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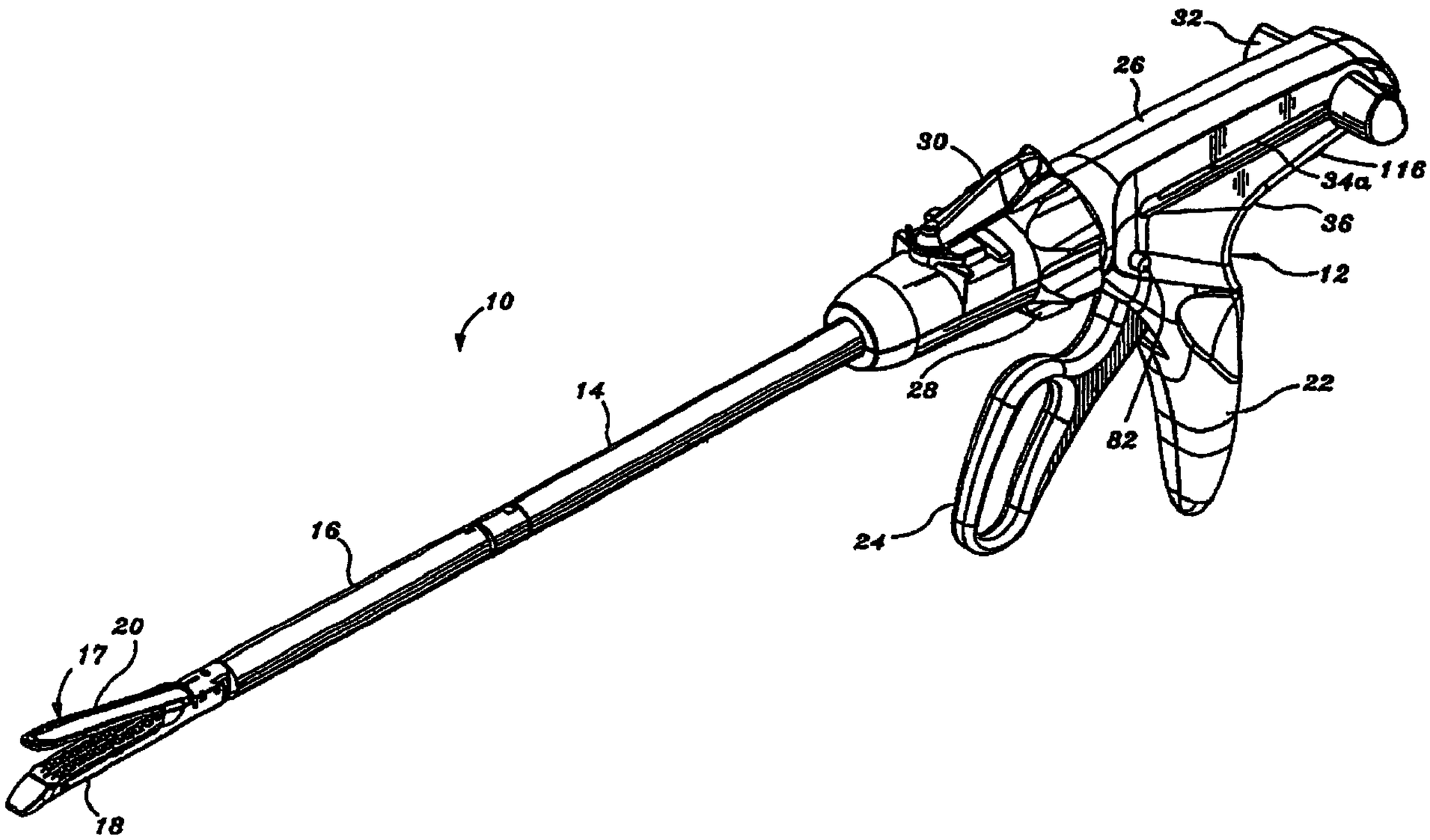

(57) Abrégé/Abstract:
An articulation mechanism for use with a surgical apparatus having an articulating tool assembly is described. The articulation mechanism includes a rotatable shaft which is fixedly secured to a disk defining a spiral groove or slot. A linearly movable translation member is provided and includes a pin which is received within the spiral groove such that rotation of the disk effects linear translation of the translation member. The configuration of the spiral groove can be selected to provide any desired ratio of angular rotation of the disk to linear advancement of the translation member. As such, the configuration of the spiral slot can be selected to provide a uniform rate of articulation of the tool assembly of the surgical apparatus or a variable rate of articulation.

ABSTRACT

An articulation mechanism for use with a surgical apparatus having an articulating tool assembly is described. The articulation mechanism includes a rotatable shaft which is fixedly secured to a disk defining a spiral groove or slot. A linearly movable translation member is provided and includes a pin which is received within the spiral groove such that rotation of the disk effects linear translation of the translation member. The configuration of the spiral groove can be selected to provide any desired ratio of angular rotation of the disk to linear advancement of the translation member. As such, the configuration of the spiral slot can be selected to provide a uniform rate of articulation of the tool assembly of the surgical apparatus or a variable rate of articulation.

SURGICAL STAPLING APPARATUS

BACKGROUND

1. Technical Field

This application relates to a surgical stapling apparatus, and more particularly, to an articulating mechanism for use with an endoscopic surgical stapling apparatus for sequentially applying a plurality of surgical fasteners to body tissue and optionally incising fastened tissue.

2. Background of Related Art

Surgical devices wherein tissue is first grasped or clamped between opposing jaw structure and then joined by surgical fasteners are well known in the art. In some instruments a knife is provided to cut the tissue which has been joined by the fasteners. The fasteners are typically in the form of surgical staples but two part polymeric fasteners can also be utilized.

Instruments for this purpose can include two elongated members which are respectively used to capture or clamp tissue. Typically, one of the members carries a staple cartridge which houses a plurality of staples arranged in at least two lateral rows while the other member has an anvil that defines a surface for forming the staple legs as the staples are driven from the staple cartridge. Generally, the stapling operation is effected by cam bars that travel longitudinally through the staple cartridge, with the cam bars acting upon staple pushers to sequentially eject the staples from the staple cartridge. A knife can travel between the staple rows to longitudinally cut and/or open the stapled tissue between the rows of staples. Such instruments are disclosed, for example, in U.S. Pat. No. 3,079,606 and U.S. Pat. No. 3,490,675.

A later stapler disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 3,499,591 applies a double row of staples on each side of the incision. This is accomplished by providing a disposable loading unit in which a cam member moves through an elongate guide path between two sets of staggered staple carrying grooves. Staple drive members are located within the grooves and are positioned in such a manner so as to be contacted by the longitudinally moving cam member to effect ejection of the staples from the staple cartridge of the disposable loading unit. Other examples of such staplers are disclosed in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,429,695 and 5,065,929.

Each of the instruments described above were designed for use in conventional surgical procedures wherein surgeons have direct manual access to the operative site. However, in endoscopic or laparoscopic procedures, surgery is performed through a small incision or through a narrow cannula inserted through small entrance wounds in the skin. In

order to address the specific needs of endoscopic and/or laparoscopic surgical procedures, endoscopic surgical stapling devices have been developed and are disclosed in, for example, U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,040,715 (Green, et al.); 5,307,976 (Olson, et al.); 5,312,023 (Green, et al.); 5,318,221 (Green, et al.); 5,326,013 (Green, et al.); and 5,332,142 (Robinson, et al.).

U.S. Surgical, the assignee of the present application, has manufactured and marketed endoscopic stapling instruments, such as the Multifire ENDO GIA ^{TM} 30 instrument, for several years. These instruments have provided significant clinical benefits. Nonetheless, improvements are possible, for example, by reducing the cost and complexity of manufacture.

Current laparoscopic linear stapling devices are configured to operate with disposable loading units and/or staple cartridges of only one size. For example, individual linear staplers are presently available for applying parallel rows of staples measuring 30mm, 45mm and 60mm in length. Thus, during a normal operation, a surgeon may be required to utilize several different stapling instruments to perform a single laparoscopic surgical procedure. Such practices increase the time, complexity and overall costs associated with laparoscopic surgical procedures. In addition, costs are greater in designing and manufacturing multiple stapler sizes, as opposed to creating a single, multipurpose stapler.

It would be extremely beneficial to provide a surgical device for use during laparoscopic and/or endoscopic surgical procedures that can be employed with several different sized disposable loading units to reduce the overall costs associated with such procedures. It would also be particularly beneficial if the device could perform multiple tasks, using disposable loading units of varying size and of varying purpose, such as, for example, to staple, clip, cut and/or articulate.

In making improvements or modifications to the current instruments, it would be highly desirable not to sacrifice any of the important benefits of the MULTIFIRE ENDO GIA ^{TM} 30 instrument as compared to other commercially available products. For example, any improvement should advantageously provide a fresh knife blade for each firing of the instrument and ensure that the disposable loading unit is securely retained in the stapling instrument unless and until the operating team chooses to remove it. It is desirable for the end effector to be capable of articulating with respect to the elongated shaft of the instrument.

SUMMARY

In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, there is provided an articulation mechanism comprising: a housing; a rotatable shaft having an inner end and an outer end, the shaft extending through the housing; an articulation member mounted on the outer end of the shaft; a rotatable plate, positioned within the housing, and affixed to the inner end of the shaft, the rotatable plate defining a spiral slot; a translation member mounted for longitudinal movement within the housing; and a pin assembly affixed to the translation member and extending into the spiral slot such that rotation of the rotatable plate effects longitudinal movement of the translation member within the housing.

In accordance with the present disclosure an articulation mechanism is provided including a housing defining a receptacle. The receptacle includes a throughbore. A main shaft is rotatably supported in the receptacle and includes a base portion and a cylindrical body

portion. The base portion has an upper support surface and a bottom surface having a cam member extending from the bottom surface through the throughbore of the housing. A lower clutch is non-rotatably supported in the receptacle of the housing. The lower clutch has an outer rim portion and an inner annular serrated portion. The lower clutch defines a throughbore dimensioned to receive the cylindrical body portion of the main shaft. An upper clutch is rotatably fixed to the main shaft and has a base portion having a bottom surface having at least one projection. The upper clutch has a throughbore dimensioned to receive the cylindrical body of the main shaft and is positioned about the cylindrical body portion of the main shaft such that the bottom surface of the upper clutch is in juxtaposed alignment with the annular serrated portion of the lower clutch. In one embodiment, a cover is positioned over the receptacle of the housing. The cover encloses the main shaft, the lower clutch and the upper clutch within the receptacle. The cover defines a throughbore dimensioned to allow passage of the upper clutch. A biasing member is positioned between the cover and the upper clutch. The biasing member urges the bottom surface of the upper clutch into engagement with the serrated portion of the lower clutch. An articulation lever is rotatably fixed to the upper clutch and is rotatable to effect rotation of the upper clutch and the main shaft. A translation member includes a slot dimensioned to receive the cam member which extends from the bottom surface of the base portion of the main shaft such that rotation of the main shaft effects linear movement of the translation member. The at least one projection of the upper clutch and the annular serrated portion of the lower shaft are maintained in releasable engagement to releasably retain the articulation member in a fixed orientation.

In accordance with the present disclosure an articulation mechanism is provided including a housing and a shaft having an inner end and an outer end. The shaft is rotatably mounted through the housing. An articulation member is mounted on the outer end of the shaft and a rotatable plate, positioned within the housing, is affixed to the inner end of the shaft. The rotatable plate defines a spiral groove or slot formed therein. A translation member is mounted for longitudinal movement within the housing. A pin assembly is affixed to the translation member and extends into the spiral groove such that rotation of the rotatable plate effects longitudinal movement of the translation member within the housing. In a specific embodiment, the spiral groove is formed in the shape of an Archimedes spiral. The Archimedes spiral acts as a cam ensuring that uniform rotation of the rotatable plate effects uniform longitudinal translation of the translation member. Alternatively, the configuration of the spiral groove can be selected to provide any desired ratio of angular rotation of the articulation member (or disk) to linear movement of the translation member. For example, the configuration of the spiral groove may

be selected to provide greater linear advancement of the translation member and thus, faster articulation of the tool assembly, near the neutral position of the articulation member, and reduced linear advancement of the translation member, and thus slower articulation of the tool assembly, further from the neutral position of the articulation member. As used herein, the neutral position of the articulation member is the position of the articulation member when the tool assembly is in a non-articulated position in relation to the elongated body of the apparatus. See FIG. 64.

In certain embodiments, the plate is a disk having a plurality of teeth on an outer periphery of the disk. The housing includes a spring loaded slide, engageable with the teeth on the disk, to provide audible and tactile indications of the degree of rotation of the disk. The disk further includes a recess and the housing includes a spring loaded plunger, engageable within the recess, to provide an indication of a neutral position of the translation member within the housing. The translation member includes structure for engagement with articulation structure of a surgical instrument.

In a specific embodiment, the housing is a rotatable member configured for use with a surgical instrument. The housing includes a receptacle configured to receive the disk. The housing includes a mechanism cover, affixed to the receptacle, and supporting the rotatable shaft.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Various preferred embodiments are described herein with reference to the drawings:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of one preferred embodiment of the presently disclosed surgical stapling apparatus;

FIG. 2 is a top view of the surgical apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a side view of the surgical apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is a perspective view with parts separated of the handle assembly of the surgical apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional view of a portion of the firing lockout mechanism shown in FIG. 4;

FIG. 6 is a perspective of the slide plate of the anti-reverse clutch mechanism of the surgical apparatus;

FIG. 7 is an enlarged perspective view of the anti- reverse clutch mechanism shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 8 is a side cross-sectional view of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1 in the non-actuated position with the disposable loading unit removed;

FIG. 9 is a perspective view with parts separated of the rotation member, the articulation mechanism, and the elongated body of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 10 is an enlarged view of the indicated area of detail shown in FIG. 8;

FIG. 10a is a perspective view of the translation member of the articulating mechanism and the proximal end of the elongated body of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 10b is an enlarged cross-sectional view of the indicated area of detail of FIG. 8;

FIG. 10c is a cross-sectional view along section line 10c-10c of FIG. 8;

FIG. 11 is a perspective view of the cam member of the articulation mechanism of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 12 is a top view of the cam member of the articulation mechanism of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 12a is a perspective view of a non-articulating disposable loading unit usable with the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 12b is a perspective view of the preferred articulating disposable loading unit of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 13 is a cross-sectional view taken along section line 13-13 of FIG. 10;

FIG. 14 is a cross-sectional view taken along section line 14-14 of FIG. 10;

FIG. 15 is a cross-sectional view taken along section line 15-15 of FIG. 10;

FIG. 16 is an enlarged view of the indicated area of detail shown in FIG. 8;

FIG. 17 is a side perspective view of the blocking plate of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 18 is a top perspective view of the blocking plate of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 19 is a perspective view of a disposable loading unit usable with the surgical stapling apparatus of FIG. 1;

FIG. 20 is another perspective view of a disposable loading unit usable with the surgical stapling apparatus of FIG. 1;

FIG. 21 is a perspective view of the tool assembly of the surgical stapling apparatus of FIG. 1 with parts separated;

FIG. 22 is an enlarged perspective view of the distal end of the anvil assembly showing a plurality of staple deforming cavities;

FIG. 23 is an enlarged perspective view of the distal end of the staple cartridge of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 24 is a side cross-sectional view taken along section line 24-24 of FIG. 23;

FIG. 25 is a bottom perspective view of the staple cartridge shown in FIG. 21;

FIG. 26 is an enlarged perspective view of the actuation sled, the pushers and the fasteners shown in FIG. 21;

FIG. 27 is an enlarged perspective view with parts separated of the proximal housing portion and mounting assembly of the disposable loading unit shown in FIG. 19;

FIG. 28 is an enlarged perspective view of the mounting assembly of the disposable loading unit shown in FIG. 19 mounted to a distal end portion of the proximal housing portion;

FIG. 29 is an enlarged perspective view of the proximal housing portion and the mounting assembly of the disposable loading unit shown in FIG. 19 with the upper housing half removed;

FIG. 30 is a perspective view of the proximal housing portion and the mounting assembly of the disposable loading unit shown in FIG. 19 with the upper housing half removed;

FIG. 31 is a perspective view with parts separated of the axial drive assembly;

FIG. 32 is an enlarged perspective view of the axial drive assembly shown in FIG. 31;

FIG. 33 is an enlarged perspective view of the proximal end of the axial drive assembly shown in FIG. 31 including the locking device;

FIG. 34 is an enlarged perspective view of the distal end of the axial drive assembly shown in FIG. 31;

FIG. 35 is an enlarged perspective view of the distal end of the elongated body of the stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 36 is an enlarged perspective view of the locking device shown in FIG. 33;

FIG. 37 is an enlarged perspective view of a lower housing half of the proximal housing portion of the disposable loading unit shown in FIG. 27;

FIG. 38 is a side cross-sectional view of the disposable loading unit shown in FIG. 20;

FIG. 39 is an enlarged view of the indicated area of detail shown in FIG. 38;

FIG. 40 is a perspective view of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1 with the disposable loading unit of FIG. 19 detached from the elongated body;

FIG. 41 is an enlarged perspective view of the disposable loading unit of FIG. 19 during attachment to the elongated body of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 42 is another enlarged perspective view of the disposable loading unit of FIG. 19 during attachment to the elongated body of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 43 is a cross-sectional view taken along section line 43-43 of FIG. 41;

FIG. 43a is a side cross-sectional view of the rotation knob, articulation mechanism, and sensing mechanism during insertion of a disposable loading unit into the elongated body of the surgical stapling apparatus;

FIG. 44 is a cross-sectional view taken along section line 44-44 of FIG. 42;

FIG. 45 is a side cross-sectional view of the distal end of the disposable loading unit of FIG. 1 with tissue positioned between the anvil and clamp assemblies;

FIG. 46 is a side cross-sectional view of the handle assembly with the movable handle in an actuated position;

FIG. 47 is an enlarged view of the indicated area of detail shown in FIG. 46;

FIG. 48 is a cross-sectional view of the proximal end of the disposable loading unit of FIG. 19 and the distal end of the elongated body of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1 with the control rod in a partially advanced position;

FIG. 49 is a cross-sectional view of the tool assembly of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1 positioned about tissue in the clamped position;

FIG. 50 is a cross-sectional view of the handle assembly of the stapling apparatus of FIG. 1 during the clamping stroke of the apparatus;

FIG. 51 is a side cross-sectional view of the distal end of the tool assembly of the stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1 during firing of the apparatus;

FIG. 52 is a side cross-sectional view of the distal end of the tool assembly of the stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1 after firing of the apparatus;

FIG. 53 is a side cross-sectional view of the handle assembly of the apparatus during retraction of the actuation shaft;

FIG. 54 is a side cross-sectional view of the handle assembly of the stapling apparatus during actuation of the emergency release button;

FIG. 55 is a top view of the articulation mechanism of the surgical stapling apparatus;

FIG. 56 is a side cross-sectional view of the articulation mechanism and rotation member of the surgical stapling apparatus shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 57 is a top view of the distal end of the elongated body, the mounting assembly, and the proximal end of the tool assembly during articulation of the stapling apparatus;

FIG. 58 is a perspective view of the surgical stapling apparatus during articulation of the tool assembly;

FIG. 59 is a perspective view of the surgical stapling apparatus during articulation and rotation of the tool assembly;

FIG. 60 is a top view of the distal end of the disposable loading unit immediately prior to articulation;

FIG. 61 is a top view of the distal end of the elongated body, the mounting assembly, and the proximal end of the tool assembly during articulation of the stapling apparatus;

FIG. 62 is a partial cross-sectional view of a portion of the disposable loading unit during retraction of the locking device; and

FIG. 63 is a partial cross-sectional view of a portion of the disposable loading unit with the locking device in the locked position.

FIG. 64 is a perspective view of another embodiment of the presently disclosed articulation mechanism;

FIG. 65 is a perspective view of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 64 with parts separated;

FIG. 66 is a perspective view of the rotatable member of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 64 with the lower clutch positioned in the receptacle of the rotatable member;

FIG. 67 is a bottom view of the upper clutch and translation member of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 65;

FIG. 68 is a bottom side perspective view of the upper clutch of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 65;

FIG. 69 is a perspective view from the top of the upper clutch shown in FIG. 68;

FIG. 70 is a top perspective view of the lower clutch of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 65;

FIG. 71 is a top perspective view of the main shaft of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 65;

FIG. 72 is a bottom perspective view of the main shaft shown in FIG. 71;

FIG. 73 is a top perspective view of the cover of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 65;

FIG. 74 is a bottom perspective view of the cover shown in FIG. 73;

FIG. 75 is a cross-sectional view of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 64 with the articulation mechanism in a non-articulated position;

FIG. 76 is a cross-sectional view taken along section lines 76-76 of FIG. 75;

FIG. 77 is a top view of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 64 with the articulation lever rotated;

FIG. 78 is a cross-sectional view of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 64 with the articulation lever rotated as shown in FIG. 77;

FIG. 79 is a cross-sectional view taken along section lines 79-79 of FIG. 78;

FIG. 80 is a cross-sectional view of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 64 with the articulation lever rotated and the upper clutch projection reengaged with the serrations of the lower clutch;

FIG. 81 is a perspective view of still another embodiment of the presently disclosed articulation mechanism;

FIG. 82 is a perspective view of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 81 with a rotatable member and mechanism cover removed;

FIG. 83 is a perspective view of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 81 with an articulation lever and the mechanism cover removed; and

FIG. 84 is across-sectional view of the articulation mechanism shown in FIG. 81 with the articulation mechanism in a non-articulated position.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

Preferred embodiments of the presently disclosed endoscopic surgical stapling apparatus will now be described in detail with reference to the drawings, in which like reference numerals designate identical or corresponding elements in each of the several views.

In the drawings and in the description that follows, the term "proximal", as is traditional, will refer to the end of the stapling apparatus which is closest to the operator, while the term distal will refer to the end of the apparatus which is furthest from the operator.

FIGS. 1-3 illustrate one embodiment of the presently disclosed surgical stapling apparatus shown generally as 10. Briefly, surgical stapling apparatus 10 includes a handle assembly 12 and an elongated body 14. A disposable loading unit or DLU 16 is releasably secured to a distal end of elongated body 14. Disposable loading unit 16 includes a tool assembly 17 having a cartridge assembly 18 housing a plurality of surgical staples and an anvil assembly 20 movably secured in relation to cartridge assembly 18. Disposable loading unit 16 is configured to apply linear rows of staples measuring from about 30mm to about 60mm in length. Disposable loading units having linear rows of staples of other lengths are also envisioned, e.g., 45mm. Handle assembly 12 includes a stationary handle member 22, a movable handle member 24, and a barrel portion 26. A rotatable member 28 is preferably mounted on the forward end of barrel portion 26 to facilitate rotation of elongated body 14 with respect to handle assembly 12. An articulation lever 30 is also preferably mounted on the forward end of barrel portion 26 adjacent rotatable knob 28 to facilitate articulation of tool assembly 17. A pair of retraction knobs 32 are movably positioned along barrel portion 26 to return surgical stapling apparatus 10 to a retracted position, as will be described in detail below.

Referring to FIG. 4, handle assembly 12 includes housing 36, which is preferably formed from molded housing half-sections 36a and 36b, which forms stationary handle member 22 and barrel portion 26 of handle assembly 12 (See FIG. 1). Movable handle member 24 is pivotably supported between housing half-sections 36a and 36b about pivot pin 38. A biasing member 40, which is preferably a torsion spring, biases movable handle 24 away from stationary handle 22. An actuation shaft 46 is supported within barrel portion 26 of housing 36 and includes a toothed rack 48. A driving pawl 42 having a rack engagement finger 43 with laterally extending wings 43a and 43b is pivotably mounted to one end of movable handle 24 about a pivot pin 44. A biasing member 50, which is also preferably a torsion spring, is positioned to urge engagement finger 43 of driving pawl 42 towards toothed rack 48 of actuation shaft 46. Movable handle 24 is pivotable to move engagement finger 43 of driving pawl 42 into contact with toothed rack 48 of actuation shaft 46 to advance the actuation shaft linearly in the distal direction. The forward end of actuation shaft 46 rotatably receives the proximal end 49 of a control rod 52 such that linear advancement of actuation shaft 46 causes corresponding linear advancement of control rod 52. A locking pawl 54 having a rack engagement member 55 is pivotably mounted within housing 36 about pivot pin 57 and is biased towards toothed rack 48 by

biasing member 56, which is also preferably a torsion spring. Engagement member 55 of locking pawl 54 is movable into engagement with toothed rack 48 to retain actuation shaft 46 in a longitudinally fixed position.

A retraction mechanism 58 which includes a pair of retractor knobs 32 (See FIG. 1) is connected to the proximal end of actuation shaft 46 by a coupling rod 60. Coupling rod 60 includes right and left engagement portions 62a and 62b for receiving retractor knobs 32 and a central portion 62c which is dimensioned and configured to translate within a pair of longitudinal slots 34a formed in actuation shaft 46 adjacent the proximal end thereof. A release plate 64 is operatively associated with actuation shaft 46 and is mounted for movement with respect thereto in response to manipulation of retractor knobs 32. A pair of spaced apart pins 66 extend outwardly from a lateral face of actuation shaft 46 to engage a pair of corresponding angled cam slots 68 formed in release plate 64. Upon rearward movement of retractor knobs 32, pins 66 can release plate 64 downwardly with respect to actuation shaft 46 and with respect to toothed rack 48 such that the bottom portion of release plate 64 extends below toothed rack 48 to disengage engagement finger 43 of driving pawl 42 from toothed rack 48. A transverse slot 70 is formed at the proximal end of release plate 64 to accommodate the central portion 62c of coupling rod 60, and elongated slots 34 (See FIG. 1) are defined in the barrel section 26 of handle assembly 12 to accommodate the longitudinal translation of coupling rod 60 as retraction knobs 32 are pulled rearwardly to retract actuation shaft 46 and thus retract control rod 52 rearwardly. Actuation shaft 46 is biased proximally by spring 72 which is secured at one end to coupling rod portion 62 via connector 74 and at the other end to post 76 on actuation shaft 46.

Referring also to FIG. 5, handle assembly 12 includes a firing lockout assembly 80 which includes a plunger 82 and a pivotable locking member 83. Plunger 82 is biased to a central position by biasing springs 84 and includes annular tapered camming surfaces 85. Each end of plunger 82 extends through housing 36 (See FIG. 1) adjacent an upper end of stationary handle 22. Pivotable locking member 83 is pivotably attached at its distal end between housing half-sections 36a and 36b about pivot pin 86 and includes a locking surface 88 and proximal extension 90 having a slot 89 formed therein. Locking member 83 is biased by spring 92 counter-clockwise (as viewed in FIG. 4) to move locking surface 88 to a position to abut the distal end of actuation shaft 46 to prevent advancement of shaft 46 and subsequent firing of stapling apparatus 10. Annular tapered camming surface 85 is positioned to extend into tapered slot 89 in proximal extension 90. Lateral movement of plunger 82 in either direction against the bias of either spring 84 moves tapered camming surface 85 into engagement with the sidewalls of tapered slot 89 to pivot locking member 83 clockwise about pivot pin 86, as viewed in FIG. 4,

to move blocking surface 88 to a position to permit advancement of actuation shaft 46 and thus firing of stapling apparatus 10. Blocking surface 88 is retained in this position by recesses 87 which receive the tapered tip of camming surface 85 to lock locking member 83 in a counter-clockwise position. Operation of firing lockout assembly 80 will be further illustrated below.

Referring to FIGS. 4, 6, and 7, handle mechanism 12 also includes an anti-reverse clutch mechanism which includes a first gear 94 rotatably mounted on a first shaft 96, and second gear 98 mounted on a second shaft 100, and a slide plate 102 (FIGS. 6 and 7) slidably mounted within housing 36. Slide plate 102 includes an elongated slot 104 dimensioned and configured to be slidably positioned about locking pawl pivot pin 57, a gear plate 106 configured to mesh with the teeth of second gear 98, and a cam surface 108. In the retracted position, cam surface 108 of slide plate 102 engages locking pawl 54 to prevent locking pawl 54 from engaging toothed rack 48. Actuation shaft 46 includes a distal set of gear teeth 110a spaced from a proximal set of gear teeth 110b positioned to engage first gear 94 of actuation shaft 46 during movement of actuation shaft 46. When actuation shaft 46 is advanced by pivoting movable handle 24 about pivot pin 38, distal gear teeth 110a on actuation shaft 46 mesh with and rotate first gear 94 and first shaft 96. First shaft 96 is connected to second shaft 100 by spring clutch assembly such that rotation of first shaft 96 will cause corresponding rotation of second shaft 100. Rotation of second shaft 100 causes corresponding rotation of second gear 98 which is engaged with gear plate 106 on slide plate 102 to cause linear advancement of slide plate 102. Linear advancement of slide plate 102 is limited to the length of elongated slot 104. When slide plate has been advanced the length of slot 104, cam surface 108 releases locking pawl 54 such that it is moved into engagement with toothed rack 48. Continued advancement of actuation shaft 46 eventually moves gear teeth 110b into engagement with gear plate 106. However, since slide plate 102 is longitudinally fixed in position, the spring clutch is forced to release, such that continued distal advancement of actuation shaft 46 is permitted.

When actuation shaft 46 is returned to the retracted position (by pulling retraction knobs 34 proximally, as discussed above) gear teeth 110b engage first gear 94 to rotate second gear 98 in the reverse direction to retract slide member 102 proximally within housing 36. Proximal movement of slide member 102 advances cam surface 108 into locking pawl 54 prior to engagement between locking pawl 54 and toothed rack 48 to urge locking pawl 54 to a position to permit retraction of actuation shaft 46.

Referring again to FIG. 4, handle assembly 12 includes an emergency return button 112 pivotally mounted within housing 36 about a pivot member 114 supported between

housing half-sections 36a and 36b. Return button 112 includes an externally positioned member 116 positioned on the proximal end of barrel portion 26. Member 116 is movable about pivot member 114 into engagement with the proximal end of locking pawl 54 to urge rack engagement member 55 out of engagement with toothed rack 48 to permit retraction of actuation shaft 46 during the firing stroke of the stapling apparatus 10. As discussed above, during the clamping portion of advancement of actuation shaft 46, slide plate 102 disengages pawl 54 from rack 48 and thus actuation of return button 112 is not necessary to retract the actuation shaft 46.

FIG. 8 illustrates the interconnection of elongated body 14 and handle assembly 12. Referring to FIGS. 8-10, housing 36 includes an annular channel 117 configured to receive an annular rib 118 formed on the proximal end of rotation member 28, which is preferably formed from molded half-sections 28a and 28b. Annular channel 117 and rib 118 permit relative rotation between rotation member 28 and housing 36. Elongated body 14 includes inner housing 122 and an outer casing 124. Inner housing 122 is dimensioned to be received within outer casing 124 and includes an internal bore 126 (FIG. 8) which extends therethrough and is dimensioned to slidably receive a first articulation link 123 and control rod 52. The proximal end of housing 122 and casing 124 each include a pair of diametrically opposed openings 130 and 128, respectively, which are dimensioned to receive radial projections 132 formed on the distal end of rotation member 28. Projections 132 and openings 128 and 130 fixedly secure rotation member 28 and elongated body 14 in relation to each other, both longitudinally and rotatably. Rotation of rotation knob 28 with respect to handle assembly 12 thus results in corresponding rotation of elongated body 14 with respect to handle assembly 12.

An articulation mechanism 120 is supported on rotatable member 28 and includes articulation lever 30, a cam member 136, a translation member 138, and first articulation link 123 (FIG. 9). Articulation lever 30 is pivotably mounted about pivot member 140 which extends outwardly from rotation member 28 and is preferably formed integrally therewith. A projection 142 extends downwardly from articulation lever 30 for engagement with cam member 136.

Referring temporarily to FIGS. 11 and 12, cam member 136 includes a housing 144 having an elongated slot 146 extending through one side thereof and a stepped camming surface 148 formed in the other side thereof. Each step of camming surface 148 corresponds to a particular degree of articulation of stapling apparatus 10. Although five steps are illustrated, fewer or more steps may be provided. Elongated slot 146 is configured to receive projection 142

formed on articulation lever 30. Housing 144 includes a distal stepped portion 150 and a proximal stepped portion 152. Proximal stepped portion 152 includes a recess 154.

Referring again to FIGS. 8-10 and also to FIGS. 13-15, translation member 138 includes a plurality of ridges 156 which are configured to be slidably received within grooves 158 formed along the inner walls of rotation member 28. Engagement between ridges 156 and grooves 158 prevent relative rotation of rotation member 28 and translation member 138 while permitting relative linear movement. The distal end of translation member 138 includes arm 160 which includes an opening 162 configured to receive a finger 164 extending from the proximal end of articulation link 123 (See FIG. 10a). A pin 166 having a housing 168 constructed from a non-abrasive material, e.g., teflon, is secured to translation member 138 and dimensioned to be received within stepped camming surface 148.

In an assembled condition, proximal and distal stepped portions 150 and 152 of cam member 136 are positioned beneath flanges 170 and 172 formed on rotation member 28 to restrict cam member 136 to transverse movement with respect to the longitudinal axis of stapling apparatus 10. When articulation lever 30 is pivoted about pivot member 140, cam member 136 is moved transversely on rotation member 28 to move stepped camming surface 148 transversely relative to pin 166, forcing pin 166 to move proximally or distally along stepped cam surface 148. Since pin 166 is fixedly attached to translation member 138, translation member 138 is moved proximally or distally to effect corresponding proximal or distal movement of first actuation link 123.

FIGS. 64-80 illustrate another embodiment of the presently disclosed articulation mechanism shown generally as 420. Referring to FIGS. 64 and 65, articulation mechanism 420 includes an articulation lever 422, a mechanism cover 424, a biasing member 426, an upper clutch 428, a lower clutch 430, a main shaft 432 and a translation member 434. The entire articulation mechanism is supported in a receptacle 436 formed in the top half-section 438a of rotatable member 438 but may also be supported in the handle assembly. Receptacle 436 defines a substantially cylindrical throughbore having a shoulder 436a dimensioned to receive and support lower clutch 430. Shoulder 436a includes one or more tabs 440.

Referring also to FIGS. 66 and 70, lower clutch 430 includes an outer rim portion 442 and an inner circular serrated portion 444. Outer rim portion 442 includes one or more cutouts 446 which are dimensioned to receive tabs 440 on shoulder 436a of receptacle 436. Lower clutch 430 is positioned within receptacle 436 atop shoulder 436a such that tabs 440 are received within cutouts 446 and lower clutch 430 is prevented from rotating within receptacle 436 (FIG. 66). Circular serrated portion 444 includes a series of shallow serrations 448 and

three spaced deep serrations 450 (FIG. 70). These serrations 448 and 450 include angled walls and function to retain articulation lever 422 at a plurality of different articulated positions as will be discussed in further detail below. Lower clutch 430 also defines a central throughbore 430a which is dimensioned to receive main shaft 432.

Referring to FIGS. 65, 68 and 69, upper clutch 428 includes a hub portion 452 and a base portion 454. Hub portion 452 defines a central throughbore 428a and a channel 456 which is dimensioned to receive a pin 458. Pin 458 is inserted through an opening 460 in articulation lever 422 and into channel 456 to rotatably fix articulation lever 422 to upper clutch 428. Hub portion 422 also includes an elongated slot 462 which is dimensioned to receive a pin 464. Pin 464 is inserted through slot 462 and a hole 466 formed in main shaft 432 to rotatably fix upper clutch 428 to main shaft 432. Pin 464 is longitudinally slidable in slot 462 to allow upper clutch 428 to move axially in relation to main shaft 432.

Base portion 454 of upper clutch includes an upper face 469 and a lower face 468 (FIG. 68) which is positioned in juxtaposed alignment with serrated portion 444 of lower clutch 430. Lower face 468 includes a plurality of spaced projections 470 configured to be received within deep and shallow serrations 450 and 448 of lower clutch 430. In one embodiment, projections 470 have a triangularly shaped cross-section in which the walls defining the triangle are steeper near the apex of the triangle. Such a configuration allows the apex of projections 470 to be received in shallow serrations 448 and substantially the entire projection 470 to be received in deep serrations 450, thus effecting a more secure engagement. The shape of projections 470 has two portions and two different engagement surfaces to define two different vertical positions for the mechanism.

Referring to FIGS. 65, 71 and 72, main shaft 432 includes a substantially cylindrical body portion 474 and a disc-shaped base portion 476. Base portion 476 defines a cutout 478 (FIG. 72) and includes a cam member or protrusion 480. Base portion 476 defines an annular support surface 482 (FIG. 71). Body portion 474 is dimensioned to extend through central throughbore 430a of lower clutch 430 and central throughbore 428a of upper clutch 428 such base portion 476 is positioned beneath upper clutch 428 and lower clutch 430 within receptacle 436 of rotatable member 438. Base portion 476 also includes a stepped portion 484 defining a shoulder 486. Shoulder 486 is supported on an annular shelf 488 (FIG. 65) formed in receptacle 436 such that main shaft 432 is rotatably supported within receptacle 436 of rotatable member 438.

Referring to FIGS. 65, 73 and 74, mechanism cover 424 defines an opening 490 dimensioned to allow passage of hub portion 452 of upper clutch 428 such that hub portion 452

can be rotatably fixed to articulation lever 422. An inner cylindrical portion 492 (FIG. 74) of cover 424 includes cutouts 494. When cover 424 is placed over receptacle 436 of top half section 438a of rotatable member 438, cutouts 494 of cylindrical portion 492 of cover 424 receive tabs 440 and cylindrical portion 492 compresses lower clutch 430 against shoulder 436a (FIG. 65). Cover 424 can be secured to rotatable member using any known fastening technique including welding, adhesives or any known mechanical attachment structure, e.g., screws, rivets, etc.

Referring to FIG. 65, translation member 434 includes an angled body 496 which defines a cam slot 498, a cutout 500 and an arm 502 having engagement structure 504 configured to engage a proximal end of an articulation link 123 (FIG. 10A). Although the engagement structure 504 is illustrated as a finger-like projection other mating engagement structures are envisioned to facilitate connection of translation member 434 to articulation link 123 (FIG. 10A).

Referring also to FIG. 67, cam slot 498 of translation member 434 is dimensioned to slidably receive cam member 480 of main shaft 432. As discussed above, articulation lever 422 is rotatably fixed to upper clutch 428 and upper clutch 428 is rotatably fixed to body portion 474 of main shaft 432. Thus, when articulation lever 422 is rotated, upper clutch 428 and main shaft 432 also rotate to rotate cam member 480 in relation to translation member 434. Although not shown, translation member 434 is confined to linear movement within rotatable member 438. As such, when cam member 480 is driven in rotation, translation member 434 is forced to move linearly within rotatable member 438. Since translation member 438 is fastened to articulation link 123 (FIG. 10A), linear movement of translation member 438 effects linear movement of articulation link 123 to articulate tool assembly 17.

Referring now to FIGS. 65 and 75, biasing member 426 is positioned between upper face 469 of base portion 454 of upper clutch 428 and an inner surface 510 of cover 424. Biasing member urges lower face 468 (FIG. 68) of upper clutch 428 into engagement with serrated portion 444 (FIG. 70) of lower clutch 430 such that spaced projections 470 on upper clutch 428 are received within shallow serrations 448 or deep serrations 450 of lower clutch 430. Engagement between projections 470 and serrations 448 and 450 releasably secure articulation mechanism 420 in a fixed position to thereby releasably secure a tool assembly 17 (FIG. 1) at a fixed angle of articulation. See FIG. 76.

Referring to FIGS. 77-80, when articulation lever 422 is rotated, (as discussed above) upper clutch 428 and main shaft 432 are driven in rotation. When base portion 454 of upper clutch 428 is rotated in relation to serrated portion 444 of lower clutch 428, the triangular projections 470 are driven against angled serrations 448 and 450. When this occurs, upper

clutch 428 is urged upwardly against the bias of biasing member 426 (FIG. 78) to disengage projections 470 from serrations 448 or 450 (FIG. 79), to allow rotation of upper clutch 428, and thus, main shaft 432. Thereafter, biasing member 426 urges upper clutch downwardly to urge projection 470 back into engagement with the next serration (FIG. 80). It is noted, projections 470 are positioned to be received within deep serrations 450 when tool assembly 17 (FIG. 1) is in its non-articulated position aligned with body portion 14 (FIG. 1). This provides increased resistance to movement of tool assembly 17 from its non-articulated position. Desirably, the deep serrations 450 correspond to the non-articulated position of the tool assembly 17. However, deep serrations may be incorporated into the mechanism to provide other positions with increased resistance to movement.

FIGS. 81-84 illustrate another embodiment of the presently disclosed articulation mechanism shown generally as 520. Articulation mechanism 520 is simple, robust and requires few moving parts. Referring initially to FIG. 81, articulation mechanism 520 generally includes a rotatable member 522 including a top half-section 522a and a bottom half-section 522b. An articulation lever 524 is provided to actuate the articulation components (described in more detail hereinbelow). A receptacle 526 is formed in top-half section 522a of rotatable member 522 and encloses and supports substantially all of the articulation components. A mechanism cover 528 is provided to secure the articulation components within receptacle 526. Mechanism cover 528 can be secured to rotatable member 522 using any known fastening technique including welding, adhesives, or any known mechanical attachment structure, e.g., screws, rivets, etc.

