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(54) **MODULAR GLAND ARRANGEMENTS FOR A FLUID END ASSEMBLY**

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This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

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F16K 5/02 (2006.01)

E21B 43/26 (2006.01)

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F16K 3/24 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **F01B 3/0029** (2013.01); **F16K 5/0271** (2013.01); **E21B 43/2607** (2020.05); **F04B 53/22** (2013.01); **F16K 3/243** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC F04B 53/16; F04B 53/22; F16K 5/0271

See application file for complete search history.

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Exhibit "A" includes cross-sectional views of fluid end assemblies known in the art prior to Aug. 25, 2016.

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Primary Examiner — Thomas E Lazo

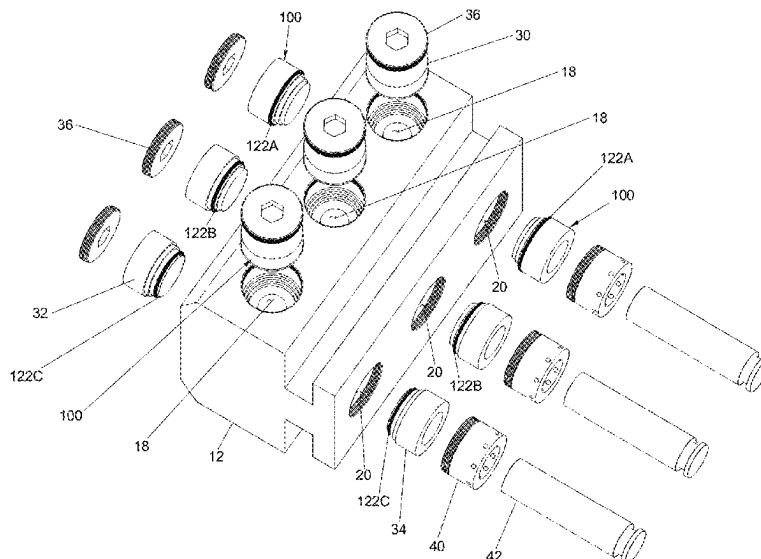
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(57)

ABSTRACT

A closure element for a fluid end assembly that has two or more recessed grooves formed in its outer surface. The grooves are axially offset. A seal is placed in one and only one of the grooves. As wear occurs, the seal is relocated to one of the other grooves. Instead of a series of axially offset grooves in a single closure element, a kit may be formed from two or more otherwise identical closure elements, each with a single recessed groove at a different axial position. Another closure element has a series of ledge-like surfaces defining spaces within which a seal may be received. One outer surface surrounds one or more of the other surfaces. A seal is placed in one and only one of the spaces. As wear occurs, the seal is relocated to one of the other spaces.

18 Claims, 13 Drawing Sheets



Related U.S. Application Data

Dec. 20, 2019, now Pat. No. 10,914,171, which is a continuation of application No. 15/685,167, filed on Aug. 24, 2017, now Pat. No. 10,519,950.

- (60) Provisional application No. 62/379,462, filed on Aug. 25, 2016.

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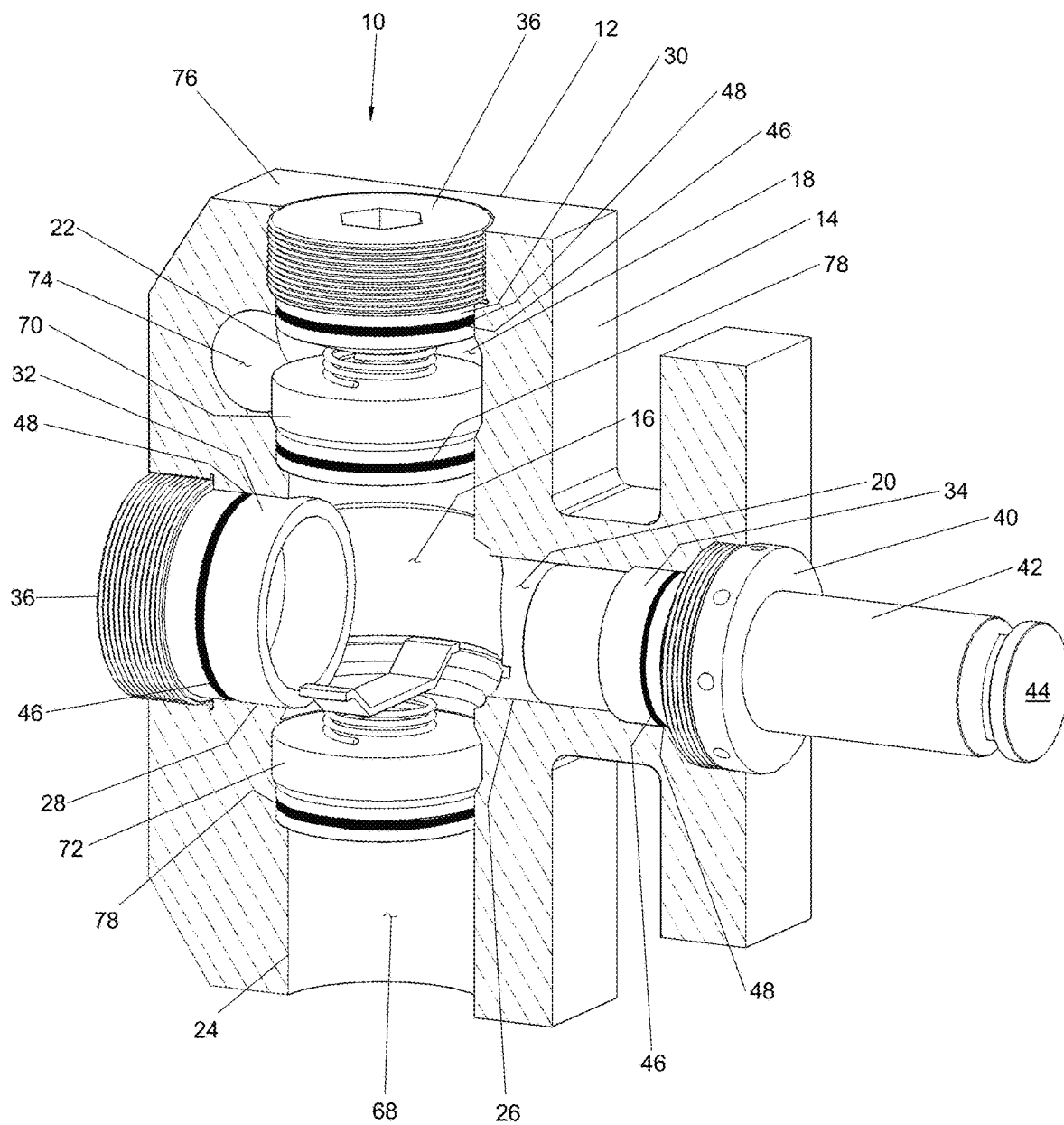
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Exhibit "B" includes side views of valve seats known in the art prior to Sep. 29, 2015.

Exhibit "C" is a cross-sectional view of a plunger end of a fluid assembly known in the art prior to Sep. 29, 2015.

Exhibit "D" includes an engineering drawing and pictures of a mud pump known in the art prior to Sep. 29, 2015.

