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(54) AN ANTENNA AND A FEED NETWORK FOR AN ANTENNA

ANTENNE UND SPEISESCHALTUNG DAFÜR

ANTENNE ET RESEAU D'ALIMENTATION D'ANTENNE

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Description

I. Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates to an antenna and to a feed network for an antenna. More specifically, the present invention relates to a dual band helical antenna with first and second feed networks wherein a portion of each of the feed networks is provided in an area coincident with radiators of the antenna.

II. Description of the Related Art

[0002] Contemporary personal communication devices are enjoying widespread use in numerous mobile and portable applications. With traditional mobile applications, the desire to minimize the size of the communication device, such as a mobile telephone for example, has led to a moderate level of downsizing. However, as the portable, hand-held applications increase in popularity, the demand for smaller and smaller devices has increased dramatically. Recent developments in processor technology, battery technology and communications technology, have enabled the size and weight of the portable device to be reduced drastically over the past several years.

[0003] One area in which reductions in size are desired is the device's antenna. The size and weight of the antenna play an important role in downsizing the communication device. The overall size of the antenna can impact the size of the device's body. Smaller diameter and shorter length antennas can allow smaller overall device sizes as well as smaller body sizes.

[0004] Size of the device is not the only factor that needs to be considered in designing antennas for portable applications. Another factor to be considered in designing antennas is attenuation and/or blockage effects resulting from the proximity of the user's head to the antenna during normal operations. Yet another factor is the characteristics of the communication link, such as, for example, desired radiation patterns and operating frequencies.

[0005] An antenna that finds widespread usage in satellite communication systems is the helical antenna. One reason for the helical antenna's popularity in satellite communication systems is its ability to produce and receive circularly-polarized radiation employed in such systems. Additionally, because the helical antenna is capable of producing a radiation pattern that is nearly hemispherical, the helical antenna is particularly well suited to applications in mobile satellite communication systems and in satellite navigational systems.

[0006] Conventional helical antennas are made by twisting the radiators of the antenna into a helical structure. A common helical antenna is the quadrifilar helical antenna which utilizes four radiators spaced equally around a core and excited in phase quadrature (i.e., the radiators are excited by signals that differ in phase by one-quarter of a period or 90°). The length of the radiators is typically an integer multiple of the quarter wavelength of the operating frequency of the communication device. The radiation patterns are typically adjusted by varying the pitch of the radiator, the length of the radiator (in integer multiples of a quarter-wavelength), and the diameter of the core.

[0007] Conventional helical antennas can be made using wire or strip technology. With strip technology, the radiators of the antenna are etched or deposited onto a thin, flexible substrate. The radiators are positioned such that they are parallel to each other, but at an obtuse angle to the sides (or edges) of the substrate. The substrate is then formed, or rolled, into a cylindrical, conical, or other appropriate shape causing the strip radiators to form a helix.

[0008] This conventional helical antenna, however, also has the characteristic that the radiator lengths are an integer multiple of one quarter wavelength of the desired resonant frequency, resulting in an overall antenna length that is longer than desired for some portable or mobile applications.

[0009] Additionally, in applications where transmit and receive communications occur at different frequencies, dual-band antennas are desirable. However, dual-band antennas are often available only in less than desirable configurations. For example, one way in which a dual band antenna can be made is to stack two single-band quadrifilar helix antennas end-to-end, so that they form a single cylinder. A disadvantage of this solution, however, is that such an antenna is longer than would otherwise be desired for portable, or hand-held applications.

[0010] Another technique for providing dual-band performance has been to utilize two separate single band antennas. However, for hand-held units, the two antennas would have to be located in close proximity to one another. Two single band antennas, placed in close proximity on a portable, or hand-held unit would cause coupling between the two antennas, leading to degraded performance as well as unwanted interference.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0011] The invention provides a dual band helical antenna, comprising: a first antenna section comprising a first feed network disposed on a first side of a substrate on a first feed portion of the first antenna, a first ground plane disposed on a second side of said substrate and opposite said feed network, and a first set of one or more radiators disposed on said substrate and extending from said feed network; a second antenna section comprising a second feed network disposed on said substrate on a second feed portion, a second ground plane disposed on said substrate opposite said feed network; a second set of one or more radiators disposed on said substrate and extending from said feed network; and means for providing a path for current to flow from said radiators of said second antenna along the axis of said second antenna to thereby increase the energy radiated in the directions perpendicular to the axis; wherein said first feed network comprises a first set of one or more traces disposed on said first feed portion of the antenna and a second set of one or more traces disposed on a radiator portion of said first antenna section, and said second feed network comprises a third set of one or more traces disposed on said second feed portion and a fourth set of one or more traces disposed on a radiator portion of said second antenna section.

[0012] The present invention is embodied in a novel and improved feed network for an antenna which includes a radiator portion and a feed portion. The feed network is configured such that a section of the feed network is disposed on the radiator portion of the antenna and the remainder of the feed network is disposed on the feed portion. Because part of the feed network is disposed on the radiator portion, the remainder of the feed network requires less area on the feed portion. As a result, the feed portion of the antenna can be smaller as compared to antennas having conventional feed networks. Because this configuration requires less area on the feed portion, the feed network is said to be area-efficient.

[0013] In a preferred embodiment, the traces of the feed network that are disposed on the radiator portion are disposed opposite the ground portion of the radiators. As such, the ground portion of the radiators serves as a ground plane for this part of the feed network.

[0014] The feed network can be implemented with numerous different types of antennas of varying configurations, including single-band and multi-band helical antennas.

[0015] One advantage of the invention is that the overall size of the antenna and the amount of loss in the feed are reduced as compared to antennas having conventional feed networks.

[0016] In one embodiment, the feed network is implemented with a dual-band helical antenna having two sets of one or more helically wound radiators. The radiators are wound, or wrapped, such that the antenna is in a cylindrical, conical, or other appropriate shape to optimize or otherwise obtain desired radiation patterns. According to this implementation, one set of radiators is provided for operation at a first frequency and the second set is provided for operation at a second frequency which preferably is different from the first frequency. Each set of radiators has an associated feed network to provide the signals to drive the radiators. Thus, the dual-band antenna can be described as being comprised of two single-band antennas, each single-band antenna having a radiator portion and a feed portion.

[0017] A tab can be provided to feed the signal to the first single-band antenna. The tab extends from the feed portion of the first single-band antenna. When the antenna is formed into a cylinder or other appropriate shape, the tab is aligned with the axis of the antenna. More specifically, in a preferred embodiment, the tab extends radially inward to provide a centrally located feed structure. Thus, the tab and the feed line do not interfere with the signal patterns of the second single-band antenna.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0018] The features, objects, and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the detailed description set forth below of an embodiment of the invention when taken in conjunction with the drawings in which like reference characters identify correspondingly throughout. Additionally, the left-most digit (s) of a reference number identifies the drawing in which the reference first appears.

FIG. **1**A is a diagram illustrating a conventional wire quadrifilar helical antenna.

FIG. **1**B is a diagram illustrating a conventional strip quadrifilar helical antenna.

FIG. **2**A is a diagram illustrating a planar representation of an open-circuited, or open terminated, quadrifilar helical antenna.

FIG. **2**B is a diagram illustrating a planar representation of a short-circuited quadrifilar helical antenna.

FIG. **3** is a diagram illustrating current distribution on a radiator of a short-circuited quadrifilar helical antenna.

FIG. **4** is a diagram illustrating a far surface of an etched substrate of a strip helical antenna.

FIG. **5** is a diagram illustrating a near surface of an etched substrate of a strip helical antenna.

FIG. **6** is a diagram illustrating a perspective view of an etched substrate of a strip helical antenna.

FIG. **7**A is a diagram illustrating an open-circuit coupled multi-segment radiator having five coupled segments.

FIG. **7**B is a diagram illustrating a pair of short-circuited coupled multi-segment radiators.

FIG. **8**A is a diagram illustrating a planar representation of a short-circuited coupled multi-segment quadrifilar helical antenna.

FIG **8**B is a diagram illustrating a coupled multi-segment quadrifilar helical antenna formed into a cylindrical shape.

FIG. **9**A is a diagram illustrating overlap δ and spacing s of radiator segments.

FIG. **9**B is a diagram illustrating example current distributions on radiator segments of the coupled multi-segment helical antenna.

FIG. **10**A is a diagram illustrating two point sources radiating signals differing in phase by 90°.

FIG. **10**B is a diagram illustrating field patterns for the point sources illustrated in FIG. **10**A.

FIG. **10**C is a diagram illustrating circular polarization field patterns for a conventional helical antenna and circular polarization field patterns for a helical antenna having a feed tab aligned with the axis of the antenna.

FIG. **11** is a diagram illustrating the embodiment in which each segment is placed equidistant from the segments on either side.

FIG. **12** is a diagram illustrating an example implementation of a coupled multi-segment antenna according to one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **13** is a diagram illustrating planar representations of the surfaces of a stacked dual-band helical antenna according to one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **14** is a diagram illustrating planar representations of the surfaces of a stacked dual-band helical antenna according to one embodiment of the invention in which the feed points for the radiators are positioned at a distance from the feed network.

FIG. **15** is a diagram illustrating a planar representation of a tab used to feed one antenna of the stacked dual-band helical antenna according to one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **16** is a diagram illustrating example dimensions for a stacked dual-band helical antenna according to one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **17** is a diagram illustrating an example of a conventional quadrature phase feed network.

FIG. **18** is a diagram illustrating a feed network having portions that extend into the radiators of the antenna according to one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **19** is a diagram illustrating feed networks along with the signal traces, including the feed paths, for antennas according to one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **20** is a diagram illustrating an outline for the ground plane of antennas according to one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **21** is a diagram illustrating both the ground planes and the signal traces of a dual band antenna superimposed according to one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **22**A is a diagram illustrating a structure for maintaining an antenna in a cylindrical or other appropriate shape according to one embodiment.

FIGS. **22**B-**22**E are diagrams illustrating the formation of an antenna in a cylindrical or other appropriate shape according to the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **22**A.

FIG. **23**A is a diagram illustrating a form suitable for use in supporting an antenna in a cylindrical or other appropriate shape according to one embodiment.

FIGS. **23**B and **23**C are diagrams illustrating the formation of an antenna in a cylindrical or other appropriate shape according to the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **23**A.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

I. Overview and Discussion of the Invention

[0019] The present invention is directed toward an area-efficient feed network for an antenna. A portion of the feed network is provided on a radiator portion of the antenna. This decreases the area required for the feed portion of the antenna.

II. Example Environment

[0020] In a broad sense, the invention can be implemented in any system for which helical antenna technology can be utilized. One example of such an environment is a communication system in which users having fixed, mobile and/or portable telephones communicate with other parties through a satellite communication link. In this example environment, the telephone is required to have an antenna tuned to the frequency of the satellite communication link.

[0021] The present invention is described in terms of this example environment Description in these terms is provided for convenience only. It is not intended that the invention be limited to application in this example environment. In fact, after reading the following description, it will become apparent to a person skilled in the relevant art how to implement the invention in alternative environments.

III. Conventional Helical Antennas

[0022] Before describing the embodiments of the invention in detail, it is useful to describe the radiator portions of some conventional helical antennas. Specifically, this section of the document describes radiator portions of some conventional quadrifilar helical antennas. FIGS. **1**A and **1**B are diagrams illustrating a radiator portion **100** of a conventional quadrifilar helical antenna in wire form and in strip form, respectively. The radiator portion **100** illustrated in FIGS. **1**A and **1**B is that of a quadrifilar helical antenna, meaning it has four radiators **104** operating in phase quadrature. As illustrated in FIGS. **1**A and **1**B, radiators **104** are wound to provide circular polarization.

[0023] FIGS. **2**A and **2**B are diagrams illustrating planar representations of a radiator portion of conventional quadrifilar helical antennas. In other words, FIGS. **2**A and **2**B illustrate the radiators as they would appear if the antenna cylinder were "unrolled" on a flat surface. FIG. **2**A is a diagram illustrating a quadrifilar helical antenna which is open-circuited, or open terminated, at the far end. For such a configuration, the resonant length ℓ of the radiators **208** is an odd integer multiple of a quarter-wavelength of the desired resonarit frequency.

[0024] FIG. **2**B is a diagram illustrating a quadrifilar helical antenna which is short-circuited, or electrically connected, at the far end. In this case, the resonant length ℓ of radiators **208** is an even integer multiple of a quarter wavelength of the desired resonant frequency. Note that in both cases, the stated resonant length ℓ is approximate, because a small adjustment is usually needed to compensate for non-ideal short and open terminations.

[0025] FIG. **3** is a diagram illustrating a planar representation of a radiator portion of a quadrinlar helical antenna, which includes radiators **208** having a length $\ell = \lambda/2$, where λ is the wavelength of the desired resonant frequency of the antenna. Curve **304** represents the relative magnitude of current for a signal on a radiator **208** that resonates at a frequency of $f = v/\lambda$, where ν is the velocity of the signal in the medium.

[0026] Example implementations of a quadrifilar helical antenna implemented using printed circuit board techniques (a strip antenna) are. described in more detail with reference to FIGS. **4 - 6**. The strip quadrifilar helical antenna is comprised of strip radiators **104**A-**104**D etched onto a dielectric substrate **406**. The substrate is a thin flexible material that is rolled into a cylindrical, conical or other appropriate shape such that radiators **104**A-**104**D are helically wound about a central axis of the cylinder.

[0027] FIGS. **4 - 6** illustrate the components used to fabricate a quadrifilar helical antenna **100**. FIGS. **4** and **5** present a view of a far surface **400** and near surface **500** of substrate **406**, respectively. The antenna **100** includes a radiator portion **404,** and a feed portion **408.**

[0028] In the embodiments described and illustrated herein, the antennas are described as being made by forming the substrate into a cylindrical shape with the near surface being on the outer surface of the formed cylinder. In alternative embodiments, the substrate is formed into the cylindrical shape with the far surface being on the outer surface of the cylinder.

[0029] In one embodiment, dielectric substrate **406** is a thin, flexible layer of polytetraflouroethylene (PTFE), a PTFE/glass composite, or other dielectric material. In one embodiment, substrate **406** is on the order of 0.005 in., or 0.13 mm thick, although other thicknesses can be chosen. Signal traces and ground traces are provided using copper. In alternative embodiments, other conducting materials can be chosen in place of copper depending on cost, environmental considerations and other factors.

[0030] In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 5, feed network **508, 580** is etched onto feed portion **408** to provide the quadrature phase signals (i.e., the 0°, 90°, 180° and 270° signals) that are provided to radiators **104**A-**104**D. Feed portion **408** of far surface **400** provides a ground plane **412** for feed circuit **508, 580**. Signal traces for feed circuit **508, 580** are etched onto near surface **500** of feed portion **408**.

[0031] For purposes of discussion, radiator portion **404** has a first end **432** adjacent to feed portion **408** and a second end **434** (on the opposite end of radiator portion **404**). Depending on the antenna embodiment implemented, radiators **104**A-**104**D can be etched into far surface **400** of radiator portion **404.** The length at which radiators **104**A-**104**D extend from first end **432** toward second end **434** is approximately an integer multiple of a quarter wavelength of the desired resonant frequency.

[0032] In such an embodiment where radiators **104**A-**104**D are an integer multiple of λ/2. radiators **104**A-**104**D are electrically connected to each other (i.e., shorted, or short circuited) at second end **434**. This connection can be made by a conductor across second end **434** which forms a ring **604** around the circumference of the antenna when the substrate is formed into a cylinder. FIG. **6** is a diagram illustrating a perspective view of an etched substrate of a strip helical antenna having a shorting ring **604** at second end **434**.

[0033] One conventional quadrifilar helical antenna is described in U.S. Patent No. 5,198,831 to Burrell *et. al*. (referred to as the '831 patent). The antenna described in the '831 patent is a printed circuit-board antenna having the antenna radiators etched or otherwise deposited on a dielectric substrate. The substrate is formed into a cylinder resulting in a helical configuration of the radiators.

[0034] Another conventional quadrifilar helical antenna is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,255,005 to Terret *et al* (referred to as the '005 patent).

[0035] The antenna described in the '005 patent is a quadrifilar helical antenna formed by two bifilar helices positioned orthogonally and excited in phase quadrature. The disclosed antenna also has a second quadrifilar helix that is coaxial and electromagnetically coupled with the first helix to improve the passband of the antenna.

[0036] Yet another conventional quadrifilar helical antenna is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,349,365, to Ow *et al* (referred to as the '365 patent). The antenna described in the '365 patent is a quadrifilar helical antenna designed in wireform as described above with reference to FIG. **1**A.

IV. Coupled Multi-Segment Helical Antenna

[0037] In order to reduce the length of radiator portion **100** of the antenna, one form of helical antenna utilizes coupled multi-segment radiators that allow for resonance at a given frequency at shorter lengths than would otherwise be needed for a helical antenna with an equivalent resonant length.

[0038] FIGS. **7**A and **7**B are diagrams illustrating planar representations of example embodiments of coupled-segment helical antennas. FIG. **7**A illustrates a coupled multi-segment radiator **706** terminated in an open-circuit according to one single-filar embodiment. An antenna terminated in an open-circuit such as this may be used in a single-filar, bifilar, quadrifilar, or other x-filar implementation.

[0039] The embodiment illustrated in FIG. **7**A is comprised of a single radiator **706.** Radiator **706** is comprised of a set of radiator segments. This set is comprised of two end segments **708, 710** and *p* intermediate segments **712,** where *p* = 0, 1, 2, 3 ... (the case where *p* = 3 is illustrated). Intermediate segments are optional (i.e., *p* can equal zero). End segments **708, 710** are physically separate from but electromagnetically coupled to one another. Intermediate segments **712** are positioned between end segments **708, 710** and provide electromagnetic coupling between end segments **708, 710**.

