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(54) **Accessory tool for a vacuum cleaner**

Zubehörwerkzeug für einen Staubsauger

Outil accessoire pour aspirateur

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Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates generally to an accessory tool for a vacuum cleaner, and more specifically, to a fluid distribution and recovery tool.

Description of the Related Art

[0002] Vacuum cleaning appliances are known for removing dry or wet debris from surfaces, including fabric-covered surfaces like carpets and upholstery, and bare surfaces like hardwood, linoleum and tile. Conventional dry vacuum cleaners are not capable of distributing or recovering fluids from surfaces because moisture can damage the motor and filtration system of the vacuum cleaner. As a result, liquid extraction vacuum cleaning appliances such as vacuum mops, extractors and carpet cleaners must be used to distribute and/or remove liquids from surfaces requiring a consumer to keep several large pieces of equipment available to complete different floor cleaning needs.

[0003] Various attachments have been developed to adapt conventional dry vacuum cleaners to distribute and recover liquids. Many of these attachments only allow for fluid recovery, and are not provided with means for fluid distribution. Some attachments include replacement filter systems that can collect recovered fluid. Other attachments include hand-held accessory tools, often referred to as wet or wet pick-up tools, that are coupled to the conventional dry vacuum cleaner using a vacuum hose.

[0004] A noted problem with using a wet pick-up tool to convert a conventional dry vacuum cleaner into one capable of fluid distribution and/or recovery is preventing fluid from entering the filtration system and suction source of the vacuum cleaner. Accordingly, wet pick-up tools often include means for separating working air from recovered fluid and a container for collecting the recovered fluid so that fluid is prevented from passing, along with the working air, to the conventional dry vacuum cleaner through the vacuum hose. However, if the container is overfilled or turned to an unusual angle, known wet pick-up tools can allow fluid to remain in the working air and enter the conventional dry vacuum cleaner, causing damage to the filtration system and suction source.

[0005] US 5 634 238 A is considered to represent the closest state of the art and discloses an accessory tool with housing, a suction nozzle, a collection container, and a connection member for a vacuum hose that defines an outlet opening in fluid communication with a suction source. Communication between the interior of the collection container and the hose attached to the connection member is by way of a flow-restricting orifice. A movable thumb-piece (not shown) may be provided within a recess on the housing for longitudinal sliding movement

towards and away from the orifice, the thumb piece having a downward extension adapted to close the orifice when the thumb piece is not moved away from the orifice against a spring-bias, so that when the user releases the tool the orifice is automatically closed in order to prevent liquid leaking out of the collection container and into the suction hose.

[0006] WO 94 08502 A1 discloses an air/liquid separation device with a float that will close an inlet opening to the collection chamber when liquid within the collection chamber raises to a sufficiently high level.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] According to the invention, an accessory tool for use in connection with a vacuum cleaner with a suction source includes a housing assembly having a suction outlet opening adapted to be connected to a vacuum hose in fluid communication with the suction source, a suction nozzle fluidly coupled to the suction opening, a recovery tank in fluid communication with the suction nozzle to store liquid drawn in through the suction nozzle, and a backflow preventer configured to prevent escape of fluid from the recovery tank back into the suction nozzle wherein a suction flow path is established from the suction nozzle, through the recovery tank, and to the suction outlet opening when suction is applied at the suction opening.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] In the drawings, the embodiments of Figures 1 to 26 do not form part of the invention but represent embodiments which are useful for understanding the invention:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a first embodiment of an accessory tool according to the present invention connected to a vacuum hose that is coupled with a conventional dry vacuum cleaning appliance.

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the accessory tool, showing a tool body supporting a recovery tank assembly and a fan/turbine assembly at a lower portion thereof and a fluid dispensing system at an upper portion thereof.

FIG. 3 is an exploded view of the accessory tool from FIG. 2.

FIG. 4 is a sectional view taken through line 4-4 of FIG. 2.

FIG. 5A is a top perspective view of the tool body from FIG. 2.

FIG. 5B is a bottom perspective view of the tool body from FIG. 2.

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of the fluid dispensing assembly from FIG. 2.

FIG. 7A is a top perspective view of a suction fan cover of the fan/turbine assembly from FIG. 2.

FIG. 7B is a bottom perspective view of the suction

fan cover from FIG. 7A.

FIG. 8A is a top perspective view of a turbine cover of the fan/turbine assembly from FIG. 2.

FIG. 8B is a bottom perspective view of the turbine cover from FIG. 8A.

FIG. 9A is a top perspective view of a separation plate of the fan/turbine assembly from FIG. 2.

FIG. 9B is a bottom perspective view of the separation plate from FIG. 9A.

FIG. 10A is a top perspective view of a suction fan of the fan/turbine assembly from FIG. 2.

FIG. 10B is a bottom perspective view of the suction fan from FIG. 10A.

FIG. 11A is a top perspective view of a turbine of the fan/turbine assembly from FIG. 2.

FIG. 11B is a bottom perspective view of the turbine from FIG. 11A.

FIG. 12 is a sectional view similar to FIG. 4, illustrating the airflow pathways through the accessory tool.

FIG. 13 is a top perspective view of a second embodiment of a nozzle assembly for the accessory tool according to the present invention, where the nozzle assembly comprises a suction nozzle and a movable agitator assembly.

FIG. 14 is a bottom perspective view of the nozzle assembly from FIG. 13.

FIG. 15 is a sectional view taken through line 15-15 of FIG. 13.

FIG. 16 is an exploded view of the nozzle assembly from FIG. 13.

FIG. 17 is a side view of the nozzle assembly from FIG. 13, showing the nozzle assembly in a first use orientation where the suction nozzle is positioned adjacent the surface to be cleaned and the agitator assembly is rotated away from the suction to be cleaned.

FIG. 18 is a side view of the nozzle assembly from FIG. 13, showing the nozzle assembly in a second use orientation where the suction nozzle is moved away from the surface to be cleaned and the agitator assembly is rotated to a position adjacent the surface to be cleaned.

FIG. 19 is a perspective view of a second embodiment of a recovery tank assembly for the accessory tool according to the present invention.

FIG. 20 is a sectional view taken through line 20-20 of FIG. 19.

FIG. 21 is a side view of the recovery tank assembly from FIG. 19, showing the partially-full recovery tank assembly in a first use orientation.

FIG. 22 is a side view of the recovery tank assembly from FIG. 19, showing the partially full recovery tank assembly in a second use orientation.

FIG. 23 is a sectional view of the accessory tool according to the present invention, comprising a second embodiment of a fan/turbine assembly according to the present invention.

FIG. 24 is a bottom perspective view of a turbine of

the fan/turbine assembly from FIG. 23.

FIG. 25 is a top perspective view of the suction of the fan/turbine assembly from FIG. 23.

FIG. 26 is a sectional view of an accessory tool according to another embodiment of the invention comprising a fluid dispensing assembly having a turbine-driven pump.

FIG. 27 is a perspective view of yet another embodiment of an accessory tool connected to a wet extraction cleaning appliance.

FIG. 28 is a perspective view of the accessory tool shown in FIG. 27.

FIG. 29 is an exploded view of the accessory tool shown in FIG. 27.

FIG. 30 is a cross sectional view of the accessory tool shown FIG. 27.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0009] Referring to the drawings, and in particular to FIG. 1, a first embodiment of an accessory tool 10 according to the present invention is illustrated that comprises a fluid delivery system for storing cleaning fluid and delivering the cleaning fluid to a surface to be cleaned, and a fluid recovery system for removing the spent cleaning fluid and dirt from the surface to be cleaned and storing the spent cleaning fluid and dirt. The accessory tool 10 is configured for removable mounting to a vacuum hose 12, which is in turn coupled with a source of suction. Preferably, the source of suction is a conventional dry vacuum cleaner 14; however any commonly known vacuum cleaning appliance comprising a suction source and vacuum hose is acceptable. As used herein, the term "dry vacuum cleaner" is used to denote a floor surface cleaner that is not capable of fluid distribution or fluid recovery without the accessory tool 10, unless it is specifically stated otherwise. Furthermore, the accessory tool 10 can be utilized with other vacuum cleaning appliances, such as a wet carpet cleaner or liquid extractor.

[0010] The vacuum cleaner 14 can comprise any type of vacuum cleaner utilizing a vacuum hose, such as an upright, canister, stick-type, or hand-held vacuum cleaner, or with a built-in central vacuum cleaning system. Further, the vacuum cleaner 14 can be used to clean fabric-covered surfaces, such as carpets and upholstery, or bare surfaces, such as hardwood, linoleum, and tile. The vacuum cleaner 14 draws in dirt-laden air through the hose 12 and into a filtration system where the dirt is trapped for later disposal. Exemplary filtration systems can include a filter bag or a bagless cyclonic filter. As illustrated, the vacuum cleaner 14 comprises an upright vacuum cleaner using at least a cyclone separator as the filtration system. Details of a suitable vacuum cleaner for use with the accessory tool 10 are disclosed in commonly assigned U.S. Patent No. 6,810,557 to Hansen et al.

[0011] Referring to FIGS. 2-4, the accessory tool 10 comprises a tool body 16 that removably supports a re-

covery tank assembly 18 and a fan/turbine assembly 20 at a lower portion thereof, lower being defined as relative to the typical use position of the accessory tool 10, and a fluid dispensing assembly 22 at an upper portion thereof. The recovery tank assembly 18 stores recovered cleaning fluid and dirt, while the fluid dispensing assembly 22 stores cleaning fluid before it is distributed to the surface to be cleaned. The recovery tank assembly 18 can further comprise an air/liquid separator from separating air from recovered cleaning fluid and dirt. The cleaning fluid can comprise any suitable cleaning fluid, including, but not limited to, water, concentrated detergent, diluted detergent, and the like. The fan/turbine assembly 20 is generally positioned between the tool body 16 and the recovery tank assembly 18 and is used generate fluid and air flow through the accessory tool 10.

[0012] Referring to FIGS. 3, 5A, and 5B, the tool body 16 comprises a fluid dispensing assembly receiver 24 that removably mounts the fluid dispensing assembly 22 positioned on an upper portion of the tool body 16, a nozzle receiver 26 having an arcuate lower surface 28 positioned at a forward end of the tool body 16, and a hollow hose connector 30 positioned at a rear end of the tool body 16, opposite the nozzle receiver 26. The fluid dispensing assembly receiver 24 at least partially receives the fluid dispensing assembly 22 and can comprise a retaining feature, such as a ridge 31 that retains a portion of the fluid dispensing assembly 22 within the fluid dispensing assembly receiver 24. The hose connector 30 is configured to fluidly couple with the vacuum hose 12, or another accessory tool (not shown), such as an extension pipe coupled with the vacuum hose 12. Furthermore, the hose connector 30 provides a convenient place for the user to grip the accessory tool 10. A working air conduit inlet opening 32 is formed on a lower surface of the tool body 16, opposite the fluid dispensing assembly receiver 24 and is in fluid communication with the fan/turbine assembly 20. A working air conduit 34 is formed through the tool body 16 and extends between the working air conduit inlet opening 32 and the hose connector 30. Thus, the working air conduit 34 fluidly communicates with a source of suction, such as the vacuum cleaner 14, via the vacuum hose 12, or another accessory tool. A turbine cover tab receiver 35 is formed on a lower surface of the tool body 16, between the working air conduit inlet opening 32 and the hose connector 30 and is configured to receive a portion of the fan/turbine assembly 20, as will be presently described.

[0013] Referring to FIGS. 3 and 4, the recovery tank assembly 18 comprises a recovery tank 36 and a suction nozzle 38 in communication with the recovery tank 36 via a recovery tank inlet 40. The recovery tank 36 comprises a generally cylindrical peripheral wall 42 having a closed bottom 44 and forms a recovery chamber 46 in which recovered cleaning fluid and dirt passing through the suction nozzle 38 is received via the recovery tank inlet 40. Multiple recesses 48 are formed in the upper edge of the peripheral wall 42 and form exhaust outlets

50 when the recovery tank 34 is mounted to the fan/turbine assembly 20. Preferably, one or both of the recovery tank 36 and the suction nozzle 38 are translucent or transparent to allow the contents to be at least partially visible to the user. The recovery tank 36 is removably mounted to the fan/turbine assembly 20 and can be removed therefrom to empty the contents of the recovery chamber 46 after a cleaning operation is complete.

[0014] The suction nozzle 38 comprises a rear nozzle body 52, which, as illustrated, is integrally formed with the recovery tank 36 and a front nozzle body 54 removably mounted to the rear nozzle body 52 to form a fluid flow path 56 therebetween. In another embodiment (not illustrated), the front nozzle body 54 is not removable from the rear nozzle body 52. In yet another embodiment (not illustrated), the recovery tank 36 is removable from the suction nozzle 38. The fluid flow path 56 extends between a suction nozzle opening 58, which, in operation, is positioned adjacent the surface to be cleaned, and the recovery tank inlet 40.

[0015] The rear nozzle body 52 comprises a generally planar upper wall 60 and two spaced side walls 62 joined to a rear wall 64. The front nozzle body 54 comprises a front wall 66 having two spaced side walls 68 configured to snap-fit to the side walls 62 of the rear nozzle body 52 to releasably secure the front nozzle body 54 to the rear nozzle body 52. The front wall 66 further comprises an upper portion 70 that extends above the side walls 68 and comprises an arcuate upper surface 72. When the front nozzle body 54 is mounted to the rear nozzle body 52, the upper portion 70 extends above the upper wall 60 of the rear nozzle body 54 and the arcuate upper surface 72 conforms to the arcuate lower surface 28 of the nozzle receiver 26. The upper portion 70 further forms an area where the user can grip the front nozzle body 54 to remove it from the rear nozzle body 52. The front wall 66 further has a generally flat glide surface 74 at a lower portion thereof, adjacent the suction nozzle opening 58, which rests on the surface to be cleaned during operation and helps distribute the weight of the accessory tool 10 over a relatively large surface area so that the user may glide the accessory tool 10 over the surface to be cleaned with less exertion.

[0016] Referring to FIG. 6, the fluid dispensing assembly 22 can comprise any vessel that can store and distribute the cleaning fluid. As illustrated, the fluid dispensing assembly 22 comprises a cleaning fluid container 76 for storing the cleaning fluid and a manually actuable dispensing cap 78 mounted to the cleaning fluid container 76. The cleaning fluid container 76 is preferably shaped to complement the shape of the fluid dispensing assembly receiver 24, and can comprise a recessed portion 79 that can be press-fit over the ridge 31 of the fluid dispensing assembly receiver 24 to mount the fluid dispensing assembly 22 to the tool body 16. The dispensing cap 78 comprises a spray nozzle 80 for distributing cleaning fluid onto the surface of the cleaned and a conventional pump (not shown) used in non-aerosol dispensers that is op-

erated by a movable discharge button 82. In operation, the user depresses the discharge button 82 to distribute a dose of cleaning fluid from the spray nozzle 80 onto the surface to be cleaned. The user may repeatedly depress the discharge button 82 to distribute multiple doses until a desired amount of cleaning fluid has been applied to onto the surface to be cleaned. When empty, the fluid dispensing assembly 22 can be removed, discarded and replaced with a new fluid dispensing assembly, or the fluid dispensing assembly 22 can be refilled with cleaning fluid and reused. It is understood that in some cleaning operations, the user may desire to only recover fluid from the surface to be cleaned, and in this case, cleaning fluid is not dispensed from the fluid dispensing assembly 22.

[0017] Referring to FIGS. 3 and 4, the fan/turbine assembly 20 comprises a suction fan 84 in fluid communication with the suction nozzle 38 to create suction force to draw cleaning fluid and dirt from the surface to be cleaned into the recovery tank 36, and a turbine 86 coupled to the suction fan 86 to drive the suction fan 86 using working air drawn over and through the turbine by the vacuum cleaner 14. The fan/turbine assembly 20 further comprises a suction fan cover 88, a turbine cover 90, and a separation plate 92. Together, the suction fan cover 88 and the separation plate 92 define a suction fan chamber 89 in which the suction fan 84 is received. Similarly, the turbine cover 90 and the separation plate 92 define a turbine chamber 91, which is separate from the suction fan chamber 89, in which the turbine 86 is received. The suction fan cover 88 is in turn at least partially received by the recovery tank 36 and the turbine cover 90 is mounted to the lower surface of the tool body 16 and rests upon the recovery tank 36. The suction fan 84 and the turbine 86 are rotatably mounted to the separation plate 92 by a coupling, which is illustrated herein as an axle 94 retained within a bearing 96 mounted to the separation plate 92. The axle 94 comprises two ends that pass through the bearing 96, each of which respectively mounts one of the suction fan 84 and the turbine 86.

[0018] Referring to FIGS. 7A and 7B, the suction fan cover 88 comprises a generally flat circular body 98 having an upper surface 100, a lower surface 102, and a peripheral edge 104. At least one fan inlet opening 106 is formed in the body 98, which fluidly communicates the recovery tank 36 with the suction fan 84. As illustrated, four fan inlet openings 106 are provided. A U-shaped baffle 108 centered around the fan inlet openings 106 extends from the lower surface 102 and into the recovery chamber 46 and forms the air/liquid separator of the recovery tank 36. The baffle 108 forces air passing through the recovery tank 36 from the suction nozzle 38 to take a more circuitous path to the suction fan 84 and aids in the separation of air from recovered cleaning fluid drawn into the recovery tank 36. A plurality of spaced upstanding partitions 110 is formed on the upper surface 100 and is arranged in an arc along the periphery of one half of the body 98. The partitions 110 form fan outlets 112 therebetween that are in fluid communication with the exhaust

outlets 50 when the recovery tank 34 is mounted to the fan/turbine assembly 20. Formed on the periphery of the other half of the body 98 is an upstanding arcuate wall 114. The wall 114 comprises an outer surface 116, which is continuous with the peripheral edge 104, an inner surface 118, and an upper surface 120. A step 122 is formed between the outer and upper surfaces 116, 120. An arcuate groove 124 is formed on the lower surface 102 and is generally aligned with the arcuate wall 114.

[0019] When the accessory tool 10 is assembled, the suction fan 84 is received within the area bounded by the partitions 110 and the arcuate wall 114 of the suction fan cover 88, and the suction fan cover 88 is received within the recovery tank 36. While not illustrated, the suction fan cover 88 can be provided with a float valve assembly for sealing the fan inlet openings 106 when the amount of fluid in the recovery chamber 46 rises above a certain level to insure that fluid does not enter the fan/turbine assembly 20. For example, the baffle 108 could be modified to include a float valve assembly. Alternately, the float valve assembly can be formed with the recovery tank assembly 18.

[0020] Referring to FIGS. 8A and 8B, the turbine cover 90 comprises a dish-shaped circular body 126 having an upper wall 128 and a peripheral wall 130 depending from the upper wall 128 at an outward angle. A plurality of spaced turbine inlet openings 132 are formed in the turbine cover 90 and are preferably formed in the peripheral wall 130. At least one turbine outlet opening 134 is formed in the upper wall 128, which is generally aligned with the working air conduit inlet opening 32 of the tool body 16 and fluidly communicates the turbine 86 with the working air conduit 34. A tab 136 extends from the body 126, near the junction between the upper wall 128 and the peripheral wall 130, and is received by the tab receiver 35 on the tool body 16 to mount the turbine cover 90, which can optionally be pre-assembled with the fan/turbine assembly 20 and the recovery tank assembly 18, to the tool body 16. The peripheral wall 130 further comprises a generally planar lower surface 138 and a generally planar inner step 140, which is spaced from the lower surface 138 and formed below the turbine inlet openings 132. When the accessory tool 10 is assembled, the lower surface 138 rests atop the peripheral wall 42 of the recovery tank 36 and the inner step 140 rests atop the separation plate 92.

[0021] Referring to FIGS. 3, 9A and 9B, the separation plate 92 comprises a generally flat circular body 142 having an upper surface 144, a lower surface 146, and a peripheral edge 148 that angles outwardly from the upper surface 144 to the lower surface 146. A central hub 150 protrudes from the upper and lower surfaces 144, 146 and comprises a bearing opening 152 passing there-through. The bearing 96 is received within the bearing opening 152 and in turn mounts the axle 94. A depending rim 154 is formed around the periphery of the lower surface 146 and is continuous with the peripheral edge 148. When the accessory tool 10 is assembled, the rim 154

abuts the partitions 110 and the step 122 in the arcuate wall 114 of the suction fan cover 88.

[0022] Referring to FIGS. 10A and 10B, the suction fan 84 comprises a generally circular body 156 having an upper surface 158, a lower surface 160, and a peripheral edge 162. The upper surface 158 is generally flat near the peripheral edge 162 and tapers to a central depression 164 in which a hub 166 is provided. The lower surface 160 is also generally flat near the peripheral edge 162 and tapers to a central protrusion 168 which continues the hub 166. An axle opening 170 passes through the hub 166 and receives the axle 94 to rotatably couple the suction fan 84 with the turbine 86. A plurality of arcuate fan blades 172 extend radially outwardly from the hub 166 to the peripheral edge 162 and are generally equally spaced from one another.