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PRIOR ART
FIG. 1

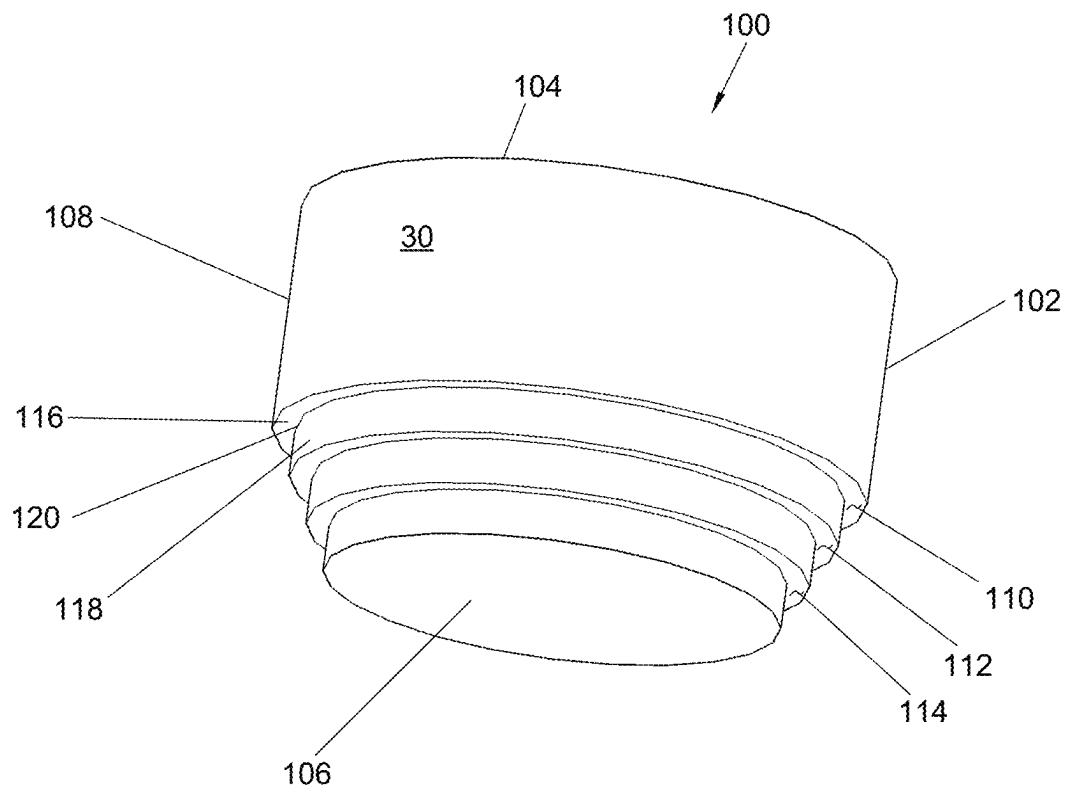


FIG. 2

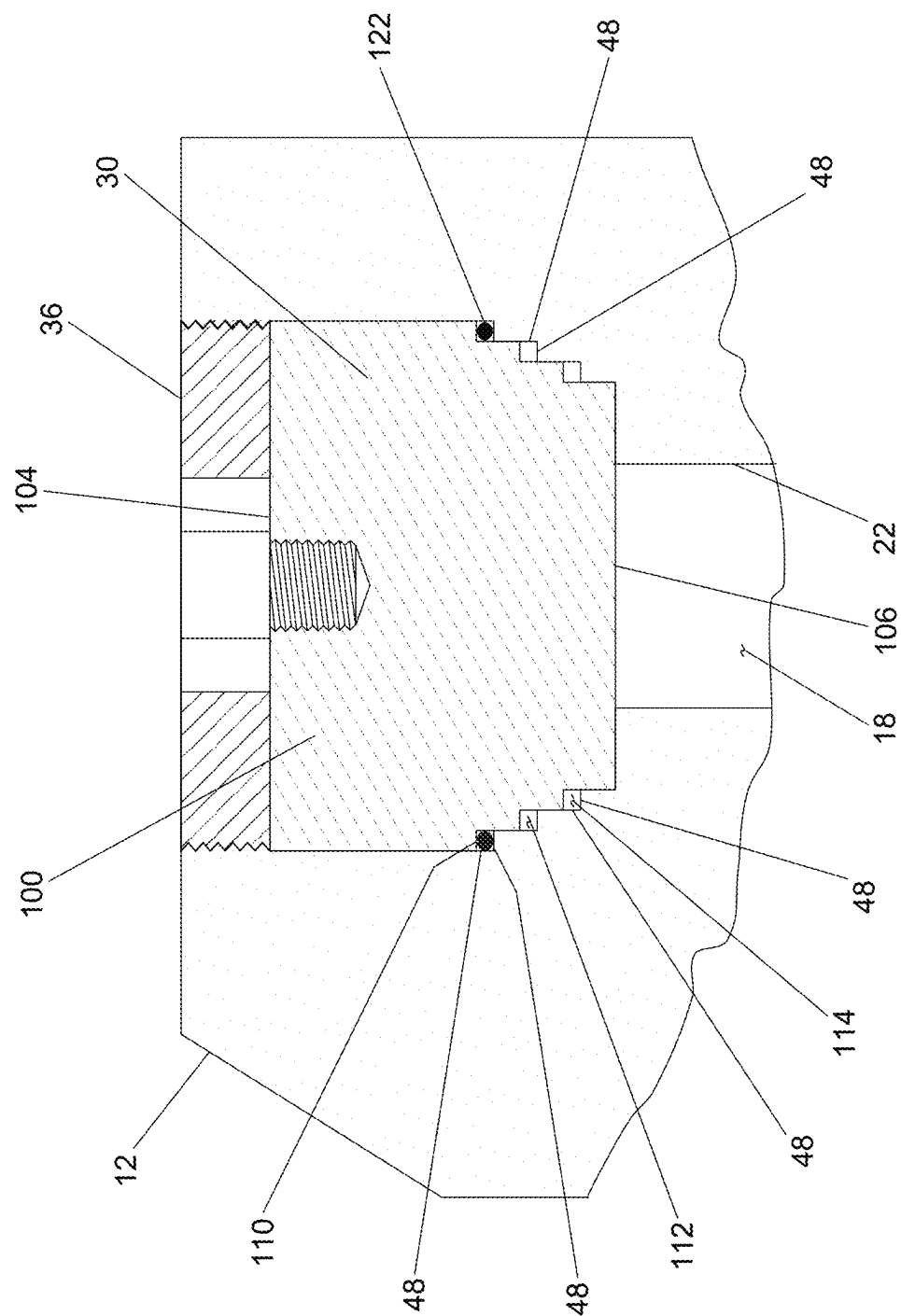


FIG. 3

