



(86) Date de dépôt PCT/PCT Filing Date: 2014/12/08
 (87) Date publication PCT/PCT Publication Date: 2016/06/16
 (85) Entrée phase nationale/National Entry: 2017/06/06
 (86) N° demande PCT/PCT Application No.: CN 2014/093302
 (87) N° publication PCT/PCT Publication No.: 2016/090538

(51) Cl.Int./Int.Cl. *D06F 75/18* (2006.01)
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(54) Titre : APPAREIL A VAPEUR PORTATIF
 (54) Title: PORTABLE HANDHELD STEAMER APPARATUS

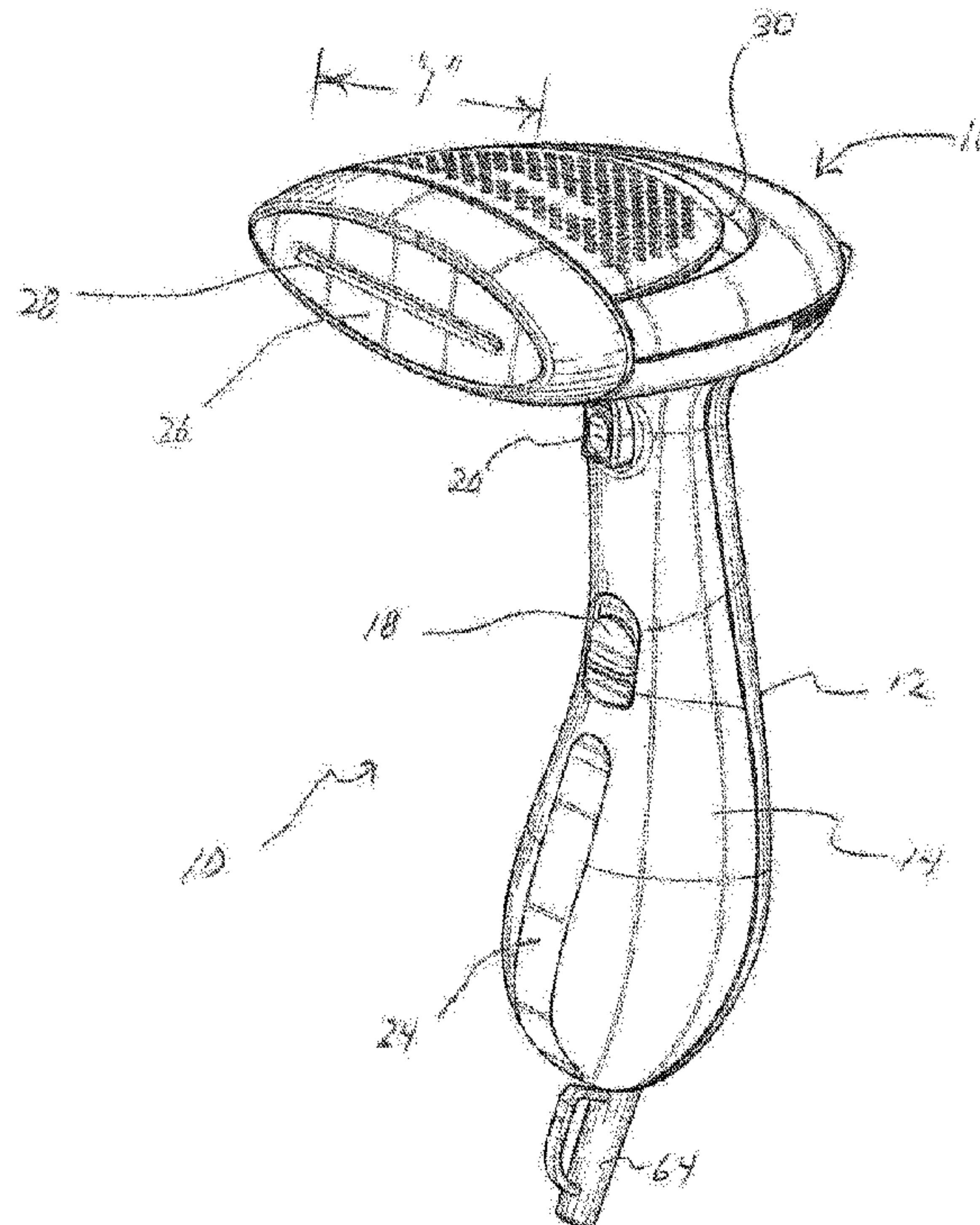


FIG. 1

(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

Steamer apparatus, includes a housing defining a steam outlet (28), a fluid reservoir (24) for storing fluid, a steam generator mounted in the housing and in fluid communication with the fluid reservoir (24) for generating steam and releasing the steam through the steam outlet (28), a pump (38) for pumping the fluid from the fluid reservoir (24) to the steam generator, a trigger mounted to the housing and a trigger lock (68) associated with the trigger. The trigger is adapted to move from an inoperative condition to an operative condition to activate one of the pump (38) and the steam generator. The trigger lock (68) is movable between a release position permitting free movement of the trigger between the inoperative condition and the operative condition and a lock position securing the trigger in the operative condition.

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property
Organization
International Bureau(43) International Publication Date
16 June 2016 (16.06.2016)(10) International Publication Number
WO 2016/090538 A1

- (51) **International Patent Classification:**
D06F 75/18 (2006.01)
- (21) **International Application Number:**
PCT/CN2014/093302
- (22) **International Filing Date:**
8 December 2014 (08.12.2014)
- (25) **Filing Language:** English
- (26) **Publication Language:** English
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- (81) **Designated States** (*unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BN, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IR, IS, JP, KE, KG, KN, KP, KR, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PA, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, QA, RO, RS, RU, RW, SA, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TH, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.
- (84) **Designated States** (*unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available*): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, RW, SD, SL, ST, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, RU, TJ, TM), European (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, KM, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

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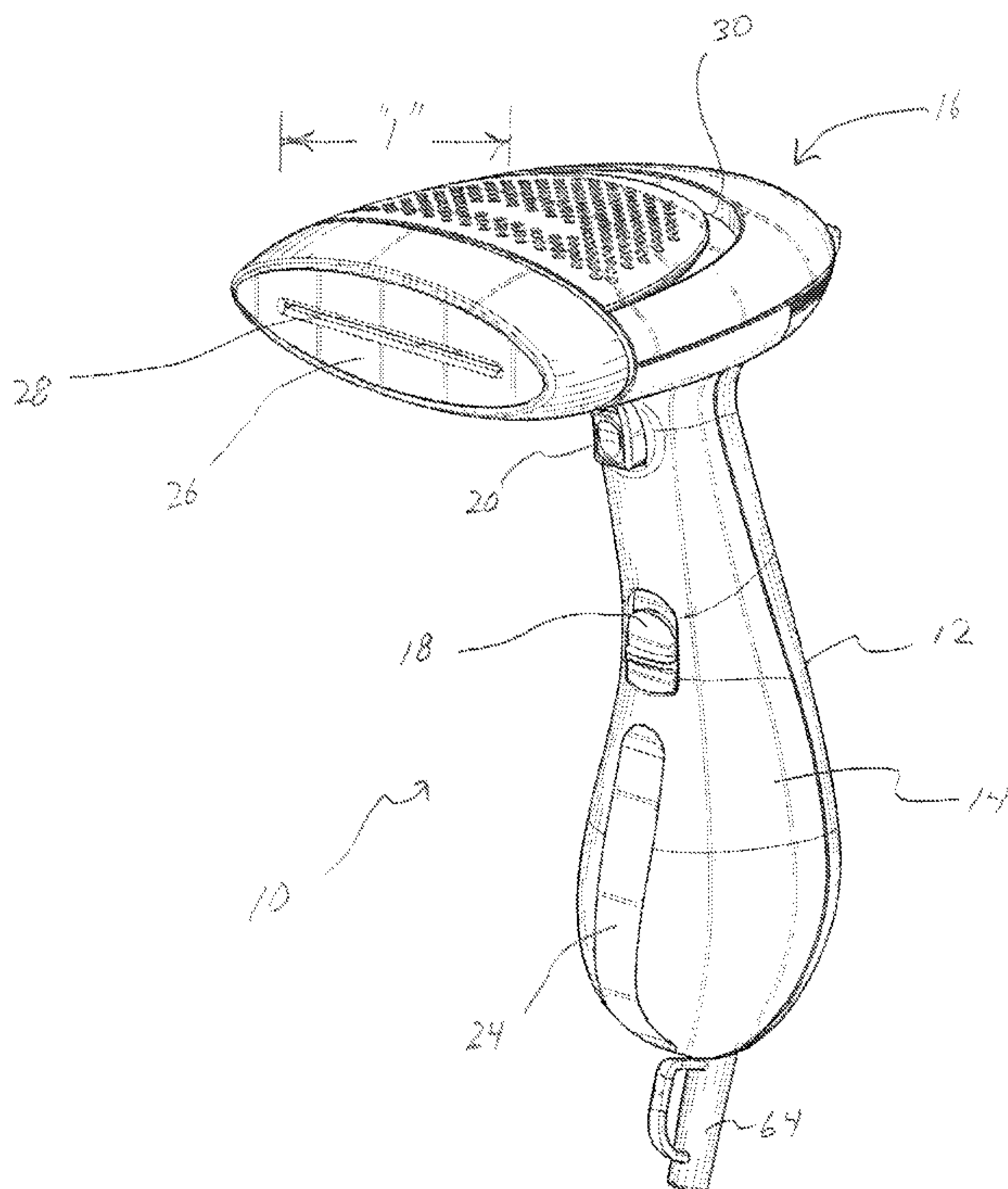
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FIG. 1

(57) **Abstract:** Steamer apparatus, includes a housing defining a steam outlet (28), a fluid reservoir (24) for storing fluid, a steam generator mounted in the housing and in fluid communication with the fluid reservoir (24) for generating steam and releasing the steam through the steam outlet (28), a pump (38) for pumping the fluid from the fluid reservoir (24) to the steam generator, a trigger mounted to the housing and a trigger lock (68) associated with the trigger. The trigger is adapted to move from an inoperative condition to an operative condition to activate one of the pump (38) and the steam generator. The trigger lock (68) is movable between a release position permitting free movement of the trigger between the inoperative condition and the operative condition and a lock position securing the trigger in the operative condition.

WO 2016/090538 A1 

Published:

— *with international search report (Art. 21(3))*

PORTABLE HANDHELD STEAMER APPARATUS

BACKGROUND

1. Technical Field

[0001] The present disclosure relates to a hand held apparatus for the care of garments and other items made of fabric. More particularly, the present disclosure relates to a hand held apparatus for applying steam and/or heat to garments, fabrics and the like.