[0023] Referring to FIGS. 11A and 11B, the turbine 86 comprises a generally circular body 174 having an upper surface 176, a lower surface 178, and a peripheral edge 180. The upper surface 176 is generally flat near the peripheral edge 180 and tapers to a central protrusion 182 on which a hub 184 is located. The lower surface 178 is also generally flat near the peripheral edge 180 and tapers to a central depression 186 in which the hub 184 is located. An axle opening 188 passes through the hub 184 and receives the axle 94 to rotatably couple the turbine 86 with the suction fan 84. A plurality of turbine blades 190 are provided on the upper surface 176 and are generally positioned a ring orientation near the peripheral edge 180. Each turbine blade 190 is generally triangular in shape when view from above, and comprises an outer straight segment 192 joined to a similar inner straight segment 194 by a rounded tip segment 196, with an arced segment 198 positioned opposite the rounded tip segment 194 joining the outer and inner straight segments 192, 194. As illustrated, the turbine blades 190 are hollow, which reduces the weight of the turbine 86 and saves material; however, the turbine 86 can alternatively be formed with solid blades, which would increase the weight of the turbine 86 near the peripheral edge 180, thereby increasing the angular momentum of the turbine 86.

[0024] In operation, when the turbine blades 190 are exposed to a moving air stream, such as that created by the vacuum cleaner 14, the axle 94 rotates with the turbine blades 190. Specifically, the exposure of the arced segment 198 of the turbine blades 190 to a moving air stream causes the turbine body 174, and consequently the axle 94, to rotate. The rotation of the axle 94 causes the suction fan 86 to rotate. As the suction fan 84 rotates, the fan blades 172 pull air from the recovery chamber 46 through the fan openings 106, thereby creating a partial vacuum within the recovery tank 36 and suction nozzle 38 and suction at the suction nozzle opening 58.

[0025] Referring to FIG. 12, the airflow pathway through the accessory tool 10 is illustrated. Arrow A indicates the "dry" portion of the pathway, where air enters the turbine chamber 91 through the turbine inlet openings 132

(shown in FIG. 2) and passes through and over the turbine 86, thereby providing motive force thereto. The air then passes out of the fan/turbine assembly 20 through the turbine outlet opening 134 and into the working air conduit 34 via the working air conduit inlet opening 32. From the working air conduit 34, the air passes sequentially through the vacuum hose 12 and the vacuum cleaner 14.

[0026] Arrow B indicates the "wet" portion of the pathway, where recovered cleaning fluid and dirt enters the suction nozzle 38 and is collected in the recovery tank 36. Some air also enters the suction nozzle 38, and passes around the baffle 108 and into the suction fan chamber 89 via the fan inlet openings 106 (shown in FIG. 7A). The air then passes through and over the suction fan 84, passes out of the fan/turbine assembly 20 via the fan outlets 112, and is exhausted from the accessory tool 10 through the recovery tank air outlets 50.

[0027] Because the suction fan 84 and the turbine 86 are contained within separate chambers 89, 91, fluid from the wet portion of the pathway B is prevented from entering the vacuum cleaner 14 through the dry portion of the airflow pathway A. Furthermore, a seal (not shown) can be used at the bearing to prevent fluid from getting into the bearing 96, and potentially into the dry portion of the pathway A.

[0028] In a variation of the embodiment of the accessory tool of FIGS. 1-12, at least some of the main operating components of the accessory tool can be arranged along a generally non-vertical axis relative to the tool body, rather than a generally vertical axis. For example, at least some of the main operating components, such as the fan/turbine assembly 20, can be arranged along a generally horizontal axis. Benefits of arranging the operating components of the accessory tool along a non-vertical axis can include increased fluid capacity in the fluid dispensing assembly 22 and/or the recovery tank 36, and flexibility with regard to the overall aesthetic shape. Furthermore, the airflow pathway through the accessory tool can be reshaped to eliminate one or more 90 degree bends in either the "dry" or "wet" portion of the pathway, which can offer improved performance.

[0029] Referring to FIGS. 13-16, an alternative nozzle assembly 200 for the accessory tool according to the invention is illustrated. While not specifically shown, the nozzle assembly 200 can be substituted for the suction nozzle 38 on the recovery tank assembly 18. Furthermore, the nozzle assembly 200 can be employed on other cleaning tools and apparatus. The nozzle assembly 200 comprises a rear nozzle body 202, which may or may not be integrally formed with a recovery container, such as recovery tank 36, and a front nozzle body 204 removably mounted to the rear nozzle body 202 to form a fluid flow path 206 therebetween. In another embodiment (not illustrated), the front nozzle body 204 is not removable from the rear nozzle body 202. The fluid flow path 206 extends between a suction nozzle opening 208, which, in operation, is positioned adjacent the surface to be

cleaned, and an inlet 210 that fluid communicates with a recovery container, such as recovery tank 36.

[0030] A pair of agitator retainers 212, 214 is formed on either side of the rear nozzle body 202 and moveably mounts an agitator assembly 216. The first agitator retainer 212 comprises a closed end wall 218, while the second agitator retainer 214 comprises an end wall 220 having an opening 222 formed through which the agitator assembly 216 can be inserted during assembly of the nozzle assembly 200.

[0031] The agitator assembly 216 comprises a generally cylindrical agitator body 224 having a first end 226 that is mounted within the first agitator retainer 212 and a second end 228 that is mounted within the second agitator retainer 214. An agitator surface, such as bristles 230, is provided on the agitator body 224 between the first and second ends 226, 228 for scrubbing or otherwise agitating the surface to be cleaned. The bristles 230 can be sufficiently resilient so that they deform to allow the agitator assembly 216 to be inserted through the opening 222. A locking projection or detent 232 is formed on the agitator body 224 and is received in one of two spaced locking slots 234, 236 formed adjacent the opening 222 on the second agitator retainer 214. As illustrated, the first locking slot 234 is generally formed at the nine o'clock position with respect to the opening 222, and the second locking slot 236 is generally formed at the twelve o'clock position with respect to the opening 222, such that the locking slots 234, 236 are spaced roughly 90° apart. However, the locking slots 234, 236 can be positioned at many different orientations with respect to each other.

[0032] Referring to FIG. 17, when the locking projection 232 is received within the first locking slot 234, the nozzle assembly 200 is in a first use orientation in which the suction nozzle opening 208 is positioned adjacent the surface to be cleaned S and the agitator assembly 216 is positioned with the bristles 230 away from the suction to be cleaned S. The first use orientation corresponds to an extraction mode of the accessory tool, where the accessory tool can recover fluid and dirt from the surface to be cleaned S. Referring to FIG. 18, when the locking projection 232 is received within the second locking slot 236, the nozzle assembly 200 is in a second use orientation in which the suction nozzle opening 208 is moved away from the surface to be cleaned S and the agitator assembly 216 is positioned with the bristles 230 adjacent the surface to be cleaned S. The second use orientation corresponds to a scrubbing mode of the accessory tool, where the accessory tool can agitate the surface to be cleaned S after the application of cleaning solution. A knob 238 for moving the agitator assembly 216 between the first and second use orientations is provided on the second end 228 of the agitator body 224 and projects exteriorly of the second agitator retainer 214 to be easily accessible to the user for manual actuation.

[0033] To move the agitator assembly 216 from the first to the second use orientation, the agitator body 224 is rotated, preferably using the knob 238, in a clockwise

direction with respect to the orientation of FIG. 17 and 18 so that the locking projection 232 emerges from the first locking slot 234 and is recaptured in the second locking slot 236. This requires a roughly 90° rotation as illustrated. A similar method is used to move the agitator assembly 216 back to the first use orientation.

[0034] The rotatable agitator assembly 215 allows the extraction mode to be separated from the scrubbing mode. The position of the bristles 230 in scrubbing mode (Fig. 18) spaces the suction nozzle opening 208 from the surface to be cleaned to keep fluid from being extracted before it is agitated.

[0035] Referring to FIG. 19, an alternative recovery tank assembly 300 for the accessory tool 10' according to the invention is illustrated. The recovery tank assembly 300 can be substituted for the recovery tank assembly 18 on the accessory tool 10, and like elements of the accessory tool 10 are designated by the same reference numerals bearing a prime symbol ('). Furthermore, the recovery tank assembly 300 can be employed on other cleaning tools and apparatus. While illustrated slightly differently, components of the accessory tool 10' other than the recovery tank assembly 300 can be assumed to be the same as described above.

[0036] The recovery tank assembly 300 comprises a recovery tank 302 and a suction nozzle 304 in communication with the recovery tank 302 via a recovery tank inlet 306. The recovery tank 302 comprises a generally cylindrical peripheral wall 308 having a closed bottom 310, and forms a recovery chamber 312 in which recovered cleaning fluid and dirt passing through the suction nozzle 304 is received via the recovery tank inlet 306. The recovery tank 302 is removably mounted to a tank cap 314, which is fixedly attached to the fan/turbine assembly 20' and can be removed therefrom to empty the contents of the recovery chamber 312 after a cleaning operation is complete. Preferably, one or both of the recovery tank 302 and the suction nozzle 304 are translucent or transparent to allow the contents to be at least partially visible to the user.

[0037] Optionally, the recovery tank 302 further includes a support frame 316 that adds rigidity to the recovery tank 302 and can comprise multiple vertical pieces 318 extending along the peripheral wall 308 from the closed bottom 310 to the tank cap 314 that are joined by a circular piece 320 extending around the inside circumference of the peripheral wall 308.

[0038] The suction nozzle 304 comprises a one-piece nozzle body 322 integrally formed with the recovery tank 302. The nozzle body 322 is hollow to form a fluid flow path 324 extending between a suction nozzle opening 326, which, in operation, is positioned adjacent the surface to be cleaned, and the recovery tank inlet 306.

[0039] A hollow rotating column 328 configured for 360° rotation about an axis of rotation R is provided within the recovery chamber 312 and is coupled with a bearing plate 330 formed on the interior side of the closed bottom 310 of the recovery tank 302. The column 328 is divided

into an upper section 332 and a lower section 334 by a horizontal wall 336 formed in the hollow interior of the column 328. An air exit 338 is formed in the upper section 332 and fluidly communicates the recovery chamber 312 with a recovery tank outlet 340 formed in the tank cap 314 via an air flow path 342 defined by air exit 338 and the upper section 332. The recovery tank outlet 340 is in fluid communication with the fan/turbine assembly 20'. The lower section 334 comprises at least one opening 344 through the column 328 to allow water to enter the hollow interior of the lower section 334. As illustrated, four such openings 334 are provided, but only two of the openings 334 are visible in FIG. 19.

[0040] Referring additionally to FIGS. 21 and 22, the column 328 is configured to rotate so that the air exit 338 is above a level of fluid F in the recovery chamber 312 when the axis of rotation is non-vertical. In other words, the air exit 338 will have an upward orientation when the recovery tank assembly 300 is tilted from a typical position, shown in FIG. 21, used when cleaning a generally horizontal surface to be cleaned S_H to a position used when cleaning a non-horizontal surface to be cleaned. An example of such a position is shown in FIG. 22, where the surface to be cleaned S_V is generally vertical. The column 328 can be weighted to effect this rotation. As illustrated, the upper section 332 comprises a weight 346 that encircles the column 328, but that has a majority of its weight distributed on the opposite side of the column 328 as the air exit 338. As the recovery tank assembly 300 is tilted from the use position shown in FIG. 21, gravity forces the weight 346 downward to its lowest possible orientation, causing the column 328 to rotate and orient the air exit upward to its highest possible orientation. As shown in FIG. 22, the horizontal wall 336 prevents fluid from entering the air flow path 342 when the recovery tank 302 is tilted. This allows more fluid to be stored in the recovery chamber 312. While only two use orientations are illustrated, it can be appreciated that any number of different use orientations are possible.

[0041] The arrangement of the recovery tank assembly 300 allows the accessory tool 10' to be held and used in many different orientations without liquid inadvertently being ingested into the fan/turbine assembly 20', as well as maximizing the amount of fluid that can be contained in the recovery chamber 312. While not illustrated, the rotating air exit can be applied to other cleaning tools and apparatus, and it is contemplated that the rotating air exit 338 can be used in other diverse applications.

[0042] Referring to FIGS. 23-25, an alternative fan/turbine assembly 400 for the accessory tool 10" according to the invention is illustrated. The fan/turbine assembly 400 is substantially similar to the fan/turbine assembly 20, with some exceptions. The fan/turbine assembly 400 can be substituted for the fan/turbine assembly 20 on the accessory tool 10", and like elements of the accessory tool 10" are designated by the same reference numerals bearing a double prime symbol ("). Furthermore, the fan/turbine assembly 400 can be employed on other

cleaning tools and apparatus.

[0043] The suction fan 84" is not directly physically coupled with the turbine 86", but rather is magnetically coupled with the turbine 86" through the separation plate 92". The suction fan 84" comprises at least one magnet 402 on its lower surface 178" and the turbine 86" comprises at least one magnet 404 on its upper surface 158". Preferably, the suction fan 84" and the turbine 86" each comprise multiple magnets 402, 404 spaced from each other. As illustrated, four magnets 402, 404 spaced at 90° intervals are provided on the suction fan 84" and the turbine 86".

[0044] Accordingly, the separation plate 92" does not include a through opening, and the suction fan 84" and the turbine 86" are separately rotatably mounted within the suction fan chamber 89" and the turbine chamber 91". As illustrated, the separation plate 92" comprises opposing bearing seats 406, 408 on its upper and lower surfaces 144, 146, respectively. Each bearing seat 406, 408 receives a bearing 410, 412 which in turn mounts a turbine axle 414 and a fan axle 416, respectively. The turbine axle 414 is received by the axle opening 170" of the turbine 86" and the fan axle 416 is received by the axle opening 188" of the suction fan 84".

[0045] In operation, when the turbine 86" is exposed to a moving air stream, such as that created by the vacuum cleaner 14, the turbine 86" will rotate with the turbine axle 414. The circular movement of the turbine magnets 404 generates a magnetic field which causes the suction fan magnets 402 to move correspondingly, and, consequently the suction fan 84" to rotate about the suction fan axle 416. As the suction fan 84" rotates, a partial vacuum is created within the recovery tank 36" and suction nozzle 38" and suction is created at the suction nozzle opening 58".

[0046] Since the suction fan 84" and the turbine 86" have separate bearings and axles, maintenance and replacement of parts can be performed separately. Furthermore, since the separation plate 92" does not have a through opening, the need for an expensive seal at the bearing 412 is negated, and the separation of the dry and wet portions of the airflow pathway is more clearly defined.

[0047] The concept of a magnetically-coupled suction/drive system can be applied to other cleaning tools and apparatus. For example, the concept can be applied to a vacuum cleaning appliance having a motor-driven suction fan. A suction motor having a motor shaft is retained within a first enclosure and the suction fan is retained within a second enclosure that is separate from the first enclosure. The suction fan is rotatably mounted within the second enclosure and is magnetically coupled with the motor shaft.

[0048] Referring to FIG. 26, a sectional view of an accessory tool 10" according to another embodiment of the invention is shown, and comprises an alternate fluid dispensing assembly 500. The fluid dispensing assembly 500 can be substituted for the fluid dispensing assembly

22 on the accessory tool 10, and like elements of the accessory tool 10 are designated by the same reference numerals bearing a triple prime symbol ("). Furthermore, the fluid dispensing assembly 500 can be employed on other cleaning tools and apparatus.

[0049] The fluid dispensing assembly 500 comprises a removable fluid reservoir 502 defining a fluid chamber 504 in which cleaning fluid is stored before it is distributed onto the surface to be cleaned. The cleaning fluid can comprise any suitable cleaning fluid, including, but not limited to, water, concentrated detergent, diluted detergent, and the like. The fluid reservoir 502 includes a removable cap 506 that is removed to fill the fluid chamber 504 with cleaning fluid. Optionally, the fluid reservoir 502 can be a single-use container that is discarded when empty and replaced with a new fluid reservoir 502.

[0050] The fluid dispensing assembly 500 further comprises a turbine-driven fluid pump 508 for dispensing cleaning fluid from the fluid reservoir 502. The fluid pump 508 can comprise any common fluid pump suitable for being driven by the turbine 86". As illustrated, the fluid pump 508 includes a pump housing 510 formed on the tool body 16" which houses a pump fan 512 rotatably coupled with the turbine 86" by an axle 514. The axle 514 also couples the suction fan 84" with the turbine 86", as previously described for the first embodiment of the accessory tool. A seal 532 is provided about the axle 514 to prevent fluid from leaking out of the fluid pump 508 and into the working air conduit 34". While only one turbine 86" is illustrated, the accessory tool 10" can alternatively be provided with separate turbines for the suction fan 84" and the fluid pump 508.

[0051] The pump housing 510 defines a pump chamber 516 in which cleaning fluid from the fluid reservoir 502 can be received, in addition to the pump fan 512. The pump housing 510 comprises an inlet 518 to the pump chamber 516 that is in communication with the fluid reservoir 502 when it is received in the tool body 16", and an outlet from the pump chamber 516 that is in communication with a fluid distributor. The fluid reservoir 502 preferably comprises a common dry disconnect coupling (not shown) that is in communication with the inlet 518 when the fluid reservoir 502 is seated on the tool body 16", so that cleaning fluid will flow from the fluid reservoir 502 by gravity feed.

[0052] The outlet of the pump housing 510 preferably comprises a fluid flow controller 520, such as a solenoid valve or a mechanical valve, that allows pressurized fluid to flow from the pump chamber 516 to a fluid distributor 522 upon actuation of the fluid flow controller 520, which can be effected using an electrical or mechanical coupling between the fluid flow controller 520 and a user-accessible actuator 524. The user-accessible actuator 524 is preferably provided on the tool body 16" near the hose connector 30", which provides a convenient place for the user to grip the accessory tool 10" while being able to selectively press the actuator 524 using the thumb or finger of the gripping hand. The fluid distributor 522

comprises a fluid conduit 526 extending along the suction nozzle 38" that defining a fluid flow path 528 between the fluid flow controller 520 and a spray nozzle 530 positioned to spray fluid onto the surface to be cleaned, forwardly of the suction nozzle 38".

[0053] In operation, when the turbine 86" is exposed to a moving air stream, such as that created by the vacuum cleaner 14, the axle 514 rotates with the turbine. The rotation of the axle 514 causes the pump fan 512. The suction fan 86" also rotates, as previously described. As the pump fan 512 rotates, the cleaning fluid in the pump chamber 516 is pressurized. Pressing the actuator 524 opens the fluid flow controller 520, allowing pressurized cleaning fluid to flow from the pump chamber 516, through the fluid flow path 528, and onto the surface to be cleaned, via the spray nozzle 530.

[0054] The accessory tool according to any of the above embodiments can expand the cleaning capability of a conventional dry floor surface cleaning appliance by allowing the dry vacuum cleaner to be used to distribute cleaning fluid as well as recover fluid. The accessory tool can also be used with a wet extraction cleaning appliance for both distributing and recovering fluid. The accessory tool is designed such that the water recovery path is separated and isolated from the conventional working air path of the vacuum cleaning appliance to prevent water laden working air from entering the vacuum cleaning appliance. Other embodiments of the accessory tool not specifically shown herein are possible. For example, the accessory tool can include an agitating surface, such as a scrubbing pad or a brush. The agitating surface can further be configured for movement, and can be coupled with the turbine to provide motive power thereto.

[0055] Referring now to FIG. 27, a perspective view of another embodiment of an accessory tool 610 attached to a vacuum cleaner in the form of an extraction cleaner 612 is shown. The embodiment illustrated may be similar in some aspects to the earlier described embodiments and part numbers begin with the 600 series. It may be understood that while like parts may not include like numerals the descriptions of the like parts of the earlier embodiments apply to the embodiment, unless otherwise noted.

[0056] A representative example of an extraction cleaner can be found in U.S. Pat. No. 6,131,237, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. As illustrated herein, the extraction cleaner 612 is an upright extraction cleaner having a housing 614 that includes an upright handle assembly 616 that is pivotally connected to a base assembly 618 for directing the base assembly 618 across the surface to be cleaned.

[0057] The extraction cleaner 612 may include a fluid delivery system for storing and delivering a cleaning fluid to the surface to be cleaned and a fluid recovery system or a suction system for extracting and storing the dispensed cleaning fluid and debris from the surface to be cleaned. The components of the fluid delivery system and the fluid recovery system can be supported by either

or both the base assembly 618 and the handle assembly 616. In the illustrated embodiment, the components are primarily supported by the base assembly 618.

[0058] The fluid delivery system can include a fluid supply tank 620 for storing a supply of cleaning fluid, an auxiliary fluid distributor 622 for depositing a cleaning fluid onto the cleaning surface, and a fluid conduit (not shown) between the fluid supply tank 620 and the auxiliary fluid distributor 622. A pump 608 can be mounted to the housing 614 or accessory tool 610 for conveying cleaning fluid from the fluid supply tank 620, through the fluid conduit and auxiliary fluid distributor 622. The fluid pump 608 can comprise any fluid pump suitable for conveying liquid such as a solenoid pump, centrifugal pump, manual piston pump or turbine-driven fluid pump 508 previously described, for example. The fluid supply tank 620 and the auxiliary fluid distributor 622 may be mounted to the base assembly 618 as illustrated. Various combinations of optional components can be incorporated into the fluid delivery system such as a heater or fluid control and mixing valves as is commonly known in the art.

