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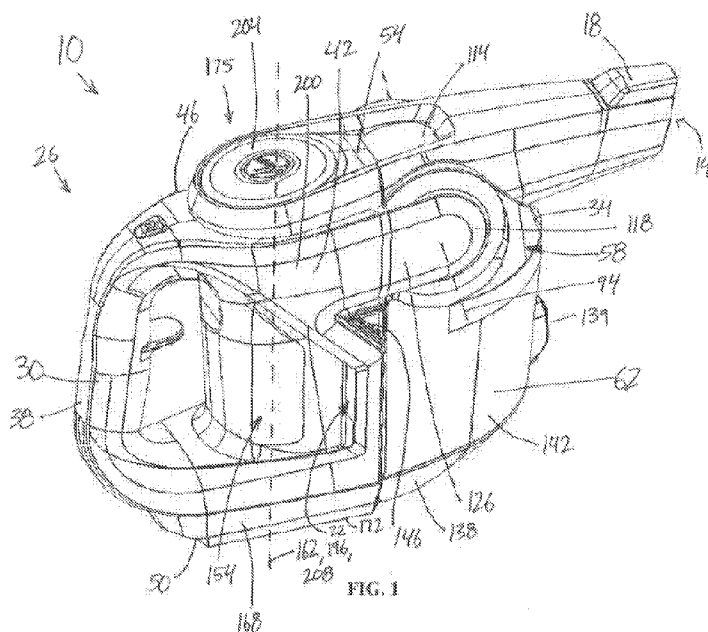
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(54) Title: HANDHELD VACUUM CLEANER



(57) Abstract: A handheld vacuum cleaner includes a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a main body including a handle, and a fluid flow motor positioned in the fluid flow path. The vacuum cleaner further includes a dirt collection region with an openable bottom and a cyclonic separator in the fluid flow- path. The cyclonic separator includes a cyclone chamber having a first end wall and a second end wall, a cyclone dirty fluid inlet, and a cyclone clean fluid outlet. The vacuum cleaner further includes a filter chamber in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator and upstream from the fluid flow motor. The filter chamber includes an outlet fluidly communicating the filter chamber and the fluid flow motor and a tangential inlet fluidly communicating the cyclonic separator and the filter chamber.



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HANDHELD VACUUM CLEANER

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to co-pending U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/253,508, filed on November 10, 2015, the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

[0002] The present invention relates to handheld vacuum cleaners, and more particularly, to cyclonic handheld vacuum cleaners.

SUMMARY

[0003] In one embodiment, the invention provides a vacuum cleaner including a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a main body including a handle, and a fluid flow motor positioned in the fluid flow path. The vacuum cleaner further includes a dirt collection region with an openable bottom and a cyclonic separator in the fluid flow path. The cyclonic separator includes a cyclone chamber having a first end wall and a second end wall, a cyclone dirty fluid inlet, and a cyclone clean fluid outlet. The vacuum cleaner further includes a filter chamber in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator and upstream from the fluid flow motor. The filter chamber includes an outlet fluidly communicating the filter chamber and the fluid flow motor and a tangential inlet fluidly communicating the cyclonic separator and the filter chamber.

[0004] In one embodiment, the invention provides a vacuum cleaner including a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a main body including a handle, and a fluid flow motor positioned in the fluid flow path. The vacuum cleaner further includes a cyclonic separator in the fluid flow path. The cyclonic separator includes a cyclone chamber having a first end wall, a second end wall, a sidewall extending along a cyclone axis, a cyclone dirty fluid inlet, and a cyclone clean fluid outlet. The vacuum cleaner further includes a filter chamber housing a cylindrical filter in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator and upstream from the fluid flow motor. An axis defined by the cylindrical filter is transverse to the cyclone axis.

[0005] In another embodiment, the invention provides a vacuum cleaner including a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a main body including a handle, and a fluid flow motor positioned in the fluid flow path. The vacuum cleaner further includes a cyclonic separator in the fluid flow path. The cyclonic separator includes a cyclone chamber having a first end wall, a second end wall, a sidewall extending along a cyclone axis, a cyclone dirty fluid inlet, and a cyclone clean fluid outlet. The vacuum cleaner further includes a filter chamber in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator and upstream from the fluid flow motor, and an airflow passage between the cyclone clean fluid outlet and the filter chamber. The airflow passage defines an upstream cross-sectional area and defines a downstream cross-sectional area. The downstream cross-sectional area is larger than the upstream cross-sectional area.

[0006] In another embodiment, the invention provides a vacuum cleaner including a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a fluid flow motor positioned in the fluid flow path, and a cyclonic separator in the fluid flow path. The cyclonic separator includes a cyclone chamber having a first end wall and a second end wall, a cyclone dirty fluid inlet, and a cyclone clean fluid outlet. The vacuum cleaner further includes a filter chamber in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator and upstream from the fluid flow motor. The filter chamber houses a pre-motor filter having a first cylindrical filter and a second cylindrical filter. The second cylindrical filter is nested within the first cylindrical filter.

[0007] In another embodiment, the invention provides a vacuum cleaner including a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a main body including a handle, and a fluid flow motor positioned in the fluid flow path. The vacuum cleaner further includes a cyclonic separator in the fluid flow path. The cyclonic separator includes a cyclone chamber having a first end wall, a second end wall, a sidewall extending along a cyclone axis, a cyclone dirty fluid inlet, and a cyclone clean fluid outlet. The vacuum cleaner further includes a filter chamber housing a pre-motor filter in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator and upstream from the fluid flow motor. A gap between the pre-motor filter and an adjacent sidewall of the filter chamber is between 5 and 10 millimeters.

[0008] In another embodiment, the invention provide a handheld vacuum cleaner including a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a main body including a handle, and a fluid flow motor positioned in the fluid flow path. The vacuum

cleaner further includes a cyclonic separator in the fluid flow path. The cyclonic separator includes a cyclone chamber having a first end wall and a second end wall, a cyclone dirty fluid inlet, and a cyclone clean fluid outlet. The vacuum cleaner further includes a filter chamber housing a filter in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator and upstream from the fluid flow motor. The filter chamber includes a lid removable to open the filter chamber and the filter is coupled to the lid.

[0009] In another embodiment, the invention provides a vacuum cleaner including a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a fluid flow motor positioned in the fluid flow path, and a cyclonic separator in the fluid flow path. The vacuum cleaner further includes a filter chamber in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator and upstream from the fluid flow motor. The filter chamber houses a pre-motor filter having a first stage filter and a second stage filter. The first stage filter is removable from the second stage filter.

[0010] In another embodiment, the invention provides a vacuum cleaner including a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a main body including a handle, and a fluid flow motor positioned in the fluid flow path. The vacuum cleaner further includes a cyclonic separator in the fluid flow path. The cyclonic separator includes a cyclone chamber having a first end wall and a second end wall, a cyclone dirty fluid inlet, and a cyclone clean fluid outlet. The vacuum cleaner further includes a filter chamber in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator and upstream from the fluid flow motor. The filter chamber includes an inlet fluidly communicating the cyclonic separator and the filter chamber. The filter chamber includes an outlet fluidly communicating the filter chamber and the fluid flow motor, and the inlet is perpendicular to the outlet.

[0011] In another embodiment, the invention provides a vacuum cleaner including a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a main body including a handle, and a fluid flow motor positioned in the fluid flow path. The vacuum cleaner further includes a cyclonic separator in the fluid flow path. The cyclonic separator includes a cyclone chamber having a first end wall and a second end wall, a cyclone dirty fluid inlet, and a cyclone clean fluid outlet. The vacuum cleaner further includes a filter chamber in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator and upstream from the fluid flow motor. The filter chamber includes an inlet fluidly communicating the cyclonic separator and the filter chamber and an outlet fluidly communicating the filter chamber and the fluid flow

motor. The inlet includes a rectangular cross-section and the outlet includes a circular cross-section.

[0012] In another embodiment, the invention provides a vacuum cleaner including a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a main body including a handle, and a fluid flow motor positioned in the fluid flow path. The vacuum cleaner further includes a cyclonic separator in the fluid flow path. The cyclonic separator includes a cyclone chamber having a first end wall, a second end wall, a sidewall extending along a cyclone axis, a cyclone dirty fluid inlet, and a cyclone clean fluid outlet. The vacuum cleaner further includes a filter chamber in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator and upstream from the fluid flow motor. An axis defined by the filter chamber is perpendicular to the cyclone axis.

[0013] In another embodiment, the invention provides a vacuum cleaner including a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a main body including a handle, a fluid flow motor positioned in the fluid flow path. The vacuum cleaner further includes a cyclonic separator in the fluid flow path, and a filter chamber housing a cylindrical filter in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator and upstream from the fluid flow motor. The filter chamber includes a tangential inlet fluidly communicating the cyclonic separator and the filter chamber. The fluid flow path extends through the cylindrical filter in a normal flow orientation.

[0014] Other aspects of the invention will become apparent by consideration of the detailed description and accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a handheld vacuum cleaner according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0016] FIG. 2 is another perspective view of the handheld vacuum cleaner of FIG. 1.

[0017] FIG. 3 is a bottom perspective view of the handheld vacuum cleaner of FIG. 1.

[0018] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of a separator according to an embodiment of the invention.

- [0019] FIG. 5 is another perspective view of the separator of FIG. 4.
- [0020] FIG. 6 is a side view of the separator of FIG. 4.
- [0021] FIG. 7 is a cross-sectional view of the separator of FIG. 4 taken along lines 7-7 shown in FIG. 4.
- [0022] FIG. 8 is another cross-sectional view of the separator of FIG. 4 taken along lines 8-8 shown in FIG. 5.
- [0023] FIG. 9 is another cross-sectional view of the separator of FIG. 4 taken along lines 9-9 shown in FIG. 4.
- [0024] FIG. 10 is another cross-sectional view of the separator of FIG. 4 taken along lines 10-10 shown in FIG. 4.
- [0025] FIG. 10A is a cross-sectional view of the separator of FIG. 4 taken along lines 10A-10A shown in FIG. 10.
- [0026] FIG. 11 is a partial perspective view of the cross-sectional view of FIG. 10.
- [0027] FIG. 12 is a perspective view of a filter assembly and a suction source according to an embodiment of the invention, with other components removed for clarity.
- [0028] FIG. 13 is an exploded view of the filter assembly of FIG. 12.
- [0029] FIG. 13A is a perspective view of the filter assembly of FIG. 12 with a pre-motor filter removed from a filter chamber.
- [0030] FIG. 14 is a cross-sectional view of the filter assembly and suction source of FIG. 12 taken along lines 14-14 shown in FIG. 12.
- [0031] FIG. 15 is a cross-sectional view of the filter assembly and motor assembly of FIG. 12 taken along lines 15-15 shown in FIG. 12.
- [0032] FIG. 16 is a perspective view of a handheld vacuum cleaner according to another embodiment of the invention.
- [0033] FIG. 17 is a side view of the handheld vacuum cleaner of FIG. 16.

[0034] FIG. 18 is a perspective schematic view of the handheld vacuum cleaner of FIG. 16.

[0035] FIG. 19 is a perspective view of a separator according to an alternative embodiment of the invention.

[0036] FIG. 20 is another perspective view of the separator of FIG. 19.

[0037] FIG. 21 is a perspective view of a cross-section of the separator of FIG. 19 taken along lines 21-21 shown in FIG. 19.

[0038] FIG. 22 is another perspective view of the cross-section of the separator of FIG. 19 taken along lines 21-21 shown in FIG. 19.

[0039] Before any embodiments of the invention are explained in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and the arrangement of components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the following drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced or of being carried out in various ways

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0040] FIGS. 1-15 illustrate a handheld vacuum cleaner 10. The handheld vacuum cleaner 10 includes a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet 14 formed in a suction nozzle 18 to a clean air outlet 22 (FIG. 1). The handheld vacuum cleaner 10 also includes a main body 26 (i.e., a main housing) with a handle 30, a front end 34, a back end 38, a first side 42, a second side 46, a bottom 50, and a top 54. The dirty air inlet 14 and the suction nozzle 18 are located at the front end 34 of the main body 26. The handle 30 is located at the back end 38 and extends generally in a top-to-bottom direction along the main body 26. In other words, the handle 30 is oriented generally vertical when the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 is sitting on a horizontal surface.

[0041] With reference to FIGS. 1-11, the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 includes a cyclonic separator 58 and a dirt collection region 62. It is understood the cyclonic separator 58 is positioned in the fluid flow path and the assemblies illustrated in FIGS. 4-11 are utilized within the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 illustrated in FIGS. 1-3. In other words, FIGS. 4-11

schematically illustrate certain details of the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 with other components removed for clarity.

[0042] With reference to FIGS. 4-11, the cyclonic separator 58 includes a cyclone chamber 66 (FIG. 7) having a first end wall 70, a second end wall 74, and a sidewall 78 extending between the first wall 70 and the second wall 74. The cyclonic separator 58 further includes a cyclone dirty fluid inlet 82 (FIG. 7), a cyclone clean fluid outlet 86, and cyclone dirt outlet 90 (FIG. 8). In the illustrated embodiment, the cyclone dirt outlet 90 is formed in the sidewall 78 proximal the second end wall 74, the cyclone dirty fluid inlet 82 is formed in the sidewall 78 proximate the first end wall 70, and the cyclone clean fluid outlet 86 is formed in the first end wall 70.

[0043] With continued reference to FIG. 9, a flow-diverting wall 91 is positioned adjacent the cyclone dirt outlet 90. The flow-diverting wall 91 is positioned downstream from the cyclone dirt outlet 90 and debris exiting the cyclone dirt outlet 90 travels past an upstream wall 92 and impinges (i.e., impacts) the flow-diverting wall 91. This is a result of the airflow within the cyclonic separator moving in a generally clockwise direction, as viewed from FIG. 9. The flow-diverting wall 91 extends from the cyclone sidewall 78 between the cyclone chamber 66 and the dirt collection region 62 in a direction along a cyclone chamber axis 94 (FIG. 8). The flow-diverting wall 91 forms a downstream boundary of the cyclone dirt outlet 90 and intersects the fluid flow path adjacent the second end wall 74 between the cyclone chamber 66 and the dirt collection region 62. A duct 93 is formed in part by the flow-diverting wall 91 and the opposite wall 92 around the perimeter of the cyclone dirt outlet 90 in fluid communication with the dirt collection region 62. The flow-diverting wall 91 eliminates a common “knife-edge” formed in prior art designs between the edge of the material throw-off in cyclone sidewalls and the adjacent dust bin. Such “knife-edge” transitions in the prior art tended to catch debris flowing toward it forming a debris clog point that reduced performance in traditional prior art cyclonic separator designs. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 9, debris exiting the cyclone dirt outlet 90 that passes over the wall 92 and impacts the flow-diverting wall 91 is at least partially guided toward the dirt collection region 62, which has been found to inhibit clogging of the cyclone dirt outlet 90.

