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(54) **MICROWAVE RESONANT CAVITY**

(52) **U.S. Cl. 333/137; 333/232**

(75) **Inventor: Sang Hun Lee, San Ramon, CA (US)**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

(73) **Assignee: AMARANTE TECHNOLOGIES, INC., Santa Clara, CA (US)**

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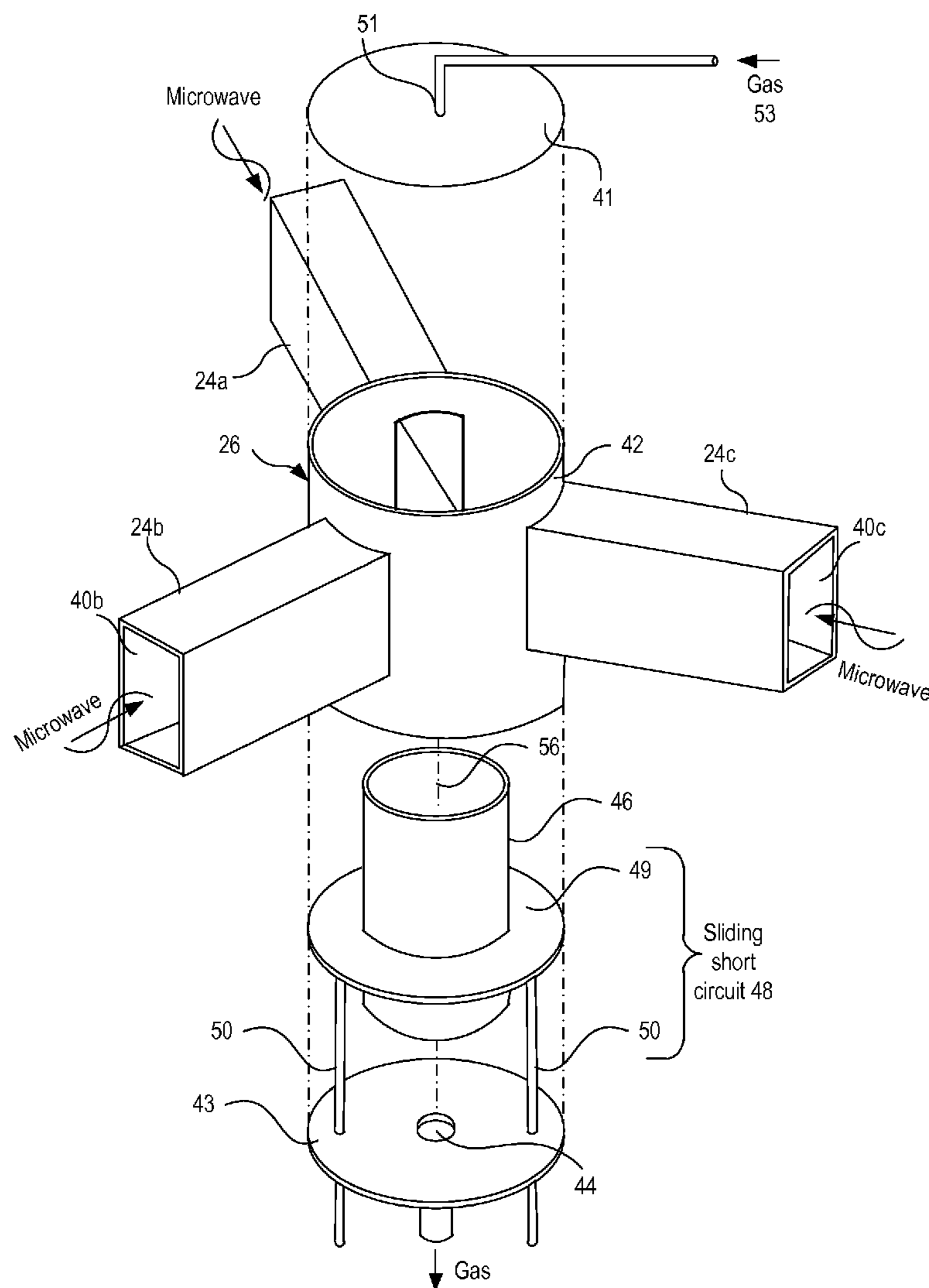
Related U.S. Application Data

(60) **Provisional application No. 61/500,624, filed on Jun. 24, 2011.**

Publication Classification

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H01P 7/06 (2006.01)
H01P 5/12 (2006.01)

A microwave resonant cavity is provided. The microwave resonant cavity includes: a sidewall having a generally cylindrical hollow shape; a gas flow tube disposed inside the sidewall and having a longitudinal axis substantially parallel to a longitudinal axis of the sidewall; a plurality of microwave waveguides, each microwave waveguide having a longitudinal axis substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the sidewall and having a distal end secured to the sidewall and aligned with a corresponding one of a plurality of holes formed on the sidewall; a top plate secured to one end of the sidewall; and a sliding short circuit. The sliding circuit includes: a disk slidably mounted between the sidewall and the gas flow tube; and at least one bar disposed inside the sidewall and arranged parallel to the longitudinal axis of the sidewall.