Referring now to FIG. 82, the articulation components of articulation mechanism 521 will now be described. The articulation components of articulation mechanism 521 include a rotatable plate or disk 530 having a spiral slot or groove 532 formed therein. A shaft 534 is provided to connect articulation lever 524 to rotatable disk 530. Specifically, a top end 536 of shaft 534 is affixed to articulation lever 524 while a bottom end 538 of shaft 534 is affixed to disk 530.

The articulation components additionally include a translation member 540 having an angled body 542. An arm 544 extends from angled body 542 and terminates in engagement structure 546 formed in a tip 548 of arm 544. Engagement structure 546 is configured to engage a proximal end of an articulation link 123 (FIG. 10A). Articulation link 123 extends through the elongate body 14 and is connected to the second articulation link 256 of the loading unit 16. While engagement structure 546 is illustrated as a finger-like projection, other mating engagement structures are envisioned to facilitate connection of translation member 540 to

articulation link 123 (FIG. 10A). While not specifically shown, translation member 540 is constrained for longitudinal, linear movement within rotatable member 522.

In order to move translation member 540 longitudinally within rotatable member 522, and in response to rotation of articulation lever 524, a pin assembly 550 is associated with translation member 540 and extends into spiral groove 532 in disk 530. Spiral groove 532 includes an inner or first end 552 closest to shaft 534 and an outer or second end 554 (FIG. 83) furthest from shaft 534. Rotation of articulation lever 524 causes pin assembly 550 to move between first end 552 and second end 554 of spiral groove 532 to move pin assembly 550 longitudinally in relation to shaft 534. Movement of pin assembly 550 in relation to shaft 534 effects linear movement of translation member 540 within rotatable member 522. Spiral groove 532 provides a large mechanical advantage requiring little force to operate and self locks in any position.

Teeth or serrations 556 are formed on an outer periphery 558 of disk 530 and cooperate with structure, which may include spring loaded mating structure 564 discussed in further detail below, formed in top half 522a of rotatable member 522 to provide an indexing mechanism, having very fine resolution, indicating the degree of rotation of disk 530 as well as providing tactile and audible feedback to the operator. A detent or recess 560 is provided in disk 530 to give a tactile indication to the operator when tool assembly 17 (FIG. 1) is in a straight, non-articulated position or neutral position aligned with body portion 14 (FIG. 1) as described in more detail hereinbelow. Further, a v-notch may be provided in outer periphery 558 of disk 530 to give a similar indication of a neutral position.

Referring now to FIG. 83, as noted herein above, movement of pin assembly 550 within spiral groove 532 of disk 530 causes longitudinal movement of translation member 540 (FIGS. 82 and 84) within rotatable member 522. In a specific embodiment, spiral groove 532 is formed as an Archimedes's spiral. That is to say that spiral groove 532 can be used as a cam to convert uniform angular or rotational motion of the articulation lever 524 into uniform linear motion of the translation member 540. This cam aspect of spiral groove 530 allows for slow and controlled articulation of tool assembly 17 (FIG. 1) while maintaining a large angular travel of articulation lever 524. Specifically, since pin assembly 550 is secured to translation member 540, pin assembly 550 is constrained to move linearly with translation member 540 along an axis x-x extending through rotatable member 522. Uniform angular velocity of disk 530 about its center results in uniform linear motion of the pin assembly 550 where spiral groove 532 crosses the x-x axis. Alternatively, the configuration of the spiral groove can be selected to provide any desired ratio of angular rotation of the articulation member to linear movement of the translation

member. For example, the configuration of the spiral groove may be selected to provide greater linear advancement of the translation member and thus, faster articulation of the tool assembly, near the neutral position of the articulation member, and reduced linear advancement of the translation member, and thus slower articulation of the tool assembly, further from the neutral position of the articulation member.

In this manner, an operator turning articulation lever 524 a specific amount is ensured that tool assembly 17 (FIG. 1) is articulated by a specific and uniform amount. As noted above, serrations 556 are provided on disk 530 to give audible as well as tactile feedback to an operator on the rotation of disk 530. A spring-loaded slide 564 is provided within a channel 566 formed within receptacle 526. Spring-loaded slide 564 engages serrations 556 to provide this feedback. Additionally, since serrations 556 are uniformly spaced, each tactile or audible feedback sensed by the operator indicates a uniform unit of rotation of disk 530 resulting in a uniform linear unit of translation of translation member 540 within rotatable member 522.

Referring also to FIG. 84, as shown, top end 536 of shaft 534 includes flats 568 to secure articulation lever 524 thereon. A spring-loaded plunger 570, having a tensioning screw 572, is provided within a channel 574 formed within mechanism cover 528. Spring-loaded plunger 570 rides along disk 530 and is configured to engage recess 560 when tool assembly 17 (FIG. 1) is in longitudinal alignment with body portion 14 (FIG. 1).

With reference to FIG. 84, pin assembly 550 includes a pin 576 which extends into spiral groove 532 and a pin holder 578 which connects pin 576 to translation member 540. Similar to top end 536 described herein above, bottom end 538 of shaft 534 includes flats 580 to secure bottom end of 538 of shaft 534 to disk 530. Alternatively, bottom end 538 of shaft 534 can be connected to disk 530 using a variety of different techniques, e.g., welding, crimping, screw threads, etc. As shown, shaft 534 extends from articulation lever 524 through a bore 582 formed in mechanism cover 528 to disk 530.

Referring to FIGS. 8-10 and 16, a disposable loading unit sensing mechanism extends within stapling apparatus 10 from elongated body 14 into handle assembly 12. The sensing mechanism includes a sensor tube 176 which is slidably supported within bore 26 of elongated body 14. The distal end of sensor tube 176 is positioned towards the distal end of elongated body 14 and the proximal end of sensor tube 176 is secured within the distal end of a sensor cylinder 176 via a pair of nubs 180. The distal end of a sensor link 182 is secured to the proximal end of sensor cylinder 178. Sensor link 182 (See FIGS. 8a and 8c) has a bulbous end 184 which engages a camming surface 83a on pivotable locking member 83. When a disposable loading unit (not shown) is inserted in the distal end of elongated body 14, the

disposable loading unit engages the distal end 177 of sensor tube 176 to drive sensor tube 176 proximally, and thereby drive sensor cylinder 178 and sensor link 182 proximally. Movement of sensor link 182 proximally causes bulbous end 184 of sensor link 182 to move distally of camming surface 83a to allow locking member 83 to pivot under the bias of spring 92 from a position permitting firing of stapling apparatus 10 to a blocking position, wherein blocking member 83 is positioned to engage actuation shaft 46 and prevent firing of stapling apparatus 10. Sensor link 182 and locking member 83 function to prevent firing of surgical stapling apparatus 10 after a disposable loading unit has been secured to elongated body 14, without first operating firing lockout assembly 80. It is noted that movement of link 182 proximally permits locking member 83 to move to its position shown in FIG. 5.

Referring again to FIGS. 9-12, cam member 136 includes recess 154. A locking ring 184 having a nub portion 186 configured to be received within recess 154 is positioned about sensor cylinder 178 between a control tab portion 188 and a proximal flange portion 190. A spring 192 positioned between flange portion 190 and locking ring 184 urges locking ring distally about sensor cylinder 178. When an articulating disposable loading unit 16b having an extended insertion tip 193 is inserted into the distal end of elongated body 14 of stapling apparatus 10, insertion tip 193 causes tab portion 188 to move proximally into engagement with locking ring 184 to urge locking ring 184 and nub 186 proximally of recess 154 in cam member 136 (See FIG. 12b). With nub 186 positioned proximally of recess 154, cam member 136 is free to move transversely to effect articulation of stapling apparatus 10. A non-articulating disposable loading unit does not have an extended insertion tip (See FIG. 12a). As such, when a non-articulating disposable loading unit is inserted in elongated body 14, sensor cylinder 178 is not retracted proximally a sufficient distance to move nub 186 from recess 154. Thus, cam member 136 is prevented from moving transversely by nub 186 of locking ring 184 which is positioned in recess 154 and articulation lever 30 is locked in its central position.

Referring to FIGS. 16-18, the distal end of elongated body 14 includes a control rod locking mechanism 190 which is activated during insertion of a disposable loading unit into elongated body 14. Control rod locking mechanism 190 includes a blocking plate 192 which is biased distally by a spring 194 and includes a proximal finger 189 having angled cam surface 195. A semi-circular engagement member 196 is biased transversely towards control rod 52 by a spring 197. Control rod 52 includes an annular recess 199 configured to receive engagement member 196. Blocking plate 192 is movable from a distal position spaced from engagement member 196 to a proximal position located behind engagement member 196. In the proximal position, engagement member 196 is prevented from being biased from recess 199 by

engagement with blocking plate 192. During insertion of a disposable loading unit 16 (See FIG. 1) into the distal end of elongated body 14, as will be described in further detail below, cam surface 195 of blocking plate 192 is engaged by a nub 254 (FIG. 30) on the disposable loading unit 16 as the disposable loading unit is rotated into engagement with elongated body 14 to urge plate 192 to the proximal position. Engagement member 196, which is positioned within recess 199, is retained therein by blocking plate 192 while nub 254 engages cam surface 195 to prevent longitudinal movement of control rod 52 during assembly. When the disposable loading unit 16 is properly positioned with respect to the elongated body 14, nub 254 on the proximal end of the disposable loading unit 16 passes off cam surface 195 allowing spring 194 to return blocking plate 192 to its distal position to permit subsequent longitudinal movement of control rod 52. It is noted that when the disposable loading unit nub passes off cam surface 195, an audible clicking sound is produced indicating that the disposable loading unit 16 is properly fastened to the elongated body 14.

Referring to FIGS. 19 and 20, disposable loading unit 16 includes a proximal housing portion 200 adapted to releasably engage the distal end of body portion 14 (FIG. 1). A mounting assembly 202 is pivotally secured to the distal end of housing portion 200, and is configured to receive the proximal end of tool assembly 17 such that pivotal movement of mounting assembly 202 about an axis perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of housing portion 200 effects articulation of tool assembly 17.

Referring to FIGS. 21-26, tool assembly 17 preferably includes anvil assembly 20 and cartridge assembly 18. Anvil assembly 20 includes anvil portion 204 having a plurality of staple deforming concavities 206 (FIG. 22) and a cover plate 208 secured to a top surface of anvil portion 204 to define a cavity 210 (FIG. 24) therebetween. Cover plate 208 is provided to prevent pinching of tissue during clamping and firing of stapling apparatus 10. Cavity 210 is dimensioned to receive a distal end of an axial drive assembly 212 (See FIG. 27). A longitudinal slot 214 extends through anvil portion 204 to facilitate passage of retention flange 284 of axial drive assembly 212 into the anvil cavity 210. A camming surface 209 formed on anvil portion 204 is positioned to engage axial drive assembly 212 to facilitate clamping of tissue 198. A pair of pivot members 211 formed on anvil portion 204 are positioned within slots 213 formed in carrier 216 to guide the anvil portion between the open and clamped positions. A pair of stabilizing members 215 engage a respective shoulder 217 formed on carrier 216 to prevent anvil portion 204 from sliding axially relative to staple cartridge 220 as camming surface 209 is deformed.

Cartridge assembly 18 includes a carrier 216 which defines an elongated support channel 218. Elongated support channel 218 is dimensioned and configured to receive a staple cartridge 220. Corresponding tabs 222 and slots 224 formed along staple cartridge 220 and elongated support channel 218 function to retain staple cartridge 220 within support channel 218. A pair of support struts 223 formed on staple cartridge 220 are positioned to rest on side walls of carrier 216 to further stabilize staple cartridge 220 within support channel 218.

Staple cartridge 220 includes retention slots 225 for receiving a plurality of fasteners 226 and pushers 228. A plurality of spaced apart longitudinal slots 230 extend through staple cartridge 220 to accommodate upstanding cam wedges 232 of actuation sled 234. A central longitudinal slot 282 extends along the length of staple cartridge 220 to facilitate passage of a knife blade 280. During operation of surgical stapler 10, actuation sled 234 translates through longitudinal slots 230 of staple cartridge 220 to advance cam wedges 232 into sequential contact with pushers 228, to cause pushers 228 to translate vertically within slots 224 and urge fasteners 226 from slots 224 into the staple deforming cavities 206 of anvil assembly 20.

Referring to FIGS. 27 and 28, mounting assembly 202 includes upper and lower mounting portions 236 and 238. Each mounting portion includes a threaded bore 240 on each side thereof dimensioned to receive threaded bolts 242 (See FIG. 21) for securing the proximal end of carrier 216 thereto. A pair of centrally located pivot members 244 (See FIG. 21) extends between upper and lower mounting portions via a pair of coupling members 246 which engage the distal end of housing portion 200. Coupling members 246 each include an interlocking proximal portion 248 configured to be received in grooves 250 formed in the proximal end of housing portion 200 to retain mounting assembly 202 and housing portion 200 in a longitudinally fixed position in relation thereto.

Housing portion 200 of disposable loading unit 16 includes an upper housing half 250 and a lower housing half 252 contained within an outer casing 251. The proximal end of housing half 250 includes engagement nubs 254 for releasably engaging elongated body 14 and an insertion tip 193. Nubs 254 form a bayonet type coupling with the distal end of body 14 which will be discussed in further detail below. Housing halves 250 and 252 define a channel 253 for slidably receiving axial drive assembly 212. A second articulation link 256 is dimensioned to be slidably positioned within a slot 258 formed between housing halves 250 and 252. A pair of blow out plates 254 are positioned adjacent the distal end of housing portion 200 adjacent the distal end of axial drive assembly 212 to prevent outward bulging of drive assembly 212 during articulation of tool assembly 17.

Referring to FIGS. 29-30, second articulation link 256 includes at least one elongated metallic plate. Preferably, two or more metallic plates are stacked to form link 256. The proximal end of articulation link 256 includes a hook portion 258 configured to engage first articulation link 123 (See FIG. 9) and the distal end includes a loop 260 dimensioned to engage a projection 262 formed on mounting assembly 202. Projection 262 is laterally offset from pivot pin 244 such that linear movement of second articulation link 256 causes mounting assembly 202 to pivot about pivot pins 244 to articulate tool assembly 17.

Referring also to FIGS. 31-34, axial drive assembly 212 includes an elongated drive beam 266 including a distal working head 268 and a proximal engagement section 270. Drive beam 266 may be constructed from a single sheet of material or, preferably, multiple stacked sheets. Engagement section 270 includes a pair of engagement fingers 270a and 270b which are dimensioned and configured to mountingly engage a pair of corresponding retention slots 272a and 272b formed in drive member 272. Drive member 272 includes a proximal porthole 274 configured to receive the distal end 276 of control rod 52 (See FIG. 35) when the proximal end of disposable loading unit 16 is engaged with elongated body 14 of surgical stapling apparatus 10.

The distal end of drive beam 266 is defined by a vertical support strut 278 which supports a knife blade 280, and an abutment surface 283 which engages the central portion of actuation sled 234 during a stapling procedure. Surface 285 at the base of surface 283 is configured to receive a support member 287 slidably positioned along the bottom of the staple cartridge 220. Knife blade 280 is positioned to translate slightly behind actuation sled 234 through a central longitudinal slot 282 in staple cartridge 220 (FIG. 30) to form an incision between rows of stapled body tissue. A retention flange 284 projects distally from vertical strut 278 and supports a cylindrical cam roller 286 at its distal end. Cam roller 286 is dimensioned and configured to engage cam surface 209 on anvil body 204 to clamp anvil portion 204 against body tissue.

Referring also to FIGS. 36-39, a locking device 288 is pivotally secured to drive member 270 about a pivot pin 290. Locking device 288 includes a pair of elongate glides 292 and 294 which define a channel 296. A web 298 joins a portion of the upper surfaces of glides 292 and 294, and is configured and dimensioned to fit within elongated slot 298 formed in drive beam 266 at a position distal of drive member 270. Horizontal cams 300 and 302 extend from glides 292 and 294 respectively, and are accommodated along an inner surface of lower housing half 252. As best shown in FIG. 42, a torsion spring 304 is positioned adjacent drive member 270 and engages horizontal cams 300 and 302 of locking device 288 to normally bias

locking device 288 downward toward lower housing half 252 onto ledge 310. Locking device 288 translates through housing portion 200 with axial drive assembly 212. Operation of locking device 288 will be described below.

Sequence of Operation

Referring to FIGS. 40-44, to use stapling instrument 10, a disposable loading unit 16 is first secured to the distal end of elongated body 14. As discussed above, stapling instrument 10 can be used with articulating and non-articulating disposable loading units having linear rows of staples between about 30mm and about 60mm. To secure disposable loading unit 16 to elongated body 14, the distal end 276 of control rod 52 is inserted into insertion tip 193 of disposable loading unit 16, and insertion tip 193 is slid longitudinally into the distal end of elongated body 14 in the direction indicated by arrow "A" in FIG. 41 such that hook portion 258 of second articulation link 256 slides within a channel 310 in elongated body 314. Nubs 254 will each be aligned in a respective channel (not shown) in elongated body 14. When hook portion 258 engages the proximal wall 312 of channel 310, disposable loading unit 16 is rotated in the direction indicated by arrow "B" in FIGS. 41-44 to move hook portion 258 of second articulation link 256 into engagement with finger 164 of first articulation link 123. Nubs 254 also forms a bayonet type coupling within annular channel 314 in body 14. During rotation of loading unit 16, nubs 254 engage cam surface 195 (FIG. 41) of block plate 192 to initially move plate 192 in the direction indicated by arrow "C" in FIGS. 41 and 43 to lock engagement member 196 in recess 199 of control rod 52 to prevent longitudinal movement of control rod 52 during attachment of disposable loading unit 16. During the final degree of rotation, nubs 254 disengage from cam surface 195 to allow blocking plate 192 to move in the direction indicated by arrow "D" in FIGS. 42 and 44 from behind engagement member 196 to once again permit longitudinal movement of control rod 52.

Referring to FIGS. 43 and 43a, when insertion tip 193 engages the distal end of sensor tube 176, the disposable loading unit sensing mechanism is actuated. Insertion tip 193 engages and moves sensor tube 176 proximally in the direction indicated by arrow "E" in FIG. 43. As discussed above, proximal movement of sensor tube 176 effects proximal movement of sensor cylinder 178 and sensor link 182 in the direction indicated by arrow "E" in FIG. 43a to pivot locking member 83 counter-clockwise, as indicated by arrow "Y" in FIG. 43a, from a non-blocking position to a position blocking movement of actuation shaft 46.

Referring to FIGS. 46-49, with a disposable loading unit attached to stapling instrument 10, tool assembly 17 can be positioned about tissue 320 (FIG. 45). To clamp tissue

between anvil assembly 20 and cartridge assembly 18, stationary handle 24 is moved in the direction indicated by arrow "E" in FIG. 46 against the bias of torsion spring 40 to move driving pawl 42 into engagement with shoulder 322 on actuation shaft 46. Engagement between shoulder 322 and driving pawl 42 advances actuation shaft 46 and thus advances control rod 52 distally. Control rod 52 is connected at its distal end to axial drive assembly 212 (FIG. 48), including drive beam 266, such that distal movement of control rod 52 effects distal movement of drive beam 266 in the direction indicated by arrow "F" in FIGS. 48 and 49, moving cam roller 286 into engagement with cam surface 209 on anvil portion 204 to urge anvil portion 204 in the direction indicated by arrow "G" in FIG. 49. It is noted that one complete stroke of movable handle 24 advances actuation shaft 46 approximately 15mm which is sufficient to clamp tissue during the first stroke but not to fire staples.

As discussed above with respect to the anti-reverse clutch mechanism, during the first (clamping) stroke of movable handle 24, slide plate 102 (FIG. 46) prevents locking pawl 54 from engaging toothed rack 48. To maintain actuation shaft 46 in its longitudinal position after handle 24 is released, an engagement member 324 (FIG. 47) is provided on locking member 83 to engage shoulder 326 on actuation shaft 46 and retain shaft 46 in its longitudinal position (See FIG. 47). Upon release of movable handle 24, drive pawl 42 moves over rack 48 as torsion spring 40 returns handle 24 to a position spaced from stationary handle 22. In this position, driving pawl 42 is urged into engagement with toothed rack 48 to retain actuation shaft 46 in its longitudinal fixed position.

In order to fire staples, movable handle 24 is actuated again, i.e., moved through another stroke. As discussed above, stapling apparatus 10 is capable of receiving disposable loading units having linear rows of staples of between about 30mm and about 60mm. Since each stroke of the movable handle 24 preferably advances actuation shaft 46 15mm, and one stroke is required to clamp tissue, the movable handle must be actuated (n+1) strokes to fire staples, where n is the length of the linear rows of staples in the disposable loading unit attached to stapling instrument 10 divided by 15mm.

Referring to FIG. 50, prior to being able to fire staples, firing lockout assembly 80 (FIG. 4) must be actuated to move locking surface 88 from its blocking position (FIG. 47) to a non-blocking position. This is accomplished by pressing down on plunger 82 to move camming surface 85 into engagement with sidewalls of slot 89 of locking member 83 to pivot locking member 83 in the direction indicated by arrow "G" in FIG. 50 (see also FIG. 5). Thereafter, movable handle 24 may be actuated an appropriate number of strokes to advance actuation shaft 46, and thus control rod 52 and drive beam 266, distally in the direction indicated by arrow

"H" in FIGS. 51 and 52 to advance actuation sled 234 through staple cartridge 220 to effect ejection of staples. It is noted that after the first or clamping stroke of movable handle 54 (during the second stroke), slide 102 passes over locking pawl 54 allowing torsion spring 56 to move locking pawl 54 in the direction indicated by arrow "I" in FIG. 50 into engagement with toothed rack 48 to retain actuation shaft 46 in its longitudinal position.

Referring to FIG. 53, to retract actuation shaft 46 and thus control rod 52 and drive member 266 after firing staples, retraction knobs 32 (see FIG. 1) are pulled proximally causing pins 66 to move release plate 64 in the direction indicated by arrow "J" in FIG. 53 over teeth 48 to disengage drive pawl 42 from engagement with teeth 48. As discussed above, with respect to the anti-reverse clutch mechanism, locking pawl 54 is urged by slide plate 102 out of engagement with toothed rack 48 (not shown) to permit actuation shaft 46 to be moved proximally, in the direction indicated by arrow "L", after drive pawl 42 is disengaged from teeth 48.

Referring to FIG. 54, in order to retract actuation shaft 46 prior to firing stapling apparatus, i.e., when locking pawl is currently engaged with toothed racked 48, emergency return button 112 is pushed in the direction indicated by arrow "Z" in FIG. 54 to disengage locking pawl 54 from toothed rack 48. Retraction knobs 32 (FIG. 1) must also be concurrently pulled rearwardly, as discussed above, to release drive pawl 42 from rack 48.

Referring to FIGS. 55-61, when an articulating disposable loading unit is secured to elongated body 14 and articulation lever 30 is pivoted in the direction indicated by arrow "M" in FIG. 55, cam member 136 is moved transversely by projection 142 (FIG. 10) in the direction indicated by arrow "N" between flanges 170 and 172 of rotation knob 28. Since translation member 138 is prevented from rotating by ridges 156 (FIG. 13), pin 166, which is fixedly secured to translation member 138, is forced to move along stepped cam surface 148. Movement of pin 166 causes corresponding movement of translation member 138 in the direction indicated by arrow "P" in FIGS. 55 and 56 to advance first articulation link 123 in the distal direction. The distal end of first articulation link 123 engages the proximal end of second articulation link 256 (FIG. 42) which is connected to projection 262 on mounting assembly 202 to advance second link 256 in the direction indicated by arrow "Q" in FIG. 57. Projection 262 is laterally offset from pivot members 244, such that distal advancement of second articulation link 256 causes mounting assembly 202 and thus tool assembly 17 to pivot in the direction indicated by arrow "R" in FIGS. 57 and 58. Note in FIG. 59 that rotation member 28 can be rotated to rotate elongated body 14 about its longitudinal axis while tool assembly 17 is articulated.

FIGS. 60-61 illustrate articulation of tool assembly 17 in the opposite direction to that described above. When second articulation link 256 is retracted by rotating articulation lever 30 in a counter-clockwise direction (not shown) as viewed in FIG. 55, pin 66 is forced to move proximally along stepped camming surface 148, moving translation member 138 and first articulation link 123 proximally. Movement of first articulation link 123 proximally, causes second articulation link 256 to move proximally as indicated by arrow "S" in FIG. 58, to rotate tool assembly 17 in a clockwise direction, as indicated by arrow "T" in FIG. 61.

Referring to FIG. 12, movement of pin 166 (FIG. 9) between adjacent step portions 340 causes tool assembly 17 to articulate 22.5 degrees. Camming surface 148 includes five step portions 340. The third step portion corresponds to the non-articulated tool assembly position, whereas the first and the fifth step portions correspond to articulation of tool assembly 17 to forty-five degrees. Each step portion is flat to retain articulation lever 30 in a fixed position when pin 166 is engaged therewith.

Referring now to FIGS. 37, 39, 62 and 63, the sequence of lockout operation will be described in detail. In FIG. 39, lockout device 288 is shown in its prefired position with horizontal cams 300 and 302 resting on top of projections 330 formed in the sidewalls of lower housing half 252 (FIG. 37). In this position, locking device 288 is held up out of alignment with projection 332 formed in the bottom surface of lower housing half 252, and web 298 is in longitudinal juxtaposition with shelf 334 defined in drive beam 266. This configuration permits the anvil 20 (FIG. 38) to be opened and repositioned onto the tissue to be stapled until the surgeon is satisfied with the position without activating locking device 288 to disable the disposable loading unit 16.

As shown in FIG. 62, upon distal movement of drive beam 266, locking device 288 rides off of projections 330 (not shown) and is biased into engagement with base lower housing half 252 by spring 304, distal to projection 332. Locking device 288 remains in this configuration throughout firing of the apparatus.

Upon retraction of the drive beam 266 in the direction indicated by arrow "U" in FIG. 62, locking device 288 passes under projections 330 and rides over projection 332 until the distalmost portion of locking device 288 is proximal to projection 332. Spring 304 biases locking device 288 into juxtaposed alignment with projection 332, effectively disabling the disposable loading unit. If an attempt is made to reactuate the apparatus, the control rod 52 will abut a proximal end surface of locking device 288 which surface is diagonally sloped to impart a moment about pivot pin 342 such that the distal end of locking device 288 is rotationally urged into contact with projection 332. Continued distal force in the direction indicated by arrow "W" in

FIG. 63, will only serve to increase the moment applied to the locking device thus the locking device will abut projection 332 and inhibit distal movement of the control rod 52.

Referring again to FIGS. 41-44, the disabled or locked disposable loading unit can be removed from the distal end of elongated body 14 by rotating disposable loading unit 16 in the direction opposite to the direction indicated by arrow "B" in FIGS. 41, 42 and 44, to disengage hook portion 258 of second articulation link 256 from finger 164 of first articulation link 123, and to disengage nubs 254 from within channel 314 of elongated body 14. After rotation, disposable loading unit 16 can be slid in the direction opposite to that indicated by arrow "A" in FIG. 41 to detach body 14 from disposable loading unit 16. Subsequently, additional articulating and/or non-articulating disposable loading units can be secured to the distal end of elongated body, as described above, to perform additional surgical stapling and/or cutting procedures. As discussed above, each disposable loading unit may include linear rows of staples which vary from about 30mm to about 60mm.

It will be understood that various modifications may be made to the embodiments disclosed herein. For example, the stapling apparatus need not apply staples but rather may apply two part fasteners as is known in the art. Further, the length of the linear row of staples or fasteners may be modified to meet the requirements of a particular surgical procedure. Thus, the length of a single stroke of the actuation shaft and/or the length of the linear row of staples and/or fasteners within a disposable loading unit may be varied accordingly. Therefore, the above description should not be construed as limiting, but merely as exemplifications of preferred embodiments. Those skilled in the art will envision other modifications within the scope of the claims appended thereto.

The embodiments of the present invention for which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. An articulation mechanism comprising:

a housing;

a rotatable shaft having an inner end and an outer end, the shaft extending through the housing;

an articulation member mounted on the outer end of the shaft;

a rotatable plate, positioned within the housing, and affixed to the inner end of the shaft, the rotatable plate defining a spiral slot;

a translation member mounted for longitudinal movement within the housing; and

a pin assembly affixed to the translation member and extending into the spiral slot such that rotation of the rotatable plate effects longitudinal movement of the translation member within the housing.

2. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 1, wherein the spiral slot is formed in the shape of an Archimedes spiral.

3. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 1, wherein the spiral slot provides reduced longitudinal movement of the translation member per degree of angular rotation of the rotatable shaft near a neutral position of the articulation member than further from the neutral position of the articulation member.

4. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 1, wherein the plate is a disk having a plurality of teeth.

5. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 3, wherein the housing includes a spring loaded slide, engageable with the teeth on the disk, to provide audible and/or tactile indications of rotation of the disk.

6. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 5, wherein the plurality of teeth are formed on an outer periphery of the disk.

7. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 1, wherein the rotatable plate includes a recess and the housing includes a spring loaded member, engageable within the recess, to releasably retain the articulation member in a neutral position.

8. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 1, wherein the translation member includes structure for engagement with an articulation structure of a surgical instrument.

9. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 1, wherein the housing is a rotatable member configured for use with a surgical instrument.

10. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 9, wherein the housing includes a receptacle to receive the rotatable plate.

11. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 10, wherein the housing includes a mechanism cover, affixed to the receptacle, and supporting the rotatable shaft.

12. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 10, wherein the rotatable shaft extends through the mechanism cover and further comprising an articulation lever mounted on the outer end of the shaft.

13. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 10, further comprising indexing elements formed on the rotatable plate and provided within the receptacle.

14. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 13, wherein the indexing elements include a plurality of teeth on an outer periphery of the rotatable plate.

15. The articulation mechanism as recited in claim 14, wherein the indexing elements further include a spring loaded slide supported on the rotatable member.

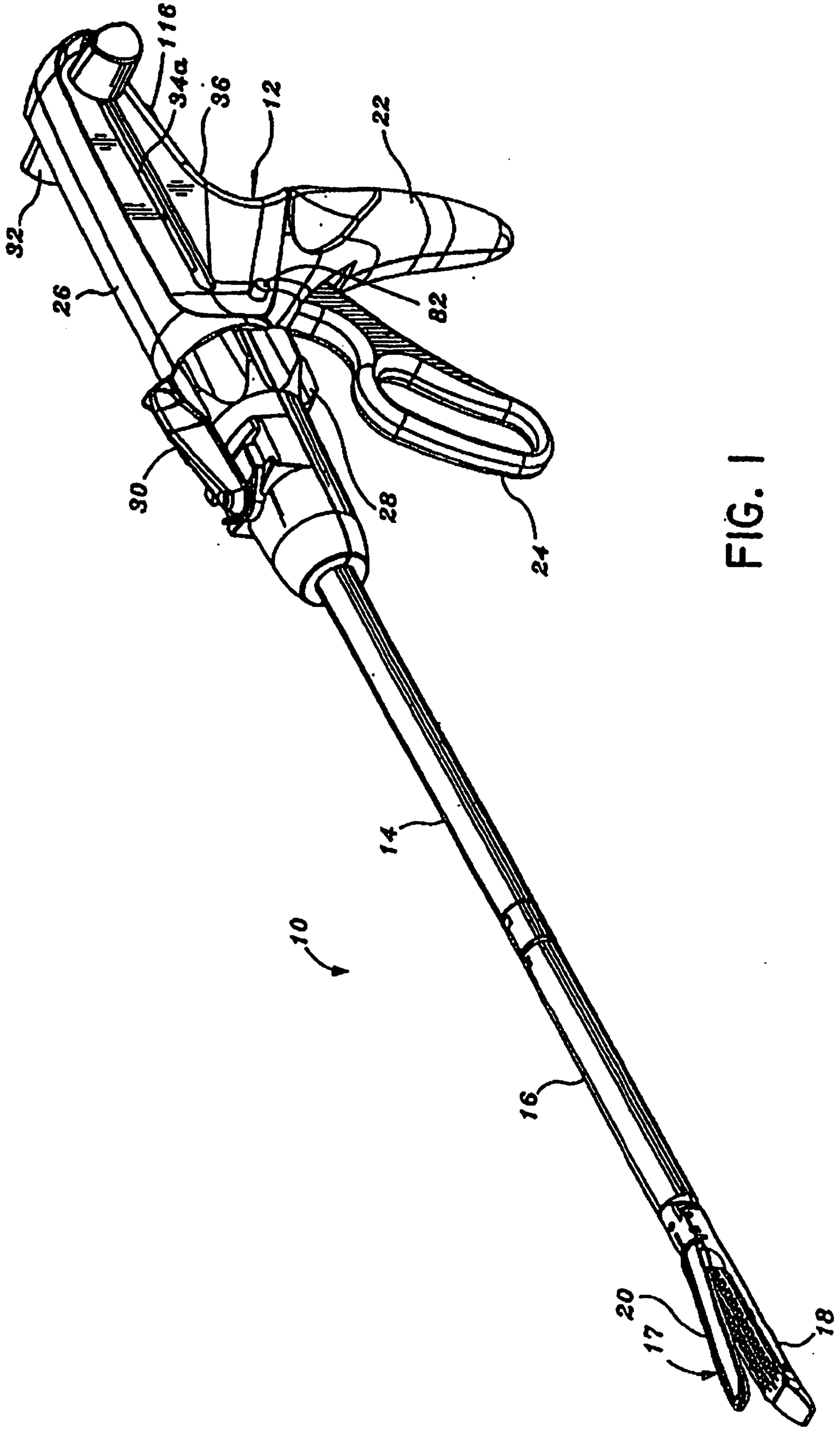

FIG. 1

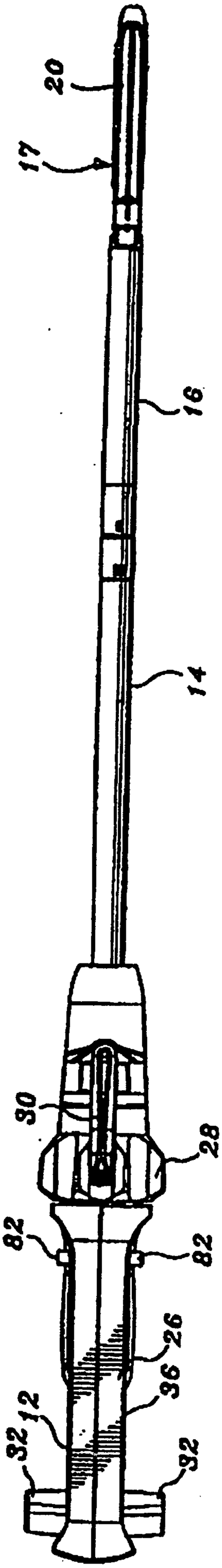
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FIG. 2

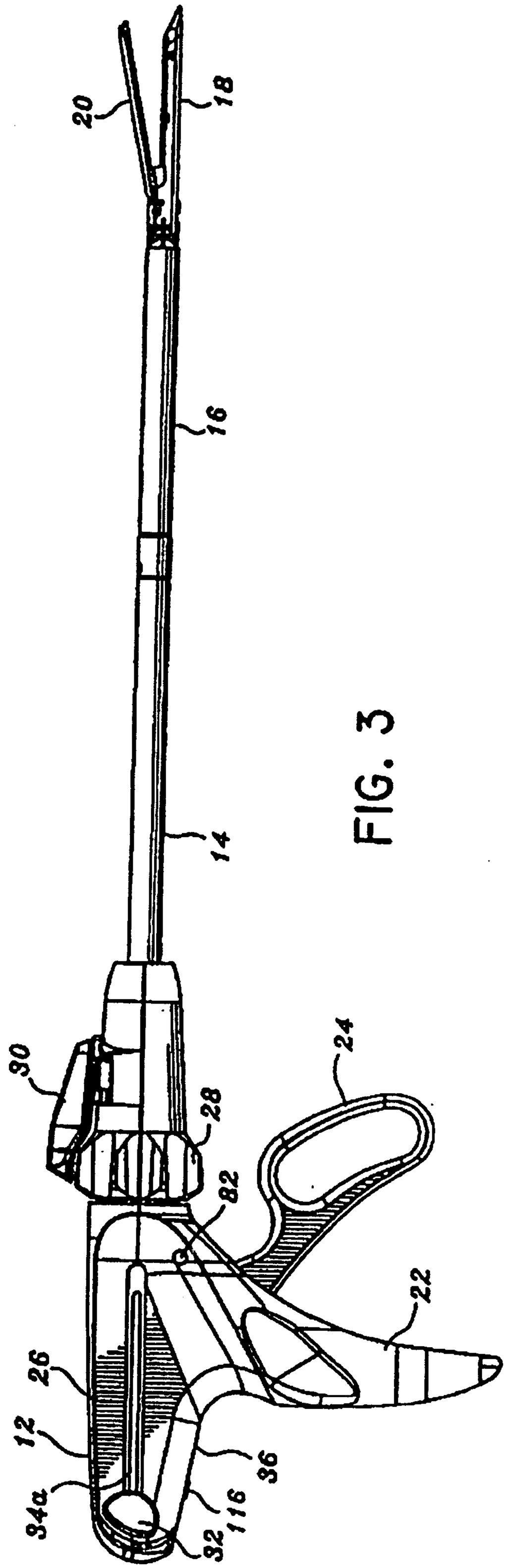
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FIG. 3

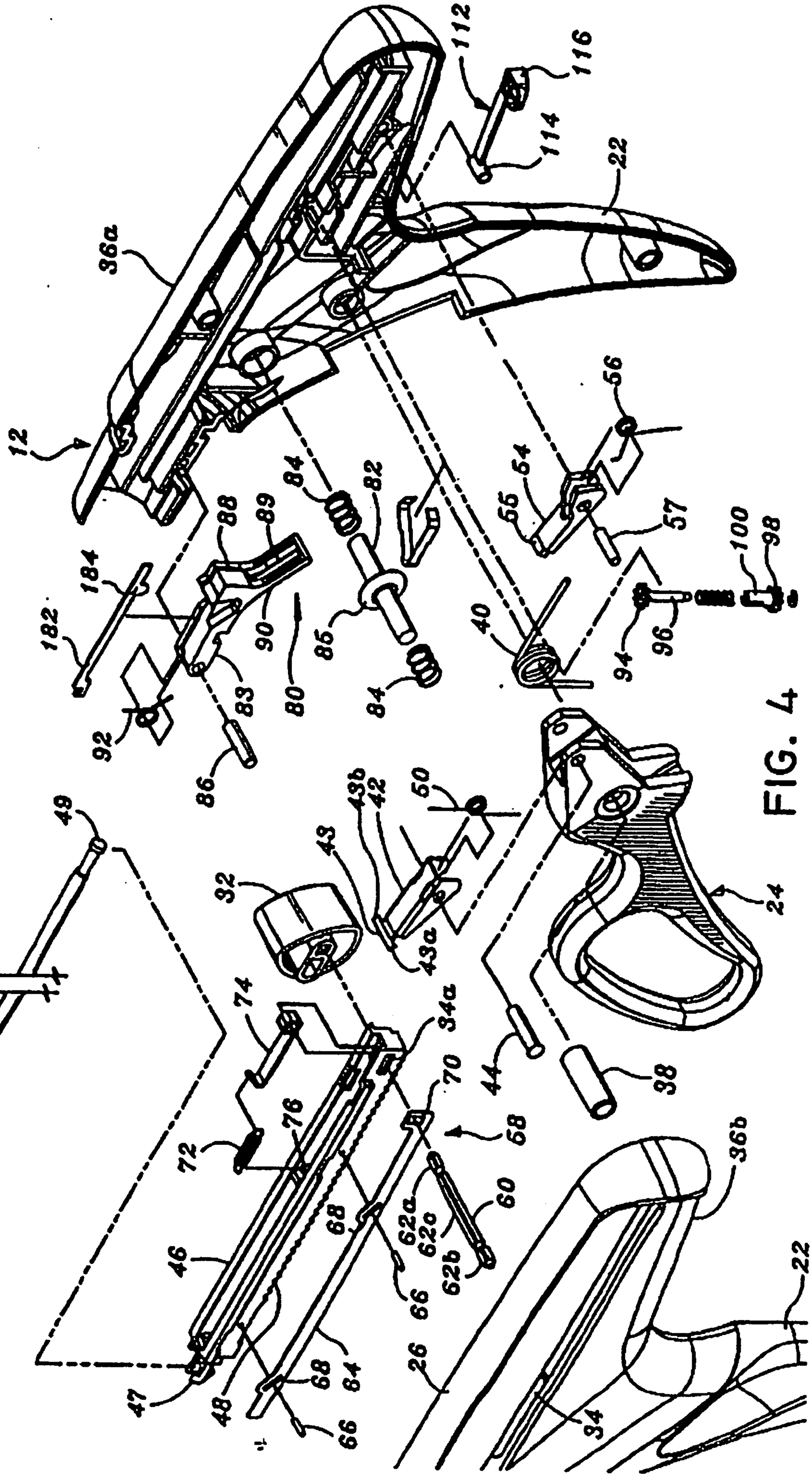
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FIG. 4

