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Calleja

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(54) **SIMPLIFIED TRUSS ASSEMBLY AND LIGHTING TRACK INTERCONNECTION**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 218 days.

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(22) Filed: **Jun. 30, 2008**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2009/0201687 A1 Aug. 13, 2009

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 12/069,201, filed on Feb. 9, 2008.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
H02G 3/04 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **174/68.1**; 174/68.3; 362/648; 362/219; 439/532; 439/114

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 174/68.1, 174/68.3; 362/648, 391, 219, 431; 439/114, 439/532, 369
See application file for complete search history.

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(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Robert Charles Hill

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A simplified assembly truss system rivets each power track inside one chord of each truss span so that the electrical components cannot be misaligned inside the chord during final assembly. The chord is slotted to receive lighting heads in its mid-sections, and short end slots allow interconnecting plugs to be inserted into matching power track ends. A stop captured by the rivets near each chord-end indexes the interconnecting plugs to ensure the final electrical assembly is correct.

6 Claims, 23 Drawing Sheets

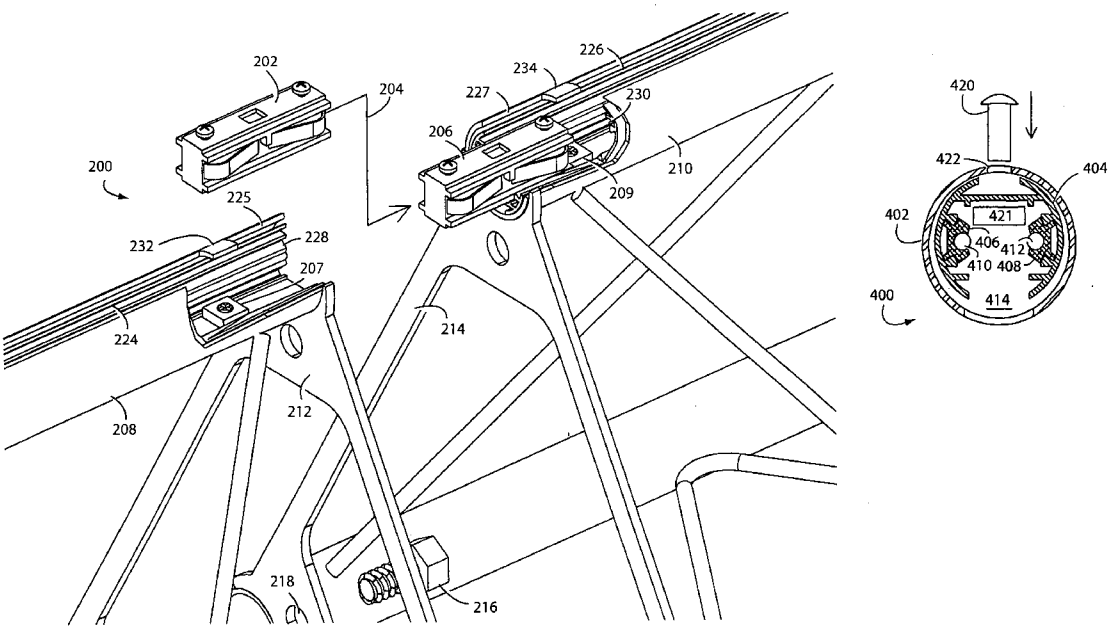
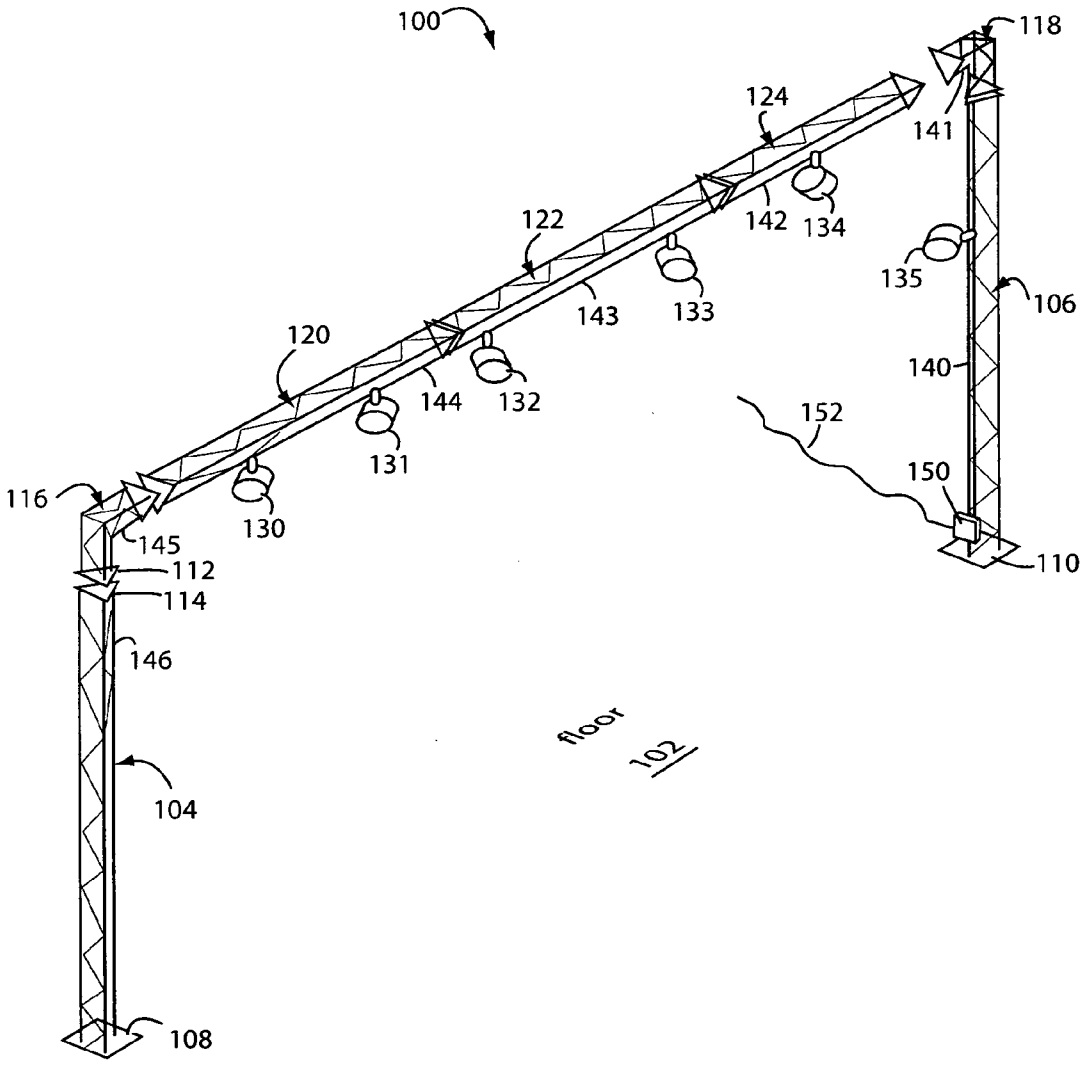


Fig. 1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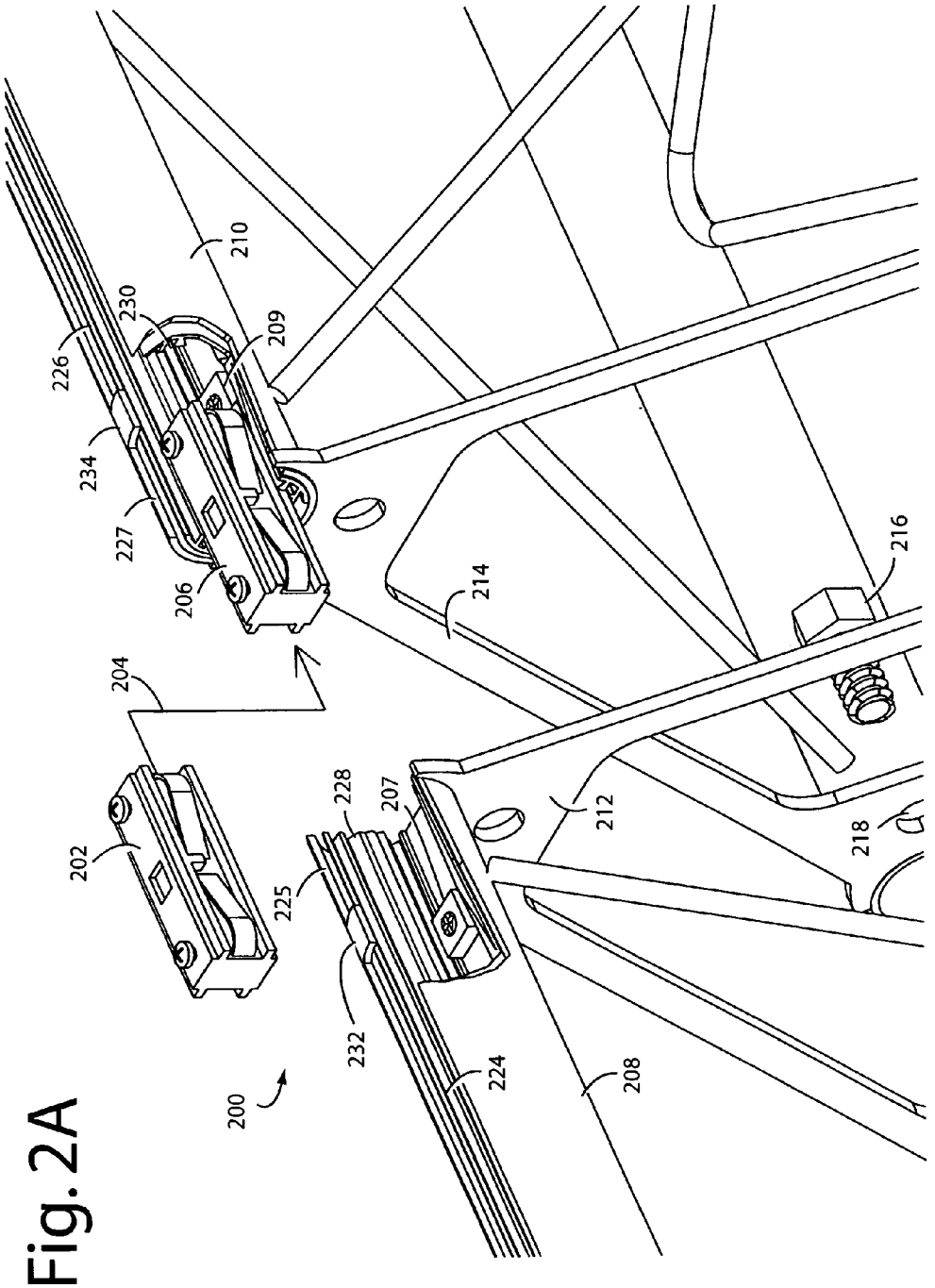
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Fig. 2A

