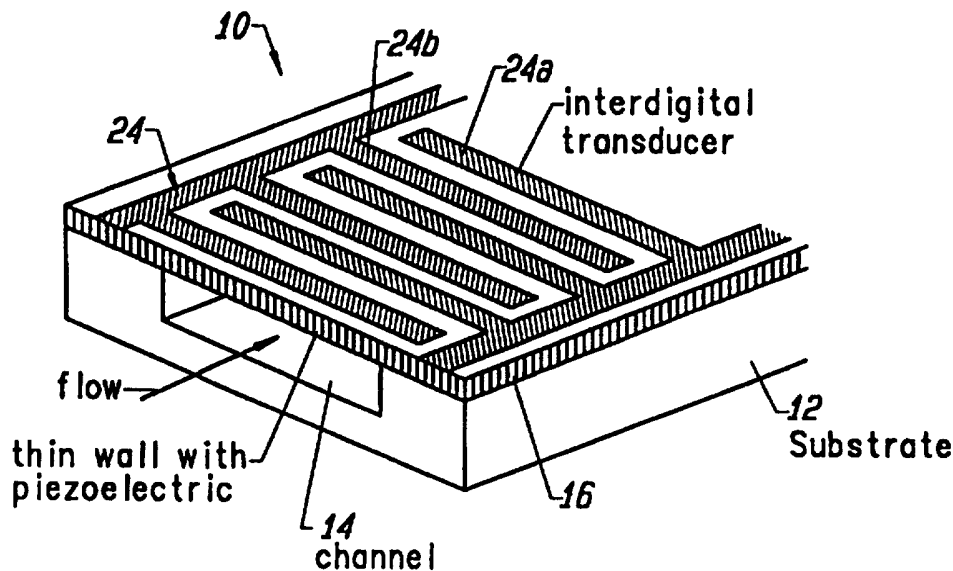




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(54) Title: MICROPUMP WITH SONIC ENERGY GENERATOR



(57) Abstract

A micro sized pump (10) comprising a substrate (12) which at least partially defines one or more walls of a longitudinally extending tunnel (14). The tunnel has a vibratable wall portion. A sonic energy generator is positioned in sonic energy transmitting relation to the vibratable wall portion. The sonic energy generator is adapted to generate elastic waves which travel along the longitudinal extension of the tunnel.

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MICROPUMP WITH SONIC ENERGY GENERATOR

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Field of the Invention

The invention relates to micro sized pumps which transport chemicals on micro sized devices for chemical analysis on such devices and to micro sized chemical analysis systems utilizing such pumps. Typically, the pumps are formed on silicon chips.

Background of the Invention

Advances in micromachining techniques have enabled the mass production of miniature and microscopic electromechanical components that perform a variety of functions. These components fall generally into two categories: sensors and actuators. Sensors can be made to monitor measurands such as pressure, acceleration, chemical-vapor concentrations, light intensity and magnetic fields. Actuators include pumps and valves for fluid manipulation, heated chambers to induce chemical reactions, moveable mirrors for optical displays and relay switches for high-frequency communications.

In addition to direct miniaturization and mass production, a feature of micromachining is that it enables the implementation of new types of technologies. With miniaturization, physical laws of scaling inherently favor certain technologies and phenomena over others. In some cases, technologies that can be made by micromachining work well on the microscopic scale but have no analogy or usefulness in the macroscopic domain (e.g., the electrostatic micromotor).

The ultimate power of microfabrication lies in the ability to integrate multiple components into complex microelectromechanical systems (MEMS) that have high functionality and performance, yet are small, easy to use and to produce, and inexpensive. An example of a complex
5 microelectromechanical system is the digital micromirror display marketed by Texas Instruments, based on an array of a plurality of individually-addressable micromirrors.

One of the attributes of these systems is that they can be made
10 fully self-contained and can be operated remotely without direct user intervention for sample handling or other tasks. Operation can be controlled with a combination of electronic hardware and software. The necessary drive electronics can be included on or off chip. In this way the ease of operation of these potentially powerful microinstruments is much simpler than most
15 conventional analytical instruments, and more comparable to individual sensors.

In the area of instrumentation, microfabrication, micromachining, holds much promise for making small low-cost, fast-
20 operating, portable, easy-to-operate systems for chemical analysis, clinical diagnostics and other applications. These microinstruments will rely on the integration of fluid-handling components.

Interest in microinstruments has been spurred by the need for
25 improved chemical and biological analysis techniques in applications such as environmental remediation, chemical-warfare-agent detection and clinical diagnostics. For example, the DOE estimates that the superfund cleanup will require tens of millions of soil samples to be analyzed each year. The cost and manpower devoted to sample collection and analysis is exorbitant, and

could be greatly reduced by using inexpensive, in-situ analyzers. However, the technology to make such analyzers is not available presently: existing sensors are very limited in their capabilities, and so-called portable analytical instruments are expensive and complicated to use.

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Micromachining techniques of the nature disclosed in the present document allow the provision of analytical-instrument performance in microinstruments that are comparable in size, cost and ease-of-use to individual sensors. These same techniques can also be used to make disposable medical instruments such as DNA-based diagnostic tests, and miniature scientific instruments based on a number of technologies such as gas and liquid chromatography, electrophoresis, and flow-injection analysis. Several of these analysis techniques can be combined into a single chip to create very sophisticated systems that separate and analyze tiny samples without human intervention.

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Essential for these microinstruments are suitable pump technologies to transport samples and reagents on the microscale. Many types of micromachined pumps have been developed recently. Most of these are discrete pumps, meaning that they operate by creating a pressure differential that drives fluids through the system in which they are functioning. The most common are silicon-based diaphragm pumps, which rely on electrostatic or thermo-pneumatic actuation to deflect a membrane that displaces fluid through one of two integrated check valves. Higher pump rates and higher pumping pressures have been achieved by actuating micromachined diaphragms with off-chip piezoelectric elements. These types of pumps are useful but have limitations. They are complicated to fabricate, subject to clogging, and pressure is generally limited by valve leakage. Discrete pump technologies also do not work well for moving fluids through microtunnels, i.e., through enclosed tunnels with cross-sectional

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dimensions of less than about 500 microns. This is because the pressure required to maintain a given flow rate increases extremely rapidly as the cross-sectional area of the tunnel is reduced.

5 Recently there has been much development of electroosmotic and electrophoretic pumps for liquid-based microinstruments. Electroosmosis is the movement of a liquid, under an applied electric field, in a fine tube or membrane. Electrophoresis is the movement of charged particles under an electric field in a liquid or gel. Electroosmosis and electrophoresis are very
10 useful pumping mechanisms for liquid-based microinstruments. However, they do not work with gases, and are sensitive to the properties of the liquid such as conductivity and pH. Electroosmosis is also sensitive to the surface properties of the tunnel.

15 U. S. Patent 5,006,749 to R. M. White describes methods for making an ultrasonic micromotor to move solids and briefly mentions the possibility of moving liquid droplets or streams. The method of this patent does not, however, describe a useful pump structure for moving fluids along an enclosed flow path, distributed pumping or chemical analysis
20 instruments.

 There is also recent work on fluid transport by acoustic streaming on a microscale. Acoustic streaming is steady fluid flow or pressure induced by high-intensity sound. It was first described by Faraday
25 in 1831 and addressed theoretically by Rayleigh in 1884. Acoustic streaming fluid velocities are generally proportional to the square of the (mechanical) displacement of the driving source, and to the square of the acoustic displacement and velocity fields in the fluid. Acoustic streaming has been observed in fluids contacting vibrating cylinders, spheres, and plates.

Recently, steady-state pumping and localized stirring have been demonstrated with a micromachined flexural-plate-wave delay line. Pumping velocities as high as 30 mm/sec in air and 0.3 mm/sec in water have been observed.

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The present inventors have shown as disclosed herein that a related structure can produce air flow rates of over 18 mm/sec in an enclosed tunnel 50 micrometers high, 500 micrometers wide and 8 mm long.

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Acoustic streaming has also been generated with surface acoustic waves (SAWs). Shiokawa et al. have shown that water droplets can be ejected from the surface of a lithium niobate SAW delay line. This work does not, however, discuss structures that can move fluids in enclosed tunnels or in microsystems, or by distributed pumping.

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Neither the White nor the Shiokawa et al. works describes a useful pump structure for moving fluids along an enclosed flow path, distributed pumping, or use with chemical-analysis instruments. Additionally, the flexural-wave structure has inherent limitations that prevent their use in forming a flexural-plate-wave pump or delay line from an enclosed narrow channel, that is, a channel with width less than about a wavelength. This is because in these configurations flexural-plate waves are generated via bimorph actuation using transducers that are uniform across the plate width. A composite plate is formed by laminating an actuation layer of a piezoelectric or electrostrictive material to one or more other layers. The center of flexure (neutral plane) of this plate is offset from the geometric center of the actuation layer. Flexural motion is produced when voltage is applied to the actuation layer, inducing a n in plane stress; since the neutral plane is offset from the center of the actuation layer, this stress causes the

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plate to flex. The entire area of the actuation layer under the applied voltage is driven into one in-plane stress state (compression or tension) causing the plate in that region to bend with one curvature (positive or negative). This mechanism works well when the plate width is large compared to the
5 ultrasonic wavelength; however, when the plate is narrow compared to the wavelength and the plate edges are clamped (such as with the pump structure proposed wherein pumping is through a narrow tunnel) it is ineffective for producing flexural motion and flexural waves.

10 In the latter narrow geometry, the clamped plate edges have a large effect on the operation. For plate flexure to occur, the curvature of the plate at the midpoint between the edges must be opposite to that at the clamped edges. Bimorph construction with uniform transducers across the full width of the plate can not induce the opposite stress needed to produce
15 these opposite curvatures, and thus is ineffective for producing flexural motion. Also, conversely, flexural motion and waves in this type of structure can not be detected effectively with a uniform transducer, because charge created piezoelectrically or electrostrictively near the edges of the plate will cancel that induced near the center, as these regions are in opposite
20 states of curvature and stress. Furthermore, the boundaries make the generally less compliant to bending.