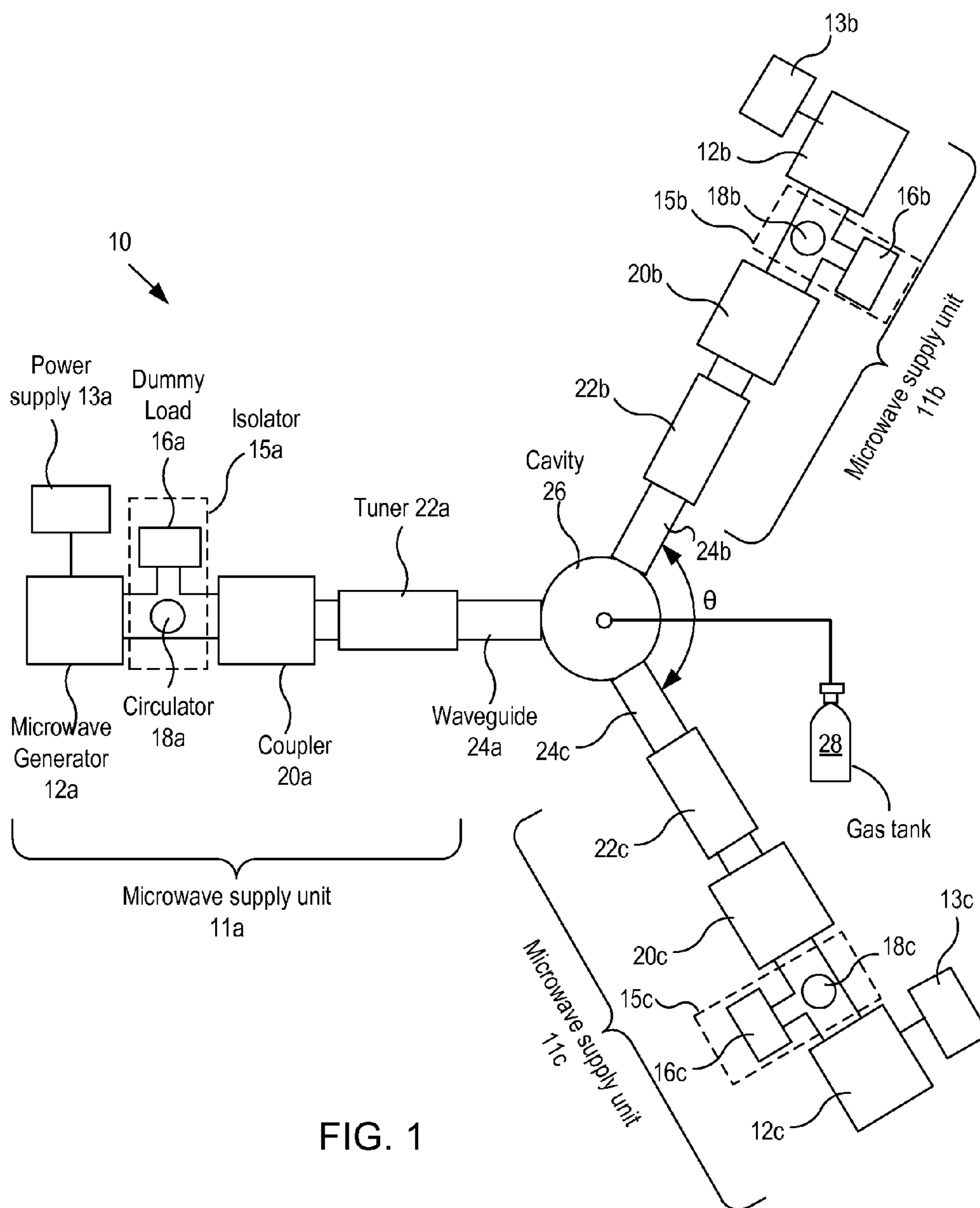
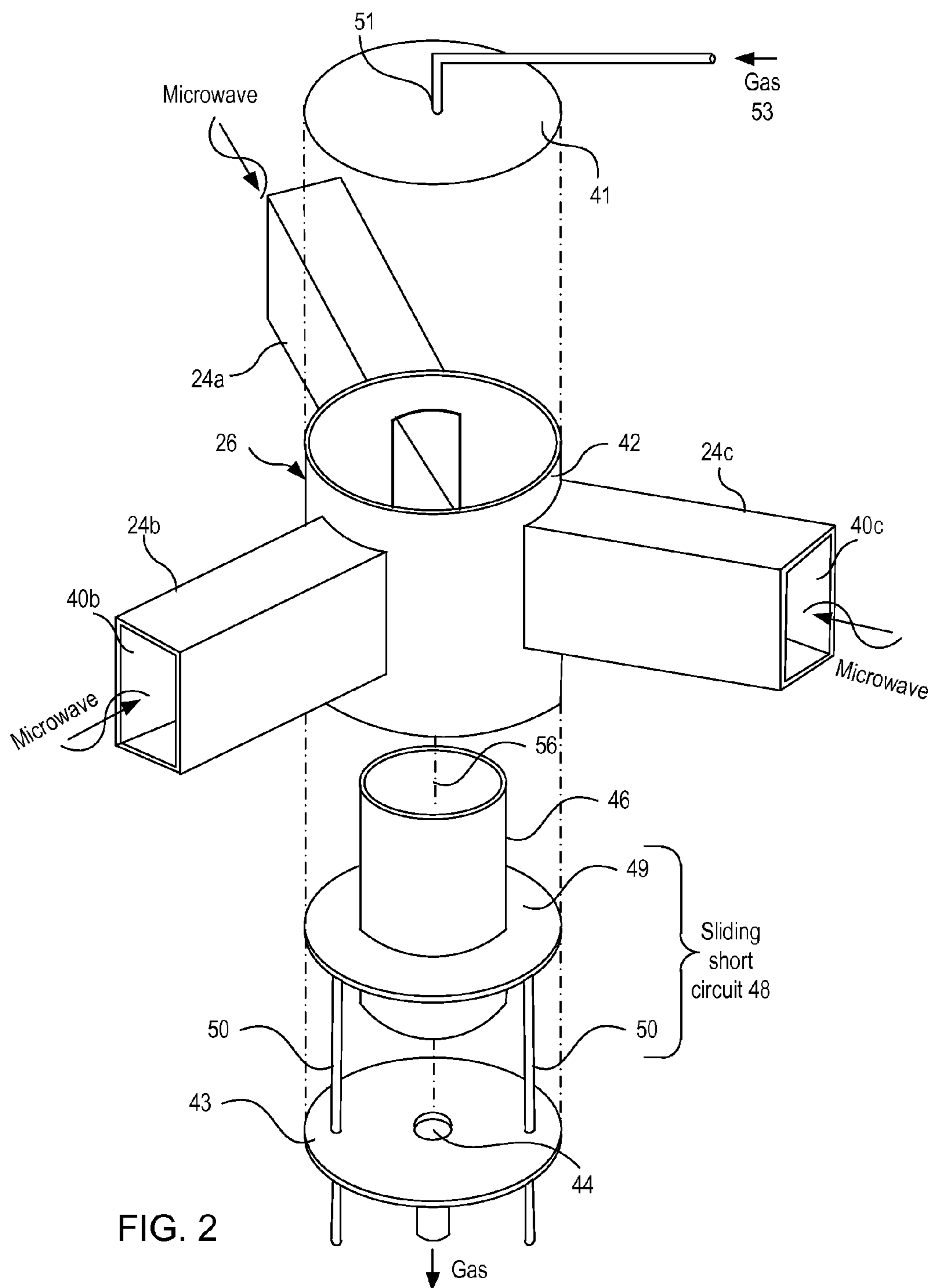


