to claim 1, wherein the top cover defines both an inlet and an outlet communicated with an interior of the base, the inlet configured to receive pressurized breathable gas and the outlet configured to deliver the pressurized breathable gas with added humidity.]

3. A humidifier assembly according to claim 1, wherein the connecting structure includes a control knob to control a heat setting of the heating element.]

4. A humidifier assembly according to claim 1, wherein the connecting structure includes contact elements that communicate with a power supply within the CPAP apparatus.]

5. A humidifier assembly according to claim 1, wherein the connecting structure is configured to allow removable attachment of the CPAP apparatus to the humidifier.]

6. A humidifier assembly according to claim 1, wherein the heat conducting material is a metallic material.]

7. A CPAP apparatus including a humidifier assembly according to claim 1.]

8. A humidifier, comprising:

a humidifier body configured to retain liquid, the humidifier body comprising:

a rear portion having a humidifier body inlet adapted to receive a flow of pressurized breathable gas, the inlet configured to direct the flow of pressurized breathable gas into the humidifier body in a substantially horizontal direction when the humidifier is in an upright operating position;

a top cover having a humidifier body outlet adapted to deliver the flow of pressurized breathable gas with added humidity;

a base detachably fastened to the top cover with at least a first clip, the base having a heat conducting plate and forming a liquid receptacle for the liquid; and a vertically extending passage to direct gas from the inlet towards liquid in the liquid receptacle of the base, the vertically extending passage having at least a portion with closed shape as seen in cross-section, wherein if the humidifier body is rotated from the upright, operating position to each of a plurality of non-upright positions, the liquid in the humidifier body remains below the inlet.

9. The humidifier of claim 8, wherein the rear portion of the humidifier body includes an external retaining portion recess positioned, configured and dimensioned to at least partly receive a horizontally extending retaining portion of a connecting structure.

10. The humidifier of claim 8, wherein the humidifier body has a gas introduction chamber and a gas humidification chamber connected to the gas introduction chamber by the passage.

11. The humidifier of claim 10, wherein the top cover includes an internal divider wall, depending from a top

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inner surface of the top cover, to divide the gas introduction chamber from the humidification chamber.

12. The humidifier of claim 8, further comprising a second clip to detachably fasten the top cover and the base, wherein the top cover and the base are snap-fit together.

13. The humidifier of claim 8, wherein the closed shape of the passage is substantially rectangular.

14. The humidifier of claim 8, wherein the passage receives the entirety of the flow of pressurized breathable gas before the gas is directed to the liquid receptacle.

15. The humidifier of claim 8, further comprising a seal between the heat conducting plate and the base.

16. The humidifier of claim 15, wherein the humidifier body further comprises a seal between the base and the top cover.

17. The humidifier of claim 8, wherein the heat conducting plate comprises metal.

18. The humidifier of claim 17, wherein the heat conducting plate is circular.

19. The humidifier of claim 8, wherein the top cover is formed of a transparent material.

20. The humidifier of claim 18, wherein the base is formed of a transparent material.

21. The humidifier of claim 8, wherein the top cover and the base are snap-fit together.

22. The humidifier of claim 8, wherein:

the rear portion of the humidifier body includes an external retaining portion recess positioned, configured and dimensioned to at least partly receive a horizontally extending retaining portion of a connecting structure,

the humidifier body has a gas introduction chamber and a gas humidifier chamber connected to the gas introduction chamber by the passage,

the top cover includes an internal divider wall, depending from a top inner surface of the top cover, to divide the gas introduction chamber and the gas humidification chamber,

the passage receives the entirety of the gas before the gas is directed to the liquid receptacle,

the humidifier further comprises a first seal between the heat conducting plate and the base, and further comprises a second seal between the base and the top cover,

the heat conducting plate is formed of metal, the top cover and base comprise transparent material, and

a shape of the heat conducting plate is different than a shape of the base of the humidifier body, and the heat conducting plate covers only a portion of the base.

