



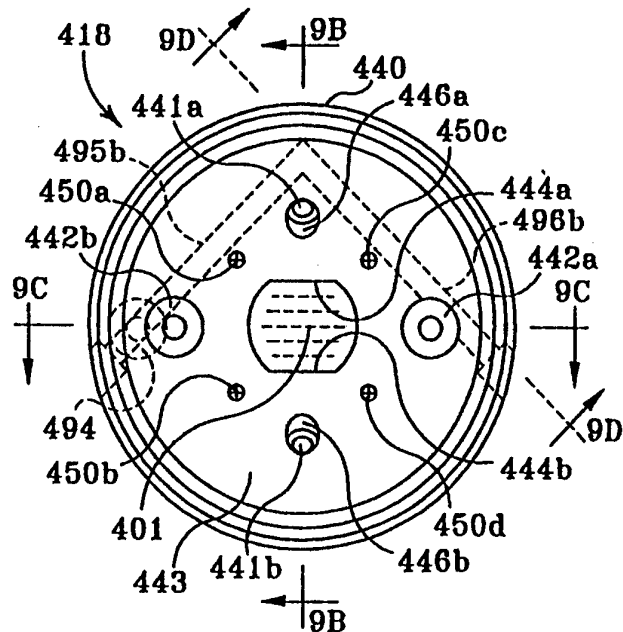
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(54) Title: EXTERNAL MIX APPLICATION SYSTEM AND NOZZLE ASSEMBLY

(57) Abstract

In an external mix, plural component application system, a first component is formed into a plurality of small, spaced streams arranged in an array (401) and projected at a substrate (14). A second component is formed into two air-entrained sprays and dispensed from nozzles (442a, 442b) and directed at the streams of the first component from adjacent the opposite sides of the array (401) to assist atomization of the streams into particles and to mix the components. A plurality of flows of compressed air are directed at the substrate (14) to from nozzles (441a, 441b) adjacent the opposite sides of the array (401) between the two sprays of second component to contain plural component emissions. A second plurality of flows of compressed air at lower flow rates is directed forwardly from apertures (450a, 450b, 450c, 450d) to inhibit an accumulation of the plural component material on the face of the nozzle assembly.



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**EXTERNAL MIX APPLICATION SYSTEM  
AND NOZZLE ASSEMBLY**

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5        Technical Field

The present invention relates generally to multi-component application systems and, more particularly, to a contained external mix plural component application system and method.

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Background Art

Multi-component application systems have been used, for example, in manufacturing plastic articles by applying resinous materials to a mold or preform for an article, or to pre-arranged fiber reinforcing materials, or with fiber reinforcing materials as they are being applied.

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In multi-component spraying systems, a liquid resin and a catalyst for the resin are formed into spray particles directed onto a substrate where the catalyst and resin react and harden to form the article. In such applications, the resin and catalyst components are preferably mixed together, and the mixture is sprayed onto the substrate. For example, in manufacturing articles with polyester resin, a catalyzing agent for the polyester resin is mixed with the resin, and the resin-catalyst mixture is then applied to the substrate. In internal mix systems, the resin and catalyst are mixed within the spraying apparatus, and the mixture is then atomized by a spray nozzle and directed onto the substrate. In external mix systems, the resin and catalyst are mixed externally of the apparatus after the resin and catalyst have already been atomized. In both external mix and internal mix systems, complete and thorough mixing of the resin and catalyst is important to avoid non-uniform hardening of the resin on the substrate

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and other undesirable results. Multi-component materials have also been used, for example, in the manufacture of insulating foams by mixing and spraying the components of a foam-producing combination onto a substrate where they produce a hardened foam-like coating.

U.S. Patent No. 4,824,017 discloses a method and apparatus that includes a flow of compressed air and entrained catalyst particles directed at the expanding, fan-like, resin film closely adjacent the airless nozzle, that effectively mixes catalyst particles with resin particles formed from an airless resin nozzle, and that provides a small, compact spray pattern with uniformly distributed and mixed resin and catalyst that may be easily used by an operator to deposit a uniform film of plural component material onto a substrate. U.S. Patent No. 4,824,017 discloses that finely atomized spray particles are not a specific desideratum, not being necessarily required in the manufacture of articles from plural component spraying systems, and that such articles are generally provided with smooth surfaces by the substrates, molds or preforms upon which the plural component materials are deposited and cured, and that it is desirable that the spray particles remain large enough so that their surface areas are small compared to their masses and they retain their fluidity so they may flow out on a substrate, mold or preform upon deposition. This retention of fluidity also enhances the ability of the catalyst spray particles to mix with and cure the resin particles upon deposition.

In one disclosed embodiment of U.S. Patent No. 4,824,017, an airless liquid nozzle of generally conventional design (in that it includes an internal passageway terminating at an internal hemispherical

surface which is cut through by an external, V-shaped groove to form an elongated, elliptical-shaped, liquid orifice) forms a flow of resin into an expanding fan-like film. A nozzle assembly is positioned around and adjacent to the liquid nozzle and comprises an annular chamber terminated at its forward end by an internal, generally hemispherical-shaped surface which is also cut through by an external, V-shaped groove to form an elongated, elliptical-shaped, air-catalyst orifice. The design and location of the air-catalyst orifice forms a flow of compressed air and catalyst particles which is generally juxtaposed around the fan-like film of resin at the liquid orifice and which includes a greater mass flow of compressed air and catalyst at the edges of the fan-like film at which resin "tails" exist. The flow of compressed air and catalyst will, therefore, provide preferential assistance in the atomization of the resin "tails" and the mixing of catalyst and resin to provide a spray in which the resin particles are of more uniform size and in which the catalyst carried by the compressed air flow will be more uniformly mixed with the resin particles throughout the volume of the spray.

In another disclosed embodiment of U.S. Patent No. 4,824,017 a pair of flows of catalyst entrained in compressed air is directed at the planar surfaces of an expanding film of resin from the opposite sides thereof to impinge upon the expanding resin film a fraction of an inch forwardly of the liquid orifice and a pair of compressed air flows is directed forwardly and generally parallel to each other and to the spray axis to impinge upon the expanding sides of the resin film forwardly of the impingement of the compressed air and catalyst on the expanding resin film. Surprisingly, when compressed air is directed

at the expanding edges of the fan-shaped resin film downstream of the impingement of the compressed air and catalyst upon the expanding liquid film, the uncontrolled billowing flow of air and escaping particles are eliminated. In addition, spray pattern size is reduced; and an improvement in spray pattern uniformity results without the creation of escaping atomized resin and catalyst particles characterized by prior air-assist, airless resin atomizing systems. The coaction of the flows of compressed air results in the capture of the resin and catalyst particles within the spray pattern.

European Patent No. 0,038,481 discloses a prior plural component application system where the flow of plural component material is divided into many small streams. In the system of European Patent No. 0,038,481, each of the streams tends to divide unpredictably and unreliably into segments of varying lengths, due to varying environmental factors and fluid flow characteristics, and the many streams of plural component material frequently create undesirable VOC emissions, that is, emissions of volatile organic solvent vapors, such as styrene vapors, into the workplace.

U.S. Patent No. 5,080,283 discloses method and apparatus providing effective application from a plurality of small streams of mixed plural component material, with stabilized stream formation, division and application and with a substantial reduction of VOC emissions in plural component applications, such as gel coat and wet-out applications in the manufacture of reinforced fiberglass articles. The method and apparatus of U.S. Patent No. 5,080,283 provide a compact, well defined and easily used pattern of plural component material with substantial

containment of the plural component materials and reduced contamination of the work environment from, for example, an inexpensive, lightweight, easy-to-manuever applicator, or an applicator with a fiber  
5 chopper.

In systems of U.S. Patent No. 5,080,283, a flow of compressed air is delivered to an applicator and flows of the plural component materials are mixed and formed into a plurality of small, spaced streams  
10 extending from the applicator. The applicator includes a liquid nozzle for forming the mixed plural component material into a two-dimensional array of small, spaced streams extending from the liquid nozzle, and an air nozzle for directing a plurality of  
15 flows of compressed air generally parallel to the plurality of small, spaced streams from a plurality of passageways spaced about the liquid nozzle. The plurality of air passageways of the air nozzle are equally spaced from, and about, the liquid nozzle, on  
20 four sides thereof, and the passageways are surrounded by small cavities in the face of the air nozzle. The flow of compressed air is thus divided into a plurality of air flows that are directed about the plurality of small, spaced streams of plural component  
25 materials and generally adjacent and parallel to the streams. The plural component material streams are substantially confined by the air flows, and their break-up is stabilized and vaporous emissions are confined and reduced.

#### Disclosure of the Invention

This invention provides an improved method and apparatus providing external mixing and application of plural component materials.

In the invention, a first component material, such as a resin, is formed into a plurality of small, spaced streams arranged in a two-dimensional array that are projected generally at a substrate or article; a second component material, such as a catalyst, is formed into two air-entrained sprays of second component material that are directed at the plurality of small, spaced streams of the first component material from adjacent opposite sides of the array of streams to break the small, spaced streams into particles of first component material that become mixed in the spray with particles of the second component material; and a flow of compressed air is formed into two flows of compressed air directed at the substrate or article from adjacent the opposing sides of the array of small, spaced streams and between the two sprays of the second component material, to provide containment for resin and catalyst vapors from the resin and catalyst particles.

In one preferred embodiment of the invention, the two-dimensional array of small, spaced streams comprises a plurality of rows of small, spaced streams of the first component material, with each row having a greater number of small, spaced streams and a greater row length than the number of rows and the height of the two-dimensional array. In addition, the two air-entrained sprays of second component material are preferably directed at the plurality of small, spaced streams from spray nozzles spaced on the opposite sides of the two-dimensional array formed by the ends of the rows and impinge on the plurality of small, spaced streams closely adjacent the sites of their projection, and the two flows of containment air are preferably directed at the substrate or article from passageways equally spaced from the two spray



nozzles and centrally adjacent to the outermost rows of the small, spaced streams. In another preferred embodiment of the invention, an additional low flow of cleansing air is directed generally forwardly of the nozzle means from a plurality of orifices spaced about the two-dimensional array of small, spaced streams, and between the air-entrained second component spray nozzles and the containment air passageways, for inhibiting mixed plural-component material from accumulating on the applicator apparatus.

Other features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the drawings and more detailed description that follows.

#### Detailed Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a block diagram to illustrate a system of the invention;

Fig. 2 is a side view of a plural component applicator including the invention;

Fig. 3 is a back view of the applicator of Fig. 2;

Fig. 4 is a front view of the applicator of Figs. 2 and 3;

Fig. 5 is a cross-sectional view of the front portion of the applicator of Figs. 2-4 taken at central plane 5-5 as indicated in Figs. 2 and 4;

Figs. 6A-C and 7 are drawings of a nozzle assembly of the applicator of Figs. 2-5;

Figs. 6A and 6B are a pair of orthogonal cross-sections of one part of the nozzle assembly taken at planes 6A-6A and 6B-6B of Fig. 6C, which is a front view of this nozzle assembly part;

Fig. 7 is a front view of the nozzle assembly;

Fig. 8 is another cross-section of the front

portion of the applicator of Figs. 2-5 taken at the central plane 8-8 of Fig. 4;

Fig. 9A is a front view of another nozzle assembly provided by the invention;

5 Figs. 9B and 9C are a pair of orthogonal cross-sections of one part of the nozzle assembly of Fig. 9A taken at planes 9B-9B and 9C-9C, respectively, of Fig. 9A; and

10 Fig. 9D is a section view of the nozzle assembly of Fig. 9A taken along reference line 9D-9D of Fig. 9A.

#### Best Mode For Carrying Out The Invention

15 Fig. 1 schematically illustrates a system of the invention for the manufacture of fiber reinforced plastic articles, and Figs. 2-4 illustrate a preferred embodiment of a hand-held applicator means 13.