[0040] In the open-terminated embodiment, the length ℓ_{s1} of segment **708** is an odd-integer multiple of one-quarter wavelength of the desired resonant frequency. The length ℓ_{s2} of segment **710** is an integer multiple of one-half the wavelength of the desired resonant frequency. The length ℓ_{sp} of each of the *p* intermediate segments **712** is an integer multiple of one-half the wavelength of the desired resonant frequency. In the illustrated embodiment, there are three intermediate segments **712** (i.e., *p* = 3).

[0041] FIG.7B illustrates radiators **706** of the helical antenna when terminated in a short circuit **722**. This short-circuited implementation is not suitable for a single-filar antenna, but can be used for bifilar, quadrifilar or other x-filar antennas. As with the open-circuited embodiment, radiators 706 are comprised of a set of radiator segments. This set is comprised of two end segments **708, 710** and *p* intermediate segments **712**, where *p* = 0, 1, 2, 3 ... (the case where *p* = 3 is illustrated). Intermediate segments are optional (i.e., *p* can equal zero). End segments **708, 710** are physically separate from but electromagnetically coupled to one another. Intermediate segments **712** are positioned between end segments **708, 710** and provide electromagnetic coupling between end segments **708,710.**

[0042] In the short-circuited embodiment, the length ℓ_{s1} of segment **708** is an odd-integer multiple of one-quarter wavelength of the desired resonant frequency. The length ℓ_{s2} of segment **710** is an odd-integer multiple of one-quarter wavelength of the desired resonant frequency. The length ℓ_{sp} of each of the *p* intermediate segments **712** is an integer multiple of one-half the wavelength of the desired resonant frequency. In the illustrated embodiment, there are three intermediate segments **712** (i.e., *p* = 3).

[0043] FIGS. **8**A and **8**B are diagrams illustrating a coupled multi-segment quadrifilar helical antenna radiator portion **800** according to one embodiment of the invention. FIGS. **8**A and **8**B illustrate one example implementation of the antenna illustrated in FIG. **7**B, where *p* = zero (i.e., there are no intermediate segments **712**) and the lengths of segments **708, 710** are one-quarter wavelength.

[0044] The radiator portion **800** illustrated in FIG. **8**A is a planar representation of a quadrifilar helical antenna, having four coupled radiators **804.** Each coupled radiator **804** in the coupled antenna is actually comprised of two radiator segments **708, 710** positioned in close proximity with one another such that the energy in radiator segment **708** is coupled to the other radiator segment **710**.

[0045] More specifically, according to one embodiment, radiator portion **800** can be described in terms of having two sections **820, 824.** Section **820** is comprised of a plurality of radiator segments **708** extending from a first end **832** of the radiator portion **800** toward the second end **834** of radiator portion **800.** Section **824** is comprised of a second plurality of radiator segments **710** extending from second end **834** of the radiator portion **800** toward first end **832**. Toward the center area of radiator portion **800**, a part of each segment **708** is in close proximity to an adjacent segment **710** such that energy from one segment is coupled into the adjacent segment in the area of proximity. This is referred to in this document as overlap.

[0046] In a preferred embodiment, each segment **708, 710** is of a length of approximately $\ell_1 = \ell_2 = \lambda/4$. The overall length of a single radiator comprising two segments **708, 710** is defined as ℓ_{tot}. The amount one segment **708** overlaps another segment **710** is defined as $\delta = \ell_1 + \ell_2 - \ell_{tot}$.

[0047] For a resonant frequency $f = \upsilon/\lambda$ the overall length of a radiator ℓ_{tot} is less than the half-wavelength length of $\lambda/2$. In other words, as a result of coupling, a radiator, comprising a pair of coupled segments **708, 710,** resonates at frequency $f = \upsilon/\lambda$ even though the overall length of that radiator is less than a length of $\lambda/2$. Therefore, the radiator portion **800** of a ½ wavelength coupled multi-segment quadrifilar helical antenna is shorter than the radiator portion of conventional half-wavelength quadrifilar helical antenna **800** for a given frequency *f*.

[0048] For a clearer illustration of the reduction in size gained by using the coupled configuration, compare the radiator portions **800** illustrated in FIG **8** with those illustrated in FIG. **3**. For a given frequency $f = \upsilon/\lambda$, the length ℓ of radiator portion **300** of the conventional antenna is $\lambda/2$, while the length ℓ_{tot} of radiator portion **800** of the coupled radiator segment antenna is less than $\lambda/2$.

[0049] As stated above, in one embodiment, segments **708, 710** are of a length $\ell_1 = \ell_2 = \lambda/4$. The length of each segment can be varied such that ℓ_1 is not necessarily equal to ℓ_2, and such that they are not equal to $\lambda/4$. The actual resonant frequency of each radiator is a function of the length of radiator segments **708, 710** the separation distance s between radiator segments **708, 710** and the amount by which segments **708, 710** overlap each other.

[0050] Note that changing the length of one segment **708** with respect to the other segment **710** can be used to adjust the bandwidth of the antenna. For example, lengthening ℓ_1 such that it is slightly greater than $\lambda/4$ and shortening ℓ_2 such that it is slightly shorter than $\lambda/4$ can increase the bandwidth of the antenna.

[0051] FIG. **8**B illustrates the actual helical configuration of a coupled multi-segment quadrifilar helical antenna according to one embodiment of the invention. This illustrates how each radiator is comprised of two segments **708, 710** in one embodiment. Segment **708** extends in a helical fashion from first end **832** of the radiator portion toward second end **834** of the radiator portion. Segment **710** extends in a helical fashion from second end **834** of the radiator portion toward first end **832** of the radiator portion. FIG. **8**B further illustrates that a portion of segments **708, 710** overlap such that they are electromagnetically coupled to one another.

[0052] FIG. **9**A is a diagram illustrating the separation s and overlap δ between radiator segments **708, 710.** Separation s is chosen such that a sufficient amount of energy is coupled between the radiator segments **708, 710** to allow them to function as a single radiator of an effective electrical length of approximately $\lambda/2$ and integer multiples thereof.

[0053] Spacing of radiator segments **708, 710** closer than this optimum spacing results in greater coupling between segments **708**, **710**. As a result, for a given frequency *f* the length of segments **708, 710** must increase to enable resonance at the same frequency *f*. This can be illustrated by the extreme case of segments **708, 710** being physically connected (i.e., $s = 0$). In this extreme case, the total length of segments **708, 710** must equal $\lambda/2$ for the antenna to resonate. Note that in this extreme case, the antenna is no longer really 'coupled' according to the usage of the term in this specification, and the resulting configuration is actually that of a conventional helical antenna such as that illustrated in FIG. **3.**

[0054] Similarly, increasing the amount of overlap δ of segments **708, 710** increases the coupling. Thus as overlap δ increases, the length of segments **708, 710** increases as well.

[0055] To qualitatively understand the optimum overlap and spacing for segments **708, 710**, refer to FIG. **9**B. FIG. **9**B represents a magnitude of the current on each segment **708, 710.** Current strength indicators **911, 928** illustrate that each segment ideally resonates at $\lambda/4$, with the maximum signal strength at the outer ends and the minimum at the inner ends.

[0056] To optimize antenna configurations for the coupled radiator segment antenna, the inventors utilized modeling software to determine correct segment length ℓ_1, ℓ_2, overlap δ, and spacing s among other parameters. One such software package is the Antenna Optimizer (AO) software package. AO is based on a method of moments electromagnetic antenna-modeling algorithm. AO Antenna Optimizer version 6.35, copyright 1994, was written by and is available from Brian Beezley, of San Diego, California.

[0057] Note that there are certain advantages obtained by using a coupled configuration as described above with reference to FIGS. **8**A and **8**B. With both the conventional antenna and the coupled radiator segment antenna, current is concentrated at the ends of the radiators. Pursuant to array factor theory, this can be used to an advantage with the coupled radiator segment antenna in certain applications.

[0058] To explain, FIG. **10**A is a diagram illustrating two point sources, A, B, where source A is radiating a signal having a magnitude equal to that of the signal of source B but lagging in phase by 90° (the $e^{j\omega t}$ convention is assumed). Where sources A and B are separated by a distance of $\lambda/4$, the signals add in phase in the direction traveling from A to B, and add out of phase in the direction from B to A. As a result, very little radiation is emitted in the direction from B to A. A typical representative field pattern shown in FIG. **10**B illustrates this point.

[0059] Thus, when the sources A and B are oriented such that the direction from A to B points upward, away from the ground, and the direction from B to A points toward the ground, the antenna is optimized for most applications. This is because it is rare that a user desires an antenna that directs signal strength toward the ground. This configuration is especially useful for satellite communications where it is desired that the majority of the signal strength be directed upward, away from the ground.

[0060] The point source antenna modeled in FIG. **10**A is not readily achievable using conventional half wavelength helical antennas. Consider the antenna radiator portion illustrated in FIG. **3**. The concentration of current strength at the ends of radiators **208** roughly approximates a point source. When radiators are twisted into a helical configuration, one end of the 90° radiator is positioned in line with the other end of the 0° radiator. Thus, this approximates two point sources in a line. However, these approximate point sources are separated by approximately $\lambda/2$ as opposed to the desired $\lambda/4$ configuration illustrated in FIG. **10**A.

[0061] Note, however that the coupled radiator segment antenna embodying the invention provides an implementation where the approximated point sources are spaced at a distance closer to $\lambda/4$. Therefore, the coupled radiator segment antenna allows users to capitalize on the directional characteristics of the antenna illustrated in FIG. **10**A.

[0062] The radiator segments **708, 710** illustrated in FIG. **8** show that segment **708** is very near its associated segment **710**, yet each pair of segments **708, 710** are relatively far from the adjacent pair of segments. In one alternative embodiment, each segment **710** is placed equidistant from the segments **708** on either side. This embodiment is illustrated in FIG. **11**.

[0063] Referring now to FIG. **11**, each segment is substantially equidistant from each pair of adjacent segments. For example, segment **708**B is equidistant from segments **710**A, **710**B. That is, $s_1 = s_2$. Similarly, segment **710**A is equidistant from segments **708**A, **708**B.

[0064] This embodiment is counterintuitive in that it appears as if unwanted coupling would exist. In other words, a segment corresponding to one phase would couple not only to the appropriate segment of the same phase, but also to the adjacent segment of the shifted phase. For example, segment **708**B, the 90° segment would couple to segment **710**A (the 0° segment) and to segment **710**B (the 90° segment). Such coupling is not a problem because the radiation from the top segments **710** can be thought of as two separate modes. One mode resulting from coupling to adjacent segments to the left and the other mode from coupling to adjacent segments to the right. However, both of these modes are phased to provide radiation in the same direction. Therefore, this double-coupling is not detrimental to the operation of the coupled multi-segment antenna.

[0065] FIG. **12** is a diagram illustrating an example implementation of a coupled radiator segment antenna. Referring now to FIG. **12**, the antenna comprises a radiator portion **1202** and a feed portion **1206**. Radiator portion includes segments **708, 710.** Dimensions provided in FIG. **12** illustrate the contribution of segments **708, 710** and the amount of overlap δ to the overall length of radiator portion **1202.**

[0066] The length of segments in a direction parallel to the axis of the cylinder is illustrated as $\ell_1 \sin\alpha$ for segments **708** and $\ell_2 \sin\alpha$ for segments **710,** where α is the inside angle of segments **708, 710.**

[0067] Segment overlap as illustrated above in FIGS. **8**A and **9**A, is illustrated by the reference character δ. The amount of overlap in a direction parallel to the axis of the antenna is given by $\delta\sin\alpha$, as illustrated in FIG. **12.**

[0068] Segments **708, 710** are separated by a spacing *s*, which can vary as described above. The distance between the end of a segment **708, 710** and the end of radiator portion **1202** is defined as the gap and illustrated by the reference characters γ_1, γ_2, respectively. The gaps γ_1, γ_2 can, but do not have to be, equal to each other. Again, as described above, the length of segments **708** can be varied with respect to that of segments **710**.

[0069] The amount of offset of a segment **710** from one end to the next is illustrated by the reference character ω_0. The separation between adjacent segments **710** is illustrated by the reference character ω_s, and is determined by the helix diameter.

[0070] Feed portion **1206** includes an appropriate feed network to provide the quadrature phase signals to the radiator segments **708.** Feed networks are well known to those of ordinary skill in the art and are thus not described in detail herein.

[0071] In the example illustrated in FIG. **12,** segments **708** are fed at a feed point that is positioned along each segment **708** a distance from the feed network that is chosen to optimize impedance matching. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **12**, this distance is illustrated by the reference characters δ_{feed}.

[0072] Note that continuous line **1224** illustrates the border for a ground portion on the far surface of the substrate. The ground portion opposite segments **708** on the far surface extends to the feed point. The thin portion of segments **708** is on the near surface. At the feed point, the thickness of segments **708** on the near surface increases.

[0073] Dimensions are now provided for an example coupled radiator segment quadrifilar helical antenna suitable for operation in the L-Band at approximately 1.6 GHz. Note that this is an example only and other dimensions are possible for operation in the L-Band. Additionally, other dimensions are possible for operation in other frequency bands as well.

[0074] The overall length of radiator portion **1202** in the example L-Band embodiment is 2.30 inches (58.4 mm). In this embodiment, the pitch angle α is 73 degrees. With this angle α, the length of segments **708** $\ell_1 \sin\alpha$ for this embodiment is 1.73 inches (43.9 mm). In the embodiment illustrated, the length of segments **710** is equal to the length of segments **708.**

[0075] In one example, segment **710** is positioned substantially equidistant from its adjacent pair of segments **708**. In one implementation of the embodiment where segments **710** are equidistant from adjacent segments **708**, the spacing $s_1 = s_2 = 0.086$ inches (2.2 mm). Other spacings are possible including, for example, the spacing s of segments **710** at 0.070 inches (1.8 mm) from an adjacent segment **708**.

[0076] The width τ of radiator segments **708**, **710** is 0.11 inches (2.8 mm) in this embodiment. Other widths are possible.

[0077] The example L-Band embodiment features a symmetric gap $\gamma_1 = \gamma_2 = 0.57$ inches (14.5 mm). Where the gap γ is symmetric for both ends of the radiator portion **1202** (i.e., where $\gamma_1 = \gamma_2$), the radiators **708, 710** have an overlap $\delta\sin\alpha$ of 1.16 inches (29.5 mm) (1.73 inches - 0.57 inches).

[0078] The segment offset ω_0 is 0.53 inches and the segment separation ω_s is 0.393 inches (10.0 mm). The diameter of the antenna is $4\omega_s/\pi$.

[0079] In one embodiment, this is chosen such that the distance δ_{feed} from the feed point to the feed network is $\delta_{feed} = 1.57$ inches (39.9 mm). Other feed points can be chosen to optimize impedance matching.

[0080] Note that the example embodiment described above is designed for use in conjunction with a 0.032 inch thick polycarbonate radome enclosing the helical antenna and contacting the radiator portion. It will become apparent to a person skilled in the art how a radome or other structure affects the wavelength of a desired frequency.

[0081] Note that in the example embodiments just described, the overall length of the L-Band antenna radiator portion is reduced from that of a conventional half-wavelength L-Band antenna. For a conventional half-wavelength L-Band antenna, the length of the radiator portion is approximately 3.2 inches (i.e., $\lambda/2(\sin\alpha)$), where α is the inside angle of segments **708, 710** with respect to the horizontal), or (81.3 mm). For the example embodiments described above, the overall length of the radiator portion **1202** is 2.3 inches (58.42 mm). This represents a substantial savings in size over the conventional antenna.

V. Stacked Dual-Band Helical Antenna

[0082] Having thus described several embodiments of a single-band helical antenna, a dual-band helical antenna embodying the present invention is now described. The present invention is directed toward a dual-band helical antenna capable of resonating at two different operating frequencies. Two helical antennas are stacked end to end, with one antenna resonating at a first frequency and the other antenna resonating at a second frequency. Each antenna has a radiator portion comprised of one or more helically-wound radiators. Each antenna also has a feed portion comprised of a feed network and a ground plane. The two antennas are stacked such that the ground plane of one antenna is used as a shorting ring across the far end of the radiators of the other antenna.

[0083] FIG. **13** is a diagram illustrating planar representations of far surface **400** and near surface **500** of a dual-band helical antenna according to one embodiment of the invention. The dual-band helical antenna is comprised of two single-band helical antennas: helical antenna **1304** operating at a first resonant frequency and helical antenna **1308** operating at a second resonant frequency.

[0084] In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **13,** feed network **508,** radiators **104**A-**104**D and first antenna **1304** are disposed on near surface **500** of first antenna **1304.** Also disposed on near surface **500** is the ground plane **412** for the feed network **508** of second antenna **1308.** On far surface **400** are feed network **508** and radiators **104**A-**104**D of second antenna **1308** as well as ground plane **412** for the feed portion of first antenna **1304.**

[0085] As discussed above with reference to FIGS. **2**A and **2**B, where the resonant length ℓ of radiators **104**A-**104**D is an even integer multiple of a quarter-wavelength of the desired resonant frequency, the far end of the radiators **104**A-**104**D is shorted. As illustrated in FIG. **13,** this shorting is accomplished using ground plane **412** of first antenna **1304.** As a result of this configuration, an additional shorting ring does not need to be added to the end of radiators **104**A-**104**D.

[0086] Note that in the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **13**, first antenna **1304** is illustrated as resonating at odd integer multiples of a quarter-wavelength of the desired resonant frequency because the ends of radiators **104**A-**104**D are open circuited. In an alternative embodiment, a shorting ring (not illustrated) could be added to the far end of radiators **104**A-**104**D of first antenna **1304**, while changing the length of these radiators **104**A-**104**D such that they are an even-integer multiple of a quarter-wavelength of the desired resonant frequency.