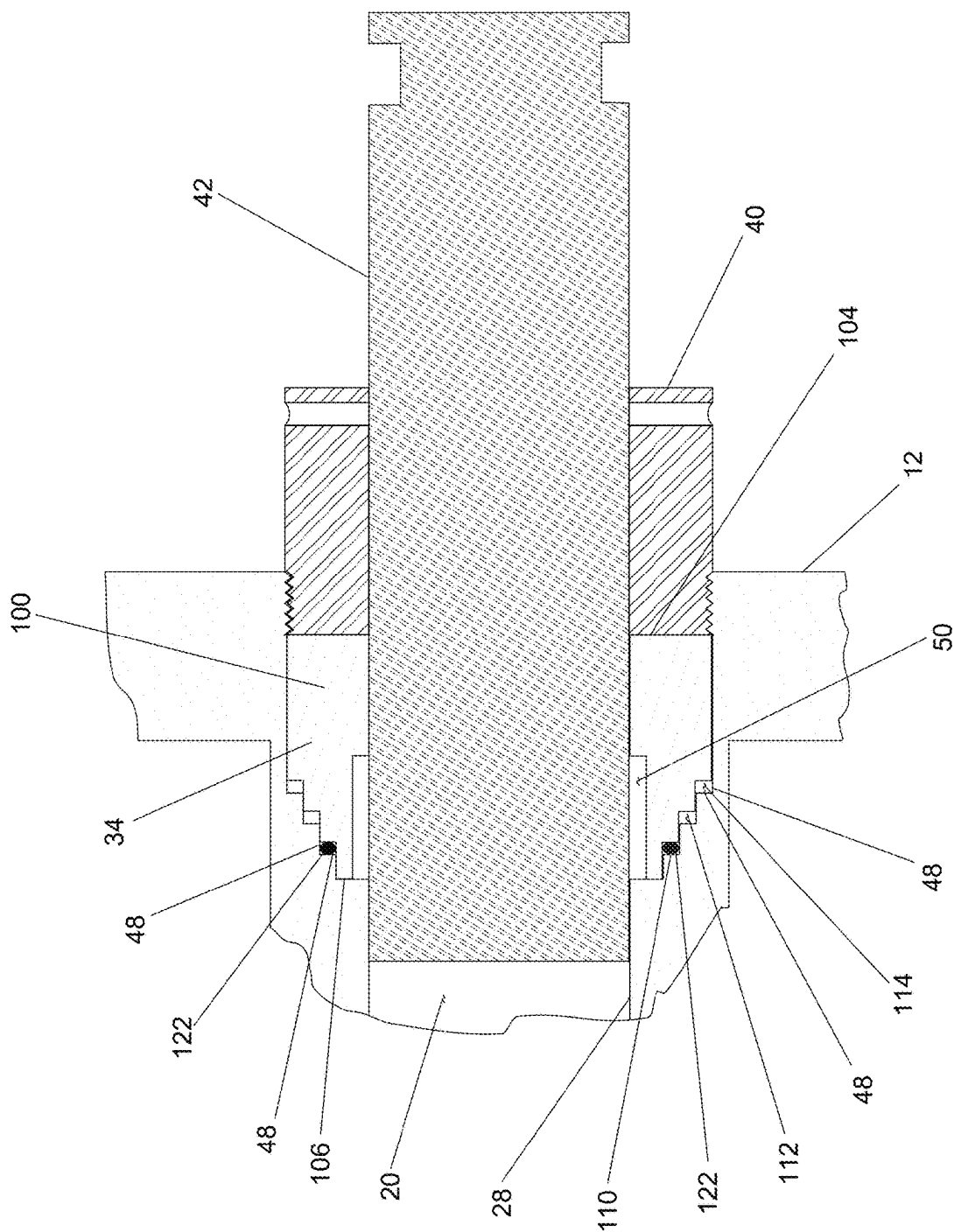


FIG. 4

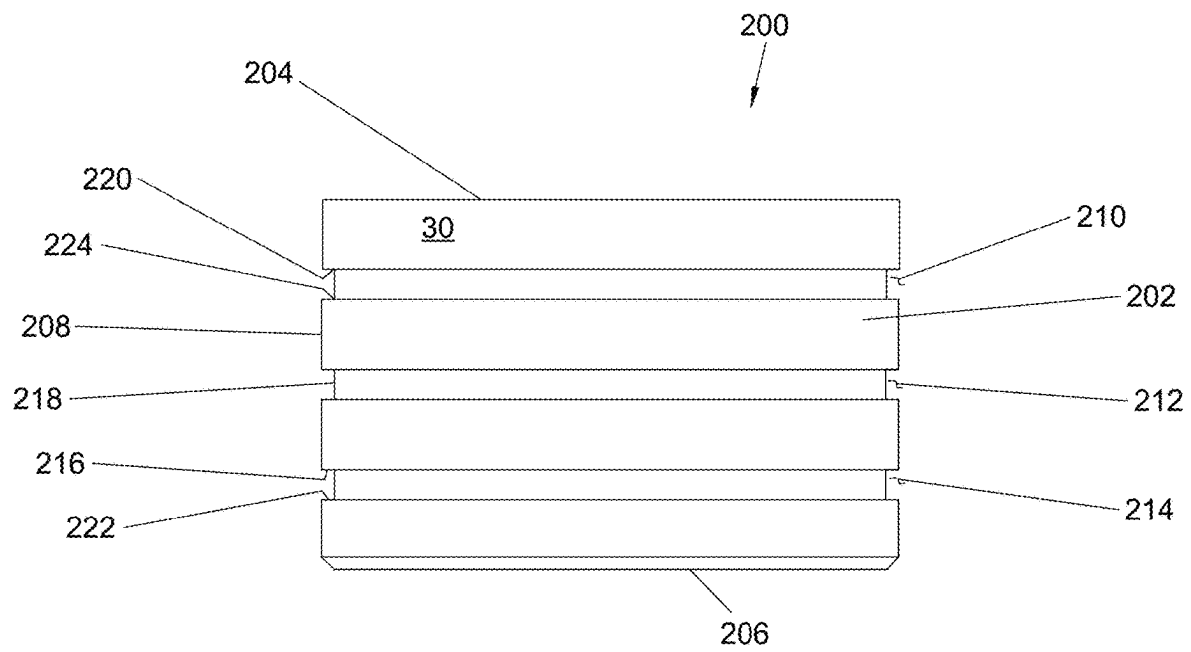


FIG. 5

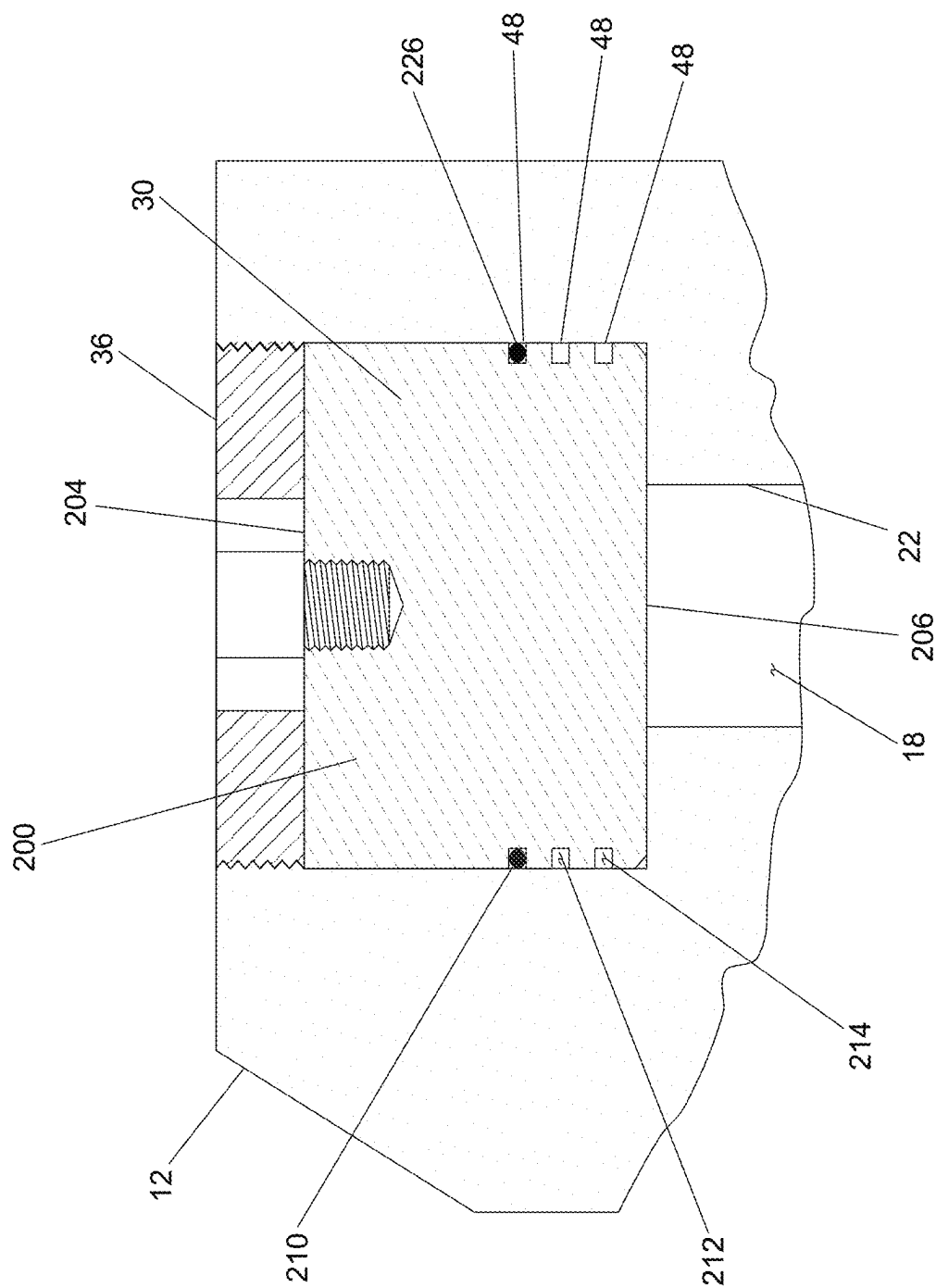


FIG. 6

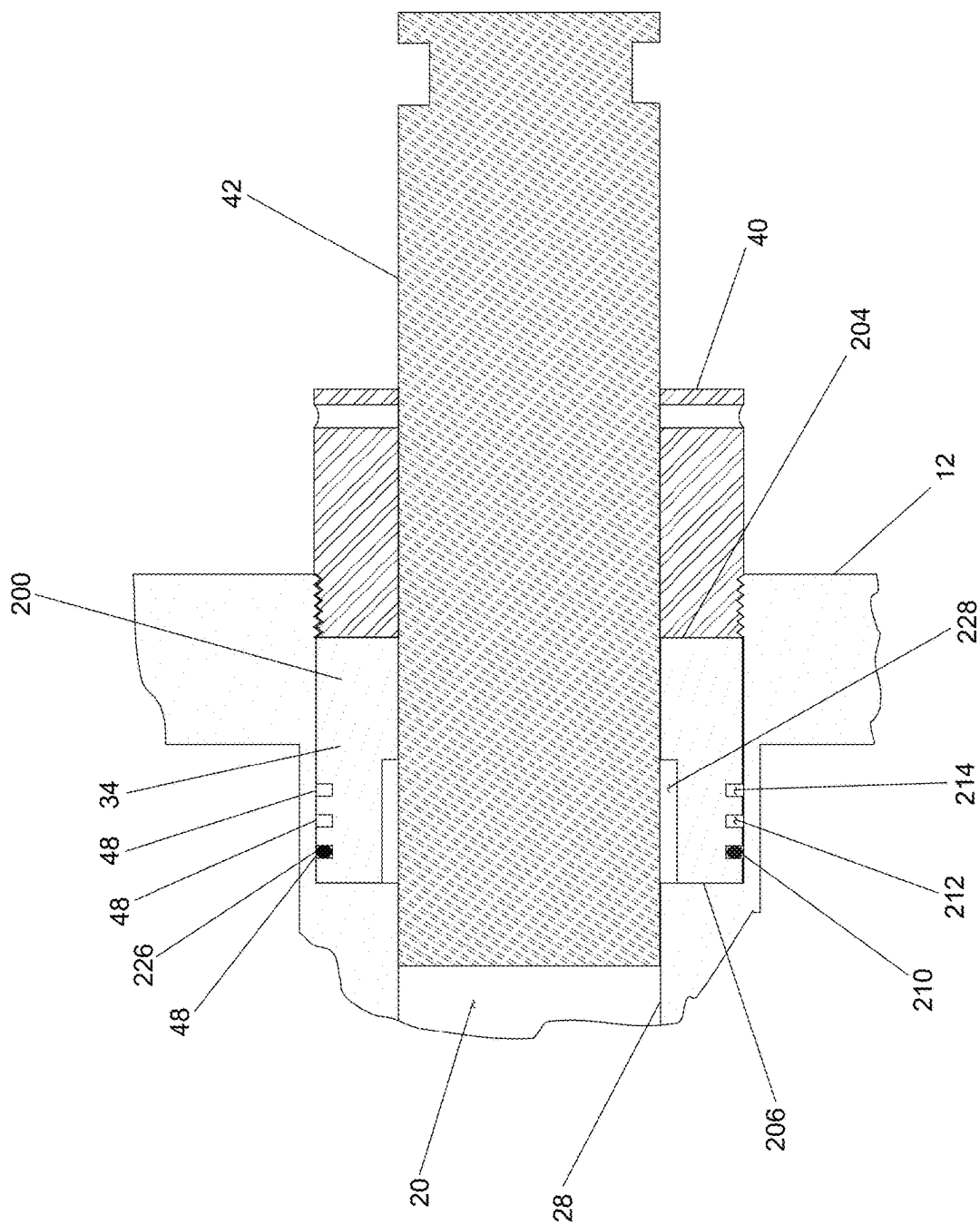


