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Lyons et al.

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(54) **CHAIN MOORING WINDLASS WITH TWO-STAGE GEAR REDUCTION AND MOVABLE DRIVE MECHANISM**

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC *F16H 37/04* (2013.01); *B63B 21/18* (2013.01); *B63B 21/22* (2013.01); *B63B 21/50* (2013.01);

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(Continued)
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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

(22) Filed: **Jun. 12, 2017**

A chain mooring windlass may include a frame, a wheel, and an axel extending through the wheel and rotatably coupled to the frame. Drive assemblies may be coupled to the axel via a first stage gear reduction including reduction gears. The axel may be coupled to the wheel via a second stage gear reduction including reduction gears. A movable drive mechanism may include reduction gears, and drive assemblies coupled to the reduction gears. The drive assemblies may drive the reduction gears. A drive gear may be coupled to the reduction gears. The reduction gears may drive the drive gear. The drive gear may be configured to couple to a chain wheel of a chain mooring windlass to drive the chain wheel. A chain wheel coupler may be configured to selectively couple the movable drive mechanism to a chain wheel of a chain mooring windlass.

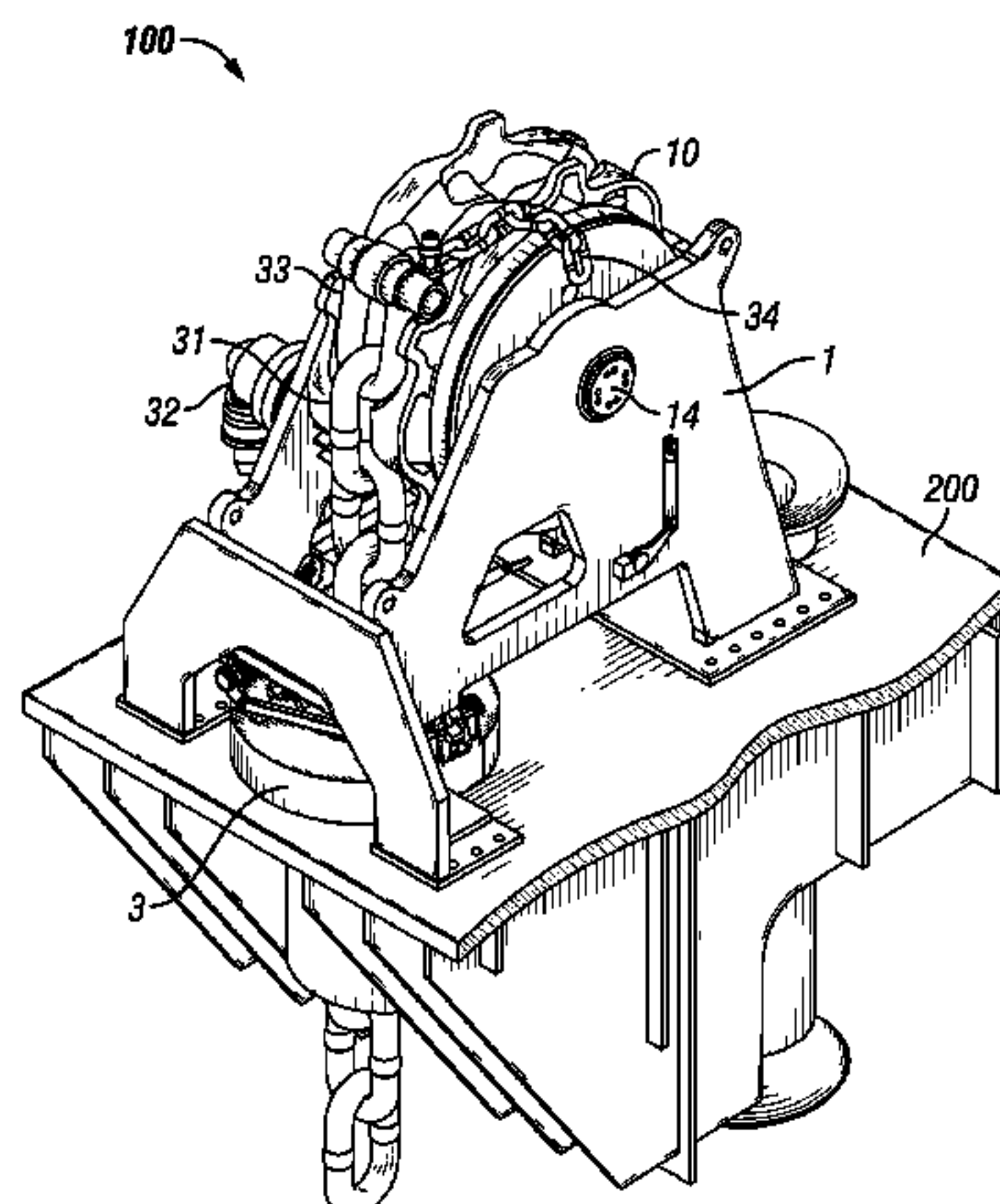
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B63B 21/22 (2006.01)
(Continued)

26 Claims, 29 Drawing Sheets



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F16H 1/28 (2006.01)
F16H 57/02 (2012.01)
B63B 21/18 (2006.01)
B66D 1/72 (2006.01)
- (52) **U.S. Cl.**
 CPC *B66D 1/72* (2013.01); *F16H 1/06*
 (2013.01); *F16H 1/28* (2013.01); *F16H 57/02*
 (2013.01)
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 37/041; F16H 57/02
 USPC 114/230.23, 293
 See application file for complete search history.

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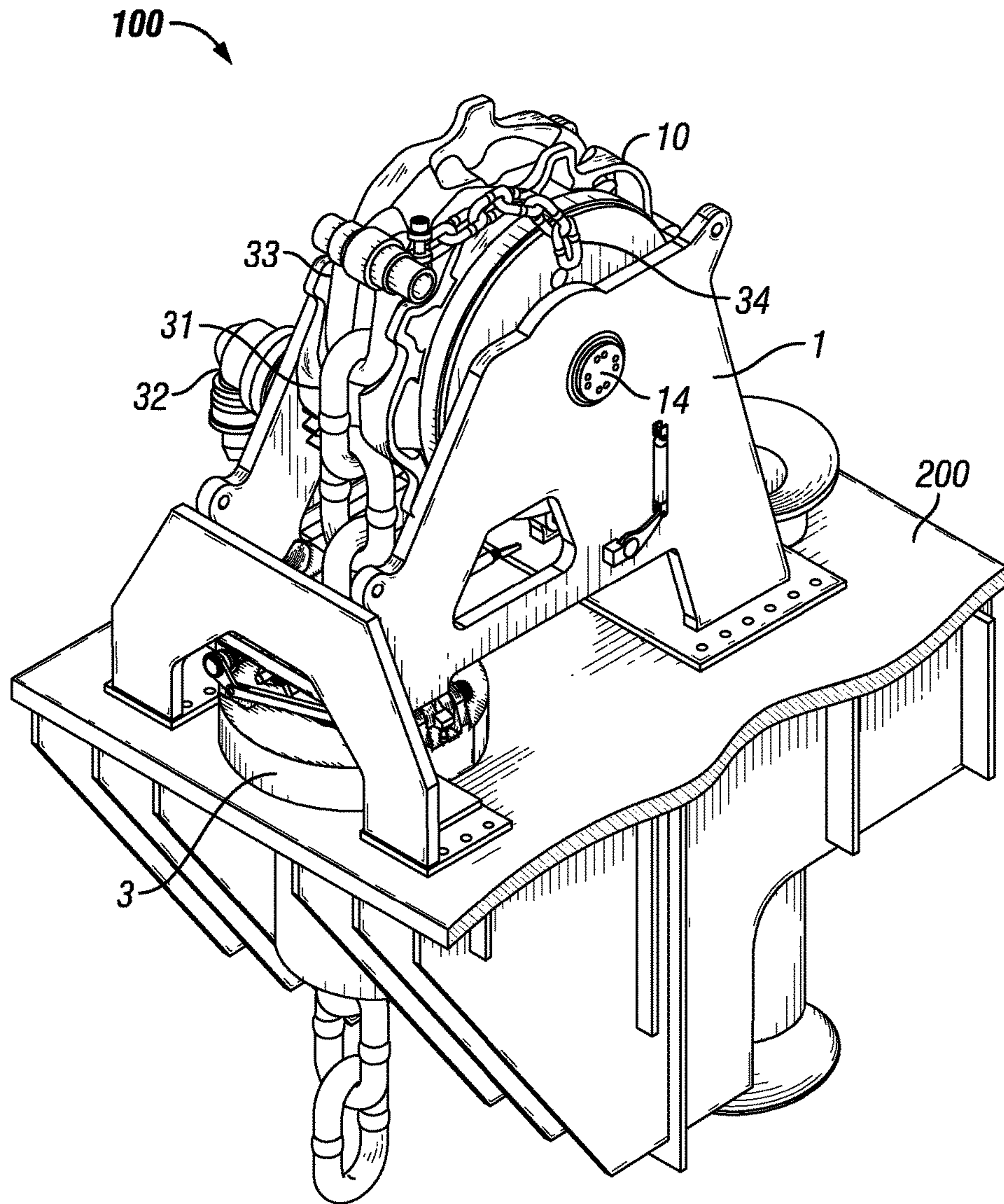