FIG. 1



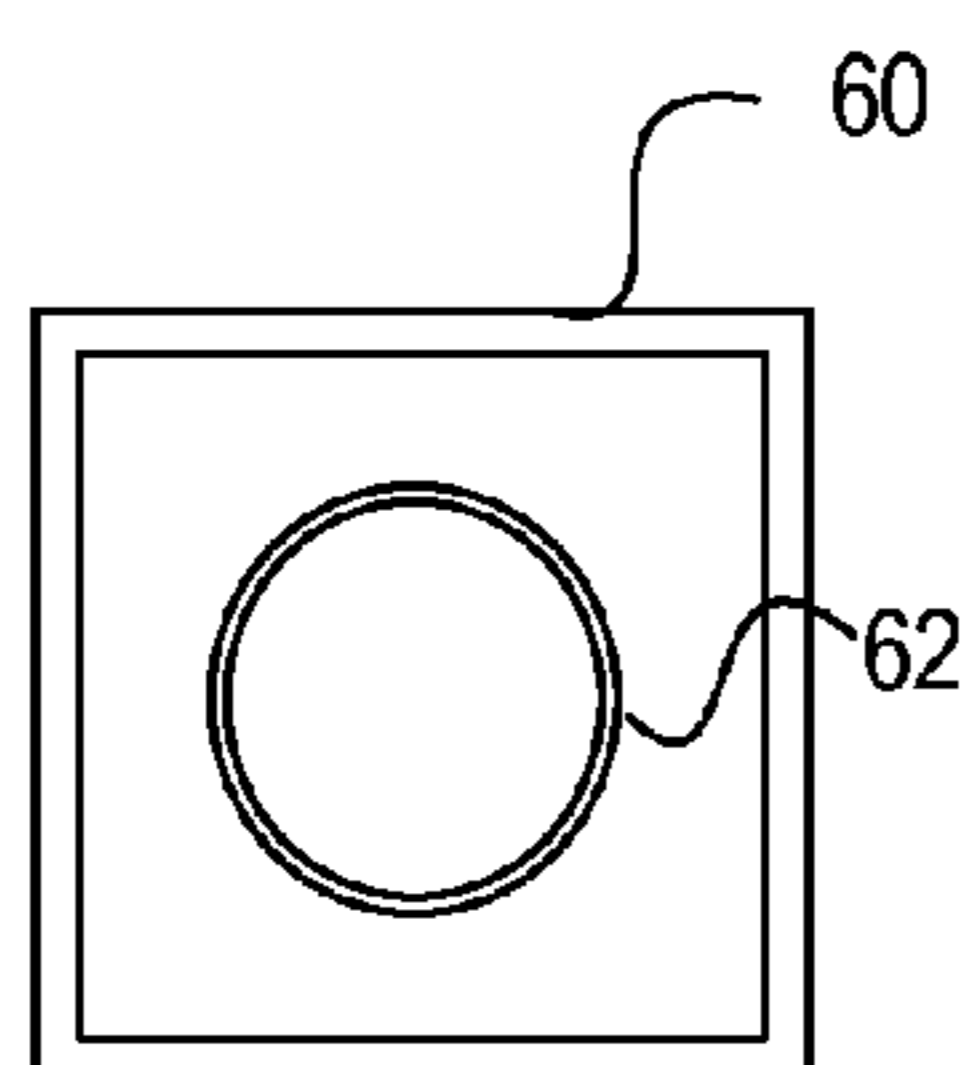


FIG. 3A

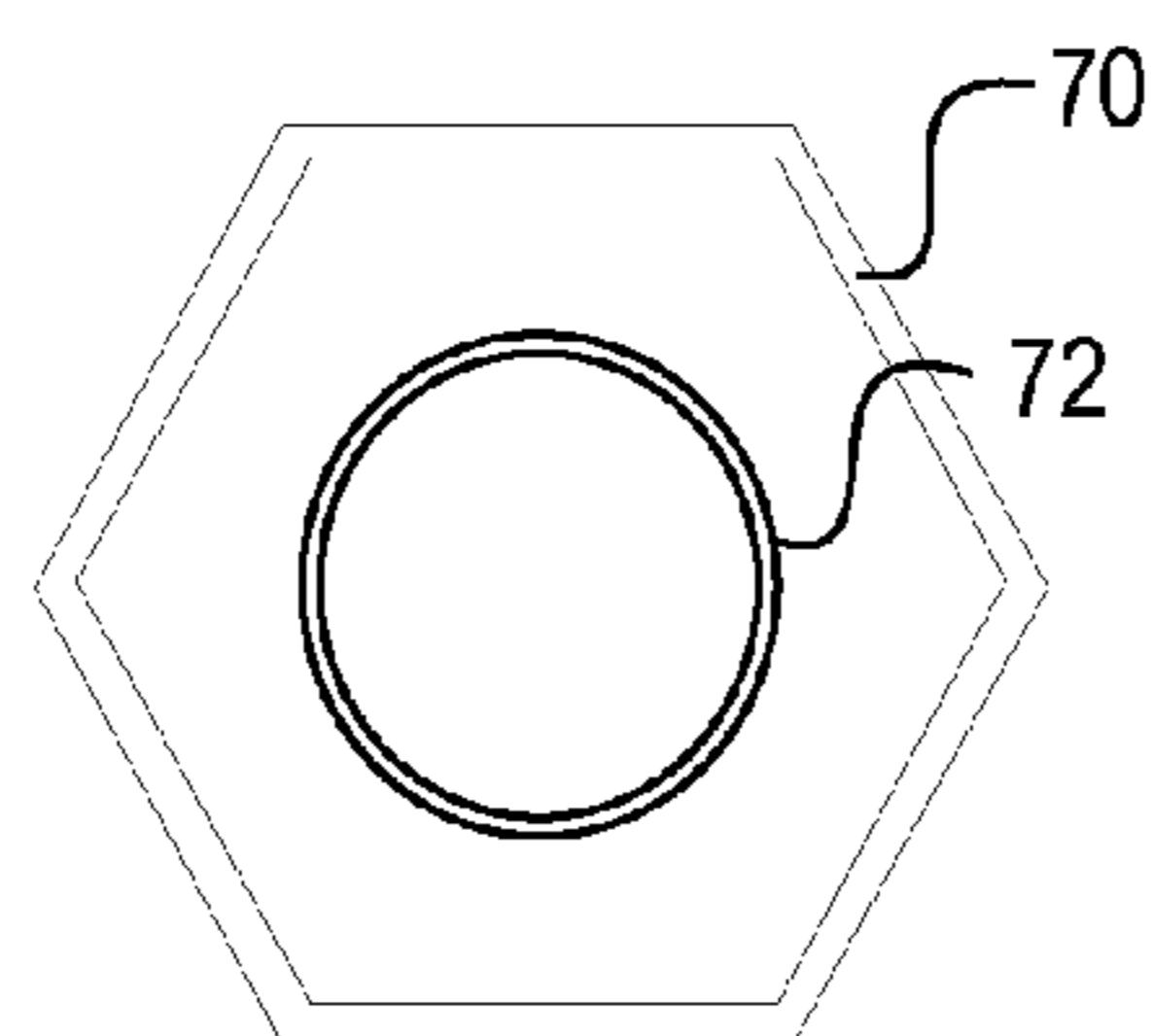