One of the first examples of a silicon-micromachined chemical-analysis system was a wafer-scale gas chromatograph developed by
25 Terry et al. at Stanford University. The design was based on a conventional gas chromatograph (GC), which has five main components: (1) separation column, (2) detector, (3) sample injector, (4) column heater, and (5) bottled pressurized carrier gas. The pressurized carrier gas is attached to the inlet of the column and used to force gases through the column and into the detector
30 on the end of the column. The sample injector typically employs a multiport

valve between the bottled carrier gas and column to introduce a plug of sample gas into the carrier gas at the column inlet, which is under pressure. The sample is generally a mixture of known or unknown chemicals in different concentrations. After the sample plug is injected, it travels down the column with the carrier gas, and interacts with a coating on the interior walls of the column termed the stationary phase. This interaction causes the chemical components of the sample to be retained differentially, so that they become spatially separated as they travel down the column. The detector is generally a non-specific sensor that tells the presence or absence of a chemical. As the chemical components pass the detector, it outputs a series of peaks called a chromatogram. An individual chemical component is identified by its retention time. The column heater is needed stabilize column temperature so that retention times are predictable; additionally, it can be used to speed analysis times by temperature ramping.

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Component identification in chromatography can also be aided by using multiple detectors that respond differently to a given set of chemicals. For example, using both a photoionization detector and a SAW sensor will yield more information than either detector alone. The mass spectrometer is another powerful analysis system that is used both alone and as a chromatographic detector; it separates and identifies chemicals by atomic mass. Microsized and microfabricated mass spectrometers are currently under development by Carl Friedhoff, et al at Northrup Grumman Corporation.

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In conventional GCs, these components are all macroscopic in size; for example, the column is typically a coiled, fused-silica capillary around 10 meters in length. The resulting GC systems are bench-top-sized or larger with power requirements of hundreds or thousands of Watts.

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Terry miniaturized a conventional GC by micromachining: the column was fabricated on a silicon wafer, to which individual silicon valves were attached for sample injection, and a thermal-conductivity detector for sample detection. This demonstrated that all of these components can be
5 miniaturized by micromachining, with the exception of the bottled carrier gas.

Though innovative, the Terry GC did not perform as well as expected. The silicon-micromachined column had a non-round cross section
10 unlike conventional fused-silica capillary columns and could not be coated evenly with a stationary phase, leading to poor performance or efficiency and resolution. Efficiency refers to the resolution of separation that can be achieved with a given length of column: A column with high efficiency separates and resolves chemicals in a shorter distance than a column with
15 lower efficiency. The design did not provide any inherent advantages over a conventional GC in terms of manufacturing costs or performance, and the advantage of size reduction was negated by the need for bottled carrier gas. A company founded on this technology now produces portable gas chromatographs that use a few micromachined parts but still employ
20 conventional fused-silica capillary columns and weigh several pounds.

Currently there is rapid development of liquid-phase microinstruments based on electroosmotic pumping. This technology has been used to create chip-based capillary-electrophoresis units with on-chip
25 sample injection. Recently, a cyclic electrophoresis unit has been demonstrated. This demonstrates how micromachining can be used to produce devices that are not possible using conventional (i.e., fused-silica capillary) techniques.

Summary of the Invention

In accordance with an embodiment of the invention a micro sized pump is set forth. It comprises a substrate which at least partially defines one or more walls of a longitudinally extending tunnel. The tunnel has a vibratable wall portion. An ultrasonic energy generator is positioned in ultrasonic energy transmitting relation to the vibratable wall portion. The ultrasonic energy generator is adapted to generate elastic waves which travel along the longitudinal extension of the tunnel. The pump is useful for moving material along the tunnel whereby chemical and biological analysis can be carried out on a micro scale.

Another embodiment of the invention is a chromatographic column comprising the pump as set forth above with walls of the tunnel being coated with a stationary phase.

Yet another embodiment of the invention is a chromatograph which includes the coated tunnel, a sample injector and one or more detectors; where appropriate a column heater is also provided.

Still another embodiment of the invention is an analysis system comprising the pump as set forth above in combination with any desired chemical analysis station with the pump being used to deliver a sample to be analyzed to the analysis station.

The present invention uses ultrasonic waves to move gases, liquids and particulate solids within and along a tunnel by the physical phenomenon of acoustic streaming. Elastic waves traveling along the interface of a solid and a fluid produce intense sound in the fluid, causing it

to move with some component of motion along the interface. The pump is formed with a tunnel that has elastic waves propagating along its wall thereby moving fluids longitudinally along the tunnel. The structure also has transducers which are used to generate the elastic waves.

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This acoustic streaming pump is novel and has distinct advantages over other types of pumps, thereby enabling many applications in miniature/micro fluidic systems. In contrast to discrete pumps (such as diaphragm pumps) the mechanism that induces fluid motion (elastic wave motion) is distributed over the length of a flow tunnel. Furthermore, the elastic waves act on the fluid very close to the interface with the wall. The result is that the pump moves fluids down long shallow and narrow tunnels without incurring the pressure limitations of discrete pumps. The fabrication of this pump is also simple compared to most micropumps. It has no moving parts that are prone to mechanical failure. It is also distinctly different from the ultrasonic transport technologies described by White et al and the work of Shiokawa et al, which only move fluids on an open surface, or recirculate them in a well.

20 The present invention is also a significant departure from prior art as it describes structures and transducers that are effective for forming enclosed, narrow-channel acoustic pumps and sensors based on flexural plate waves as well as other types of ultrasonic waves.

25 The invention also includes microinstruments based on the pump.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The invention will be better understood by reference to the figures of the drawings wherein:

5 Figure 1 illustrates, in isometric view, a pumping structure in accordance with an embodiment of the invention which provides ultrasonic pumping along a tunnel on a micromachined substrate.

10 Figure 2 illustrates, in side section partial view, a piezoelectric embodiment of Figure 1.

15 Figure 3 shows another preferred piezoelectric embodiment that uses a new transducer design that is more efficient than a uniform transducer for generating and detecting flexural motion and flexural waves in the walls of narrow channels.

20 Figure 4 shows another preferred piezoelectric embodiment that uses a second new transducer design that is more efficient than a uniform transducer for generating and detecting flexural motion and flexural waves in the walls of narrow channels.

Figure 5 illustrates, in side sectional section partial view, an electrostatic embodiment of Figure 1.

25 Figure 6 illustrates, in isometric end section view, an

embodiment as in Figure 5 which utilizes an SAW-based pump.

Figure 7 illustrates, schematically, a micro-sized gas chromatograph used with a pumping structure in accordance with one or more embodiments of the invention.

Figure 8 illustrates a more detailed view of a gas chromatograph than does Figure 7 showing an embodiment of a sample injector made from a heated platform with a sorptive material connected to the separation column.

Figure 9 is a section view taken along the line AA of Figure 8.

Figure 10 is a cyclic chromatograph.

Figure 11 illustrates, in schematic format, a fluidic microsystem based on a pump in accordance with one or more embodiments of the invention.

Best Mode for Carrying Out Invention

A system is described that improves the performance of an individual sensor by reducing drift of its output signal caused by undesirable interferences such as temperature and aging. A pump draws an analyte, generally a gas, past a concentration modulator to a sensor. The user

programs the concentration modulator to vary the concentration of analyte reaching the sensor. The sensor system is otherwise unaffected by the concentration monitor. The sensor output signal then varies in synchrony with the concentration modulator when the analyte is present; the sensor response due to the analyte can thus be separated from uncorrelated drift.

The pump is used to make a miniature, simple, high-performance GC that is not possible with conventional components. A micromachined separation column is made with the pump distributed along a desired portion of its length. The pumped column draws the carrier gas and sample through it, so that pressurized carrier gas is not needed to induce flow. Since the system is not under pressure, valves are not needed for injecting the sample. Sample collection and injection can be performed with sorptive materials on a temperature-controllable platform near the column inlet. Detection can be achieved with one or more sensors, positioned near the column outlet, that are appropriate for the chemicals of interest. A further simplification of the system is achieved by using detectors that can operate in air rather than just in a specific type of carrier gas (such as helium). Then ambient air can be used for the carrier gas, eliminating the bottled, pressurized carrier gas altogether. The entire system (sample injector, pumped separation column and detectors) can be integrated on single chip of area less than about 1-cm², with the appropriate choice of miniature detectors. A column heater can also be included in this area, if appropriate. Electronics to drive, control and interrogate the system can be included on or off the chip.

Generally, the GC system may operate as follows: The ultrasonically pumped column draws sample air through the sample collector and column for a specified period of time; the temperature-controlled platform is heated quickly to desorb and inject a plug of the collected sample into the column; the sample plug is drawn down the column by the pump

and separates into its different chemical components, which are detected by the detectors. The temperature of the optional column heater can be set to a specific temperature or varied during operation.

5 One type of detector that may be used is an ultrasonic sensor, which uses the same basic technology as the ultrasonic pump. An ultrasonic delay line is coated with a chemically sensitive film; when chemicals are present, they interact with the film and change its mass, and with it the ultrasonic wave velocity. The velocity change is measured electronically and
10 correlated with chemical concentration.

 In another implementation, an ultrasonic pump separate from that of the column can be used to draw sample air through the sample collector. The invention may also include filters to prevent particles and
15 aerosols from clogging or otherwise adversely affecting the system. A denuder may also be included to scrub the carrier gas.

 Other benefits accrue from using the ultrasonically pumped separation column. The efficiency or effectiveness with which a column
20 separates chemicals increases as the cross section of the separation column is reduced. In conventional GCs there is an effective minimum column width of several hundred micrometers, which is dictated by the pressure required to force carrier gas through the column at a given rate, and by the flow requirements (including dead volume) of sample injectors and detectors. The
25 use of high pressure increases the cost and complexity of the associated equipment, and causes "band broadening", which reduces resolution. By employing ultrasonic pumping, the invention allows columns of arbitrarily small cross section to be used, without the limitations of pressure driven flow. Higher flow velocities can be used to gain even higher efficiency and

faster analysis. The high-efficiency columns enabled by the distributed pumping can also be shorter to obtain the same resolution, aiding further in miniaturization.

5 Furthermore, the narrower columns allow different types of stationary phase materials to be employed. As the column cross section is decreased, the stationary-phase thickness required to achieve a desired efficiency also decreases, as does analysis time. Column cross sections can potentially be reduced enough to permit single-molecule layers, such as self-
10 assembled monolayers (SAMs), to be used for the stationary phase. SAMs are organic molecules that can be grown in highly ordered, single layers on surfaces. J. Wirth and H.O. Fatunmbi, LC-GC, Volume 12, No. 3, pp. 222-228, March 1994, demonstrates the use of a SAM film as the stationary phase in a liquid chromatograph. SAMs offer the potential to obtain uniform,
15 high-quality stationary phase coatings on columns of arbitrary cross-sectional shape and dimensions.