FIG. 1

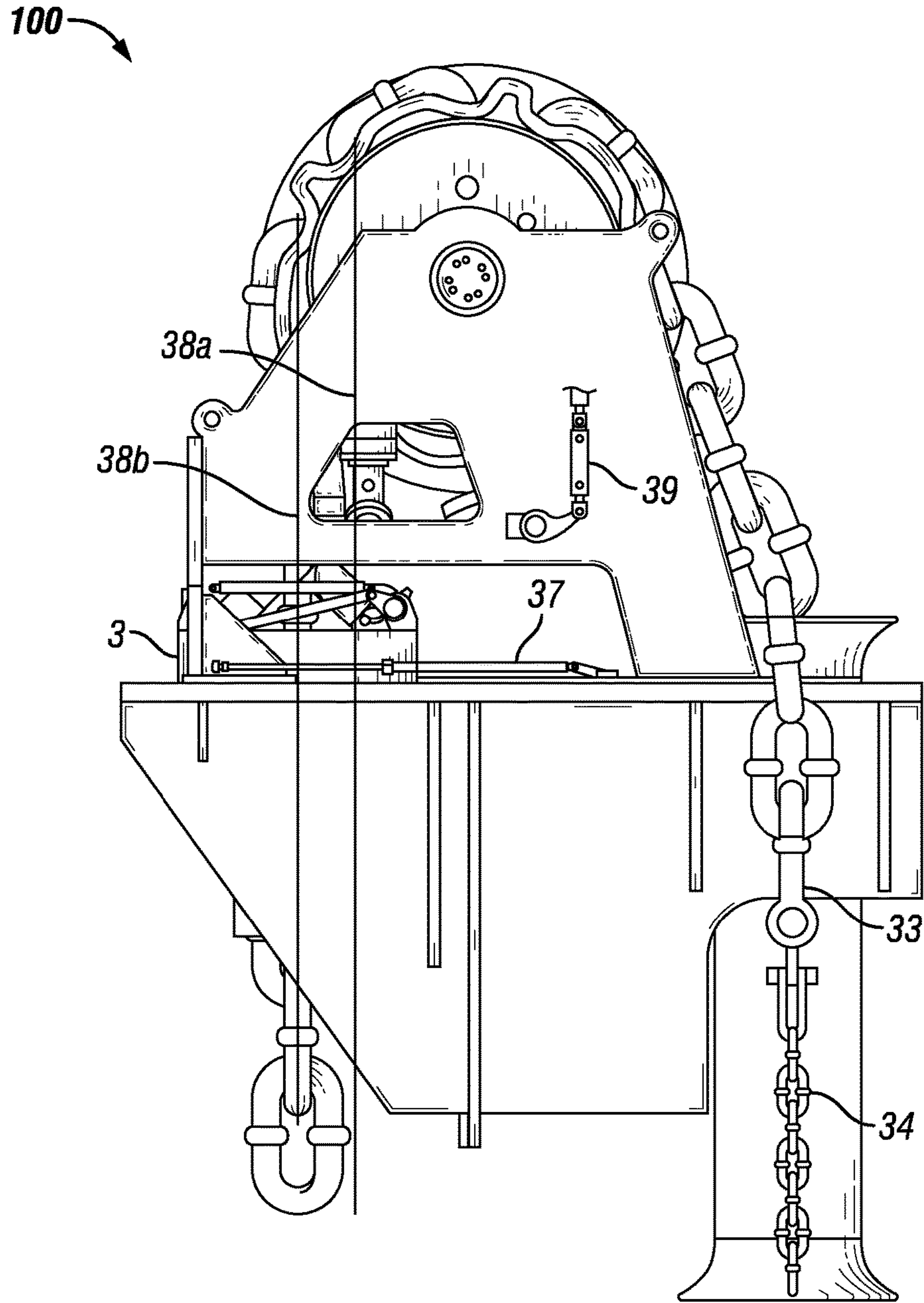


FIG. 2

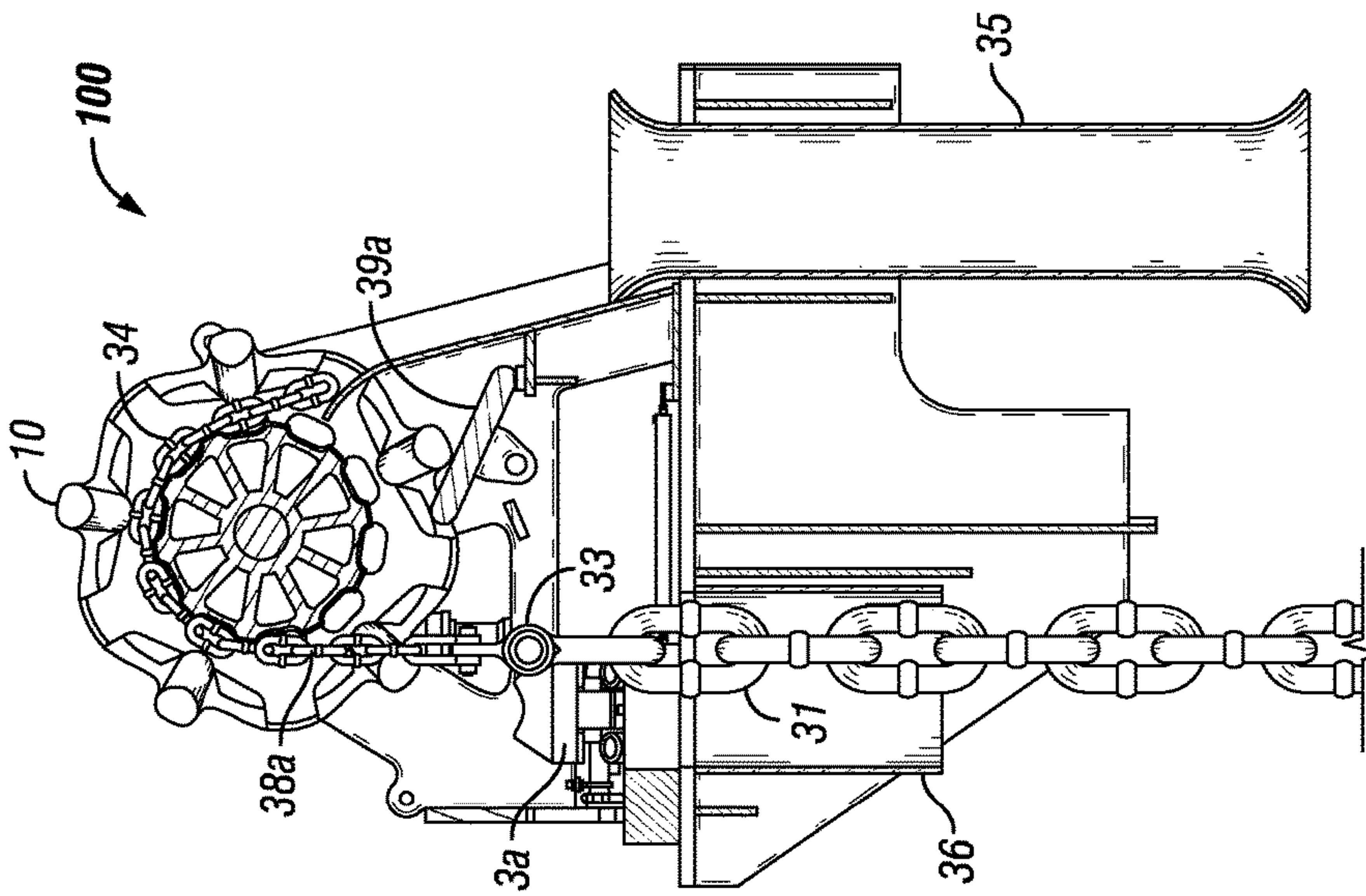


FIG. 4

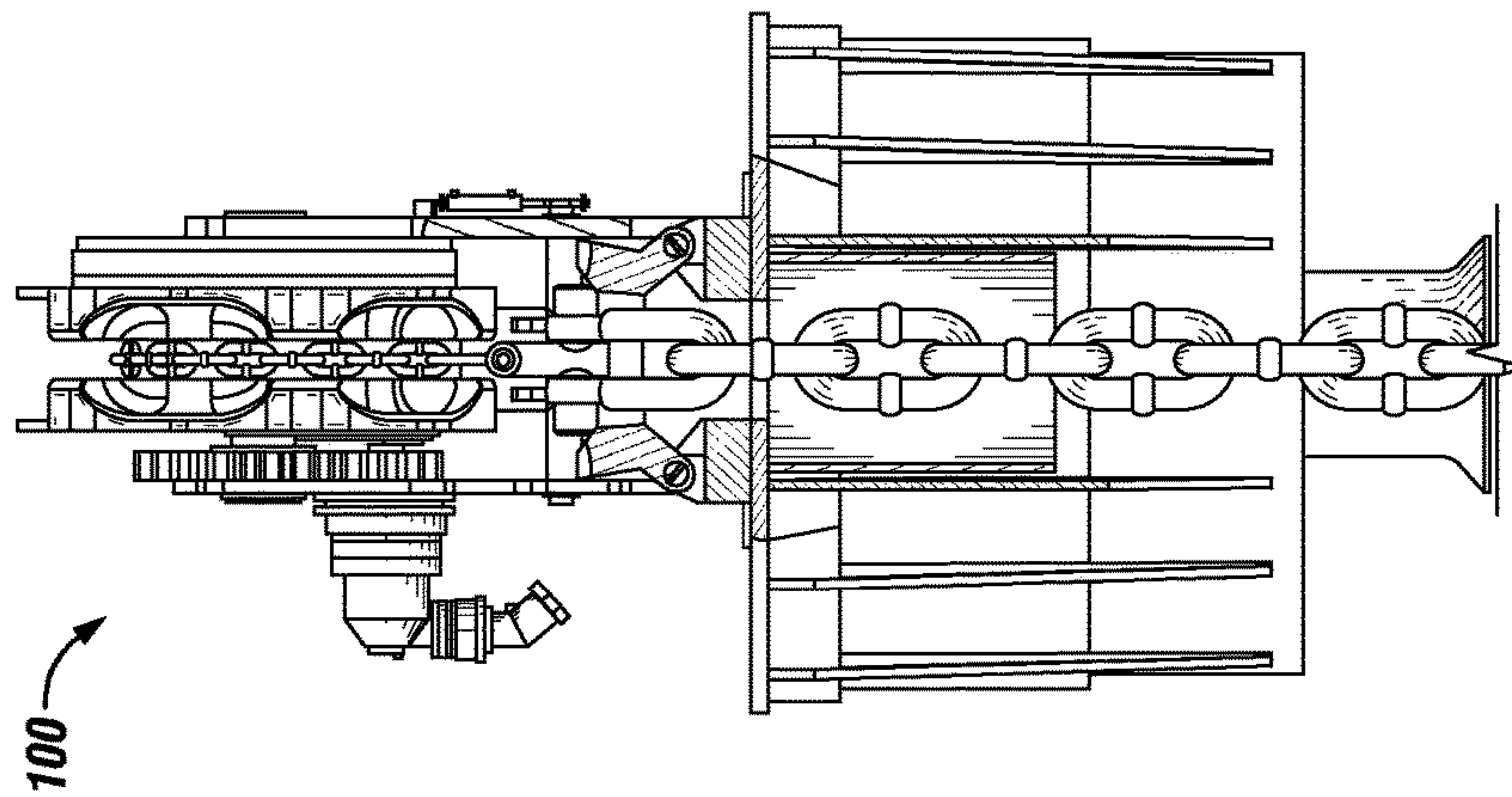


FIG. 3

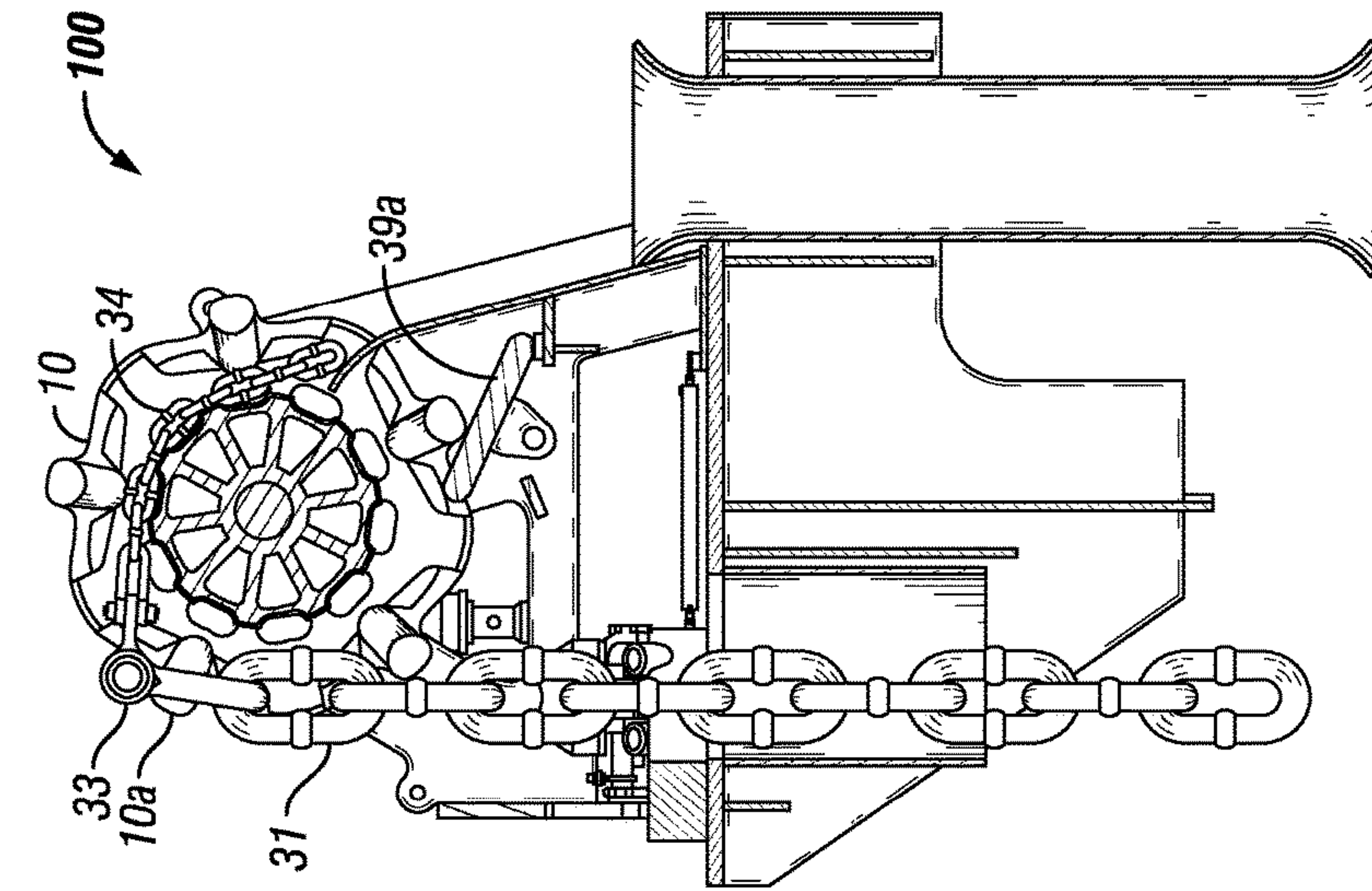


FIG. 5

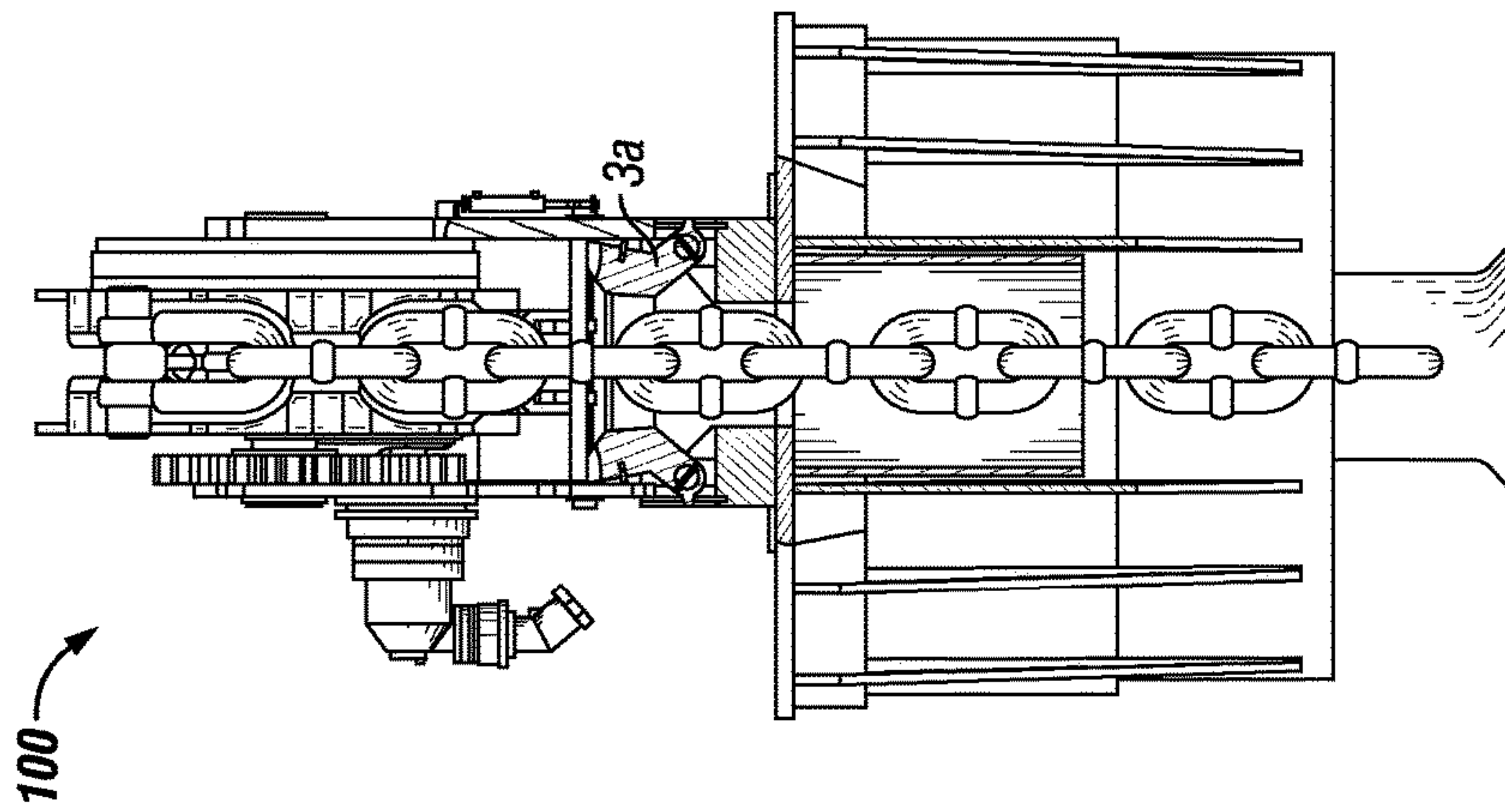


FIG. 6

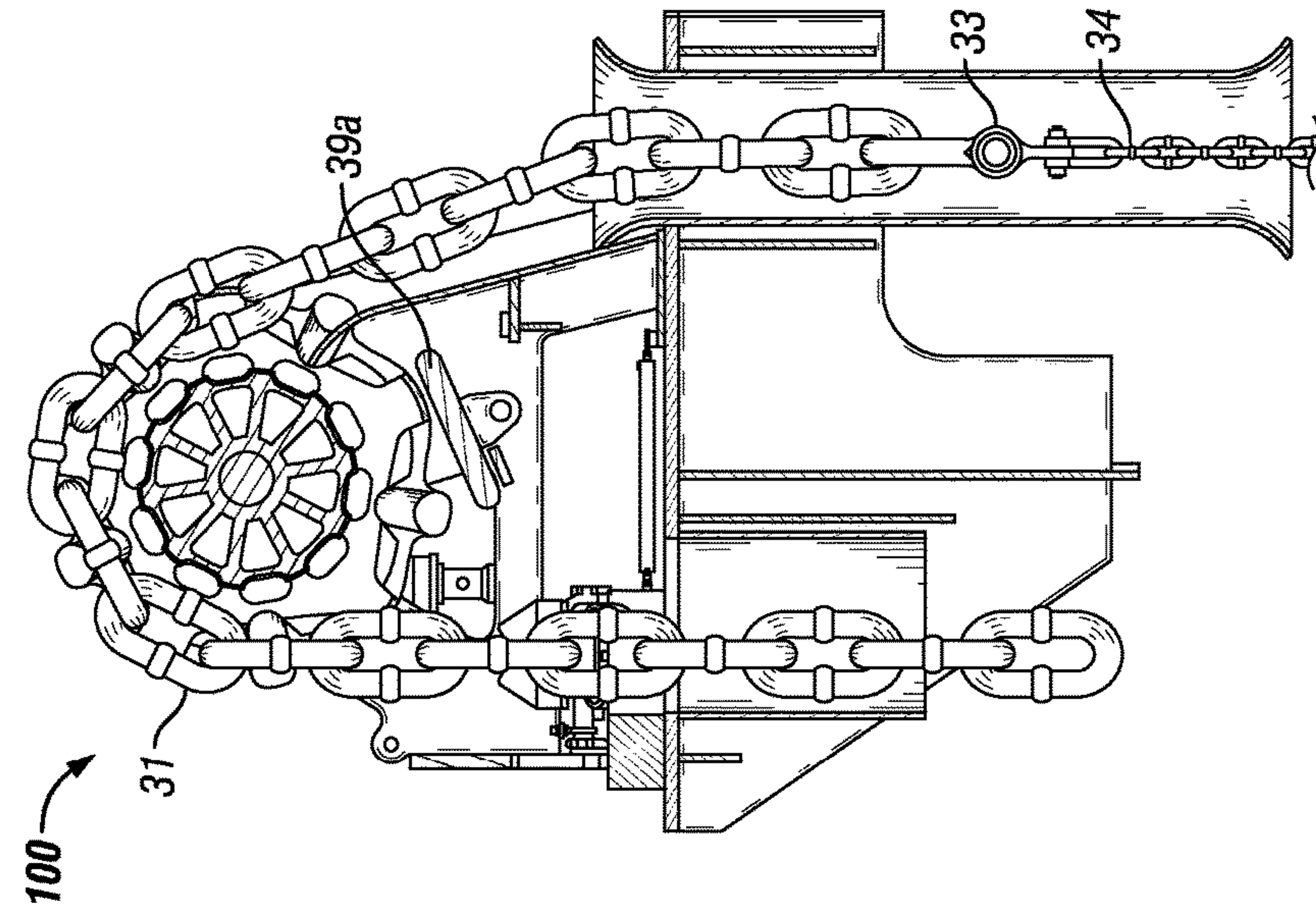


FIG. 7

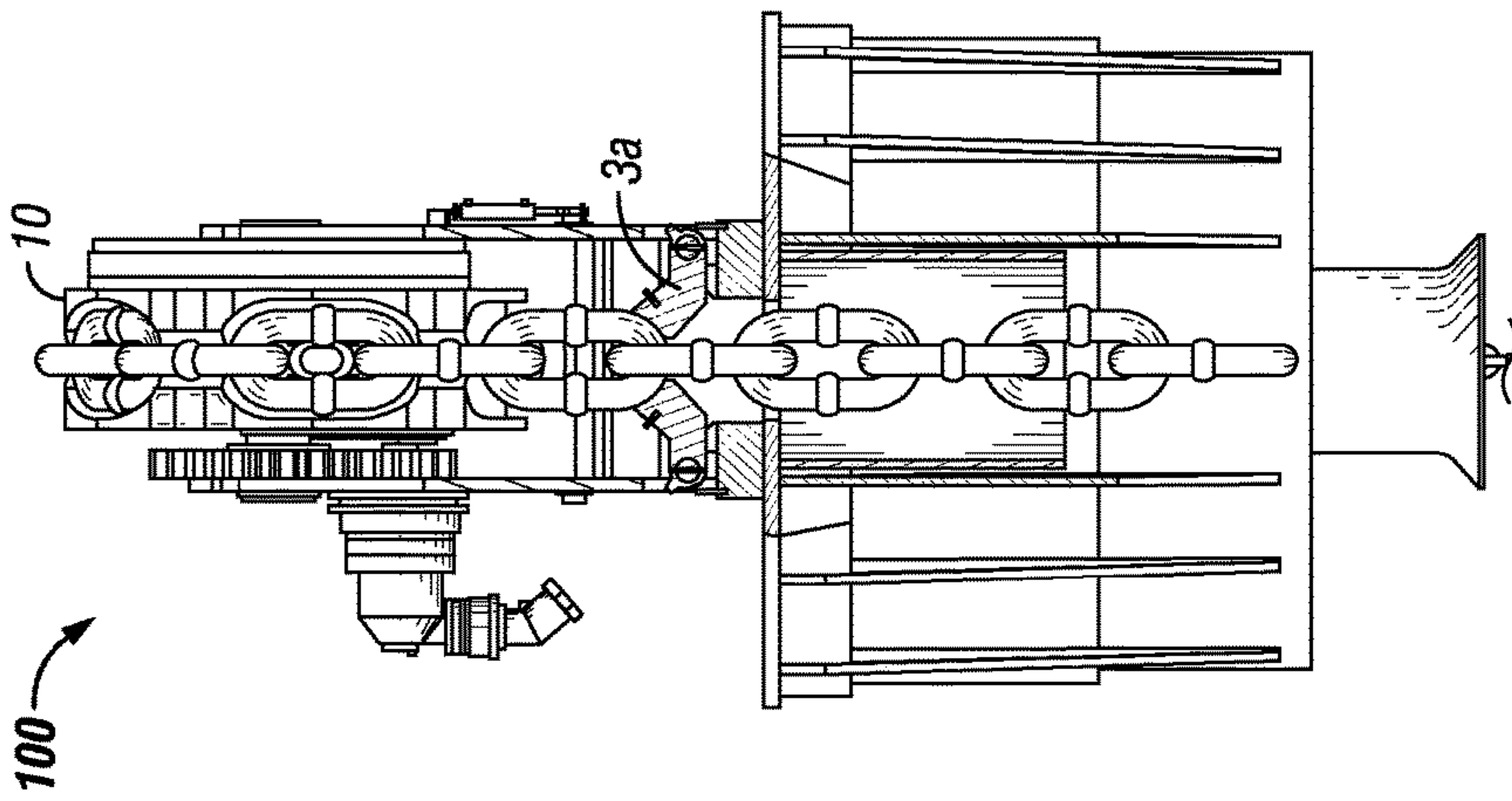


FIG. 8

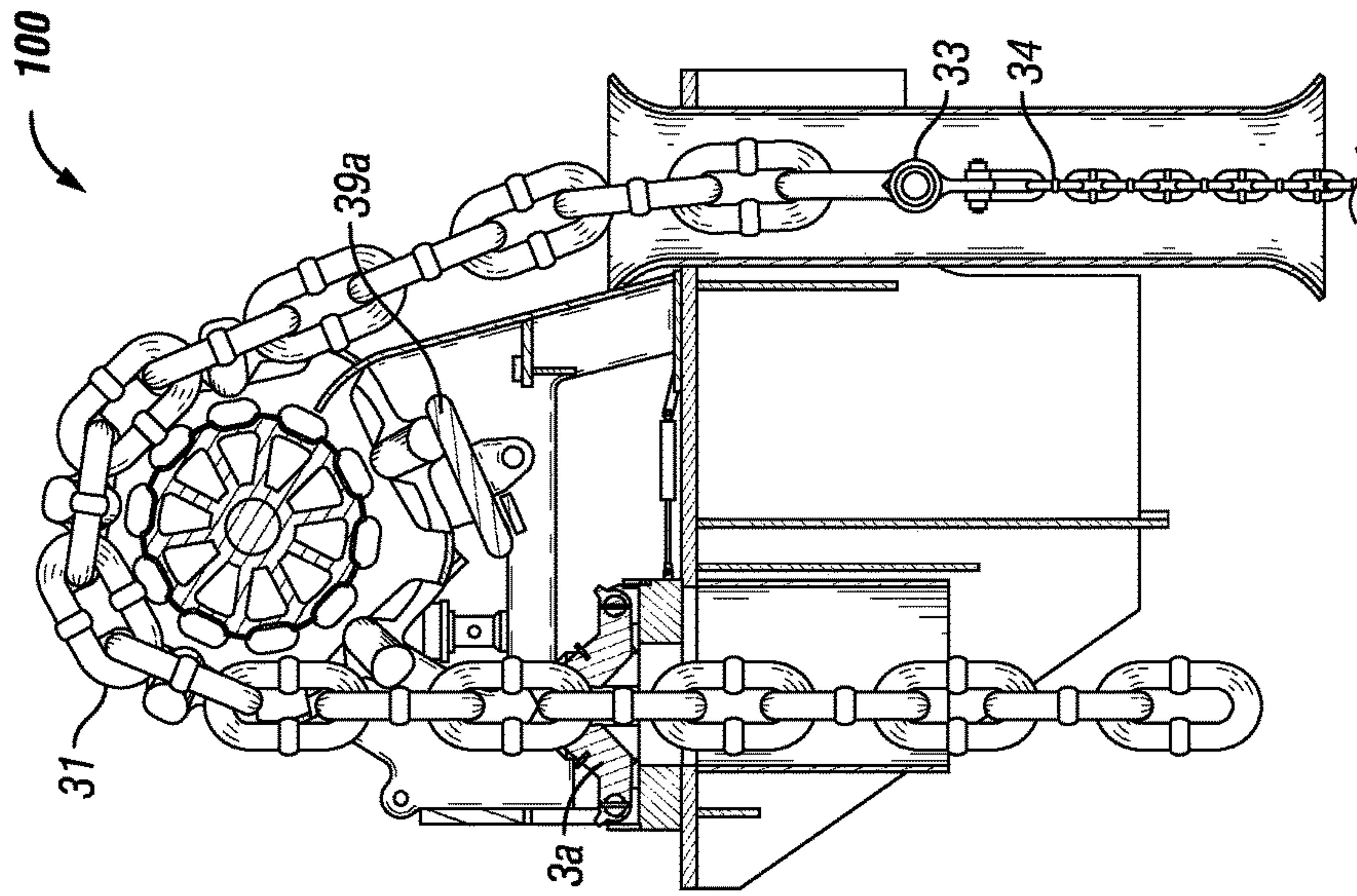


FIG. 10

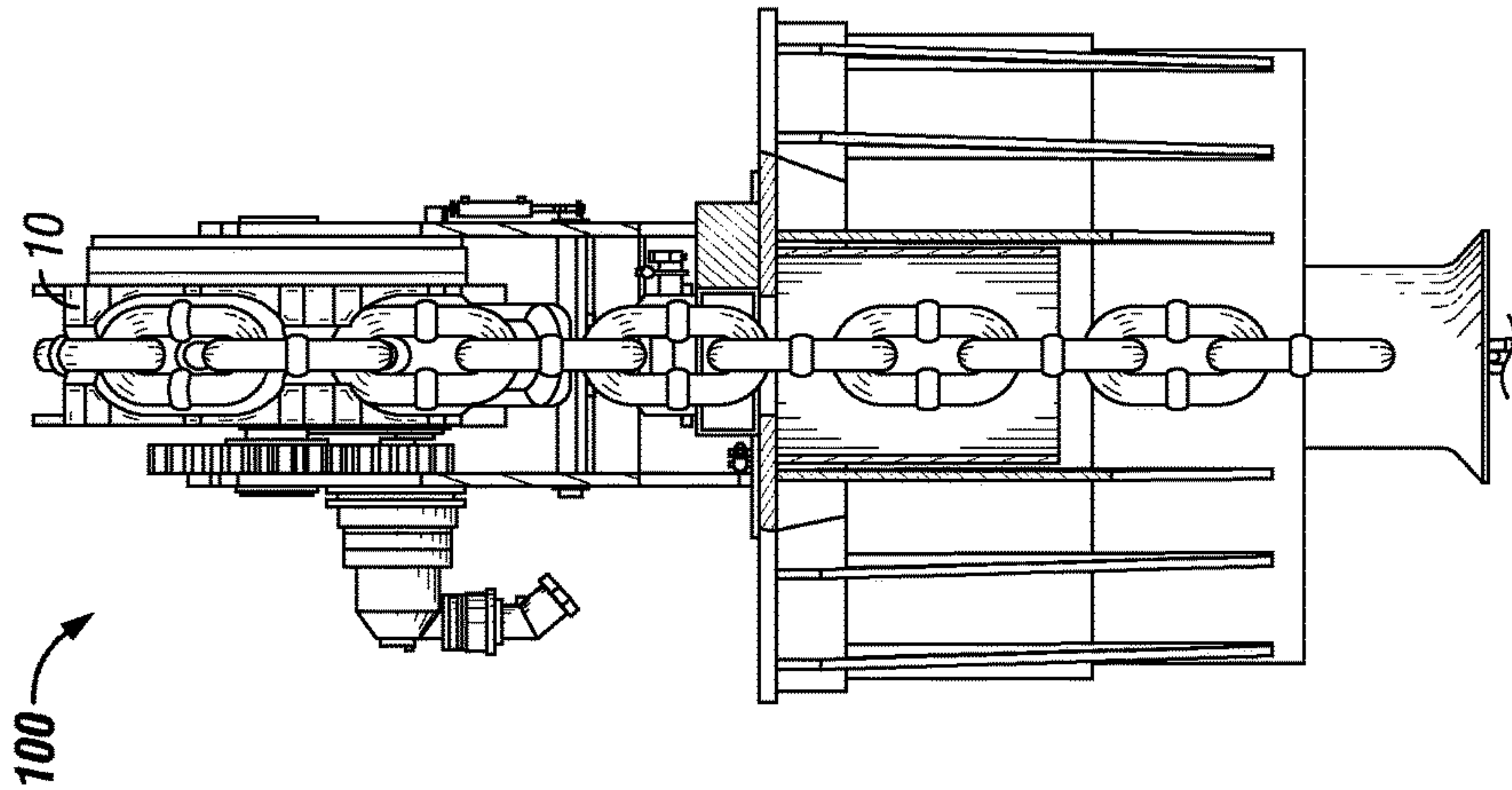


FIG. 9

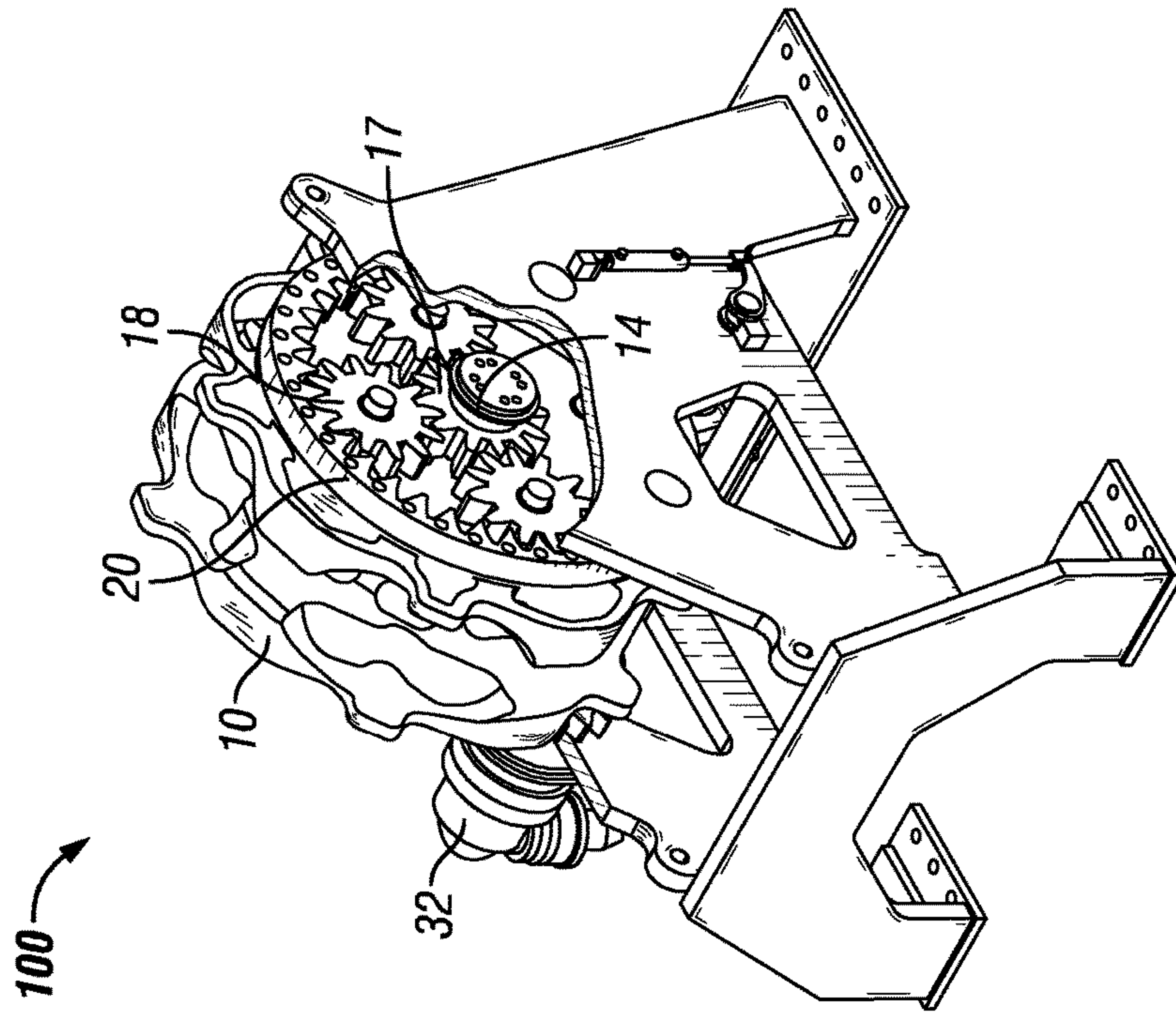


FIG. 12