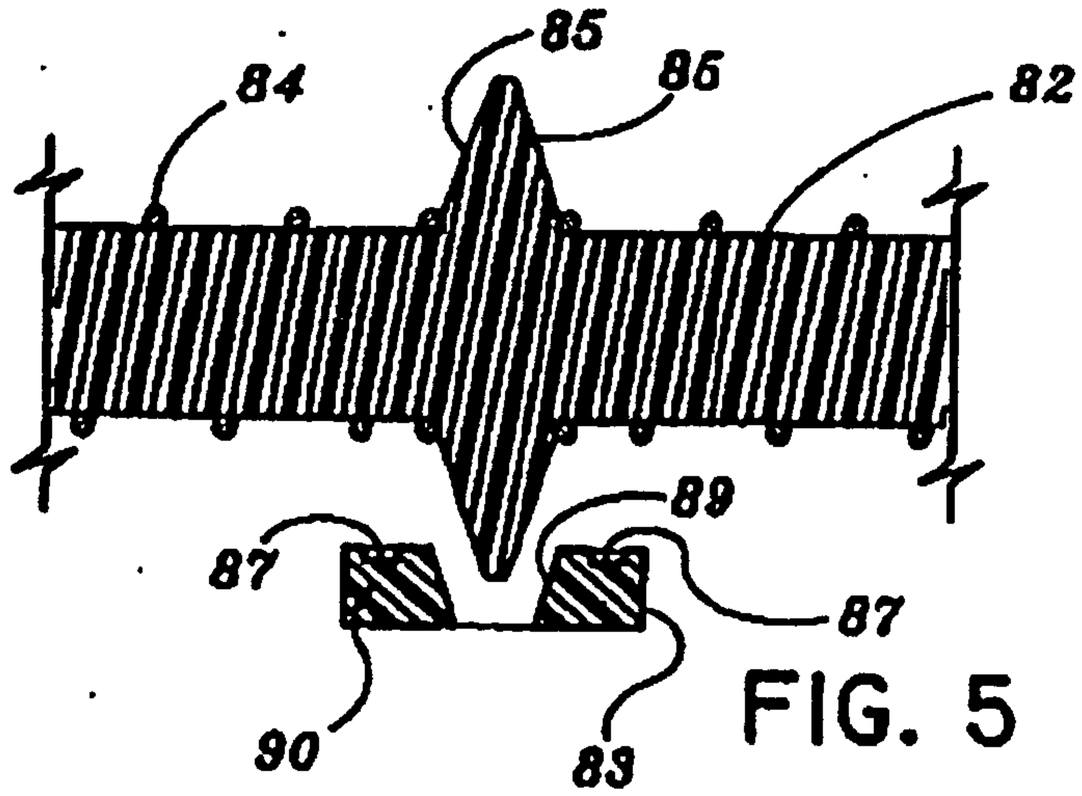

FIG. 5

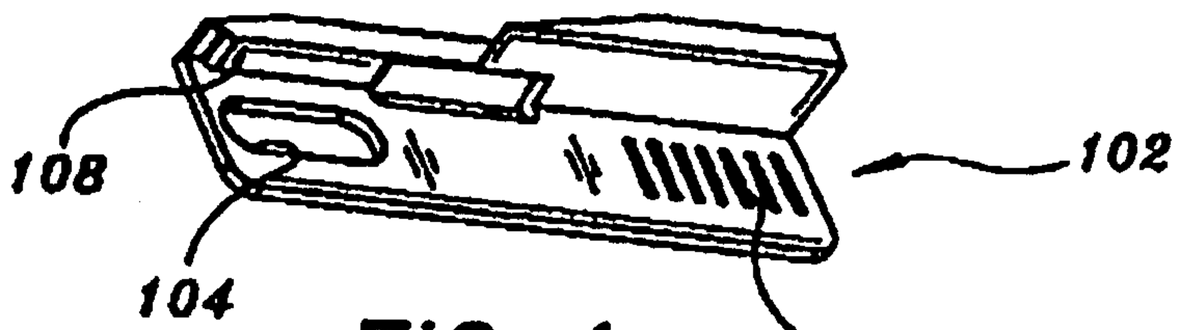

FIG. 6

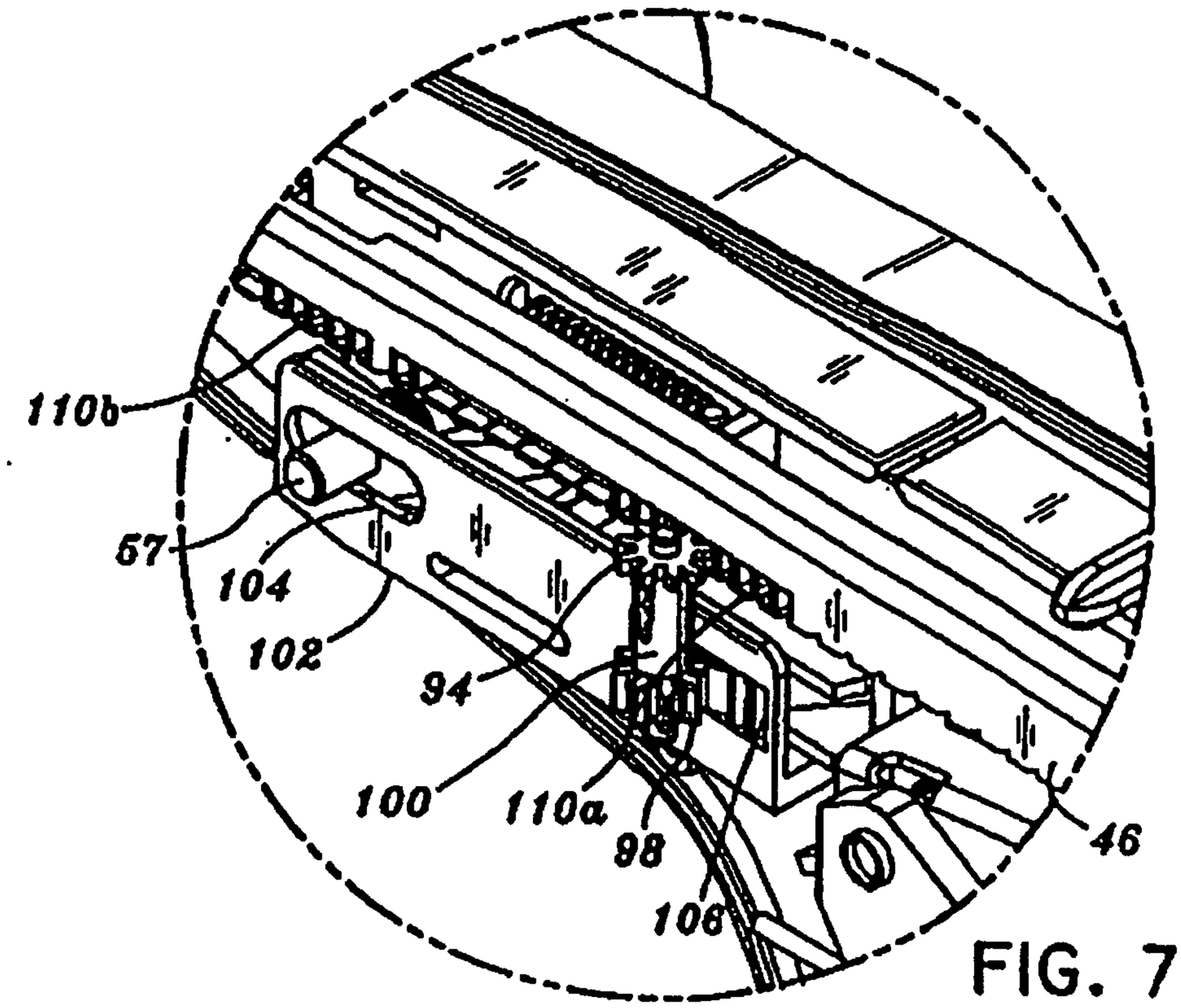

FIG. 7

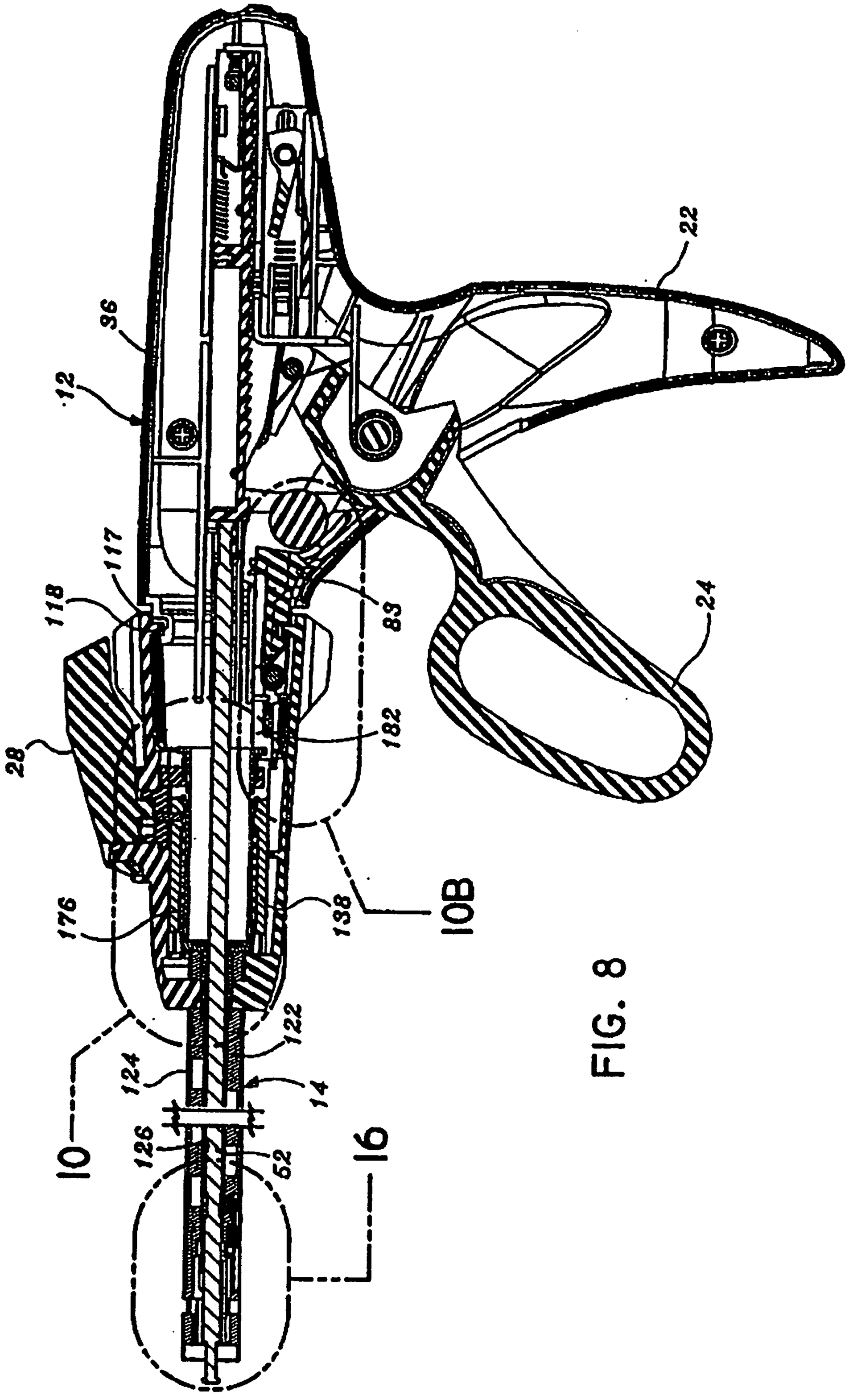

FIG. 8

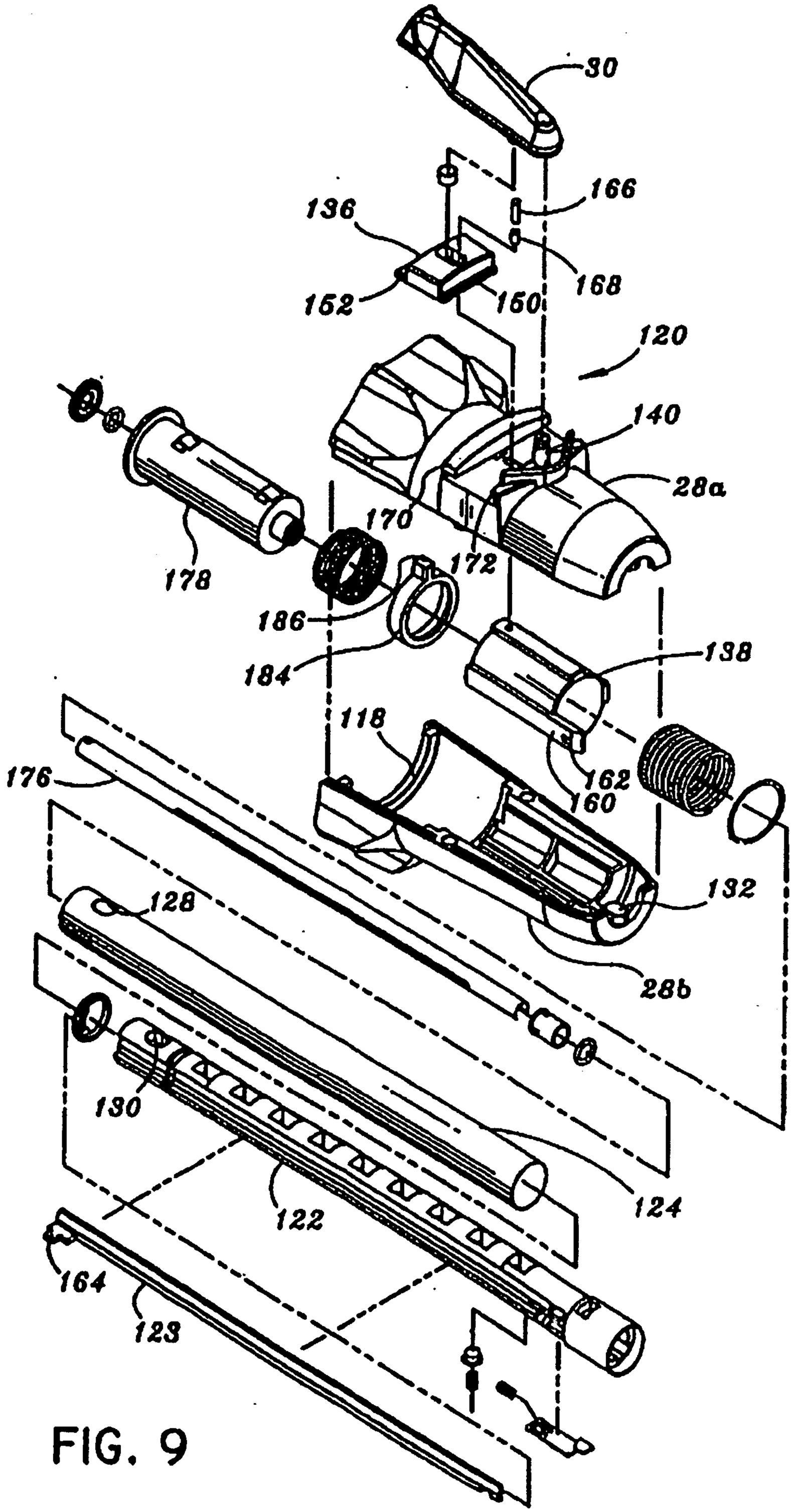
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FIG. 9

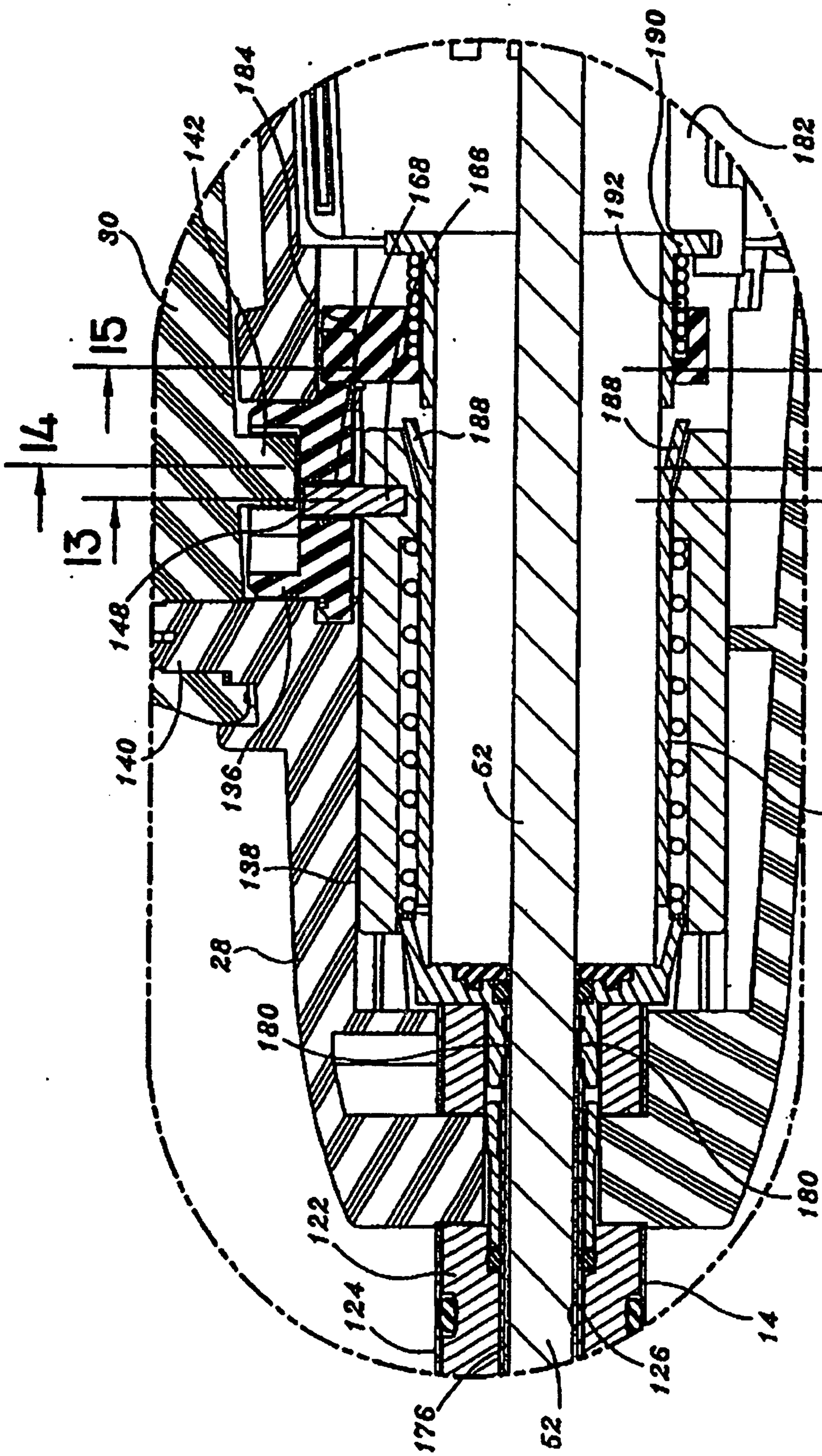
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FIG. 10