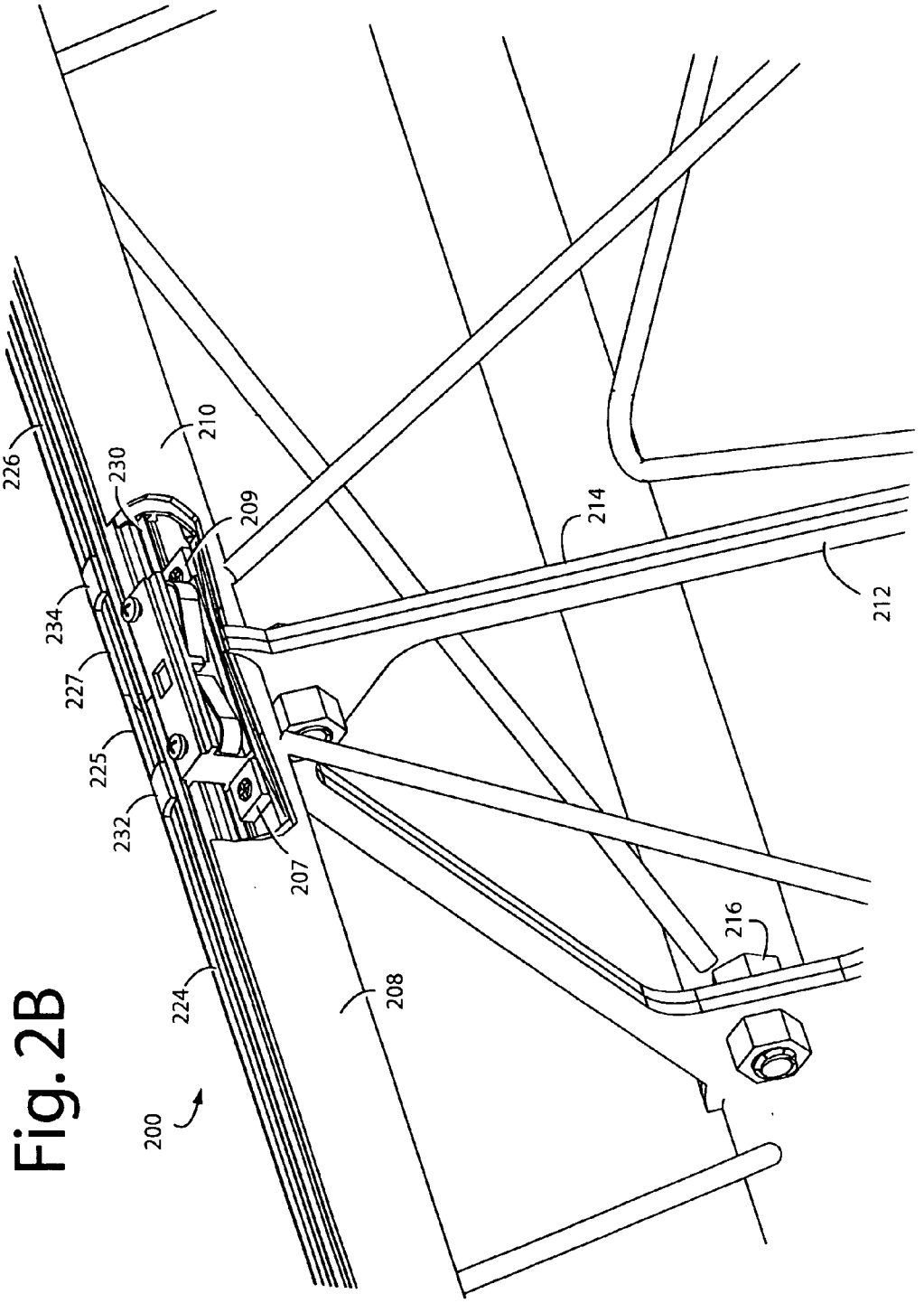
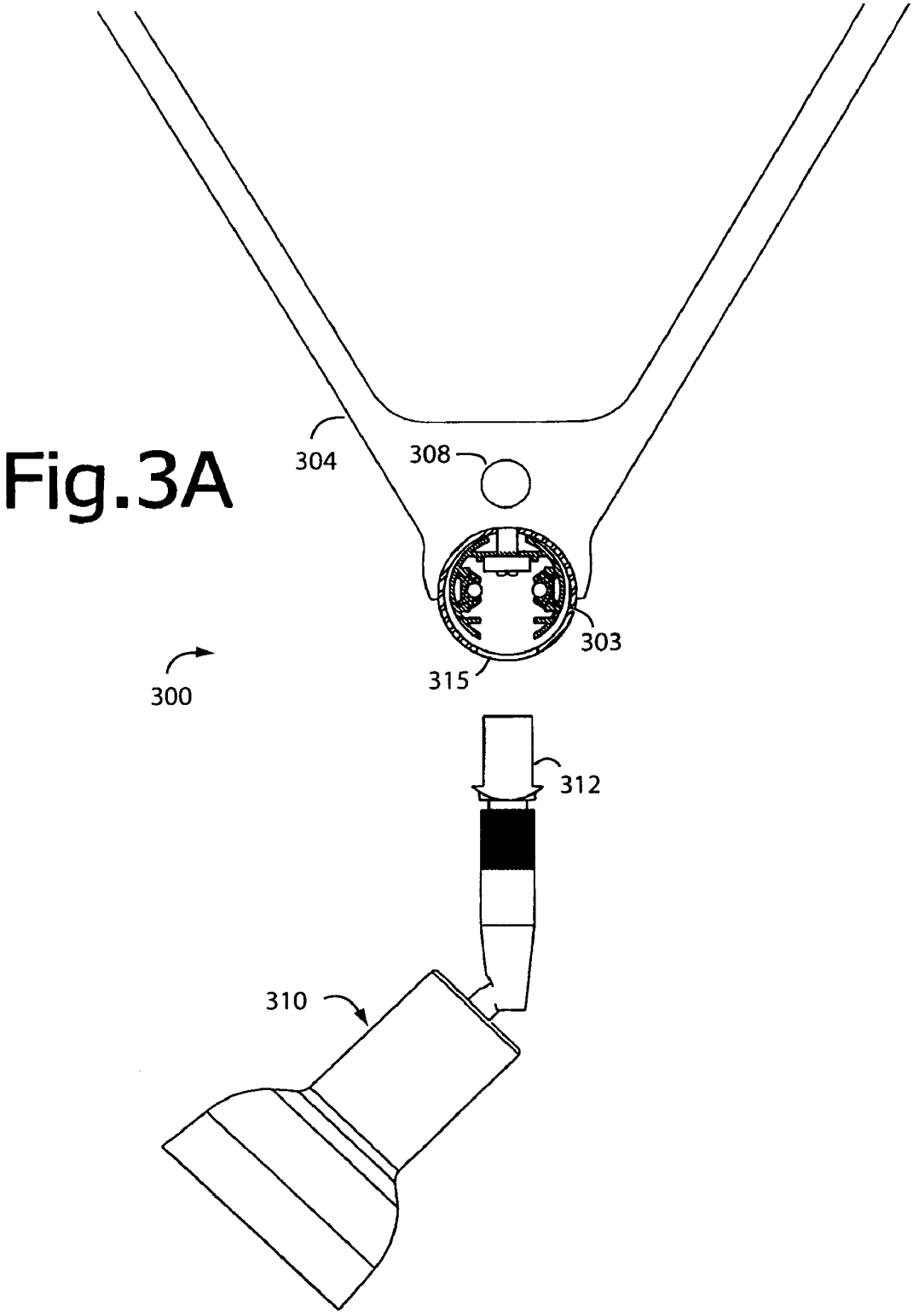