[0059] The fluid recovery system can include an extraction path in the form of an extraction nozzle 624 extending towards a surface to be cleaned, a recovery tank 626 and a working air conduit (not shown) associated with the base assembly 618 and in fluid communication with the extraction nozzle 624 and the recovery tank 626. The fluid recovery system can also comprise a suction source such as a motor/fan assembly 628 in fluid communication with the recovery tank 626 and configured to generate a working airflow to draw liquid and entrained debris through the extraction nozzle 624 and into the recovery tank 626.

[0060] A vacuum or suction hose 630 can also be operably coupled to the extraction cleaner 612 and can be fluidly coupled to the motor/fan assembly 628. The accessory tool 610 can be removably mounted to the suction hose 630 such that the accessory tool 610 can be operably coupled to the extraction cleaner 612. More specifically, the accessory tool 610 includes a housing assembly 640 having a suction outlet opening 642 adapted to be connected to the suction hose 630 such that it can be in fluid communication with the motor/fan assembly 628. A suction nozzle 644 can be included in the housing assembly 640 and can be fluidly coupled to the suction outlet opening 642.

[0061] As more easily seen in FIG. 28, in the illustrated example the suction nozzle 644 is at one end of the housing assembly 640 and the suction outlet opening 642 is at the opposing end. When assembled, the suction hose 630 can fluidly couple the suction nozzle 644 of the accessory tool 610 to the motor/fan assembly 628 to establish a suction flow path from the suction nozzle 644 of the accessory tool 610 through the suction hose 630, recovery tank 626 and working air conduit associated with the base 618, to the motor/fan assembly 628. An auxiliary recovery tank 650 can be coupled to the housing assembly 640. Referring to Fig. 29, the accessory tool

may also include a fluid dispensing assembly 660, an agitator assembly 656, and a backflow preventer 670.

[0062] As illustrated, the auxiliary recovery tank 650 can have a retaining mechanism 652, which can interface with a portion of the housing assembly 640 and can be used to removably mount the auxiliary recovery tank 650 to the housing assembly 640. Any suitable retaining mechanism can be used and bayonet tabs have been illustrated for exemplary purposes only. More specifically, the tabs 653 are configured to engage corresponding slots 655 and grooves 657 in the housing assembly 640. The tabs 653 can be inserted into the slots 655 and then rotated within in the grooves 657 to secure the tank 650 to the housing assembly 640. A detent 661 on the outer surface of the auxiliary recovery tank 650 can create an interference fit with a corresponding feature (not shown) on the housing assembly 640 for securing the auxiliary recovery tank 650 to the housing assembly 640. A user can overcome the interference fit exerting force to rotate the recovery tank 650 relative to the housing assembly 640 and thus remove the recovery tank 650 from the housing assembly 640 to empty the contents located in the auxiliary recovery tank 650 after a cleaning operation is complete.

[0063] The auxiliary recovery tank 650 can be fluidly coupled to the suction flow path and can be in fluid communication with the suction nozzle 644 to store liquid drawn into the suction nozzle 644. The auxiliary recovery tank 650 like the earlier embodiments includes a generally cylindrical peripheral wall having a closed bottom and forms a recovery chamber in which recovered cleaning fluid and dirt passing through the suction nozzle 644 can be received and retained. One or both of the auxiliary recovery tank 650 and the suction nozzle 644 can be translucent or transparent to allow the contents to be at least partially visible to the user.

[0064] The housing assembly 640 can include a cover 648 and an air/liquid separator 654 for separating air from liquid drawn into the auxiliary recovery tank 650 through the suction nozzle 644. The air/liquid separator 654 can be secured to either of the housing assembly 640 or auxiliary recovery tank 650. Alternatively, the air/liquid separator can be formed integrally with the housing assembly 640 or the auxiliary recovery tank 650. As shown in Figures, the air/liquid separator 654 has been illustrated as a separate component that is fastened to the housing assembly 640 for exemplary purposes only.

[0065] The fluid dispensing assembly 660 can distribute cleaning fluid onto a surface to be cleaned and can include a fluid delivery tube 662, a spray nozzle 664, and a fluid inlet 668, which can be fluidly coupled to a cleaning fluid source. It is contemplated that the cleaning fluid source can be a separate fluid cleaning source such as an auxiliary reservoir (not shown) or that the fluid inlet 668 can be fluidly coupled to the fluid supply tank 620. A trigger assembly (not shown) can be configured to selectively actuate a pump or a valve for selectively distributing cleaning fluid onto the surface to be cleaned. The

trigger assembly can be operably coupled between the fluid inlet 668 and the cleaning fluid source and can be operated by a user to distribute cleaning fluid from the spray nozzle 664 onto the surface to be cleaned. The user can repeatedly depress the trigger or continuously depress the trigger to distribute cleaning fluid until a desired amount of cleaning fluid has been applied onto the surface to be cleaned. It is understood that in some cleaning operations, the user can desire to only recover fluid from the surface to be cleaned, and in this case, cleaning fluid is not dispensed from the fluid dispensing assembly 660.

[0066] The agitator assembly 656 can be mounted in the accessory tool 619 and can be associated with the suction nozzle 644. The agitator assembly 656 can include an agitator body 659 with an agitator surface, such as bristles 658, provided on the agitator body 659 for scrubbing or otherwise agitating the surface to be cleaned.

[0067] A backflow preventer 670 can be located in the suction flow path upstream from the auxiliary recovery tank 650 to prevent liquid leakage therefrom. With reference to FIG. 30 it can be seen that a backflow preventer 670 can be located in the portion 672 of the suction flow path between the suction nozzle 644 and the auxiliary recovery tank 650. The backflow preventer 670 can be a valve or any other suitable mechanism for preventing the escape of fluid from the auxiliary recovery tank 650 back into the suction nozzle 644. In the illustrated example, the backflow preventer 670 is a duckbill valve backflow preventer 670.

[0068] The suction flow path can include a tortuous path portion 680 between the auxiliary recovery tank 650 and the suction outlet opening 642 through which the air travels after it has been separated from the liquid in the auxiliary recovery tank 650. The tortuous path portion 680 can be defined between corresponding surfaces of the auxiliary recovery tank 650, the air/liquid separator 654 and the housing assembly 640 to form an air-passable barrier between the recovery tank 650 and the suction outlet opening 642.

[0069] According to the present invention, a liquid flow preventer 682 is included in the accessory tool 610 between the auxiliary recovery tank 650 and the suction outlet opening 642. The liquid flow preventer 682 can be any suitable mechanism to prevent the flow of liquid to the suction outlet opening 642 and has been schematically illustrated as a valve. The valve can be an umbrella valve or a duckbill valve.

[0070] The result will be that separated air can travel from the auxiliary recovery tank 650 to the suction outlet opening 642 when suction is applied at the suction outlet opening 642. The liquid flow preventer 682 will open upon exposure to a working airflow to permit the working airflow to pass around it. When the suction source is de-energized or when the accessory tool 610 is detached from the suction hose 630, the liquid flow preventer 682 automatically closes and prevents liquid leakage through the

suction outlet opening 642. Likewise, the tortuous flow path portion 680 permits airflow to pass therethrough while simultaneously preventing liquid from flowing to the suction outlet opening 642.

[0071] Optionally, a shut-off float can be incorporated within the auxiliary recovery tank 650 to prevent liquid leakage through the tortuous path portion 680 when suction is applied at the outlet opening 642. For example, a commonly known shut-off float assembly with a buoyant shut-off member can be adapted to block the working airflow path between the auxiliary recovery tank 650 and suction outlet opening 642 when the recovered liquid in the tank reaches a predetermined level, or when the tank and liquid therein are oriented in a predetermined position.

[0072] In operation, when the motor/fan assembly 628 of the extraction cleaner 612 is activated a suction flow path is established from the suction nozzle 644, through the auxiliary recovery tank 650, and to the suction outlet opening 642 when suction is applied at the suction outlet opening 642. Fluid and dirt drawn in through the suction nozzle 644 are deposited and retained in the auxiliary recovery tank 650 and separated air can travel from the auxiliary recovery tank 650 to the suction outlet opening 642.

[0073] The arrangement of the backflow preventer 670 prevents fluid from leaking out of the auxiliary recovery tank 650 and exiting the accessory tool 610 through the suction nozzle 644. The backflow preventer 670 opens when the accessory tool 610 is connected to the suction hose 630 and exposed to a working airflow and allows air and liquid to pass freely there through in the direction from the suction nozzle 644 into the auxiliary recovery tank 650. The working airflow is schematically illustrated as arrows 686. However, the backflow preventer 670 closes and blocks the flow of air and liquid in the reverse direction, from the auxiliary recovery tank 650 through the suction nozzle 644. Moreover, when the suction source is de-energized or when the accessory tool 610 is detached from the suction hose 630 and no longer exposed to a working airflow, the backflow preventer 670 automatically closes or seals to prevent liquid leakage therethrough. Accordingly, the backflow preventer 670 allows a user to tilt the accessory tool 610 in many different orientations during use and storage without liquid inadvertently leaking out of the accessory tool 610 through the suction nozzle 644.

[0074] Further, the tortuous path portion 680 and optional liquid flow preventer 682 can prevent liquid from leaking out of the auxiliary recovery tank 650 and exiting the accessory tool 610 through the suction outlet opening 642. Accordingly, the accessory tool 610 can be tilted in many different orientations during use and storage without liquid inadvertently being leaked out of the tool through the suction outlet opening 642. Moreover, the tortuous path portion 680 prevents soiled liquid in the auxiliary recovery tank 650 from being transported through the suction hose 630, recovery tank 626 and

working air conduit and being ingested into the motor/fan assembly 628.

[0075] While the above embodiment of the invention is described in the context of the extraction cleaner 612, it is within the scope of the invention for any suitable type of extraction device to be used. For example, the accessory tool 610 can be used with a portable extraction cleaner. It will also be understood that the accessory tool 610 can be used with the dry vacuum cleaners described above and that the previously described accessory tools can be used with the extraction cleaner 612.

[0076] While the invention has been specifically described in connection with certain specific embodiments thereof, it is to be understood that this is by way of illustration and not of limitation, and the scope of the appended claims should be construed as broadly as the prior art will permit. For example, while the figures describe a device with the main operating components arranged along a generally vertical axis relative to the tool body, it is understood that the components can be arranged along a generally horizontal axis or at any angle therebetween.

Claims

1. An accessory tool (610) for use in connection with a vacuum cleaner with a suction source, comprising:

a housing assembly (640) having a suction outlet opening (642) adapted to be connected to a vacuum hose in fluid communication with the suction source;

a suction nozzle (644) fluidly coupled to the suction outlet opening (642);

an auxiliary recovery tank (650) in fluid communication with the suction nozzle (644) to collect liquid drawn in through the suction nozzle (644); a backflow preventer (670) located within a suction flow path between the suction nozzle (644) and the auxiliary recovery tank (650), wherein the backflow preventer (670) is configured to prevent leakage of fluid from the auxiliary recovery tank (650) back into the suction nozzle (644); and

a liquid flow preventer (682) between the auxiliary recovery tank (650) and the suction outlet opening (642), wherein the liquid flow preventer (682) opens upon exposure to a working airflow and closes when suction is not applied to block liquid from flowing to the suction outlet opening (642).

2. The accessory tool (610) of claim 1 wherein the backflow preventer (670) is a valve.

3. The accessory tool (610) of claim 2 wherein the valve is a duckbill valve.

4. The accessory tool (610) of claim 1 wherein the auxiliary recovery tank (650) is coupled to the housing assembly (640).

5. The accessory tool (610) of claim 4 wherein the auxiliary recovery tank (650) is removably mounted to the housing assembly (640).

6. The accessory tool (610) of claim 1, further comprising an air/liquid separator (654) associated with the auxiliary recovery tank (650) for separating air from liquid drawn into the auxiliary recovery tank (650) through the suction nozzle (644).

7. The accessory tool (610) of claim 6, wherein separated air travels from the auxiliary recovery tank (650) to the suction outlet opening (642) around the liquid flow preventer (682) when suction is applied at the suction outlet opening (642).

8. The accessory tool (610) of claim 7 wherein the liquid flow preventer (682) comprises a valve.

9. The accessory tool (610) of claim 8 wherein the valve is an umbrella valve.

10. The accessory tool (610) of claim 9, wherein the suction flow path further comprises a tortuous path (680) between the auxiliary recovery tank (650) and the suction outlet opening (642) through which the separated air travels.

11. The accessory tool (610) of claim 1, further comprising a fluid dispensing assembly (660) for distributing cleaning fluid onto a surface to be cleaned.

12. The accessory tool (610) of claim 11 wherein the fluid dispensing assembly (660) comprises a fluid delivery tube (662) and a spray nozzle (664) fluidly coupled to a cleaning fluid source.

13. The accessory tool (610) of claim 11 wherein the fluid dispensing assembly (660) further comprises a pump (608).

14. The accessory tool (610) of claim 1 wherein the backflow preventer (670) opens upon exposure to a working airflow and closes when suction is not applied.

Patentansprüche

1. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) zur Verwendung in Verbindung mit einem Staubsauger mit einer Saugquelle, umfassend:

eine Gehäuseanordnung (640) mit einer Saugauslassöffnung (642), die dazu geeignet ist, an

- einen Vakuumschlauch in Fluidverbindung mit der Saugquelle angeschlossen zu werden; eine Saugdüse (644), die fluidmäßig mit der Saugauslassöffnung (642) gekoppelt ist; einen Hilfsrückgewinnungstank (650) in Fluidverbindung mit der Saugdüse (644), um durch die Saugdüse (644) angesaugte Flüssigkeit zu sammeln; einen Rückflussverhinderer (670), der in einem Saugfließpfad zwischen der Saugdüse (644) und dem Hilfsrückgewinnungstank (650) angeordnet ist, wobei der Rückflussverhinderer (670) so konfiguriert ist, dass er einen Austritt von Fluid aus dem Hilfsrückgewinnungstank (650) zurück in die Saugdüse (644) verhindert; und einen Flüssigkeitsflussverhinderer (682) zwischen dem Hilfsrückgewinnungstank (650) und der Saugauslassöffnung (642), wobei sich der Flüssigkeit-sflussverhinderer (682) öffnet, wenn er einem Arbeitsluftstrom ausgesetzt wird, und sich schließt, wenn keine Saugwirkung angelegt wird, um Flüssigkeit daran zu hindern, zur Saugauslassöffnung (642) zu fließen.
2. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) nach Anspruch 1, wobei der Rückflussverhinderer (670) ein Ventil ist.
 3. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) nach Anspruch 2, wobei das Ventil ein Entenschnabelventil ist.
 4. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) nach Anspruch 1, wobei der Hilfsrückgewinnungstank (650) mit der Gehäuseanordnung (640) gekoppelt ist.
 5. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) nach Anspruch 4, wobei der Hilfsrückgewinnungstank (650) lösbar an der Gehäuseanordnung (640) befestigt ist.
 6. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) nach Anspruch 1, ferner umfassend einen Luft/Flüssigkeitsabscheider (654), der mit dem Hilfsrückgewinnungstank (650) verbunden ist, um Luft aus der Flüssigkeit abzuscheiden, die durch die Saugdüse (644) in den Hilfsrückgewinnungstank (650) gesaugt wurde.
 7. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) nach Anspruch 6, wobei abgeschiedene Luft von dem Hilfsrückgewinnungstank (650) zu der Saugauslassöffnung (642) um den Flüssigkeitsflussverhinderer (682) herum strömt, wenn eine Saugwirkung an der Saugauslassöffnung (642) angelegt wird.
 8. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) nach Anspruch 7, wobei der Flüssigkeitsflussverhinderer (682) ein Ventil umfasst.
 9. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) nach Anspruch 8, wobei das Ventil ein Schirmventil ist.
 10. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) nach Anspruch 9, wobei der Saugfließpfad ferner einen gewundenen Pfad (680) zwischen dem Hilfsrückgewinnungstank (650) und der Saugauslassöffnung (642) umfasst, durch den die abgeschiedene Luft strömt.
 11. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) nach Anspruch 1, ferner umfassend eine Fluidabgabeanordnung (660) zum Verteilen von Reinigungsfluid auf eine zu reinigende Oberfläche.
 12. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) nach Anspruch 11, wobei die Fluidabgabeanordnung (660) einen Fluidabgabeschlauch (662) und eine Sprühdüse (664) umfasst, die fluidmäßig mit einer Reinigungsfluidquelle gekoppelt ist.
 13. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) nach Anspruch 11, wobei die Fluidabgabeanordnung (660) ferner eine Pumpe (608) umfasst.
 14. Zubehörwerkzeug (610) nach Anspruch 1, wobei sich der Rückflussverhinderer (670) öffnet, wenn er einem Arbeitsluftstrom ausgesetzt wird, und sich schließt, wenn keine Saugwirkung angelegt wird.

Revendications

1. Outil accessoire (610) destiné à être utilisé en liaison avec un aspirateur doté d'une source d'aspiration, comportant :
 - un ensemble boîtier (640) doté d'une ouverture (642) de sortie d'aspiration prévue pour être raccordée à un tuyau flexible d'aspirateur en communication fluide avec la source d'aspiration ;
 - une buse (644) d'aspiration couplée fluidiquement à l'ouverture (642) de sortie d'aspiration ;
 - un réservoir auxiliaire (650) de récupération en communication fluide avec la buse (644) d'aspiration pour recueillir du liquide aspiré à travers la buse (644) d'aspiration ;
 - un dispositif anti-reflux (670) situé à l'intérieur d'un parcours d'écoulement d'aspiration entre la buse (644) d'aspiration et le réservoir auxiliaire (650) de récupération, le dispositif anti-reflux (670) étant configuré pour empêcher des fuites de fluide retournant dans la buse (644) d'aspiration à partir du réservoir auxiliaire (650) de récupération ; et
 - un dispositif anti-écoulement (682) de liquide entre le réservoir auxiliaire (650) de récupération et l'ouverture (642) de sortie d'aspiration, le dispositif anti-écoulement (682) de liquide s'ouvrant en cas d'exposition à un écoulement d'air de travail et se fermant lorsqu'aucune as-

piration n'est appliquée pour empêcher que du liquide s'écoule vers l'ouverture (642) de sortie d'aspiration.

2. Outil accessoire (610) selon la revendication 1, le dispositif anti-reflux (670) étant une soupape. 5
3. Outil accessoire (610) selon la revendication 2, la soupape étant une soupape en bec de canard. 10
4. Outil accessoire (610) selon la revendication 1, le réservoir auxiliaire (650) de récupération étant couplé à l'ensemble boîtier (640). 15
5. Outil accessoire (610) selon la revendication 4, le réservoir auxiliaire (650) de récupération étant monté de façon amovible sur l'ensemble boîtier (640). 20
6. Outil accessoire (610) selon la revendication 1, comportant en outre un séparateur air/liquide (654) associé au réservoir auxiliaire (650) de récupération pour séparer de l'air d'un liquide aspiré dans le réservoir auxiliaire (650) de récupération à travers la buse (644) d'aspiration. 25
7. Outil accessoire (610) selon la revendication 6, l'air séparé passant du réservoir auxiliaire (650) de récupération à l'ouverture (642) de sortie d'aspiration autour du dispositif anti-écoulement (682) de liquide lorsqu'une aspiration est appliquée au niveau de l'ouverture (642) de sortie d'aspiration. 30
8. Outil accessoire (610) selon la revendication 7, le dispositif anti-écoulement (682) de liquide comportant une soupape. 35
9. Outil accessoire (610) selon la revendication 8, la soupape étant un clapet parapluie.
10. Outil accessoire (610) selon la revendication 9, le parcours d'écoulement d'aspiration comportant en outre un parcours tortueux (680) entre le réservoir auxiliaire (650) de récupération et l'ouverture (642) de sortie d'aspiration à travers lequel circule l'air séparé. 40 45
11. Outil accessoire (610) selon la revendication 1, comportant en outre un ensemble distributeur (660) de fluide servant à distribuer un fluide de nettoyage sur une surface à nettoyer. 50
12. Outil accessoire (610) selon la revendication 11, l'ensemble distributeur (660) de fluide comportant un tube (662) d'amenée de fluide et une buse (664) de pulvérisation couplés fluidiquement à une source de fluide de nettoyage. 55
13. Outil accessoire (610) selon la revendication 11, l'en-

semble distributeur (660) de fluide comportant en outre une pompe (608).

14. Outil accessoire (610) selon la revendication 1, le dispositif anti-reflux (670) s'ouvrant lorsqu'il est exposé à un écoulement d'air de travail et se fermant lorsqu'aucune aspiration n'est appliquée.

