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Li et al.

(54) **EMBEDDED COIL ASSEMBLY AND METHOD OF MAKING**

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Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**

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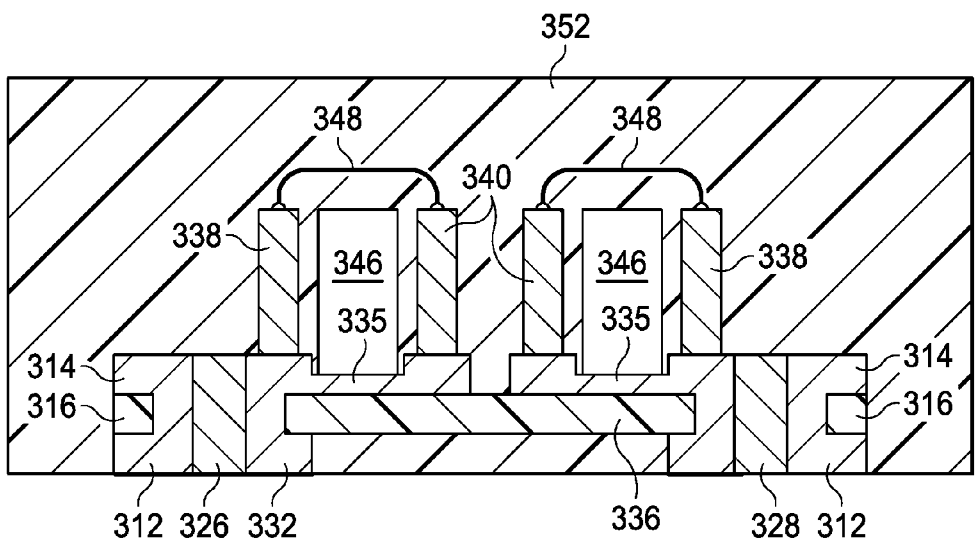
H01F 41/12 (2006.01)
H01F 17/06 (2006.01)
H01F 27/32 (2006.01)
H01F 41/04 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC ***H01F 27/2804*** (2013.01); ***H01F 27/327*** (2013.01); ***H01F 27/2895*** (2013.01); ***H01F 41/041*** (2013.01); ***H01F 17/062*** (2013.01); ***H01F 41/127*** (2013.01)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An embedded coil assembly embodiment includes a ferrite ring having an annular axis. The ferrite ring is positioned on a conductive metal surface. A plurality of separate, spaced apart conductive structures extend over the ferrite ring and are attached to the conductive metal surface in a first region of the conductive surface positioned radially outwardly of the annular axis of the ferrite ring and in a second region of the conductive surface positioned radially inwardly of the annular axis of the ferrite ring. An encapsulation layer covers, the ferrite ring and at least a portion of the plurality of conductive structures.



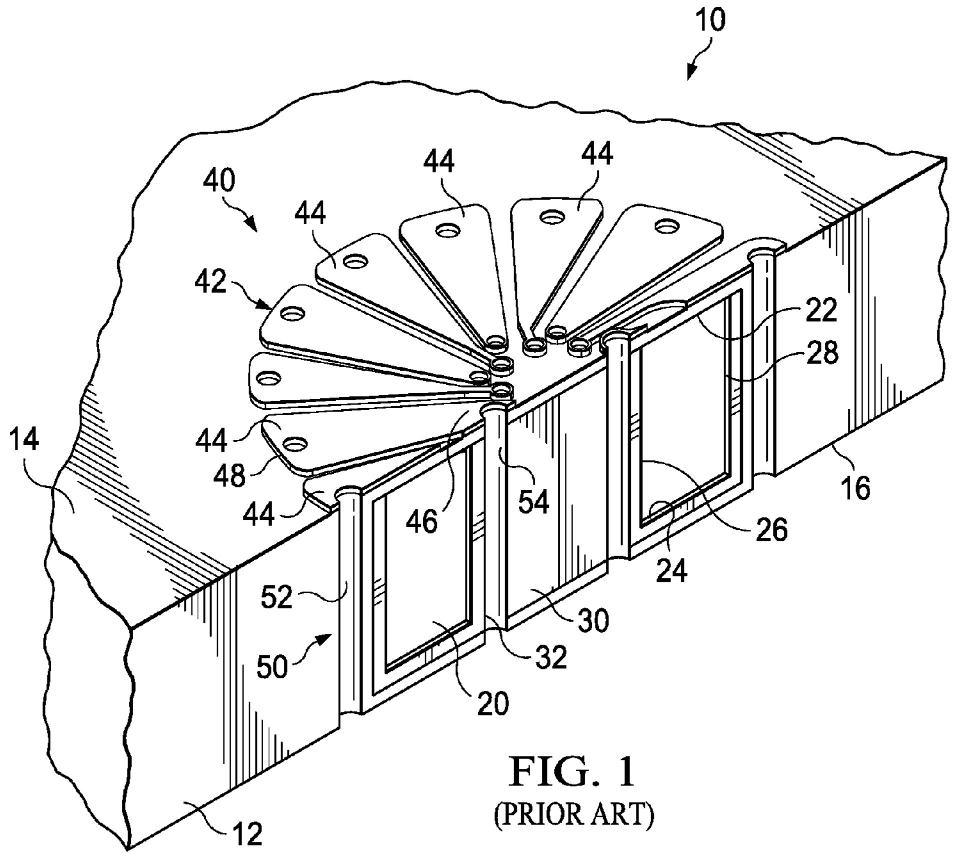


FIG. 1
(PRIOR ART)

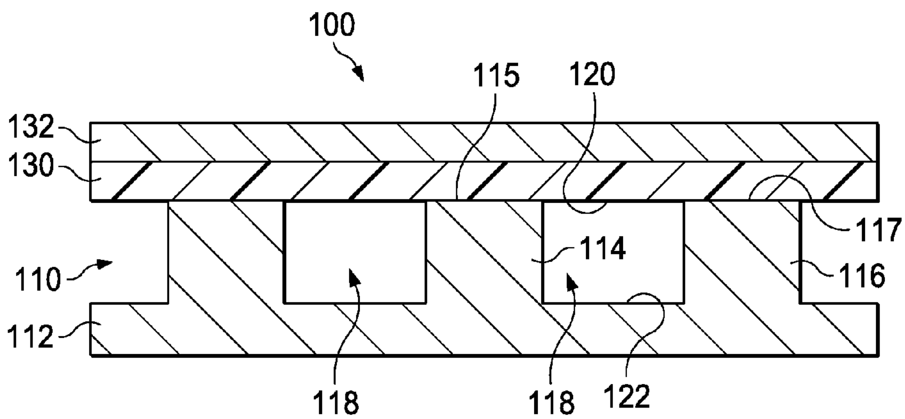


FIG. 2

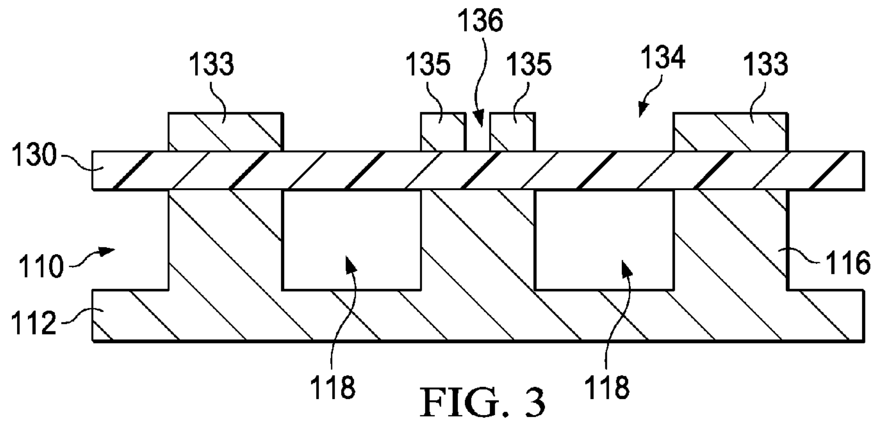


FIG. 3

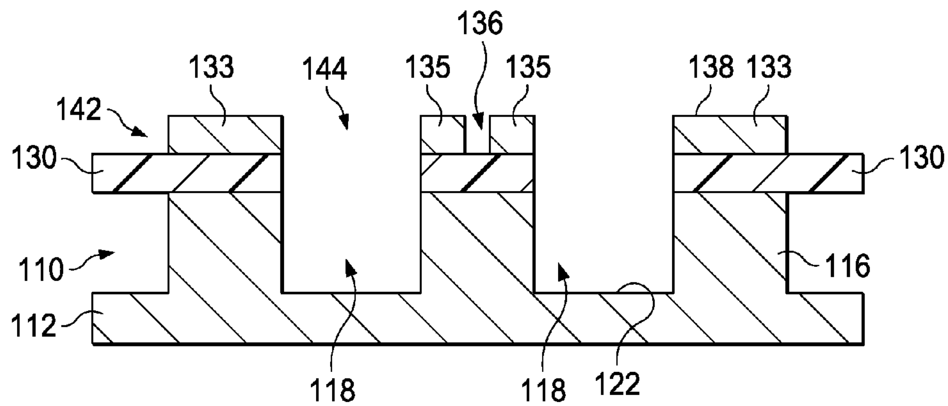


FIG. 4

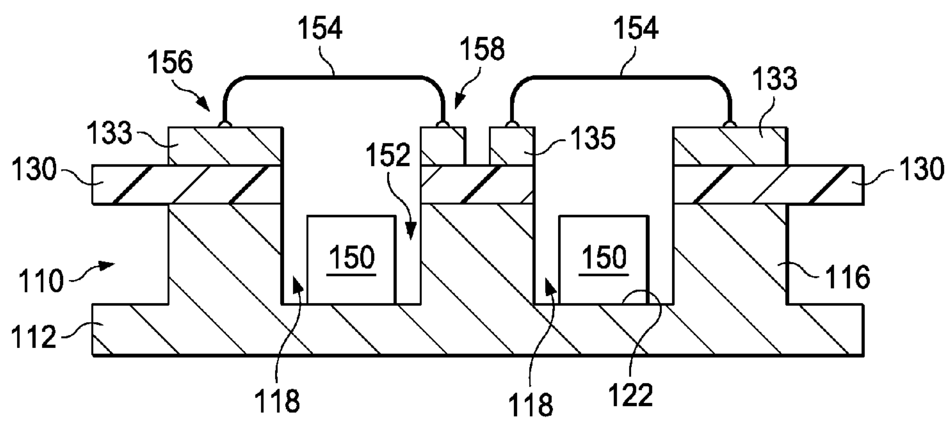


FIG. 5

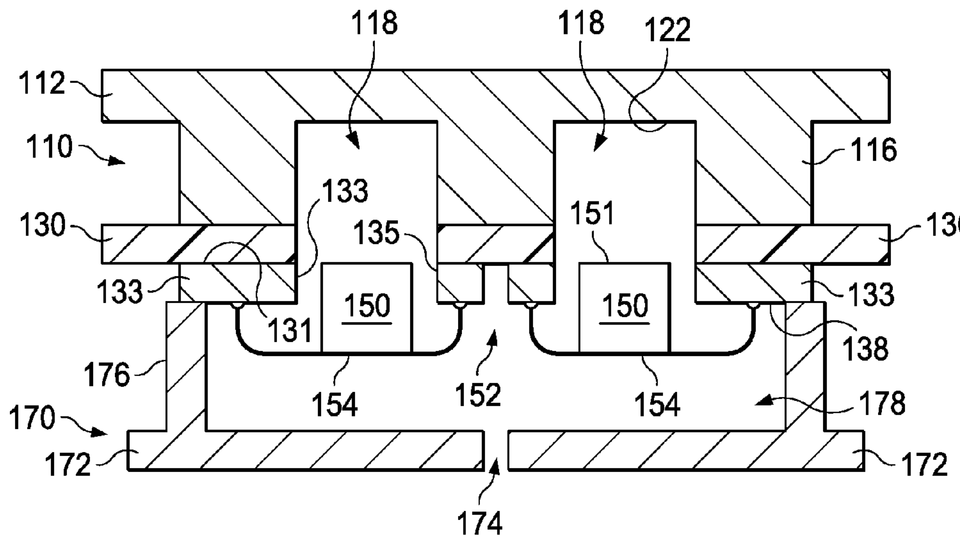

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FIG. 6

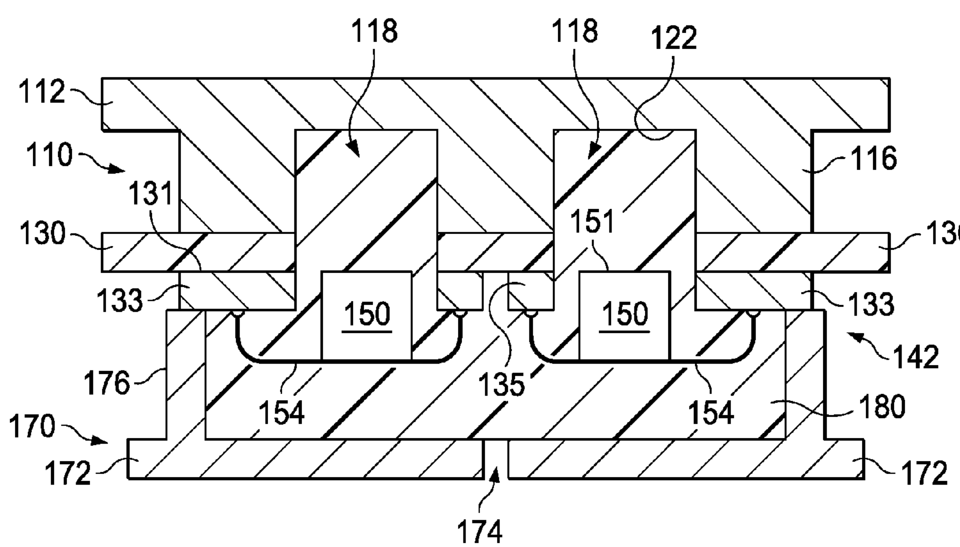
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FIG. 7