FIG. 7

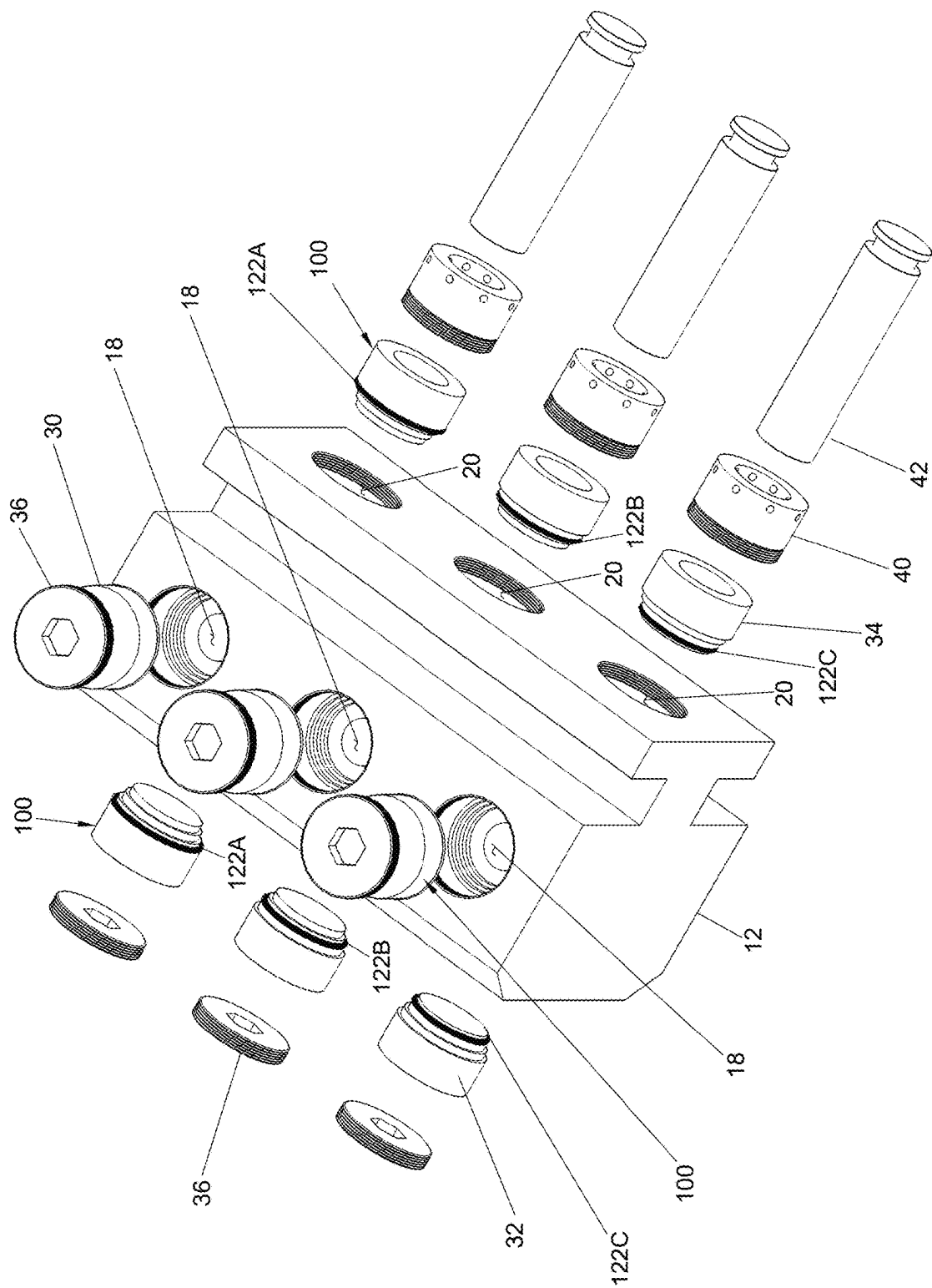
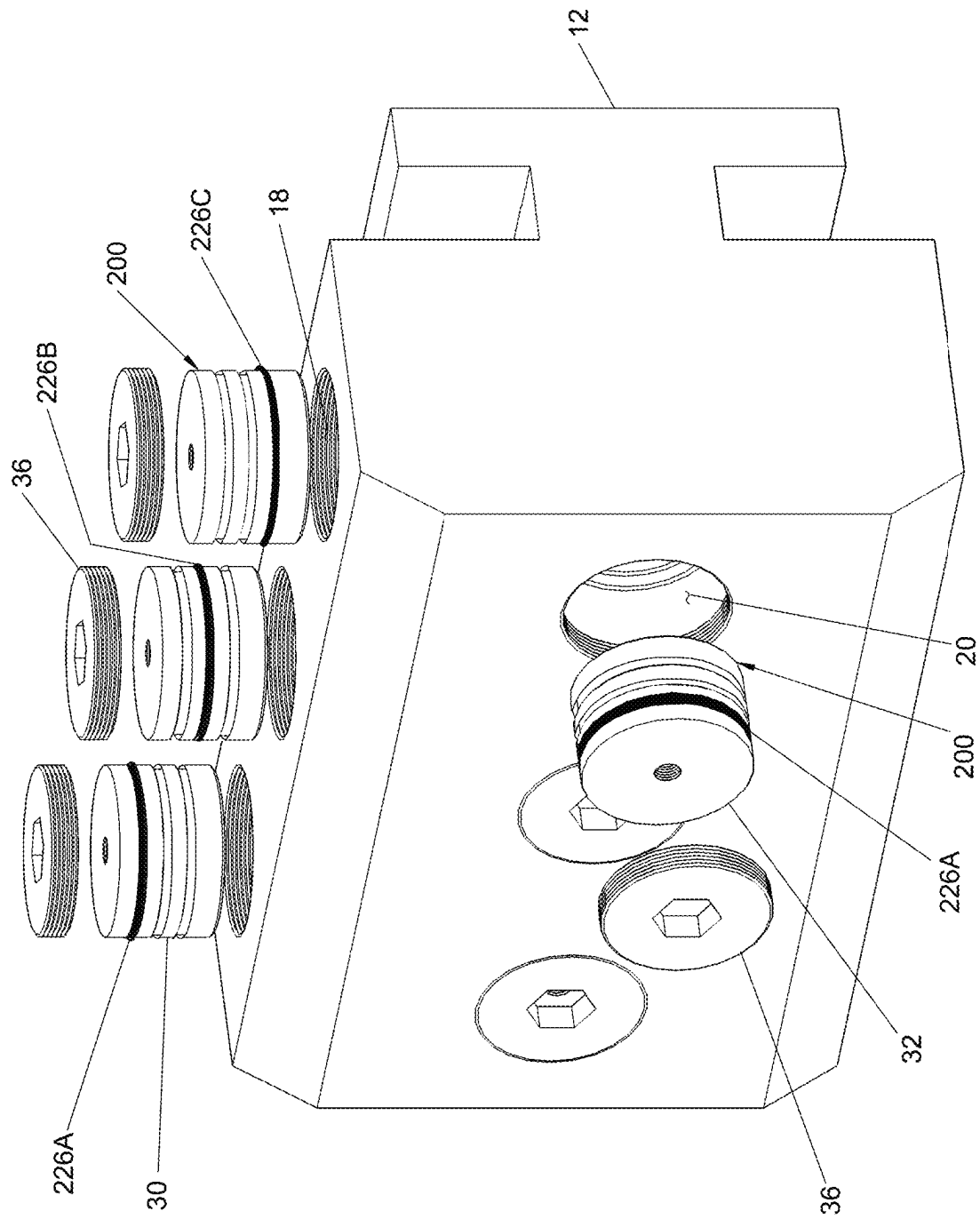


FIG. 8



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E/G.

