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(71) Applicant(s)
Briggs and Stratton Corporation

(72) Inventor(s)
Nicholas Robert Hirsch; Mark Donald Schaefer; Michael Paul Braun; Peter Hotz; Darrell Albert Wiatrowski; Ronald Lee Bartelt; Brian Hubbard

(74) Agent/Attorney
CALLINAN LAWRIE,Private Bag 7,KEW VIC 3101

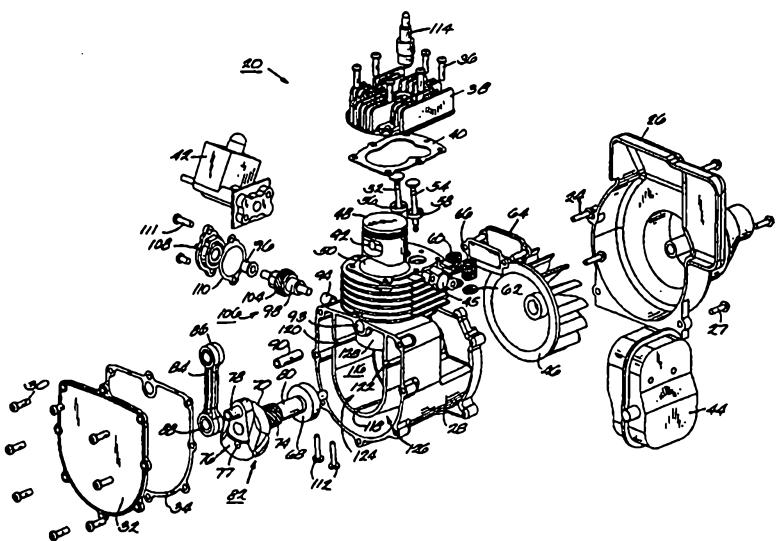
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(71) Applicant (<i>for all designated States except US</i>): BRIGGS & STRATTON CORPORATION [US/US]; 12301 West Wirth Street, Wauwatosa, WI 53222 (US).			
(72) Inventors; and			
(75) Inventors/Applicants (<i>for US only</i>): HIRSCH, Nicholas, Robert [US/US]; N. 39 W. 27369 Glacier Road, Pewaukee, WI 53072 (US). SCHAEFER, Mark, Donald [US/US]; S. 38 W. 32010 Highway Drive, Waukesha, WI 53189 (US). BRAUN, Michael, Paul [US/US]; 1924 Ludington Avenue, Wauwatosa, WI 53226 (US). HOTZ, Peter [US/US]; 6128 N. Berkeley Boulevard, Whitefish Bay, WI 53217 (US). WIATROWSKI, Darrell, Albert [US/US]; 12188 W. Eastwood Road, Beach Park, IL 60087 (US). BARTEL, Ronald, Lee [US/US]; S. 68 W. 17074 Martin Drive, Muskego, WI 53150 (US). HUBBARD, Brian [US/US]; Unit C, 2010 Division Street, East Troy, WI 53120 (US).			
(74) Agent: LASKA, Casimir, F.; Michael Best & Friedrich LLP, 100 East Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53202 (US).			
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(54) Title: FOUR-STROKE INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE



(57) Abstract

A four-stroke internal combustion engine (20) is provided. There is provided within an engine housing (28) an oil reservoir (126) and a valve chamber (156) which independently communicate with a crank chamber (124). A strategically placed divider (116) and passageway, located within the engine housing (28), appropriately direct lubricant within the engine housing (28) so that the internal cavity of the engine is lubricated during use in various operating attitudes, and so that the fluid flows to and is held in the proper chambers of the engine housing during storage. There is also provided a breather arrangement for an internal combustion engine (20) which includes a cam shaft (98) having a hollow passageway in communication with the crank chamber (124) and the air intake system of the engine. There is also provided an engine housing which can be utilized for engines having different horse power ratings. There is also provided a crankshaft bearing assembly (68, 70) which prevents damage to the bearing upon insertion of the crankshaft (80) into the crank chamber (124).

FOUR-STROKE INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates, generally, to four-stroke internal combustion engines and, more particularly, to four-stroke internal combustion engines used in trimmers, blowers, vacuums, chain saws, other hand-held power tools, snowblowers, generators, vegetation cutting devices such as lawn mowers, or other outdoor power equipment.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Many hand-held power tools or other outdoor power equipment are powered by electric motors or two-stroke internal combustion engines. Electric motors are limited to certain applications due to the available power for products utilizing a cord, and battery longevity 15 for cordless products. Conventional two-stroke engines include a lubricating means in which the lubricant is mixed with fuel which allows the engines to operate in any given position such as upright, inclined, sideways or upside down. For example, when using a chain saw, the chain saw is typically capable of use in either an upright, sideways or upside down condition. Over the past few years, there has been a requirement by various 20 governing bodies to reduce the emissions associated with all small gas engines, particularly, conventional two-stroke engines. Thus, because four-stroke engines do not require the mixing of lubricant and fuel, it is desirable to use four-stroke engines in place of conventional two-stroke engines, since four-stroke engines normally release fewer undesirable emissions as compared to the amount of undesirable emissions released by 25 conventional two-stroke engines.

However, previously, it was widely viewed that four-stroke internal combustion engines could only be used for limited applications, such as lawn mowers, snowblowers, generators, or other portable products having wheels. It was thought that these prior four- 30 stroke engines were too heavy and cumbersome to be used in operator-carried power tools. Moreover, since it is generally necessary to store oil separate from the gas so that the oil can be used for lubrication, traditional low-cost four-stroke engines were not designed to operate in any position other than a substantially upright position because if the engine was



significantly tipped or tilted, the lubricant would foul the engine. Only very recently has it been contemplated that a four-stroke engine may be used in a hand-held power tool or in other applications where the engine may operate in a tipped or tilted condition.

5 **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

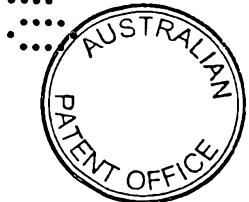
Accordingly, there is a need for a four-stroke internal combustion engine that is capable of use in various power tools, and yet is also capable of having low emissions and being sufficiently light to be carried by an operator when desired. What is also needed is a four-

10 stroke internal combustion engine that is capable of operating in many different attitudes of the engine. What is also needed is a four-stroke engine that eliminates the need for an elaborate lubrication system. What is needed is a four-stroke internal combustion engine which accomplishes these features and other features and which is also economical to manufacture.

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According to the present invention there is provided a four stroke internal combustion engine including:

an engine housing, including a crankcase and a cylinder;
an intake valve and an exhaust valve disposed within the engine housing;
20 a crank chamber disposed within said crankcase;
a crankshaft supported for rotation within said crank chamber;
a piston operably interconnected with said crankshaft for reciprocation within said cylinder in response to rotation of said crankshaft;
an oil reservoir disposed within said crankcase, and in fluid flow communication
25 with said crank chamber;
a divider at least partially separating said crank chamber from said oil reservoir;
a depending wall extending at least partially into said crank chamber to define a lubricant receiving space between said divider and said depending wall; and
an agitator located in the engine housing that moves lubricant in the engine housing
30 during operation of the engine.



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Accordingly, it is a principal feature of the present invention to provide a four-stroke internal combustion engine which includes a simple and inexpensive lubricating system which enables the engine to be functional in various operational attitudes.

- 5 It is a feature of the present invention to provide a four-stroke engine incorporating the foregoing features and yet also simple and easy to manufacture and assemble.

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Other features and advantages of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon review of the following detailed description, claims and drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an exploded perspective view of a four-stroke internal combustion engine
5 according to the present invention.

FIG. 1A is a perspective view of the four-stroke engine of FIG. 1 illustrating the engine as assembled for use with, e.g., a power trimmer.

FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional end view and a partial schematic view of the engine of FIG. 1 taken along line 2-2 of FIG. 3.

10 FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional side view of the assembled engine of FIG. 1.

FIG. 4 is an enlarged view of a portion of the engine shown in FIG. 3 illustrating the rotational relationship between a cam gear and a crank gear, a portion of a lubricant flow path, and a portion of a breather system for the engine shown in FIG. 1.

15 FIG. 5 is an enlarged view of a portion of the engine shown in FIG. 3 illustrating a piston in its bottom dead center position.

FIG. 6 is a schematic representation illustrating another aspect of the present invention which concerns the attachment of a connecting rod to a piston and a crankshaft.

FIG. 7 is a perspective front view taken along line 7-7 of FIG. 9 illustrating a counterweight positioned adjacent to a main bearing of the crankshaft.

20 FIG. 7A is a side view of the counterweight of FIG. 7.

FIG. 7B is another perspective view of the counterweight of FIG. 7.

FIG. 8 is a perspective view illustrating an agitator cooperating with a scraper found on a wall within the engine cavity in order to regulate the amount of lubricant which comes into contact with the agitator.

25 FIG. 8A shows the rotational movement of the agitator of FIG. 8 and how the scraper controls the lubricant which comes into contact with the agitator.

FIG. 9 is a schematic representation of another aspect of the present invention illustrating the positioning of a crankshaft within a crank chamber disposed in an engine housing.

30 FIG. 10 is a partial schematic view of a top portion of the engine housing taken along line 10-10 of FIG. 3 illustrating the spatial relationship between a combustion chamber, a piston bore, an intake valve and an exhaust valve.

FIG. 11 is a partial schematic view of a cylinder head taken along line 11-11 of FIG. 3 illustrating the spatial relationship between the combustion chamber, the piston bore, the intake valve, the exhaust valve and portions of a spark plug.

5 FIG. 12 is a schematic view illustrating the path of an air/fuel mixture through an intake system to the combustion chamber and the path of the exhaust out of the combustion chamber through an exhaust system in an engine according to the present invention.

10 FIG. 13 is a cross-sectional partial schematic view of an engine according to the present invention showing the state of the lubricant in the crank chamber and an oil reservoir when the engine is in an upside down state.

FIG. 14 is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of the present invention showing a starter assembly attached to the rear of a four-stroke internal combustion engine.

15 FIGS. 15-18 are schematic representations of two engine housings which are capable of being produced using one die tool and one die casting machine.

FIG. 19 is a schematic view of a power trimmer in which another four-stroke internal combustion engine according to the present invention is employed.

20 FIG. 20 is a perspective view of a shroud which at least partially surrounds an engine, wherein the shroud is adapted to enhance overall assembly operations of the engine.

FIG. 21 is an exploded partial perspective view of the four-stroke engine of FIG. 19.

FIG. 22 is another exploded partial perspective view of the four-stroke engine of FIG. 19.

25 FIG. 23 is a perspective view of an engine housing with a muffler attached thereto.

FIG. 24 is an exploded perspective view of FIG. 23.

FIG. 25 is a perspective view illustrating the flywheel end of the engine housing of FIG. 23.

FIG. 26 is an enlarged partial cross-sectional view taken along line 26-26 of FIG. 30 23 illustrating a connection between the engine housing and muffler of FIG. 23.

FIG. 27 is an alternative connection between the engine housing and muffler of FIG. 26.

FIG. 28 is a perspective view of the engine housing of FIG. 23 without the muffler.

FIG. 29 is a front view of an intake isolator as shown in FIG. 22 and FIG. 20.

FIG. 30 is a cross-sectional view of the intake isolator of FIG. 29.

FIG. 31 is a partial cross-sectional side view of the assembled engine of FIGS. 21 and 22.

5 FIG. 32 is an enlarged view of a portion of the engine shown in FIG. 31 illustrating a piston in its bottom dead center position.

FIG. 33 is an enlarged view of the relationship between the shroud and starter assembly in terms of retaining the starter assembly on the shroud.

FIGS. 34-38 illustrate various views of the starter pulley shown in FIG. 33.

10 FIGS. 39-40 are schematic representations of two engine housings which are capable of being produced using one die tool and one die casting machine.

15 Before the embodiments of the invention are explained in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and the arrangements of components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced or of being carried out in various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology used herein is for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

20 Illustrated in FIG. 1A of the drawings is a four-stroke internal combustion engine 20 according to the present invention. The engine 20 drives a conventional shaft typically housed in a shaft tube 22 which in turn drives an implement having a rotary head, cutting filament or blade, rotary impeller, or the like, depending on the type of power tool in use (see, e.g., FIG. 19). The shaft arrangement shown in FIG. 1A (and FIG. 19), typically 25 used in conjunction with a hand-held power trimmer, is used for illustrative purposes only and it should be understood that other power tools such as those mentioned previously herein are capable of utilizing the four-stroke engine of the present invention. In other words, generally, the engine according to the present invention is preferably used in an orientation where the implement or working tool has an axis which is substantially parallel 30 with a crankshaft axis. The engine according to the present invention may also be orientated with the crankshaft being horizontal or vertical. The engine according to the present invention is particularly well suited for those applications in which high RPMs,

e.g., 3,000 RPMs up to 7,000-8,000 RPMs or more, may be required and in which an output of less than 1 to over 6 horsepower may be supplied. Importantly, whichever type of power tool is used in combination with the four-stroke engine according to the present invention, the engine is capable of working, at least temporarily, in substantially any 5 operational position of the power tool.

Illustrated in FIG. 1 of the drawings is an exploded perspective view showing various components of the four-stroke internal combustion engine 20 according to the present invention. Shown in FIG. 1 is a side valve or "L" head engine in which the various features of the present invention are employed. Side valve engines are sometimes 10 referred to as "L" head engines because of the positional relationship of an intake valve and an exhaust valve with respect to a combustion chamber. As will be apparent below, the "L" is in reference to the path taken by an air/fuel mixture and the exhaust through respective valves and ports found in the engine body. Also, importantly, in an "L" head engine, the intake valve port and the exhaust valve port are located in the engine housing, 15 not in the cylinder head which is generally common to overhead valve or overhead cam engines.

Before describing in detail the various features of the present invention, the components shown in FIG. 1 are identified for the sake of clarity. Shown are an ignition coil screw 24 used to attach an ignition coil (not shown) to the engine 20; shroud screws 20 27 attach shroud 26 to an engine housing 28; cover screws 30 attach sump cover 32 and sump cover gasket 34 to the engine housing 28 in order to seal one end of the engine housing 28; cylinder head screws 36 attach cylinder head 38 and cylinder head gasket 40 to the engine housing 28 thereby at least partially defining a combustion chamber 39 (FIG. 2); carburetor 42 and muffler 44 are appropriately connected to the engine 20; carburetor 25 42 cooperates with intake port 41 and air cleaner or filter 43 (FIG. 2); muffler 44 cooperates with exhaust port 45; flywheel 46 which includes an integral fan (not shown) is positioned between the shroud 26 and engine housing 28 with the help of a flywheel key (not shown) in order to cool the engine 20 during operation; piston 48 is received by piston bore 50 within engine housing 28; intake valve 52 and exhaust valve 54 are positioned 30 adjacent piston bore 50 within engine housing 28; intake valve seat 56 and exhaust valve seat 58 are placed within engine housing 28 to cooperate with the respective heads of valves 52 and 54; valve springs 60 are placed in a valve spring chamber and held within the valve spring chamber by valve spring keepers 62; the valve spring chamber is sealed

by valve cover 64 and valve cover gasket 66; crankshaft bearing 68, crankshaft bearing 70, worm-helical or spiral gear 74, counterweight 76, crank pin 78 and crankshaft 80 are part of crankshaft assembly 82; counterweight 76 includes an aperture 77; connecting rod 84 includes connecting rod bearings 86 and 88; one end of connecting rod 84 fits over crank pin 78 and a wrist pin 90 connects the other end of connecting rod 84 to piston 48 by sliding in aperture 92 of piston 48; wrist pin 90 cooperates with access hole 93 of engine housing 28 when attaching the connecting rod 84 to the piston 48; cam shaft bushing 94, cam shaft bushing 96, cam shaft 98, cam lobes 100 and 102 (FIG. 2), and worm-helical or spiral gear 104 are part of cam shaft assembly 106; cam cap 108 and cam cap gasket 110 are attached to engine housing 28 by cam cap screws 111 in order to seal cam shaft assembly 106; tappets 112 are properly positioned within the engine 20 to cooperate with valves 52 and 54; spark plug 114 is positioned in a spark plug hole within cylinder head 38; divider 116 having slots 118, 120 and 122 is disposed within engine housing 28 and at least partially defines a crank chamber 124 and a lubricant or oil reservoir 126; and the piston bore 50 includes an extension 128 which at least partially extends into crank chamber 124.

Other components and features not clearly shown in FIG. 1 will be described below according to the features of the present invention.

FIG. 1 shows the carburetor 42 and the exhaust muffler 44 mounted on opposite sides of the engine housing 28. The carburetor 42 may be of any type of carburetor that is tippable such as a standard variable venturi diaphragm carburetor found in small gas engines, but a rotary valve carburetor available from, e.g., Walbro, is particularly well suited for use in an engine according to the present invention. The air cleaner or filter 43 (schematically shown in FIG. 2) is mounted in or near an inlet of an intake passage in the carburetor 42. A fuel tank (not shown in FIG. 1) is mounted typically to a lower surface of the engine housing 28 and cooperates with the carburetor 42 so that fuel and air can be supplied to the intake port 41 (FIG. 2) in the engine housing.

The engine housing 28 is typically made of a lightweight aluminum alloy casting having a cylindrical bore or piston bore 50 formed therein. As noted, the piston bore 50 is configured to partially extend into the crank chamber 124 disposed within the engine housing 28. The area or space 136 (FIG. 13) between the extended piston bore 50 and divider 116 accepts volumes of the lubricant or oil during operation and storage to prevent too much lubricant or oil from entering the piston bore 50 or valve chamber 156 (FIG. 2).

The piston 48 is preferably coated, such as with an iron coating, or chrome plated so as to eliminate the need for a sleeve such as an iron sleeve within the piston bore 50.

Alternatively, piston bore 50 may include an iron cylinder sleeve.

The divider preferably includes bottom slot 118 which is located directly below the piston bore 50. Optional side slots 120 and 122 of the divider 116 may be located substantially directly across from one another at a predetermined distance from the bottom of the piston bore 50. The slots 118, 120 and 122 may be replaced with one or more holes or other apertures. As noted, the present invention is, of course, not limited to a particularly sized engine, but may be used with any internal combustion engine. The design considerations to determine the size and location of the slots or holes will be apparent below. The slots or holes should be configured for different sized engines taking into consideration the various features of the present invention.

FIGS. 8 and 8A show another aspect of the divider 116. In operation, as shown, the counterweight 76 is caused to rotate in one direction, usually, a clockwise direction. The bottom slot 118 includes opposing sides 130 and 132. The second side 132, with respect to the direction of travel of the counterweight 76, has a scraper 134 adjacent thereto. Preferably, the scraper 134 is positioned within .020 to .060 inches of the counterweight 76 when the counterweight 76 is located closest to the scraper 134. The scraper 134 limits or meters the amount of lubricant or oil (shown in broken dotted lines) which comes into direct contact with the counterweight 76. The scraper 134 helps to limit the amount of lubricant or oil which may be slung into the piston bore 50 during operation and reduces the wind resistance caused by excessive lubricant on counterweight 76. It should be noted that the scraper 134 could be configured in other ways. For example, bottom slot 118 in the divider 116 could be a diagonal slot such that the second side of the diagonal slot acts as the scraper 134 but the scraper is not a raised scraper as shown in FIGS. 8 and 8A. Alternatively, the bottom slot 118 in the divider 116 could be a straight slot without the use of a scraper.

As noted, FIG. 1 shows the oil reservoir 126 disposed within the engine housing 28 defined by the divider 116 and the engine housing 28. The oil reservoir 126 is in fluid flow communication with the crank chamber 124, preferably through slots 118, 120 and 122. As shown, the oil reservoir 126 and the divider 116 are substantially curved or U-shaped. The divider 116 is preferably curved to direct lubricant away from the piston bore 50 when the engine is tipped or inverted. The communication between the two chambers

124 and 126 allows for the crank chamber 124 to be properly lubricated during use as the lubricant is allowed to flow between the two chambers 124 and 126 during use, and for the lubricant to flow back into the oil reservoir 126 during storage so that an excessive amount of lubricant does not adversely flow into the piston bore 50.

5 Referring to FIGS. 1 and 3, crankshaft 80 is mounted within the crank chamber 124. The crankshaft worm-helical or spiral gear 74 drives the cam shaft assembly 106. Worm-helical or spiral gears are commonly known in the art and readily available from any number of gear manufacturers and suppliers. The crankshaft 80 and gear 74 may be manufactured in any number of known ways. However, injection molding the gear around 10 a trim metal piece representing the crankshaft would work well according to the principles of the subject invention. The injection mold material may be a thermoplastic material or nylon material known to those skilled in the art. Another alternative is to provide a metal crankshaft with an enlarged cylindrical piece of metal on the crank where a worm-helical or spiral gear is intended to be located. The crankshaft then is subjected to a hobbing 15 procedure in which the gear is machined on the crankshaft.

