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(71) Applicant: **PITNEY BOWES, INC.**
World Headquarters One Elmcroft
Stamford Connecticut 06926-0700(US)

(72) Inventor: **Buan, Danilo P.**
29 Hall Road
Easton CT 06612(US)
Inventor: **Terry, Betty R.**
7 Spring Valley Road
Weston CT 06883(US)
Inventor: **Jackson, Jerome E.**
6 Roosevelt Drive
Newtown CT 06470(US)

(74) Representative: **Cook, Anthony John et al**
D. YOUNG & CO. 10, Staple Inn
London, WC1V 7RD(GB)

(54) Ink tray.

(57) An ink pad device for a high speed mailing machine is disclosed. The ink pad device includes an ink pad and an ink chamber in which the ink pad is at least partially disposed to sorb ink therefrom. The ink pad device may also comprise an ink reservoir and/or a pump for pumping ink from the reservoir to the ink chamber. The ink pad device is attachable to a drive for moving the ink pad horizontally and vertically from a horizontal home position to a horizontal inking position in which the ink pad is tamped against a printing device which imprints postage indicia. The ink pump comprises a deformable chamber which is compressed to pump ink from the reservoir to the ink chamber. In one embodiment, the ink pad and the ink chamber are provided as a disposable, non-replenishable, non-refillable unit containing a limited amount of ink for limited use. In another embodiment, the ink chamber, the ink pad, the reservoir and the pump form a unit in which ink is replenished from the reservoir to the ink chamber. In that embodiment, the entire unit may be made disposable and may be moved by the drive to the inking position. In still another embodiment, the ink pad and the ink chamber form a disposable, replenishable unit, and the reservoir is replaceable. In that embodiment, only the ink pad and the ink chamber are movable by the drive to the inking position.

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INK TRAY

The invention disclosed herein relates to an ink pad device, particularly for inking a printing device, particularly a printing device of a mailing machine.

In the mail processing field, it is highly desirable to imprint postage and other indicia on envelopes, packages, tapes, etc. at a high speed. With such high speed operation, particularly where high volume is involved, it is important to maintain the quality of imprinted postage and other indicia.

In European Patent Application (EP-A) No. 321098 there is disclosed an inker module. The whole content of this disclosure is hereby incorporated in the present application.

The disclosed ink pad device includes an ink pad and an ink chamber for holding ink to be transferred to the ink pad i.e. the ink chamber holds ink in addition to any ink already contained in the ink pad. The ink chamber and the ink pad are configured such that the ink pad when mounted in the ink pad device is at least partially disposed in the ink chamber adjacent a layer of ink held in the ink chamber to obtain ink directly from the layer.

In a specific embodiment, the ink chamber includes therein a plurality of partitions defining a plurality of channels for holding ink, and the ink pad is at least partially disposed in the ink chamber contacting the partitions adjacent the channels to obtain ink disposed in the channels. The ink chamber may comprise structure defining a manifold extending adjacent an end of the ink channels in communication therewith.

In a specific embodiment, the ink pad comprises one or more layers of a material which sorbs ink from a layer of ink which the material is in contact.

According to an embodiment of the invention, an inlet is provided to the ink chamber for supplying ink thereto. Preferably, an outlet is also provided from the ink chamber for removing excess ink accumulated in the ink chamber.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the ink pad device includes an ink reservoir. In a specific embodiment, the ink chamber and reservoir are attached so as to form a unit. Thus, the ink pad, the ink chamber and the reservoir may be moved as a unit from the home position referred to above to the inking position referred to above when mounted to an ink device drive. Preferably, the ink pad/ink chamber/ink reservoir unit is a disposable unit, i.e., is constructed so as to make disposability practical. In another embodiment, the ink pad and ink chamber are attached as a unit, preferably a disposable unit, and the ink reservoir is separate therefrom.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the ink pad device includes an ink pump. In a specific embodiment, the ink chamber and the ink pump are attached so as to form a unit. Thus, the ink pad, the ink chamber and the ink pump may be moved as a unit from the home position referred to above to the inking position referred to above when mounted to an ink device drive. Preferably, the ink pad/ink chamber/ink pump unit is a disposable unit. In another embodiment, the ink reservoir and the pump are attached as a unit, preferably to be reused after the reservoir is emptied, and the ink chamber is separate therefrom. In that embodiment, only the ink chamber (and the ink pad) are moved from a home position to an inking position. Preferably, the ink chamber and ink pad are a disposable unit.

According to another embodiment of the invention, the ink pad device includes the ink reservoir and the ink pump, and in a specific embodiment, the ink chamber, the ink reservoir and the ink pump are attached so as to form a unit. Thus, the ink pad, the ink chamber, the ink reservoir and the ink pump may be moved as a unit from the home position referred to above to the inking position referred to above when mounted to an ink device drive. Preferably, the ink pad/ink chamber/ink reservoir/ink pump unit is a disposable unit.

In one embodiment, the ink pad device includes a cartridge with which the reservoir forms an integral or unitary part, and a tray which incorporates the ink chamber and which is attached to the cartridge. In another embodiment, the ink reservoir is a separate part from the ink chamber. Features of the apparatus disclosed and illustrated are:

to provide improved ink pad devices, particularly for inking a printing device;

to provide ink pad devices incorporating a substantial supply of ink therein in addition to any ink already contained in an ink pad of the particular device;

to provide ink pad devices which are capable of imparting ink to a printing device quickly so as to permit high speed operation of the printing device;

to provide ink pad devices for inking a printing device which may be replenished with ink during operation of the printing device;

to provide improved ink pad devices and ink pumps and/or ink reservoirs therefor, particularly for inking a printing device;

to provide ink pad devices which incorporate an ink reservoir and/or an ink pump;

to provide such ink pad devices in which all or part of the devices are disposable;

to provide such ink pad devices for inking postage meter printing devices, particularly at high speed;

to provide such ink pad devices which may be mounted to drive apparatus, particularly high speed drive apparatus, for moving the ink pad device or parts thereof including an ink pad from a home position to an inking position in which the ink pad of the ink pad device is tamped against a printing device;

to provide ink pad devices described in the preceding paragraph which are capable of being replenished with ink while mounted to the drive therefor during operation thereof; and

to provide such ink pad devices which may be mounted to drive apparatus, particularly high speed drive apparatus, for moving the inking device or parts thereof including an ink pad in two directions, for example horizontal and vertical, from a home position to an inking position in which the ink pad of the ink pad device is tamped against a printing device.

The invention is illustrated by way of example and not limitation in the figures of the accompanying drawings in which like references denote the same elements, and in which:

FIG. 1 is a front perspective view of a drive for moving an ink pad tray from a home position to an inking position in a mailing machine;

FIG. 2 is a sectional view of the drive of FIG. 1, also showing the ink pad tray in its home position, and a pump for the ink pad, a printing device and a platen device in its home position;

FIG. 3 is a front perspective view of the drive depicted in FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is a simplified side view partially broken away of the drive, ink pad, ink pad tray, platen device and printer device depicted in FIG. 3 With the ink pad tray and the platen device in their home positions;

FIGS. 5-7 are views similar to that of FIG. 4 showing the motion of the ink pad tray in stages from its rest position depicted in FIG. 4 to its inking position depicted in FIG. 7 with the ink pad tamped against the printing device, the platen device being shown in its home position;

FIG. 8 is a view similar to that of FIG. 4 showing the ink pad tray back in its home position and the platen device in its printing position tamping an envelope or tape against the printing device for imprinting the envelope;

FIG. 9 consisting of FIGS. 9a, 9b and 9c is a series of plots showing the relationship between the horizontal and vertical positions of the ink pad tray and the angle of the ink pad drive camshaft with respect to movement of the ink pad tray from its home to its inking position;

FIG. 10 consisting of FIGS. 10a, 10b, and 10c is a series of plots showing the relationship between the horizontal and vertical positions of the ink pad tray and the angle of the ink pad drive camshaft with respect to movement of the ink pad tray shortly before, during and shortly after tamping thereof against the printing device;

FIGS. 11-17 are stick diagrams illustrating the relative positions of drive linkages, the ink pump linkages and the drive camshaft and showing the percentage completed of the inking cycle in moving the ink tray from its home position to its inking position;

FIG. 18 is a perspective view of an ink pad, ink pad tray and pump;

FIG. 19 is an exploded perspective view of the ink pad, ink pad tray and pump depicted in FIG. 18;

FIG. 20 is a side sectional view of another embodiment of an ink-pad, ink pad tray and pump, this embodiment including an ink reservoir, and this figure also showing portions of the ink tray drive which also actuate the pump; and

FIG. 21 is a sectional view of the reservoir and pump depicted in FIG. 20 taken along line 21 - 21 of FIG. 20.

Referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, inker module 25 includes a chassis 30 which houses drive 32 that (a) moves an ink pad tray 34 (FIG. 2) from a home position (FIG. 2) to an inking position (FIG. 7) in which an ink pad 36 (FIG. 2) is tamped against a printing device 38 (FIG. 2) to ink the printing device; and (b) actuates a pump 40 (FIG. 2) to pump ink from a reservoir 41 in ink pad tray 34 to ink pad 36. Chassis 30 also houses drive 42 which moves platen device 44 (FIG. 2) upwardly from a home position (FIG. 2) to a printing position (FIG. 8) in which an en velope or strip of tape 46 is pressed against printing device 38 to imprint postage indicia thereon. Printing device 38 is part of a flat-bed postage meter referenced generally by 47 (Fig. 2) which is pivotally mounted by a counterbalance mechanism 48 in a system including inker module 25.

Ink tray 34 at opposed sides 50 (FIG. 2) adjacent its rear 52 is pivotally connected to ends 54, 55 (FIG. 1) of links 56, 57, respectively, by inwardly projecting pins 59 from links 56, 57 snap fitted in receptacles 61 (FIG. 18) of ink tray 34. The forward part 63 of ink tray 34 is supported by pins 65, (FIG. 1) inwardly projecting from ends 67, 68 of links 70, 71, respectively. That snap-fit arrangement facilitates replacement of ink tray 34 as described in more detail below. Platform 72 is fixed to chassis 30 so that links 56 and 57 move relative to platform 72. Pins 65 extend into slots or cut-outs 73 in sides 50 of ink tray 34 (FIG. 18) so that ink tray 34 may be moved by links 56 and 57 relative to platform 72 riding on pins 65. Platform 72 is attached to opposed sides 73, 74 (FIG. 1) of chassis 30 by screws 75 so that it may be removed for ease of assembling, disassembling and servicing of drives

32 and 42. Links 70 and 71 are pivotally attached in a central region 77 thereof to platform 72 by pins 79 so that ends 67 and 68 of links 70 and 71 pivot upwardly (clockwise) relative to platform 72. Movement of links 56 and 57 to the left in FIG. 1 move ink tray 34 horizontally to the left relative to platform 72, and clockwise pivoting of links 70 and 71 moves ink tray 34 vertically upwardly.

Drive 32 first moves links 56 and 57 to the left, as illustrated by the sequence of FIGS. 4-6, to move ink tray 34 horizontally to the left from its rest position (FIG. 4) to a position registered with printing device 38 (FIG. 6). Drive 32 then pivots links 70 and 71 (FIG. 7) to move ink tray 34 vertically and tamp it against printing device 38 to ink it. After drive 42 raises platen device 44 to press an envelope or tape strip 46 against printing device 38, drive 32 moves links 70 and 71, and links 56 and 57 move in reverse to the movements that brought ink tray 34 into its inking position, and return ink tray 34 to its home position.

Drive 32 (FIG. 3) includes drive motor 85, cam wheels 87, 88 fixed to camshaft 90 journaled to sides 72 and 73 of chassis 30, and pulley system 92 coupling motor shaft 93 and camshaft 90. Links 70 and 71 have respective rollers 94 rotatably connected to respective ends 96 thereof and are supported from chassis sides 72 and 73 such that respective rollers 94 ride on cam wheels 87 and 88, respectively. Springs 95 urge links 72 and 73 towards cam wheels 87, 88, and urge rollers 94 thereof into engagement with cam wheels 87, 88. Links 56 and 57 are pivotally connected at respective ends 100 thereof to respective ends 102 of links 104 and 105, respectively. Links 104 and 105 are pivotally con nected at respective ends 107 to chassis sides 73 and 74, respectively, and have respective rollers 109 rotatably connected to a respective central part 110 thereof. Links 56 and 57 have rotatably connected to a respective central part 111 (FIG. 2) thereof respective rollers 112. Springs 113 urge links 56 and 57 towards cam wheels 87, 88, and urge rollers 112 thereof into engagement with cam wheels 87, 88. Cam wheels 87 and 88 each include a cam surface 114 on which a respective roller 94 rides, a cam surface 115 on which a respective roller 109 rides, and a cam surface 116 on which a respective roller 112 rides. Links 56 and 104, and links 57 and 105 are interconnected and supported such that respective rollers ride on respective cam surfaces of cam wheels 87 and 88, respectively, as respective cam followers. The cam surfaces are contoured to move the various links upon a given rotation of camshaft 90 to provide the motion of ink tray 34 described above and defined by Fig. 9, and the cam surfaces are aligned axially offset, as shown, or may be circumferentially aligned along the respective outer peripheries of cam wheels 87, 88. Cam wheels 87, 88 may be rotated through a cycle, with constant velocity or continuously with variable velocity, or cam wheels 87, 88 may be oscillated through a cycle.

Referring to FIGS. 1-3, drive 42 includes motor 118 having motor shaft 119, supported from sides 73, 74 of chassis 30 by bearing 120 (FIG. 3), gear 122 fixed to shaft 119, gear 123 mesh ing with and driven by gear 119, shaft 124 fixed to gear 123 and supported from chassis 30 by bearings 125, pinion gears 126 fixed to shaft 124, and racks 127 (FIG. 2) fixed to opposed sides of platten device 44 meshed with respective pinion gears 126. Actuation of motor 118 causes pinion gears 126 to rotate, engaging and elevating respective racks 127 and with them platten device 44. FIGS. 4-8 show elevation of platten device 44 with respect to movement of ink pad tray 34.

In order to produce straight line (e.g. generally horizontal) and parallel motion (e.g., parallel to the indicia surface of printing device 38), links 57 must experience some orthogonal motion (e.g., generally vertical). Links 105 and the corresponding cam surfaces cooperate with links 57 to provide that motion. Additionally, links 105 and the corresponding cam surfaces provide the orthogonal (vertical) motion during tamping.