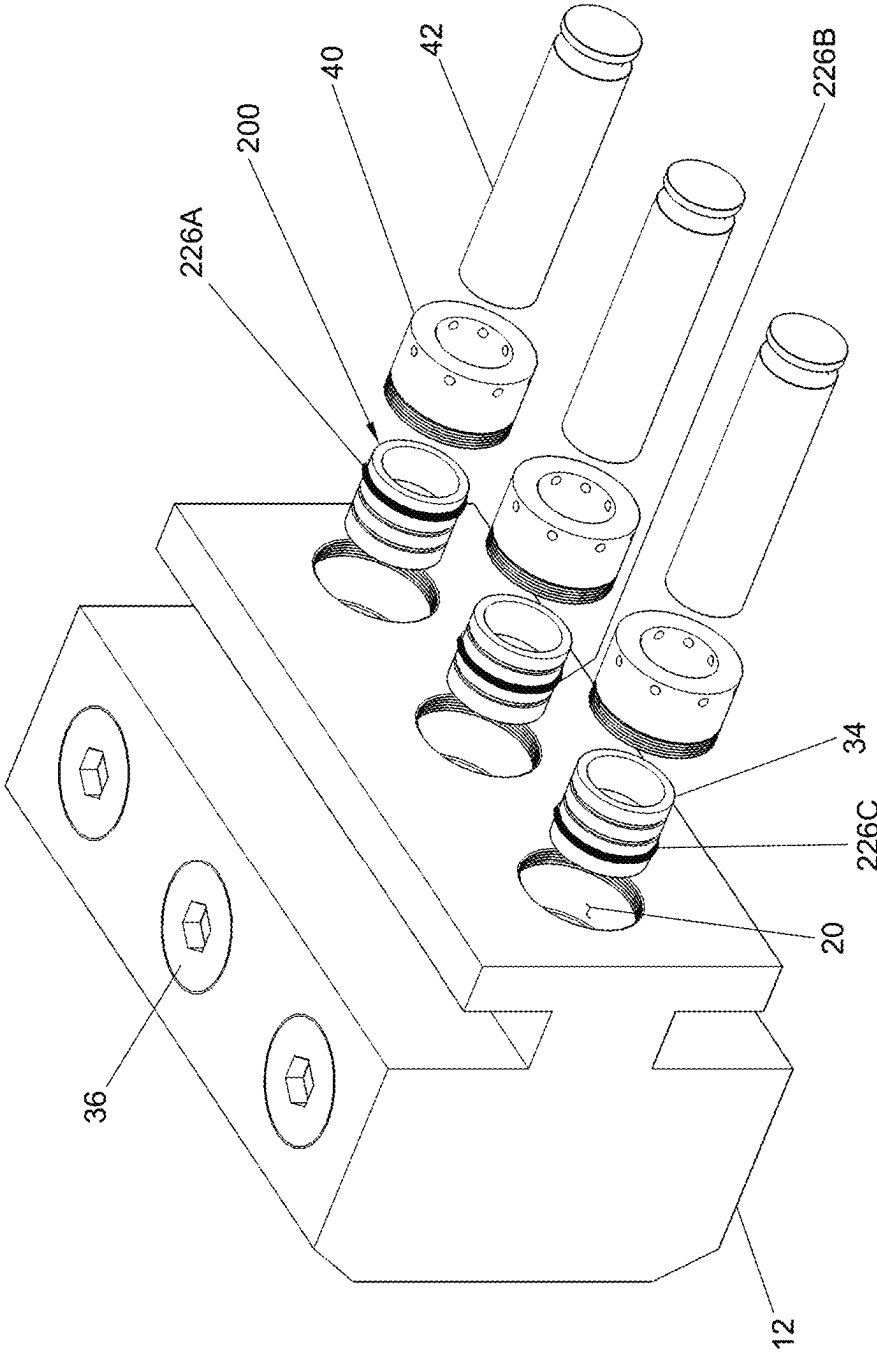


FIG. 10

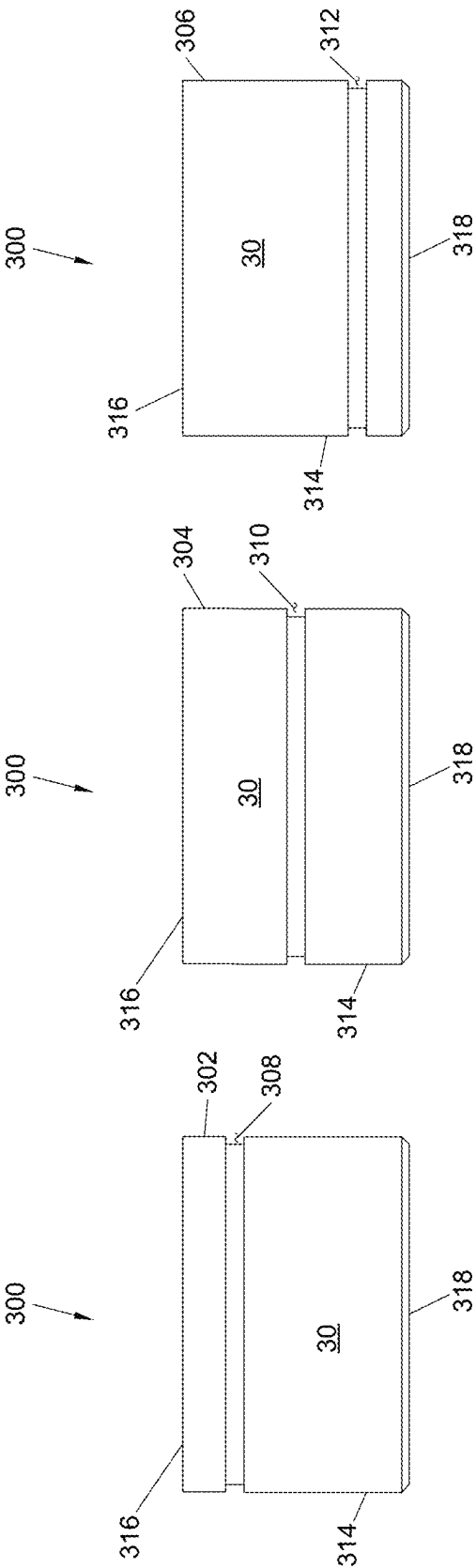


FIG. 11

FIG. 12

FIG. 13

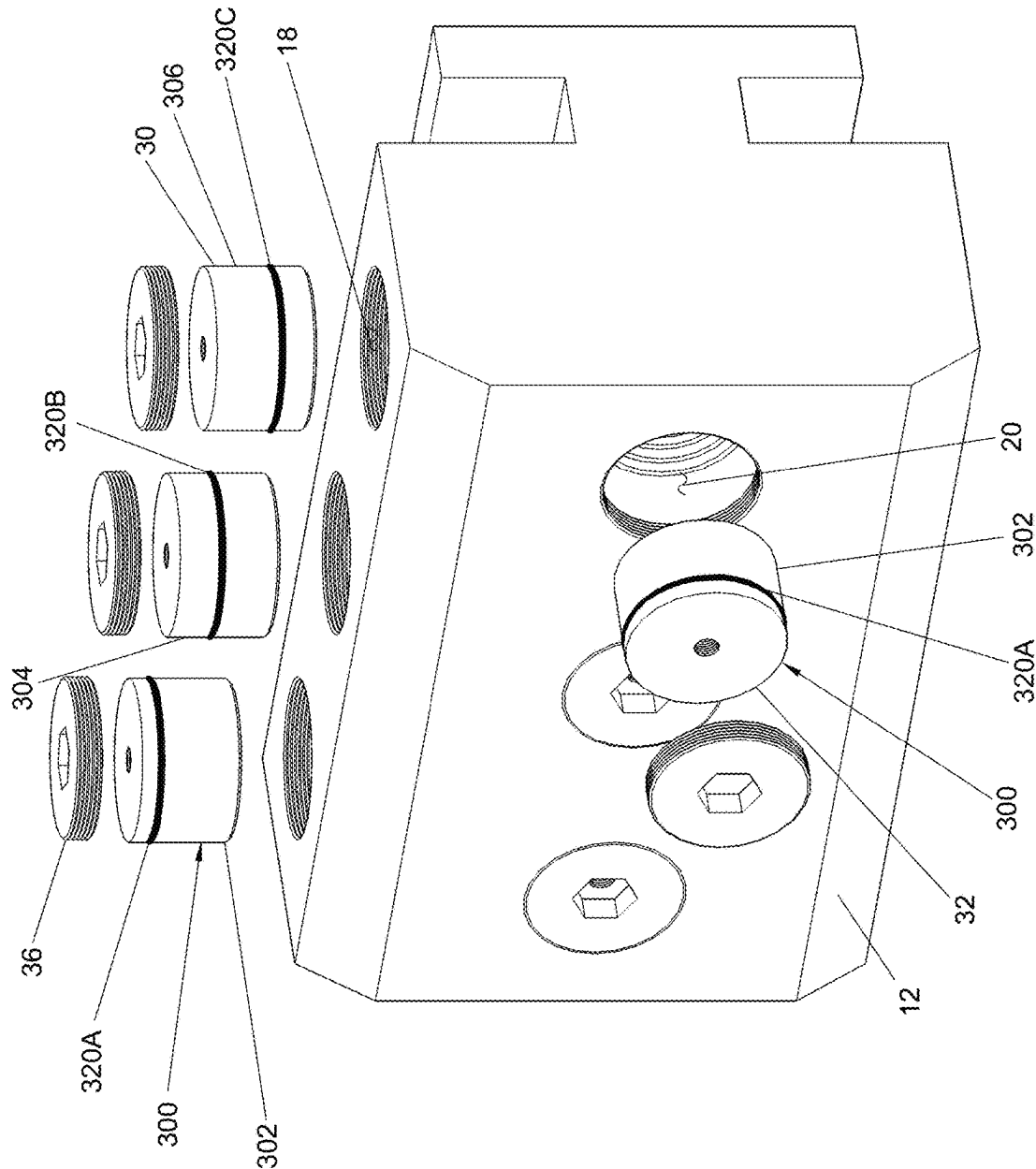


FIG. 14

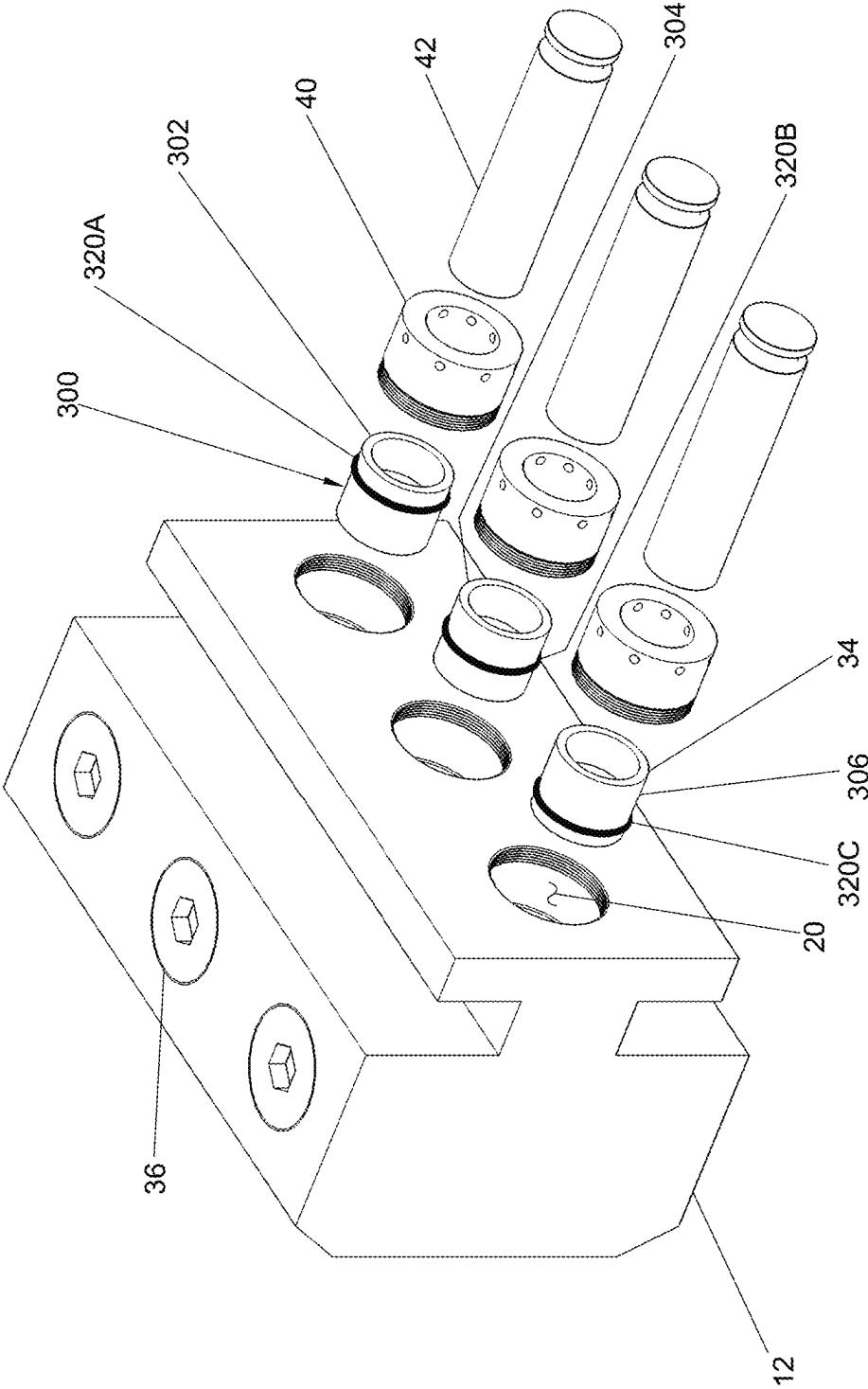


FIG. 15

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MODULAR GLAND ARRANGEMENTS FOR A FLUID END ASSEMBLY

SUMMARY

The present invention is directed to a kit comprising a fluid end assembly, a closure element, and at least one annular first seal. The fluid end assembly comprises a housing having an external surface and an internal chamber. A first conduit is formed in the housing that has a first and a second section, each section independently interconnecting the internal chamber and the external surface. A second conduit is also formed in the housing that intersects the first conduit and independently interconnects the internal chamber and the external surface. The closure element comprises a body having at least two structural features. Each structural feature comprises a pair of external surfaces formed in an outer surface of the body. The external surfaces join at a first corner line and form two boundaries of a recessed space within which an annular seal is receivable. The annular first seal is positionable within the recessed space of any of the structural features.

The present invention is also directed to a kit comprising a fluid end assembly, a first closure element, annular first seal, a second closure element, and an annular second seal. The fluid end assembly comprises a housing having an internal chamber and a conduit that intersects the internal chamber and opens at a first surface of the housing. The first closure element comprises a body having a pair of external surfaces formed in an outer surface of the body. The external surfaces join at a first corner line and form two boundaries of a recessed space within which an annular seal is receivable. The annular first seal is positioned within the recessed space of the first closure element. The second closure element comprises a body having a pair of external surfaces formed in an outer surface of the body. The external surfaces join at a first corner line and form two boundaries of a recessed space within which an annular seal is receivable. The recessed space of the second closure element is axially offset from the recessed space of the first closure element if those closure elements were superimposed. The annular second seal is positioned within the recessed space of the second closure element.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a fluid end assembly. The housing has been partially cut away to better display installed closure elements.

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a discharge cover from the fluid end assembly of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view of the discharge cover of FIG. 2, positioned within a conduit of a fluid end assembly.

FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view of a sleeve positioned within a conduit of the fluid end assembly. A plunger is disposed within the sleeve.

FIG. 5 is a side elevation view of a second embodiment of a discharge cover.

FIG. 6 is a cross-sectional view of the discharge cover of FIG. 5, positioned within a conduit of a fluid end assembly.

FIG. 7 is a cross-sectional view of a second embodiment of a sleeve positioned within a conduit of a fluid end assembly. A plunger is shown disposed within the sleeve.

FIG. 8 is an exploded perspective view of components of the fluid end assembly. The discharge covers are those shown in FIG. 2, and the sleeves are those shown in FIG. 4.

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FIG. 9 is an exploded perspective view of some of the components of another fluid end assembly. The discharge covers are those shown in FIG. 5.

FIG. 10 is an exploded view of the fluid end assembly of FIG. 9, from a different perspective. The sleeves are those shown in FIG. 7.

FIG. 11 is a side elevation of a first discharge cover. Together with the second and third discharge covers shown in FIGS. 12 and 13, it forms a kit of a third embodiment of discharge covers.

FIG. 12 is a side elevation view of a second discharge cover.

FIG. 13 is a side elevation view of a third discharge cover.

FIG. 14 is an exploded perspective view of some of the components of another fluid end assembly. The discharge covers are those shown in FIGS. 11-13.