Still referring to FIGS. 1 and 3, bearings 68 and 70 are positioned around the crankshaft 80 in order to support the cantilevered crankshaft 80 when it is placed within the crank chamber 124. The bearings 68 and 70 are placed on opposite sides of the worm-helical or spiral gear 74 and on the same side of the piston bore 50. The inner bearing 68 20 is smaller in diameter than the outer bearing 70. The bearings 68 and 70 are dimensioned in this manner such that the bearing pockets found in the crank chamber 124 are machined from one side of the engine housing 28 using only one tool. As can be appreciated by those skilled in the art, machining bearing pockets from one direction reduces equipment, time and expense usually associated with having to machine bearing pockets from 25 different directions.

As shown in FIG. 1, counterweight 76 is mounted on one end of the crankshaft 80. FIGS. 7, 7A and 7B show in greater detail the shape and contours of the counterweight 76. As generally understood, the forces resulting from the operation of the piston 48, the connecting rod 84 and the associated components, are balanced by the counterweight 76. 30 Depending on the size of the engine, more than one counterweight may be necessary. The counterweight 76 includes wing-tipped aerodynamic sides 138 and 140. Each wing-tipped side includes a back 142 that is positioned adjacent the main bearing 70 and a front 144 opposite the back 142. The wing-tipped sides 138 and 140 have contoured surfaces that

extend from the back 140 to the front 142 of the counterweight 76. In this way, as will be more evident below, the aerodynamic shape of the counterweight 76 assists in reducing air resistance on the counterweight 76, generating the proper turbulence of air and lubricant within the internal cavity of the engine 20 and directing the lubricant within the internal 5 cavity of the engine 20.

The tool access hole or aperture 77 of counterweight 76 (FIG. 7) is used for positioning the crankshaft 80 within the crank chamber 124. FIGS. 7 and 9 schematically show a tool 146 which is used to position the outer bearing 70, counterweight 76 and the crankshaft 80 within the crank chamber 124. Bearing 68 is press fitted into the crank 10 chamber 124 and is adapted to receive one end of the crankshaft 80. Once the crankshaft 80 has been manufactured, the bearing 70 is press fitted onto the crankshaft 80. The counterweight 76 is then fixed to the crankshaft 80. FIG. 7A illustrates a step 141 which provides a clearance of approximately .050 of an inch between the counterweight 76 and bearing 70. As shown in FIG. 7, only portions 69 of the outside race of the main bearing 15 70 are exposed after the counterweight 76 is placed on the crankshaft 80. The access aperture 77 allows the tool 146 (FIG. 9) to contact the outside race of the main bearing 70 in three spots when assembling the crankshaft 80 and associated components of the crankshaft assembly 82 into the crank chamber 124. A fourth leg of the tool (FIG. 9) contacts the cantilevered end of the crankshaft 80. This assembly helps ensure that the 20 main bearing 70 will not be damaged upon assembly and the crankshaft 80 will be properly seated when inserted into the crank chamber 124.

FIG. 6 schematically illustrates how the connecting rod 84 is attached to the crankshaft 80 and piston 48. A custom shoulder bolt (not shown) may be utilized to affix the connecting rod 84 to the crank pin 78. The entire crankshaft assembly 82 (FIG. 1) is 25 mounted within the crank chamber 124 (FIG. 3). The piston 48 is slid into the piston bore 50 from the top of the engine housing 28. The aperture 92 in the piston 48 is lined up with the access aperture 93 in the engine housing 28. The connecting rod 84 is attached to the crankshaft assembly 82 by virtue of crank pin 78 and positioned within a cut out portion 148 of the piston 48. The wrist pin 90 is inserted through the access hole 93 of the engine 30 housing 28 into the access hole 92 of the piston 48 and through the bearing 86 of the connecting rod 84. Since the aperture 92 of the piston 48 is not drilled all the way through the piston 48, one end of the wrist pin 90 abuts an inner portion 150 of the piston 48. The wrist pin 90 can be held in place within the piston 48 by a star washer 151 inserted in the

open end of the aperture 92 (see also FIG. 5). Preferably, the wrist pin 90 and the crank pin 78 are hollow so as to reduce the overall weight of the reciprocating mass which in turn means a smaller counterweight with less weight is needed to balance the forces generated by the reciprocating mass. Reducing the overall weight of the reciprocating 5 components improves vibration and makes the engine lighter for ease of operation.

The cam shaft 98, the eccentric style cam lobes 100 and 102 and the cam gear 104 are shown as separate parts in FIG. 2. It should be noted that these parts can be injected molded as a single component using, for example, a thermoplastic or nylon material.

Alternatively, certain components may be injected molded around a piece of trim metal to 10 create the final assembly in similar manner to that contemplated for the crankshaft 80 and worm-helical or spiral gear 74.

FIG. 2 illustrates that the cam shaft 98 includes a passageway 152. FIGS. 2, 3 and 4 show that a portion of the cam shaft assembly 106 (FIG. 1) adjacent the worm-helical or spiral gear 104 includes at least one radial aperture 154 exposed to the passageway 152 15 and crank chamber 124. The passageway 152 and aperture 154 may be drilled into the proper portions of the cam shaft assembly 106 or molded therein. Essentially, the passageway 152 and the aperture 154 and cam shaft assembly 106 cooperate to provide a breather arrangement for the internal combustion engine which will be fully outlined below. Further, the radial aperture 154 may be found in a radial disc (not shown) attached 20 to the cam shaft assembly 106 in close proximity to the gear 104 so as to be in communication with the passageway 152 and crank chamber 124.

As shown, the cam shaft 98 is located normal to the crankshaft 80. As can be appreciated by those skilled in the art, generally, in typical small gas engines, the cam shaft and the crankshaft are parallel to one another, not normal as shown according to the 25 present invention. A parallel arrangement leads to a wider engine whereas the normal arrangement according to the present invention leads to a longer engine design with the crankshaft axis being substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis of the tool. A longer unit is particularly desirable for those hand-held applications such as power trimmers which require better balance for ease of operation. A wider engine may tend to cause the 30 unit to want to rotate in the operator's hands during use.

FIG. 2 shows that cam shaft 98 sits in bushings 94 and 96 which rest in respective pockets within the crank chamber 124 in engine housing 28. The worm-helical or spiral gears 74 and 104 (FIGS. 2 and 3) are preferably designed such that when cam shaft 98 is

placed generally normal to crankshaft 80, the gears 74 and 104 mesh so that the rotational relationship between the crankshaft 80 to cam shaft 98 is 2 to 1.

The tappets 112 and the intake valve 52 and the exhaust valve 54 cooperate with cam shaft 98 (FIG. 2). Intake valve 52 and exhaust valve 54 are positioned within engine 5 housing 28 adjacent to piston 48 and piston bore 50. The valves 52 and 54 are positioned such that the valve heads are closer to the centerline of the bore 50 as compared to the lower portions of the valves (FIG. 3). Preferably, the valves 52 and 54 are set at an angle of approximately between zero and eight degrees from a line parallel with the centerline of the bore. The intake valve seat 56 and the exhaust valve seat 58 are placed within engine 10 housing 28 and cooperate with the heads of the respective valves 52 and 54 to alternately create a seal or an opening into the combustion chamber 39 with respect to the ports 41 and 45. The valve spring keepers 62 and valve compression springs 60 are positioned within the valve chamber 156 (FIG. 2). Each tappet 112 includes a respective head 158 which is in operational contact with respective cam lobes 100 and 102. As the cam shaft 15 98 rotates by virtue of drive gear 74, cam lobes 100 and 102 properly engage tappets 112 such that valves 52 and 54 move up and down as is commonly understood by those skilled in the art.

With reference to FIGS. 2, 3 and 4, the crank chamber 124 is in communication with the valve chamber 156 via access passageway or aperture 160. Additionally, the 20 valve chamber 156 is in communication with the piston bore 50 via access passageway or aperture 162. The passageways 160 and 162 allow valve chamber 156 and the components therein to receive lubricant during operation of the engine 20 in substantially any attitude. Additionally, during storage, with the aid of divider 116, the extended piston bore 50, and the slots 118, 120 and 122, a significant amount of lubricant will not remain 25 or flow into the valve chamber 156.

Referring to FIGS. 1, 2 and 3, cylinder head gasket 40 is positioned between the cylinder head 38 and the engine housing 28 so as to provide a proper seal between the two. Spark plug 114 projects into the enclosed combustion chamber 39. Spark plug 114 fires in combination with the ignition coil and magneto (not shown) to provide the necessary 30 charge or high voltage signal to ignite the air/fuel mixture in the combustion chamber 39 when the engine 20 is in operational mode.

FIGS. 10 and 11 schematically show, at least in part, the combustion chamber 39 with respect to the intake valve 52, exhaust valve 54 and piston bore 50. As shown, the

combustion chamber 39 only partially extends over the piston bore 50. The orientation of the combustion chamber 39 and shape of the combustion chamber 39 enhances swirl in the mixing chamber 39 so as to provide a better air/fuel mixture to enhance ignition of the mixture. Also, the spark plug 114 is positioned closer to the exhaust valve 54 than it is to
5 the intake valve 52. The electrode 164 is properly oriented to provide a firing spark.

Placing the spark plug 114 nearer the exhaust valve 54 allows the hotter air/fuel mixture to be burned sooner by the spark ignited flame front. This will reduce the self-ignition tendency of the hotter air/fuel mixture at the exhaust side of the combustion chamber 39. If the spark plug 114 is positioned closer to the intake valve 52, there is a risk of having
10 two combustions, resulting in a loss of power.

As shown in FIG. 2, the intake port 41 and the exhaust port 45 are located 180 degrees apart from each other. The position of the valves 52 and 54 is a result of the substantially normal arrangement of the cam shaft 98 and crankshaft 80 and allows the ports 41 and 45 to be positioned on opposite sides of the engine housing 28. This provides
15 an additional feature of operator safety. For example, when using a power trimmer, the exhaust port 45 and muffler 44 (FIG. 1) are positioned farther away from the operator during use. Another advantage of placing the ports 41 and 45 as far apart as possible is to reduce heat migration from the exhaust port 45 to the intake port 41 which, if did occur, could result in hot restart vapor lock issues, or difficulty in calibrating the air/fuel ratio.

20 FIG. 12, with reference to FIGS. 2 and 10 as needed, shows a schematic representation of the path traveled by the air/fuel mixture and exhaust through the engine 20. The air/fuel mixture enters the intake port 41, travels past the intake valve 52, and into the combustion chamber 39. The engine 20 combusts the air/fuel mixture in order to generate power, and the remaining exhaust travels past the exhaust valve 54 and out the
25 exhaust port 45. The arrangement of the cam shaft 98 and the crankshaft 80 is also shown to illustrate how such an arrangement contributes to the overall scheme associated with the air/fuel and exhaust paths through the engine 20.

An important feature of the present invention is that the four-stroke engine according to the present invention is capable of use in substantially any position. A
30 problem with prior conventional four-stroke engines is that if the engine is substantially tilted, the lubricant will run into undesirable locations, such as the carburetor, thereby causing the engine to malfunction or cease working altogether. The four-stroke engine

according to the present invention is designed to solve this problem and other problems typically associated with conventional four-stroke engines.

The oil or lubricant reservoir 126, the crank chamber 124, the piston bore 50, and the valve chamber 156 include strategically placed slots, passageways, or apertures so as 5 to enable various working components within the engine to be lubricated at virtually all times during operation. Additionally, in cooperation with the divider 116, the counterweight 76 has been designed such that only a proper amount of lubricant comes into contact with the counterweight 76. The design of the counterweight 76 also allows the counterweight to meter the amount of lubricant that finds its way to the main bearing 10 70 so as not to flood that part of the crank chamber 124 encapsulating the gears 74 and 104. This also will help prevent too much lubricant from entering the valve chamber 156 through passageway 160 and 162. Moreover, the piston bore 50 and divider 116 have been designed to ensure that the lubricant has a place to go regardless of whether the engine is operating or being stored, so as not to foul the internal components of the engine.

15 The piston bore 50, connecting rod 84, the crankshaft assembly 82, the cam shaft assembly 106, and the valve chamber 156 and the components therein all require some lubrication. It is a feature of the present invention to use a minimal amount of lubricant or oil to lubricate the engine. This is accomplished in a number of ways. First, the highest part that needs lubrication, considering when the engine is in an upright (spark plug up) 20 condition, is the valve chamber 156. Second, the roller bearings 86 and 88 for the connecting rod 84 require less lubrication versus a solid shaft with aluminum bushings. Third, since the lubricant will follow the path of least resistance, the divider 116, the counterweight 76 and the various slots, apertures and passageways previously mentioned help direct the lubricant to particular areas of the engine depending on the attitude of the 25 engine.

In an upright non-operating position, lubricant or oil is stored within the oil or lubricant reservoir 126. In this position and in this state, the level of the lubricant is preferably below the bottom slot 118 in the divider 116. During operation, the reciprocating movement of the piston 48 creates pressure pulses within the internal cavity 30 of the engine 20. The lubricant moves in response to the movement of the piston 48. The counterweight 76 agitates the lubricant or oil and blow-by gas within the inside cavity of the engine 20. As the piston 48 travels in its downward direction during the intake and power strokes, the lubricant is forced through the main bearing 70 to lubricate the bearings

70 and 68, the worm-helical or spiral gears 74 and 104, the crankshaft 80, the cam shaft 98 and the bushings 94 and 96 due to increased pressure in the engine cavity. The action of the cam gear 104 will cause some lubricant to enter aperture 160 and migrate to the valve chamber 156. Moreover, any oil found in piston bore 50 could be pushed into aperture 5 162 to also lubricate the valve chamber 156. On the upward strokes, i.e., the compression and exhaust strokes, the lubricant will be drawn back over the just mentioned areas to further lubricate the components due to a partial vacuum in the engine cavity. The reciprocating movement of the piston 48 moves the lubricant back and forth within the internal cavity of the engine 20. The invention does not require a control valve to control 10 movement of the lubricant.

There are at least a couple of aspects to consider when discussing lubricating the engine 20. First, there is resistance or energy lost as the counterweight 76 agitates the lubricant and blow-by gas. Second, it is undesirable to supply too much lubricant to the piston bore 50 and the valve chamber 156 which, if did occur, could result in damage to 15 the engine 20.

As noted, since the static oil level is preferably below the bottom slot 118 in an upright condition, the counterweight 76 preferably does not dip directly into the lubricant, although direct dipping could be used. The more direct contact made with the lubrication, the more energy that is lost from the engine 20. The least amount of lubricant resistance is 20 desired. As mentioned, the counterweight 76 is designed to throw the lubricant away from the main bearing 70 and towards the sump cover 32. The design of the counterweight 76 also limits the amount of lubricant slung into the piston bore 50. In this way, only a limited amount of oil will find its way to the valve chamber 156. The counterweight 76 is designed to reduce the amount of drag that the counterweight 76 has when it is rotating 25 through and churning up the lubricant. In addition, the counterweight 76 design reduces windage which creates a more efficient engine. It should be noted that although the counterweight 76 is shown and described as the device which agitates the lubricant and blow-by gas within the internal cavity, a separate agitator may be provided to accomplish the same results. Such an agitator may be a splasher or mixer attached to the rotating 30 crankshaft or connecting rod, or caused to rotate in any number of other ways.

In an upside down (spark plug down) position such as that shown in FIG. 13, the extended piston bore 50, the divider 116, the slots 118, 120 and 122, and the passageways 160 and 162 (FIGS. 2 and 3) ensure that the engine will continue to function properly, for

at least a limited amount of time, or be capable of storage in this position without fouling the engine. During operation, the changing pressure pulses, the blow-by gas and the agitator 76 will cause the lubricant to be mixed and moved inside the cavity of the engine 20. Although some oil will be flung into the piston bore 50, not a significant amount will 5 go there. Also, it should be noted that the access passageway 162 is located such that the oil ring 166 in the piston 48 does not travel over or past the passageway 162 as the piston 48 reciprocates within the piston bore 50 (FIG.5). Otherwise, it would be possible for lubricant found within the valve chamber 156 to find its way into the combustion chamber 39, thereby burning off the lubricant and creating excess emissions.

10 The crank chamber 124 includes the area or space 136 between the extended piston bore 50 and divider 116 for receiving oil or lubricant when the engine is tilted or inverted as representatively shown in FIG. 13. During storage, the slots 118, 120 and 122 will allow most of the oil to remain in the oil reservoir 126, and the area 136 between the divider 116 and the piston bore 50 will hold most of the remaining lubricant. Any oil left 15 in the valve spring chamber 156 during use is thought to be negligible and will not significantly affect the operation of the motor. Importantly, because of the positioning of the slots 120 and 122 above the oil in the inverted position, the valve chamber 156 will not be able to receive any significant amount of oil.

20 To further explain certain features of the present invention, the oil reservoir 126 should be in communication with the crank chamber 124 so as to allow for proper lubrication of the engine 20 in substantially any operational position. The various described slots, passageways, holes and apertures perform at least two functions. First, if the engine 20 is operating in a sideways condition, the slot 120 or 122 in the divider wall 116 facing down towards the ground allows oil to travel into the crank chamber 124 with 25 the pressure pulsations in a manner similar to when the engine is in an upright state during which lubricant moves through the bottom slot 118. Second, if for whatever reason, a significant amount of lubricant finds its way to the crank chamber 124 during operation and the engine 20 is turned off and turned upside down or sideways for storage, the side slots 120 and 122 allow oil to migrate from the crank chamber 124 to the oil reservoir 126 30 so as to prevent the piston bore 50 and valve chamber 126 from undesirably receiving a significant amount of lubricant.

Another important feature of the present invention is to be able to vent blow-by gas from the crank chamber 124 by separating the blow-by gas from the lubricant/blow-by gas

mixture. As described, the cam shaft 98 is provided with a hollow passageway 152 and properly positioned radial passages 154. With reference to FIG. 2, one end of the cam shaft cover 108 includes a nipple 168 which is attached to a flexible hose 170 (schematically shown). Although not shown, there may be an oil seal placed between the 5 cam cover 108 and engine housing 28. As the pressure pulse forces the lubricant/blow-by gas mixture through the main bearing 70, the blow-by gas is driven into the radial holes 154 and passageway 152 while the oil is prevented from passing through the holes 154 as a result of the centrifugal action of the operating cam shaft 98. The blow-by gas travels 10 through the cam cover 108 and nipple 168 affixed to cam cover 108, through the flexible hose 170 and back into the intake of the carburetor 42. A check valve may be positioned between the end of the cam shaft 98 and the air intake system to maintain the negative pressure created within the engine.

FIG. 14 shows a cross-sectional view of the four-stroke engine according to the present invention with a starter mechanism 172 attached to the sump cover plate 32 with 15 screws 30. A crankshaft adapter 174 is connected to crank pin 78. A clutch bearing 176 is press fitted around the crankshaft adapter 174. A starter shaft 178 is positioned around the clutch bearing 176 and is keyed or molded to the starter 180. An oil seal or O-ring 181 is placed around the starter shaft 178 to provide a seal between the starter mechanism 172 and the sump cover 32. A thrust washer or bearing 182 is placed on each side of the 20 starter 180. Starter 180 is preferably a rewind starter having a pull cord 184. Locating the starter mechanism 172 or the sump cover 32 on the back of the engine 20 enables the operator to have easy access to the pull cord. Further, integrally connecting the starter to the piston 48 through connecting rod 84 and the crankshaft 80 through the crank pin 78 reduces the rope pull force needed to start the engine 20. Alternatively, other starter 25 assemblies may be utilized.

FIGS. 15-18 depict a layout for the dies used to manufacture an engine housing according to the present invention. The engine housing is designed to permit two engine housings to be produced using one die tool and one die casting machine. The engine housing is designed to include walls which allow for the needed draft angles given 30 different orientations for each engine housing within the die tool. The draft angles enable the engine housing to readily separate from the die. The engine housing is designed to permit slide tooling access (i.e., the piston and cam shaft bores) when two engine housings are fabricated from one tool. In FIGS. 15-18, the dies 188 and 190 are formed so that the

centerlines of the engine cylinder bores (which are parallel to direction C) are parallel to each other. Boxes 194 and 196 represent the edges of the tool. By positioning the dies in this manner, the inserts used to form the dies are inserted only along a few directions, i.e., in directions A, B and C. This die configuration reduces the overall space required to 5 make the engine housings, while still enabling two engine housings to be made at the same time. The two die halves 188 and 190 are parted along parting line 192. It should be noted that the back wall of the engine housing is not shown and is separately formed and then fastened to the engine housing with bolts or other suitable fasteners. It is, however, possible that the back wall could be formed integral with the engine housing according to 10 the principles set forth above. It should also be noted that the parting line 192 could be moved to another location. The draft angles of the engine housing outer walls would change accordingly so as to accommodate the new location of the parting line.