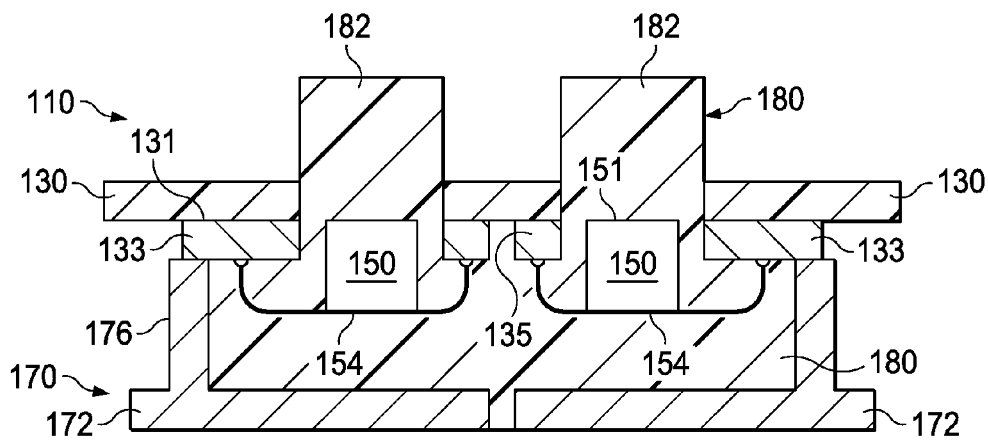

FIG. 8

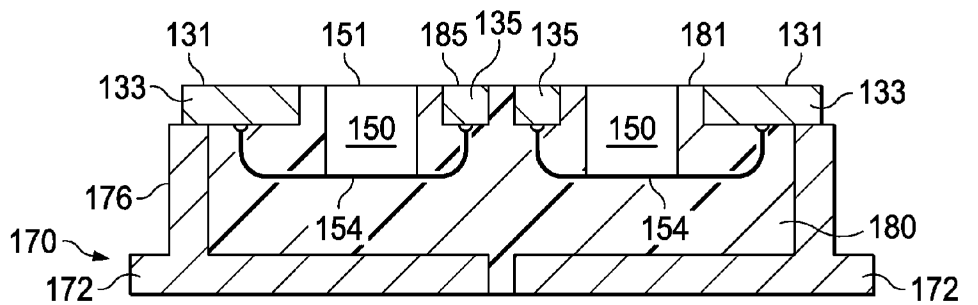

FIG. 9

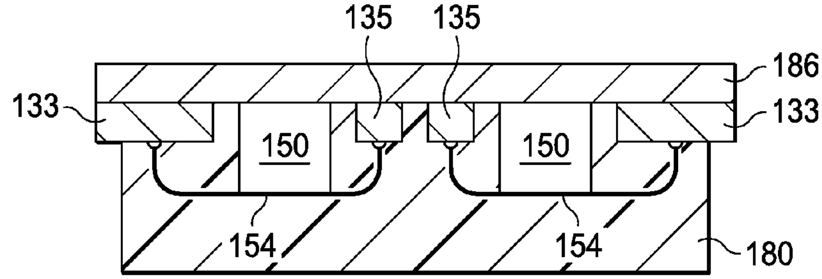

FIG. 10

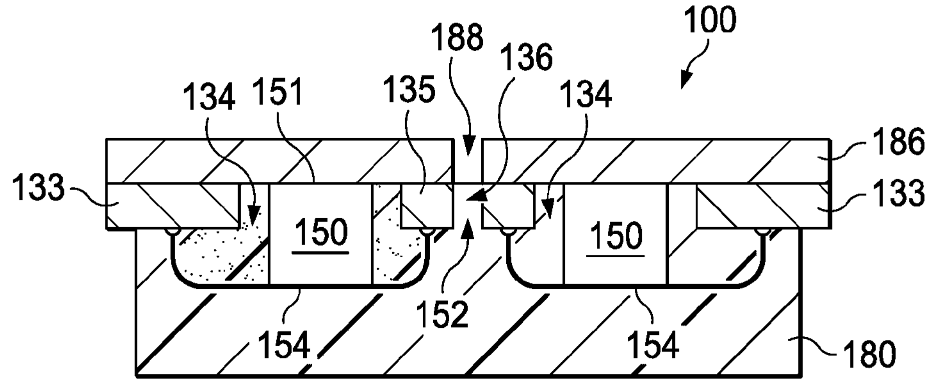

FIG. 11A

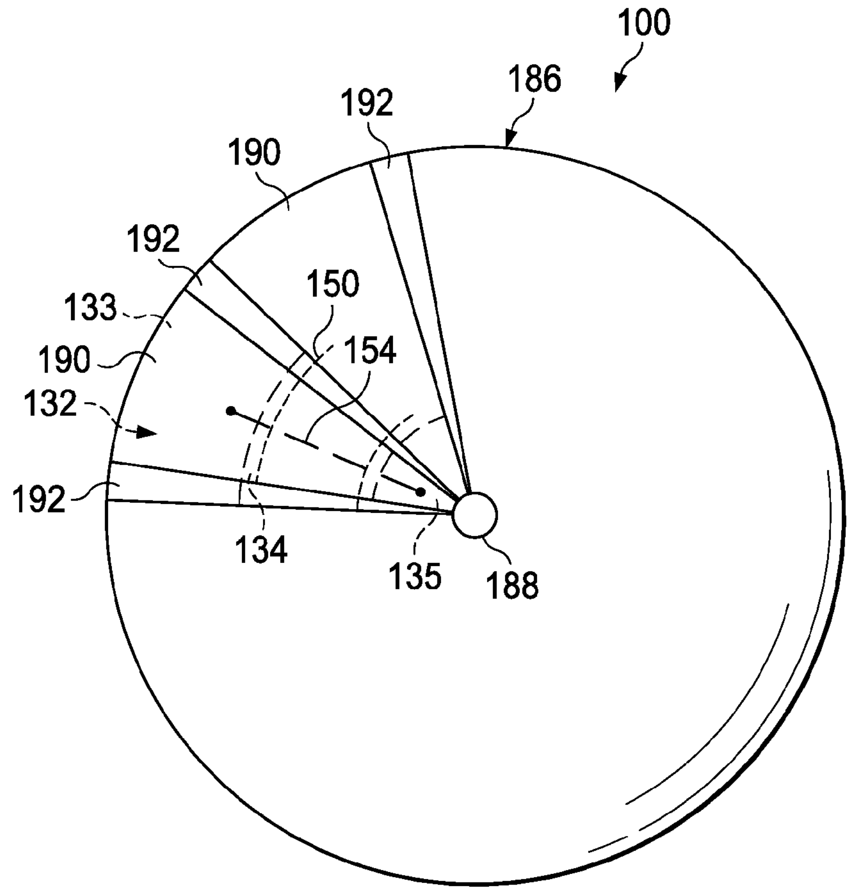

FIG. 11B

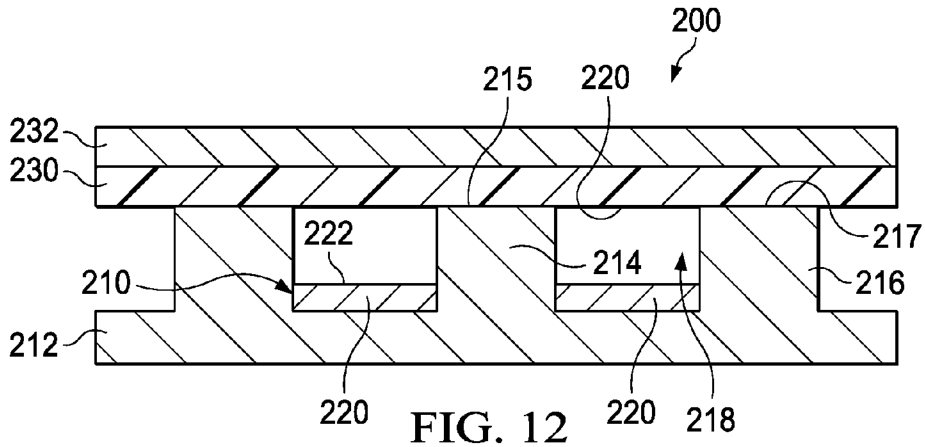

FIG. 12

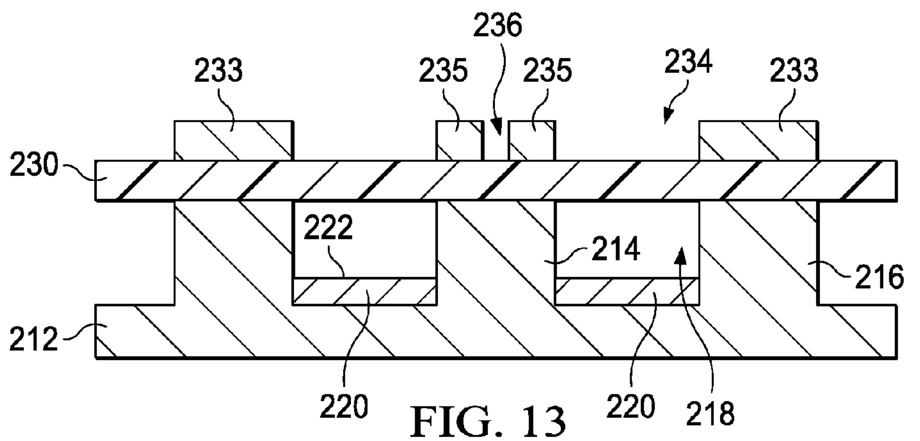

FIG. 13

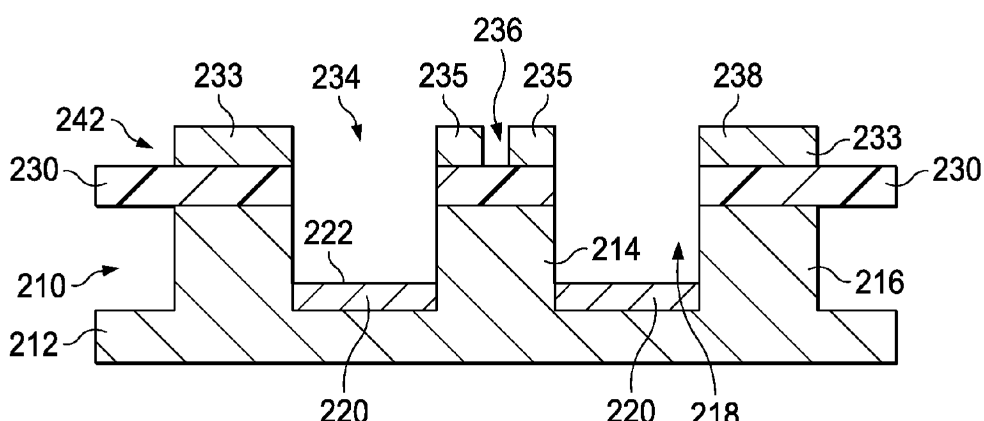

FIG. 14

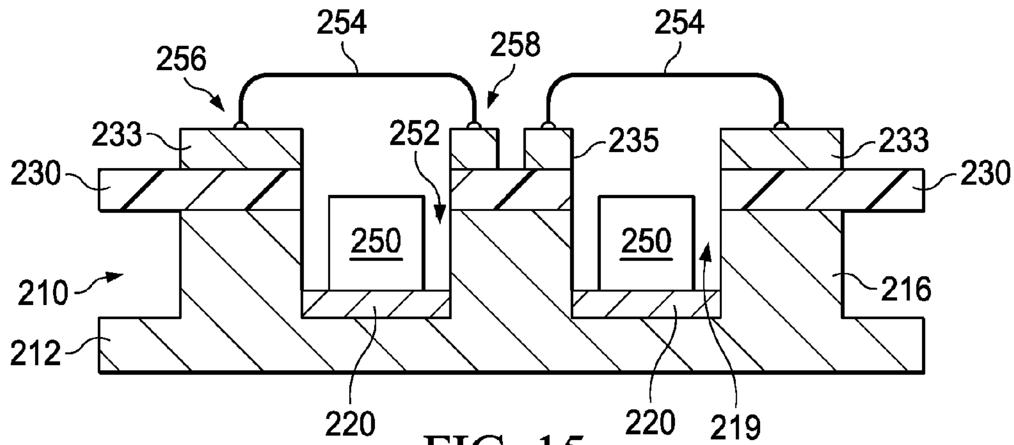
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FIG. 15

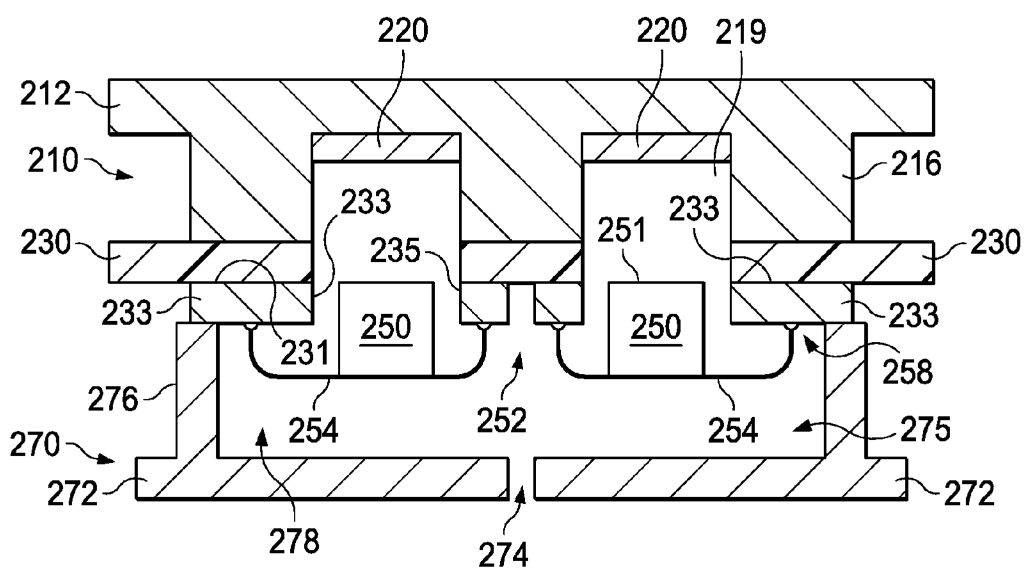
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FIG. 16

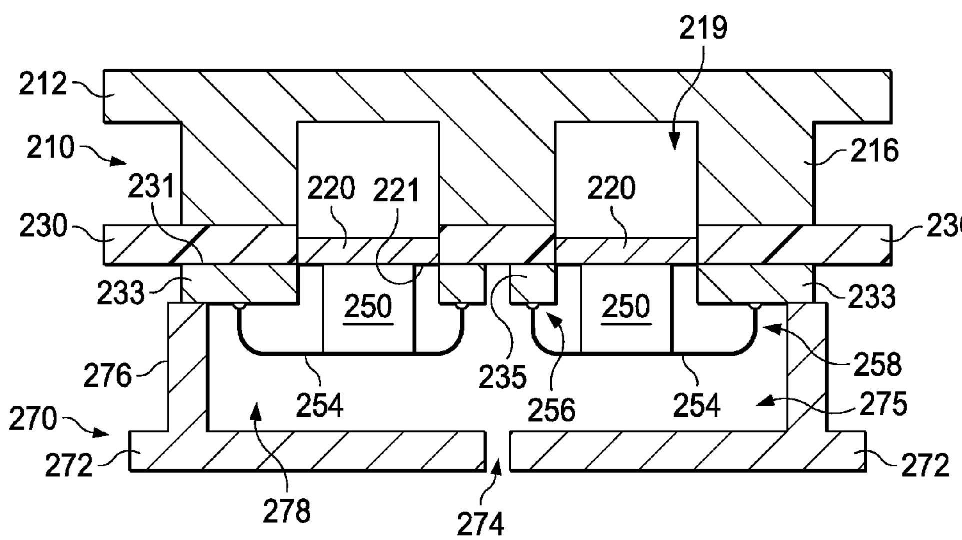
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FIG. 17