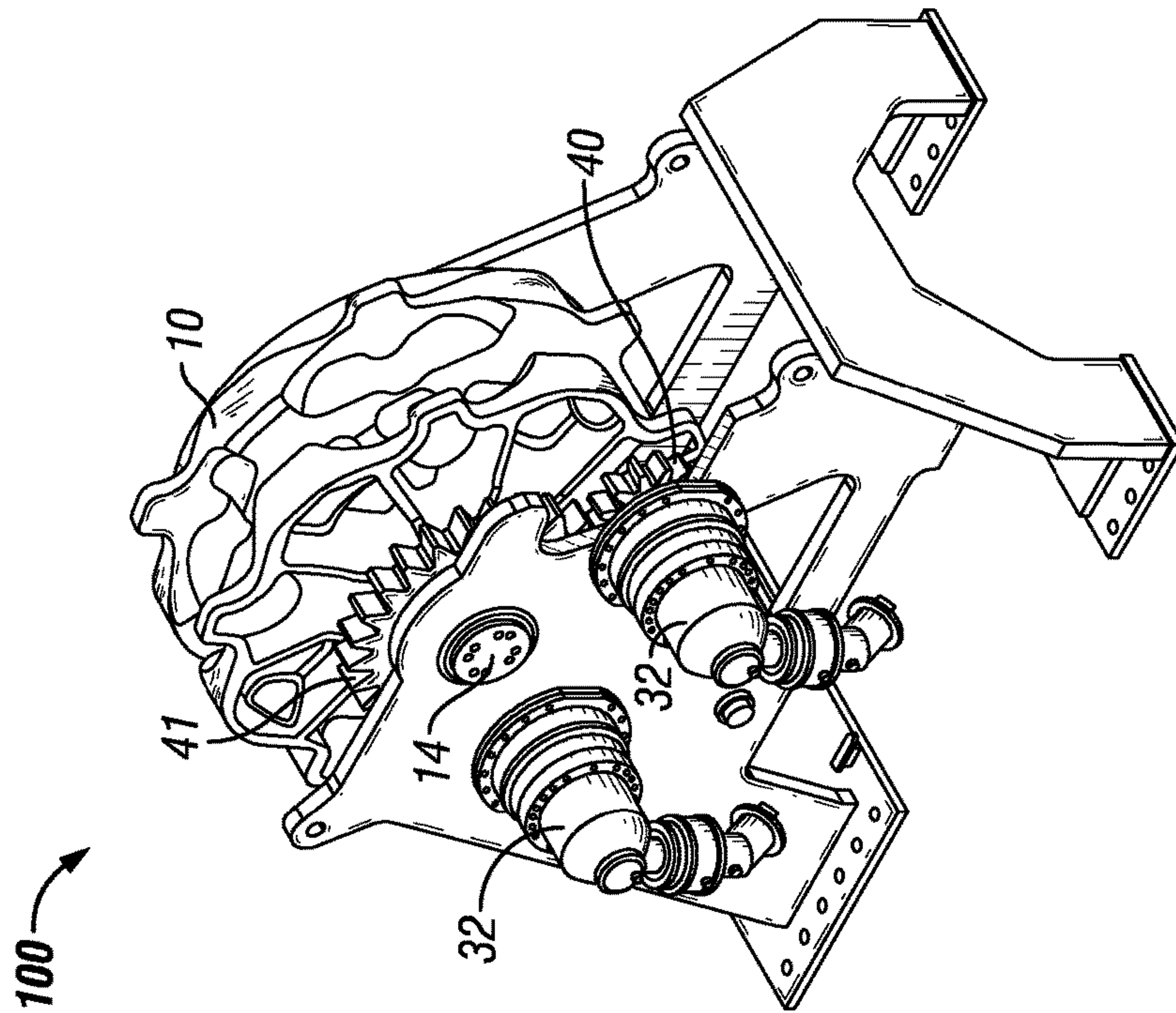


FIG. 11

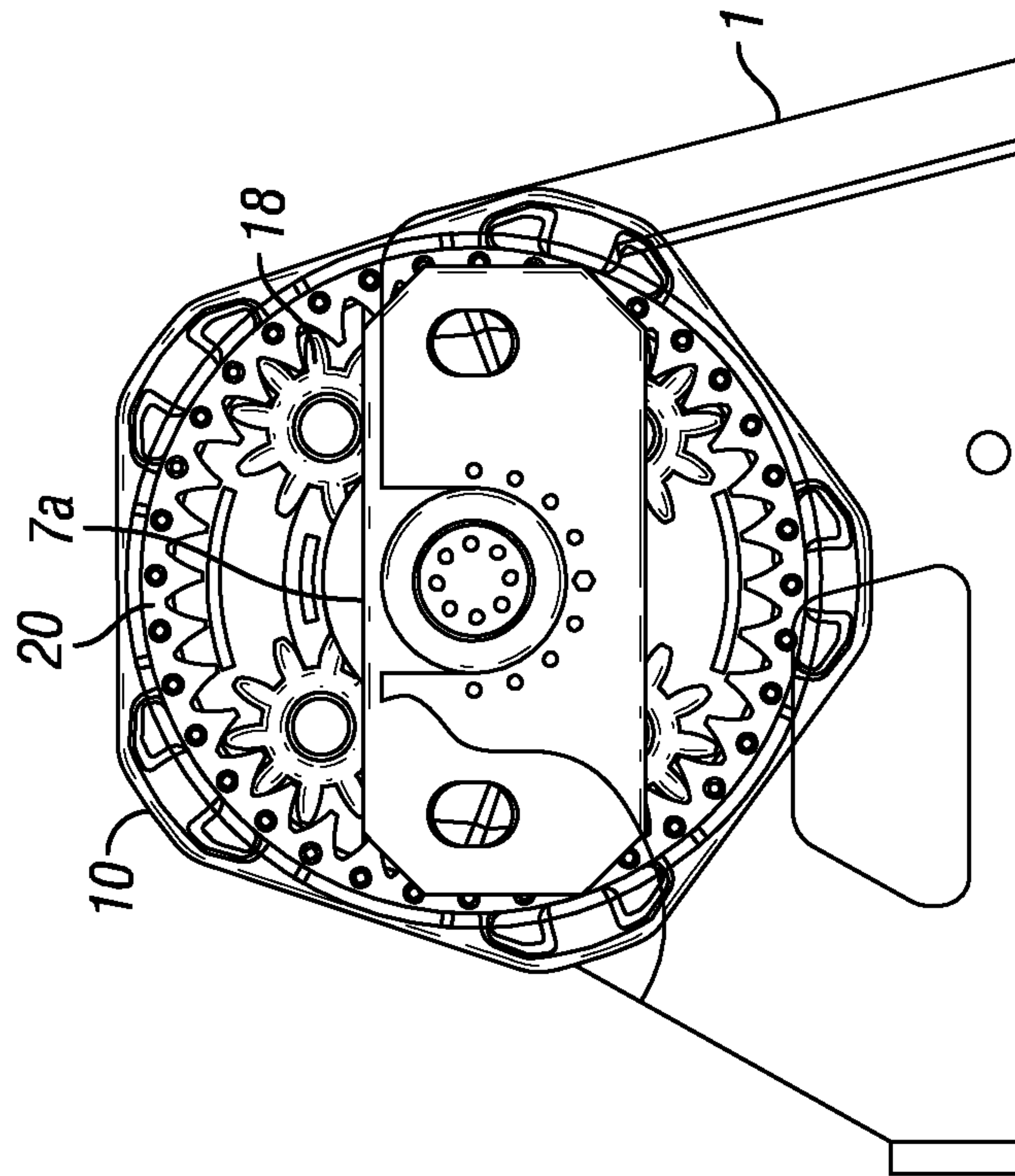


FIG. 13B

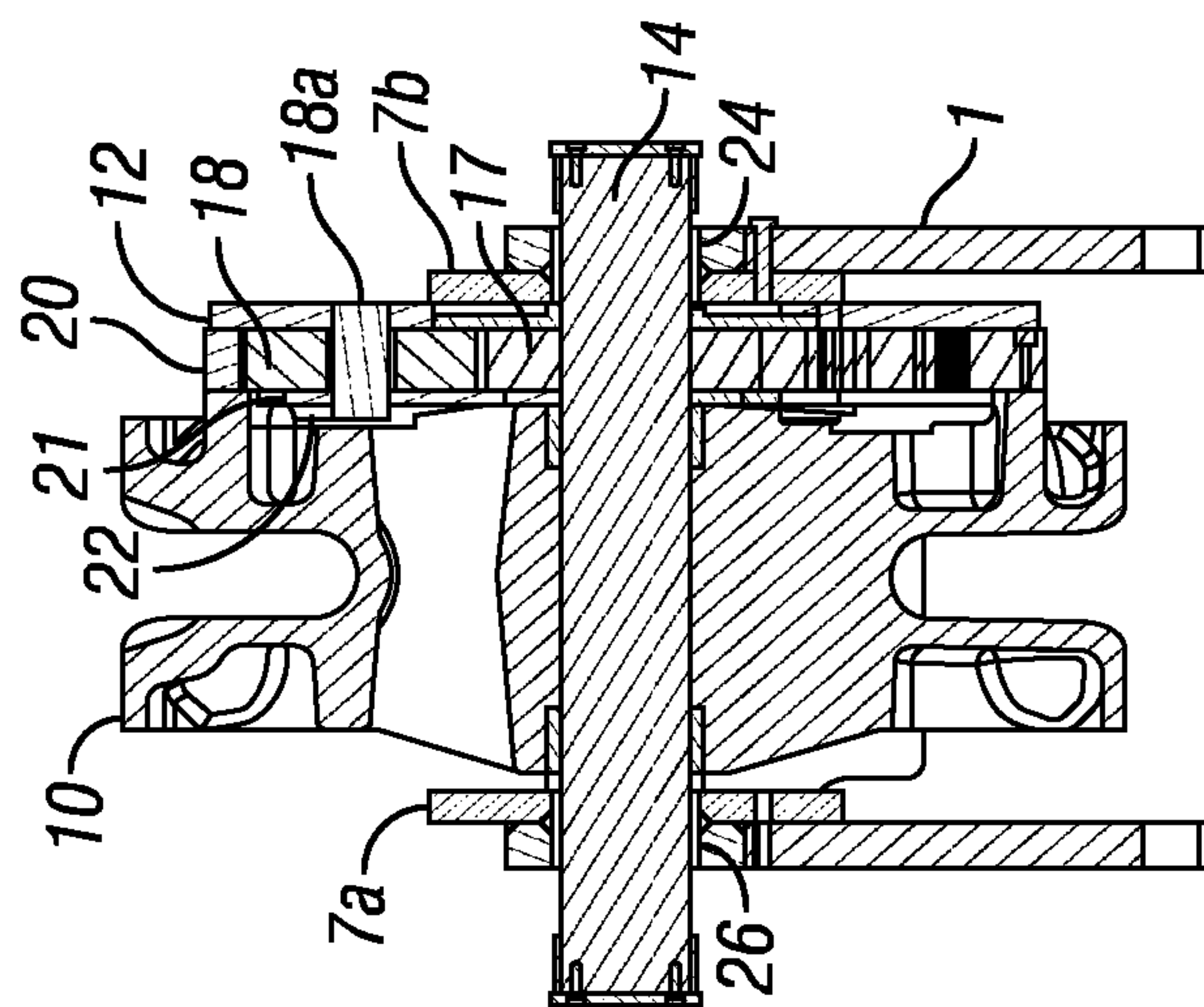


FIG. 13A

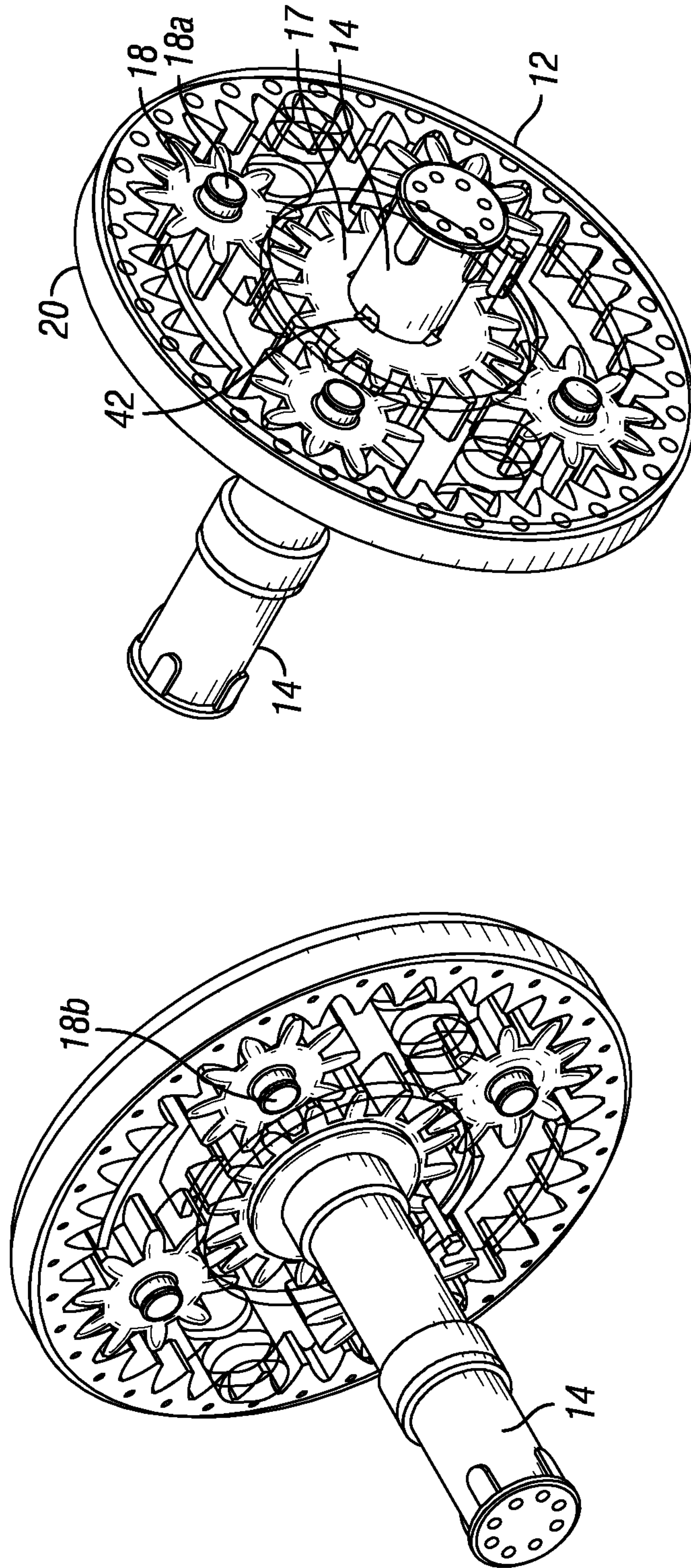


FIG. 14B

FIG. 14A

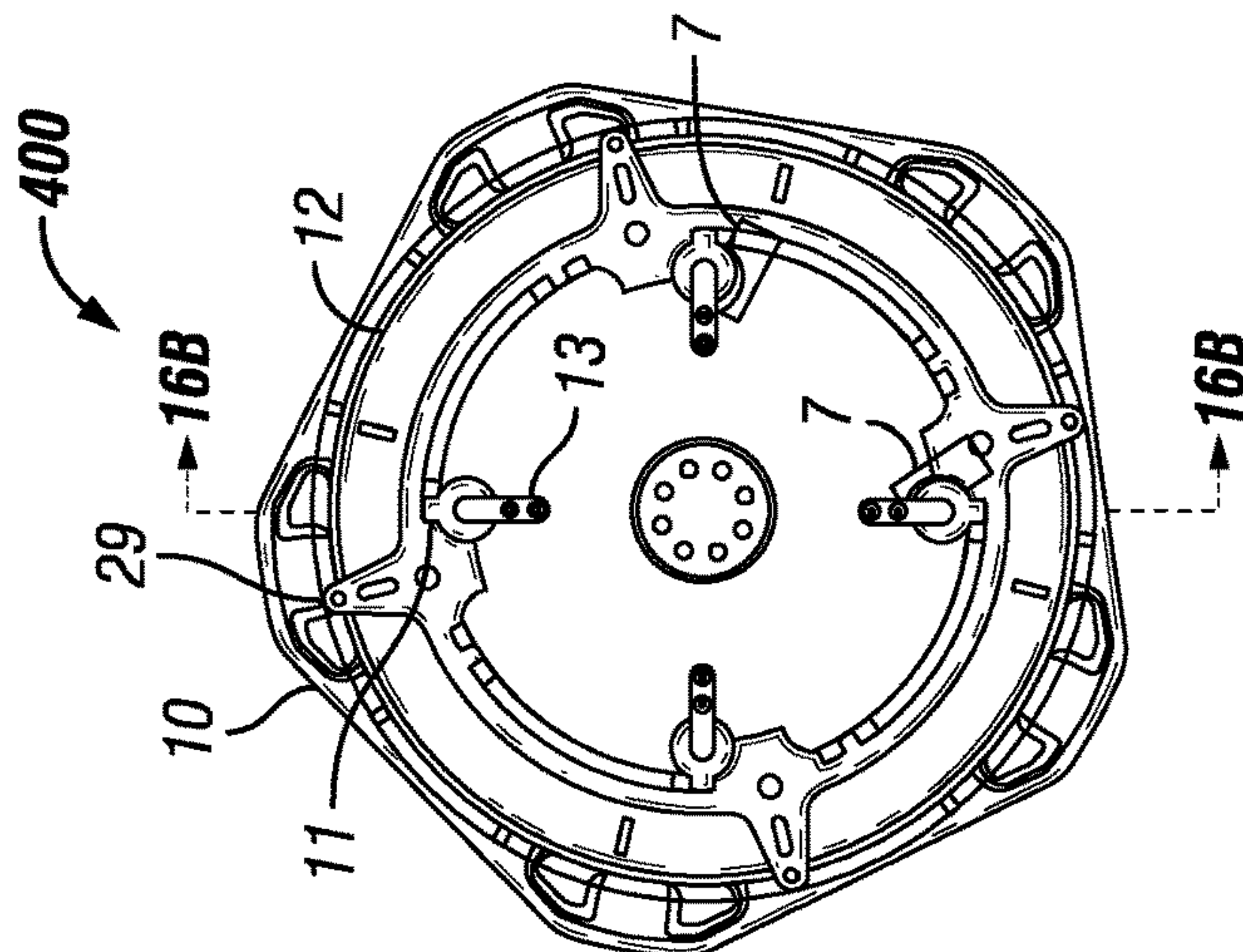


FIG. 16C

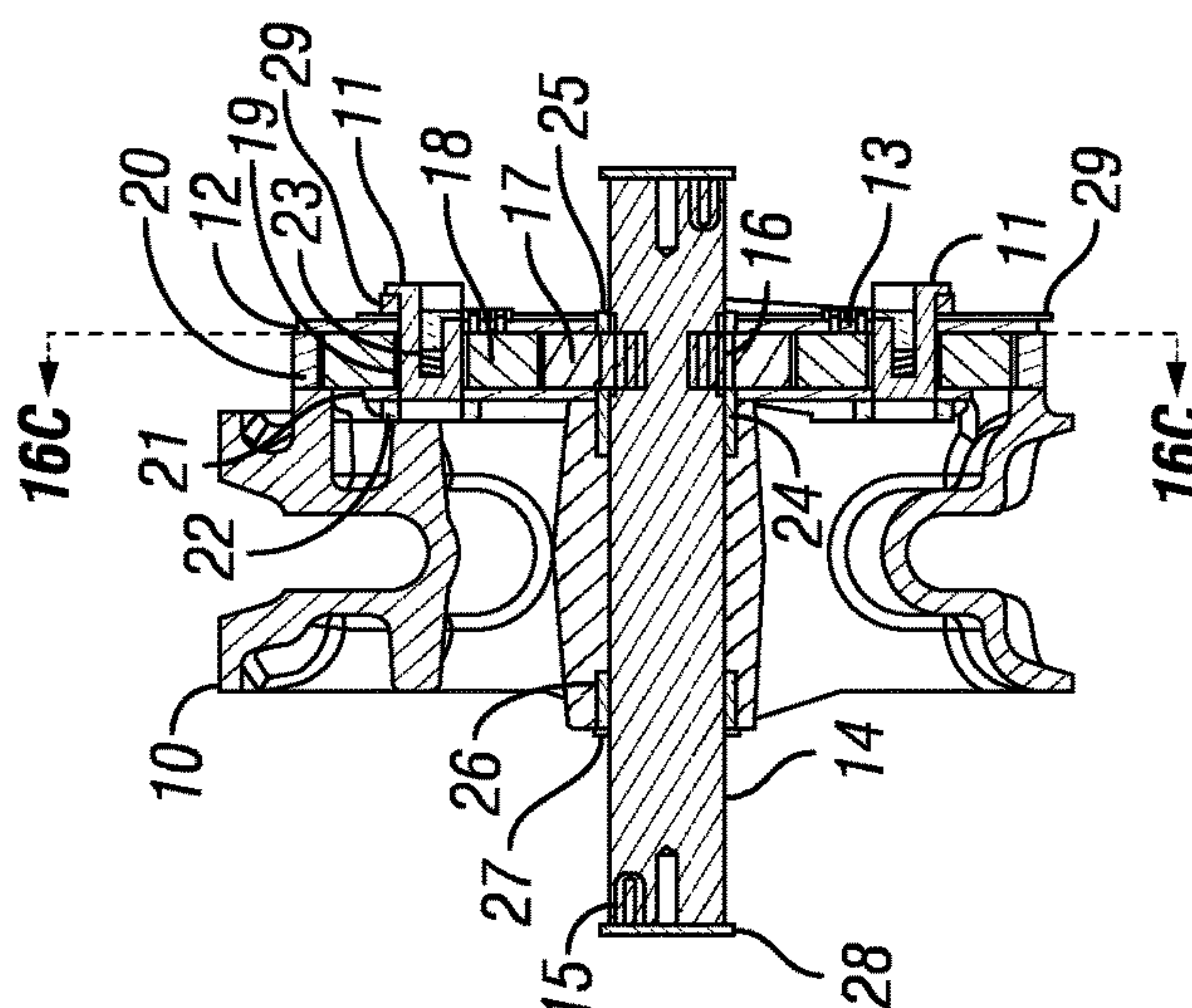


FIG. 16B

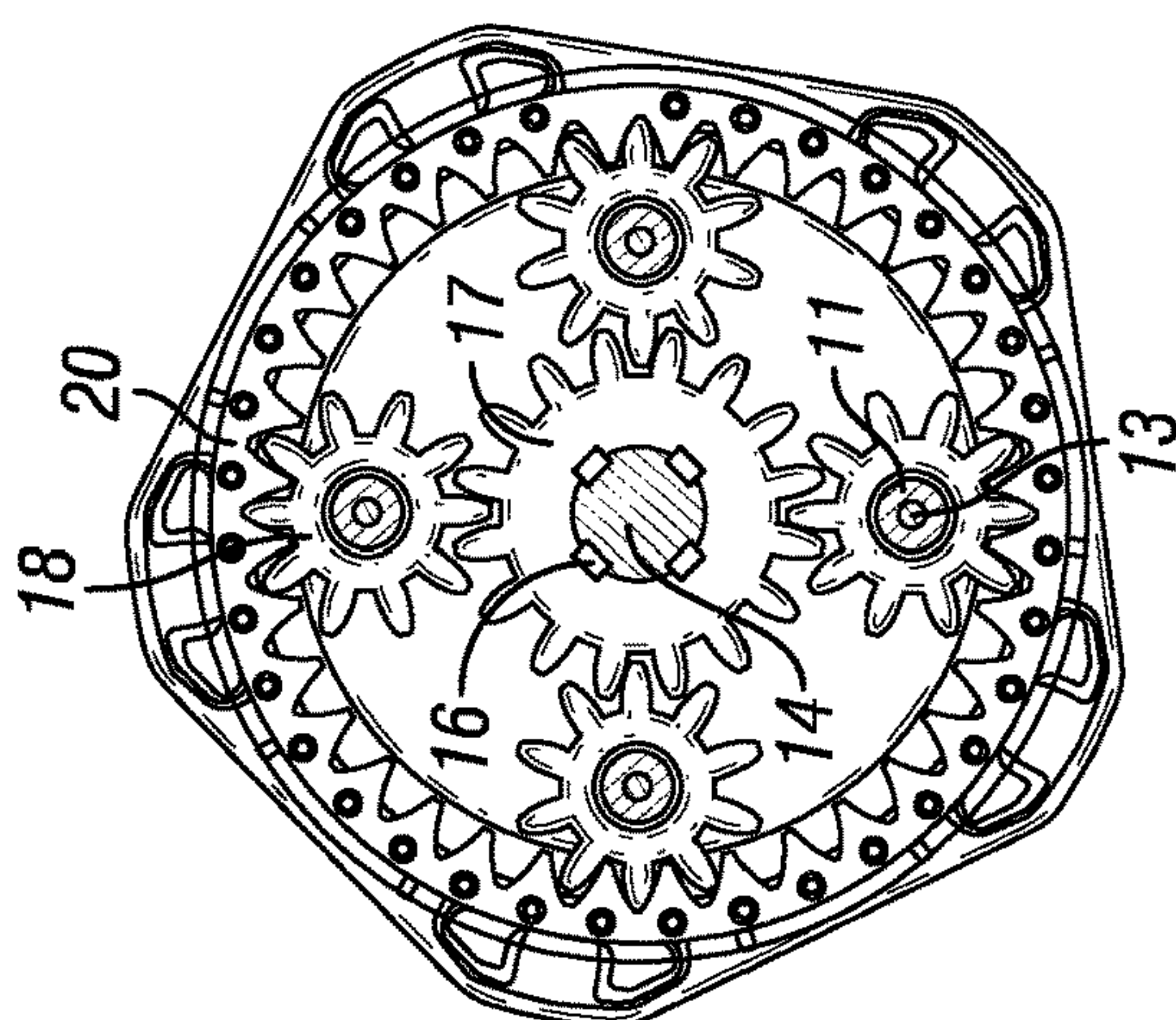


FIG. 16A

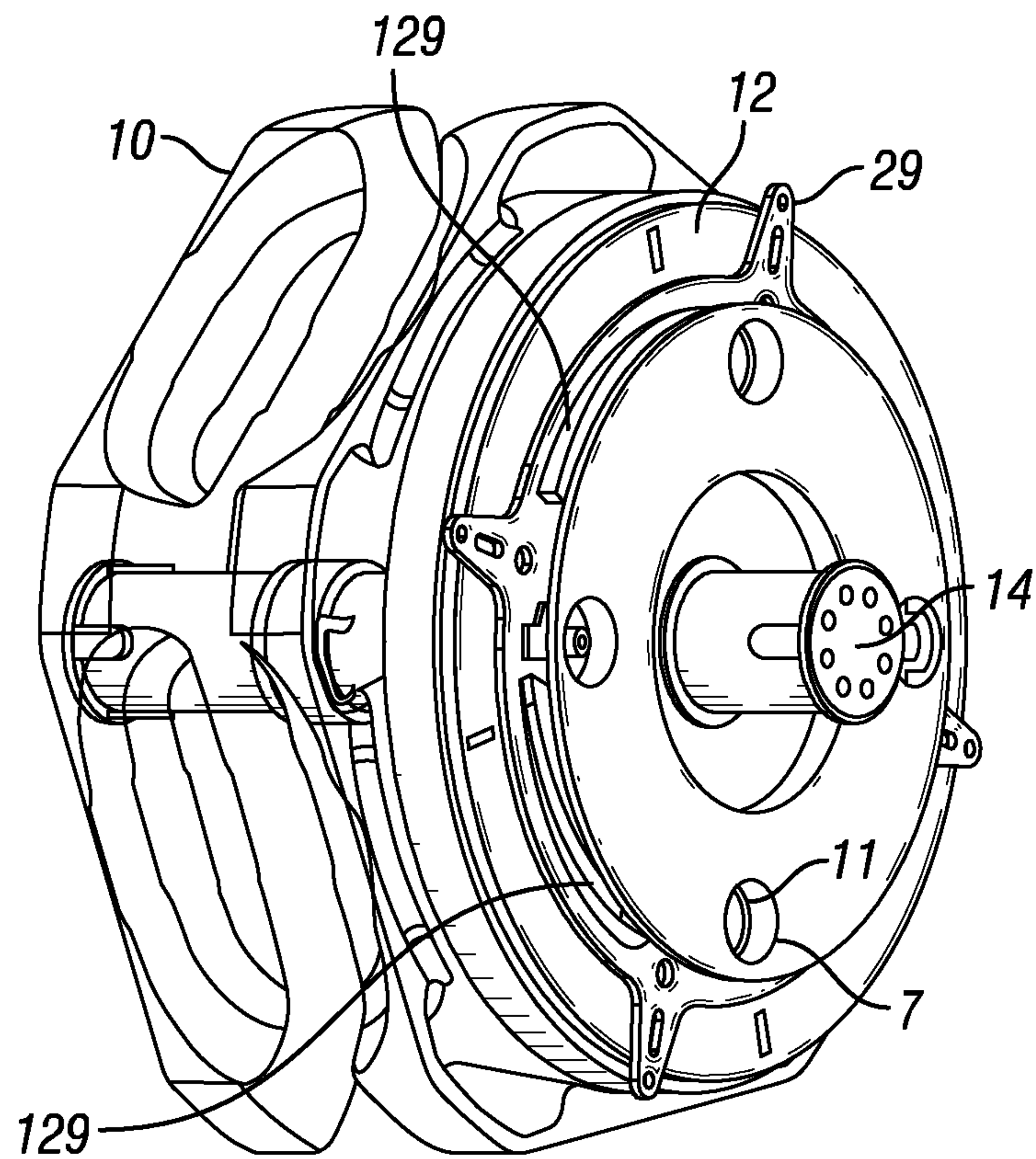


FIG. 17A

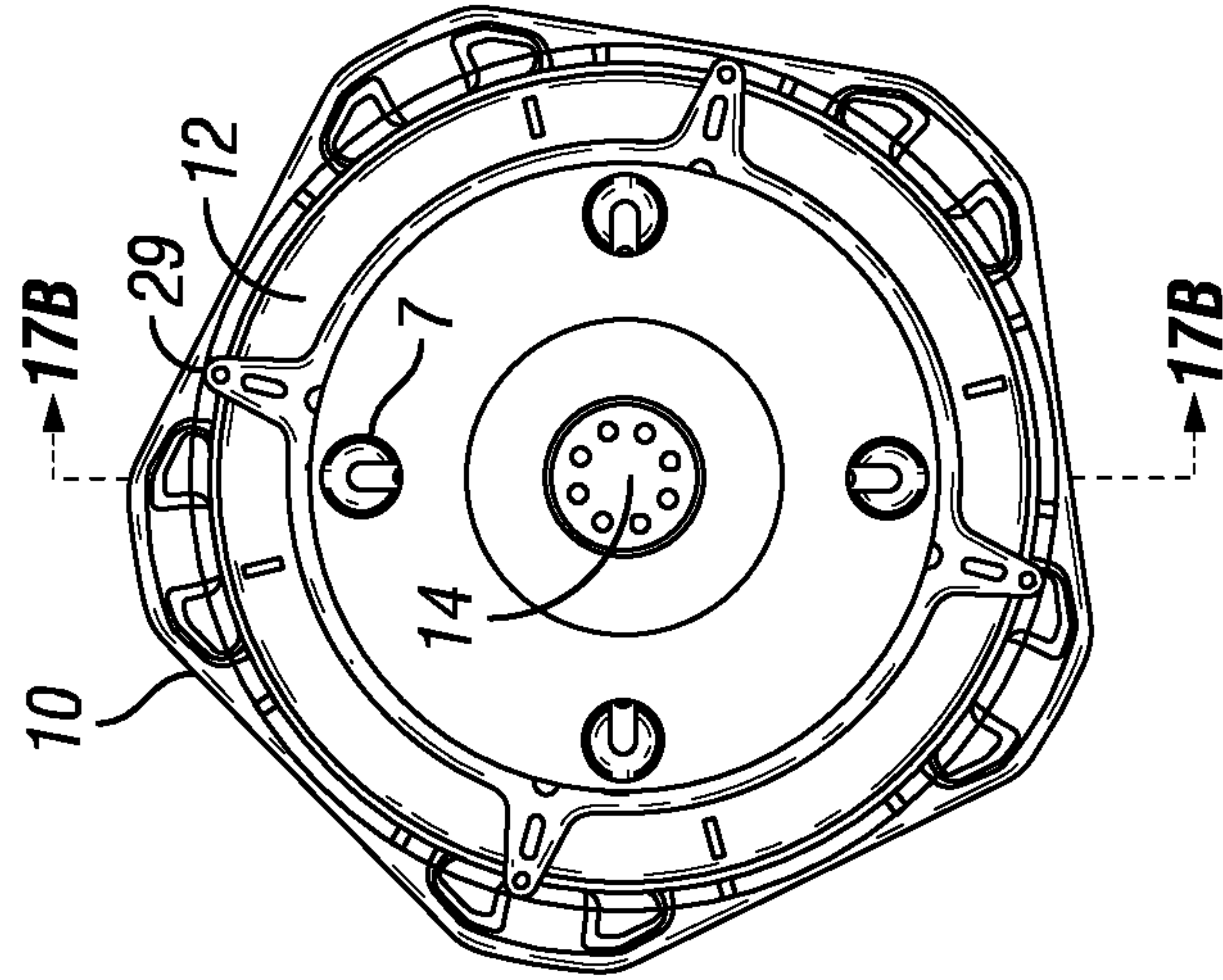


FIG. 17C

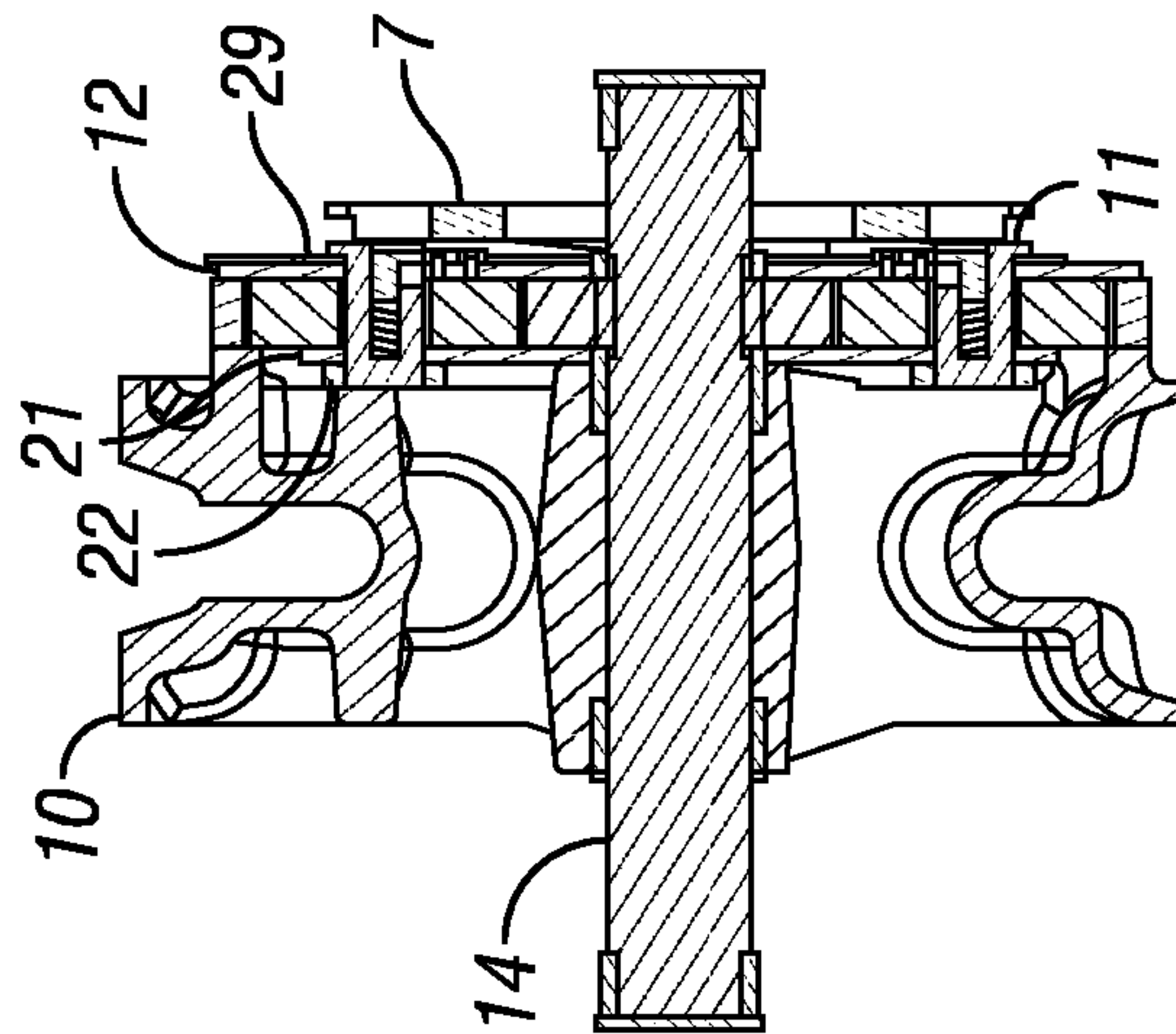


