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Seifried

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(54) **MAGNETIC ARC WELDED PISTON ASSEMBLY**

USPC 219/100, 121, 122, 123, 617, 635;
123/123, 193.6; 29/29, 888.044
See application file for complete search history.

(71) Applicant: **Mahle International GmbH**, Stuttgart (DE)

(72) Inventor: **Matthias Seifried**, Boesingen (DE)

(73) Assignee: **Mahle International GmbH** (DE)

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B23K 9/08 (2006.01)
F02F 3/00 (2006.01)
B23K 101/00 (2006.01)

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

CPC **B23K 11/04** (2013.01); **B23K 9/08** (2013.01); **F02F 3/003** (2013.01); **B23K 2101/003** (2018.08); **F02F 2003/0061** (2013.01)

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Primary Examiner — Tu B Hoang

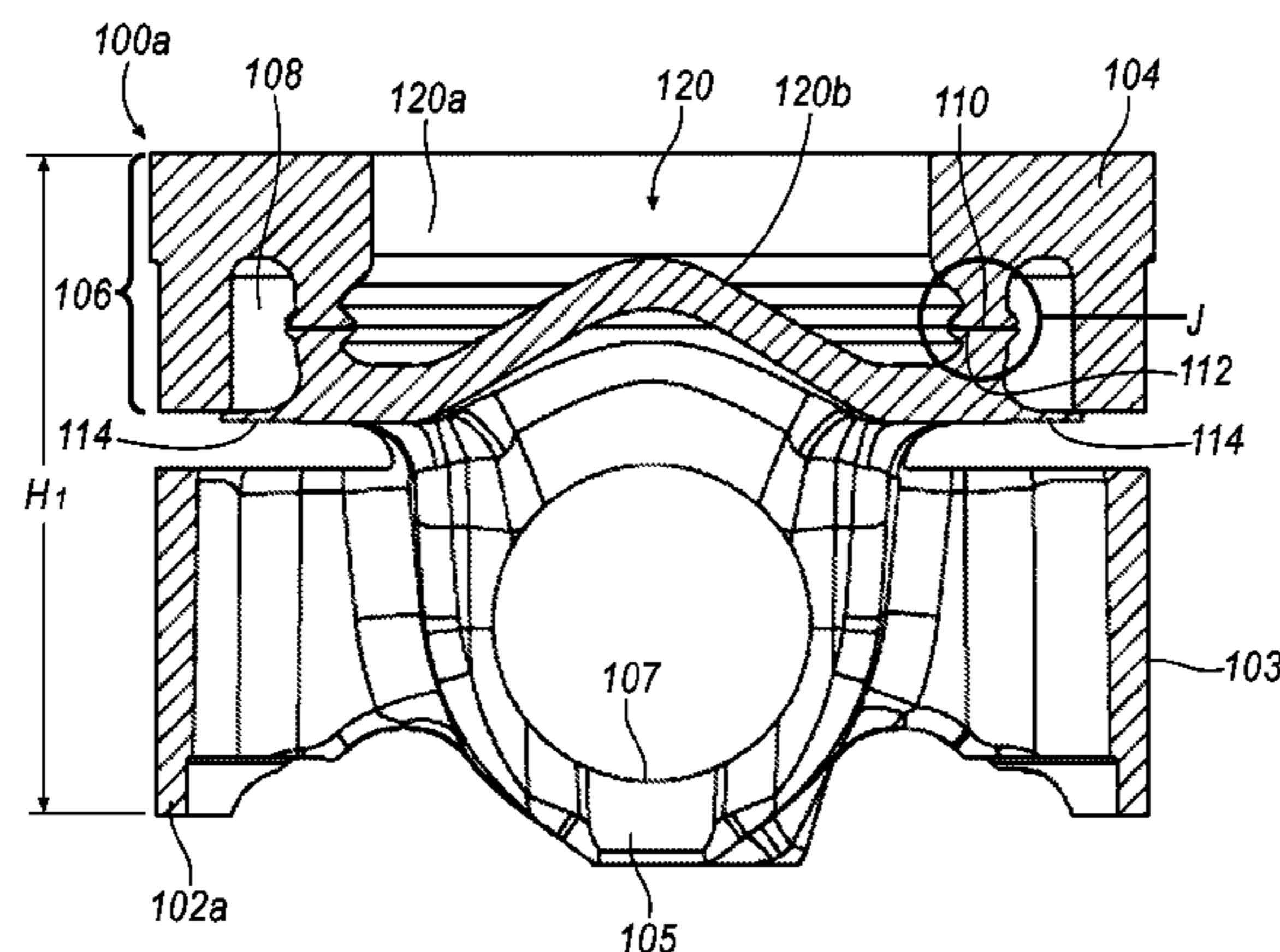
Assistant Examiner — Vy T Nguyen

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Fishman Stewart PLLC

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A piston and method of making the same includes providing a piston lower part defining a piston axis and at least a portion of the upper combustion bowl surface, and assembling a piston upper part to the piston lower part. The piston upper and lower parts cooperate to define at least in part a cooling gallery extending annularly about the piston. The method further includes bringing the piston upper and lower parts together along respective upper and lower mating surfaces and inducing an electric current between the upper and lower mating surfaces while the upper and lower mating surfaces are in contact.

14 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets



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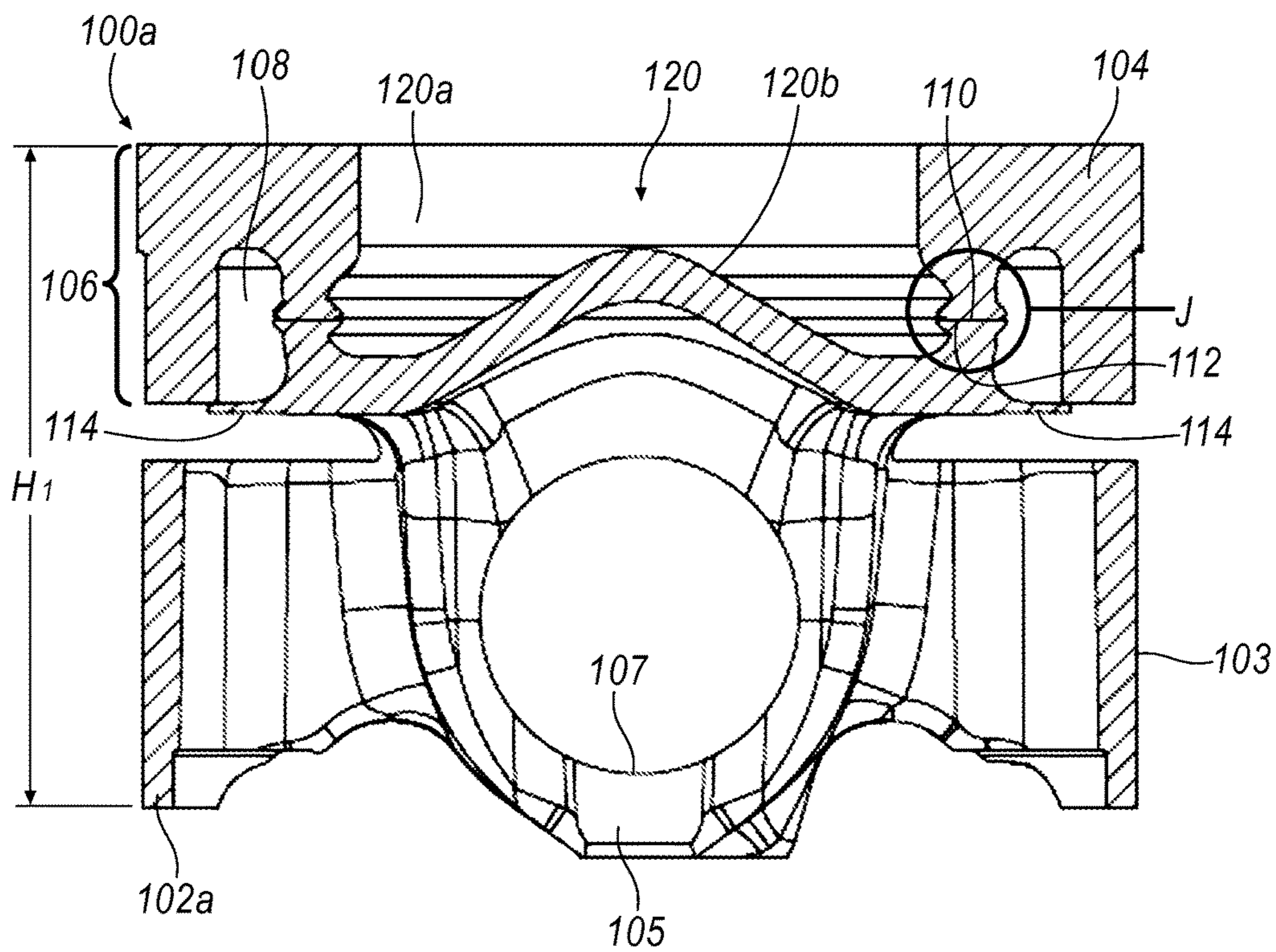


