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(54) **Shaggy fabric steam pocket for a steam appliance**

(57) A fabric steam pocket (15/46/56) for mounting onto a steam frame (14) of a steam appliance (10) is provided. The pocket (15/46/56) includes two complementary substantially planar layers (48/61,66) of chenille fabric joined at their peripheral edges (52,54) with an open section (51/57/64,68) for mounting onto the steam frame (14) and allowing the open edges to butt against each other. The layers (48/61,66) are made of a chenille fabric with a shaggy or spaghetti-like pile of about 2 cm extending from the exposed surface of a canvas base that faces the steam frame (14). The fabric (48/61,66) is sealed about the frame (14) a first length of a fastener (63) is secured to the inside face along the open edge (64) of one layer (48/61), with a complementary length of a fastener (69) secured to the inside face of the second layer (66) and extending beyond the edge to allow the open edges of each layer (48/61,66) to abut each other and for the fasteners (63,69) to engage and secure the fabric steam pocket (15/46/56) about the edge of the frame (14).

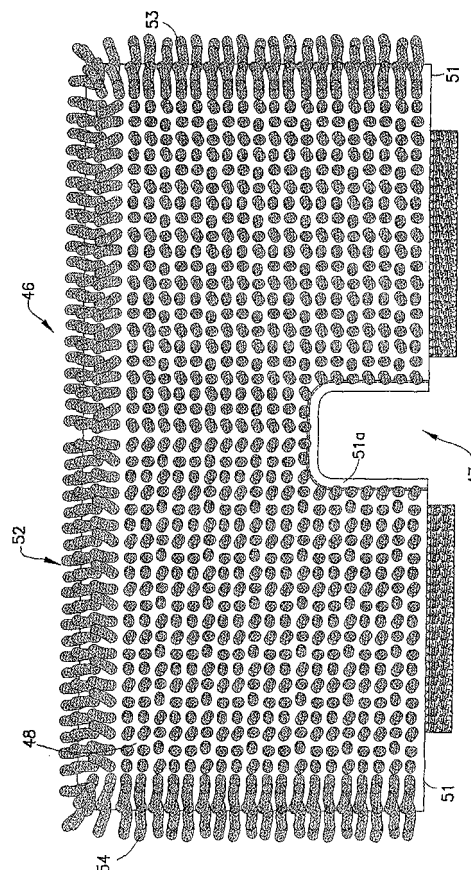


Fig. 6

Description**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

[0001] This application is based on and claims the benefit of provisional application No. 61/172,523 filed April 24, 2009.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The invention relates generally to a fabric pocket for a steam appliance, and more particularly to a shaggy fabric towel in the form of an envelope to form a steam or steam duster pocket when installed on a steam frame of a steam appliance.

[0003] Steam cleaners and/or devices used to apply steam to household objects are well known. The uses of the devices vary widely, and may include the application of steam to drapes or other fabrics to ease wrinkles, and the application of steam to objects to assist in cleaning the objects. Steam cleaners also have been used for cleaning carpeted floors, but usually overly saturate the carpet and require long period of time to dry.

[0004] Typical steam devices have a reservoir for storing water that is connected to an electrical water pump with an on/off switch. The exit from the electric water pump is connected to a steam boiler with a heating element to heat the water. The heated water generates steam, which may be directed towards its intended destination through a nozzle which controls the application of the steam. Variation of the shape and size of the nozzle allows for preferred distribution of generated steam to an object to be cleaned. The nozzles may be disconnectable from the steam generator to allow different nozzles to be utilized, based on the object to be steamed. The nozzle may be either closely coupled to the steam generator, or located at a distance from the steam generator, requiring tubing or other steam transfer structures to be interconnected between the steam generator and the discharge nozzle. Typically, it is beneficial to provide suitable connectors between the steam generator and the nozzle to allow either the nozzle to be connected to the steam generator, or to allow the interpositioning of transfer tubes or hoses between the steam generator and the nozzle.

[0005] In general, the nozzles used with the steam cleaners do not have large surface areas. A cloth or towel is placed on a steam frame coupled to the steam nozzle to distribute the steam.

[0006] Notwithstanding the wide variety of steam generating appliances and cleaning towels available, there exists the need to provide improved accessories for use with a steam cleaner.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] Generally speaking, in accordance with the invention, a shaggy fabric in the form of an envelope with one open edge for mounting onto a steam frame of a steam generating device to form a steam pocket is provided. The shaggy fabric towel has improved cleaning and steam distribution properties. The fabric layers of the shaggy steam pocket a chenille fabric with a shaggy or spaghetti-like pile extending from the exposed surface of a canvas base that faces the steam frame. A slot along the open back edge is provided to accommodate a connection to the appliance and allow for unlimited steering of the steam pocket and use of both sides of the towel for cleaning. The open edge of the envelope does not have any pile and a border is provided along the open edge and slot for accommodating the connector and not interfering with the steering of the steam mop.

[0008] The fabric envelope is formed from two substantially planar layers of fabric configured to fit over a steam frame with fasteners to lock the pocket closed about the frame. The surface layers are joined around their perimeter along the sides and leaving an open edge for mounting onto the steam frame. A pair of fastening strips are secured to the inner side of one layer along the open edge and on the outer side of the other layer with one set of strips extending beyond the edge. When placed on the frame and secured the fabric edges of both layers are butting each other along a closure line. This locks the steam pocket closed to prevent the escape of steam out the open edge of the fabric envelope. In another embodiment, the fabric may include a pull ribbon for assisting installation on to the frame.

[0009] Accordingly, it is an object of the invention to provide an improved fabric steam towel to form a steam pocket in a steam appliance.

[0010] Another object of the invention is to provide a steam towel for a steam appliance with improved cleaning performance.

[0011] Yet another object of the invention is to provide a fabric towel with a closure to lock the pocket closed in the back of the steam frame for improved steaming.

[0012] A further object of the invention is to provide a steam towel for a steam appliance with improved push/pull performance.

[0013] Yet another object of the invention is to provide a steam towel for a steam appliance having improved durability.

[0014] Still other objects and advantages of the invention will in part be obvious and will in part be apparent from the specification.