FIG. 17B

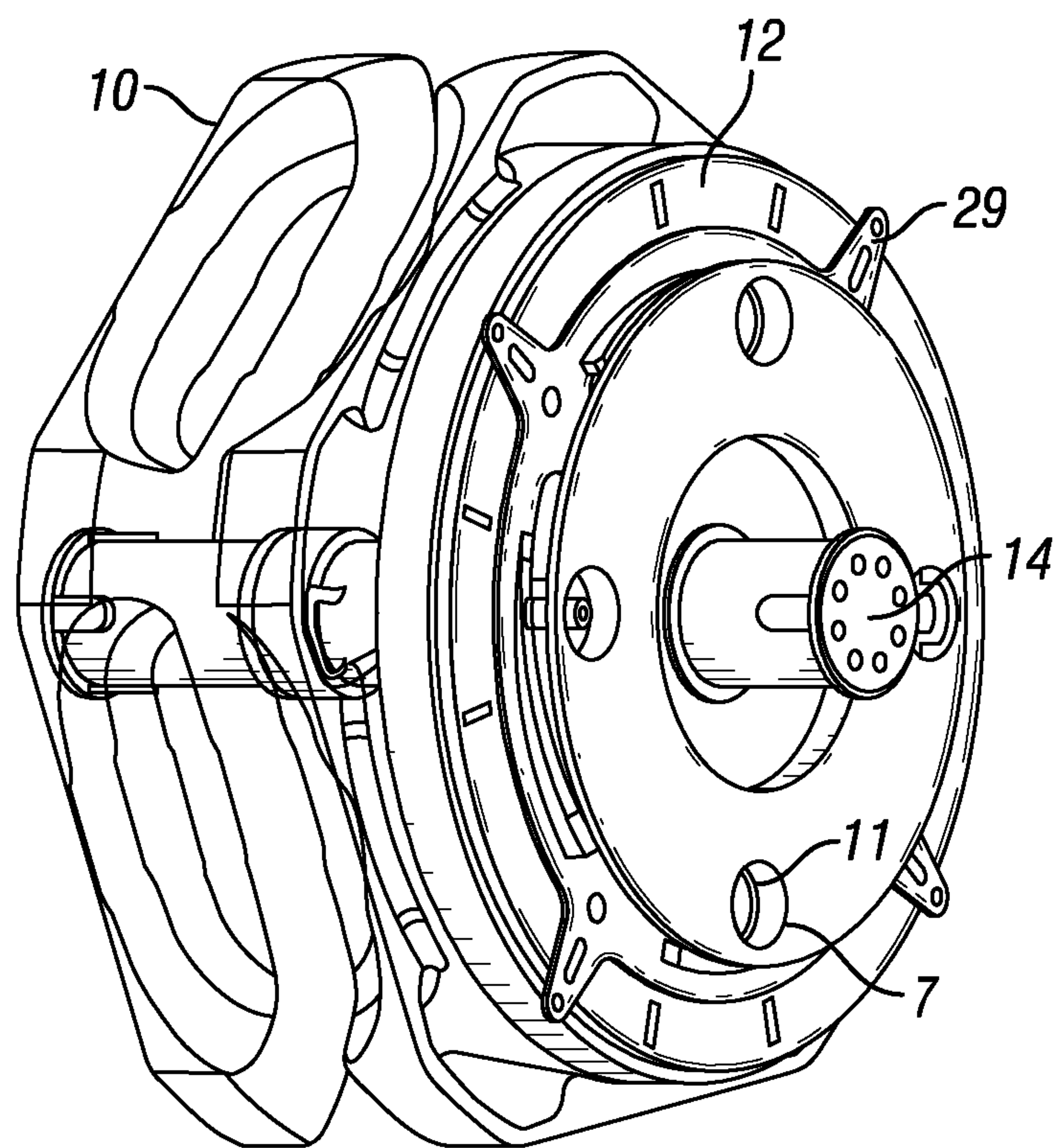


FIG. 18A

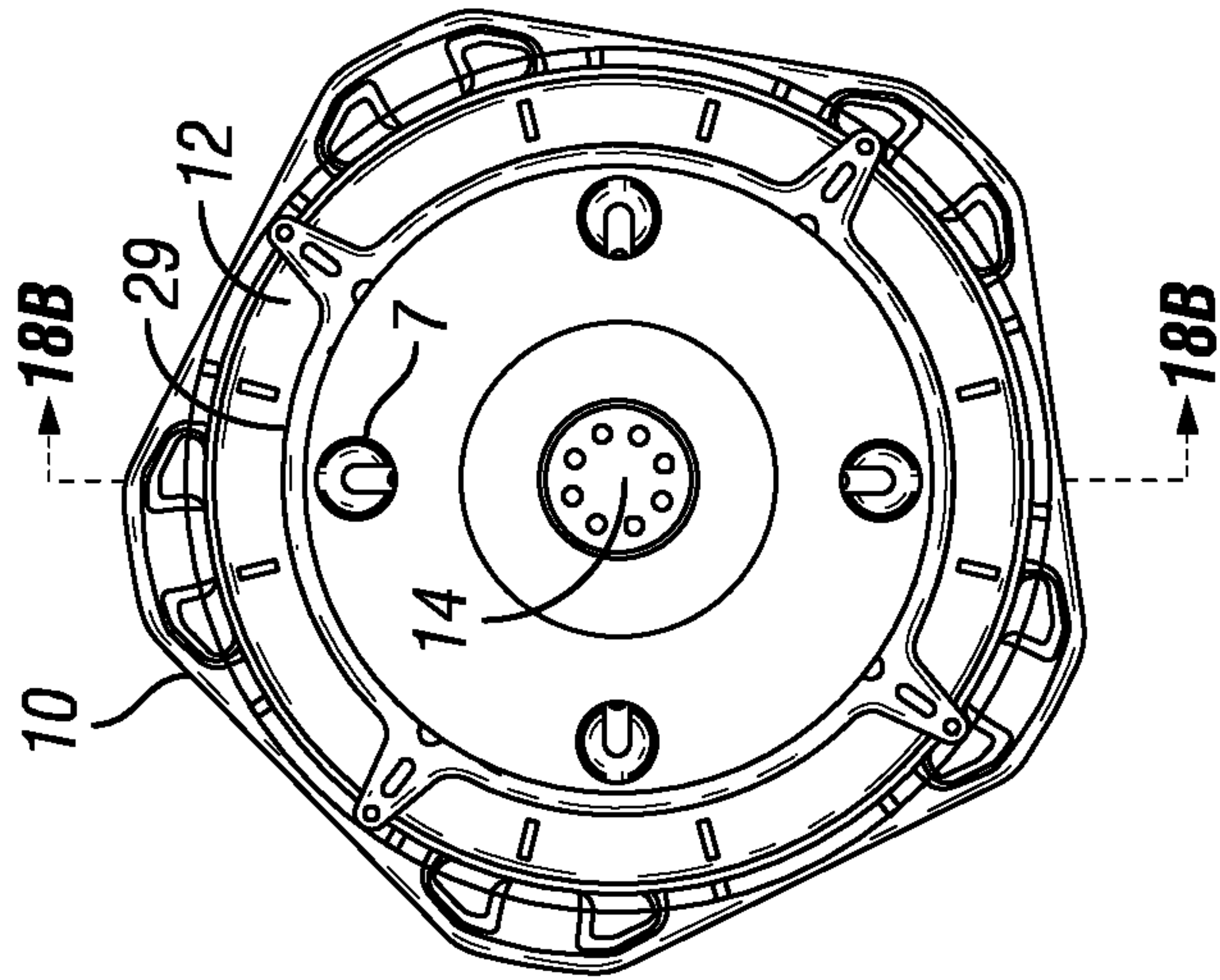


FIG. 18C

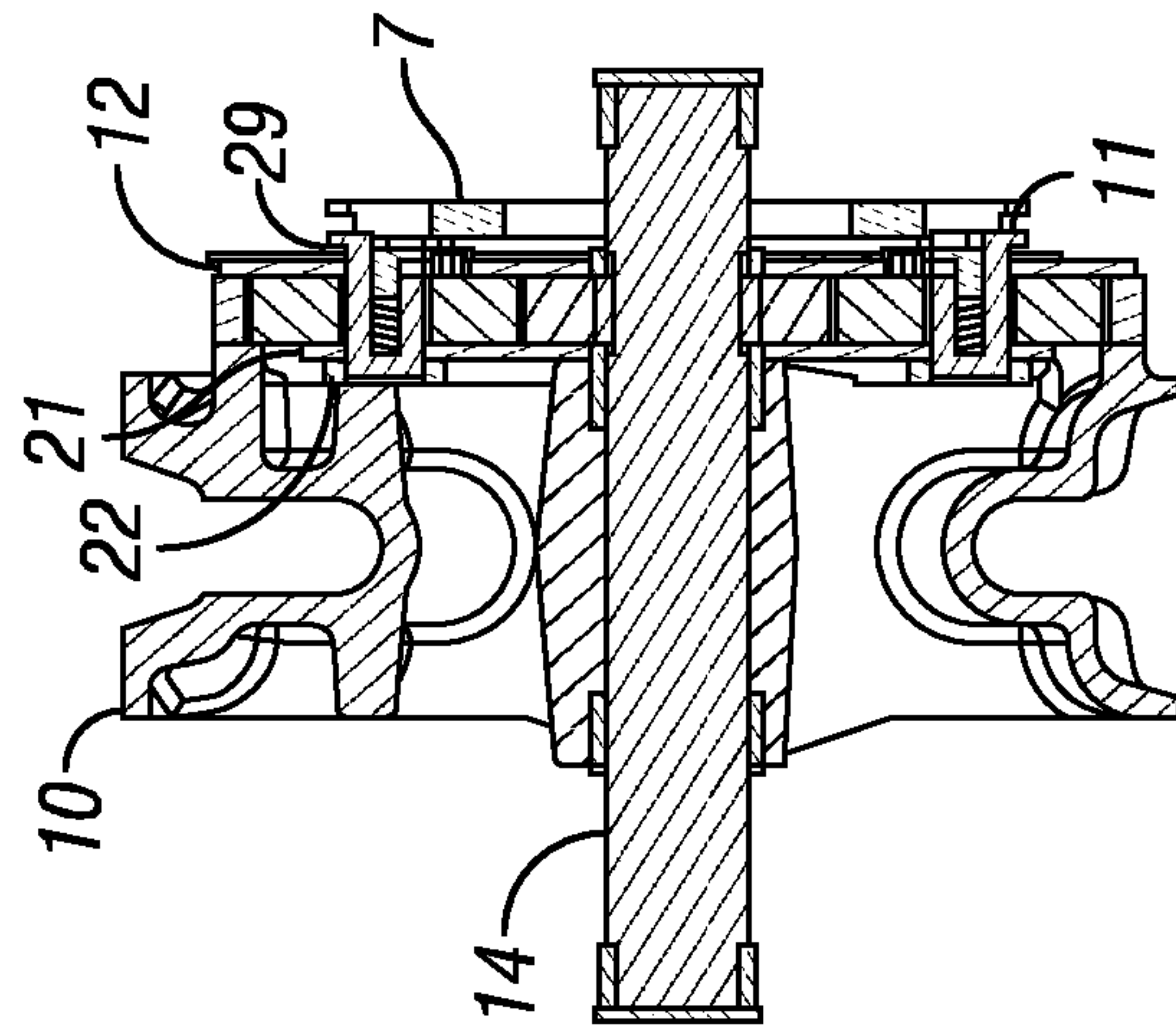


FIG. 18B

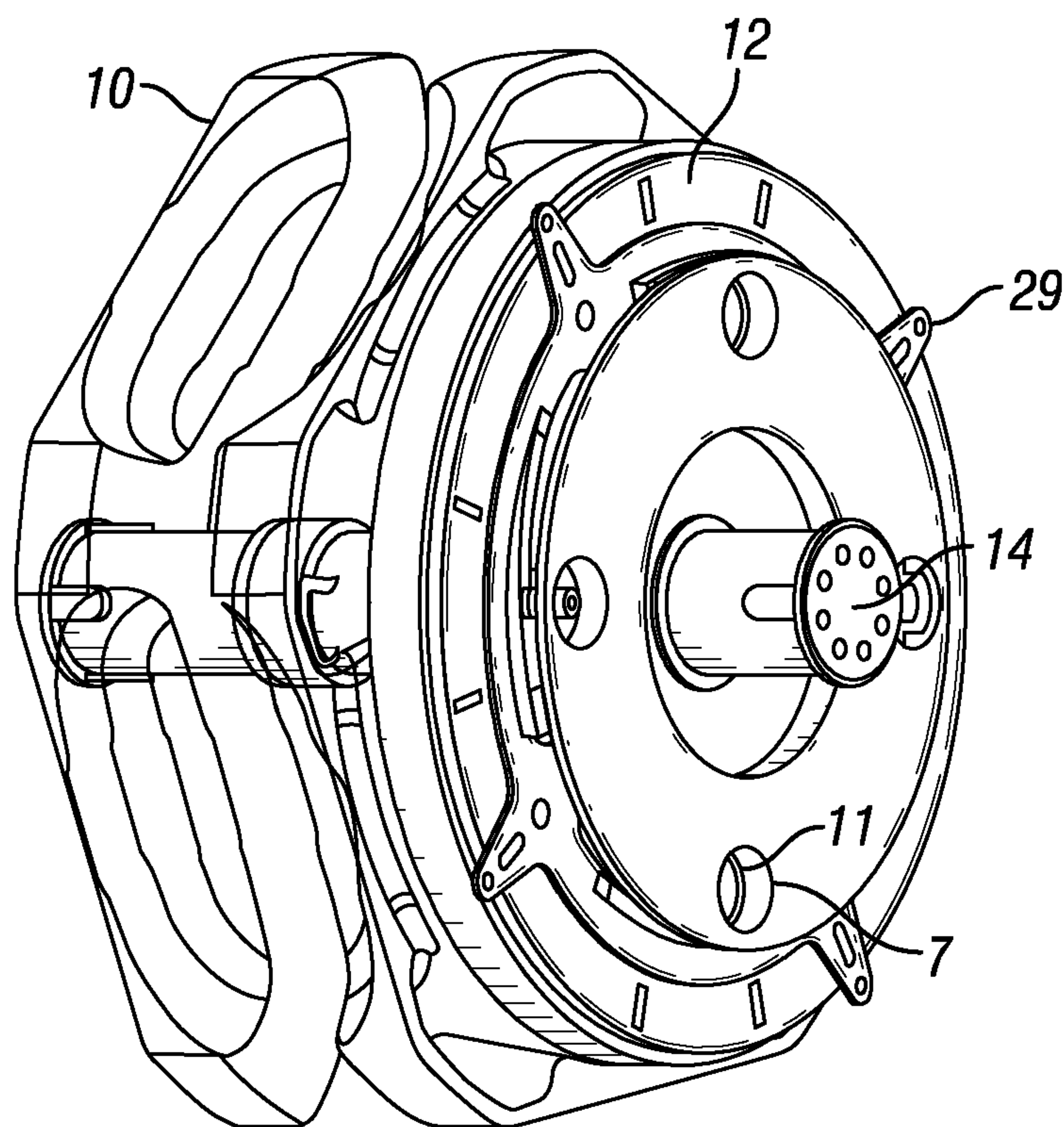


FIG. 19A

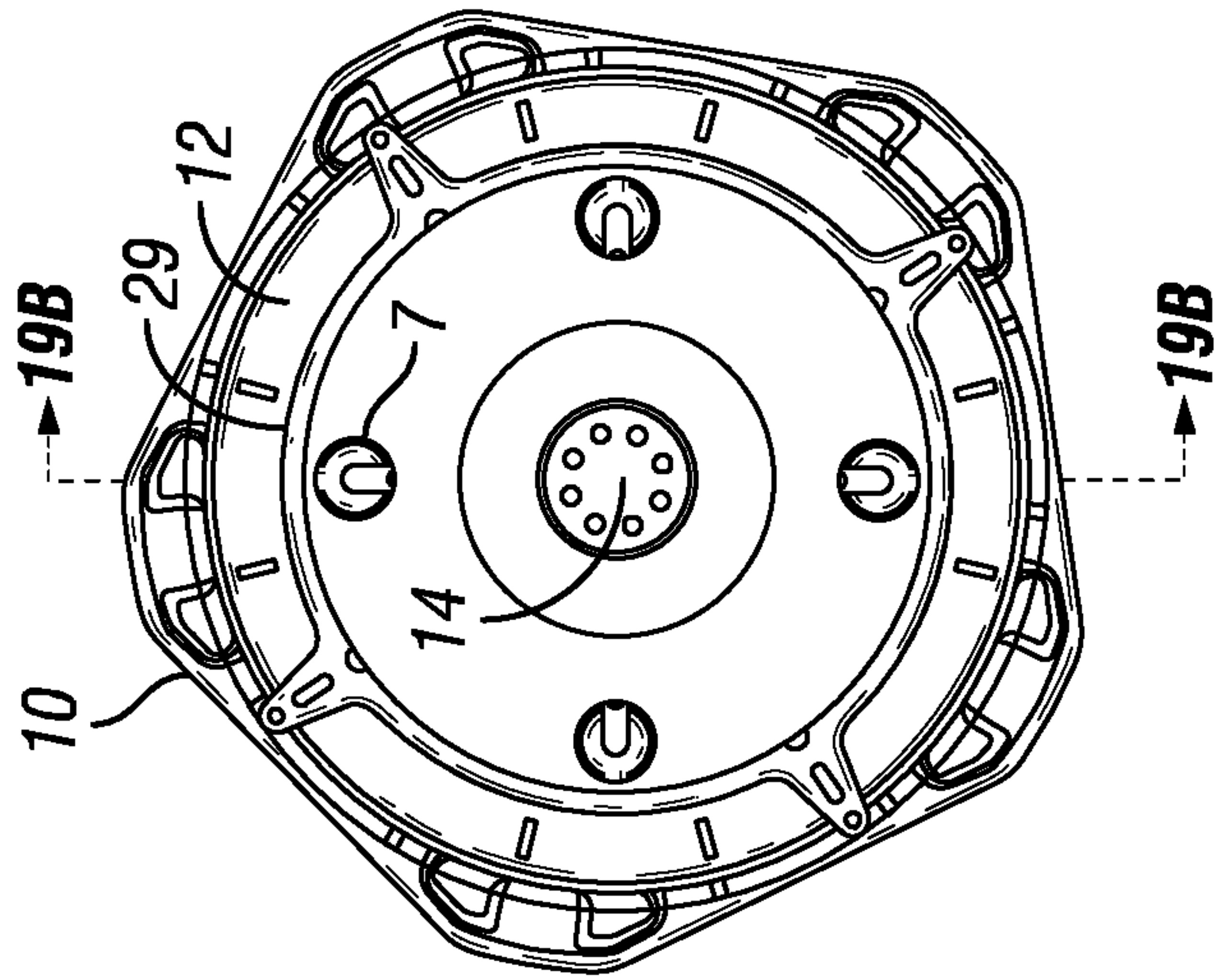


FIG. 19C

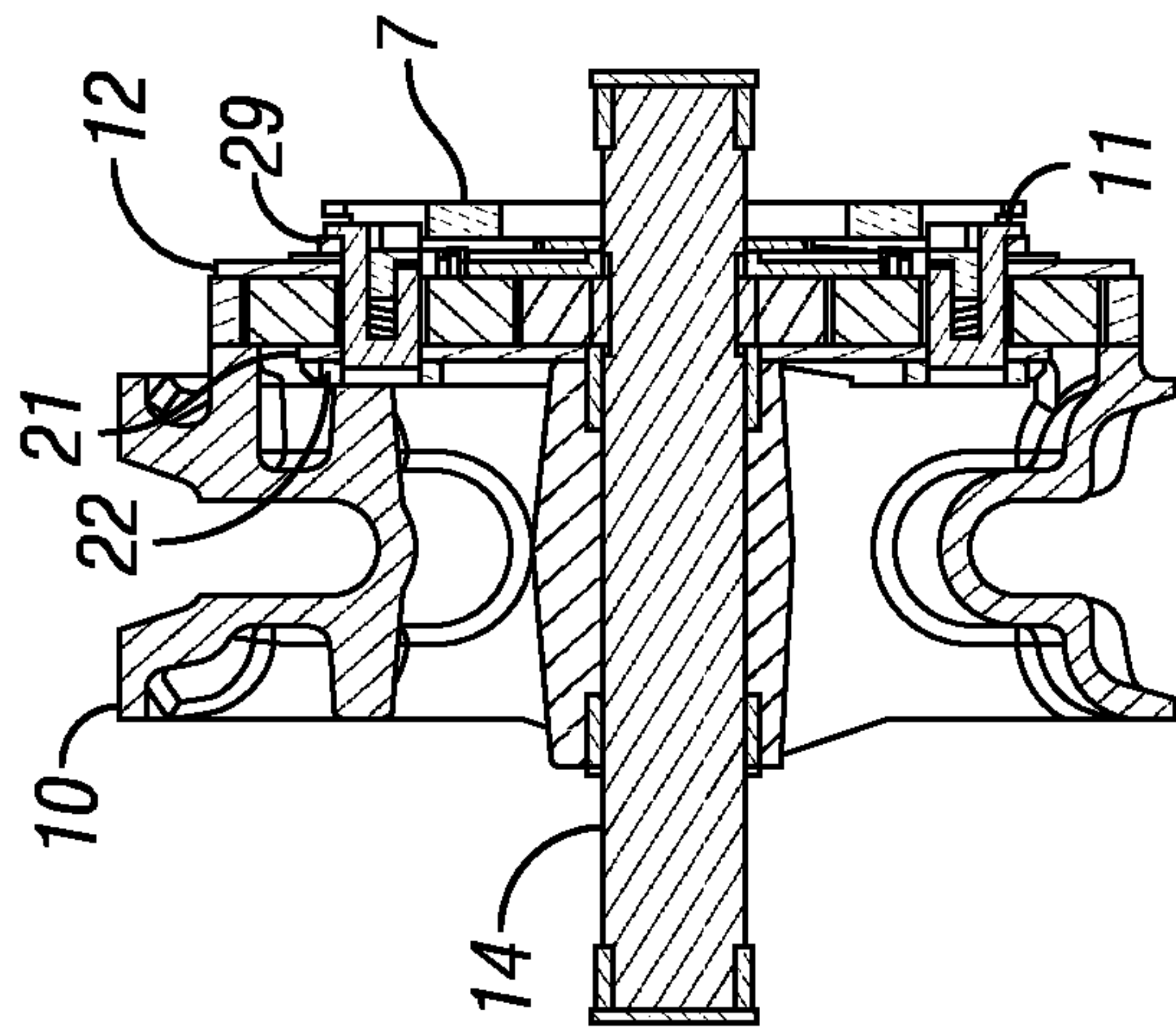


FIG. 19B

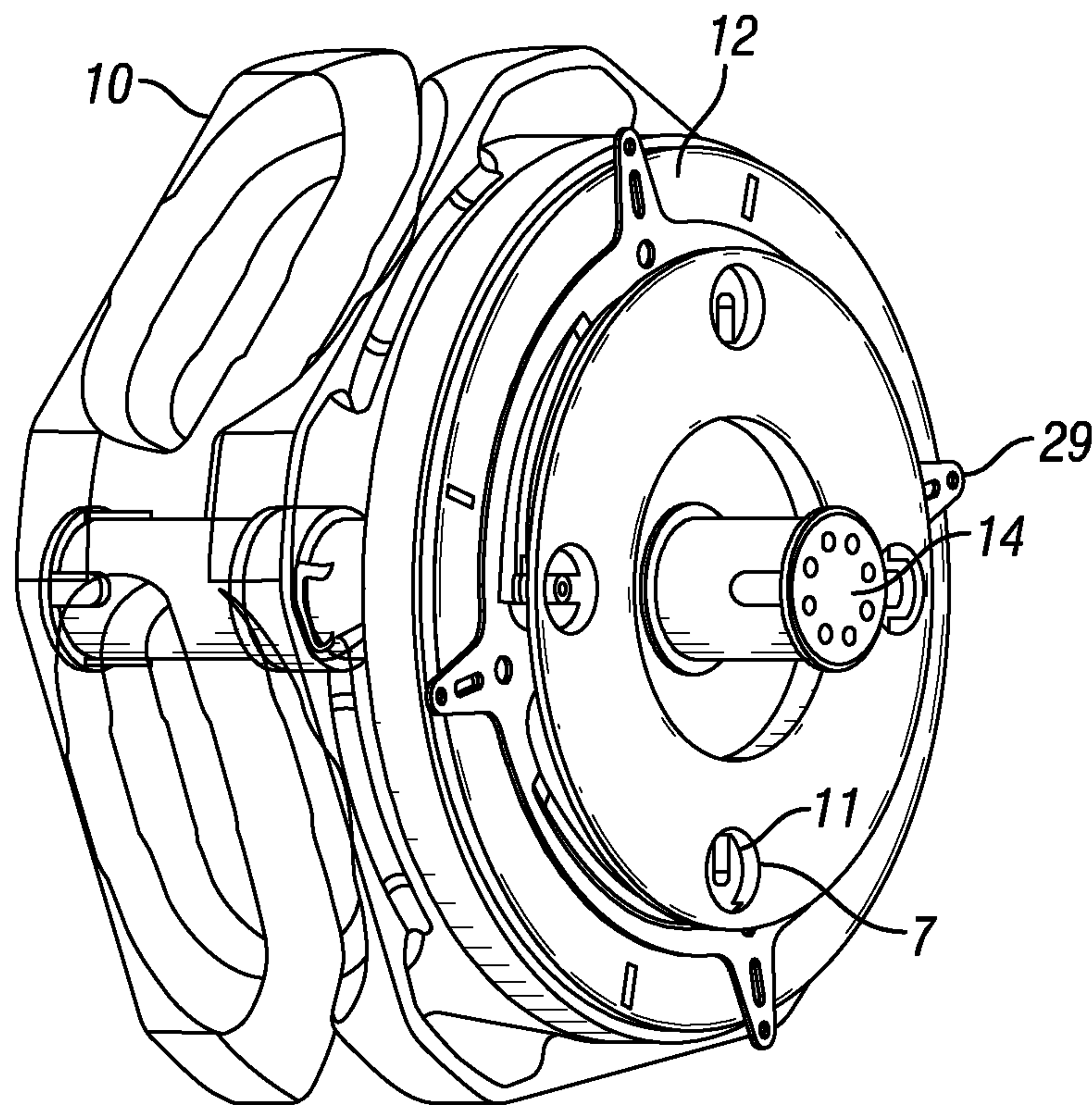


FIG. 20A

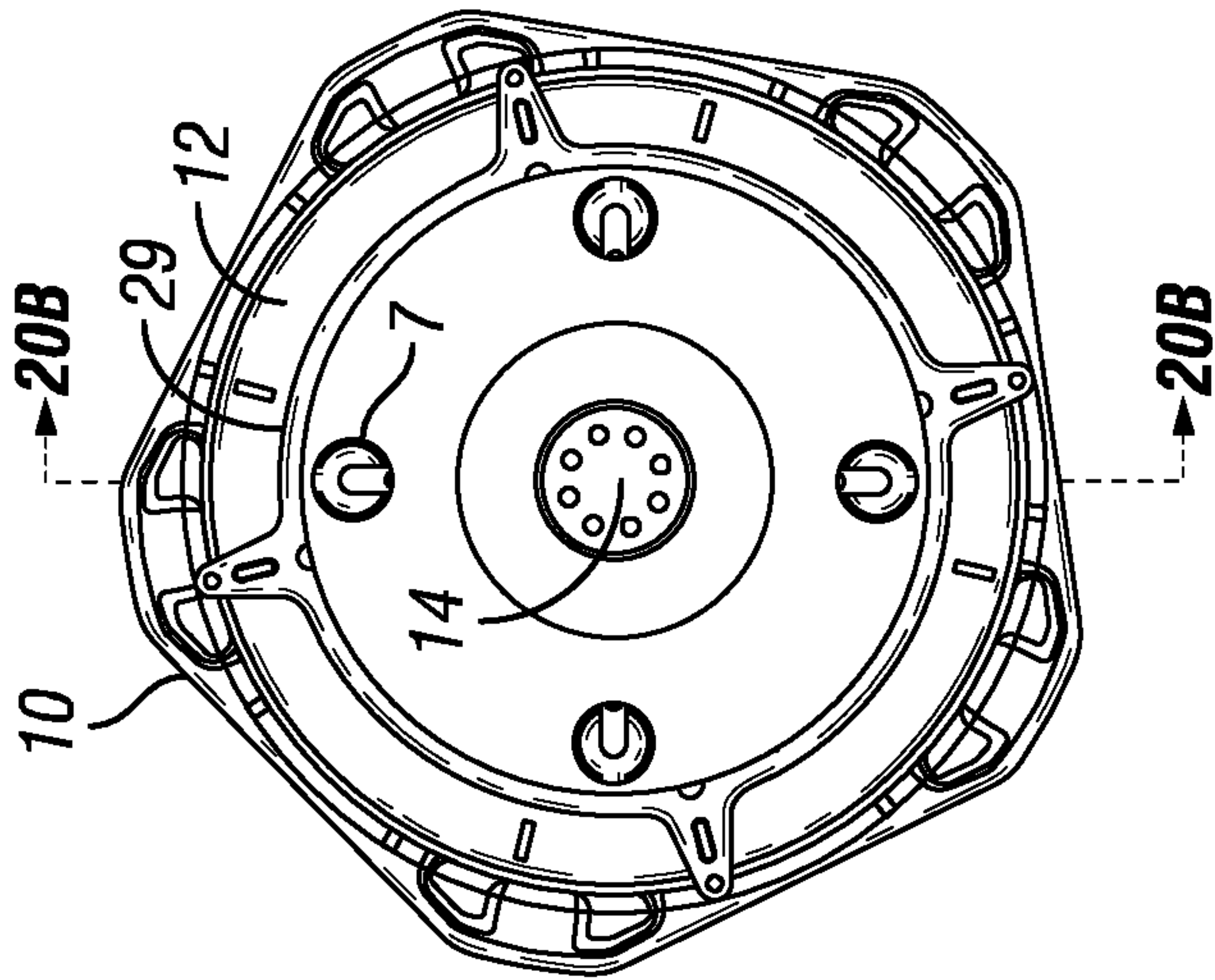


FIG. 20C

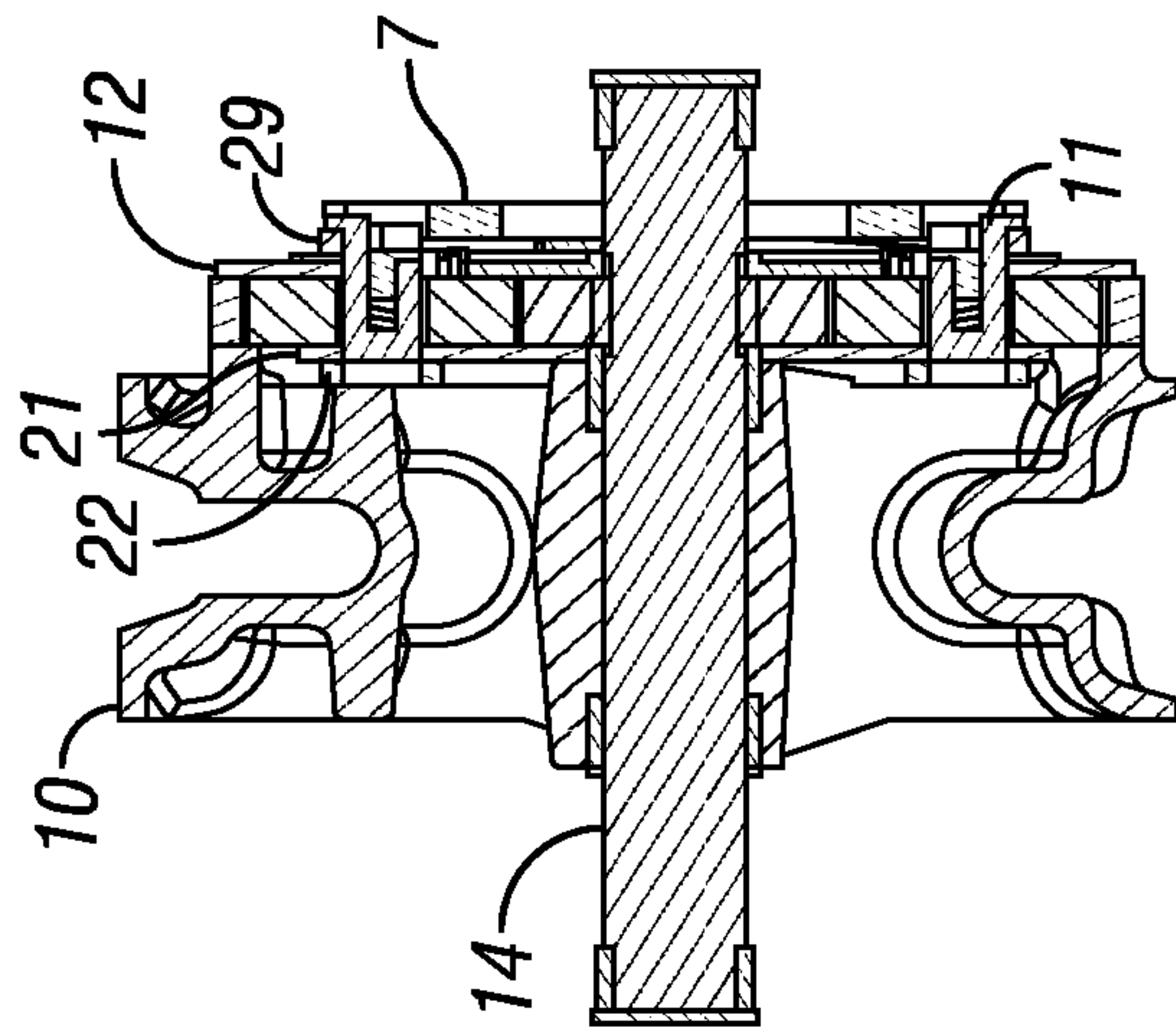


FIG. 20B

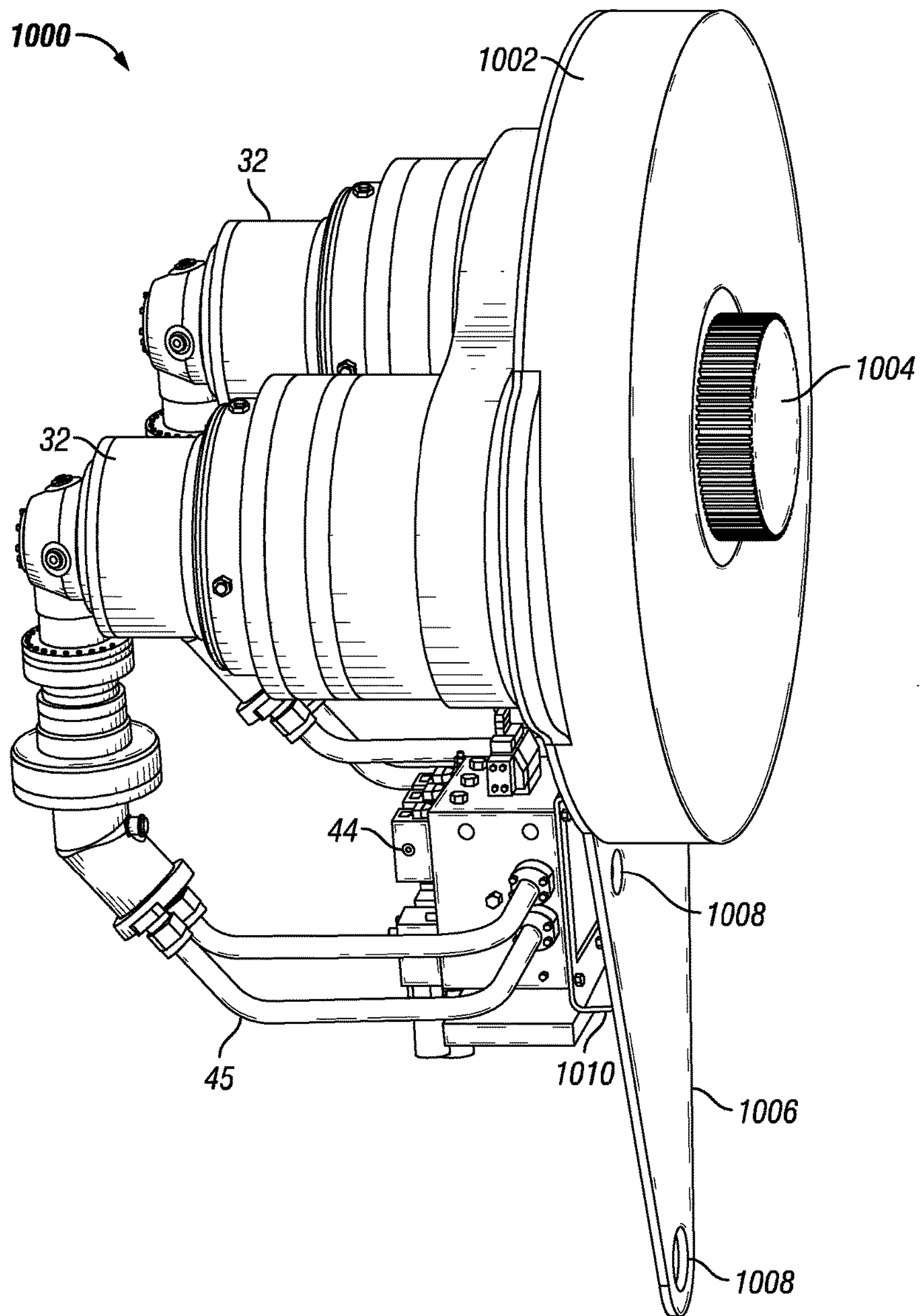