[0044] The cyclone chamber axis 94 is defined by the sidewall 78 and passes through the first end wall 70 and the second end wall 74 (FIG. 8). The first end wall 70 and the second end wall 74 of the cyclone chamber 66 both intersect a common horizontal plane 98 (FIG. 6)

when the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 is positioned on a horizontal surface. In other words, normally the cyclone chamber axis 94 is approximately horizontal when the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 is in use. As used in the present description and claims, an approximately or generally horizontal orientation means an orientation that is tilted over such that it is not vertical or upright. The generally horizontal orientation includes various embodiments that are approximately parallel to the ground or floor, as well as orientations that are not parallel to the ground or floor but being generally more laying over than upright (i.e., being tilted more than about 45 degrees). For example, a horizontal orientation can include a cyclonic separator having a portion of a first end and a portion of a second end both intersecting a common horizontal plane.

[0045] With reference to FIGS. 10 and 11, the cyclonic separator 58 further includes a ramp 102 positioned in the cyclone chamber 66 around at least a portion of the second end wall 74 extending along the sidewall 78 toward the cyclone dirt outlet 90. In particular, the ramp 102 includes a beginning 106 spaced from the second end wall 74, and the ramp 102 includes an end 110 positioned at the second end wall 74 of the cyclone chamber 66. In the illustrated embodiment, a portion of the ramp surface 102 as viewed in a plane parallel to and through the cyclone chamber axis 94 is approximately perpendicular to the sidewall 78, shown as angle θ in FIG. 10A. Alternatively, the ramp surface angle θ may be at a non-perpendicular angle from the sidewall between about 30 degrees and 150 degrees. In yet another alternative, the ramp surface angle θ may be at a non-perpendicular angle from the sidewall between about 60 degrees and 120 degrees.

[0046] The ramp 102 is positioned such that the ramp end 110 positioned at the second end wall is along a flow path directed toward the cyclone dirt outlet 90 and the flow-diverting wall 91. In the illustrated embodiment, the ramp 102 is a helical ramp. The ramp 102 shown in FIG. 11 extends around an upper portion 114 of the sidewall 78; however, the ramp may be arranged along a middle portion or lower portion of the sidewall in embodiments having the cyclone dirt outlet in a different location than in the present embodiment. In the illustrated embodiment, the ramp 102 extends around approximately 180 degrees around the sidewall 78 (i.e., approximately half). In alternative embodiments, the ramp can extend around more or less of the perimeter of the cyclone to guide debris along a flow path directed toward the cyclone dirt outlet. The ramp may extend between about 90 degrees and 300 degrees around the cyclone perimeter. The ramp 102 guides debris in the cyclone chamber

66 to the cyclone dirt outlet 90. In addition, the ramp 102 inhibits the mixing of any air flow out of the cyclone through the dirt outlet with corresponding air flow in the cyclone across the cyclone dirt outlet 90, which in turn minimizes the re-entrainment of debris.

[0047] With reference to FIGS. 7 and 8, the cyclonic separator 58 further includes a shroud 115 positioned around a portion of the cyclone clean fluid outlet 86 configured to allow airflow from the cyclonic separator 58 to pass through the shroud 115 into the clean fluid outlet 86 and inhibiting passage of debris into the clean fluid outlet 86. In the illustrated embodiment, the shroud 115 includes a conical frame 116 with a mesh 117. The conical frame 116 and the mesh 117 provides more volume between the conical frame 116 and the sidewall 78 at the smaller end of the conical frame 116. The tangential flow of the swirling air and debris within the cyclonic separator 58 washes against the mesh 117 while the axial component of the flow pushes the debris toward the smaller end of the conical frame 116, which helps clear debris from the shroud 115 back into the separator flow. As such, a self-cleaning effect is achieved with the shroud 115 as debris is carried along with the flow, slowing the “wrapping” of debris in the cyclone chamber 66 around the shroud 115. Reducing the wrapping of debris inhibits clogging of the separator that formed in some prior art designs. In some embodiments, the shroud 115 and the first end wall 70 of the cyclonic separator 58 may be removable by a user from the first side 42 of the main body 26 to allow a user access to the cyclone chamber 66.

[0048] With reference to FIGS. 5-7, the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 further includes an outlet scroll 118 in fluid communication with the cyclone clean fluid outlet 86. The outlet scroll 118 includes a central portion 122 forming an end of the clean fluid outlet 86 and an airflow passage 126 downstream of the central portion 122. The outlet scroll 118 is configured to change the airflow path from a generally helical airflow along a first direction through the clean fluid outlet 86 to an airflow having less rotation along a second direction different than the first direction along the airflow passage 126 downstream of the central portion 122. In the illustrated embodiment, the first direction is along a first axis defined by the clean fluid outlet 86, and the second direction is along a second axis defined by the airflow passage 126 downstream of the central portion 122, where the second axis is transverse to the first axis. In other words, the outlet scroll 118 tends to straighten the flow as it passes from the cyclone clean fluid outlet 86 to the airflow passage 126. The airflow passage 126 is generally tangentially aligned with the central portion 122. In the illustrated

embodiment, the central portion 122 is generally cylindrical having a dimension larger than a dimension of the airflow passage, the airflow passage 126 being radially offset in the central portion 122 in the direction of the airflow such that the airflow has a tangential exit from the central portion 122 into the airflow passage 126. More specifically, the airflow passage 126 defines a central longitudinal axis 130 that does not intersect a midpoint 134 of the central portion 122. The outlet scroll 118 is more compact than a 90-degree elbow that was required in prior designs to change direction from the center axis of the separator to the direction toward the filter assembly. In addition, the outlet scroll 118 converts the swirling flow along the clean fluid outlet 86 into a more straightened flow along the airflow passage 126, which retains some of the kinetic energy that would otherwise be lost in a 90-degree elbow, resulting in a lower pressure drop. In other words, as a result of the passage 126 being tangentially aligned with the central portion 122 in the airflow direction, clean air entering the central portion 122 from the cyclone clean fluid outlet 86 leaves the central portion 122 with a lower pressure drop when compared to traditional elbow turns.

[0049] With reference to FIGS. 1-3 and 8-10, the dirt collection region 62 (i.e., dirt collection chamber) is removably secured to the main body 26 and in fluid communication with the cyclone dirt outlet 90 of the cyclonic separator 58. The dirt collection region 62 includes an openable bottom door 138 on the bottom of the dirt collection region 62, which allows for emptying the dirt collection region 62. In the illustrated embodiment, the bottom door 138 is released by actuation of a catch 139 (FIG. 2), or other suitable releasable securing means. The dirt collection region 62 is at least partially defined by a transparent bin 142 that is removably secured to the main body 26 via a catch 146 (FIG. 1), or other suitable releasable securing means. In the illustrated embodiment, the bin 142 is both removable from the main body 26 and the bottom door 138 is openable. As such, the bottom of the dirt collection region 62 is openable when the bin 142 is removed from the main body 26 or attached to the main body 26. The dirt collection region 62 includes ribs 150 to deflect the flow of air and inhibit the debris contained in the dirt collection region 62 from becoming re-entrained in the airflow.

[0050] With reference to FIGS. 12 and 15, the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 further includes a suction source 154 positioned in the fluid flow path. The suction source 154 is located in the main body 26 and includes a fluid flow motor 158 (FIG. 15) and a fan operable to generate a fluid flow path (i.e., a suction airflow) through the handheld vacuum cleaner 10

that is drawn from the dirty air inlet 14 through the cyclonic separator 58 to a motor air outlet 20, which is ducted to the clean air outlet 22 (FIG. 1). The motor 158 defines a motor axis 162 and the motor 158 is operable to rotate the fan about the motor axis 162. In the illustrated embodiment, the motor 158 and the fan are oriented such that the motor axis 162 extends in a direction toward the bottom 50 and the top 54 of the main body 26 and therefore, the motor axis 162 is generally vertical when the vacuum is positioned on a horizontal surface. In other words, the fluid flow motor axis 162 of the fluid flow motor 158 is approximately vertical when the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 is positioned on a horizontal surface. The fluid flow motor axis 162 is positioned closer to the handle 30 than the cyclone chamber axis 94 is to the handle 30. The fluid flow motor axis 162 is offset from and approximately perpendicular to the cyclone chamber axis 94.

[0051] With reference to FIGS. 1-3, the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 includes a battery 168 (i.e., a removable, rechargeable battery pack) to supply power to the suction source 154 to operate the motor 158 and other electrical components. The battery 168 is positioned at least partially below the bottom openable door 138 of the dirt collection region 62. When the battery 168 is attached to the main body 26, the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 is supported solely on the battery 168 when positioned on the horizontal surface. In other words, the battery 168 provides a bottom surface 172 that allows the entire handheld vacuum cleaner 10 to be supported by the battery 168 when the handheld vacuum cleaner is positioned on a horizontal surface.

[0052] With reference to FIGS. 12-15, the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 further includes a filter assembly 175 having a pre-motor filter 176 and a filter chamber 180. The pre-motor filter assembly 175 is located in the main body 26 with the filter chamber 180 positioned above the motor 158. The pre-motor filter 176 and the filter chamber 180 are in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator 58 and are upstream from the fluid flow motor 158. The pre-motor filter 176 and filter chamber 180 are positioned between the handle 30 and the cyclonic separator 58. The pre-motor filter 176 filters the fluid flow path before the air travels through the fan and the motor 158. With reference to FIG. 13, the pre-motor filter 176 has a first cylindrical filter 184, optionally a second cylindrical filter 188, and a filter frame 192. The second cylindrical filter 188 is nested within and removable from the first cylindrical filter 184, and both filters 184, 188 are positioned around the filter frame 192. In the illustrated embodiment, the first cylindrical filter 184 defines an inner diameter

189 (FIG. 13) and the second cylindrical filter 188 defines an outer diameter 190, and the inner diameter 189 and the outer diameter 190 are approximately equal (e.g., within approximately 1 mm, 5mm, 10mm, etc. of each other). In some embodiments, the inner diameter 189 of the first cylindrical filter 184 is smaller than the outer diameter 190 of the second cylindrical filter 188 such that the second cylindrical filter 188 is slightly compressed (i.e. deformed) in order to be nested within the first cylindrical filter 184 in a press-fit type configuration. In alternative embodiments, there exists a gap radially between the first cylindrical filter 184 and the second cylindrical filter 188.

[0053] The filter frame may be integral with one of the first or second cylindrical filters, and for some embodiments the filter frame is omitted. In the illustrated embodiment, the second cylindrical filter 188 is configured to remove finer particles from the airflow than the first cylindrical filter 184 and the combination of the first and second cylindrical filters provides desired filtration of the airflow. In alternative embodiments, the first cylindrical filter 184 provides desired filtration of the airflow and the second cylindrical filter 188 is omitted. The first cylindrical filter 184 and second cylindrical filter 188 may be any desired filter media, including pleated or non-pleated, non-woven fiber, foam, or other media. The pre-motor filter 176 defines a filter axis 196 that is co-axial with the fluid flow motor axis 162 when the pre-motor filter 176 is assembled within the filter chamber 180. In addition, the filter axis 196 is transverse to the cyclone axis 94. In the illustrated embodiment, the filter axis 196 defined by the cylindrical pre-motor filter 176 is perpendicular to the cyclone chamber axis 94. In alternative embodiments, the pre-motor filter assembly 175 may be positioned such that the filter axis 196 is offset from and parallel to the motor axis.

[0054] With reference to FIGS. 12-14, the filter chamber 180 includes a tangential inlet 200 fluidly communicating the cyclonic separator 58 and the filter chamber 180. In particular, the airflow passage 126 extends between the cyclone clean fluid outlet 86 (more specifically, the outlet scroll 118) and the tangential inlet 200. The passage 126 ends downstream with the tangential inlet 200 to the filter chamber 180, the tangential inlet 200 providing a smooth airflow transition into the filter chamber 180 reducing the velocity of the airflow into the pre-motor filter 176. More specifically, the inlet 200 to the filter chamber 180 shown in FIG. 14 is a scroll inlet. The airflow passage 126 is positioned providing an entry 201 to the scroll inlet 200 adjacent the filter chamber 180. The scroll inlet 200 is an arcuate passage from an entry 201 to a tangential entry 202 to the filter chamber 180. The

tangential entry 202 to the filter chamber 180 may be between 90 and 360 degrees from the entry 201 to the scroll inlet 200, shown as angle β in FIG. 14. In other words, the filter chamber 180 includes a scroll inlet 200 having a tangential inlet 202 to the filter chamber 180 between 90 and 360 degrees from entry 201 of the scroll inlet 200. In some embodiments, part or all of the passage 126 and the outlet scroll 118 are openable to allow a user access to the same.

[0055] With continued reference to FIGS. 13-15, the filter chamber 180 also includes an outlet 203 fluidly communicating the filter chamber 180 and the fluid flow motor 158. In the illustrated embodiment, the outlet 203 is perpendicular to the tangential inlet 200. For example, with the vacuum cleaner 10 positioned on a horizontal surface, the fluid flow enters the tangential inlet 200 generally horizontal and leaves the outlet 203 generally vertically (i.e., the fluid flow makes approximately a 90 degree turn in the filter chamber 180). The fluid flow path extends through the cylindrical filters 184, 188 in a normal flow orientation (i.e., the fluid flow move radially inwards toward the center of the cylindrical filters 184, 188). In some embodiments, the inlet 200 includes a rectangular cross-section shape and the outlet 203 includes a circular cross-section shape.

[0056] With reference to FIGS. 12 and 13, the filter chamber 180 is openable from the top 54 of the main body 26 when the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 is positioned on a horizontal surface. In particular, a removable lid 204 is provided on the top of the filter chamber 180 that may be opened by a user. As such, the pre-motor filter 176 is removable from the top of the filter chamber 180 through the top 54 of the main body 26. In some embodiments, the pre-motor filter 176 is attached to the lid 204 such that the lid acts as a handle to lift the filter out of the filter chamber. In some embodiments, the first cylindrical filter 184 is coupled to the removable lid 204 and the first cylindrical filter 184 is removed with the lid 204 by a user, leaving the second cylindrical filter 188 behind in the filter chamber 180. Alternatively or additionally, the filter frame 192 is attached to or integral with the lid 204 as shown in FIG. 13A.

