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Remarks:
Amended claims in accordance with Rule 137(2) EPC.

(54) **Emulsifier system**

(57) An emulsifier system (10) includes a mixing pump (30), a water source (20), a water intake regulator (40) for regulating the flow rate of water supplied by the water source (20) to the mixing pump (30), an air intake regulator (50) for regulating the flow rate of air being sup-

plied to the mixing pump (30) for enabling the mixing pump (30) to output a high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas, and an emulsifier (70) for emulsifying the high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas outputted by the mixing pump (30) by means of a cavitation effect.

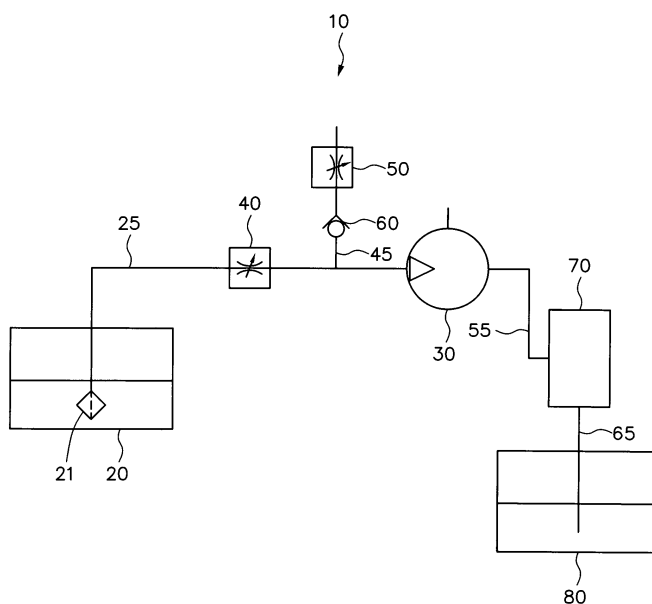


FIG. 1

Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates to the application of emulsification technology and more particularly, to an emulsifier system, which emulsifies a high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas by means of a cavitation effect.

2. Description of the Related Art

[0002] Micro air bubbles released from air dissolved water after relief of pressure are intensively and successfully used in water treatment and for other applications. The smaller the size of air bubbles is the longer the retaining time of air bubbles in water and the greater the effect of air bubbles will be. Emulsification occurs when the density of air bubbles in water reaches the peak. For emulsification, the diameter of air bubbles must be reduced to a limited number of micrometers. Therefore, how to obtain air bubbles at a relatively smaller diameter and a relatively higher density is one important subject of pressure flotation.

[0003] Taiwan patent number 245667 discloses an "Ultra-fine air bubble generator", which uses a multi-stage pump to pump air into water for producing a mixed flow of air and water, enabling the mixed flow of air and water to be delivered to a pressure relief device to relieve pressure transiently, thereby producing ultra fine air bubbles.

[0004] However, due to structural limitation, the size and density of the air bubbles produced by the aforesaid patent cannot reach the emulsification condition.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The inventor discovered that when a liquid is flowing in a region where the pressure of the liquid falls below its vapor pressure, vapor bubbles will be formed in the liquid. The vapor bubbles will soon collapse and release high energy. This phenomenon is called cavitation in fluid mechanics.

[0006] The inventor further discovered that when a liquid is flowing in a cavitation zone, micro air bubbles will be released from the liquid. Further, when cavitation bubbles collapse, contained air will be dissolved into fine bubbles, at the same time the high energy released due to collapse of cavitation bubbles will produce more air bubbles in the liquid, causing an emulsification effect.

[0007] Therefore, it is the main object of the present invention to provide an emulsifier system, which utilizes the cavitation effect of fluid mechanics to spread air bubbles in water, causing formation of emulsification.

[0008] To achieve this and other objects of the present invention, the emulsifier system comprises a mixing pump, a water source in water communication with the

mixing pump for providing a fluid to the mixing pump, a water intake regulator in communication with the mixing pump for regulating the flow rate of the fluid being supplied the water source to the mixing pump, an air intake regulator in communication with the mixing pump for regulating the flow rate of a gas into the mixing pump for dissolving in the fluid being supplied to the mixing pump for enabling the mixing pump to output a high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas, and a emulsifier connected to the mixing pump to receive the high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas outputted by the mixing pump. The emulsifier comprises a housing, a partition board mounted in the housing and dividing the housing into a front chamber and a rear chamber, the partition board comprising a plurality of narrow holes disposed in communication between the front chamber and the rear chamber for causing a cavitation effect to emulsify the high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas when the high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas is flowing into the emulsifier.