FIG. 1

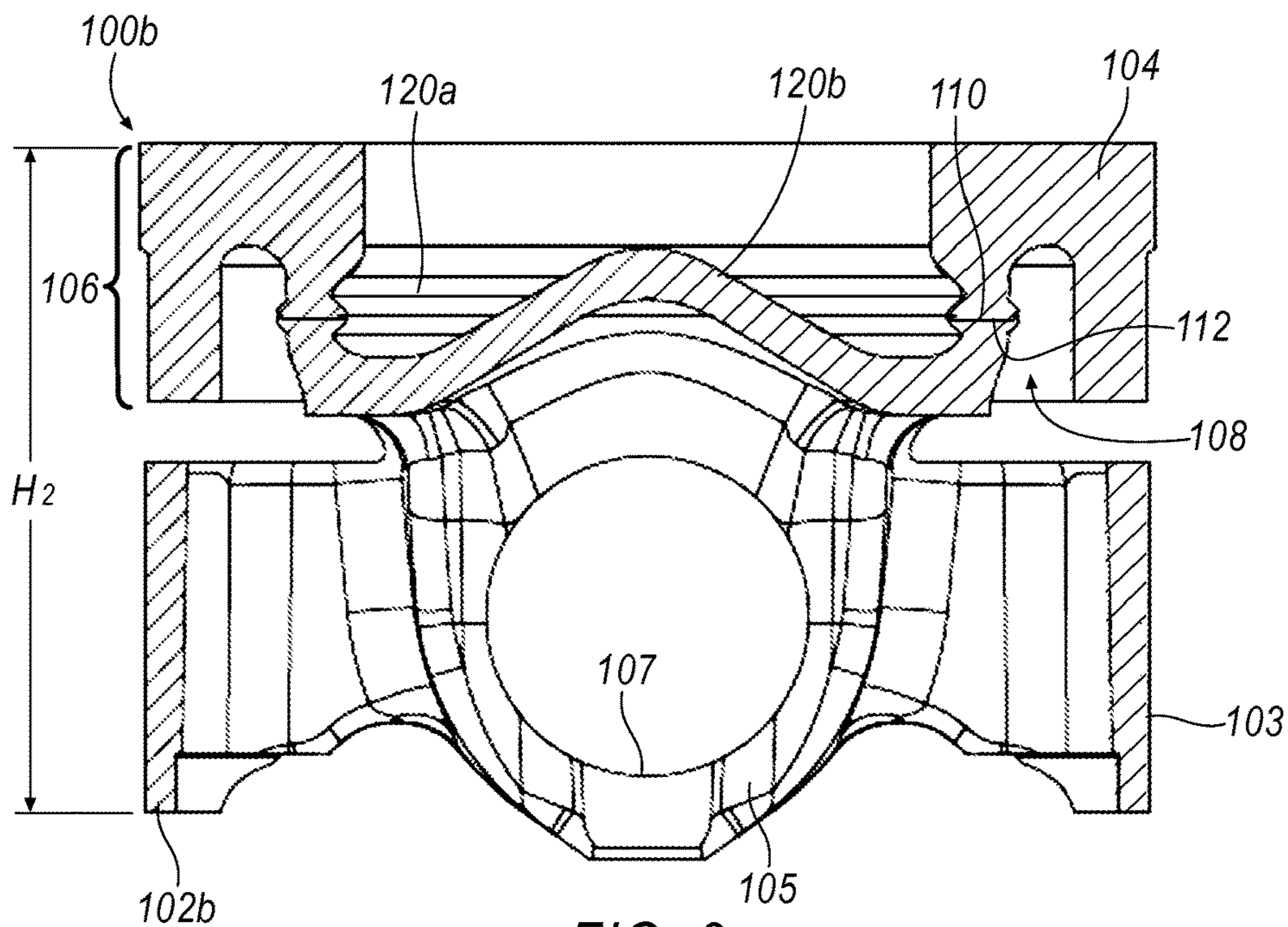


FIG. 2

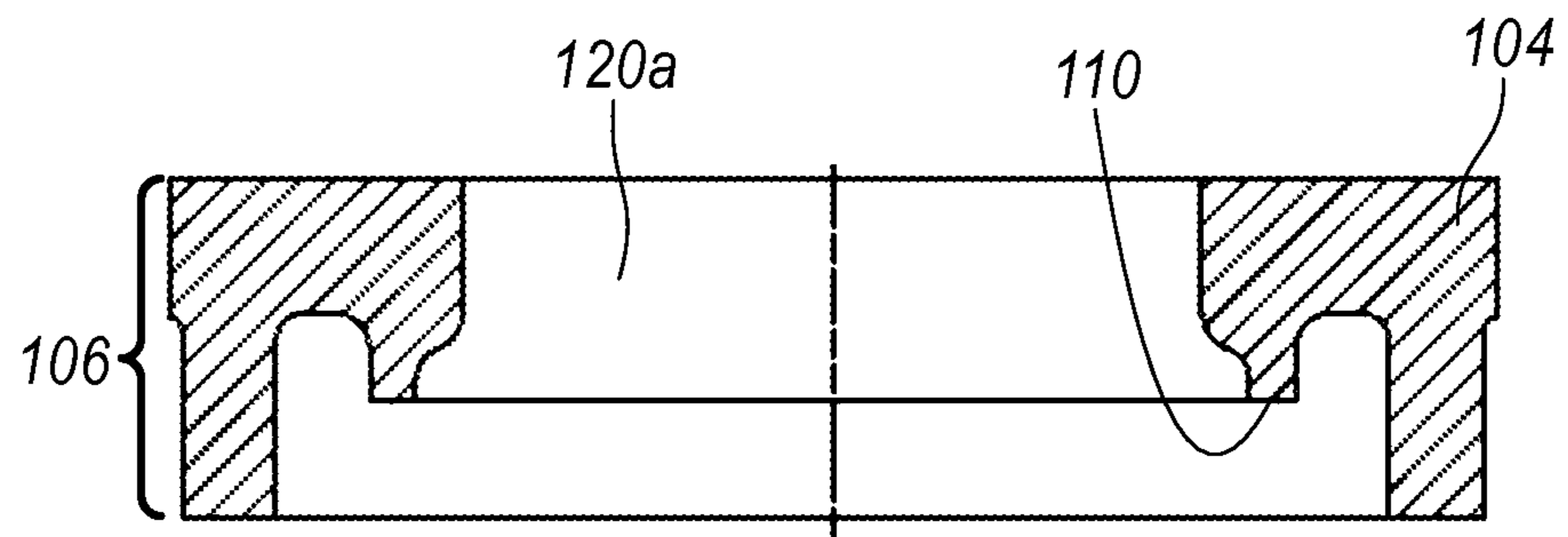


FIG. 3A