[0057] The pre-motor filter 176 is positioned in the filter chamber 180. The filter chamber 180 is configured to provide a gap 181 (FIGS. 14 and 15) between the pre-motor filter 176 and an adjacent sidewall 182 of the filter chamber 180 between 5 and 10 millimeters. In one alternative, the gap 181 between the pre-motor filter 176 and adjacent sidewall 182 of the filter chamber 180 is between 5 and 8 millimeters. In another alternative,

the gap 181 between the pre-motor filter 176 and adjacent sidewall 182 of the filter chamber 180 is between 8 and 10 millimeters. In other embodiments, the gap 181 between the pre-motor filter 176 and the adjacent sidewall 182 of the filter chamber 180 is larger than 5 millimeters to provide the desired airflow around the filter.

[0058] The airflow passage 126 extends in a lengthwise direction between the cyclonic separator 58 and the filter chamber 180, and has a height 124 and a width 125. As shown in FIG. 13A, the height 124 of the airflow passage 126 may increase along the downstream direction to slow the velocity of the air passing through the passage 126. Alternatively or additionally, the width 125 of the airflow passage 126 may increase along the downstream direction. In other words, with reference to FIG. 13A, the airflow passage 126 defines an upstream cross-sectional area 127 and defines a downstream cross-sectional area 128, and the downstream cross-sectional area 128 is larger than the upstream cross-sectional area 127 (i.e., the airflow passage 126 increases in volume along the downstream direction).

[0059] With reference to FIGS. 1-15, the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 includes a layout including the dirt collection region 62 generally located below the cyclonic separator 58 and adjacent the battery 168 and the suction source 154. The battery 168 is positioned below the fluid flow motor 158. In the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 1-2, the battery 168 is entirely positioned below the fluid flow motor 158. The fluid flow motor 158 is positioned between the dirt collection region 62 and the handle 30. The filter chamber 180 is positioned above the fluid flow motor 158 when the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 is positioned on a horizontal surface. Furthermore, the filter chamber 180 defines a filter chamber axis 208 that is coaxial with the fluid flow motor axis 162 and the filter axis 196. In alternative embodiments, the filter chamber axis 208 is offset from and parallel to the fluid flow motor axis 162. In the illustrated embodiment, the filter chamber axis 208 is perpendicular to the cyclone chamber axis 94. The filter chamber 180 and the fluid flow motor 158 are both positioned between the cyclonic separator 58 and the handle 30.

[0060] In operation, the battery 168 provides power to the motor 158 to rotate the fan to generate a suction airflow that is drawn through the suction nozzle 18 along with debris. The airflow, entrained with debris, travels to cyclone dirty fluid inlet 82 of the cyclonic separator 58. The airflow and debris travel into the cyclone chamber 66 where the airflow and debris rotate about the cyclone chamber axis 94. Rotation of the airflow and debris causes the debris to separate from the airflow and the debris is discharged through the cyclone dirt outlet

90. The ramp 102 aids in expelling the separated debris out the cyclone dirt outlet 90. The separated debris then falls into the dirt collection region 62. The clean air travels through the shroud 115 into the cyclone clean fluid outlet 86. The clean airflow then travels through the outlet scroll 118 and is routed to the tangential inlet 200 of the filter chamber 180. The airflow then travels through the pre-motor filter 176 before traveling through the suction source 154. After traveling through the suction source 154, the airflow is exhausted from the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 through exhaust openings in the main body 26.

[0061] After using the handheld vacuum cleaner 10, the user can open the door 138 to empty the dirt collection region 62. After several uses, debris may have collected on the shroud 115 and within the cyclone chamber 66. If so, the user can open or remove a portion of the first end wall 70 and outlet scroll 118 to remove the shroud 115 from the cyclonic separator 58. This allows the user to clean the shroud 115 and inside the sidewall 78. In addition, opening the removable lid 204 provides the user access to the filter chamber 180 and the pre-motor filter 176 so the user can clean or replace the pre-motor filter 176.

[0062] With reference to FIGS. 16-18, an alternative handheld vacuum cleaner 310 is illustrated. The alternative handheld vacuum cleaner 310 is similar to and includes many of the same components as the handheld vacuum cleaner 10 illustrated in FIGS. 1-15. As such, like components are reference the same with only the differences described in detail below. Similar to the handheld vacuum cleaner 10, the handheld vacuum cleaner 310 includes a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet 14 formed in a suction nozzle 18 to a clean air outlet. The handheld vacuum cleaner 310 also includes a main body 26 with a handle 30, and a fluid flow motor 158 (FIG. 18) and a cyclonic separator 358 positioned in the fluid flow path.

[0063] The cyclonic separator 358 includes a cyclone chamber 366 having a first end wall 370, a second end wall 374, and a sidewall 378 extending between the first end wall 370 and the second end wall 374. The cyclonic separator 358 further includes a cyclone dirty fluid inlet 382, a cyclone clean fluid outlet 386, and a cyclone dirt outlet 390. A cyclone chamber axis 394 (FIG. 16) passes through the first end wall 370 and the second end wall 374. The first end wall 370 and the second end wall 374 of the cyclone chamber 366 both intersect a common horizontal plane 398 when the handheld vacuum cleaner 310 is positioned on a horizontal surface. In other words, normally the cyclone chamber axis 394 is approximately horizontal when the handheld vacuum cleaner 310 is in use.

[0064] A debris deceleration chamber 380 is positioned between the cyclone chamber 366 and a dirt collection region 362. The debris deceleration chamber 380 is in fluid communication with the cyclonic separator 358 and the dirt collection region 362. In particular, the debris deceleration chamber 380 is in fluid communication with the cyclone dirt outlet 390. In the illustrated embodiment, the debris deceleration chamber 380 is conical or funnel shaped defining a deceleration chamber axis 385 that is transverse to the cyclone axis 394. In the illustrated embodiment, the chamber axis 385 is approximately perpendicular to the cyclone axis 394. The debris deceleration chamber 380 includes an inlet 381 that is larger in cross-sectional area than an outlet 383. The outlet 383 of the debris deceleration chamber 380 is in fluid communication with the dirt collection region 362. Dirt exiting the cyclone dirt outlet 390 having a general flow direction around the cyclone axis 394 enters the debris deceleration chamber 380 which turns the flow in a direction around the chamber axis 385 where the velocity of the dirt is decreased before entering the dirt collection region 362. The slower debris speed created by the debris deceleration chamber 380 helps prevent debris in the dirt collection region 362 from becoming re-entrained in the fluid flow path. The debris deceleration chamber 380 defines the axis 385 (FIG. 17) that passes through the inlet 381 and the outlet 383. The axis 385 is generally askew and is neither oriented vertically nor horizontally. In the illustrated embodiment, the axis is approximately 30 degrees from vertical.

[0065] With reference to FIG. 17, the dirt collection region 362 includes an openable bottom door 438. The door 438 is openable while the handheld vacuum cleaner 310 is supported solely on a battery 168. In other words, a bottom surface 172 of the battery 168 is below the openable door 438. With reference to FIG. 18, the handheld vacuum cleaner 310 further includes a filter chamber 180 with a tangential inlet 200. The filter chamber 180 defines a filter chamber axis 208 that is coaxial with a motor axis 162 of a motor 158.

[0066] With reference to FIGS. 19-22, an alternative cyclonic separator 558 is illustrated. The alternative cyclonic separator 558 is similar to and includes many of the same components as the cyclonic separator 58 illustrated in FIGS. 4-11. As such, like components are referenced the same with only the differences described in detail below. It is understood that the cyclonic separator 558 can be implemented in either of the handheld vacuum cleaners 10, 310 described above. Similar to the cyclonic separator 58, the cyclonic separator 558 is positioned in the fluid flow path.

[0067] The cyclonic separator 558 includes a cyclone chamber 566 having a first end wall 570, a second end wall 574, and a sidewall 578 extending along a cyclone axis 594 between the first end wall 570 and the second end wall 574. The cyclonic separator 558 further includes a cyclone dirt fluid inlet 582, a cyclone clean fluid outlet, and a cyclone dirt outlet 590 formed in the sidewall 578. The cyclone chamber axis 594 passes through the first end wall 570 and the second end wall 574. The first end wall 570 and the second end wall 574 of the cyclone chamber 566 both intersect a common horizontal plane when the handheld vacuum cleaner is positioned on a horizontal surface. In other words, normally the cyclone chamber axis 594 is approximately horizontal when the handheld vacuum cleaner is in use.

[0068] With reference to FIGS. 21 and 22, the second end wall 574 includes an inner portion 575 and an outer portion 576. The outer portion 576 is offset from the inner portion 575 in a direction away from the first end wall 570. A flow-diverting wall 591 connects the inner portion 575 and the outer portion 576 of the second end wall 574, which bounds the downstream end of the cyclone dirt outlet 590. In other words, the flow-diverting wall 591 forms a downstream boundary of the cyclone dirt outlet 590, and the flow-diverting wall 591 is positioned along the direction of the cyclone axis 594. The flow-diverting wall 591 intersects the fluid flow path adjacent the second end wall 574 and is positioned between the cyclone chamber 566 and a dirt collection region 562. The flow-diverting wall 591 is positioned downstream from the cyclone dirt outlet 590 and debris exiting the cyclone dirt outlet 590 impinges (i.e., impacts) the flow-diverting wall 591 while the same debris exiting the cyclone dirt outlet 590 travels over an opposite wall 592. A duct 593 is at least partially formed by the flow-diverting wall 591, the opposite wall 592, and the second end wall 574. The duct 593 is in fluid communication with the cyclone dirt outlet 590 and the dirt collection region 562. Similar to the flow-diverting wall 91 described above, the flow-diverting wall 591 eliminates a common “knife-edge” formed in prior art designs between the edge of the material throw-off in cyclone sidewalls and the adjacent dust bin. Such “knife-edge” transitions in the prior art tended to catch debris flowing toward it forming a debris clog point that reduced performance in traditional prior art cyclonic separator designs. In the illustrated embodiment, the flow-diverting wall 591 is larger in cross-sectional area than the opposite wall 592. In addition, the inner portion 575 is similar to the ramp 102 described above since the inner portion 575 includes a beginning 606 spaced from the outer portion 576 and an end 610 positioned at the outer portion 576 of the second end wall 574.

[0069] Although the separators 58, 358, and 558 described above were detailed as cyclonic, over-the-wall type separators, other alternative cyclonic and non-cyclonic separators are considered. In particular, the cyclonic separator can be, in alternative embodiments: a bag filtering unit; a conical separator; etc.

[0070] Various features and advantages of the invention are set forth in the following claims.

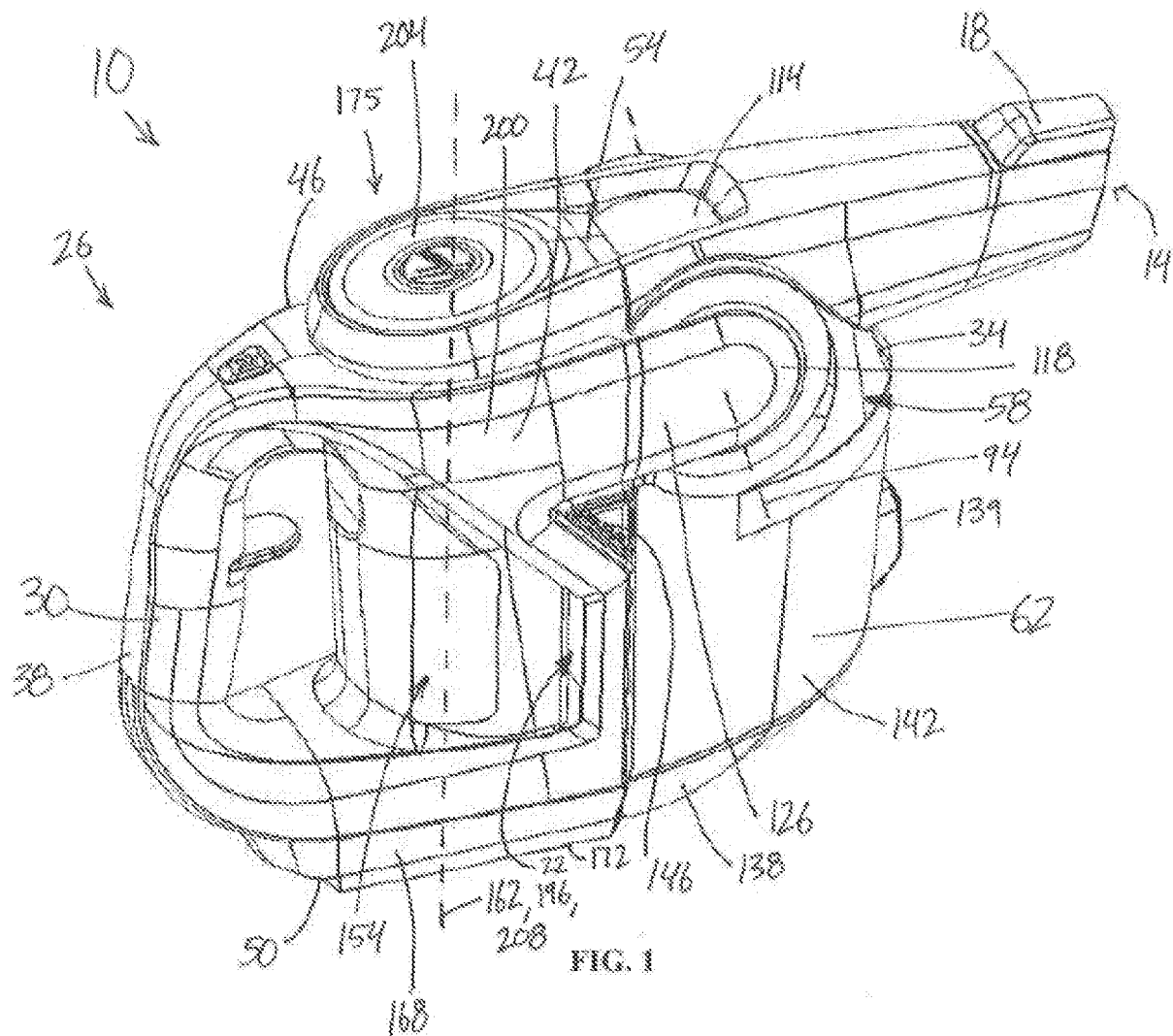
CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A vacuum cleaner comprising:
 - a fluid flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet;
 - a main body including a handle;
 - a fluid flow motor positioned in the fluid flow path;
 - a dirt collection region with an openable bottom;
 - a cyclonic separator in the fluid flow path, the cyclonic separator including, a cyclone chamber having a first end wall and a second end wall, a cyclone dirty fluid inlet, and a cyclone clean fluid outlet; and
 - a filter chamber in the fluid flow path downstream from the cyclonic separator and upstream from the fluid flow motor,wherein the filter chamber includes an outlet fluidly communicating the filter chamber and the fluid flow motor and a tangential inlet fluidly communicating the cyclonic separator and the filter chamber.
2. The vacuum cleaner of claim 1, further comprising a ramp in the cyclone chamber extending along a sidewall toward the cyclone dirt outlet; and wherein a beginning of the ramp is spaced from the second end wall and an end of the ramp is positioned at the second end wall of the cyclone chamber.
3. The vacuum cleaner of claim 1 or 2, wherein the fluid flow motor has a fluid flow motor axis that is vertical when the handheld vacuum cleaner is positioned on a horizontal surface.
4. The vacuum cleaner as in any one of claims 1 – 3, wherein the filter chamber houses a pre-motor filter having a cylindrical filter; and wherein the fluid flow path extends through the cylindrical filter in a normal flow orientation.
5. The vacuum cleaner as in any one of claims 1 – 4, wherein the filter chamber inlet includes a rectangular cross-section and the filter chamber outlet includes a circular cross-section.