[0009] According to the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the narrow holes of the emulsifier have a width smaller than 0.3mm so that the cavitation zone takes more than 20% of the cross sectional area of the narrow holes.

[0010] According to the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the emulsifier further comprises a gap adjustment plate mounted on one side of the partition board and movable relative to the partition board to regulate the passage of the narrow holes, the gap adjustment plate comprising a plurality of narrow holes corresponding to the narrow holes of the partition board.

[0011] According to the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the mixing pump is a centrifugal pump comprising a housing, a pump shaft mounted in the housing, at least one impeller vane rotatable with the pump shaft relative to the housing, and at least one fixed vane affixed to the inside of the housing, the at least one impeller vane and the at least one fixed vane each comprising an outer wheel disk and a plurality of passages cut through the outer wheel disk for the passing of the high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas axially.

[0012] Other features and advantages of the present invention will be fully understood from the further technological features disclosed by the preferred embodiments, simply by way of illustration of modes best suited to carry out the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013]

FIG. 1 is a plain view of an emulsifier system in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a sectional view of a part of the present invention, showing the structure of the mixing pump.

FIG. 3 is a plain view of a part of the mixing pump according to the present invention.

FIG. 4 is a sectional view of the emulsifier of the

emulsifier system according to the present invention. FIG. 5 is a sectional view of an alternate form of the emulsifier of the emulsifier system according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0014] Referring to FIGS. 1-3, an emulsifier system 10 comprises a water source 20, a mixing pump 30, a water intake regulator 40, an air intake regulator 50, a check valve 60, an emulsifier 70 and the necessary piping.

[0015] The water source 20 is connected with the mixing pump 30 through a first pipe 25 to supply water to the mixing pump 30. To assure clean water supply, a water filter 21 is installed in the water outlet of the water source 20 to remove solid matters from water being delivered to the mixing pump 30, avoiding blocking of the flow path in the system.

[0016] The water intake regulator 40 is installed in the first pipe 25 and adapted for regulating the flow rate of water being delivered from the water source 20 to the mixing pump 30.

[0017] The air intake regulator 50 is installed in a second pipe 45 and adapted for regulating the flow rate of air being supplied to the mixing pump 30 for mixing with water. The second pipe 45 is connected to the first pipe 25 between the water intake regulator 40 and the mixing pump 30.

[0018] The mixing pump 30 is kept in water communication with the water source 20, and adapted for producing a low pressure at the water intake port to induce flowing of water from the water source 20 into the inside (housing) of the mixing pump 30 and to suck in air for mixing with the intake flow of water, so as to output a saturated mixed flow of air and water of pressure greater than 4.0kg/cm². As shown in FIGS. 2 and 3, the mixing pump 30 is a centrifugal type. Unlike conventional centrifugal pumps, comprising a pump shaft 31, an impeller van 33 rotatable with the pump shaft 31, and a fixed vane 34 affixed to the housing 32 of the centrifugal mixing pump 30. The impeller van 33 has a plurality of passages 37 cut through the circular outer wheel disk 35 thereof. The fixed vane 34 has also a plurality of passages 38 cut through the circular outer wheel disk 36 thereof for the passing of high pressure mixed fluid of air and water in the axial direction. This will be described further. According to the present preferred embodiment as shown in the annexed drawings, the passages 36 and 38 are circular passages. However, the passages 36 and 38 are not limited to a circular shape. Alternatively, they can be made having an elongated profile. Further, the combination of the impeller van 33 and the fixed vane 34 can be duplicated to form a multi-step mixing pump for producing a saturated mixed flow of air and water of relatively higher pressure.

[0019] The check valve 60 is installed in the second pipe 45 between the first pipe 25 and the air intake reg-

ulator 50 to prohibit reverse flow of water from the first pipe 25 into the air intake regulator 50. The check valve 60 and the air intake regulator 50 can be connected in parallel, forming a combination device.