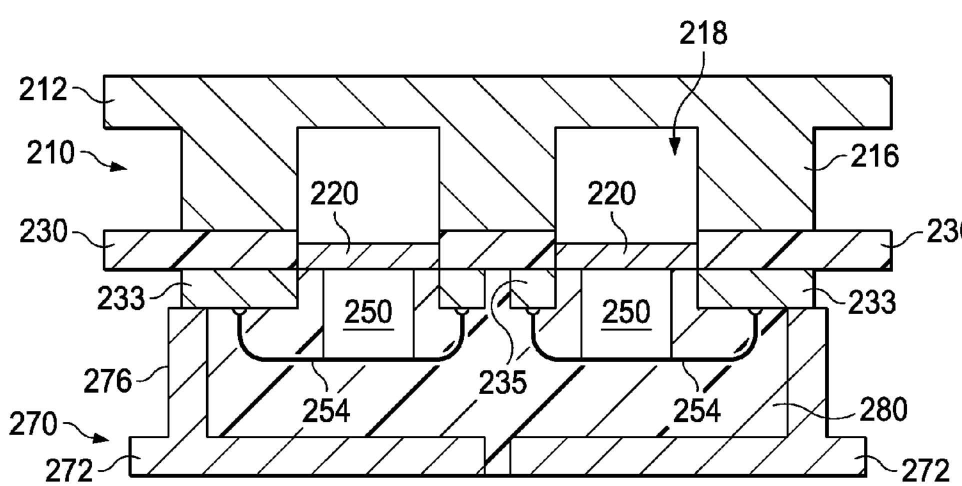
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FIG. 18

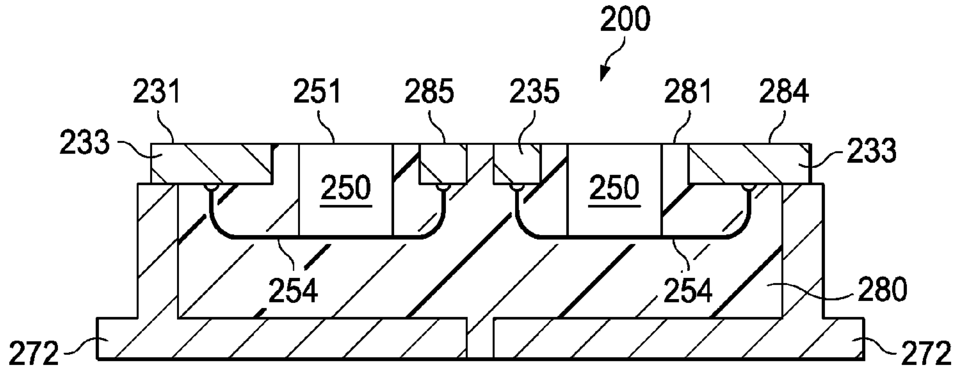


FIG. 19

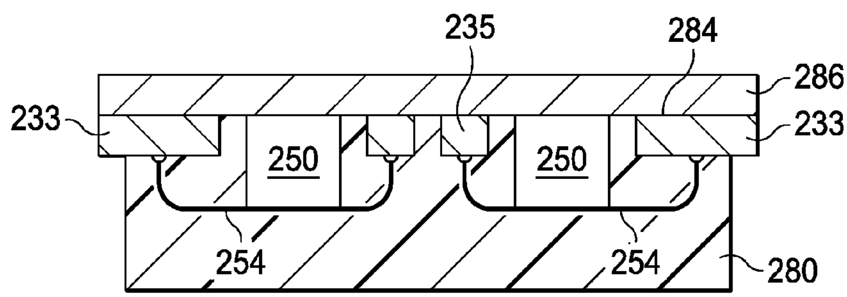


FIG. 20

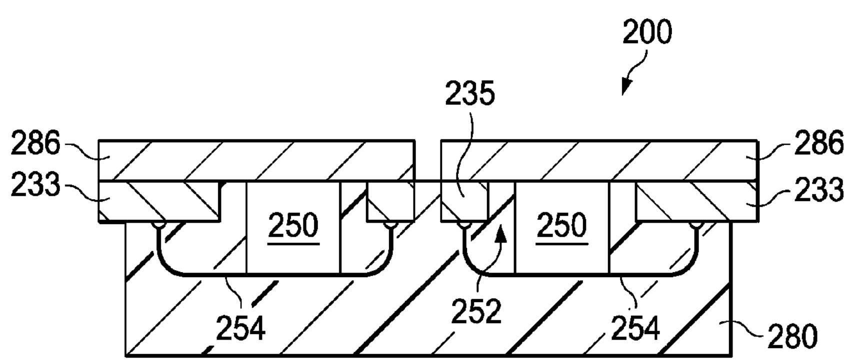


FIG. 21

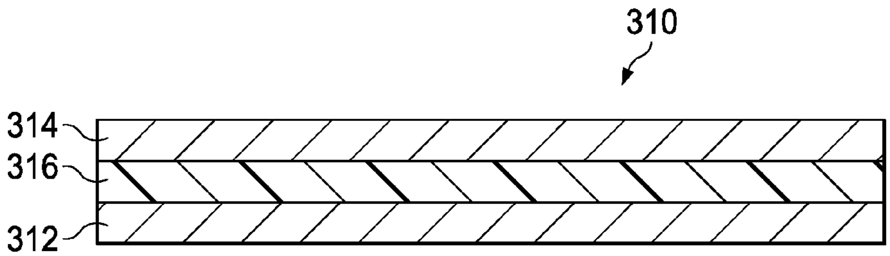


FIG. 22

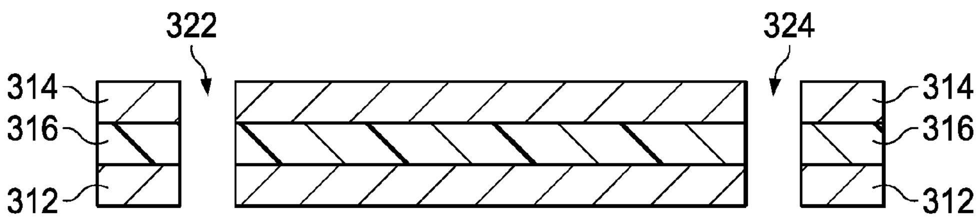
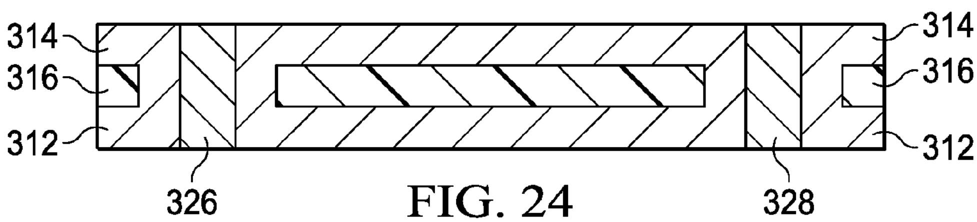


FIG. 23



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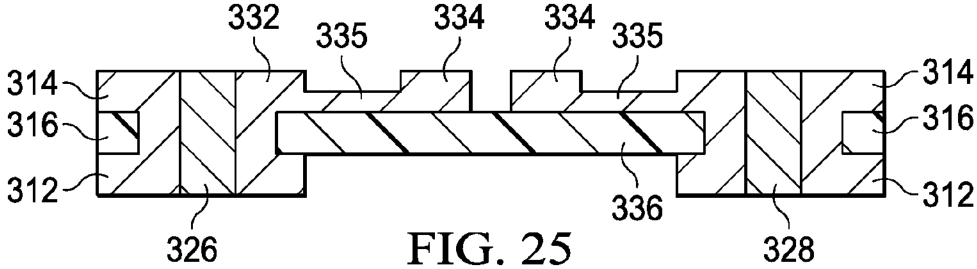


FIG. 25

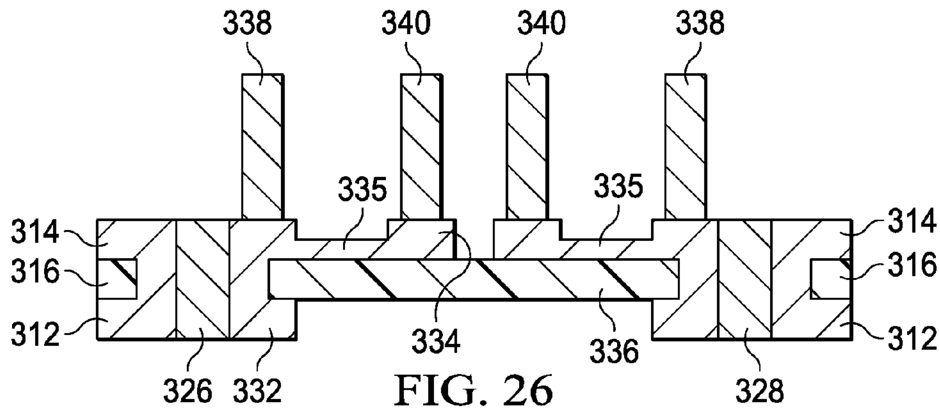
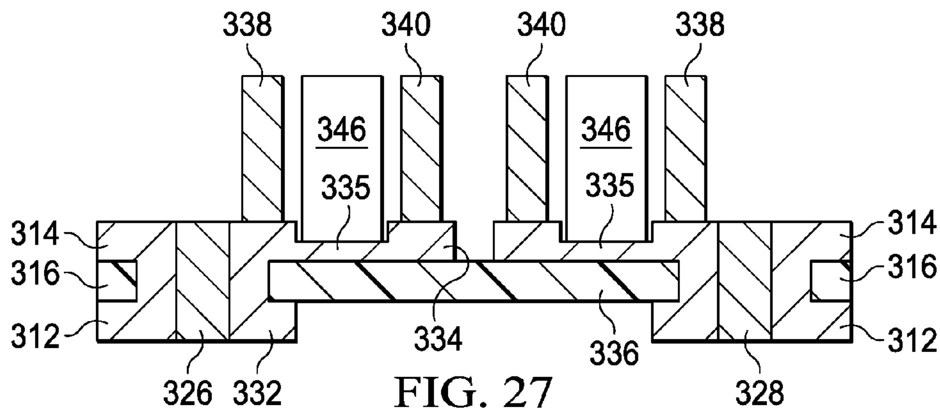


FIG. 26



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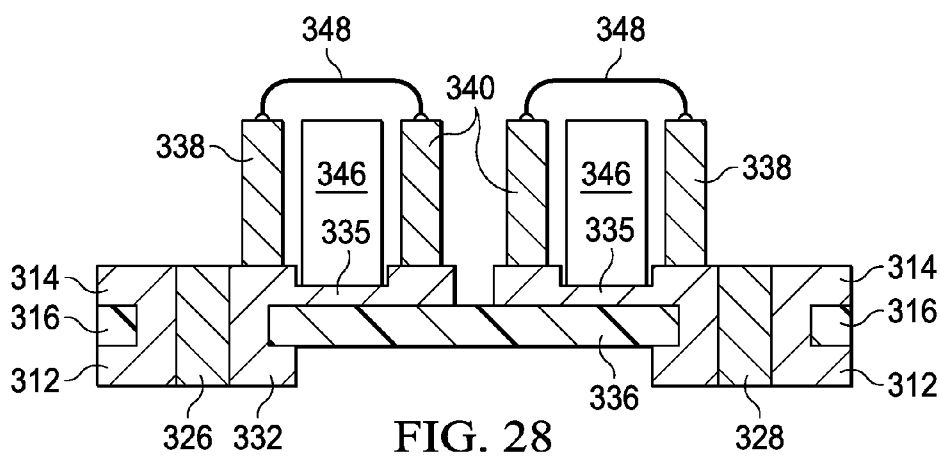

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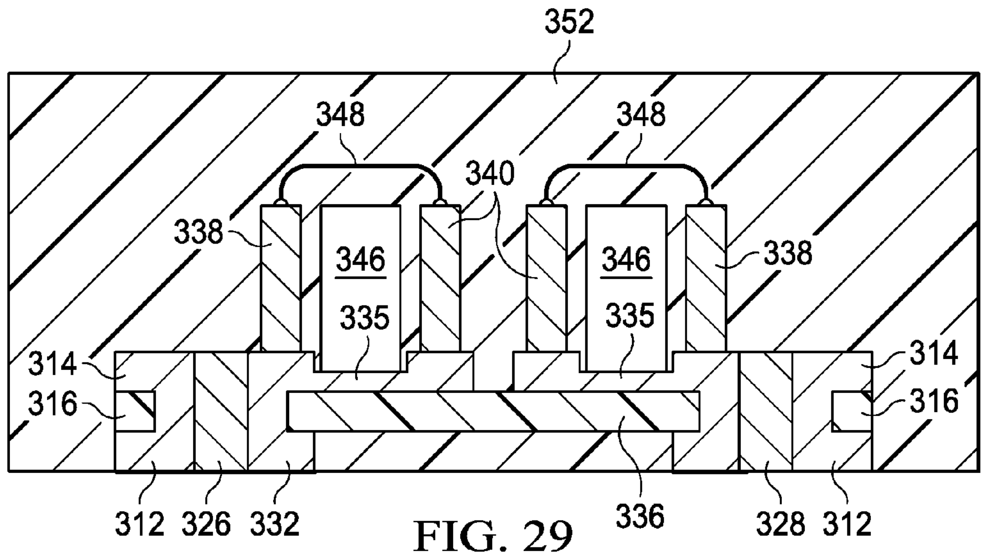
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FIG. 29

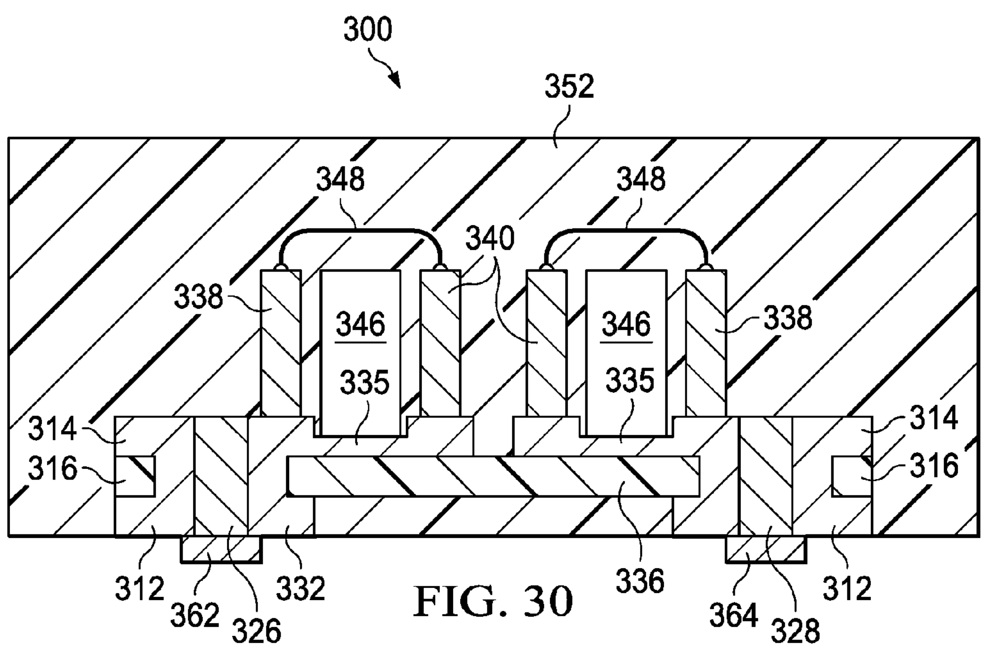
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FIG. 30

