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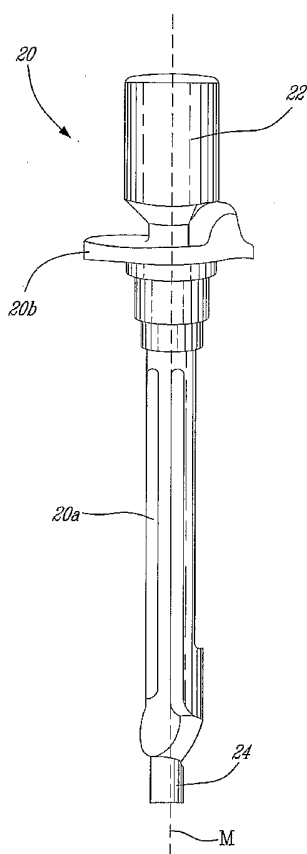
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(54) Title: GAS TURBINE FUEL NOZZLE MANUFACTURING

(57) Abstract: A method and a pre-shaped workpiece (20) for making at least a portion of a gas turbine fuel nozzle (20') are disclosed having opposed gripping tabs (22, 24) which can be secured to machine tool holders (32, 34) during manufacturing by a machine tool (30).



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GAS TURBINE FUEL NOZZLE MANUFACTURING

TECHNICAL FIELD

The invention relates generally to fuel nozzles for gas turbine engines and, more particularly, to improved methods of making the same.

BACKGROUND OF THE ART

Conventional fuel nozzles are manufactured in multiple pieces produced from castings that have an overall diameter at least equal to the largest diameter of the parts. Consequently, a large quantity of material is removed, especially if the section with the largest diameter is only a small fraction of the parts. The time and cost for manufacturing parts are thereby increased. Moreover, nozzle parts need to be repositioned in the machine tool for various operations, which increases the difficulties of manufacturing the fuel nozzles since each repositioning requires that the part be precisely realigned with reference to the machine tool in order to keep tolerances within the desired level.

There is a need to provide improved manufacturing methods which can greatly simplify the manufacturing of gas turbine fuel nozzles, thereby reducing the manufacturing time and cost.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In one aspect, the present invention provides a method of making at least a portion of a gas turbine fuel nozzle, the method comprising: providing a pre-shaped workpiece having two gripping tabs projecting therefrom adjacent opposite ends, the gripping tabs being coaxial with one another; securing the gripping tabs to machine tool holders; rotating the workpiece; machining the workpiece into a near-final form; and removing the gripping tabs from the workpiece.

In a second aspect, the present invention provides a method of making a gas turbine fuel nozzle, the method comprising: providing a pre-shaped workpiece having two opposite gripping tabs thereon, the gripping tabs being aligned on a main axis of the workpiece; inserting the gripping tabs into holders of a machine tool; rotating the

workpiece; machining the workpiece with the machine tool into a fuel nozzle in a near-final form; and removing the gripping tabs from the fuel nozzle using the machine tool.

In a third aspect, the present invention provides a pre-shaped workpiece for use in a machine tool to manufacture at least a portion of a gas turbine fuel nozzle, the workpiece comprising two gripping tabs to provide a grip for the machine tool, the gripping tabs being configured and disposed to be removed from the item in a near-final form and being in registry with a main axis of the item.

Further details of these and other aspects of the present invention will be apparent from the detailed description and figures included below.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Reference is now made to the accompanying figures depicting aspects of the present invention, in which:

Fig. 1 shows a generic gas turbine engine to illustrate an example of a general environment in which the invention can be used;

Figs. 2a and 2b are perspective views of an example of a fuel nozzle made in accordance with the present invention, Fig. 2a showing the fuel nozzle before being machined by the machine tool and Fig. 2b showing the fuel nozzle at the end of the manufacturing process;

Fig. 3 is a schematic view of a workpiece being machined in a machine tool; and

Figs. 4a and 4b are views similar to Figs. 2a and 2b, showing a fuel nozzle in accordance with another possible embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Fig. 1 illustrates an example of a gas turbine engine 10 of a type preferably provided for use in subsonic flight, generally comprising in serial flow communication a fan 12 through which ambient air is propelled, a multistage compressor 14 for pressurizing the air, a combustor 16 in which the compressed air is mixed with fuel and ignited for generating an annular stream of hot combustion gases, and a turbine section

18 for extracting energy from the combustion gases. This figure illustrates an example of the environment in which the present invention can be used.