[0020] The emulsifier 70 is connected to the mixing pump 30 through a third pipe 55. As shown in FIG. 4, the emulsifier 70 comprises a housing 71, and a partition board 72 mounted in the housing 71 and dividing the inside space of the housing 71 into a front chamber 73 and a rear chamber 74. The partition board 72 has a plurality of narrow holes 75. These narrow holes 75 constitute an emulsification path for causing cavitation upon flowing of a flow of mixed fluid of air and water. Because the cavitation effect is produced only at the edge of each narrow hole 75, the narrow holes 75 have a width below 0.3mm for obtaining a relatively higher proportion of cavitation zone so that the cavitation zone can be greater than 20% of the cross section of the narrow holes 75.

[0021] During operation of the emulsifier system 10, the mixing pump 30 is started to suck in water from the water source 20 through the first pipe 25 and at the same time, to suck in a proper amount of air from the air intake regulator 50 through the second pipe 45. When water and air are flowing into the housing 32 during rotation of the impeller vane 33, the impeller vane 33 enhances the pressure and speed of the intake flow of water and the intake flow of air, causing the intake flow of air to be dissolved in water, forming a high pressure saturated mixed flow of air and water. When the impeller vane 33 is moving the mixed flow of air and water toward the output port 39, the mixed flow of air and water flows axially through the passages 36 and 38 of the impeller van 33 and fixed vane 34. At this time, the shear effect produced during rotation of the impeller vane 33 relative to the fixed vane 34 crushes the unevenly distributed air bubbles, causing air bubbles to be evenly distributed in water and shortening the dissolving time of air in water. When the mixed flow of air and water is forced out of the mixing pump 30, the third pipe 55 delivers the mixed flow of air and water to the front chamber 73 of the emulsifier 70. When the mixed flow of air and water is flowing through the narrow holes 75 of the emulsifier 70, it is emulsified subject to a cavitation effect, and the emulsified fluid thus produced flows out of the rear chamber 74 of the emulsifier 70 through a fourth pipe 65 to a water tank 80, or flows back to the water source 20.

[0022] FIG. 5 shows an alternate form of the emulsifier. According to this alternate form, the emulsifier, referenced by 70a, is substantially similar to the aforesaid emulsifier 70 shown in FIG. 4 with the exception that this alternate form has an additional gap adjustment plate 76. The gap adjustment plate 76 is movably provided at one side of the partition board 72, having a plurality of narrow holes 77. According to this embodiment, the narrow holes 77 are formed on the additional gap adjustment plate 76 corresponding to the narrow holes 75 on the partition plate 72. Further, the width of the narrow holes 75 and 77 can be several millimeters. When the narrow holes

75 and **77** are axially aligned, the narrow holes **75** are fully opened. By means of moving the gap adjustment plate **76** relative to the partition board **72** to deviate the narrow holes **77** on the gap adjustment plate **76** from the narrow holes **75** on the partition board **72**, the opening of the narrow holes **75** on the partition board **72** is adjusted, and therefore the passage gap **b** in between the front chamber **73** and the rear chamber **74** can be adjusted subject to different flow conditions. When the flow path of the system is blocked, the passage gap **b** can be adjusted to the maximum to discharge solid impurities.

[0023] Although particular embodiments of the invention have been described in detail for purposes of illustration, various modifications and enhancements may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the invention is not to be limited except as by the appended claims.

Claims

1. An emulsifier system (10), comprising:

a mixing pump (30);
a water source (20) in water communication with said mixing pump (30) for providing a fluid to said mixing pump (30);
a water intake regulator (40) in communication with said mixing pump (30) for regulating the flow rate of the fluid being supplied said water source (20) to said mixing pump (30); and
an air intake regulator (50) in communication with said mixing pump (30) for regulating the flow rate of a gas into said mixing pump (30) for dissolving in the fluid being supplied to said mixing pump (30) for enabling said mixing pump (30) to output a high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas;

characterized in that a emulsifier (70) is connected to said mixing pump (30) to receive the high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas outputted by said mixing pump (30), said emulsifier (70) comprising a housing (71), a partition board (72) mounted in said housing (71) and dividing said housing (71) into a front chamber (73) and a rear chamber (74), said partition board (72) comprising a plurality of narrow holes (75) disposed in communication between said front chamber (73) and said rear chamber (74) for causing a cavitation effect to emulsify said high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas when said high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas is flowing into said emulsifier (70).

2. The emulsifier system (10) as claimed in claim 1, **characterized in that** said narrow holes (75) of said partition board (72) have a width smaller than 0.3mm so that the cavitation zone takes more than 20% of

the cross sectional area of said narrow holes (75).

