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Conrad

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(54) **SURFACE CLEANING APPARATUS**

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Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 14/003,160, filed as application No. PCT/CA2012/000194 on Mar. 5, 2012, now Pat. No. 9,962,052, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 13/040,695, filed on Mar. 4, 2011, now abandoned.

(51) **Int. Cl.**

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A47L 7/00	(2006.01)
A47L 5/36	(2006.01)
A47L 5/24	(2006.01)
A47L 5/32	(2006.01)

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

CPC ***A47L 9/1608*** (2013.01); ***A47L 5/24*** (2013.01); ***A47L 5/32*** (2013.01); ***A47L 5/362*** (2013.01); ***A47L 7/0023*** (2013.01); ***A47L 7/0038*** (2013.01); ***A47L 9/1666*** (2013.01); ***A47L 9/1683*** (2013.01); ***A47L 9/1691*** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

None

See application file for complete search history.

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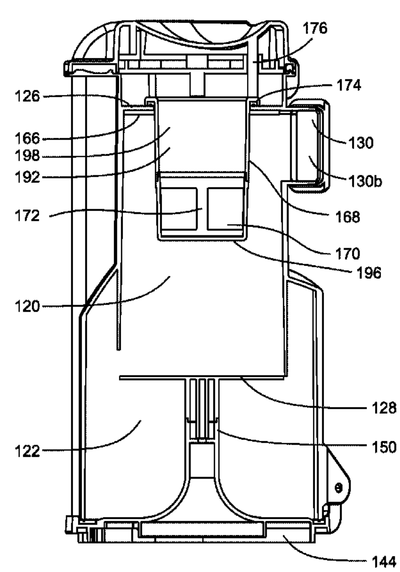
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A surface cleaning apparatus has a dirt collection chamber that is external to a cyclone chamber. The dirt collection chamber has a sidewall having a first sidewall portion that extends outwardly away from the cyclone chamber sidewall and a second sidewall portion that extends from the first sidewall portion towards a distal end of the dirt collection chamber. The cyclone chamber has a dirt outlet that faces the cyclone chamber sidewall.

20 Claims, 14 Drawing Sheets



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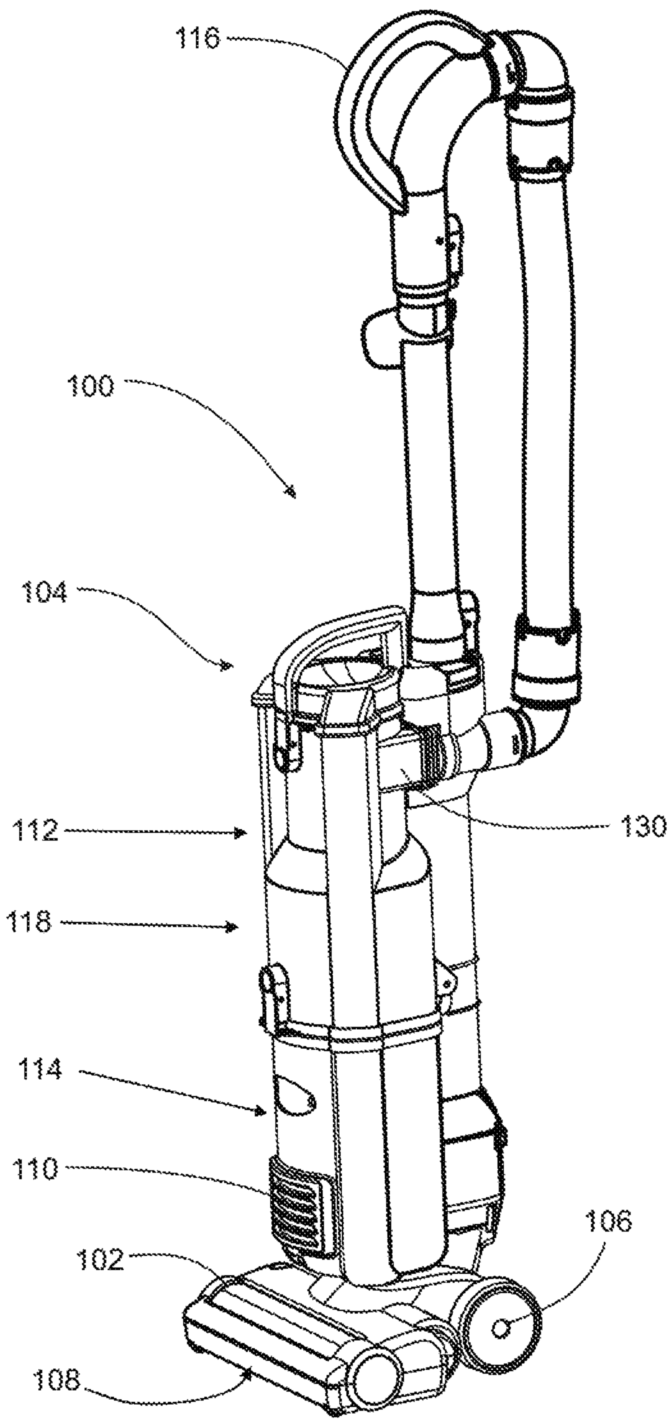