The relationship between ink tray movement and camshaft 90 rotation is given in FIG. 9. FIG. 9-(a) shows horizontal ink tray movement versus time; FIG. 9(b) shows vertical ink tray movement versus time; and FIG. 9(c) shows camshaft angle rotation versus time. The ordinate axes time scales in FIGS. 9 (a), (b) and (c) are identical, so that viewing FIG. 9(a) and/or FIG. 9(b) with FIG. 9(c) gives horizontal and/or vertical displacement versus camshaft angle.

The plots in FIGS. 10(a), (b), and (c) are similar to the corresponding plots in FIG. 9 and give the relationship between ink pad tray movement and camshaft angle on an expanded side shortly before, during and shortly after the ink tray is tamped against the printing device, and include additional information. The cam profiles are configured to ensure that there is a bounceless strike of ink pad 36 against printing device 38, i.e., once ink pad 36 has been tamped against printing device 38 and it starts its downward movement, it is prevented from restriking printing device 38. FIG. 10 also gives ranges for acceptable ink tray vertical heights and indicia heights. The cam profiles are further configured to provide smooth acceleration and deceleration.

As mentioned above, drive 32 also actuates a pump 40 which pumps ink from reservoir 41 to ink pad 36. Referring to FIG. 2, link 130 is pivotally supported in its central part 132 from bracket 134

of chassis 30 with link end 136 adjacent cam wheel 88 and link end 138 adjacent pump 40. Roller 140 is rotatably connected to end 136 of link 130, and link 130 is configured and supported so that roller 140 rides on cam surface 142 as a cam follower. Rotation of cam wheel 88 pivots link 130 so that end 138 compresses pump 40 to create a pumping action therein as described below. Pump 40 is compressed once for each tamping of ink pad 36 against printing device 38, or less than once or more than once depending upon the amount of ink required. In the disclosed embodiment, pump 40 is compressed once for each ink pad tamping. It is preferred that pump 40 be compressed starting shortly before and during a substantial portion of the time that ink pad 36 is tamped against printing device 38. At high speed operation, it is preferred to pump only once per inking cycle to allow enough time for the pump material to relax to its original shape before compressing it again.

FIGS. 11-17 show the relative positions of links 57, 71, 105 and 130, rollers 96, 109, 112 and 140, cam wheel 88, ink tray 34, printing device 38, platen device 44 and pump 40 for different times of the inking cycle indicated in each figure as a percentage of the inking cycle. FIG. 11 shows the various parts in the home position of ink tray 34 (100% or 0% of the cycle), and FIG. 17 shows the various parts at the inking position of ink tray 34 when ink tray 34 is at its maximum height (about 30% of the cycle) and tamped against printing device 38. A time is indicated on each figure corresponding to times on the ordinate axis in FIGS. 9 and 10. A Cartesian coordinate system is referenced in the upper part of FIGS. 11-17 with the ordinate axis 175 representing the horizontal or "x" position of ink tray 34 and the coordinate axis 179 representing the vertical or "y" position of ink tray 34, with the origin of the coordinate system designated 183. The links and rollers (followers) are designated in FIG. 11 with respect to the axis along which they control movement. Diametric line 90 through the circle representing cam wheel 88 and diametric line 93 through the circle representing shaft 93 of motor 85 indicate in FIGS. 11-17 rotational relationship of cam wheel 88 and motor shaft 93 and the positional relationship of the various links and rollers at the indicated times in the cycle. Ink pad 36 also moves along the x-axis at the same time it is rising at the last .060 inch of vertical rise (total rise is .210) to provide a wiping action against the printing drive, which improves ink transfer. This is referred to in the drawings as "alpha-scrub". The alphascrub ratio is 4:1, that is; .015 inch x-motion for the .060 inch y-motion. Various references locations are represented by cross hatches.

Referring to FIGS. 18 and 19, ink cartridge 200 includes ink reservoir 41 and ink tray 34 which holds ink pad 36 in an ink distribution chamber 204. Ink pad 36 is made of a resilient sorbent material which sorbs (i.e., absorbs) ink contained in ink distribution chamber 204. Ink pad 36 is compressed slightly during tamping thereof against inking device 38 to transfer ink thereto. Releasing of compression causes additional ink to be sorbed to the upper portion of ink pad 36. Preferably, ink pad 36 also sorbs ink through capillary action.

For use in a high speed mailing machine environment, ink tray 34 is constructed to transfer up to ink four times or more per second to the printing device 38, which imposes restraints on the amount of time in which ink must be sorbed by ink pad 36 and the amount of time in which ink must be transferred to printing device 38. Referring to FIGS. 9 and 10, each inking cycle is about 0.25 seconds (250 ms) including rest time, and is about 160 ms excluding rest time. Tamping takes up about 25 ms. Therefore, ink release to printing device 38 must take place within 25 ms, and a resupply of ink must be sorbed to the upper part of ink pad 36 in about 225 ms. Pump 40 must be compressed in about 80 ms and recover in about 80 ms. The design of ink tray 34 and pump 40 disclosed herein takes those restraints into consideration.

Ink pad 36 disclosed herein (FIGS. 18 and 19) includes a single layer or multi-layers. In the disclosed embodiment, two layers are shown, upper layer 36a and lower layer 36b. Upper layer 36a functions as a metering layer to release a metered amount of ink during tamping thereof against printing device 38, and lower layer 36b functions as a supply layer to the upper metering layer 36a to replenish ink released by the upper layer. Typically, upper layer 36a has a smaller average pore diameter than lower layer 36b, and ink transfer from ink distribution chamber 204 to lower layer 36b, and from lower layer 36b to upper layer 36a is by capillary action and negative internal pad pressures. During tamping, upper layer 36a is compressed slightly so that some ink transfer also occurs from lower layer 36b to upper layer 36a as a result, and upon release, of compression of upper layer 36a. The particular material used for ink pad 36 may depend upon the particular ink used. For example, when a dispersion ink is used, upper layer 36a and lower layer 36b may be a Scotfelt foam laminate (polyurethane) which consists of a firmness of 20 (upper) over 8 (lower), and when a solution ink is used, upper layer 36a may be in the so-called "Porex" media (sintered polyethylene), i.e., a polyethylene laminated with a heat-activated adhesive extending in a spider web pattern, and lower layer 36b may be an olefinic material such as Neoprene.

Referring to FIGS. 18 and 19, ink distribution chamber 204 has an inlet 206, an optional outlet

208, a number of channels 210 formed therein by partitions 212 and a manifold 214 in communication with partitions 210. Ink pad 36 is supported on partitions 212 in communication with channels 210 and manifold 214 so as to sorb ink present in channels 210 and manifold 214. The height of partitions 212 is selected to properly deliver the required amount of ink at highest possible usage while printing. For the specific ink used in the mailing machine referred to above, the height is about .030 inch.

Although channels 210 are shown to extend parallel to each other and to be of equal size, they need not be, and other designs may be suitable for supplying ink to ink pad 36.

Tubing 216 represented schematically in FIG. 18 communicates the output 218 of pump 40 with the inlet 206 of ink distri bution chamber 204. In some applications it is preferable to provide for the removal of excess ink to avoid overflow and splashing during high speed operation, and to insure adequate ink supply. Ink usage is variable depending on the printing area (with or without ad slogan; variation in the ad slogan design, etc.). For use of ink tray 34 in such applications, ink distribution chamber 204 may optionally have an outlet 208, and reservoir 41 may have an inlet 220. Ink distribution chamber outlet 208 and reservoir inlet 220 are communicated via tubing 222 (represented schematically), or may be blocked, depending on the particular application, etc. Reservoir 41 has an outlet (not shown in FIGS. 18 and 19) within support 226 in direct communication, without valving, etc., with the input 224 of pump 40.

Ink flow is as follows. Pump 40 injects ink into ink distribution chamber 204 from reservoir 41 via pump output 218, tubing 216 and ink distribution chamber inlet 206. Optionally, excess ink in ink distribution chamber 204 not sorbed by ink pad 36 is returned to reservoir 41 via ink distribution chamber outlet 208, tubing 222 and reservoir inlet 220. Outlet 208 is communicated with ink distribution chamber 204 at an appropriate height so that excess ink flows back to reservoir 41 primarily by gravity force and to some extent by the pumping action of pump 40. If desired, a second pump (not shown) may be used to pump excess ink back to reservoir 41.

Pump 40 (FIG. 21) comprises an elastic sleeve or tube 230 capable of repeatedly being compressed and recovering to its original shape. Within sleeve 230 are disposed an input valve 232 and an output valve 234. Valves 232 and 234 are one-way valves which permit liquid to flow from the reservoir (41 in FIG. 18) into sleeve 230, and from sleeve 230 into ink pad distribution chamber 204. Ink reservoir 41 (FIGS. 18 and 19) includes a bearing surface 235 against which sleeve 230 is compressed by end 138 of link 130 (FIG. 2). Compression of sleeve 230 by link 130 closes valve 232 and opens valve 234, and expels ink from sleeve 230 through open valve 234. Upon release of the compression, a partial vacuum is created within sleeve 230 which closes valve 234 and opens valve 232, and which draws additional ink into sleeve 230. Valves 234 and 232 operate in the nature of ball valves, but are disposed entirely within sleeve 230. In the preferred embodiment valves 232 and 234 are duck bill valves which not only allow valves 232 and 234 to be placed entirely within sleeve 230, but also permit pump 40 to be operated at any attitude. In the embodiments illustrated in the drawings, pump 40 is disposed horizontally. In the presently preferred embodiment, the diameter of sleeve 230 is about 5/8 inch and its length about 2 inches, and is compressed by about 1/8 inch.

The particular application in which pump 40 will be used requires a consideration of the fluid to be pumped, the nature of the service environment, service life, cost, serviceability, etc. In the specific embodiments disclosed herein, sleeve 230 is made of an elastic material which is (a) non-reactive With the particular ink being used, (b) can withstand repeated compression cycles in the thousands to millions and recover to substantially its original shape to thereby perform the pumping action described above over the desired service life of the pump, and (c) can recover to substantially its original shape in a fraction of a second, more specifically within a time permitting at least four full pumping cycles per second. The wall thickness of sleeve 230 has an effect on service life and recovery time. A thicker wall thickness provides a faster recovery time, but also subjects sleeve 230 to more stress which reduces service life. For example, sleeve 40 may be made of an olefinic material such as Neoprene, silicone rubber, polyethylene or polypropylene which may have a preferred wall thickness of about 1/16 inch, and the duck bill valves may be made of olefinic material such as Neoprene (for ink capability). Similarly, other parts which come into contact with ink are made of a material which is not reactive with the particular ink used. Sleeve 230 may be connected to reservoir 41 by fitting the ends thereof tightly over conical fittings 236, 238 (FIG. 21), and sealing the sleeve to the fittings by means of an adhesive, heat shrinking, etc.

Referring to FIGS. 18 and 19, ink cartridge 200 (including ink tray 34) and ink pump 40 may be supplied as a disposable cartridge unit comprising ink reservoir 41, ink pad holder 202 including ink distribution chamber 204 and ink pad 36, and pump 40. Such a cartridge may be supplied tightly covered in foil or plastic to preserve product integrity during shipment, storage and handling, and

ready for installation, which is facilitated by virtue of the snap-fit construction of ink tray 34 described above. Ink cartridge 200 includes a finger grasp 240 which may be engaged to un-snap ink cartridge 200 from and snap ink cartridge 200 into inker module 25. If desired individual parts of ink tray 34 and ink cartridge 200 may be replaced, although replacement as a unit is preferred.

FIGS. 20 and 21 depict an alternate embodiment in which ink cartridge 200 includes ink tray 34A, and ink pad holder 202A including ink distribution chamber 204A. Ink cartridge 200 does not include an ink reservoir, rather a separate larger reservoir 250 is provided. Ink pad holder 202A is constructed and mounted similar to ink pad holder 202, and ink distribution chamber 204A is similar to ink distribution chamber 204. Platform 72A is constructed and mounted similar to platform 72 except that reservoir 250 is disposed transversely to the plane of platform 72A, i.e., vertically, protruding through hole 252 thereof. Ink pad holder 202A moves relative to platform 72A as generally described for ink tray 34 and platform 72. Ink reservoir 250 is received in receptacle 254 mounted to the bottom 256 of chassis 30A by flanges 257. With tray 34A removed, reservoir 250 is simply dropped in or lifted out of receptacle 254. Pump 40 is affixed to the bottom 260 of reservoir 250 projecting through hole 261 of receptacle 254. Pump 40 extends horizontally as in the embodiment of FIGS. 18 and 19.

Drive 32A includes a link 130A supported to be cammed by cam wheel 87A similar to link 130 and cam wheel 87 so that its end 138A compresses sleeve 230 of pump 40, as described above for drive 32, link 130 and cam wheel 87. The output of pump 40 is communicated with the inlet 206A of ink distribution chamber 204A by tubing 216A, and the outlet of ink distribution chamber 204A is communicated with port 262 of reservoir 250 by tubing 222A. Port 262 communicates with the input 224 of pump 40.

Ink tray 34A and reservoir 250 and pump 40 operate to pump ink from reservoir 250 to ink distribution chamber 204A as described for the embodiment depicted in FIGS. 18 and 19, except that excess from ink distribution chamber 204A tends to be recirculated rather than returned to reservoir 250.

In the embodiment depicted in FIGS. 20 and 21, ink reservoir 250 and pump 40 are replaceable separately from ink tray 34A. Tray 34A may easily be replaced, as described for tray 34, by a new tray., After un-snapping tray 34A, and disconnecting tubing 216A and 222A, reservoir 250 is exposed and may easily be lifted out of receptacle 254 for removal and replacement, and thereafter replaced by connecting tubing 216A and 222A, and dropping reservoir 250 back into receptacle 254. If necessary, receptacle 254, reservoir 250 and pump 40 may be replaced by a new unit.

For those embodiments which include an ink pump 40, it may be necessary to initialize the system each time an ink tray is changed to pump a predetermined amount of ink into the ink distribution chamber 204, 204A before commencing actual printing operations.

The control system described in U.S. application Serial No. 291483, (Case C.444), may be used to accomplish and synchronize the foregoing operation of drives 32 (32A) and 42, and pump 40.

Changes and modifications of the embodiments of the invention herein disclosed will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art. Moreover, uses of the invention other than in mailing apparatus will also be readily apparent to those skilled in the art. Changes and modifications may therefore be made to the embodiments of the invention herein described without departing from the invention.

Claims

1. An ink pad device comprising an ink pad made of a material which sorbs ink, an ink chamber for holding ink, said ink pad being at least partially disposed in said ink chamber adjacent a layer of ink held in said ink chamber to sorb ink directly from said layer.

