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(54) **Title:** METHOD FOR PRODUCTION OF AN ACID PROOF, SEAMLESS PRESSURE VESSEL

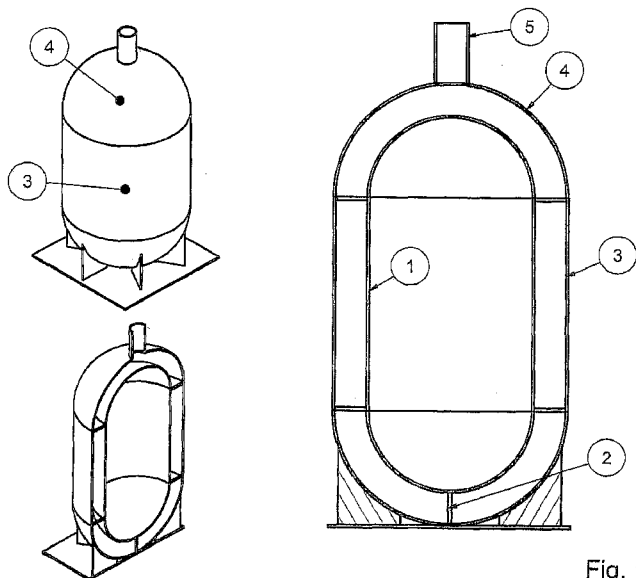


Fig. 1

(57) **Abstract:** The invention relates to a method for production of a cylindrical acid proof, seamless pressure vessel having hemispherical top and bottom by powder moulding in an HIP (Hot Isostatic Pressing) process. Sheet metal moulds are produced constituting an internal shell (1), lower part of an external shell (3), upper part of an external shell (4) with filling spout (5) with corresponding top and bottom. Distance pins (2) decide the wall thickness and are mounted outward from the internal shell which is led down into the lower part of external shell (3) whereafter shell part (4) with filling spout (5) closes the volume between the internal and external shells which is then filled with powder through the filling spout (5). The pressure vessel is placed in an HIP-process container for vacuuming, sealing, supply of high-pressure inert gas such as argon, at high temperature such as 1000 °C, for processing together with the distance pins (2) to a compact and homogeneous material.

METHOD FOR PRODUCTION OF AN ACID PROOF, SEEMLESS PRESSURE
VESSEL

The invention relates to a method for production of an acid
proof, seamless pressure vessel, as stated in the introduc-
5 tion to the accompanying claim 1.

There is an increasing need for large high-pressure accumula-
tors of the bladder type in the subsea industry. In today's
subsea control systems it is common to store hydraulic energy
on the surface in hydraulic units having pumps and hydraulic
10 accumulators.

Piston accumulators are generally used in surface equipment
while bladder accumulators are preferred for subsea use. The
bladder accumulators are simpler, cheaper, easier to maintain
and more reliable than piston accumulators. Bladder accumula-
15 tors also have shorter delivery times.

The standard piston accumulators are, however, available in
higher pressure classes and with larger volume than standard
bladder accumulators, and they may be equipped with position
reading of the piston for monitoring of gas tightness.

20 The hydraulic energy for activating various functions are
distributed from a surface installation to the subsea equip-
ment via hydraulic control lines collected in an umbilical
running down to the subsea equipment. To reduce response

times for actuation of subsea equipment and to ensure a stable operating pressure it is common to fit an additional accumulator locally on the subsea equipment.

Large costs and technical limitations are tied to hydraulic distribution between the hydraulic unit on the surface vessel and the subsea equipment via an umbilical. Water depths and distances are steadily increasing requiring pumps and accumulators to be fitted on the subsea equipment itself. This relates to both permanent production systems and control systems used in connection with various operations.

Concerning well operations there is established through rules and specifications a requirement for available stored energy for closing, opening and closing of all valve actuators. There is also a requirement for such as emergency disconnection of equipment during operations.

When hydraulic energy is to be established and stored for actuation of various subsea functions, a pump is used to charge the accumulators to the desired pressure. There will be pressure regulators downstream of the accumulators and the outlet pressure from the accumulator is adjusted down to the operating pressure. The operating pressure will with consumption fall to a level where the regulators let the stored energy out to the rest of the system.