2. Description of Related Art

[0002] Portable hand held devices for applying steam are particularly useful in removing wrinkles and improving the appearance of hanging garments, draperies, upholstery, and other items made of fabric. When traveling, these devices may be especially effective for freshening clothes that have been packed in luggage. They are also useful for improving the appearance of hanging draperies without removing them, straightening and flattening upholstery, opening seams, and, generally, for smoothing fabric during sewing operations. In all of these applications, it is not only important to apply steam to the fabric, but to do so in a safe and easy manner. It is also important to be able to apply a desired amount of steam to a particular portion of the fabric being treated. One garment steamer is disclosed in commonly assigned U.S. Patent No. 7,155,117 to Leung et al., the entire contents of which are incorporated by reference herein.

SUMMARY

[0003] Accordingly, the present disclosure is directed to further improvements in steam generating apparatus, particularly, handheld steamers. A steamer apparatus includes a housing defining a steam outlet, a fluid reservoir for storing fluid, a steam generator mounted in the housing and in fluid communication with the fluid reservoir for generating steam and releasing the steam through the steam outlet, a pump for pumping the fluid from the fluid reservoir to the steam generator, a trigger mounted to the housing and a trigger lock associated with the trigger. The trigger is adapted to move from an inoperative condition to an operative condition to activate one of the pump and the steam generator. The trigger lock is movable between a release position permitting free movement of the trigger between the inoperative condition and the operative condition and a lock position securing the trigger in the operative condition.

[0004] The steam generator may include a first boiler for heating the steam to a first temperature and a second boiler in fluid communication with the first boiler for heating the steam to a second temperature greater than the first generator. The first temperature is at least about **100° C** and the second temperature is at least about **130° C**.

[0005] The housing may include a slot extending therethrough for release of heat generated by the steam generator. The slot may be generally crescent-shaped. The housing defines a resting block in opposed relation to the steam outlet. The resting block is dimensioned for positioning upon a support surface to orient the steam outlet facing away from the support surface. An indicator light may be within the resting block for providing visual indication of the pump in the operative position.

[0006] An ironing sole plate is mounted to the housing with the steam outlet extending through the ironing soleplate. The ironing sole plate may be dimensioned to be heated by the steam as the steam passes through the steam outlet. Alternatively, the ironing sole plate is in contact with the steam generator whereby heat is transferred from the steam generator to the ironing sole plate. As a further alternative, a heater may be associated with the ironing sole plate to heat the ironing sole plate.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] Embodiment(s) of the present disclosure will be more readily appreciated by reference to the drawings wherein:

[0008] **FIGS. 1-2** are perspective views of the handheld steamer apparatus in accordance with the principles of the present disclosure illustrating the handle segment and the head segment;

[0009] **FIG. 3** is a side elevation view of the handheld steamer apparatus;

[0010] **FIG. 4** is a top plan view of the handheld steamer apparatus;

[0011] **FIG. 5** is a side plan view of the handheld steamer apparatus positioned on a support surface and supported by a resting block on the rear of the head segment;

[0012] **FIGS. 6 and 7** are perspective and side plan views illustrating the double boiler system of the handheld steamer apparatus;

[0013] **FIG. 8** is a perspective view with parts separated of the first and second heating chambers of the double boiler system;

[0014] **FIG. 9** is a top plan illustrating the flow path of the steam within the first and second heating chambers of the double boiler system;

[0015] **FIGS. 10-11** are perspective views of the trigger in release and secured positions respectively;

[0016] **FIGS. 12-14** are views illustrating various arrangements for heating the iron soleplate of the handheld steamer;

[0017] **FIGS. 15 and 16** illustrate use of the handheld steamer apparatus in respective vertical and horizontal arrangements relative to the garment; and

[0018] **FIG. 17** illustrates various attachments for use with the handheld steamer apparatus.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0019] Referring now to **FIGS. 1-4**, the handheld steamer apparatus **10** in accordance with the principles of the present disclosure is illustrated. The handheld steamer apparatus **10** includes an outer housing **12** defining a general pistol configuration and having a handle segment **14** and a head segment **16**. The handle segment **14** is dimensioned for manual engagement by the user. The handle segment **14** includes a reservoir lock **18** and a steam trigger button **20** on the forward side of the handle segment **14** and a steam setting switch **22** on the rear side. The reservoir lock **18** secures a fluid reservoir **24** which is detachable (e.g., removable) from the handle segment **14**. The fluid reservoir **24** is selectively released by actuation of the reservoir lock **18**. The fluid reservoir **24** contains water or other suitable fluid, and may be refilled once the fluid reservoir **24** is emptied. The steam trigger button **20** activates the double boiler system and may be positioned in a continuous or non-continuous. The operation of the steam trigger button **20** will be discussed in greater detail hereinbelow. The steam setting

switch **22** enables the user to select the desired steam temperature depending on the fabric to be ironed.

[0020] The head segment **16** includes an ironing soleplate **26** and a steam outlet **28** extending through the soleplate **26**. The steam outlet **28** extends along the majority of the length “**l**” of the ironing soleplate, e.g., at least about **60%** of the length “**l**” and possibly at least **70 %** of the length “**l**”. This provides a relatively wide steam outlet **28** thereby increasing the effective treatment area of the released steam. The ironing soleplate **26** has an outward bow or curved configuration which facilitates the ironing process when both in a vertical and horizontal application as will be discussed hereinbelow. The ironing soleplate **26** may be made of metal or any other suitable material, e.g., heat conductive material, for distributing heat to the garment.

[0021] The top of the head segment **16** includes a generally crescent shaped vent **30** which communicates with the interior of the head segment **16** to release heat generated by the double boiler system thereby minimizing the potential of pressure build-up within the head segment **16**. The rear of the head segment **16** includes a resting block or segment **32** dimensioned to permit the operator to place the steamer apparatus **10** on a table or support surface with the ironing soleplate **26** and the steam outlet **28** facing upwardly away from the garment of the support surface. This ensures that the heated components of the steamer apparatus **10** are removed from the garment or the support surface when not in use. The resting block **32** may have a substantially planar surface **34** and defines a width and length sufficient to support the handheld steamer apparatus **10** in the desired position. An indicator light **36** may be disposed within the resting block **32** to provide a visual indicator that the steamer apparatus **10** is in an on or active mode. With

this arrangement it is envisioned that the resting block **32** comprises a transparent material. **FIG. 5** illustrates the handheld steamer apparatus in the upright position with the resting block placed on a support surface “s” and the ironing soleplate **26** and the nozzle **28** directed in the upward direction.

[0022] Referring now to **FIGS. 6** and **7**, the handheld steamer apparatus **10** includes a boiler system consisting of fluid or water pump **38** and boiler housing **40**. The water pump **38** is in fluid communication with the fluid reservoir **24** through appropriate tubing **43, 45** (**FIG. 7**) to deliver water to the boiler housing **40**. The boiler housing **40** includes a first heating chamber **42** and a second heating chamber **44**. The first heating chamber **42** will heat the water to generate steam at a first predetermined temperature, e.g., about **100° C** or higher. The second heating chamber **44** is located at the outlet **46** of the first heating chamber **42** and heats the steam to a higher predetermined temperature, e.g., about **130° C** or higher, to generate super steam. The super steam provides a quicker and efficient ironing characteristic to remove wrinkles in the garment, keeps the garment drive after ironing and may kill bacteria due to the high temperature of the steam. Various heater sets, plates and generator means may be incorporated to create the steam within the first and second chambers at the desired temperatures. For example, as depicted in **FIG. 8**, the first heating chamber **42** may incorporate a U-shaped heater **48** and the second heating chamber **44** may includes a pair of electro-connection plates **50** with an interposed second heater set **52** and a lower heater mounting plate **54**. Other dual generator arrangements are also contemplated. It is also envisioned the first and second heating chambers **42, 44** may be heated by the same heater. It is further envisioned that each of the first and second heating chambers **42, 44** may be incorporated in separate

boilers which are in fluid communication to heat the steam to the first and second predetermined temperatures. A temperature control **56** in electrical communication with the external steam setting switch **22** can control the temperature of the steam generated.

[0023] **FIG. 9** illustrates the flow path of the steam generated by the first and second heating chambers **42, 44**. The water inlet **58** receives the water from the fluid pump **38**, which is circulated through the first heating chamber **42** to be converted to steam at a first predetermined temperature (at least about **100° C**) and released through the outlet **46** of the first chamber **42**. The steam is circulated through the second heating chamber **44** and heated or superheated to a second predetermined temperature (at least about **130° C**) and released through the external steam outlet **28** extending through the ironing sole plate **26**. The steam outlet **28** may have a plurality of channels **62** to distribute the steam evenly to the garment.

[0024] Power for handheld steamer apparatus **10** is derived from an external power source (not shown) through an electrical cable **64** (**FIG. 1**) The cable **64** provides an electrical connection from the external power source to the fluid pump **38**, the double boiler system, and other components of handheld steamer apparatus **10** requiring electrical energy. It should be appreciated that the steamer apparatus **10** may be powered by an internal power source such as a battery. The electrical power from the cable **64** may be controlled through the steam trigger button **20**. The steam trigger button **20** serves to complete an electrical circuit which includes the fluid pump **38** either directly or indirectly, e.g., by use of a delay. The steam trigger button **20** operates to cause application of power to the fluid pump **38**. In the alternative, or in addition, the steam trigger button **20** may be actuated to activate the double boiler system, with the heat

setting being controlled via the steam setting switch **22**. In the alternative or in addition, the steam trigger button **20** may operate to cause a variable amount of power to be applied to the fluid pump **38** and/or the double boiler system depending upon the degree of actuation by a user. Suitable safety devices in the form of a fuse, circuit breaker, thermal cut-off, or other safety device appropriate for use in the handheld steamer apparatus **10**.