2. An ink pad device according to claim 1 further comprising an ink reservoir and means connecting said reservoir with said ink chamber for supplying ink from said reservoir to said ink chamber.

3. An ink pad device according to claim 1 and further comprising an ink pump, an ink reservoir and means connecting said reservoir, said pump and said ink chamber for pumping ink from said reservoir to said ink chamber.

4. An ink pad device according to claim 1 and further comprising a base to which said ink chamber is attached, an ink reservoir integral with said base and means connecting said reservoir with said ink chamber for supplying ink from said reservoir to said ink chamber.

5. An ink pad device according to claim 4 in which the connecting means includes an ink pump arranged for pumping ink from said reservoir to said ink chamber.

6. An ink pad device according to any of claims 1-5 wherein said ink pad and said ink chamber are constructed to be disposable.

7. An ink pad device according to any of claims 1-5 wherein said ink chamber includes therein a plurality of partitions defining a plurality of

channels for holding ink, and said ink pad is at least partially disposed in said ink chamber contacting said partitions adjacent said channels to sorb ink disposed in said channels.

8. The ink pad device of claim 4 including an inlet to and/or an outlet from said ink chamber for supplying ink to or removing excess ink from said ink chamber.

9. An ink pad device according to any of claims 1-5 wherein said ink chamber and said reservoir are attached so as to form a unit.

10. An ink pad device according to claim 9 wherein said ink chamber and said ink reservoir unit is constructed to be disposable.

11. An ink pad device according to claim 3, 4 or 5 wherein said ink chamber, said ink pad and said ink pump are attached so as to form a unit.

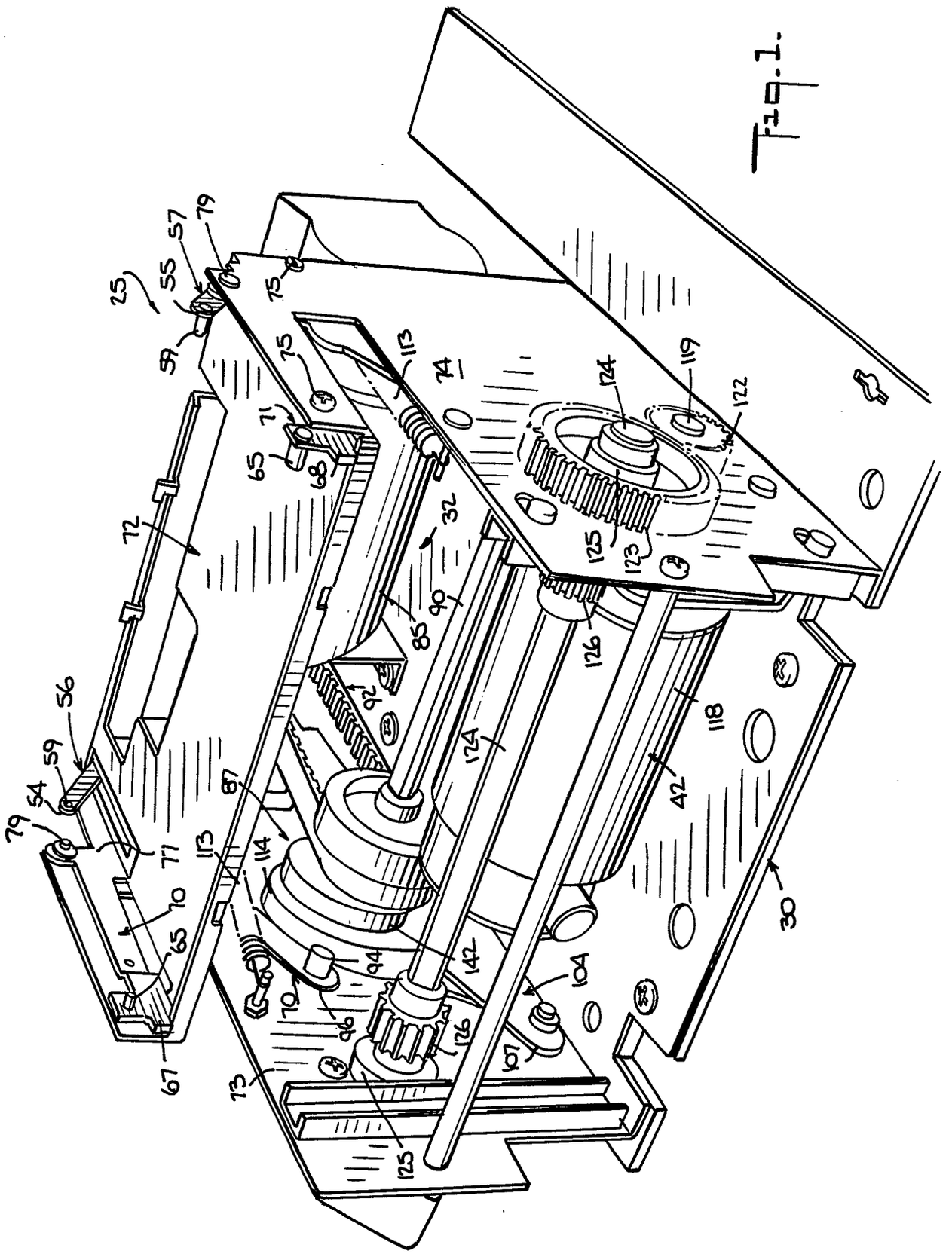
12. An ink pad device according to claim 4 wherein said ink chamber and said base are attached so as to form a unit.

13. An ink pad device according to claim 12 wherein said ink chamber and said base unit are constructed to be disposable.

14. An ink pad device according to claim 5 wherein an ink pump comprises a deformable chamber and valving such that upon compression of said chamber ink therein is expelled for delivery to said ink chamber and upon release of said compression ink is drawn therein from said reservoir.

15. An ink pad device according to claim 14 including means securing said ink chamber to said base so as to form a unit (which may be disposable) comprising said ink chamber, said reservoir and said pump.

16. An ink pad device according to claim 3 wherein said ink reservoir and said ink pump are attached so as to form a unit.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124
122
71
65
68
72
32
125
123
85
90
126
26
56
59
54
79
87
114
113
71
70
65
67
73
94
142
104
107
176
125
124
118
42
30

Fig. 1.

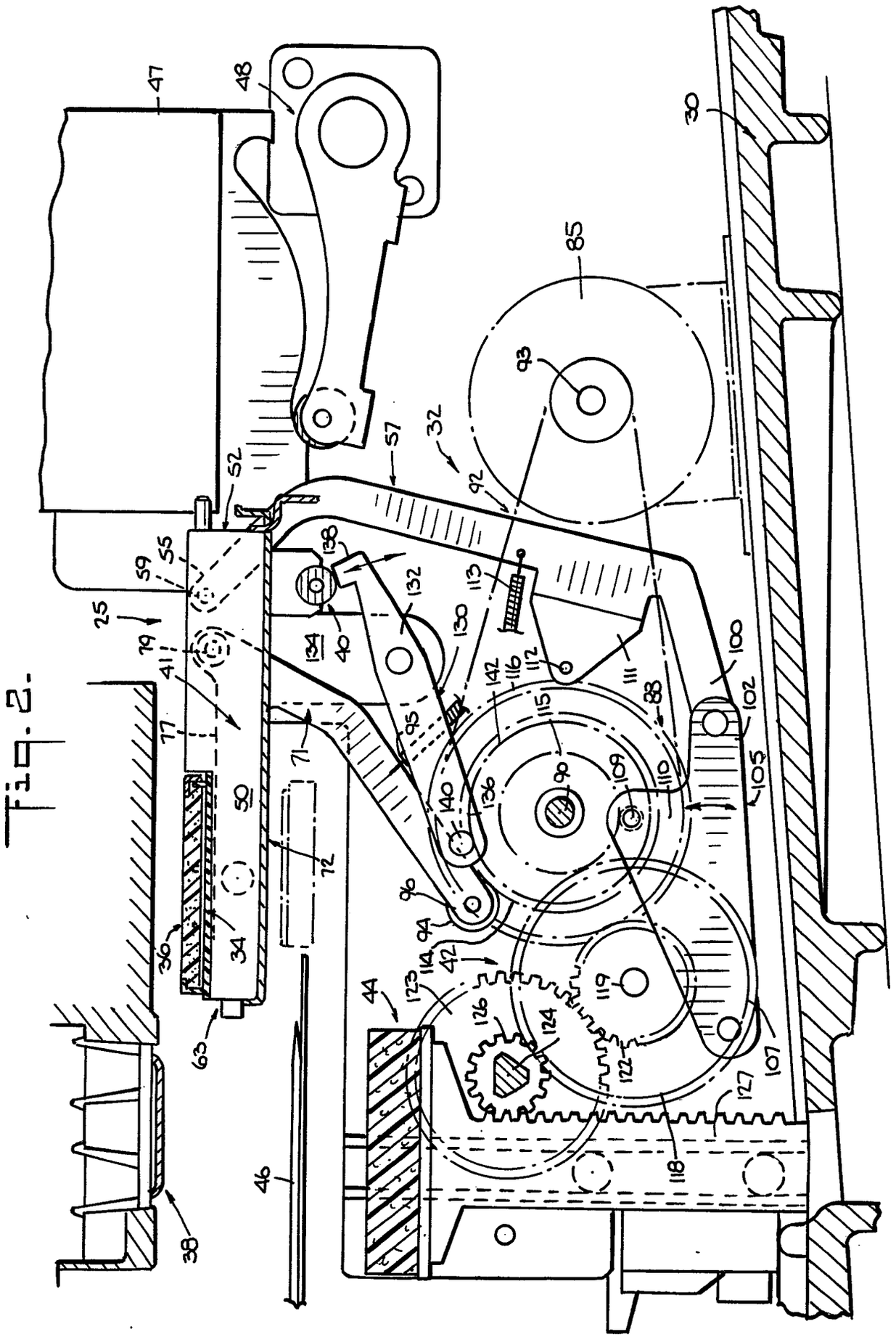

47
48
30
85
93
32
57
92
52
59
55
25
79
41
77
71
50
72
34
36
63
38
46
44
42
94
96
114
123
126
124
122
119
107
127
118
140
136
98
109
110
105
102
100
111
88
95
147
116
112
115
132
130
113
138
134
40

Fig. 2.

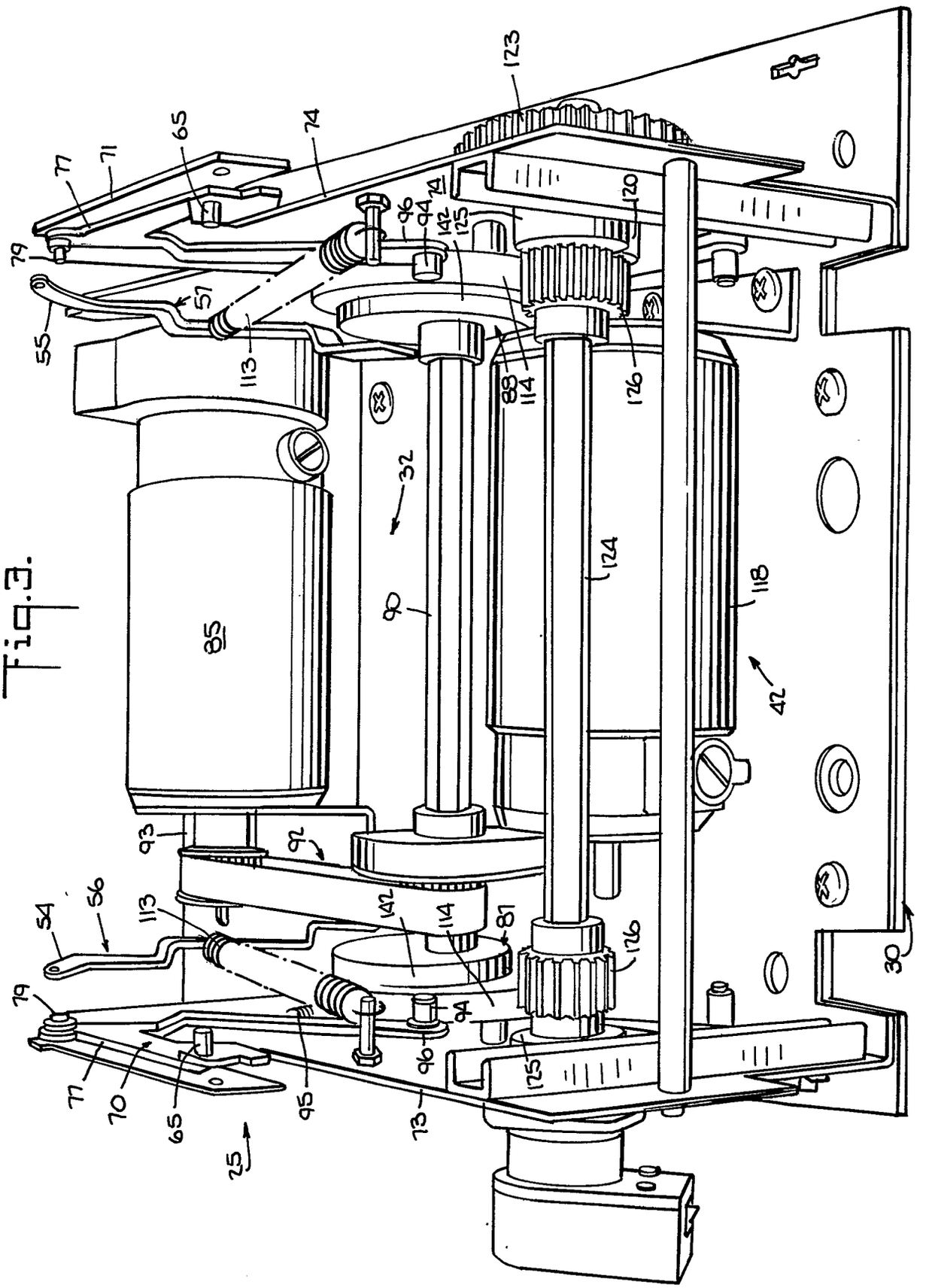

123
65
74
77
71
79
96
94
141
142
125
120
57
55
113
88
114
126
32
90
124
118
85
42
93
92
142
114
87
126
54
56
113
79
94
96
175
77
70
65
95
73
25
30

Fig.3.

Fig.4.

