

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
23 October 2003 (23.10.2003)

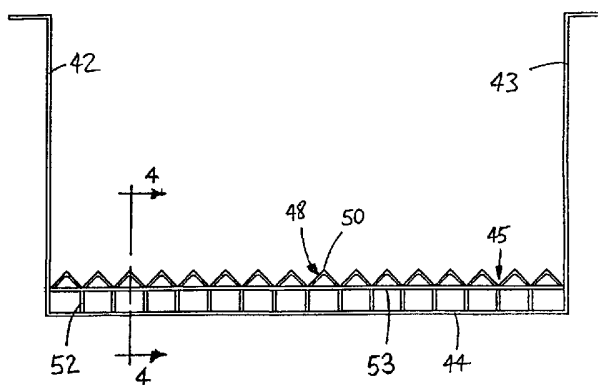
PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 03/086578 A1

- (51) International Patent Classification⁷: B01D 33/03, B07B 1/46
 - (21) International Application Number: PCT/US03/11042
 - (22) International Filing Date: 11 April 2003 (11.04.2003)
 - (25) Filing Language: English
 - (26) Publication Language: English
 - (30) Priority Data: 10/121,097 11 April 2002 (11.04.2002) US
 - (71) Applicant: GENERAL KINEMATICS CORPORATION [US/US]; 777 Lake Zurich Road, P.O. Box 2010, Barrington, IL 60011 (US).
 - (72) Inventors: CASEY, Dwight, P.; 810 North Beck, Lindenhurst, IL 60046 (US). IMES, Tobin, L.; 1388 Cotton Wood Lane, Crystal Lake, IL 60014 (US). MATHIS, Oscar L.; 962 Mayfield Street, Cary, IL 60013 (US).
 - (74) Agent: MATTHIAS, Brent, E.; Marshall, Gerstein & Borun, 233 S. Wacker Drive, 6300 Sears Tower, Chicago, IL 60606-6357 (US).
 - (81) Designated States (national): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VC, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW.
 - (84) Designated States (regional): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HU, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).
- Published: — with international search report

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: A METHOD OF SEPARATING LIQUID FROM LIQUID LADEN SOLID MATERIAL



(57) Abstract: A vibratory apparatus for separating a liquid from a liquid-laden solid material includes an inclined trough having a base with a first end and a second elevated with respect to the first end. A deck is attached to the trough base, the deck defining support points positioned above the base spaced from one another by a distance sufficient to support the solid material above the deck, and passages located between the support points to allow liquid to flow to the deck. A vibratory drive is attached to the trough and oriented to impart a conveying motion toward the trough second end. Solid material deposited onto the deck is advanced toward the second end by the conveying motion while the liquid flows along the trough base toward the first end under gravity. A method of separating a liquid from a liquid-laden solid material includes providing a trough having a deck defining a support surface with passages extending through the support surface. The liquid-laden solid material is deposited onto the support surface so that the liquid-laden solid material is supported by the support surface. A vibratory force is applied to the deck to separate a substantial portion of the liquid from the liquid-laden solid material. The liquid separated from the liquid-laden solid material is directed under gravity force through the passages extending through the support surface. The solid material is conveyed along the support surface by the vibratory force to a solids discharge point.



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For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR SEPARATING LIQUID FROM LIQUID LADEN SOLID MATERIAL

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention generally relates to methods and apparatus for dewatering solids, and more particularly to using a vibratory force to separate liquid from a liquid-laden solid material.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 The need for separating liquid from a liquid-laden solid material may arise in a variety of applications. As crude oil is refined, for example, a residual material known as petroleum coke may be generated. Petroleum coke is a granular solid that is highly combustible. It is typically created in a coking drum having removable end caps, wherein a single piece of petroleum coke remains lodged inside the drum. To remove the petroleum coke from the drum, the end caps are removed
15 and a hydraulic drill is inserted through a center of the piece of petroleum coke. The hydraulic drill first passes axially through the drum to create a two to three foot bore through the center of the petroleum coke. The drill is then pivoted so that its head is aligned radially with respect to the drum axis, and the drill is rotated to cut through and dislodge the petroleum coke material located nearer the drum. During the drilling
20 and cutting processes, water is typically used to assist removal of the coke from the drum. Eventually, all of the petroleum coke and water will drop out of the bottom of the drum.

 Further processing of the petroleum coke and water has typically included passing the material through a screen into a pit. The water and the petroleum
25 coke is then pulled out of the pit and discharged into an evaporation field. Once the water content is sufficiently reduced, the petroleum coke is then loaded into rail cars which ultimately discharge the coke onto a conveyor. Consequently, the petroleum coke must be handled at separate transfer points, such as from the pit to the evaporation field and from the evaporation field to the conveyor. Furthermore, such
30 handling often requires the use of rail cars which are overly expensive and time consuming to use. Still further, the use of evaporating pits requires a substantial amount of time for the water content of the petroleum coke to drop to a level sufficient for further handling, transport, and/or use.

Some petroleum coke dewatering processes are known which attempt to use screens to retain the solid material while allowing the liquid to pass through. Such systems may employ conventional or vibrating screens. A common problem with such screens, whether conventional or vibrating, is that solids suspended in the liquid tend to clog the screen, thereby interrupting the dewatering process.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a side elevation view of vibratory separating apparatus in accordance with the teachings of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a schematic end view of a trough used in the apparatus shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is an end view of an alternative trough having an elevated support bed.

FIG. 4 is a side elevation view, in cross-section, taken along line 4-4 of FIG. 3.

FIG. 5 is an end view of an alternative trough having a deck formed of grouser bars.