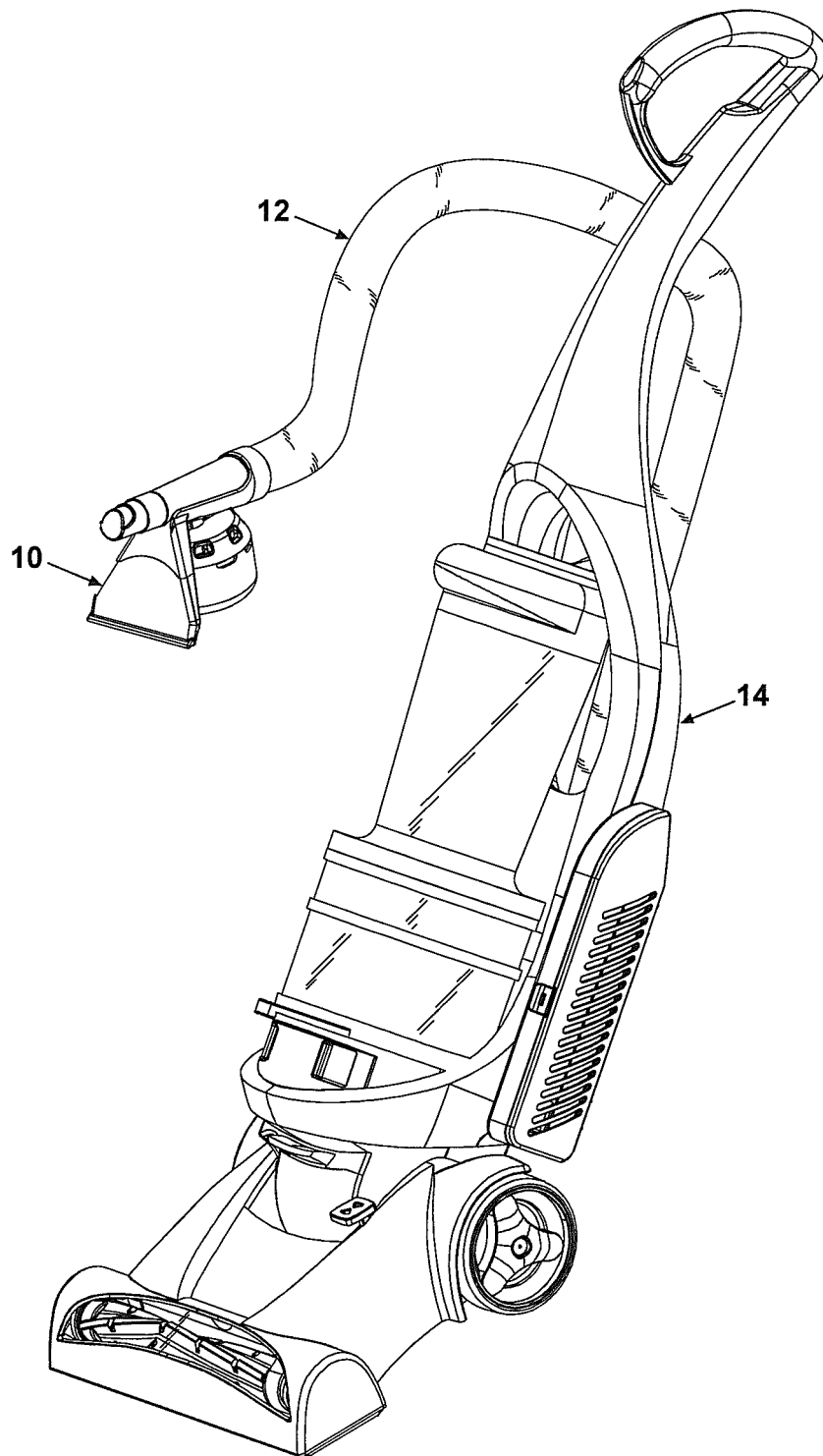


Fig. 1

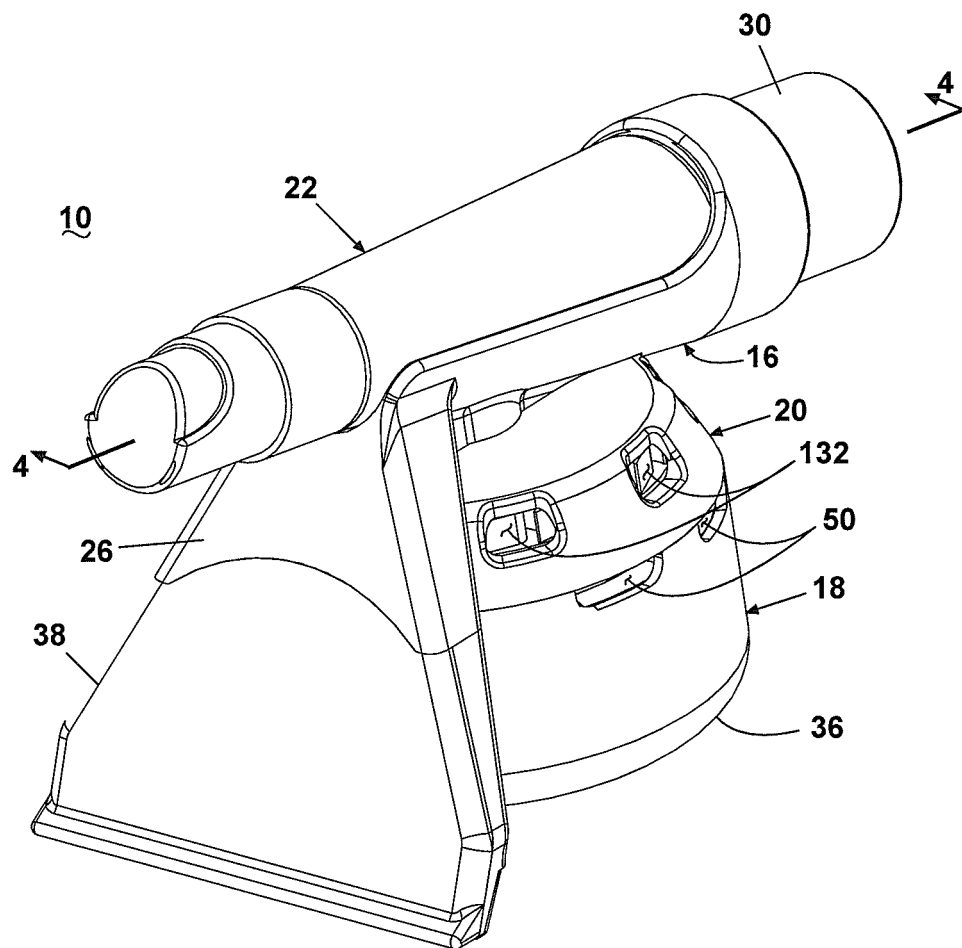


Fig. 2

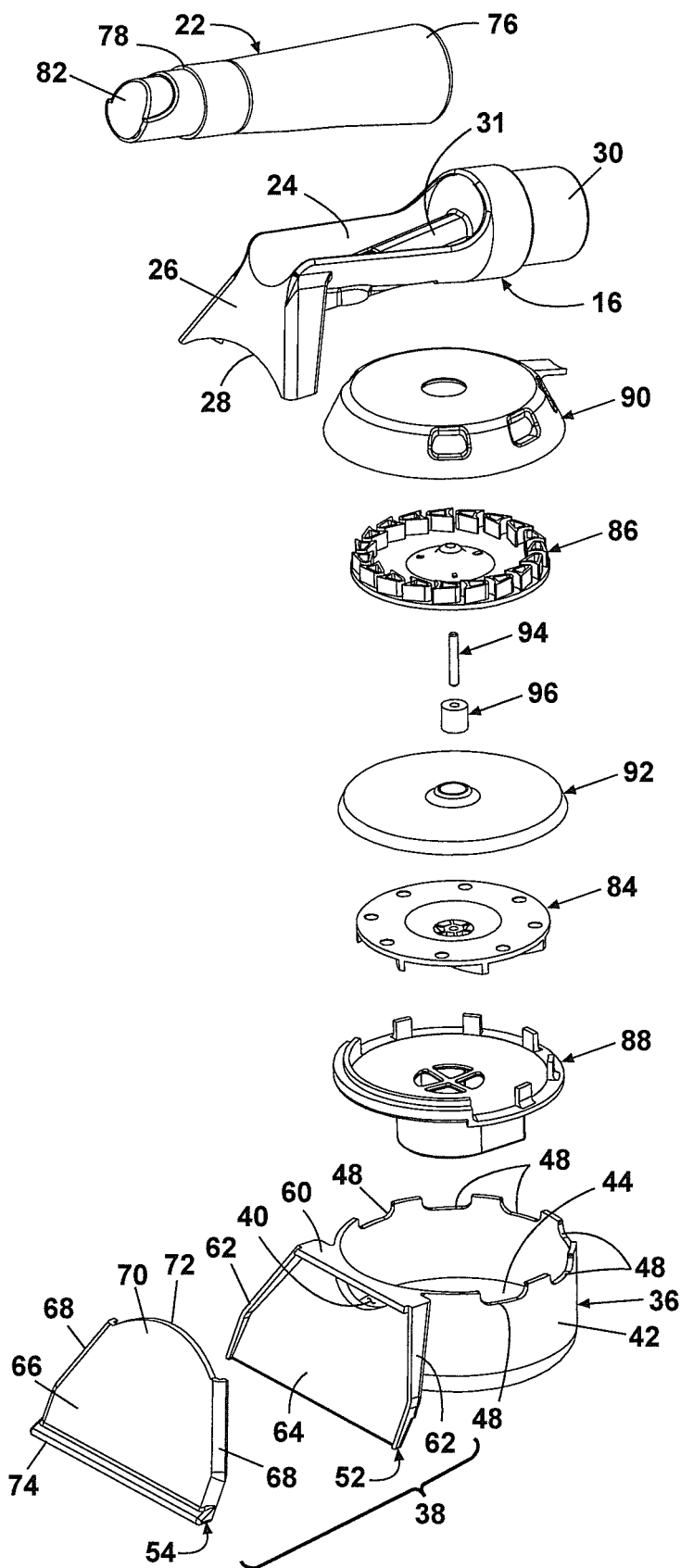


Fig. 3

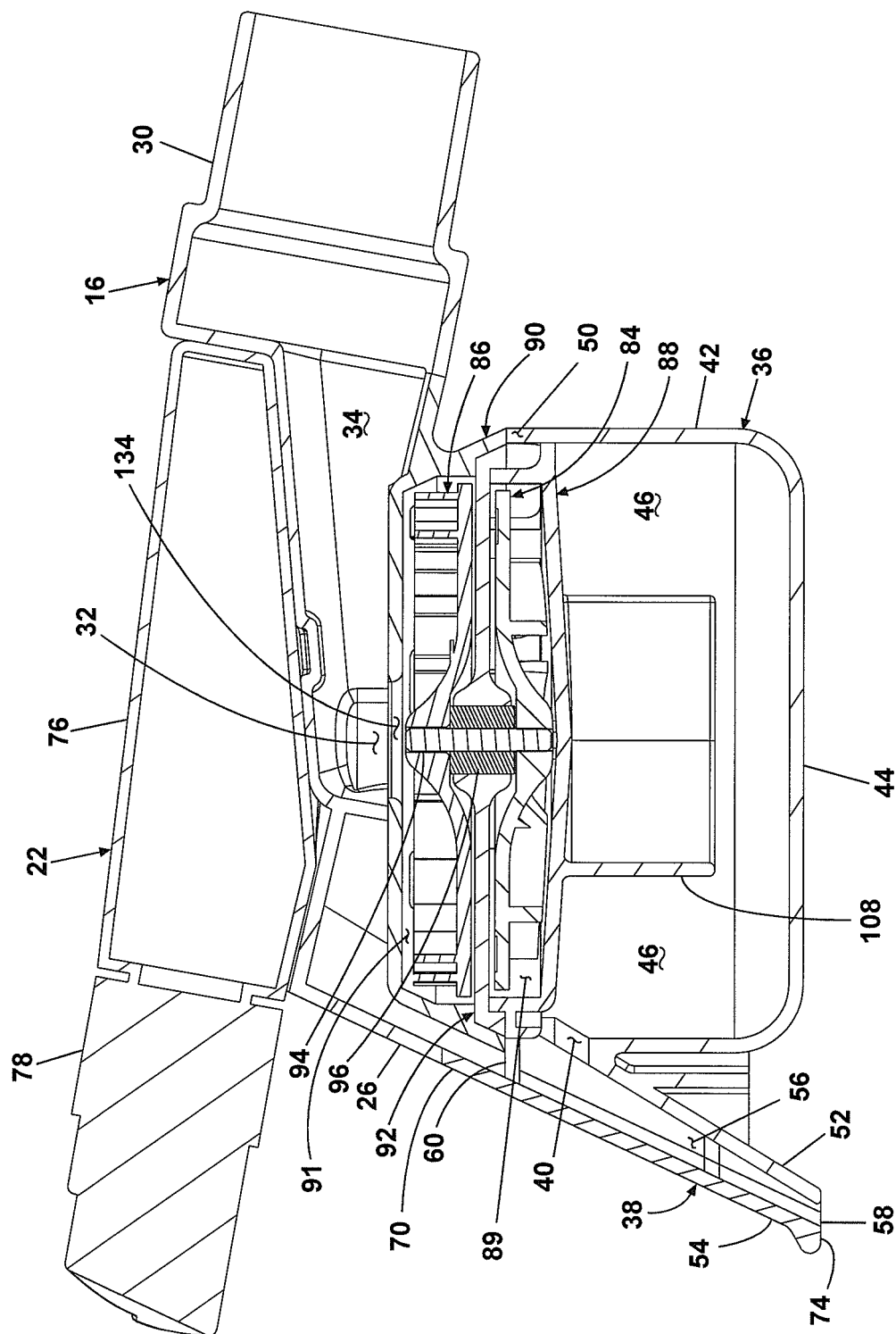


Fig. 4

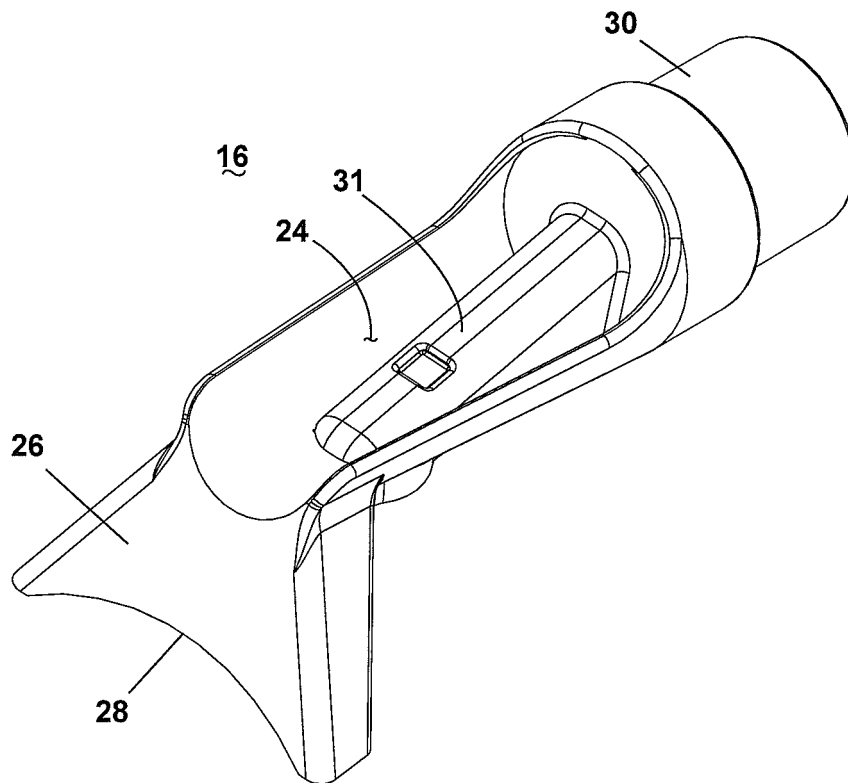


Fig. 5A

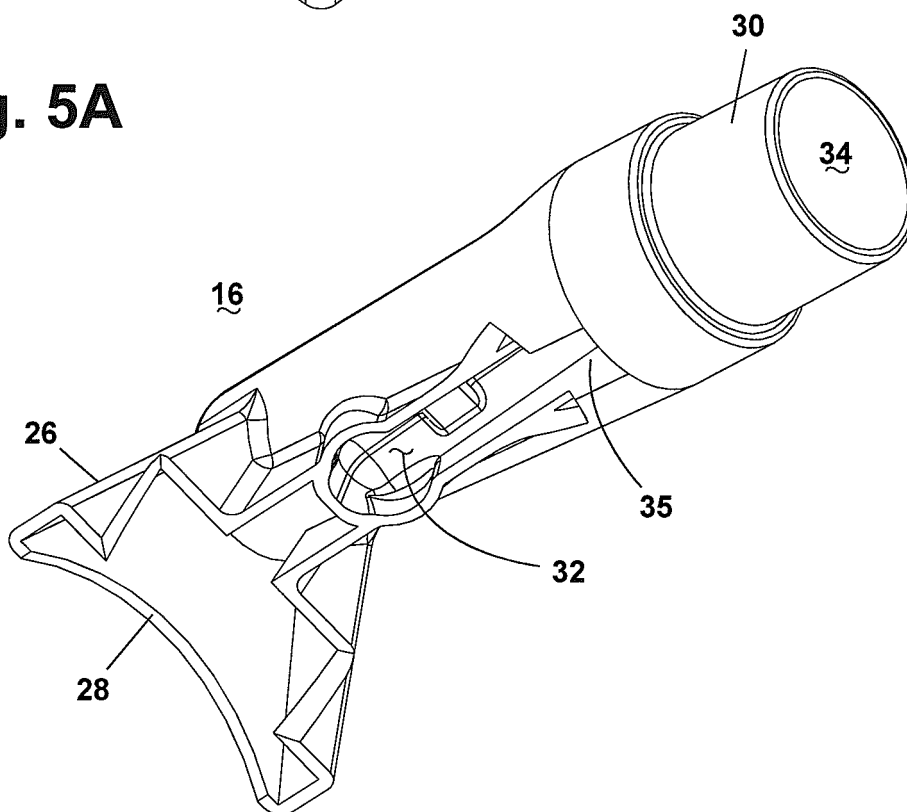


Fig. 5B

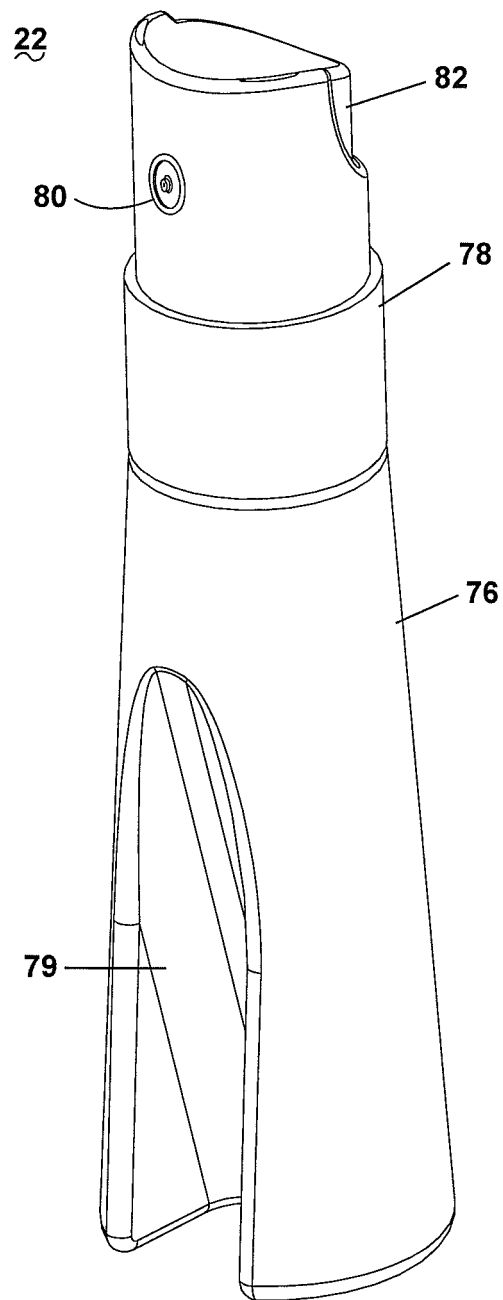
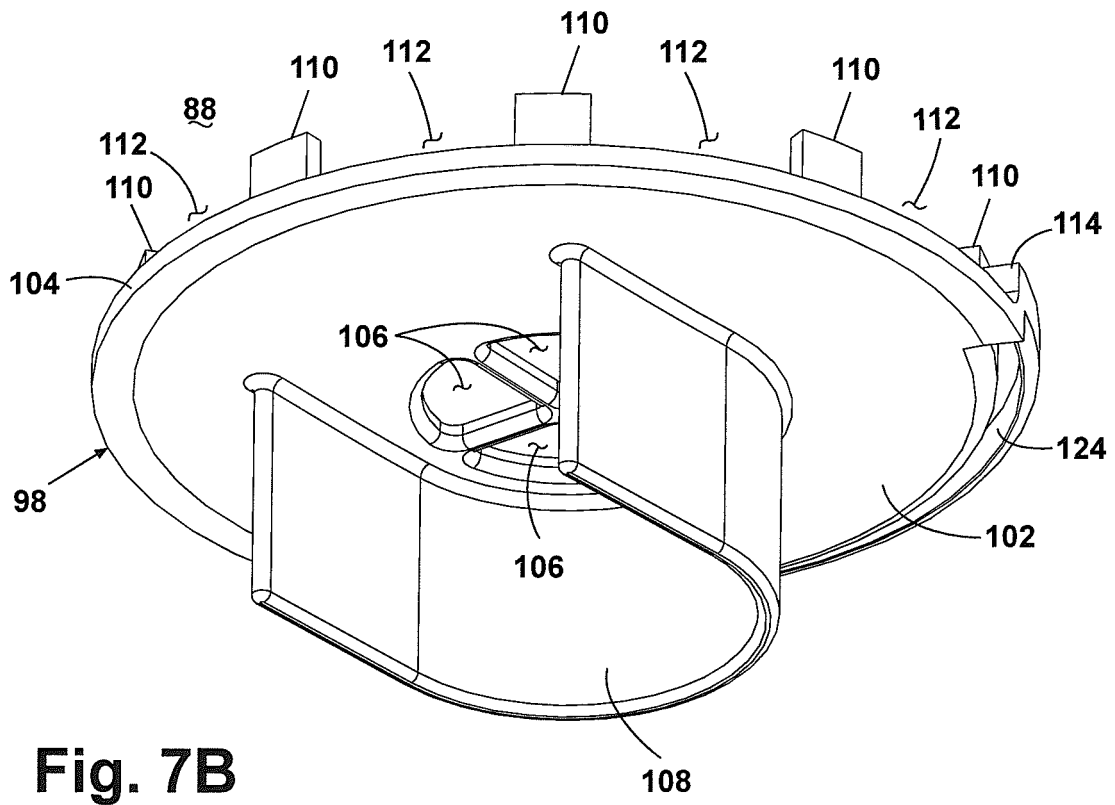
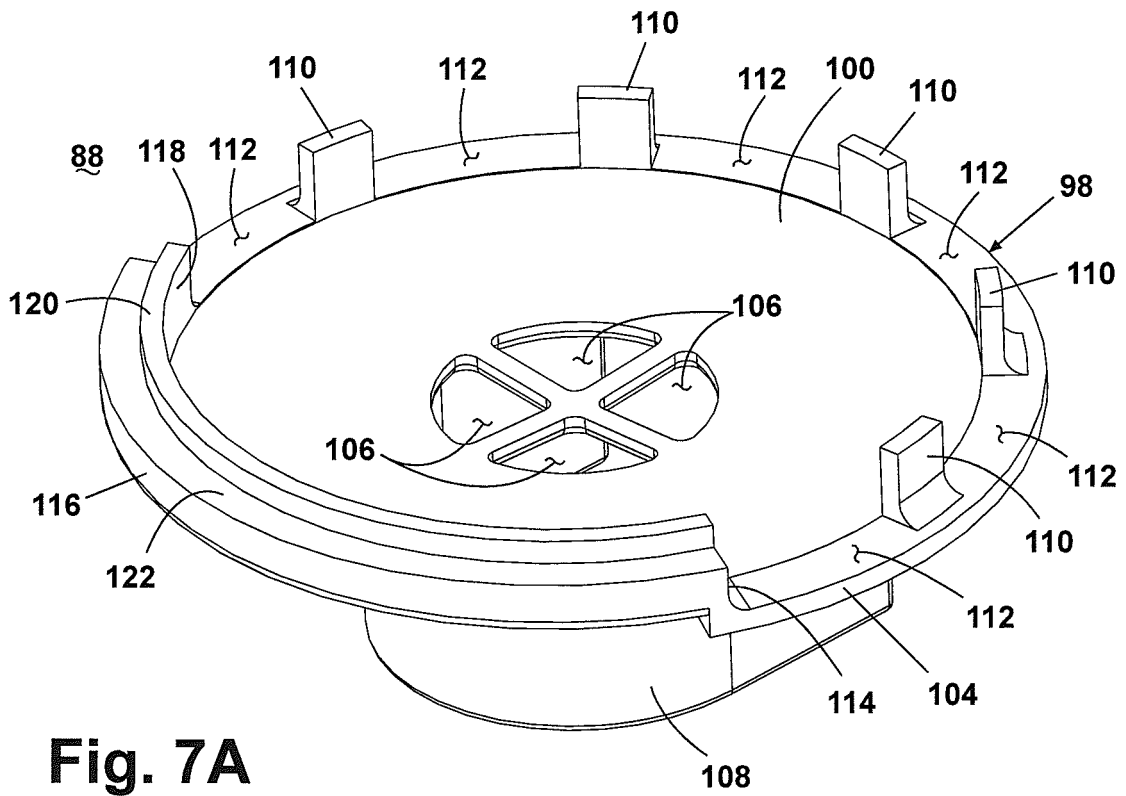


