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(54) **WEAR RESISTANT LEAD FREE ALLOY BUSHING AND METHOD OF MAKING**

VERSCHLEISSFESTE BUCHSE AUS EINER BLEIFREIEN LEGIERUNG UND HERSTELLUNGSVERFAHREN

BAGUE EN ALLIAGE SANS PLOMB RÉSISTANT À L'USURE ET SON PROCÉDÉ DE FABRICATION

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Description**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**5 **Field of the Invention**

[0001] This invention relates generally to sliding-type bearings, and more particularly to those having a sintered powder metal bronze bearing material applied to a steel backing, such as used in engine bearings.

10 **Related Art**

[0002] It is common in sliding bearing applications, including engine bearings, to bond a powder metal bronze alloy to a steel backing to journal a crankshaft or the like. The copper tin alloy matrix provides a strong bearing surface that can withstand the loads subjected on the bearing in use. Such bearings must also exhibit suitable wear and seizure resistance properties, and for this purpose it is common to add a certain additional alloying constituents, including lead to the bronze matrix. Lead acts as a lubricant to the bearing surface. It is also common to add a thin coating of tin to the bearing surface to further enhance the wear and seizure characteristics of the bearing.

[0003] Due to environmental considerations, various substitutes for lead have been explored, but to date none have demonstrated the ability to truly substitute for lead without unduly sacrificing the strength, wear, seizure and various other properties in many sliding bearing applications, including engine bearings.

[0004] Applicants' have found that bismuth, when prealloyed with powder metal bronze in a controlled amount along with a controlled amount of phosphorus can be sintered and bonded to a steel backing to provide a resultant sintered bronze steel-backed engine bearing whose physical properties are equal to or better than that of bronze-lead bearings while also exhibiting wear and seizure resistant properties equal to or exceeding those of steel-backed powder metal bronze-lead engine bearings.

[0005] An engine bearing constructed according to the Applicant's own prior invention (namely U.S. Patent 6,746,154) comprises an essentially lead-free bronze powder metal bearing material bonded to a steel backing. The bearing material consists essentially of 8 to 12% by weight of tin, 1 to less than 5% by weight of bismuth, and 0.03 to 0.8% by weight of phosphorus, with the balance being made up essentially of copper.

[0006] Bronze-bismuth-phosphorus engine bearings constructed according to the prior invention exhibit physical properties of tensile strength greater than or equal to 400 MPa, yield strength greater than or equal to 290 MPa, elongation greater than or equal to 10% and hardness greater than or equal to 130 Hv 0.5/15. By way of comparison, a traditional copper-tin-lead bearing having 10 wt. % tin, and 10 wt. % lead exhibits, on average, a considerably lower yield strength of 223 MPa, a comparable tensile strength of 301 MPa, a reduced elongation of about 8%, and a reduced hardness of about 96 HV 0.5/15. By way of further comparison, an identical engine wear test was conducted on bronze-bismuth-phosphorus bearings prepared according to the prior invention against more traditional copper-tin-lead bearings of the type described above. The more traditional copper-tin-lead engine bearings exhibited a loss of about 12 microns due to wear, whereas bearings prepared according to the invention exhibited an average of about 10-11 microns, demonstrating that the wear and seizure resistance of bearings according to the invention are at least as good, if not better than that of the traditional copper-tin-lead engine bearings.

[0007] It has been surprisingly found that bearings prepared according to the Applicant's prior invention exhibit the beneficial property, when subjected to frictional sliding loading in use, of having a certain amount of tin, which is in solid solution with the copper migrate to the bearing surface, with the result being that a tin-rich layer is formed at the bearing surface which was not present after sintering or prior to installation and use of the bearing. This migration of tin and formation of a highly tin-rich layer at the bearing surface greatly increases the lubricity of the bearing and thus contributes to enhanced wear and seizure resistant characteristics of the bearing once the bearing is put into use. Such tin migration has not been observed in traditional copper-tin-lead bearings, nor with other proposed lead substitutes, such as nickel. While not entirely understood, it is believed that, when subjected to frictional sliding loading, the bismuth reacts with the tin in the matrix and effectively mobilizes the tin, drawing it to the bearing surface. Following testing, a visual inspection of the engine bearings prepared according to the invention showed the bearing surface to have a lustrous, tin-colored bearing surface, and a chemical analysis conducted on the bearing showed a considerably higher concentration of tin at the surface than in portion of the copper-tin matrix below the surface, which remained uniform in its tin concentration.

[0008] This surprising property of tin migration has the benefit of eliminating or minimizing the need to apply a tin flash coating to the bearing surface prior to putting the bearing into service. The elimination of the flash coating step saves time and equipment and simplifies as well as lowers the cost of making engine bearings.

[0009] The elimination of lead from the engine bearings has the advantage of providing a more environmentally compliant engine bearing, and the substitution thereof with bismuth in the manner called for by the Applicant's prior invention has the advantage of providing the same or better strength and wear/seizure resistant properties without

requiring substantial changes in the way engine bearings are made. As such, engine bearings prepared according to the prior invention are readily adaptable to new applications or existing applications that would otherwise call for copper-tin-lead bearings, and a manufacturer of bearings according to the invention can adapt to the making of such bearings without requiring new or substantially modified manufacturing equipment, and perhaps eliminate some of the steps and equipment normally associated with the manufacture of traditional copper-tin-lead bearings.

[0010] According to a further aspect of the Applicant's prior invention (U.S. Patent 6,746,154), particular benefits have been realized when a copper-tin-bismuth sintered compact is produced from a blend of water-atomized copper-bismuth powder and gas-atomized copper-tin powder. Again, while not entirely understood, it is believed that the process by which the powders are made contributes to the mobilization of the tin onto the bearing surface.

[0011] Other related art of notable mention may include U.S. Patent No. 6,905,779 assigned to Daido Metal Company, Ltd. This patent is directed toward improved seizure resistance while unconcerned in any way with alloys containing bismuth or issues associated with wear resistance during the break-in period. Here, a mechanical alloying technique is used to achieve a uniform hard particle distribution in the material composition.

[0012] Still other related art includes GB2355016A assigned to Daido Metal Company Ltd. which teaches a copper alloy that comprises 0.5-15 mass % tin, 1-20 mass % bismuth and 0.1-10 volume % hard particles having an average size of 1-45 μm . The bismuth exists as a bismuth phase dispersed through the alloy. The hard particles may comprise one or more of borides, suicides, oxides, nitrides, carbides and/or an intermetallic compound. The alloy may further comprise not more than 40 mass % of Fe, Al, Zn, Mn, Co, Ni, Si and/or P. It may also further comprise not more than 20 volume % of one or more of MoS_2 , WS_2 , BN and graphite. The bearing alloy material is made by sintering an admixture of pure copper, tin and bismuth powders and various hard particle powders. This patent teaches that the hard particles mentioned co-exist with the bismuth phase in the copper matrix. The size of the bismuth phase is generally larger than the diameter of the hard particles, as the particles are located in the bismuth phase.

[0013] Still other related art includes US 2006/0000527 (corresponding to EP 1 605 069 A1) assigned to Taiho Kogyo Co. Ltd. which teaches a Cu-Bi based alloy, which can simultaneously attain a high level of the compatibility, fatigue resistance and corrosion resistance required for the bearing of a fuel injection pump. The '527 patent teaches a lead-free bearing, which contains from 1 to 30 mass % of Bi and from 0.1 to 10 mass % of hard particles having from 10 to 50 μm average particle diameter, the balance being Cu and unavoidable impurities, and further the Bi phase dispersed in the Cu matrix has an average particle diameter smaller than that of the hard particles. The Cu-Bi alloy is pulverized by an atomizing method. The resultant Cu-Bi powder is mixed with hard-particle powder and powder of the other metallic components. The components other than the hard-particle powder may be in the form of an alloy powder prepared by the atomizing method. The hard particles may be carbides such as Cr_2C_3 , Mo_2C , WC, VC and NbC, and preferably Fe_2P , Fe_3P , FeB, Fe_2B , and Fe_3B . Similar bearings and producing methods can also be found in US 2001/021353 A1 and US 6,905,779 B2.

[0014] Notwithstanding the advantages associated with the use of copper-tin-bismuth bearing materials as described in U.S. Patent 6,746,154, occasional early bushing wear may be experienced when using sintered bushings made from the composition. Such wear problems typically manifest during the initial break-in period of service. Despite the uses of certain combinations of hard particles suggested above, further bearing material improvements are desirable, particularly to improve wear and seizure resistance of the bearing, including early wear and seizure resistance, while also maintaining a suitable combination of mechanical and physical properties, such as tensile strength and ductility or elongation. It is also desirable to affect the necessary improvements while minimizing the amount of additional hard particle powder materials used, since these materials frequently have an associated cost that is greater than the cost of the alloy powders they replace in the sintered bearing material.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0015] The above objects are achieved with a bearing according to claim 1 and with a method in accordance with claim 7.

[0016] This invention provides improved wear resistance for bushings or bearings. The base material, a copper-tin-bismuth alloy with added phosphorus, described in detail in the Applicant's U.S. Patent 6,746,154, has excellent strength, due to the solid solution of copper, tin and phosphorus. The material also has good lubricity as a result of the presence of the bismuth and the associated tin migration that occurs during bearing use. In some instances, however, an unusual set of operating circumstances can result in very fast and excessive wear. These circumstances relate to the matching of the surfaces of the bushing and the mating pin or journal, wherein bushing wear can occur more rapidly than the above described tin migration can occur. The addition of small amounts of relatively small hard particles, particularly Fe_3P , MoSi_2 or a mixture thereof as described herein provides a suitable hard surface artifact to polish the pin or journal and thus greatly reduces the total wear, particularly early wear associated with matching the bearing surfaces as described above.