[0015] The invention accordingly comprises a product possessing the features, properties, and the relation of components which will be exemplified in the product hereinafter described, and the scope of the invention will be indicated in the claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] For a fuller understanding of the invention, reference is made to the following description taken in connection with the accompanying drawing(s), in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a steam mop including a steam pocket constructed and arranged in accordance with the invention;
 FIG. 2 is a front view of the mop housing in section showing a reservoir, a pump and a boiler in the mop of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the steam mop frame and universal connector in the steam mop of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the universal connector for connecting the steam frame to the appliance housing as shown in FIG. 1;
 FIG. 5 is a rear perspective view of the steam frame showing the details of the steam frame of FIG. 3;
 FIG. 6 is a plan view of a rectangular shaggy fabric steam towel suitable constructed and arranged in accordance with the invention for use with the steam appliance of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 7 is a plan view of a triangular shaggy fabric steam towel in accordance with the invention that may be used with a triangular shaped steam frame and connector for the mop of FIG. 1;
 FIG. 8 is a rear perspective view of a triangular steam frame for use with the fabric steam towel of FIG. 7;
 FIG. 9a and 9b are schematics showing the position of hook and loop fasteners on the top and bottom layers of the steam towel in accordance with the invention; and
 FIG. 10 is a rear elevation schematic view of the towel closure constructed and arranged in accordance with the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0017] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a steam mop 10 constructed and arranged in accordance with the invention. Mop 10 includes an elongated housing 11 with a water reservoir 21 and a boiler 23 shown in FIG. 2 and an upper tube 12a and a lower tube 12b connected to one end of housing 11. A handle 13 is attached to the end of upper tube 12a. A steam frame 14 with a receiving slot 20 with an installed steam pocket 15 is operatively connected to the other end of housing 11 by a connector 16. In this embodiment, connector 16 and frame 14 may be removed from housing 11 by pressing a release button 17 at the base of housing 11. Water is introduced into a reservoir 21 at a water inlet or opening 18a. The level of water present in a reservoir 21 in housing 11 can be viewed through a sighting window 19. The specifics of fabric steam pocket 15 will be described below.

[0018] FIG. 2 is a front plan view in section showing the location of elements in housing 11. Water container 21 is positioned adjacent and surrounds boiler 23. A one-way pump 22 pumps water from reservoir 21 to boiler 23 in response to the push-pull movement of mop 10. This movement of handle 13 activates operation of pump 22 and one way inlet and outlet valves.

[0019] FIGS. 3-5 show the details of construction of universal connector 16 and steam frame 14 used with steam mop 10 of FIG. 1. Frame 14 is substantially rectangular in shape, open at the top and bottom with plurality of baffles as will be described in detail below.

[0020] Universal connector 16 includes an upper connection piece 26 with pivot plates 26a and 26b and a lower connection piece 27 with two pivot arms 27a and 27b coupled at a pivot pins 28 on upper piece 22 that allows steam frame 14 and housing 11 to pivot side to side.

[0021] Lower connection piece also includes two side arms 29a and 29b with a central opening 29c for passage of a flexible steam hose 32 to feed steam to frame 14. Frame 14 includes connector receiving slot bushings 33a and 33b for receiving side arms 29a and 29b. Two mounting plates 34a and 34b secure arms 29a and 29b in place to allow for up and down pivoting of arms 29a and 29b. This configuration allows for both sides of frame 14 and steam towel 15 to be used for steaming a surface to be cleaned and for unlimited steering of the steam pocket during use.

[0022] As shown in FIGS. 3 and 5 steam frame 14 includes a rear wall 14a with connector receiving opening 20 in the center, a front wall 14b and a right side wall 14c and a left side wall 14d. A plurality of baffles 38 extend within the walls of frame 14. Frame 14 also includes a central steam passageway or manifold 36 that runs from the rear of frame 14 at a receiving slot 20 to a front border 14e. A plurality of steam release openings 37 are formed on both sides of manifold 36 along the top and bottom thereof. These release openings 37 are positioned between each baffle 38. Baffles 38 are substantially orthogonal to manifold 36 in the center of frame 14 and extend sideways and curve rearward to the side edges and rear wall of frame 14.

[0023] Steam hose 32 is connected to manifold 36 at a hose plate 39 mounted at the entrance to manifold 36. Short fins 41 extend from the sides of manifold 36 and edges 14c and 14d approximately at the mid-height of manifold 36 and side walls 14c and 14d to assist in distribution of steam to the upper and lower surfaces of steam towel 15 installed on frame 14 to form the steam pocket when in use.

[0024] Universal connector 16 provides many advantages for ease of use because it easily connect and disconnect to mop frame while providing a user with universal pivoting and steering capability. The user has more control of the appliance and frame by the universal connection to clean whatever areas that need to be clean and allows use of both sides of steam frame 14 for cleaning. In addition, the universal connector may be attached to any variety of differently shaped mop frames, such as rectangular frame 14 or a triangular frame 59 with a slot 60 as shown in FIG. 8 for use with towel as shown in FIG. 7.

[0025] FIG. 6 shows a rectangular towel envelope 46 with a "U" shaped slot 47 and is configured to slip over frame 14 to form a steam pocket 15. Steam towel 47 is formed of a first shaggy fabric layer 48 and an opposed second shaggy fabric 49. Shaggy fabric 48 and 49 each have a substantially rectangular shape with a rear edge 51 in sections about slot 47, a front edge 52 and two short edges 53 and 54. The open edge 51 of the envelope does not have any pile and a border or hem 51a is provided along the open edge and slot 58 for accommodating connector 16 and not interfering with the steering of the steam mop. The steam pocket formed by frame 14 and towel 46 is joined at edges 51, 52 and 53 by stitching in to form fabric steam towel 15. As shown in FIG. 7 a steam pocket fabric 56 may be triangular in shape or any shape with an open rear mounting edge 57 with a border or hem 57a about a gap 58 for mounting over steam frame 59.

[0026] Steam pocket fabric envelopes 15, 46 and 56 are open at rear edges 15a, 51 and 57. The fabric along the opening may be closed with a hook and loop fastener, buttons or snaps. Here, steam towels 15 and 46 have slots 20, 47 and 57 to fit around the width of connector 16. This allows for vertical rotation of housing 11 without bending the fabric of fabric steam towel 15. It also allows use of both sides of steam towel 15, 46 and 56 for cleaning without having to remove and re-install the steam towel 15. In addition, shaggy steam towels in accordance with the invention are more durable after as many as twenty washing and drying cycles along with usage between each wash cycle.

[0027] The specifications of the shaggy fabrics for the shaggy steam pockets are as set forth in Table 1:

Table 1

Yarn count:	single 8's (made from 150 D / 288 F microfiber)
Numbers of threads for warp:	14/10 CM
Numbers of threads for weft:	14/10 CM
Height of spaghetti:	1.8cm

[0028] The resulting fabric is a composition wherein numerous chenille yarns are spun together and twisted form two larger yarns which create a larger spaghetti-like structure.

[0029] Each fabric surface of the fabric towels are formed of two separate fabric layers. Shaggy fabric of 100 percent polyester with a pile height of from 1.0 to 10 3.5 cm and the weight pf the fabric may vary from 250 to 500 g/sq.m. The number of spaghetti-like pile in the fabric can vary from 10 to 15 per square in on an average, and preferably 11 to 12 per square inch. The height may vary fro 1 to 5 cm., preferably from 1.5 to 2.2 cm in height, and most preferably 1.8 cm in height.

[0030] All open edges of each surface of the steam towels are stitched along the rear edge and around slots 20, 47 and 58. It is desirable to seal the open edge of the steam towels when installed on a steam frame to lock the pocket closed and prevent steam escape as shown in schematic in FIGS. 9a and 9b. One shaggy surface 61 includes a first length of a hook and loop fastener 63 secured to an inside open edge 64 on both sides of slot 62. A hem or border 62a is provided around slot 62. Second shaggy surface 66 with a complimentary slot 67 along open edge 68 in FIG. 9b includes a complimentary hook and loop fastener 69 is secured to the opposed inside edge and extends beyond edge 68. This will allow edges 64 and 68 with a border or hem 70 on each surface on each surface to abut and form a seal 71 along rear edge of frame 14 as shown in FIG. 10.