FIG. 6 is an end view of an alternative trough having a deck formed of round rods.

FIG. 7 is an end view of an alternative trough having a deck formed of tapered bars.

FIG. 8 is an end view of an alternative trough having a deck formed of half rounds.

FIG. 9 is an end view of an alternative trough having a deck formed of half ovals.

FIG. 10 is a side elevation view of an alternative vibratory separating apparatus adapted for mobile transportation.

FIG. 11 is a side elevation view of a vibratory separating apparatus having an alternative drive.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring to FIG. 1, vibratory apparatus for separating liquid from a liquid-laden solid material is indicated generally by reference numeral 10. The vibratory separating apparatus 10 is described herein for use in a petroleum coke dewatering process. It will be understood, however, that this is but a single application, and that the vibratory separating apparatus 10 may be used in any process that would benefit from the efficient separation of liquid from a liquid-laden solid material.

As shown in FIG. 1, the vibratory separating apparatus 10 includes a first separating unit 12 having a trough 14 supported by a frame 16. An exciter 18 is attached to the trough 14 and includes a rotating unbalance drive 20 for generating a vibratory motion, as is generally known in the art. Alternatively, the separating unit 12 may include a rotating eccentric drive 21, as illustrated in FIG. 11.

The trough 14 is oriented on an incline so that a first end 22 is positioned below a second end 24. While the solid material is typically advanced up the incline, as described in greater detail below, it is not necessary, and the trough may be declined or horizontal. By advancing the solid material up the incline, the period during which the solid material is in the apparatus 10 (also known as "dwell time") may be increased. The exciter 18 is oriented so that the vibratory motion created by the drive 20 imparts a conveying motion toward the elevated second end 24. A hopper 26 may be positioned above a central portion of the trough 14 for directing liquid-laden material into the trough. For example, a coking drum having petroleum coke lodged therein may be positioned over the hopper 26, so that the pieces of petroleum coke removed from the drum fall into the central portion of the trough 14. The first end 22 of the trough 14 further includes a chute 23 for directing liquid into a drainage receptacle 25.

In the illustrated embodiment, the vibratory separating apparatus 10 also includes a second separating unit 28 that is substantially identical to the first separating unit 12. Accordingly, the second separating unit 28 includes a trough 30 supported by a frame 32. An exciter 34 is operably connected to the trough 30 and includes a drive 36 for generating a vibratory motion. The trough 30 is also oriented on an incline so that a first end 38 is lower than a second end 40 of the trough. The

exciter 34 is oriented to impart a conveying motion which advances material in the trough 30 from the first end 38 to the elevated second end 40. Apparatus for generating such a vibratory conveying motion are generally known in the art, and therefore are not described in detail herein. The first end 38 of the trough 30 also includes a chute 39 for directing liquid into a drainage receptacle 41.

The first end 38 of the trough 30 may be positioned below the second end 24 of the trough 14, so that material advancing over the second end 24 of the trough 14 will drop into the trough 30 of the second separating unit 28. In the illustrated embodiment, the second end 24 of trough 14 is positioned somewhat upstream of the first end 38 of trough 30. The second end 40 of the trough 30 may be positioned over a receptacle, conveyor, or other transport apparatus for further processing of the solid material. It will be appreciated that the second unit 28 further separates liquid from the liquid-laden solid material, but is not required in all applications, since a single separating unit 12 may provide sufficient separation.

While both exciters 18, 34 are shown position below the troughs 14, 30, it will be appreciated that the exciters may be positioned above the troughs or in any other location currently known in the art.

FIG. 2 illustrates an end view of the trough 14. The trough 14 includes opposing sidewalls 42, 43 connected by a base 44. A plurality of V-shaped angles 46 are attached to the base 44 and extend longitudinally along the length of the trough 14. Each V-shaped angle 46 has an apex 48 and defines one or more support points 50. In the current embodiment in which the V-shaped angles 46 extend continuously along the length of the trough 14, the support points 50 create a pattern of support lines. The support points 50 are positioned above the base 44 and are spaced at a distance sufficient to engage and support substantially all of the solid material above the base 44. Edges of adjacent V-shaped angles define passages 45, which allow the fluid contained by the material to pass through to the base 44. Accordingly, the V-shaped angles 46 suspend the solid material above the base 44 to allow liquid to drain from the solid material under the force of gravity.

Because the trough 14 in the illustrated embodiments is on an incline, the liquid will flow toward the first end 22 and through the chute 23 for discharge into the drainage receptacle 25. In contrast, the solid material supported by the V-shaped

angles 46 is advanced toward the second end 24 of the trough 14 as a result of the vibratory conveying motion generated by the exciter 18. The solid material is ultimately discharged into the trough 30 of the second separating unit 28 having a substantially identical base construction. Accordingly, additional liquid is removed from the solid material and flows to the first end 38 and through the chute 39 for discharge into the drainage receptacle 41, while the solid material is advanced toward the second end 40 of the trough 30.

While FIG. 2 illustrates apparatus in which the solid and liquid materials flow in opposite directions (i.e., a reverse flow arrangement), the separating units 12, 28 may be configured for other material flow patterns. For example, the solid material may be conveyed down the inclined trough and a liquid drainage point may be located upstream of the solids discharge point, to produce a concurrent flow of solid and liquid materials. In addition, the trough may be horizontal, with concurrent or reverse material flow paths. Furthermore, the liquid drainage point may be an outlet formed in the base, while the solids discharge point may be the trough first end.