FIG. 3B

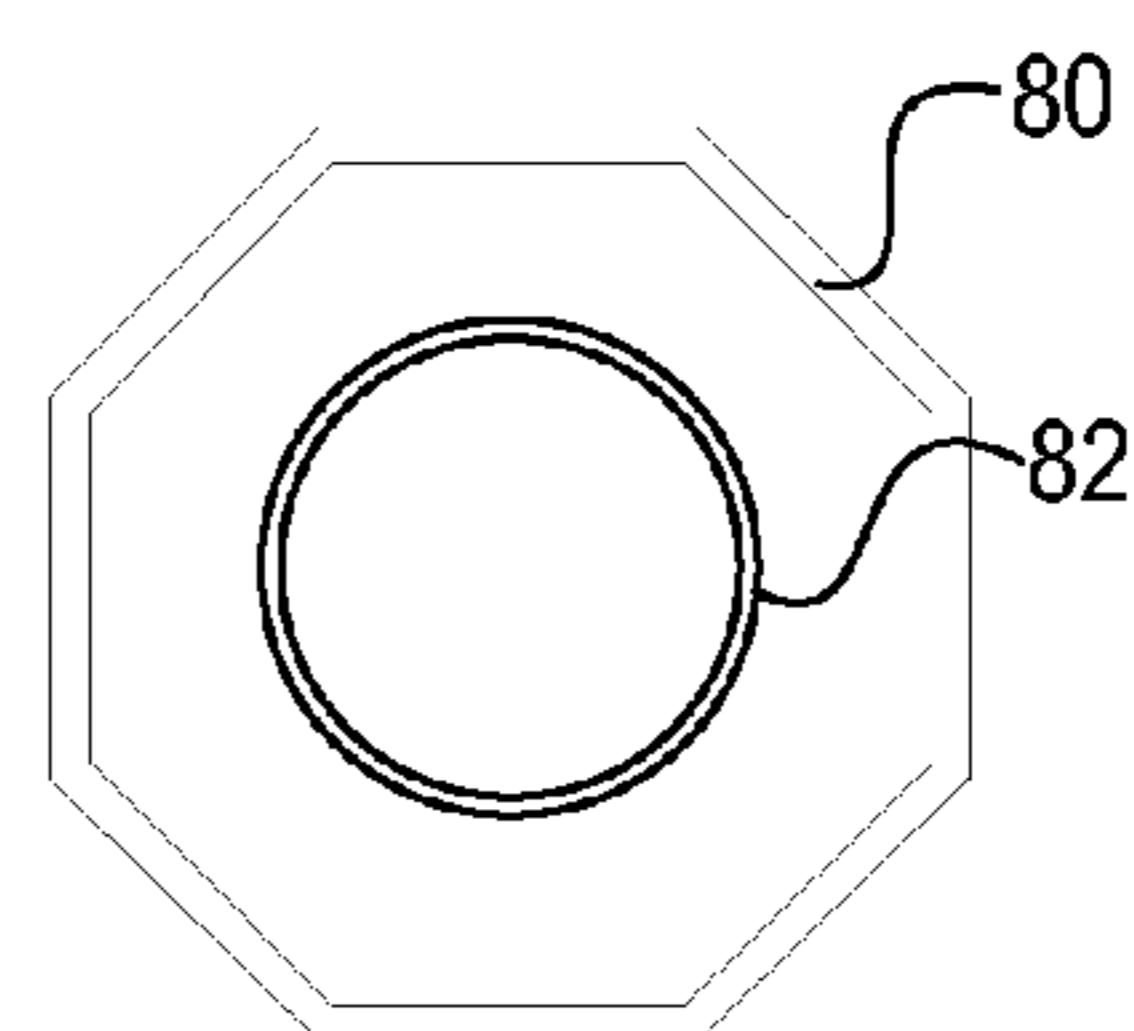


FIG. 3C

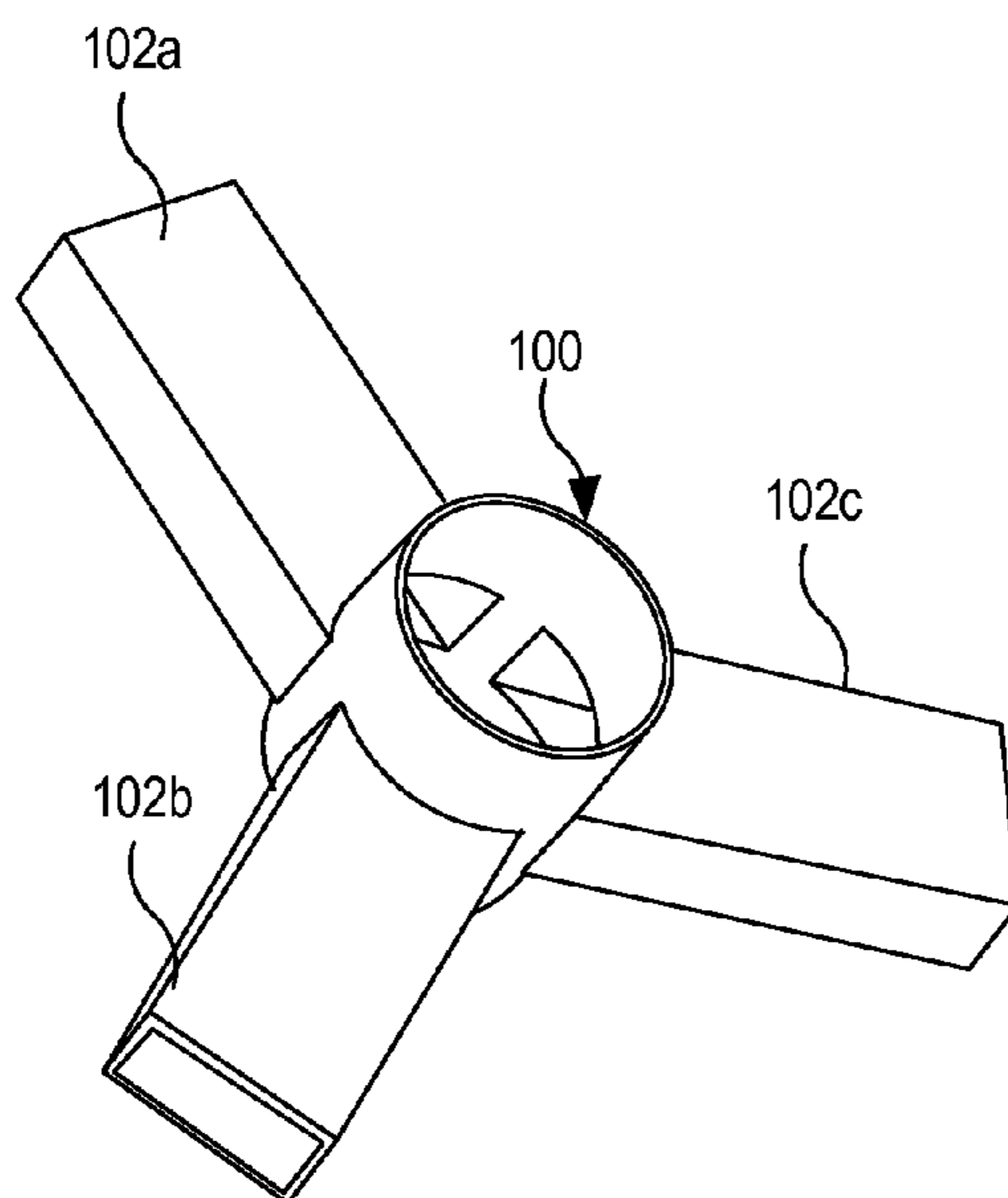