[0031] Fabric steam towels in accordance with the invention may be formed of any suitable fabric, such as cotton or a synthetic fabric, such as polyester or polyolefm fiber. Preferably, the fabric of steam towels is a microfiber. Most preferably, the microfiber is a synthetic 100% polyester microfiber. Typical dimensions for a rectangular steam pocket are about 13 inches wide and 7 inches deep and one inch thick. To close the open edge about 4 to 5 inches of fasteners are used on each side of the slots in the rear edges.

[0032] When closure of edges 64 and 68 is complete and pocket 15 is sealed, the rear view is as shown in FIG. 10. Hook and loop fasteners 63 and 69 are not visible when installed. It is desirable to have fabric steam pocket 15 fit snugly about frame 14 for improved distribution of steam. In order to facilitate mounting fabric pocket 15 on frame 14, a pull ribbon 76 is attached to one side of edge opening with two strips of elastic 72 that allows a user to mount pocket 15 on

one side of back edge of frame 14 and then pull on ribbon 76 to complete the installation of fabric pocket 15. Then hook and loop fasteners are secured to seal the envelope prior to use. The chenille steam pockets in accordance with the invention have improved cleaning, and absorption abilities as well as a high resistance to abrasion. In combination with steam and heat generated in the steam pocket, the cleaning ability of the fabric properties is increased markedly.

[0033] It will thus be seen that the objects set forth above, among those made apparent from the preceding description, are efficiently attained and, since certain changes may be made in the above product without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, it is intended that all matter contained in the above description and shown in the accompanying drawings shall be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense.

[0034] It is also to be understood that the following claims are intended to cover all of the generic and specific features of the invention herein described and all statements of the scope of the invention which, as a matter of language, might be said to fall therebetween.

[0035] The present invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential attributes of the invention.

Claims

1. A fabric steam pocket for mounting onto a steam frame of a steam appliance, comprising:

two complementary substantially planar layers of steam permeable fabric of the shape of the frame joined at their peripheral edges with an open section for mounting onto the steam frame; both layers of fabric including pile having a length from 1.0 to 4.0 cm.

2. The fabric steam pocket of claim 1, wherein the fabric is a chenille fabric.

3. The fabric steam pocket of claim 1 or 2, wherein the shape of the pocket is either rectangular or triangular.

4. The fabric steam pocket of any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the layers are quilted with stitching on the fabric surfaces.

5. The fabric steam pocket of any one of claims 1 to 4, including complementary fasteners on each layer for closing the open section after the pocket is mounted onto the steam frame.

6. The fabric steam pocket of claim 5, wherein the complementary fasteners and layers are arranged so that edges of the open section abut when the complementary fasteners are fastened together.

7. The fabric steam pocket of claim 5 or 6, wherein the complementary fasteners include strips of hook and loop fastening fabric.

8. The fabric steam pocket of claim 7, wherein the complementary strips of hook and loop fastening fabric are located on interior surfaces of the layers.

9. The fabric steam pocket of claim 7 or 8, wherein a first length of hook or loop fastening fabric is secured to an inside face of one layer and a second length of hook or loop fastening fabric is secured to the inside face of the other layer and extends beyond an edge of the open section so that the edges of each layer at the open section abut when the first and second lengths of hook and loop fastening fabric are secured together.

10. The fabric steam pocket of any one of claims 1 to 9, further including an opening in each layer adjacent the open section for receipt of a connector from a steam frame.

11. The fabric steam pocket of any one of claims 1 to 10, wherein the two layers are joined directly at their peripheral edges.

12. The fabric steam pocket of any one of claims 1 to 11, in combination with a steam frame of a steam appliance.

13. The fabric steam pocket and steam frame combination of claim 12, wherein the steam frame includes a connector for connecting to the main body of a steam appliance, and a steam manifold for conducting steam from the main body into and about the steam frame.

14. The fabric steam pocket and steam frame combination of claim 13, further including a plurality of spaced baffles

extending transverse to the steam manifold.

- 15.** The fabric steam pocket and steam frame combination of any one of claims 12 to 14 included within a steam mop appliance.

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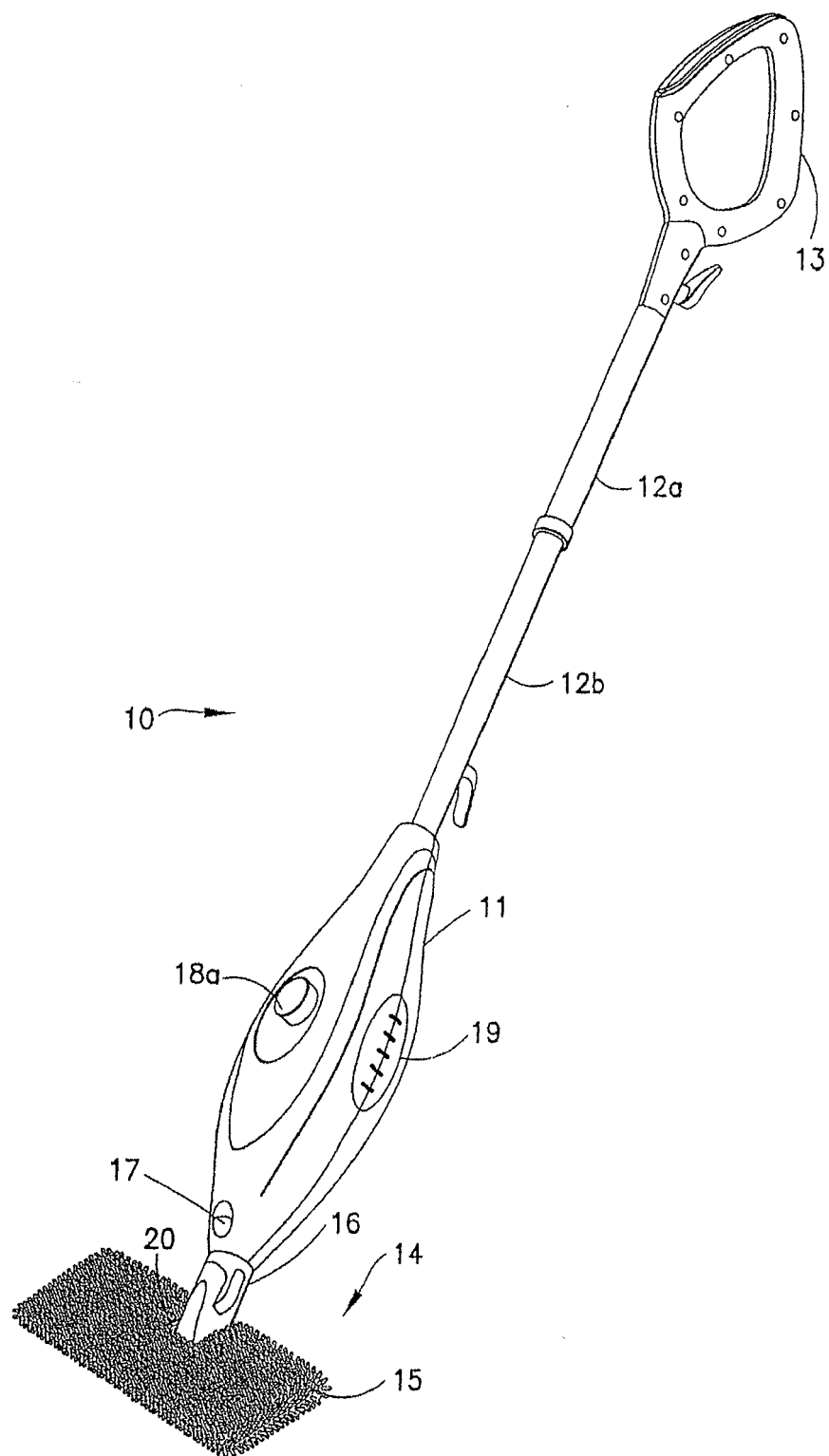


