

MEASURING DEVICE WITH EXTENSIBLE CORD AND METHOD

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation-in-part and claims benefit of co-pending
5 U.S. Application Number 12/214,585, filed June 20, 2008 of the same title.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates in general to measuring devices and more specifically
involves a measuring device with an extensible cord having a free end, the cord free
10 end for placement on a point to measure its location.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Conventional devices and methods for measuring, for example a room for
remodeling, are slow, labor intensive and not very accurate. Usually, two
15 persons take measurements with tape measure and protractors.

The most modern methods use laser measuring devices. These devices
are extremely expensive and have limited accuracy on many surfaces. Their
accuracy is especially diminished where accuracy is most desired, such as in
corners and on curved surfaces.

20 Several devices measure a three-dimensional object by placing a probe on
multiple points on the object and determining the relative positions of the points
from their positions relative to the probe's base unit.

For example, U.S. Patent 4,703,443 of Maiyasu titled Device for
Measuring the Shape of a Three-Dimensional Object describes using a probe on
25 the end of an arm comprised of a plurality of arm members. The relative location
of a probed point is determined from the angles of the arm members.

The device of U.S. Patent 6,785,973 of Janssen titled Measuring Device
Comprising a Movable Measuring Probe uses a tethered probe coupled to a ball
joint. The relative location of a probed point is determined by measuring the
30 length of the tether and the rotation of the ball joint.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention is a measuring device and it generally comprises a base unit housing an extensible cable; the cable includes a free end for placement by a user at a point being measured. The base unit includes: a base; a first carriage
5 including a first frame rotationally attached to the base so as to be rotatable about a first axis; and a second carriage including a second frame rotationally attached to the first frame so as to be rotatable about a second axis. A main datum passage device, attached to the second frame, defines an inner confined main datum passage for the midsection of the cable. An angular displacement sensor
10 attached to the second frame includes an outer confined cable passage for the cable between the main datum passage and the cable free end. The cable is in alignment position when the local longitudinal axis of the cable at the outer confined cable passage is aligned with the main datum passage. The angular displacement sensor senses angular displacement of the cable away from the
15 alignment position and produces a displacement signal indicative thereof.

A first servoed motor is coupled to the first frame for rotating the first carriage about the first axis responsive to the displacement signal from the angular displacement sensor indicative of cable displacement about the first axis so as to move the angular displacement sensor toward or to the alignment
20 position.

A second servoed motor is coupled to the second frame for rotating the second carriage about the second axis responsive to the displacement signal from the angular displacement sensor indicative of cable displacement about the second axis so as to move the angular displacement sensor toward or to the
25 alignment position.

A cable measuring assembly, attached to the second frame, is coupled to the cable and measures the length or change of length of the cable and produces a signal indicative of the distance to the point being measured.

A first carriage measuring assembly measures the rotational position or
30 change of rotational position of the first carriage relative to the base and produces a signal indicative of the angle about the first axis to the point being measured.

A second carriage measuring assembly measures the rotational position or change of rotational position of the second carriage relative to the first carriage and produces a signal indicative of the angle about the second axis to the point being measured.

5 A computer stores the identification of points and their measurements. Preferably, the user placing the cable free end on a point holds the computer, such as a PDA, and the measurements are communicated from the base unit to the computer via radio, such as Bluetooth®. A software program uses a plurality of points to define surfaces of objects.

10 A method of measuring an object by the measuring device includes positioning the base unit in line of sight of the object, positioning the cable free end on a point on the object to be measured; and obtaining the measurements of the location of the point from the cable measuring assembly, the first carriage measuring assembly, and the second carriage measuring assembly. A plurality of
15 measured points defines the object.

To measure new points not within line of sight of the first position, the base unit is positioned at a second position with line of sight of both a measured surface or the first position and the new points to be measured. The new position is then determined such that the relative position of the new points can be
20 determined.

Other features and many attendant advantages of the invention will become more apparent upon reading the following detailed description together with the drawings wherein like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout.

25 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a room showing a use of the measuring device of the invention.

Figure 2 is a top, front, right side, partially cut away, perspective view of selected elements of the base unit of the device.

30 Figure 3 is a bottom, front, left side, partially cut away, perspective view of selective elements of Figure 2.

Figure 4A is a front, top, right side perspective view of the cable angular displacement sensor including a biased main gimbal in the form of a plate gimbal.

Figure 4B is a back, bottom, left side perspective view of the cable
5 angular displacement sensor of Figure 4A.

Figure 5 is a front elevation view of the main angular displacement gimbal of Figure 4A and Figure 4B.

Figure 6 is an enlarged front elevation view of the plate gimbal of Figure
5.

10 Figure 7 is an enlarged front, top, right side, perspective of the cable passage assembly of Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 8 is an enlarged cross sectional view of the main gimbal thrust bearing assembly.

Figure 9 is a perspective schematic of a second embodiment of the cable
15 angular displacement sensor in the form of contact sensors.

Figure 10 is a perspective schematic of a third embodiment of the cable angular displacement sensor in the form of optical sensors.

Figure 11 is a perspective schematic of a fourth embodiment of the cable angular displacement sensor in the form of a magnetic or electromagnetic sensor.

20 Figure 12 is a perspective view of a fifth embodiment of the cable angular displacement sensor in the form of a moment sensor.

Figure 13 is a flow chart for measuring a surface.

Figure 14 is a front, top, right side perspective view, similar to Figure 4B,
of an alternate embodiment of the main gimbal thrust support in the form of a
25 wire.

Figure 15 is a cross sectional view, similar to Figure 8, of the wire main gimbal thrust support of Figure 14.

Figure 16 is an enlarged, exploded, partially-cut-away perspective view of the wire clamp and gimbal of Figure 15.

30 Figure 17 is a perspective view of a sixth embodiment of the cable angular displacement sensor including an off-cable optical sensor.

Figure 18 is a perspective view of a seventh embodiment of the cable angular displacement sensor including an off-cable laser sensor.

Figure 19 is a perspective view of an eighth embodiment of the cable angular displacement sensor including a laser sensor and an elastomeric cable
5 follower.

Figure 20 is an enlarged top view, partially in cross section, of the cable angular displacement sensor of Figure 19.

Figure 21 is a perspective view of a ninth embodiment of the cable angular displacement sensor including a two axis, cantilever spring assembly.

10 Figure 22 is a perspective view of a tenth embodiment of the cable angular displacement sensor including a magnetic linear encoder.

Figure 23 is bottom, front, left side; partially cut away, perspective view similar to Figure 3 of selective elements of an alternative embodiment of the measuring device including only one carriage.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

With reference now to the drawings, there is shown in Figure 1 a perspective view of a room 800 showing a use of the measuring device 10 of the invention. A user 90 uses measuring device 10 to obtain numerical coordinates,
20 such as polar coordinates, of a plurality of points in room 800. By measuring the location of a relatively small number of points in room 800, measuring device 10 can define all of the desired surfaces 805 in three-space for purposes of determining the amount or size of flooring, paint, wall coverings, windows, counter tops, cabinets and other features.

25 Device 10 may be used in a factory to measure the three-dimensional location of piping, or machinery details, or other generally difficult-to-measure objects.

Surfaces 805 of room 800 include a floor 810, back wall 815, and side wall 820. A hutch 830 abuts side wall 820. Surfaces 805 of hutch 830 include a
30 right side wall 835, a left side wall 840, a top surface 845, an upper front wall 850, a lower surface 855, and a lower front wall 860.

Device 10 generally includes a retractable cable 12 having a midsection 16 and a free end 14; a base unit 20 supporting devices for tracking movement of cable 12 and for measuring the length and direction of cable 12, a computer 700, such as a personal digital assistant (PDA) 701 held by a user 90, and a user interface 704 to computer 700 such as an entry pad 704A on PDA 701 or key pad 704B on base unit 20.

Housing 102 is protective against dirt and damage and defines an orifice 103 for passage of cable 12. As will be explained in greater detail later, housing 102 rotates to follow cable 12 as cable 12 is moved. Base unit 20 is adapted to be firmly supported by a surface. Framework 25 of base unit 20 is firmly supported by a support 40, such as a floor plate placed on the floor or, such as shown in the exemplary embodiment, on a first tripod 40F placed on floor 810. Preferably, base unit 20 is selectively attachable to support 40 for purposes as will be explained.

A user 90, such as grip user 90G, grips a grip 18 attached to cable free end 14 and places free end 14 on a point, such as point A on side wall 820, the location of which is to be measured by device 10. Grip 18 is attached to cable 12 in a manner so as to not introduce a moment to cable 12 so as to keep cable 12 linear. The distance to point A and the direction to point A are measured by measuring devices in housing 102.

One or more computers 700 are used for data input, storage, and processing. In the preferred embodiment shown, grip user 90G uses a hand held computer 700, such as a personal digital assistant (PDA) 701. PDA 701 contains a program adapted for receiving and processing data input. A computer program for performing the functions described herein is readily commercially available or can be written by a programmer reasonably skilled in the art or an existing program can be readily adapted to the specifics of device 10 by a programmer reasonably skilled in the art. Alternatively, a computer 700 may be located in base unit 20 or be a separate unit.

In the exemplary embodiment, grip user 90G enters input on entry pad 704A of PDA 701. PDA 701 and base unit 20 have wireless connectivity, such

as radio, such as Bluetooth[®], and PDA 701 receives the cable measurements from base unit 20. Other wireless connectivity, such as IrDA (infrared), sound, or Wi-Fi could be used. Alternatively, other input and connectivity methods could be used. A separate cable could be used. Input could be transmitted via measuring
5 cable 12. Data connectivity between computer 700, measuring devices, and grip user 90G allows just one person to be able to operate device 10 and measure room 800. A second user, not shown, could communicate with computer 700 in one of the above-described manners or furnish input via port 706 or on entry or key pad 704B on base unit 20.

10 Turning momentarily to **Figure 13**, there is shown a flow chart for taking measurement. A user inputs a surface identifier to identify the surface being measured for associating the measured points with. With cable free end 14 on a point to be measured on the surface, the user presses a “record” button. The measurements are recorded. If more points must be input to reconstruct the
15 surface, then cable free end 14 is moved and additional points are recorded to memory for that surface. If not, then a new surface identifier is entered and points on that surface are measured.

In an exemplary use, user 90 places first tripod 40F firmly on floor 810 and attaches framework 25. The program in PDA 701 is activated for receiving
20 data. Grip user 90G enters an identifier for a surface 805, such as side wall 820, to be measured. Grip user 90G enters an identifier for type of surface, for example “planar” for side wall surface 820, places cable free end 14 on a point, such as point A, on side wall 820, and presses a record button on PDA 701. The location of point A is determined by base unit 20 and is transmitted to PDA 701.
25 This procedure is repeated with points B and C. PDA 701 now has in memory three points A, B, C that define a plane, of which side wall surface 820 is a part. The same procedure is used for other surfaces 805. Additional points on any surface 805 may be measured. The gathered data can be processed by computer 700 or sent, such as via port 706 or radio, such as with Bluetooth[®], to another
30 computer for processing.

From the measured data, imaging software, such as computer aided design (CAD) software reconstructs surfaces 820. Such software is well known in the art. An example is Geomagic Studio from Geomagic, Inc. Another software package for processing point data into three dimensions is

5 RapidFormXOR from INUS Technology, Inc. and Rapidform, Inc.

Other identifiers for type of surface are used for more complex surfaces. For a surface identifier such as "smooth curve", the computer program could "fair" the associated measured points to arrive at the surface configuration. For each surface designation, one or more sub-designations may be used. For
10 example, "edge" or "terminus" is used for designating an edge point or corner point on a surface respectively. For measuring more complex surfaces, a large number of points are measured or a "scan" sub-designation is entered and cable free end 14 is drawn along the surface and points are measured repeatedly

If a surface 805 to be measured, such as hutch left end 840, cannot be
15 measured by device 10 while mounted on first tripod 40F, such as because the surface 840 is not in the line of sight from first tripod 40F or cannot be reached by cable end 14 from first tripod 40F, then an additional tripod, such as second tripod 40S, is placed in a suitable location for measuring surface 840. Each tripod 40 includes a reference point, such as point F, S or T, the location of
20 which, relative to an attached base unit 20, is known. The location of reference point S on second tripod 40S is measured by device 10 to establish the spatial location of second tripod 40S relative to first tripod 40F. Base unit 20 is detached from first tripod 40F and attached to second tripod 40S. The reference point F on first tripod 40F is measured by base unit 20 on second tripod 40S to
25 establish the angular orientation of base unit 20 on second tripod 40S relative to first tripod 40F. Points are measured from base unit 20 on second tripod 40S.

This tripod jumping pattern can be repeated to measure any surfaces 805. For example, to measure additional points that are not measurable from second tripod 40S, first tripod 40F, or another tripod 40T is moved to a suitable location
30 for measuring the points. Its reference point F at the new location is measured, base unit 20 is detached from second tripod 40S and attached to the moved first

tripod 40F, and reference point S of second tripod 40S is measured to establish the relative position of the new location.

If it is desirable to later add a surface 805 to the data or to later improve on or correct measured data from a surface 805, it is not necessary to re-input all of the measured points. Instead, to add a surface 805, base unit 20 is placed, as described above, in a position to both measure the additional surface 805 and to measure a plurality of points on already known surfaces 805. A “re-orientation” entry directs computer 700 to use the next measured points from known surfaces 805 to determine the location and orientation of base unit 20 by triangulation. The additional points or surface 805 can then be measured and added to the previously measured data.

Figure 2 is a top, front, right side, partly cut away, perspective view of selected elements of the base unit 20 of device 10. Figure 3 is a bottom, front, left side, perspective view of selected elements of Figure 2. Figures 2 and 3 will be used to explain the overall functions of device 10. Pertinent elements will be later discussed in greater detail. A cable 12 includes a free end 14, a supply end 13, and a midsection 16 therebetween. Free end 14 is for placement on a point, the location of which is to be measured, such as point A on Fig. 1. A grip 18 attached to free end 14 of cable 12 is used, such as by gripping by user 90G, for positioning free end 14 at a point to be measured.

Base Unit 20 generally includes framework 25 for attachment to floor support 40, a base 30 attached to framework 25, a turn carriage 100 rotationally mounted on base 30, and a pitch carriage 200 rotationally mounted on turn carriage 100.

Framework 25 includes means, such as a plurality of cooperative connectors 26 for cooperating with support 40 for selectively attaching framework 25 to support 40.

Base 30 includes a ring 31 attached to and supported by framework 25. Ring 31 has a circular inner face 32 and a circular outer face 33.

Turn carriage 100 includes a plurality of components attached to a turn-carriage frame 101. In Fig. 3, frame 101 is only partially shown for clarity. Turn

carriage 100 includes means 110, such as a plurality of wheels 111, for rotationally mounting turn carriage 100 on base 30. Wheels 111 including drive wheel 111D, are mounted on frame 101 and rotationally mount turn carriage 100 on inner face 32 of ring 31 of base 30. Turn carriage 100 is rotationally attached to base 30 so as to be rotatable about a yaw axis, such as first axis or turn axis θ (theta). Turn axis θ is typically perpendicular to the floor or other support 40 for base unit 20. Thus, turn axis θ typically is vertical or substantially vertical. Turn carriage 100 can rotate left or right and any number of degrees to align cable 12 in any direction.

Base unit 20 includes power means 190, such as a battery 191 for powering components. Battery 191 is attached to base unit 20, such as to turn-carriage frame 101. Power is distributed from battery 191 to the components by any desirable means, such as power lines, not shown.

Pitch-carriage mounting means, such as a pair of spaced bearings 135 are attached to frame 101 for rotational mounting of pitch carriage 200.

Pitch carriage 200 includes a plurality of components attached to pitch-carriage frame 201. In Figure 3, frame 201 is only partially shown for clarity. Pitch carriage 200 is rotationally attached to turn carriage 100, such as by shafts 202 attached to frame 201 and journaled in bearings 135, so as to be rotatable about a second or pitch axis ϕ (phi) defined by bearings 135. In the exemplary embodiment, pitch carriage 200 may pitch down at an angle of about 35° and rotate upward from there through an angle of about 92° for 127° total motion.

A main datum passage 230 is attached to frame 201 and defines an inner, confined passage relative to frame 201 for midsection 16 of cable 12. In the exemplary embodiment, a main datum passage device attached to pitch carriage frame 201, such as pulley 231 rotationally attached to pitch carriage frame 201, provides main datum passage 230. Main datum passage 230 is where incoming cable 12 first touches main datum pulley 231 when received from an outer confined incoming data passage 339, as will be subsequently described. Main datum passage 230 provides the first pivot point that is fixed relative to frame 201 for incoming cable 12. Other embodiments of main datum passage 230

could include a ring orifice or the entrance to a tube or similar opening for confined passage of cable 12.

In the preferred embodiment shown, second axis ϕ is perpendicular to and intersects turn axis θ . Main datum passage 230 is located at, or near, this intersection. Consequently, the relative polar coordinates ρ , θ , ϕ of cable end 14 may be rather straightforwardly produced from main datum passage 230. However, other relative axes may be used and the measurements to the point may then be mathematically transformed as is well known in the art, into any desired coordinate system.

10 A cable supply means 600 is attached to frame 201 and supplies cable 12 from supply end 13 under a predetermined tension to main datum passage 230. In the exemplary embodiment, cable supply means 600 includes a drum or reel 660, upon which cable 12 is wound, a cable tension sensor 610 for sensing the tension in cable 12 supplied to main datum passage 230, and a reel servoed motor 15 650 coupled to reel 660 such as by belt 655 for rotating reel 660. Reel mounting means, such as a plurality of rollers 670, is mounted to pitch frame 201 for supporting reel 660 such that it may rotate for storage or release of cable 12. In the exemplary embodiment, cable tension sensor 610 includes a sensor and a roller pulley 611 that is spring biased to push against cable 12 between other 20 cable supports. Sensor 610 senses the location of pulley 611 and produces a signal representative thereof. Responsive to the signal from tension sensor 610, reel servoed motor 650 rotates reel 660 to maintain the predetermined tension.

Other cable tension sensing means well-known in the art could be used, such as a load cell to measure load on pulley 611.

25 Cable positioning means 620 attached to frame 201 includes a plurality of pulleys 622 feeding cable 12 to or receiving cable 12 from a final positioning pulley 623. Final positioning pulley 623 is mounted on a shaft 630 attached to frame 201 so as to slide axially along shaft 630 and feed cable 12 to reel 660 such that cable 12 does not overlap on reel 660.

30 Cable length measuring means 450 is attached to frame 201 and is coupled to cable 12 for measuring the length ρ (rho) or change of length of cable

12 as free end 14 is moved and placed on a point. Cable length measuring means 450 produces a signal, such as on line 460, indicative of the length ρ (rho) or change of length of cable 12. Cable length measuring means of various configurations are well known in the art. In the illustrative embodiment, cable 12 is partially wrapped around a pulley 455 such that movement of cable 12 rotates pulley 455. A sensor 457, as is well known in the art, such as an optical encoder, translates amount of rotation of pulley 455 to change in cable length and produces a signal indicative thereof.