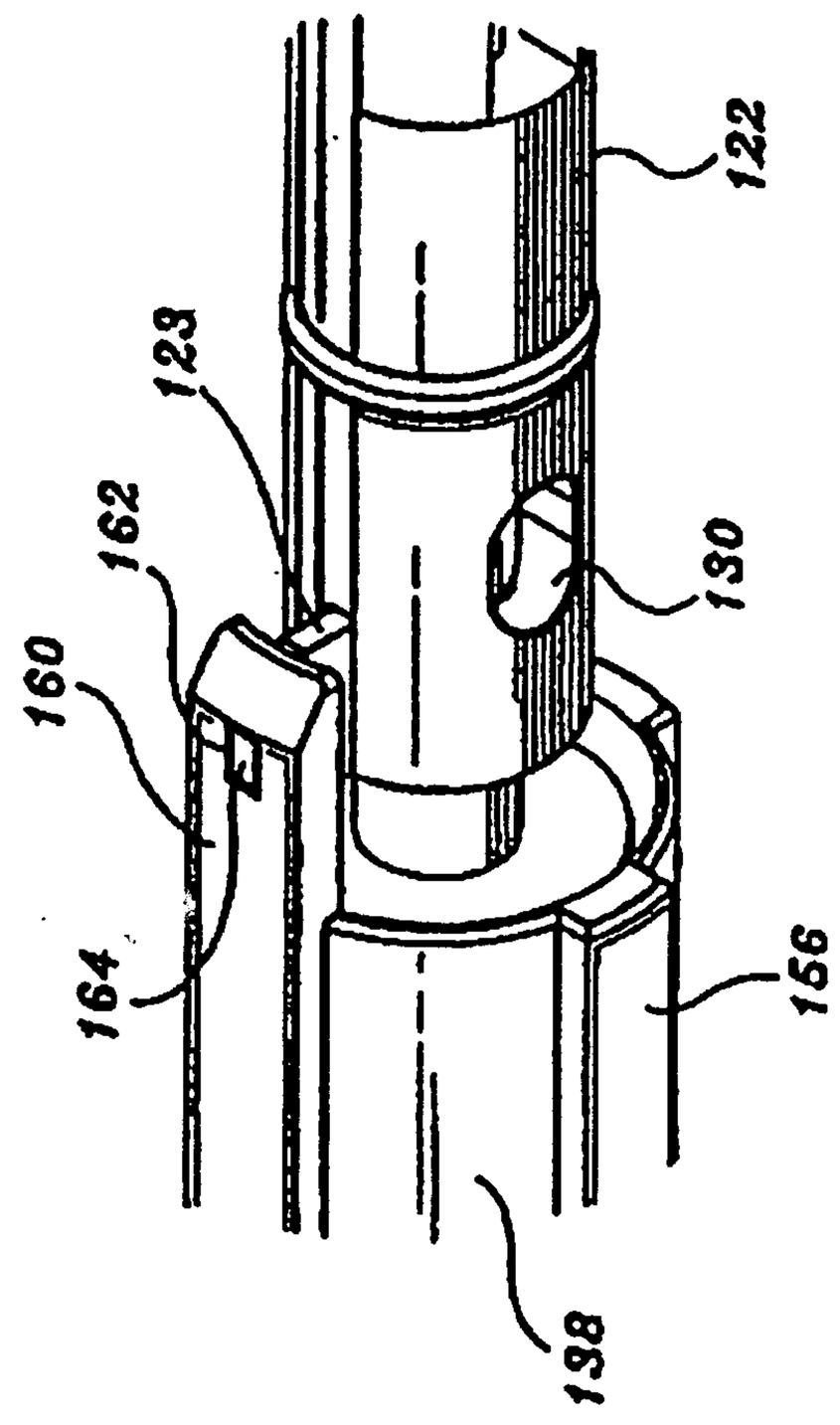

FIG. 10A

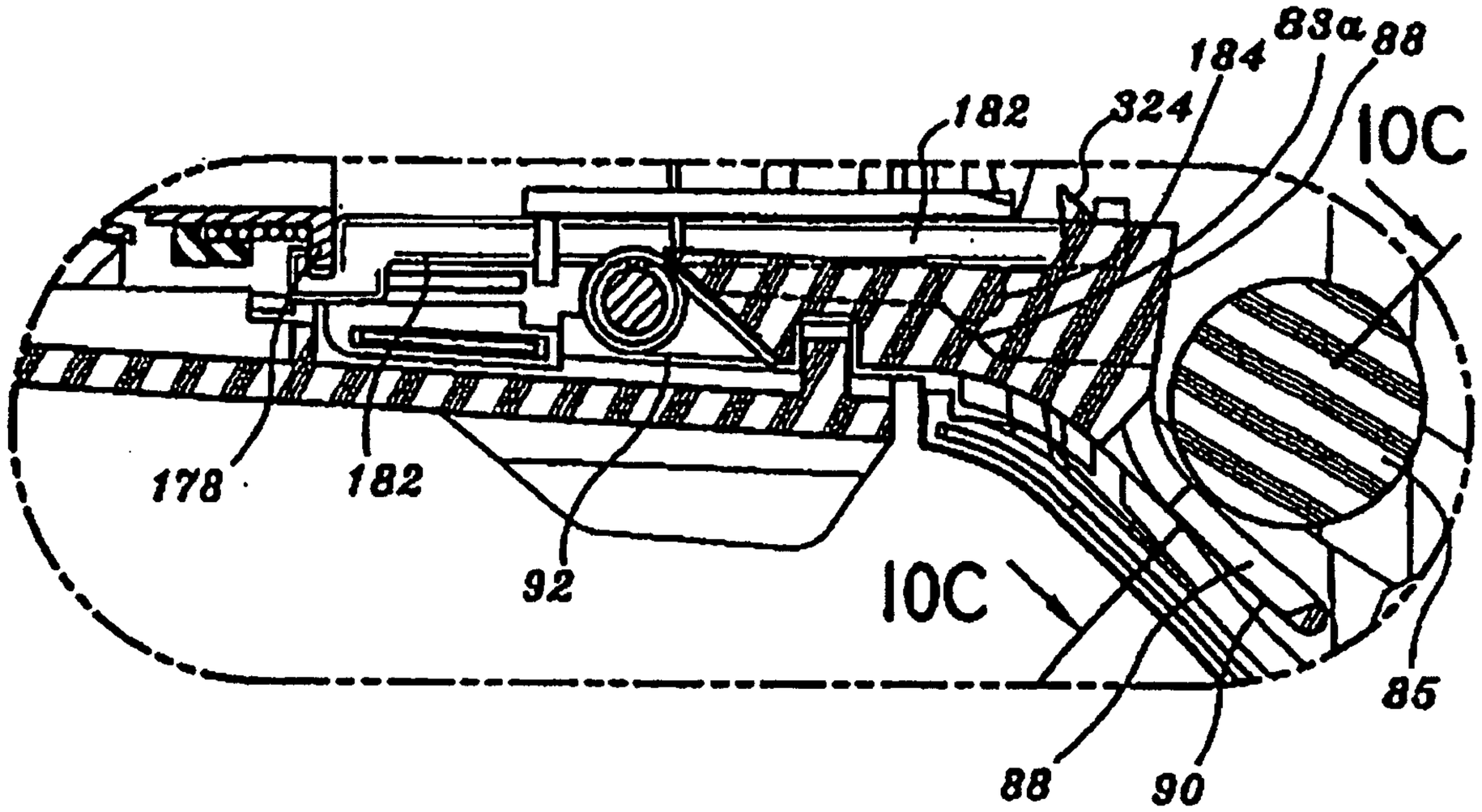

FIG. 10B

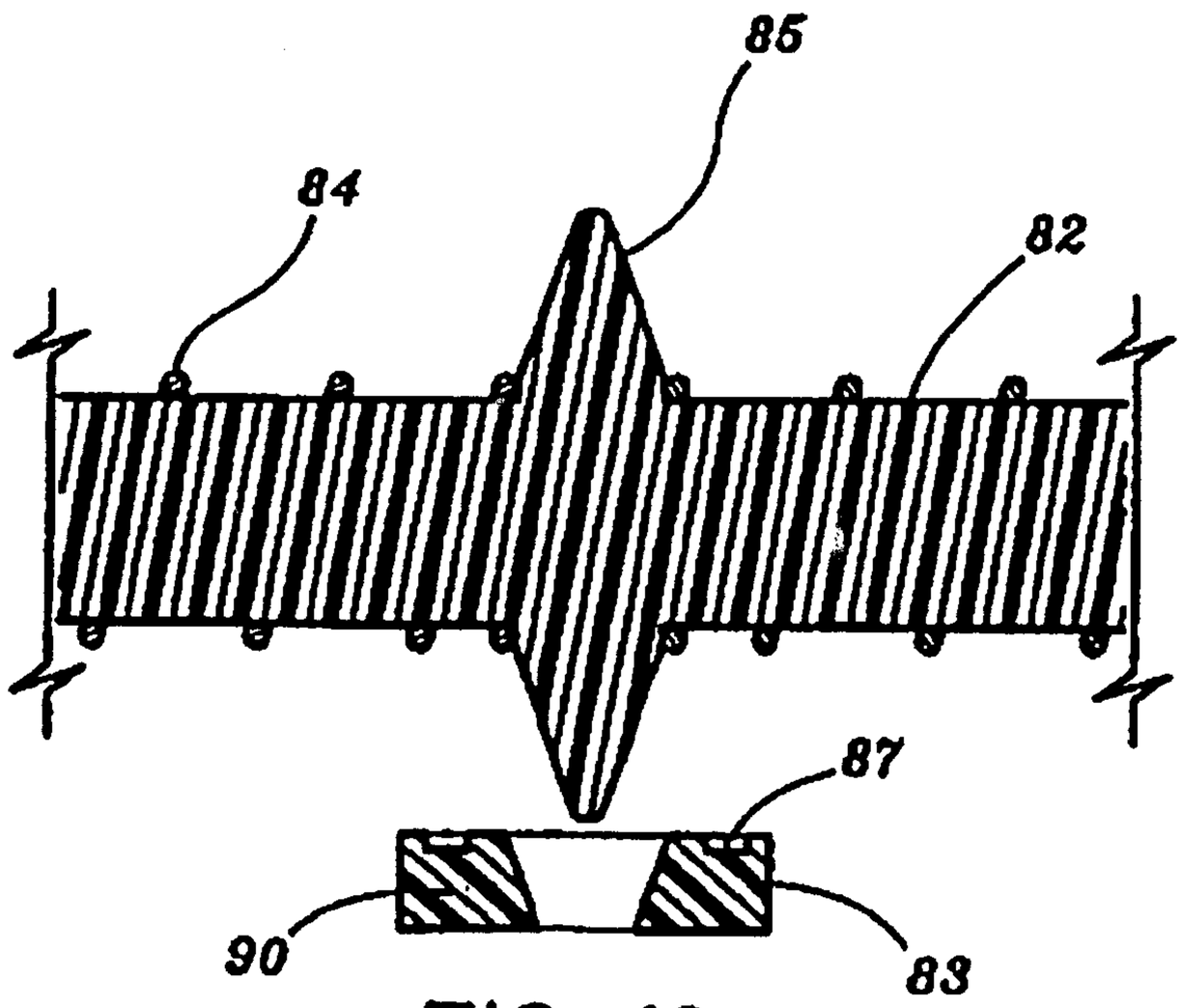

FIG. 10C

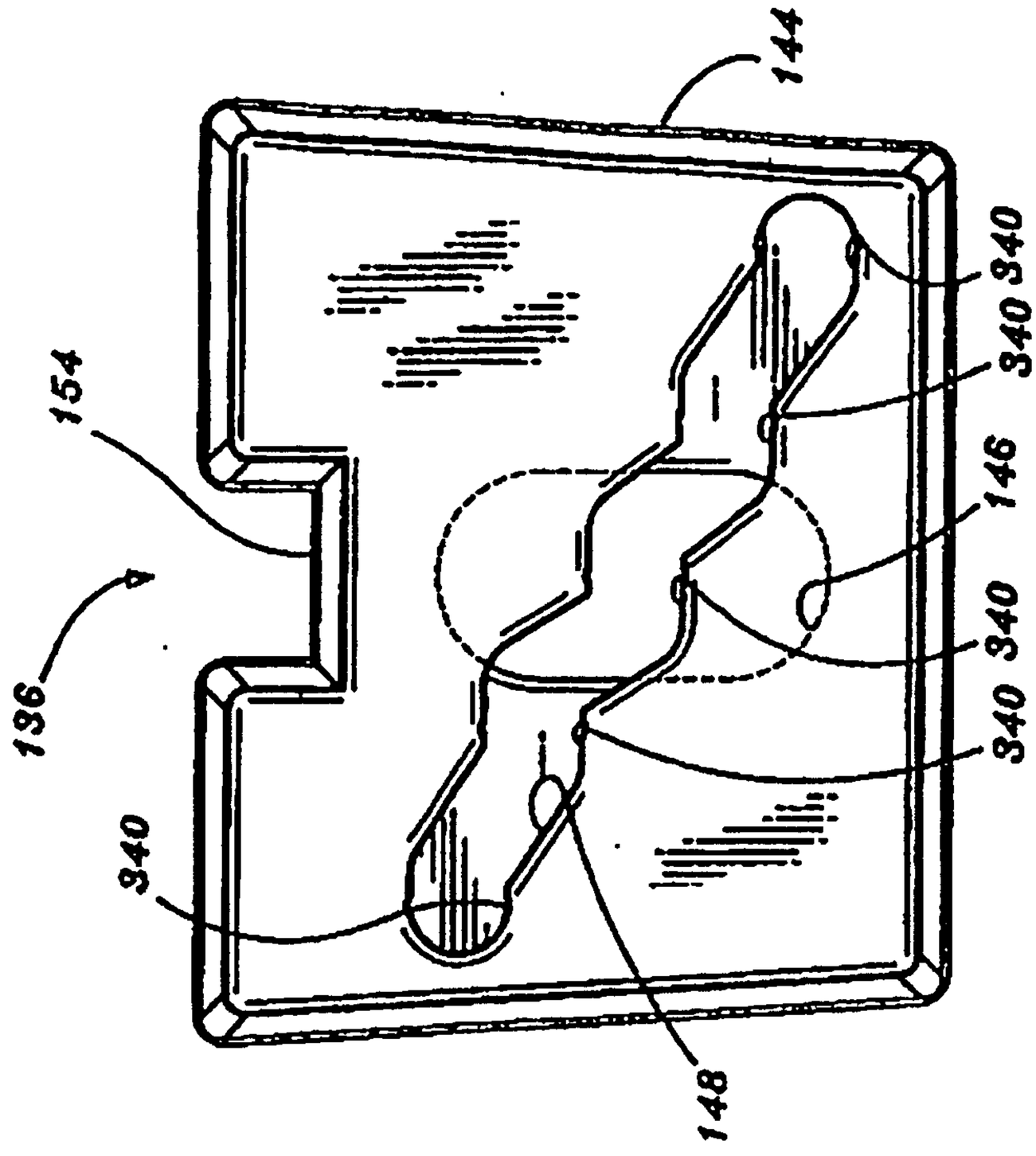

FIG. 12

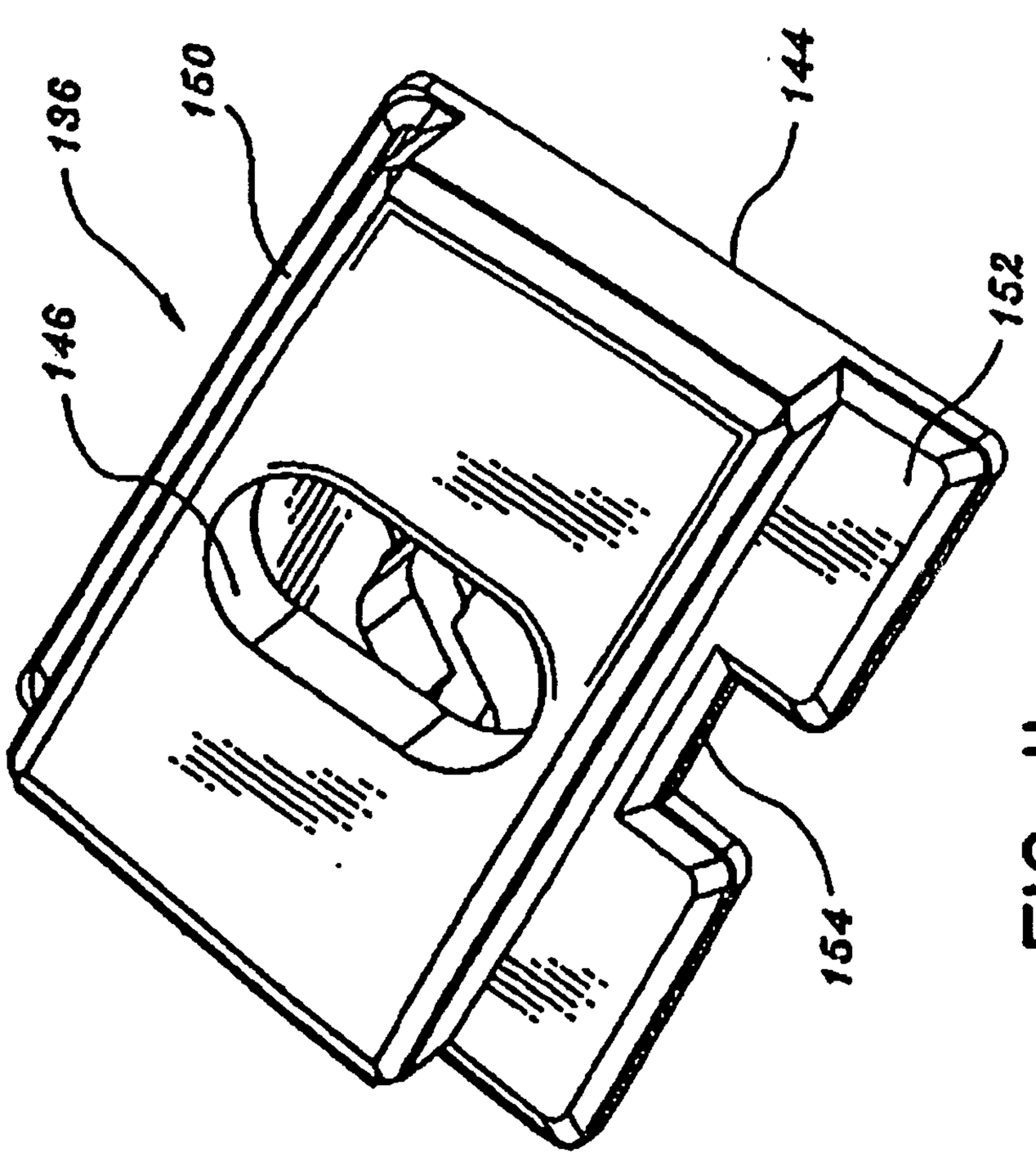

FIG. 11

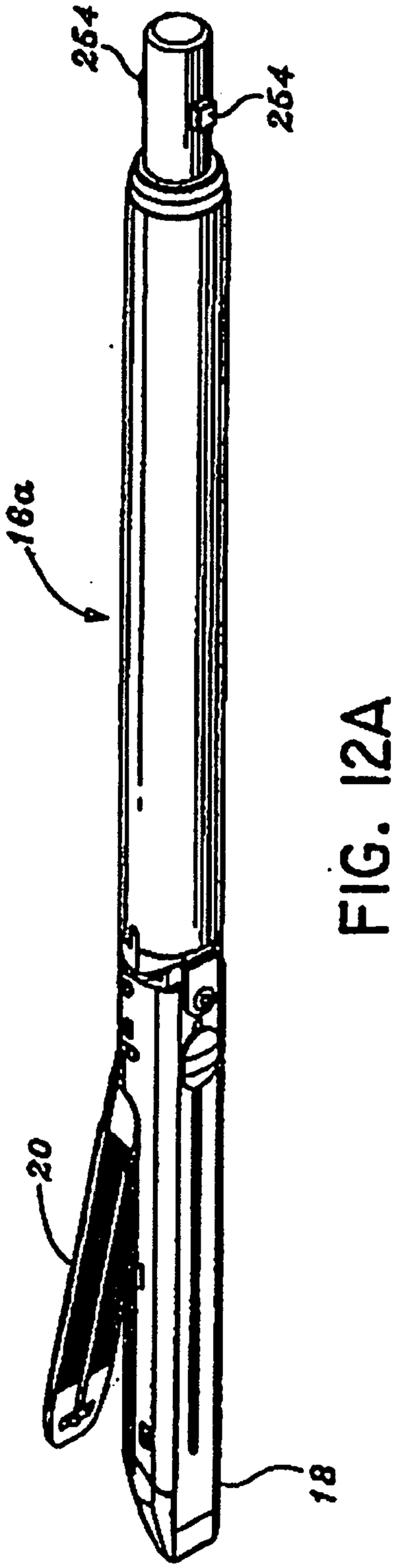

FIG. 12A

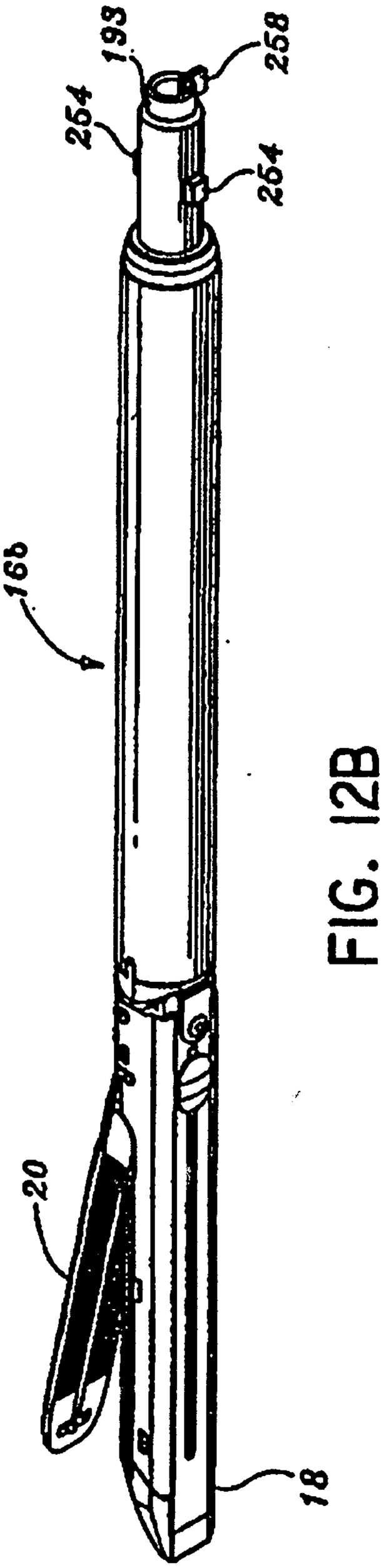

FIG. 12B

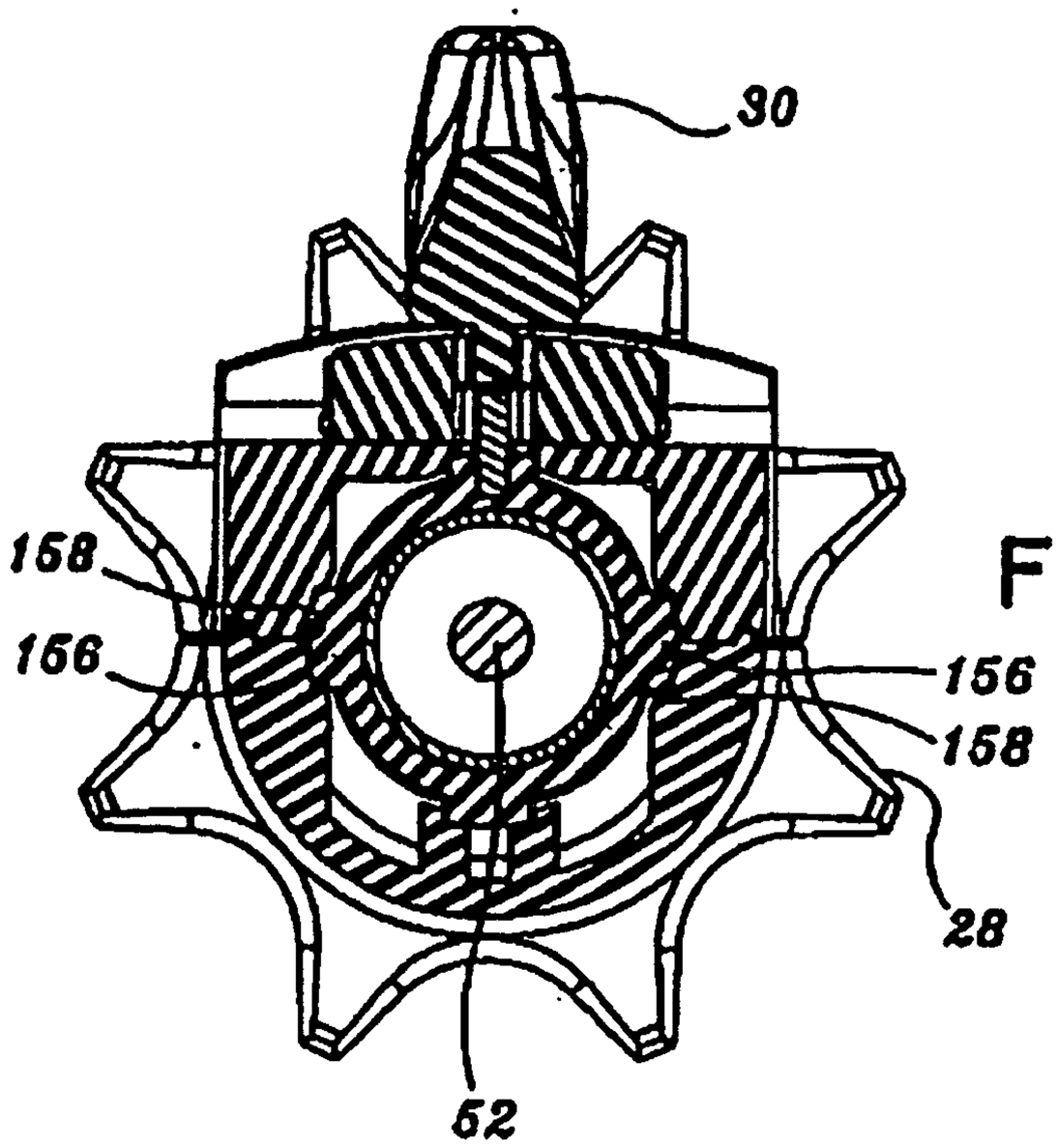

FIG. 13

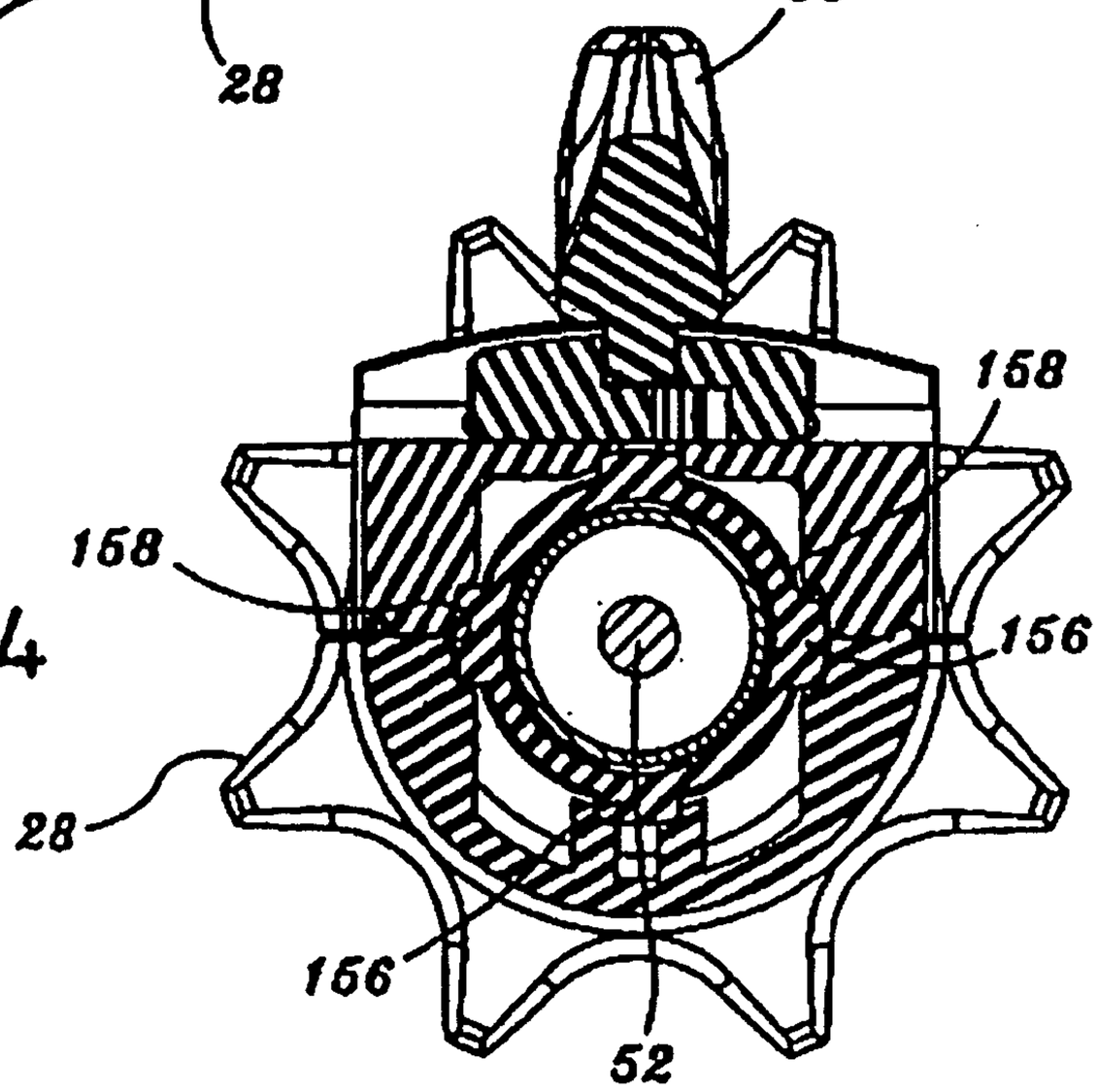

FIG. 14

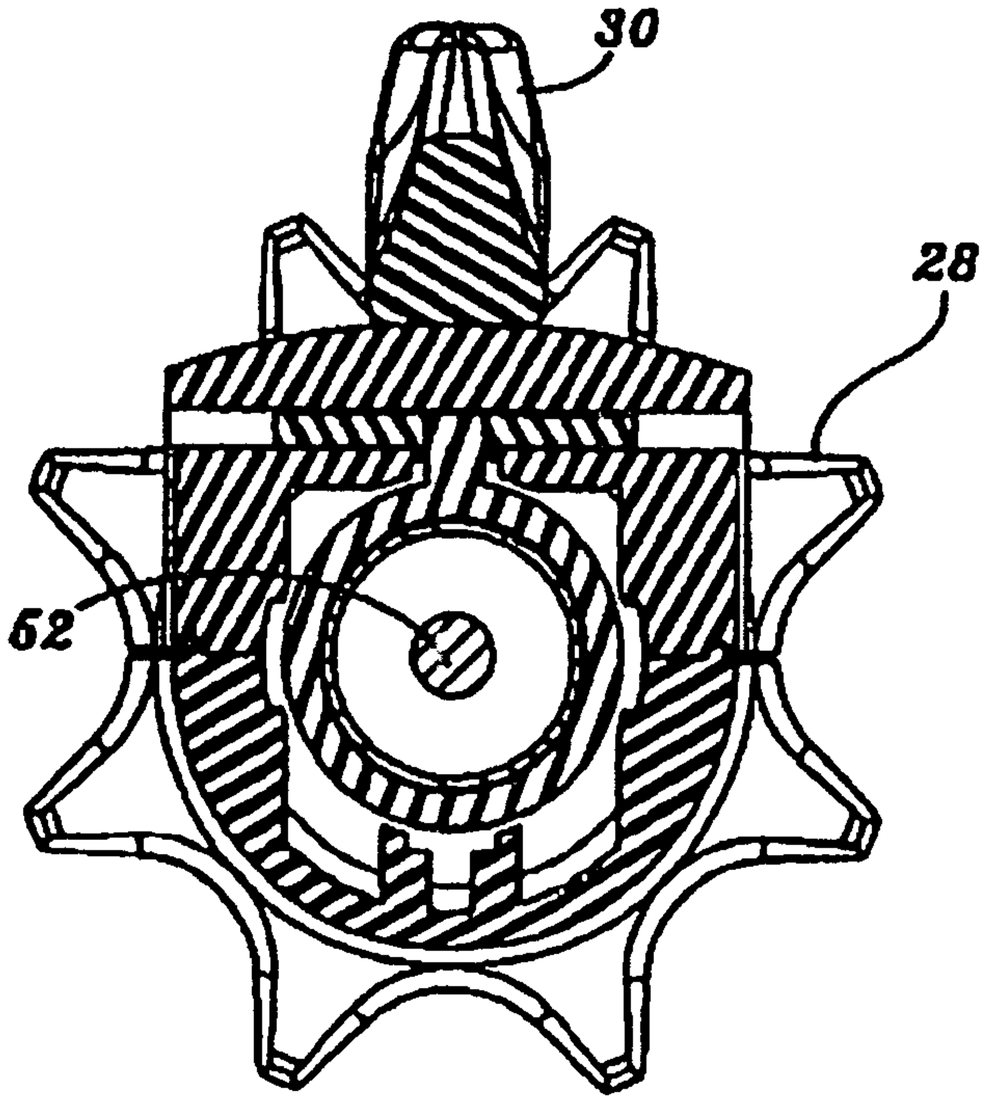

FIG. 15

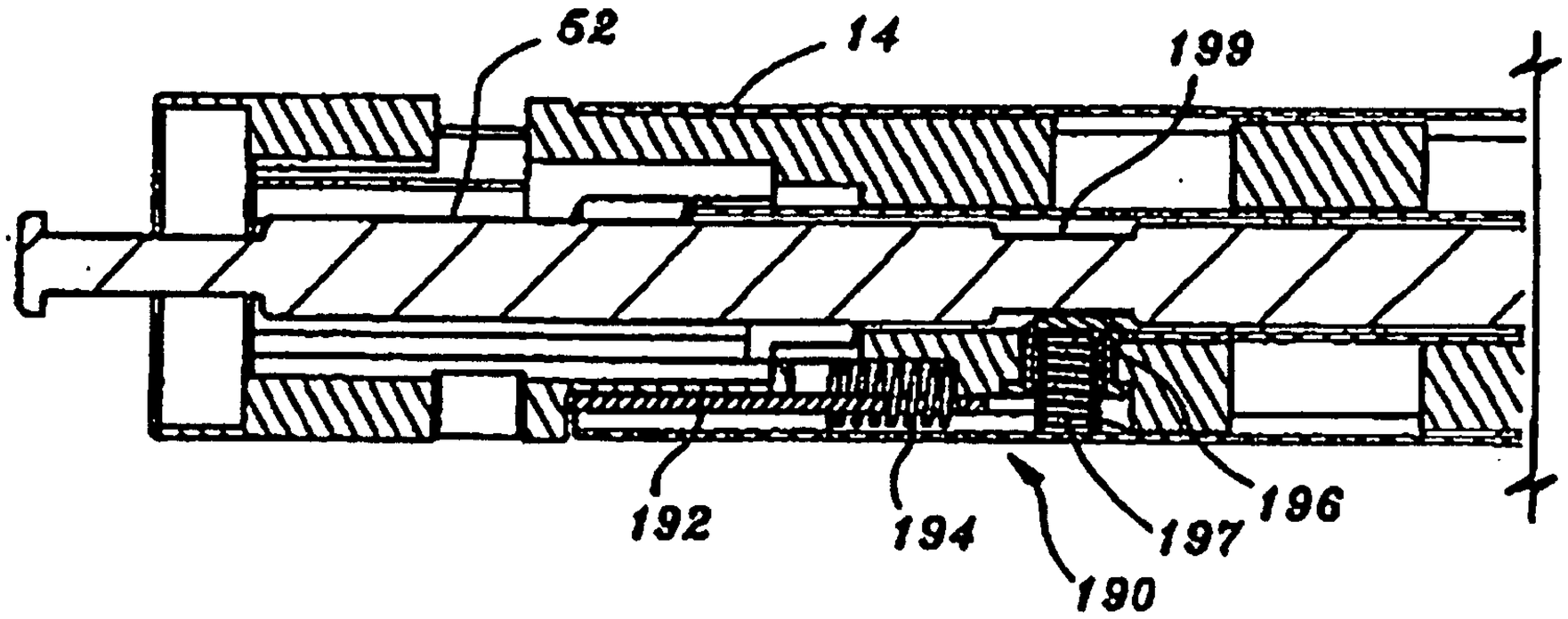

FIG. 16

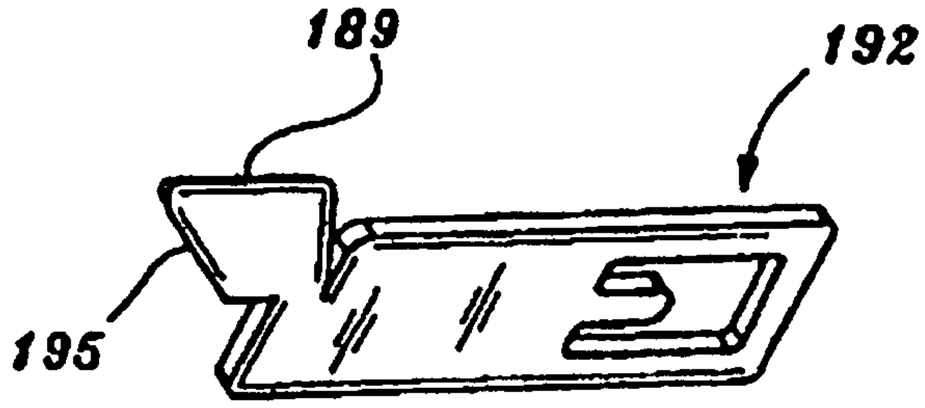

FIG. 17

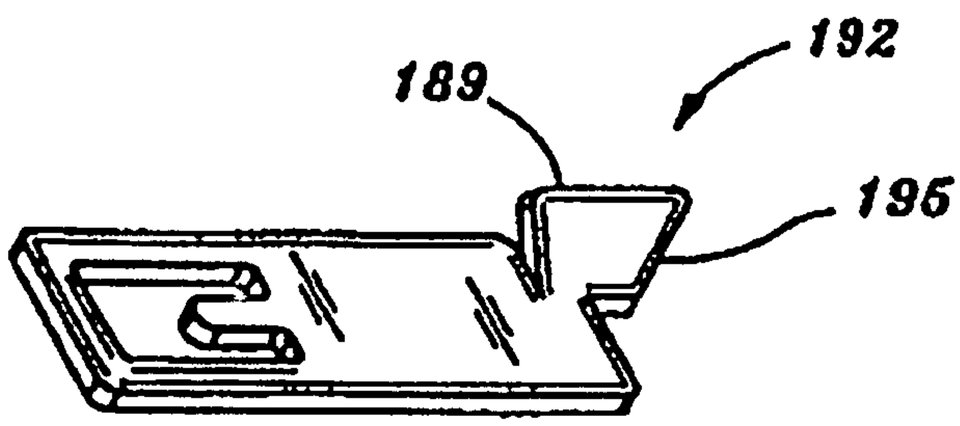

FIG. 18

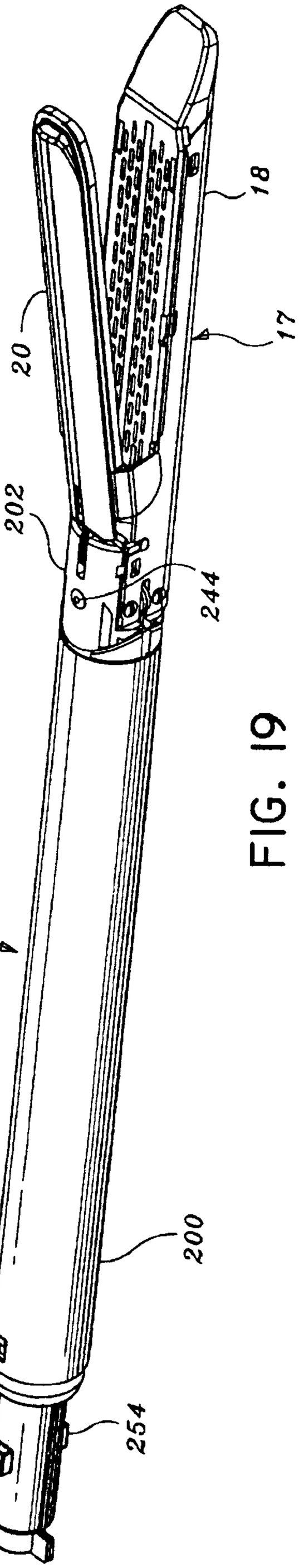

FIG. 19

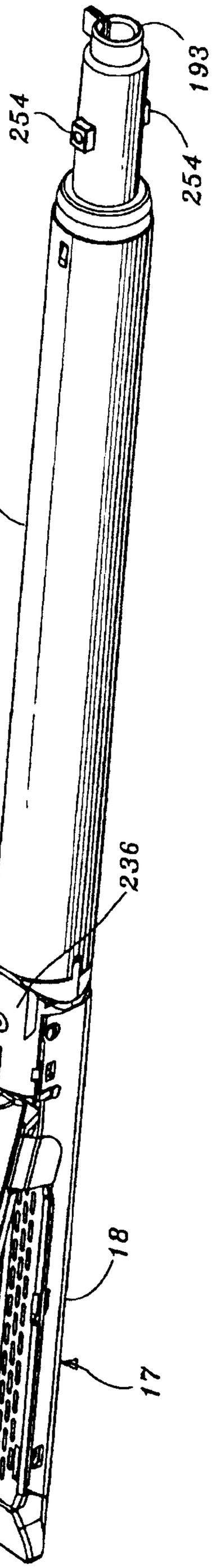

FIG. 20

FIG. 21

FIG. 22

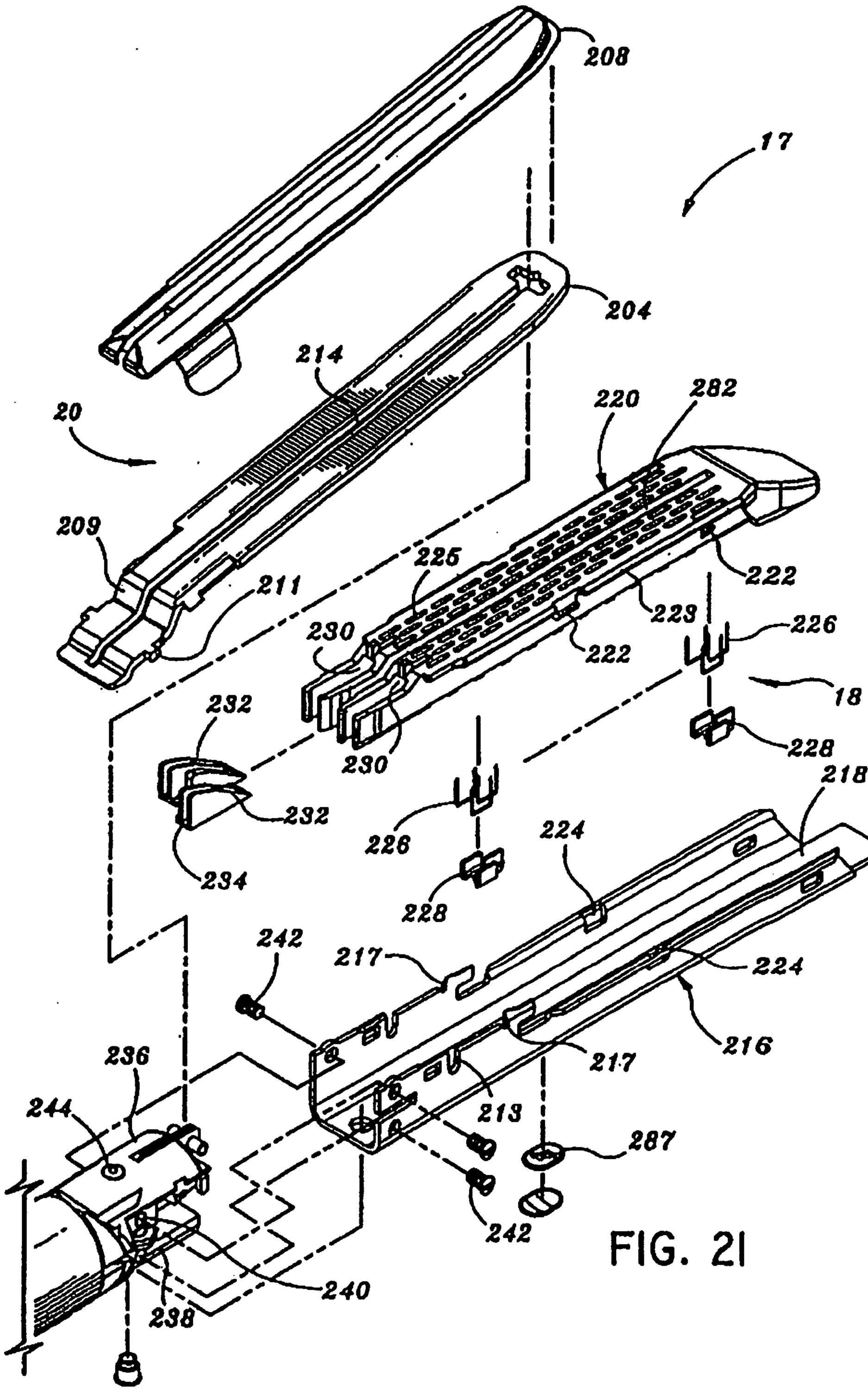
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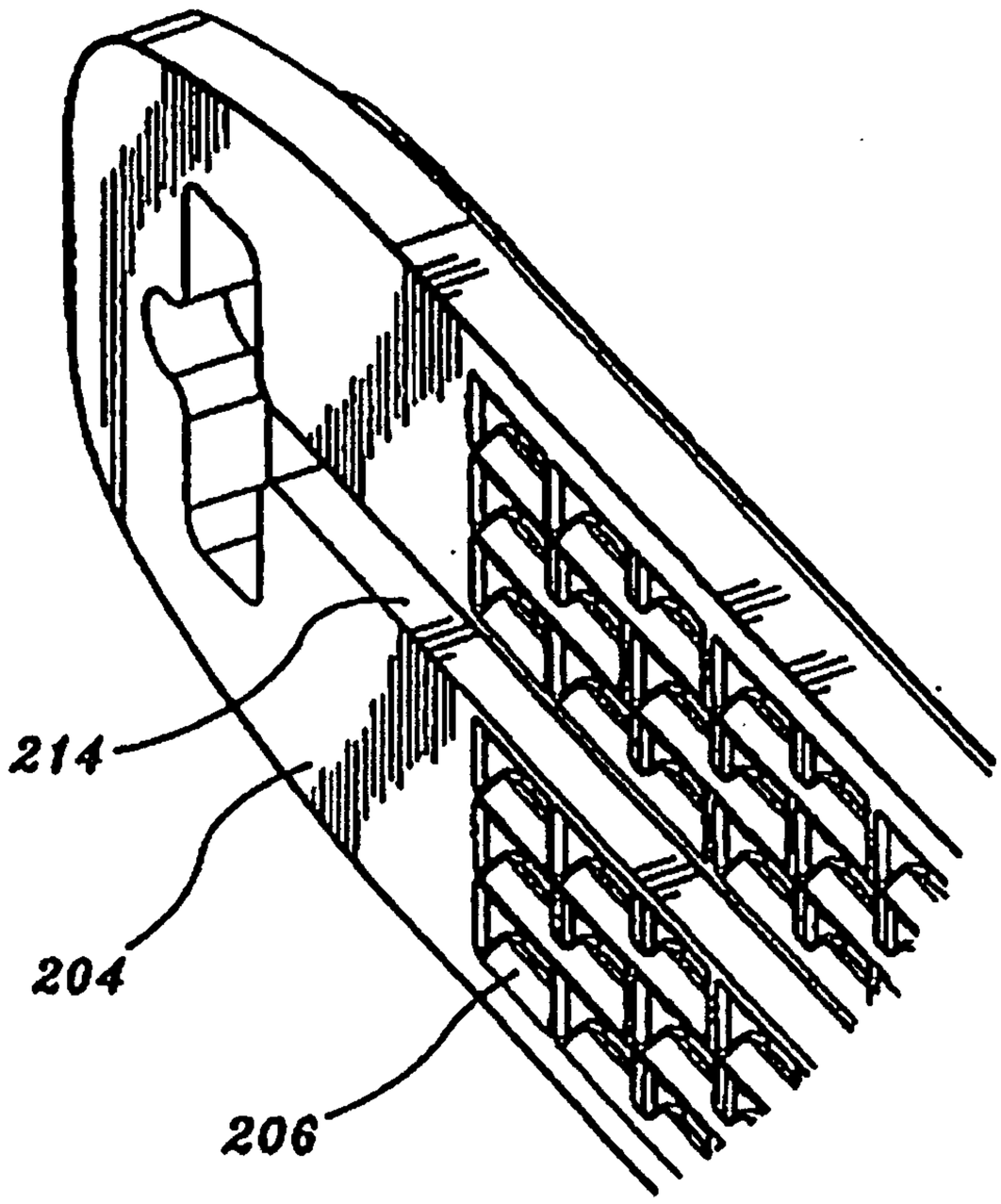
FIG. 21



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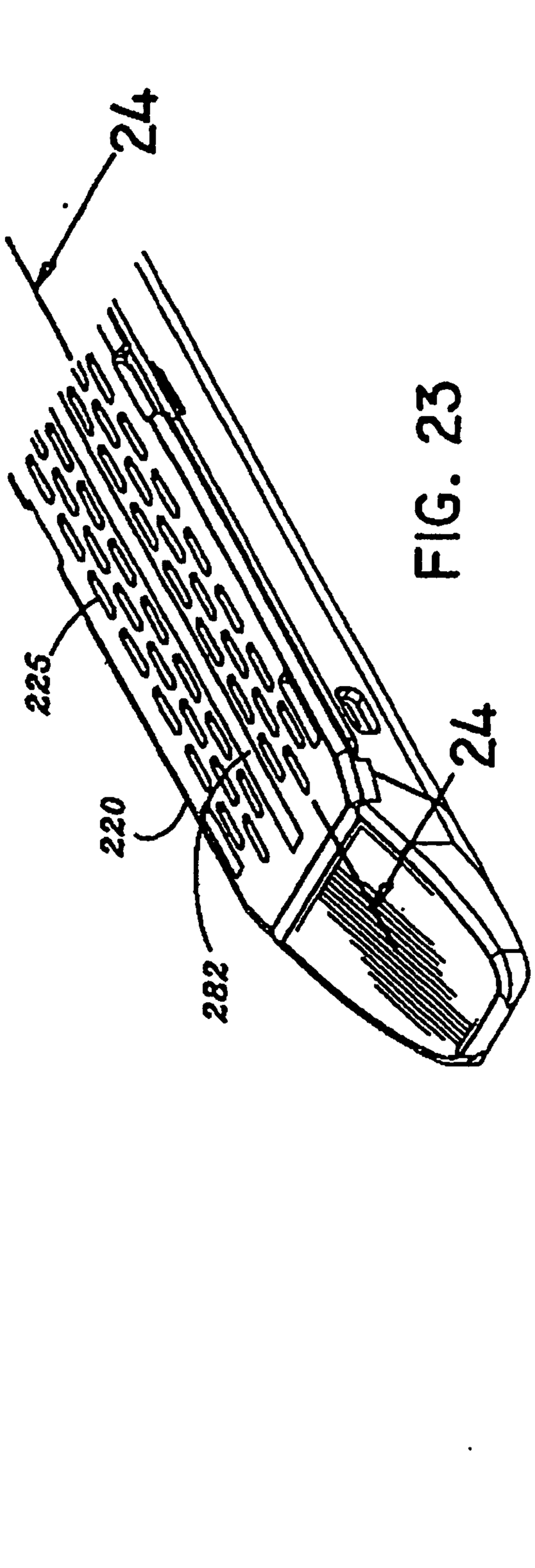
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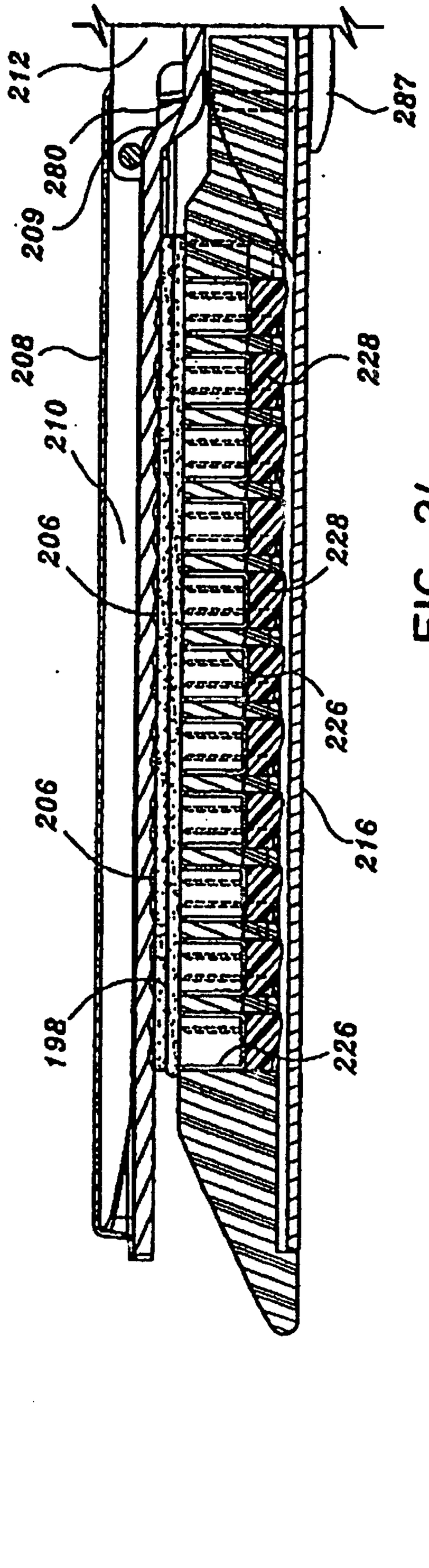
FIG. 23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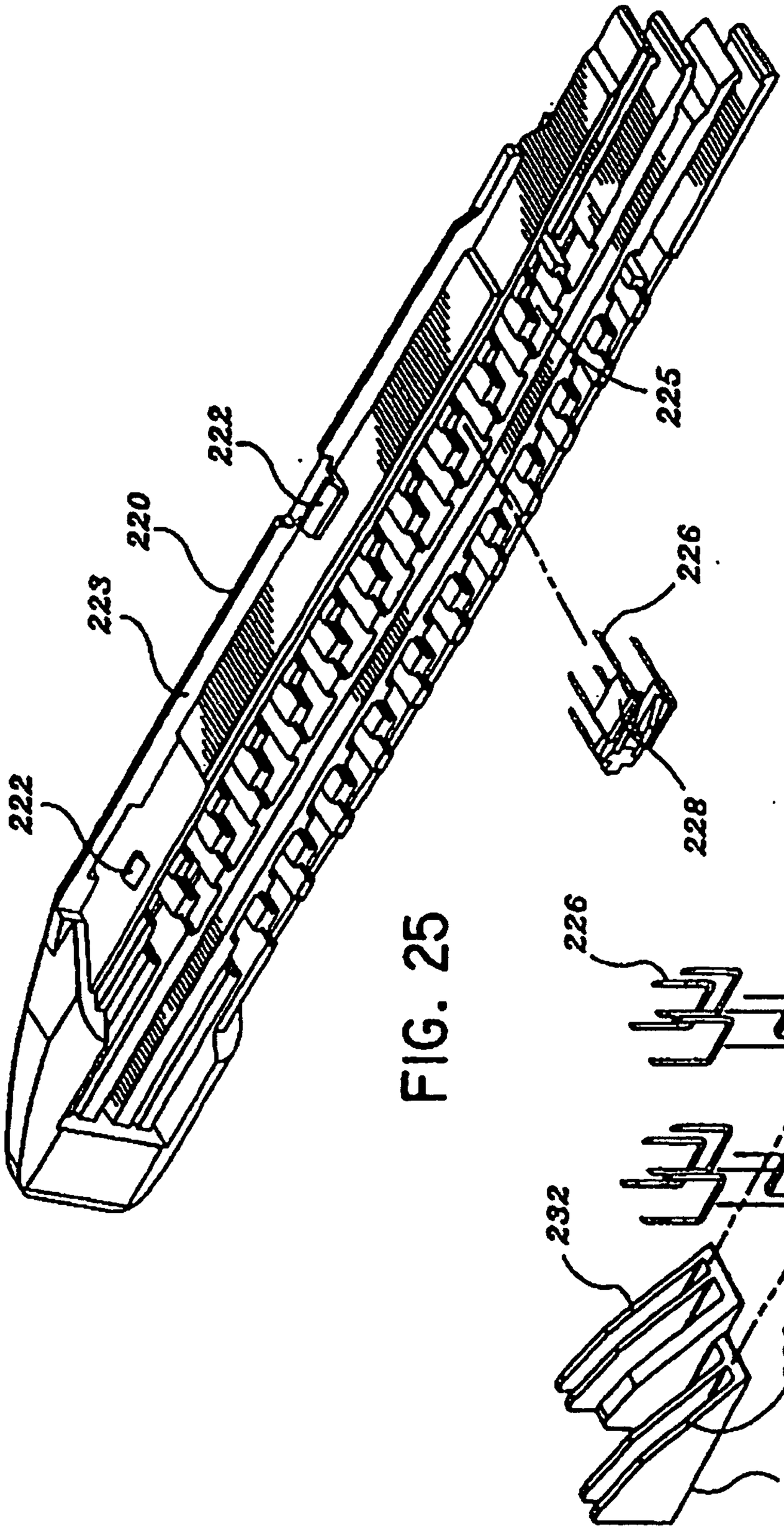
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FIG. 25

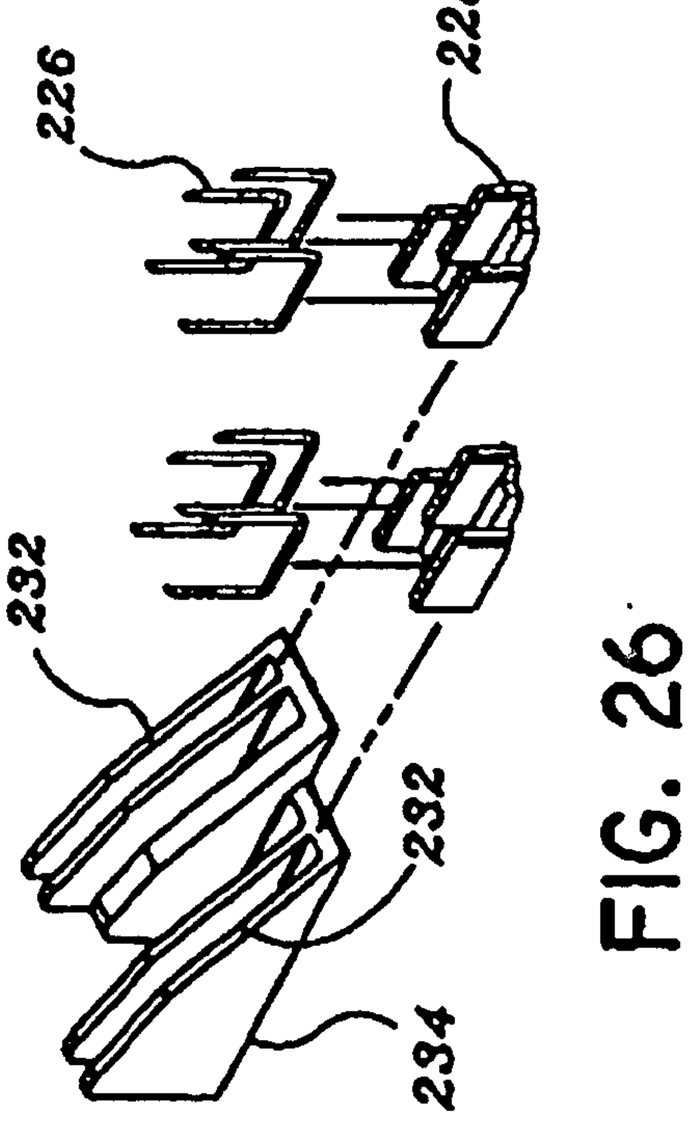
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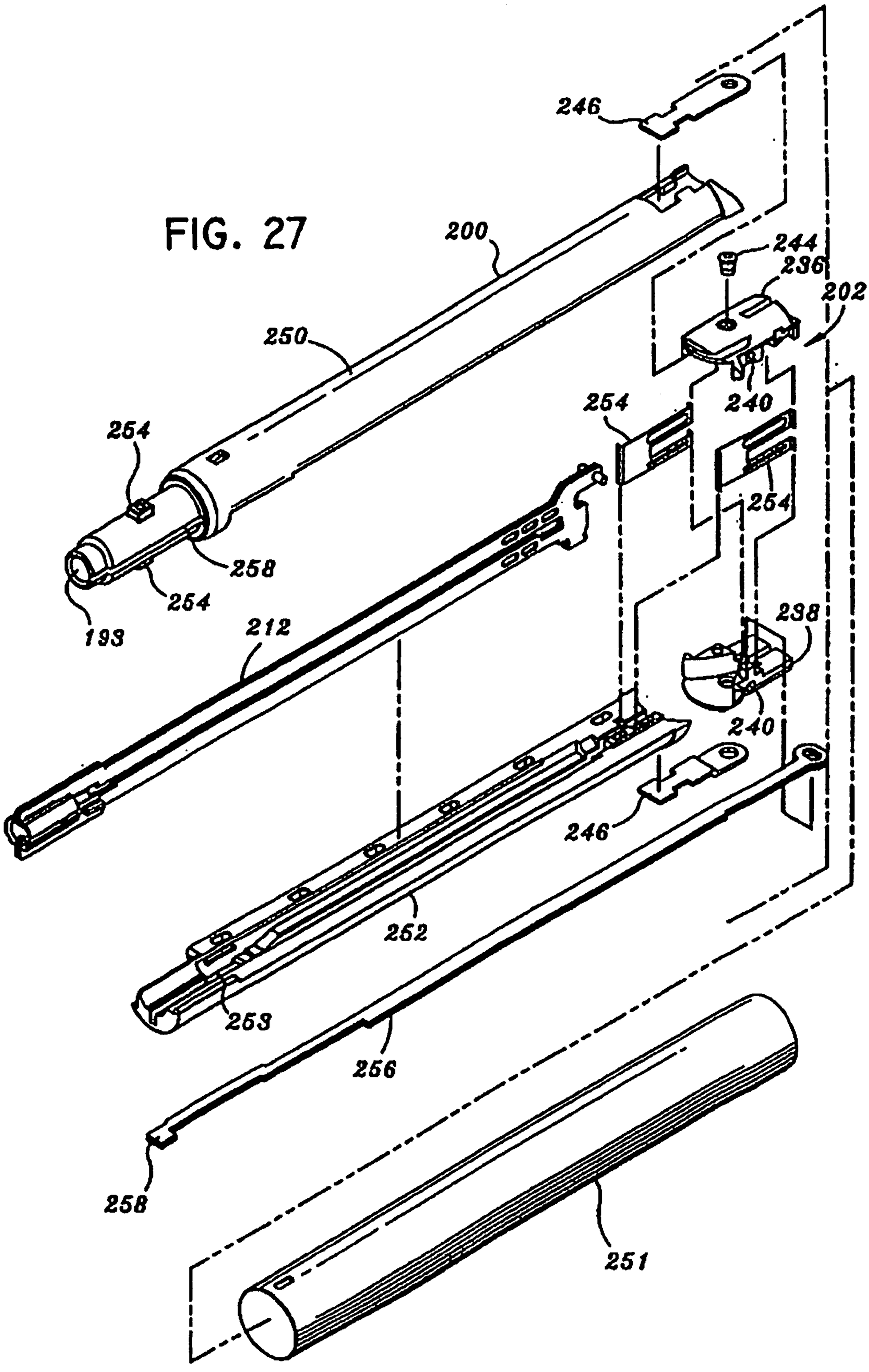
FIG. 26

