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(12) **United States Patent**
Conrad

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 11,744,421 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** ***Sep. 5, 2023**

- (54) **SURFACE CLEANING APPARATUS**
- (71) Applicant: **OMACHRON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY INC., Hampton (CA)**
- (72) Inventor: **Wayne Ernest Conrad, Hampton (CA)**
- (73) Assignee: **Omachron Intellectual Property Inc., Hampton (CA)**
- (*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 311 days.
This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

- (52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **A47L 9/1658** (2013.01); **A47L 9/127** (2013.01); **A47L 9/165** (2013.01); **A47L 9/2842** (2013.01); **A47L 5/24** (2013.01)
- (58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC **B01D 46/002**; **B01D 45/12**; **B01D 50/002**; **B01D 2279/55**; **A47L 9/102**; **A47L 9/122**; **A47L 9/322**; **A47L 9/22**; **A47L 9/20**; **A47L 9/2884**; **A47L 5/24**; **A47L 9/10**
USPC **55/385.1**, **429**, **423**, **DIG. 3**; **15/347**, **352**, **15/353**, **300.1**
See application file for complete search history.

- (21) Appl. No.: **17/154,310**
- (22) Filed: **Jan. 21, 2021**
- (65) **Prior Publication Data**
US 2021/0137335 A1 May 13, 2021

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Related U.S. Application Data

- (63) Continuation of application No. 16/419,993, filed on May 22, 2019, now Pat. No. 10,932,634, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 15/993,189, filed on May 30, 2018, now Pat. No. 10,827,889.

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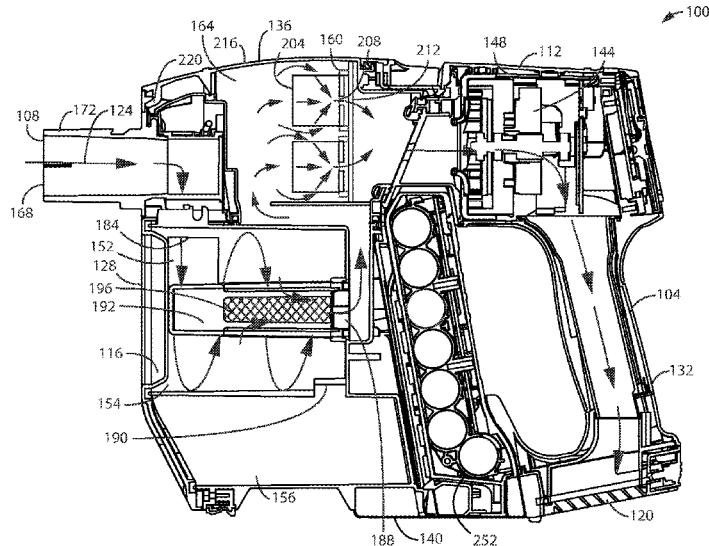
- (51) **Int. Cl.**
B01D 45/16 (2006.01)
A47L 9/10 (2006.01)
A47L 9/12 (2006.01)
A47L 9/16 (2006.01)
A47L 9/20 (2006.01)
A47L 9/22 (2006.01)
A47L 9/24 (2006.01)
A47L 9/28 (2006.01)
A47L 9/32 (2006.01)
A47L 5/24 (2006.01)

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- (57) **ABSTRACT**
A surface cleaning apparatus includes first and second pre-motor filters that are in parallel.

18 Claims, 50 Drawing Sheets



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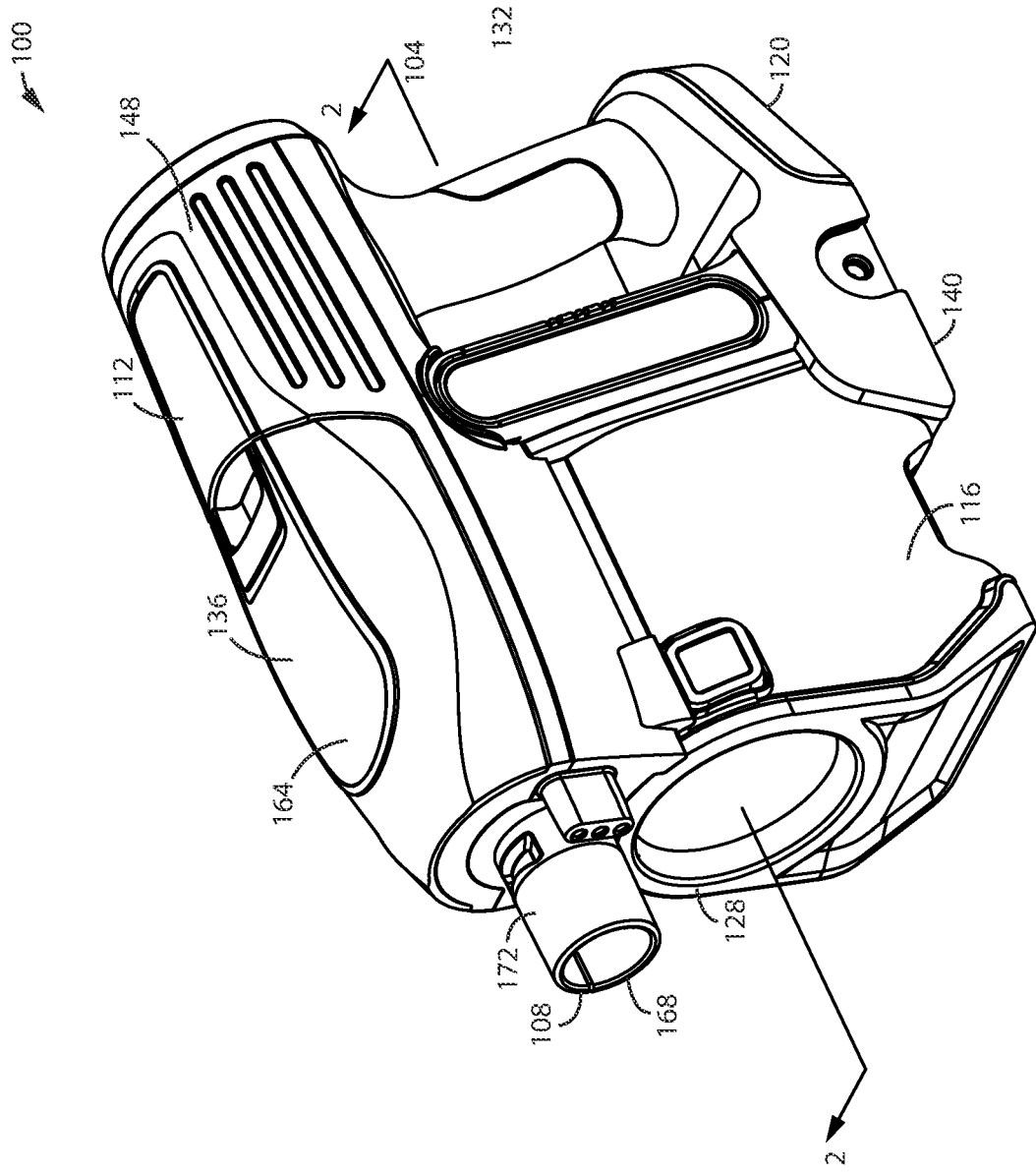


FIG. 1

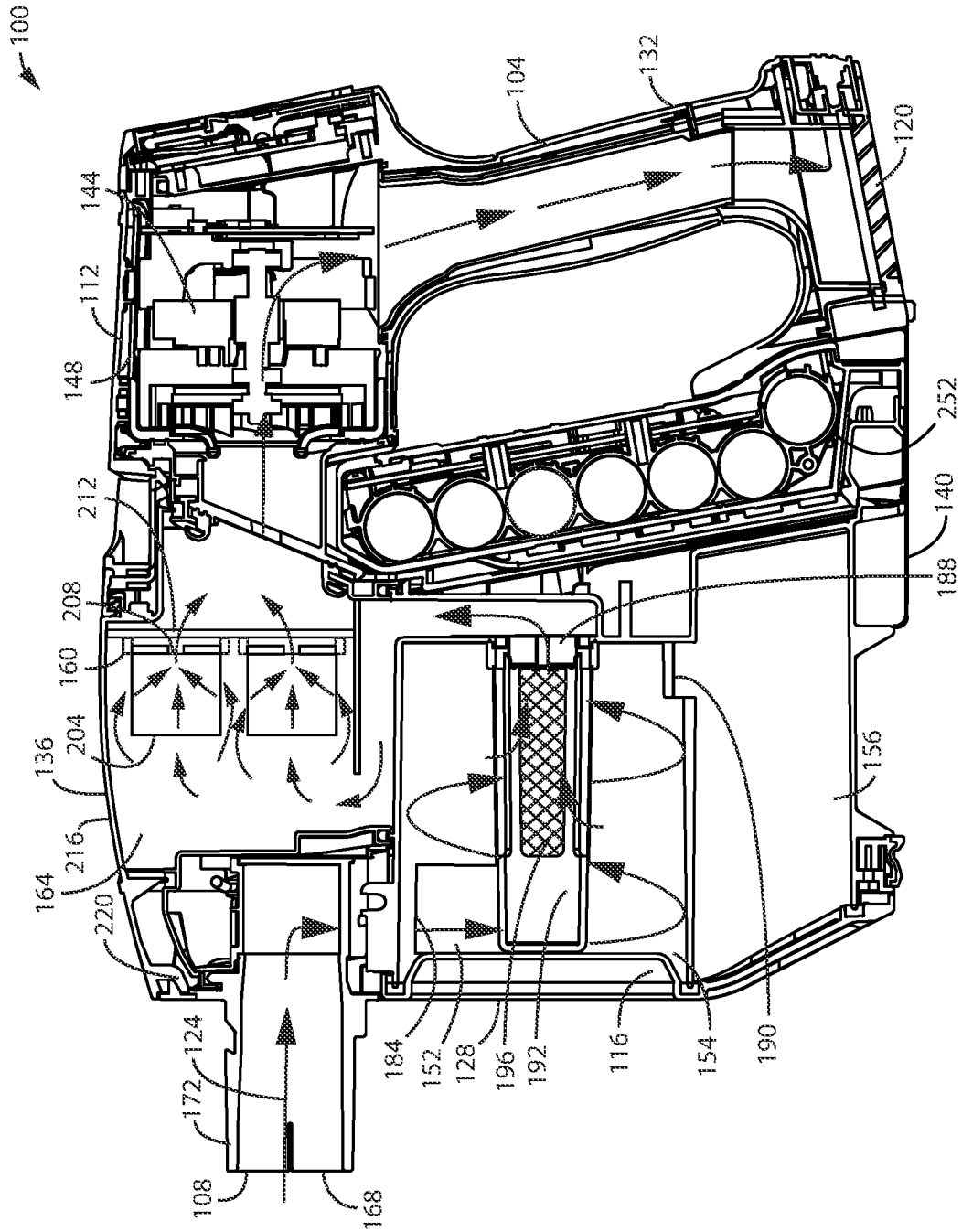


FIG. 2

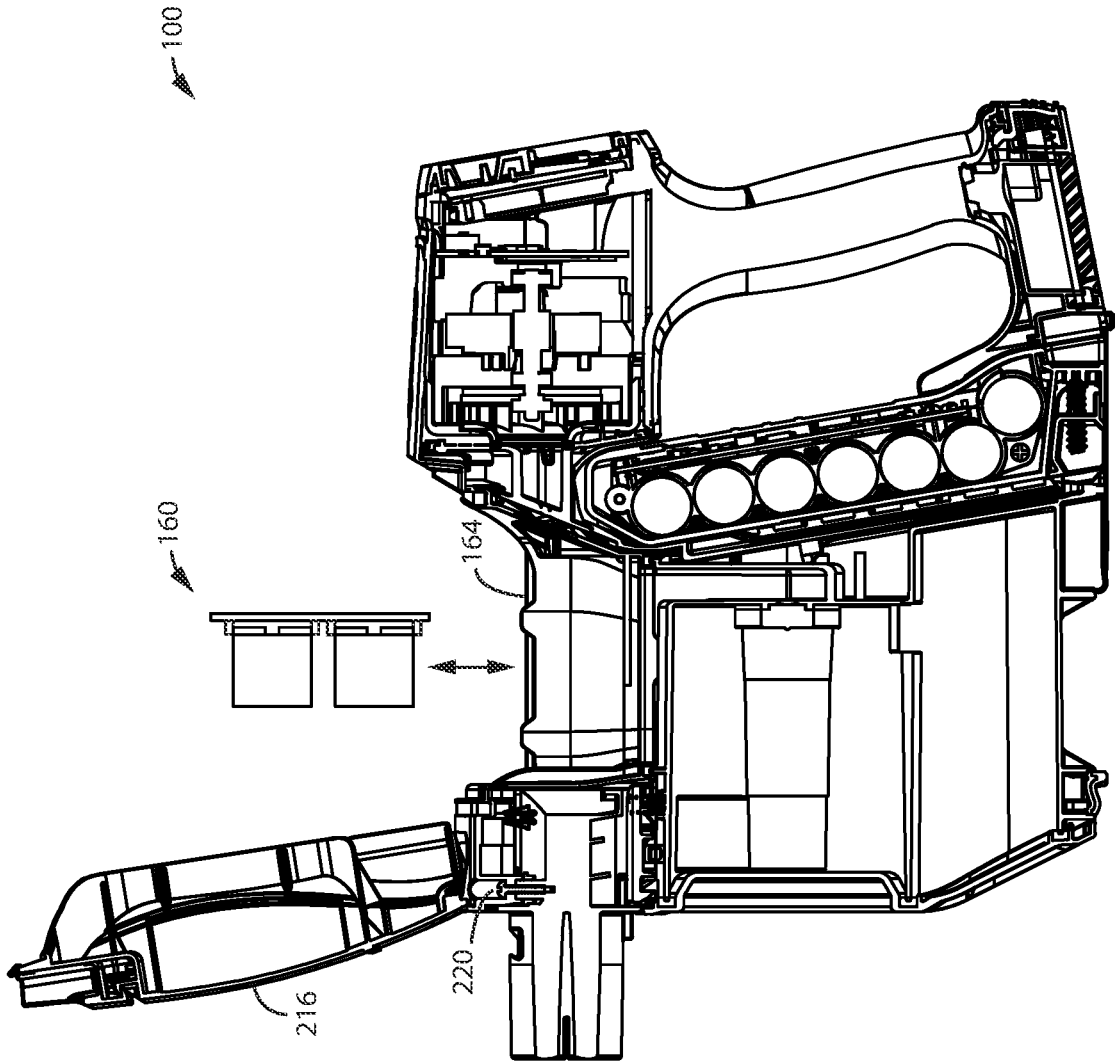


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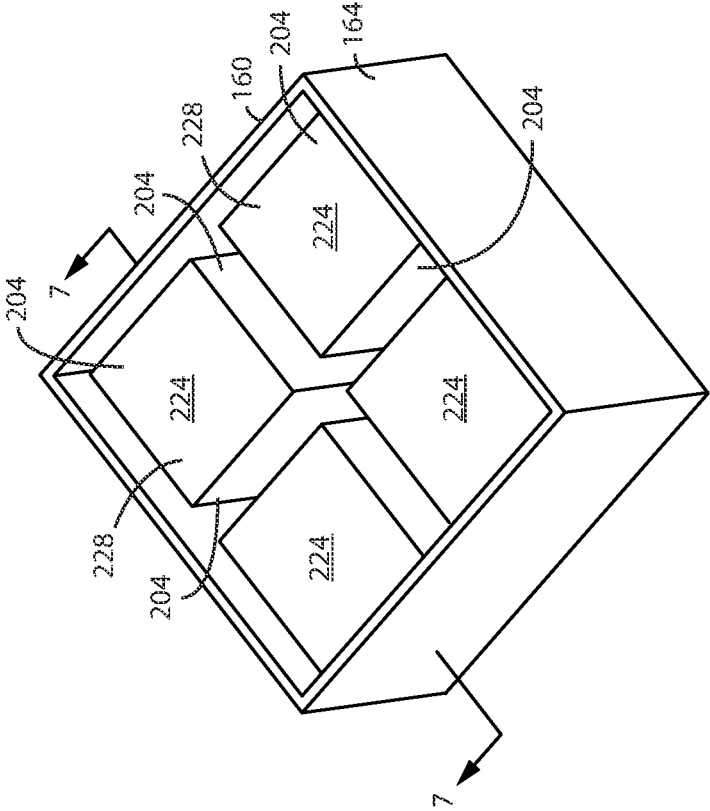


FIG. 4

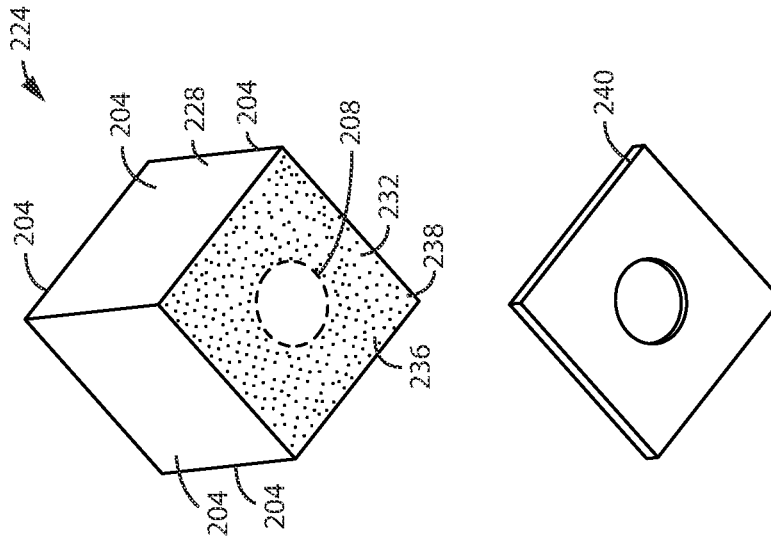


FIG. 5A

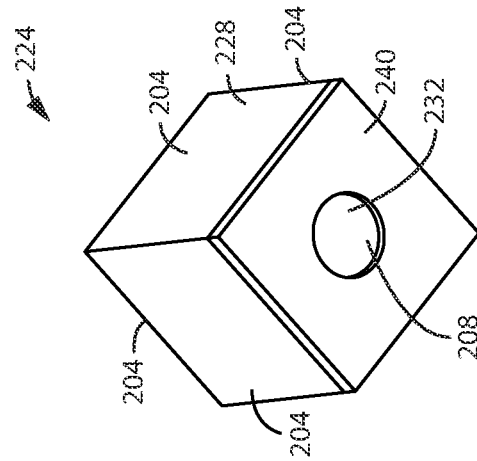


FIG. 5B

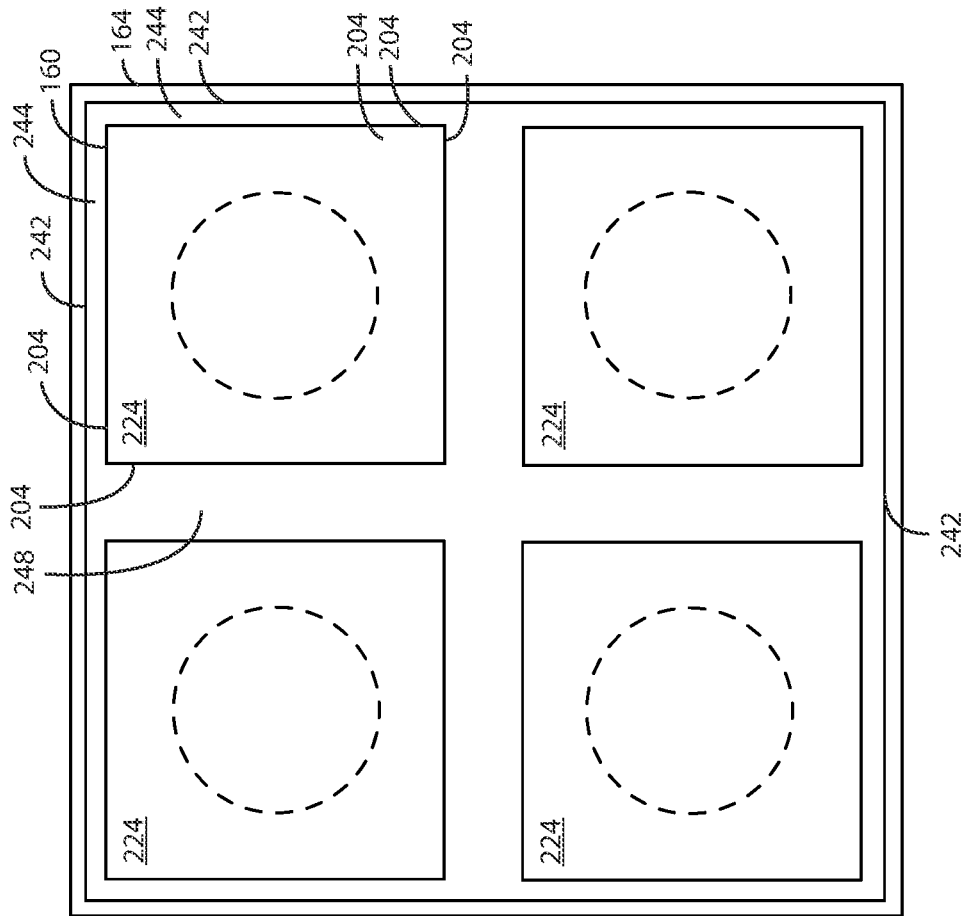


FIG. 6

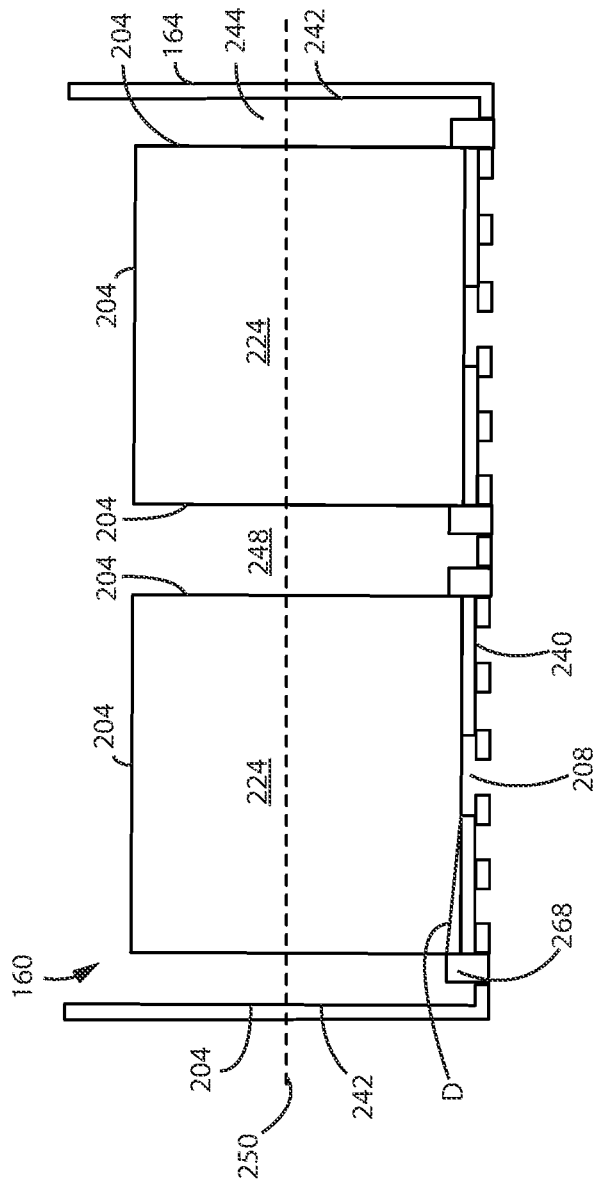


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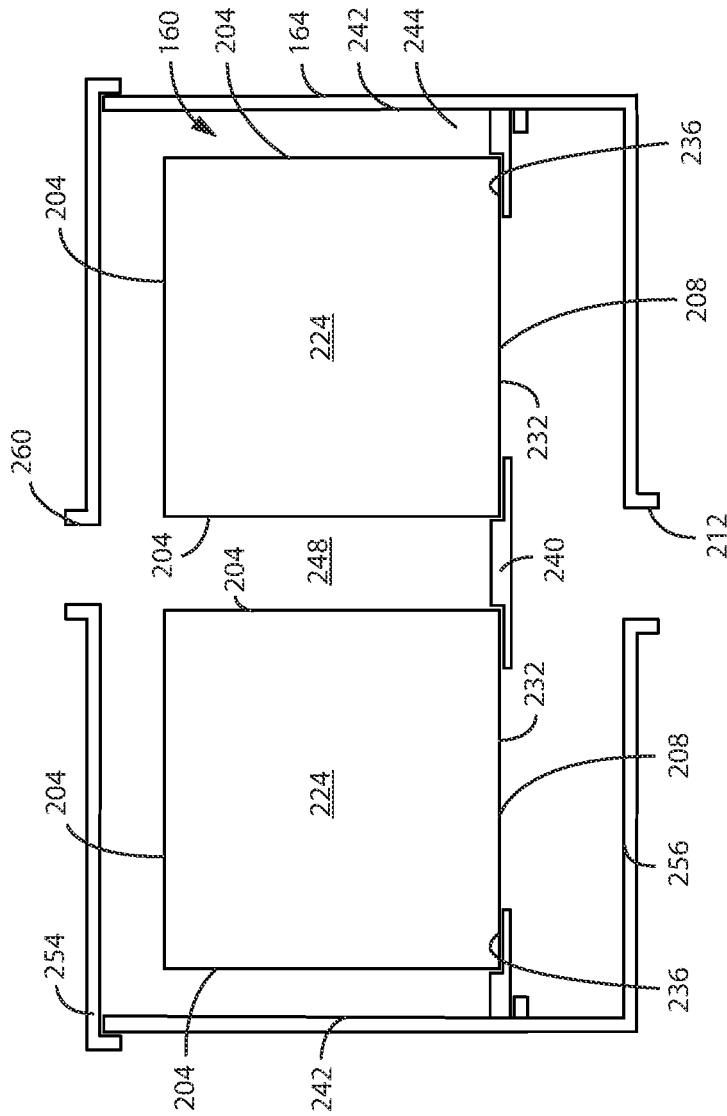


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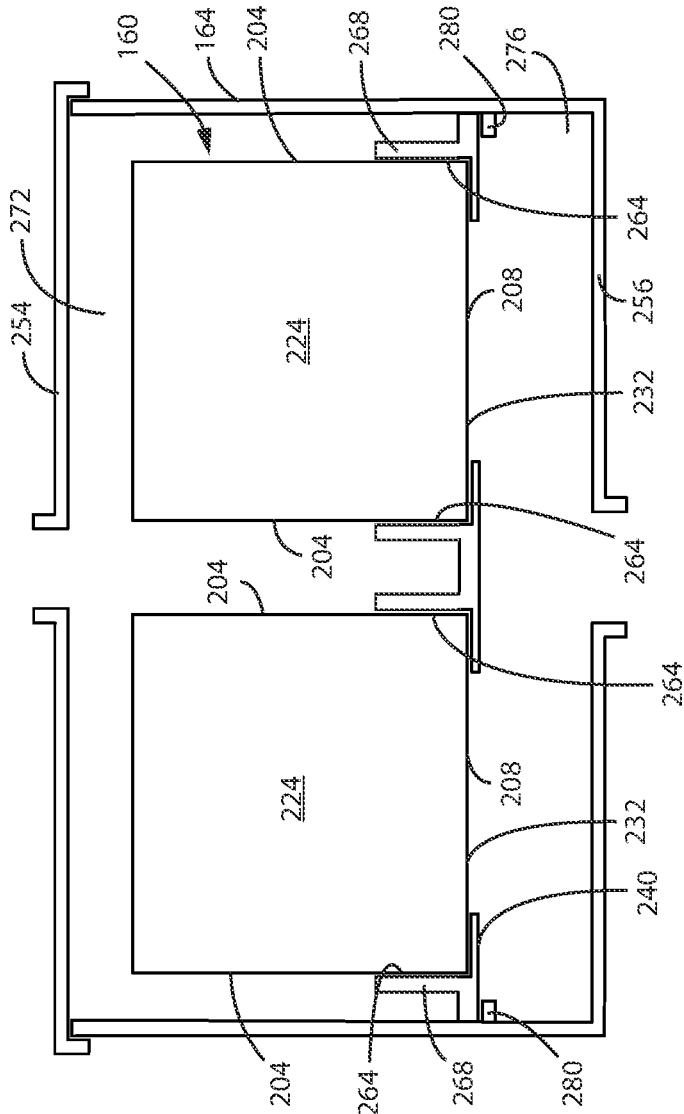


