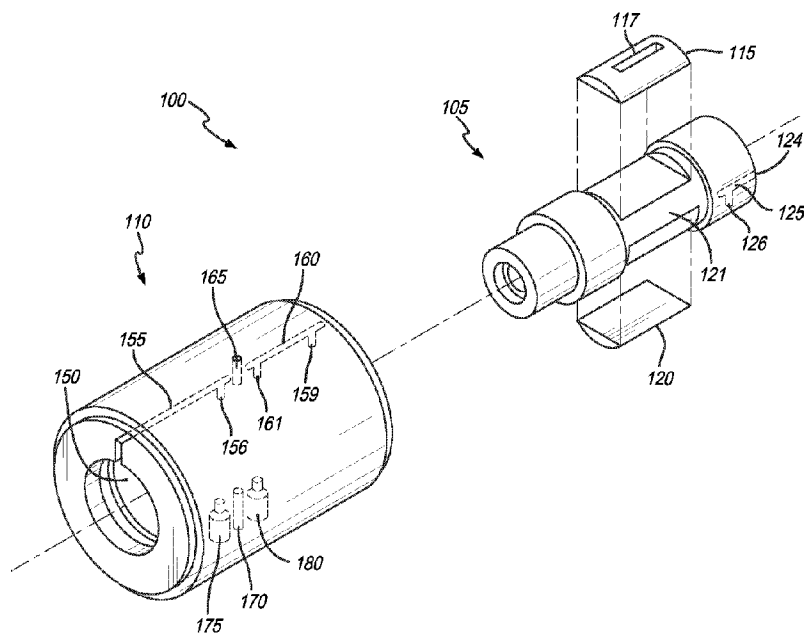




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(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

A reciprocating drive mechanism. The reciprocating drive mechanism may comprise: a spool assembly and a spool housing. The spool assembly may be reciprocally movable within a spool chamber of the spool housing. The spool housing may comprise a first seal, a second seal, and a third seal. When the spool assembly is within the spool chamber, the first seal, the second seal, and the third seal may divide the spool chamber into a distal chamber, an intermediate chamber, a supply chamber, and a proximal chamber, respectively. The spool assembly may comprise a first spool vent that is in fluid communication with the distal chamber. The spool housing may comprise a first housing vent that is in fluid communication with the intermediate chamber. The first spool vent may be in fluid communication with the first housing vent when an outlet of the first spool vent is aligned within the intermediate chamber.

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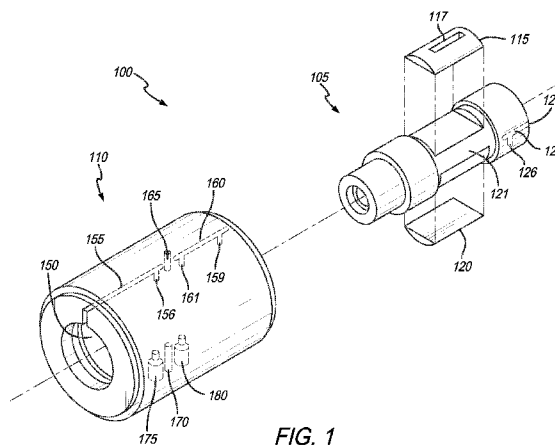


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: A reciprocating drive mechanism. The reciprocating drive mechanism may comprise: a spool assembly and a spool housing. The spool assembly may be reciprocally movable within a spool chamber of the spool housing. The spool housing may comprise a first seal, a second seal, and a third seal. When the spool assembly is within the spool chamber, the first seal, the second seal, and the third seal may divide the spool chamber into a distal chamber, an intermediate chamber, a supply chamber, and a proximal chamber, respectively. The spool assembly may comprise a first spool vent that is in fluid communication with the distal chamber. The spool housing may comprise a first housing vent that is in fluid communication with the intermediate chamber. The first spool vent may be in fluid communication with the first housing vent when an outlet of the first spool vent is aligned within the intermediate chamber.

RECIPROCATING DRIVE MECHANISM WITH A SPOOL VENT

FIELD OF USE

[0001] The present disclosure relates generally to control valves and reciprocating drive mechanisms, and more specifically, to reciprocating drive mechanisms with control valves such as injection pumps adapted to selectively change the directional flow of fluids for a piston.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Reciprocating drive mechanisms such as injection pumps and pneumatic pumps may be used to transport fluids, liquids, and/or gases and are generally used in various applications, such as manufacturing process control, hydraulic systems, and the like. The control valve of a reciprocating drive mechanism may comprise a spool valve coupled to piston. As a spool shifts between a first position and second position, control fluid may be selectively communicated between various ports and lines for pressurized movement of the piston. This pressurized movement preferably creates a pumping action of the piston through a repetitive series of motions.

[0003] U.S. Patent No. 4,776,773, issued to Anthony J. Quartana, III (“Quartana”), for example, discloses a pilot control valve for changing the directional flow of fluid to a piston. The Quartana reference discloses a valve member or spool disposed within the upper housing. The spool is coupled to a piston via a valve stem and includes slide valves that are loosely mounted on the sides of the spool. The slide valves may shift between a first and second position on the spool and are used for selective communication of the control fluid. For example, when the slide valves are in the first position, the slide valves allow communication of the control fluid from the upper housing to the lower surface of the piston. As the slide valves move to their second position, they allow communication of the pressurized control fluid to the upper surface of the piston, thereby causing the piston to return to its first position. The Quartana control valve also includes an exhaust port located on the side of the housing for the release of fluid or air buildup behind the spool.

[0004] Unfortunately, these reciprocating pumps, especially the Quartana control valve, generally have a shorter spool design, which limits the stroke of the piston and spool to approximately 1-2 inches. Thus, these reciprocating drive mechanisms are not designed with the longer strokes because air buildup generally occurs behind the spool, thereby causing the pump to stall. Specifically, with each iteration of motion by the piston and spool, air is inadvertently

forced behind the area of the spool due to the longer strokes. This air may be trapped and unable to escape, leading to air buildup, which can interfere with the operation of the pump. The trapped air may cause the pump to stall, possibly causing the pump to become inoperable and unreliable.

[0005] Therefore, there is a need for a new and improved reciprocating drive mechanism capable of performing longer strokes (*e.g.*, at least four inches) while preventing air buildup behind the spool.

SUMMARY OF EMBODIMENTS

[0006] To minimize the limitations in the prior art, and to minimize other limitations that will become apparent upon reading and understanding the present disclosure, the present specification discloses a new and improved reciprocating drive pump with a spool vent.

[0007] One embodiment may be a reciprocating drive mechanism, comprising: a spool assembly; and a spool housing; wherein the spool housing may comprise a spool chamber; wherein the spool assembly may be disposed in and reciprocally movable within the spool chamber; wherein the spool housing may comprise a first seal, a second seal, and a third seal; wherein, when the spool assembly is disposed within the spool chamber of the spool housing, the first seal, the second seal, and the third seal may divide the spool chamber into a distal chamber, an intermediate chamber, a supply chamber, and a proximal chamber, respectively, such that: (i) the first seal may divide the spool chamber into the distal chamber and the intermediate chamber; (ii) the second seal may divide the spool chamber into the intermediate chamber and the supply chamber; and (iii) the third seal may divide the spool chamber into the supply chamber and the proximal chamber; wherein the spool assembly may comprise a first spool vent; wherein the first spool vent may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber; wherein the spool housing may comprise a first housing vent having an inlet and an outlet; wherein an inlet of the first housing vent may be in fluid communication with the intermediate chamber; and wherein the first spool vent may be in fluid communication with the first housing vent when the spool assembly reciprocates within the spool housing and aligns an outlet of the first spool vent within the intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within the distal chamber may be allowed to escape the distal chamber and into the intermediate chamber to the first housing vent. The spool housing may further comprise a first exhaust port; wherein the spool assembly may further comprise a first slide valve; wherein the first slide valve may be coupled to an outer perimeter of

the spool assembly; wherein the first exhaust port may be positioned proximally and adjacent to the outlet of the first housing vent; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards a distal end of the spool housing during an upstroke, a first internal valve space of the first slide valve may align with an outlet of the first housing vent and the first exhaust port so as to allow the fluid within the first housing vent to communicate through the first internal valve space of the first slide valve and the first exhaust port; and wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards a proximal end of the spool housing during a downstroke, at least a portion of the first slide valve may block the outlet of the first housing vent so as to prevent the fluid within the first housing vent to communicate through the first internal valve space of the first slide valve and the first exhaust port. The spool housing may further comprise a second housing vent; wherein the second housing vent may be proximal and adjacent to the first exhaust port and may comprise an inlet and an outlet; wherein the inlet of the second housing vent may be in fluid communication with the proximal chamber and wherein the outlet of the second housing vent may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards the distal end of the spool housing during an upstroke, the outlet of the second housing vent may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber, such that the proximal chamber is in fluid communication with the supply chamber; and wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards the proximal end of the spool housing during a downstroke, the first internal valve space of the first slide valve may align with the outlet of the second housing vent and the first exhaust port, so as to allow the fluid within the second housing vent and the proximal chamber to communicate through the first internal valve space of the first slide valve and the first exhaust port. The spool housing may further comprise: a first fluid port, a second fluid port, and a second exhaust port; wherein the second exhaust port may be positioned proximally and adjacent to the first fluid port; wherein the second fluid port may be positioned proximally and adjacent to the second exhaust port; wherein the first fluid port and the second fluid port may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber; wherein the spool assembly may comprise a second slide valve coupled to an outer perimeter of the spool assembly; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards the distal end of the spool housing during the upstroke: (i) a second internal valve space of the second slide valve may align with the first fluid port and the second exhaust port so as to allow the fluid within the first fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space of the second slide valve and through the second exhaust port; and (ii) the second fluid port may

be in fluid communication with the supply chamber, so as to prevent the fluid in the second fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space and the second exhaust port; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards the proximal end of the spool housing during the downstroke: (i) the second internal valve space of the second slide valve may align with the second fluid port and the second exhaust port so as to allow the fluid within the second fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space of the second slide valve and through the second exhaust port; and (ii) the first fluid port may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber, so as to prevent the fluid in the first fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space and the second exhaust port. The spool assembly may comprise a center bore; wherein the center bore of the spool assembly may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber; wherein, when a pressurized fluid travels from the center bore and towards the distal chamber, the spool assembly may perform the downstroke. The reciprocating drive mechanism may further comprise: a piston housing; a piston; and a valve stem; wherein the piston housing may comprise a top flange, a bottom flange, and a cylindrical side wall; wherein the top flange, the bottom flange, and the cylindrical side wall may form a piston chamber; wherein the piston may be reciprocally movable within the piston chamber and may divide the piston chamber into a first cylindrical space and a second cylindrical space; wherein a proximal portion of the valve stem may be connected to the piston; wherein a distal portion of the valve stem may be configured to slideably and reciprocally engage within the center bore of the spool assembly; wherein the valve stem may comprise a valve stem bore and at least one passage; wherein the valve stem bore and the at least one passage may be in fluid communication with the center bore of the spool assembly, such that the valve stem bore and the at least one passage may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber; wherein the top flange may comprise a valve stem opening and a fourth seal disposed within the valve stem opening; wherein the fourth seal may be slideably engaged with the valve stem; and wherein, when the at least one passage is exposed within the first cylindrical space after the piston moves towards the bottom flange and shifts the at least one passage of the valve stem within the first cylindrical space, the valve stem bore may be in fluid communication with the first cylindrical space. The reciprocating drive mechanism may further comprise: a first fluid conduit; and a second fluid conduit; wherein the first fluid conduit may be coupled between the first fluid port and the bottom flange of the piston housing; wherein the first fluid conduit may allow the first fluid port to be in fluid

communication with the first cylindrical space; wherein the second fluid conduit may be coupled between the second fluid port and the top flange of the piston housing; and wherein the second fluid conduit may allow the second fluid port to be in fluid communication with the second cylindrical space. The spool assembly may comprise a second spool vent having an inlet and an outlet; wherein an inlet of the second spool vent may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber; wherein the outlet of the second spool vent may be located at an outer perimeter of the spool assembly; wherein an outlet of the second spool vent may be configured to be in fluid communication with the first housing vent when the spool assembly reciprocates within the spool housing and aligns the outlet of the first spool vent within the intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within the distal chamber may be allowed to escape the distal chamber and into the intermediate chamber to the first housing vent via the second spool vent. The fluid may be a gas.

[0008] Another embodiment may be a reciprocating drive mechanism, comprising: a spool assembly; and a spool housing; wherein the spool housing may comprise a spool chamber; wherein the spool assembly may be disposed in and reciprocally movable within the spool chamber; wherein the spool housing may comprise a first seal, a second seal, and a third seal; wherein, when the spool assembly is disposed within the spool chamber of the spool housing, the first seal, the second seal, and the third seal may divide the spool chamber into a distal chamber, an intermediate chamber, a supply chamber, and a proximal chamber, respectively, such that: (i) the first seal may divide the spool chamber into the distal chamber and the intermediate chamber; (ii) the second seal may divide the spool chamber into the intermediate chamber and the supply chamber; and (iii) the third seal may divide the spool chamber into the supply chamber and the proximal chamber; wherein the spool assembly may comprise a first spool vent having an inlet and an outlet; wherein the inlet of the first spool vent may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber and wherein the outlet of the first spool vent may be located at an outer perimeter of the spool assembly; wherein the spool housing may comprise a first housing vent having an inlet and an outlet; wherein an inlet of the first housing vent may be in fluid communication with the intermediate chamber and wherein the outlet of the first housing vent may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber; and wherein the first spool vent may be in fluid communication with the first housing vent when the spool assembly reciprocates within the spool housing and aligns the outlet of the first spool vent within the intermediate chamber, such

that a fluid trapped within the distal chamber may be allowed to escape the distal chamber and into the intermediate chamber to the first housing vent. The spool housing may further comprise a first exhaust port; wherein the spool assembly may further comprise a first slide valve; wherein the first slide valve may be coupled to an outer perimeter of the spool assembly; wherein the first exhaust port may be positioned proximally and adjacent to the outlet of the first housing vent; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards a distal end of the spool housing during an upstroke, a first internal valve space of the first slide valve may align with an outlet of the first housing vent and the first exhaust port so as to allow the fluid within the first housing vent to communicate through the first internal valve space of the first slide valve and the first exhaust port; and wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards a proximal end of the spool housing during a downstroke, at least a portion of the first slide valve may block the outlet of the first housing vent so as to prevent the fluid within the first housing vent to communicate through the first internal valve space of the first slide valve and the first exhaust port. The spool housing may further comprise a second housing vent; wherein the second housing vent may be proximal and adjacent to the first exhaust port and comprises an inlet and an outlet; wherein the inlet of the second housing vent may be in fluid communication with the proximal chamber and wherein the outlet of the second housing vent may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards the distal end of the spool housing during an upstroke, the outlet of the second housing vent may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber, such that the proximal chamber is in fluid communication with the supply chamber; and wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards the proximal end of the spool housing during a downstroke, the first internal valve space of the first slide valve may align with the outlet of the second housing vent and the first exhaust port, so as to allow the fluid within the second housing vent and the proximal chamber to communicate through the first internal valve space of the first slide valve and the first exhaust port. The spool housing may further comprise: a first fluid port, a second fluid port, and a second exhaust port; wherein the second exhaust port may be positioned proximally and adjacent to the first fluid port; wherein the second fluid port may be positioned proximally and adjacent to the second exhaust port; wherein the first fluid port and the second fluid port may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber; wherein the spool assembly may comprise a second slide valve coupled to an outer perimeter of the spool assembly; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards the distal end of the spool housing

during the upstroke: (i) a second internal valve space of the second slide valve may align with the first fluid port and the second exhaust port so as to allow the fluid within the first fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space of the second slide valve and to the second exhaust port; and (ii) the second fluid port may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber, so as to prevent the fluid in the second fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space and the second exhaust port; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards the proximal end of the spool housing during the downstroke: (i) the second internal valve space of the second slide valve may align with the second fluid port and the second exhaust port so as to allow the fluid within the second fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space of the second slide valve and to the second exhaust port; and (ii) the first fluid port may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber, so as to prevent the fluid in the first fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space and the second exhaust port. The spool assembly may comprise a center bore; wherein the center bore of the spool assembly may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber; wherein, when a pressurized fluid travels from the center bore and towards the distal chamber, the spool assembly may perform the downstroke. The reciprocating drive mechanism may further comprise: a piston housing; a piston; and a valve stem; wherein the piston housing may comprise a top flange, a bottom flange, and a cylindrical side wall; wherein the top flange, the bottom flange, and the cylindrical side wall may form a piston chamber; wherein the piston may be reciprocally movable within the piston chamber and may divide the piston chamber into a first cylindrical space and a second cylindrical space; wherein a proximal portion of the valve stem may be connected to the piston; wherein a distal portion of the valve stem may be configured to slideably and reciprocally engage within the center bore of the spool assembly; wherein the valve stem may comprise a valve stem bore and at least one passage; wherein the valve stem bore and the at least one passage may be in fluid communication with the center bore of the spool assembly, such that the valve stem bore and the at least one passage of the valve stem may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber; wherein the top flange may comprise a valve stem opening and a fourth seal disposed within the valve stem opening; wherein the fourth seal may be slideably engaged with the valve stem; and wherein, when the at least one passage is exposed within the first cylindrical space after the piston moves towards the bottom flange and shifts the at least one passage of the valve stem within the first cylindrical space, the valve stem bore of the valve stem may be in fluid

communication with the first cylindrical space. The reciprocating drive mechanism may further comprise: a first fluid conduit; and a second fluid conduit; wherein the first fluid conduit may be coupled between the first fluid port and the bottom flange of the piston housing; wherein the first fluid conduit may allow the first fluid port to be in fluid communication with the first cylindrical space; wherein the second fluid conduit may be coupled between the second fluid port and the top flange of the piston housing; and wherein the second fluid conduit may allow the second fluid port to be in fluid communication with the second cylindrical space. The spool assembly may comprise a second spool vent having an inlet and an outlet; wherein an inlet of the second spool vent may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber; wherein the outlet of the second spool vent may be located at an outer perimeter of the spool assembly; and wherein an outlet of the second spool vent may be configured to be in fluid communication with the first housing vent when the spool assembly reciprocates within the spool housing and aligns the outlet of the second spool vent within the intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within the distal chamber may be allowed to escape the distal chamber and into the intermediate chamber to the first housing vent via the second spool vent. The fluid may be a gas.