20 The apparatus and method of this invention do not require a chopper; however, a chopper may be used to add reinforcing fiber to the plural component material, if desired. Where a chopper is used, the applicator means 13 may be fitted with a chopper by attaching it to the applicator body 17 by means of a bolt fastener (not shown).

25 In the system of Fig. 1 an external mix, air-assisted plural component application system is generally designated by reference numeral 10 and includes a first source 11 of a first component, e.g., a resinous material; a second source 12 of a second component, e.g., a catalyst for the resinous material;  
30 an application means 13 for mixing the catalyst and resin and for applying the mixture on a substrate 14; delivery means 16 for delivering the resin, catalyst and other materials to the spraying means during

operation of the system; and a compressed air source 27.

Applicator means 13 preferably comprises a hand-held device (shown in Figs. 2-4) which includes an applicator body 17 with a nozzle assembly 318, 418 at its front. Nozzle assembly 318, 418 includes two embodiments, one shown in Figs. 5-7 and another shown in Fig. 9. Both embodiments are described in detail below and basically comprise a nozzle assembly in which compressed air and liquid pressure are used in applying the plural component material. Both embodiments 318, 418 comprise a first nozzle part 330 (Figs. 5, 7 and 9A) for dividing a flow of mixed plural component material into a plurality of small, spaced streams and a second nozzle part 340, 440 (Figs. 4, 6 and 9) for dividing a flow of compressed air into a plurality of directed air flows, and for dividing a flow of catalyst and compressed air into a plurality of directed catalyst-air sprays.

Delivery means 16 includes means 21 for delivering the resin under pressure to spraying means 13, including a resin pump 23 and resin conduit 22, arranged between the source of resin 11 and the applicator body 17; means 24 for delivering catalyst, including a catalyst pump 33 and a catalyst-air conduit 25, arranged between the catalyst source 12 and the applicator body 17; and means 26 for delivering a flow of compressed air for delivery of catalyst to the applicator, including a compressed air control 29 and an air conduit 28, arranged between compressed air source 27 and an injection means 31 for entraining the catalyst into the flow of air through conduit 25. Injection means 31 is shown and described in U.S. Patent No. 3,763,876, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference. Thus, system 10

includes a compressed air source 27; and delivery means 16 includes air delivery means 26 for delivering compressed air to the applicator means 13.

5 Catalyst from source 12 is delivered to applicator means 13 by introduction into the compressed air from source 27 that assists in the application of the material. Specifically, system 10 includes catalyst injection means 31, which receives catalyst under pressure from source 12 via conduit 32 and pump 33, and compressed air from source 27 via 10 compressed air control 29 and conduit 28. Catalyst injection means 31 introduces the catalyst into the compressed air as a spray for delivery to the spraying means 13.

15 As described below, the flow of resin into spraying means 13 is directed through the liquid nozzle 330 which forms the resin flow into a plurality of small, spaced streams of resin in a two-dimensional array. The flow of catalyst-injected compressed air 20 into spraying means 13 is directed at the plurality of resin streams through a plurality of spray nozzles, 342a and 342b (Figs. 4, 6B, 6C and 7) and 442a and 442b in Fig. 9, which are configured and positioned so that the catalyst and compressed air will coact with 25 the resin streams externally of the spraying means, simultaneously mix the resin and catalyst particles and assist in the application of the resin onto the substrate. In addition, the flow of compressed air alone is directed to a plurality of air nozzles, 341a and 341b (Figs. 4, 5 and 7) and 441a 441b (Fig. 9). 30 In another improved embodiment of the invention, an additional flow of compressed air is directed to a plurality of air orifices 450a-450d (Fig. 9) to inhibit collection of catalyst and resin on the 35 apparatus.

Substrate 14 comprises an article-forming substrate such as a mold or preform used to manufacture articles from the catalyzed resin applied thereto. The invention can also be used to fill chambers of articles, such as refrigerators, with foam-like insulating materials. The resin can comprise any one of numerous materials such as a polyester or epoxy resin, and the catalyst can comprise any material suitable for catalyzing the resin. As noted above, system 10 may include a chopper mounted to spraying means 13 to dispense strands of fiberglass or the like into the spray pattern 15 to reinforce the plastic article and to act as a filler.

System 10 can further include a second compressed air control 39 connected to spraying means 13 by conduit 42. Compressed air from source 27 through control 39 provides the separate flow of air through air nozzles (341a, 341b and 441a, 441b) for assisting in containment of the catalyst and resin, and through air orifices (450a-450d) can be used for inhibiting the collection of catalyst and resin on the spraying means during a spraying operation.

Figs. 2-4 illustrate one embodiment of a hand-held applicator means 13. The hand-held applicator means 13 preferably comprises a gun body 17 with a nozzle assembly 18 at its front. Gun body 17 and nozzle assembly 18 are described in substantially more detail below.

In use, applicator means 13 of Figs. 2-4 is connected into the system shown in Fig. 1. The first source of the first component, i.e., the resinous material, is connected to the opening 314 at the rear of spray gun body 17. The resinous material from source 11 may then be provided by pump 23 through hose

22 to opening 314 at the rear of spray gun body 17. The second source 12 of the second component, i.e., the catalyst for the resinous material, is connected through pump 33, hose 32 and injection means 31 to opening 315 at the rear of spray gun body 17 (see Fig. 3). As shown in Fig. 2, injection means 31 may be conveniently attached to gun body 17 by threading it into opening 315 or onto a fitting 316 that is threaded into opening 315. Compressed air from compressed air source 27 is connected through the compressed air control 39 and a hose 42 to opening 319 at the rear of gun body 17. The upper rear portion of gun body 17 is provided with a mounting platform 320 (Figs. 2 and 3) into which openings 314, 315 and 316 are perpendicularly drilled. When connected into system 10 of this invention, the connections for resin, catalyst and compressed air can be, thus, conveniently carried over the hand of the operator as he grips handle 321 formed in gun body 17.

Operation of the application system is effected by pulling the trigger means 322 which is pivotally fastened to gun body 17 by means of a threaded fastener 323. As the operator pulls trigger 322 rearwardly toward handle 321 of gun body 17, trigger 322 operates an air valve (not shown) located in the central plane of the spray gun body 17 rearwardly of trigger 322 and in a passageway leading from opening 319 to the interface between the forward position 325 of spray gun body 17 and head portion 324 (see Fig. 8 which illustrates the air passageways in the head portion 324). The trigger also operates a pair of valves for the resin and for the air-entrained catalyst located forwardly of the trigger in cavities 366 and 380 in the head portion 324 attached at the

forward portion 325 of application means 13 (see Fig. 5).

5 In the operation of applicator means 13, catalyst from source 11 (Fig. 1) is delivered to application means 13 by its introduction into a second flow of compressed air from source 27. As indicated above and shown in Fig. 2, catalyst injection means 31 may be carried at the rear of spray gun body 17; the operative components of the catalyst injection means are, however, preferably incorporated into the spray gun body 17. Catalyst injection means 31 receives catalyst from source 12 as a result of the operation of pump 33, through conduit 32, and a controlled flow of compressed air from source 27 and compressed air control 29 through conduit 28. Catalyst injection means 31 introduces the catalyst into the compressed air for delivery to opening 315 at the rear of spray gun body 317. Catalyst injection means 31 is illustrated in U.S. Patent No. 3,763,876 and its operation is described in detail therein.

15 In operation, applicator means 13 provides an expanded flow of mixed resin and catalyst which may be directed by the system operator onto a substrate 14, which may be a mold or preform used to manufacture articles of varied shape. When used without a chopper, applicator means 13 forms a smooth, catalyzed resin film on substrate 14. Such smooth, non-reinforced resin films are frequently referred to as being a "gel coat" and provide a smooth surface on the article. The nozzle assemblies shown in the drawings and described below may be utilized for applying "gel coat" with the means 13. If further strength is required in the manufactured article, means 13 may be operated with a chopper, as described above, to introduce, into the catalyst-resin spray, reinforcing

fibers of selected length to form a layer of reinforced catalyzed resin deposited over the "gel coat" on the substrate. These fibers are preferably chopped fiberglass.

5 Figs. 5-8 illustrate the head end 324 of the gun and nozzle assembly 18 attached to the head end of the gun 17.

10 Fig. 5 is a cross-sectional view of the head end of 324 of the applicator means 13 with nozzle assembly 18 attached. The cross-sectional view of Fig. 5 is viewed downwardly on a plane through the center line of nozzle assembly 18 as indicated in Figs. 2 and 4. Nozzle assembly 18 includes an airless liquid resin  
15 resin nozzle 330 and an air-catalyst nozzle 340. Liquid resin nozzle 330 includes a plurality of small spaced passageways 201 (Fig. 7) arranged in a two-dimensional array and forms the resin into a plurality of small spaced streams projected from the passageways 201. Air-catalyst nozzle 340 forms a controlled flow of air  
20 through a plurality of air orifices 341a, 341b and a controlled flow of catalyst entrained in air from a plurality of catalyst nozzles 342a and 342b (see Figs. 6 and 7).

25 Nozzle assembly 18, including liquid resin nozzle 330 and air-catalyst nozzle 340, forms a resin-catalyst mixture having a pattern which provides a uniform distribution of particles throughout the pattern and without escaping catalyst particles. The pattern may be conveniently used by an operator of  
30 applicator means 13 to provide a uniform, catalyzed resin film on a substrate, mold or preform.

35 Fig. 5 shows how nozzle assembly 18 is assembled onto head portion 324 of spray gun body 17. As shown in Fig. 5, liquid resin nozzle 330 is held onto head portion 324 of the gun body by air-catalyst nozzle 340



and a threaded retainer nut 360. Retainer nut 360 includes a threaded portion 361 at its rear which threads onto a threaded portion 362 provided at the forward end of head portion 324. At its forward  
5 portion, retainer nut 360 forms an inwardly projecting flange 363 which engages the front face 343 of air-catalyst nozzle 340, urging nozzle 340 rearwardly and tightly against the front face 326 of head portion  
10 324. Air-catalyst nozzle 340 is formed with a central opening 344 which is shaped to include two flat surfaces 344a and 344b (see Figs. 4, 6C and 7). Opening 344 fits around liquid resin nozzle 330. A rearwardly facing flange 345 of nozzle 340 is formed around central opening 344; and as the retaining nut  
15 360 is threaded onto the head portion 324 of the spray gun and its rearwardly facing flange 363 engages the front face 343 of air-catalyst nozzle 340 and urges the nozzle 340 rearwardly, flange 345 of nozzle 340 presses liquid resin nozzle 330 rearwardly into  
20 engagement with sealing means 333 and body portion 350.

