

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A shift control mechanism for an automatic transmission includes a housing having a shift control pattern with a longitudinal portion defining a plurality of automatic transmission operating settings and a transverse portion at one end of the longitudinal portion defining a plurality of manual transmission operating settings, a shift lever which is manually movable along the shift control portion for selecting the automatic transmission operating settings and for selecting the manual transmission operating settings, and a proximity switch assembly actuated by moving the shift lever to a first position in the transverse portion to send a signal to manually upshift the automatic transmission and to a second position in the transverse portion opposite the first position to send a signal to manually downshift the automatic transmission.

**SHIFT CONTROL MECHANISM TO
MANUALLY SHIFT AN AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION**

5 The present invention relates generally to shift control mechanisms for transmissions and, more particularly, to a shift control mechanism to manually shift an automatic transmission.

10 Automotive vehicles require a power train to transmit the force of an engine to wheels of the vehicle. The power train's main component is typically referred to as the "transmission". Engine torque and speed are converted in the transmission in accordance with the tractive-power demand of the vehicle. Transmissions are generally referred to as manually actuated or automatic

transmissions. Manual transmissions generally include mechanical mechanisms for coupling rotating gears to produce different ratio outputs to drive the wheels. Automatic transmissions are designed to take automatic control of the frictional units, gear ratio selection and gear shifting.

Recently, there has been a demand to provide an automatic transmission that may be manually shifted in addition to normal automatic transmission operation. Such shifting is typically provided by a shift control mechanism. An example of such a shift control mechanism is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 4,905,530 to Stehle et al. This patented shift control mechanism for an automatic transmission includes a selector lever to be operated manually. The selector lever is displaced in a first shifting lane for selecting different transmission speeds during normal automatic mode operation and transversely in a second shifting lane to manually engage the desired forward speed. However, there is a need in the art to provide a new and improved shift control mechanism.

It is, therefore, one object of the present invention to provide an improved shift control mechanism for an automatic transmission.

It is another object of the present invention to provide an improved shift control mechanism to manually shift an automatic transmission.

To achieve the foregoing objects, the present invention is a shift control mechanism for an automatic transmission including a housing having a shift control pattern with a longitudinal portion defining a plurality of automatic transmission operating settings and a transverse portion at one end of the longitudinal portion defining a plurality of manual transmission operating settings. The shift control mechanism also includes a shift lever which is manually movable along the shift control pattern for selecting the automatic transmission operating settings and for selecting the manual transmission operating settings. The shift control mechanism further includes a Hall Effect sensor/switch assembly actuated by moving the shift lever to a first position in the transverse portion to send a signal to manually upshift the automatic transmission and to a second position in the transverse portion opposite the first position to send a signal to manually downshift the automatic transmission.

One advantage of the present invention is that a shift control mechanism is provided for an automatic transmission. Another advantage of the present invention is that a shift control mechanism is provided for manually

shifting an automatic transmission. Yet another advantage of the present invention is that the shift control mechanism uses a Hall Effect sensor/switch to sense the position of a shift lever to generate a signal to manually shift the automatic transmission.

According to an aspect of the present invention there is provided a shift control mechanism for an automatic transmission comprising a housing including a shift control pattern having a longitudinal portion defining a plurality of automatic transmission operating settings and a transverse portion at one end of the longitudinal portion defining a plurality of manual transmission operating settings, a shift lever manually movable along the shift control pattern for selecting the automatic transmission operating settings and for selecting the manual transmission operating settings, and a proximity switch assembly actuated by moving the shift lever to a first position in the transverse portion to send a signal to manually upshift the automatic transmission and to a second position in the transverse portion opposite the first position to send a signal to manually downshift the automatic transmission, the proximity switch including a switch housing and a shift lever engagement member pivotally mounted to the switch housing and moveable with the shift lever to the first and second transverse positions to manually shift the automatic transmission, wherein the switch housing includes a plurality of support prongs, the shift lever engagement member including a body and a hub disposed at one end of the body, and a yoke disposed at the other end of the body opposite the hub and extending transversely to the body, the shift lever engagement member mounted on the support prongs at the hub,

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the shift lever receivable by the yoke when the shift lever is in the transverse position.

According to another aspect of the present invention there is provided a shift control mechanism for an automatic transmission comprising a housing including a shift control pattern having a longitudinal portion defining a plurality of automatic transmission operating settings and a transverse portion at one end of the longitudinal portion defining a plurality of manual transmission operating settings, a shift lever manually movable along the shift control pattern for selecting the automatic transmission operating settings and for selecting the manual transmission operating settings, and a proximity switch assembly actuated by moving the shift lever to a first position in the transverse portion to send a signal to manually upshift the automatic transmission and to a second position in the transverse portion opposite the first position to send a signal to manually downshift the automatic transmission, the proximity switch including a switch housing and a shift lever engagement member pivotally mounted to the switch housing and moveable with the shift lever to the first and second transverse positions to manually shift the automatic transmission, wherein the switch housing includes a plurality of support prongs, the shift lever engagement member including a body and a hub disposed at one end of the body, and a yoke disposed at the other end of the body opposite the hub and extending transversely to the body, the shift lever engagement member mounted on the support prongs at the hub, the shift lever receivable by the yoke when the shift lever is in the transverse position, and wherein the proximity switch assembly includes a centering mechanism disposed between the yoke and the hub to urge the shift lever

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engagement member to a neutral position between the first and second transverse positions.

5 Other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be readily appreciated as the same becomes better understood after reading the subsequent description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

10 FIG. 1 is an elevational view of a shift control mechanism, according to the present invention, illustrated in operational relationship with vehicle structure.

15 FIG. 2 is an enlarged plan view of the shift control mechanism of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a fragmentary side elevational view of the shift control mechanism of FIG. 1.

20 FIG. 4 is a sectional view taken along line 4-4 of FIG. 2 illustrating the shift control mechanism in a first operational position.

FIG. 5 is a view similar to FIG. 4 illustrating the shift control mechanism in a second operational position.

FIG. 6 is a partial plan view of a shift control pattern for the shift control mechanism of FIG. 1.

FIG. 7 is an enlarged plan view of another embodiment, according to the present invention, of the shift control mechanism of FIG. 1.

5 FIG. 8 is a fragmentary side elevational view of the shift control mechanism of FIG. 7.

FIG. 9 is a sectional view taken along lines 9-9 of FIG. 8.

FIG. 10 is a view similar to FIG. 9 illustrating the shift control mechanism in a second operational position.

10 FIG. 11 is a sectional view taken along lines 11-11 of FIG. 9.

Referring to FIG. 1, a shift control mechanism 10, according to the present invention, is illustrated in operational relationship with vehicle structure 12 such as a vehicle floor of an automotive vehicle (not shown). The shift control mechanism 10 is
15 operatively connected to a key cylinder lock housing (not shown) and an automatic transmission (not shown) via cables (not shown). The automatic transmission may be of the type disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 4,875,391 to Leising et al..

The connections of the shift control mechanism 10 to the automatic transmission and key cylinder lock housing are similar to that disclosed in U.S. Patent No 5,207,124 to Anderson et al..