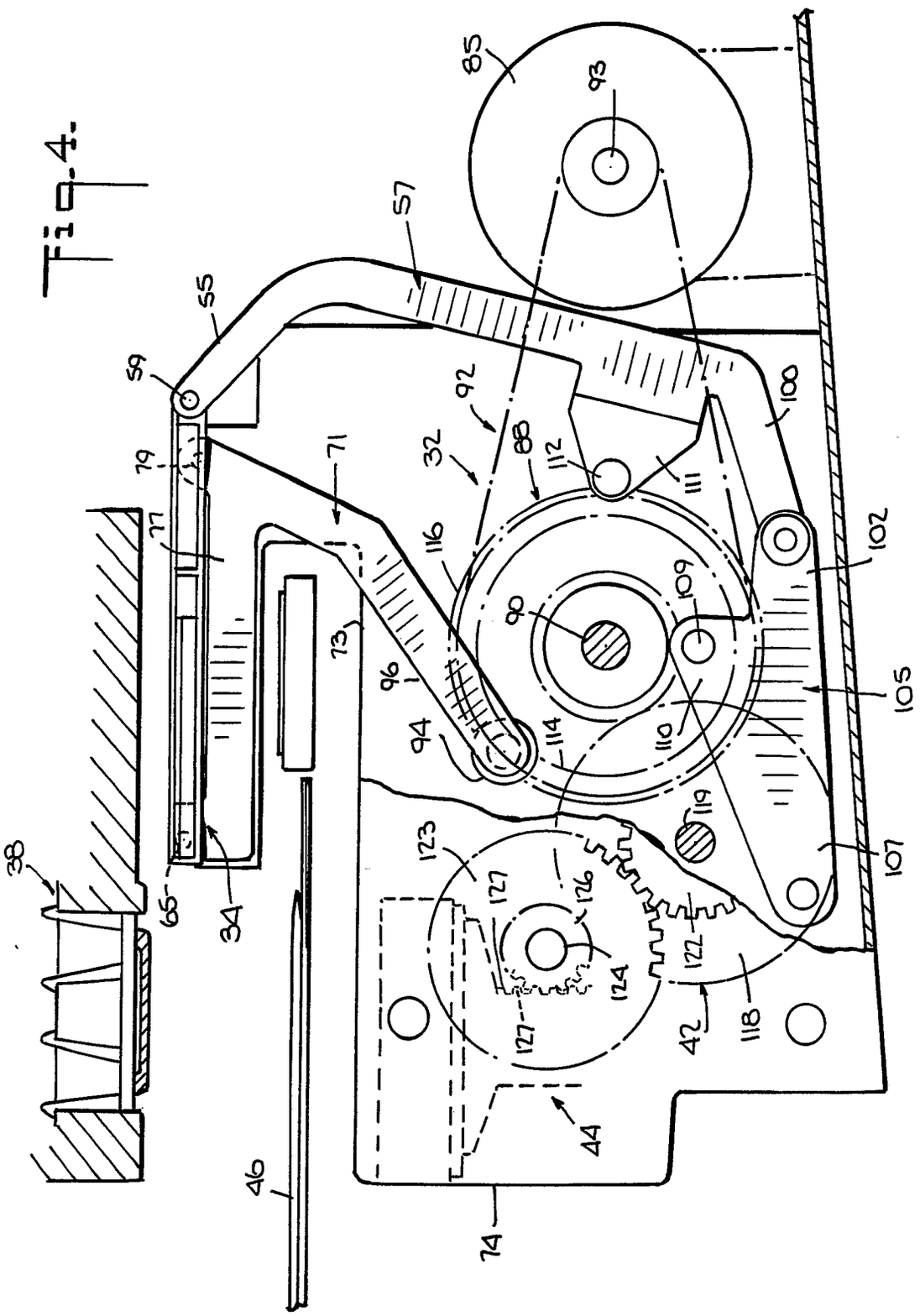

85
93
57
55
59
92
32
88
112
111
100
79
71
77
116
102
109
90
73
96
105
94
114
110
119
107
123
127
126
122
124
127
42
118
44
38
65
34
46
74

Fig. 5.

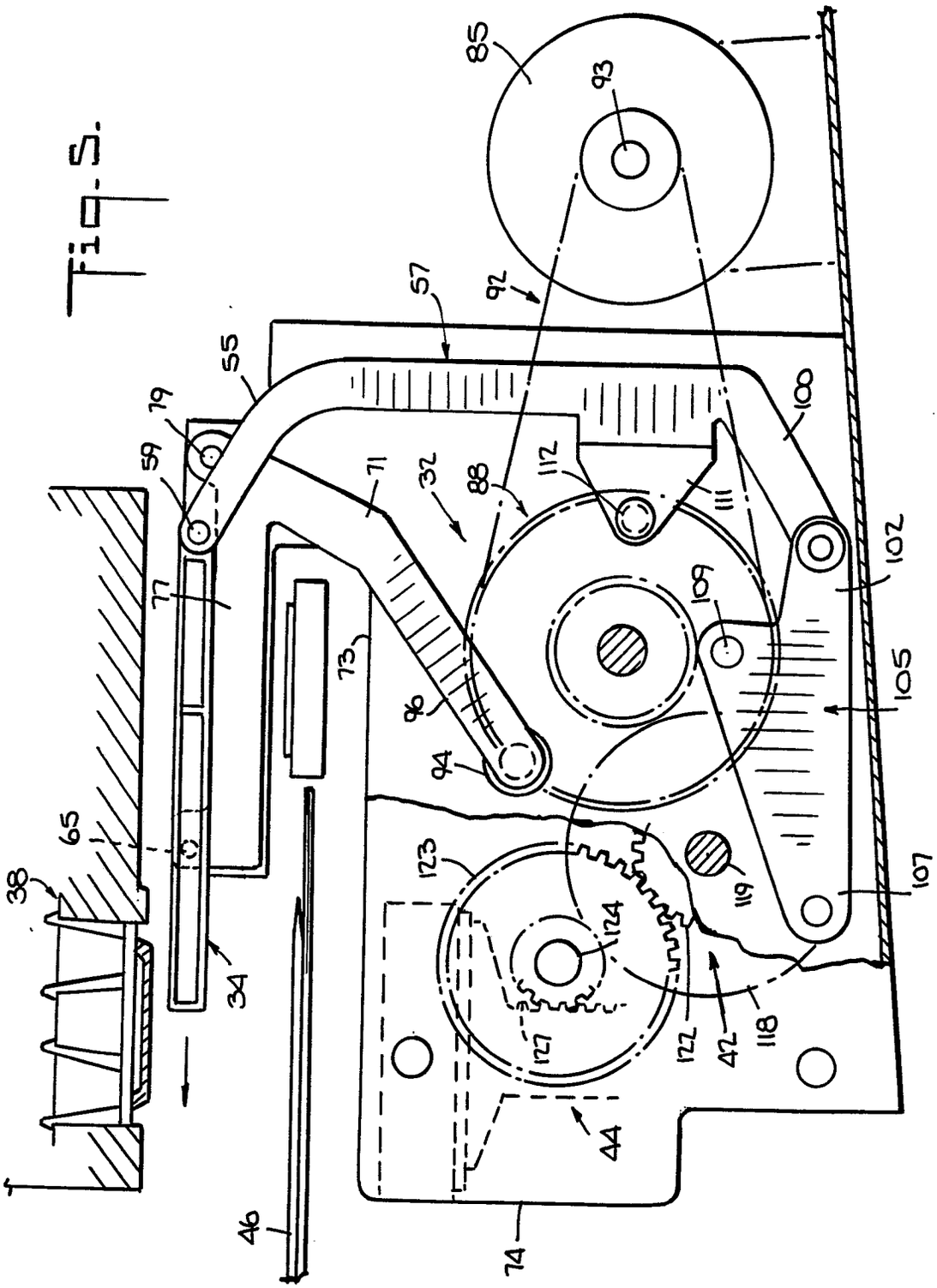

85
93
92
57
55
19
59
71
32
88
112
111
100
102
109
105
107
77
73
96
94
65
38
34
123
124
119
127
122
42
118
44
46
74

Fig. 6.

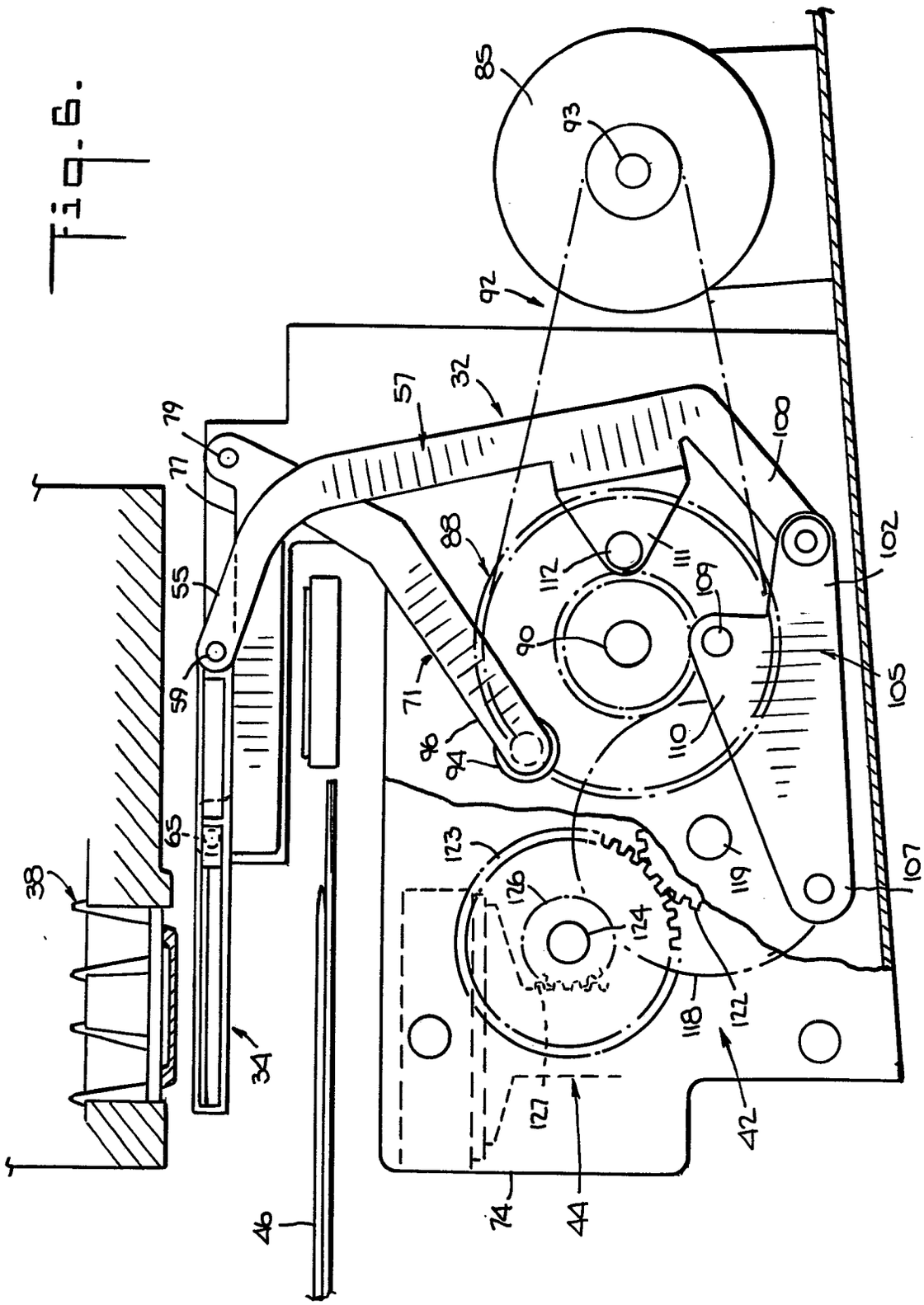

85
93
92
32
57
79
77
55
59
100
88
112
111
109
90
102
105
71
96
94
110
65
38
123
126
124
119
107
118
122
34
127
42
74
44
46

Fig. 7.