As shown in Fig. 5, sealing means 333 is sealingly engaged between liquid nozzle 330 and body portion 350. Thus, as retaining nut 360 is threaded  
25 onto head portion 324 of the spray gun body, nut 360 simultaneously fastens the air-catalyst nozzle 340 and liquid resin nozzle 330 to the head portion 324 of the spray gun and provides an effective seal between liquid resin nozzle 330 and air-catalyst nozzle 340  
30 and, by means of seal means 333, between liquid resin nozzle 330 and body portion 350.

Body portion 350 comprises a generally cylindrical-shaped component of aluminum or stainless steel having a central passageway 351 extending from  
35 its front face longitudinally into, but not through,

its body. Body portion 350 also forms a pair of outwardly extending flanges 352 (forward) and 353 (rear) forming a pair of O-ring grooves 354 and 355 to carry a pair of O-rings 356 and 357 to provide a seal between body portion 350 and inner wall 327 that forms a central cavity in head portion 324 of the spray gun body. An annular cavity 358 is formed by the flanges 352 and 353 of the body portion between body portion 350 and inner wall 327 of head portion 324. A plurality of openings 359 is formed in body portion 350 extending between cavity 358 and central passageway 351.

When body portion 350 is held in place in the cavity formed in head portion 324 of the gun body by inner surface 327, the annular cavity 358 that it forms communicates with a passageway 365 formed in head portion 324. Passageway 365 extends rearwardly in head portion 324 and intersects a machined cavity 366 formed in the rear of head portion 324 and adapted to accept the elements of a resin valve (not shown). Cavity 366 thus includes a threaded portion 367 adapted to accept a valve seat having a threaded exterior. Valve cavity 366 further includes at the rear face of head portion 324 a threaded portion 368 adapted to accept the washers, packing elements and threaded compression nut necessary to provide (as known in the art) a compression packing and to seal around a needle valve actuator that extends longitudinally from trigger 322 along the center line of cavity 366 into engagement with a valve seat threaded into portion 367. With the valve seat positioned in threaded portion 367 and packing members in position in threaded portion 368, cavity 366 forms a central fluid cavity 369 which is in communication with a passageway 370 in head portion 324. Passageway

370 leads through a tube 371 (shown in Figs. 2-4) to resin opening 314 (shown in Figs. 2-3).

Thus, with pump 23 (Fig. 1) operating, pressurized resin is presented at opening 314 into passageway 370 through the tube 371. As long as trigger 322 is not being operated, the valve seat adjacent threaded portion 367 of cavity 366 in the head portion of the gun body is closed and there is no resin flowing through the gun body. When trigger 322 is pulled rearwardly, thereby removing the needle valve from the valve seat at threaded portion 367, resin flows under the influence of pressure imparted by pump 23 through passageway 370, cavity 369, passageway 365, annular cavity 358, openings 359, central passageway 351, liquid resin nozzle 330 and the openings 201 therein. As noted above, liquid resin nozzle 330 includes a plurality of interior passageways 331 to force the resin to flow into a plurality of small, spaced streams projected from the nozzle 330 in a two-dimensional array. Fig. 7 best shows the plurality of openings 201 and the two dimensional array formed by the plurality of passageways 331.

Body portion 350, when in place in the cavity formed in head portion 324 of the spray gun body 17, also forms an air passage to deliver a flow of compressed air to the plurality of air orifices 341a and 341b in the front of the air-catalyst nozzle 340. As best shown in Fig. 5, the central cavity of head portion 324 includes a rearward portion 375 having a smaller diameter than the cavity formed by inner wall 327 of head portion 324. Body portion 350 further includes a plurality of passageways 376, preferably four, extending forwardly from its rear face at the cavity 375 to adjacent its forward end where the

plurality of passageways 376 opens into an annular cavity 377 formed between body portion 350, front face 326 of head portion 324 of the applicator and air-catalyst nozzle 340. A plurality of air passageways 341c, 341d (Fig 6A) extends from the rear air-catalyst nozzle surface that communicates with annular cavity 377 to orifices 341a and 341b at the front face 343 of air-catalyst nozzle 340. Compressed air, which is controlled by a needle valve in gun body 17 rearwardly of trigger 322, is directed through passageways which are not shown in the gun body 17 from opening 319 (Figs. 2 and 4) to the interface between head portion 324 and the front portion 325 of spray gun body 17. As shown in Figs. 5 and 8, passageway 378 intersects a passageway 379 in head portion 324 which extends rearwardly to the interface between head portion 324 and the front portion 325 of gun body 17. When trigger 322 is operated, the compressed air flows from source 27 and compressed air control 39 (Fig. 1) through conduit 42, opening 319, the passageways in gun body 17 (not shown), passageway 379, passageway 378, cavity 375, the plurality of passageways 376, annular cavity 377, passageways 341c and 341d (Figs. 5 and 6A) formed in air-catalyst nozzle 340 and from the plurality of air orifices 341a and 341b.

As shown in Fig. 5, the rear portion of head portion 324 of the gun body also forms a cavity 380 adapted to carry means to control the flow of air-entrained catalyst from applicator means 13. Cavity 380 includes a threaded portion 382 adjacent the rear face of head portion 324 adapted to carry a separate, self-contained needle valve assembly (not shown) with a needle valve actuator that extends from the trigger valve 322 within the self-contained needle valve assembly into engagement with a valve seat

carried within the self-contained needle valve assembly. With needle valve assembly in place, cavity 380 forms a central cavity 383 which, as shown in Fig. 5, communicates with passageway 384. Passageway 384 extends upwardly through head portion 324 of the spray gun body and extends rearwardly through tube 372 shown in Figs. 3 and 4 to opening 315 and catalyst injection means 31.

When trigger 322 is operated, the valve carried in cavity 380 of head portion 324 of the spray gun is opened and catalyst particles and air flow under the influence of catalyst pump 33, compressed air source 27 and compressed air control 29, through injection means 31, orifice 315 at the rear of the spray gun body 317, tube 372 (Figs. 1, 3 and 4), passageway 384 and through passageway 385 to cavity 386 (Fig. 5). With air-catalyst nozzle 340 in the position shown in Figs. 2-5, the air-entrained catalyst is directed into a passageway 393 in a tube 390 at the rear of the air-catalyst nozzle 340 and into air-catalyst passageway 394 in nozzle 340. Fig. 6C is a front view of the nozzle assembly 340 for gel coat applications showing the orientation, from a front perspective, of air-catalyst passageway 394. Air-catalyst nozzle 340 shown in Figs. 6B and 6C includes passageways 395b and 396b which intersect passageway 394 and which distribute the air entrained catalyst to nozzles 342a and 342b, respectively. Air-catalyst passageways 395b and 396b are plugged at their respective ends opposite passageway 394. Tube 390, extending from the rearmost face of nozzle 340, forms an O-ring groove 391 and carries an O-ring 392. When the air-catalyst nozzle 340 is assembled to the head portion 324 of the gun body as shown in Figs. 2-5, its tube 390 extends into the cavity 386 and O-ring 392 forms a seal between

tube 390 and the cylindrical surface of head portion 324 forming cavity 386.

Nozzle assembly 18, and particularly liquid resin nozzle 330 and air-catalyst nozzle 340, are shown in greater detail in Figs. 6 and 7. Fig. 6A is a cross-sectional view of the nozzle assembly through section 6A-6A of Fig. 6C. Fig. 6B is a cross-sectional view of the air-catalyst nozzle 340 taken along a plane at right angles to the plane of the cross-section of Fig. 6A. The plane of the cross-section of Fig. 6B corresponds with the plane of the cross-section of Fig. 8. The nozzle assembly 340 preferably has a diameter of about 1.5 inches. As indicated in Fig. 5, the threaded nut 360 fits over the subassembly comprising liquid resin nozzle 330, seal 333 and air-catalyst nozzle 340. Threaded nut 360 engages the front surface 343 of air-catalyst nozzle 340 and the subassembly is threaded onto the front of body 324, thereby forming a liquid seal between the central passageways of body portion 350, seal 333 and liquid resin nozzle 330 and directing the flow of resin to the liquid resin nozzle 330, where it is divided into an array of small, spaced streams by an array of small, spaced openings 201a as shown in Fig. 7. Preferably, liquid nozzle 330 has more than five small, spaced openings arranged in a two-dimensional distributed array. Still more preferably, liquid resin nozzle 330 has a large number of small spaced openings arranged in a two-dimensional distributed array, for example, more than ten. Such resin nozzles preferably have 20 or more openings in the array.

In the specific nozzle assembly 18, shown in Fig. 7, the liquid resin nozzle 330 has 33 small, spaced holes arranged in a two-dimensional distributed array. Liquid resin nozzle 330 is provided with a

flow of resin at pressures on the order of 100-800 pounds per square inch. Each small hole has, for example, a diameter of about 0.010 inch, and the holes are, for example, spaced apart about 0.060 inch and form the flowing resin into 33 fine streams in a two-dimensional distributed array. Liquid resin nozzle 330 is of a type known in the art and may be provided with a variety of orifice sizes and arrangements. The resin nozzle orifices can have diameters in the range from 0.010 inch to 0.030 inch, and the resin nozzles can form spray patterns with included angles from about 15° to about 45°.

In accordance with the invention, air-catalyst nozzle 340 is provided adjacent liquid resin nozzle 330 and provides two sprays of catalyst entrained in air via nozzles 342a and 342b directed at the plurality of small, spaced streams of resin from liquid resin nozzle 330 from two opposite sides of the two-dimensional array of streams, and further provides two flows of compressed air via nozzles 341a and 341b on the other two opposing sides of the spaced array of resin streams. The two sprays of catalyst entrained in air uniformly break the plurality of small, spaced resin streams into resin particles and produce a substantially uniform mixture of resin and catalyst particles. The two flows of air from nozzles 341a and 341b at the other sides of the spaced array of resin streams entrap and contain vapors emitted from the resin streams and catalyst. In addition, the flows of air provide improved wetting of fibers when used to wet-out pre-deposited fibers and when used with a fiber chopper to deposit wetted reinforcing fibers on a substrate. Both such operations are useful in the manufacture of fiber-reinforced plastic articles, and the air-assisted containment of vapors emitted from

the plural component materials provides a better working environment.

Thus, compressed air and catalyst flowing to cavity 386 flow into passageway 393 of pipe 390 and passageways 394, 395b and 396b (see Figs. 6B and 6C) drilled into the main body of air-catalyst nozzle 340. As shown in Fig. 6C, passageways 395b and 396b intersect within the body of spray nozzle 340 with passageway 394 and are closed at the peripheral surfaces of the body. As shown in Fig. 6B, compressed air and catalyst are directed via passageways 397a and 397b, which intersect passageways 395b and 396b, respectively, to the plurality of air-catalyst spray nozzles 342a and 342b, respectively. The air-catalyst spray nozzles 342a and 342b direct the air-entrained catalyst at the spaced plurality of resin streams from the liquid resin nozzle 330 which is positioned in central opening 344 of air-catalyst nozzle 340, as shown in Fig 7. The two flattened portions 344a and 344b (see Figs. 4, 6C and 7) of central opening 344 ensure that the nozzle assembly 340 is properly aligned with the liquid resin nozzle 330. The air-catalyst nozzles 342a and 342b may be pressed into the body of nozzle assembly 340 or may be fastened therein by any convenient fastening method.