Fig. 2a shows a workpiece 20 for manufacturing one possible embodiment of gas turbine fuel nozzle. It comprises a stem portion 20a and a flange portion 20b. This workpiece 20 is pre-shaped so as to minimize the quantity of material to be removed. It is preferably obtained by casting, forging, stamping or a combination thereof.

Initially, the workpiece 20 includes two opposite gripping tabs 22, 24. The tabs 22, 24 are integrally connected to the workpiece 20. These gripping tabs 22, 24 are preferably cylindrical, although other shapes and configurations are possible. The two gripping tabs 22, 24 are in registry with the main axis M of the workpiece 20, which means that the center of the gripping tabs 22, 24 are coaxially aligned with the main axis M. However, it should be noted that the main axis M is not necessarily the central axis of the workpiece 20 although this is preferred.

The gripping tabs 22, 24 are used as connection points for machine tool holders. This allows holding the workpiece 20 by simply securing the gripping tabs 22, 24 to the machine tool holders. Since the holders are coaxial, the piece may be rotated during machining, such as turning between centres, etc.

Fig. 2b illustrates the resulting fuel nozzle 20' at the end of the manufacturing process. One can see that the gripping tabs have been removed.

Fig. 3 schematically illustrates a machine tool 30, such as a mill turn machine tool, in which is provided a pair of holders 32, 34. The holders 32, 34 in the machine tool 30 are preferably mounted on moveable carriers (not shown), including co-rotating collets, so that machining can be undertaken in accordance with many possible axes. A tool 36, either driven in rotation or only passive, is positioned against the surface of the workpiece 20 to machine its outer surfaces. The tool 36 can also take advantage of the fact that the whole workpiece 20 can be rotated around the main axis M or be otherwise moved during a manufacturing step. More than one tool 36 is generally required to complete the manufacturing. Yet, the manufacturing is done on at least a portion of the workpiece 20, although all surfaces are preferably machined before the fuel nozzle 20' is

finished. It is thus possible to design a fuel nozzle 20' with one or more sections that are already completed when the raw workpiece 20 is produced.

Once the workpiece 20 is in a near final form, such as near the end of the machining process, the gripping tabs 22, 24 can be removed from the workpiece 20 by cutting them or otherwise removing them, preferably while they are still within at least one of the machine tool holders 32, 34. The advantage of using this process is that the manipulation of the workpiece 20 is minimized. Ideally, the complete manufacturing process could be done without having to remove the workpiece 20 from any of the machine tool holders 32, 34 until the end. This greatly simplifies handling.

Figs. 4a and 4b are views similar to Figs. 2a and 2b, showing another example of fuel nozzle 20' that can be manufactured from a pre-shaped workpiece 20 using the present invention. As can be seen, the workpiece or nozzle needs not be symmetrical about axis M.

As can be appreciated, using a workpiece 20 in the making of a gas turbine fuel nozzle 20' allows having a single piece with fewer braze joints. The integrated one-piece member thus has fewer parts. This allows designing a part with only a minimum of material being removed during the manufacturing process and using the same machine tool 30. Overall, the cost for making a fuel nozzle using the present invention is lower than using conventional techniques and the manufacturing time is lower. Fuel channels may be provided in accordance with U.S. Patent No. 6,141,968, or any other suitable matter.