[0025] In accordance with one embodiment, the steam trigger button **20** may be activated in a continuous or intermittent mode of operation. For example, with reference to **FIGS. 10-11**, depression of the steam trigger button **20** completes the electrical circuit to activate the fluid pump **38** and/or the double boiler system as indicated hereinabove. In the intermittent condition of the steam trigger button **20**, depression and release of the button **20** will activate and deactivate the electrical circuit. The steam trigger button **20** is normally biased outwardly by coil spring **66**, which position corresponds to the deactivated condition of the steam trigger button **20**. When continuous power is desired for continuous steam to be released from the handheld steamer apparatus **10**, the steam trigger button **20** is depressed and a trigger lock **68** associated with the steam trigger button **20** is slid or depressed from the position depicted in **FIG. 10** to the position depicted in **FIG. 11**. In the position of the trigger lock **68** of **FIG. 11**, the lower depending locking tab **70** of the trigger lock **68** depends through an opening **72** in the steam trigger button **20** to be received within an internal locking recess **74** of the handle segment **14**. The depending locking tab **70** is retained within the internal locking recess **74** through friction and/or via the outward bias of the coil spring **66** which drives the locking tab **70** (either directly or indirectly through engagement with vertical shelf **76** of

the steam trigger button **20**) against the internal forward surface **78** defining the internal locking recess **74**. In this position, the steam trigger button **20** is secured to continuously provide power to the fluid pump **38** and/or the double boiler system. The trigger lock **68** may be slid upwardly to the position of **FIG. 10** when continuous operation is no longer desired. Thus, the trigger lock **68** is movable between a release position depicted in **FIG. 10** permitting free movement of the trigger button **20** and a lock position securing the trigger button **20** and maintaining the fluid pump **38** and/or the double boiler system in an operative condition. It is also possible to provide continuous steam by manually maintaining the steam trigger button **20** in the depressed condition of **FIG. 11** without securing the trigger lock **68**.

[0026] **FIGS. 12-14** illustrate various arrangements to heat or preheat the ironing soleplate **26** in accordance with the principles of the present disclosure. With the arrangement depicted in **FIG. 12**, the ironing soleplate **26** is directly in contact with or attached to the boiler housing **38** whereby heat is transferred from the boiler housing **38** to the soleplate **26**. The boiler housing **38** may be fabricated from a heat conductive metal such as cast aluminum or cast iron. In the embodiment of **FIG. 13**, the steam “s” is passed through the ironing soleplate **26** and thereby heats the soleplate **26** to the desired temperature through conduction and/or convection. In the embodiment of **FIG. 14**, a separate heater **80** is connected to the sole plate **26**. The heater **80** may be activated through the steam trigger button **20** or another button or switch associated with the handle segment **14**. The separate heater may provide for more rapid heating of the soleplate.

[0027] **FIGS. 15-16** illustrate the use of the handheld steamer apparatus **10** in both a vertical application (**FIG. 15**) and a horizontal application (**FIG. 16**). During use,

the curved or bowed configuration of the ironing soleplate **26** permits the operator to manipulate and pivot the handheld steamer apparatus **10** relative to the garment and about the ironing soleplate **26** as depicted by directional arrows “k”. This bowed configuration facilitates use of the steamer apparatus **10** by permitting the operator to address the garment “g” at a number of angles. This is not possible with conventional flat irons.

[0028] **FIG. 17** illustrates various attachments contemplated for use with the handheld steamer apparatus **10**. The attachments include a lint brush attachment **100**, a soft fabric cushion attachment **200** and a creaser attachment **300**. The attachments **100**, **200**, **300** may be fit about the periphery of the front end of the head segment **16** in frictional relationship therewith.

[0029] The above description and the drawings are provided for the purpose of describing embodiments of the present disclosure and are not intended to limit the scope of the disclosure in any way. It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made without departing from the spirit or scope of the disclosure. Thus, it is intended that the present disclosure cover the modifications and variations of this disclosure provided they come within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A steamer apparatus, which comprises:
 - a housing defining a steam outlet;
 - a fluid reservoir for storing fluid;
 - a steam generator mounted in said housing and in fluid communication with said fluid reservoir for generating steam and releasing said steam through said steam outlet;
 - a pump for pumping said fluid from said fluid reservoir to said steam generator;
 - a trigger mounted to said housing, said trigger adapted to move from an inoperative condition to an operative condition to activate one of said pump and said steam generator; and
 - a trigger lock associated with said trigger, said trigger lock movable between a release position permitting free movement of said trigger between said inoperative condition and said operative condition and a lock position securing said trigger in said operative condition.

2. The steamer apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said steam generator includes a first boiler for heating said steam to a first temperature and a second boiler in fluid communication with said first boiler for heating said steam to a second temperature greater than said first generator.

3. The steamer apparatus according to claim 2 wherein said first temperature is at least about 100° C and said second temperature is at least about 130° C.

4. The steamer apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said housing includes a slot extending therethrough for release of heat generated by said steam generator.

5. The steamer apparatus according to claim 4 wherein said slot is generally crescent-shaped.

6. The steamer apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said housing defines a resting block in opposed relation to said steam outlet, said resting block dimensioned for positioning upon a support surface to orient said steam outlet facing away from said support surface.

7. The steamer apparatus according to claim 6 including an indicator light within said resting block for providing visual indication of said pump in said operative position.

8. The steamer apparatus according to claim 1 including an ironing sole plate mounted to said housing, said steam outlet extending through said ironing soleplate.

9. The steamer apparatus according to claim 8 wherein said ironing sole plate is dimensioned to be heated by said steam as said steam passes through said steam outlet.

10. The steamer apparatus according to claim 8 wherein said ironing sole plate is in contact with said steam generator whereby heat is transferred from said steam generator to said ironing sole plate.

11. The steamer apparatus according to claim 8 including a heater associated with said ironing sole plate to heat said ironing sole plate.