In the embodiments illustrated in Figs. 6 and 7, the nozzle assembly 340 surrounds liquid resin nozzle 330 and the liquid resin nozzle is located within the opening 344 along the longitudinal center line of nozzle assembly 340. The air-catalyst spray nozzles 342a and 342b formed by the nozzle assembly are located on a plane, which corresponds to plane 6B-6B in Fig. 6C, that is perpendicular to and bisects a plane, which corresponds to plane 6A-6A in Fig. 6C, upon which lies the centers of air orifices 341a and



341b. As shown in Fig. 7, the air-catalyst spray  
nozzles 342a and 342b are located on the opposite  
sides of the two-dimensional array formed by the ends  
of the rows of holes 201 that form the small resin  
5 streams, and direct flows of compressed air and  
catalyst at an acute included angle "a" (Fig. 6B) in  
an expanding fan-like form, with respect to the spaced  
plurality of small resin streams, and impinge upon the  
resin streams a distance of from about five-tenths to  
10 about eight-tenths of an inch forwardly of the orifice  
of the liquid resin nozzle 330. Air-catalyst spray  
nozzles 342a and 342b can be equally spaced from the  
center line of the liquid resin nozzle 330 by a  
distance "c" of about three-eighths of an inch to  
15 about one-half of an inch and directed to form equal  
acute included angles "a" of about 25 to about 35  
degrees with respect to the longitudinal center axis  
of the liquid resin nozzle 330.

As noted above, a flow of compressed air in the  
20 illustrated embodiments of Figs. 6 and 7 is formed by  
two passageways 341c, 341d (Fig. 6A) parallel to both  
the longitudinal axis of the nozzle assembly and to  
each other. The two passageways are equally spaced  
from the central longitudinal axis of the liquid resin  
25 nozzle 330 a distance "e" of about three-tenths to  
about four-tenths of an inch. Air nozzles 341a and  
341b are located centrally adjacent the outermost rows  
of holes 201 that form the small resin streams,  
preferably lying in a plane that perpendicularly  
30 bisects the plane extending through the centers of  
catalyst spray nozzles 342a and 342b.

In addition, as shown in Figs. 6 and 7, a pair of  
cavities 346a and 346b may be formed in the front face  
343 of air-catalyst nozzle assembly 340 around air  
35 orifices 341a and 341b, respectively. Cavities 346a

and 346b are formed in the front face 343 in such a manner that they extend inwardly at an acute angle with respect to air passageways 341c and 341d (Fig. 6A), respectively, but in such a manner that there are  
5 no air nozzle surfaces forwardly of the air orifices 341a and 341b that lie within the imaginary extension of the air passageways 341c and 341d, and compressed air is directed forwardly and generally parallel to the spray axis, i.e., the axis generally parallel to  
10 the plurality of passageways 331. Cavities 346a and 346b tend to form low pressure areas adjacent the air orifices 341a and 341b which "soften" the edges of the compressed air jets projected from orifices 341a and 341b as the compressed air jets extend forwardly from  
15 the front face 343 of the air-catalyst nozzle 340. The acute angle "j" (Fig. 6A) formed by the central axis of cavities 346a and 346b and the longitudinal axis of air passageways 341c and 341d may vary; with the specific embodiment described above, effective  
20 operation can be obtained with cavities 346a and 346b lying at an angle "j" equal to about 20 degrees if the cavities have a diameter of about 0.138 inch and a depth of about 0.118 inch and the diameter of air passageways 341c and 341d is about 0.062 inch.

25 This invention provides a further improved embodiment, including the nozzle assembly 418 shown in Figs. 9A-9D that can be employed with the system and method of this invention. Nozzle assembly 418 is similar to nozzle assembly 18 in that it comprises a  
30 nozzle assembly in which compressed air and liquid pressure are used in applying the plural component material. Nozzle assembly 418 comprises first liquid resin nozzle 330 for providing a plurality of small, spaced streams of resin, and a second air-catalyst  
35 nozzle 440 for dividing a flow of compressed air into

a plurality of directed air flows and for dividing a flow of catalyst and compressed air into a plurality of directed catalyst-air sprays. Resin nozzle 330 and air-catalyst nozzle 440 interfit and are fastened to head portion 324 of the spray gun 17 in the same manner as illustrated in Figs. 5-8 and described above for resin nozzle 330 and air-catalyst nozzle 340.

First liquid resin nozzle 330 of this further improved embodiment is identical in structure to liquid resin nozzle 330 discussed above, including a plurality of small openings 401 in a two-dimensional array. In this further embodiment, the flow of resin into applicator means 13 is directed from the central passageway 351 of body portion 350 (Fig. 5) through liquid resin nozzle 330 in nozzle assembly 418 which forms the resin flow into a plurality of small, spaced streams of resin flowing from holes 401 in a two-dimensional array. Second air-catalyst nozzle 440 surrounds resin nozzle 330 with a plurality of flow-forming nozzles and orifices.

The flow of catalyst-injected compressed air into applicator means 13 is directed through a plurality of spray nozzles 442a and 442b in nozzle assembly 418 which are configured and positioned so that the catalyst and compressed air will coact with the plurality of resin streams externally of the spraying means, simultaneously mix the resin and catalyst particles and assist in the application of the resin onto the substrate. In this further embodiment, as in air-catalyst nozzle 340 of the embodiment described above, air-catalyst nozzles 442a and 442b are located centrally on the sides of the two-dimensional array of resin nozzle 330 that are formed by the ends of the rows of holes 401, preferably on the plane which corresponds to plane 9C-9C in Fig. 9A, and the flows

of air and catalyst are directed at the two-dimensional array of small resin streams from their central location adjacent the sides of the two-dimensional array formed by the ends of the rows to  
5 assist in the atomization of the resin and to mix resin and catalyst. Unlike the expanding fan-like spray "patterns" created by the air-catalyst nozzles 342a and 342b of nozzle 340 described above, the air-catalyst mixtures from nozzles 442a and 442b of nozzle  
10 440 are directed at the resin streams in expanding conical-shaped spray patterns.

Also, in this further embodiment, as in air catalyst nozzle 340 of the embodiment described above, the air-catalyst nozzle 440 further directs a  
15 plurality of flows of air from air orifices 441a and 441b that are located centrally on the sides of the two-dimensional array of resin nozzle 330 that are formed by the outermost rows of holes 401, preferably on the plane that corresponds to plane 9B-9B in Fig. 9A and bisects the plane 9C-9C of Fig. 9A, and the  
20 plurality of air flows from air orifices 441a and 441b capture and contain resin and catalyst particles and vapors.

However, unlike air-catalyst nozzle 340, air-catalyst nozzle 440 includes a plurality, preferably  
25 four, small air holes 450a-450d arranged between the plurality of air-catalyst nozzles 442a and 442b and the resin nozzle 330. Preferably, the four air holes 450a-450d are located around resin nozzle 330,  
30 substantially equally spaced between the air-catalyst nozzles 442a, 442b and the air orifices 441a, 441b. For example, as shown in Fig. 9A, air hole 450a is located substantially equidistance between air orifice 441a and air-catalyst nozzle 442b; air hole 450b is  
35 located substantially equidistance between air-

catalyst nozzle 442b and air orifice 441b, etc. Flows of air are directed from air holes 450a-450d forwardly from the front face 443 of the air-catalyst nozzle 440 and between the flows of air and catalyst from nozzles 442a and 442b and the two-dimensional array of resin flows from holes 401 of resin nozzle 330. The air flows from air holes 450a-450d are at a very low velocity, substantially lower than the flow velocities of the air-catalyst from nozzles 442a and 442b and of the containment air from air orifices 441a and 441b. The low velocity flows of air from air holes 450a-450b inhibit the accumulation of mixed resin and catalyst on the face 443 of air-catalyst nozzle 440. An accumulation of mixed resin and catalyst in the face 443 of air-catalyst nozzle 440 can harden and interfere with the proper operation of the system.

When the nozzle assembly 418 is used in system 10 of this invention, the connections for resin, catalyst and compressed air are arranged and operate in the same manner as described above in relation to nozzle assembly 18. Thus, the further embodiment of this invention including nozzle assembly 418 requires no other changes in the system or its components. Accordingly, when trigger 322 of the spray gun is pulled rearwardly, resin flows under the influence of pressure imparted by pump 23 through passageway 370, cavity 369, passageway 365, annular cavity 358, openings 359, central passageway 351, liquid resin nozzle 330 and the openings 401 therein.

As indicated above, liquid resin nozzle 330 includes a plurality of interior passageways (not shown) leading to openings 401 to force the resin to flow into a plurality of small, spaced streams projected from the nozzle 330 in a two-dimensional array, and preferably in an expanding pattern. While

this plurality of interior passageways is not shown in Fig. 9, the passageways are identical to the interior passageways of liquid resin nozzle 330 shown in Fig. 5. Accordingly, liquid resin nozzle 330 preferably has more than five small, spaced openings arranged in a two-dimensional distributed array. Still more preferably, liquid resin nozzle 330 has a large number of small spaced openings arranged in a two-dimensional distributed array, for example, more than about twenty. Most preferably, liquid resin nozzle 330 has 33 small, spaced holes arranged in a two-dimensional distributed array. Liquid resin nozzle 330 is provided with a flow of resin at pressures on the order of 100-800 pounds per square inch. Each small hole has, for example, a diameter of about 0.010 inch to about 0.020 inch and the holes are, for example, spaced apart about 0.060 inch and form the flowing plural component material into 33 fine streams in a two-dimensional distributed array. As indicated above, liquid resin nozzle 330 is of a type known in the art and may be provided with a variety of hole sizes and arrangements.

As also indicated above, nozzle assembly 418 is assembled onto the head portion 324 of spray gun body 17 in the same manner as nozzle assembly 18, shown in Fig. 5. Thus, liquid resin nozzle 330 is held onto head portion 324 of the spray gun body by air-catalyst nozzle 440 and a threaded retainer nut 360. As described above, retainer nut 360 includes threaded portion 361 at its rear which threads onto threaded portion 362 at the forward end of head portion 324, and retainer nut 360 forms at its forward position an inwardly projecting flange 363 which engages the front face 443 of air-catalyst nozzle 440, urging the entire

nozzle assembly 418 rearwardly and tightly against the front face 326 of head portion 324.

5 Air-catalyst nozzle 440 is formed with a central opening 444 which is shaped to include two flat surfaces 444a, 444b and two curved surfaces 444c and 444d (Figs. 9A and 9B) that fit around liquid resin nozzle 330. A rearwardly facing flange 445 of nozzle 440 (Figs. 9B and 9C) is formed around central opening 444. As the retaining nut 360 is threaded onto the head portion 324 of the spray gun 17 and its rearwardly facing flange 363 engages the front face 443 of air-catalyst nozzle 440 and urges the nozzle 440 rearwardly, flange 445 of nozzle 440 presses liquid resin nozzle 330 rearwardly into engagement with sealing means 333 and body portion 350 as shown in Fig. 5.