3. The emulsifier system (10) as claimed in claim 1, **characterized in that** said emulsifier (70a) further comprises a gap adjustment plate (76) mounted on one side of said partition board (72) and movable relative to said partition board (72) to regulate the passage of said narrow holes (75), said gap adjustment plate (76) comprising a plurality of narrow holes (77) corresponding to said narrow holes (75) of said partition board (72).

4. The emulsifier system (10) as claimed in claim 1, **characterized in that** said mixing pump (30) is a centrifugal pump comprising a housing (32), a pump shaft (31) mounted in said housing (32), at least one impeller vane (33) rotatable with said pump shaft (31) relative to said housing (32), and at least one fixed vane (34) affixed to the inside of said housing (32), said at least one impeller vane (33) and said at least one fixed vane (34) each comprising an outer wheel disk (35, 36) and a plurality of passages (37, 38) cut through said outer wheel disk (35, 36) for the passing of said high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas axially.

Amended claims in accordance with Rule 137(2) EPC.

1. An emulsifier system (10), comprising:

a mixing pump (30);
a water source (20) in water communication with said mixing pump (30) for providing a fluid to said mixing pump (30);
a water intake regulator (40) in communication with said mixing pump (30) for regulating the flow rate of the fluid being supplied said water source (20) to said mixing pump (30); and
an air intake regulator (50) in communication with said mixing pump (30) for regulating the flow rate of a gas into said mixing pump (30) for dissolving in the fluid being supplied to said mixing pump (30) for enabling said mixing pump (30) to output a high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas;

characterized in that a emulsifier (70) is connected to said mixing pump (30) to receive the high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas outputted by said mixing pump (30), said emulsifier (70) comprising a housing (71), a partition board (72) mounted in said housing (71) and dividing said housing (71) into a front chamber (73) and a rear chamber (74), said partition board (72) comprising a plurality of narrow holes (75) disposed in communication between said front chamber (73) and said rear chamber (74) for causing a

cavitation effect to emulsify said high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas when said high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas is flowing into said emulsifier (70), and

characterized in that said mixing pump (30) is a centrifugal pump comprising a housing (32), a pump shaft (31) mounted in said housing (32), at least one impeller vane (33) rotatable with said pump shaft (31) relative to said housing (32), and at least one fixed vane (34) affixed to the inside of said housing (32), said at least one impeller vane (33) and said at least one fixed vane (34) each comprising an outer wheel disk (35, 36) and a plurality of passages (37, 38) cut through said outer wheel disk (35, 36) for the passing of said high pressure flow of mixed fluid and gas axially.

2. The emulsifier system (10) as claimed in claim 1, **characterized in that** said narrow holes (75) of said partition board (72) have a width smaller than 0.3mm so that the cavitation zone takes more than 20% of the cross sectional area of said narrow holes (75).

3. The emulsifier system (10) as claimed in claim 1, **characterized in that** said emulsifier (70a) further comprises a gap adjustment plate (76) mounted on one side of said partition board (72) and movable relative to said partition board (72) to regulate the passage of said narrow holes (75), said gap adjustment plate (76) comprising a plurality of narrow holes (77) corresponding to said narrow holes (75) of said partition board (72).