Fig. 1

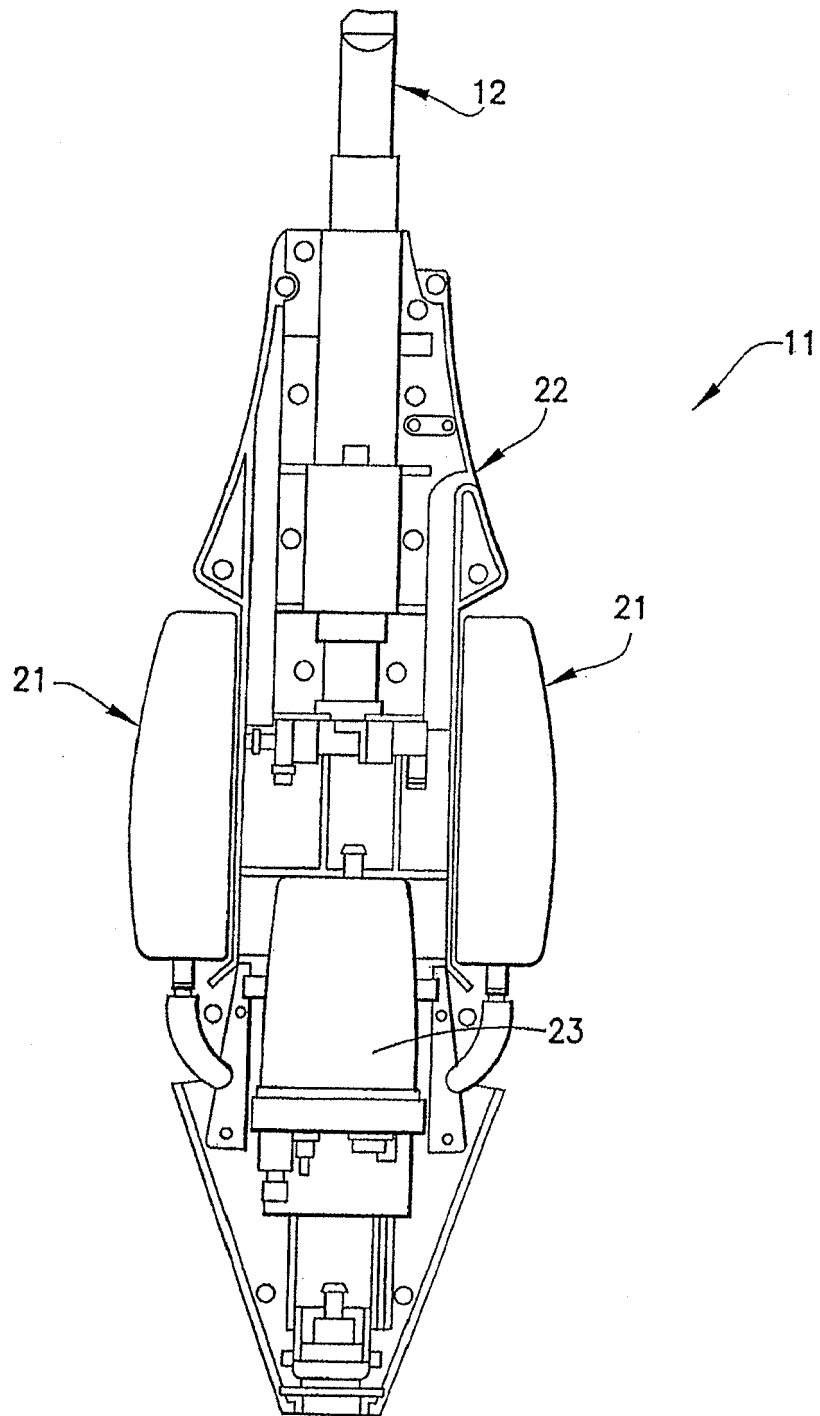


Fig. 2

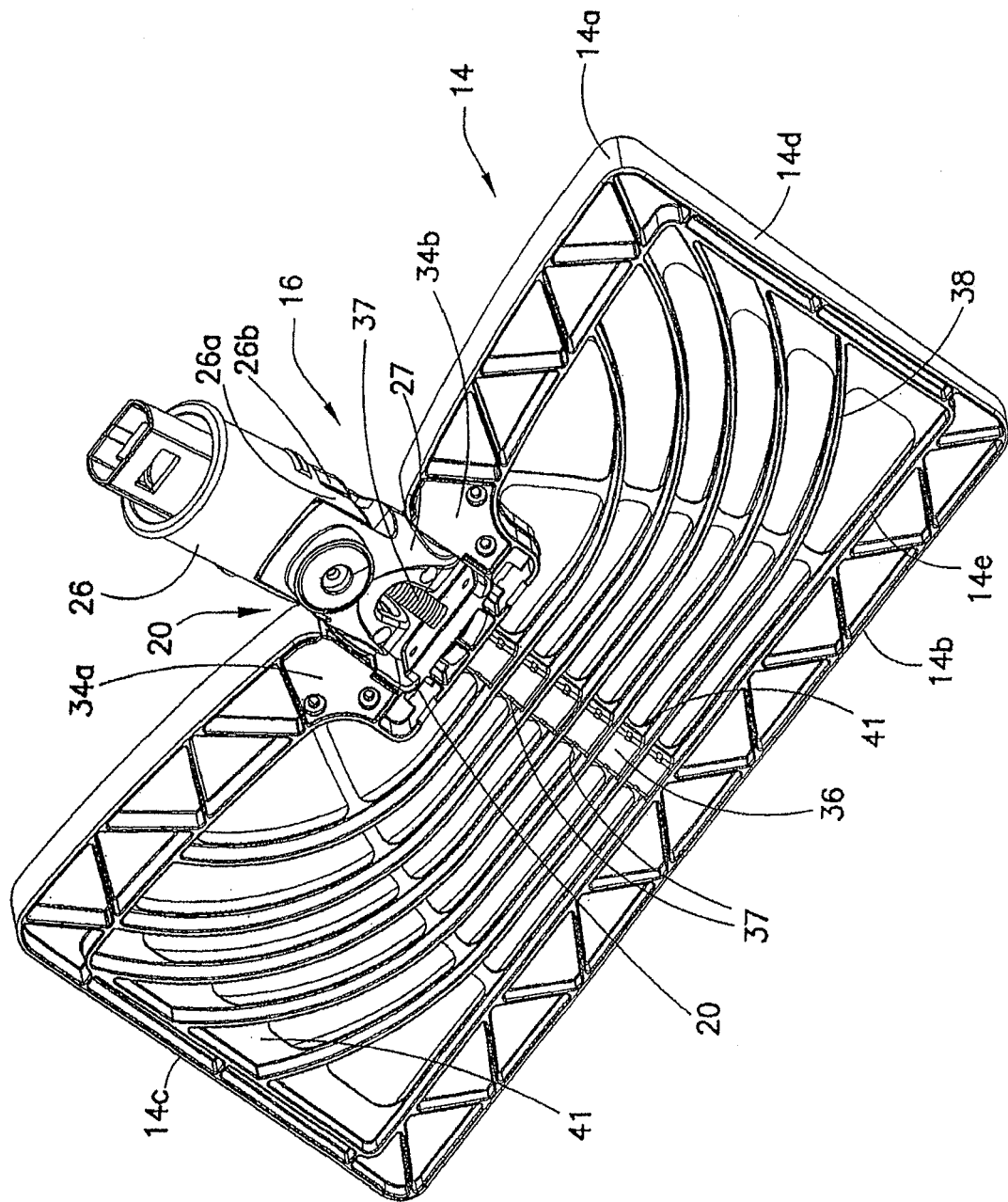


Fig. 3