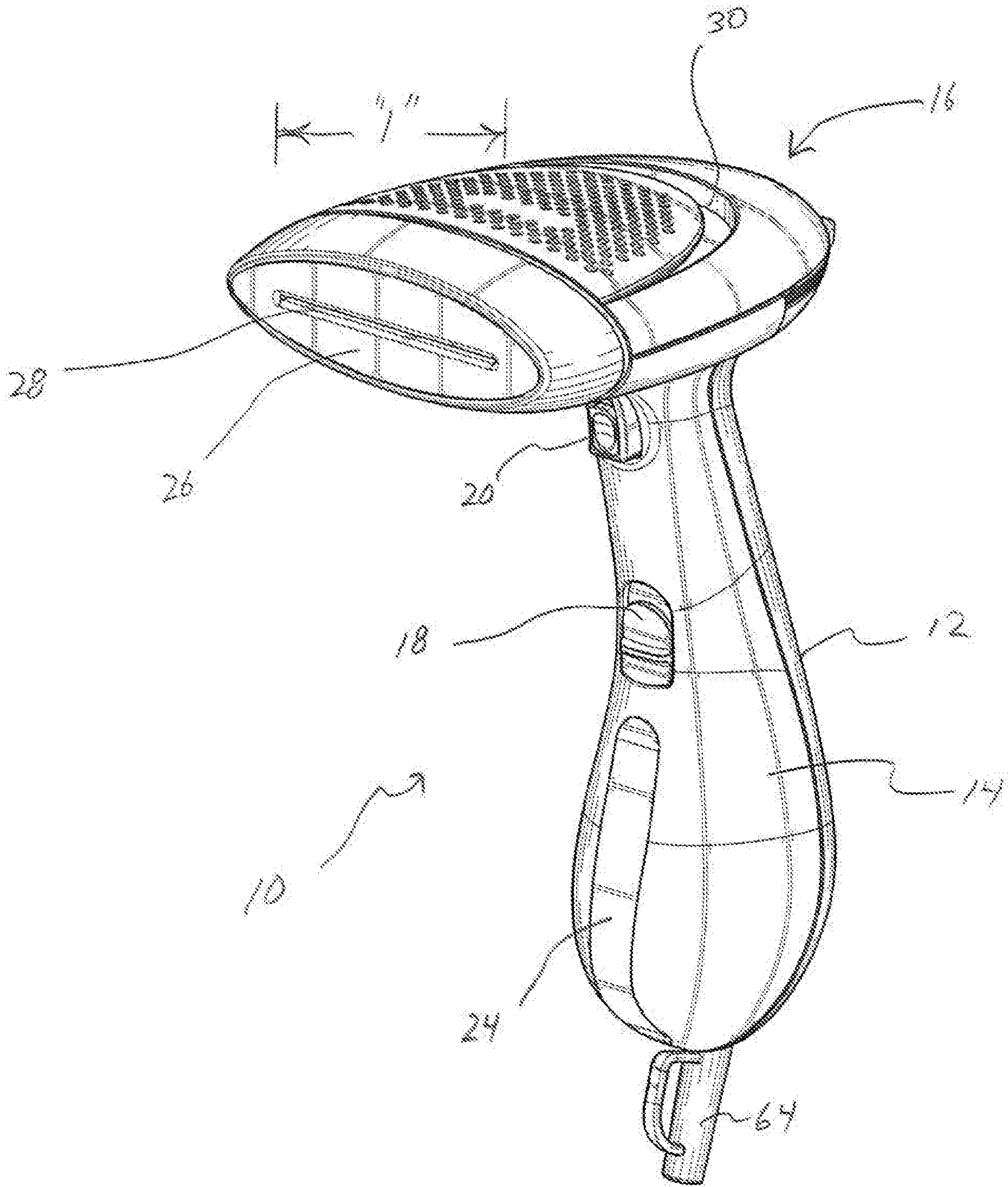


FIG. 1

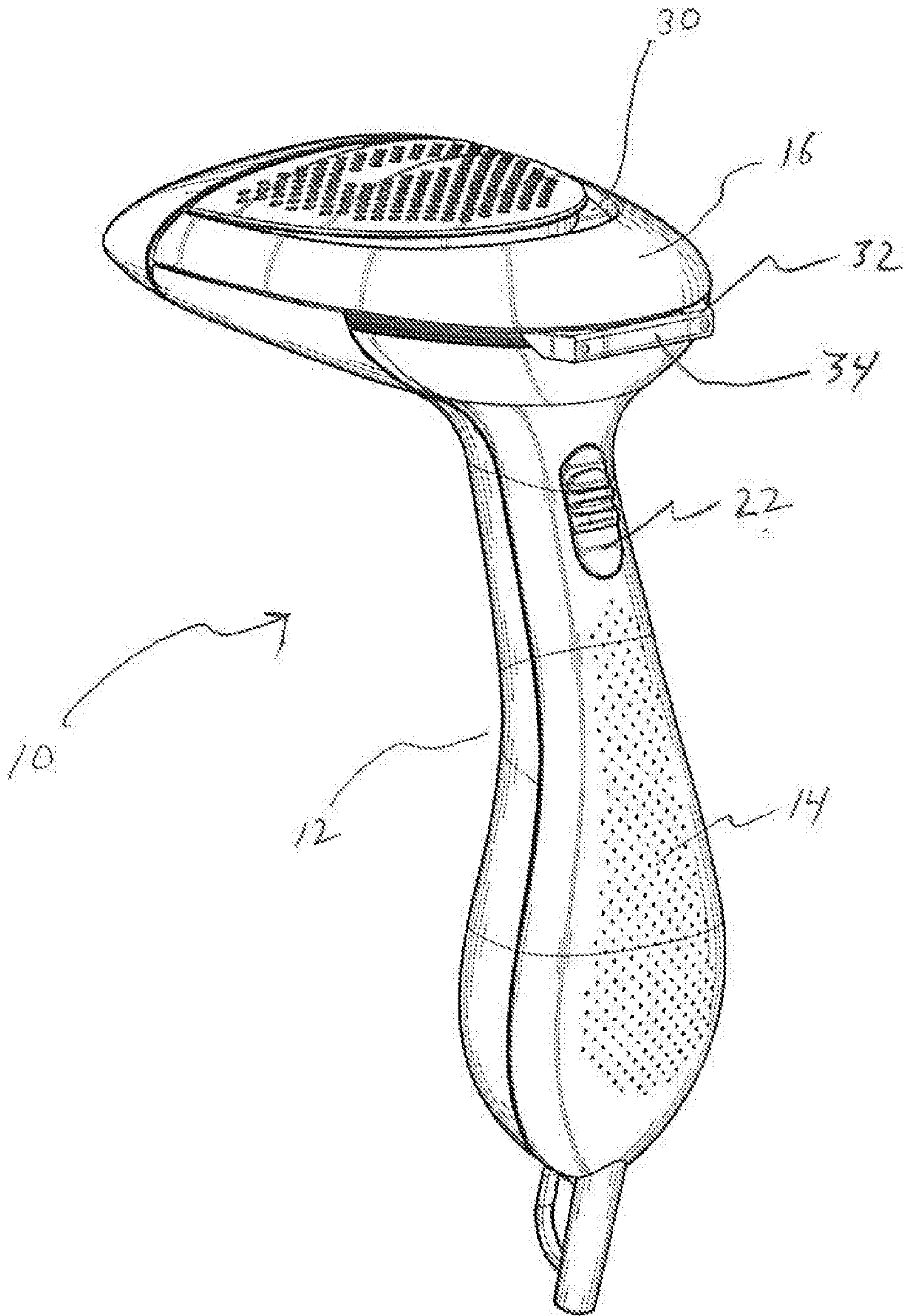


FIG. 2

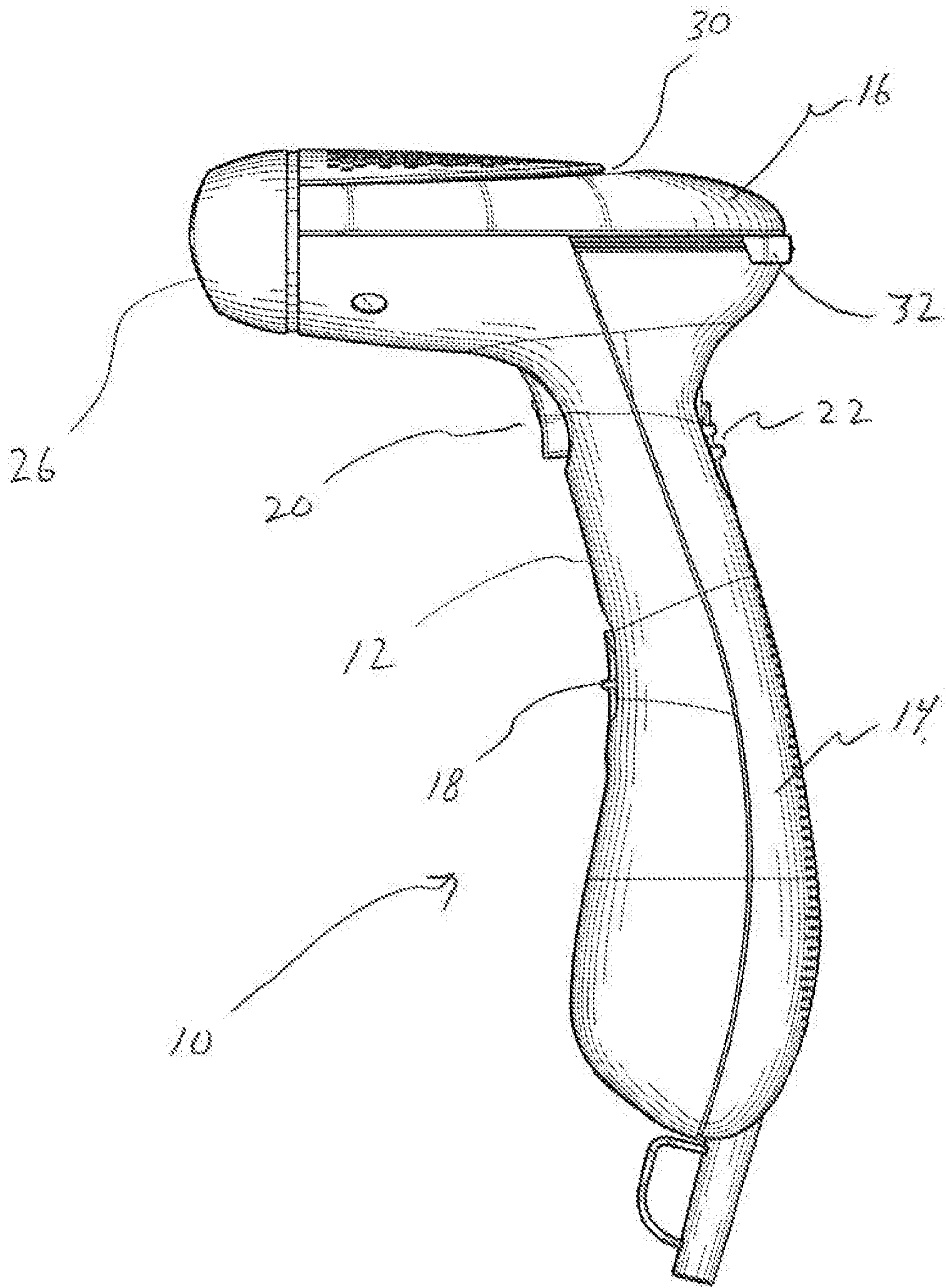


FIG. 3

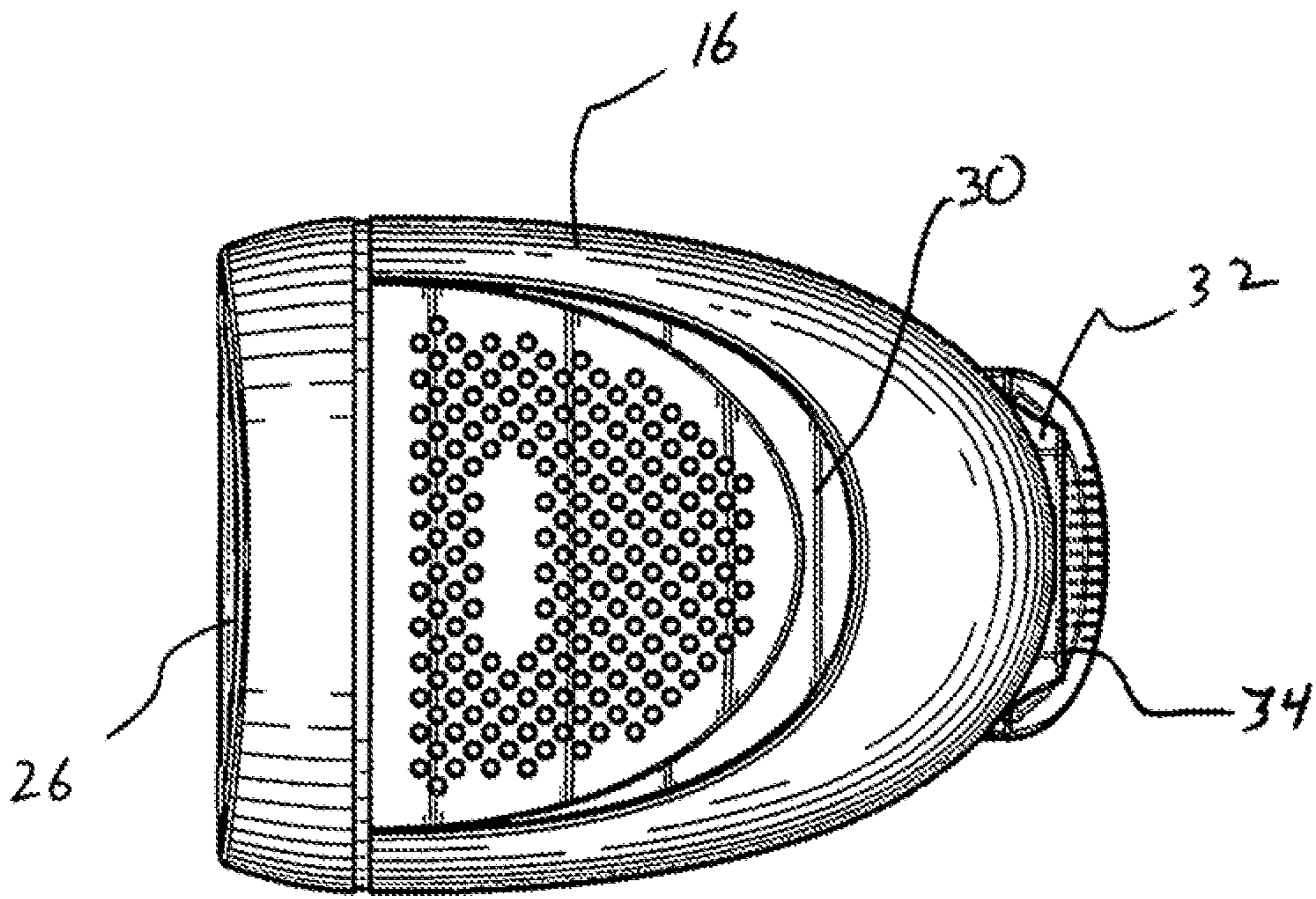
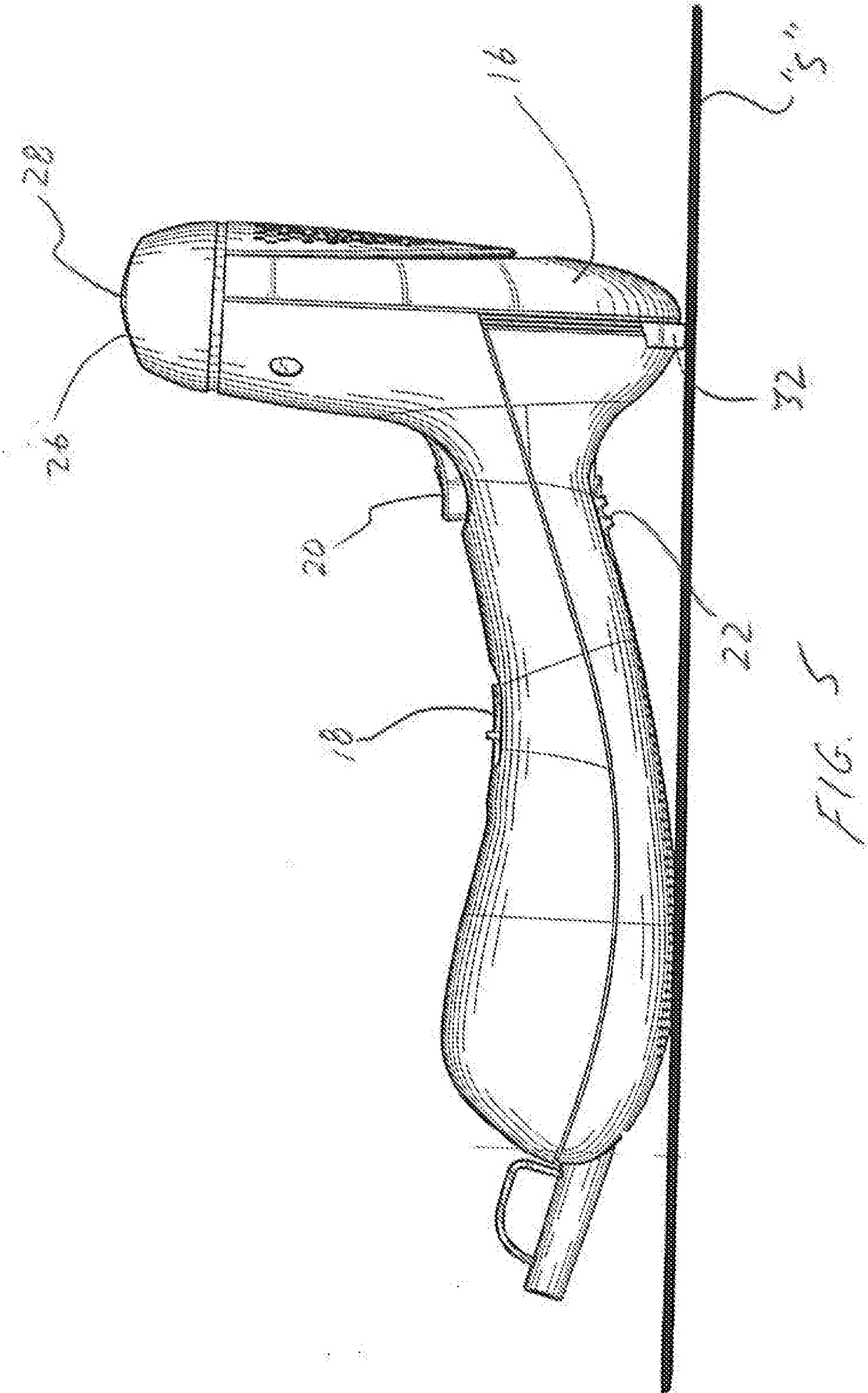