5 Referring to FIGS. 1 through 4, the shift control mechanism 10 includes a housing, generally indicated at 14. The housing 14 is generally rectangular in shape and has a bottom wall 16. The housing 14 also has a pair of side walls 18 and 20 spaced transversely and a pair of end walls 22 and 24 spaced longitudinally and extending upwardly generally perpendicular to the bottom wall 16. The housing 14 further includes a cover 26 having an arcuate-shaped central portion 28 and generally
10 planar flange portions 30 secured to a top edge of the walls 18, 20, 22, 24 by suitable means such as screws 32. It should be appreciated that the walls 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24 may be integral and formed as one-piece from a plastic material such as by molding.

15 Referring to FIGS. 2 and 6, the central portion 28 of the cover 26 includes a shift control pattern formed by an inverted and generally T-shaped guide slot 34 extending therethrough. The guide slot 34 has a longitudinal portion 36 with predetermined automatic

transmission operating gears or settings such as Park (P), Reverse (R), Neutral (N) and Drive (D) for selecting transmission speeds to be automatically engaged in the automatic transmission during normal automatic transmission operation. The guide slot 34 has a transverse portion 38 at one end of the longitudinal portion 36 with predetermined manual transmission operating settings such as Manual (M), Upshift (+) and Downshift (-) to select and manually shift or engage the desired forward speed during manual operation of the automatic transmission. It should be appreciated that the automatic transmission may be manually shifted by moving transversely from the M setting to either the + or - setting.

Referring to FIGS. 1 through 4, the shift control mechanism 10 also includes a shift lever 40 to shift the automatic transmission. The shift lever 40 extends through the guide slot 34 in the cover 26 and is manually operated or displaced through the Park (P), Reverse (R), Neutral (N), Drive (D), Manual (M), upshift (+) and downshift (-) settings. The shift lever 40 has a shift rod 42 slidably mounted therein. The shift lever 40 also has a palm abutting knob 44 surrounding the shift lever 40 and a push button 46 extending from the palm abutting knob 44 for a function as described in U.S. Patent No. 5,207,124 to Anderson et al.

The shift control mechanism 10 further includes a mounting assembly, generally indicated at 48, for pivotally mounting the shift lever 40 within the housing 14. The mounting assembly 48 includes a bracket 50 having an inverted and generally U-shape. The bracket 50 has a generally horizontal base portion 52 with a central opening 54 and leg portions 56 generally perpendicular to and at each end of the base portion 52. The base portion 52 has a bushing 57 disposed in the central opening 54. The leg portions 56 include an opening 58 extending therethrough near a free end thereof. The mounting assembly 48 also includes a pivot pin 60 for pivotally mounting the bracket 50 to the housing 14. The pivot pin 60 is mounted between mounting brackets 62 formed on the bottom wall 16 of the housing 14. The pivot pin 60 extends through the openings 58 of the leg portions 56 and a passageway 64 of the mounting brackets 62. It should be appreciated that the bracket 50 pivots or rotates longitudinally about the pivot pin 60.

The mounting assembly 48 also includes a connecting member 66 for pivotally connecting the shift lever 40 to the pivot pin 60. The connecting member 66 has a cavity 68 to form a generally U-shaped cross-section. The connecting member 66 also has a pair of transversely spaced and downwardly extending flanges 70 with openings 72

extending therethrough. The pivot pin 60 extends through the openings 72 in the flanges 70 to allow the connecting member 66 to pivot or rotate longitudinally about the pivot pin 60. The mounting assembly 48 includes a cross-over pin 74 for pivotally connecting the shift lever 40 to the connecting member 66. The cross-over pin 74 extends through openings in the shift lever 40 and connecting member 66 to allow the shift lever 40 to pivot or rotate transversely about the cross-over pin 74. It should be appreciated that the connecting member 66 allows longitudinal pivotal movement of the shift lever 40 in the longitudinal portion 36 of the guide slot 34 and the cross-over pin 74 allows transverse pivotal movement of the shift lever 40 in the transverse portion 38 of the guide slot 34. It should also be appreciated that the longitudinal portion 36 of the guide slot 34 prevents transverse pivotal movement of the shift lever 40 and guides the shift lever 40 along a predetermined path.

The mounting assembly 48 may include a tubular member 76 with a bottom seat 78 secured to a left end of the bracket 50 by suitable means such as welding. The mounting assembly may also include a detente member 80 slidably mounted in the tubular member 76 and urged upwardly therefrom by a coil spring 82 mounted between the bottom seat 78 and a flange 84 formed around the detente

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member 80. The detent member 80 has an extended end 86 which is rounded and received in a plurality of rounded indentations 88 formed in the inner surface of an edge portion of the central portion 28 of the cover 26. A
5 further explanation of the structure and operation may be found in U.S. Patent No. 5,207,124 to Anderson et al.

The mounting assembly 48 further includes a first guide member 90 having a central opening 92 disposed about the shift lever 40. The guide member 90 has a plurality of
10 steps 94 spaced axially and formed in an outer periphery thereof for a function to be described. The mounting assembly 48 includes a second guide member 96 on an interior surface of the cover 26. Preferably, the second guide member 96 is integral with the cover 26. The second
15 guide member 96 has a cam profile or cooperating surface 98. The steps 94 of the guide member 90 form a generally point contact with the cooperating surface 98 to move therealong. The mounting assembly 48 also includes a
20 retainer bushing 100 disposed about the shift lever 40 and a coil spring 102 disposed about the shift lever 40 between the first guide member 90 and the retainer bushing 100. The coil spring 102 urges the first guide member 90 axially away from the retainer bushing 100. It should be appreciated that the retainer bushing 100 is fixedly

secured to the shift lever 40 and the first guide member 90 is slidable along the shift lever 40.

5 The shift control mechanism 10 also includes a switch assembly, generally indicated at 104, to send signals directly to a transmission controller (not shown) for shifting the automatic transmission. Such a transmission controller is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 4,875,391 to Leising et al. The switch assembly 104 includes switches 106 disposed on each transverse side of the slot 36 in the cover 26. The switches 106 are attached to the cover 26 by suitable means. The switches 106 have a spring loaded contact 108 which extends outwardly over the + and - settings of the transverse portion 38. When the shift lever 40 contacts or deflects one of the contacts 108, the switch 106 sends a signal to the transmission controller. The switches 106 are connected by connectors (not shown) and electrical wires (not shown) to the transmission controller. It should be appreciated that the transmission controller executes a command to shift the automatic transmission.

20 The shift control mechanism 10 further includes a return spring 110 for centering or urging the shift lever 40 to the M setting. The return spring 110 has a coil portion 112 secured to the cover 26 by suitable means such as a fastener 113. The return spring 110 also has a pair

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of fingers 114 extending longitudinally and spaced transversely by a spacer 116 extending upwardly from the cover 26. The shift lever 40 is disposed between the fingers 114. Alternatively, the return spring 110 may be of the torsional type and disposed about the cross-over pin 74 or a pair of springs of the compression type disposed on opposed sides of the shift lever 40 for centering or urging the shift lever 40 to the M setting.