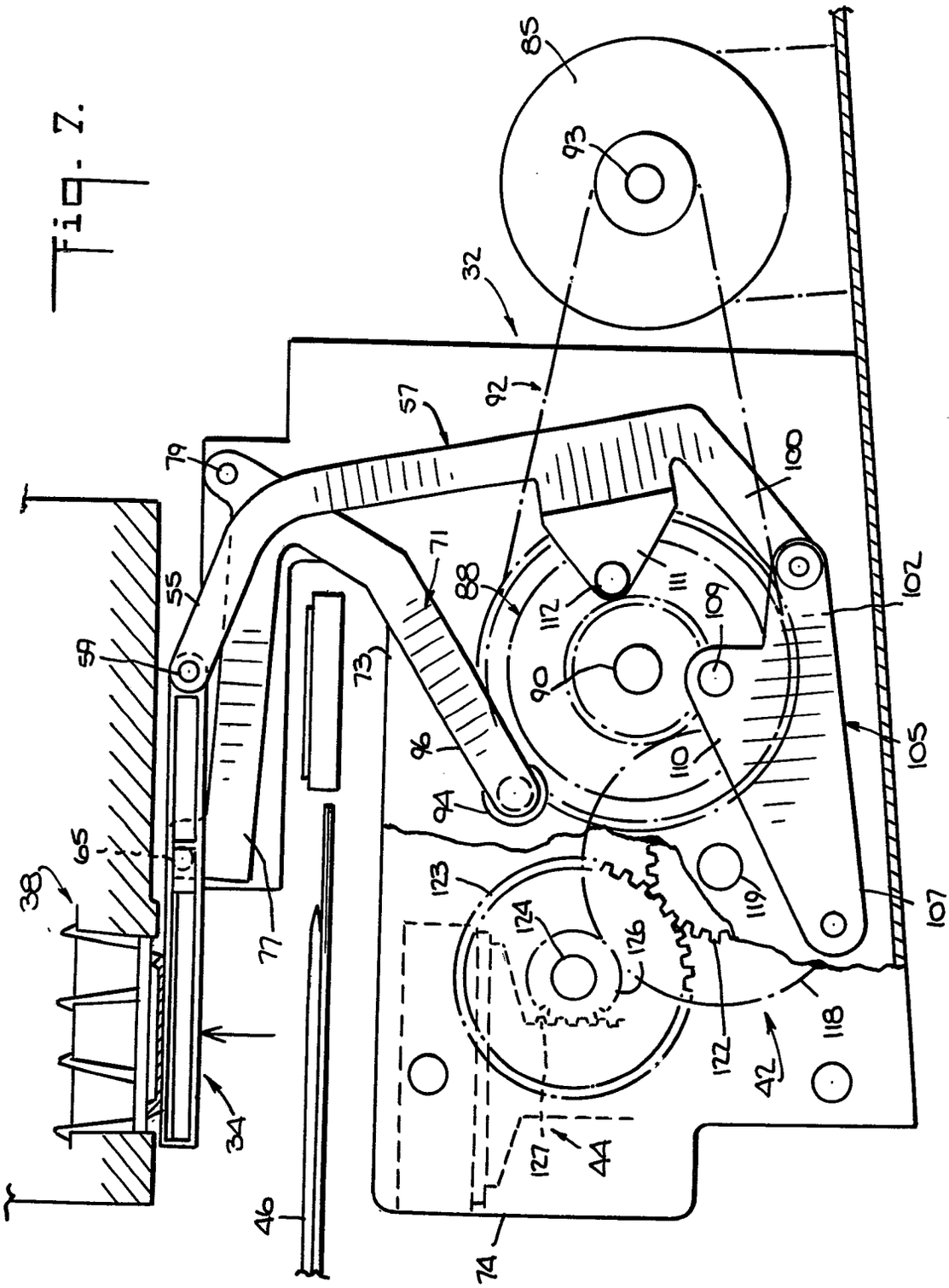
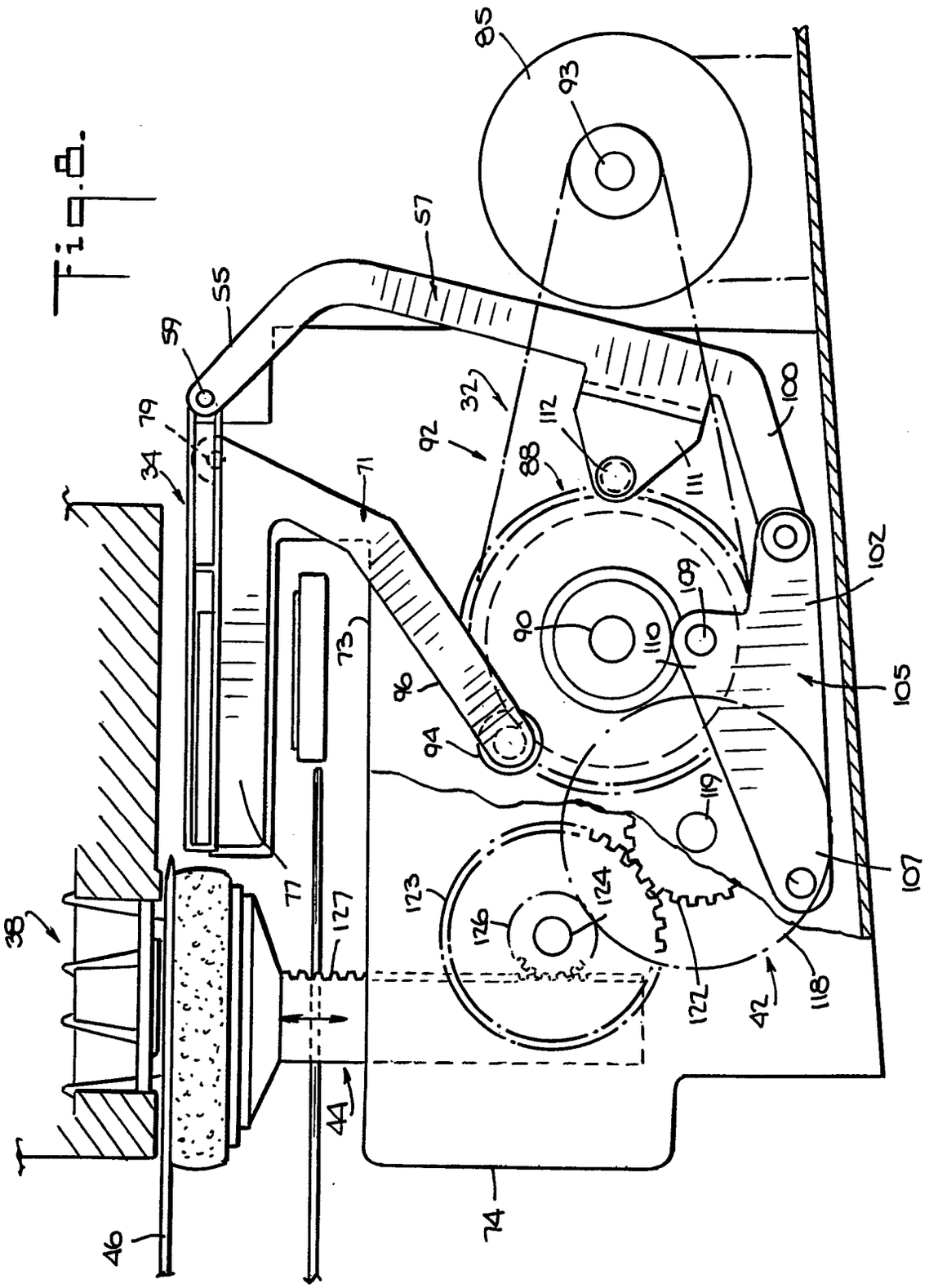

85
93
32
57
92
79
100
71
88
112
111
109
102
55
59
90
73
96
110
105
94
65
38
123
124
126
119
107
77
118
122
42
34
127
44
46
74

Fig. 8.


85
93
57
55
59
79
34
32
92
88
112
100
71
111
102
109
90
110
105
73
96
94
119
107
123
124
126
127
77
38
122
42
118
44
46
74

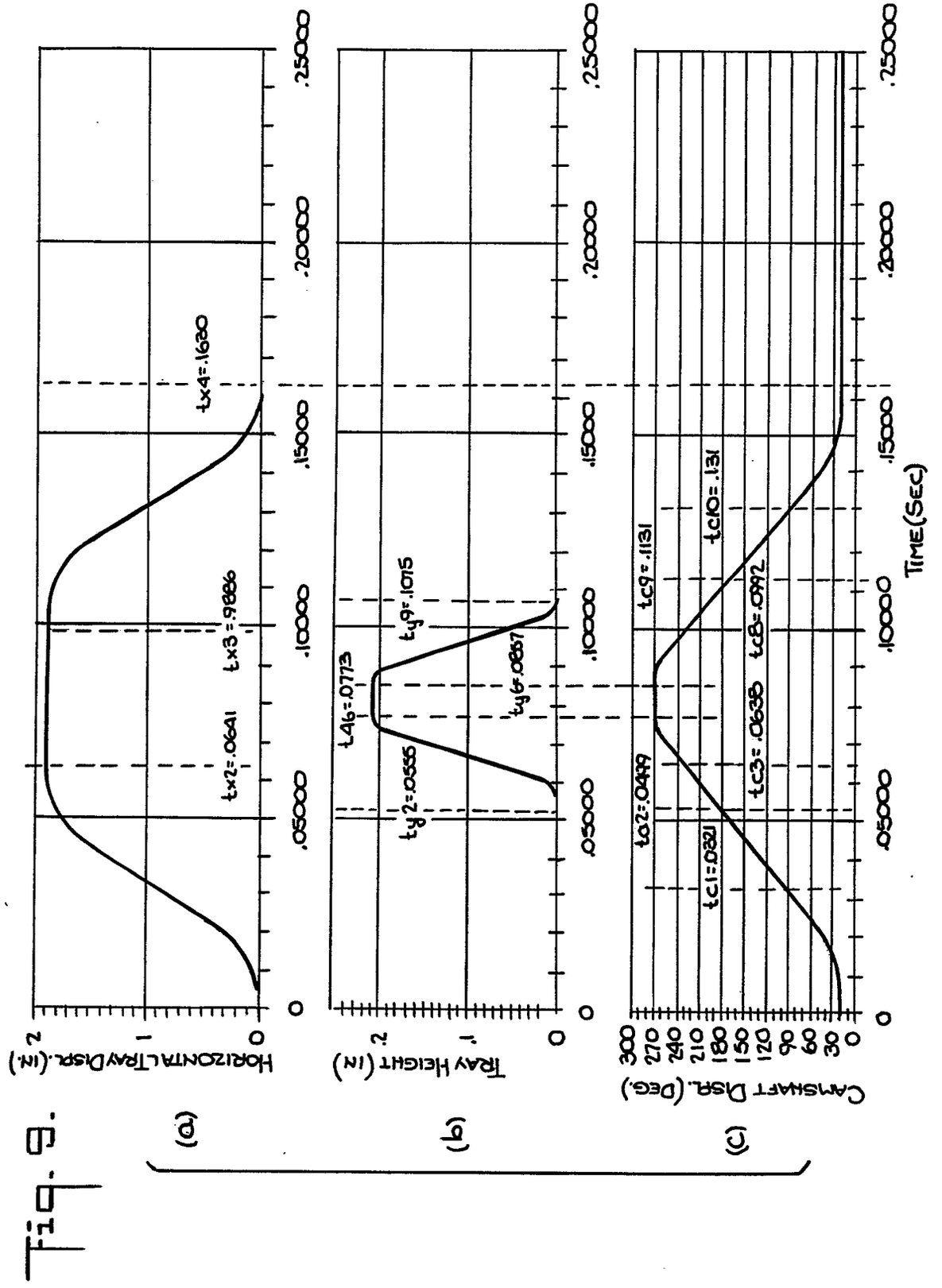

(a)
HORIZONTAL TRAY DISP. (IN.)
tx4=.1680
tx3=.9886
tx2=.0641
(b)
TRAY HEIGHT (IN)
ty9=.1015
ty6=.0867
t46=.0773
ty2=.0555
(c)
CAMSHAFT DISP. (DEG.)
tc9=.1131
tc10=.131
tc8=.0992
tc3=.0638
tc2=.0499
tc1=.0321
TIME(SEC)
.25000
.20000
.15000
.10000
.05000
0

Fig. 9.

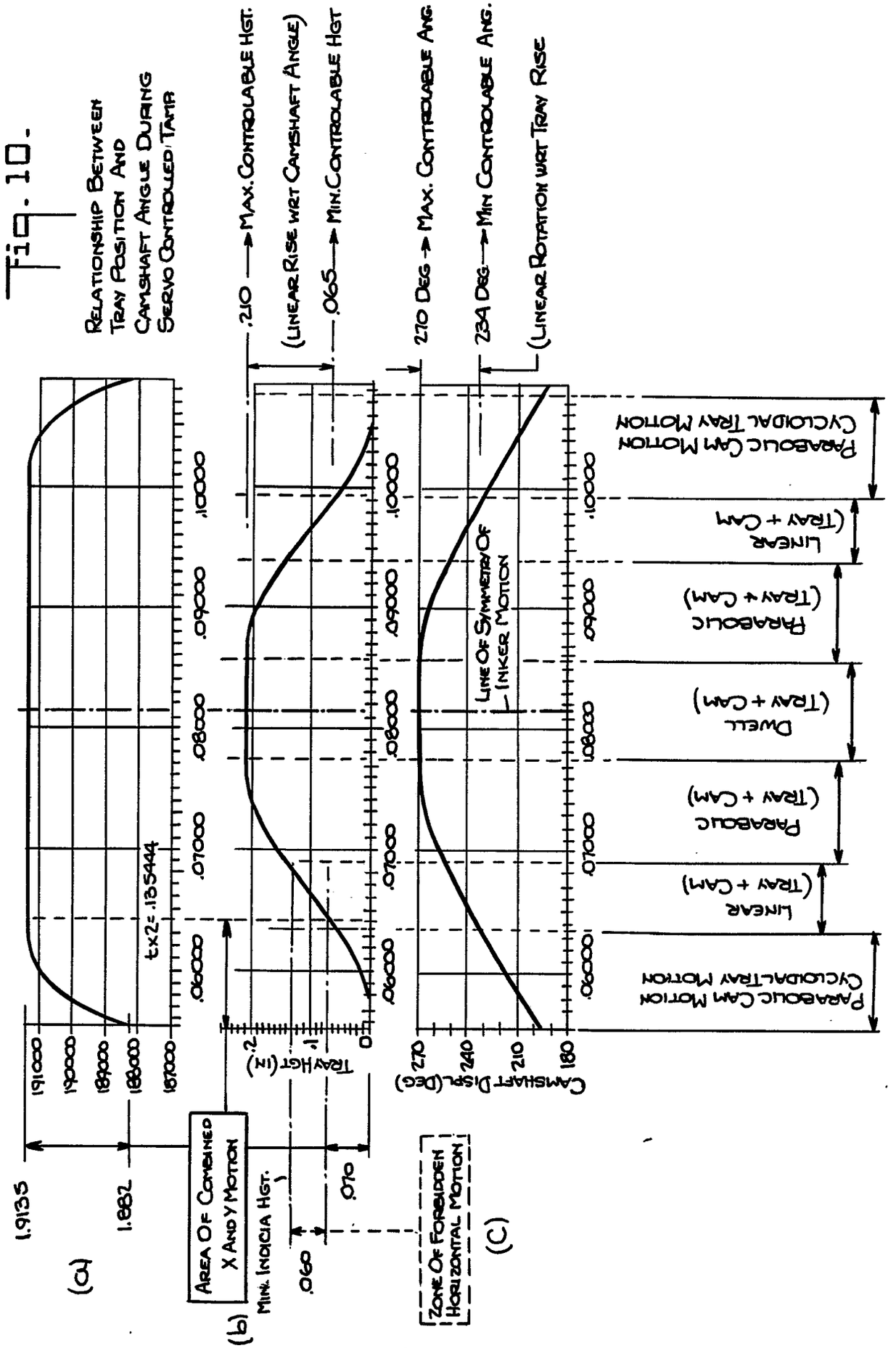


Fig. 10.
Relationship Between Tray Position And Camshaft Angle During Servo Controlled Tamp
(a)
(b)
(c)
1.9135
1.882
.070
.060
Area Of Combined X And Y Motion
Min. Indicia Hgt.
Zone Of Forbidden Horizontal Motion
t x 2 = .135444
.210 → Max. Controllable Hgt.
(Linear Rise wrt Camshaft Angle)
.065 → Min. Controllable Hgt
270 Deg → Max. Controllable Ang.
234 Deg → Min Controllable Ang.
(Linear Rotation wrt Tray Rise
Line Of Symmetry Of Inker Motion
Tray Hgt (in)
Camshaft Disp. (Deg)
Parabolic Cam Motion Cycloidal Tray Motion
Linear (Tray + Cam)
Parabolic (Tray + Cam)
Dwell (Tray + Cam)
Parabolic (Tray + Cam)
Linear (Tray + Cam)
Parabolic Cam Motion Cycloidal Tray Motion