FIG. 4



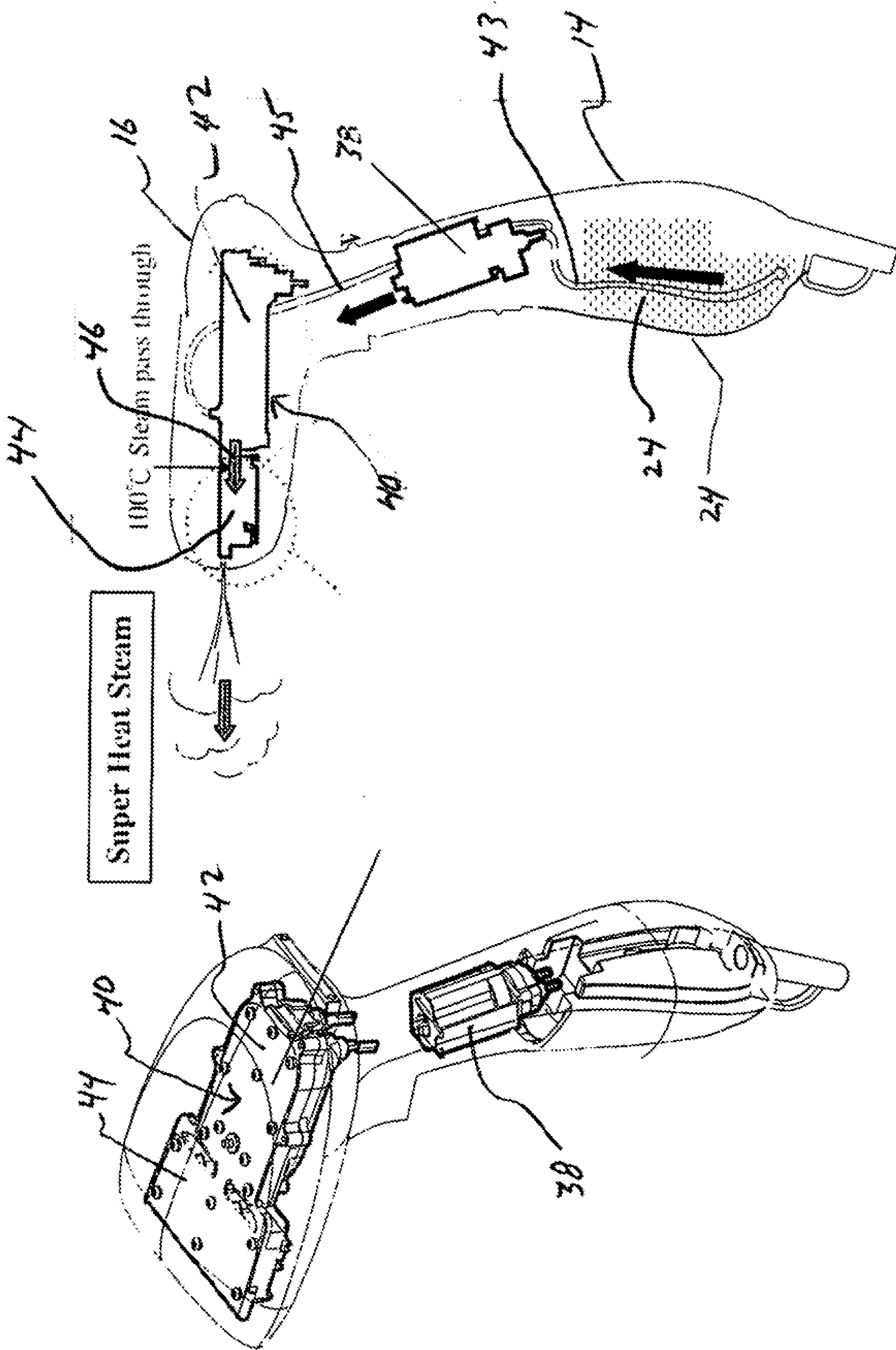


FIG. 7

FIG. 6

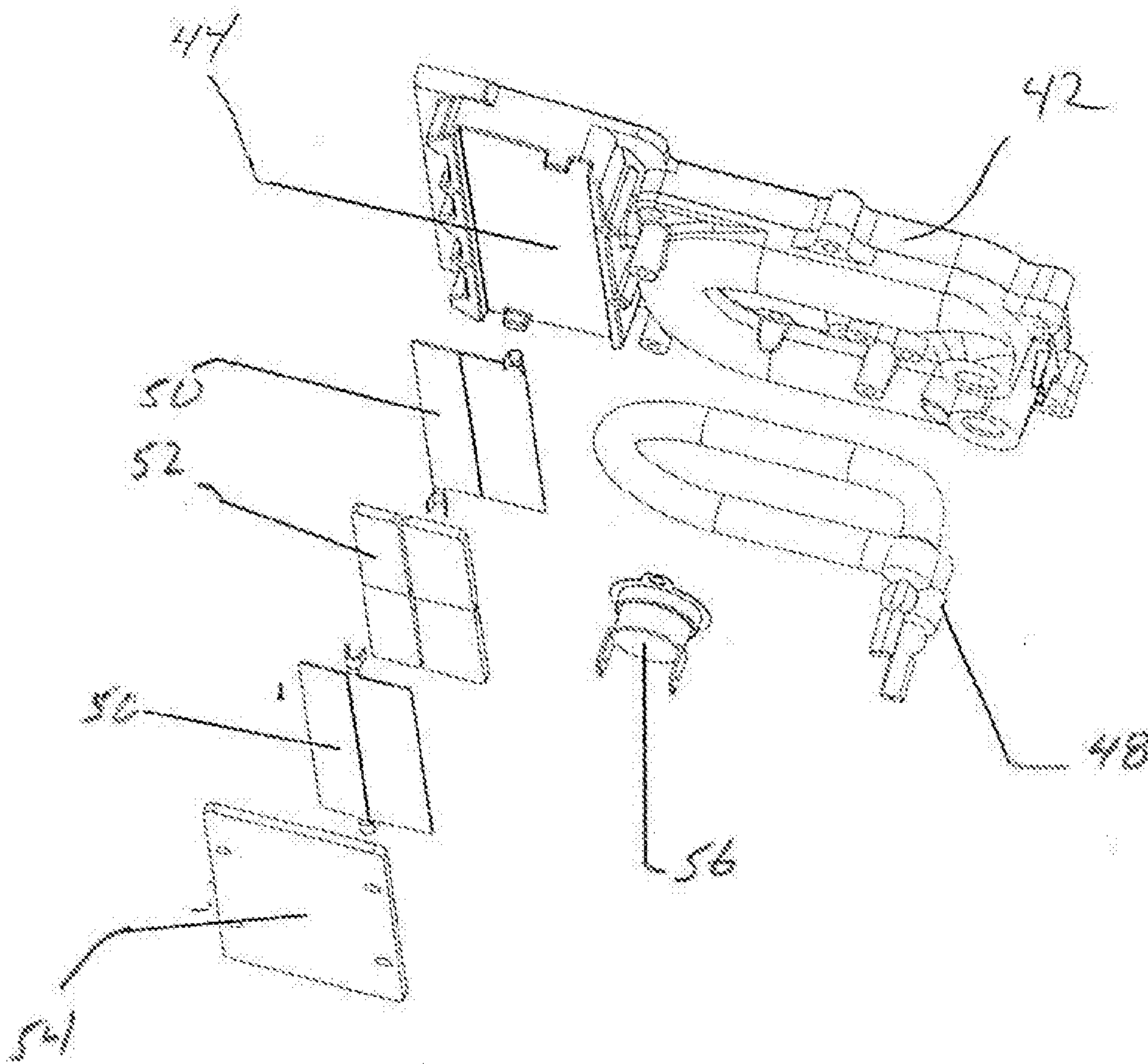


FIG. 8