[0009] Another embodiment may be a reciprocating drive mechanism, comprising: a spool assembly; a spool housing; a piston housing; a piston; a valve stem; a first fluid conduit; and a second fluid conduit; wherein the spool assembly may comprise: a first seal, a second seal, a third seal, a first spool vent and first slide valve; wherein the spool housing may comprise: a spool chamber, a first exhaust port, a second exhaust port, a first fluid port, and a second fluid port; wherein the spool assembly may be disposed in and reciprocally movable within the spool chamber; wherein, when the spool assembly is disposed within the spool chamber of the spool housing, the first seal, the second seal, and the third seal may divide the spool chamber into a distal chamber, an intermediate chamber, a supply chamber, and a proximal chamber, respectively, such that: (i) the first seal may divide the spool chamber into the distal chamber and the intermediate chamber; (ii) the second seal may divide the spool chamber into the intermediate chamber and the supply chamber; and (iii) the third seal may divide the spool chamber into the supply chamber and the proximal chamber; wherein the first spool vent may comprise an inlet and an outlet; wherein the inlet of the first spool vent may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber; wherein the outlet of the first spool vent may be located at an outer perimeter of the spool assembly and may be in fluid communication with the

intermediate chamber; wherein the spool housing may comprise a first housing vent having an inlet and an outlet; wherein an inlet of the first housing vent may be in fluid communication with the intermediate chamber when the inlet of the first housing vent aligns with the intermediate chamber; wherein the outlet of the first housing vent may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber; wherein the first spool vent may be in fluid communication with the first housing vent when the spool assembly reciprocates within the spool housing and aligns the inlet of the first housing vent within the intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within the distal chamber may be allowed to escape the distal chamber, through the spool vent, through the intermediate chamber, and to the first housing vent; wherein the first exhaust port may be positioned proximally and adjacent to the outlet of the first housing vent; wherein the second housing vent may be proximal and adjacent to the first exhaust port and may comprise an inlet and an outlet; wherein the inlet of the second housing vent may be in fluid communication with the proximal chamber and wherein the outlet of the second housing vent may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards a distal end of the spool housing during an upstroke: (i) the outlet of the second housing vent may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber, such that the proximal chamber is in fluid communication with the supply chamber; and (ii) a first internal valve space of the first slide valve may align with an outlet of the first housing vent and the first exhaust port so as to allow the fluid within the first housing vent to communicate through the internal valve space of the first slide valve and the first exhaust port; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards a proximal end of the spool housing during a downstroke: (i) the first internal valve space of the first slide valve may align with the outlet of the second housing vent and the first exhaust port, so as to allow the fluid within the second housing vent and the proximal chamber to communicate through the first internal valve space of the first slide valve and the first exhaust port; and (ii) at least a portion of the first slide valve may block the outlet of the first housing vent so as to prevent the fluid within the first housing vent to communicate through the first internal valve space of the first slide valve and the first exhaust port; wherein the second exhaust port may be positioned proximally and adjacent to the first fluid port; wherein the second fluid port may be positioned proximally and adjacent to the second exhaust port; wherein the first fluid port and the second fluid port may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber; wherein the spool assembly may comprise a second slide valve coupled to an outer perimeter of the spool

assembly; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards the distal end of the spool housing during the upstroke: (i) a second internal valve space of the second slide valve may align with the first fluid port and the second exhaust port so as to allow the fluid within the first fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space of the second slide valve and to the second exhaust port; and (ii) the second fluid port may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber, so as to prevent the fluid in the second fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space and the second exhaust port; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards the proximal end of the spool housing during the downstroke: (i) a second internal valve space of the second slide valve may align with the second fluid port and the second exhaust port so as to allow the fluid within the second fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space of the second slide valve and to the second exhaust port; and (ii) the first fluid port may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber, so as to prevent the fluid in the first fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space and the second exhaust port; wherein the piston housing may comprise a top flange, a bottom flange, and a cylindrical side wall; wherein the top flange, the bottom flange, and the cylindrical side walls may form a piston chamber; wherein the piston may be reciprocally movable within the piston chamber and may divide the piston chamber into a first cylindrical space and a second cylindrical space; wherein a proximal portion of the valve stem may be connected to the piston; wherein a distal portion of the valve stem may be configured to slideably and reciprocally engage within a center bore of the spool assembly; wherein the center bore of the spool assembly may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber of the spool housing; wherein, when a pressurized fluid travels from the center bore and towards the distal chamber, the spool assembly may perform the downstroke; wherein the valve stem may comprise a valve stem bore and at least one passage; wherein the valve stem bore and the at least one passage may be in fluid communication with the center bore of the spool assembly, such that the valve stem bore and the at least one passage of the valve stem are in fluid communication with the distal chamber; wherein the top flange may comprise a valve stem opening and a fourth seal disposed within the valve stem opening; wherein the fourth seal may be slideably engaged with the valve stem; wherein, when the at least one passage is exposed within the first cylindrical space after the piston moves towards the bottom flange and shifts the at least one passage of the valve stem within the first cylindrical space, the valve stem bore of the valve stem may be in fluid communication with the first cylindrical space; wherein

the first fluid conduit may be coupled between the first fluid port and the bottom flange of the piston housing; wherein the first fluid conduit may allow the first fluid port to be in fluid communication with the first cylindrical space; wherein the second fluid conduit may be coupled between the second fluid port and the top flange of the piston housing; and wherein the second fluid conduit may allow the second fluid port to be in fluid communication with the second cylindrical space. The spool assembly may comprise a second spool vent having an inlet and an outlet; wherein an inlet of the second spool vent may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber; wherein an outlet of the second spool vent may be located at an outer perimeter of the spool assembly; and wherein an outlet of the second spool vent may be in fluid communication with the first housing vent when the spool assembly reciprocates within the spool housing and aligns the inlet of the first housing vent within the intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within the distal chamber is allowed to escape the distal chamber and into the intermediate chamber to the first housing vent via the second spool vent.

[0010] Another embodiment may be a reciprocating drive mechanism, comprising: a spool assembly; a spool housing; a piston housing; a piston; a valve stem; a first fluid conduit; and a second fluid conduit; wherein the spool housing may comprise: a spool chamber; a first seal, a second seal, a third seal, a first exhaust port, a second exhaust port, a first fluid port, and a second fluid port; wherein the spool assembly may be disposed in and reciprocally movable within the spool chamber; wherein, when the spool assembly is disposed within the spool chamber of the spool housing, the first seal, the second seal, and the third seal may divide the spool chamber into a distal chamber, an intermediate chamber, a supply chamber, and a proximal chamber, respectively, such that: (i) the first seal may divide the spool chamber into the distal chamber and the intermediate chamber; (ii) the second seal may divide the spool chamber into the intermediate chamber and the supply chamber; and (iii) the third seal may divide the spool chamber into the supply chamber and the proximal chamber; wherein the spool assembly may comprise a first spool vent and first slide valve; wherein the first spool vent may comprise an inlet and an outlet; wherein the inlet of the first spool vent may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber and wherein the outlet of the first spool vent may be located at an outer perimeter of the spool assembly; wherein the spool housing may comprise a first housing vent having an inlet and an outlet; wherein an inlet of the first housing vent may be in fluid communication with the intermediate chamber and wherein the outlet of the first housing vent

may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber; wherein the first spool vent may be in fluid communication with the first housing vent when the spool assembly reciprocates within the spool housing and aligns the outlet of the first spool vent within the intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within the distal chamber may be allowed to escape the distal chamber, through the spool vent, through the intermediate chamber, and to the first housing vent; wherein the first exhaust port may be positioned proximally and adjacent to the outlet of the first housing vent; wherein the second housing vent may be proximal and adjacent to the first exhaust port and comprises an inlet and an outlet; wherein the inlet of the second housing vent may be in fluid communication with the proximal chamber and wherein the outlet of the second housing vent may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards a distal end of the spool housing during an upstroke: (i) the outlet of the second housing vent may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber, such that the proximal chamber is in fluid communication with the supply chamber; and (ii) a first internal valve space of the first slide valve may align with an outlet of the first housing vent and the first exhaust port so as to allow the fluid within the first housing vent to communicate through the internal valve space of the first slide valve and the first exhaust port; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards a proximal end of the spool housing during a downstroke: (i) the first internal valve space of the first slide valve may align with the outlet of the second housing vent and the first exhaust port, so as to allow the fluid within the second housing vent and the proximal chamber to communicate through the first internal valve space of the first slide valve and the first exhaust port; and (ii) at least a portion of the first slide valve may block the outlet of the first housing vent so as to prevent the fluid within the first housing vent to communicate through the first internal valve space of the first slide valve and the first exhaust port; wherein the second exhaust port may be positioned proximally and adjacent to the first fluid port; wherein the second fluid port may be positioned proximally and adjacent to the second exhaust port; wherein the first fluid port and the second fluid port may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber; wherein the spool assembly may comprise a second slide valve coupled to an outer perimeter of the spool assembly; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards the distal end of the spool housing during the upstroke: (i) a second internal valve space of the second slide valve may align with the first fluid port and the second exhaust port so as to allow the fluid within the first fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space of the second slide valve and to the second

exhaust port; and (ii) the second fluid port may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber, so as to prevent the fluid in the second fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space and the second exhaust port; wherein, as the spool assembly moves towards the proximal end of the spool housing during the downstroke: (i) a second internal valve space of the second slide valve may align with the second fluid port and the second exhaust port so as to allow the fluid within the second fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space of the second slide valve and to the second exhaust port; and (ii) the first fluid port may be in fluid communication with the supply chamber, so as to prevent the fluid in the first fluid port to communicate through the second internal valve space and the second exhaust port; wherein the piston housing may comprise a top flange, a bottom flange, and a cylindrical side wall; wherein the top flange, the bottom flange, and the cylindrical side walls may form a piston chamber; wherein the piston may be reciprocally movable within the piston chamber and may divide the piston chamber into a first cylindrical space and a second cylindrical space; wherein a proximal portion of the valve stem may be connected to the piston; wherein a distal portion of the valve stem may be configured to slideably and reciprocally engage within a center bore of the spool assembly; wherein the center bore of the spool assembly may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber of the spool housing; wherein, when a pressurized fluid travels from the center bore and towards the distal chamber, the spool assembly may perform the downstroke; wherein the valve stem comprises a valve stem bore and at least one passage; wherein the valve stem bore and the at least one passage may be in fluid communication with the center bore of the spool assembly, such that the valve stem bore and the at least one passage of the valve stem may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber; wherein the top flange may comprise a valve stem opening and a fourth seal disposed within the valve stem opening; wherein the fourth seal may be slideably engaged with the valve stem; wherein, when the at least one passage is exposed within the first cylindrical space after the piston moves towards the bottom flange and shifts the at least one passage of the valve stem within the first cylindrical space, the valve stem bore of the valve stem may be in fluid communication with the first cylindrical space; wherein the first fluid conduit may be coupled between the first fluid port and the bottom flange of the piston housing; wherein the first fluid conduit may allow the first fluid port to be in fluid communication with the first cylindrical space; wherein the second fluid conduit may be coupled between the second fluid port and the top flange of the piston housing; and wherein the second fluid conduit may

allow the second fluid port to be in fluid communication with the second cylindrical space. The spool assembly may comprise a second spool vent having an inlet and an outlet; wherein an inlet of the second spool vent may be in fluid communication with the distal chamber; wherein an outlet of the second spool vent may be located at an outer perimeter of the spool assembly; and wherein an outlet of the second spool vent may be configured to be in fluid communication with the first housing vent when the spool assembly reciprocates within the spool housing and aligns the outlet of the first spool vent within the intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within the distal chamber may be allowed to escape the distal chamber and into the intermediate chamber to the first housing vent via the second spool vent.

[0011] It is an object to provide a reciprocating drive mechanism with one or more spool vents. Preferably the spool vent is a vent located in the spool assembly and preferably allows trapped air inside the pump to exit into the atmosphere.

[0012] It is an object to provide a design enhancement to a reciprocating drive mechanism, typically used as a fluid pump. The nature of standard pump designs generally limits the length of the spool. The new design disclosed herein preferably does not limit stroke length, which is directly related to how much fluid volume the reciprocating mechanism can pump.

[0013] It is an object to provide a new reciprocating drive pump that creates longer stroking pumps and which will allow air behind a spool to escape. Preferably, the new reciprocating drive pump provides a path that allows air to escape to the atmosphere, thereby providing smoother strokes.

[0014] It is an object to provide a reciprocating drive mechanism that performs strokes at least three to four inches.

[0015] It is an object to provide a spool housing and spool assembly that forms or comprises a vent from the distal chamber within the housing assembly to the outside of the reciprocating drive mechanism to release air trapped at the end of the spool. In one embodiment, the vents of the housing assembly and spool assembly may be aligned when the spool assembly forms a distal chamber of approximately 0.110 inches from the distal end of the housing assembly to the distal end of the spool assembly.

[0016] It is an object to provide a reciprocating drive mechanism that allows air to exit one or more internal chambers of the reciprocating drive mechanism without increasing the wear on the seals of the reciprocating drive mechanism.

[0017] It is an object to provide a reciprocating drive mechanism that allows for a reciprocating drive fluid pump to have a spool of any length.

[0018] It is an object to overcome the deficiencies of the prior art.

[0019] These, as well as other components, steps, features, objects, benefits, and advantages, will now become clear from a review of the following detailed description of illustrative embodiments, of the accompanying drawings, and of the claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ILLUSTRATIVE EMBODIMENTS

[0020] The drawings show illustrative embodiments, but do not depict all embodiments. Other embodiments may be used in addition to or instead of the illustrative embodiments. Details that may be apparent or unnecessary may be omitted for the purpose of saving space or for more effective illustrations. Some embodiments may be practiced with additional components or steps and/or without some or all components or steps provided in the illustrations. When different drawings contain the same numeral, that numeral refers to the same or similar components or steps.

[0021] **FIG. 1** is an illustration of an exploded view of one embodiment of the spool valve.

[0022] **FIG. 2A** is an illustration of a cross-section view of one embodiment of the spool valve during the downstroke of the spool assembly.

[0023] **FIG. 2B** is an illustration of a cross-section view of one embodiment of the spool valve during the upstroke of the spool assembly.

[0024] **FIGS. 3A to 3G** are illustrations of a cross-section view of one embodiment of the reciprocating drive mechanism and shows the reciprocating drive mechanism in operation.

[0025] **FIG. 4** is an illustration of a cross-section view of another embodiment of the spool valve and shows the spool valve with two spool vents.

[0026] **FIG. 5** is an illustration of a cross-section view of another embodiment of the spool valve and shows the seals disposed around the spool assembly and not the spool housing.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ILLUSTRATIVE EMBODIMENTS

[0027] In the following detailed description of various embodiments, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of various aspects of the embodiments. However, the embodiments may be practiced without some or all of these specific details. In other instances, well-known procedures and/or components have not been described in detail so as not to unnecessarily obscure aspects of the embodiments.

[0028] While some embodiments are disclosed here, other embodiments will become obvious to those skilled in the art as a result of the following detailed description. These embodiments are capable of modifications of various obvious aspects, all without departing from the spirit and scope of protection. The Figures, and their detailed descriptions, are to be regarded as illustrative in nature and not restrictive. Also, the reference or non-reference to a particular embodiment shall not be interpreted to limit the scope of protection.

[0029] In the following description, certain terminology is used to describe certain features of one or more embodiments. For purposes of the specification, unless otherwise specified, the terms “reciprocating drive mechanism”, “pump”, and “drive pump”, as used herein, refer to any mechanical device that raises, transfers, delivers, or compresses fluids or that attenuates gases especially by suction or pressure or both.

[0030] As used herein, the terms “approximately” and “about” generally refer to a deviance of within 5% of the indicated number or range of numbers. In one embodiment, the term “approximately” and “about”, refer to a deviance of between 1-10% from the indicated number or range of numbers.

[0031] **FIG. 1** is an illustration of an exploded view of one embodiment of the spool valve. As shown in FIG. 1, one embodiment of the spool valve **100** may comprise: a spool assembly **105** and a spool housing **110**. The spool assembly **105** may comprise a spool body **121**, a first slide valve **115**, a second slide valve **120**, and a spool vent **125**. The spool housing **110** may comprise a spool chamber **150**, a first housing vent **160**, a second housing vent **155**, a first exhaust port **165**, a second exhaust port **170**, a first fluid port **180**, and a second fluid port **175**.