[0087] Radiators **104**A-**104**D of the dual-band antenna described with reference to FIG. **13** are illustrated as being fed at a first end near feed network **508.** It is well known that a feed point of radiators **104**A-**104**D of the helical antenna can be positioned at any point along the length of radiators **104**A-**104**D where such positioning is primarily determined based on impedance matching considerations. FIG. **14** is a diagram illustrating one embodiment of a dual-band helical antenna in which the feed points of radiators **104**A-**104**D are positioned at a predetermined distance from feed network **508**. Specifically, in the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **14,** a feed point A of first antenna **1304** is positioned at a distance ℓ_{FEED1} from feed network **508** and feed point B of second antenna **1308** is positioned at a distance ℓ_{FEED2} from feed network **508**.

[0088] This embodiment illustrates that radiators **104**A-**104**D are comprised of a ground trace **1436** on a first surface of the substrate **406,** a feed trace **1438** on a second surface of substrate **406** and opposite said ground trace **1436,** and a radiator trace **1440** on the second surface of substrate **406.**

[0089] As with the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **13,** in this embodiment, ground plane **412** of first antenna **1304** serves as a shorting ring for radiators **104**A-**104**D and second antenna **1308**, such that the radiators of second antenna **1308** resonate at an even integer multiple of a quarter-wavelength of the desired resonant frequency.

[0090] In order to decrease the overall length of the stacked antenna, the edge-coupled technology discussed above can be utilized. In such embodiments, radiators **104**A-**104**D of first antenna **1304** and/or second antenna **1308** as illustrated in FIGS. **13** and **14** are replaced with edge-coupled radiators as illustrated, for example, in FIG. **12**.

[0091] One challenge of providing a dual-band antenna such as that illustrated in FIGS. **13** and **14** is that of feeding first antenna **1304.** To this end, first antenna **1304** is fed by means of a tab extending from the lower area of the feed portion of first antenna **1304.**

[0092] FIG. **15** is a diagram illustrating such a tab used to feed first antenna **1304**. Referring now to FIG. **15**, a tab **1504** extends from the side of the feed portion of first antenna **1304** on substrate **406.** In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **15**, tab **1504** is approximately "L" shaped such that it extends horizontally from the feed portion of first antenna **1304** at a given distance and is then angled axially through the center in the direction of the feed portion of second antenna **1308**. Although **1504** is illustrated as being shaped with a right angle, other angles could be used as could curves of various radii.

[0093] Ideally, when substrate **406** is rolled into a cylinder or other appropriate shape to form the helical antenna, axial component **1524** of tab **1504** is substantially along the axis of the dual-band helical antenna. Having axial component **1524** of tab **1504** coincident with the axis of the helical antenna minimizes the impact of this member on the radiation patterns of the antenna. As illustrated in FIG. **15,** in a preferred embodiment, tab

1504 extends from feed portion of first antenna **1304** at a vertical position that is as far as possible from first antenna **1304.** This is done to minimize the effect of tab **1504** on the radiation patterns of first antenna **1304.** Because second antenna **1308** is a coupled-segment one-half wavelength antenna and the ends of radiators **104**A-**104**D of second antenna **1308** are shorted by ground plane **412** of first antenna **1304,** tab **1504** has a minimal effect on the radiation patterns of second antenna **1308.**

[0094] Preferably, the length ℓ_{gp} of feed portion **1206** of first antenna **1304** can be determined by considering two factors at the appropriate operating frequency. First, it is desirable to minimize the amount of current flowing from the radiators of first antenna **1304** to second antenna **1308,** and vice versa. In other words, it is desirable to achieve isolation between the two antennas. This can be accomplished by ensuring that the length is great enough such that the currents do not extend from one set of radiators to the other at the frequency of interest.

[0095] Another challenge is the goal of not allowing current from radiators **104**A-D of first antenna **1304** from reaching tab **1504.** Currents from first antenna **1304** are attenuated as they travel across the feed portion of first antenna **1304** toward tab **1504**. Tab **1504** creates an asymmetrical discontinuity in these currents. Therefore, it is desired to minimize the magnitude of the currents reaching tab **1504** to the extent practical.

[0096] After reading this description, it will become apparent to a person skilled in the art how to implement feed portion **1206** of appropriate length ℓ_{gp} based on the materials used, the frequencies of interest, the expected power levels in the antenna, and other known factors. This decision may also entail a tradeoff between size and performance.

[0097] Note that the effects of tab **1504** are not nonexistent in this embodiment. Because tab **1504** is close to the radiators of second antenna **1308**, some current from second antenna **1308** is coupled into tab **1504,** and, therefore, along the axis of the antenna. This current affects the radiation of second antenna **1308,** resulting in increased radiation to the sides of the antenna. For applications where the antenna is mounted vertically, this results in increased radiation in the direction of the horizon and decreased radiation in the vertical direction. As a result, this application is well-suited for satellite communication systems where low-earth-orbiting satellites are used to relay communications from or to the communication device.

[0098] This effect is illustrated in FIG. **10**C, where circular polarization radiation pattern **1010** is a representation of a typical radiation pattern for a conventional helical antenna, and radiation pattern **1020** is a representation of a radiation pattern for second antenna **1308.** As FIG. **10**C illustrates, pattern **1020** is "flatter" and "wider" than conventional pattern **1010.**

[0099] To enable coupling of a signal to first antenna **1304,** tab **1504** includes a connector such as a crimp or solder connector or other connector suitable for making a connection between a feed cable and the signal trace on tab **1504**. Various types of cable or wire can be used to connect transceiver RF circuitry to the antenna at tab **1504**. Preferably, a low loss flexible or semi-rigid cable is utilized. Of course, as is well known in the antenna art, it is desired to match the impedance of the feed input with that of the interface cable to maximize power transfer to the antenna. However, if the input transition is poor, the radiation patterns will still be symmetric, only their gains will be lowered by the corresponding amount of reflection loss. In addition to a low insertion loss, it is also important that the connector provide a sturdy mechanical connection between the cable and tab **1504**.

[0100] Also illustrated in FIG. **15** is the outline for an example substrate shape. After reading this description, it will become apparent to a person skilled in the art how to implement the antenna with a tab **1504** utilizing substrates having other shapes.

[0101] FIG. **16** is a diagram illustrating one embodiment of a stacked antenna with example dimensions. In this embodiment, first antenna **1304** is an L-band antenna and second antenna **1308** is an S-band antenna. In this embodiment, S-band antenna **1308** is an edge-coupled antenna wherein each radiator **104** is comprised of two segments. Note that this embodiment is provided for example only. Alternative frequency bands can be chosen for operation. Also note that either first antenna **1304** or second antenna **1308** or both could utilize the edge-coupled technology.

[0102] Example dimensions are now described for the L-band and S-band antenna illustrated in FIG. **16**. The radiating aperture of the L-band antenna is a total axial height of 1.253 inches, while the S-band aperture is a total height of 1.400 inches. In this embodiment, the height of feed portion **412** of first antenna **1304** is 0.400 inches. This yields a total radiating aperture of 3.093 inches. The inclination angle of radiators **104**A-**104**D is 65°.

[0103] The above dimensions are provided by way of example only. As discussed above with reference to conventional helical antennas, the overall length of radiators **104**A-**104**D determines the precise resonating frequency of the antenna. The resonating frequency is important because the highest average gains and the most symmetric patterns occur at the resonant frequency. If the antenna is made longer, the resonating frequency shifts down. Conversely, if the antenna is made shorter, the resonating frequency shifts up. The percentage of the frequency shift is approximately proportional to the percentage that the radiators **104**A-**104**D are lengthened or shortened. At L-band operating frequencies, roughly 1 mm of length in the direction of the antenna axis corresponds to 1 MHz.

[0104] In the illustrated embodiment, both first antenna **1304** and second antenna **1308** have four excited filar arms, or radiators **104**A-**104**D. Each of these radiators 104A-104D are fed in phase quadrature. The quadrature phase excitation of four radiators **104**A-**104**D for each antenna **1304**, **1308** is implemented using a feed network. While conventional feed networks capable of providing quadrature phase excitation can be implemented, a preferred feed network is discussed in detail below.

[0105] Another important dimension is the feedpoint axial length. The feedpoint axial length defines the distance of the feedpoint from the feed network for embodiments where the feedpoint is positioned along radiators **104**A-**104**D as illustrated in FIG. **13**. The feedpoint axial length dimension indicates the position at which the microstrip flares out to continue the radiator and is actually the feedpoint position for the entire radiator **104.** In the example illustrated in FIG. **16**, the feedpoint length for first antenna **1304** is 1.133 inches (28.8 mm). The feedpoint length for second antenna **1308** is 0.638 inches (16.2 mm). These dimensions yield 50 ohm impedances at 1618 and 2492 MHz, respectively. If the feedpoint position is shifted lower, the impedance is lower. Conversely, if the feedpoint position is shifted higher, the impedance is higher. It is important to note that when the overall radiator length is being adjusted to tune the frequency, the feedpoint position should also be shifted by a proportional amount in the direction along the axis of the antenna to maintain the correct impedance match.

[0106] Preferably, the antenna having dimensions as illustrated in FIG. **16** is rolled into a cylinder having a diameter of 0.500 inches (12.7 mm).

VI. Feed Network

[0107] The helical antennas described in this document can be implemented using a mono-filar, quadrifilar, octafilar or other x-filar configuration. A feed network is utilized to provide the signals to the filars at the necessary phase angle. The feed network splits the signal and shifts the phase provided to each filar. The configuration of the feed network is dependent on the number of filars. For example, for a quadrifilar helical antenna, the feed network provides four equal-power signals in a quadrature phase relationship (i.e., 0, 90, 180, and 270 degrees).

[0108] To conserve space on the feed portion of the antenna a unique feed network layout may be utilized. The traces of the feed network extend into one or more radiators **104**A-**104**D of the antenna. For convenience, the feed network is described in terms of a feed network designed to provide four equal-power signals in a quadrature phase relationship. After reading this description, it will become apparent to a person skilled in the relevant art how to implement the feed network for other x-filar configurations.

[0109] FIG. **17** illustrates the electrical equivalent of a conventional quadrature phase feed network. For conventional quadrature phase feed networks, the network provides four equal-power signals, each separated in phase by 90 degrees. The signal is provided to the feed network via a first signal path **1704.** At a first signal point A (referred to as a secondary feed point), the 0-degree phase signal is provided to a first radiator **104**. At signal point B, the 90-degree phase signal is provided to a second radiator **104**. At signal points C and D, the 180- and 270-degree phase signals are provided to third and fourth radiators **104**.

[0110] Signals A and B are combined at a point P2 to yield a 25-ohm impedance. Likewise, signals C and D are combined at a point P3 to yield a 25-ohm impedance. These signals are combined at P1 to yield a 12.5-ohm impedance. Therefore, a 25-ohm, 90-degree transformer is placed at the input to convert this impedance to 50-ohms. Note that in the network illustrated in FIG. **17**, part of the transformer is placed before the P1 split to shorten the feed and also to decrease losses. However, because it is before the split, it must be twice the impedance after the split.

[0111] The conventional feed network is modified such that the traces of the feed network are disposed on portions of the substrate defined for radiators **104**A-**104**D. Specifically, in a preferred embodiment, these traces are disposed on the substrate in an area which is opposite from the ground traces of the one or more of the radiators **104**A-**104**D.

[0112] FIG. **18** is a diagram illustrating an example embodiment of the feed network in a quadrifilar helical antenna environment. Specifically, in the example illustrated in FIG. **18,** two feed networks are illustrated: a first feed network **1804** for implementation with first antenna **1304**; and a second feed network **1808** for implementation with second antenna **1308**. Feed networks **1804,1808** have points A, B, C, and D, for providing the 0, 90,180, and 270-degree signals to radiators **104**A-**104**D. The dashed lines provided on FIG. **18** approximately illustrate an outline for the ground plane of radiators **104**A-**104**D on a surface of the substrate opposite the surface on which feed networks **1804,1808** are disposed. Thus, FIG. 18 illustrates those portions of feed networks **1804, 1808** which are disposed on, or extend into, radiators **104**A-**104**D.

[0113] Note that according to conventional wisdom, the feed network is provided on an area that is designated for the feed network and that is separate from the radiators. In contrast, the feed network described herein is laid out such that a portion of the feed network is deposited on the radiator portion of the antenna. As such, the feed portion of the antenna can be reduced in size in comparison to the feed portion for a conventional feed networks.

[0114] FIG. **19** is a diagram illustrating feed networks **1804, 1808** along with the signal traces, including the feed paths, for antennas **1304, 1308.** FIG. **20** illustrates an outline for the ground plane of antennas **1304, 1308.** FIG. **21** is a diagram illustrating both the ground planes and the signal traces superimposed.

[0115] An advantage of these feed networks is that the area required for the feed portion of the antenna to implement a feed network is reduced over conventional feeding techniques. This is because portions of the feed network which would otherwise be disposed on the feed portion of the antenna are now disposed on the radiator portion of the antenna. As a result of this, the overall length of the antenna can be reduced.

[0116] An additional advantage of such a feed network is that because the secondary feed point is moved closer to the feed point of the antenna, transmission line loss is decreased. Additionally, a transformer can be integrated into the routing line of the feed network for impedance matching.

[0117] Thus, an area-efficient network is configured such that a section of the feed network is disposed on a radiator portion of an antenna and the remainder of the feed network is disposed on a feed portion. Because part of the feed network is disposed on the radiator portion, the remainder of the feed network requires less area on the feed portion. As a result, the feed portion of the antenna can be smaller as compared to antennas having conventional feed networks. Preferably, the traces of the feed network that are disposed on the radiator portion are disposed opposite the ground portion of the radiators. As such, the ground portion of the radiators serves as a ground plane for this part of the feed network. The area-efficient feed network can be implemented with numerous different types of antennas of varying configurations, including single-band and multiband helical antennas. As a result of this configuration, the overall size of the antenna and the amount of loss in the feed are reduced as compared to antennas having conventional feed networks.

VII. Antenna Assembly

[0118] As described above, one technique for manufacturing helical antennas is to dispose radiators, feed networks and ground traces on a substrate and to wrap the substrate in an appropriate shape. Although the above-described antenna configurations can be implemented using conventional techniques for wrapping the substrate in the appropriate shape, an improved structure and technique for wrapping the substrate is now described.

[0119] FIG. **22**A is a diagram illustrating one embodiment of a structure used to maintain the substrate in an appropriate (e.g., cylindrical) shape. More specifically, FIG. **22**A illustrates an example structure added to an antenna having an area efficient feed network After reading this description, it will become apparent to a person skilled in the relevant art how to implement the invention with helical antennas of other configurations.

[0120] FIGS. **22**B through **22**F depict cross-sectional views of an example structure used to hold the antenna in a cylindrical or other appropriate shape. Referring now to FIGS. **22**A through **22**F, the example includes a metallic strip **2218** on, or as an extension of, ground plane **412,** solder material **2216** opposite metallic strip **2218**, and one or more vias **2210**.

[0121] Metallic strip **2218** can be comprised of a portion of ground plane **412**, or a metallic strip added to ground plane **412**. Preferably, in one embodiment, metallic strip **2218** is provided by merely extending the width of ground plane **412** by a predetermined amount. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **22**A, this width is shown by ω_{strip}.

[0122] A series of vias **2210** are provided in ground plane **412** in the area of metallic strip **2218.** Preferably, for a solid connection, the vias **2210** are added to radiator portions of both first antenna **1304** and second antenna **1308.** The pattern chosen for vias **2210** is based on known mechanical and electrical properties of the materials used. While the invention can be implemented with only one or two vias **2210** on each ground plane **412,** to obtain a desired level of mechanical strength and electrical connection, several vias **2210** may be employed. While not necessary, the portion of each ground plane **412** used can extend laterally, or circumferentially, beyond the antenna radiators.

[0123] As seen in FIG. **22**B, vias **2210** extend completely through the material of ground plane **412** and through support substrate **406** (**100**) from one surface to the next The vias are manufactured as metallized or metal coated vias using well known techniques in the art. A relatively small portion or region of an opposite edge **2214** of ground plane **412** is coated with solder material **2216**.

[0124] The embodiments illustrated in FIGS. **22**B and **22**D, include a small metallic strip **2218** formed on substrate **406** on the opposite side from ground plane **412**, but adjacent to first edge **2212**. In this embodiment, the vias extend through the substrate to metallic strip **2218**. While metallic strip **2218** is not necessary in all applications, it will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art that metallic strip **2218** facilitates solder flow and improved mechanical bonding. A specific material for manufacturing metallic strip **2218** is chosen according to known principles based on the ground plane material being used, the solder chosen, and so forth.

[0125] When the antenna support substrate is rolled into the generally cylindrical shape to form desired helical antenna structures, edges **2212** and **2214** are brought into close proximity with one another as illustrated in FIG. **22**D. Vias **2210** and metallic strip **2218** (if provided) are positioned to overlap solder material **2216** on opposite ground plane edge **2214.** Heat is applied using well known soldering techniques and equipment while strip **2218** is held in contact with solder material **2216**.

[0126] As solder material **2216** is melted, it flows into vias **2210** and onto metallic strip **2218**. The heat is then reduced or removed, and the solder forms a permanent, but removable or serviceable, joint or bond between the two outer edges or ends of ground plane **412.** In this manner, the antenna support substrate **406** and the antenna components deposited thereon are now mechanically held in the desired cylindrical form without requiring other materials such as dielectric tape, adhesives, or the like. This reduces the time, cost, and labor previously required to assemble a helical antenna of this type. This may also allow increased automation of this operation and provide more; readily reproducible antenna dimensions. In addition, one edge of ground plane **412** is now electrically connected to the other edge, providing a continuous conductive ring from the ground plane, as desired. This electrical connection is accomplished without complicated soldering or connecting wires.