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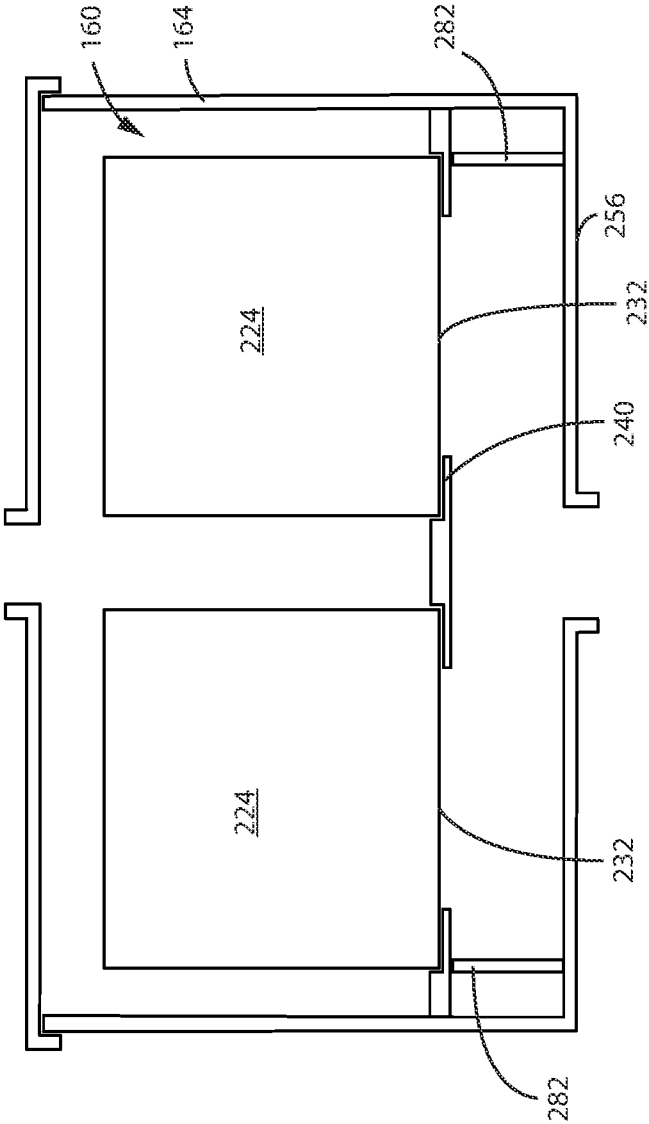


FIG. 10

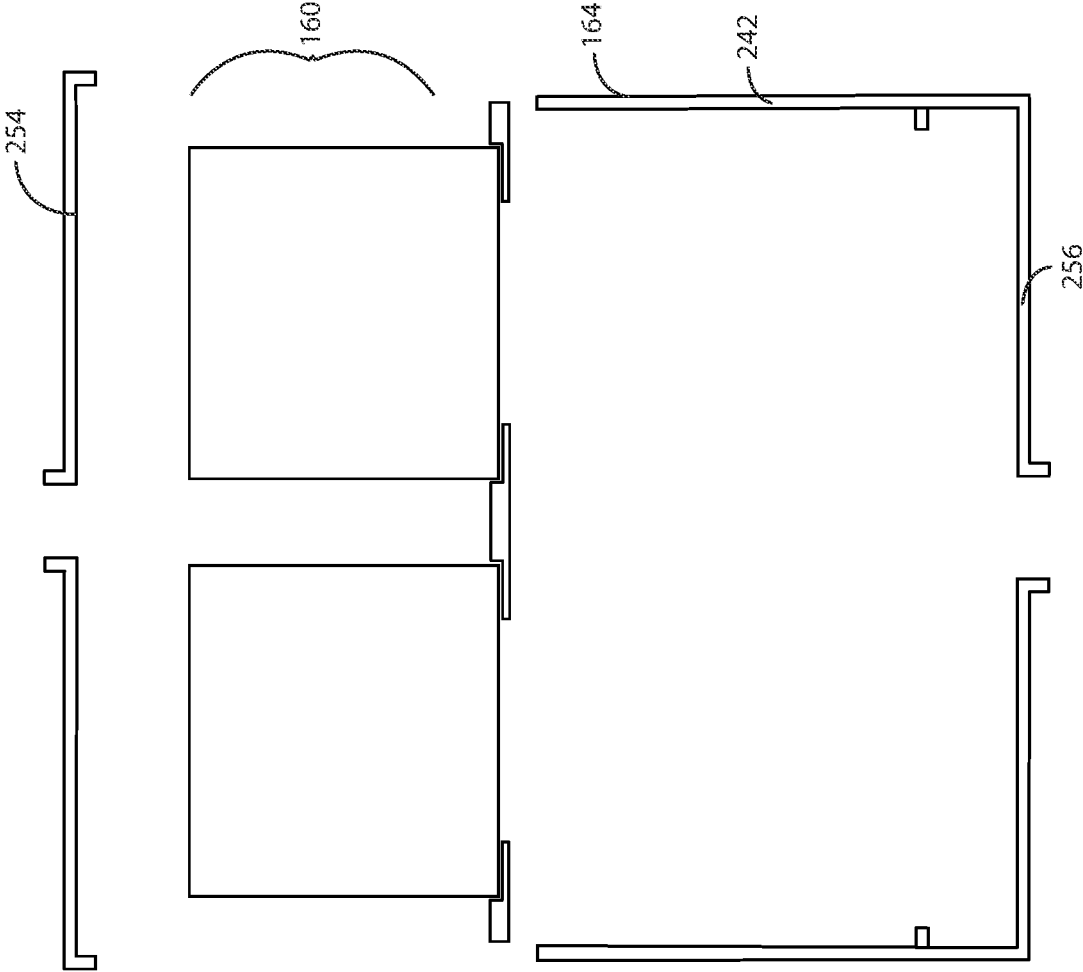


FIG. 11

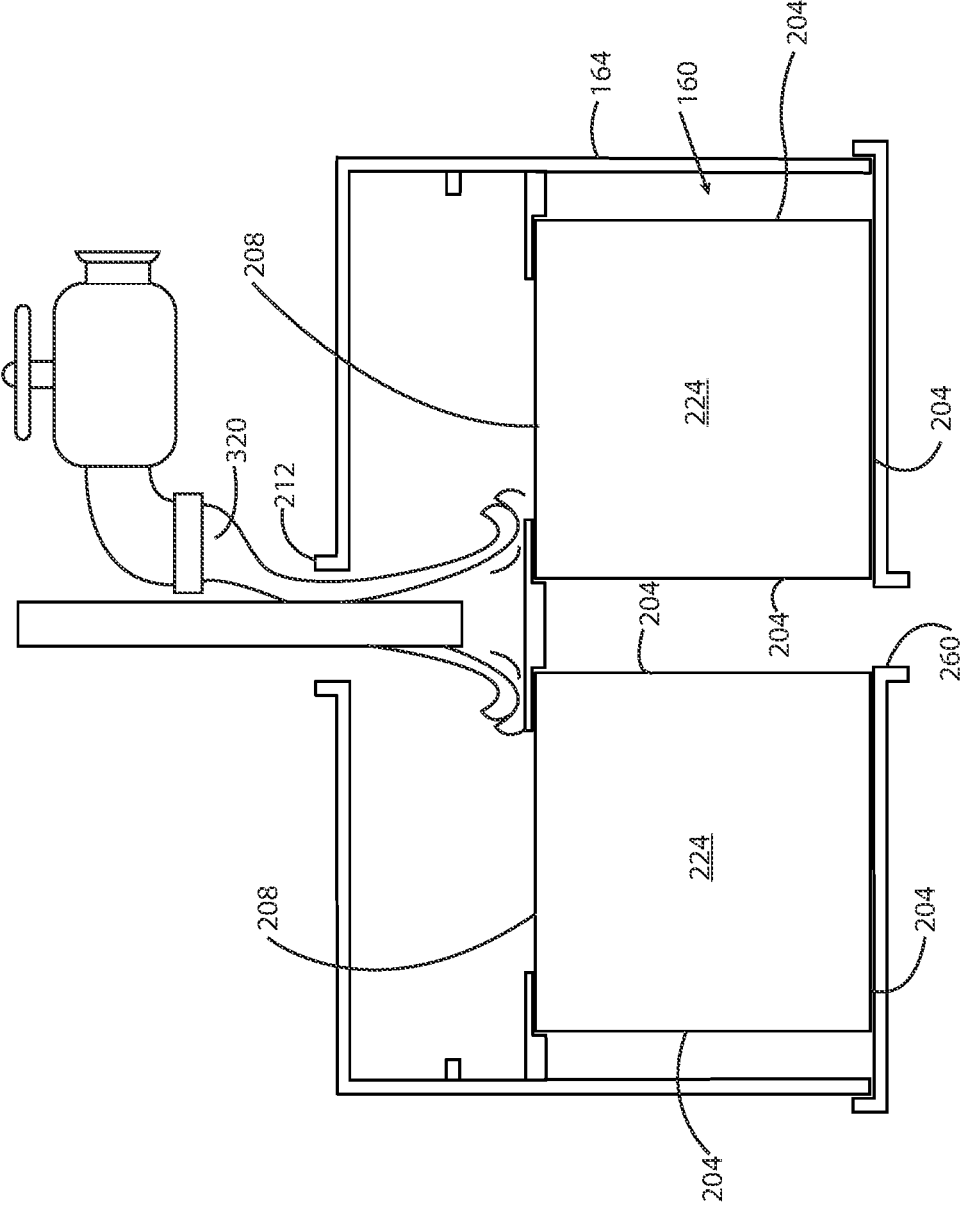


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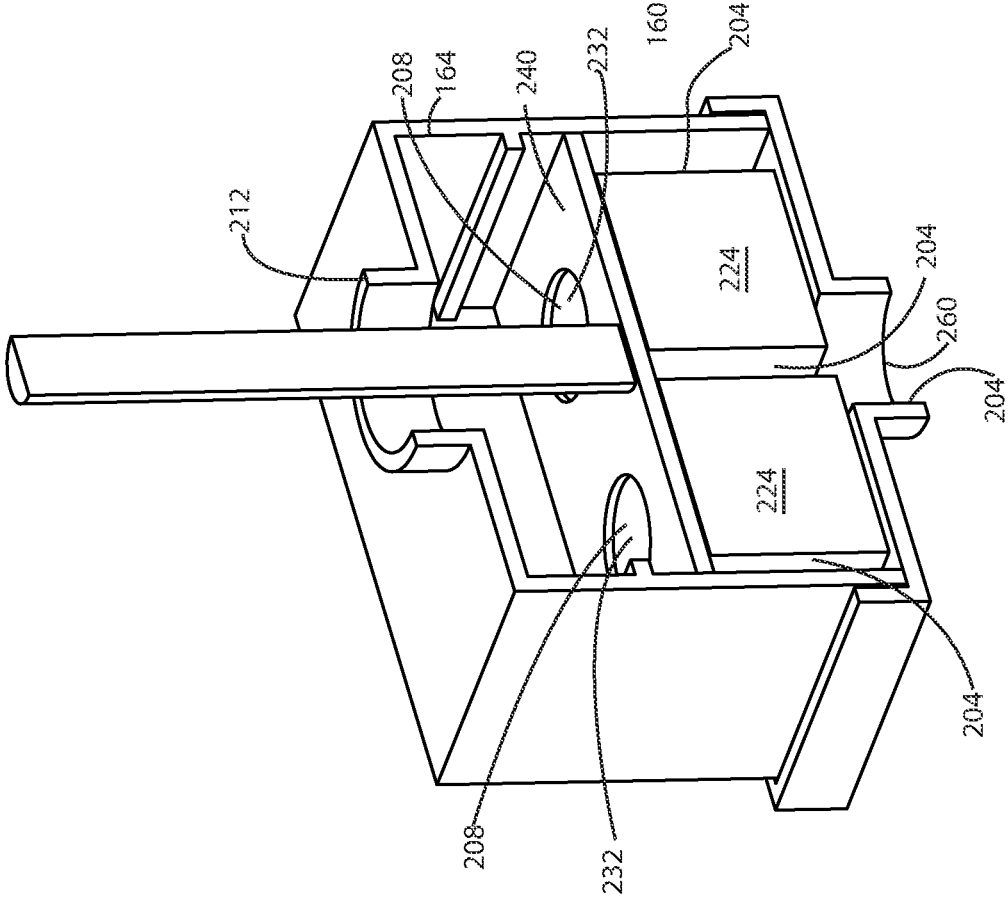


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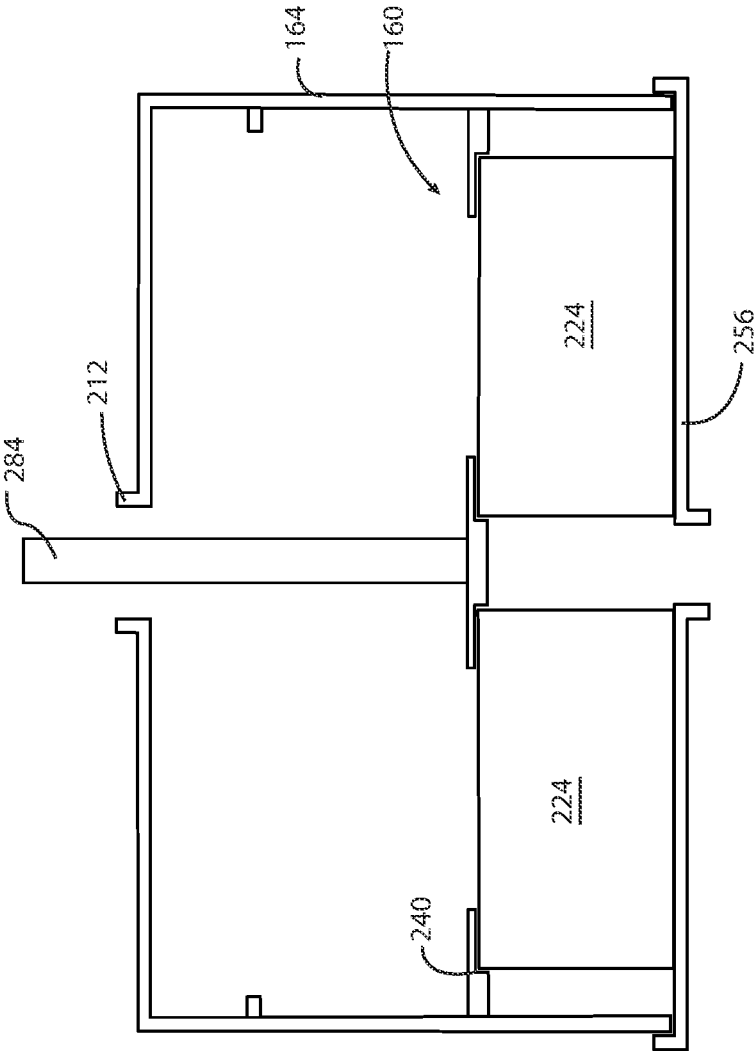


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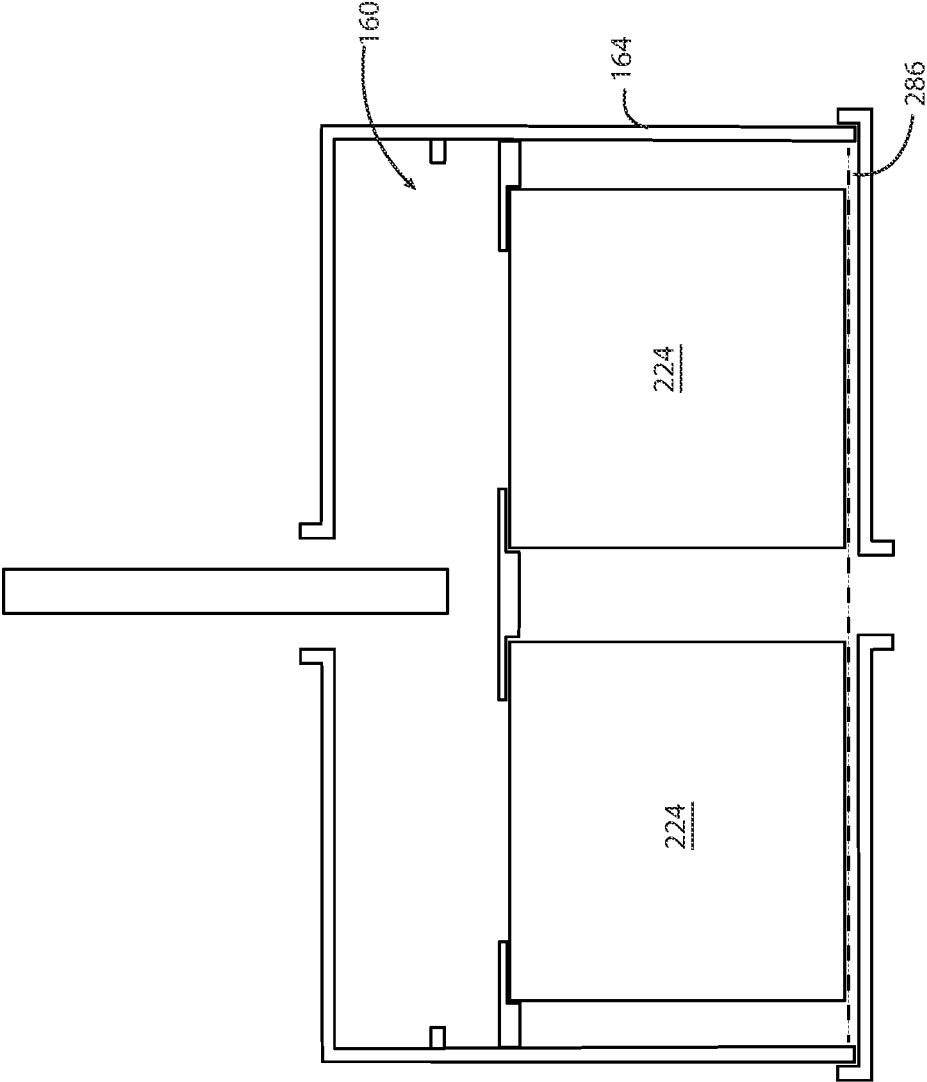


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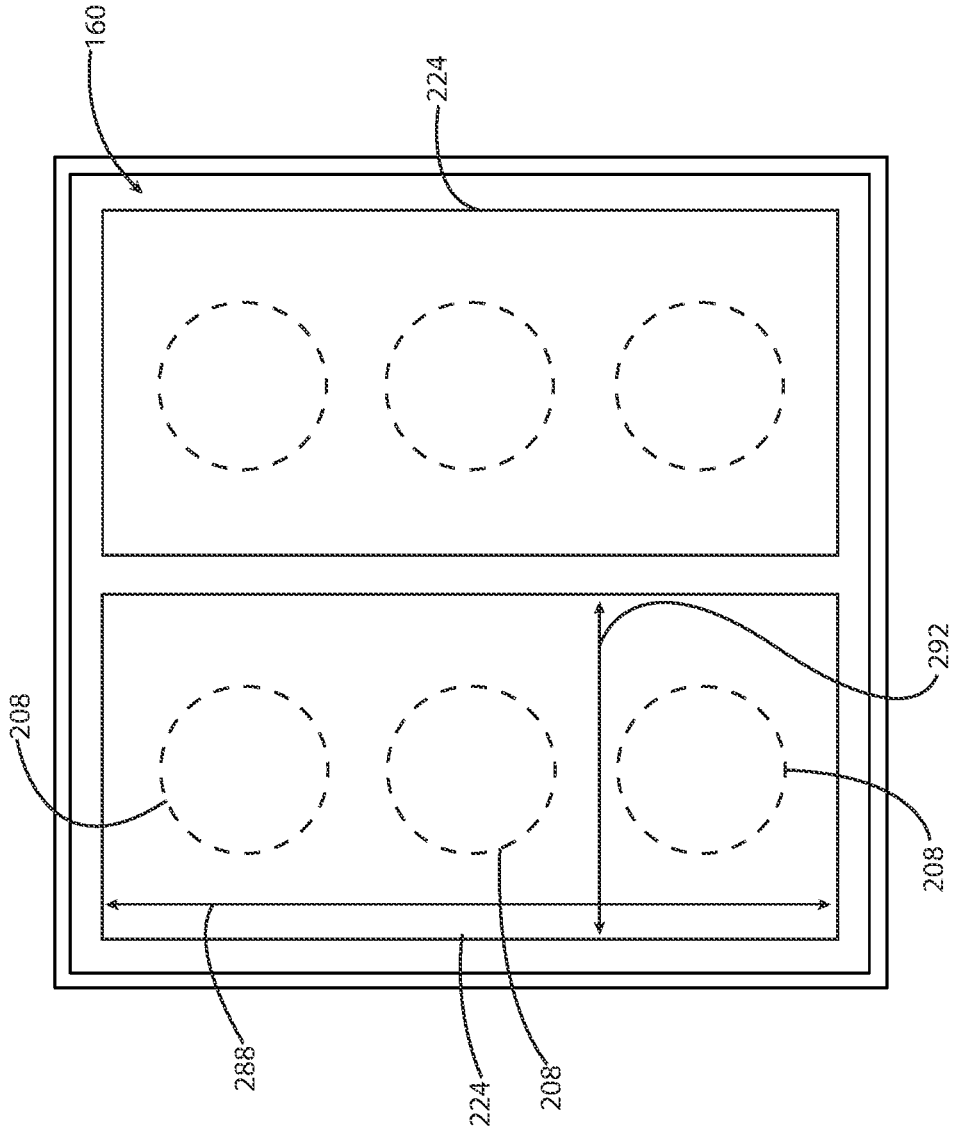


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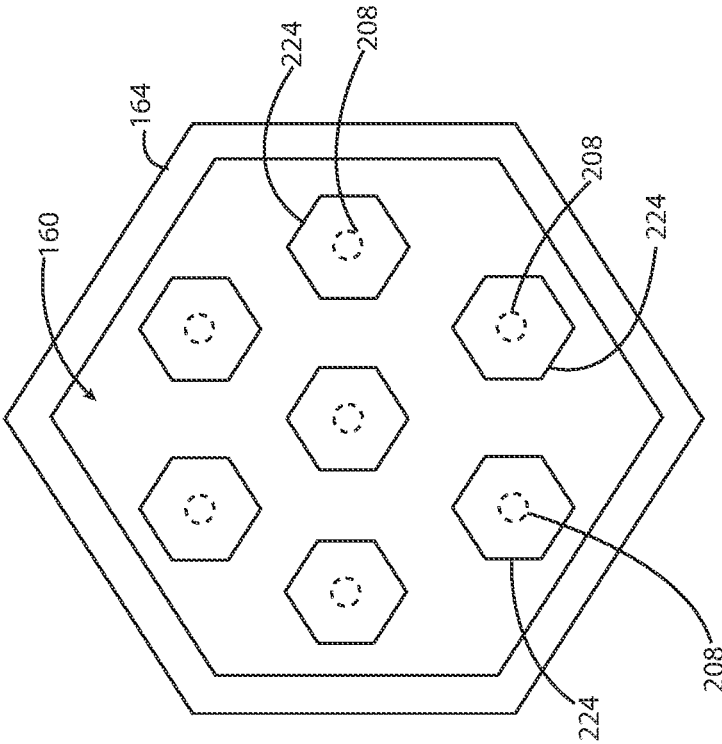


FIG. 17

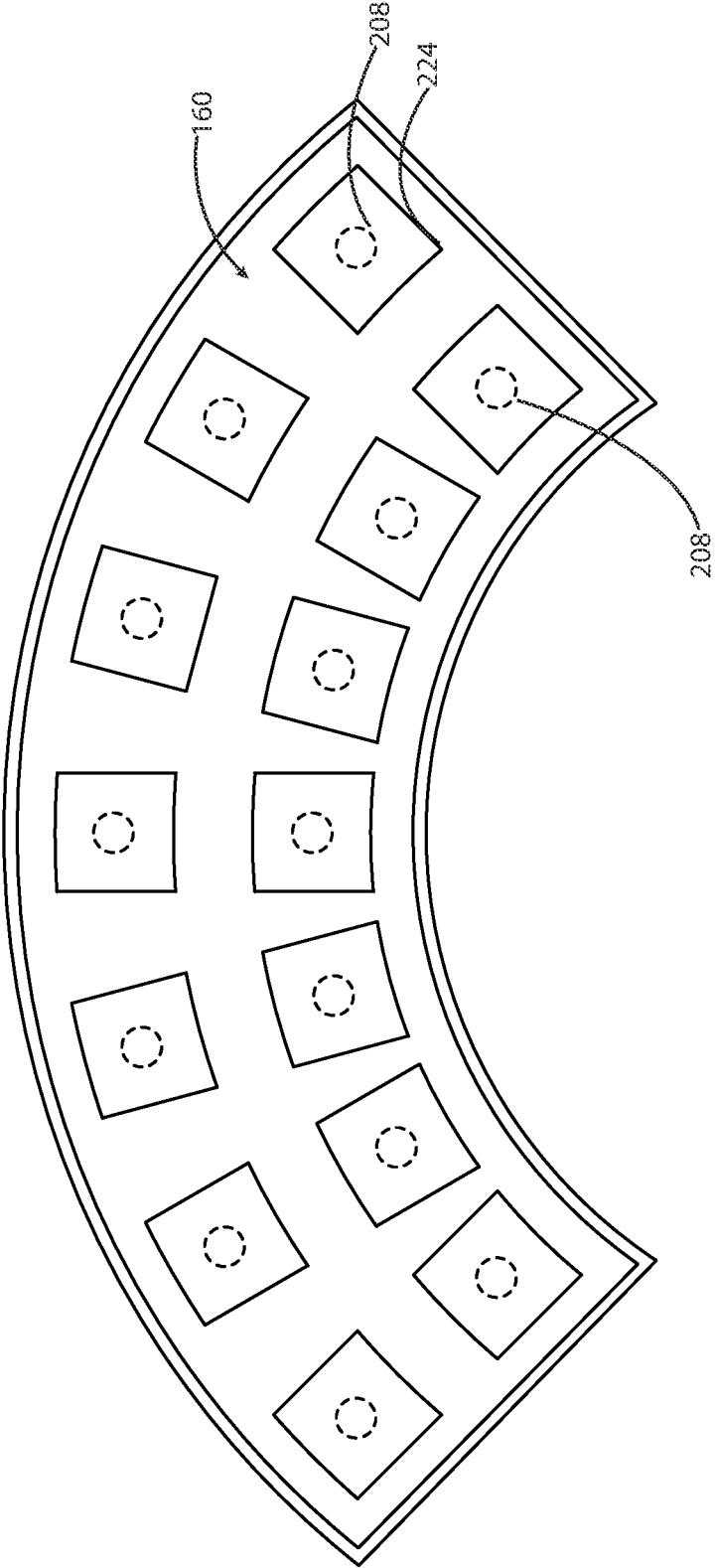


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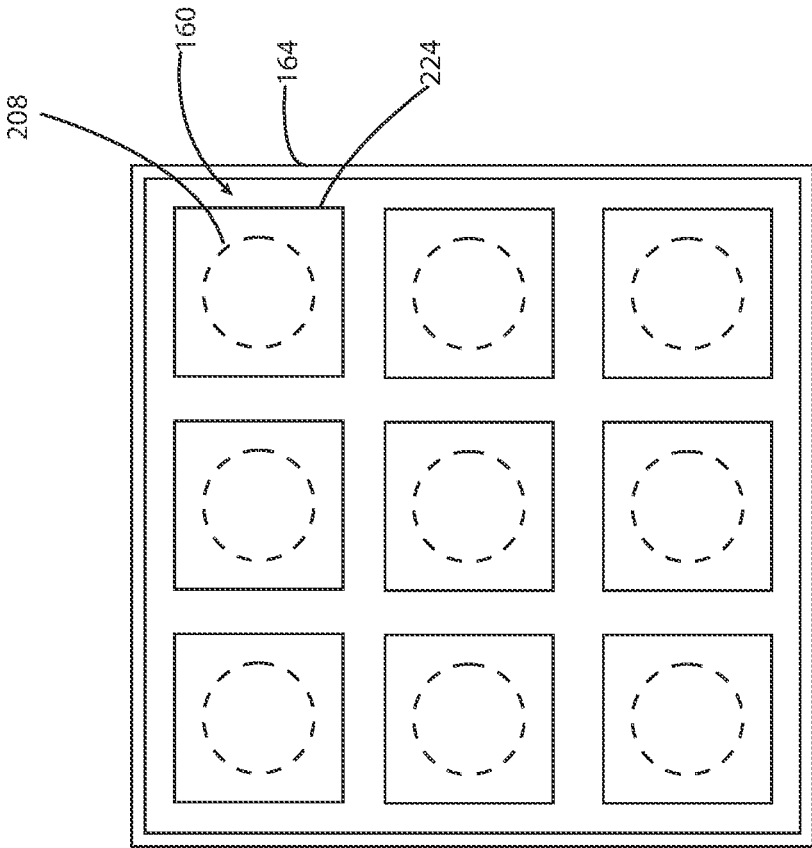