FIG. 1

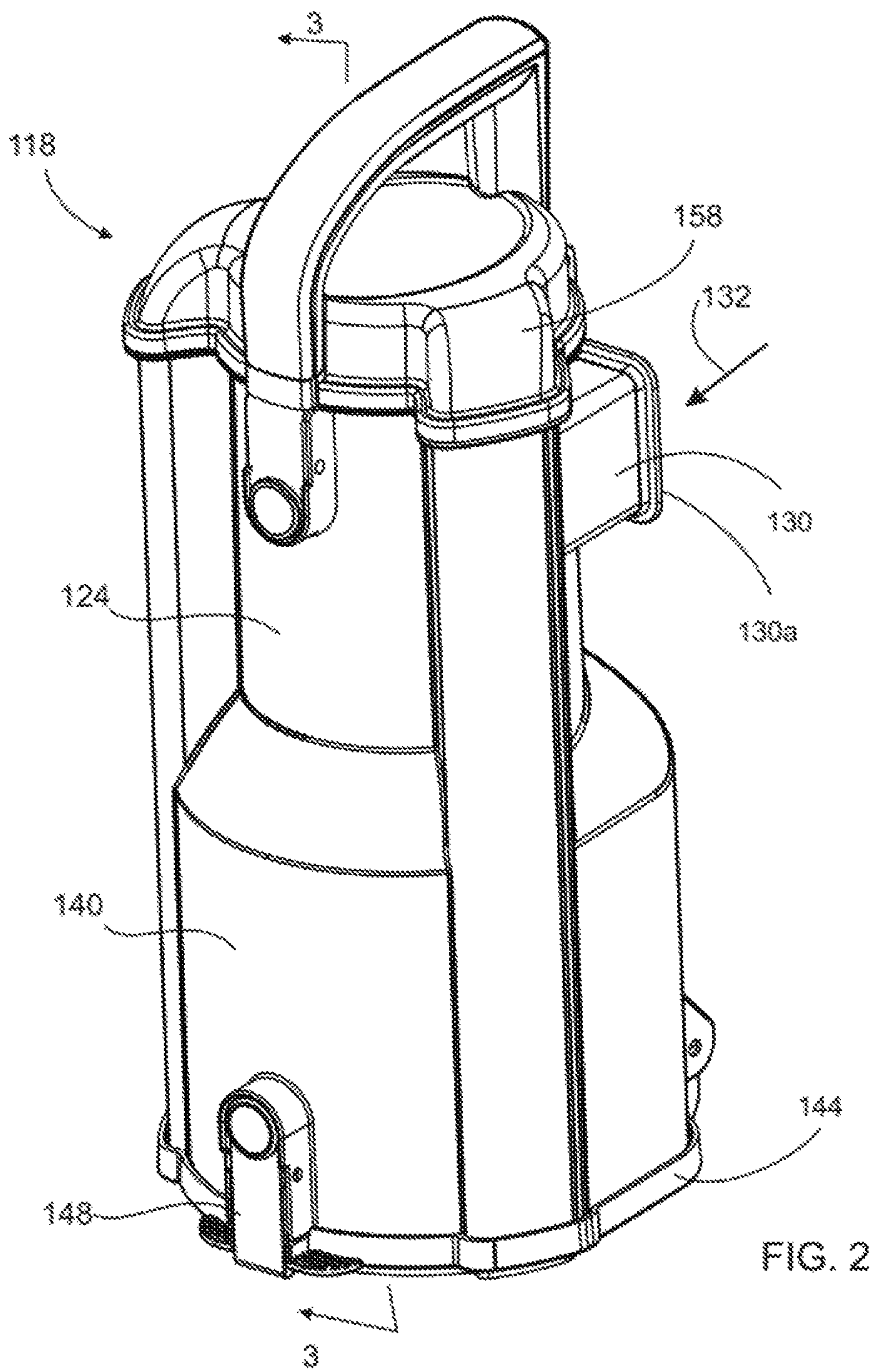

FIG. 2

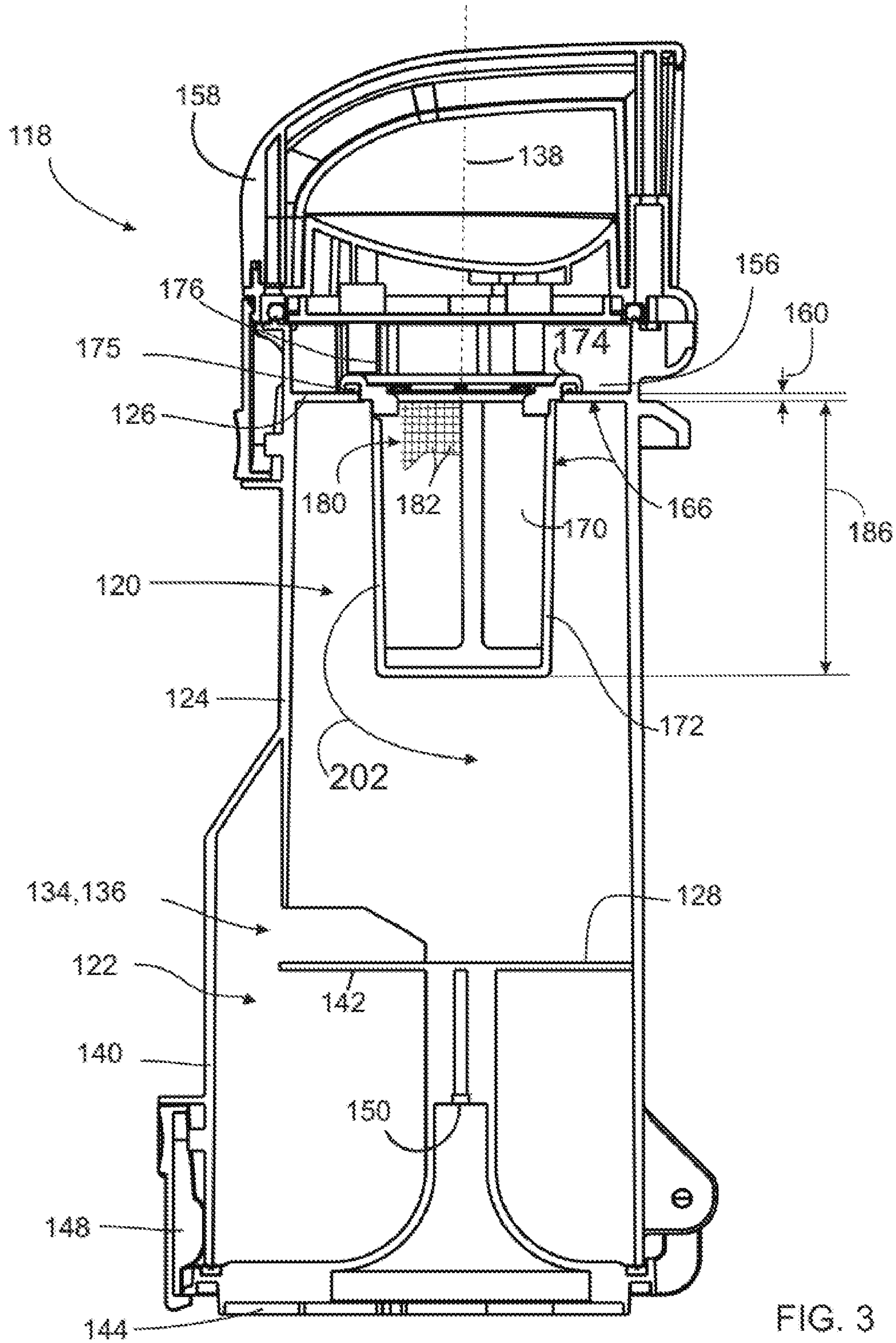

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FIG. 3

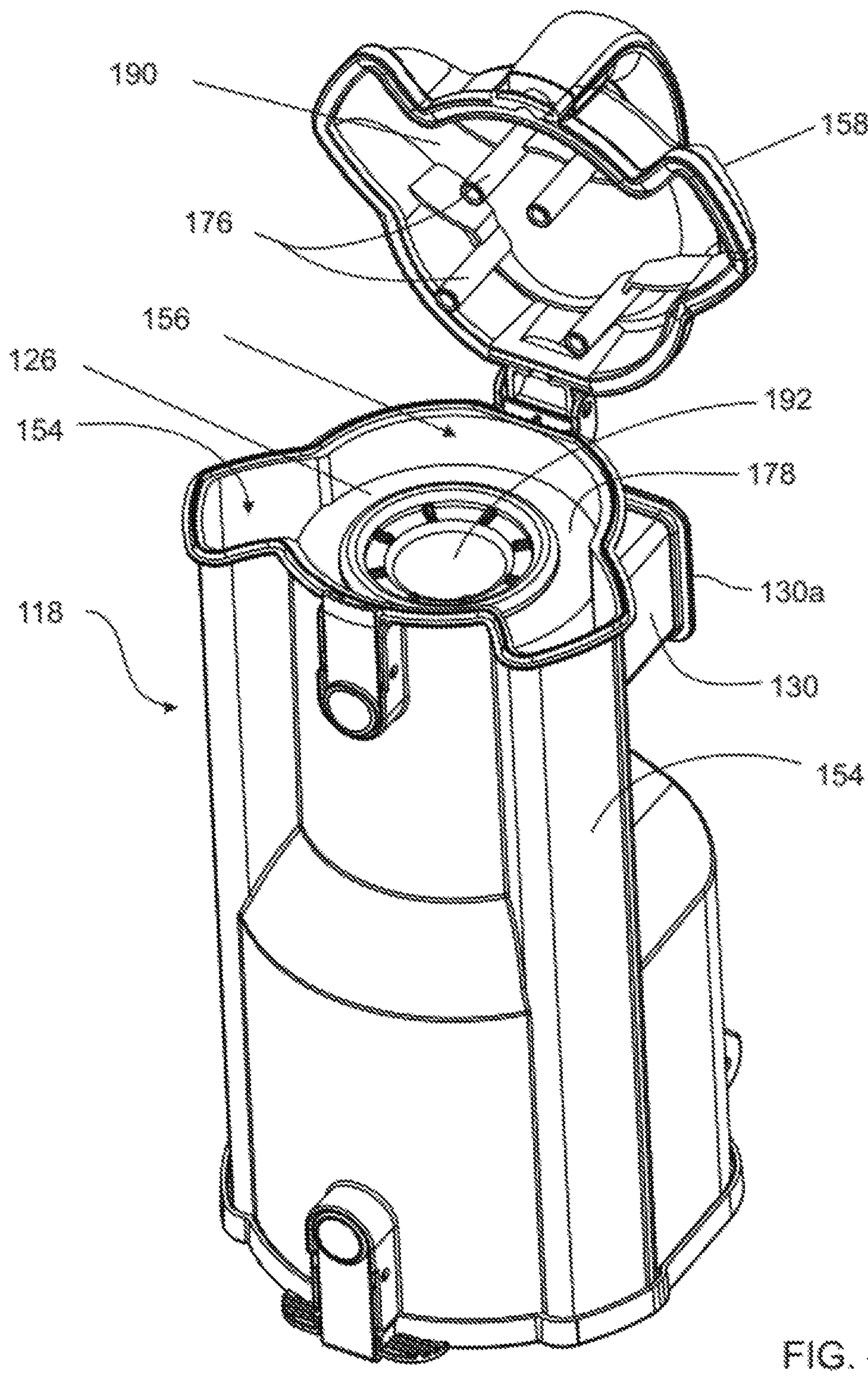

FIG. 4

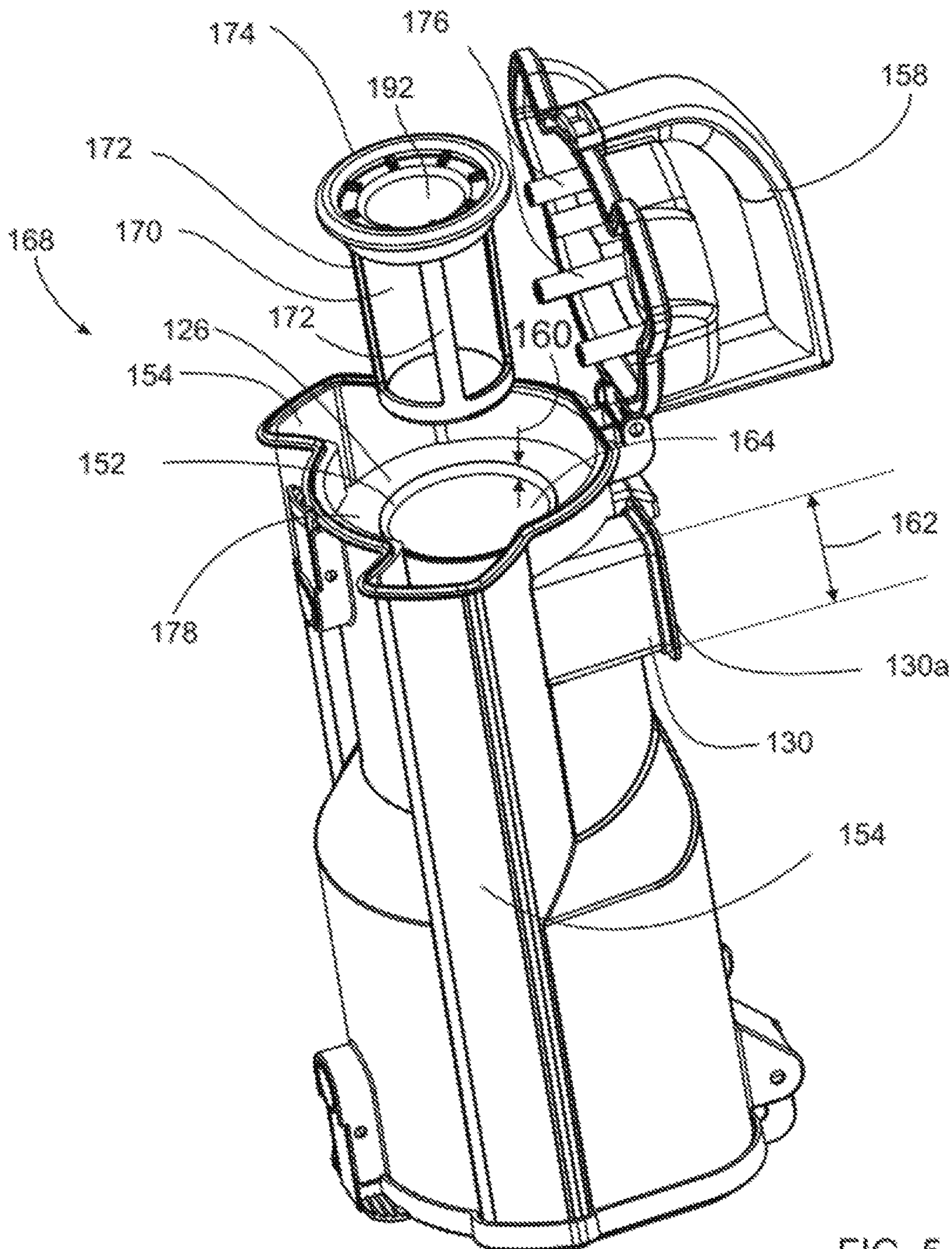
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FIG. 5