Fig. 6



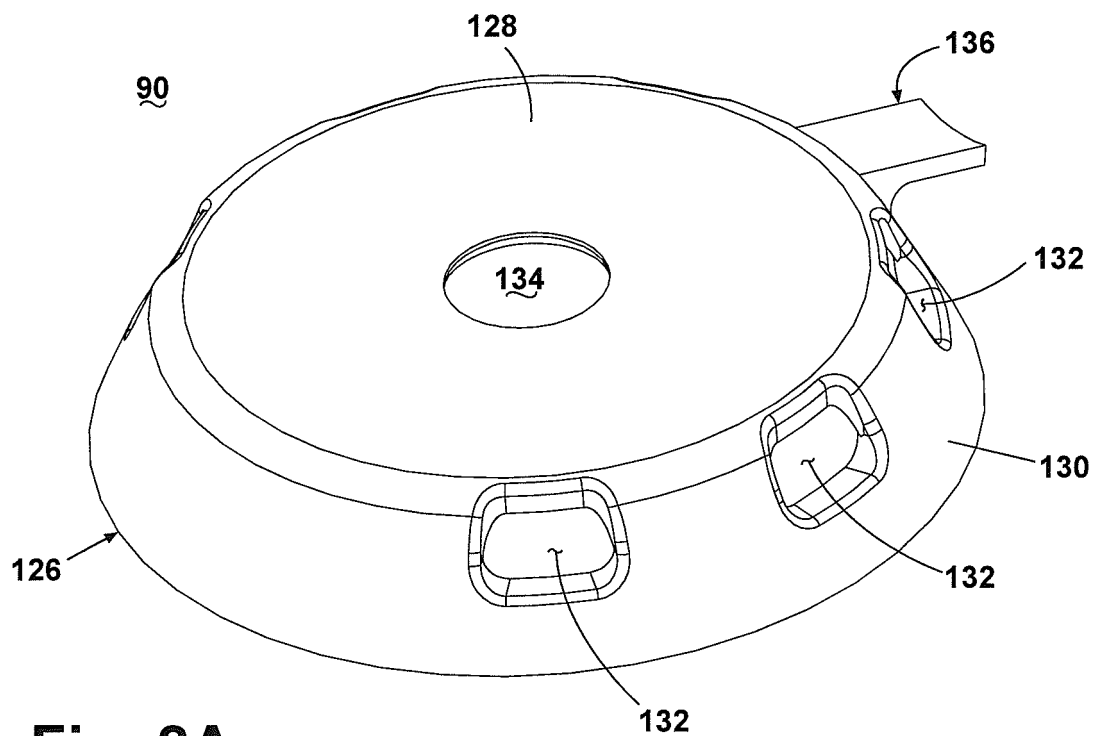


Fig. 8A

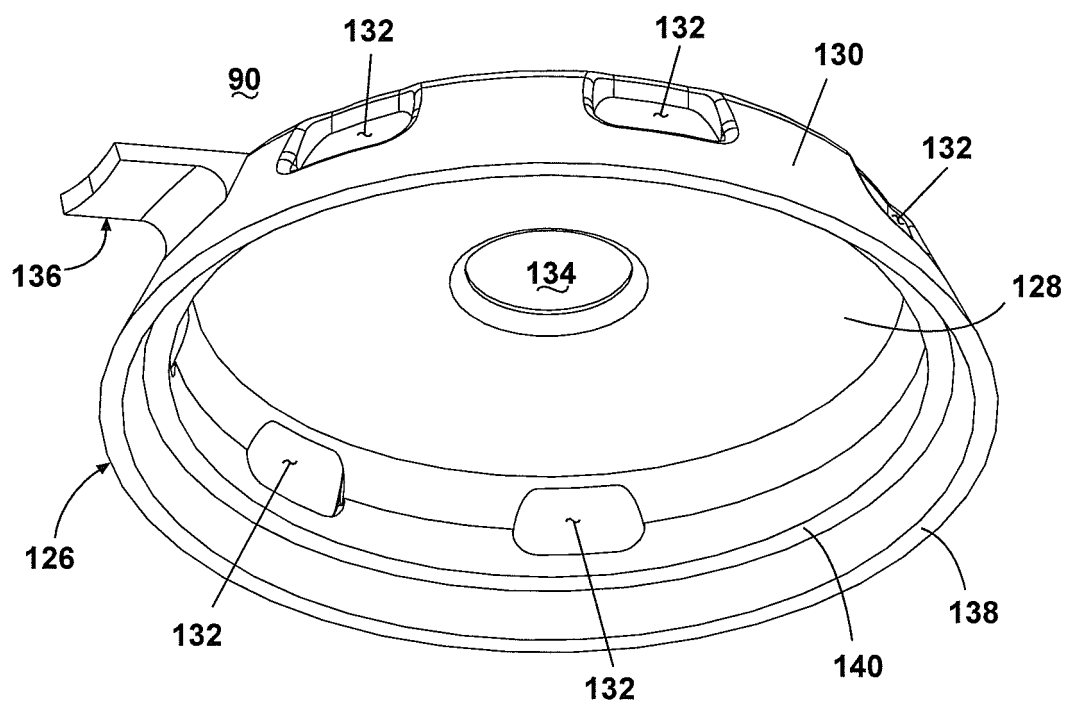


Fig. 8B

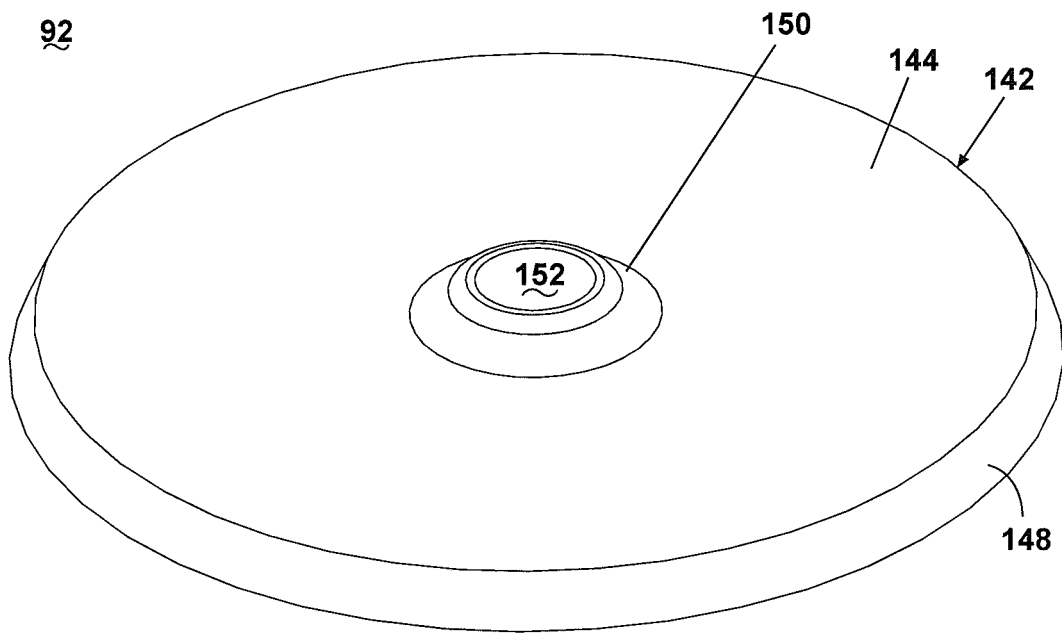


Fig. 9A

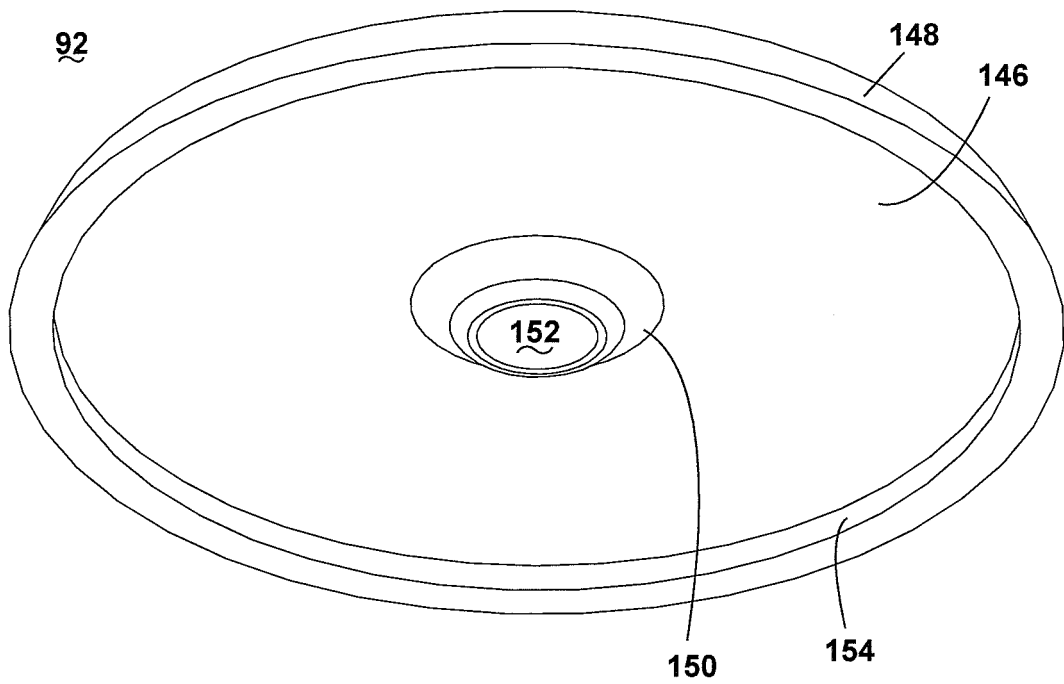


Fig. 9B

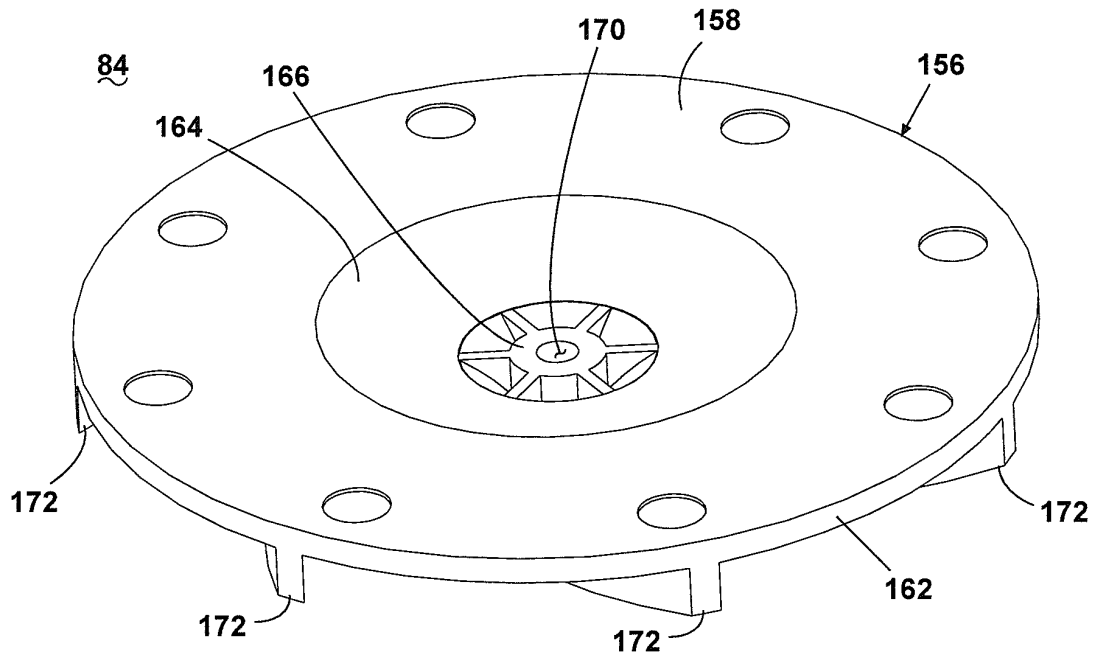


Fig. 10A

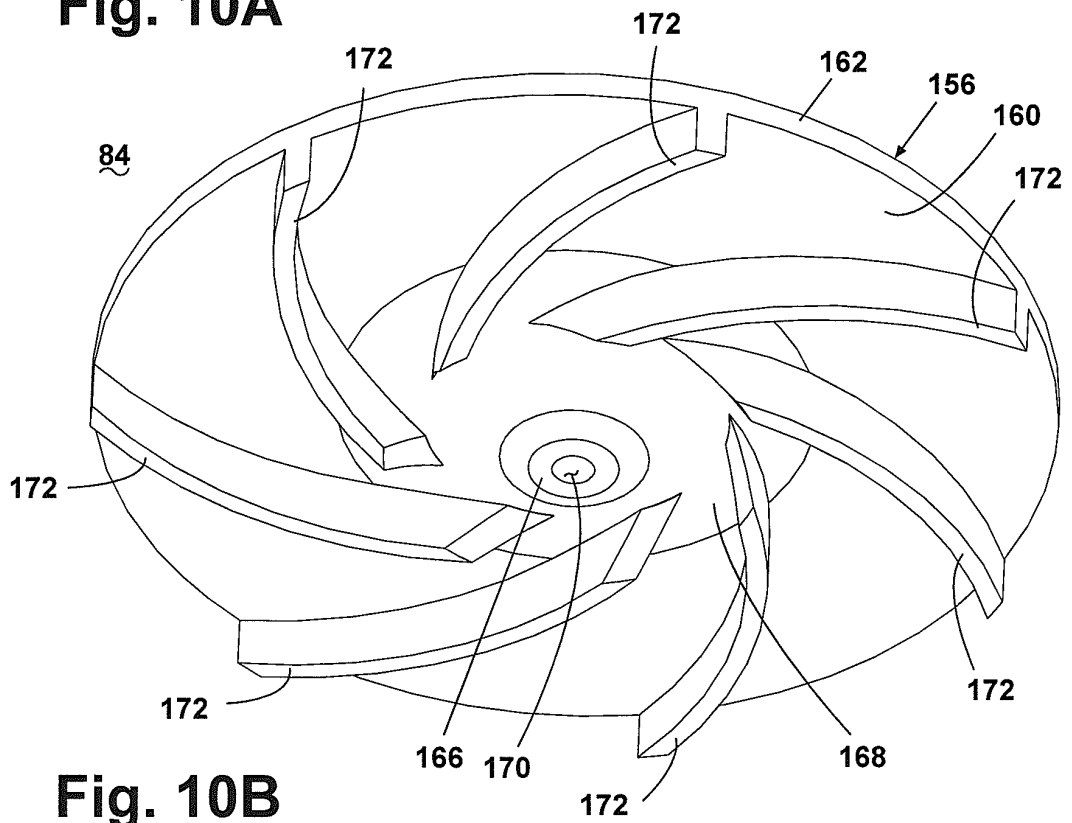


Fig. 10B

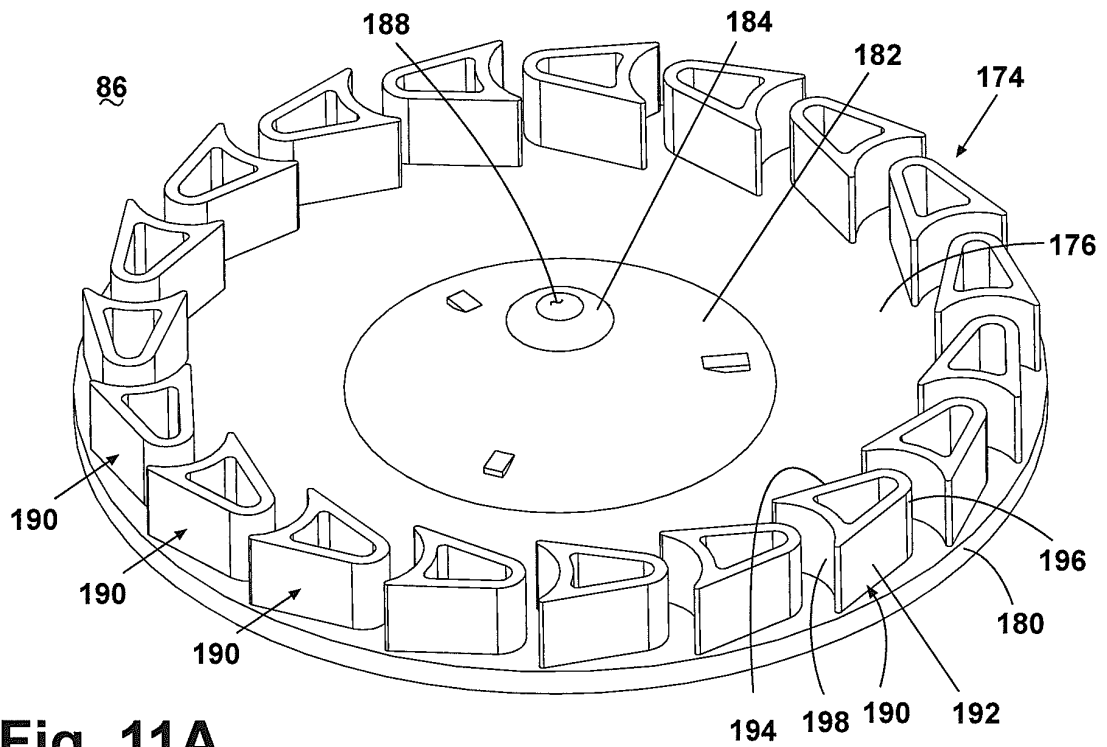


Fig. 11A