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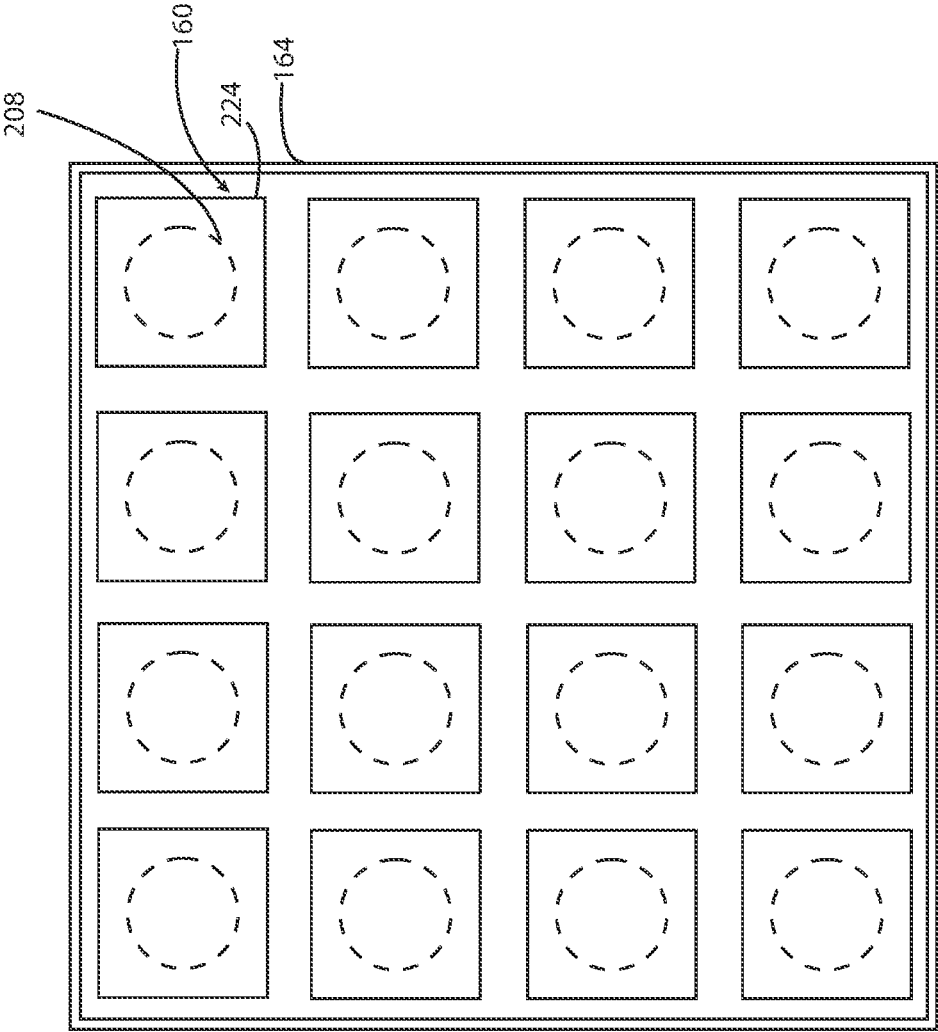


FIG. 20

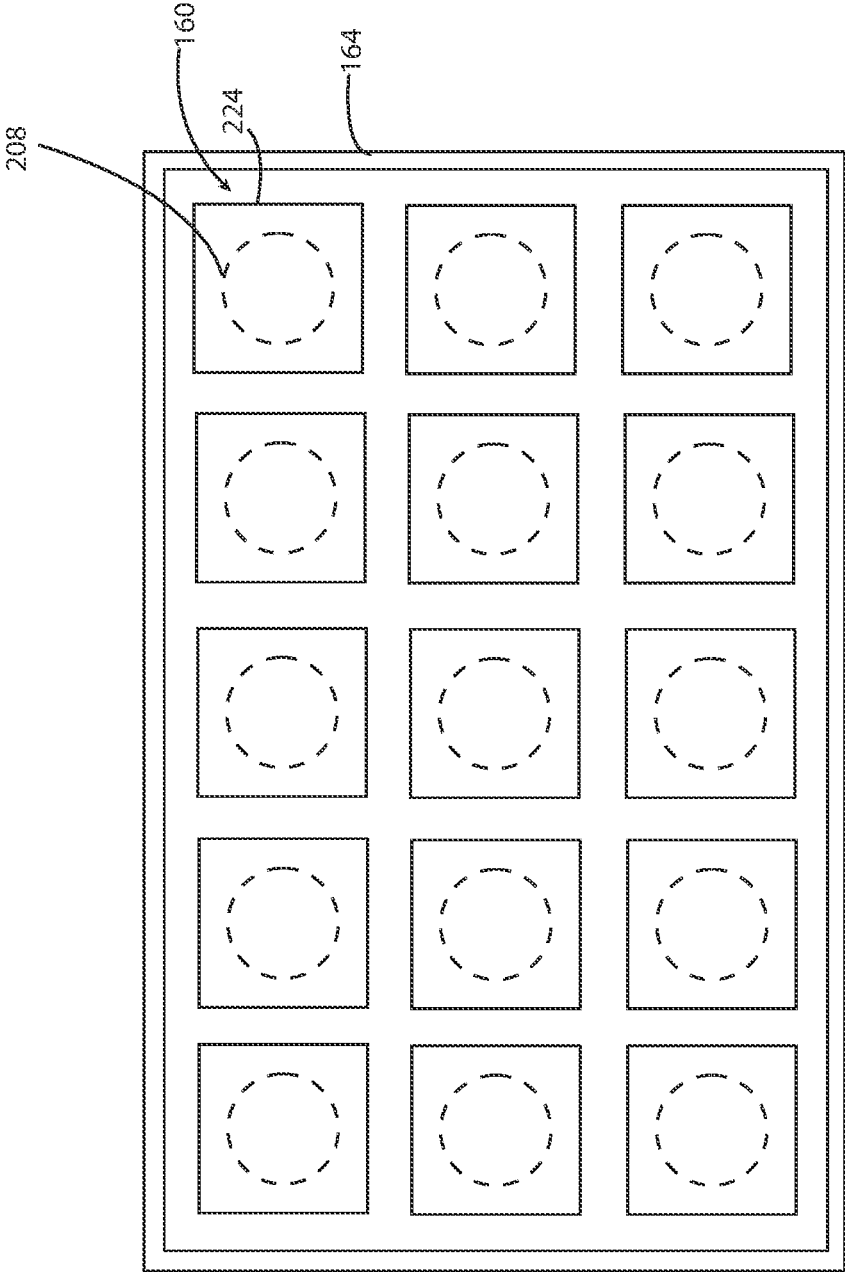


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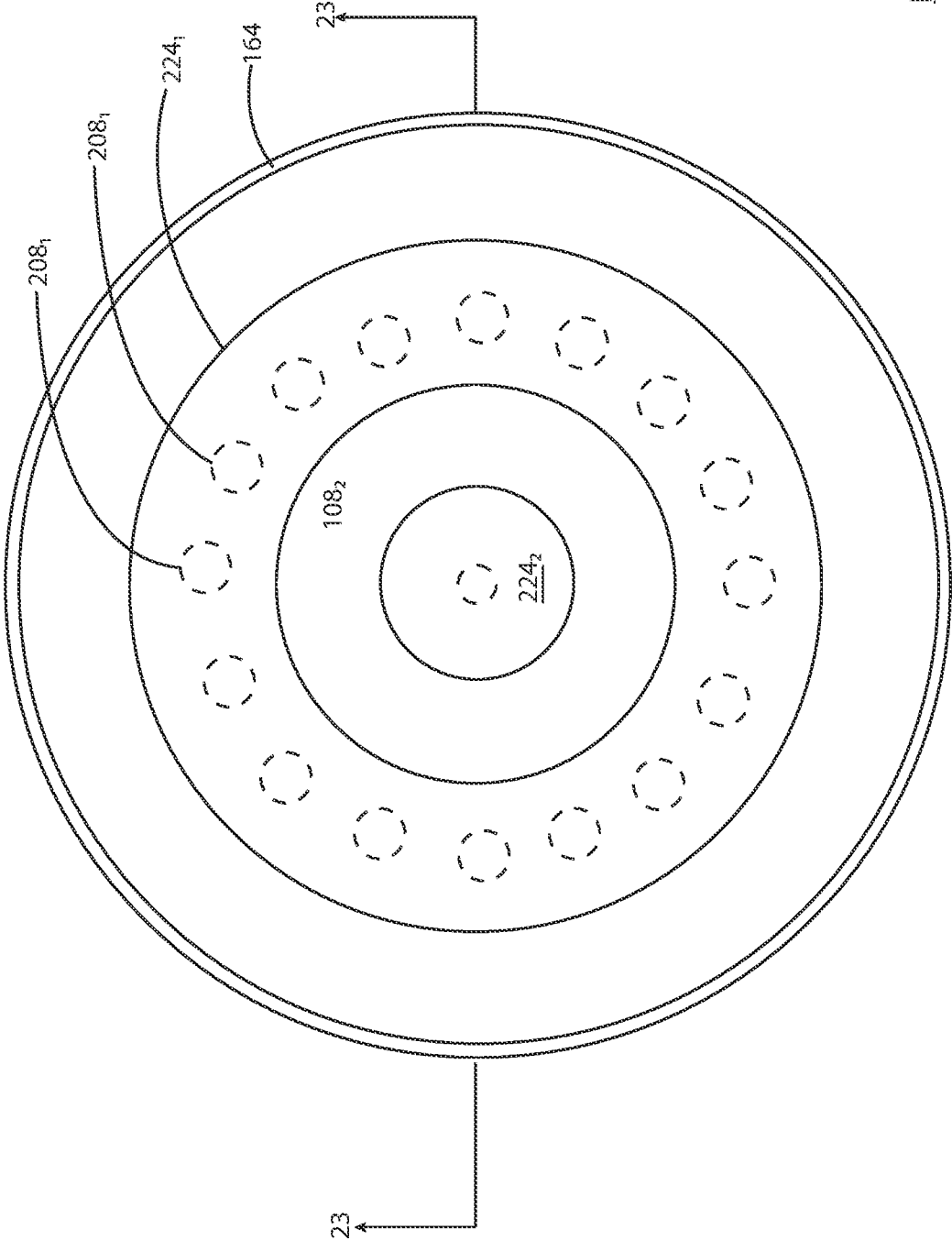


FIG. 22

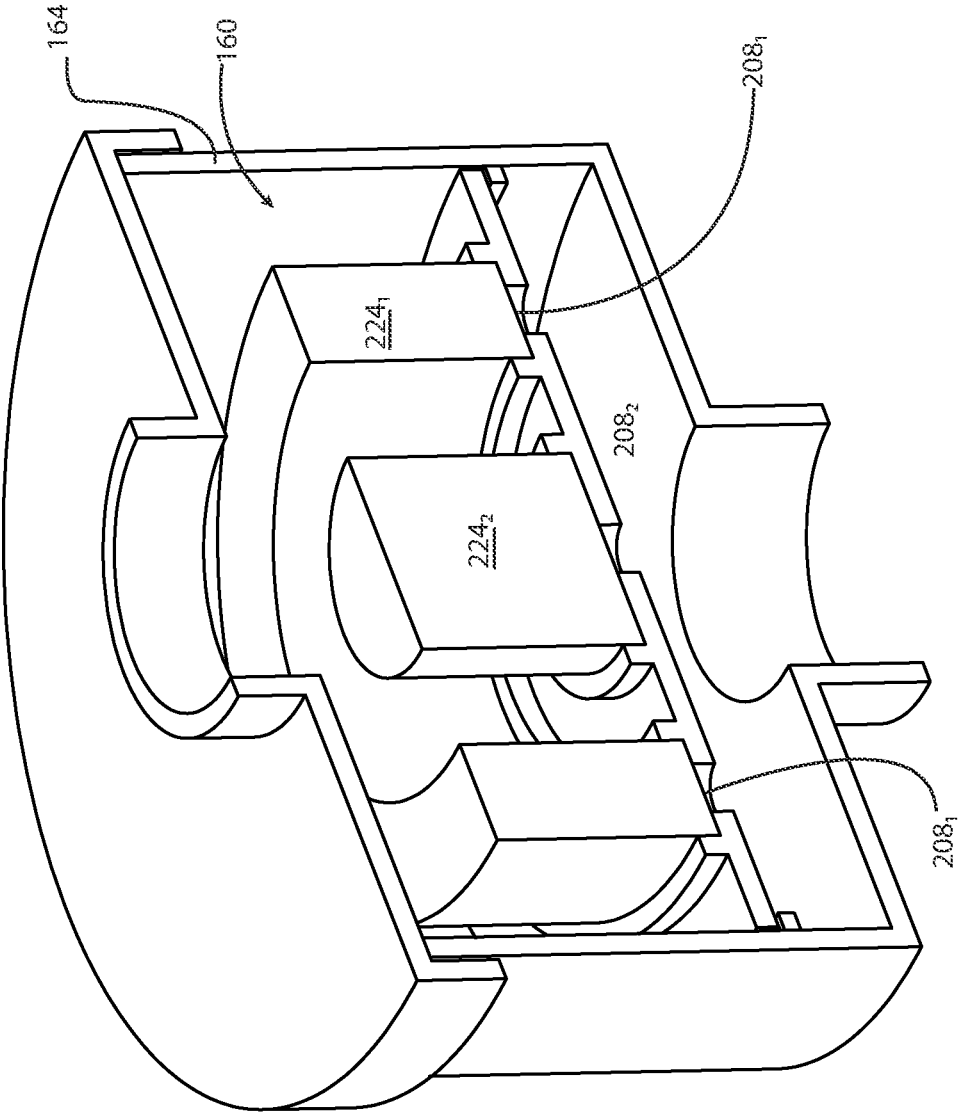


FIG. 23

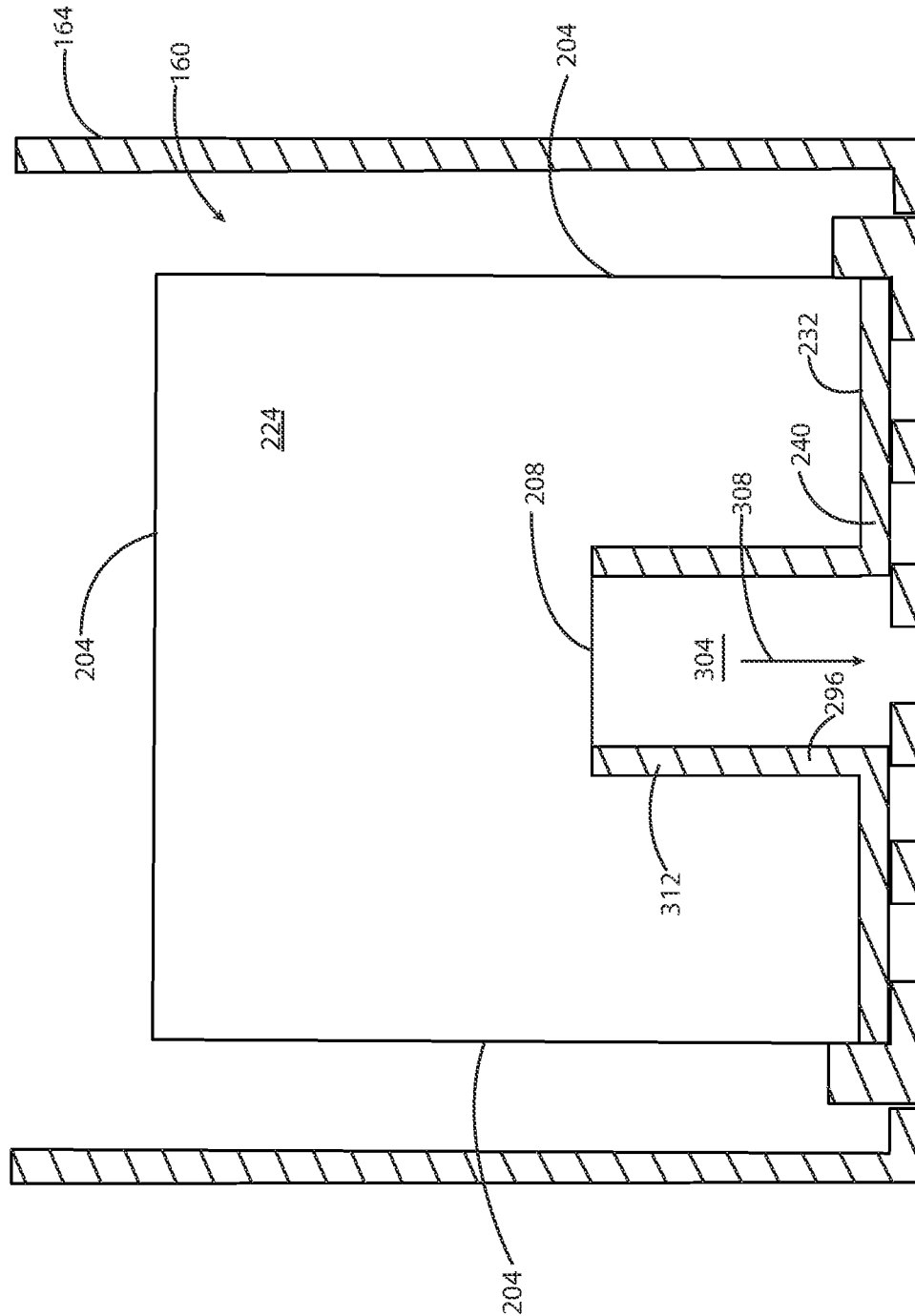


FIG. 24

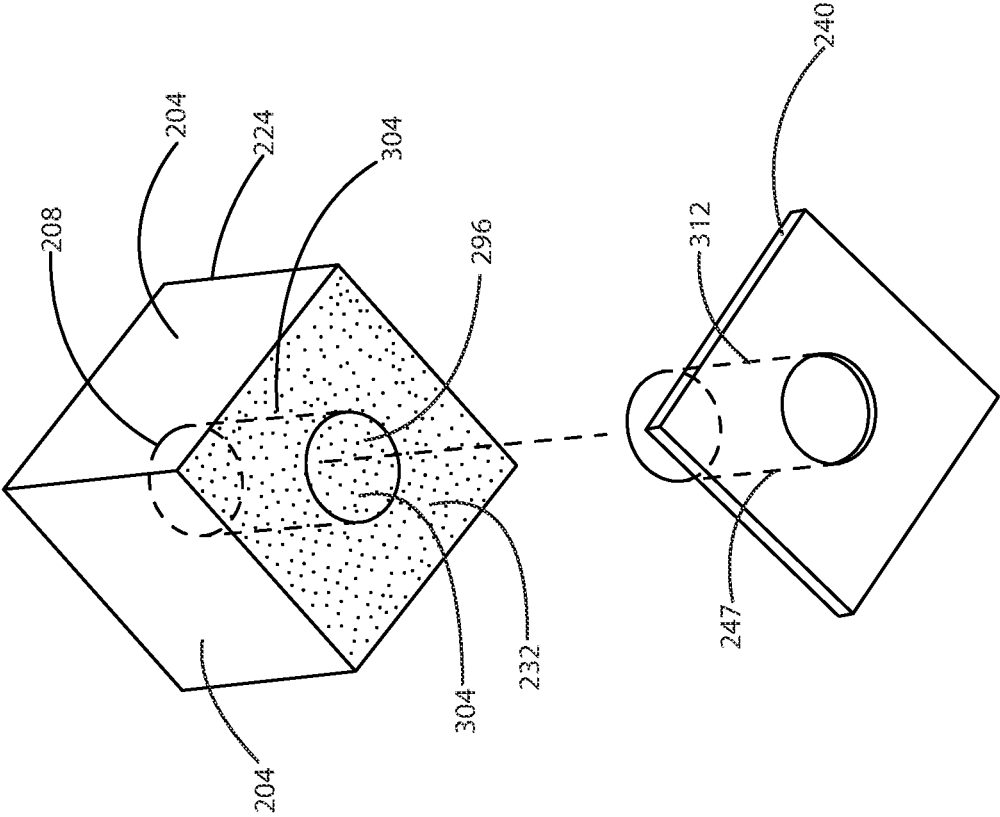


FIG. 25

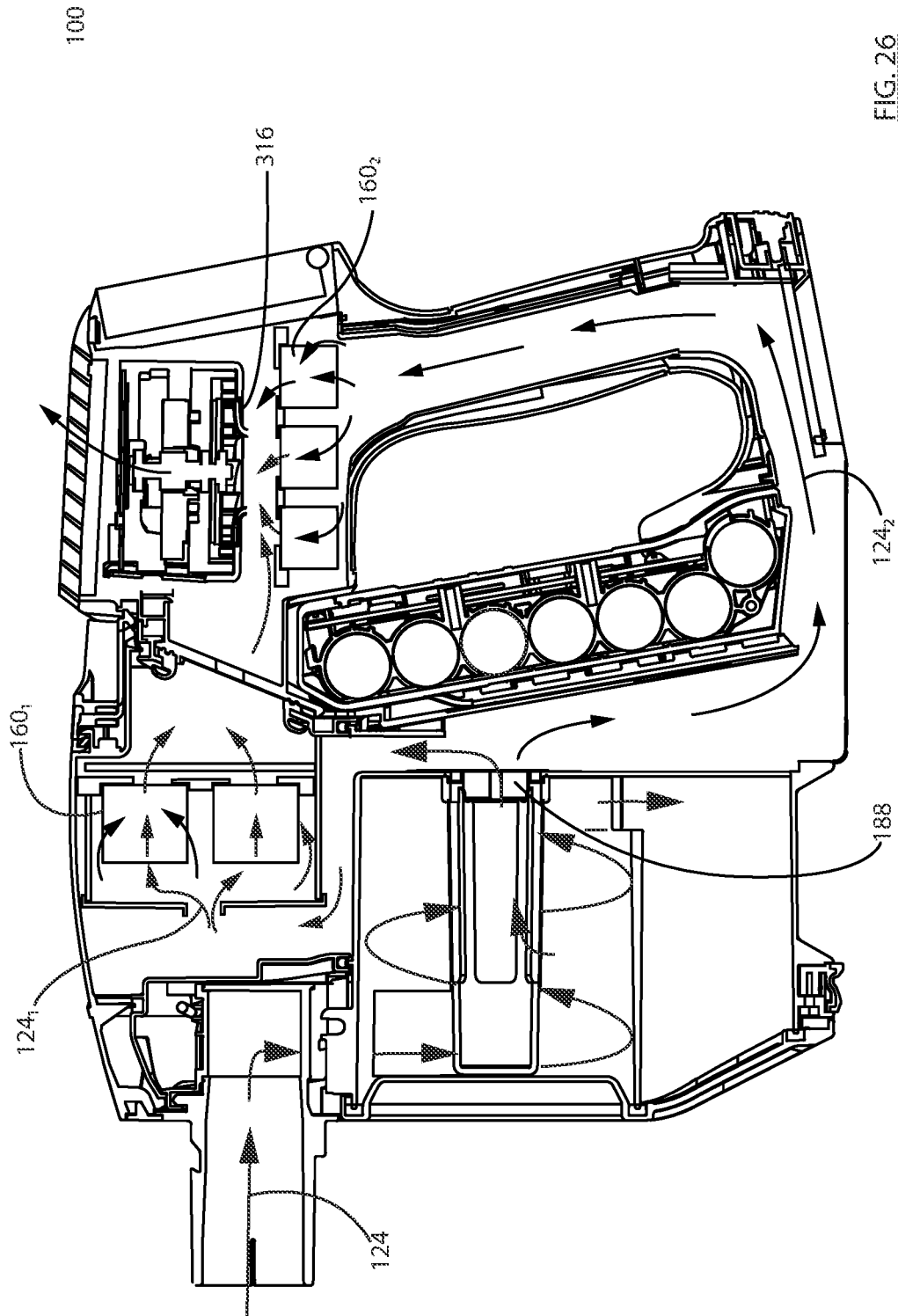


FIG. 26

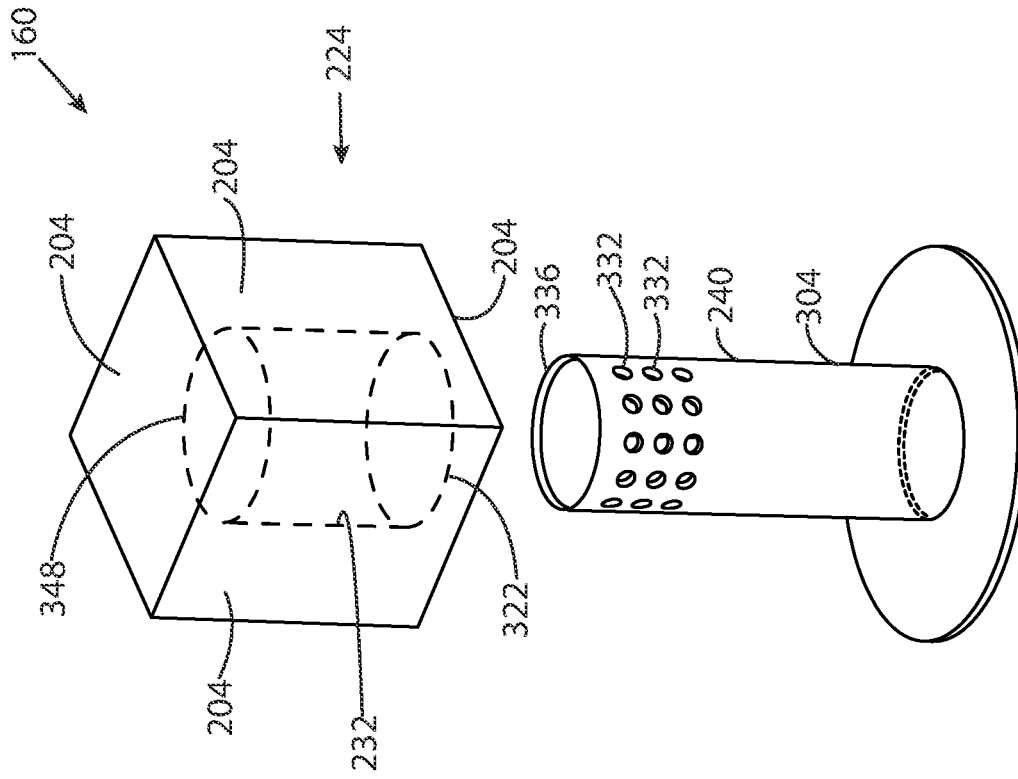


FIG. 27

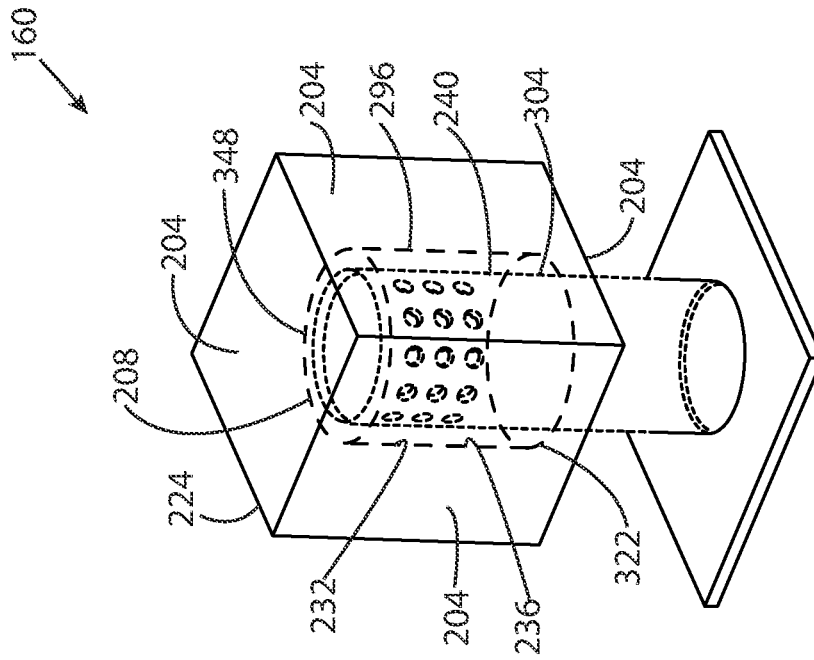


FIG. 28

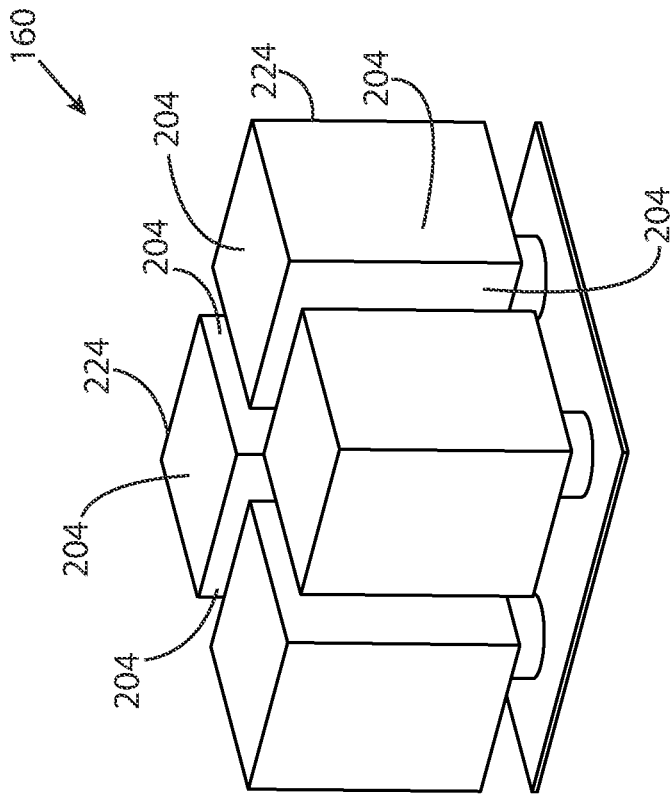
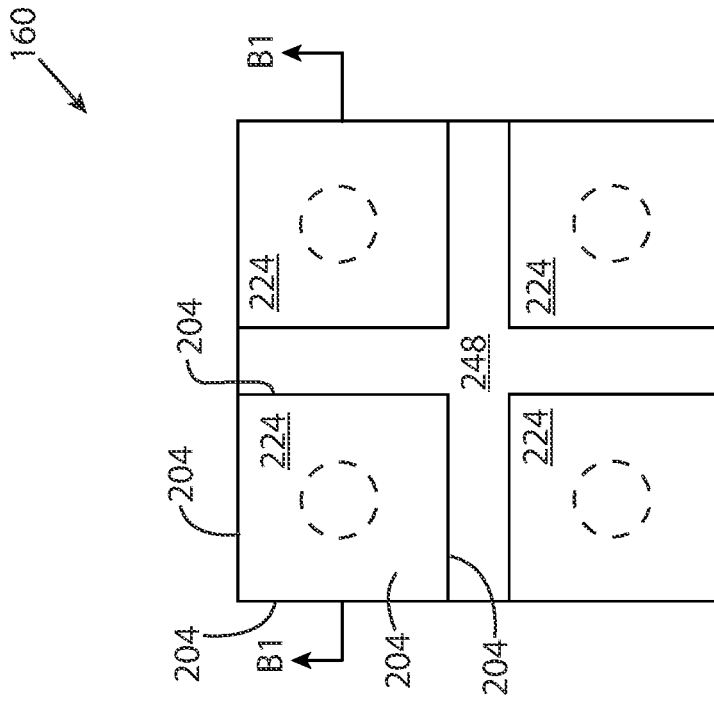