6. The vacuum cleaner as in any one of claims 1 – 5, wherein the filter chamber includes a scroll inlet having the tangential inlet to the filter chamber between 90 and 360 degrees from entry of the scroll inlet.
7. The vacuum cleaner as in any one of claims 1 – 6, wherein the filter chamber includes a lid removable to open the filter chamber, and wherein the filter is coupled to the lid.
8. The vacuum cleaner as in any one of claims 1 – 7, wherein the fluid flow motor defines a fluid flow motor axis and the filter chamber defines a filter chamber axis that is coaxial with the fluid flow motor axis.
9. The vacuum cleaner as in any one of claims 1 – 8, wherein the fluid flow motor is positioned between the dirt collection region and the handle.
10. The vacuum cleaner as in any one of claims 1 – 9, further comprising a battery positioned below the fluid flow motor, wherein a bottom surface of the battery is below the openable bottom of the dirt collection region.
11. The vacuum cleaner of claim 10, wherein the handheld vacuum cleaner is supported solely by the battery when the handheld vacuum cleaner is positioned on a horizontal surface.
12. The vacuum cleaner as in any one of claims 1 – 11, wherein the filter chamber is positioned between the handle and the cyclonic separator.
13. The vacuum cleaner as in any one of claims 1 – 12, wherein the filter chamber houses a pre-motor filter having a cylindrical filter.

14. The vacuum cleaner as in any one of claims 1 – 13, wherein the filter chamber houses a pre-motor filter having a first cylindrical filter and a second cylindrical filter, the second cylindrical filter being nested within the first cylindrical filter.
15. The vacuum cleaner as in any one of claims 1 – 14, wherein the first end wall and the second end wall of the cyclone chamber both intersect a common horizontal plane when the vacuum cleaner is positioned on a horizontal surface.



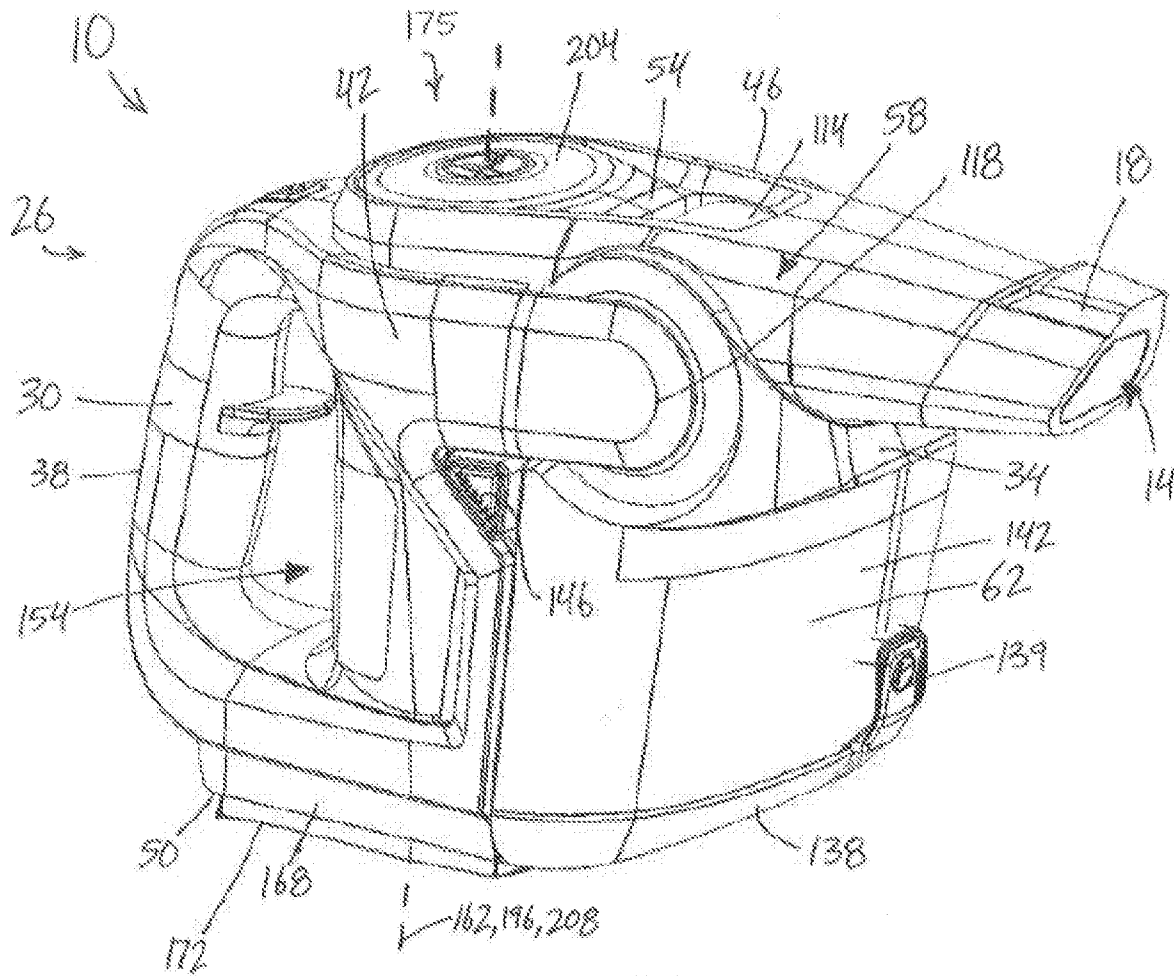
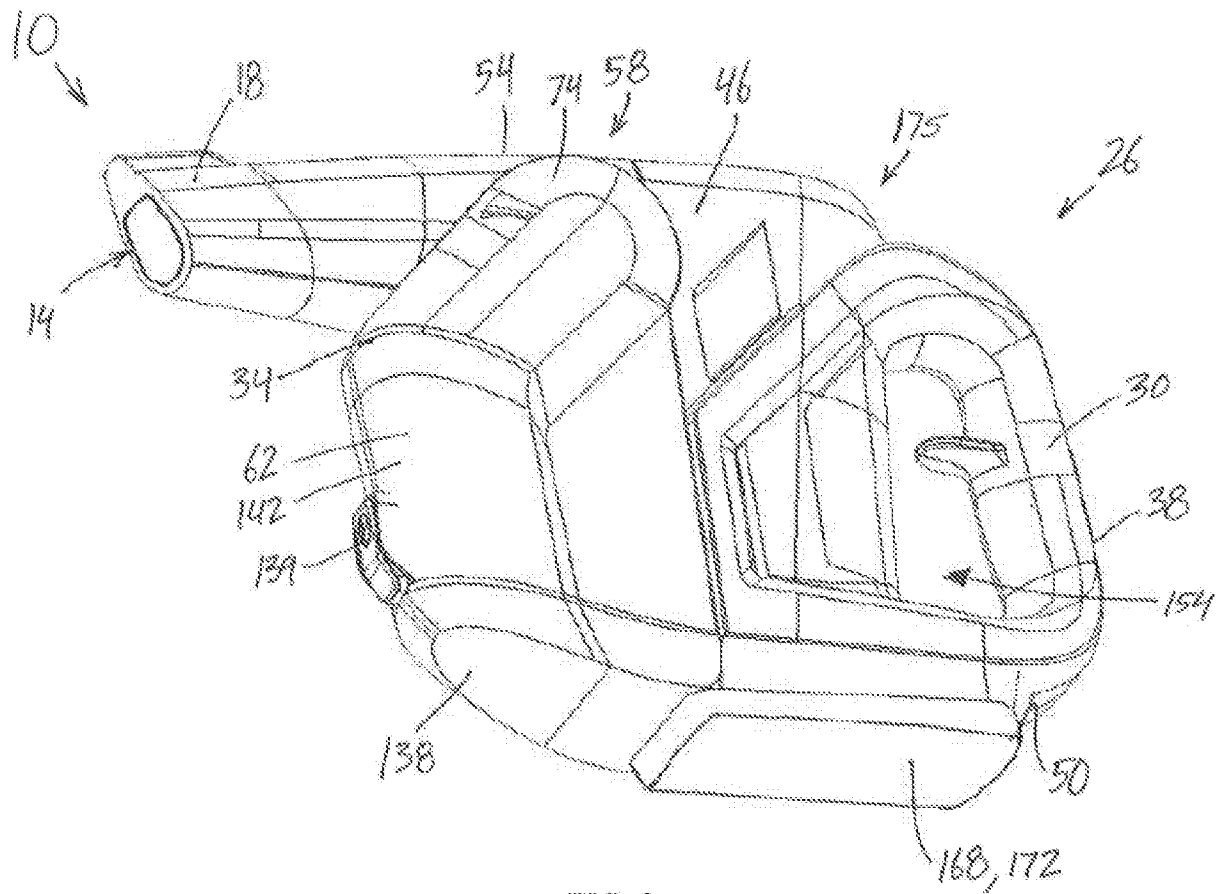


FIG. 2



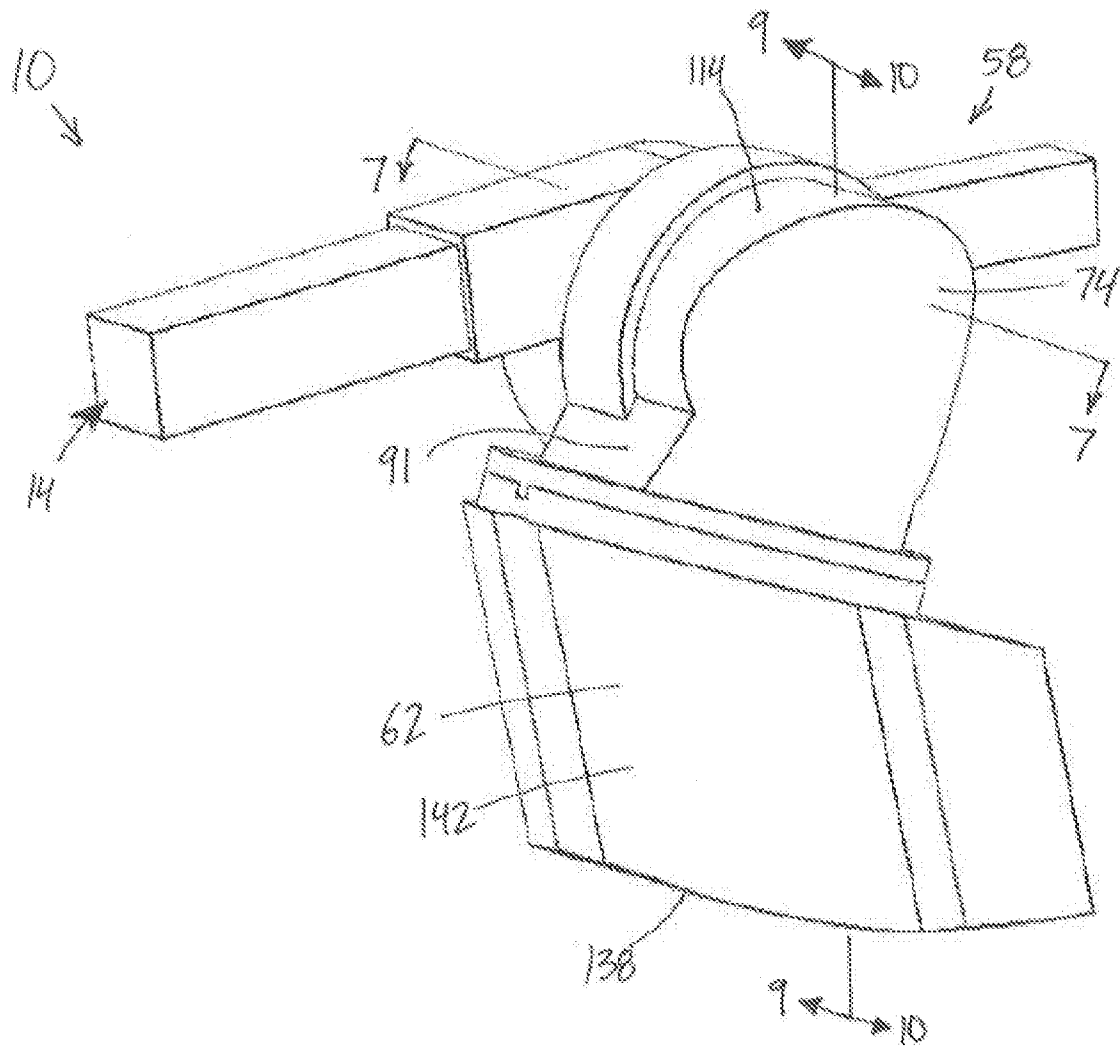
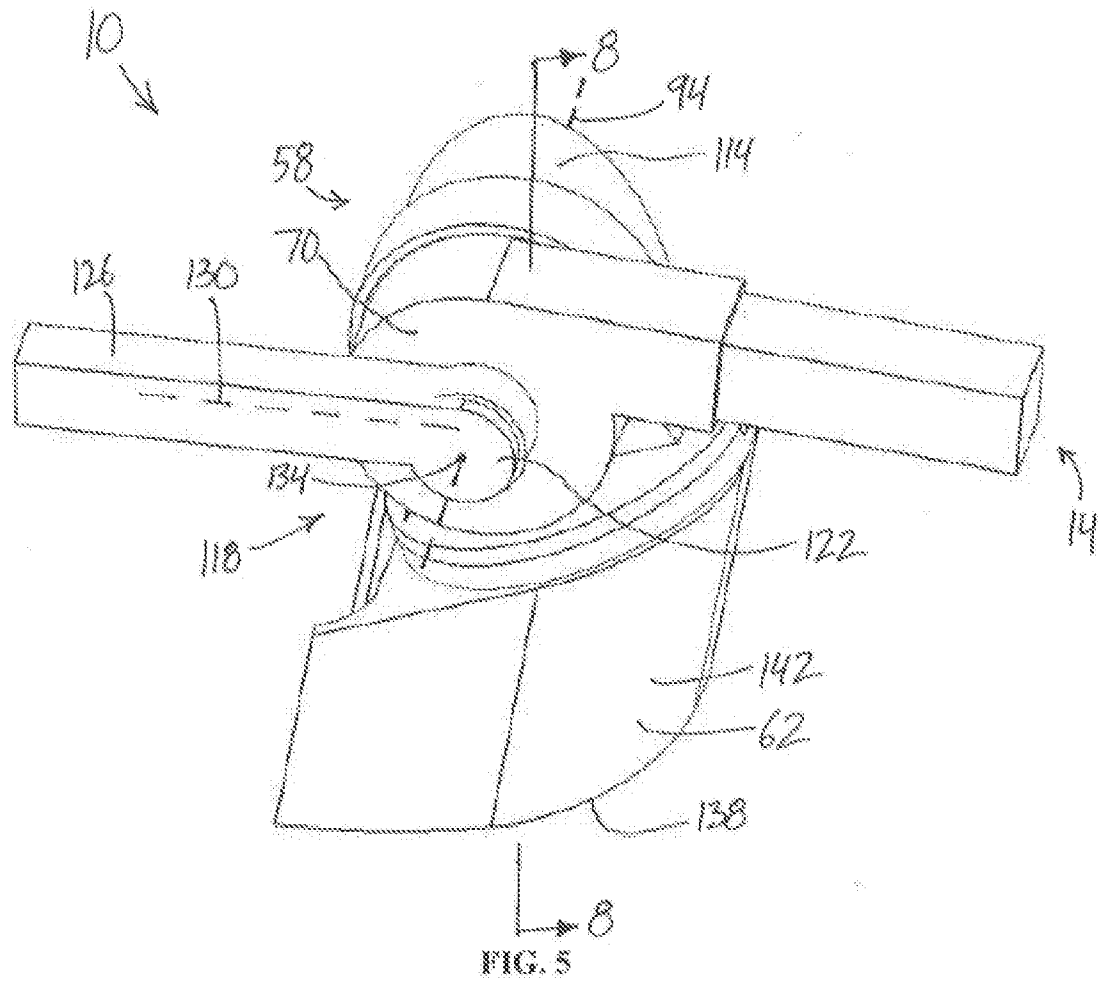