FIG. 21A

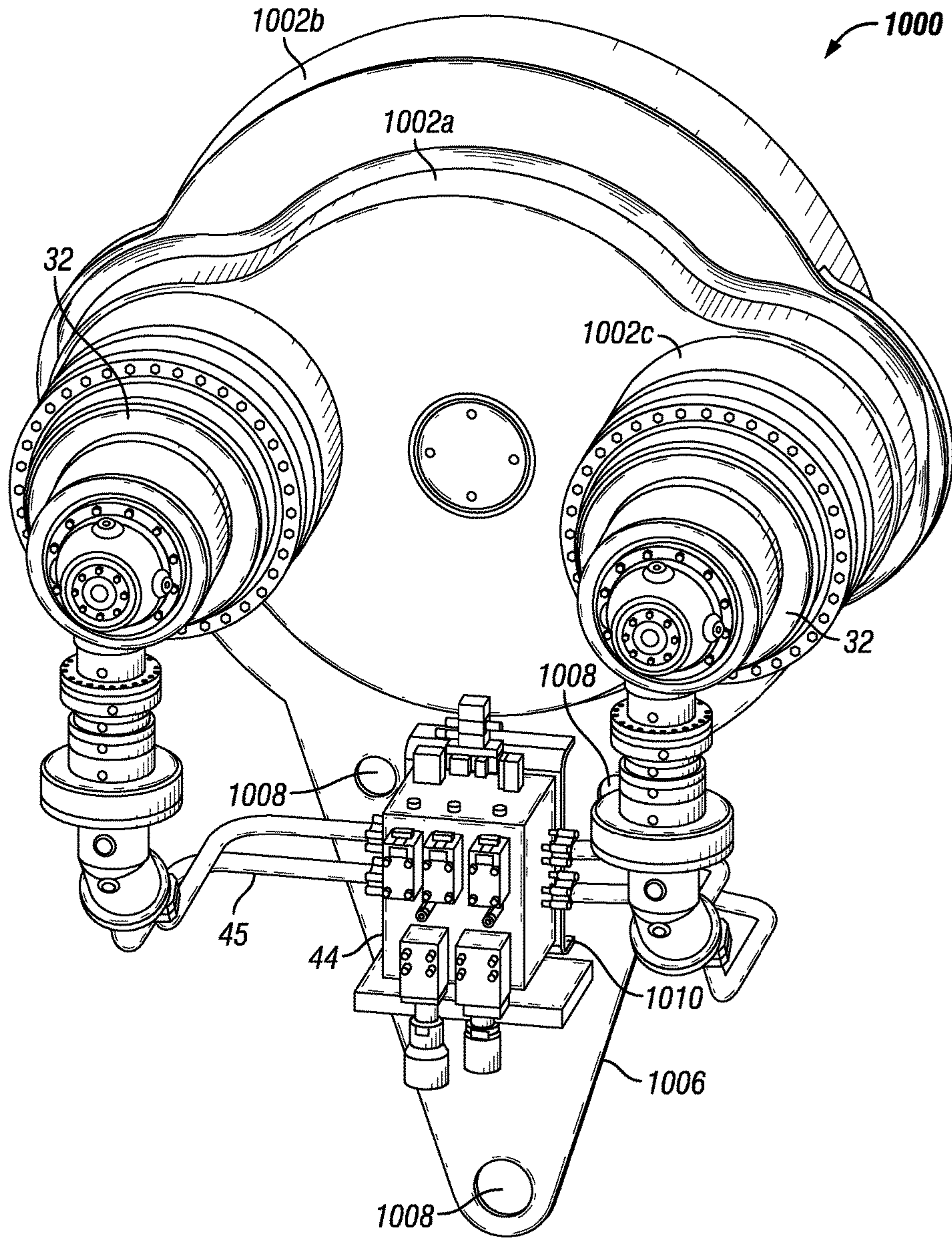


FIG. 21B

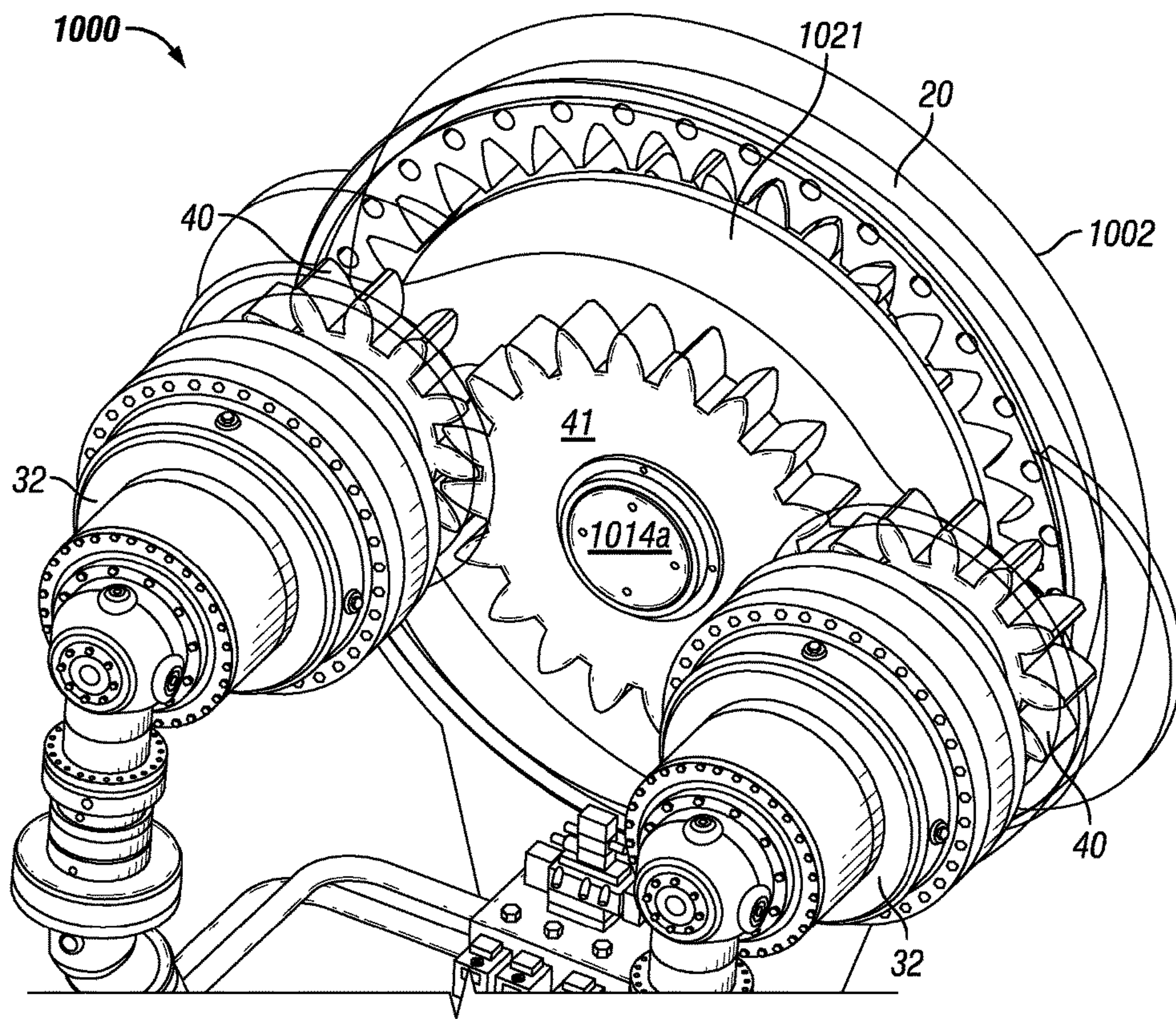


FIG. 22A

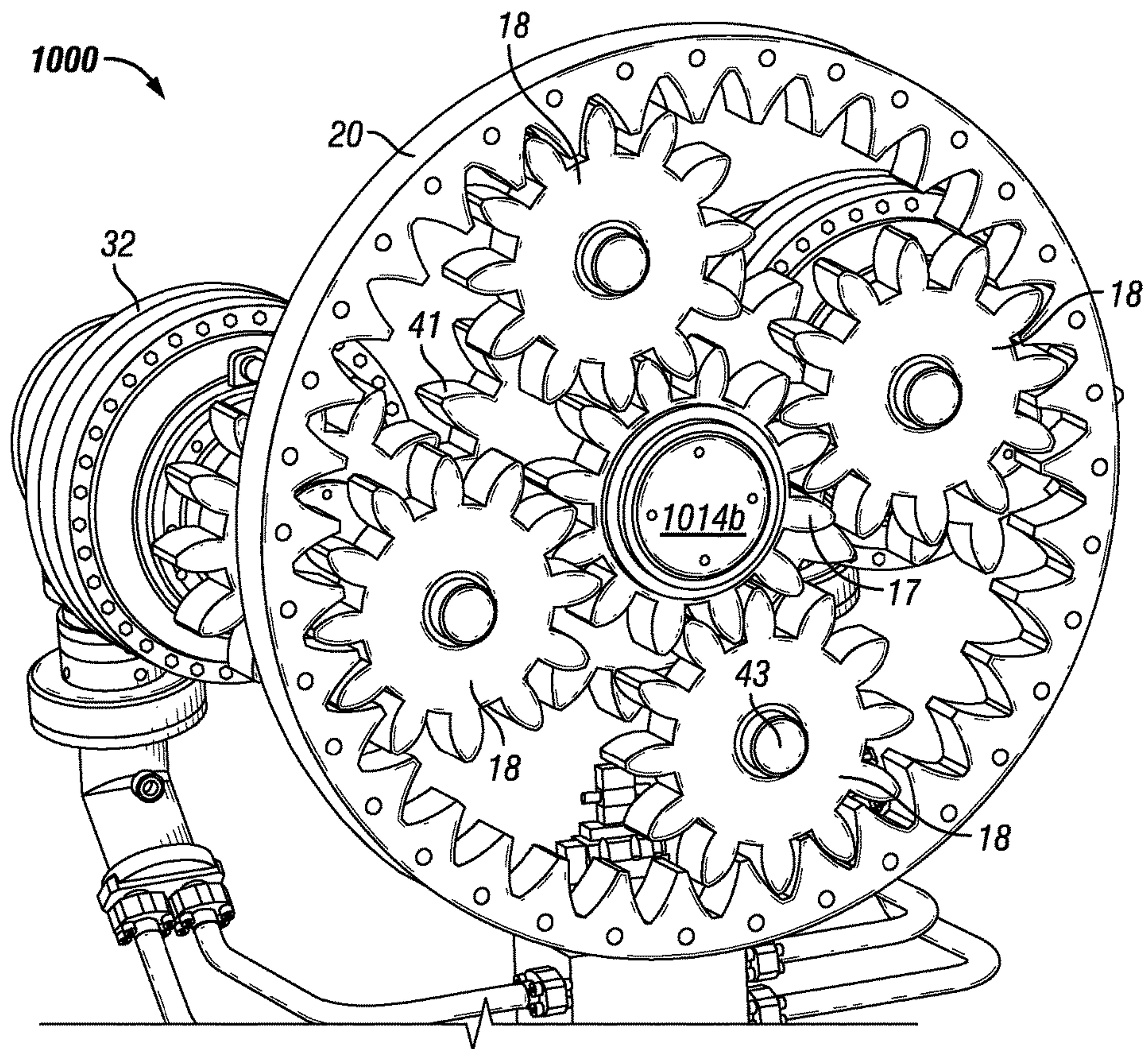


FIG. 22B

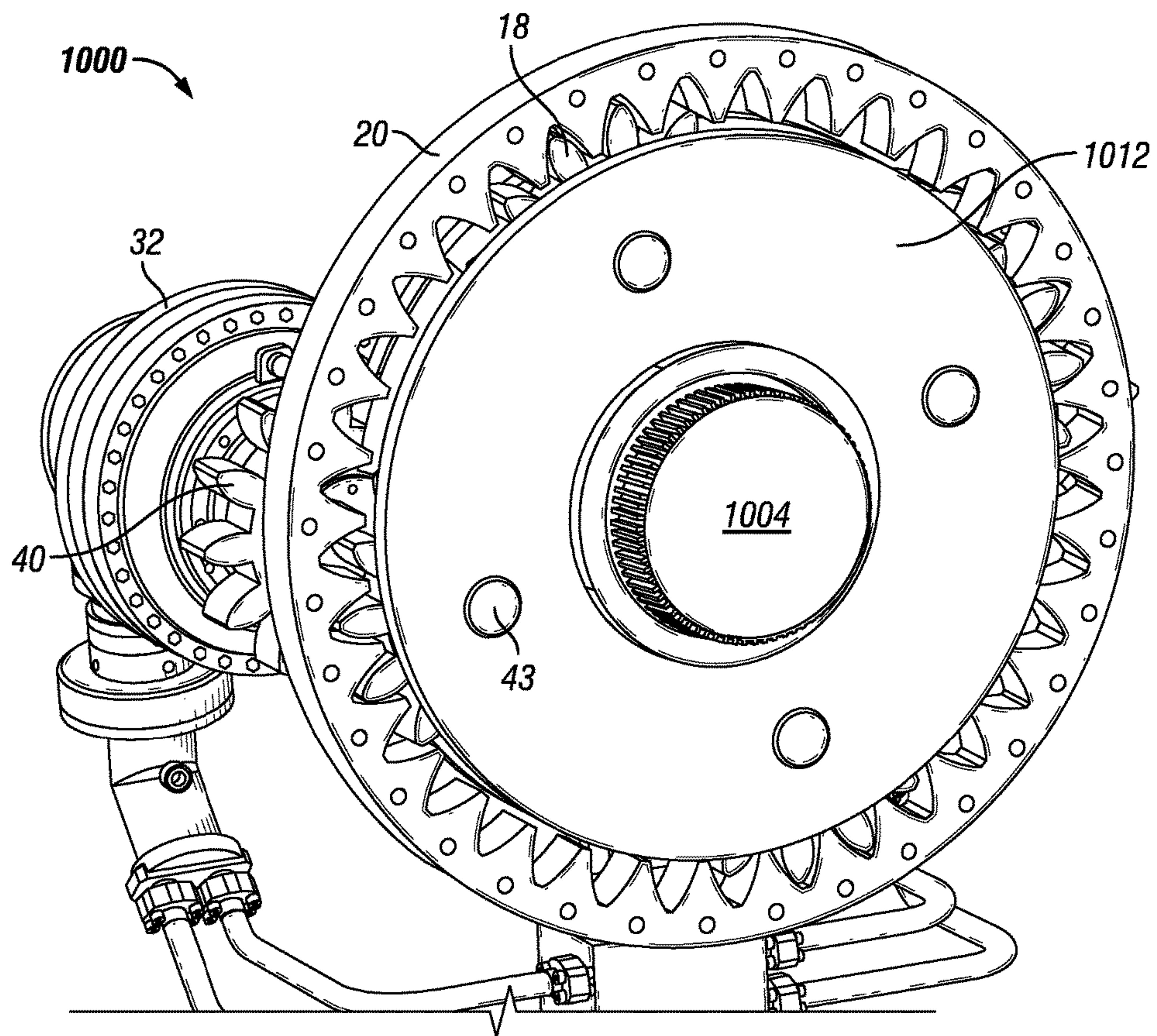


FIG. 22C

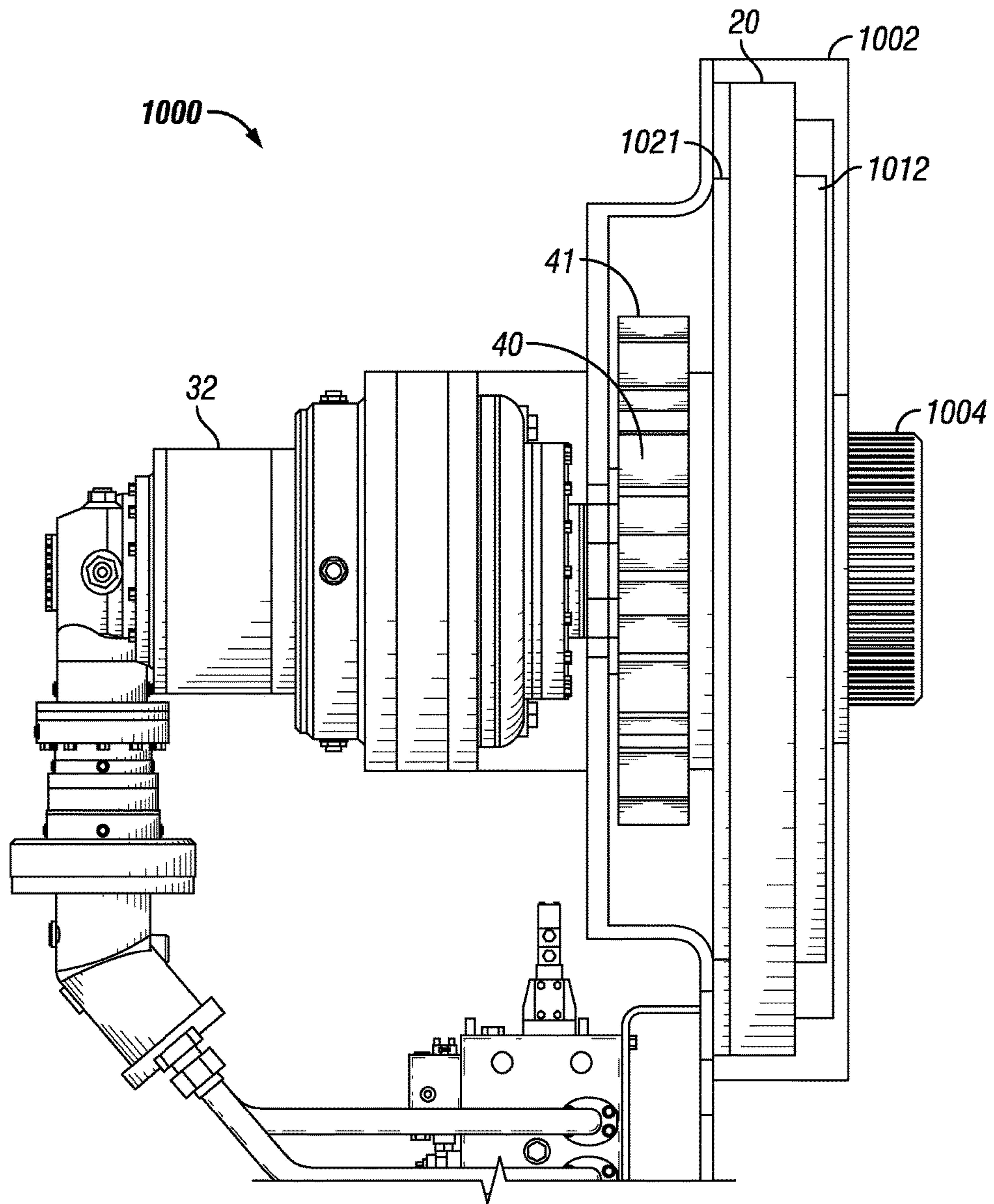


FIG. 22D

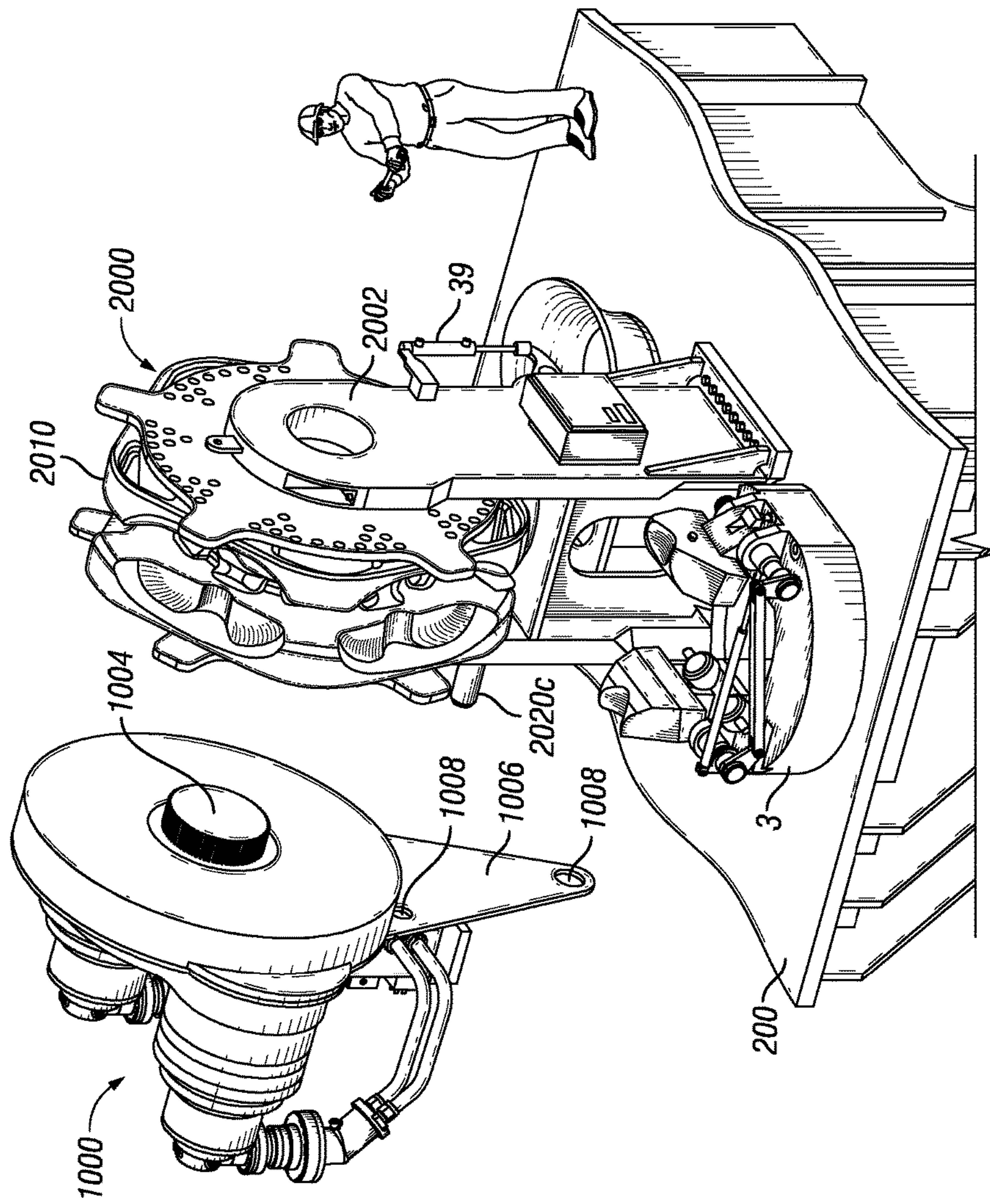


FIG. 23A

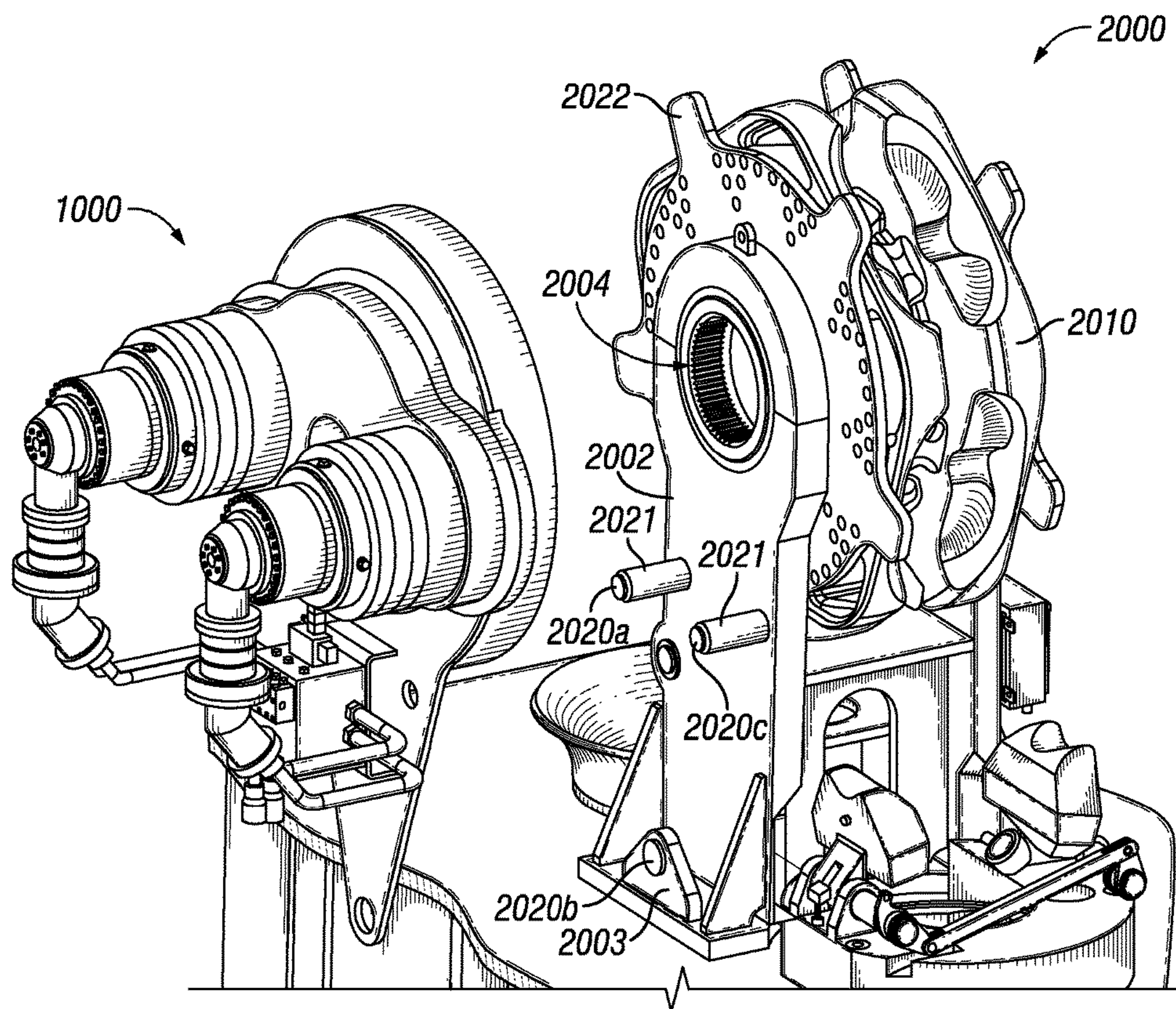


FIG. 23B

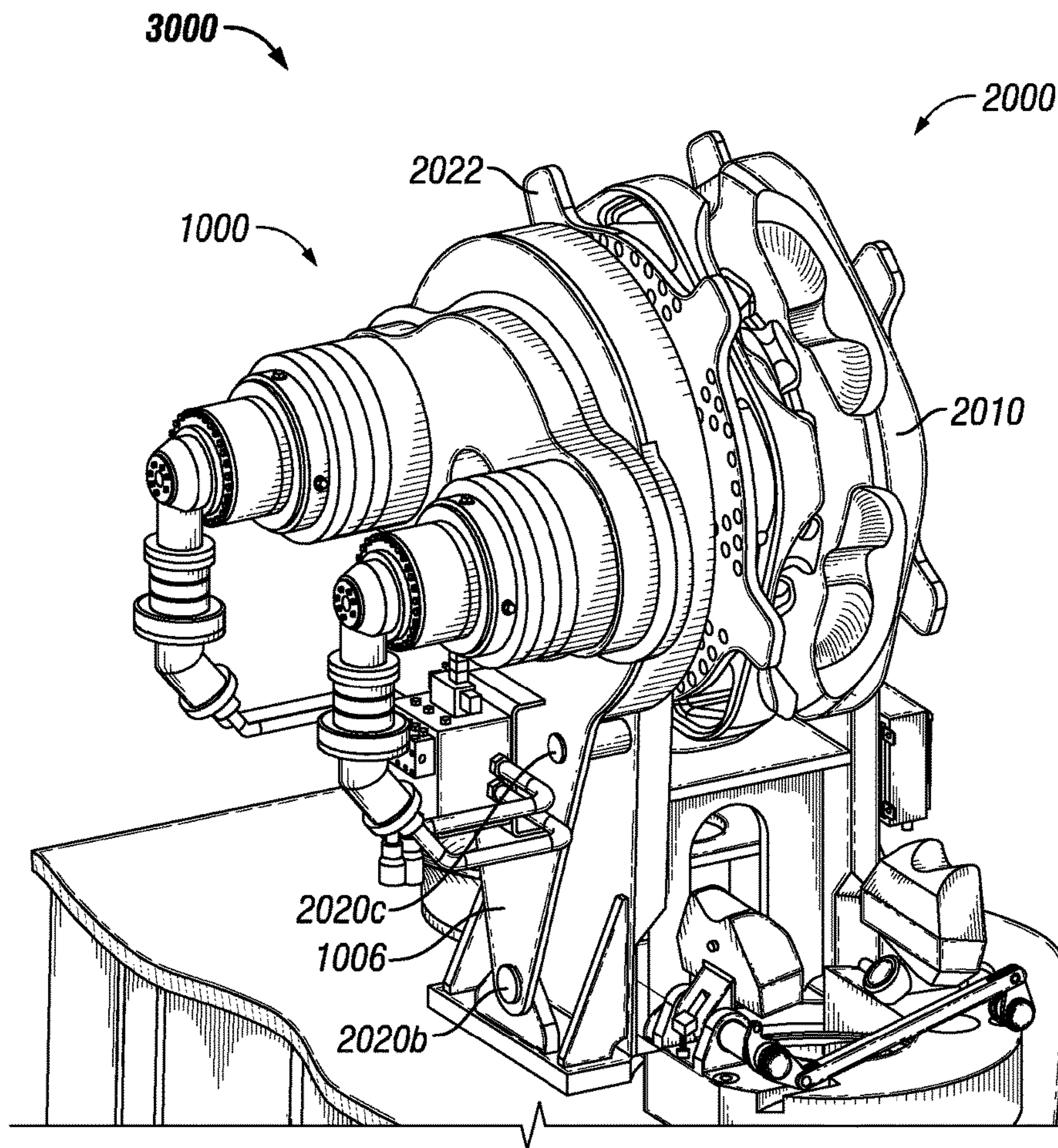


FIG. 24A

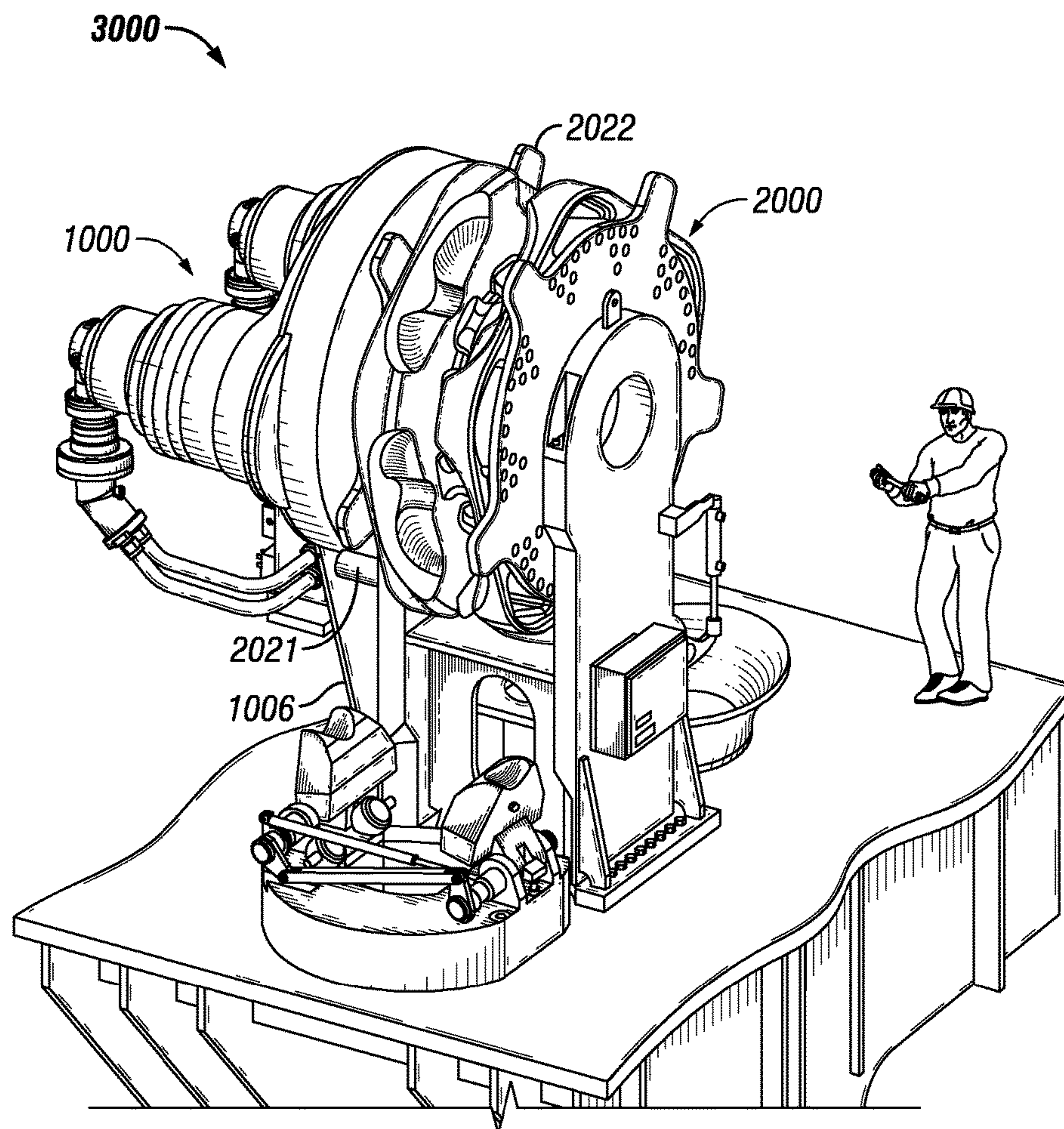


FIG. 24B

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**CHAIN MOORING WINDLASS WITH
TWO-STAGE GEAR REDUCTION AND
MOVABLE DRIVE MECHANISM**

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATIONS

The present application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/348,597, filed in Jun. 10, 2016, the entirety of which is incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD

The present disclosure relates to a dual chain mooring windlass with two-stage gear reduction, and to a movable drive mechanism for selectively driving multiple windlasses.