[0017] In one aspect, the invention is a bearing comprising a sintered powder compact bearing material of a copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder and a metal compound powder which is bonded to a steel backing shell, wherein the metal

compound powder has an average particle size of less than 10 μm and wherein the metal compound powder comprises a Fe_3P powder and a MoSi_2 powder.

[0018] In another aspect, the metal compound powder comprises 0.1-10% by volume of the sintered powder compact.

[0019] In another aspect, the copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder may include, by weight, 8-15% tin, 1-30% bismuth and the balance essentially copper, and more particularly 8-12% tin, 1-<5% bismuth and the balance essentially copper. The copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder may include either a gas atomized powder or a water atomized powder, and more particularly may include a mixture of a gas atomized powder and a water atomized powder.

[0020] In another aspect, the copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder may also include phosphorus, and more particularly, by weight, 0.03-0.8% of the copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder, and even more particularly, by weight, 0.03-0.8% of the copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder.

[0021] In another aspect, the invention includes a method of making a bearing including the steps of: applying a mixture of a copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder and a metal compound powder having an average particle size of less than 10 μm to a steel backing shell. wherein the metal compound powder comprises a Fe_3P powder and a MoSi_2 powder; heating the powder mixture and steel backing shell to produce a sintered powder mixture and bond the sintered powder mixture to the steel backing shell; and rolling the sintered powder mixture and steel backing shell to reduce a porosity of the sintered powder and to produce a fully-dense, sintered compact bearing material.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0022] These and other features and advantages of the present invention will become more readily appreciated when considered in connection with the following detailed description and appended drawings, wherein like elements have like reference numerals throughout:

FIG. 1 is a schematic perspective view of an engine bearing constructed according to the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a pin bushing constructed according to the invention;

FIG. 3 is an enlarged fragmentary cross-sectional view of a bearing according to the invention in its manufactured, but pre-use, condition;

FIG. 4 is a view like FIG. 3 but showing the bearing following a period of use in service;

FIG. 5 is an SEM photomicrograph showing agglomerated Fe_3P particles;

FIG. 6 is a second SEM photomicrograph of Fe_3P particles that are not agglomerated;

FIG. 7 is an SEM photomicrograph of MoSi_2 particles;

FIG. 8 is an SEM photomicrograph of the MoSi_2 particles of FIG. 7 taken at a higher magnification;

FIG. 9 is an optical photomicrograph of the bearing material LFC-63;

FIG. 10 is a secondary electron photomicrograph of the bearing material of FIG. 9;

FIG. 11 is a back scatter electron photomicrograph of the bearing material of FIG. 9;

FIG. 12 is an optical photomicrograph of the bearing material LFC-64;

FIG. 13 is a secondary electron photomicrograph of the bearing material of FIG. 12;

FIG. 14 is a back scatter electron photomicrograph of the bearing material of FIG. 12;

FIG. 15 is an optical photomicrograph of the bearing material LFC-65;

FIG. 16 is a secondary electron photomicrograph of the bearing material of FIG. 15;

FIG. 17 is a back scatter electron photomicrograph of the bearing material of FIG. 15;

FIG. 18 is an optical photomicrograph of the bearing material LFC-66;

FIG. 19 is a secondary electron photomicrograph of the bearing material of FIG. 18;

FIG. 20 is a back scatter electron photomicrograph of the bearing material of FIG. 18; and

FIG. 21 is a plot of the wear performance of several bearing materials of the invention and a comparative bearing material.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0023] Referring to the FIGS., wherein like numerals indicate like or corresponding parts throughout the several views, a bearing constructed according to the present invention is shown generally at 10 in FIG. 1 in the form of an engine bearing, and at 10' in FIG. 2 which represents a pin bushing such as that used in the small end opening of a connecting rod for journaling a wrist pin of a piston. For simplicity, the remainder of the description will be made in reference to the engine bearing 10, but it is to be understood that the description is equally applicable to the pin bushing 10'.

[0024] The engine bearing 10 is of the type comprising a half shell used in combination with a counterpart half shell bearing in an engine, or the like, to journal a rotating shaft, such as the crankshaft of an engine. The bearing 10 has a steel backing shell 12 having a concave inner surface 14 and a convex outer surface 16. Bearing material 18 is applied to the inner surface 14 as a loose powder mixture of a copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder and hard particle powder and is

sintered and rolled to form a sintered powder compact. The copper-tin-bismuth alloy bearing material 18 is lead-free. By lead-free, it is meant that the bearing material contains either none or only incidental amounts of lead due to impurities (i.e., less than about 0.5% by weight).

5 [0025] The bearing material 18 is fabricated of a copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder, or blend of copper-tin-bismuth alloy powders, that also includes at least one hard particle powder, and preferably at least two hard particle powders. The at least one hard particle powder is a metal compound powder in an amount of 0.1-10%, by volume, of bearing material 18 and the sintered compact and has an average particle size of less than 10 μm . While 0.1-10% by volume of the metal compound powder is believed to represent the broadest range of this material, 0.5-5% by volume of this material is believed to represent a more preferred range and 1-2% by volume is a most preferred range of this material. Applicants have determined that either of Fe_3P and MoSi_2 are suitable for use as the metal compound in the amounts and sizes indicated above, with MoSi_2 being somewhat preferred in that it has produced somewhat superior wear resistance and ductility, but with Fe_3P generally being somewhat preferred with regard to its relatively lower cost. However, it is believed to be most preferred to use a mixture of Fe_3P and MoSi_2 in the amounts and sizes described above to exploit the advantages of both materials. The use of hard particles in these amounts and sizes, particularly as a mixture of Fe_3P and MoSi_2 , has not been discussed in the related art patents and publications.

10 [0026] Importantly, the copper, tin and bismuth are alloyed together prior to forming the copper-tin-bismuth powder in contrast to other copper-tin-bismuth alloy bearings that have been reported earlier using a mixture of pure metal powders of each of these constituents, as Applicants have observed, consistent with what has been reported in GB2355016, that the use of pure metal powders to make the sintered bearing material increases the tendency for the hard particles described herein to be preferentially located in or proximate to the bismuth phase. The use of copper-tin-bismuth alloy powders to make sintered compacts of the invention has been observed to produce compacts where the hard particles are generally evenly distributed throughout the alloy microstructure, particularly within the copper-tin matrix. While some hard particles have been observed in the bismuth phase, as would be expected assuming a generally homogeneous distribution of the copper-tin-bismuth alloy particles and the metal compound particles, preferential incorporation of the hard particles in the bismuth phase has not been noted. The alloying done prior to forming the copper-tin-bismuth powder may include alloying together all of the desired alloy constituents, such that a single powder may be formed, preferably as a water atomized or gas atomized powder, or more preferably as a mixture of gas atomized and water atomized powders.

20 [0027] However, the invention and the references herein to copper-tin-bismuth powders also contemplates alloying together of certain combinations of constituents to form alloy powders which may then be mixed together to achieve the desired alloy composition of the sintered compact, such as by separately forming copper-tin alloy and copper-bismuth alloy powders and then mixing them together prior to sintering, as described in US 6,746,154 and such that pure bismuth powder is not used. When different alloy powders are used, they may also be formed as gas atomized and water atomized powders. The hard particle powder is mixed with the copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder in the amounts described above using known mixing methods to form the bearing material 18.

25 [0028] The mixture of copper-tin-bismuth powder and hard particle powder used to form metal bearing material 18 is sintered and bonded to the steel backing shell 12 to provide a lining of the copper-tin-bismuth bearing material which contains hard particles dispersed therein, particularly within the copper-tin alloy matrix, against the inner surface 14 of the backing shell 12. As is known generally to those skilled in the bronze bearing art, including bronze-bismuth bearings, the technique used to bond the copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder with the dispersed hard particles as the bearing material 18 to the steel backing shell 12 involves applying the bearing material 18 in loose powder form to the inner surface 14, after which the powder bearing material is heated, sintered and rolled to develop essentially a porosity-free, fully densified layer of the bearing material 18 which is permanently metallurgically bonded and united to the steel backing shell 12 to form a united multi-layer bearing structure. By fully dense, it is meant that the powder bearing material 18 is compressed and sintered to near fully theoretical density to form a sintered compact that is substantially impervious to oil or other substances in contrast to porous, oil-retaining bronze bearings to which this invention is not directed. Accordingly, it will be understood that fully dense or nearly fully dense means the bearing material 18 has a density exceeding 99% of full theoretical density, and preferably greater than 99.5%, and still more preferably 99.9% or more. Following the step of rolling, it is preferred that the multi-layer bearing structure be heated again sufficiently (i.e., for a sufficient time and temperature) to promote inner diffusion within the bearing material 18 at sites associated with the porosity which was effectively closed by the rolling step. This step increases the strength of the bearing material 18 considerably by increasing the homogeneity of the microstructure and removing through inner diffusion what would effectively be a network of microcracks associated with the porosity which was closed by rolling.