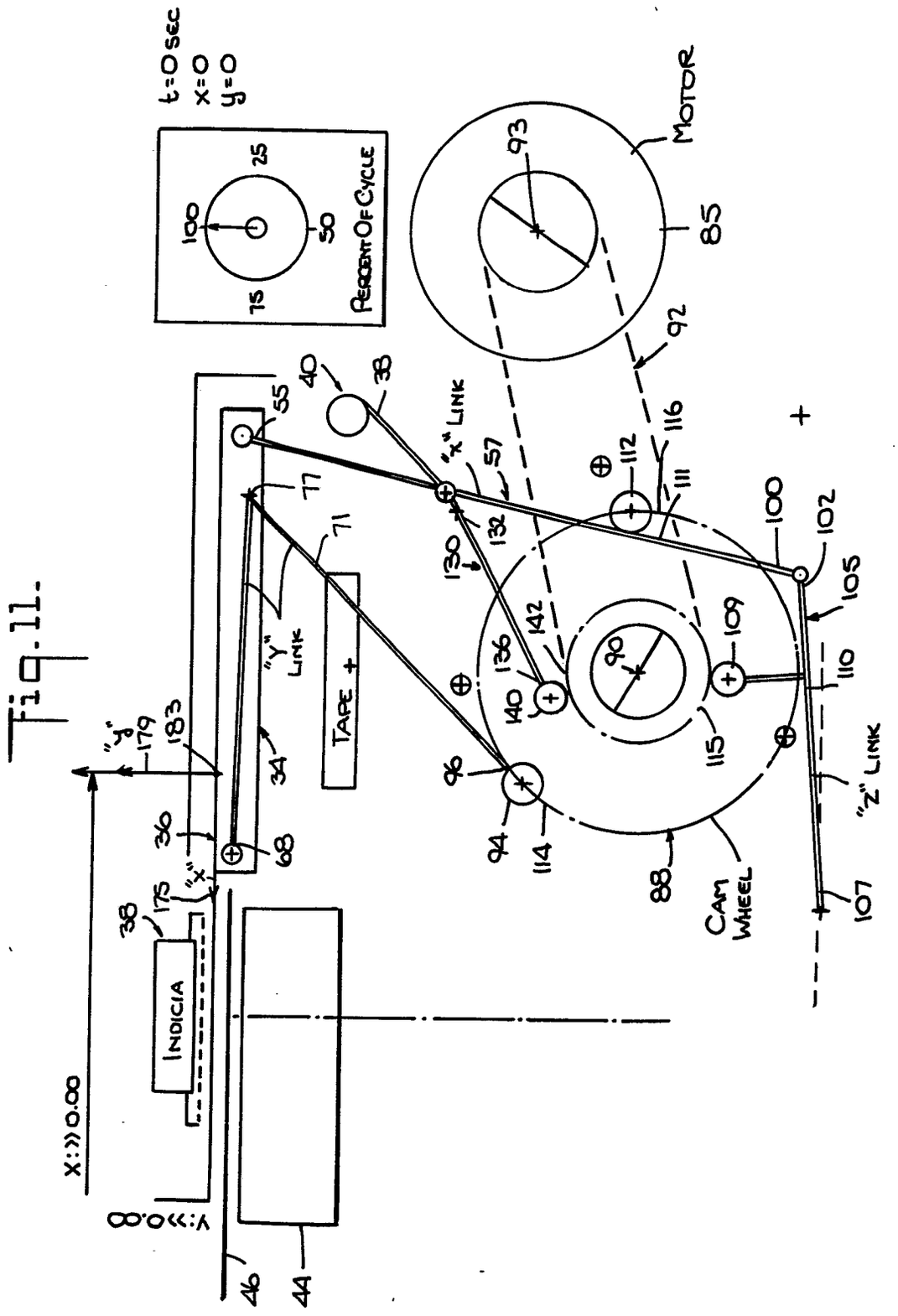

t=0 sec
x=0
y=0
25
100
50
75
PERCENT OF CYCLE
MOTOR
93
85
92
40
38
55
"x" LINK
57
77
71
"y" LINK
TAPE
130
132
112
116
111
100
102
105
142
136
109
110
140
115
96
94
114
88
CAM WHEEL
107
"z" LINK
"y"
179
183
34
36
"x"
68
38
175
INDICIA
X:»0.00
Y:»0.00
46
44

Fig. 11.

Fig. 12.

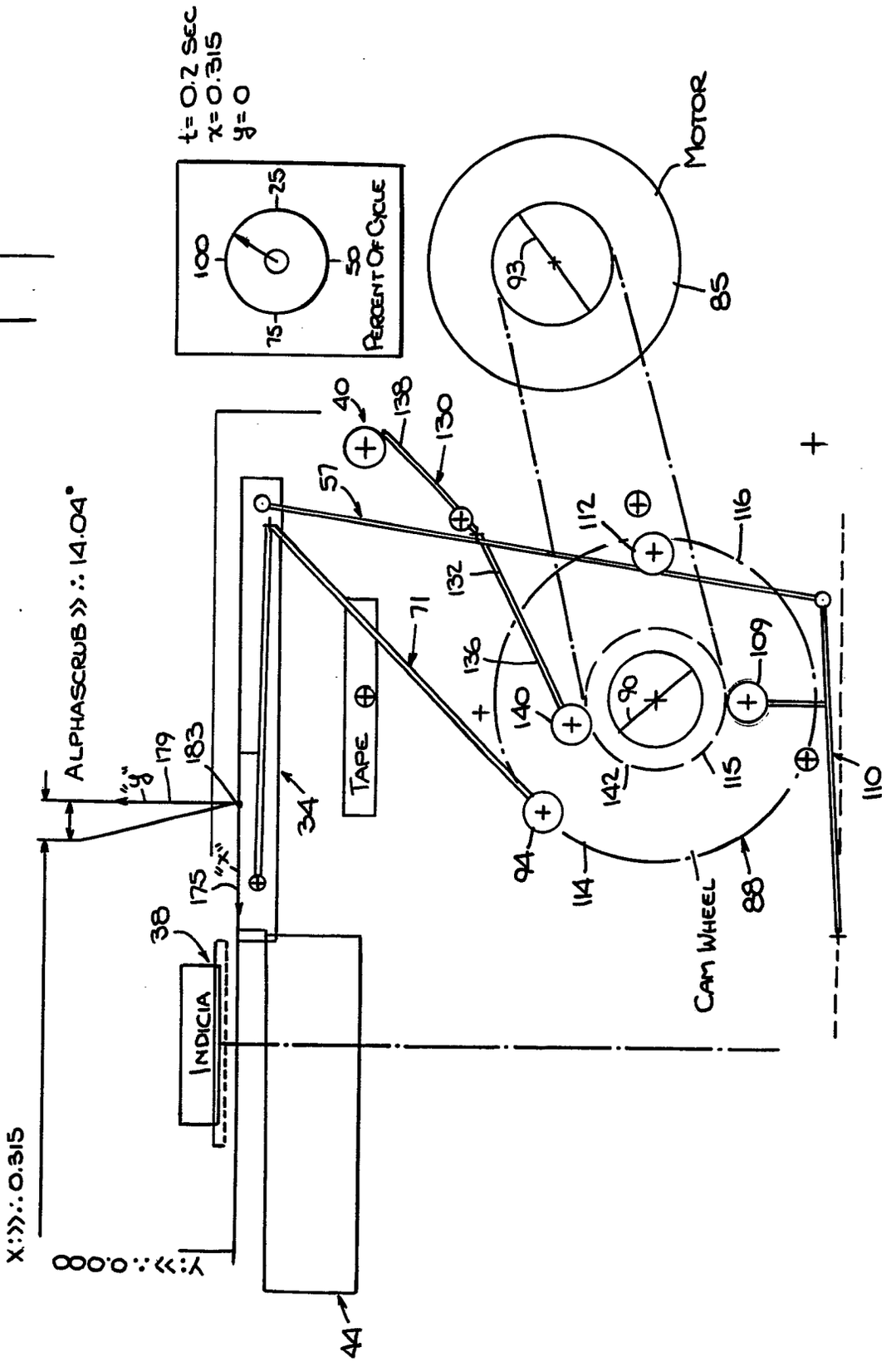

t= 0.2 SEC
x= 0.315
y= 0
100
75
25
50
PERCENT OF CYCLE
MOTOR
85
93
40
138
130
57
112
116
132
71
136
140
90
109
142
115
110
94
114
CAM WHEEL
88
TAPE
34
ALPHASCRUB = 14.04°
"y"
179
183
175
"x"
38
INDICIA
44
X = 0.315
Y = 0.088

Fig. 13.

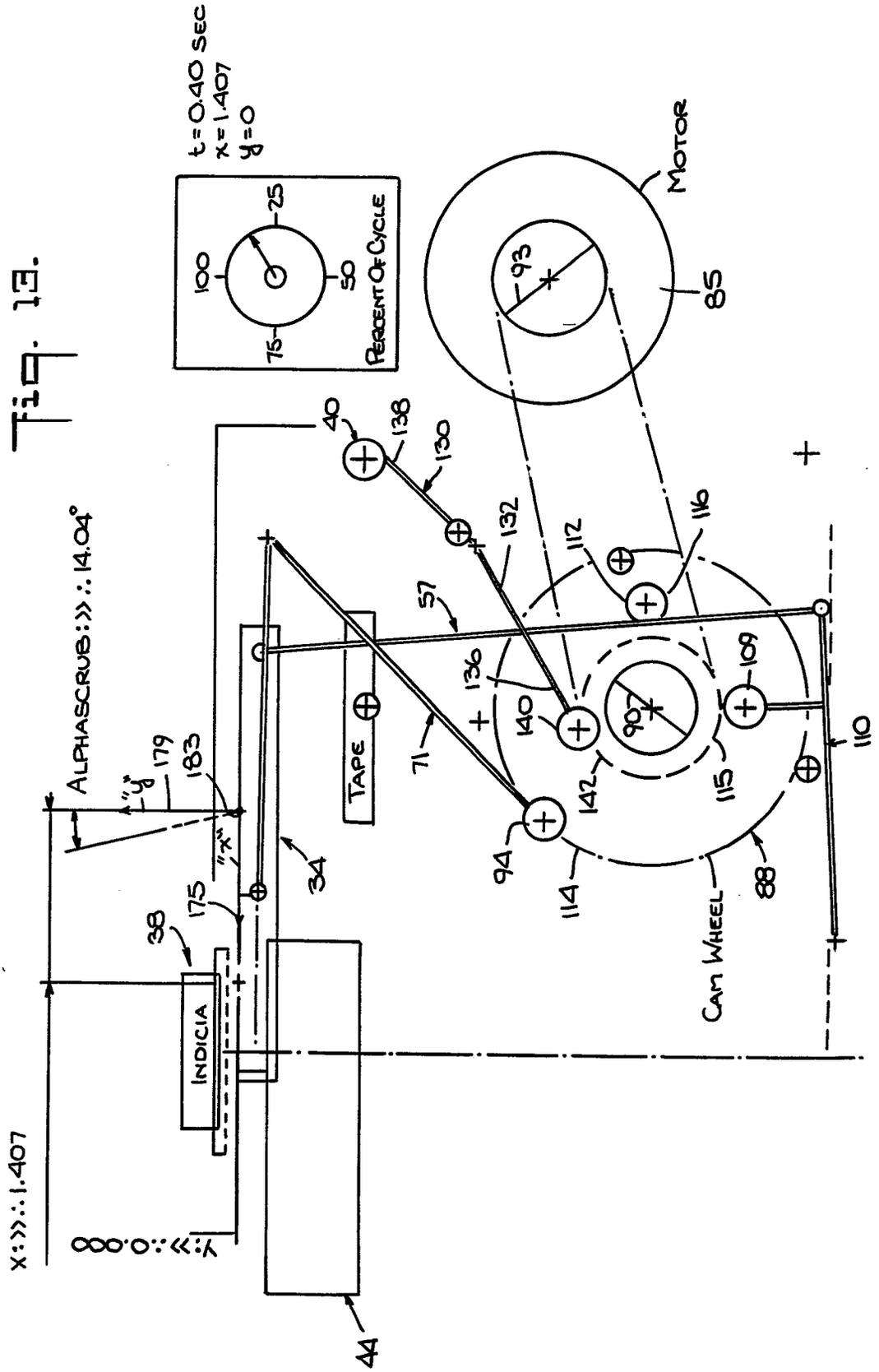

t=0.40 SEC
x=1.407
y=0
100
25
50
75
PERCENT OF CYCLE
MOTOR
85
93
40
138
130
132
112
116
57
136
140
107
109
110
71
142
115
94
114
88
CAM WHEEL
TAPE
ALPHASCRUB: » : 14.04°
"y"
179
183
"x"
34
175
38
INDICIA
x: » : 1.407
y: » : 0.00
44

Fig. 14.