In operation, the shift lever 40 is moved longitudinally by an operator from the P setting to either the R, N or D setting to allow normal automatic operation of the automatic transmission. When the shift lever 40 is in the D setting, the operator may desire to manually shift the automatic transmission. If so, the shift lever 40 is moved longitudinally by the operator from the D setting to the M setting to allow manual shifting of the automatic transmission. If a downshift is desired, the operator moves transversely the shift lever 40 to the - setting to downshift the automatic transmission. When this occurs, the shift lever 40 contacts and deflects the contact 108 of the switch 106 to send a signal to the transmission controller which then executes a command to downshift the automatic transmission. As illustrated in FIG. 5, the first guide member 90 moves downwardly against the spring 102 and one of the fingers 114 of the return spring 110 is

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deflected transversely. After the shift lever 40 is moved to the - setting, the operator releases the shift lever 40. When this occurs, the finger 114 moves the shift lever 40 transversely to the M setting and, as the coil spring 102
5 urges the first guide member 90 upwardly, the steps 94 of the first guide member 90 slide along the cooperating surface 98 of second guide member 96. It should be appreciated that the operation is similar for movement of the shift lever 40 from the M setting to the + setting for
10 an upshift of the automatic transmission.

Referring to FIGS. 7 through 11, another embodiment of the shift control mechanism 10 includes a proximity switch assembly, generally indicated at 204 wherein like references numerals have been used to
15 designate like structure as discussed above. As with the switch assembly 104 shown in the other Figures, the proximity switch assembly 204 shown in FIGS. 7 through 11 is actuated by moving the shift lever 40 to a first position in the transverse portion 38 to send a signal to manually upshift the automatic transmission. The proximity
20 switch assembly 204 is also actuated when the shift lever 40 is moved to a second position in the transverse portion 38 opposite the first position to send a signal to manually downshift the automatic transmission. As can best be seen
25 with reference to FIGS. 9 and 10, the proximity switch

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assembly 204 includes a switch housing, generally indicated at 206 and a shift lever engagement member, generally indicated at 208. The shift lever engagement member 208 is pivotally mounted to the switch housing 206 and movable with the shift lever 40 to the first and second transverse positions to manually shift the automatic transmission. The switch housing 206 includes a base support stud 212 operatively supporting the switch housing 206 upon the bottom wall 16 of the shift control mechanism housing 14. In addition, the switch housing 206 includes a pair of horizontally extending flanges 216 disposed on either side of the switch housing 206 for securing the switch housing 206 to the cover 26 of the shift control mechanism housing 14 by using a pair of fasteners 218. The switch housing 206 further includes a plurality of support prongs 220 for a function to be described.

The shift lever engagement member 208 includes a body 222 and a hub 224 disposed at one end of the body 222. The shift lever engagement member 208 includes a magnet 209 recessed in the shift lever engagement member 208. The magnet 209 is located such that its travel crosses the Hall Effect sensor/switch 240 to be described. The shift lever engagement member 208 is mounted on the support prongs 220 at the hub 224. The shift lever engagement member 208 also includes a yoke 226 disposed at the other end of the body

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yoke 226 extends transversely to the body 222. As can best be seen with reference to FIG. 7, the yoke 226 includes an arcuate recess 228. The shift lever 40 is receivable by the yoke 226 in the recess 228 when the shift lever 40 is in the transverse portion 38.

Referring now to FIGS. 9 and 11, the proximity switch assembly 204 includes a centering mechanism, generally indicated at 230 which is disposed between the yoke 226 and the hub 224. The centering mechanism 230 urges the shift lever engagement member 208 to a neutral position between the first and second transverse positions. The centering mechanism 230 includes a pair of arms 232 extending transversely from the body 222 in a direction opposite to the yoke 226 in spaced parallel relationship with respect to each other. The centering mechanism 230 includes a coiled spring 234 captured between a pair of flanges 236 on the switch housing 206 and is compressible in the direction of both the first and second transverse positions to exert a centering force on the shift lever engagement member 208 to urge the member 208 to the neutral position.

As best shown in FIGS. 7 and 9, the switch housing 206 also includes a compartment 238 disposed in spaced relationship but immediately adjacent the shift lever engagement member 208 at the yoke 226. The proximity

switch assembly 204 includes a proximity or Hall Effect sensor/switch 240 disposed within the compartment 238 and operatively connected to a power source through a connector 242. The Hall Effect sensor/switch 240 is capable of sensing the movement of the shift lever engagement member 208 with the shift lever 40 as the shift lever 40 is moved to the first and second transverse positions. The Hall Effect sensor/switch 240 generates a signal in response to the movement of the magnet 209 on the shift lever engagement member 208 to manually upshift and downshift the automatic transmission. It should be appreciated that the Hall Effect sensor/switch 240 is conventional.

In operation, when the shift lever 40 and shift lever engagement member 208 are moved to either the first or second transverse positions within the transverse portion 38, the Hall Effect sensor/switch 240 senses the movement of the change in magnetic field provided by the magnet 209 and sends a signal to the transmission controller which then executes a command to downshift or upshift the automatic transmission. As illustrated in FIG. 10, when the shift lever 40 and thus the shift lever engagement member 208 are moved transversely, one of the arms 232 of the centering mechanism 230 will act to compress the coiled spring 234. After the operator releases the shift lever 40, the coiled spring 234 acts to

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exert a centering force on the shift lever engagement member 208 to urge the member 208 and shift lever 40 to the neutral position.

5 Accordingly, the shift control mechanism 10 allows an operator to choose complete automatic control of the automatic transmission by leaving the shift lever 40 in the longitudinal portion 36 of the guide slot 34 or can change gears manually by moving the shift lever 40 in the transverse portion 38 of the guide slot 34. Also, the
10 shift control mechanism 10 may use a Hall Effect sensor/switch 240 to sense the position of the shift lever 40 to generate a signal to manually shift the automatic transmission.

15 The present invention has been described in an illustrative manner. It is to be understood that the terminology which has been used is intended to be in the nature of words of description rather than of limitation.

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. A shift control mechanism for an automatic transmission comprising:

a housing including a shift control pattern having a longitudinal portion defining a plurality of automatic transmission operating settings and a transverse portion at one end of said longitudinal portion defining a plurality of manual transmission operating settings;

a shift lever manually movable along said shift control pattern for selecting said automatic transmission operating settings and for selecting said manual transmission operating settings; and

a proximity switch assembly actuated by moving said shift lever to a first position in said transverse portion to send a signal to manually upshift the automatic transmission and to a second position in said transverse portion opposite said first position to send a signal to manually downshift the automatic transmission, said proximity switch including a switch housing and a shift lever engagement member pivotally mounted to said switch housing and moveable with said shift lever to said first and second transverse positions to manually shift the automatic transmission;

wherein said switch housing includes a plurality of support prongs, said shift lever engagement member including a body and a hub disposed at one end of said body, and a yoke disposed at the other end of said body opposite said hub and extending transversely to said body, said shift lever engagement member mounted on said support prongs at said hub, said shift lever receivable by said yoke when said shift lever is in said transverse position.