FIG. 29

FIG. 30

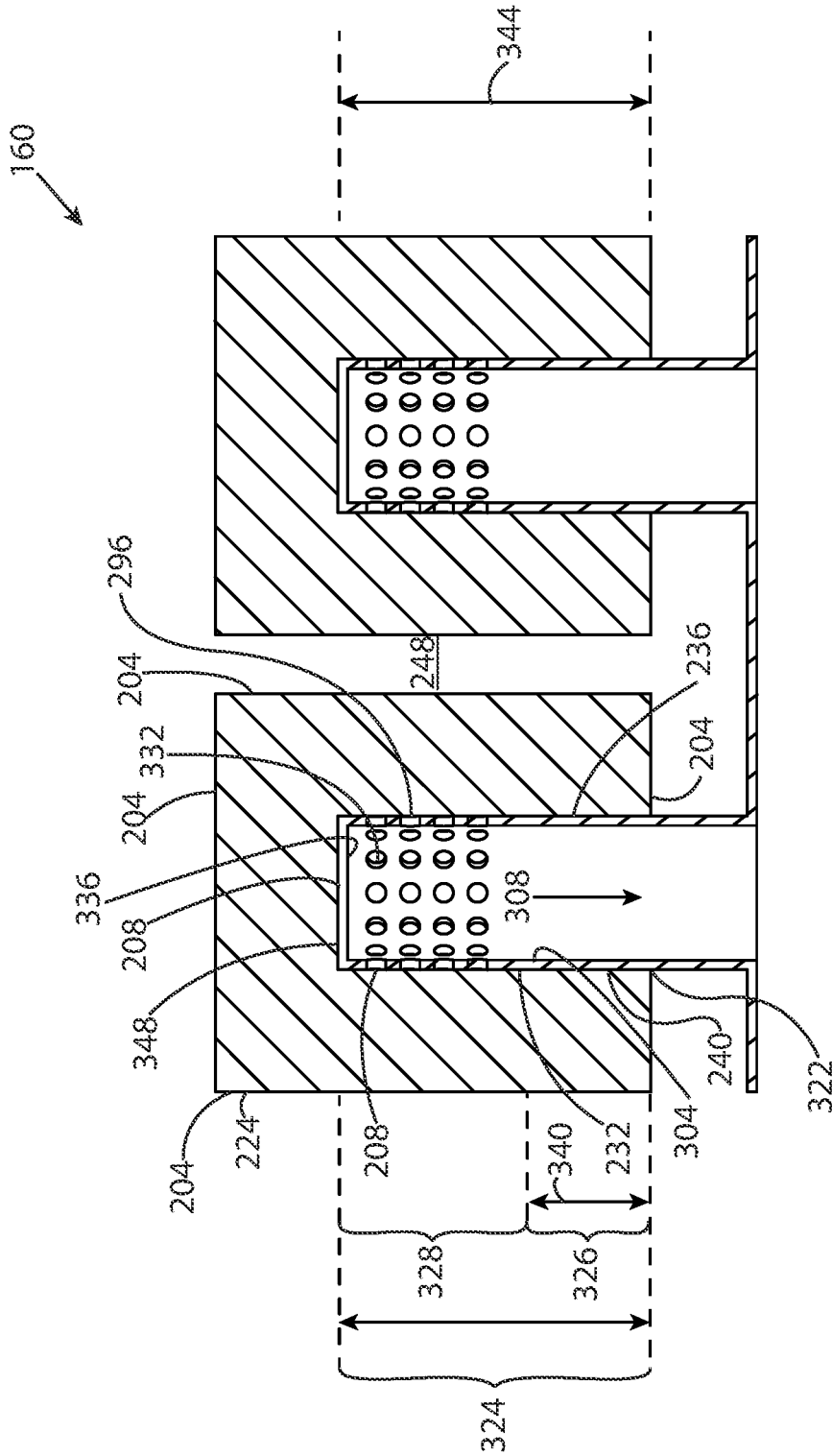


FIG. 31

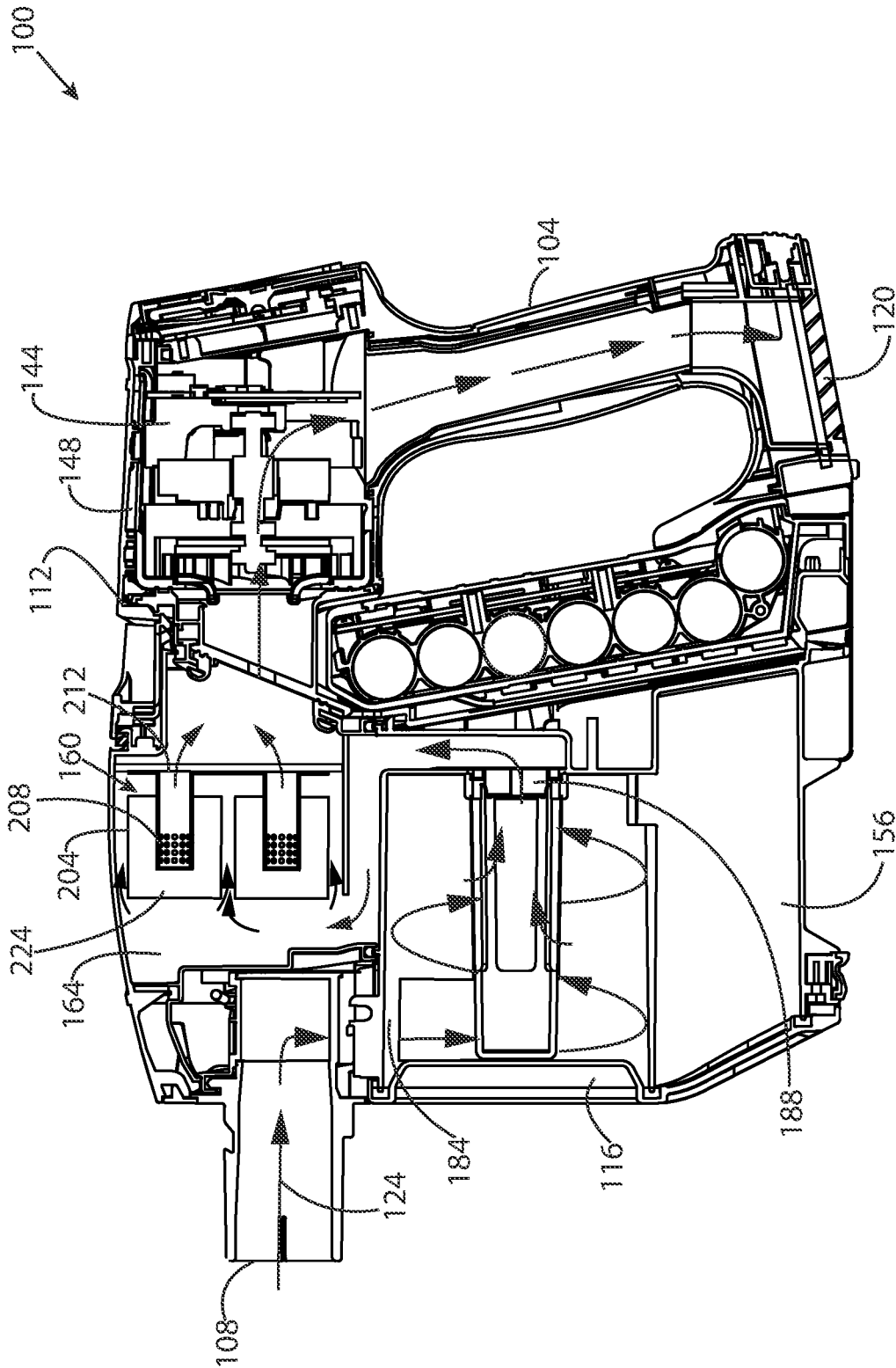


FIG. 32

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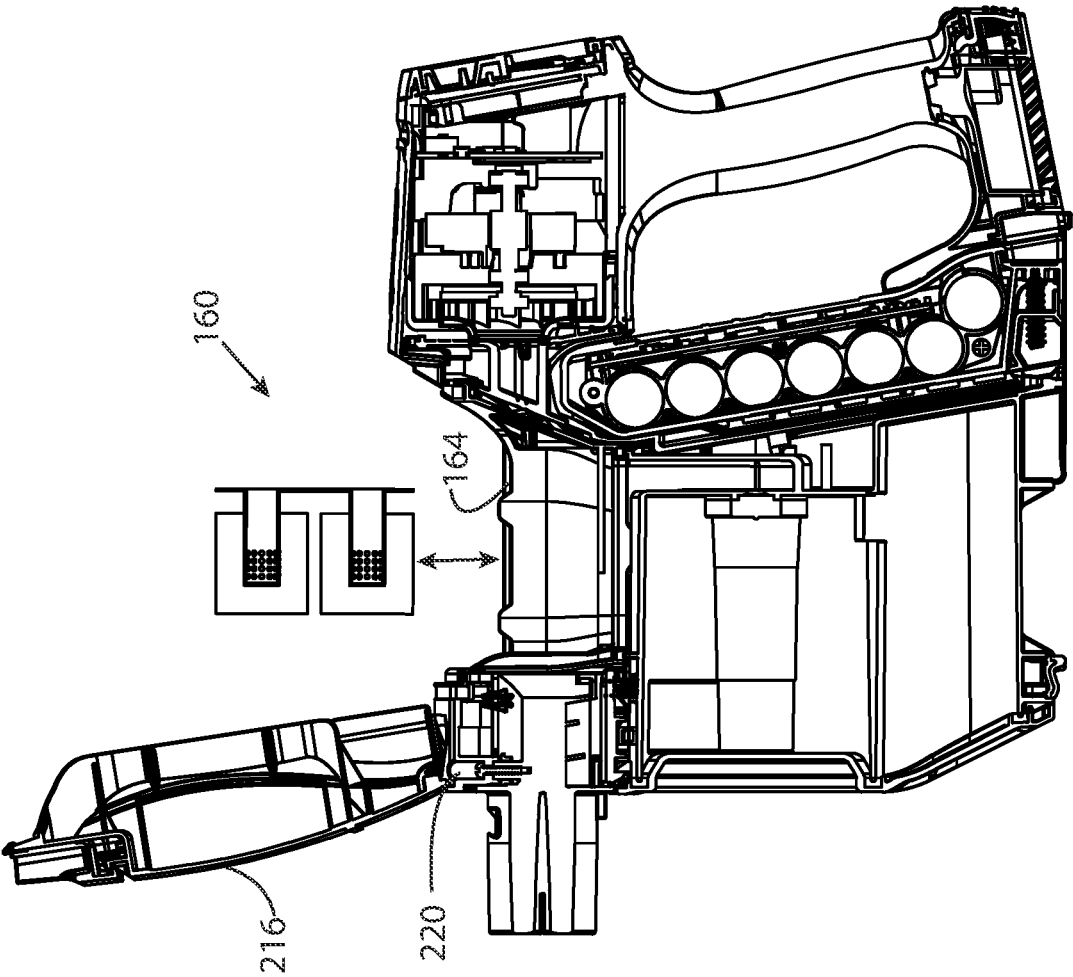


FIG. 33

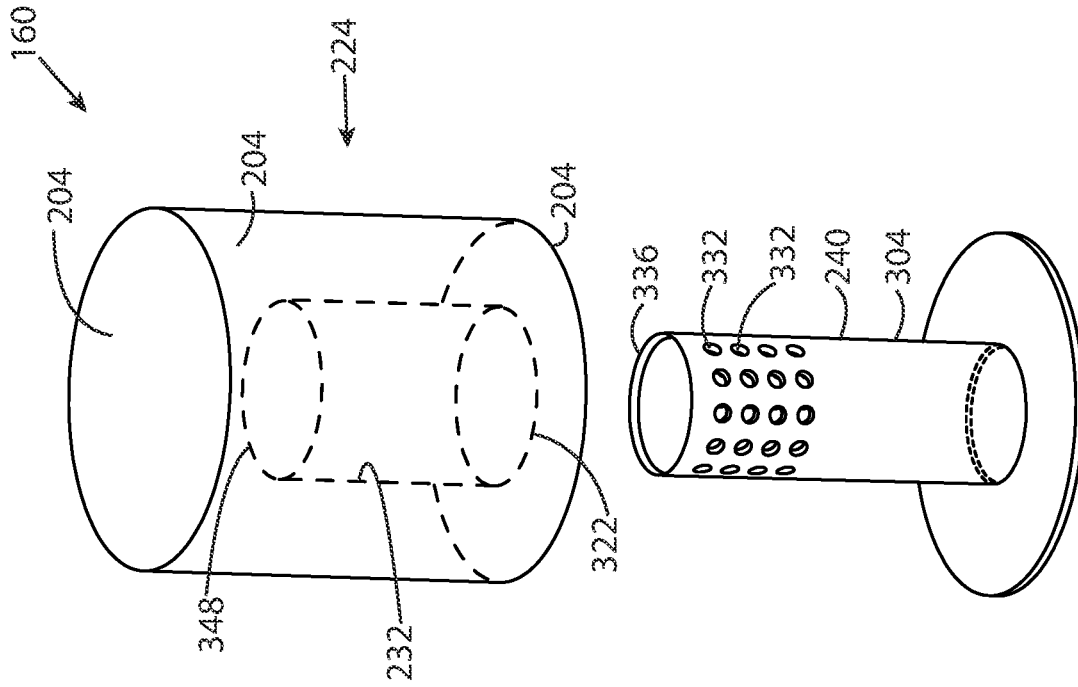


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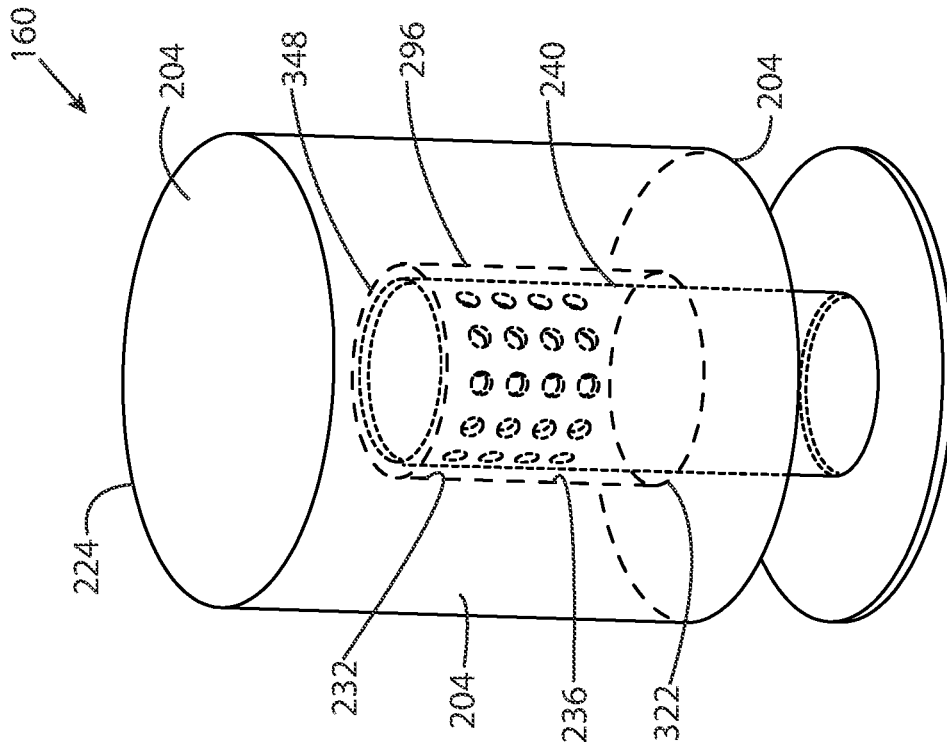