FIG. 15 is an exploded view of the fluid end assembly of FIG. 14, from a different perspective.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Fluid end assemblies are typically used in oil and gas operations to deliver highly pressurized corrosive and/or abrasive fluids to piping leading to the wellbore. The assemblies are typically attached to power ends run by engines. The power ends reciprocate plungers within the assemblies to pump fluid throughout the fluid end. Fluid may be pumped through the fluid end at pressures that range from 5,000-15,000 pounds per square inch (psi). Fluid used in high pressure hydraulic fracturing operations is typically pumped through the fluid end at a minimum of 8,000 psi; however, fluid will normally be pumped through the fluid end at pressures around 10,000-15,000 psi during such operations.

With reference now to FIG. 1, a fluid end assembly 10 comprising a housing 12 having an external surface 14 and an internal chamber 16 is shown. A first conduit 18 and a second conduit 20 are formed within the housing 12. The conduits 18 and 20 intersect each other to form the internal chamber 16. As shown in FIG. 1, the diameter of the conduits 18 and 20 may vary throughout the housing 12. This allows the conduits 18 and 20 to closely receive structures of different sizes described later herein.

The first conduit 18 shown in FIG. 1 has aligned first and second sections 22 and 24, and the second conduit 20 has aligned third and fourth sections 26 and 28. Each section 22, 24, 26, and 28 independently connects the internal chamber 16 and the external surface 14. The sections 22, 24, 26, and 28 are aligned such that the conduits 18 and 20 are orthogonal to one another. However, the sections 22, 24, 26, and 28 may also be aligned so they intersect the internal chamber 16 at a non-straight angle.

In another embodiment, the second conduit 20 may only comprise a third section 26, meaning the second conduit 20 only has one opening on the external surface 14. The fourth section 28 is not required for operation of the fluid end 10. The fourth section 28 is typically machined in the housing 12 for ease of creating the second conduit 20 and to provide an opening to service parts within the housing 12, if needed.

The second section 24 has an intake opening 68. The intake opening 68 may be secured to a piping system that delivers fluid to the fluid end 10. A set of valves 70 and 72 are positioned within the first conduit 18. The valves 70 and 72 help move fluid within the housing 12. An intake valve 72 prevents fluid from flowing back through the intake opening 68 after entering the housing 12. A discharge valve 70 allows fluid to exit the fluid end 10 through a discharge

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opening 74 positioned proximate a top end 76 of the fluid end 10. Each of the valves 70, 72 may also have a seal 78 positioned around its outer surface to block fluid from leaking around the valves 70, 72.

With reference to FIGS. 1 and 8, the housing 12 may have a plurality of first and second conduits 18 and 20 positioned adjacent one another. Each first conduit 18 may have an intake opening 68 formed in its second section 24. The intake openings 68 may each be connected to a different coupler or pipe that leads to the same piping system (not shown). This allows fluid to enter the fluid end 10 through multiple openings. In contrast, only one discharge opening 74 may be formed in the housing 12. Each first section 22 of the first conduits 18 may be connected to the discharge opening 74. This allows fluid to exit the housing 12 through a single opening.

A second discharge opening (not shown) may also be formed in the housing 12 that is in fluid communication with the discharge opening 74. This allows fluid to exit the housing 12 through two openings. Additional discharge openings may also be formed in the housing 12, if needed.

With reference to FIG. 1, a plurality of closure elements 30, 32, and 34 are shown positioned within the first, third, and fourth sections 22, 26, and 28. The closure element positioned within the first section 22 is a discharge cover or discharge plug 30, and the closure element positioned within the fourth section 28 is a suction cover or suction plug 32. The covers 30 and 32 are substantially identical. Each cover 30, 32 is sized to fully block fluid flow within the section 22 or 28 it is situated in. The covers 30 and 32 are retained within each section 22 or 28 by a retaining nut 36 that threads into each section 22 and 28 proximate the external surface 14 of the housing 12.

The closure element positioned within the third section 26 is a sleeve 34. The sleeve 34 is tubular and sized to be closely received within the third section 26. The sleeve 34 is retained within the third section 26 by a tubular retaining nut 40. The retaining nut 40 threads into the third section 26 proximate the external surface 14 of the housing 12.