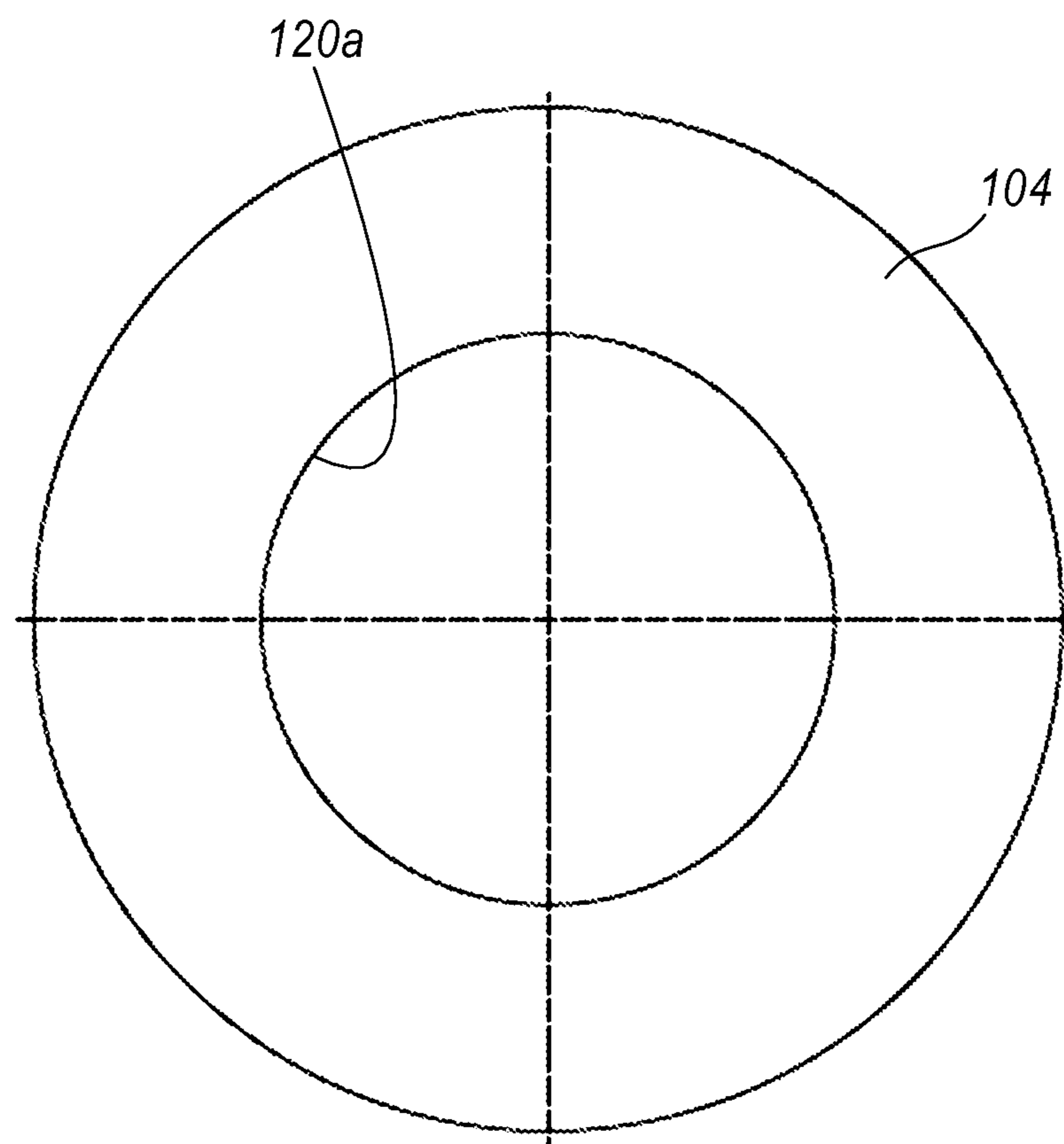


FIG. 3B

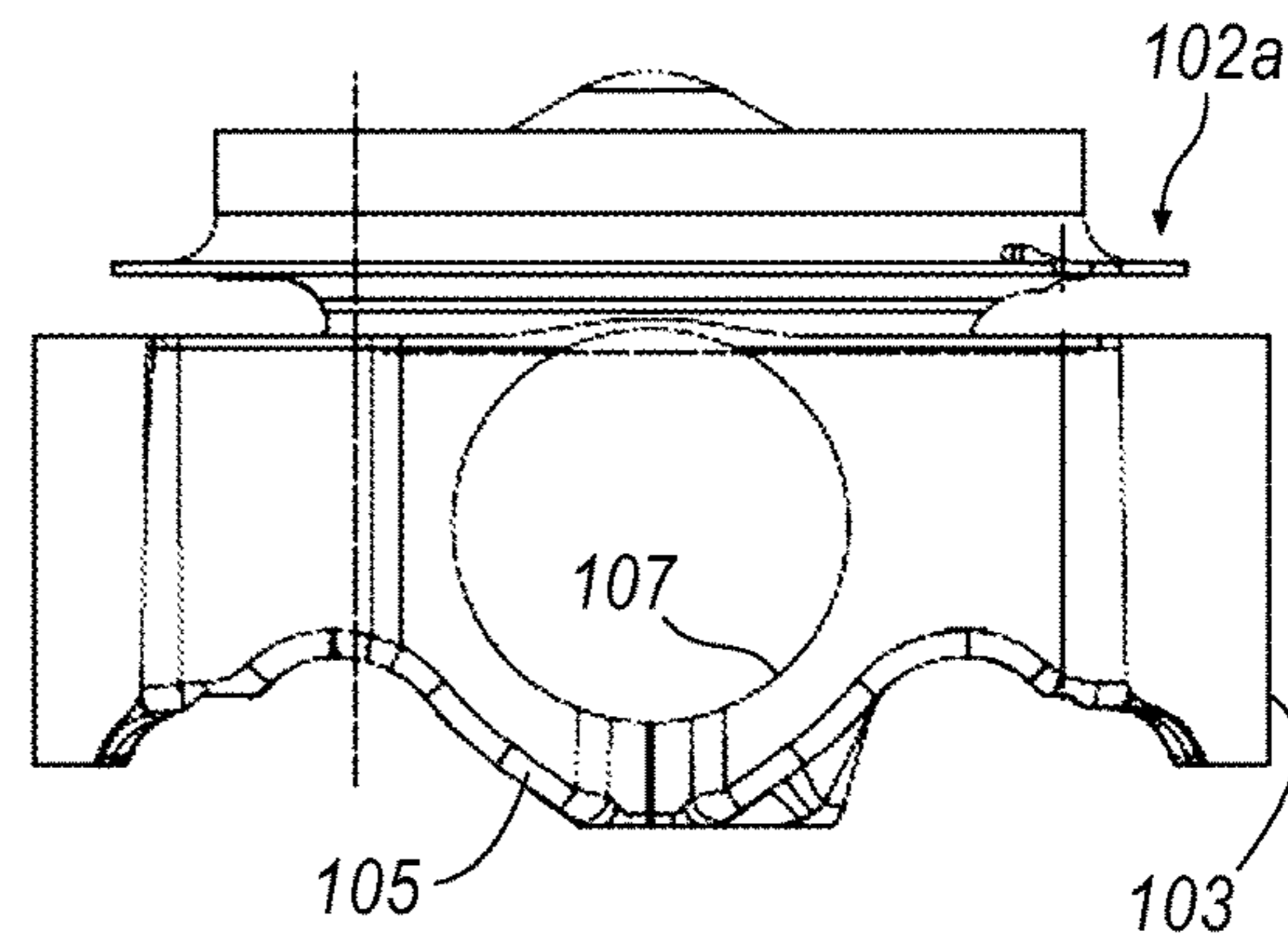
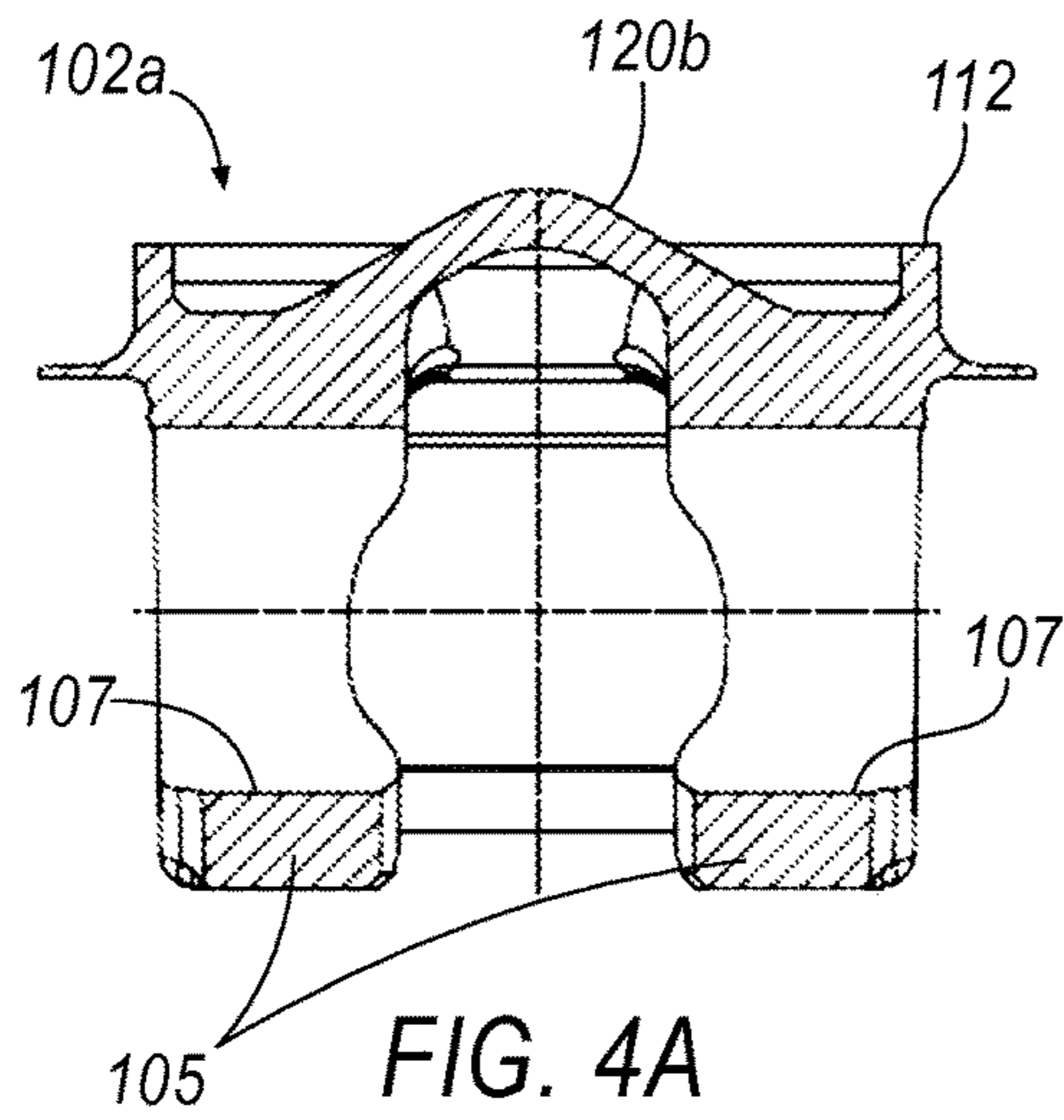