FIG. 4A

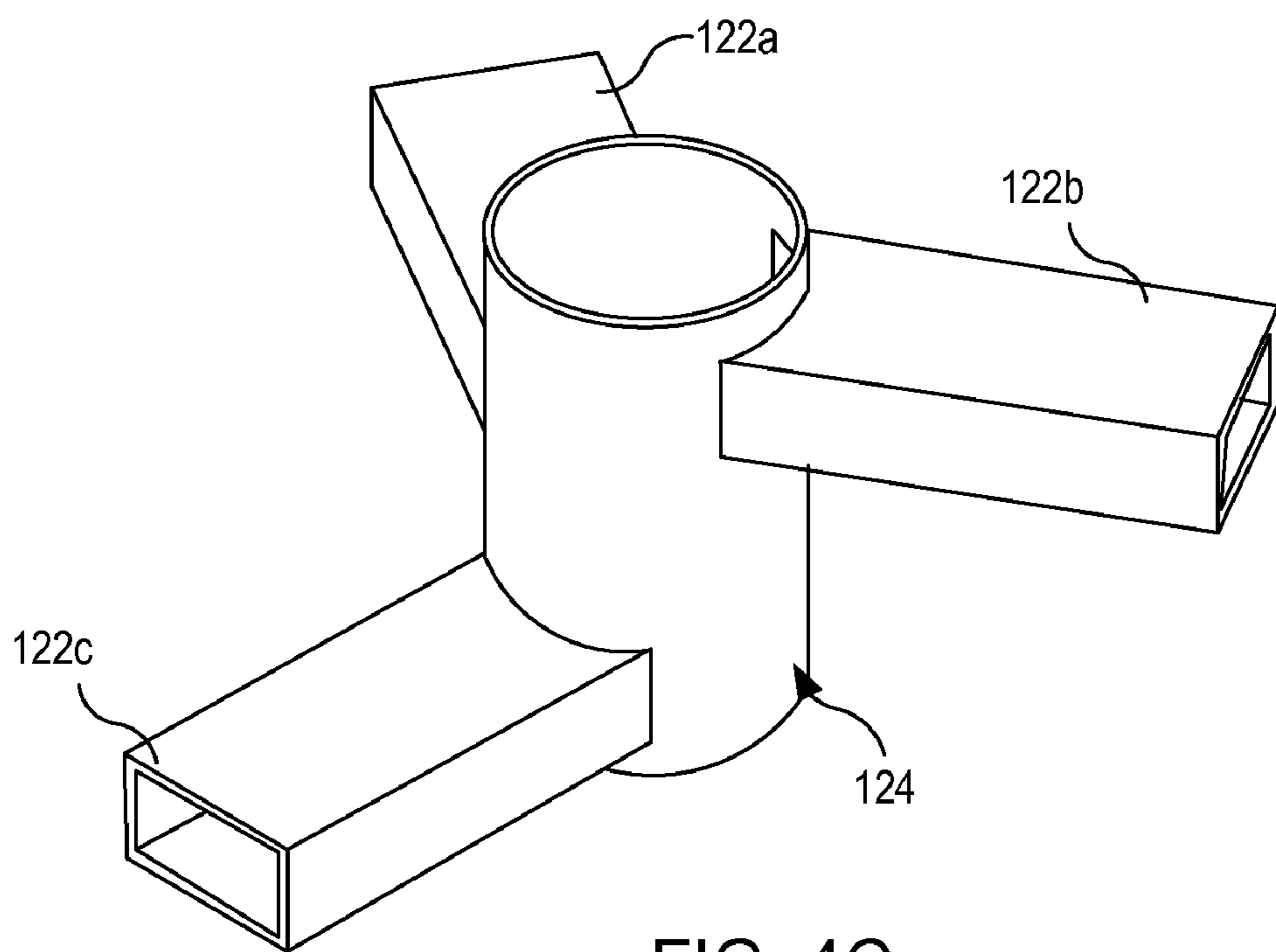
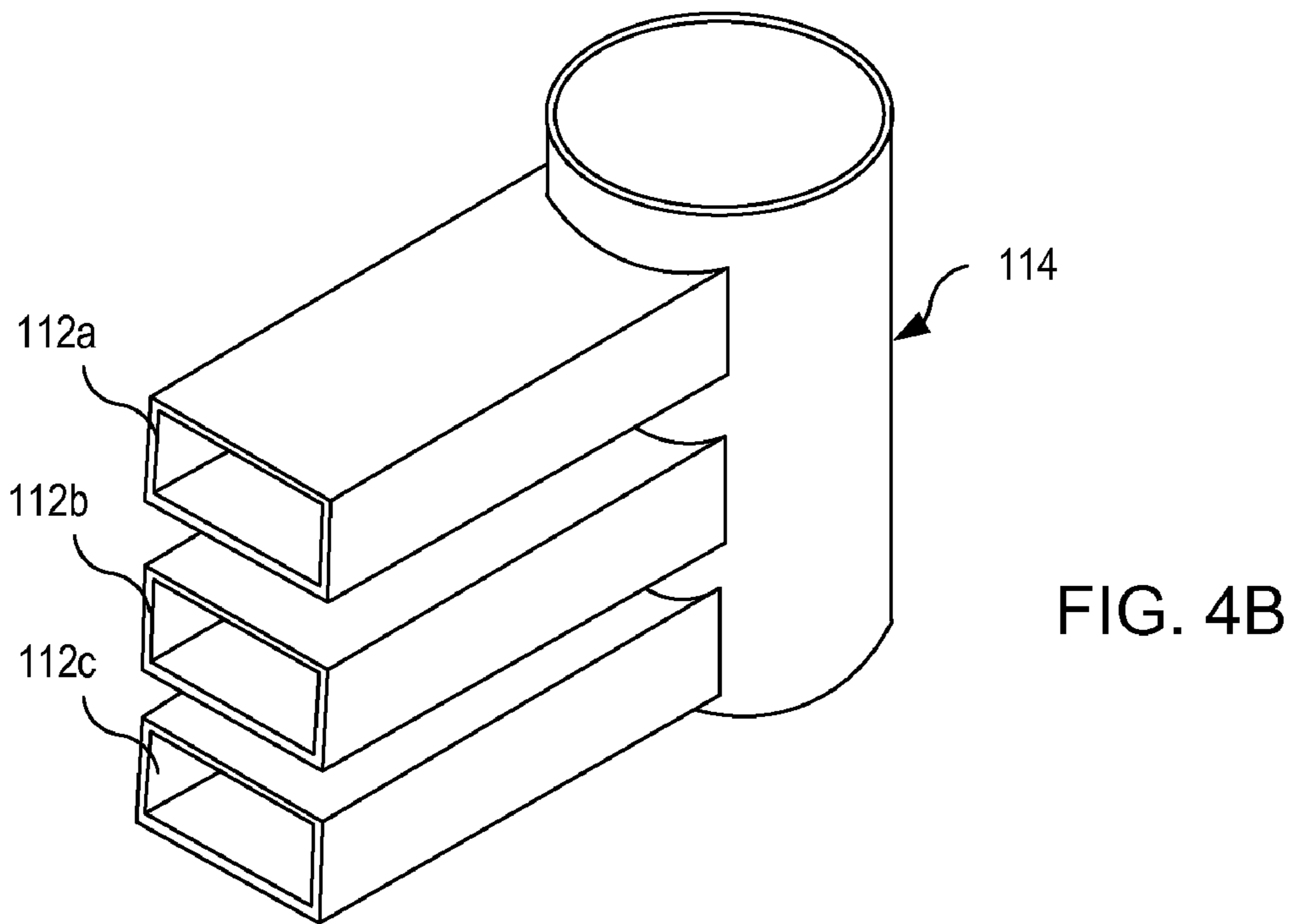