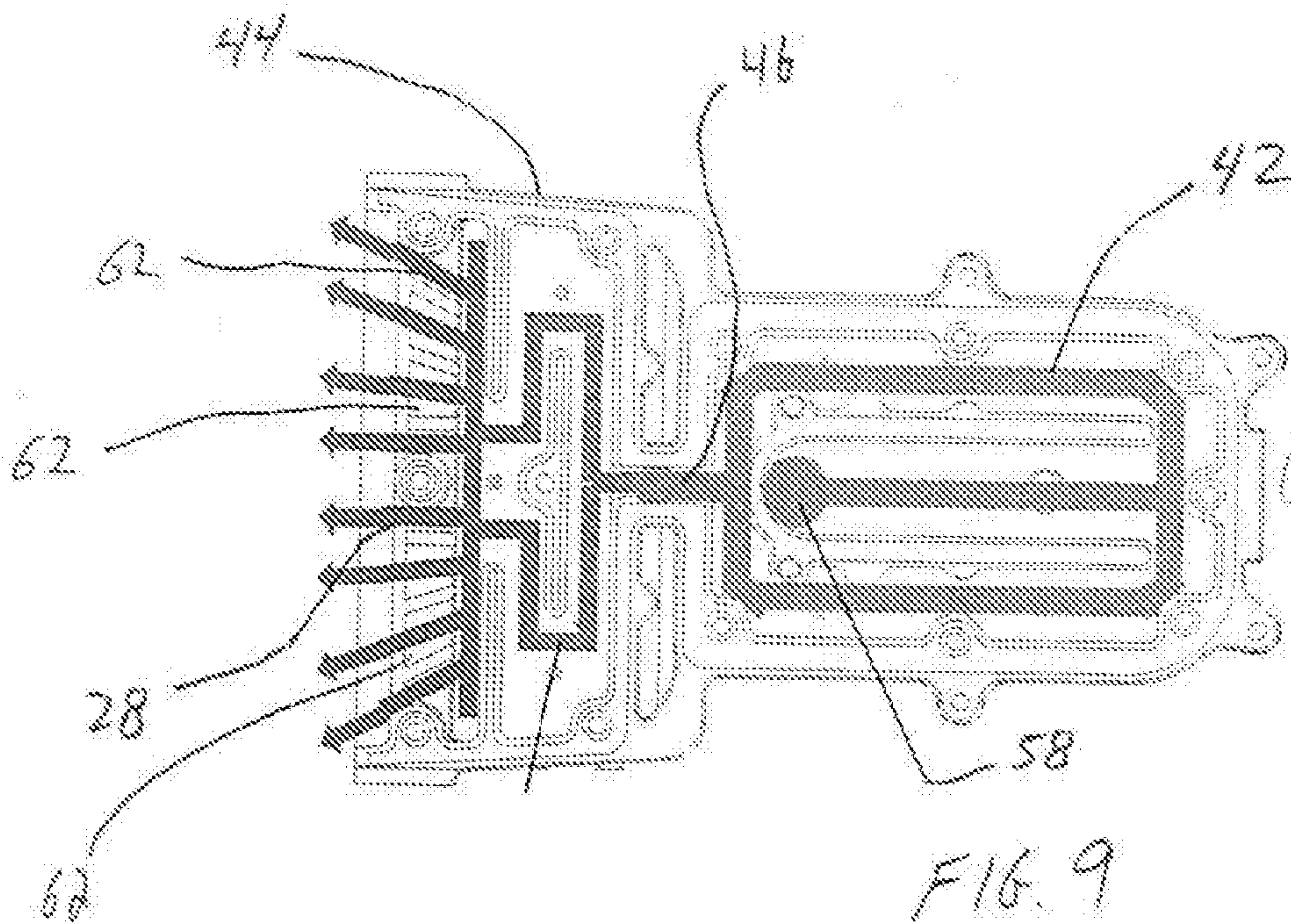
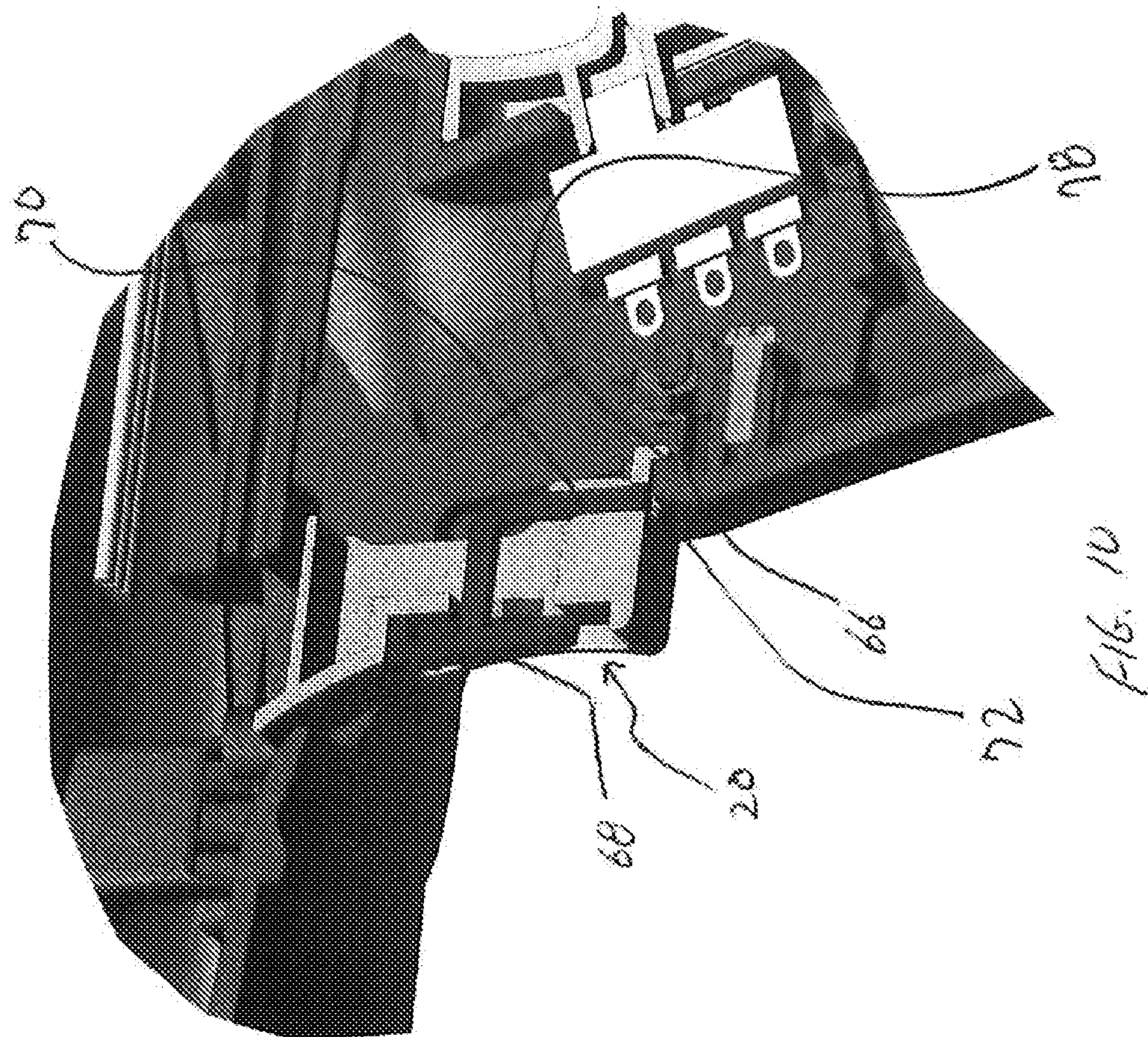
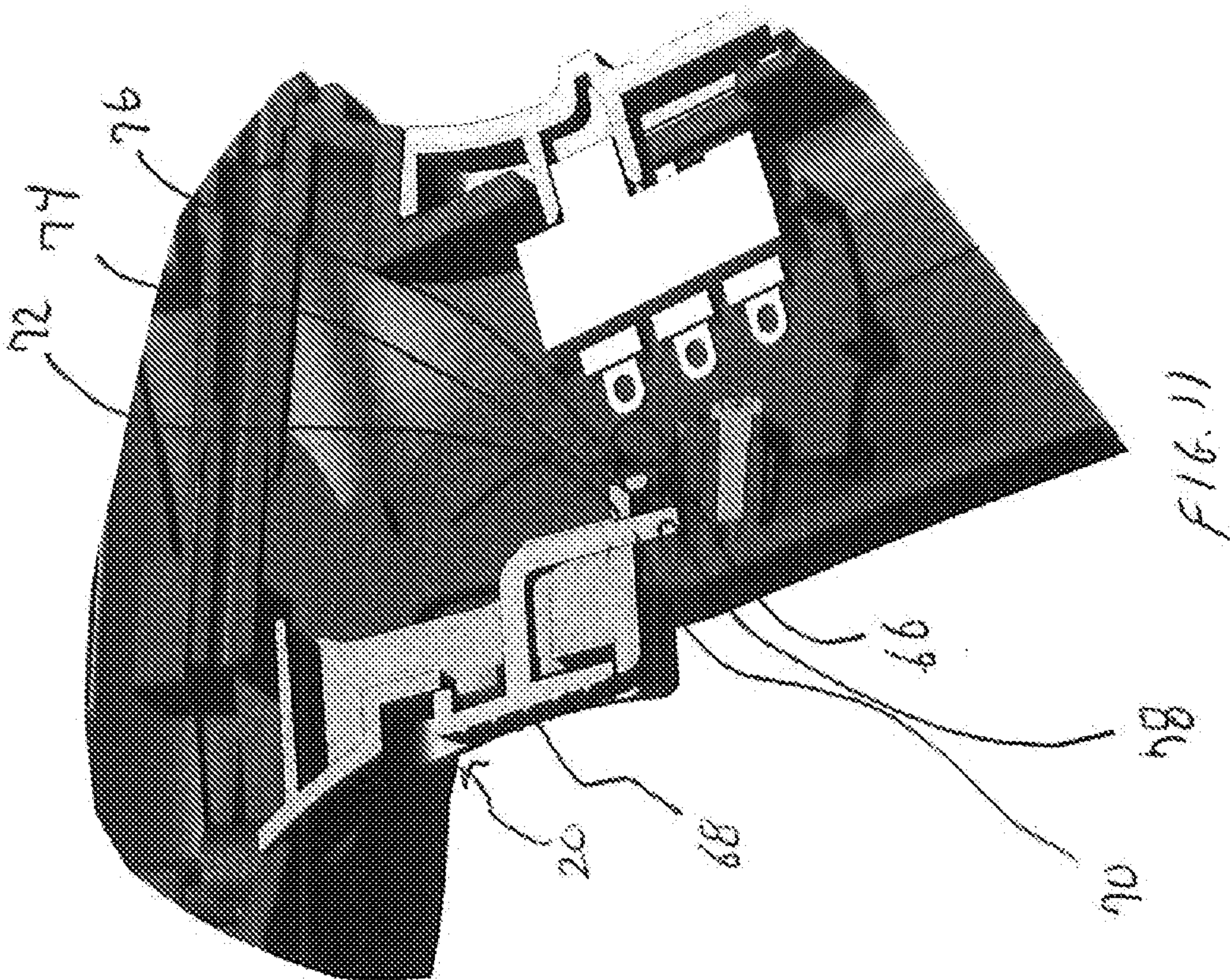