FIG. 4A

FIG. 4B

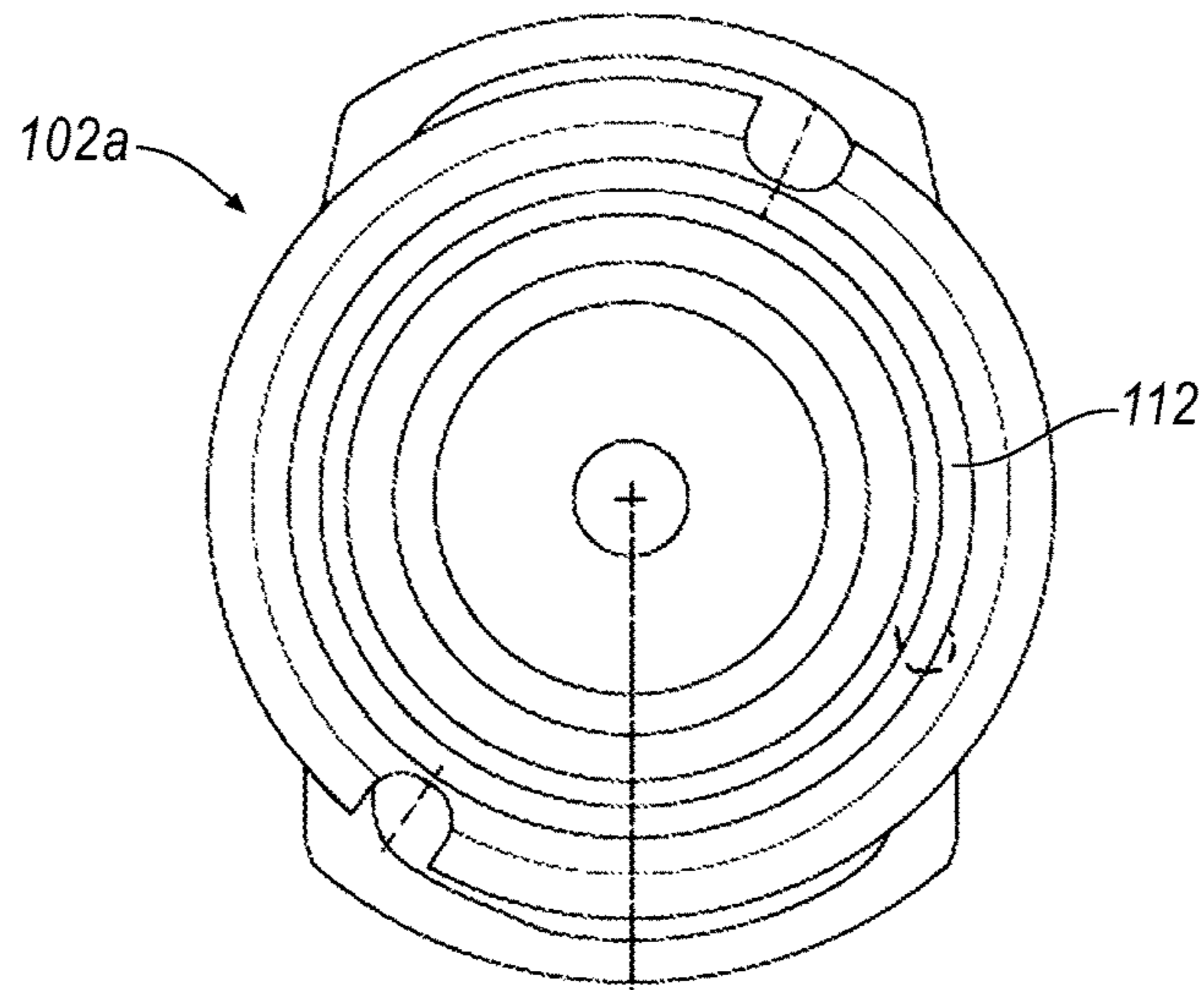


FIG. 4C

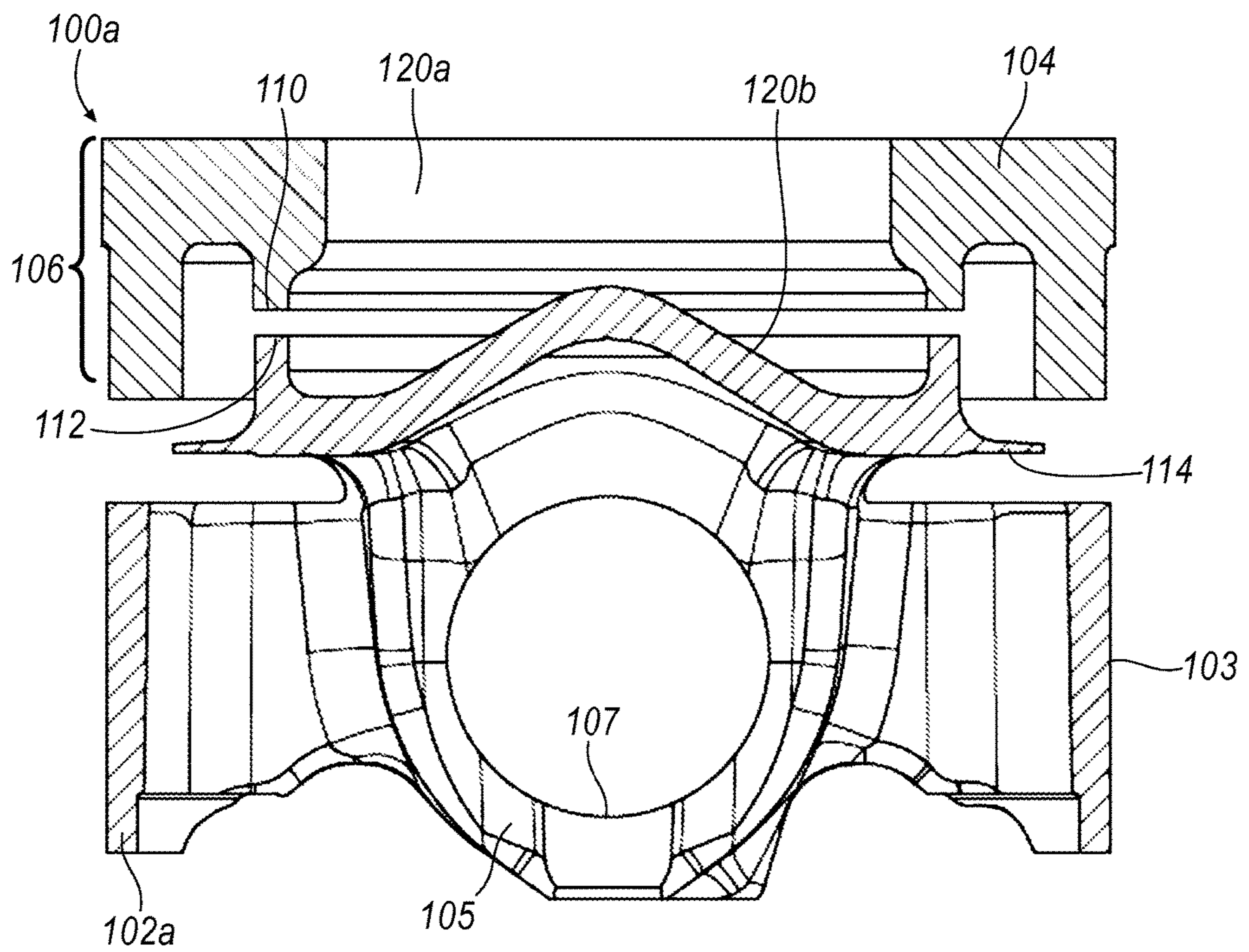