Pitch carriage 200 includes an angular displacement sensor assembly 300 attached to frame 201 including an outer confined cable passage 339 for cable 12 between main datum passage 230 and cable free end 14. Cable 12 is in alignment position when the local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 at outer confined cable passage 339 is aligned with main datum passage 230. As cable free end 14 is moved from an old point to a new point that is not directly radially outward from the old point, cable midsection 16 is displaced angularly in angular displacement sensor assembly 300. Angular displacement sensor assembly 300 detects this angular displacement of cable 12 away from alignment position 305 and produces a signal or signals indicative thereof, such as on lines 308 and 309. Angular displacement sensor assembly 300 will be discussed in greater detail later herein.

Turn servoed motor assembly 120 rotates turn carriage 100 about turn axis θ responsive to the signal from angular displacement sensor assembly 300 indicative of cable displacement about turn axis (θ) so as to move angular displacement sensor assembly 300 toward alignment position 305. As illustrated, turn servoed motor assembly 120 includes a turn servoed motor 122 mounted on turn carriage 100 and a first drive mechanism 125 including a belt 126 connected to first drive wheel 127 connected to drive wheel 111D interacting with inner face 32 of ring 31 of base 30 for rotating turn carriage 100 relative to base 30 and about turn axis θ . As used herein, the term "servoed motor" may apply to any kind of applicable motor actuator such as a servo motor, a stepper motor, or a hydraulic motor for example.

Pitch servoed motor assembly 160 couples pitch carriage 200 to turn carriage 100 for rotating pitch carriage 200 in bearings 135 about pitch axis ϕ responsive to the signal from angular displacement sensor assembly 300 indicative of cable 12 movement about pitch axis ϕ so as to move angular displacement sensor assembly 300 toward alignment position 305. As shown, pitch servoed motor assembly 160 includes a pitch servoed motor 162 mounted on frame 101 and a pitch drive mechanism 165 including a belt 166 connecting first drive wheel 167 with second drive wheel 168 connected to journal shaft 202 of pitch carriage 200 for rotating pitch carriage 200 in bearings 135.

10 A turn-carriage measuring means 500 measures the rotational position or change of rotational position of turn carriage 100 relative to base 30 and produces a signal, such as on line 510, indicative thereof. Many such measuring means are well-known in the art. In the exemplary embodiment, an optical encoder 520 includes an optical reader 522 mounted on turn carriage 100 for reading an encoder strip 525 on base 30.

A pitch-carriage measuring means 550 measures the rotational position or change of rotational position of pitch carriage 200 relative to turn carriage 100 and produces a signal indicative thereof. Many such measuring means are well-known in the art. In the exemplary embodiment, pitch-carriage measuring means 20 550 includes an optical encoder 570 including an optical reader 572 mounted on pitch carriage 200 for reading an encoder strip 575 on arc 140 of turn carriage 100 and for producing a signal indicative of the pitch on signal line 560.

In this manner, turn and pitch carriages 100, 200 rotate so as to follow the movement of free end 14 of cable 12 to a new measured point or between an old measured point and a new point until cable midsection 16 is once again in alignment position 305 in angular displacement sensor assembly 300. At this time, the position of the new point or the change in position of the new point relative to the old point can be determined, such as by computer 700 in response to the signals on lines 460, 510, 560 from measuring means 450, 500, and 550.

30 The measured point's location may be determined from the signals on 460, 510, and 560, for the purpose of reconstructing the measured surface, by

mathematical means well known in the art. In the exemplary embodiment, computer 700 interprets the signals on lines 460, 510, and 560 as representing the ρ , θ , and ϕ components of a point P (not shown) in a polar coordinate system. Because the force of gravity tends to displace the cable midsection 16 downward
5 along a catenary curve, the measured location of cable free end 14 is not coincident with point P, but contains an offset dependent on the cable's extended length, the cable's orientation relative to the force of gravity, the cable's density per unit length, and the cable's tension. Computer 700 determines the offset from these known parameters using mathematical means well-known in the art to
10 determine the measured location of cable free end 14 relative to point P. For increased accuracy, an accelerometer or other level sensor (not shown) may be mounted in base unit 20, such as to pitch carriage 200, for the purpose of determining the cable's precise orientation relative to the force of gravity.

The location signals on distance signal line 460, rotation signal line 510,
15 and pitch signal line 560 are stored in connection with the measured point. This can be done in any desirable manner, such as in a local computer in base unit 20, not shown, or, as in the illustrative example, transmitted, such as by Bluetooth[®], to PDA 701.

Signal communication within base unit 30 may be performed in any
20 desirable manner. The exemplary configuration uses wires. Wires are easily used for connectivity because the only relative movement between sending elements and receiving elements is the change in pitch angle ϕ .

Besides being a measuring device, device 10 may also be an output device. A light pointer, such as laser pointer 270 producing laser beam 271, is
25 attached to pitch frame 201. Using the results of measured data, a computer program, as is well-known in the art, constructs a three-dimensional image of the surfaces. Base unit 20 can be directed, such as by a computer program, to direct light from laser pointer 270 to a given point or along a pattern of points. For example, the outline of an earlier measured wall electrical receptacle can be
30 traced for cutting out of new overlying wallboard or a new pattern for floor tiles may be traced on a floor.

Figures 4-8 are views of an illustrative embodiment of an angular displacement sensor assembly 300, such as gimbaled angular displacement sensor assembly 300G, including a biased main gimbal 310 in the form of a plate gimbal. Nine other embodiments of angular displacement sensor assembly 300 are shown in later figures and described therewith. Angular displacement sensor assembly 300 is attached to second frame 201 and includes a confined incoming datum passage between main datum passage 230 and cable free end 14 wherein cable 12 is in alignment position 305 when the local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 is aligned with datum passage 230. Angular displacement sensor assembly 300 senses the angular displacement of cable 12 away from alignment position 305 and produces a displacement signal, such as on lines 308, 309 indicative thereof. The displacement signal instructs turn servo motor 122 and/or pitch servo motor 162 to move turn carriage 100 and/or pitch carriage 200 such that cable 12 is returned to cable alignment position 305.

Figure 4A is a front, top, right side perspective view of the cable angular displacement sensor assembly 300G including a biased main gimbal 310 in the form of a plate gimbal attached to a portion of pitch-carriage frame 201. Figure 4B is a back, bottom, left side perspective view of the cable angular displacement sensor assembly 300G of Figure 4A. Figure 5 is a front elevation view of the angular displacement sensor assembly 300G of Figure 4A. Figure 6 is an enlarged front elevation view of main gimbal 310 of Figure 4A and 4B. Figure 7 is an enlarged front, top, right-side perspective view of the cable passage assembly 330 of Figures 4A, 4B and 5. Figure 8 is an enlarged cross sectional view of main gimbal thrust bearing assembly 370 and biasing assembly 375 of Figure 5.

Turning for a moment to Figure 6, there is shown an enlarged front elevation view of main gimbal 310 of Figures 4 and 5. Main gimbal 310 is a planar, two axis biased gimbal comprising an outer gimbal 312 and an inner gimbal 320. Outer gimbal 312 includes an outer gimbal ring 313 supported by the inner ends 316 of a pair of outer torsion members 315 on a first gimbal axis 314. Note that "ring" is used due to gimbal tradition, but this element may be any functional shape. Bores 318 receive fasteners 319, such as bolts, as seen in

Figures 4A and 5, that fasten outer ends 317 of outer torsion members 315 to pitch carriage 200. Inner gimbal 320 includes an inner gimbal ring 321 supported by the inner ends 326 of a pair of inner torsion members 325 on a second gimbal axis 324. Inner torsion members 325 are supported at their outer ends 327 by
5 outer gimbal ring 313. Outer gimbal ring 313 is free to rotate about first gimbal axis 314. Inner gimbal ring 321 is free to rotate about second gimbal axis 324 relative to outer gimbal ring 313 and, thus, may rotate in any direction. Main gimbal 310 is a biased gimbal, in that gimbal rings 313, 321 are biased to rotate to a neutral position when rotational forces are removed. In main gimbal 310, the
10 neutral bias is provided by paired torsion members 315, 325.

Returning to Figures 4, 5, 7 and 8, the other main components of angular displacement sensor assembly 300G are a cable passage assembly 330, a gimbal thrust bearing assembly 370, a biasing assembly 375, a first angular displacement sensor 400, and a second angular displacement sensor 420.

15 Figure 7 is an enlarged front, top, right side, perspective of the cable passage assembly 330 of Figures 4 and 5. Cable passage assembly 330 is mounted on sensor arm plate 321S of inner ring 321 (not seen) of main gimbal 310 and rotates inner ring 321 responsive to angular displacement of cable 12 from cable alignment position 305. An arm 360, such as thin tube 361, has an
20 inner end 362 connected to inner gimbal ring 321 and an outer end 363 including a bracket 364, best seen in Figure 4B.

An anti-moment gimbal 340, such as a plate gimbal, is mounted on bracket 364. Anti-moment gimbal 340 is a planar, two axis biased gimbal similar to main gimbal 310 and comprises an outer gimbal 342 and an inner gimbal 350.
25 As best seen in Figure 5, outer gimbal 342 includes an outer gimbal ring 343 supported by the inner ends 346 of a pair of outer torsion members 345 on a first gimbal axis 344. Outer torsion members 345 are supported at their outer ends 347 by bracket 364. Inner gimbal 350 includes an inner gimbal ring 352 supported by the inner ends 356 of a pair of inner torsion members 355 on a
30 second gimbal axis 354. Note that "ring" is used due to gimbal tradition, but this element may be any functional shape. Inner torsion members 355 are supported

at their outer ends 357 by outer gimbal ring 343. Outer gimbal ring 343 may rotate about first gimbal axis 344. Inner gimbal ring 352 may rotate about second gimbal axis 354 relative to outer gimbal ring 343 and, thus, may rotate in any direction.

5 ~~Outer~~ Incoming cable passage members 331, including dihedral blocks 332 and a biased pulley 333, define a confined incoming datum passage, such as confined passage 339, for confined passage of midsection 16 of cable 12. Passage members 331 are mounted on inner ring 352 of anti-moment gimbal 340. Pulley 333 is mounted on a swinging yoke 334 and biased toward the cable
10 confining position by a spring 335. This biasing allows pulley 333 to move slightly to allow for passage of protuberances on cable 12. Of course, there are many other manners of accomplishing this confined cable passage 339. For example, instead of dihedral blocks 332, a second pulley could be used, or a plurality of rollers could be used.

15 Anti-moment gimbal 340 decouples sensor assembly 300G from applying any moment to cable 12 in confined cable passage 339. Anti-moment gimbal 340 may not be necessary for all types of cable 12.

 As seen in Figure 7, a counter mass 368 may be attached to the back side of inner gimbal ring 321 to counter the mass of arm 360 and cable passage
20 assembly 330 so as to balance main gimbal 310 to a more planar neutral position.

 As best seen in Figures 3 and 4A, cable 12 is in the alignment position 305 when local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 in confined passage 339 is aligned with main datum passage 230 and main gimbal 310 and anti-moment gimbal 340 are in the neutral position. With cable 12 in alignment position 305,
25 the measurement of a point may be taken. Cable free end 14 is then moved to a new point for measurement. If cable midsection 16 is displaced angularly during movement to the new point, midsection 16 exerts a side force against outer cable passage members 331 which, through arm 360, exert a moment on inner gimbal ring 321 of main gimbal 310 so as to rotate it.

30 Figure 8 is an enlarged cross sectional view of gimbal thrust bearing assembly 370. Thrust bearing assembly 370 provides a front-to-back pivot point

for inner gimbal ring 321 and also may bias or pre-load inner gimbal ring 321 to a position out of the planar position. A pivot rod 371 includes a front end 372 and a back end 373. Inner gimbal ring 321 includes a bearing plate 321B attached to the front of inner gimbal ring 321. Bearing plate 321B includes a rear facing pivot seat 322 and a front facing pivot seat 323. The front end 372 of pivot rod 371 and rear facing pivot seat 322 are adapted such that bearing plate 321B, and hence inner gimbal ring 321, pivots on front end 372. Preferably, also, pivot rod back end 373 and pitch frame 201 are adapted such that pivot rod back end 373 pivots on pitch carriage 200. These functions can be implemented in many manners. In the exemplary embodiment, pivot rod front end 372 is curved, such as being hemispherical. Mounted on or integral with inner gimbal ring 321 and moving therewith are a bearing plate 321B and sensor arm plate 321S. Bearing plate 321B includes a concave conical pivot seat 322 for receiving front end 372 in a pivoting relationship. Pitch frame 201 includes a set screw 203 adjustably threadably engaged in threaded bore 209. Set screw 203 includes a front-facing, concave, conical pivot seat 203a for receiving pivot rod back end 373. Pivot rod back end 373 is curved, such as being hemispherical, for pivoting in seat 203a. Note that pivot rod 371 pivots on both ends 372, 373 such that it only can apply an axial force and, other than its own weight, pivot rod 371 cannot apply a side load or moment to main gimbal 310. Pivot rod 371 cannot carry any of the weight of main gimbal 310 or its attachments including anti-moment gimbal 340.

Because main gimbal 310 may exhibit tensional discontinuities at the planar position, set screw 203 is adjusted so that inner gimbal ring 321 is out of planar with the remainder of main gimbal 310.

Means, such as a biasing assembly 375, may be used to further assure that inner gimbal ring 321 is positioned at a particular front-to-rear position against pivot rod 371. To this end, a compression member, such as spring 376, bears against pitch frame 201 and inner gimbal ring 321 to bias inner gimbal ring 321 against pivot rod 371. Spring 376 includes a front end 377 and a back end 378. Pitch frame 201 includes means, such as a set screw 205 adjustably threadably

engaged in threaded bore 204, for bearing on spring front end 377 for adjusting the compression biasing of spring 376. Spring back end 378 bears on inner gimbal ring 321, such on bearing plate 321B, such as on front seat 323 thereon. Spring 376 and inner gimbal ring 321 may be adapted (not shown), such as with a hemispherical cap on spring 376 and a concave conical seat on inner gimbal ring 321 for receiving the cap, such that spring 376 pivotly bears against inner gimbal ring 321 so as to impart no moment to inner gimbal ring 321.

Although, the terms “front” and “back” are used to conform to the illustration, thrust bearing assembly 370 can be easily modified to operate in the reverse manner with pivot rod 371 in front of inner gimbal ring 321.

Returning to Figs. 4 and 5 showing gimbale angular displacement sensor assembly 300G, as best seen in Figure 5, the movement about a first sensor axis 401 of inner gimbal ring 321 caused by angular displacement of cable 12 is sensed by first angular displacement sensor 400. The movement of inner gimbal ring 321 about a second sensor axis 421 caused by angular displacement of cable 12 is sensed by second angular displacement sensor 420. In the exemplary embodiment, first and second angular displacement sensors 400, 420 are optical encoders as are well known in the art.

First sensor 400 includes a moving portion 405, which rotates with inner gimbal ring 321, and a fixed portion 415 attached to pitch carriage 200. Moving portion 405 includes a radial arm 406 having an inner end 407 connected to sensor arm plate 321S of inner gimbal ring 321 and an outer end 408 having an encoder strip 409 thereon. Arm 406 rotates with inner gimbal ring 321 about first sensor axis 401. Fixed portion 415 includes an encoder read head 416 attached to pitch carriage 200 for reading encoder strip 409. Read head 416 outputs a signal, such as on line 308, indicative of rotation of inner gimbal ring 321 about first sensor axis 401.

Second sensor 420 includes a moving portion 425, which rotates with inner gimbal ring 321, and a fixed portion 435 attached to pitch carriage 200. Moving portion 425 includes a radial arm 426 having an inner end 427 connected to sensor arm plate 321S of inner gimbal ring 321 and an outer end 428 having an

encoder strip 429 thereon. Arm 426 rotates with inner gimbal ring 321 about second sensor axis 421. Fixed portion 435 includes an encoder read head 436 attached to pitch carriage 200 for reading encoder strip 429. Read head 436 outputs a signal, such as on line 309, indicative of rotation of inner gimbal ring
5 321 about the second sensor axis 421.

In the exemplary embodiment, the first sensor axis 401 corresponds to turn axis θ and second sensor axis 421 corresponds to second axis ϕ such that the signal from first sensor 400 may directly be used to control turn servoed motor 122 to rotate turn carriage 100 toward cable alignment position 305 and the signal
10 from second sensor 420 may directly be used to control pitch servoed motor 162 to rotate pitch carriage 200 toward the cable alignment position 305.

If the first and second sensor axes 401, 421 do not correspond to turn axis θ and second axis ϕ , then the output signals from sensors 400, 420 are transposed by means well known in the art into corresponding turn axis θ and second axis ϕ
15 rotations before being used to command servoed motors 122, 162 for rotation of turn and pitch carriages 100, 200 toward cable alignment position 305 wherein a measurement of a point may be taken.

As seen in Figure 5, flexible anti-dust bag, such as flexible anti-dust bag 419, shown in cross-section, covering first displacement sensor 400, may be used
20 to surround sensors to protect them from dust and dirt.

Figure 9 is a perspective schematic of a second embodiment of the cable angular displacement sensor assembly 300 including proximity or contact sensors, such as contact sensors 380 mounted to frame 201. Incoming midsection 16 of cable 12 is shown in alignment position 305 wherein the local longitudinal axis
25 17 of cable 12 in confined incoming datum passage 339 is aligned with main datum passage 230.

A first pair 380A of contact sensors 381A, 381B, attached to frame 201, are equally spaced on opposite sides of cable 12 for detecting angular displacement of cable 12 about a first contact sensor axis perpendicular to a
30 midline between first sensors 380A. A second pair 380B of contact sensors 381C, 381D, attached to frame 201, are equally spaced on opposite sides of cable

12 for detecting angular displacement of cable 12 about a second contact sensor axis perpendicular to a midline between second sensors 380B. If cable 12 is angularly displaced so as to touch sensor 381A, sensor 381A produces a signal on line 308C1 indicating rotation is required about the first contact sensor axis in a first direction. If cable 12 touches sensor 381B, sensor 381B produces a signal on line 308C2 indicating rotation is required about the first contact sensor axis in the opposite direction. If cable 12 is angularly displaced so as to touch sensor 381C, sensor 381C produces a signal on line 309C1 indicating rotation is required about the second contact sensor axis in a first direction. If cable 12 touches sensor 381D, sensor 381D produces a signal on line 309C2 indicating rotation is required about the second contact sensor axis in the opposite direction. Depending on the relationship between the first and second contact sensor axes with θ and ϕ , the signals on lines 308C1, 308C2, 309C1 and 309C2 may directly control turn servoed motor 122 or pitch servoed motor 162 or may be transposed by means well known in the art into corresponding turn axis θ and second axis ϕ rotations before being used to command servoed motors 122, 162 for rotation of turn carriage 100 and pitch carriage 200 toward cable alignment position 305 wherein a measurement of a point may be taken.

Because the slight gaps between cable 12 and sensors 381A-381D introduce a slight error, contact sensors 380 are dithered about the sensor axes so that cable 12 is centered in the alignment position 305 before taking a measurement. Servoed motors 122, 162 are controlled to dither contact sensors 380.