30 [0029] Depending on the properties required in the bearing application, copper-tin-bismuth alloy powders having a range of alloy compositions are suitable for use to make the bearing material 18 of the invention. However, copper-tin-bismuth-phosphorus alloy powders are particularly useful in a number of bearing applications, since phosphorus additions strengthen the sintered compact. The copper-tin-bismuth or copper-tin-bismuth-phosphorus alloy powder bearing materials 18 contain, by weight, an amount of tin in the range of 8 to 15%, and more preferably 8 to 12%, and even more

preferably 9 to 11%; an amount of bismuth of 1 to less than 5%, and more preferably 3 to 4%; and when present, an amount of phosphorus of 0.03 to 0.8% and more preferably 0.03 to 0.08%, with the balance of copper, allowing for incidental impurities. While having amounts greater than 0.5% phosphorus has been reported to promote embrittlement of copper-tin-bismuth alloy bearing materials, it is believed that having a greater amount of this material, such as 0.8% by weight, may be useful in conjunction with hard particles that are adapted to react with phosphorus, such as MoSi_2 , as such materials by virtue of their reaction with the phosphorus will lower the amount of phosphorus in the copper-tin matrix to levels which are at or below 0.5% by weight. The amounts of phosphorus used in excess of 0.5% by weight for the purposes described above will depend upon the nature of the reaction with the metal compound used for the hard particles as well as the amount of hard particles that are used. Other alloying additions which do not impair the physical, tribological, wear or other properties of the bearing material, such as the mobilization of tin, may also be incorporated.

[0030] The bonded layer of bearing material 18 has a matrix 22 of copper and tin, with the tin being dissolved in solid solution in the copper. When present, the phosphorus is likewise in solid solution in the matrix. The bismuth has very low solubility in copper and exists as a distinct bismuth-rich phase 20 in the form of finely dispersed islands within the copper-tin or copper-tin-phosphorus matrix. The bismuth-rich phase 20 is dispersed substantially uniformly throughout the volume of the copper-tin matrix 22, as represented schematically in FIGS. 3 and 4.

[0031] As described in US 6,746,154, when using a copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder in a sintered bearing according to the invention, bismuth serves as a substitute for lead, and has shown to provide additional properties not shared by lead when used in the controlled amount called for by the invention (i.e., between 1 to less than 5 weight percent). Roll bonded and sintered fully dense copper-tin-bismuth bearing material without the addition of hard particles has been shown to exhibit the following physical properties including a tensile strength greater than or equal to 400MPa, a yield strength greater than or equal to 200MPa, and elongation of greater than 10% and a hardness (HV) less than 130 (0.5/15).

[0032] These physical properties meet or exceed traditional copper-tin-lead engine bearings as discussed in the previous section. In addition, engine bearings constructed according to the invention have as good or better wear and seizure resistance properties as compared to traditional copper-tin-lead engine bearings. In a comparative engine test, engine bearing constructed according to the invention exhibited a loss of material of about 10 to 11 microns, whereas traditional copper-tin-lead bearings tested under the same conditions exhibited a loss of 12 microns, indicating about a 10% decrease in wear of copper-tin-bismuth bearings over traditional copper-tin-lead bearings.

[0033] In a study conducted on the copper-tin-bismuth bearing materials, it was surprisingly found that when engine bearings are prepared according to the invention within the limits set forth above, the exceptional physical properties are achieved that enable bearings constructed according to the invention to be substituted for those applications now or in the future calling for traditional copper-tin-lead engine bearings. Although not entirely understood, one of the key factors attributing to the remarkable physical properties is the presence of the phosphorus which is effective at degassing the alloy during melting and atomization into powder, and the fully dense roll bonding and sintering of the bearing material onto the backing 12. Additionally, the physical properties mentioned above as well as fatigue strength are maintained by controlling the amount of bismuth added to the alloy. If added in amounts of 5% or more, bismuth has the effect of weakening the matrix structure since it does not dissolve in the matrix 22 and the bismuth islands 20 amount, effectively, to bismuth-filled holes or pockets in the otherwise strong matrix. If too much bismuth is present, the islands (and thus the holes they fill) become too large and the desired physical properties of the material are lost. As such, the addition of bismuth in the range called for by the invention and recited above has been shown not to reduce the physical properties of the matrix below that which is desired for engine bearing applications.

[0034] Bismuth has also surprisingly been shown to have a very desirable, positive effect on the wear and seizure resistance properties of the bearing layer 18. As shown in FIG. 3, when the bearing 10 is manufactured and installed in an engine, the tin is fully dissolved in the copper to yield a uniform copper-tin matrix 22. However, it has been surprisingly found that during operation when a frictional compressive sliding load is applied to the exposed bearing surface 24 of the bearing layer 18, a certain amount of tin in the matrix is caused to migrate through the matrix into the bearing surface 24, developing a tin-rich layer 26 at the bearing surface 24 as illustrated in FIG. 4. This tin-rich layer 26 serves as a lubricant at the bearing surface 24 and has the effect of reducing the wear and seizure resistance of the overall bearing 10. As the bearing 10 wears, the bearing material 18 has the characteristic of continuously replenishing the tin-rich layer, such that the layer 26 is always present and developing due to the mobilization of the tin in the matrix 22. The mobilization of the tin is believed to result from a reaction between the tin in solution and the bismuth under the load/friction conditions of bearing usage. The presence of the bismuth in combination with the fully dense powder metal structure of the matrix 22 provides the vehicle for transporting the tin from the matrix to the surface 24 in development of the tin-rich layer 26. Since the copper-tin-bismuth bearing material 18 has the characteristic of developing its own tin-rich layer 26 at the bearing surface 24, there is generally no need to apply a flash coating of tin or other tin overlay to the bearing material 18, as is often applied to bronze-lead engine bearings of the traditional type mentioned above. The bearing layer 18 of the invention which also includes hard particles in the amounts described herein has also been observed to exhibit tin mobilization as described above comparable to that which has been observed in alloys in copper-tin-bismuth alloys

which do not include hard particles.

[0035] By way of comparison, the tin mobility is not known to exist in copper-tin-lead bearings. Tests were also conducted on a copper-tin-nickel alloy and likewise no tin mobilization was found to be present. Only bismuth, in the amount specified by the invention, has shown to provide tin mobilization to improve wear and seizure characteristics while not unduly inhibiting the physical properties of the copper-tin matrix.

[0036] As noted previously, test specimens were similarly prepared from comparable copper-tin-bismuth compositions made up of only gas atomized powder and another set of test specimens made up of only water atomized powder, but of comparable composition to the gas/water blend of the first test specimens. It was surprisingly found that the gas/water atomized blend had significantly improved physical properties as compared to the test specimens of comparable compositions made from either 100% gas atomized or 100% water atomized powder. The improved physical properties include yield strength, tensile strength, ductility, hardness and seizure resistance; all of which play an important role in copper-based sintered powder metal bushing and bearing applications.

[0037] Applicants have observed that the advantages and improvements described above that are associated with the use of copper-tin-bismuth alloy bearing materials are also generally characteristic of, and even improved by, bearing materials of the invention that also include hard particles. For example, the wear resistance is improved and the tin mobility and lubricity associated with the bismuth are also observed in bearing materials of the invention. Some differences have been noted, such as a general reduction of the tensile strength and elongation, but these properties are still generally sufficient to provide a bearing material having suitable strength and ductility for many bearing applications, including main engine bearings for internal combustion engines.

[0038] The bearing materials of the invention are further described below with regard to several examples, including comparative examples. Applicants have fabricated several bearing materials of the invention for evaluation, including metallographic and scanning electron microscope evaluation of the resultant microstructures, measurement of porosity, and well as wear testing.

EXAMPLE

[0039] The samples made were of engine bearings main bearings. The copper-tin-bismuth powder used was as described generally herein and in US Patent 6,746,154. The hard particles included Fe₃P and MoSi₂ powder used individually (comparative examples) and in combination (inventive example) in the amount and sizes described in Table 1.

Table 1: Powder Mixtures

Alloy	LFC-63	LFC-64	LFC-65	LFC-66
LF-5 (Cu-Sn-Bi) Powder (wt.%)	99	99	99	99
Fe ₃ P (wt.%) /(vol%)	1/1.32	0/0	0.9/1.19	0.5/0.66
MoSi ₂ (wt.%) /(vol%)	0/0	1/1.41	0.1/0.14	0.5/0.70
Total	100	100	100	100

[0040] The LF-5 used for samples LFC-63 through LFC-66 was a Cu-Sn-Bi alloy powder. That is, each of the constituents was added into a melt to form the alloy, which was then atomized to form the alloy powder. This material had the properties as shown in Tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2: Chemistry of LF-5

Sn	Bi	Pb	Ni	P	O ₂	Fe	Zn	Sb	Al	Si
10.18	3.25	0.012	0.002	0.071	0.09	0.003	0.002	0.007	<0.001	0.001

Table 3: Powder Properties of LF-5

Flow time (s)	Apparent Density (g/ml)	Sieve analysis (sieve sizes in microns)						
		+200	-200 +180	-180 +150	-150 +125	-125 + 75	- 75 + 45	- 45
12	5.65	0.00%	0.00%	0.55%	3.48%	21.99%	30.14 %	43.84 %

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[0041] The Fe₃P powder used for samples LFC-63 through LFC-66 was purchased from F.W. Winter Co, grade FEP-R15-F4. The Fe₃P powder had the chemical analysis and powder properties as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Properties of the Fe₃P Powder

P (%)	Si (%)	Mn (%)	C(%)	Size analysis (microns)	
				D50	D90
15.15	0.01	0.4	0.25	6.4	2.4

[0042] Scanning electron microscope (SEM) photographs of the Fe₃P powder are shown in FIGS. 5 and 6 below. FIG. 5 reveals some agglomeration of the Fe₃P particles, as compared to those shown in FIG. 6. It is believed to be desirable to use the Fe₃P powder in the form shown in FIG. 6.