FIG. 34

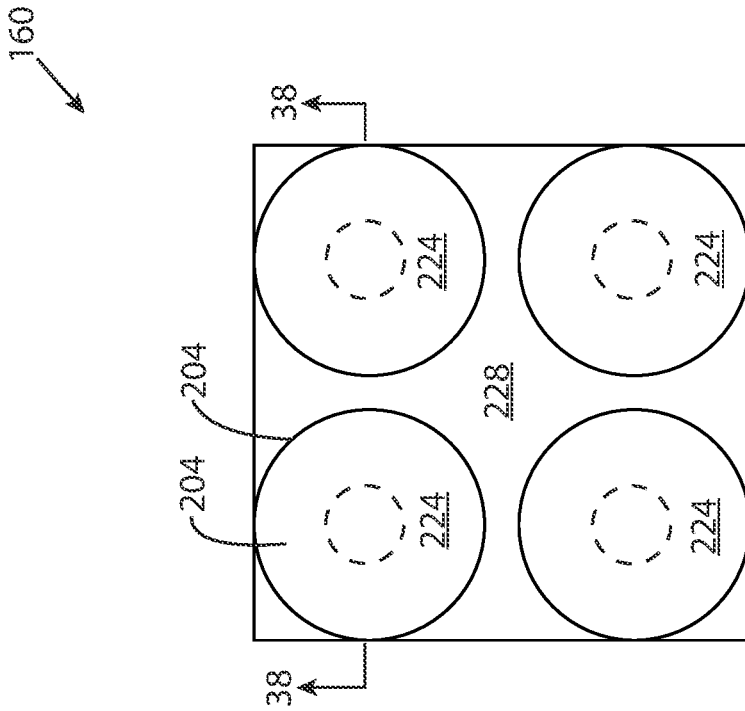


FIG. 37

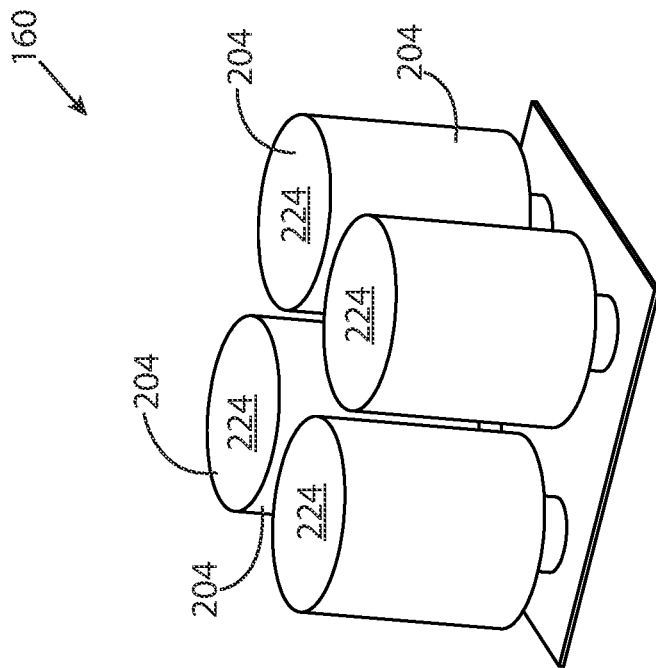


FIG. 36

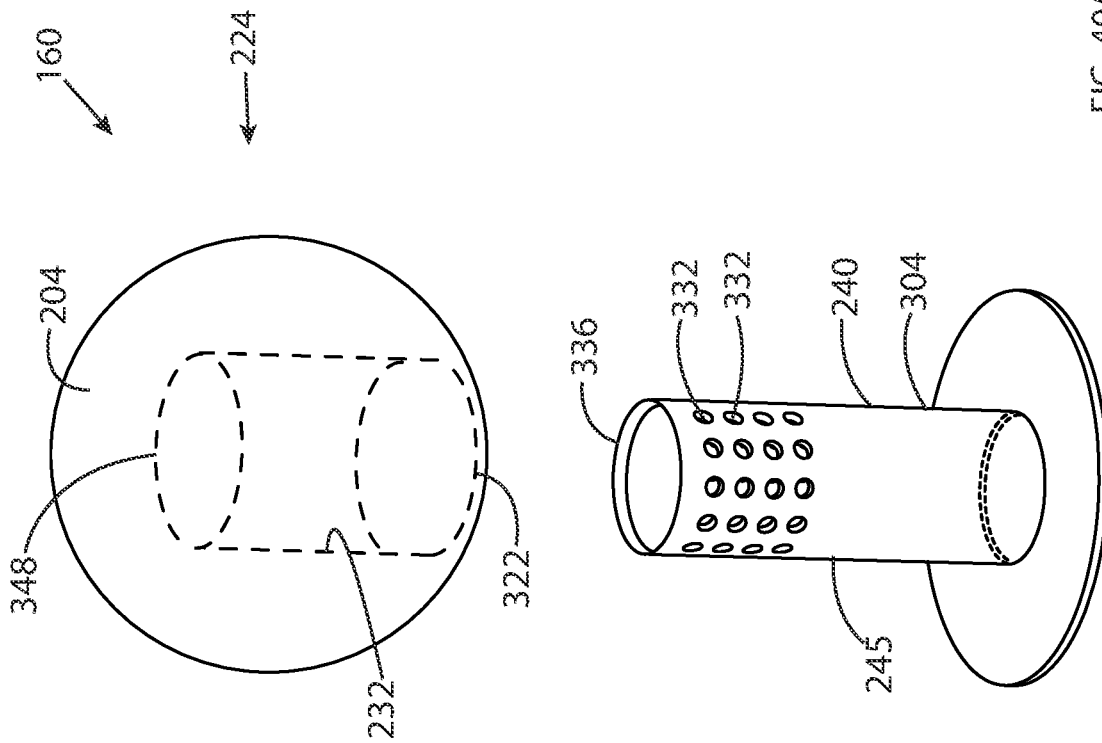


FIG. 40A

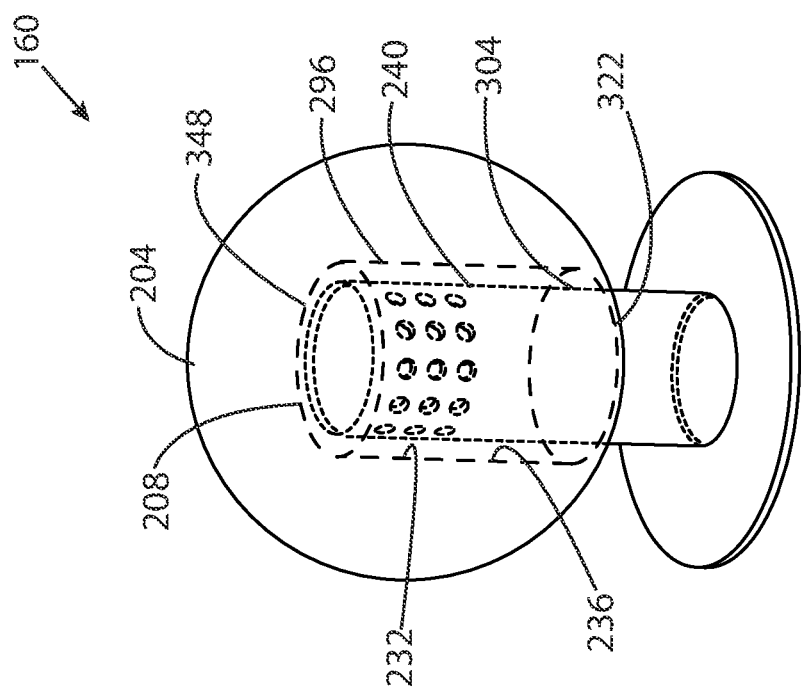


FIG. 39

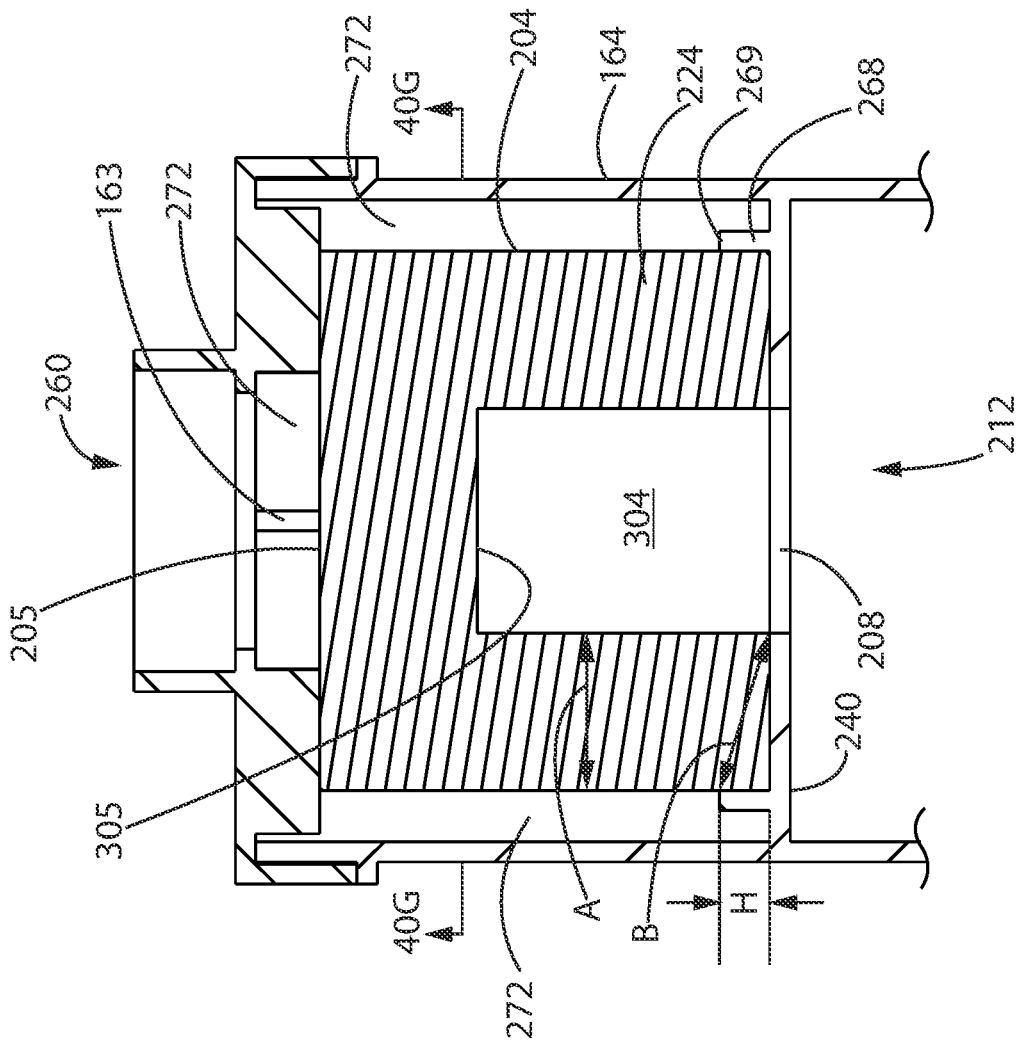


FIG. 40B

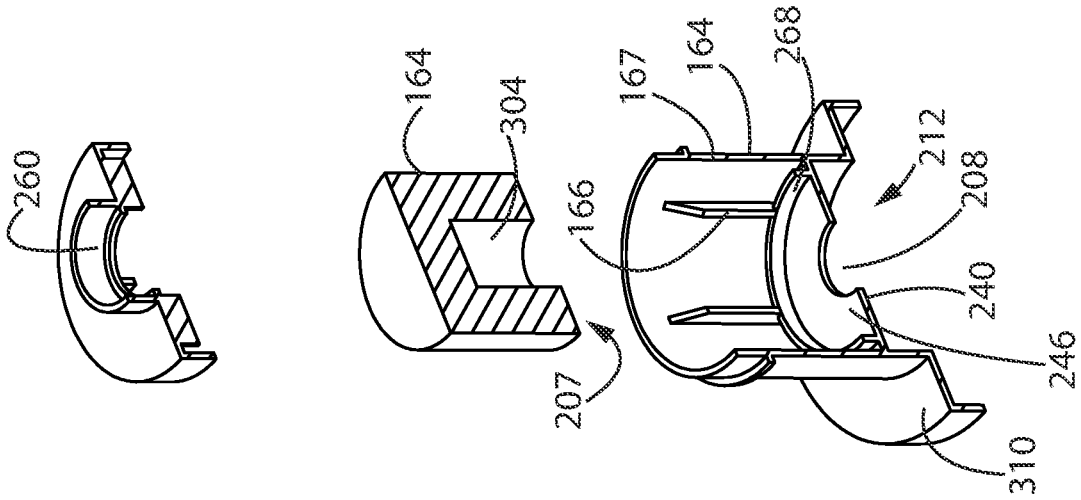


FIG. 40E

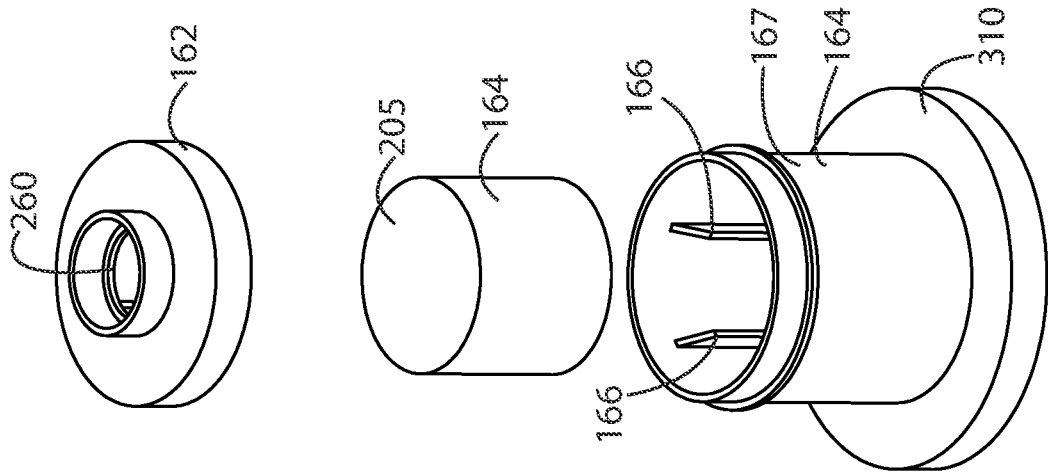


FIG. 40D

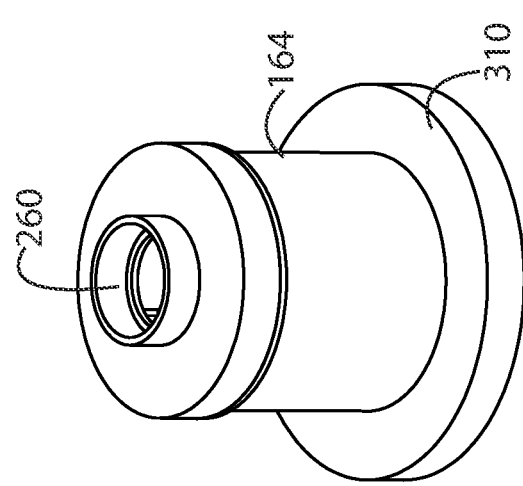


FIG. 40C

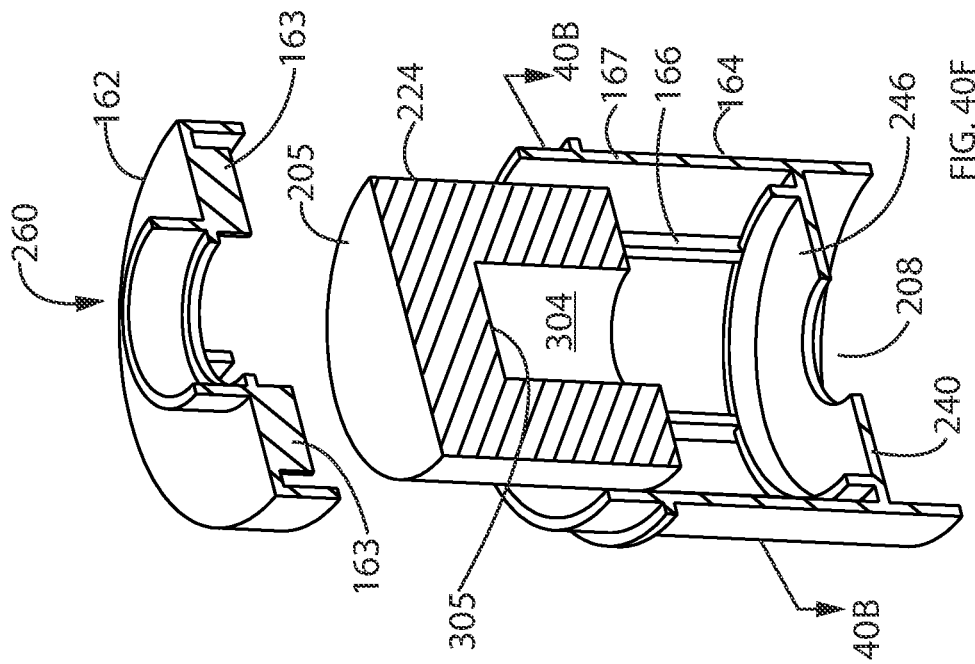


FIG. 40F

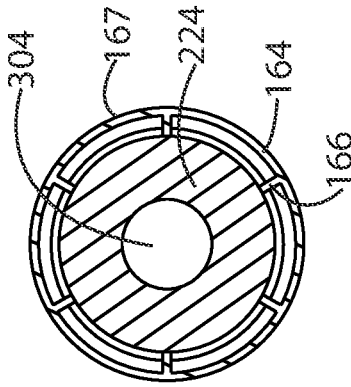


FIG. 40G

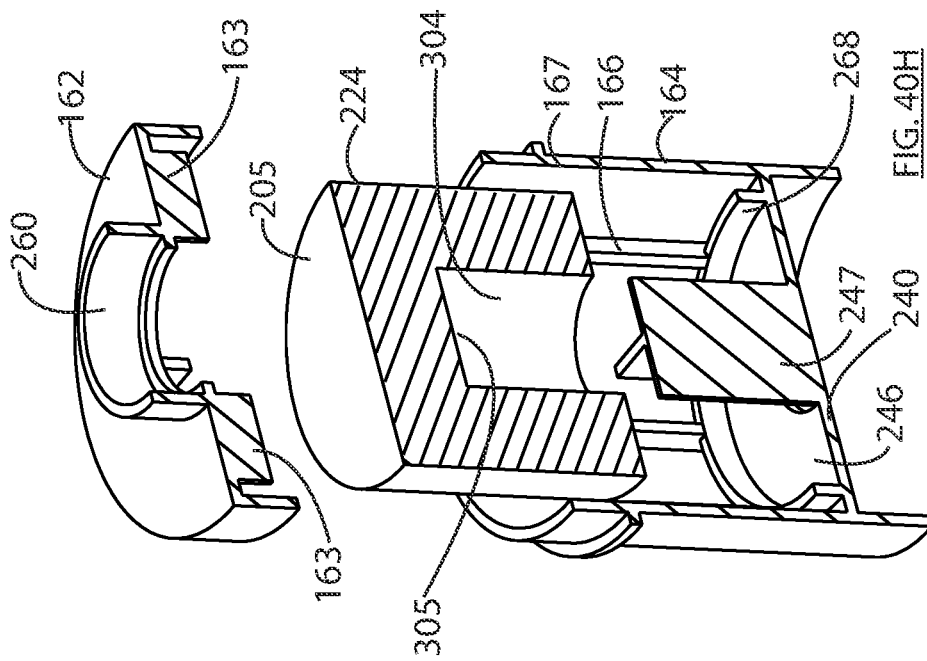


FIG. 40H

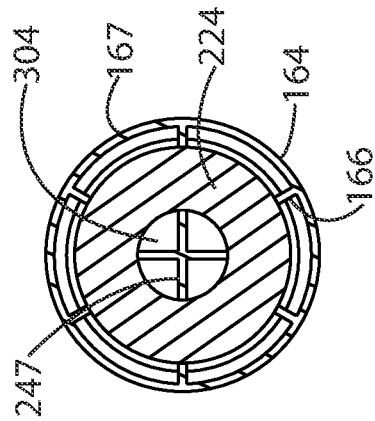


FIG. 40I

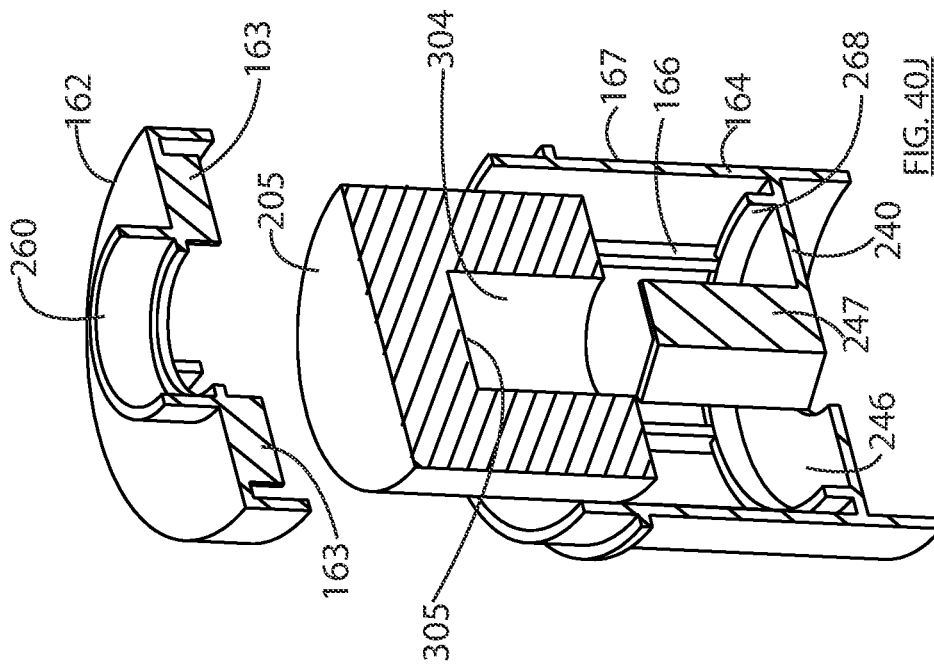


FIG. 40J

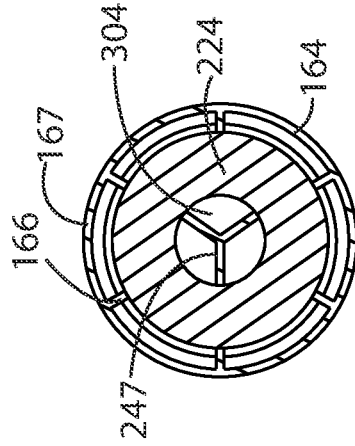


FIG. 40K

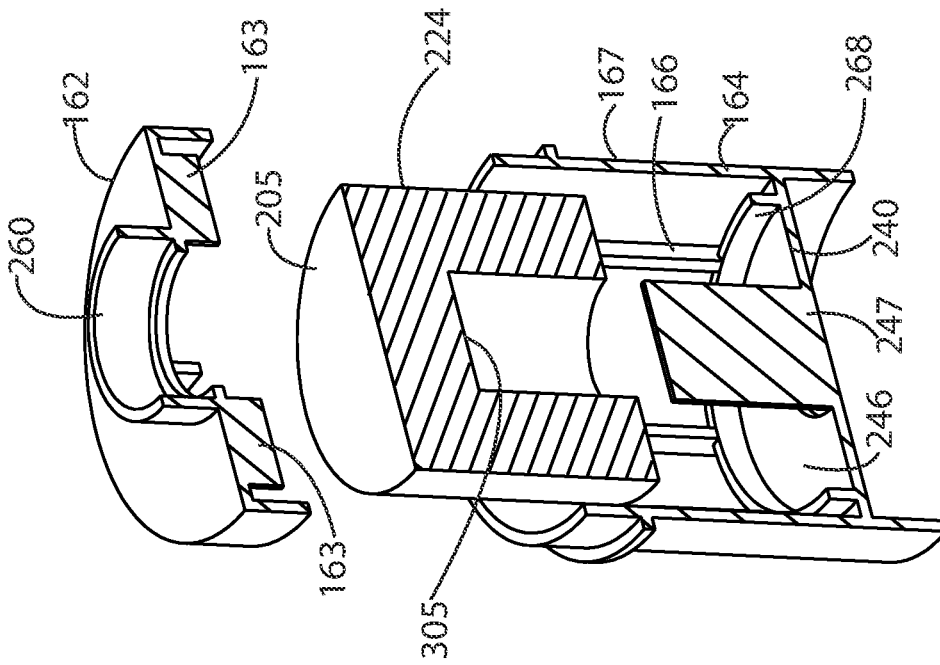


FIG. 40L

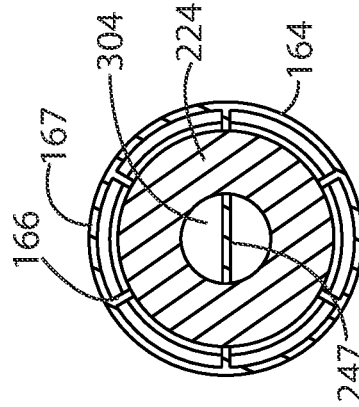


FIG. 40M

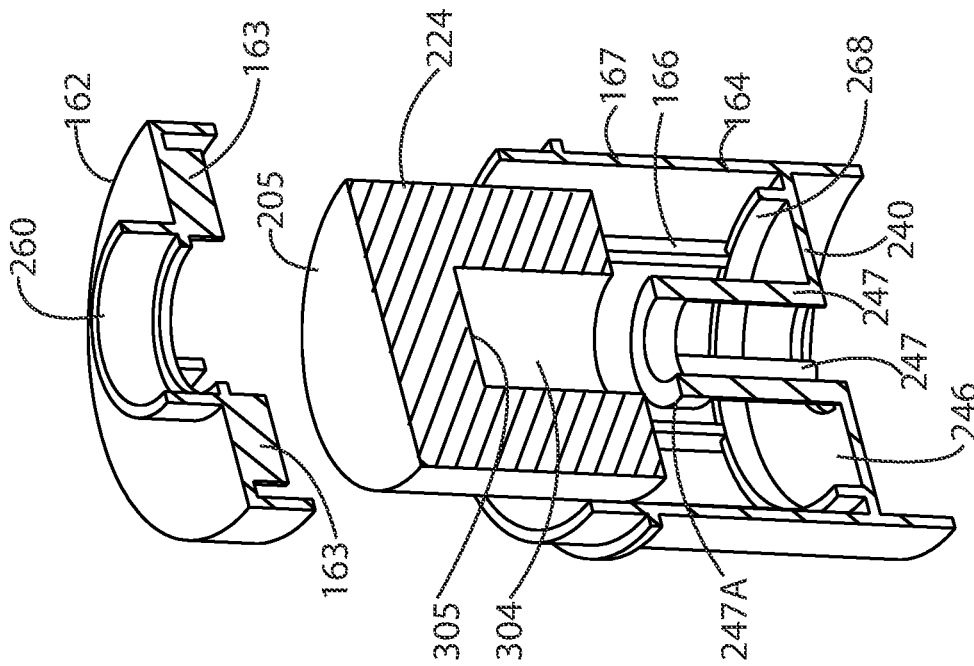


FIG. 40N

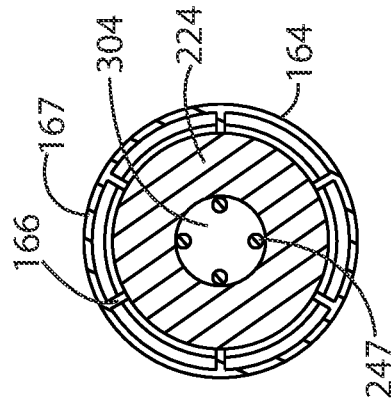


FIG. 40O

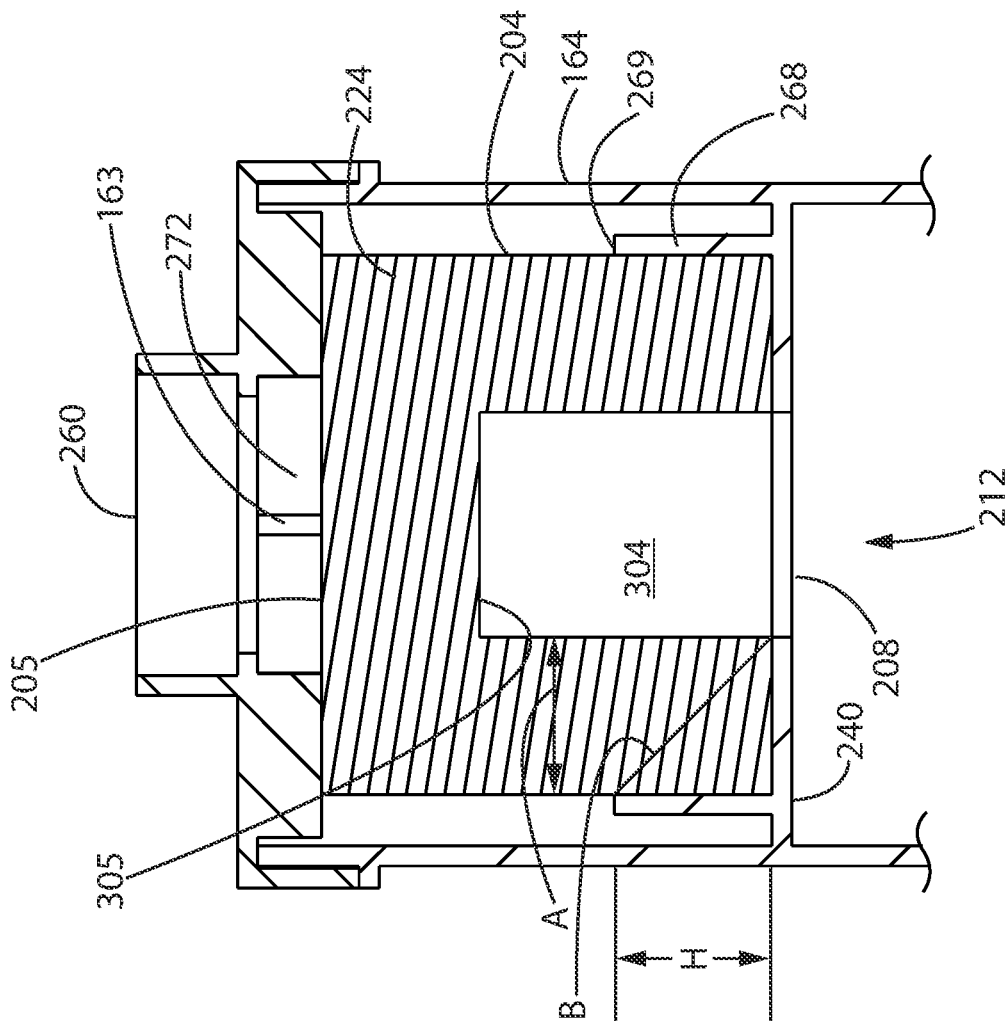


FIG. 40P

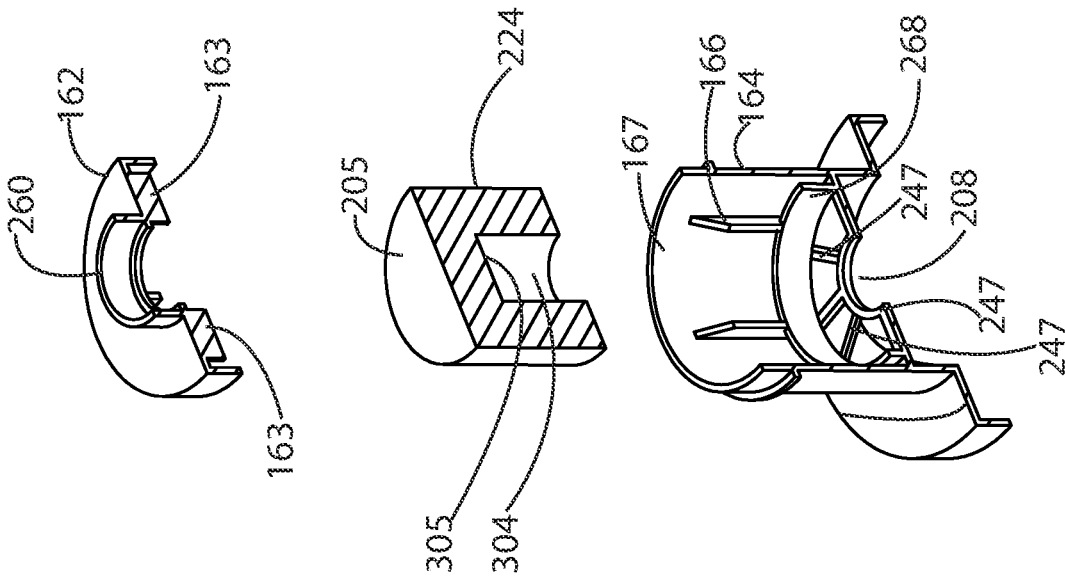
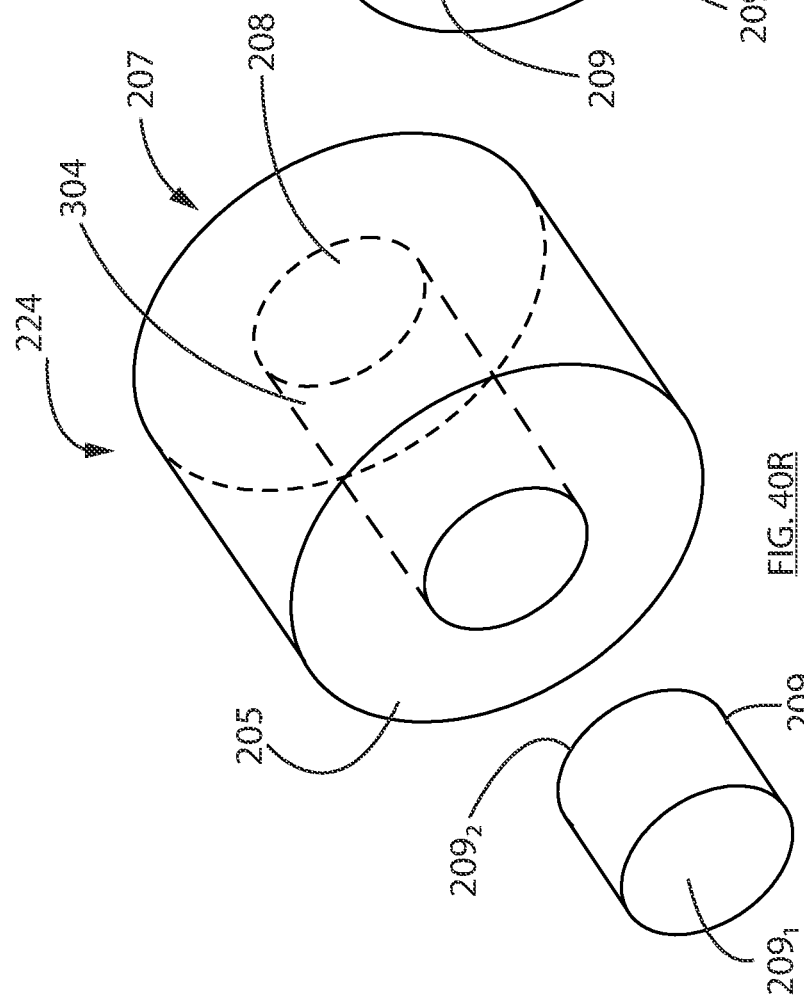
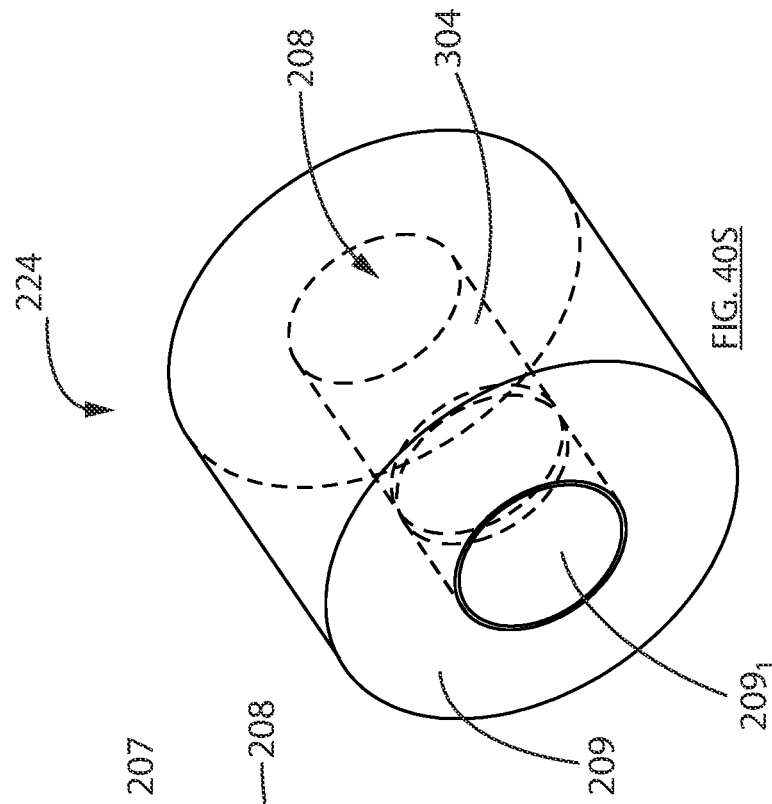
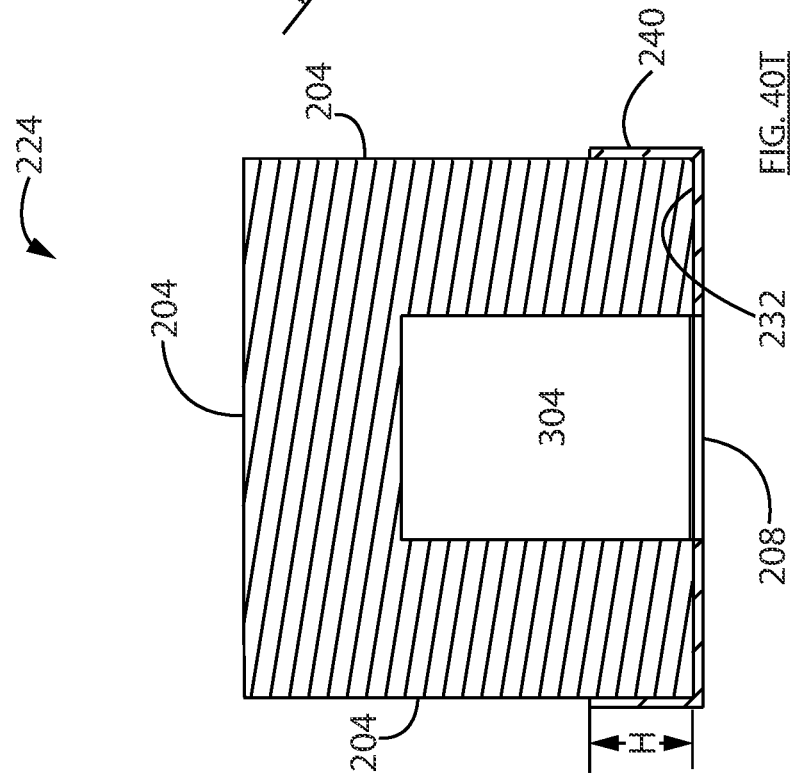
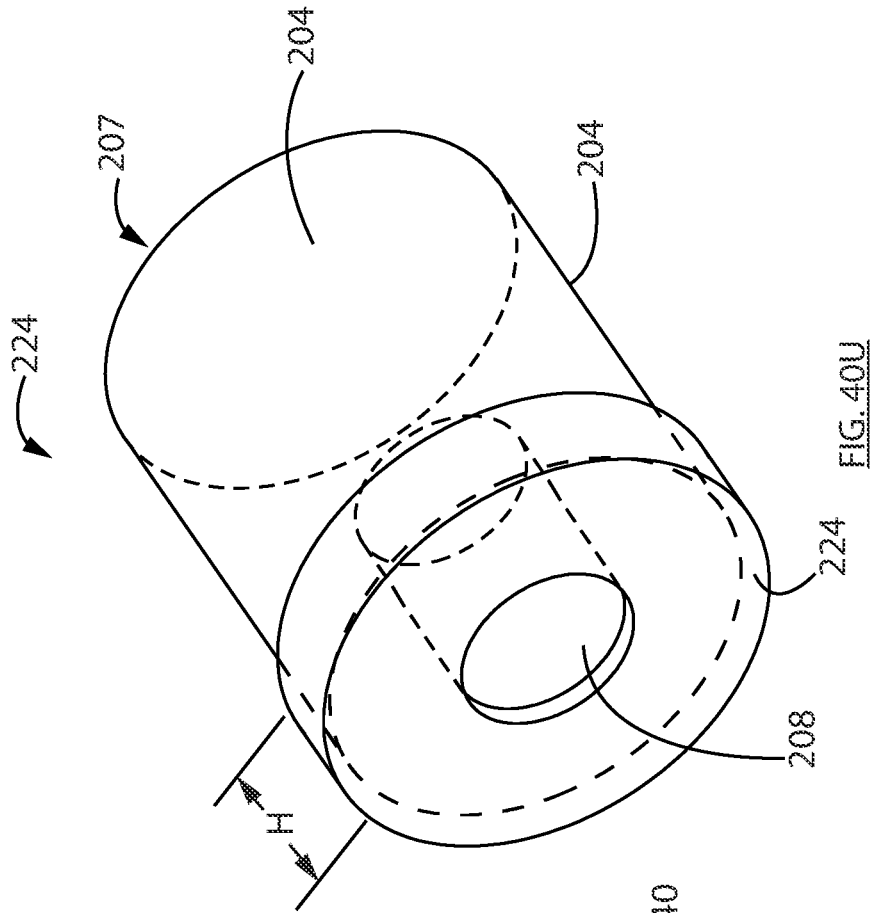