23. The humidifier of claim 8, wherein:

the humidifier body has a pair of resiliently biased lugs adapted to be disposed within corresponding recesses to secure the humidifier in place relative to a CPAP apparatus,

the humidifier body has a gas introduction chamber and a gas humidifier chamber connected to the gas introduction chamber by the passage,

the passage receives all of the gas before the gas is directed from the gas introduction chamber to the gas humidifier chamber and the liquid receptacle, and the humidifier further comprises a seal between the base and the top cover.

24. The humidifier of claim 23, wherein the base and the top cover are snap fit to one another.

25. A CPAP system including a blower to generate the flow of pressurized breathable gas and the humidifier of claim 8.

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26. A humidifier assembly, comprising:
the humidifier of claim 8; and

a connecting structure configured to connect between the humidifier and a CPAP apparatus without the need for an external tube or conduit extending between the CPAP apparatus and the connecting structure, the connecting structure comprising a housing defining a humidifier receptacle configured to horizontally receive the humidifier.

27. The humidifier assembly of claim 26, wherein the rear portion of the humidifier body includes an external retaining portion recess positioned, configured and dimensioned to at least partly receive a horizontally extending retaining portion of the connecting structure when the humidifier is fully inserted relative to the humidifier receptacle.

28. The humidifier assembly of claim 27, further comprising ribs between the recess and the horizontally extending retaining portion.

29. The humidifier assembly of claim 26, wherein the housing comprises a base portion configured to support the humidifier, and the humidifier assembly further comprises a securing mechanism that secures the humidifier in the housing with at least part of the humidifier being exposed.

30. The humidifier assembly of claim 29, wherein the base portion comprises a heating element configured to engage the heat conducting plate of the humidifier when the humidifier is retained in the housing.

31. The humidifier assembly of claim 30, wherein the heating element is resiliently biased into engagement with the heat conducting plate.

32. The humidifier assembly of claim 31, wherein the heating element is a flat plate-like resistance heater.

33. The humidifier assembly of claim 26, wherein the housing comprises contact elements configured to receive power from the CPAP apparatus.

34. The humidifier assembly of claim 33, wherein the housing comprises resiliently biased locking members on a side thereof that are configured to engage the CPAP apparatus to secure the connecting structure to the CPAP apparatus.

35. The humidifier assembly of claim 34, further comprising a release member configured to release the connecting structure from the CPAP apparatus.

36. The humidifier assembly of claim 35, wherein the release member is a button structure positioned on a lower portion of the housing.

37. The humidifier assembly of claim 36, wherein, when the humidifier body and the connecting structure as a unit are rotated from the upright, operating position, the liquid will drain through the humidifier body outlet before draining through the humidifier body inlet.

38. The humidifier assembly of claim 37, wherein the connecting structure includes an upstanding wall portion that extends in a vertical orientation, the humidifier having a rear wall that abuts or is proximate the upstanding wall portion when the humidifier is fully horizontally inserted relative to the connecting structure, wherein an opening of the connecting structure aligns with the inlet of the humidifier when the humidifier is fully inserted relative to the connecting structure, the opening being configured to allow communication of the flow of pressurized breathable gas from an outlet of the CPAP apparatus to the inlet of the humidifier.

39. The humidifier assembly of claim 36, wherein the connecting structure includes a movable button structure configured to allow manual release of the connecting structure from the CPAP apparatus.

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40. A CPAP system including a blower to generate the flow of pressurized breathable gas and the humidifier assembly of claim 26.

41. The CPAP system of claim 40, wherein the CPAP apparatus includes a controller to control a heating element of the connecting structure, as well as at least one electrical connecting member to allow power supply from the CPAP apparatus to the connecting structure.