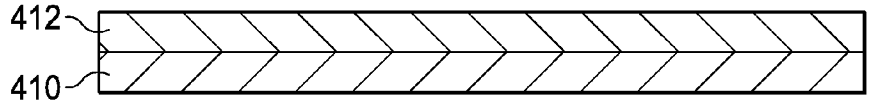

FIG. 31

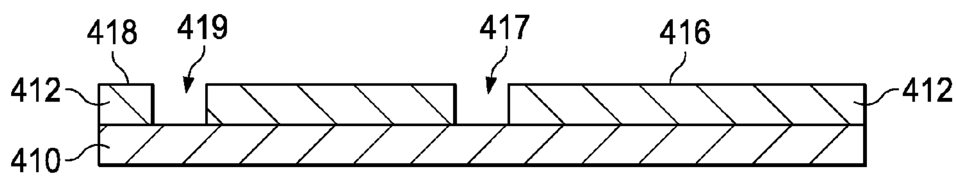

FIG. 32

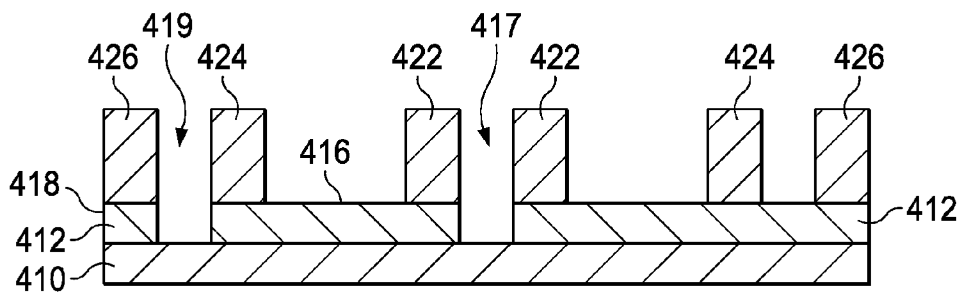

FIG. 33

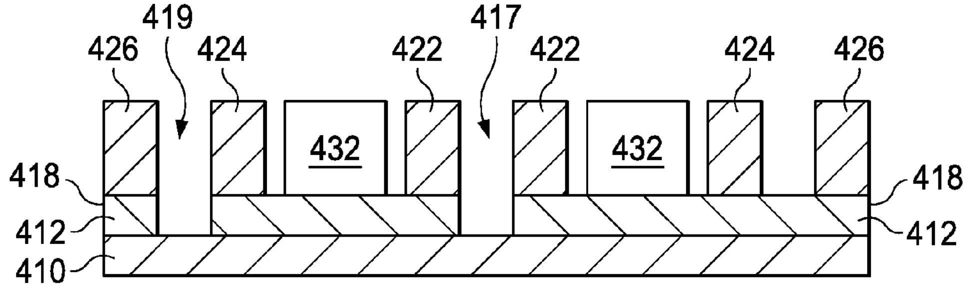

FIG. 34

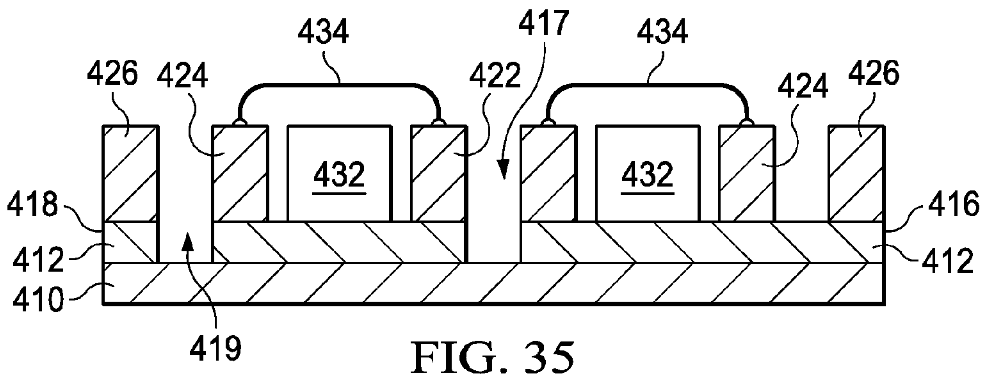

FIG. 35

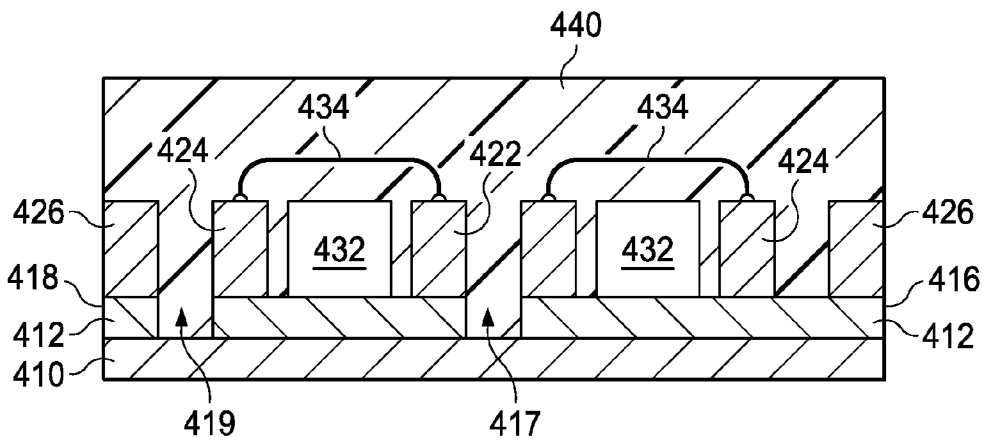

FIG. 36

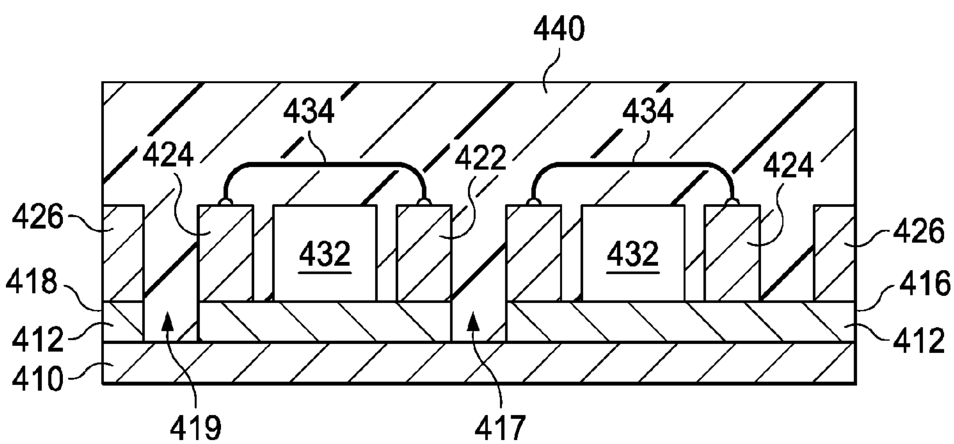

FIG. 37

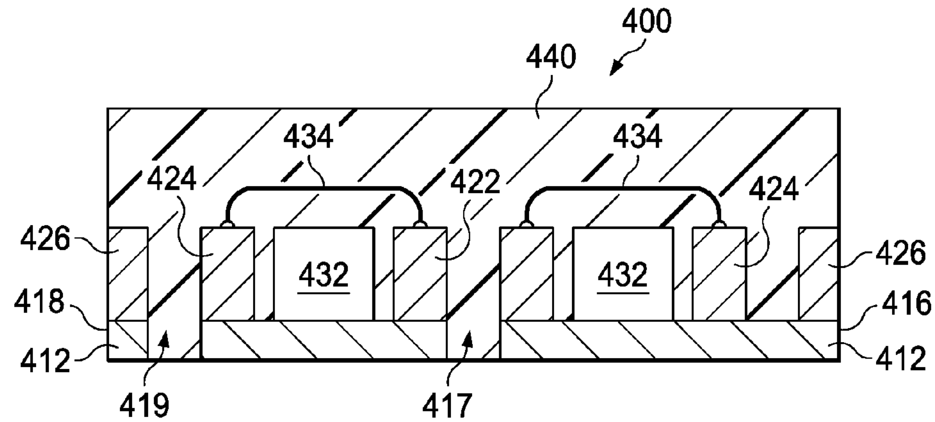

FIG. 38A

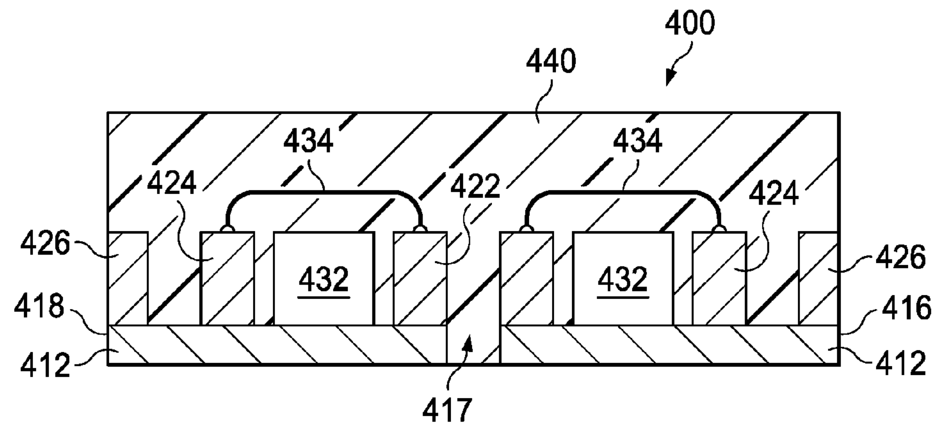

FIG. 38B

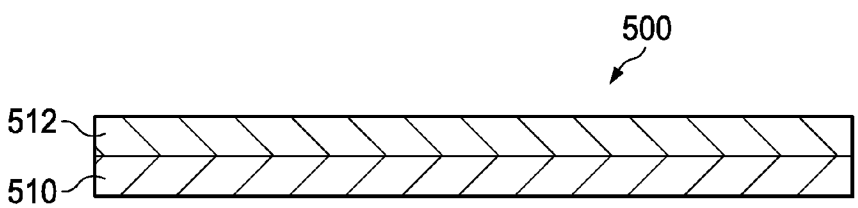

FIG. 39

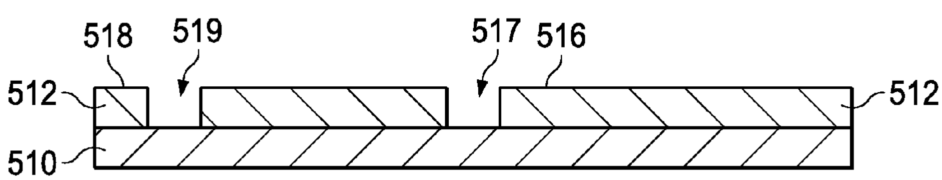

FIG. 40

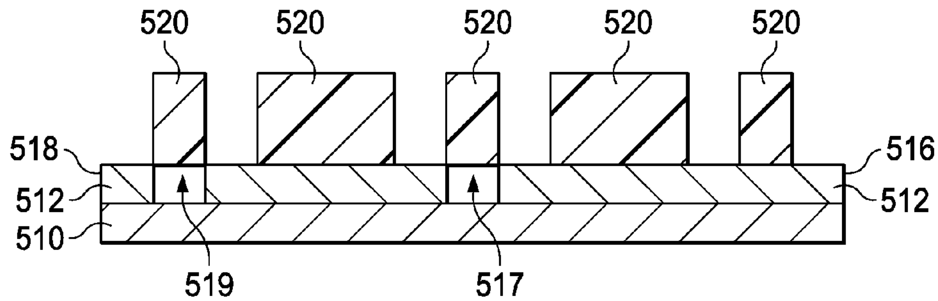

FIG. 41

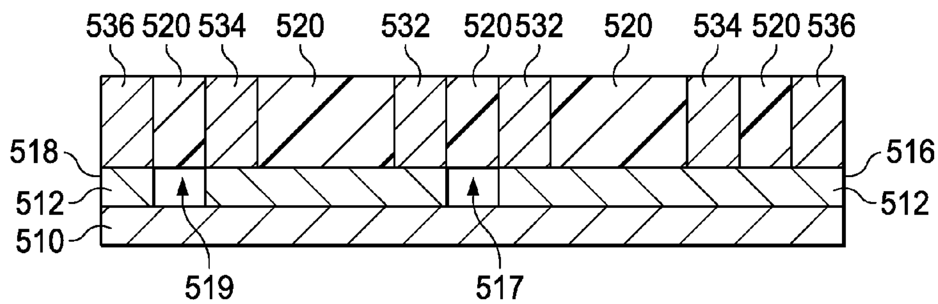

FIG. 42

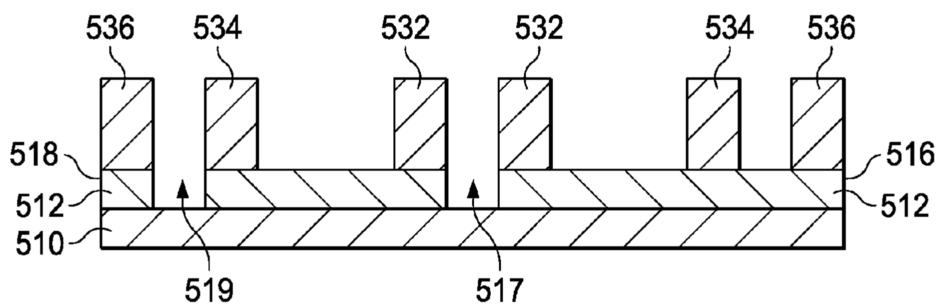

FIG. 43

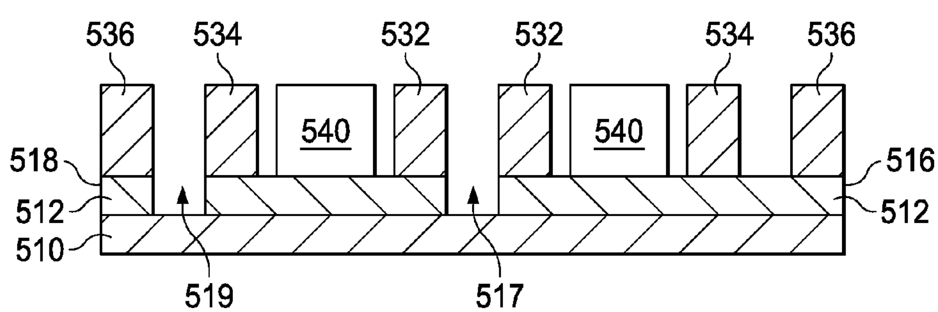

FIG. 44

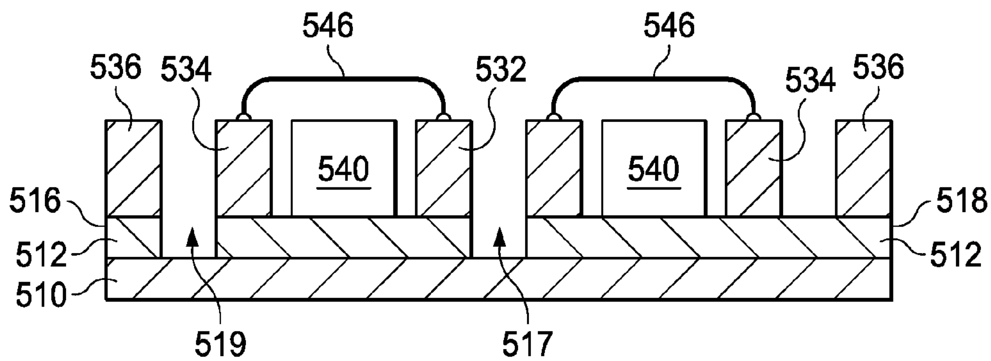

FIG. 45

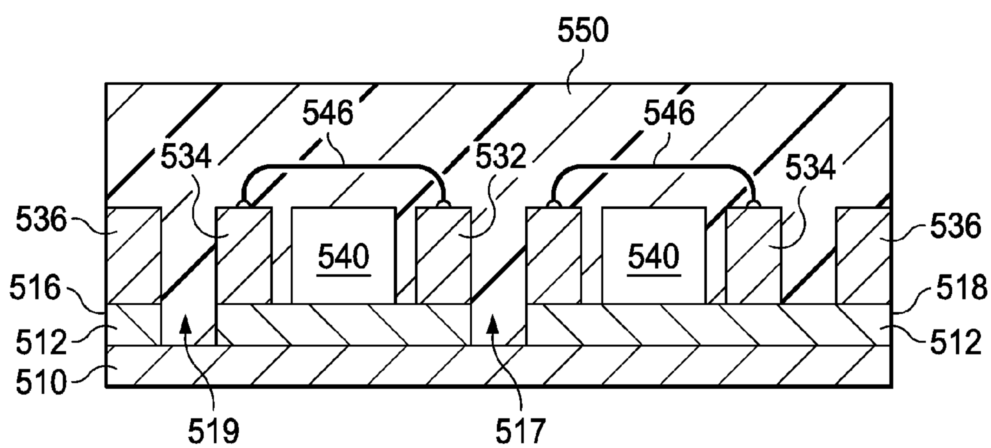

FIG. 46

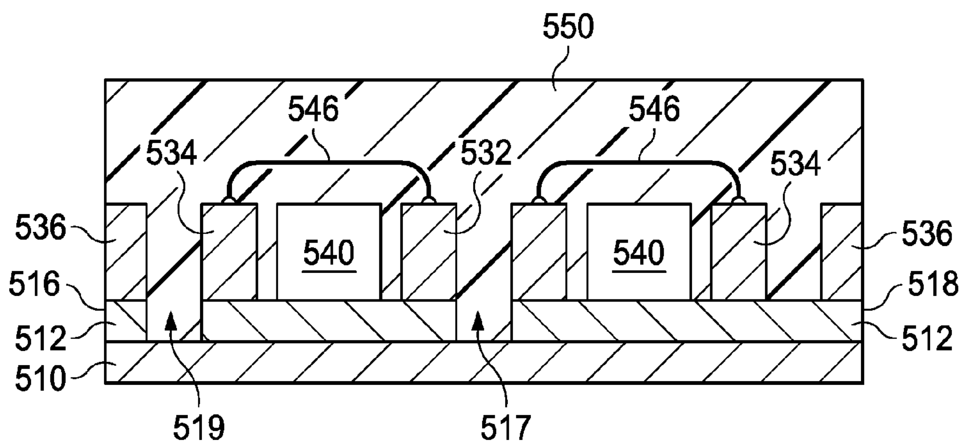

FIG. 47

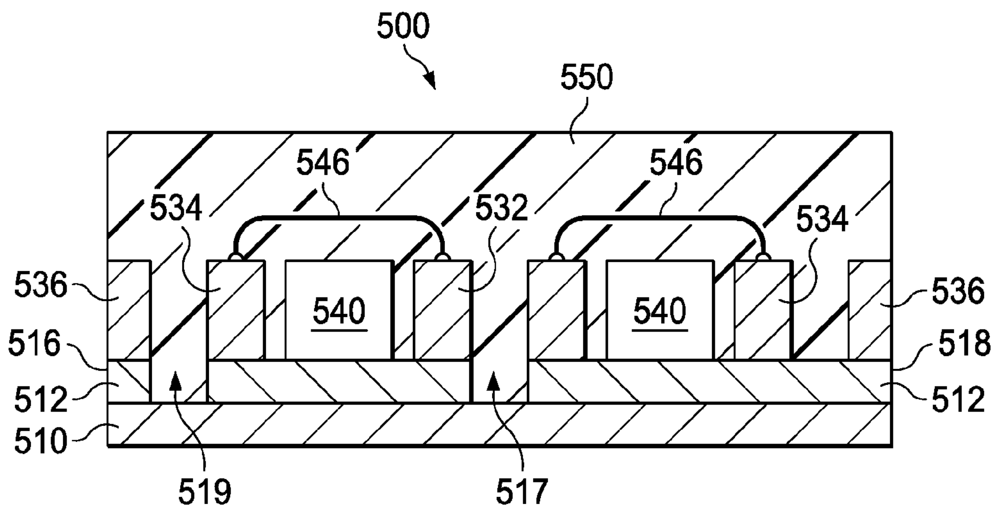

FIG. 48

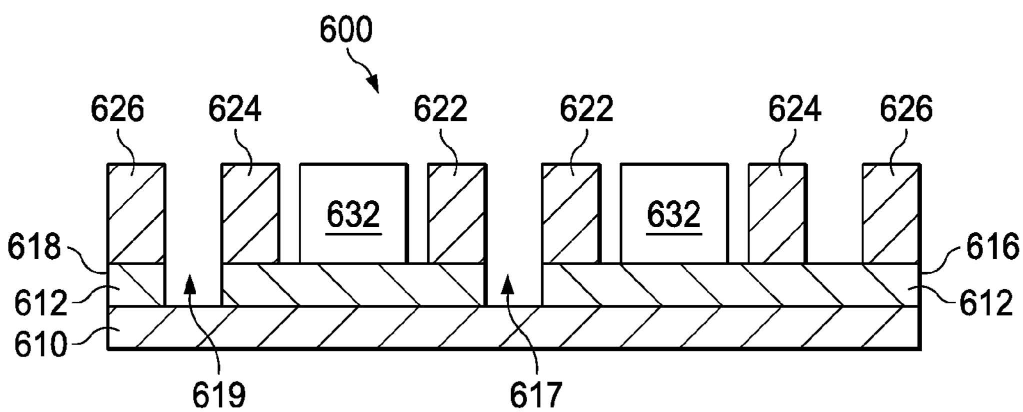

FIG. 49

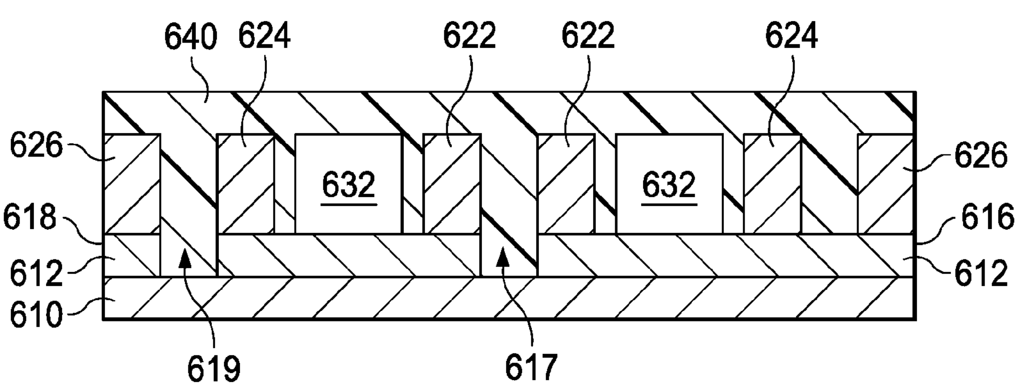

FIG. 50

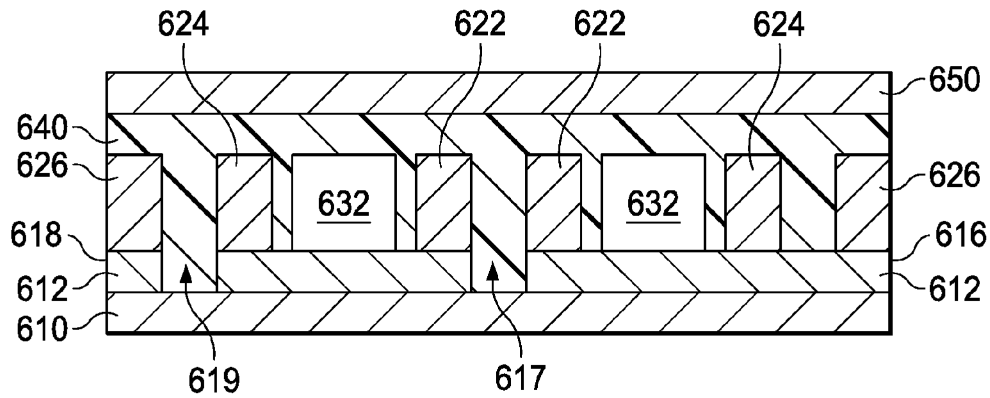

FIG. 51

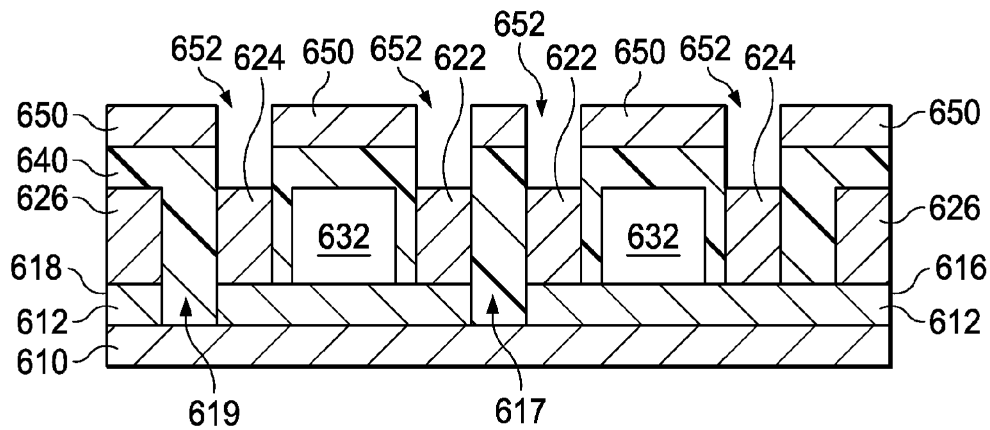

FIG. 52

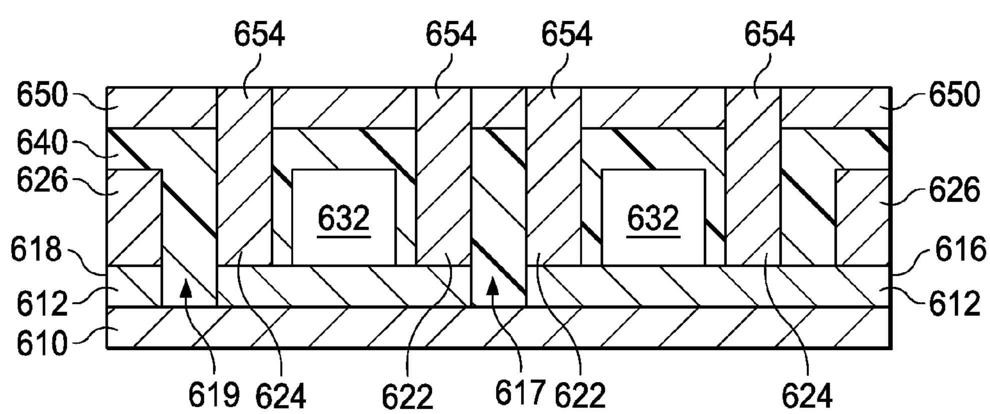

FIG. 53

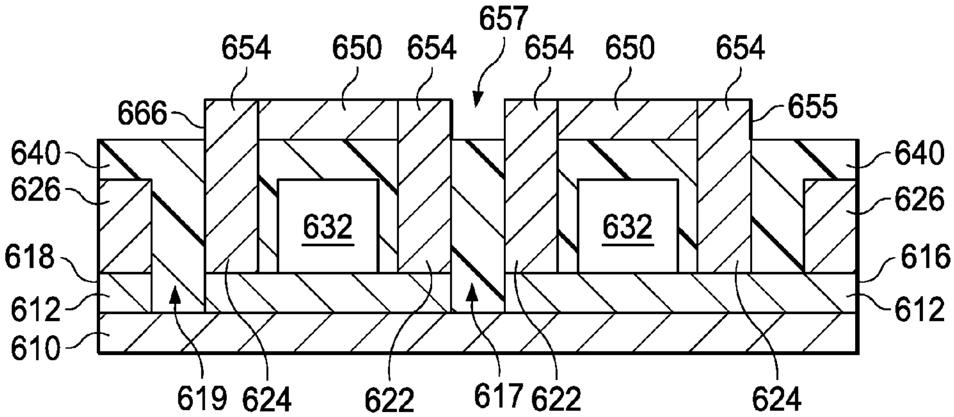

FIG. 54

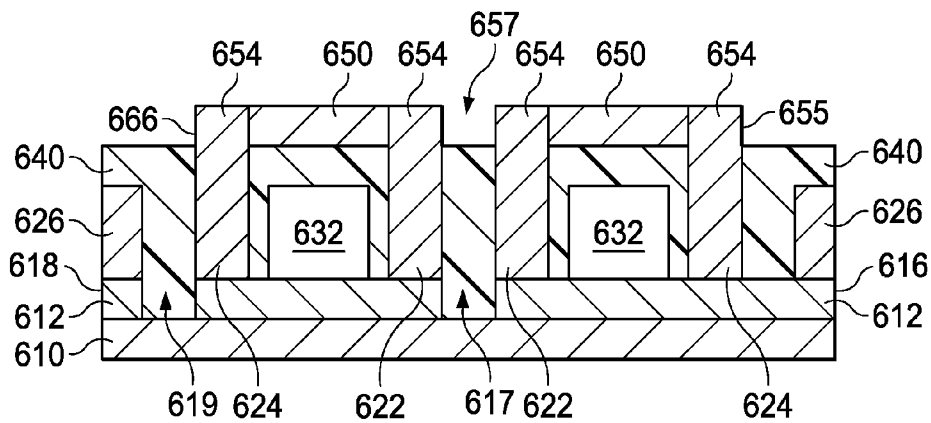

FIG. 55

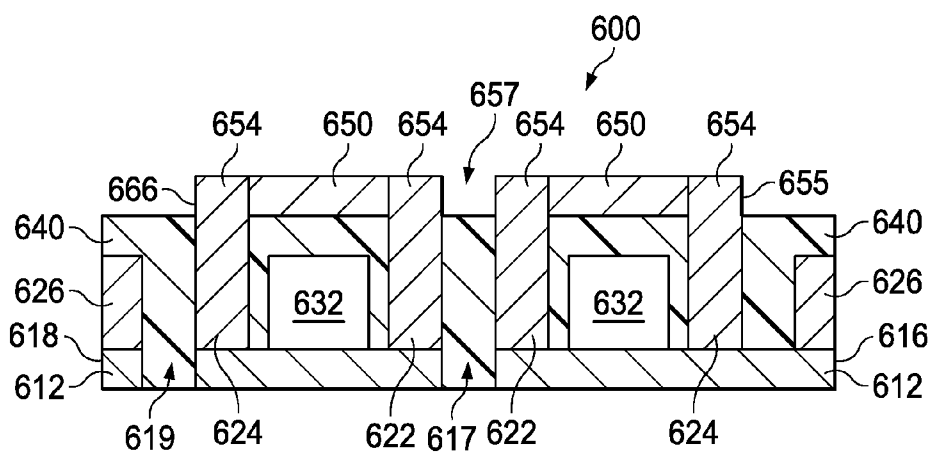

FIG. 56

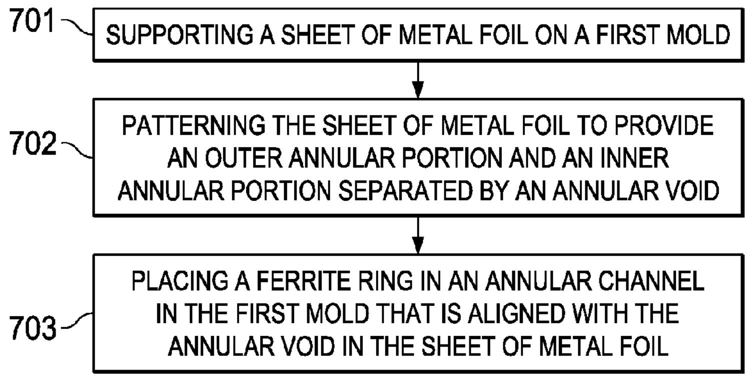
701
SUPPORTING A SHEET OF METAL FOIL ON A FIRST MOLD
702
PATTERNING THE SHEET OF METAL FOIL TO PROVIDE AN OUTER ANNULAR PORTION AND AN INNER ANNULAR PORTION SEPARATED BY AN ANNULAR VOID
703
PLACING A FERRITE RING IN AN ANNULAR CHANNEL IN THE FIRST MOLD THAT IS ALIGNED WITH THE ANNULAR VOID IN THE SHEET OF METAL FOIL

FIG. 57

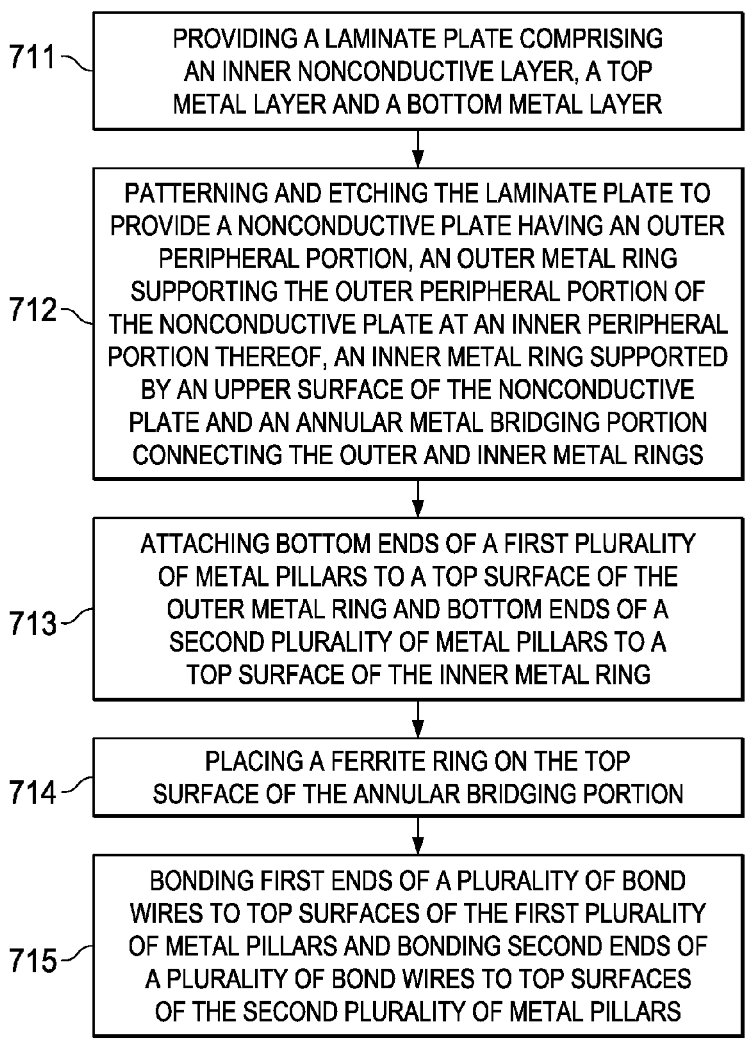
711
PROVIDING A LAMINATE PLATE COMPRISING AN INNER NONCONDUCTIVE LAYER, A TOP METAL LAYER AND A BOTTOM METAL LAYER
712
PATTERNING AND ETCHING THE LAMINATE PLATE TO PROVIDE A NONCONDUCTIVE PLATE HAVING AN OUTER PERIPHERAL PORTION, AN OUTER METAL RING SUPPORTING THE OUTER PERIPHERAL PORTION OF THE NONCONDUCTIVE PLATE AT AN INNER PERIPHERAL PORTION THEREOF, AN INNER METAL RING SUPPORTED BY AN UPPER SURFACE OF THE NONCONDUCTIVE PLATE AND AN ANNULAR METAL BRIDGING PORTION CONNECTING THE OUTER AND INNER METAL RINGS
713
ATTACHING BOTTOM ENDS OF A FIRST PLURALITY OF METAL PILLARS TO A TOP SURFACE OF THE OUTER METAL RING AND BOTTOM ENDS OF A SECOND PLURALITY OF METAL PILLARS TO A TOP SURFACE OF THE INNER METAL RING
714
PLACING A FERRITE RING ON THE TOP SURFACE OF THE ANNULAR BRIDGING PORTION
715