Fig. 2B

Fig.3A



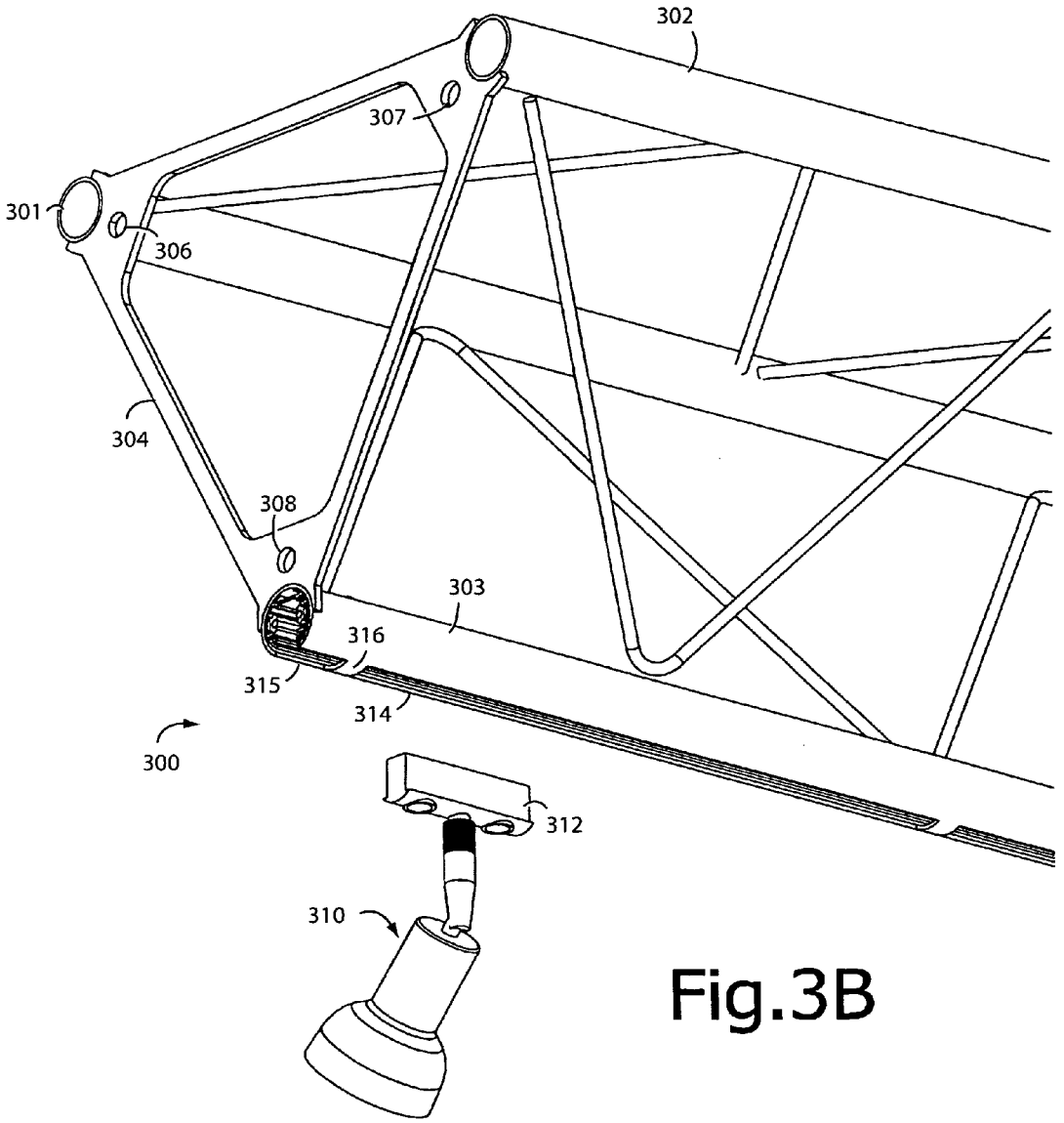


Fig.3B

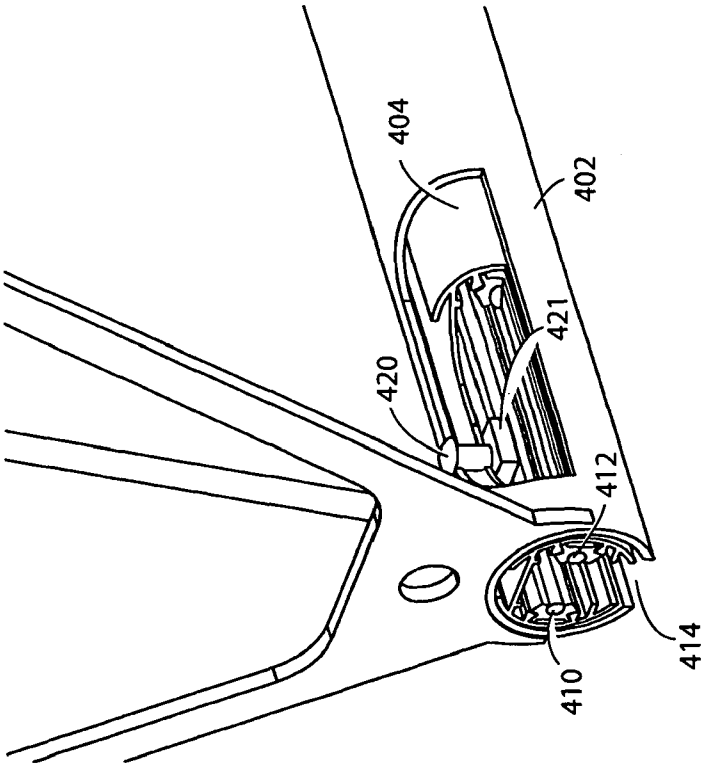


Fig.4C

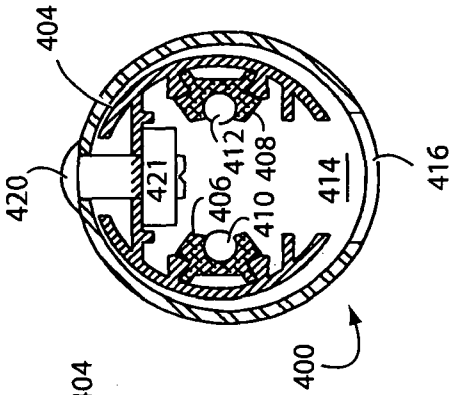


Fig.4B

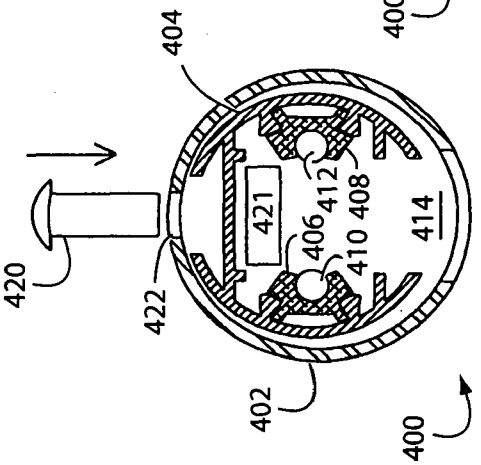


Fig.4A

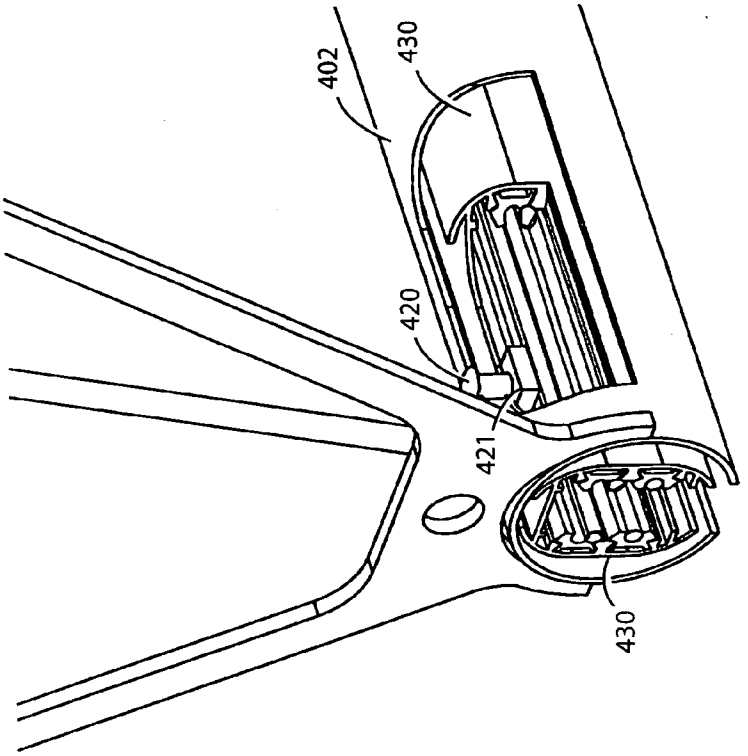


Fig.4F

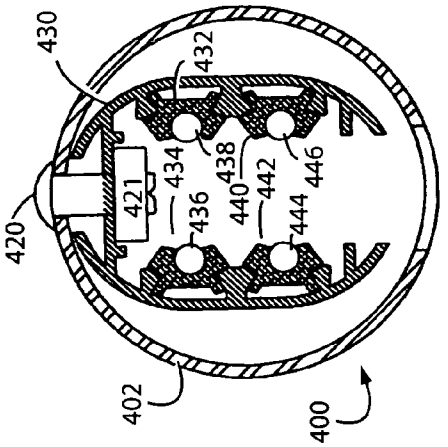


Fig.4E

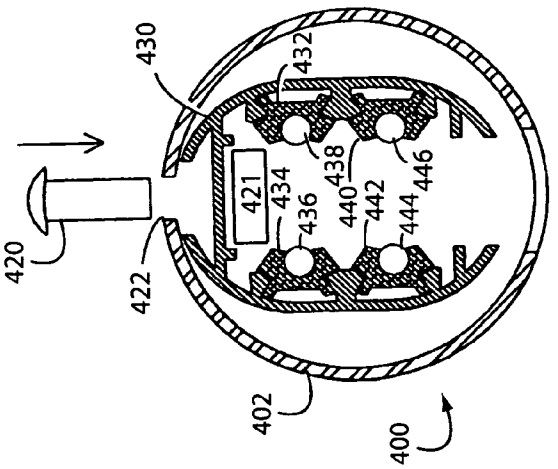


Fig.4D

Fig.5A

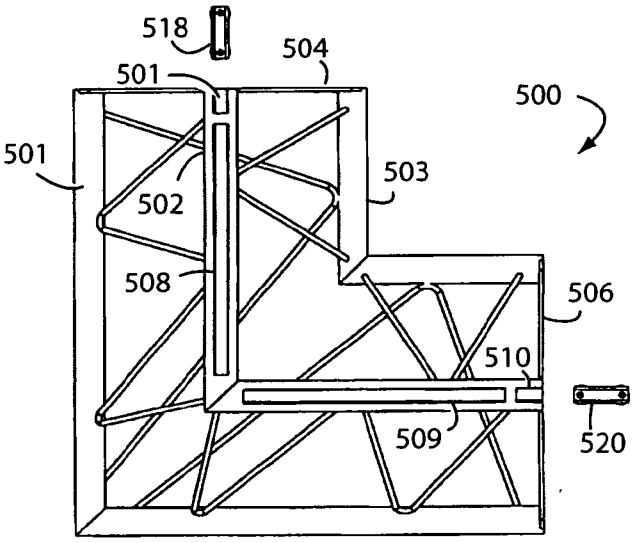


Fig.5B

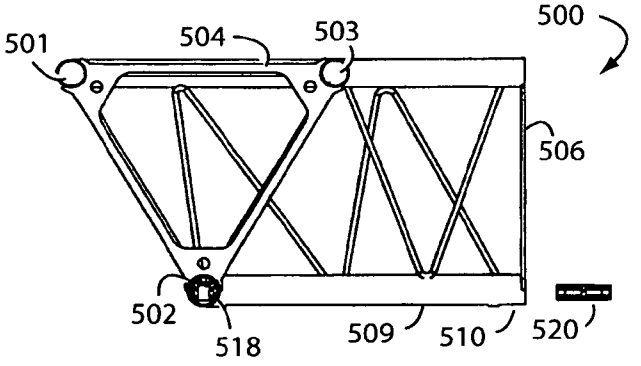
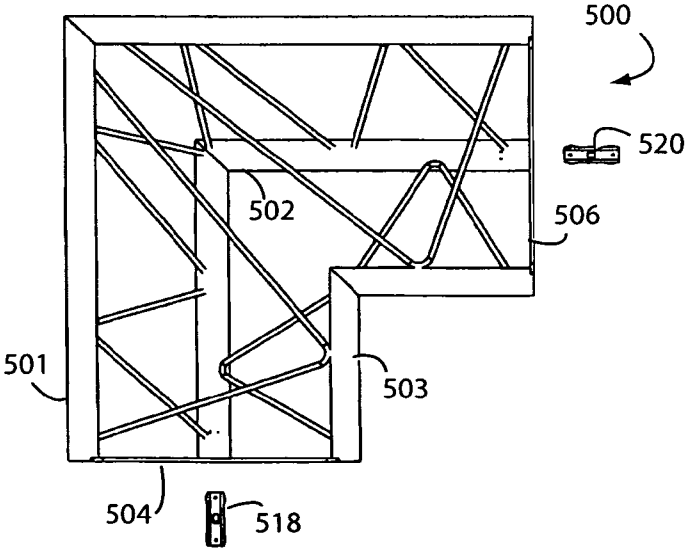


Fig.5C



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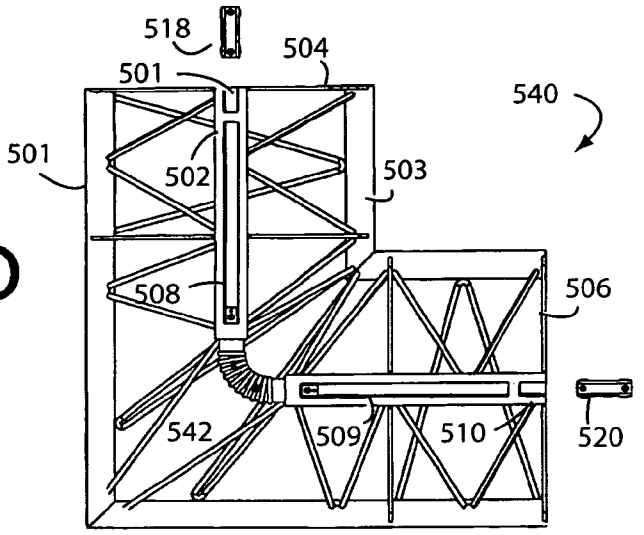


Fig.5E

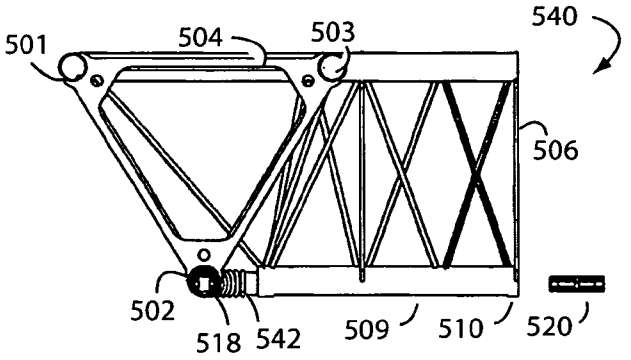


Fig.5F

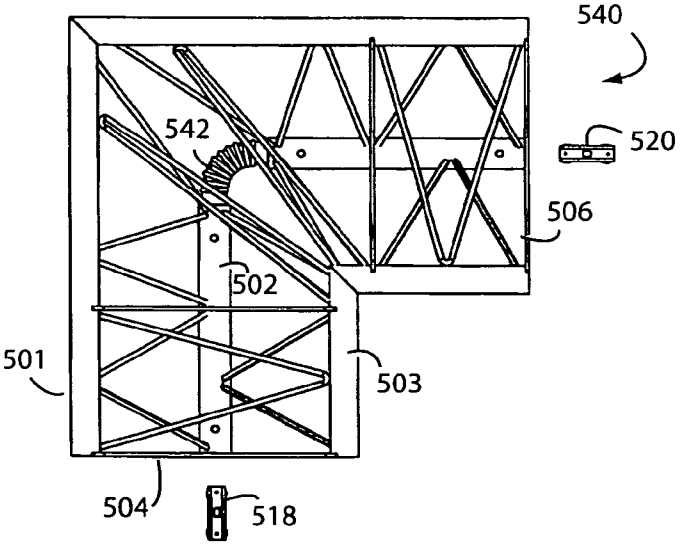


Fig.6A

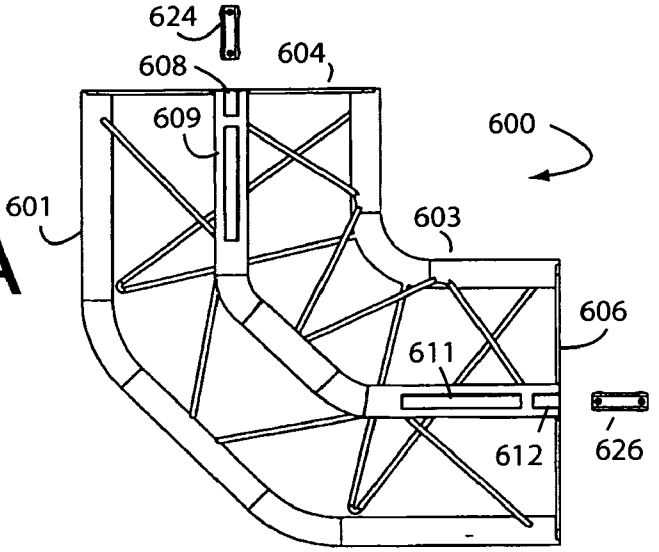


Fig.6B

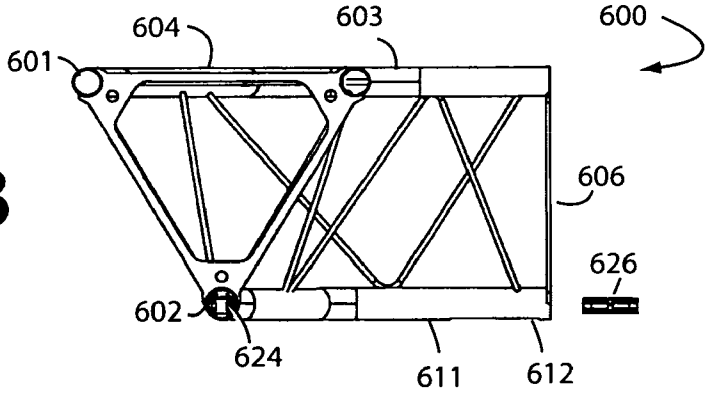
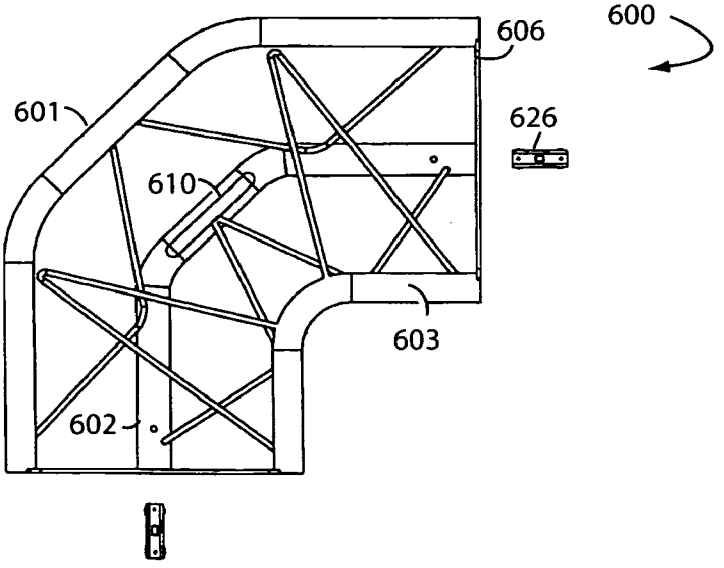