FIG. 5A

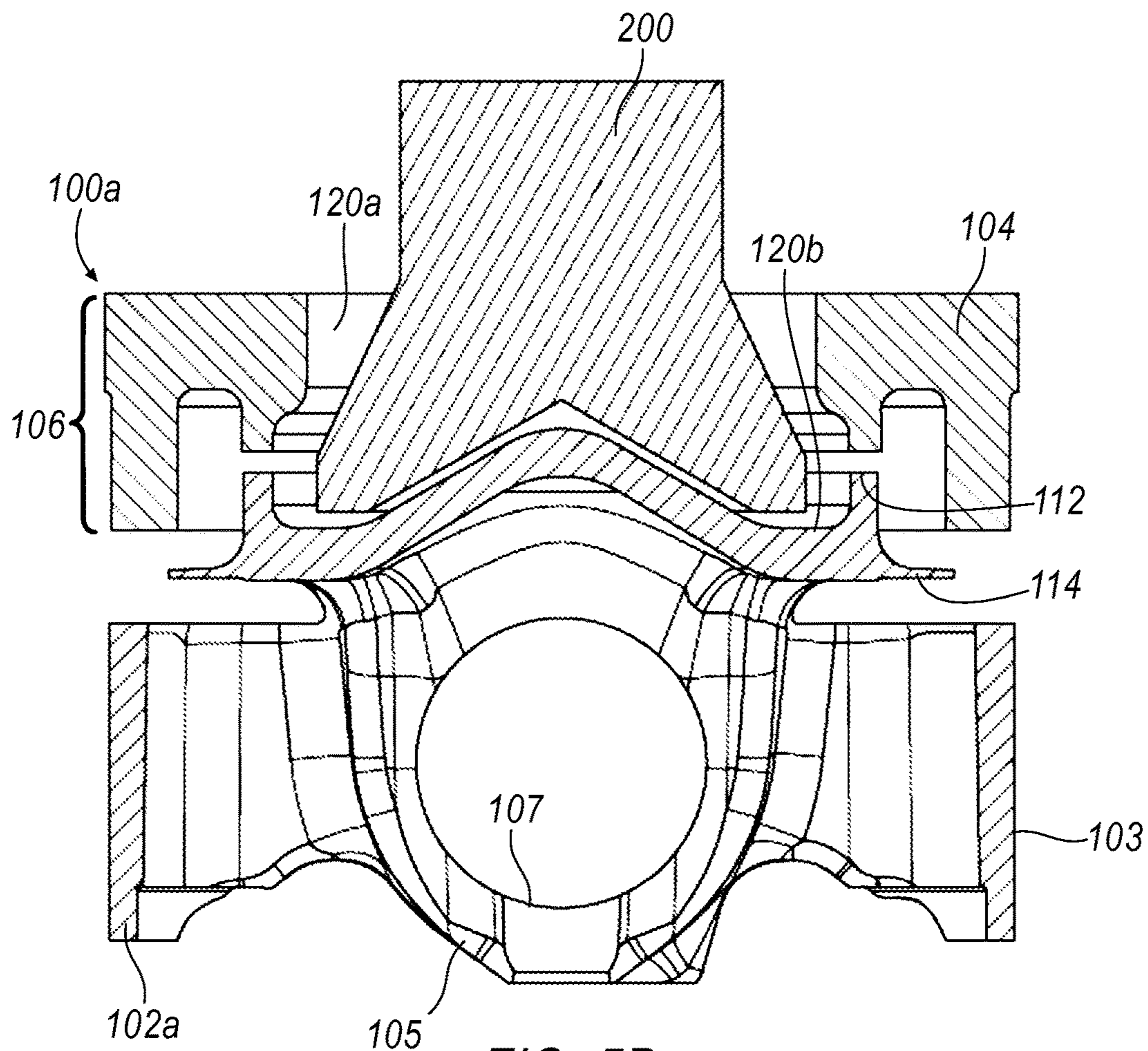
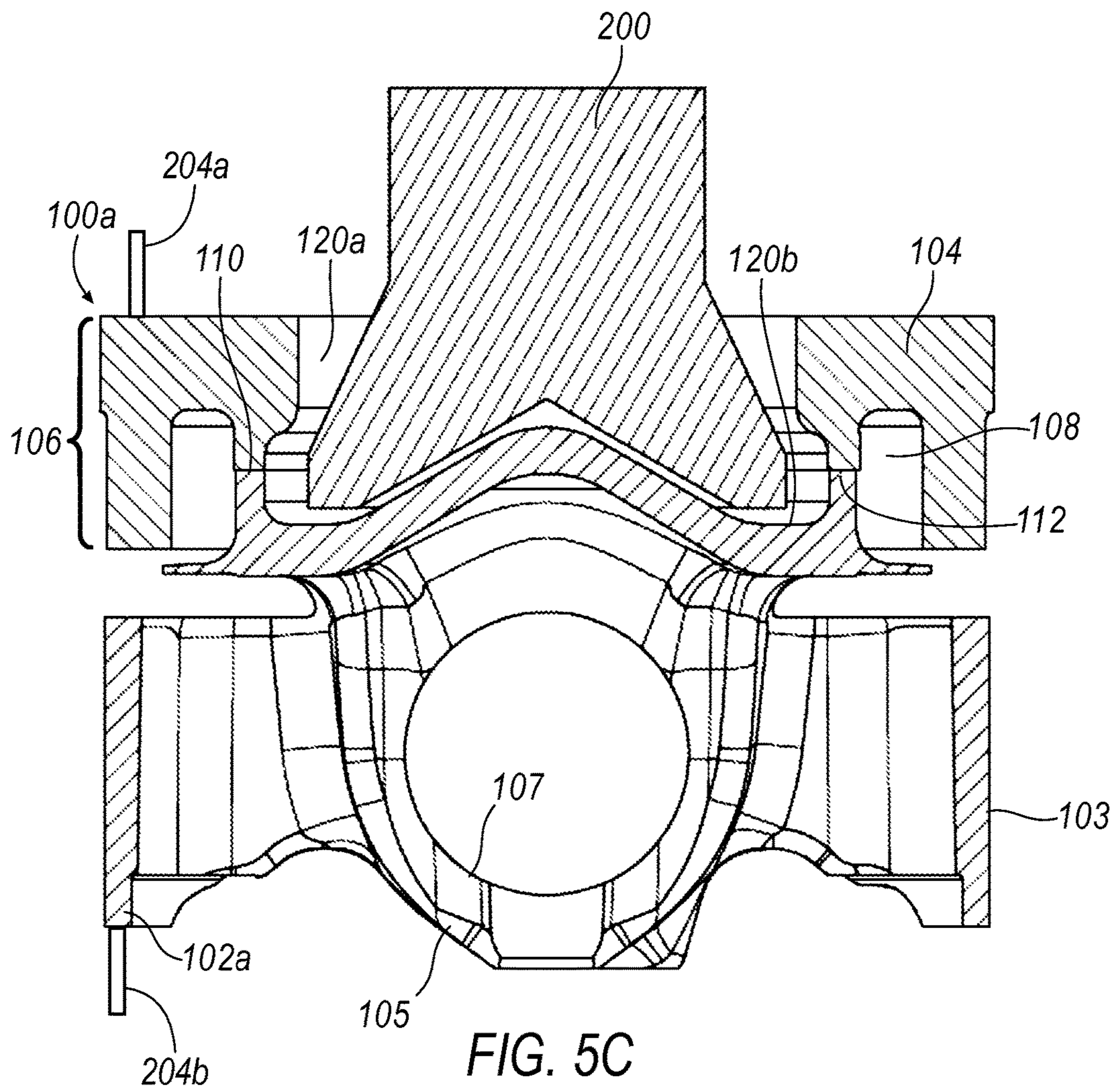