BONDING FIRST ENDS OF A PLURALITY OF BOND WIRES TO TOP SURFACES OF THE FIRST PLURALITY OF METAL PILLARS AND BONDING SECOND ENDS OF A PLURALITY OF BOND WIRES TO TOP SURFACES OF THE SECOND PLURALITY OF METAL PILLARS

FIG. 58

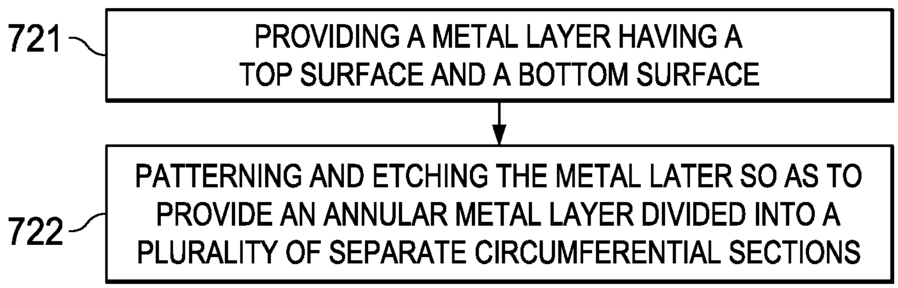
721
PROVIDING A METAL LAYER HAVING A TOP SURFACE AND A BOTTOM SURFACE
722
PATTERNING AND ETCHING THE METAL LATER SO AS TO PROVIDE AN ANNULAR METAL LAYER DIVIDED INTO A PLURALITY OF SEPARATE CIRCUMFERENTIAL SECTIONS

FIG. 59

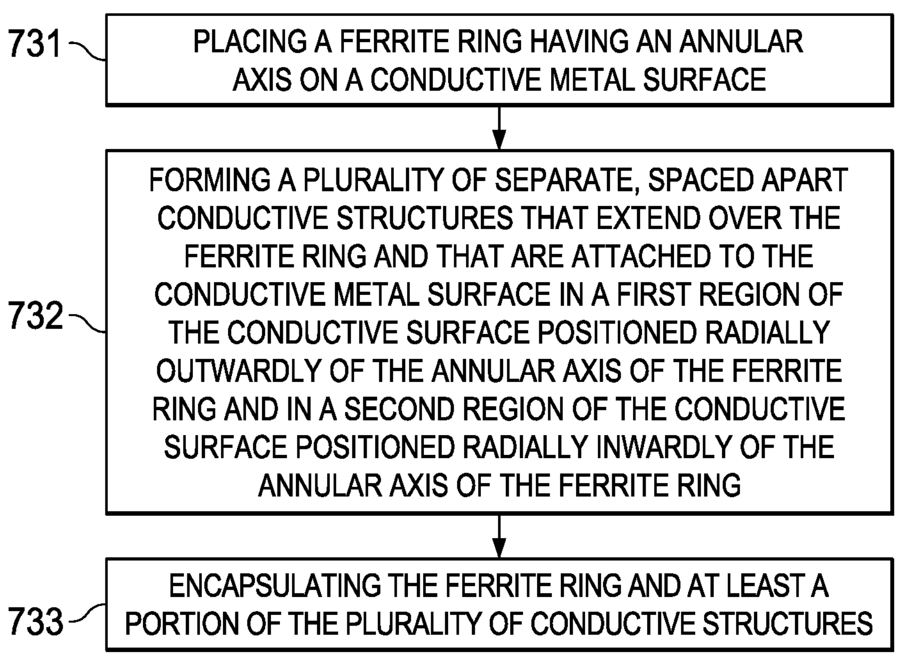
731
PLACING A FERRITE RING HAVING AN ANNULAR AXIS ON A CONDUCTIVE METAL SURFACE
732
FORMING A PLURALITY OF SEPARATE, SPACED APART CONDUCTIVE STRUCTURES THAT EXTEND OVER THE FERRITE RING AND THAT ARE ATTACHED TO THE CONDUCTIVE METAL SURFACE IN A FIRST REGION OF THE CONDUCTIVE SURFACE POSITIONED RADIALLY OUTWARDLY OF THE ANNULAR AXIS OF THE FERRITE RING AND IN A SECOND REGION OF THE CONDUCTIVE SURFACE POSITIONED RADIALLY INWARDLY OF THE ANNULAR AXIS OF THE FERRITE RING
733
ENCAPSULATING THE FERRITE RING AND AT LEAST A PORTION OF THE PLURALITY OF CONDUCTIVE STRUCTURES

FIG. 60

EMBEDDED COIL ASSEMBLY AND METHOD OF MAKING

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 14/576,904, filed Dec. 19, 2014, which is related to U.S. application Ser. No. 14/576,934, filed Dec. 19, 2014, the contents of both are herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Toroidal coil assemblies, including toroidal inductors and toroidal transformers, are passive electronic components. A toroidal coil assembly typically includes a circular ring-shaped (toroidal) magnetic core of high magnetic permeability material, such as iron powder or ferrite. In at least one typical toroidal inductor, a wire is coiled around the toroidal core through the entire circumferential length thereof. Generally, for a toroidal transformer, a first wire (primary winding) is wrapped around a first half of the circumference of the core, and a second wire (secondary winding) is wrapped around the second half of the circumference of the core. In both transformer and inductor coil assemblies, the wire turns are electrically insulated from each other.

[0003] Toroidal coil assemblies have long been used in electronic applications. Small toroidal coil assemblies are sometimes embedded in printed circuit boards and in molded block components.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0004] FIG. **1** is an isometric cross-sectional view of a prior art embedded coil assembly.