[0127] This technique can also be extended to provide support or engagement along other portions of the antenna. For example, a series of one or more metallic pads or strips **2220** can be deposited at spaced apart locations along the length of one or both sets of antenna radiators. As seen in FIG. **22**E, the metallic pads or strips **2220** are positioned adjacent one or more radiators **104**A-D but on the opposite side of support substrate **406** (**100**). These pads or strips are positioned so that when the antenna substrate is rolled or curved to produce the desired antenna, as seen in FIG. **22**F, metallic pads or strips **2220** are positioned over a portion of radiators **104**A-D on the opposite edge of the support substrate. Specifically, in one embodiment, metallic pads or strips **220** are positioned over a ground trace 1436 of radiators **104**A-D. Metallized vias may be formed in pads **2220** where desired for the application or to improve transfer of heat to melt the solder.

[0128] If a small amount of solder **2226** is previously applied to a mating portion on the surface of ground trace **1436**, it can be used to join these radiators to the strips. This provides additional joints or bonding points which efficiently hold the antenna structure together in the desired form. Where electrical connection is desired, metallized vias can be formed in the pads or strips which extend through to the opposite side. These pads can be used in conjunction with or without the strips previously discussed for the ground planes. Such a structure is especially useful where very long radiators, or multiple stacks of antenna radiators are contemplated which result in tall antenna structures.

[0129] FIGS. **23**A - **23**C illustrate a series of views of an example embodiment of a form **2310** used for rolling substrate **406** into the desired shape. The example illustrated in FIG. 23 is a form **2310** of cylindrical shape used in rolling the antenna and to provide continued support and rigidity for the antenna structure. In one embodiment, form **2310** can be provided with a series of prongs or teeth **2312** extending radially outward from an outer surface of form **2310.** To interface with form **2310** and teeth **2312**, a series of "tooling" or assembly guide" holes or passages **2230** are provided in substrate **406** for mating with teeth **2312**.

[0130] In FIG. **22**A, tooling holes **2230** are illustrated as being positioned within ground planes **412**. The metallic material of ground plane **412** acts to reinforce the holes and prevent deformation and movement when a relatively soft support substrate material is used. This assists with alignment accuracy for the antenna structure. However, there is no requirement for holes **2230** to be placed within a metallic layer.

[0131] Referring again to FIGS. **23**A - **23**C, and commencing with the perspective view of FIG. **23**A, substrate **406** is shown positioned to engage a support form 2310 by mating teeth **2312** with holes **2230**. As seen in the side views of FIG. **23**B and **23**C, as support form **2310** is rotated about its axis, or substrate **406** is otherwise wrapped around support form **2310,** holes **2230** engage teeth **2312** which help position substrate **406** in place against or on support from **2310.** Eventually, the entire substrate **406** is engaged against support form **2310**. In FIG. **23**C, substrate **406** is illustrated as having been wrapped around support form **2310** until it overlaps itself so that strips **2218**, **2220** engage solder **2216, 2226** as described above.

[0132] Of course, where strips **2218**, **2220** and solder **2216, 2226** are not used to join the substrate sections, substrate **406** does not need to overlap on support form **2310.** Additionally, there is no requirement that support form **2310** extend the entire length of the antenna(s), radiators **104**A-D or substrate **406.** In some applications, some or all of the portions of the antenna may be self supporting, without the need for a form **2310.** This feature can be advantageous, for example, to minimize the impact of the form **2310** on radiation patterns at certain frequencies.

[0133] For purposes of clarity and ease of illustration, in FIGS. **23**A - **23**C, only substrate **406** is shown, without material layers for ground planes, radiators, feeds, feed networks, and so forth. It will also be readily apparent to those skilled in the relevant art how to size holes **2230** to match the dimensions of teeth **2312**.

[0134] Form **2310**, as illustrated in FIG. **23**, can be constructed using a solid or hollow structure formed in a cylindrical or other desired shape, with teeth or prongs **2312** protruding therefrom. In this embodiment, form **2310** can be thought of, for example, as a variation of the toothed drum found in many music boxes. As would be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art after reading this disclosure, alternative structures can be implemented to provide form **2310** including an axle/spoke arrangement, an axle/sprocket arrangement, or other appropriate configuration.

[0135] Note that it is contemplated that the spacing of the prongs **2312** or spokes may not be symmetrical about the support element. That is, the spacing may be larger in some portions in order to impart a greater amount of consistent tension in rolling, and smaller in some areas to better control substrate positioning where the substrate edges overlap. Preferably tooth spacing is chosen such that teeth **2312** apply a certain amount of tension to hold substrate **406** in place and to make the entire assembly a more rigid structure.

[0136] The use of holes **2230** and teeth **2312** provide improved manufacturing capabilities through position and assembly automation, and in precision placement or positioning of the substrate on a form that can be mounted within an antenna radome. This allows more precise structural definition and positioning of the antenna assembly, resulting in more precise control and compensation for the impact of the radome on radiation patterns.

[0137] The above description of the placement of metallic strips **2218**, solder material **2216**, and vias **2210** is provided by way of example. After reading this description, it would be apparent to a person skilled in the art how these components could be placed in alternative locations depending on the configuration desired. For example, these components can be positioned such that the antenna can be rolled to have right-hand or left-hand circular polarization and to have the radiators **104**A-D on either the inside or the outside of the shape.

VIII. Conclusion

[0138] While various embodiments of the present invention have been described above, it should be understood that they have been presented by way of example only, and not limitation. Thus, the breadth and scope of the present invention should not be limited by any of the above-described exemplary embodiments, but should be defined only in accordance with the following claims.

Claims

1. A dual band helical antenna, comprising:

a first antenna section (1304) comprising
a first feed network (508, 1804) disposed on a first side of a substrate (100,406) on a first feed portion of the first antenna section (1304),
a first ground plane (412) disposed on a second side of said substrate (100,406) and opposite said feed network (508,1804), and
a first set of one or more radiators (1440) disposed on said substrate (100,406) and extending from said first feed network (508,1804); **characterised by**:

a second antenna section (1308) comprising
a second feed network (508,1808) disposed on said substrate (100,406) on a second feed portion,
a second ground plane (412) disposed on said substrate (100,406) opposite said second feed network (508, 1808);
a second set of one or more radiators (1440) disposed on said substrate (100,406) and extending from said second feed network (508,1808); and
means (1504, 1524) for providing a path for current to flow from said radiators (1440) of said second antenna section (1308) along the axis of said second antenna section (1308) to thereby increase the energy radiated in the directions perpendicular to the axis;

wherein said first feed network (508,1804) comprises a first set of one or more traces (1438) disposed on said first feed portion of the first antenna section (1304) and a second set of one or more traces (1438) disposed on a radiator portion of said first antenna section (1304), and said second feed network (508,1808) comprises a third set of one or more traces (1438) disposed on said second feed portion and a fourth set of one or more traces (1438) disposed on a radiator portion of said second antenna section (1308).

2. The antenna according to claim 1, wherein said second set of one or more traces (1438) disposed on said radiator portion are disposed on areas of said radiator portion defined for said plurality of radiators (1440).

3. The antenna according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said radiators (1440) each comprise a ground trace (1436) and wherein said set of one or more traces (1438) of said first and/or second feed network (508,1804,1808) disposed on said radiator portion are disposed on a surface of said substrate (100,406) opposite said ground trace (1436).

4. The antenna according to claim 3, wherein said traces (1438) are comprised of copper.

5. The antenna according to any preceding claim, wherein said antenna is a quadrifilar, bi-filar or other x-filar antenna.

6. The antenna of any preceding claim, wherein said radiators (1440) are comprised of strip segments deposited on said substrate (100,406).

7. The antenna of any preceding claim, wherein said substrate (100,406) is formed into a cylindrical, conical or other appropriate shape.

8. The antenna of any preceding claim, wherein said radiator portion comprises four radiators disposed on said substrate (100,406) and said first and/or second feed network (508,1804,1808) provides a quadrature phase signal to said four radiators (1440).

Patentansprüche

1. Eine schraubenförmige Dualbandantenne, die Folgendes aufweist:

    einen ersten Antennenabschnitt (1304), der Folgendes aufweist:

        ein erstes Feed- bzw. Speisenetzwerk (508, 1804), das sich auf einer ersten Seite eines Substrats (100, 406) auf einem ersten Speiseteil des ersten Antennenabschnitts (1304) angeordnet ist,
        eine erste Grundebene (412), die auf einer zweiten Seite des Substrats (100, 406) und gegenüberliegend zu dem Speisenetzwerk (508, 1804) angeordnet ist, und
        ein erster Satz von einem oder mehreren Strahlern (1440), die auf dem Substrat angeordnet sind (100, 406) und sich von dem ersten Speisenetzwerk (508, 1804) aus erstrecken; **dadurch gekennzeichnet dass** die Antenne weiterhin Folgendes aufweist:

            einen zweiten Antennenabschnitt (1308), der Folgendes aufweist:

                ein zweites Speisenetzwerk (508, 1808), das auf dem Substrat (100, 406) auf einem zweiten Speiseteil angeordnet ist
                eine zweite Grund- bzw. Erdungsebene (412), die auf dem Substrat (100, 406) gegenüberliegend zu dem zweiten Speisenetzwerk (508, 1808) angeordnet ist;
                ein zweiter Satz von einem oder mehreren Strahlern (1440), die auf dem Substrat (100, 406) angeordnet sind und sich von dem zweiten Speisenetzwerk (508, 1808) erstrecken;
                Mittel (1504, 1524) zum Vorsehen eines Weges zum Stromfluss von den Strahlern (1440) des zweiten Antennenabschnitts (1308) entlang der Achse des zweiten Antennenabschnitts (1308), um hierdurch die Energie zu erhöhen, die in Richtungen senkrecht zu der Achse abgestrahlt wird;

    wobei das erste Speisenetzwerk (508, 1804) einen ersten Satz von einem oder mehreren Spuren (1438) aufweist, die auf dem ersten Speiseteil des ersten Antennenabschnitts (1304) angeordnet sind, und einen zweiten Satz von einem oder mehreren Spuren (1438) aufweist, die auf einem Strahlerteil des ersten Antennenabschnitts (1304) angeordnet sind, und wobei das zweite Speisenetzwerk (508, 1808) einen dritten Satz von einem oder mehreren Spuren (1438) aufweist, die auf dem zweiten Speiseteil angeordnet sind, sowie einen vierten Satz von einem oder mehreren Spuren (1438) aufweist, die auf einem Strahlerteil des zweiten Antennenabschnitts (1308) angeordnet sind.

2. Antenne gemäß Anspruch 1, wobei der zweite Satz von einem oder mehreren Spuren (1438), angeordnet auf dem Strahlerteil, auf Flächen auf dem Strahlerteil, die für die Vielzahl von Strahlern (1440) definiert sind, angeordnet sind.

3. Antenne gemäß Anspruch 1 oder 2, wobei die Strahler (1440), jeweils eine Erdungs- bzw. Grundspur aufweisen und wobei der Satz von einem oder mehreren Spuren (1438) des ersten und/oder zweiten Speisenetzwerks (508, 1804, 1808), und zwar angeordnet auf dem Strahlerteil, auf einer Oberfläche des Substrats (100, 406) gegenüber der Erdungsspur (1436) angeordnet sind.

4. Antenne gemäß Anspruch 3, wobei die Spuren (1438) aus Kupfer bestehen.

5. Antenne gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei die Antenne eine quadrifilare, bifilare oder andere x-filare bzw. x-Faden-Antenne ist.

6. Antenne nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei die Strahler (1440) aus Streifensegmenten angeordnet auf dem Substrat (100, 406) bestehen.

7. Antenne nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei das Substrat (100, 406) in eine zylindrische, konische oder andere geeignete Form geformt ist.

8. Antenne nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei der Strahlerteil vier Strahler aufweist, die auf dem Substrat (100, 406) angeordnet sind, und das erste und/oder zweite Speisenetzwerk (508, 1804, 1808) ein Quadraturphasensignal an die vier Strahler (1440) vorsieht.

Revendications

1. Antenne en hélice double bande, comprenant :

    une première section d'antenne (1304) comprenant :

        un premier réseau d'alimentation (508, 1804) disposé d'un premier côté d'un substrat (100, 406) sur une première partie d'alimentation de la première section d'antenne (1304),

un premier plan de masse (412) disposé d'un deuxième côté dudit substrat (100, 406) et à l'opposé dudit réseau d'alimentation (508, 1804), et

un premier ensemble d'un ou plusieurs radiateurs (1440) disposés sur ledit substrat (100, 406) et s'étendant depuis ledit premier réseau d'alimentation (508, 1804) ;

caractérisée par :

une deuxième section d'antenne (1308) comprenant :

un deuxième réseau d'alimentation (508, 1808) disposé sur ledit substrat (100, 406) sur une deuxième partie d'alimentation,

un deuxième plan de masse (412) disposé sur ledit substrat (100, 406) à l'opposé dudit deuxième réseau d'alimentation (508, 1808) ;

un deuxième ensemble d'un ou plusieurs radiateurs (1440) disposés sur ledit substrat (100, 406) et s'étendant depuis ledit deuxième réseau d'alimentation (508, 1808) ; et

un moyen (1504, 1524) servant à fournir un chemin pour le passage d'un courant depuis lesdits radiateurs (1440) de ladite deuxième section d'antenne (1308) le long de l'axe de ladite deuxième section d'antenne (1308) pour accroître ainsi l'énergie émise dans les directions perpendiculaires à l'axe ;

dans laquelle ledit premier réseau d'alimentation (508, 1804) comprend un premier ensemble d'un ou plusieurs rubans (1438) disposés sur ladite première partie d'alimentation de la première section d'antenne (1304) et un deuxième ensemble d'un ou plusieurs rubans (1438) disposés sur une partie radiateur de ladite première section d'antenne (1304), et ledit deuxième réseau d'alimentation (508, 1808) comprend un troisième ensemble d'un ou plusieurs rubans (1438) disposés sur ladite deuxième partie d'alimentation et un quatrième ensemble d'u ou plusieurs rubans (1438) disposés sur une partie radiateur de ladite deuxième section d'antenne (1308).

2. Antenne selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle ledit deuxième ensemble d'un ou plusieurs rubans (1438) disposés sur ladite partie radiateur sont disposés sur des zones de ladite partie radiateur définies pour ladite pluralité de radiateurs (1440).

3. Antenne selon la revendication 1 ou 2, dans laquelle lesdits radiateurs (1440) comprennent chacun un ruban de masse (1436) et dans laquelle ledit ensemble d'un ou plusieurs rubans (1438) desdits premier et/ou deuxième réseau(x) d'alimentation (508, 1804, 1808) disposés sur ladite partie radiateur sont disposés sur une surface dudit substrat (100, 406) opposée audit ruban de masse (1436).

4. Antenne selon la revendication 3, dans laquelle lesdits rubans (1438) sont constitués de cuivre.

5. Antenne selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans laquelle ladite antenne est une antenne quadrifilaire, bifilaire ou autre x-filaire.

6. Antenne selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans laquelle lesdits radiateurs (1440) sont constitués de segments de bande déposés sur ledit substrat (100, 406).

7. Antenne selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans laquelle ledit substrat (100, 406) a une forme cylindrique, conique ou toute autre forme adaptée.

8. Antenne selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans laquelle ladite partie radiateur comprend quatre radiateurs disposés sur ledit substrat (100, 406) et ledit premier et/ou deuxième réseau(x) (508, 1804, 1808) fournit un signal en quadrature auxdits quatre radiateurs (1440).