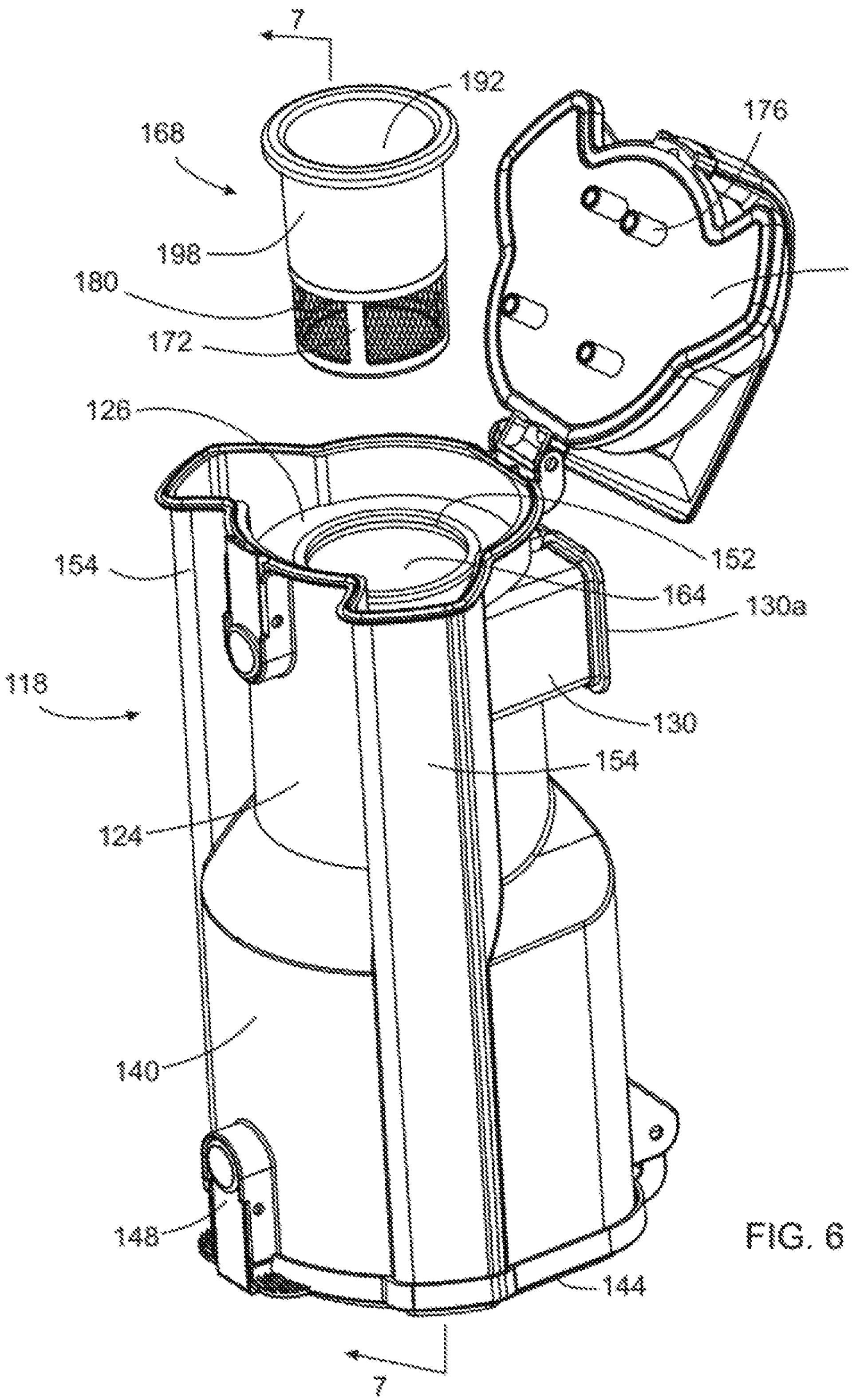
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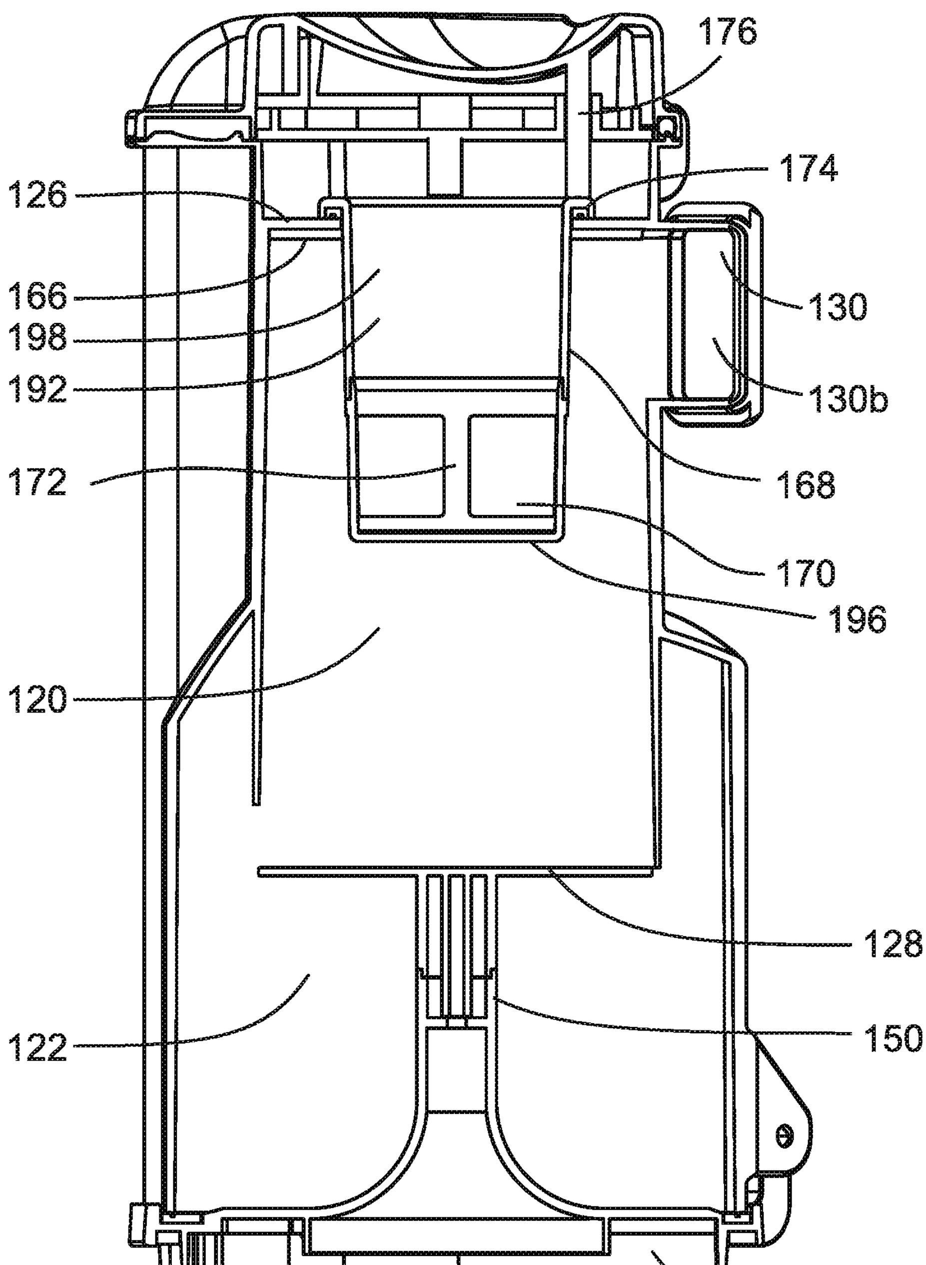
FIG. 6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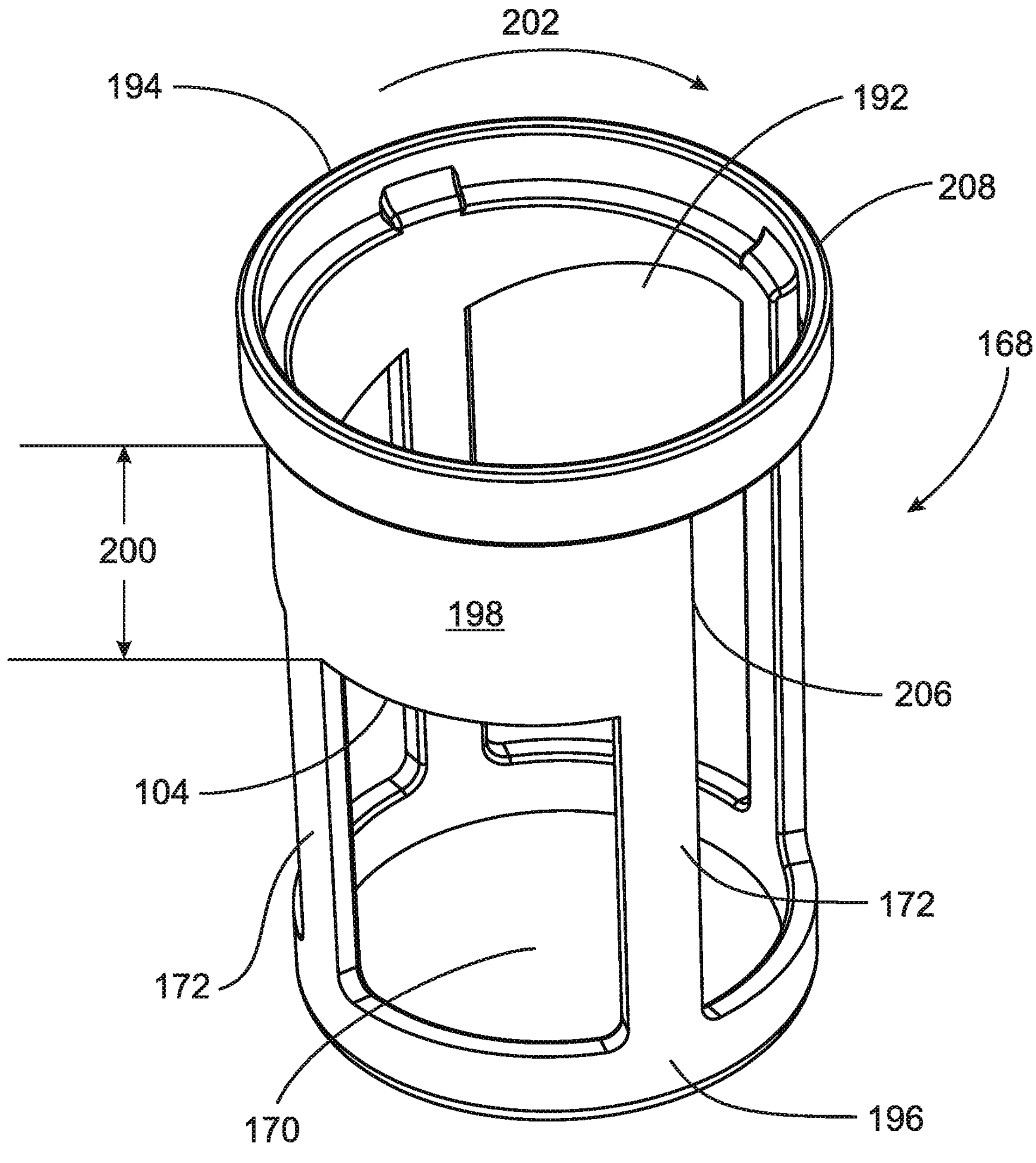