[0005] FIGS. **2** through **11**A are cross-sectional side elevation views illustrating various stages in an example method of producing an embedded coil assembly, and FIG. **11**B is a top plan view of FIG. **11**A.

[0006] FIGS. **12** through **21** are cross-sectional side elevation views illustrating various stages in another example method of producing an embedded coil assembly.

[0007] FIGS. **22** through **30** are cross-sectional side elevation views illustrating various stages in a yet another example method of producing an embedded coil assembly.

[0008] FIGS. **31** through **38**A are cross-sectional side elevation views illustrating various stages in still another example method of producing an embedded coil assembly, and FIG. **38**B is a side elevation view of an alternative structure to that shown in FIG. **38**A.

[0009] FIGS. **39** through **48** are cross-sectional side elevation views illustrating various stages in a further example method of producing an embedded coil assembly.

[0010] FIGS. **49** through **56** are cross-sectional side elevation views illustrating various stages in a still further example method of producing an embedded coil assembly.

[0011] FIG. **57** is a block diagram of an example embodiment of a method of making an embedded coil assembly.

[0012] FIG. **58** is a block diagram of another example embodiment of a method of making an embedded coil assembly.

[0013] FIG. **59** is a block diagram of a further example embodiment of a method of making an embedded coil assembly.

[0014] FIG. **60** is a block diagram of yet another example embodiment of a method of making an embedded coil assembly.

SUMMARY

[0015] An embedded coil assembly is described that includes an annular metal layer having an upper surface, a first plurality of metal pillars arranged in an inner ring on the upper surface of the annular metal layer, a second plurality of metal pillars arranged in an intermediate ring on the upper surface of the annular metal layer and a third plurality of metal pillars arranged in an outer ring on the upper surface of the annular metal layer. A ferrite ring is positioned on the upper surface of the annular metal layer between the first plurality of metal pillars and the second plurality of metal pillars. A plurality of conductive structures each connect corresponding ones of the first plurality of metal pillars and the second plurality of metal pillars. An encapsulation layer covers, the ferrite ring, the first and second plurality of metal pillars, at least a portion of the third plurality of metal pillars and at least a portion of the plurality of conductive structures.