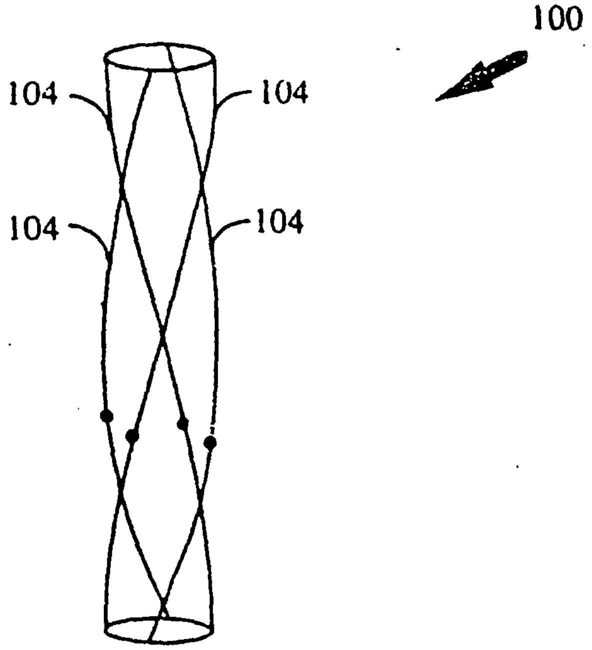


FIG. 1A

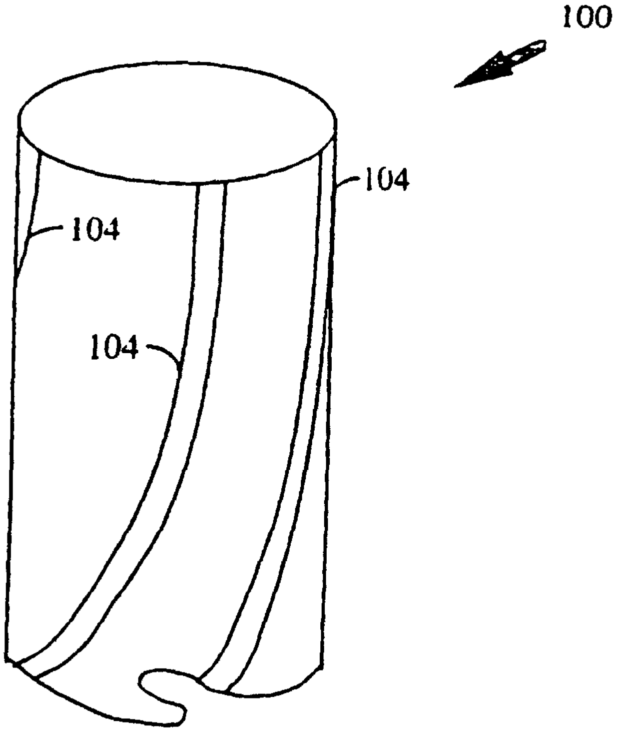


FIG. 1B

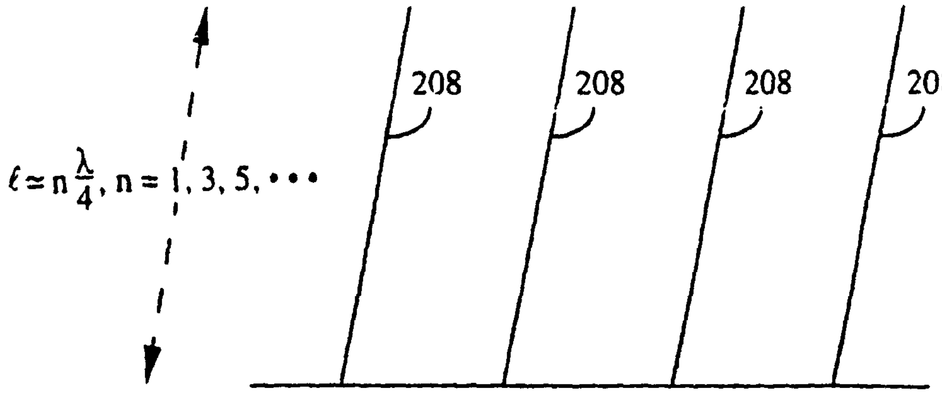


FIG. 2A

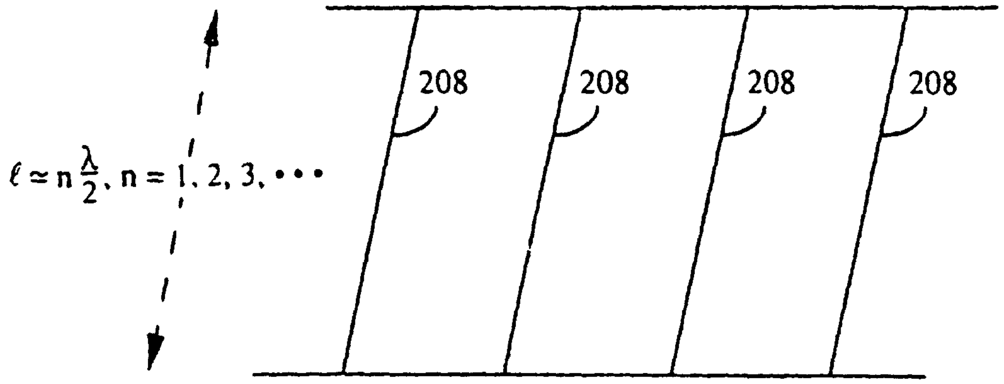


FIG. 2B

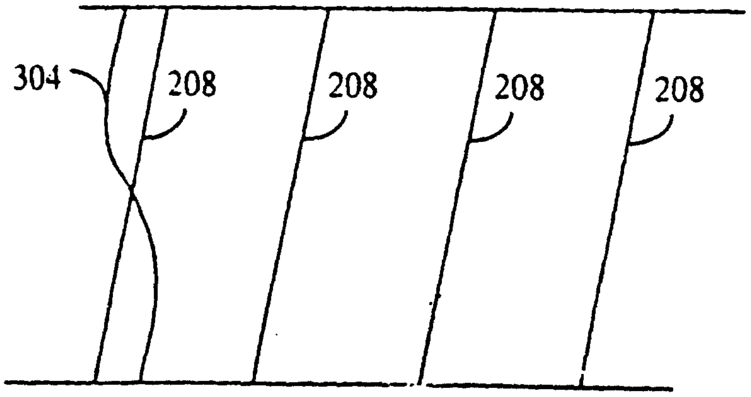


FIG. 3

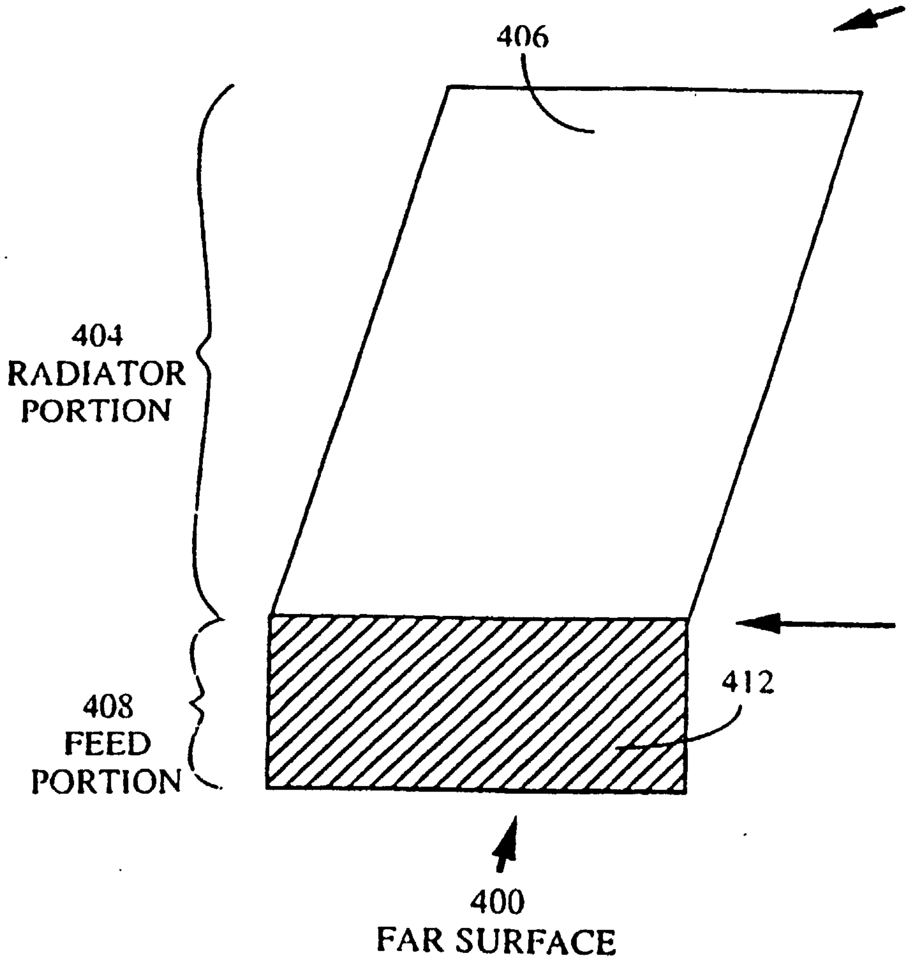

406
404
RADIATOR
PORTION
408
FEED
PORTION
412
400
FAR SURFACE

FIG. 4

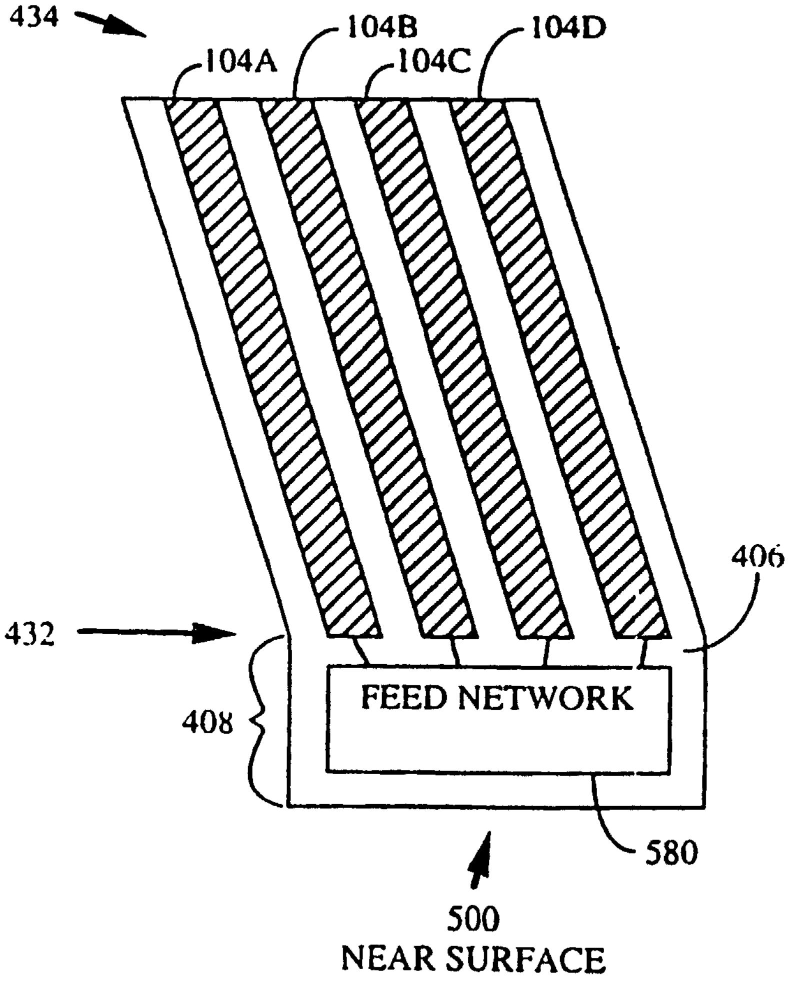

434
432
104A
104B
104C
104D
406
FEED NETWORK
408
580
500
NEAR SURFACE

FIG. 5

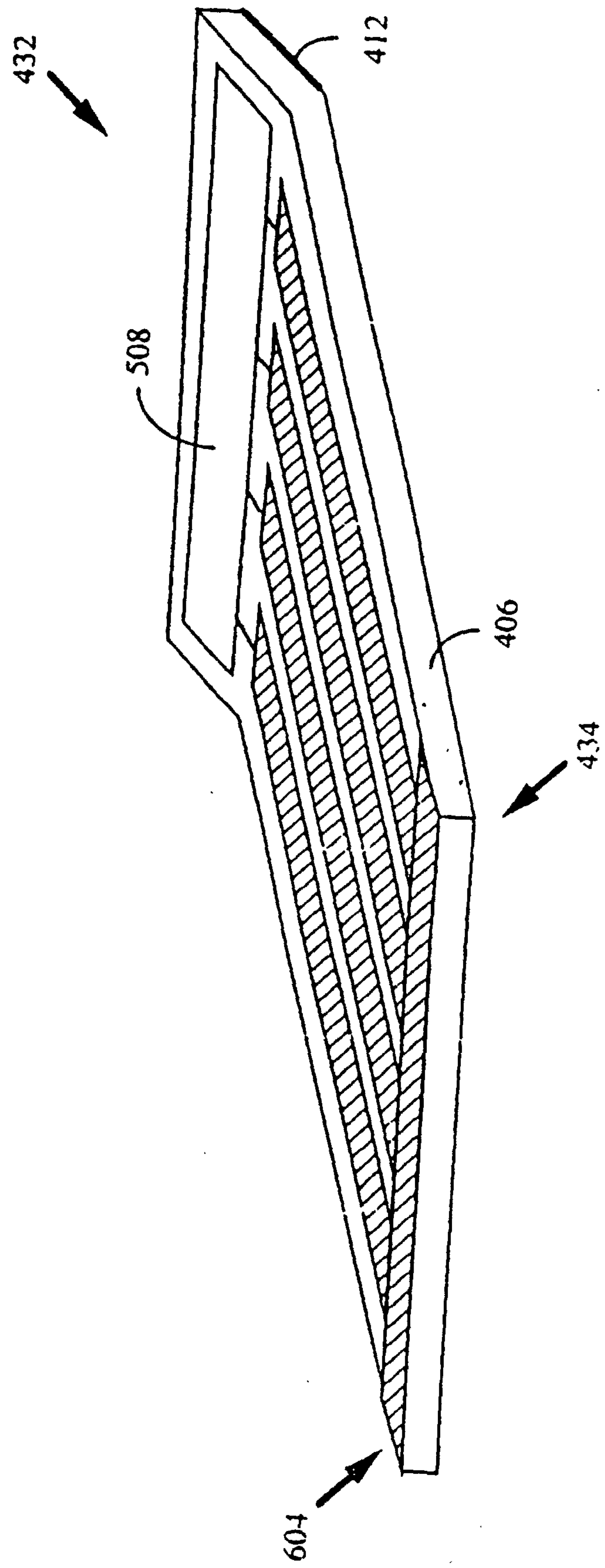


FIG. 6

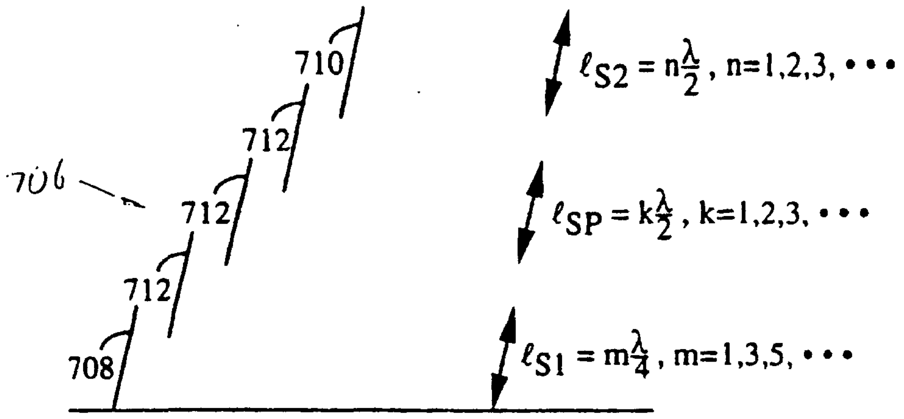

710
712
712
712
708
706
$\ell_{S2} = n\frac{\lambda}{2}$, n=1,2,3, • • •
$\ell_{SP} = k\frac{\lambda}{2}$, k=1,2,3, • • •
$\ell_{S1} = m\frac{\lambda}{4}$, m=1,3,5, • • •

FIG. 7A

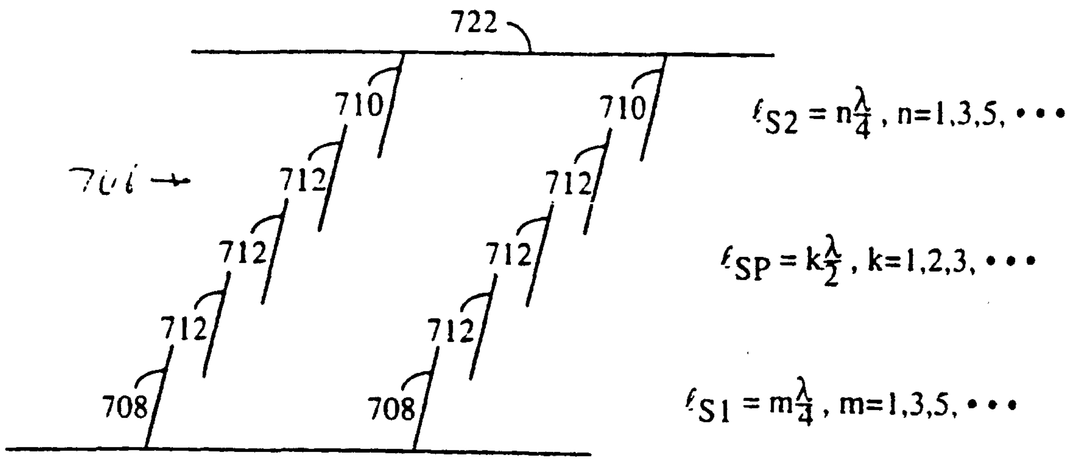

722
710
710
706
712
712
712
712
712
712
708
708
$\ell_{S2} = n\frac{\lambda}{4}$, n=1,3,5, • • •
$\ell_{SP} = k\frac{\lambda}{2}$, k=1,2,3, • • •
$\ell_{S1} = m\frac{\lambda}{4}$, m=1,3,5, • • •