FIG. 4



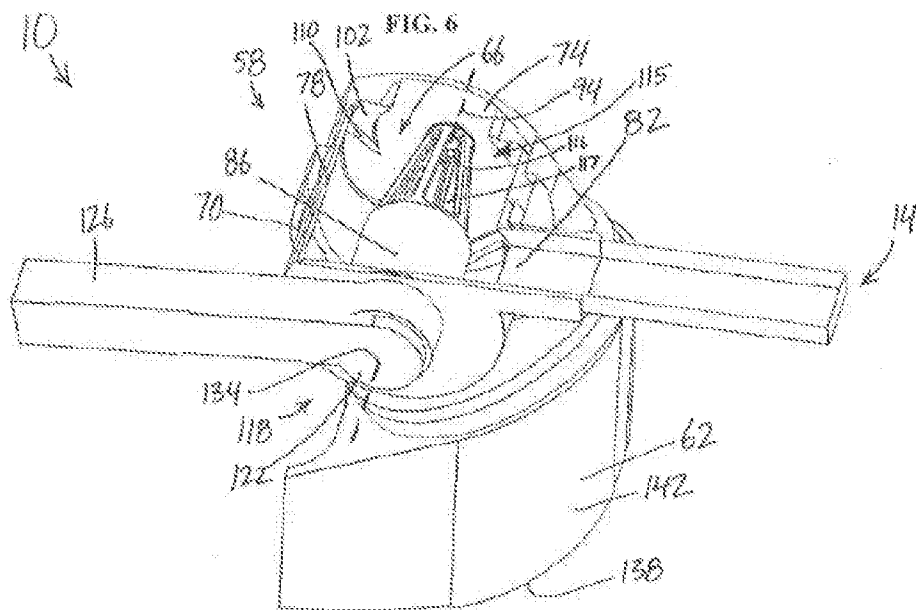
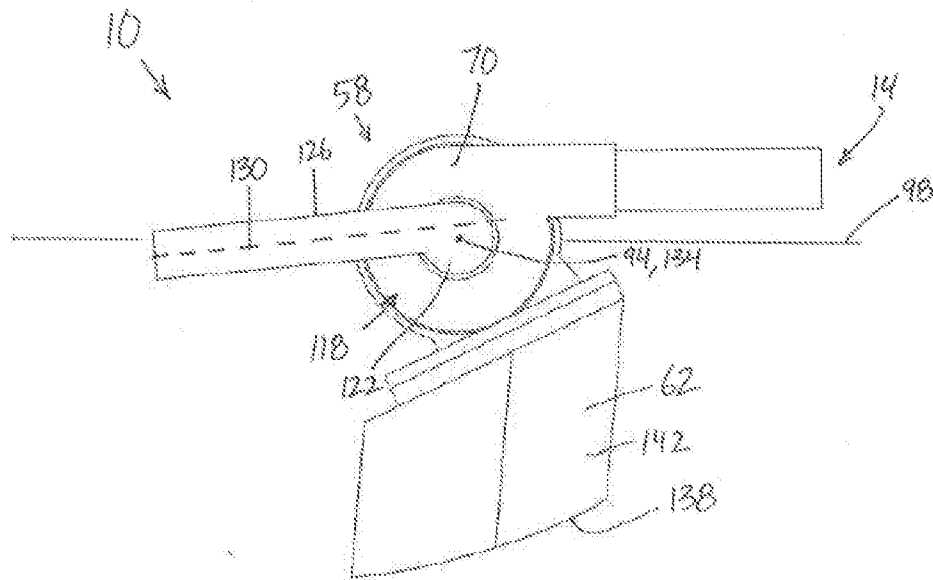