BACKGROUND

Windlasses are typically used to move heavy weight. One type of windlass, mooring windlasses, are used to pull-in or pay-out mooring lines to moor offshore vessels. Mooring windlasses may be driven by a motor, such as a hydraulic or electrically driven motor.

In some applications, multiple mooring windlasses are used to moor a single offshore vessel. In such applications, provision of a separate drive mechanism, e.g. a hydraulic or electric motor, for each windlass increases the financial costs associated with mooring the offshore vessel.

BRIEF SUMMARY

An embodiment of the present disclosure relates a chain mooring windlass having a two-stage gear reduction. The chain mooring windlass may include a windlass frame, a chain wheel, and a chain wheel axel extending through the chain wheel and rotatably coupled to the windlass frame. Drive assemblies may be operatively coupled to the chain wheel axel via a first stage gear reduction including reduction gears. The chain wheel axel may be operatively coupled to the chain wheel via a second stage gear reduction including reduction gears.

Another embodiment of the present disclosure relates to a gear reduction method for chain mooring windlasses that may include providing a first stage of gear reduction and a second stage of gear reduction. Both the first and second stages of gear reduction may be located between drive assemblies of a chain mooring windlass and a chain wheel of the chain mooring windlass.

Another embodiment of the present disclosure relates to an offshore vessel having a chain mooring windlass that has a two-stage gear reduction. The chain mooring windlass may include a windlass frame, which may be coupled to a portion of the offshore vessel. The chain mooring windlass may include a chain wheel and a chain wheel axel extending through the chain wheel and rotatably coupled to the windlass frame. Drive assemblies may be operatively coupled to the chain wheel axel via a first stage gear reduction including reduction gears. The chain wheel axel may be operatively coupled to the chain wheel via a second stage gear reduction including reduction gears.

Another embodiment of the present disclosure relates to a movable drive mechanism for driving chain mooring windlasses. The movable drive mechanism may include reduction gears, and drive assemblies operatively coupled to the

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reduction gears. The drive assemblies may operate to drive the reduction gears. A drive gear may be operatively coupled to the reduction gears. The reduction gears may operate to drive the drive gear. The drive gear may be configured to operatively couple to a chain wheel of a chain mooring windlass to drive the chain wheel. The movable drive mechanism may include a chain wheel coupler configured to selectively couple the movable drive mechanism to a chain wheel of a chain mooring windlass.

Another embodiment of the present disclosure relates to a single-drive method that includes using a single movable drive mechanism to selectively operate multiple chain mooring windlasses. The single-drive method may include providing a movable drive mechanism, coupling the movable drive mechanism with a first chain wheel assembly, and rotating a chain wheel of the first chain wheel assembly using the movable drive mechanism. The single-drive method may include decoupling the movable drive mechanism from the first chain wheel assembly, coupling the movable drive mechanism with a second chain wheel assembly, and rotating a chain wheel of the second chain wheel assembly using the movable drive mechanism.

Another embodiment of the present disclosure relates to an offshore vessel that includes multiple chain mooring windlasses, each chain mooring windlass having a chain wheel. A frame of each chain mooring windlasses may be coupled to a portion of the offshore vessel. The offshore vessel may include a movable drive mechanism configured to selectively couple to each of the chain mooring windlasses and to drive the chain wheels thereof. The movable drive mechanism may include reduction gears, and drive assemblies operatively coupled to the reduction gears. The drive assemblies may operate to drive the reduction gears. A drive gear may be operatively coupled to the reduction gears. The reduction gears may operate to drive the drive gear. The drive gear may be configured to operatively couple to a chain wheel of a chain mooring windlass to drive the chain wheel. The movable drive mechanism may include a chain wheel coupler configured to selectively couple the movable drive mechanism to a chain wheel of a chain mooring windlass.

Some embodiments relate to a chain mooring windlass including a windlass frame, a chain wheel, a chain wheel axel extending through and operatively coupled to the chain wheel and rotatably coupled to the windlass frame, and drive assemblies operatively coupled to the chain wheel axel. The chain mooring windlass also includes a chain stopper configured to selectively rotate into: an open configuration allowing passage of a chain through an opening formed by the chain stopper; and a closed configuration with the chain stopper gripping a chain positioned within the opening formed by the chain stopper. The chain mooring windlass with the chain stopper may be in a method of pulling-in, paying-out, positioning, or combination thereof a mooring line.

The foregoing has outlined rather broadly the features and technical advantages of the present disclosure in order that the detailed description that follows may be better understood. Additional features and advantages will be described hereinafter, which form the subject of the claims. It should be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the conception and specific embodiment disclosed may be readily utilized as a basis for modifying or designing other structures for carrying out the same purposes of the present disclosure. It should also be realized by those skilled in the art that such equivalent constructions do not depart from the spirit and scope of the disclosure. The novel features which are

believed to be characteristic of the products, systems, and methods, both as to its organization and method of operation, together with further objects and advantages will be better understood from the following description when considered in connection with the accompanying figures. It is to be expressly understood, however, that each of the figures is provided for the purpose of illustration and description only and is not intended as a definition of the limits of the present disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

So that the manner in which the features and advantages of the system, products, and/or method so of the present disclosure may be understood in more detail, a more particular description briefly summarized above may be had by reference to the embodiments thereof which are illustrated in the appended drawings that form a part of this specification. It is to be noted, however, that the drawings illustrate only various exemplary embodiments and are therefore not to be considered limiting of the disclosed concepts as it may include other effective embodiments as well.

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a dual chain mooring windlass in accordance with certain embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIG. 2 is a side view of the dual chain mooring windlass of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a cut-away, front view of a dual chain mooring windlass during haul-in of a messenger chain in accordance with certain embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIG. 4 is a cut-away, side view of the dual chain mooring windlass during haul-in of the messenger chain of FIG. 3.

FIG. 5 is a cut-away, front view of a dual chain mooring windlass during transition from hauling in the messenger chain to hauling in a mooring chain in accordance with certain embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIG. 6 is a cut-away, side view of the dual chain mooring windlass during transition from hauling in the messenger chain to hauling in the mooring chain of FIG. 5.

FIG. 7 is a cut-away, front view of a dual chain mooring windlass during haul-in of the mooring chain in accordance with certain embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIG. 8 is a cut-away, side view of the dual chain mooring windlass during haul-in of the mooring chain of FIG. 7.

FIG. 9 is a cut-away, front view of a dual chain mooring windlass during positioning of the mooring chain in accordance with certain embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIG. 10 is a cut-away, side view of the dual chain mooring windlass during positioning of the mooring chain of FIG. 9.

FIG. 11 is a cut-away, perspective view of a motor side of a dual chain mooring windlass having a two-stage gear reduction in accordance with certain embodiments.

FIG. 12 is a cut-away, perspective view of a non-motor side of the dual chain mooring windlass having a two-stage gear reduction of FIG. 11.

FIG. 13A is a cut-away, side view of an embodiment of a mooring windlass having a two-stage gear reduction

FIG. 13B is another cut-away, plan view of the embodiment of FIG. 13A.

FIG. 14A is a cut-away, perspective view of a planetary carrier assembly in accordance with certain embodiments.

FIG. 14B is another cut-away, perspective view of the planetary carrier assembly of FIG. 14A.

FIG. 15A is a cut-away, plan view of a planetary carrier in accordance with certain embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIG. 15B is a cut-away, side view of the planetary carrier of FIG. 15A with a manual shift mechanism in a fast/light mode in accordance with certain embodiments.

FIG. 15C is plan view of the manual shift mechanism of FIG. 15B in the fast/light mode.

FIG. 16A is a cut-away, plan view of a planetary carrier in accordance with certain embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIG. 16B is a cut-away, side view of the planetary carrier of FIG. 16A with the manual shift mechanism in a slow/heavy mode in accordance with certain embodiments.

FIG. 16C is plan view of the manual shift mechanism of FIG. 16B in the slow/heavy mode.

FIG. 17A is a perspective view showing a plunger fully engaged in a driving plate and fully disengaged from a fixed holding plate, during fast mode operation.

FIG. 17B is a cut-away, side view showing the plunger fully engaged in the driving plate and fully disengaged from the fixed holding plate, during the fast mode operation of FIG. 17A.

FIG. 17C is a plan view of the shifting mechanism during the fast mode operation of FIGS. 17A and 17B.

FIG. 18A is a perspective view showing the plunger partially retracted from the driving plate and partially engaged in the fixed holding plate, during transition from fast mode operation to slow mode operation.

FIG. 18B is a cut-away, side view showing the plunger partially retracted from the driving plate and partially engaged in the fixed holding plate, during transition from fast mode operation to slow mode operation of FIG. 18A.

FIG. 18C is a plan view of the shifting mechanism during the transition of FIGS. 18A and 18B.

FIG. 19A is a perspective view showing the plunger further retracted from the driving plate and further engaged in the fixed holding plate relative to FIG. 19A, during transition from fast mode operation to slow mode operation.

FIG. 19B is a cut-away, side view showing the plunger further retracted from the driving plate and further engaged in the fixed holding plate relative to FIG. 18B, during transition from fast mode operation to slow mode operation of FIGS. 19A.

FIG. 19C is a plan view of the shifting mechanism during the transition of FIGS. 19A and 19B.

FIG. 20A is a perspective view showing the plunger fully disengaged from the driving plate and fully engaged in the fixed holding plate, during slow mode operation.

FIG. 20B is a cut-away, side view showing the plunger fully disengaged from the driving plate and fully engaged in the fixed holding plate, during slow mode operation of FIG. 20A.

FIG. 20C is a plan view of the shifting mechanism during the transition of FIGS. 20A and 20B.

FIGS. 21A and 21B are perspective views of a movable drive mechanism in accordance with certain embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIGS. 22A-22D are cut-away views that depict gears of the movable drive mechanism in accordance with certain embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIGS. 23A and 23B depict the movable drive mechanism disengaged from a dual chain mooring windlass in accordance with certain embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIGS. 24A and 24B depict the movable drive mechanism engaged with a dual chain mooring windlass in accordance with certain embodiments of the present disclosure.

Products and methods according to present disclosure will now be described more fully with reference to the accompanying drawings, which illustrate various exemplary

embodiments. Concepts according to the present disclosure may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as being limited by the illustrated embodiments set forth herein. Rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough as well as complete and will fully convey the scope of the various concepts to those skilled in the art and the best and preferred modes of practice. For example, many of the exemplary descriptions provided herein are concerned with training pants for infants and young children or diapers. Aspects of the concepts described may, however, be equally applicable to designs for and the manufacture of adult incontinence products and other similar products.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The foregoing has outlined rather broadly the features and technical advantages of the present disclosure in order that the detailed description that follows may be better understood. Additional features and advantages will be described hereinafter, which form the subject of the claims. It should be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the conception and specific embodiments disclosed may be readily utilized as a basis for modifying or designing other structures for carrying out the same purposes of the present disclosure. It should also be realized by those skilled in the art that such equivalent constructions do not depart from the spirit and scope of the disclosure. The novel features which are believed to be characteristic of the products, systems, and methods, both as to their organization and method of operation, together with further objects and advantages will be better understood from the following description when considered in connection with the accompanying figures. It is to be expressly understood, however, that each of the figures is provided for the purpose of illustration and description only and is not intended as a definition of the limits of the present disclosure.

Certain embodiments of the present disclosure include a chain mooring windlass having a movable (e.g., rotatable) chain stopper that includes two opposing stopper latches, and has an open “C” configuration. It is understood that the chain stopper may be the movable chain stopper disclosed in the figures or any of the chain stoppers disclosed in U.S. application Ser. No. 15/431,145, filed on Feb. 13, 2017, and U.S. application Ser. No. 15/603,293, filed on May 23, 2017, both of which are incorporated herein by reference.

One embodiment of the present disclosure relates to a chain mooring windlass with two stages of gear reduction, including embodiments with a shift mechanism and without a shift mechanism. Some embodiments disclosed herein relate to a movable drive mechanism for driving chain mooring windlasses. While these embodiments are separately described herein, one skilled in the art would understand that one or more of these embodiments may be combined. For example and without limitation, some embodiments may include a chain mooring windlass having a movable chain stopper and two stages of gear reduction. Additional embodiments may include a chain mooring windlass having two stages of gear reduction and a movable drive mechanism. While, still further embodiments may include a chain mooring windlass having a movable chain stopper, two stages of gear reduction, and a movable drive mechanism. Any of these embodiments or combinations of embodiments may be with or without a shift mechanism, as describe herein.

FIGS. 1-12 depict chain mooring windlass 100. Chain mooring windlass 100 includes chain wheel 10. As shown,

chain wheel 10 is a dual chain wheel. The dual chain wheel may be one the same as or similar to the chain wheel disclosed in U.S. application Ser. No. 13/669,310, the entirety of which is incorporated herein by reference. In other embodiments, the chain wheel may be a single chain wheel. Dual chain wheel 10 is rotatably mounted onto windlass frame 1 via chain wheel axel 14. Chain wheel axel 14 extends through chain wheel 10, and is configured to rotate freely relative to frame 1. Dual chain wheel 10 is configured to rotate freely about chain wheel axel 14. Frame 1 is mounted to a portion of offshore vessel 200.

Chain mooring windlass 100 includes drive assembly 32. Drive assembly 32 is operatively coupled with chain wheel axel 14 via a first stage of gear reduction, including one or more reduction gears, which may be configured to rotate chain wheel axel 14. Chain wheel axel 14 may, in-turn, rotate reduction gears of a second stage of gear reduction. Reduction gears of the second stages of gear reduction may then rotate chain wheel 10, as described in more detail below. Rotation of chain wheel 10 hauls mooring chain 31 into or towards inboard hawse pipe 35 or deploy mooring chain 31 outboard through outboard hawse pipe 36, depending upon the direction of rotation of chain wheel 10. Drive assembly 32 may be an electric or hydraulic drive assembly. In some embodiments, drive assembly 32 may include a motor, gearbox, and pinion. Chain mooring windlass 100 includes chain wheel latch cylinder 39 configured to ratchetedly engage with chain wheel 10. In the embodiment shown in FIGS. 1-12, chain wheel latch cylinder 39 ratchetedly engages the chain wheel 10 with chain wheel latch 39a.

In some embodiments, mooring chain 31 may be a mechanically coupled with an anchor (not shown). Mooring chain 31 is coupled with shackle 33. In operation, shackle 33 is configured to engage with teeth of chain wheel 10. Shackle 33 may be a back to back shackle connector. Shackle 33 is coupled with messenger chain 34. In this manner, a continuous chain of two different chain sizes is formed.

In the embodiment show in FIGS. 1-12, the small wildcat profiles of chain wheel 10 are sized and configured to couple with messenger chain 34. The large wildcat profiles of chain wheel 10 are sized and configured to couple with mooring chain 31, as discussed in U.S. application Ser. No. 13/669,310. In operation, while messenger chain 34 is hauled in, mooring chain 31 may extend along chain line 38a, and while mooring chain 31 is hauled in, mooring chain 31 may extend along chain line 38b.

The chain mooring windlass 100 shown in FIGS. 1-12 includes chain stopper 3, which may be a rotatable stopper assembly. Chain stopper 3 includes stopper rotating cylinder 37 configured to selectively rotate chain stopper 3 into an open configuration allowing passage of messenger chain 34. Chain stopper 3 has a “C” shaped body with two opposing stopper latches 3a.

FIGS. 3-10 depict chain mooring windlass 100 in operation, in accordance with certain embodiments of the present disclosure. FIGS. 3 and 4 depict chain mooring windlass 100 during haul-in of messenger chain 34. During haul-in of messenger chain 34, chain stopper 3 is in the open position. When in the open position, as shown in FIGS. 3 and 4, chain line 38a passes inboard of stopper latches 3a, by way of the open side of the “C” shaped chain stopper 3. When chain line 38a is clear of chain stopper 3, messenger chain 34 and shackle 33 do not engage latches 3a or the body of chain stopper 3. In a preferred embodiment, when chain line 38a is clear of chain stopper 3, messenger chain 34 and shackle

33 do not engage or touch latches 3a or the body of chain stopper 3 as they are hauled in or payed out.

While the messenger chain 34 is being hauled in, chain wheel latch 39a, movable via chain wheel latch cylinder 39, may be positioned to engaged chain wheel 10. In some 5 embodiments, chain wheel latch 39a ratchetedly engages chain wheel 10 as chain wheel 10 rotates. In the embodiment of FIG. 4, chain wheel 10 is rotated clockwise to haul-in messenger chain 34, shackle 33, and mooring chain 31.

FIGS. 5 and 6 depict chain mooring windlass 100 during 10 transition from hauling in messenger chain 34, as shown in FIGS. 3 and 4, to hauling in and positioning mooring chain 31, as shown in FIGS. 5-10. During transition, shackle 33 engages tooth 10a of chain wheel 10. In some embodiments, chain wheel latch 39a ratchetedly engages chain wheel 10 15 during the transition.

During the transition, chain stopper 3 is in the open position to allow chain 31 to pass freely as chain 31 transitions from chain line 38a to chain line 38b.

FIGS. 7-10 depict top chain haul-in and positioning. 20 During top chain haul-in, chain 31 is engaged with chain wheel 10, and chain 31 extends along chain line 38b. In the embodiment of FIGS. 7-10, chain stopper 3 is a rotatable chain stopper. The center of rotation is preferably a point located centrally between the two stopper latches 3a. In this manner, as chain stopper 3 rotates, the stopper latches 3a rotate about the center of rotation. In a preferred embodi- 25 ment, chain line 38b runs through the center of rotation.

During top chain haul-in, stopper latches 3a may be set to ratchetedly engage with links of mooring chain 31. In this 30 manner, stopper latches 3a ratchet on the top part of alternating chain links. FIGS. 7 and 8 on the one hand, and FIGS. 9 and 10 on the other, show two positions in which stopper latches 3a can engage chain 31. To precisely position mooring chain 31, mooring chain 31 may be hauled in via 35 rotating chain wheel 10. Once in position, chain stopper 3 is positioned such that latches 3a may engage with the link of chain 31 that minimizes the movement of chain 31 when chain 31 is set down upon, and in engagement with latches 3a. In operation, chain stopper 3 is rotated, such as by 90°, 40 so that latches 3a may engage any link of mooring chain 31. As such, chain 31 can be more precisely positioned in that every link of chain 31 can be engaged instead of every other link. Latches 3a secure and maintain position of mooring chain 31. During top chain haul-in and precise positioning of 45 mooring chain 31, chain wheel latch 39a may be disengaged from chain wheel 10.

Chain Mooring Windlass with Two Stages of Gear Reduction

FIGS. 11 and 12 depict first and second stage gear 50 reductions of chain mooring windlass 100. The first stage gear reduction is shown in FIG. 11, on a motor side of chain wheel 10. Reduction gears of the first stage of gear reduction includes pinion gears 40 and bull gear 41. Drive assemblies 32 are operatively coupled to pinion gears 40, pinion gears 40 are operatively coupled to bull gear 41, and bull gear 41 is operatively coupled to (e.g., fixed to) chain wheel axle 14. In operation, drive assemblies 32 operate to rotate pinion gears 40, rotation of pinion gears 40 rotates bull gear 41, and rotation of bull gear 41 rotates chain wheel axle 14. In some 60 embodiments, the pitch diameter of pinion gears 40 is less than the pitch diameter of bull gear 41. In certain embodiments, the pitch diameter of pinion gears 40 is half or less than the pitch diameter of bull gear 41.

In operation, chain wheel axle 14 rotates with bull gear 65 41. In certain embodiments, bull gear 41 is fixed to chain wheel axle 14 such that both bull gear 41 and chain wheel

axel 14 rotate at the same rate. In other embodiments, bull gear 41 and chain wheel axle 14 rotate at different rates. While shown and described as including bull gear 41 and pinion gears 40, the first stage gear reduction is not limited 5 to this particular embodiment, and may be any arrangement of gears configured to provide gear reduction.

FIG. 12 depicts the second stage gear reduction on a non-motor side of chain wheel 10. Reduction gears of the second stage gear reduction include sun gear 17, planetary 10 gears 18, and internal ring gear 20. Chain mooring windlass 100 includes a planetary gearbox, including internal ring gear 20, which may be fixed to chain wheel 10. In some embodiments, chain wheel 10 and internal ring gear 20 rotate at the same rate. In other embodiments, chain wheel 10 and internal ring gear 20 rotate at different rates. 15

The planetary gearbox includes sun gear 17 and one or more planetary gears 18. The planetary gearbox includes four planetary gears 18, as shown. In other embodiments, the planetary gearbox may include more or less than four planetary gears 18. For example and without limitation, the planetary gearbox may include two, three, or more than four planetary gears 18. In certain embodiments, each planetary gear 18 may be configured to share tooth loading equally. In some embodiments, planetary gears 18 are lockable with 25 respect to internal ring gear 20. In operation, planetary gears 18 may function as idlers.

Sun gear 17 is fixed to chain wheel axle 14. In operation, sun gear 17 rotates with chain wheel axle 14. The rate at which sun gear 17 rotates may be related to the speed of the 30 motors of drive assembly 32 and the pitch diameter of pinion gears 40 relative to the pitch diameter of bull gear 41. For example and without limitation, in some embodiments, every 360° rotation of pinion gears 40 may rotate bull gear 41 by 90°, which, in-turn, may rotate chain wheel axle 14 and sun gear 17. In some embodiments, sun gear 17 has the same pitch diameter as planetary gears 18. In other embodi- 35 ments, sun gear 17 has a different pitch diameter than that of planetary gears 18. While shown and described as including sun gear 17 and planetary gears 18, the second stage gear reduction is not limited to this particular embodiment, and may be any arrangement of gears configured to provide gear reduction. 40

While the first and second gear reductions are shown on opposite sides of chain wheel 10, in FIGS. 11 and 12, one skilled in the art would appreciate that both of the first and second gear reductions could be on the same side of chain wheel 10. Alternatively, a single stage gear reduction is also possible. For embodiments with one gear reduction, the gear reduction can be positioned on the motor or non-motor side.