FIG. 8

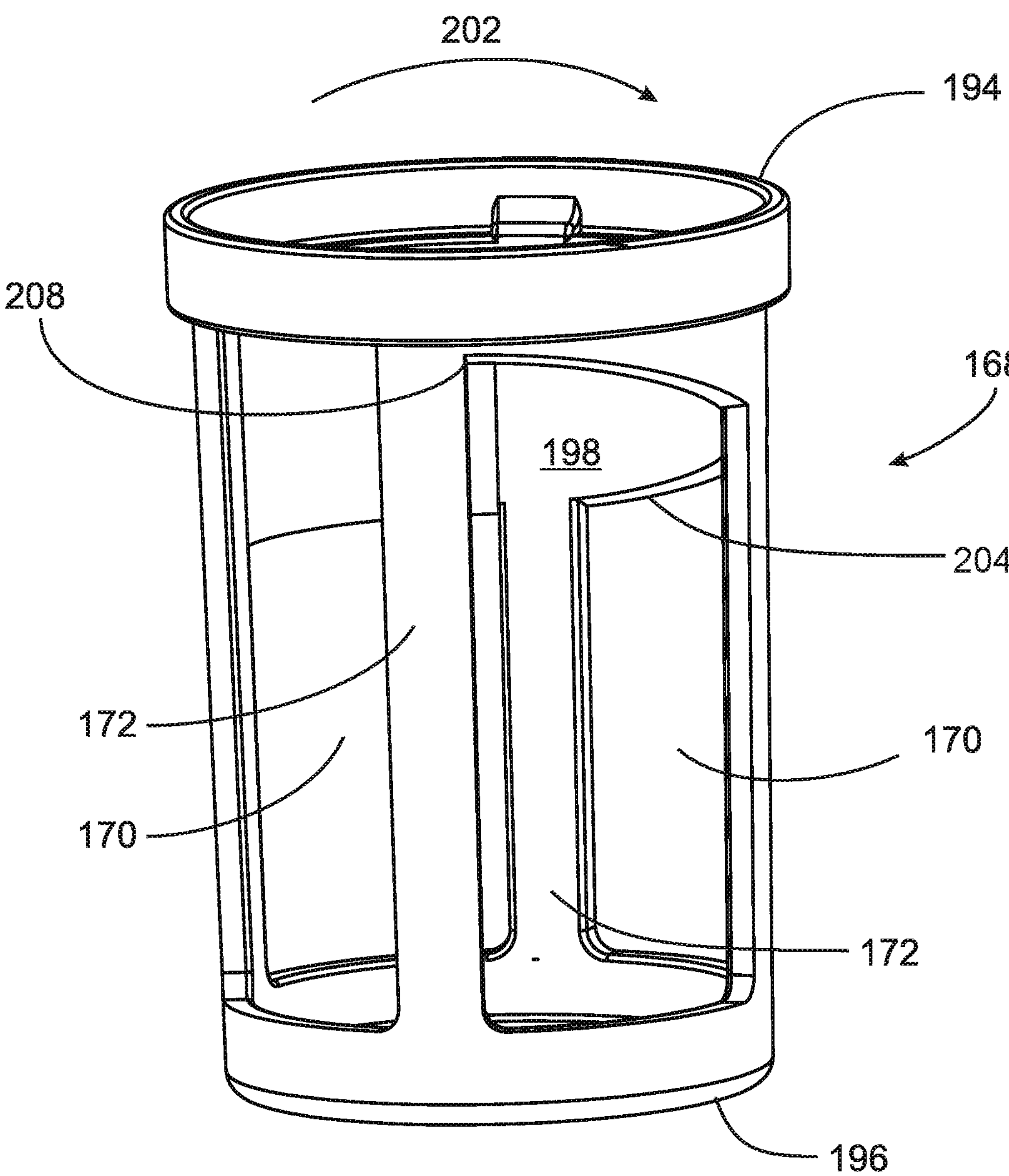

FIG. 9

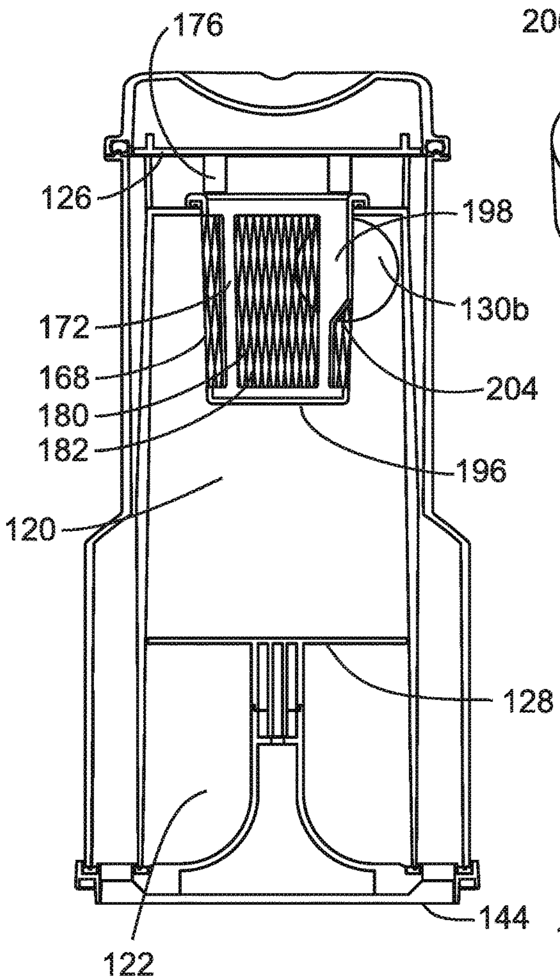
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FIG. 11

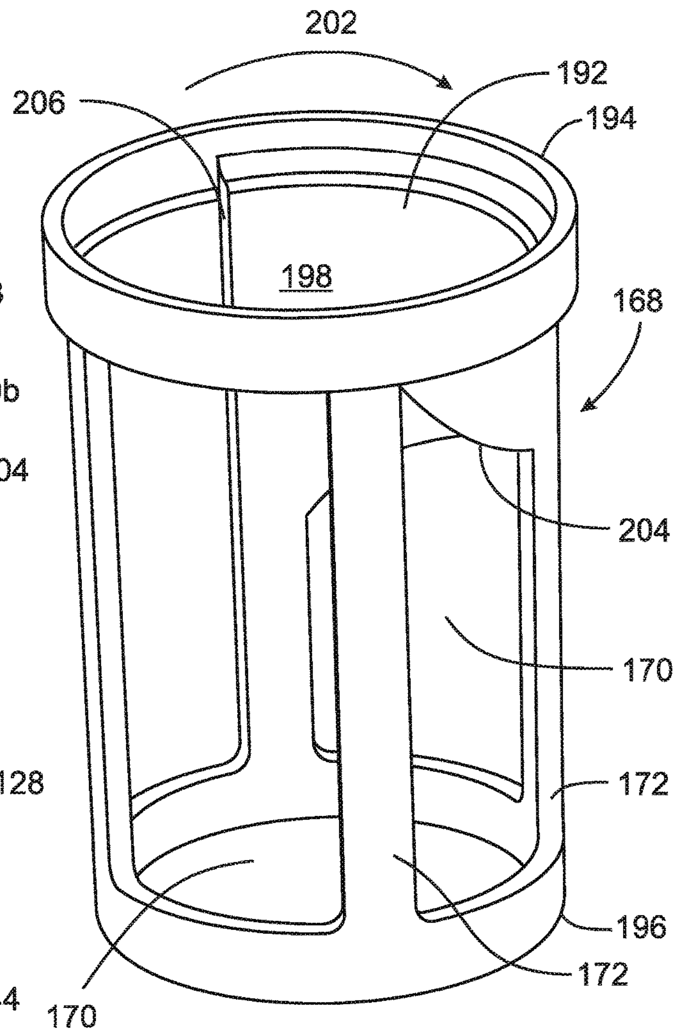
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FIG. 10

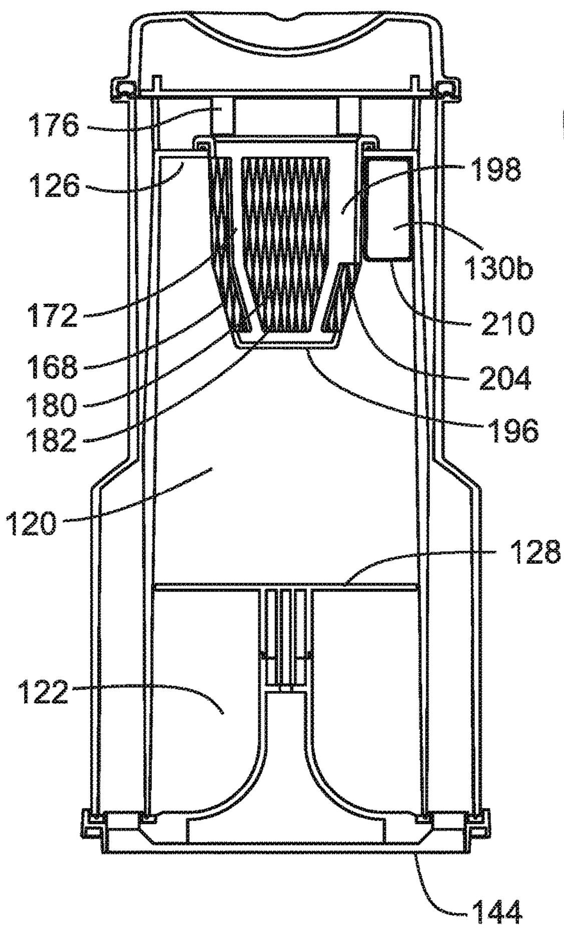
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FIG. 13

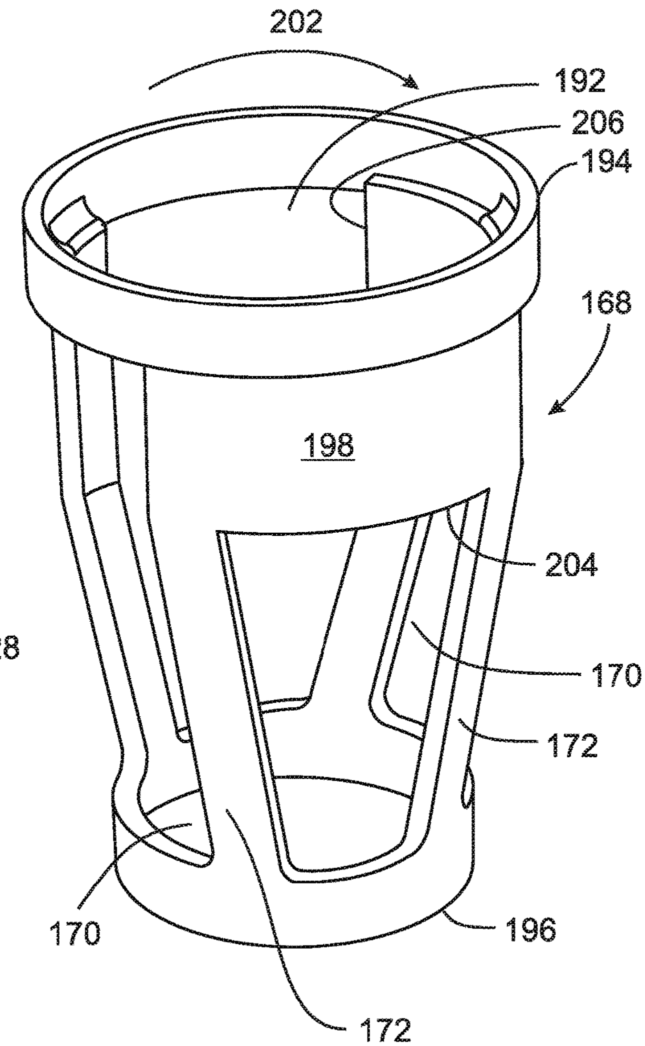
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FIG. 12

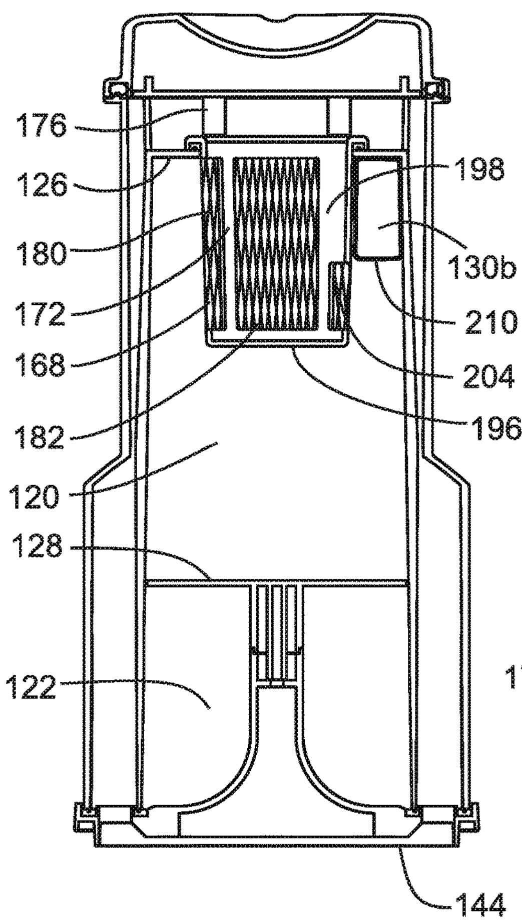
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FIG. 15