The above description is meant to be exemplary only, and one skilled in the art will recognize that changes may be made to the embodiments described without departing from the scope of the invention disclosed. For example, the pre-shaped workpiece can be made using other techniques than casting, forging or stamping. The gripping tabs are not necessarily cylindrical. These tabs can be removed from the workpiece, at any stage and using any method. Any number of gripping tabs may be used. Still other modifications which fall within the scope of the present invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art, in light of a review of this disclosure, and such modifications are intended to fall within the appended claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of making at least a portion of a gas turbine fuel nozzle, the method comprising:
providing a pre-shaped workpiece having two gripping tabs projecting therefrom adjacent opposite ends, the gripping tabs being coaxial with one another;
securing the gripping tabs to machine tool holders;
rotating the workpiece;
machining the workpiece into a near-final form; and
removing the gripping tabs from the workpiece.
2. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the pre-shaped workpiece is made by one among the group consisting of casting, forging, stamping or a combination thereof.
3. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the pre-shaped workpiece comprises a flange portion and a stem portion, both being cast together as a single casting.
4. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the machine tool holders are co-rotating collets adapted to rotate the workpiece in the machine tool around its main axis.
5. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the gripping tabs are removed from the workpiece while the workpiece is still held by at least one of the machine tool holders.
6. A method of making a gas turbine fuel nozzle, the method comprising:
providing a pre-shaped workpiece having two opposite gripping tabs thereon, the gripping tabs being aligned on a main axis of the workpiece;

inserting the gripping tabs into holders of a machine tool;

rotating the workpiece;

machining the workpiece with the machine tool into a fuel nozzle in a near-final form; and

removing the gripping tabs from the fuel nozzle using the machine tool.

7. A pre-shaped workpiece for use in a machine tool to manufacture at least a portion of a gas turbine fuel nozzle, the workpiece comprising two gripping tabs to provide a grip for the machine tool, the gripping tabs being configured and disposed to be removed from the item in a near-final form and being in registry with a main axis of the item.
8. The workpiece as defined in claim 8, wherein it comprises a flange portion and a stem portion, both being integral with each other.
9. The workpiece as defined in claim 8, wherein the gripping tabs are cylindrical.