FIG. 5B



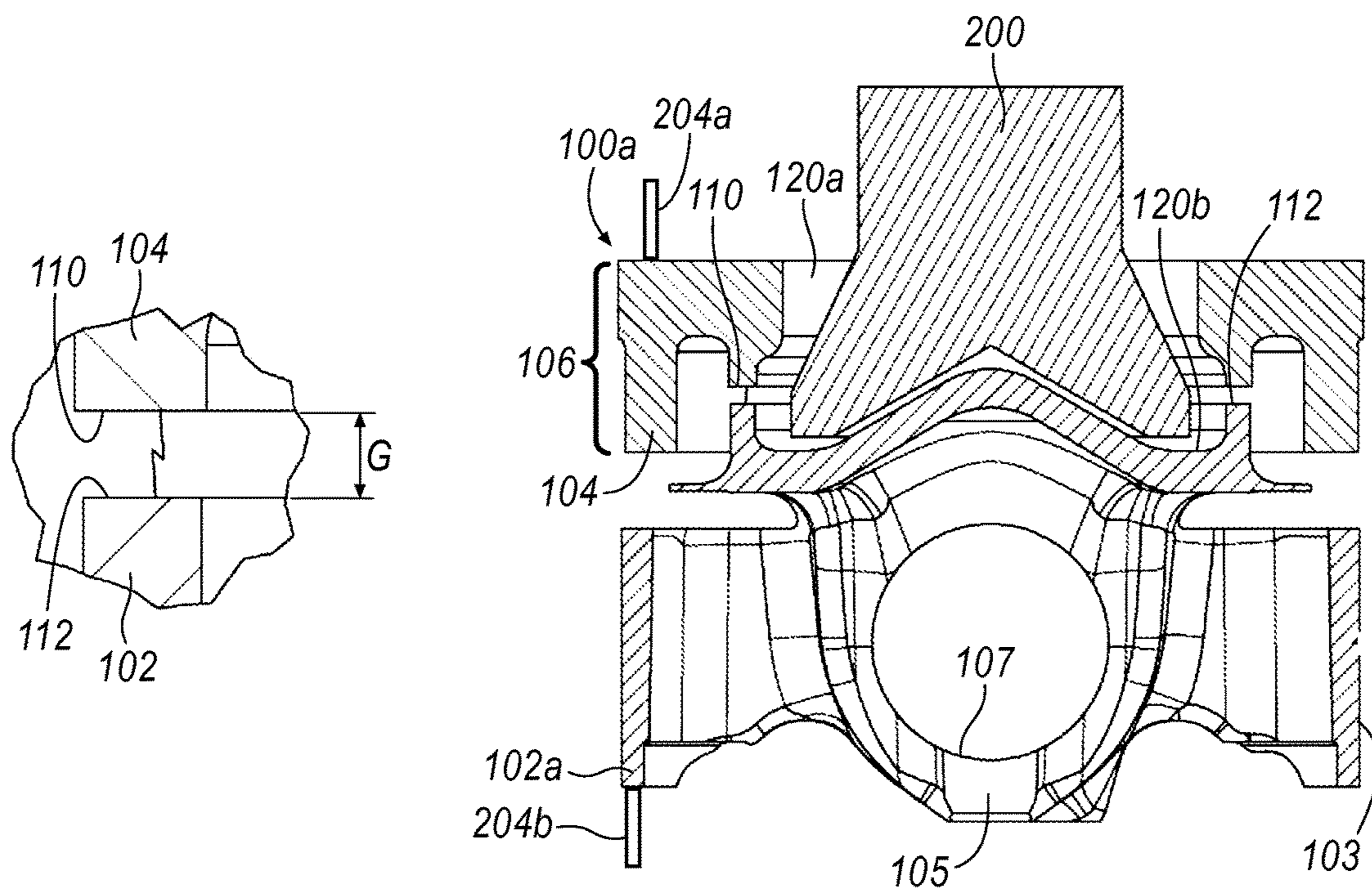


FIG. 5D

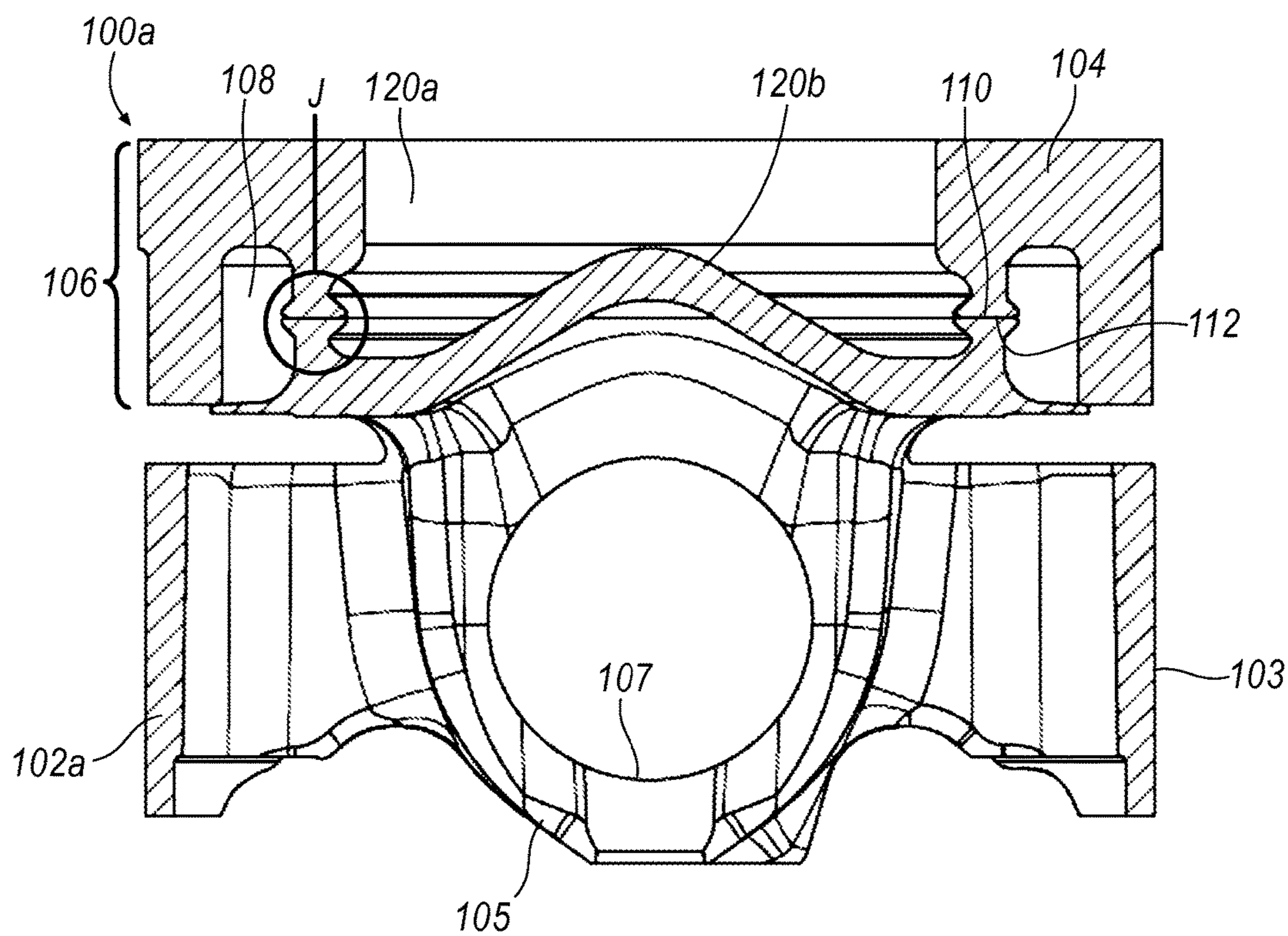


FIG. 5E

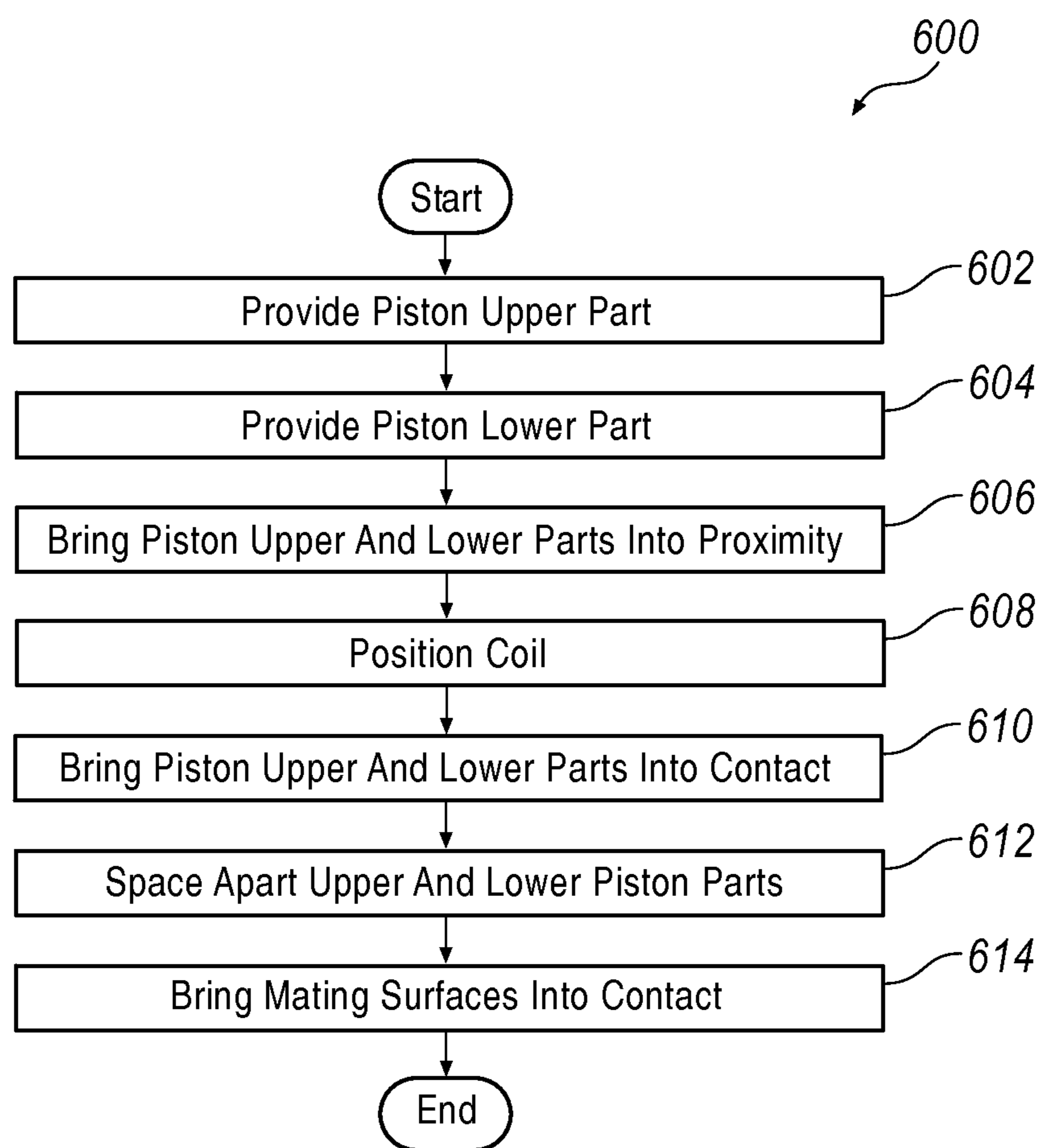


FIG. 6

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MAGNETIC ARC WELDED PISTON
ASSEMBLY

This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 61/986,943, filed on May 1, 2014, the contents of which are hereby expressly incorporated by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND

Internal combustion engine manufacturers are constantly seeking to increase power output and fuel efficiency of their products. One method of generally increasing efficiency and power is to reduce the oscillating mass of an engine, e.g., of the pistons, connecting rods, and other moving parts of the engine. Efforts to increase engine power and/or efficiency also may also result in an increase in pressure and/or temperature within the combustion chamber during operation.

Engines, and in particular the pistons of the engine, are therefore under increased stress as a result of these reductions in weight and increased pressures and temperatures associated with engine operation. Piston cooling is therefore increasingly important for withstanding the increased stress of such operational conditions over the life of the engine.

To reduce the operating temperatures of piston components, a cooling gallery may be provided about a perimeter of the piston. A coolant such as crankcase oil may be introduced to the cooling gallery, and may be distributed about the cooling gallery by the reciprocating motion of the piston, thereby reducing the operating temperature of the piston. At the same time, the cooling galleries may increase overall complexity of the piston assembly and manufacturing of the same.

Known methodologies for securing piston components together may require certain compromises in the cooling gallery configuration. For example, friction welding creates relatively large weld curls which occupy space within the gallery and thereby reduce an overall volume of the cooling gallery. Laser welding may create weld spatter that adheres to interior surfaces of the cooling gallery, generally requiring additional cleanup or machining after the welding process is completed. Induction heating, while resulting in reduced material waste of the joined components such as weld curls or spatter, generally requires relatively large induction coils to be interposed between the piston components being joined. The delay required to allow removal of the coils from between the two components before they are brought into contact after heating necessarily results in a loss of at least some heat energy, thereby creating a need for additional energy to be introduced into the joint to adequately join the components.

Accordingly, there is a need for a piston and manufacturing process that addresses the above problems.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Referring now to the drawings, illustrative examples are shown in detail. Although the drawings represent the exemplary illustrations described herein, the drawings are not necessarily to scale and certain features may be exaggerated to better illustrate and explain an innovative aspect of an exemplary illustration. Further, the exemplary illustrations described herein are not intended to be exhaustive or otherwise limiting or restricting to the precise form and configuration shown in the drawings and disclosed in the

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following detailed description. Exemplary illustrations of the present invention are described in detail by referring to the drawings as follows:

FIG. 1 is a sectional view of an exemplary piston assembly;

FIG. 2 is a sectional view of another exemplary piston assembly;

FIGS. 3A and 3B are top and sectional views, respectively, of an upper part used to form the exemplary piston of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 4A, 4B, and 4C are sectional, top, and side views, respectively, of a lower part used to form the exemplary piston of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 5A-5E illustrate an exemplary method of joining the upper and lower parts of FIGS. 3 and 4, respectively, to form the exemplary piston of FIG. 1; and

FIG. 6 is a process flow diagram for an exemplary method of making a piston.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Reference in the specification to “an exemplary illustration”, an “example” or similar language means that a particular feature, structure, or characteristic described in connection with the exemplary approach is included in at least one illustration. The appearances of the phrase “in an illustration” or similar type language in various places in the specification are not necessarily all referring to the same illustration or example.