FIG. 27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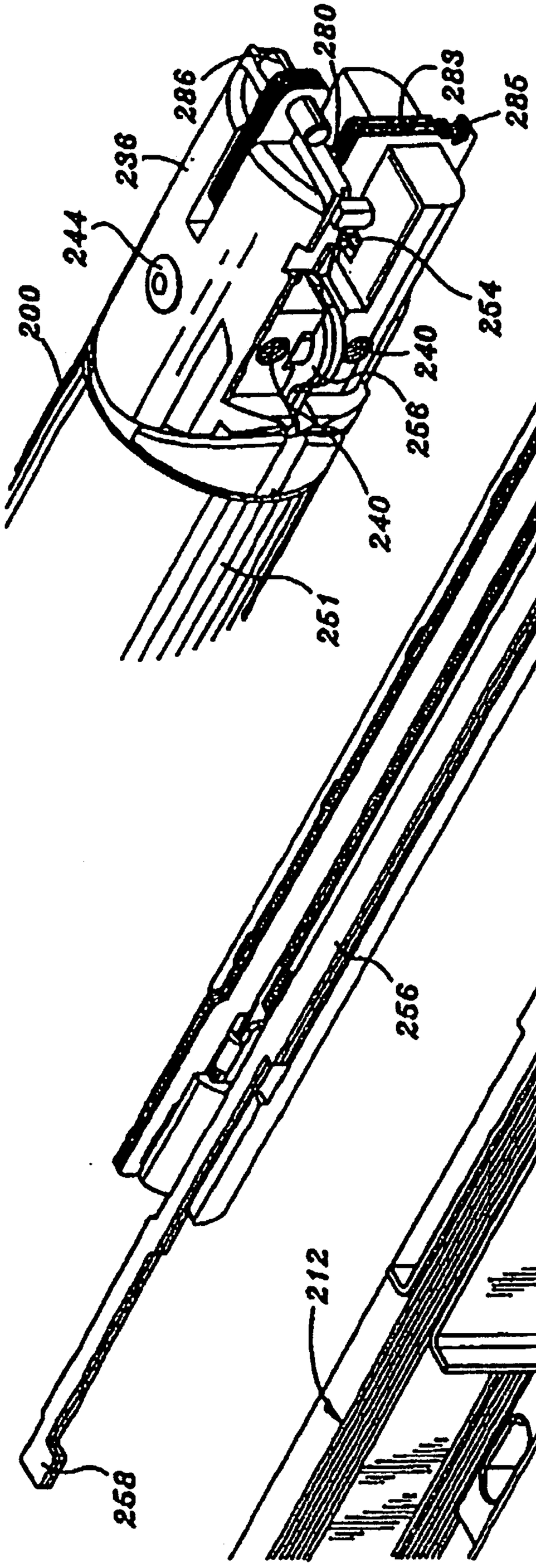

FIG. 28

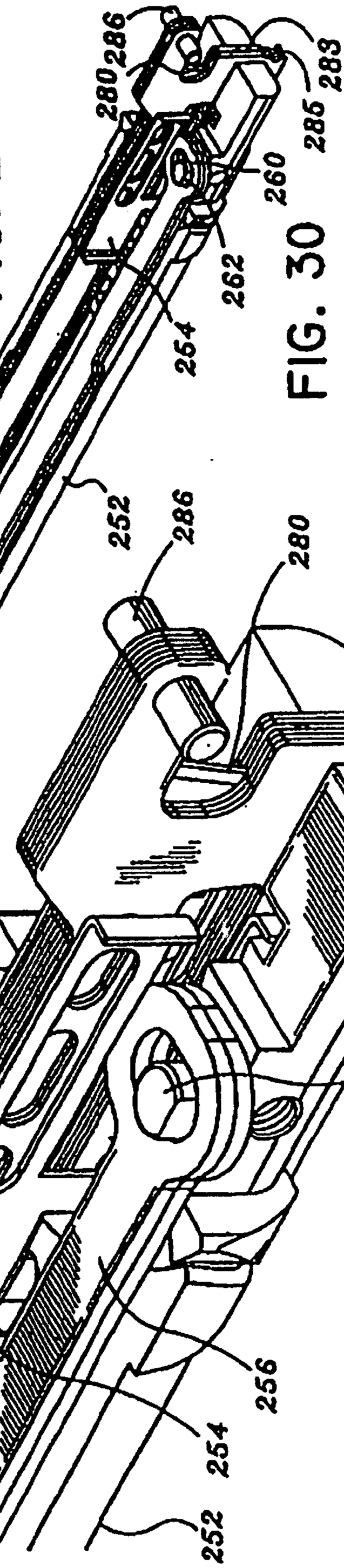

FIG. 30

FIG. 29

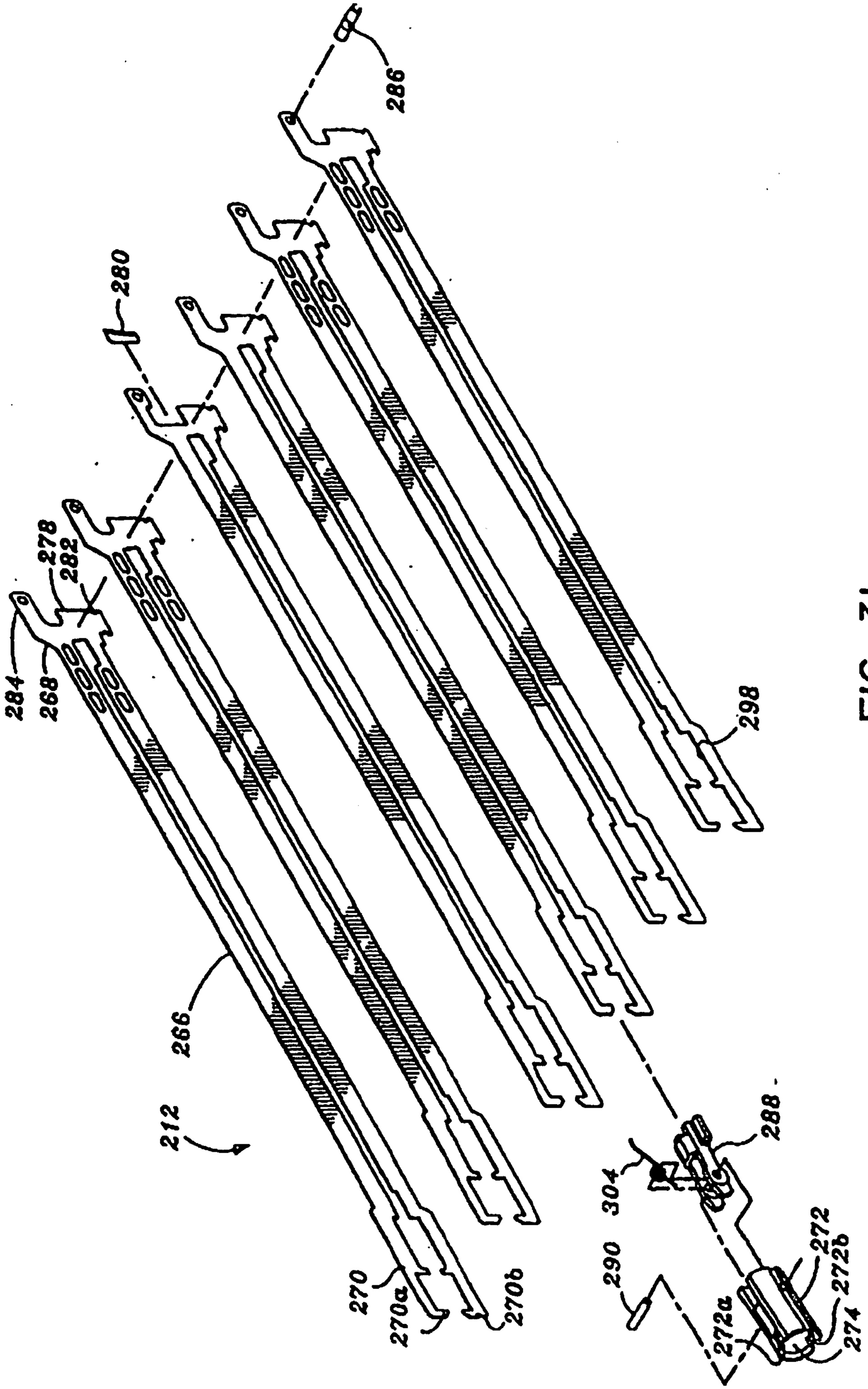
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FIG. 31

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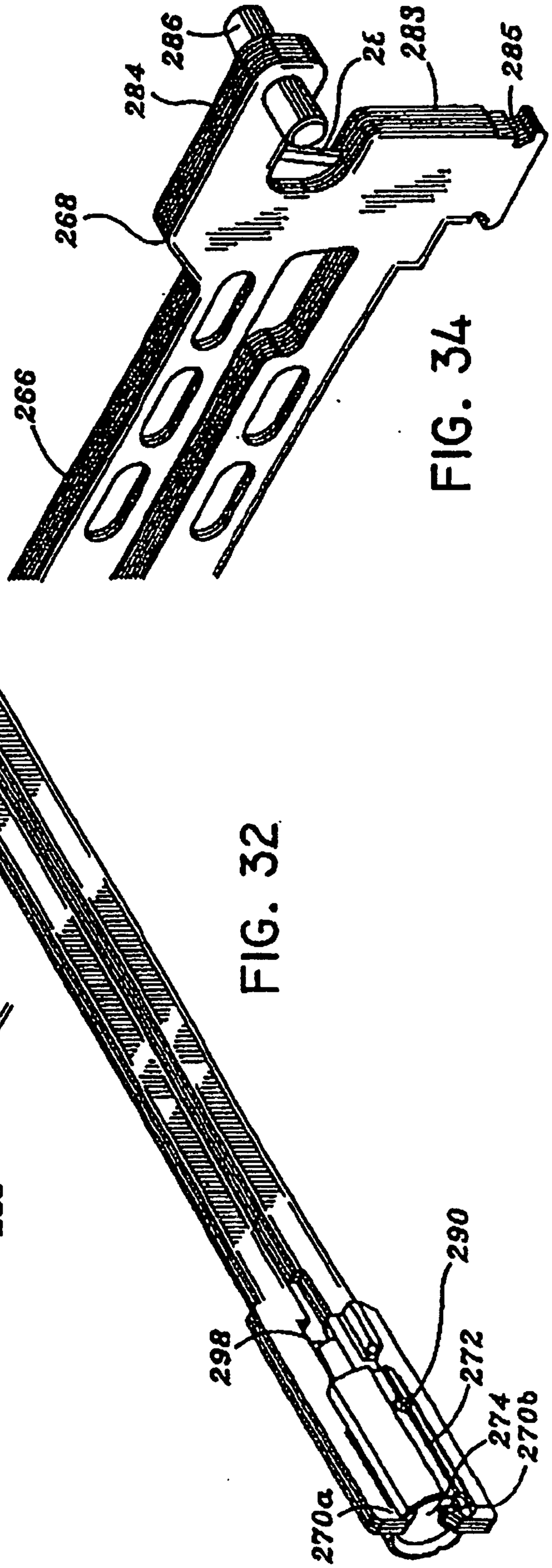
FIG. 33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270b
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FIG. 34

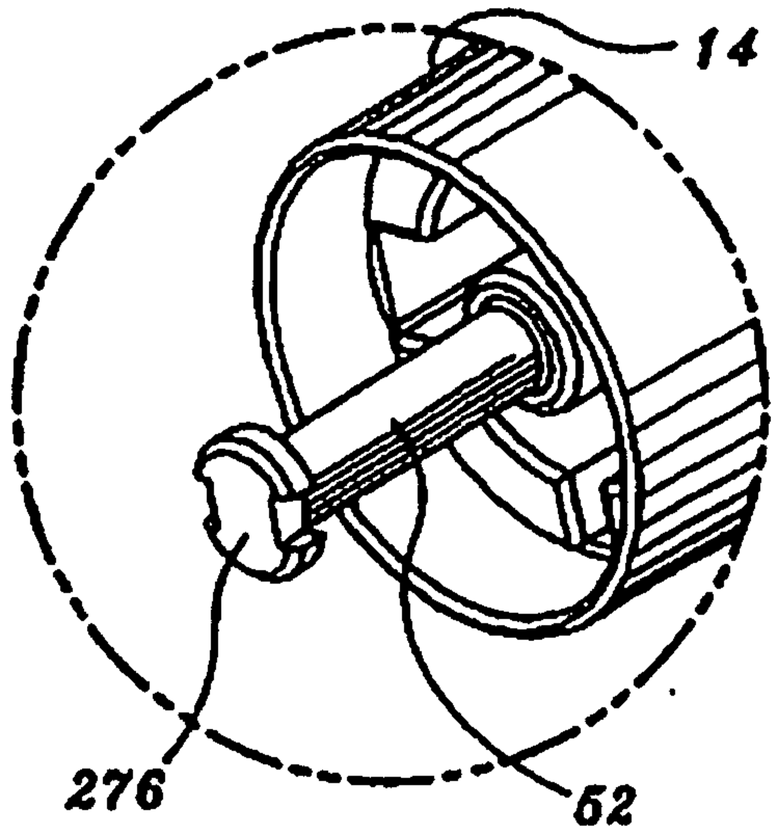

FIG. 35

FIG. 36

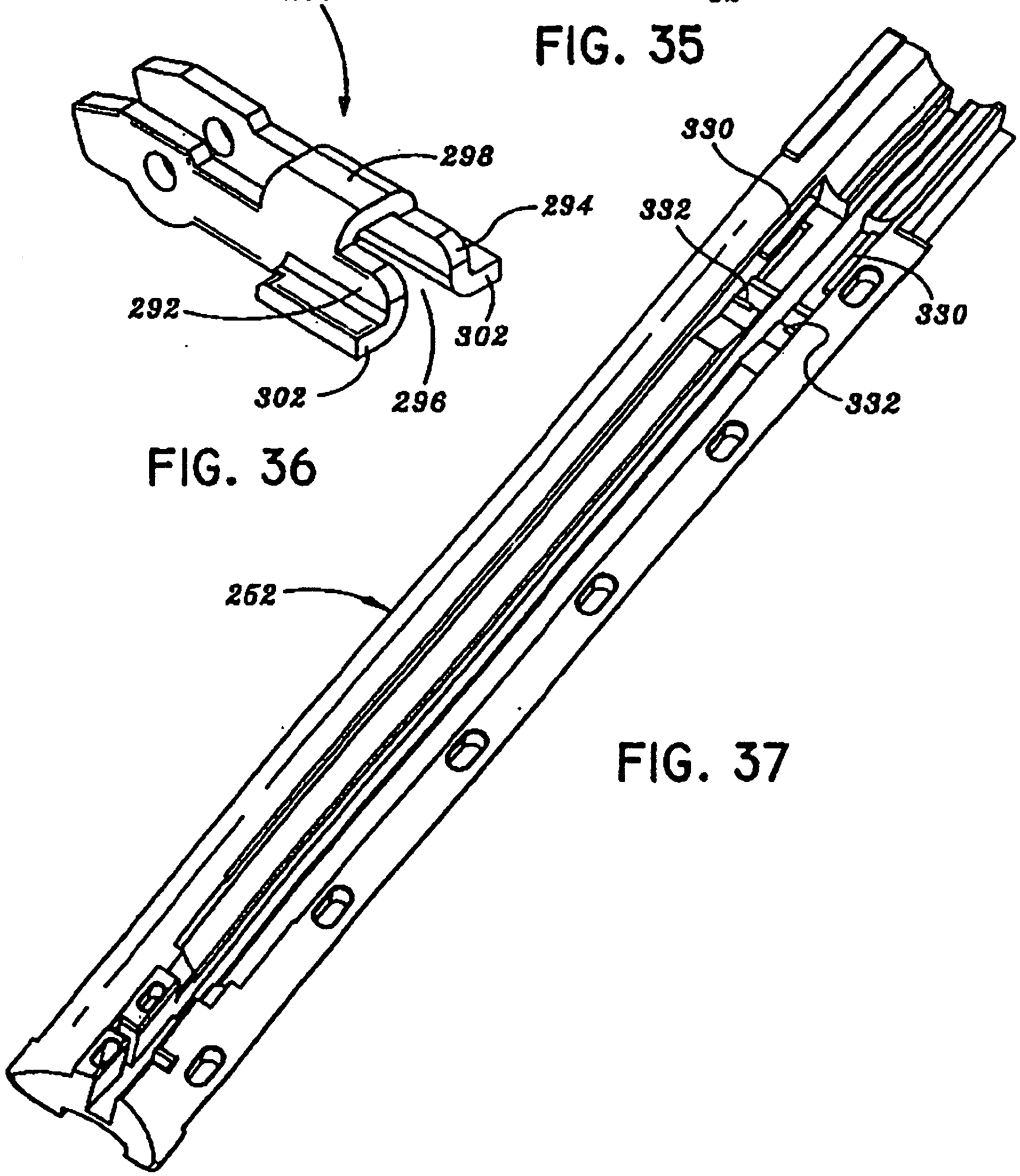

FIG. 37

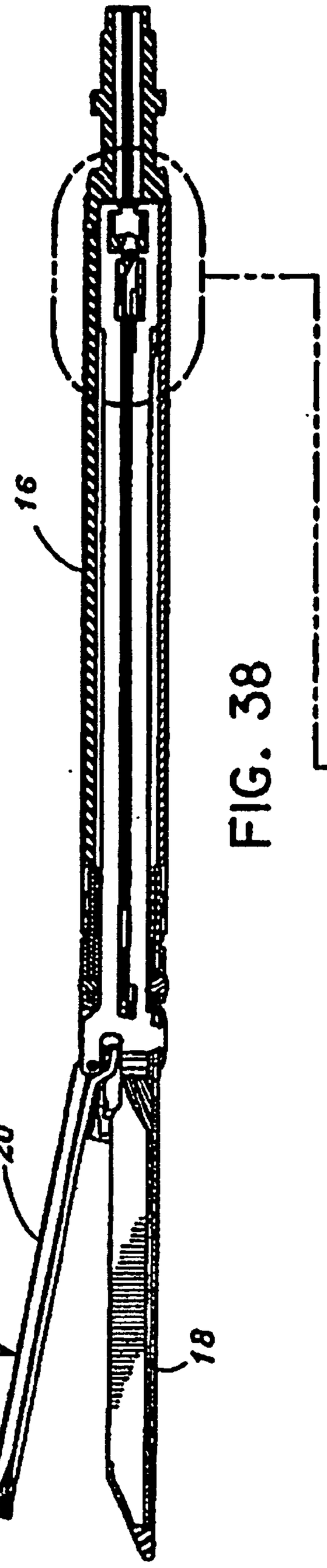

FIG. 38

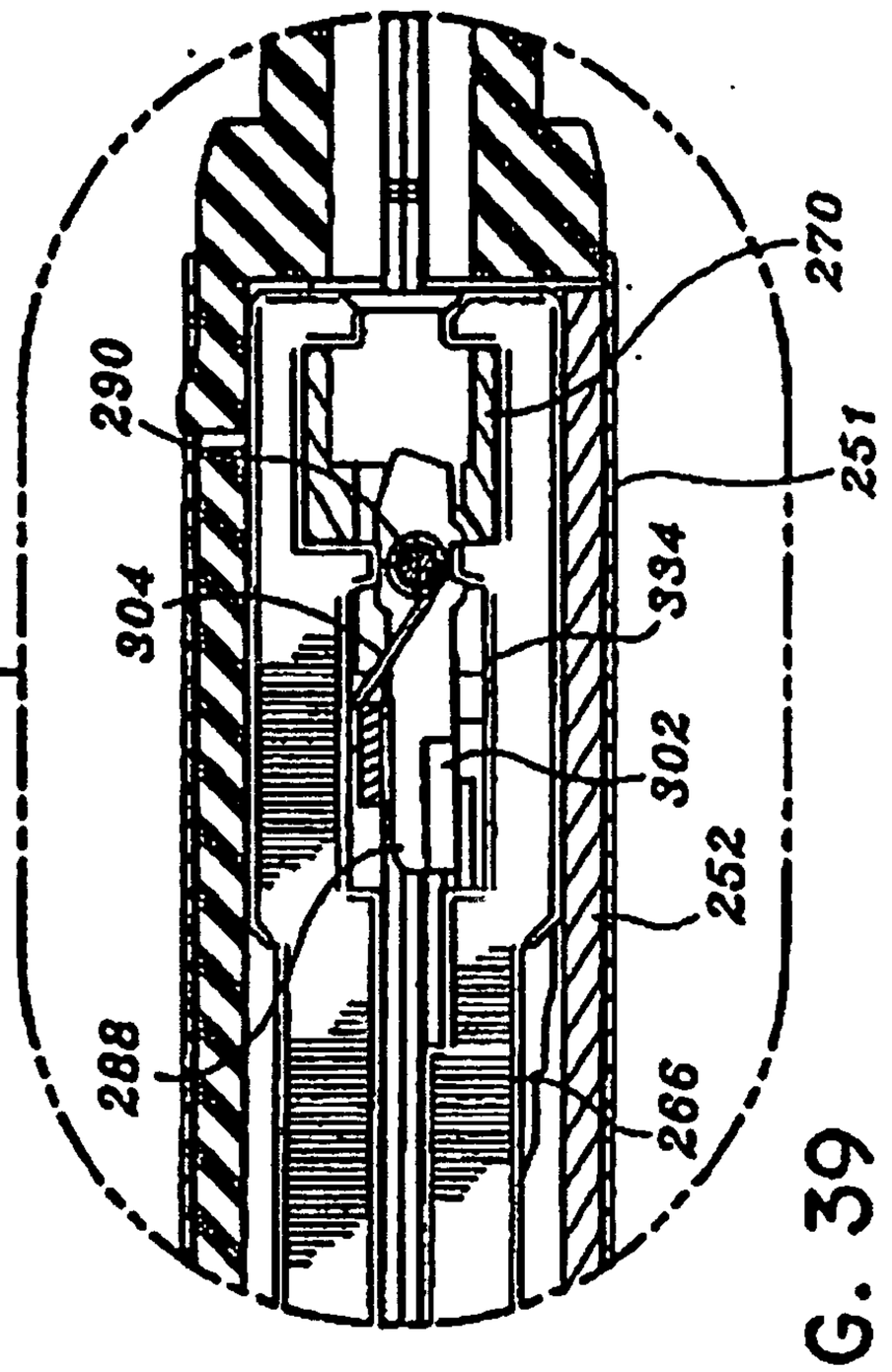

FIG. 39

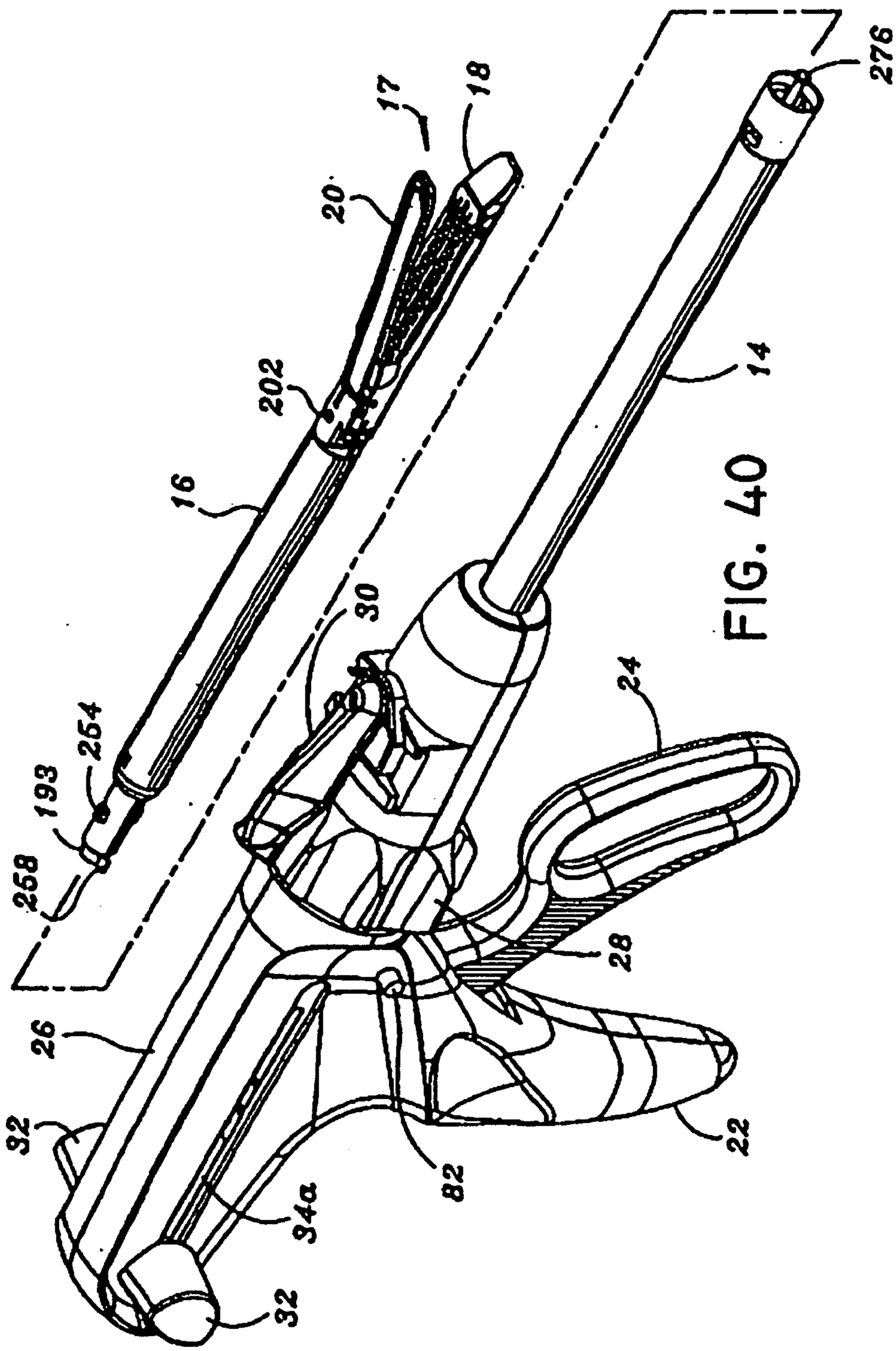

FIG. 40

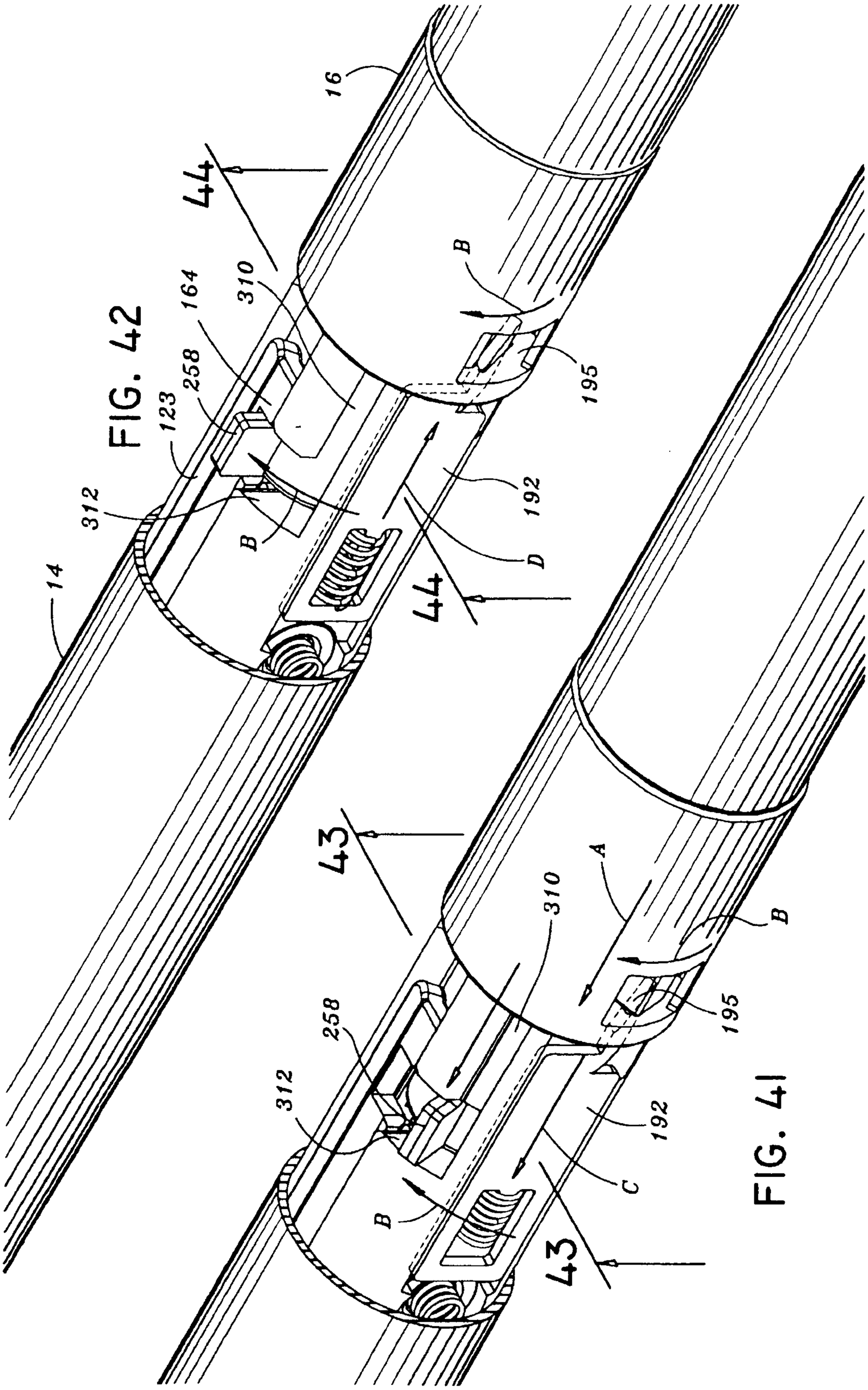

FIG. 41

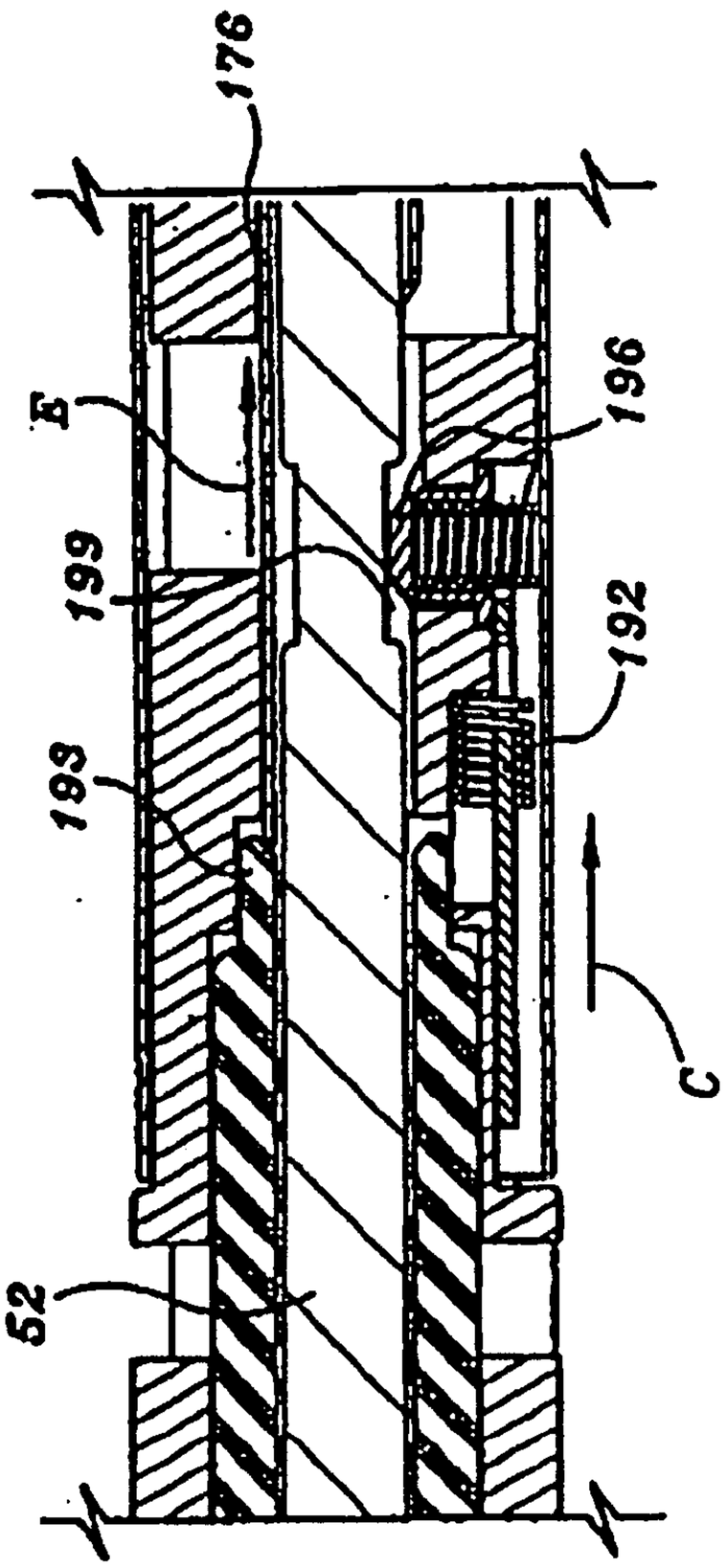
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FIG. 43

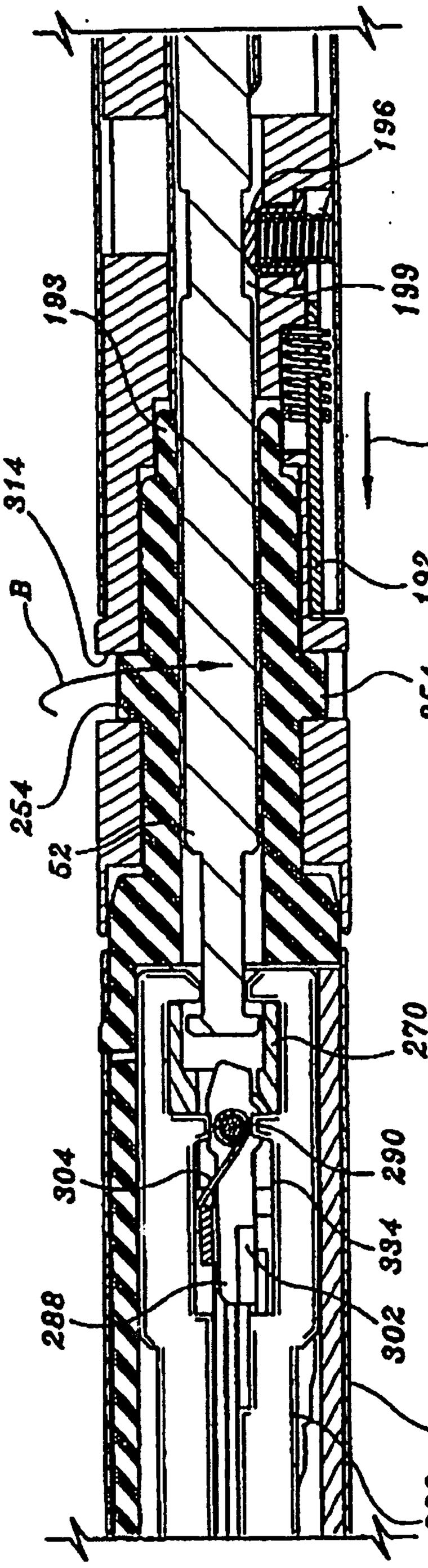
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FIG. 44