 A chemical or biological reaction system can be constructed utilizing a pump as set forth herein. Such a system can comprise
20 one or more of the pumps as described in detail below in combination with a reaction region adjacent the substrate. The reaction region is connected to receive a reaction sample having one or more reactants which are pumped there via one or more tunnel(s) and to carry forth a reaction to form a reacted sample. The system can include an additional reaction region, the
25 additional reaction region being connected to receive the reacted sample pumped via a tunnel and to carry forth an additional reaction to thereby form a further reacted sample. The additional reaction region can be connected to receive one or more additional reactants for reaction with the reacted sample to thereby form the further reacted sample.

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Figure 1 shows a preferred embodiment of a pump structure 10 in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. A substrate 12, made of a material, such as, for example, silicon, fused silica or quartz, has a longitudinally extending tunnel 14 formed in it. A vibratable member, in the embodiment of Figure 2 a thin 16, covers the tunnel 14. The material of the substrate 12 is not at all critical and the invention can be applied using any desired substrate material so long as it has sufficient structural integrity.

The term plate, as used herein, is a solid media with two surfaces that are free or bordered by mechanically compliant media. The plate may be clamped so that it is of limited subject to stress, such as in-plane tension or compression.

Plate waves, as defined herein, are elastic waves that propagate in plates, as defined herein. These include modes akin to Lamb waves, which have particle motions both longitudinal and transverse to wave propagation, the transverse motion being perpendicular to the plate surfaces or plane of the plate. Also included are shear horizontal plate waves, in which displacements are transverse to the direction of propagation and in the plane of the plate. Strictly speaking, Lamb modes can only exist in plates that have both surfaces free, are of infinite extent in the two dimensions in the plane of the plate, and are stress free. The structures presented herein use plates that deviate from this structure significantly; therefore the elastic waves that can be supported are not strictly Lamb or shear-horizontal plate modes. For example, the lowest-order antisymmetric Lamb mode (A0 mode) in a free plate is sometimes termed the "flexural plate wave". Narrow-plate structures are disclosed herein that can support flexural waves that differ from the A0 mode because the particle motion contains transverse components that are in the plane of the plate. Furthermore, the propagation properties (e.g., velocity and frequency) of this flexural wave are affected

strongly by the finite plate width and the clamping conditions and can not be predicted/derived accurately using the Rayleigh-Lamb frequency equation, which describes Lamb-wave propagation.

5 Referring to Figure 2, the thin plate 16 can suitably be made of a structural layer 18, an electronically conducting layer 20 and a piezoelectric material layer 22. For example, the layers can be silicon dioxide, aluminum and zinc oxide, respectively. While specific materials are set forth it should be recognized that the invention is not limited to the use of
10 these materials and that substantially any structural, electronically conducting and piezoelectric materials may be used in their place. By way of example and without limitation some other useful piezoelectric materials are aluminum nitride, lead zirconate titanate, barium titanate and lithium niobate. Provision of the electrically conducting layer 20 works well and is preferred
15 but such a layer is not a necessity.

A conductive transducer 24, suitably made of any conductive material such as a metal, in the form of a first plurality of interdigitated fingers 24a and a second plurality of interdigitated fingers 24b, sits atop and
20 is in elastic wave generating contact with the piezoelectric layer 22. The fingers are arranged substantially parallel relative to one another and extend along the longitudinal extension of the tunnel 14. To operate this structure as a pump, an alternating voltage is applied between the layer 20 and the interdigitated fingers 24a, 24b of the conductive transducer 24. This creates
25 strain in the piezoelectric layer 22 and generates ultrasonic waves that travel longitudinally down the tunnel 14 in the substrate 12. Gases or liquids in the tunnel 14 move down the tunnel 14. For most efficient operation, an alternating voltage is applied between the fingers 24a and the conducting layer 20 at 180° out of phase with the voltage applied between the fingers
30 24b and the conducting layer 20. The frequency is adjusted such that the

elastic wavelength is equal to P . This results in a maximized acoustic wave of the same frequency as the alternating voltage. Less efficient but useful operation is practical when these parameters are deviated from. Generally, the distance between adjacent pairs of fingers must be no more than the distance the elastic waves will sustain themselves along the tunnel.

Single-phase transducers may also be used, wherein a single set of electrodes at the same voltage is used to generate or detect waves. Single-phase transducers are usually less efficient than multiple-phase transducers.

Figure 3 shows electrodes 24a, 24b in top view with the electrodes extending part way across the plate 16 from its periphery.

Figure 4 shows electrodes 24a, 24b in top view which extend laterally onto the center portion of the top of the plate 16 with the contacts 24aa, 24bb being as small as possible so that the electrodes are centered.

Figure 5 shows a second embodiment of the pump 10, using electrostatic actuation to generate wave motion. In the embodiment of Figure 5 the substrate 12a must be conductive (as illustrated) or must have a conducting layer (not illustrated) on it. The tunnel 14 is closed at its top by a thin plate 16a which forms a wall of the tunnel 14 and is made of a dielectric such as, for example, silicon, fused silica, quartz or silicon nitride. The materials specified are merely illustrative. Substantially any nonconductor which has the requisite structural integrity can be used. Thus, for example, plastics can be used. A set of interdigitated transducers 24a, 24b, made of a conductive material, such as a metal, is located atop the thin plate 16a. To operate this structure, an alternating voltage is applied between the transducers 24a, 24b and the substrate 12a. Electrostatic

attraction between the transducers 24a, 24b and the substrate 12a creates strain in the thin plate 16a, generating ultrasonic waves that travel down the tunnel 14. This structure is especially useful for generating flexural waves, because electrostatic force bends the plate directly out of plane. This
5 implementation will work best when the tunnel width is less than the ultrasonic wavelength.

This is because local bending under the transducers is needed to generate flexural waves, which is difficult to achieve with a wide
10 structure. The transducers generate a net force on the plate that tends to pull the entire plate toward the substrate. If the plate is wide compared to the transducer period P , the entire plate deflects, and there is very little local bending under the transducers. In a narrow structure (plate width less than P) the clamped plate edges counter the net plate force and prevent the entire
15 plate from bending, but do allow local bending under the transducers.

Figure 6 shows yet another preferred embodiment of the pump 10 that employs surface acoustic waves. In the embodiment of Figure 4 the substrate 12b is made of, or has on the portion of it which forms a portion
20 of the wall of the tunnel 14b, a piezoelectric material. On the substrate 12b, within the tunnel 14b, are interdigitated transducers 24a, 24b. Atop the substrate 12b is a tunnel plate 16b in which the tunnel 14b is formed.. The tunnel plate 16b is bonded to the substrate 12b to form the enclosed tunnel 14b with the pluralities of interdigitated fingers 24a, 24b extending
25 longitudinally along a desired portion of the length of the tunnel 14b. This embodiment is much like the Figure 2 embodiment and operates similarly. The difference is that of geometry, and of the type of waves that are generated and induce the pumping. Substrate 12B is generally about the same thickness or thicker than the ultrasonic wavelength. Therefore surface
30 acoustic waves are generated.

Unidirectional designs and transducers

In order to generate streaming flows and pumping, it is essential that propagating elastic (ultrasonic) waves are used, rather than standing waves. This means that the structure has to be capable of generating elastic waves that travel in a single direction along the tunnel. This so-called unidirectional design can be accomplished in different ways. One way is to use transducers that are specifically designed to be unidirectional. Many of these are reported in the literature. Another way is to use a bi-directional transducer (which may be simpler to fabricate and operate than a unidirectional design) in conjunction with an ultrasonic-wave reflector or absorber in the path of the ultrasonic-wave. An ultrasonic-wave reflector will generally be positioned in spacial relation to a transducer such that waves incident upon it in the non-preferred direction reflect and propagate in phase with waves emitted from the transducer in the preferred direction. An ultrasonic-wave absorber will simply damp and absorb the waves propagating in non-preferred directions to leave the wave traveling in the preferred direction. In all of the figures, bi-directional transducers are shown for ease of depiction/description. However, it is intended that for pump operation, the actual structure will be unidirectional, whether it be by transducer design alone, or by a combination of transducer design with ultrasonic reflectors and absorbers.

Reflectors may be made from any structure that causes a large impedance discontinuity in the ultrasonic path. If the material is mechanically rigid and thick enough, it presents a large impedance mismatch and acts as a wave reflector. A reflector can also be formed from a slot part or all of the way through the plate (or substrate for SAWs). A mechanically lossy or viscous material may be used to form an elastic wave absorber.

Ultrasonic-absorbing sections can also be used to terminate

sections of the propagation path.

Electrostatic drive separate from tunnel

Figure 6a shows another embodiment of the pump invention, where a tunnel 14 is built above the substrate 12. The ultrasonically driven plate 16 forms the lower wall of the fluid tunnel 14 shown in Fig 6a with the tunnel being covered by an upper wall 13. This configuration can be advantageous because the ultrasonic drive portion is separate from the fluid tunnel 14, giving more design freedom for the individual components. For example, height of the fluid tunnel 14 height can be designed arbitrarily large to accommodate different fluids and flow rates, while a plate-to-substrate spacing 11 can be small (of order 0.1 to 10 microns) so that large electric fields can be generated with low voltages. The bending force and displacement (deflection) experienced by the plate 16 due to the electric field are proportional to the square of the electric field strength, which is equal to the applied voltage divided by the electrode-substrate spacing. Therefore, larger-amplitude waves and more efficient operation can be obtained for a given voltage by using smaller electrode-substrate spacing.

The electrodes 24a, 24b can also be located on the substrate 12 as shown in Fig. 6b, in which case the plate 16 must be conductive, or have a conductive material on it so that voltage can be applied between electrodes and plate.

Furthermore, the medium between the electrodes 24a, 24b and the substrate 12 can be sealed into the plate-to-electrode volume, and can be different than that in the fluid tunnel 14. The medium should be a dielectric, and should have low mechanical stiffness, so that it is compliant to compression as the plate above it bends. In the preferred embodiment this

medium is a gas, a gas at reduced pressure or even vacuum. Wave generation and propagation may be optimized by using a low-pressure gas medium in the plate-substrate space 11 (rather than a liquid, solid or gas at higher pressure, such as atmospheric pressure). This is because any medium
5 in this space will impede the plate motion with both elastic and viscous-damping components; with a gas these components are small to begin with and decrease in magnitude toward zero as the gas pressure is decreased toward zero. Furthermore, due to the Paschen effect--an increase in voltage and electric field needed to breakdown gas between electrodes as the
10 electrode spacing decreases--larger electric fields can be sustained across a thin gas layer than across a correspondingly thin solid or liquid dielectric.