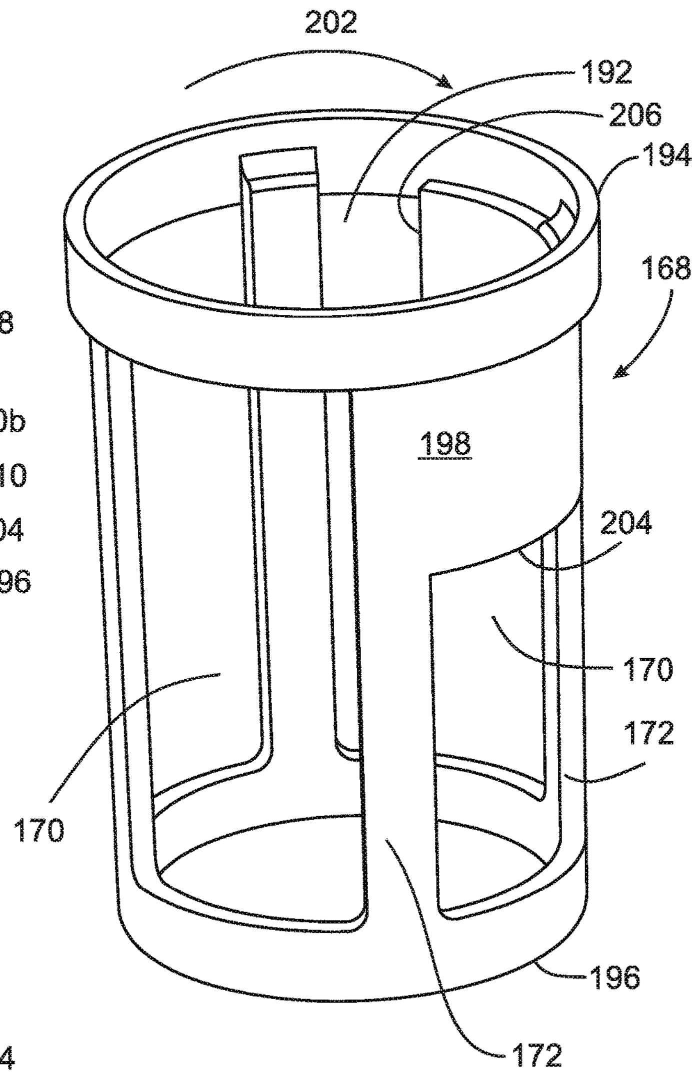
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FIG. 14

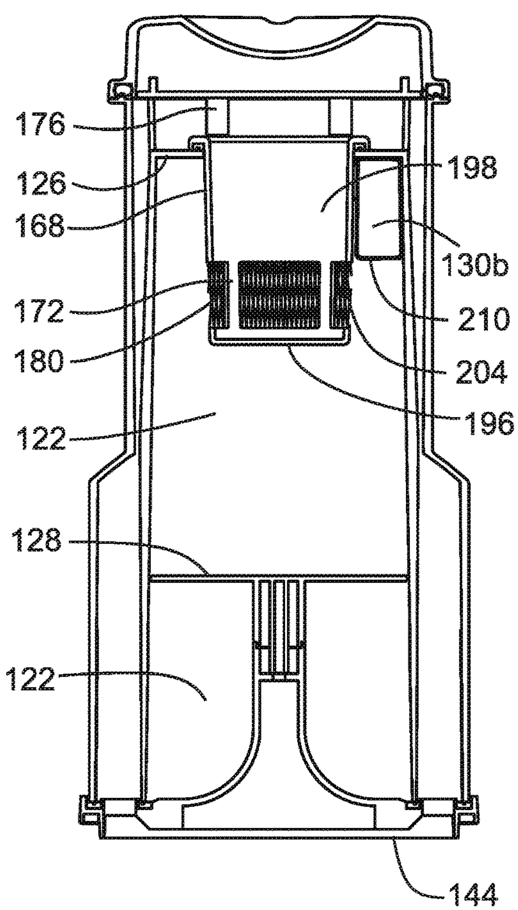
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FIG. 17

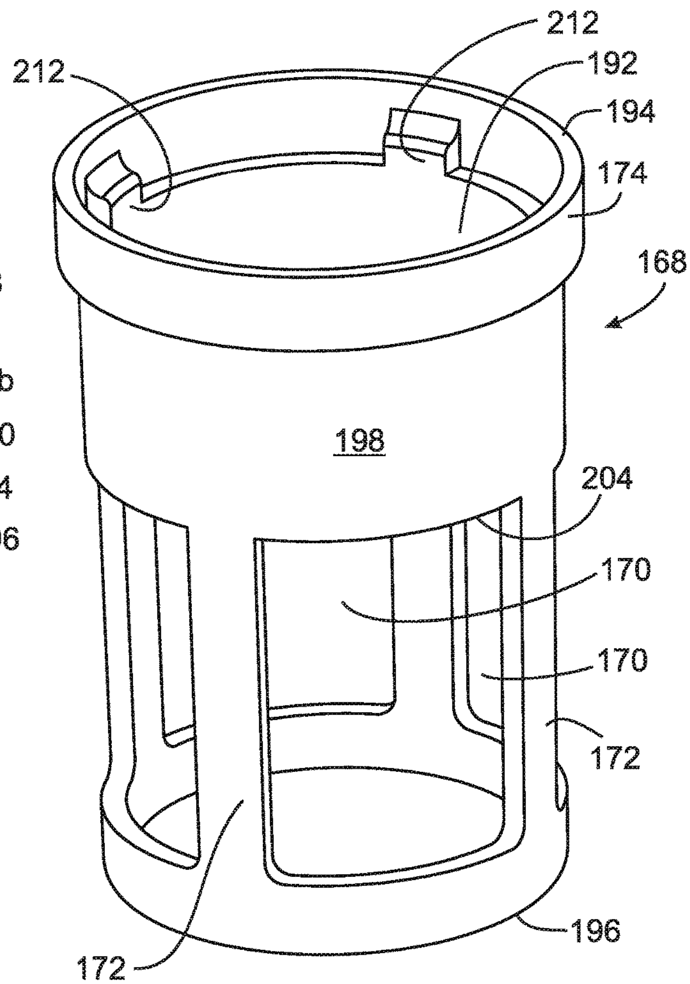
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FIG. 16

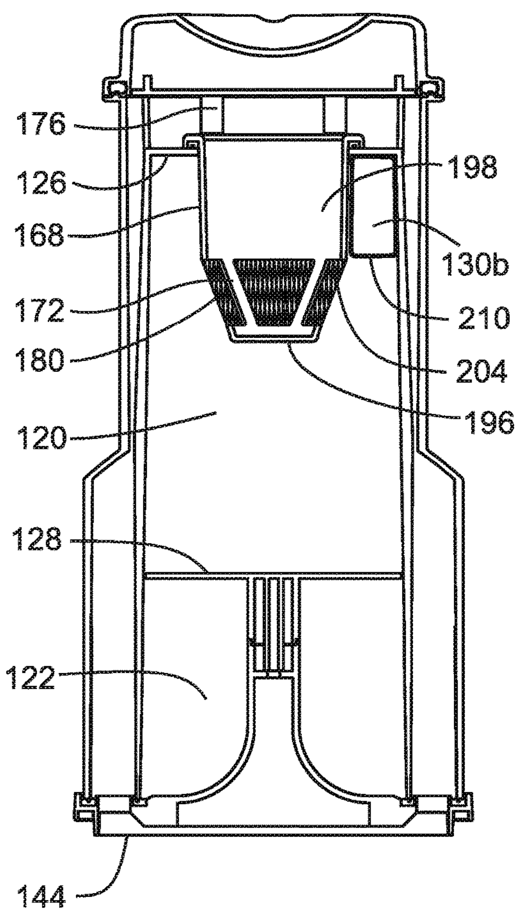

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FIG. 19

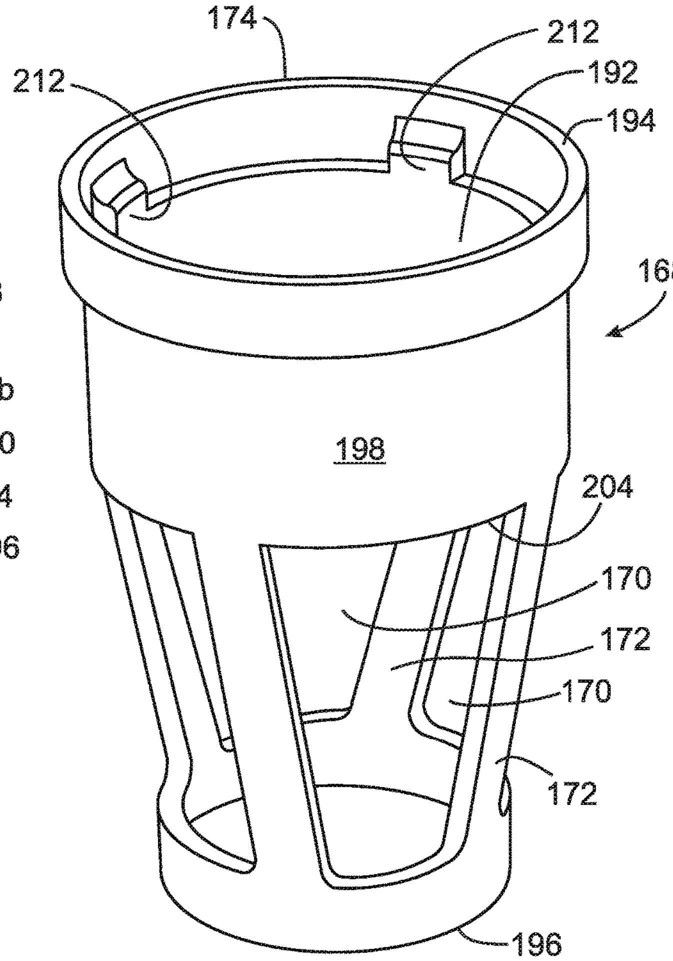

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FIG. 18

SURFACE CLEANING APPARATUS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/003,160 which was filed on Nov. 11, 2013, which itself claims benefit of 35 U.S.C. 371 based on co-pending international application No. PCT/CA2012/000194, filed Mar. 5, 2012, which itself is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/040,695, filed on Mar. 4, 2011, the entirety of which is incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD

The disclosure relates to surface cleaning apparatuses, such as vacuum cleaners having a suction motor that may produce a reduced air flow, such as a battery operated vacuum cleaner.