FIG. 40Q





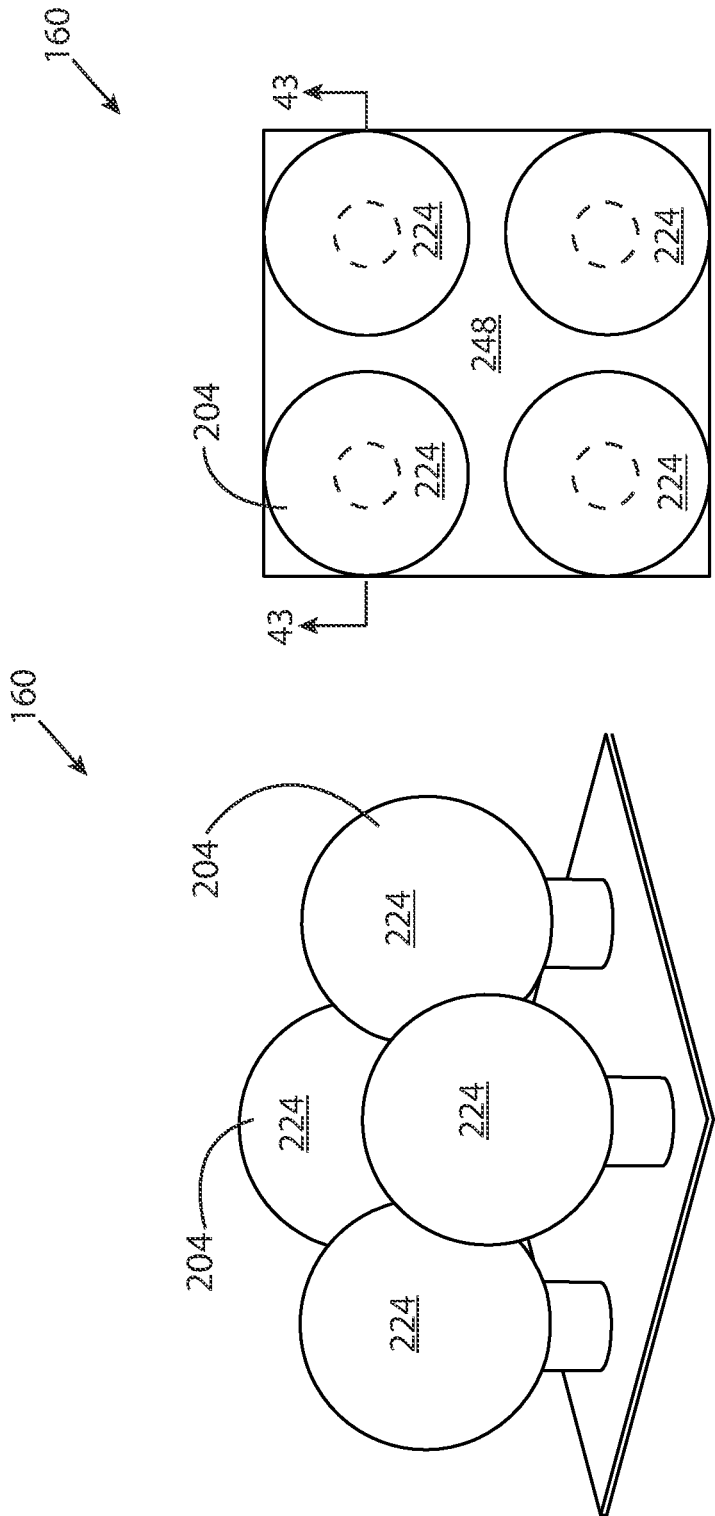


FIG. 42

FIG. 41

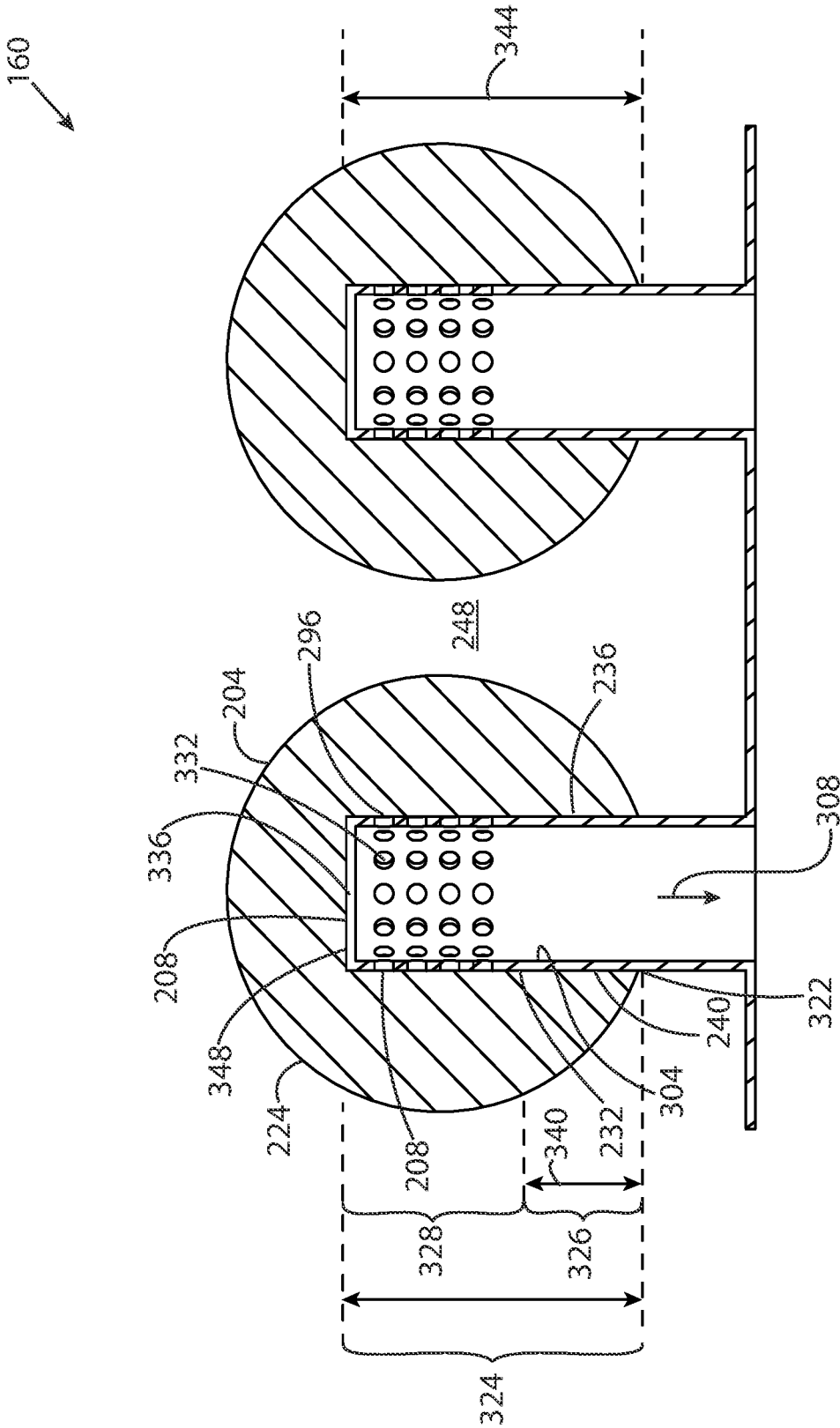


FIG. 43

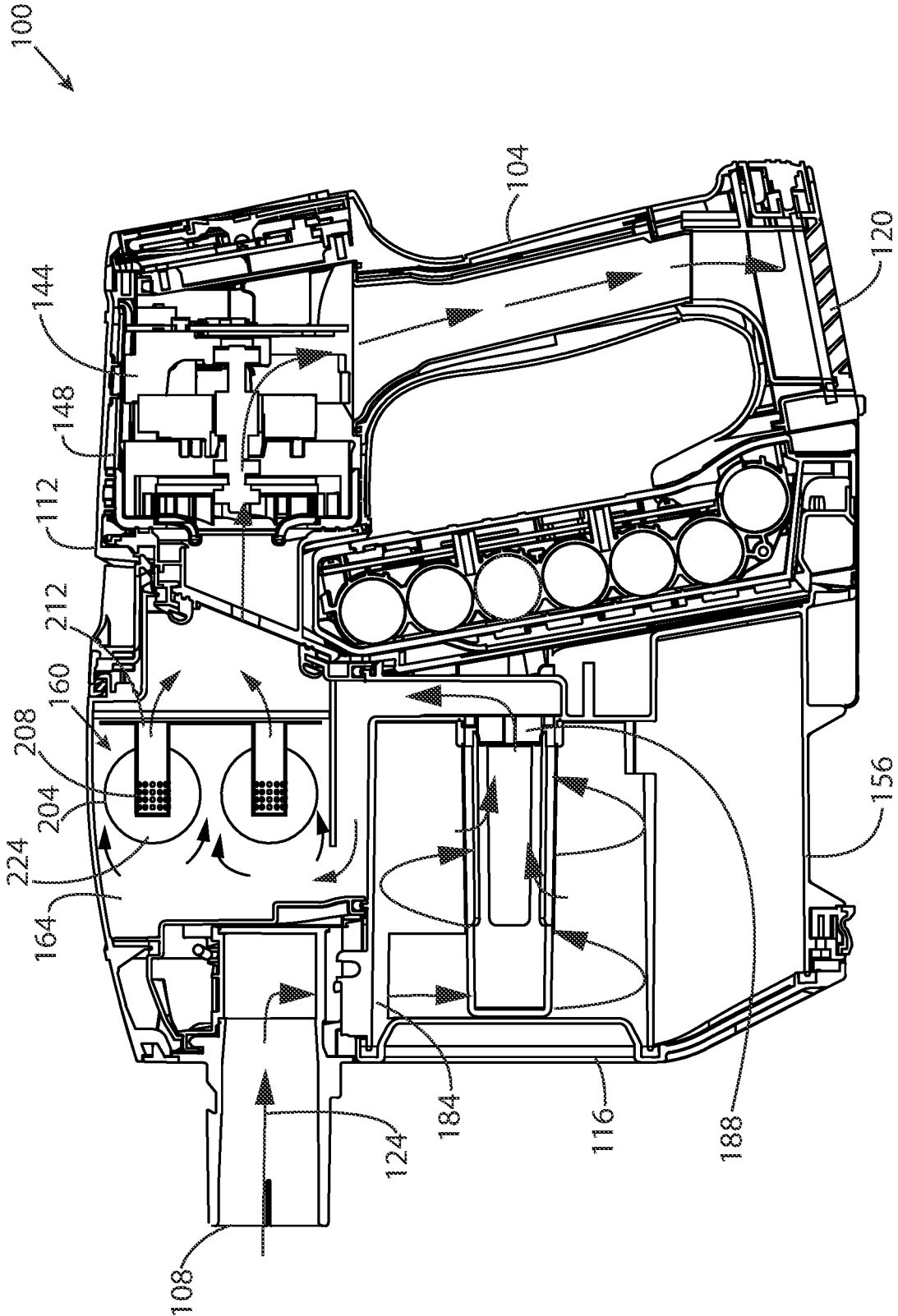


FIG. 44

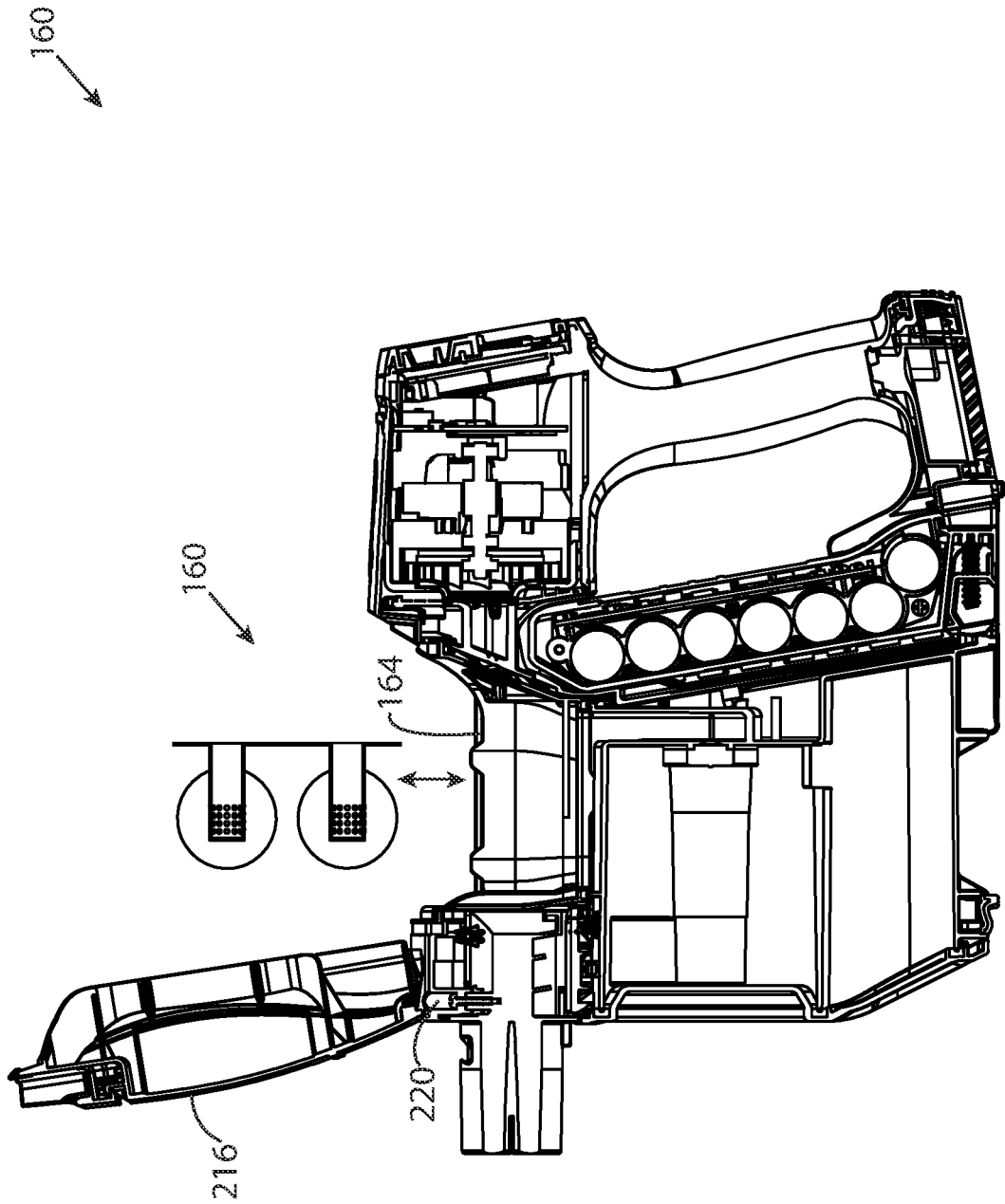


FIG. 45

1

SURFACE CLEANING APPARATUS**CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/419,993, which was filed on May 22, 2019, now U.S. Pat. No. 10,932,634, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/993,189, which was filed on May 30, 2018 and which has issued as U.S. Pat. No. 10,827,889 on Nov. 10, 2020, the disclosure of each of which is incorporated herein in its entirety.

FIELD

This disclosure relates generally to surface cleaning apparatus.

INTRODUCTION

The following is not an admission that anything discussed below is part of the prior art or part of the common general knowledge of a person skilled in the art.

Various types of surface cleaning apparatus are known. Such surface cleaning apparatus include vacuum cleaners, including upright vacuum cleaners, hand carryable vacuum cleaners, canister-type vacuum cleaners, extractors and wet/dry type vacuum cleaners (e.g. Shop-Vac™). Some vacuum cleaners include a cyclonic separator (also referred to as a cyclone bin assembly) having a cyclone chamber and a dirt collection chamber. A motor is used to draw air through the surface cleaning apparatus. A filter, such as a pre-motor filter, may be provided in the air flow path through the surface cleaning apparatus.

SUMMARY

This summary is intended to introduce the reader to the more detailed description that follows and not to limit or define any claimed or as yet unclaimed invention. One or more inventions may reside in any combination or sub-combination of the elements or process steps disclosed in any part of this document including its claims and figures.

In one aspect, a surface cleaning apparatus is provided wherein a filter assembly, which may be a pre-motor filter, is provided. The filter assembly comprises a plurality of individual or discrete filter elements, which may be mounted on a common support member. The plurality of individual filter elements are spaced apart such that the side face of at least one individual filter element faces a side face of another individual filter element. The side faces are upstream faces of the filter assembly. An advantage of this design is that the upstream surface area of the filter assembly may be increased without increasing or substantially increasing the volume of the filter assembly.

In accordance with this aspect, there is provided a surface cleaning apparatus having an air flow path, a filter housing, and a filter member. The air flow path extends from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, and an air treatment member and a suction motor are positioned in the air flow path. The filter housing is provided in the air flow path. The filter member is provided in the filter housing. The filter member comprises a plurality of individual filter elements arranged in parallel, each of the individual filter elements comprising porous filter material having at least one upstream face and at least one portion defining a porous filter media air outlet. The at least one upstream face has a larger surface area than

2

the at least one portion. An outside gap is provided between at least some of the upstream faces and opposed facing walls of the filter housing and an inside gap is provided between opposed upstream faces. A cross-sectional area of the outside gaps and the inside gaps, in a plane transverse to a direction of air flow through the outside and inside gaps, is at least as large as a cross-sectional area of an air inlet to the air treatment member in a plane transverse to a direction of air flow through the air inlet to the air treatment member.

In some embodiments, the at least one portion may be provided on a single downstream face.

In some embodiments, only a portion of the single downstream face may be porous.

In some embodiments, an air impermeable material may be provided on a portion of the single downstream face.

In some embodiments, the at least one portion may be provided on the interior of the porous filter media and the porous filter media may have an air outlet passage extending in an air flow direction, the air outlet passage having a sidewall extending in the air flow direction and at least a portion of the air outlet passage being air impermeable.

In some embodiments, an air impermeable material may be provided on at least a portion of the sidewall of the air outlet passage.

In some embodiments, the air impermeable material may include a conduit inserted into the air outlet passage.

In some embodiments, an air impermeable material may be provided on a part of the porous filter media surrounding the porous filter media air outlet.

In some embodiments, at least some of the filter elements may have a plurality of upstream faces.

In some embodiments, at least some of the individual filter elements may be generally polyhedron in shape.

In some embodiments, at least some of the individual filter elements may be generally annular in transverse section and may be at least partially nested inside each other.

In accordance with this aspect, there is also provided a surface cleaning apparatus. The surface cleaning apparatus includes an air flow path and an individual filter element. The air flow path extends from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet. An air treatment member and a suction motor are positioned in the air flow path. The individual filter element includes a porous filter material having at a plurality of upstream faces and at least one portion defining a porous filter media air outlet. The at least one upstream face has a larger surface area than the at least one portion.

In some embodiments, the at least one portion may be provided on a single downstream face.

In some embodiments, only a portion of the single downstream face may be porous.

In some embodiments, an air impermeable material may be provided on a portion of the single downstream face.

In some embodiments, the at least one portion may be provided on the interior of the porous filter media and the porous filter media may have an air outlet passage extending in an air flow direction, the air outlet passage having a sidewall extending in the air flow direction and at least a portion of the air outlet passage being air impermeable.

In some embodiments, an air impermeable material may be provided on at least a portion of the sidewall of the air outlet passage.

In some embodiments, the air impermeable material may include a conduit inserted into the air outlet passage.

In accordance with another aspect, a filter for a surface cleaning apparatus, such as a pre-motor filter, may be subdivided into two or more sub-assemblies wherein each

sub assembly comprises a plurality of individual or discrete filter elements, which may be mounted on a common support member.

In accordance with this aspect, there is provided a surface cleaning apparatus having an air flow path, a first filter part, and a second filter part. The air flow path extends from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet. An air treatment member and a suction motor are positioned in the air flow path. The first filter part includes a first plurality of individual filter elements in parallel and is located at a first location in the surface cleaning apparatus. The second filter part includes a second plurality of individual filter elements in parallel and is located at a second location in the surface cleaning apparatus. Each of the individual filter elements includes porous filter material having at least one upstream face and at least one portion defining a porous filter media air outlet. The at least one upstream face has a larger surface area than the at least one portion.

In some embodiments, at least some of the individual filter elements may be generally polyhedron in shape.

In accordance with another aspect, a filter assembly is provided wherein the filter or the filter housing is provided with an air impermeable member on or abutting the upstream outer face of the porous filter media to promote air passing through a minimum path through the porous filter media.

In accordance with this aspect, there is provided a surface cleaning apparatus comprising an air flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet with an air treatment member and a suction motor positioned in the air flow path. A filter housing has an axially extending filter chamber having an inlet end and an outlet end, the filter housing having an air impermeable wall extending from the outlet end towards the inlet end of the filter housing. A filter comprises a porous filter media positioned in the filter housing, the porous filter media having an outer upstream surface and an inner outlet passage defining a downstream surface and having an axial flow direction, the outlet passage terminating at an outlet port provided in an end face of the porous filter media, the outer upstream surface abutting the air impermeable wall.

In some embodiments, the porous filter media may have an absence of a support member inside the outlet passage.

In some embodiments, the air impermeable wall may have a greater axial length than a thickness of the porous filter media from the inner outlet passage to the outer upstream wall in a plane transverse to the axial flow direction.

In some embodiments, a distance from an axially inward end of the air impermeable wall to the outlet port may be greater than 110%, 125% or 150% a thickness of the porous filter media from the inner outlet passage to the outer upstream wall in a plane transverse to the axial flow direction.

In some embodiments, the surface area of the outer upstream surface of the porous filter media may be at least as great as a cross-sectional area of the filter housing air inlet in a direction transverse to a direction of flow through the filter housing air inlet.

In some embodiments, the end face maybe provided with an air impermeable material surrounding the outlet port. The air impermeable material surrounding the outlet port may be attached to the end face of the porous filter media. Alternately, or in addition, the air impermeable material surrounding the outlet port may comprise an air outlet end wall of the filter housing.

In some embodiments, a plurality of ribs may be provided at the outlet end of the filter chamber.

In some embodiments, a distance from an axially inward end of the air impermeable wall to the outlet port may be at least as great as a thickness of the porous filter media from the inner outlet passage to the outer upstream wall in a plane transverse to the axial flow direction.

In some embodiments, the porous filter media may comprise an axially extending annular filter member having a first end, an axially spaced apart second end and an inner open volume extending axially from the first end to the opposed second end, and an separately formed insert is provided in and closes the first end of the open volume. The insert may be made of a porous filter media,

In accordance with this aspect, there is also provided a surface cleaning apparatus comprising an air flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet with an air treatment member and a suction motor positioned in the air flow path. A filter housing has an axially extending filter chamber having an inlet end and an outlet end spaced from the inlet end in an axial direction, the filter housing having an air impermeable wall extending from the outlet end towards the inlet end of the filter housing. A filter comprises a porous filter media positioned in the filter housing, the porous filter media having an outer upstream surface and an outlet portion provided in an end face of the porous filter media, the outer upstream surface abutting the air impermeable wall.

In some embodiments, the air impermeable wall may have a greater axial length than a quarter of a thickness of the porous filter media in a plane transverse to the axial direction.

In some embodiments, the air impermeable wall may have a greater axial length than a third of a thickness of the porous filter media in a plane transverse to the axial direction.

In some embodiments, the surface area of the outer upstream surface of the porous filter media may be at least as great as a cross-sectional area of the filter housing air inlet in a direction transverse to a direction of flow through the filter housing air inlet.

In some embodiments, the end face may be provided with an air impermeable material surrounding the outlet portion. The air impermeable material surrounding the outlet portion may be attached to the end face of the porous filter media. Alternately or in addition, the air impermeable material surrounding the outlet portion may comprise an air outlet end wall of the filter housing.