2. A shift control mechanism for an automatic transmission comprising:

a housing including a shift control pattern having a longitudinal portion defining a plurality of automatic transmission operating settings and a transverse portion at one end of said longitudinal portion defining a plurality of manual transmission operating settings;

a shift lever manually movable along said shift control pattern for selecting said automatic transmission operating settings and for selecting said manual transmission operating settings; and

a proximity switch assembly actuated by moving said shift lever to a first position in said transverse portion to send a signal to manually upshift the automatic transmission and to a second position in said transverse portion opposite said first position to send a signal to manually downshift the automatic transmission, said proximity switch including a switch housing and a shift lever engagement member pivotally mounted to said switch housing and moveable with said shift lever to said first and second transverse positions to manually shift the automatic transmission;

wherein said switch housing includes a plurality of support prongs, said shift lever engagement member including a body and a hub disposed at one end of said body, and a yoke disposed at the other end of said body opposite said hub and extending transversely to said body, said shift lever engagement member mounted on said support prongs at said hub, said shift lever receivable by said yoke when said shift lever is in said transverse position, and wherein said proximity switch assembly includes a centering mechanism disposed between said yoke and said hub to urge said shift lever engagement member to a neutral

position between said first and second transverse positions.

FIG. 1

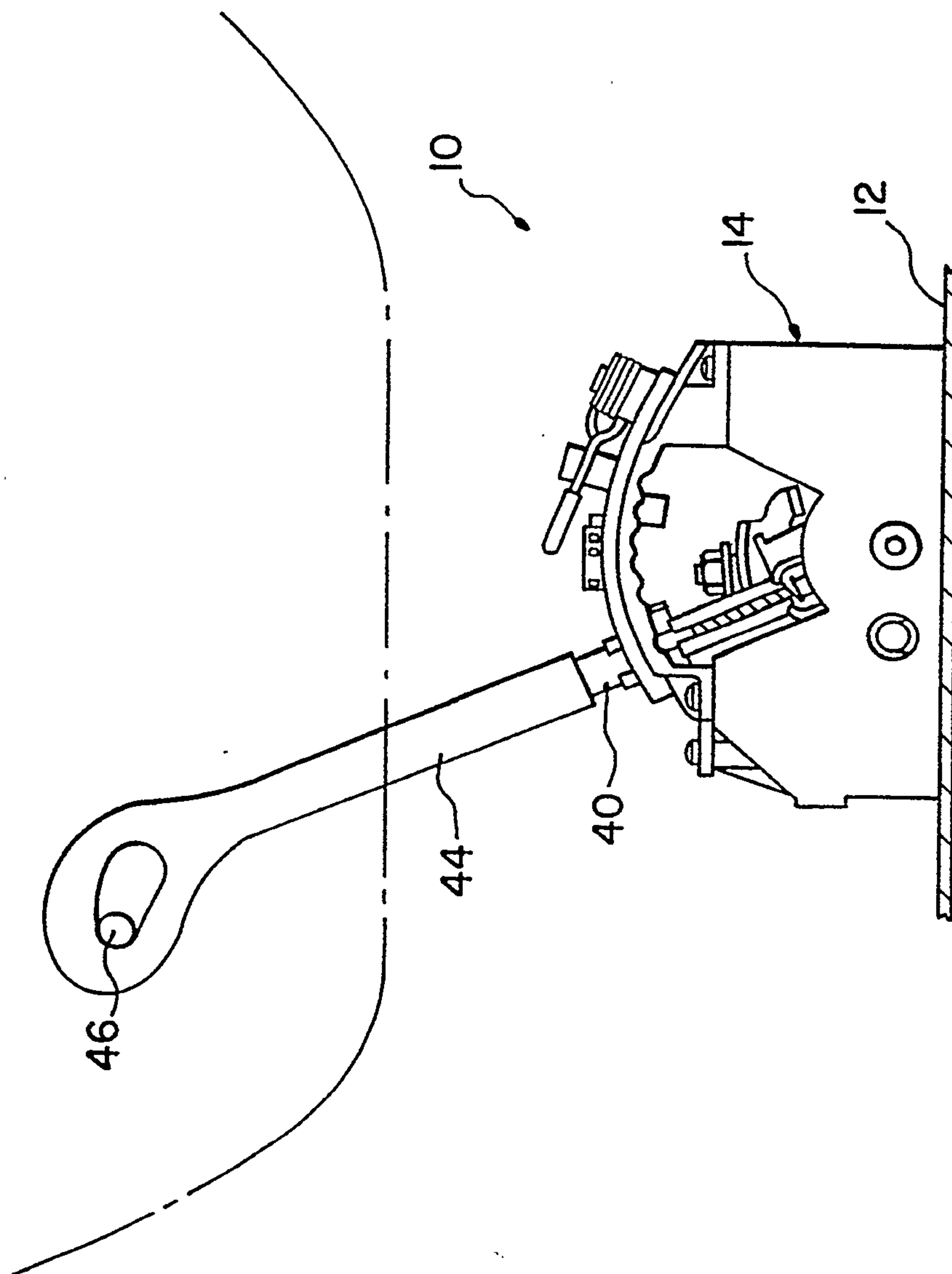
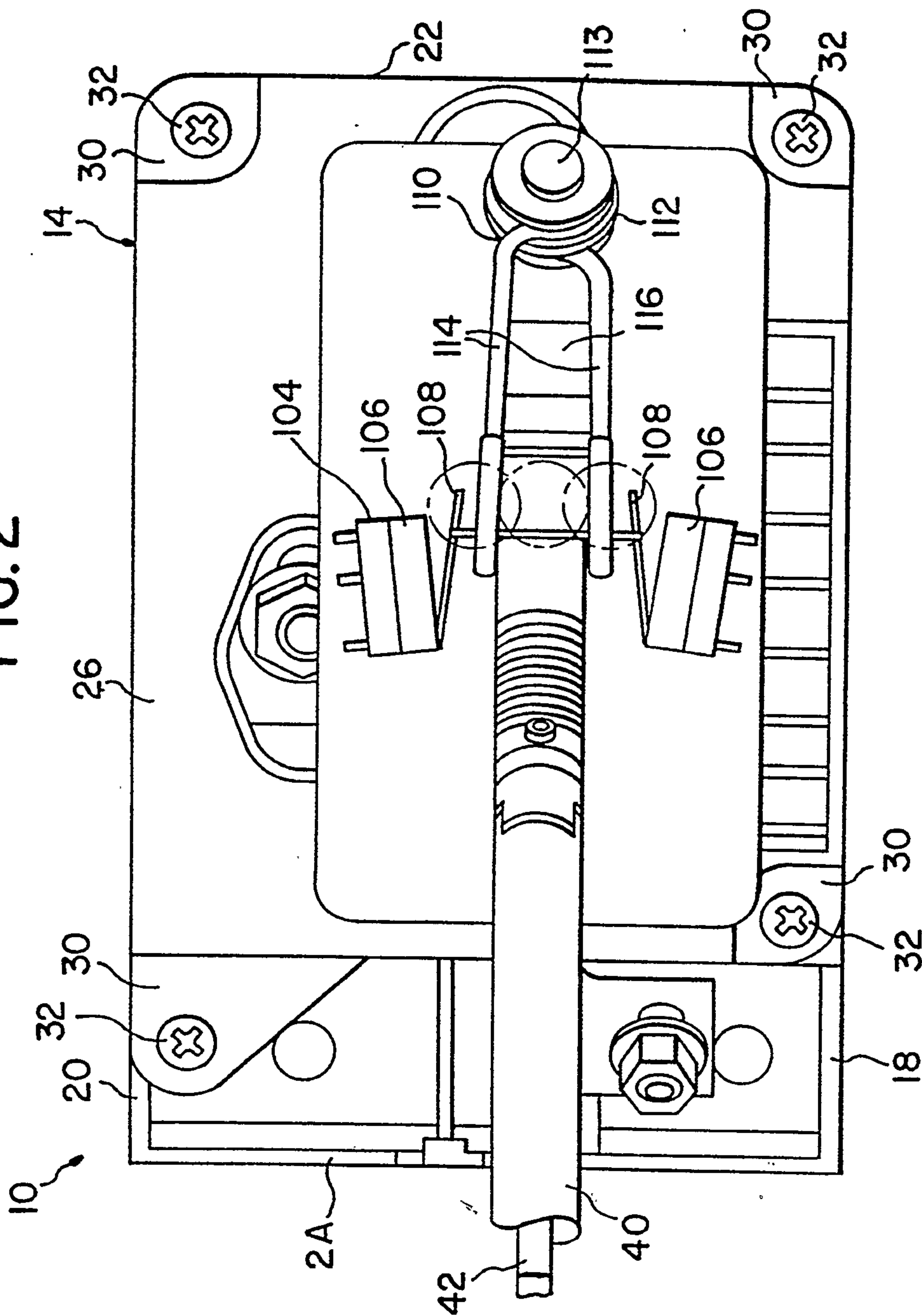
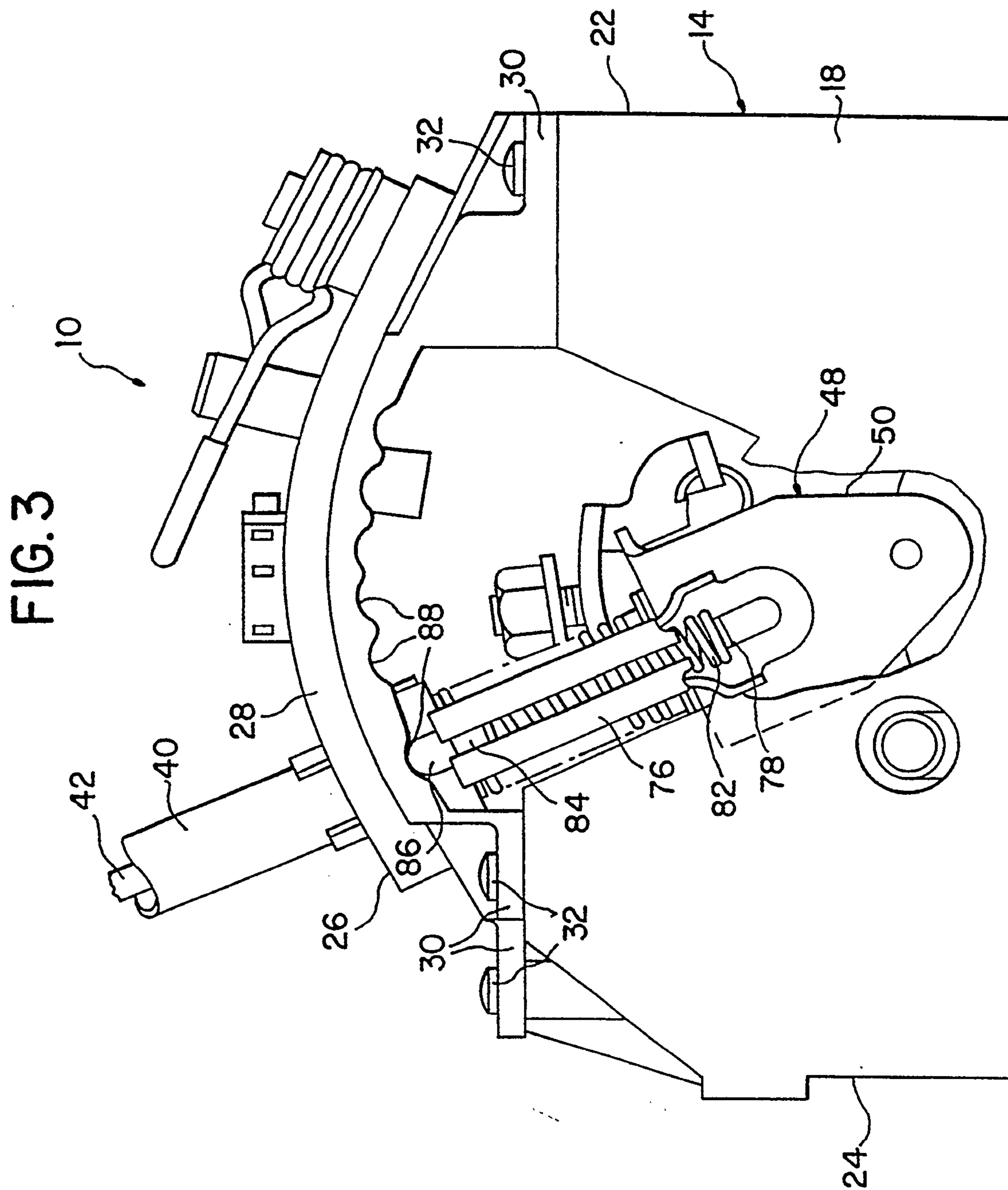