[0032] The spool housing **110** is preferably a structure that houses or contains the spool assembly **105** within a spool chamber **150**. The spool assembly **105** is a structure (preferably cylindrical) that is configured to move back and forth in a reciprocating manner, so as to control the flow of fluid, such as a liquid or a gas within the reciprocating drive mechanism **1000** (shown in FIGS. 3A-G). The spool vent **125**, first housing vent **160**, second housing vent **155**, first fluid port **180**, and second fluid port **175** are preferably openings that serve as inlets and/or outlets for fluid, liquid, and/or gases within the spool valve **100** (*i.e.*, spool assembly **105** and spool housing **110**). Similarly, the first slide valve **115** and second slide valve **120** are preferably rectilinear valves used to control the emission of fluid, liquid, and/or gas from the reciprocating drive pump **100**. In a preferred embodiment, slide valves **115**, **120** are preferably D-slide valves with a

curved outer perimeter, each of which having an internal valve space **117**, **118** (shown in FIG. 2). Specifically, first slide valve **115** preferably has an internal valve space **117**, and second slide valve **120** has an internal valve space **118**. Although FIG. 1 shows a spool valve **100** with a single spool vent **125**, multiple spool vents may also be used.

[0033] In one embodiment, the spool vent **125** may traverse from a distal end of the spool assembly **105** to an outer perimeter surface of the spool assembly **105**. The housing vents **155**, **160** may traverse within the inner wall of the spool housing **110** and towards a middle area of the inner wall. Specifically, first housing vent **160** may traverse from the distal end of the spool housing **110** and towards a middle area of the inner wall, whereas second housing vent **155** may traverse from the proximal end of the spool housing **110** and towards a middle area of the inner wall. Preferably, the first internal valve space **117** of first slide valve **115** may provide a temporary and one-way passageway for the outlet **156** of second housing vent **155** and the outlet **161** of first housing vent **160**. Preferably, the distal end of the spool chamber **150** and outer machining of the spool assembly **105** are plugged via seals (shown in FIGS. 2A, 2B) to isolate the paths from distal chamber **201** and the atmosphere.

[0034] In one embodiment, the housing vents **155**, **160**, exhaust port **165**, and slide valve **115** are located within a relatively short distance from one another within the spool valve **100**. This preferably allows the outlets, **156**, **161** of housing vents **155**, **160**, exhaust port **165**, and first internal valve space **117** of the first slide valve **115** to align in close proximity with each other as the spool assembly **105** moves to a certain position within the spool housing **110** during the reciprocating upstroke or downstroke motion of the spool assembly **105**. Similarly, in one embodiment, fluid ports **175**, **180**, exhaust port **170**, and slide valve **120** are also located within a relatively short distance from one another within the spool valve **100**. This also preferably allows the fluid ports **175**, **180**, exhaust port **170**, and second internal valve space **118** of the second slide valve **120** to align in close proximity with each other as the spool assembly **105** moves to a certain position within the spool housing **110** during the reciprocating upstroke or downstroke motion of the spool assembly **105**. This may also allow the fluid communicating through fluid ports **175**, **180** to access to the outside or exterior portion of the spool housing **110** via the exhaust port **170**.

[0035] FIG. 2A is an illustration of a cross-section view of one embodiment of the spool valve during the downstroke of the spool assembly. As shown in FIG. 2A, one embodiment of the

spool valve **100** may comprise: a spool assembly **105**, spool housing **110**, and cover **111**. The spool assembly **105** may comprise a spool body **121**, a first slide valve **115**, a second slide valve **120**, and a spool vent **125**. The first slide valve **115** may comprise a first internal valve space **117**, and the second slide valve **120** may comprise a second internal valve space **118**. The spool housing **110** may comprise a first housing vent **160**, a second housing vent **155**, a first exhaust port **165**, a second exhaust port **170**, a first fluid port **180**, a second fluid port **175**, first seal **190**, a second seal **191**, and a third seal **192**. FIG. 2A also show that spool housing **110** may also comprise a substantially hollow spool chamber **150**, which may run essentially the entire length of the spool housing **110**. FIG. 2A also shows that the spool assembly **105** may comprise a center bore **151** that may extend essentially the entire length of the spool assembly **105**, and that a valve stem **301** or rod may be slidably engaged with the center bore **151**. In one embodiment, valve stem **301** is provided with a valve stem bore **302** and a passage **303**. Valve stem bore **302** may extend inward from upper end valve stem **301** and generally has a suitable depth such that the end of bore **302** may engage with the shoulder of center bore **151** of spool assembly **105**.

[0036] In one embodiment, the width of the spool chamber **150** is the same or almost the same as the width of the spool assembly **105**. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 2A, the length of the spool chamber **150** is preferably longer than the length of the spool assembly **105**. Additionally, the spool assembly **105** is almost always preferably longer than the spool housing **110** in overall length, but the spool chamber **150** formed by the spool housing **110** and the top flange **602** (shown in FIGS 3A to 3G) may create a chamber that is longer than the spool assembly **105**. This may allow the spool assembly **105** to traverse up and down (or back and forth, depending upon the orientation of the reciprocating drive mechanism **1000**) the length of the spool chamber **150** within the spool housing **110**. Thus, the spool assembly **105** may move towards a distal end of the spool housing **110** near the cover **111** and reciprocate back to its original position at a proximate end of the spool housing **110**. Thus, in its original position, the spool assembly **105** may contract the distal chamber **201** when moving towards the distal end of the spool housing **110**, and may expand the distal chamber **201** when reciprocating back to its original position (at the proximate end of the spool housing **110**). This may occur when the spool assembly **105** moves between the two positions repeatedly and reciprocatingly via a piston **320** (shown in FIGS. 3A to 3G). This action may cause fluid or air buildup within an end distal chamber **201** of fluid pumps (especially fluid pumps that perform longer strokes), thereby causing these pumps to

stall or freeze during operation.

[0037] In addition, FIG. 2A shows that the outer distal portion of the spool assembly **105** and rear interior portion of the spool housing **110**, in combination, may form a distal chamber **201**. In some embodiments, the distal chamber **201** may also be formed based on the location of the first seal **190**. In a preferred embodiment, the distal chamber **201** may be located near or at the distal end of the spool housing **110** and preferably just interior to the cover **111**. In one embodiment, the inlet **124** of the spool vent **125** is in communication with the distal chamber **201**, such that fluid or gas within the distal chamber **201** may flow through inlet **124** and through the spool vent **125**. Additionally, the center bore **151** of the spool housing is preferably in communication with the distal chamber **201**.

[0038] Similarly, FIG. 2A shows that the outer perimeter of the spool assembly **105** and an interior portion of the spool housing **110**, in combination, may form an intermediate chamber **202**. This intermediate chamber **202** may be formed based on the location of the first seal **190**, second seal **191**, and the spool assembly **105**. In a preferred embodiment, the intermediate chamber **202** may be located near or adjacent to the distal chamber **201** of the spool housing **110** and may be proximate to the distal chamber **201**. In one embodiment, the inlet **159** of the housing vent **160** may be in communication with the intermediate chamber **202**, such that fluid or gas within the intermediate chamber **202** may flow through inlet **159** of the housing vent **160** and through the housing vent **160**.

[0039] Moreover, FIG. 2A shows that the outer perimeter of the spool assembly **105** and an interior portion of the spool housing **110**, in combination, also may form a supply chamber **203**. Specifically, the supply chamber **203** may be formed based on the location of the second seal **191** and third seal **192** and may be located near or adjacent to the intermediate chamber **202** of the spool housing **110**. In one embodiment, depending upon the position of the spool assembly **105** within the spool chamber **150**, the second housing vent **155**, second fluid port **175**, and third fluid port **180** may either be in communication with the supply chamber **203** or may be in communication with the internal valve spaces **117**, **118** of slide valves **115**, **120**. This may allow fluid or gas in the supply chamber **203** to selectively travel through second housing vent **155** and fluid ports **175**, **180** in order to enter and exit the supply chamber **203** within the spool valve **100**. In a preferred embodiment, first housing vent **160** is preferably in fluid communication with the first internal valve space **117** of the first slide valve **115** at the upstroke of spool valve **100** while

the first slide valve **115** is at its first position (*i.e.*, during the upstroke of the spool valve **100**, shown in FIG. 2B) and is preferably blocked by the first slide valve **115** or a portion thereof at the downstroke when the first slide valve **115** is at its second position (*i.e.*, during the downstroke of the spool valve **100** shown in FIG. 2A).

[0040] Furthermore, an outer perimeter of the spool assembly **105** and an interior portion of the spool housing **110**, in combination, also may form a proximal chamber **204** (shown in FIGS. 3A-3G). Specifically, the proximal chamber **204** may be formed based on the location of the third seal **192** and may be located near or adjacent to the supply chamber **203** of the spool housing **110**. In a preferred embodiment, inlet **154** of housing vent **155** is in fluid communication with the proximal chamber **204**, such that fluid or gas in the proximal chamber **204** may flow through the second housing vent **155**. Additionally, the proximal chamber **204** is preferably in communication with the second cylindrical space **359** (shown in FIGS. 3A-3G) of the piston housing **601**.

[0041] FIG. 2A also shows that, in a preferred embodiment, the exhaust ports **165**, **170** are generally in communication with internal valve spaces **117**, **118** of slide valves **115**, **120**. Specifically, first exhaust port **165** may be in fluid communication with the first internal valve space **117** of the first slide valve **115** when the first slide valve **115** is at its first position (*i.e.*, during the upstroke of the spool valve **100**, shown in FIG. 2B), and the second exhaust port **170** may be in fluid communication with the second internal valve space **118** of the second slide valve **120** when the second slide valve **120** is at its second position (*i.e.*, during the downstroke of the spool valve **100**, shown in FIG. 2A). Thus, depending upon whether the spool assembly **105** is in the upstroke or downstroke position, second fluid port **175** or first fluid port **180** (but not both simultaneously) may be in fluid communication with the second internal valve space **118**. Similarly, depending upon whether the spool assembly **105** is in the upstroke or downstroke position, outlet **156** of the second housing vent **155** or outlet **161** of housing vent **160** may be in fluid communication with the first internal valve space **117**.

[0042] FIG. 2A also shows that, during the downstroke of the spool valve **100**, second fluid port **175** may be in fluid communication with the second exhaust port **170**. At this moment, first fluid port **180** is preferably in fluid communication with the supply chamber **203**, thereby allowing any fluid or gas within the supply chamber **203** to travel through the first fluid port **180**. Additionally, in this embodiment, during the downstroke, outlet **156** of the second housing vent **155**

155 is preferably in fluid communication with the first internal valve space **117** (and thus also in fluid communication with the first exhaust port **165**). At this moment, the outlet **161** of the first housing vent **160** is preferably straddled or blocked by the first slide valve **115** or a portion thereof when the first slide valve **115** is at its second position to prevent any fluid or gas from traveling through the outlet **161** of the first housing vent **160**.

[0043] Importantly, regarding the spool vent **125**, FIG. 2A shows that when the spool assembly **105** moves within the spool chamber **150**, the outlet **126** of the spool vent **125** may align within the intermediate chamber **202**. This may allow any fluid or gas located within the distal chamber **201** to travel or communicate with the intermediate chamber **202** via spool vent **125** and thus the first housing vent **160** through its inlet **159**. Thus, once the first internal valve space **117** of the first slide valve **115** aligns with the outlet **161** of the first housing vent **160** and first exhaust port **165** (*i.e.*, when the first slide valve **115** is at its first position), fluid or gas in the first housing vent **160** may also communicate through the first exhaust port **165**.

[0044] Finally, FIG. 2A shows that a valve stem **301** may be slideably engaged with the center bore **151** of the spool assembly **105**. FIG. 2A also shows that the valve stem bore **302** and passage **303** of the valve stem **301** is generally in fluid communication with the center bore **151** of the spool assembly **105** and thus distal chamber **201**. This preferably allows any fluid or gas located in the valve stem bore **302** and passage **303** of the valve stem **301** (and perhaps the center bore **151**) to travel or communicate towards and within the distal chamber **201**, which may expand the distal chamber **201** and push or act against spool assembly **105** to perform a downstroke. Although FIG. 2A shows a specific number of vents and slide valves, any number of vents and valves may be used to allow fluid/gas to exit the reciprocating drive pump.

[0045] FIG. 2B is an illustration of a cross-section view of one embodiment of the spool valve during the upstroke of the spool assembly. FIG. 2B shows that, during the upstroke of the spool valve **100**, first fluid port **180** may be in communication with the second internal valve space **118** of the second slide valve **120**. This may allow any fluid or gas in the first fluid port **180** to communicate through the second exhaust port **170**. At this moment, the second fluid port **175** is preferably in fluid communication with the supply chamber **203**, thereby allowing any fluid or gas within the supply chamber **203** to travel through the second fluid port **175**. Additionally, in this embodiment, during the upstroke of the spool valve **100**, outlet **161** of the first housing vent **160** preferably communicates with the first internal valve space **117** (and hence the first exhaust

port **165**). At this moment, the second housing vent **155** is preferably in fluid communication with the supply chamber **203**, thereby allowing any fluid or gas within the supply chamber **203** to also travel through the second housing port **155**. Because proximal chamber **204** is preferably in communication with the second cylindrical space **359** of the piston housing **601**, control fluid in supply chamber **203** may communicate with second cylindrical space **359** depending upon whether spool assembly **105** is performing the upstroke or downstroke.

[0046] Importantly, FIG. 2B shows that, when the spool assembly **105** is positioned approximately near the distal end of the spool housing **110** or cover **111**, the spool vent **125**, first housing vent **160**, first exhaust port **165**, and first internal valve space **117** of slide valve **115** may align with one another at certain time periods so that air within the distal chamber **201** may escape. For example, in one embodiment, the outlet **126** of spool vent **125** may align within the intermediate chamber **202** at the same time while the first internal valve space **117** of the first slide valve **115** aligns with both the exhaust port **165** and the outlet **161** of the first housing vent **160**. Preferably, this alignment happens when the distance between the distal end of the spool assembly **105** and the cover **111** is very small. This will preferably allow the trapped air of within the distal chamber **201** to be released, especially when the distal chamber expands or decrease to a certain length. This will preferably allow the spool vent **125**, outlet **161** of the first housing vent **160**, first exhaust port **165**, and first internal valve space **117** of the first slide valve **115** to be in fluid communication, thereby allowing the air trapped in the distal chamber **201** to vent or escape out from the reciprocating drive mechanism **1000**. In other embodiments, the outlet **126** of spool vent **125**, first housing vent **160**, first exhaust port **165**, and first internal valve space **117** of the slide valve **115** may align with one another at other various distances between the spool assembly **105** and cover **111**, such as approximately between 0.5 inches or 0.75 inches.

[0047] Conversely, when spool assembly **105** moves within the spool chamber **150**, the outlet **126** of the spool vent **125** may not align with the intermediate chamber **202** (*e.g.*, the outlet **126** of the spool vent **125** may be straddled or blocked by seals **190**, **191**). This may prevent any fluid or gas located within the distal chamber **201** and the spool vent **125** to travel or communicate within the intermediate chamber **202** and thus first housing vent **160**. However, once the outlet **126** of the spool vent **125** aligns within the intermediate chamber **202**, fluid or gas within the distal chamber **201** and spool vent **125** may also communicate through the first

housing vent **160**.

[0048] In another embodiment of the reciprocating drive mechanism **1000**, fluid or air located inside the distal chamber **201** may exit the spool housing **110** at various time intervals. This may occur when the outlet **126** of the spool vent **125** first aligns within the intermediate chamber **202**, such that air moves from distal chamber **201**, into the intermediate chamber **202**. However, during this time, the outlet **161** of first housing vent may be blocked or straddled by the first slide valve **115** (when the first slide valve **115** is at its second position), thus preventing fluid or air from communicating through the first internal valve space **117** and thus first exhaust port **165**. However, once spool assembly **105** reaches the distal end of the spool chamber **150** possibly due to the upward longitudinal movement of valve stem **301**, outlet **161** of first housing vent **160** may be in communication with the first internal valve space **117**, thereby allowing the fluid or air in the first housing vent **160** to communicate through the first exhaust port **165**. Thus, the fluid or air that has first moved into the first housing vent **160** may then pass through the outlet **161** of the first housing vent **160** to the first internal valve space **117** of the first slide valve **115** and out through the first exhaust port **165** when the first internal valve space **117** of the first slide valve **115** aligns with the outlet **161** of the first housing vent **160** and first exhaust port **165** (when the first slide valve **115** is at its first position). Accordingly, when the spool assembly **105** moves to one or more specific position(s) within the spool housing **110**, the outlet **126** of the spool vent **125** may first align within the intermediate chamber **202**, which will allow fluid or air within the distal chamber **201** to flow through the spool assembly **105**, through the intermediate chamber **202** and through the inlet **159** of the first housing vent **160**. The fluid or gas in the housing vent **160** may then travel through the outlet **161** of the first housing vent **160** and through the first slide valve **115** and first exhaust port **165** once the first internal valve space **117** of the first slide valve **115** aligns with the outlet **161** of the first housing vent **160** and first exhaust port **165**, such that any air trapped in distal chamber **201** may exit the spool valve **100**. Because the air trapped in distal chamber **201** is released, it preferably does not interfere with the movement of the spool assembly **105**, thereby allowing the spool assembly **105** to continue traveling towards the cover **111**.