In some embodiments, a plurality of ribs may be provided at the outlet end of the filter chamber.

In some embodiments, a distance from an axially inward end of the air impermeable wall to the outlet port may be at least as great as a thickness of the porous filter media from the inner outlet passage to the outer upstream wall in a plane transverse to the axial flow direction.

In some embodiments, the porous filter media may comprise an axially extending annular filter member having a first end, an axially spaced apart second end and an inner open volume extending axially from the first end to the opposed second end, and an separately formed insert is provided in and closes the first end of the open volume. The insert may be made of a porous filter media,

In accordance with another aspect, a filter, which is made of a porous filter media, and which has an inner outlet passage, may be formed as an annular member (e.g., by extrusion or molding) and one end of the inner outlet passage may be closed by an insert member. The insert

5

member is inserted into an end of the inner outlet passage so as to inhibit air passing directly into the inner outlet passage. The insert member may be made of a porous filter media (e.g., foam) that is the same or different to that of the filter.

In accordance with this aspect, there is provided a porous filter media for a surface cleaning apparatus comprising an axially extending annular filter member having a first end, an axially spaced apart second end and an inner open volume extending axially from the first end to the opposed second end, and a separately formed insert is provided in and closes the first end of the open volume.

In some embodiments, the insert may be made of a porous filter media,

DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a surface cleaning apparatus in accordance with an embodiment;

FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 2-2 in FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is the cross-sectional view of FIG. 2, with a filter housing opened and a filter member, which comprises a plurality of individual filter elements, removed, in accordance with an embodiment;

FIG. 4 is a top perspective view of a filtration assembly including a filter member in a filter housing;

FIG. 5A is a bottom perspective view of a filter element of the filter member of FIG. 4;

FIG. 5B is an exploded view of the filter element of FIG. 5A;

FIG. 6 is a top plan view of the filtration assembly of FIG. 4;

FIG. 7 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 7-7 in FIG. 4, in accordance with an embodiment;

FIG. 8 is a cross-sectional view of a filtration assembly in accordance with another embodiment;

FIG. 9 is a cross-sectional view of a filtration assembly in accordance with another embodiment;

FIG. 10 is a cross-sectional view of a filtration assembly in accordance with another embodiment;

FIG. 11 is an exploded view of the filtration assembly of FIG. 8;

FIG. 12 is a cross-sectional view of the filtration assembly of FIG. 8 and a plunger, with the filtration assembly inverted;

FIG. 13 is a cross-sectional perspective view of the filtration assembly and plunger of FIG. 12;

FIG. 14 is the cross-sectional perspective view of FIG. 13 showing a filter member compressed by the plunger;

FIG. 15 is a cross-sectional view of a filtration assembly having a screen, and a plunger, with the filtration assembly inverted, in accordance with another embodiment;

FIGS. 16-22 are top plan views of filtration assemblies in accordance with various embodiments;

FIG. 23 is a perspective view of a cross-section taken along line 23-23 in FIG. 22;

FIG. 24 is a cross-sectional view of a filtration assembly in accordance with another embodiment;

FIG. 25 is an exploded view of a filter element and filter support of the filtration assembly of FIG. 24;

FIG. 26 is a cross-sectional view of a surface cleaning apparatus in accordance with another embodiment;

FIG. 27 is a perspective view of a filter member and filter support in accordance with another embodiment;

FIG. 28 is an exploded view of the filter member and filter support of FIG. 27;

6

FIG. 29 is a perspective view of a filter member and filter support in accordance with another embodiment;

FIG. 30 is a top plan view of the filter member and filter support of FIG. 29;

FIG. 31 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 31-31 in FIG. 30;

FIG. 32 is a cross-sectional view of a surface cleaning apparatus including the filter member of FIG. 29;

FIG. 33 is a cross-sectional view of the surface cleaning apparatus of FIG. 32, with a filter housing opened and the filter member removed, in accordance with an embodiment;

FIG. 34 is a perspective view of a filter member and filter support in accordance with another embodiment;

FIG. 35 is an exploded view of the filter member and filter support of FIG. 34;

FIG. 36 is a perspective view of a filter member and filter support in accordance with another embodiment;

FIG. 37 is a top plan view of the filter member and filter support of FIG. 36;

FIG. 38 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 38-38 in FIG. 37;

FIG. 39 is a perspective view of a filter member and filter support in accordance with another embodiment;

FIG. 40A is an exploded view of the filter member and filter support of FIG. 39;

FIG. 40B is a cross-sectional view taken along line 40B-40B in FIG. 40F;

FIG. 40C is a perspective view of a filter housing in accordance with another embodiment;

FIG. 40D is an exploded view of the filter housing of FIG. 40C showing the filter member;

FIG. 40E is an exploded cross-sectional view along line 40-40 of the filter member and filter housing of FIG. 40C;

FIG. 40F is an exploded cross-sectional of an alternate embodiment of a filter member and filter housing showing an alternate filter housing;

FIG. 40G is a horizontal section of the embodiment of FIG. 40F taken along the line 40G-40G in FIG. 40B;

FIG. 40H is an exploded cross-sectional of an alternate embodiment of a filter member and filter housing;

FIG. 40I is a horizontal section of the embodiment of FIG. 40H taken along the line 40G-40G in FIG. 40B;

FIG. 40J is an exploded cross-sectional of an alternate embodiment of a filter member and filter housing;

FIG. 40K is a horizontal section of the embodiment of FIG. 40J taken along the line 40G-40G in FIG. 40B;

FIG. 40L is an exploded cross-sectional of an alternate embodiment of a filter member and filter housing;

FIG. 40M is a horizontal section of the embodiment of FIG. 40L taken along the line 40G-40G in FIG. 40B;

FIG. 40N is an exploded cross-sectional of an alternate embodiment of a filter member and filter housing;

FIG. 40O is a horizontal section of the embodiment of FIG. 40N taken along the line 40G-40G in FIG. 40B;

FIG. 40P is a cross-sectional view taken along line 40B-40B in FIG. 40F of a further alternate embodiment of a filter member and filter housing;

FIG. 40Q is an exploded view of the filter member and filter housing of FIG. 40P;

FIG. 40R is an exploded view of an alternate filter member;

FIG. 40S is an assembled view of the filter member of FIG. 40R;

FIG. 40T is a longitudinal sectional view of an alternate filter member;

FIG. 40U is a perspective view of the filter member of FIG. 40T;

FIG. 41 is a perspective view of a filter member in accordance with another embodiment;

FIG. 42 is a top plan view of the filter member of FIG. 41;

FIG. 43 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 43-43 in FIG. 42;

FIG. 44 is a cross-sectional view of a surface cleaning apparatus including the filter member of FIG. 41; and,

FIG. 45 is a cross-sectional view of the surface cleaning apparatus of FIG. 44, with a filter housing opened and the filter member removed, in accordance with an embodiment.

DESCRIPTION OF VARIOUS EMBODIMENTS

Various apparatuses, methods and compositions are described below to provide an example of an embodiment of each claimed invention. No embodiment described below limits any claimed invention and any claimed invention may cover apparatuses and methods that differ from those described below. The claimed inventions are not limited to apparatuses, methods and compositions having all of the features of any one apparatus, method or composition described below or to features common to multiple or all of the apparatuses, methods or compositions described below. It is possible that an apparatus, method or composition described below is not an embodiment of any claimed invention. Any invention disclosed in an apparatus, method or composition described below that is not claimed in this document may be the subject matter of another protective instrument, for example, a continuing patent application, and the applicant(s), inventor(s) and/or owner(s) do not intend to abandon, disclaim, or dedicate to the public any such invention by its disclosure in this document.

The terms “an embodiment,” “embodiment,” “embodiments,” “the embodiment,” “the embodiments,” “one or more embodiments,” “some embodiments,” and “one embodiment” mean “one or more (but not all) embodiments of the present invention(s),” unless expressly specified otherwise.

The terms “including,” “comprising” and variations thereof mean “including but not limited to,” unless expressly specified otherwise. A listing of items does not imply that any or all of the items are mutually exclusive, unless expressly specified otherwise. The terms “a,” “an” and “the” mean “one or more,” unless expressly specified otherwise.

As used herein and in the claims, two or more parts are said to be “coupled,” “connected,” “attached,” “joined,” “affixed,” or “fastened” where the parts are joined or operate together either directly or indirectly (i.e., through one or more intermediate parts), so long as a link occurs. As used herein and in the claims, two or more parts are said to be “directly coupled,” “directly connected,” “directly attached,” “directly joined,” “directly affixed,” or “directly fastened” where the parts are connected in physical contact with each other. As used herein, two or more parts are said to be “rigidly coupled,” “rigidly connected,” “rigidly attached,” “rigidly joined,” “rigidly affixed,” or “rigidly fastened” where the parts are coupled so as to move as one while maintaining a constant orientation relative to each other. None of the terms “coupled,” “connected,” “attached,” “joined,” “affixed,” and “fastened” distinguish the manner in which two or more parts are joined together.

Furthermore, it will be appreciated that for simplicity and clarity of illustration, where considered appropriate, reference numerals may be repeated among the figures to indicate corresponding or analogous elements. In addition, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the example embodiments described

herein. However, it will be understood by those of ordinary skill in the art that the example embodiments described herein may be practiced without these specific details. In other instances, well-known methods, procedures, and components have not been described in detail so as not to obscure the example embodiments described herein. Also, the description is not to be considered as limiting the scope of the example embodiments described herein.

General Description of a Vacuum Cleaner

Referring to FIGS. 1-2, an exemplary embodiment of a surface cleaning apparatus is shown generally as 100. The following is a general discussion of apparatus 100 which provides a basis for understanding several of the features that are discussed herein. As discussed subsequently, each of the features may be used individually or in any particular combination or sub-combination in this or in other embodiments disclosed herein. Embodiments described herein include an improved filter member 160, and a surface cleaning apparatus 100 including the same. Surface cleaning apparatus 100 may be any type of surface cleaning apparatus, including for example a hand vacuum cleaner as shown, a stick vacuum cleaner, an upright vacuum cleaner, a canister vacuum cleaner, an extractor or a wet/dry type vacuum cleaner. Optionally, the surface cleaning apparatus may use one or more cyclones and may therefore be a cyclonic surface cleaning apparatus.

In FIGS. 1-2, surface cleaning apparatus 100 is illustrated as a hand vacuum cleaner, which may also be referred to also as a “handvac” or “hand-held vacuum cleaner”. As used herein, a hand vacuum cleaner is a vacuum cleaner that can be operated to clean a surface generally one-handedly. That is, the entire weight of the vacuum may be held by the same one hand used to direct a dirty air inlet of the vacuum cleaner with respect to a surface to be cleaned. For example, handle 104 and dirty air inlet 108 may be rigidly coupled to each other (directly or indirectly), such as being integrally formed or separately molded and then non-removably secured together such as by an adhesive or welding, so as to move as one while maintaining a constant orientation relative to each other. This is to be contrasted with canister and upright vacuum cleaners, whose weight is typically supported by a surface (e.g. a floor) during use, and when a canister vacuum cleaner is operated or when an upright vacuum cleaner is operated in a ‘lift-away’ configuration, a second hand is typically required to direct the dirty air inlet at the end of a flexible hose.

Still referring to FIGS. 1-2, surface cleaning apparatus 100 includes a main body or a hand vac body 112 having an air treatment member 116 (which may be permanently affixed to the main body or may be removable therefrom for emptying), a dirty air inlet 108, a clean air outlet 120, and an air flow path 124 extending between the dirty air inlet 108 and the clean air outlet 120.

Surface cleaning apparatus 100 has a front end 128, a rear end 132, an upper end (also referred to as the top) 136, and a lower end (also referred to as the bottom) 140. In the embodiment shown, dirty air inlet 108 is at an upper portion of apparatus front end 128 and clean air outlet 120 is at a rearward portion of apparatus 100 at apparatus rear end 132. It will be appreciated that dirty air inlet 108 and clean air outlet 120 may be positioned in different locations of apparatus 100.

A suction motor 144 is provided to generate vacuum suction through air flow path 124, and is positioned within a motor housing 148. Suction motor 144 may be a fan-motor assembly including an electric motor and impeller blade(s). In the illustrated embodiment, suction motor 144 is posi-

tioned in the air flow path **124** downstream of air treatment member **116**. In this configuration, suction motor **144** may be referred to as a “clean air motor”. Alternatively, suction motor **144** may be positioned upstream of air treatment member **116**, and referred to as a “dirty air motor”.

Air treatment member **116** is configured to remove particles of dirt and other debris from the air flow. In the illustrated example, air treatment member **116** includes a cyclone assembly (also referred to as a “cyclone bin assembly”) having a single cyclonic cleaning stage with a single cyclone **152** and a dirt collection chamber **156** (also referred to as a “dirt collection region”, “dirt collection bin”, “dirt bin”, or “dirt chamber”). Cyclone **152** has a cyclone chamber **154**. Dirt collection chamber **156** may be external to the cyclone chamber **154** (i.e. dirt collection chamber **156** may have a discrete volume from that of cyclone chamber **154**). Cyclone **152** and dirt collection chamber **156** may be of any configuration suitable for separating dirt from an air stream and collecting the separated dirt respectively and may be in communication by a dirt outlet of the cyclone chamber.

In alternate embodiments, air treatment member **116** may include a cyclone assembly having two or more cyclonic cleaning stages arranged in series with each other. Each cyclonic cleaning stage may include one or more cyclones arranged in parallel with each other and one or more dirt collection chambers, of any suitable configuration. The dirt collection chamber(s) may be external to the cyclone chambers of the cyclones. Alternatively, one or more (or all) of the dirt collection chamber(s) may be internal to one or more (or all) of the cyclone chambers. For example, the internal dirt collection chamber(s) may be configured as a dirt collection area within the cyclone chamber.

In other alternative embodiments, air treatment member **116** may not include a cyclonic cleaning stage. For example, air treatment member **116** may include a bag, a porous physical filter media (such as, for example foam or felt), one or more screen or other air treating means.

Referring to FIG. 2, hand vacuum cleaner **100** may include a pre-motor filter **160** provided in the air flow path **124** downstream of air treatment member **116** and upstream of suction motor **144**. Pre-motor filter **160** may be formed from any suitable physical, porous filter media (also referred to as “porous filter material”). For example, pre-motor filter **160** may be one or more of a foam filter, felt filter, HEPA filter, or other physical filter media. In some embodiments, pre-motor filter **160** may include an electrostatic filter, or the like. As shown, pre-motor filter **160** may be located in a pre-motor filter housing **164** that is external to the air treatment member **116**.

In the illustrated embodiment, dirty air inlet **108** is the inlet end **168** of an air inlet conduit **172**. Optionally, inlet end **168** of air inlet conduit **172** can be used as a nozzle to directly clean a surface. Alternatively, or in addition to functioning as a nozzle, air inlet conduit **172** may be connected (e.g. directly connected) to the downstream end of any suitable accessory tool such as a rigid air flow conduit (e.g., an above floor cleaning wand), a crevice tool, a mini brush, and the like. As shown, dirty air inlet **108** may be positioned forward of air treatment member **116**, although this need not be the case.

In the embodiment of FIG. 2, the air treatment member comprises a cyclone **152**, the air treatment air inlet is a cyclone air inlet **184**, and the air treatment member air outlet is a cyclone air outlet **188**. Accordingly, in operation, after activating suction motor **144**, dirty air enters apparatus **100** through dirty air inlet **108** and is directed along air inlet conduit **172** to the cyclone air inlet **184**. As shown, cyclone

air inlet **184** may direct the dirty air flow to enter cyclone chamber **154** in a tangential direction so as to promote cyclonic action. Dirt particles and other debris may be disentrained (i.e. separated) from the dirty air flow as the dirty air flow travels from cyclone air inlet **184** to cyclone air outlet **188**. The disentrained dirt particles and debris may discharge from cyclone chamber **154** through a dirt outlet **190** into dirt collection chamber **156** external to the cyclone chamber **154**, where the dirt particles and debris may be collected and stored until dirt collection chamber **156** is emptied.

Air exiting cyclone chamber **154** may pass through an outlet passage **192** located upstream of cyclone air outlet **188**. Cyclone chamber outlet passage **192** may also act as a vortex finder to promote cyclonic flow within cyclone chamber **154**. In some embodiments, cyclone outlet passage **192** may include a screen or shroud **196** (e.g. a fine mesh screen) in the air flow path **124** to remove large dirt particles and debris, such as hair, remaining in the exiting air flow.

From cyclone air outlet **188**, the air flow may be directed into pre-motor filter housing **164** at an upstream side **204** of pre-motor filter **160**. The air flow may pass through pre-motor filter **160** to porous filter media air outlet **208**, and then exit through pre-motor filter chamber air outlet **212** into motor housing **148**. At motor housing **148**, the clean air flow may be drawn into suction motor **144** and then discharged from apparatus **100** through clean air outlet **120**. Prior to exiting the clean air outlet **120**, the treated air may pass through a post-motor filter, which may be one or more layers of filter media.

Filter Member

Embodiments herein relate to an improved filter member. Examples illustrated in the figures show a pre-motor filter member (also referred to more simply as a ‘pre-motor filter’) positioned upstream of the suction motor. It will be appreciated that embodiments of the filter member disclosed herein may be used as a post-motor filter member (also referred to more simply as a ‘post-motor filter’) positioned downstream of the suction motor. It will also be appreciated that the filter member may be used in any filter housing and that a plurality of filter members may be used in a single apparatus.

When air flows through a filter member of porous filter media, most of the dirt particles removed from the air flow collect on upstream surfaces of the filter member (also referred to as ‘inlet surfaces’ of the filter member). An advantage of collecting dirt on exposed surfaces of the filter member is that the dirt can be more easily cleaned off of the filter member (e.g. by brushing, agitating, or washing the filter member) as compared with dirt that is trapped within the porous filter media of the filter member.

Over time, the upstream surfaces can become clogged upon collecting a threshold amount of dirt from the air flow passing through the filter media. When the upstream surfaces are clogged, the collected dirt may create substantial impedance to air flow entering the filter member through the upstream surfaces. That is, the clogged filter member may produce substantial backpressure in the air flow path. Moreover, a clogged filter member may experience greater dirt penetration into the porous filter media. Dirt that has penetrated into the inner volume of the porous filter media may be more difficult to clean. Occurrence of dirt penetration may increase because a filter member with clogged upstream surfaces has an air inlet with a much reduced effective cross-sectional area, which results in higher velocity air flow at the upstream surfaces, which drives the dirt deeper into the porous filter media. When too much dirt becomes

trapped inside the porous filter media, the filter member may require replacement. Thus, dirt penetration reduces the working life of the filter member.

The disclosed filter member provides greater upstream surface area (also referred to as 'inlet surface area') as compared to prior filter designs of the same volume, all else being equal. Greater upstream surface area provides the filter member disclosed herein with more area for dirt to collect on the upstream surfaces of the filter member, and therefore the filter member can remove more dirt from an air flow before the upstream surfaces become clogged. In use, this allows the disclosed filter member to filter a greater volume of air before the filter member creates a substantial pressure drop in the air flow path or experiences substantial dirt penetration. Consequently, the disclosed filter member can be used for a longer period before cleaning or replacing the filter member. Alternately, the disclosed filter member would allow a filter having a smaller volume to be used to have the same performance as compared to prior filter designs of the same volume, all else being equal.

Referring to FIGS. 2-3, surface cleaning apparatus 100 may include a filter housing 164 that holds filter member 160. Filter member 160 is preferably removable from filter housing 164 for cleaning or replacement. Alternatively, filter member 160 may be permanently connected to filter housing 164, and user accessible for cleaning in-situ. In the example shown, filter housing 164 includes an openable door 216. When filter housing door 216 is opened, filter member 160 may be user accessible to remove filter member 160 as shown for cleaning or replacement, or to clean (e.g. agitate or brush) filter member 160 in-situ. Alternately, filter housing 164 may be removed concurrently with filter member 160.

Door 216 may be openable in any manner that provides user access to filter member 160 when opened. In the illustrated example, door 216 is rotatably (e.g. pivotably) openable by a hinge 220. Alternatively or in addition, door 216 may be openable in translation (e.g. slide along a rail), or door 216 may be removable from apparatus 100.

Alternatively or in addition to providing user access to filter member 160, filter member 160 may be cleaned automatically by apparatus 100 (e.g. by a mechanical agitator). In such embodiments, filter housing 164 may optionally provide no user access to filter member 160. For example, filter housing 164 may not include an openable door 216.

Reference is now made to FIGS. 4, 5A, and 5B. Filter member 160 can include one or a plurality of individual filter elements 224 of porous filter media. In the illustrated embodiment, filter member 160 includes a plurality of filter element 224 positioned in parallel (i.e. as opposed to in series) within the air flow path 124 (FIG. 2). Each filter element 224 has an outer surface 228 that bounds the volume of porous filter media inside. The filter element outer surface 228 includes at least one upstream face 204 (also referred to as an 'upstream surface', an 'upstream side', an 'inlet face', an 'inlet surface', or an 'inlet side') that provides an inlet for air entering the filter element 224. Filter element outer surface 228 also includes at least one portion 208 that defines an air outlet for air exiting the porous filter media. In use, air enters each filter element 224 through their respective upstream face(s) 204, travels downstream within each filter element 224, and exits each filter element 224 through their respective porous filter media air outlet(s) 208.

As shown, filter member 160 has filter elements 224, which collectively have filter element upstream faces 204 with a total surface area greater than the total surface area of

the filter element portions 208 that define their porous filter media air outlets. Thus, filter member 160 has a relatively large filter element upstream surface area. As explained above, this provides filter member 160 with a greater capacity to collect dirt on the filter element upstream faces 204, whereby the filter member 160 may operate longer between cleanings, and enjoy a longer working life before requiring replacement. Preferably, the total surface area of upstream faces 204 is at least twice the total surface area of the porous filter media air outlets 208. In the illustrated example, the total surface area of upstream faces 204 is greater than six times the total surface area of the porous filter media air outlets 208.

Referring to FIGS. 5A-5B, filter element 224 may have any number of upstream faces 204, and can have filter media outlet portion(s) 208 on any number of downstream faces 232. For example, filter element 224 may have a greater number of upstream faces 204 than downstream faces 232, which may promote a greater total inlet cross-sectional area than the total outlet cross-sectional area, depending on the size and configuration of the faces. In some embodiments, filter element 224 may be polyhedral. In the illustrated embodiment, filter element 224 is shown having a hexahedral (e.g. cubic) shape, with five upstream faces 204 and an outlet portion 208 provided on a single downstream face 232. In this example, the total surface area of upstream faces 204 is greater than five times the total surface area of the porous filter media air outlets 208.

Outlet portion 208 may include the entirety of filter element downstream face(s) 232 or a lesser portion thereof. In the illustrated embodiment, outlet portion 208 is less than the entire filter element downstream face 232, and is spaced apart from the immediately adjacent upstream faces 204. An advantage of this design is that it can require air that enters an upstream face 204 at a location nearest outlet portion 208 to travel at least a minimum distance (through the porous filter media) effective to filter dirt from the air flow. This may be referred to as preventing the airflow from 'effectively bypassing' the porous filter media. In this way, the dirt separation efficiency of the filter element 224 (i.e. the percentage of dirt removed from the filtered air) may be improved. For example, referring to FIG. 7, outlet portion may be positioned such that the minimum distance that air must travel through the filter element 224 is D. Distance D may be selected such that air travels a predetermined distance through the filter media before exiting the filter media, (in this example though outlet portion 208). It will be appreciated that if outlet portion 208 is larger (see for example FIG. 8), then distance D will be smaller unless sidewall portion 268 is longer in the axial direction (see for example FIG. 40P)

The outlet portion(s) 208 may together include any portion of filter element downstream face(s) 232. For example, outlet portion(s) 208 may have a total surface area of less than 75% of the total surface area of the filter element downstream face(s) 232. In the illustrated embodiment, outlet portion 208 is less than 50% of the surface area of the filter element downstream face 232. As shown, outlet portion 208 may be spaced apart from the upstream faces 204, which are connected to the downstream face 232. In the illustrated example, outlet portion 208 is substantially centered on upstream face 204. This may provide relatively even spacing between outlet portion 208 and the adjacent downstream faces 232. It will be appreciated that if outlet portion is larger, (e.g., it occupies a larger percentage of the downstream face 232 of the filter element 224), then if

sidewall portions 268 are provided, sidewall portions 268 are preferably longer so as to increase distance D.

Still referring to FIGS. 5A-5B, downstream face 232 may include portion 208 that defines the porous filter media air outlet, and a portion 236 that is made air impermeable by an air impermeable material 240 (also referred to as an 'air impermeable member 240'). As shown, air impermeable material 240 may be directly and rigidly attached to downstream face 232 to inhibit air from exiting from downstream face 232 except through outlet portion 208. In this way, air impermeable material 240 may function as an 'outlet mask' that defines (e.g. borders or circumscribes) outlet portion 208. In the illustrated example, air impermeable material 240 surrounds outlet portion 208 in order to space outlet portion 208 from all of the upstream faces 204 that border downstream face 232.

Air impermeable material 240 can be any discrete, air impermeable member that is applied to the porous filter media. In some embodiments, air impermeable material 240 has the form of a coating that is, for example sprayed, stamped, or rolled onto downstream face 232 of filter element 224. In some embodiments, air impermeable material 240 may take the form of a rigid or flexible web or substrate, such as for example a paper, plastic, metal, or silicon sheet or plate, that is rigidly and directly attached to downstream face 232 of filter element 224, such as by adhesive, a fastener, and/or fusing the air impermeable material to the filter element 224 for example. In some embodiments, air impermeable material 240 includes a combination of a coating and a web. In combination, the coating and the web may be air impermeable, even if one or both of the coating and web are air permeable individually.

As used herein, air impermeable material 240 is considered "air impermeable" where air impermeable material 240 reduces the air permeability per unit area of the surface to which it is applied by at least 75%, 80%, 85%, 90%, 95% or more than 95%.

Air impermeable material 240 may be positively connected to filter element 224 by other than, or more than, a friction fit or containment in filter housing 164 (FIG. 2). This may help ensure that the connection between air impermeable material 240 and filter element 224 is properly formed and allows air impermeable material 240 to render the portion 236 of downstream filter face 232 air impermeable.

In some embodiments, air impermeable material 240 is permanently connected to filter element 224. That is, air impermeable material 240 cannot be removed from filter element 224 without damaging one or both of air impermeable material 240 or filter element 224, and without having to reapply bonding agent 238 to restore the connection between air impermeable material 240 and filter element 224. The permanent connection allows air impermeable material 240 and filter housing 164 (FIG. 4) to be user manipulated as a unitary object that can be removed and replaced as one article, for example. The permanent connection may also prevent a loss of filter performance resulting from user error in reconnecting air impermeable material 240 to filter element 224. The permanent connection may be provided by, for example permanent adhesive, welding, coating, or melt bonding the air impermeable material 240 to filter element 224.

FIGS. 40T-40U exemplify an embodiment wherein a coating 240, such as an air impermeable silicon coating, is applied to the downstream face 232 and a portion of the sidewall 204 of the filter element 224. The coating extends axially a distance H from the downstream face 232 towards the opposed upstream face 204. An advantage of the coating

is that it stiffens the downstream end of filter element 224 thereby inhibiting the collapse of outlet passage. Accordingly, in such a case a support member, such as a pipe 247 (as exemplified in FIG. 25) or an insert (as exemplified in FIGS. 40H-40O) may not be required. Such embodiments are exemplified in FIGS. 40B-40G.

In other embodiments, air impermeable material 240 may be removably connected (e.g. semi-permanently connected) to filter element 224. Air impermeable material 240 and filter element 224 may remain connected until a deliberate user action is taken to separate them. This may permit air impermeable material 240 to remain attached to filter element 224 throughout the lifespan of filter element 224, and then deliberately disconnected from filter element 224 for use with a subsequent replacement filter element 224. For example, air impermeable material 240 may be connected to filter element 224 by releasable adhesive, or a fastener (e.g. screw or nail). Reusing the air impermeable material 240 may help reduce the cost and environment impact of replacement filter elements 224.

Filter member 160 can have filter elements 224 of any shape and positional arrangement. For example, filter member 160 can have filter elements 224 that are hexahedral (e.g. cubic) as seen in FIGS. 4 and 5A-5B, cylindrical, spherical, pyramidal, or another regular or irregular shape. All filter elements 224 may have the same shape or filter member 160 may have filter elements 224 of two or more shapes. Further, each filter element 224 may have one filter media air outlet 208, or several spaced apart porous filter media air outlets 208.