FIG. 2

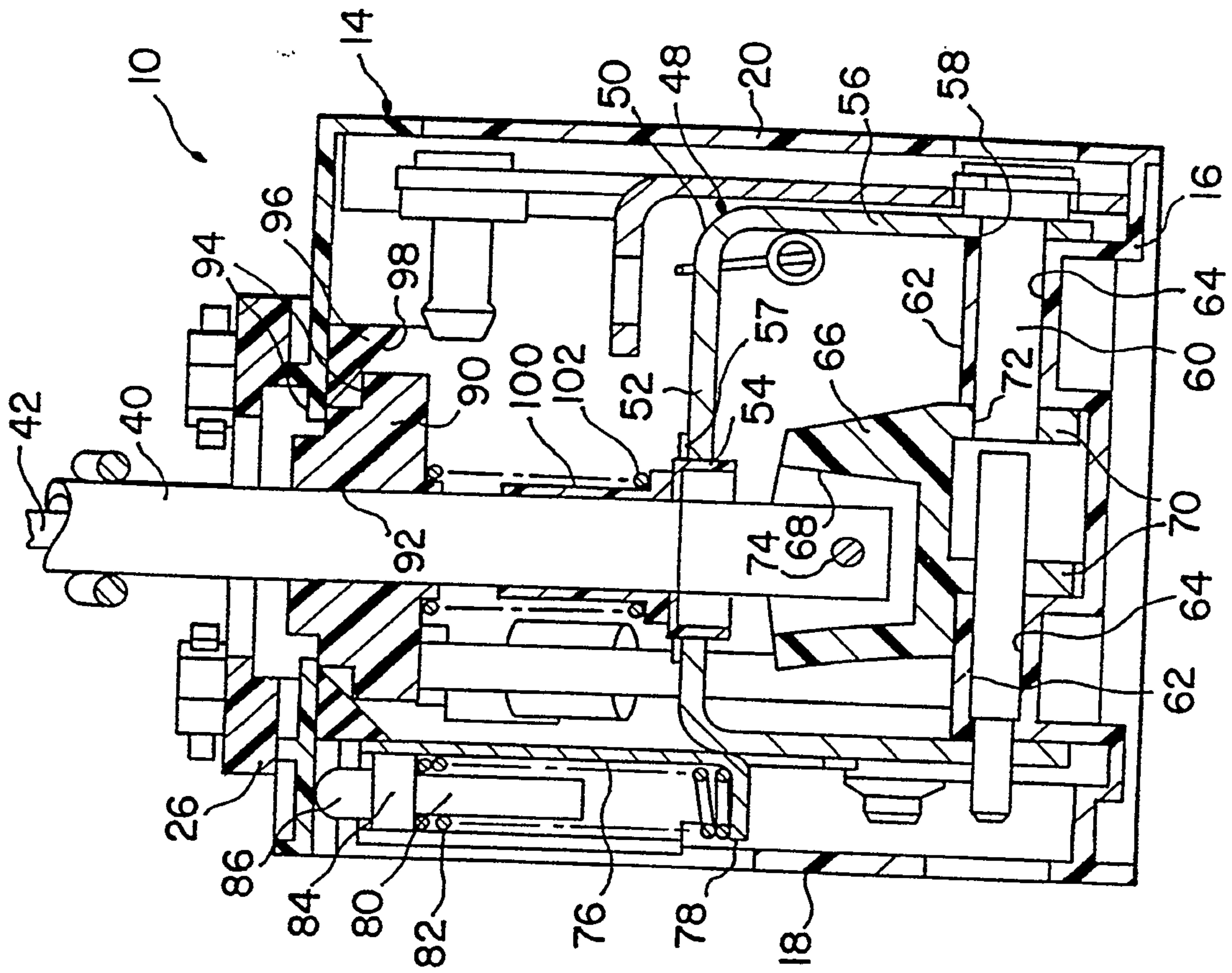




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FIG. 4



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FIG. 5

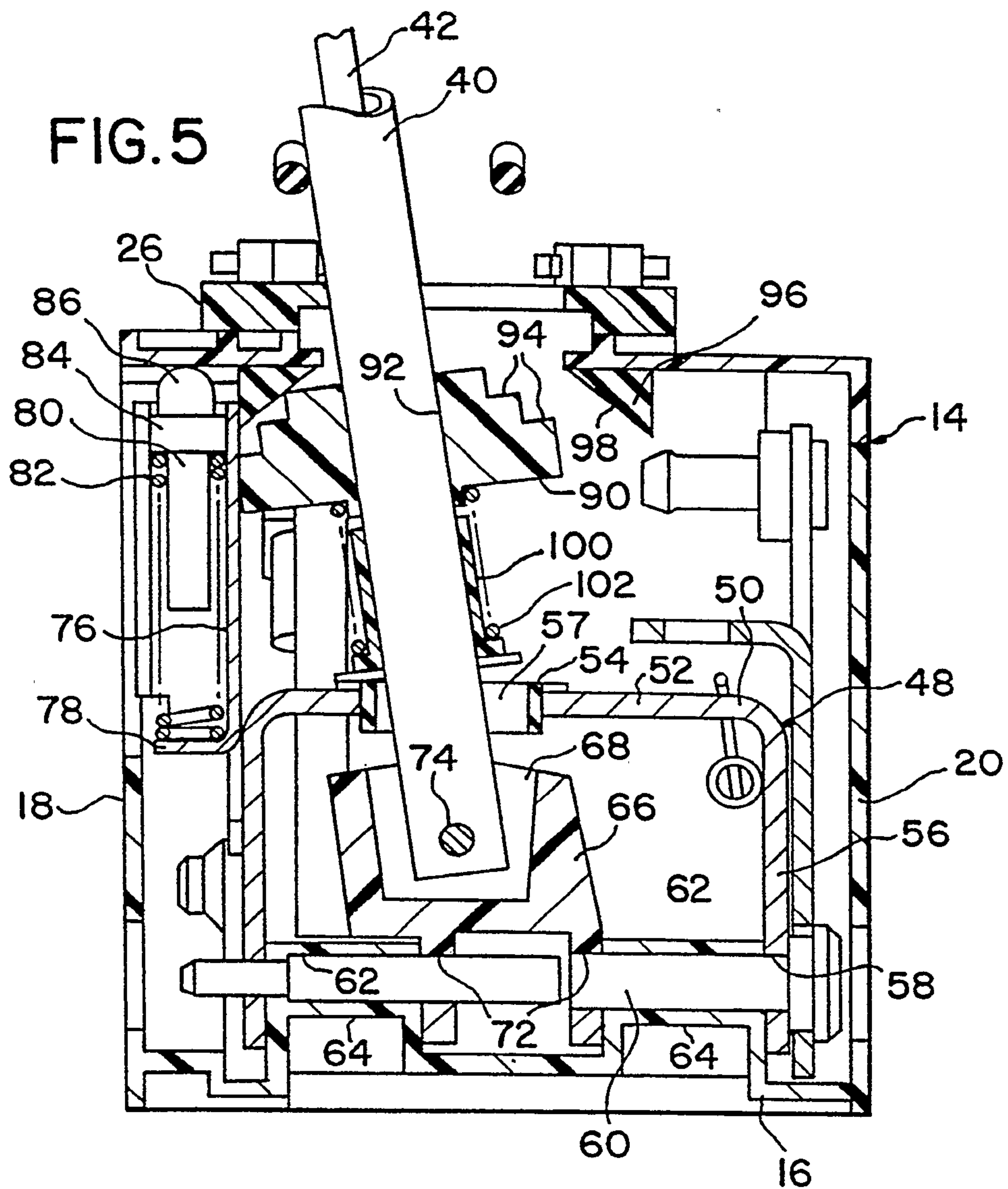
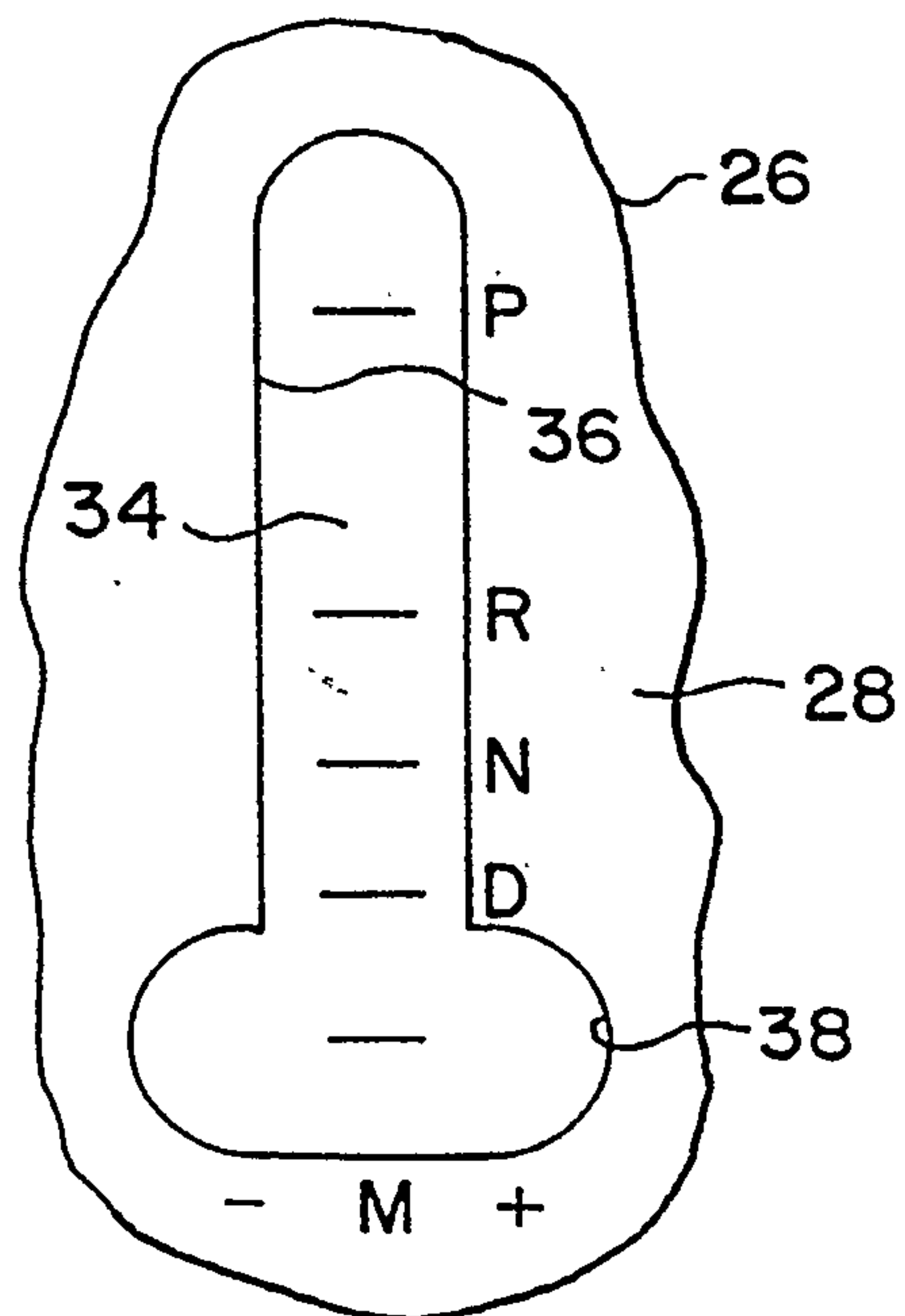