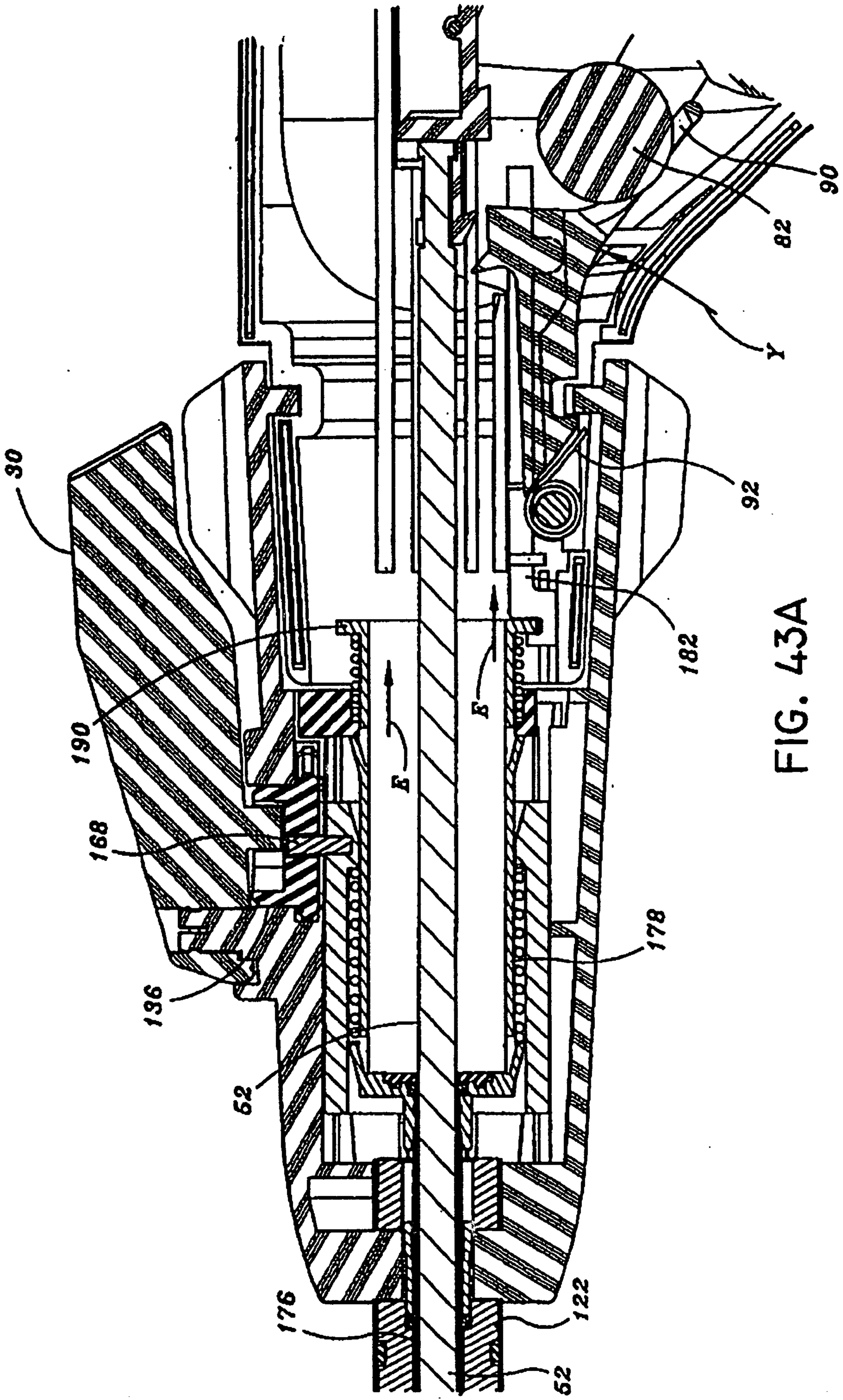

FIG. 43A

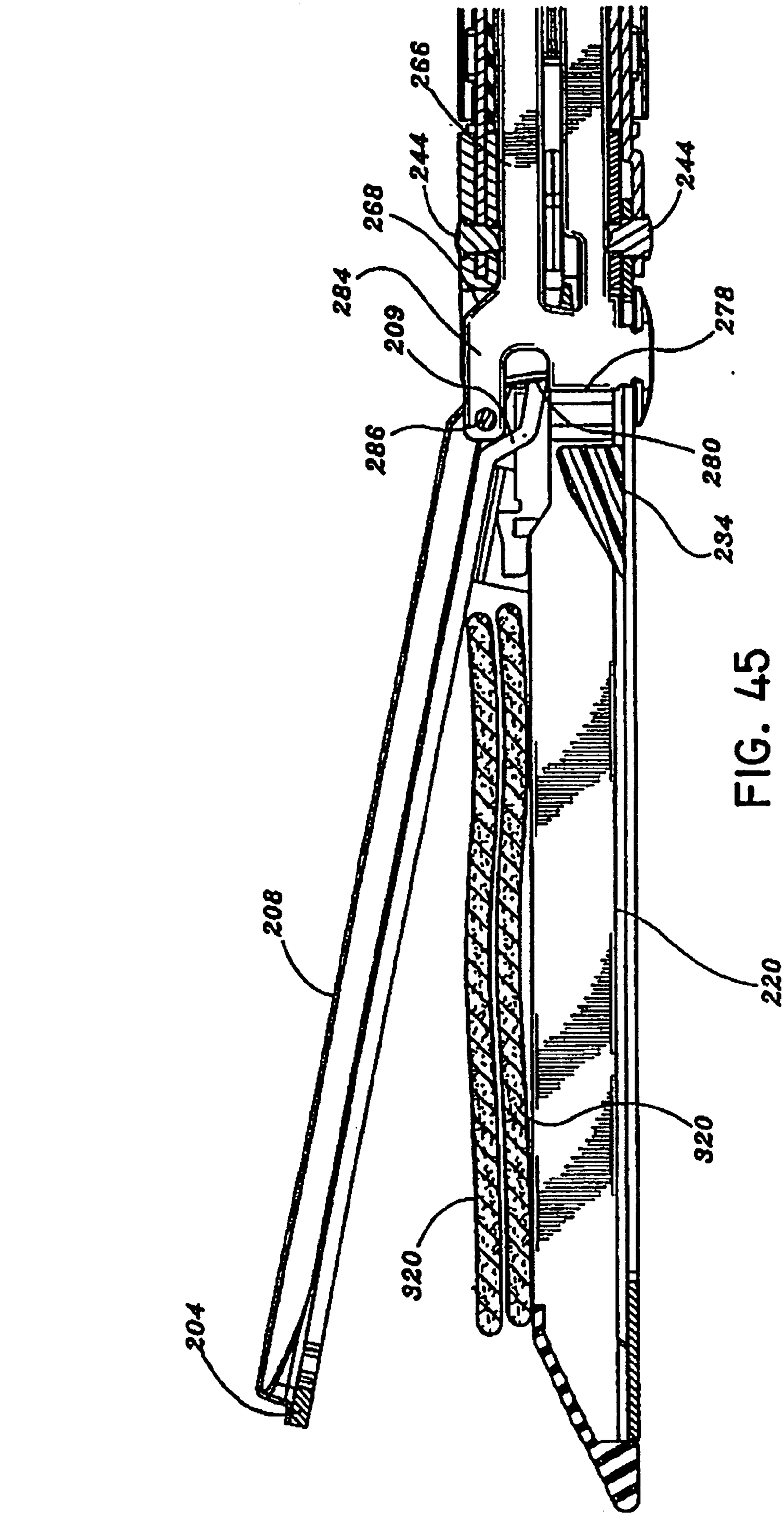

FIG. 45

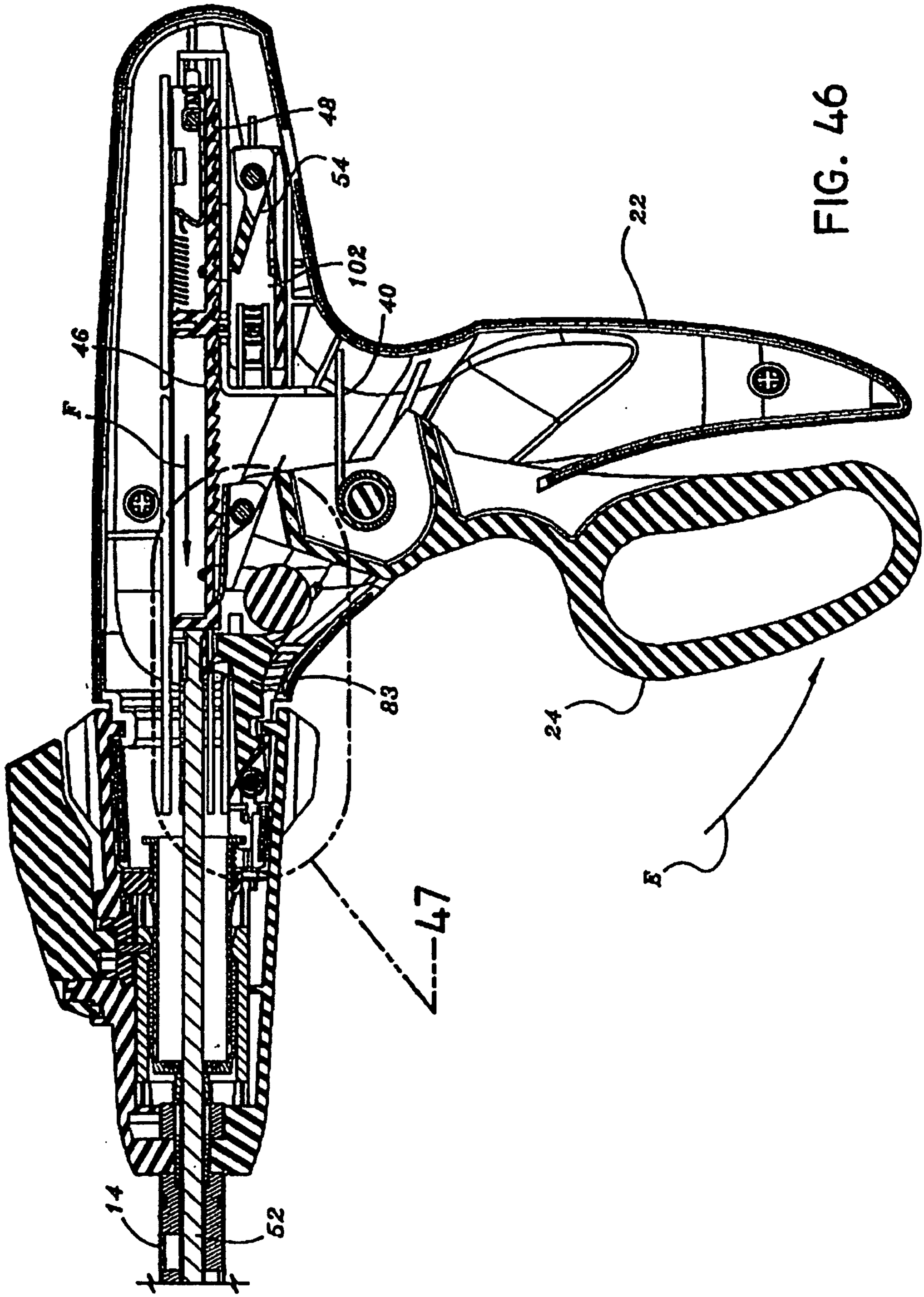

FIG. 46

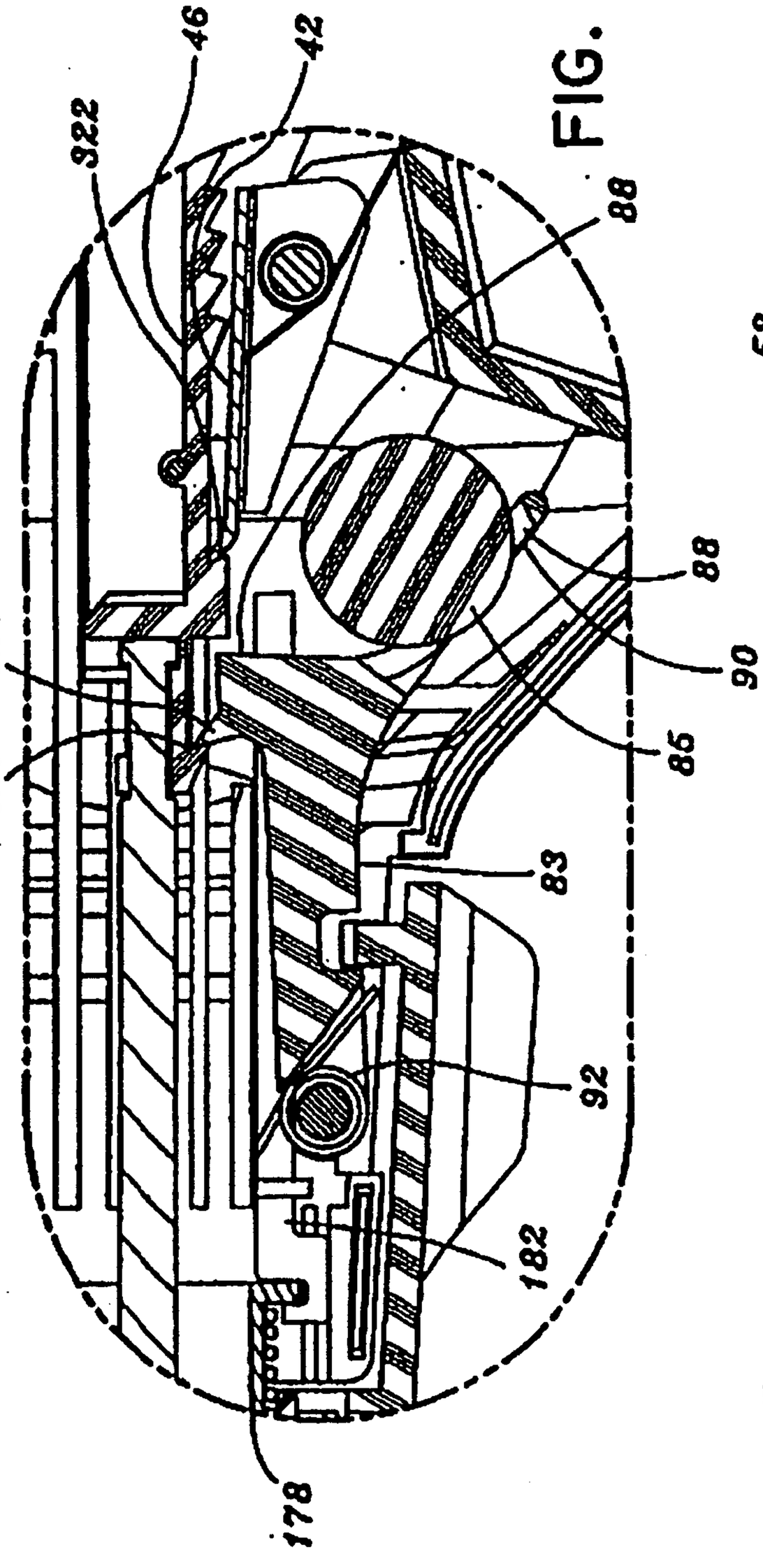

FIG. 47

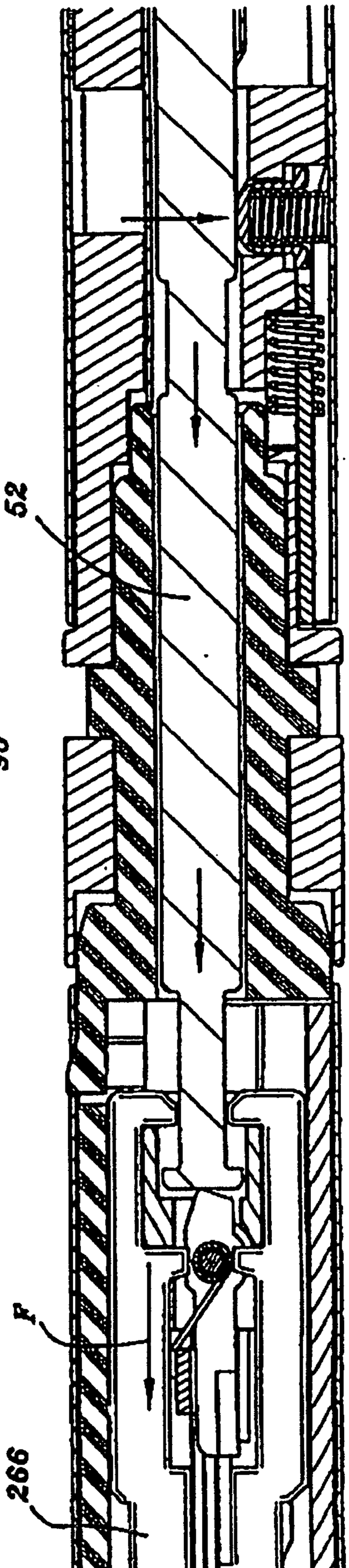

FIG. 48

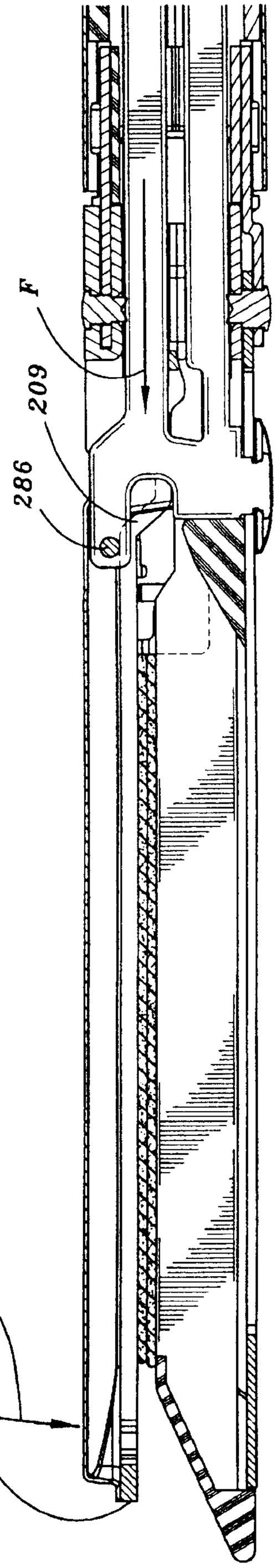

FIG. 49

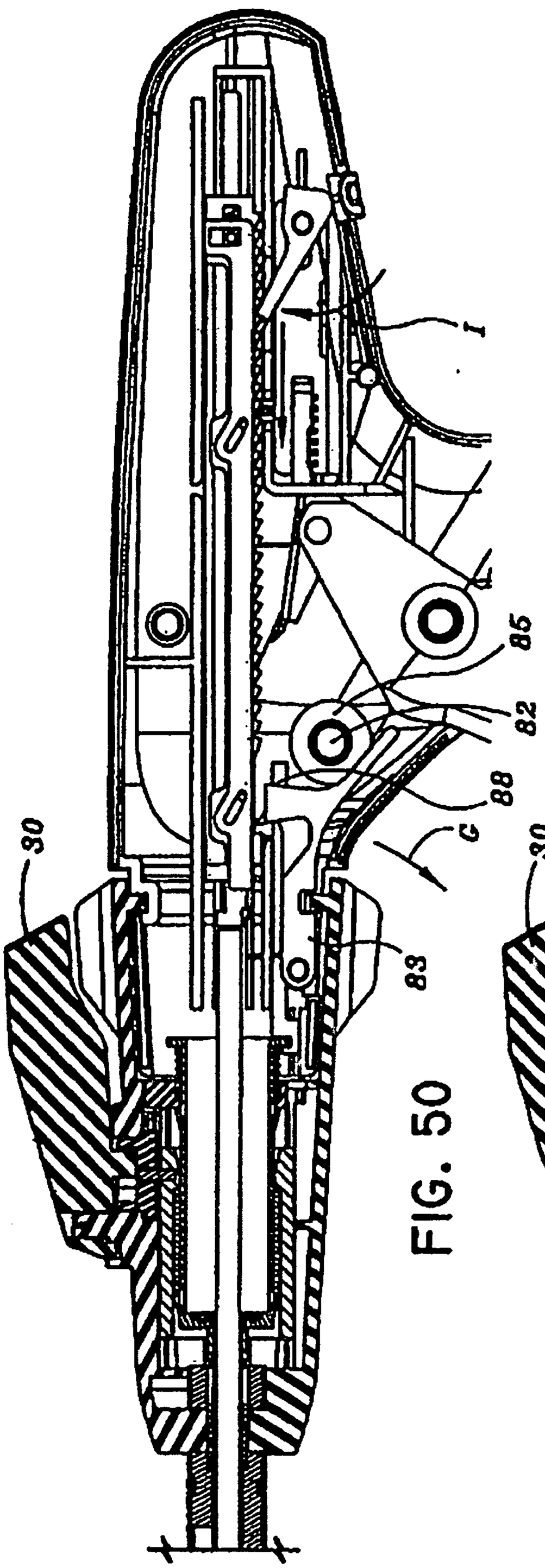

FIG. 50

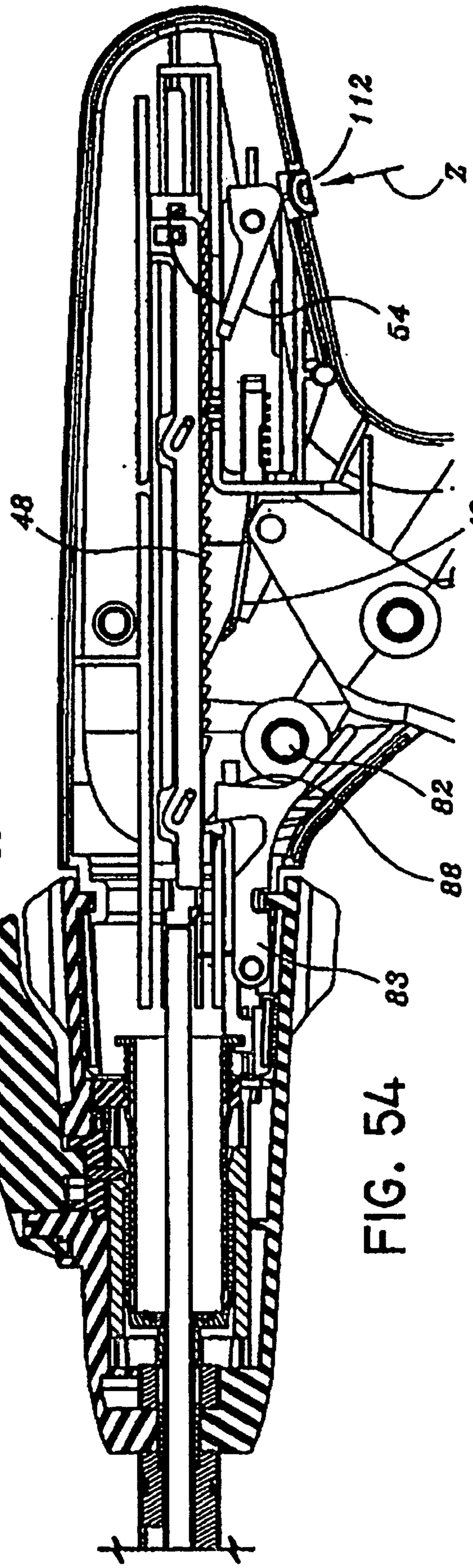

FIG. 54

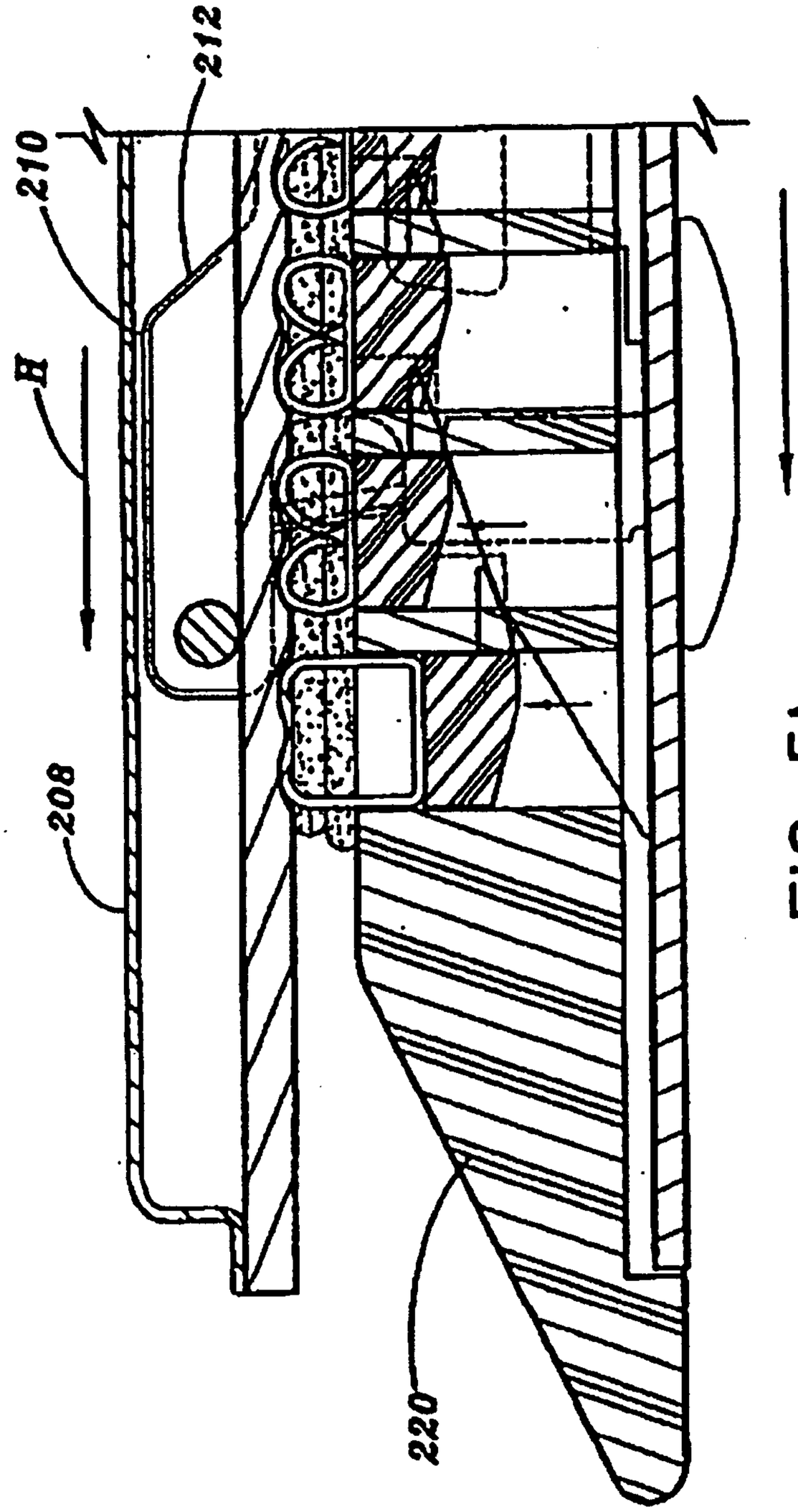

FIG. 51

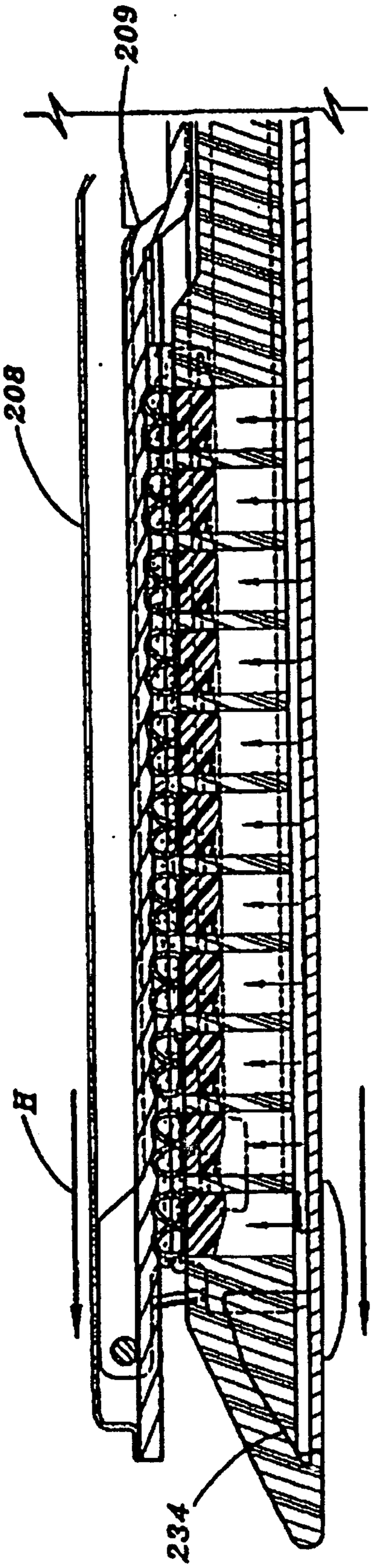

FIG. 52

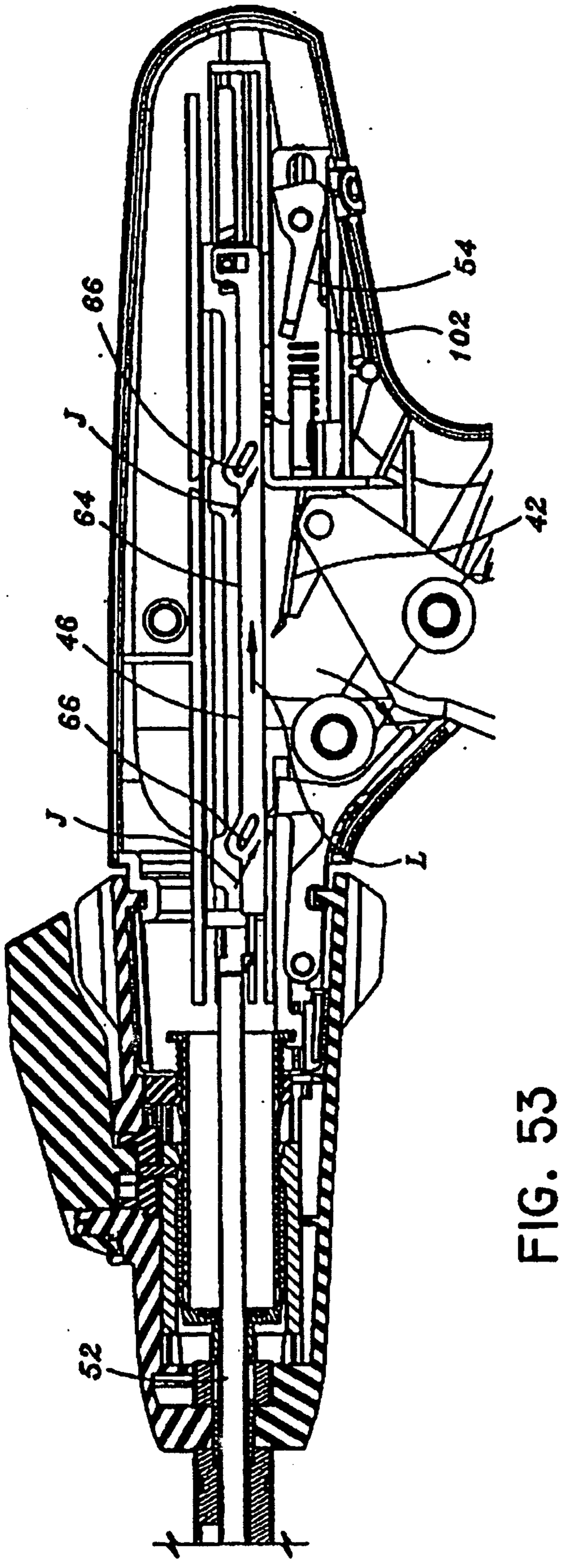

FIG. 53

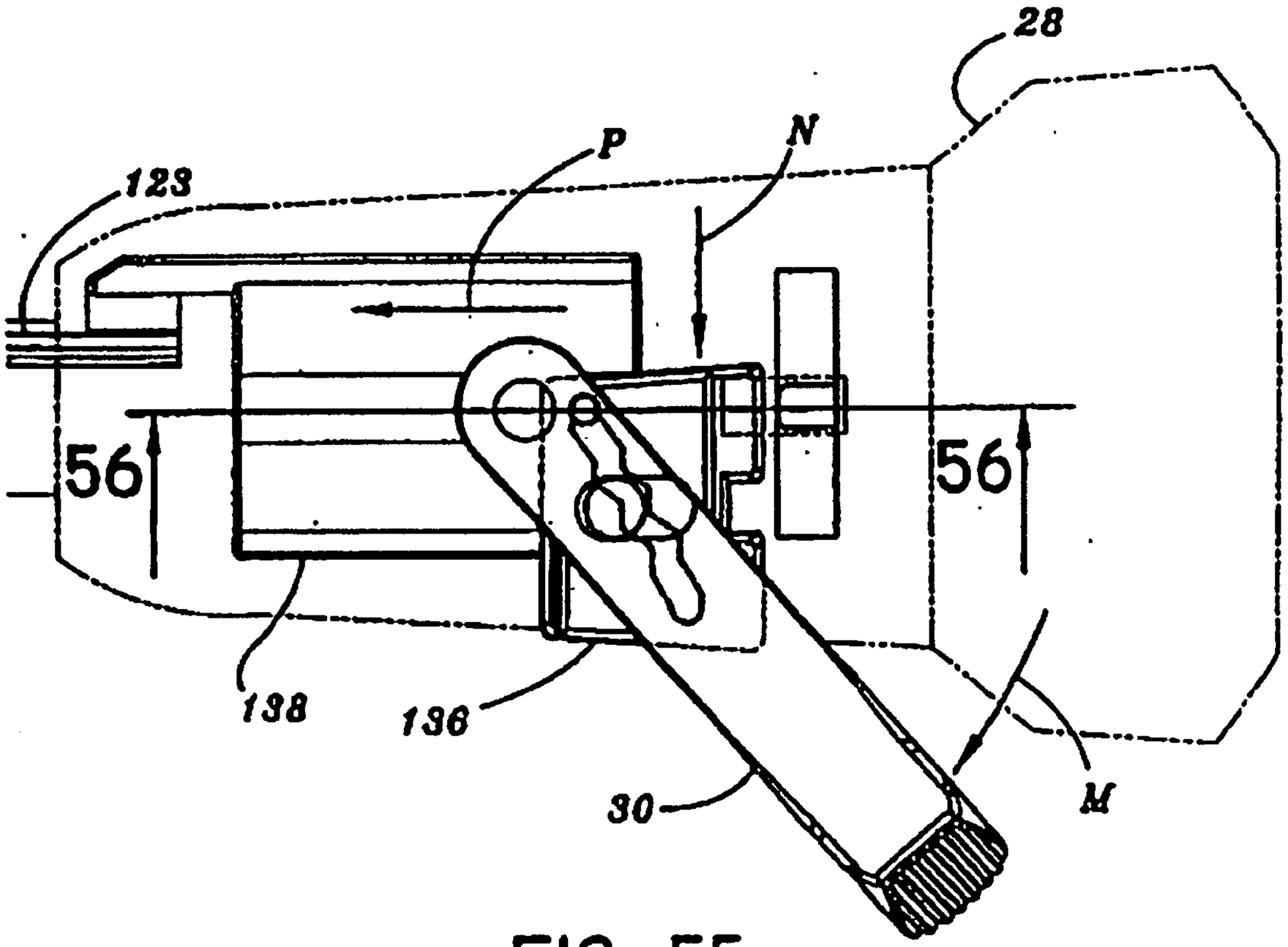

FIG. 55

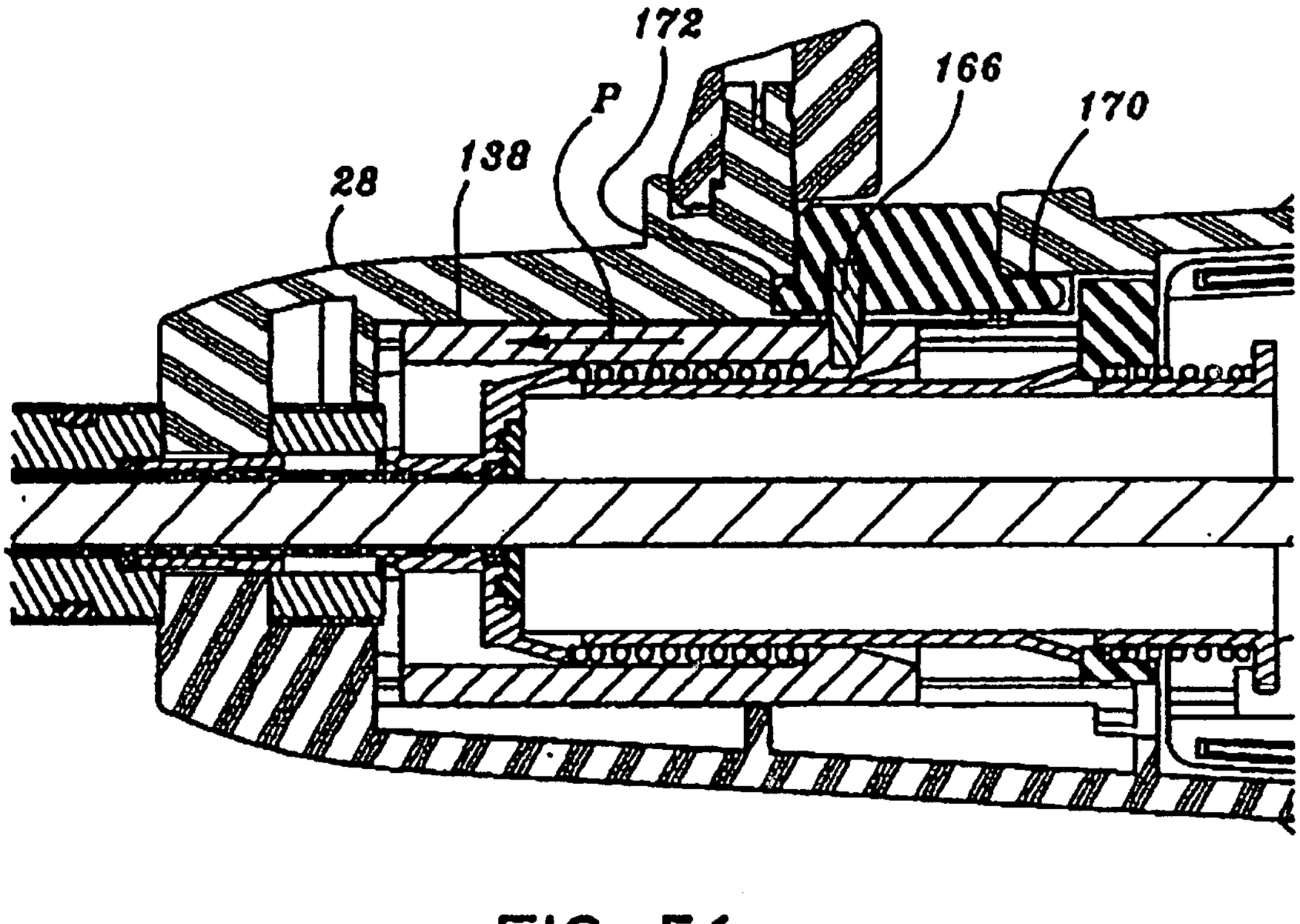

FIG. 56

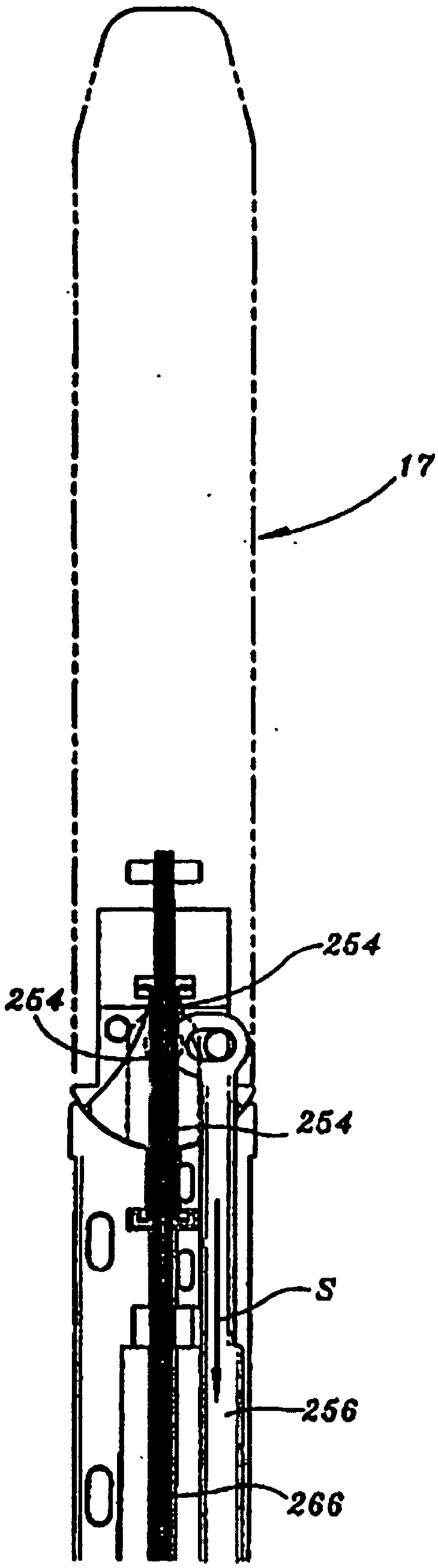

FIG. 60

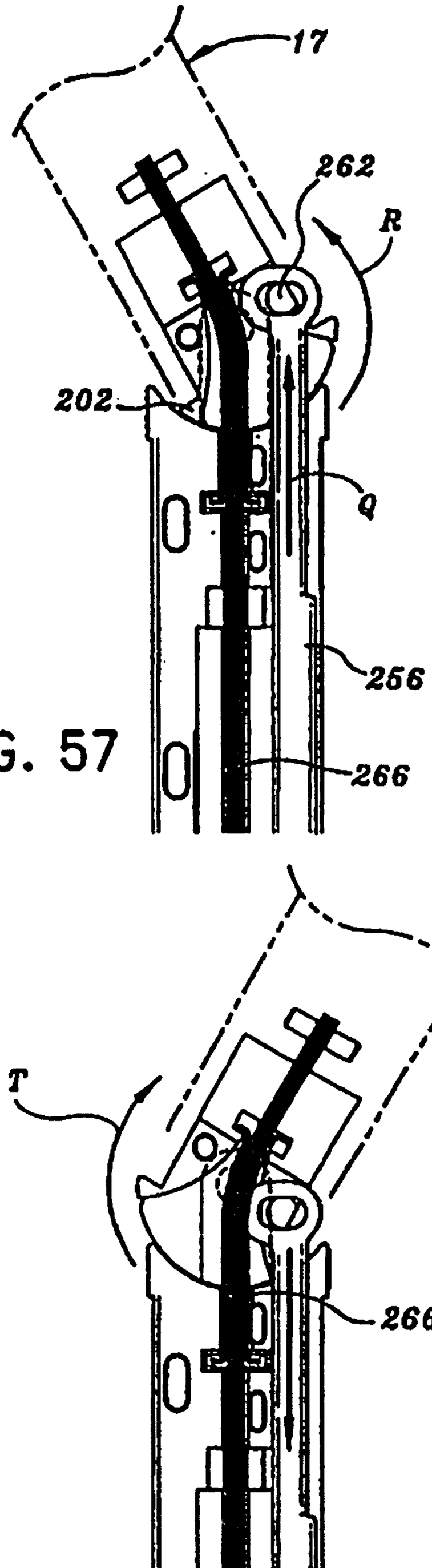

FIG. 57

FIG. 61

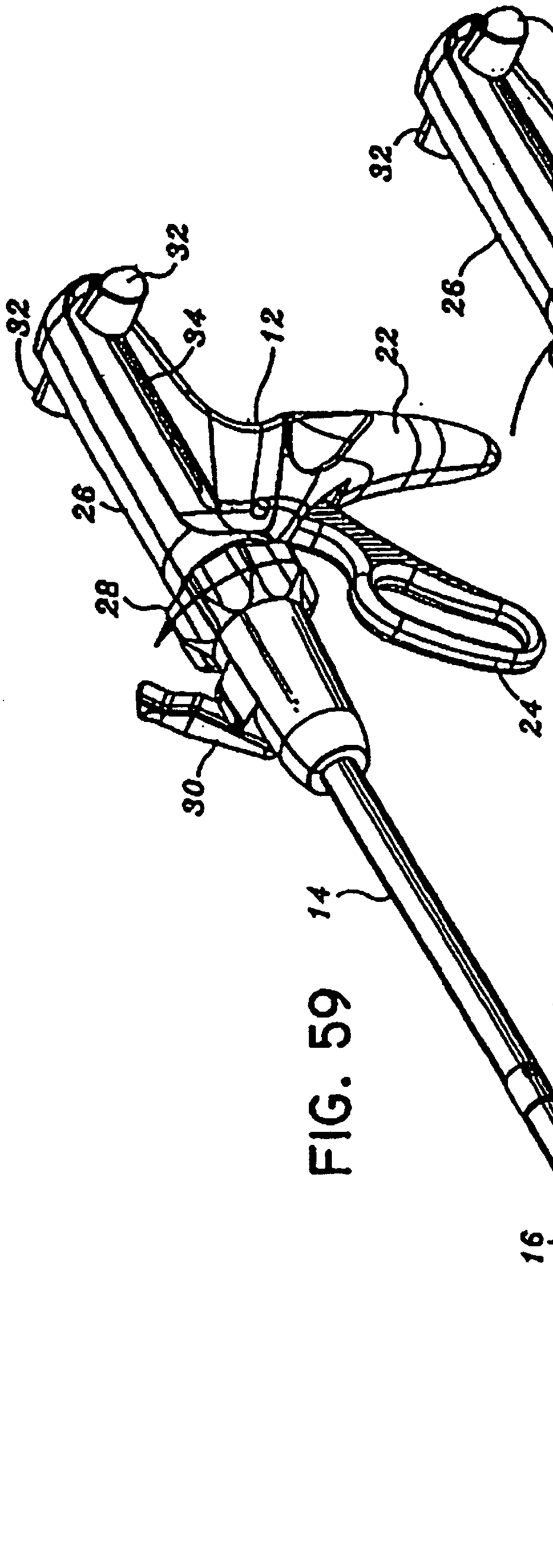
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FIG. 59