It is desired to keep weight and volume of the accumulators to a minimum when these are to be included in a subsea solution. If the accumulators can be charged to a much higher pressure than the regulated working pressure, then each accumulator may store more energy and the size and weight of the accumulator may be reduced. This assumes a qualified pressure regulator. In connection with control of well head mounted equipment a very high pressure level is utilised for downhole

functions and a medium pressure for actuator and connector functions. When the accumulators have a pressure sufficiently high to supply both downhole and other functions it may open for a simplification of the hydraulic system compared to what is common today.

This scenario implies a need for subsea accumulators having a large volume and a higher pressure class than what is available as standard equipment today. The highest design pressure available for standard bladder accumulators produced in large quantities today is 10 000 psi corresponding to 690 bar. There are however few suppliers having accumulators larger than 5 litres effective volume for this pressure class in their standard programme.

Most commonly the accumulator shell is defined based on the PED-directive concerning pressurised equipment (97/23/EC) passed in 1997 and implemented as Norwegian regulation in 1999. From May 29, 2002 the regulation is made absolute for new pressurised equipment to be used in Norway and/or to be sold within the EU.

Accumulator shells are today generally forged in China in large series. Using HIP'ing (Hot Isostatic Pressing) the accumulator supplier will have the advantage of producing in small series and give the client the choice between material thickness according to PED or other regulations as desired.

A bladder accumulator consists in principle of four parts:

- a steel container - a normally forged steel container,
- an internal rubber bladder separating gas and liquid,
- a gas valve to precharge the accumulator, filling it with gas,
- an oil valve to stop the bladder being squeezed out of the accumulator.

The forged pressure vessel of a high-pressure bladder accumulator is seamless and is generally produced from high-tensile chromium and molybdenum alloyed steel, but exist also in acid proof material for different pressures. The subsea market demands accumulators in acid proof materials.

In prior art the pressure vessel is forged to the desired shape from a forged hollow bar. The ends are heated and formed to a rounded shape wherein are later machined openings for placing valves for gas filling and oil supply, respectively.

It is desirable to produce acid proof pressure vessels for bladder accumulators having an effective volume of up to 50 litres in pressure class 15,000 - 20,000 psi at a competitive price. This is outside the standard supplier programme for all accumulator suppliers today.

The aim is to produce a first class seamless quality product by powder moulding, so-called Hot Isostatic Pressing (HIP). HIP'ing is a new technique for production of pressure vessels for bladder accumulators and is a technical and economic alternative to prior art for production of large high-pressure accumulators in an acid proof material. The finished product will have the same shape as today's forged pressure vessels having wall thickness adapted to increased pressure class and pressure vessel regulations valid for the relevant market.

The present application relates to a method for production of an acid proof seamless pressure vessel and the method is characterised in the characteristics stated in the claims.

Fig. 1 shows a sectioned finished mounted cylindrical vessel having a hemispherical top and bottom consisting of an internal shell 1 held together with distance pins 2 to a lower part of an external shell 3

and a corresponding upper external shell 4 having a filling spout 5, wherein both the internal shell 1 and the external shells 3, 4 constitute moulds of sheet material which in the further production process is used to fill the interstice before hot hardening together with the distance pins, so that a seamless vessel in a compact and homogeneous material results from a completed process.

Fig. 2A shows in 3D an internal shell 1 fitted with a number of distance pins 2 in the same material as the finished HIP'ed material.

Fig. 2B shows in 3D a lower part of an external shall 3 having internal shell 1 with the distance pins 2 fitted.

The HIP-technique is a known production method for production of components from different powder materials like metal and ceramic powders. The blanks here constituting the internal shell 1, the lower part of the external shell 3, distance pins 2 and the hemispherical tops and bottoms are produced by means of respective sheet moulds.

The internal shell 1 with the distance pins 2 deciding the wall thickness is led down into the lower part of the external shell 3 whereafter the hemispherical upper part 4 of the external shell with filling spout 5 closes the volume between internal and external shells which is filled with powder through the filling spout 5, and the container is placed in a HIP-process container for vacuuming, sealing, supply of high pressure inert gas like argon at high temperature such as 1000 °C, to a compact homogenous material having better properties than forged steel.

Finally the blank is machined outside and inside to final embodiment by machining of surfaces and also openings for positioning of valves for gas filling and oil supply.

5 It is possible to use the same material for the internal and external mould as the HIP'ed material, and alternatively the moulds are made of a material which is etched away in an acid bath. The choice of method is decided based on technical and economical production considerations.