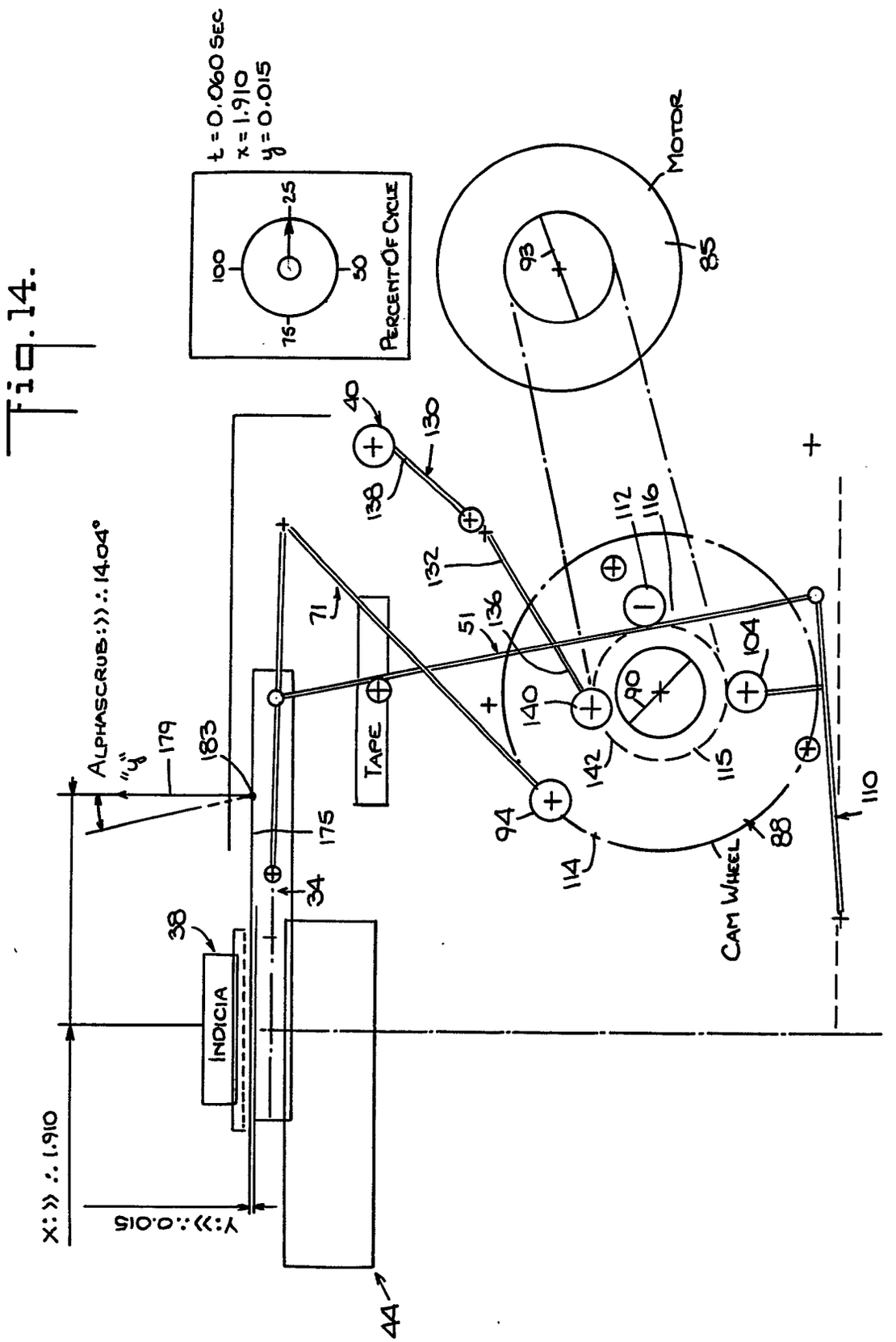

t = 0.060 SEC
x = 1.910
y = 0.015
100
25
50
75
PERCENT OF CYCLE
MOTOR
85
93
40
130
138
132
112
116
71
51
136
104
140
90
TAPE
142
115
94
114
88
CAM WHEEL
110
ALPHASCRUB: ∴ 14.04°
"y"
179
183
175
34
38
INDICIA
X: ∴ 1.910
Y: ∴ 0.015
44

Fig. 15.

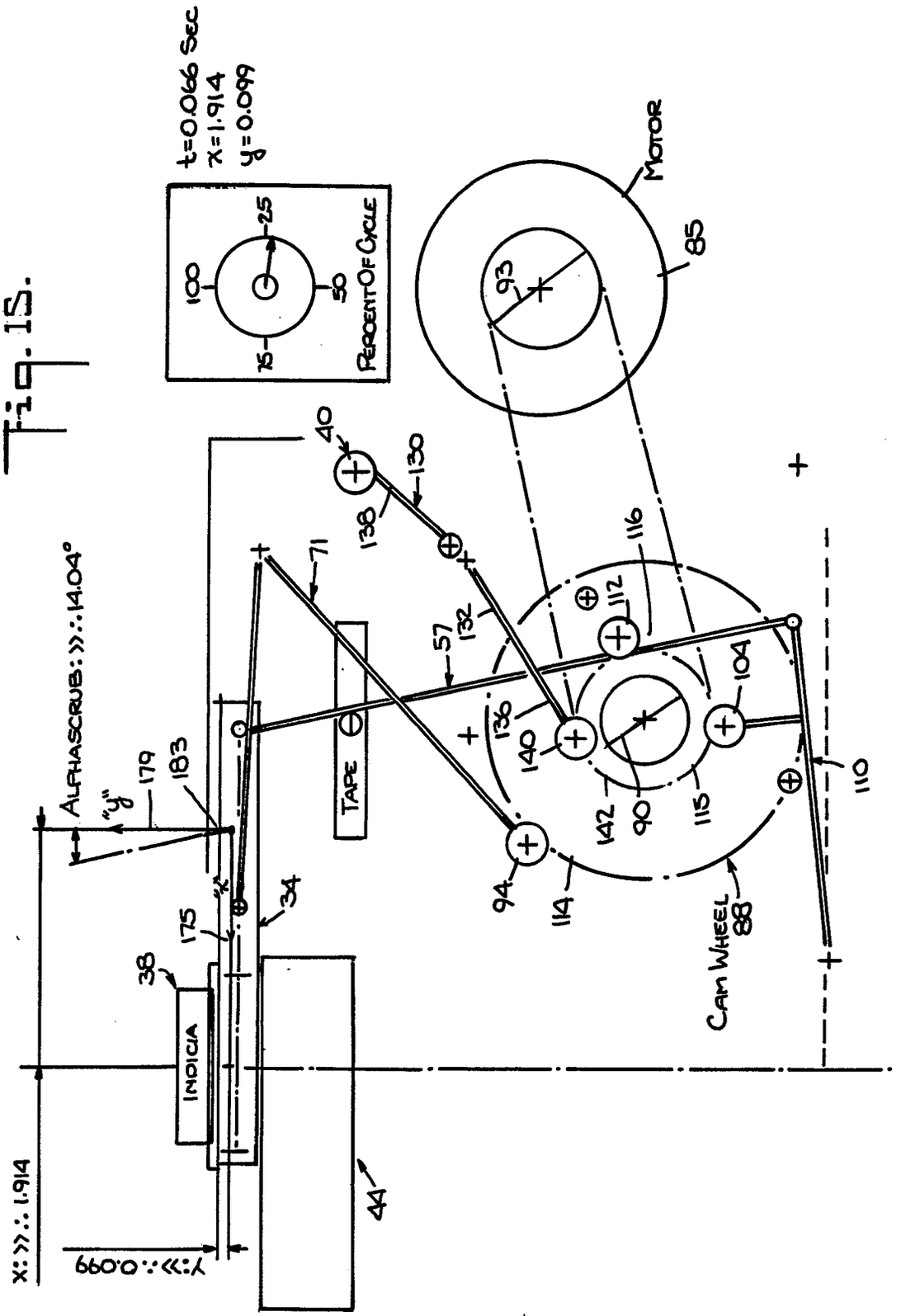

t=0.066 Sec
x=1.914
y=0.099
100
25
50
75
PERCENT OF CYCLE
MOTOR
85
93
40
130
138
71
57
132
116
112
104
136
140
142
90
115
110
94
114
CAM WHEEL
88
TAPE
ALPHASCRUB: »:.14.04°
"y"
179
183
"x"
34
175
38
INDICIA
44
x:»:.1914
y:»:.0099

Fig. 1B.

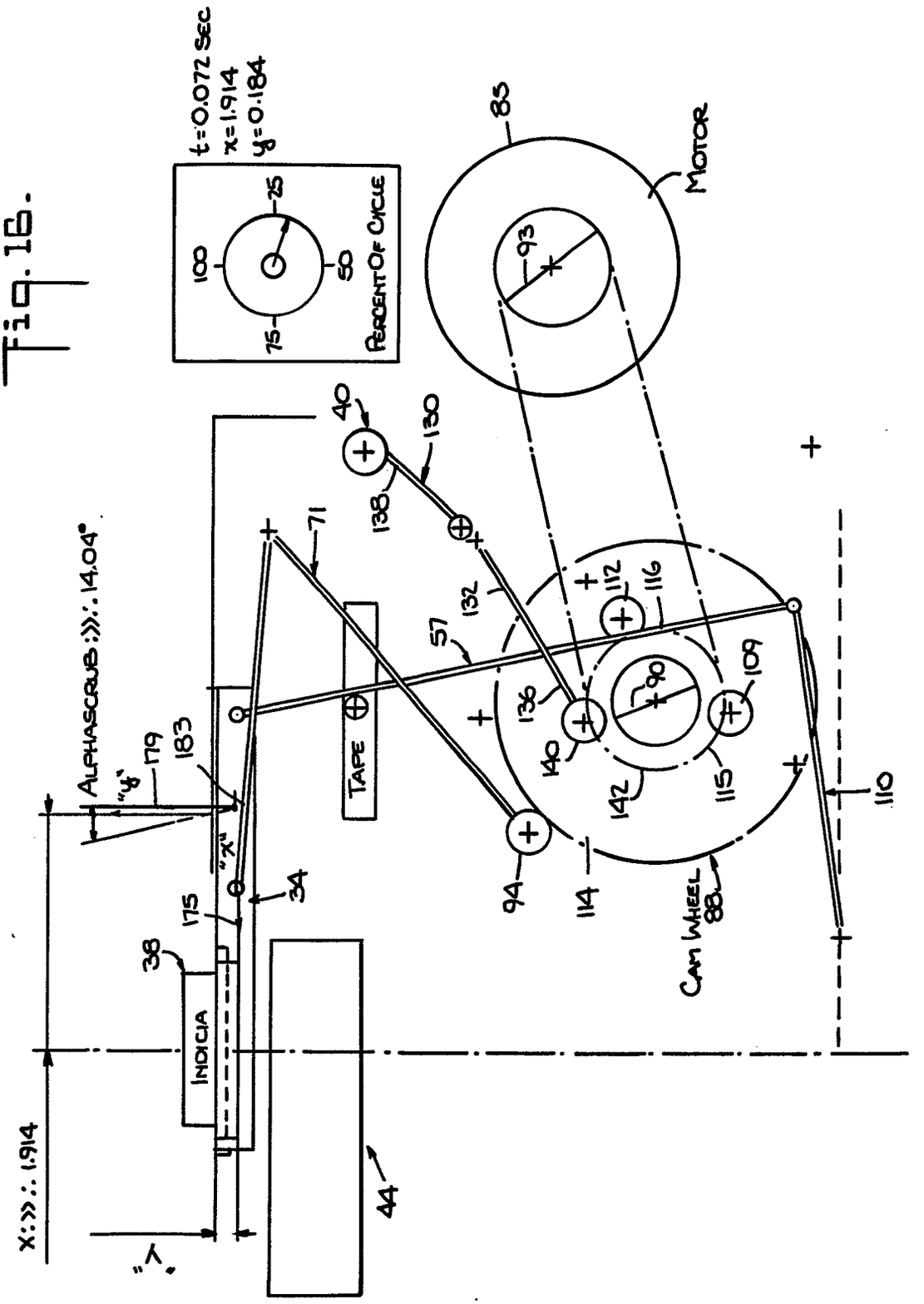
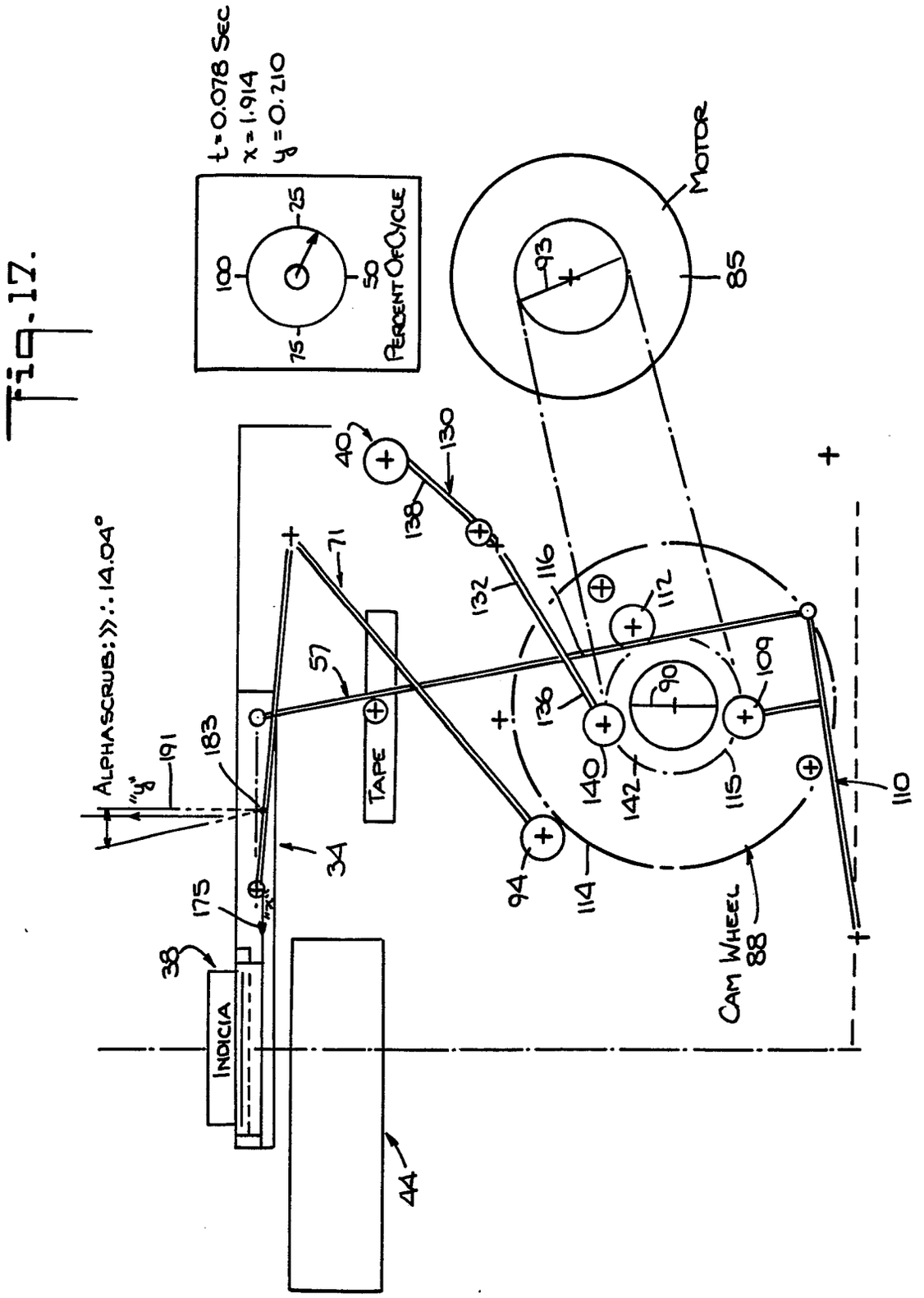

t=0.072 SEC
x=1.914
y=0.184
100
25
50
75
PERCENT OF CYCLE
85
MOTOR
93
40
130
138
71
132
57
112
116
136
90
109
140
142
115
110
94
114
CAM WHEEL
88
TAPE
ALPHASCRUB
"y"
179
183
"x"
34
175
38
INDICIA
44
X:=:.1914
"Y"

Fig. 17.