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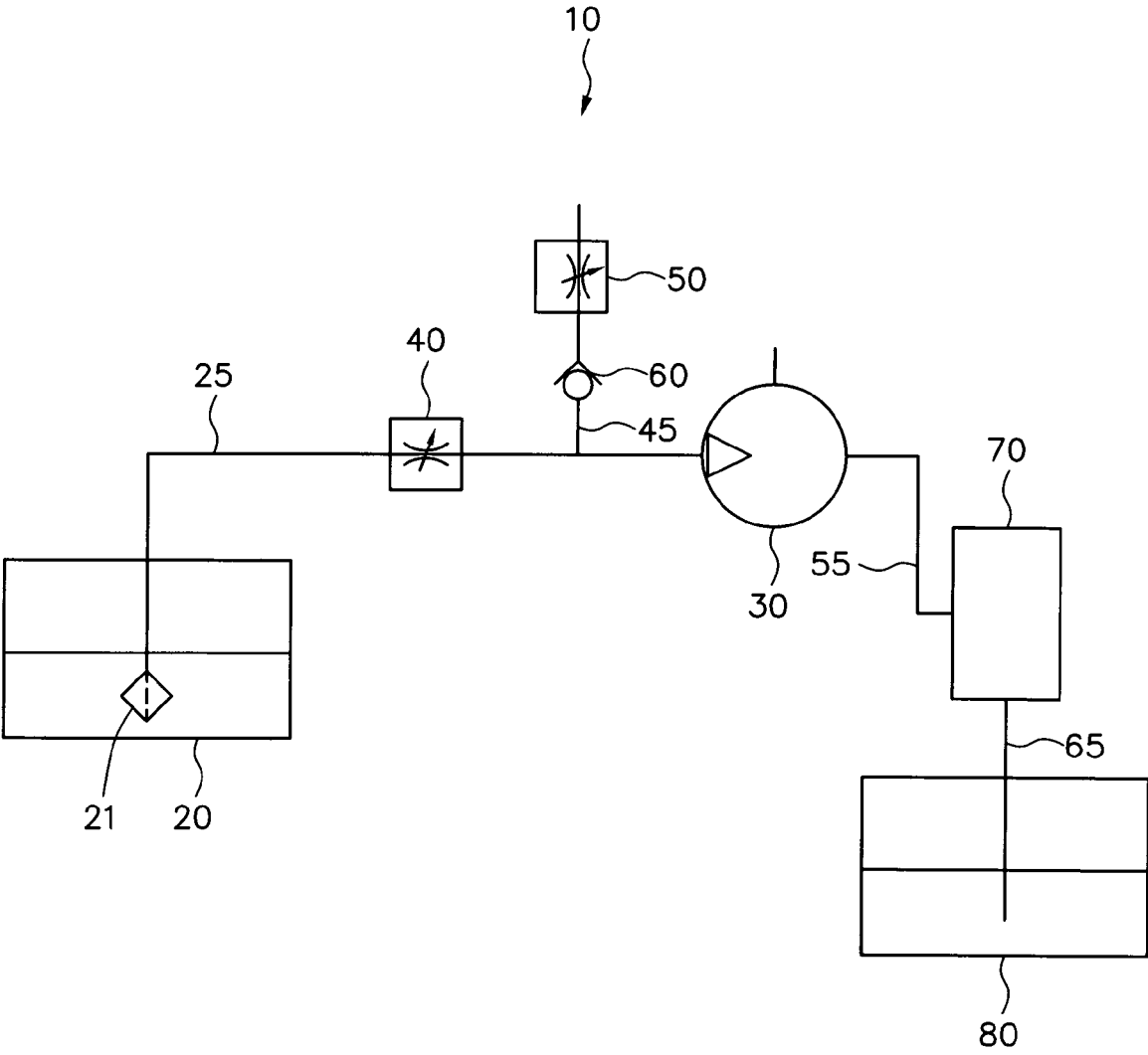