In an alternative trough embodiment illustrated at FIGS. 3 and 4, the support points 50 are further elevated with respect to the trough base 44. In this embodiment, spacer bars 52 are intermittently positioned along the length of the trough base 44. Cross bars 53 are attached to the tops of the spacer bars 52 and extend transversely across the trough 14. The V-shaped angles 46 are then attached to the cross bars 53. Liquid may flow through the passages 45 between adjacent angles 46 and the gaps between the spacer and cross bars 52, 53 to drain from the solid material. The spacer and cross bars 52, 53 increase the height of the support points 50 with respect to the trough base 44, thereby increasing the liquid volume capacity of the separating unit. Alternatively, the trough base 44 may be removed and the liquid separated from the solid material may collect in a separate receptacle positioned below the trough 14.

While the above embodiments describe the use of V-shaped angles, it will be appreciated that any type of deck that creates support points positioned above the base 44 and spaced a distance sufficient to support the solid material may be used. Accordingly, the deck may comprise a plurality of grouser bars 63 (FIG. 5), round rods 54 (FIG. 6), tapered bars 55 (FIG. 7), half rounds 56 (FIG. 8), half ovals 57 (FIG.

9), or any other structure that defines the support points 50. The spacer and cross bars 52, 53 shown in the embodiments of FIGS. 5-9 may be omitted without departing from the teachings of the present invention.

5 In an alternative embodiment illustrated at FIG. 10, a vibratory separating apparatus 60 is shown that is adapted for mobile transportation. Similar to the embodiment of FIG. 1, the vibratory separating apparatus 60 includes first and second separating units 62, 64. Other than the second separating unit 64 being positioned transversely with respect to the first separating unit 62, the units 62, 64 are constructed substantially identical to the first and second separating units 12, 28 of the
10 above embodiment. In addition, the first and second separating units 62, 64 are mounted on frames 66, 68 having wheels 70. As shown in FIG. 10, the wheels 70 are adapted for use with rails 72 to allow the vibratory separating apparatus 60 to be transported to different locations. This is particularly advantageous, for example, where multiple coking drums are located at a single site. As a result, a single
15 vibratory separating apparatus 60 may be used to dewater petroleum coke from the various coking drums.

In operation, a petroleum coking drum may be positioned over the hopper 26 of the vibratory separating apparatus 10. The hopper 26 assists in directing the water-laden petroleum coke toward a central portion of the trough 14 of the first
20 separating unit 12. The V-shaped angles 46 engage and support the petroleum coke above the base 44 of the trough 14, thereby allowing the water to drain from the coke to the trough base 44 via the passages 45. The inclined trough 14 causes the water to flow toward the first trough end 22 under the force of gravity, so that the water is discharged by the chute 23 into the drainage receptacle 25. The petroleum coke
25 supported on the V-shaped angles 46, however, is advanced toward the trough second end 24 as a result of the vibratory motion generated by the exciter 18. The petroleum coke is eventually discharged from the second end 24 of the trough 14 into the trough 30 of the second separating unit 28. A similar process continues in the second separating unit 28, wherein additional liquid flows toward the trough first end 38 and
30 through the chute 39 to discharge in the drainage receptacle 41. Vibratory motion generated by the exciter 34 advances the petroleum coke toward the trough second end 40. The petroleum coke may be discharged from the trough second end 40 onto a vibratory conveyor, receptacle, or other transport for further processing.

While FIG. 10 illustrates frames 66, 68 having wheels 70, it will be appreciated that other types of mobile frames, such as rotating or translating frames, may be used without departing from the scope of the present invention.

5 A method of separating liquid from liquid-laden solid material is also provided. The liquid-laden solid material may be deposited onto a support surface, such as the support points 50, having passages extending therethrough. A vibratory force is applied to the support surface to separate a substantial portion of the liquid from the liquid-laden solid material. As used herein, a substantial portion is at least 50%, and preferably at least 75-80% of the liquid content in the solid material. The
10 liquid separated from the liquid-laden solid material is directed under gravity force through the passages extending through the support surface. The solid material is conveyed by the vibratory force along the support surface to a solids discharge point.

In the foregoing process and apparatus, it has been found that the application of the vibratory force to the support surface assists gravity in separating
15 liquid from the liquid-laden solid material. In addition, the vibratory force used in the present apparatus and method reduces the amount of fines that may be suspended in and discharged with the liquid. The vibratory force drives fines suspended in the liquid downward through the liquid-laden solid material. As the fines travel downward, they tend to stick together to form larger solid bodies that are do not flow
20 through the passages and therefore are conveyed with the rest of the solid material. Still further, by avoiding the use of screens, the process and apparatus disclosed herein do not plug and may be used continuously or in-line with other handling or processing equipment, in contrast to the batch processing required with conventional apparatus and methods.

25 Although certain apparatus and methods have been described herein, the scope of coverage of this patent is not limited thereto. On the contrary, this patent covers all embodiments of the teachings of the invention fairly falling within the scope of the appended claims either literally or under the doctrine equivalents.

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. A vibratory apparatus for separating a liquid from a liquid-laden solid material, the apparatus comprising:

5 a trough having a base, the trough defining a solids discharge point and a liquid drainage point;

a deck attached to the trough base, the deck defining support points positioned above the base and spaced from one another by a distance sufficient to support the solid material above the base, and passages located between the support points to allow liquid to flow therethrough; and

10 a vibratory drive attached to the trough and oriented to impart a conveying motion toward the solids discharge point;

wherein the solid material deposited onto the deck is advanced toward the solids discharge point by the conveying motion while the liquid flows along the trough base toward the liquid drainage point under gravity.

15

2. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a hopper located above the trough for directing the liquid-laden solid material toward a central portion of the trough.