Fig.6C



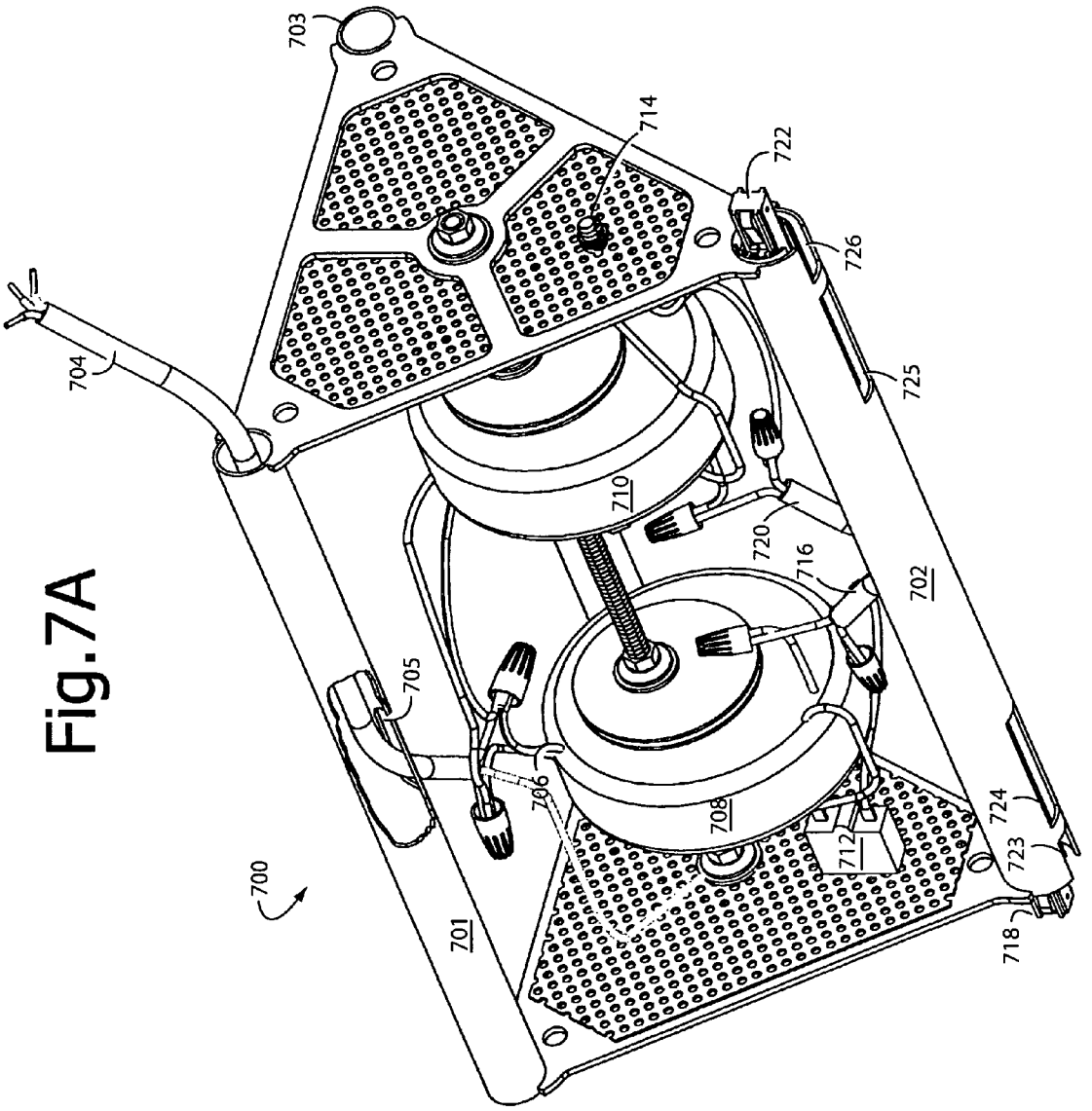

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Fig.7A

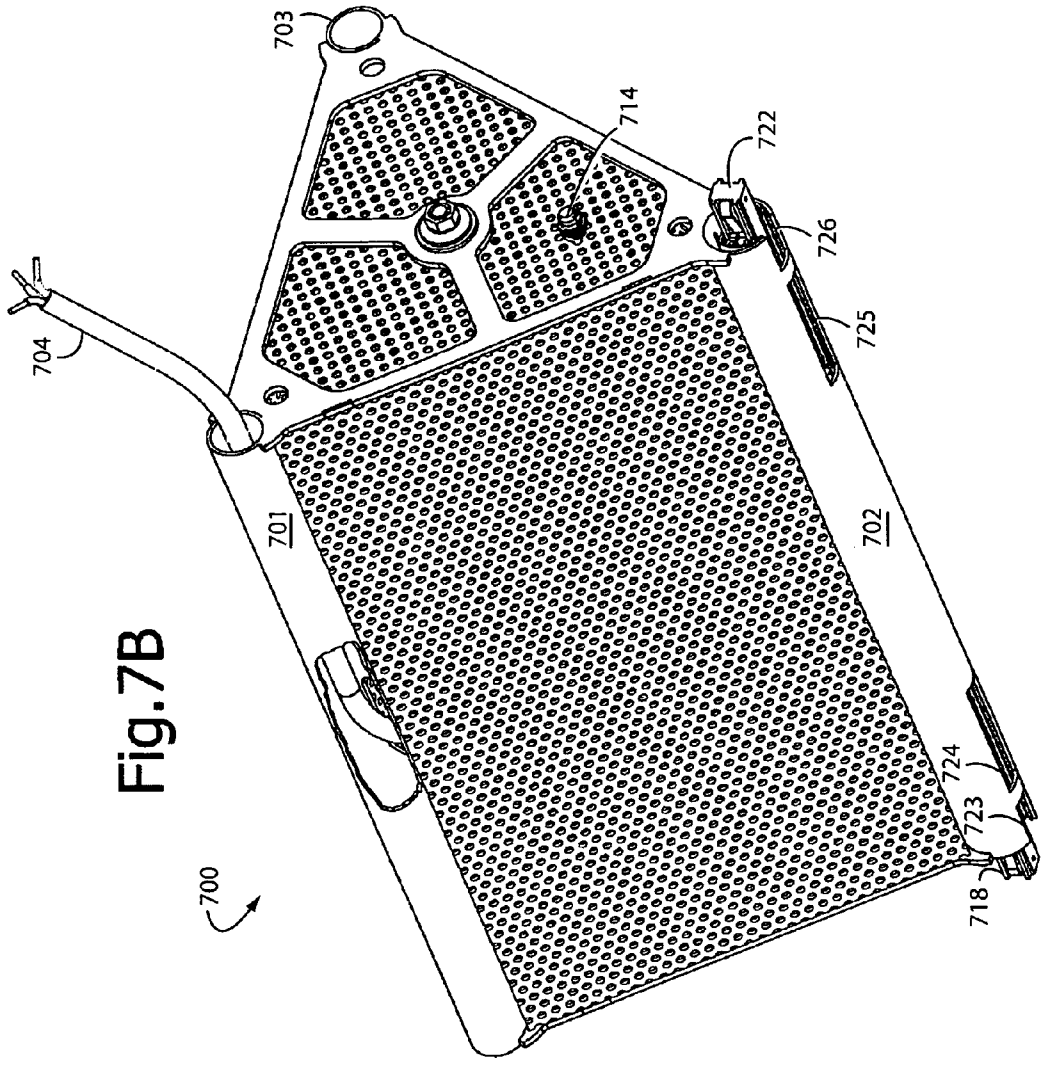

Fig.7B

Fig.8A

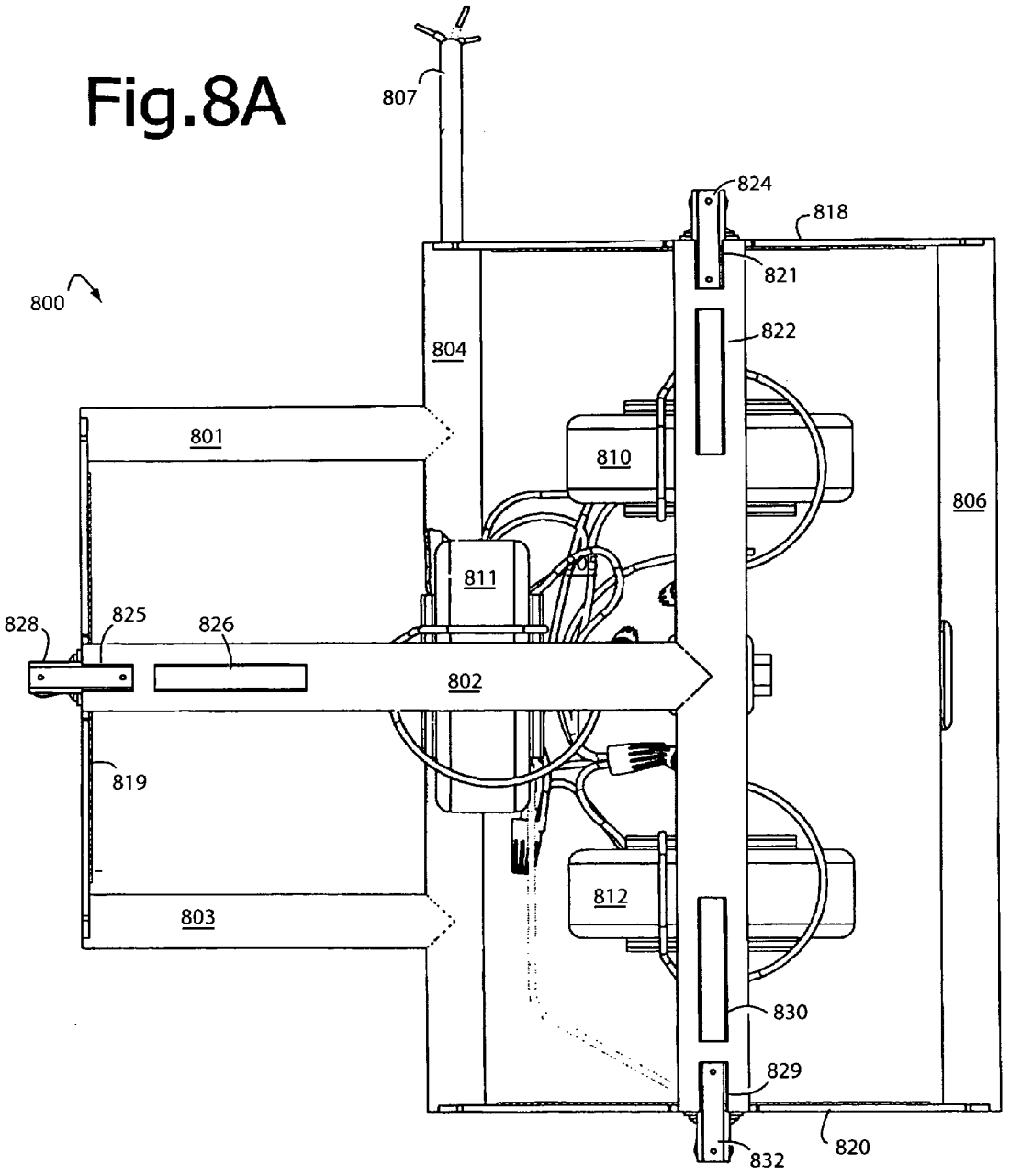
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Fig.8B

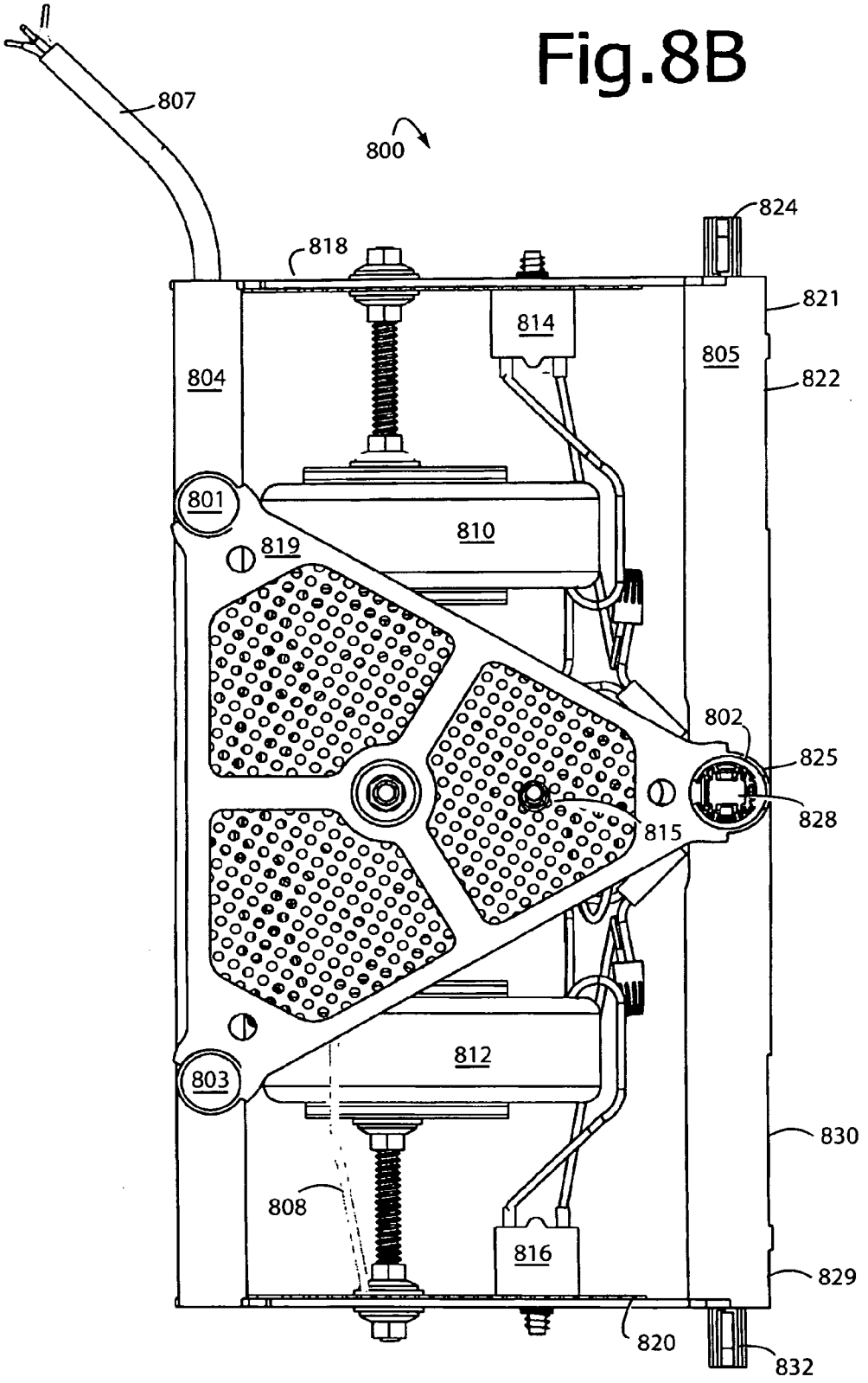
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Fig.8C