FIG. 1

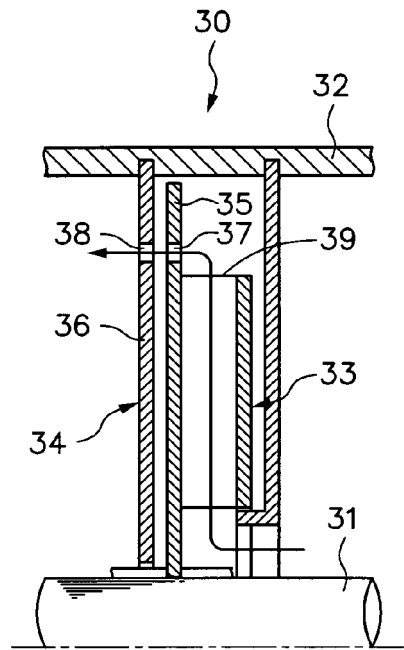


FIG. 2

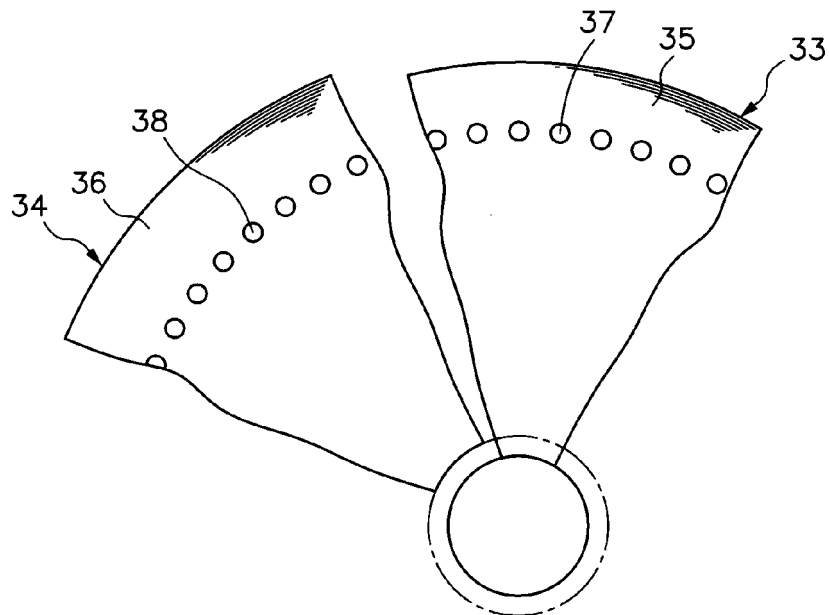


FIG. 3

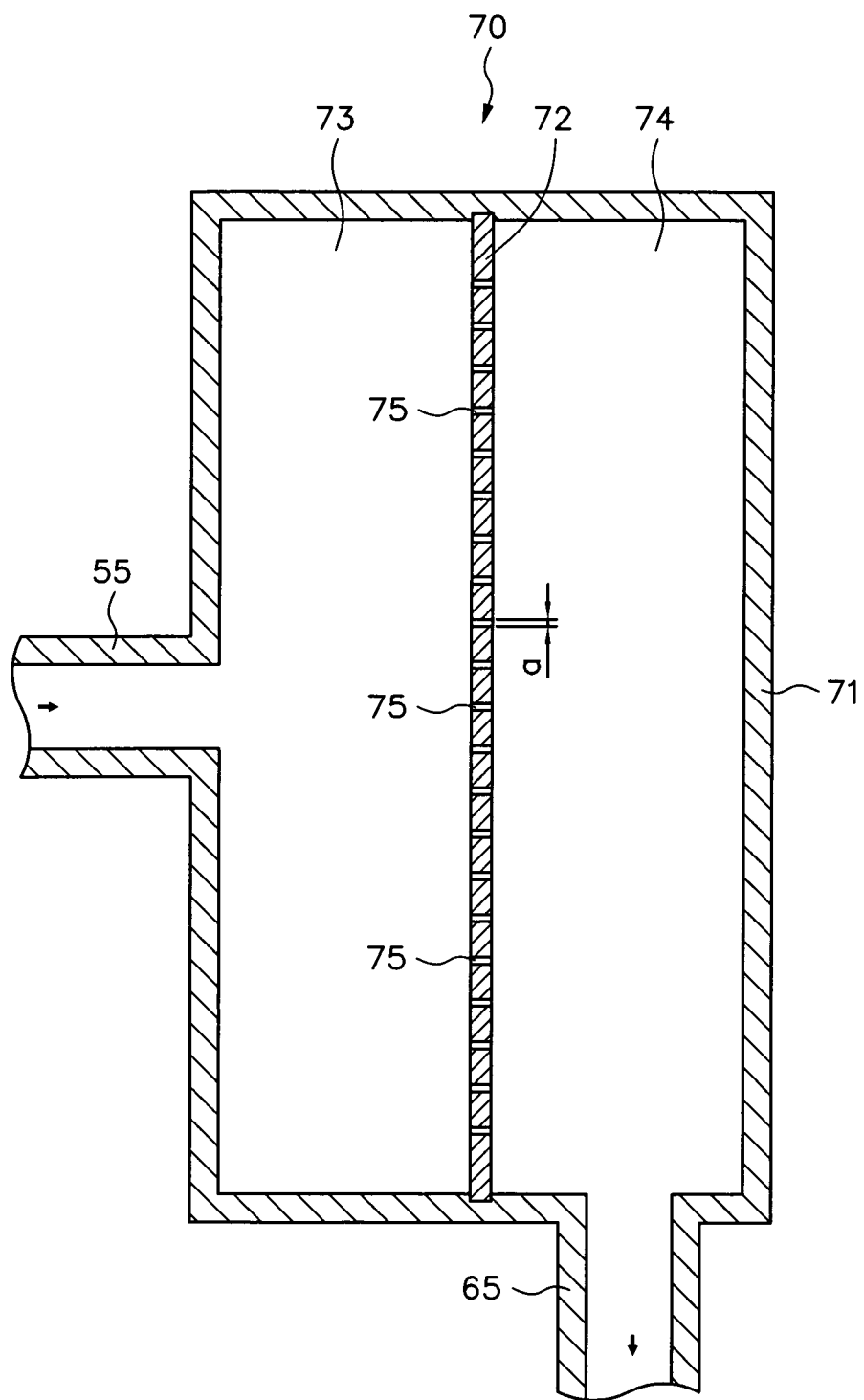


FIG. 4

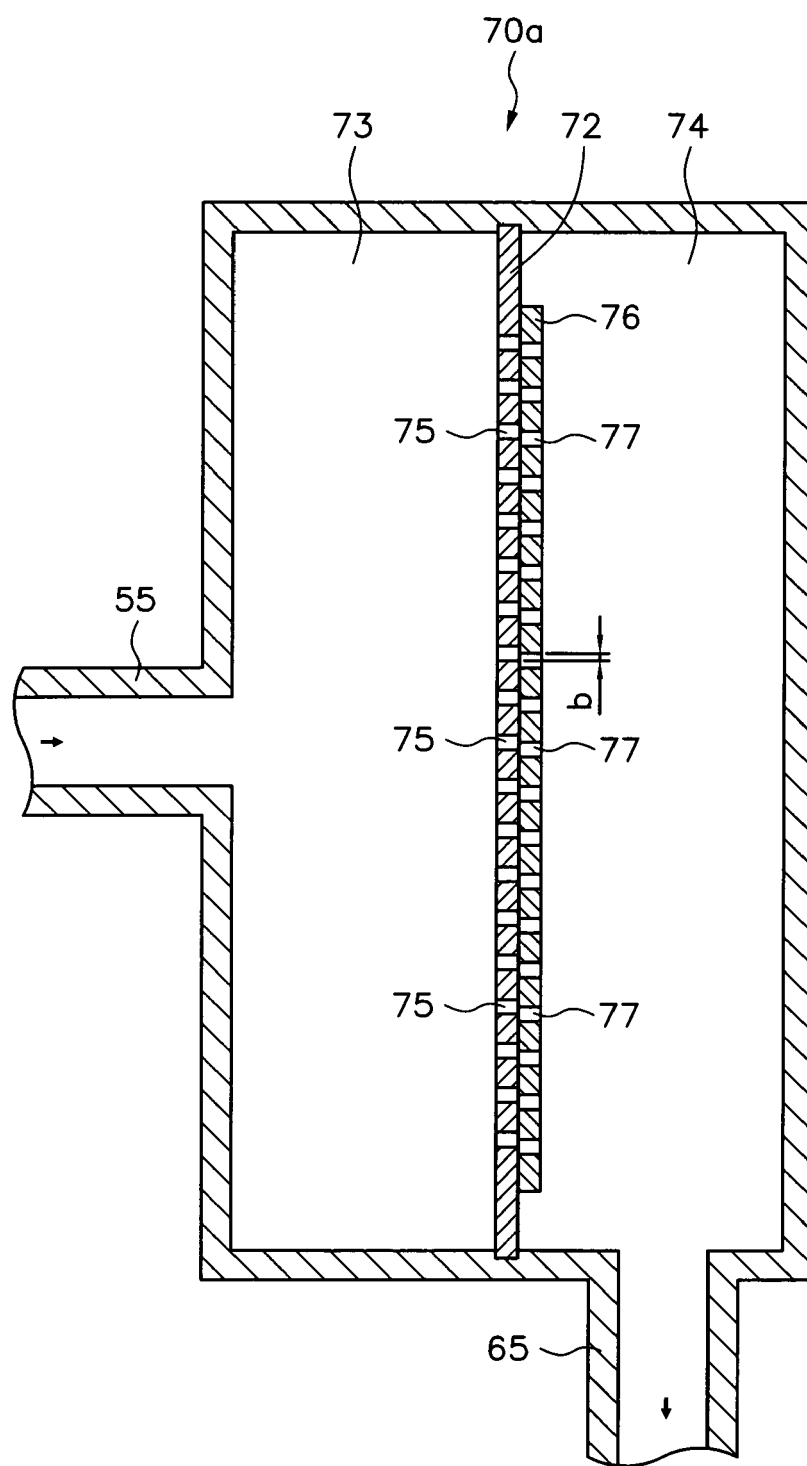


FIG. 5



EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 08 36 0039

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Place of search Munich		Date of completion of the search 16 April 2009	Examiner Brunold, Axel
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EPO FORM 1503 03.82 (P04C01)



EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
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