FIG. 7

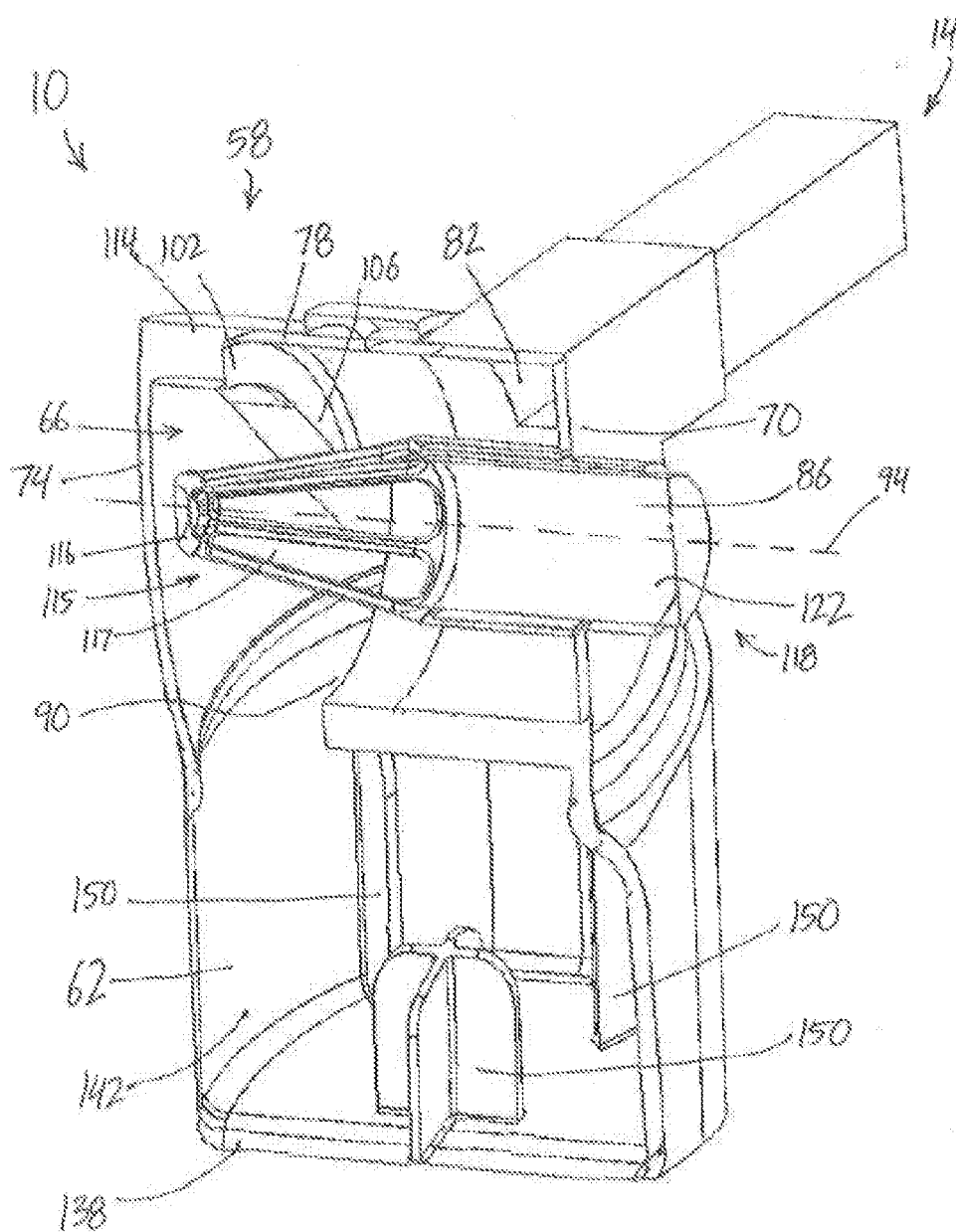


FIG. 22

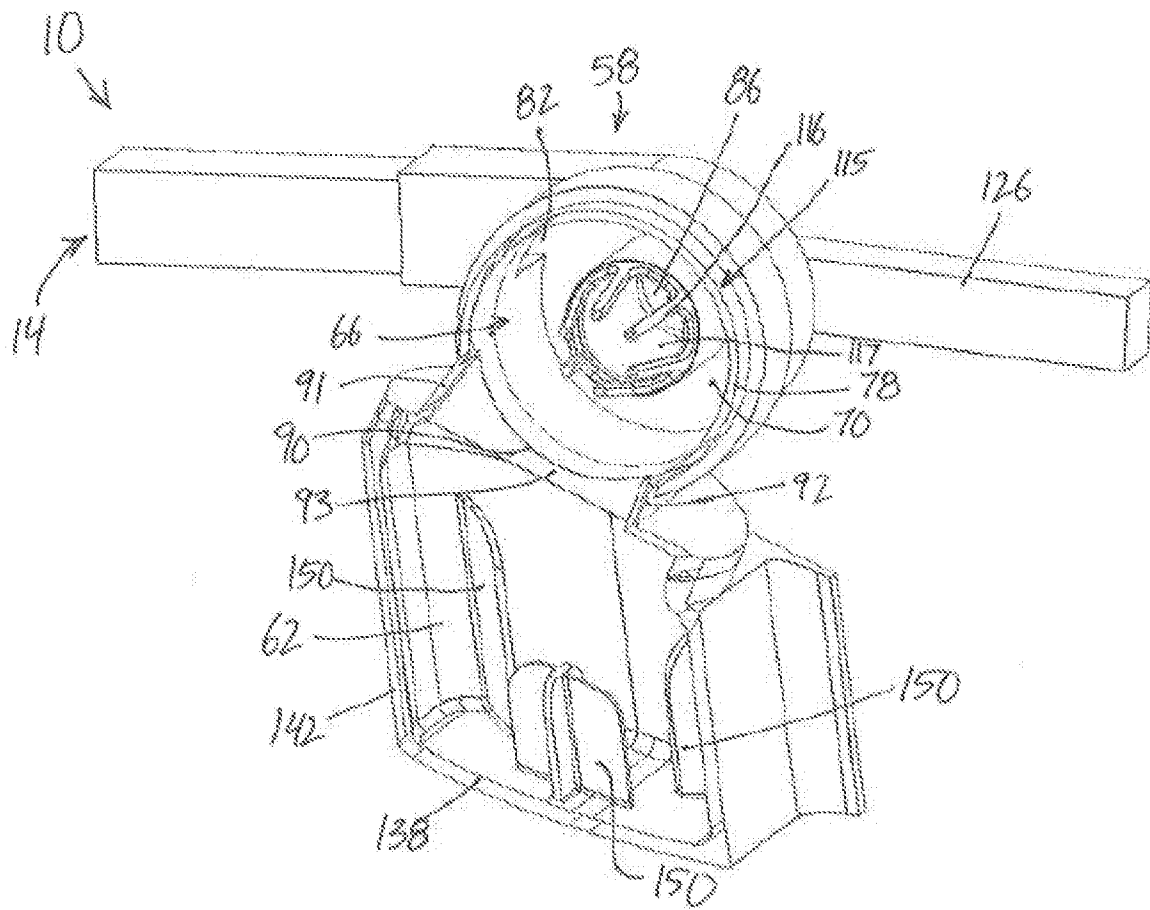


FIG. 9

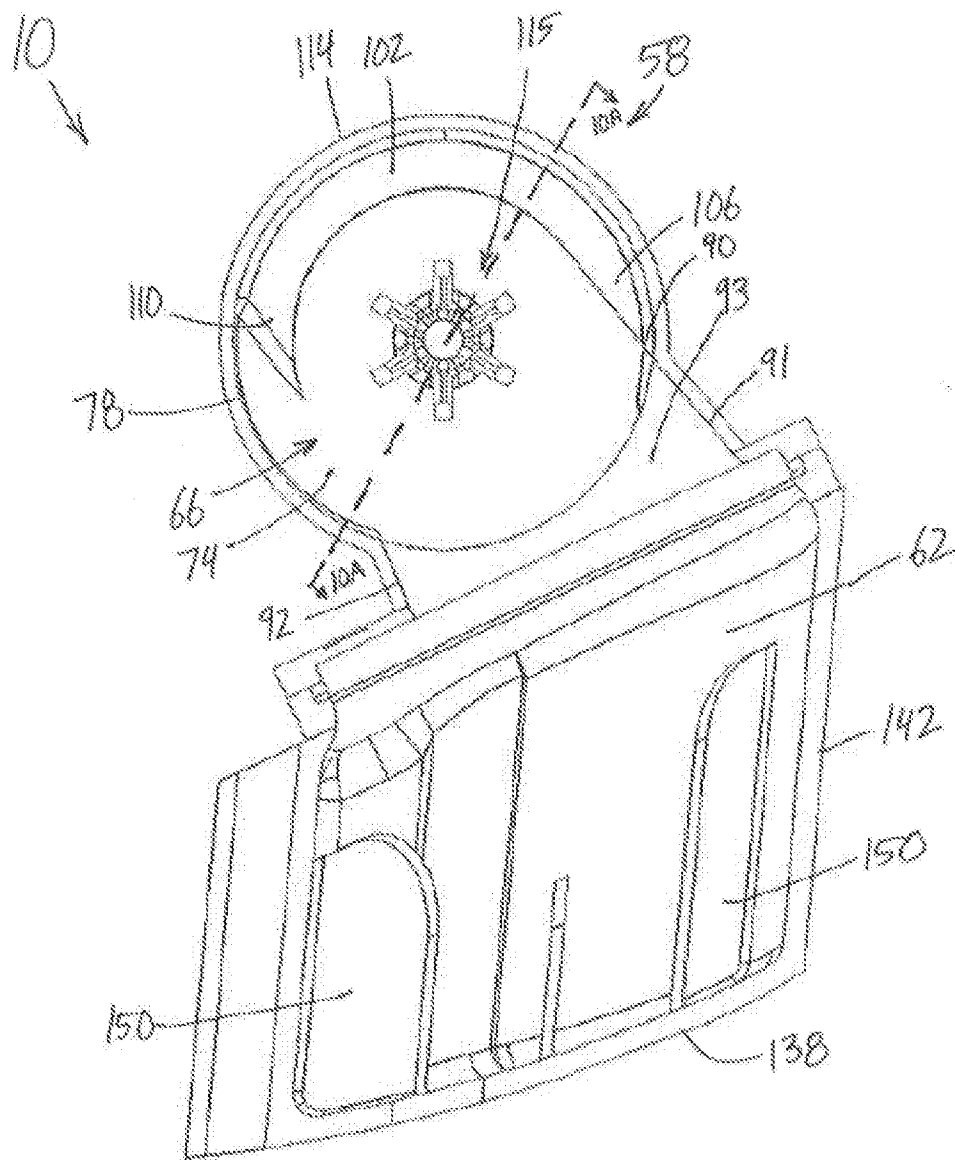
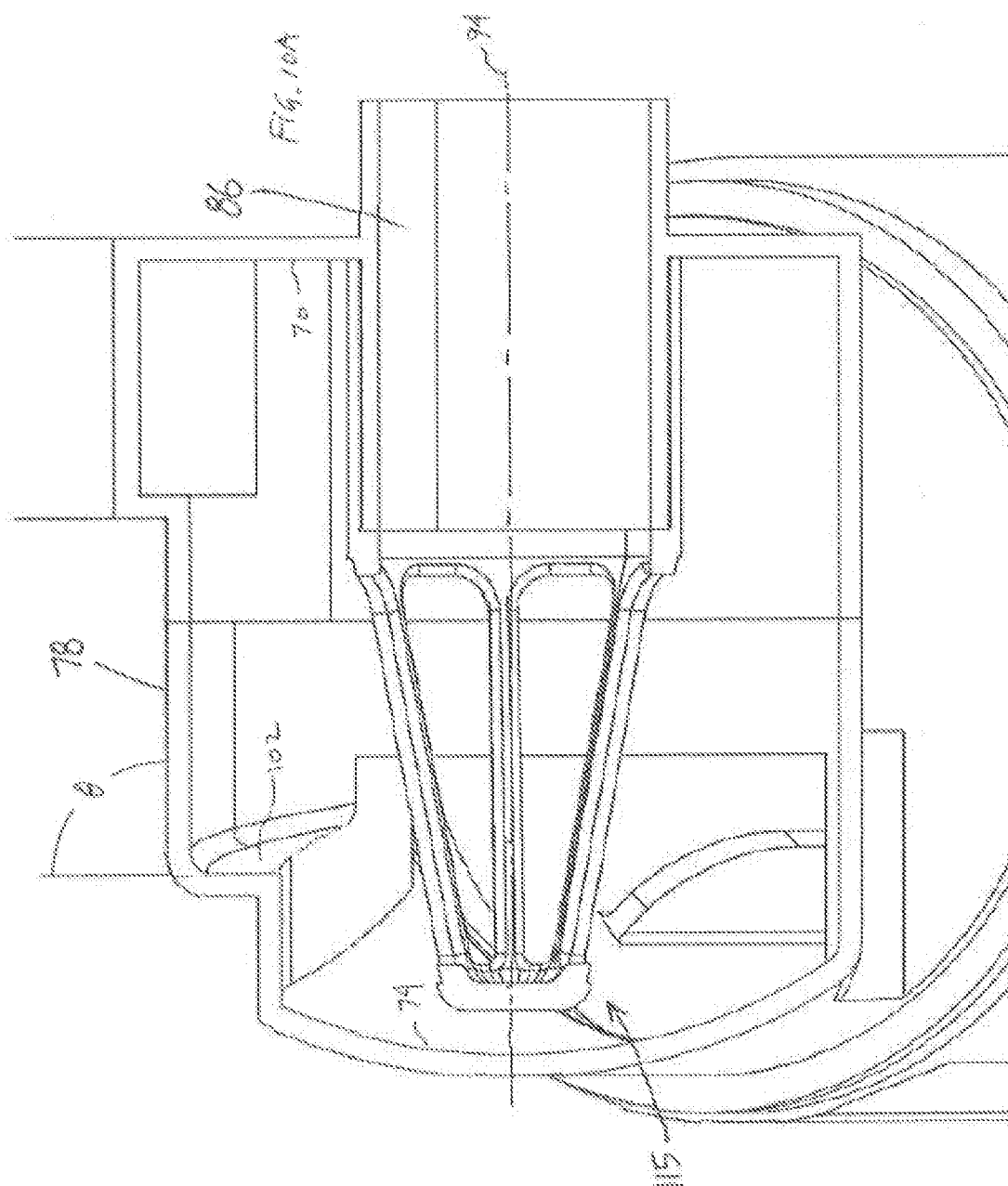