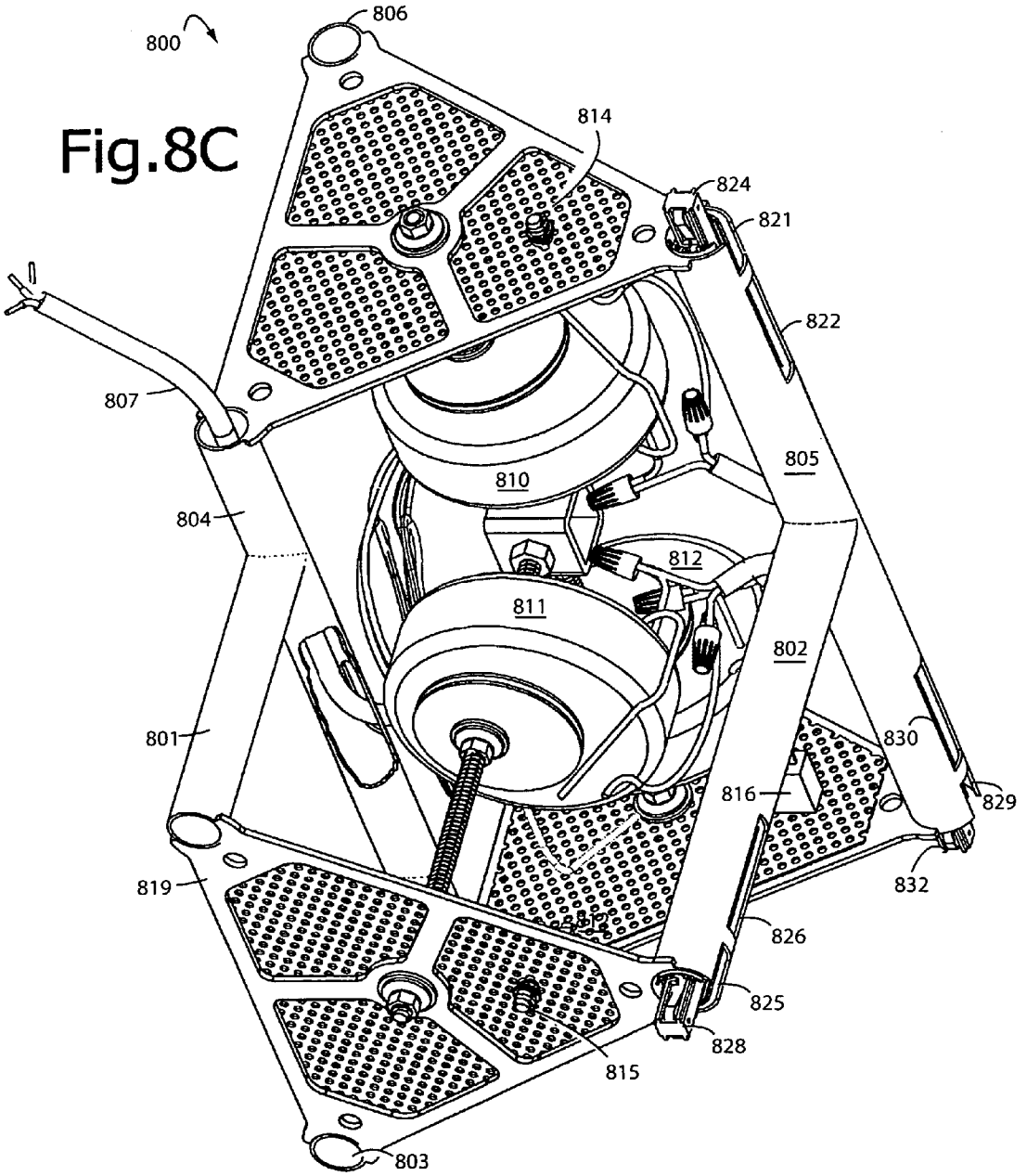
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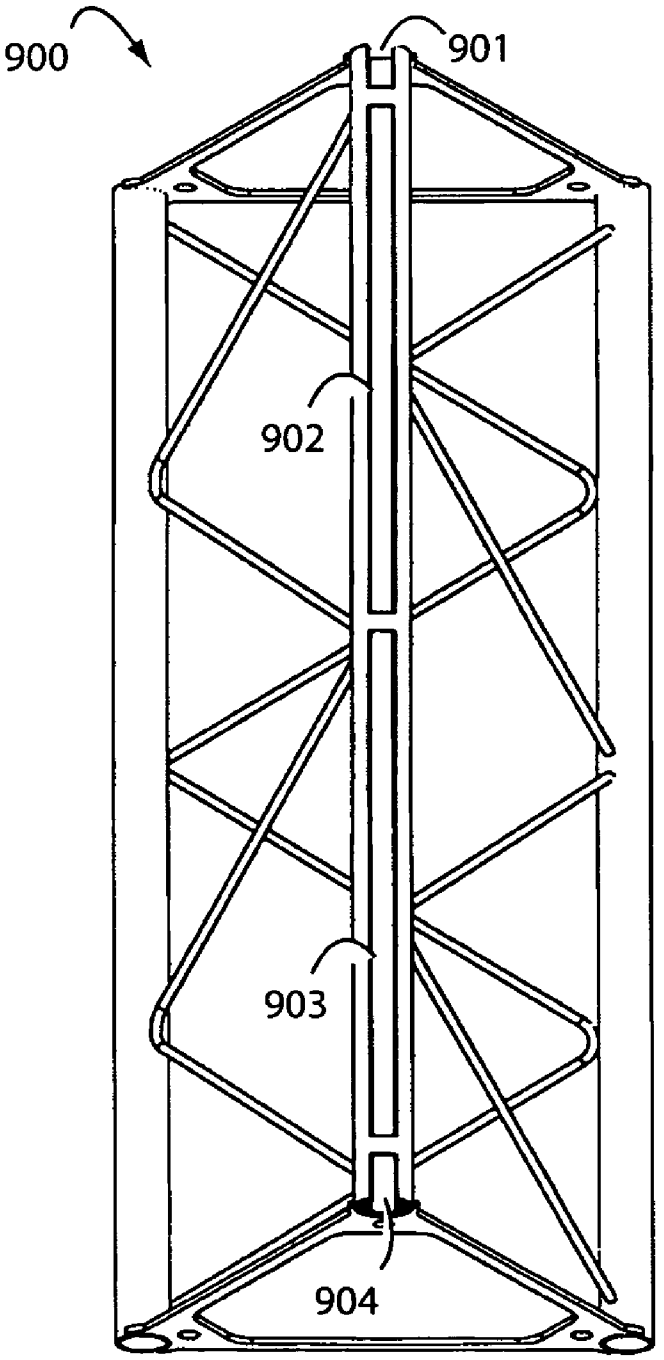
Fig.9