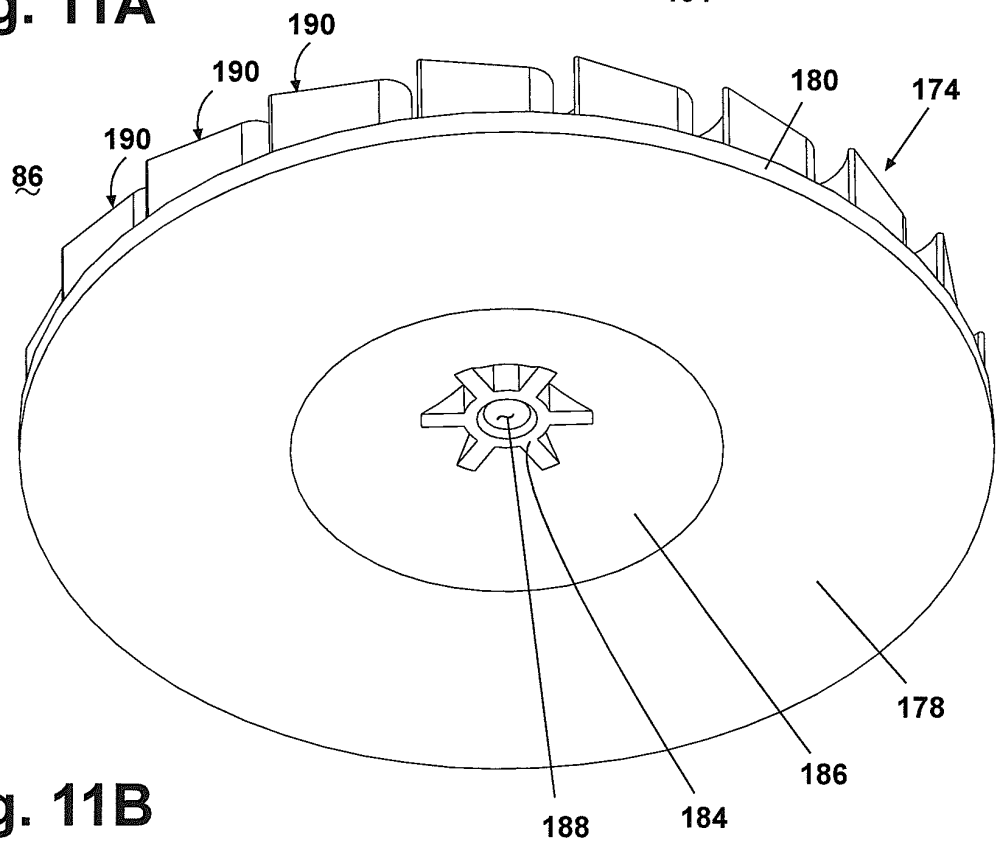


Fig. 11B

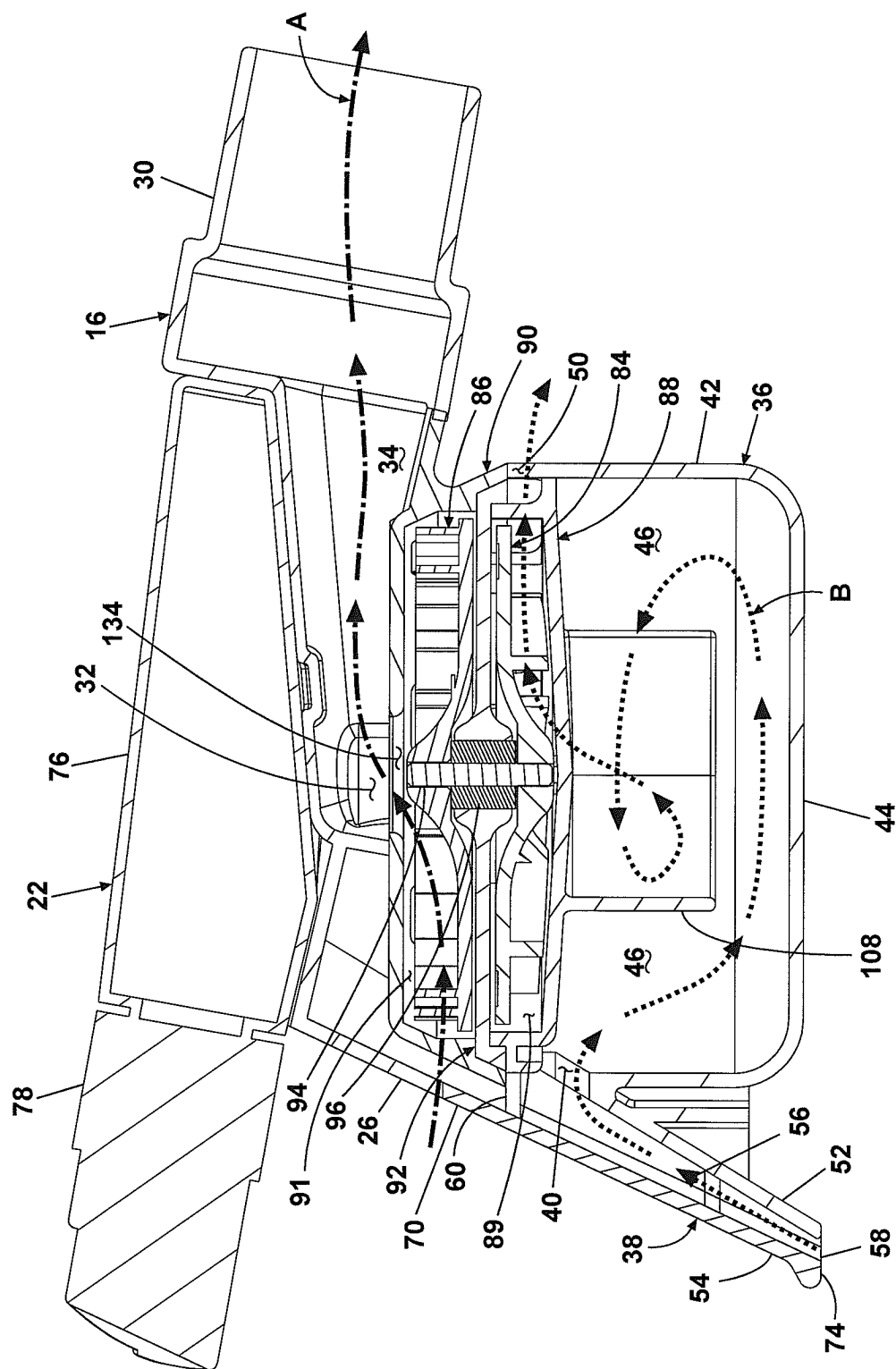


Fig. 12

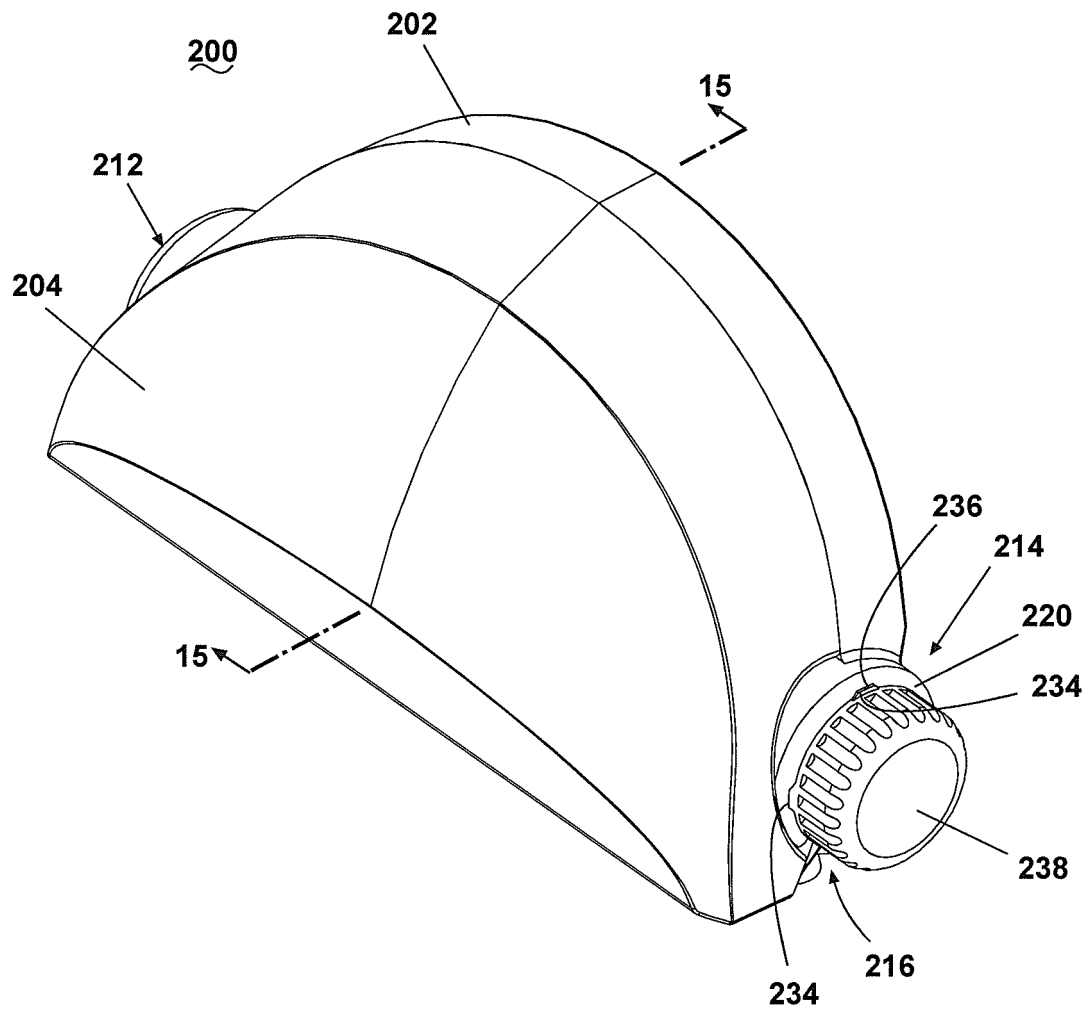


Fig. 13

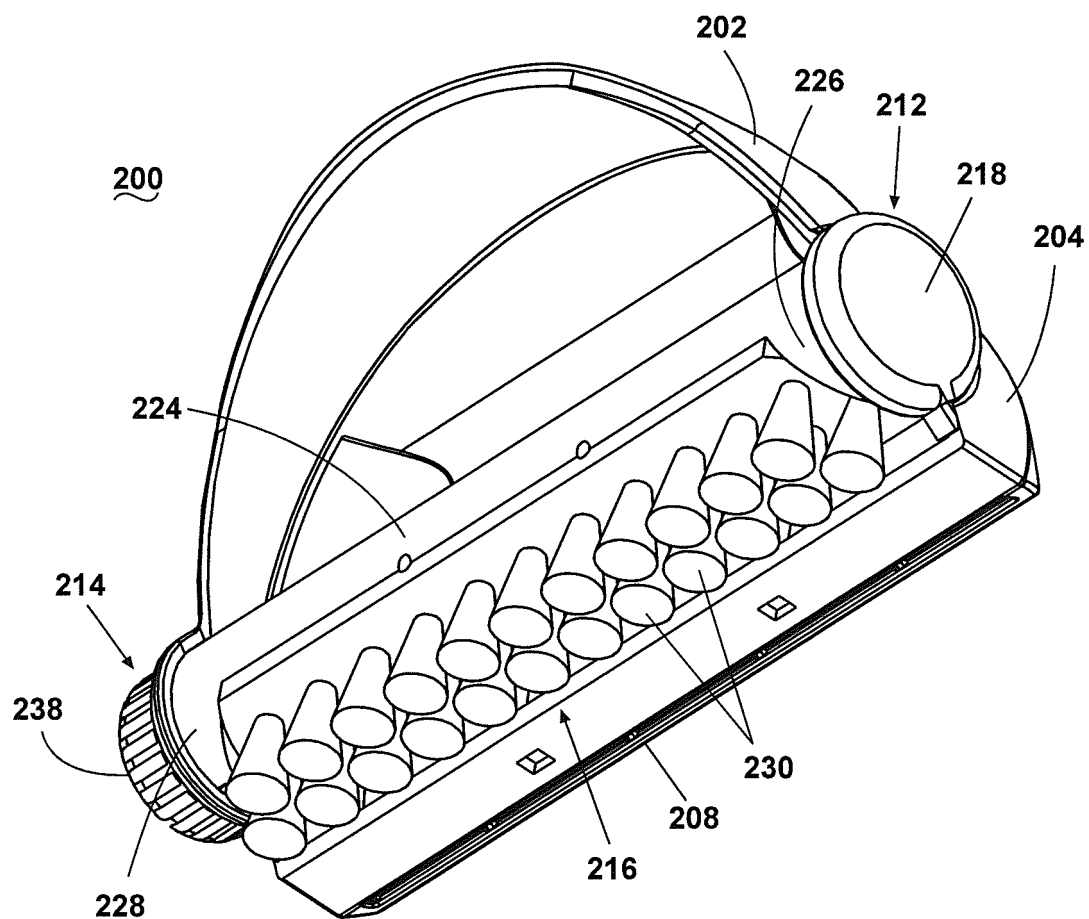


Fig. 14

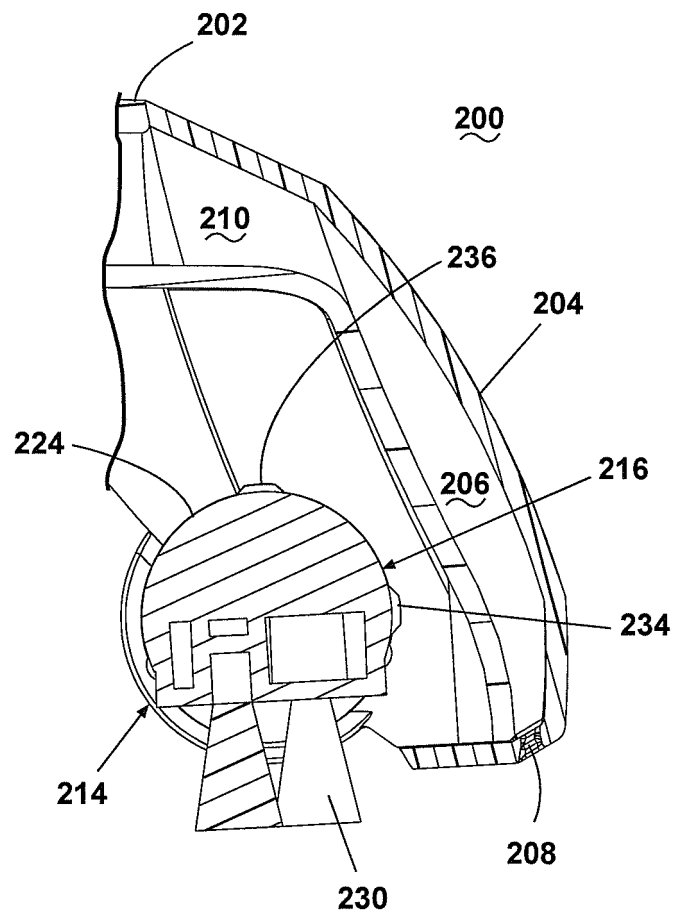


Fig. 15

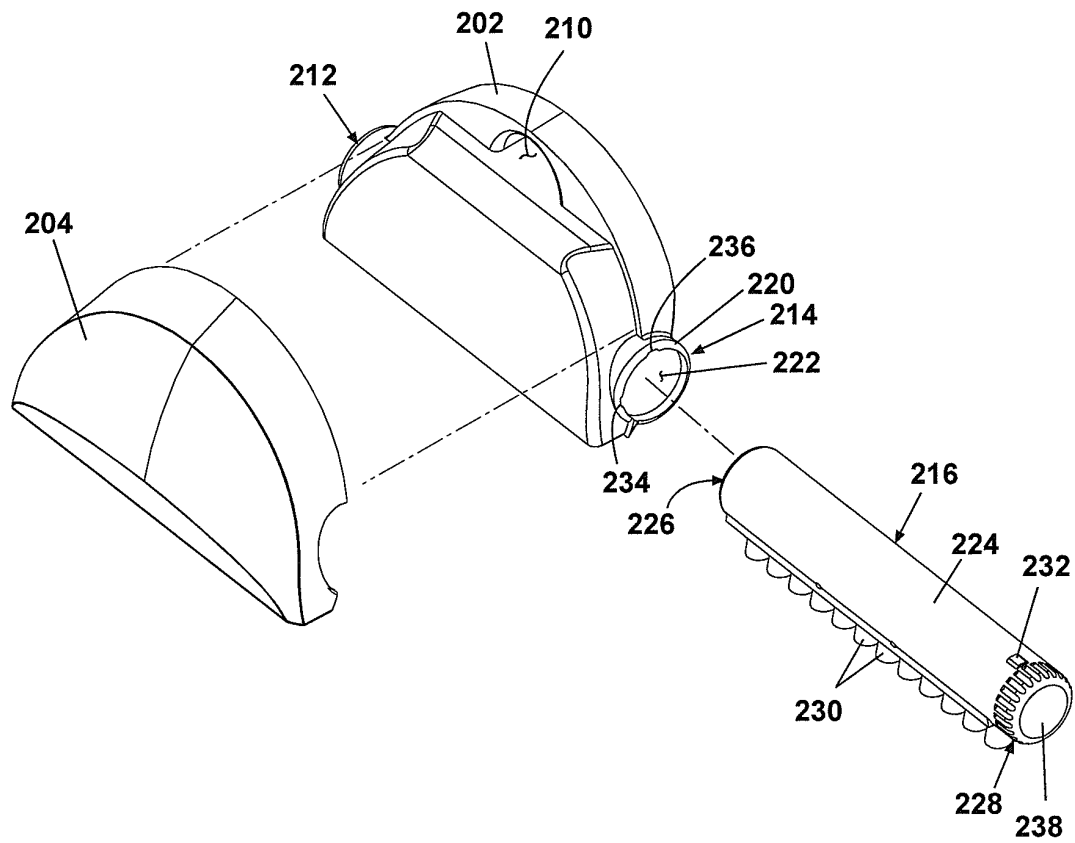


Fig. 16

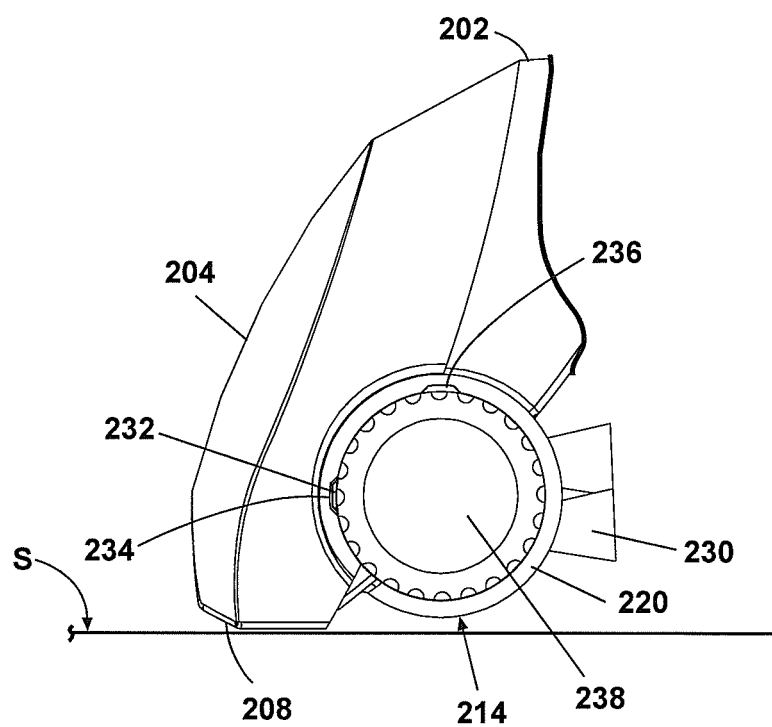


Fig. 17