FIG. 7B

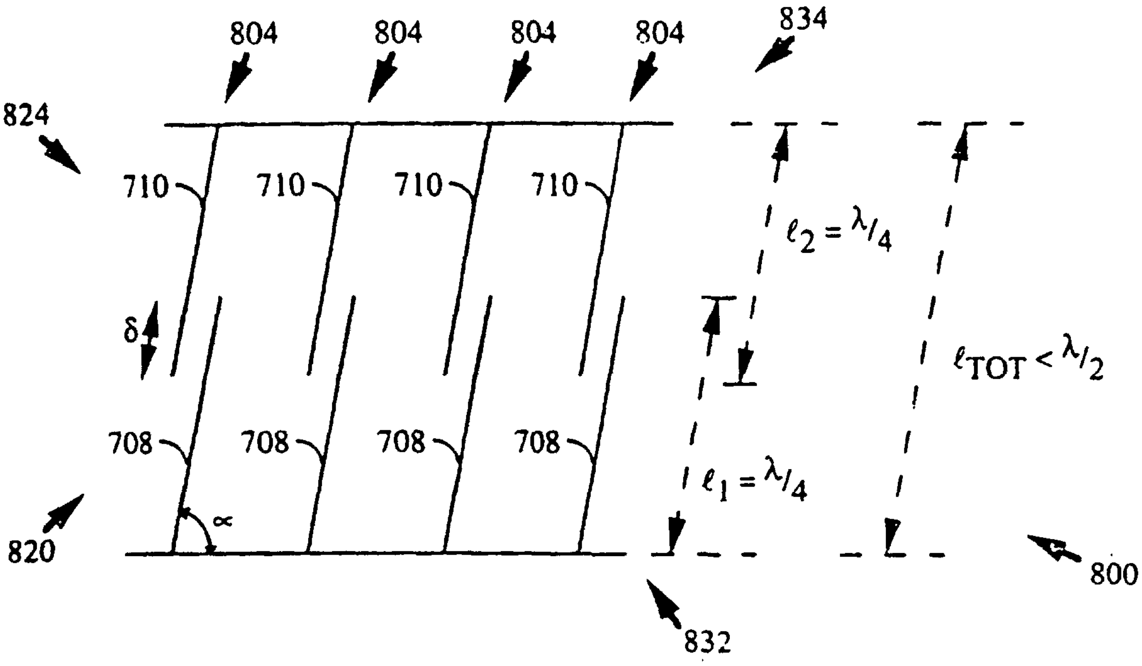

804
804
804
804
834
824
710
710
710
710
δ
$\ell_2 = \lambda/4$
$\ell_{TOT} < \lambda/2$
708
708
708
708
$\ell_1 = \lambda/4$
∝
820
800
832

FIG. 8A

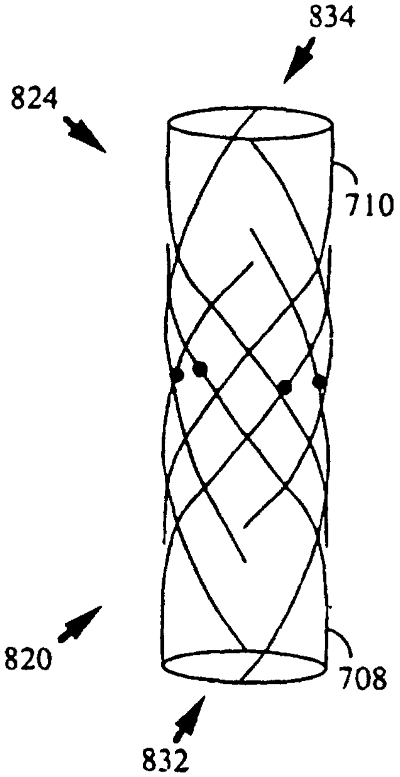

834
824
710
820
708
832

FIG. 8B

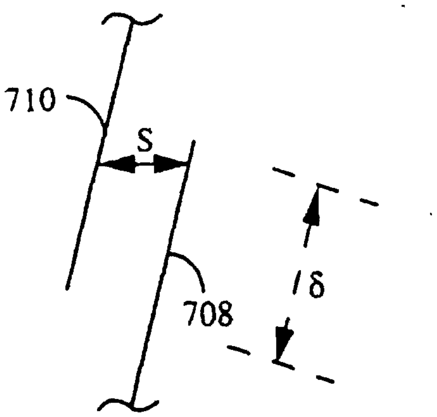


FIG. 9A

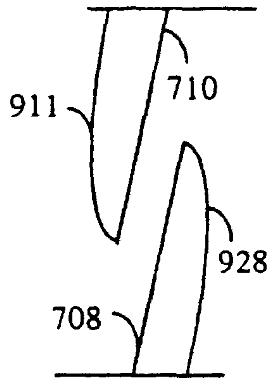


FIG. 9B

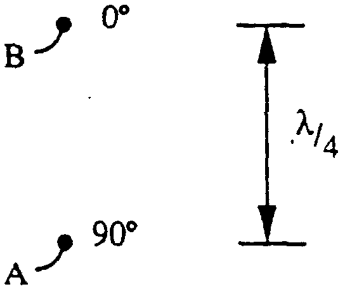


FIG. 10A

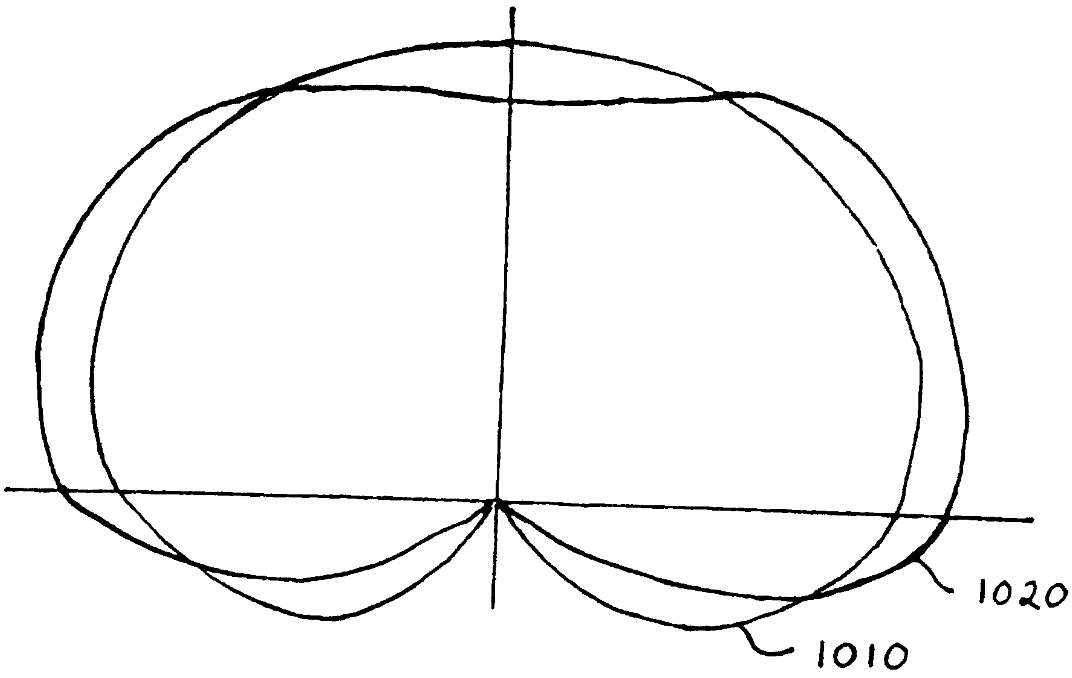


FIG 10C

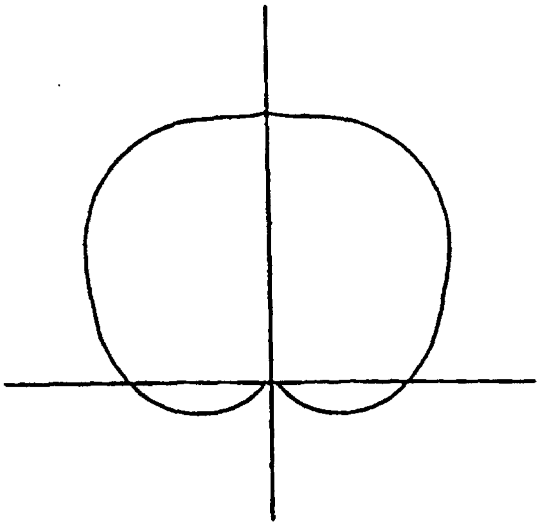


FIG. 10B

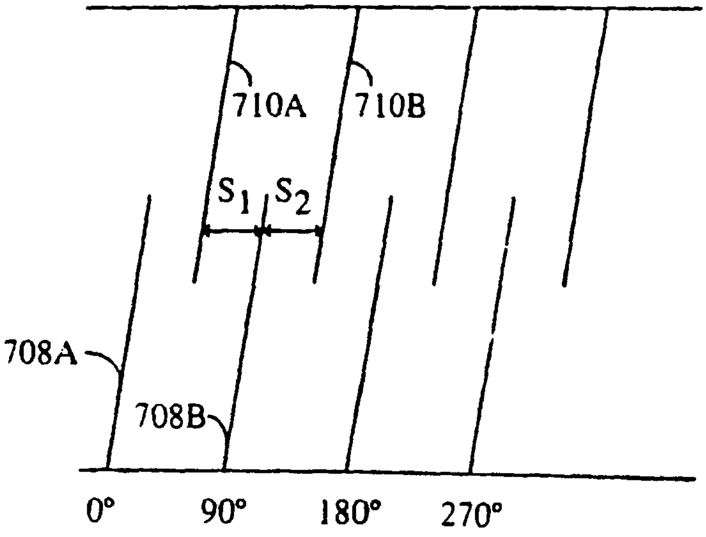


FIG. 11

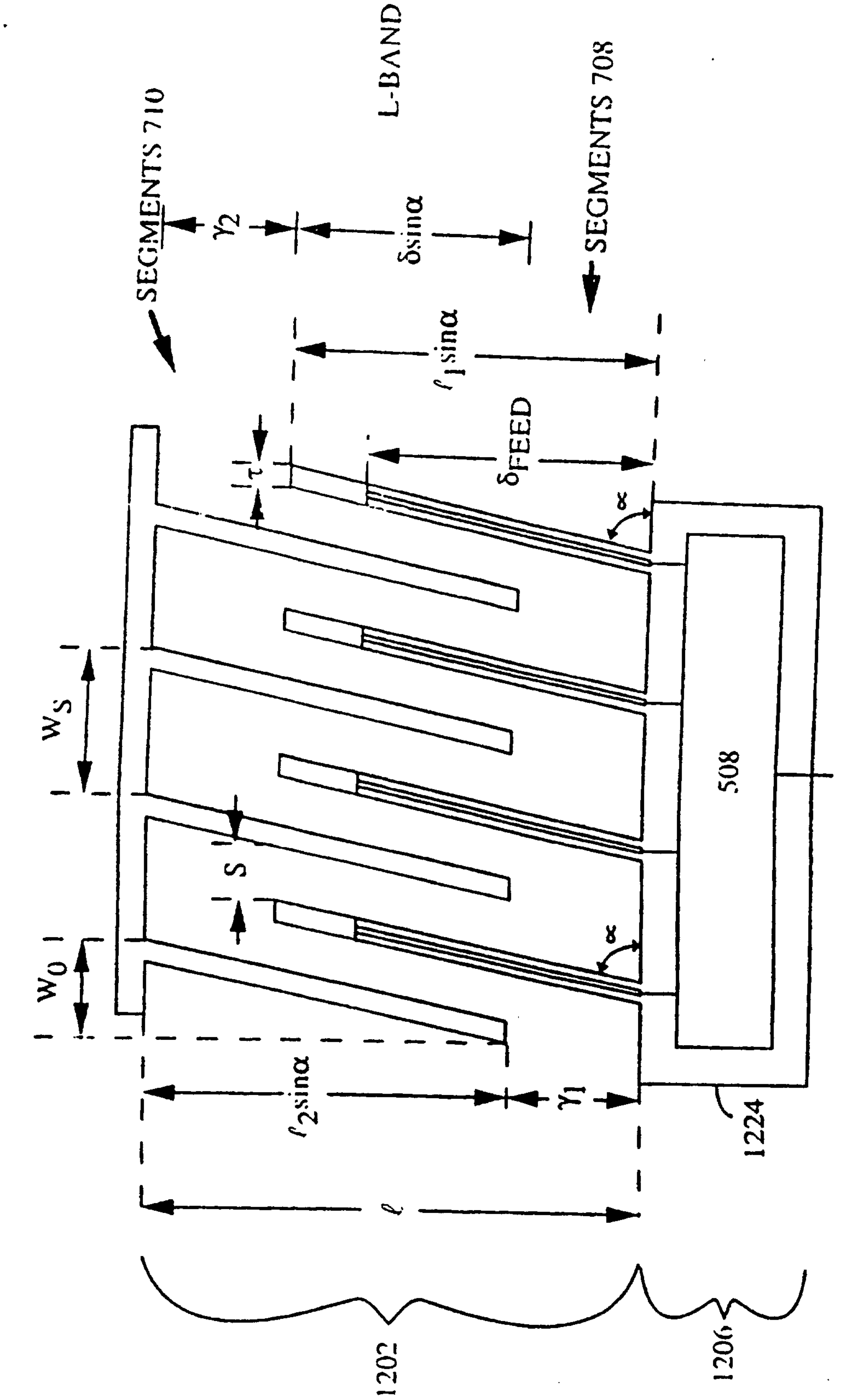

SEGMENTS 710
L-BAND
SEGMENTS 708
γ_2
$\delta\sin\alpha$
$\ell_1\sin\alpha$
δ_{FEED}
τ
α
α
W_S
S
W_0
$\ell_2\sin\alpha$
γ_1
ℓ
508
1224
1202
1206