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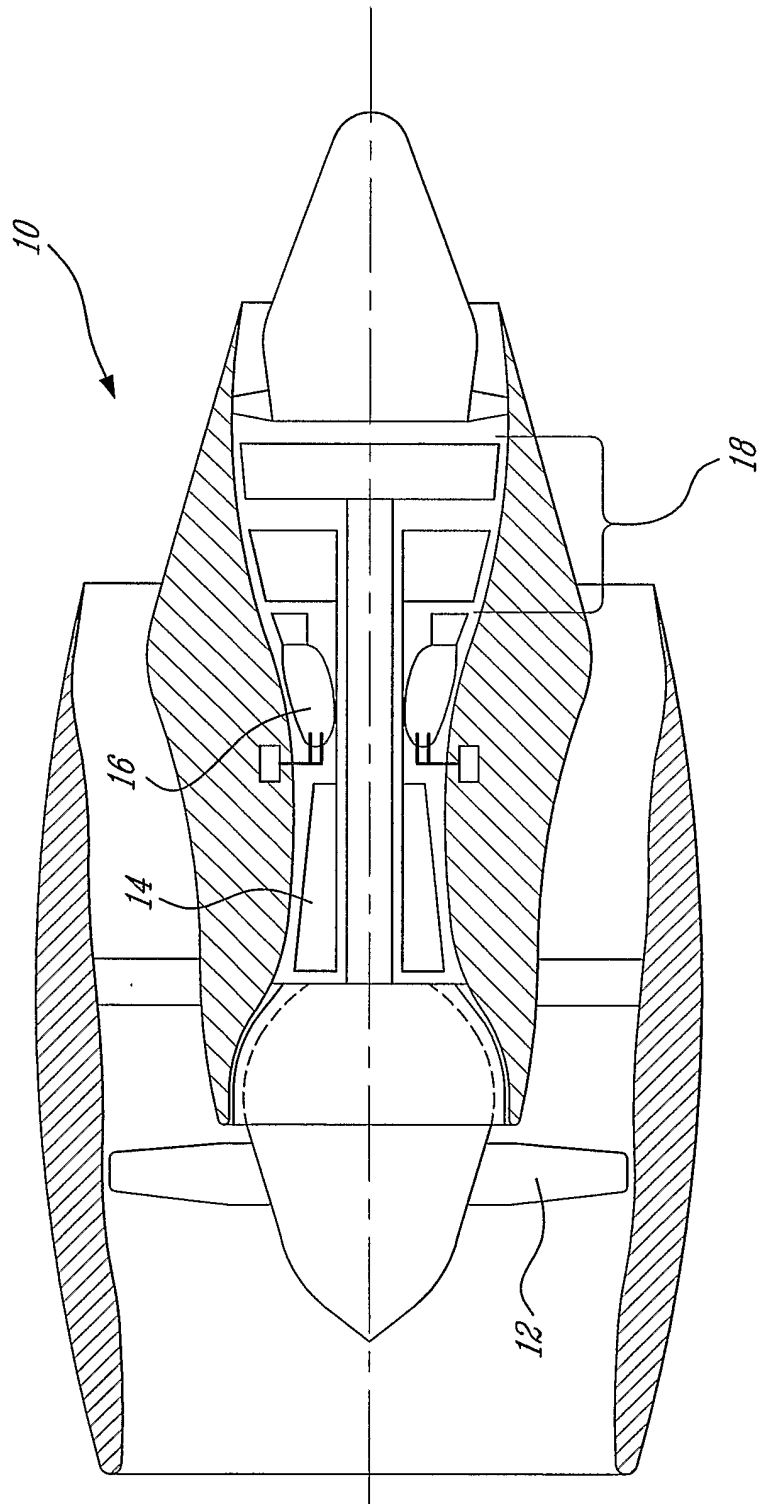
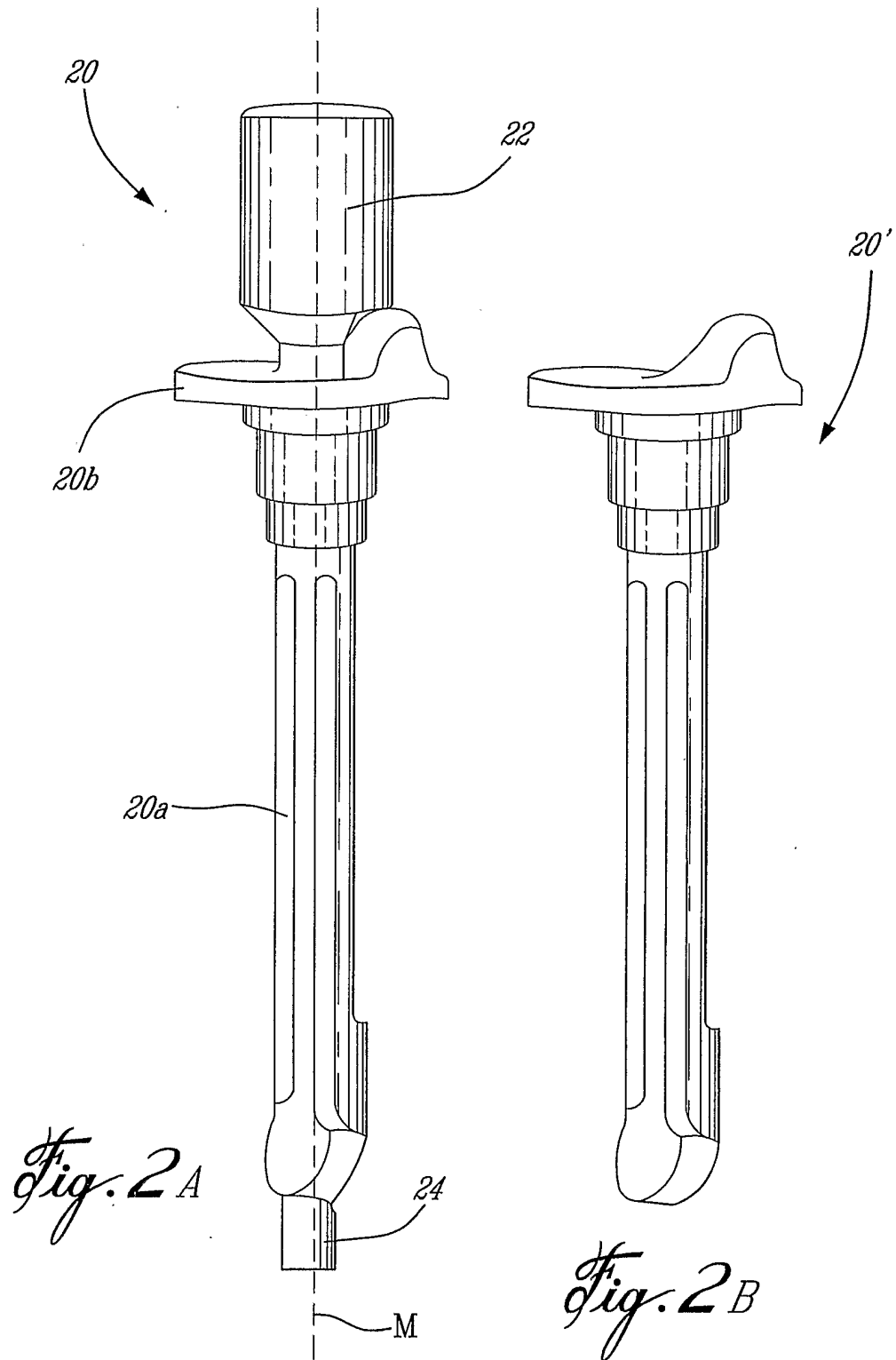