Exemplary illustrations are provided herein of a piston and method of making the same. An exemplary method generally includes providing a piston lower part defining a piston axis and at least a portion of the upper combustion bowl surface, and assembling a piston upper part to the piston lower part. The piston upper and lower parts cooperate to define at least in part an annular cooling gallery extending about the piston. The method may further include bringing the piston upper and lower parts together along respective upper and lower mating surfaces and inducing an electric current between the upper and lower mating surfaces while the upper and lower mating surfaces are in contact. In one exemplary approach, electrodes are applied to the piston to induce current through the upper and lower mating surfaces.

Referring now to FIG. 1, an exemplary piston 100a is illustrated. Exemplary pistons may include a piston upper part 104 and a piston lower part 102a (or 102b, as shown in FIG. 2, described further below) that are joined along corresponding upper and lower mating surfaces 110, 112 thereof, respectively, which thereby define an annular joint J of the piston 100. The upper piston part 104 may define a ringland 106 configured to receive one or more piston or oil control rings (not shown) within one or more corresponding piston ring grooves (not shown). The lower piston part 102a may define a skirt 103 configured to support the piston during reciprocal motion by sliding or interfacing with cylindrical bore surfaces (not shown) of an internal combustion engine. The piston lower part 102a may also define two piston pin bosses 105 having piston pin bores 107 configured to receive a piston pin, e.g., for selectively securing a connecting rod (not shown) to the piston.

The upper and lower piston parts 104, 102 may generally cooperate to define a cooling gallery 108 extending annularly about the piston 100a. As shown in FIG. 1, the lower piston part 102a may include a lower flange 114, which generally defines a lower border of the cooling gallery 108, and generally encloses an annular space defined by the

piston upper part **104**, thereby generally defining a substantially closed cooling gallery **108**. The closed cooling gallery **108** may receive coolant or lubricant via one or more apertures (not shown), which may receive a coolant or lubricant from a coolant jet (not shown) configured to circulate oil from an engine crankcase. The cooling gallery **108** may permit coolant or lubricant to exit back to the crankcase via one or more apertures (not shown). While the lower flange **114** is illustrated as being in contact with a lower edge of the ringland **106** to generally close off the gallery, in some exemplary illustrations, a gap between the radially outer end of the lower flange **114** and the lower edge of the ringland **106** may be provided to allow ingress/egress of a coolant from the cooling gallery.

The upper and lower mating surfaces **110**, **112** of the piston upper and lower parts **104**, **102**, respectively, may be joined along a combustion bowl **120** that extends along an upper surface of the piston **100a**, for example as shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**. As will be described further below, the upper and lower mating surfaces **110**, **112** may be joined in a welding process where an electric current is used to generally heat the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102** adjacent the upper and lower mating surfaces **110**, **112**.

Turning now to FIG. **2**, another exemplary piston **100b** is illustrated. The piston **102b** is substantially the same as piston **100a** shown in FIG. **1**. However, the piston lower part **102b** in FIG. **2** lacks the lower flange **114** shown in the piston **100a** of FIG. **1**. Accordingly, the cooling gallery **108** defined by the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102b** is generally open to a space beneath the cooling gallery **108**. The generally open cooling gallery may generally more freely allow ingress and egress of a coolant, e.g., by way of an incoming cooling jet. Moreover, a cover plate (not shown) may be used to partially or fully enclose the cooling gallery **108** of the piston **102b**.

The generally two-piece construction of the pistons **100a**, **100b** (collectively, **100**) shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**, i.e., with the piston upper and lower parts **104** and **102a**, **102b**, may generally allow flexibility in regard to the size and shape of the piston upper and lower parts **104**, **102** and resulting piston **100**, e.g., allowing a lower overall compression height and/or center of gravity of the piston. Moreover, the two-piece construction may also facilitate the forming of more complex shapes within the cooling gallery **108** to allow greater ease of manufacturing of effectively sized galleries that provide enhanced cooling ability.

The upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102** may be formed of any material that is convenient. In one exemplary approach the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102** are each form of a steel material. In other exemplary approaches, the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102** are formed of different materials. In approaches where different materials are used for the upper and lower parts **104**, **102**, materials may be selected for each part that are specialized for the function of the upper and lower parts **104**, **102**, respectively. Merely as an example, a more temperature resistant material may be selected for the upper part **104**, which generally is positioned near the most extreme temperatures and pressures experienced by the piston **100** during operation.

As noted above, the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102** may generally be joined in a process that relies on an electric current made to flow through the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102** adjacent the upper and lower mating surfaces **110**, **112**. In one exemplary approach the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102** are each initially formed, e.g. in a casting, forging or machining process, merely as examples. See, for example, FIGS. **3A** and **3B**, which illustrate an

exemplary upper part **104**, and FIGS. **4A**, **4B**, and **4C**, which illustrate an exemplary lower part **102a** having a lower flange **114**. Moreover, the upper and lower parts **104**, **102** may be formed in different forming processes, e.g. the upper part **104** may be forged while the lower part **102** is machined.

Proceeding now to FIGS. **5A-5E** and **6**, an exemplary method is described. More specifically, FIG. **6** illustrates an exemplary process **600**, which is generally directed to a method of making a piston **100a**, as illustrated in FIGS. **5A-5E**. Process **600** may begin at block **602**, where a piston upper part is provided, e.g., upper part **104**. The upper part **104** may be formed via any process, e.g., via forging, machining, casting, or sintering, merely as examples. Moreover, the upper part **104** may be formed of any material that is convenient.

Proceeding to block **604**, a piston lower part **102a**, **102b** may be provided. The lower part **102a**, **102b** may be formed via any process, e.g., via forging, machining, casting, or sintering, merely as examples. Additionally, the lower part **102a**, **102b** may be formed of any material that is convenient. The lower part **102** may be formed of a same material or different material than the upper part **104**, and may be formed in a same process or different process than the upper part **104**. Process **600** may then proceed to block **606**.

At block **606**, the piston upper and lower parts **104**, **102** may be brought into proximity to each other. For example, as shown in FIG. **5A**, the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102** may initially be brought near each other, such that the upper and lower mating surfaces **110**, **112** are just out of contact with each other.

Proceeding to block **608**, a coil **200** may be positioned adjacent the upper and lower mating surfaces **110**, **112**, e.g., as shown in FIG. **5B**. In one exemplary approach, a magnetic arc welding process is used to join the upper and lower mating surfaces **110**, **112** of the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102**. In one exemplary approach, the coil **200** does not contact the piston **100**, and is close enough to the piston **100** to create a magnetic field sufficient to guide an electric arc between the upper and lower mating surfaces **110**, **112**, as further described below. Process **600** may then proceed to block **610**.

At block **610**, the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102** may be brought together, such that the upper and lower mating surfaces **110**, **112** are brought into contact with one another, e.g., as shown in FIG. **5C**. In one exemplary illustration, after the upper and lower mating surfaces are brought into contact with one another, an electric current may be induced across the upper and lower mating surfaces **110**, **112**. For example, electrodes **204a**, **204b** may be applied to the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102**, respectively, while the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102** are in contact. While it may be possible to induce current with the coil **200**, the inventors have found that inducing current across the upper and lower mating surfaces **110**, **112** by contacting electrodes to the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102** may be more advantageous in some applications. Current may be applied to the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102** by the electrodes **204**.

Proceeding to block **612**, the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102** may be moved away from one another to define a gap between the upper and lower mating surfaces, as shown in FIG. **5D**, while electrical current flows through the upper and lower piston parts **104**, **102**. For example, the upper and lower mating surfaces **110**, **112** may be spaced apart by a relatively small distance or gap **G**, which in some exemplary approaches may only be a few millimeters. As a result of the

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spacing of the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112** apart while the electric current is flowing through the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112**, an electric arc is formed between the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112**, as also shown in FIG. 5D and best seen in the enlarged portion thereof. Moreover, a magnetic field initiated by coil **200** may drive and guide the electric arc around the circumference along the mating surfaces **110, 112** of the lower and upper piston parts **102, 104**, respectively. The arc between the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112** may generally heat the piston upper and lower parts **104, 102** adjacent the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112**. Accordingly, the material(s) of the piston upper and lower parts **104, 102** may generally be heated until it the material(s) of each are softened or converted to a liquid phase suitable for bonding the upper and lower parts **104, 102** together. Process **600** may then proceed to block **614**.

At block **614**, the piston upper and lower parts **104, 102** may be brought back into contact, joining the piston upper and lower parts **104, 102** along the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112**. In some exemplary approaches, the upper and lower parts **104, 102** are forced together or propelled into contact, e.g., with an upset force, which generally forces the softened or liquid material together. The heated material is allowed to generally cool, re-hardening and thereby joining the piston upper and lower parts together **104, 102**, along the annular joint J, e.g., as shown in FIG. 5E.