A plunger 42 is shown disposed within the sleeve 34 and the retaining nut 40. During operation, the plunger 42 reciprocates within the housing 12 to pump fluid throughout the fluid end 10. The plunger 42 is powered by a power end run by an engine (not shown) that is connected to a first end 44 of the plunger 42.

Each of the closure elements 30, 32, and 34 has a seal 46 positioned around its outer surface to block fluid from leaking from the sections 22, 26, or 28. The seals 46 block the flow of fluid by tightly engaging an inner surface or sealing surface 48 of conduits 18 and 20.

Fluid end assemblies 10 are susceptible to corrosive and/or abrasive fluid becoming trapped between the seal 46 and the sealing surface 48. This may cause the sealing surfaces 48 to erode over time and prevent the seals 46 from tightly engaging the sealing surfaces 48. Fluid may leak from the sections 22, 26, and 28 if the seals 46 cannot effectively seal against the sealing surfaces 48. If fluid leaks from the fluid end 10, the housing 12 will likely need to be replaced, because it may no longer maintain the requisite fluid pressure for operation.

The present invention is directed to a system including one or more closure elements 30, 32, and 34 that permit the seal 46 to be relocated within the conduits 18 and 20 over time. Relocating the seal 46 also relocates the sealing surface 48. Thus, if the original sealing surface 48 suffers erosion, the seal 46 can be moved to engage with a different

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sealing surface 48 in the conduits 18 or 20. Such relocation will help extend the life of the fluid end housing 12.

Turning now to FIG. 2, a first embodiment of the closure element 100 is shown. A discharge cover 30 is shown in FIG. 2, but a suction cover 32 or a sleeve 34 may also be used with the closure element 100 (FIGS. 4 and 8). The closure element 100 comprises a body 102 having a top surface 104, a bottom surface 106 and an outer surface 108.

The body 102 further comprises a plurality of structural features making up a first recessed space 110, a second recessed space 112, and third recessed space 114. The recessed spaces 110, 112, and 114 are each formed by paired external surfaces 116 and 118 that join at a first corner line 120 and form a ledge at an outer edge of the body 102. The external surfaces 116 and 118 form the boundaries of each recessed space 110, 112, and 114. An annular seal 122 is positionable within one of the recessed spaces 110, 112, and 114 (FIGS. 3 and 4).

The first recessed space 110 has a larger circumference than the second recessed space 112, and the second recessed space 112 has a larger circumference than the third recessed space 114. The structural features making up the recessed spaces 110, 112, and 114 shown in FIG. 2 follow substantially the same path around the outer surface 108 of the body 102. However, the recessed spaces 110, 112, and 114 may follow differently shaped paths around the outer surface 108 of the body 102, if desired.

With reference now to FIGS. 3 and 4, the closure elements 100 are shown positioned within the conduits 18 and 20. The discharge cover 30 is shown in FIG. 3 and the sleeve 34 is shown in FIG. 4. The closure elements 100 are positioned within the sections 22 or 28 such that the bottom surface 106 faces towards the internal chamber 16 (FIG. 1). The retaining nut 36 or 40 is positioned above the top surface 104 of the closure element 100. As shown in FIG. 4, the sleeve 34 is hollow in the center to make room for the plunger 42. A packing seal or series of packing seals 50 may also be positioned inside of the sleeve 34 to block fluid from leaking between the sleeve 34 and the plunger 42.

Continuing with FIGS. 3 and 4, the sealing surface 48 for each seal 122 comprises paired surfaces formed in the internal walls of the conduits 18 or 20. The paired surfaces correspond with the recessed spaces 110, 112, and 114 formed in the closure element 100. Thus, the inner walls of the conduits 18 or 20 further bound the recessed spaces 110, 112, and 114 to tightly engage the seal 122.

Turning now to FIG. 5, a second embodiment of the closure element 200 is shown. A discharge cover 30 is shown in FIGS. 5, but a suction cover 32 or a sleeve 34 may also be used with the closure element 200 (FIGS. 7, 9, and 10). The closure element 200 comprises a body 202 having a top surface 204, a bottom surface 206 and an outer surface 208.

A plurality of structural features are formed in the body 202 that make up a first recessed space 210, a second recessed space 212, and third recessed space 214. The recessed spaces 210, 212, and 214 are each formed by paired external surfaces 216 and 218 that join at a first corner line 220 and form a ledge at an outer edge of the body 202. The recessed spaces 210, 212, and 214 are further bounded by a third external surface 222 of the body 202 that joins one of the paired external surfaces 216, 218 at a second corner line 224. The three external surfaces 216, 218, and 222 together form a groove in the body 202.

The recessed spaces 210, 212, and 214 are axially spaced on the outer surface 208 of the body 202 and are substantially identical in shape and size. However, the spaces 210, 212, and 214 may vary in size and shape, if desired. An

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annular seal **226** is positionable within one of the recessed spaces **210**, **212**, and **214** (FIGS. **6** and **7**).

With reference now to FIGS. **6** and **7**, the closure elements **200** are shown positioned within the conduits **18** and **20**. The discharge cover **30** is shown in FIG. **6** and the sleeve **34** is shown in FIG. **7**. The closure elements **200** are positioned within the sections **22** or **28** such that the bottom surface **206** faces towards the internal chamber **16** (FIG. **1**). The retaining nut **36** or **40** is positioned above the top surface **204** of the closure element **200**. As shown in FIG. **7**, the sleeve **34** is hollow in the center to make room for the plunger **42**. Like closure element **100**, a packing seal or series of packing seals **228** may also be positioned inside of the sleeve **34** to block fluid from leaking between the sleeve **34** and the plunger **42**.

Continuing with FIGS. **6** and **7**, the sealing surface **48** for each seal **226** is the area of the internal wall of the conduit **18** or **20** that tightly engages the seal **226**. This area is typically the portion of the internal wall directly across from the position of the seal **226**, when the closure element **200** is positioned within the conduits **18** or **20**.

Turning now to FIGS. **8-10**, the first and second embodiments of the closure elements **100** and **200** may be utilized in the same manner. In operation, an operator will put a first seal **122A** or **226A** in the first recessed space **110** or **210** and leave the second and third recessed spaces **112**, **212**, **114**, and **214** empty (FIGS. **2** and **5**). The operator will then install the closure element **100** or **200** into one of the conduits **18** or **20** and secure it with the retaining nut **36** or **40**.

The power end attached to the fluid end **10** is then activated such that fluid begins to flow throughout the fluid end **10**. During operation, the sealing surface **48** within the conduit **18** or **20** will start to erode. If the seal **122A** or **226A** starts to leak, the power end is deactivated to stop fluid flow. The closure element **100** or **200** is removed from the conduit **18** or **20** and the first seal **122A** or **226A** is removed from the first recessed space **110** or **210** (FIGS. **2** and **5**).

A second seal **122B** or **226B** is positioned within the second recessed space **112** or **212** leaving the first and third recessed spaces **110**, **210**, **114**, and **214** empty (FIGS. **2** and **5**). The closure element **100** or **200** is installed into the same conduit **18** or **20** it was removed from and operations may resume. Because the position of the second seal **122B** or **226B** is axially spaced from that of the first seal **122A** or **226A**, the second seal **122B** or **226B** will have a new non-eroded sealing surface **48** on the internal surface of the conduit **18** or **20** (FIGS. **3**, **4**, **6** and **7**). Thus, the second seal **122B** or **226B** will offer enhanced resistance from leakage from the conduit **18** or **20**.

As the sealing surfaces **48** experience erosion, the seal **122B** or **226B** may begin to leak. In such case, the power end is again deactivated and the closure element **100** or **200** is removed from the conduit **18** or **20**, and the second seal **122B** or **226B** is removed from the second recessed space **112** or **212**. A third seal **122C** or **226C** is positioned within the third recessed space **114** or **214** leaving the first and second recessed spaces **110**, **210**, **112**, and **212** empty (FIGS. **2** and **5**). The closure element **100** or **200** is again installed into the conduit **18** or **20** and operations may resume. Because the position of the third seal **122C** or **226C** is axially spaced from that of the first and second seal **122A**, **122B**, **226A**, and **226B**, the third seal **122C** or **226C** will have a new non-eroded sealing surface **48** (FIGS. **3**, **4**, **6**, and **7**). Thus, the third seal **122C** or **226C** will offer enhanced resistance from leakage from the conduit **18** or **20**.

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The operator may choose any order of positioning the seals within the grooves desired. The order of operation described above is non-limiting and is just one method of using the closure elements **100** or **200**. For example, the operator may start by positioning the third seal **122C** or **226C** in the third recessed spaces **114** or **214**, rather than starting by positioning the first seal **122A** or **226A** in the first recessed spaces **110** or **210**.

The same methods described above may be employed using a closure element **100** or **200** having only two recessed spaces or having more than three recessed spaces. Once the final seal no longer seals properly against its sealing surface **48**, the fluid end housing **12** will likely need to be replaced.

In operation, this method is employed for each conduit **18** or **20** individually. FIGS. **8-10** show the seals **122A**, **122B**, **122C**, **226A**, **226B**, and **226C** positioned within a different recessed space **110**, **112**, **114**, **210**, **212**, and **214** (FIGS. **2** and **5**) in each type of closure element **100** and **200** for illustrative purposes only. In reality, each closure element **100** or **200** starts with the first seal **122A** or **226A** in the first recessed space **110** or **210**. The first seal **122A** or **226A** may be removed and the second seal **122B** or **226B** is placed in the second recessed space **112** or **212**, and so on, only when necessary for each closure element **100** or **200**.