20 3. The apparatus of claim 1, in which the deck comprises a plurality of V-shaped angles, each V-shaped angle having an apex defining at least one support point, the V-shaped angles extending longitudinally along the trough base.

25 4. The apparatus of claim 3, in which edges of adjacent V-shaped angles are spaced to define the passages.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising spacers positioned between the deck and the trough base.

30 6. The apparatus of claim 1, in which the solid comprises petroleum coke.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, in which the trough is mounted on a mobile frame.

5 8. The apparatus of claim 7, in which the frame comprises wheels adapted to travel along tracks.

9. The apparatus of claim 1, in which the vibratory drive comprises a rotating eccentric drive.

10

10. The apparatus of claim 1, in which the vibratory drive comprises a rotating unbalance drive.

11. The apparatus of claim 1, in which the trough has a first end and a second end, wherein the trough second end is elevated with respect to the trough first end.

15

12. The apparatus of claim 11, in which the trough second end comprises the solids discharge point and the trough first end comprises the liquid drainage point.

13. A method of separating liquid from a liquid-laden solid material, comprising:

20

providing a trough having a deck defining a support surface with passages extending through the support surface;

25 depositing the liquid-laden solid material on the support surface so that the liquid-laden solid material is supported by the support surface;

applying a vibratory force to the deck to separate a substantial portion of the liquid from the liquid-laden solid material;

directing the liquid separated from the liquid-laden solid material under gravity force through the passages extending through the support surface;

conveying the solid material by the vibratory force along the support surface to a solids discharge point.

5 14. The method of claim 13, in which the trough further comprises a base surface positioned below the support surface and in fluid communication with the passages extending through the support surface, the method further comprising transferring the liquid along the base surface to a liquid drainage point.

10 15. The method of claim 14, in which the liquid is transferred along the base surface in a first direction and the solid material is conveyed along the support surface in a second direction.

15 16. The method of claim 15, in which the first direction is opposite the second direction.

17. The method of claim 13, in which the deck support surface is oriented at an incline so that the solid material is conveyed vertically upward along the support surface.

20 18. The method of claim 17, in which the base surface is oriented at a decline so that the liquid is transferred vertically downward along the base surface.

25 19. The method of claim 14, in which the support surface is defined by a plurality of inverted V-shaped angles coupled to the base surface, the V-shaped angles extending longitudinally along the base surface and being spaced to define the passages therebetween.

20. The method of claim 19, in which spacers are positioned between the base surface and the V-shaped angles.

21. The method of claim 14, in which the support surface is defined by a plurality of grouser bars coupled to the base surface, the grouser bars extending longitudinally along the base surface and being spaced to define the passages
5 therebetween.

22. The method of claim 14, in which the support surface is defined by a plurality of round rods coupled to the base surface, the round rods extending longitudinally along the base surface and being spaced to define the passages
10 therebetween.

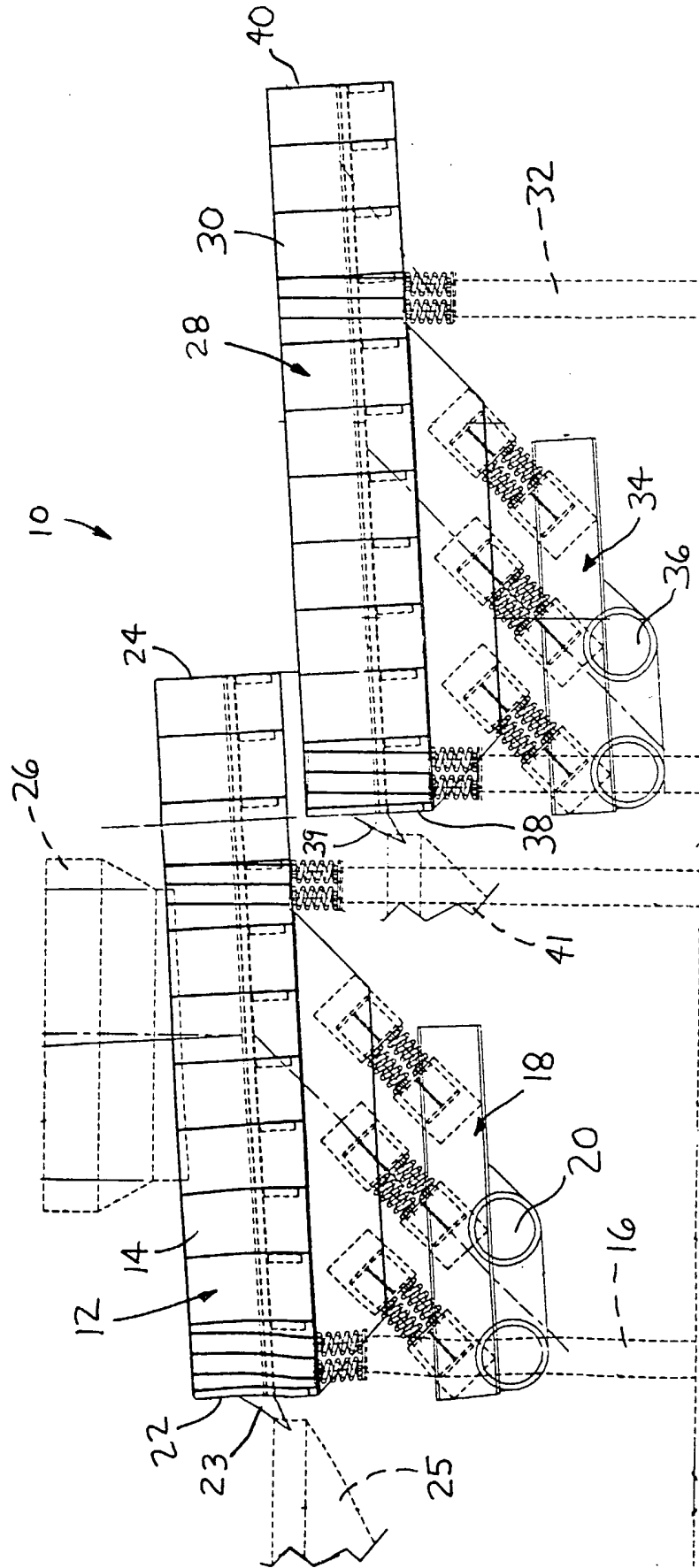
23. The method of claim 14, in which the support surface is defined by a plurality of half rounds coupled to the base surface, the half rounds extending longitudinally along the base surface and being spaced to define the passages
15 therebetween.