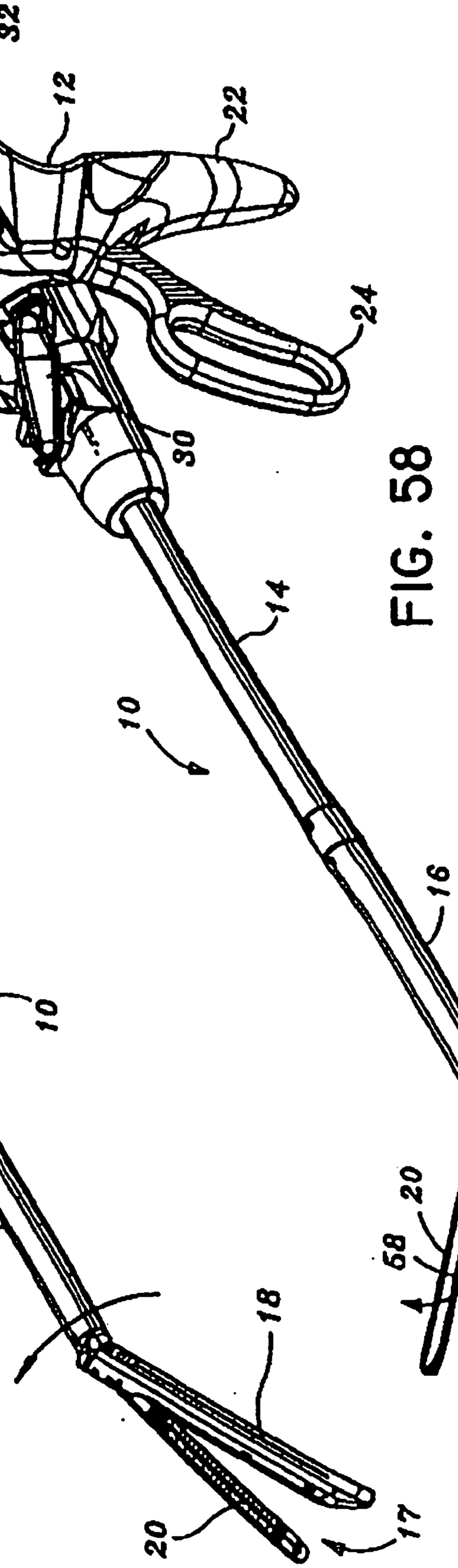
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FIG. 58

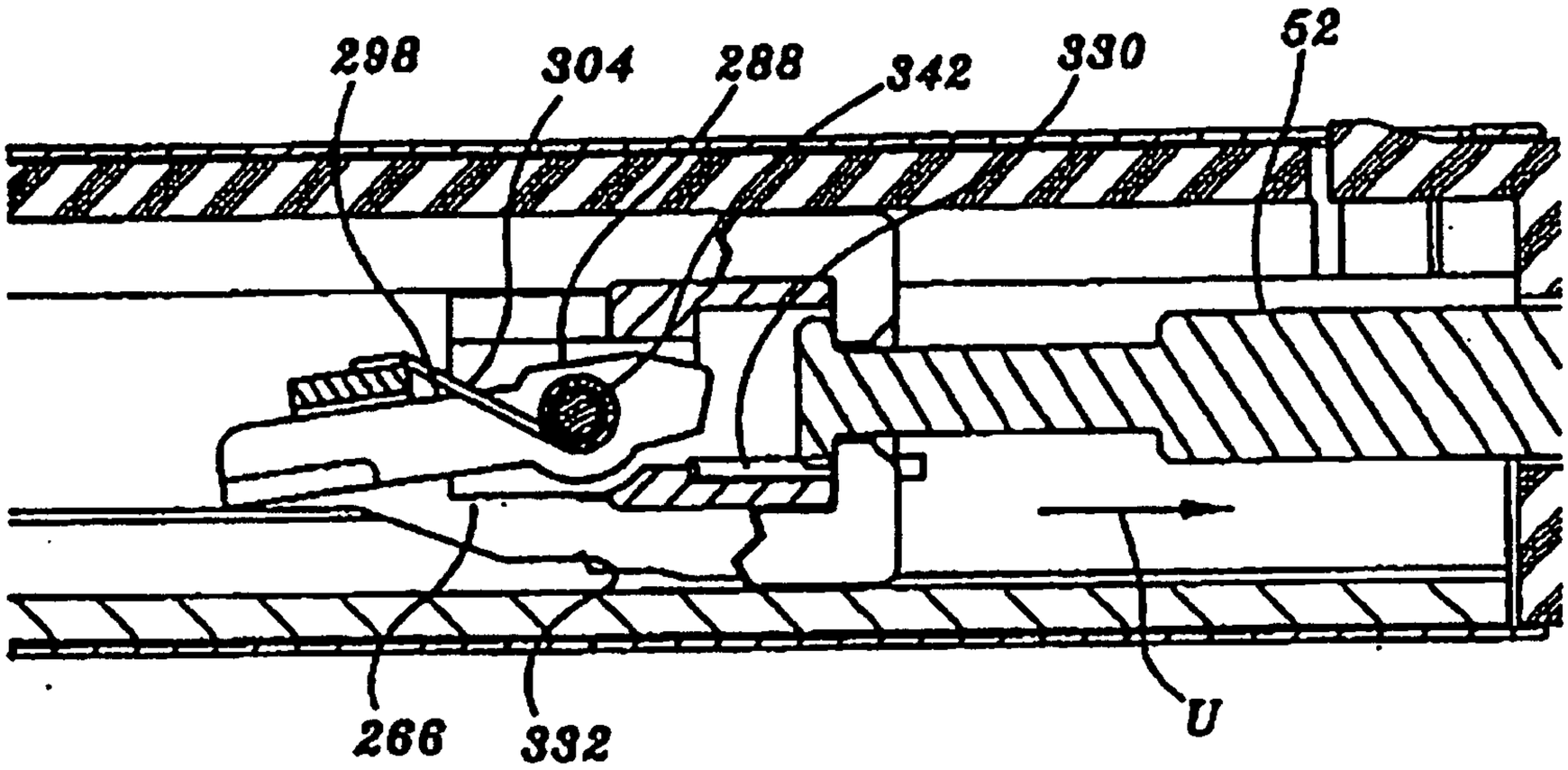

FIG. 62

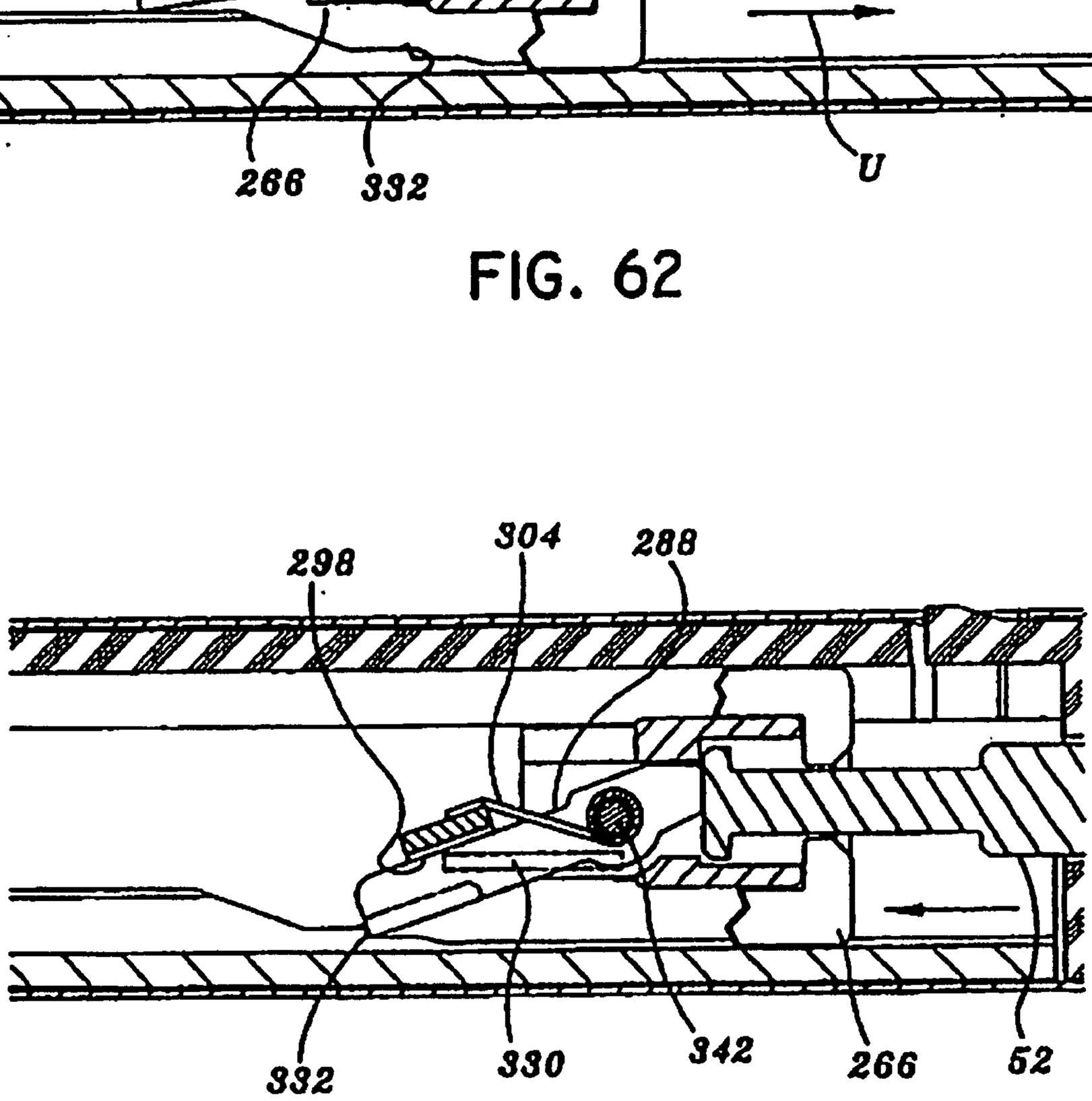

FIG. 63

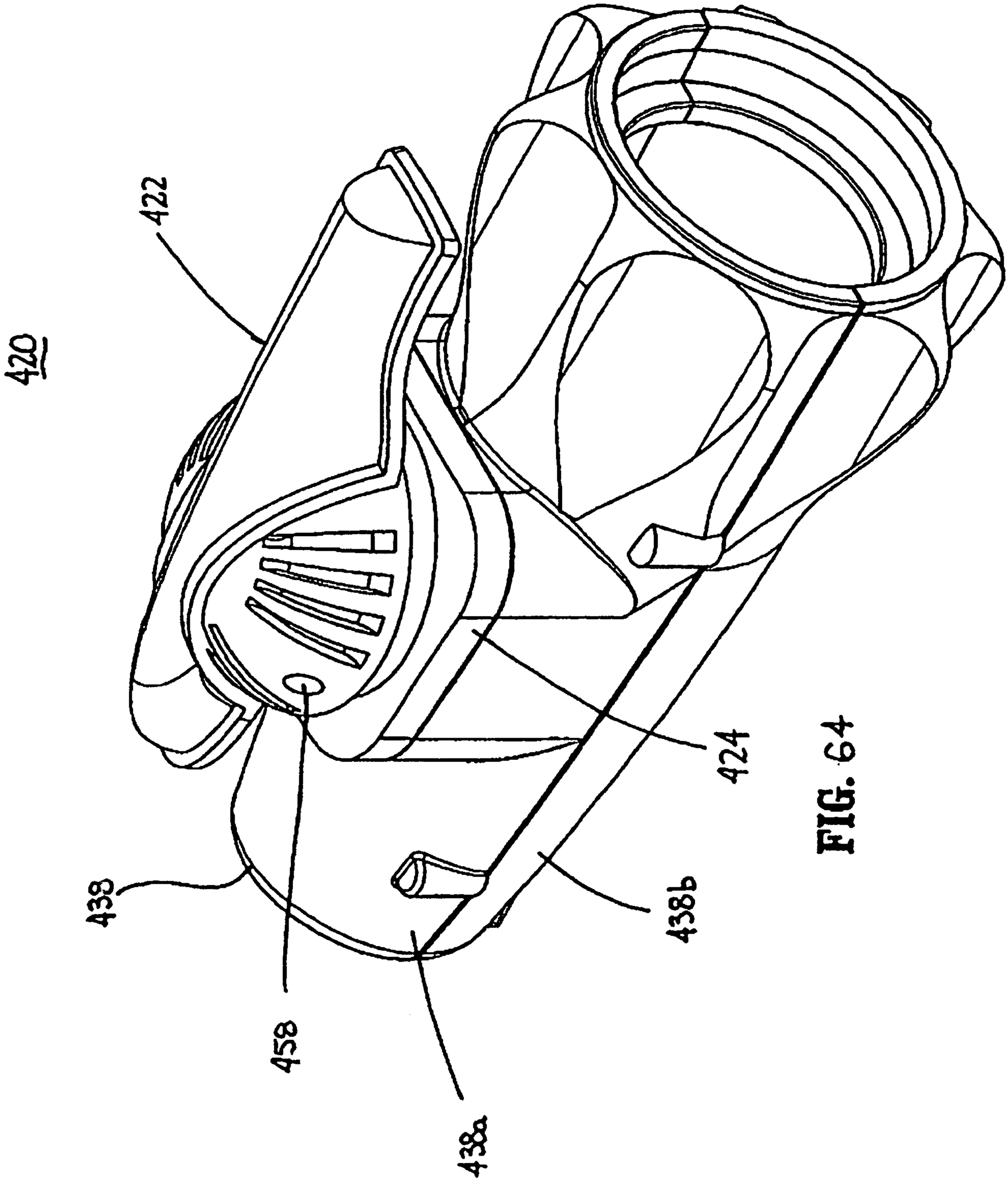

FIG. 64

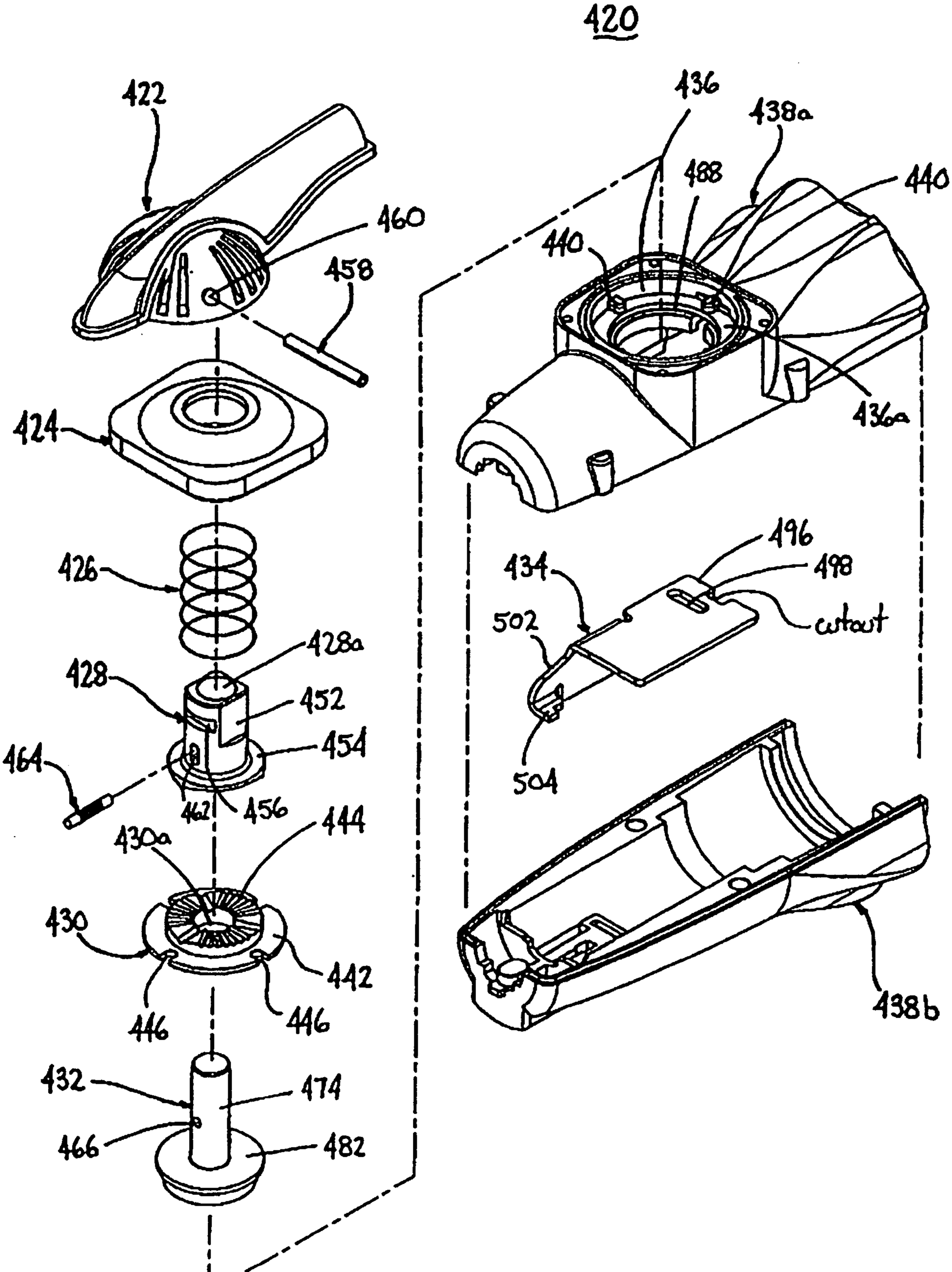
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FIG. 65