FIG. 9



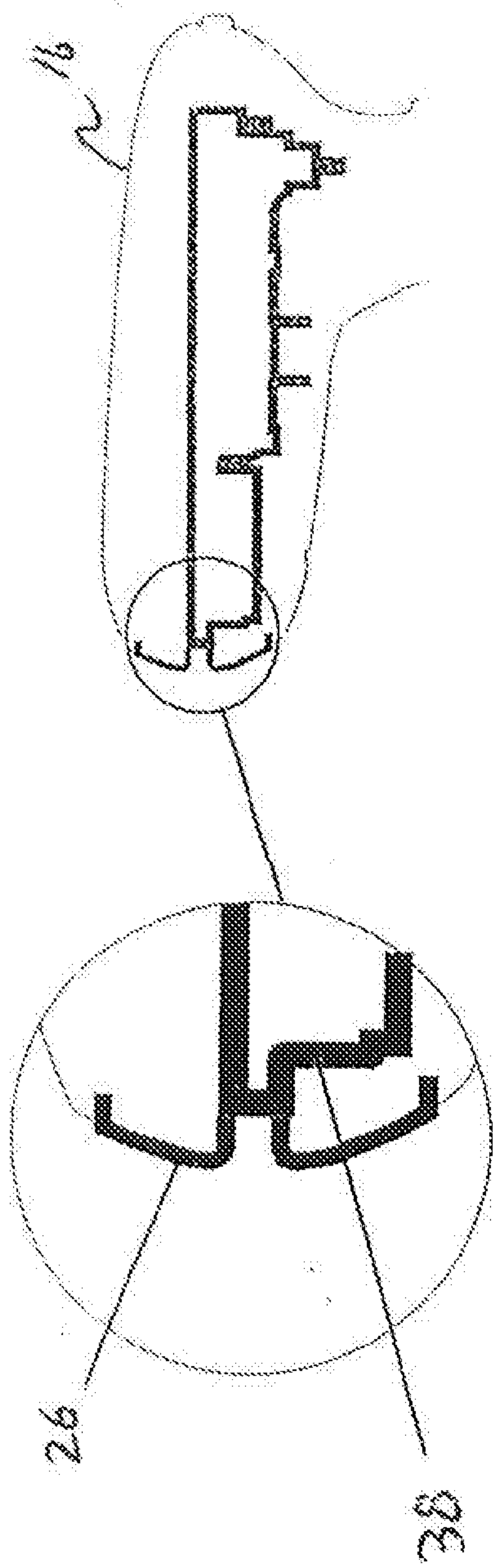


FIG. 12

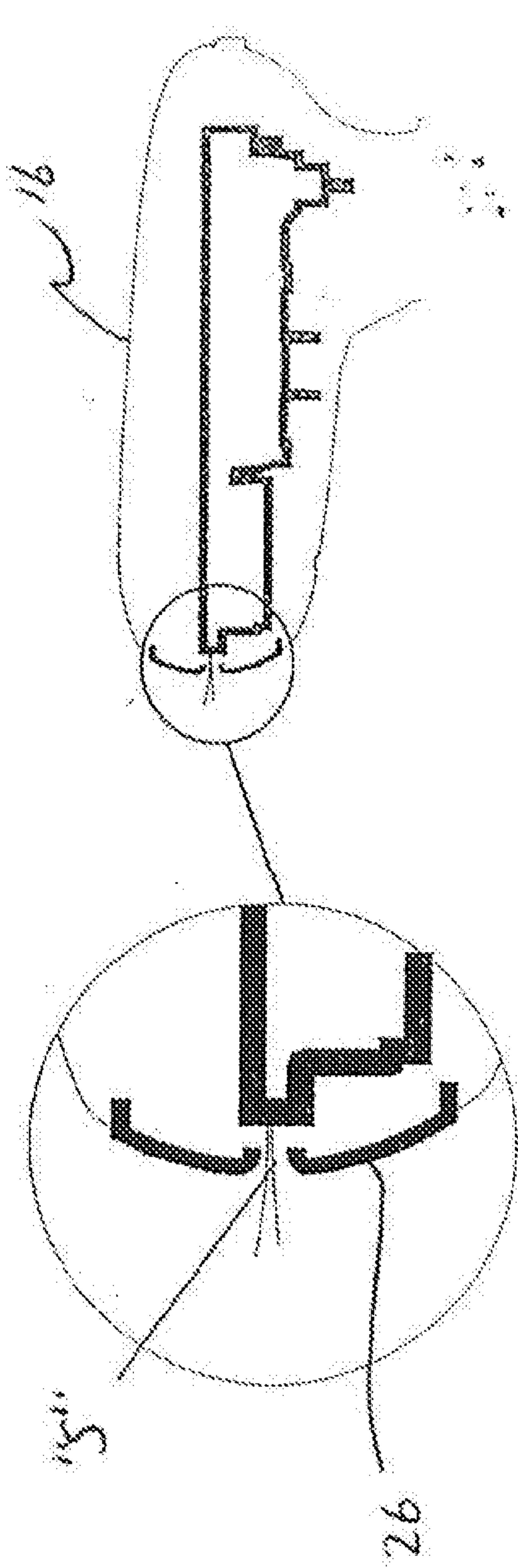


FIG. 13

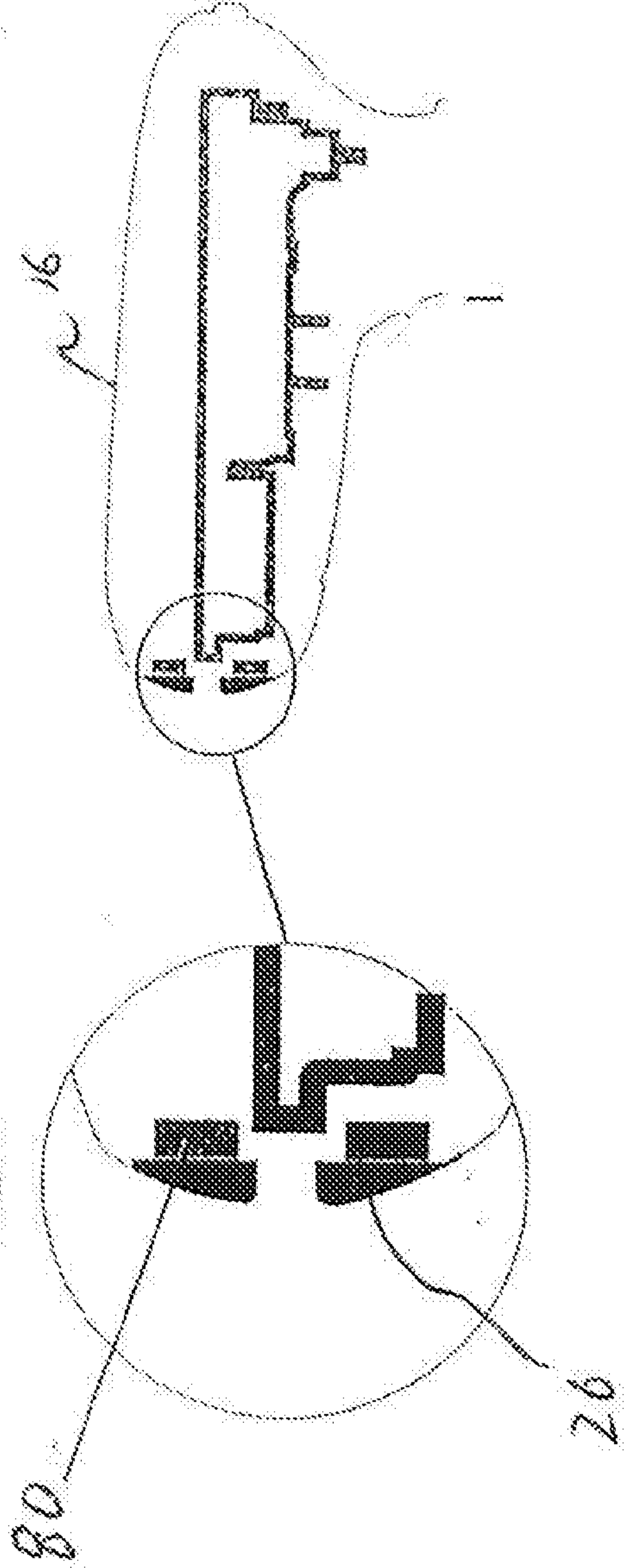


FIG. 14