[0049] FIGS. 3A to 3G are illustrations of a cross-section view of one embodiment of the reciprocating drive mechanism and shows the reciprocating drive mechanism in operation. As discussed above, the reciprocating drive mechanism **1000** generally refers to any mechanical

device that raises, transfers, delivers, or compresses fluids or that attenuates gases especially by suction or pressure or both. First, FIGS. 3A to 3G show that the spool valve **100** may be coupled to a piston assembly **600** for driving a pump. The piston assembly **600** may be formed by a piston housing **601**, piston **320**, and valve stem **301**. Specifically, the piston housing **601** may comprise a top flange **602**, bottom flange **603**, and a cylindrical side wall **604**. FIGS. 3A to 3G also show that the top flange **602**, bottom flange **603**, and the cylindrical side wall **604** may form a piston chamber where the piston **320** is reciprocally movable within the piston chamber and divides the piston chamber into cylindrical spaces **359**, **360**. Specifically, piston **320** may divide the piston chamber to a first cylindrical space **360** and a second cylindrical space **359**. In this manner, when piston **320** moves downwards towards the bottom flange **603** or performs a downstroke, first cylindrical space **360** preferably narrows while second cylindrical space **359** expands. Conversely, when piston **320** moves upwards towards the top flange **602** or performs an upstroke, first cylindrical space **360** preferably expands while second cylindrical space **359** narrows.

[0050] FIGS. 3A to 3G also show that the proximal portion of the valve stem **301** is preferably connected or attached to the piston **320**, while the distal portion of the valve stem **301** is preferably slideably and reciprocally engaged within the center bore **151** of the spool assembly **105**. Because top flange **602** preferably comprises a valve stem opening **605** and a fourth seal **610** disposed within the valve stem opening **605**, the fourth seal **610** is preferably slideably engaged with said valve stem **301**.

[0051] Importantly, FIGS. 3A to 3G show that valve stem **301** preferably comprises a valve stem bore **302** and a passage **303**, wherein the valve stem bore **302** and the passage **303** are preferably in communication with the center bore **151** of the spool assembly **105**. This allows fluid or gas to communicate from the valve stem bore **302** and passage **303** to the distal chamber **201** of the spool valve **100**. Thus, when passage **303** is exposed within second cylindrical space **359** after the piston **320** moves towards the bottom flange **603** and shifts and exposes passage **303** of the valve stem **301** within the second cylindrical space **359**, valve stem bore **302** of valve stem **301** communicates with the second cylindrical space **359**.

[0052] FIGS. 3A to 3G also shows that the reciprocating drive mechanism **1000** may comprise a first fluid conduit **401** and a second fluid conduit **402**. Specifically, FIGS. 3A to 3G shows that fluid conduit **401** is preferably coupled between first fluid port **180** and first port **503** of the

bottom flange **603** of the piston housing **601**, such that first fluid conduit **401** allows fluid or gas in the first fluid port **180** to communicate with the first cylindrical space **360**. FIGS. 3A to 3G also shows that the second fluid conduit **402** is preferably coupled between the second fluid port **175** and second port **502** of the top flange **602** of the piston housing **601**, such that the second fluid conduit **402** allows fluid or gas in second fluid port **175** to communicate with the second cylindrical space **359**.

[0053] FIGS. 3A to 3G also shows the reciprocating drive mechanism **1000** in operation. Specifically, FIG. 3A shows the reciprocating drive mechanism **1000** at the beginning of its downstroke. As spool valve **100** is in the position of FIG. 3A at the end of its upstroke (*i.e.*, while the distal ends of the spool valve **100** and valve stem **301** are near or adjacent to the cover **111**) and the slide valves **115**, **120** are in their first position, pressurized control fluid communicates or travels in the direction of **ARROW B** from the supply chamber **203** to the second cylindrical space **359** via the second fluid port **175**, second fluid conduit **402**, and second port **502** to apply pressure against the top surface of piston **320** in order to move piston **320** and valve stem **301** downwards in the direction of **ARROW C**. Pressurized control fluid is also preferably communicated from supply chamber **203** through the second housing vent **155** and into proximal chamber **204**, which is preferably in communication with the second cylindrical space **359**. This also preferably provides longitudinal downstroke movement in the direction of **ARROW C**. During this time, the first cylindrical space **360** is preferably vented to ambient pressure as the first cylindrical space **360** is in communication with the second exhaust port **170** via first fluid port **180**, first fluid conduit **401**, first port **503** and second internal valve space **118** of second slide valve **120** in its first position.

[0054] FIG. 3B shows the piston **320** and valve stem **301** during their downwards longitudinal movement. As discussed above, first cylindrical space **360** is preferably in communication with second exhaust port **170** via first fluid port **180**, first fluid conduit **401**, first port **503**, and second internal valve space **118** of the second slide valve **120** in its first position. As piston **320** continues to move downwards in the direction of the **ARROW C**, fluid in second cylindrical space **360** continues to vent through the second exhaust port **170** towards ambient pressure in the direction of **ARROW A**. Pressurized control fluid, on the other hand, continues to communicate in the direction of **ARROW B** from supply chamber **203** through second fluid port **175**, second fluid conduit **402**, and second port **502**, to apply pressure and act against the top surface of piston

320. Pressurized control fluid is also communicated from supply chamber **203** through housing vent **155** and proximal chamber **204**, both of which are also preferably in fluid communication with the first cylindrical space **359**. Preferably, spool assembly **105** is still positioned near or adjacent to cover **111**. However, the continued downward motion of piston **320** will also move valve stem **301** towards first cylindrical space **359** until the upper end portion of the valve stem exposes passage **303** into the first cylindrical space **359**, as shown in FIG. 3C. Additionally exposing passage **303** of valve stem **301** preferably allows pressurized fluid to communicate through valve stem bore **302**, center bore **151** of spool assembly **105**, and eventually the distal chamber **201** of the spool valve **100**. Once valve stem bore **302** and passage **303** provides communication between second cylindrical space **359** and the distal chamber **201**, spool assembly **105** also performs its downward movement due to pressurized fluid acting against the distal end of the spool assembly **105** in distal chamber **201**.

[0055] FIG. 3C shows valve stem bore **302** and passage **303** in communication with the second cylindrical space **359**. At this time, piston **320** and valve stem **301** may be near the end of their downwards longitudinal movement. Control fluid provided by the supply chamber **203** of spool valve **100** preferably still communicates through the second fluid port **175**, second fluid conduit **402**, second port **502**, in the direction of **ARROW B** to second cylindrical space **359** to provide control or supply fluid acting on the top surface of piston **320**. Pressurized control fluid is also communicated from supply chamber **203** and proximal chamber **204** through the second housing vent **155**, which is also preferably in communication with the second cylindrical space **359**. This preferably continues to drive piston **320** and its valve stem **301** in the direction of **ARROW C**. During this time, the first cylindrical space **360** continues to vent fluid through the second exhaust port **170** towards ambient pressure via the first fluid port **180**, first fluid conduit **401**, first port **503**, and second internal valve space **118** of the second slide valve **120** in direction **ARROW A**. Importantly, control fluid supplied into the second cylindrical space **359**, however, communicates through valve stem bore **302** and passage **303** and travels through center bore **151**. This may cause pressurized fluid to build in distal chamber **201** of the spool housing **110**, thereby acting against spool assembly **105**. As a result, spool assembly **105** may begin to perform a downstroke towards the piston assembly **600**, which preferably causes slide valve members **115**, **120** to shift from their first position and towards their second position. The shifting of slide valve members **115**, **120** from their first position towards their second position

preferably causes (1) the second exhaust port **170** to be in communication with the second fluid port **175** and (2) the first exhaust port **165** to be in communication with the second housing vent **155**, as shown in FIG. 3D.

[0056] FIG. 3D shows the spool assembly **105** performing a downstroke due to the pressurized control fluid buildup in the distal chamber **201**. During this time, passage **303** has been exposed within the second cylindrical space **359**, thereby causing pressurized control fluid within the second cylindrical space **359** to travel into distal chamber **201** via center bore **151** of spool assembly **105** and valve stem bore **302**. Movement of spool assembly **105** causes slide valves **115**, **120** to shift from their first position to the second position. As a result, second exhaust port **170** is in communication with the second fluid port **175**, and the first exhaust port **165** is in communication with the second housing vent **155**. This preferably causes pressurized control fluid to travel into the first cylindrical space **360** in the direction of **ARROW A**. Fluid in the second cylindrical space **359**, on the other hand, begins to vent to ambient pressure through exhaust ports **170**, **165**. Specifically, the second cylindrical space **360** is preferably in communication with the first fluid port **180**, first fluid conduit **401**, and first port **503**, which causes control fluid to travel from the supply chamber **203** and into the first cylindrical space **360**. This preferably creates pressure against the bottom surface of piston **320**, thereby moving the piston **320** and valve stem **301** upwards in the direction of **ARROW C**. During this time, the second cylindrical space **359** is preferably in communication with exhaust port **170** via second fluid port **175**, second fluid conduit **402**, second port **502**, and second internal valve space **118** of the second slide valve **120** in its first position. This causes control fluid to travel from supply chamber **203** and into the first cylindrical space **360**, thereby creating pressure against the bottom surface of piston **320** and thus moving piston **320** and valve stem **301** upwards in the direction of **ARROW C**.

[0057] During this time, outlet **126** of spool vent **125** may be in communication with intermediate chamber **202** of spool valve **100**. This allows fluid in the distal chamber **201** to travel through spool vent **125**, intermediate chamber **202**, and into the first housing vent **160**. Because spool valve **105** is in the downstroke position, a portion of the first slide valve **115** may straddle or block the outlet **161** of the first housing vent **160**, thereby preventing fluid in the first housing vent **160** from communicating through the first exhaust port **165**.

[0058] FIG. 3E shows the piston **320** and valve stem **301** during their upwards longitudinal

movement. As piston **320** continues to move upwards in the direction of the **ARROW C**, fluid in the second cylindrical space **359** continues to vent through the first exhaust port **170** towards ambient pressure via the second fluid port **175**, second fluid conduit **402**, second port **502**, and second internal valve space **118** of the second slide valve **120** in its second position. Additionally, fluid in the second cylindrical space **359** continues to vent through the first exhaust port **165** via the second housing vent **155**, first internal valve space **117** of the first slide valve **115**, and the proximal chamber **204**. Pressurized control fluid, on the other hand, continues to communicate in the direction of the **ARROW A** from supply chamber **203** through fluid port **180**, fluid conduit **401**, and first port **503**, in order to apply pressure against the bottom surface of piston **320**. Spool assembly **105** is generally still positioned near or adjacent to the top flange **602** but the continued upward motion of piston **320** will also preferably move the upper end of the valve stem **301** towards the distal end of the center bore **151** until the upper end portion of the valve stem engages against the shoulder of center bore **151**, as shown in FIG. 3F. This upward movement preferably shifts the valve stem bore **302** and passage **303** within the spool assembly **105**, thereby preventing fluid in the second cylindrical space **359** from traveling through passage **303**, valve stem bore **302**, center bore **151**, and distal chamber **201**. As a result, pressurized control fluid no longer communicates into the distal chamber **201**. Fluid within the distal chamber **201** may still remain within the spool vent **125**, intermediate chamber **202**, and housing vent **160** due to the blockage of outlet **161** caused by the first slide valve **115**.

[0059] FIG. 3F shows the upper end of valve stem **301** engaged against the shoulder of center bore **151**. At this time, fluid in the second cylindrical space **359** generally continues to vent through the second exhaust port **170** towards ambient pressure in the direction of **ARROW B** via second fluid port **175**, second fluid conduit **402**, second port **502**, and the second internal valve space **117** of the second slide valve **120** in its second position. Fluid in the second cylindrical space **359** also preferably continues to vent through the first exhaust port **165** via the second housing vent **155**, proximal chamber **204**, and first internal valve space **118** of the first slide valve **120** in the second position. Pressurized control fluid, on the other hand, continues to communicate in the direction of the **ARROW A** from supply chamber **203** through the first fluid port **180**, first fluid conduit **401**, and first port **503**. This continues to create pressure against the bottom surface of piston **320**, causing piston **320** to continue moving upwards in the direction of the **ARROW C**. This preferably causes spool assembly **105** to begin its upstroke due to the

longitudinal movement of valve stem **301** and piston **320**. Fluid in the second cylindrical space **359** is preferably still blocked and prevented from traveling through passage **303**, valve stem bore **302**, center bore **151**, and thus distal chamber **201**. Once the spool assembly **105** moves towards the cover **111**, slide valves **115**, **120** begins to shift from their second position to their first position. This preferably causes (1) the second exhaust port **170** to be in communication with the first fluid port **180** and (2) the first exhaust port **165** to be in communication with outlet **161** of the first housing vent **160**, as shown in FIG. 3G.

[0060] FIG. 3G shows the reciprocating drive mechanism **1000** and spool valve **100** at the end of its upstroke. As the distal ends of spool valve **100** and valve stem **301** are positioned near the cover **111**, slide valves **115**, **120** are preferably in their first position. This preferably allows fluid in the intermediate chamber **202**, and the first housing vent **160** to travel through the first exhaust port **165** via the first internal valve space **117** of the first slide valve **115**. Additionally, pressurized control fluid is communicated in the direction of the ARROW **B** from supply chamber **203** to the second cylindrical space **359** through the second fluid port **175**, second fluid conduit **402**, and second port **502**, to again apply pressure against the top surface of piston **320**. This preferably allows piston **320** and valve stem **301** to again move downwards in the direction of ARROW **C**. Pressurized control fluid is also communicated from supply chamber **203** through the second housing vent **155**, which is also preferably in fluid communication with the second cylindrical space **359**. This also preferably provides longitudinal downstroke movement in the direction of ARROW **C**. During this time, the first cylindrical space **360** is preferably vented towards ambient pressure as the first cylindrical space **360** is in communication with the second exhaust port **170** via the first fluid port **180**, first fluid conduit **401**, first port **503** and second internal valve space **118** of the second slide valve **120** in its first position. The reciprocating drive mechanism **1000** or pump now repeats the strokes from left to right again (*i.e.*, FIGS. 3A-3G) following the above method over and over again repeatedly.

[0061] FIG. 4 is an illustration of a cross-section view of another embodiment of the spool valve and shows the spool valve with two spool vents. As shown in FIG. 4, another embodiment of the spool valve **800** may comprise: a spool assembly **805**, spool housing **810**, and cover **811**. The spool assembly **805** may comprise a spool body **821**, a first slide valve **815**, a second slide valve **820**, and a first spool vent **825**. The spool housing **810** may comprise a first housing vent **860**, a second housing vent **855**, a first exhaust port **865**, a second exhaust port **870**, a first fluid port

880, a second fluid port **875**, a first seal **890**, a second seal **891**, and a third seal **892**. FIG. 4 also show that spool housing **810** may also comprise a substantially hollow spool chamber **850**, which may run essentially the entire length of the spool housing **810**. The spool assembly **805** along with the first seal **890**, second seal **891**, and third seal **892** may also form the distal chamber **901**, intermediate chamber **902**, supply chamber **903**, and proximal chamber **904**, similar to the distal chamber **201**, intermediate chamber **202**, supply chamber **203**, and proximal chamber **204** shown in FIGS 2A-2B and 3A-3G.

[0062] Importantly, FIG. 4 shows that the spool assembly **805** of the spool valve **800** may also comprise a second spool vent **925**. The second spool vent **925** may provide an additional passage for fluid or air buildup in the distal chamber **201** to communicate to the first housing vent **855**. In this embodiment, the inlet **824** of the first spool vent **825** may be in communication with the distal chamber **901**, and the outlet **826** of the first spool vent **825** may be located at an outer perimeter of the spool assembly **805**. This may allow the first spool vent **825** to traverse from a distal end of the spool assembly **805** to an outer perimeter surface of the spool assembly **805**. Similarly, the inlet **924** of the second spool vent **925** may be in communication with the distal chamber **901**, and the outlet **926** of the second spool vent **925** may be located at another location at the outer perimeter of the spool assembly **905**. This may also allow the second spool vent **925** to traverse from a distal end of the spool assembly **905** to an outer perimeter surface of the spool assembly **905**. This addition of a second spool vent **925** may increase the removal or transfer of air or fluid buildup from the distal chamber **901** to the first exhaust port **865**. For example, when the spool assembly **805** moves within the spool chamber **850**, the outlet **826** of the first spool vent **825** may align within the intermediate chamber **902**. This may allow any fluid or gas located within the distal chamber **901** to travel or communicate with the intermediate chamber **902** via the first spool vent **825**. Similarly, the outlet **926** of the second spool vent **925** may also align within the intermediate chamber **902**. This may also allow any fluid or gas located within the distal chamber **901** to alternately travel or communicate with the intermediate chamber **902** via the second spool vent **925**. Once inside the intermediate chamber **902**, the fluid or air may communicate with the first housing vent **860**, through inlet **859**. As the spool assembly **805** moves within the spool chamber **850**, the internal valve space **817** of the slide valve **815** may align with the outlet **861** of the housing vent **860** and exhaust port **865** (*i.e.*, when slide valve **815** is at its first position), thereby allowing fluid or gas within housing vent **860** to

also communicate through the exhaust port **865**. Although FIG. 4 only shows two spool vents, any number of spool vents such as three or four may be used for the reciprocating drive mechanism.