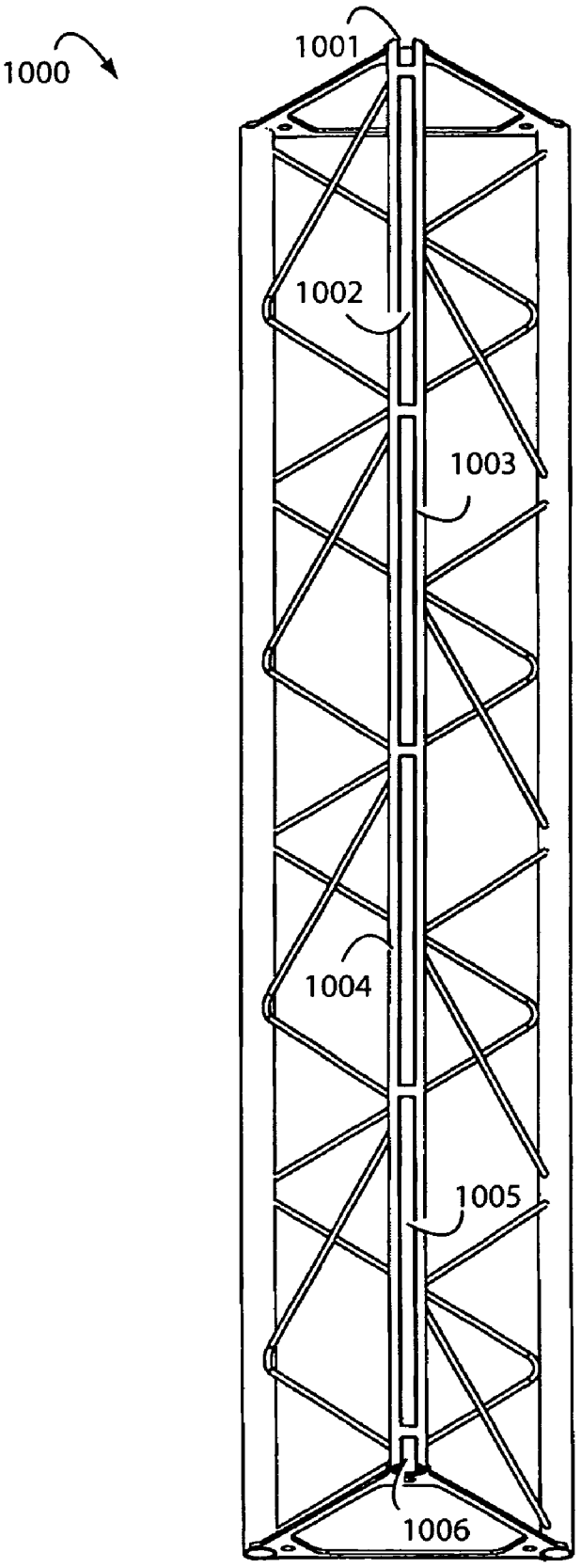


Fig.10

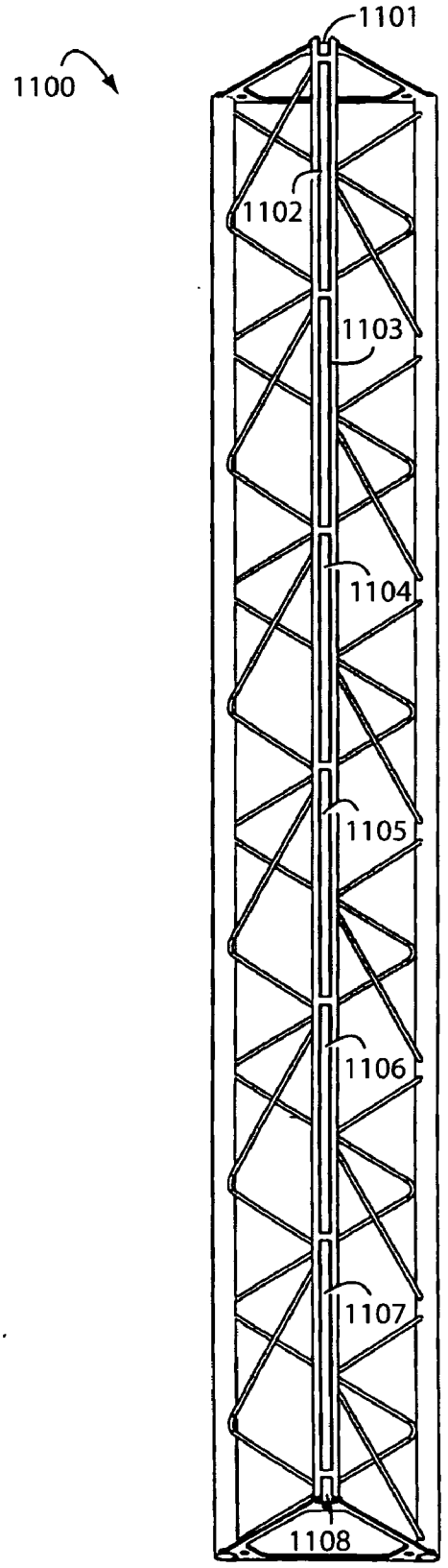


Fig. 11

Fig. 12A

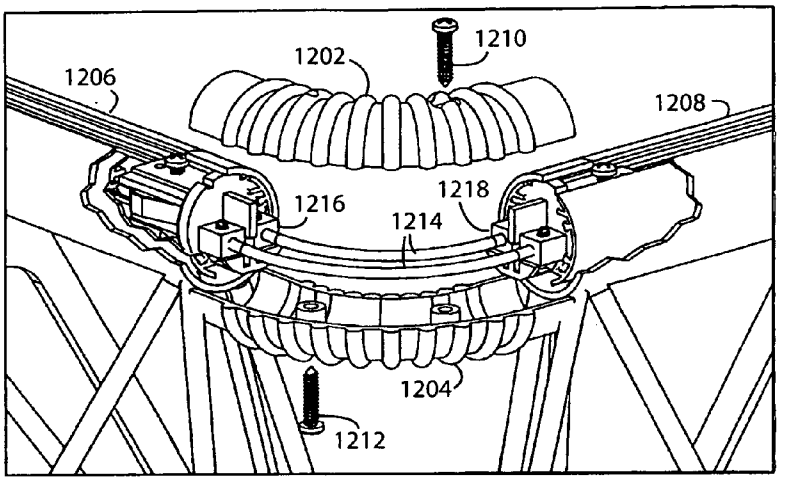


Fig. 12B

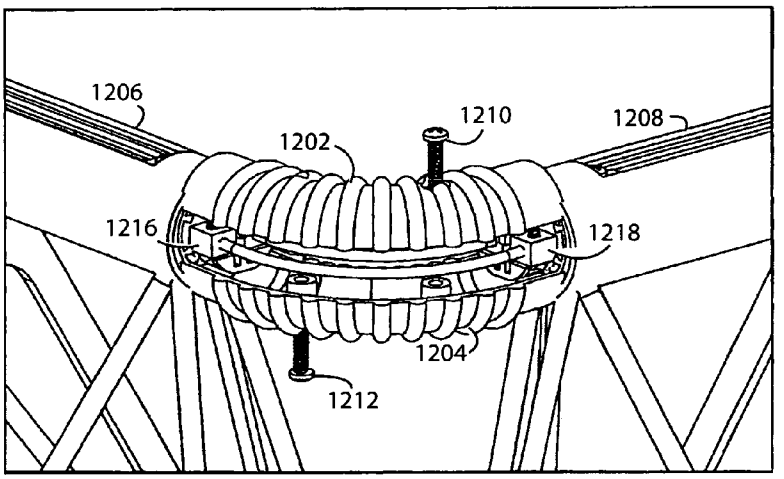


Fig. 12C

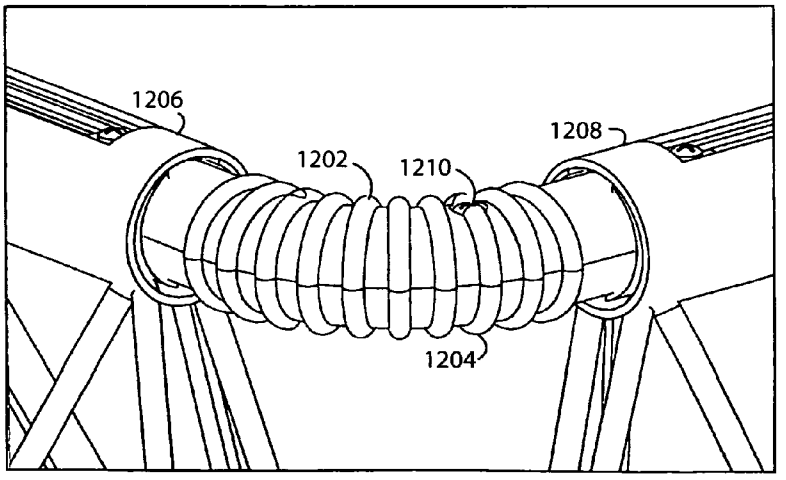
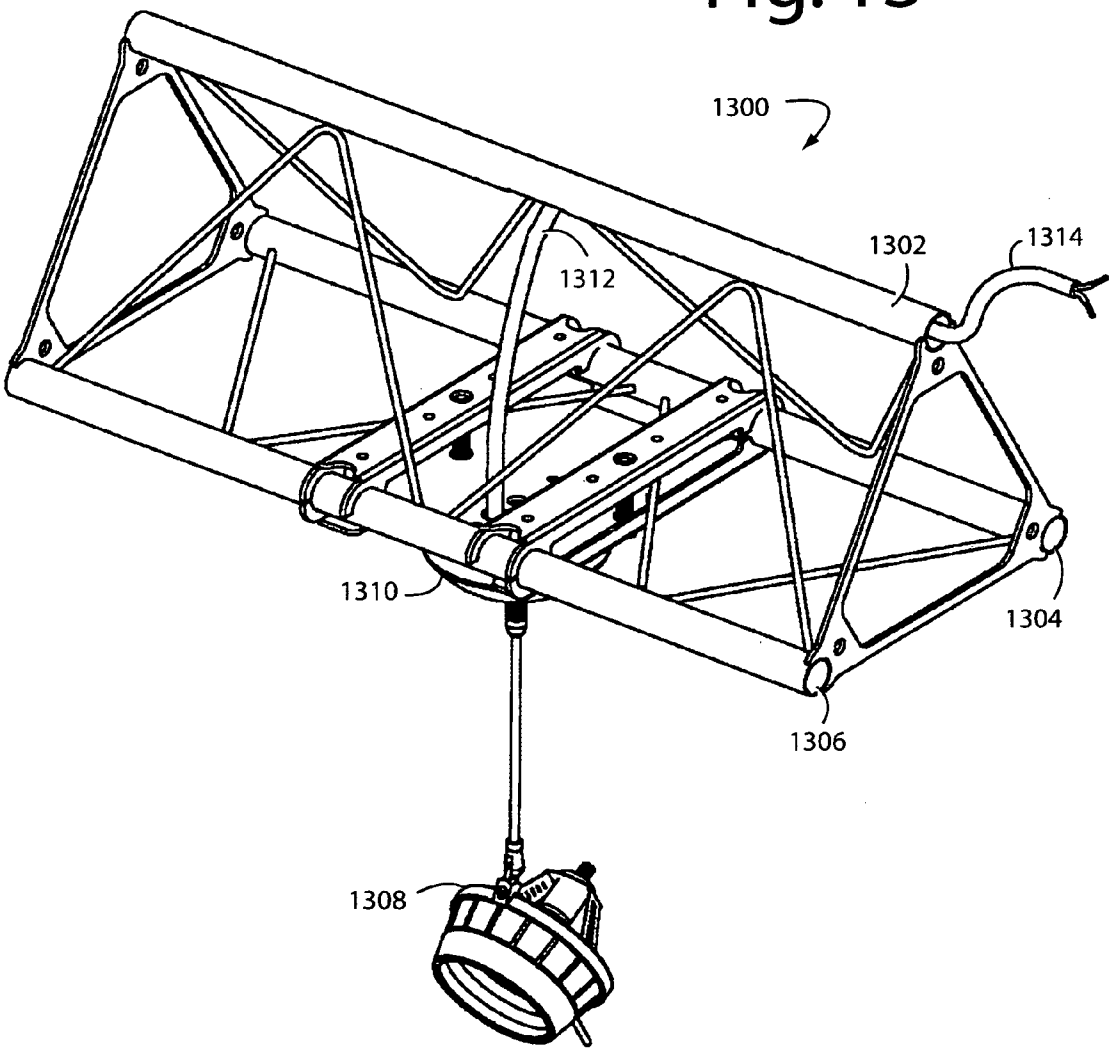


Fig. 13



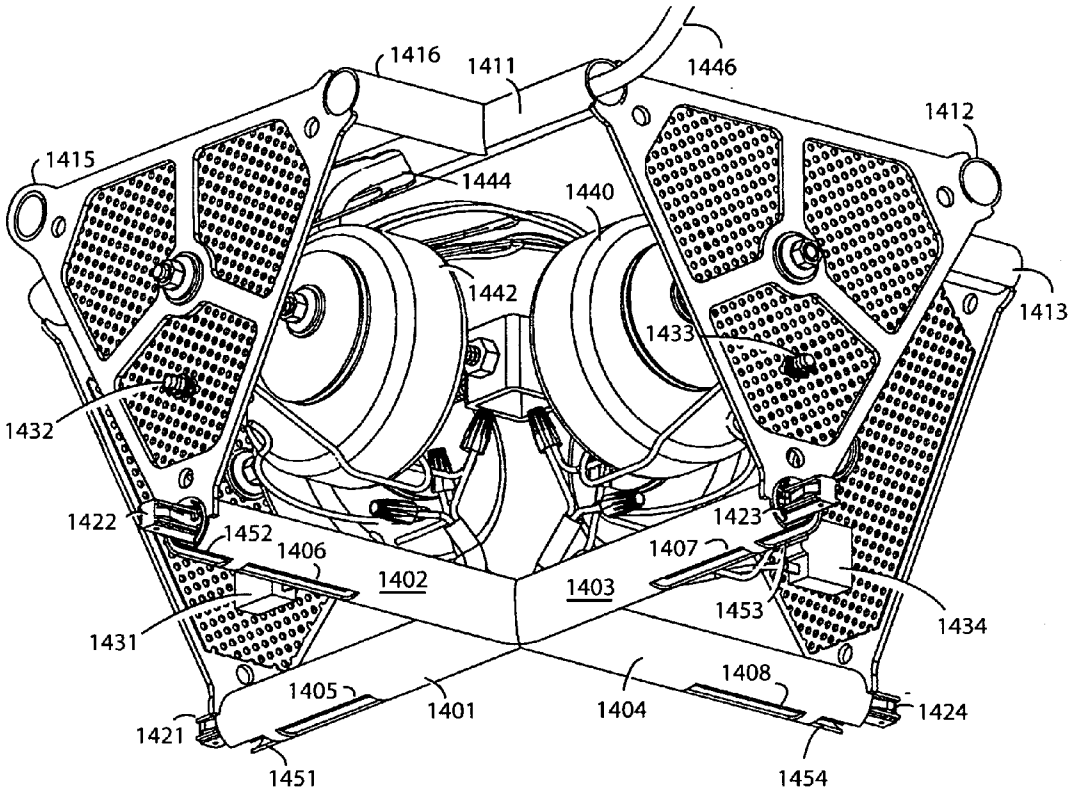

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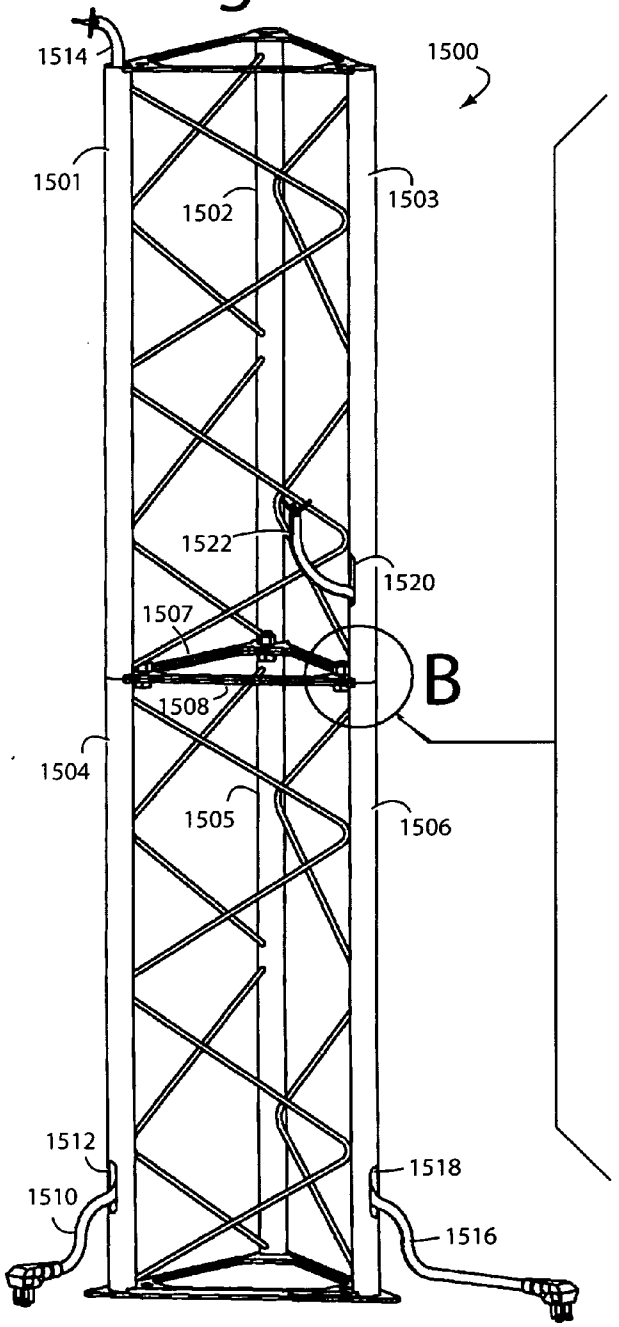
Fig.14