[0043] The LF-5 and Fe₃P powders were blended together in a weight ratio of 400 pounds LF-5 and 4.0 pounds of Fe₃P powder as hard particles to make sample LFC-63.

[0044] The blended loose powder mixture of LFC-63 was applied to several sample steel strips and sintered at 805°C. The porosity of the sintered strips was measured as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Post-Sintering Porosity

Sample	Average Porosity	Maximum Porosity
1	0.6%	1.5%
2	1.1%	2.7%
3	0.7%	1.5%
4	0.5%	1.4%

[0045] Referring to FIG. 9, the photomicrographs of sample LFC-63 show darker gray areas (Fe₃P particles) both adjacent to and independent from lighter gray bismuth phase. Note that the Fe₃P particles appear to somewhat favor sites at the intersection of the bismuth phase and the bronze particle grain boundaries, possibly pinning the bismuth.

[0046] Referring to FIGS. 10 and 11, respectively, secondary electron (SE) and backscatter (BS) photographs of the microstructure clearly show the bismuth phase (white in the SE, dark in BS), while the Fe₃P particles show as dark gray areas in the SE photograph and white areas in the BS photograph.

[0047] The lining of each comparative sample of LFC-63 was analyzed for composition. The results are shown in the following Table 6.

Table 6: LFC-63 Chemistry

Sample	Sn	Bi	Fe	P	Pb	Ni	Zn	Si	Mo
1	9.98	2.78	0.96	0.20	0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	NA
2	9.92	2.74	0.73	0.23	0.02	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
3	10.03	2.87	0.75	0.24	0.07	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
4	9.98	2.79	0.73	0.24	0.02	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

[0048] The hardness of the steel and lining were measured as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: LFC-63 Hardness

Sample	Lining Hardness HR15T	Lining Microhardness HV500	Steel Hardness HRB	Steel Microhardness HV1000
1	83.0	131	73.1	144
2	82.9	142	73.7	144
3	81.8	128	70.2	147
4	82.8	135	71.0	149

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[0049] Tensile and yield properties were measured as shown in the following Table 8.

Table 8: LFC-63 Tensile/Yield Strength

Sample	Yield Strength		Ultimate Tensile Strength		Elongation
	psi	MPa	psi	MPa	%
1	48,000	331	49,900	344	1.2
2	48,500	335	48,500	338	1.3
3	49,000	338	50,000	345	1.0
4	48,700	336	49,900	344	1.0

[0050] The SEM analysis also indicated the presence of Fe₃P in the copper matrix, in addition to being located in the bismuth phase.

[0051] The LF-5 and MoSi₂ powders were blended together in a weight ratio of 352 pounds of LF-5 and 3.52 pounds of MoSi₂ as hard particles to make sample LFC-64.

[0052] MoSi₂ powder may be purchased from ABCR GmbH & Co. KG. The MoSi₂ powder had the chemical analysis and powder properties as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Properties of the MoSi₂ Powder

Si (%)	C (%)	O (%)	N (%)	Surface area (m ² /g)	App. Density (g/inch ³)/(g/ml)	Microtrac size analysis (microns)		
						D10	D50	D90
36.60	0.11	0.76	0.04	0.9	19.3/1.18	1.484	4.703	8.306

[0053] Scanning electron microscope (SEM) photographs of the MoSi₂ powder are shown in FIGS. 7 and 8 at two different magnifications. In contrast to the Fe₃P particles, the MoSi₂ powder particles did not show evidence of agglomeration as may be seen in FIGS. 7 and 8. It is believed to be desirable to use the MoSi₂ powder in the form shown in FIGS 7 and 8.

[0054] The blended loose powder mixture of LFC-64 was applied to several sample steel strips and sintered at 805°C.

[0055] The low magnification optical photomicrograph of the microstructure of the sample of LFC-64 material made according to this invention shows a significant number of dark areas that appear to be porosity. Under higher magnification as shown in FIG. 12, many of these dark areas are revealed to be small MoSi₂ particles. Because of this, image analysis techniques do not give an accurate measurement of the porosity. As may be seen in FIG. 12, the microstructure shows many dark areas, as well as gray secondary phase bismuth areas. The MoSi₂ particles are not generally adjacent to or associated with the bismuth phase, although they do appear to be well distributed along the grain boundaries of the Cu matrix.

[0056] Referring to FIGS. 13 and 14, respectively, secondary electron (SE) and backscatter (BS) photographs of the microstructure clearly show the bismuth phase (white in the SE, dark in BS), while the MoSi₂ particles show as dark gray in the SE and either light gray or white areas in the BS photomicrograph. White areas are higher in Si than the light gray areas.

[0057] The lining of each comparative sample of LFC--64 was analyzed for composition. The results are shown in the following Table 10

Table 10: LFC-64 Chemistry

Sample	Sn	Bi	Mo	Si	P	Pb	Ni	Fe	Zn
1	9.97	2.93	0.60	0.30	0.07	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	NA
2	9.87	2.69	0.60	0.30	0.06	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
3	9.43	2.22	0.56	0.32	0.09	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
4	9.73	2.90	0.59	0.32	0.10	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

[0058] The hardness of the steel and lining were measured as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: LFC-64 Hardness

Sample	Lining Hardness HR15T	Lining Microhardness HV500	Steel Hardness HRB	Steel Microhardness HV1000
1	83.0	138	68.1	133
2	83.3	139	70.2	137
3	82.1	135	70.4	1.35
4	83.4	142	69.6	136

[0059] Tensile and yield properties were measured as shown in the following Table 12.

Table 12: LFC-63 Tensile/Yield Strength

Sample	Yield Strength		Tensile Strength		Elongation
	psi	MPa	psi	MPa	%
1	52,900	365	58,300	402	4.1
2	55,400	382	60,900	420	3.1
3	52,000	358	57,000	393	3.6
4	56,400	389	62,100	428	2.3

[0060] The LF-5, Fe₃P and MoSi₂ powders were blended together in a weight ratio of 247.5 pounds LF-5, 22.5 pounds of Fe₃P and 2.5 pounds of MoSi₂ powder as hard particles to make sample LFC-65, and a weight ratio of 247.5 pounds LF-5, 12.5 pounds of Fe₃P and 12.5 pounds of MoSi₂ powder as hard particles to make sample LFC-66. The same Fe₃P and MoSi₂ powders used to make LFC-63 and LFC-64, respectively, were used to make LFC-65 and LFC-66

[0061] The blended loose powder mixture of LFC-63 was applied to several sample steel strips and sintered at 805°C

[0062] The LFC-65 and LFC-66 bearing materials have not yet been tested for hardness, tensile and yield strength, wear resistance and alloy chemistry, but it is anticipated that they will have values for these properties intermediate those of LFC-63 and LFC-64.

[0063] Referring to FIG. 15, the photomicrographs of the samples of LFC-65 show darker gray areas (Fe₃P and MoSi₂ particles) in, adjacent to and independent from the lighter gray bismuth phase. Applicants have observed that when hard particles occur in the bismuth phase that they tend to be Fe₃P particles. As was the case with LFC-64, the MoSi₂ particles tend to be located in the grain boundaries, but do not tend to be found in the bismuth phase

[0064] Referring to FIGS. 16 and 17, respectively, secondary electron (SE) and backscatter (BS) photographs of the microstructure clearly show the bismuth phase (white in the SE, dark in BS), while the Fe₃P particles show as dark gray areas in the SE photograph and white areas in the BS photograph. The MoSi₂ particles are not present in the field of view in FIGS. 16 and 17, which is not surprising in that there is only 0.1 weight percent of these particles in LFC-65.

[0065] Referring to FIG. 15, the photomicrographs of the samples of LFC-65 show darker gray areas (Fe₃P and MoSi₂ particles) in, adjacent to and independent from the lighter gray bismuth phase. Applicants have observed that when hard particles occur in the bismuth phase that they tend to be Fe₃P particles. As was the case with LFC-64, the MoSi₂ particles tend to be located in the grain boundaries, but do not tend to be found in the bismuth phase

[0066] Referring to FIGS. 16 and 17, respectively, secondary electron (SE) and backscatter (BS) photographs of the microstructure clearly show the bismuth phase (white in the SE, dark in BS), while the Fe₃P particles show as dark gray areas in the SE photograph and white areas in the BS photograph. The MoSi₂ particles are not present in the field of view in FIGS. 16 and 17.