Fig. 1



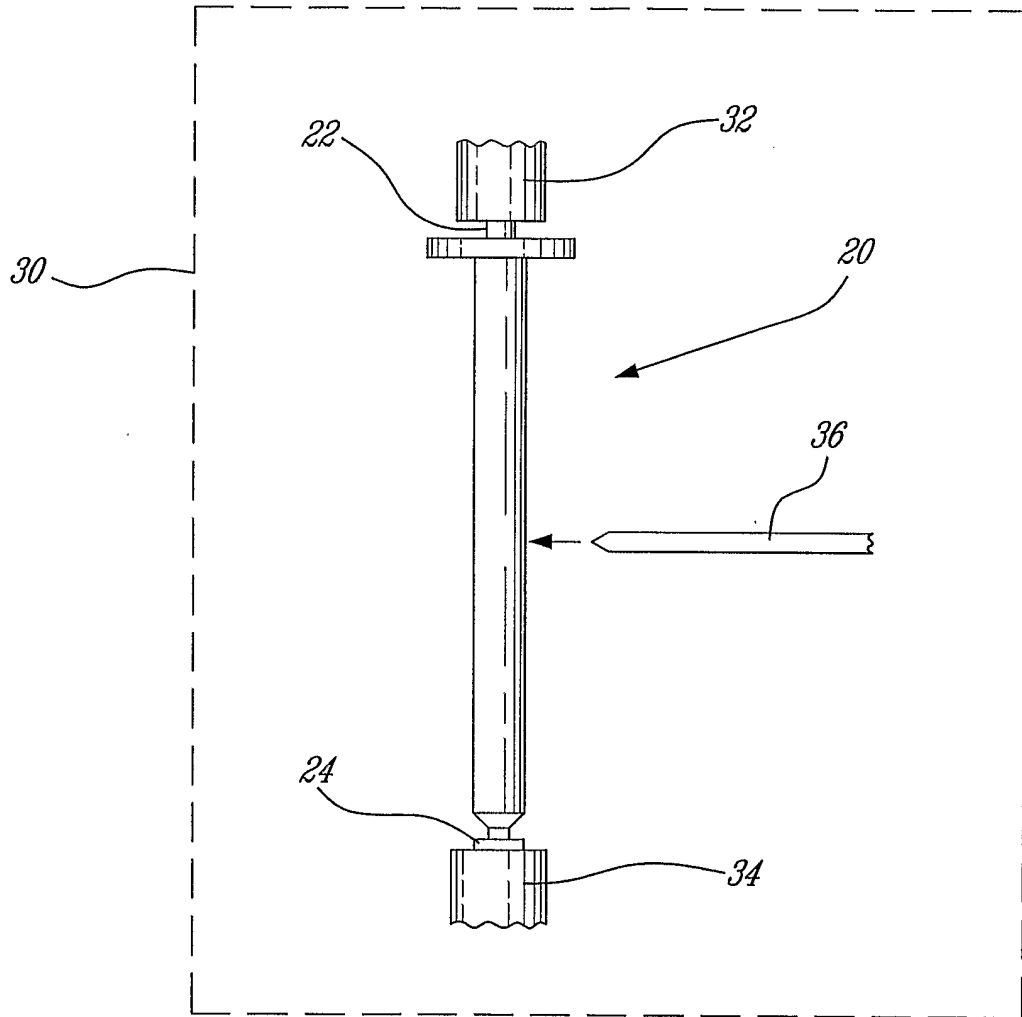