Figure 10 is a perspective schematic of a third embodiment of the cable angular displacement sensor assembly 300, including optical sensors 385 mounted to frame 201 for detecting movement of cable 12 from alignment position 305. Cable 12 is shown in alignment position 305 wherein the local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 in confined incoming datum passage 339 is aligned with main datum passage 230.

In the exemplary embodiment, each optical sensor 385 includes a light source 386, some focusing lenses 387, and a light sensor 388.

A pitch optical sensor 385A includes light source 386A that emits light and is disposed on one side of cable 12 and a light sensor 388A for receiving the emitted light is disposed on the other side of cable 12. Light sensor 388A may include a CCD array 389A or other light detector as is well known. One or more
5 lenses, such as lenses 387, may be used to focus or magnify the light for accurate reading. Sensor 388A detects when the shadow of cable 12 moves up or down and produces a signal, such as on line 309D, indicative thereof for directing pitch servoed motor 162 to move pitch carriage 200 so as to return cable 12 to alignment position 305.

10 A turn optical sensor 385B includes light source 386B that emits light and is disposed on one side of cable 12 and light sensor 388B for receiving the light is disposed on the other side of cable 12. Light sensor 388B may include a CCD array 389B or other light detector as is well known. One or more lenses, such as
15 lenses 387A, mounted to frame 201, may be used to focus or magnify the light for accurate reading. Sensor 388B detects when the shadow of cable 12 moves left or right and produces a signal, such as on line 308D, indicative thereof for directing turn servoed motor 122 to move turn carriage 100 so as to return cable 12 to alignment position 305.

In the exemplary embodiment, the output of optical sensors 385
20 corresponds directly to movement in θ and ϕ . However, other axes may be used and translated into movement in θ and ϕ .

Other types of optical sensors could be used, such as reflecting light off cable 12 to a light detector.

Figure 11 is a perspective schematic of a fourth embodiment of the cable
25 angular displacement sensor assembly 300 including a magnetic or electromagnetic sensor 390. A pitch electromagnetic sensor 390A detects the proximity of cable 12 and, when cable 12 moves up or down, produces a signal, such as on line 309E, indicative thereof for directing pitch servoed motor 162 to move pitch carriage 200 so as to return cable 12 to alignment position 305. A
30 turn optical sensor 390B detects the proximity of cable 12 and, when 12 moves left or right, and produces a signal, such as on line 308E, indicative thereof for

directing turn servoed motor 122 to move turn carriage 100 so as to return cable 12 to alignment position 305 wherein the local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 in confined incoming datum passage 339 is aligned with main datum passage 230.

Magnetic sensors could also be used to detect the proximity of cable. In the exemplary embodiment, the output of sensors 390 corresponds directly to movement in θ and ϕ . However, other axes may be used and translated into movement in θ and ϕ .

Figure 12 is a perspective view of a fifth embodiment of the cable angular displacement sensor assembly 300 including a moment sensor 395. Tube 360 from the anti-moment gimbal from the confined cable passage 339 is solidly attached to frame 201. As discussed elsewhere, other means of producing a confined cable passage 339 such as in Figure 12 are possible. For example confined passage 339 could be a tube with a close-fitting hole about the outer diameter of cable 12 that the cable 12 passes through, or could be opposing rollers that the cable passes between.

When cable 12 is moved up or down, or to the right or to the left through confined cable passage assembly 330, a side force is transmitted through confined cable passage 339, as a moment on arm 360, such as thin tube 361. Arm 360 produces detectable strain on load cells, such as strain gages 396 and 397 mounted on arm 360. Strain gages 396 and 397 produce strain signals which are processed in a manner well known in the art. Other types of load cells known in the art, such as other strain gage arrangements, piezo-resistive-element load cells, hydraulic load cells, pneumatic load cells and optical load cells, may be used. The strain induced on 360 in the vertical axis is detected by strain gage 396 and produces a signal, such as on line 309F, indicative thereof for directing turn servo motor 162 to move pitch carriage 200 so as to return cable 12 to alignment position 305. The strain induced on 360 in the horizontal axis is detected by strain gage 397 and produces a signal, such as on lines 308F, indicative thereof for directing turn servo motor 122 to move carriage 200 so as to return cable 12 to alignment position 305 wherein the local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 in confined incoming datum passage 339 is aligned with main datum passage 230.

Other arrangements of moment-load cell well known in the art may be applied to the mount end of thin tube 360 at the interface with 201.

Figure 14 is a front, top, right side perspective view, similar to Figure 4B, of a second embodiment of a main gimbal thrust support assembly 900 including a thin flexible tension member, such as a line or wire 901, such as piano wire 901P. **Figure 15** is a cross sectional view, similar to Figure 8, of thrust support assembly 900 for main gimbal 310. **Figure 16** is an enlarged, exploded, partially-cut-away perspective view of the attachment clamp 910 of piano wire 901P to gimbal 310 of Figures 14 and 15. Thrust support 900 replaces thrust bearing assembly 370 of Figure 8.

Piano wire 901P includes a front end 902, a back end 903 and a midsection 904. Piano wire 901P has a diameter of about 0.009".

As best seen in Figure 16, attachment means, such as clamp 910, attaches midsection 904 of piano wire 901P to main gimbal 310, such as to inner gimbal ring 321 of inner gimbal 320. Inner gimbal ring 321 includes a central bore or passage 321P therethrough. Preferably, passage 321P is central to gimbal 310. Clamp base 911 is attached, such as by bolts 912, to inner gimbal ring 321 so as to support wire 901P at the center of passage 321P. Base 911 may include a groove 913 for retaining wire 901P. Clamp moving member 915 attaches to base 911, such as with bolts 919 in threaded bores 914, so as to clamp wire 901P.

Returning to Figures 14 and 15, pitch carriage frame 201 includes a front support 201f and a back support 201b for supporting front end 902 and back end 903 respectively of piano wire 901P. Supports 201f, 201b are spaced sufficiently, such as about four inches for a 0.009" diameter piano wire 901P, to minimize the moment wire 901P can exert on gimbal 310.

In the exemplary embodiment, piano wire 901P is attached as follows. Wire 901P is threaded through bore 321P in main gimbal 310. Wire front end 902 is passed through a slot or bore in front support 201f, through compression spring 922 and is crimped in ferrule 921. Wire back end 903 is passed through a slot or bore in back support 201b. Wire 901P is tensioned, such as by pulling on back end 903 to partially compress spring 922 and is retained in tension, such as

by application of back clamp 925. Clamp 910 is then attached to wire 901P as described above so as to retain main gimbal 310 in the neutral position front to back and to resist front to back movement of main gimbal 310 from any applied thrust forces and return gimbal 310 to the neutral position.

5 **Figure 17** is a perspective view of a sixth embodiment of cable angular displacement sensor assembly 300A including off-cable optical sensors 385a, similar to optical sensors 385 of Figure 10.

Midsection 16 of incoming cable 12 is shown in the alignment position 305 wherein the local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 in confined incoming
10 datum passage 339 is aligned with main datum passage 230. Cable passage assembly 330A, includes incoming cable passage member 331 mounted to frame 201 on a resilient flexible support member or members, such as on flexible rods 336. Flexible rods 336 have a fixed end attached to frame 201 and a free end attached to cable passage member 331. Free end moves sideways in any direction
15 responsive to a side force. Flexible rods 336 are in a neutral position when there is no side force from cable 12 on cable passage member 331. After a side force by cable 12 moves cable passage member 331 and flexible rods 336 to the side, flexible rods 336 return to the neutral position when the side force from cable is removed. Cable passage member 331 includes confined incoming datum passage
20 339, such as bore 339a, through which cable 12 passes. The free ends of flexible rods 336 are parallel to local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12. Cable passage assembly 330A may include a projection, such as outward projection 337, which parallels local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12. Confined cable passage 339 aligns with local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 with movement of cable 12 out
25 of alignment position 305 and moves cable passage member 331 in the direction of cable movement by the bending of flexible rods 336. Optical sensors 385a function in the same manner as sensors 385 of Figure 10 except, instead of detecting movement of cable 12 relative to frame 201, they detect movement of cable passage assembly 330A, such as movement of projection 337, relative to
30 frame 201.

In the exemplary embodiment, each optical sensor 385 includes a light source, some focusing lenses, and a light sensor.

A turn optical sensor 385A, mounted to frame 201, includes light source 386A that emits light and is disposed on one side of cable 12 and a light sensor 388A for receiving the emitted light is disposed on the other side of cable 12. Light sensor 388A may include a CCD array 389A or other light detector as is well known. One or more lenses, such as lenses 387, may be used to focus or magnify the light for accurate reading. Sensor 388A detects when the shadow of projection 337 moves left or right and produces a signal, such as on line 308, indicative thereof for directing turn servoed motor 122 to move turn carriage 100 so as to return cable 12 to alignment position 305.

A pitch optical sensor 385B, mounted to frame 201, includes light source 386B that emits light and is disposed on one side of cable 12 and light sensor 388B for receiving the light is disposed on the other side of cable 12. Light sensor 388B may include a CCD array 389B or other light detector as is well known. One or more lenses, such as lenses 387A, 387B, mounted to frame 201, may be used to focus or magnify the light for pitch and turn for accurate reading. Sensor 388B detects when the shadow of projection 337 moves up or down and produces a signal, such as on line 309, indicative thereof for directing pitch servoed motor 162 to move pitch carriage 200 so as to return cable 12 to alignment position 305.

In the exemplary embodiment, the output of optical sensors 385a corresponds directly to movement in θ and ϕ . However, other axes may be used and translated into movement in θ and ϕ by methods that are well known.

Off-cable optical sensors 385a have several advantages over on-cable sensors 385 of Figure 10. First, the length of projection 337 to sensors 385a amplifies the displacement of cable 12 at confined passage 339 such that readings are more easily taken. Second, optical sensors 385a, unlike optical sensors 385, are not directly exposed to cable 12, which may carry dirt and other contaminants that could prevent readings. Also, off-cable optical sensors 385a can be more

easily enclosed and protected from dust and dirt in a flexible bag, such as flexible anti-dust bag 999, shown in diagrammatic representation.

Figure 18 is a perspective view of a seventh embodiment of the cable angular displacement sensor assembly 300A including an off-cable, laser sensor

5 930

Cable passage assembly 330A functions as described with respect to Figure 17, above.

A laser 931, or other light source, is mounted to a portion of cable passage assembly 330A, such as to projection 337, such that laser beam 932 emitted by
10 laser 931 parallels local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 at confined passage 339. A laser beam sensor, such as a CCD array 935, is mounted on frame 201. Array 935 receives laser beam 932, detects motion of laser beam 932 away from the cable alignment position 305 and produces a signal or signals, such as on signal lines 308 and 309, indicative thereof for directing turn servoed motor 122 to
15 move turn carriage 100 so as to return cable 12 to alignment position 305 and for directing pitch servoed motor 162 to move pitch carriage 200 so as to return cable 12 to alignment position 305. A lens or mask 936, attached to projection 337 or to laser 931, includes a lens or a small orifice, for passage therethrough of laser beam 932 for producing more narrow beam 933 such that narrow beam 933
20 produces a smaller dot on CCD array 935, as is well known in the art. Laser sensor 930 is enclosed and protected from dust and dirt in a flexible bag, such as anti-dust bag 999, shown in diagrammatic representation.

Figure 19 is a perspective view of an eighth embodiment of cable angular displacement sensor assembly 300A wherein cable passage assembly 330A
25 includes cable passage member 331 mounted to frame 201 on a resilient, flexible support member, such as on an elastomeric support tube 338. Elastomeric support tube 338 is sometimes called a rolling diaphragm. **Figure 20** is a partial, enlarged, top view, partially in cross section, of cable angular displacement sensor assembly 300A of Figure 18. A rolling diaphragm, such as elastomeric
30 support tube 338, allows motion radially, yet resists turning about its central axis. Other elastomeric embodiments could also be used, such as a rubber block.

Elastomeric support tube 338 includes a first end 338a connected to frame 201, a second end 338b mounting cable passage member 331 and a flexible wall 338c therebetween. Cable passage member 331 is mounted in second end 338b of elastomeric support tube 338 such that cable 12 passes through tube 338. Tube wall 338c supports tube second end 338b such that it can move relative to first end 338a and such that second end 338b movably supports cable passage member 331 such that, as confined cable passage 339 aligns with local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 with movement of cable 12 out of alignment position 305, cable passage member 331 moves in the direction of cable movement.

A light source, such as laser 940, is mounted to cable passage member 331 such that laser beam 942 emitted by laser 940 parallels local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 at confined passage 339. A laser beam sensor, such as a CCD array 945, is mounted on frame 201. Array 945 receives laser beam 942, detects motion of laser beam 942 away from the cable alignment position 305 and produces a signal or signals, such as on signal lines 308 and 309, indicative thereof for directing turn servoed motor 122 to move turn carriage 100 so as to return cable 12 to alignment position 305 and for directing pitch servoed motor 162 to move pitch carriage 200 so as to return cable 12 to alignment position 305.

Alternatively, the movement of a projection (not shown) of cable passage member 331 and paralleling local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 could be detected by sensors, such as optical sensors 385a described with respect to Figure 17, to provide signals indicative of cable movement.

Figure 21 is a perspective view of a ninth embodiment of the cable angular displacement sensor 300A including a two axis, cantilever spring assembly 950 mount for cable passage assembly 330.

Cantilever spring assembly 950 includes a first axis assembly 952 connected to frame 201 providing for movement of cable passage assembly 330 in a first axis; and further includes a second axis assembly 972 connected to first axis assembly 952 providing for movement of cable passage assembly 330 in a second axis.

First axis assembly 952 includes a stationary frame end 953 mounted to frame 201, single axis, cantilever spring means with relative movement in a first axis, such as first pair of parallel, flat springs 954 each having a first end 955 connected to stationary frame end 953 and a second end 956 connected to first moving frame 957 such that, as first springs 954 bend, first moving frame 957 can move perpendicular to the plane of flat springs 954 relative to frame 201.

Second axis assembly 972 includes single axis, cantilever spring means with relative movement in a second axis, such as second pair of parallel, flat springs 974 each having a first end 975 connected to first moving frame 957 and a second end 976 connected to second moving frame 977 such that, as second springs 974 bend, second moving frame 977 can move perpendicular to the plane of flat springs 974 relative to first moving frame 957. Thus, second moving frame 977 can move in both axes.

Cable passage assembly 330 is attached, such as by bracket 364, to second moving frame 977. Cable passage assembly 330, shown, is like that shown and described in Figures 4, 5, and 7 and includes a confined cable passage 339 for passage of incoming cable 12. However, other configurations of cable passage assembly 330, such as those shown herein, could be used.

Midsection 16 of incoming cable 12 is shown in the alignment position 305 wherein the local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 is aligned with main datum passage 230. With movement of cable 12 out of alignment position 305, confined cable passage 339 aligns with local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 and moves cable passage member 331 in the direction of cable movement by the deflection of springs 954, 974.

A first axis angular displacement sensor 960 detects relative movement of first moving frame 957 and stationary frame end 953 and sends a signal, such as on line 309, indicative thereof. A second angular displacement sensor 980 detects relative movement of second moving frame 977 and first moving frame 957 and sends a signal, such as on line 308, indicative thereof. In response to signals in lines 308, 309, servoed motor 122 moves turn carriage 100 so as to

return cable 12 toward alignment position 305 and pitch servoed motor 162 moves pitch carriage 200 so as to return cable 12 toward alignment position 305.

In the exemplary embodiment, displacement sensors 960, 980 are of the arm-and-reader type as used in the first embodiment of Figures 2-8 and each
5 comprises an arm attached to one of the relative moving members and extending toward the other relative moving member and an optical encoder reading displacement between the end of the arm and the other member.

First axis displacement sensor 960 includes arm 961 projecting from first moving frame 957 toward stationary frame end 953. An encoder strip 962 on end
10 of arm 961 is read by encoder read head 963 on stationary frame end 953 or frame 201 and a signal indicative of the relative movement is output on line 309.

As an option, a first dash pot, such as first air pot 965, is connected between the free end of arm 961 and mount 968 mounted on frame 201 and dampens relative movement of stationary frame end 953 and first moving frame
15 957. First air pot 965 includes a piston 966 moving in an air cylinder 967, as is known in that art. Other types of dampener, such as hydraulic, could be used.

Second axis displacement sensor 980 includes arm 981 projecting from second moving frame 977 toward first moving frame 957. An encoder strip 982 on end of arm 981 is read by encoder read head 983 on first moving frame 957
20 and a signal indicative of the relative movement is output on line 308.

As an option, a second dash pot, such as second air pot 985, is connected between the free end of arm 981 and mount 988 mounted on first moving frame 957 and dampens relative movement of first moving frame 957 and second moving frame 977. Second air pot 985 is similar to first air pot 965 and includes
25 a piston, not seen, moving in an air cylinder 987, as is known in that art. Other types of dampener, such as hydraulic, could be used.

Displacement sensors 960, 980 can be any desirable type of displacement sensor, such as shown herein. Also, other configurations of cantilever spring assembly 950 are possible. An axis assembly 952, 972 could have just a single
30 spring. Also, axis assemblies 952, 957 can double back on one another so as to shorten spring assembly 950.

Figure 22 is a perspective view of a tenth embodiment of cable angular displacement sensor of the arm and sensor type including a magnetic encoder, such as magnetic linear encoder 990. Magnetic linear encoder 990 can be substituted for an optical encoder, such as for encoder 409, 416 of the first embodiment shown in Figure 4A herein. Magnetic linear sensor 990 includes a multi-pole magnetic strip 992 on angular displacement arm 991 and an encoder head 993, including a Hall-effect sensing integrated circuit chip 994 for sensing movement of magnetic strip 992 in an axis and producing a signal on line 308 indicative thereof.

A suitable encoder 990 is the AS5311 high resolution magnetic linear encoder made by AustriaMicroSystems of Schloss Premstaetten, Austria. This encoder has a resolution as small as $1.95\mu\text{m}$ so it can detect minute movements of arm 991.

Figure 23 is a bottom, front, left side, partially cut away, perspective view of selective elements of an alternative embodiment 10B of device 10 as was shown and described primarily with respect to Figures 2 and 3. Measuring device 10B is similar to device 10 in most respects but differs as described below from device 10 in that there is no pitch carriage 200; many elements that are mounted on pitch carriage 200 in device 10 are instead mounted on turn carriage 100 in device 10B. In the exemplary embodiment, device 10B includes a first displacement sensor, such as turn sensor 400, and a second angular displacement sensor, such as pitch sensor, 420. A simplified version of device 10B may omit pitch sensor 420.

Device 10B can measure points in a plane that is close to ring 31 of base 30 and that is perpendicular to turn axis θ . Device 10B can measure these points with precision if the pitch axis sensor range is not exceeded or, otherwise, with sufficient accuracy for many applications. For example, device 10B can be used to measure flooring, such as tiles.

Main datum passage 230, cable supply means 600, cable length measuring means 450, and angular displacement sensor assembly 300 are attached to frame 101. Although a gimbaled angular displacement sensor 300G

is shown, other angular displacement sensors, such as those shown and described herein, could be used.