FIG. 16 shows an example of filter elements 224 having a rectangular cross-section with lengths 288 that are greater than their widths 292. As shown, filter member 160 may include two, side-by-side, spaced apart filter elements 224. Each filter element 224 is shown including three porous filter media air outlets 208 distributed along the length 288 of each filter element 224.

FIG. 17 shows an example of filter elements 224 each having a hexagonal cross-sectional shape. As shown, hexagonal filter elements 224 are distributed in a spaced apart manner within a hexagonal filter housing 164, and each filter element 224 is shown including one porous filter media air outlet 208.

FIG. 18 shows an example of filter elements 224 each having an arcuate cross-sectional shape. As shown, arcuate filter elements 224 are distributed in a spaced apart manner within an arcuate filter housing 164, and each filter element 224 is shown including one porous filter media air outlet 208.

FIGS. 19-21 show examples of filter members 160 having filter elements 224, each having square cross-sectional shapes that are arranged in a 3x3, 4x4, and 5x3 grid pattern respectively.

FIGS. 22-23 show an example of a filter member 160 having filter elements 224₁ and 224₂ that have different cross-sectional sizes and shapes. As shown, filter element 224₁ has an annular shape (e.g. hollow cylindrical shape), and filter element 224₂ has a circular cross-sectional shape. Also, filter element 224₂ is smaller than filter element 224₁. The illustration also exemplifies that filter member 160 can have nested filter elements. In the example shown, filter element 224₂ is nested within filter element 224₁. Further, the illustration exemplifies that filter member 160 can have filter elements with different numbers of porous filter media air outlets. As shown, filter element 224₁ has 16 porous filter

media air outlets **208**₁ circularly distributed in spaced apart relation, and filter element **224**₂ has one filter media air outlet **208**₂.

Reference is now made to FIGS. **24-25**. In some embodiments, outlet portion **208** need not be merely a port or opening in a porous member provided on a face of the filter element **224**. Instead, outlet portion **208** may be an open volume formed as a recess **296** in filter element **224**. Recess **296** may provide an air outlet passage **304** which extends in an air flow direction **308**. As shown, a support member **247** may be provided inside outlet passage **304** and may be of any shape that may inhibit outlet passage **304** from collapsing as air flows through the filter element. Support member may be cylindrical, such as a pipe, all or a portion of the sidewall of which may be solid (non-porous) or, as exemplified in FIG. **40A** and upstream portion of the support member may be air permeable (e.g., it may be porous or have openings filled with e.g., a screen or mesh material or it may be formed with openings therein). As exemplified in FIGS. **40H-40I**, support member **247** may be in the form of a longitudinally extending member having an "X" shape in transverse section (i.e., it may have four, optionally equidistantly spaced, longitudinally extending ribs which extend radially outwardly from a central core). As exemplified in FIGS. **40J-40K**, support member **247** may have three, optionally equidistantly spaced, longitudinally extending ribs which extend radially outwardly from a central core. As exemplified in FIGS. **40L-40M**, support member **247** may have a singular longitudinally extending rib. As exemplified in FIGS. **40N-40O**, support member **247** may comprise a plurality, e.g., four, optionally equidistantly spaced, longitudinally extending posts, which may have at their inner end a support ring **247A**.

Air outlet passage **304** may be lined with a hollow support member (e.g., a pipe) **247**. Support member **247** has a sidewall **312**. Some or all of sidewall **312** may be air impermeable. For example, air impermeable member **240** may extend from filter element downstream face **232** into air outlet passage **304**. As illustrated, air impermeable member **240** may form a pipe or support member **247** that has a sidewall **312** that may abut the inner surface of outlet passage **304**. An advantage of this design is that the porous filter media air outlet **208** is offset from filter element downstream face **232** inwards to a position that is more evenly spaced from upstream faces **204**. This may provide each upstream face **204** with a more similar path length to porous filter media air outlet **208**, and therefore a more similar flow resistance to porous filter media air outlet **208**. In turn, this may promote a more even distribution of air flow across upstream faces **204**, which may avoid premature clogging of certain upstream faces **204** that have at least initially the lowest flow resistance to porous filter media air outlet **208** and therefore admit the most air flow.

Reference is now made to FIGS. **27-33**. In some embodiments, recess **296** defines an air outlet passage **304** extending from an upstream face **204**. As compared with the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. **24-25**, in which air outlet passage **304** extends from a downstream face **232** (some or all of which may be made air impermeable by an air impermeable member **240**), upstream face **204** may provide additional upstream surface area to filter element **224**. As discussed above, additional upstream surface area may provide the filter member **160** with more area for dirt to collect on the upstream faces **204** of the filter member **160**, and therefore the filter member **160** can remove more dirt from an air flow before the upstream faces **204** become clogged, all else being equal. In use, this allows the filter member **160**

to filter a greater volume of air before the filter member **160** creates a substantial pressure drop in the air flow path or experiences substantial dirt penetration.

In the illustrated example of FIG. **27**, all exterior faces of filter element **224** may be upstream faces **204**. As shown, downstream face **232** may be defined by the interior surface(s) of recess **296**. Air impermeable member **240** may extend into recess **296**, and overlies portion(s) **236** of downstream face **232** to make portion(s) **236** air impermeable. The remaining portion(s) **208** of downstream face **232** may define a porous filter media air outlet.

FIG. **27** may appear to illustrate air impermeable member **240** as being spaced apart from the interior surfaces of recess **296**. This spacing is only shown for clarity to provide air impermeable member **240** and recess **296** with distinguishable lines in the illustration. It will be understood that air impermeable member **240** is optionally in fact positioned as having flush contact with the interior surfaces of recess **296** as exemplified in FIG. **31**.

As shown, air impermeable portion **236** may extend from an upstream face **204** inwardly. That is, portion(s) **208** that defines the porous filter media air outlet may be spaced apart from recess opening **322** at the upstream face **204**. As discussed above, this may position porous filter media air outlet **208** more centrally within filter element **224**, whereby each upstream face **204** may have a more similar path length to porous filter media air outlet **208**, and therefore a more similar flow resistance to porous filter media air outlet **208**, all else being equal.

As exemplified in FIG. **31**, air impermeable member **240** includes a portion **324** within recess **296**, and recess portion **324** includes an outer portion **326** extending inwardly from upstream face **204** and an inner portion **328** extending inwardly from outer portion **326**. As shown, inner portion **328** may border (e.g. surround or circumscribe) the portion(s) **208** defining the porous filter media air outlet. Portions **208** may be bordered by openings **332** formed in inner portion **328**, an open inner end **336** of inner portion **328**, or both as shown. Outer portion **326** may not border any air outlet portion(s) **208**. For example, outer portion **326** may provide contiguous coverage (free of openings) over a length **340** of recess **296** extending from recess opening **322**. In some embodiments, and as shown, outer portion length **340** (measured in airflow direction **308**) may be at least $\frac{1}{4}$ of recess length **344** (measured in airflow direction **308**). Depending on the shape of filter element **224**, such length **340** may permit outer portion **326** to effectively offset porous filter media air outlet **208** inwardly from recess opening **322** at upstream face **204**. As discussed above, such an offset may provide numerous advantages.

The illustrated example shows air impermeable recess portion **324** formed as a pipe, which extends to an inner end **348** of filter element recess **296**. An advantage of this design is that it simplifies installing filter element **224** onto air impermeable member **240** (i.e. filter element **224** is inserted as far as possible into recess **296**). In alternative embodiments, air impermeable recess portion **324** may be spaced apart from recess inner end **348**. For example, outer portion may be secured in position, such as by an adhesive, so that no inner portion **328** is required (e.g., in FIG. **31**, inner portion may be removed and outer portion may be secured in the position shown). In such a case, outlet portion **208** comprises a contiguous (e.g. cylindrical) section of recess **296** extending from recess inner end **348**. An advantage of this design is that it may permit porous filter media air outlet **208** to have a greater surface area.

FIGS. 34-38 illustrate examples in which filter element 224 is cylindrically shaped.

FIGS. 39-45 illustrate examples in which filter element 224 has a round shape (e.g. substantially ovoid or spherical shape).

If filter element 304 has an outlet passage 304, then as exemplified in FIGS. 40R and 40S, filter element 304 may be formed (e.g., extruded) with an outlet passage 304 that extends from end face 205 to the outlet end face 207. The upper portion of the outlet passage 304 may be filled by an insert member 209, which has axially opposed end faces 2091 and 2092. Insert 209 may be porous and may be made from the same material as element 224, e.g., a porous foam. The insert 209 may be secured in position by, e.g., an adhesive or a compression fit. When secured in position, end face 205 and end face 2091 may extend in a common plane. Filter Housing Having a Filter Member

Embodiments herein relate to an improved filter housing, which may hold the filter member disclosed herein.

Reference is now made to FIGS. 2, 6, and 7. Filter member 160 may be configured (e.g. sized, shaped, and arranged) within filter housing 164 to mitigate backpressure. This allows apparatus 100 to draw greater air flow with same size of suction motor 144, or to draw the same air flow with a smaller, lighter, less expensive suction motor 144, all else being equal. In some embodiments, filter member 160 may be configured to provide an air flow path within filter housing 164 having a cross-sectional area that is equal to or greater than a cross-sectional area of the air flow path 124 at one or many critical positions upstream of filter housing 164.

As shown, within filter housing 164, a filter element 224 may be positioned with their upstream faces 204 spaced apart from opposing filter housing walls 242 by an outside gap 244. Outside gap 244 may provide an unobstructed path for air to access and enter upstream faces 204, which are opposed to housing walls 242. In embodiments of filter member 160 that have more than one filter element 224, the filter upstream faces 204 may be spaced apart from opposing upstream faces 204 of adjacent filter elements 224 by an inside gap 248. Inside gap 248 may provide an unobstructed path for air to access and enter upstream faces 204, which are opposed to another upstream face 204.

Outside gaps 244 and inside gaps 248 together have a gap cross-sectional area in a plane 250 transverse to a direction of air flow through the gaps 244 and 248. The gap cross-sectional area may be equal to or greater than the cross-sectional area of the air treatment member air inlet 184 (in a plane transverse to the direction of air flow through inlet 184) and/or equal to or greater than the cross-sectional area of the air treatment member air outlet 188 (in a plane transverse to the direction of air flow through air outlet 188), or both. This may mitigate backpressure that might result from a flow restriction created by the sizing of gaps 244 and 248. As discussed above, this may permit apparatus 100 to draw greater air flow with the same size of suction motor 144, or to draw the same air flow with a smaller, lighter, less expensive suction motor 144 that consumes less power, all else being equal. Without being limited by theory, creating backpressure expends energy, and therefore reducing backpressure may conserve energy. By conserving energy, a battery operated hand vacuum 100 may run for a longer duration on the same size of battery 252, or run for the same duration on a smaller, lighter, and less expensive battery 252, all else being equal.

Reference is now made to FIG. 8, which shows a filter housing 164 holding a filter member 160, in accordance with an embodiment. Filter housing 164 may be permanently

connected to or integrally formed with apparatus 100 (FIG. 1). Alternatively, filter housing 164 may be removable positionable in a corresponding cavity of apparatus 100 (FIG. 1) in the manner of a cartridge. As shown, filter housing 164 may include housing sidewalls 242 that connect an upstream wall 254 to a downstream wall 256. Upstream wall 254 may include a filter housing air inlet 260. Downstream wall 256 may include a filter housing air outlet 212. In use, air travels from filter housing air inlet 260 through filter element upstream faces 204, to porous filter media air outlet 208, and then exits filter housing 164 through filter housing air outlet 212. It will be appreciated that housing air inlet 260 and air outlet 212 do not need to be provided in opposing upstream and downstream walls 254 and 256, so long as they are situated in the air flow path upstream and downstream of filter member 160 respectively. For example, filter housing 164 may be configured so that one or both of housing air inlet 260 and air outlet 212 are provided in a housing sidewall 242.

Optionally, the cross-sectional area of housing air inlet 260 in a direction transverse to the direction of air flow therethrough is equal to or substantially equal to the cross-sectional area of housing air outlet 212 in a direction transverse to the direction of air flow therethrough and/or equal to or substantially equal to the cross-sectional area of outside gap 244 and inside gap 248 in a direction transverse to the direction of air flow therethrough and/or equal to or substantially equal to the cross-sectional area of outlet passage in a direction transverse to the air flow direction 308. In other embodiments, the cross-sectional area of outside gap 244 and inside gap 248 in a direction transverse to the direction of air flow therethrough may be 100%, 200%, 300%, 400%, 500% or more of the cross-sectional area of housing air inlet 260 in a direction transverse to the direction of air flow therethrough and/or the cross-sectional area of housing air outlet 212 in a direction transverse to the direction of air flow therethrough. An advantage of this design is that, as the filter elements accumulate dirt filtered from the air stream, an increase in back pressure produced by the air flow through the filter housing will tend to be limited and may not occur.

Turning to FIG. 9, in some embodiments a filter element 224 may include an air impermeable material 240 that extends over a portion 264 of one or more upstream faces 204 that border downstream face 232. In the illustrated example, air impermeable material 240 includes side portions 268 that extend away from downstream face 232 over a portion 264 of every upstream face 204 that borders downstream face 232. As shown, side portions 268 sit flush against upstream face portions 264 whereby upstream face portions 264 are rendered air impermeable. This may further mitigate air from effectively bypassing the porous filter media, by inhibiting air from entering upstream face 204 at locations which most closely border porous filter media air outlet 208. As noted above, mitigating bypass may improve the dirt separation efficiency of filter element 224 by forcing the air flow to travel at least a minimum distance through the porous filter media.

As exemplified in FIGS. 40B-40E, filter element 224 has an internal outlet passage 304. The filter material has a thickness A in a direction transverse to the longitudinal axis of outlet passage 304. Thickness A may be the minimum distance that air must travel as it passes through the filter media from upstream face 204 to outlet passage 304. For example, upper end face 305 may be spaced more than thickness A from the upper end face 205 of the filter element. Alternately, upper end face 305 may be spaced thickness A

from upper end face **205**. Sidewall portion **268** may terminate at an upper end **269** such that the minimum distance B from outlet portion **208** to upper end **269** is greater than thickness A. The longitudinal extend or height H of sidewall portions may be 0.25-1.5 A, 0.25-1 A or 0.25-0.5 A. In other embodiments, height H may be 1.5 A or more. For example, FIG. 40P show an embodiment wherein H is larger, thereby increasing distance B.

As exemplified in FIG. 40E, the air impermeable material **240** is not attached to the filter element **224** but is an end wall **246** of the outlet end of the chamber defined by filter housing **164**. As such, outlet portion may be considered to be a port or opening in the end wall **246**. If the end wall **246** is solid, then the height of sidewall portions **268** may be reduced to provide the minimum distance B. It will be appreciated that the end wall **246** of the chamber defined by filter housing **164** need not be solid as exemplified in FIG. 40E, but may be a plurality of ribs **247** as exemplified in FIG. 40Q. Accordingly, the space between ribs **247** may define the outlet of the filter media **224**. As exemplified, ribs **247** are spaced apart equidistantly around the end of the filter chamber. It will be appreciated that ribs **247** may be spaced apart by different amounts; they need not extend continuously along the radial length of the end of the filter chamber but may be a plurality of discrete members extending inwardly from end of the filter chamber to assist in holding filter element **224** in position.

Still referring to FIG. 9, filter member **160** may be positioned within filter housing **164** with filter element(s) **224** positioned spaced apart from filter housing upstream wall **254**. This may define an upstream header **272** that allows air to freely diffuse across the filter element upstream faces **204**.

Alternatively or in addition, filter member **160** may be positioned within filter housing **164** with filter element(s) **224** spaced apart from filter housing downstream wall **256** to define a downstream header **276**. Downstream header **276** may permit air exiting filter element(s) **224** to consolidate (i.e. rejoin, merge) and exit as a singular air flow. Filter element(s) **224** may be supported in spaced apart relation from filter housing downstream wall **256** in any manner. In the illustrated example, filter housing **164** includes sidewall supports **280** that hold filter elements **224** spaced apart from filter housing downstream wall **256**. As shown, filter elements **224** may rest upon supports, such as sidewall supports **280** and/or end wall supports **282**, with air impermeable material **240** in contact with the sidewall supports **280** and/or end wall supports **282**. Sidewall supports **282** and/or end wall supports **282** may be integrally formed or permanently connected to air impermeable material **240** as shown, or a wall of the filter housing, such as a sidewall of the filter housing or filter housing downstream wall **256**, or neither.

FIG. 9 exemplifies an embodiment wherein sidewall supports extend inwardly from a sidewall of the filter housing **164**. Spacers **280** may be integrally formed or permanently connected to air impermeable material **240** as shown, or a filter housing sidewall, or neither.

FIG. 10 exemplifies an embodiment in which spacers **282** hold filter elements **224** spaced apart from filter housing downstream wall **256**. As shown, spacers **282** may extend from air impermeable material **240** away from filter element downstream face **232**. Spacers **282** may be integrally formed or permanently connected to air impermeable material **240** as shown, or filter housing downstream wall **256**, or neither.

Referring to FIGS. 5A-B, each filter element **224** may include a discrete air impermeable member **240**. An advantage of this design is that it may permit each filter element

224 to be removed for cleaning or replacement on an individual basis as required. Alternatively, two or more (or all) of filter elements **224** may share a common air impermeable member **240**. FIG. 8 shows an example in which all of filter elements **224** share a common air impermeable member **240**, which extends over the air impermeable portion **236** of each filter element downstream face **232** (see also FIG. 11). An advantage of this design is that it allows air impermeable member **240** to connect the plurality of filter elements **224** in a fixed relative positional arrangement that provides the intended outside and inside gaps **244** and **248** (FIG. 6). This may mitigate a loss of separation efficiency or an increase in backpressure as a result of user error in positionally arranging filter elements **224** with the requisite spacing.

Referring to FIG. 11, filter housing **164** may be openable to provide access to filter member **160** inside. As shown, a wall of filter housing **164** (e.g. upstream wall **254** as shown, a sidewall **242**, and/or downstream wall **256**) may be movable (e.g. rotatably, slideably, or removably) from a closed position (FIG. 8) to an open position (FIG. 11). In the open position, user access to inspect, clean, and/or remove filter member **160** may be provided.

In alternative embodiments, filter housing **164** may be permanently closed. For example, filter housing **164** may form a disposable filter cartridge that is to be removed and replaced when needed. This may avoid user exposure to the dirt collect by the filter member **160** that is inside filter housing **164**.

Alternatively or in addition to being disposable, filter member **160** may be cleaned without opening filter housing **164**. FIGS. 12-14 illustrate an exemplary method of cleaning a filter member **160** within filter housing **164**. Beginning with FIGS. 12-13, filter housing **164** may be oriented with filter housing air outlet **212** face-up. A cleaning fluid **320** (e.g. water) may be poured into filter housing air outlet **212**. The cleaning fluid will flow through filter elements **224** in reverse from filter element outlets **208** to upstream faces **204**. The cleaning fluid may entrain dirt that is within the porous filter media, and on upstream faces **204**, and carry the dirt out of filter housing **164** through filter housing air inlet **260**.

Turning to FIG. 14, a plunger (e.g. a rod) **284** may be inserted through filter housing air outlet **212** and used to push filter elements **224** so that filter elements **224** become compressed against filter housing downstream wall **256**. This may be done to agitate the cleaning fluid within the filter elements **224** (e.g. to dislodge additional dirt), and/or to squeeze out cleaning fluid from the filter elements **224** (e.g. to expedite drying). In the illustrated example, filter elements **224** are connected by a common air impermeable member **240**, and the plunger **284** presses on the air impermeable member **240** to compress filter elements **224** as a group. Alternatively, filter elements **224** may have individual air impermeable members **240**, and may be compressed individually. Alternately, a rigid member may be provided inside the filter housing and moved by a plunger to compress the filter elements.

As shown in FIG. 15, a screen **286** may be provided for filter elements **224** to be compressed against. As compared with a liquid impermeable wall, screen **286** may permit cleaning fluid to expel from filter element **224** through the faces in contact with screen **286**. In turn, screen **286** may permit the cleaning fluid to better clean the end faces of filter elements **224**.

21

It will be appreciated that, in alternate embodiments, a cleaning fluid may be introduced through the air inlet port and a plunger may be inserted through the air inlet port.

As exemplified in FIG. 40B, the outlet passage downstream of outlet portion 208 (filter housing air outlet 212) may have a larger cross-sectional area in a direction transverse to a direction of air flow therethrough (e.g., transverse to flow direction 308) than the cross-sectional area of outlet portion 208 in a direction transverse to flow direction 308. For example, as exemplified in FIG. 40B, the diameter of the filter housing air outlet 212 may be the same as the diameter of filter housing 164. Alternately, as exemplified in FIGS. 40C-40E, a flange 310 may be provided at the outlet end of the filter element 164. Accordingly, the cross-sectional area in a direction transverse to the direction of air flow through the filter housing air outlet 212 may be increased and may be larger than the diameter of filter housing 164.

It will be appreciated that the filter may be spaced from the inner surface of the sidewalls of the filter housing 164 by any means. For example, pipe 245 (see for example FIG. 40A, may secure filter element 224 in position in filter housing 164. Alternately, or in addition ribs 166 may be provided on the inner surface of the sidewall of filter housing. As exemplified, ribs 166 extend continuously axially in the direction of the sidewall 167 of filter housing 164. As exemplified, ribs 166 are spaced apart equidistantly around sidewall 167. It will be appreciated that ribs 166 may be spaced apart by different amounts; they need not extend continuously along the length of the sidewall 167 but may be a plurality of discrete members extending inwardly from sidewall 167 to assist in holding filter element 224 in position.

As exemplified in FIGS. 40D, 40F, 40H, 40J, 40L, 40N, and 40Q. Filter housing 164 may include a lid 162, which may be openable. Optionally, lid may have one or more ribs 163 that extend from lid 162 downwardly to upper surface 205 of filter element 224 to assist in holding filter element 224 in position in the filter housing 164. Ribs 163 are spaced apart equidistantly around lid 162. It will be appreciated that ribs 163 may be spaced apart by different amounts; they need not extend continuously along the radial length of the lid 162 but may be a plurality of discrete members extending inwardly from lid 162 to assist in holding filter element 224 in position. Ribs 163 may overlie less than 10%, less than 5% or less than 3% of upper surface 205 of filter element 224.

Distributed Filter Elements

As demonstrated by the examples illustrated in FIGS. 16-23, there is great flexibility of design in the shape and size of filter member 160, and the number and arrangement of filter elements 224 therein. Turning to FIG. 26, this design flexibility may permit surface cleaning apparatus 100 to accommodate two or more filter members 160 positioned in parallel in the air flow path 124. For example, apparatus 100 may include two or more pre-motor filter members 160 positioned in parallel in the air flow path 124 between air treatment member air outlet 188 and suction motor air inlet 316. In some embodiments, filter members 160 may be sized and shaped to occupy locations in apparatus 100 that may have otherwise been unused void space. An advantage of occupying otherwise unused space with additional filter member(s) 160 is that it may provide greater dirt separation efficiency and less backpressure, all else being equal.

As exemplified in FIG. 26, two filter members 160 are provided, one above air treatment member 116 and one above handle 104. As shown, air exiting air treatment member 116 may divide into two parallel air flow paths 124₁

22

and 124₂. Air flow path 124₁ is shown extending across pre-motor filter member 160₁ from air treatment member air outlet 188 to suction motor air inlet 316, and air flow path 124₂ is shown extending across pre-motor filter member 160₂ from air treatment member air outlet 188 to suction motor air inlet 316.

While the above description provides examples of the embodiments, it will be appreciated that some features and/or functions of the described embodiments are susceptible to modification without departing from the spirit and principles of operation of the described embodiments. Accordingly, what has been described above has been intended to be illustrative of the invention and non-limiting and it will be understood by persons skilled in the art that other variants and modifications may be made without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the claims appended hereto. The scope of the claims should not be limited by the preferred embodiments and examples, but should be given the broadest interpretation consistent with the description as a whole.

The invention claimed is:

1. A surface cleaning apparatus comprising:

- (a) an air flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet with an air treatment member and a suction motor positioned in the air flow path; and,
- (b) a first pre-motor filter having an upstream face and a downstream face, the first pre-motor filter is positioned in the air flow path downstream of the air treatment member and upstream of the suction motor; and,
- (c) a second pre-motor filter having an upstream face and a downstream face, the second pre-motor filter is positioned in the air flow path downstream of the air treatment member and upstream of the suction motor, wherein the first pre-motor filter and the second pre-motor filter are in parallel in the air flow path, and wherein neither of the first pre-motor filter and the second pre-motor filter is positioned upstream from the other.

2. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 1 wherein the first pre-motor filter and the second pre-motor filter are provided at different locations in the surface cleaning apparatus.

3. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 1 wherein the surface cleaning apparatus is a hand vacuum cleaner.

4. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 1 wherein neither of the upstream and downstream faces of first pre-motor filter faces any of the upstream and downstream faces of the second pre-motor filter.

5. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 1 wherein the air flow path comprises a first air flow path portion and a second air flow path portion, the first air flow path portion extends from the air treatment member to the suction motor and the first pre-motor filter is positioned in the first air flow path portion, and the second air flow path portion extends from the air treatment member to the suction motor and the second pre-motor filter is positioned in the second air flow path portion.

6. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 5 wherein, a first portion of air that enters the dirty air inlet passes through the first pre-motor filter and a second portion of the air that enters the dirty air inlet passes through the second pre-motor filter and the first portion and the second portion of air merge upstream of the suction motor.

7. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 1 wherein, a first portion of air that enters the dirty air inlet passes through the first pre-motor filter and a second portion of the air that enters the dirty air inlet passes through the second

23

pre-motor filter and the first portion and the second portion of air merge upstream of the suction motor.

8. A surface cleaning apparatus comprising:

- (a) an air flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet with an air treatment member and a suction motor positioned in the air flow path; and,
- (b) a first pre-motor filter having an upstream face and a downstream face, the first pre-motor filter is positioned in the air flow path downstream of the air treatment member and upstream of the suction motor; and,
- (c) a second pre-motor filter having an upstream face and a downstream face, the second pre-motor filter is positioned in the air flow path downstream of the air treatment member and upstream of the suction motor, wherein neither of the upstream and downstream faces of first pre-motor filter faces any of the upstream and downstream faces of the second pre-motor filter.

9. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 8 wherein the first pre-motor filter and the second pre-motor filter are provided at different locations in the surface cleaning apparatus.

10. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 8 wherein the surface cleaning apparatus is a hand vacuum cleaner.

11. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 8 wherein the air flow path comprises a first air flow path portion and a second air flow path portion, the first air flow path portion extends from the air treatment member to the suction motor and the first pre-motor filter is positioned in the first air flow path portion, and the second air flow path portion extends from the air treatment member to the suction motor and the second pre-motor filter is positioned in the second air flow path portion.

12. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 11 wherein, a first portion of air that enters the dirty air inlet passes through the first pre-motor filter and a second portion of the air that enters the dirty air inlet passes through the second pre-motor filter and the first portion and the second portion of air merge upstream of the suction motor.

24

13. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 8 wherein, a first portion of air that enters the dirty air inlet passes through the first pre-motor filter and a second portion of the air that enters the dirty air inlet passes through the second pre-motor filter and the first portion and the second portion of air merge upstream of the suction motor.

14. A surface cleaning apparatus comprising:

- (a) an air flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet with an air treatment member and a suction motor positioned in the air flow path, the air flow path comprises a first air flow path portion that extends from the air treatment member to the suction motor and a second air flow path portion that extends from the air treatment member to the suction motor;
- (b) a first pre-motor filter having an upstream face and a downstream face, the first pre-motor filter is positioned in first air flow path portion; and,
- (c) a second pre-motor filter having an upstream face and a downstream face, the second pre-motor filter is positioned in the second air flow path portion.

15. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 14 wherein the first pre-motor filter and the second pre-motor filter are provided at different locations in the surface cleaning apparatus.

16. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 14 wherein the surface cleaning apparatus is a hand vacuum cleaner.

17. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 14 wherein neither of the upstream and downstream faces of first pre-motor filter faces any of the upstream and downstream faces of the second pre-motor filter.

18. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 14 wherein, a first portion of air that enters the dirty air inlet passes through the first pre-motor filter and a second portion of the air that enters the dirty air inlet passes through the second pre-motor filter and the first portion and the second portion of air merge upstream of the suction motor.

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