Fig. 15A



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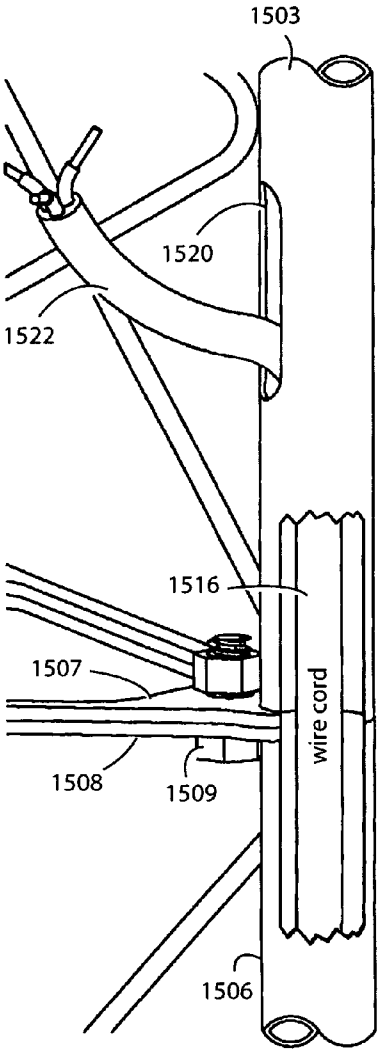

Fig. 16B

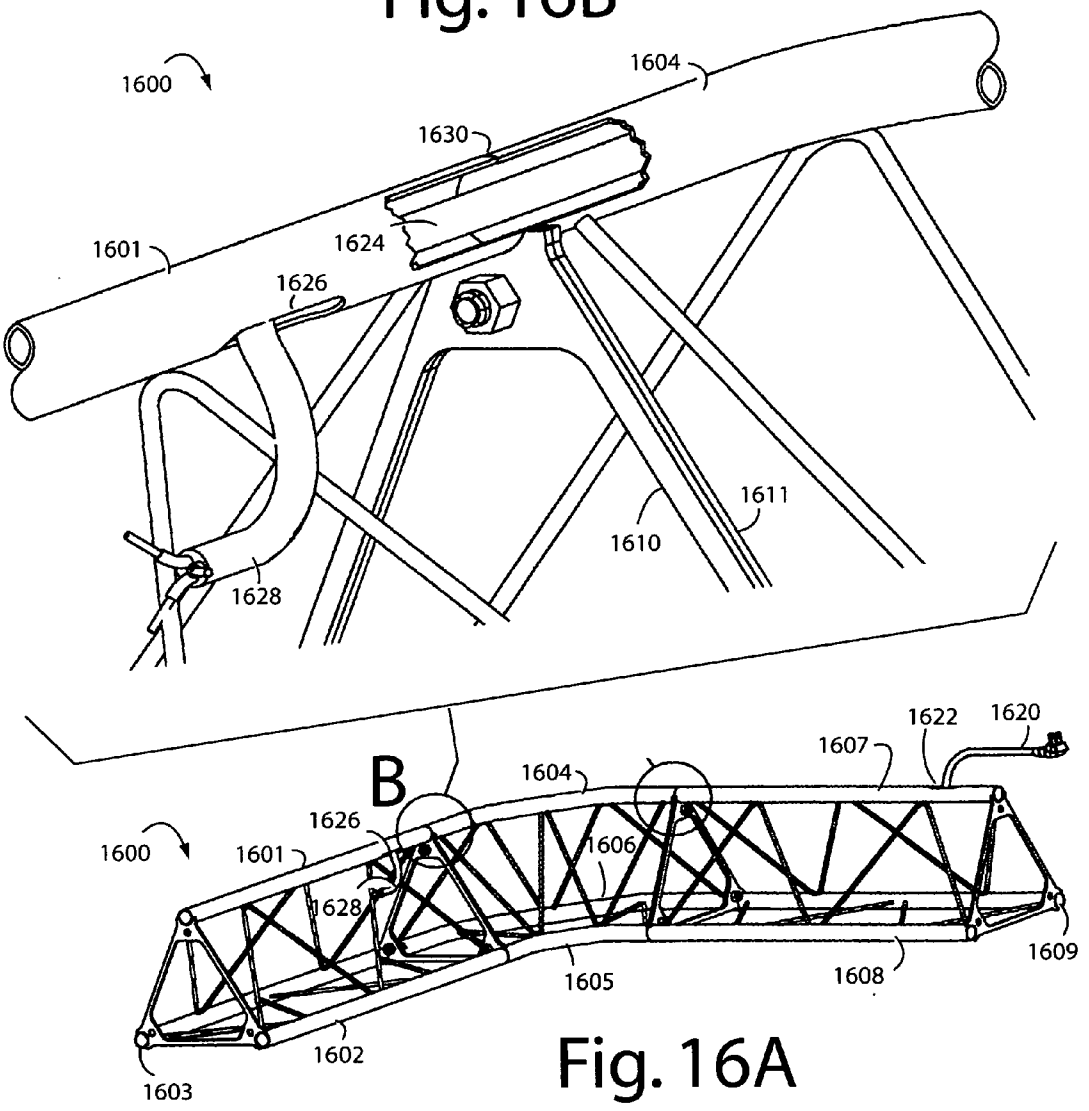

Fig. 16A

SIMPLIFIED TRUSS ASSEMBLY AND LIGHTING TRACK INTERCONNECTION

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This Application claims benefit of, and is a continuation-in-part of, U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/069,201, filed Feb. 09, 2008, titled, TRUSS WITH LIGHTING TRACK, and is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to lighting truss systems typically used in homes, offices, retail space, stages and trade shows. In particular, the present invention relates to trusses with electrical buss bars, insulator supports, and extruded aluminum carriers disposed in at least one steel truss chord and accessible for track light fixtures through slots.

2. Description of Related Art

Trusses are widely used to support overhead lighting units powered by electrical power cords dressed along the truss raceways. Truss systems for stages and tradeshow floors are available in I-beam, triangle, and square truss sections made from aluminum or steel. Steel trusses are strong enough to permit 40-foot spans, and aluminum trusses have the advantage that they can be made from extruded pieces. Extrusions allow the possibility of including power tracks inside for track lighting heads.

Trussing typically comes in ten-foot sections, and can be interconnected with 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6-way corners. The interconnections at the ends can be the tube-in-socket kind, or by butting together and bolting truss end plates.

Track lighting is another very flexible and adaptable lighting system, but more so for permanent installations. The power tracks themselves are usually very flimsy and need to be supported by bolting them to walls, ceilings, or support rods.

Line voltage track systems are dangerous and require large raceways that make the overall structures relatively large and clumsy. Low voltage systems enabled with step-down transformers permit much smaller and moderate structural piece sizes that make for easier and simplified installations.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Briefly, a simplified assembly truss system embodiment of the present invention rivets power tracks inside one chord of each truss span so that the power tracks cannot be misaligned inside the chord during final assembly. The chord is slotted to receive lighting heads in its mid-sections, and short end slots allow interconnecting plugs to be inserted into matching power track ends. A stop captured by the rivets near each chord-end indexes the inter-connecting plugs.

An advantage of the present invention is that a truss system is provided that does not allow incorrect or misaligned assembly by an installer.

Another advantage of the present invention is that a method is provided for the interconnection of low voltage power between truss sections.

The above and still further objects, features, and advantages of the present invention will become apparent upon consideration of the following detailed description of specific embodiments thereof, especially when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a perspective diagram of a stage lighting truss system embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **2**A is a close up perspective exploded assembly view showing how typical truss sections are assembled together with interconnecting plugs for the low voltage power daisy-chaining;

FIG. **2**B is a close up perspective view showing how typical truss sections look after being assembled together;

FIG. **3**A is an end view of a truss section with one of its three main chords outfitted with power busses and slotting to accommodate lighting heads, transformers, and other devices, as in FIG. **1**;

FIG. **3**B is a perspective view of the truss section shown in FIG. **3**A;

FIGS. **4**A-**4**C are end views and a perspective of a powered truss chord, as in FIGS. **3**A and **3**B, which has aluminum extrusions and insulator supports for two-wire power bus bars and slotting in the steel truss chord tubing to accommodate lighting heads as in FIG. **1**;

FIGS. **4**D-**4**F are end views and a perspective of a powered truss chord, as in FIGS. **3**A and **3**B, which has aluminum extrusions and insulator supports for four-wire power bus bars and slotting in the steel truss chord tubing to accommodate two circuits of lighting heads as in FIG. **1**;

FIGS. **5**A-**5**C are bottom, end, and top views of a 90-degree corner section that could be used with the parts shown in FIGS. **1**-**3**A and **3**B, inside the power tracks are interconnected through the sharp turns by internal wiring;

FIGS. **5**D-**5**F are bottom, end, and top views of the 90-degree corner section like that of FIGS. **5**A-**5**C, but with a hard plastic conduit connecting the power chord together and enclosing the interconnecting wiring;

FIGS. **6**A-**6**C are bottom, end, and top views of a 45-45-degree corner section that could be used with the parts shown in FIGS. **1**-**3**A and **3**B, the power tracks are interconnected through the 45-degree turns by internal wiring;

FIGS. **7**A-**7**B are perspective diagrams of a transformer power truss section to convert 110/220 VAC utility power into 12-VAC low voltage for the power tracks in FIGS. **1**-**6**A, **6**B, and **6**C;

FIGS. **8**A-**8**C are perspective diagrams of a transformer power truss T-section to convert 110/220 VAC utility power into 12-VAC low voltage for the power tracks in FIGS. **1**-**6**A, **6**B, and **6**C;

FIGS. **9**-**11** are perspective view diagrams of short, medium, and long lengths of straight truss sections, with two, three, and four power slots respectively;

FIGS. **12**A-**12**C are perspective view diagrams showing, in three steps, the assembly of a plastic elbow conduit and wiring for a corner truss section;

FIG. **13** is a perspective view diagram of a straight truss section with a utility line voltage powered pendulum lamp and strain relief support base;

FIG. **14** is a perspective diagram of a 4-transformer power truss 4-way cross connection to convert 110/220 VAC utility power into 12-VAC low voltage for the power tracks in adjoining truss sections;

FIGS. **15**A and **15**B are perspective view diagrams of two lengths of straight truss sections, showing how slots can be used to thread a power cord; and

FIGS. **16**A and **16**B are perspective view diagrams of two lengths of straight truss sections and a radius corner section, showing how slots can be used to thread a power cord through the corner.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

FIG. **1** represents a stage lighting truss system embodiment of the present invention, and is referred to herein by the general reference numeral **100**. Truss system **100** may be arranged in many configurations suitable for the dimensions and uses of a floor **102**. In one configuration, truss system **100** is made primarily from steel and comprises a pair of vertical supports **104** and **106** with base footings **108** and **110**. A three-chord member, triangular construction is shown in FIG. **1**, but 2-chord (I-beam), and 4-chord (square) truss pieces can also be used. A unique aspect is at least one of the chords has an electrical track and fixture slot within to accommodate and power low-voltage lighting heads.

Each section is terminated with a welded triangular flange, e.g., **112** and **114**. These bolt together and allow the modular assembly needed to custom configure each application of the system. An interconnector, shown in later Figures, allows daisy-chaining of the electrical power from one powered truss chord to the next.

A pair of 90-degree corner connectors **116** and **118** provide mounts overhead for a span of three horizontal truss sections **120**, **122**, and **124**. Typically, three such sections would provide a 30-foot span. For example, low-voltage lighting heads **130-135** can be installed anywhere along the powered truss chord **140-146** using a fixture slot in the steel tubing that provides mechanical support aloft and electrical contact access to the electrified power busses inside.

A step-down transformer **150** provides low-voltage, 12/24 VAC, power converted from a 120/240 VAC power line cord **152**. The low voltage connection from the step-down transformer can be detachable through the track fixture slot like the lighting heads, or wired-in for high amperage through a heavier feed cable connection.

FIG. **2**A shows a close-up of the connection between sections, e.g., between flanges **112** and **114** in FIG. **1**, and is referred to by the general reference numeral **200**. Connection **200** requires an electrical interconnector **202** with opposite male plug ends. During on-site assembly, an insertion motion **204** puts this in place in one truss section end, as shown here by another interconnector **206**.

A riveted stop **207**, visible here only in the end of a powered truss chord **208** prevents the interconnector **206** from going in too deep. Its rivet prevents field personnel from assuming this piece can be adjusted or disassembled by them.