Cable 12 is in alignment position 305 when the local longitudinal axis 17 of cable 12 at outer confined cable passage 339 is aligned with turn axis (θ). As
5 cable free end 14 is moved from an old point to a new point that is not directly radially outward from the old point, cable midsection 16 is displaced angularly in angular displacement sensor assembly 300. Angular displacement sensor assembly 300 detects this angular displacement of cable 12 away from alignment position 305 and produces a signal or signals indicative thereof, such as on lines 308 and
10 309. Turn servoed motor assembly 120 rotates turn carriage 100 about turn axis θ responsive to the signals from angular displacement sensor assembly 300 indicative of cable displacement about turn axis (θ) so as to move angular displacement sensor assembly 300 to alignment position 305.

As discussed with respect to device 10, in device 10B, the location of the
15 measured point is determined from turn-carriage measuring means 500, cable length measuring means 450, and pitch angle from the signals from angular displacement sensor assembly 300 indicative of pitch angle, such as on line 309.

It should be appreciated that device 10 is versatile and can be used in several modes as discussed below.

20 Using device 10 as an output device was discussed above with respect to the laser pointer 270.

Distances longer than the length of cable 12 may be measured by connecting a laser micrometer to the end of cable 12 and holding it, such as by grip 18, such that the emitted laser beam is parallel to cable 12 and the beam
25 lands on the point being measured. The distance indicated by the laser micrometer is added to the cable distance to attain total distance.

Another method of measuring points at longer distances is to attach a laser tape measure to base unit 20. User 90 may be positioned near the point to be measured and use means, such as a PDA with Bluetooth[®] to drive the turn and
30 pitch servos to place the laser light on the point and take a measurement.

Device 10 can be used to measure artwork or blueprints and then scale up or scale down or even project the measured points on a surface, such as a wall.

Cable 12 is preferably of low and known strain. A wire cable of about one sixteenth inch diameter and having a breaking strength of about 300 pounds
5 has been used. Temperature, humidity, and level sensors may be included to improve accuracy.

From the foregoing description, it is seen that the present invention provides an extremely convenient and accurate measuring device that can be operated by a single user.

MEASURING DEVICE WITH EXTENSIBLE CORD AND METHOD

1. A measuring device comprising:

- 2 a cable including:
 - a midsection; and
 - 4 a free end for placement by a user at a point being measured;
- a base unit including:
 - 6 a base;
 - a first carriage including:
 - 8 a first frame rotationally attached to said base so as to be
 - rotatable about a first axis;
 - 10 a second carriage including:
 - a second frame rotationally attached to said first frame so
 - 12 as to be rotatable about a second axis;
 - a main datum passage attached to said second frame for
 - 14 confined passage of said midsection of said cable;
 - an angular displacement sensor assembly attached to said
 - 16 second frame including:
 - an incoming cable passage assembly defining an
 - 18 incoming datum passage between said main datum passage and said cable free
 - end for confined passage of said midsection of said cable; said cable being in an
 - 20 alignment position when the local longitudinal axis of said cable in said incoming
 - datum passage is aligned with said main datum passage; said angular
 - 22 displacement sensor assembly for sensing angular displacement of said cable
 - away from the alignment position and for producing a displacement signal
 - 24 indicative thereof;
 - a first motor coupled to said first frame for rotating said first
 - 26 carriage about the first axis responsive to the displacement signal from said
 - angular displacement sensor assembly indicative of cable displacement about the
 - 28 first axis so as to move said angular displacement sensor assembly to the
 - alignment position;

30 a second motor coupled to said second frame for rotating said
second carriage about the second axis responsive to the displacement signal from
32 said angular displacement sensor assembly indicative of cable displacement about
the second axis so as to move said angular displacement sensor assembly to the
34 alignment position;

cable measuring means attached to said base unit and coupled to
36 said cable for measuring the length or change of length of said cable and for
producing a cable signal indicative of the distance to the point being measured;

38 first carriage measuring means attached to said base unit for
measuring the rotational position or change of rotational position of said first
40 carriage relative to said base and for producing a first-carriage signal indicative of
the angle about the first axis to the point being measured; and

42 second carriage measuring means attached to said base unit for
measuring the rotational position or change of rotational position of said second
44 carriage relative to said first carriage and for producing a second-carriage signal
indicative of the angle about the second axis to the point being measured.

2. The measuring device of claim 1 wherein:

2 said angular displacement sensor assembly includes:

an optical sensor for sensing angular displacement of said cable
4 away from said alignment position and for producing a signal indicative thereof.

3. The measuring device of claim 1 wherein:

2 said angular displacement sensor assembly includes:

a magnetic sensor for sensing angular displacement of said cable
4 away from said alignment position and for producing a signal indicative thereof.

4. The measuring device of claim 1 wherein:

2 said angular displacement sensor assembly includes:

a pair of contact sensors for sensing angular displacement of said
4 cable away from said alignment position and for producing a signal indicative
thereof.

5. The measuring device of claim 1 wherein:

2 said angular displacement sensor assembly includes:

a pair of load cells for sensing angular displacement of said cable
4 away from said alignment position and for producing a signal indicative thereof.

6. The measuring device of claim 1 wherein:

2 said angular displacement sensor assembly includes:

a laser sensor for sensing angular displacement of said cable away
4 from said alignment position and for producing a signal indicative thereof.

7. The measuring device of claim 1 wherein:

2 said angular displacement sensor assembly includes:

a Hall-effect magnetic encoder for sensing angular displacement
4 of said cable away from said alignment position and for producing a signal
indicative thereof.

8. The measuring device of claim 1 wherein:

2 said angular displacement sensor assembly includes:

an optical encoder for sensing angular displacement of said cable
4 away from said alignment position and for producing a signal indicative thereof.

9. The measuring device of claim 1 further including:

2 grip means attached to said free end of said cable for positioning said free
end of said cable without imparting a moment to said cable.

10. The measuring device of claim 1 further including:

2 supply means for supplying said cable under tension to said main datum
passage.

11. The measuring device of claim 10 wherein:

2 said supply means includes:

 a cable tension sensor for sensing the tension in said cable and for
4 producing a signal indicative thereof; and
 a third motor coupled to said cable supplied to said datum passage
6 for tensioning said supplied cable responsive to the signal from the cable tension
sensor.

12. The measuring device of claim 11 wherein:

2 said supply means further includes:

 a reel upon which said cable is wound; and wherein said third
4 motor is coupled to said reel.

13. The measuring device of claim 1 further including:

2 a user input device located proximal said cable free end and in
communication with said base unit, and

4 a storage device in communication with said base unit; said base unit
sending the cable signal, the first-carriage signal and the second-carriage signal to
6 said storage device responsive to a record directive from said input device.

14. The measuring device of claim 1 further including:

2 A user input and storage device located proximal said cable free end and
in communication with said base unit; said base unit sending the cable signal, the
4 first-carriage signal and the second-carriage signal to said input and storage
device responsive to a record directive from said input device.

2 15. The measuring device of claim 1 wherein:

 said angular displacement sensor assembly includes:

4 a resilient, flexible support supporting said incoming cable
passage assembly from said second frame in a neutral position when there are no
6 side forces from said cable on said incoming datum passage and such that side
forces from said cable move said incoming datum passage out of the neutral
8 position; said resilient, flexible support returning said incoming datum passage to
the neutral position after the side forces from said cable have been removed.

16. The measuring device of claim 15 wherein:

2 said resilient, flexible support includes:

 a main gimbal biased to a neutral position such that angular
4 displacement of said cable from the alignment position rotates said main gimbal;
and

6 said angular displacement sensor assembly includes:

 a first rotation sensor for sensing the rotation of said main gimbal
8 about a first sensor axis; and

 a second rotation sensor for sensing rotation of said main gimbal
10 about a second sensor axis.

17. The measuring device of claim 16 wherein:

2 said gimbal is a plate gimbal.

18. The measuring device of claim 15 wherein:

2 said resilient, flexible support includes:

 a resilient, flexible rod cantilevered from said second frame and
4 having a free end supporting to said incoming cable passage assembly.

19. The measuring device of claim 15 wherein:

2 said resilient, flexible support includes:

 an elastomeric support tube; and wherein said incoming datum
4 passage is mounted in said elastomeric support tube.

20. The measuring device of claim 15 wherein:

2 said resilient, flexible support includes:

 a cantilever spring assembly supporting said cable passage
4 assembly for movement in two axes.

21. A method of measuring an object by a measuring device comprising: a cable
2 including: a midsection; and a free end for placement by a user at a point being
 measured; a base unit including: a base; a first carriage including: a first frame
4 rotationally attached to the base so as to be rotatable about a first axis; a second
 carriage including: a second frame rotationally attached to the first frame so as to
6 be rotatable about a second axis; a main datum passage attached to the second
 frame for confined passage of the midsection of the cable; an angular
8 displacement sensor assembly attached to the second frame including and
 incoming datum passage between the main datum passage and the cable free end
10 for confined passage of the midsection of the cable; the cable being in an
 alignment position when the local longitudinal axis of the cable in the incoming
12 datum passage is aligned with the main datum passage; the angular displacement
 sensor assembly for sensing angular displacement of the cable away from the
14 alignment position and for producing a displacement signal indicative thereof; a
 first motor coupled to the first frame for rotating the first carriage about the first
16 axis responsive to the displacement signal from the angular displacement sensor
 assembly indicative of cable displacement about the first axis so as to move the
18 angular displacement sensor toward or to the alignment position; a second motor
 coupled to the second frame for rotating the second carriage about the second
20 axis responsive to the displacement signal from the angular displacement sensor
 indicative of cable displacement about the second axis so as to move the angular
22 displacement sensor toward or to the alignment position; cable measuring means
 attached to the second frame and coupled to the cable for measuring the length or
24 change of length of the cable and for producing a cable signal indicative of the
 distance to the point being measured; first carriage measuring means for
26 measuring the rotational position or change of rotational position of the first

carriage relative to the base and for producing a first-carriage signal indicative of
28 the angle to the point being measured about the first axis; and second carriage
measuring means for measuring the rotational position or change of rotational
30 position of the second carriage relative to the first carriage and for producing a
second-carriage signal indicative of the angle to the point being measured about
32 the second axis; comprising:

positioning the base unit at a first position within line of sight of a first
34 point on the object to be measured;

positioning the cable free end on the first point on the object to be
36 measured; and

obtaining the measurements of the first point from the cable measuring
38 means, the first carriage measuring means, and the second carriage measuring
means.

22. The method of claim 20 wherein the measuring device further includes: an
2 input device located proximal the cable free end and in communication with the
base unit, and a storage device in communication with the base unit; the base unit
4 sending the cable signal, the first-carriage signal and the second-carriage signal to
the storage device responsive to a record directive to the input device from a user;
6 and the step of obtaining the measurements of the first point includes:

providing a record directive to the input device

23. The measuring device of claim 21 wherein the measuring device further
2 includes: an input and storage device located proximal the cable free end and in
communication with the base unit; the base unit sending the cable signal, the
4 first-carriage signal and the second-carriage signal to the input and storage device
responsive to a record directive to the input device from a user; and the step of
6 obtaining the measurements of the first point includes:

providing a record directive to the input and storage device.

24. A measuring device comprising:

2 a cable including:
a midsection; and
4 a free end for placement by a user at a point being measured;
a base unit including:
6 a base;
a first carriage including:
8 a first frame rotationally attached to said base so as to be
rotatable about a first axis;
10 a main datum passage attached to said first frame for confined
passage of said midsection of said cable;
12 an angular displacement sensor assembly attached to said first
frame including:
14 an incoming cable passage assembly defining an incoming
datum passage between said main datum passage and said cable free end for
16 confined passage of said midsection of said cable; said cable being in an
alignment position when the local longitudinal axis of said cable in said incoming
18 datum passage is aligned with said first axis; said angular displacement sensor
assembly for sensing angular displacement of said cable away from the alignment
20 position and for producing a displacement signal indicative thereof;
a first motor coupled to said first frame for rotating said first
22 carriage about the first axis responsive to the displacement signal from said
angular displacement sensor assembly indicative of cable displacement about the
24 first axis so as to move said angular displacement sensor assembly to the
alignment position;
26 cable measuring means attached to said base unit and coupled to
said cable for measuring the length or change of length of said cable and for
28 producing a cable signal indicative of the distance to the point being measured;
and
30 first carriage measuring means on said base unit for measuring the
rotational position or change of rotational position of said first carriage relative to

32 said base and for producing a first-carriage signal indicative of the angle about
the first axis to the point being measured.

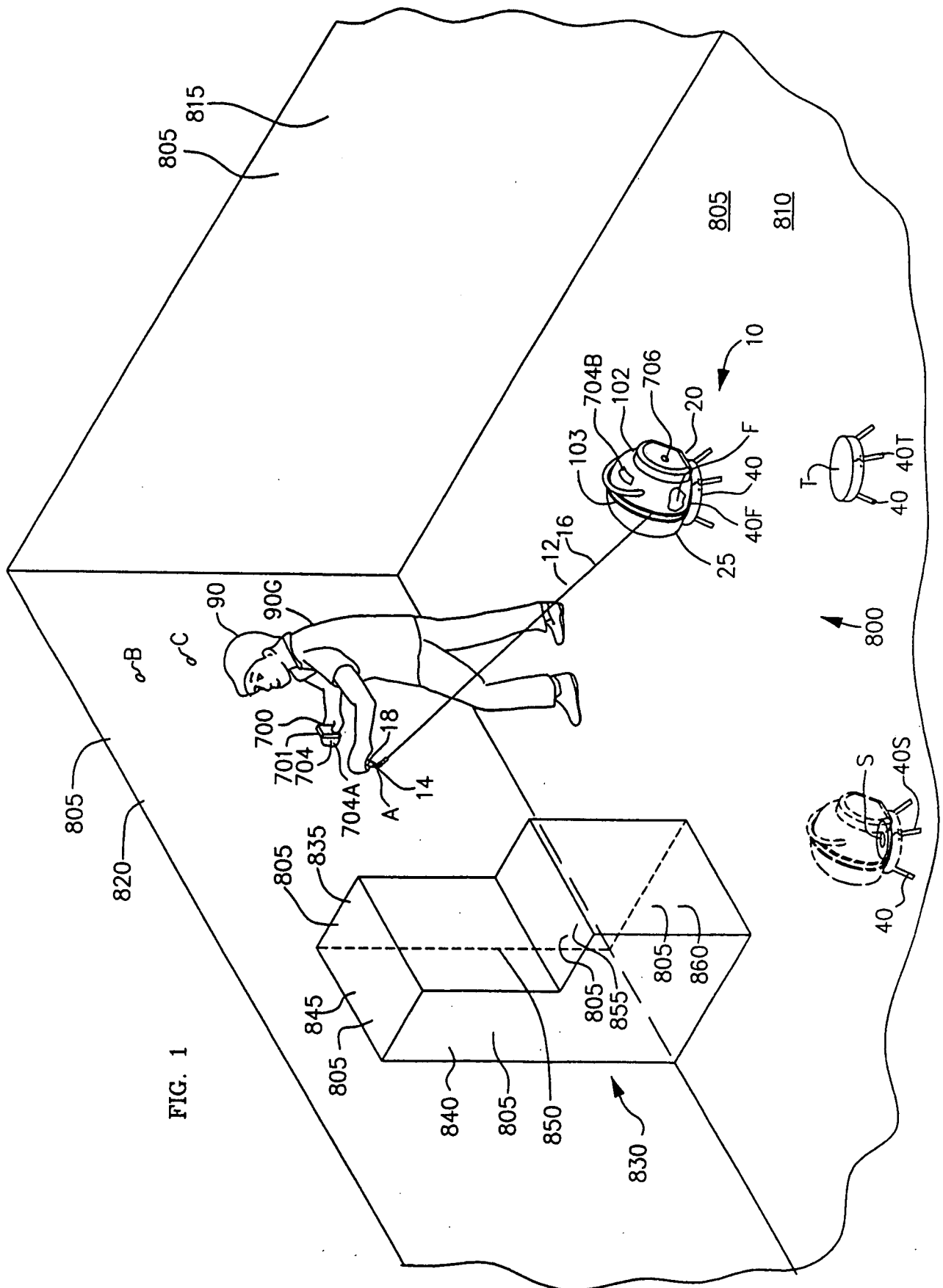
34

25. The measuring device of claim 24 wherein:

36 said angular displacement sensor assembly includes:

pitch angle measuring means for measuring the pitch or change of

38 pitch of said cable and for producing a signal indicative thereof.



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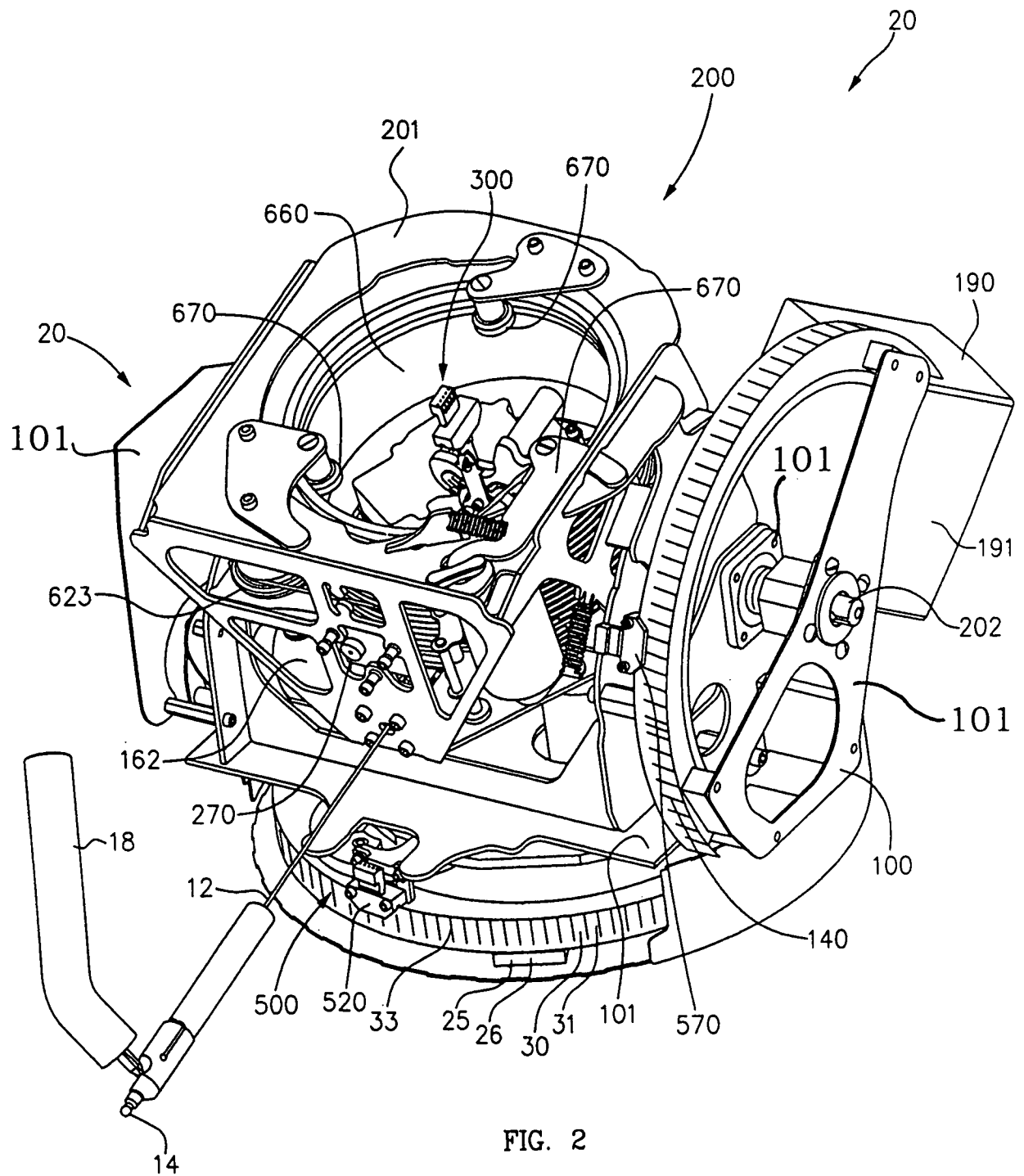