INTRODUCTION

Various constructions for surface cleaning apparatuses, such as vacuum cleaners, are known. Currently, many surface cleaning apparatuses are constructed using at least one cyclonic cleaning stage. Air is drawn into the vacuum cleaners through a dirty air inlet and conveyed to a cyclone inlet. The rotation of the air in the cyclone results in some of the particulate matter in the airflow stream being disentrained from the airflow stream. This material is then collected in a dirt bin collection chamber, which may be at the bottom of the cyclone or in a direct collection chamber exterior to the cyclone chamber (see for example WO2009/026709 and U.S. Pat. No. 5,078,761). One or more additional cyclonic cleaning stages and/or filters may be positioned downstream from the cyclone. Cyclonic vacuum cleaners include a vortex finder that extends into the interior of the cyclone chamber and defines an air exit passage for the cyclone chamber. In addition, a screen is provided around the opening of the vortex finder to prevent hair and larger dirt particles from exiting the vacuum cleaner.

SUMMARY

The following summary is provided to introduce the reader to the more detailed discussion to follow. The summary is not intended to limit or define the claims.

One of the heaviest individual components of a vacuum cleaner may be the suction motor. The suction motor is an assembly that comprises an impeller or fan and a motor to drive the impeller or fan. Typically, vacuum cleaners use a clean air motor. Accordingly, the dirty air that is drawn into the vacuum cleaner is treated (e.g., filtered, subjected to cyclonic air separation) prior to the air passing by the suction motor. The suction motor must produce sufficient suction to draw air through the air flow passage through the vacuum cleaner, including through the air treatment members.

In order to produce a lighter vacuum cleaner, a smaller suction motor may be used. However, smaller motors typically produce less suction. An important factor in the cleaning efficiency of a vacuum cleaner is the velocity of the air flow at the dirty air inlet. The greater the velocity, the greater the amount of dirt and other particulate matter that may be entrained in an air stream and drawn into the vacuum cleaner. For example, a dirty air inlet in a floor cleaning head may have a length (in the direction transverse to the forward direction of motion) of from e.g. 7 to 12 inches and preferably from 9 to 11 inches and a width (in the direction of forward motion) of from e.g., 0.5 to 4 inches and preferably 1 to 3 inches. If the size of the dirty air inlet is maintained constant and no other changes are made to the air flow path through the vacuum cleaner, then reducing the amount of suction produced by a suction motor will reduce the cleaning efficiency of a vacuum cleaner.

According to one broad aspect of this disclosure, a vacuum cleaner, or other surface cleaning apparatus, is provided wherein a screen is provided in the cyclone chamber but a vortex finder is not provided. The screen may be of any typical design that may be used to prevent hair and larger particulate matter from exiting the cyclone chamber. Accordingly, the screen may be a shroud (e.g., a molded plastic member having openings or perforations therein), or a mesh (e.g., metal or synthetic such as nylon) provided on a support frame.

It has been surprising determined that a vacuum cleaner which has an absence of a typical vortex finder may have improved performance despite the absence of the vortex finder, particularly in low air flow vacuum cleaners. It has been determined that a vortex finder produces back pressure. This back pressure provides a resistance to flow through the vacuum cleaner and, no other changes being made, reduces the velocity of the air flow at the dirty air inlet. At the same time, the absence of the vortex finder does not materially affect the efficiency of the cyclone chamber. Therefore, the cleaning performance of the surface cleaning apparatus may be improved.

According to another broad aspect of this disclosure, a vacuum cleaner, or other surface cleaning apparatus, is provided wherein a cyclone chamber is provided with a vortex finder that extends into the cyclone chamber less than the height of the cyclone air inlet. It has also been surprisingly determined that even by reducing the size of, (without making any other change) the cleaning performance of the surface cleaning apparatus may be improved.

The vacuum cleaner, or other surface cleaning apparatus is preferably an upright vacuum cleaner and the suction motor may have a power requirement of 200 Watts or less. The surface cleaning apparatus may be battery powered, or may be connectable to an external power source, or both. Preferably, the surface cleaning apparatus is battery operated.

While a battery pack having a large power capacity may be provided so as to provide a high level of current for an extended period of time, the weight of the battery pack may be excessive for use in a vacuum cleaner. However, if the weight of the battery pack is reduced, then the operating life between charges may be low or the air flow produced by the surface cleaning apparatus may result in poor cleaning performance. In such a case, reducing the size of, or eliminating the vortex finder may result in an improvement in cleaning performance.

Accordingly, the cyclone air outlet may comprise a passage that extends into the cyclone chamber less than the height of the cyclone inlet and may be an opening in an end wall of the cyclone chamber which is covered by a screen. In particular, the surface cleaning apparatus may be operable without having a traditional, non-permeable outlet conduit or vortex finder extending into the cyclone chamber. In this configuration the screen may provide the function of a traditional vortex finder under certain air flow conditions.

In one embodiment in accordance with one broad aspect, a battery operated surface cleaning apparatus comprises an air flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet and includes a suction motor. A cyclone chamber may be provided in the air flow path. The cyclone chamber may comprise a cyclone air inlet having a height, a cyclone air outlet and a screen surrounding the cyclone air outlet. The cyclone air outlet may comprise a passage that extends into the cyclone chamber less than the height of the cyclone inlet. The surface cleaning apparatus may also include at least one battery operably connected to the suction motor.

In another embodiment in accordance with this broad aspect, a surface cleaning apparatus may also comprise an air flow path extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet and includes a suction motor having a power requirement of 200 Watts or less. A cyclone chamber may be provided in the air flow path and may comprise a cyclone air inlet having a height, a cyclone air outlet and a screen surrounding the cyclone air outlet. The cyclone air outlet may comprise a passage that extends into the cyclone chamber less than the height of the cyclone inlet.

In one embodiment in accordance with another broad aspect, a surface cleaning apparatus comprises an air flow passage extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a cyclone chamber positioned in the air flow passage and having an end wall, a cyclone air inlet and a cyclone air outlet, the cyclone air outlet comprising an opening in the end wall of cyclone chamber, a screen positioned in the cyclone chamber upstream of the cyclone air outlet, the screen having an outlet end, the outlet end of the screen is open and defines an airflow passage which is at least the same size as an airflow passage defined by the cyclone air outlet and, a suction motor positioned in the air flow passage.

In another embodiment in accordance with this other broad aspect, a surface cleaning apparatus may also comprise an air flow passage extending from a dirty air inlet to a clean air outlet, a cyclone chamber positioned in the air flow passage and having a cyclone air inlet and an end wall having a cyclone air outlet, a screen positioned in the cyclone chamber upstream of the cyclone air outlet, the screen having an outlet end and an absence of a centrally positioned vortex finder and, a suction motor positioned in the air flow passage

Any of the embodiments described herein may have one or more of the following features.

The screen may have an interior volume that is fully open.

The screen may include a solid wall facing the cyclone air inlet. The solid wall may have a height that is greater than a height of the cyclone air inlet. Alternately or in addition, the solid wall ma have a distal end spaced from an end wall of the cyclone chamber by a first distance and the cyclone air inlet may have a distal end spaced from an end wall of the cyclone chamber by a second distance and the first distance may be greater than the second distance. Alternately or in addition, the air may rotate may in the cyclone chamber in a direction and the height of the solid wall may decrease in the direction. Alternately or in addition, the air entering the cyclone chamber may rotate around the screen in a direction and the air rotating in the direction adjacent the screen may have a height and the height of the solid may be greater than the height of the air.

The cyclone air outlet may include a collar positioned adjacent the screen extending inwardly into the screen a distance up to the height of the air inlet and preferably less than half the height of the cyclone air inlet.

The cyclone air outlet may be provided in the end wall and the outlet end of the screen may be positioned adjacent the end wall.

The cyclone air outlet may have a diameter and the screen adjacent the cyclone air outlet may have an open end having a diameter proximate the diameter of the cyclone air outlet.

The outlet end of the screen may be open and define an airflow passage which is at least the same size as an airflow passage defined by the cyclone air outlet.

The at least one battery or surface cleaning apparatus may produce less than 50 air watts and an air flow rate less than 1.3 m^3/minute.

The at least one battery or surface cleaning apparatus may produce less than 40 air watts and an air flow rate less than 1.2 m^3/minute.

The at least one battery or surface cleaning apparatus may produce less than 30 air watts and an air flow rate less than 1.1 m^3/minute.

The passage may be provided in a wall of the cyclone chamber and may have a thickness proximate a thickness of the wall.

The cyclone air inlet and the cyclone air outlet may be provided at a first end of the cyclone chamber.

The cyclone chamber may comprise a dirt outlet and the dirt outlet may be at a second end of the cyclone chamber opposed to the first end.

The screen may have a plurality of openings that are less than 8 mm in size, preferably less than 6 mm in size, more preferably less than 4 mm in size, and still more preferably less than 2 mm in size.

The screen may be cylindrical in shape.

The screen may be frusto-conical in shape.

The screen may have a height that is from 0.5 to 4 times the height of the cyclone air inlet.

The screen may have a height that is from 1 to 3 times the height of the cyclone air inlet.

The screen may have a height that is about twice the height of the cyclone air inlet.

DRAWINGS

Reference is made in the detailed description to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of an embodiment of a surface cleaning apparatus;

FIG. **2** is a perspective view of a cyclone bin assembly useable with the surface cleaning apparatus of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **3** is a section view of the cyclone bin assembly of FIG. **2**, taken along line **3-3** in FIG. **2** with part of the mesh removed;

FIG. **4** is a top perspective view of the cyclone bin assembly of FIG. **2**, with its lid open;

FIG. **5** is the perspective view of FIG. **4**, with the screen removed and with the mesh removed;

FIG. **6** is the perspective view of the cyclone bin assembly of FIG. **2**, with an alternate screen removed;

FIG. **7** is a section view of the cyclone bin assembly of FIG. **6**, taken along line **7-7** in FIG. **6** with the mesh removed from the screen;

FIG. **8** is a perspective view of an alternate screen with the mesh removed from the screen;

FIG. **9** is a perspective view of another side of the screen of FIG. **8** with the mesh removed from the screen;

FIG. **10** is a perspective view of a further alternate screen with the mesh removed from the screen;

FIG. **11** is a section view of the cyclone bin assembly of FIG. **6**, taken along line **7-7** in FIG. **6** and incorporating the screen of FIG. **10**;

FIG. **12** is a perspective view of a further alternate screen with the mesh removed from the screen;

FIG. **13** is a section view of the cyclone bin assembly of FIG. **6**, taken along line **7-7** in FIG. **6** and incorporating the screen of FIG. **12**;

FIG. **14** is a perspective view of a further alternate screen with the mesh removed from the screen;

FIG. **15** is a section view of the cyclone bin assembly of FIG. **6**, taken along line **7-7** in FIG. **6** and incorporating the screen of FIG. **14**;

FIG. **16** is a perspective view of a further alternate screen with the mesh removed from the screen;

FIG. **17** is a section view of the cyclone bin assembly of FIG. **6**, taken along line **7-7** in FIG. **6** and incorporating the screen of FIG. **16**;

FIG. **18** is a perspective view of a further alternate screen with the mesh removed from the screen; and,

FIG. **19** is a section view of the cyclone bin assembly of FIG. **6**, taken along line **7-7** in FIG. **6** and incorporating the screen of FIG. **18**.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring to FIG. **1**, an embodiment of a surface cleaning apparatus **100** is shown. In the embodiment illustrated, the surface cleaning apparatus **100** is a full size upright vacuum cleaner. In alternate embodiments, the surface cleaning apparatus may be another suitable type of surface cleaning apparatus, including, for example, a hand vacuum cleaner, a canister vacuum cleaner, a stick vac, a wet-dry vacuum cleaner and a carpet extractor.