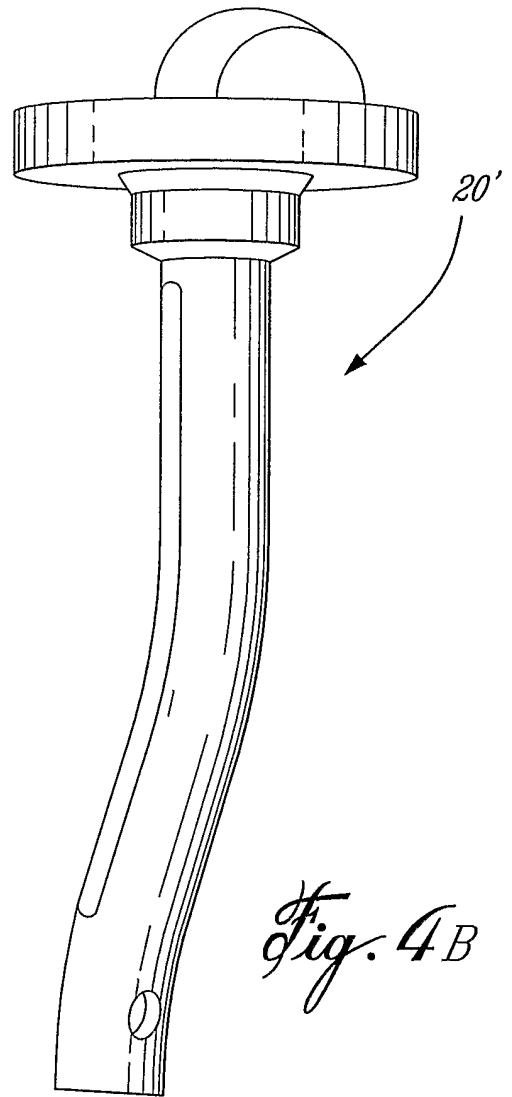
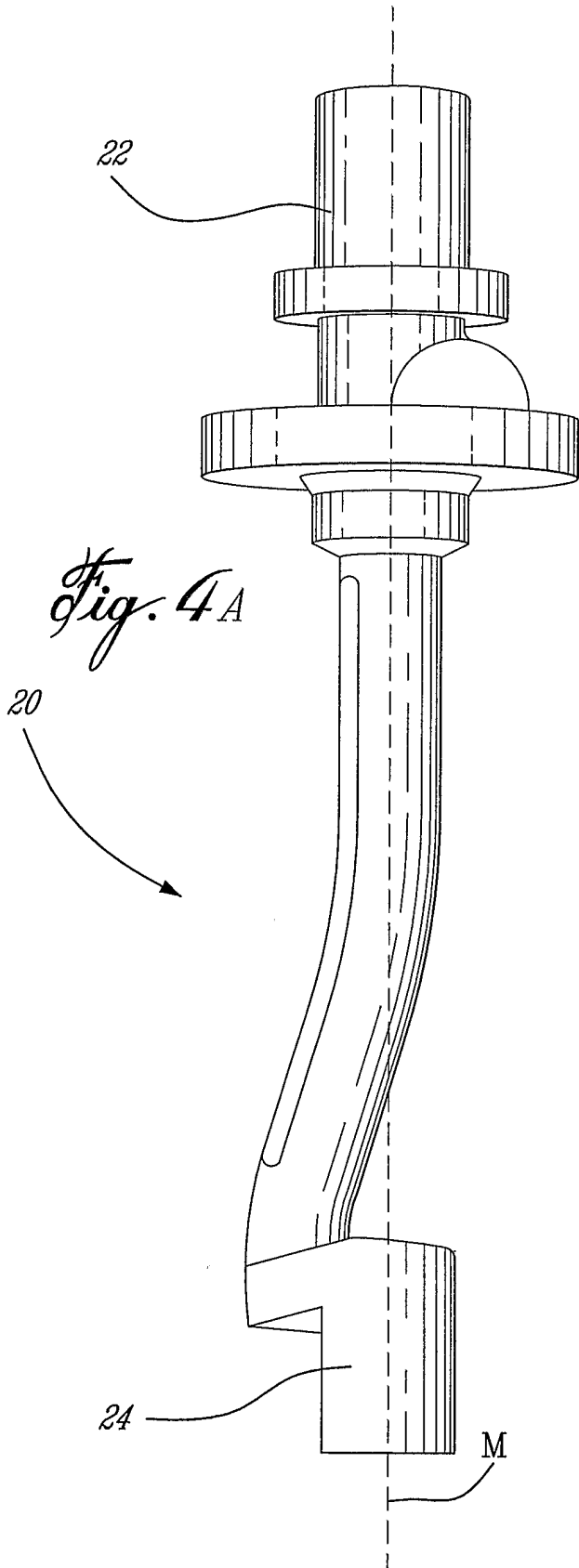