FIGS. 39-40 depict another embodiment of a layout for the die 529 used to manufacture an engine housing according to the present invention. In this embodiment, it 15 is still possible to permit two engine housings to be produced using one die tool and one die casting machine. The die 529 is laid out in such a manner that the centerlines of the piston bores are parallel but in opposite directions. Further, both cavities are oriented such that the stationary bodies of material compose the internal features of the oil reservoir, the barrier wall and the inner crank chamber. The engine housing is designed to include walls 20 of which are needed for draft angles parting line jumps, and slide shut-offs for the given orientation within the die layout. By orienting the die in such a prescribed manner, the inserts for the die pieces are inserted only along a few directions, i.e., in directions D, E, F and G. This embodiment of the die layout also serves to minimize the overall space necessary to manufacture the two-engine housings out of a single die.

25 With such a die layout, the datum targets or reference features for both cavities are created by the same piece of stationary material. By having these references on the same piece of stationary material, there is less variance to accommodate between the casting in the machining of the finished engine housing. This further translates into less variance in the finished-machined engine housing even though the casting is being derived from two 30 separate cavities.

As shown, this embodiment also integrally creates the flywheel back-plate into the engine housing casting. It is further desirable to gate 531 the casting into the deck of the cylinder and route the gates parallel to directions F and G into the cavities.

The engine 20 shown in FIG. 1 has been described in such a manner to identify the various aspects of the present invention. However, the features of the present invention described above may be incorporated into other four-stroke internal combustion engine configurations. Moreover, the features identified above may be slightly modified to 5 accommodate different engine designs. As such, FIGS. 19-40 illustrate another four-stroke internal combustion engine in which the features previously described may be employed and which incorporates additional inventive features not yet previously described. It should be noted that the features specifically described in relation to FIGS. 19-40 may be incorporated into the engine described in FIGS. 1-18, or other engines.

10 FIG. 19 illustrates a four-stroke internal combustion engine 300 according to the present invention. The engine 300 is shown as used in a power trimmer but may be used in other devices as described for the engine of FIG. 1.

Again, before describing in detail the various features of the present invention, the components shown in FIGS. 21 and 22 are identified for the sake of clarity. Many of the 15 components are assembled in the same or similar manner as described in reference to FIG. 1 or as generally understood by those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the manner of assembly is not described in great detail below except if the manner of assembly pertains to specific features of the present invention. Greater detail of such features will be provided in reference to the drawings to follow when needed. Shown in FIG. 21 are spark 20 plug 302; cylinder head screws 304; cylinder 306; cylinder head gasket 308; compression rings 310 and 312 and oil ring 313 which are appropriately positioned in annular slots located in piston 314; connecting rod 316 and connecting rod bearings, preferably needle roller bearings, 318 and 320; exhaust valve 322, intake valve 324, valve springs 326 and valve spring keepers 328; engine housing 330; valve cover 332 and associated screws 334; 25 flywheel 336, crankshaft adapter 338, ignition coil 340, wiring assemblies 342 and 346, and screws 344 all of which are part of a starter assembly; muffler mounting bolts 350; muffler 352; and blower housing 348 which is part of an overall shroud further described below.

Shown in FIG. 22 are sealing O-ring 366 and oil gauge 367; intake gasket 368, 30 intake isolator 369 and screws 370; carburetor gasket 372, carburetor 374 and O-ring 376; air filter assembly 378, screws 380 and air filter cover 382; wrist pin 384 and star washer wrist pin retainer 386; oil sealing ring 388, roller bearing 390, crankshaft 392 and counterweight 393; sump cover 394 and screws 396; muffler housing 398 which is part of

an overall shroud further described below and mounting screws 400; tappets 402, cam shaft 404, cam shaft cover 406; screws 408 and breather tube 410; check valve 411; fuel tank 412 having fuel line 414, opposing shoulders 416; and filter material 418 which is placed around shoulders 416 as further described below.

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Other components and features not clearly shown in FIGS. 21 and 22 will be described below. Moreover, the significance of any of the components shown in FIGS. 21 and 22 or their interaction, will be described below in conjunction with the principles of the present invention.

FIG. 23 more clearly shows the engine housing 330 with the muffler 352 attached thereto by mounting bolts 350. The engine housing 330 includes a crankcase 420 and a cylinder 422. The cylinder head 306 (FIG. 21), which at least partially defines a combustion chamber, is disposed adjacent to the cylinder 422. A crank chamber 426 is disposed within the crankcase 420. An oil reservoir 428 is also disposed within the crankcase 420 and is in fluid flow communication with the crank chamber 426, preferably, through slot 430 and opposing holes 432 (only one being shown) disposed in a divider 433. The divider 433 is disposed within the crankcase 420 and at least partially divides the crank chamber 426 and the oil reservoir 428. A plurality of holes 434 are provided in the engine housing 330 so that the sump cover 394 and sump cover gasket can be attached thereto. The engine housing 330 also includes an oversized wrist pin boss 436. The wrist pin boss 436 may be integrally formed with the divider 433. The function of the wrist pin boss 436 will be further described below. The engine housing 330 also includes a flywheel back plate 438 with at least one mounting boss 440, the function of which will be described below.

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FIG. 24 is an exploded perspective view of FIG. 23 showing how the muffler 352 is connected to the engine housing 330. The cylinder 422 includes an exhaust port 442 and an intake port 444 (FIG. 25). Preferably, the intake port 444 and exhaust port 442 are elliptical in shape thereby enabling the overall height of the engine housing 330 to be reduced. This will naturally reduce the overall weight of the engine housing, which is an especially important factor for hand-held power tools. The walls of the ports 442 and 444 are provided with sufficient material so as to be able to support the weight of the engine housing 330 and cylinder head 306 disposed thereabove.

30

The muffler 352 includes a boss 446 which is preferably elliptical. The boss 446 extends into the exhaust port 442. Mounting bolts 350 extend through holes 448 in the

muffler 352 and into holes 450 formed in the cylinder 422. Preferably, the holes 448 are spaced apart and positioned on opposite sides of the exhaust port 442 to maximize the stability of the muffler 352 with respect to its connection to the cylinder 422.

FIGS. 26 and 27 are enlarged partial cross-sectional views taken along line 26-26 of FIG. 23 showing preferred alternative mounting connections between the muffler 352 and cylinder 422. FIG. 26 shows the engine housing 330 having an angled, step sealing surface 452 located in the exhaust port 442 of cylinder 422. The end 454 of boss 446 can mate against the exhaust port sealing surface 452 to substantially prevent exhaust from undesirably escaping into the environment. Preferably, a sealing gasket 456 is positioned between the end 454 of the boss 446 and the sealing surface 452 to even better prevent the exhaust from escaping.

FIG. 27 shows the outside liner of the boss 446 of the muffler 352 surrounded by the surface 458 of the exhaust port 442, thereby defining a clearance space 460 therebetween. Although surface 458 is shown as an angled surface, it may take on other configurations so long as clearance space is provided between the muffler 352 and the exhaust port 442. A gasket 462 is positioned between the muffler 352 and cylinder 422 or engine housing 330 to seal the clearance space 460, thereby preventing exhaust from escaping into the atmosphere. Preferably, the gasket 462 is an enlarged gasket which also serves as a heat shield between the engine housing 330 and the muffler 352.

The muffler 352 (FIG. 24) preferably includes a pair of outer shells 464 and 466 having respective mounting bolt holes 448 for the mounting bolts 350. An inner shell or baffle plate (not shown) is preferably located between the outer shells 464 and 466. The inner shell also is adapted to allow the mounting bolts 350 to pass therethrough. The baffle plate is designed to reduce noise. Outer shell 464 includes a shoulder 470 which extends around an edge of the outer shell 464. Outer shell 466 includes a flange (not shown) which extends around an edge of the outer shell 466. Upon assembly, the shoulder 470 receives the flange such that if exhaust does leak out of muffler 352, the exhaust will leak away from the engine. Although not shown, a deflector may be placed over the exhaust holes 372 (FIG. 23) of the muffler 352 to protect the operator from receiving a direct blast of exhaust.

Given the nature of the four-stroke engine according to the principles of the present invention, it is desirable to provide an economical engine with features which allow the engine to be easily assembled. One feature is to use the same engine housing 330 for

engines having different horsepower ratings, simply by changing the connecting rod 316 (FIG. 21) and thus, the length of the piston throw. To accomplish this feature, the oversized wrist pin boss 436 (FIG. 23) is provided. The wrist pin boss 436 can be machined at its upper end 474 to provide an access hole (not shown) in the crankcase 420 for a first piston throw, and the wrist pin boss 436 can be machined at its lower end 476 to provide an access hole (not shown) in the crankcase 420 for a second piston throw. After the wrist pin boss 436 is properly machined, the wrist pin 384 (FIG. 22) is inserted through the crankcase access hole and into the piston access hole to connect the piston 314 (FIG. 21) to the connecting rod 316 (FIG. 21). Accordingly, the same engine housing 330 can 10 be used for different sized engines. FIG. 31 shows a completed assembly on such engine. FIG. 32 shows the piston 314 in its bottom most dead center position so that the wrist pin 384 can be appropriately positioned within the engine.

FIG. 28 is an enlarged view of the engine housing 330 of FIG. 24 without the muffler 352. As shown, the divider 433 defines a path 478 which extends substantially 15 about the divider 433 and over the wrist pin boss 436. The path 478 allows lubricant found in the oil reservoir 428 to flow around a substantial portion of the divider 433 to further enhance the lubricating and storage features according to the principles of the present invention. The path 478 allows the amount of lubricant found on both sides of the divider 433 to equalize when the engine 300 is turned upside down. This further inhibits a 20 substantial amount of the lubricant from migrating into the crank chamber 426.

Another feature which reduces assembly costs of the engine thereby reducing the overall cost of the engine relates to the manner of assembling a shroud to the engine housing. As noted with reference to FIG. 23, the flywheel back plate 438 is provided with at least one mounting boss 440. FIG. 25 is a perspective view of the engine housing 330 25 of FIG. 23 only from a different perspective. As shown, the opposite side of the flywheel back plate 438 also includes at least one mounting boss 480. Upon assembling the engine 300, an assembly fixture (not shown) is adapted to hold the engine 300. Each mounting boss 440 and 480 receives a separate pin (not shown) of the assembly fixture to secure the engine housing 330 to the assembly fixture. A shroud 482 (FIG. 20) is provided to at least 30 partially surround the engine housing 330. Preferably, the shroud comprises the blower housing 348 (see also FIG. 21) and muffler housing 398 (see also FIG. 22). Shroud 482 includes at least one slot 484. Each slot 484 is designed to surround a respective pin of the assembly fixture extending out of the mounting bosses 440 and 480 when the shroud 482

is positioned around the engine housing 330. The shroud 482 can be attached to the engine housing 330 by threading screws 486 (FIG. 20) into respective holes such as hole 488 (FIG. 25) of the engine housing 330. Thus, the entire engine 300 can be substantially assembled while remaining attached to a single assembly fixture.

5 Another feature of the shroud 482 is that the muffler housing 398 preferably includes a plurality of raised portions 490 (FIG. 31). Thus, if desired, the engine 300 may be placed on the ground to rest on the raised portions 490. It should be noted that the blower housing 492' of FIG. 31 is slightly different from the blower housing shown in FIG. 20. The purpose of this is to show that various suitable configurations of the shroud 10 482 are possible without affecting the scope of the present invention.

As shown in FIG. 20, the shroud 482 is provided with an opening 494 which surrounds the intake port 444 (FIG. 25). An intake isolator 369 (FIG. 22) having an air/fuel passageway 496 (FIGS. 29 and 30) extending therethrough is provided. The intake isolator 369 is mounted to the engine housing 330 so that the air/fuel passageway 496 is 15 aligned with the intake port 444. The intake isolator 496 is positioned within the opening 494 of the shroud 482 to substantially ensure that cooling air passing between the engine housing 330 and the shroud 482 cannot escape through the opening 494 in the shroud 482. Preferably, the intake isolator 369 includes an integrally formed back wall 498 and a side wall 500 (FIG. 22) to accomplish this feature.

20 To further reduce manufacturing costs, the crankcase 420, the cylinder 422 and the back plate 438 are cast as a single component. In a preferred embodiment, the engine housing 330 further includes at least one fin 502 integrally formed thereto (FIG. 28). The fin 502 extends from the back plate 438 and beneath the crankcase 420 for stability and cooling purposes.

25 Although the shroud 482 may be of many different designs consistent with the principles of the present invention, the shroud 482 is designed to hold the fuel tank 412. As best shown in FIG. 31, the shroud 482 is provided with a pair of opposed channels 504 (only one is shown). The outwardly extending shoulders 416 (see also FIG. 22) are received by the respective channels 504 so that the fuel tank 412 is held by the shroud 482. 30 The filler material 418 (see also FIG. 22), preferably a polyethylene, high-density, closed cell, high-temperature and gasoline-resistant foam material, is positioned between each channel 504 and the respective shoulder 416 to provide a tight fit between the shroud 482 and the fuel tank 412. The fuel line 414 (FIG. 22) includes a fuel filter 506 attached to the

end of the fuel line 414 disposed within the fuel tank 412. It should be noted that the extra line shown in FIG. 22 is a purge line. The fuel filter 506 acts as a weight such that during operation of the engine, if the engine is tipped, the weighted fuel line 414 swings to the bottom of the fuel tank 412 to ensure that fuel is picked up by the fuel line 414.

5 Another aspect of the present invention concerns the starter assembly 507 shown in FIG. 33. The blower housing 348 is provided with a hub 508 having an inwardly facing extension 510. The hub 508 is adapted to fit over the crankshaft 392 (FIG. 22) or crankshaft adapter 338 (FIG. 21). The starter assembly 507 which includes the pulley 516, rope 518 and spring 520 is positioned onto the hub 508. A star washer 514 is placed over 10 the hub extension 510 so as to dig into the extension material. The star washer 514 holds the starter assembly 507 in place with respect to the blower housing 348. This arrangement eliminates the need for separate mounting bosses and fasteners typically needed to hold the starter assembly in place. Such mounting bosses and fasteners generally block the cooling air flow by a fan.

15 FIGS. 34-38 show various views of the pulley 516. The spring 520 (FIG. 33) is positioned on one side 522 of the pulley 516 having an appropriately shaped annular recess 524. The opposite side 526 of the pulley 516 includes a plurality of spokes 528 for engagement with a flywheel such as flywheel 336 shown in FIG. 21. The rope 518 includes a knot 530 on one end thereof which is held in a chamber 532 formed in a hub 20 534 of the pulley 516 beneath the pulley rope portion 536. The rope 518 extends through a hole 538 in the pulley rope portion 536 and is wrapped around the pulley 516. The other end of the rope 518 is attached to a starter handle 540 (FIG. 20).

25 The foregoing description of the present invention has been presented for purposes of illustration and description. Furthermore, the description is not intended to limit the invention in the form disclosed herein. Consequently, variations and modifications commensurate with the above teachings in skill or knowledge of the relevant art, are within the scope of the present invention. The embodiments described herein are further intended to explain the best modes known for practicing the invention and to enable others skilled in the art to utilize the invention as such, or other embodiments and with various 30 modifications required by the particular applications or uses of the present invention. It is intended that the appended claims are to be construed to include alternative embodiments to the extent permitted by the prior art.

Various features of the invention are set forth in the following claims.

Where the terms "comprise", "comprises", "comprised" or "comprising" are used in this specification, they are to be interpreted as specifying the presence of the stated features, integers, steps or components referred to, but not to preclude the presence or addition of one or more other feature, integer, step,

5 component or group thereof.

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The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. A four stroke internal combustion engine including:

an engine housing, including a crankcase and a cylinder;

an intake valve and an exhaust valve disposed within the engine housing;

5 a crank chamber disposed within said crankcase;

a crankshaft supported for rotation within said crank chamber;

a piston operably interconnected with said crankshaft for reciprocation within said cylinder in response to rotation of said crankshaft;

an oil reservoir disposed within said crankcase, and in fluid flow communication

10 with said crank chamber;

a divider at least partially separating said crank chamber from said oil reservoir;

a depending wall extending at least partially into said crank chamber to define a lubricant receiving space between said divider and said depending wall; and

15 an agitator located in the engine housing that moves lubricant in the engine housing during operation of the engine.

2. An engine as set forth in claim 1, wherein the lubricant receiving space

includes a first portion between the divider and a first side of the depending wall, and a

second portion between the divider and an opposite side of the depending wall.

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3. An engine as set forth in claim 2, wherein the lubricant is able to flow from the first portion of the lubricant receiving space to the second portion of the lubricant receiving space.

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4. An engine as set forth in claim 1, wherein the divider is substantially U-shaped.

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5. An engine as set forth in claim 4, wherein one side of the divider wall is exposed to the oil reservoir and an opposite side of the divider wall is exposed to the crank chamber.

6. An engine as set forth in claim 1, wherein the divider partially defines a

flow path which extends around the divider, such that lubricant in the oil reservoir is able to flow around a substantial portion of the divider.



7. An engine as set forth in claim 1, wherein the flow path is substantially circular.

5 8. An engine as set forth in claim 1, wherein the divider includes an opening, such that the crank chamber and the oil reservoir are in fluid flow communication through the opening.

10 9. An engine as set forth in claim 8, wherein the divider further includes a second opening and a third opening, the second opening positioned substantially opposite to the third opening, the second and third openings being located at predetermined distances from the first opening, such that the crank chamber and the oil reservoir are also in fluid flow communication through the second and third openings.

15 10. An engine according to claim 8, wherein the divider further includes a scraper located adjacent to the opening, the scraper at least partially extending into the crank chamber, such that as the agitator moves past the scraper during operation of the engine, the scraper controls the amount of lubricant which comes into contact with the agitator.

20 11. An engine according to claim 10, wherein an end of the scraper is located approximately 0.020 to 0.060 inches from the agitator when the agitator moves past the scraper.

25 12. An engine as set forth in claim 1, wherein the crank chamber includes a second lubricant receiving space disposed substantially within the crank chamber and substantially around a portion of a crankshaft.

30 13. An engine as set forth in claim 1, further comprising:
a cantilevered crankshaft having opposite ends, the crankshaft being at least partially located within the crank chamber; and
wherein the agitator includes a counterweight which is interconnected with one end of the crankshaft, the counterweight including a wing-tipped, aerodynamic side which reduces windage resistance on the crankshaft and which slings lubricant about the crank



chamber as the crankshaft rotates.

14. An engine as set forth in claim 1, wherein the engine housing, the cylinder, the crank chamber, and the divider are cast as a single unit.

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15. An engine as set forth in claim 14, wherein the engine housing further includes an integrally formed back plate.

10 16. An engine as set forth in claim 15, wherein the engine housing includes at least one external fin integrally formed therewith, said fin extending from the back plate and adjacent the crank chamber.

17. An engine as set forth in claim 1, wherein the engine housing includes an intake port and an exhaust port that are each elliptical in shape.

15

18. A four-stroke internal combustion engine, comprising:
an engine housing including a cylinder;
a cylinder head which at least partially defines a combustion chamber;
an intake valve and an exhaust valve disposed within the engine housing;
20 a crank chamber disposed within the engine housing, the crank chamber including a first beating pocket;
a crankshaft at least partially disposed within the crank chamber;
a first bearing positioned within the first bearing pocket for supporting the crankshaft, the first beating including a front side and a back side;
25 an oil reservoir disposed within the engine housing that is in fluid flow communication with the crank chamber, such that a lubricating fluid can flow from the oil reservoir, through the first bearing, and into a portion of the crank chamber located adjacent the back side of the first beating; and
an agitator located in the engine housing that moves lubricant in the engine housing
30 during operation of the engine.

19. An engine as set forth in claim 18, wherein the engine housing further includes a cylinder side wall, and wherein said crank chamber includes a second beating pocket having a smaller diameter than the first bearing pocket, wherein both the first and



second beating pockets are disposed on the same side of the cylinder side wall, and wherein a second beating is positioned within the second beating pocket to further support the crankshaft.