FIG. 12

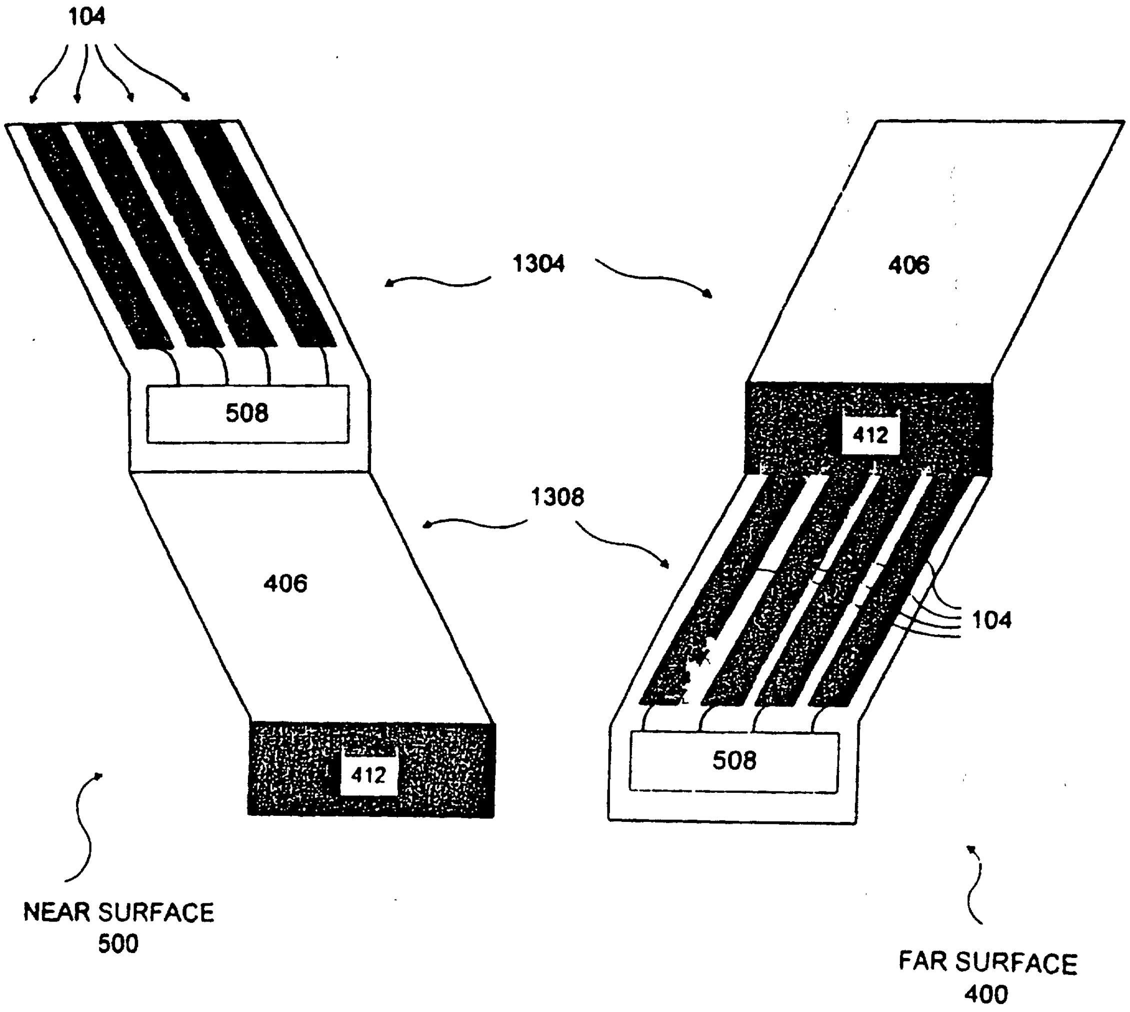

104
1304
406
508
412
1308
406
412
104
508
NEAR SURFACE
500
FAR SURFACE
400

FIG. 13

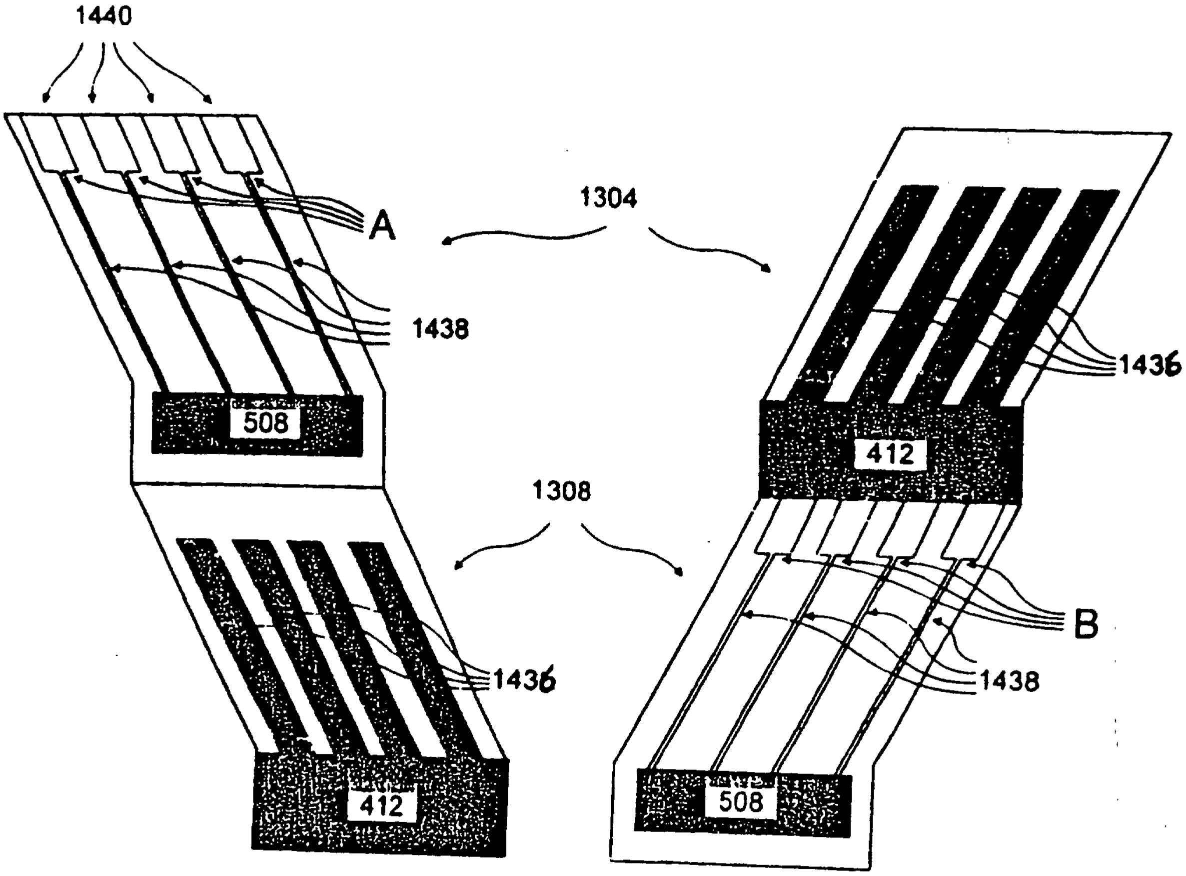
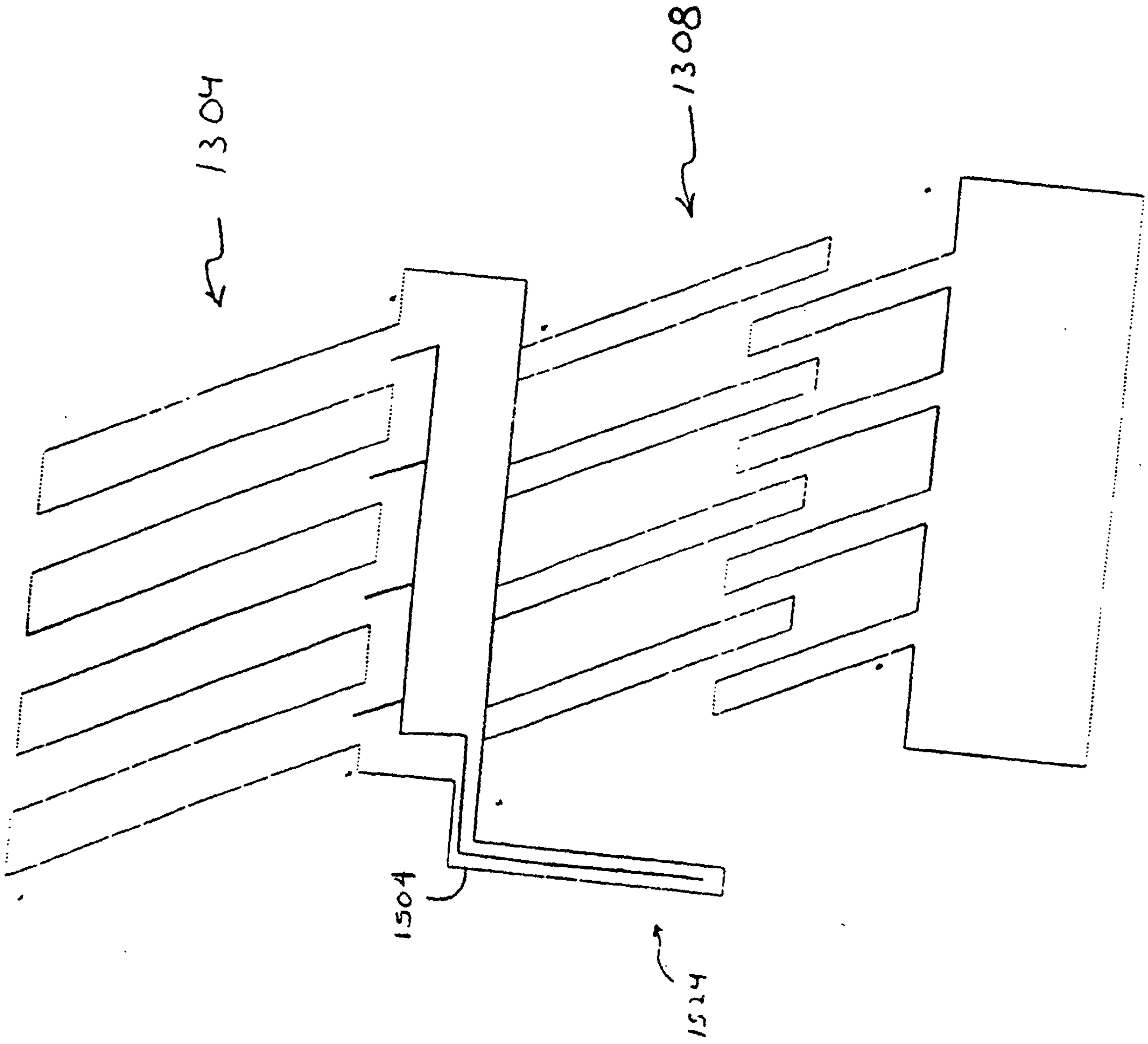


FIG. 14

FIG. 15



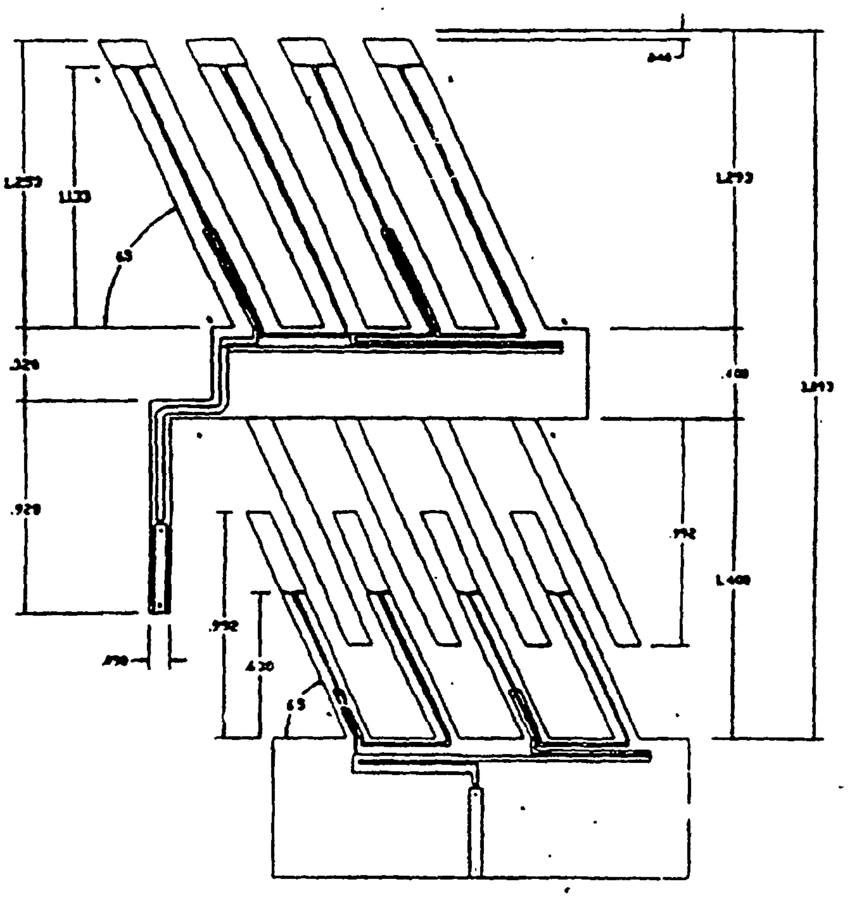


Figure 16

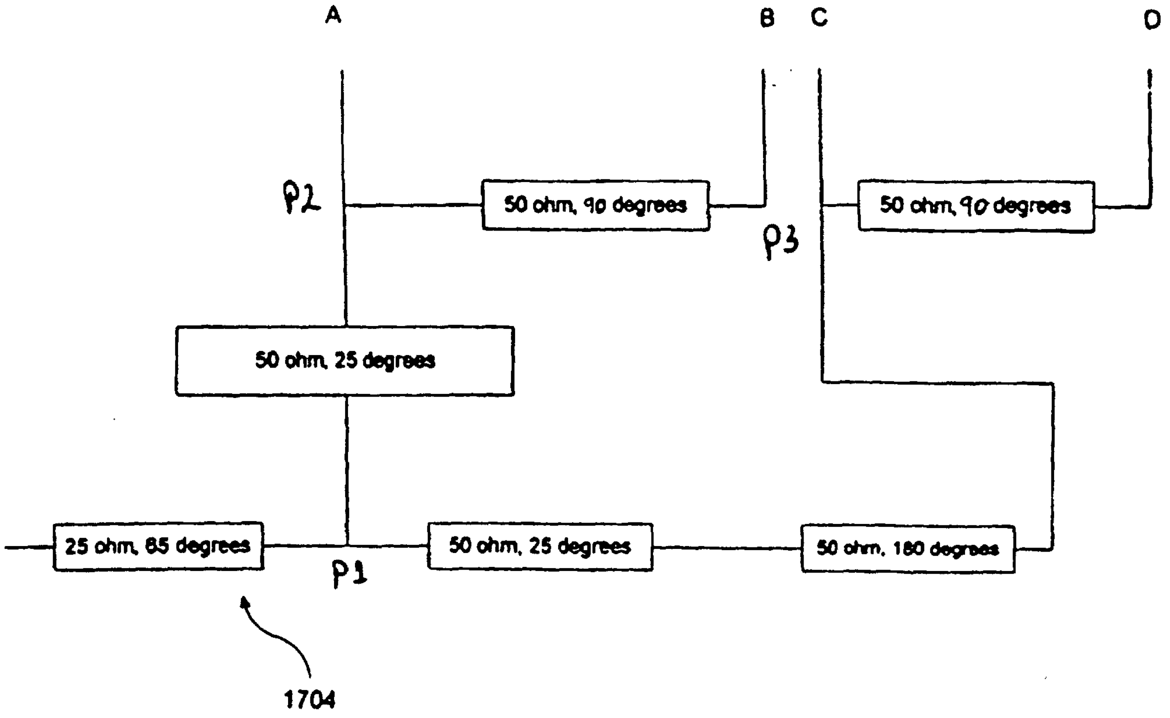

A
B
C
D
P2
50 ohm, 90 degrees
P3
50 ohm, 90 degrees
50 ohm, 25 degrees
25 ohm, 85 degrees
P1
50 ohm, 25 degrees
50 ohm, 180 degrees
1704

FIG. 17

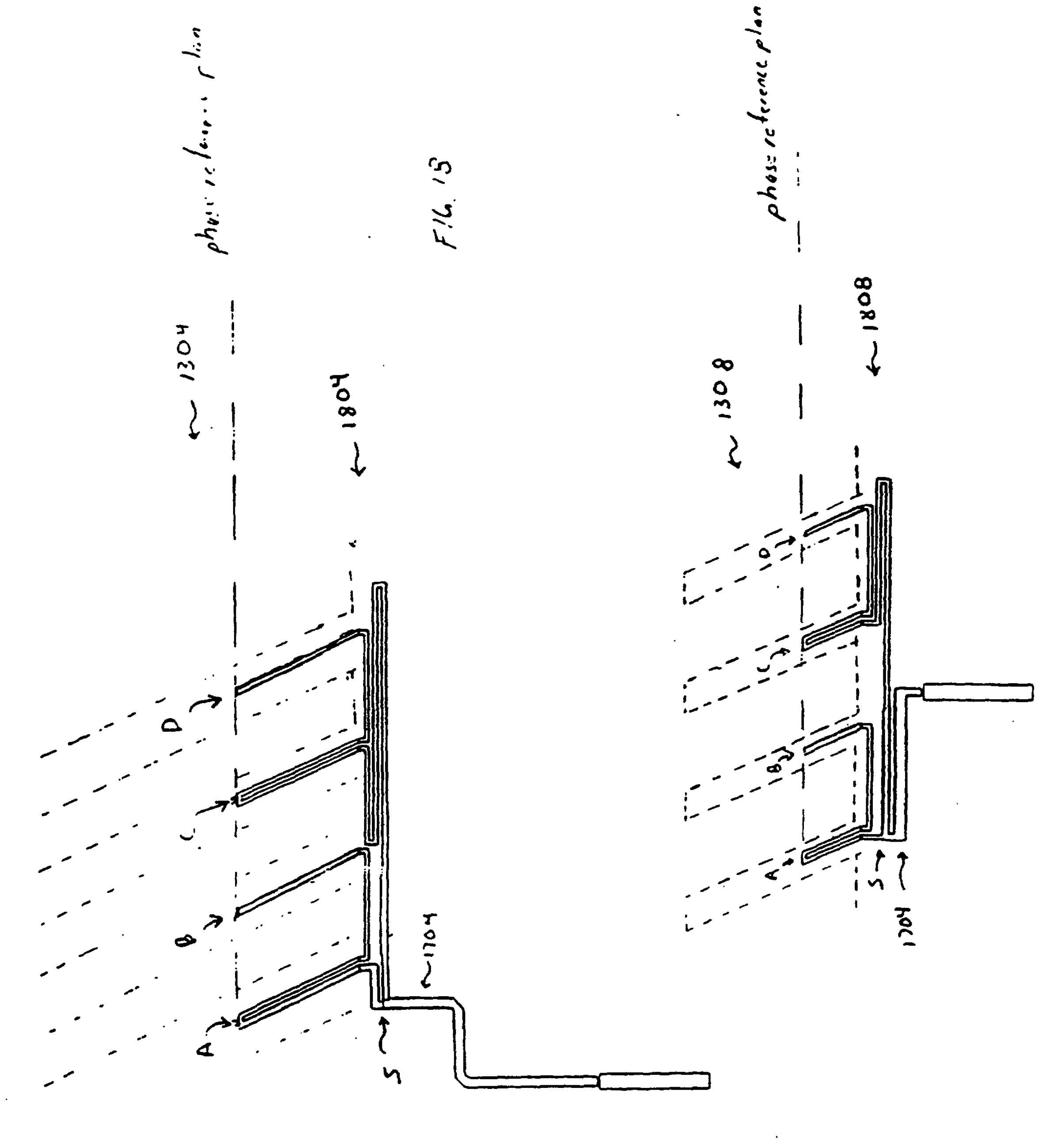
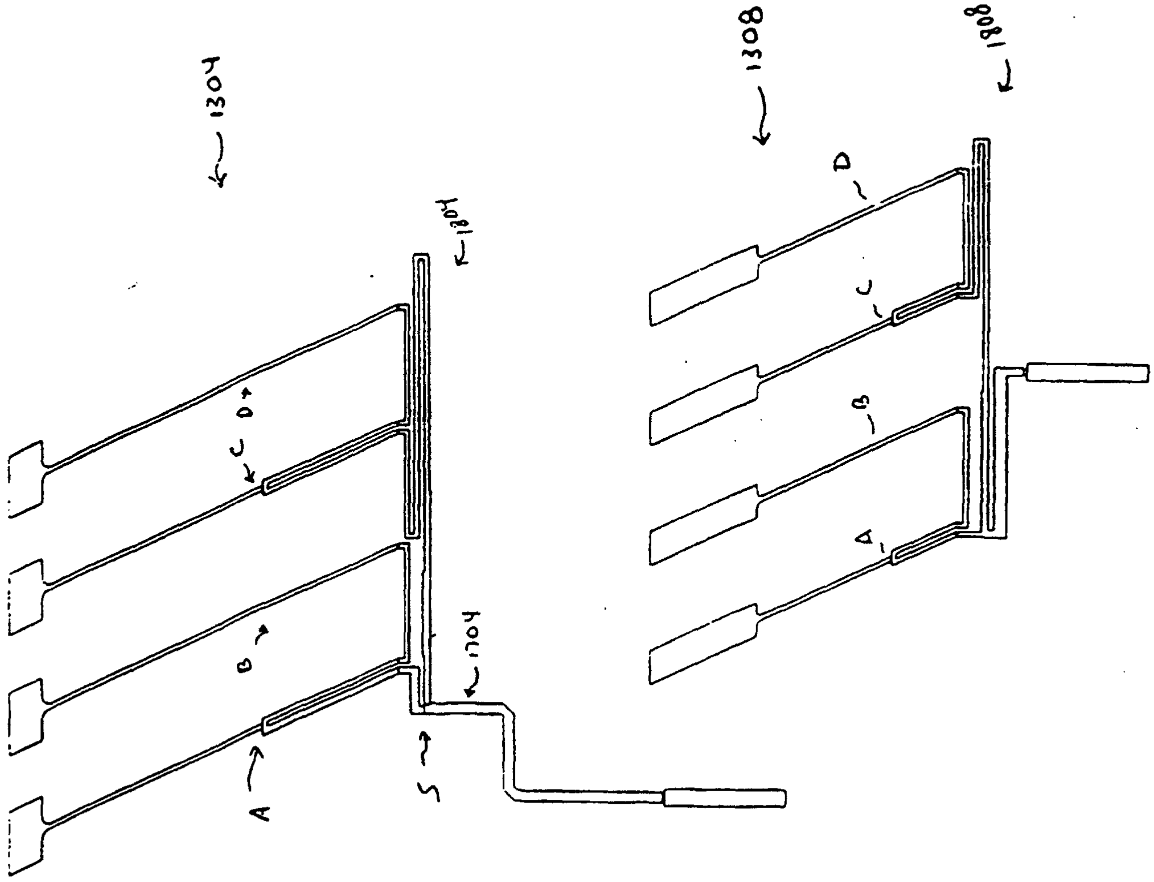

phase reference plan
1304
1804
D
C
B
A
S
1704
phase reference plan
1308
1808
D
C
B
A
S
1704