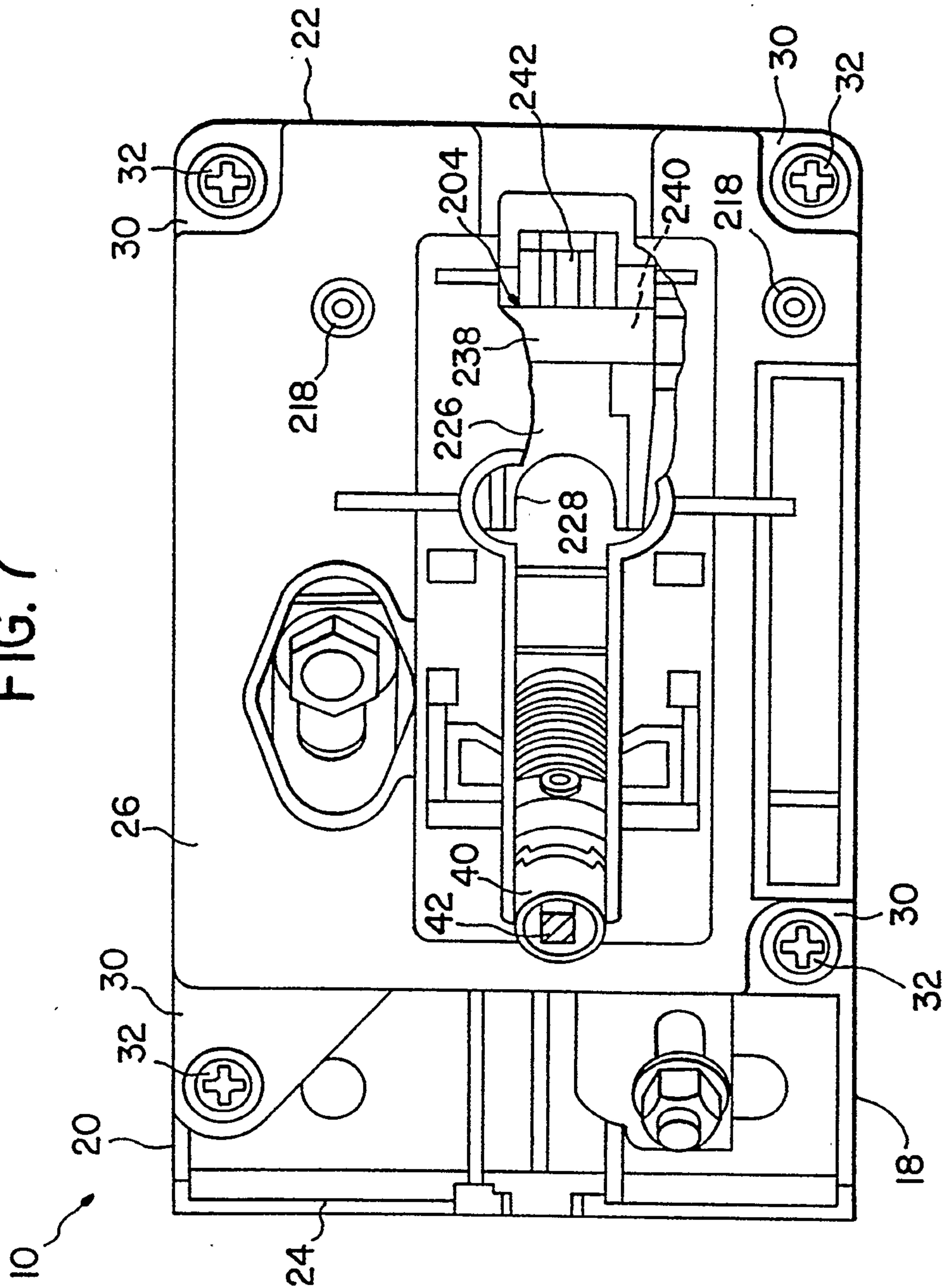
FIG. 6



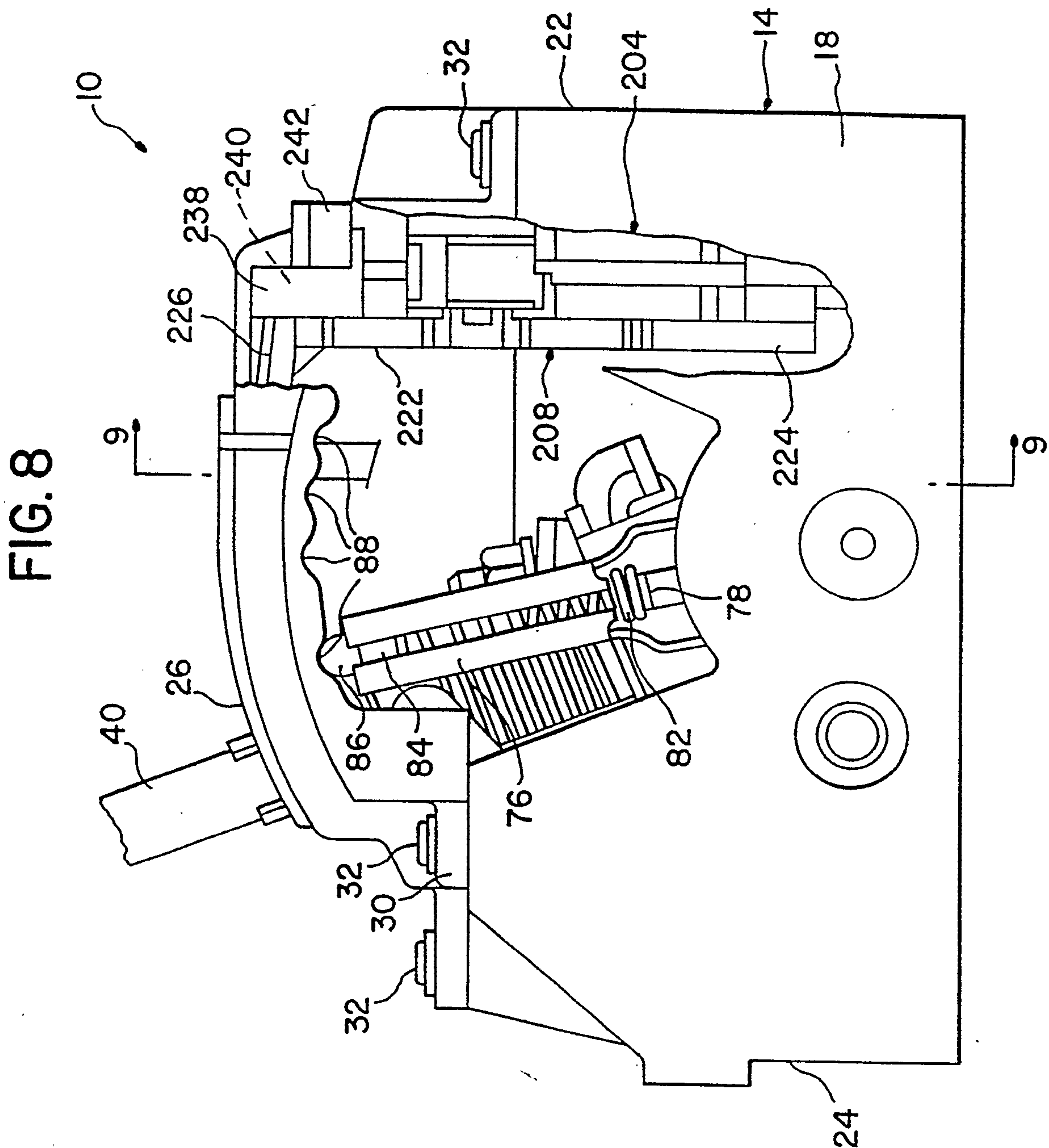
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FIG. 