5 20. An engine as set forth in claim 18, wherein the crankshaft is a cantilevered crankshaft having opposite ends and being substantially disposed within the crank chamber, and wherein the agitator includes a counterweight which is connected to one end of the crankshaft, the counterweight having a locating hole extending therethrough, and the counterweight being positioned adjacent to the beating, such that a tool extending at least 10 through the locating hole of the counterweight contacts the beating for proper insertion of the crankshaft through the beating.

15 21. An engine as set forth in claim 18, wherein the engine housing further includes a valve chamber, the cylinder has a side wall, and a first passageway extends from the cylinder, through the side wall of the cylinder, and into the valve chamber, so that the valve chamber is in communication with the cylinder.

20 22. An engine as set forth in claim 21, wherein the crank chamber is in fluid flow communication with the valve chamber.

25 23. An engine as set forth in claim 22, wherein the engine housing further includes a second passageway extending from the crank chamber into the valve chamber.

30 24. A four stroke internal combustion engine comprising:
an engine housing including a cylinder;
a cylinder head which at least partially defines a combustion chamber, the cylinder head disposed adjacent to the cylinder;
an intake valve and an exhaust valve disposed within the engine housing;
a crank chamber disposed within the engine housing;
a crankshaft at least partially disposed within the crank chamber;
a cam shaft rotatably driven by the crankshaft, the cam shaft being located substantially normal to the crankshaft;
an oil reservoir disposed within the crankcase, the oil reservoir being in fluid flow communication with the crank chamber; and



an agitator located in the engine housing, the agitator moving lubricant within the engine housing during operation of the engine.

25. An engine as set forth in claim 24, wherein the intake valve and the exhaust valve move in response to rotation of the cam shaft, and wherein the valves are disposed substantially normal to the crankshaft.

26. An engine as set forth in claim 24, wherein the intake valve and the exhaust valve are disposed on opposite sides of the crankshaft.

10

27. A four stroke internal combustion engine comprising:
an engine housing including a cylinder;
a cylinder head which at least partially defines a combustion chamber, the cylinder head disposed adjacent to the cylinder;
an intake valve and an exhaust valve disposed within the engine housing;
a crank chamber disposed within the engine housing;
a cantilevered crankshaft at least partially disposed within the crank chamber;
a cam shaft being rotatably driven by the crankshaft, the cam shaft having an axial passageway, and further having a radial passageway which communicates with the crank chamber and with the axial passageway;
a breather passageway having opposite ends, one end of the breather passageway communicating with the axial passageway and the other end of the breather passageway communicating with an air intake system of the engine;
an oil reservoir disposed in the engine housing, the oil reservoir being in fluid flow communication with the crank chamber; and
an agitator located in the engine housing that moves lubricant in the engine housing during operation of the engine.

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28. An engine as set forth in claim 27, wherein the cam shaft includes a cam gear, and wherein the radial passageway extends into the cam gear.

29. An engine as set forth in claim 28, wherein the crankshaft includes a crank gear that engages the cam gear, and wherein the cam shaft is substantially transverse to the crankshaft, such that a tortuous path extends around the crankshaft gear, through the



radial and axial passageways of the cam shaft, and into the intake system of the engine, so that during storage of the engine, the lubricant is inhibited from flowing into the intake system of the engine as a result of the tortuous path.

5 30. An engine according to claim 27, wherein blowby gas flows from the crank chamber, through the radial and axial passageways of the cam shaft, through the breather passageway, and into the air intake system of the engine.

10 31. An engine according to claim 27, further comprising:
a check valve positioned between the cam shaft and the air intake system of the engine.

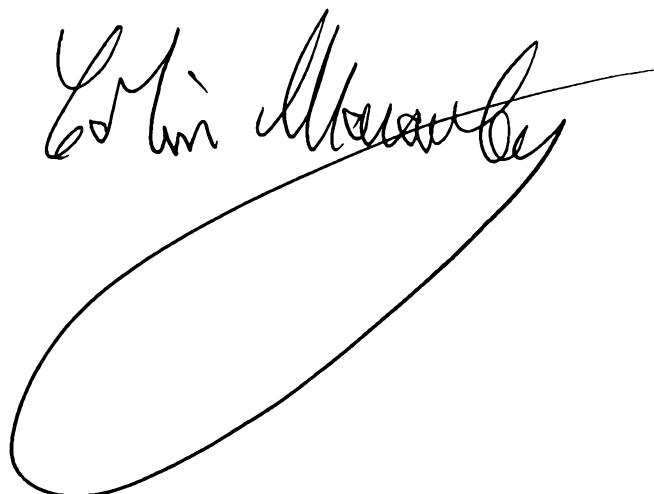
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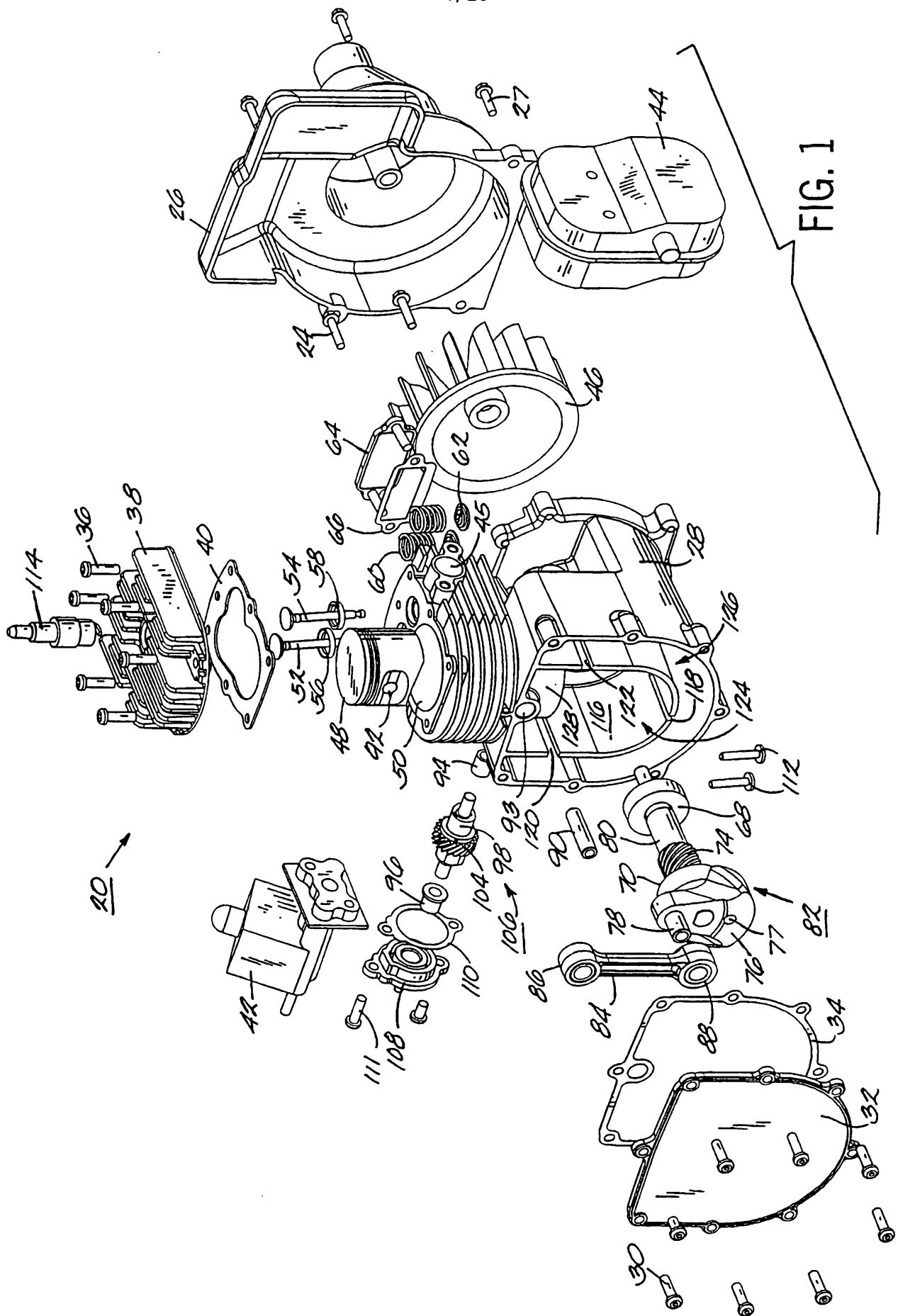
BRIGGS & STRATTON CORPORATION

By their Patent Attorneys:

CALLINAN LAWRIE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin Ilkley", is written over a large, thin-lined oval.

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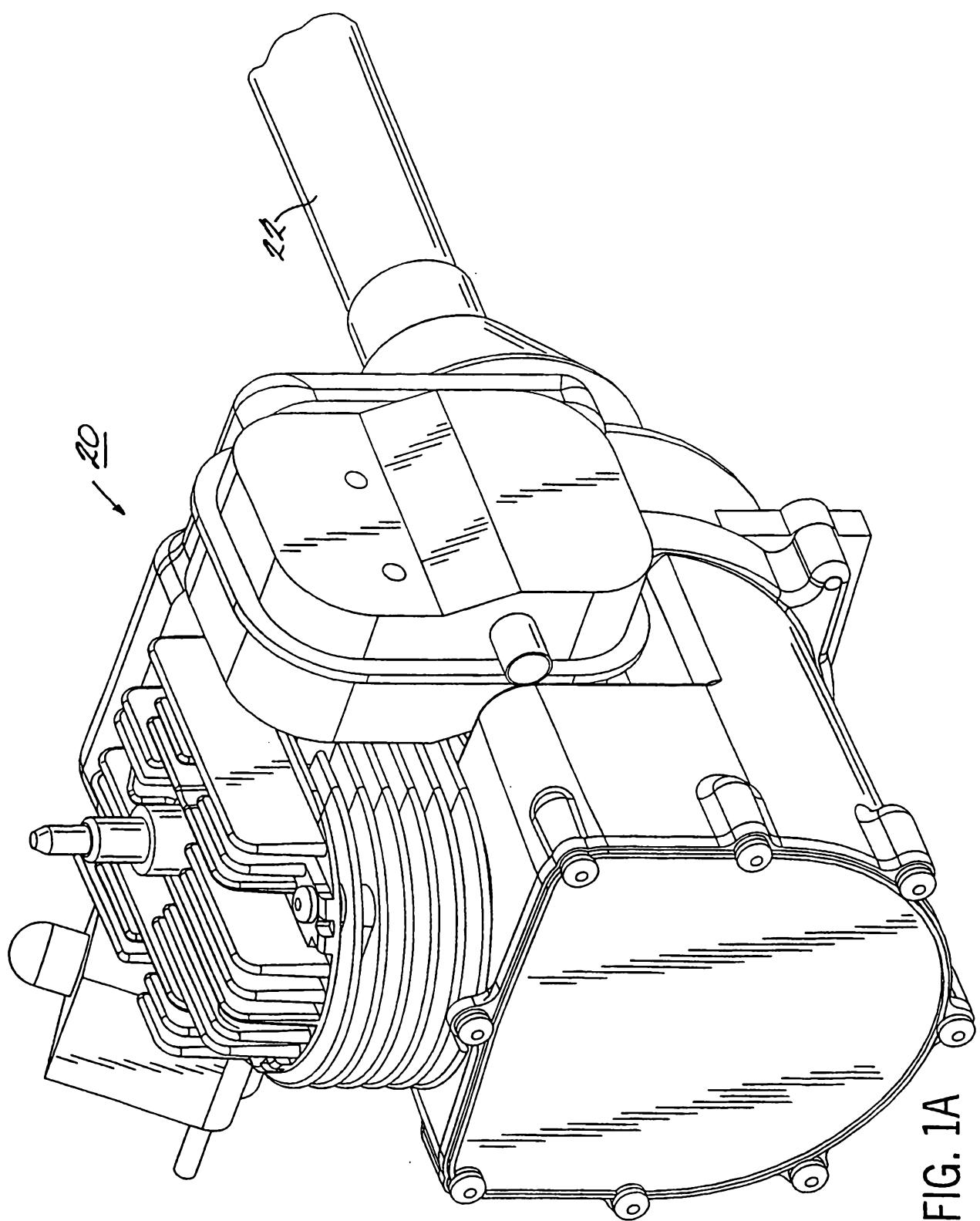
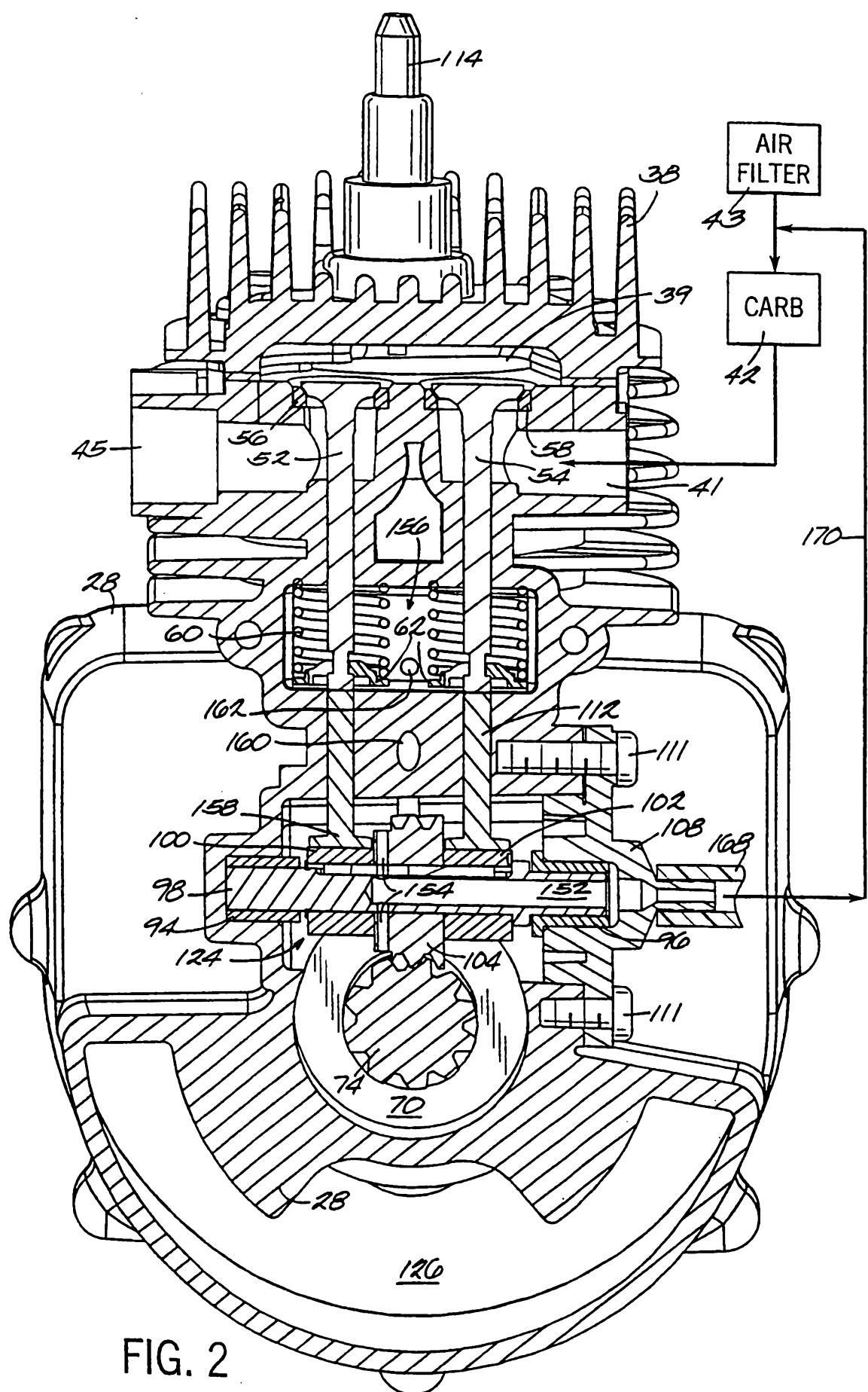


FIG. 1A



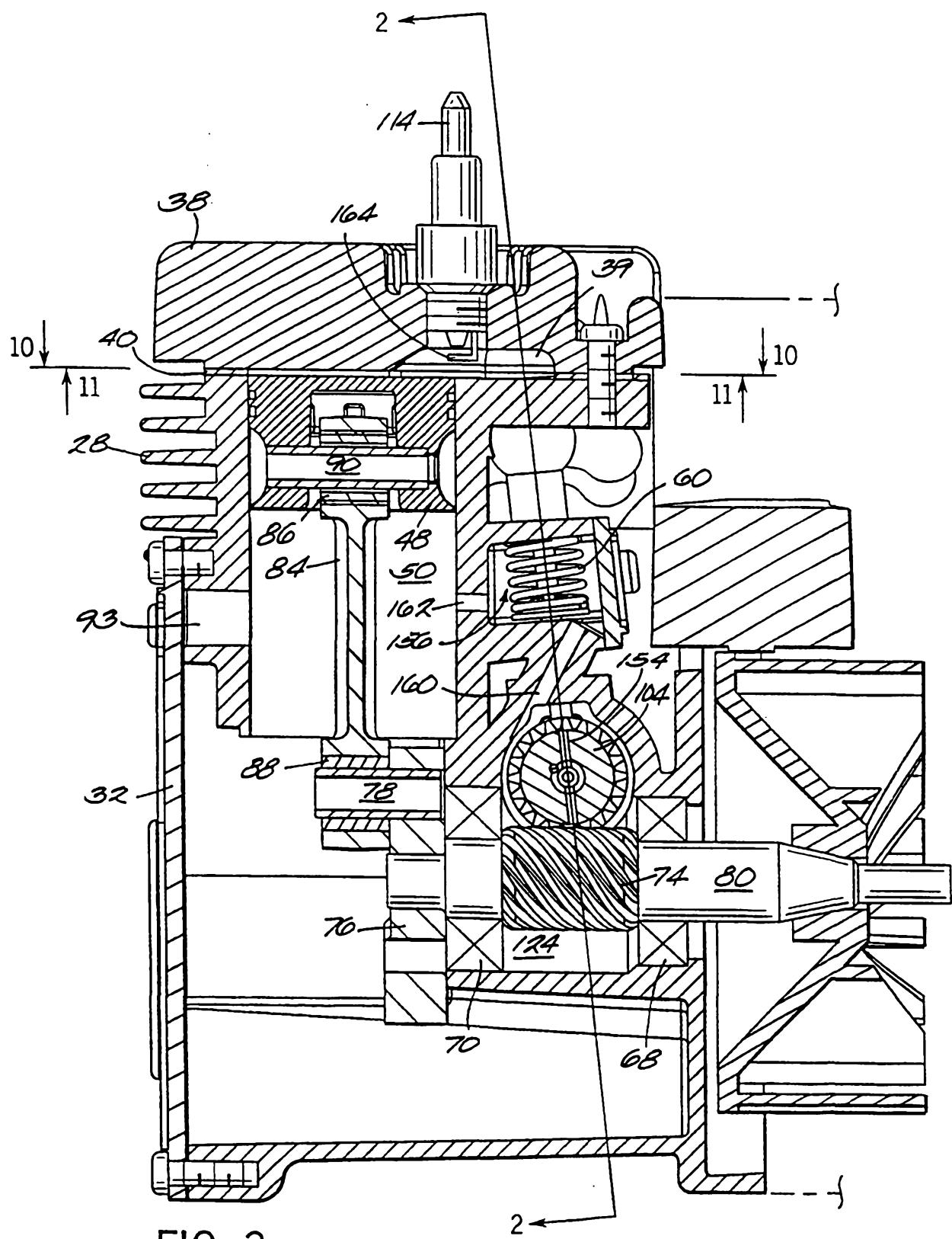


FIG. 3

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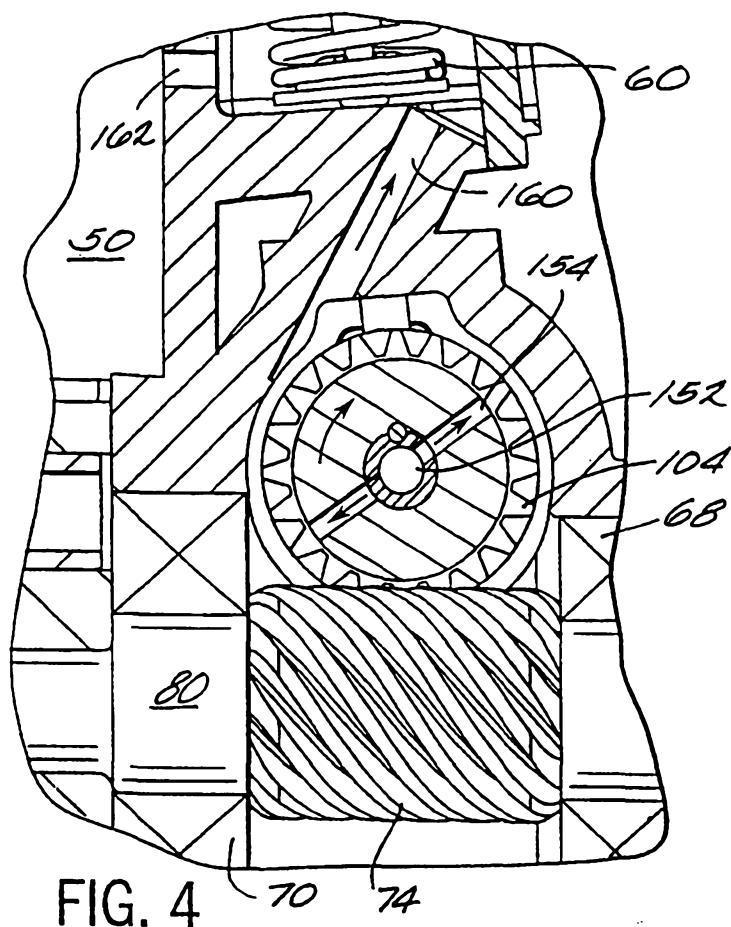