FIG. 2

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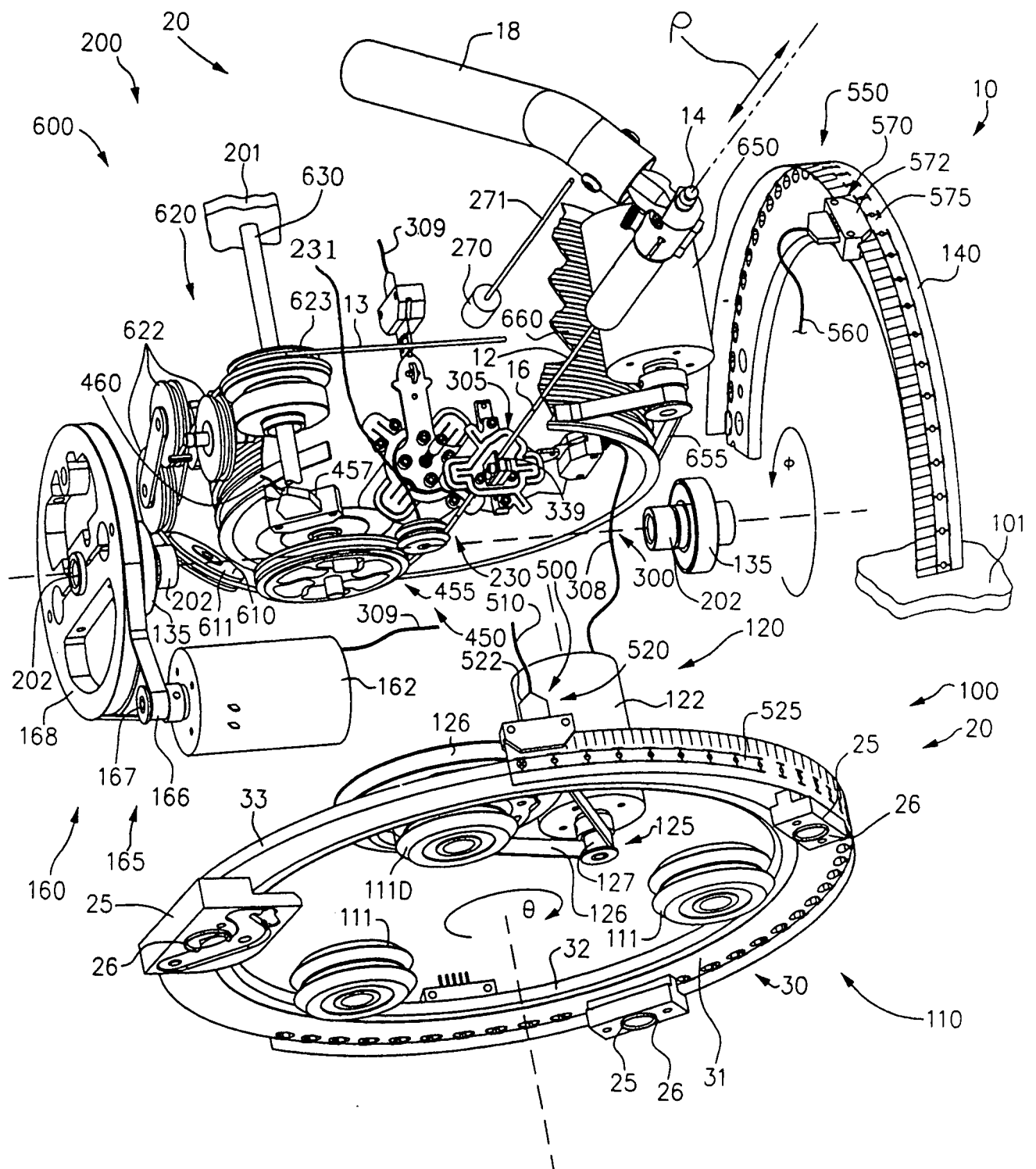


FIG. 3

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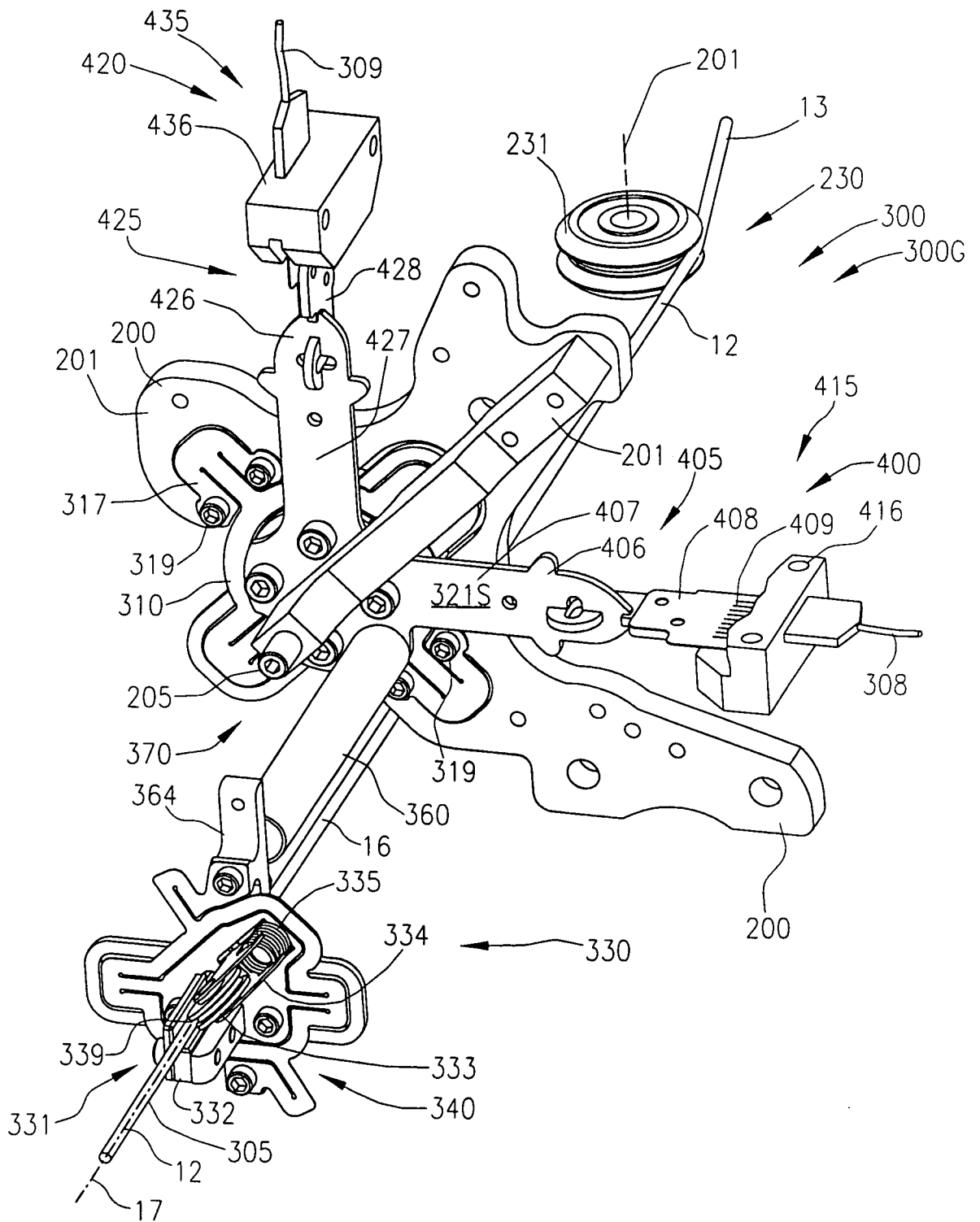
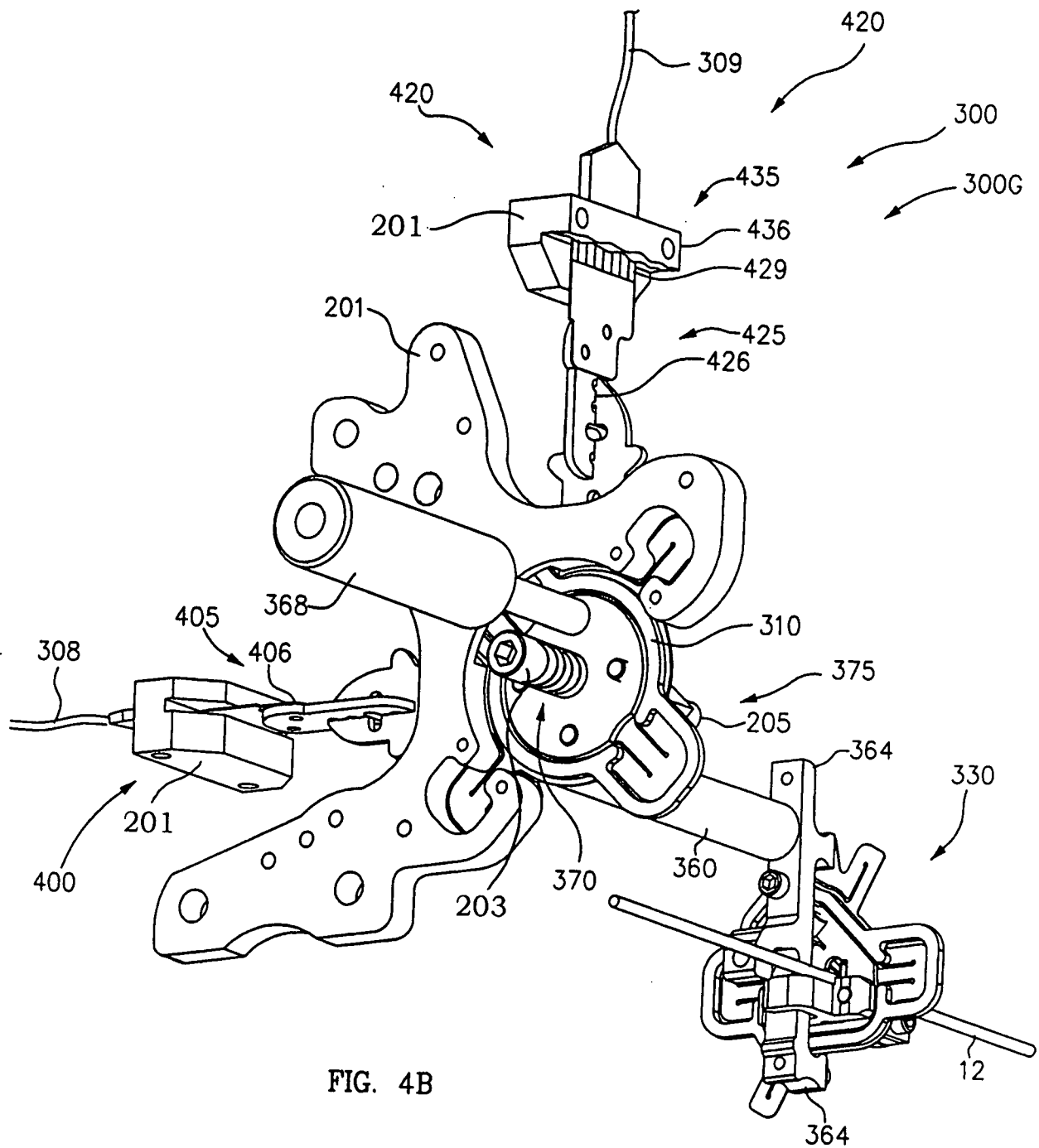


FIG. 4A

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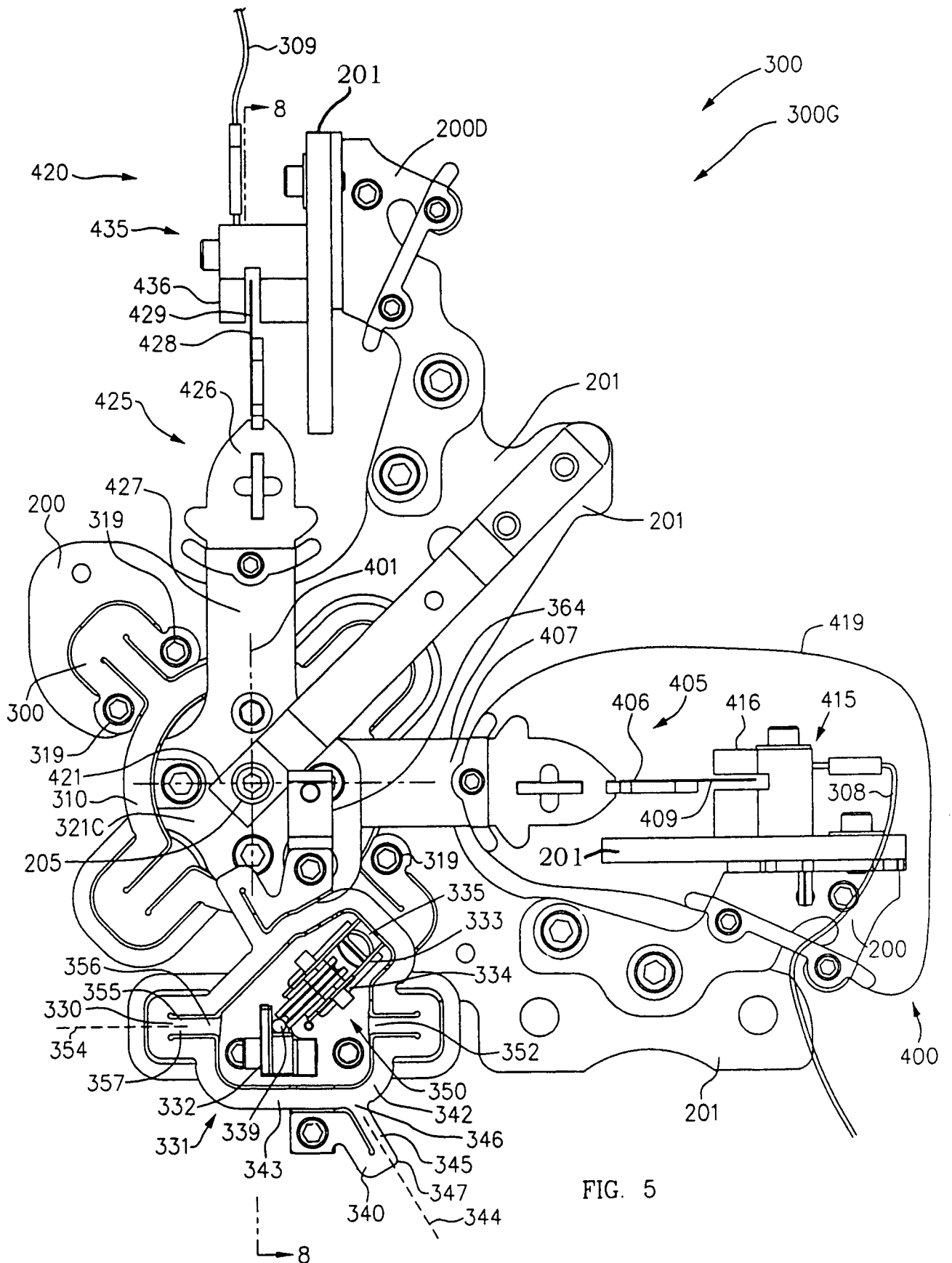


FIG. 5

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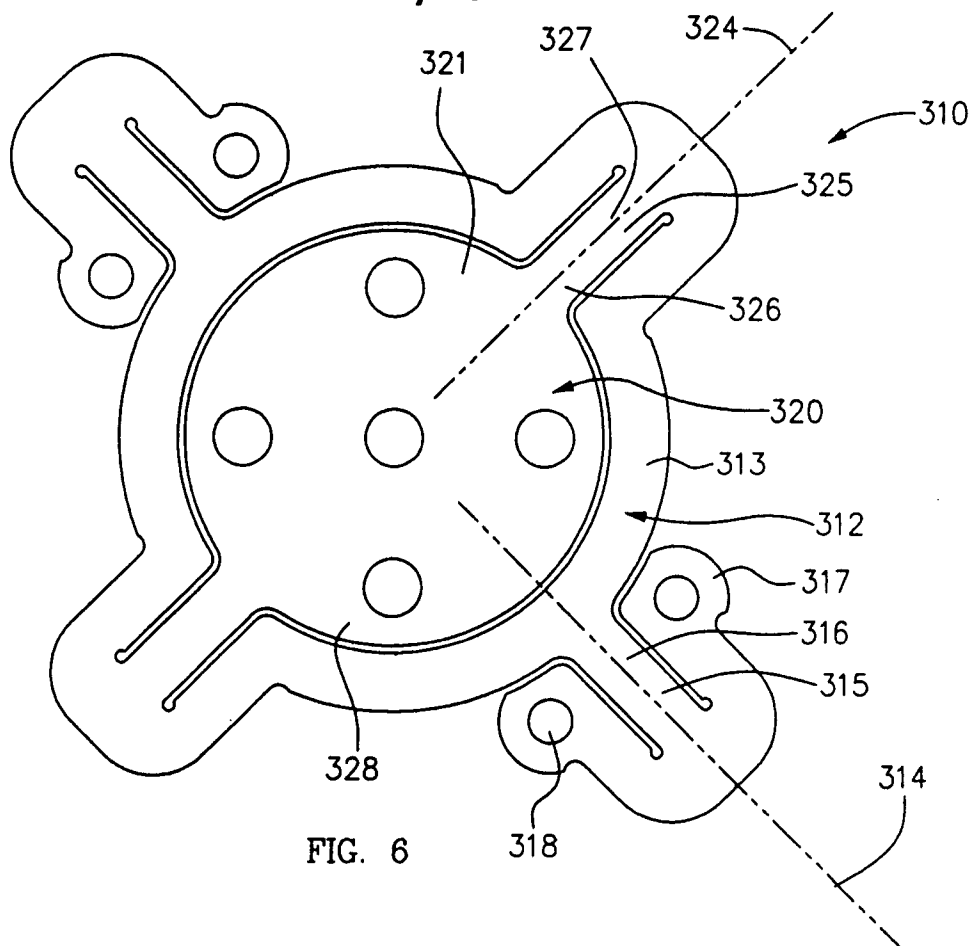