A matching female socket here aligns with a similar powered truss-chord **210** and female socket in an adjoining truss section. These two truss sections are joined by matching welded flanges **212** and **214**, and all are made of steel for strength. A typical machine bolt **216** passes through holes **218** and is threaded and tightened to a machine nut. Slots **224-227** provide access for lighting heads and transformers into the internal power tracks **228** and **230**. The internal power tracks **228** and **230** are disposed in each of the powered truss-chords **208** and **210** and are electrically bridged by interconnector **206**.

It's advantageous to have the longest fixture slots **224** and **226** possible, and these are most practical when the chords are comprised of steel. Slots **225** and **227** are each just a few inches long and are divided by webbings **232** and **234** from slots **224** and **226**. The webbings **232** and **234** help maintain the overall strength of the tube sections in which they are disposed.

FIG. **2**B shows the results of assembling connection **200**.

FIGS. **3**A and **3**B represent a flange end of a three-chord truss **300**. In FIG. **3**B, three steel chords **301-303** are welded at their ends in a triangular pattern to a flange **304**. Bolt holes **306-308** are provided to fasten this end to another adjoining truss section. Truss chord **303** is a powered truss chord and can receive a lighting head **310** and track connector **312** through a near continuous fixture slot **314**. An end slot **315** allows for testing and inspection of any interconnecting plugs after assembly.

How much of the length of powered truss-chord **303** that can be slotted is limited by the weakening effects a continuous fixture slot would have. If steel were used for the tubing, the slotting would have less of an effect on the truss strength. Such slots can be cut from the steel tubing by industrial lasers, which allow for clean straight cuts of any shape. The slotting **314** and **315** in the steel tubing may be interrupted at the ends and every three or four feet to allow a web **316** to brace together the open pieces. Other metals, of course, can be used for the tubing and flanges.

FIGS. **4**A-**4**F provide more details of what's inside a powered truss chord **400**. It includes a steel outer tubing **402** in which is disposed an aluminum extrusion **404**. Such, in turn, provides for two insulator supports **406** and **408** as seen in FIGS. **4**A-**4**C. These can be made of any good electrical insulating material that is also mechanically strong and able to resist breaking and cracking, e.g., polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and other plastics. A pair of copper bus bars **410** and **412** carry a low voltage current to power track lighting and other devices. The electrical contact can be made directly inside anywhere along the exposed bars. An access fixture slot **414** in extrusion **404** allows a lighting head connector, e.g., **312** in FIGS. **3**A and **3**B, to be inserted through to make contact with power buss bars **410** and **412**. A similar, matching fixture slot **416** is cut into the adjacent section of the steel main truss chord **402**.

The aluminum extrusion **404** is permanently secured inside powered truss-chord **402** with a rivet **420** and square nut stop **421** through a hole **422**. FIGS. **4**C and **4**F use drawing cutaways in tubing **402** to better show the details of rivet **420** and square nut stop **421**.

FIGS. **4**D-**4**F include instead a 4-wire bus bar extrusion **430**, a first pair of insulators **432** and **434**, a top pair of copper buss bars **436** and **438**, a second pair of insulators **440** and **442**, and a bottom pair of copper buss bars **444** and **446**.

FIGS. **5**A-**5**C represent one kind of 90-degree corner section that could be used with the parts shown in FIGS. **1**-**3**A and **3**B, and is referred to herein by the general reference numeral **500**. Corner **500** comprises three main chords **501-503** and end-plate flanges **504** and **506**, e.g., made of steel. Slots **507-510** are respectively cut in the outer edge of powered truss chord **502**. Power busses are aligned with slots **508** and **510** and connected by a pair of wires through a plastic elbow **512**. Male-male interconnectors **518** and **520** provide for power connections to the adjoining truss sections.

FIGS. **5**D-**5**F are bottom, end, and top views of a 90-degree corner section **540** like those of FIGS. **5**A-**5**C, but with a hard plastic conduit **542** enclosing interconnecting wiring. Slots **507-510** are disposed in the power chord **502** which provide access to power busses inside. End slots **507** and **510** allow for the inspection and testing of respective interconnectors **518** and **520**.

FIGS. **6**A-**6**C represent a 45-45-degree corner section that could be used with the parts shown in FIGS. **1**-**3**A and **3**B, and is referred to herein by the general reference numeral **600**. Corner **600** comprises three main chords **601-603** and end-plate flanges **604** and **606**, e.g., made of steel. Slots **608-612**, are cut into the corresponding straight runs of powered truss chord **602**. Slot **610** allows a power cord to be threaded in the tubing to the outside. Power busses, like that shown in FIG. **4**, are aligned and connected through the sharp turns by wire

pairs. Male-male interconnectors **624** and **626** provide for power connections to the adjoining truss sections through matching female sockets.

FIGS. **7**A-**7**B represent a transformer power truss section **700** to convert 120VAC or 220VAC utility power into 12VAC low voltage for the power tracks in FIGS. **1**-**6**A and **6**C. The power truss section **700** comprises three truss chords **701**-**703**, of which chord **702** carries the low voltage wiring and lighting tracks. A utility power supply pigtail **704** leads in through a slot **705** in chord **701** and has a ground connection **706**. Two step-down transformers **708** and **710** convert, e.g., 120VAC to 12VAC and are respectively protected by circuit breakers **712** and **714**. These each have a pushbutton reset (shown for **714**) that a user can get to easily on the outside. A low voltage output from step-down transformer **708** connects through a wire lead **716** to an interconnector **718**. Similarly, another low voltage output from step-down transformer **710** connects through a wire lead **720** to an interconnector **722**. These respectively plug into a power track accessible through slots **723**-**726**. FIG. **7**B shows how the electrical components can be enclosed.

FIGS. **8**A-**8**C represent a transformer power truss T-section **800** to convert 120VAC or 220VAC utility power into 12VAC low voltage, e.g., for the power tracks in FIGS. **1**-**6**A, **6**B, and **6**C. The power truss T-section **800** comprises three truss chords **801**-**803** which T-intersect with three other truss chords **804**-**806**. Chords **802** and **805** carry the low voltage wiring and lighting tracks. A utility power supply pigtail **807** leads in through chord **804** and has a ground connection **808**. Three step-down transformers **810**-**812** convert, e.g., 110-VAC to 12-VAC, and are respectively protected by circuit breakers **814**-**816**. These each have a pushbutton reset on the corresponding arm's flange plate **818**-**820** that a user can get to easily on the outside. A low voltage output from step-down transformer **810** connects through a wire lead to a power bus under an end slot **821**, a fixture slot **822** and interconnector **824**. Similarly, another low voltage output from step-down transformer **811** connects through a wire lead to a power bus under an end slot **825**, a fixture slot **826** and to an interconnector **828**. A third low voltage output from step-down transformer **812** connects through a wire lead to a power bus under an end slot **829**, a fixture slot **830** and then to interconnector **832**.

FIGS. **9**-**11** represent a short, a medium, and a long length of straight truss sections, referred to herein by the general reference numerals **900**, **1000**, and **1100**. For example, these could be four, six, and eight feet long. In FIG. **9**, straight truss section **900** has slots **901**-**904**. In FIG. **10**, straight truss section **1000** has slots **10001**-**1006**. In FIG. **11**, straight truss section **1100** has slots **1101**-**1108**. The slots keep enough webbing between them to provide the structural strength necessary for the truss to provide good support without bending or flexing. For this reason, the longer lengths of straight truss sections need to be broken up in more slots, such that the webbing between them can be spaced no more than a few feet apart. For example, in FIG. **9**, the maximum length of slots **902** and **903** would be several inches.

FIGS. **12**A-**12**C provide more detail on the wiring and interconnection of corner truss sections, like that shown in FIGS. **5**D-**5**F. A corner truss **1200** has two plastic elbow sections **1202** and **1204** that clamp over and join the ends of intersecting power truss chords and electric tracks **1206** and **1208**. A pair of screws **1210** and **1212** holds them together. Inside, a pair of electrical wires **1214** connect respective ends **1216** and **1218** of the electric tracks **1206** and **1208**.

FIG. **13** represents a straight truss section **1300** that does not include an electric track or power chord. Instead, three truss chords **1302**, **1304**, and **1306**, are used to support a pendulum lamp **1308**. A clamp on support base **1310** provides a decorative base and strain relief for a power cord **1312**. This feeds into a slot in chord **1302** and out one end, emerging as a pigtail **1314** for connection to a power source and/or junction box.

FIG. **14** represents a 4-way truss connecting section **1400** that includes four arms **1401**-**1404** and a power chord with slots **1405**-**1408**. Other chords **1411**-**1416** are welded together from tubing to form the basic three-chord structural member with 4-way intersection. Interconnectors **1421**-**1424** provide for electrical, low voltage connections to other truss sections. Each has a respective circuit breaker **1431**-**1434** that can be easily reset with a pushbutton by a user if a circuit fault occurred. Four step-down transformers are represented by **1440** and **1444**, and receive utility power through a slot **1444** using a power cord and pigtail **1446**. Cover screens would normally be installed to protect workers from electric shock, and are not shown here so the internal components can be understood and described. End slots **1451**-**1454** provide access and inspection of interconnectors **1421**-**1424**.

FIGS. **15**A and **15**B represent a truss section **1500** that illustrates how the utility power cords can be dressed inside the truss chords. A first straight truss has three chords **1501**-**1503** that join with a second straight truss section with three matching truss chords **1504**-**1506**. These all have open ends that allow cords and other wiring to pass inside between them, and the truss sections bolt together with end flanges like **1507** and **1508** using fasteners like **1509**. A first power plug and cord **1510** passes up inside chords **1504** and **1501** through a slot **1512**. A pigtail **1514** appears at the open end of chord **1501**. Another power plug and cord **1516** similarly passes up inside chords **1506** and **1503**, but exits through a slot **1520** to appear as pigtail **1522**.

FIG. **16** represents a corner assembly **1600** that uses a radius elbow section to join straight truss sections. The way the utility power wiring is threaded in the truss chord tubing members is the focus of this illustration. A first straight truss section has straight chords **1601**-**1603** that align with three corresponding radius chord members **1604**-**1606** in an elbow truss. These, in turn, connect to respective chords **1607**-**1609** in a second straight truss section. A detail B shows how flanges **1610** and **1611** mate and are bolted together. A power plug and cord **1620** threads into a slot **1622** in chord **1607** and runs up along inside chords **1604** and **1601**. It is seen in a cutaway as cord **1624** and exits a slot **1626** with a pigtail end **1628**. Standard twist-on wire connections can be used to complete the electrical connection, e.g., to a step-down transformer or line-voltage lamp. Cord **1624** is shown passing through a butt-joint **1630**.

Although particular embodiments of the present invention have been described and illustrated, such was not intended to limit the invention. Modifications and changes will no doubt become apparent to those skilled in the art, and it was intended that the invention only be limited by the scope of the appended claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A lighting truss system, comprising: a truss section with a plurality of powered main truss chords between end flanges;

a plurality of fixture slots disposed along an outside length of said powered main truss chords; a pair of end slots outboard of the fixture slots and inline with the fixture slots, and which produce an opening at each end of the powered main truss chords; a plurality of extruded aluminum supports disposed inside said powered main truss chords; a pair of power buss bars supported inside the extruded aluminum supports by insulator supports

and accessible on one side through one of the fixture slots; and a pair of fasteners each for fixing corresponding ends of the extruded aluminum supports inside the powered main truss chords.

2. The truss system of claim **1**, further comprising: a male-male plug for interconnecting exposed open ends of the powered main truss chords between adjoining said end flanges, and which slide in under respective one of the end slots, and that are indexed and stopped in position by corresponding one of the fasteners.

3. The truss system of claim **1**, further comprising:

the plurality of fixture slots disposed along said outside length of said powered main truss chords, and the extruded aluminum supports disposed inside said powered main truss chords, and the pair of power buss bars supported inside the extruded aluminum supports by insulator supports; wires interconnecting at least two pairs of the power buss bars;

and sockets formed at each end of the powered main truss chords at said end flanges providing for a male-male plug for interconnecting exposed open ends of the powered main truss chords between adjoining said end flanges.

4. The truss system of claim **1**, further comprising:

a step-down transformer for providing low-voltage from a utility connection to the pair of power buss bars through one of the fixture slots.

5. The truss system of claim **1**, further comprising:

a number of lighting heads connected through the fixture slots to the power buss bars and positionable anywhere along the fixture slots.

6. A truss transformer power T-section, comprising:

a truss T-section with a plurality of low-voltage powered main truss chords between three end flanges; a plurality of slots disposed along an outside length of said powered main truss chords; a plurality of extruded aluminum supports disposed inside said powered main truss chords relative to the slots;

a pair of fasteners each for fixing the ends of the extruded aluminum supports inside the powered main truss chords; a pair of power buss bars supported inside each of the extruded aluminum supports by insulator supports and accessible on one side through the fixture slots; pairs of wires internally interconnecting the pair of power buss bars; sockets formed at each of ends of the powered main truss chords at said end flanges providing for a male-male plug for interconnecting exposed open ends of the powered main truss chords between adjoining said end flanges; and at least one step-down transformer for converting a utility power input into a low voltage which is then applied to the pairs of power buss bars.

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