FIG 15

FIG. 19



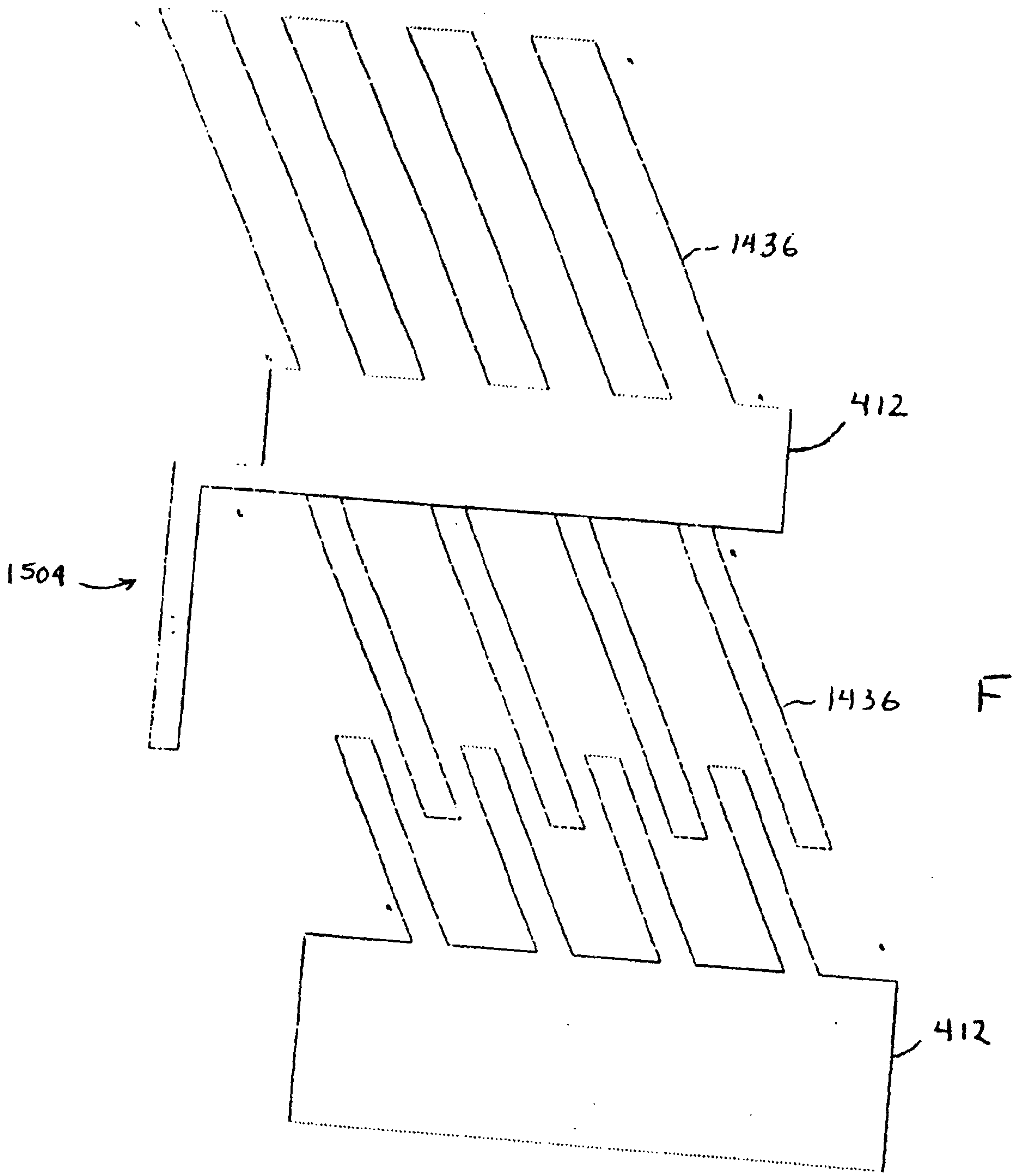


FIG 20

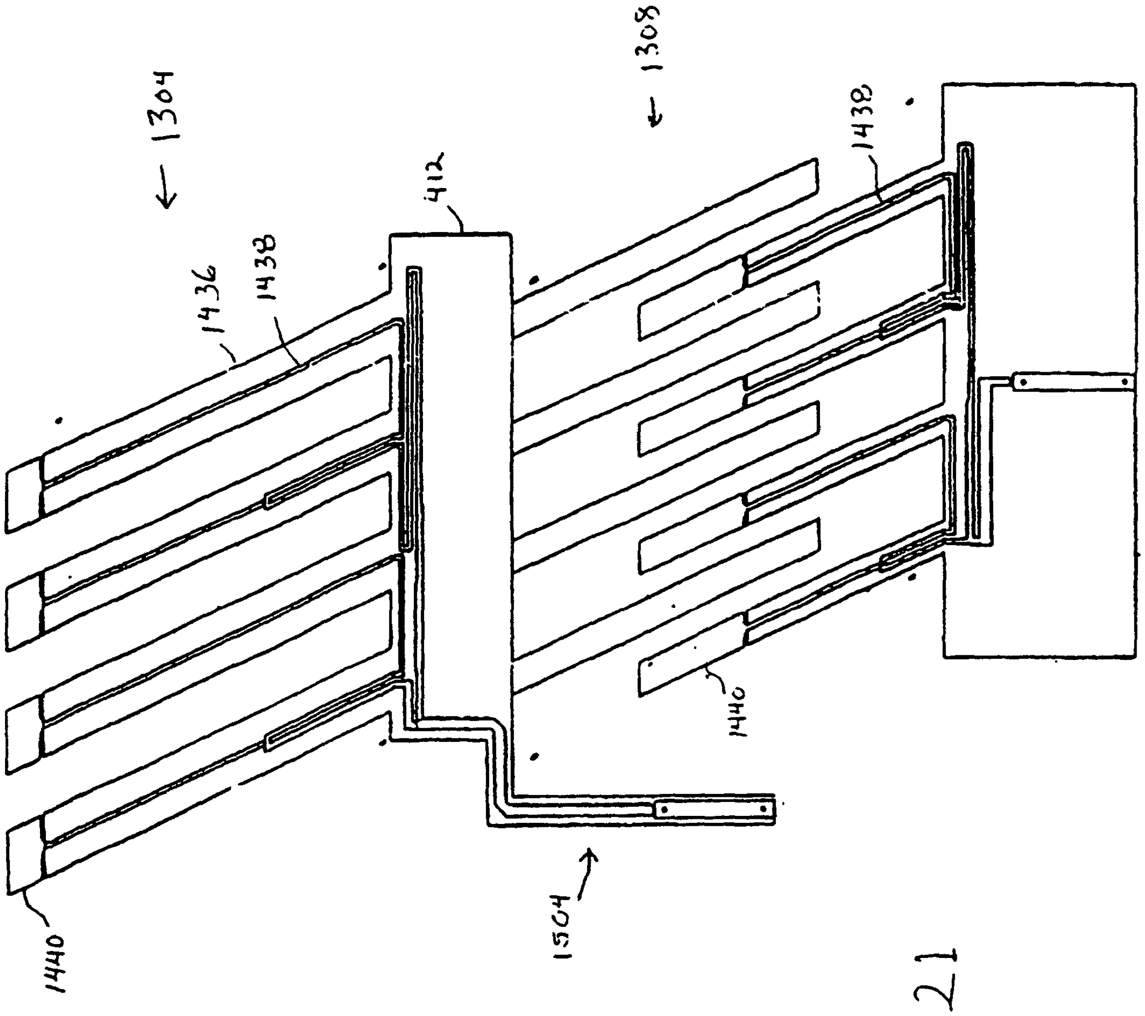


FIG 21

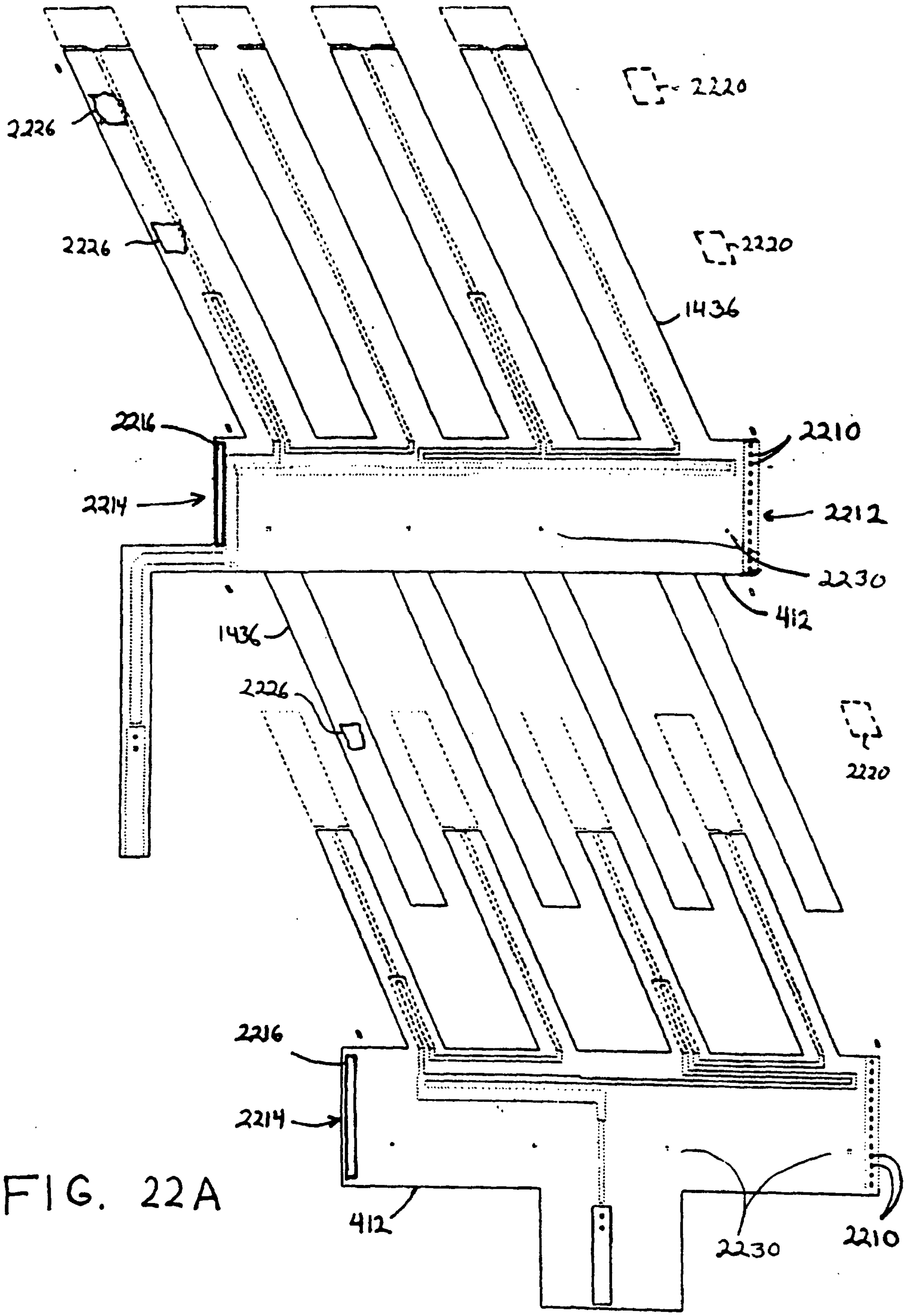

2220
2226
2226
2220
1436
2216
2210
2214
2212
2230
412
1436
2226
2220
2216
2214
412
2230
2210

FIG. 22A

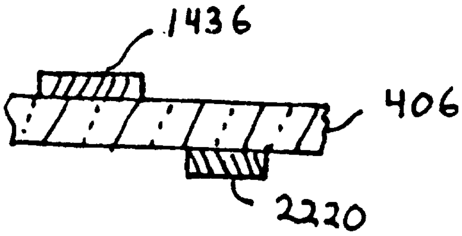


FIG 22E

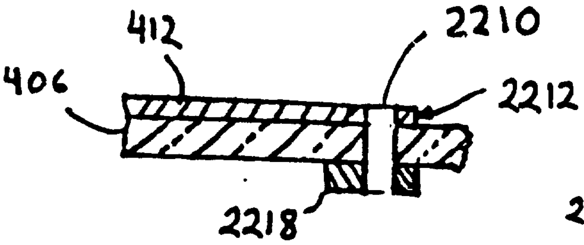


FIG. 22B

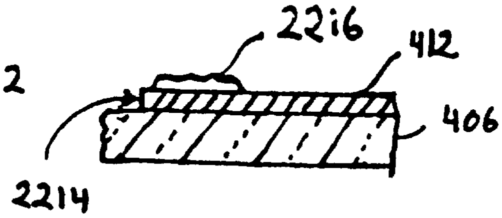


FIG. 22C

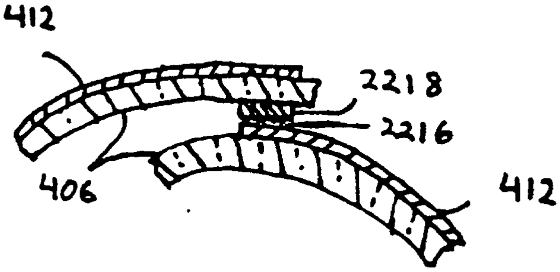


FIG. 22D

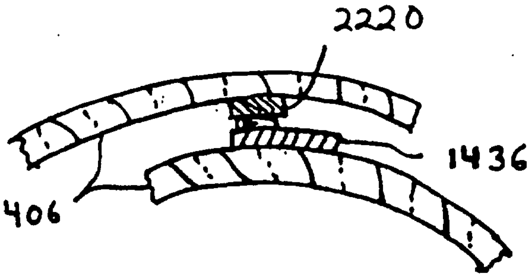


FIG. 22F

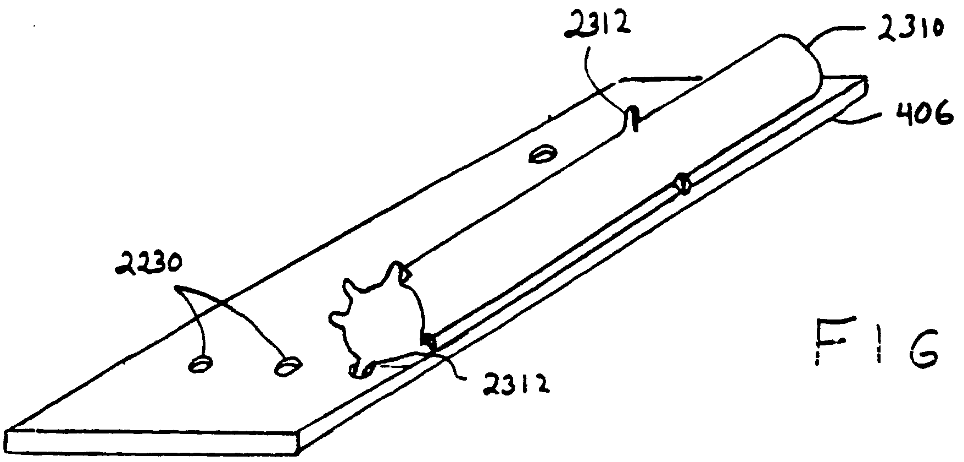


FIG 23A

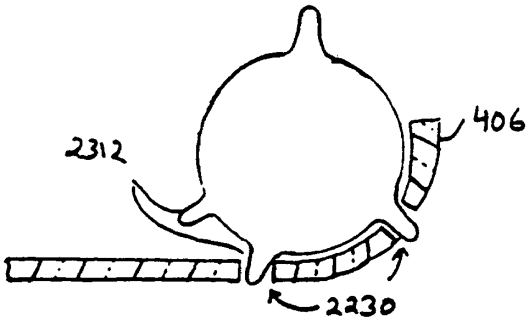


FIG 23B

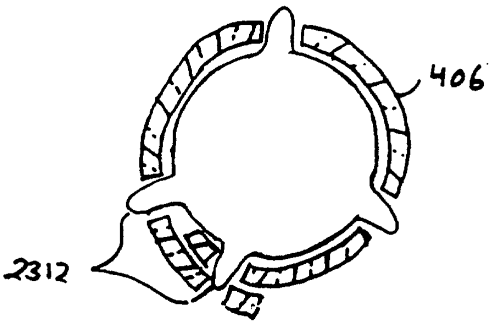


FIG 23C