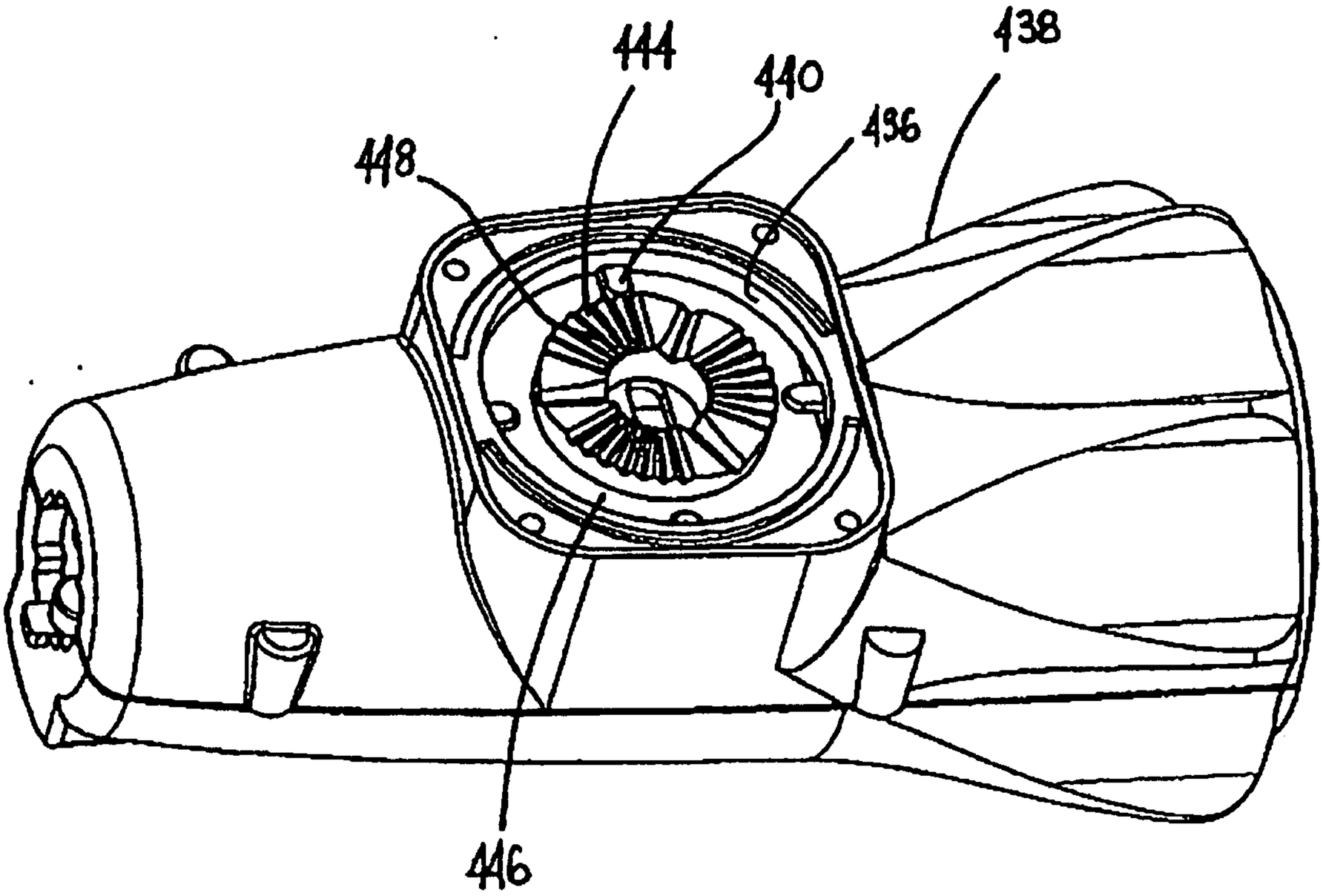

FIG. 66

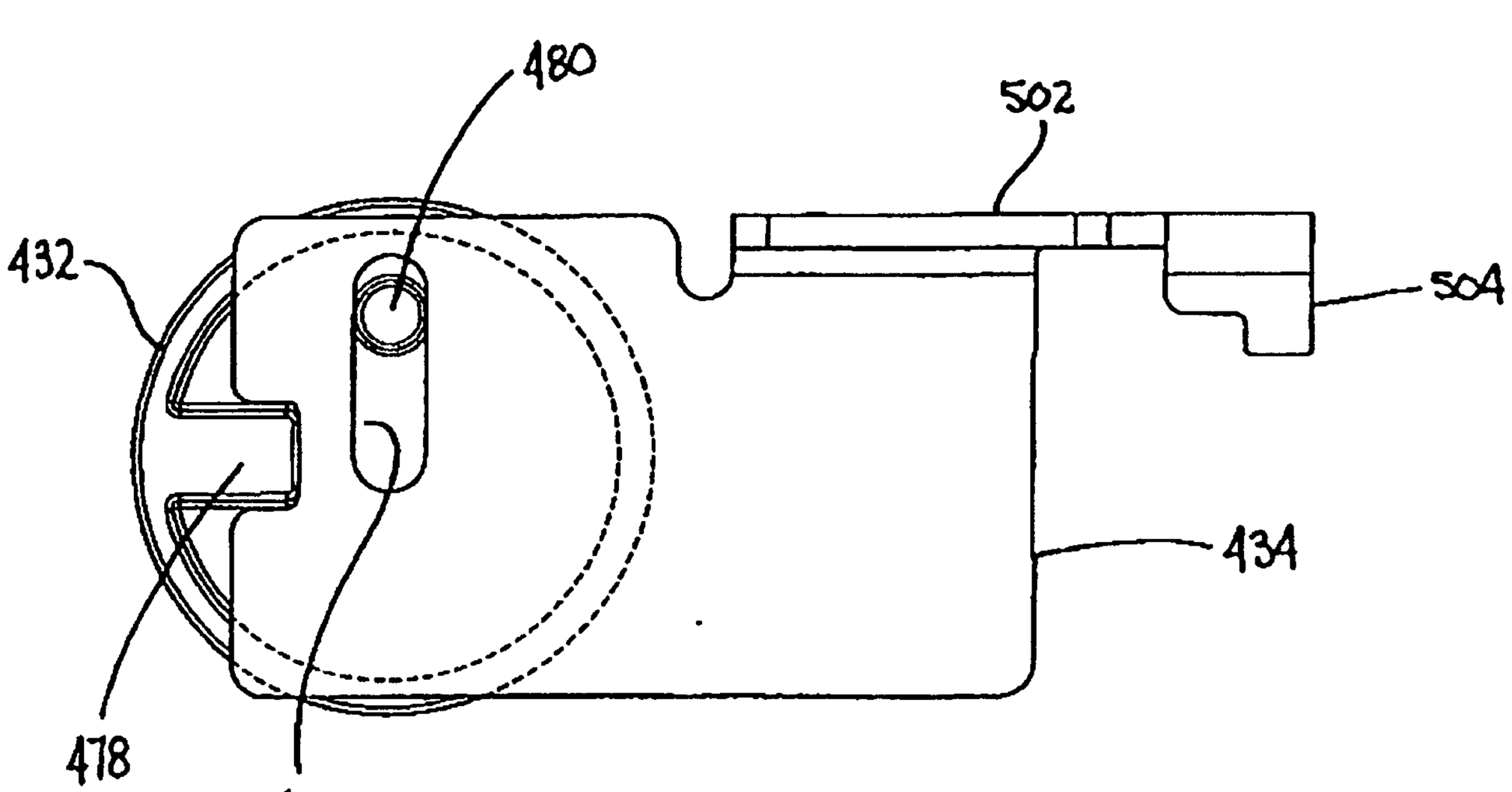

FIG. 67

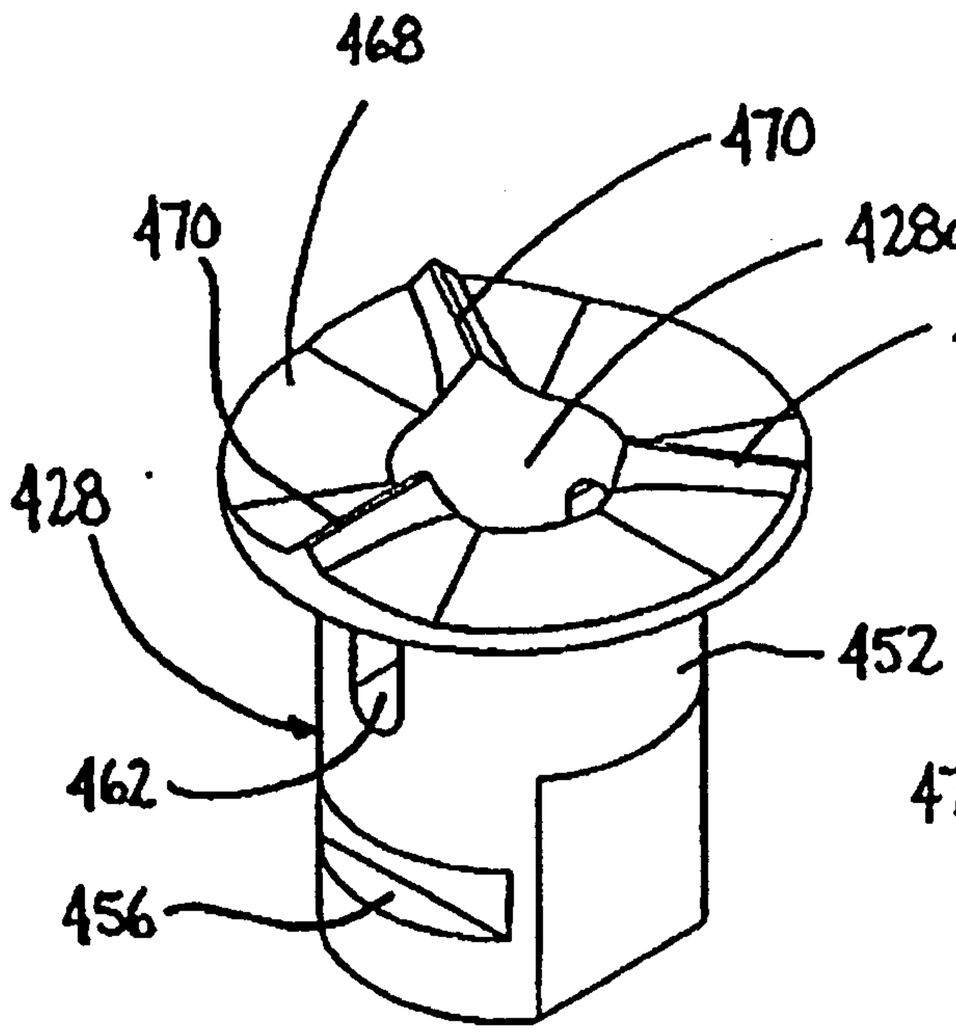

FIG. 68

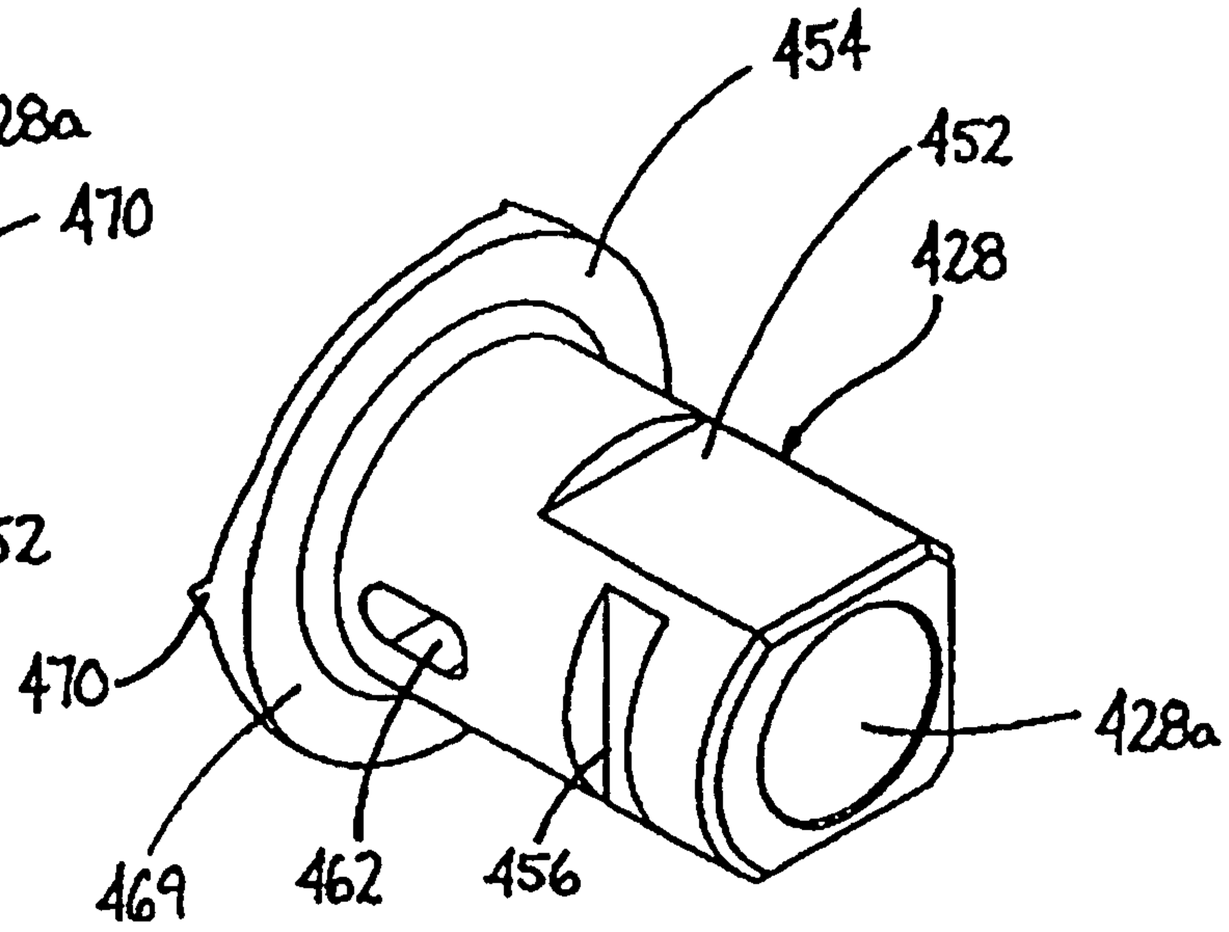

FIG. 69

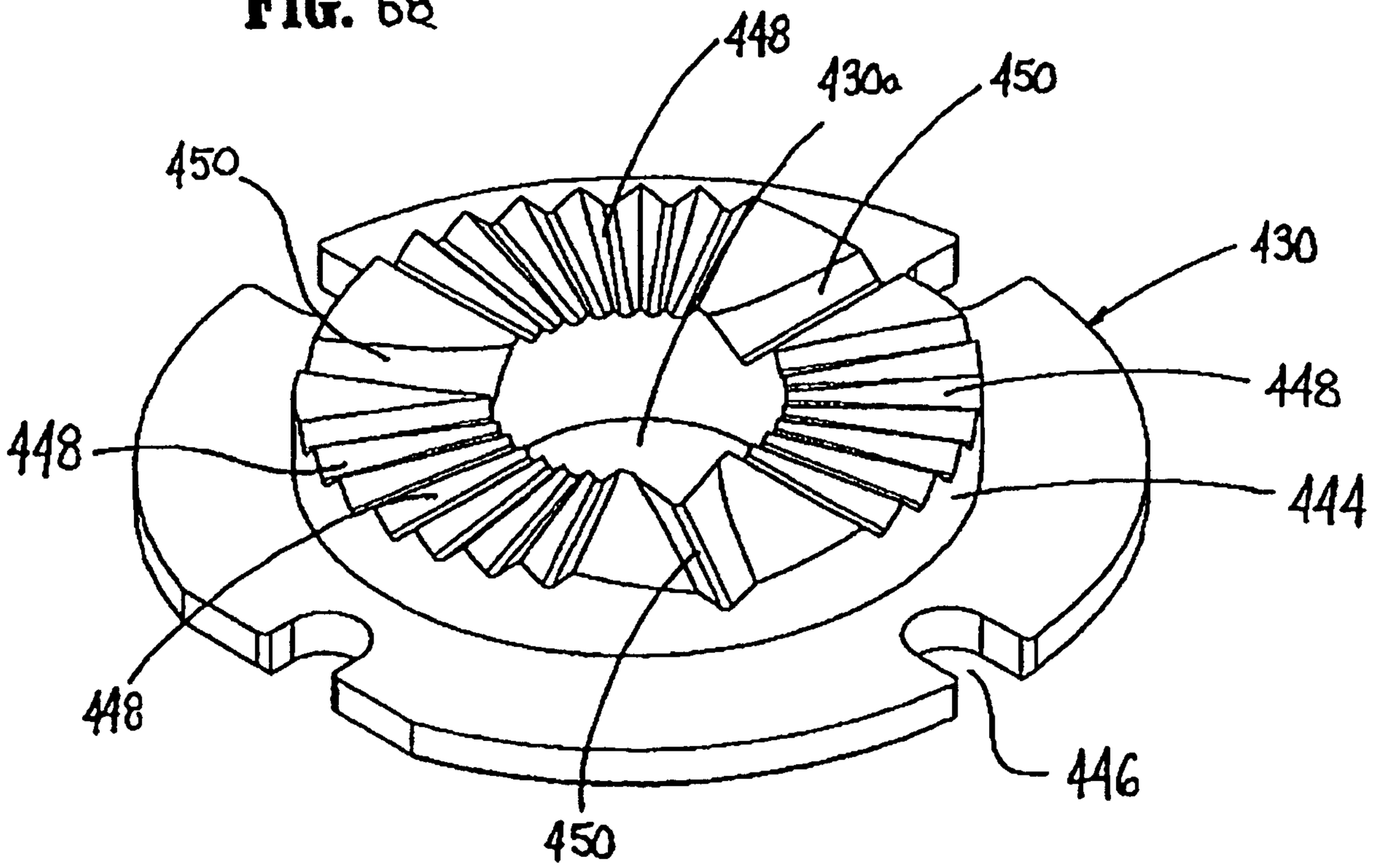

FIG. 70

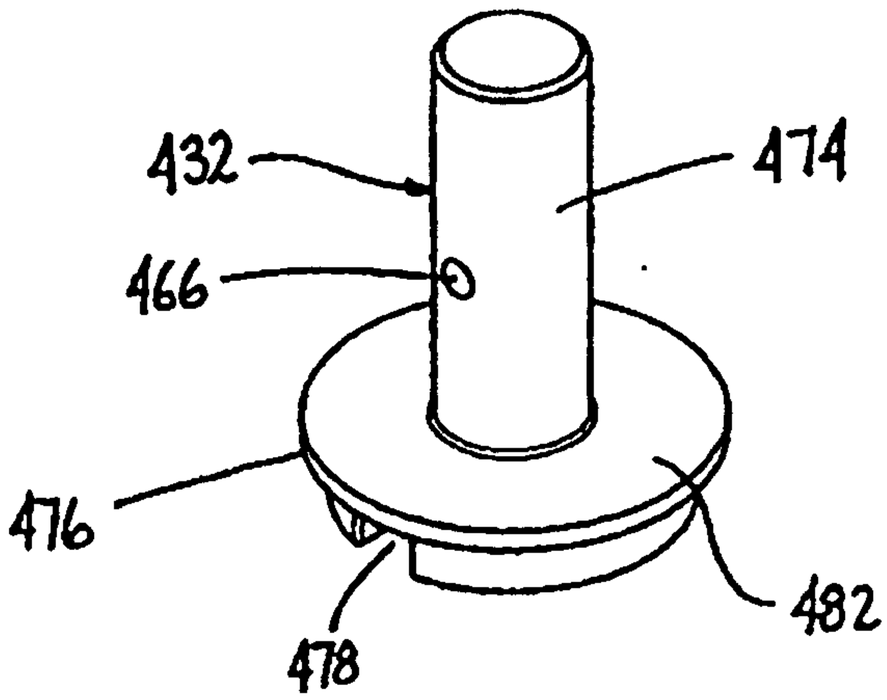

FIG. 71

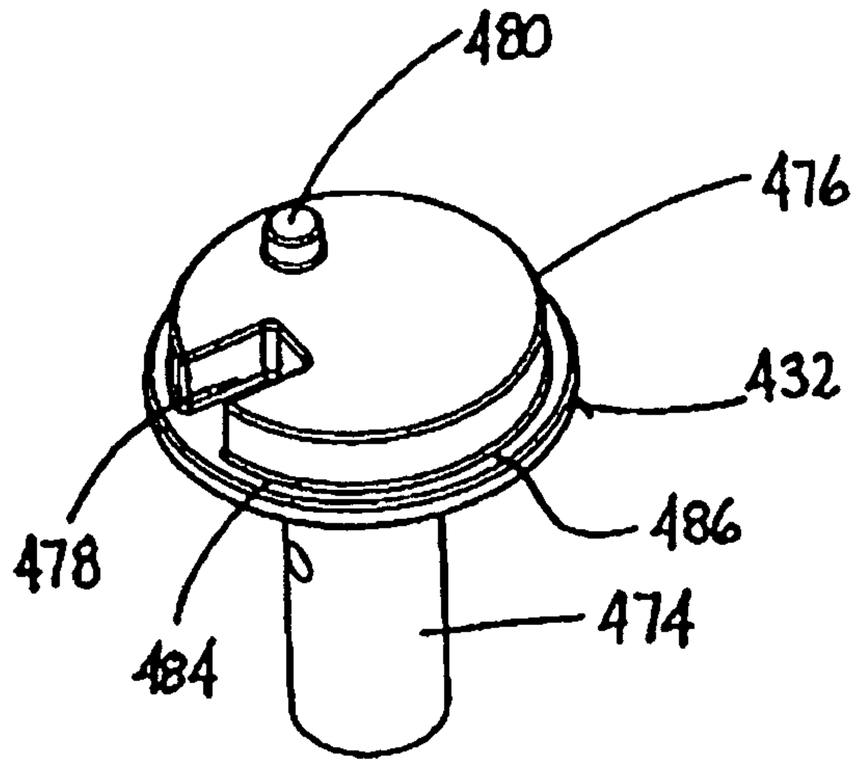

FIG. 72

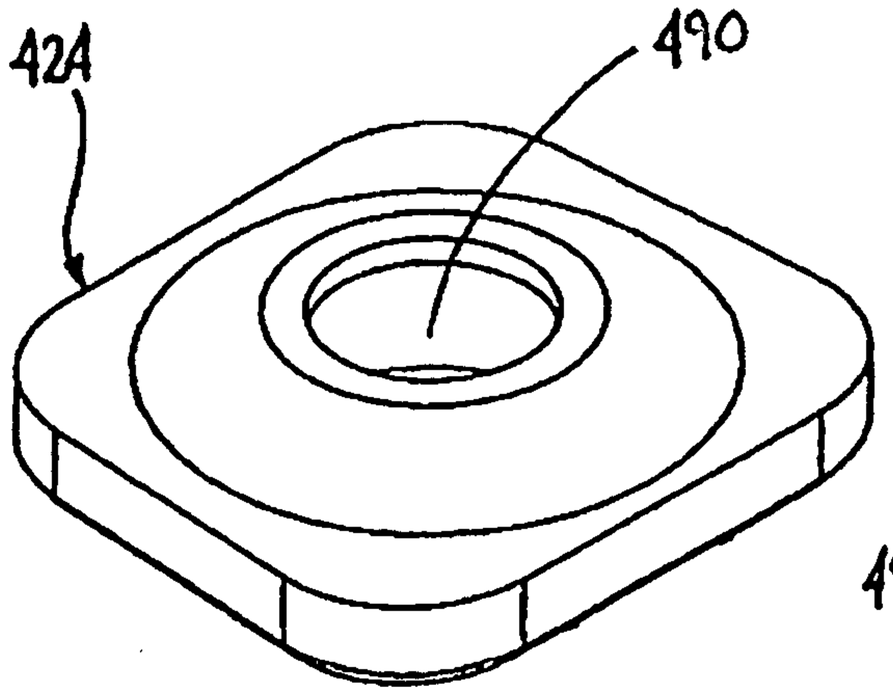

FIG. 73

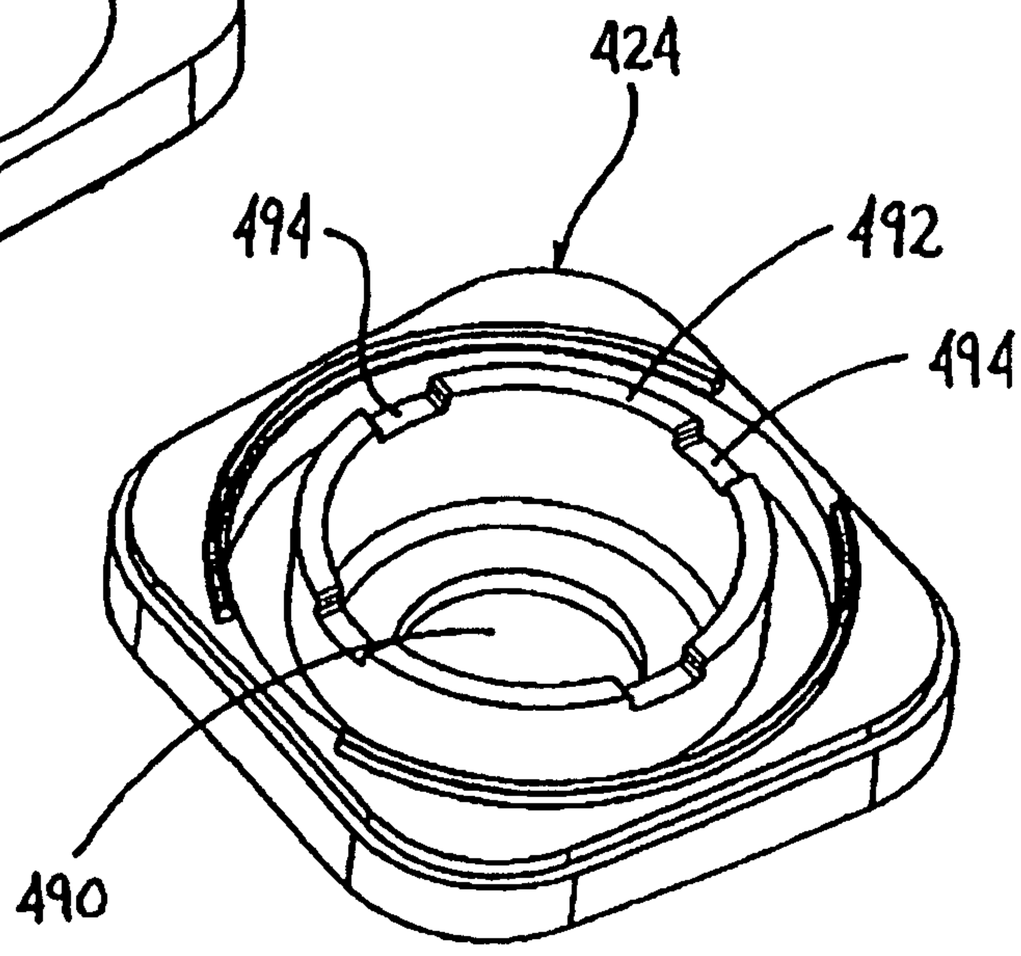

FIG. 74

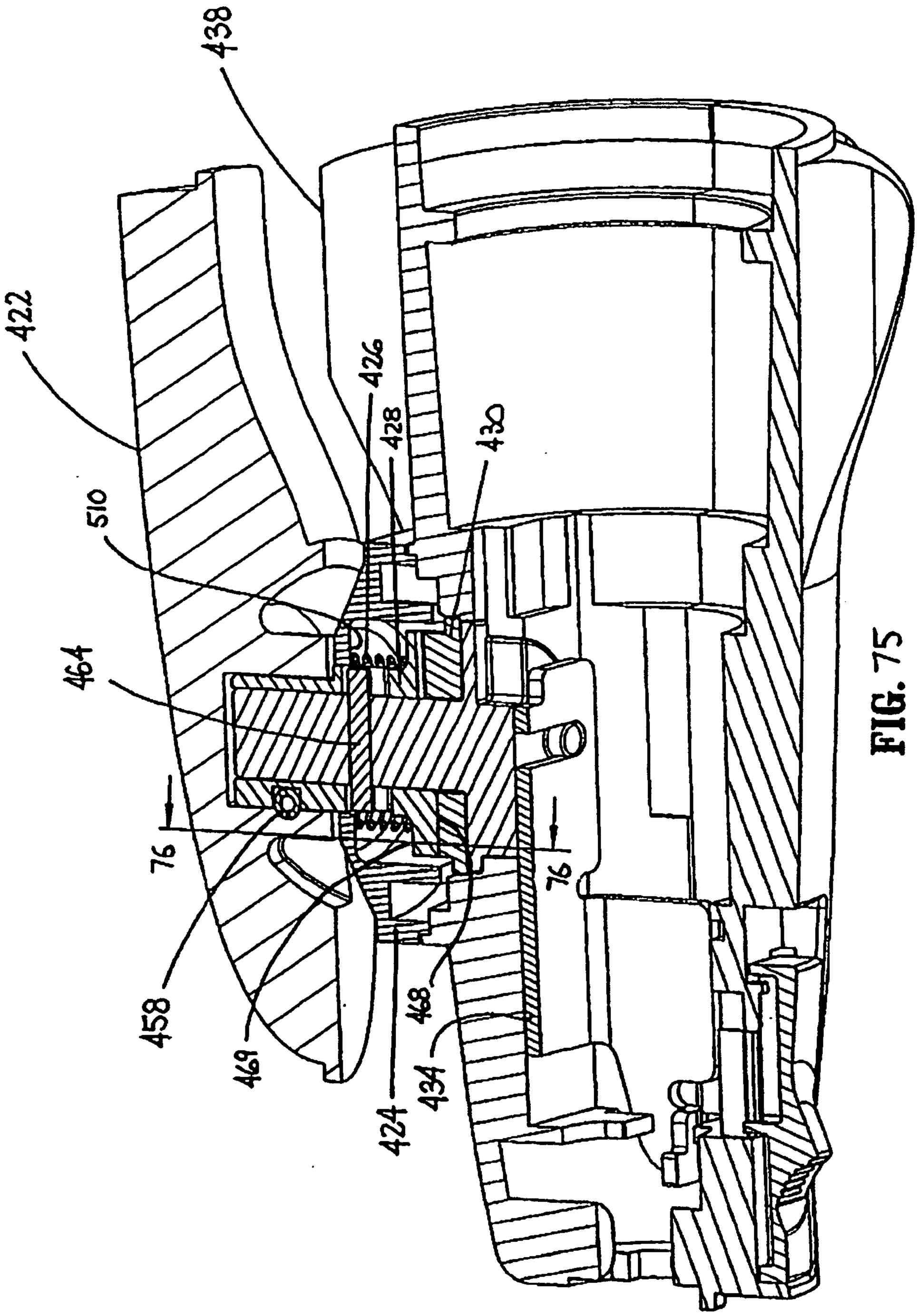

FIG. 75

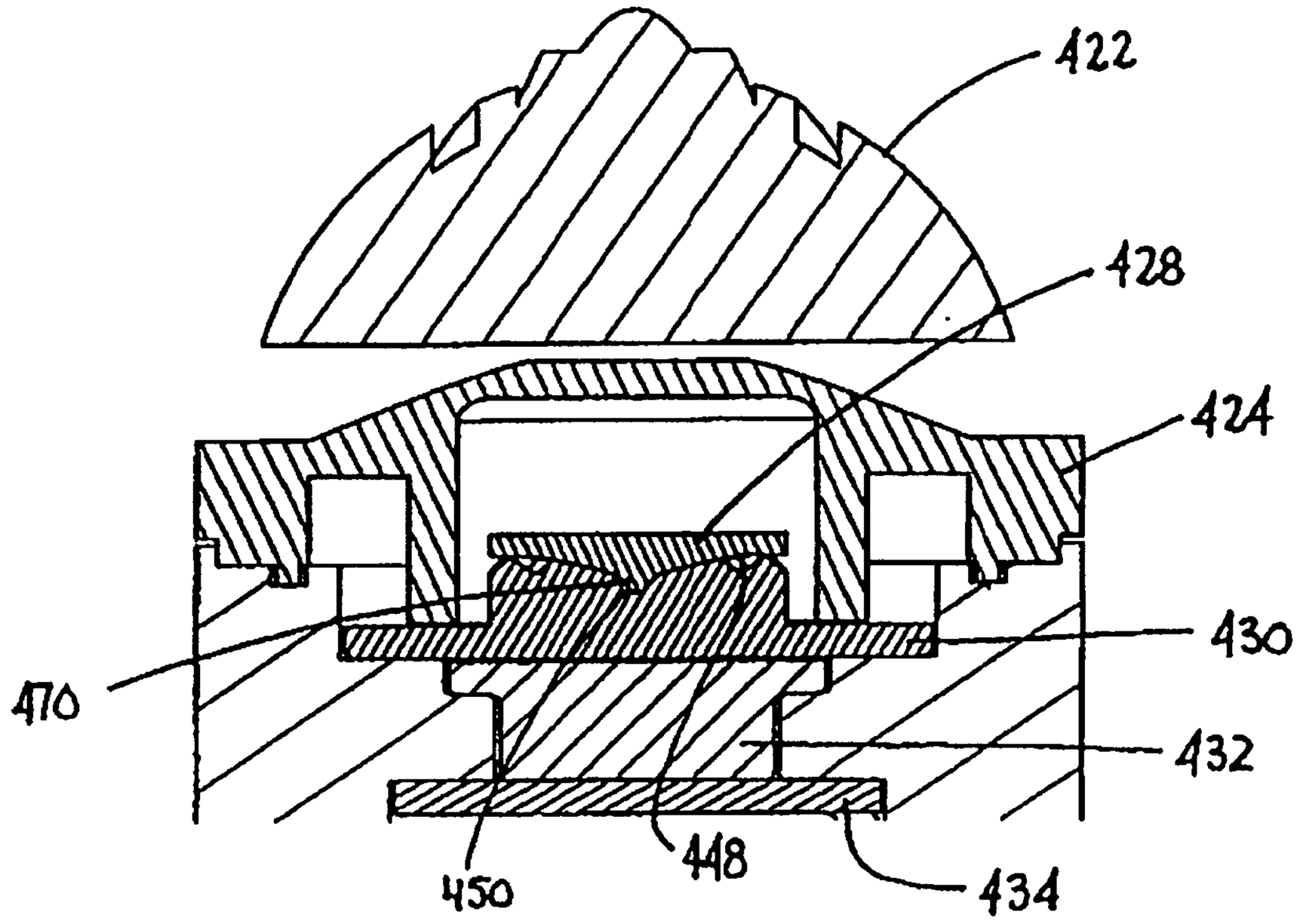

FIG. 76

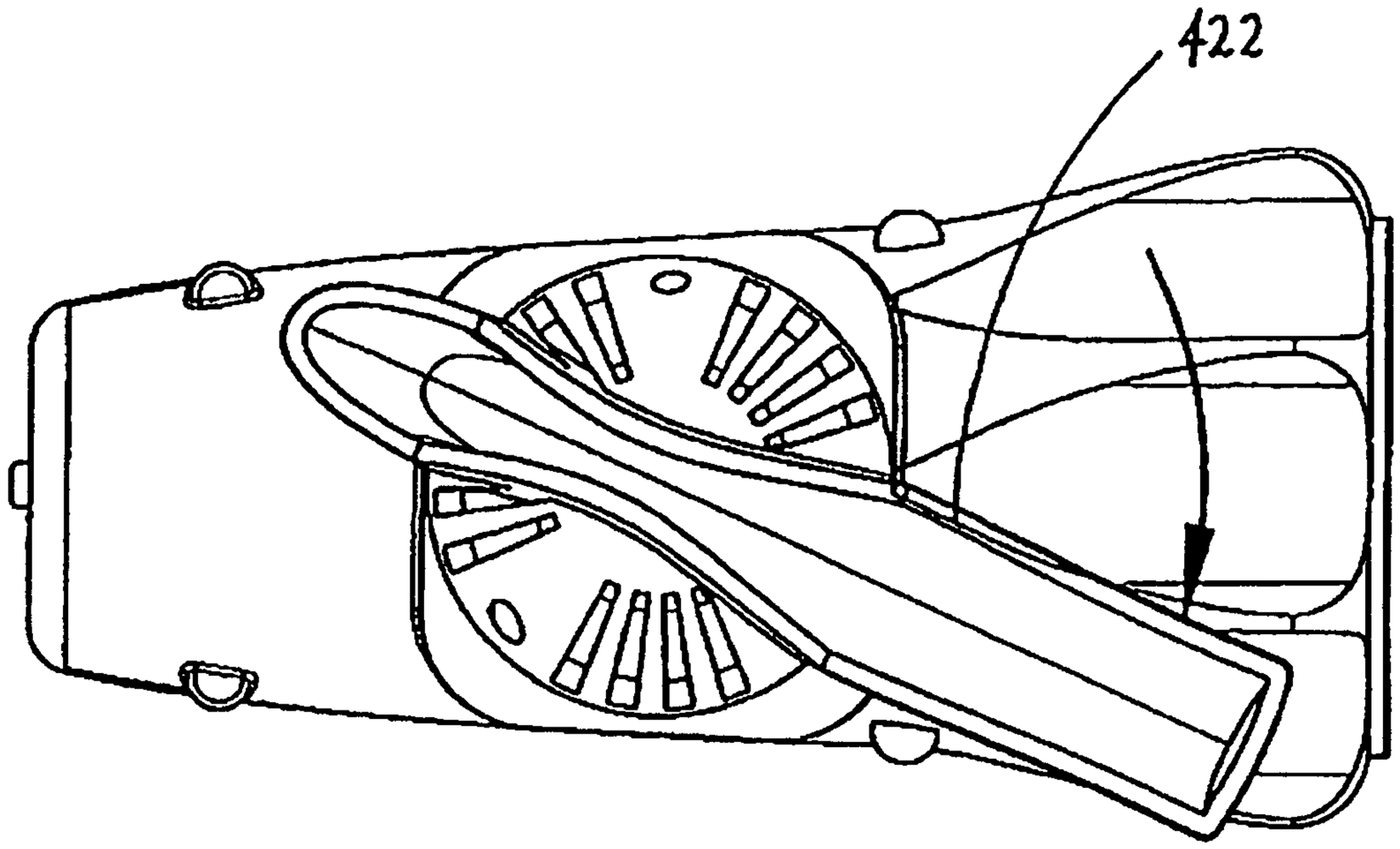

FIG. 77

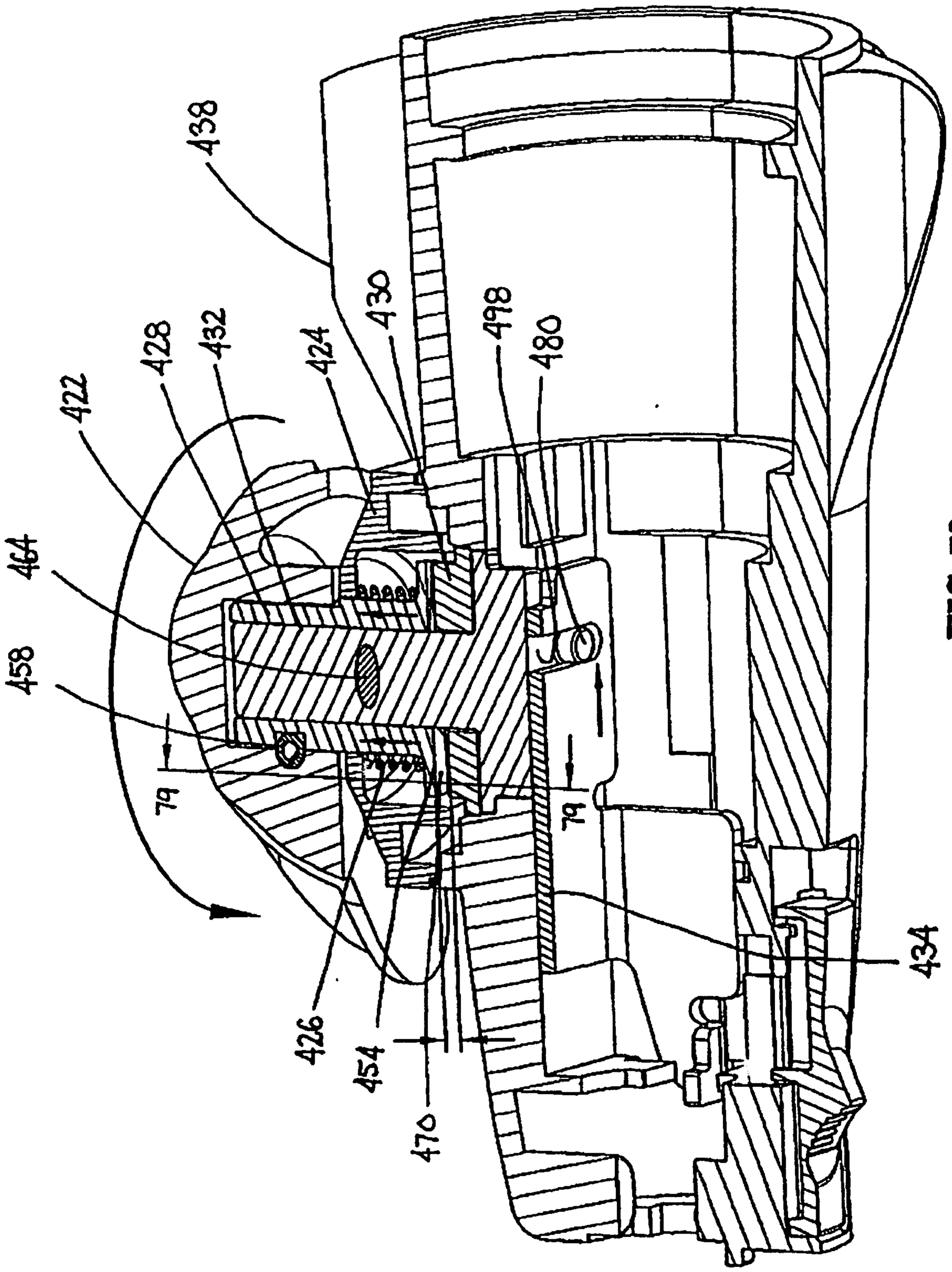

FIG. 78

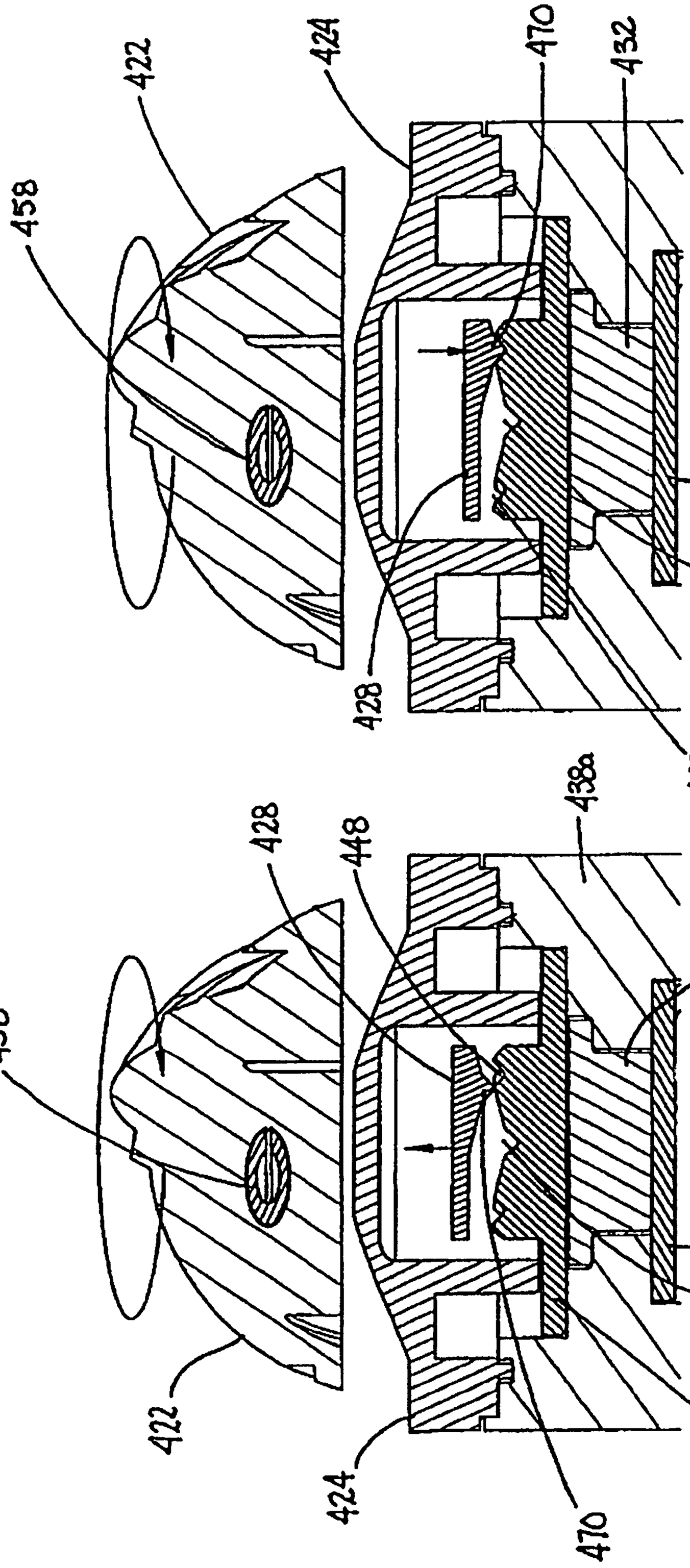

FIG. 80

FIG. 79

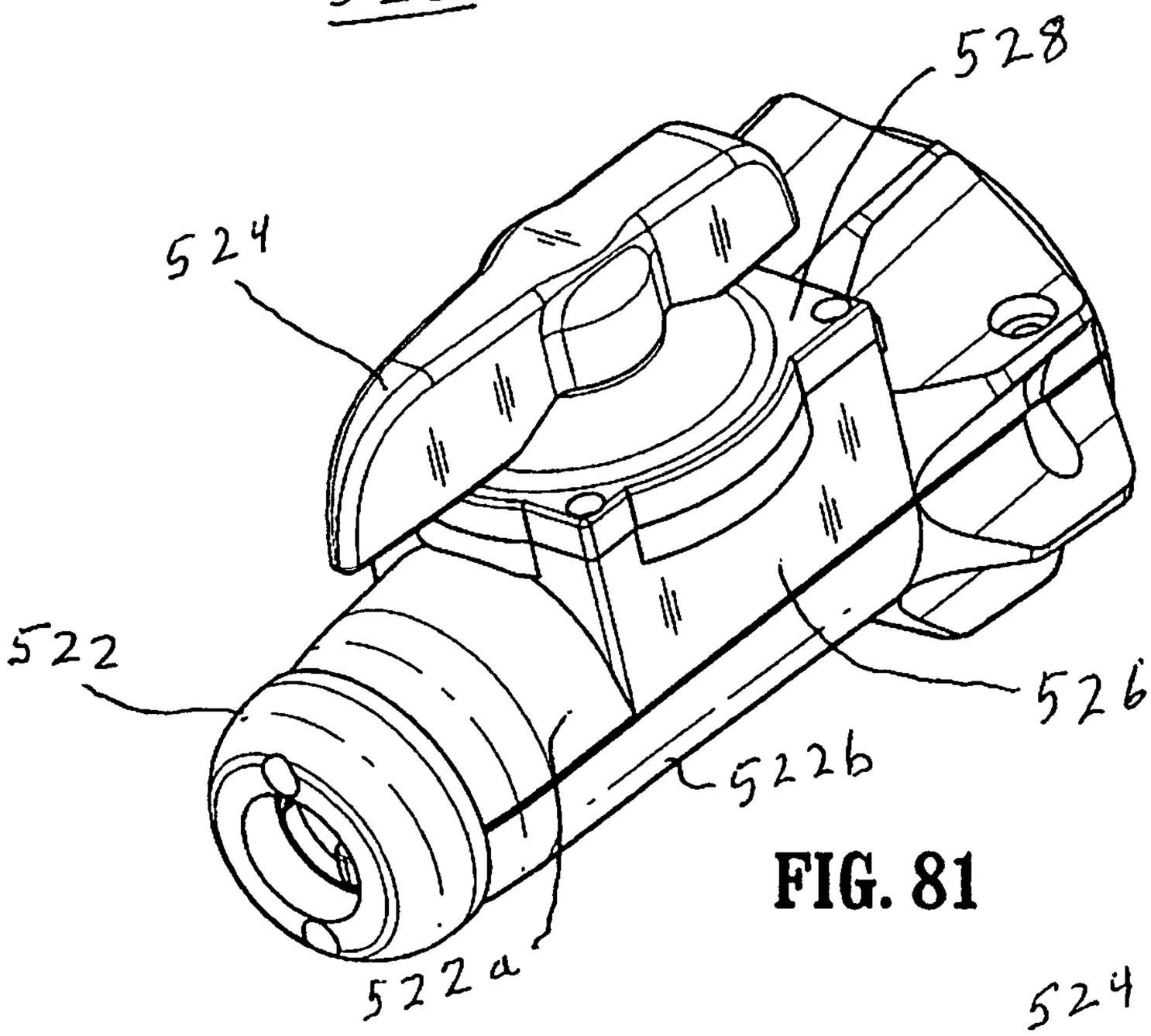
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FIG. 81

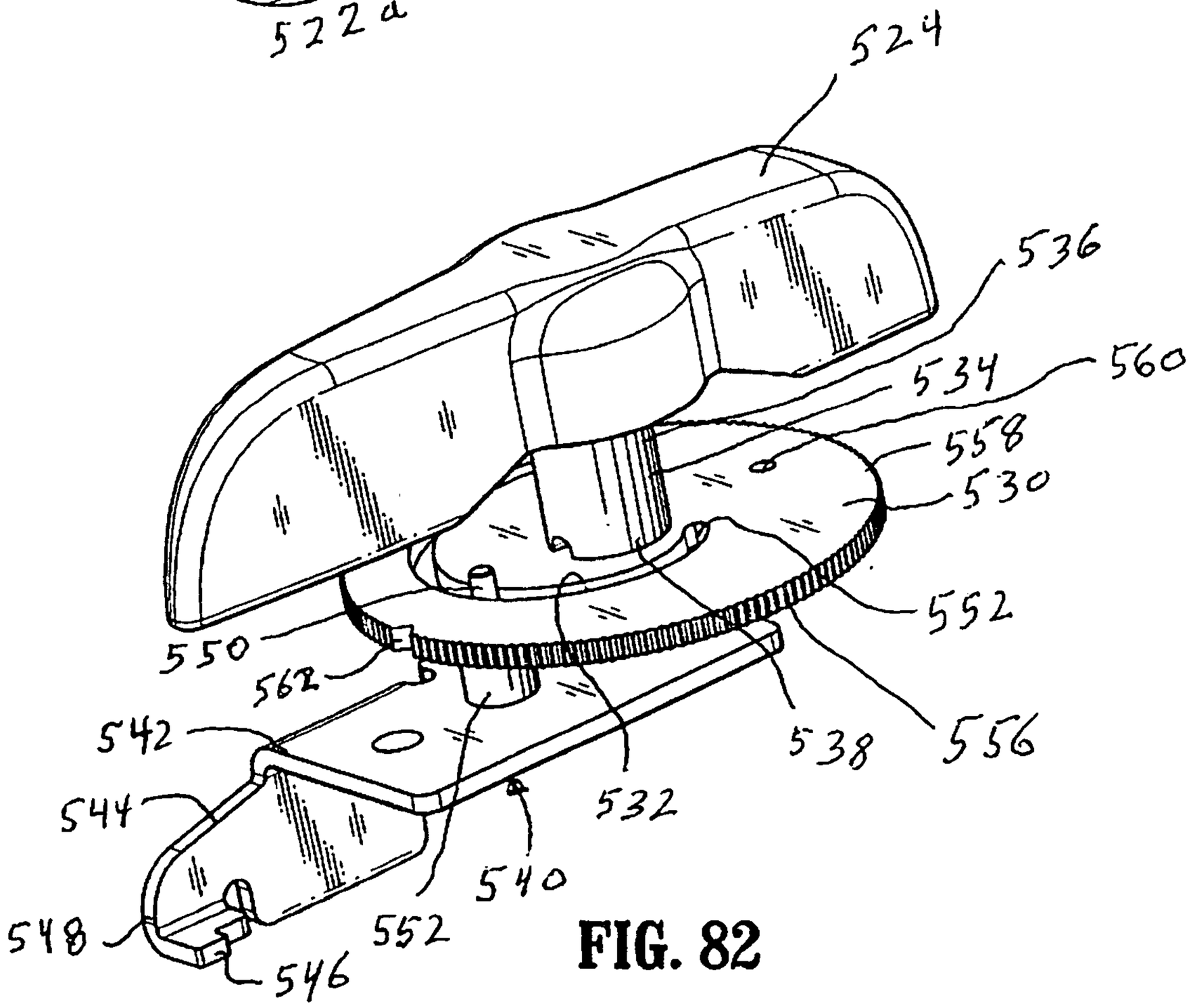
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FIG. 82

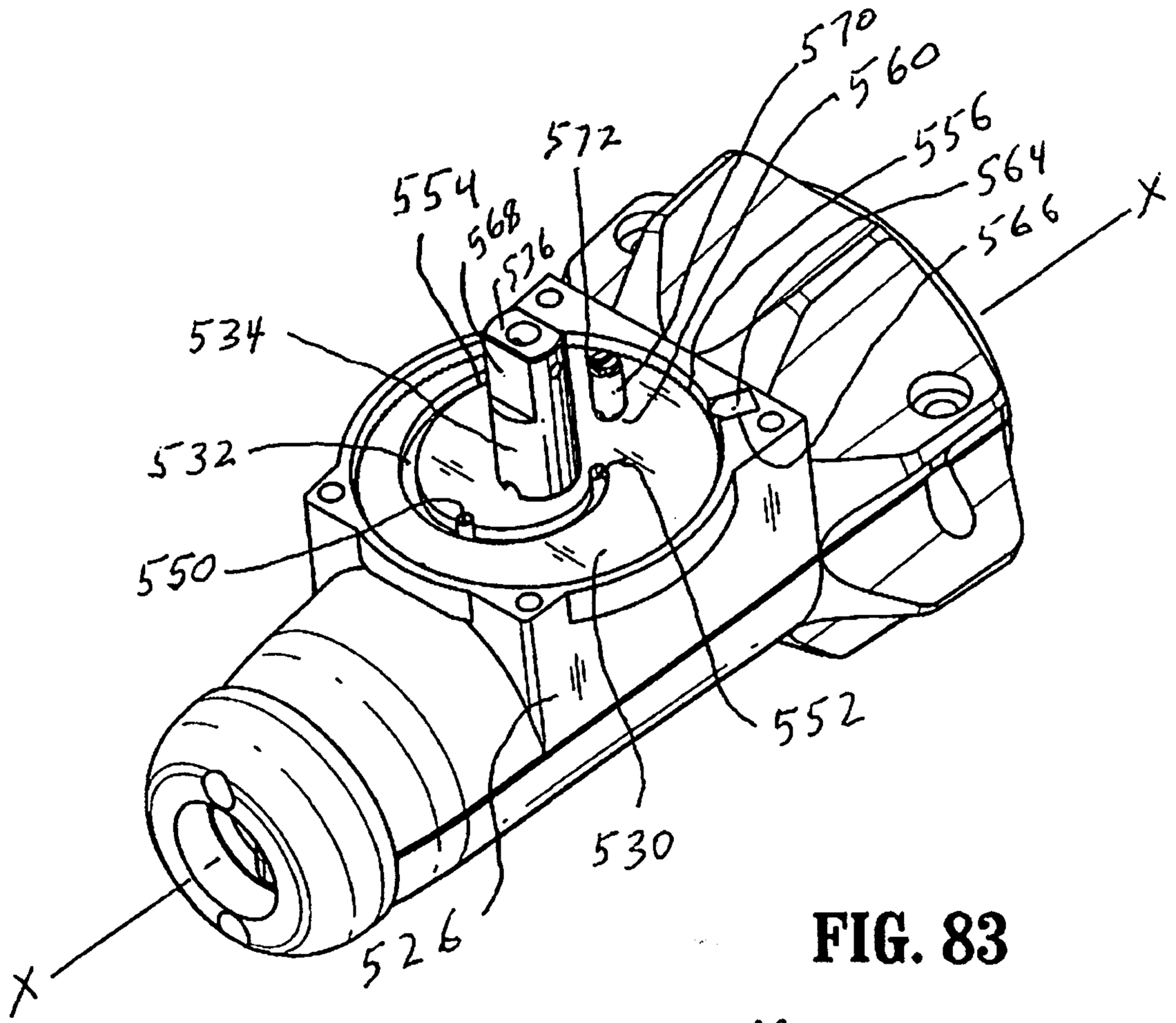
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FIG. 83

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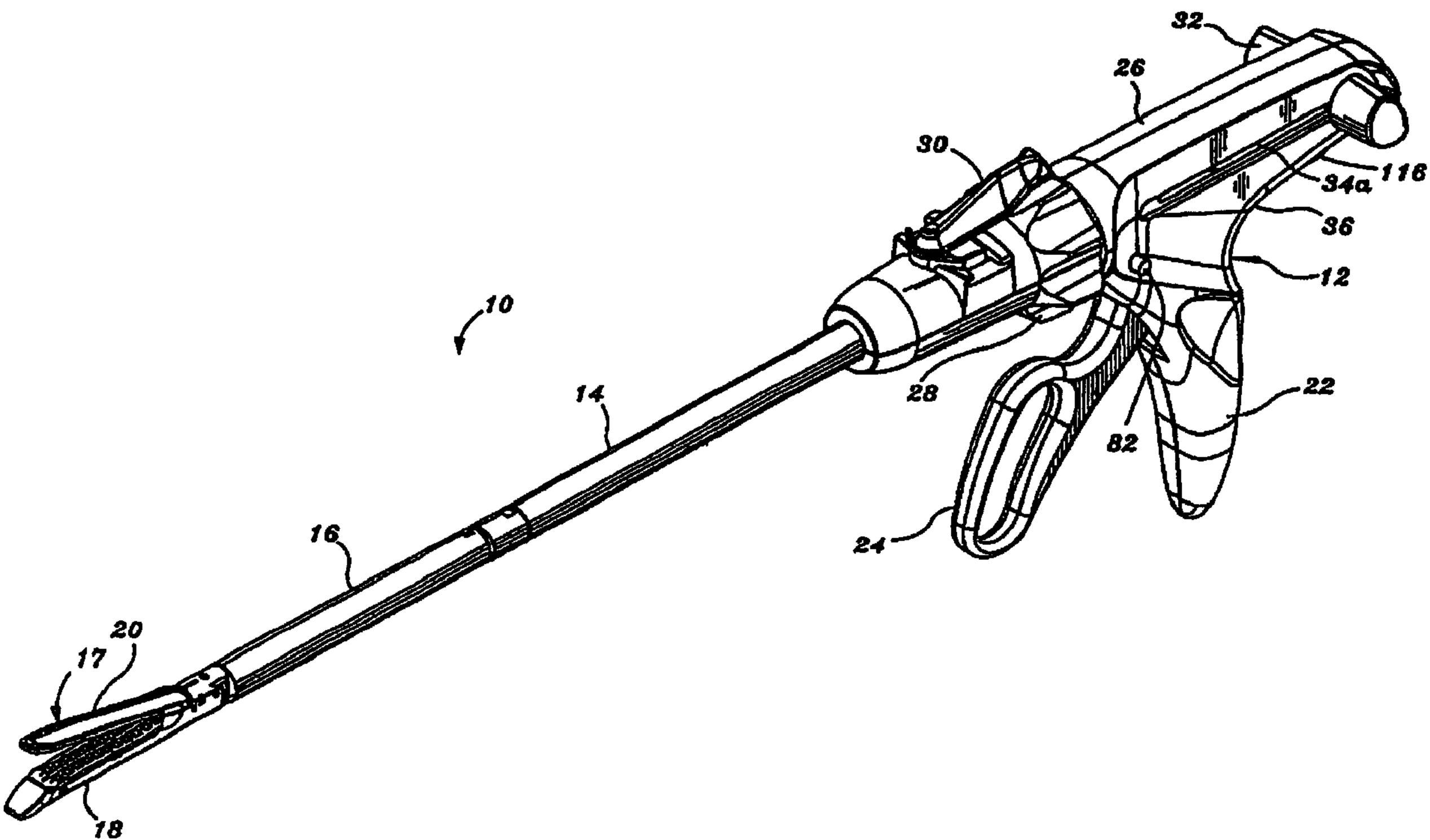
FIG. 84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