[0067] Referring to FIG. 18, the photomicrographs of the samples of LFC-66 show darker gray areas (Fe₃P and MoSi₂ particles) in, adjacent to and independent from the lighter gray bismuth phase. Applicants have observed that when hard particles occur in the bismuth phase that they tend to be Fe₃P particles. As was the case with LFC-64, the MoSi₂ particles tend to be located in the grain boundaries, but do not tend to be found in the bismuth phase

[0068] Referring to FIGS. 16 and 17, respectively, secondary electron (SE) and backscatter (BS) photographs of the microstructure clearly show the bismuth phase (white in the SE, dark in BS) which is designated with the reference numeral 3, while the MoSi₂ particles show as dark gray areas in the SE photograph and lighter gray or white areas in the BS photograph and are designated with the reference numeral 2. These materials were identified using Energy Dispersive X-ray analysis (EDX). Surprisingly, these photomicrographs also reveal the presence of a molybdenum

phosphorus compound (MoP_x) which is designated with the reference numeral 1. This may be evidence of a reaction between the MoSi_2 particles and the phosphorus found either in the alloy matrix or in an adjacent Fe_3P particle.

[0069] Applicants have observed the surprising development that the addition of small amounts, less than one percent, of MoSi_2 particles significantly improves the formability and manufacturability of the bearing as was the case with LFC-64 through LFC-66. These materials have been observed to be less susceptible to transverse cracking during the step of rolling than the LFC-63 material, with the materials with greatest amounts of MoSi_2 being least susceptible to transverse cracking. As may be seen from comparison of the tabular data from LFC-63 and LFC-64, the elongation of the LFC-64 is significantly greater than that of the LFC-63. This enhanced ductility is also believed to be associated with the transverse cracking phenomenon. The addition of even relatively small amounts of MoSi_2 particles seems to have a significant affect on properties that are very important to the manufacturing of the bearings.

[0070] Referring to FIG. 21, the engine wear performance of LFC-63 and LFC-64 is plotted, together with comparative wear data from another alloy, namely a conventional copper-10 weight% tin-10 weight % lead bearing alloy (HF-2F). The results indicate a significant increase in wear resistance associated with the addition of hard particles, with a somewhat greater improvement associated with MoSi_2 particle additions into somewhat lesser improvement observed with the addition of Fe_3P of particle additions. However, the improvement associated with the addition of either MoSi_2 or Fe_3P particles was significant. The copper-tin-lead bearing alloy was used to assess the improvement in wear resistance associated with incorporation of hard particles. Given the comparable significant or slightly improved performance of copper-tin-bismuth alloys as compared to copper-tin-lead alloys with respect to wear resistance, comparable wear resistance improvements for bearing materials of the invention that incorporate hard particles would also be expected as compared to copper-tin-bismuth alloy bearing materials that do not incorporate hard particles.

[0071] The foregoing invention has been described in accordance with the relevant legal standards, thus the description is exemplary rather than limiting in nature. Variations and modifications to the disclosed embodiment may become apparent to those skilled in the art and fall within the scope of the invention. Accordingly the scope of legal protection afforded this invention can only be determined by studying the following claims.

Claims

1. A bearing (10, 10') comprising a sintered powder compact bearing material (18) of a copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder and a metal compound powder which is bonded to a steel backing shell (12), wherein said metal compound powder has an average particle size of less than 10 μm and wherein said metal compound powder comprises an Fe_3P powder and an MoSi_2 powder.
2. The bearing (10, 10') of claim 1, wherein said copper-tin-bismuth alloy comprises, by weight: 8-15% tin, 1-30% bismuth and the balance essentially copper.
3. The bearing (10, 10') of claim 1, further comprising phosphorus as an alloy constituent of the copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder.
4. The bearing (10, 10') of claim 1, wherein said MoSi_2 powder comprises 0.1-0.5% by weight of the compact bearing material.
5. The bearing (10, 10') of claim 1, wherein said metal compound powder comprises 0.1-10% by volume of the compact bearing material.
6. The bearing (10, 10') of claim 1, wherein said copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder comprises a mixture of a gas atomized powder and a water atomized powder.
7. A method of making a bearing (10, 10') comprising the steps of:
 - applying a mixture of a copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder and a metal compound powder having an average particle size of less than 10 μm to a steel backing shell (12), wherein said metal compound powder comprises an Fe_3P powder and an MoSi_2 powder;
 - heating the powder mixture and steel backing shell to produce a sintered powder mixture and bond the sintered powder mixture to the steel backing shell; and
 - rolling the sintered powder mixture and steel backing shell to reduce a porosity of the sintered powder mixture and produce a fully-dense sintered compact bearing material (18).

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8. The method of claim 7, wherein said copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder comprises, by weight: 8-15% tin, 1-30% bismuth, and the balance essentially copper.
9. The method of claim 7 or 8, further comprising phosphorus as an alloy constituent of the copper-tin-bismuth alloy powder.
10. The method of claim 9, wherein the fully dense sintered compact bearing material comprises a molybdenum phosphorus compound as a reaction product of said MoSi_2 powder and at least one of the Fe_3P powder or the phosphorus.

Patentansprüche

1. Lager (10, 10') mit einem gesinterten Pulverpresskörper-Lagermaterial (18) aus einem Kupfer-Zinn-Wismut-Legierungspulver und einem Metallmischpulver, das mit einer Stahlstützschale (12) verbunden ist, wobei das Metallmischpulver eine mittlere Partikelgröße von weniger als $10\ \mu\text{m}$ hat, und wobei das Metallmischpulver ein Fe_3P -Pulver und ein MoSi_2 -Pulver aufweist.
2. Lager (10, 10') nach Anspruch 1, wobei die Kupfer-Zinn-Wismut-Legierung 8 - 15 Gew.-% Zinn, 1 - 30 Gew.-% Wismut und einen Rest aus im Wesentlichen Kupfer aufweist.
3. Lager (10, 10') nach Anspruch 1, ferner mit Phosphor als ein Legierungsbestandteil des Kupfer-Zinn-Wismut-Legierungspulvers.
4. Lager (10, 10') nach Anspruch 1, wobei das MoSi_2 -Pulver 0,1 - 0,5 Gew.-% des Presskörperlagermaterials bildet.
5. Lager (10, 10') nach Anspruch 1, wobei das Metallmischpulver 0,1 - 10 Vol.-% des Presskörperlagermaterials bildet.
6. Lager (10, 10') von Anspruch 1, wobei das Kupfer-Zinn-Wismut-Legierungspulver ein Gemisch aus einem gasverdühten Pulver und einem wasserverdühten Pulver enthält.
7. Verfahren zum Herstellen eines Lagers (10, 10'), mit den Schritten:

Aufbringen eines Gemischs aus einem Kupfer-Zinn-Wismut-Legierungspulver und einem Metallmischpulver mit einer mittleren Partikelgröße von weniger als $10\ \mu\text{m}$ auf eine Stahlstützschale (12), wobei das Metallmischpulver ein Fe_3P -Pulver und ein MoSi_2 -Pulver aufweist;
Erwärmen des Pulvergemischs und der Stahlstützschale, um ein Sinterpulvergemisch herzustellen und das Sinterpulvergemisch mit der Stahlstützschale zu verbinden; und
Walzen des Sinterpulvergemischs und der Stahlstützschale, um eine Porosität des Sinterpulvergemischs zu vermindern und ein vollständig dichtes gesintertes Presskörper-Lagermaterial (18) herzustellen.

8. Verfahren nach Anspruch 7, wobei das Kupfer-Zinn-Wismut-Legierungspulver 8 - 15 Gew.-% Zinn, 1 - 30 Gew.-% Wismut und einen Rest aus im Wesentlichen Kupfer aufweist.
9. Verfahren nach Anspruch 7 oder 8, ferner mit Phosphor als ein Legierungsbestandteil des Kupfer-Zinn-Wismut-Legierungspulvers.
10. Verfahren nach Anspruch 9, wobei das vollständig dichte gesinterte Presskörper-Lagermaterial eine Molybdän-Phosphor-Verbindung als ein Reaktionsprodukt des MoSi_2 -Pulvers mit dem Fe_3P -Pulver und/oder dem Phosphor aufweist.

Revendications

1. Palier (10, 10') qui comprend un matériau de palier compact en poudre frittée (18) composée d'une poudre d'alliage de cuivre/étain/bismuth et d'une poudre de composé métallique qui est liée à une coque à doublage en acier (12), dans lequel ladite poudre de composé métallique possède une taille moyenne de particules inférieure à $10\ \mu\text{m}$ et dans lequel ladite poudre de composé métallique comprend de la poudre de Fe_3P et de la poudre de MoSi_2 .