Also, large electric fields, typically on the order of 10^6 V/cm, are typically needed to generate force sufficient to bend the tunnel wall, in
15 this case the plate 16. The large fields are primarily confined in the plate-substrate gap 11 external to the tunnel 14, and will have little or no effect on the materials and processes inside the fluid tunnel 14. This may be very advantageous when a liquid or conducting liquid is present inside the fluid tunnel.

20

External electrostatic drive

Fig. 6c shows another embodiment of the pump invention, whereby ultrasonic wave motion is generated by a transducer composed of electrodes 24a, 24b separated from a plate 16 which serves as the upper wall
25 of the tunnel 14. Alternating voltage is applied between electrodes 24a, 24b and the tunnel plate 16, generating an attractive force between these two that causes the plate 16 to bend, thereby generating flexural waves. The plate must be conductive or have a conductive layer on it. A single set of electrodes, for example, the electrodes 24a without the electrodes 24b, may
30 be used in which case they will act as a single phase transducer. The use of

multiple phases, e.g., the two-phase system described, is preferable as this provides efficiency and versatility for making the waves unidirectional.

5 This configuration is advantageous because the gap height
between electrodes 24a, 24b and the channel plate 16 can be changed
independently of the tunnel depth. Also, the large electric fields needed to
generate force sufficient to bend the plate terminate at the plate because it is
conductive; therefore these fields are completely external to the fluid tunnel
14 and will not affect the materials and processes inside the tunnel 14. This
10 may be advantageous when a liquid or conducting liquid is present inside the
tunnel.

The (electrostatic) transducer designs shown) can also be used
for receiving or detecting ultrasonic waves. Ultrasonic waves in the plate 16
15 may pass below the transducer electrodes 24a, 24b and change the gap
spacing. This change in gap spacing can be detected electronically to sense
the waves and their properties. For example, the capacitance between the
electrodes 24a, 24b and the plate 16 is inversely proportional to the gap
height; therefore, capacitance changes can be used to measure wave
20 amplitude and frequency. Capacitance can be measured in different ways;
one method is to apply a voltage between the electrodes 24a, 24b and the
plate, and sense the current traveling to and from the resulting capacitor.
Multiple transducers can be placed along a delay line to generate and detect
waves.

25

High-pressure/vacuum pump

A structure as shown in Fig. 6d may be used to pump fluids
against an external differential pressure and to create a large pressure
differential between its ends. A tunnel can be formed in two parts, 14a and

14b to serve as a fluid conduit. The tunnel part 14a is formed from a top shell portion 17 and the substrate 12. A plate 16 serves as the bottom of the tunnel part 14a and as the top of the tunnel part 14b. The plate 16 supports ultrasonic waves that transport fluid down the length of the tunnel. The plate
5 16 may have perforations 19 in it to allow the pressure to equilibrate across it, such that plate 16 does not experience differential fluid pressure across it that would cause it to deflect. Transducers (electrostatic, piezoelectric, magnetic, etc) are used to generate traveling elastic waves in the plate 16 as with previously described embodiments.

10

In operation, the overall tunnel is narrow and shallow enough to present a high impedance to fluid flow that would be caused by differential pressure applied between the ends of the tunnel. Ultrasonic waves in the plate 16 form a distributed pump that transports fluid down the
15 length of the tunnel more effectively than externally applied pressure. Thus, the pump 10 can transport fluids even in the presence of, and working against, an externally applied pressure. Conversely, this distributed pump 10 may used to create a differential pressure by pumping fluids to or from a sealed or partially-sealed volume.

20

An advantage of this structure is that the shell 17 and the substrate 12 that form the walls of the overall tunnel can be designed arbitrarily thick, stiff and strong enough to sustain a high pressure differential (for example, one atmosphere or greater) between the inside and
25 outside of the tunnel. The plate 16 never experiences differential fluid pressure, and so can be built as thin as necessary to be compliant to plate-wave generation by the transducers. (Flexural rigidity of a plate--the resistance to bending--decreases as the plate thickness decreases. Therefore, the force required to generate flexural waves of a given amplitude decreases
30 as the plate thickness decreases.) The pump efficiency and ability to move

fluids against an external pressure can be adjusted by design. The tunnel can be made longer, or its cross section decreased, in order to increase impedance to external flow. Decreasing the tunnel height (distance between inside of shell 17 and substrate 12) increases the average pumping velocity across the channel. One application is as a vacuum pump, where the invention is attached to a volume and evacuates it until the pressure is below the ambient.

Processing

The structures discussed herein may be fabricated in a number of ways which generally rely on integrated-circuit and other microfabrication techniques such as photolithography, thin-film deposition, wet-chemical and plasma etching and wafer bonding. A preferred method to form a tunnel sealed by a thin plate wall 16 is to use wafer bonding and etch-back techniques. Channels or grooves are made in a first wafer or substrate using standard photolithographic techniques to define the groove, and then etching into the substrate with wet chemicals or a plasma. A second wafer is coated with a thin layer of structural material that will act as the channel wall, such as silicon nitride or silicon dioxide. (Silicon nitride can be deposited by low-pressure chemical-vapor deposition (LP CVD) for example, or silicon dioxide may be grown thermally with standard IC processes.) The wafers are then bonded using one of several bonding techniques, such as fusion or anodic bonding. After bonding, the second wafer is etched away, stopping on the structural layer. The etching can be performed with a combination of mechanical grinding, chemical-mechanical polishing (CMP) and chemical etching. Alternately, the material of the second wafer (such as silicon) can be used as the structural plate material, by using CMP to etch the second wafer sufficiently thin (in this case, deposition of a structural material is not needed). This leaves the thin-walled tunnel structure on the first wafer. Next, the appropriate electrodes are deposited. Metal may be deposited by sputtering or evaporation. Piezoelectric materials may be deposited by

sputtering, sol-gel, CVD or metal-organic deposition techniques. All layers can be patterned with standard photolithographic techniques and wet-chemical or dry (plasma) etching or lift-off.

5 Another technique for making thin-walled tunnels is to use so-called permeable poly (see Leboutitz et al, Permeable polysilicon etch-access windows for microshell fabrication, Proc. 8th Intern. Conf. on Solid State Sensors and Actuators and Eurosensors IX, Stockholm, Sweden, June 25-29 1995 which is incorporated herein by reference). A sacrificial layer such as
10 PSG (phosphosilicate glass) is deposited on a substrate or wafer and patterned into channel shape. A thin layer of polysilicon is deposited under conditions such that it is permeable to wet chemicals. The PSG layer is then etched through the permeable poly using hydrofluoric acid. Next, the HF is removed by soaking in deionized (DI) water, and the DI water removed by
15 heating or by supercritical fluid extraction. This leaves a shell of polysilicon. Further processing can then be performed, such as deposition of materials to seal the shell, and subsequent metal and piezoelectric deposition, photolithography and etching.

20 Thin walled tunnels can also be formed using xenon difluoride processing techniques where a sacrificial layer (e.g., polysilicon) is etched from underneath a shell of structural material such as silicon nitride.

 As yet another alternative, the substrate can be a plastic and
25 the tunnels, etc. can be formed by a molding step.

 The stationary phase will usually, but not always, be applied in the liquid phase, requiring that solvents be removed at a later stage.

Solvent extraction may be difficult using conventional techniques with these long, fine, thin-walled tunnels, and may be aided/effected by supercritical fluid extraction.

5 For example, a miniature DNA-diagnostic or analysis system may be built using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR)--a technique that replicates (or "amplifies") DNA very rapidly. PCR is used to create a "significant" sample of DNA from an original sample that was too small to analyze. PCR targets a given section of the original DNA, and can yield an
10 end sample that contains millions or billions of copies of the base sequence contained in this section of original DNA. The end sample can then be analyzed in various ways. For example, simple detection schemes can be performed to determine the presence or absence of products; separation of the end products can be performed to determine contamination. PCR
15 requires mixing/combining a DNA sample with other compounds such as primers and XXX, and then going through a repetitive heating sequence.

 In another embodiment, a peristaltic pump may be formed
20 using multi-phase transducers with three phases or more. Fig 6f electrodes T1, T2 and T3 are driven with voltages at phases $\phi 1$, $\phi 2$ and $\phi 3$ respectively. These voltages are phased such that the plate displacement that constricts the tunnel is induced under the electrodes and moves in a single direction. The movement of the constrictions cause fluid pumping by
25 peristaltic action. The velocity at which the constrictions move is determined by the frequency and phasing of the applied voltage, and does not depend on the elastic wave velocity.

Figure 7 is a conceptual view of a miniature chromatographic

separation system 28 based on use of and incorporating the pump 10. The interdigitated fingers 24a, 24b, as illustrated extend along most or all of the length of the separation column 34. A filter or denuder 30 is attached to the inlet 32 of an ultrasonically pumped separation column 34. Also attached to the column 34 is sample injector 36 which is shown in Figures 8 and 9. A detector 38 is attached at an outlet end 40 of the column 34. However, they need not extend the entire length of the column 34 since the elastic waves will sustain themselves beyond the last of the fingers. What is important is that each adjacent set of the finger pairs 24a, 24b must not be separated from the next adjacent set of finger pairs 24a, 24b by more than the distance the elastic waves will sustain themselves.

Fig 7a shows an embodiment of a split sample injector 62 that may be used with the chromatograph or other system. Sorptive sample injector 64 at the inlet 66 of the instrument (e.g., separation column) is also bordered by the inlet of multiple dilution pumps 68. In operation, the dilution pumps are used to draw gas away from the sorptive sample injector as it releases trapped vapors, thereby reducing the amount of sample injected into the instrument at inlet 66.

20

Figures 8 and 9 show more details of a preferred embodiment of micro GC system of Figure 7. It will be noted that the column interior 42 is coated with a stationary phase 44 of sorptive material on one or more walls. The stationary phase extends substantially all of the column length. Attached to the column 34 is the sample injector 36. The sample injector is composed of a sorptive material 45, which may be a polymer or particulate material such as Tenax or Carbopack, and a heater 46 for releasing compounds that have been trapped by the sorptive material.