Fig. 3



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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC: B23P 15/00 (2000.01) , F23R 3/42 (2000.01) , B23Q 3/00 (2000.01) 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: B23P 15/00 (2000.01) , F23R 3/42 (2000.01) , B23Q 3/00 (2000.01) CPC: 26/*, 29/1 to 29/45, 76/*, 82/*, 90/*, 164/*, 225/*, 248/1 to 248/7, 269/*, 341/*, 342/*, 60/111, 60/117, 60/164, and 60/174 Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Electronic database(s) consulted during the international search (name of database(s) and, where practicable, search terms used) Delphion, USPTO, EPO, Canadian Patent Database.		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 6,088,903 (MATSUO) 18 July 2000 (18-07-2000) *column 2*	1 to 9
Y	US 4,151,765 (SEVASTAKIS) 1 May 1979 (01-05-1979) *column 4*	1 to 9
A	US 6,141,968 (GATES et al.) 7 November 2000 (07-11-2000) *whole document*	1 to 9
A	US 4,559,852 (ATKINSON) 24 December 1985 (24-12-1985) *whole document*	1 to 9
A	US 4,637,620 (GRAHAM et al.) 20 January 1987 (20-01-1987) *whole document*	1 to 9
<input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex.		
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"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	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
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"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	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	Date of mailing of the international search report	
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