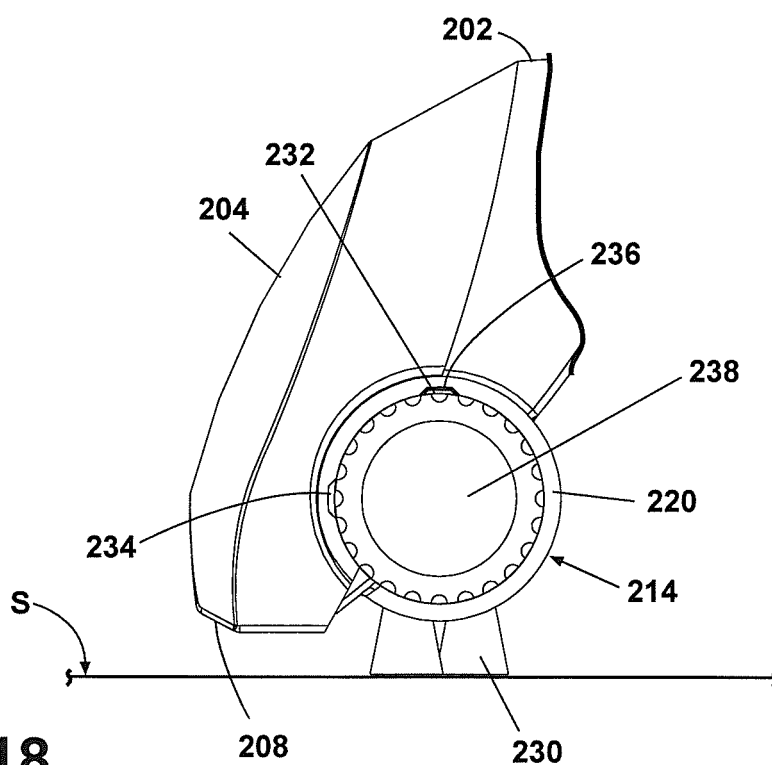


Fig. 18

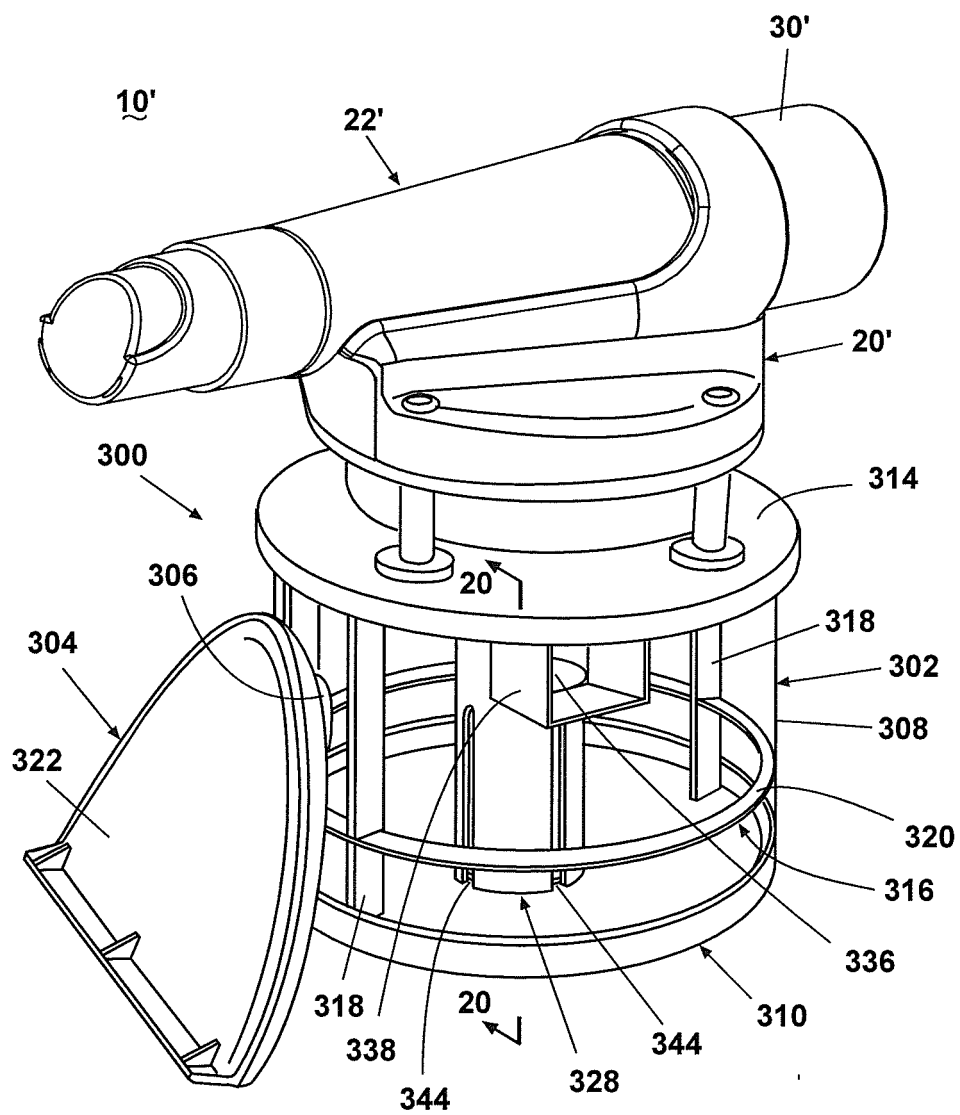


Fig. 19

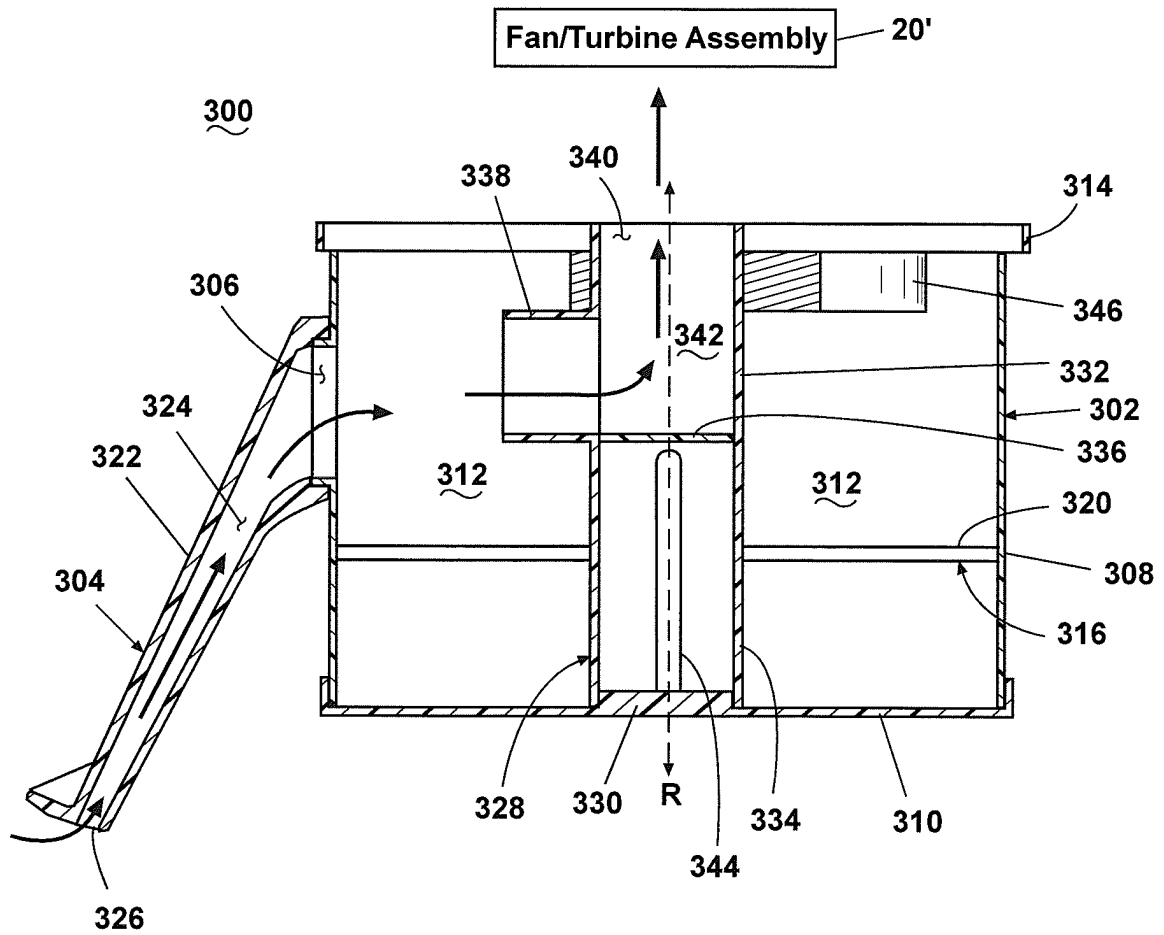


Fig. 20

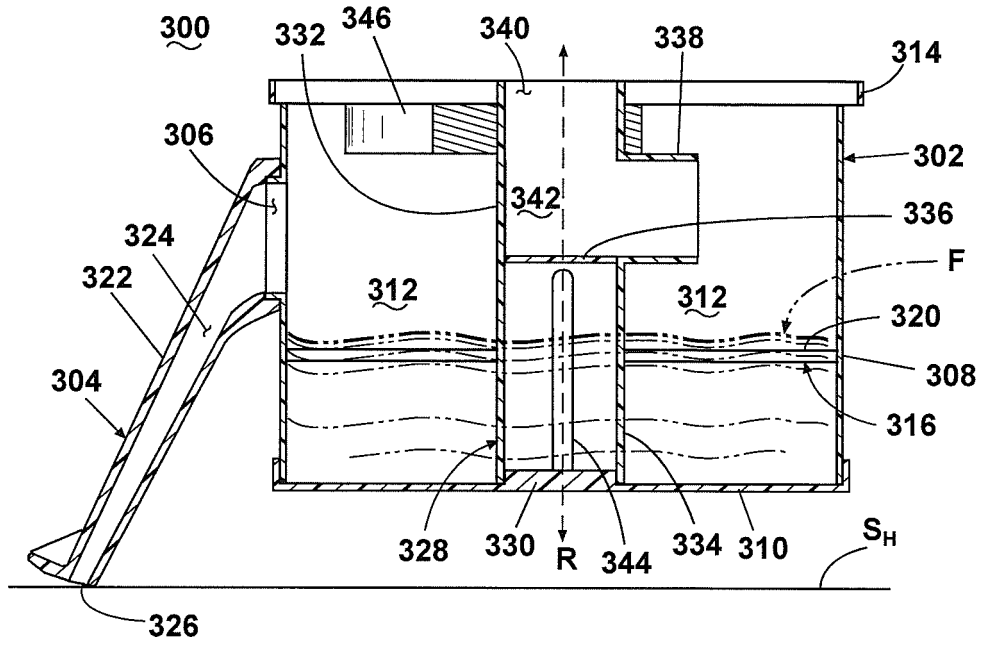


Fig. 21

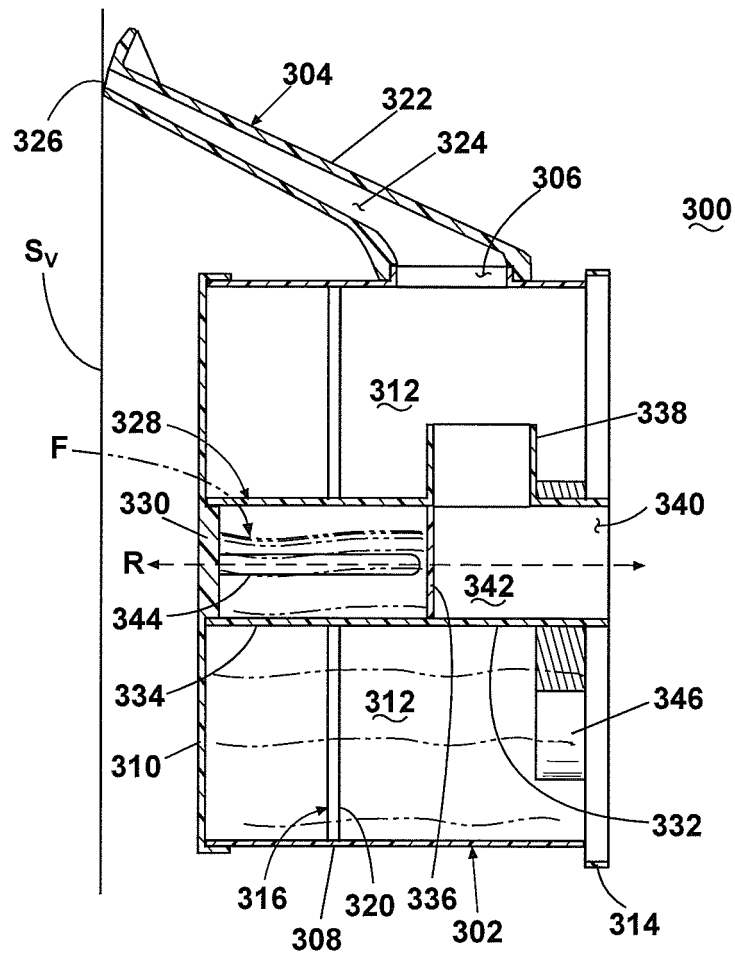


Fig. 22

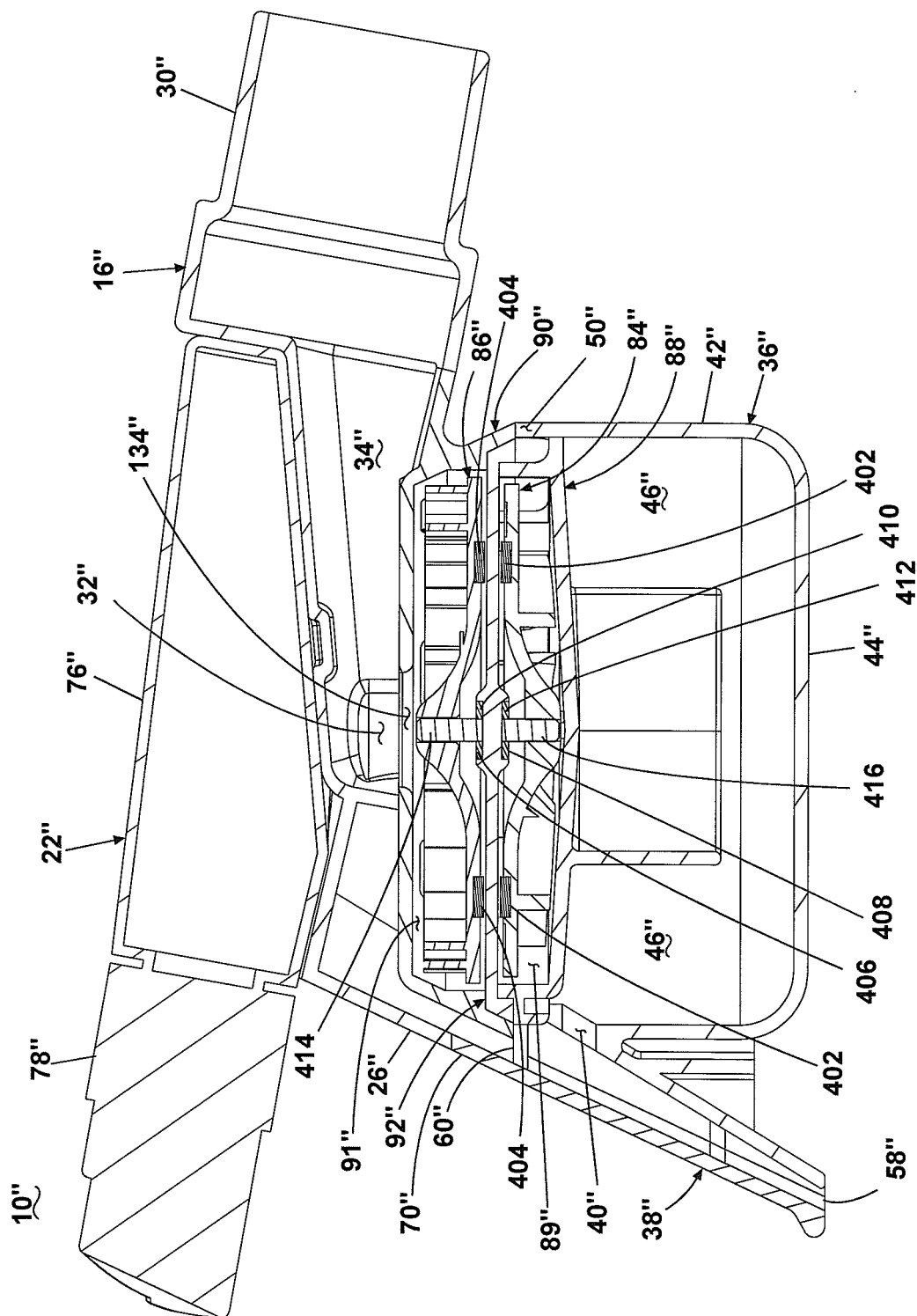


Fig. 23

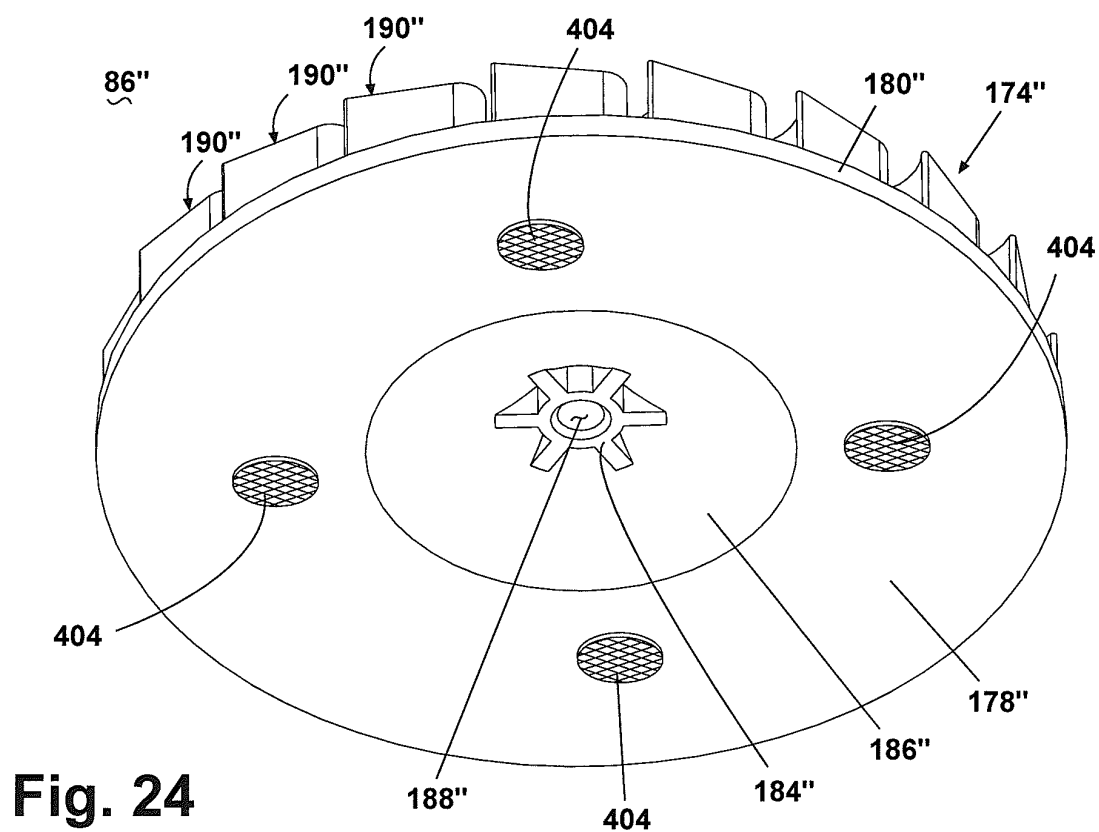


Fig. 24

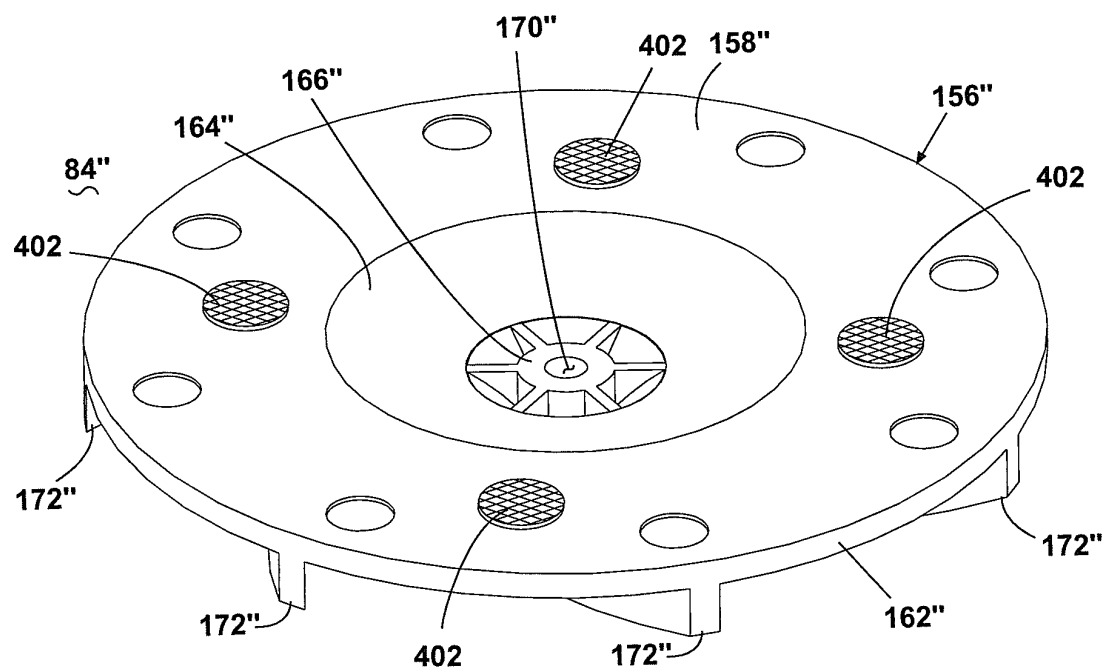