FIG. 6

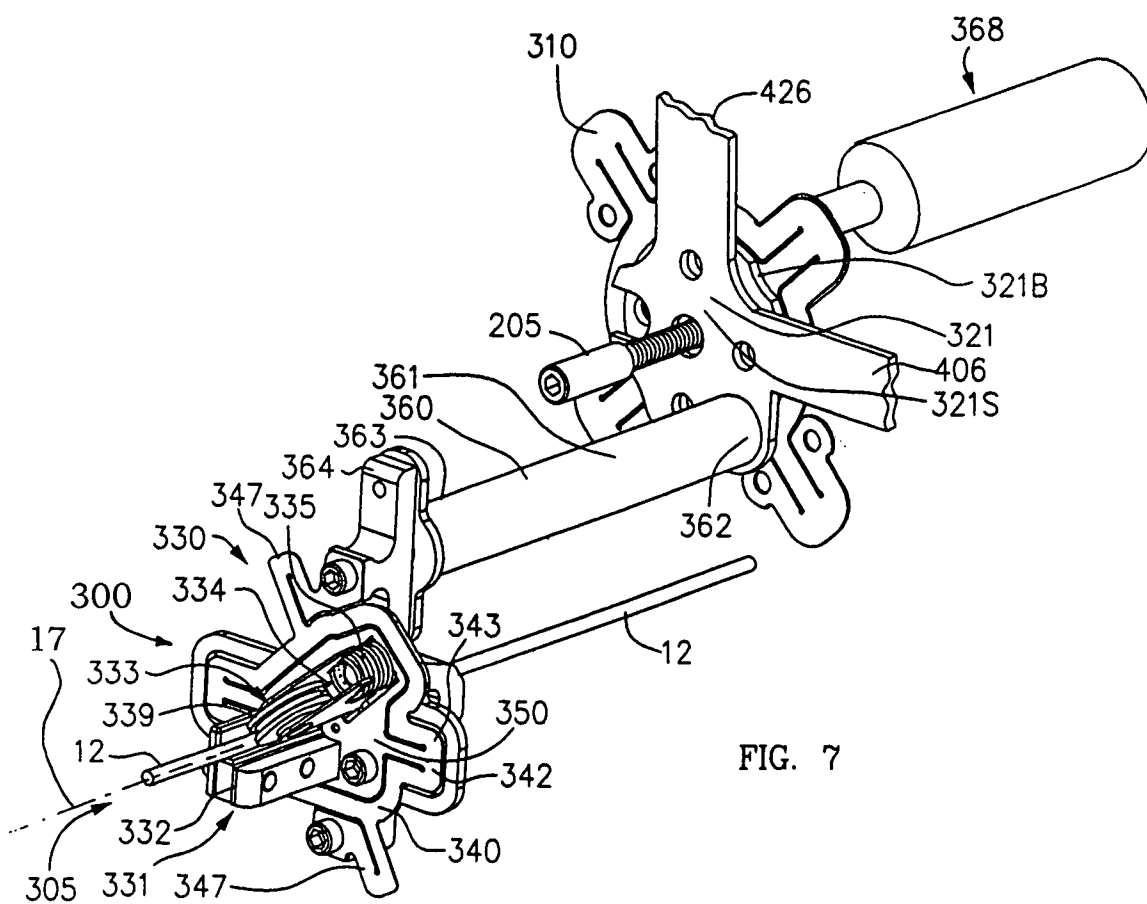


FIG. 7

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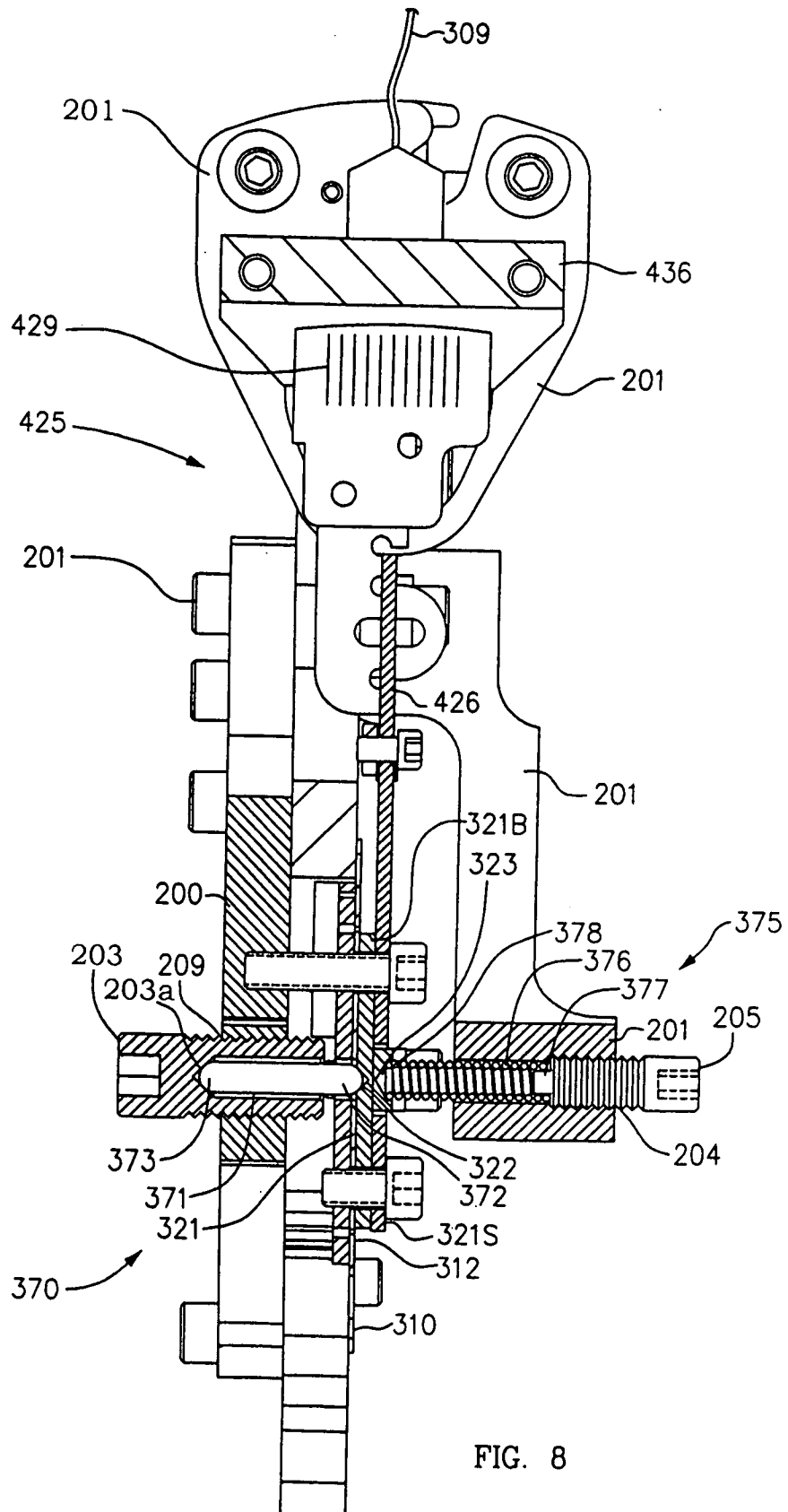


FIG. 8

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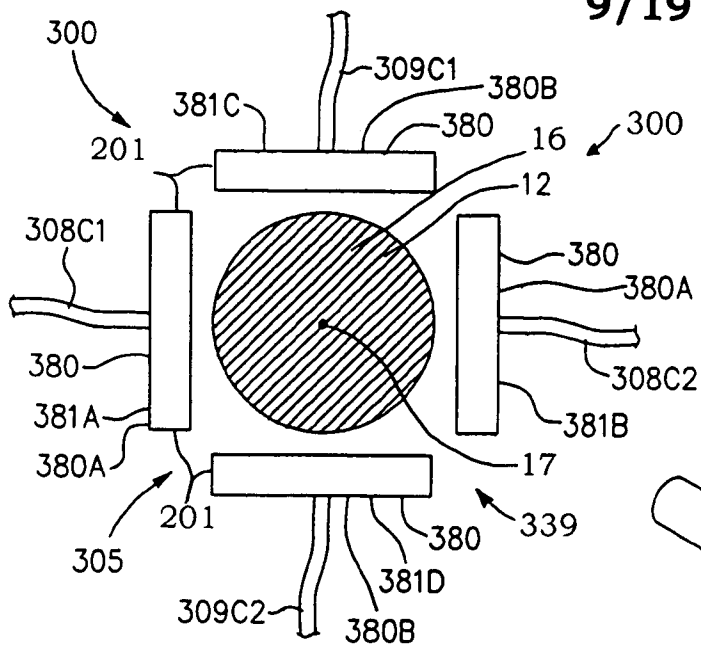


FIG. 9

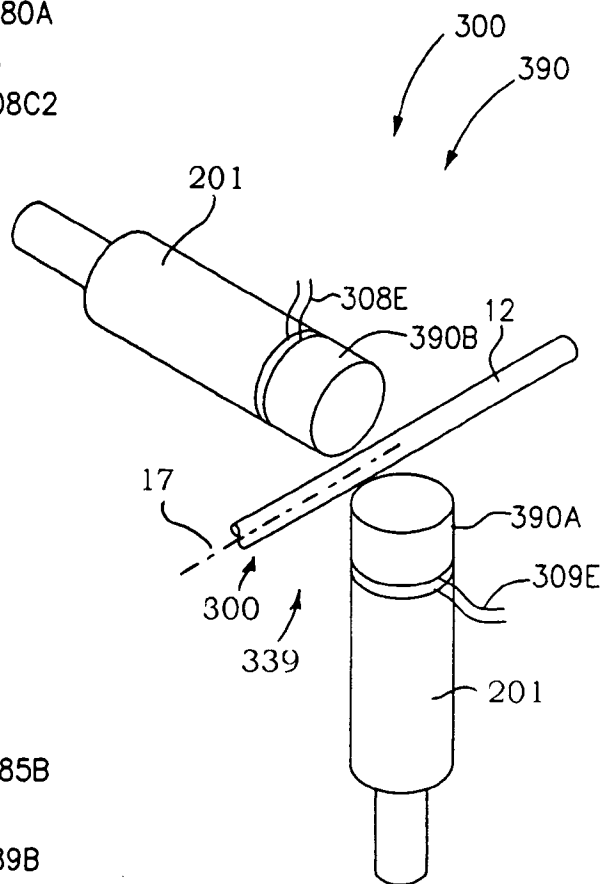


FIG. 11

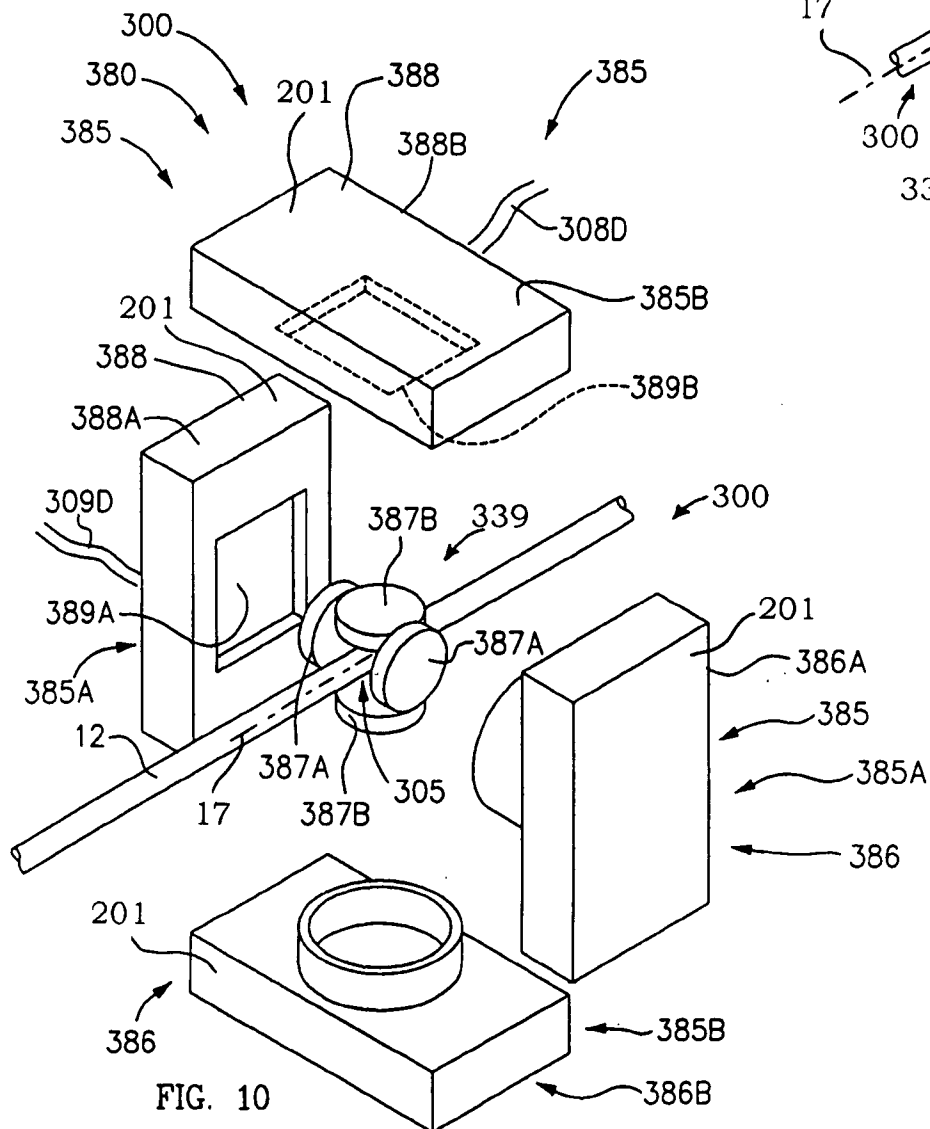


FIG. 10

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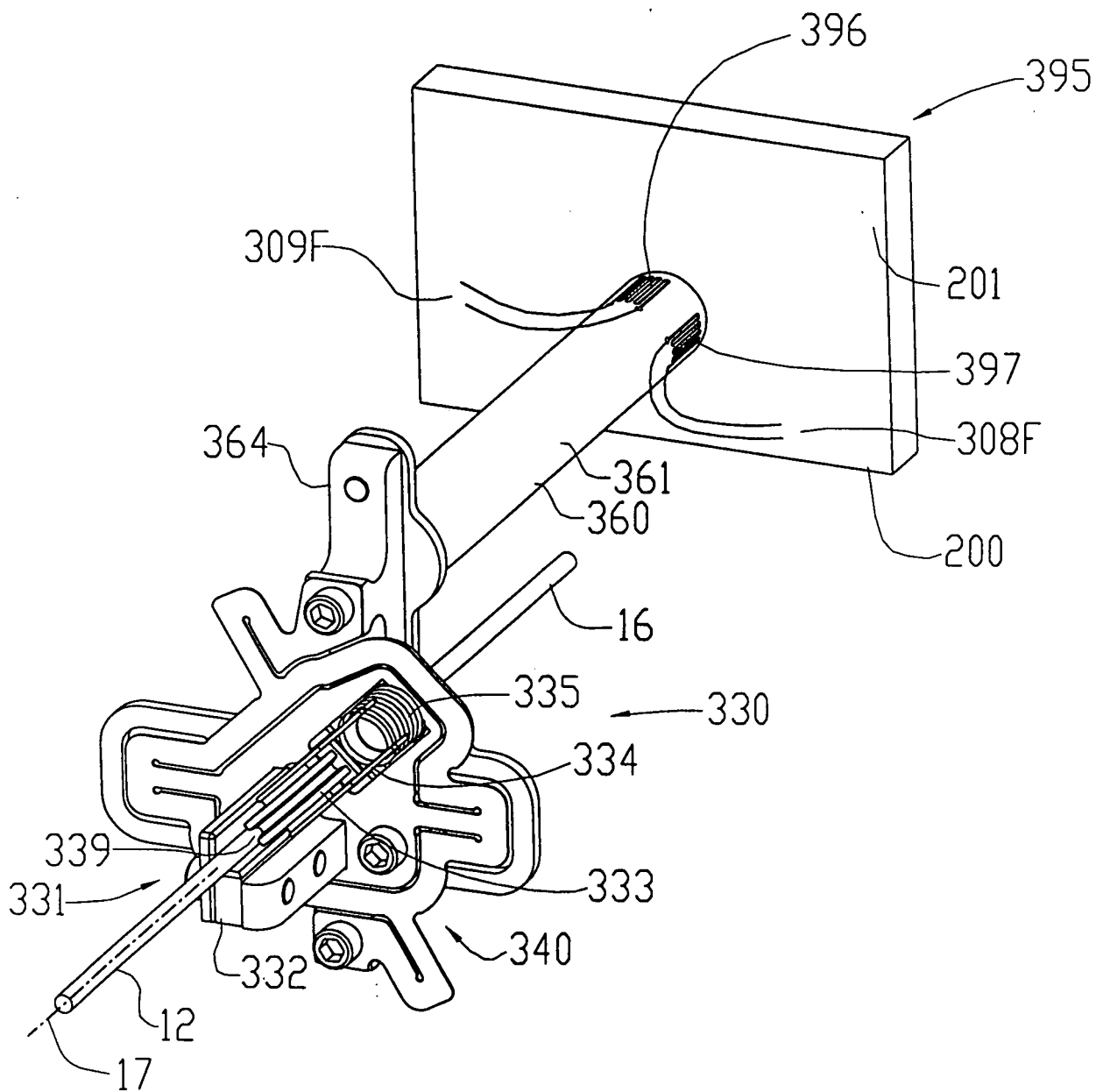