Figure 10 shows cyclic or re-entrant chromatographic system based on pump 10. Ultrasonically-pumped column 47 forms a closed loop in which samples can be recirculated multiple times to increase the effective column length and obtain higher resolution of separation. Any desired resolution can be achieved in situ by monitoring the detector output each time the sample completes the loop. This design can use a shorter column than required by a non-reentrant design, which aids in reducing the size of the system. The rest of system is similar to Figures 8 and 9.

Figure 11 conceptually shows a general microfluidic system based on the pump 10. Sample receptacles 50, valves 52, pumps 54 and reaction chambers 56 are illustrated. This type of system may be used for a variety of purposes, such as to automate tests for biochemical warfare agents and diseases, mix and deliver drugs, pre-process environmental and industrial samples for analysis by micro or macro analytical instruments. As only one example of many the system can be used to carry out microscale PCR procedures as described above. The system can also be used for any of many chemical, physical and/or biological analysis and/or reaction techniques as discussed in detail above. Delivery of drugs, etc. from an implanted device to a desired location in a patient is also attainable.

Industrial Applicability

The present invention provides a micro sized pump 10 and pumping system useful, inter alia, to pump materials from one place to another whereby micro chemical and biological analysis can be carried out in the field on very small samples.

While the invention has been described in connection with specific embodiments thereof, it will be understood that it is capable of further modification, and this application is intended to cover any variations,

uses, or adaptations of the invention following, in general, the principles of the invention and including such departures from the present disclosure as come within known or customary practice in the art to which the invention pertains and as may be applied to the essential features hereinbefore set
5 forth, and as fall within the scope of the invention and the limits of the appended claims.

Claims

That which is claimed is:

1. A micro sized pump, comprising:
 - a) a substrate which at least partially defines one or more walls
5 of a longitudinally extending tunnel, the tunnel having a vibratable wall portion;
 - b) a sonic energy generator positioned in sonic energy transmitting relation to the vibratable wall portion, the sonic energy generator being adapted to generate elastic waves
10 which travel along the longitudinal extension of the tunnel; and
 - c) means for limiting the elastic waves such that they travel in substantially only a single direction.
- 15 2. A pump as set forth in claim 1, wherein the tunnel has a maximum lateral dimension of less than about 500 microns.
3. A pump as set forth in claim 1, wherein the generator
is in the nature of a first plurality of substantially parallel conductors, each
20 one of which is in electrical conducting relation to each other of which and a second plurality of substantially parallel conductors, each one of which is in electrical conducting relation to each other of which, the first and second pluralities of conductors being electrically isolated from one another, the
conductors of the first and second pluralities of conductors being
25 interdigitally arranged with one another and extending along the longitudinal extension of the tunnel.

4. A pump as set forth in claim 3, wherein the interdigitally arranged conductors are spaced from one another within a distance of no more than that over which the elastic waves sustain themselves.

5

5. A pump as set forth in claim 1 wherein the transducers are uni-directional.

6. A pump as set forth in claim 1 wherein the tunnel is in the nature of a trench extending into the substrate and the vibratable wall portion comprises a plate which covers the trench.

10

7. A pump as set forth in claim 6, wherein the trench includes a piezoelectric layer.

15

8. A pump as set forth in claim 6 wherein the piezoelectric layer is zinc oxide, aluminum nitride, lead zirconate titanate, barium titanate or lithium niobate.

20

9. A chromatographic column comprising the pump as set forth in claim 1 wherein the walls of the tunnel are coated with a stationary phase.

10. A chromatographic column as set forth in claim 9 wherein the stationary phase is a polymer.

25

11. A chromatographic column as set forth in claim 9 wherein the stationary phase is a self-assembled monolayer.

5 12. A analysis system comprising the chromatographic column of claim 9, a sample injector and a detector.

13. An analysis system as set forth in claim 12, wherein the detector is an ultrasonic sensor.

10

14. An analysis system as set forth in claim 12, wherein the sample injector includes a heated platform along with a sorptive material.

15 15. A chemical or biological analysis system comprising the pump as set forth in claim 1 in combination with a sensor connected to receive a sample having one or more components pumped via the tunnel and to measure a quantity indicative of at least one of the components.

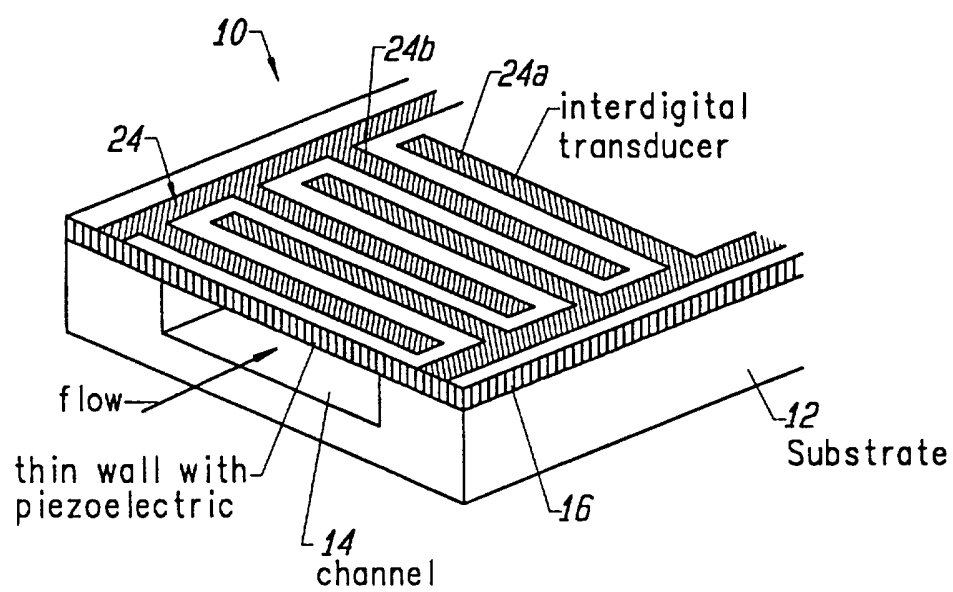
20 16. An analysis system as set forth in claim 15 including one or more additional sensors, each being connected to receive the sample pumped via the tunnel and to measure an additional quantity indicative of at least one of the components.

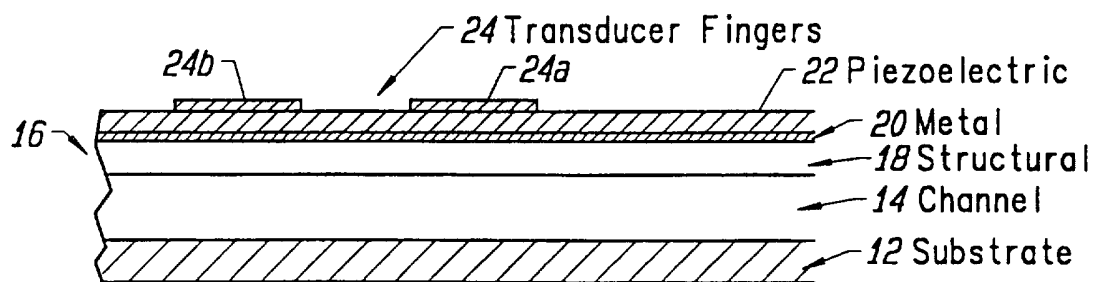
17. A chemical or biological reaction system comprising one or more of the pumps as set forth in claim 1 in combination with a reaction region adjacent the substrate connected to receive a reaction sample having one or more reactants pumped via the tunnel(s) and to carry forth a reaction thereat to thereby form a reacted sample.

18. A reaction system as set forth in claim 17 including an additional reaction region, the additional reaction region being connected to receive the reacted sample pumped via a selected one of the one or more of the tunnels and to carry forth an additional reaction thereat to thereby form a further reacted sample.

19. A reaction system as set forth in claim 18 wherein the additional reaction region is connected to receive an additional reactant for reaction with the reacted sample thereat to thereby form the further reacted sample.

20. A method of fabricating a pump as set forth in claim 1, comprising applying micromachining techniques to a substrate to form the components thereof.