The surface cleaning apparatus **100** may comprise an electrical cord to connect to an external power source, including, for example, a standard electrical outlet. Alternatively, or in addition to being connectable to an external power source, the surface cleaning apparatus **100** may comprise an onboard power source, including, for example one or more batteries. Optionally, the on board battery may be rechargeable, preferably while mounted to the surface cleaning apparatus **100**.

As exemplified in FIG. **1**, the surface cleaning apparatus **100** includes a surface cleaning head **102** and an upper section **104**. The surface cleaning head **102** preferably includes a pair of rear wheels **106** and a pair of front wheels (not shown) for rolling across a surface and a dirty air inlet **108** towards the front. The upper section **104** is moveably connected to the surface cleaning head **102** (e.g., pivotally mounted) between an upright storage position and an inclined in use position. It will be appreciated that the cleaning head and upright section may be of any design known in the art.

An air flow passage extends from the dirty air inlet **108** to a clean air outlet **110**, which is preferably provided on the upper section **104**. A handle **116**, which is preferably connected to the upper section **104**, is provided for manipulating the surface cleaning apparatus **100**.

Preferably, as exemplified, the upper section **104** comprises an air treatment housing **112** and a suction motor housing **114**. The air treatment housing **112** houses an air treatment member, which is positioned in the air flow passage downstream from the dirty air inlet **108**, to remove dirt particles and other debris from the air flowing through the air flow passage. In the illustrated example, the air treatment member comprises a cyclone bin assembly **118** comprising a cyclone chamber **120** and a dirt collection chamber **122**. The air treatment member may also comprise one or other air treatment members such as one or more cyclones or filters

The suction motor housing **114** is configured to house a suction motor (not shown). Preferably, as exemplified, the suction motor is in air flow communication with the air flow passage, downstream from the cyclone bin assembly **118**. Air exiting the cyclone bin assembly **118** may flow into a suction motor and exit the surface cleaning apparatus via the clean air outlet **110**. The suction motor is preferably provided below the cyclone air outlet.

As exemplified in FIGS. **2-5**, the cyclone bin assembly **118** comprises a cyclonic chamber **120** and a separate dirt collection chamber **122** exterior to the cyclone chamber. The cyclone chamber and the dirt collection chamber may be of any configuration and may be in any orientation.

Air circulating within the cyclone chamber **120** enters via a cyclone or tangential air inlet **130** (which has an inlet end **130***a* and an outlet end **130***b*) and exits via a cyclone air outlet. As exemplified, cyclone chamber **120** is an upright cyclone chamber (e.g., the air enters and exits at the upper end of the cyclone chamber and the separated dirt exits at the lower end). In an alternate embodiment, the cyclone may be an inverted cyclone chamber (e.g., the air enters and exits at the lower end of the cyclone chamber and the separated dirt exits at the upper end). It will be appreciated that the air inlets and air outlets may be of various known designs.

As exemplified, the cyclone chamber **120** comprises a sidewall **124**, a first (e.g., upper) end wall **126**, an opposed second (lower) end wall or floor **128** and a longitudinal axis **138**. A tangential or cyclone air inlet **130**, in air flow communication with the dirty air inlet **108**, is provided, preferably in the sidewall **124** for receiving a particle laden fluid stream, represented by arrow **132**. As the fluid stream **132** circulates within the cyclone chamber **120**, dirt particles and other debris may be disentrained from the fluid stream **132**. Dirt particles and other debris separated from the fluid stream **132** may exit the cyclone chamber **120** through a dirt outlet **134**, and are collected in the dirt collection chamber **122**. The cyclone chamber **120** is exemplified in an upright configuration (e.g., e.g., the cyclone axis **138** extends generally vertically). However, it will be appreciated that the cyclone chamber may be provided in various orientations.

Preferably, the dirt outlet **134** comprises a gap provided between the sidewall **124** of the cyclone chamber **120** and the second (lower) end wall **128**. The gap may extend part way or all the way around sidewall **124**. Preferably, as exemplified, the dirt outlet comprises a slot **136** that extends part way around sidewall **122** between the end of sidewall **124** facing second end wall **128** and the second end wall **128**. Debris separated from the air flow in the cyclone chamber **120** may travel from the cyclone chamber **120**, through the dirt outlet **158** to the dirt collection chamber **122**. Alternately, for example, the dirt outlet may be an opening in the second end wall or floor **128** and a plate may be provided at or facing the opening.

As exemplified, the dirt collection chamber **122** is separate from and positioned below the cyclone chamber **120**. It will be appreciated that, in alternate designs, the dirt collection chamber may be internal to the cyclone chamber (e.g., it may comprise the bottom section of a cyclone chamber) or it may be positioned beside the cyclone chamber.

As exemplified, the dirt collection chamber **122** comprises a sidewall **140**, a first end wall **144** and an opposed second end wall or floor **144**. The dirt collection chamber may be emptyable by any means known in the art. For example an end wall may be openable (e.g., moveable to an open position or removably mounted). Preferably, the floor **144** is pivotally connected to the dirt collection chamber

122, such as by hinges **146**, and may be rotated between a closed position (FIG. **2**) and an open position (not shown). The floor **144** can be held in the closed position by any means known in the art, such as a releasable latch **148**, or other suitable closure mechanism.

The cyclone chamber may be openable concurrently with the dirt collection chamber. As exemplified, the floor **128** of the cyclone chamber may be movable with the floor of the dirt collection chamber **144** to allow dirt retained in the cyclone chamber **120** to be emptied when the dirt collection chamber **122** is opened. In the illustrated example, the floor **128** of the cyclone chamber **120** is supported above the floor **144** of the dirt collection chamber **122** on a support member **150**.

As exemplified in FIG. **5**, the cyclone air outlet comprises an opening **152** in the first end wall **126** of cyclone chamber **160** which has a thickness **160**. Screen **168** is positioned to cover opening **152**. Opening **152** is in airflow communication with, preferably, a pair of external outlet down ducts **154**. In the illustrated example, the passage **152** and down ducts **154** are in airflow communication by an air outlet chamber or plenum **156** that is located between the first end wall **126** of the cyclone chamber **120** and the inner surface **190** of the lid **158**. The downstream ends of the down ducts **154** are in fluid communication with the suction motor. It will be appreciated that the passage from the cyclone outlet to the clean air outlet may be of various configurations and may include one or more filters as is known in the art.

In one aspect of this disclosure, the cyclone air outlet has an absence of a vortex finder. Accordingly, the cyclone air outlet is defined by opening **152** in the first end wall **126** that is covered by screen **168**. Preferably, as exemplified, the screen **168** has an interior volume **192** that is fully open. As such, the screen does not have a conduit or other structure that extends from end wall **126** downwardly into interior volume **192** of screen **168**. Air with enters the interior volume **192** may flow unimpeded through opening **152**.

Referring to FIGS. **3** and **5**, the opening **152** defines a passage **164** that has a passage height **160**, measured parallel to the cyclone chamber axis **138**. Conventional cyclone chamber designs include a generally elongate outlet passage that may extend into the interior of the cyclone chamber to a position substantially below the lower extent of the cyclone air inlet. Such air outlet passages have a solid, fluid impermeable wall, and are commonly referred to as vortex finders.

In accordance with another aspect of this disclosure, unlike conventional cyclone chamber designs, the height **160** of the air outlet passage **164** may be selected so that the walls of the outlet passage **164** do not substantially extend into the interior of the cyclone chamber **120**. Preferably, the height **160** of outlet passage **164** may be selected to be less than the height **162** of the cyclone air inlet **130** and is preferably less than half the height **162** and more preferably less than a third of the height. As such, if a conduit extends into the screen **168** to define a longer passage **164**, it may comprise a collar depending downwardly from inner surface **166** of first end wall **126**.

More preferably, a collar is not provided so that outlet passage **164** does not extend beyond the inner surface **166** of the first end wall **126** (i.e., it does not extend into the interior volume **192** of screen **168**). In the illustrated example, the height **160** is less than height **162**, and is generally equal to the thickness **168** of the end wall **126**. Reducing the height **160** of the outlet passage **164** may help reduce energy losses as air exits the cyclone chamber **120**, which may help increase the efficiency of the surface cleaning apparatus **100**.

The screen **168** may help prevent elongate material such as hair and larger dirt particles from exiting the cyclone chamber **120** via the opening **152**. Screen **168** may be a shroud (e.g., a molded plastic member having a plurality of openings or perforations therein. Alternately, screen **168** may comprise a mesh material. The mesh material may be self-supporting (e.g., a metal mesh). If the mesh material is not self-supporting, then a frame may be provided. Any screen known in the art may be used.

It has been discovered that for example, that for certain air flows, having certain flow properties, the fluid permeable screen **168** can be used in place of a traditional, non-permeable vortex finder to help facilitate the cyclonic air flow pattern within the cyclone chamber **120**. For example, it has been discovered that if the surface cleaning apparatus **100** operates with a given combination of operating power and air flow rate, positioning the screen **168** within the cyclone chamber **120** may be sufficient to facilitate cyclonic flow of the air, without passing directly to exit the cyclone chamber **120** via the outlet passage **152** and therefore bypassing the cyclonic cleaning stage.

For example, the use of a screen **168**, as opposed to a traditional non-permeable vortex finder, is sufficient to facilitate operation of the surface cleaning apparatus **110** when the surface cleaning apparatus **100** produces approximately 50 air watts of power (or less), preferably 40 air watts of power or less and optionally 30 air watts of power or less and/or operates an air flow rate of approximately 1.3 cubic meters per minute or less, preferably 1.2 cubic meters per minute or less and optionally 1.1 cubic meters per minute or less. The suction motor used in such a surface cleaning apparatus **100** may have a power requirement of 500 watts or less, and preferably has a power requirement of less than 200 watts.

As exemplified, screen **168** comprises on or more fluid permeable regions **170** that are covered with a fluid permeable material **180** (e.g., a mesh material) extending between non-permeable frame members **172**. The permeable material **180** comprises a plurality of openings **182** to allow air to flow therethrough and may be a synthetic material (e.g., plastic). The permeability of the fluid permeable regions, and the corresponding flow resistance of the screen **168**, may be varied by varying the properties of the permeable material **180**, including, for example the size and/or shape of the openings **182**. For example, the openings **182** can be configured to have a diameter or maximum height that is less than 8 mm in size, preferably less than 6 mm, more preferably less than 4 mm and may be less than 2 mm.

Preferably, the screen **168** has a height **186** that is greater than the height **162** of the outlet **130*b*** of the air inlet **130**. Optionally, the screen **168** can be configured so that the height **186** is between about 0.5 and 4 times larger than height **162**. Preferably, the height **186** is between about 1 and about 3 times the height **162** of the outlet **130*b*** of the air inlet **130**, and more preferably is about 2 times the height **162** of the outlet **130*b*** of the air inlet **130**.

Referring to the screen exemplified in FIGS. **8** and **9**, screen **168** is positioned in the cyclone chamber **120** upstream of the cyclone air outlet. Screen **168** has an outlet end **194** and a distal end **196** spaced from and facing the outlet end **194**. The outlet end of the screen is open and defines an airflow passage which is at least the same size as an airflow passage defined by the opening **152**. For example, if the screen **168** and the outlet **152** are circular, then open end **194** may have a diameter proximate the diameter of opening **152**. Therefore, the outlet end **194** of the screen **168** may be positioned adjacent the end wall **126**.