C l a i m s

1. A method for production of a cylindrical acid proof
seamless pressure vessel having hemispherical bottom
and top by powder moulding in an HIP (Hot Isostatic
5 Pressing) process, c h a r a c t e r i z e d i n

that sheet moulds are produced constituting an
internal shell (1), lower part of an external shell
(3), upper part of an external shell (4) having fill-
ing spout (5) with corresponding tops and bottoms,

10 that distance pins deciding the wall thickness
are produced and which in a necessary number are
mounted out from the internal shell (1) being led down
into the lower part of the external shell (3), where-
after the upper shell part (4) with filling spout (5)
15 closes the volume between the internal and external
shells which is filled with powder through the filling
spout (5), and the pressure vessel is placed in an
HIP-process container for vacuuming, sealing, supply
of high pressure inert gas such as argon at high tem-
20 perature like 1000 °C, for processing together with
the distance pins (2) to a compact and homogenous ma-
terial.

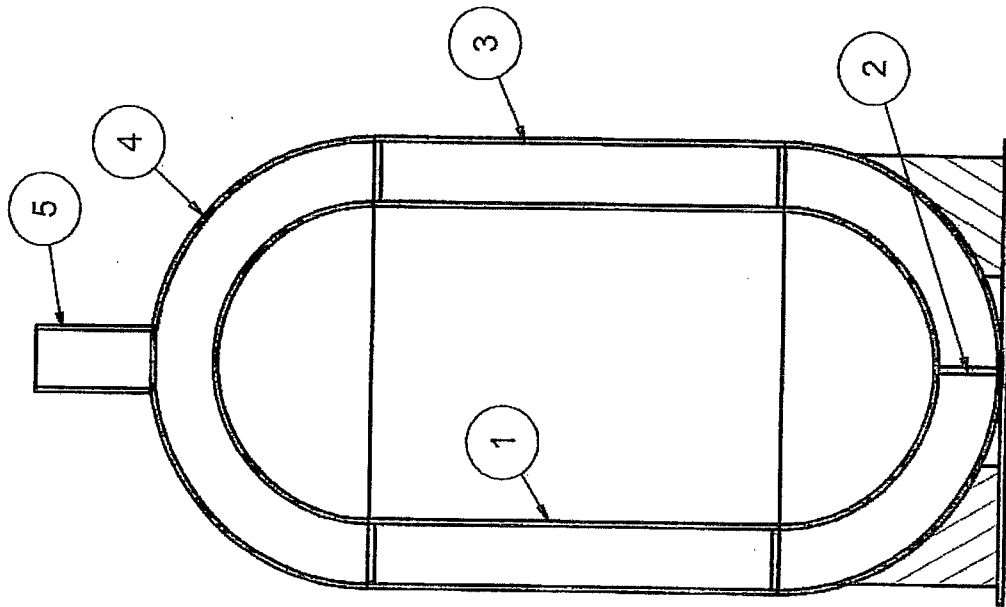
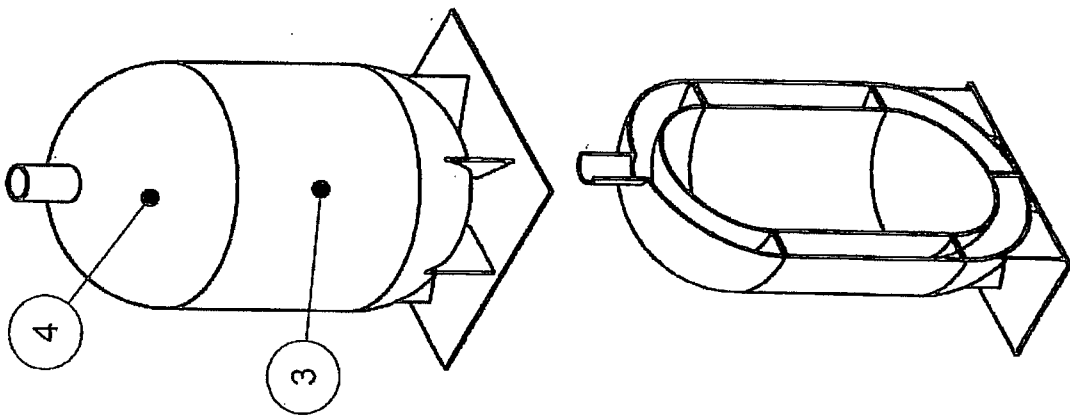