*FIG. 1*



Piezo
FIG. 2

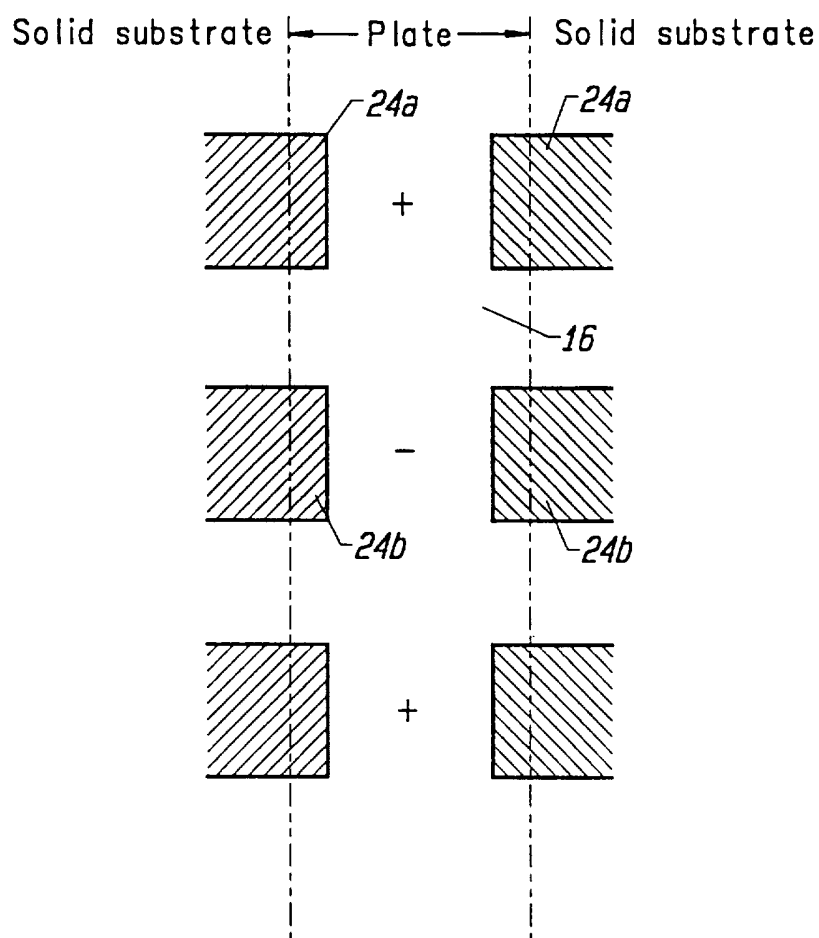


FIG. 3

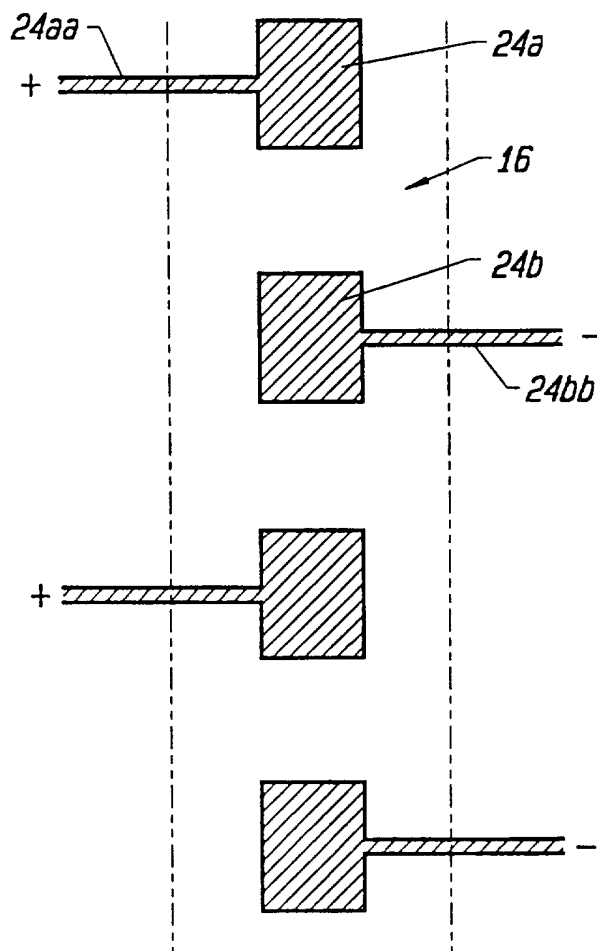


FIG. 4

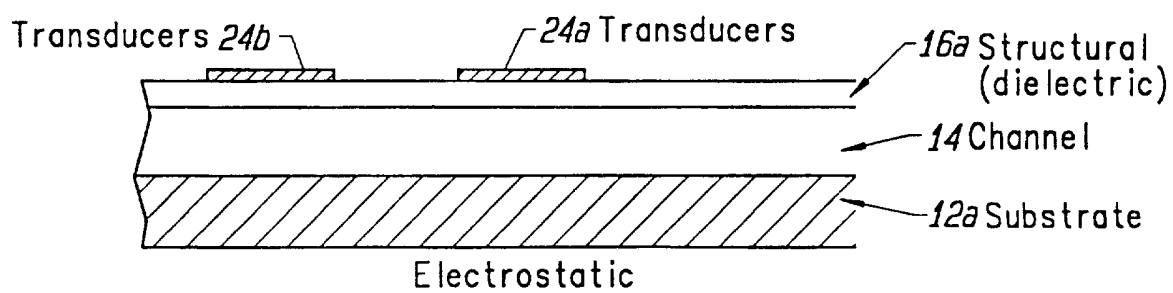


FIG. 5

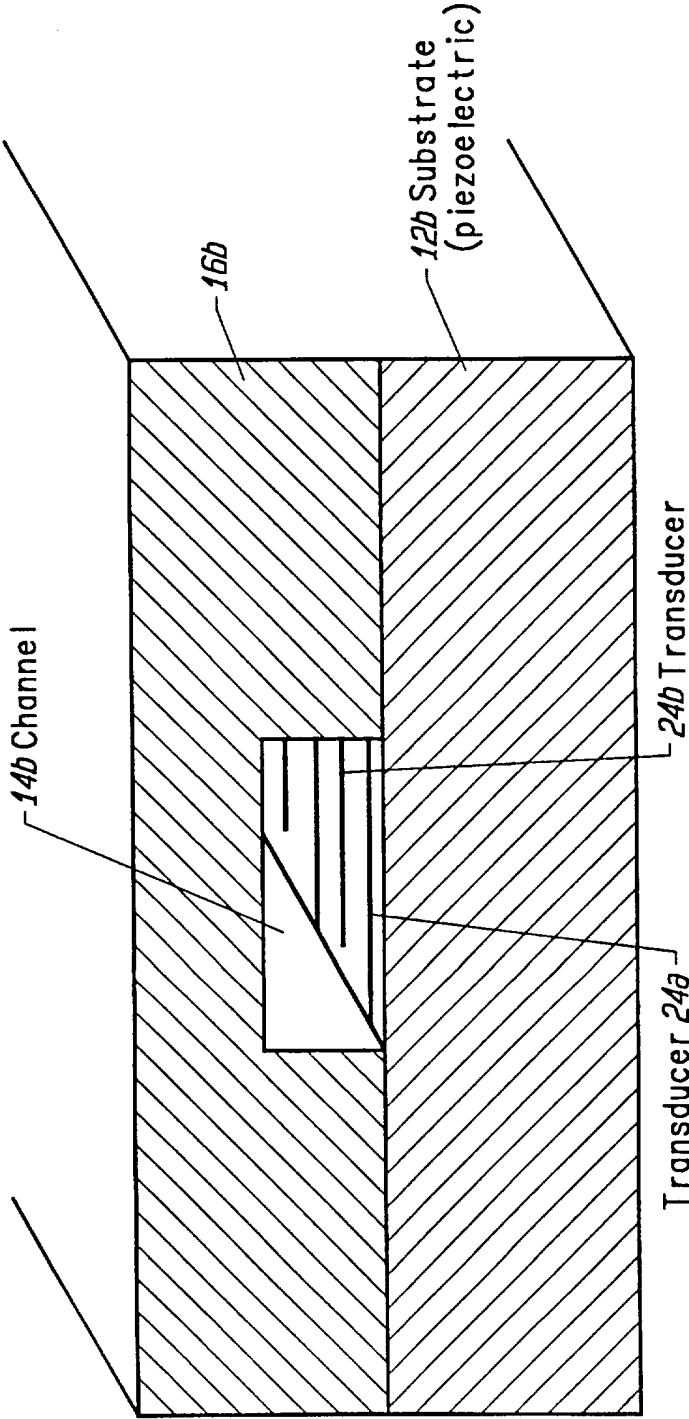


FIG. 6

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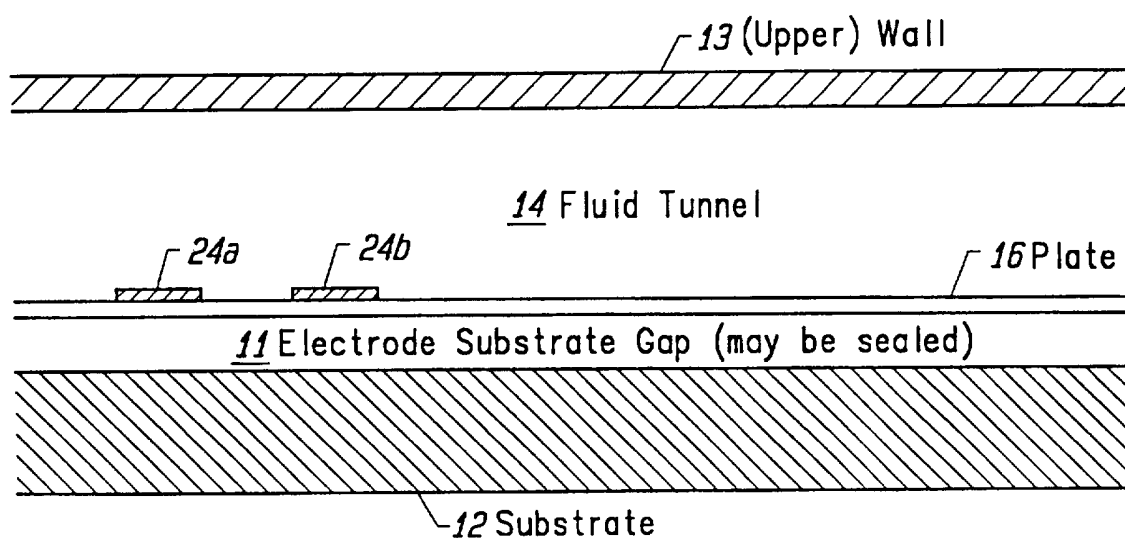


FIG. 6A

Implementation with conductivity plate:

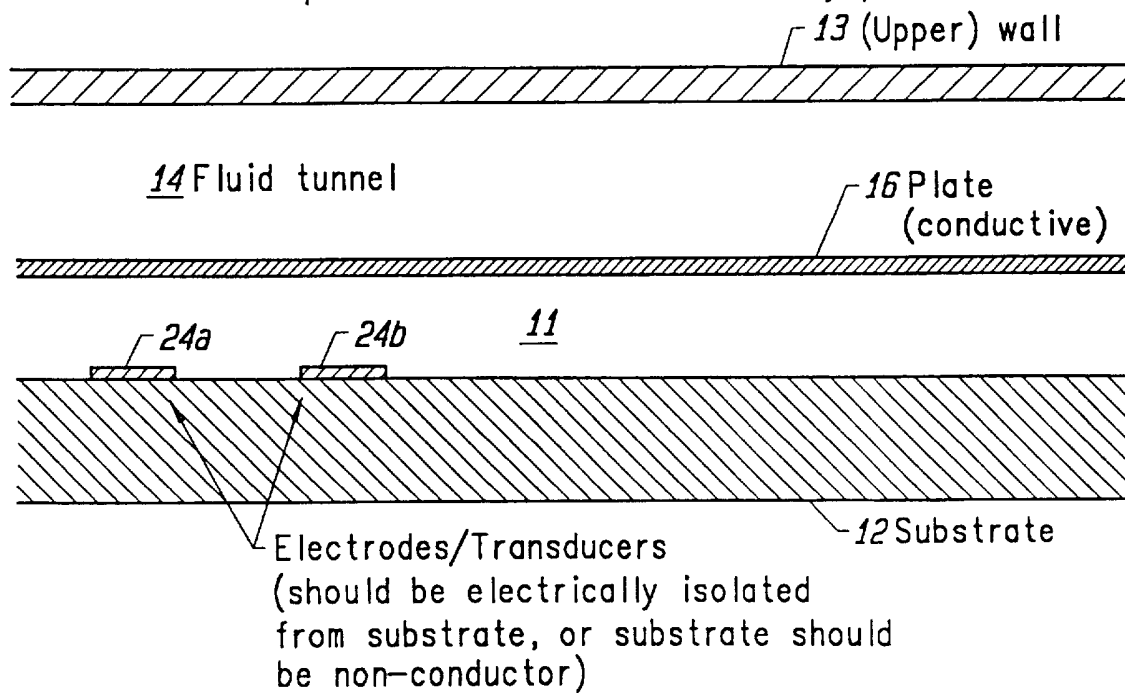
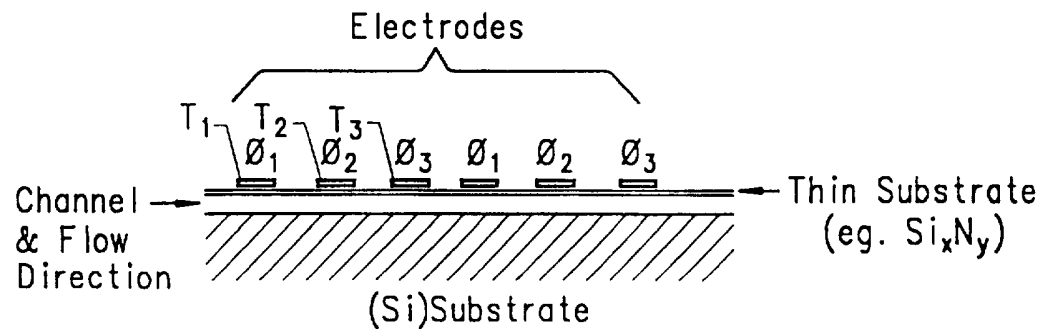
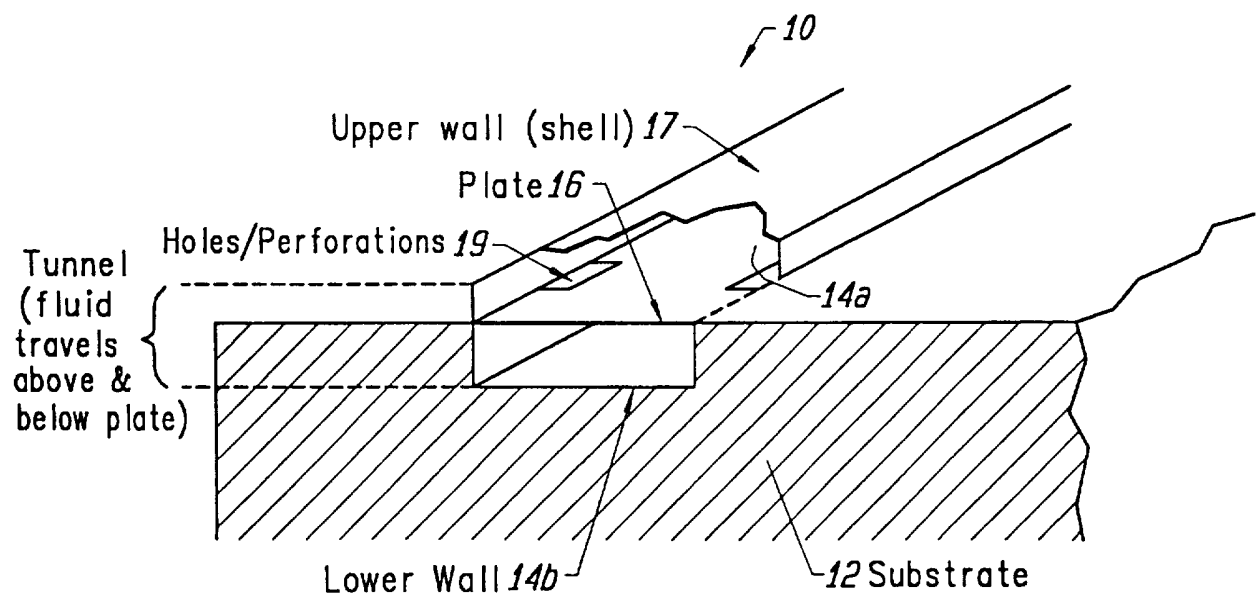
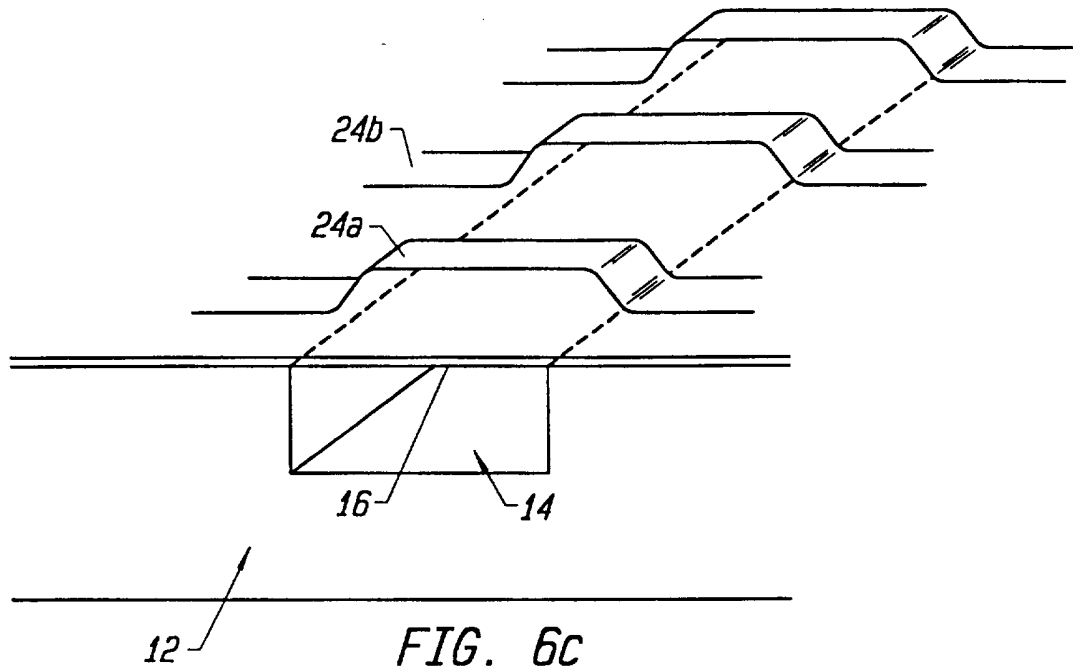