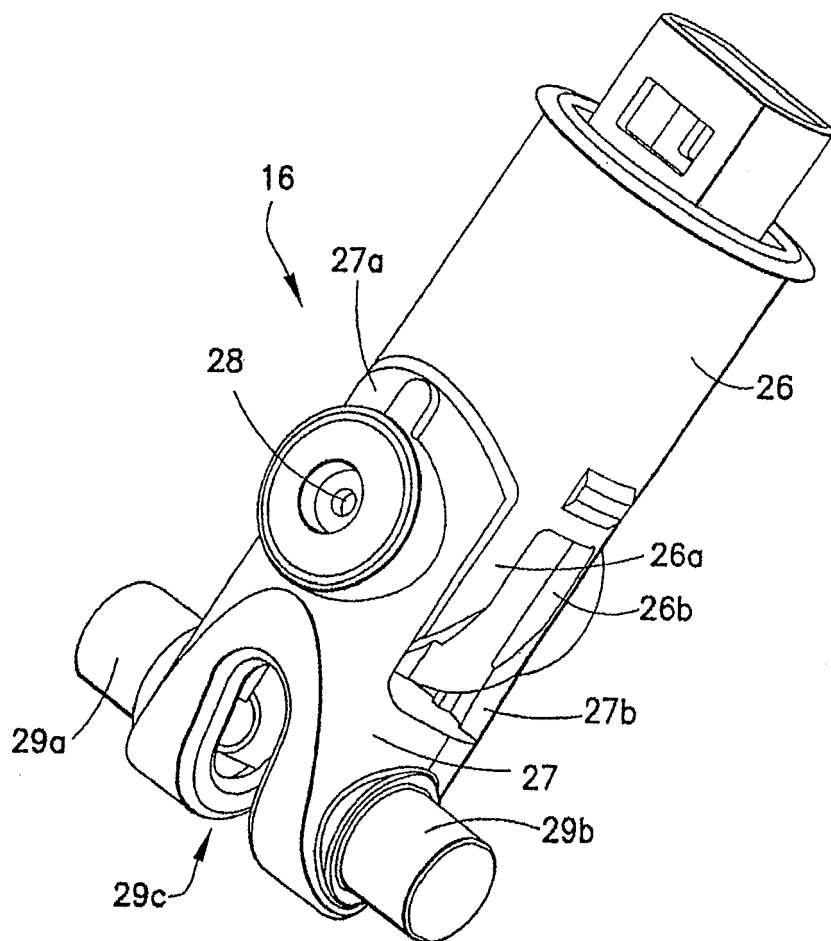


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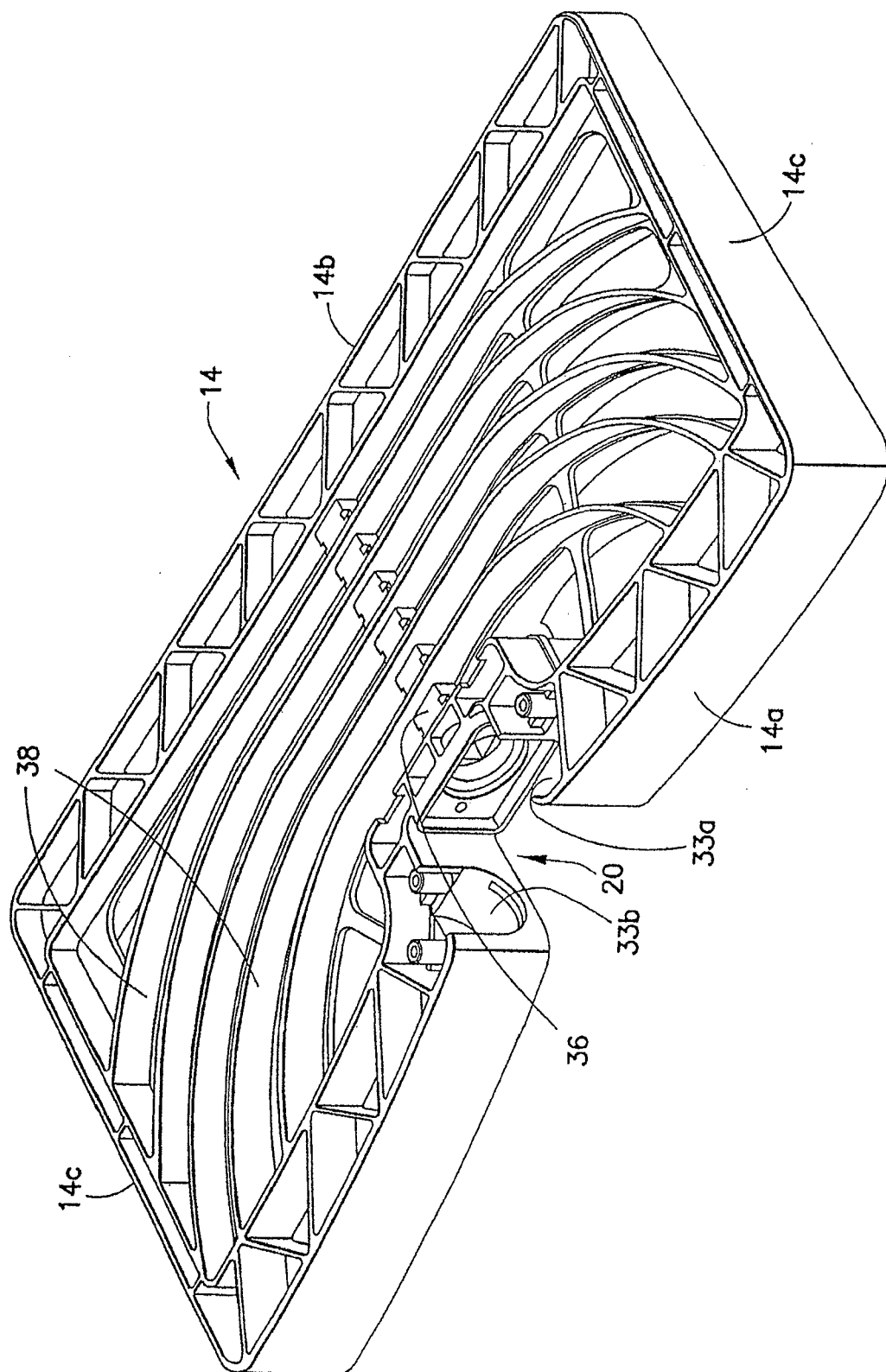