Fig. 1



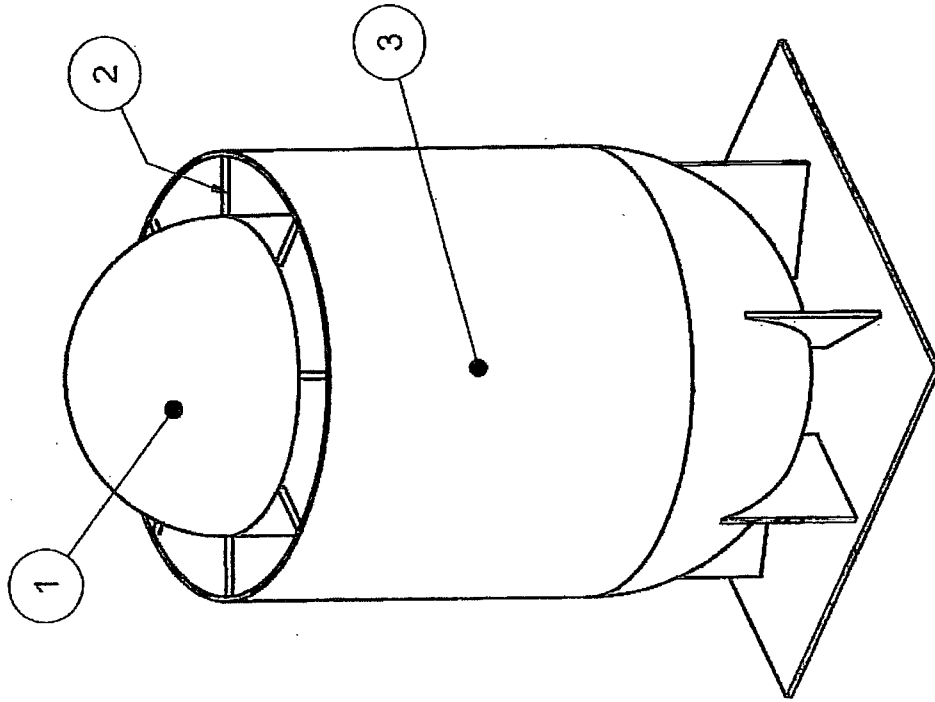


Fig. 2B

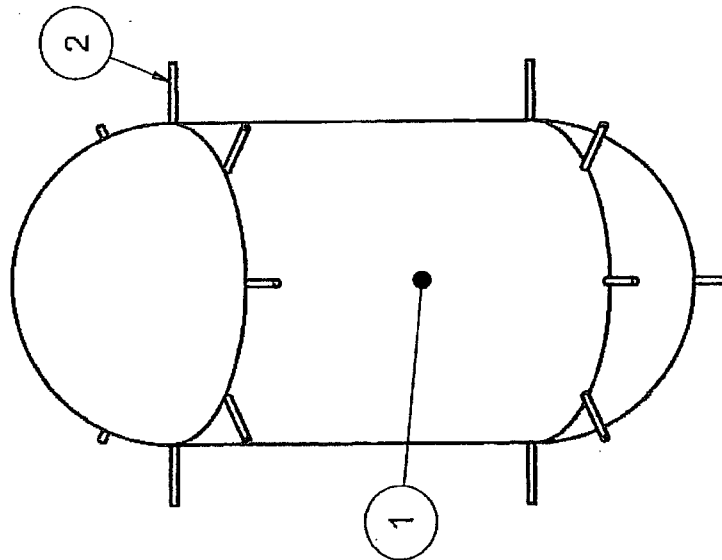


Fig. 2A

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/NO2009/000350

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER		
IPC: B22F 3/15 (2006.01), F16J12/00 (2006.01), F17C 1/00 (2006.01) According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED		
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)		
IPC : B22F, F16J, F17C		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched		
NO, SE, FI, DK classes as above		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)		
EPODOC, WPI, CAPLUS		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 3418112 A (ZORAN W. A.) 1968-12-24, claim 1	1
A	EP 1779946 A1 (GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY) 2007-05-02, abstract and figure 4	1
A	EP 1657010 A1 (SINTEC HTM AG) 2006-05-17, abstract and figure 1	1
A	FR 2796322 A1 (COMMISSARIAT A L'ENERGIE ATOMIQUE) 2001-01-19, abstract and figures 1 and 2	1
A	US 4135286 A (WRIGHT R. J.) 1979-01-23, claim 1 and figures 1 and 2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input checked="" 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	"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
"E"	earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date	"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
"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)	"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
"O"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&" document member of the same patent family
"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT
Information on patent family members

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