[0016] A method of making an embedded coil assembly includes providing a metal layer having a top surface and a bottom surface and patterning and etching the metal layer so as to provide an annular metal layer divided into a plurality of separate circumferential sections.

[0017] Another embedded coil assembly includes a ferrite ring having an annular axis. The ferrite ring is positioned on a conductive metal surface. A plurality of separate, spaced apart conductive structures extend over the ferrite ring and are attached to the conductive metal surface in a first region of the conductive surface positioned radially outwardly of the annular axis of the ferrite ring and in a second region of the conductive surface positioned radially inwardly of the annular axis of the ferrite ring. An encapsulation layer covers, the ferrite ring and at least a portion of the plurality of conductive structures.

[0018] Another method of making an embedded coil assembly includes placing a ferrite ring, which has an annular axis, on a conductive metal surface. The method includes forming multiple separate, spaced apart conductive structures that extend over the ferrite ring and that are attached to the conductive metal surface in a first region of the conductive surface positioned radially outwardly of the annular axis of the ferrite ring and in a second region of the conductive surface positioned radially inwardly of the annular axis of the ferrite ring. The method also includes encapsulating the ferrite ring and at least a portion of the plurality of conductive structures.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0019] As previously mentioned, small toroidal coil assemblies are often embedded in printed circuit boards and in separate molded components. FIG. **1** is an isometric cross-sectional view of one such prior art embedded coil assembly **10**. Coil assembly **10** is formed in an organic substrate **12**, such as FR-4, having a top surface **14** and a bottom surface **16**. The coil assembly **10** has an annular ("ring shaped"/"toroidal") ferrite core **20**. The core **20** has a ring-shaped top surface **22**, a ring-shaped bottom surface **24**, an inner cylindrical surface **26**, and an outer cylindrical surface **28**. An epoxy filled central column **30** has a cylindrical outer surface **32**, which engages the inner cylindrical surface **26** of the ferrite core **20**. A coil winding assembly **40** is partially formed on a top surface **14** of the organic substrate **12** and includes a generally fan shaped, patterned metal layer **42** having a plurality of spaced-apart, radially extending segments **44**, each having a radial inner end **46** and a radial outer end **48**. A mirror image coil winding assembly (not shown), which provides another portion of the coil winding assembly **40**, is formed on the bottom surface **16** of the organic substrate **12**. The coil winding assembly **40** also includes a plurality of plated vias **50**. Except for lead attachment regions, each of the radially extending segments **44** of the top metal layer **42** is connected by a first plated via **52** at its radially inner end **46** and a second plated via **54** at its radially outer end **48** to corresponding portions of the patterned metal layer on the bottom surface **16** of the substrate. When such an assembly is used to provide small transformers or inductors, production involves drilling and plating a large number of tiny vias. This process is machine-time intensive and expensive.

[0020] Another prior art method of providing an embedded coil assembly (not shown) is to hand wrap metal windings about a toroidal ferrite core and then embed the hand wrapped assembly in an organic substrate. Such hand wrapping of small toroidal cores is also extremely time-consuming, labor-intensive and expensive.

[0021] This specification discloses several novel embedded coil assemblies and methods of making such embedded coil assemblies. An advantage of some or all of the herein described embedded coil assembly manufacturing methods is the speed and efficiency at which such assemblies may be produced, as compared to the above described prior art methods. These advantages are achieved, at least in part, by using techniques from semiconductor manufacturing technology in a new manufacturing environment involving organic printed circuit boards and stand alone inductor components encased in an organic material, such as, for example, mold compound.

[0022] FIGS. **2** through **11**A are cross-sectional side elevation views illustrating various stages in an example method of producing an embedded coil assembly. In FIG. **2** an annular metal backing plate or mold **110** has a circular base portion **112**. Metal backing plate **110** has an upwardly projecting central column portion **114** with a top surface **115**. An annular outer portion **116** has a ring-shaped top surface **117**. An annular void **118** is positioned between the central column portion **114** and the annular outer portion **116**. The annular void **118** has an open upper end **120** and a closed lower end **122**. A photo-definable film layer **130** is supported on the circular top surface **115** and ring-shaped top surface **117** of the central column portion **114** and annular outer portion **116**. The metal layer **132** (for example, copper foil layer) is attached to the top surface of the photo-definable film layer **130**. Such copper clad photo-definable film layers are known in the art.

[0023] As shown in FIG. **3**, the metal layer **132** is patterned and etched to provide an outer annular portion **133**, an annular void **134** positioned above void **118**, an annular inner portion **135** and a central circular hole **136**.

[0024] As illustrated in FIG. **4**, the portion of the photo-definable film layer **130** positioned below the void **134** and above the void **118** is exposed to light and etched away such that the voids **118** and **134** illustrated in FIG. **4** are now merged and continuous from the bottom surface **122** thereof to the top surface **138** of the metal layer **13**. This now merged void is indicated as **118** in FIG. **4**.

[0025] As illustrated in FIG. **5**, next a ferrite ring **150** is placed inside the annular void **118** in engagement with surface **122**. After placing ferrite ring **150**, a plurality of circumferentially spaced-apart bond wires **154** having outer ends **156** and inner ends **158** are attached to the annular outer portion **133** and annular inner portion **135**, respectively, of the metal layer **232**. The plurality of bond wires **154** are spaced-apart at a predetermined circumferential distance and form a "wire cage" over the ferrite ring **150**. Next, a second metal backing plate or mold **170**, having a circular laterally disposed portion **172** with a small central hole **174** therein and an annular, vertically projecting wall **176** defining a disc shaped empty space **178**, is positioned against the outer annular portion of the metal layer **132**. This assembly is then inverted as shown in FIG. **6**. As a result of the inversion, the ferrite ring **150** is displaced by gravity downwardly until coming into contact with the bond wires **154**, which prevents further downward movement thereof. The length of each bond wire **154** is selected such that the ferrite ring **150** comes to rest at a position in which the now upwardly facing surface **151** thereof is positioned at or just below the elevation of the now upwardly facing surface **131** of the metal layer **132**.

[0026] Next, as illustrated in FIG. **7**, mold compound **180** is injected into the space **178**, covering the ferrite ring **150**, the bond wires **154**, the inner annular portion **135** and part of the outer annular portion **133**.

[0027] Next, as illustrated in FIG. **8**, the metal backing plate/mold **110** is removed and an annular vertically projecting portion of the injected mold compound **180** extends above the support plate **130**.

[0028] As illustrated in FIG. **9**, the photo-definable film layer is then removed and the projections **182** are planed and sanded so that the top surface **181** of the mold compound **180** is now flush with the top surface **151** of the ferrite ring **150** and the top surfaces **131**, **185** of the outer and inner metal ring portions **133** and **135**.

[0029] As illustrated in FIG. **10**, a metal layer **186** is then plated onto the flat top surface of the assembly.

[0030] Finally, as illustrated in FIG. **11**A the top metal layer **186** and the outer and inner annular portions **133**, **135** of the metal layer **132** are patterned to provide, along with the bond wires, a plurality of completed windings around the ferrite ring **150**. The upper copper layer **186** and the underlying outer and inner annular portions **133**, **135** of the metal layer **132** are patterned and etched, as illustrated in FIG. **11**B, into a plurality of pie-shaped segments **190**, which are separated by pie shaped voids **192**. As a result, an embedded coil assembly **100**, FIGS. **11**A and **11**B is provided.

[0031] The embedded coil assembly **100**, FIGS. **11**A, **11**B, includes a laterally disposed ferrite ring **150** having a central opening **152**. An upper laterally disposed annular metal layer **186** has a central opening **188** aligned with the central opening **152** in the ferrite ring **150** and engages the top surface **151** of the ferrite ring **150**. A lower laterally disposed annular metal layer **132** has a central opening **136** aligned with the central opening in the upper metal layer **188** and has an annular void **134** therein separating the annular outer portion **133** from the annular inner portion **135** thereof. The ferrite ring **150** is positioned in the annular void **134**.

[0032] FIG. **11**B is a top plan view of the embedded coil assembly **100** showing the upper metal layer **186** and showing the various portions of the lower metal layer **132** and the ferrite ring **150** in small dashed lines and the bond wires **154** in larger dashed lines. As the result of a final patterning and etching process, the upper annular metal layer **186** and the lower annular metal layer **132** below it are divided into a plurality of circumferential pie-shaped segments **190** that are separated by circumferential spaces **192**. Each circumferential segment **190** of the lower metal layer **132** has outer and inner radially-extending portions **133**, **135** that are radially separated by a void **134**. The outer and inner portions **133**, **135** of the lower metal layer **132** engage identically shaped portions of the upper metal layer **186**, which are attached thereto. The ferrite ring **150** is located in the annular void **134** of the lower metal layer **132**. The plurality of bond wires **154** are connected at opposite ends thereof to the spaced-apart outer and inner portions **133**, **135** of the lower metal layer **132** and extend beneath the ferrite ring **150**. A layer of mold compound **180**, FIG. **11**A, engages the ferrite ring **150**, the upper and lower metal layers **186**, **132** and the bond wires **154**.

[0033] An embedded coil assembly **200** that is identical to the above described embedded coil assembly **100** may be made by an alternative method as will now be described with reference to FIGS. **12-21**.

[0034] FIG. **12** is a cross-sectional side elevation view of a variable mold **210**. The variable mold **210** has much the same structure as that described above for mold **110**. Corresponding structures in the variable mold **210** are indicated by the same reference numerals as used for mold **110**, except with **200** series numerals. The variable mold **210** differs from mold **110** in that it has a displaceable seal plate **220** with a central opening **224** therein. The operations performed in FIGS. **12-15** are essentially the same as those described above with reference to FIGS. **2-5**.

[0035] As shown in FIG. **12** an annular metal backing plate or mold **210** has a circular base portion **212**. The metal backing plate **210** includes an upwardly projecting central column portion **214** with a circular top surface **215** and an upwardly projecting annular outer portion **216** with a ring-shaped top surface **217**. An annular void **218** is positioned between the central column portion **214** and the annular outer portion **216**. The annular void **218** has an open upper end **220**. A photo-definable film layer **230** is supported on the circular top surface **215** and the ring-shaped top surface **217** of the central column portion **214** and annular outer portion **216**. A face surface of the metal layer (for example, copper foil layer) **232** is attached to a face surface of the photo-definable film layer **230**.

[0036] As shown in FIG. **13** the metal layer **232** is patterned and etched to provide an outer annular portion **233**, an annular void **234** positioned above void **218**, an annular inner portion **235** and a central circular hole **236**.

[0037] As illustrated in FIG. **14**, the portion of the photo-definable film layer **230** positioned below the void **234** and above the void **218** is exposed to light and then etched away, such that the void **218** illustrated in FIG. **13**, becomes the elongated void **218**. As shown in FIG. **14**, the void **218** now extends from the top surface **222** of the displaceable plate **220** to the elevation of the top surface **238** of the metal layer **232**.

[0038] As illustrated in FIG. **15**, a ferrite ring **250** is placed inside the annular void **219** and rests on surface **222**. After placing the ferrite ring **250**, a plurality of circumferentially spaced-apart bond wires **254** having outer ends **256** and inner ends **258** are attached to the annular outer portion **233** and annular inner portion **235**, respectively, of metal layer **232**. Next, a second metal backing plate/mold **270**, having a circular laterally disposed portion **272** with a hole **274** therein and an annular vertically projecting wall **276** defining an empty space **278** is positioned against the outer annular portion **233** of the metal layer **232**. This assembly is then inverted as shown in FIG. **16**.

[0039] As a result of the inversion, as shown in FIG. **16**, the ferrite ring **250** is displaced by gravity downwardly until coming into contact with the bond wires **254**, which prevents further downward movement thereof. The length of each bond wire **254** is selected such that the ferrite ring **250** comes to rest at a position in which the now upwardly facing surface **251** thereof is positioned at the same elevation as the now upwardly facing surface **231** of the metal layer **232**.

[0040] Next, as shown in FIG. **17**, the displaceable metal plate **220** is moved downwardly until the now downwardly positioned surface **221** thereof is level with the now upwardly facing surface of the photo-definable film layer **230** and the upwardly facing surface **251** of the ferrite ring **250**. Then, as shown in FIG. **18**, the cavity **275** defined by the displaceable plate **220** and the lower mold **270** is injected with mold compound **280**.

[0041] As shown by FIG. **19**, after the mold compound **280** cures, the mold **210** is removed/opened and the top surface of the remaining mold compound **281**, which is already substantially flat, is further leveled and sanded as needed, such that it is flush with the upper surfaces **231**, **285** and **251** of the metal layer **232** and ferrite ring **250**.

[0042] As shown by FIG. **20**, the bottom mold **270** is then removed and an upper metal layer **280** is plated onto the flat top surface of the assembly, engaging surfaces **231** and **251**. At this point the assembly shown in FIG. **20** is identical to the assembly shown in FIG. **10**. Next the operations described above with reference to FIGS. **11**A and **11**B are performed on the assembly of FIG. **20** resulting in the product **200** shown in FIG. **21**, which is substantially the same as that shown in FIGS. **11**A and **11**B.

[0043] Various production stages in a method of making another embedded coil assembly **300** are illustrated in FIGS. **22-30**.

[0044] FIG. **22** is a side elevation view of a printed circuit board ("PCB") prepreg assembly **310**. The prepreg assembly **310** includes lower metal layer **312** and an upper metal layer **314**, which may both be copper foil layers. Sandwiched between the metal layers **312**, **314** is a prepreg layer **316** of composite fiber material in a matrix, for example, glass fabric in epoxy, which is also referred to herein as "composite layer" **316**.

[0045] As illustrated in FIG. **23** a plurality of through-holes **322**, **324** are drilled around the periphery of the prepreg **310**. Through-holes **322**, **324** are then plated to provide plated through-holes **326**, **328** as illustrated in FIG. **24**.

[0046] Next, as shown by FIG. **25**, a circuit is patterned and etched out on metal layers **312**, **314** and **316**. This process forms an outer metal ring **332**, which includes plated through-holes **326** and **328**. The metal ring **332** supports a composite layer bridge **336** at a mid-height of the metal ring **332**. An inner metal ring **334** is supported at the top surface of the composite bridge **336**. An annular metal bridge **335** is continuous with and connects the two metal rings **332** and **334**. In the illustrated embodiment the metal bridge has a height of half the height of each of the metal rings **332** and **334**. In other embodiments the annular metal bridge **335** may have the same height as the metal rings **332** and **334** or it may have another height.

[0047] As illustrated by FIG. **26**, a first plurality of circumferentially spaced-apart metal pillars **338** are formed on the outer ring **332** and a second plurality of circumferentially spaced-apart pillars **340** are formed on the inner ring **334**. In one embodiment these pillars **338** and **340** are produced conventionally and are then conventionally attached at a predetermined spacing to the rings **332**, **334**. In another embodiment the pillars are printed onto the rings **332** and **334** with a 3-D printer and are then exposed to a high temperature to sinter/fuse the pillars to the rings **332** and **334**. In some embodiments the metal pillars **338**, **340** are silver or copper.