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2. Palier (10, 10') selon la revendication 1, dans lequel ledit alliage de cuivre/étain/bismuth comprend, en poids : 8 à 15% d'étain, 1 à 30% de bismuth, et le reste essentiellement de cuivre.
- 5 3. Palier (10, 10') selon la revendication 1, qui comprend en outre du phosphore comme constituant d'alliage de la poudre d'alliage de cuivre/étain/bismuth.
4. Palier (10, 10') selon la revendication 1, dans lequel ladite poudre de MoSi_2 comprend 0,1 à 0,5% en poids du matériau de palier compact.
- 10 5. Palier (10, 10') selon la revendication 1, dans lequel ladite poudre de composé métallique comprend 0,1 à 10% en volume du matériau de palier compact.
6. Palier (10, 10') selon la revendication 1, dans lequel ladite poudre d'alliage de cuivre/étain/bismuth comprend un mélange de poudre atomisée par gaz et de poudre atomisée par eau.
- 15 7. Procédé de fabrication d'un palier (10, 10') qui comprend les étapes qui consistent à :
- appliquer un mélange de poudre d'alliage de cuivre/étain/bismuth et de poudre de composé métallique ayant une taille moyenne de particules inférieure à $10 \mu\text{m}$ à une coque à doublage en acier (12), dans lequel ladite
- 20 poudre de composé métallique comprend une poudre de Fe_3P et une poudre de MoSi_2 ;
chauffer le mélange de poudres et la coque à doublage en acier afin de produire un mélange de poudre frittée et de lier le mélange de poudre frittée à la coque à doublage en acier ; et
rouler le mélange de poudre frittée et la coque à doublage en acier afin de réduire la porosité du mélange de poudre frittée et de produire un matériau de palier compact, fritté et parfaitement dense (18).
- 25 8. Procédé selon la revendication 7, dans lequel ladite poudre d'alliage de cuivre/étain/bismuth comprend, en poids : 8 à 15% d'étain, 1 à 30% de bismuth, et le reste essentiellement de cuivre.
9. Procédé selon la revendication 7 ou 8, qui comprend en outre du phosphore comme constituant d'alliage de la
- 30 poudre d'alliage de cuivre/étain/bismuth.
10. Procédé selon la revendication 9, dans lequel le matériau de palier compact, fritté et parfaitement dense comprend un composé de phosphore molybdène comme produit de réaction de ladite poudre de MoSi_2 et d'au moins l'un des éléments choisis parmi la poudre de Fe_3P et le phosphore.
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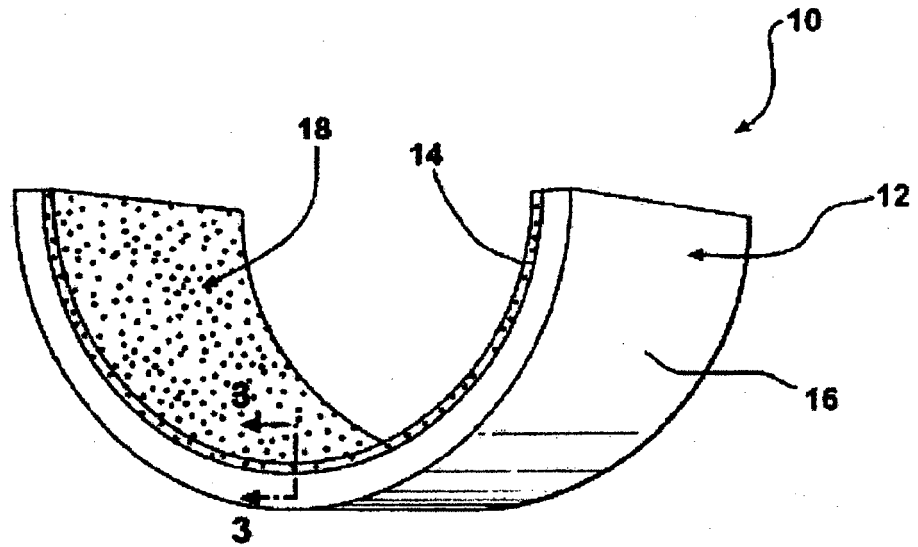


FIG - 1

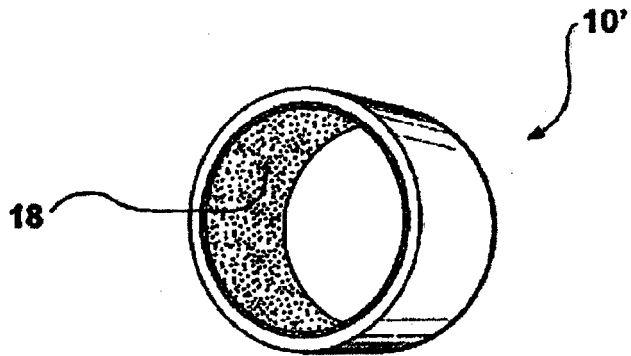


FIG - 2

FIG - 3

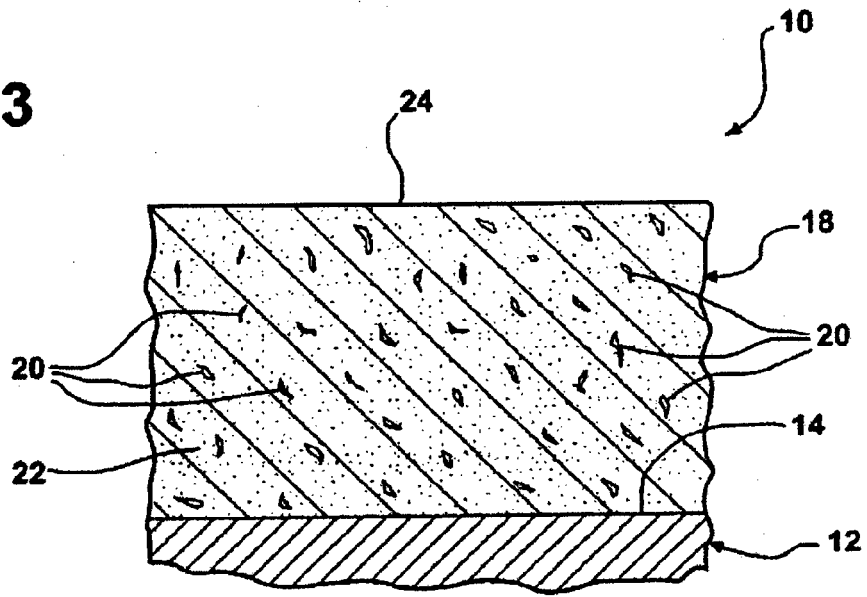
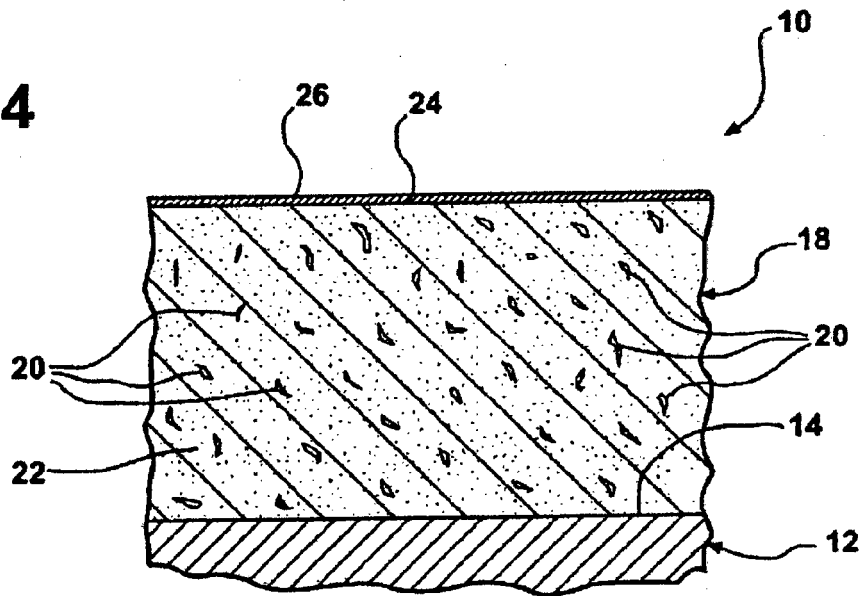