FIG. 12

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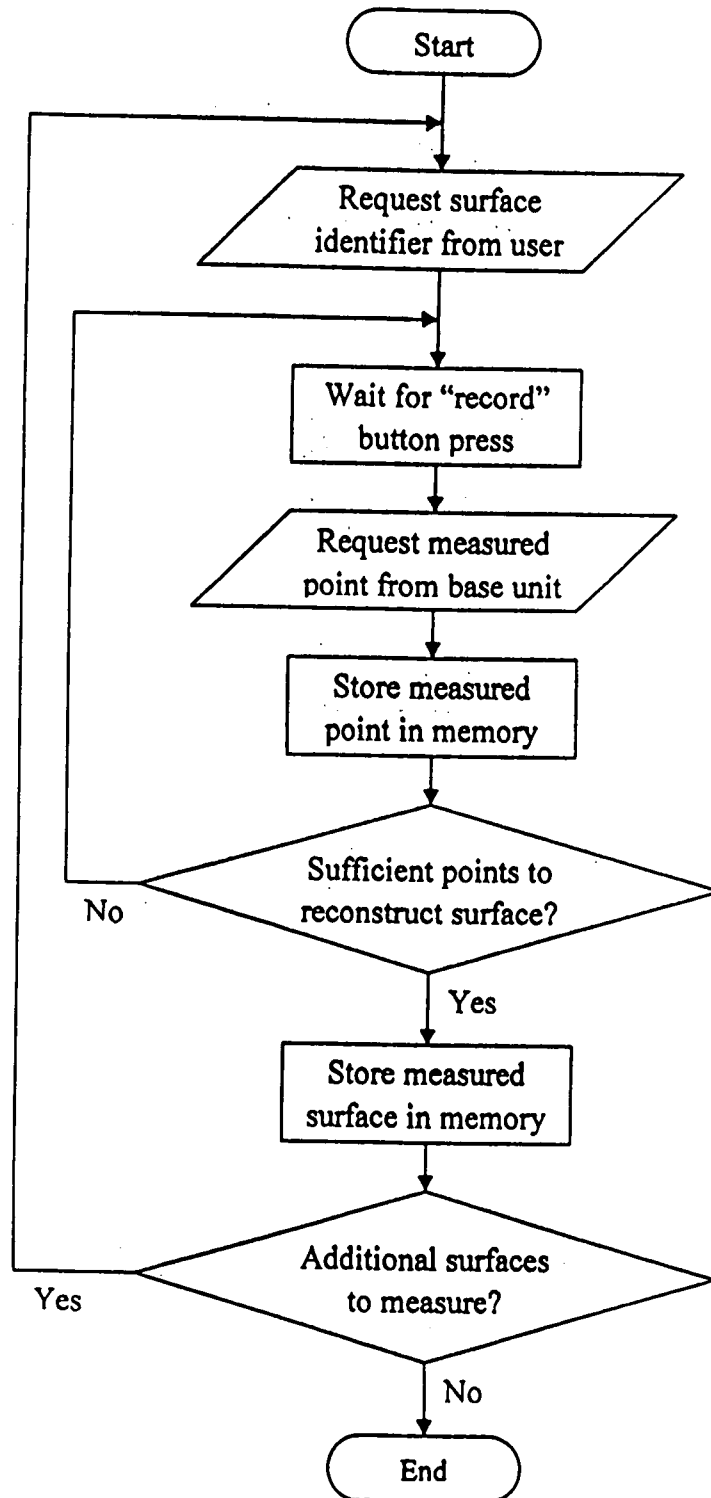
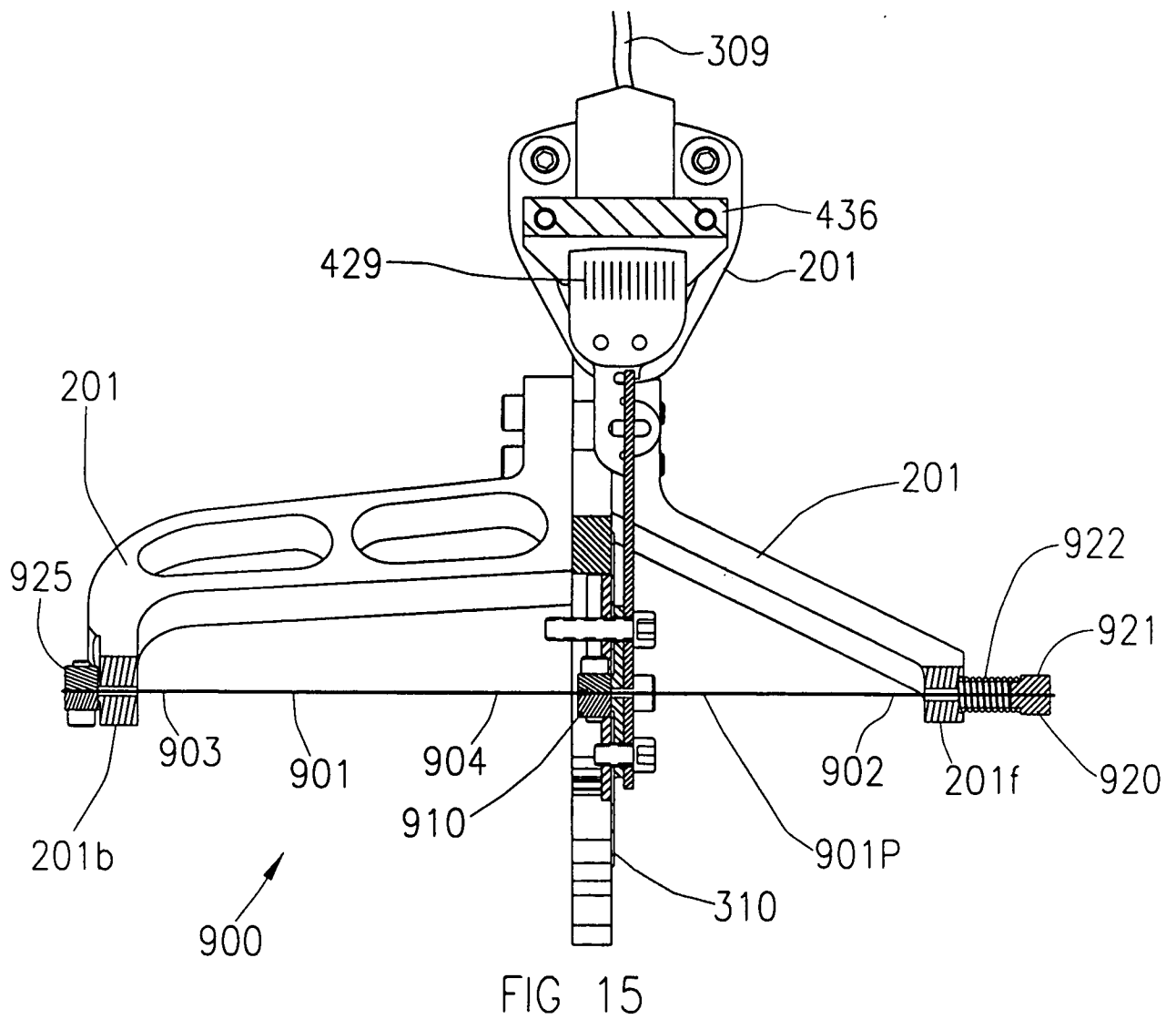
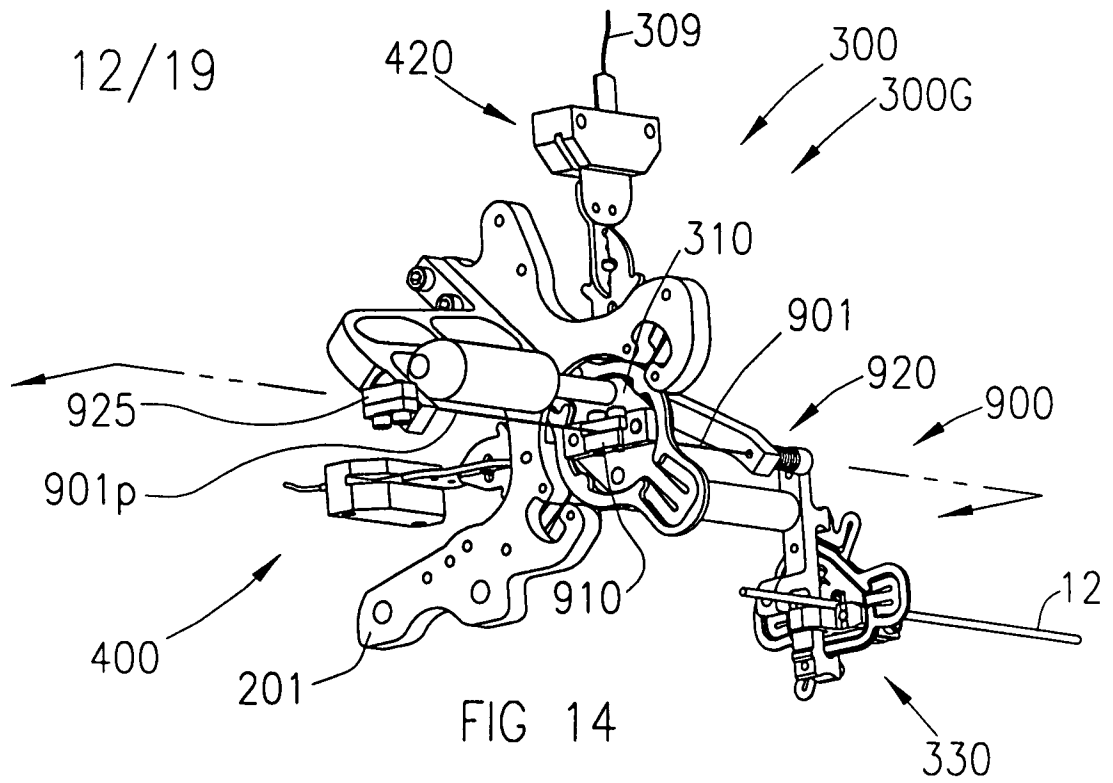


FIG. 13



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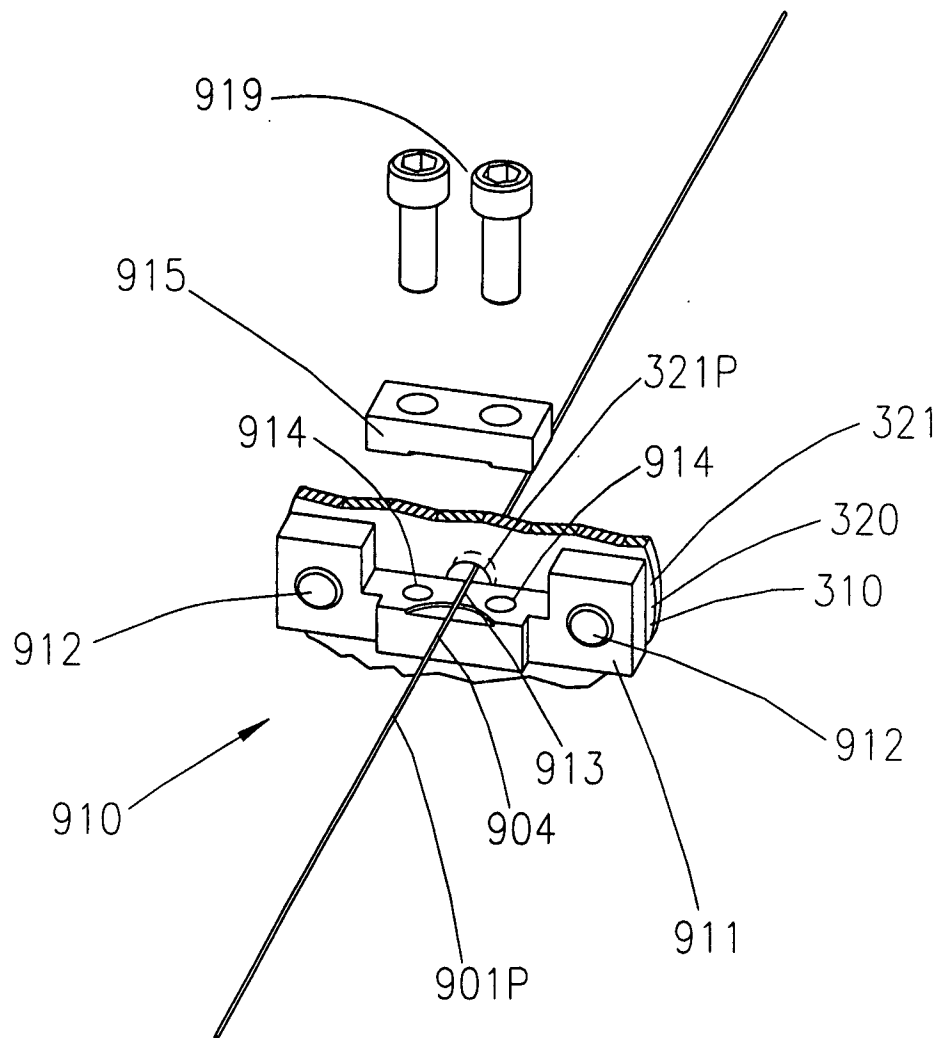


FIG 16

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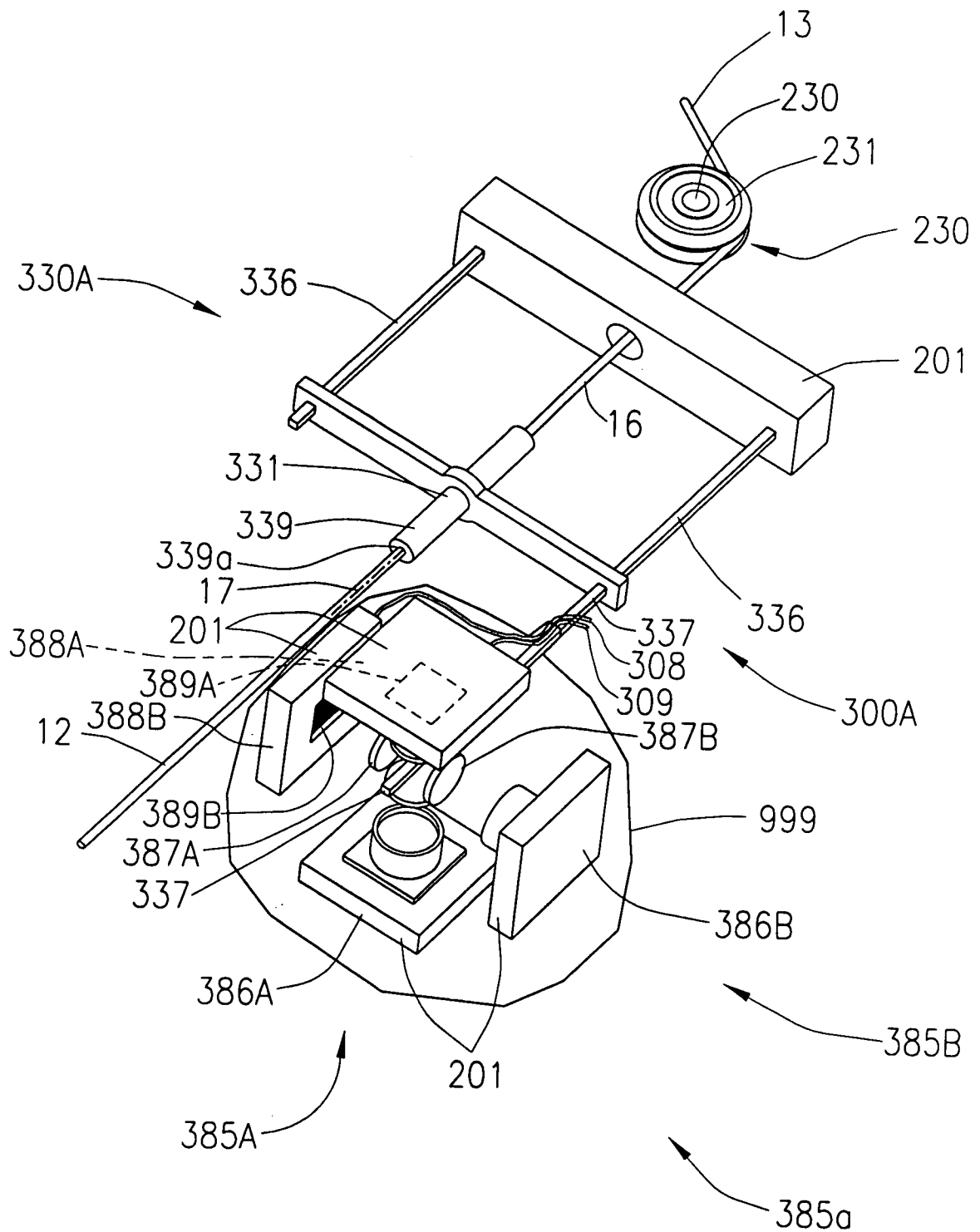