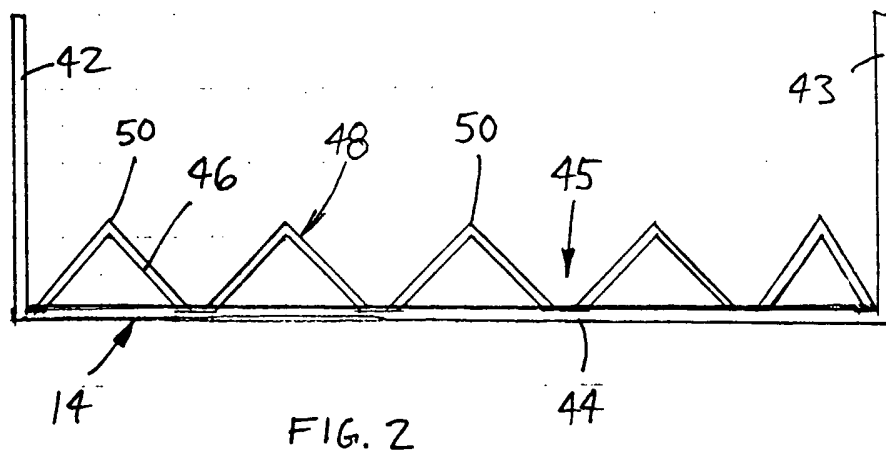
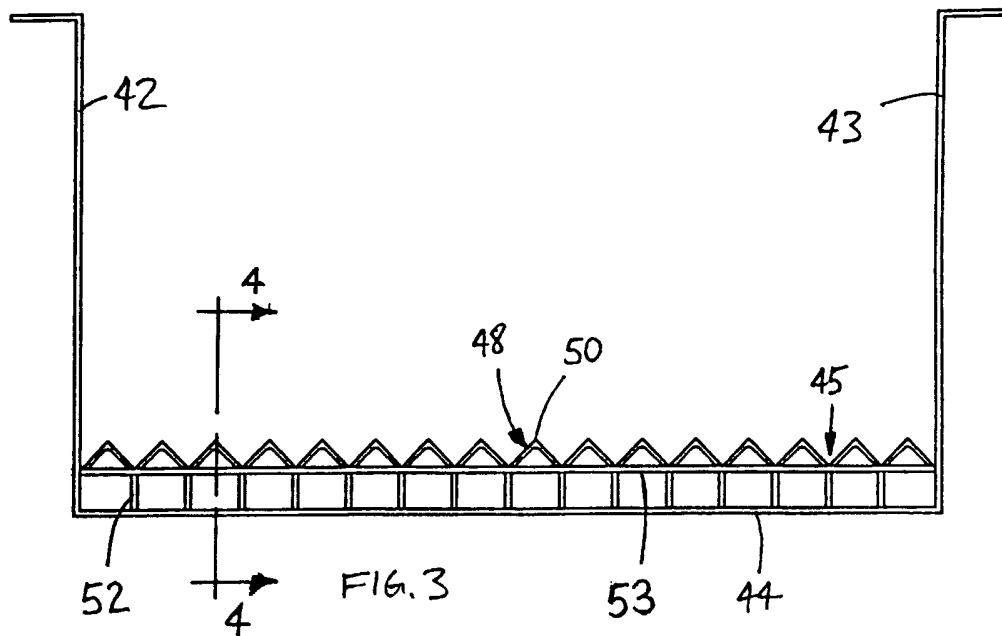
24. The method of claim 14, in which the support surface is defined by a plurality of half ovals coupled to the base surface, the half ovals extending longitudinally along the base surface and being spaced to define the passages
20 therebetween.

25. The method of claim 13, in which a vibratory drive is coupled to the trough to apply the vibratory force to the deck.