[0048] As shown in FIG. **27** a ferrite ring **346** is placed on the annular metal bridge **335** that is supported on the composite bridge **336** in the annular space between the outer pillars **338** and inner ring of pillars **340**.

[0049] Next, as illustrated in FIG. **28**, bond wires **348** are connected between radially aligned pillars in the first plurality of pillars **338** and the second plurality of pillars **340** such that the bond wires **348** extend over the ferrite ring **346**.

[0050] As shown by FIG. **29**, the assembly of FIG. **28** is then molded, as by use of a transfer mold, such that a block of mold compound **352** covers the entire assembly leaving only the bottom surface of the outer metal ring **332** exposed.

[0051] Next, as illustrated in FIG. **30**, I/O lead blocks **362**, **364** are formed below diametrically opposed plated through-holes **326**, **328**. In one embodiment the lead blocks **362**, **364** are formed in a two step process. First, solder paste is applied and then the solder paste is heated to reflow the solder and fuse it to the metal ring **332** and plated through-holes **328** or **332**. In the case where the coil assembly **300** is an inductor coil assembly with a single set of windings there are generally only two plated through-holes **328** and **332**. For a typical transformer coil assembly with two sets of windings, one on each circumferential half of the core, there are generally four such I/O lead blocks. The formation of I/O leads **362**, **364**, etc., may complete the embedded coil assembly **300**.

[0052] A method of making another embodiment of embedded coil assembly **400** will now be described with reference to FIGS. **31-38**. As illustrated in FIG. **31**, a base plate **410** has a metal foil layer **412**, such as copper clad, formed thereon. Next, as illustrated in FIG. **32**, a circuitry pattern is formed in the metal layer **412**, which, in this embodiment, includes an annular main body portion **416** with a central hole **419** therein and a separate island portion **418**. (In other embodiments no such hole **419** is formed and the metal foil layer is symmetrical after patterning and etching with no separate island **418** being formed.) The main body portion **416** is further patterned into a plurality of separate radially extending portions, which may be pie-shaped portions, similar to those shown in FIG. **11**B. The island portion **416** may be a circumferentially short portion formed by a single small hole **419** in a single pie shaped portion. The island portion **416** may be used as one terminal for a circuit (not shown) different and isolated from the coil assembly **400**, FIG. **37**. In other embodiments, as previously mentioned, this hole **419** is omitted from the coil assembly **400**.

[0053] Next, as illustrated by FIG. **33**, an inner ring of pillars **422**, an intermediate ring of pillars **424** and an outer ring of pillars **426** are sintered or placed on the patterned, annular metal layer **412**, one pillar on each radial end and in the radial middle of each pie-shaped portion (except for a radially shortened pie shaped portion aligned with the island **418**, which only has two pillars thereon, while the island **418** itself has one pillar thereon). As illustrated by FIG. **33**, a ferrite ring **432** is then placed on the metal layer **412** at a position between the inner ring of pillars **422** and the intermediate ring of pillars **424**.

[0054] As shown by FIG. **35**, bond wires **434** are then attached at opposite ends thereof between pillars in the inner ring of pillars **422** and pillars in the intermediate ring of pillars **424**, such that the bond wires **434** extend over the ferrite ring **432**.

[0055] Next, shown by FIG. **36**, a layer of mold compound **440** is molded over the metal layer **412**, the pillars **422**, **424**, **426**, the ferrite ring **432** and the bond wires **434**. The layer of mold compound **440** also fills the holes **417** and **419**. It is to be understood that FIGS. **31-36** each illustrate a portion of a yet unsingulated assembly, which contains a plurality of identical assemblies.

[0056] As shown in FIG. **37**, each of the multiple assemblies, one of which is shown in FIG. **36**, are then singulated by saw cuts, which pass through the outer ring of pillars **426** and the portion of the metal layer **412** and support layer **410** positioned immediately therebelow. These metal portions are exposed at a lateral side surface of the mold compound **440** block and may be used as terminals for one or more windings of the completed coil assembly **400** of FIG. **38**A.

[0057] A completed embedded coil assembly **400** is provided, as illustrated in FIG. **38**A, by removal of the base layer **410** shown in FIG. **37**.

[0058] An alternate embodiment of an embedded coil assembly **400** is illustrated in FIG. **38**B. The alternative embodiment is identical to that of FIG. **38**A, except that the hole **419** is omitted.

[0059] FIGS. **39-48** illustrate stages in the formation of another embedded coil assembly **500** similar to coil assembly **400**. As shown in FIG. **39**, a metal foil layer **512** is supported on a base layer **510**. The foil layer **512** has circuitry patterned and etched thereon in the same manner as illustrated and described with reference to FIG. **32** to provide an annular main body portion **516** with hole **517** therein and an outer island portion **518** formed by a hole **519**.

[0060] Next, as shown in FIG. **41**, a non-sticky preformed mold **520** is placed on the metal foil layer **512**. Then as shown in FIG. **42**, metal powder is printed into the voids in the preformed mold **520** to provide a plurality of metal pillars **532** arranged in an inner ring, a plurality of metal pillars **534** arranged in an intermediate ring, and a plurality of metal pillars **536** arranged in an outer ring **536**. The metal powder is then sintered or cured to form solid pillars.

[0061] The preformed mold **520** is then removed as illustrated in FIG. **43**, and a ferrite ring **540** is placed in the annular void between the plurality of pillars **532** in the inner ring and the plurality of pillars **534** in the intermediate ring, as shown in FIG. **44**.

[0062] As illustrated by FIG. **45**, bond wires **546** are then attached over the ferrite ring **542** aligned pillars in the inner ring of pillars **532** and the intermediate ring of pillars **546**.

[0063] Next, the assembly of FIG. **45** has a layer of mold compound **550** applied thereto, which covers the metal layer

512, the inner, intermediate, and outer plurality of pillars 532, 534, 536, the ferrite ring 540 and the bond wires 546.

[0064] The base layer 510 is then removed to provide the completed embedded coil assembly 500, as illustrated by FIG. 48, which may be essentially identical to assembly 400 described above.

[0065] An alternative process for completing the production stages described with reference to FIGS. 33-37 and FIGS. 42-48, are illustrated in FIGS. 49-56. The end product made using this alternative process is the embedded coil assembly 600 illustrated in FIG. 56.

[0066] The process begins with an assembly as illustrated in FIG. 49 in which a support base layer 610 supports a patterned metal layer 612 that has been patterned and etched to provide a circuit having an annular main body portion 616 with a central opening 617 and a small outer Island portion 618 separated by a hole 619, i.e., the same pattern as described above, which forms a portion of embedded coil assemblies 400 and 500. An inner ring of metal pillar 622, an intermediate ring of metal pillar 624, and an outer ring of metal pillars 626 are formed on the surface of the metal layer 612, as shown in FIG. 49. A ferrite ring 632 is placed in an annular space between the metal pillars 622 in the center ring and the metal pillars 624 in the intermediate ring.

[0067] Next, the assembly shown in FIG. 49 is molded, as by a transfer mold to provide a layer of mold compound 640 that covers the metal layer 616, all of the metal pillars 622, 624, 626 and the ferrite ring 632, and fills the holes 617 and 619.

[0068] Next, as shown by FIG. 51, a metal layer 650, which may be a copper clad lamination layer, is formed on the top surface of the mold compound layer 640. As shown in FIG. 52 micro-vias 652 are then formed, as by using a laser, which extend through the top metal layer 650 and a portion of the mold layer 640 to the surface of each of the inner ring of metal pillars 622, and the intermediate ring of metal pillars 624.

[0069] As illustrated in FIG. 53 the vias 652 are then metal plated to provide a continuous vertical metal path 654 extending from each of the pillars through the top plating layer 650.

[0070] Next, as shown in FIG. 54, an outer annular portion 655 of the top plating layer 650 positioned outwardly of the intermediate pillars 624 is etched away, a central opening 657 is etched away and the top layer is further etched into a plurality of pie-shaped portion when viewed from the top, similar to the pie-shaped portions shown in FIG. 11B. As a result a plurality of bridge structures 666 are formed that are each comprised of a horizontal portion formed from layer 650 and two vertical end portions, formed by individual pillars 622, 624 and the filled vias 654 positioned thereabove. Each bridge structure 666 is generally pie-shaped as viewed from the top.

[0071] Next, as illustrated in FIG. 55, the assembly shown in FIG. 54 and adjacent assemblies are singulated. After that, the bottom layer 610 is removed leaving the completed embedded coil assembly 600 illustrated in FIG. 56. In this assembly, a metal bridge 666 extends between each pair of pillars 622, 624 in the inner pillar ring and intermediate pillar ring. Some of the pillars 626 in the outer pillar ring are exposed through the lateral sidewalls of the mold compound 640 by the singulation cuts. In another embodiment (not shown) an identical structure is provided, except that the hole 619 was not etched in the process described with reference to FIG. 49, and thus the finished assembly is symmetrical, i.e. there is no hole 619, and any of the exposed pillars 626 may be used for connection of external leads (not shown) to the coil assembly windings.

[0072] While copper has been described as a typical metal which may be used in the various metal layers and filled vias and bond wires, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that other conductive material such as silver or gold could provide the metal components described herein.

[0073] FIG. 57 illustrates an example method of making an embedded coil assembly. The method includes, as shown at block 701, supporting a sheet of metal foil on a first mold. The method also includes, as shown at block 702, patterning the sheet of metal foil to provide an outer annular foil portion and an inner annular foil portion separated by an annular void. The method includes, as shown at block 703 placing a ferrite ring in an annular channel in the first mold that is aligned with the annular void in the sheet of metal foil.

[0074] FIG. 58 illustrates another method of making an embedded coil assembly. The method includes, as shown at block 711, providing a laminate plate having an inner nonconductive layer, a top metal layer and a bottom metal layer. The method also includes, as shown at block 712, patterning and etching the laminate plate to provide a nonconductive plate having an peripheral portion, an outer metal ring supporting the outer peripheral portion of the nonconductive plate at an inner peripheral portion thereof, an inner metal ring supported by an upper surface of the nonconductive plate and an annular metal bridging portion connecting the outer and inner metal rings. The method also includes, as shown at block 713 attaching bottom ends of a first plurality of metal pillars to a top surface of the outer metal ring and bottom ends of a second plurality of metal pillars to a top surface of the inner metal ring. The method further includes, as shown at block 714, placing a ferrite ring on a top surface of the annular bridging portion. The method additionally includes, as shown at block 715, bonding first ends of a plurality of bond wires to top surfaces of the first plurality of metal pillars and bonding second ends of another plurality of bond wires to top surfaces of the second plurality of metal pillars.

[0075] FIG. 59 illustrates a method of making an embedded coil assembly. The method includes, as shown at block 721, providing a metal layer having a top surface and a bottom surface and patterning and, as shown at block 722, etching the metal layer so as to provide an annular metal layer divided into a plurality of separate circumferential sections.

[0076] FIG. 60 illustrates a method of making an embedded coil assembly that includes, as shown at 731, placing a ferrite ring, which has a an annular axis, on a conductive metal surface. The method also includes, as shown at block 732, forming multiple separate, spaced-apart conductive structures that extend over the ferrite ring and that are attached to the conductive metal surface in a first region of the conductive surface positioned radially outwardly of the annular axis of the ferrite ring and in a second region of the conductive surface positioned radially inwardly of the annular axis of the ferrite ring. The method further includes, as shown at block 733, encapsulating the ferrite ring and at least a portion of the plurality of conductive structures.

[0077] Although certain embodiments of embedded circuit assemblies and production methods therefor have been expressly described in detail herein, other alternative embodiments will occur to those skilled in the art after reading this disclosure. It is intended for the language of appended claims to be broadly construed to encompass such alternative embodiments, except as limited by the prior art.

What is claimed is:

1. An embedded coil assembly comprising:

a ferrite ring having an annular axis, said ferrite ring positioned on a conductive metal surface;

a plurality of conductive structures attached to the conductive metal surface in a first region of the conductive surface positioned radially outwardly of the annular axis of the ferrite ring and in a second region of the conductive surface positioned radially inwardly of the annular axis of the ferrite ring;

a first plurality of metal pillars and a second plurality of metal pillars both having exposed vertically extending surfaces, the second plurality of metal pillars connected to at least one of the plurality of conductive structures; and

an encapsulation layer covering the ferrite ring, at least a portion of the plurality of conductive structures, and portions of the first and second plurality of metal pillars.

2. The embedded coil assembly of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of conductive structures is separate and spaced apart.

3. The embedded coil assembly of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of conductive structures comprises metal pillars.

4. The embedded coil assembly of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of conductive structures comprises a patterned metal layer.

5. The embedded coil assembly of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of conductive structures comprises filled vias.

6. The embedded coil assembly of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of conductive structures comprises at least two of metal pillars, bond wires, a patterned metal layer and filled vias.

7. The embedded coil assembly of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of conductive structures comprises at least two of metal pillars and a patterned metal layer connecting the at least two of metal pillars.

8. The embedded coil assembly of claim **7**, wherein a portion of the patterned metal layer is exposed from the embedded coil assembly.

9. The embedded coil assembly of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of conductive structures comprises at least two of metal pillars and a bond wire connecting the at least two of metal pillars.

10. An embedded coil assembly comprising:

a ferrite ring having an annular axis, said ferrite ring positioned on a conductive metal surface;

a first plurality of conductive structures and a second plurality of conductive structures, the first plurality of conductive structures attached to the conductive metal surface in a first region of the conductive surface positioned radially outwardly of the annular axis of the ferrite ring, the second plurality of conductive structures in a second region of the conductive surface positioned radially inwardly of the annular axis of the ferrite ring;

a plurality of patterned metal layers connecting the first plurality of conductive structures and a second plurality of conductive structures;

a first plurality of metal pillars and a second plurality of metal pillars both having exposed vertically extending surfaces, the second plurality of metal pillars connected to at least one of the plurality of conductive structures; and

an encapsulation layer covering the ferrite ring, at least a portion of the first and second plurality of conductive structures, and portions of the first and second plurality of metal pillars.

11. The embedded coil assembly of claim **10**, wherein portions of the conductive metal surface are exposed from the embedded coil assembly.

12. The embedded coil assembly of claim **10**, wherein at least a portion of vertical extending surfaces of the first plurality of conductive structures and the second plurality of conductive structures are exposed from the embedded coil assembly.

13. The embedded coil assembly of claim **10**, wherein the plurality of patterned metal layers includes a copper clad lamination layer.

14. The embedded coil assembly of claim **10**, wherein the plurality of patterned metal layers includes a pie shape on a surface of the embedded coil assembly.

15. The embedded coil assembly of claim **10**, wherein the first and second plurality of conductive structures comprises filled vias.

16. The embedded coil assembly of claim **10** further comprising a recess in between the second plurality of conductive structures.

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