42. A humidifier, comprising:

a humidifier body configured to retain liquid, the humidifier body comprising:

a humidifier body inlet configured to receive a flow of pressurized breathable gas the humidifier body inlet being positioned on a rear side wall of the humidifier body;

a humidifier body outlet adapted to deliver the flow of pressurized breathable gas with added humidity;

a gas introduction chamber having a gas introduction chamber inlet and a gas introduction chamber outlet, the gas introduction chamber inlet being adapted to receive the flow of pressurized breathable gas from the humidifier body inlet;

a humidification chamber in communication with the gas introduction chamber and the humidifier body outlet, the humidification chamber having a bottom surface comprising heat conductive metallic material, and

a cover including the humidifier body outlet,

wherein:

the gas introduction chamber outlet serves as a humidification chamber inlet,

the gas introduction chamber and the humidification chamber are connected by a substantially vertically oriented transitional passage having a closed cross sectional shape configured to receive all of the flow of pressurized breathable gas before the gas is directed to the humidification chamber,

the gas introduction chamber inlet faces a substantially horizontal direction when the humidifier is in an upright, operating position,

the gas introduction chamber outlet is positioned above the liquid when the humidifier body retains the liquid and is in the upright, operating position, and

the gas introduction chamber and the humidification chamber are configured so that when the humidifier body is rotated around a horizontal axis parallel to the bottom surface of the humidifier chamber, in each of clockwise and counterclockwise directions, from the upright, operating position to a plurality of non-upright positions, liquid is prevented or discouraged from flowing from the humidification chamber and out through the humidifier body inlet.

43. The humidifier of claim 42, wherein a volume of the gas introduction chamber is smaller than a volume of the humidification chamber.

44. The humidifier of claim 43, wherein the non-upright positions include positions where the humidifier is inadvertently rotated about multiple horizontal axes.

45. The humidifier of claim 44, wherein the non-upright positions are those which occur when the humidifier is inadvertently rotated in both clockwise and counterclockwise orientations relative to the horizontal axes.

46. The humidifier of claim 44, wherein the horizontal axes include a first axis that runs from a front to a back of the humidifier body, and a second axis that runs from lateral side to lateral side of the humidifier body.

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47. The humidifier of claim 42, wherein the humidifier body includes a top cover and a base that are snap-fit together.

48. The humidifier of claim 47, wherein the humidifier body further comprises a seal between the base and the top cover.

49. The humidifier of claim 48, further comprising a seal between the heat conducting plate and the base.

50. The humidifier of claim 48, wherein the top cover and base are formed of a transparent material.

51. The humidifier of claim 42, wherein the humidifier body includes a top cover, a base, and a pair of clips to detachably fasten the top cover and the base.

52. The humidifier of claim 42, further comprising a pair of resiliently biased lugs to secure the humidifier relative to a blower of a CPAP apparatus.

53. A humidifier assembly, comprising:
the humidifier of claim 42; and

a connecting structure configured to connect between the humidifier and a CPAP apparatus without the need for an external tube or conduit extending between the CPAP apparatus and the connecting structure, the connecting structure comprising a housing defining a receptacle configured to horizontally receive the humidifier.

54. The humidifier assembly of claim 53, wherein a rear portion of the humidifier body includes an external retaining portion recess positioned, configured and dimensioned to at least partly receive a horizontally extending retaining portion of the connecting structure.

55. The humidifier assembly of claim 54, further comprising ribs positioned adjacent the horizontally extending retaining portion.

56. The humidifier assembly of claim 53, wherein the housing comprises a base portion configured to support the humidifier, and the humidifier assembly further comprises a securing mechanism that secures the humidifier in the housing with at least part of the humidifier being exposed.

57. The humidifier assembly of claim 56, wherein the securing mechanism includes a resiliently biased member having a pair of locking lugs provided on the humidifier body, and the base portion includes lug receiving recesses in which the lugs may be releasably disposed.

58. The humidifier assembly of claim 56, wherein the base portion comprises a heating element configured to engage the heat conductive metallic material of the humidifier when the humidifier is retained in the housing.

59. The humidifier assembly of claim 58, wherein the heating element is resiliently biased into engagement with the heat conducting plate.

60. The humidifier assembly of claim 58, wherein the heating element is a flat plate-like resistance heater.

61. The humidifier assembly of claim 53, wherein the housing comprises contact elements configured to receive power from the CPAP apparatus.

62. The humidifier assembly of claim 61, wherein the housing comprises resiliently biased locking members on a side thereof that are configured to engage the CPAP apparatus to secure the connecting structure to the CPAP apparatus.

63. The humidifier assembly of claim 62, further comprising a release member configured to release the connecting structure from the CPAP apparatus.