FIG. 4

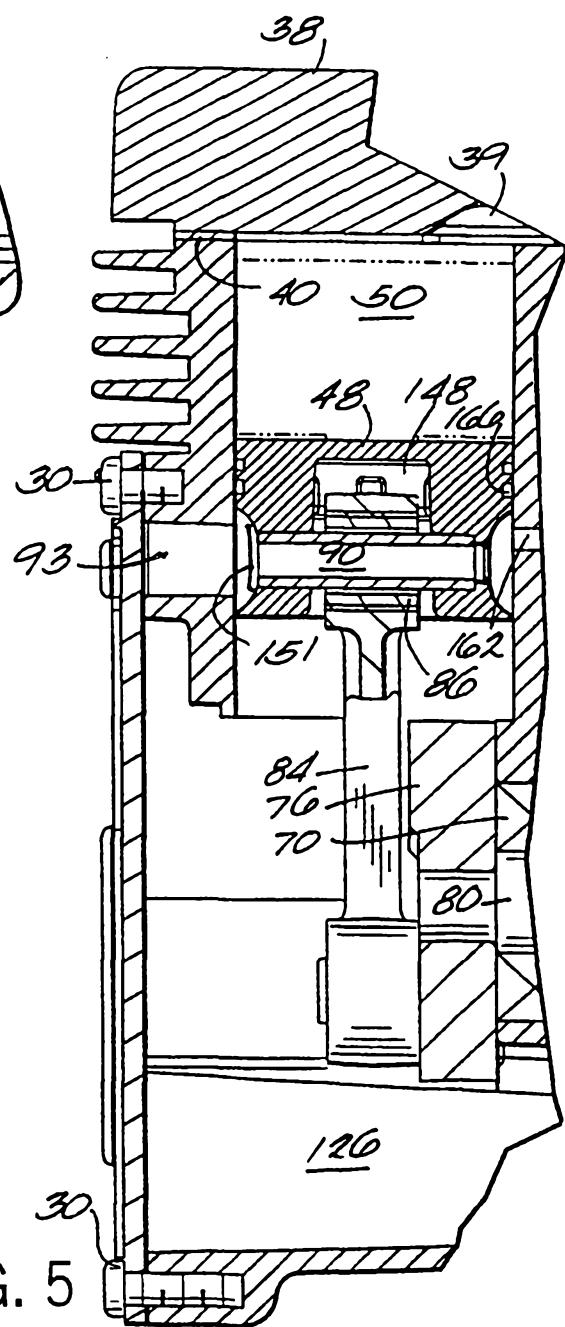
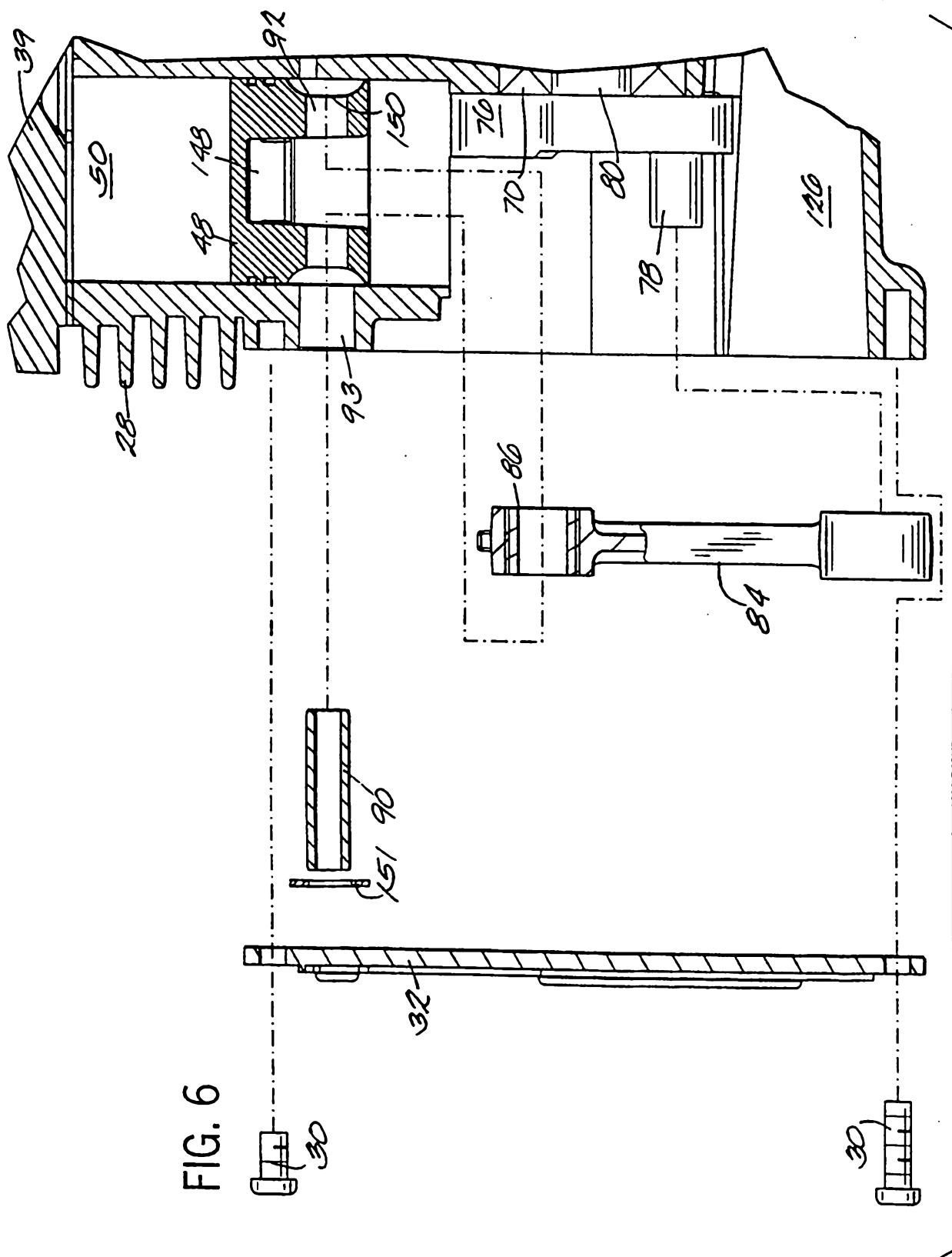
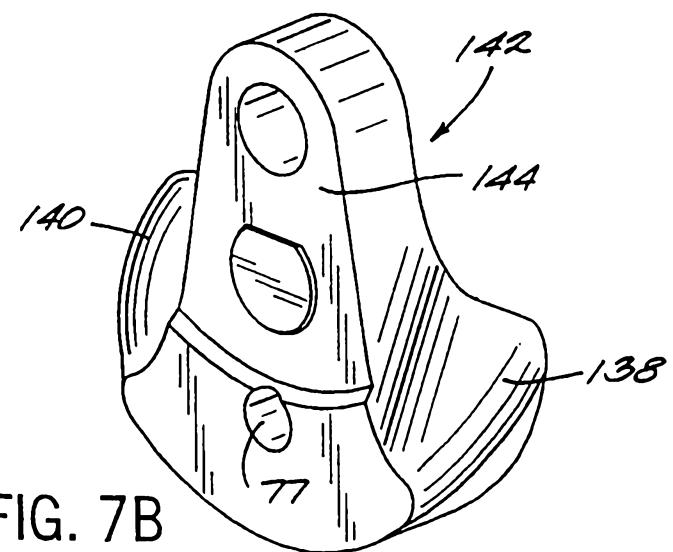
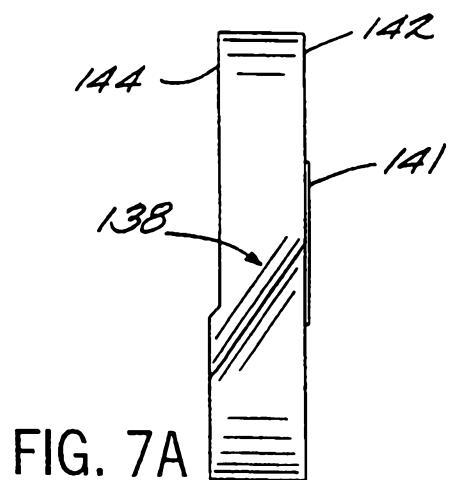
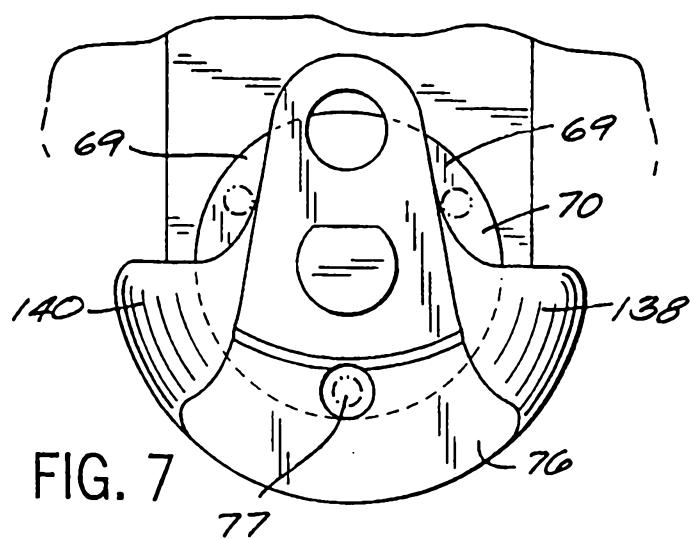


FIG. 5



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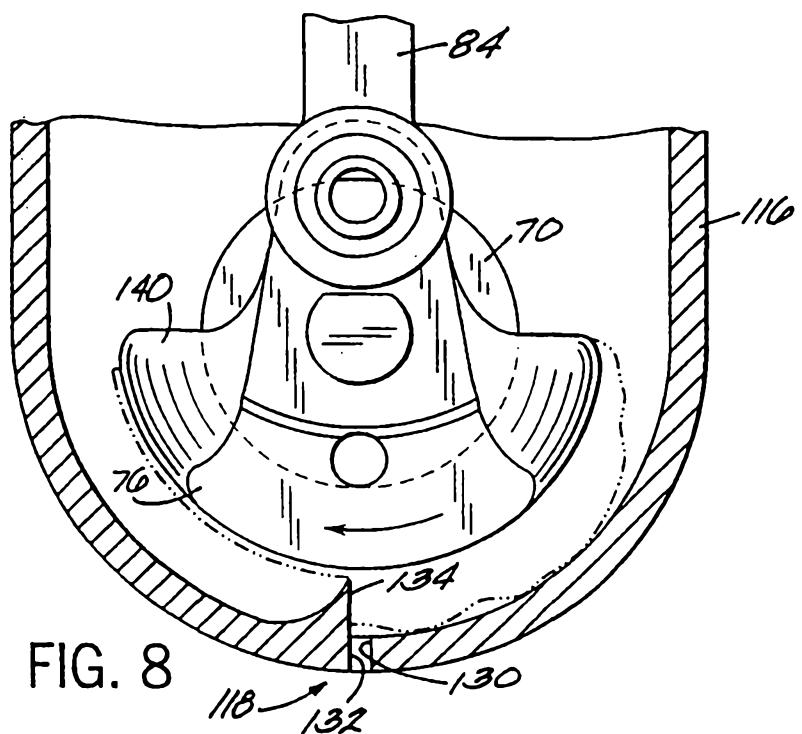


FIG. 8

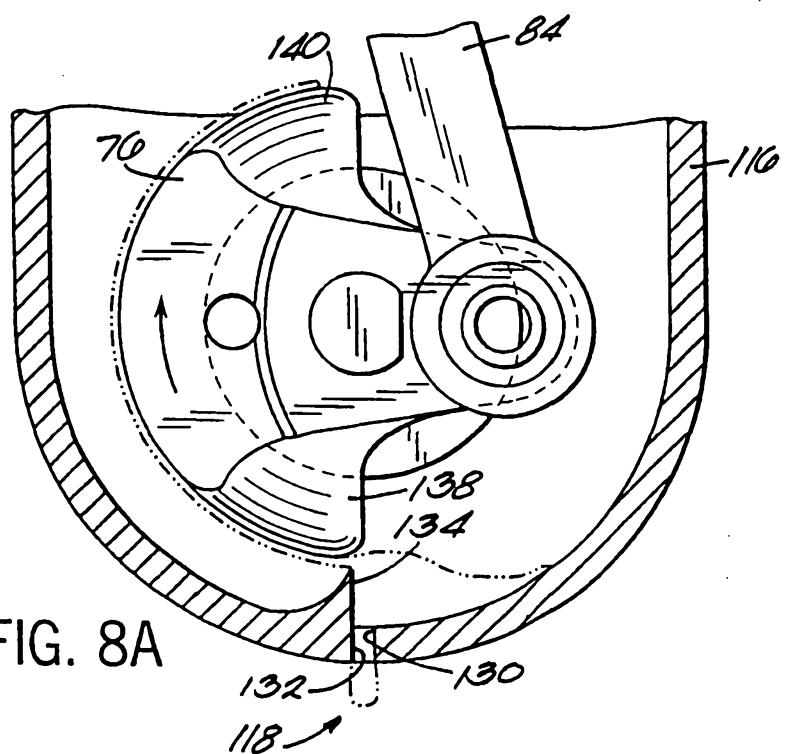


FIG. 8A

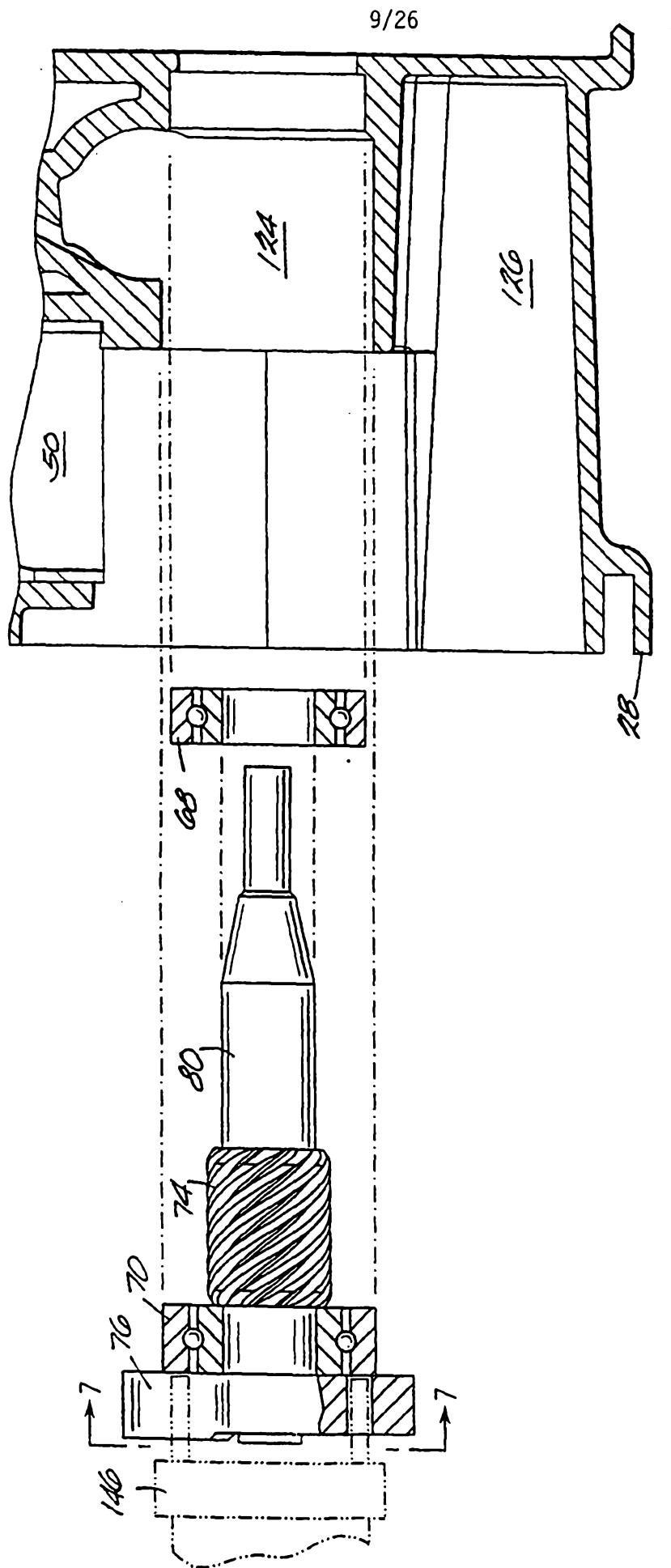


FIG. 9

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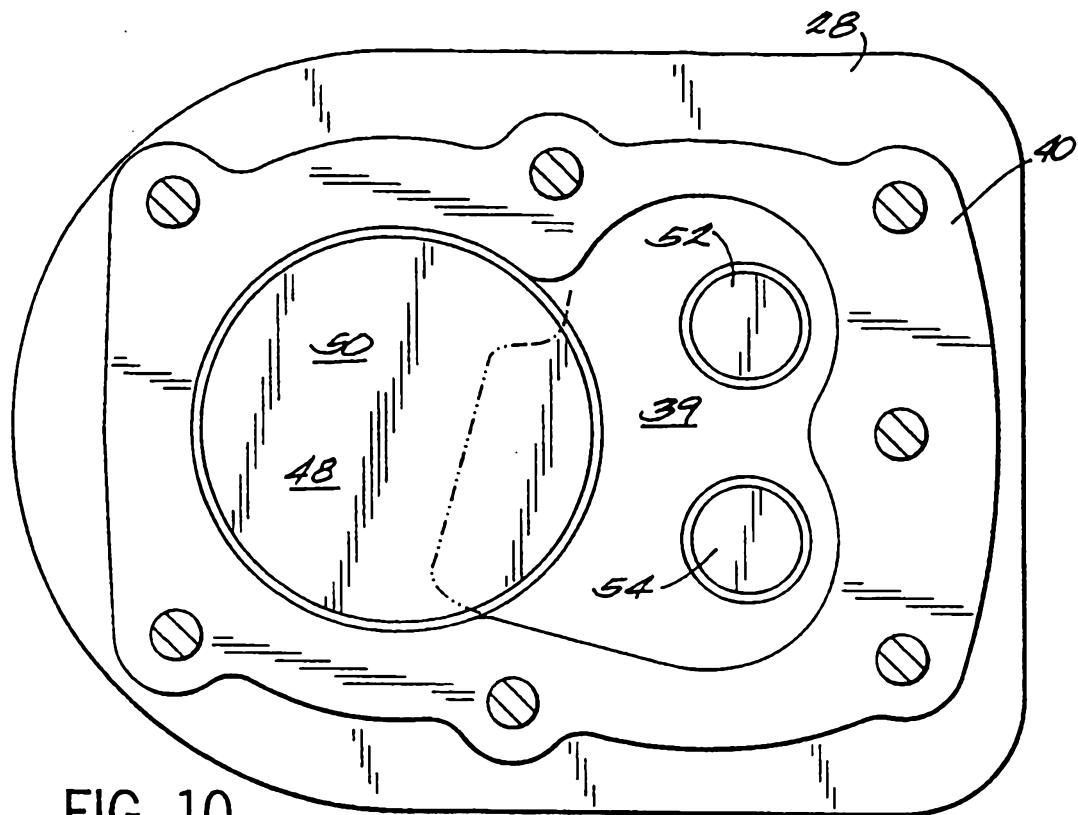