FIG - 4



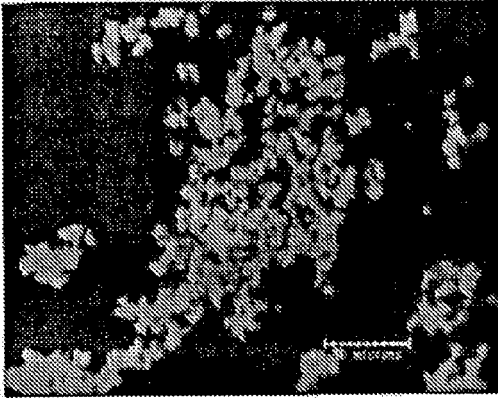


FIG - 5

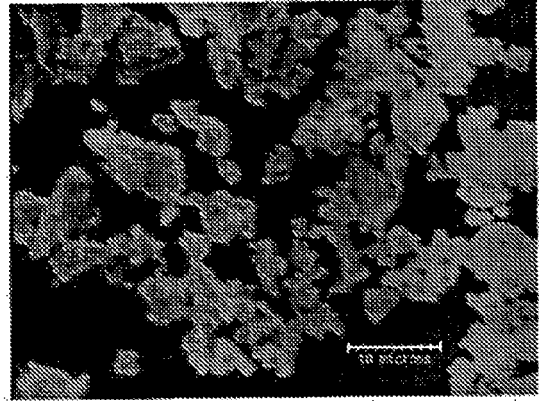


FIG - 6

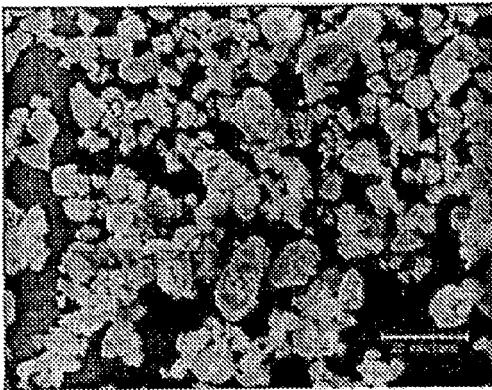


FIG - 7

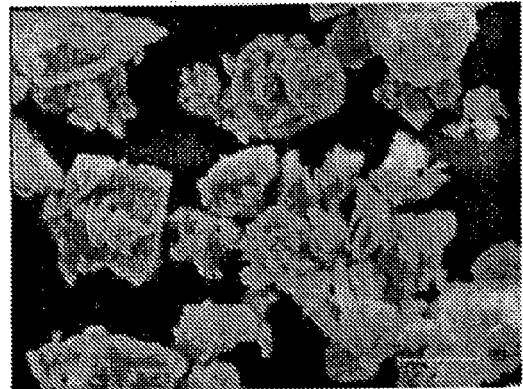


FIG - 8

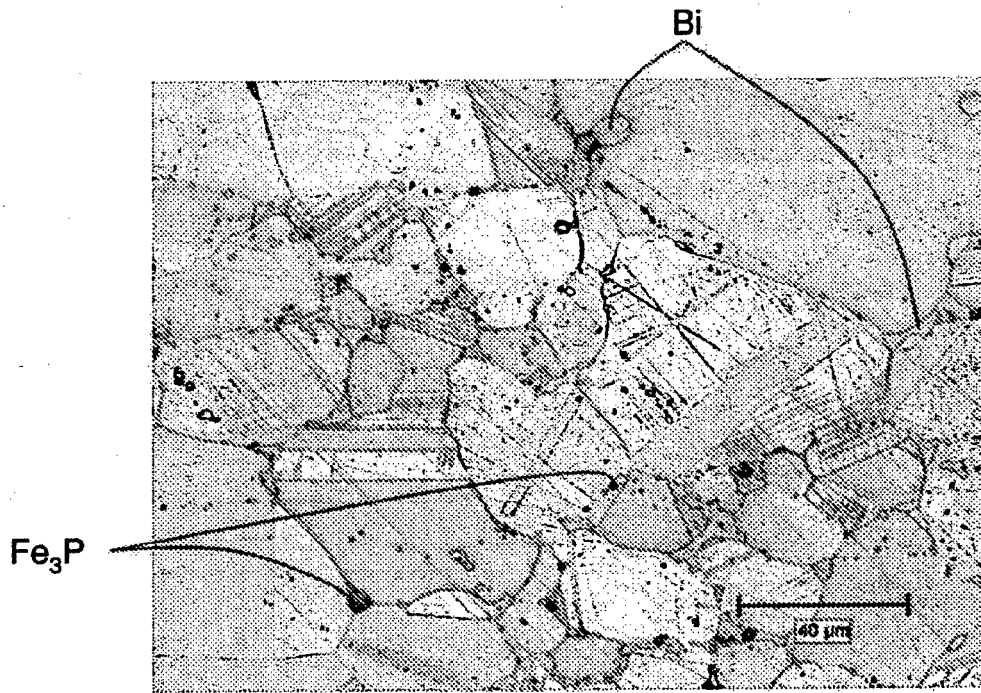


FIG - 9

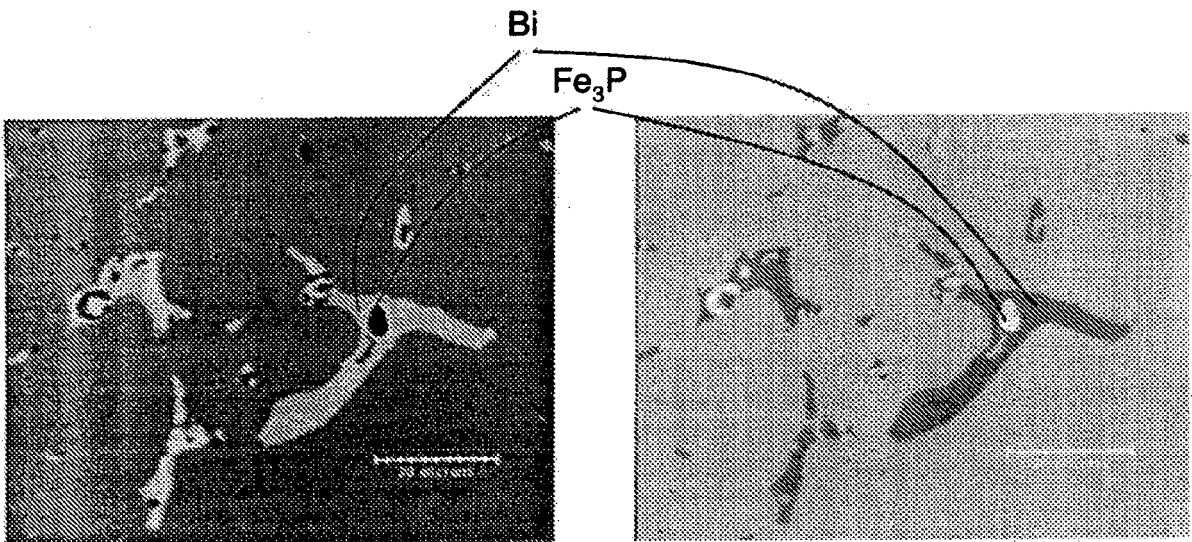


FIG - 10

FIG - 11

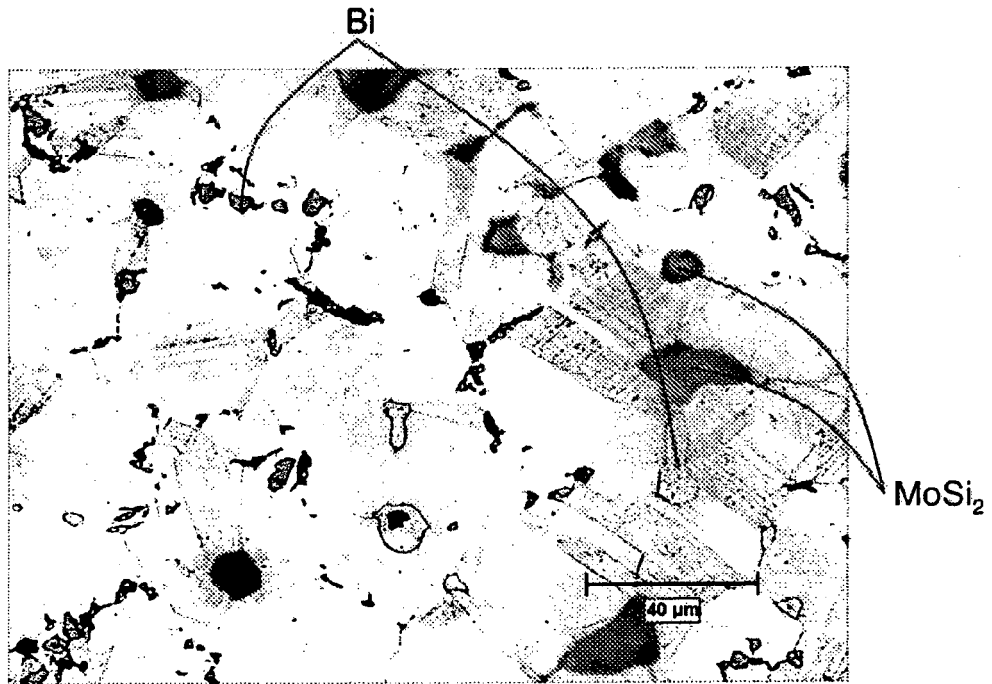


FIG - 12

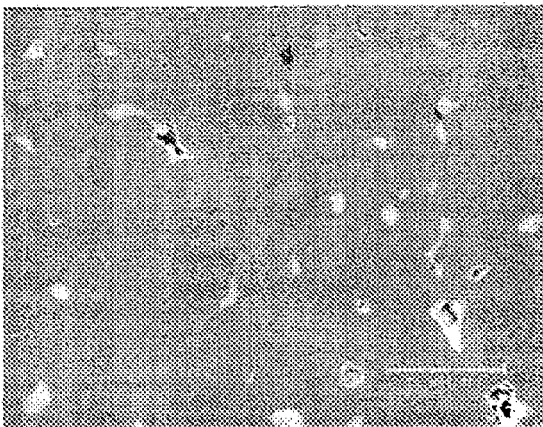


FIG - 13

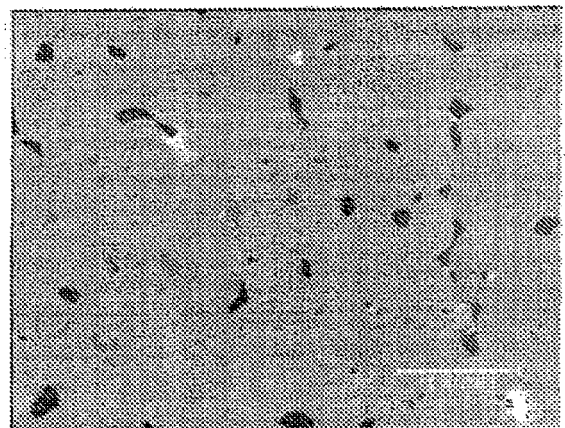