64. The humidifier assembly of claim 63, wherein the release member is a button structure provided to a lower portion of the housing.

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65. A CPAP system including a blower to generate a flow of pressurized breathable gas and the humidifier assembly of claim 53.

66. A CPAP system including a blower to generate a flow of pressurized breathable gas and the humidifier of claim 42.

67. A humidifier, comprising:

a humidifier body having a base and a top cover snap-fitted to the base, the base defining a liquid receptacle adapted to contain liquid, the base having a heat conducting plate;

an inlet adapted to receive a flow of pressurized breathable gas;

an outlet, downstream of the liquid receptacle, adapted to deliver the flow of pressurized breathable gas with added humidity; and

at least a first resiliently biased lug movable relative to the base, the first lug being biased in an extended position and manually movable against the resilient bias from the extended position to a retracted position,

wherein if the humidifier body is rotated from an upright, operating position to each of a plurality of non-upright positions, liquid in the humidifier body remains below the inlet.

68. The humidifier of claim 67, wherein a rear portion of the humidifier body includes an external retaining portion recess.

69. The humidifier of claim 67, wherein the humidifier body has a gas introduction chamber and a gas humidifier chamber connected to the gas introduction chamber by a vertically extending passage having at least a portion with closed shape as seen in cross-section.

70. The humidifier of claim 69, wherein the passage receives the entirety of the flow of pressurized breathable gas before the gas is directed to the liquid receptacle.

71. The humidifier of claim 67, wherein the humidifier body further comprises a seal between the base and the top cover.

72. The humidifier of claim 71, wherein the top cover and base comprise transparent material.

73. The humidifier of claim 67, wherein:

a rear portion of the humidifier body includes an external retaining portion recess,

the humidifier body has a gas introduction chamber and a gas humidifier chamber connected to the gas introduction chamber by a vertically extending passage having at least a portion with closed shape as seen in cross-section,

the passage receives all of the gas before the gas is directed to the liquid receptacle,

the heat conducting plate is formed of metal, and the top cover and base comprise transparent material.

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74. The humidifier of claim 73, further comprising a second lug, laterally spaced from the first lug and movable in unison with the first lug, wherein the first and second lugs are positioned to extend outwardly relative to the humidifier body.

75. A CPAP system including:

a CPAP apparatus having a blower to generate the flow of pressurized breathable gas; and

a humidifier receptacle to horizontally receive the humidifier of claim 67.

76. The CPAP system of claim 75, wherein a rear portion of the humidifier body includes an external retaining portion recess positioned, configured and dimensioned to at least partly receive a horizontally extending retaining portion associated with the humidifier receptacle when the humidifier is fully inserted relative to the humidifier receptacle, and wherein the CPAP system further comprises at least a first lug receiving recess in which the first lug is a releasably disposed when the humidifier is fully inserted relative to the humidifier receptacle and the lug resiliently moves to the extended position.

77. The CPAP system of claim 76, further comprising ribs adjacent the horizontally extending retaining portion.

78. The CPAP system of claim 75, further comprising a heating element configured to engage the heat conducting plate of the humidifier when the humidifier is retained in the humidifier receptacle.

79. A CPAP system of claim 78, wherein the heating element is resiliently biased into engagement with the heat conducting plate.

80. The CPAP system of claim 79, wherein the heating element is a flat plate-like resistance heater.

81. The CPAP system of claim 75, further comprising a connecting structure having resiliently biased locking members on a side thereof that are configured to engage the CPAP apparatus to secure the connecting structure to the CPAP apparatus without the need for an external flexible hose or conduit, wherein the connecting structure includes the humidifier receptacle.

82. The CPAP system of claim 81, wherein the connecting structure comprises contact elements configured to receive power from the CPAP apparatus.

83. The CPAP system of claim 81, further comprising a release member configured to release the connecting structure from the CPAP apparatus.

84. The CPAP system of claim 83, wherein the release member is a button structure.

85. The CPAP system of claim 81, wherein, when the humidifier body and the connecting structure as a unit are rotated from the upright, operating position, liquid will drain through the outlet before draining through the inlet.

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