t=0.078 Sec
x=1.914
y=0.210
100
25
75
50
PERCENT OF CYCLE
MOTOR
85
93
ALPHASCRUB: >>: 14.04°
"y"
191
183
175
38
INDICIA
34
44
TAPE
57
71
40
130
138
132
116
112
136
90
109
140
142
115
94
114
110
CAM WHEEL
88

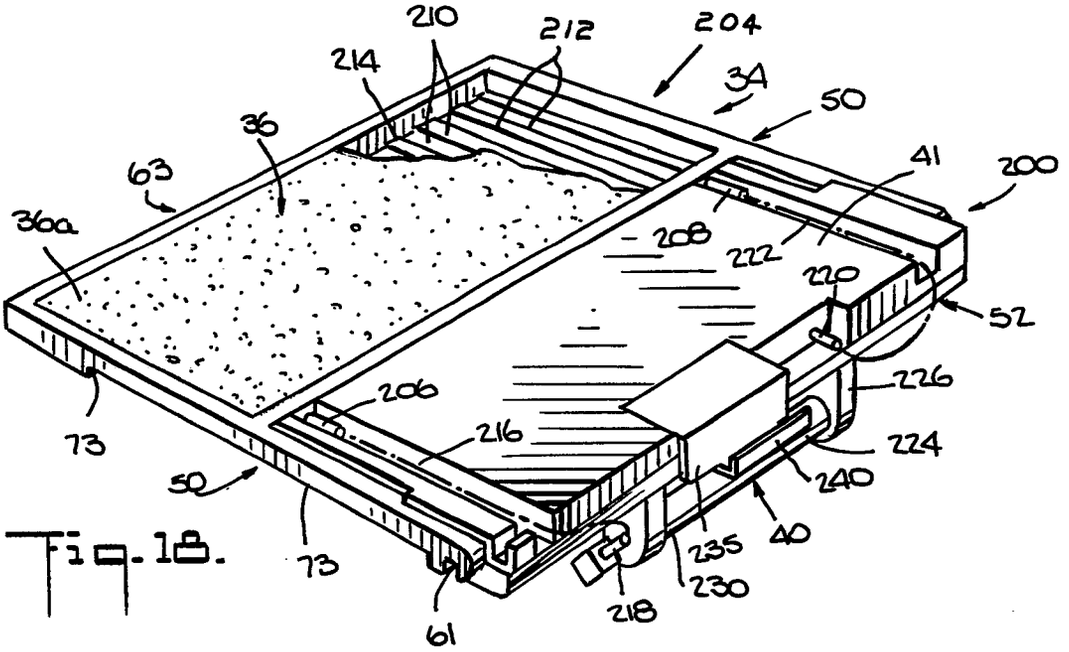

210
212
214
204
34
50
36
63
41
200
36a
208
222
220
52
226
206
216
224
73
240
50
40
235
73
230
218
61

Fig. 18.

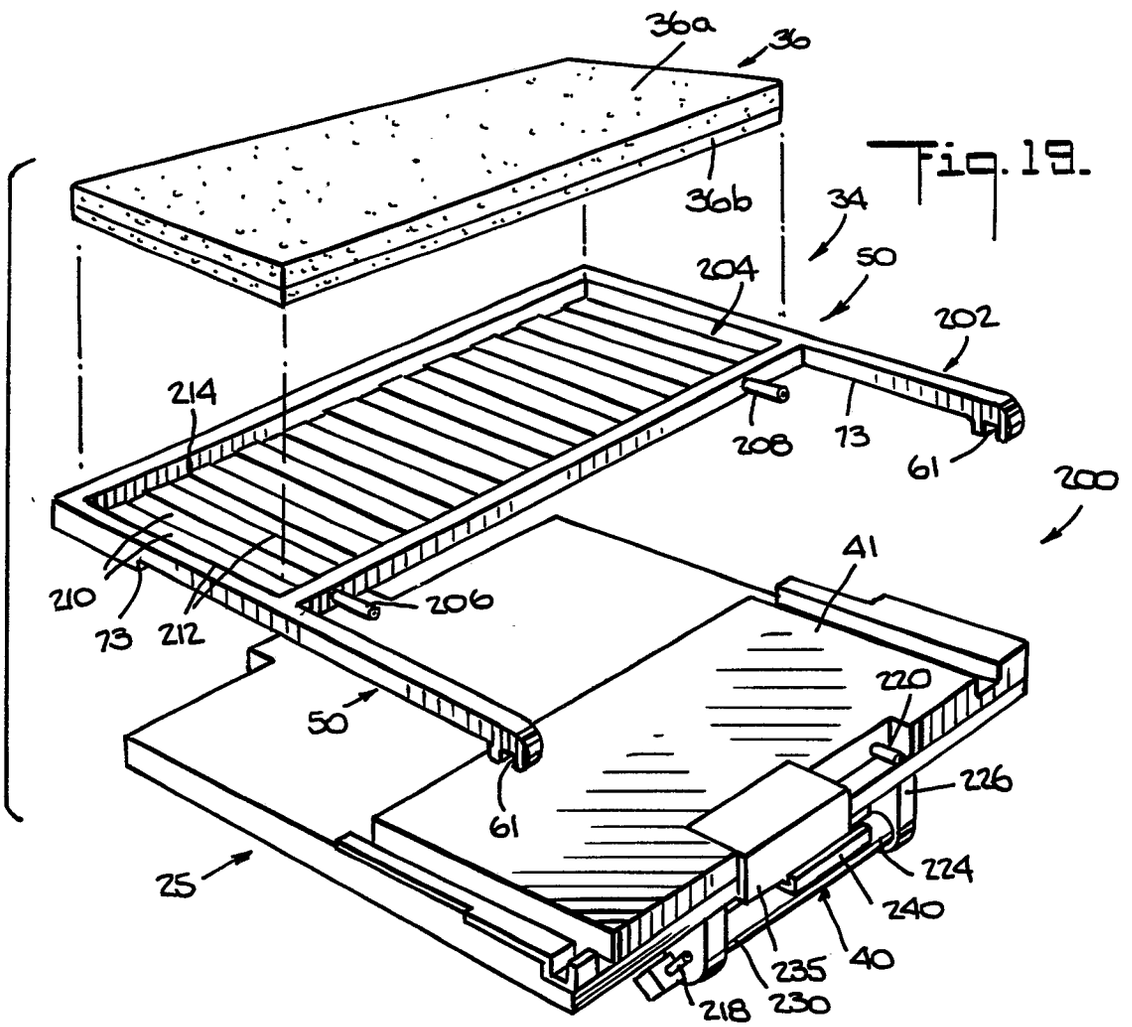
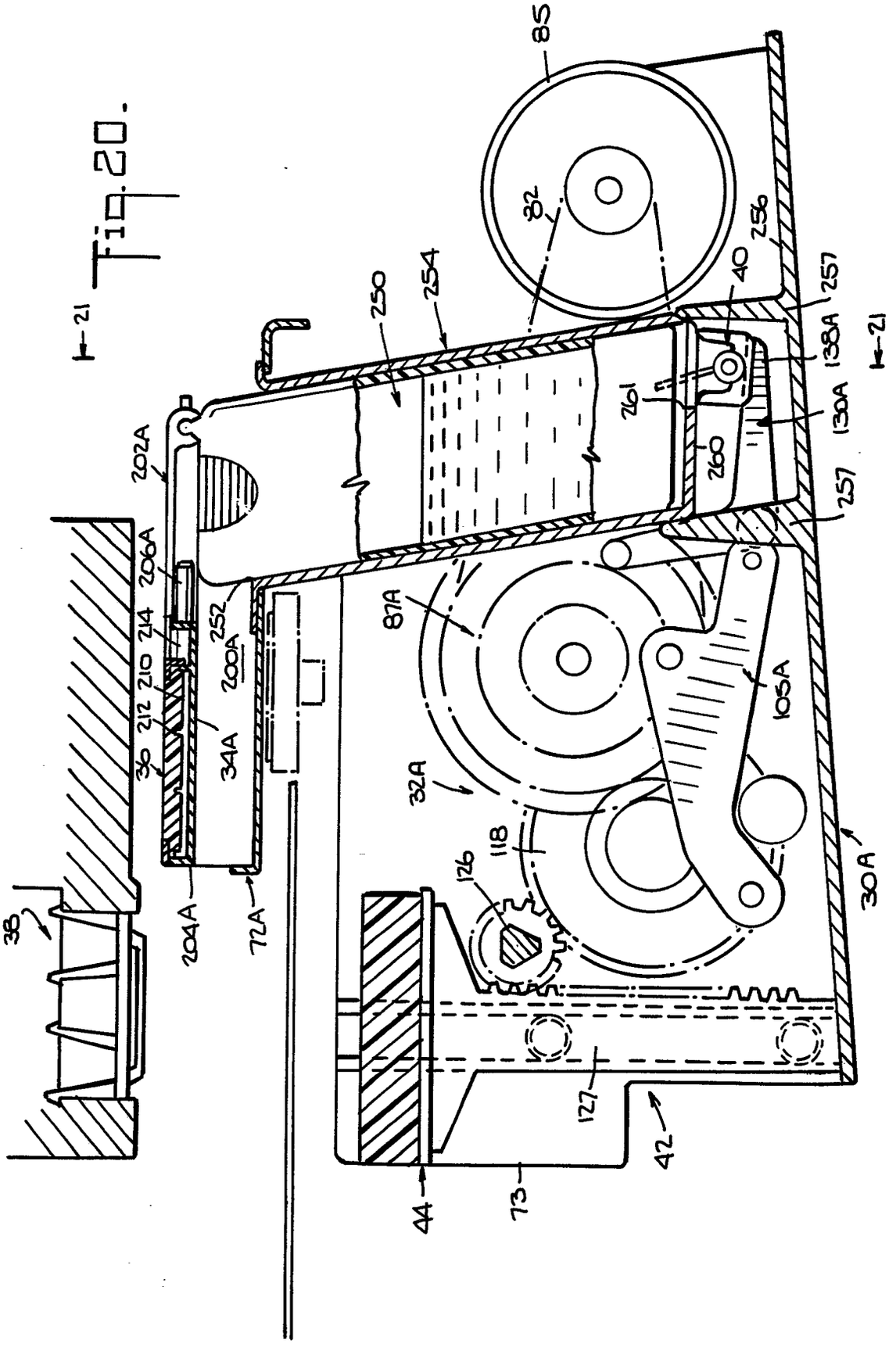

36a
36
36b
34
50
204
202
214
208
73
61
200
41
210
73
212
206
220
50
226
61
224
25
240
40
235
218
230

Fig. 19.

Fig. 20.


85
82
256
40
257
250
254
261
260
138A
130A
257
202A
206A
214
210
212
252
200A
34A
36
87A
105A
32A
118
126
30A
38
204A
72A
127
42
44
73
4-21
4-21

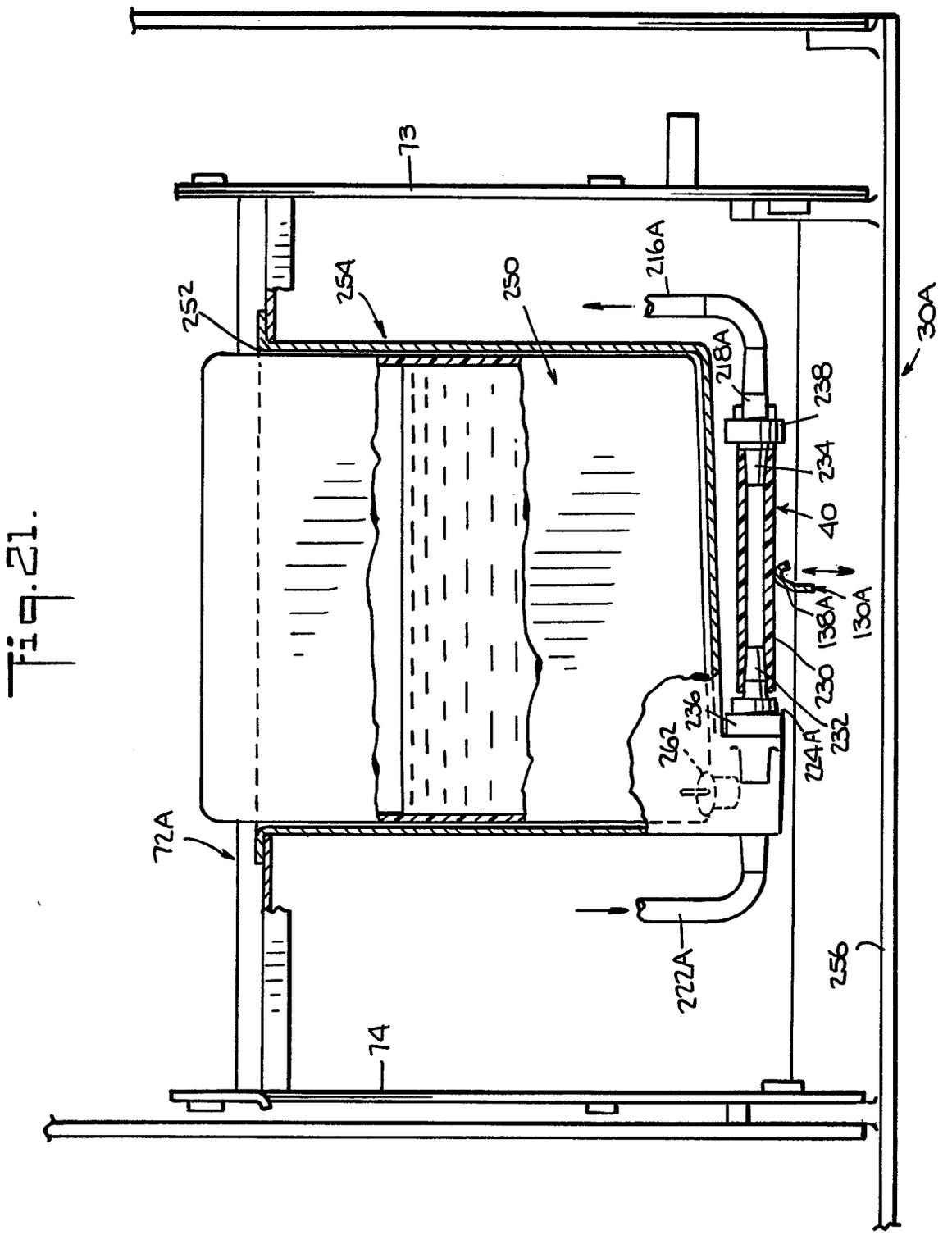

73
216A
254
250
252
30A
218A
238
234
40
138A
130A
230
236
232
224A
262
72A
222A
256
74

Fig.21.