FIG. 10

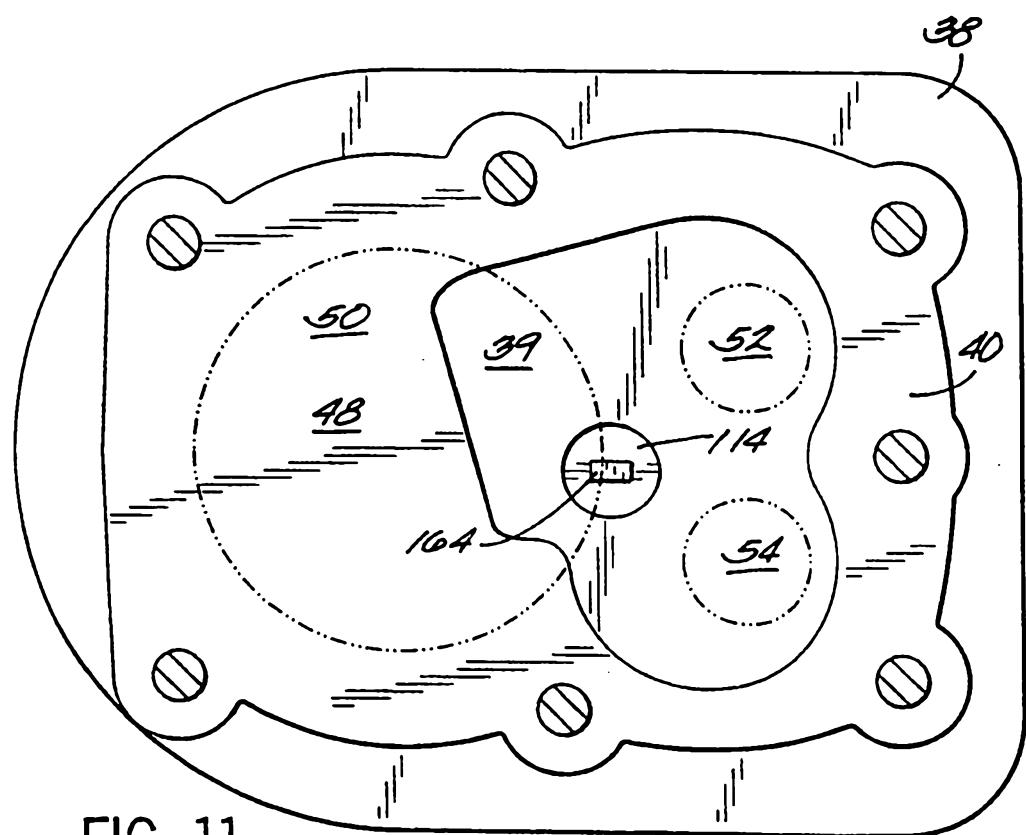
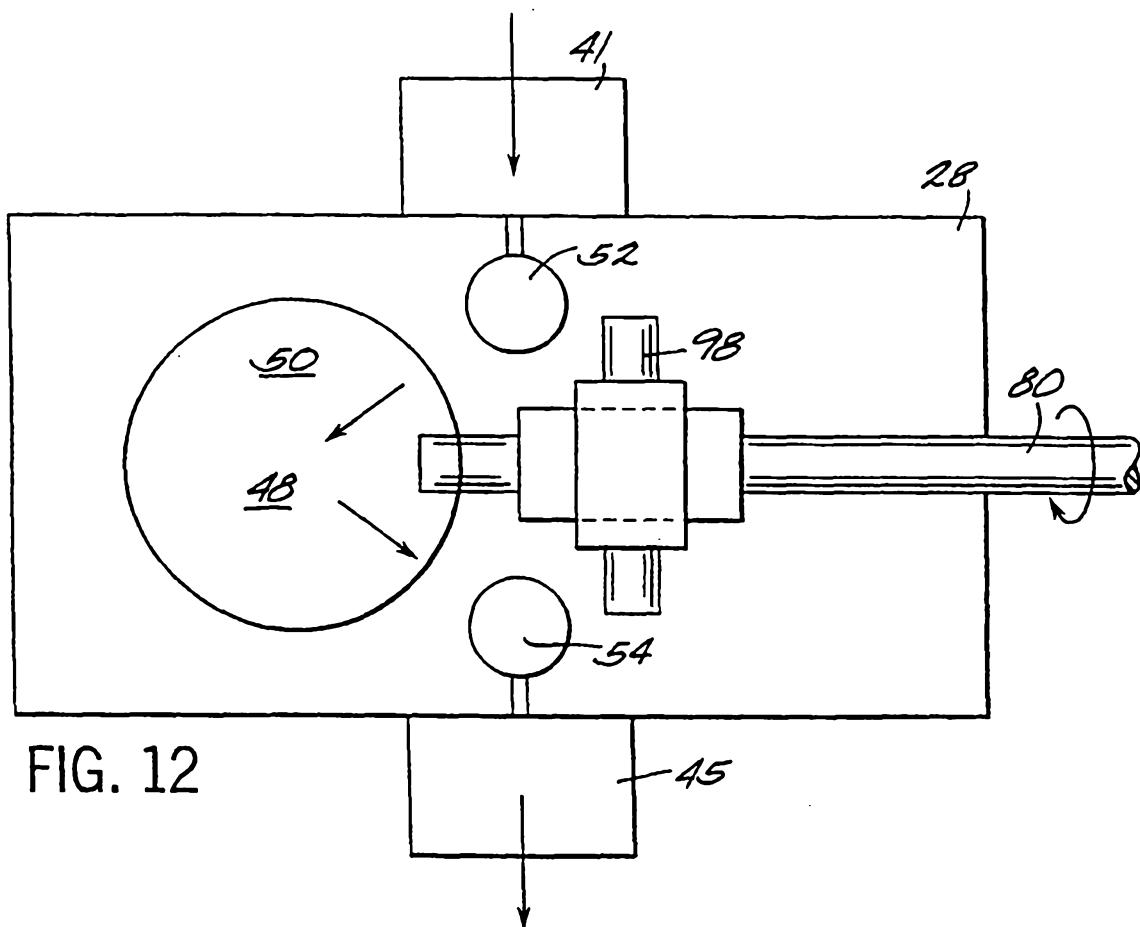


FIG. 11



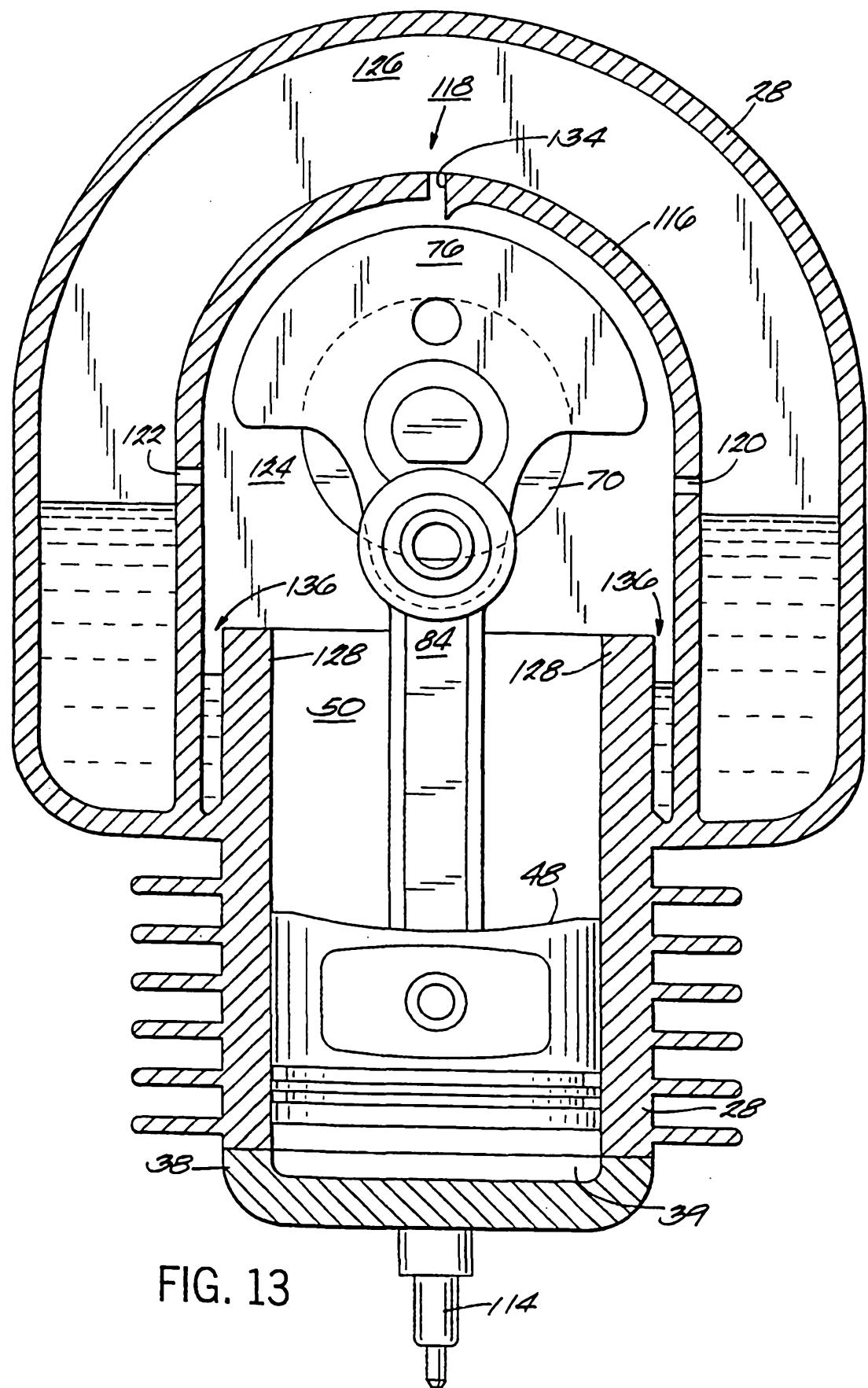


FIG. 13

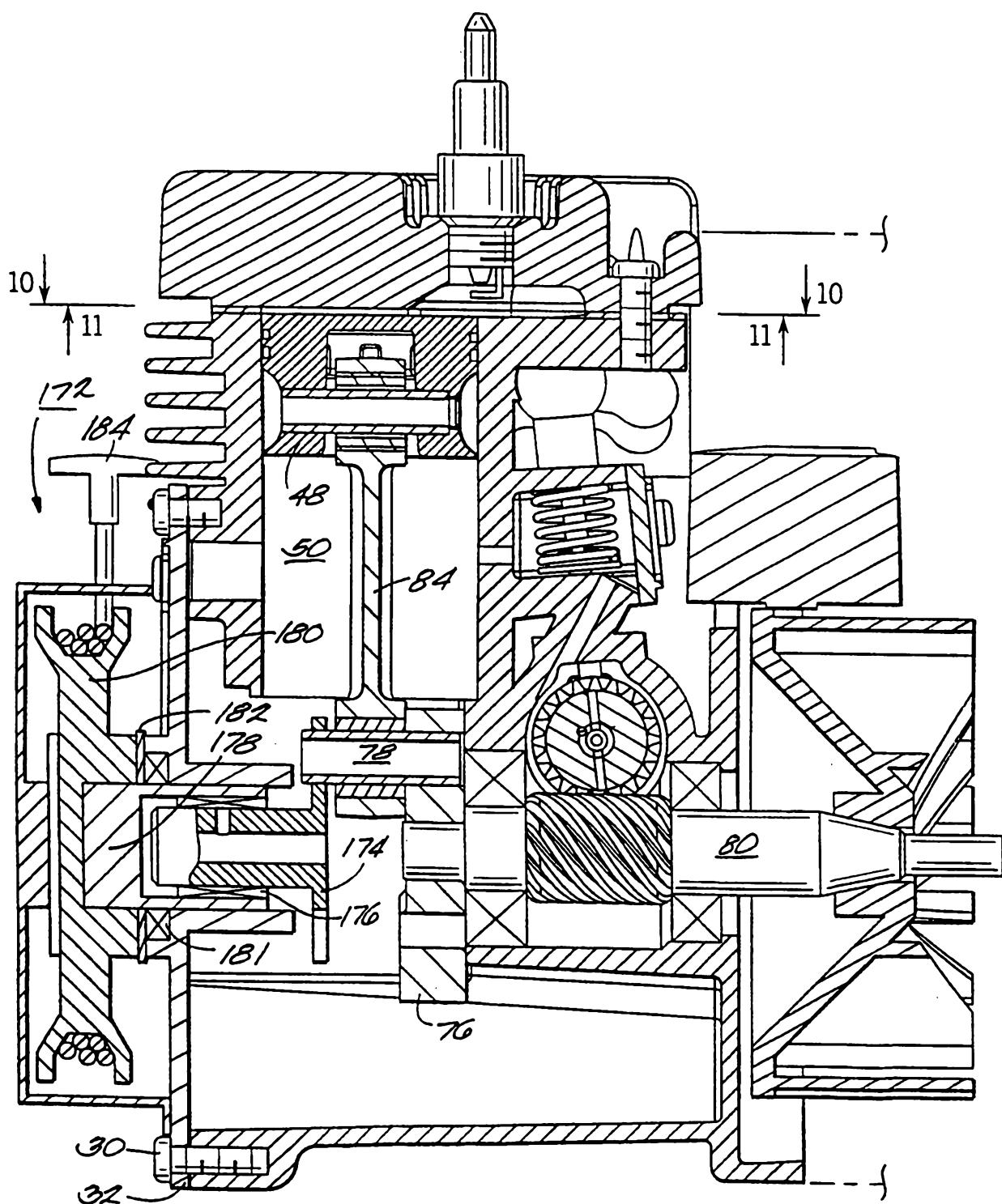


FIG. 14

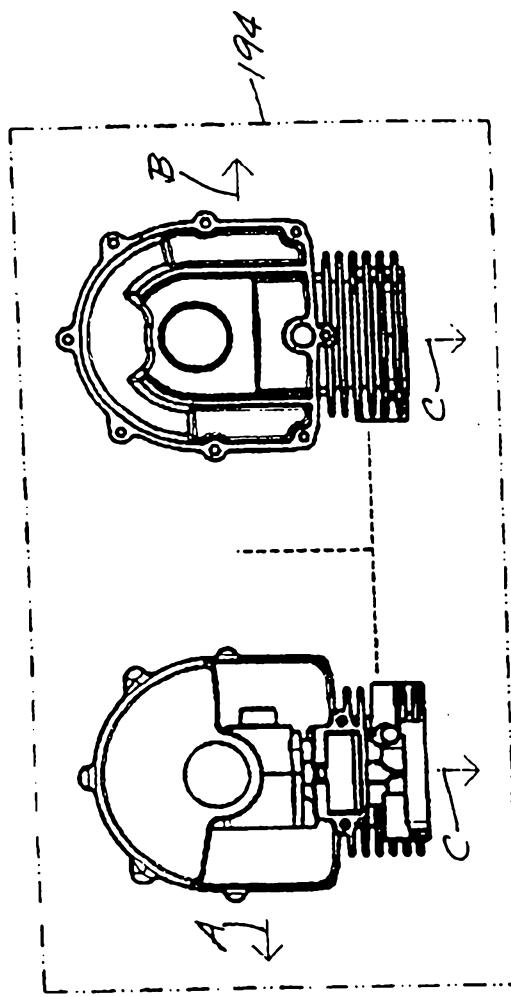


FIG. 15

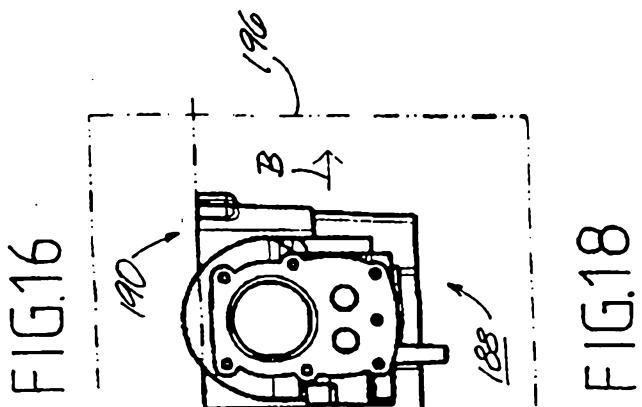
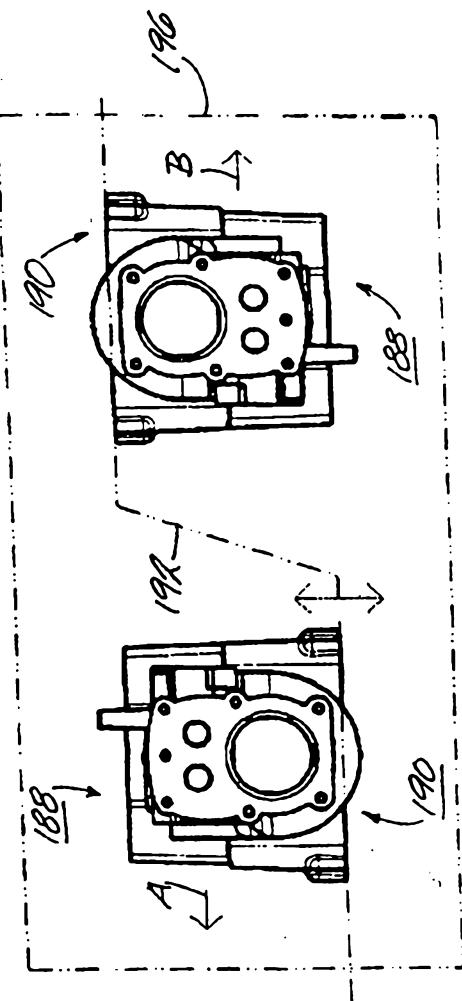


FIG. 16

FIG. 17

FIG. 18

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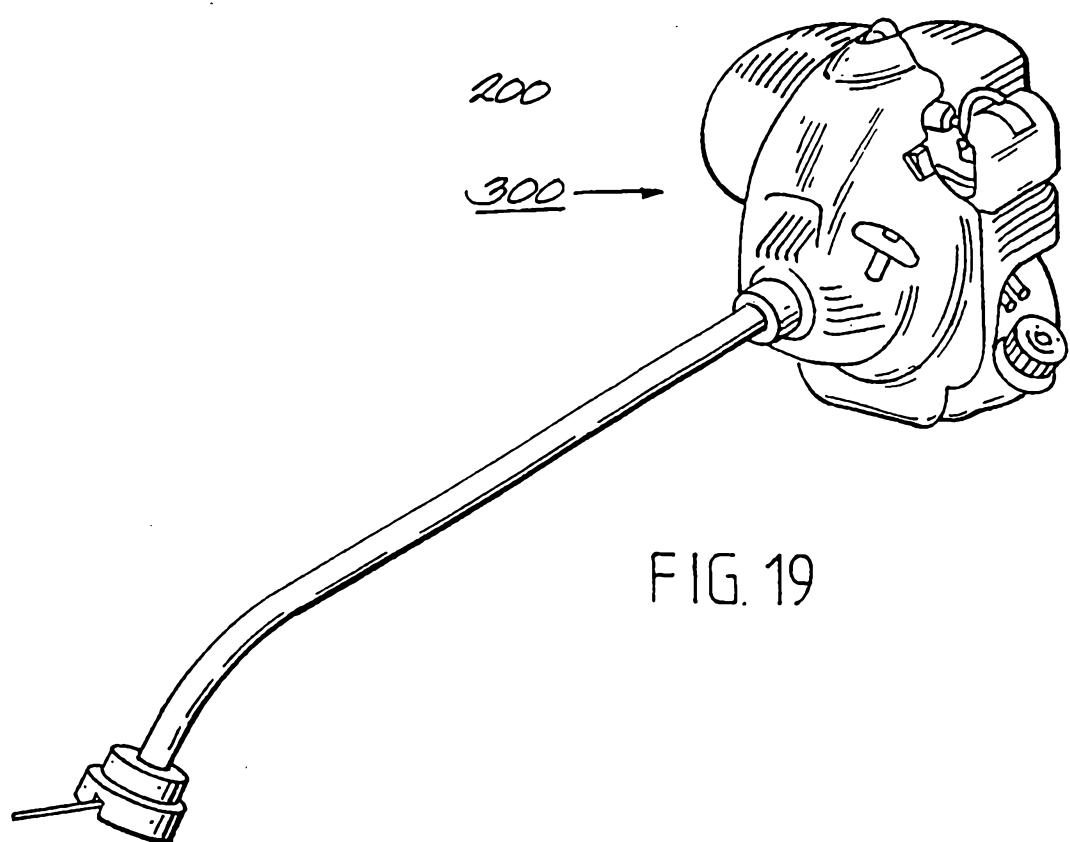