Fig. 5

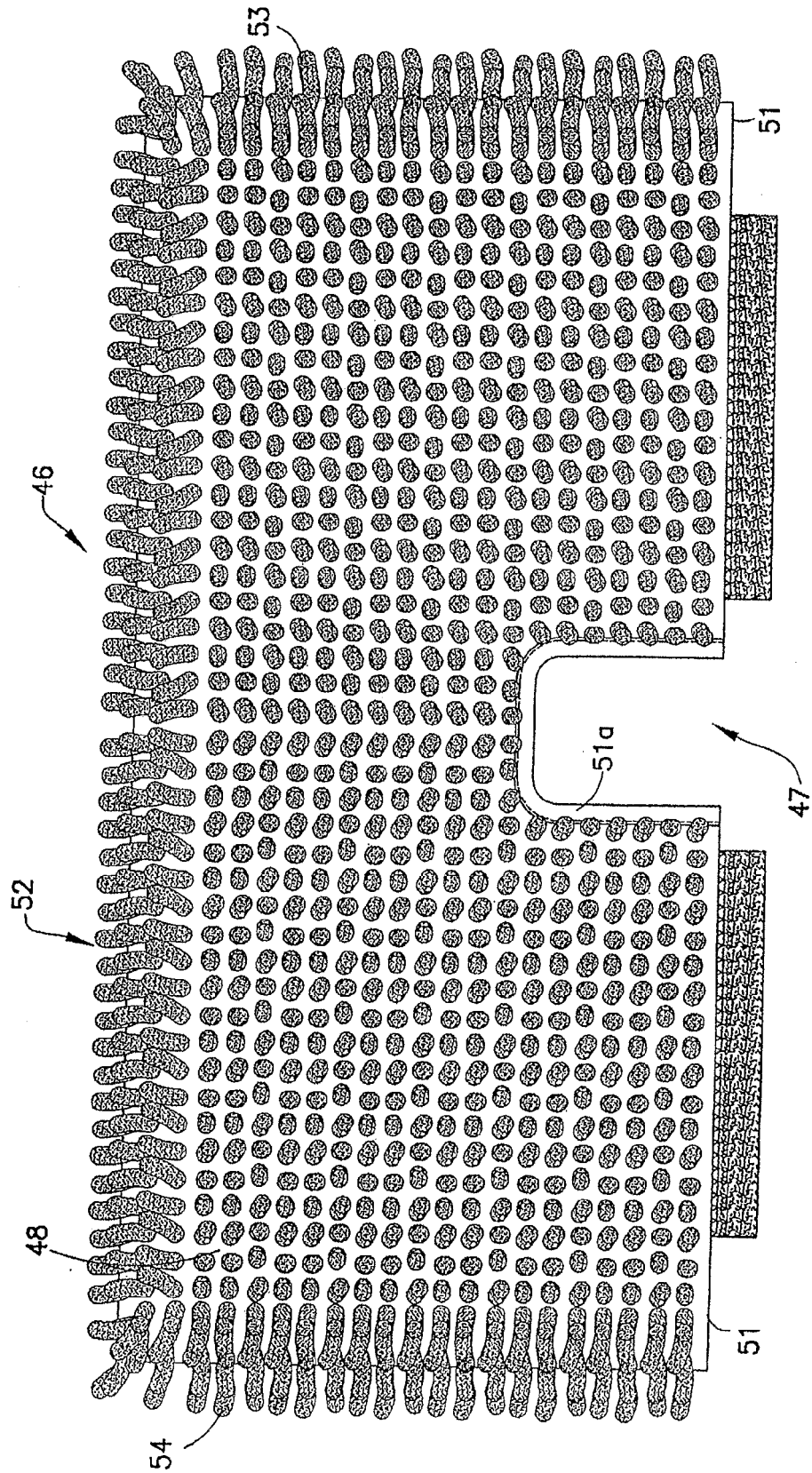


Fig. 6

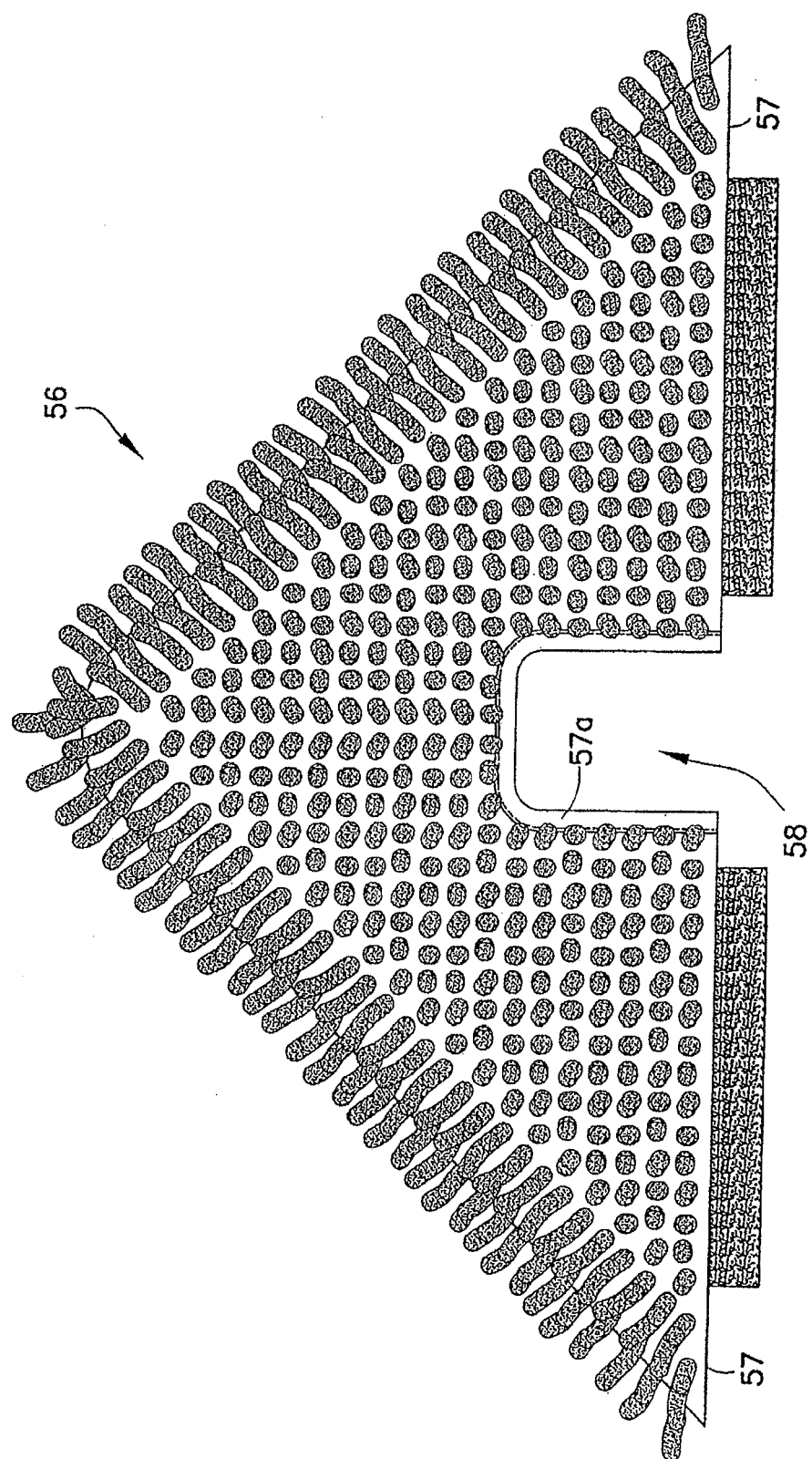


Fig. 7

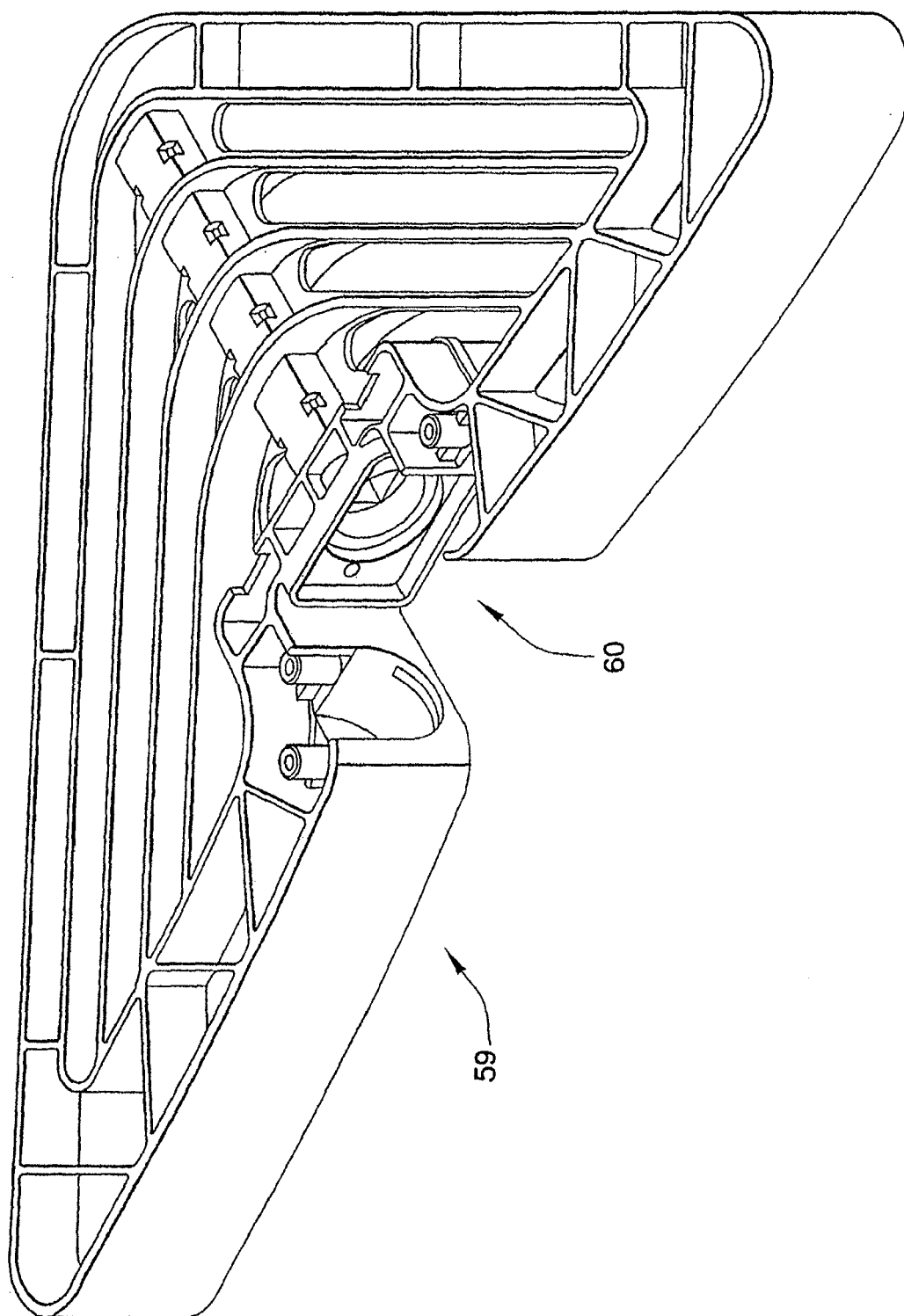


Fig. 8