FIG. 4C

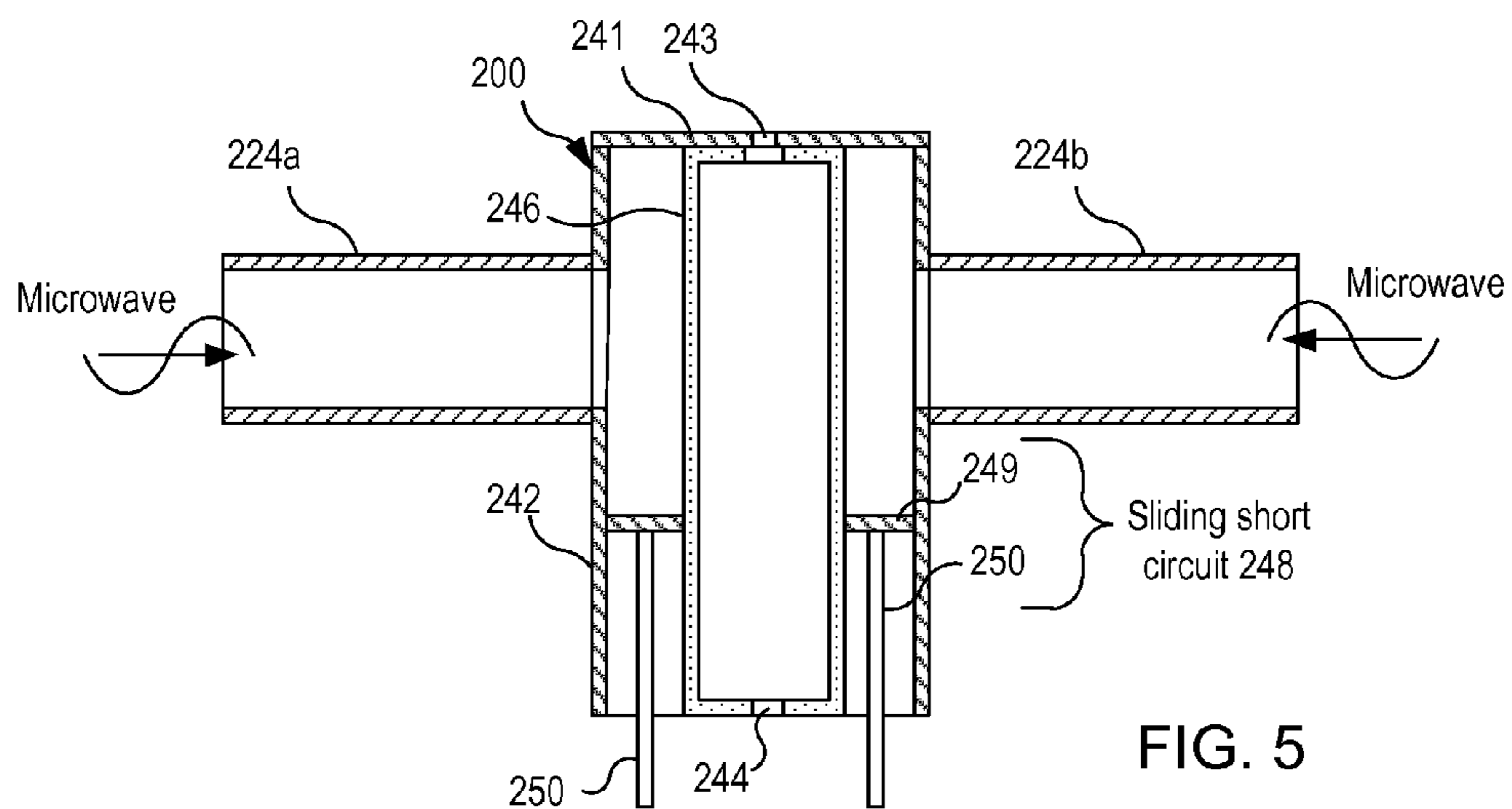


FIG. 5

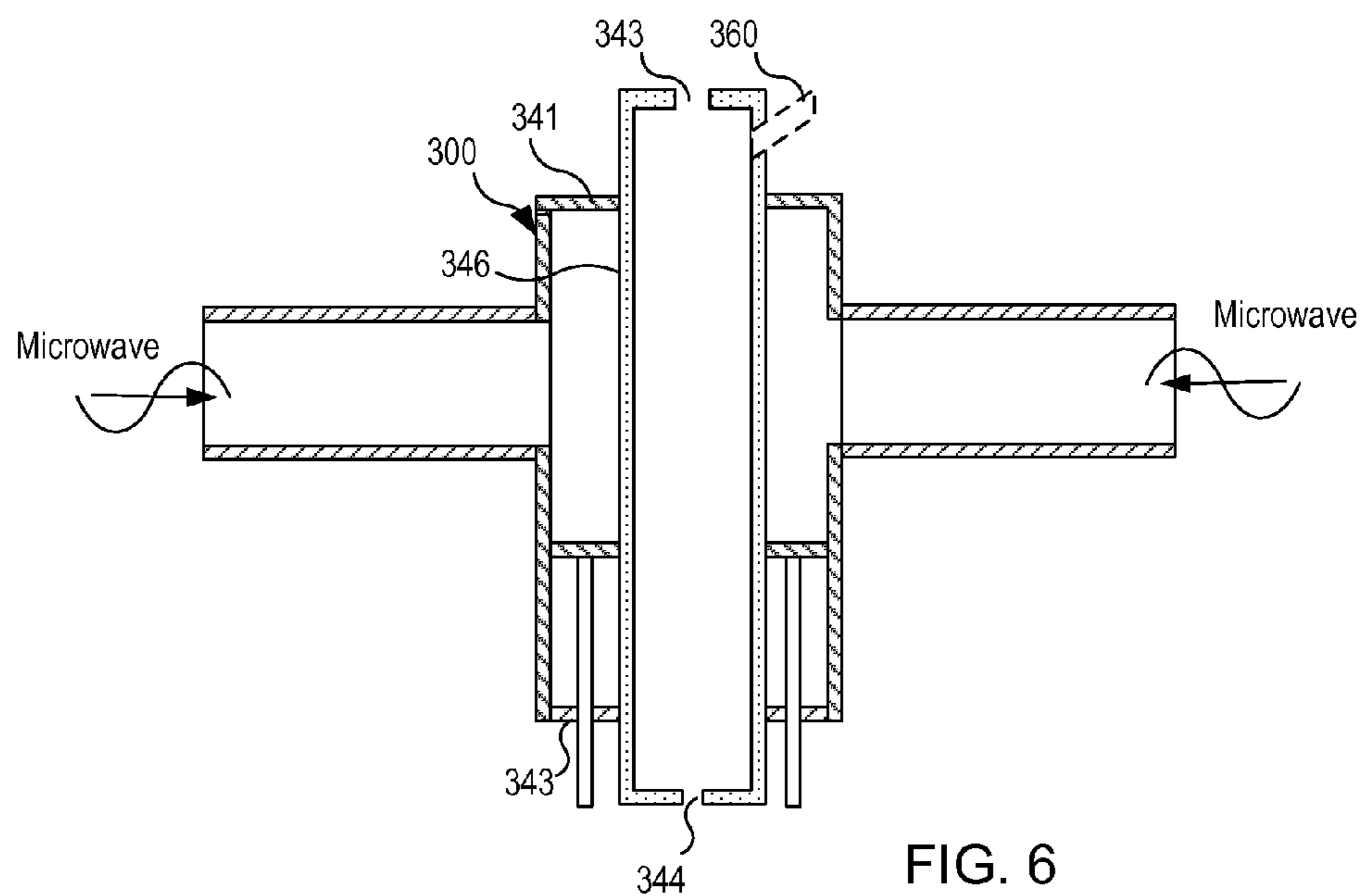


FIG. 6

MICROWAVE RESONANT CAVITY

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Applications No. 61/500,624, entitled "Microwave resonant cavity," filed on Jun. 24, 2011, which is incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to plasma generators, and more particularly to systems having a resonant cavity for generating a plasma therein.