Turning now to FIGS. **11-13**, a third embodiment of the closure element **300** is shown. The closure element **300** utilizes a kit comprising multiple closure elements **302**, **304**, and **306**. Discharge covers **30** are shown in FIGS. **11-13**, but suction covers **32** or sleeves **34** may also be used with the closure element **300** (FIGS. **14** and **15**).

The kit making up the closure element **300** includes a first closure element **302**, a second closure element **304**, and third closure element **306**. Except as described hereafter, the closure elements **302**, **304**, and **306** are identical in size and shape to closure elements **200**. Each closure element **302**, **304**, and **306** has a single structural feature formed in the outer surface of its body **314** in the form of a recessed space **308**, **310**, and **312**. The recessed spaces **308**, **310**, and **312** are configured identically to the recessed spaces **210**, **212**, and **214** formed in the second embodiment of the closure element **200** (FIG. **5**).

The first closure element **302** has a first recessed space **308** formed proximate a top surface **316** of its body **314**. The second closure element **304** has a second recessed space **310** formed proximate the center of the body **314**, and the third closure element **306** has a third recessed space **312** formed proximate a bottom surface **318** of its body **314**. Thus, the recessed spaces **308**, **310**, and **312** are axially offset from one another if the closure elements **302**, **304**, and **306** are superimposed. A first, second, and third seal **320A**, **320B**, and **320C** may be positioned within each corresponding recessed space **308**, **310**, and **312** (FIGS. **14** and **15**).

Turning now to FIGS. **14** and **15**, in operation, the operator will install the first closure element **302** into one of the conduits **18** or **20** and secure it with the retaining nut **36** or **40**. The power end attached to the fluid end **10** is activated such that fluid begins to flow throughout the fluid end **10**. Over time, the sealing surface **48** of the first seal **320A** will start to erode. If the first seal **320A** starts to leak, the power end is deactivated to stop fluid flow. The first closure element **302** is removed from the conduit **18** or **20** and replaced with the second closure element **304**.

Because the position of the second seal **320B** on the second closure element **304** is axially spaced from that of the first seal **320A** on the first closure element **302**, the second seal **320B** will have a new non-eroded sealing surface **48** in

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the conduit **18** or **20**. Thus, the second seal **320B** will offer enhanced resistance from leakage from the conduit **18** or **20**.

As the sealing surfaces **48** experience erosion, the second seal **320B** may begin to leak. In such case, the power end is again deactivated and the second closure element **304** is removed from the conduit **18** or **20** and replaced with the third closure element **306**. Because the position of the third seal **320C** on the third closure element **306** is axially spaced from the first and second seals **320A** and **320B** on the first and second closure elements **302** and **304**, the third seal **320C** will have a new non-eroded sealing surface **48**. Thus, the third seal **320C** will offer enhanced resistance from leakage from the conduit **18** or **20**.

The operator may choose any order of positioning the closure element **302**, **304**, and **306** within the conduits **18** or **20** desired. The order of operation described above is non-limiting and is just one method of using the kit making up the closure element **300**. For example, the operator may start by positioning the third closure element **306** in the conduit **18** or **20**, rather than starting by positioning the first closure element **302** in the conduit **18** or **20**.

This same method may be employed using only two different closure elements **300** or more than three different closure elements **300**. Once the seal on the final closure element no longer seals properly, the fluid end housing **12** will likely need to be replaced.

This same method may also be employed using the first embodiment **100** of the closure element **100**. In such case, each closure element would only have one recessed space formed in its body that is identical to the recessed spaces **110**, **112**, or **114** shown in FIG. 2. The recessed spaces would be axially offset if those closure elements were superimposed.

In operation, this method is employed for each conduit section **22**, **26**, or **28** (FIG. 1) individually. FIGS. **14** and **15** show a different closure element **302**, **304**, or **306** positioned within each conduit section **22**, **26**, or **28** for illustrative purposes only. In reality, each conduit section **22**, **26**, or **28** would start with the first closure element **302**. The first closure element **302** would be removed and replaced with the second closure element **304**, and so on, only when necessary for each conduit section **22**, **26**, or **28**.

Turning back to FIG. 1, the seals **78** on the valves **70**, **72** may have the same problems as the seals **46** used on the closure elements **30**. Due to this, the embodiments **100**, **200**, and **300** and methods discussed above may also be employed on the valves **70** and **72**.

Various modifications can be made in the design and operation of the present invention without departing from the spirit thereof. Thus, while the principle preferred construction and modes of operation of the invention have been explained in what is now considered to represent its best embodiments, which have been illustrated and described, it should be understood that the invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically illustrated and described.

The invention claimed is:

1. A fluid end kit, comprising:

a housing having an external surface, an internal chamber, and at least two conduits independently interconnecting the external surface and the internal chamber, each conduit comprising a longitudinal axis;

a first plug configured to be closely received within a selected one of the conduits and configured to block the flow of fluid within such conduit, the first plug comprising:

a body, comprising:

an axis that is configured to be colinear with the longitudinal axis; and
one and only one circumferential recess formed therein; and

a second plug configured to be closely received within the same selected one of the conduits as the first plug and configured to block the flow of fluid within such conduit, the second plug comprising:

a body, comprising:

an axis that is configured to be colinear with the longitudinal axis; and
one and only one circumferential recess formed therein;

in which the respective recesses would be axially offset if the first and second plugs were superimposed.

2. The fluid end kit of claim 1, in which each circumferential recess comprises two sidewalls joined by a base.

3. The fluid end kit of claim 1, in which each conduit is configured to receive the first and second plugs singly, but not jointly.

4. The fluid end kit of claim 1, further comprising:

a third plug configured to be closely received within the same selected one of the conduits as the first and second plugs and configured to block the flow of fluid within such conduit, the third plug comprising:

a body, comprising:

an axis that is configured to be colinear with the longitudinal axis; and
one and only one circumferential recess formed therein;

in which the recess would be axially offset from the recesses of the first and second plugs if the first, second, and third plugs were superimposed; and

at least one annular seal configured to be received in the circumferential recess formed in the first, second, or third plug.

5. The fluid end kit of claim 1, further comprising at least one annular seal configured to be received in the circumferential recesses formed in the first or second plug.

6. A method of using the fluid end kit of claim 1, in which the first plug has an annular seal situated within its groove, and in which the assembled first plug and seal have been installed in a selected conduit of housing to form an operative fluid end, the method comprising:

replacing the first plug with the second plug in the selected conduit, the second plug having an annular seal within its groove.

7. The method of claim 6, in which the annular seal installed within the first plug is the same annular seal installed within the second plug.

8. A fluid end assembly, comprising:

a fluid end body having at least two conduits, each conduit comprising a longitudinal axis;

a closure element installed within a selected one of the conduits, the closure element comprising:

a body having an axis configured to be colinear with the longitudinal axis and at least two axially spaced and circumferential steps formed therein, each step configured for receiving an annular seal; and

an annular seal positioned within one and only one of the steps formed in the body;

in which the annular seal is configured to block the flow of fluid within such conduit.

9. The fluid end assembly of claim 8, further comprising a retaining nut threaded into the fluid end body, the retaining nut configured to secure the closure element within the selected conduit.

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10. The fluid end assembly of claim 8, in which the closure element is characterized as a tubular sleeve, the tubular sleeve configured to receive at least a portion of a reciprocating plunger.

11. A method of using the fluid end assembly of claim 8, 5 the method comprising:

operating the fluid end with the closure element carrying the annular seal, the seal being installed on a first step of the closure element; and

during a break in operation of the fluid end, servicing the 10 closure element such that a second annular seal carried by the closure element is installed on a second and different step.

12. The method of claim 11, in which the seal installed on the second step of the closure element is different from the seal installed on the first step of the closure element.

13. An assembly, comprising:

a fluid end, comprising:

a housing, comprising:

an external surface;

an internal chamber; and

at least two independent conduits, each conduit having a longitudinal axis and interconnecting the external surface and the internal chamber; and 25

a replacement part kit, comprising:

a first plug configured to be closely received within a selected one of the conduits and configured to block the flow of fluid within such conduit, the first plug comprising:

a body having an axis configured to be colinear with the longitudinal axis of the selected conduit and one and only one circumferential recess formed therein; and

a second plug configured to be closely received within the same selected one of the conduits and

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configured to block the flow of fluid within such conduit, the second plug comprising:

a body having an axis configured to be colinear with the longitudinal axis of the selected conduit and one and only one circumferential recess formed therein;

in which the bodies of the plugs are identically shaped and sized apart from the recesses, with the recesses of the respective plugs being axially offset but otherwise identical.

14. The assembly of claim 13, in which the fluid end further comprises:

a retaining nut configured to thread into the housing and hold a selected plug within a selected conduit.

15. The assembly of claim 13, in which each circumferential recess comprises two sidewalls joined by a base.

16. The assembly of claim 13, in which each conduit is configured to receive the first and second plugs singly, but not jointly.

17. The assembly of claim 13, in which the replacement part kit further comprises:

a third plug configured to be received within the same selected one of the conduits and configured to block the flow of fluid within such conduit, the third plug comprising a body having an axis configured to be colinear with the longitudinal axis of the selected conduit and one and only one circumferential recess formed therein.

18. A method of using the assembly of claim 13, in which the first plug has an annular seal situated within its groove, and in which the assembled first plug and seal have been installed in a selected conduit of the housing to form an operative fluid end, the method comprising:

replacing the first plug with the second plug in the selected conduit, the second plug having a second annular seal within its groove.

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