As shown in FIGS. 1, 2, and 5E, the resulting joint J between the piston upper and lower parts **104, 102** generally results in a slightly widened area adjacent the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112**. Nevertheless, the resulting joint J is formed substantially free of any weld curls typical of previous piston parts securement approaches such as friction welding. Additionally, substantially no weld spatter is created from the process of applying and guiding the current through the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112**. More specifically, a magnetically guided current across the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112** generally results in a comparatively controlled heating of the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112** that does not create weld curls or weld spatter, and in any case results in a relatively cleaner joint between the upper and lower piston parts **104, 102** and smaller heat affected zone. The lack of weld curls and spatter generally reduces or even eliminates the need for subsequent machining operations or cleanup operations to remove weld curls or weld spatter from the piston **100**. The reduced or eliminated need for subsequent machining or cleanup of weld spatter is especially advantageous within the cooling gallery **108** of the piston **100**, where space is more restricted and a smooth surface is important for minimizing disruptions in coolant flow. Additionally, the use of a magnetically guided current allows the upper and lower piston parts **104, 102** to be maintained relatively close together during the process, without any components such as a coil being between the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112** as the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112** are being heated. As a result, the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112** may generally be brought back into contact very quickly once the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112** have been sufficiently heated by the current arcing across the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112**. Accordingly, little if any heat is lost from the heated material. In some exemplary approaches, this may provide the advantage that no additional turning or relative rotation between the upper and lower parts **104, 102** or any other enhancements to the joint J are required to obtain an adequate bond between the upper and lower piston parts

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104, 102. In fact, in some examples the use of a current arcing across the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112** allows current to remain "on" or flowing through the mating surfaces **110, 112** until the parts are brought back into contact, with the current continuing to flow until the upper and lower mating surfaces are brought back into contact. In other words, since no components, e.g., a coil, are positioned between the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112** as part of the process of heating the upper and lower mating surfaces, there is generally no delay, i.e., to wait for the coil to be moved out of the way between the upper and lower parts **104, 102** before bringing the upper and lower parts **104, 102** back into contact.

Additionally, the use of a guided current across the upper and lower mating surfaces **110, 112** may allow a number of different variations and configurations of the mating surfaces **110, 112**. FIGS. 1 and 2 illustrate the upper and lower surfaces as being generally planar, annularly extending surfaces. However, any other configuration compatible with applying an electrical current and guiding the current across at least a portion of the upper and lower mating surfaces may be employed.

The exemplary pistons disclosed herein may be employed in small and large bore diameter applications, generally without limitation. The reduced joint size resulting from the use of a guided current may advantageously allow for smaller overall geometry of the piston. Compression height, i.e., ratio of piston diameter to a distance between the upper surface and a center of the bore defined by the pin bosses, may be reduced. Overall height, i.e., H_1 and/or H_2 of the exemplary pistons shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, respectively, may also be reduced relative to pistons formed in other previous piston component securement approaches. For example, the minimal widening of the joint J between the piston upper and lower parts **104, 102** may also facilitate a relatively shallow bowl geometry, i.e., a reduced height of the combustion bowl **120** relative to the diameter of the piston **100**. Finally, a smaller overall height and/or compression height generally reduces size and weight of the piston **100**, allowing smaller engine blocks and smaller components overall, allowing greater freedom in vehicle packaging around the engine block. A longer connecting rod may also be employed where compression height is minimized, reducing lateral forces during engine operation against the engine bore. This may in turn reduce friction between the piston and the bore, improving engine efficiency. The piston assembly may also tolerate increased peak combustion pressures as a result of the rigidity of the piston assembly and the flexibility in material selection offered by the exemplary guided current approaches described herein. Manufacturing costs may also be reduced due to the simplified forging and joining processes that may be used in some exemplary illustrations.

With regard to the processes, systems, methods, heuristics, etc. described herein, it should be understood that, although the steps of such processes, etc. have been described as occurring according to a certain ordered sequence, such processes could be practiced with the described steps performed in an order other than the order described herein. It further should be understood that certain steps could be performed simultaneously, that other steps could be added, or that certain steps described herein could be omitted. In other words, the descriptions of processes herein are provided for the purpose of illustrating certain embodiments, and should in no way be construed so as to limit the claimed invention.

Accordingly, it is to be understood that the above description is intended to be illustrative and not restrictive. Many embodiments and applications other than the examples provided would be upon reading the above description. The scope of the invention should be determined, not with reference to the above description, but should instead be determined with reference to the appended claims, along with the full scope of equivalents to which such claims are entitled. It is anticipated and intended that future developments will occur in the arts discussed herein, and that the disclosed systems and methods will be incorporated into such future embodiments. In sum, it should be understood that the invention is capable of modification and variation and is limited only by the following claims.

All terms used in the claims are intended to be given their broadest reasonable constructions and their ordinary meanings as understood by those skilled in the art unless an explicit indication to the contrary is made herein. In particular, use of the singular articles such as "a," "the," "said," etc. should be read to recite one or more of the indicated elements unless a claim recites an explicit limitation to the contrary.

What is claimed is:

1. A magnetic arc welding method, comprising:
 providing a piston having a piston lower part defining a piston axis and having a combustion bowl portion and an upper piston part, wherein the combustion bowl portion includes a lower flange extending radially outwardly;
 positioning the piston upper part in proximity to the piston lower part, wherein the piston upper and lower parts cooperate to define at least in part a cooling gallery extending annularly about the piston axis, wherein an upper surface of the lower flange extends underneath a lower surface of the piston upper part and radially external to the cooling gallery;
 bringing the piston upper and lower parts together along respective upper and lower mating surfaces that are radially external to the cooling gallery, thereby partially forming the cooling gallery between the upper and lower parts, the upper and lower parts further defining a combustion bowl radially internal to the cooling gallery, wherein the upper and lower mating surfaces form a single circumferential contact area that extends from the combustion bowl to the cooling gallery;
 connecting electrodes to the upper and lower piston parts for providing electric current;
 positioning a magnetic coil within the combustion bowl;
 inducing an electric current generated from the magnetic coil through the single circumferential contact area after bringing the upper and the lower mating surfaces in contact;
 after the electric current is induced, spacing the upper and lower mating surfaces apart to form a gap between the upper and lower mating surfaces, thereby forming and maintaining an electric arc between the upper and lower mating surfaces, wherein the electric arc heats the upper and lower mating surfaces to a melt temperature; and
 after the upper and the lower mating surfaces are at least softened, bringing the upper and lower mating surfaces back together to join the upper and lower mating surfaces and form a weld joint at the single circumferential contact area, and to bring the upper surface of the lower flange in contact with the lower surface of the piston upper part to fully form the combustion bowl

and enclose the cooling gallery with the lower surface of the piston upper part thereof.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the piston lower part includes a skirt configured to interface with an engine bore surface.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the piston upper and lower parts are each formed of a steel material.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the piston upper part is formed of a first material, and the piston lower part is formed of a second material different from the first material.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising guiding the electric arc between the upper and lower mating surfaces with a magnetic field initiated by the magnetic coil.

6. A magnetic arc welding method, comprising:

providing a piston having a piston lower part defining a piston axis and having a combustion bowl portion and an upper piston part, wherein the combustion bowl portion;

assembling a piston upper part to the piston lower part, wherein the piston upper and lower parts cooperate to define at least in part a cooling gallery extending annularly about the piston axis, wherein the piston lower part includes a lower flange extending radially outwardly and radially external to the cooling gallery;
 bringing the piston upper and lower parts together along respective upper and lower mating surfaces that are radially external to the cooling gallery, thereby partially forming the cooling gallery between the upper and lower parts, the upper and lower parts further defining a combustion bowl radially internal to the cooling gallery, wherein the upper and lower mating surfaces form a single circumferential contact area that extends from the combustion bowl to the cooling gallery;

connecting electrodes to the upper and lower piston parts for providing electric current;

positioning a magnetic coil within the combustion bowl;
 inducing an electric current generated from the magnetic coil through the single circumferential contact area after bringing the upper and lower mating surfaces in contact;

after the electric current is induced, spacing the upper and lower mating surfaces apart, thereby forming and maintaining an electric arc between the upper and lower mating surfaces, wherein the electric arc heats the upper and lower mating surfaces to a melt temperature; and

after the upper and the lower mating surfaces are at least softened, joining the upper and lower mating surfaces together at the single circumferential contact area until an upper surface of the lower flange is in contact with the lower surface of the piston upper part to form a weld joint between the upper and the lower mating surfaces, and to enclose the cooling gallery with the lower surface of the piston upper part thereof.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the piston lower part includes a skirt configured to interface with an engine bore surface.

8. The method of claim 6, wherein the piston upper part is formed of a first material, and the piston lower part is formed of a second material different from the first material.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the lower flange forms an unwelded portion of the cooling gallery.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the contact area extends in a direction that is approximately orthogonal to the piston axis, and bringing the piston upper and lower parts into contact further comprises forming the contact area along an arcuate surface of the combustion bowl.

11. The method of claim 6, wherein the lower flange forms an unwelded portion of the cooling gallery.

12. The method of claim 6, wherein the contact area extends in a direction that is approximately orthogonal to the piston axis, and bringing the piston upper and lower parts into contact further comprises forming the contact area along an arcuate surface of the combustion bowl.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein positioning the magnetic coil comprises positioning the magnetic coil between the upper and lower mating surfaces.

14. The method of claim 6, wherein positioning the magnetic coil comprises positioning the magnetic coil between the upper and lower mating surfaces.

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