[0003] In recent years, microwave technology has been applied to generate various types of plasma. In some applications, igniting and sustaining plasma requires a high power microwave generator. The existing microwave techniques are not suitable, or at best, highly inefficient due to one or more of the following drawbacks. First, the existing systems lack proper scalability, where scalability refers to the ability of a system to handle varying amounts of microwave input power in a graceful manner or its ability to be enlarged/reduced to accommodate the variation of the input power. For instance, the required microwave input power may vary depending on the types, pressure, and flow rates of the gas to be converted into plasma. Second, the economics of scale for a magnetron increases rapidly as the output power increases. For instance, the price of a 10 KW magnetron is much higher than the price of ten 1 KW magnetrons. Thus, there is a need for a plasma generating system that has high scalability and is cheaper than currently available plasma generating systems without compromising the output power.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] In one embodiment of the present disclosure, a microwave resonant cavity includes: a sidewall having a generally cylindrical hollow shape and formed of a material opaque to a microwave; a gas flow tube disposed inside the sidewall, formed of a material transparent to a microwave, and having a longitudinal axis substantially parallel to a longitudinal axis of the sidewall; a plurality of microwave waveguides, each said microwave waveguide having a longitudinal axis substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the sidewall and having a distal end secured to the sidewall and aligned with a corresponding one of a plurality of holes formed on the sidewall; a top plate formed of a material opaque to a microwave and secured to one end of the sidewall; and a sliding short circuit. The sliding circuit includes: a disk formed of a material opaque to a microwave and slidably mounted between the sidewall and the gas flow tube, the disk having an outer rim snugly fit into the sidewall and a hole into which the gas flow tube being snugly fit; and at least one bar disposed inside the sidewall and arranged parallel to the longitudinal axis of the sidewall. By moving the bar along the longitudinal direction of the sidewall, the space defined by the top plate, sidewall, and the disk is adjusted to form a microwave resonant cavity inside the gas flow tube.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of a plasma generating system in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0006] FIG. 2 is an exploded perspective view of the microwave resonant cavity in FIG. 1.

[0007] FIGS. 3A-3B are top views of alternative embodiments of the microwave resonant cavity in FIG. 2.

[0008] FIGS. 4A-4C are perspective views of alternative embodiments of the microwave resonant cavity in FIG. 1.

[0009] FIG. 5 is a schematic cross sectional view of an alternative embodiment of the microwave resonant cavity in FIG. 2.

[0010] FIG. 6 is a schematic cross sectional view of an alternative embodiment of the microwave resonant cavity in FIG. 2.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0011] FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of a system 10 for generating microwave plasma in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. As illustrated, the system 10 may include: a microwave resonant cavity 26; microwave supply units 11a-11c for providing microwaves to the microwave resonant cavity 26; and waveguides 24a-24c for transmitting microwaves from the microwave supply units 11a-11c to the microwave resonant cavity 26, where the microwave resonant cavity 26 receives a gas and/or gas mixture from a gas tank 28 or another source such as flue gas.

[0012] The microwave supply unit 11a provides microwaves to the microwave resonant cavity 26 and may include: a microwave generator 12a for generating microwaves; a power supply 13a for supplying power to the microwave generator 12a; and an isolator 15a having a dummy load 16a for dissipating reflected microwaves that propagate toward the microwave generator 12a and a circulator 18a for directing the reflected microwaves to the dummy load 16a.

[0013] In one embodiment, the microwave supply unit 11a further includes a coupler 20a for measuring fluxes of the microwaves; and a tuner 22a for reducing the microwaves reflected from the microwave resonant cavity 26. The components of the microwave supply unit 11a shown in FIG. 1 are well known and are listed herein for exemplary purposes only. Also, it is possible to replace the microwave supply unit 11a with a system having the capability to provide microwaves to the microwave resonant cavity 26 without deviating from the present invention. A phase shifter may be mounted between the isolator 15a and the coupler 20a.

[0014] The microwave supply units 11b and 11c are shown to have similar components as the microwave supply units 11a. However, it is noted that the microwave supply units 11b and 11c may have components different from those of the unit 11a, insofar as they can generate and deliver microwaves to the waveguides 24b and 24c, respectively.

[0015] FIG. 2 is an exploded perspective view of the microwave resonant cavity 26 in FIG. 1. As depicted, the microwave resonant cavity (shortly, cavity hereinafter) 26 includes a top plate 41 having an inlet port 51 for receiving gas 53 from the gas tank 28; a bottom plate 43 having an outlet port (or, outlet hole) 44 for discharging gas therethrough; and a sidewall 42 connected to the distal ends of the waveguides 24a-24c. The distal end of the waveguide 24a is secured to the sidewall 42 so that the microwave energy flowing through the proximal end 40a of the waveguide 24a enters into the sidewall 42. Likewise, the microwave energy flowing through the proximal ends 40b and 40c of the waveguides 24b and 24c enters the sidewall 42. The top plate 41, sidewall 42, and bottom plate 43 may be formed of any suitable material, such

as metal, that is opaque to the microwave. The cavity **26** also includes a gas flow tube **46** that is transparent to the microwave and preferably formed of quartz.

[0016] The top and bottom ends of the gas flow tube **46** are sealed to the top plate **41** and the bottom plates **43** of the cavity **26**, respectively, so that the gas entered into the tube **46** through the inlet port **51** is excited into plasma and exits through the outlet port **44** of the bottom plate **43**. The microwave energy received through the waveguides **24a-24c** excites the gas into plasma when the gas flows through the gas flow tube **46**.

[0017] The cavity **26** may also include a sliding short **48** having a disk **49** and bars **50**. The disk **49** is dimensioned to slidably fit into the space between the inner surface of the sidewall **42** and the outer surface of the gas flow tube **46**, and formed of material opaque to the microwave, preferably metal. During operation, the microwaves discharged from the distal ends of the waveguides **24a-24c** form an interference pattern in the gas flow tube **46**. As the user slides the bars **50** up and down along the longitudinal direction **56** of the cavity **26**, the distance between the disk **49** and the top plate **41** is changed so that the interference generates a peak amplitude region in the gas flow tube **46**, i.e., the impedance matching may be obtained by adjusting the location of the disk **49** relative to the top plate **41**. It is noted that the bars may be attached to a suitable tuning mechanism, such as a micrometer fixed to the outer surface of the bottom plate **43** so that the user can tune the impedance at high precision. Optionally, a motor attached to the bars **50** may be used for an automated control.