FIG. 19

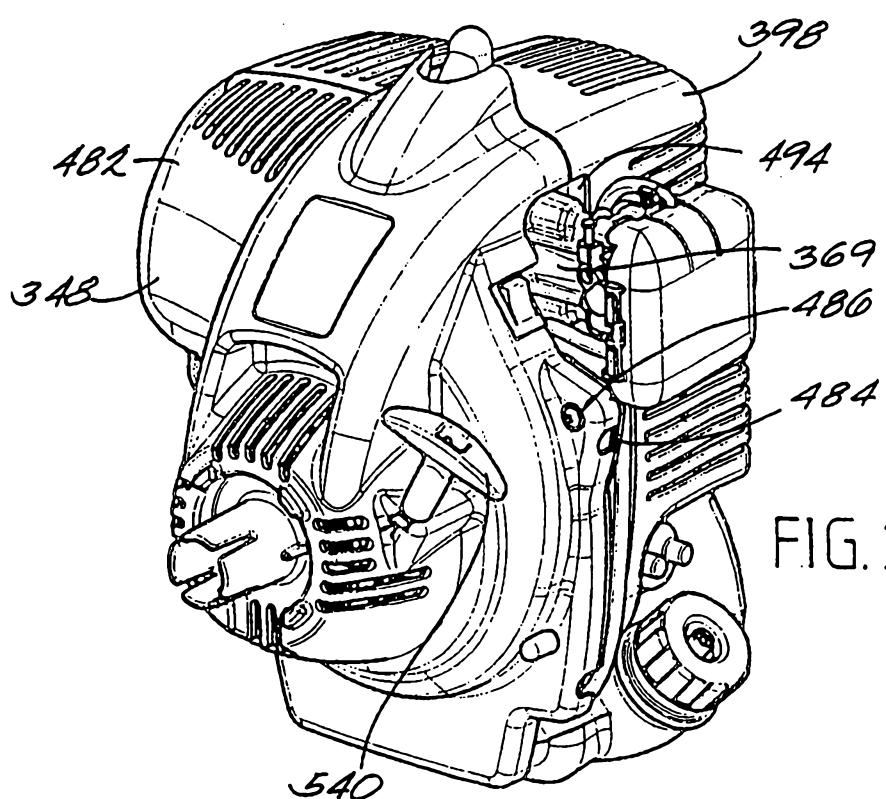


FIG. 20

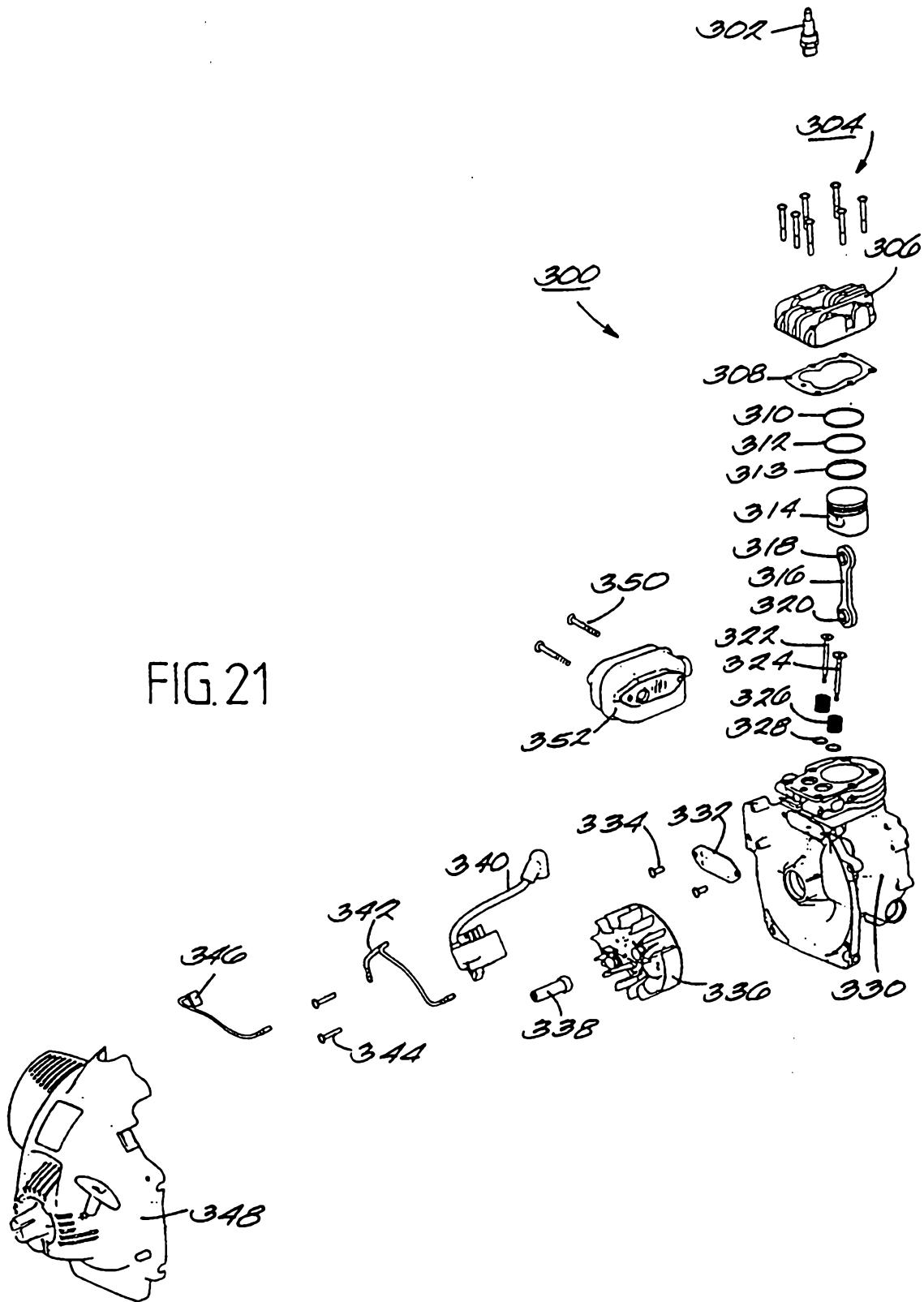
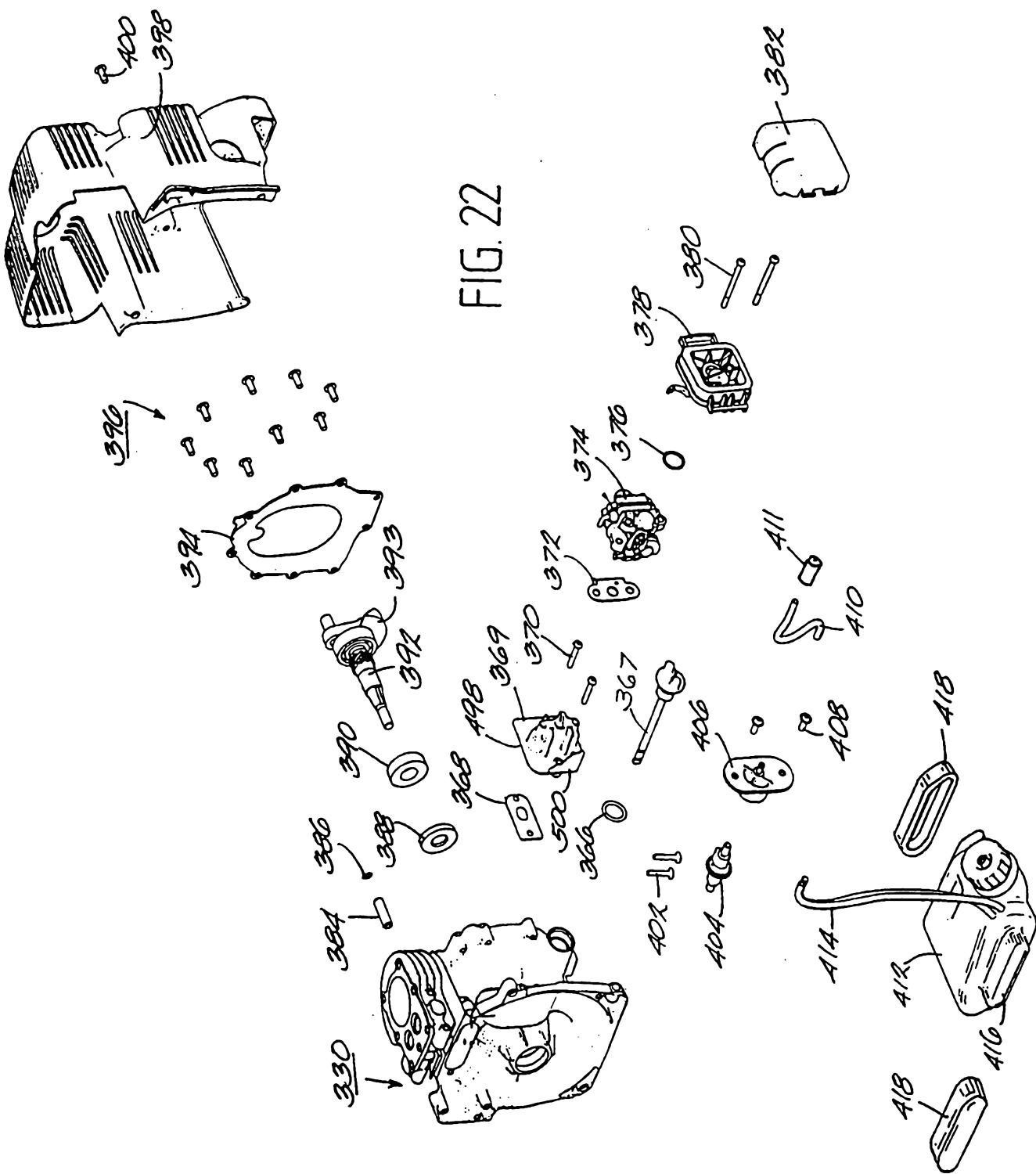
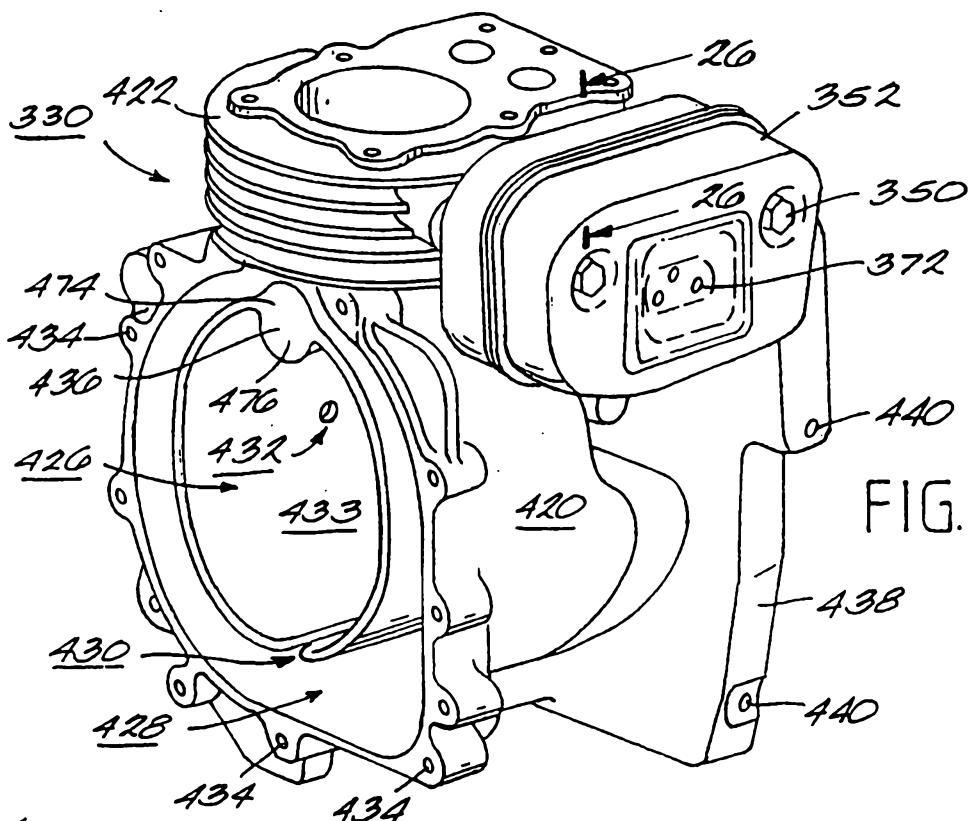
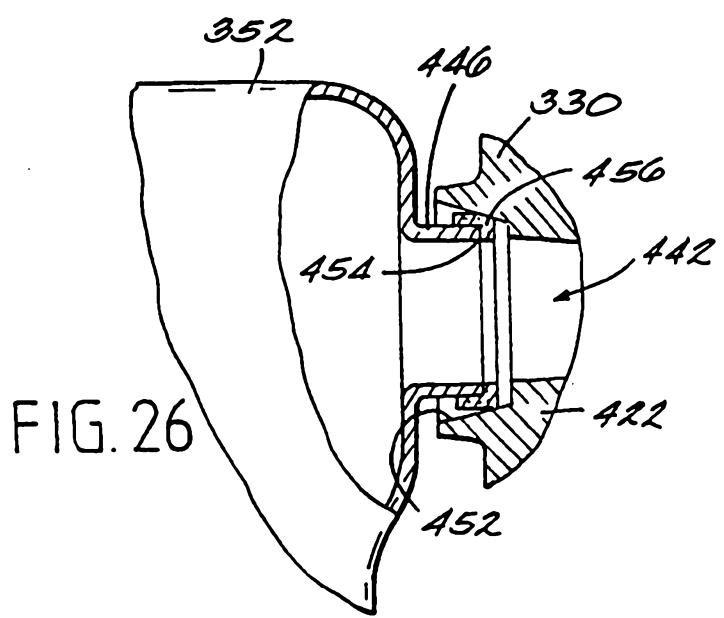


FIG. 22



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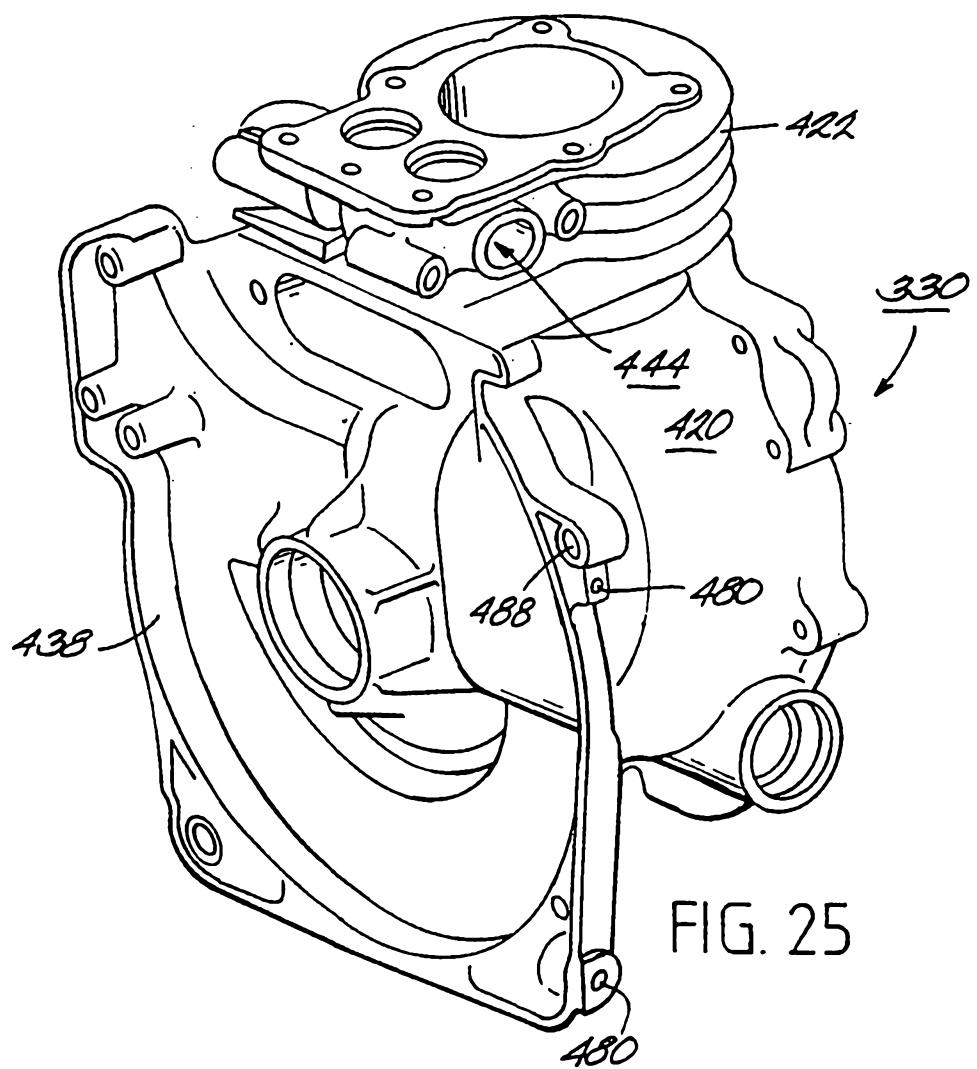