FIG. 6B

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7/10

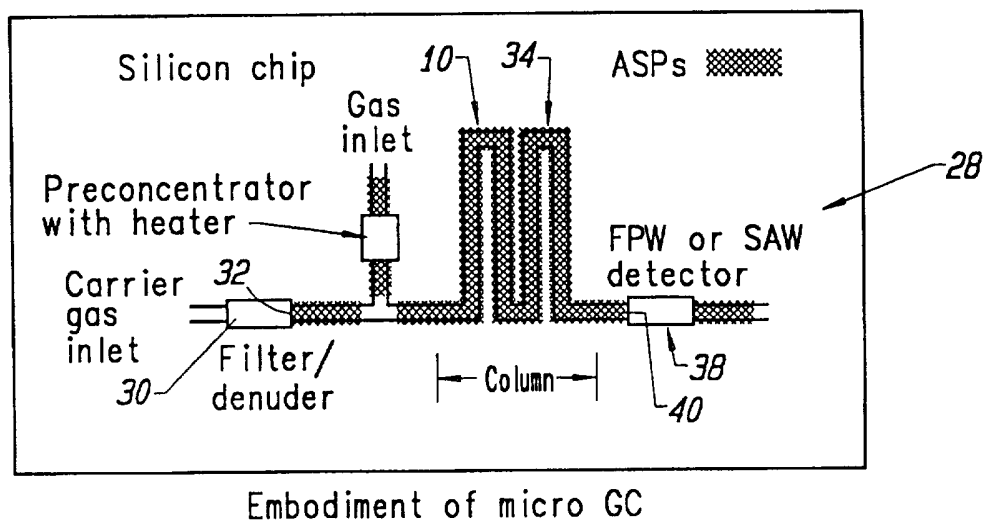


FIG. 7

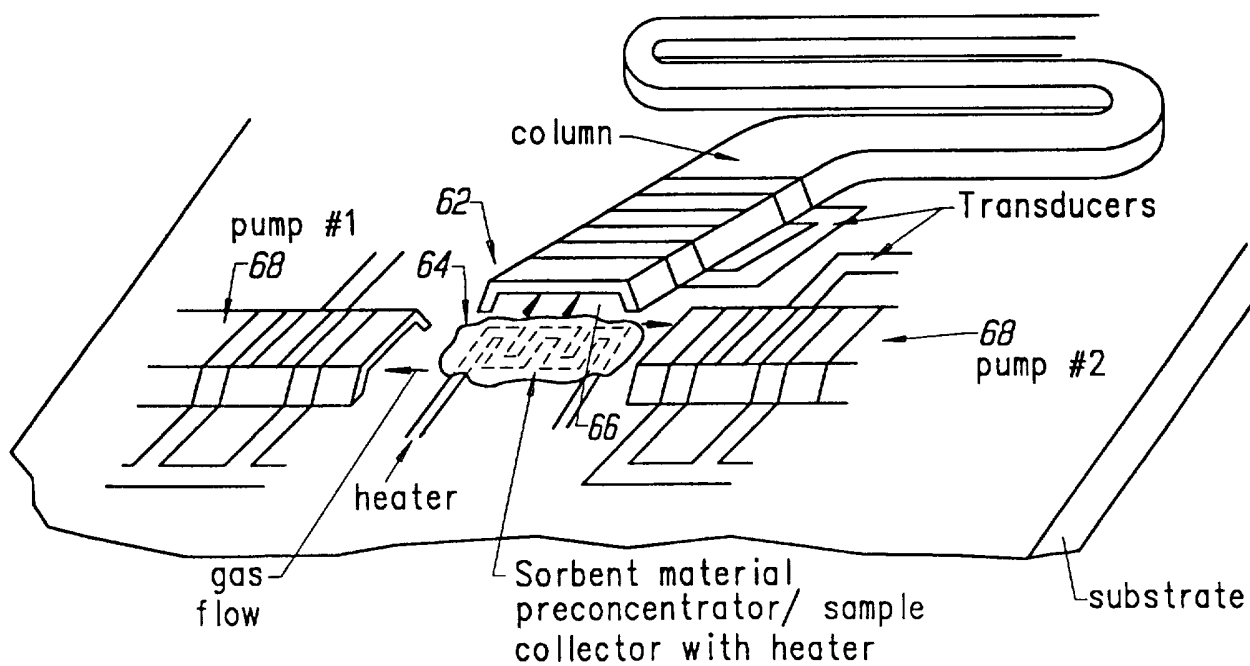
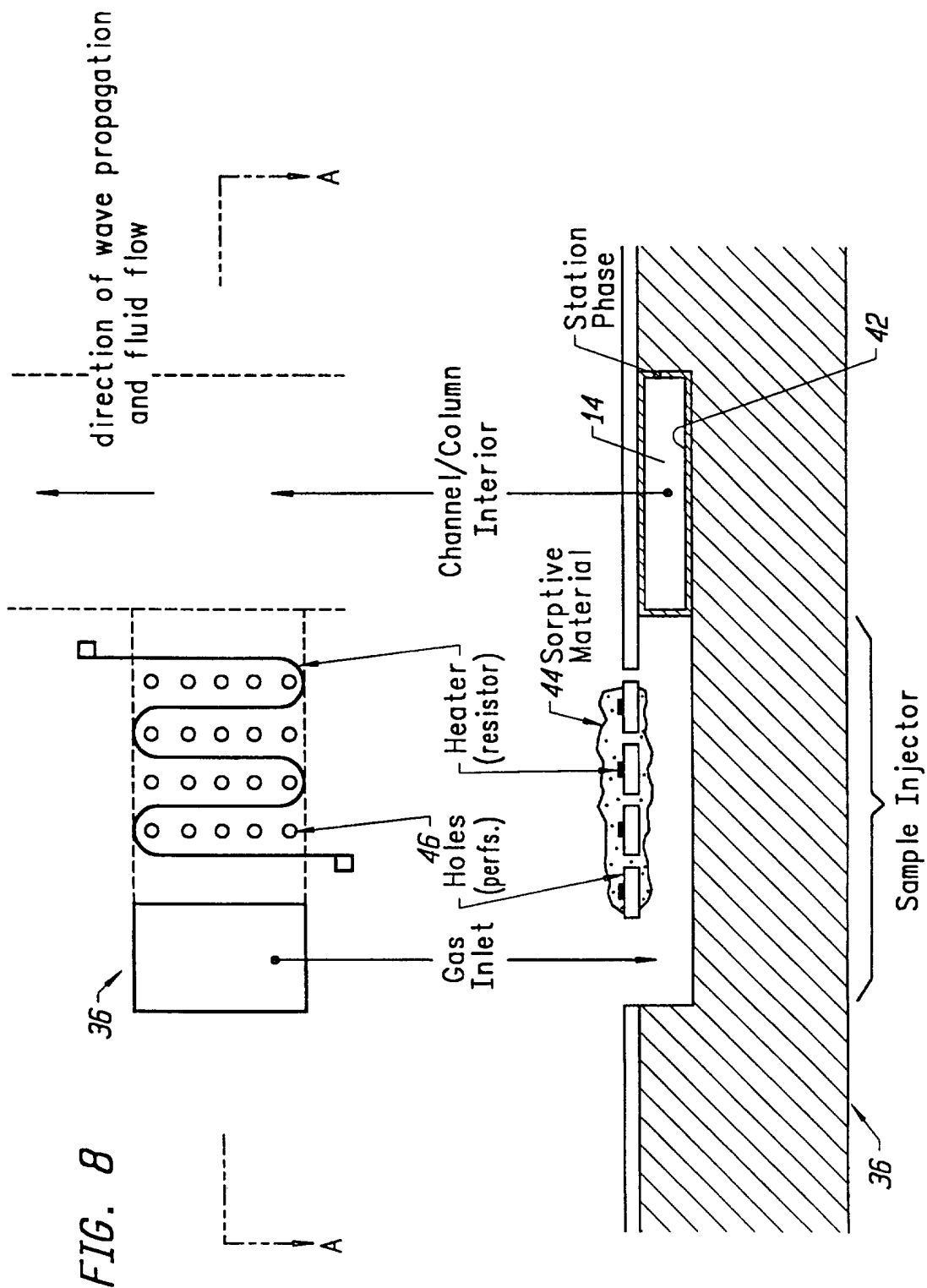
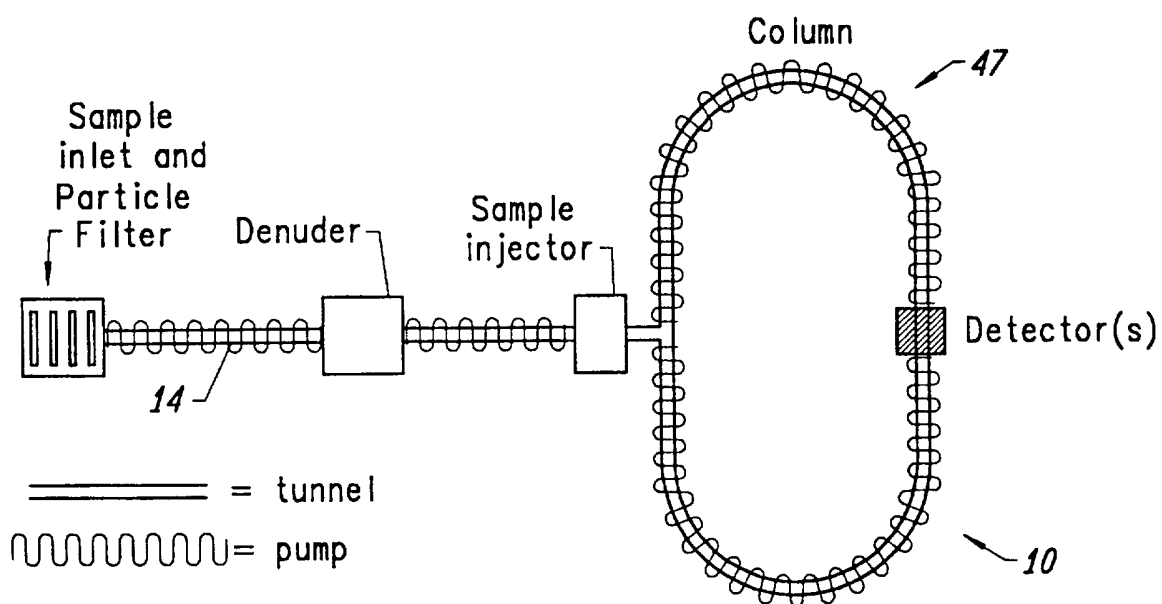


FIG. 7A

SUBSTITUTE SHEET (RULE 26)





"pump" generally means an area with ultrasonic waves propagating. The pump area can have transducers on all or part of it, since waves can propagate in regions without transducers.

Re-entrant/cyclic chromatograph

FIG. 10

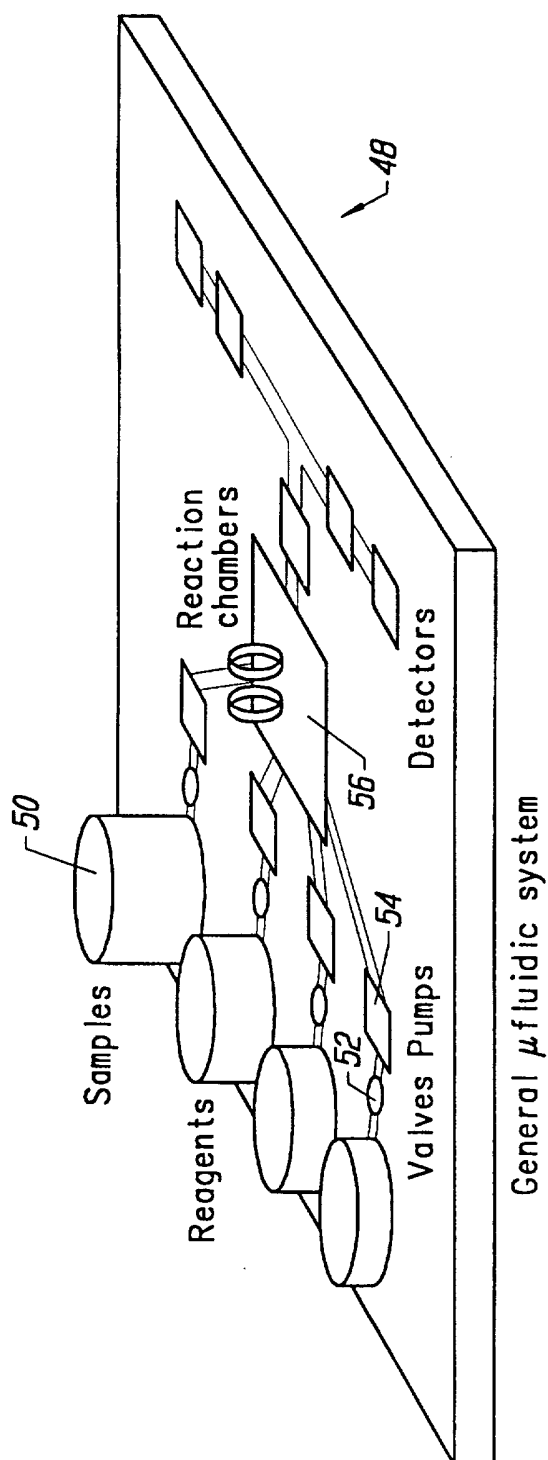


FIG. 11

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US97/00076

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) : F04B 19/24, 17/00

US CL : 417/ 52, 413.3

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)

U.S. : 417/ 50, 52, 413.2, 413.3, 478, 479

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

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

APS

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 5,466,932 A (YOUNG ET AL) 14 NOVEMBER 1995, entire document.	1
A	US 5,525,041 A (DEAK) 11 JUNE 1996, entire document.	1
A	US 5,006,749 A (WHITE) 09 APRIL 1991, entire document.	1

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.
 ☐ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	*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
*A document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	*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
*E earlier document published on or after the international filing date	*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
*L document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	*G document member of the same patent family
*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	

Date of the actual completion of the international search 10 MARCH 1997	Date of mailing of the international search report 11 APR 1997
Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Box PCT Washington, D.C. 20231 Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230	Authorized officer <i>C. Freay</i> CHARLES G. FREAY Telephone No. (703) 308-0639