10 As also shown in Fig. 5, a sealing means 333 will sealingly engage liquid resin nozzle 330 and body portion 350. Thus, as retaining nut 360 is threaded onto head portion 324 of the spray gun body 17, nut 360 simultaneously fastens the air-catalyst nozzle 440 and liquid resin nozzle 330 to the head portion 324 of the spray gun 17 and provides an effective seal between liquid resin nozzle 330 and air-catalyst nozzle 440 and, by means of seal means 333, between liquid resin nozzle 330 and body portion 350.

20 As noted above, body portion 350 includes a plurality of passageways 376 and when positioned in the cavity formed in head position 324, it permits the delivery of a flow of compressed air to the plurality of air orifices 441a and 441b in the front face 443 of the air-catalyst nozzle 440. The central cavity 327 (Fig. 8) of head portion 324 includes rearward portion 375, and the plurality of passageways 376 of body portion 350 extend forwardly from portion 375 and open

30

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into annular air cavity 377 formed between body portion 350, front face 326 of head portion 324 of the applicator and air-catalyst nozzle 440. A plurality of air passageways 441c, 441d (Fig. 9B) extending to  
5 air orifices 441a and 441b and a plurality of air holes 450a-450d communicate with annular air cavity 377.

As described above, compressed air is directed through passageways, which are not shown, in the spray  
10 gun body 17 from opening 319 (Figs. 2 and 4) to the interface between head portion 324 and the front portion 325 of the spray gun body. As shown in Fig. 8, passageway 378 intersects a passageway 379 in head portion 324 which extends rearwardly to the interface  
15 between head portion 324 and the front portion 325 of spray gun body 17. When trigger 322 is operated, the compressed air flows from source 27 and compressed air control 39 (Fig. 1) through conduit 42, opening 319, the passageways in gun body 17 (not shown), passageway  
20 379, passageway 378, cavity 375, the plurality of passageways 441c and 441d (Fig. 9B) formed in air-catalyst nozzle 440 and from the plurality of air orifices 441a and 441b.

Concurrently with the compressed air being  
25 directed forwardly of the nozzle assembly 418 from orifices 441a and 441b, low velocity flows of air are also directed from the annular air cavity 377 through the plurality of passageways 450a-d (Figs. 9A-C) and from the plurality of small orifices disposed on the  
30 front face 443 of air-catalyst nozzle 440 to inhibit the accumulation thereon of plural-component material.

As described above in relation to the delivery of a flow of air-entrained catalyst to the nozzle assembly 418, cavity 380 forms a central cavity 383  
35 which communicates with passageway 384 (Fig. 5).



Passageway 384 extends upwardly through head portion 34 of the spray gun body 17 and extends rearwardly through tube 372 shown in Figs. 3 and 4 to opening 315 and catalyst injection means 31. When trigger 322 is operated, catalyst particles and air flow, as described above, through injection means 31, orifice 315 at the rear of the spray gun body 317, tube 372 (Figs. 1, 3 and 4), passageway 384 and through passageway 385 to cavity 386. With air-catalyst nozzle 440 in the position on the forward portion 324 of the spray gun 17, the air-entrained catalyst is directed into a passageway in tube 490 (Figs. 9C and 9D) at the rear 443' of the air-catalyst nozzle 440 and into air-catalyst passageway 494.

Tube 490, extending from the rearmost face 443' of nozzle 440, forms an O-ring groove and carries an O-ring similar to groove 391 and ring 392 described above in relation to air-catalyst nozzle 340. When the air-catalyst nozzle 440 is assembled to the head portion 324 of the gun body 17 as shown in Figs. 2-5, tube 490 extends into the cavity 386 and the O-ring forms a seal between tube 490 and the cylindrical surface of head portion 324 forming cavity 386. Compressed air and catalyst flowing to cavity 386 flow into a passageway (not shown) of pipe 490 and passageways 494, 495b and 496a (see Figs. 9A, 9C and 9D) drilled into the main body of air-catalyst nozzle 440. As shown in Figs. 9A and 9C, passageways 495b and 496b intersect within the body of nozzle 440 with passageway 494 and are closed at the peripheral surfaces of nozzle 440 by, for example, plugs 495b' and 496b' (Figs. 9C and 9D). As shown in Fig. 9C, compressed air and catalyst are directed via passageways 497a and 497b, which intersect passageways 495b and 496b, respectively, to the plurality of air-

catalyst spray nozzles 442a and 442b, respectively. The air-catalyst spray nozzles 442a and 442b direct expanding conical flows of air-entrained catalyst at the spaced plurality of resin streams from the liquid resin nozzle 330, which is positioned in central opening 444 of air-catalyst nozzle 440, as shown in Fig. 9A. The two flattened portions 444a and 444b of central opening 444 ensure that the nozzle assembly 440 is properly aligned with respect to the liquid resin nozzle 330.

Air-catalyst nozzles 442a and 442b may be pressed into the body of nozzle assembly 440 or may be fastened therein by any convenient fastening method. Unlike nozzles 342a and 342b of air catalyst nozzle 340, nozzles 442a and 442b have forward surfaces that are substantially flush with the forward face 443 of air catalyst nozzle 440 and include an orifice-forming portions which have slightly elliptical openings to form expanding conical air-catalyst sprays. The elliptical orifices of nozzles 442a and 442b are preferably substantially flush with the forward face 443 of nozzle 440. Alternatively, no nozzle inserts 442a, 442b may be employed and passageways 497a and 497b can extend forwardly to the front face 443 of nozzle 440 and be formed with appropriate spray-forming surfaces adjacent the front face 443 of nozzle 440.

In the embodiment illustrated in Figs. 9A-D, the nozzle assembly 440 surrounds liquid resin nozzle 330, and nozzle 330 is located within the opening 444 at the longitudinal center line of nozzle assembly 440 (Fig 9A). The air-catalyst spray nozzles 442a and 442b are located on the plane, which corresponds to plane 9C-9C in Fig. 9A, that is perpendicular to and bisects the plane which corresponds to plane 9B-9B in

Fig. 9A, that extends through the centers of air orifices 441a and 441b.

5 The air-catalyst spray nozzles 442a and 442b direct the flows of compressed air and catalyst at an acute, included angle "c" (Fig. 9C) with respect to the spaced plurality of small resin streams and impinge upon the resin streams at a distance of from about five-tenths to about eight-tenths of an inch forwardly of the orifice of the liquid resin nozzle 10 330. Such orientation, in cooperation with air orifices 450a-d, inhibits a troublesome accumulation of multi-component particles on the face of the nozzle assembly 418.

15 Air-catalyst spray nozzles 442a and 442b can be equally spaced from the center line of the liquid resin nozzle 330 by a distance of about three-eighths of an inch to about one-half of an inch and directed to form equal acute included angles "c" (Fig. 9C) of about 25 to 35 degrees with respect to the 20 longitudinal center axis of the liquid resin nozzle 330.

As noted above, a flow of compressed air in the embodiment illustrated in Figs. 9A-9D is formed by two passageways 441c and 441d disposed parallel to both 25 the longitudinal axis of the nozzle assembly 418 and to each other. The two passageways are equally spaced from the central longitudinal axis of the liquid resin nozzle 330 a distance of about three-tenths to about four-tenths of an inch and lie in the plane, which 30 corresponds to plane 9B-9B in Fig. 9A and perpendicularly bisects the plane that extends through the centers of the catalyst spray nozzles 442a and 442b.

35 In addition, as shown in Figs. 9A and 9B, a pair of cavities 446a and 446b may be formed in the front

face 443 of air-catalyst nozzle 440 around air  
orifices 441a and 441b, respectively. Cavities 446a  
and 446b are formed in the front face 443 in such a  
manner that they extend inwardly at an acute angle "d"  
5 (Fig. 9B) with respect to air passageways 441c and  
441d, respectively, but in such a manner that there  
are no air nozzle surfaces forwardly of the air  
orifices 441a and 441b that lie within the imaginary  
extension of the air passageways 441c and 441d and  
10 compressed air is directed forwardly and generally  
parallel to the spray axis, i.e., the axis generally  
parallel to the plurality of passageways 431.  
Cavities 446a and 446b tend to form low pressure areas  
adjacent the air orifices 441a and 441b which "soften"  
15 the edges of the compressed air jets projected from  
orifices 441a and 441b as the compressed air jets  
project forwardly from the front face 443 of the air-  
catalyst nozzle 440. The acute angle "d" (Fig. 9B)  
formed by the central axis of cavities 446a and 446b  
20 and the longitudinal axis of air passageways 441c and  
441d may vary. In the specific embodiment described  
herein, however, effective operation can be obtained  
with cavities 446a and 446b lying at an angle "d"  
equal to about 20 degrees if the cavities have a  
25 diameter of about 0.138 inch, a depth of about 0.118  
inch, and the diameter of air passageways 441c and  
441d is about 0.062 inch.

Each of the four air holes 450a-450b is formed by  
drilling through the body of the air-catalyst nozzle  
30 440 between its front face 443 and the rear surface  
that forms annular air cavity 377. In the preferred  
embodiment of air-catalyst nozzle 440 shown in Figs.  
9A-9D, air holes 450a-450d have a diameter of about  
0.052 inches. As indicated in Fig. 9A, the pair of  
35 air holes 450a and 450b and the pair of air holes 450c

and 450d are located, respectively, in a pair of planes, each of which is parallel to the plane 9B-9B and spaced on each side thereof a distance of about 0.239 inches. In addition, the pair of air holes 450a and 450c and the pair of air holes 450b and 450d are located, respectively, in a pair of planes, each of which is parallel to the plane 9C-9C and spaced on each side thereof a distance of about 0.246 inches.

As shown and described above, the invention provides a plural component application system, including a liquid nozzle having a plurality of small, spaced passageways distributed in a two-dimensional array about the geometric center of said liquid nozzle and adapted to project a plurality of small, spaced streams of a first plural component material, such as resin, forward of the liquid nozzle; and a second nozzle body forming an opening in its face permitting the body to be positioned adjacent the liquid nozzle and providing a plurality of spray nozzles equally spaced on opposite sides of said opening and adapted to direct a plurality of air-carried sprays of a second plural component, such as catalyst, inwardly at said plurality of small spaced streams of said first plural component material and also providing a plurality of air passageways equally spaced between said plurality of spray nozzles and adapted to direct a plurality of flows of compressed air forwardly of the body, generally parallel to each other and perpendicular to the face of the second nozzle body.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention, as shown in Figs. 9A-9D, the plurality of small, spaced streams formed by the liquid nozzle passageways are distributed in a two-dimensional array having a plurality of rows of passageways, with each of the rows having a greater number of passageways than the

number of rows and with the two-dimensional array having a length along said rows greater than its width across said rows. In such a preferred embodiment, the spray nozzles for the second component are located centrally adjacent the sides of the two-dimensional array formed by the ends of the rows of holes and are adapted to direct the spray of second plural component (e.g., catalyst) material along the rows of resin streams, and the plurality of passageways for containment air are generally centrally located adjacent the outermost rows, preferably on a plane that bisects the plane on which the spray nozzles are located. The spray nozzles are adapted to form the sprays of second plural component material into expanding conical-shaped sprays of particles of the second plural component material. Such a preferred embodiment further includes a plurality of air holes arranged between the spray nozzles and liquid nozzle and adapted to direct low flows of air forwardly to inhibit or prevent an accumulation of mixed plural component material on the nozzle assembly.