FIG 17

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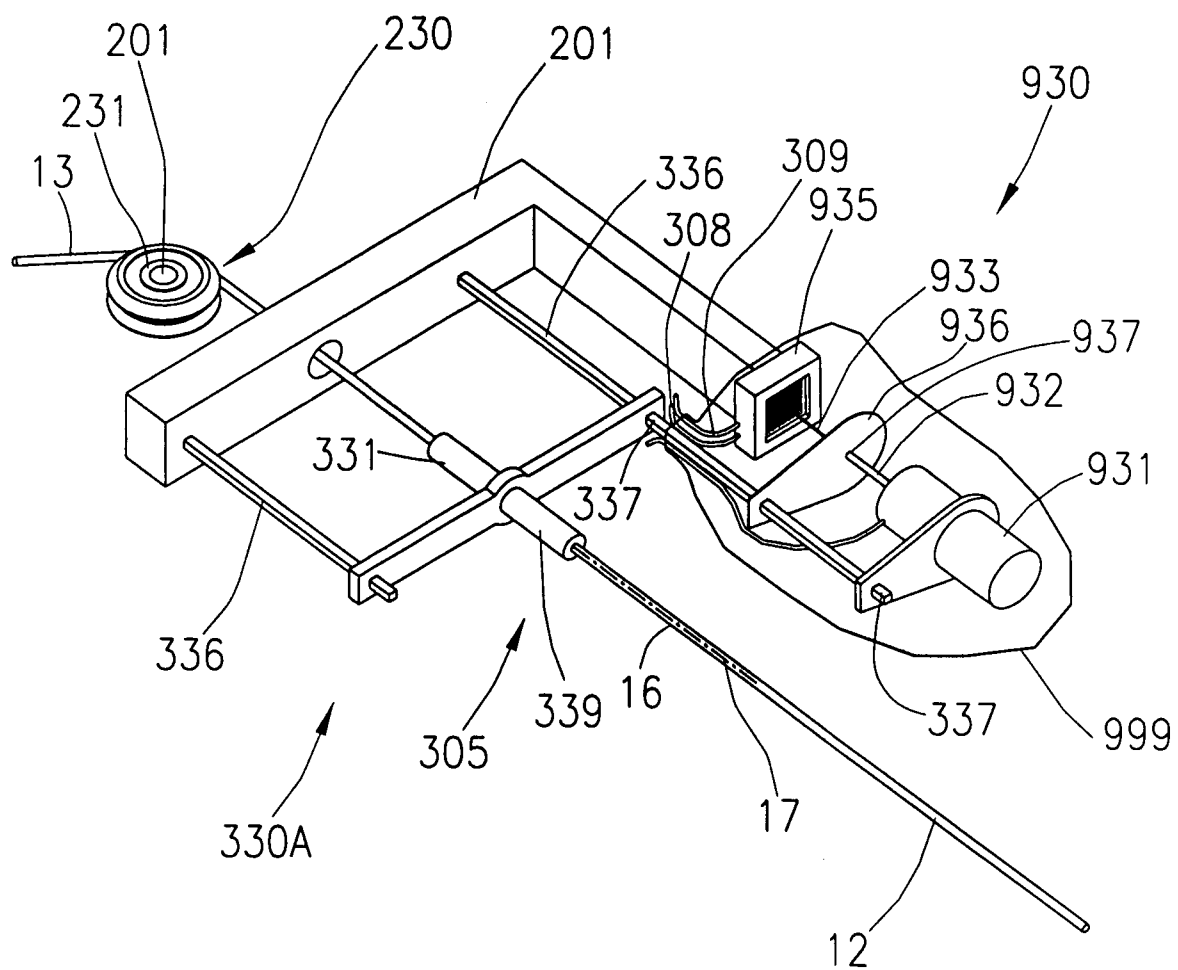
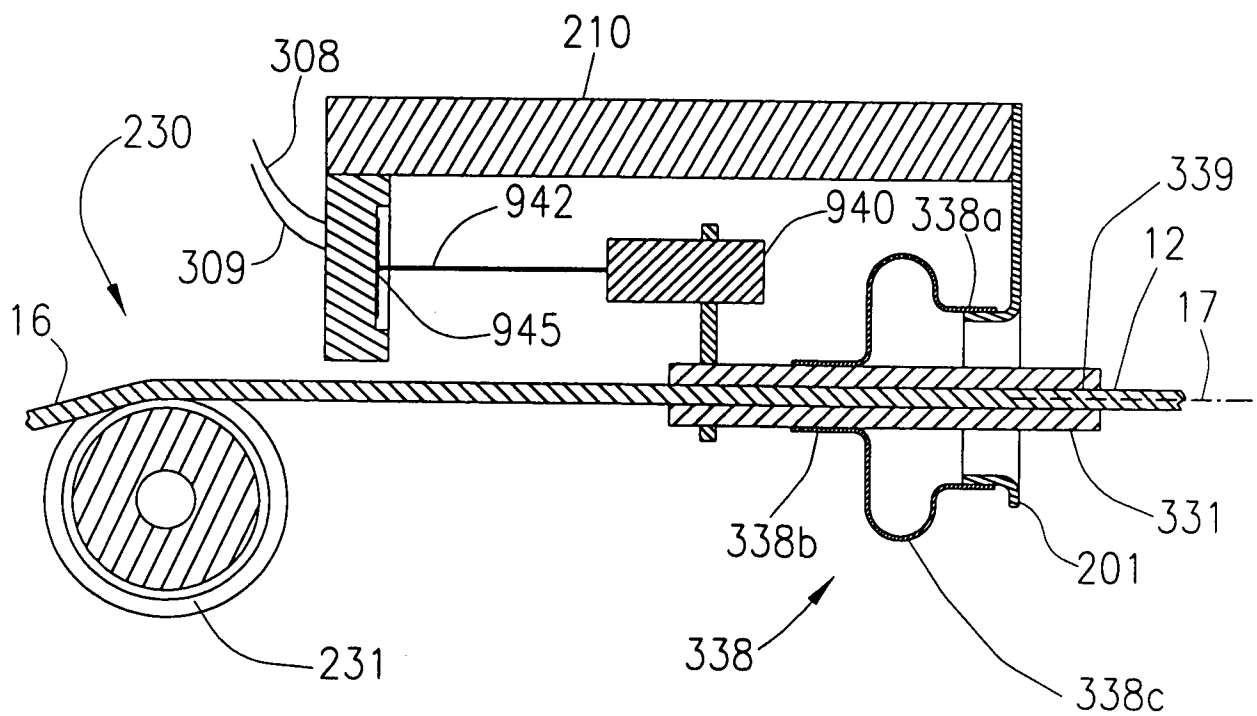
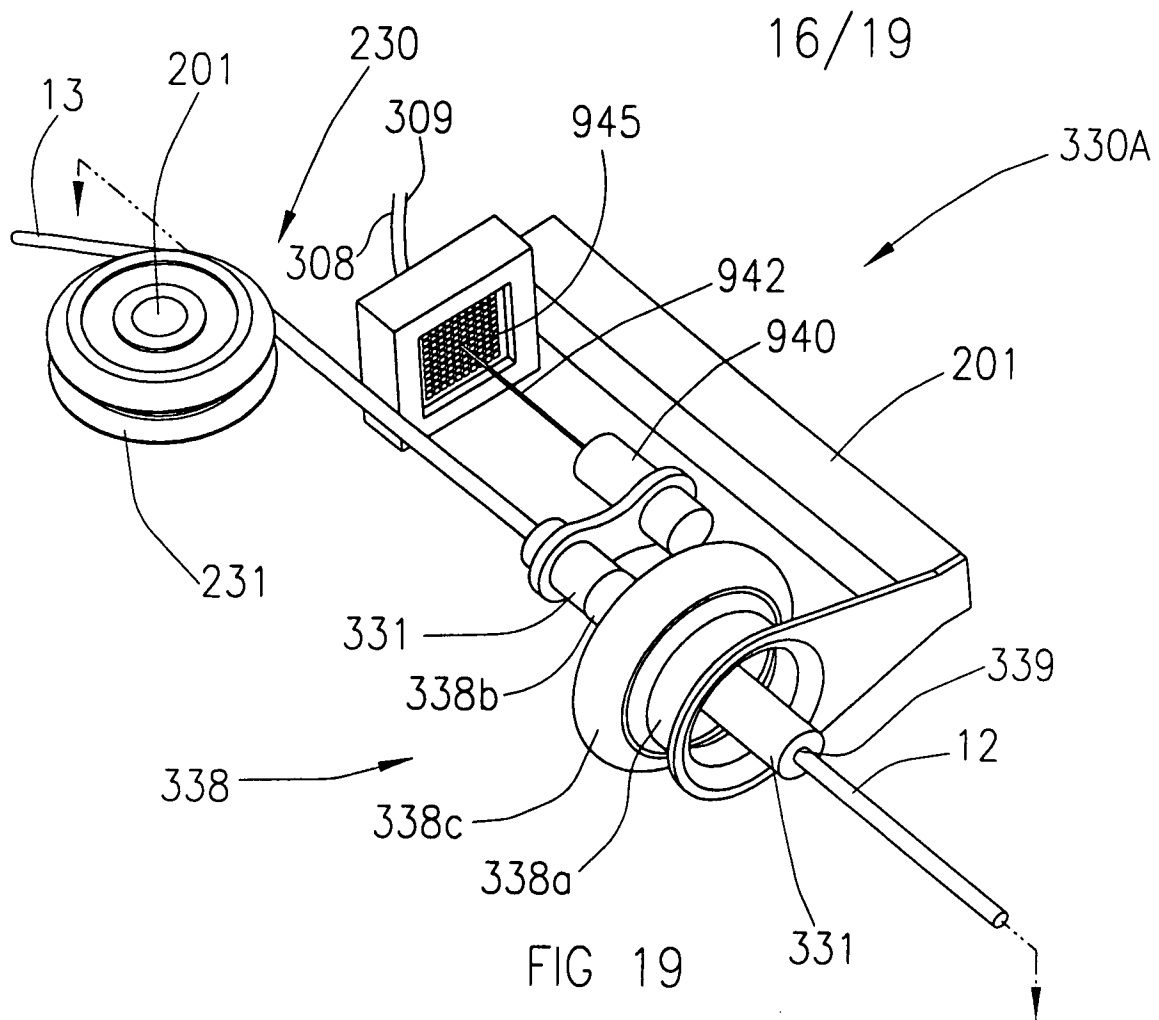


FIG 18



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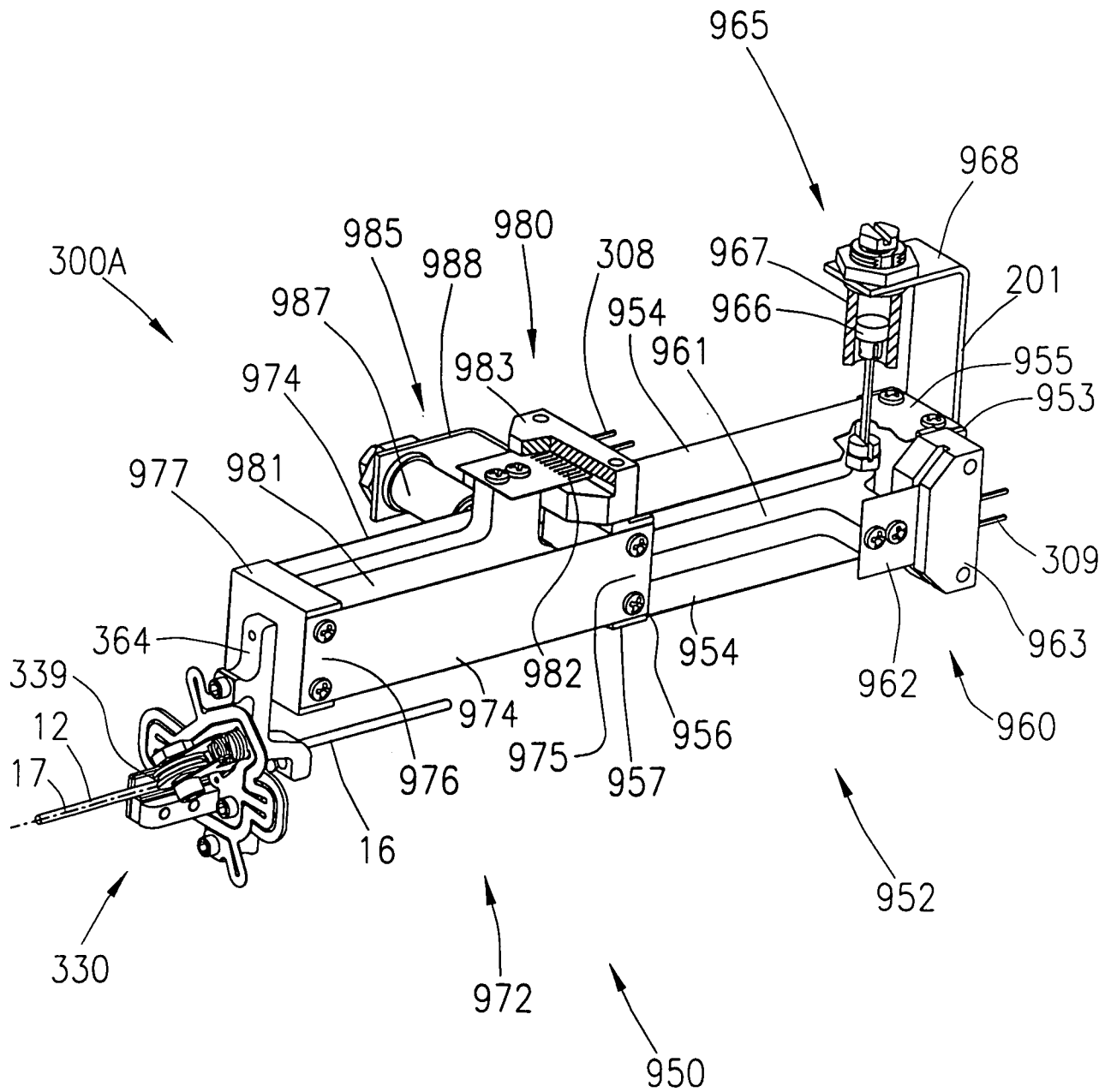


FIG 21

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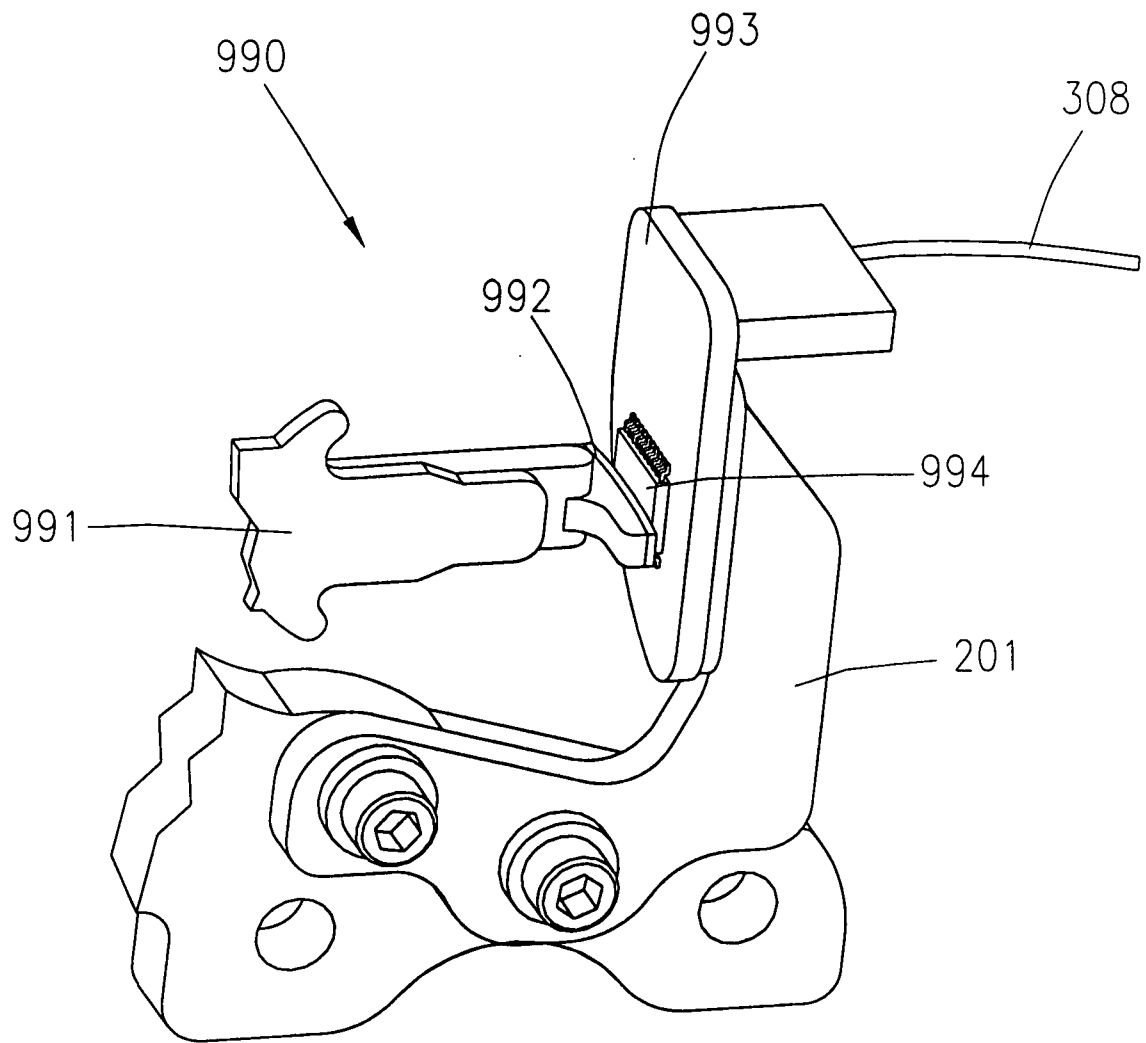


FIG 22

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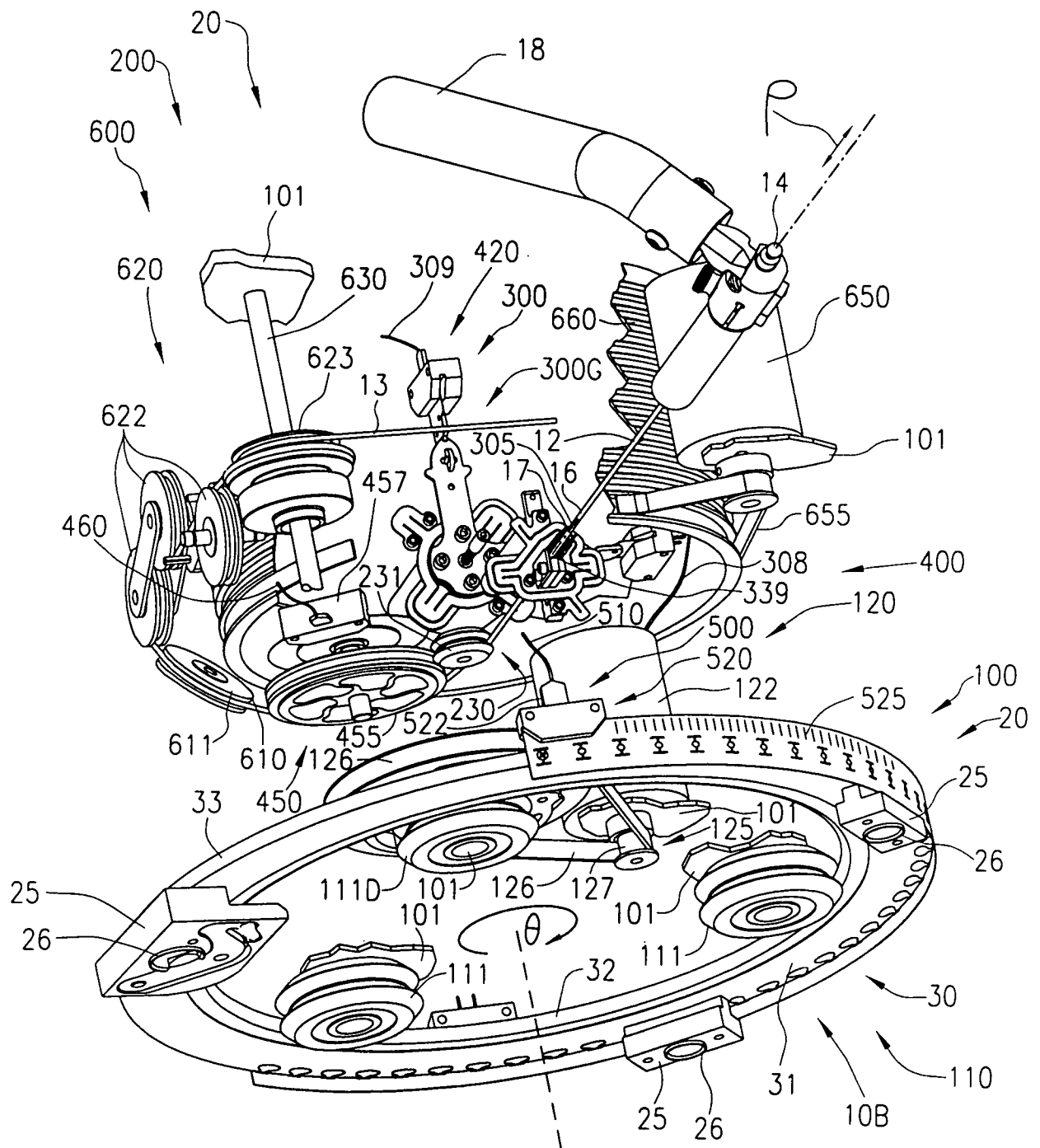


FIG 23

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US 09/03690

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - G01B 5/02 (2009.01)

USPC - 702/158

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

USPC: 702/158

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
USPC: 702/164; 33/756; 33/761; 33/772

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

USPTO, PUBWEST (PGPB, USPT, USOC, EPAB, JPAB), Google

Search Terms Used: cable, string, cord, measure, sense, detect, angle, rotate, distance, length, motor, servo, second, axis

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 2008/0072443 A1 (Powell) 27 March 2008 (27.03.2008), para [0043]-[0048], Fig 1	1-25
Y	US 5,430,948 A (Vander Wal) 11 July 1995 (11.07.1995), col 4, ln 67 to col 7, ln 63	1-25
Y	US 4,495,703 A (Sakata et al.) 29 January 1985 (29.01.1985), col 16, ln 25-37, col 32, ln 30-36	2-8
Y	US 2006/0162176 A1 (Lummes et al.) 27 July 2006 (27.07.2006), para [0028]-[0031]	15-20

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

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

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

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

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

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

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

28 July 2009 (28.07.2009)

Date of mailing of the international search report

04 AUG 2009

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US

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