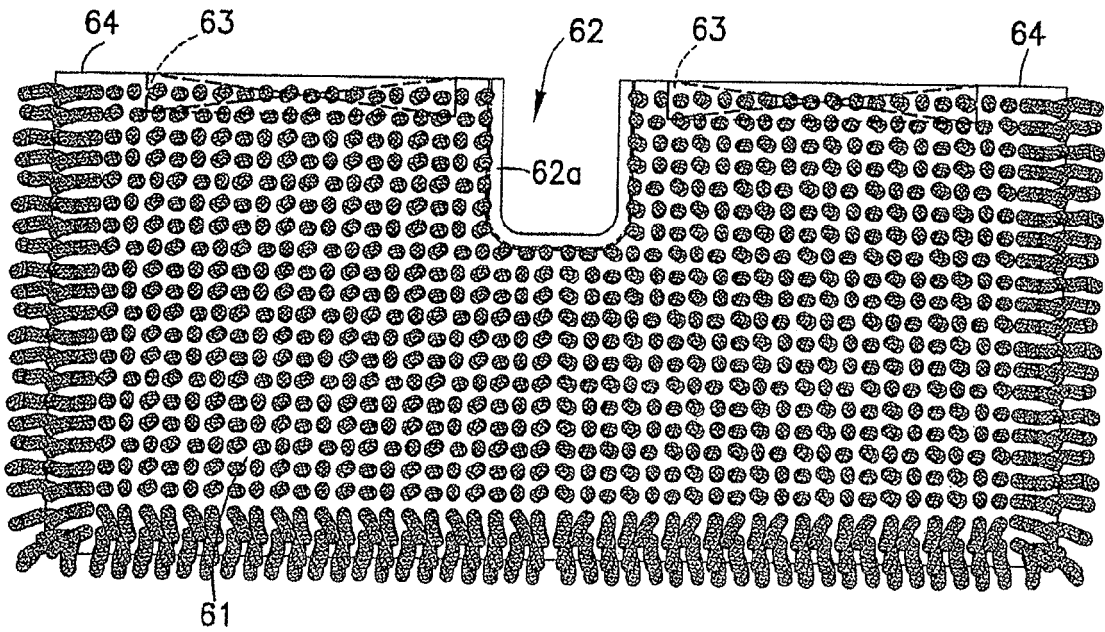


Fig. 9a

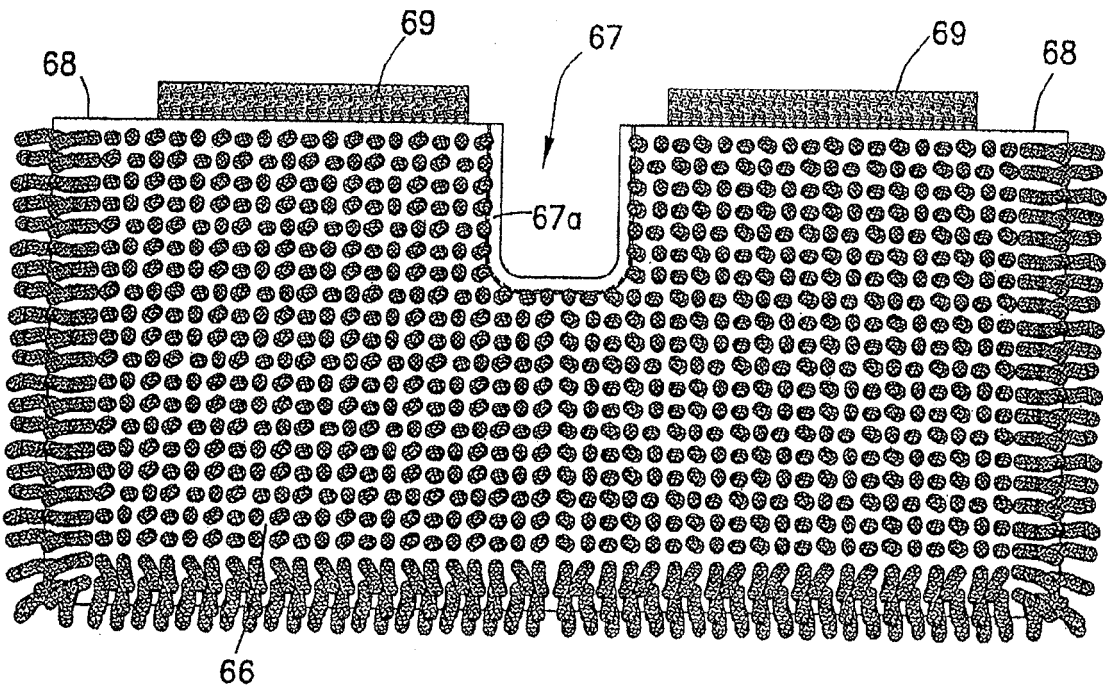


Fig. 9b

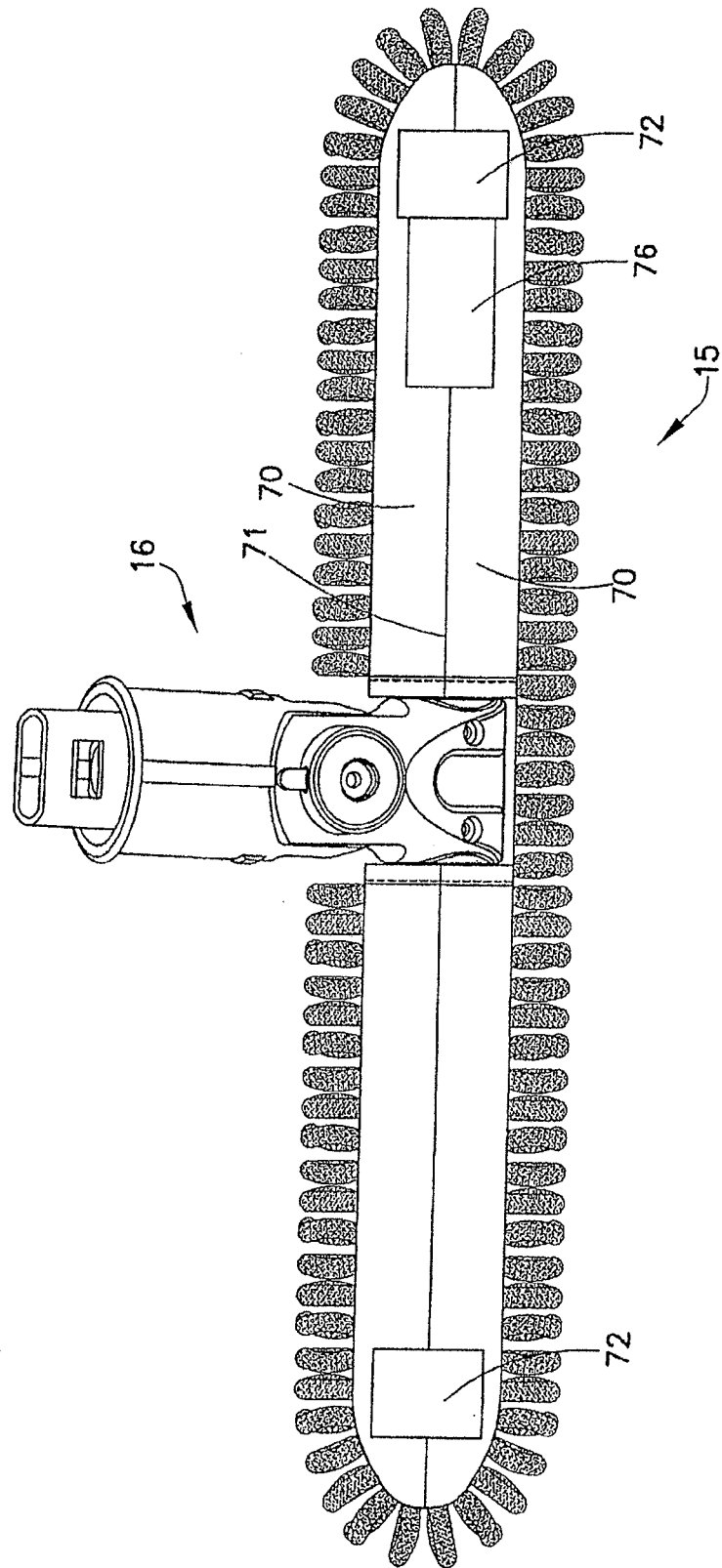


Fig. 10

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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Patent documents cited in the description

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