The invention thus provides a further useful method of application of mixed plural component material by providing a flow of resin, dividing the flow into a spaced array of small streams of resin, providing flows of catalyst entrained in air directed at the spaced array of a plurality of small streams of resin; breaking the plurality of small streams of resin into resin particles and mixing the resin particles with catalyst; providing a containment flow of air adjacent to but spaced from the spaced array of resin streams and from the flows of catalyst entrained in air to capture and contain vapors emitted from the resin and catalyst particles; and providing a deposit-inhibiting flow of air to prevent plural-component

material from accumulating on the face of the nozzle assembly.

5 The application system of this invention can be advantageously applied not only to resin-catalyst systems for the formation of fiber reinforced plastic products such as boats, shower stalls and the like, but to other plural component systems for industrial applications as well. Such systems provide substantially improved plural component application and are less expensive to manufacture, operate and maintain. Systems of this invention are also easier and safer to use through their improved operation.

10 While the apparatus and method described above constitutes a presently preferred embodiment, the invention can take many other forms. Accordingly, it should be understood that the invention is to be limited only insofar as is required by the scope of the following claims.

Claims

1. A nozzle assembly for use in a plural component application system, comprising:

- 5 a liquid nozzle having a plurality of small, spaced liquid passageways in a two-dimensional array about the geometric center of said liquid nozzle and adapted to project a plurality of small, spaced streams of a first plural component material forward  
10 of the liquid nozzle; and  
a body forming an opening in its face permitting the body to be positioned adjacent the liquid nozzle, said body having a plurality of spray nozzles equally spaced on a first plane on opposite sides of  
15 said opening and adapted to direct a plurality of sprays of a second plural component and air inwardly at said plurality of small spaced streams of said first plural component material,  
said body also having a first plurality of air  
20 passageways on a second plane between said plurality of air-second plural component spray nozzles and equally spaced on opposite sides of said opening and adapted to direct a first plurality of flows of compressed air forwardly of the body for containing  
25 the plural components,  
said body also having a second plurality of air passageways arranged between said liquid nozzle and said plurality of spray nozzles and adapted to direct a second plurality of flows of compressed air  
30 forwardly of the body for inhibiting the accumulation of said plural component materials on the face of said nozzle assembly.

- 35 2. The nozzle assembly of claim 1 characterized in that said plurality of small spaced liquid



passageways are distributed in a two-dimensional array having a plurality of rows of passageways, with each of the rows having a greater number of passageways than the number of rows, said two-dimensional array  
5 having a length along said rows greater than its width across said rows.

3. The nozzle assembly of claim 1 characterized in that said spray nozzles are adapted to direct the  
10 spray of second plural component material along the rows and said plurality of air passageways are generally centrally located adjacent the center of the outermost rows.

15 4. The nozzle assembly of claim 3 characterized in that said spray nozzles are adapted to form the sprays of second plural component material into expanding conical-shaped sprays.

20 5. The nozzle assembly of claim 1 characterized in that each of said first plurality of air passageways is surrounded by a cavity at the front face of the nozzle.

25 6. The nozzle assembly of claim 5 characterized in that the central axis of the cavities lie at an acute angle air passageways.

30 7. The nozzle assembly of claim 6 characterized in that the cavities have an inside diameter of about 0.138 inch and a depth of about 0.118 inch and their central axes lie at an angle of about 20° with respect to the central axes of the air passageways.

8. The nozzle assembly of claim 2 characterized in that said plurality of small spaced liquid passageways are distributed in a two-dimensional array having five rows with each row having at least six passageways.

9. The nozzle assembly as in claim 1 characterized in that each of said second plurality of air passageways has a diameter substantially smaller than the diameters of the first plurality of air passageways and the passageways leading to the spray nozzles.

10. The nozzle assembly as in claim 1 characterized in that said plurality of spray nozzles includes two spray nozzles equally spaced on said first plane on opposite sides of said opening, wherein said first plurality of air passageways includes two passageways equally spaced on said second plane on opposite sides of said opening, said second plane of said first plurality of air passageways being perpendicular to and bisecting the first plane of said two spray nozzles; and wherein said second plurality of air passageways includes four passageways spaced equally between said two spray nozzles and said first two air passageways.

11. The nozzle assembly as in claim 1 characterized in that the central axes of said second plurality of air passageways lie generally parallel to each other and perpendicular to the face of said body to direct said second plurality of flows of compressed air forwardly of the body generally parallel to each other and perpendicular to the face of said body.

12. A method of applying a plural component material to a substrate, comprising:

5 delivering a flow of a first component of said plural component material to an applicator means (13);

delivering a flow of a second component of said plural component material to said applicator means;

10 delivering a flow of compressed air to said applicator means;

forming said first component into a plurality of small, spaced streams of said first plural component distributed in a two-dimensional array extending forwardly from the applicator means from a first location;

15 mixing said flow of second component with said flow of compressed air;

forming the mixture of compressed air and second component into a plurality of sprays of second component entrained in compressed air and directing the plurality of sprays of air-entrained second component at the plurality of small, spaced streams of said first component;

25 directing a first plurality of flows of compressed air substantially parallel to said small, spaced streams from a plurality of locations closely adjacent said plurality of small, spaced streams of first component material for capturing and containing emissions of first and second components; and

30 directing a second plurality of flows of compressed air forwardly of the body for inhibiting the accumulation of first and second components on the face of said nozzle assembly.

35

13. The method of claim 12 characterized in that said plurality of small, spaced streams of said first component is distributed from said first location in an array of a plurality of rows, each row having a plurality of passageways with the number of passageways in each row exceeding the number of rows and having a length dimension greater than the height of the array.

14. The method of claim 13 characterized in that said first plurality of air flows is directed in two separate flows of compressed air from a pair of opposed locations generally adjacent the centers of the outermost rows of the plurality of small, spaced streams of said first component.

15. The method of claim 13 characterized in that said plurality of sprays of the second component includes two separate sprays of air and second component directed at the plurality of small, spaced streams of the first component from a pair of second locations equally spaced from and centrally located on the opposite sides of small, spaced streams of said first component that are formed by the ends of the rows,

wherein said first plurality of air flows is directed in two separate flows substantially parallel to the small, spaced streams of said first component from a pair of third locations equally spaced on the opposite sides of the small, spaced streams of said first component that are formed by the outermost rows, and

wherein said second plurality of air flows is directed in four separate flows that are substantially parallel to the small, spaced streams of

said first component and generally parallel to each other and are substantially equally spaced between the second locations of said sprays of second component and said third locations of said first plurality of air flows.

5

16. The method of claim 12 characterized in that the rates of flow of said second plurality of air flows is substantially less than the rates of flow said first plurality of air flows.

10

17. A method of application of mixed plural component material with an applicator, comprising the steps of:

15

providing a flow of resin,  
dividing the flow into a spaced array of small streams of resin;

20

providing flows of catalyst entrained in air directed at the spaced array of a plurality of small streams of resin;

breaking the plurality of small streams of resin into resin particles and mixing the resin particles with catalyst;

25

providing a containment flow of air adjacent to but spaced from the spaced array of resin streams and the flows of catalyst entrained in air to capture and contain resin and catalyst emissions; and

30

providing a deposit-inhibiting flow of air for inhibiting an accumulation of resin and catalyst on said applicator means.

35

18. The method of claim 17 wherein the deposit-inhibiting flow of air has a flow rate substantially less than the flow rate of the containment flow of air.

19. Means for spraying a plural component material, comprising:

a first delivery means for providing a flow of a first component;

5 a second delivery means for providing a flow of a second component;

an air delivery means for providing a flow of compressed air;

10 an injection means for mixing said flow of second component with a flow of air from said air delivery means;

a sprayer for mixing said first and second components and directing mixed plural component material from the sprayer;

15 said sprayer comprising a liquid nozzle having a plurality of small, spaced liquid passageways in a two-dimensional array about the geometric center of said liquid nozzle and adapted to project a plurality of small, spaced streams of the first component forward of the liquid nozzle; and

20 a combined nozzle assembly adjacent the liquid nozzle,

said combined nozzle assembly having a plurality of second component-air nozzles spaced on a first plane on opposite sides of said liquid nozzle and adapted to direct a plurality of sprays of second component and air inwardly at said plurality of small spaced streams of said first plural component material,

30 said combined nozzle assembly also having a first plurality of air passageways spaced between said plurality of second component-air nozzles and on opposite sides of said liquid nozzle for directing a first plurality of flows of compressed air forwardly of the body for containing the plural components,

35

said combined nozzle assembly also having a second plurality of air passageways arranged between said liquid nozzle and said plurality of second component-air nozzles for directing a second plurality of flows of compressed air forwardly of the combined nozzle assembly for inhibiting the accumulation of said first and second components on said liquid nozzle and said combined nozzle assembly.

20. The means of claim 19 and further including alignment means on said liquid nozzle and said combined nozzle assembly for automatically aligning said liquid nozzle and combined nozzle assembly when said liquid nozzle and said combined nozzle assembly are assembled.