[0063] FIG. 5 is an illustration of a cross-section view of another embodiment of the spool valve and shows the seals disposed around the spool assembly and not the spool housing. As shown in FIG. 5, another embodiment of the spool valve **1000** may comprise: a spool assembly **1005**, spool housing **1010**, and cover **1011**. The spool assembly **1005** may comprise a spool body **1021**, a first slide valve **1015**, a second slide valve **1020**, a spool vent **1025**, a first seal **1090**, a second seal **1091**, and a third seal **1092**. The spool housing **1010** may comprise a first housing vent **1060**, a second housing vent **1055**, a first exhaust port **1065**, a second exhaust port **1070**, a first fluid port **1080**, a second fluid port **1075**. FIG. 5 also show that spool housing **1010** may also comprise a substantially hollow spool chamber **1050**, which may run essentially the entire length of the spool housing **1010**. The spool assembly **1005** along with the first seal **1090**, second seal **1091**, and third seal **1092** may also form the distal chamber **1001**, intermediate chamber **1002**, supply chamber **1003**, and proximal chamber **1004**, similar to the distal chamber **201**, **901**, intermediate chamber **202**, **902**, supply chamber **203**, **903**, and proximal chamber **204**, **904** shown in FIGS 2-4.

[0064] Importantly, unlike the spool valves **100**, **800** shown in FIGS. 2-4, spool valve **1000**, shown in FIG. 5, has the first seal **1090**, second seal **1091**, and third seal **1092** disposed and positioned around the grooves or outer perimeter of the spool assembly **1005** (rather than within the grooves of the spool housing **1010**). In this manner, the outlet **1026** of the spool vent **1025** is preferably in constant communication with the intermediate chamber **1002**. On the other hand, inlet **1059** may not always be in communication with the intermediate chamber **1002** because the intermediate chamber **1002** may shift along the spool chamber **1050**, depending upon the position of the spool assembly **1005** within the spool chamber **1050**. For example, when the spool assembly **1005** moves within the spool chamber **1050**, the inlet **1059** of the first housing vent **1060** may align within the intermediate chamber **1002**. This may allow any fluid or gas located within the distal chamber **1001** to travel or communicate into intermediate chamber **1002** via the first spool vent **1025** and possibly to the first housing vent **1060**. Once inside first housing vent **1060**, the fluid or air may communicate with the exhaust port **1065**, depending upon the position of the spool assembly **1005** within the spool chamber **1050** (*i.e.*, the internal

valve space **1017** of the slide valve **1015** may align with the outlet **1061** of the housing vent **1060** and exhaust port **1065** when slide valve **1015** is at its first position). Although FIG. 5 shows all the seals **1090**, **1091**, **1092** located on the spool assembly **1000**, the seals may be disposed both within the spool assembly and/or spool housing.

[0065] Unless otherwise stated, all measurements, values, ratings, positions, magnitudes, sizes, locations, and other specifications that are set forth in this specification, including in the claims that follow, are approximate, not exact. They are intended to have a reasonable range that is consistent with the functions to which they relate and with what is customary in the art to which they pertain.

[0066] The foregoing description of the preferred embodiment has been presented for the purposes of illustration and description. While multiple embodiments are disclosed, still other embodiments will become apparent to those skilled in the art from the above detailed description. These embodiments are capable of modifications in various obvious aspects, all without departing from the spirit and scope of protection. Accordingly, the detailed description is to be regarded as illustrative in nature and not restrictive. Also, although not explicitly recited, one or more embodiments may be practiced in combination or conjunction with one another. Furthermore, the reference or non-reference to a particular embodiment shall not be interpreted to limit the scope of protection. It is intended that the scope of protection not be limited by this detailed description, but by the claims and the equivalents to the claims that are appended hereto.

[0067] Except as stated immediately above, nothing that has been stated or illustrated is intended or should be interpreted to cause a dedication of any component, step, feature, object, benefit, advantage, or equivalent, to the public, regardless of whether it is or is not recited in the claims.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A reciprocating drive mechanism, comprising:
a spool assembly; and
a spool housing;
wherein said spool housing comprises a spool chamber;
wherein said spool assembly is disposed in and reciprocally movable within said spool chamber;
wherein said spool housing comprises a first seal, a second seal, and a third seal;
wherein, when said spool assembly is disposed within said spool chamber of said spool housing, said first seal, said second seal, and said third seal divide said spool chamber into a distal chamber, an intermediate chamber, a supply chamber, and a proximal chamber, respectively, such that:
 - (i) said first seal divides said spool chamber into said distal chamber and said intermediate chamber;
 - (ii) said second seal divides said spool chamber into said intermediate chamber and said supply chamber; and
 - (iii) said third seal divides said spool chamber into said supply chamber and said proximal chamber;wherein said spool assembly comprises a first spool vent;
wherein said first spool vent is in fluid communication with said distal chamber;
wherein said spool housing comprises a first housing vent having an inlet and an outlet;
wherein the inlet of said first housing vent is in fluid communication with said intermediate chamber; and
wherein said first spool vent is in fluid communication with said first housing vent when said spool assembly reciprocates within said spool housing and aligns an outlet of said first spool vent within said intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within said distal chamber is allowed to escape said distal chamber and into said intermediate chamber to said first housing vent.
2. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 1, wherein said spool housing further comprises a first exhaust port;

wherein said spool assembly further comprises a first slide valve;
wherein said first slide valve is coupled to an outer perimeter of said spool assembly;
wherein said first exhaust port is positioned proximally and adjacent to said outlet of said first housing vent;
wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards a distal end of said spool housing during an upstroke, a first internal valve space of said first slide valve aligns with an outlet of said first housing vent and said first exhaust port so as to allow said fluid within said first housing vent to communicate through said first internal valve space of said first slide valve and said first exhaust port; and
wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards a proximal end of said spool housing during a downstroke, at least a portion of said first slide valve blocks said outlet of said first housing vent so as to prevent said fluid within said first housing vent to communicate through said first internal valve space of said first slide valve and said first exhaust port.

3. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 2, wherein said spool housing further comprises a second housing vent;
wherein said second housing vent is proximal and adjacent to said first exhaust port and comprises an inlet and an outlet;
wherein said inlet of said second housing vent is in fluid communication with said proximal chamber and wherein said outlet of said second housing vent is in fluid communication with said supply chamber;
wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards said distal end of said spool housing during the upstroke, said outlet of said second housing vent is in fluid communication with said supply chamber, such that said proximal chamber is in fluid communication with said supply chamber; and
wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards said proximal end of said spool housing during the downstroke, said first internal valve space of said first slide valve aligns with said outlet of said second housing vent and said first exhaust port, so as to allow said fluid within said second housing vent and said proximal chamber to communicate through said first internal valve space of said first slide valve and said first exhaust port.

4. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 3, wherein said spool housing further comprises: a first fluid port, a second fluid port, and a second exhaust port; wherein said second exhaust port is positioned proximally and adjacent to said first fluid port;
- wherein said second fluid port is positioned proximally and adjacent to said second exhaust port;
- wherein said first fluid port and said second fluid port are in fluid communication with said supply chamber;
- wherein said spool assembly comprises a second slide valve coupled to an outer perimeter of said spool assembly;
- wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards said distal end of said spool housing during said upstroke:
- (i) a second internal valve space of said second slide valve aligns with said first fluid port and said second exhaust port so as to allow said fluid within said first fluid port to communicate through said second internal valve space of said second slide valve and through said second exhaust port; and
 - (ii) said second fluid port is in fluid communication with said supply chamber, so as to prevent said fluid in said second fluid port to communicate through said second internal valve space and said second exhaust port;
- wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards said proximal end of said spool housing during said downstroke:
- (i) said second internal valve space of said second slide valve aligns with said second fluid port and said second exhaust port so as to allow said fluid within said second fluid port to communicate through said second internal valve space of said second slide valve and through said second exhaust port; and
 - (ii) said first fluid port is in fluid communication with said supply chamber, so as to prevent said fluid in said first fluid port to communicate through said second internal valve space and said second exhaust port.
5. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 4, wherein said spool assembly comprises a center bore;

wherein said center bore of said spool assembly is in fluid communication with said distal chamber;

wherein, when a pressurized fluid travels from said center bore and towards said distal chamber, said spool assembly performs said downstroke.

6. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 5, further comprising:

a piston housing;

a piston; and

a valve stem;

wherein said piston housing comprises a top flange, a bottom flange, and a cylindrical side wall;

wherein said top flange, said bottom flange, and said cylindrical side wall form a piston chamber;

wherein said piston is reciprocally movable within said piston chamber and divides said piston chamber into a first cylindrical space and a second cylindrical space;

wherein a proximal portion of said valve stem is connected to said piston;

wherein a distal portion of said valve stem is configured to slideably and reciprocally engage within said center bore of said spool assembly;

wherein said valve stem comprises a valve stem bore and at least one passage;

wherein said valve stem bore and said at least one passage are in fluid communication with said center bore of said spool assembly, such that said valve stem bore and said at least one passage are in fluid communication with said distal chamber;

wherein said top flange comprises a valve stem opening and a fourth seal disposed within said valve stem opening;

wherein said fourth seal is slideably engaged with said valve stem; and

wherein, when said at least one passage is exposed within said first cylindrical space after said piston moves towards said bottom flange and shifts said at least one passage of said valve stem within said first cylindrical space, said valve stem bore is in fluid communication with said first cylindrical space.

7. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 6, further comprising:

a first fluid conduit; and

a second fluid conduit;

wherein said first fluid conduit is coupled between said first fluid port and said bottom flange of said piston housing

wherein said first fluid conduit allows said first fluid port to be in fluid communication with said first cylindrical space;

wherein said second fluid conduit is coupled between said second fluid port and said top flange of said piston housing; and

wherein said second fluid conduit allows said second fluid port to be in fluid communication with said second cylindrical space.

8. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 1, wherein said spool assembly comprises a second spool vent having an inlet and an outlet;
wherein an inlet of said second spool vent is in fluid communication with said distal chamber;
wherein said outlet of said second spool vent is located at an outer perimeter of said spool assembly;
wherein an outlet of said second spool vent is configured to be in fluid communication with said first housing vent when said spool assembly reciprocates within said spool housing and aligns said outlet of said first spool vent within said intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within said distal chamber is allowed to escape said distal chamber and into said intermediate chamber to said first housing vent via said second spool vent.
9. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 1, wherein said fluid is a gas.
10. A reciprocating drive mechanism, comprising:
a spool assembly; and
a spool housing;
wherein said spool housing comprises a spool chamber;
wherein said spool assembly is disposed in and reciprocally movable within said spool chamber;
wherein said spool housing comprises a first seal, a second seal, and a third seal;
wherein, when said spool assembly is disposed within said spool chamber of said spool housing, said first seal, said second seal, and said third seal divide said spool

chamber into a distal chamber, an intermediate chamber, a supply chamber, and a proximal chamber, respectively, such that:

- (i) said first seal divides said spool chamber into said distal chamber and said intermediate chamber;
- (ii) said second seal divides said spool chamber into said intermediate chamber and said supply chamber; and
- (iii) said third seal divides said spool chamber into said supply chamber and said proximal chamber;

wherein said spool assembly comprises a first spool vent having an inlet and an outlet; wherein said inlet of said first spool vent is in fluid communication with said distal chamber and wherein said outlet of said first spool vent is located at an outer perimeter of said spool assembly;

wherein said spool housing comprises a first housing vent having an inlet and an outlet; wherein the inlet of said first housing vent is in fluid communication with said intermediate chamber and wherein said outlet of said first housing vent is in fluid communication with said supply chamber; and

wherein said first spool vent is in fluid communication with said first housing vent when said spool assembly reciprocates within said spool housing and aligns said outlet of said first spool vent within said intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within said distal chamber is allowed to escape said distal chamber and into said intermediate chamber to said first housing vent.

11. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 10, wherein said spool housing further comprises a first exhaust port;
wherein said spool assembly further comprises a first slide valve;
wherein said first slide valve is coupled to an outer perimeter of said spool assembly;
wherein said first exhaust port is positioned proximally and adjacent to said outlet of said first housing vent;
wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards a distal end of said spool housing during an upstroke, a first internal valve space of said first slide valve aligns with the outlet of said first housing vent and said first exhaust port so as to allow said fluid

within said first housing vent to communicate through said first internal valve space of said first slide valve and said first exhaust port; and
wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards a proximal end of said spool housing during a downstroke, at least a portion of said first slide valve blocks said outlet of said first housing vent so as to prevent said fluid within said first housing vent to communicate through said first internal valve space of said first slide valve and said first exhaust port.

12. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 11, wherein said spool housing further comprises a second housing vent;
wherein said second housing vent is proximal and adjacent to said first exhaust port and comprises an inlet and an outlet;
wherein said inlet of said second housing vent is in fluid communication with said proximal chamber and wherein said outlet of said second housing vent is in fluid communication with said supply chamber;
wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards said distal end of said spool housing during the upstroke, said outlet of said second housing vent is in fluid communication with said supply chamber, such that said proximal chamber is in fluid communication with said supply chamber; and
wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards said proximal end of said spool housing during the downstroke, said first internal valve space of said first slide valve aligns with said outlet of said second housing vent and said first exhaust port, so as to allow said fluid within said second housing vent and said proximal chamber to communicate through said first internal valve space of said first slide valve and said first exhaust port.
13. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 12, wherein said spool housing further comprises: a first fluid port, a second fluid port, and a second exhaust port;
wherein said second exhaust port is positioned proximally and adjacent to said first fluid port;
wherein said second fluid port is positioned proximally and adjacent to said second exhaust port;

wherein said first fluid port and said second fluid port are in fluid communication with said supply chamber;

wherein said spool assembly comprises a second slide valve coupled to the outer perimeter of said spool assembly;

wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards said distal end of said spool housing during said upstroke:

- (i) a second internal valve space of said second slide valve aligns with said first fluid port and said second exhaust port so as to allow said fluid within said first fluid port to communicate through said second internal valve space of said second slide valve and to said second exhaust port; and
- (ii) said second fluid port is in fluid communication with said supply chamber, so as to prevent said fluid in said second fluid port to communicate through said second internal valve space and said second exhaust port;

wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards said proximal end of said spool housing during said downstroke:

- (i) said second internal valve space of said second slide valve aligns with said second fluid port and said second exhaust port so as to allow said fluid within said second fluid port to communicate through said second internal valve space of said second slide valve and to said second exhaust port; and
- (ii) said first fluid port is in fluid communication with said supply chamber, so as to prevent said fluid in said first fluid port to communicate through said second internal valve space and said second exhaust port.

14. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 13, wherein said spool assembly comprises a center bore;

wherein said center bore of said spool assembly is in fluid communication with said distal chamber;

wherein, when a pressurized fluid travels from said center bore and towards said distal chamber, said spool assembly performs said downstroke.

15. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 14, further comprising:
a piston housing;
a piston; and

a valve stem;
 wherein said piston housing comprises a top flange, a bottom flange, and a cylindrical side wall;
 wherein said top flange, said bottom flange, and said cylindrical side wall form a piston chamber;
 wherein said piston is reciprocally movable within said piston chamber and divides said piston chamber into a first cylindrical space and a second cylindrical space;
 wherein a proximal portion of said valve stem is connected to said piston;
 wherein a distal portion of said valve stem is configured to slideably and reciprocally engage within said center bore of said spool assembly;
 wherein said valve stem comprises a valve stem bore and at least one passage;
 wherein said valve stem bore and said at least one passage are in fluid communication with said center bore of said spool assembly, such that said valve stem bore and said at least one passage of said valve stem are in fluid communication with said distal chamber;
 wherein said top flange comprises a valve stem opening and a fourth seal disposed within said valve stem opening;
 wherein said fourth seal is slideably engaged with said valve stem; and
 wherein, when said at least one passage is exposed within said first cylindrical space after said piston moves towards said bottom flange and shifts said at least one passage of said valve stem within said first cylindrical space, said valve stem bore of said valve stem is in fluid communication with said first cylindrical space.

16. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 15, further comprising:
 - a first fluid conduit; and
 - a second fluid conduit;
 - wherein said first fluid conduit is coupled between said first fluid port and said bottom flange of said piston housing
 - wherein said first fluid conduit allows said first fluid port to be in fluid communication with said first cylindrical space;
 - wherein said second fluid conduit is coupled between said second fluid port and said top flange of said piston housing; and

wherein said second fluid conduit allows said second fluid port to be in fluid communication with said second cylindrical space.

17. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 16, wherein said spool assembly comprises a second spool vent having an inlet and an outlet;
wherein the inlet of said second spool vent is in fluid communication with said distal chamber;
wherein said outlet of said second spool vent is located at the outer perimeter of said spool assembly;
wherein the outlet of said second spool vent is configured to be in fluid communication with said first housing vent when said spool assembly reciprocates within said spool housing and aligns said outlet of said second spool vent within said intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within said distal chamber is allowed to escape said distal chamber and into said intermediate chamber to said first housing vent via said second spool vent.
18. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 17, wherein said spool assembly comprises a second spool vent having an inlet and an outlet;
wherein the inlet of said second spool vent is in fluid communication with said distal chamber;
wherein the outlet of said second spool vent is located at an outer perimeter of said spool assembly; and
wherein the outlet of said second spool vent is configured to be in fluid communication with said first housing vent when said spool assembly reciprocates within said spool housing and aligns said outlet of said first spool vent within said intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within said distal chamber is allowed to escape said distal chamber and into said intermediate chamber to said first housing vent via said second spool vent.
19. A reciprocating drive mechanism, comprising:
a spool assembly;
a spool housing;
a piston housing;
a piston;

a valve stem;

a first fluid conduit; and

a second fluid conduit;

wherein said spool assembly comprises: a first seal, a second seal, a third seal, a first spool vent and first slide valve;

wherein said spool housing comprises: a spool chamber, a first exhaust port, a second exhaust port, a first fluid port, and a second fluid port;

wherein said spool assembly is disposed in and reciprocally movable within said spool chamber;

wherein, when said spool assembly is disposed within said spool chamber of said spool housing, said first seal, said second seal, and said third seal divide said spool chamber into a distal chamber, an intermediate chamber, a supply chamber, and a proximal chamber, respectively, such that:

- (i) said first seal divides said spool chamber into said distal chamber and said intermediate chamber;
- (ii) said second seal divides said spool chamber into said intermediate chamber and said supply chamber; and
- (iii) said third seal divides said spool chamber into said supply chamber and said proximal chamber;

wherein said first spool vent comprises an inlet and an outlet;

wherein said inlet of said first spool vent is in fluid communication with said distal chamber;

wherein said outlet of said first spool vent is located at an outer perimeter of said spool assembly and is in fluid communication with said intermediate chamber;

wherein said spool housing comprises a first housing vent having an inlet and an outlet;

wherein the inlet of said first housing vent is in fluid communication with said intermediate chamber when said inlet of said first housing vent aligns with said intermediate chamber;

wherein said outlet of said first housing vent is in fluid communication with said supply chamber;

wherein said first spool vent is in fluid communication with said first housing vent when said spool assembly reciprocates within said spool housing and aligns said inlet of said first housing vent within said intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within said distal chamber is allowed to escape said distal chamber, through said spool vent, through said intermediate chamber, and to said first housing vent;

wherein said first exhaust port is positioned proximally and adjacent to said outlet of said first housing vent;

wherein said second housing vent is proximal and adjacent to said first exhaust port and comprises an inlet and an outlet;

wherein said inlet of said second housing vent is in fluid communication with said proximal chamber and wherein said outlet of said second housing vent is in fluid communication with said supply chamber;

wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards a distal end of said spool housing during an upstroke:

- (i) said outlet of said second housing vent is in fluid communication with said supply chamber, such that said proximal chamber is in fluid communication with said supply chamber; and
- (ii) a first internal valve space of said first slide valve aligns with the outlet of said first housing vent and said first exhaust port so as to allow said fluid within said first housing vent to communicate through said internal valve space of said first slide valve and said first exhaust port;

wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards a proximal end of said spool housing during a downstroke:

- (i) said first internal valve space of said first slide valve aligns with said outlet of said second housing vent and said first exhaust port, so as to allow said fluid within said second housing vent and said proximal chamber to communicate through said first internal valve space of said first slide valve and said first exhaust port; and
- (ii) at least a portion of said first slide valve blocks said outlet of said first housing vent so as to prevent said fluid within said first housing vent to

communicate through said first internal valve space of said first slide valve and said first exhaust port;

wherein said second exhaust port is positioned proximally and adjacent to said first fluid port;

wherein said second fluid port is positioned proximally and adjacent to said second exhaust port;

wherein said first fluid port and said second fluid port are in fluid communication with said supply chamber;

wherein said spool assembly comprises a second slide valve coupled to an outer perimeter of said spool assembly;

wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards said distal end of said spool housing during said upstroke:

- (i) a second internal valve space of said second slide valve aligns with said first fluid port and said second exhaust port so as to allow said fluid within said first fluid port to communicate through said second internal valve space of said second slide valve and to said second exhaust port; and
- (ii) said second fluid port is in fluid communication with said supply chamber, so as to prevent said fluid in said second fluid port to communicate through said second internal valve space and said second exhaust port;

wherein, as said spool assembly moves towards said proximal end of said spool housing during said downstroke:

- (i) a second internal valve space of said second slide valve aligns with said second fluid port and said second exhaust port so as to allow said fluid within said second fluid port to communicate through said second internal valve space of said second slide valve and to said second exhaust port; and
- (ii) said first fluid port is in fluid communication with said supply chamber, so as to prevent said fluid in said first fluid port to communicate through said second internal valve space and said second exhaust port;

wherein said piston housing comprises a top flange, a bottom flange, and a cylindrical side wall;

wherein said top flange, said bottom flange, and said cylindrical side walls form a piston chamber;

wherein said piston is reciprocally movable within said piston chamber and divides said piston chamber into a first cylindrical space and a second cylindrical space;

wherein a proximal portion of said valve stem is connected to said piston;

wherein a distal portion of said valve stem is configured to slideably and reciprocally engage within a center bore of said spool assembly;

wherein said center bore of said spool assembly is in fluid communication with said distal chamber of said spool housing;

wherein, when a pressurized fluid travels from said center bore and towards said distal chamber, said spool assembly performs said downstroke;

wherein said valve stem comprises a valve stem bore and at least one passage;

wherein said valve stem bore and said at least one passage are in fluid communication with said center bore of said spool assembly, such that said valve stem bore and said at least one passage of said valve stem are in fluid communication with said distal chamber;

wherein said top flange comprises a valve stem opening and a fourth seal disposed within said valve stem opening;

wherein said fourth seal is slideably engaged with said valve stem;

wherein, when said at least one passage is exposed within said first cylindrical space after said piston moves towards said bottom flange and shifts said at least one passage of said valve stem within said first cylindrical space, said valve stem bore of said valve stem is in fluid communication with said first cylindrical space;

wherein said first fluid conduit is coupled between said first fluid port and said bottom flange of said piston housing;

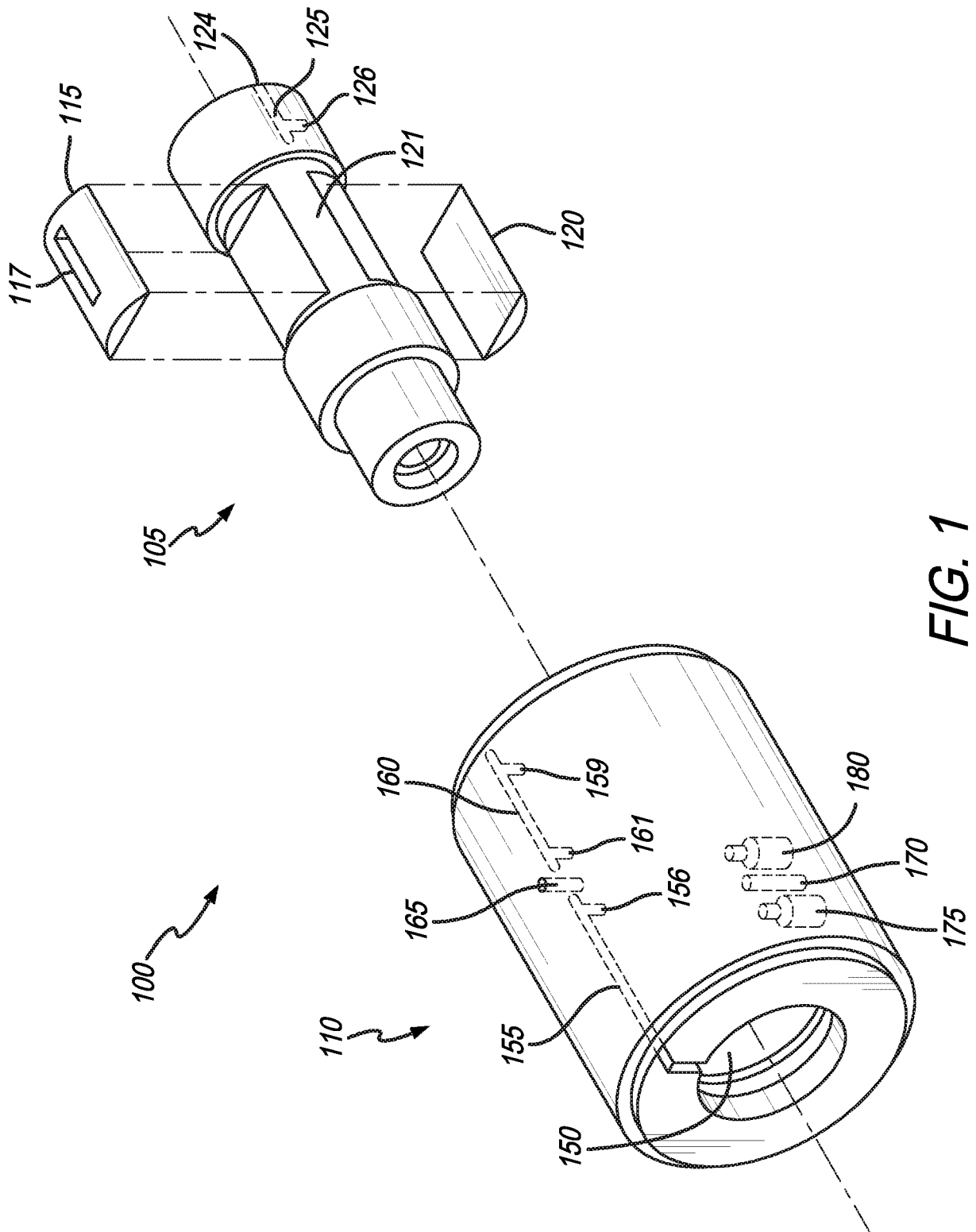
wherein said first fluid conduit allows said first fluid port to be in fluid communication with said first cylindrical space;

wherein said second fluid conduit is coupled between said second fluid port and said top flange of said piston housing; and

wherein said second fluid conduit allows said second fluid port to be in fluid communication with said second cylindrical space.

20. The reciprocating drive mechanism of Claim 19, wherein said spool assembly comprises a second spool vent having an inlet and an outlet;
wherein the inlet of said second spool vent is in fluid communication with said distal chamber;
wherein the outlet of said second spool vent is located at an outer perimeter of said spool assembly and is in fluid communication with said intermediate chamber; and
wherein the outlet of said second spool vent is configured to be in fluid communication with said first housing vent when said spool assembly reciprocates within said spool housing and aligns said inlet of said first housing vent within said intermediate chamber, such that a fluid trapped within said distal chamber is allowed to escape said distal chamber and into said intermediate chamber to said first housing vent via said second spool vent.

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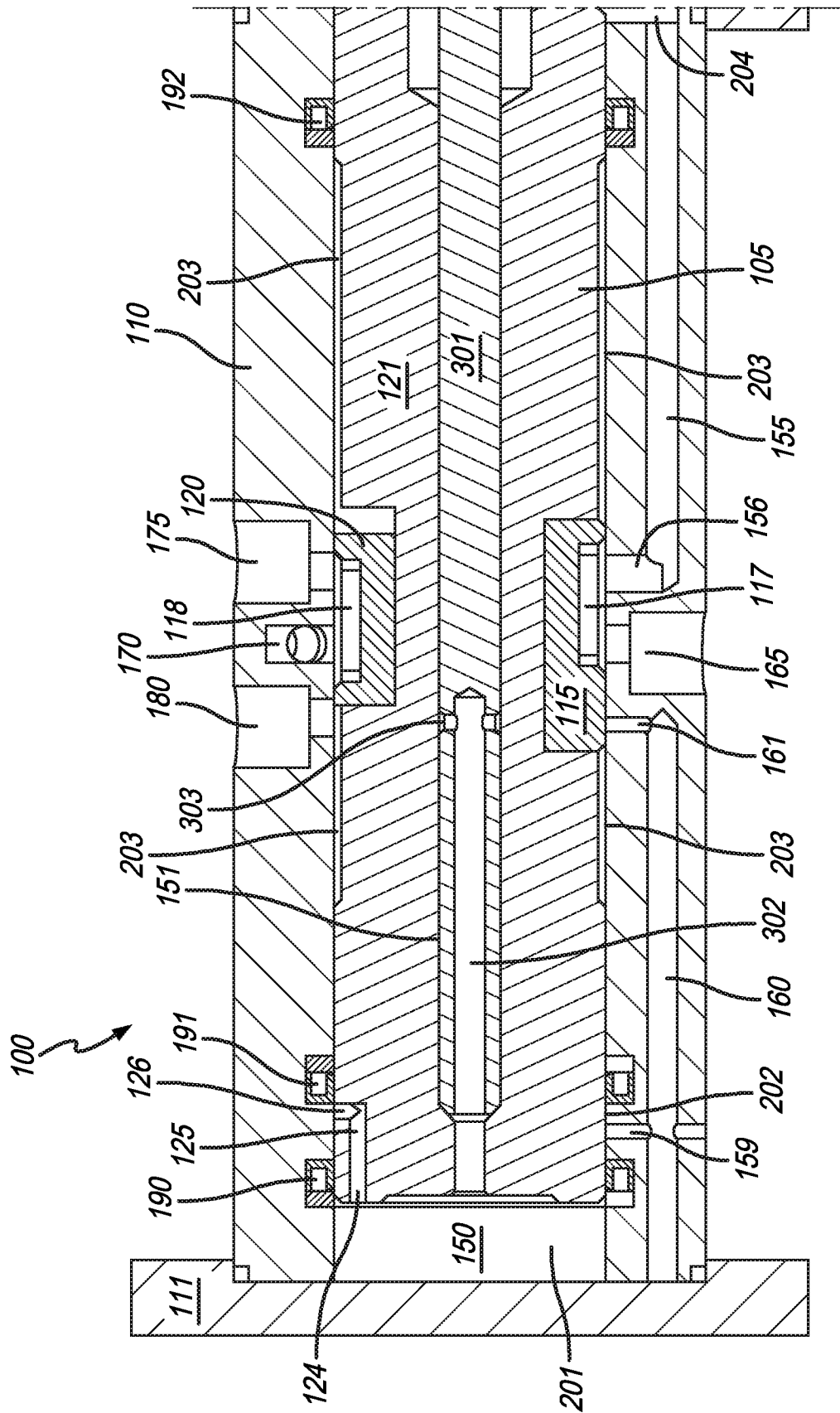