FIG. 25

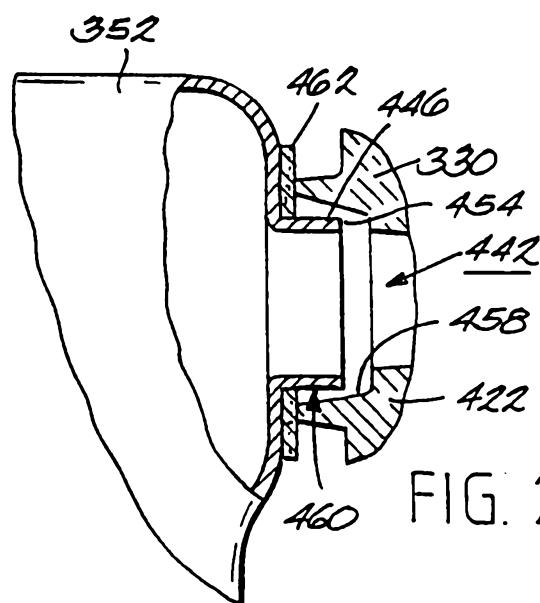


FIG. 27

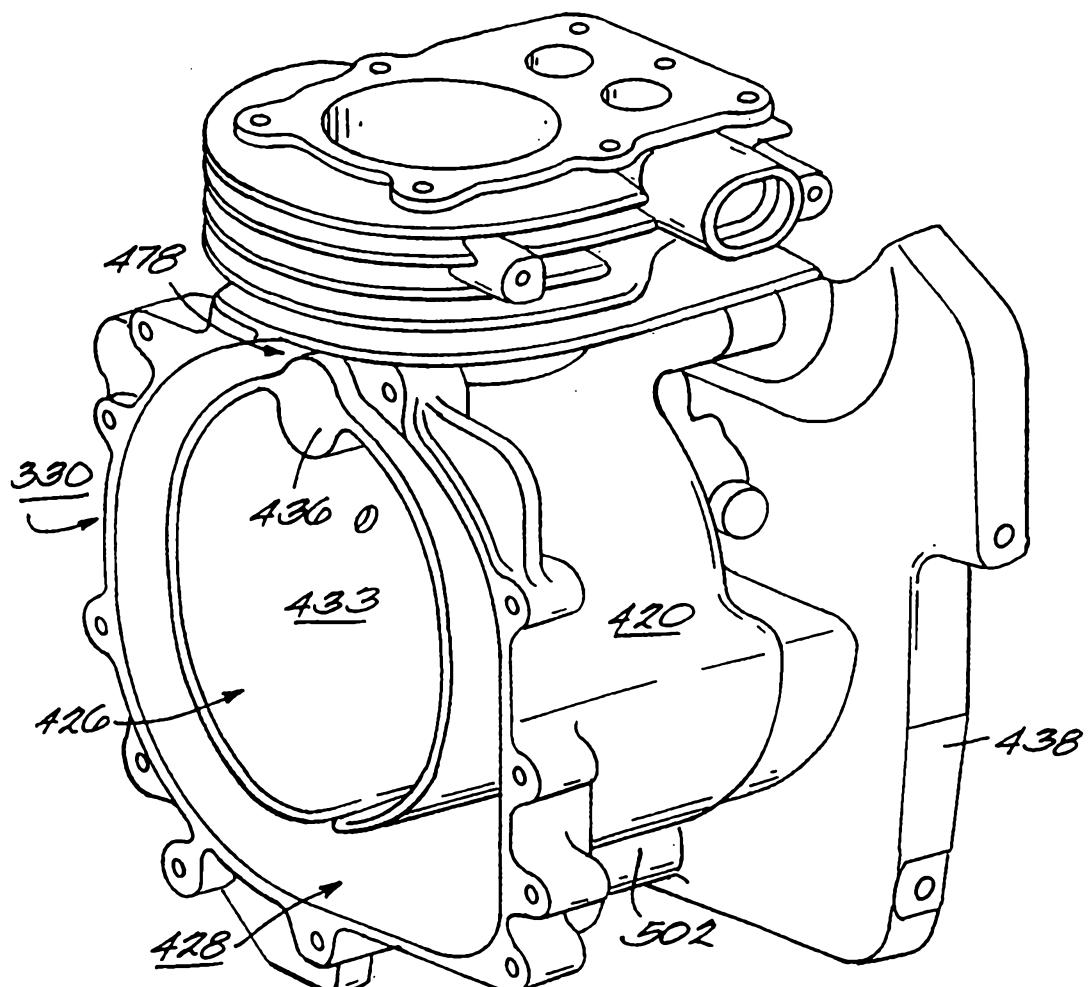


FIG. 28

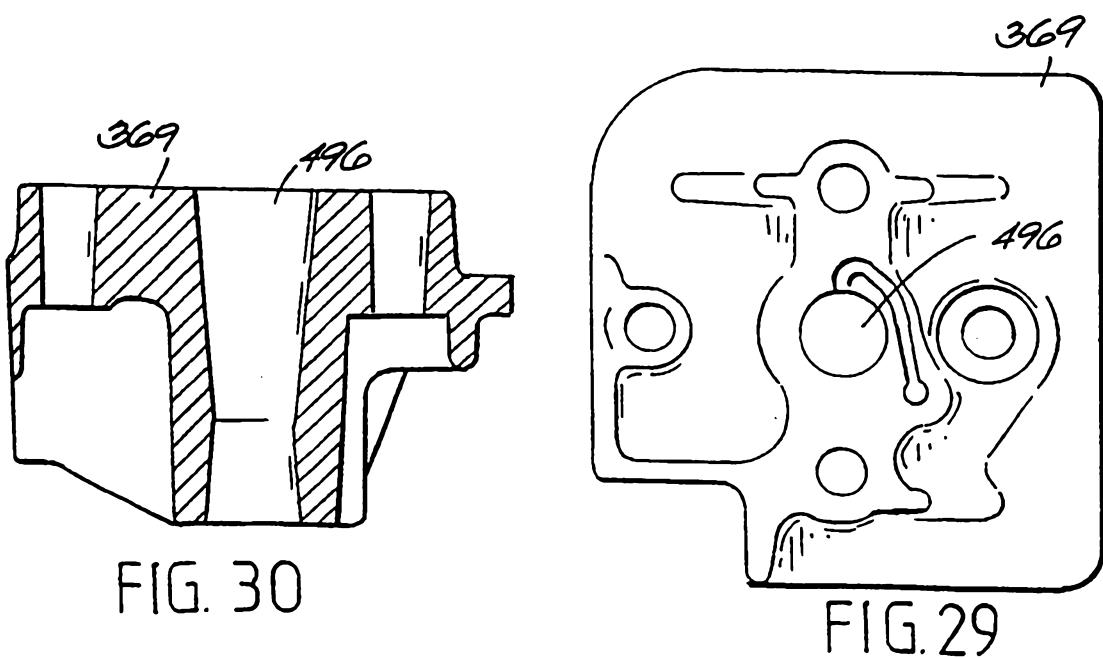
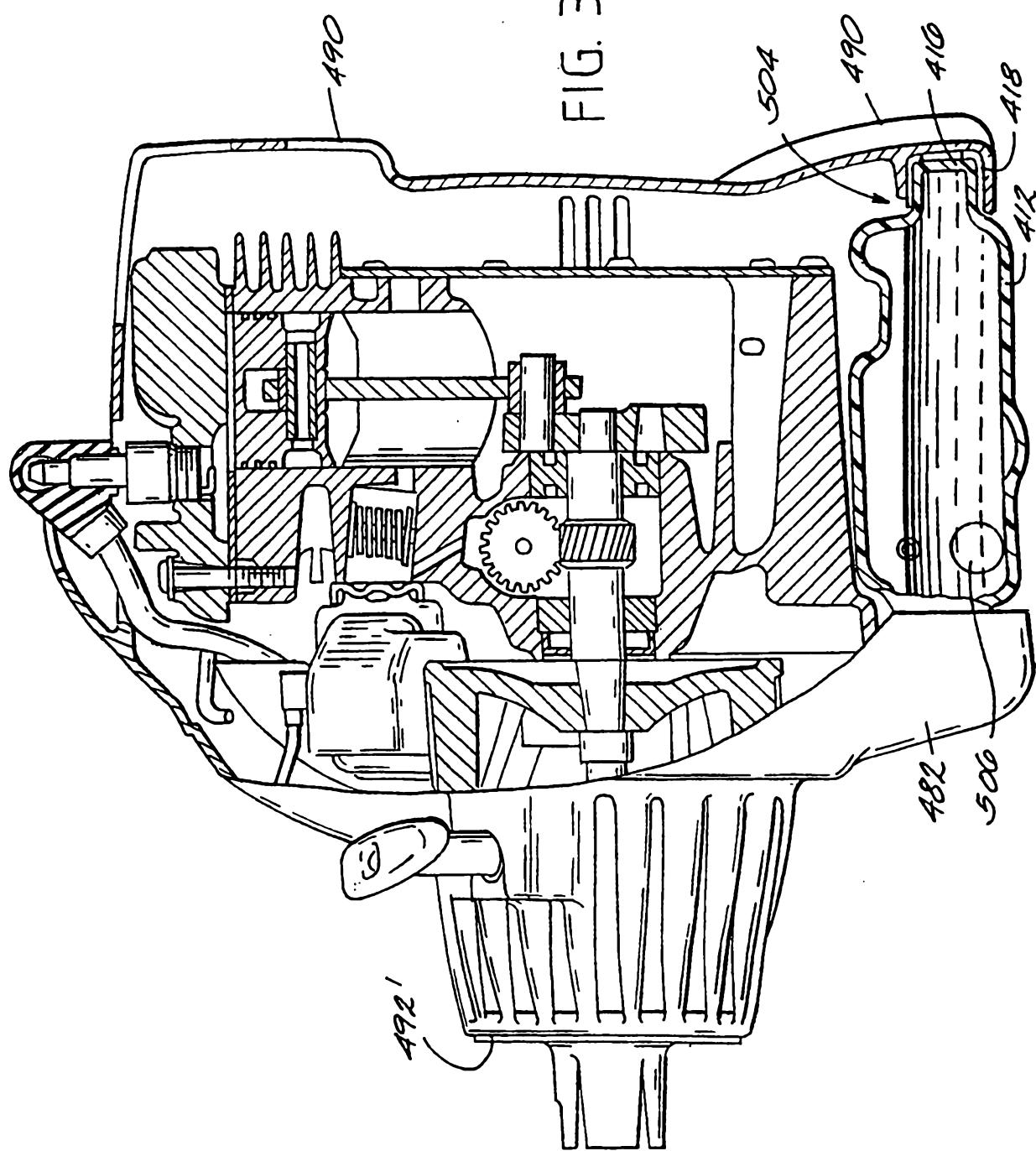


FIG. 30

FIG. 29

FIG. 31



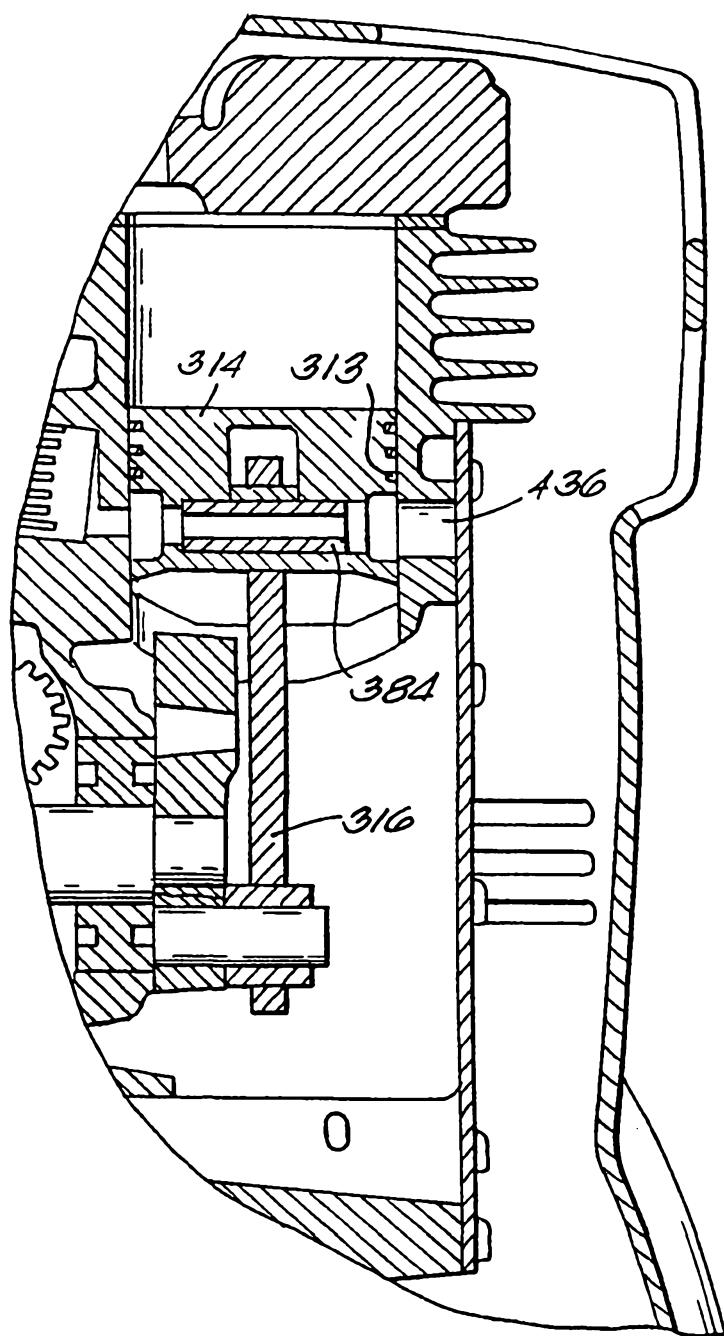


FIG. 32

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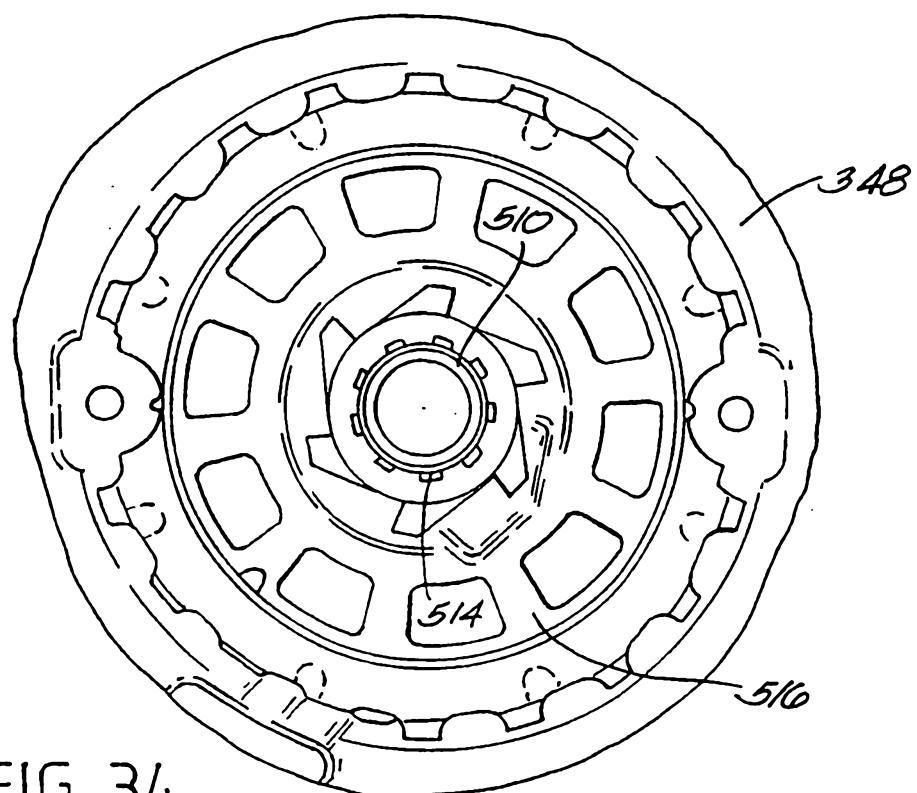


FIG. 34

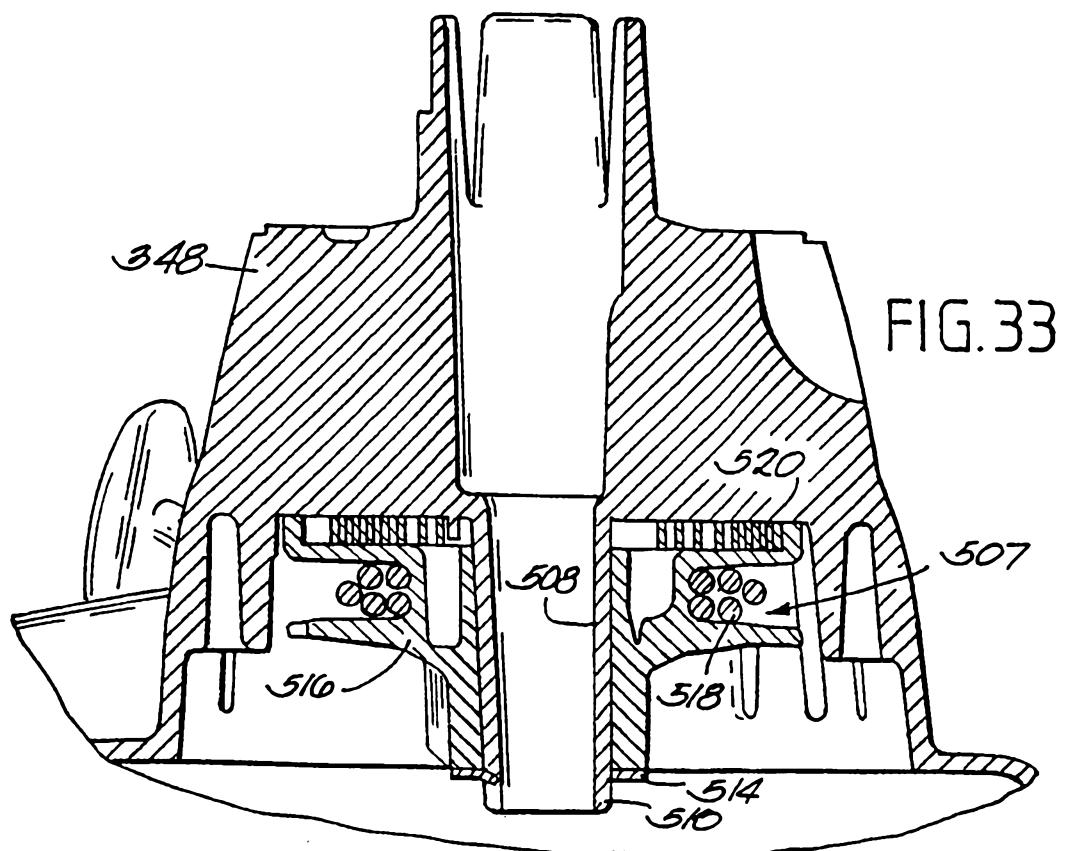


FIG. 33

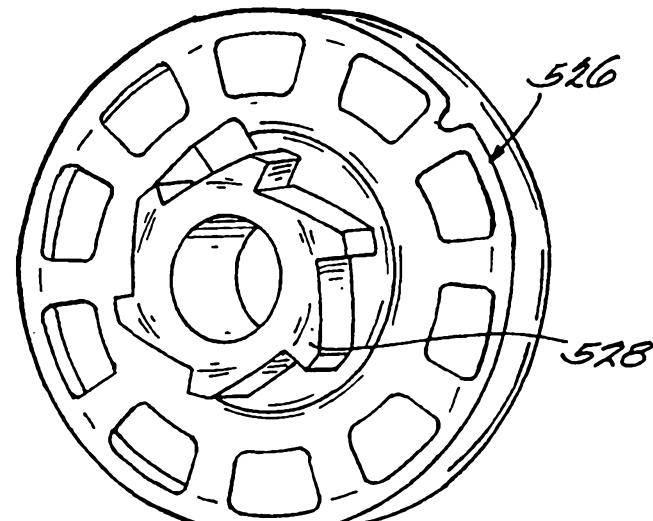


FIG. 35

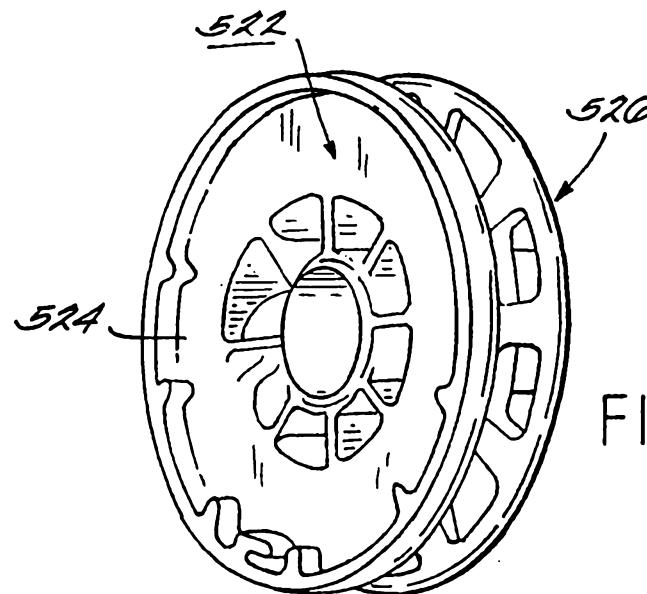


FIG. 36

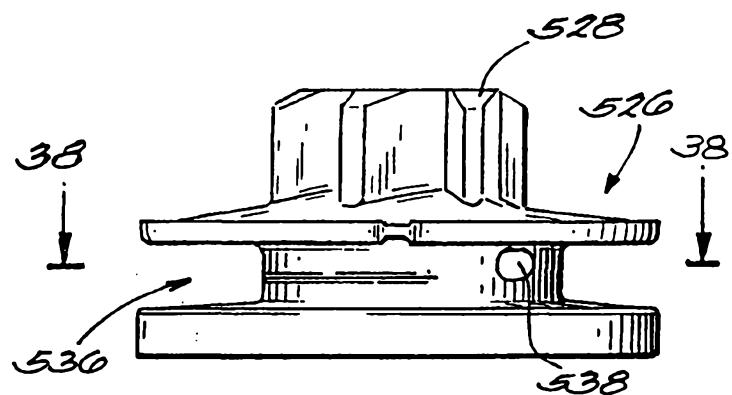


FIG. 37

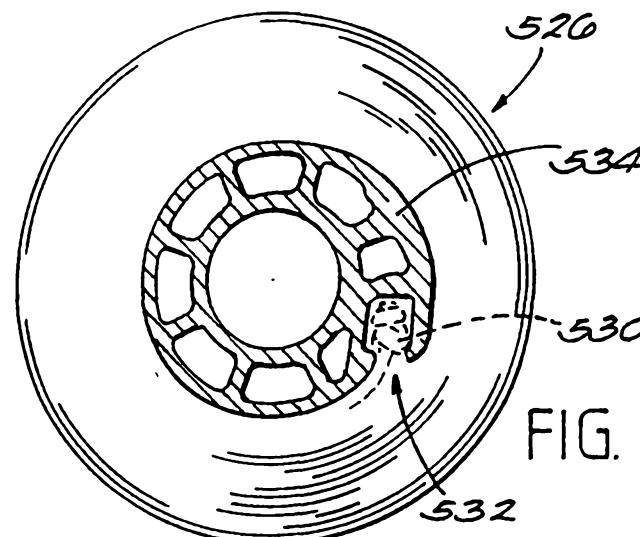


FIG. 38