7



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FIG. 9

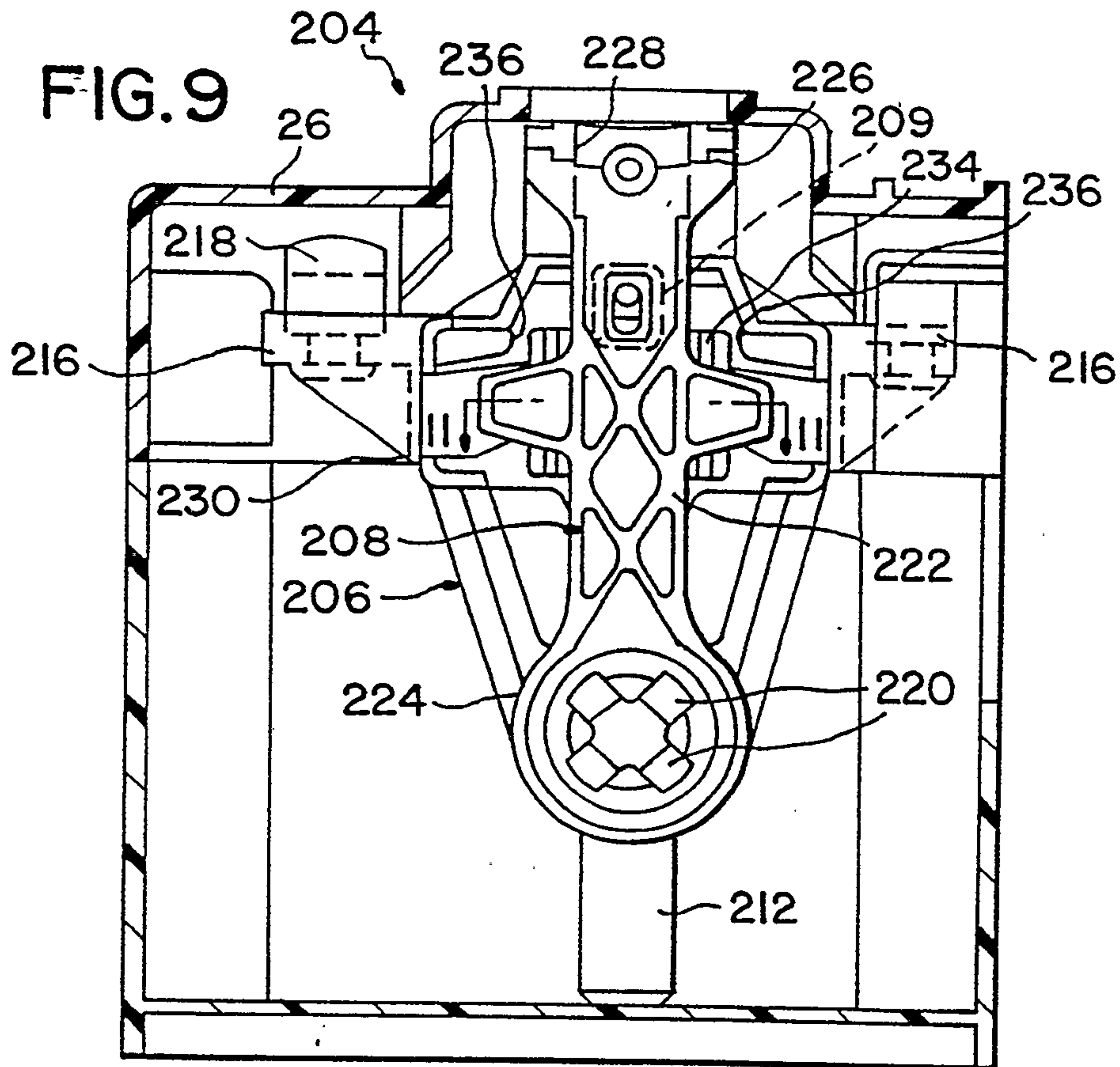


FIG. 10