FIG. 2A

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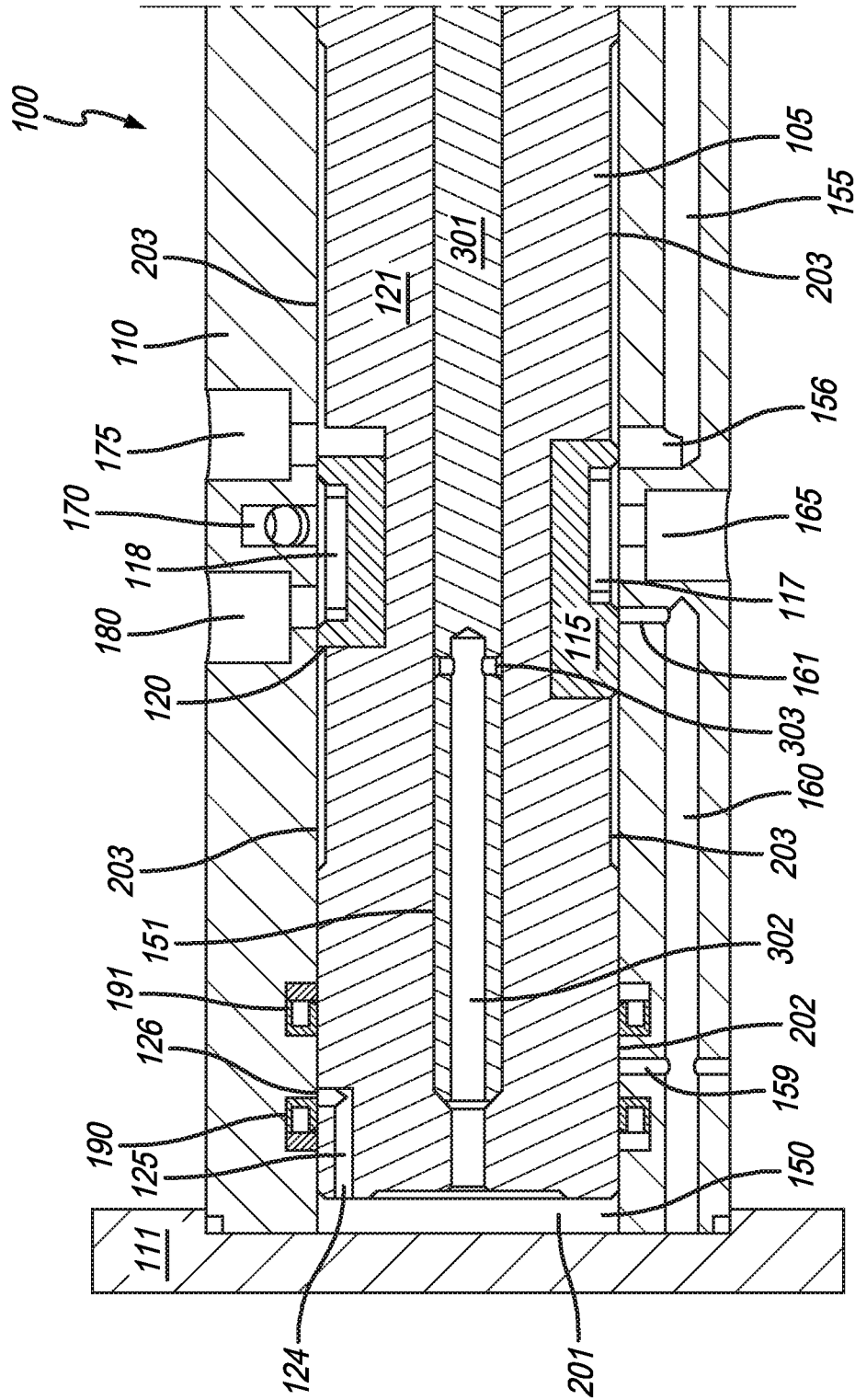
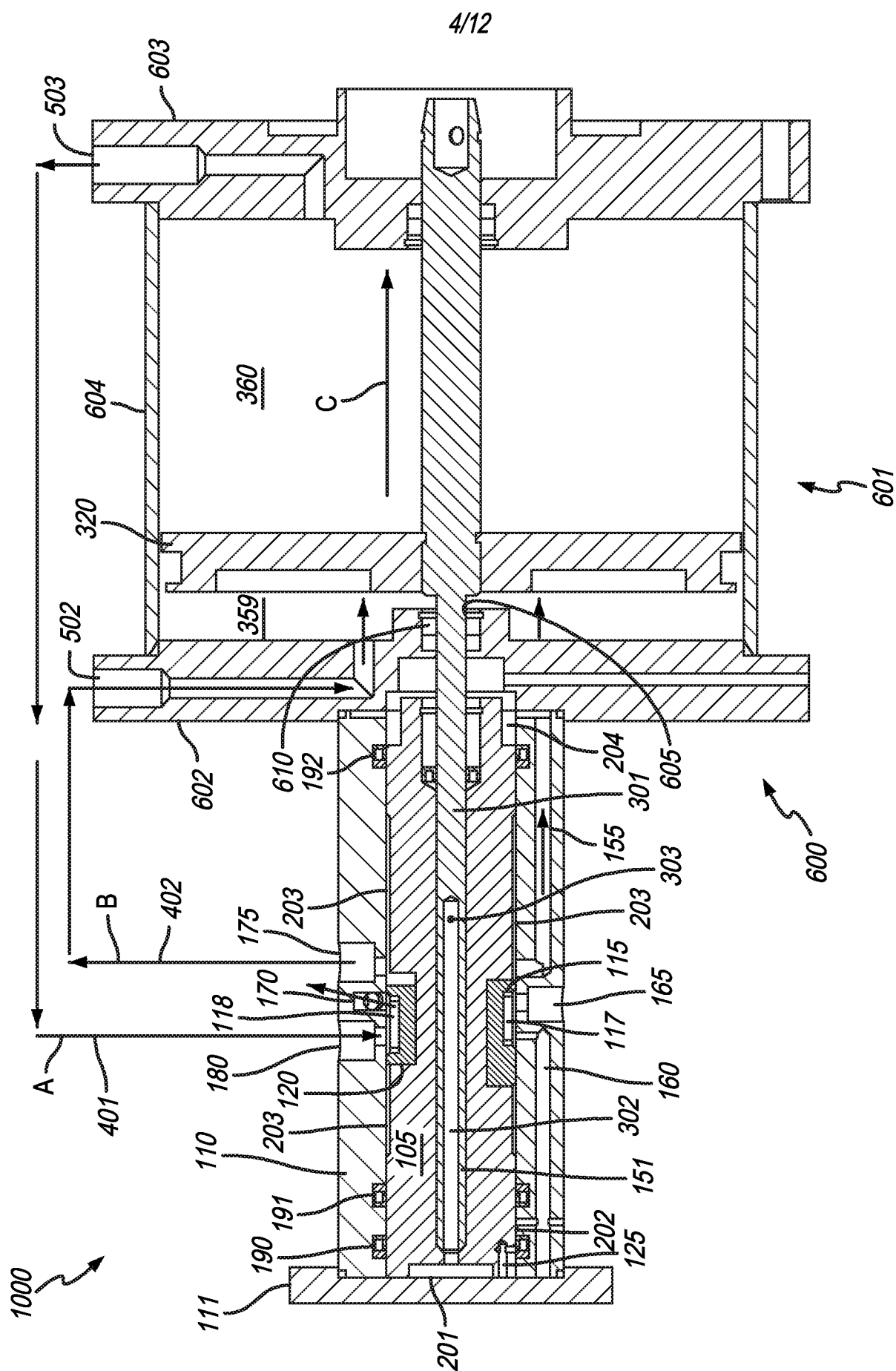


FIG. 2B



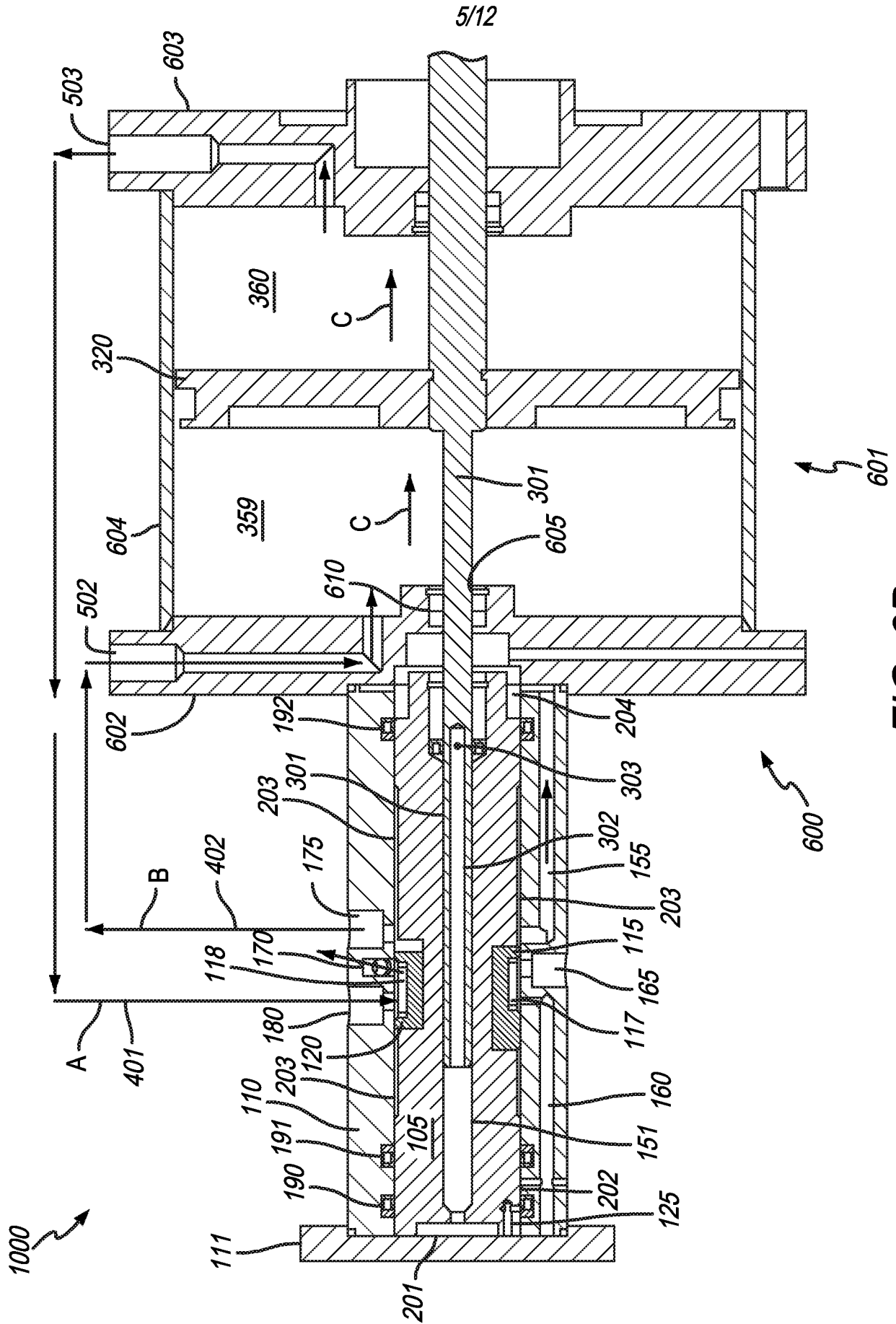


FIG. 3B

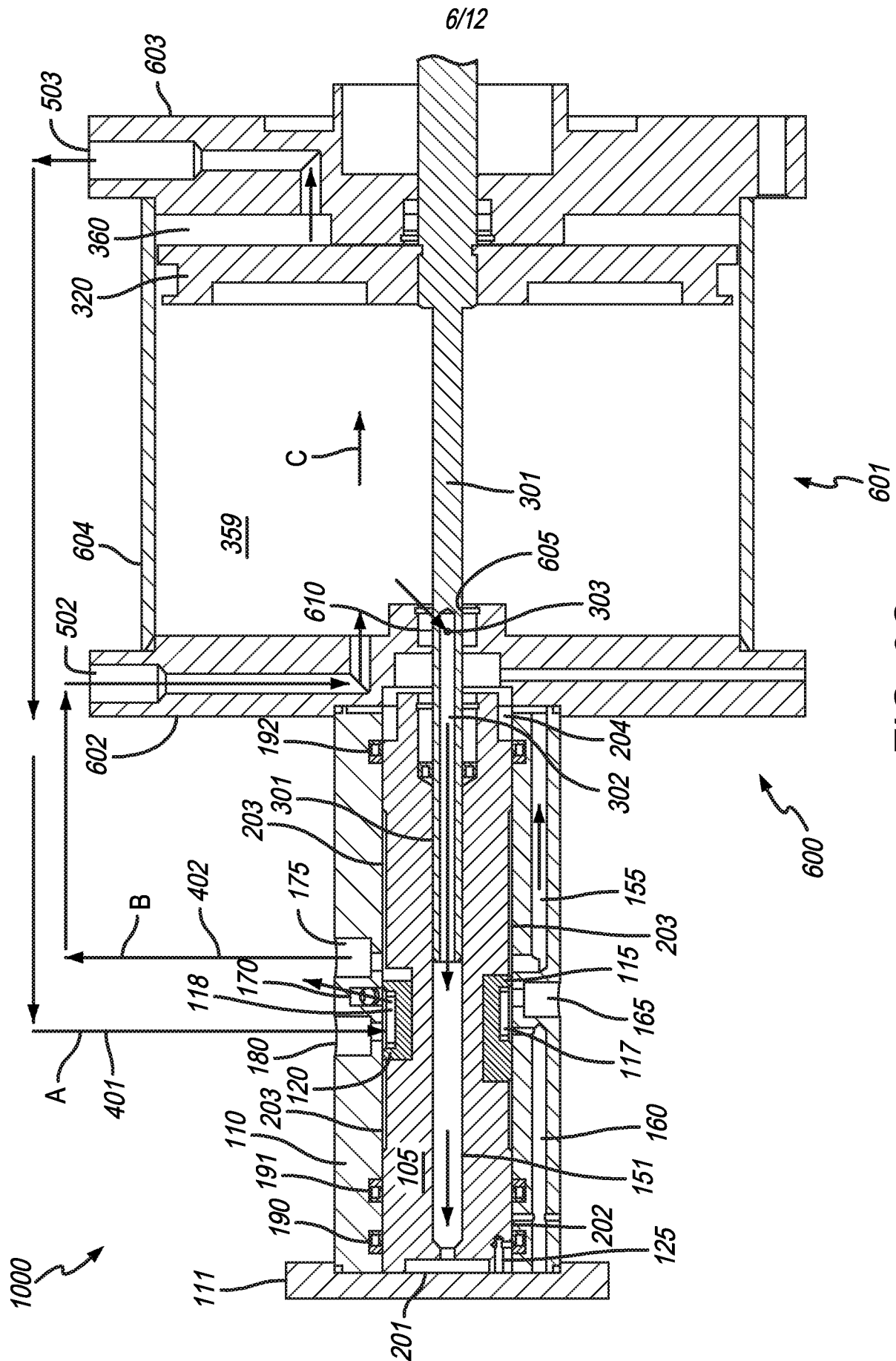
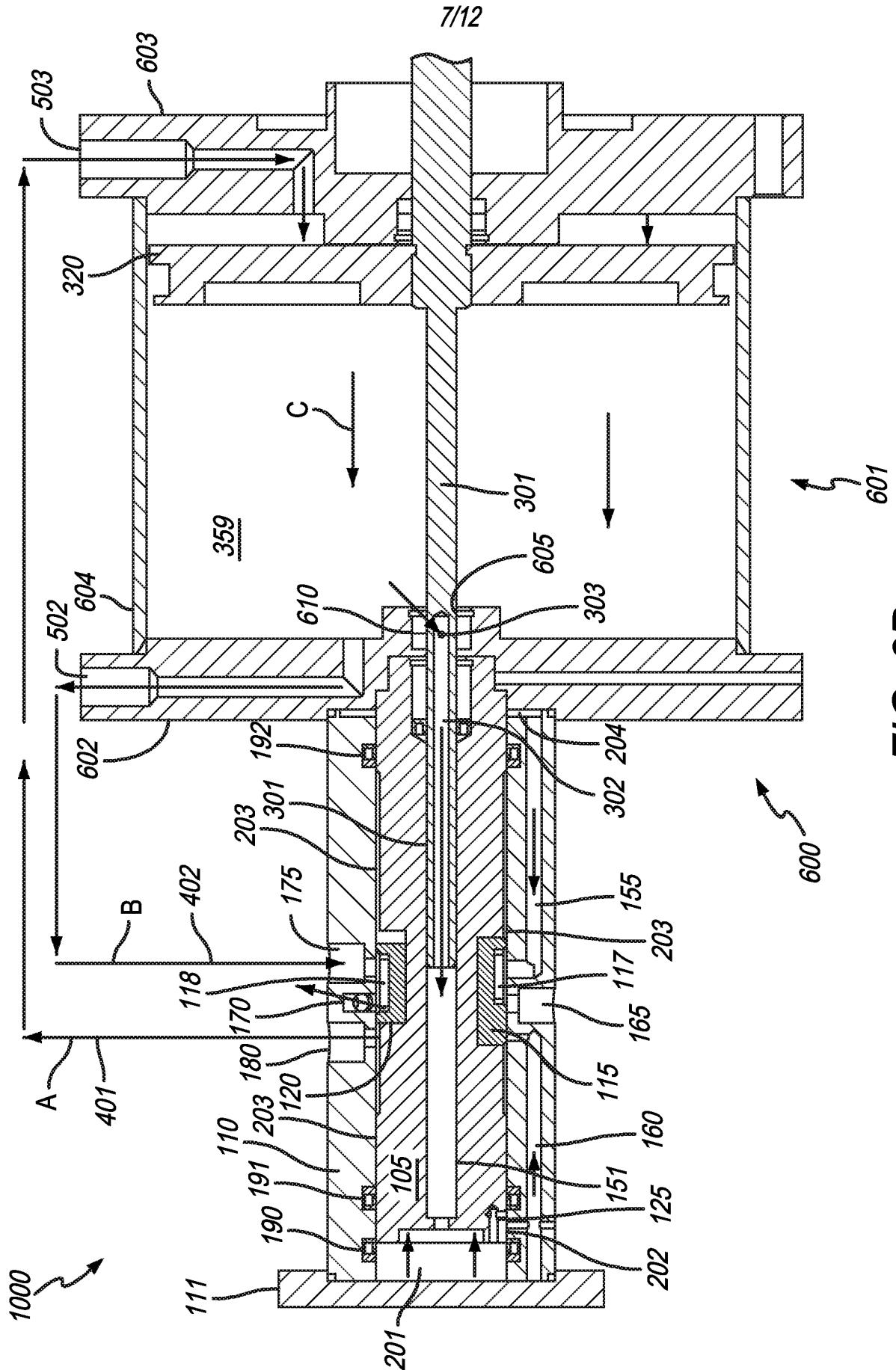