FIG. 10



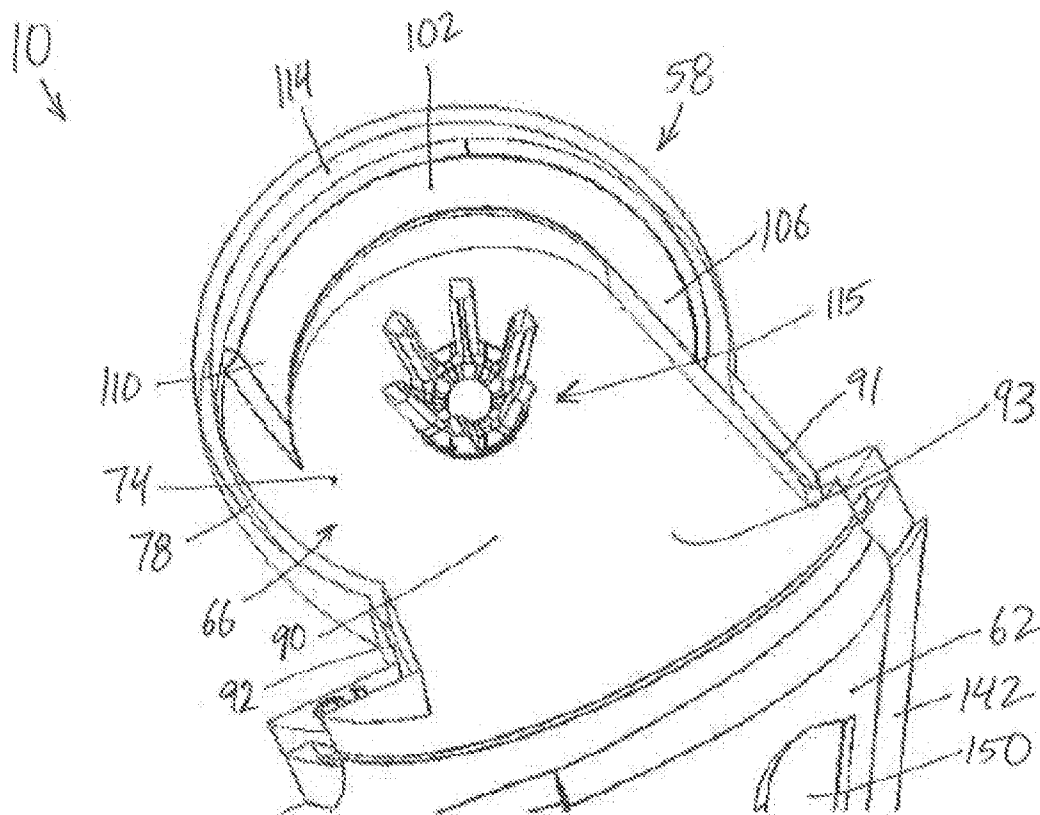


FIG. 11

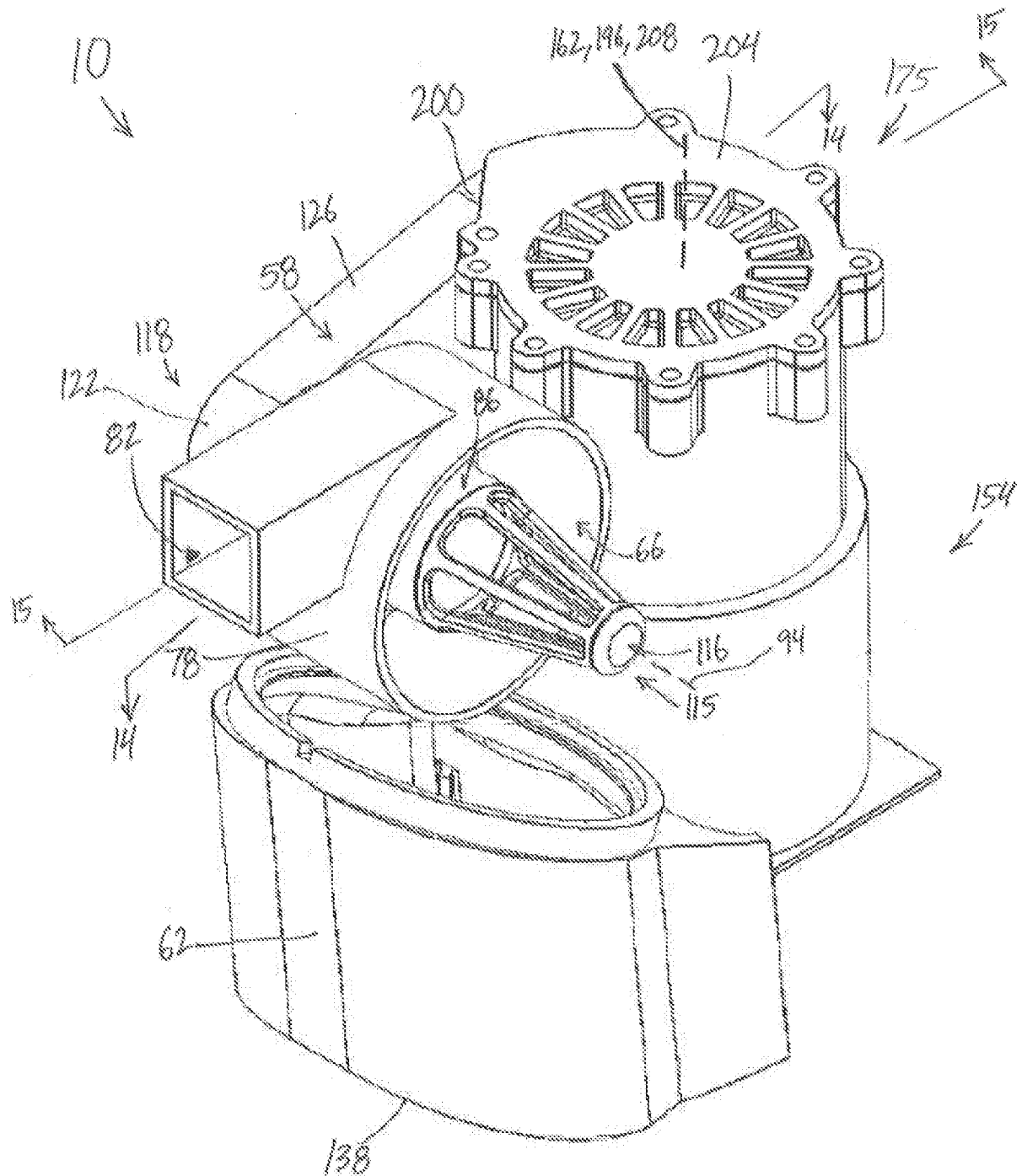
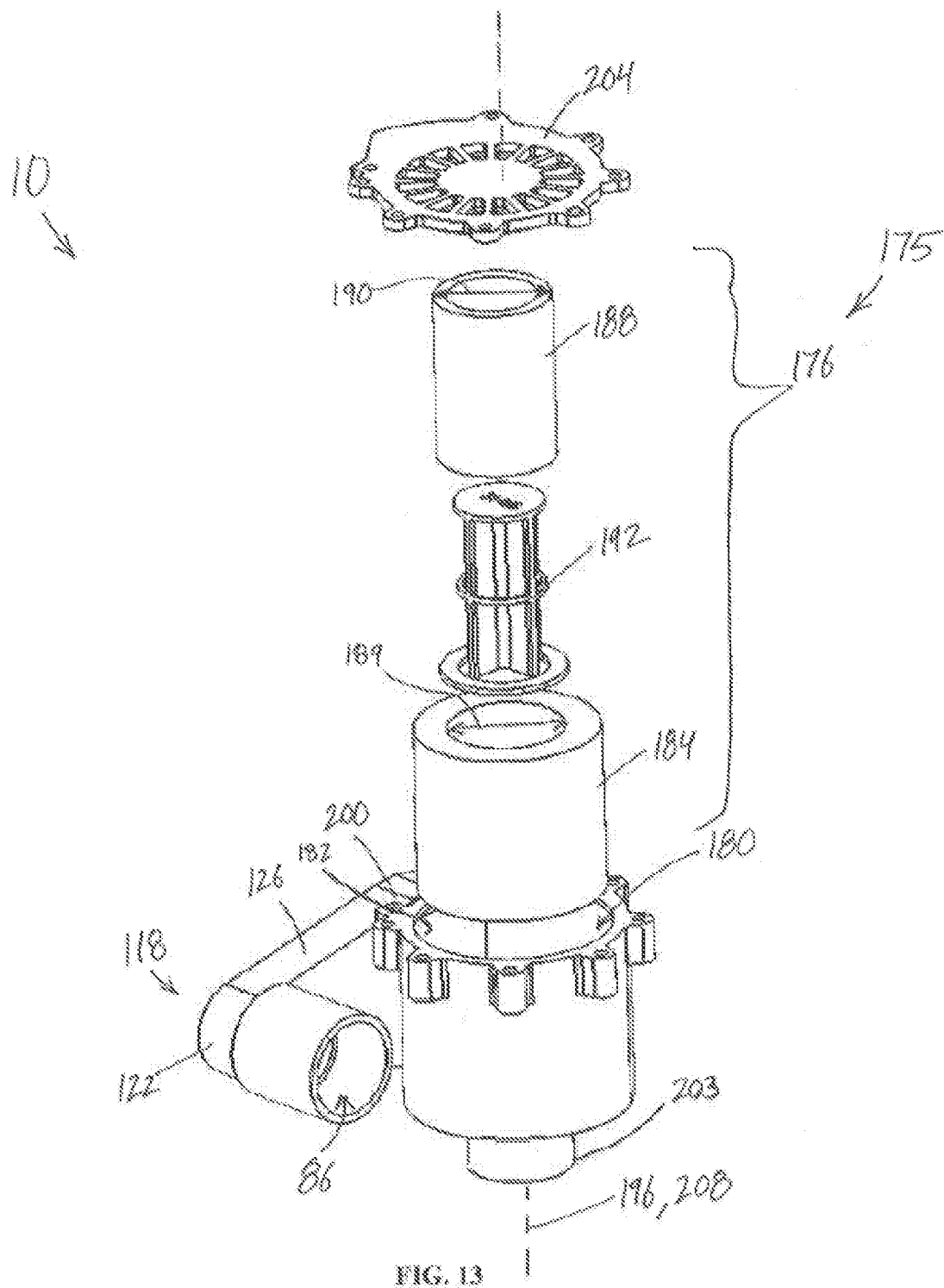
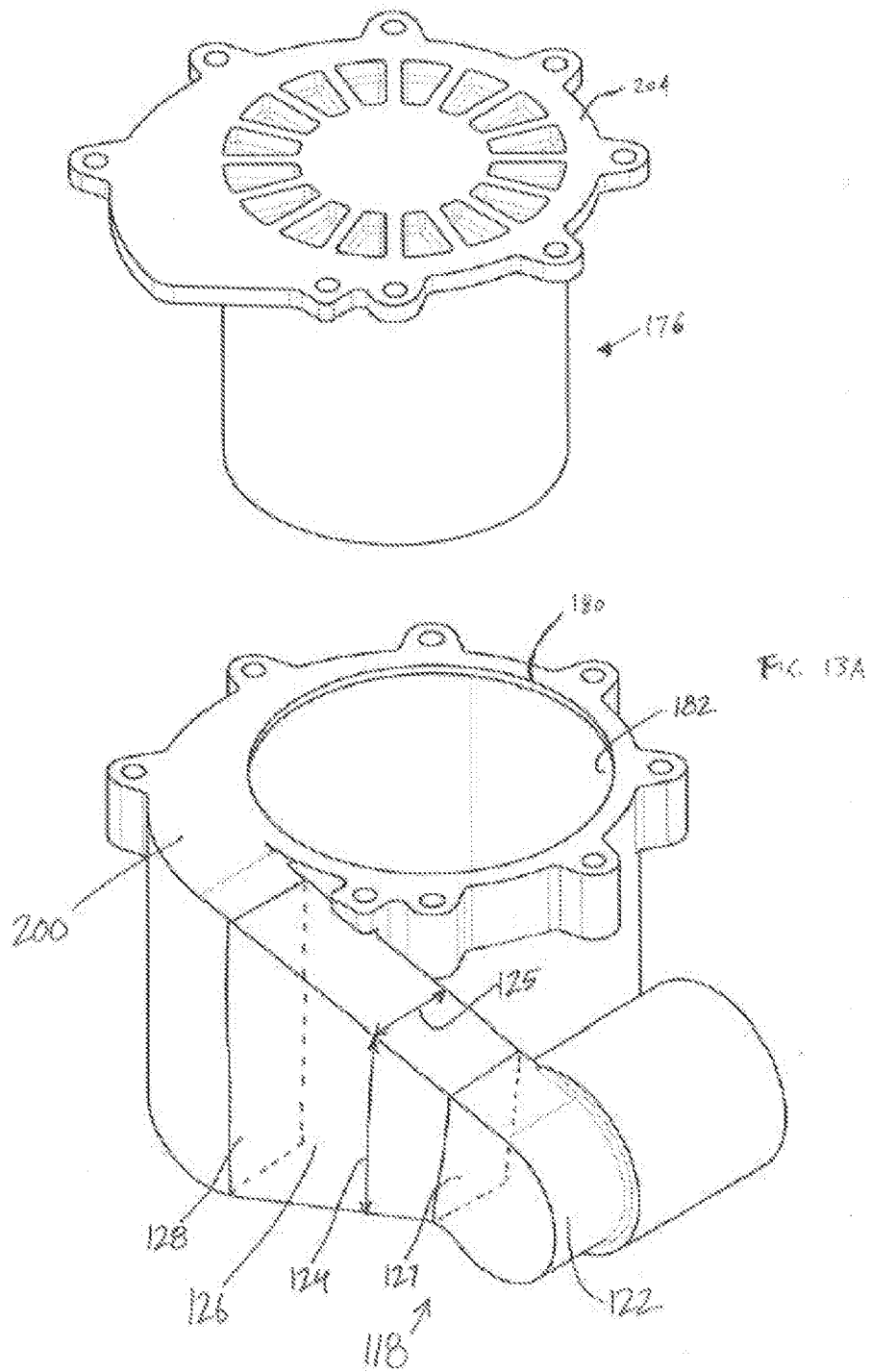
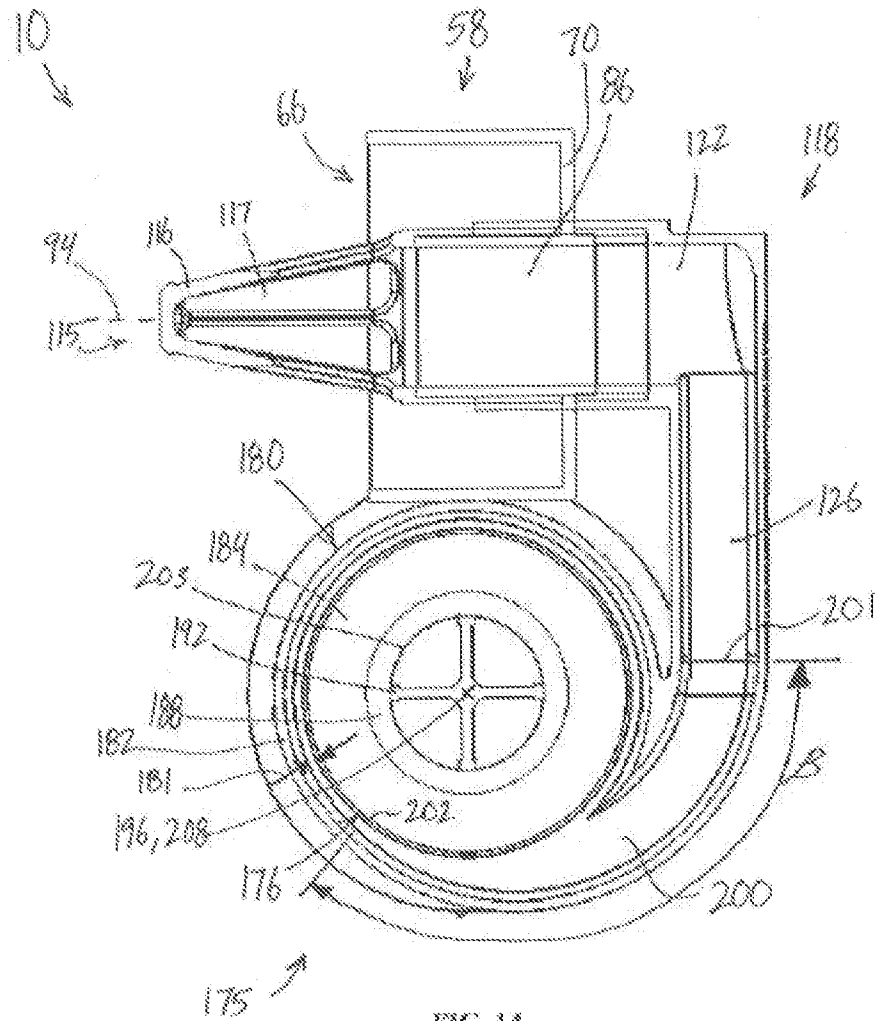