[0018] It is noted that the microwaves generated by the three microwave supply units **11a-11c** are combined in the gas flow tube **46**. As such, if the microwave supply units are identical, the maximum intensity of microwave field within the gas flow tube **46** would be the same as the intensity generated by one microwave supply unit that has the output power three times as large as the microwave supply unit **11a**. This feature provides two advantages; scalability and cost reduction in manufacturing a microwave supply unit. The operator of the system **10** may selectively turn on the microwave supply units **11a-11c** so that the intensity of the microwave field in the gas flow tube **46** may be varied. For instance, the microwave intensity for igniting the plasma in the gas flow tube **46** may vary depending on the types of gas **53**. The operator may optimize the microwave intensity in the gas flow tube **46** by selectively turning on the microwave supply units **11a-11c**. It is noted that the system **10** has only three microwave supply unit. However, it should be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art that the system may include any other suitable number of microwave supply units.

[0019] The price of the microwave generator **12a**, especially the magnetron, increases rapidly as its power output increases. For instance, the price of ten magnetrons of the commercially available microwave oven is considerably lower than that of one high power magnetron which has an output power ten times that of the microwave oven. Thus, the multiple microwave generators feature of the system **10** allows the designer to build a low cost microwave generating system without compromising the total maximum power.

[0020] FIGS. 3A-3C are top views of alternative embodiments **60**, **70**, and **80** of the cavity sidewall **42** in FIG. 2. As depicted, the sidewall may have a suitable polygonal shape, such as rectangle, hexagon, or octagon, where a waveguide may be fixed to each side of the polygon. The phases of the

microwaves exiting from two adjacent waveguides may be differentiated so that the interference between the microwaves generates the maximum intensity in the gas flow tubes **62**, **72**, and **82**. It is noted that gas flow tubes **62**, **72**, and **82** may have other suitable cross sectional geometry, such as rectangle, hexagon, or octagon. It is further noted that the angle θ (shown in FIG. 1) between two adjacent waveguides may be adjusted to optimize the interference between two microwaves.

[0021] FIG. 4A is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment **100** of the cavity **26** in FIG. 1. For brevity, only the sidewall and waveguides are shown in FIG. 4A. As depicted, the cavity **100** is similar to the cavity **26** in FIG. 1, with the difference that the waveguides **102a-102c** are e-plane waveguides.

[0022] FIGS. 4B and 4C are perspective views of alternative embodiments **114** and **124** of the cavity **26** in FIG. 1. As depicted, the cavities **114** and **124** are similar to the cavity **26**, with the differences that the locations of the waveguides **112a-112c** and **122a-122c** relative to the sidewalls of the cavities **114** and **124** are different. The locations of the waveguides are determined to optimize the interference pattern in the gas flow tubes (not shown in FIGS. 4B-4C for brevity) disposed within the cavities **114** and **124**.

[0023] FIG. 5 is a schematic cross sectional view of an alternative embodiment **200** of the microwave resonant cavity **26** in FIG. 2. As depicted, the cavity **200** includes a top plate **241** having an inlet hole **243** for receiving gas from the gas tank **28** (not shown in FIG. 5); a sidewall **242** connected to the distal ends of the waveguides **224a-224b**; a gas flow tube **246** having a bottom hole **244** for discharging gas therethrough; and sliding short circuit **248** having a disk **249** and bars **250**. Since the materials and functions of the components of the cavity **200** are similar to those of their counterparts of the cavity **26**, the detailed description is not repeated. The difference between the cavities **26** and **200** is that the cavity **200** does not have a bottom plate while the cavity **26** includes the bottom plate **43**.

[0024] FIG. 6 is a schematic cross sectional view of an alternative embodiment **300** of the cavity **26** in FIG. 2. As depicted, the cavity **300** is similar to the cavity **26**, with the difference that the top and bottom portions of the gas flow tube **346** protrude outside the top plate **341** and the bottom plate **343**, respectively. The gas flow tube **346** includes a top hole **343** and a bottom hole **344** for receiving and discharging the gas therethrough. Alternatively, the gas flow tube **360** may have a gas inlet port **360** in place of the hole **343**, where the inlet port **360** is angled with respect to the longitudinal axis of the gas flow tube **346** to impart swirling motion to the injected gas.

[0025] It should be understood, of course, that the foregoing relates to exemplary embodiments of the invention and that modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A microwave resonant cavity, comprising:
 - a sidewall having a generally cylindrical hollow shape and formed of a material opaque to a microwave;
 - a gas flow tube disposed inside the sidewall, formed of a material transparent to a microwave, and having a longitudinal axis substantially parallel to a longitudinal axis of the sidewall;

a plurality of microwave waveguides, each said microwave waveguide having a longitudinal axis substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the sidewall and having a distal end secured to the sidewall and aligned with a corresponding one of a plurality of holes formed on the sidewall;

a top plate formed of a material opaque to a microwave and secured to one end of the sidewall; and

a sliding short circuit including:

- a disk formed of a material opaque to a microwave and slidably mounted between the sidewall and the gas flow tube, the disk having an outer rim snugly fit into the sidewall and a hole into which the gas flow tube being snugly fit; and
- at least one bar disposed inside the sidewall and arranged parallel to the longitudinal axis of the sidewall,

whereby a space defined by the top plate, sidewall, and the disk is adjusted to form a microwave resonant cavity inside the gas flow tube by moving the bar along the longitudinal direction of the sidewall.

2. A microwave resonant cavity as recited in claim 1, wherein one end of the gas flow tube abuts the top plate and the top plate has a hole for receiving a gas that flows through the gas flow tube.

3. A microwave resonant cavity as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

- a bottom plate secured to an other end of the sidewall and having at least one hole through which the bar passes through.

4. A microwave resonant cavity as recited in claim 3, wherein the bottom plate has a gas outlet.

5. A microwave resonant cavity as recited in claim 1, wherein the gas flow tube passes through the top plate.

6. A microwave resonant cavity as recited in claim 1, wherein the distal ends of the plurality of microwave waveguides are disposed at a same height along the longitudinal axis of the sidewall.

7. A microwave resonant cavity as recited in claim 1, wherein the distal ends of the plurality of microwave waveguides are disposed at different heights along the longitudinal axis of the sidewall.

8. A microwave resonant cavity as recited in claim 1, wherein a cross sectional shape of the sidewall is one selected from the group consisting of circle, rectangle, hexagon, and octagon.

9. A microwave resonant cavity as recited in claim 1, wherein the longitudinal axes of the plurality of microwave waveguides are disposed on a same plane parallel to the longitudinal axis of the sidewall.

10. A microwave resonant cavity as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

- a microwave supply unit coupled to a proximal end of each said microwave waveguide.

11. A microwave resonant cavity as recited in claim 10, wherein the microwave supply unit includes:

- a microwave generator for generating microwaves; and
- an isolator having a dummy load for dissipating microwaves that propagate toward the microwave generator and a circulator directing the microwaves to the dummy load.

12. A microwave resonant cavity as recited in claim 11, wherein the microwave supply unit further includes:

- a coupler for measuring a flux of microwaves; and
- a tuner for reducing reflection of microwaves.

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