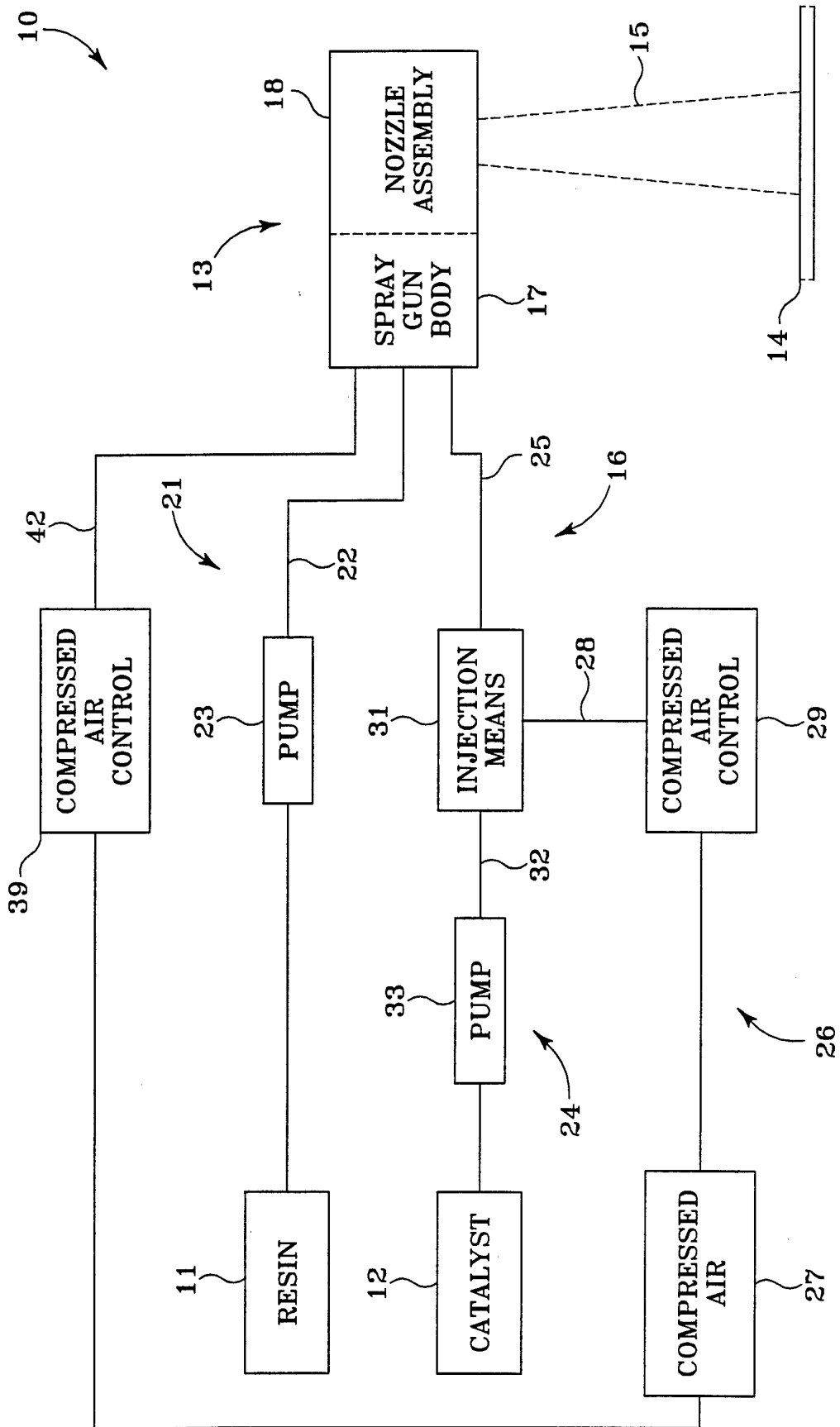


FIG. 1



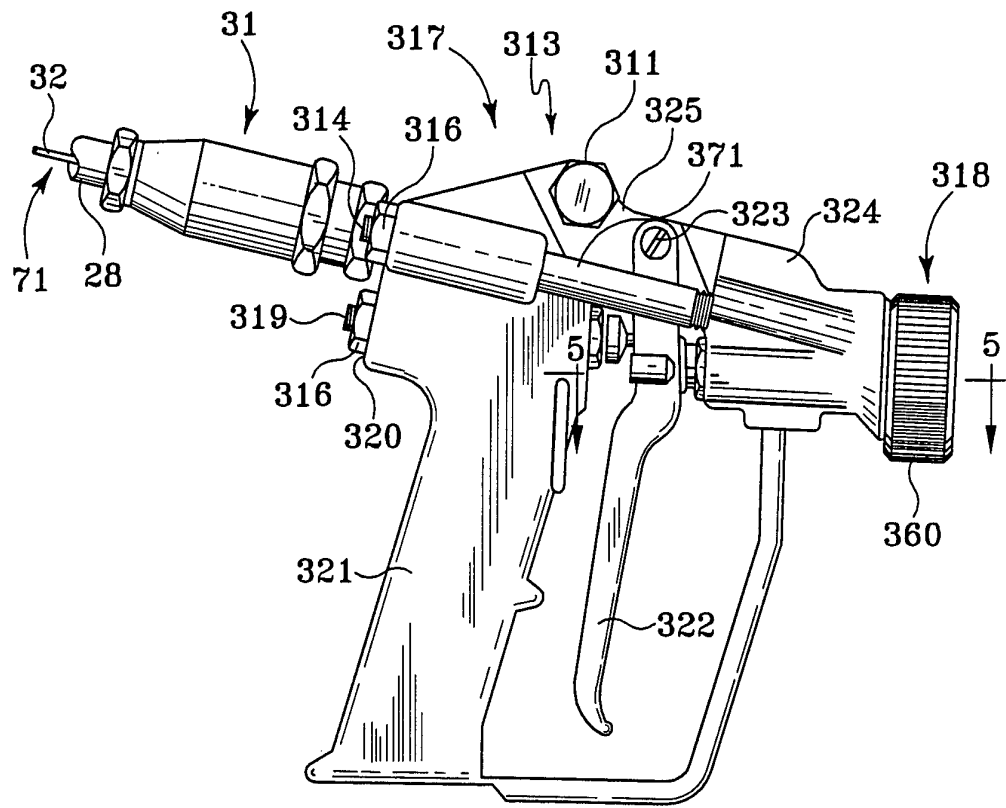


FIG. 2

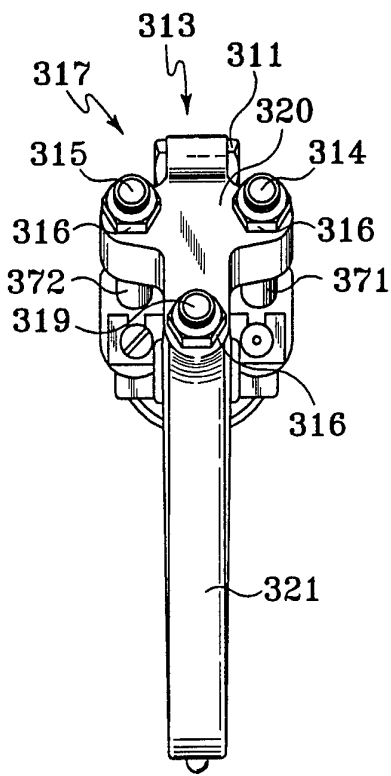


FIG. 3

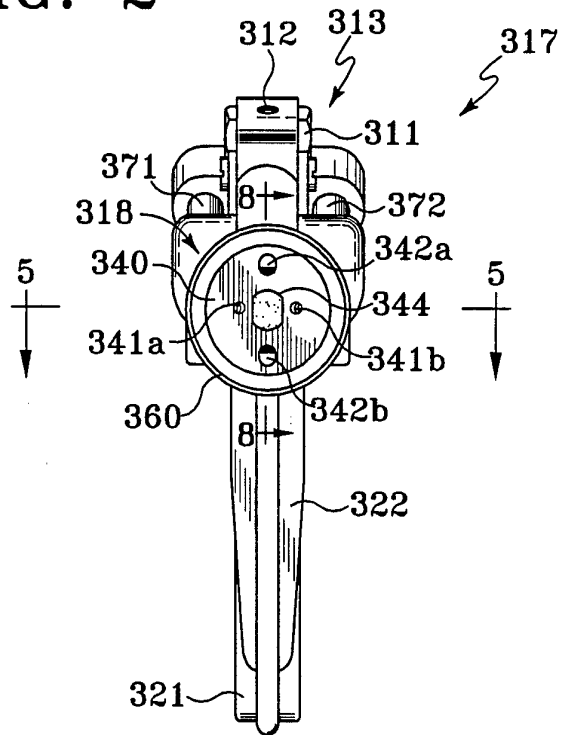


FIG. 4

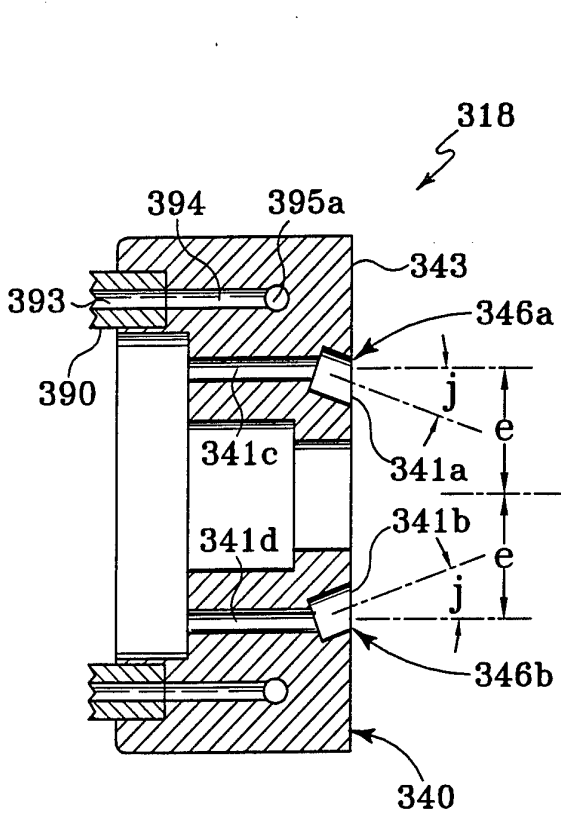


FIG. 6A

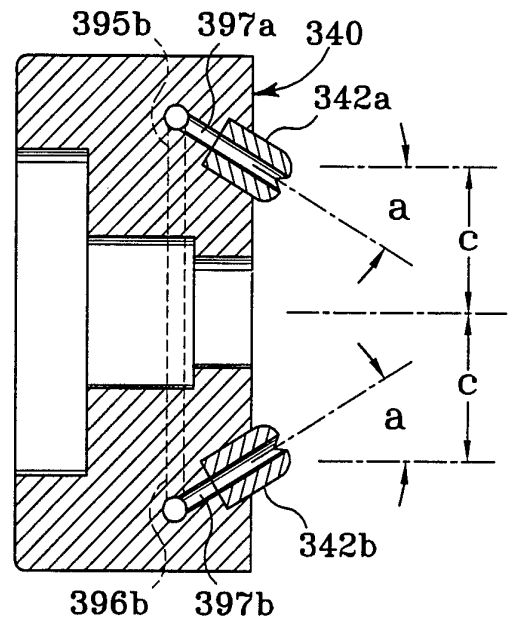


FIG. 6B

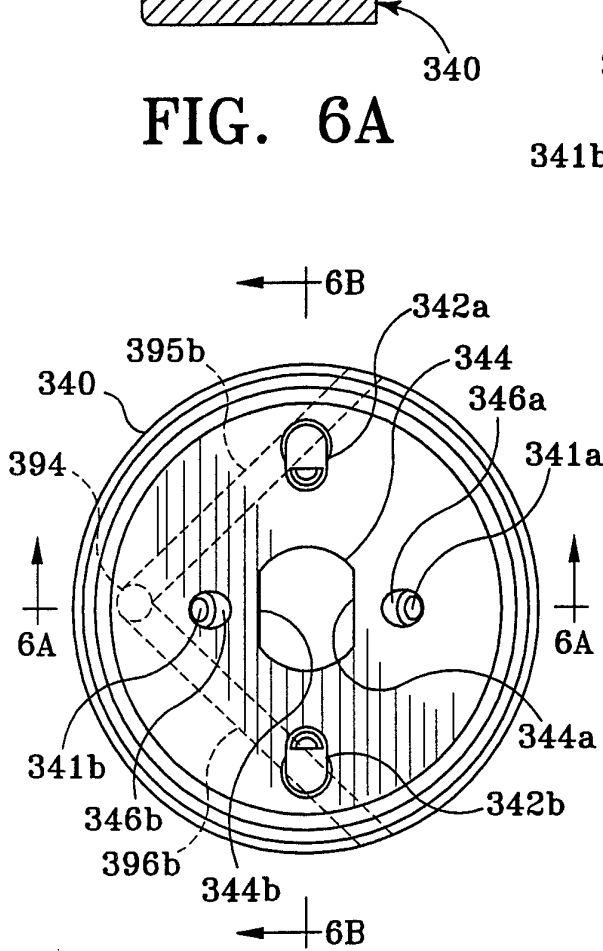


FIG. 6C

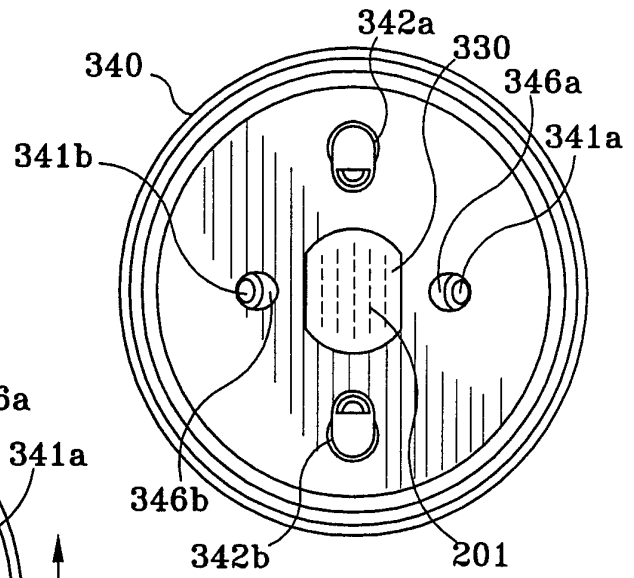


FIG. 7

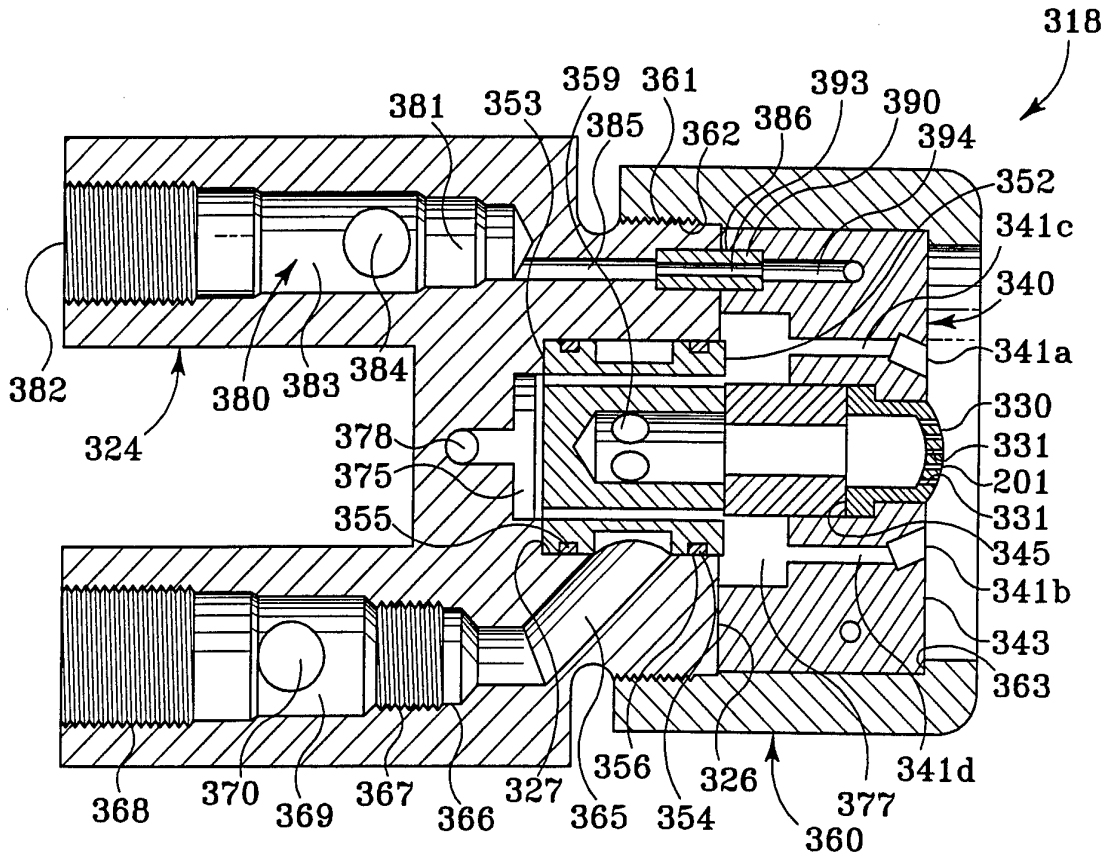


FIG. 5

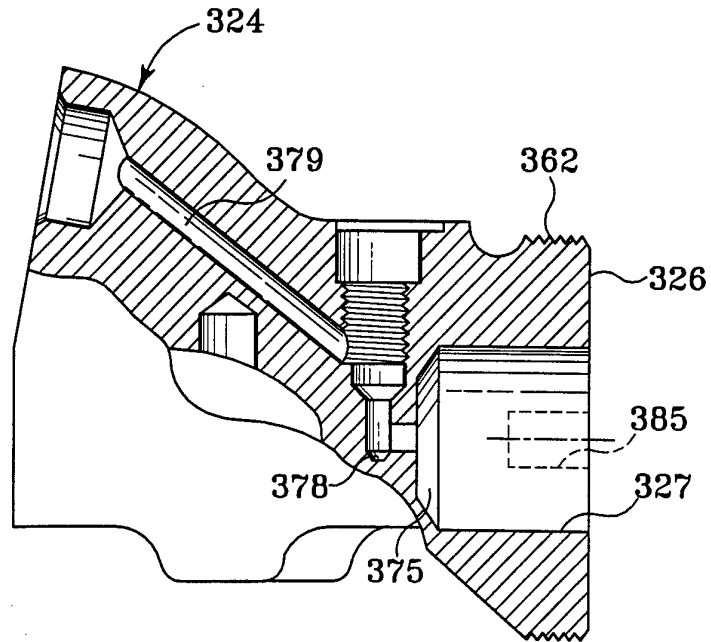


FIG. 8

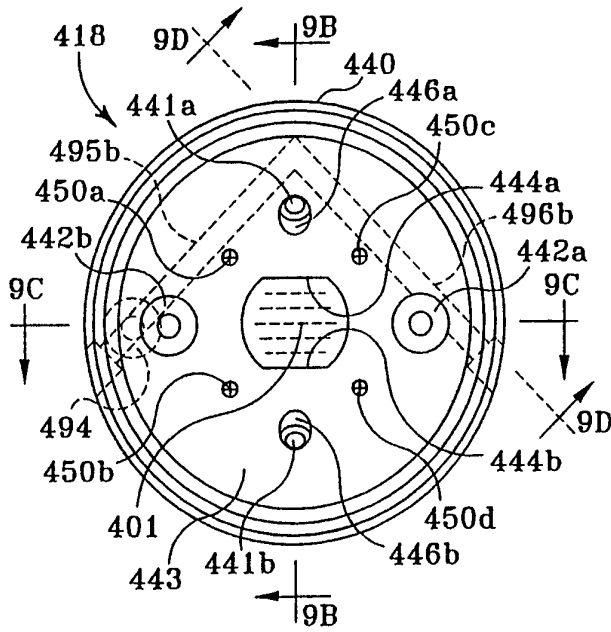


FIG. 9A

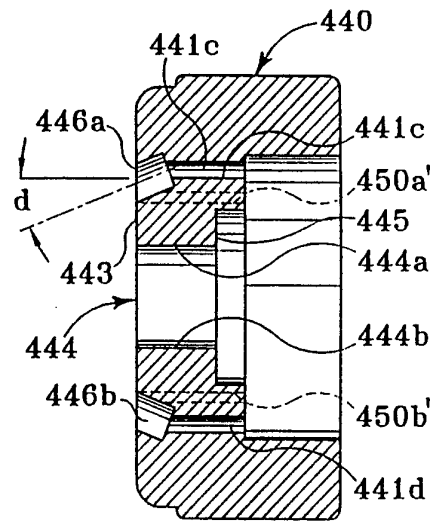


FIG. 9B

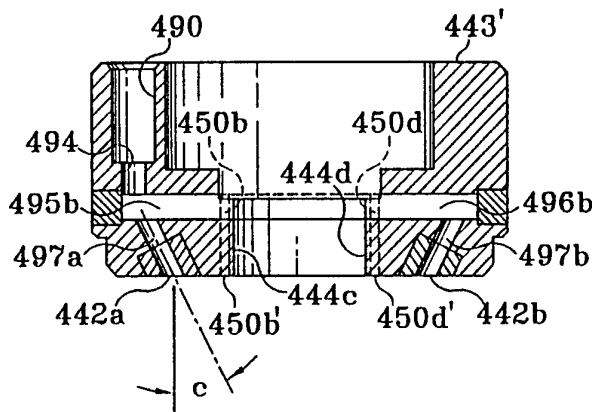


FIG. 9C

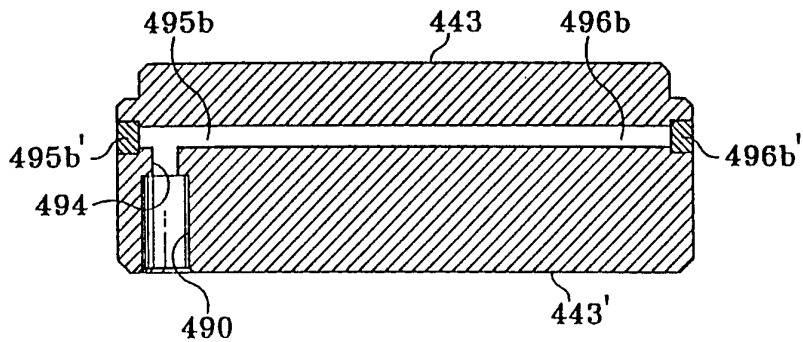


FIG. 9D

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.  
PCT/US94/13298

<b>A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER</b> IPC(6) :B05B 1/28, 7/08 US CL :239/9, 105, 294, 296, 299 According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
<b>B. FIELDS SEARCHED</b> Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) U.S. : 239/9, 105, 294, 296, 299, 419.3, 422, 424.5, 425, 552, 556, DIG. 8 Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)		
<b>C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT</b>		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US, A, 5,080,283 (Kukesh et al.) 14 January 1992, See Figs. 3A and 3B.	1-20
Y	US, A, 4,854,504 (Hedger, Jr. et al.) 08 August 1989, See Figs. 1 and 5.	1-20
Y	US, A, 2,271,779 (Peeps) 03 February 1942, See Fig. 3 and page 3, left col., lines 14-25.	1-20
<input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex.		
* Special categories of cited documents: *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance *E* earlier document published on or after the international filing date *L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) *O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means *P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed *T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention *X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone *Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art *&* document member of the same patent family		
Date of the actual completion of the international search 25 JANUARY 1995		Date of mailing of the international search report 07 FEB 1995
Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Box PCT Washington, D.C. 20231 Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230		Authorized officer <i>William Grant</i> WILLIAM GRANT Telephone No. (703) 308-1113