Fig. 25

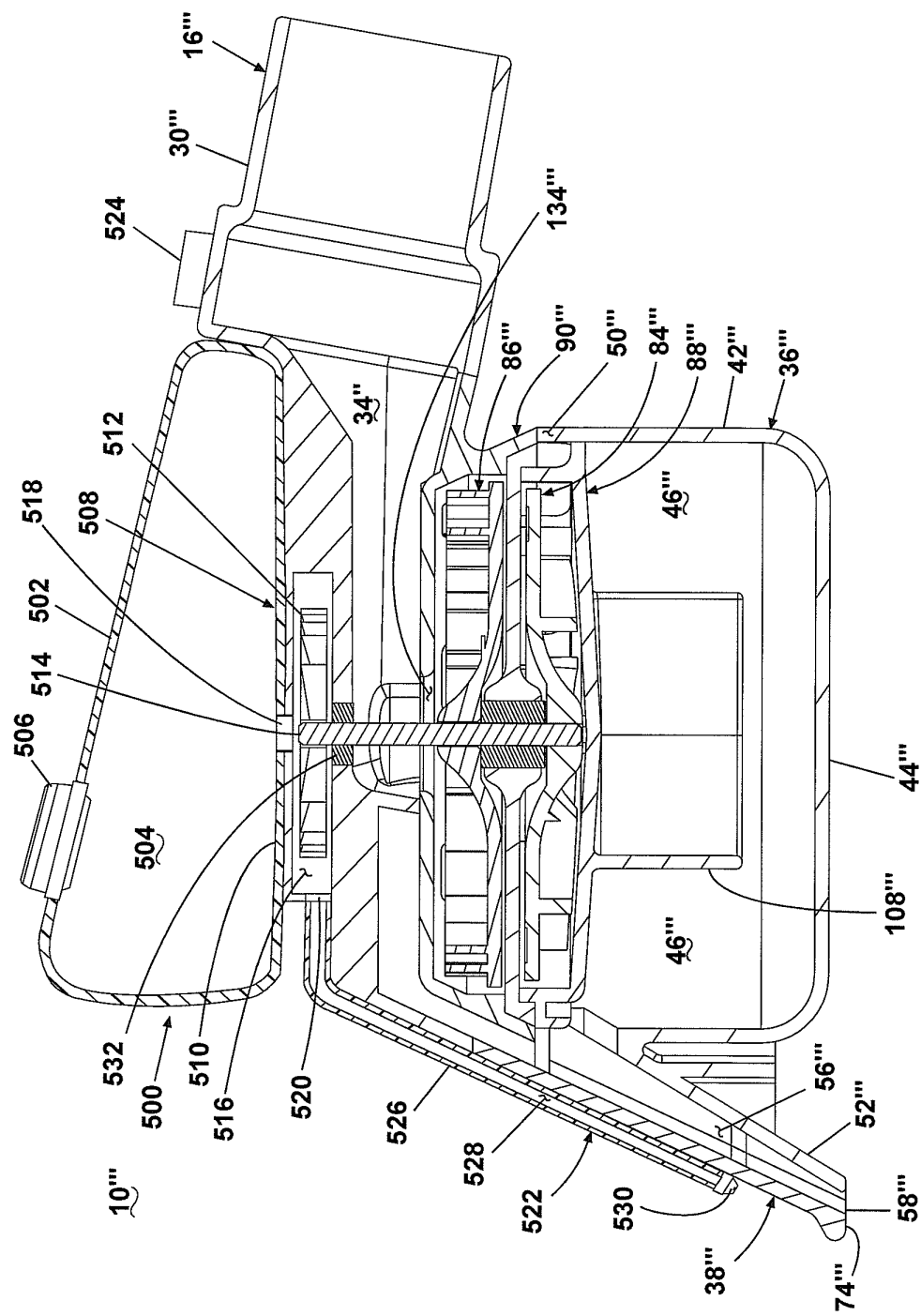


Fig. 26

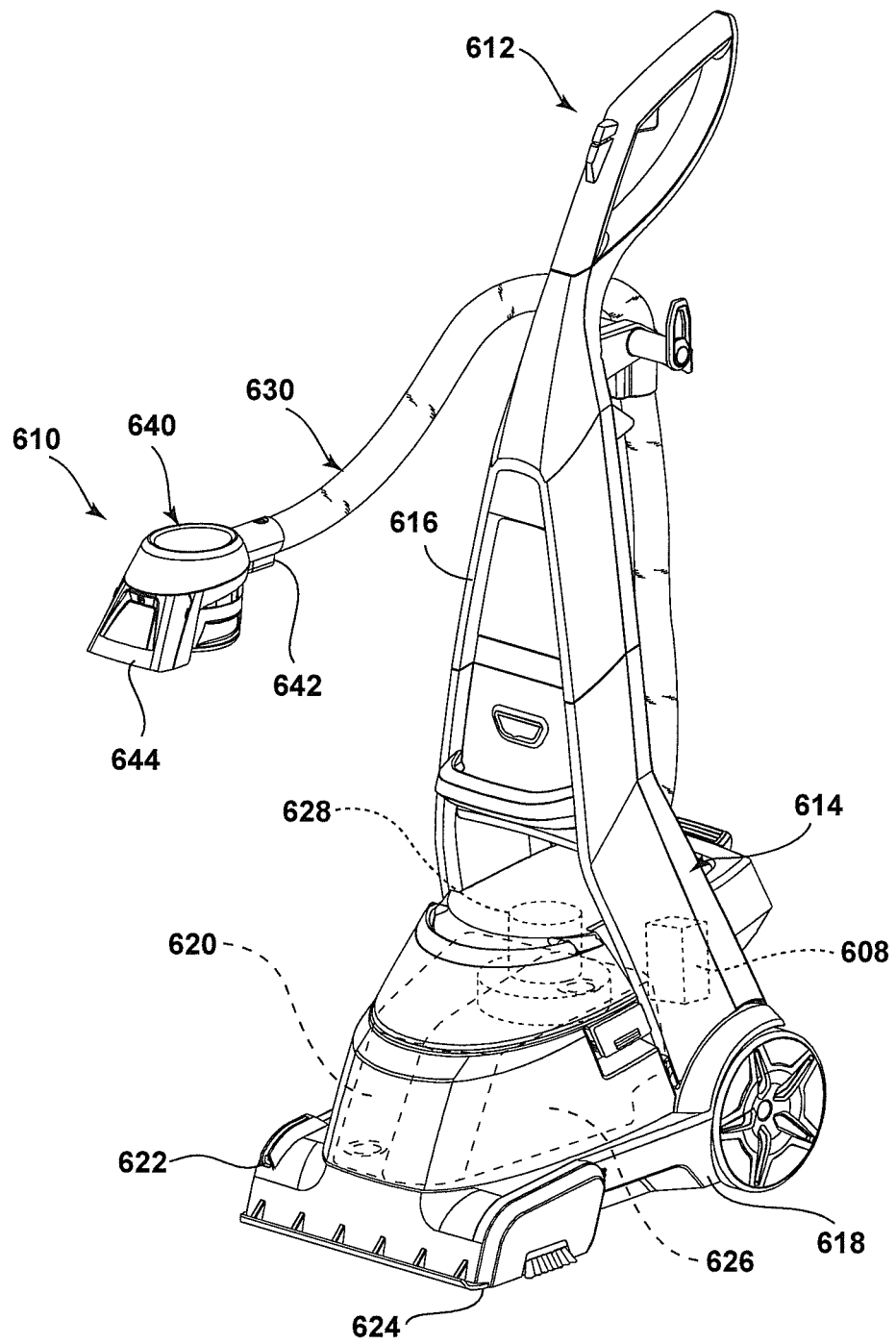


Fig. 27

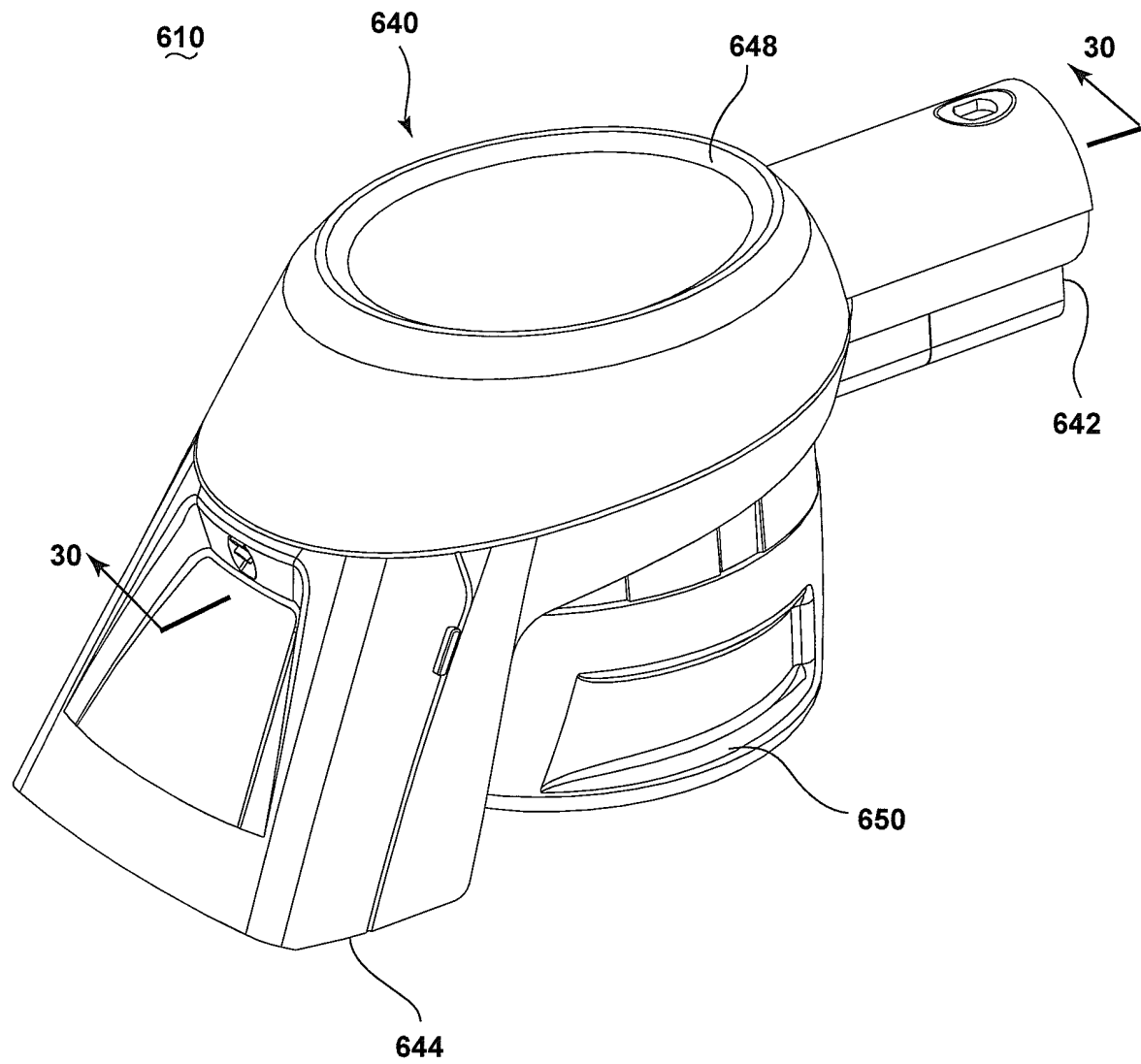


Fig. 28

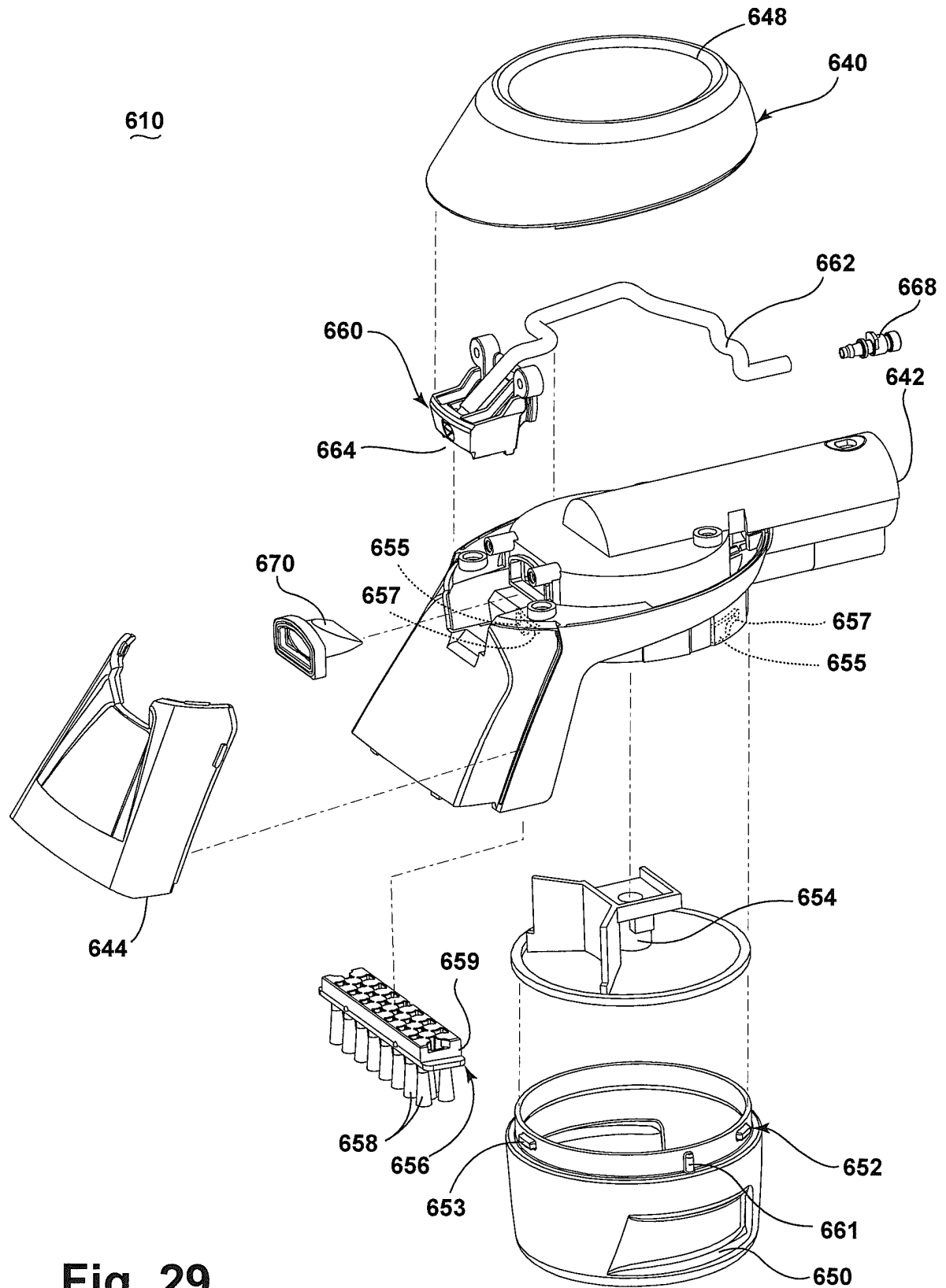


Fig. 29

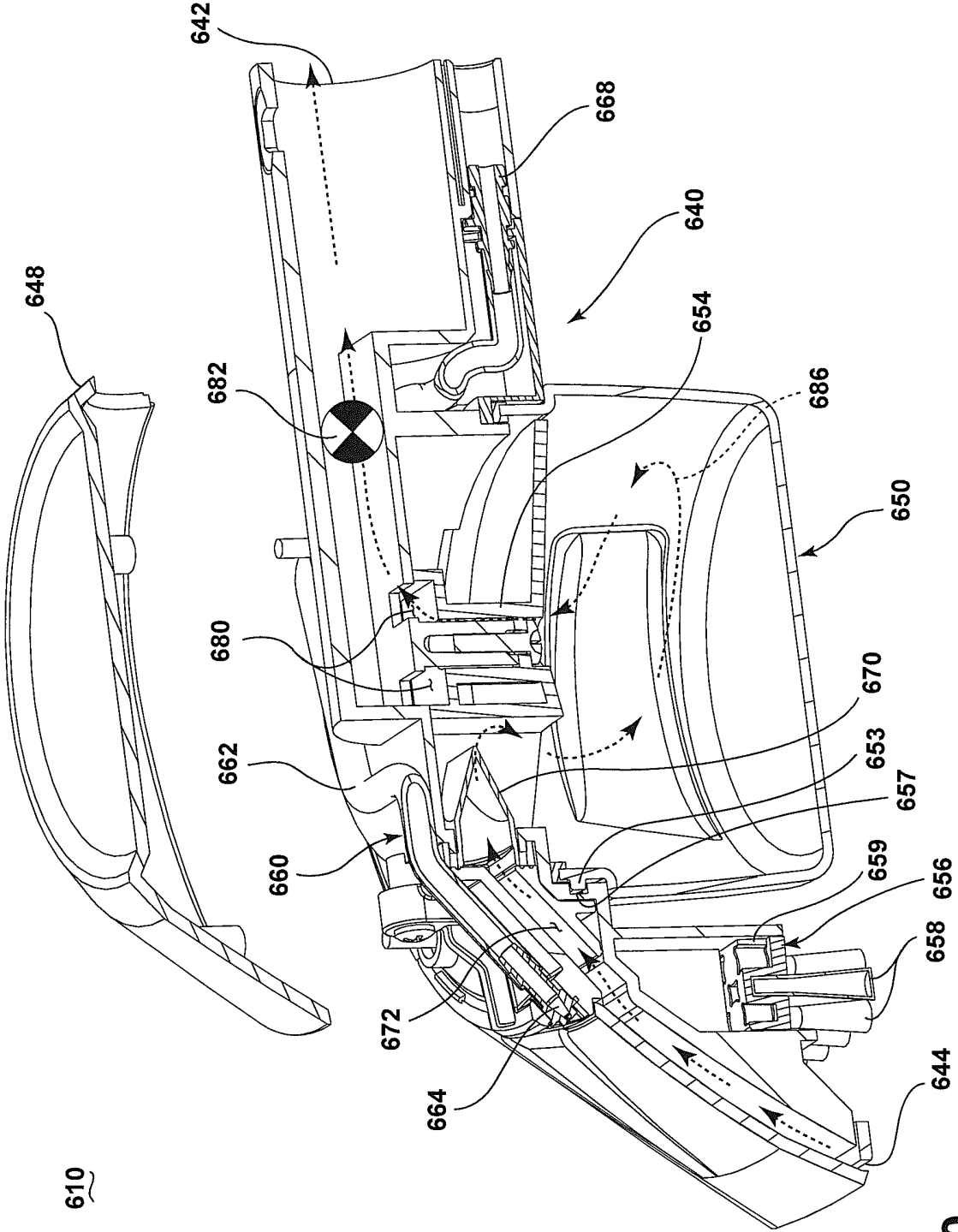


Fig. 30

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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