In operation, the total gear reduction may be optimally 50 configured according to the expected chain loads and drive assemblies 32 used. In some embodiments, drive assemblies 32 include hydraulic or electrical motors. While shown as including two drive assemblies 32, chain mooring windlass 100 may include more or less than two drive assemblies 32. 55

FIGS. 13A and 13B provide additional detail on the planetary gears that can be used in a gear reduction. In the embodiment of FIGS. 13A and 13B, the first stage gear reduction on the motor side (see FIG. 12) is not shown. One skilled in the art understands that alternative embodiments are envisioned that only have one gear reduction. FIGS. 14A and 14B depict the planetary carrier assembly of FIGS. 13A and 13B. The embodiments include planetary gear pins 18a, which may be permanent, and fixed holding plates 7a and 7b. Planetary gears 18 are mounted on planetary gear pins 18a. Planetary gear pins 18a are mounted to outer plate 12 and retained thereto, such as via planetary gear pin retainers 65

18b. Fixed holding plates **7a** and **7b** are mounted onto frame **1** and rigidly connected thereto. In operation, fixed holding plate **7a** may react bearing load from chain wheel axel **14**, and fixed holding plate **7b** may react bearing load from chain wheel axel **14** and torsion from outer plate **12**. In certain

Shift Mechanism

With reference to FIGS. **15A-15C**, in some embodiments, operation of planetary gearbox **300** is selectable by way of shift mechanism **400**. In operation, shift mechanism **400** may allow an operator to manage the rotational speed of chain wheel **10** relative to the load on chain wheel **10**. In certain embodiments, shift mechanism **400** may be infrequently used. In other embodiments, shift mechanism **400** may be frequently used. In some embodiments, shift mechanism **400** may be a manual shift design (as shown). In other embodiments, shift mechanism **400** may be an automatic shift design (not shown).

Shift mechanism **400** is shown in FIGS. **5A-15C** in a fast/light mode configured for high speed/low torque operation.

Internal ring gear **20** may be bolted or otherwise fixed to chain wheel **10**. Sun gear **17** may be rigidly connected to chain wheel axle **14**, such as via center gear key **16**. Crank arm key **15** is engaged with end cap **28** of chain wheel axle **14**. The assembly of planetary gear box **300**, chain wheel **10**, and chain wheel axle **14** includes one or more bearings, including chain wheel axle sleeve bearing **24**, chain wheel axle sleeve bearing **26**, chain wheel axle thrust bearing **27**, and outer plate sleeve bearing **25**. Planetary gearbox **300** also includes planetary gear sleeve bearing **19**.

Planetary gears **18** are each supported by one of plungers **11**, by inner plate **21**, and by outer plate **12**. Each plunger **11** is retained by plunger retainer **13**, and may be biased via spring **23**. Inner plate **21** and outer plate **12** may function as planetary carriers.

Each plunger **11** may be configured to move with respect to chain wheel **10**. Plungers **11** may be movable between a first position in engagement with chain wheel **10**, and a second position clear of (i.e., not in engagement with) chain wheel **10**. In the embodiment of FIGS. **17A-17C**, spring **23** biases plunger **11** into engagement with chain wheel **10**. In operation, at least one planetary gear **18** rotates about each plunger **11** when the plungers **11** are clear of chain wheel **10**.

Shift mechanism **400** includes shift ring **29**. Shift ring **29** may be overlaid on the outside of outer plate **12**. In operation, shift ring **29** may be manually rotated to move plungers **11** into and out of engagement with either chain wheel **10** or fixed holding plate **7**. Shift ring **29** may be rotated in ways other than the manual configuration of FIGS. **15A-15C**. For example, shift ring **29** may be shifted electronically, hydraulically, or other means known to those skilled in the art.

Planetary gearbox **300** can be configured for high speed/low torque operations forcing chain wheel axle **14** and chain wheel **10** to rotate together at the same rate. In the embodiment of FIGS. **15A-15C**, this is done by positioning plungers **11** in the holes in adapter plate **22**. Adapter plate **22** is fixed to chain wheel **10**. Once plungers **11** are positioned in the holes in adapter plate **22**, plungers **11**, adapter plate **22**, chain wheel axle **14**, and chain wheel **10** rotate together at the same rate. As such, planetary gears **18**, plungers **11**, and

inner and outer plates **21** and **12** rotate with chain wheel **10**, resulting in a one-to-one revolutions per minute (rpm) ratio from chain wheel axle **14** to chain wheel **10** in the same direction.

Planetary gearbox **300** can be configured for low speed/high torque operations by allowing chain wheel axle **14** and chain wheel **10** to rotate at different rates. In the embodiment of FIGS. **16A-16C**, this is done by retracting plungers **11** out of the holes in adapter plate **22**. Once plungers **11** are retracted from the holes in adapter plate **22**, plungers **11** move relative to chain wheel **10**, allowing chain wheel axle **14** and chain wheel **10** to rotate at different rates. In such a configuration, each planetary gear **18** is free to rotate about its own axis, thereby transferring power from sun gear **17** to internal ring gear **20** in reverse direction.

The embodiments of FIGS. **15A-20C** can be moved between high speed/low torque mode and low speed/high torque mode using shift ring **29**. Shift ring **29** includes wedge surfaces **129** that are in sliding engagement with plungers **11** to wedge them from the holes in adapter plate **22**. In the high speed/low torque mode, plungers **11** are fully extended into the holes in adapter plate **22**. In one embodiment, springs **23** bias plungers **11** into the holes. As shift ring **29** is rotated, wedge surfaces **129** slide under edges of plungers **11**. As shift ring **29** is rotated further, wedge surfaces **129** wedge plungers **11** from the holes in adapter plate **22**. In some embodiments, fixed holding plate **7** may be rigidly connected to frame **1**, thereby fixing plungers **11**, inner plate **21**, and outer plate **12** relative to frame **1**.

In some embodiments, the diameter ratio of internal ring gear **20** to sun gear **17** may be, for example, 2:1. In such embodiments, chain wheel **10** will be driven twice as fast and with half the capacity in the high speed/low torque mode when compared to the low speed/high torque mode for a given chain wheel axle **14** speed. One skilled in the art would appreciate that the torque/speed relationships between high and low gears may be varied in the design to achieve ratios advantageous to particular applications.

FIGS. **17A-220C** depict plungers **11** in various configurations during operation. In FIGS. **17A-17C**, plungers **11** are fully engaged in the holes in adapter plate **22** for fast mode operation.

In FIGS. **18A-18C**, chain wheel **10** is in transition from the fast mode (FIGS. **17A-17D**) to the slow mode (FIGS. **20A-20C**). Plungers **11** are partially retracted (about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way) from the holes in adapter plate **22**.

In FIGS. **19A-19C**, chain wheel **10** is further along the transition from the fast mode to the slow mode. Plungers **11** are mostly retracted (about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way) from the holes in adapter plate **22**.

In FIGS. **20A-20C**, chain wheel **10** is in slow mode. Plungers **11** are fully disengaged (retracted) from the holes in adapter plate **22**.

Movable Drive Mechanism

The present disclosure also relates to a movable drive mechanism for driving chain mooring windlasses, embodiments of which are depicted and described with reference to FIGS. **21A-24B**. In FIGS. **21A-24B**, like reference numerals relative to those in FIGS. **1-20C** are used to describe like elements.

With reference to FIGS. **21A** and **21B**, movable drive mechanism **1000** includes one or more drive assemblies **32**. Drive assemblies **32** are operatively connected with controller **44**, such as via conduits **45**. Controller **44** may function to control operation of drive assemblies **32**. As discussed elsewhere herein, drive assemblies **32** may be hydraulic drive assemblies, including hydraulic motors. In such

embodiments, conduits **45** may carry hydraulic fluid to and from drive assemblies **32** for operation thereof.

Movable drive mechanism **1000** includes housing **1002**. Housing **1002** may be a steel housing containing one or more gear reduction stages, such as first and second gear reduction stages, as described in more detail below. For example, housing **1002** may include first housing section **1002a** containing a first gear reduction stage, and second housing section **1002b** containing a second gear reduction stage. Housing **1002** may also include third housing section **1002c** configured to couple to drive assemblies **32**. Controller **44** may be coupled to housing **1002**, such as via controller bracket **1010**. In operation, as described in more detail below, operation of drive assemblies **32** ultimately results in rotation of drive gear **1004** of movable drive mechanism **1000**.

Movable drive mechanism **1000** includes chain wheel coupler **1006**. Chain wheel coupler **1006** may be any structure, static or mechanical, configured to mechanically couple movable drive mechanism **1000** to a chain mooring windlass, as shown and described in more detail below. For example, chain wheel coupler **1006** may be a plate or bracket, coupled to or integral with housing **1002**, including one or more pin holes **1008**. In operation of such embodiments, one or more portions of a chain mooring windlass may be coupled within pin holes **1008** of chain wheel coupler **1006**, as described in more detail below. While shown and described as a plate having pin holes, one skilled in the art would understand that chain wheel coupler **1006** may be any structure, static or mechanical, configured to mechanically couple movable drive mechanism **1000** to a chain mooring windlass.

FIGS. **22A-22D** are views depicting the first and second stages of gear reduction of movable drive mechanism **1000**. The first stage of gear reduction is shown in FIG. **22A**. Each drive assembly **32** may be mechanically coupled to housing **1002**, and operatively coupled to one of pinion gears **40**. Each pinion gear **40** may be operatively coupled to bull gear **41**, and bull gear **41** may be operatively coupled to (e.g., affixed thereto) motor side of axel **1014a**. Drive assemblies **32**, pinion gears **40**, and bull gear **41** may be located on a motor side of inner plate **1021** of movable drive mechanism **1000**. In operation, drive assemblies **32** rotate pinion gears **40**, rotation of pinion gears **40** rotates bull gear **41**, and rotation of bull gear **41** rotates axel **1014**.

The second stage of gear reduction is shown in FIG. **22B**. Sun gear **17** is coupled (e.g., affixed thereto) to axel **1014**. Sun gear **17** is operatively coupled to one or more planetary gears **18**, each operatively coupled to a planetary gear shaft **43**. Each planetary gear **18** is operatively coupled to internal ring gear **20**. Internal ring gear **20** is coupled to a portion of housing **1002**. As shown, internal ring gear **20** is coupled to second housing section **1002b**. In operation, internal ring gear **20** of movable drive mechanism **1000** is static and does not rotate. Drive gear **1004** is coupled to or integral with outer plate **1012**, which is operatively coupled to each planetary gear shaft **43** on non-motor side of axel **1014b**. In operation, rotation of bull gear **41** may rotate axel **1014**, rotation of axel **1014** may rotate sun gear **17**, rotation of sun gear **17** may rotate planetary gears **18** along static internal ring gear **20**, and may rotate outer plate **1012**, thereby rotating drive gear **1004**.

FIGS. **23A** and **23B** depict movable drive mechanism **1000** separated from chain wheel assembly **2000**. Movable drive mechanism **1000** may be configured to mechanically couple with chain wheel assembly **2000** (e.g., a chain mooring windlass). For example and without limitation,

chain wheel assembly **2000** includes one or more pins **2020a**, **2020b** and **2020c** configured to fit within pin holes **1008** of chain wheel coupler **1006**. Each pin **2020a**, **2020b**, and **2020c** may be configured to extend into one of pin holes **1008** to a predetermined distance. For example, pins **2020a**, **2020c** include pin bases **2021**. Each of pins **2020a**, **2020c** may have a shape and size configured to fit within one of pin holes **1008**, and each of pin bases **2021** may have a shape and/or size configured to prevent pin bases **2021** from fitting into pin holes **1008**. Also, for example, pin **2020b** may be coupled to or integral with pin bracket **2003**. Pin **2020b** may have a shape and size configured to fit within one of pin holes **1008**, and pin bracket **2003** may have a shape and/or size configured to prevent pin bracket **2003** from fitting into pin holes **1008**. Each of pins **2020a**, **2020b**, **2020c**, pin bases **2021**, and pin bracket **2003** are coupled to or integral with chain wheel assembly frame **2002**. Chain wheel assembly frame **2002** is mechanically coupled with offshore vessel **200**, such as via bolting. In some embodiments, movable drive mechanism **1000** may be bolted or otherwise fixed to chain wheel assembly **2000**. For example and without limitation, bolts may be affixed threaded onto or into a portion of pins **2020a**, **2020b**, and **2020c** to affix movable drive mechanism **1000** to chain wheel assembly **2000**. In one embodiment, bolts (not shown) may hold, such as through a retainer plate, movable drive mechanism **1000** against shoulder steps on pins **2020a**, **2020b**, and **2020c**, and the end faces of pins **2020a**, **2020b**, and **2020c** may be thread-hole tapped to accommodate bolts. Those skilled in the art would understand that mechanical coupling of movable drive mechanism **1000** to chain wheel assembly **2000** is not limited to the particular embodiments shown in the Figures. Thus, movable drive mechanism **1000** may be coupled to chain wheel assembly **2000** in any manner known to those skilled in the art. Movable drive mechanism **1000** and chain wheel assembly **2000** may be coupled in such a way that, when movable drive mechanism **1000** is torqueing, movable drive mechanism **1000** does not become dislodged from or otherwise disengaged from chain wheel assembly **2000** due to torqueing forces.

Drive gear **1004** may be configured to operatively engage chain wheel drive gear **2004**. Chain wheel drive gear **2004** is operatively coupled to chain wheel. In one embodiment chain wheel drive gear **2004** is integral with chain wheel assembly adapter plate **2022**, and chain wheel assembly adapter plate **2022** is operatively coupled to chain wheel **2010**. In operation, when movable drive mechanism **1000** is selectively engaged with chain wheel assembly **2000**, drive gear **1004** is operatively engaged to chain wheel drive gear **2004**. In one embodiment, rotation of drive gear **1004** rotates chain wheel drive gear **2004**, rotation of chain wheel drive gear **2004** rotates chain wheel assembly adapter plate **2022**, rotation of chain wheel assembly adapter plate **2022** rotates chain wheel **2010**, and rotation of chain wheel **2010** results in the hauling in or deployment of any anchor chain and/or anchor operatively coupled with chain wheel **2010**.

While coupling of movable drive mechanism **1000** with chain wheel assembly **2000** is shown and described as being accomplished via pin holes **1008** and pins **2020a**, **2020b**, **2020c**, one skilled in the art would understand that coupling of movable drive mechanism **1000** with chain wheel assembly **2000** may be accomplished in any number of ways such that movable drive mechanism **1000** is selectively attachable and detachable to chain wheel assembly **2000**. In some embodiments, chain wheel assembly **2000** is a chain wheel assembly that is manufactured to be configured to couple with movable drive mechanism **1000**. In other embodiments,

chain wheel assembly **2000** is a chain wheel assembly that is retrofitted to couple with movable drive mechanism **1000**.

FIGS. **24A** and **24B** depict mooring windlass assembly **3000**, including movable drive mechanism **1000** coupled to chain wheel assembly **2000**. In operation, movable drive mechanism **1000** may be selectively coupled to a first chain wheel assembly for operation thereof, then decoupled from the first chain wheel assembly, and subsequently selectively coupled to a second chain wheel assembly for operation thereof. Thus, a single movable drive mechanism **1000** may be used to operate multiple chain wheel assemblies. As such, in some embodiments, a single movable drive mechanism **1000** can be used on an offshore vessel to operate multiple chain wheel assemblies located on the offshore vessel. Moveable drive mechanism **1000** may include one, two, or more than two stages of gear reduction. In some embodiments, moveable drive mechanism **1000** may be used in conjunction with additional stages of gear reduction, which may be on the same or an opposite side of the chain wheel **10** that moveable drive mechanism **1000** is coupled to. In other embodiments, moveable drive mechanism **1000** is not used in conjunction with any additional stages of gear reduction.

Use of one and two-stage gear reductions described with respect to FIGS. **1-24B**, may require fewer drive assemblies than if bull gear **41** were mounted on chain wheel **10**, without a gear reduction. Use of a gear reduction may allow for fewer drive assemblies **32**, which may, in some embodiments, reduce the overall financial cost of chain mooring windlass.

In some embodiments, during use of embodiments of the two-stage gear reduction described with respect to FIGS. **1-24B**, motors of drive assemblies **32** may operate (i.e., spin) at a higher rpm than if bull gear **41** were mounted on chain wheel **10**, without the second stage of gear reduction.

In some embodiments, during use of embodiments of the two-stage gear reduction described with respect to FIGS. **1-24B**, gear tooth loading on one or more gears of drive assemblies **32** is less than if bull gear **41** were mounted on chain wheel **10**, without the second stage of gear reduction.

Gear Reduction Method

Some embodiments relate to a gear reduction method for a chain mooring windlass. The gear reduction method may be implemented using any of the embodiments of the chain mooring windlass and/or movable drive mechanism depicted in FIGS. **1-24B**. The gear reduction method includes providing a first stage of gear reduction and a second stage of gear reduction between drive assemblies of the chain mooring windlass and a chain wheel of the chain mooring windlass. The two stages of gear reduction may be provided in any of the manners depicted and described with respect to any of FIGS. **1-24B**.

In the gear reduction method, the first stage of gear reduction may drive an axel (e.g., chain wheel axel **14** or axel **1014**) of the chain mooring windlass. The chain wheel may be configured to rotate freely with respect to the axel. The axel is coupled with gears of the second stage of gear reduction. One or more gears of the second stage of gear reduction may drive the chain wheel, such as via adapter plate **22** or **2022**.

The gear-reduction method may be used to haul-in or deploy an anchor chain, for example. In certain embodiments, the gear-reduction method includes selectively shifting between a fast/light mode and a slow/heavy mode, as depicted and described with respect to FIGS. **15A-20C**. In some embodiments, a chain mooring windlass with no shift

mechanism is used in the gear-reduction method, as shown and described with respect to FIGS. **13A-14B**.

Single Drive Method

Some embodiments relate to a single-drive method using a single movable drive mechanism to selectively operate multiple chain mooring windlasses. The single-drive method may be implemented using any of the embodiments of the movable drive mechanism depicted in FIGS. **21A-24B**.

The single-drive method includes providing a movable drive mechanism (e.g., movable drive mechanism **1000**). The single-drive method includes coupling the movable drive mechanism with a first chain wheel assembly, rotating a chain wheel of the first chain wheel assembly, decoupling the movable drive mechanism from the first chain wheel assembly, coupling the movable drive mechanism with a second chain wheel assembly, and rotating a chain wheel of the second chain wheel assembly. This operation may be repeated for any number of chain wheel assemblies on one or more offshore vessels.

In some embodiments, the single-drive method includes providing two stages of gear reduction. The method includes providing a first stage of gear reduction and a second stage of gear reduction between drive assemblies of the chain mooring windlass and a chain wheel of the chain mooring windlass. The two stages of gear reduction may be provided in the manner depicted and described in FIGS. **21A-24B**.

The single-drive method may be used to haul-in or pay out an anchor chain, for example. In some embodiments, chain mooring windlass with no shift mechanism is used in the single-drive method, as shown and described with respect to FIGS. **13A-14B**. In certain embodiments, the single-drive method includes selectively shifting between a fast/light mode and a slow/heavy mode, as depicted and described with respect to FIGS. **15A-20C**.

Offshore Vessel

Certain embodiments relate to an offshore vessel having a chain mooring windlass in accordance with any of FIGS. **1-20C**. Other embodiments relate to an offshore vessel having a chain mooring windlass and movable drive mechanism in accordance with any of FIGS. **21A-24B**.

Chain Stopping Method

Other embodiments relate to use of a chain stopper assembly in accordance with FIGS. **1-10** for pulling-in, paying-out, and positioning mooring lines to moor offshore vessels. Certain embodiments of such a method may be performed in accordance use of chain stopper assembly **3**, as described with reference to FIGS. **3-10**.

The various embodiments, or aspects thereof, described herein may be combined. For example, the drive assemblies and two stage gear reductions shown and described with respect to FIGS. **11-20C** may be incorporated into the movable drive mechanism, as shown and described with respect to FIGS. **21A-24B**. Also, the embodiment without a shift mechanism shown and described with respect to FIGS. **15A-16B** or the shift mechanism **400** shown and described with respect to FIGS. **17A-20C**, may be incorporated into the movable drive mechanism, as shown and described with respect to FIGS. **21A-24B**.

Although the present embodiments and advantages have been described in detail, it should be understood that various changes, substitutions and alterations can be made herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the disclosure. Moreover, the scope of the present application is not intended to be limited to the particular embodiments of the process, machine, manufacture, composition of matter, means, methods and steps described in the specification. As one of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate from

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the disclosure, processes, machines, manufacture, compositions of matter, means, methods, or steps, presently existing or later to be developed that perform substantially the same function or achieve substantially the same result as the corresponding embodiments described herein may be utilized according to the present disclosure. Accordingly, the appended claims are intended to include within their scope such processes, machines, manufacture, compositions of matter, means, methods, or steps.

What is claimed is:

1. A chain mooring windlass having a two-stage gear reduction, the chain mooring windlass comprising:

a chain wheel;

a chain wheel axle extending through the chain wheel;

one or more drive assemblies coupled to the chain wheel axle via a first stage gear reduction comprising one or more reduction gears, wherein the chain wheel axle is coupled to the chain wheel via a second stage gear reduction comprising one or more reduction gears; and wherein the first stage gear reduction includes a reduction gear that drives the chain wheel axle.

2. The chain mooring windlass of claim 1, wherein the first stage gear reduction is located on the same side of the chain wheel as the one or more drive assemblies, and wherein the second stage gear reduction is located on the opposite side of the chain wheel as the one or more drive assemblies.

3. The chain mooring windlass of claim 1, wherein the reduction gears of the first stage gear reduction comprise: one or more pinion gears, each coupled to one of the one or more drive assemblies; and wherein the reduction gear that drives the chain wheel axle is a bull gear coupled to the one or more pinion gears and to the chain wheel axle, wherein the one or more drive assemblies drive the one or more pinion gears, and the one or more pinion gears drive the bull gear.

4. The chain mooring windlass of claim 3, wherein the pitch diameter of each pinion gear is less than the pitch diameter of the bull gear.

5. The chain mooring windlass of claim 3, wherein the bull gear and the chain wheel axle rotate at the same rate.

6. The chain mooring windlass of claim 3, wherein the second stage gear reduction comprises a planetary gearbox coupled to the chain wheel axle and to the chain wheel.

7. The chain mooring windlass of claim 3, wherein the reduction gears of the second stage gear reduction comprise: a sun gear coupled to the chain wheel axle; one or more planetary gears coupled to the sun gear; and an internal ring gear coupled to the chain wheel, wherein the chain wheel axle drives the sun gear, the sun gear drives the one or more planetary gears, the one or more planetary gears drive the internal ring gear, and the internal ring gear drives the chain wheel.

8. The chain mooring windlass of claim 7, wherein the chain wheel and the internal ring gear rotate at the same rate.

9. The chain mooring windlass of claim 7, wherein the one or more planetary gears share tooth loading equally.

10. The chain mooring windlass of claim 7, wherein the one or more planetary gears are lockable with respect to the internal ring gear.

11. The chain mooring windlass of claim 7, wherein the one or more planetary gears function as idlers.

12. The chain mooring windlass of claim 7, wherein the sun gear has the same pitch diameter as the one or more planetary gears.

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13. The chain mooring windlass of claim 7, wherein the sun gear has a different pitch diameter than the pitch diameters of the one or more planetary gears.

14. The chain mooring windlass of claim 7, further comprising one or more plungers, wherein at least one planetary gear is rotatable about each plunger.

15. The chain mooring windlass of claim 14, wherein each plunger is movable with respect to the chain wheel.

16. The chain mooring windlass of claim 15, wherein each plunger is movable between a first position engaging the chain wheel, and a second position clear of the chain wheel.

17. The chain mooring windlass of claim 16, further comprising a shift mechanism configured to move each plunger between the first position and the second position to selectively control rotational speed of the chain wheel relative to load on the chain wheel, wherein engagement of each plunger with the chain wheel configures the chain mooring windlass for operation at in a fast/light mode, and wherein when each plunger is clear of the chain wheel the chain mooring windlass is configured to operate in a slow/heavy mode.

18. The chain mooring windlass of claim 7, further comprising:

an inner plate and outer plate supporting the one or more planetary gears;

one or more planetary gear pins mounted to the outer plate, wherein each planetary gear is mounted on one of the planetary gear pins; and

a first fixed holding plate mounted onto a windlass frame on a first side of the chain wheel, and a second fixed holding plate mounted onto the windlass frame on a second side of the chain wheel, wherein the first fixed holding plate reacts to bearing load from the chain wheel axle, and wherein the second fixed holding plate reacts to bearing load from the chain wheel axle and torsion from the outer plate.

19. The chain mooring windlass of claim 1, wherein the reduction gear that drives the chain wheel axle is fixed to the chain wheel axle.

20. The chain mooring windlass of claim 1, wherein the second stage gear reduction includes a reduction gear that is driven by the chain wheel axle.

21. The chain mooring windlass of claim 20, wherein the second stage gear reduction includes another reduction gear that drives the chain wheel.

22. A movable drive mechanism for driving chain mooring windlasses, the movable drive mechanism comprising: one or more reduction gears including reduction gears of a first stage gear reduction and reduction gears of a second stage gear reduction, wherein the second stage gear reduction includes a planetary gear box; one or more drive assemblies coupled to the reduction gears, wherein the drive assemblies drive the reduction gears;

a drive gear coupled to the reduction gears, wherein the reduction gears drive the drive gear; and

a chain wheel coupler to selectively couple the movable drive mechanism to a chain mooring windlass.

23. A gear reduction method for chain mooring windlasses, the gear reduction method comprising:

providing a first stage of gear reduction and a second stage of gear reduction, wherein both the first and second stages of gear reduction are located between drive assemblies of a chain mooring windlass and a chain wheel of the chain mooring windlass, and wherein a chain wheel axle extends through the chain wheel;

driving the chain wheel axle with the first stage of gear reduction;
driving the second stage of gear reduction with the chain wheel axle; and
driving the chain wheel with the second stage of gear reduction. 5

24. The method of claim **23**, wherein the second stage of gear reduction includes a planetary gear box.

25. A chain mooring windlass having a two-stage gear reduction, the chain mooring windlass comprising: 10
a chain wheel; and
one or more drive assemblies coupled to the chain wheel via a first stage gear reduction and a second stage gear reduction, wherein the second stage gear reduction includes a planetary gear box. 15

26. The chain mooring windlass of claim **25**, wherein the planetary gear box includes a reduction gear that drives the chain wheel.

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