FIG - 14

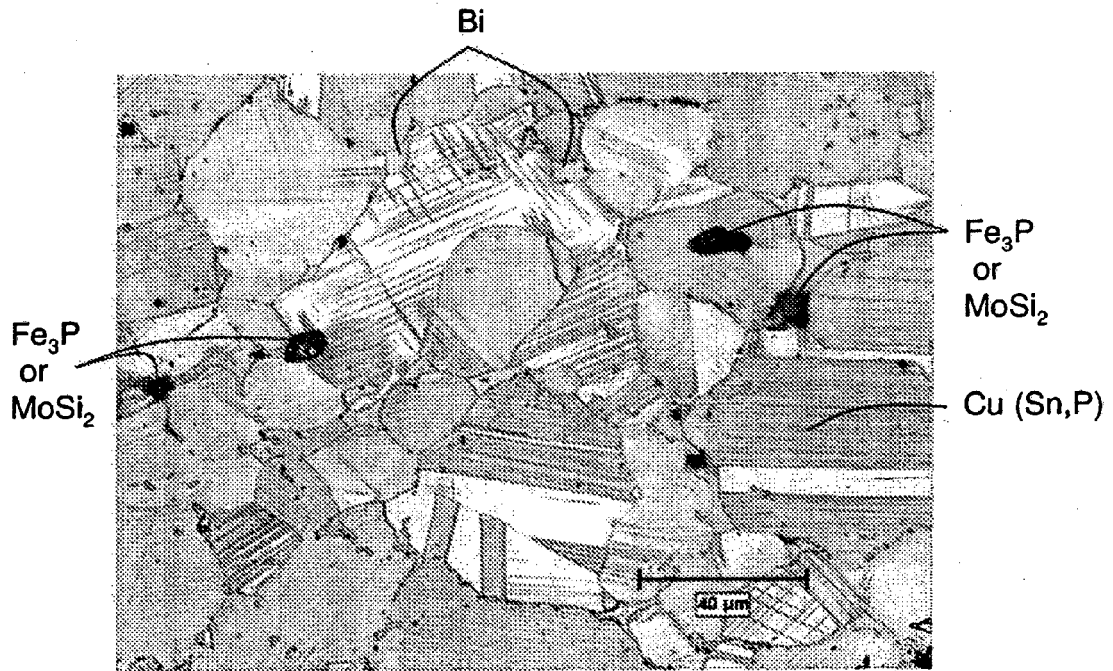


FIG - 15

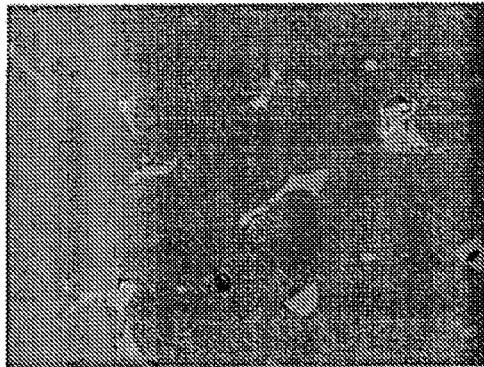


FIG - 16

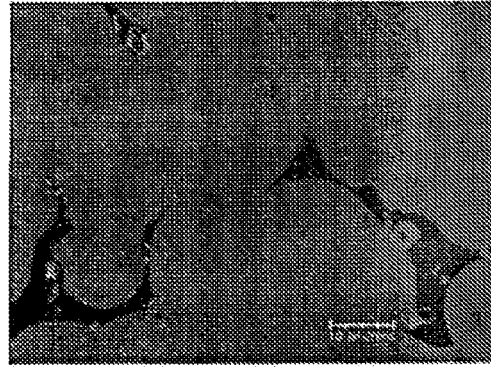


FIG - 17

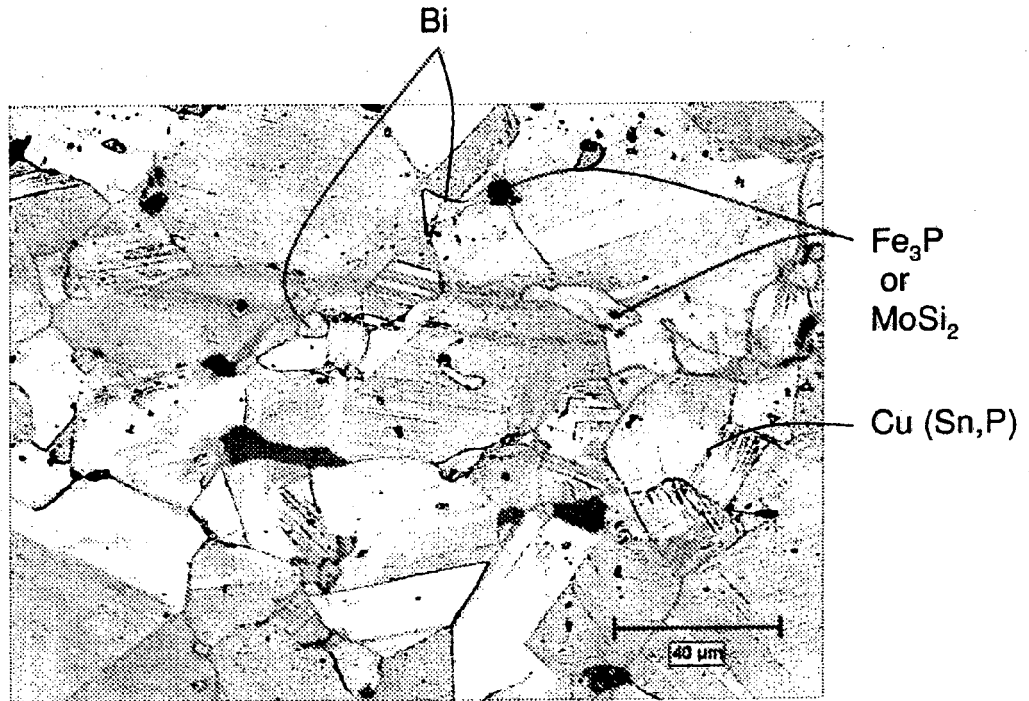


FIG - 18

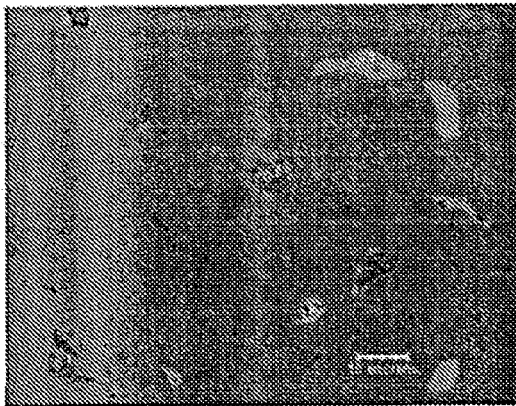


FIG - 19

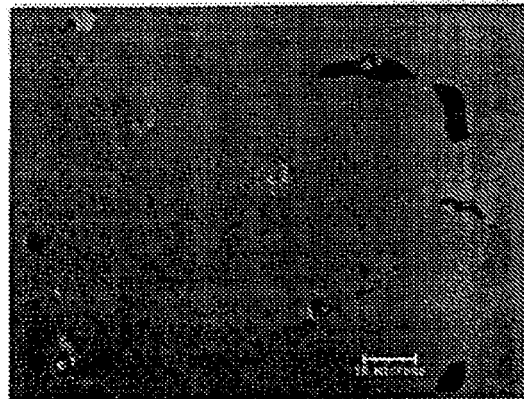


FIG - 20

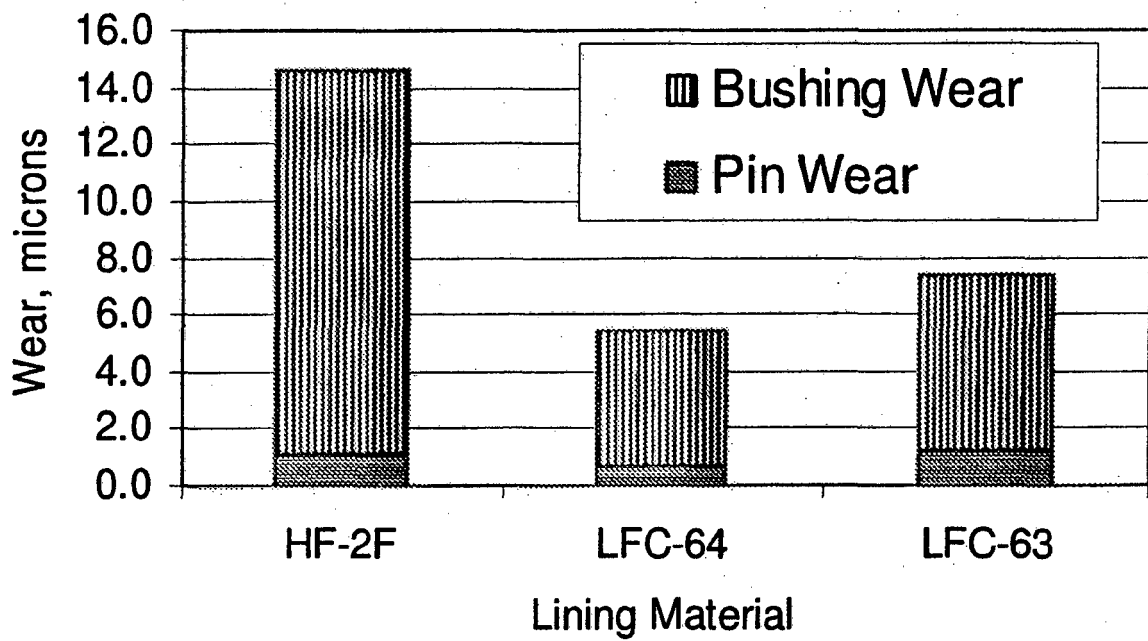


FIG - 20

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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