FIG. 3C



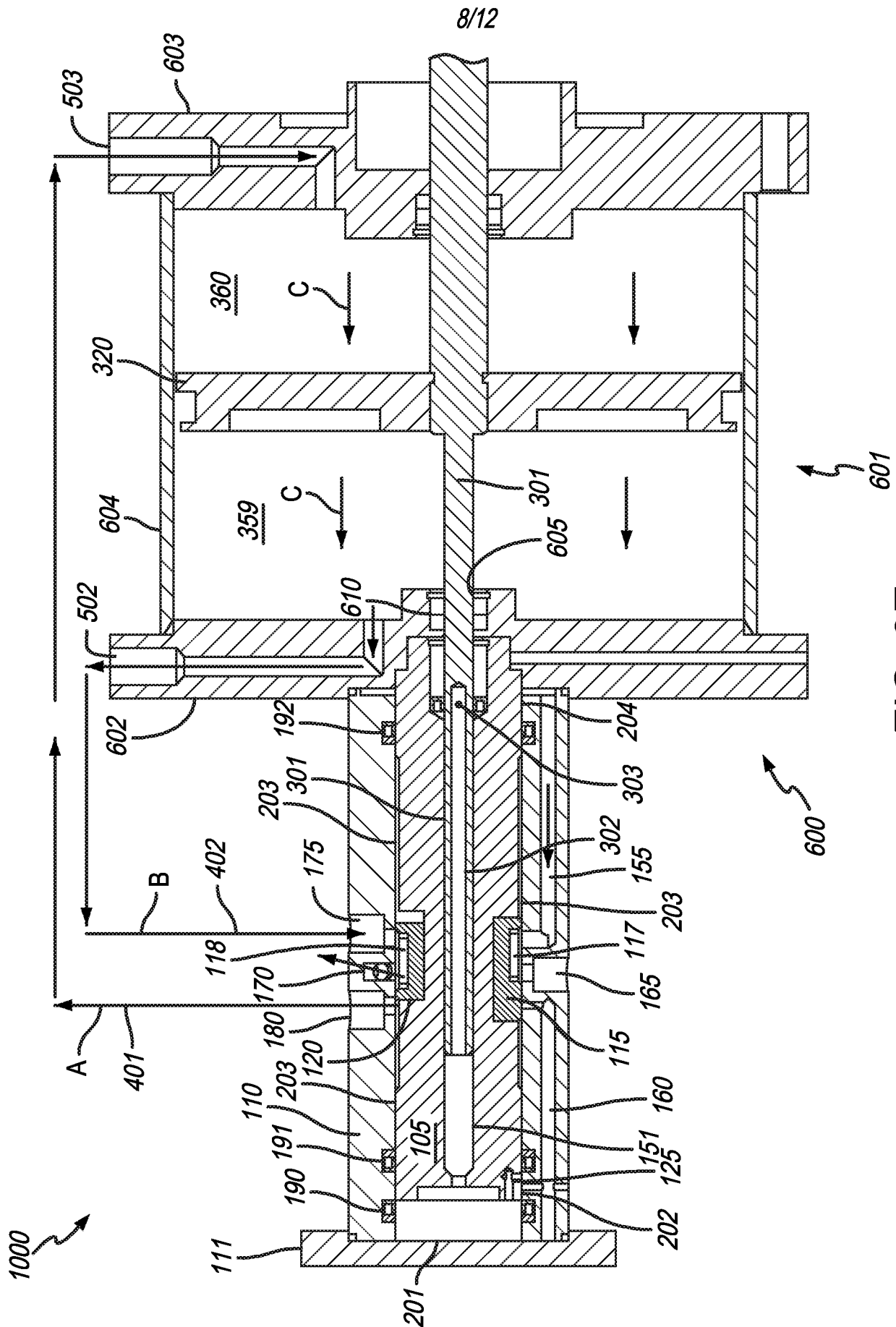
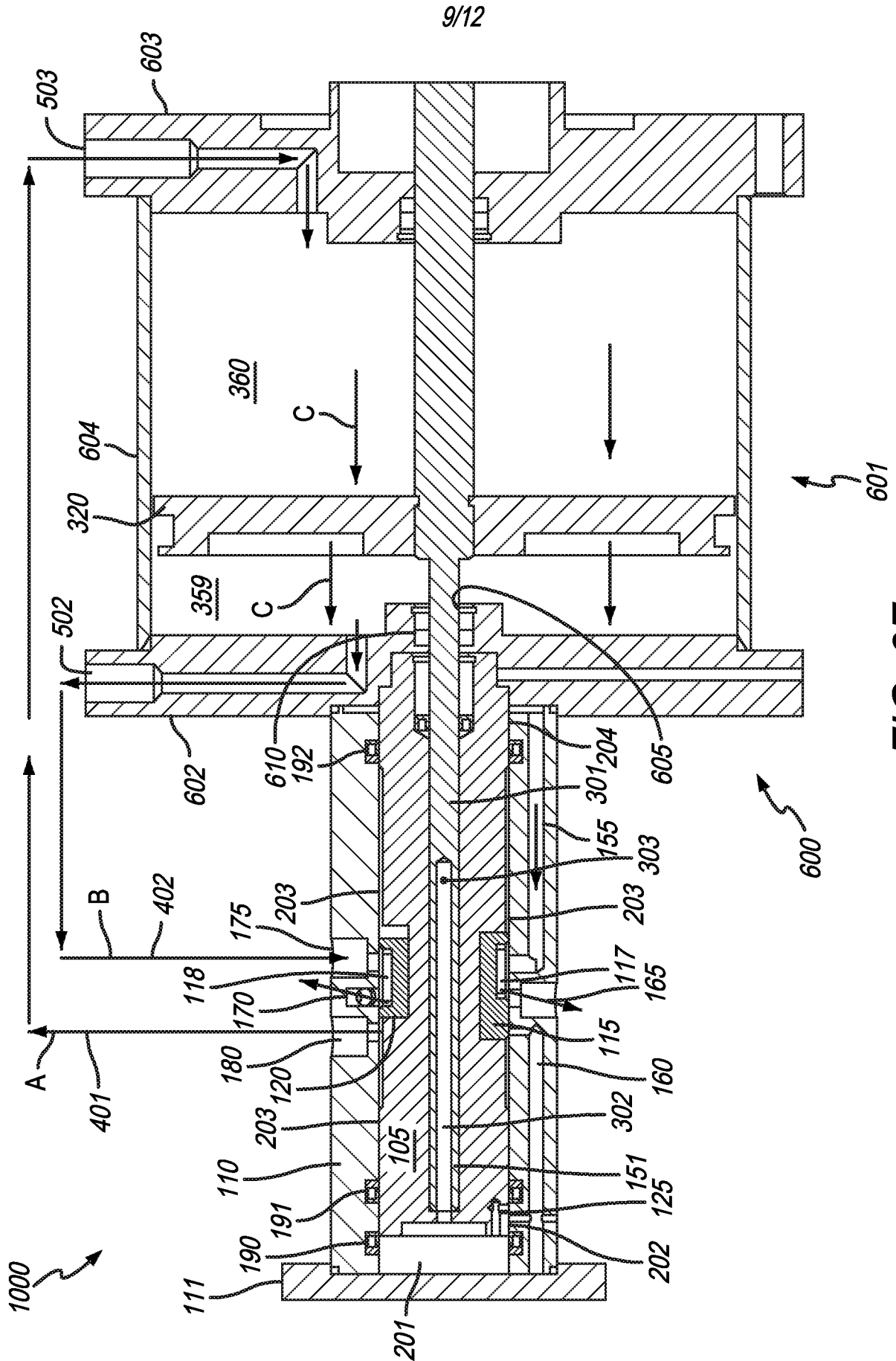
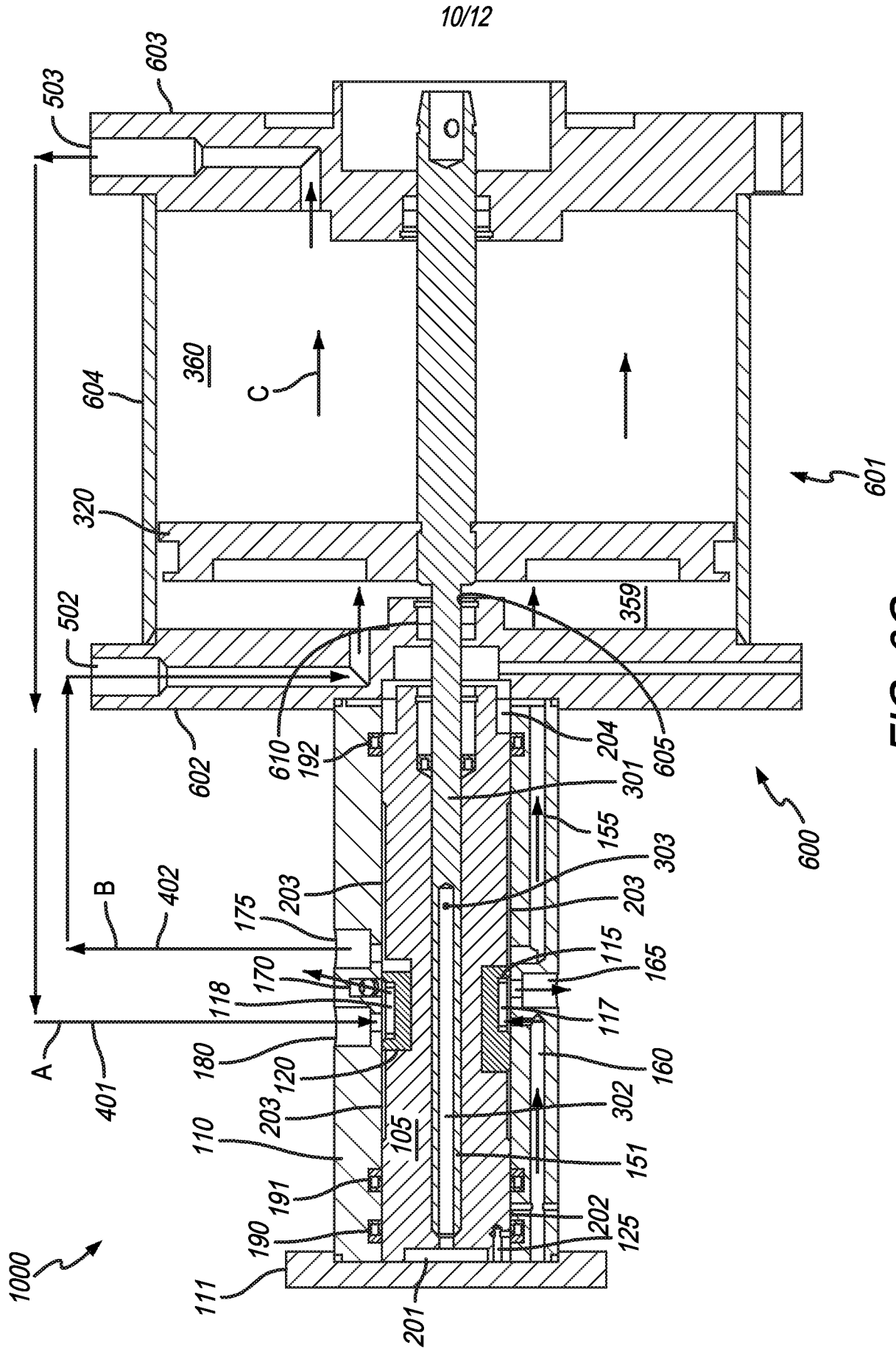


FIG. 3E





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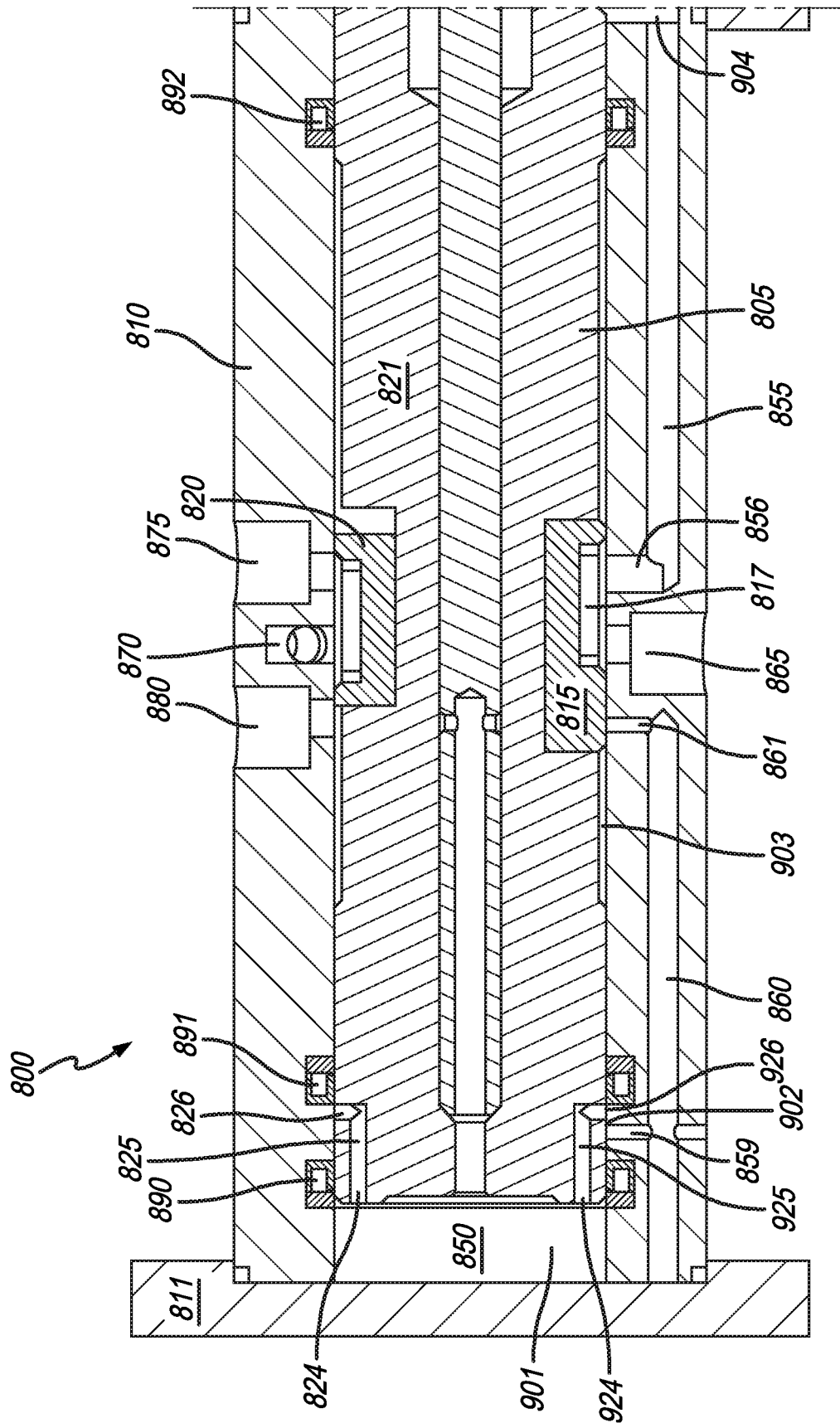


FIG. 4

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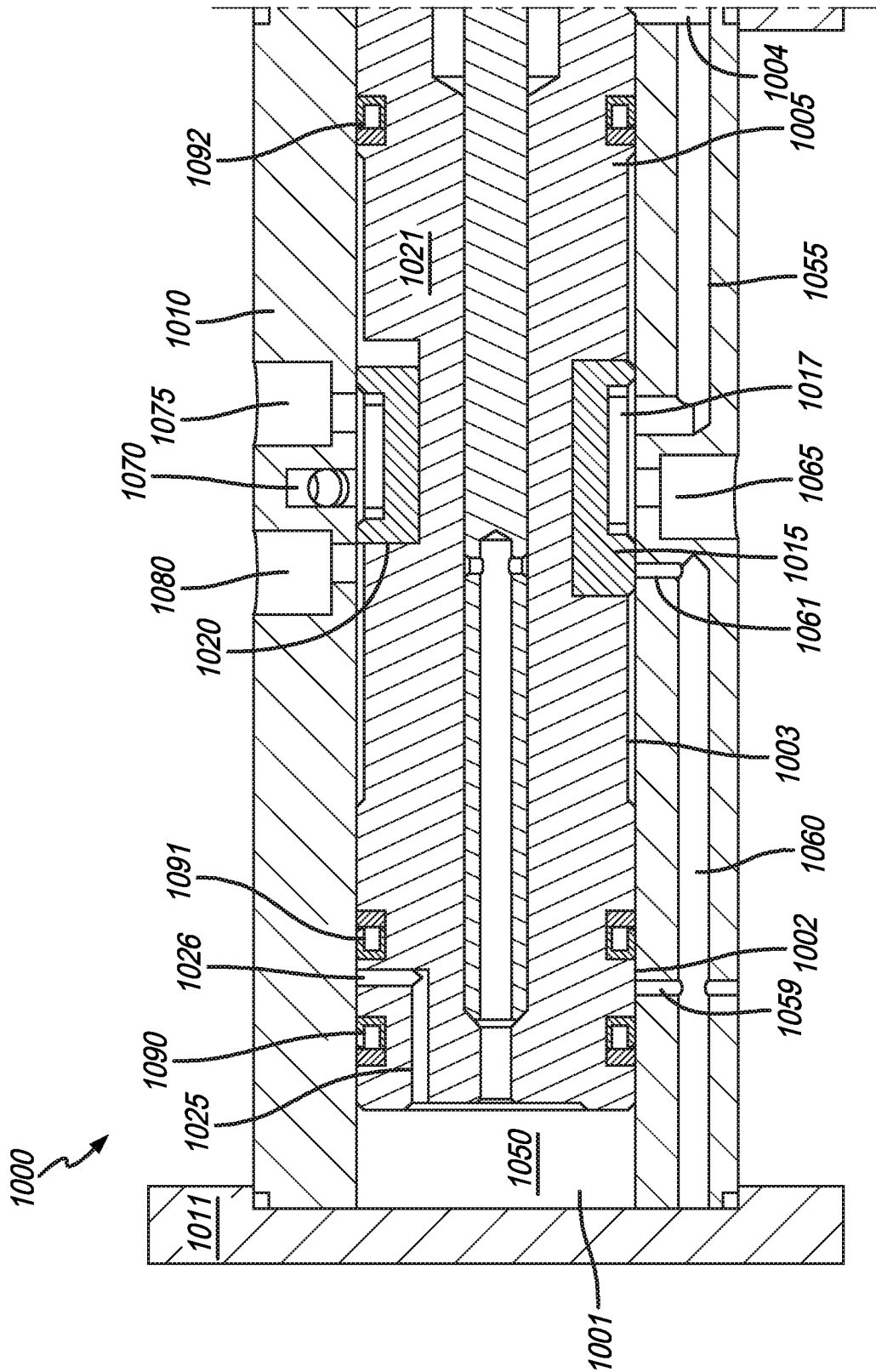


FIG. 5