26. The method of claim 13, in which the liquid-laden solid material
25 comprises water-laden petroleum coke.

FIG. 1





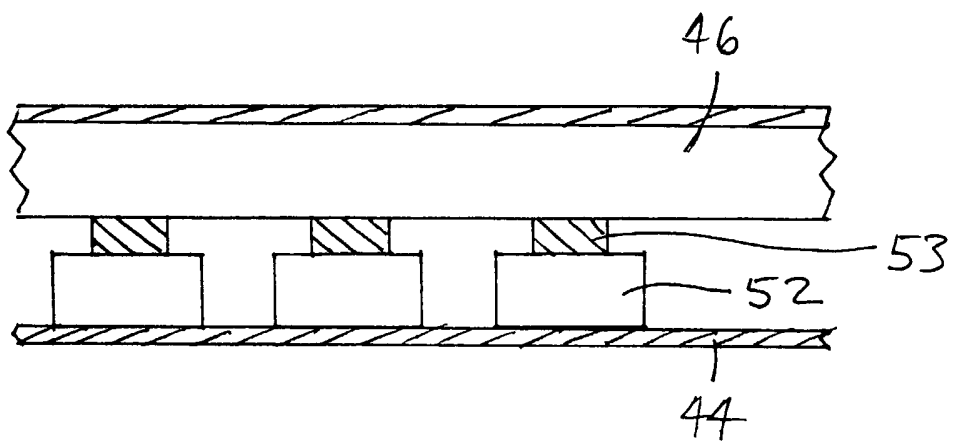


FIG. 4

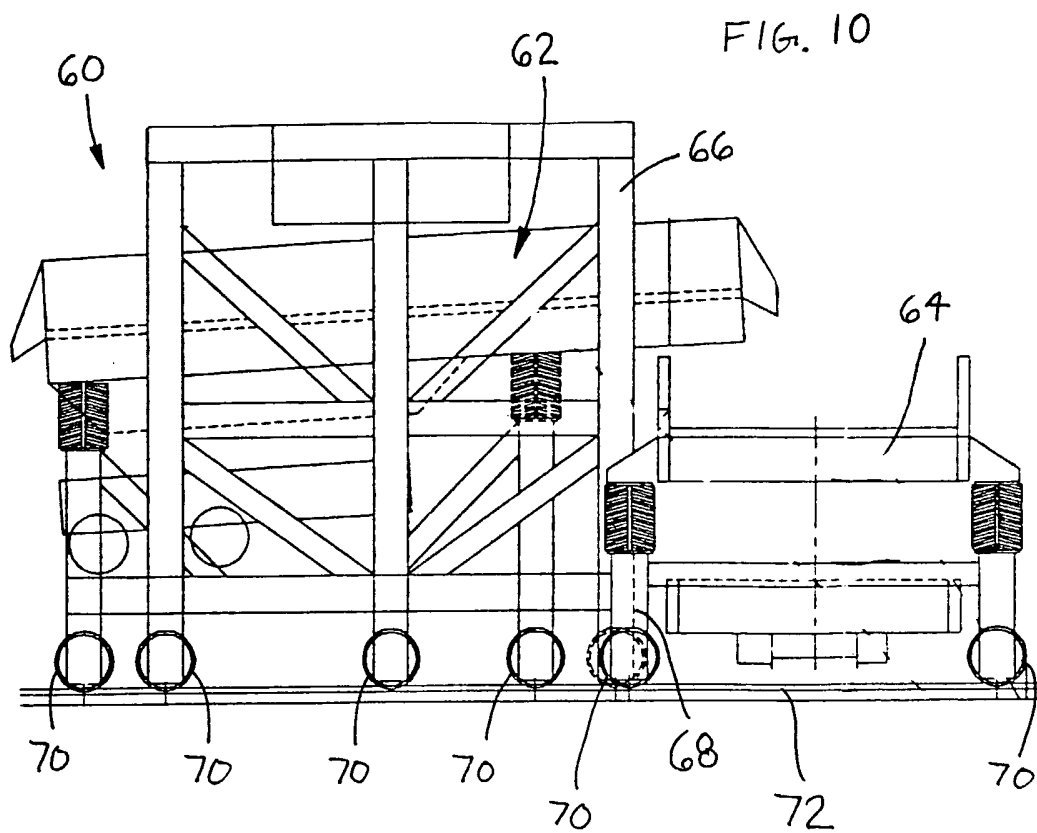


FIG. 5

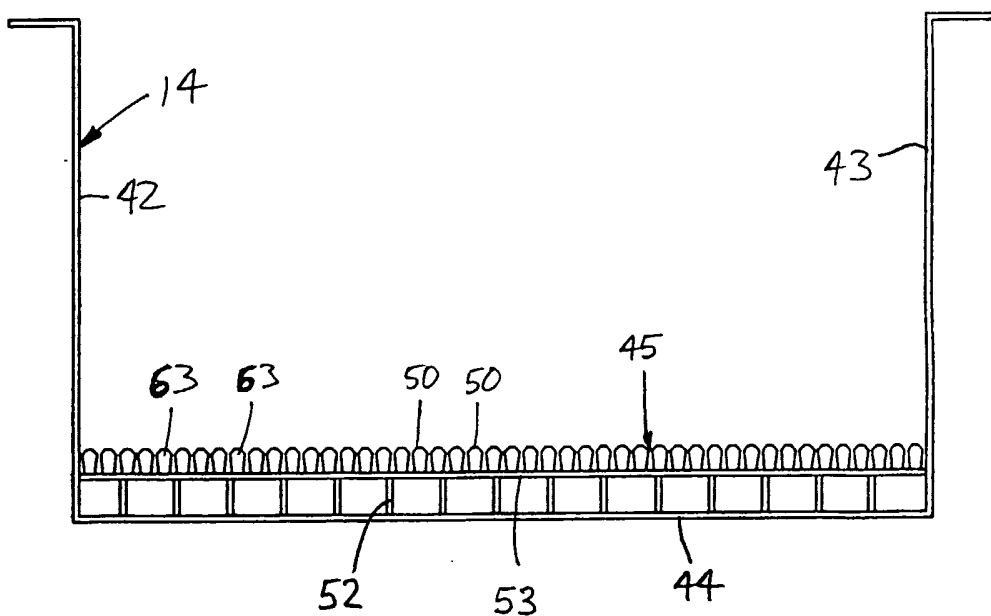


FIG. 6

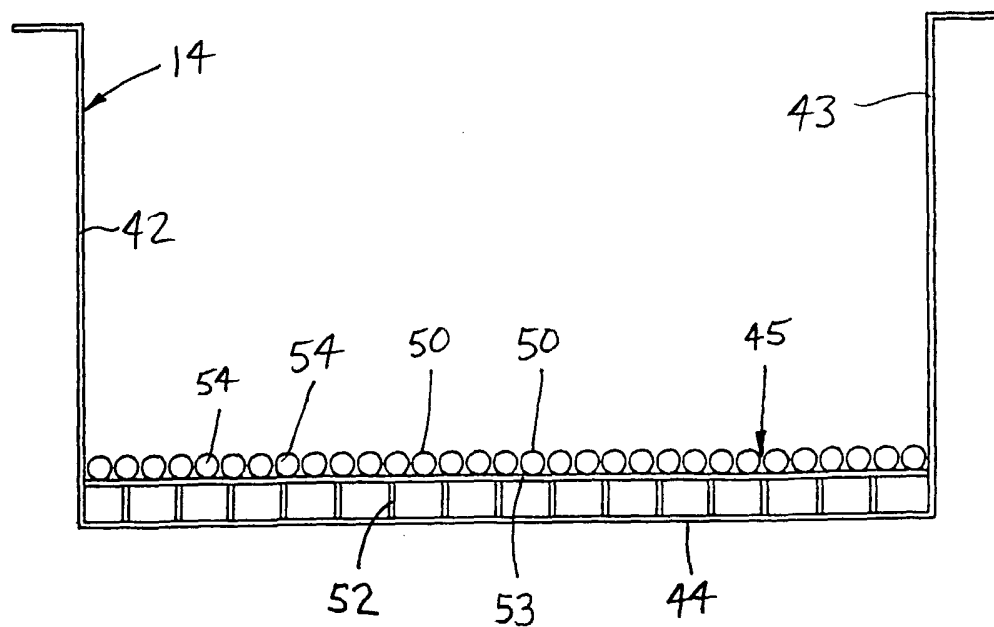


FIG. 7

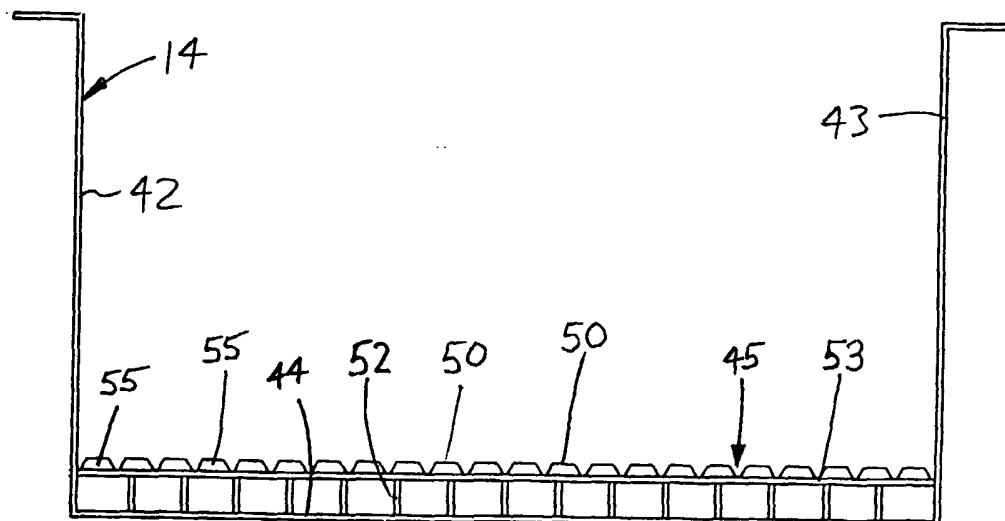


FIG. 8

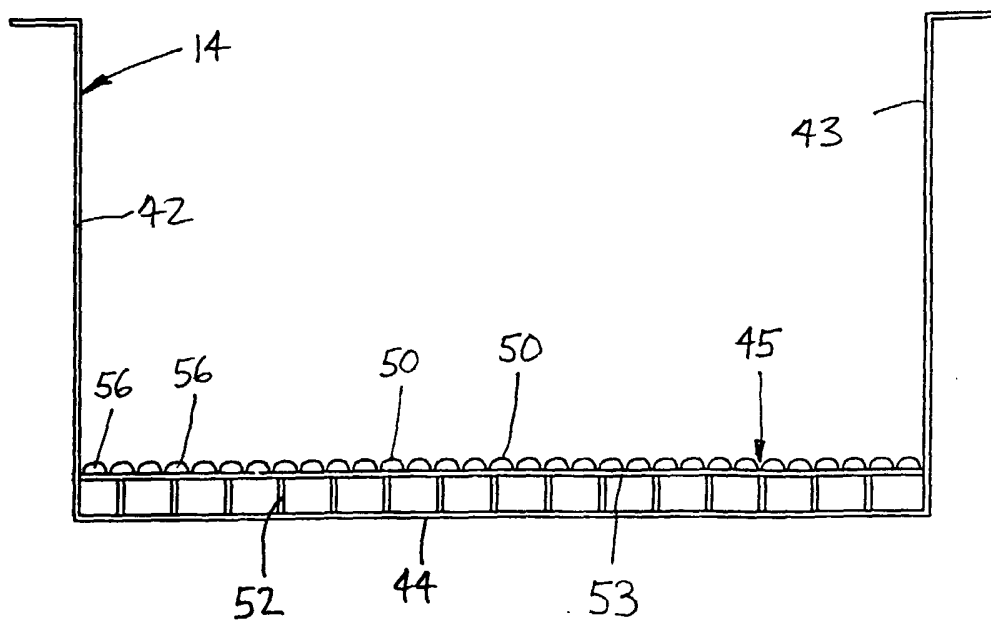


FIG. 9

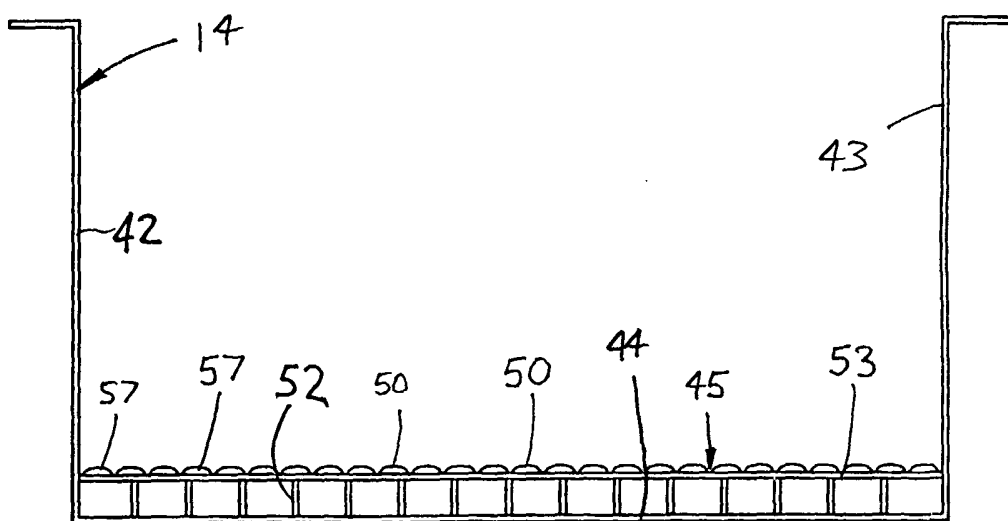
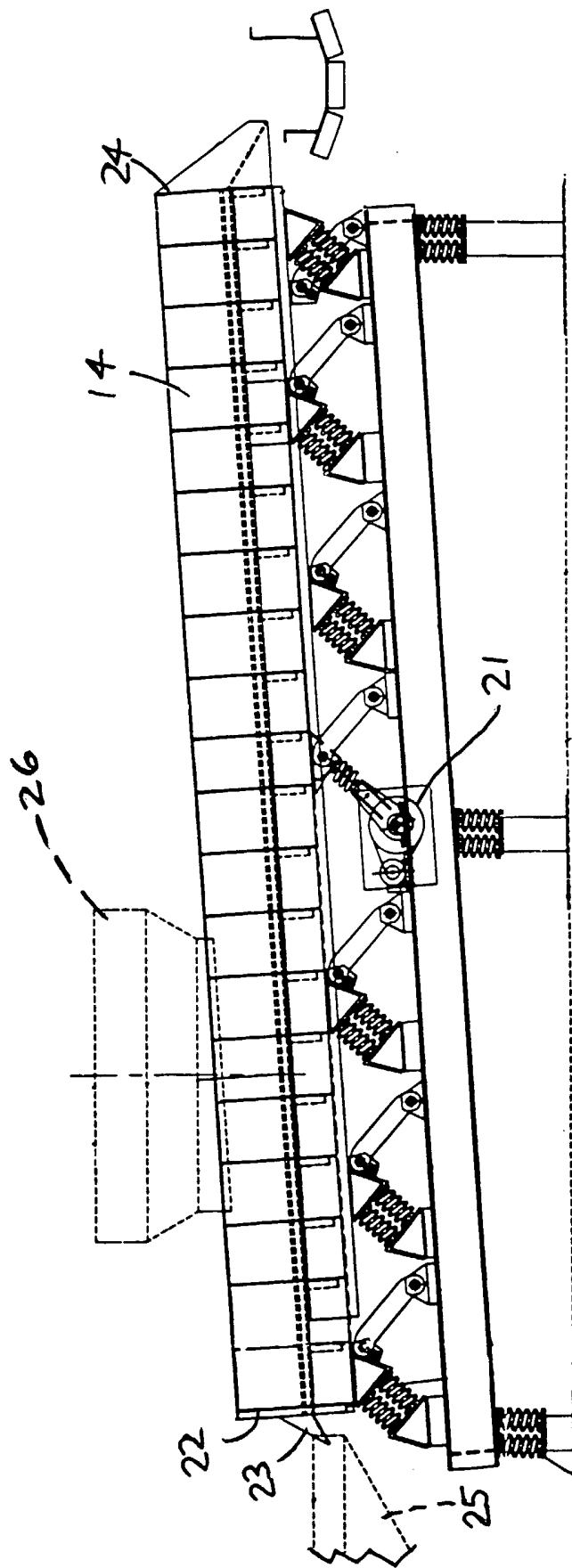


FIG. 11



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

PCT/US 03/11042

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 B01D33/03 B07B1/46

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

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 B01D B07B

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

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

EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 01 45867 A (ANDERSON JOHN R ;MALONEY LINDSAY (AU); MELWIRE PTY LTD (AU); TAYLO) 28 June 2001 (2001-06-28) the whole document	1,2, 5-18, 21-26
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Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

° Special categories of cited documents :

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

23 July 2003

Date of mailing of the international search report

30/07/2003

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
 Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,
 Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

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Hilt, D

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

PCT/US 03/11042

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