Preferably, screen **168** comprises a solid wall **198** that faces the outlet **130***b* of cyclone air inlet **130**. Solid wall **198** may assist in preventing air bypassing cyclone chamber **120** by travelling directly to opening **152** and may assist in creating cyclonic flow in cyclone chamber **120** by defining an annular air flow passage at the upper end of cyclone chamber **120**. Preferably, the solid wall **198** has a height **200** that is greater than the height **162** of the outlet **130***b* of cyclone air inlet **130**.

In some embodiments, solid wall **198** may have a uniform height (see for example FIGS. **6**, **7** and **12-19**. In such cases, the height **200** of solid wall is preferable greater than the height of outlet **130***b* of cyclone air inlet **130**. In some embodiments, solid wall **198** may extend all the way around screen **198** (see for example FIGS. **6**, **7** and **16-19**). In other cases, solid wall may extend only part way around screen **168** (see for example FIGS. **12-15**).

In other cases, (see for example FIGS. **8-11**) the height **200** of the solid wall may be variable and preferably decreases in the direction of rotation **202** of the air in cyclone chamber **120**. In such a case, the height **200** of the portion of solid wall **198** facing outlet **130***b* of cyclone air inlet **130** is preferable greater than the height of outlet **130***b* of cyclone air inlet **130**. For example, the height **200** of upstream end **206** of solid wall **198** is preferable greater than the height of outlet **130***b* of cyclone air inlet **130**. As the air rotates in direction **202** in cyclone chamber **120**, the air will move downwardly towards lower end **128** of cyclone chamber **120**. Accordingly, the height of the solid wall **198** may decrease as there may not be cyclonic flow around a portion of the upper end of screen **168**. For example, at a position about ½ of ¾ of the distance around screen **168** from outlet **130***b*, there may be no cyclonic flow around the upper portion of screen **168**. Accordingly, solid wall **198** is not required to prevent bypass of cyclone chamber **120**. Preferably, the air rotating in the direction **202** adjacent the screen has a height and the height **200** of the solid wall is greater than the height of the air. As exemplified in FIGS. **8** and **9**, the height **200** of solid wall **168** decreases to 0 or essentially 0 at a position **208** which is about ¾ of the distance around screen **168** from outlet **130***b*. An advantage of this design is that mesh **180** may be provided in an region that would otherwise be occupied by solid wall **198**, thereby increasing the mesh surface area and therefore increasing the surface area available for air to mass through to opening **198**.

Accordingly, solid wall **198** may have a distal end **204** that is spaced from end wall **126** of the cyclone chamber **120** by a first distance or height **200** and the outlet **130***b* of the cyclone air inlet **130** may have a distal end **210** spaced from an end wall of the cyclone chamber **126** by a second distance or height **162** and the first distance is greater than the second distance.

The distal end **196** of screen **168** may be closed (e.g., a solid surface) but it is preferably open (e.g., covered by mesh **180**).

Optionally, the lid **158** of the cyclone bin assembly **118** is openable to allow a user to remove the screen **168**. In the illustrated example, the lid **158** is hinged and can pivot open to allow access to the removable of the screen **168**. Alternatively, the lid **158** can be detachable or openable by any other means.

If screen **168** is removable and if solid wall **198** does not extend all around screen **168** or if it only has a portion with a height **200** greater than the height **162** of outlet **130***b*, then one or more alignment members may be provided to assist a user to reinsert screen in the correct orientation (e.g., with the portion of screen **168** that has a height **200** greater than the height **162** of outlet **130***b* facing outlet **130***b*). For example, as exemplified in FIGS. **16-19**, alignment notches **212** may be provided in rim **174** of screen **168**. These alignment notches **212** may mate with protrusions provided on the outer surface of end wall **126** on which rim **174** seats. In a particularly preferred embodiment, the notches **212** may be angularly spaced so that screen **168** may only be reinserted in the correct position. Any other alignment means or inter-engagement members may be sued.

Screen **168** may be of various shapes. In the illustrated example, outlet **152** and the screen **168** have generally round cross sectional shapes, and the screen **168** is received in the outlet **152**. Optionally, the screen **168** may be configured to have a cylindrical shape (see FIGS. **4-11** and **14-17**), a lower portion that is generally frusto-conical in shape (see FIGS. **12**, **13**, **18** and **19**) or any other suitable shape.

The screen **168** may comprise an annular rim **174**. When screen **168** is positioned in cyclone chamber **120**, the rim **174** may be positioned above, and preferably rests on the upper wall **126** such that the screen **168** is suspended from the rim **174**. A gasket **175** or other sealing member may be provided between the rim **174** and the upper wall **126** to help seal the rim **174** against the upper wall **126**.

Optionally, if the screen **168** is removable, a member to secure the screen in portion may be provided. For example, as exemplified, the lid **158** may include one or more engagement member that can secure the screen **168** in position when the lid **158** is closed. In the illustrated example, the engagement member comprises four securing legs **176** extending from the inner surface **190** of lid **158**. When the lid **158** is closed, the securing legs **176** rest on the rim **174** and press the rim **174** against the upper wall **126**. Providing securing legs **176** to hold the rim **174** in place may eliminate the need to use additional fasteners or attachment members to hold the screen **168** in position. The legs **176** are preferably spaced apart from each other around the perimeter of the rim **174**. Spacing the legs **176** apart from each other may help to provide a distributed holding force and may help facilitate airflow between the legs **176**, from the outlet passage **152** to the outlet conduits **154**. Optionally, a different number of legs **176**, other type of holding structure, including for example a bayonet mount, male and female engagement members provided on screen **168** and end wall **126**, or other type of fastening members can be used to hold the screen **168** in place.

In the illustrated example, the screen **168** may be received in the outlet **152** in a plurality of rotational alignment positions, and need not be oriented in a predetermined direction or alignment relative to the upper wall **126** of the cyclone chamber **120**.

Optionally, some or all of the upper wall **126** of the cyclone chamber **120** may be removable with the screen **168**. Removing a portion of the upper wall **126** may allow a user to access the interior of the cyclone chamber **120**. Optionally, the removable portion of the upper wall **126** may be an annular band **178** that surrounds the outlet **152**. Removing some or all of the upper wall **126** while the floors **128** and **144** are open may allow simultaneous access to both ends of the cyclone bin assembly **118**, which may help a user to clean the interior of the cyclone bin assembly **118**.

What has been described above has been intended to be illustrative of the invention and non-limiting and it will be understood by persons skilled in the art that other variants and modifications may be made without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the claims appended hereto.

The invention claimed is:

1. A surface cleaning apparatus comprising:

(a) a cyclone chamber having a longitudinal axis defining a longitudinal direction, a first end having a first end wall, a longitudinally spaced apart second end having a second opposed end wall, a cyclone chamber sidewall extending between the first and second end walls, a cyclone air inlet, a cyclone air outlet and a dirt outlet, wherein, at a location of the dirt outlet, the cyclone chamber has a cyclone chamber width in a direction transverse to the longitudinal axis;

(b) a dirt collection chamber having a first end wall positioned proximate the second opposed end wall of the cyclone chamber, a second opposed end wall that is longitudinally spaced apart from the first end wall of the dirt collection chamber and a dirt collection chamber sidewall; and,

(c) a suction motor in fluid communication with the cyclone chamber,

wherein the dirt collection chamber sidewall has a first sidewall portion and a second sidewall portion,

wherein the cyclone chamber sidewall has a first location and an axially spaced apart second location and the first sidewall portion extends outwardly from the first location on the cyclone chamber sidewall to a distal end of the first sidewall portion, the distal end is spaced radially outwardly from the second location of the cyclone chamber sidewall,

wherein the second sidewall portion extends from the distal end towards the second opposed end wall of the dirt collection chamber,

wherein a plane that is transverse to the longitudinal axis extends through the dirt outlet and the second sidewall portion, and

wherein the second sidewall portion has a width in a direction transverse to the longitudinal axis that is greater than the width of the cyclone chamber.

2. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 1 wherein the distal end of the first sidewall portion is positioned between the first end wall of the cyclone chamber and the dirt outlet.

3. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 1 wherein the second sidewall portion extends longitudinally.

4. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 1 wherein the dirt outlet comprises a gap provided between the cyclone chamber sidewall and the second opposed end wall of the cyclone chamber.

5. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 4 wherein the dirt outlet comprises a slot.

6. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 5 wherein the slot extends part way around the cyclone chamber sidewall.

7. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 1 wherein the dirt outlet comprises a gap provided between the cyclone chamber sidewall and the second opposed end wall of the cyclone chamber.

8. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 7 wherein the dirt outlet comprises a slot.

9. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 8 wherein the slot extends part way around the cyclone chamber sidewall.

10. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 1 wherein the dirt collection chamber extends longitudinally away from the cyclone chamber.

11. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 1 wherein the longitudinal axis extends through the dirt collection chamber.

12. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 1 wherein, when the surface cleaning apparatus is positioned on a horizontal surface, the first end wall of the cyclone chamber is located above the second opposed end wall of the cyclone chamber and the dirt collection chamber is positioned below the cyclone chamber.

13. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 1 wherein the cyclone air inlet and the cyclone air outlet are located at the first end of the cyclone chamber.

14. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 13 wherein the dirt outlet is located at the second end of the cyclone chamber.

15. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 14 wherein the dirt outlet faces the second sidewall portion.

16. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 15 wherein the second sidewall portion extends longitudinally.

17. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 14 wherein the longitudinal axis extends through the dirt collection chamber.

18. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 15 wherein the longitudinal axis extends through the dirt collection chamber.

19. The surface cleaning apparatus of claim 14 wherein the distal end of the first sidewall portion is positioned between the first end wall of the cyclone chamber and the dirt outlet.

20. A surface cleaning apparatus comprising:

(a) a cyclone chamber having a longitudinal axis defining a longitudinal direction, a first end having a first end wall, a longitudinally spaced apart second end having a second opposed end wall, a cyclone chamber sidewall, a cyclone air inlet, a cyclone air outlet and a dirt outlet, wherein, at a location of the dirt outlet, the cyclone chamber has a cyclone chamber width in a direction transverse to the longitudinal axis;

(b) a dirt collection chamber having a first end wall positioned proximate the second opposed end wall of the cyclone chamber, a second opposed end wall that is longitudinally spaced apart from the first end wall of the dirt collection chamber and a dirt collection chamber sidewall; and,

(c) a suction motor in fluid communication with the cyclone chamber,

wherein the dirt collection chamber sidewall has a first sidewall portion and a second sidewall portion,

wherein the first sidewall portion extends outwardly from a first portion of the cyclone chamber sidewall that is located between first and second opposed ends of the cyclone chamber sidewall, the first sidewall portion has a distal end that is spaced outwardly from a second portion of the cyclone chamber sidewall that is axially spaced from the first portion of the cyclone chamber sidewall,

wherein the second sidewall portion extends from the distal end towards the second opposed end wall of the dirt collection chamber,

wherein the dirt outlet faces towards the dirt collection chamber sidewall, and

wherein the second sidewall portion has a width in a direction transverse to the longitudinal axis that is greater than the width of the cyclone chamber, and

wherein a plane that is transverse to the longitudinal axis extends through the distal end of the first sidewall portion and the cyclone chamber sidewall.

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