FIG. 12







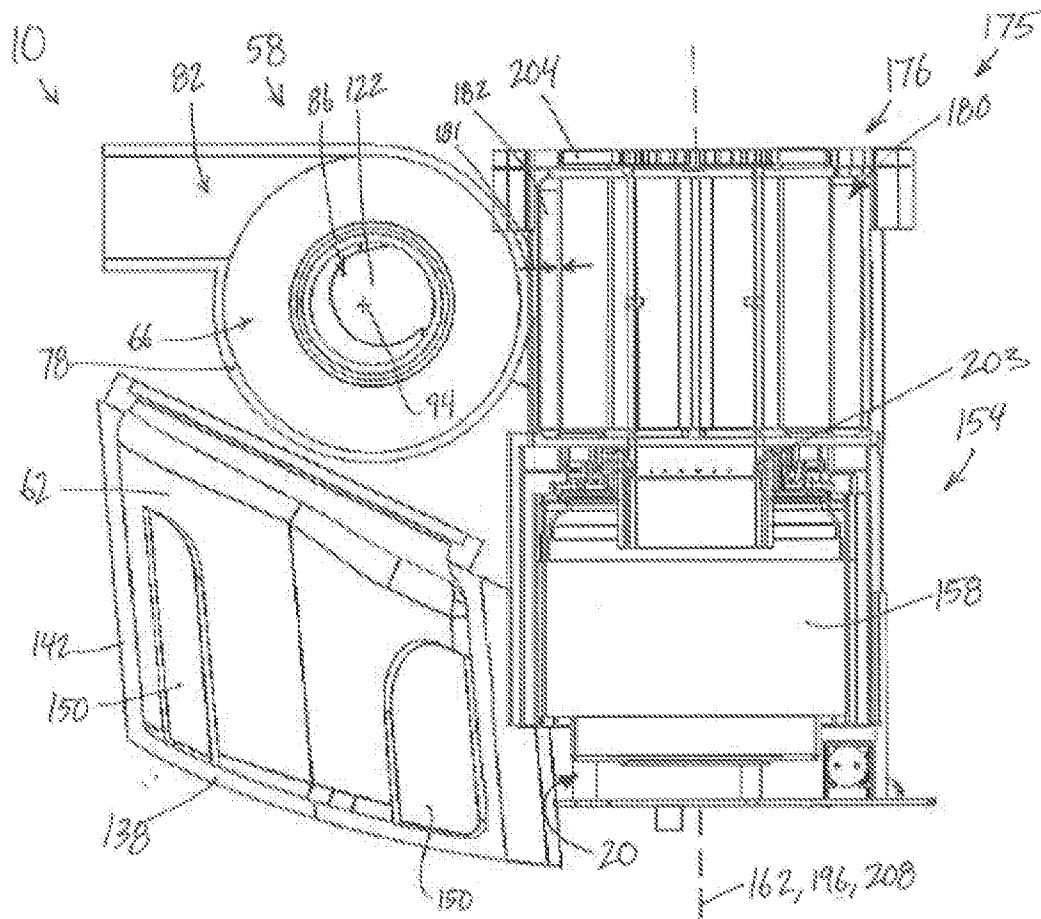


FIG. 15

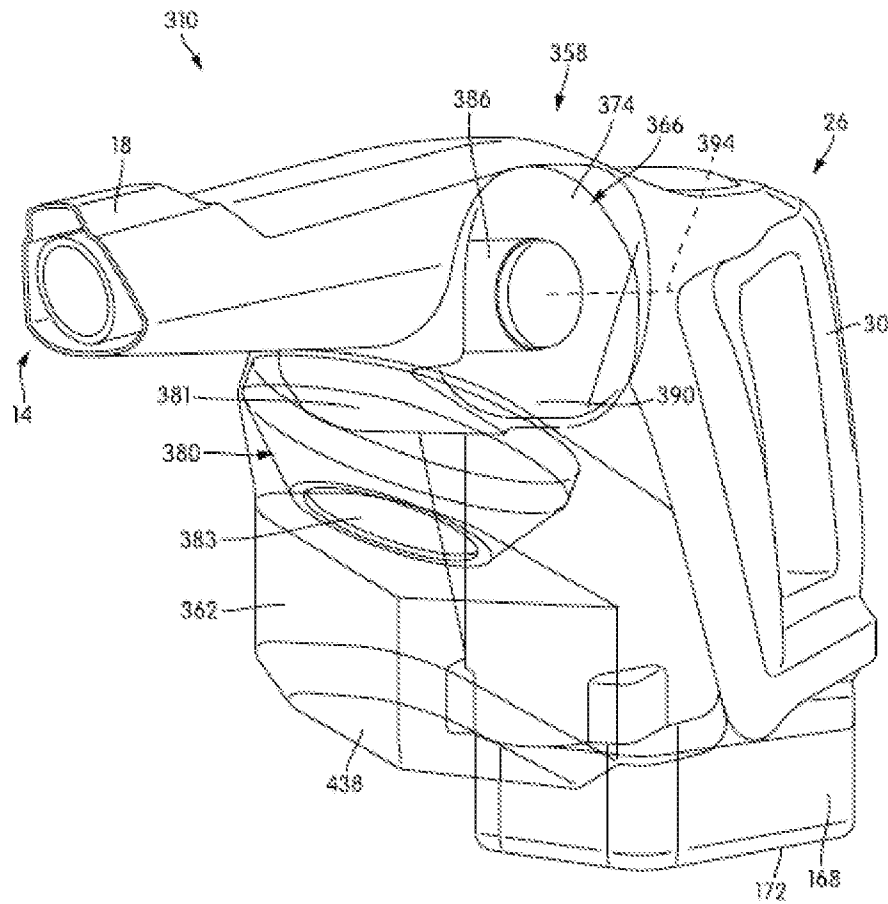


FIG. 16

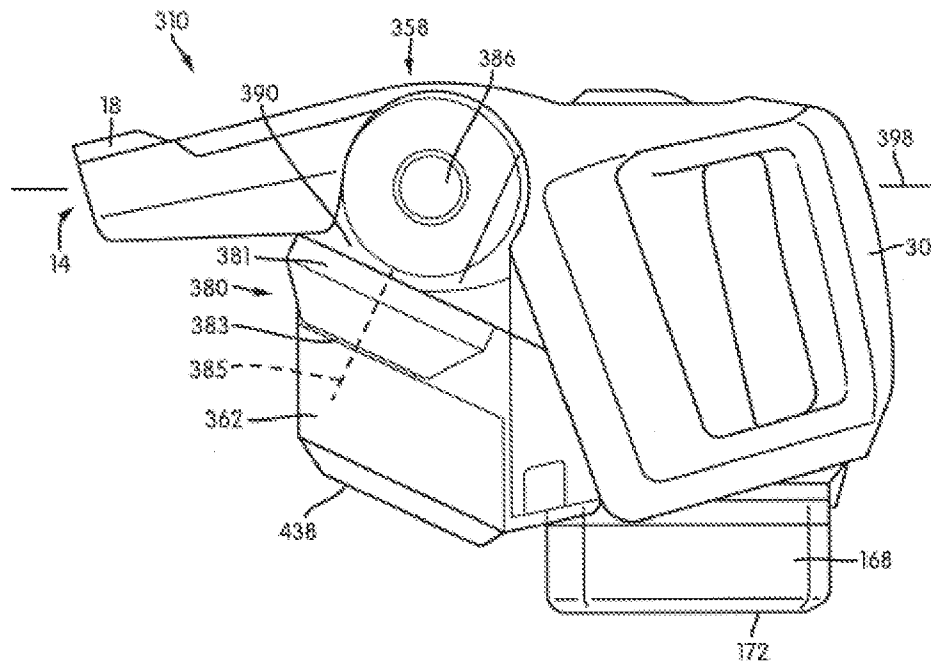


FIG. 17

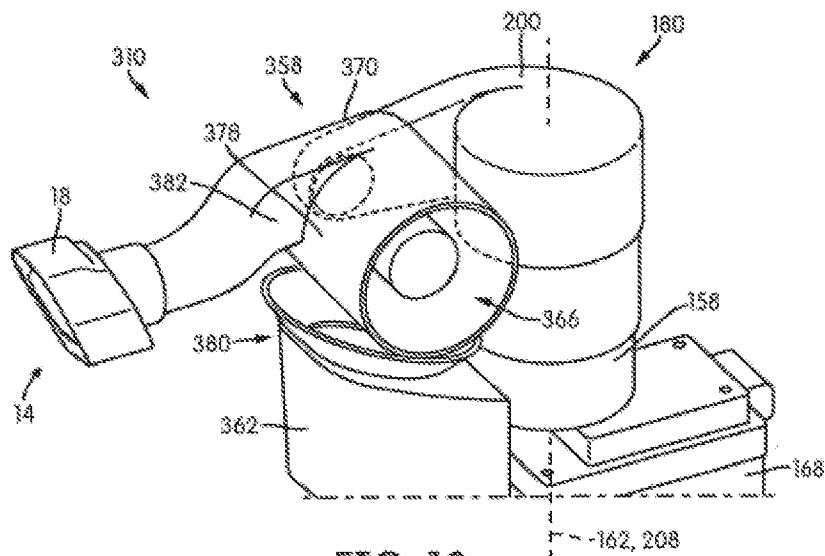


FIG. 18

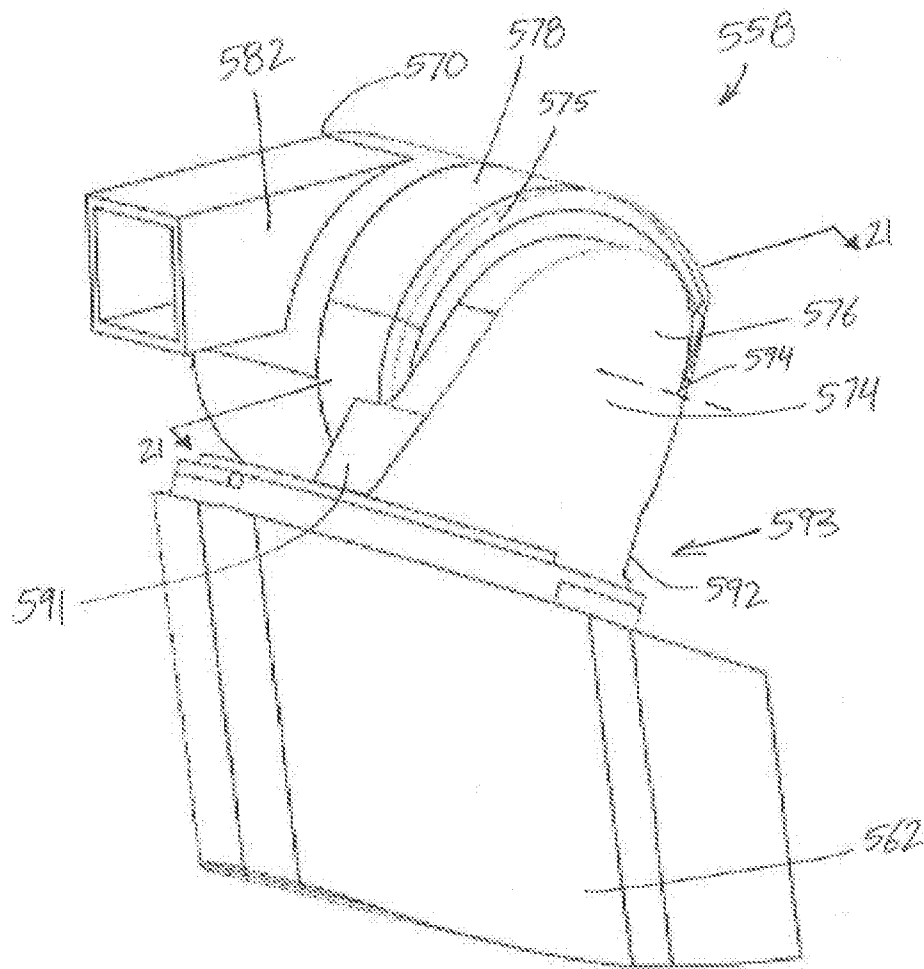


FIG. 19

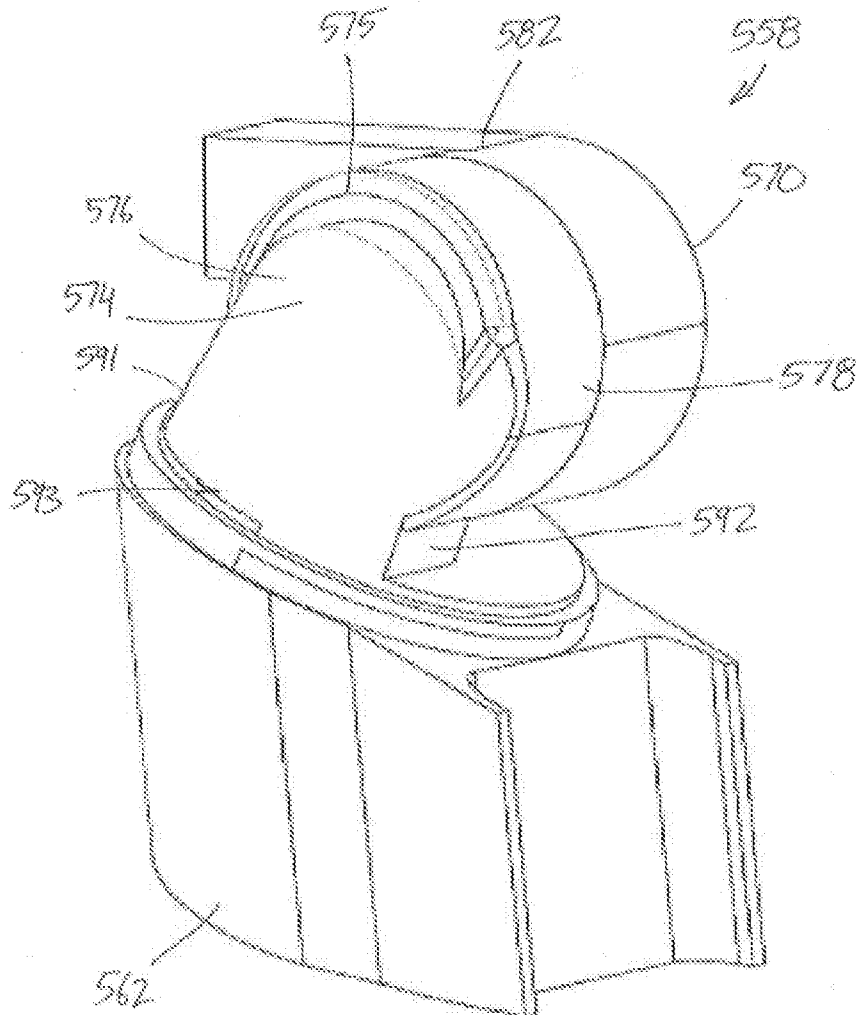


FIG. 20

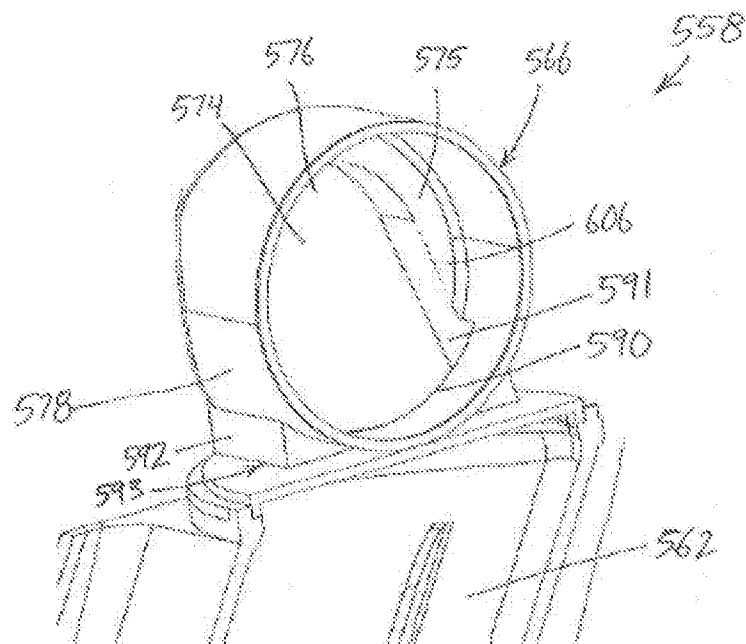


FIG. 21

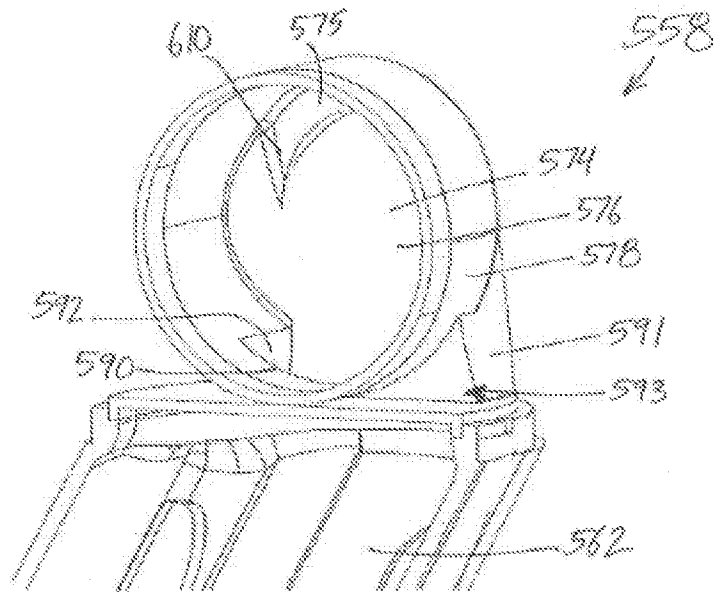


FIG. 22

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/US2016/061293

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

INV. A47L5/24 A47L9/12 A47L9/16
ADD.

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)
A47L

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 practicable, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 2014/237757 A1 (CONRAD WAYNE ERNEST [CA]) 28 August 2014 (2014-08-28) paragraphs [0082] - [0108] -----	1-15
A	US 2011/219577 A1 (CONRAD WAYNE ERNEST [CA]) 15 September 2011 (2011-09-15) paragraphs [0060] - [0066] -----	1-15
A	US 2013/232722 A1 (CONRAD WAYNE ERNEST [CA]) 12 September 2013 (2013-09-12) paragraph [0086]; figures 5,6,9 -----	1
A	EP 2 191 761 A1 (PANASONIC CORP [JP]) 2 June 2010 (2010-06-02) paragraph [0038] -----	1
A	US 2002/092123 A1 (STEPHENS PAUL D [US] ET AL) 18 July 2002 (2002-07-18) paragraph [0034] -----	1



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

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"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

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"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

17 January 2017

Date of mailing of the international search report

22/02/2017

Name and mailing address of the ISA/

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Authorized officer

Eckenschwiller, A

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No

PCT/US2016/061293

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