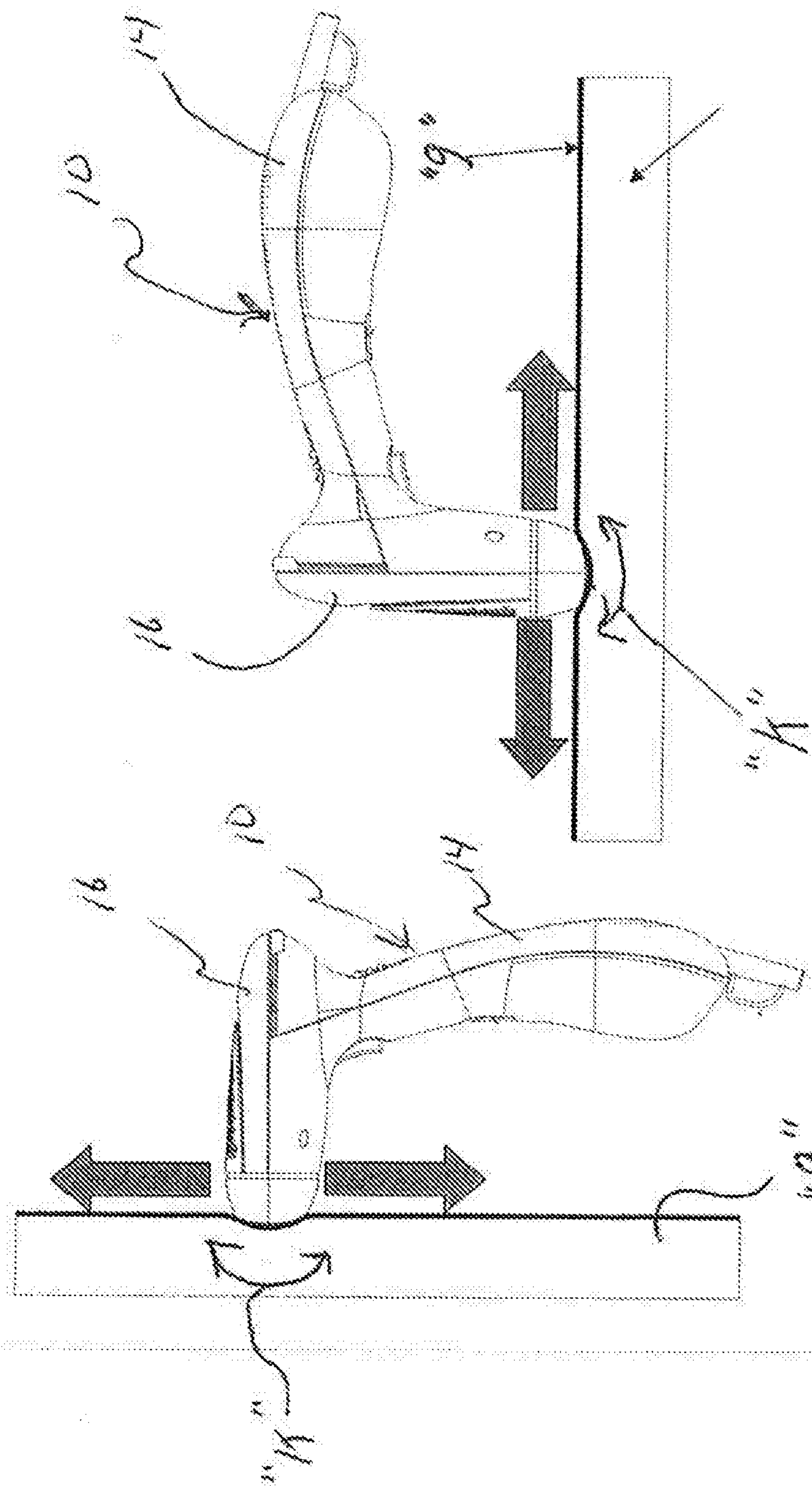


FIG. 16

FIG. 15

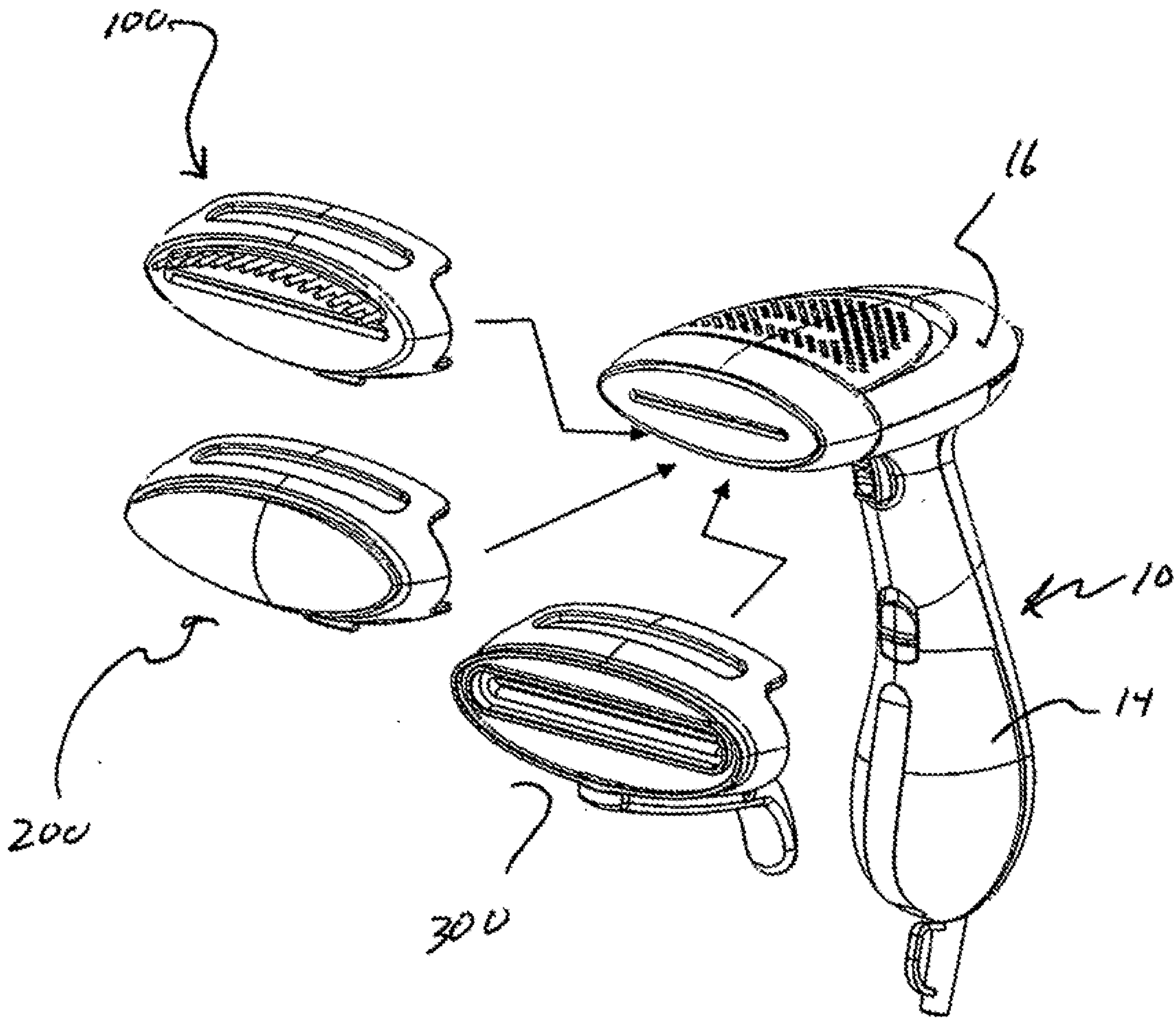


Fig.17

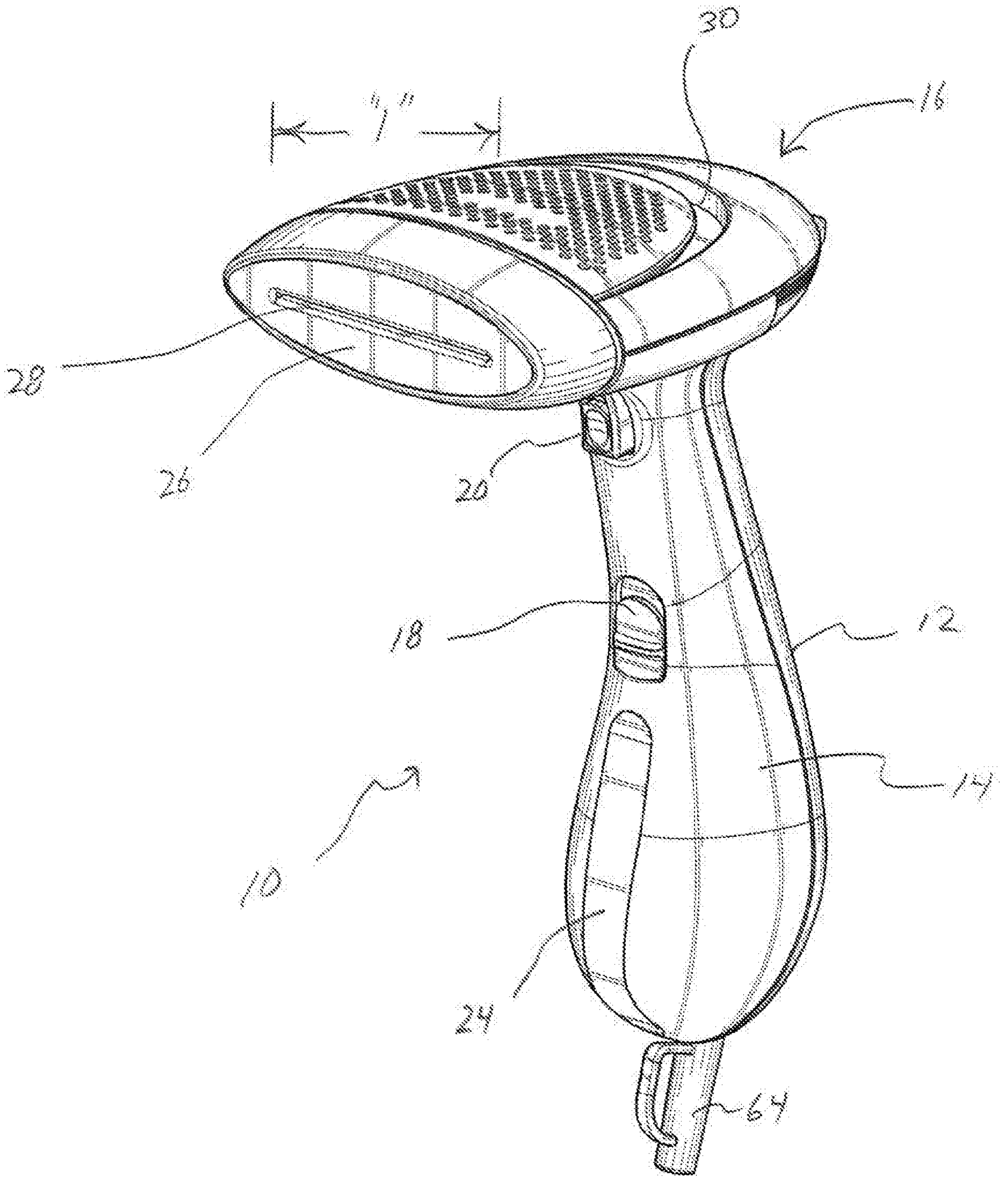


FIG. 1